

# Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia

One-in-six newlyweds are married to someone of a different race or ethnicity

By [Gretchen Livingston](#) and [Anna Brown](#)

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In 2015, 17% of all U.S. newlyweds had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, marking more than a fivefold increase since 1967, when 3% of newlyweds were intermarried, according to a new Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.<sup>2</sup> In that year, the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Loving v. Virginia* case ruled that marriage across racial lines was legal throughout the country. Until this ruling, interracial marriages were forbidden in many states.

More broadly, one-in-ten married people in 2015 – not just those who *recently* married – had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity. This

translates into 11 million people who were intermarried. The growth in intermarriage has coincided with shifting societal norms as Americans have become more accepting of marriages involving spouses of different races and ethnicities, even within their own families.

The most dramatic increases in intermarriage have occurred among black newlyweds. Since 1980, the share who married someone of a different race or ethnicity has more than tripled from 5% to 18%. White newlyweds, too, have experienced a rapid increase in intermarriage, with rates rising from 4% to 11%. However, despite this increase, they remain the least likely of all major racial or ethnic groups to marry someone of a different race or ethnicity.

Asian and Hispanic newlyweds are by far the most likely to intermarry in the U.S. About three-in-ten Asian newlyweds<sup>3</sup> (29%) did so in 2015, and the share was 27% among recently married Hispanics. For these groups, intermarriage is even more prevalent among the U.S. born: 39% of U.S.-born Hispanic newlyweds and almost half (46%) of U.S.-born Asian newlyweds have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity.

**Since 1967, a steady increase in U.S. intermarriage**

*% of newlyweds who are intermarried*



Note: Data prior to 1980 are estimates. See Methodology for more details.

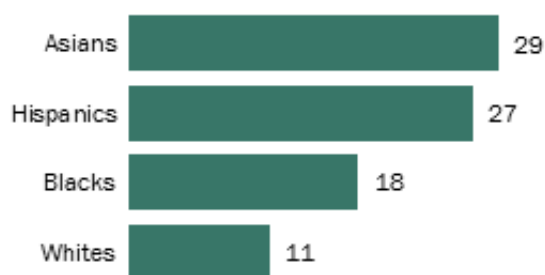
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2008-2015 American Community Survey and 1980 decennial census (IPUMS).

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**About three-in-ten Asian newlyweds in the U.S. are intermarried**

*% of newlyweds who are intermarried*



Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Asians include Pacific Islanders.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014-2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS).

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**For blacks and Asians, stark gender differences in**

## intermarriage

Among blacks, intermarriage is twice as prevalent for male newlyweds as it is for their female counterparts. While about one-fourth of recently married black men (24%) have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, this share is 12% among recently married black women.

There are dramatic gender differences among Asian newlyweds as well, though they run in the opposite direction – Asian women are far more likely to intermarry than their male counterparts. In 2015, just over one-third (36%) of newlywed Asian women had a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, compared with 21% of newlywed Asian men.

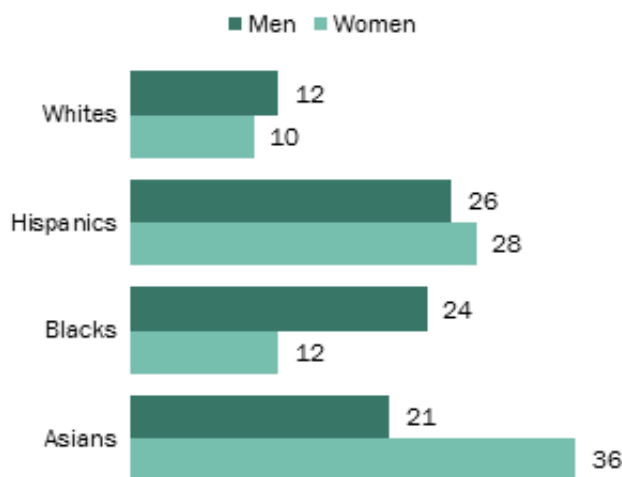
In contrast, among white and Hispanic newlyweds, the shares who intermarry are similar for men and women. Some 12% of recently married white men and 10% of white women have a spouse of a different race or ethnicity, and among Hispanics, 26% of newly married men and 28% of women do.

