DIVORCE IS IN JACKSONVILLE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIVORCE IS JUST THE MOST AWFUL THING IN THE WORLD. - JOHN DENVER

Divorces cost many in a lot of different ways. Fortunately, divorces in Duval County, home of Jacksonville, Florida have significantly decreased over the last three years. This independent research report was done by the Florida State University's (FSU) Center for Prevention Research and takes a look at:

What are the characteristics of Duval County and the city of Jacksonville and are they unique

What are the results of 50 randomly selected individuals going through faith-based marriage counseling

What are the trends of marriages and divorces nation-wide over the last ten years

What are the statistical trends and realities of divorce rates per thousand population in Duval County

What are the probable causes of the significant divorce reduction rates in Duval County, and

What are some organizations who are working very hard to reduce divorce rates in Duval County

This independent research effort is the result of a request by Live the Life (LTL) because they believe their efforts are making a difference in Duval County. The approach that Live the Life is taking in Jacksonville is the implementation of a church-focused Community Marriage Initiative (CMI). In a church-focused CMI, a lead agency – in this case Live the Life – empowers a large number of churches within a community to implement highly effective self-sufficient marriage ministries across all the ages and stages of the marital life cycle. The three main components of their approach are to:

1. Increase the Supply of marriage programs and resources within a community
2. Increase the Demand for marriage programs and resources within a community
3. Develop and promote a Community Marriage Resource Center website – which is an electronic clearinghouse of marriage related resources within a community. This is the way that the "Increased Demand" finds the "Increased Supply".

Their approach is based upon a simple fact – which is that very few people ever really WANT to get a divorce. Divorces almost always occur because one or both people think their present situation is hopeless, so they just give up! To address this, LTL now believes that the best way to reduce the number of divorces that occur in a community is to "flood the community" with high-quality marriage-related programs and resources – and then let people know that those resources are out there! So LTL "restores hope to the hopeless" by giving them access to the resources that they need to build the type of marriage that they were hoping to have when they first got married.

LTL began the church-focused CMI mid-year in 2015 and it continues today by using multi-phased programmatic activities to provide couples and families additional options other than divorce.

We hope you enjoy this report and gain valuable information about divorces and how they can be reduced like Duval County has experienced over the last three years.

STEPHEN HODGE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FSU INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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DUVAL COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

At the request of Live the Life (LTL), an organization that works to strengthen marriage and family relationships, The Florida Center for Prevention Research (FCPR) has performed an analysis of the Duval County Florida marriage dissolution (divorce) rates from 1995 to 2016. Divorce rates in Duval County have exhibited a declining trend over the last two decades; however, before discussing the primary statistical analysis and causes of the decline in divorce rates, let's look at some information about Duval County, Florida.

Population Data: Duval County is located in Florida's upper NE corner and is comprised of the following communities with estimated populations from 2013:[1]

Jacksonville	842,583. (Jacksonville is not only the largest city, area wise, in the state of Florida, but in the contiguous 48 states. It also has the highest population in Florida.)[2]
Jacksonville Beach	21,823
Atlantic Beach	12,985
Neptune Beach	7,124

According to the 2010 Census:

The racial makeup of the county is:[3]

RACIAL GROUPS IN DUVAL COUNTY

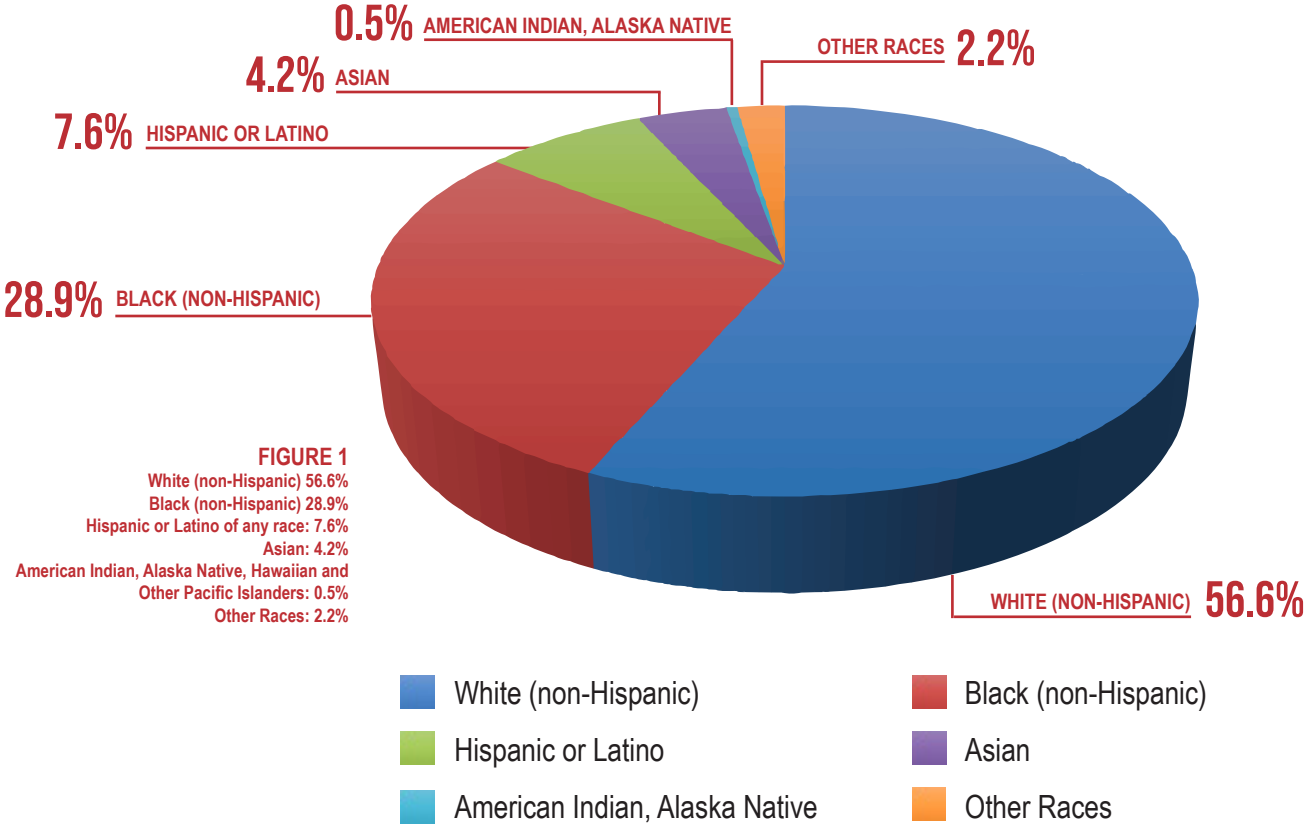


FIGURE 1
White (non-Hispanic) 56.6%
Black (non-Hispanic) 28.9%
Hispanic or Latino of any race: 7.6%
Asian: 4.2%
American Indian, Alaska Native, Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders: 0.5%
Other Races: 2.2%

