

Running Head: EXAMINING DIVORCE IN THE OCFA

Examining Divorce in the Orange County Fire Authority

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CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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### Abstract

The problem was that the Orange County Fire Authority has experienced a noticeable rate of divorce among its employees. The purpose of the research was to examine internal and external divorce rates. By using descriptive methodology, the researcher reviewed internal and external rates and causes of divorce and compared them to other fire department studies and the general public. Utilizing a literature review, internet search, internal document review, collection and analysis of data, implementation of an internal employee survey, causative factors and measurement of incidence were studied and described. The researcher evaluated the following four questions: (a) What are the rates of marriage in the OCFA; (b) What is the effective rate of divorce within the OCFA; (c) What are the causes of divorce within the OCFA; and (d) Can any correlations between divorce in the OCFA and the general public be identified? The results indicated that firefighter rates of divorce are lower than previously known and are significantly less than national and local rates. Yet, at 29%, the rates of divorce in the OCFA are twice the firefighter national average of 14%. Even though the impacts of divorce on families and children are widely known, the fire service has not focused adequate attention on education and counseling. This research has enabled the Orange County Fire Authority to obtain a clearer understanding of the rates and effects of divorce on firefighters. Results from this research may be found useful to other fire departments, occupations, and researchers studying similar concerns. Recommendations were offered for the implementation of the development and of proposals and new programs and for future work to continue to improve the health and lifestyles of firefighters and reduce the incidence of divorce.

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## Introduction

The Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA) employs approximately 1325 full time employees and 250 volunteers. The OCFA provides fire and emergency services to nearly 1.7 million residents in 23 cities, encompasses an area of approximately 575 square miles, and includes 175,000 acres of wild lands and wild land urban interface regions (Orange County Fire Authority [OCFA], 2013a).

The problem is that the OCFA has experienced notable rates of divorce of its employees. The purpose of the research is to examine internal and external rates and causative factors of divorce.

This research will identify the incidence and causes of divorce within the OCFA; identify rates of divorce in other fire departments nationally; identify rates of divorce within the general public; analyze the causative factors to identify correlations; and recommend steps for the OCFA to take to improve the marital health of its employees. This research will address the following questions: (a) What are the rates of marriage in the OCFA; (b) What is the effective rate of divorce within the OCFA; (c) What are the causes of divorce within the OCFA; and (d) Can any correlations between divorce in the OCFA and the general public be identified? A descriptive research approach is utilized to identify the current situation, analyze survey results, and synthesize the research to provide recommendations.

## Background and Significance

Orange County, California, exists within the southern California coastal region and is bordered by three adjacent counties and the Pacific Ocean: Los Angeles County to the north, San Diego County to the south, and Riverside County to the east. The County of Orange comprises 34 incorporated cities, covering a geographical are of nearly 800 square miles. Orange County is

considered moderately affluent, both for business and residence. The county's population of over 3 million residents is widely diverse, encompassing many cultures and races. The geography and topography of the region is a blend of urban, suburban, coastal, and natural wilderness areas. The county also has numerous residential developments which are within and directly adjacent to the wilderness lands (Orange County Fire Authority, 2013b).

The OCFA is an all-hazard emergency services agency, operating a regional delivery system from 71 fire stations by 1040 full-time firefighters, 48 chief officers, and 230 volunteer firefighters. The department also possesses a 20 acre administrative headquarters and training complex, housing approximately 235 professional staff members. In addition to its contract cities, the OCFA provides protection to all county unincorporated areas, state responsibility areas, and federal responsibility areas. The department is governed by a 25 member board of directors, with one representative from each of the twenty three contract cities and two representatives from the County of Orange (OCFA, 2013a). The OCFA was awarded accreditation in 2011 by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (OCFA, 2012b).

In 2012, the OCFA responded to 101,297 emergency calls with 183,553 unit responses (OCFA, 2013c). The current annual operating budget for 2012-2013 was \$330 million dollars (Orange County Fire Authority, 2012a).

The OCFA is considered a value-based organization, with employees looking out for one another through various methods. Family values are promoted through activities, support, and camaraderie through events, information, and employee support programs. Family values are supported through a variety of means: employee associations; department support; OCFA Chaplain Program; employee assistance programs; employee financial and time-donation assistance programs; and family-centered events.

However, despite the strong support for family values through person-to-person, employee association, and department efforts, a perception exists among employees that divorce rates are high within the organization. Additionally, a perception of an ambivalent attitude regarding a focus on non-family outside activities, infidelity, and inappropriate relationships at work, exists among many employees.

It is generally believed that within the fire service, as well as other high-risk occupations, that the incidence of marital issues resulting in divorce is high (Rawles, 2003). It is also generally believed that the rate of divorce in the fire service is higher than that of the general public (Talbert, 1996).

This research will identify the incidence and causes of divorce within the OCFA; identify rates of divorce in other fire departments nationally; identify rates of divorce within the general public; analyze the causative factors to identify correlations; and recommend steps for the OCFA to take to improve the marital health of its employees. Results from this study could be used to identify programs and support for OCFA employees to improve the marital health of employees and reduce the rate of divorce. The results of this study may also be found useful to other fire departments, other governmental agencies, educational institutions, other researchers, private agencies, and the general public.

The research presented within this report is directly related to the goals and objectives of the United States Fire Administration (USFA) course, *Executive Leadership*. This course is delivered during the fourth and final year of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy, in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The course curriculum is designed to prepare senior fire officers with the skills necessary to be able to identify and implement adaptive and technical change within their agencies. Specifically related to this research is course emphasis on self-



reflection and evaluation in order to improve leadership qualities of today's fire service executives (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2008).

The USFA has identified five operational objectives to provide targets of achievement for America's fire service. This research may help to improve the capabilities of fire departments through objective E: "To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (USFA, 2008, p. II-2).

### Literature Review

The literature review for this research focused on obtaining information pertaining to the rates and causes of divorce among firefighters and other fire service employees. Literature reviewed includes public and private research studies, journals, periodicals, web sites, and other documentation located via internet search engines. During the search for literature, the author noted a sizeable amount of literature and data pertaining to advertisement for attorney services, counseling services, and other related industries. These sites were reviewed but not chosen for citation based on their commercial nature and limited amount of objective and attributable information.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2008 the United States (U.S.) ranked highest among industrialized nations for rates of marriage at 10.6 per 1000 and rates of divorce at 5.2 per 1000. This results in a net divorce rate of 49% within the United States. These rates are based on measuring the incidence per 1000 population, aged 15-64 years. The country with the lowest rate of marriage was Spain at 6.2 and the country with the lowest rate of divorce was Italy at 1.3 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Complete divorce data by country can be reviewed in Appendix A).

The marriage and effective divorce rates expressed as percentage among the countries can be noted in the following two tables:

*Table 1: Marriage Rates by Country, 1980 to 2008*

Country	Marriage Rate			
	1980	1990	2000	2008
United States <sup>1</sup>	15.9	14.9	12.5	10.6
Canada	11.5	10	7.5	6.4
Japan	9.8	8.4	9.2	NA
Denmark	8	9.1	10.8	10.3
France	9.7	7.7	7.9	6.6
Germany <sup>2</sup>	X	8.2	7.6	6.9
Ireland <sup>3</sup>	10.9	8.3	7.6	NA
Italy	8.7	8.2	7.3	6.3
Netherlands	9.6	9.4	8.2	6.7
Spain	9.4	8.5	7.9	6.2
Sweden	7.1	7.4	7	8.3
United Kingdom	11.6	10	8	NA

NA: Not Available. X: Not Applicable. <sup>1</sup> Divorce rates exclude data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota in 2008. <sup>2</sup> Data are for 1991 instead of 1990. <sup>3</sup> Divorce not allowed by law prior to 1997.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, updated and revised from "Families and Work in Transition in 12 Countries 1980-2001," *Monthly Labor Review*, September, 2003, with national sources, some of which may be unpublished.

Table 2: Divorce Rates by Country, 1980 to 2008

Country	Divorce Rate							
	1980		1990		2000		2008	
United States <sup>1</sup>	7.9	50%	7.2	48%	6.2	50%	5.2	49%
Canada	3.7	32%	4.2	42%	3.4	45%	NA	NA
Japan	1.8	18%	1.8	21%	3.1	34%	NA	NA
Denmark	4.1	51%	4.0	44%	4.0	37%	4.1	40%
France	2.4	25%	2.8	36%	3.0	38%	NA	NA
Germany <sup>2</sup>	X	X	2.5	30%	3.5	46%	3.5	51%
Ireland <sup>3</sup>	NA	NA	NA	NA	1.0	13%	NA	NA
Italy	0.3	3%	0.7	9%	1.0	14%	1.3	21%
Netherlands	2.7	28%	2.8	30%	3.2	39%	2.9	43%
Spain	NA	NA	0.9	11%	1.4	18%	3.5	56%
Sweden	3.7	52%	3.5	47%	3.8	54%	3.5	42%
United Kingdom	4.1	35%	4.1	41%	4.0	50%	NA	NA

NA: Not Available. X: Not Applicable. <sup>1</sup>Divorce rates exclude data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota in 2008. <sup>2</sup>Data are for 1991 instead of 1990. <sup>3</sup>Divorce not allowed by law prior to 1997.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, updated and revised from "Families and Work in Transition in 12 Countries 1980-2001," *Monthly Labor Review*, September, 2003, with national sources, some of which may be unpublished.

