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NEWS RELEASE

2009 Adult Felony Criminal Prosecutions in Dakota County

OVERVIEW

Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom has released statistics for 2009 involving **adult felony criminal prosecutions** handled by his Office. **These statistics do not reflect the total number of crimes occurring, but reflect the number of felony charges filed against individuals within Dakota County in 2009.** The County Attorney is responsible for the prosecution of all felonies committed by adults (this includes persons age 18 and over and any juvenile certified for prosecution as an adult) that occur in the County. According to Backstrom:

- The total number of **adults charged**¹ with felony offenses in Dakota County decreased by 12% (**1,514**² adults were charged with felony offenses in 2009, compared to 1,729 in 2008).
- The average number of Part 1 Crimes³ occurring in Dakota County (based upon arrest data) has increased slightly from 2000-2008, according to the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

ADULTS CHARGED WITH FELONIES (BY CITY/JURISDICTION)

The following reflects felony charging statistics involving cases referred from individual cities and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office:

Apple Valley **decreased** from 173 to **166**
Burnsville **decreased** from 295 to **272**
Dakota County Sheriff **decreased** from 219 to **110**
Eagan **decreased** from 215 to **192**
Farmington **increased** from 26 to **41**
Hastings **increased** from 82 to **86**
Inver Grove Heights **decreased** from 142 to **112**
Lakeville **decreased** from 123 to **119**
Mendota Heights **stayed the same** at **22**
Rosemount **decreased** from 69 to **50**
South St. Paul **decreased** from 125 to **105**
West St. Paul **increased** from 164 to **167**

ILLEGAL DRUG CHARGES DROP SIGNIFICANTLY --- BUT DRUG OFFENSES CONTINUE AS TOP PROBLEM

Drug offenses continue to represent the largest category of cases charged by the Dakota County Attorney's Office. The total number of defendants charged with drug offenses in 2009 represents approximately 25% of the entire felony caseload of the Dakota County Attorney's Office. (See the attached chart for drug trends in the past ten years). **375**⁴ individuals were charged with felony drug crimes in Dakota County in 2009, compared to 414 the year before, a decrease of 9%.

Backstrom commented: "While illegal drug use in Dakota County and across our state continues to be an enormous problem, this is the fourth year in a row in which we have seen significant drops in the number of individuals charged with illegal drug crimes in our community which is obviously a good sign. Illegal drug charges continue as the most frequently charged felony in Dakota County, as they have since 1997."

Backstrom indicated that methamphetamine continues to be the number one illegal drug involved in criminal charges in Dakota County, although the number of these charges dropped dramatically last year. In Dakota County **124** individuals were charged with meth-related felonies in 2009, compared to 162 the year before (a decrease of 23%). No meth labs were seized in 2009. This is a significant drop from the 28 meth labs seized in 2004 in the County. Other drugs of concern: heroin (increased from 7 defendants charged to **22** in 2009), prescription drugs (increased from 49 defendants charged to **73** in 2009), cocaine (decreased from 124 defendants charged to **81** in 2009) and marijuana (increased from 75 defendants charged to **79** in 2009).

Backstrom noted that **prevention and public awareness efforts** concerning the meth problem have also been a factor in reducing meth use. The Dakota County Attorney's and Sheriff's Offices have conducted a number of public forums and presentations over the last several years concerning the dangers of methamphetamine use. Meth prevention and public awareness has also been a key project of the Minnesota County Attorneys Association (MCAA). The past four summers, the MCAA booth at the Minnesota State Fair focused on the dangers of methamphetamine and broadened the resources to make the public more aware of chemical addiction in our state. *"We have worked together to effectively reduce chemical abuse. Coordinating our efforts with law enforcement, treatment and prevention, allows us to not only hold offenders accountable, but to educate everyone in the community concerning the extent of the serious problem of chemical addiction,"* Backstrom added.