According to the 2010 census, there were 342,450 households in Duval County of which 28.68% had children under the age of 18 in residence, 41.92% were cohabitating married couples, 16.74% had a female householder with no husband present, and 36.27% were single homeowners. Of all households surveyed, 24.85% were made up of individuals and 8.05% (2.29% male and 5.76% female) had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.47 and the average family size was 3.04.[4]

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE IN DUVAL COUNTY

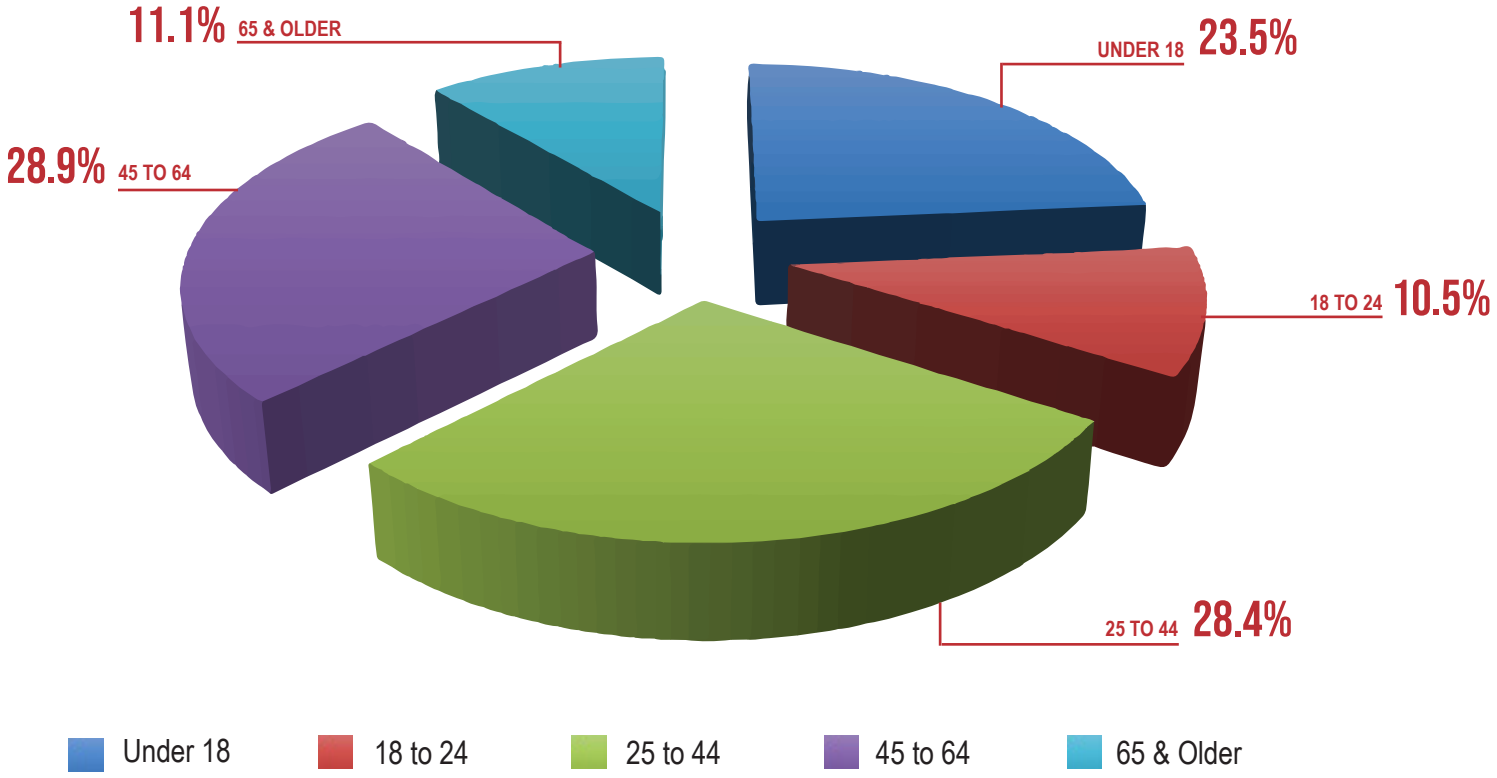


FIGURE 2

The population spread within the county was 23.5% under the age of 18, 10.5% from 18 to 24, 28.4% from 25 to 44, 26.4% from 45 to 64, and 11.1% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 35.8 years. For every 100 females there were 94.3 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 91.6 males.[4]

The median income for a household in the county was $49,463, and the median income for a family was $60,114.[5]

Military Presence: According to Florida Defense Factbook dated September 2015, there were four military installations in Duval County that employed 101,500 invididuals.[6]

These Installations include:

Naval Air Station Jacksonville: A multi-mission base hosting more than 100 tenant organizations and representing the third largest naval installation in the continental US.

Naval Station Mayport: Host to 83 tenant commands including 16 ships, four helicopter squadrons and the Navy's Fourth Fleet.

Marine Corps Support Facility Blount Island: Plans, coordinates, and executes the logistic efforts necessary to support Maritime Prepositioning Ship squadrons.

125th Fighter Wing, Jacksonville Air National Guard: Provides air defense for the southeastern US from Charleston, SC to the southern tip of Florida.

Religion: Duval County affiliates with religion at a rate of 56.2%, compared to 39.7% of remaining Florida counties and 49.4% of the continental US.

