

# COMMUNITY COUNTS

seventh annual

The 2005/2006 Community Report Card presented by: **The Delta Strategy**



# About Community Counts

Community Counts: a Community Report Card is an annual survey of quantitative and qualitative quality of life data broadly distributed and used as a reference tool to understand current conditions of our community, progress and impact of community initiatives and new or remaining community issues.

Community Counts provides residents, elected officials, nonprofits, and business with a “mountaintop” view of the overall condition of our community. Each of us, as a greater Grand Rapids resident, is part of a neighborhood, a city, and region as well as global economic and natural systems. Each of these systems profoundly affects our lives; in turn, these systems are affected by every one of us. Our hope is that Community Counts will develop a collective understanding of the conditions in our community, so that people are empowered to make meaningful, lasting change in our community.

## The Data

Data for the Community Report Card come from several major sources, including the U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS), administrative data from public agencies, special reports and indexes developed by research institutions and qualitative data from behavior and attitude surveys like the Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey.

The Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey is a collaborative effort between the Community Research Institute of the Johnson Center for Philanthropy of Grand Valley State University, The Delta Strategy, Heart of West Michigan United Way and the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation. The purpose of this annual survey is to access citizen opinions, perceptions and behaviors relating to civic engagement, basic needs, health, education and religion in the Kent County area. The project includes phone surveys of 1351 adults, ages 18 and up.

For full data tables from this report and 20 additional indicators, please visit the Community Research Institute at [www.cridata.org](http://www.cridata.org) or The Delta Strategy at [www.deltastategy.org](http://www.deltastategy.org).

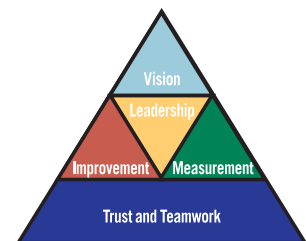
All data in this report have been analyzed, summarized and provided as shown by the identified source. Except for the Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, the report’s authors gathered no original data. For that reason, there may be errors or omissions in the report – even though its authors, editors and reviewers have tried to verify and ensure the validity of all information included. In all cases, the authors have attempted to provide the most recent data available and trends. For details on data provided in this report please visit the listed source that appears along with the data chart or visit the Community Research Institute or The Delta Strategy websites.

## About The Delta Strategy

In 1998, 4600 community members described their vision for the future of greater Grand Rapids, a process facilitated by The Delta Strategy. Creating a community vision is one part of the three responsibilities of community leadership as described in The Delta Strategy Change Process. As a part of the measurement process, Community Counts provides some broad measurements that then allow us to see whether we are either progressively moving toward that vision or drifting farther away. Then as part of the problem solving process, The Delta Strategy provides a place where dialogue can happen about why that is and what can be done about it. Community Counts is intended to encourage thoughtful analysis that leads toward meaningful action either as independent efforts or as part of a broader systemic approach to problem solving. All the while we are building trust as we work in teams in the community to solve our toughest problems.

### Our Process:

- A clear vision and goals tell us where we want to be
- Diverse leadership from across the community guides us to our vision
- Continuous improvement and disciplined problem-solving actually help us address the problems
- Measurable results get us closer to the vision
- And most important, the trust and teamwork that come from real collaboration are the foundation on which The Delta Strategy process is built.



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**Our Mission:** To build the capacity of community to solve our challenging and complex problems by engaging in the community improvement process with people and organizations seeking change.

**Our Vision:** The Delta Strategy serves as a catalyst for social change by fostering community learning and problem-solving. We help build a community in which all members and sectors are empowered to participate equally and effectively in creating a better future for all.

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

What We Want: Families and individuals have equal opportunity and treatment.

(Community Vision Statement 2000)

The true strength of a diverse community lies in its ability to engage all its members and invite them into the circle. The experiences and insights shared are the fuel for making meaningful change that improves the quality of life for all of us.

Our community is continually becoming more diverse, but there are remaining challenges to assure that the diversity is embraced and that everyone receives equal treatment, has access to all our community has to offer and can meaningfully contribute to its betterment.

Many people from local businesses and organizations, and many individuals in our community, are beginning to understand the pain of discrimination, and are working hard to become more inclusive. Those who commit to inclusion are learning first-hand about the resource that diverse individuals bring to the workplace, the market-place, the meeting table, and the neighborhood.

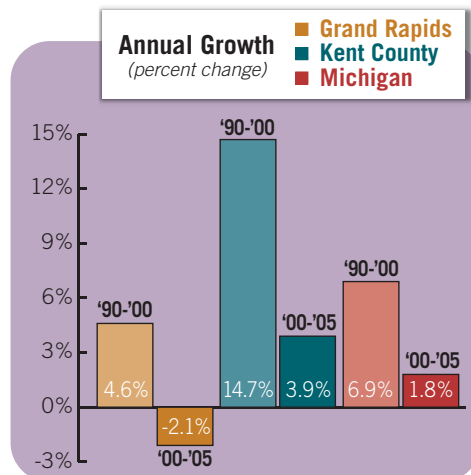


## INDICATOR 1: POPULATION GROWTH

**What does it measure?** The change in the number of individuals reporting residence in the city, county and state.

**Why is it important?** Population growth and its rate can determine the vibrancy of a community and the strain that it can put on existing infrastructure and resources.

**How are we doing?** Kent County and the state's population growth rate is slowing while the City of Grand Rapids' population declined.



Source: U.S. Census SF3 2000 and 2005 American Community Survey 2005

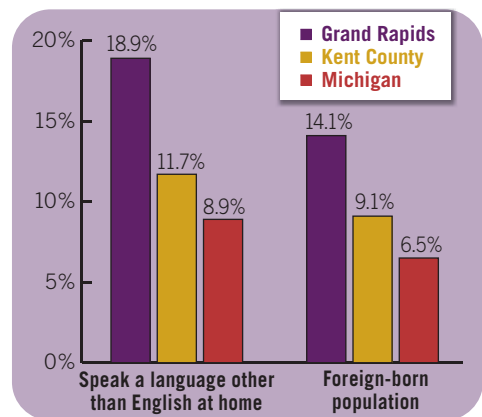


## INDICATOR 2: NATIONAL ORIGIN AND LANGUAGE

**What does it measure?** Percent of people that are born outside the United States, and the percent of people 5 years and older speaking another language than English at home.

