



WASHINGTON STATE  
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION  
Kitsap County



# 4-H Youth Development

# 2025

## THE ISSUE

Youth in Kitsap County are facing complex and overlapping challenges—especially around mental health, safety, and connection to trusted adults. Healthy Youth Survey results continue to show that many students are struggling with depressive feelings and suicidal thoughts.

The 2023 Healthy Youth Survey showed that in Kitsap County the ongoing concerns included:

- More than one in three students reported persistent depressive feelings.
- Nearly one in five reported having contemplated suicide.
- Responses show that Kitsap has a continued need for support of youth who experience barriers to support (including LGBTQ+ youth and students with disabilities).

This shows the continued need for programs to build a sense of belonging, protective factors, trusted adult relationships, and practical life skills. 4-H is a program that provides all of those skills and helps young people thrive.

## THE RESPONSE

Kitsap County 4-H strengthens youths resilience, confidence and connection to their community through hands-on learning, supportive adult relationships, and building real life skills.

While 4-H began in 1902 with roots in agriculture, today it supports youth across a wide variety of projects including leadership, arts, robotics, civic government, animal husbandry, and public speaking.

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 320 Kitsap 4-H Club Members
- 417 Total youth participating in 4-H Activities
- 137 Certified Adult Volunteers
- 57 Youth participating in a Leadership project
- 47 Youth participating in Archery

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***"In 4-H, we don't just teach skills. We build confidence, character, and community."***

***-Unknown***

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## THE RESPONSE *continued*

At the heart, 4-H is all about the relationship between youth and certified adult volunteers who serve as a consistent, positive role model for youth. With caring adults and a structured program environment, youth build protective factors including goal setting, responsibility, coping strategies, decision making skills, and being a team player.



Youth choose projects that match their interests—whether animal science, archery, robotics, art, or public speaking—and practice real-world skills including planning, record keeping, budgeting, teamwork, and communication until they master the skills necessary.

## THE IMPACTS

Kitsap County 4-H delivers measurable and meaningful outcomes for youth and adults:

- Youth build leadership, communication, and collaboration skills through projects, demonstrations, and service. They grow confidence by setting goals, practicing skills over time, and sharing what they learn.
- 4-H creates supportive peer groups and connects youth with caring adults.
- Older youth mentor younger members, strengthening a culture of peer support and giving teens authentic leadership practice.
- Youth contribute through service and outreach, sharing skills and accomplishments.
- Adult volunteers receive training and support in positive youth development and safe programs.

4-H shows that youth gain skills, confidence and a sense of community purpose when they feel valued and supported.