The illegal manufacture, distribution, and possession of drugs continue to negatively impact the overall public health and safety of our communities. Many drug related crimes are committed by individuals who themselves are addicted to drugs. Dakota County Attorney James Backstrom continues to collaborate with a team of staff from Dakota County Community Corrections, judges, law enforcement, and other criminal justice professionals in Dakota County's **Adult Drug Court**. The team identifies and implements policies and procedures to more effectively and efficiently address repeat and non-violent drug offenders who demonstrate a willingness to address their chemical addiction. The process of Drug Court includes three phases with rigorous bi-monthly court appearances. The goal of Drug Court is to resolve cases in a more proactive way, holding offenders accountable with an emphasis on needed treatment and reducing overall recidivism. There are currently **30** offenders in the Adult Drug Court program and the first graduation occurred in December 2009.

Backstrom also praised the continued efforts of the **Dakota County Drug Task Force**, which consists of officers from the Dakota County Sheriff's Department and police departments in the cities of Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, South St. Paul, West St. Paul and Savage. Backstrom commented: *"This coordinated law enforcement effort has been extremely effective in investigating illegal drug activity and identifying those persons involved in illegal drug sales or use. Continuation of the Dakota County Drug Task Force, which relies heavily on federal grant funding, is vital in combating the serious problems associated with the use of methamphetamine and other illegal drugs in our community."*

DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MURDER

Backstrom indicated that last year in Dakota County **6** individuals were charged with **murder or manslaughter** involving six deaths. During 2009, three of these individuals were charged with killing family members: an infant grandson, a toddler step-son and a 10-year-old son. These cases are extremely tragic and very emotional when prosecuting family members of the victims for these serious and violent crimes. *"Over the last five years*

Dakota County has averaged four homicides per year which is a remarkably low number for a jurisdiction of almost 400,000 persons," Backstrom added.

FELONY STRANGULATION CASES

Beginning August 1, 2005, it became a felony to strangle or attempt to strangle someone during a domestic violence struggle. Backstrom praised the law, which resulted in **57** individuals being charged with felony domestic violence in 2009 (compared to 65 in 2008). Backstrom commented: *"Domestic violence is a huge problem in our society. The act of strangulation signifies how the level of violence in these cases is escalating. Making these serious crimes felonies was the right thing to do and will appropriately hold these offenders more accountable and provide greater protection to the victims of domestic violence."*

VIOLENT CRIME CHARGES DECREASE

After increasing for several years, the number of violent crime charges dropped last year in Dakota County⁵. Violent crime charges decreased from 646 in 2008 to **539** in 2009 (a decrease of almost 17%). The ten-year average (2000-2009) for violent crimes charged in Dakota County is 464 (see the attached chart). Of significant note:

Felony assault charges (including domestic-related) **decreased** from 242 in 2008 to **219**

Terroristic threats charges **decreased** from 123 in 2008 to **99**

Felony sex-related charges **increased** from 110 in 2008 to **123**

Backstrom stated: "It is important to keep in mind that our violent crime rate is statistically quite low for the size of our County. Dakota County remains a safe community in which to live."

CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE / INJURY AND FELONY DWI'S

Backstrom said that **1** individual was charged with Criminal Vehicular Homicide in Dakota County in 2009 for a crash that occurred in 2008. Additionally, **12** individuals were charged with Criminal Vehicular Injury in Dakota County in 2009. Also, felony DWI charges were filed against **50** individuals in Dakota County in 2009 (compared to 55 in 2008). A felony DWI occurs if an offender has been previously convicted of three DWI's in the last 10 years (among several other ways).

Backstrom said his Office coordinates prevention activities aimed at reducing alcohol-related crashes with the Safe Dakota Coalition, consisting of all Dakota County law enforcement agencies and area high schools, community colleges and other organizations. Backstrom praised the commitment of the Dakota County Traffic Enforcement Group, made up of all law enforcement agencies, for the monthly efforts in keeping our roadways safe. *Backstrom commented: "Drunk driving kills or cripples more persons each year than any other crime in America. We must continue to dedicate resources to raise the level of awareness of the dangers associated with drunk or impaired driving in our efforts to prevent these tragedies."*

In Minnesota in 2009, **412** persons (estimate from Minnesota Department of Public Safety) were killed in motor vehicle crashes compared to 446 in 2008 (an estimated 35% were alcohol-related). In Dakota County last year, 16 individuals were killed in 13 motor vehicle crashes (so far only 1 crash has been determined to be alcohol-related).

