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**US Religion Census 2020:
Dramatic Changes in American Orthodox Churches.**

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Monk's Lagoon, Spruce Island, Alaska

To Catch Your Interest:

Examples of What the 2020 Census of American Orthodox Churches Revealed

- ❖ If measured by the number of *all adherents* (regular attendees plus occasional and marginal participants, adults plus children), in 2020, the estimated membership in all Eastern Orthodox Churches in the USA was 675,765, and it was 491,413 in all Oriental Orthodox Churches. Looking *only at the number of regular attendees*,¹ the estimated membership for all Eastern Orthodox Churches was 183,020 versus 171,045 for all Oriental Orthodox Churches.
- ❖ Between 2010 and 2020, Eastern Orthodox Churches have suffered significant membership losses: they declined by 17% in total adherents and by 14% in regular attendees. In stark contrast, Oriental Orthodox Churches have grown substantially in both total adherents (+67%) and regular attendees (+59%). However, these overall trends in membership were more nuanced when looking at individual Church bodies. This report examines and presents the 2010-2020 membership changes in fourteen Eastern and nine Oriental Orthodox Churches.
- ❖ US Orthodox Churches vary greatly in terms of how many of their parishioners attend church regularly. Among the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the best “church-goers” are in the Holy Orthodox Church in North America and the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese. More than half of their total adherents (57% and 51% respectively) attend services on a regular basis. On the opposite extreme are Albanian Orthodox Diocese, Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarchal Parishes of Moscow Patriarchate, and Macedonian Orthodox Diocese: no more than one-fifth of parishioners worship in their churches regularly. Among Oriental Orthodox, the Knanaya Churches stand out for high percentage of regular attendees: 71%. On the contrary, in the Armenian Apostolic Church (both Catholicosate Cilicia and Etchmiadzin), only about one-tenth of adherents come to church regularly.
- ❖ More than one-third Oriental Orthodox parishes (35%) are new, established since 2010, in comparison with one-in-ten (10%) in the case of Eastern Orthodox Churches. Among Oriental Orthodox Churches, three have especially high percentage of parishes newly formed since 2010: the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (49% of all parishes are new since 2010), Coptic Orthodox Church (43%), and Eritrean Orthodox Church (36%). Four Eastern Orthodox Churches also stand out for having a high share of new parishes added since 2010: the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians (72% of all parishes are new since 2010), Georgian Orthodox Church (50%), Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (32%), and Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese (29%).

¹ For definitions of “adherents” and “regular attendees,” see the section *About This Report: Presented Data and Their Inclusiveness*

About This Report: Presented Data and Their Inclusiveness

This report presents the results of the Second National Census of American Orthodox Christian Churches, conducted in 2020. It offers diverse information on parishes, total membership, and worship attendance of both the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in the United States. It also describes significant changes in American Orthodox Christianity that have occurred since the First Census in 2010. As we will see on the following pages, during the decade of 2010-2020, some US Orthodox Churches have grown exponentially while others have experienced sharp declines. Both the 2010 and 2020 studies were part of a much larger US Religion Census which collected data on all American religious congregations. Information gathered by the US Religion Census is publicly available at: www.usreligioncensus.org

In both the 2010 and 2020 Census, we approached local Orthodox parishes and asked two questions:²

- How many individual persons in total are involved in the life of your parish? Include in this number adults and children, regular and occasional attendees, paid stewards and persons who do not contribute financially.
- Approximately how many persons – including both adults and children – attend liturgy in your parish on a typical (not festive) Sunday?

The answer to the first question gives information on the number of *all adherents*. This is the most inclusive category of membership that reflects the total number of persons involved – some regularly and some occasionally – in the life of the local parish community.

The answer to the second question indicates the number of *regular attendees* – the number of parishioners who participate in the life of a parish on a regular weekly basis. The *percentage of regular attendees among total adherents* can be seen as a measure of church commitment among parishioners. In essence, it shows the size of the “membership nucleus” formed by regularly involved people versus the remaining parishioners who participate only occasionally or marginally.

With regard to the second question, it should also be mentioned that some data were gathered before the lockdowns and limitations in worship services imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. For parishes that gave their information during the pandemic, respondents were asked to provide information on worship attendance prior to COVID-19. As a result, 2010 and 2020 data on worship attendance are fully comparable and reflect the normal pre-pandemic situation.

² In most cases, the local parish clergy served as respondents and answered these questions

The following table lists the American Orthodox Christian Churches that participated in the 2010 and 2020 Censuses. It should be noted that some of these Church-bodies have parishes both in and outside the USA. However, all data gathered in the 2010 and 2020 Censuses and presented in this report refer exclusively to their parishes in the United States.

Eastern Orthodox Churches	Participation		Oriental Orthodox Churches	Participation	
	2010	2020		2010	2020
Albanian Orthodox Diocese	Yes	Yes	Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of Cilicia)	Yes	Yes
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA	Yes	Yes	Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate of Etchmiadzin)	Yes	Yes
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America	Yes	Yes	Coptic Orthodox Church	Yes	Yes
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese of the USA, Canada and Australia	Yes	Yes	Ethiopian Orthodox Church	Yes(**)	Yes
Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians (*)	No	Yes	Eritrean Orthodox Church	Yes	Yes
Georgian Orthodox Church in North America	Yes	Yes	Knanaya Churches in the USA	No	Yes
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	Yes	Yes	Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church	Yes	Yes
Holy Orthodox Church in North America (*)	Yes	Yes	Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	Yes	Yes
Macedonian Orthodox Diocese (*)	Yes	Yes	Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch	Yes	Yes
Orthodox Church in America	Yes	Yes			
Patriarchal Parishes of Moscow Patriarchate	Yes	Yes			
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas	Yes	Yes			
Serbian Orthodox Church in North, Central and South America	Yes	Yes			
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	Yes	Yes			

(*) - Eastern Orthodox Churches of irregular status. They are not part of the “Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States of America” and are seen by the latter as “non-canonical” (not valid).

(**) – in the 2010 Census the data on the Ethiopian Orthodox Church were limited to location of its parishes. At that time, we were unable to obtain information on membership and worship attendance.

In terms of the completeness of data gathered in the 2020 Census, in the vast majority of cases, we were able to obtain information on all or nearly all parishes of various American Orthodox Churches. The two exceptions are the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese and the Eritrean Orthodox Church. In the case of the Antiochian Archdiocese, 85% of the parishes provided information. For the missing 15% of parishes, this report employs their data from the 2010 Census. For the Eritrean Orthodox Church, only 60% of the parishes responded. In order to present national results for the Eritrean Church, we extrapolated the obtained information into the remaining 40% of parishes.

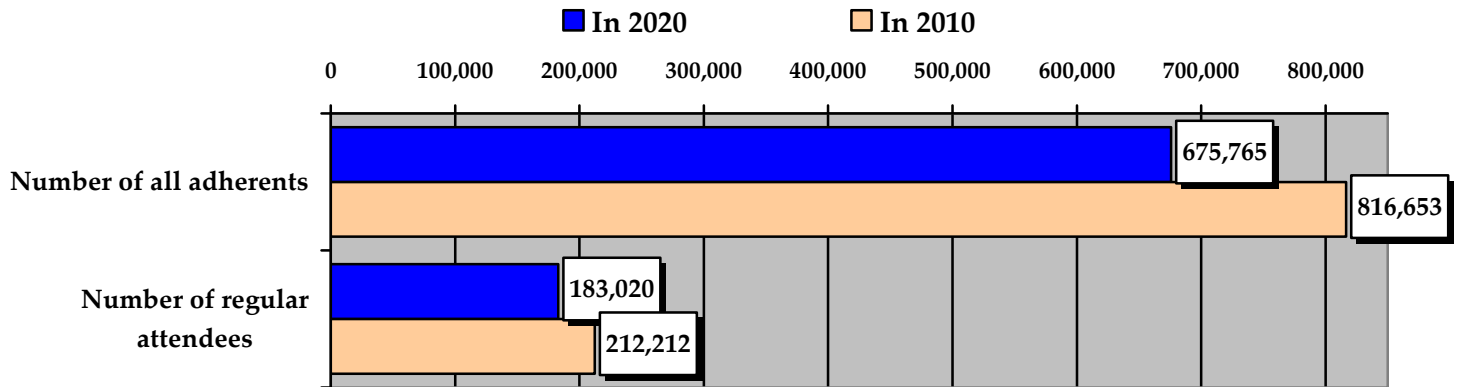
Finally, it should be noted that this report simply presents the data as reported by the parishes. We do not attempt to explain or comment on the causes of changes (i.e., growth or decline) in American Orthodox Churches that have occurred since the previous Census (2010).

Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA in 2020: National Overview

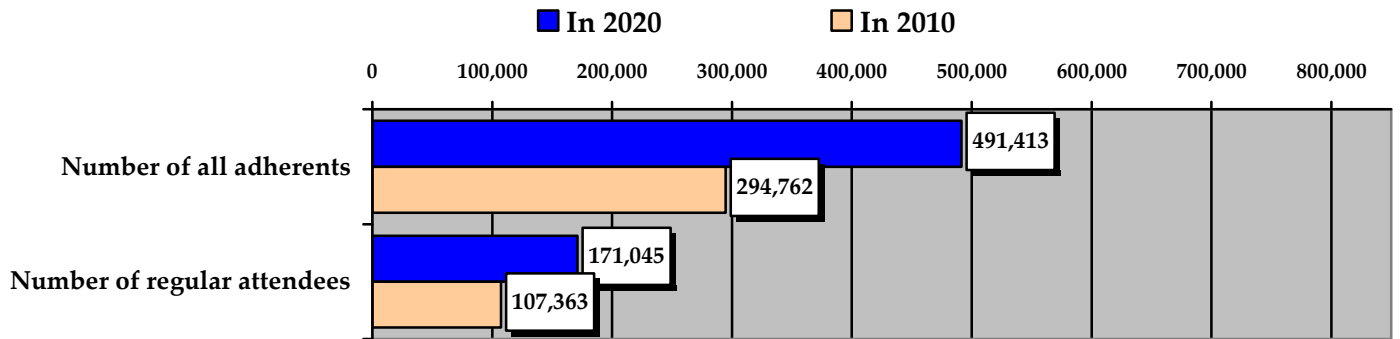
If measured by the number of *all adherents* (regular attendees plus occasional/marginal participants, adults plus children), in 2020, the estimated membership in all Eastern Orthodox Churches was 675,765, in comparison with 491,413 in all Oriental Orthodox Churches. Looking *only at the number of regular attendees*, the estimated membership for all Eastern Orthodox Churches was 183,020 versus 171,045 for all Oriental Orthodox Churches. We see that 27% of Eastern Orthodox parishioners (183,020 out of 675,765) and 35% of Oriental Orthodox parishioners (171,045 out of 491,413) participate in church life on a regular basis.

Fig. 1 shows that from 2010-2020, Eastern Orthodox Churches have experienced a significant membership decline. In contrast, the Oriental Orthodox Churches have grown substantially in both total adherents and regular attendees. Indeed, between 2010 and 2020, the number of all Eastern Orthodox Church adherents dropped from 816,653 to 675,765 (-17%), and their number of regular attendees declined from 212,212 to 183,020 (-14%). Oriental Orthodox Churches have grown from 294,762 to 491,413 total adherents (+67%) and from 107,363 to 171,045 regular attendees (+59%).³

Figure 1 Eastern Orthodox Churches: Change in Membership from 2010 to 2020



Oriental Orthodox Churches: Change in Membership from 2010 to 2020



³ For Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Knanaya Orthodox Churches in the USA, we estimated their 2010 membership based on their numbers from 2020 Census and adjusting proportionately to the change in number parishes between 2010 and 2020

As a result of these two opposing trends, the relative “weight” - i.e., the share - of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Church adherents in the entire American Orthodox Church community changed significantly. Fig. 2a shows that in 2010, the followers of various Eastern Orthodox Churches constituted nearly three-quarters (73%) of all American Orthodox Church adherents. Ten years later, their share had diminished to 58%. In contrast, the percentage of Oriental Orthodox among all American Orthodox Church adherents has increased from 27% to 42%. When looking at regular church attendees, even greater 2010-2020 gains of Oriental Orthodox Churches were evident. Fig. 2b shows that in 2010, Oriental Orthodox Christians accounted for slightly more than one-third (34%) of the regularly worshipping American Orthodox population. However, in 2020, the shares of Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox regular church attendees were almost at parity: 48% and 52% respectively.