Within the U.S., approximately half of all first marriages end in divorce (Copen, Daniels, Vespa, and Mosher, 2012). During 2009, the average national rates of marriage were 19.1 per 1000 for men and 17.6 per 1000 for women. Divorce rates nationally averaged 9.2 for men (48%) and 9.7 (55%) for women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a). Population shifts, changes in social norms, and focus on careers has caused the timing and duration of first marriages to change dramatically during the second half of the twentieth century. This trend is continuing into the current first half of the twenty first century. For the first time in history, Americans are entering into first marriages at an older age, with many adults cohabiting with a partner before marrying. Cohabitation is increasingly being utilized as the first union between young adults. Statistically, 68% of unions involving women from 1997 to 2001 were by cohabitation rather than marriage (Copen, et al., 2012).

In 2009, married couples in the southern states had higher rates of divorce in 2009 than in other regions of the country: 10.2 per 1,000 for men and 11.1 per 1,000 for women. Conversely, men and women in the Northeast had the lowest rates of divorce, at 7.2 and 7.5 respectively. According to Diana Elliott, a family demographer at the Census Bureau, "Divorce rates tend to be higher in the South because marriage rates are also higher in the South". This can be contrasted in the Northeast, where first marriages tend to be delayed and marriage rates are typically lower, resulting in fewer divorces (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

According to the information service, Divorce Source (n.d.), a discussion of the overall changes to social norms is appropriate to include a dramatic increase in the number of unmarried couples who are cohabiting prior to marriage. "Between 1960 and 1998, the number of unmarried, cohabiting couples increased from 439,000 to 4.2 million - a tenfold increase, and greater than the rates of marriage and divorce" (§ 10). The existence of more informal unions is more flexible than traditional marital unions and increases the fluctuations of relationships in the U.S.

By 2004, the majority of the adult population in the United States had been married only once, with 58 percent of women and 54 percent of men still married to their first partner. However, since the 1950's, the rate of divorcees to non-divorcees has more than tripled. Currently, the lifetime probability of a first marriage ending in divorce in the U.S. is approximately 50 percent (Teachman, Tedrow, and Crowder, 2000)

U.S. Census Bureau (2012a) data suggests that within the United States, there are varying rates of marriage and divorce from state to state. For example, in 2009 the rate of marriage in California was 19.1 per 1000 men and 17.5 per 1000 women. During the same year, rates of divorce were 8.0 per 1000 men (42%) and 8.9 per 1000 women (51%). In contrast, within the

same timeframe in Mississippi, the rate of divorce was 11.1 per 1000 men (58%) and 12.5 per 1000 women (72%); Wyoming had 10.3 per 1000 men (34%) and 10.7 per 1000 women (37%).

A sample of the 2009 U.S. Census Bureau, Table 132, can be reviewed in Appendix B.

When calculating marriage and divorce rates, historically the measurement has been conducted by comparing the rate by 1000 population, then calculating the difference as a percentage. This is known as the crude divorce rate. Until 1995, this method was utilized by most demographers. In 1995, a new approach was developed which measured the number of first marriages to end in separation or divorce within a given year (Copen, et al., 2012).

Robert Hughes, a former professor in the Department of Human & Family Services, College of Human Environmental Science, University of Missouri-Columbia offers, “The demographics of divorce are routinely reported wrong, calculated wrong or misinterpreted.” Hughes notes that in the 1990’s, for every one divorce there is two marriages. This is not to say that truly one half of all marriages nationally end in divorce. This is due to the fact that the people getting divorced within a single year are not necessarily the same ones who got married (Divorce Source, n.d.).

On average, there are approximately 2.4 million marriages and 1.2 million divorces per year. On the surface, a common misconception would be that an easy calculation could be made to assume that the rate of divorce is 50%. This number is misleading based on each state having differing rates of marriage and divorce. Additionally, not all states routinely report their demographic data, making the calculation of a national average all the more difficult. Further, most demographic data includes children and single adults as a part of the population considered. A more accurate method is to only measure the rates of divorce of first marriages, thus

eliminating the segment of the population who are too young and single adults who may or may not be likely to marry (Divorce Source, n.d.).

Second and third marriages generally fail at a much higher rate than first marriages. A generally held belief is that the first time divorcee has learned from his or her mistakes, but is much wiser and will have a different experience the second or third time. However, while percentages differ slightly depending on the source, approximately 60 to 67 percent of second marriages fail and 70 to 73 percent of third marriages fail (Divorce Source, n.d.).

Orange County has one of the highest divorce rates in the nation. On average, 33 people in the O.C. initiate divorce proceedings every day – including weekends. While the national divorce rate hovers around 50%, in Orange County, the divorce rate is approximately 60% (Whiting, 2012).

According to Marguiles (2009), although the husband frequently initiates a divorce, the wife initiates ending the marriage in approximately 75% of divorces.

Rawles (2003) states that, “Firefighters have one of the highest divorce rates when compared to other occupations” (§ 4).

In 2009 at Radford University, a research project was conducted to compare rates of divorce within law enforcement, as compared to other occupations. Authors Aamodt and McCoy (2009) concluded that the common belief that law enforcement officers have one of the highest rates of divorce was proven to be unfounded. In reality, at the time of the study, officers were found to have a divorce rate of 14.47%. Although the study was not focused on firefighters, information is presented as a comparison to other occupations. During the year of the study, rates of divorce within the different fire service occupations were noted as follows:

*Table 3: Fire Service Occupational Divorce Rates*

Fire Service Occupational Divorce Rates		
	Perceived	Actual
Fire Inspectors	16.61%	12.01%
EMT/Paramedics	18.19%	22.75%
Firefighters	16.18%	14.08%
Fire Management	12.55%	8.68%

Also according to Aamodt and McCoy (2009), the five broad occupations with the highest divorce rates were dancers and choreographers (43.05%); bartenders (38.43%); massage therapists (38.22%); gaming cage workers (34.66%); and extruding machine operators (32.74%). The five occupations with the lowest divorce rates were media and communications equipment workers (0.00%); agricultural engineers (1.78%); optometrists (4.01%); transit and railroad police (5.26%); and clergy (5.61%).

The focus on firefighter health and safety has expanded beyond basic firefighting skills and improvements to safety equipment. Physical fitness is only one component of wellness; a focus must also be made on the emotional and behavioral health of firefighters as an integral component of overall wellness (McDowell, 2013). According to Talbert (1996), the three most often cited aspects of the job that firefighters believed contributed to divorce in the fire service were work schedule (24 hour shift), work stress, and lack of communication. Yet, McDowell (2013) notes that among firefighters, there is a demonstrable link to behavioral health problems and poor job performance, attitude problems on the job, safety violations and even workplace violence.

The career of a firefighter presents unique challenges and inherent stresses to maintaining a well-balanced life. This is the case despite firefighting personnel maintaining a relatively high

level of inherent resiliency. Stressors can include shift work, physical stress, dangerous working environments, and traumatic incidents. Additionally many firefighters work two or more jobs, which can strain their efforts at creating balance and wellness in life. (McDowell, 2013).

According to Rawles (2003), there are commonly three occupational stressors that a firefighter experiences: organizational, demographic, and environmental. Organizational stressors are any changes associated with the individual's department, such as difficult, distrustful, and tense relationships between the senior staff and line personnel. Demographic stressors can be identified as changes to the current census of the department, such as ethnic and gender based hiring practices. Environmental stressors are identified as challenges associated with working conditions, such as the erratic sleep patterns and associated with a 24-hour shift and critical stresses due to emergency incidents. These stressors and conditions have the potential to manifest into tremendous emotional and mental strain for a firefighter. These stressors are similar to those noted by Talbert (1996).

Firefighters will typically exhibit signs of decreasing well-being long before divorce is initiated. These signs can be noted as changes in work behavior, frequent illnesses, poor job performance, and lack of enthusiasm. Contrasting behavior can also be noted by firefighters spending more time at the station, working additional overtime, and signing up for extra activities and commitments. Some may just hang out at the fire station in order to escape their unpleasant home life (Rawles, 2003).

