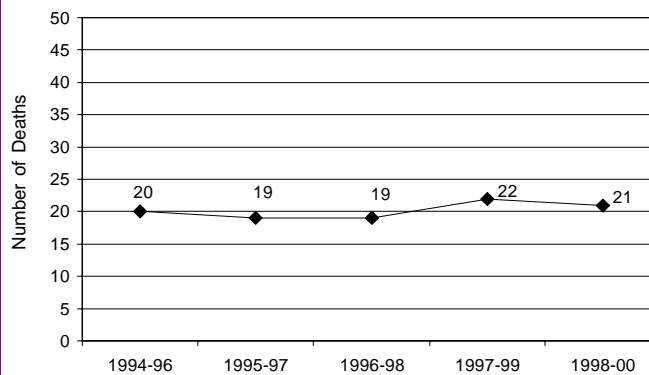


Focus on Substance Abuse

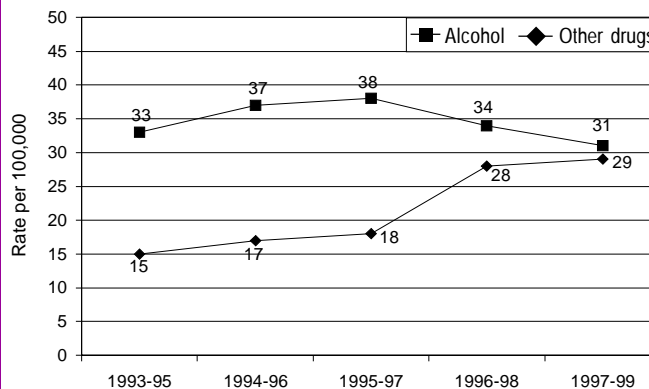
The Community HealthWatch report cards are developed by the Kent County Health Department to report on the status of health priorities being monitored in the Kent County community by Healthy Kent 2010. This report card focuses on substance abuse. The Healthy Kent Substance Abuse Implementation Team has focused on prevention and treatment of substance abuse since the Healthy Kent initiative began in 1993. Most recently, the Substance Abuse Implementation Team is working to support the 'Take Me Home' program that provides safe rides between the Christmas and New Year's holidays. As a Healthy Kent priority area, substance abuse is perhaps the most global, and is linked to all other Healthy Kent priority areas: violence, chronic disease, sexually transmitted diseases, and infant health. For this reason, substance abuse prevention and treatment must continue to be a community priority.

Alcohol-Involved Crash Deaths



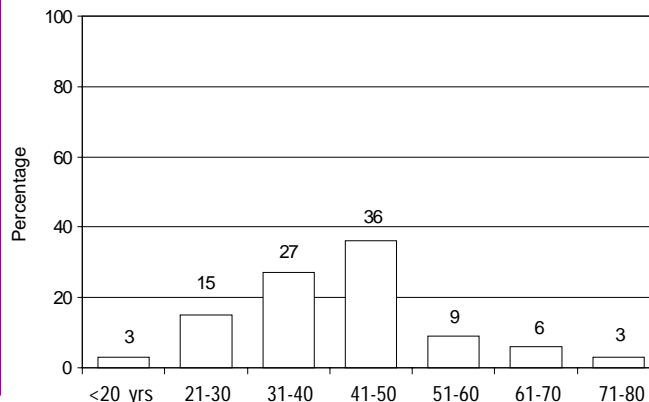
For the last six years the number **motor vehicle crash deaths involving alcohol** has remained relatively stable in Kent County. Although the annual number of these deaths is small, it is hoped that the recently imposed repeat offender laws, in conjunction with other programs, will have more of an impact on alcohol-involved crash deaths in years to come.

Alcohol and Drug Deaths



The rates of **deaths from alcohol and other drugs** in Kent County mirror national trends. Even when population growth is taken into consideration, deaths directly related to alcohol use have decreased slightly over the past five years. During the same time however, deaths directly related to other drugs have nearly doubled.

Drug Deaths by Age



Data from the Kent County Medical Examiner shows that in 2000 **over 60% of the individuals who died from drug use in Kent County were between the ages of 30 and 50**. More than a third (36%) of all Kent County drug deaths were individuals between 41 and 50, the single largest group, a trend also observed on the national level. Studies of substance abuse patterns in the U.S. suggest that approximately one-third of first-time drug users in the 1980's became repeat or chronic users. Chronic drug use coupled with normal age-related increases in risk for chronic disease can result in significantly premature death.