OTHER PROPERTY CRIMES

Overall, the number of felony level property crime charges in Dakota County dropped from 1,047 in 2008 to **847** in 2009 (a decrease of 19%). Specific categories of **felony property crime charges** are listed below:

- Theft-related charges **decreased** from 368 in 2008 to **339** in 2009
- Forgery charges **decreased** from 225 in 2008 to **179** in 2009
- Welfare fraud charges **decreased** from 158 in 2008 to **36⁶** in 2009
- Burglary charges **decreased** from 178 in 2008 to **144** in 2009
- Stolen property charges **increased** from 77 in 2008 to **109** in 2009
- Criminal damage to property charges **stayed about the same** from 41 in 2008 to **40** in 2009

The Adult Community Accountability Program implemented by the Dakota County Attorney in 1994 after a legislative mandate, refers approximately 100 defendants each year based on guidelines established. The goals of the program are: to create an incentive for first-time property offenders to change their behavior, to ensure full and prompt payment of restitution to crime victims, to hold the offenders accountable to society, and to reduce costs associated with the criminal justice system. During 2009, **102** new cases were referred to the program (another 108 individuals successfully completed the program). A total of **\$99,064** was collected in restitution from individuals in the program.

CRIMINAL APPEALS

Backstrom indicated that his Office was involved in filing or responding to **55** appeals in criminal cases in 2009. Appeals involve significant staff resources and are necessary in efforts to insure the fair administration of justice.

COURT HEARINGS

11,952 court calendar events were scheduled in 2009. Of those, **2,074** were contested hearings and jury trials. Backstrom stated that his Office was involved in another **1,844** court hearings to determine if an individual has violated the terms of probation. These cases are staff intensive and are necessary to hold offenders appropriately accountable. Backstrom commented: "*Offenders who fail to follow the terms of their probation should have their probation revoked and further sanctions imposed.*"

Attached is a chart detailing felony level charges filed by the Dakota County Attorney's Office in 2009. Also attached are charts comparing statistical information about adult felony prosecutions for the last decade. This information is also available on the Dakota County Attorney website at <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Departments/Attorney/Reports/default.htm>.

If you have any questions, contact James Backstrom at 651-438-4440.

¹ Criminal charges are not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

² Some of these defendants may have been charged more than one time with crimes occurring in separate behavioral incidents.

³ Part 1 Crimes include: murder, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

⁴ Some of these defendants were charged with crimes involving more than one illegal drug in the same or separate behavioral incidents.

⁵ Felony crimes of violence include: homicide (murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter), assault, offenses involving dangerous weapons, kidnapping, robbery, sex offenses, criminal vehicular homicide/injury and terroristic threats. The statistics referenced in this section reflect the number of felony charges and not defendants. A single defendant may be charged with more than one felony offense involving the same incident.

⁶ The primary reason for the decrease in welfare fraud cases being charged is the result of staffing shortages in the Dakota County Attorney's Office and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office. Steps have been taken to resolve these issues for 2010.