Other signs are offered by Marguiles (2009) who notes that marriages don't typically just break down all at once; rather, they erode over time. He offers six signals of impending divorce: no conflict resolution; emotional disengagement; disaffection; lack of sex; increased focus outside the marriage; and preparing themselves for a single life.



A majority of divorced couples report years of marital acrimony leading up to the decision to divorce (Pam, 2013). To make matters worse, about half of all dissolving marital unions consist of families with children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Thus, children can be exposed to significant levels of inter-parental conflict for many years prior to their parents divorcing (Pam, 2013). As if divorce isn't hard enough on children, approximately 30% of children in the U.S. go through additional transitions and gain a stepparent, or become a member of a step family (Greene, Anderson, Hetherington, DeGarmo, 2003).

Nationally, children from fatherless homes account for sizeable statistics of social issues: 63% of youth suicides, 71% of teenage pregnancies, 90% of homeless and runaway children, 70% of institutionalized juveniles, 85% of children with behavioral disorders, 80% of rapists, 71% of high school dropouts, 75% of adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers, and 85% of all youth incarcerated in prison (Divorce Source, n.d.).

Transitioning to a single parenthood following divorce can be a stressful time that requires dealing with issues of losing a partner, decreasing finances, loneliness, and broken connections with friends and family (Anderson, 2003). Couples who split apart often increase their costs by requiring two homes instead of one. At the same time, the higher income spouse will likely see a drop in income with spousal and child support, as well as maintaining a home. Non-breadwinners will likely discover they need to quickly get a job in order to make ends meet (Whiting, 2012).

Similar to overall society, fire departments have viewed providing counseling and social programs to employees as a benefit to help ensure their workers are happy and productive. Within the research presented by Talbert (1996), the author notes within the discussion and recommendations that officials were encouraged to establish programs to reduce psychological

stress. The recommendations included providing education and training to employees about stress management techniques as well as the establishment of employee assistance programs which provide group discussions and marital counseling. Administrators were encouraged to become advocates for the programs to ensure the physiological and psychological well-being of their employees.

Unfortunately, most information provided in fire officers' academy training don't cover these subjects, which includes discussions about fire service dynamics that can lead to divorce, typical responses to divorce, and preventative actions that fire departments can take. It is important for fire agencies to help reduce the risk of divorce among personnel and provide guidance for commanding officers trying to help their divorced personnel adjust (Rawles, 2003).

At the Virginia Fire Officer Academy, the theme of *safety through leadership* is the focus for an annual week-long company officer development program. During this program, information and discussion is offered for officers learn how to engage in conversations with firefighters about their attitudes and behavior. It is offered that this can be very difficult, particularly when the underlying issues fall outside of our personal experience or comfort zone (McDowell, 2013).

Rawles (2003) supports these concepts and offers that there are many methods that a fire department can do to implement preventive interventions. These interventions should be designed to help their members manage career and personal stress, with the desire of reducing the risk of stress in the employee's home life and reducing the incidence of divorce. Employers should begin with an orientation session for spouses to help the new firefighters' families gain a better understanding of the job and its stressors. Peer-counseling programs can be implemented, as firefighters may be more willing to talk to a peer as opposed to a professional. Mentoring

programs can be developed for new firefighters to couple them with an experienced firefighter who demonstrates strong values and behaviors. Ongoing maintenance and effort is required to help ensure that quality and well-adjusted firefighters continue to be the outcome.

Within the OCFA's Strategic Plan, Objective 2-F is identified to, "Develop and promote programs that help members manage the issues that could adversely impact their professional and personal lives". Critical tasks include: (1) Identify common life issues affecting members: crisis counseling, stress, financial welfare, retirement, insurance, etc.; (2) develop programs to present regular workshops and information on common life issues affecting members; and (3) develop and distribute material that describes the resources available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), Chaplain Program, and Benevolent Association. Outcomes are described as: overall morale is improved by increased productivity, and happiness at work and social settings. Employee absenteeism due to adverse life issues is reduced and there is better utilization of the EAP program (OCFA, 2010).

As an employee assistance organization, the Orange County Fire Authority Firefighter's Benevolent Association is organized for the purpose of providing physical, financial, and emotional support to their members and their families during times of need. Their desire is to, "Take care of our own" (Orange County Fire Authority Benevolent Association, 2013).

In summary, within this literature review, the information reviewed both confirmed and contradicted previously held views and perceptions regarding marriage and divorce in society and in the fire service. With the exception of published texts, professional journals, and official census data from governmental sources, the majority of information located was, at times, confusing and contradictory. Within published texts and journals, the majority of information located pertaining to marriage and divorce was noted as related to the psychology of marital

problems. It was challenging to locate current sources containing accurate data that could be verified and attributed. The majority of information located on the internet was in the form of official-looking websites that were found to be nothing more than advertisements for legal and counseling services.

Although information pertaining to global, national, and local rates of marriage and divorce were available, accurate information regarding rates of divorce in the fire service were not. One of the only sources located that was based on sound research methods was the law enforcement study from Radford University. Through this research, the authors were able to conclude that previously held perceptions of divorce to law enforcement officers was incorrect. Through their research, this researcher was able to utilize their information to also conclude that previously held perceptions of divorce within the fire service was also incorrect. The information reviewed within the literature search helped to guide and refine the procedures, results, discussion, and recommendations of this research.

#### Procedures

The purpose of the research was to examine divorce rates internally and externally and to make recommendations for future consideration.

The descriptive research method utilized during this study focused on studying the incidence and causal factors of divorce within the OCFA, evaluating if internal and external correlations can be made, and providing recommendations for future consideration.

Descriptive research is defined as, “Determining and reporting the present status of something”, with the purpose as, “To clarify and report the way things are at the present time” (USFA, 2008, p. II-16).

A fundamental measurement of this descriptive research would be to examine the rates and causative factors of divorce within the OCFA and identify future goals to reduce the incidence within the OCFA's employees.

### *Research Methods*

The research for this study was conducted from April 1, 2013 to September 23, 2013. Procedures during this time focused on: (a) literature review; (b) personal communications with OCFA personnel; (c) development and implementation of a survey for current and retired OCFA employees; (e) research of external divorce rates and other data; and (f) recommendations for future goals and work.

*Literature Review.* Internet searches were performed to identify texts, research projects, journals, periodicals, census data, and other appropriate literature pertaining to divorce within the fire service and in the general public. Internet search engines used: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com), [www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com), and [www.msn.com](http://www.msn.com). Keywords and phrases utilized for search: divorce; divorces; divorce statistics; firefighter divorce; divorce in the fire service; occupational divorce rates; psychology of divorce; counseling; divorce causes; and divorce counseling. Searches were narrowed and refined for their pertinence to this research.

*Personal Communications.* Prior to and during the course of this research, personal communications were held orally with OCFA personnel to determine the overall opinions and general perceptions of divorce in the OCFA. Additionally, communications were held to determine the perceptions of divorce in the fire service and the general public. These communications were not structured in nature as an interview, but were primarily utilized to gauge the common perceptions and opinions of employees. These helped to guide and focus this research and the development of the research questions and survey.

*Review of census data and statistics.* Census data was retrieved and reviewed from the U.S. Census Bureau for global, national, and state rates of divorce. Additionally, data was retrieved and reviewed for occupational divorce rates.

*Development of a survey instrument.* Based on the background information obtained during the literature review, and communications with OCFA personnel, a survey instrument was developed (Appendix C). This survey was developed and implemented utilizing the on-line website: [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com). The survey was posted to this web site between July 30, 2013 and September 29, 2013. The format and questioning was developed to determine what general information about divorce as experienced by employees of OCFA. Prior to distribution and collection of responses, the survey instrument was sent to five OCFA employees for beta-testing and refinement. Based on the feedback received, questions and answer choices were revised and refined for better clarity and quality of answers.

The survey was sent via electronic mail to all 1,553 current OCFA employees. Submission to the current employees was effected via the OCFA's Microsoft Outlook electronic mail system utilizing the group addresses: *Ops/Dept* and *RFOTC Distribution*. These two group addresses contain the email addresses of all employees in all departments and sections.

At the researcher's request, all retired employees with an active known email address were also forwarded the survey. Submission to the approximately 450 retired employees was performed with the assistance of Mr. Chris Leonard, Fire Captain for the OCFA. Mr. Leonard maintains an email list of retirees in order to send them pertinent information and activities within the OCFA. Responses from the retired employees were viewed as important in order to capture the historical data and perceptions from prior members of the organization.

A total of 2,003 email requests were sent to current and retired employees with a link to the survey, requesting that they participate. Eight surveys sent via electronic mail were returned as undeliverable due to incorrect email addresses, which were unable to be resolved. Links to the survey were successfully delivered to all of the other email recipients, resulting in 1,995 surveys delivered. A total of 472 responses were collected, representing a 24% rate of return.

