

# 8 facts about love and marriage in America

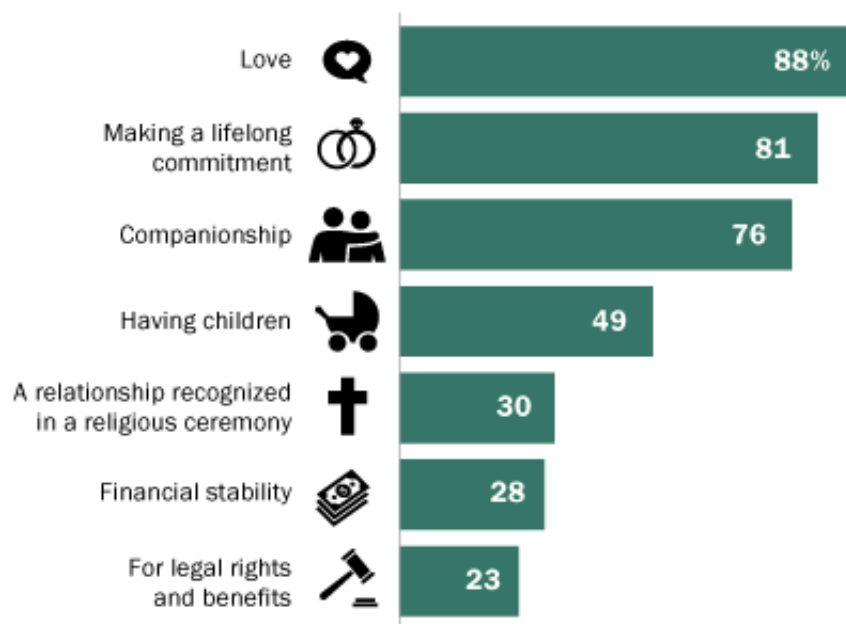
By [Abigail Geiger](#) and [Gretchen Livingston](#)

The landscape of relationships in America has shifted dramatically in recent decades. From cohabitation to same-sex marriage to interracial and interethnic marriage, here are eight facts about love and marriage in the United States.

## 1

### Why get married?

*% of the general public saying \_\_\_ is a very important reason to get married*



Source: Survey conducted May 10-13, 2013 (online poll).

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**Love tops the list of Americans' reasons to marry.** About nine-in-ten Americans (88%) cited love as a very important reason to get married, ahead of making a lifelong commitment (81%) and companionship (76%), according to a [2013 Pew Research Center survey](#). Fewer said having their

relationship recognized in a religious ceremony (30%), financial stability (28%) or legal rights and benefits (23%) were very important reasons to marry.

However, being a [good financial provider](#) was seen as particularly important for men to be a good husband or partner, according to a 2017 survey by the Center. About seven-in-ten adults (71%) said it was very important for a man to be able to support a family financially to be a good husband or partner, while just 32% said the same for a woman to be a good wife or partner.

As far as [what helps people stay married](#), married adults said in a 2015 survey that having shared interests (64%) and a satisfying sexual relationship (61%) were very important to a successful marriage. More than half (56%) also named sharing household chores.

**2**  
**Half of Americans ages 18 and older [were married in 2016](#), a share that has remained relatively stable in recent years but is down 9 percentage points over the past quarter-century.** One factor driving this change is that Americans – particularly men – [are staying single longer](#). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2017, the median age at first marriage had reached its highest point on record: 29.5 years for men and 27.4 years for women.

[Marriage declined most](#) among those with a high school diploma or less education. In 1990, 63% of this group were married; by 2015, that had dropped to 50%. In contrast, 65% of those ages 25 and older with at least a four-year college degree were married in 2015.

As the U.S. marriage rate has declined, divorce rates [have increased among older Americans](#). In 2015, for every 1,000 married adults ages 50 and older, 10 had divorced – up from five in 1990. Among those ages 65 and older, the divorce rate roughly tripled since 1990.

**3The number of U.S. adults cohabiting with a partner is on the rise.** In addition to the half of U.S. adults who are married, 7% were cohabiting in 2016. The number of Americans [living with an unmarried partner](#) reached about 18 million in 2016, up 29% since 2007. Roughly half of cohabiters are younger than 35 – but cohabitation is rising most quickly among Americans ages 50 and older.

