Divorce rates for law enforcement personnel:
Another myth bites the dust

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Common Beliefs

- Surveys of police officers continually reflect estimates of divorce rates as high as 75%
- Police officers…have a high divorce rate, about second in the nation
- Police officers…have double the divorce rate
- Police officers, for example, face divorce rates averaging between 66 and 75 percent
- The police profession has the highest rates of divorce, alcoholism, domestic violence and suicides
Where are these beliefs coming from?

- No empirical source

- Two census studies
  - Lichtenberger (1909; 1963)
    - 1900 census
    - Ranked 39 occupations
    - Law enforcement was 30th
  - Whitehouse (1965)
    - Only three sentence in the entire book
    - 1960 census
    - Police officer rate was 1.7% compared to the male population rate of 2.1% (2.4% in the same age distribution)

- Three survey studies
  - Durner et al. (1975)
    - Divorce rates for cops in three cities
      - Baltimore (17%), Santa Ana (27%), Chicago (33.3%)
      - No comparison group, no indication of what these rates mean
  - Niederhoffer and Niederhoffer (1978)
    - Survey of 30 police departments
      - 2.5% were divorced
      - National percentage was 3.7%
  - Kroes, Margolis, and Hurrel (1974)
    - 100 Cincinnati police officers
    - 6.17% were divorced
Current Study

- 2000 U.S. Census
- 449 broad occupations
- Divorce rate
  - $(\text{separated + divorced}) \div (\text{total population} - \text{never married})$

Also computed expected rate

- Individual demographics
  - Divorce rates higher for jobs with
    - Higher percentage of African Americans
    - Higher percentage of women
    - Lower percentage of Asian Americans
    - Lower average incomes

- Job characteristics
  - Shift work
  - Dangerousness
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Divorce Rates</th>
<th>Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Actual</td>
<td>Expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement</td>
<td>14.47</td>
<td>16.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>21.30</td>
<td>21.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All census jobs</td>
<td>16.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highest divorce rates

- Dancers & choreographers (43.05%)
- Bartenders (38.43%)
- Massage therapists (38.22%)
- Gaming cage workers (34.66%)
- Extruding machine operators (32.74%)
- Gaming services workers (31.345)
- Factory workers: Food & tobacco (29.78)
- Telephone operators (29.30%)
Lowest divorce rates

- Media & communication equipment workers (0.0)
- Agricultural engineers (1.78%)
- Optometrists (4.01%)
- Transit and railroad police (5.26%)
- Clergy (5.61%)
- Directors, religious activities (5.88%)
- Sales engineers (6.61%)
- Podiatrists (6.81%)
- Nuclear engineers (7.29%)

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