

## ACTIVE 4-H'ERS EXCEL!

New findings from a national study have an important message for parents, community leaders, and educators: Active 4-H members excel in leadership and have higher educational goals. In addition, they report fewer unhealthy behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and other drug use.

“The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development has gathered important information from thousands of adolescents, not just 4-H members. As a result, we know more about the kinds of experiences and support that all young people need to be healthy and thrive,” said Dr. Ina Linville, Director of the University of Missouri 4-H Center for Youth Development.

Linville says that the 4-H Study has surveyed 6,120 adolescents and 3,084 parents from 41 states in its first six years. Since joining the study in 2007, 502 Missouri youth at 26 sites around the state have been surveyed. According to Dr. Jo Turner, 4-H Study director in Missouri, the Missouri students are evenly divided between 4-H and non-4-H participants. Students are in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades.

“In our 2007 and 2008 data, we found significant differences between active 4-H participants and non-4-H'ers, particularly for older teens,” said Turner. “Most importantly, active 4-H'ers in high school report more leadership experiences and are more likely to expect to attend college. Plus, they have lower scores on unhealthy behaviors. Clearly, 4-H is a good investment for kids, parents, and civic leaders.” Turner said that for this study, active 4-H participation was defined as participating in a 4-H activity at least twice a month.

According to Linville and Turner, the Missouri results confirm the national findings. The national study is following young people over time to track patterns of growth and change. For youth who had participated in 4-H at some point during 5-9<sup>th</sup> grades, researchers report that 4-H Youth were 2.5 times more likely to be at highest levels of Contribution. Contribution is a measure of volunteering and service activities. Further, 4-H youth were 1.7 times more likely to report they expected to go to college.

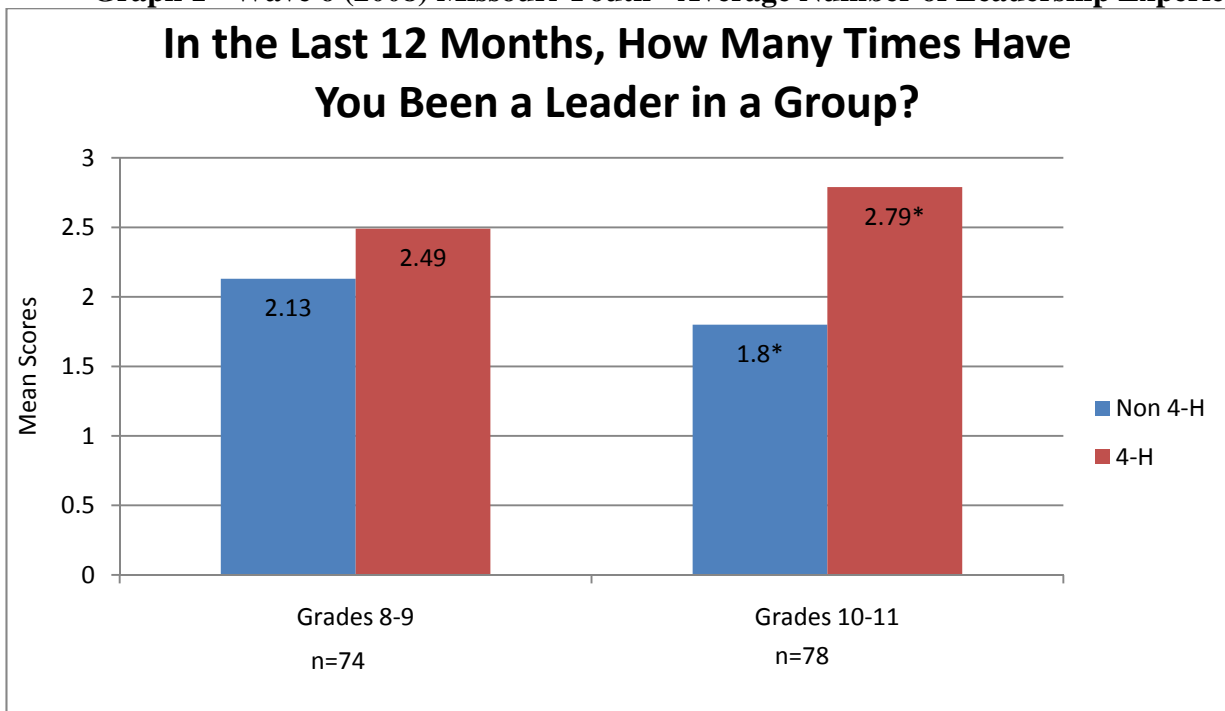
In addition, the 2008 national results show that 4-H'ers have more positive attitudes toward careers in the sciences, engineering, or technology-related fields. In addition, young women in 4-H are more involved with and positive about the sciences. Similarly, Missouri 4-H'er girls were more likely to an interest in scientific careers after high school “Since women are typically under-represented in the sciences, it is exciting to see 4-H girls breaking that stereotype,” said Turner.

The national 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development is funded by National 4-H Council and lead by researchers at Tufts University. The University of Missouri-MU Extension, Lincoln University, and other land-grant universities are partners in the research. Plans are to continue surveying these youth through high school and into college. After the first five years, Dr. Richard Lerner, director of the national study concluded, “The true value of 4-H programs comes not from short-term results or event the effects over a few years. It comes from the programs' influence on lifelong pathways of development.”