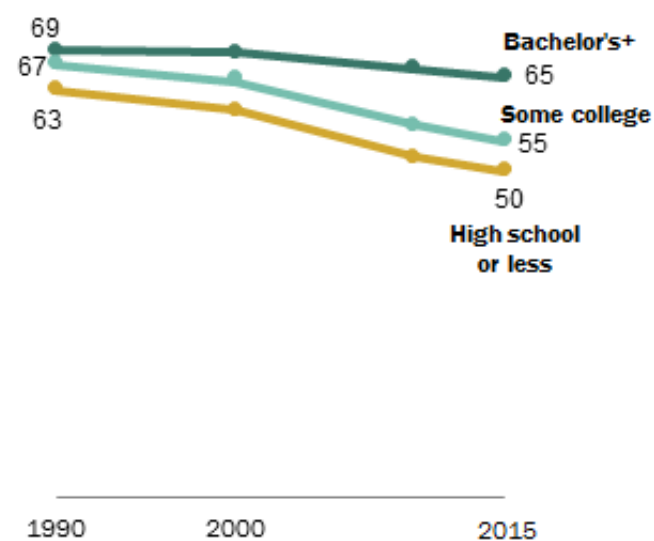
**4 Remarriage is on the rise.** In 2013, 23% of married people [had been married before](#), compared with just 13% in 1960. Four-in-ten new marriages in 2013 included a spouse who had said “I do” (at least) once before, and in 20% of new marriages both spouses had been married at least once before.

Remarriage is more common among men than women. Among previously married men (those who were ever divorced or widowed), 64% took a second walk down the aisle, compared with 52% of previously married women, according to a Pew Research Center analysis of 2013 Census Bureau data. One possible reason for this disparity is that women are less interested than men in remarrying. Among previously married women, 54% said in a 2014 Pew Research Center survey that they did not want to marry again, compared with 30% of men.

**5One-in-six newlyweds (17%) were [married to someone of a different race or ethnicity](#) in 2015.** This reflects a steady increase in

### The education gap in marriage continues to grow

*% of U.S. adults ages 25 and older who are married, by education*



Note: “Some college” includes those with an associate degree and those who attended college but did not obtain a degree. Adults who are separated are not classified as married.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 1990-2000 decennial censuses and the 2010 and 2015 American Community Surveys (IPUMS).

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intermarriage since 1967, when just 3% of newlyweds were intermarried, according to a 2017 Pew Research Center analysis.

While Asian (29%) and Hispanic (27%) newlyweds are most likely to intermarry in the U.S., the most dramatic increases in intermarriage have occurred among black newlyweds, 18% of whom married someone of a different race or ethnicity, up from 5% in 1980. About one-in-ten white newlyweds (11%) are married to someone of a different race or ethnicity.

Intermarriage is more common in [certain metropolitan areas](#), as well as in urban rather than rural areas.

For example, 42% of newlyweds in Honolulu were intermarried – by far the largest share of the 126 metropolitan areas analyzed. By contrast, about 3% of newlyweds in Jackson, Mississippi, and Asheville, North Carolina, married someone of a different race or ethnicity.

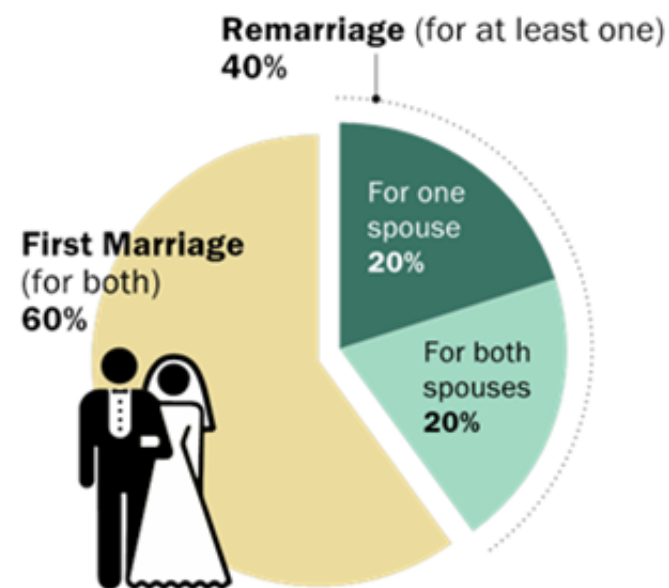
## 6

**Public support for same-sex marriage [has grown in the past 10 years](#).** In 2007, Americans opposed legalizing same-sex marriage by a margin of 54% to 37%. In 2017, more favored (62%) than opposed (32%) allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally.

Surveys conducted by [Gallup](#) found that about one-in-ten LGBT Americans (10%) were married to a same-sex spouse in 2017. Now, a majority (61%) of all same-sex couples who live together are married.

### Four-in-ten new marriages involve remarriage

*% of new marriages in 2013*



Note: "New marriages" are marriages that began in the past 12 months. A first marriage is one in which neither spouse has been previously married. A remarriage includes at least one spouse who has been married before. Based on couples, not individuals, where at least one spouse is age 18 or older. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2013 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS).