### A more diverse population and shifting attitudes are contributing to the rise of intermarriage

The rapid increases in intermarriage rates for recently married whites and blacks have played an important role in driving up the overall rate of intermarriage in the U.S. However, the growing share of the population

#### Black men are twice as likely as black women to intermarry

*% of U.S. newlyweds who are intermarried*



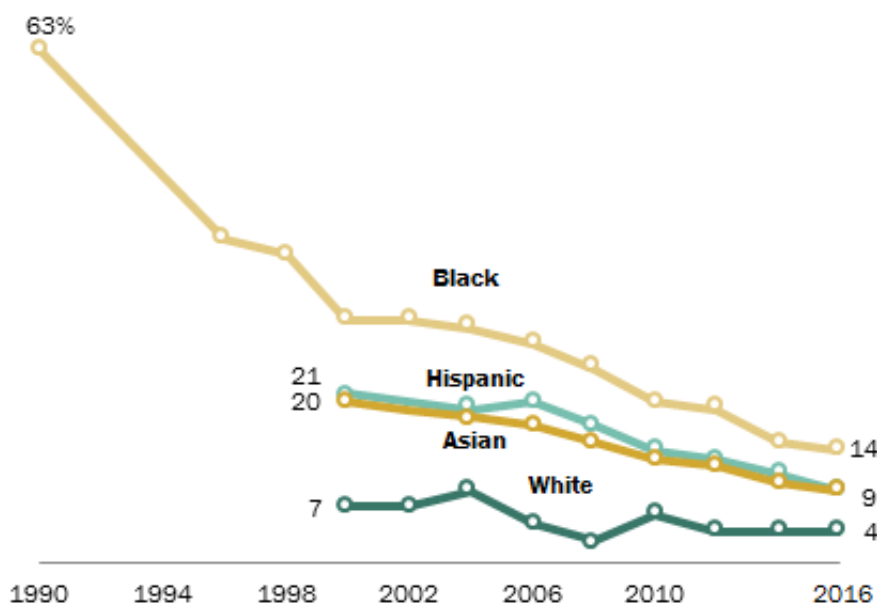
Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014-2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS). "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

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that is [Asian or Hispanic](#), combined with these groups' high rates of intermarriage, is further boosting U.S. intermarriage overall. Among all newlyweds, the share who are Hispanic has risen by 9 percentage points since 1980, and the share who are Asian has risen 4 points. Meanwhile, the share of newlyweds who are white has dropped by 15 points.

**Dramatic dive in share of nonblacks who would oppose a relative marrying a black person**

*% saying they would be very or somewhat opposed to a close relative marrying someone who is \_\_\_ among U.S. adults who are not that race or ethnicity*



Note: Due to changes in question wording, the universe of nonblacks prior to 2000 includes anyone who reported a race other than black; in 2000 and later, the universe of nonblacks includes those who did not identify as single-race, non-Hispanic blacks (and so may include Hispanic blacks and multiracial blacks).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of General Social Survey. "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

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Attitudes about intermarriage are changing as well. In just seven years, the share of adults saying that the growing number of people marrying someone of a different race is *good* for society has risen 15 points, to 39%, according to a new Pew Research Center survey conducted Feb. 28-March 12, 2017.

The decline in opposition to intermarriage in the longer term has been

even more dramatic, a new Pew Research Center analysis of data from the [General Social Survey](#) has found. In 1990, 63% of nonblack adults surveyed said they would be very or somewhat opposed to a close relative marrying a black person; today the figure stands at 14%. Opposition to a close relative entering into an intermarriage with a spouse who is Hispanic or Asian has also declined markedly since 2000, when data regarding those groups first became available. The share of nonwhites saying they would oppose having a family member marry a white person has edged downward as well.

## **Intermarriage somewhat more common among the college educated**

In 1980, the rate of intermarriage did not differ markedly by educational attainment among newlyweds. Since that time, however, a modest intermarriage gap has emerged. In 2015, 14% of newlyweds with a high school diploma or less were married to someone of a different race or ethnicity, compared with 18% of those with some college and 19% of those with a bachelor's degree or more.

The educational gap is most striking among Hispanics: While almost half (46%) of Hispanic newlyweds with a bachelor's degree were intermarried in 2015, this share drops to 16% for those with a high school diploma or less – a pattern driven partially, but not entirely, by the higher share of immigrants among the less educated. Intermarriage is also slightly more common among black newlyweds with a bachelor's degree (21%) than those with some college (17%) or a high school diploma or less (15%).

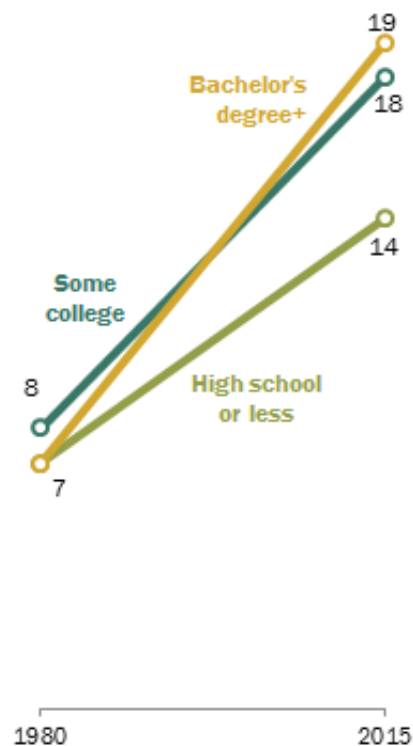
Among recently married Asians, however, the pattern is different – intermarriage is far more common among those with some college (39%) than those with either more education (29%) or less education (26%). Among white newlyweds, intermarriage rates are similar regardless of educational attainment.