2009 ADULT FELONY STATISTICS

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	Drug Related ¹	Theft-Related & Defeating Security ²	Forgery Related	Burglary	Strangulation/Felony 5th/Domestic Assault	Sex-Related	Stolen Property ²	Stalking-Related	Terroristic Threats	Assault Related	Felony DWI	Traffic-Related(Including Fleeing with no injury)	Tax-Related	Fugitive From Justice	Criminal Damage to Property	Robbery	Public Health & Safety/Coercion	Welfare Fraud	Illegal Motor Vehicle Use ²	Homicide, including Attempted ³	Possession or Use of Dangerous Weapons	Arson	Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury ⁴	Obstructing Justice, Escape, Public Corruption	Abuse/Neglect of Minor	Gambling Related	Kidnapping	Deprivation of Custodial Rights/Support/Paternity	Tampering With a Witness	Gang	TOTAL CHARGES ⁵	TOTAL DEFENDANTS	
Apple Valley	33	67	30	15	6	18	13	18	16	8	12	11	10	2	5	9	2	0	5	3	1	1	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	291	166
Burnsville	102	47	22	36	25	19	24	14	18	10	10	12	0	6	1	16	7	0	4	4	5	2	3	3	4	0	3	0	1	0	0	398	272
Dakota County Sheriff	32	15	1	4	1	8	4	6	0	9	8	9	0	17	0	0	0	36	2	6	5	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	167	110
Eagan	87	58	29	16	17	18	15	9	7	16	6	6	0	7	6	3	7	0	4	0	0	3	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	318	192
Farmington	22	6	2	2	1	4	0	0	4	3	1	1	0	3	2	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	58	41
Hastings	29	12	5	8	11	2	10	5	4	3	5	7	10	4	4	0	7	0	2	0	1	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	135	86
Inver Grove Heights	34	14	9	13	16	14	3	11	10	4	4	0	0	3	3	3	0	0	4	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	153	112
Lakeville	26	34	15	21	6	17	8	10	7	7	5	7	0	3	4	1	0	0	5	2	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	182	119
Mendota Heights	12	2	9	2	2	1	2	0	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	22
MN State Patrol	18	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	14	7	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	49	32
Other Law Agencies	27	24	3	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	29	0	0	0	3	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	103	40
Rosemount	16	10	0	4	3	8	17	1	4	1	2	2	0	4	5	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	50
South St. Paul	27	10	10	11	28	4	1	22	13	10	3	4	16	3	4	0	1	0	1	2	5	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	177	105	
West St. Paul	44	38	44	12	16	10	10	10	12	13	5	4	0	8	6	4	4	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	246	167	
TOTAL	509	339	179	144	133	123	109	107	99	86	75	71	65	63	40	38	37	36	31	23	19	15	14	12	12	8	4	3	1	1	2397	1514	

1. Drug-related statistics are reported under the city where the offense occurred (drug offenses occurring in townships are recorded under the Dakota County Sheriff or other). Drug Task Force includes representatives from the Apple Valley, Burnsville, Eagan, Farmington, Hastings, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Mendota Heights, Rosemount, Savage, South St. Paul, and West St. Paul Police Departments, and the Dakota County Sheriff's Office.

