Multi-State 4-H Youth Retention Study: Qualitative & Quantitative Findings

Enrollment in 4-H is declining nationwide. The 4-H Youth Retention Study explores first-year experiences in 4-H from both member and adult perspectives. This multi-state research project seeks to understand why youth and families join and stay in the program. This poster provides an overview of the study’s qualitative and quantitative findings. Specifically, reasons for joining 4-H, the best part of 4-H, and reasons for leaving 4-H.

Methods

- Over four years (2015-2019), data were collected from eight states to understand youth retention in 4-H
- Data were collected from 4,371 youth 4,823 adults
- Online surveys were sent to 4-H members and parents (guardians) after their 1st year in 4-H
- Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected
- Survey details are described in Lewis et al. (2018)

Implications and Key Points

- Understanding why youth join 4-H, the best parts of 4-H, and reasons for leaving 4-H can be useful to 4-H staff in identifying ways to retain members.
- Utilize results to develop resources and methods to better orient new families into the program and to develop strategic plans and materials to improve organizational practices and communication among leaders, families, and staff within the program.

Findings

**Why Youth Leave? (Quantitative Data)**

*The top four reasons that youth indicated they did not continue in 4-H were:*

- Didn’t feel connected to other youth in the club (20%)
- Don’t have time for 4-H because of other activities (18%)
- Didn’t know when club or project met (13%)
- Didn’t feel welcome (9%)

**Why Youth Leave? (Qualitative Data)**

*The top three reasons that youth and adults indicated they did not continue in 4-H were:*

- Lost Interest
- Didn’t feel connected to other youth in the club
- Didn’t have time for 4-H because of other activities

**What is the Best Part of 4-H?**

Youth and Adults BOTH identified their top three reasons as:

- To try new things
  *youth-56%  *adults-61%
- To have fun
  *youth-45%  *adults-47%
- Skill building
  *youth-32%  *adults-40%
- Personal growth
  *youth-31%  *adults 40%
- Family or personal influences
  *youth-30%  *adults-27%
- To make friends
  *youth-28%  *adults-29%

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**To learn more about the study visit:**
http://ucanr.edu/4-hyouthretentionstudy

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Keeping Members in 4-H: A Look at Why They Join

In Loving Memory of Jeannette Rea Keywood