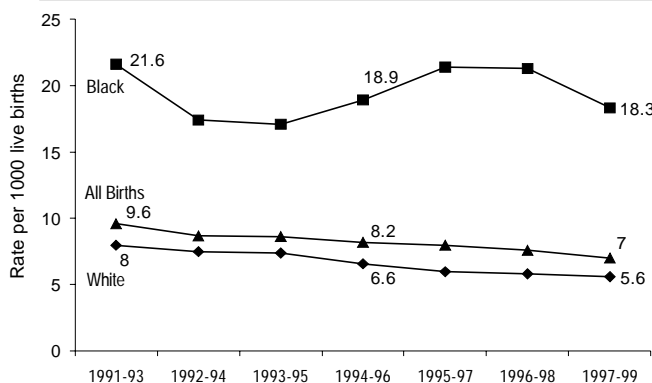


Focus on Infant Health

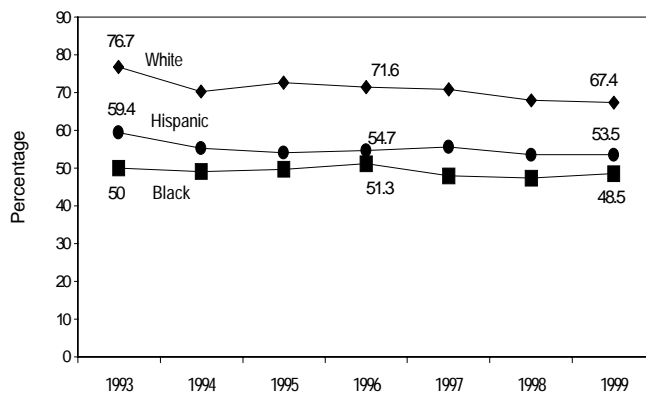
The Community HealthWatch report cards are developed by the Kent County Health Department to report on the status of health priorities being monitored in the Kent County community by Healthy Kent 2010. This report card focuses on infant health. Adequate prenatal care is associated with birth outcomes, specifically birthweight, while low birthweight is a known risk factor for infant death. In Kent County, the most recent data show that significant racial disparities in prenatal care, birthweight, and infant mortality remain. Black women are less likely to receive adequate prenatal care and more likely to have babies with low birthweight than white or Hispanic women. The goal of the Healthy Kent Infant Health Team is to eliminate racial disparities in infant health. The Infant Health Team is currently developing a community-wide prenatal assessment tool to help monitor progress toward this goal.

Infant Mortality Rate



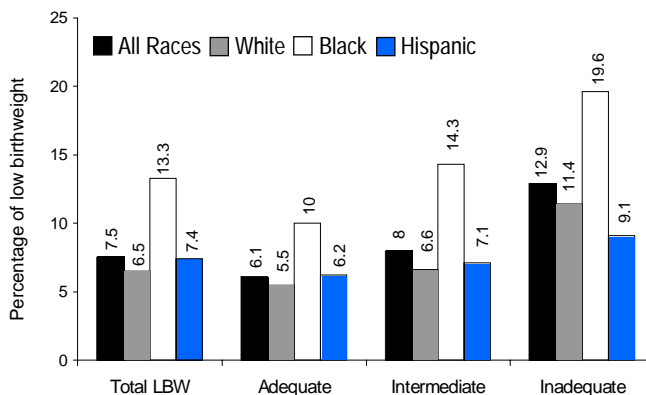
During the last eight years there have been declines in both the black and white **infant mortality** rates in Kent County. However, the black infant death rate went from 2.7 times greater than the white infant death rate in 1991-93 to 3.2 times greater in 1997-99. Although infant deaths have declined overall in both racial groups, the proportional disparity between black and white infant deaths has increased.

Adequacy of Prenatal Care



Quality prenatal care contributes to both maternal and infant health by identifying women who are high risk. Adequate care is measured by the month of pregnancy in which prenatal care began and the number of prenatal visits. From 1993-97, white mothers were more likely to enter care early and receive adequate care than either black or Hispanic women in Kent County.

Birthweight by Level of Prenatal Care



Black and Hispanic infants are both more likely to have shorter gestational periods than white infants. Prematurity (gestation under 37 weeks) is a leading cause of **low birthweight**, while low birthweight is a leading risk factor for infant death. Interestingly, in 1999 in Kent County, black infants made up the largest percentages of low birthweight (≤ 5.5 lbs.) infants regardless of the level of prenatal care. This suggests that prenatal care is only one of several factors affecting birth outcomes and infant mortality in Kent County.