**Why is it important?** It may indicate a growing, culturally diverse community and the need for more specialized employment and education services.

**How are we doing?** Almost 1 in 5 residents of Grand Rapids does not speak English in their home, twice that of the state of Michigan. Most of these residents are Spanish speakers.



Source: U.S. Census, American Community Survey 2005



### INDICATOR 3: RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

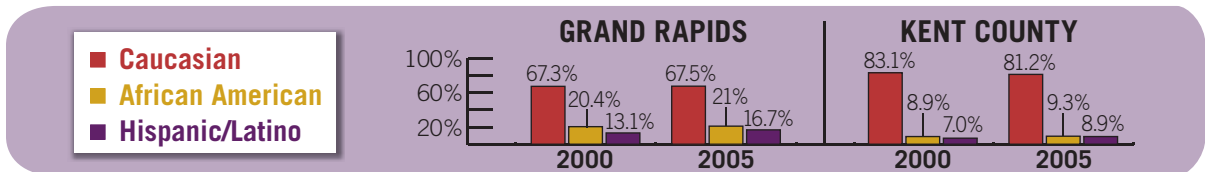
**What does it measure?** Racial distribution reflects a community's racial and ethnic diversity as a percentage of the total population.

**Why is it important?** Racial and ethnic diversity can both strengthen a community and present challenges for equal opportunity.

**How are we doing?** Grand Rapids, Kent County and the state are showing signs of a slight increase in diversity since 2000. Roughly 1 in 3 people in Grand Rapids and 1 in 5 living in Kent County is not Caucasian.

**14.6% of City of Grand Rapids and 15% of Kent County employees were minorities in 2005.**

Source: City of Grand Rapids, Kent County Human Resources



\*Hispanic/Latino is an ethnic description and could be included in any racial category.  
Source: U.S. Census SF3 and American Community Survey 2005

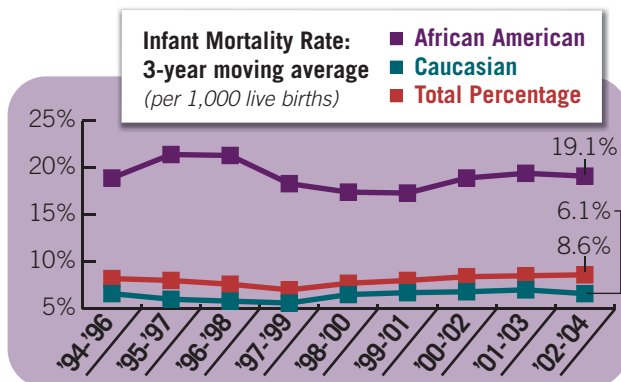


### INDICATOR 4: INFANT MORTALITY

**What does it measure?** The number of infant deaths during the first year of life per 1,000 live births in Kent County.

**Why is it important?** It is a measure of community health and health care access, education and poverty as well as lifestyle choices and adequacy of prenatal care.

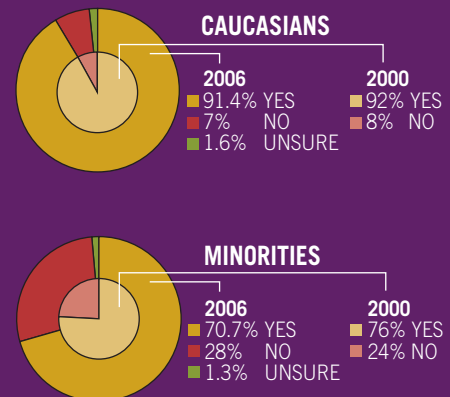
**How are we doing?** The infant mortality rate for African American infants is still triple the rate for white infants. Kent County's infant mortality rate is slightly higher than the state average of 8.1% (17.7% African American and 6% Caucasian).



Source: Michigan Department of Community Health

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

**Do you believe you and your family experience equal opportunity and treatment compared to others?**



Source: Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, 2000, 2006

# FAMILY ECONOMICS

**What We Want:** Families and individuals are economically self-sufficient (Community Vision Statement 2000)

For people living in poverty it means not having enough monthly income to provide their family with things many of us take for granted: good food, affordable housing, reliable transportation.

Poverty affects the quality of life for all of us. On the community level, high levels of concentrated poverty correlate to poor educational outcomes, poor health, and often increased crime. Breaking the cycle of poverty for individuals and families will result in an improved community where workers make a living wage and businesses thrive.

Our community experienced increases in the poverty rate for families, children and individuals, increased emergency calls for help to the United Way's 211 system and more economically disadvantaged children receiving free and reduced price lunches in every school district even as the unemployment rate decreased and per capita income increased.

The economic growth and health of our community lie in the shared responsibility of looking at the root causes of poverty, discussing them openly, and creating meaningful solutions together.

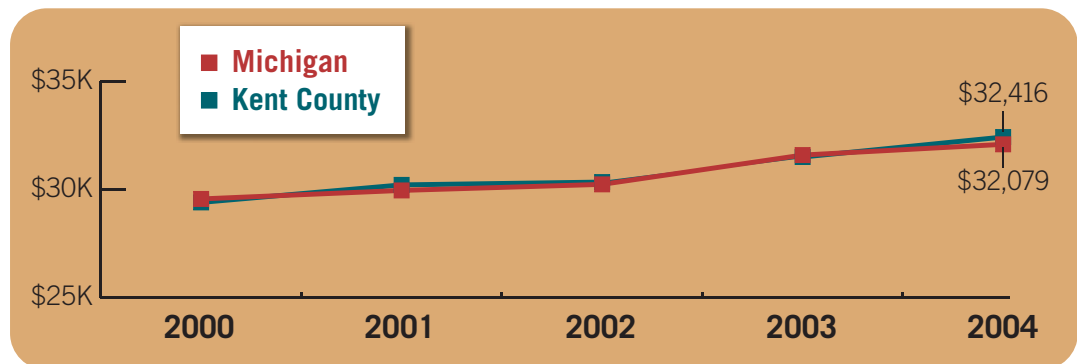


## INDICATOR 1: PER CAPITA PERSONAL INCOME

**What does it measure?** Per capita estimates reflect the total amount of personal income averaged across the population.