Figure 2a “Shares” of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches among All Orthodox Christian Church Adherents in the USA: Changes from 2010 to 2020

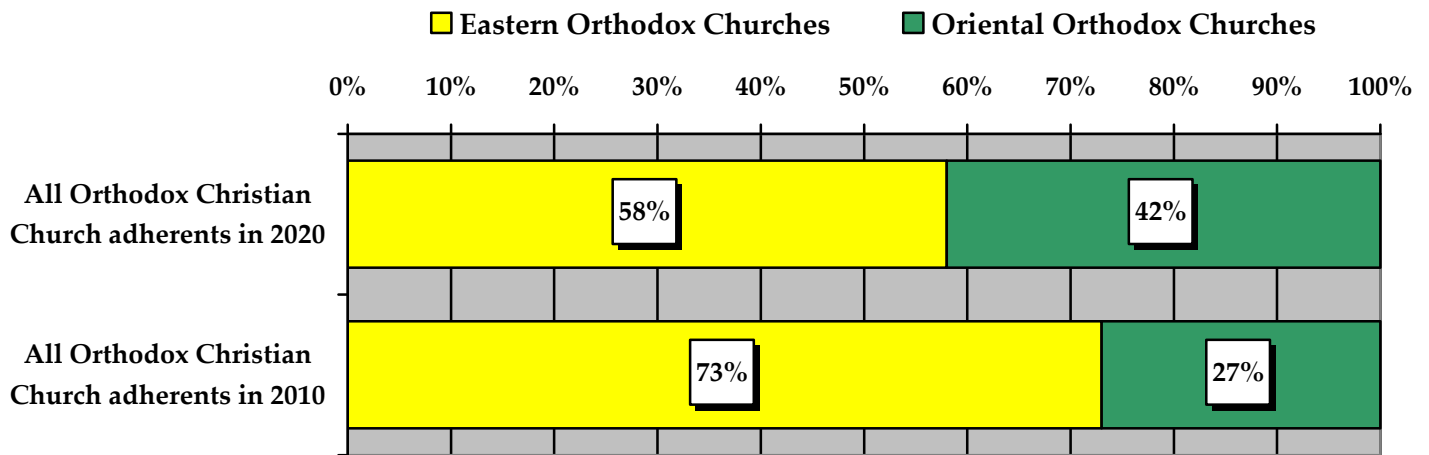
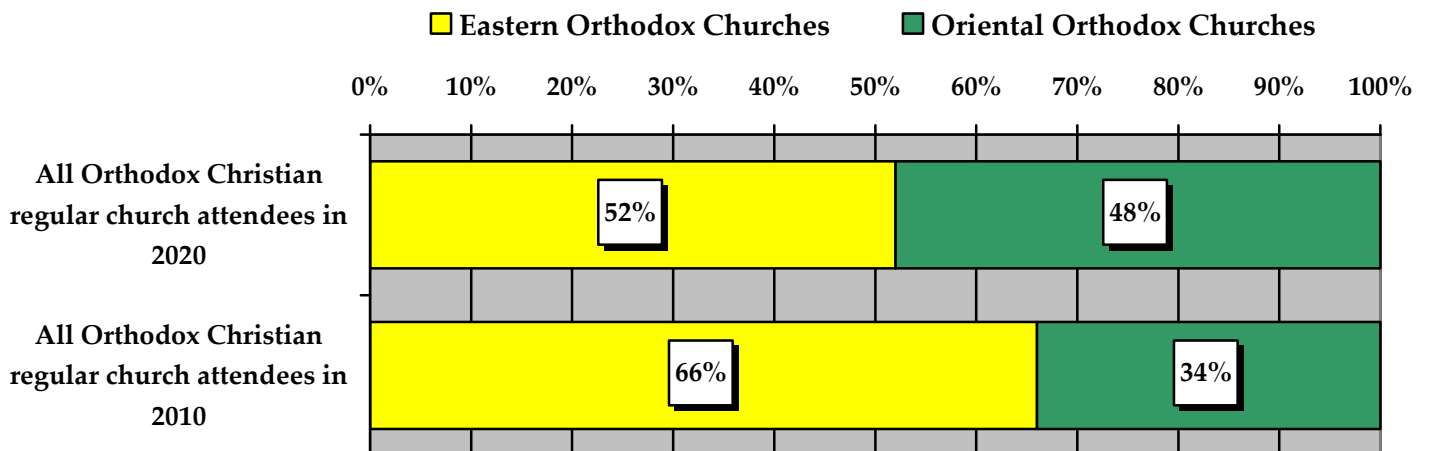
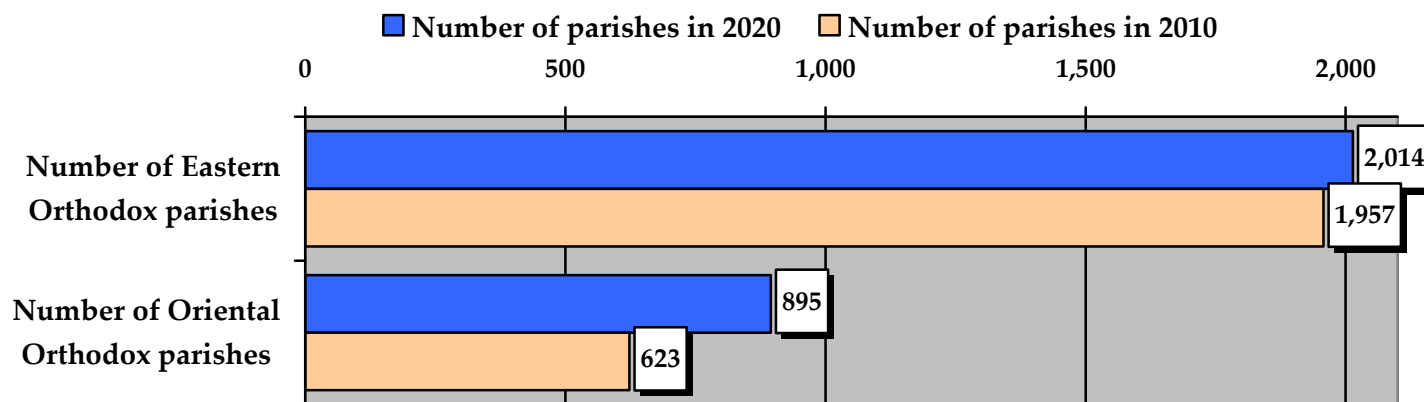


Figure 2b “Shares” of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches among All Orthodox Christian Regular Church Attendees in the USA: Changes from 2010 to 2020



When looking at 2010-2020 changes in parishes, both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches have grown in the numbers of local congregations. However, as Fig. 3 shows, this growth was much more robust in Oriental Orthodox Churches (from 623 to 895: +44%) than in Eastern Orthodox Churches (from 1957 to 2014: +3%).

Figure 3 Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches: Change in Number of Parishes from 2010 to 2020



Notably, in the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the increase in adherents (+67%) clearly outpaced the increase in parishes (+44%). What this fact suggests is that the gains in Oriental Orthodox Church membership were not only thanks to opening new parishes, but also because their existing congregations were attracting more new members and continued to grow. In contrast, the Eastern Orthodox Churches have grown somewhat in parishes but declined significantly in adherents. In other words, even opening new congregations was insufficient to counterbalance the losses in membership suffered by already existing parishes.

Tables 1a and 1b summarize 2010-2020 changes in membership and parishes in Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches. They also show the size of a “typical” median⁴ parish measured either by all adherents or only by regular attendees. Overall, we see that Oriental Orthodox parishes tend to be larger than Eastern Orthodox parishes in both measures of membership: total adherents and regular attendees.

The tables also provide a list of the largest Eastern and Oriental Orthodox parishes, as measured either by total adherents or only by regular attendees.⁵ Notably, no single Eastern Orthodox parish has an average Sunday attendance of at least 1,000 people, while nineteen Oriental Orthodox parishes gather 1,000 or more worshippers in their sanctuaries on a typical Sunday.

⁴ For a list of values that is in descending or ascending order, the median is the value that is in the middle of the list. Suppose we have nine parishes with memberships of 10, 13, 15, 20, 25, 30, 31, 37, and 40. The size of a median parish in this list is 25 members – the value that separates the four smaller and four larger parishes. If there is an even number of parishes, then the median is the average of the two middle values. Suppose we have ten parishes with memberships of 10, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 30, 31, 37, and 40. Here, the size of a median parish is 24 – the average of 23 and 25.

⁵ Note that, because of the varied attendance rates, the parishes with the largest communities of total adherents are not necessarily the same as those with the greatest number of “people in the pews” on any given Sunday.

Table 1a Overview of Parishes and Membership in Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches

Change in the number of parishes and missions: 2010 → 2020	1,957 parishes and missions → 2,014 parishes and missions (+3%) (since 2010, 203 parishes were founded while 146 closed)
Change in the number of total adherents: 2010 → 2020	816,653 → 675,675 (-17%)
Change in the number of regular attendees: 2010 → 2020	212,212 → 183,020 (-14%)
Change in the size of a median parish measured by number of total adherents: 2010 → 2020	150 → 130 (-13%)
Change in the size of a median parish measured by number of regular attendees: 2010 → 2020	60 → 60 (no change)
Largest parishes by number of total adherents (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Nicholas Cathedral, Tarpon Springs, FL; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (10,000 people) • St. George Church, Piscataway, NJ; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (6,500) • Annunciation Cathedral, Houston, TX; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (5,000) • Holy Trinity Cathedral, Charlotte, NC; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (4,500) • St. Lazar, Detroit, MI; Serbian Orthodox Church (4,100) • St. Nicholas Shrine Church, Flushing, NY; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (4,000) • Sts. Constantine & Helen Cathedral, Merrillville, IN; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (3,750) • St. Demetrios Church, Elmhurst, IL; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (3,500) • St. Vasilios Church, Peabody, MA; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (3,500) • Assumption Church, St. Clair Shores, MI; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (3,500) • St. Thomas Church, Cherry Hill, NJ; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (3,500) • Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Sterling Heights, MI; Macedonian Orthodox Diocese (3,500) • Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Crown Point, IN; Macedonian Orthodox Diocese (3,500)
Largest parishes by number of regular attendees (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Nicholas Shrine Church, Flushing, NY; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (850 people) • Three Hierarchs Church, Brooklyn, NY; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (800) • Holy Trinity Cathedral, Charlotte, NC; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (750) • Annunciation Cathedral, Houston, TX; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (700)

Continued: Largest parishes by number of regular attendees (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Nicholas Church, Troy, MI; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (700) • St. Michael Church, Louisville, KY; Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese (700) • St. Catherine, St. George, and St. Demetrios Church, Astoria, NY; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (650) • St. Nektarios Church, Charlotte, NC; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (600) • St. Elijah Church, Oklahoma City, OK; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (600) • St. Katherine Church, Falls Church, VA; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (550) • St. George Church, Piscataway, NJ; Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (525) • Basilica of St. Mary, Livonia, MI; Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese (525)
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Table 1b Overview of Parishes and Membership in Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches

