



Florida 4-H Develops Positive and Productive Youth

University of Florida 4-H Youth Development



**Florida 4-H Youth
Members by
Delivery Methods
in 2004-05.**

**Organized 4-H
Clubs
24,599 youth
1404 club groups**

**Overnight
Camping
2,870 youth**

**After-School
Program
(not clubs)
2375 youth
114 sites**

**Classroom
Enrichment
226, 207 youth**

 UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA
IFAS EXTENSION

2005 Extension 4-H Evaluation Study

4-H Youth Development uses experiential, research-based educational opportunities that help youth become competent, caring, confident, connected, and contributing citizens of character. Research indicates that regular participation in extracurricular activities during adolescence can lead to long-term quality of life payoffs. Recent studies indicate that *youth spending time in positive youth programs, such as 4-H, are less likely to become involved in high risk behaviors, have higher school attendance and grades, better conflict management practices and better work habits.*

Additional research studies have shown that *when young people participate in safe, structured, supervised and healthy activities, they are less likely to become involved in the high-risk, unhealthy behaviors that can delay or derail positive development, and more likely to obtain a broad range of competencies.* Involved youth are *also more likely as adults to vote in national and local elections, and to volunteer in community and religious organizations, true civic engagement.*

Study Goals:

A 2005 statewide evaluation survey provides supporting data of youth and adult views on three focus areas of 4-H program effectiveness:

- Creating high quality community based learning environments for youth,
- Creating caring adult support systems for youth, and
- Developing life and career skills through subject-matter topics.

Study Methodology:

All Florida counties were invited to participate with a goal of at least 30 youth /30 adult respondents from each county. Study findings are being aggregated statewide. Counties that have sufficient respondents will be provided complete analysis of their groups. This summary is of the data received between August and December, 2005.

“Florida 4-H was perhaps one of the earliest influences on my life. It taught me at that early age to exercise my head, heart, hands and health for the betterment of myself and the world around me.”
—Bob Graham

Florida 4-H Develops Positive and Productive Youth

Positive youth development through University of Florida 4-H Programs provide opportunities for youth to feel safe, secure, respected, intellectually stimulated, and engaged in their community. 4-H youth development occurs from an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes (Figure 1) for young people by providing opportunities, relationships, and support.

In a 2005 survey of 4-H, 628 youth and 535 adult volunteers responded to an evaluation of outcomes, skills and experiences. Youth generally indicated that 4-H provided a supportive environment with effective adult leaders (Table 1). According to youth, 4-H provides a safe for learning and growing (84% *most to all the time*), as well as providing supportive environments where youth feel accepted (83% *most to all the time*). Comparatively, ninety-four percent of adult volunteers felt that 4-H provided safe and supportive environments. Youth reported that adult leaders help their club succeed (92% *most to all the time*). In addition, according to respondents, 4-H involves youth from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds (72-79% *most to all the time*). Overall, eighty-one percent of youth report that 4-H has made a positive difference in their lives, while 91% of the adults perceived that it had made a difference.

Figure 1. Outcomes — 4-H Youth :

• are physically and emotionally safe;
• develop and maintain positive relationships
• develop a sense of belonging, in an inclusive environment;
• develop personal competencies for self-reliance, independence and autonomy;
• grow and contribute as active citizens through service and leadership; and
• develop marketable, productive skills and competencies for work and family life.

How Effective has 4-H Been at Supporting Youth in the County?

Generally, youth reported they felt 4-H was effective in their community and that 4-H was achieving its goals. Regarding project support (Table 1), the majority of youth felt (*most to all the time*) that (a) 4-H projects met their interests (77%), (b) project material helped them gain new knowledge and skills (75%), (c) record-keeping skills were learned through 4-H projects (73%). Youth also felt 4-H was effective in providing events and activities to support their learning beyond their individual project work. For example, youth reported that *most to all the time* that (a) 4-H newsletters were useful for informing them of events (78%), (b) 4-H provides training events that support their project work (73%) and (c) 4-H competitions, events and fairs are useful places to learn (81%). Adults consistently rated 4-H with higher levels of support with the exception of training events provided by the county.