**Why is it important?** Personal income is one of the most basic measures of the health of the local economy. Individuals use their personal income to purchase items to meet family needs. A low per capita income may indicate that the local economy does not adequately support individuals and families.

**How are we doing?** Since the year 2000, per capita income increased at a faster rate in Kent County (10.3%) than it did in the State of Michigan (8.6%), and it is growing slower than the national average but keeping steady with basic inflation. In 2004, the national per capita income was \$33,050.



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce

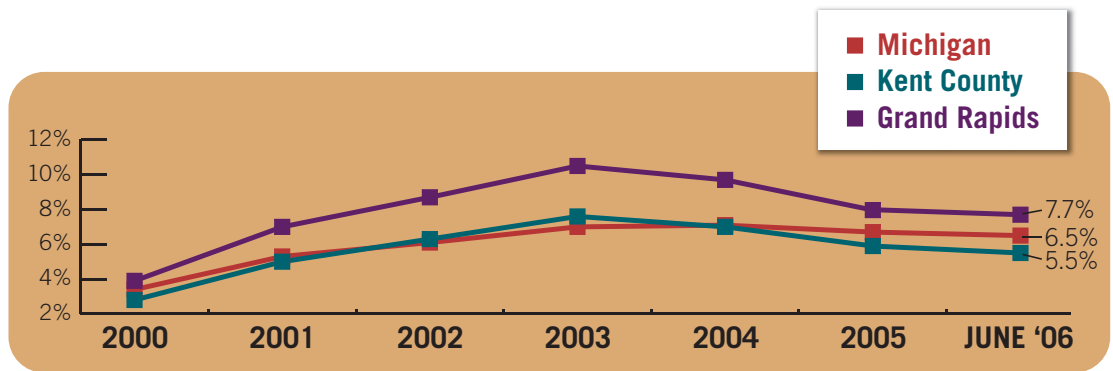


## INDICATOR 2: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

**What does it measure?** The unemployment rate is expressed as a percentage of people within the labor force who are out of work and who are actively searching for employment. It does not include homemakers, retired persons, or unemployed persons not seeking work.

**Why is it important?** It is an indicator of economic well being. It reflects the ability of employers to supply the numbers and types of jobs needed by the labor force, and the ability of the labor force to provide skills and availability needed by employers. At the individual level, unemployment reduces household income, can limit health insurance and lead to stress and crisis. At a community level, it may reflect a lack of job opportunities and place demands on human services.

**How are we doing?** Kent County had an unemployment rate marginally lower than the state of Michigan, while the Grand Rapids rate remains higher than the state and county levels. Kent County's 2005 unemployment rate was the lowest since 2001.



Source: Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth

## NOTES

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## INDICATOR 3: POVERTY

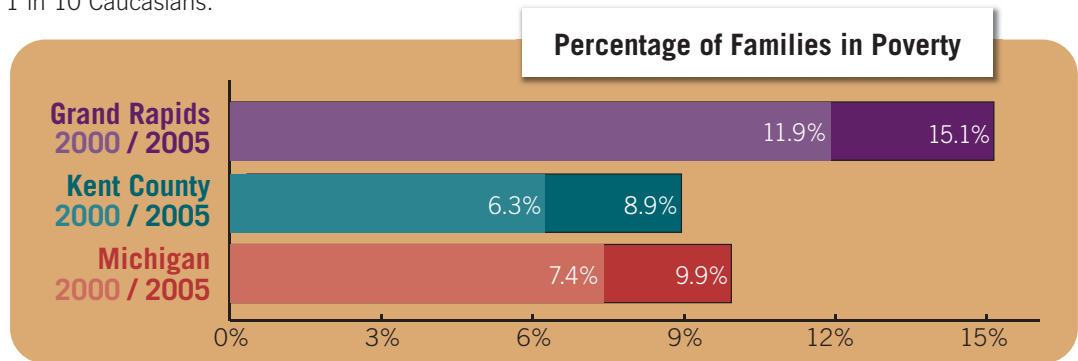
**What does it measure?** The percent of all families with income below the Federal poverty level (income below \$19,350 for a family of 4).

**Why is it important?** It is an indicator of economic well being. Poverty is associated with many negative outcomes such as substance abuse, violent behavior, teen pregnancy, juvenile delinquency, low academic achievement and lack of access to health care.

**In 2005, over 84% of housing in the Grand Rapids area was affordable to median income families, 11% more than in 2000.**

Source: National Association of Home Builders, Housing Opportunity Index, 2000 & 2005

**How are we doing?** The percent of families living below the poverty level in Kent County rose from 6.8% in 2004 to 8.9% in 2005. The increase represents roughly 3,000 more families living in poverty than in 2004. In Kent County, over 1/3 of African Americans live below the poverty level compared to less than 1 in 10 Caucasians.



Source: U.S. Census SF3 2000 and American Community Survey 2005

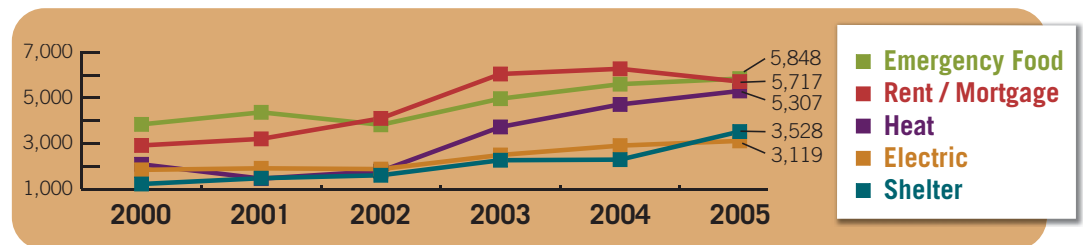


## INDICATOR 4: EMERGENCY CALLS FOR HELP (211)

**What does it measure?** The number of calls requesting assistance that were received by The Heart of West Michigan United Way's 211 service.