Twenty two of the twenty five questions were offered in a multiple-choice format. Three of the questions were offered in a format that allowed the respondent to enter written text responses. These written responses are summarized in the results and appendices sections of this research document.

## Results

This research project was directed at determining and describing the current divorce rates with the OCFA, comparing the results with global, national, and state data and statistics, determining the primary causes, and developing recommendations and goals for future work. The research was completed by conducting personal communications with OCFA employees; conducting a literature review; and development and implementation of a survey instrument. Utilizing the results of this project, the primary objective is to sufficiently answer the research questions posed, and determine if the OCFA could approach the issue of divorce differently to reduce the incidence and improve the outcome by its employees.

### *Research questions*

This research will address the following questions: (a) What are the rates of marriage in the OCFA; (b) What is the effective rate of divorce within the OCFA; (c) What are the causes of divorce within the OCFA; and (d) Can any correlations between divorce in the OCFA and the general public be identified?

Within the survey instrument, questions 1 through 6 were developed to determine a general gauge of employment status, position, age, gender, and years of service.

Of the respondents, 82% are currently employed with the OCFA, 17% are retired, and less than 1% are volunteers. The majority work in the operations department, 84%, which encompasses the fire stations and firefighting personnel. Approximately 12% were executive managers, with the remaining 14% as support and administrative personnel. Fifty three percent identified themselves as worker; 33% as supervisor, 12% as manager, and 3% as administrative.

Ninety one percent identified themselves as male, with 9% as female. The ages and lengths of employment of the respondents are contained in the following two tables.

*Table 4: Ages of Current and Retired Employees*

Age of Employees		
	Responses	Percentage
20 to 30 years of age	16	3.40%
30 to 40 years of age	111	23.60%
40 to 50 years of age	145	30.90%
Over 50 years of age	198	42%

*Table 5: Length of OCFA Employment*

Length of OCFA employment		
	Responses	Percentage
Less than 10 years employed	153	32.50%
10 to 20 years employed	112	23.80%
40 to 50 years of age employed	113	24.00%
Over 50 years of age employed	93	19.70%



*What are the rates of marriage in the OCFA?*

Questions 7 through 21 within the survey were developed to determine current marital status; number of times married; classifications and causes of marital difficulties; causes of divorce; help and assistance sought; and OCFA's role in assisting employees.

Currently, 84% of respondents are married and 16% are single. The numbers of times OCFA employees have been married are represented in the following table.

*Table 6: Rates of Marriage in the OCFA*

OCFA Rates of Marriage		
	Responses	Percentage
Married 0 times	24	5.10%
Married 1 time	349	73.90%
Married 2 times	78	16.50%
Married 3 times	17	3.60%
Married 4 times	4	0.80%

Of interest to note in the above table is the inverse relationship to the decrease in the rate of marriage as compared to the increase in number of times married.

*What is the effective rate of divorce within the OCFA?*

To calculate the overall rate of divorce from marriage, the figures in survey Question 8 can be analyzed. Those married one time can be added to those never married for a sample of 373 respondents. This would indicate 99 respondents who have either divorced and remarried, or divorced and not remarried, for an assumed effective divorce rate of 21% of the total 472 respondents.

This calculated effective rate differs from calculations made from figures in survey Question 10. This question was stated as, "If you have been divorced, what would you consider as the primary cause?" An assumption could be made that only those who have been divorced

should have answered this question. In consideration of the results, 135 responses were received, resulting in a 29% effective divorce rate. 337 respondents did not answer the question.

However, within survey Question 11, respondents are asked, “If you are married and have not been divorced, have you ever considered it?” This question can be used to evaluate the number of respondents who have not been divorced by the 136 individuals who skipped the question. This can provide an assumption of similarity between the 135 who identified causes of divorce in Question 10 and the 136 who indicated that they have been divorced by skipping Question 11. Utilizing the data in this manner indicates a margin of error of 1 response, or 0.002%, and results in an effective rate of divorce within the OCFA of 29%.

It is unknown if the differences between the two calculated divorce rates are due to sampling error or are based on misunderstanding of the questions by the respondents. It is also unknown if respondents did not answer the question due to their cause not being indicated as one of the choices. A more efficient method to determine this rate would have been to ask the respondents if they had been divorced from their first marriage.

*What are the causes of divorce within the OCFA?*

Within the survey, questions were asked pertaining to the causes of relationship issues; causes of divorce; if the respondents had ever contemplated divorce; and any help or assistance that the employees had sought.

Respondents were asked to classify any marital or relationship issues as related to their careers at OCFA. Work schedule issues were identified by 29%; stress at work, 27%; too much focus on career, 20%; and time away from home, 66%. Primary causes of divorce were identified as indicated in the following table.

*Table 7: Primary Causes of Divorce*

Primary Causes of Divorce in the OCFA		
	Responses	Percentage
Schedule	12	8.90%
Stress	10	7.40%
Lack of Communication	49	36.30%
Career Focus	15	11.10%
Infidelity (Extramarital Affair)	49	36.30%

Employees who have considered divorce, but have not followed through it with answered 69%: no, and 31%: yes. Additionally, the causes of why divorce was not pursued are identified in the following table.

*Table 8: Consideration of Divorce*

Consideration of Divorce		
	Responses	Percentage
Impact to Children and Family	87	74.40%
Loss of Retirement Benefits	10	8.50%
Cost	11	9.40%
Social Stigma	5	4.30%
Loneliness	4	3.40%

Responses indicate that 280 (68%) discussed issues in their marriage with their co-workers and 248 (64%) have sought outside help; 186 (72%) responded that the outside help that they sought was beneficial. The following table identifies responses received regarding issues which contributed to difficulties in their marriage.

*Table 9: Issues Contributing to Marital Difficulties*

Issues Contributing to Difficulties in Marriage		
	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Outside Social Activities	95	47.00%
Peer Bonding	47	23.00%
Substance Abuse	37	18.00%
Infidelity (Extramarital Affair)	79	38.90%

Responses related to infidelity in above table can be compared with previously noted responses related to causes of divorce. While 79 responses indicated that infidelity caused difficulties in their marriage, 49 respondents (Table 7) indicated that infidelity was the cause of their divorce. This relationship can be further stated to note that in the 30 instances (38%) where infidelity caused relationship difficulties, those difficulties did not result in divorce.

The following table identifies the types of assistance that OCFA employees have sought when experiencing difficulties in their marriage. A significant number have chosen to seek outside marriage and family counseling, rather than internal OCFA assistance.

*Table 10: Types of Marital Issue Assistance*

Types of Marital Issue Assistance		
	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Employee Assistance Program	36	14.00%
OCFA Chaplain/Clergy	16	6.20%
Marriage and Family Counselor	196	76.30%
Psychiatrist/Psychologist	44	17.10%
Trusted Friend	84	32.70%

Half of the respondents indicated that the OCFA has adequate resources to assist employees with marital issues; however, only 37% indicated that they were interested in utilizing those programs. Survey respondents were queried that if they had indicated that they would not

utilize OCFA programs, what was the reason? Responses can be reviewed in the following table.

*Table 11: Reasons for Non-Interest in OCFA Marriage Counseling Programs*

Reasons for Non-Interest in OCFA Marriage Programs		
	Responses	Percentage
Embarrassment	28	10.50%
Confidentiality	84	31.60%
None of Co-Workers Business	63	23.70%
None of OCFA's Business	111	41.70%
Other	103	38.70%

Respondents were also asked that if they had answered affirmatively that they would be interested in attending OCFA marriage programs, were there any specific topics that they would be interested in? Seventy two responses were received and are summarized in Appendix D.

*Can any correlations between divorce in the OCFA and the general public be identified?*

Survey questions 22 and 23 specifically targeted to determine the general perceptions and opinions of employees pertaining to comparing the OCFA to national averages and to the general public. 42% indicated that they believed that rates of divorce in the OCFA are higher; 5% lower; and 54% no different than the national average.

Compared to the general public, 70% indicated they believed that the rate of divorce in the fire service is higher; 4% believe that it is lower; and 26% indicated there was no difference.

Determining the actual rates of divorce in the fire service was challenging for purposes of this research. There was minimal empirical data noted specific to this subject in documents and journals research. Most of the information located was generic and anecdotal, with no references to verifiable sources.

Finally, respondents were asked if there was anything that wasn't asked in the survey that they would have added. Those responses are summarized in Appendix E.

