

## Divorce rates for law enforcement personnel:

### Another myth bites the dust

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## Common Beliefs

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- 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?

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- 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)



## Where are these beliefs coming from?

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- 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

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



## Also computed expected rate

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- 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

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Occupation	Divorce Rates		Ratios	
	Actual	Expected	National norms	Expected
Law Enforcement	14.47	16.96	88.50	85.32
Corrections	21.30	21.37	130.28	99.67
All census jobs	16.35			



## Highest divorce rates

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- 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

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- 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%)



## Contact Information

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