**Why is it important?** It is an indicator of community emergency needs and reflects individual and family well-being in the area.

**How are we doing?** 211 received a record number of calls in 2005 (28,347), 1,771 more than in 2004. The largest percent increases in requests for assistance were for shelter, heat and furniture assistance, while rent/mortgage was the only request that decreased.



Source: Heart of West Michigan United Way (top five requests for assistance)

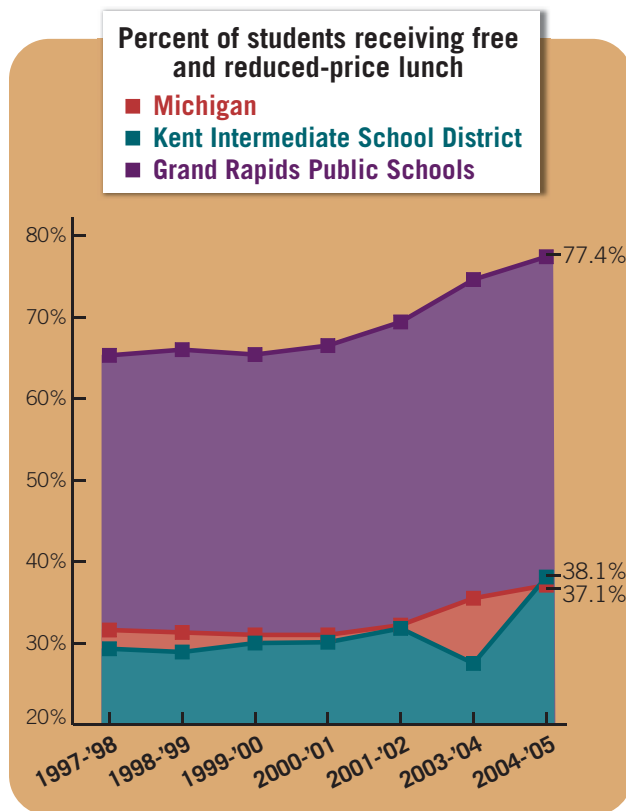


## INDICATOR 5: FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE LUNCH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

**What does it measure?** The percent of students meeting income qualifications and receiving free or reduced-price lunch as part of the National School Lunch Program.

**Why is it important?** It is an indicator of socioeconomic levels of families in the community. Increases in particular districts may show geographic shifts in poverty or more general trends in families with school age children.

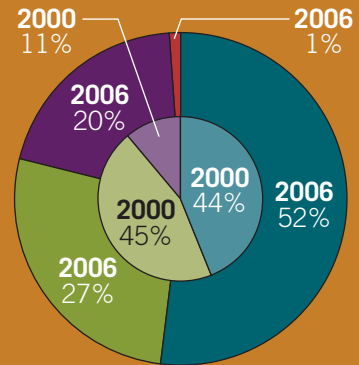
**How are we doing?** Families qualifying for the Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program continue to increase throughout the county, and Grand Rapids Public Schools and Godfrey Lee have a much higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students than the surrounding suburbs. No school district in the county saw a decrease.



Source: Michigan Department of Education

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

**How are you and your family doing financially, compared to a year ago?**



- About the same
- Better
- Worse
- Unsure

Source: Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, 2000, 2006

12.9% of respondents did not have enough money in the past 12 months to pay utility bills. 8% did not have enough money to pay rent, mortgage or real estate taxes.

Respondents worried about running out of money for food or clothing were more likely to be African American or Hispanic.

# EDUCATION

**What We Want:** All children succeed in school and adults have opportunities for continued learning.

(Community Vision Statement 2000)

Perhaps no other factor contributes as strongly to a successful community than its number of committed learners. For the individual, education and training are the gateways to opportunity, the doorways out of poverty, and a key factor in determining future earning potential. For the community, education and training insure sustained vitality. Employers and employees locate in communities where people are committed to continuing their learning and where schools are committed to excellence for all students.

Improved MEAP Reading and Math scores and higher levels of educational attainment point toward our community placing a priority on education and creating a culture of learning. However, disparities in proficiency between school districts and increases in economically disadvantaged students throughout the county present great challenges for educators.

Parental involvement in a child's school and learning activities are critical to future success. Tutoring & mentoring programs, special relationships between schools, business and churches and a stronger focus on reducing school absences are opportunities with great promise.



## INDICATOR 1: ADULT EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

**What does it measure?** The level of education achieved by adults (25+ years of age).

**Why is it important?**

It is an indicator of economic opportunity. An individual with a higher education is believed to be critical for a global-thinking community. Increased educational levels also translate to employment opportunities and to a higher quality of life for the individual and community. Guaranteeing that all individuals in Kent County have, at minimum, a high school diploma is critical for individual self-sufficiency and community vitality.

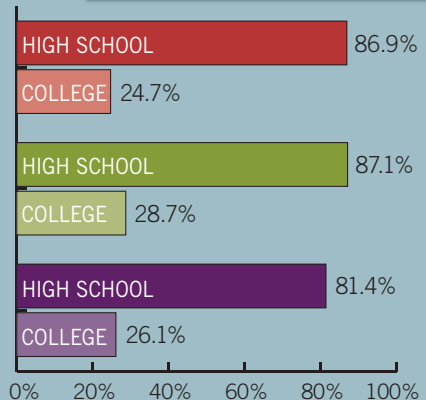
**How are we doing?** The percentage of Kent County residents with a 4-year college degree is above the state and national level. High school and 4-year college graduates in the city, county and state continue to rise by about 3% since 2000. Nearly 1 in 5 individuals, 25 years and older, living in the city of Grand Rapids is not a high school graduate (includes equivalency). Last year, one-third of all people living below the poverty level did not have a high-school diploma.

