

Shared religious beliefs in marriage important to some, but not all, married Americans

By [David Masci](#)

At a time when American society has [become less religious](#), many people still say shared religious beliefs are an important ingredient for marital success. But married adults point to other factors, such as shared interests and even sharing household chores, as bigger keys to a successful marriage.

Nearly half of all married adults (47%) say sharing religious beliefs with one's spouse is "very important" for a successful marriage, according to the [newest report](#) from Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study. Perhaps not surprisingly, nearly two-thirds of those married to someone from the *same* religious tradition (64%) take this view, compared with just 24% of those married to someone who is affiliated with *different* religions and only 17% of those in marriages between one religiously affiliated spouse and one who is unaffiliated.

But, overall, larger percentages of Americans rank other factors higher as key ingredients to a successful marriage. We asked respondents how important each of seven factors (including sharing religion) is to marital success. Topping the list as important for adults overall is having shared interests, a satisfying sexual relationship and sharing household chores.

Shared interests, good sex, sharing of chores seen as keys to successful marriage

% in each group who say _____ is very important for a successful marriage

	All adults	NET All MARRIED adults	Both spouses affiliated w/same religion	Both affiliated, but w/different religions	One spouse affiliated, one unaffiliated	Both spouses unaffiliated	All UNMARRIED adults
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Having shared interests	66	64	65	68	57	64	68
Satisfying sexual relationship	63	61	63	60	57	60	65
Sharing household chores	61	56	55	57	58	62	65
Adequate income	46	42	43	40	42	41	51
Shared religious beliefs	44	47	64	24	17	16	41
Having children	41	43	51	37	32	19	39
Agreement on politics	16	16	17	16	13	13	16

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015.
"One-in-Five U.S. Adults Were Raised in Interfaith Homes"

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Indeed, compared with those who value shared religious beliefs, substantially more married people (64%) say having shared interests is very important for a successful marriage. Similarly, roughly six-in-ten married Americans (61%) say a satisfying sex life is very important. Even sharing the household chores is seen as crucial by more married people (56%) than sharing religious beliefs.

Overall, a slightly smaller share of married people say having children (43%) and having adequate income (42%) are very important for success in marriage than say the same about having shared religious beliefs. Meanwhile, fewer see agreement on politics (16%) as a necessary ingredient for a good marriage – a fact that may save more than few marriages during a contentious election year (although another [recent Pew Research Center survey](#) found that most married Clinton and Trump supporters have spouses who share their candidate preference).

Most in religiously mixed marriages say spouse's religion was not important factor in decision to marry

How important a factor was your spouse's religion in deciding whether to marry them?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not too/not at all Important	Don't know
All married people	27%	21	51	1
Both affiliated with same religion	36	26	37	1
Both affiliated but w/different religions	18	17	65	<1
One affiliated, one unaffiliated	10	10	80	1
Both unaffiliated	5	10	84	<1

Source: 2014 Religious Landscape Study recontact survey conducted March 17-May 6, 2015.

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Although nearly half of married Americans say shared religious beliefs are very important to a successful marriage, considerably fewer (27%) say the religion of their spouse was a very important factor in their choosing who to marry. Another 21% say their spouse's religion was "somewhat" important in their decision to wed.

Again, those who are married to someone in the same religious group are more likely than religiously intermarried people to say their spouse's faith tradition was an important factor in their decision marry them. A majority of those married to someone of the same faith say this was a very (36%) or somewhat (26%) important element in their choice, while most of those who are married to someone with a different religious identity (including people in marriages between a religiously affiliated person and a religious "none") say their spouse's religion was not an important factor.

Fully 84% of religious "nones" married to other religiously unaffiliated people say the faith of their spouse was unimportant to them in choosing whether to get married, which makes sense, considering that just 16% of "nones" married to other "nones" express the view that shared religious beliefs are very important to a successful marriage more generally.

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