Table 1. Moderate to High Level of Responses by Youth

	Youth Results N=628*		Volunteer Results N=535*	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Youth Perceptions of Club Environment				
4-H provides a safe place for learning and growing	523	84%	501	94%
4-H clubs are supportive environments where I feel accepted	515	83%	502	94%
4-H involves youth from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds	448	72%	422	79%
4-H has made a positive difference in my life	504	81%	482	91%
Youth Response to Program Effectiveness				
4-H offers projects to meet my interests	479	77%	502	94%
4-H project materials I receive help me gain new knowledge and skills	471	75%	487	81%
4-H provides me training events to support my project work	454	73%	395	74%
4-H newsletters are useful for informing me of events.	476	78%	465	88%
4-H competitions, events or fairs are useful places to learn	539	87%	479	90%
4-H teaches valuable recordkeeping skills through project work	462	75%	477	90%

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

Building Life Skills in Youth

The development of marketable and productive skills for work and family life has been cited by researchers as a major outcome for positive youth development. Learning to be productive, do well in school, develop positive outside interests and acquire basic life skills for work and family life is a basic transition from youth to adulthood. Studies indicate that the more internal assets and life skills youth build the more likely they are to grow up healthy, confident and responsible and less likely to become involved in risky behaviors. Active participation in 4-H helps youth develop their assets and life skills.



4-H utilizes a variety of projects to engage youth in areas of interests. Statewide, an average of 3 projects are completed by 4-H members annually. These projects not only guide youth to acquire new work and family life skills but become the "vehicle" through which to maximize youth development. In 4-H project learning experiences, youth become engaged with other adults, engage in self-directed learning, set goals, make independent choices and decisions, and gain a sense of mastery and accomplishment from their experiences.

4-H Life Skill Outcomes

Florida 4-H programs targets the youth development life skills in Figure 2 as outcomes for young people. In the 2005 survey, 628 4-H'ers responded to the impact on life skills achieved from their 4-H experiences. Likewise, 535 volunteers evaluated what they thought the skill level youth attained from 4-H. How effective has 4-H been in helping youth develop skills? Here is a summary of the skills acquired through 4-H experiences.

Communication Skills

Providing youth experiences to interact within groups, among peers and providing intentional opportunities for youth to do public speaking is a cornerstone of 4-H programs. Helping youth develop core competencies dealing with interpersonal communication and public presentation skills has been a well established outcome of 4-H youth programs. Skills in communication (Table 2) were measured by four questions. Results of youth were: (a) 58% learn skills useful in dealing with conflicts, (b) 76% learn better communication skills, (c) 73% learn public speaking skills, and (d) 77% gain self-confidence, especially when in groups. On average within the state, youth reported they learned communication skills most of the time in 4-H. Adult perceptions of the skills presented in Table 2 for comparison.

Relationship Skills

The capacity of youth to exhibit social skills necessary for developing or maintaining positive relationships with others was measured with five questions. The percent of youth that responded with high to moderate ratings of these five relationship skills as a result of 4-H were: (a) 80% develop close relationships with others in 4-H, (b) 76% learn relationship skill building processes, (c) 79% learn to trust others and be trustworthy, (d) 82% value and care about others' feelings, and (e) 83% make and keep friends. Table 2 presents the summary of how 4-H members are doing on gaining these skills as a result of their 4-H experiences compared to adult volunteer perceptions.



Figure 2. Life Skill Outcomes — 4-H Youth Can:

- Effectively communicate with others
- Develop and maintain positive relationships with others
- Process information to make effective decisions and positive choices.
- Lead and contribute to others (peers, family, community).
- Demonstrate marketable/productive skills for work and family life.

Decision-Making and Ability to Make Positive Choices

The Florida 4-H Program provides youth the experiences to learn some core competencies that prepare them for life. Programs provide youth the opportunities to:

- learn and practice self-responsibility, plan, organize and set goals for themselves;
- recognize when and how to make informed decisions and implement decisions to solve a problem;
- to make positive choices about friends as well as risky behaviors; and
- social responsibility to feel accountable and in control of their lives.



Eight items represented these core competencies resulting in decision-making skills of youth. (Table 2). The majority of youth responded that they could perform these skills *most to all the time* with means ranging from 4 to a high of 5 on the 5-point scale. Overall, 70% have learned to organize their time and resources; 78% reported learning decision-making; 76% are saying “no” to risky behaviors and 84% feel they are responsible for their own actions. Adult volunteer ratings of these skills are summarized in Table 2 for comparison.