### Discussion

Divorce continues to be a societal problem, both in the general public and in the fire service. Historically, the rates of divorce are known to differ widely between nations, as well as between states within America. In 2008, the U.S. had the highest rate of divorce (49%) of any industrialized nation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). During 2009, the national rates were 48% for men and 55% for women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a). Since the 1950's, the number of divorcees to non-divorcees has more than tripled (Teachman et al., 2000). Studies have also indicated that it is the wife that initiates divorce approximately 75% of the time (Marguiles, 2009).

Over the past half century, Americans are entering into marriage at an older age (Copen et al., 2012). Social norms have changed the landscape of couples marrying, with many young couples currently choosing to cohabit before marrying. During 1960 to 1998, cohabiting increased ten-fold, from 439,000 to 4.2 million individuals (Divorce Source, n.d.). 68% of unions from 1997 to 2001 were by cohabitation (Copen et al., 2012). Although overall, this is reducing the incidence of marriage and reducing the incident of divorces since there are fewer marriages, the divorce rate has remained at approximately 50% of first marriages since the 1980's. Second and third marriages fail at much higher rates (Divorce Source, n.d.).

Divorce from marriage can be a traumatic and emotionally painful experience, to both spouses, but significantly on a couple's children. Many divorce couples report years of acrimony leading up to the act of divorce (Pam, 2013). A troubling statistic is that approximately half of all divorces are in families with children (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Emotional scars left on

children have been shown to be a dramatic contributor to many of society's problems. Studies have shown that children of divorce have higher rates of unwed pregnancies, higher rates of incarceration, as well as numerous other issues detrimental to a healthy family life and society as a whole (Pam, 2013). As if going through the process of divorce isn't hard enough, approximately 30% of all children in the U.S. gain a stepparent, or become a member of a step family (Greene et al., 2003).

The emotional, physical, and financial impact on divorcing couples can take its toll over time. Decreasing finances, isolation, loneliness, and broken family connections can cause significant stress over time (Anderson, 2003). At the same time, the higher earner will see a drop in wages due to alimony and child support and the other spouse may find him/herself needing to re-enter the workplace (Whiting, 2012).

For many years, there have been complications and issues in calculating the rates of marriage and divorce (Copen et al., 2012). Prior to the 1995, demographers calculated rates of marriage and rates of divorce by simply evaluating the numbers per 1000 population and subtracting the raw numbers from one another. However, this did not take into account the factors that simply taking the entire population into account also included children and those adults who had never married and are known as the crude rates (Divorce Source, n.d.). However, since 1995, demographers now calculate the effective rates of marriage and divorce by calculating the number of first marriages and divorce in first marriages between the the ages of 15 and 64 (Copen et al., 2012).

Misconceptions regarding divorce rates in the fire service have been fueled by anecdotal writings in fire service journals and other periodicals which state that the fire service has one of the highest divorce rates of any occupation (Rawles, 2003). However, due to the research by

Radford University researchers, Aamodt and McCoy (2009), these anecdotal figures have been demystified and verified. Although the intent of these researchers was not to show the rates of the fire service, rather, their research was to document rates of divorce in law enforcement officers. However, utilizing the occupational data that they compiled, this researcher was able to extrapolate the data for the fire service, which demonstrates that the average rate of divorce for firefighters is only 14%. Additionally, the researchers of this data listed other occupations within the fire service other than firefighters (Table 3). When averaged, all of the fire service occupations within their study remain at an average of 14%.

Within the OCFA, the rate of divorce among survey respondents was shown to be an average of 29%. This figure was calculated using response data from survey questions pertaining to marriage and divorce. In hindsight, it would have been simpler to have asked the respondents to indicate whether or not their first marriage had ended in divorce, possibly with better accuracy. The OCFA rate of 29% is higher than the average shown by Aamodt and McCoy (2009), but lower than the national rate of 50% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b), and significantly lower than the average within Orange County (Whiting, 2012).

However, the fact that the fire service rates are lower than the national averages, and that the OCFA's rates are also lower than the national and local averages, does not minimize the impact to firefighters and their families. Significant stressors exist in the lives of firefighters which cannot be ignored or minimized to ensure a healthy family life. McDowell (2013) and Talbert (1996) both offer that although physical fitness is often looked at as the most important aspect of a firefighter's career, failure to focus on the emotional and behavioral well-being can be detrimental and cause long-lasting effects.



Similar to the general public, firefighters will often exhibit signs of stress and emotional instability long before problems are manifested and divorce is imminent. Changes in attitude, work behavior, illness, job performance issues, and spending considerable time away from home are common denominators that there are problems at home (Rawles, 2003). Often times, there are clear warning signs that are precursors to divorce: lack of conflict resolution, emotional disengagement, disaffection, lack of sex, increased focus outside of the marriage, and preparing themselves for a single life (Marguiles, 2009). These issues were also noted by OCFA members in the survey instrument noted in Appendix C and the open responses noted for survey question 21 in Appendix E.

Although there are numerous counseling programs and opportunities in society to help individuals cope with relational issues and divorce, the fire service has been slow to offer assistance to its struggling employees. Some fire agencies offer information programs on recognizing symptoms, and providing basic counseling (Rawles, 2003; McDowell, 2013), however most either lack the vision or the resources to provide significant education and practical tools to their employees.

Within the OCFA, there are several programs which can provide assistance to employees experiencing family and marital issues. The OCFA currently has a strategic objective focused on assisting employees. Additionally, the OCFA employs an outside health agency to administer its EAP program, where employees can access resources for substance abuse, marital counseling, as well as a wide variety of other services (OCFA, 2010). However, the majority of employees do not avail themselves of this service due to rumors of past experiences by other employees, as well the program being associated with their employer.

Additionally, there are other services that the OCFA provides which some employees have chosen to utilize: OCFA Chaplain Program and the OCFA Benevolent Association (OCFA, 2010). Both of these programs and association are internal programs with an outstanding reputation for providing assistance and maintaining confidentiality.

However, as noted in the survey instrument and contained within the results section and appendices of this research, employees are reluctant to access these services provided by their employer. Noted within the survey results were that the employee's felt that their issues were none of their employer and fellow employee's business.

This research project was chosen by the researcher based on nearly 30 years within the OCFA and observations of co-workers experiencing job stresses, marital problems, and divorces. Although national averages and other anecdotal and unproven figures are discussed casually, the question has existed for many years as to the actual, data-proven figures. Discovering through research that the national rate for firefighters was significantly lower than previously thought and discovering that the actual rate within the OCFA is considerably lower was a seminal moment for this researcher. Although the fire service as a whole, and the OCFA as a local agency have set in motion programs and assistance for firefighters and other fire service personnel, there is still much work to be done to ensure that the fire service becomes better at educating, counseling, and healing itself. Increasing the proactive education provided to the fire service will help to provide the emotional, behavioral, and physical support needed for firefighters and their spouses to reduce the incidence of divorce.

This study has shown that although the rate of divorce by firefighters is less than average, the incidence is no less traumatic to the individual and their family. By educating its employees and by providing counseling opportunities, the OCFA has the capability to improve the outcomes

for its employees to remain married. This has the potential of improving the lives of the firefighters and society as a whole.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for future research, future work, and future development by the OCFA and others:

- Provide a copy of this research report to OCFA management.
- Identify internal and community stakeholders to recruit as peer advocates.
- Develop proposals to OCFA Management outlining the need to engage employees and outside specialists to develop plans to implement new programs.
- Develop goals, objectives, and timeframes for implementation within one year.
- Develop methods and procedures for education, mentoring, and counseling for OCFA employees.
- Develop lesson plans for instruction at firefighter academies and officer training.
- Perform evaluation and analysis of programs at 6 month and 1 year intervals.

### *Future readers:*

- It is recommended that research to replicate these procedures in other agencies include new research on local, state, and national marriage and divorce statistics specific to the fire service. This will help to provide new and accurate data which will be beneficial for the fire service as a whole and to the research community.

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## Appendix A

**Table 1336. Marriage and Divorce Rates by Country: 1980 to 2008**

[Per 1,000 population aged 15–64 years]

Country	Marriage rate				Divorce rate			
	1980	1990	2000	2008	1980	1990	2000	2008
United States <sup>1</sup> .....	15.9	14.9	12.5	10.6	7.9	7.2	6.2	5.2
Canada .....	11.5	10.0	7.5	6.4	3.7	4.2	3.4	(NA)
Japan .....	9.8	8.4	9.2	(NA)	1.8	1.8	3.1	(NA)
Denmark .....	8.0	9.1	10.8	10.3	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.1
France .....	9.7	7.7	7.9	6.6	2.4	2.8	3.0	(NA)
Germany <sup>2</sup> .....	(X)	8.2	7.6	6.9	(X)	2.5	3.5	3.5
Ireland <sup>3</sup> .....	10.9	8.3	7.6	(NA)	(NA)	(NA)	1.0	(NA)
Italy .....	8.7	8.2	7.3	6.3	0.3	0.7	1.0	1.3
Netherlands .....	9.6	9.4	8.2	6.7	2.7	2.8	3.2	2.9
Spain .....	9.4	8.5	7.9	6.2	(NA)	0.9	1.4	3.5
Sweden .....	7.1	7.4	7.0	8.3	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.5
United Kingdom .....	11.6	10.0	8.0	(NA)	4.1	4.1	4.0	(NA)

NA Not available. X Not applicable. <sup>1</sup> Divorce rates exclude data for California, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota in 2008. <sup>2</sup> Data are for 1991 instead of 1990. <sup>3</sup> Divorce not allowed by law prior to 1997.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, updated and revised from "Families and Work in Transition in 12 Countries, 1980–2001," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 2003, with national sources, some of which may be unpublished.