RELIGIONS PRACTICED IN DUVAL COUNTY

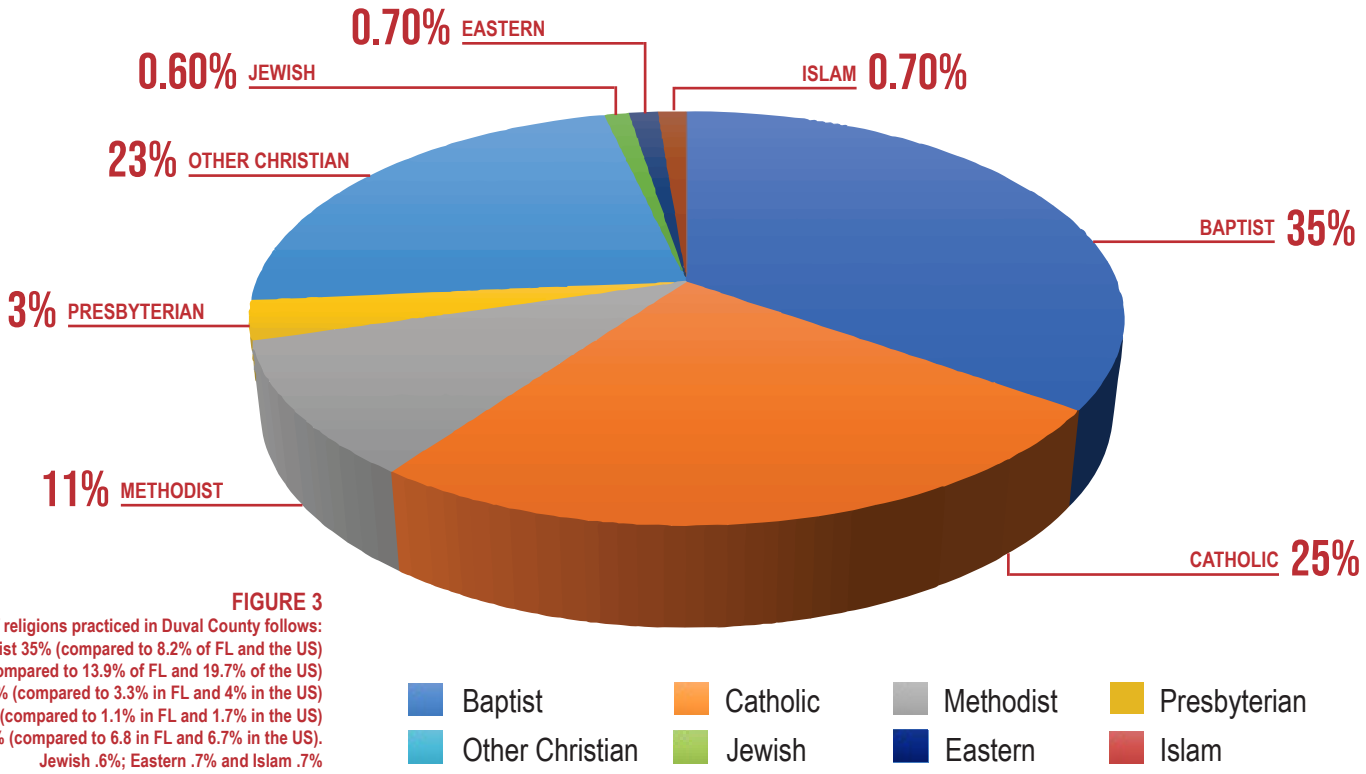


FIGURE 3
A breakdown of religions practiced in Duval County follows:
Baptist 35% (compared to 8.2% of FL and the US)
Catholic 25% (compared to 13.9% of FL and 19.7% of the US)
Methodist 11% (compared to 3.3% in FL and 4% in the US)
Presbyterian 3% (compared to 1.1% in FL and 1.7% in the US)
Other Christian 23% (compared to 6.8 in FL and 6.7% in the US).
Jewish .6%; Eastern .7% and Islam .7%

Worthy of note: Jacksonville is the most Bible-minded city in Florida in 2016 according to the American Bible Society.[9]

Marriage and Family Divorce Mitigation/Counseling:

According to the Florida Department of Health there were 229 psychologists, 512 clinical social workers and 360 marriage counselors registered in Duval County in 2018. These numbers are in addition to the 885 faith-based organizations listed as of 2010 by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies.[7]

CAUSES OF DIVORCE AND DIVORCE/ MARRIAGE TRENDS

At the request of FCPR, Dr. Shelley Todd (a faith-based marital counselor in Leon County) conducted a review of married people who participated in marriage counseling, between the years 2012 and 2018, to ascertain expressed causes of difficulty within their marriages. Fifty individuals were chosen at random for the study. The review included the following topical issues:

- Number of previous marriages
- Reasons for previous divorces
- Reasons for initiating therapy
- Marital issues addressed in current therapy
- Outcome of therapy

THE DATA

TABLE 1. PREVIOUS NUMBER OF DIVORCES

# OF INDIVIDUALS	NUMBER OF DIVORCES
14	Zero divorces
24	One divorce
5	Two divorces
4	Three divorces
3	Four or more divorces

Reasons Given for Previous Divorces:

As noted below, there were a wide variety of reasons for previous divorces outlined in the individual's personal history. In some cases more than one reason for the divorce was indicated. The reasons, listed by the number of times reported, are described in Table 2 below. Multiple reasons for divorce are not represented in Table 2, as the purpose of this data is to simply express the variety of reasons given for divorce. Please see chart on next page.

TABLE 2. REASONS FOR PREVIOUS DIVORCES

# OF REPORTS	REASONS GIVEN FOR FORMER DIVORCES
9	Infidelity
7	Married too young
6	Drug Use / Addiction
5	Alcohol Issues
4	Spouse left / wanted Divorce
3	Irreconcilable Differences
3	Married because of pregnancy, didn't last
2	Anger issues
2	Communication
2	Spouse had Mental Health issues
1	Annulled by spouse's parents
1	"Business" divorce (to preserve assets, no issues between spouses)
1	Emotional abuse
1	Hated the spouse
1	Marriage was sexless
1	Military issues (not PTSD)
1	Parental interference in marriage
1	Physical Abuse
1	Pornography
1	Spouse convicted of selling drugs
1	Spouse deported
1	Spouse hated her children
1	Spouse left upon completing graduate school

# OF REPORTS	REASONS GIVEN FOR FORMER DIVORCES
1	Spouse physically abused client's disabled sister
1	Spouse returned to former boyfriend
1	Spouse revealed he was homosexual
1	Spouse separated frequently
1	Spouse wanted biological children/ she could not have a child
1	Spouse was controlling
1	Spouse's "mid-life" crisis
1	Spouse's extramarital child (born within weeks of their child)
1	Spouse's long term affair was revealed
1	Tired of spouse's crises

Reasons for Entering Therapy:

Of the fifty individuals surveyed, all expressed issues with their spouses although not all entered counseling expressly to deal with their marriage. The chart below describes the reasons identified on individual intake forms for entering therapy.

TABLE 3. REASONS FOR ENTERING THERAPY

# OF INDIVIDUALS	REASONS GIVEN FOR ENTERING THERAPY
29	Marital issues
8	Divorcing spouse
4	Anxiety and depression
3	Spouse is divorcing them
2	Client is bipolar
2	Personal growth
1	Evaluation for ministry
1	Son's suicide attempt

Marital Issues Addressed in Current Therapy:

The results below have been separated according to the circumstances of the client at the time of entry into counseling. The first group entered therapy because their spouse wanted a divorce and they were trying to save the marriage (3 clients). The second group entered counseling with the intent to divorce (8 clients). The third group consisted of clients living with their spouses and working on the marriage or at least attempting to work on the marriage (29 clients). The last group entered therapy for a variety of non-marital issues, but ended up dealing with the issues as a part of therapy (10 clients). Most clients identified 2-4 issues.

