

The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is a national longitudinal study directed by Tufts University. From 2003 through 2008 over 6,000 youth from 41 states participated in the study, which includes questions around a wide variety of topics, such as academic engagement, family and peer relationships, health behaviors, neighborhood indicators, participation in youth programs, personal values, goals, time use, pubertal changes, and risk behaviors. In 2008, California participated in the 4HSPYD for the first time, in the study's sixth wave.

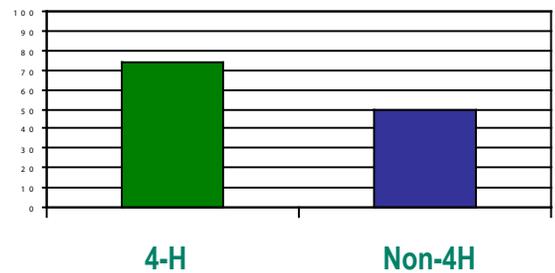
A total of 285 youth from California ages 13-18 from 14 counties participated in the Wave 6 survey. About 70 percent of the California respondents were current 4-H members. Results from this study demonstrate the importance of the 4-H program in impacting indicators of positive youth development.

The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development included questions about civic engagement, including community participation as well as political involvement. Results showed that 4-H youth were more civically engaged than their non-4-H member counterparts.

Key Findings

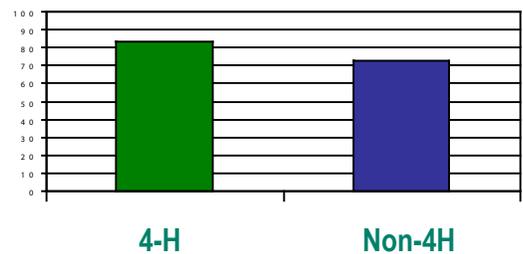
Most 4-H youth reported participating in voluntary community service that was not required by their schools. 4-H youth were significantly more likely than non-4-H youth to report volunteering.

Volunteering



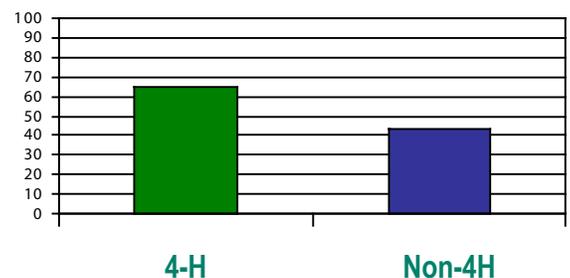
About 84 percent of 4-H youth and 73 percent of non-4-H youth felt it was "quite important" or "extremely important" to help make the world a better place in which to live. This difference was statistically significant.

Helping improve the world



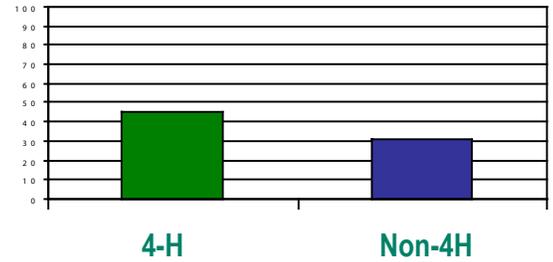
Most 4-H youth feel empowered to make a difference. Almost two-thirds of youth in 4-H believe they can make a difference in their communities. This number was significantly lower for young people who were not in 4-H.

I can make a difference in my community



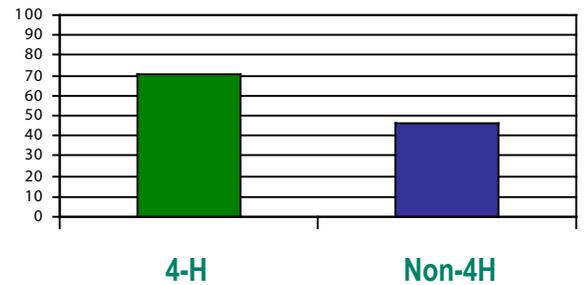
4-H members were more likely than other youth to feel a sense of self-efficacy around the political system. About 45 percent felt that people like themselves and their families could influence political decisions, compared with 31 percent of non-4-H youth. Most 4-H youth (56 percent) reported that they talk to their parents about politics, compared with 37 percent of non-4-H youth.

People like me...can influence political decisions



Virtually all measures of civic engagement were higher among 4-H youth than among other young people. 4-H youth were significantly more likely than non-4-H youth to feel they could express their views in front of a group; write an opinion letter to a local newspaper; call someone they didn't know on the phone to get help with a problem; contact an elected official about a problem; sign a petition; or contact or visit someone in government who represents their community.

I can express my views in front of a group of people



The reason for these differences was not due to disparities between 4-H and other youth in their likelihood of keeping up with current events.

4-H youth were about equally likely as other youth to report accessing media for information about current events, such as watching local or national news on television, reading about news on the internet, reading the newspaper, or listening to news on the radio.

Summary Fact Sheet by **Katherine Heck** of the 4-H Center for Youth Development, University of California, Davis.



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