## Appendix B

**Table 132. People Who Got Married, and Divorced in the Past 12 Months by State: 2009**

[In thousands (2,287 represents 2,287,000). For 12 month period prior to interview date, which occurred for each month in calendar year. For example, a person interviewed in January 2009 could report they got married between January 2008 and January 2009. Persons 15 years and over. Vital event is counted in state in which respondent lived at the time of survey. Based on 2009 American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS universe includes the household population and the group quarters population." Based on a sample and subject to sampling variability. See Appendix III]

State	People who got married in the past 12 months				People who got divorced in the past 12 months			
	Males (1,000)	Marriage rate per 1,000 men	Females (1,000)	Marriage rate per 1,000 women	Males (1,000)	Divorce rate per 1,000 men	Females (1,000)	Divorce rate per 1,000 women
<b>United States</b> . . . . .	<b>2,287</b>	<b>19.1</b>	<b>2,209</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>1,099</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>1,220</b>	<b>9.7</b>
Alabama . . . . .	36	20.2	37	18.8	23	12.7	27	13.9
Alaska . . . . .	7	26.0	7	24.7	4	12.5	4	16.2
Arizona . . . . .	52	20.3	49	19.0	28	10.8	31	11.9
Arkansas . . . . .	29	26.4	27	23.0	15	13.5	15	12.8
California . . . . .	276	19.1	256	17.5	116	8.0	130	8.9
Colorado . . . . .	47	23.5	44	22.0	23	11.6	19	9.4
Connecticut . . . . .	24	17.1	24	15.9	9	6.7	16	10.7
Delaware . . . . .	8	23.1	8	20.9	3	8.9	3	8.7
District of Columbia . . . . .	4	17.7	5	16.9	1	6.3	2	8.3
Florida . . . . .	126	17.0	118	15.2	63	8.5	77	9.9
Georgia . . . . .	82	22.1	81	20.4	43	11.5	46	11.7
Hawaii . . . . .	13	24.9	11	21.9	4	8.3	4	7.8
Idaho . . . . .	15	25.8	15	25.1	5	7.7	6	9.7
Illinois . . . . .	89	17.9	86	16.3	40	8.0	42	8.0
Indiana . . . . .	49	19.8	49	18.9	27	11.0	28	10.7
Iowa . . . . .	25	21.5	27	21.5	12	10.2	13	10.8
Kansas . . . . .	24	22.1	24	20.8	12	10.6	12	10.2
Kentucky . . . . .	37	22.2	37	20.5	21	12.6	24	13.5
Louisiana . . . . .	35	20.6	33	17.6	19	11.0	19	10.0
Maine . . . . .	7	13.5	7	12.2	7	13.0	5	9.1
Maryland . . . . .	40	18.3	39	16.1	19	8.8	20	8.2
Massachusetts . . . . .	41	15.8	40	14.1	20	7.8	20	7.0
Michigan . . . . .	65	16.5	64	15.6	36	9.2	38	9.3
Minnesota . . . . .	32	15.3	33	15.4	15	7.4	17	7.8
Mississippi . . . . .	21	19.3	21	17.3	12	11.1	15	12.5
Missouri . . . . .	43	18.6	46	18.7	22	9.5	26	10.4
Montana . . . . .	7	18.5	8	18.8	4	9.1	4	11.1
Nebraska . . . . .	14	19.6	14	18.9	6	8.8	7	9.8
Nevada . . . . .	24	23.2	23	22.4	13	12.3	13	12.3
New Hampshire . . . . .	9	16.7	9	15.5	5	10.1	5	9.6
New Jersey . . . . .	50	14.8	48	13.3	21	6.1	22	6.0
New Mexico . . . . .	16	20.4	16	19.9	8	10.2	8	10.1
New York . . . . .	128	16.8	122	14.8	50	6.6	60	7.3
North Carolina . . . . .	74	20.4	74	19.0	36	9.9	40	10.3
North Dakota . . . . .	7	26.7	7	27.3	2	8.0	2	8.3
Ohio . . . . .	76	16.9	74	15.4	43	9.5	48	10.0
Oklahoma . . . . .	34	23.8	33	22.4	18	12.8	21	14.1
Oregon . . . . .	29	18.9	29	18.1	16	10.4	18	11.4
Pennsylvania . . . . .	77	15.5	77	14.3	38	7.7	40	7.4
Rhode Island . . . . .	6	15.0	7	15.1	4	9.4	4	9.5
South Carolina . . . . .	32	18.1	30	15.8	14	8.1	15	7.8
South Dakota . . . . .	6	20.1	7	20.3	3	10.9	3	8.9
Tennessee . . . . .	47	19.4	45	17.1	28	11.4	30	11.6
Texas . . . . .	202	21.5	195	20.4	94	10.0	114	11.9
Utah . . . . .	30	29.6	27	26.7	10	10.2	11	10.8
Vermont . . . . .	4	16.4	4	15.4	2	9.6	3	11.5
Virginia . . . . .	63	20.5	61	18.8	28	8.9	33	10.2
Washington . . . . .	57	21.4	55	20.3	27	10.0	29	10.6
West Virginia . . . . .	16	22.2	16	20.8	8	10.9	9	11.8
Wisconsin . . . . .	39	17.2	38	16.2	19	8.3	17	7.5
Wyoming . . . . .	7	30.7	6	28.7	2	10.3	2	10.7

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 American Community Survey, B12501, "Marriage in the Last Year by Sex by Marital Status for the Population 15 Years and Over," B12502, "Marriages Ending in Widowhood in the Last Year by Sex by Marital Status for the Population 15 Years and Over," B12503, "Divorces in the Last Year by Sex by Marital Status for the Population 15 Years and Over," <[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?\\_program=ACS&\\_submenuId=&\\_lang=en&\\_ts=>](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_program=ACS&_submenuId=&_lang=en&_ts=>)

## Appendix C

Divorce Rates Within OCFA  
Survey Instrument  
Total Survey Requests Delivered = 1,995  
Total Responses Received = 472

Q1. *What is your current employment status with OCFA?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Employed	82.2%	388
Retired	16.9%	80
Volunteer	0.8%	4
		472
	answered question	472
	skipped question	0

Q2. *Where do you work in the OCFA?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Executive Management	2.4%	11
Operations	84.0%	382
Finance	1.8%	8
Fire Prevention	4.6%	21
Support	7.3%	33
		455
	answered question	455
	skipped question	17

Q3. *Within your area/department, how would you classify yourself?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Worker	53.0%	245
Supervisor	32.7%	151
Manager	11.7%	54
Administrator	2.6%	12
		462
	answered question	462
	skipped question	10

Q4. *What is your current age?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
20 to 30 years	3.4%	16
30 to 40 years	23.6%	111
40 to 50 years	30.9%	145
Over 50 years	42.1%	198
<hr/>		
	answered question	470
	skipped question	2

Q5. *What is your gender?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	91.1%	428
Female	8.9%	42
<hr/>		
	answered question	470
	skipped question	2

Q6. *How long have you worked for the OCFA?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 10 years	32.5%	153
10 to 20 years	23.8%	112
20 to 30 years	24.0%	113
Over 30 years	19.7%	93
<hr/>		
	answered question	471
	skipped question	1

Q7. *What is your current marital status?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Married	84.2%	395
Single	15.8%	74
<hr/>		
	answered question	469
	skipped question	3

Q8. *How many times have you been married?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
0 times	5.1%	24
1 times	73.9%	349
2 times	16.5%	78
3 times	3.6%	17
4 times	0.8%	4
answered question		472
skipped question		0

Q9. *How would you classify marital/relationship issues when related to your OCFA career?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Work schedule	29.3%	120
Stress at work	27.1%	111
Too much focus on career	20.2%	83
Time away from home	65.6%	269
answered question		410
skipped question		62

