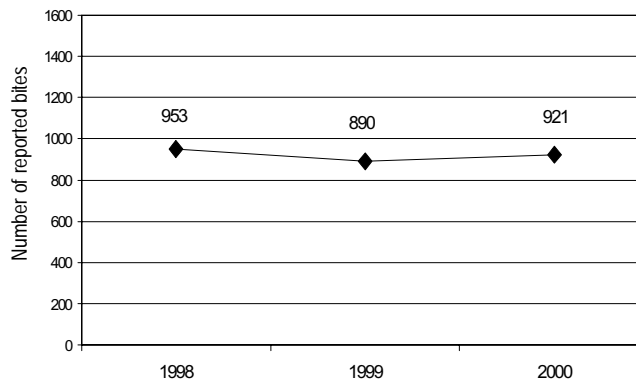


Focus on Environmental Health

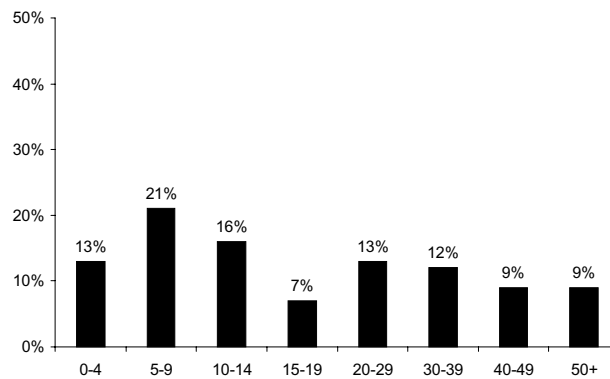
The Community HealthWatch report cards are developed by the Kent County Health Department to present health information that is being monitored by the Kent County community. This report card focuses on the animal control aspect of environmental health, specifically injuries from dog bites. Dog bite injuries can cause physical and emotional harm to the victim, and may also result in civil or criminal liability for the dog's owner. Children have the highest risk of injury or death from dog bites. The Kent County Animal Shelter, a division of the Health Department, enforces County animal control regulations, and provides a bite prevention program for school children, but dog owners have a vital responsibility to control, confine, and neuter their dogs to reduce the likelihood of the animal biting.

Reported Dog Bites, 1998-2000



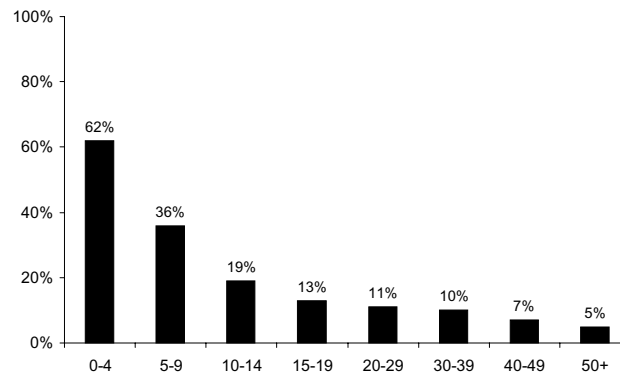
The number of **persons reporting being bitten by dogs** has remained relatively stable in Kent County during the last three years. It is likely, however, that these numbers are lower than the actual number of dog bites resulting in injuries; Animal Control authorities believe many dog bites are not reported to the Health Department, making the true incidence difficult to measure.

Dog Bites by Age of Victim



Although **children 0-14 years of age** make up only 24% of the Kent County population they **represent 50% of dog bite victims**. From 1998-2000 children ages 5-9 accounted for the largest percentage (21%) of dog bite victims. In addition, data on dog bite victims ages 0-4 shows that the most frequent (62%) **locations of dog bite injury** are the head and neck -- areas particularly susceptible to critical injury.

Bites on Head or Neck by Age of Victim



While strict enforcement of Kent County animal control regulations helps reduce the number of stray and unattended dogs, the Animal Shelter also teaches children basic animal safety and bite prevention techniques. **Dog owners and parents of young children must monitor both pet and child behaviors to reduce the risk of potential bite situations** and ensure the safety of families and their pets. In addition, neutering dogs helps reduce aggressive tendencies that may lead dogs to bite.