TABLE 4. GROUP 1: BEING DIVORCED

# OF REPORTS	REASONS GIVEN WHY SPOUSE DESIRES DIVORCE
1	Client's anger
1	Client's control
1	Client is homosexual
1	Client is a former sex addict
1	Client is having an emotional affair
1	Spouse is having an affair

TABLE 5. GROUP 2: DIVORCING

# OF REPORTS	REASONS GIVEN FOR SEEKING A DIVORCE
2	Emotional abuse
2	Spouse's controlling behavior
2	Spouse's stalking
1	Child molestation by spouse
1	Child porn used by spouse
1	Disrespect from spouse
1	Drug addiction of spouse
1	Lying
1	Sexual issues
1	Spouse's emotional affair
1	Spouse's affair
1	Trust issues of spouse

TABLE 6. GROUP 3: WORKING ON MARRIAGE

# OF REPORTS	REASONS GIVEN FOR SEEKING THERAPY
8	Communication
8	Finances
7	Step-parenting issues
5	Infidelity
4	Control
4	Mental health issues
3	Alcohol
3	Fighting and conflict
3	Lack of assistance with kids
3	Trust of spouse
2	Emotional abuse
2	Lack of respect
2	Sexual issues
2	Spouse won't work
2	Unhappiness
1	Addiction
1	Adult stepchildren
1	Being jobless
1	Codependency
1	Destruction of property
1	Indecision
1	Lack of affection
1	Lack of commitment of spouse to marriage
1	Leisure time use conflict

# OF REPORTS	REASONS GIVEN FOR SEEKING THERAPY
1	Living with parents who interfere in marriage
1	Parenting
1	Parents
1	Priorities
1	Spiritual conflict
1	Spouse is leading a double life
1	Spouse's ex-wife
1	Spouse's perfectionism
1	Spouse's physical health
1	Unmet needs

TABLE 7. GROUP 4: CLIENTS INITIALLY ENTERING THERAPY FOR NON-MARITAL ISSUES

# OF REPORTS	MARITAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THERAPY
1	Business problems related to spouse
1	Client's grief issues causing conflict with spouse
1	Codependency in marital relationship
1	Does not love spouse
1	Lack of emotional balance in marriage
1	Mental health issues of spouse
1	Spouse is a sex addict
1	Spouse's anger
1	Spouse's illness and its impact on marriage

Outcome of Therapy:

Of clients surveyed, the following resolutions were identified:

TABLE 8. OUTCOME OF THERAPY EFFORTS

GROUPS/# OF CLIENTS	RESOLUTION
GROUP 1/3	2 – Divorced
	1 – Did not return to therapy after initial session
GROUP 2/8	5 – Divorced
	2 – Still in therapy
	1 – Resolved and remained married
GROUP 3/29	13 – Resolved and remained married
	5 – Separated (2 – one spouse remained in therapy)
	4 – Divorced
	4 – Still in therapy
	3 – Did not return after initial session
GROUP 4/10	5 – Resolved and remained married
	3 – Still in therapy
	3 – Divorced

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The data support many and varied reasons for individuals to experience marital strife and divorce. It is further evident that some people enter therapy with the intent to get a divorce, and this increases the likelihood that they will get a divorce even after counseling to remain married. However, when we examine the reasons for divorce given by groups One (Table 4) and Two (Table 5), it is evident there were significant issues involved. Sexual issues, child endangerment, and addiction issues rank highly in failing marriages. In most cases, these types of issues are not conducive to salvaging the marriage. In these situations, issues of trust and/or the life-style of the spouse being divorced had moved beyond the position where the other spouse was willing to invest significantly in the marriage. In some cases, fear for self or children outweighed reasons to remain married.

DIVORCE TRENDS IN THE US

Divorce is not a new phenomenon for our society--it has been around since Biblical times. What is new over the last century however, is the dramatic increase of marriages that eventually end in divorce. The divorce rate in the US began its upward climb in the late 19th century (Preston and MacDonald, 1979). This upward trend continued through most of the 20th century, peaked during significant events such as the Great Depression, and then sharply increased between 1960 and 1980. After 1980, the divorce rate began to decline. In the past decade, the US experienced a brief spike in the divorce rate around the recession that began in 2007, but it has now appeared to level off.

As of 2016, the crude divorce rate (number of divorces per 1,000 people) in the US stood at 3.2 (National Center for Health Statistics, 2018). This translates to somewhere between 40-50% of marriages occurring in the US ending in divorce (rates are even higher for subsequent marriages). Although for now the numbers appear to be leveling off, this still stands at an alarming rate.

There are a number of explanations offered by social scientists for the apparent leveling off of the divorce rate in the US. First, the age at marriage continues to increase, with the current average age of first marriage at 27.4 for women and 29.5 for men (US Census Bureau, 2017). Waiting to marry at a later age tends to increase the likelihood of having a successful marriage, as the individuals are more emotionally and financially stable.

There also appears to be a decreased stigma surrounding couples counseling, resulting in more couples who are open to seeking marriage or family counseling, which may prevent them from dissolving their marriage. Additionally, some researchers suggest that having parents who divorced may result in an increased determination to make ones' own marriage work (Crary, 2007).

Other researchers posit that the decline in divorce rates in the US may be partially attributable to increased numbers of couples who cohabit, in that couples that are at greater risk for disillusionment may breakup prior to getting married. This would result in more stable couples going on to eventually get married. Yet the paradox is that couples who cohabit with multiple partners are also at greater risk for divorce in subsequent marriages. Additionally, cohabiting and single individuals are often suspicious of marriage, desiring to marry only once in an effort to avoid divorce (Miller, Sassler, and Kusi-Appouh, 2011).

CAUSES OF DIVORCE

There are a number of factors that contribute to a couples' risk of divorcing. These include demographic and social factors such as education, race, income, age at marriage, and where they live. But these also include interpersonal factors that put couples at risk. A number of these contributing factors will be discussed here.

Demographic/Social Factors:

Education. One of most discriminating factors that contributes to the likelihood of a couple divorcing is their level of education. Only 27% of those with a college degree will divorce, whereas that number is nearly double for those who did not complete high school. Individuals with a high school diploma but no college degree have between 43-48% chance of divorcing (Aughinbaugh, Robles, and Sun, 2013). Sociologist Steven Martin refers to this as the "divorce divide" (Ono, 2009), to describe the divorce rate disparity between those with and without a college degree.

Income/Social Class. Divorce rates also vary depending on income level. Individuals earning more than $50,000 per year have a 30% lower chance of divorce than those earning under $25,000 (National Marriage Project and the Institute for American Values, 2012).