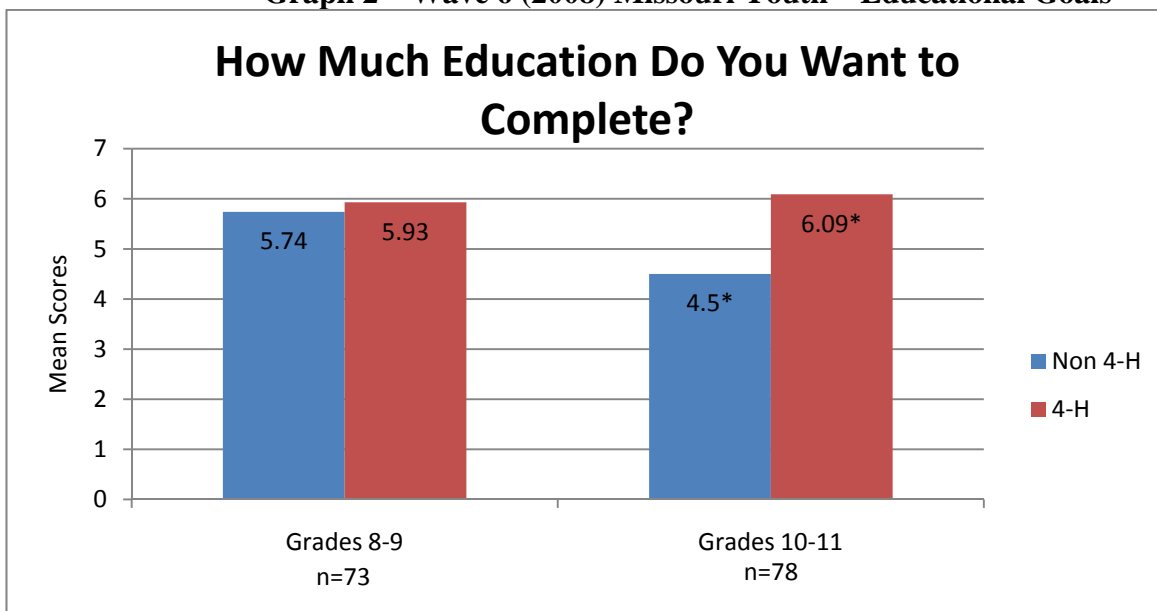
For more information on the 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development, visit:

<http://mo4h.missouri.edu/resources/evaluation/pydstudy.htm>

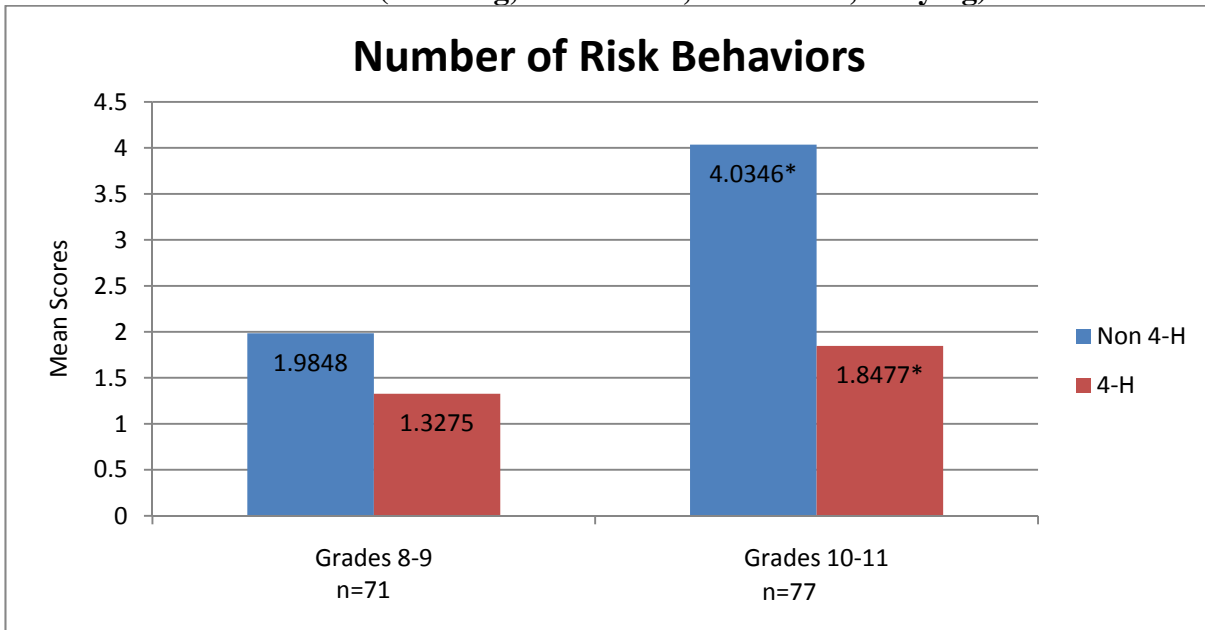
**Graph 1 - Wave 6 (2008) Missouri Youth - Average Number of Leadership Experiences**



**Graph 2 – Wave 6 (2008) Missouri Youth – Educational Goals**



**Graph 3 - Wave 6 (2008) Missouri Youth – Average Number of Risk Behaviors Reported (Smoking, tobacco use, alcohol use, bullying)**



**Graph 4– Wave 6 Missouri Youth – Girls: Science Courses after High School**