## **Other key findings**

- The most common racial or ethnic pairing among newlywed intermarried couples is one Hispanic and one white spouse (42%). Next most common are one white and one Asian spouse (15%) and one white and one multiracial spouse (12%).
- Newlyweds living in metropolitan areas are more likely to be intermarried than those in non-metropolitan areas (18% vs. 11%). This pattern is driven entirely by whites; Hispanics and Asians are more likely to intermarry if they live in non-metro areas. The rates do not vary by place of residence for blacks.
- Among black newlyweds, the gender gap in intermarriage increases with education: For those with a high school diploma or less, 17% of men vs. 10% of women are intermarried, while among those with a bachelor's degree, black men are more than twice as likely as black women to intermarry (30% vs. 13%).
- Among newlyweds, intermarriage is most common for those in their 30s (18%). Even so, 13% of newlyweds ages 50 and older are married to someone of a different race or ethnicity.
- There is a sharp partisan divide in attitudes about interracial marriage. Roughly half (49%) of Democrats and independents who lean to the Democratic Party say the growing number of people of different races marrying each other is a good thing for society. Only 28% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents share that view.

### An emerging educational gap in intermarriage

% of U.S. newlyweds ages 25 and older who are intermarried



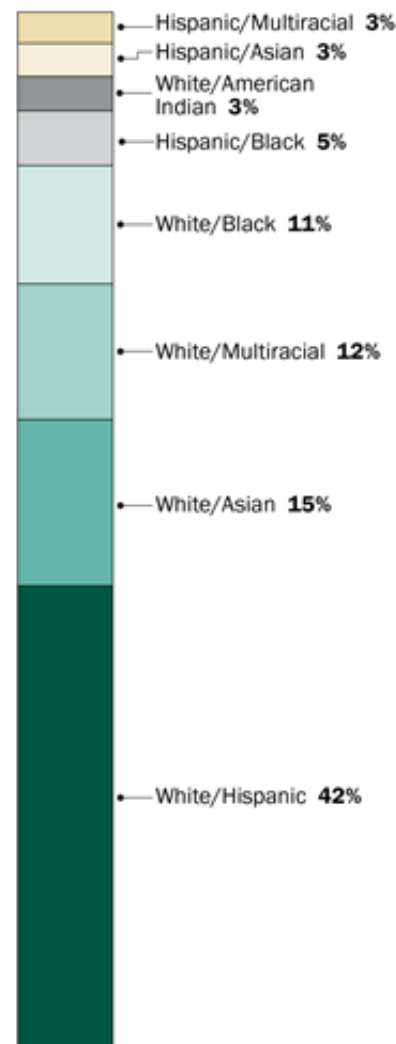
Note: "Some college" includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. The 2015 time point is based on combined 2014 and 2015 data.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014-2015 American Community Survey and 1980 decennial census (IPUMS). "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

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### About four-in-ten U.S. intermarried couples include one Hispanic and one white spouse

*% of opposite-sex newlywed intermarried couples that include each combination*



Note: Racial and ethnic combinations with values of less than 2% are not shown. Whites, blacks, Asians and American Indians include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. Asians include Pacific Islanders. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2014-2015 American Community Survey (IPUMS). "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

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1. This marks a change from prior Pew Research Center reports regarding intermarriage, which classified couples including one

multiracial spouse and one spouse of “some other race” (who didn’t identify as white, black, Hispanic, Asian or multiracial) as being in a same-race marriage. Because there are very few people who fall into the “some other race” category, the fact that these couples are now classified as intermarried has a minimal effect on estimates.

2. In keeping with the [U.S. Census Bureau definition](#), ethnicity refers to whether an individual is of Hispanic origin or not. Intermarriages are defined as marriages between Hispanic and non-Hispanic persons, or marriages between white, black, Asian, American Indian or multiracial persons, or persons who report that they are some other race. Among all intermarried couples in 2015, 54% were in interethnic (Hispanic/non-Hispanic) marriages, and the remainder was in interracial marriages.
3. Asian Americans are an incredibly diverse group, with varying histories in the U.S. and very different demographic and economic profiles. For a more detailed look at Asian American subgroups and their intermarriage patterns, see “[The Rise of Asian Americans](#)”.