Change in the number of parishes and missions: 2010 → 2020	623 parishes and missions → 895 parishes and missions (+44%) (since 2010, 312 parishes were founded while 40 closed)
Change in the number of total adherents: 2010 → 2020	294,762 → 491,413 (+67%)
Change in the number of regular attendees: 2010 → 2020	107,363 → 171,045 (+59%)
Change in the size of a median parish measured by number of total adherents: 2010 → 2020	240 → 292 (+22%)
Change in the size of a median parish measured by number of regular attendees: 2010 → 2020	90 → 115 (+28%)
Largest parishes by number of total adherents (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Leon Cathedral, Burbank, CA; Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate Etchmiadzin (10,000 people) • St. Peter, Van Nuys, CA; Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate Etchmiadzin (7,500) • St. Vartan, New York, NY; Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate Etchmiadzin (5,060) • St. James, Watertown, MA; Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate Etchmiadzin (5,000) • St. Abanoub & St. Antonious, Bayonne, NJ; Coptic Orthodox Church (5,000) • St. Mary, Glendale, CA; Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate Cilicia (4,940) • Medhane Alem (Christ Savior), Colmar Manor, MD; Eritrean Orthodox Church (4,200) • St. Paul, Fresno, CA; Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate Etchmiadzin (4,000)

Continued: Largest parishes by number of total adherents (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St. Mark, Los Angeles, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (4,000) • St. Mary and St. Athanasius, Northridge, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (4,000) • Archangel Michael, Santa Ana, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (4,000) • St. George, Bellflower, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (4,000) • St. Pope Kyrillos VI, Westminster, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (4,000)
Largest parishes by number of regular attendees (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy Trinity, Minneapolis, MN; Ethiopian Orthodox Church (1,800) • St. Mina, Holmdel, NJ; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,750) • Archangel Michael, Santa Ana, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,700) • St. Pope Kyrillos VI, Westminster, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,700) • St. Mark, Los Angeles, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,200) • St. George, Brooklyn, NY; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,200) • St. Maurice, Pomona, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,200) • St. Gabriel, San Jose, CA; Ethiopian Orthodox Church (1,150) • St. Mary, East Brunswick, NJ; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,100) • St. George & St. Shenouda, Jersey City, NJ; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,100) • St. Abanoub & St. Antonious, Bayonne, NJ; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • St. Mary and St. Athanasius, Northridge, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • St. George, Bellflower, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • St. Mark, Fairfax, VA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • St. John, Covina, CA; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • Holy Resurrection and St. Mark, Burr Ridge, IL; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • Virgin Mary & St. George, Staten Island, NY; Coptic Orthodox Church (1,000) • St. Michael, Garland, TX; Ethiopian Orthodox Church (1,000) • Virgin Mary, Washington, DC; Ethiopian Orthodox Church (1,000)

Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches:

Church-by-Church Data on Parishes, Membership and Worship Attendance

Fourteen Eastern and nine Oriental Orthodox Churches were involved in the 2020 Census of American Orthodox Christian Churches. They vary greatly in terms of their membership, number of parishes, and rates of church attendance.

Fig. 4a and 4b show that if measured by the number of total adherents, the membership of the Eastern Orthodox Churches ranges from 375,972 in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America to just 741 in the Holy Orthodox Church in North America. Among Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Coptic Orthodox Church is the biggest (179,256 adherents) and Knanaya Churches in the USA (2,817) is the smallest.

Figure 4a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Number of All Adherents (marked with “*” are churches of irregular status)

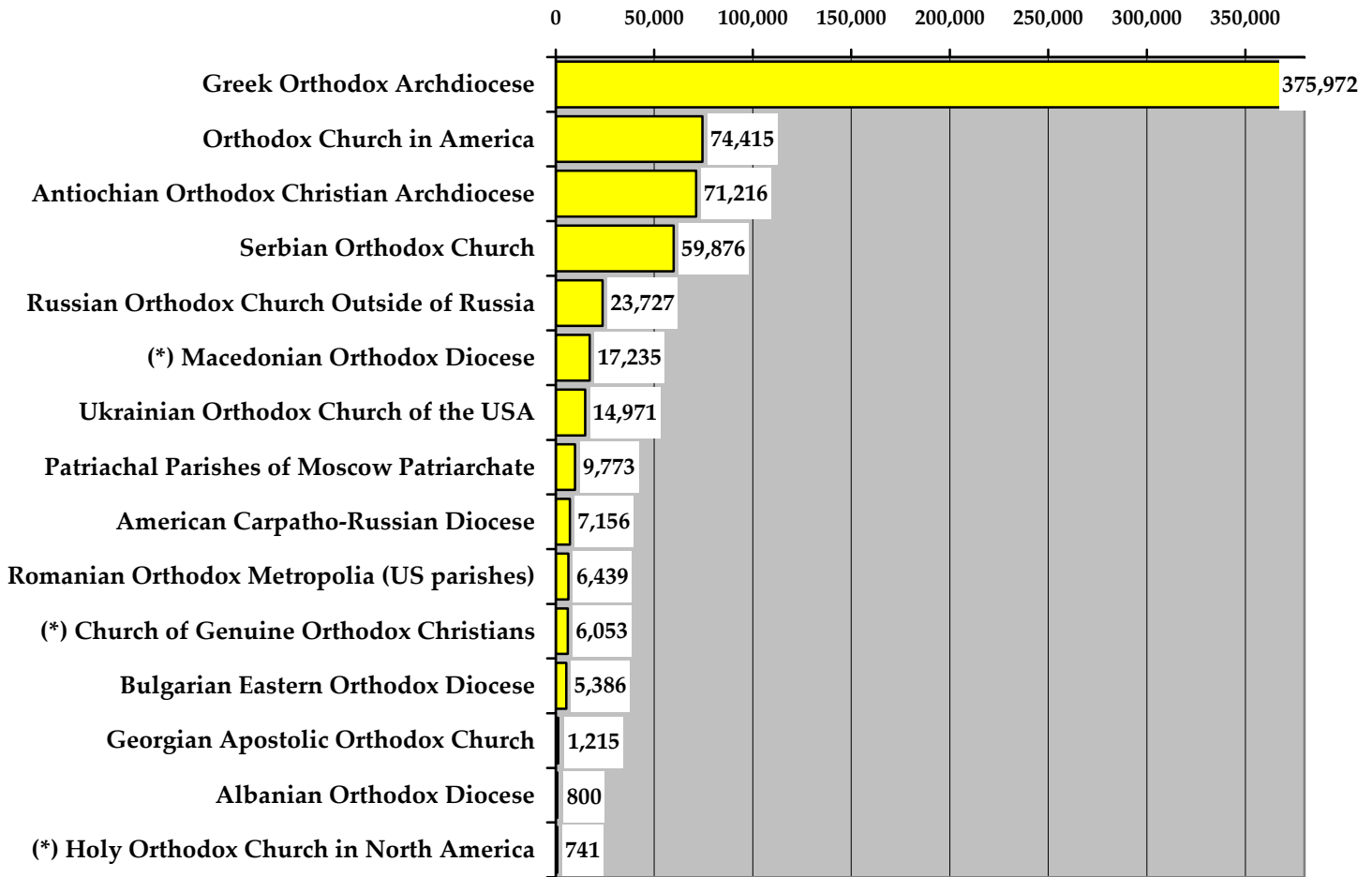
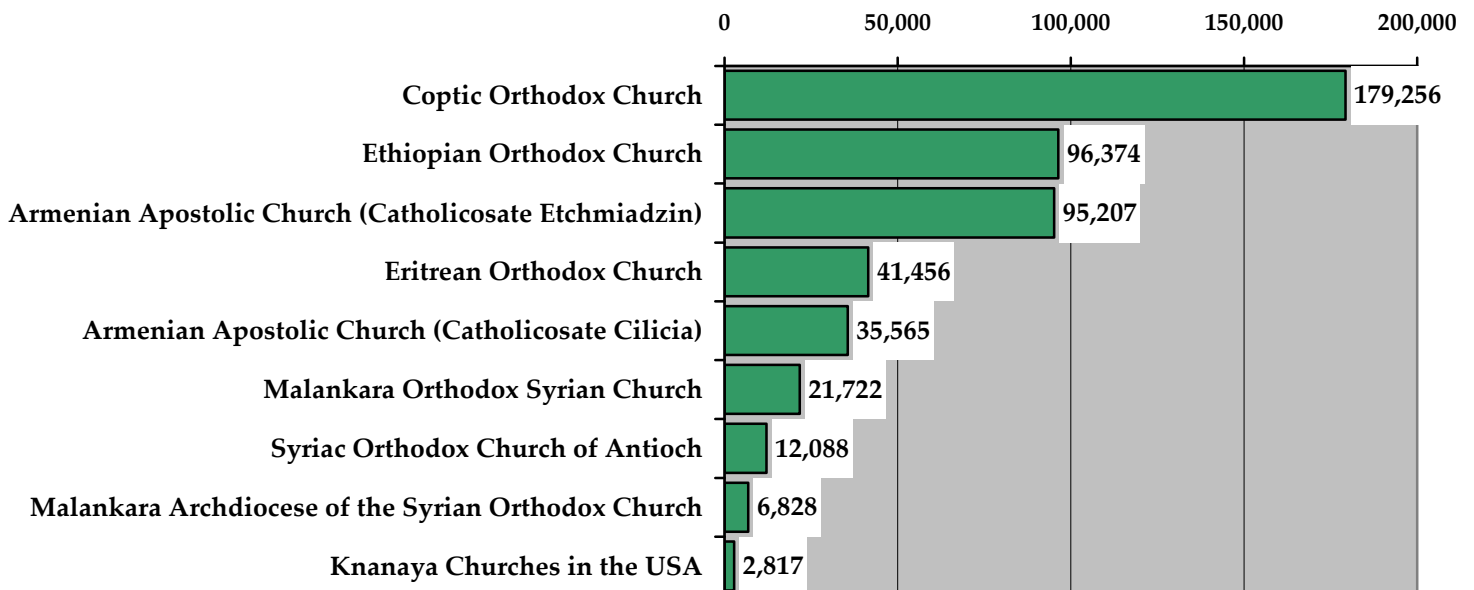


Figure 4b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Number of All Adherents



If counting only regular attendees, the Eastern Orthodox Churches vary in size from 84,552 in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese to just 160 in the Albanian Diocese. Among Oriental Orthodox Churches, the number of regular attendees ranges from 78,425 in the Coptic Orthodox Church to 1,992 in Knanaya Churches. See Fig. 5.