Leading and Serving Others

The development of leadership and citizenship life skills are very important aspects of 4-H that helps young people gain independence and a sense of worth. The percent of 4-H’ers rating moderate to high level of skills were: (a) 78% feeling useful and important, (b) 74% learning to become a leader among their peers, (c) 77% learning to value service to their community and (d) 71% being engaged in their own club program planning. By comparison, adult volunteers rated youth outcomes for leading and serving others slightly higher across all indicators.

Other Life Skill Findings

The survey did assess whether youth were obtaining new knowledge and skills as well as exposure to future career choices as a result of their 4-H experiences. 490 or 80% of youth reported they were learning new knowledge and skills and 67% (n=400) reported moderate to higher levels of career development choices as a result of 4-H. In addition, 78% (n=479) reported feeling a sense of belonging and 85% (n=522) reported an interest in trying new things. In terms of independence, 84% (n=481) of youth reported that they were learning to do things on their own and 83% (504) were learning to make their own decisions as a result of their involvement in 4-H. Lastly, 83% (n=493) of youth reported exploring personal interests in 4-H and 83% (n=499) reported the opportunity to make friends.



Table 2. Moderate to High Levels of Youth Life Skills

	Youth Perception of Skills N=628*		Adult Volunteer Perception of Skills N=535*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Communication Skills				
General communication	472	76%	471	89%
Conflict resolution	359	58%	350	67%
Public presentation	452	73%	455	86%
Self-confidence within groups	477	77%	463	88%
Relationship Skills				
Developed close relationships with others in 4-H	499	80%	490	92%
Developed relationship building skills	470	76%	452	85%
Learned to trust others and be trustworthy	488	79%	443	84%
Learned to care about others feelings	506	82%	420	80%
Learned to make and keep friends	518	83%	464	88%
Decision-Making Skills				
Learning to organize my time & resources	438	70%	416	79%
Good at planning ahead	379	62%	394	76%
Learning to set and reach goals	491	79%	466	89%
Learning to make decisions for myself	485	78%	433	82%
Learning to think through decisions before acting	407	66%	356	68%
Saying “no” to risky behaviors	468	76%	393	75%
Positive choices of friends	459	74%	402	77%
Responsible for my own actions	519	84%	440	84%
Skills and Opportunities to Lead and Serve Others				
In 4-H I:				
Feel useful and important	487	78%	472	89%
Am learning to be a leader among my peers	452	74%	456	87%
Am learning to value service to my community	475	77%	473	90%
Am involved in planning activities for my club.	429	71%	N/A	N/A

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages

Volunteer Effectiveness for Mentoring and Supporting Youth Needs

Studies confirm the value of a significant other adult in the life of a child. The ability of 4-H Programs to provide safe and secure environments is dependent upon the management and quality of trained staff of volunteers. Likewise, other youth outcomes like a sense of belonging and inclusive and supportive environments are related to the effectiveness of volunteers/ relationships and interactions with youth.



Results of the 2005 survey of youth and adult volunteers supporting 4-H clubs revealed an assessment of the effectiveness of volunteers in two areas: 1) Caring and supportive environments through personal support and mentoring by meeting individual youth's needs and 2) providing a safe and secure environment for youth.

Volunteers Create Caring & Supportive Environments For Youth

Overall, youth rated 4-H clubs volunteers as very effective at individual mentoring and support (Table 3). Eighty-three percent of the youth reported that volunteers listen to them *most to all the time*.; 81% of the youth responded that volunteers talk and spend time with them when they have problems; 83% feel that the volunteers make them feel special and important as well as set high expectations and 84% report that their volunteers encourage them to take leadership roles and recognize them for accomplishments. Table 3 presents the adults perceptions of how they manage these tasks for comparison.

Volunteer Provide Safe and Secure Environments

Volunteer Screening is an established best practice for safe 4-H youth programs. Establishing consistent screening and risk management policies to provide a sense of safety and security among youth has been a key activity in 2005. Training was provided for youth faculty and volunteers to develop positive relationships and effectively manage youth behaviors within group settings.

Results of a 2005 evaluation survey of 628 4-H club youth and 535 adult club volunteers measuring the impact of volunteer effectiveness of youth safety and security revealed these findings. Overall, youth rated 4-H Club volunteers as very effective at managing youth relationships and behavior within groups. Differences between how youth and adult view their effectiveness can be viewed in Table 3. Overall, 85% of the youth reported volunteers kept youth from bullying each other; 84% most or always managed conflicts among youth; and 90% made sure 4-H events and activities were safe. The two lowest rated areas were keeping youth from hurting each others' feelings (72%) and understanding/relating with youth from different backgrounds or culture (75%).