**In GRPS, only 1 of every 3 students in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade completes high school within that school system four years later because they drop out, fail to graduate in 4 years or because they leave the district.**

Source: Standard and Poor's, SchoolMatters: Cumulative Promotion Index, 2002. GRPS - 32.5%, State - 72.7%

**2005 Educational Attainment**  
(Adults aged 25+ years)

- Michigan
- Kent County
- Grand Rapids



Source: Standard and Poor's

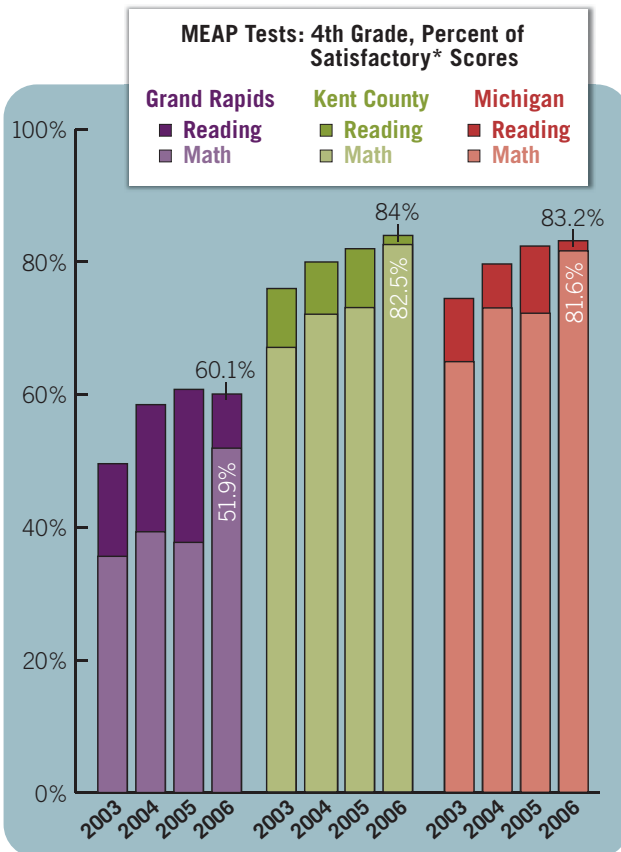


## INDICATOR 2: MEAP SCORES, 4TH GRADE LEVEL

**What does it measure?** The percent of fourth grade students that met or exceeded Michigan Standards in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP).

**Why is it important?** Indicates how well schools are meeting the annual measurable objectives established by the Michigan Department of Education. Basic reading and math skills are vital to creating a community that offers high quality of life for its residents.

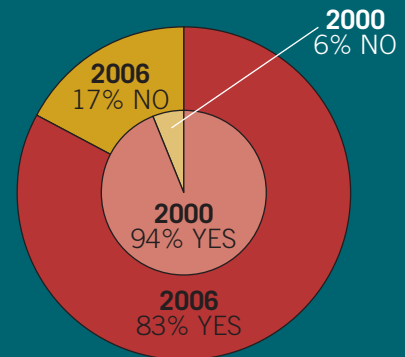
**How are we doing?** On average, MEAP scores are improving and students in Kent County schools are scoring above the state average. However, GRPS scores are still well below the county average.



\*Combines percent of students scoring at Level 1 and Level 2.  
Source: Standard and Poor's

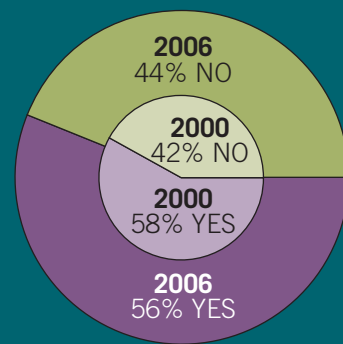
## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

**Did you participate in parent teacher conferences at school last year?**



Source: Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, 2000, 2006

**Did you volunteer at a school last year?**



Source: Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, 2000, 2006

# HEALTH

What We Want: Individuals and families are healthy, with adequate shelter, nutrition and clothing. (Community Vision Statement 2000)

Only when our essential needs are met are we able to focus on larger goals. Many people in our community have no health care coverage. Others are concerned with their basic safety and well-being. As a community, we need to work to remove obstacles that make it difficult to secure life's basic needs and live healthy lives.

**An estimated 1 in 10 working age adults in Kent County have no health insurance coverage.**

Source: Michigan Department of Community Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 2005

Disparities in health and access to health care by particular groups in our community continue to be a major issue. Almost every major health indicator shows a disparity based on race or income.

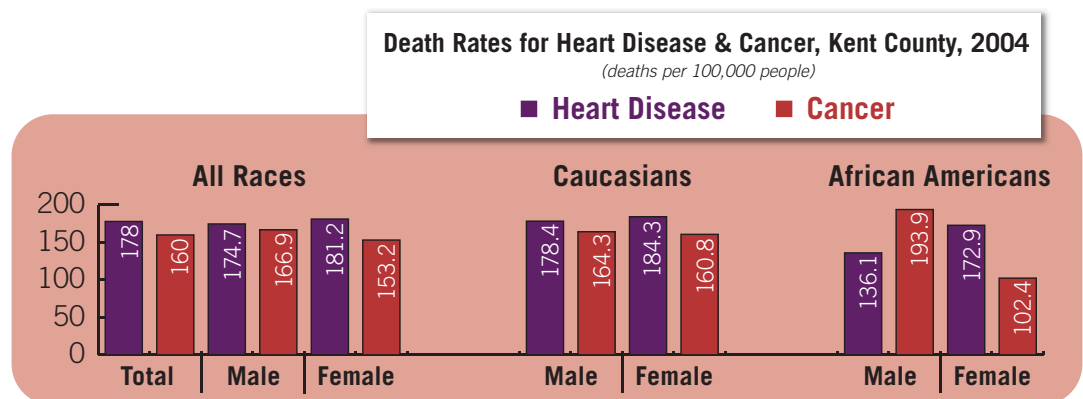
Effective prevention programs and high quality health care for all people in our community are essential to a good quality of life. There are many health care providers, agencies and community groups tracking these indicators and working toward improved prevention, access and care.

## INDICATOR 1: DEATH RATES, CANCER & HEART DISEASE

**What does it measure?** The relative distribution of the two leading causes of death per 100,000 people.

**Why is it important?** It is a measure of comparative health in the community and may indicate the effectiveness of prevention and care for different populations.