Age at Marriage: The probability of divorce generally declines with age, with the highest risk of divorce being for those who marry as a teenager (Copen et al, 2012).

Heterogamous marriage: Marriages that are homogamous (similar in terms of race, ethnicity, or religion) have a lower chance of divorce. Marrying someone who is different in these areas results in a heterogamous marriage, which tend to be at greater risk for divorce (Amato, 2010).

Race/ethnicity: Divorce rates vary by race and ethnicity, with Hispanics and Blacks having higher divorce rates compared to whites and Asians (Aughinbaugh, Robles, and Sun, 2013).

Cohabitation: Overall, there appears to be a positive correlation between cohabitation prior to marriage and increased risk of divorce, but that relationship is even stronger for those who have had multiple cohabiting relationships (Miller, Sassler, and Kusi-Appouh 2011).

Intergenerational Transmission of Divorce: Individuals who had parents or grandparents who divorced have a higher likelihood of divorcing themselves (Amato, 2010).

Remarriage: Couples who are in a remarriage have a higher risk for divorce than first-married couples (Aughinbaugh, Robles, and Sun 2013).

Premarital sex, pregnancy, and childbearing: Factors such as engaging in premarital sex or experiencing premarital pregnancy and premarital childbearing increase the risk of divorce in a subsequent marriage (Child Trends 2015).

Interpersonal Factors:

In addition to the above demographic and social factors, a number of interpersonal factors increase the likelihood that a couple will divorce.

Common Marital Complaints:

With the allowance of "No Fault Divorce" across the US starting in the 1970s, couples may now divorce simply for "irreconcilable differences." Common marital complaints associated with divorce include handling of money, unwillingness to work on the relationship, partner's poor communication, violence, alcohol or drug abuse, infidelity, jealousy, moodiness, low levels of trust, and (less often) homosexuality, as well as perceived incompatibility and growing apart (Lamanna and Reidman, 2018).

Communication Patterns:

Social Psychologist John Gottman (1994) has found common destructive communication patterns that are extremely predictive of a couples' risk of divorce. In fact, Gottman claims he is able to predict the likelihood of divorce with a 90% accuracy simply by observing the way they communicate, all within 5 minutes of the interaction. Gottman and his team have found that four destructive communication patterns, if used consistently in communication, are predictive of divorce. He calls these the *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, which are criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Gottman also found that the amount of positive or negative affect in a relationship is a strong determinant of both marital stability and quality, with successful couples having at least a 5:1 ratio of positive to negative statements. Gottman's research has also found other destructive patterns that predict divorce, including harsh startups, emotional flooding, failed repair attempts, and bad memories (Gottman, 2014).

PREVENTION OF DIVORCE

Although the divorce statistics in the US may seem bleak, research has demonstrated evidence for the effectiveness of programs aimed at preventing divorce and strengthening marriages. Psychologist Scott Stanley identifies four benefits of premarital education:

> (a) it can slow couples down to foster deliberation, (b) it sends a message that marriage matters, (c) it can help couples learn of options if they need help later, and (d) there is evidence that providing some couples with some types of premarital training … can lower their risks for subsequent marital distress or termination. (Markman, Stanley, and Blumberg 2001, p. 272)

Premarital counseling and education have shown promising results for their effectiveness in prevention of divorce. Florida was the first state to enact a premarital counseling statute in 1998 that provided incentives for couples to receive premarital counseling (in the form of reduced marriage license fees and waiver for the 3-day waiting period).

Premarital education programs have been demonstrated through research to improve a couple's relationship quality and communication skills (at least in the short term) (Fincham and Beach, 2010). Likewise, a large-scale study done by researcher Robyn Parker (2007) found that individuals who participated in a marriage and relationship enrichment program had a lower likelihood of divorce and reported a higher relationship quality.

SUMMMARY

Although the divorce rates remain at an alarmingly high level, there is hope for the future as the number of individuals divorcing in the US appear to have leveled off. A number of factors put couples at risk for divorce, including demographic and interpersonal factors, which could give practitioners opportunities to intervene in areas that can impact likelihood of divorce. Additionally, there is promising research that indicates the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs have been demonstrated to improve these bleak divorce statistics.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DUVAL COUNTY DIVORCE RATE

Live the Life requested an analysis of the decline in the marriage dissolution rate to determine if the present rate in dissolutions per thousand has decreased as a result of a trend in the time series data, or as a result of external interactions in the city of Jacksonville. This section of the FCPR report provides the statistical trending analysis of data from 1995 to 2016 to determine if the dissolution rate per thousand has changed as a result of intervention programs focused on strengthening marriages and families or on other recurring factors. The source data for this trend analysis was derived from the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Statistics – FL Health Charts, Dissolution of Marriage Query System.

THE DATA

TABLE 9. DIVORCE RATES PER THOUSAND 1995 TO 2016 FOR STATE OF FLORIDA AND DUVAL COUNTY (JACKSONVILLE).

	FLORIDA DIVORCE RATE / 1000	DUVAL DIVORCE RATE / 1000
1995	5.4	6.3
1996	5.3	6.2
1997	5.5	6
1998	5.3	6.3
1999	5.2	5.9
2000	5.1	6.2
2001	5.2	5.7
2002	5.1	5.7
2003	5	5.7
2004	4.8	5.5
2005	4.5	5.2
2006	4.7	5.3

	FLORIDA DIVORCE RATE / 1000	DUVAL DIVORCE RATE / 1000
2007	4.6	5.1
2008	4.3	4.4
2009	4.2	4.4
2010	4.4	4.9
2011	4.5	5.3
2012	4.3	4.3
2013	4.2	4.7
2014	4.1	4.1
2015	4	4.1
2016	3.9	3.3

