If the struggling economy has spurred more residential burglaries in recent years, there hasn't been an alarming increase in most Lake Zurich and Barrington area communities.

A Pioneer Press analysis of five years worth of police records encompassing Barrington, Barrington Hills, Deer Park, Hawthorn Woods, Kildeer, Lake Zurich and South Barrington found that the total number of reported residential burglaries decreased from 58 in 2005 to 54 in 2009 (7 percent).

However, statistics show slight increases in the past two years. In 2007 the total number of residential burglaries was 47, in 2008 it was 51 and in 2009 it was 54.

Art Lurigio, a professor of psychology and criminal justice at Loyola University, said the economy is one of many factors that can influence crime trends, but the relationship is "complicated" and the two don't always correlate.

"A lot of criminals are opportunists and are going to commit crimes irrespective of the state of the economy," Lurigio said. "It may be that they are leaning in that direction, that they have committed that type of crime in the past, and that dire economic circumstances tip them over the edge and they start committing those types of crimes again."


South Barrington Police Chief Mike Deegan said the reason for the spike in incidents in 2009 was a series of burglaries that police believe might have been connected.

Deegan would not reveal which incidents he believes were connected because of ongoing investigations. Statistics indicated 12 of the 19 burglaries in South Barrington in 2009 occurred between March 2 and April 9.

"It was kind of a fluky thing," he said.

Experts generally agree that burglary and theft are crimes of opportunity, and that thieves will seek out the easiest homes to enter and escape undetected. For example, police sometimes notice patterns suggesting burglars targeted homes near busy streets and highways, providing for a quick retreat.
The Pioneer Press analysis identified most of the burglaries in South Barrington were within a short distance of Interstate 90.

The towns with the two largest populations and the most density had the highest number of incidents throughout the five year span. Barrington reported 79 residential burglaries dating back to 2005 while Lake Zurich reported 85.

However, the number of incidents per year has steadily decreased in both towns. Barrington decreased from 28 residential burglaries in 2005 to 11 in 2009 (61 percent). Lake Zurich decreased from 21 residential burglaries in 2005 to 13 in 2009 (38 percent).

"It appears to be that we've been pretty much plateaued. We haven't had a real big spike," said Lake Zurich Police Chief Pat Finlon.

Barrington Police Chief Jerry Libit said he buys into the theory that the economic situation can lead to more burglaries, but said so far he believes the increase has been reflected in small-scale thefts from vehicles rather than residential burglaries.

Barrington's contract to provide police service to Inverness expired in April 2009, reducing the department's jurisdiction by 6.5-square-miles. Libit said there has not been a large enough sample size to assess how the loss of Inverness jurisdiction will affect the number of residential burglaries the department responds to.