

SPECIAL OLYMPICS 2025 ANNUAL FITNESS REPORT

A global summary of metrics
and programming successes
from fitness activations in 2025



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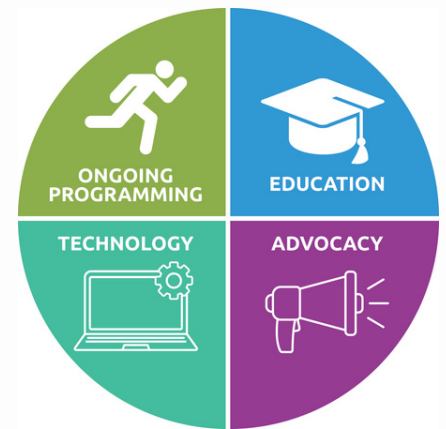


Special Olympics
Health

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Background

This report highlights 2025 data from Special Olympics Programs engaged in Healthy Communities work, as well as the global Census, showcasing successes, impact on athlete health and fitness, and progress toward the 2022-2026 [Special Olympics Fitness Strategy](#). The report is structured around the strategy's four key areas: Ongoing Programming, Education, Technology, and Advocacy. Fitness is a key part of Special Olympics' overall health work. Learn more in the [2025 Annual Health Report](#).

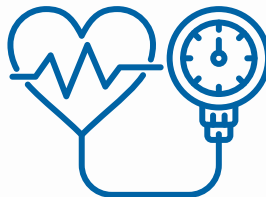


Health and Fitness Overview

Special Olympics Healthy Athletes® data provide insights into the health and fitness of athletes with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). The data below highlight key areas related to physical activity, nutrition, and overall well-being.



of athletes are **overweight or obese**



of athletes have **high blood pressure**



of athletes have **balance concerns**



of athletes engage in **3 days or less** of weekly physical activity



of athletes consume **less than 3** servings of fruits and vegetables daily

Data source: 2025 Healthy Athletes Health Promotion and FUNfitness global screening data



Ongoing Programming

Ongoing fitness programming provides high-quality opportunities that support Special Olympics athletes in achieving higher levels of fitness and improved health behaviors.