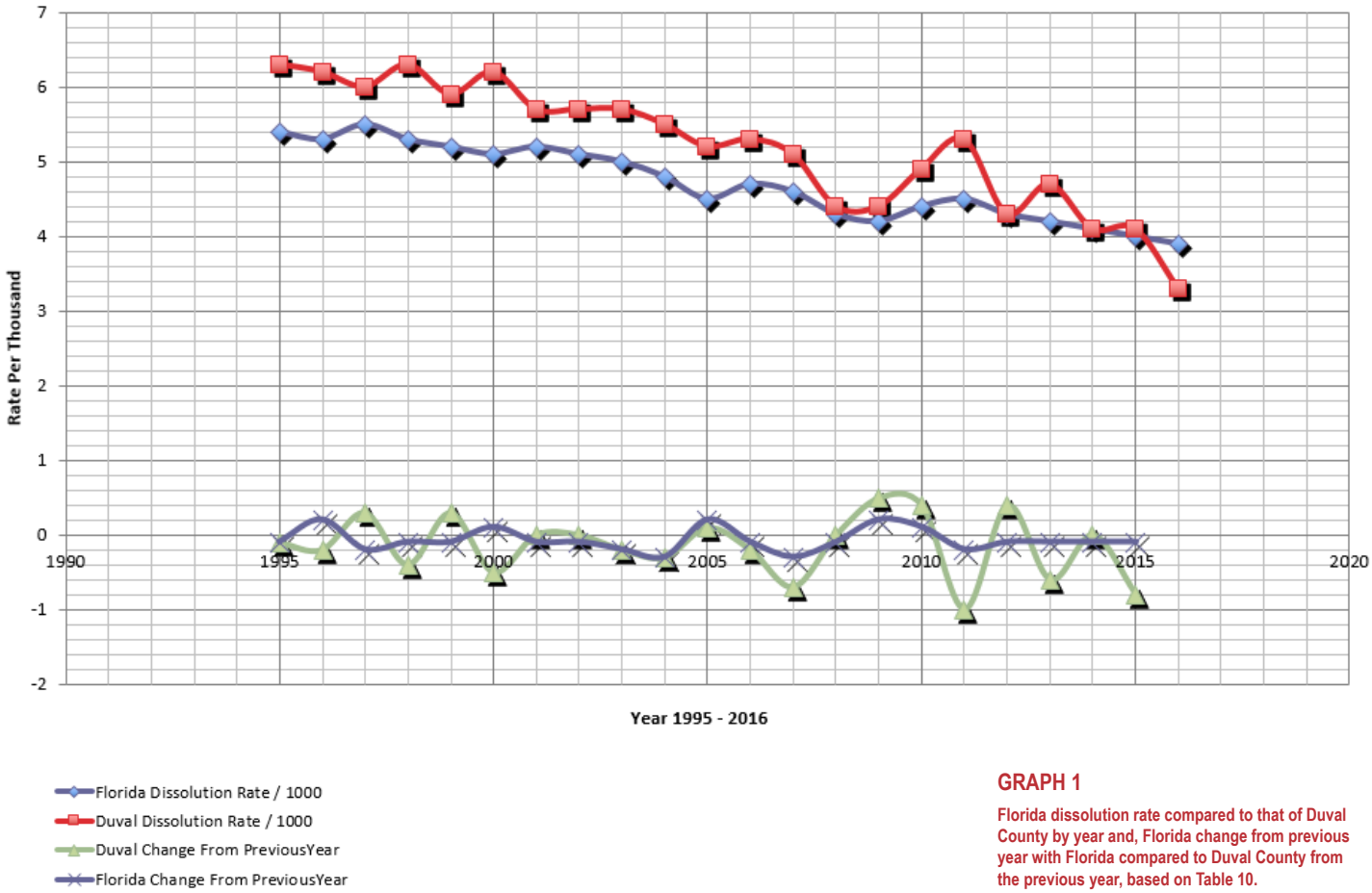
In addition to the rate per thousand in Table 9 above, two additional columns have been inserted to indicate the difference from the previous year. This allows not only a measure of rate per thousand, but also the magnitude of change from the previous year.

TABLE 10. DIVORCE RATE WITH DIFFERENCES FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

	Data in Rate /1,000 (Florida Dissolution of Marraige Query System			
	FLORIDA DIVORCE RATE / 1000	FLORIDA CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	DUVAL CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	DUVAL DIVORCE RATE / 1000
1995	5.4			6.3
1996	5.3	-0.1	-0.1	6.2
1997	5.5	0.2	-0.2	6
1998	5.3	-0.2	0.3	6.3
1999	5.2	-0.1	-0.4	5.9
2000	5.1	-0.1	0.3	6.2
2001	5.2	0.1	-0.5	5.7
2002	5.1	-0.1	0	5.7

	FLORIDA DIVORCE RATE / 1000	FLORIDA CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	DUVAL CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	DUVAL DIVORCE RATE / 1000
2003	5	-0.1	0	5.7
2004	4.8	-0.2	-0.2	5.5
2005	4.5	-0.3	-0.3	5.2
2006	4.7	0.2	0.1	5.3
2007	4.6	-0.1	-0.2	5.1
2008	4.3	-0.3	-0.7	4.4
2009	4.2	-0.1	0	4.4
2010	4.4	0.2	0.5	4.9
2011	4.5	0.1	0.4	5.3
2012	4.3	-0.2	-1	4.3
2013	4.2	-0.1	0.4	4.7
2014	4.1	-0.2	-0.6	4.1
2015	4	-0.1	0	4.1
2016	3.9	-0.1	-0.8	3.3

The graphic of the dissolution rate per thousand and the change from the previous year (see below) provide a unique picture of trends in the existing data from which to compare to the 2015 & 2016 data used to generate the trend line. Trend refers to the upward or downward movement that characterizes a time series over time. The rationale in doing so thus reflects the long run growth or decline in the time series.



GRAPH 1

Florida dissolution rate compared to that of Duval County by year and, Florida change from previous year with Florida compared to Duval County from the previous year, based on Table 10.

Trended Data:

Trended data presented in Tables 11& 12. Table 12 does not use 2015 values for the trend calculations, i.e. removes the affect as it effects the change in rate per thousand. Table 11 leaves the 2015 affect in the data which is used to calculate the effect that it has on the change in rate per thousand. The Duval County trend values for 2015 & 2016 in rate per thousand are 4.02 and 4.09 respectively: the published values for 2015 & 2016 in rate per thousand are 4.1 and 3.3. The rate per thousand value for Duval with 2015 included in the trend calculation for 2016 is 4.073, evidencing that there was a change that began in 2015 with an intensification of efforts to reduce the dissolution rate as evidenced by the .773 difference in the actual and the trended value. **This is a very strong indication that some form of treatment** caused a shift in the naturally occurring rate. The trended values for Florida and Duval County support the degree of fitness of the least-squares regression line to a range or array and returns of the actual values along that line for the trended values as demonstrated.

TABLE 11. DIVORCE RATES PER THOUSAND TRENDED FROM 2015 – 2017 IN DUVAL COUNTY

Data Source 1995 - 2014

	2015 ACTUAL & 2015 TRENDING			
	Data in Rate /1,000 (Florida Dissolution of Marraige Query System			
	FLORIDA DIVORCE RATE / 1000	DUVAL DIVORCE RATE / 1000	DUVAL CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	FLORIDA CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
1995	5.4	6.3		
1996	5.3	6.2	-0.1	-0.1
1997	5.5	6	-0.2	0.2
1998	5.3	6.3	0.3	-0.2
1999	5.2	5.9	-0.4	-0.1
2011	4.5	5.3	0.4	0.1
2012	4.3	4.3	-1	-0.2
2013	4.2	4.7	0.4	-0.1
2014	4.1	4.1	-0.6	-0.1
2015	4	4.1	0	-0.1
2016	3.9	3.3	-0.8	-0.1

Trending Data 2015 - 2025

	FLORIDA	DUVAL
2015	4.01	4.20
2016	3.93	4.09
2017	3.86	3.98
2018	3.78	3.87
2019	3.71	3.76
2020	3.63	3.65
2021	3.56	3.54
2022	3.49	3.43
2023	3.41	3.32
2024	3.34	3.21
2025	3.26	3.10

Trend calculated for 2015 was 4.2 as compared to actual of 4.1. Assumption of difference based on standard error of measurement, and indicates the trend is a good predictor based on previously recorded measurements.