2. Auto theft-related charges are listed with Theft-Related, Stolen Property and/or Illegal Motor Vehicle Use offenses.

3. Homicide offenses include charges for murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder, and manslaughter.

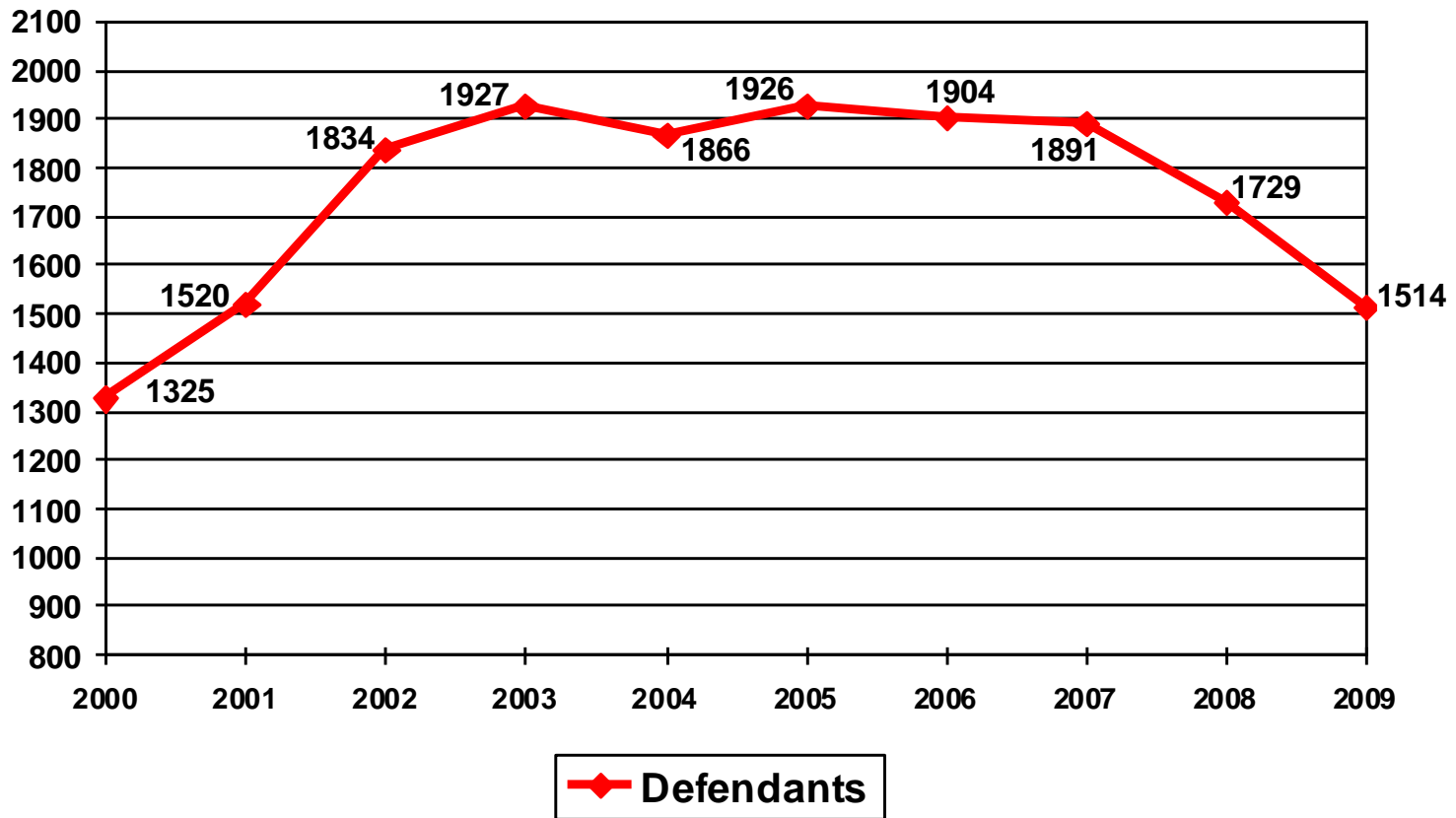
4. Criminal Vehicular Homicide and Injury includes Fleeing a Police Officer in a Motor Vehicle that Results in Death or Injury.