463,456 

Athletes participating in
**structured
fitness programming**



2026 Objective: 700,000

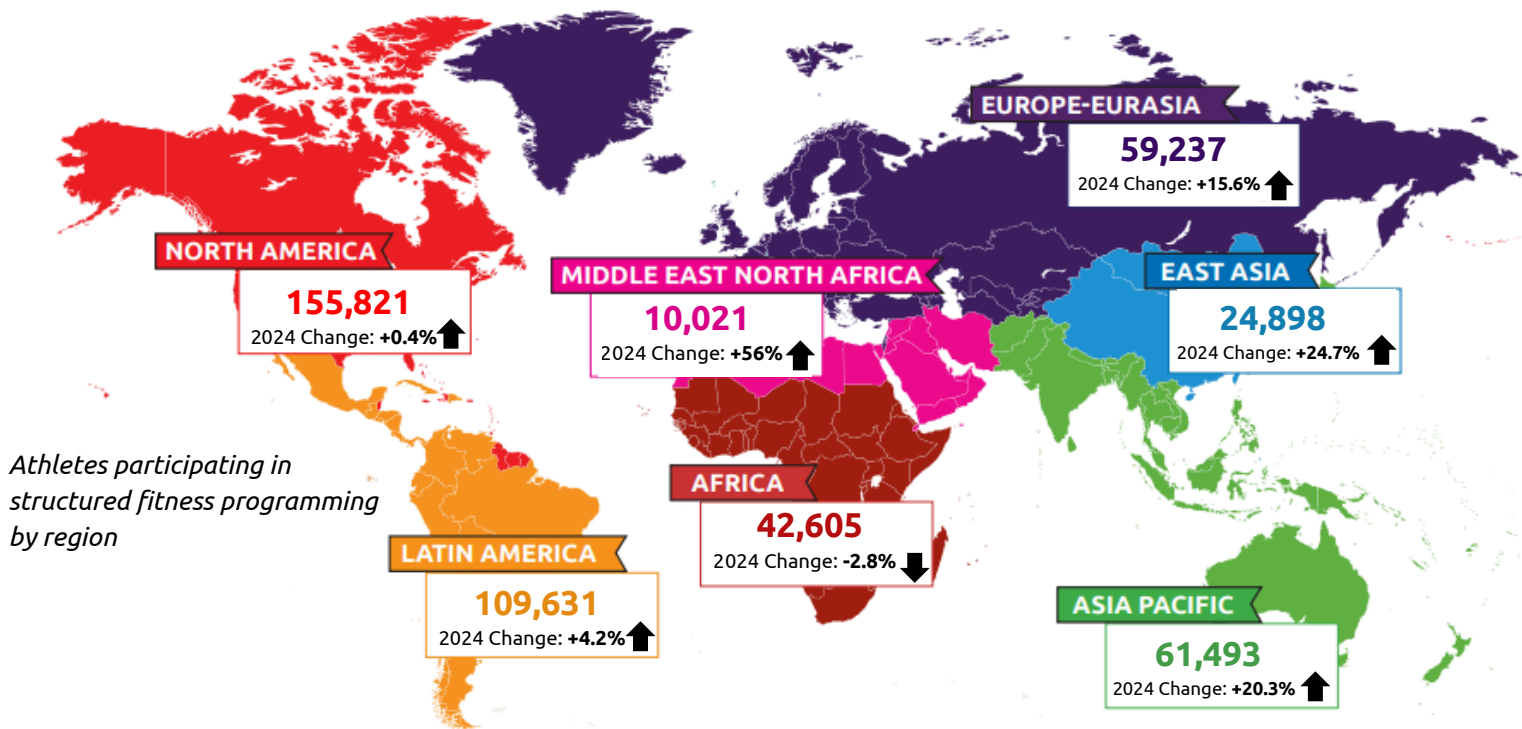
320,504 

Athletes participating in
**structured fitness programming
for 6 weeks or longer**



2026 Objective: 550,000

Global Participation by Region



Athletes participating in
structured fitness programming
by region

Data source: 2025 Special Olympics Census



What's the Impact?

The [Lifestyle Survey](#) measures athlete improvements in health and behaviors. It can be used pre- and post-program to evaluate impact and effectiveness. Below are highlights from ongoing fitness programming evaluations.



improved confidence in doing physical activity



improved physical activity knowledge



improved confidence in eating healthy

Data source: 2025 Lifestyle Survey-Special Olympics fitness evaluation survey

Fitness in Schools in Action!

Resource Highlight!

High 5 Updated Lesson Plans

After piloting, High 5 for Fitness Lesson Plans are now available [here!](#) These lessons promote the adoption of healthy physical activity, nutrition, and hydration habits among school-aged youth ages 8-21.

Over **92%** of educators stated that they would recommend the lesson plans to other educators.

63,421



School-based participants in structured fitness programming for **6 weeks or longer**

Data source: 2025 Healthy Communities Impact Grant reporting (Goliso 2025; CDC Y4 Aug 2024-July 2025)

Inclusive Healthy Lifestyle Groups in Schools (IHLGiS)

Special Olympics Europe Eurasia completed a three-year partnership with the European Union to execute [IHLGiS](#). This project promoted fitness and health education to students with and without IDD. The initiative far exceeded goal metrics, engaging **291 schools, 450 teachers, and over 6,000 students** in Estonia, Hellas, Berlin, and Poland.



Education

Education equips Special Olympics leaders to promote adoption of healthy lifestyle behaviors among athletes.

15,690 

Number of **sports coaches** trained in fitness

7,207 

Number of **fitness professionals** trained in inclusive fitness

1,329 

Number of athletes trained as **Fitness Captains**

2,229 

Total number of athletes trained as **Fitness Captains (2023-2025)**



Data source: Healthy Communities Impact Grant reporting (Golisano 2025; CDC Y4 Aug. 2024-Jul. 2025), Fitness Captains Directory, Special Olympics Learning Portal, & the American Council on Exercise Learning Management System



"Fitness Captains [is] a good strategy to develop leadership led by athletes and young people, without adding more responsibilities to sports leaders and/or coaches beyond supervision and support."

