



2020 REACH REPORT OVERVIEW

The 2020 Reach Report presents data primarily sourced from the Special Olympics annual census, as well as the Health, Legal and Sports departments. Special Olympics North America provided Unified Schools and Unified Champion Schools data.

Any decline in numbers compared to 2019 data highlights the devastating impact of COVID-19 on our global Programs. Yet 2020 data also showcases our resilience as a global movement, as we worked worldwide to redirect our programming and developed new creative solutions in adapting to a virtual environment.

SPORT

In 2020, on-site coach training opportunities were limited, yet Special Olympics utilized a new, virtual model. A framework for a regional Coach Developer System was created for Special Olympics Asia Pacific, and more than 10,000 coaching and fitness courses were completed through the Special Olympics International (SOI) online Learning Management System.

Engagement strategies with international sports federations yielded an increase in national-level sports partnerships of 63%. These partnerships will significantly assist our Programs to emerge from COVID with added capacity and resources. Athletes will be able to realize the physical, social, and mental well-being and benefits of sports training and competition.

Yet another example of global innovation was the inauguration of virtual games and competitions, enabling athletes from around the world to experience the joy of sports from the safety of their homes.

COVID contingency plans were developed for both the 2022 World Winter Games and 2023 World (Summer) Games Local Organizing Committees. Meanwhile, planning continued for the 2nd edition of the Special Olympics Unified Cup, which was awarded to Michigan, USA.

In addition, we increased our audience engagement by sharing stories of how Special Olympics athletes have boldly faced opportunities and challenges both on and off the field through the confidence and skills they continued to develop through virtual sports programming. This engagement included a major milestone as Chris Nikic, a Special Olympics Florida athlete, became the first person with Down syndrome to complete an IRONMAN.

This story and many others featured in highly coveted outlets and channels helped to keep Special Olympics' sports programming front and center with decision-makers, volunteers such as coaches, community leaders, and, of course, people with intellectual disabilities.



Through the power of sports, people with intellectual disabilities discover new strengths and abilities, skills, and success. Our athletes find joy, confidence, and fulfillment—on the playing field and in life. They also inspire people in their communities and elsewhere to open their hearts to a wider world of human talents and potential.

HEALTH

Special Olympics Health programs are working to create a world where people with intellectual disabilities have every opportunity to be healthy. In 2020, with in-person health and fitness activities curtailed, Special Olympics moved to virtual. Through creative and innovative approaches, we were able to provide engaging health programs, such as virtual fitness programming, which reached four times the number of participants compared with 2019. Special Olympics introduced virtual health screening and education using telehealth, expanded online training of health-care professionals, and the developed of a virtual family health forums, which proved especially effective in reaching large numbers of family members on health topics.

Our Inclusive Health message was heard far and wide to remind audiences of the importance of health care provider training, share fitness resources and programming, and advocate for equitable treatment for people with intellectual disabilities. Our presence in healthy lifestyle and fitness stories, courtesy of top-tier reporters and show hosts, helped to spread the word.

As a response to the pandemic, Special Olympics Health got to work on a wide-reaching campaign on preventing COVID and advocating for health care during COVID. People with intellectual disabilities are at higher risk of contracting and dying from COVID. We conducted two surveys of over 6,000 athletes from all regions to understand experiences during COVID and found that while most athletes are using preventive measures (handwashing, masking, distancing), there is still room to improve. Special Olympics has been educating athletes on COVID prevention, tackling myths and misinformation that contribute to vaccine hesitancy, and working to increase access to vaccines for athletes and people with ID. Most athletes--70%--reported feeling more isolated and alone during COVID. Athletes who were connected to Special Olympics felt less isolated and alone and were also more likely to use COVID prevention methods than athletes who were not connected to Special Olympics. These findings indicate that our programming and resources are important in helping to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

EDUCATION

In 2020, COVID-19 caused school closures worldwide; over the course of the pandemic, over



1.2 billion children and youth have been out of school globally. These closures have resulted in Special Olympics programs adjusting to being more creative, resourceful, and innovative, using virtual engagement when working with youth with and without intellectual disabilities.

Even given the virtual nature resulting from quarantine and lockdowns, Special Olympics has forged and activated an international team of youth leaders, teachers, community organizers, and coaches, who are bringing the power of social inclusion to schools and communities around the world.

LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY & OUTREACH

If we want a more inclusive organization and accepting world, Special Olympics athletes -- people with intellectual and development disabilities -- must be allowed and encouraged to contribute in ways beyond the sports field. In 2020, new Leadership & Skills curricula provided Special Olympics athletes knowledge and skills to prepare them for meaningful roles and jobs in Special Olympics and their community.

We also created opportunities for families, community members, local leaders, businesses, law enforcement, celebrities, dignitaries, and others to band together to change attitudes and support athletes.

Further, we've increased audience interaction to grow the movement by attracting new stakeholders to our mission. While exclusively remote, our communications and marketing efforts reached new consumers and policymakers through rich storytelling directly provided through Special Olympics digital and social media channels and conduits such as traditional media and digital-first influencers.

This storytelling activity has produced widespread, deep coverage for the Special Olympics movement and the push for inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities. Secured coverage highlighted and stressed the importance of our sports, health, education, and leadership messages and offerings. In fact, in 2020, outreach has resulted in over one billion impressions consisting of articles, bylines, posts, and mentions in national to micro-local media outlets and social media channels.

GLOBAL REACH

Snapshot: The Special Olympics movement consists of 251 accredited Programs operating in 201 countries and jurisdictions. There are also more than 21,375 local community sub-programs and clubs.