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# 7

## 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.

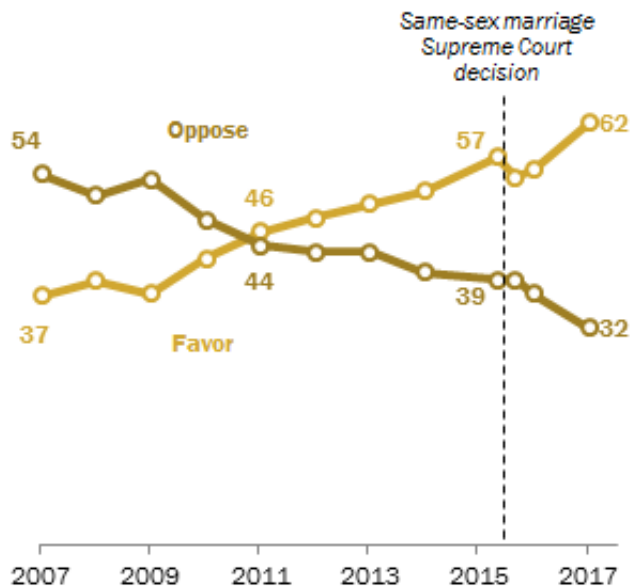
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 2008-2015 American Community Survey and 1980 decennial census (IPUMS).

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

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## Public support for same-sex marriage in U.S. reaches new milestone

% who \_\_\_ allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally

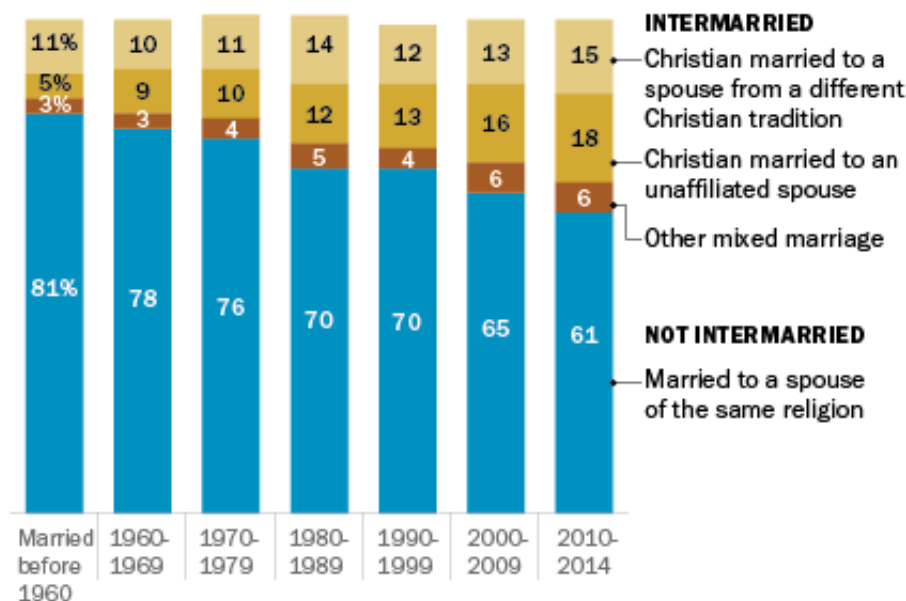


Notes: Data for 2007-2015 based on yearly averages. Don't know responses not shown. Source: Survey conducted June 8-18, 2017.

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## Recently Wed Americans More Likely to Marry Outside the Faith

Based on those who are currently married, by year married



Notes: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding. Evangelical Protestantism, mainline Protestantism and historically black Protestantism are treated as separate religions. "Christian married to an unaffiliated spouse" includes unaffiliated respondents married to a Christian.

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study, June 4-Sept. 30, 2014.

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**Sizable minorities of married people are members of a different religious group than their significant other or identify with a different political party.** About four-in-ten Americans (39%) who have married since 2010 have [a spouse who is in a different religious group](#), compared with only 19% of those who wed before 1960, according to a 2014 Pew Research Center survey. Many of these interfaith marriages are between Christians and those who are religiously unaffiliated.

Meanwhile, marriages and partnerships across political party lines are relatively rare in the U.S. Large majorities of members of both political parties say their spouse or partner [belongs to the same party](#). In 2016, 77% of both Republicans and Democrats who were married or living with a partner said their spouse or partner was in the same party.

**8 Americans are increasingly looking for love online.** A total of 15% of American adults have used online dating sites and/or mobile dating apps, [according to a 2015 Pew Research Center survey](#), up from 11% who [reported doing so](#) in 2013. Roughly four-in-ten Americans (41%) know someone who uses online dating, and 29% know someone who has entered a long-term relationship via online dating.

The growth in online dating can be seen particularly among young adults. The share of 18- to 24-year-olds who use online dating has almost tripled in recent years, from 10% in 2013 to 27% in 2015. Mobile dating apps are partly responsible of this increase: 22% of 18- to 24-year-olds now report using mobile dating apps, up from just 5% in 2013.

For the most part, people today view online dating positively. About six-in-ten (59%) say it is a good way to meet people, and 47% agree that it is easier and more efficient than other ways of meeting people.

*Note: This is an update of a post originally published on Feb. 14, 2014.*

Category: [5 Facts](#)

Topics: [Lifestyle](#), [Family and Relationships](#), [Marriage and Divorce](#)