Figure 5a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Number of Regular Attendees (marked with “*” are churches of irregular status)

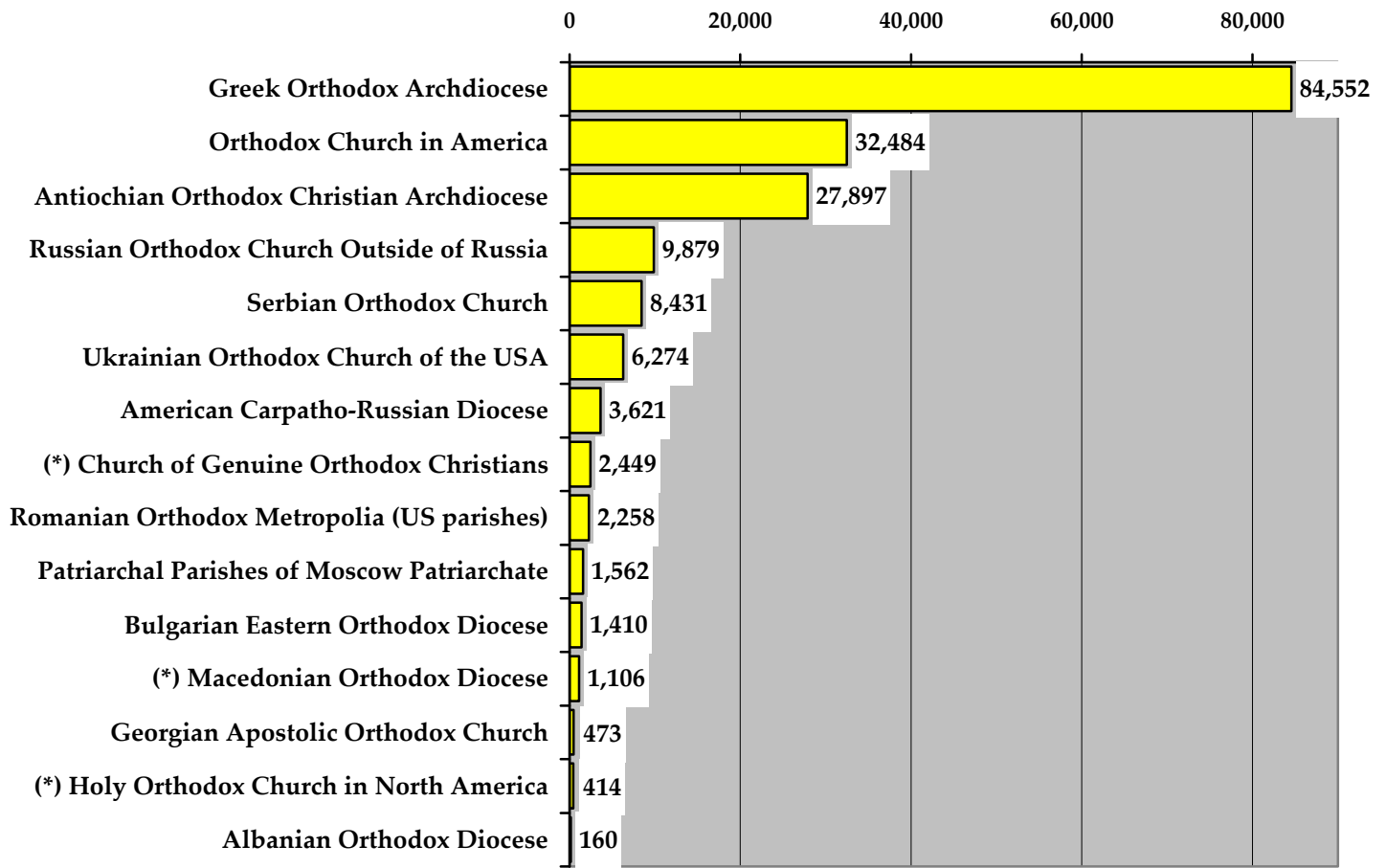
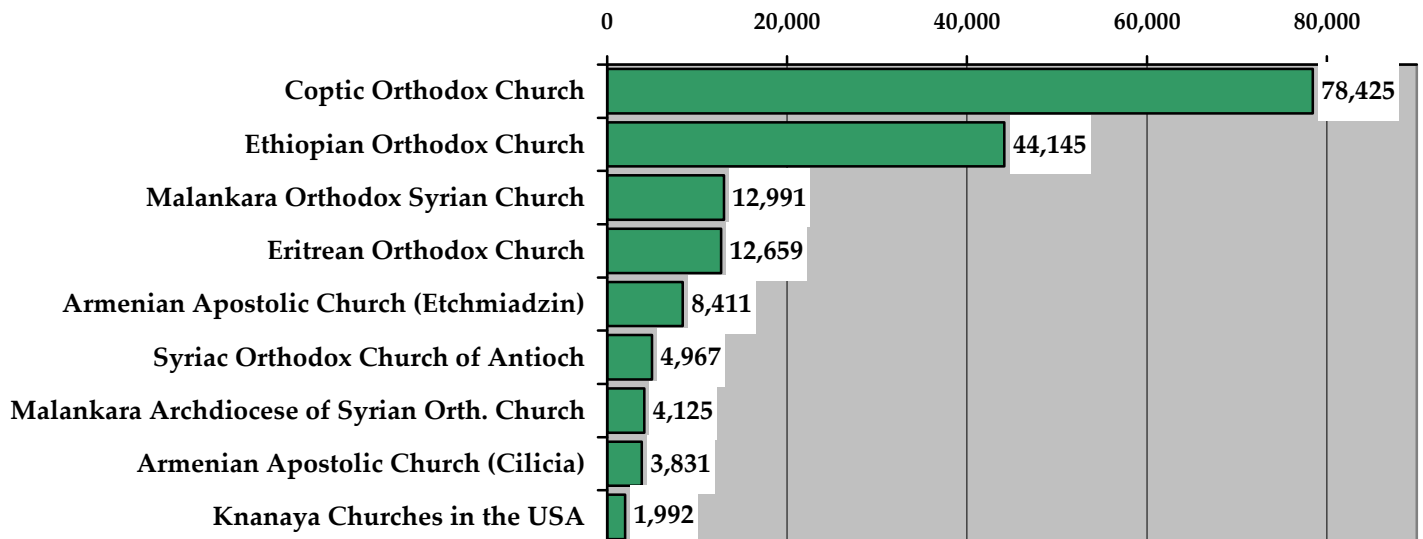


Figure 5b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Number of Regular Attendees



The share/percentage of regular attendees among total adherents is also very different for various Orthodox Christian Churches. This figure is a good indicator of how *active and involved the members* in various US Orthodox Churches are. See Fig. 6a and 6b.

Figure 6a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Percentage of Regular Attendees among Total Adherents

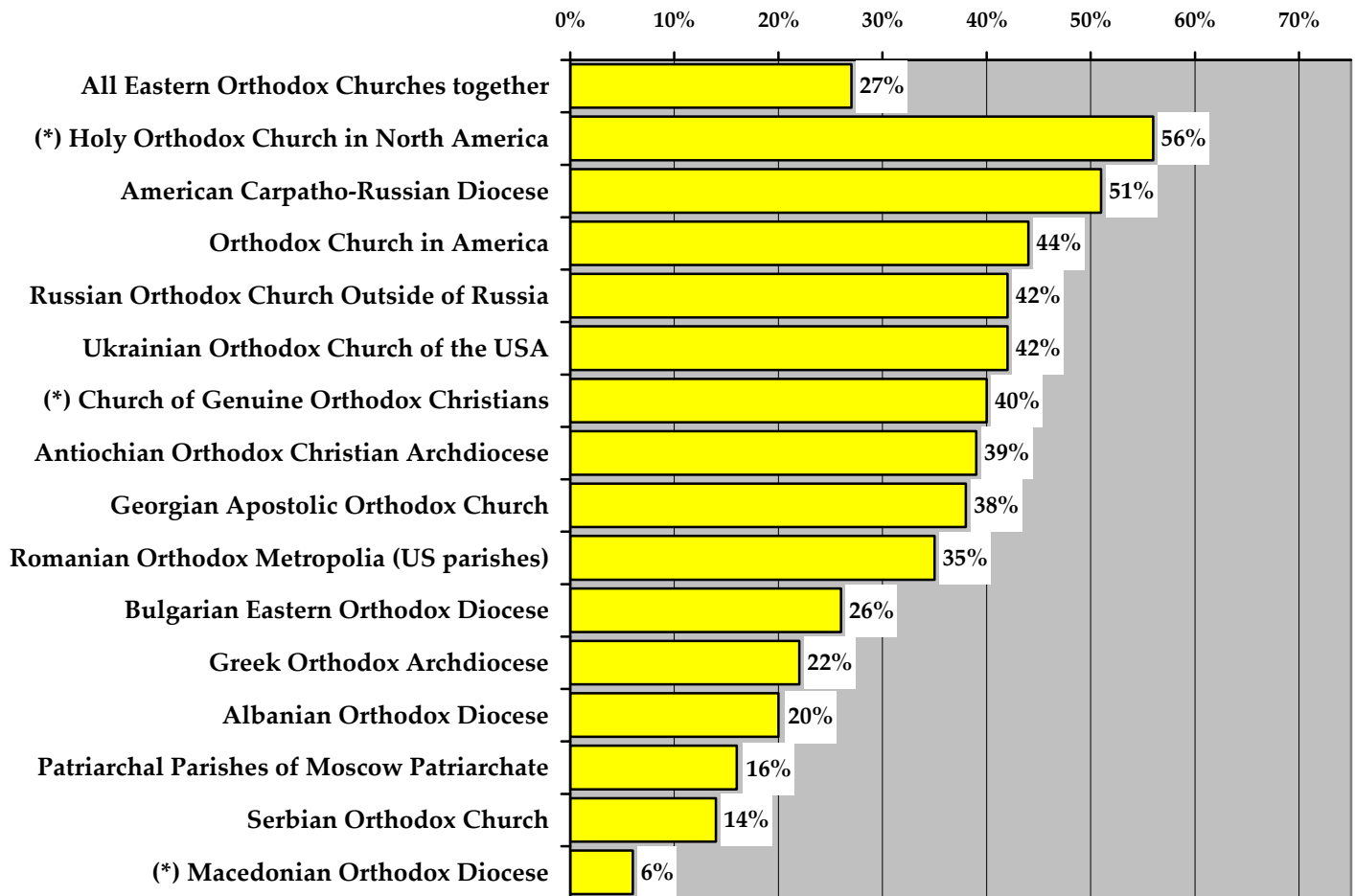


Figure 6b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Percentage of Regular Attendees among Total Adherents

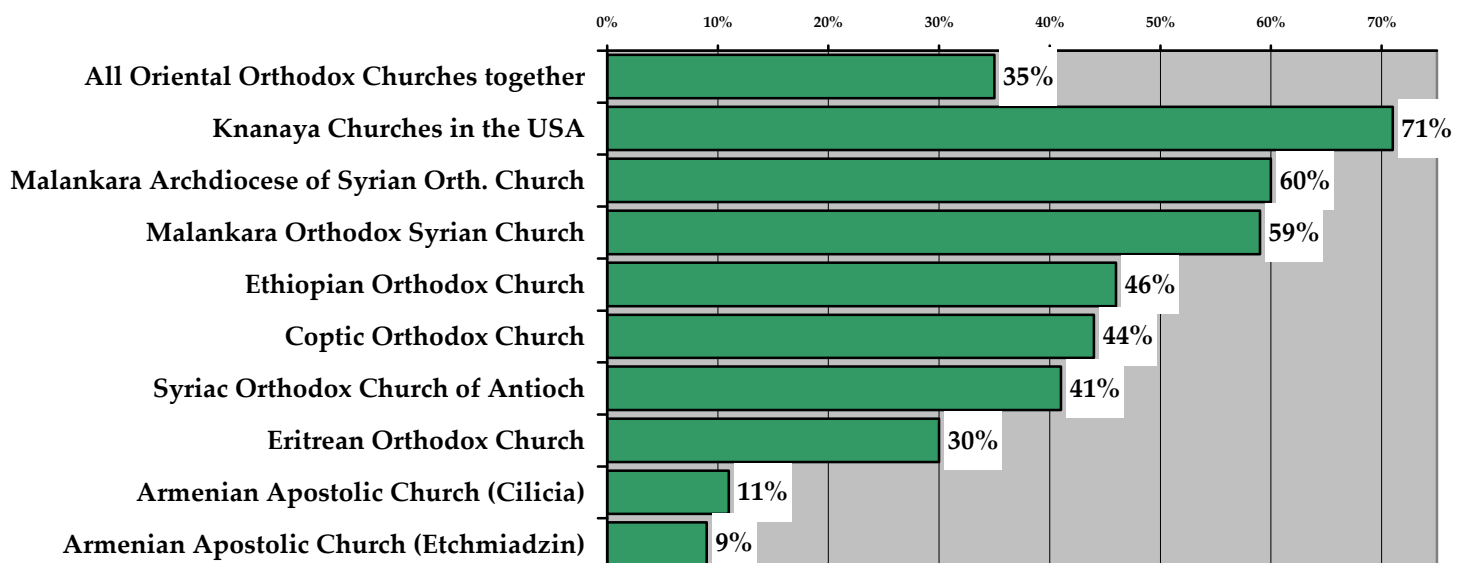


Fig. 6a and 6b show that the followers of Oriental Orthodox Churches are more involved in their parishes than the adherents of Eastern Orthodox Churches. Indeed, 35% of all Oriental Orthodox Church adherents attend worship services regularly, as compared to 27% among Eastern Orthodox Christians.