TABLE 12. DIVORCE RATES PER THOUSAND TRENDED FROM 2016 – 2017 IN DUVAL COUNTY

	2016 ACTUAL & 2016 TRENDING			
	Data in Rate /1,000 (Florida Dissolution of Marraige Query System			
	FLORIDA DIVORCE RATE / 1000	DUVAL DIVORCE RATE / 1000	DUVAL CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR	FLORIDA CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS YEAR
1995	5.4	6.3		
1996	5.3	6.2	-0.1	-0.1
1997	5.5	6	-0.2	0.2
1998	5.3	6.3	0.3	-0.2
1999	5.2	5.9	-0.4	-0.1
2011	4.5	5.3	0.4	0.1
2012	4.3	4.3	-1	-0.2
2013	4.2	4.7	0.4	-0.1
2014	4.1	4.1	-0.6	-0.1
2015	4	4.1	0	-0.1
2016	3.9	3.3	-0.8	-0.1

Data Source 1995 - 2015

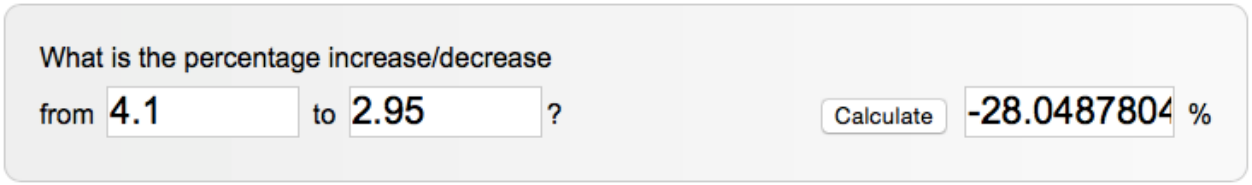
	FLORIDA	DUVAL
2016	3.930	4.073
2017	3.851	3.821
2018	3.776	3.700
2019	3.701	3.579
2020	3.627	3.459
2021	3.552	3.338
2022	3.477	3.217
2023	3.403	3.096
2024	3.328	3.976
2025	3.253	3.855

Trending Data 2016 - 2025

Divorce rates per thousand trended so as to include LTL 2016 activities in Duval County (Jacksonville).

SIGNIFICANCE OF TRENDED DATA V/S PUBLISHED

The rate per thousand (RaPT) for 2015 -2017 as calculated for Duval should have been 4.2, 4.09, and 3.98, whereas the actual values were 4.1, 3.3, 2.95 respectively. Another interesting anomaly in the rate data happens in 2014 & 2015 when the RaPT remains 4.1 for both years but the number of divorces is 3,637 and 3,708 respectively indicating an increase in population. When the percentage decrease is calculated the reduction in divorce rate from 2015 to 2017 is 28%. No attempt is being made to explain the precise cause of this reduction but it is apparent that a change is occurring in Duval County.



CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DATA

1. The data itself has a cycle and a trend, a rhythm if you will.
2. The state of Florida data because of a large “N” (state population) tends to be more linear as compared toDuval County with a lower “N” (county/city population).
3. County data reflects the chance that non-parametric occurrences may affect the data, but to what degree is notknown, nor the purpose of this analysis.

LIMITATIONS OF THE ANALYSIS:

1. Without having tracked participation in the intervention, we cannot make a causal claim that x directly affected y.
2. As a researcher, a concern about participant selection bias (those who choose to enter a program (treatment)are less likely to divorce as they have already chosen to attend this seminar to help them assess and or improve their marital relationship).
3. We suggest longitudinal tracking of participants to gather integral data, but there are still methodological biasissues in characteristic #3 above to deal with in the design of the longitudinal tracking activity.

WHAT THE DATA INDICATES

A. In Duval County, Florida there was an intervention or treatment that caused the dissolution rate to decreaseto 3.3 / 1,000 as opposed to what it should have done, and that was to increase to 4.1 / 1,000.

B. Even without participant level data, the decrease in the RaPT of at least .8 / 1,000 from the trend analysis cannot be classified as a chance occurrence. It resulted from an interaction that was timely, effective, and resulted from program providers in Jacksonville who focused on keeping marriages together rather than allowing them to separate.

POSSIBLE REASONS WHY DUVAL DIVORCE RATES ARE DOWN

Divorce is something that typically takes time and is often caused by an interaction of multiple events. Many divorces happen after five or more years of marriage. This begs the question of why divorces have gone down in Duval County from 2016 to present. Assuming marriages were initiated in the last decade, what are some possible reasons that married couples in Duval County have not pursued divorce?

As highlighted in the previous section on marriage and divorce trends (Section II) some of the possible reasons married couples have not sought a divorce include:

1. Couples getting married are older than before.
2. Couples date longer or cohabitate before they get married, and understand the spouse better than before when only emotions (love/lust) were the main reason for marrying.
3. The economy has improved since the 2007 financial crisis that our country experienced.
4. Couples are having fewer children which can mitigate financial or emotional crisis in a marriage.
5. Long-term military deployments have declined in the last several years as noted by the Commander, Naval Station Mayport.
6. Lastly, people experiencing marital problems, have been successful at working out their problems. This may be attributed to the result of family interventions, secular/faith-based counseling or marriage enrichment programs provided by faith-based organizations. In addition, word of mouth successes goes a long way to perpetuate further reductions of other couples getting a divorce. This is especially true in Florida since Florida law requires couples seeking a divorce to document a mitigation effort before filing for a divorce. Importantly, programs like the ones that LTL offers encourage and support healthy relationships among married couples resulting in a reduced divorce rate in Duval County.

Now let's look at what Live the Life organization and the Culture of Freedom Initiative are specifically doing.

CULTURE OF FREEDOM INITIATIVE (COFI) AND LIVE THE LIFE (LTL)

CULTURE OF FREEDOM INITIATIVE:

According to the Philanthropy Roundtable website located at http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/topic/philanthropic_freedom/closing_the_marriage_gap the crisis in modern families has been a subject of cultural and political concern for years. Various solutions to the problem have been proposed, such as the Healthy Marriage Initiative, launched at the Federal level in 2001, but nothing has altered the troubling national trend data.