**How are we doing?** Heart disease and cancer rates in Kent County are lower than the state and national rates. Heart disease death rates have declined by 20% since 2000 and accounted for 1/4 of all deaths in 2004. Related, congestive heart failure was the second leading cause of preventable hospitalizations in Kent County in 2004.



Source: Michigan Department of Community Health

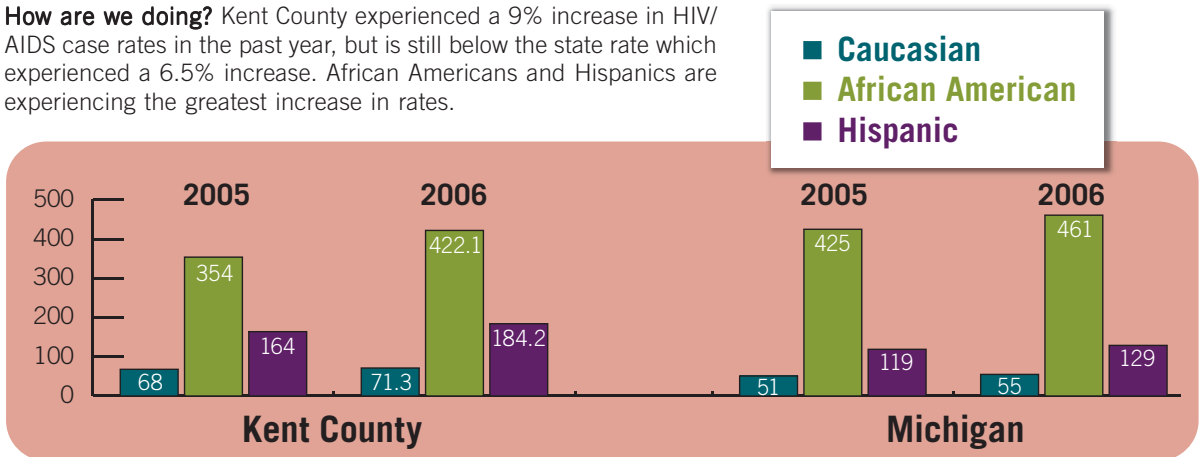


## INDICATOR 2: HIV / AIDS CASE RATES

**What does it measure?** Reported cases of HIV/AIDS per 100,000 people.

**Why is it important?** It is a measure of comparative health in the community and indicates the effectiveness of education and prevention activities.

**How are we doing?** Kent County experienced a 9% increase in HIV/AIDS case rates in the past year, but is still below the state rate which experienced a 6.5% increase. African Americans and Hispanics are experiencing the greatest increase in rates.



Source: Michigan Department of Community Health, Bureau of Epidemiology

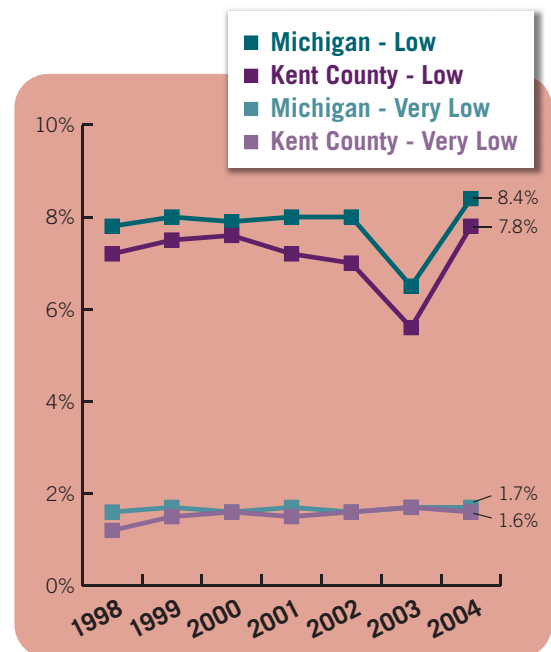


## INDICATOR 3: LOW BIRTH WEIGHT

**What does it measure?** Percentage of live births with birth weight less than 5 lbs. 8 oz. (low birth weight) or 3 lbs. 5 oz. (very low birth weight).

**Why is it important?** It is an indicator of infant health and viability. Race, maternal age, delivery history, marital status, socioeconomic factors, prenatal care, smoking and drinking may impact birth weight.

**How are we doing?** The percent of live births with low birth weight in Kent County is slightly lower than the state rate. However, it increased compared to prior years.



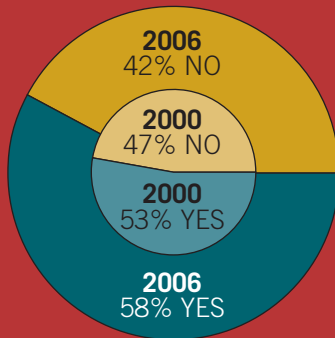
Source: Michigan Department of Community Health



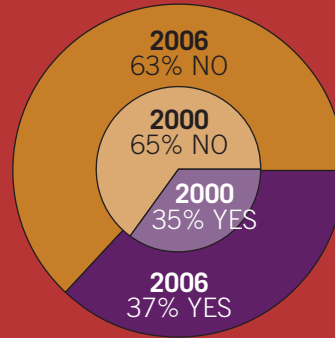
# COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

In the last year, which of these healthy behaviors did you do?

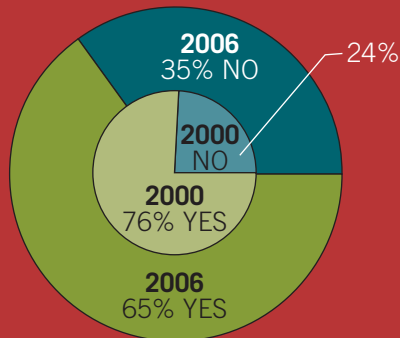
**Exercised for 30 minutes  
3 times a week:**



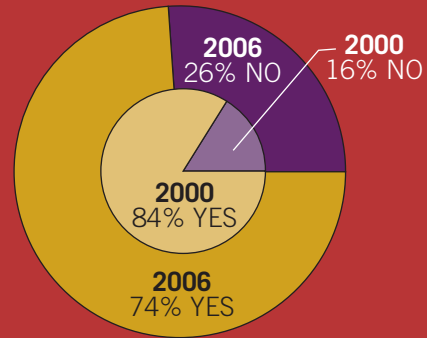
**Ate at least 5 servings of  
fruit/vegetables daily:**



**Got a physical exam:**



**Saw a dentist:**



13.1% of total respondents said there is no place where they usually go when they are sick or need health advice. Over 1/3 of all Hispanic respondents did not have a usual source of care.

