

## ANNUAL CRIME FIGURES

# Some county crime stats rise

*Crime + Criminals - Dec*

✓ Department of Justice says violent acts statewide decline 6.6 percent

*Sentinel staff report*

SANTA CRUZ — Bucking a more positive statewide trend, crime statistics released Friday show theft and related property crimes rose in Santa Cruz County last year compared to 2008.

And Monterey County earned the dubious distinction of having the highest homicide rate in the state.

California Attorney General Edmund G. Brown Jr. released annual crime statistics Friday, in Los Angeles, saying violent crime declined 6.6 percent statewide.

That was true in Santa Cruz as well, which reported an overall drop of 4 percent for violent crimes.

However, there were 10 murders in the county in

2009, compared to eight in 2008. Rape reports rose from 77 to 79 and assaults from 886 to 904. Robberies fell 20 percent.

Property crimes rose 15 percent overall in Santa Cruz County.

They include burglary, car theft and larceny, or theft of items valued at more than \$400. Car theft rose the most, with a 20 percent jump, followed by larceny, which increased 19 percent.

Statewide, the statistics reflect a 9 percent drop in homicides and robberies and a 16 percent decrease in vehicle theft.

Monterey County's top homicide ranking reflects

the county's highest homicide rate in at least 20 years of data made available by the state.

And it wasn't just the record 29 murders in Salinas making the area look bad, as last year another 22 people were killed in other parts of the county.

In contrast, San Francisco, Alameda and Los Angeles counties all showed significant drops in homicides.

Los Angeles County saw a 14 percent drop in its murder rate in 2009 over the year before, Alameda County's rate fell more than 7 percent, while San Francisco showed a stunning decline from 98 murders to 35 — a

drop of 54 percent.

Statewide, murder rates have declined steadily since their 1980 peak of 14.4 per 100,000 California residents, a trend that's mirrored nationally as well.

This year, while the murder rate remains high in several south Monterey County cities such as Greenfield and King City, Salinas has shown a dramatic drop in both shootings and homicides, leaving some cautiously optimistic that the city's recent data-driven and tightly focused anti-violence efforts may be having an effect.

The statistics are based on data reported by police and sheriff's departments in all of the state's 58 counties.

Brown praised the efforts of law enforcement officers, but said crime remains a serious problem in the state.

For more information, visit [www.ag.ca.gov](http://www.ag.ca.gov).

*Julie Reynolds of the Monterey Herald contributed to this report.*

## BY THE NUMBERS

	2008	2009	% CHANGE
<b>VIOLENT CRIMES</b>	1,247	1,215	-2.6
<b>PROPERTY CRIMES</b>	4,132	4,805	+14.9
<b>ARSON</b>	72	67	-8.2
<b>THEFT</b>	5,601	6,480	+14.3

Source: California Department of Justice

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