Q10. *If you have been divorced, what would you consider as the primary cause?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Schedule	8.9%	12
Stress	7.4%	10
Lack of communication	36.3%	49
Career focus	11.1%	15
Infidelity (affair)	36.3%	49
answered question		135
skipped question		337

Q11. *If you are married and have not been divorced, have you ever considered it?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	31.0%	104
No	69.0%	232
answered question		336
skipped question		136

Q12. *If you considered divorce, but did not follow through with it, what was the cause?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Impact to children/family	74.4%	87
Loss of retirement benefits	8.5%	10
Cost	9.4%	11
Social stigma	4.3%	5
Loneliness	3.4%	4
<hr/>		
	answered question	117
	skipped question	355

Q13. *If you have had difficulties in your marriage/relationship, have you ever discussed it with a co-worker?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	68.0%	280
No	32.0%	132
<hr/>		
	answered question	412
	skipped question	60

Q14. *Have any of the following choices contributed to difficulties in your marriage or other relationship?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Outside social activities	46.8%	95
Peer bonding	23.2%	47
Substance abuse (alcohol or drugs)	18.2%	37
Infidelity (affair)	38.9%	79
<hr/>		
	answered question	203
	skipped question	269

Q15. *If you have had difficulties in your marriage/relationship, have you ever sought outside help?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	63.8%	248
No	36.2%	141
<hr/>		
	answered question	389
	skipped question	83

Q16. *If yes, what type of assistance have you sought?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Employee Assistance Program (EAP)	14.0%	36
OCFA Chaplain/Personal Clergy	6.2%	16
Marriage and family counselor	76.3%	196
Psychiatrist/Psychologist	17.1%	44
Trusted friend	32.7%	84
	answered question	257
	skipped question	215

Q17. *Did the outside assistance you sought help?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	72.1%	186
No	27.9%	72
	answered question	258
	skipped question	214

Q18. *Do you feel that the OCFA has adequate resources to help employees with marriage/relationship issues?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	49.8%	162
No	50.2%	163
	answered question	325
	skipped question	147

Q19. *Would you be interested in attending marriage/family programs offered by the OCFA or an employee association?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes	36.5%	148
No	63.5%	258
	answered question	406
	skipped question	66

Q20. *If your answer to the previous question was "No", why not?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Embarrassment	10.5%	28
Confidentiality	31.6%	84
None of co-worker's business	23.7%	63
None of OCFA's business	41.7%	111
Other	38.7%	103
	answered question	266
	skipped question	206

Q21. *If yes, are there any specific topics you would be interested in?*

Answer Options	Response Count
	72
answered question (See Appendix D)	72
skipped question	400

Q22. *How would you classify the rate of divorce in OCFA, as compared to the national averages?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Higher	41.8%	179
Lower	4.7%	20
No difference	53.5%	229
	answered question	428
	skipped question	44

Q23. *How would you rank the divorce rate in the fire service, when compared to the general public?*

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Higher	70.3%	307
Lower	3.7%	16
No difference	26.1%	114
	answered question	437
	skipped question	35

Q24. *Is there anything that hasn't been asked in this survey regarding marriage, divorce, and the relation to the OCFA that you would like to add?*

Answer Options	Response Count
	96
answered question (See Appendix E)	96
skipped question	376

Q25. *If you would be willing to be contacted for an interview, please enter your contact information below:*

Answer Options	Response Count
	85
answered question	85
skipped question	387



## Appendix D

Q21. *If yes, are there any specific topics you would be interested in?*

Answer Options	Response Count
	72
answered question	72
skipped question	400

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STRESS, PEER PRESSURE, SOCIAL EXCEPTANCE OF INFIDELITY

Aging and marriage

Focus on positive reinforcements vs. negative impacts

Not needed

The role of step-parenting in a successful relationship

Money management

Communication

Time away from family

Communication; skills for marriages when dealing with a stressful job and lack of sleep due to call load.

Stress reduction; health issues related to stress and sleep deprivation;

Work family life balance, communications

Marriage therapy

Stress issues related to critical calls (death issues that non-OCFA members don't deal with).

Sex

Faith

Something that would expose significant others to "a day in the life" type experience so they had a better understanding of the demands, both physical and emotional, etc. A spouse boot camp or similar...

Communication skills

Focus on activities

Communication

Teen issues...co-parenting, post-divorce

Marriage and family counseling. I tried EAP and they do not help unless you are suicidal or thinking of hurting someone

Trust

Managing mixed families (step children)

Child Raising Tips, communication

Communication

Fire schedule/children

Have a segment focus on young couples

Long term planning for young adults

Solutions to medics being forced and away from home

Biblical Marriage Counseling

Strengthening a relationship

Communication to keep the marriage strong when gone for so many days in a row.

Why should an OCFA firefighter who had an affair with another OCFA firefighter's wife get to keep his job?

De-stressing techniques

Communication, Finance, Problematic children.

Ways to minimize work impacts on personal lives and time

Marriage counseling

FINANCE

Not that I can think of

Marital communication, how to cope with spouse time away from home (48-72 or longer), finance, budgeting

What can a FF do to protect themselves from divorce? personal and professional.

Communication and understanding of the firefighters job as it relates to a "second family"

Communication breakdown so it doesn't happen again

Family/marital difficulties as it relates to the fire service.

Enhancing communication

Hyper vigilance

The importance of shared values

Humility, servant-hood, sacrifice, leading a family

Communication

Financial impact of divorce. Communication options. Fairness of custody issues.

Security and Trust

Husband and Wife round table discussions, with the elders who have navigated the pitfalls

Time away from family explained to spouse

Parenting teenagers

Communications, finances

**GENDER REASSIGNMENT**

Time management (quality time)

Communication

Finances, Impact of 24 hour schedule on family, Possible sacrifices family will have to make for career advancements

Communication, respect

**UNDERSTANDING THE STRESSES OF THE JOB, FINANCES.**

## Appendix E

Q24. *Is there anything that hasn't been asked in this survey regarding marriage, divorce, and the relation to the OCFA that you would like to add?*

Answer Options	Response Count
	96
answered question	96
skipped question	376

- 
- \* Divorce by job duties... Paramedics vs Firefighters. Contact with aggressive nurses.
  - \* Impact of distance to fire station for families to visit. I believe this was a factor in my former relationship. My ex use to visit frequently when I was employed at another agency closer to our home. She did this primarily when I was working a 72 hr. shift.
  - \* A "life in the fire service" for both husbands and wives should be available at the beginning of their careers, with a "binder" handout that provides sources of help. Not necessarily in my opinion the business of OCFA, but still help may be needed from other resources currently available.
  - \* The better you are at your job, the more time the department wanted from you.
  - \* We have a strong marriage, based on our love for each other and a relationship with Jesus Christ. Marriage is as lot of work. requiring both partners to honor one another and a commitment to the promises we made on our wedding day. 38 years and still she is the love of my life.
  - \* Extreme focus on career, or any other activity, at the loss of family is a huge life error. Also a big part of marriage is two way trust. Some personalities cannot cope with a partner not at arm's reach every night.
  - \* As for question 14, I believe money and different thoughts in raising children would be a some of the greatest causes of divorce. I know that was the biggest 2 issues for us.
  - \* Some blame for the high divorce rate must be attributed to the amount of forced OT that prevents families spending holidays together. (meaning: only scheduled forced OT that is a result of short staffing and NOT related to extended emergency incidents. OT is an expected duty on extended natural or man-made disasters and we knew this when we became FF's)
  - \* Did you realize after marriage that you should not have married in the first place. Did the time off from work provide more opportunities to be away from family and contribute to doing the wrong thing with the wrong people?
  - \* Has there been an opportunity or have you had during your employment with OCFA an affair with a fellow employee?
  - \* The infidelity was by my spouse not I the employee.
  - \* I feel having a religion, (LDS) in my case; has been an very important factor in the success and longevity of my marriage. It would be interesting to see if statistics support this
  - \* One of the higher things that I have witnessed in our organization is that 'as an organization' and our treatment of each other, there is a lot of stress brought into the homes by our own 'brotherhood' and our viciousness towards each other. We are good when the chips are down but as soon as all is well the backstabbing and character assassination runs rampant.
  - \* Question #10 - reasoning for divorce not covered in your survey - ex-wife was physically and verbally abusive to children and myself, I ended up with full custody of my children and was a single parent still on shift work - Judge allowed this. Question #9 - reasoning not really

covered for my divorce situation unless you take in to account times when I had to leave work due to an abuse situation with ex-wife and children (schedule?). Question #19 - Feel this would be a viable option for those seeking counsel along with other options - I personally sought help through my church and professional counselors the church recommended in my circumstance.