12% of respondents who thought they needed medical care in the past year did not see a professional. Cost was the main reason.

11% of respondents did not have health care coverage. 45% of Hispanic respondents did not have coverage, and 24% of respondents below 200% of the poverty level did not have coverage.

29% of respondents would rate their health as excellent. 50% responded good, 16% fair and 5% said their health was poor.

Source: Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, 2000, 2006



# ENVIRONMENT

**What We Want:** For families and individuals to live in a clean, natural environment where resources are used responsibly. (Community Vision Statement 2000)

Clean air and water and a safe, natural living environment are as essential to our quality of life as sufficient food and adequate shelter. Our ability to appreciate the beauty around us depends on what we actually see, breathe and experience. We are touched in subtle ways by what happens in the environment of our little corner of the world.

This year we are hoping to develop better measures that will more accurately and comprehensively reflect the condition and trends of our natural and built environment. Throughout 2006, The Delta Strategy worked closely with the West Michigan Strategic Alliance to help develop regional indicators. Several of these indicators will have data which measure the quality of life of our environment. We hope that future Report Cards will align well with these regional indicators and the work of the Sustainability Partnership's triple bottom line: Economy, Social Equity and Environment.

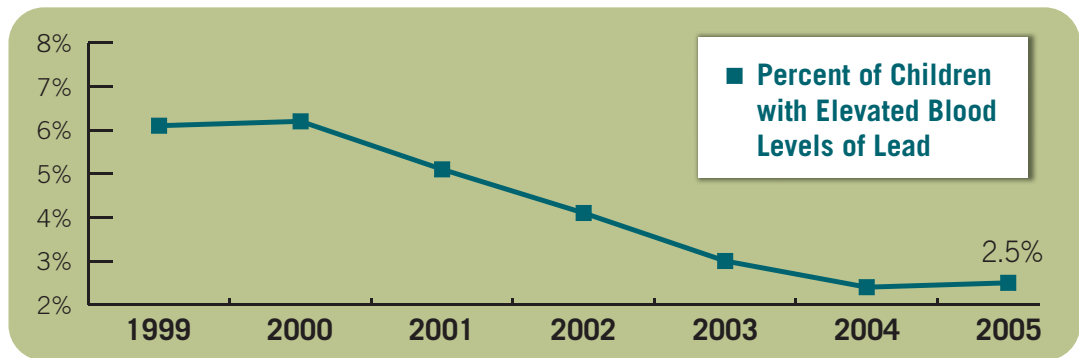


## INDICATOR 1: LEAD POISONING

**What does it measure?** Children tested that have elevated levels of lead in their blood.

**Why is it important?** It is an indicator of environmental and children's environmental health. Lead levels impact brain development.

**How are we doing?** Children with elevated blood levels has continued to decline in Kent County. The percent of children in Grand Rapids tested with elevated blood levels was 4.3% in 2005 and in Michigan it was 2.4%. Lead levels are seen in areas of the city with aging housing stock.



Source: Kent County Health Department and Get the Lead Out

## NOTES

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# PUBLIC SAFETY

What We Want: Families and individuals live in a safe, caring, thriving and vibrant community.

(Community Vision Statement 2000)

There are so many elements that make up a community's quality of life, including health, education, enrichment, mobility, access, inclusion and safety. Not all neighborhoods and families in our community have that same quality of life. We have isolated pockets of high poverty and crime where few people feel safe or cared for.

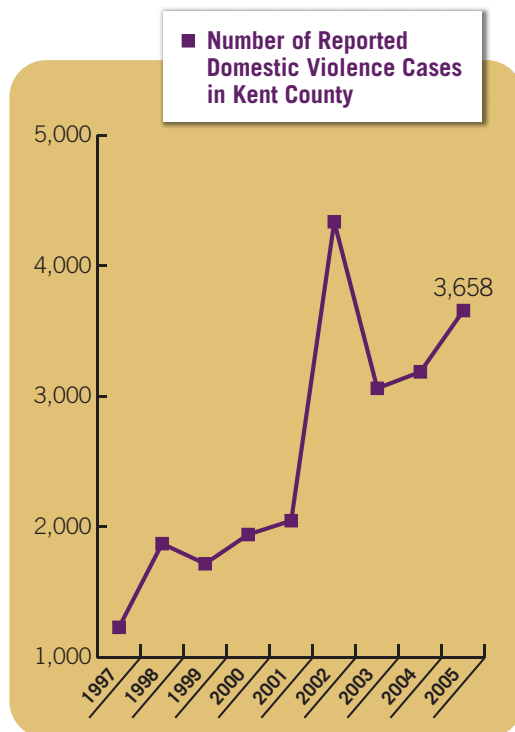


## INDICATOR 1: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

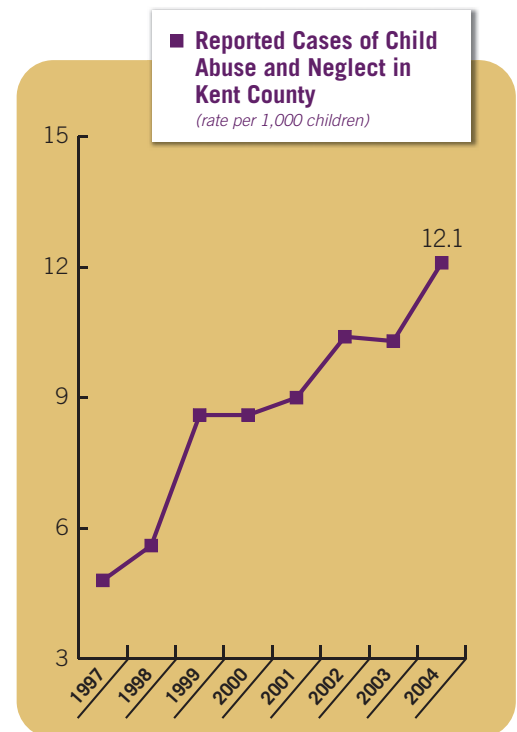
**What does it measure?** Number of domestic violence cases reported to law enforcement & rate of child abuse or neglect per 1,000 children in Kent County.

