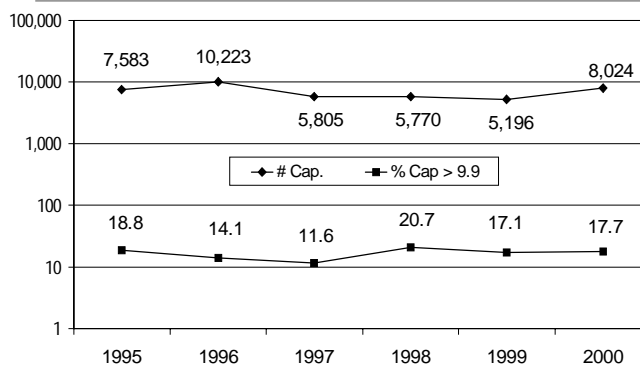


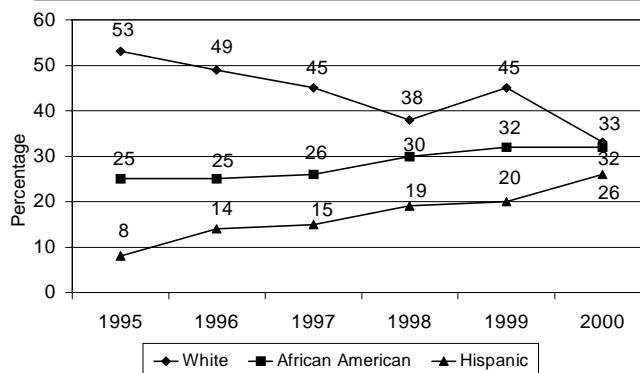
Focus on Environmental Health

The Community HealthWatch report cards are developed by the Kent County Health Department to report on the status of health priorities being monitored in the Kent County community. This report card focuses on environmental health. Lead poisoning is the leading childhood environmental health hazard. Older homes in poor condition are one of the leading sources of childhood lead exposure, though any home built prior to 1978 - the year lead-based paint was outlawed - may contain lead paint. The Health Department's Childhood Lead Primary Prevention Program seeks to identify and reduce lead hazards in the community by screening children for elevated blood lead levels, and by requiring housing-related lead hazards to be repaired. However, like many health problems, lead is more likely to affect lower-income and minority populations than communities of higher socioeconomic status.

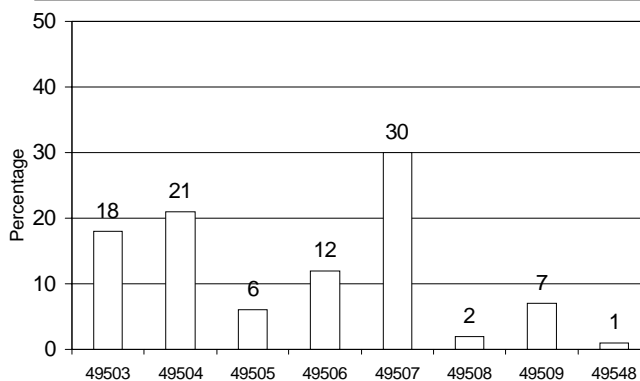
Capillary Blood Lead Tests



Lead Testing by Race/Ethnicity



Elevated Lead by Zip Code



Capillary blood lead tests are used to identify children with elevated blood lead levels. The Health Department tests children for lead as part of the WIC program. While in the past all children in WIC were tested for lead, since 1997 only children living in known high-risk areas of older housing stock receive lead testing, a practice known as targeted lead testing. Although the number of children tested for lead has fluctuated, the percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels has remained relatively stable - an average of 17% - suggesting targeted testing is effective for identifying lead-burdened children. When the population of children tested for lead is broken down by race/ethnicity and geographic area, striking disparities emerge. The over-representation of **African American** and **Hispanic** children tested for lead shows that minority populations in Kent County are more likely to live in older, high-risk housing, and are therefore more likely to be affected by lead (consistent with national data on lead poisoning). A breakdown of **blood lead testing by zip code** shows that the highest percentage of children with elevated blood lead levels live in the five zip codes that make up Grand Rapids core city neighborhoods. These graphs suggest that socioeconomic factors play a role in both health status and health disparities.