



# 2018 Reach Report Overview

The 2018 Reach Report presents data primarily sourced from the Special Olympics annual census, which surveys the breadth, depth and impact of the global Special Olympics movement. This includes data from 244 Programs in 193 countries on athletes, coaches, competitions and other key metrics.

## ATHLETES

In 2018, Special Olympics included more than **6 million** athletes and Unified Sports partners.

- This includes **5.5 million** athletes with intellectual disabilities and over **920,000** Unified Sports partners without intellectual disabilities.
- 86% of athletes live in countries outside of North America.
- 58% of athletes are ages 8-21 years old. (And 9% are ages 2-7).
- 33% of athletes are age 22 or older.
- 41% of athletes are female; 59% are male.
- In the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) Region, our reach expanded significantly. Youth Leadership grew by 573%, volunteers increased 66%, and Unified Athlete participation grew 47%. 2019 marked the first World Games in the MENA Region, which drove growth in 2018.

## COMPETITIONS

There were **106,300** Special Olympics sports competitions in 2018.

- Competitions worldwide averaged 291 per day, 12 per hour. These events ranged from local competitions or sports tournaments to Regional or World Games.
- This number includes 26,388 Special Olympics Unified Sports competitions – almost an increase of 8% since 2017.
- In traditional sports, athletics continues to be the most popular sport globally, followed by football (soccer), basketball, swimming and bocce.

## UNIFIED SPORTS

Our popular Unified Sports program expanded to nearly **1.8 million teammates globally** in 2018!

- This includes over 850,000 athletes (people with intellectual disabilities) and over 920,000 Unified partners (people without intellectual disabilities)—an 8% increase over 2017.
- Youth Unified Sports added 73,000 teammates ages 8-25 globally, an increase of 13%. The largest growth was reported by North America. The Region engaged over 24,500 more youth athletes and partners in 2018 compared to previous year.\*
- Overall, participation in Unified Sports has grown exponentially over the last 10 years: in 2008, there were only 129,600 Unified athletes—and 76,500 Unified partners.



## HEALTH

Special Olympics is targeting health disparities for people with intellectual disabilities and bringing improved health to our athletes all around the world. In just a few examples:

- In 2018, there were over 175,000 Healthy Athletes screenings worldwide.
- There have been more than 2.1 million screenings since Healthy Athletes began in 1997.
- Over 280,000 healthcare providers and students have been trained to date.
- Over 140 countries have held Healthy Athletes events since 1997.
- 34 Special Olympics Programs have achieved Healthy Community status—and 40 more Programs are in progress.
- In 2018, over 41,000 health providers and students were trained on health needs of people with ID.

## VOLUNTEERS

The Special Olympics movement is driven by our volunteers, with more than **1.1 million** donating their time and expertise in 2018.

- This includes 508,853 coaches (an increase of 6% since 2017).
- We now have 399,429 youth volunteers ages 8-25. These young volunteers make up one-third of our volunteer base!
- 112,000 Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR) volunteers.
- 41,000 health providers and students trained.
- Special Olympics Asia Pacific Programs added 19% more coaches in 2018.

## LEADERSHIP

To build an inclusive world, we must lead the way by developing strong, inspiring leaders.

- We now have 47,000 athlete leaders worldwide—a 4% increase since 2017.
- Our movement engages 75,000 youth leaders ages 8-25.
- We engaged 37,000 Family Leaders—an 18% jump since last year.
- Special Olympics Middle East/North Africa Programs added 573% more youth leaders and Africa Programs added 30% more youth leaders this year.

## YOUNG ATHLETES

In 2018, Young Athletes grew by 42% globally, with new participation among females outpacing males. Now, 80% of all Special Olympics Programs conduct Young Athletes.



## ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

The Special Olympics movement consists of **244** accredited Programs operating in **193** countries and thousands of local community Programs and clubs. In 2018, Special Olympics added **19** new Programs.

The six countries with the most number of Special Olympics athletes:

- Bharat (India): 1.6 million
- China: 1.3 million
- United States: 700,000
- Indonesia: 138,000
- Russia: 122,000
- Bangladesh: 78,000

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** For external documents, websites and even video content, we recommend use of rounded/estimated figures, rather than the most recent or exacting—so we don't outdate our publications/video content so very quickly. Most frequently used examples are below:

### **Preferred:**

**-More than 100,000 competitions per year** (not 106,300)

**-More than 5 million athletes with intellectual disabilities** (not 5.5 million)

**-More than 6 million athletes and Unified Sports partners** (not 6.4 million)

**-More than 190 countries** (not 193)

## 2018 Reach Report Talking Points

In 2018, Special Olympics continued its five-year campaign aimed at achieving 1) Inclusive Sport and Health; 2) a Unified Generation; and 3) Athlete Empowerment. We are already seeing impressive results:

**Unified Sports**—As of this year, nearly 1.8 million Unified Sports teammates are playing together and learning from each other in every region of the world.

**Youth Unified Sports**—We also count over 600,000 young people ages 8-25 who have joined our inclusive sports movement as Unified Sports athletes and partners: more than a half-million strong!



**Health Screenings**—To date, Special Olympics health experts have given over 2.1 million free health screenings to athletes with intellectual disabilities, a long neglected population.

**Inclusive Youth Leadership**—Special Olympics is now powered by the energy of nearly 75,000 youth leaders ages 8-25 all around the world. We also count almost 400,000 youth volunteers—a pipeline of leaders

**Athlete Leadership**—Special Olympics athletes continue to lead the way: We can celebrate over 47,000 athlete leaders in a variety of meaningful leadership roles—a 4% expansion from 2017.

**Our Inclusive Future**—Inclusion is beautiful at every age, as our Young Athletes program proves. This innovative initiative now brings together more than 440,000 children ages 2-7—with and without intellectual disabilities—all around the world. This marks a 43% growth rate since last year.

**Our Global Movement**—We are more of an international movement than ever: Special Olympics Programs are in 193 countries; 86% of our athletes live outside of North America.

#### **UPDATED BOILER PLATE:**

*About Special Olympics:*

Special Olympics is a global inclusion movement using sport, health, education and leadership programs every day around the world to end discrimination against and empower people with intellectual disabilities. [Founded in 1968](#), the Special Olympics movement has grown to more than 6 million athletes and Unified Sports partners in more than [190 countries](#). With the support of more than 1 million coaches and volunteers, Special Olympics delivers [32 Olympic-type sports](#) and over [100,000 games and competitions](#) throughout the year. Special Olympics is supported by individuals, foundations and partners, including Bank of America, the Christmas Records Trust, The Coca-Cola Company, ESPN, Essilor Vision Foundation, the Golisano Foundation, IKEA Foundation, the Lane Family, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, Lions Clubs International, Safilo Group, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, TOYOTA, United Airlines, and The Walt Disney Company. [Click here for a full list of partners](#). Engage with us on: [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), [Instagram](#) and [our blog on Medium](#). Learn more at [www.SpecialOlympics.org](http://www.SpecialOlympics.org).