

Women Speak FOR THEMSELVES

WOMEN AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: A FACT SHEET (March, 2015)

1. Women in the United States and Religious Freedom- women are always ranked “more religious than men.”

Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/7432/why-women-more-religious.aspx>
December 17, 2002

Why Are Women More Religious? (italics and bolding added) ,by George H. Gallup Jr.

A mountain of Gallup survey data attests to the idea that women are more religious than men, hold their beliefs more firmly, practice their faith more consistently, and work more vigorously for the congregation. In fact, gender-based differences in responses to religious questions are far more pronounced than those between any other demographic categories, such as age, education level, or geographic region.

The tendency toward higher religiosity among women has manifested over seven decades of scientific polling, and church membership figures indicate that it probably existed for many decades prior to the advent of survey research in the mid-1930s.

Reasons Why Women Are More Religious

Historically, differing social roles may have encouraged greater religious participation among women: for example, mothers have tended to spend more time than fathers in raising and nurturing their children..

-women often had more flexible daily schedules than men did, permitting more church involvement during the week.

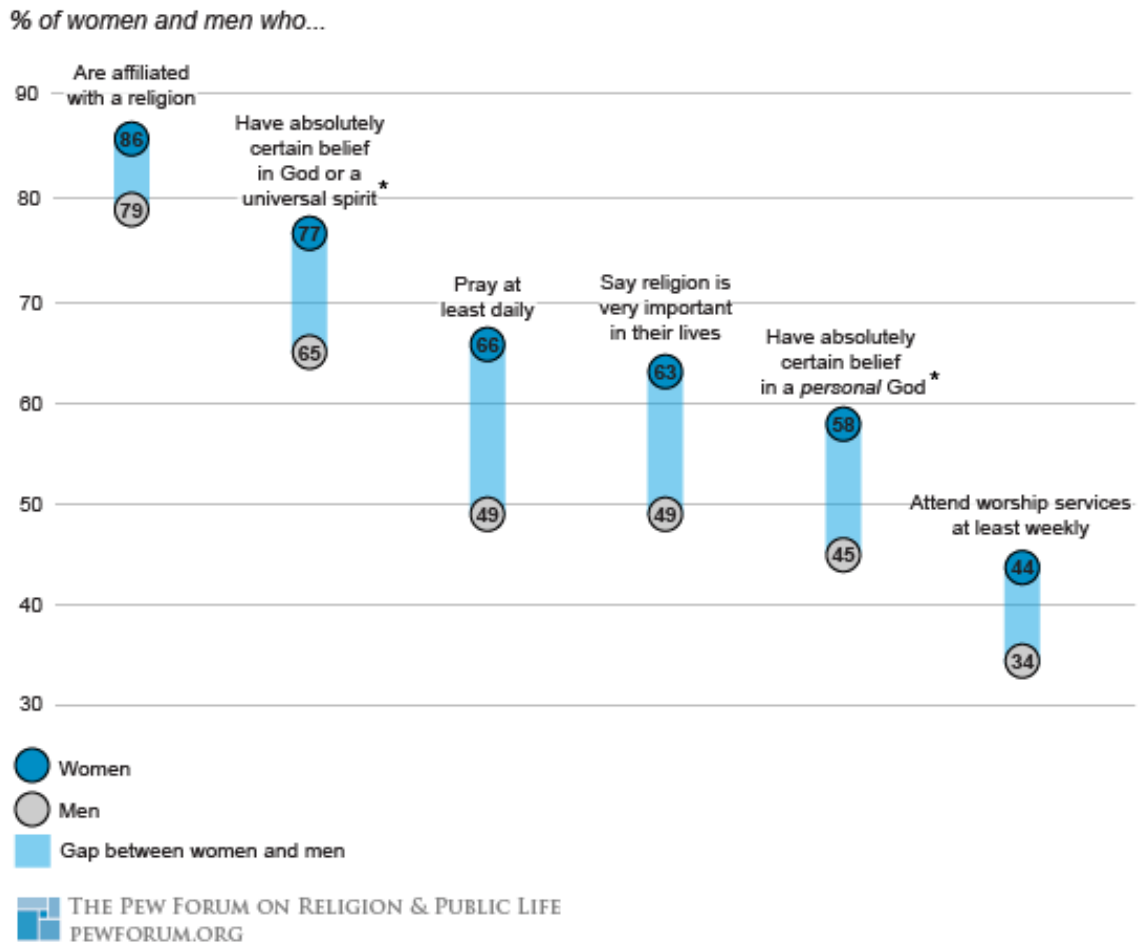
-female and male psyches may contribute as well. Gallup surveys (as well as my own personal experience from participating in small Bible study and prayer groups over the last 15 years) point to the following:

--Women tend to be more open about sharing personal problems.

-Women are more relational than men. Gallup research finds that a higher proportion of women than men say they have a "best friend" in their congregation.

--More so than men, women lean toward an empirical rather than a rational basis for faith.