In the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the best “church-goers” are in the Holy Orthodox Church in North America and American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese. More than half of their total adherents (57% and 51% respectively) attend services on a regular basis. On the opposite extreme are the parishioners in Albanian Orthodox Diocese, Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarchal Parishes of Moscow Patriarchate, and Macedonian Orthodox Diocese: no more than one-fifth of them worship in their churches regularly.

Among Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Knanaya Churches in the USA stands out for the high percentage of members regularly attending services: 71%. In contrast, in the Armenian Apostolic Church (both Catholicosate Cilicia and Etchmiadzin), only about one-tenth of all adherents come to church regularly.

The differences in rates of church attendance also have significant implications for judging the membership of various US Orthodox Christian Churches. Indeed, church membership can be evaluated either by counting all adherents or only regular attendees. These two approaches produce quite different pictures. For instance, the Serbian Orthodox Church has 2.5 times more adherents than the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (59,876 vs. 23,727). However, the latter has much higher rates of attendance than the former (42% vs. 14%). Consequently, if membership were measured only by the number of truly devoted parishioners - the regular attendees - the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia would be larger than the Serbian Orthodox Church (9,879 vs. 8,431). Similarly, the Armenian Apostolic Church of Catholicosate Etchmiadzin is much larger in the number of adherents than Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church or Eritrean Orthodox Church (95,207 vs. 21,722 and 41,456 respectively). But because of the very low rates of attendance, the former lags behind the other two when considering the number of regular attendees (8,411 vs. 12,991 and 12,250 respectively).

Clearly, the “religious impact” of a Church can be judged by the size of its membership, but it can also be evaluated by the number of its local communities (parishes/congregations).

For instance, when looking at Fig. 4 and 5 (number of all adherents and regular attendees in various Orthodox Churches), one might get the impression that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese “dominates” Eastern Orthodox Church life in the USA. Indeed, it accounts for 56% of all Eastern Orthodox adherents and 46% of all Eastern Orthodox regular church attendees. However, the parishes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese constitute only slightly more than one-quarter (26%) of all Eastern Orthodox parishes. In contrast, the adherents of the Orthodox Church in America constitute only 11% of all Eastern Orthodox adherents, but this Church has more parishes than any other Eastern Orthodox Church (559 or 28% of all Eastern Orthodox parishes).

Fig. 7a and 7b offer information on the total number of parishes (including mission parishes) in various Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Figure 7a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Number of Parishes and Mission Parishes in 2020
 (marked with “*” are churches of irregular status)

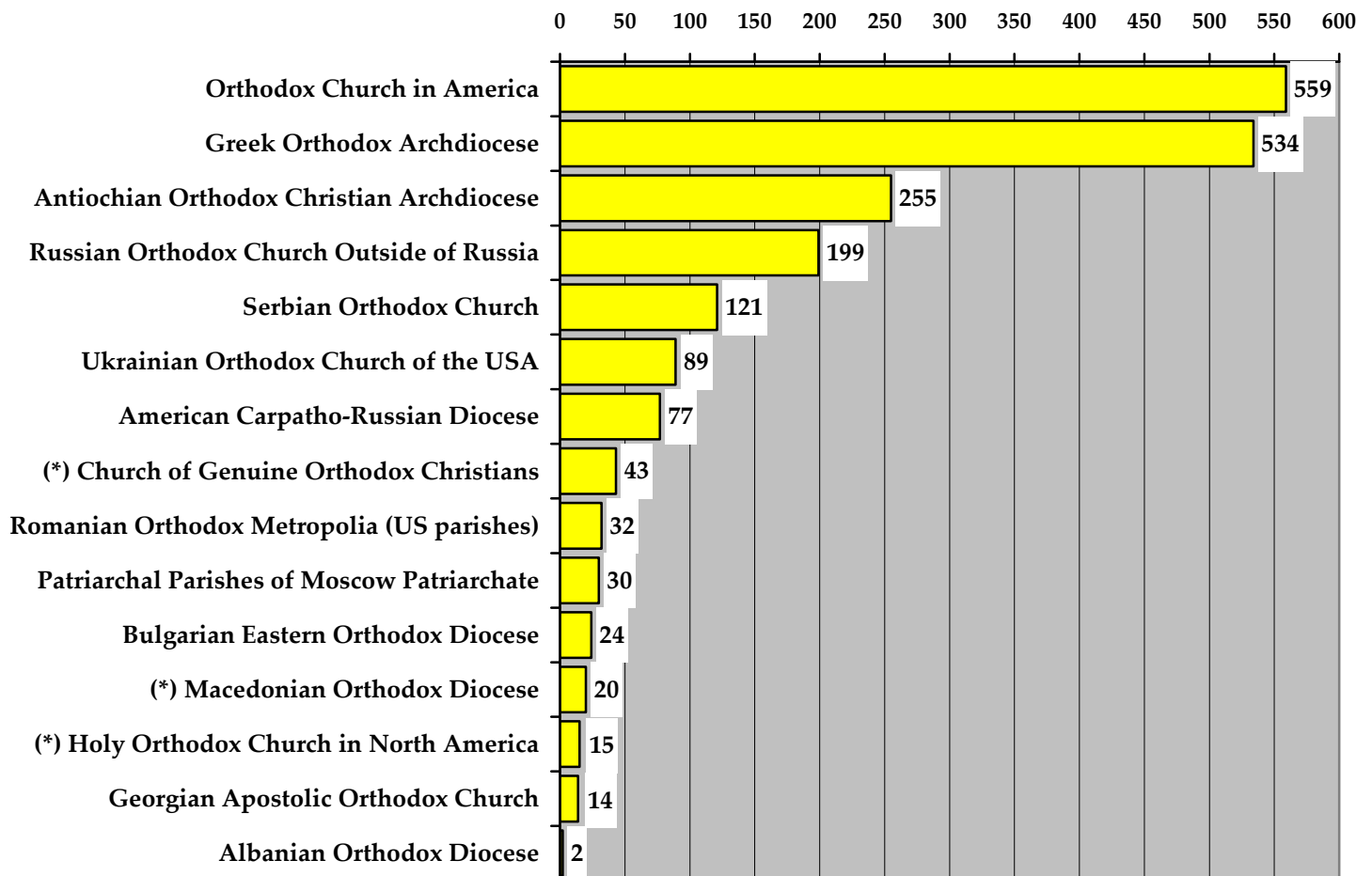
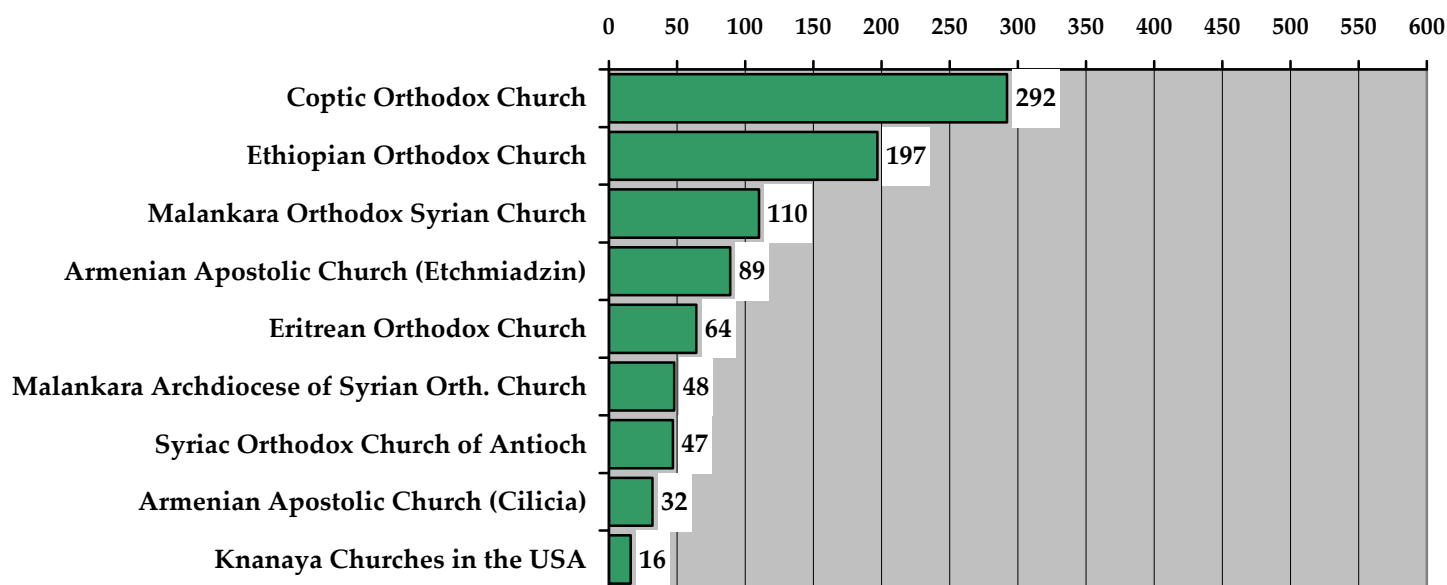


Figure 7b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Number of Parishes and Mission Parishes in 2020



The American Orthodox Churches also differ from one another in the size of their parishes. Some of them tend to have bigger congregations, while others typically have smaller parish communities. Fig. 8a and 8b shows the size of a “typical” median⁶ parish for various Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Overall, the parishes of the Oriental Orthodox Churches are typically much larger than their Eastern Orthodox counterparts. Indeed, a median Oriental Orthodox parish has 292 adherents vs. 130 in a median Eastern Orthodox parish.

In the case of Eastern Orthodox Churches, the members of the Macedonian and Albanian Orthodox Dioceses, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the Serbian Orthodox Church are more likely to belong to sizeable parishes. Differently, in the Georgian Orthodox Church, the American Carpatho-Russian Diocese, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, the Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians, and the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, parishioners typically attend and worship in the smaller, “family-like” communities.

Among Oriental Orthodox Churches, the Armenian Apostolic Churches (both Catholicosate of Cilicia and Etchmiadzin) stand out for their larger parish size. On the opposite end are the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch and Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church: their parishes tend to be considerably smaller.

⁶ For a list of values that is in ascending or descending order, the median is the value that is in the middle of the list. Suppose we have nine parishes with memberships of 10, 13, 15, 20, 25, 30, 31, 37, and 40. The size of a median parish in this list is 25 members – the value that separates the four smaller and four larger parishes.

