Over the past 20 years, research commissioned by National 4-H Council and conducted by Dr. Richard M. Lerner and his research team at the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development at Tufts University shows that 4-H contributes to the positive development of young people — with lasting effects that continue into adulthood.

Building on the decade-long original study conducted between 2002 and 2012, Dr. Lerner and his research team recently completed two additional studies between 2020 and 2023.

Collectively, this research reveals the impact of 4-H and underscores its positive and enduring influence on youth, ensuring they are ready for the journey of life.

**ORIGINAL STUDY**

The original 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development conducted from 2002 to 2012 across multiple waves of data collection, reveals that, compared to their peers, 4-H members were:

- **nearly 4X more likely to make a positive contribution to their communities**
- **2X more likely to participate in out-of-school-time science programs**
- **2X more likely to make healthier choices**

**REPLICATION STUDY**

The Replication Study of Positive Youth Development, conducted with 346 youth across three waves of data collection, reveals that 4-H continues to have a strong impact. Youth reported high levels of positive youth development, including *overall well-being, a desire to contribute to others, a sense of purpose and hope for the future, strong relationship skills, good self-regulation and active school engagement*. Findings show the positive impact that 4-H continues to have, particularly as youth navigate significant mental health and other challenges.

Most notably, when compared to non-4-H youth, participants in the Replication Study were:

- **2X more likely to report feeling competent**
- **2X more likely to feel positive about their wellbeing**
The Reconnection Study, one of the first investigations into the long-term effects of 4-H, was conducted with 332 young adults who were part of the original study. Results show that 4-H significantly influenced the confidence, relationship and leadership skills of the 4-H alums as they enter adulthood. They also reported having a strong sense of purpose, hope for the future, and a desire to give back through community service.

When compared to young adults from the original study who did not participate in 4-H, 4-H alums were:

- 3X more likely to participate in community service
- 2X more likely to report living life with intentionality & purpose
- 2X more likely to have a goal of being a leader

**ESTABLISHING IMPACT!**

How do we ensure youth **thrive** and are ready for life?

Youth impact is dependent on creating intentional, high-quality 4-H programs that promote positive youth development (PYD). Based on the Thriving Model, the 4-H PYD Academy equips 4-H professionals with the essential knowledge and skills to plan, implement, and evaluate high-quality, impactful youth development programs.

Academy offerings include in-depth training in learning and applied PYD theory, program development and evaluation. Short, one-day intensive Academies develop skills in focused areas, like volunteer development and STEM programming.

More information about the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development and the Replication and Reconnection studies can be found at: [4-h.org/about/research/4-h-impact](4-h.org/about/research/4-h-impact)

More information about the 4-H PYD Academy and upcoming academy opportunities can be found at: [pyd-academy.extension.org](pyd-academy.extension.org)