**Why is it important?** Domestic violence and child abuse impacts families and communities at all levels. Of 3.5 million violent crimes in the U.S., 49% were committed against a spouse, 11% against sons/daughters, and 40% against other family members. Approximately 73% of victims were female (U.S. Dept of Justice Family Violence Statistics, June 2005).

**How are we doing?** Reported cases of domestic violence are up from the last 2 years. The number of child abuse and neglect cases also increased.



Source: Michigan State Police, Uniform Crime Report



Source: Kids Count in Michigan

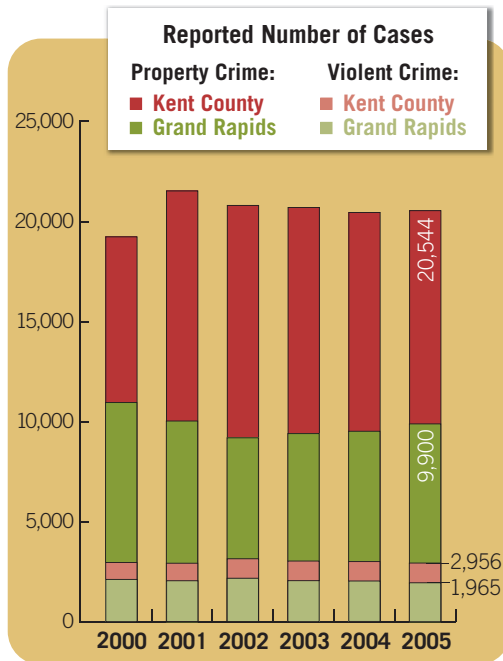


## INDICATOR 2: CRIME OFFENSES

**What does it measure?** The number of actual violent (murder, rape, robbery, assault) and property (burglary, larceny, car theft, arson) crime offenses reported by law enforcement.

**Why is it important?** These eight crimes are part of the Crime Index and serve as a common indicator of the crime experience. Because of their serious nature, these offenses are considered a better indicator of the crime situation than total crime, including minor infractions.

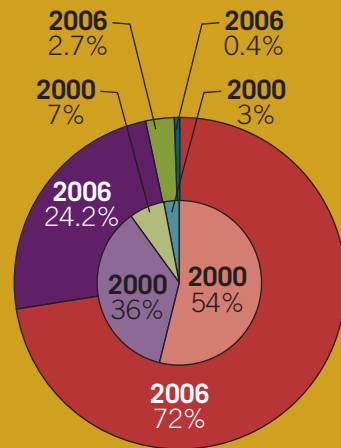
**How are we doing?** As of 2005, violent crime offenses in the city and county decreased slightly from prior years while property crimes increased. Of the county total, the Grand Rapids Police Department was responsible for reporting 66.5% of the violent crimes and 48.2% of the property crimes, down from 70.7% and 56.9% in 2000, showing a possible shift in criminal activity.



Source: Michigan State Police, Uniform Crime Report

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTION

How safe do you feel walking in your neighborhood at night?



- Very safe
- Somewhat safe
- Somewhat unsafe
- Very unsafe

Source: Greater Grand Rapids Community Survey, 2000, 2006

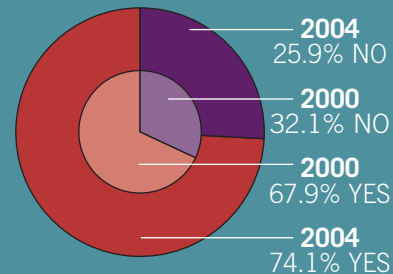
People who are minorities, poor, or living in urban areas are more likely than others to report feeling unsafe.

# Community Engagement

What does it take to have a thriving and vibrant community where all of us share the bounty and rewards? Vision, hope, commitment and collaboration. A flourishing community is best reflected in the eyes and hearts of its citizens. There are programs, services and people right now making a difference...together. Many hearts. Many minds. One future.

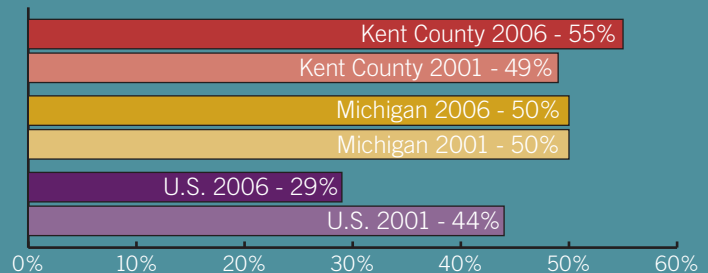
- In the past week, 59% of respondents had been to a place of worship for a service or activity, 70.6% had discussed current events or politics, 70.3% went to a social or cultural activity, and 75.4% got together with friends and neighbors.
- In the past 12 months, 45.6% of respondents had contacted the media to express opinions, 36.5% had signed a petition, 31.1% worked to solve a community problem where they live, 21.9% contacted or visited a public official, and 5.7% had taken part in a protest, march or demonstration.
- 64% of respondents had volunteered for a charitable organization in the last 12 months.
- 40% of respondents said they were involved in local groups, clubs or associations, though people in poverty were less likely to belong to local groups.

## Did you vote in general elections?



Source: Kent County Clerks Election Department

## Percentage of adults who volunteer:



Source: Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, Grand Valley State University

## About The Community Research Institute

The Community Research Institute (CRI) monitors local and regional social conditions and provides this information to the local non-profit and philanthropic sectors as a one-stop shop for data about the Greater Grand Rapids community. CRI helps organizations understand the evolving needs of the community, document these needs for grant applications, and measure the success of their various programs and initiatives.

**Community Research Institute**  
Empowering communities with quality research and data

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