Pew Forum (in 2009) reports similarly with Gallup:



2. Across the Muslim World: Women Similarly Religious as Men, Except in Mosque Attendance, at <http://www.pewforum.org/Muslim/the-worlds-muslims-unity-and-diversity-executive-summary.aspx#gender>

Women and Men Equally Committed; But Differences in Mosque Attendance

Median % in region who say religion is very important in their lives

	Men	Women	Diff.
Southern-Eastern Europe	38	42	+4
Southeast Asia	93	94	+1
Middle East-North Africa	82	83	+1
Central Asia	42	43	+1
Sub-Saharan Africa*	94	93	-1
South Asia	93	90	-3

Median % in region who pray several times a day

	Men	Women	Diff.
Middle East-North Africa	65	69	+4
Central Asia	28	31	+3
Southern-Eastern Europe	26	28	+2
Southeast Asia	77	78	+1
Sub-Saharan Africa*	84	84	0
South Asia	52	48	-4

*Median % in region who read or listen to Quran daily***

	Men	Women	Diff.
South Asia	26	33	+7
Central Asia	6	8	+2
Southeast Asia	36	38	+2
Middle East-North Africa	48	49	+1
Southern-Eastern Europe	9	6	-3

Median % in region who never attend mosque

	Men	Women	Diff.
South Asia	1	77	+76
Central Asia	20	74	+54
Southern-Eastern Europe	22	49	+27
Middle East-North Africa	7	33	+26
Southeast Asia	0	4	+4
Sub-Saharan Africa*	1	2	+1

*Data for all countries except Niger from "Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa."

**Not asked in sub-Saharan African countries.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER Q34, Q36, Q61 & Q65.

Across the six regions included in the survey, women and men tend to be very similar in terms of the role religion plays in daily life. This holds true for the importance that both sexes place on religion, as well as for the frequency with which they observe daily rituals, such as prayer and reading (or listening to) the Quran.

For example, among the countries surveyed in Central Asia, a median of 43% of Muslim women say religion is very important in their lives, compared with 42% of men. When it comes to prayer, medians of 31% of women and 28% of men in Central Asia pray several times a day. And nearly equal percentages of women (8%) and men (6%) across the region say they read or listen to the Quran daily.

The one exception to this pattern is mosque attendance: women are much more likely than men to say they never visit their local mosque. This gender gap is largest in South Asia and Central Asia. In South Asia, including Pakistan, a median of about three-quarters of women (77%) say they never attend mosque, compared with just 1% of men. In Central Asia, the comparable figures are 74% and 20%. Gender differences in mosque attendance are smaller, though still significant, in Southern and Eastern Europe (+27 percentage points) and the Middle East-North Africa region (+26 points). There is little or no gap, however, in Southeast Asia (+4) and sub-Saharan Africa (+1).

3. Closer Scrutiny of the Data on Women's Religiosity Shows That:

--women exceed men in religiousness the most among Christians and Hindus with regard to the importance of religion and weekly church attendance, and among Christians and Buddhists with regard to being a religious person and religious group membership.

-there may be sex-linked reasons women are more religious, but there are also many *social* reasons they survey as more religious. In the U.S. "social" versus personality factors seem to explain more of women's greater religiousness.

-regarding "affective" religiosity, women report much higher levels than men; but regarding "active" (practice) religiosity, women report equal levels with men in about one third of nations (World Values Survey data)

- among Jews and Muslims worldwide, men are more religious than women. (*PEW FORUM DISAGREES RE MUSLIMS)

See: D. Paul Sullins, Ph.D., 2006, Gender and Religiousness: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity

<http://faculty.cua.edu/sullins/published%20articles/ajs1206.pd>

Department of Sociology The Catholic University of America Washington, D.C. 20064

4. Some talking points I drafted Women and Religious Freedom (drafted 2012 by HMA; “reasoned,” not data-based):

<http://womenspeakforthemselves.com/our-work/talking-points-women-and-religious-freedom>

Religious freedom is significant value for women as well as men. For both sexes, the ability to pursue questions about the meaning of life and one’s obligations to a Creator and to fellow human beings – and to order one’s life in accord with the answers – are central to a life of integrity, freedom and happiness.

Religious freedom may be of particular importance to women because of the crucial role religion plays in providing the rationale for the equality of every human person – made female or male. Historically and currently, the Old Testament’s creation accounts, and the New Testament’s celebration of women’s role in salvation history and of marriage as a sacred and mutual covenant, have provided the leading rationale for the legal and cultural imperative to regard women as fully equal to men, and equally made in God’s image.

Data indicate that countries around the world which respect religious freedom are also more likely to recognize the equality of the female half of the human race. Brian J. Grim and Roger Finke, *The Price of Freedom Denied*, Chapter 7

It is infuriating that the most recent attacks on religious freedom are launched in the name of women’s equality. There is no evidence that big government birth control programs are a boon to women, let alone that they should trump religious freedom. Interest groups currently shouting down religious opposition to contraception or abortion mandates ignore the data showing that such government programs have corresponded with increases – not decreases – in unintended pregnancies, abortions and nonmarital births. All of these outcomes are borne nearly exclusively by women.

% of women and men who...

