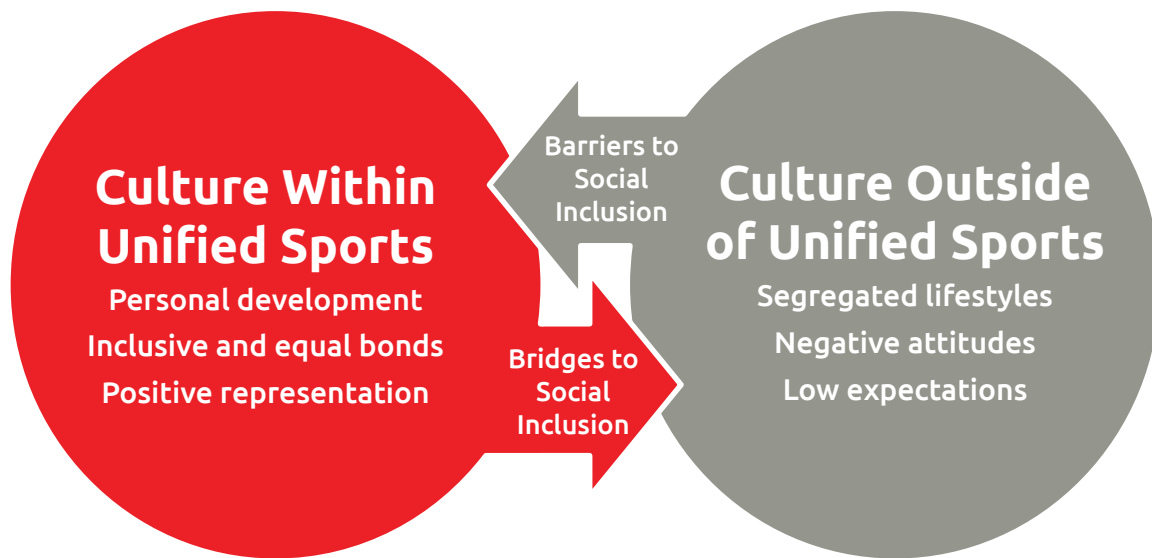


UNIFIED SPORTS AS A BRIDGE TO SOCIAL INCLUSION²⁹



There are four main elements of Unified Sports that challenge barriers to inclusion in the community. These are:

- 1. Promoting the personal development of athletes and partners.** Developing social and sports skills while focusing on ability, rather than disability.
- 2. Creating inclusive and equal bonds among athletes and partners.** Promoting true partnerships that are positive and inclusive.
- 3. Generating positive perceptions of athletes.** Serving as a platform to inform the community about people with ID.
- 4. Building alliances within the community.** Building parent support/advocacy networks and connecting with local sports organizations, schools, governments, etc. for support.³⁰

These processes allow social inclusion to occur within Unified teams and in the broader community. Evaluations have shown that Unified Sports has in fact helped athletes enhance their involvement in the community. According to one Special Olympics survey, as a result of participating in Unified Sports, 83% of participants reported that they do more activities in their community.³¹ Through the power of sport, Unified Sports connects people with and without ID, building bridges to social inclusion in the broader community and breaking down stigmas.

“This team includes everyone, we play as one, we work together, that is the best way for Unified teams.”

— Unified partner, Ukraine³²

²⁹ Dowling, S., McConkey, R., Hassan, D., & Menke, S. (2010). *Unified gives us a chance: An evaluation of Special Olympics youth unified sports programme in Europe/Eurasia*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

³⁰ Dowling, S., McConkey, R., Hassan, D., & Menke, S. (2010). *Unified gives us a chance: An evaluation of Special Olympics youth unified sports programme in Europe/Eurasia*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.

³¹ Nanavati, J. & Haas, K. (2015). *Unified Sports Evaluation*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics International.

³² Dowling, S., McConkey, R., Hassan, D., & Menke, S. (2010). *Unified gives us a chance: An evaluation of Special Olympics youth unified sports programme in Europe/Eurasia*. Washington, DC: Special Olympics, Inc.