Table 3. Moderate to High Levels of Volunteer Leader Mentoring & Support of Youth Needs

	Youth Perceptions N=628*		Volunteer Perceptions N=535*	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Listens to me and my club members.	517	86%	474	91%
Talks with me or other members when we have a problem.	489	81%	453	87%
Helps me feel like I belong to a special group.	500	83%	480	93%
Helps me feel that I am important.	498	83%	488	94%
Lets me know that he/she have high expectations of me.	502	83%	482	93%
Helps me with goal setting, decision-making, and record keeping.	492	82%	454	87%
Encourages me to take leadership roles and helping me succeed.	504	84%	485	93%
Recognizes me for my accomplishments	506	84%	487	94%
Volunteer Leader Youth Relationships and Behavior Management				
Keeps youth from hurting others feelings	493	72%	442	85%
Keeps youth from bullying each other	512	85%	442	85%
Manages conflict between youth	503	84%	434	84%
Makes sure that 4-H activities are safe	541	90%	495	95%
Makes sure that youth help plan and lead 4-H meetings and activities.	514	86%	472	91%
Provides fun, interesting activities that we can do.	504	84%	473	91%
Understands a "youth" point of view.	474	78%	453	87%
Relates well to youth from a different culture/background	452	75%	409	79%
Makes sure we act appropriately during 4-H meetings, events and activities.	525	87%	474	91%

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

4-H Youth Participation Experiences

The level of youth participation in 4-H activities was measured by three items. Ranging from very low (1) to very high (5), the average response from youth surveyed was that they had a high level of participation (mean 4.1) when compared to other 4-Hers. 4-H youth participation was also measured by whether or not they participated in certain types of 4-H experiences (Table 4). While the evaluation targeted those youth in 4-H clubs, it is possible for club members to participate in other 4-H learning experiences delivered in the classroom, through residential or day camps or special interest classes conducted in the county. Likewise, club members are provided the opportunity to participate in varied county, district, state or national competitive/noncompetitive events. Previous research has shown that the more involved youth are in 4-H over time and through various levels of opportunities, the greater skill outcomes. The majority of youth participated in 4-H clubs and county events. Adult volunteers were asked to report about youth participation for the majority of their club members. They reported very similar patterns of participation for youth.

Table 4. Self-Reported Youth Participation in Multiple Levels of 4-H Experiences

4-H Activities	State Youth Results N=628*				State Adult Volunteer Results N=535*			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
4-H Clubs	555	92%	47	8%	476	92%	41	8%
Classroom project(s)	223	37%	379	63%	187	36%	330	64%
4-H Day Camp(s)	193	31%	409	68%	208	40%	309	60%
4-H Overnight Camp(s)	274	46%	327	54%	277	54%	240	46%
4-H After-school Project	142	24%	460	76%	103	20%	414	80%
County Events	440	73%	162	27%	421	81%	96	19%
District Events	271	45%	331	55%	330	64%	187	36%
State/National Events	193	32%	409	68%	264	51%	253	49%

Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

Youth were also reported *how often* they attended or participated in certain 4-H related activities (Table 5). Youth reported that they attended their 4-H club meetings the most regularly (75%). Approximately one-third (36%) of youth never attended county council meetings and over half (53%) never attended district council meetings.

Table 5: Level of Youth Participation in 4-H Experiences

How often do you...	State Youth Results N=628*											
	Never		Very Seldom		Seldom		Regularly		Very Regularly		Not Offered	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Attend 4-H Club meetings	4	0.7%	13	2.2%	18	3.0%	106	17.9%	441	75%	9	2%
Attend County Council Meetings	204	36%	67	12%	57	10%	57	10%	134	24%	44	8%
Attend District Council meetings	291	53%	51	9%	48	9%	36	7%	73	13%	55	10%
Participate in planning 4-H events and activities	73	13%	37	7%	94	17%	138	24%	204	36%	22	4%
Participate in community service activities	60	11%	51	9%	87	15%	155	27%	194	34%	19	3%
Participate in County Awards Nights	101	18%	29	5%	46	8%	131	23%	228	41%	26	5%

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

Leadership Experiences

The level of youth participation is also measured by the frequency in which they assumed leadership roles. The majority of youth assuming leadership roles were club officers (Table 6). A large percent of youth respondents had not had leadership roles as county council officers, district/state officers, youth/adult teaching teams, camp counselors, school or other youth leader, or as a part of community committees.

