

International study reveals gender gap in religion

March 23, 2016

WASHINGTON—If the pews at church seem more populated by women than men, don't be surprised. Among Christians, women are more religious than men by several standard measures of what it means to be a religious person, a new Pew Research Center international [report](#) reveals.

In the United States, women in general—regardless of faith tradition—are more religious than men. The study reveals 60 percent of American women are likely to say religion is “very important” in their lives, compared to 47 percent of men. And 40 percent of American women say they attend religious services at least once a week, compared to 32 percent of men.

However, the same report shows men demonstrate higher levels of religious commitment in some countries and religious groups.

For instance, men attend worship more often in predominantly Muslim countries and Israel. However, Muslim women and Muslim men display similar levels of religious commitment based on all other measures.

Researchers gauged religious commitment by looking at several indicators—religious affiliation, frequency of attendance at worship services, frequency of prayer and whether religion plays an important role in a person's life.

Gender gap greater in U.S.

The religious gender gap appears more pronounced in the United States than in Canada, Germany, Australia, France or the United Kingdom. By several key measures, American men and women differ from each other to

a greater extent than men and women differ in the other five countries.

For example, 64 percent of women in the United States report they participate in daily prayer, compared to 47 percent of American men. Compare that 17 percent gap to the 9 percent gap in the United Kingdom (23 percent of women and 14 percent of men) or the 2 percent gap in Canada (30 percent of women and 28 percent of men).

In nearly one-third of the countries (61 out of 192 nations) where researchers examined religious affiliation, women are at least 2 percent more likely than men to identify with a religion.

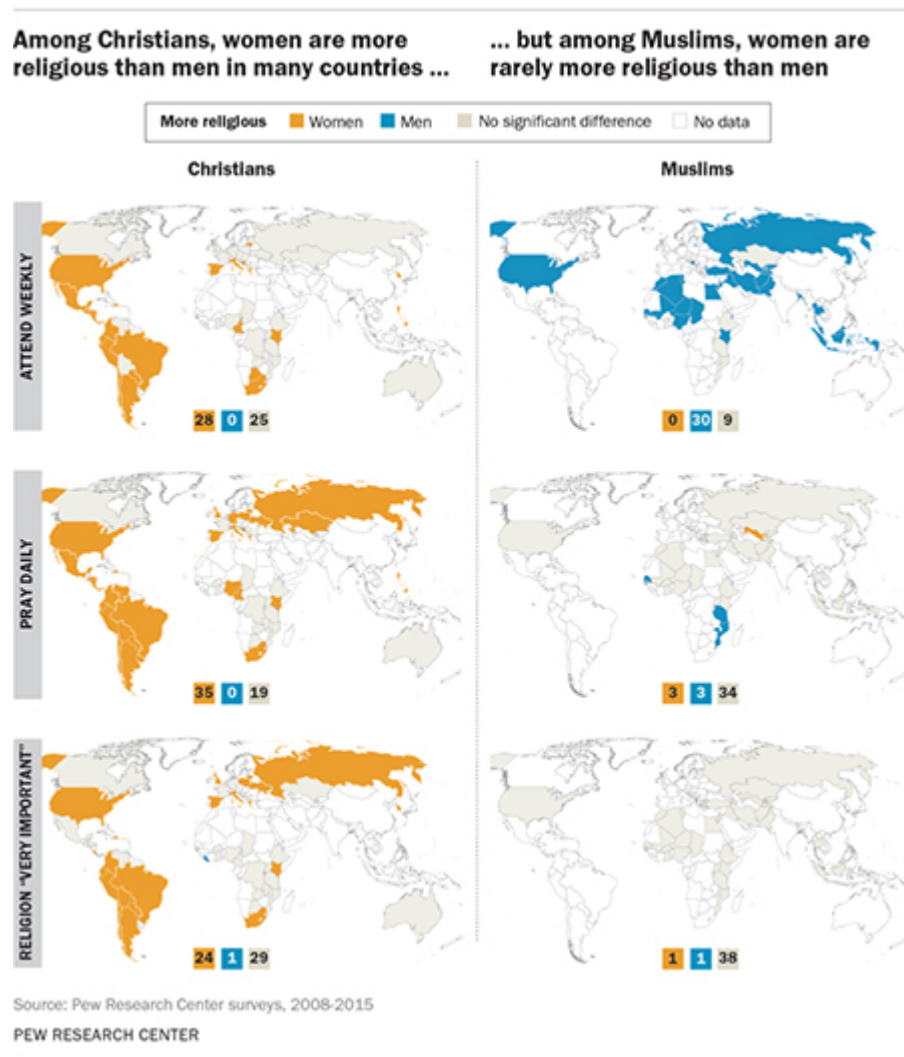


Although in some countries women and men display equal rates of religious affiliation, in no country are men more religiously affiliated than women by 2 percent or more.

Daily prayer significantly more common among women

The difference between women and men in self-reported rates of daily prayer marks the greatest gender gap in the study. In the 84 countries where information is available, the average share of women who say they pray daily is 8 percent higher than the average share of men. Even

religiously unaffiliated women in some countries report praying daily at higher rates than unaffiliated men do.



In 55 percent of the countries (46 of 84 nations) where information is available, women and men are about equally likely to say religion is “very important” in their lives. But in 36 other countries, women are more likely than men to consider religion very important—often by notably large margins. Only in Israel and Mozambique are

men more likely than women to consider religion very important to them personally.

Looking at survey data from 63 countries indicates men and women usually display similar levels of belief in heaven, hell and angels. For example, men and women are equally likely to believe in heaven in 47 countries and to believe in hell in 52 countries.

But in places with a discernible gender gap, women are more likely than

men to believe in these concepts. For example, women in 15 countries are more likely than men to say they believe in heaven, and in 10 countries, they are more likely than men to say they believe in hell.

The Pew Research Center report examined extensive international data on gender and religion in six groups—Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews and the religiously unaffiliated.

In 192 countries, information on affiliation was collected from censuses, demographic surveys and general population surveys as part of the center's study projecting the size and geographic distribution of the world's major religious groups from 2010 to 2050.

Data on religious beliefs and practices come from international Pew Research Center surveys of the general population in 84 countries conducted between 2008 and 2015.