Figure 8a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Number of Adherents in a “Typical” Median Parish
 (marked with “*” are churches of irregular status)

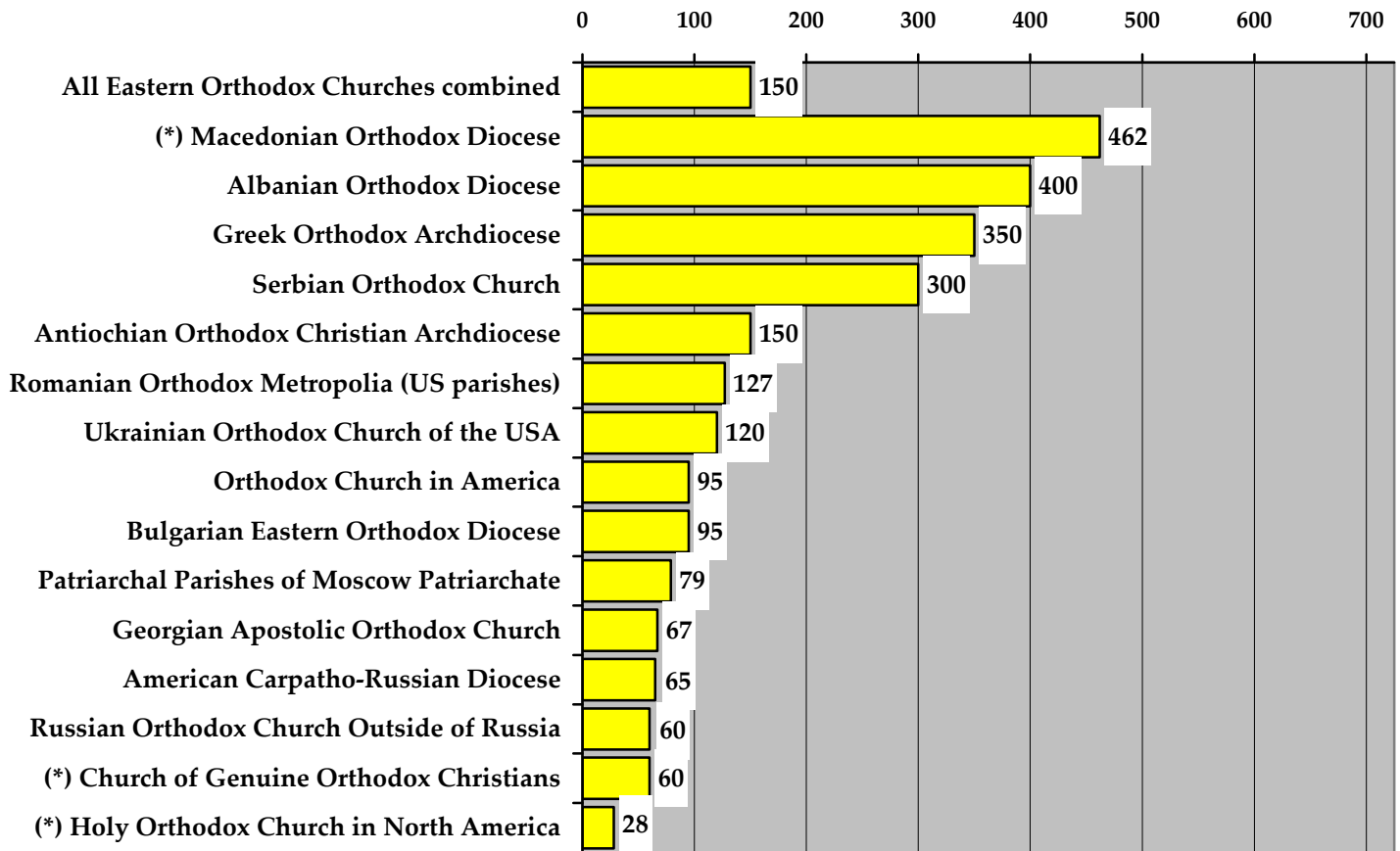
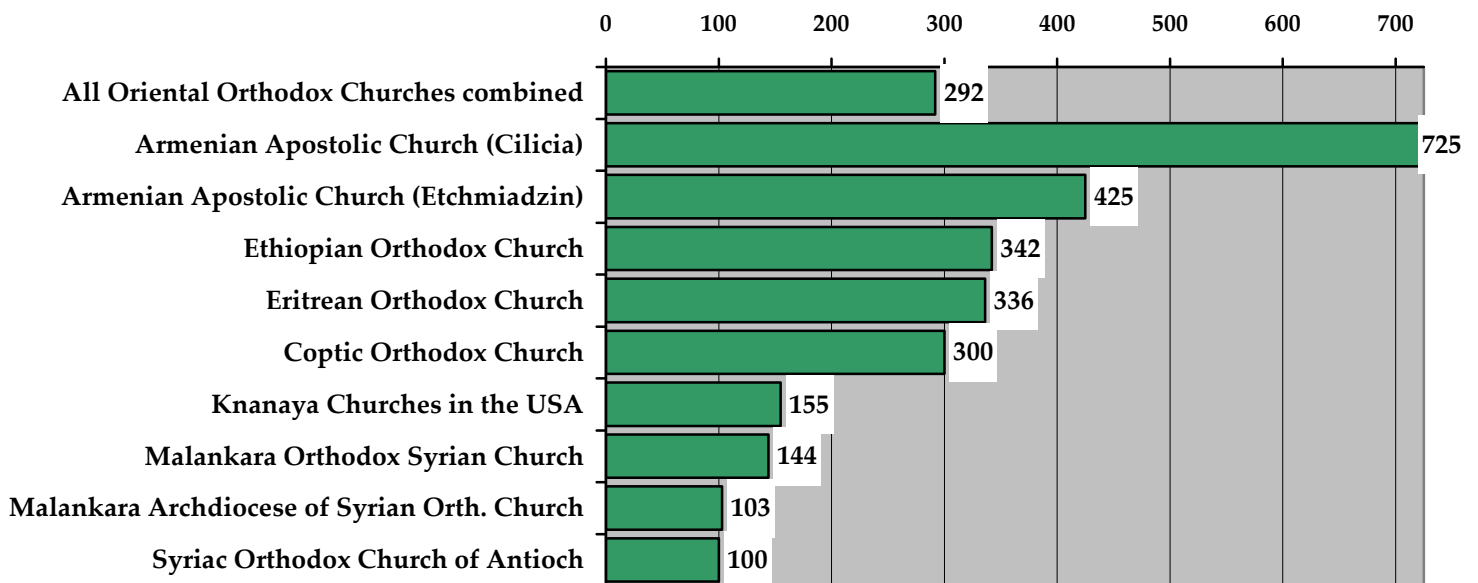


Figure 8b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Number of Adherents in a “Typical” Median Parish

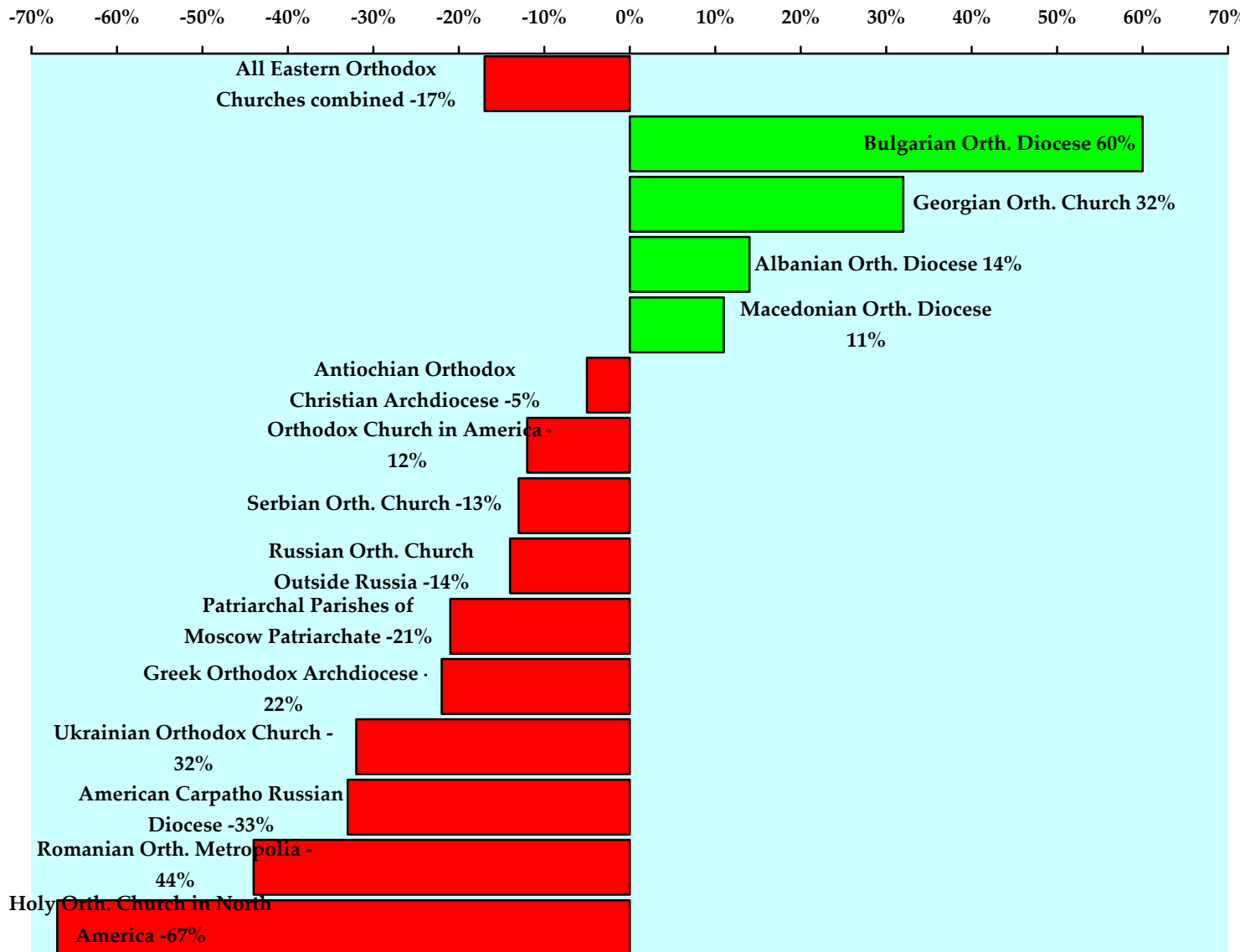


From 2010 to 2020: A Decade of Dramatic Gains and Losses in American Orthodox Churches

We noted earlier that between 2010 and 2020, the Eastern Orthodox Churches experienced a significant membership decline (-17% in adherents and -14% in regular attendees), while the Oriental Orthodox Churches grew substantially in both total adherents (+67% increase) and regular attendees (+59%). This general dynamic, however, was more nuanced when looking at individual Orthodox Church bodies.

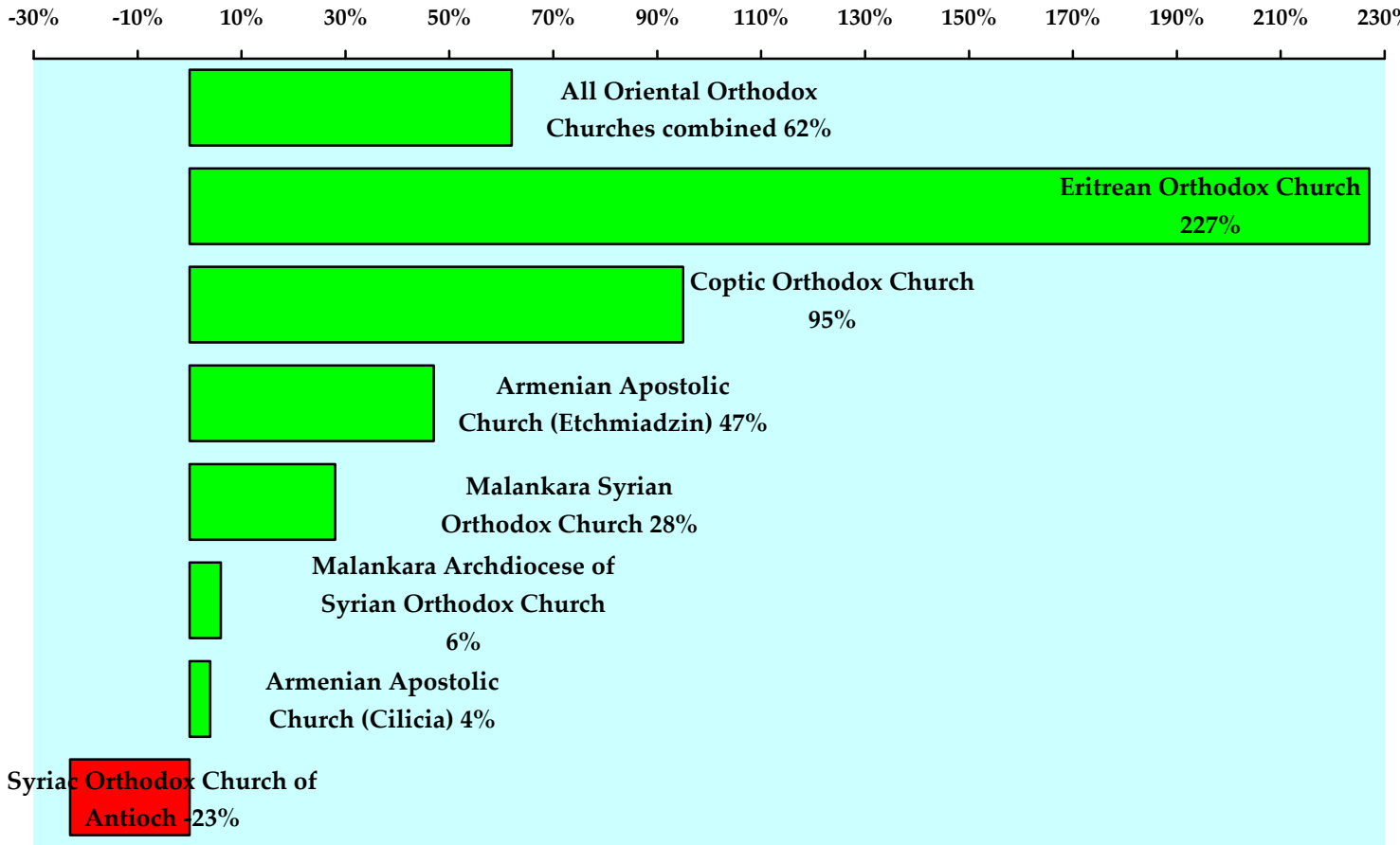
As Fig. 9a shows, four Eastern Orthodox Church bodies have grown in membership (measured by total adherents): the Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese (+60% growth in adherents), Georgian Orthodox Church (+32%), Albanian Orthodox Diocese (+14%), and Macedonian Orthodox Diocese (+11%). On the opposite extreme are three Churches which have suffered the greatest losses: Holy Orthodox Church in North America (-67%), the Romanian Metropolia (-44%), and the American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese (-33%).