- Ana Aloe, Director of Innovative Programs, Special Olympics Argentina

Fitness Captains in Action!

Special Olympics Argentina trained **120** Fitness Captains. These athletes foster confidence and share fitness knowledge with their peers. Special Olympics Argentina sees this as an opportunity for meaningful leadership from athletes, not just on the field of play, but off the field by involving athletes in co-leading Fitness Captain trainings. By demonstrating exercises like warm-ups and cool-downs, Fitness Captains can prevent injuries and enhance sports program quality.

Technology



Technology builds awareness of fitness and health behaviors to facilitate health behavior change. Below are data and stories from the Special Olympics Fitness App.

1,404



Number of app **users**

9,417



Average number of **daily steps tracked** per user

22



Number of **Fitness Challenges** conducted using the app

Data source: 2025 Special Olympics Fitness App



"What sets the experience apart is the resource section. I use a ton of the resources available to stay informed and keep my routine fresh. Whether it's looking up new exercises or following health tips, being able to have information in one place makes staying healthy feel manageable."

-Kayla Cornell, Special Olympics Michigan Health Messenger & Athlete App Advisory Committee Member

Special Olympics Fitness App in Action!

Special Olympics North America (SONA) hosted a regional 8-week fitness challenge called SONA Move. **409 athletes** from **36 Programs** participated. **79.7%** of participants reported that the challenge made them **more confident in doing physical activity**, in addition to feeling **more confident in eating healthy**. Participants increased the number of days that strength exercises were completed from 3.31 days to 3.86 days per week.

The app is publicly available through the [Apple](#) and [Google Play](#) stores. Click the links above to **download the app** for free!



Advocacy

Advocacy increases accessible fitness opportunities for all individuals with IDD. An important way to do this is through local, national, and global partnerships.

3



Number of **Special Olympics International** fitness partnerships

222



Number of **Special Olympics Program** gym partnerships



18

new Program gym partnerships from 2024

Data source: Healthy Communities Impact Grant reporting (Golisano 2025; CDC Y4 Aug. 2024-Jul. 2025) & SOI fitness partnerships

Partner Resource Highlight!

Community Physical Activity Leader course (CPAL)

Special Olympics partnered with the American Council on Exercise to launch CPAL, a free training course for people with and without IDD to develop and lead physical activity programs for all. 95% of those who have completed the course reported plans to lead physical activity programs in their communities. [Share the course with athletes!](#)

Partnerships in Action!

Special Olympics International and the International Federation for Adapted Physical Activity (IFAPA) renewed their partnership at the International Symposium of Adapted Physical Activity in June 2025. The partnership strengthens inclusive research, promotes training, and advances evidence-based programming to improve health outcomes for people with disabilities globally. For collaboration opportunities, contact fitness@specialolympics.org.



Evaluation Spotlight

Data-Driven Fitness: Special Olympics Asia Pacific (SOAP)

SOAP partnered with the Research and Evaluation team to evaluate MoveFit, a fitness program reaching **816 athletes** and **545 family members** across **28 sites in Malaysia and Vietnam**. MoveFit showed statistically significant results for athletes and family members across nearly all health, fitness, and behavioral measures.

Athlete Findings



69%
Increased
Physical Activity
per Week



67%
Improved
Strength

Family Findings



71%
Improved
Blood Pressure*



71%
Reduced
Body Mass Index

**71% improved systolic, 63% improved diastolic*



Contact for Support

Special Olympics Programs can receive support from the Fitness and Research and Evaluation teams in implementing and evaluating fitness programming, using this report, and leveraging existing fitness partnerships. Together, we're creating a culture of fitness! Contact fitness@specialolympics.org for more information!

