

ARTICLE

Study shows there are two divorce seasons

Couples might want to put a little extra effort into their marriage just before March and August every year. Sociologists have identified annual spikes in the number of divorces filed in these two months. Researchers from the University of Washington analysed data for divorces filed in the U.S. state of Washington between 2001 and 2015. There were almost 25,000 divorces filed in the state in 2014 alone. The scientists found that over the 14-year period of the study, divorce rates peaked in August, after the summer holidays, and in March, after the Christmas and New Year holidays. Some researchers said the divorces could be due to financial problems caused by the winter and summer holidays.

Researcher Julie Brines suggested that the anti-climax felt after the build-up to holidays, and the holidays themselves, may leave couples feeling stressed and deflated. She said: "People tend to face the holidays with rising expectations, despite what disappointments they might have had in years past." She added: "[Holidays] represent periods in the year when there's the anticipation or the opportunity for a new beginning, a new start, something different, a transition into a new period of life. It's like an optimism cycle." Couples generally spend more time in closer proximity to each other during holidays, which may actually exacerbate tensions rather than rekindle romance.

WARM UP

1. PROBLEMS: What advice would you give to a married couple with the following problems? Discuss this with your partner(s).

- Money
- In-laws
- Different interests
- Romance gone
- Housework
- Boredom

2. STRESSES: Rank these with your partner. Put the biggest stresses in a marriage at the top.

- children
- abuse
- in-laws
- different interests
- money
- housework
- cheating
- marrying too young

GAP FILL

Put these words into the spaces in the paragraph below.

alone, due, extra, caused, filed, period, identified, data

Couples might want to put a little (1) _____ effort into their marriage just before March and August every year. Sociologists have (2) _____ annual spikes in the number of divorces (3) _____ in these two months. Researchers from the University of Washington analysed (4) _____ for divorces filed in the U.S. state of Washington between 2001 and 2015. There were almost 25,000 divorces filed in the state in 2014 (5) _____. The scientists found that over the 14-year (6) _____ of the study, divorce rates peaked in August, after the summer holidays, and in March, after the Christmas and New Year holidays. Some researchers said the divorces could be (7) _____ to financial problems (8) _____ by the winter and summer holidays.

past, themselves, optimism, anticipation, romance, deflated, anti-climax, transition

Researcher Julie Brines suggested that the (9) _____ felt after the build-up to holidays, and the holidays (10) _____, may leave couples feeling stressed and (11) _____. She said: "People tend to face the holidays with rising expectations, despite what disappointments they might have had in years (12) _____. " She added: "[Holidays] represent periods in the year when there's the (13) _____ or the opportunity for a new beginning, a new start, something different, a (14) _____ into a new period of life. It's like an (15) _____ cycle." Couples generally spend more time in closer proximity to each other during holidays, which may actually exacerbate tensions rather than rekindle (16) _____.

DISCUSSION

- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'divorce'?
- Why do so many marriages end in divorce?
- Should couples make an extra effort around divorce season?
- Should engaged couples take a test to see if their marriage will last?
- Who suffers the most from a divorce?
- How can we prevent divorce?
- What do you think of making divorce illegal?
- What do you think of the idea that marriage is forever?
- Do you always feel an anti-climax after holidays?
- What makes couples stressed?
- Are family holidays always fun?
- What stresses are there associated with holidays?
- Why is a holiday "the opportunity for a new beginning"?
- What is your advice for a successful marriage?
- Why do couples need to spend some time apart?
- Would it be better for couples to go on separate holidays?