Figure 9a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Percentage Changes in Total Adherents between 2010 and 2020



Among Oriental Orthodox Churches,⁷ two have grown dramatically between 2010 and 2020: the Eritrean Orthodox Church has more than tripled in adherents (+227%) and the Coptic Orthodox Church has almost doubled its membership (+95%). At the same time, despite overall growth of Oriental Orthodox Churches, one Oriental Church declined: the Syriac Orthodox Church has lost nearly a quarter of its adherents (-23%).

Figure 9b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Percentage Changes in Total Adherents during 2010-2020



Figures 10a (Eastern Orthodox) and 10b (Oriental Orthodox) show the 2010-2020 changes in adherents in actual numbers rather than percentages. For each Church, the dark blue upper bars indicate the number of adherents in 2020, while the tan lower bars reflect the total of adherents in 2010.

⁷ The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Knanaya Churches in the USA did not provide data on their membership in 2010 Census. Therefore they are not present in this chart

Figure 10a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Number of Adherents in 2020 vs. 2010

(marked with “*” are churches of irregular status)

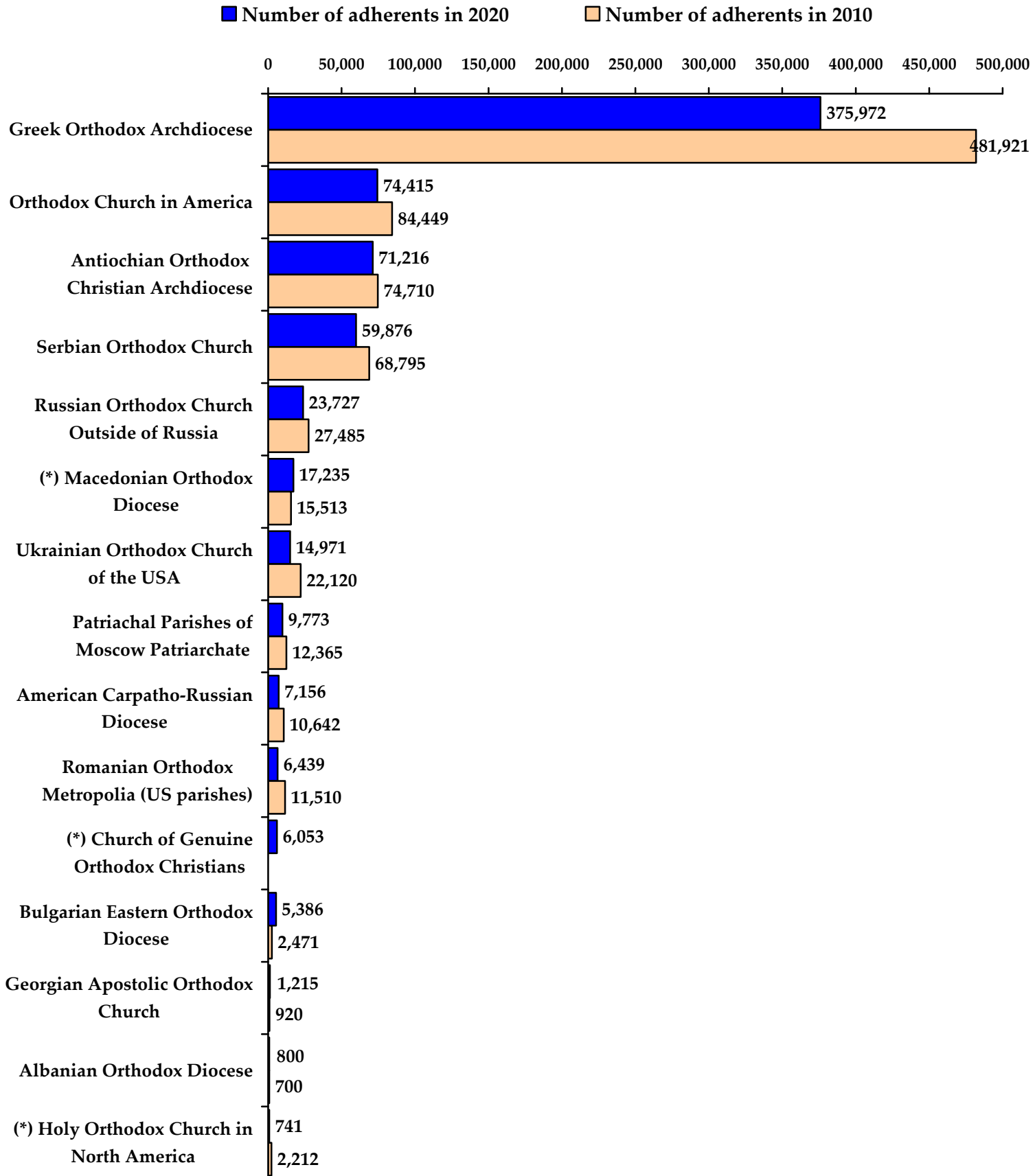
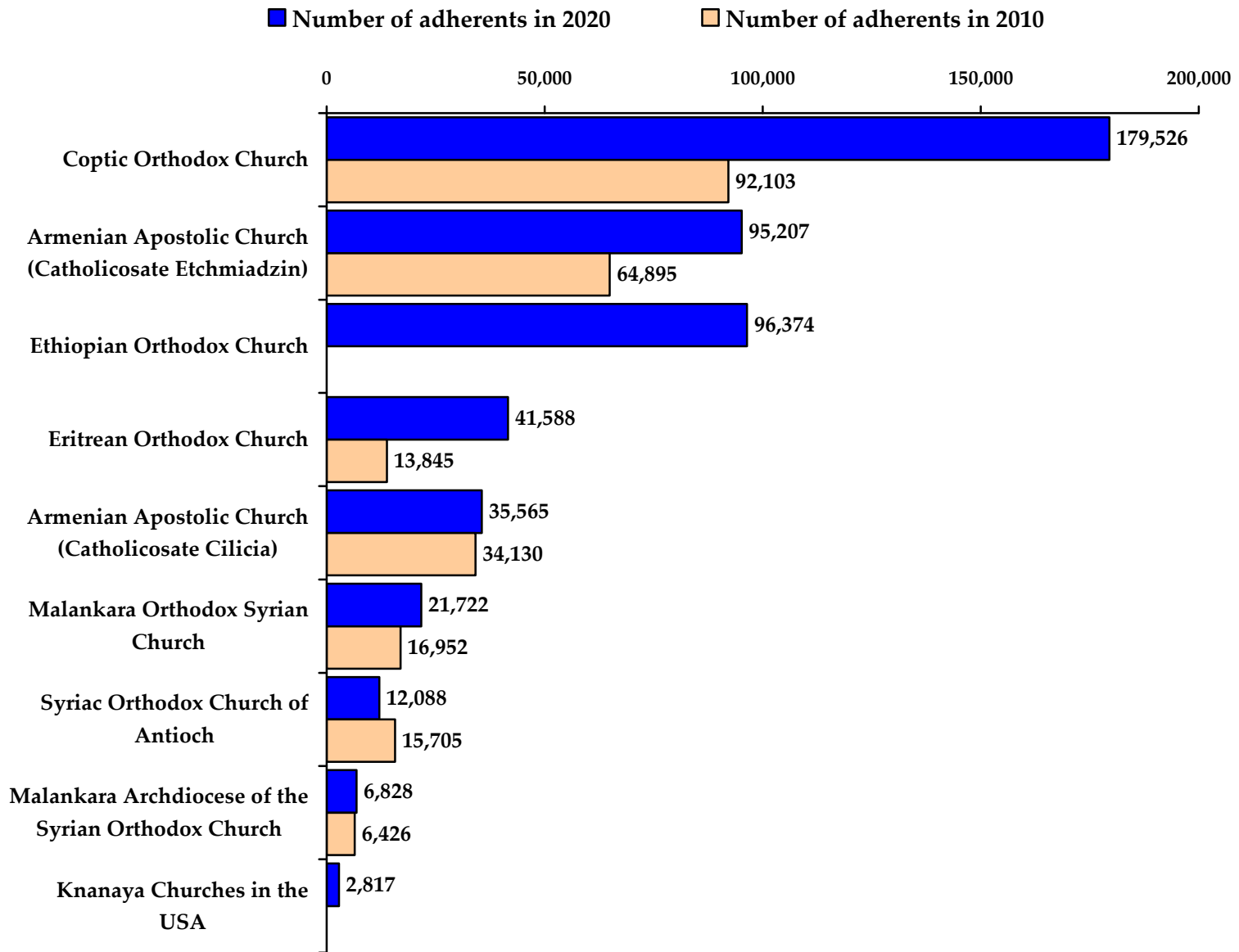


Figure 10b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Number of Adherents in 2020 vs. 2010



We noted previously (see Fig. 2) that between 2010 and 2020, the relative “weight” - the share - of Eastern versus Oriental Orthodox Churches in the entire American Orthodox Church community has shifted significantly. Because the former declined and the latter grew, the share of the followers of various Eastern Orthodox Churches among all American Orthodox Christians decreased from 73% to 58%. Respectively, the share of adherents of Oriental Orthodox Churches has grown from 27% to 42%. Simultaneously, within each Orthodox Church family (i.e., Eastern and Oriental), the share of individual Churches has changed as well. Tables 2a and 2b summarize these changes.

For each Church, the left column shows the 2010 share/percentage of this Church in the total of either Eastern Orthodox (Table 2a) or Oriental Orthodox⁸ (Table 2b) adherents. The right column presents the same information for 2020. Marked with green in the right (2020) column are the “winners” – the Churches whose share/percentage among the total number of adherents in their Orthodox Church family has grown. Red numbers indicate Churches whose “weight” among the total of adherents has diminished.