5. Numbers in all categories include charges of attempts to commit the crime.

Dakota County

Adults Charged with Felonies

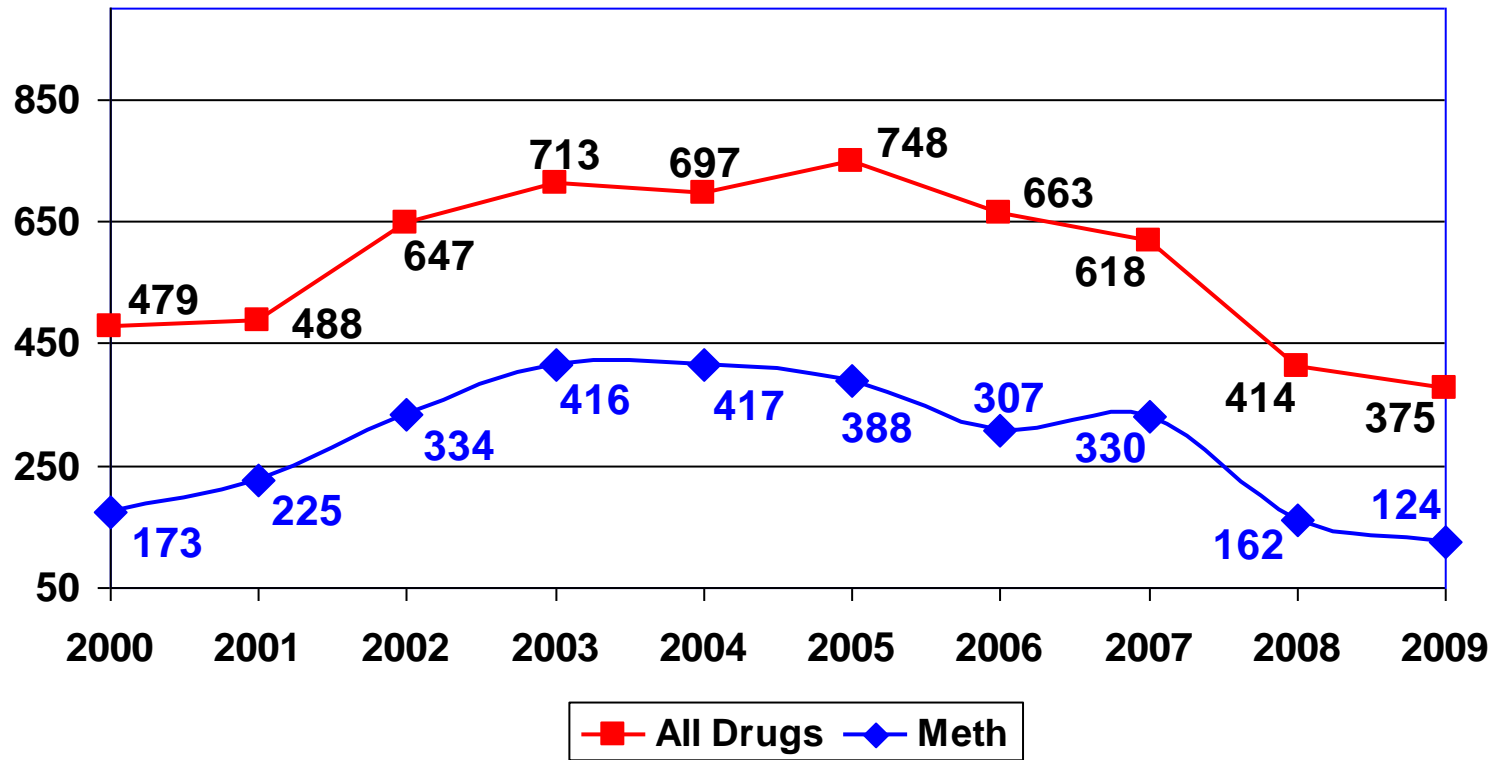
2000 to 2009



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

Dakota County

Adult Drug-Related Defendants Prosecuted 2000-2009



Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

Dakota County

Violent Crime Charges Involving Adult Defendants

2000 - 2009

CRIME	TEN YEAR AVG	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
MURDER ¹	Figures Not Available	7 ³	4 ⁴	2 ⁵	2 ⁶	8 ⁷
ATTEMPTED MURDER ¹	Figures Not Available	5	2	2	5	2
KIDNAPPING	14	18	11	14	27	4
SEX-RELATED	97	118	78	87	110	123
ROBBERY	39	40	44	57	64	38
FELONY ASSAULTS (felony strangulations 8-01-05)	150	141	210	235	242	219
TERRORISTIC THREATS	91	105	89	112	123	99
DANGEROUS WEAPONS	31	24	24	30	35	19
CRIMINAL VEHICULAR HOMICIDE/INJURY	22	24	51	24	26	14
TOTAL² :	464	512	519	576	646	539

Compiled by: James C. Backstrom, Dakota County Attorney

¹ Murder and Attempted Murder figures, which also include conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter (if any), reflect the actual number of persons charged with these offenses. The remaining crimes listed are based upon the number of felony charges filed.

² The total represents the number of charges of individual counts of violent crime (including murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to commit murder and manslaughter).

³ There were seven persons charged with murder in 2005 in connection with six deaths, one that occurred in 1979. One person was charged with conspiracy to commit murder, and four persons were charged with attempted murder.

⁴ There were three persons charged with murder in 2006 in connection with three deaths, one that occurred in 2005. There were two persons charged with attempted murder and one charged with manslaughter. Also, one murder/suicide.

⁵ There was one person charged with murder in 2007 in connection with a death that occurred in 2005. There were two persons charged with attempted murder and two persons charged with manslaughter.

⁶ There were two persons charged with murder in 2008 in connection with two deaths. There were five persons charged with attempted murder.

⁷ There were eight persons charged with murder in 2009 (two from another county) involving six deaths. There were two persons charged with attempted murder and one person charged with manslaughter.