Table 6. Self-Reported Youth Leadership Roles

	State Youth Results N=628*			
	Yes		No	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Club Committees	243	40%	358	60%
Club Officer	352	59%	249	41%
County Council Officer	120	20%	481	80%
District/State Officer	65	11%	536	85%
Youth/Adult Teaching Team	68	11%	533	89%
Camp Counselor	103	17%	498	83%
School/other Youth Leader	104	17%	493	83%
Community Committees	86	14%	511	86%

Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

Demographics of Youth Respondents

The average number of years that youth have been enrolled in 4-H is five, with the average age of youth being thirteen. Approximately 36% of youth respondents were male and 64% female. The majority youth attended public school and were of Caucasian ethnicity (79%). In addition, 41% of youth respondents lived in a rural community, followed by small towns (27%). The demographics of youth respondents are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Demographics of the Youth Respondents

Do you attend...	State Youth Results N=628*	
	Number	Percent
Public School	330	58%
Private School	55	10%
Home School	184	32%
Ethnicity	Number	Percent
Caucasian	445	79%
African-American	15	3%
Hispanic	32	6%
Asian	2	0.4%
Other	14	3%
Residence	Number	Percent
Rural	236	41%
Small town	152	27%
Urban area	183	32%

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

4-H Adult Volunteer Participation

The participation of 4-H adult volunteers was measured by how their participation compared to other leaders in their county. When compared to other leaders in their county, volunteers indicated they had a high level of participation on a scale of very low (1) to very high (5), with an average of 4. In addition, adult volunteers were asked to indicate what volunteer roles they had (Table 8). The majority of respondents participated in club work, teaching youth (beyond club), chaperoning (beyond club), and event planning (beyond club). The most popular volunteer role included club work and the least was policy making (beyond club).

Table 8. Self-Reported Adult Volunteer Roles

	State Adult Results N=535*			
	Yes		No	
My volunteer roles have included:	No.	#	No.	#
Club work	474	92%	42	8%
Teaching youth (beyond club)	312	61%	204	40%
Chaperoning (beyond club)	299	58%	217	42%
Coaching/Advising (beyond club)	214	42%	302	59%
Event Planning (beyond club)	286	55%	230	45%
Policy Making (beyond club)	139	27%	377	73%

Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

In addition, adult volunteers were also asked to indicate how many times they have attended certain 4-H activities (Table 9). For example, more volunteers attended county leader training (mean 3.76) than the other formats; followed by participating in county/state camp (mean 2.63); state/national events (mean 2.50); Congress/LEG (mean 2.46); project training (mean 2.24); and multi-county/district events (mean 2.13).

Table 9. Level of Adult Volunteer Participation in 4-H Experiences

	State Adult Volunteer Results N=535*											
	One Time		Two Times		Three Times		Four Times		Five Times		Never	
How many times have you attended...	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
County Leader Training	108	26%	55	13%	51	12%	46	11%	98	23%	66	16%
Project Training	71	19%	69	18%	50	13%	40	10%	48	13%	106	28%
Multi-County/District Events	64	16%	47	12%	59	14%	45	11%	113	28%	81	20%
Congress/LEG	102	31%	16	5%	19	6%	10	3%	31	9%	155	47%
County/State Camp	100	28%	31	9%	19	5%	18	5%	51	14%	137	39%
State/National Events	107	29%	30	8%	22	6%	20	6%	54	15%	133	36%

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.

Demographics of Adult Volunteer Respondents

The average number of years that adult respondents had been a 4-H volunteer is 6 years and their average age is 43 years. Approximately 86% of respondents were female and 14% were male. The majority of respondents were Caucasian (88%), followed by African-American (5%). Adult volunteers were primarily from rural communities (46%) or urban areas (34%). The demographics of adult volunteer respondents can be found in Table 10.

Table 10. Demographics of the Adult Respondents

Ethnicity	State Adult Volunteer Results N=535*	
	Number	Percent
Caucasian	440	88%
African-American	23	5%
Hispanic	19	4%
Asian	2	0.4%
Other	14	3%
Residence	Number	Percent
Rural	217	46%
Small town	95	20%
Urban area	162	34%

*Missing data to individual items accounts for variations in reported numbers and percentages.