"These are not problems that a bureaucrat or a legislator or a regulator can really fix," suggests J. P.De Gance, executive vice president at The Philanthropy Roundtable. "These are issues of family andfaith. As a friend from Texas once told me, trying to change the country by focusing on politics is a lot like trying to change the weather by playing with the thermometer. This is an issue for civil society." Such a personal and private challenge, even one with far-reaching public implications, calls for a personal approach.

With this in mind, The Philanthropy Roundtable recently launched the "Culture of Freedom Initiative," a privately funded cross-country partnership designed to strengthen families, and the religious participation that bolsters family life, in three demonstration communities: Phoenix, Arizona; Jacksonville, Florida; and Dayton, Ohio. The name, explains De Gance, was chosen to remind potential donors of the cultural root of a healthy society: the self-governing individuals created by strong families. Live the Life is the lead agency for the Culture of Freedom Initiative in Jacksonville, Florida.

The initiative has raised millions over the past year to launch its pilot programs. Funds are used to boost local nonprofits capable of making an impact in its target cities. During the next five years, this first phase of a long-term effort will seek to increase two gauges of community health: marital success and family attendance at worship services.

The Culture of Freedom Initiative program connects anchor nonprofits like Live the Life in Jacksonville with national experts, event partners, media tools, marketing assistance, and measurement methods. It is guided by a task force of ten philanthropists with interests and expertise in this area.

"In my view, the breakdown of the family is the most significant problem facing the country today," says task force member Toby Neugebauer, co-founder of Quantum Energy Partners, "and the Culture of Freedom Initiative is targeting it in an innovative way. I was overwhelmed and very impressed with the sophistication and professionalism here. I think we're taking a fresh approach to a massive problem—an approach that heretofore has not been applied."[8]

LIVE THE LIFE (LTL):

Live the Life (LTL) was started in 1998 in Tallahassee, Florida due to a growing concern of marriage problems and family breakdowns spreading across America. The LTL vision and mission is simple: Communities will become "divorce-free zones," where divorces are rarely, if ever, wanted or needed, and where strong marriages are encouraged, nurtured, developed, and maintained. As our dream comes true, more children will grow up in safe, happy, and healthy married families characterized by nurturing parents, permanence and better life outcomes. The Strategic goals are to:

1. Increase the statistical marriage rate
2. Decrease the statistical divorce rate
3. Decrease non-marital child births, and
4. Increase church attendance. After many years of steady growth and increased impact, Live the Life became a statewide organization in 2011. Today Live the Life has Florida offices in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Bradenton, Panama City and Ft. Lauderdale, and is recognized nationally in the marriage and relationship education field.

LTL's website www.livethelife.org has 14 marriage education programs it offers and each program is designed to improve every marriage in some way. Live the Life also uses another website www.usmarriage.org which helps advertise marriage enrichment programs also in Florida, as well as across the US.

LTL's Jacksonville office is very active in Duval County promoting both marriage promotion and enrichment programs and is the anchor non-profit organization in the Culture of Freedom Initiative project in Jacksonville, Florida.

Several churches in Jacksonville have lauded the efforts of Live the Life. Some of the comments include:

The Catholic Diocesan Center for Family Life states, "This has been an exciting moment in marriage ministry and I'm confident that the work of the dedicated staff of Live the Life will produce a lasting transformation on the city [Jacksonville] through the creation and nurturing of healthy, vibrant marriages."

The Jacksonville Baptist Association states, "Over the last two years, we can see a wonderful correlation between the efforts of Live the Life to increase the number of quality marriage programs in our city and the dramatic drop in the divorce rate that Duval County has experienced."

One of the Executive Pastors at Celebration Church—the largest church in Duval County states, "We are working with Live the Life to help train our Care Ministry Team on how to provide individual resources for those in crisis. We have seen many testimonies of marriages saved due to expansion of marriage programs that Live the Life has fostered."

SUMMMARY

While we cannot identify with certainty which parts of the Culture of Freedom Initiative project that Live the Life has led in Jacksonville over the past several years has had the most impact, the 28% reduction in divorce rate that Jacksonville has experienced over the past two years is a strong testimony to the overall effectiveness of this type of community-level intervention.

INFORMATION ABOUT FCPR AND THE REPORT AUTHORS

The Florida Center for Prevention Research (FCPR) was created in 1998 at Florida State University to support the Florida Tobacco Pilot Program from its inception in February 1998 until its termination on June 30, 2003. FCPR's vision and mission is to establish a reputable and respected prevention, research, and services organization, to provide innovative research, education, training, and technological solutions to address the challenges of substance abuse prevention and other social issues among Florida's population.

Since 2003, the FCPR team expanded its depth and breadth in substance abuse prevention capabilities under contracts and grants from the Office of the Governor, Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Department of Health, Agency for Health Care Administration, the US Department of Education and others.

Located at the FSU Research Complex, FCPR has managed projects in excess of $21 million, ranging from health care to youth programs. Project Managers come with a variety of experience and skills to partner with agencies, through their unique talents they provide sound services and products. Agencies find that while working with FCPR, they work with a team - a successful team that is mission focused! See https://www.fcpr.fsu.edu.

Dr. Scott Helzer was the author of most of this report. Dr. Helzer holds an earned doctorate from Texas A&M University with undergraduate and master's degrees from the University of Nebraska Kearney. His experiences include University Professor, Professor of Research, Manufacturing Engineer, Quality Engineer, Statistical Engineer, Director of Certification and, Strategic Planner for quality enhancements and forecasting. He has been trained in the process of planning and program implementation for long-term cultural change at the Pacific Institute in Seattle, WA. His background in planning is evidenced by participating with and program planning for companies such as Common Wealth Edison, The Midwest Regional Metal Casting Research Institute, The Florida Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA), The US Department of Energy – Industries of the Future Program and many others. He was awarded the best in category by the US Department of Energy for implementing strategic planning for manufacturing industries to provide quality enhancements and energy efficiencies while increasing competitive stance. He is presently employed by FSU as a professor of Research for the Florida Center for Prevention Research where he serves as a program coordinator and strategist.

Dr. Shelley Todd was the author of the previous and current Divorce counseling statistics found in Section II. She has been a faith-based family counselor for over 25 years in Leon County. She has a Masters of Divinity from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Central Florida. She is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor, a member of the American Association of Christian Counselors, as well as a National Certified Counselor.

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Tommy Bowermeister, Col, USAF (Retired) was the overall editor of this report. He is the Executive Director of FCPR at Florida State University. He has a BS of Education from the University of Georgia and a MS of Education in Counseling from the University of Maryland. He is also an Assistant Professor who teaches graduate and undergraduate students at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

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