- \* My divorce was connected to a service-related injury which I had. I needed a surgery which disabled me 90%.
- \* Consider the positive effects of the fire service on marriage also. A common interest, ladies auxiliary, outside activities, respect, etc.
- \* Issues involving being married with kids vs. no kids; marrying someone who is a stay at home parent vs. another working spouse
- \* How about are your happily married and don't have issues? . . . . YES
- \* I find I have stress issues when I have a call at work that closely resembles my home situation.
- \* My wife rarely recognizes stressors I encounter at work.
- \* Expecting employees to commit to 14 days straight away from home for out-of-county strike team assignments is an unfair burden on the marriage and should be stopped immediately.
- \* I would be more likely to seek help outside of work- many ff gossip.
- \* Too much time away from home (forces, OT) with young children is "no bueno" ! Hard on the spouse and adds stress for her....
- \* In a relationship, it seems like it is harder to be the significant other of a shift-worker, than it is for the shift worker themselves. Significant others have a very hard time understanding the demands of the job and the cost for all that the job provides, i.e., financial stability and security, etc. They seem to think that choosing this career means we choose it over them and that creates a constant struggle and resentment - for work, coworkers, training, overtime, etc. It would be helpful to have some type of orientation for the spouses/significant others as well so they don't feel so threatened by the job and have more realistic expectations of a shift-worker partner.
- \* Provide a selection that doesn't attribute one's profession to the divorce; my divorce was not a result of my employment with the OCFA.
- \* I would like to explain my choices for #9 below "How would you classify marital/relationship issues when related to your OCFA career?" \* Work schedule & Stress at work The work schedule is not the issue, but being forced or expected to fill or attend is. Yes I happily took the job with full knowledge of the consequences. After time these surprises behind door #1, 2 or 3 took a toll on what I brought home from work & my children, my wife missed me, and I them. Being away more than being with is not family. My wife was both the father and mother for the majority & did a great job. It just makes me feel sad that I missed so many memories because of a force or a trade or a class or a fill for OK10.....or on and on. So yep too many hours & the constant grind of being a FCD for many years got to me and impacted those close to me, one being my spouse.
- \* Does being forced to work negatively impact your quality of life and marriage.
- \* For the purpose of this survey, I consider infidelity comparable to molestation, statutory rape, and/or indecent exposure.
- \* I am not paramedic, but all of the forces are killing their family life.
- \* only suggestion is to put UNK with some of these questions.
- \* I have read that individuals with higher education and religious background are less likely to get a divorce. It could be interesting to add to your survey. For #10- You could add an optional field to add in what they believe to be the cause for more information. (For the questions that apply to only certain individuals-you could put an N/a as an option).
- \* At HQ, stress level has continued to escalate with more work and less support staff -
- \* How have your family circumstances affected your work performance? How can you separate, to the best degree, your home challenges and your work performance?

- \* Financial problems
- \* This job makes some guys think they are 'bitchin'. Their crap does stink however and we ALL need to remember we are servants to the public and are called to be humble.
- \* If I were having relationship issues, I MIGHT attend an ocfa/3631 offering. but the question was "are you"... so i answered "no"
- \* I think that our schedule. Especially the 9/80 and the schedules that people work because of overtime/backfill contribute to the lack of family time or at home time that allows for them or a spouse to grow apart.
- \* I would have ended my marriage sooner had we both not been employed by the OCFA.
- \* Some limitations to the format, the issue of alcohol suggests that it's the fire employee, when in fact, it was in our case the wife's alcoholism that was the relationship stressor.
- \* Hard career on marriage and families!!!
- \* solutions to medics being forced and away from home
- \* Look at the average firefighter's behavior / attitude. Many are confident, individuals with a good deal of ego. I believe this type of behavior or way individuals conduct themselves is part of who the fire service looks for. Confident strong individuals. Perhaps not conducive to relationships. At least at a young age.
- \* The 56 hr/wk work schedule in itself is not an issue. However, as a firefighter/paramedic, I often get forced OT, particularly on weekends and holidays. These are times where families in the American culture typically spend quality time together. The inability to due things with my family on these type of occasions has certainly impacted my relationship with my wife and children. The amount of forced OT is excessive and harmful.
- \* OCFA should not tolerate infidelity of its firefighters with other OCFA firefighters wives. It lowers moral and should be considered theft. OCFA has a history of this.
- \* Religious impact
- \* We are very fortunate to have the Chaplain's in the OCFA that we could call on for advice that have a better understanding of what we do and how we can improve our marriages.
- \* If the grass is greener somewhere else, you need to take better care of your lawn.
- \* I think that there is a direct correlation with social networking and divorce. I think that this is one topic that should be looked at.
- \* Frequency of pornography viewing. Has pornography effected your marital/sexual expectations? Has pornography played a role in your marital problems?
- \* I have a great marriage and many questions did not pertain to me.
- \* Who initiated the infidelity? Was this situation brought about by your spouse? Does the fact that you work for the OCFA make you more vulnerable to divorce because of "built-in" securities provided by OCFA?
- \* Sexual affairs - not necessarily in the physical sense but in the form of some type of social media / texting / e-mail / internet are rampant in this organization and I am sure elsewhere. This can lead to sexual addiction without the person even realizing it. This sexual addiction can lead to affairs which can lead to infidelity... etc
- \* More than anything else, I believe that Pranic Energy Healing saved my marriage and my family, and I wish everyone considering divorce would at least consider it before they get a divorce.
- \* The excessive forcing of paramedics is a genuine marital/family problem.
- \* Depth of relationship with the Lord, firefighters/spouses parents' marital status
- \* Attended a great seminar that attempted to explain higher public safety divorce rates with adrenaline inducing activities...made sense
- \* I wouldn't seek counseling because my wife and I are doing well now. We had a problem years ago and we both decided to work at it. I'm glad we did it and we have a great relationship. I would seek the help if i had a relationship problem.

- \* At first when everything is upside down and sideways, the person is embarrassed and feels shame that it did not work, and does not understand, then after time the real cause is found. I have heard so many times from that their wife said I just don't love you anymore. I think counseling is a good idea but at that point in time honestly it is usually too late.
- \* Most of the challenges my wife and I had in our marriage were early on before I worked for OCFA.
- \* Spirituality and how it helps in successful marriages!
- \* Does not address matter of spirituality, faith or morals. All significant aspects relative to marriage.
- \* More choices for "difficulties" that contributed such as "money troubles" and "spouse incompatibility" "how many times have you been divorced?" "Do you feel the benevolent and union have adequate resources to help?" The union should help, they protect wages and benefits. The easiest way to get a 50% cut in pay is to get a divorce, let alone the trauma it causes families.
- \* Post-traumatic stress syndrome
- \* Do you feel that your position as a firefighter has increased your opportunities for infidelity? Have you ever acted on those opportunities of infidelity?
- \* Seek GOD for Counseling.
- \* Employee stress is much greater at OCFA than at my prior employers. I am sure that it would have a contributing effect on the longevity of marriage (and life) for staff members.
- \* When firefighters contemplate marriage - even to another firefighter - a very detailed and extensive review of their lives now - in one year - after children and finally retirement. All have different impacts - time away (24-120 hours) - missing holidays-school days-weddings-family commitments- strong independent nature of both spouses to carry on routine life routine in absence of (ff dad or mom). Consequences of divorce: numerous factors!!!! PRE-NUPITUAL AGREEMENT (IRONCLAD--NO OUTS OR OPTIONS) Question 12: Stayed in relationship 8 years longer because of impact to children & catholic beliefs. BIG MISTAKE for me and my children. As adults now they both agree divorce earlier would have been better - because I parented them both without their mom....
- \* Marital or divorce issues are not always related to our career or aspects of our career. In my case, aspects of my career enhanced my marriage.
- \* Scheduling issue esp. with children/spouse is HUGE issue. Alternating days off/Forces, etc... Is a relationship ender.
- \* What percentage of married couples attended some type of pre-marital counseling or similar classes? What percentage consider themselves affiliated with a type of religion. How does the influence of their religious beliefs influence the idea/result of divorce.
- \* Amount of shifts/hours worked per week. I am thinking there may be a correlation between number of hours worked and quality of family relationships. (ie. Work-Life Balance) very hard to maintain a family and a marriage within the fire service...Not the fault of the OCFA but the job in general
- \* I would like to see the OCFA develop a policy for Fraternalization. It has been my personal observation that many use the OCFA as a "social/dating network" regardless of marital status.... and to this I say - GET OUT OF THE POOL! it's difficult to request or enforce professionalism when employees are not discouraged to refrain from extra marital affairs/relationships within the work place or that cross rank..... an on-line training of sexual harassment does not adequately discourage this OCFA custom wife/husband swap. - - just being honest!
- \* I think this could be a very helpful area to explore for a lot of our people.
- \* I believe that faith based marriage have the most success, but OCFA being a Gov. Agency would not be able to provide such programs.