Table 2a Eastern Orthodox Churches (Church of the Genuine Orthodox Christians is excluded from calculations because of absence of data for 2010)	Share (percentage) of each Church in the total of Eastern Orthodox adherents	
	In 2010	In 2020
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America	59.1%	56.1%
Orthodox Church in America	10.4%	11.1%
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese	9.2%	10.6%
Serbian Orthodox Church	8.4%	8.9%
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia	3.4%	3.5%
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA	2.7%	2.4%
Macedonian Orthodox Diocese	1.9%	2.6%
Patriarchal Parishes of Moscow Patriarchate	1.5%	1.5%
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia	1.4%	1.0%
American Orthodox Carpatho-Russian Diocese	1.3%	1.1%
Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese	0.4%	0.8%
Holy Orthodox Church in North America	0.3%	0.1%
Albanian Orthodox Diocese	0.1%	0.1%
Georgian Orthodox Church	0.1%	0.2%
Total	100%	100%

⁸ For Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Knanaya Orthodox Churches in the USA, we estimated their 2010 membership based on their numbers from 2020 Census and adjusting proportionately to the change in number parishes between 2010 and 2020

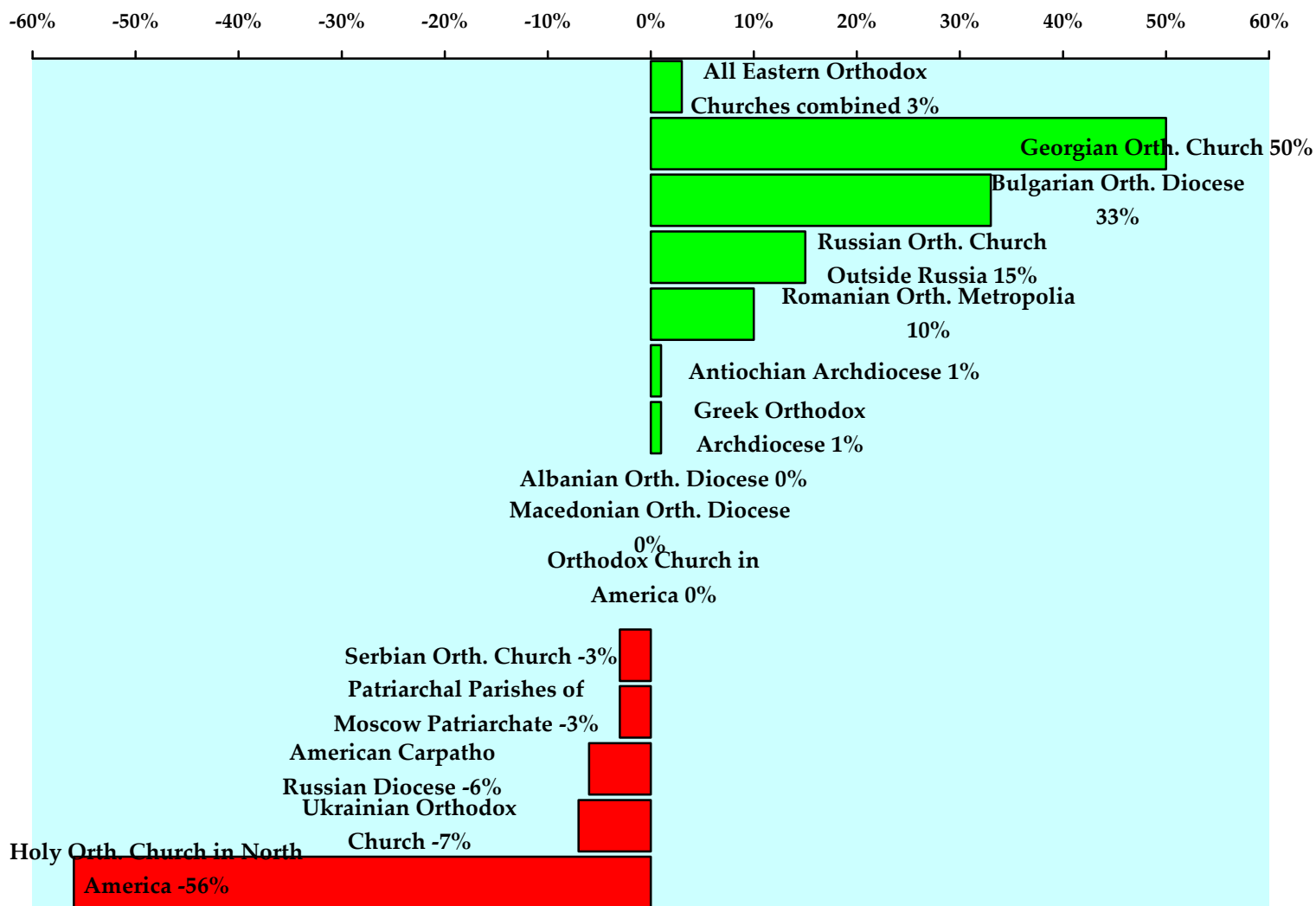
Table 2b Oriental Orthodox Churches	Share (percentage) of each Church in the total of Oriental Orthodox adherents	
	In 2010	In 2020
Coptic Orthodox Church	31.2%	36.5%
Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate Etchmiadzin)	22.0%	19.4%
Ethiopian Orthodox Church	16.8%	19.6%
Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate Cilicia)	11.6%	7.2%
Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church	5.8%	4.4%
Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch	5.3%	2.5%
Eritrean Orthodox Church	4.3%	8.4%
Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church	2.2%	1.4%
Knanaya Churches in the USA	0.8%	0.6%

The Eritrean Orthodox Church is probably the most noticeable example of the changes in the rank-orders of the various Churches. Between 2010 and 2020, it nearly doubled its “weight” (from 4.3% to 8.4% of all Oriental Orthodox Church adherents) and surpassed three other Oriental Churches in actual size: the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, and the Armenian Apostolic Church (Catholicosate Cilicia).

Were significant 2010-2020 changes in the Orthodox Church membership (growth of Oriental Orthodox and decline of Eastern Orthodox Churches) accompanied by respective changes in the number of parishes? Fig. 11a and 11b show that the general answer to this question is: “yes” for Oriental Orthodox and “no” for Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Fig. 11a allows for three observations. First, overall, between 2010 and 2020, there was only a slight increase in the number of Eastern Orthodox parishes (+3%). Second, there was also little change in the three Eastern Orthodox Church bodies with the largest number of parishes: the Orthodox Church in America (0% change), the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (+1%), and the Antiochian Archdiocese (+1%). Third, comparing Fig. 11a with 9a (percentage change in adherents), one can see that four Eastern Orthodox Churches have grown in parishes and, yet, declined in adherents: the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, the Romanian Metropolia, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the Antiochian Archdiocese. In other words, in these Churches, opening new parishes was insufficient to counterbalance the declining membership in already existing congregations.

Fig. 11a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Percentage Changes in Number of Parishes during 2010-2020



For the Oriental Orthodox Churches, the decadal changes in the number of parishes and adherents were more mirroring each other than for the Eastern Orthodox Churches. See Fig. 11b. Similar to their impressive gains in adherents (+67%), the Oriental Orthodox Churches have also grown significantly in the number of parishes (+44%). Yet there were two deviations from this overall pattern.

First, the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch has grown in parishes (+47%), but declined in adherents (-23%). Like a number of Eastern Orthodox Churches, in the Syriac Orthodox Church, acquiring new members in the new parishes was insufficient to counterbalance the membership losses in already existing congregations.

Second, reflecting an opposite trend, the two Armenian Orthodox Churches increased the number of adherents despite slight diminishing in the number of parishes. In these Churches, growth of existing parishes was greater than membership losses due to the closure of some parishes.

It should also be noted that in most other Oriental Orthodox Churches (Coptic, Eritrean, and Malankara-Syrian) the 2010-2020 growth in adherents was noticeably stronger than the increase in the parishes. What this fact suggests is that these Churches were growing in membership not simply thanks to opening new parishes, but also because of continuing growth in already existing congregations.

Figure 11b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Percentage Changes in Number of Parishes during 2010-2020

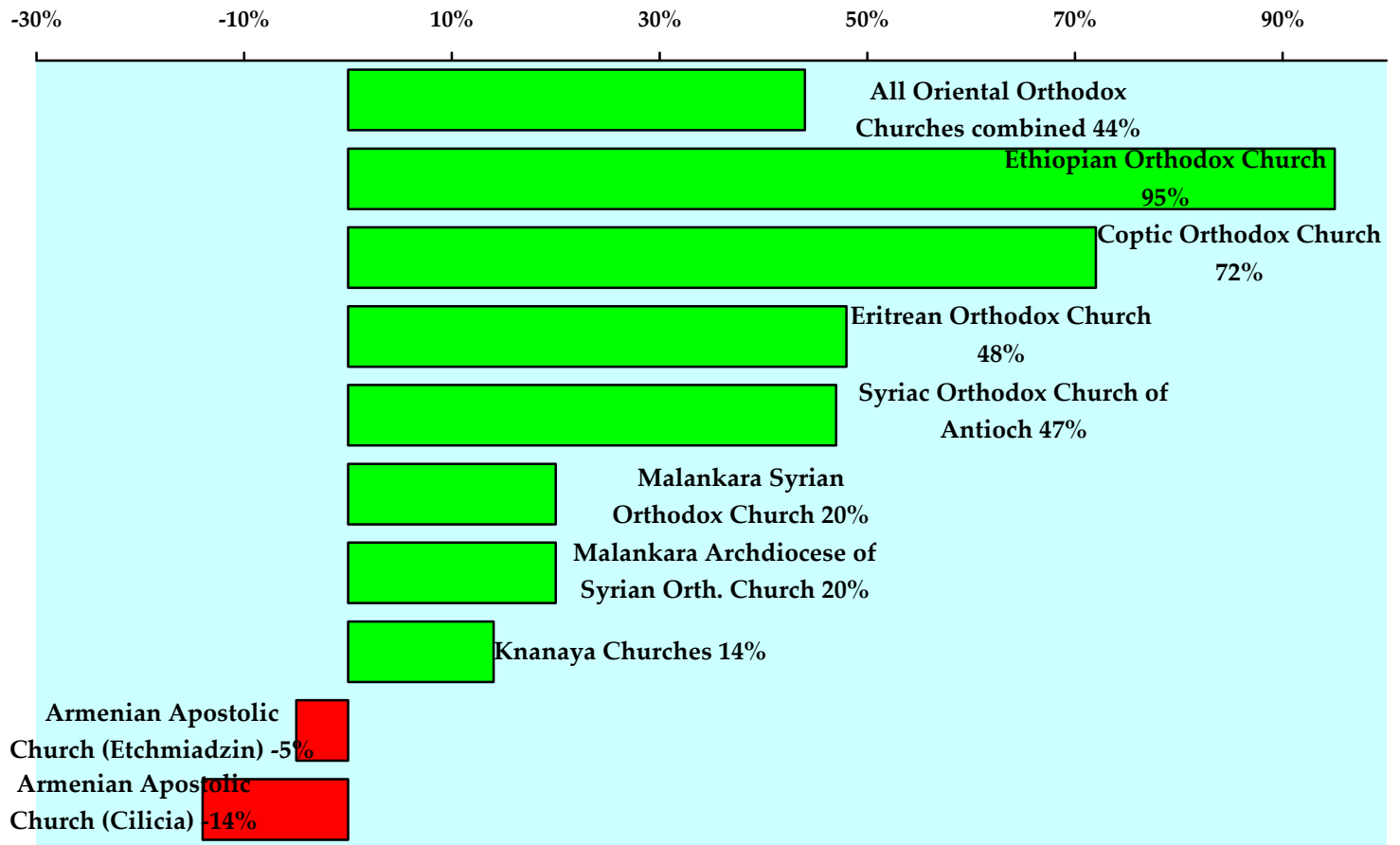


Fig. 12a (for Eastern Orthodox) and 12b (for Oriental Orthodox) show the 2010-2020 changes in parishes in actual numbers rather than percentages. For each Church, the dark blue upper bars indicate the number of parishes in 2020 and the tan lower bars reflect the situation in 2010.

Figure 12a Eastern Orthodox Churches: Number of Parishes in 2020 vs. 2010
 (marked with “*” are churches of irregular status)

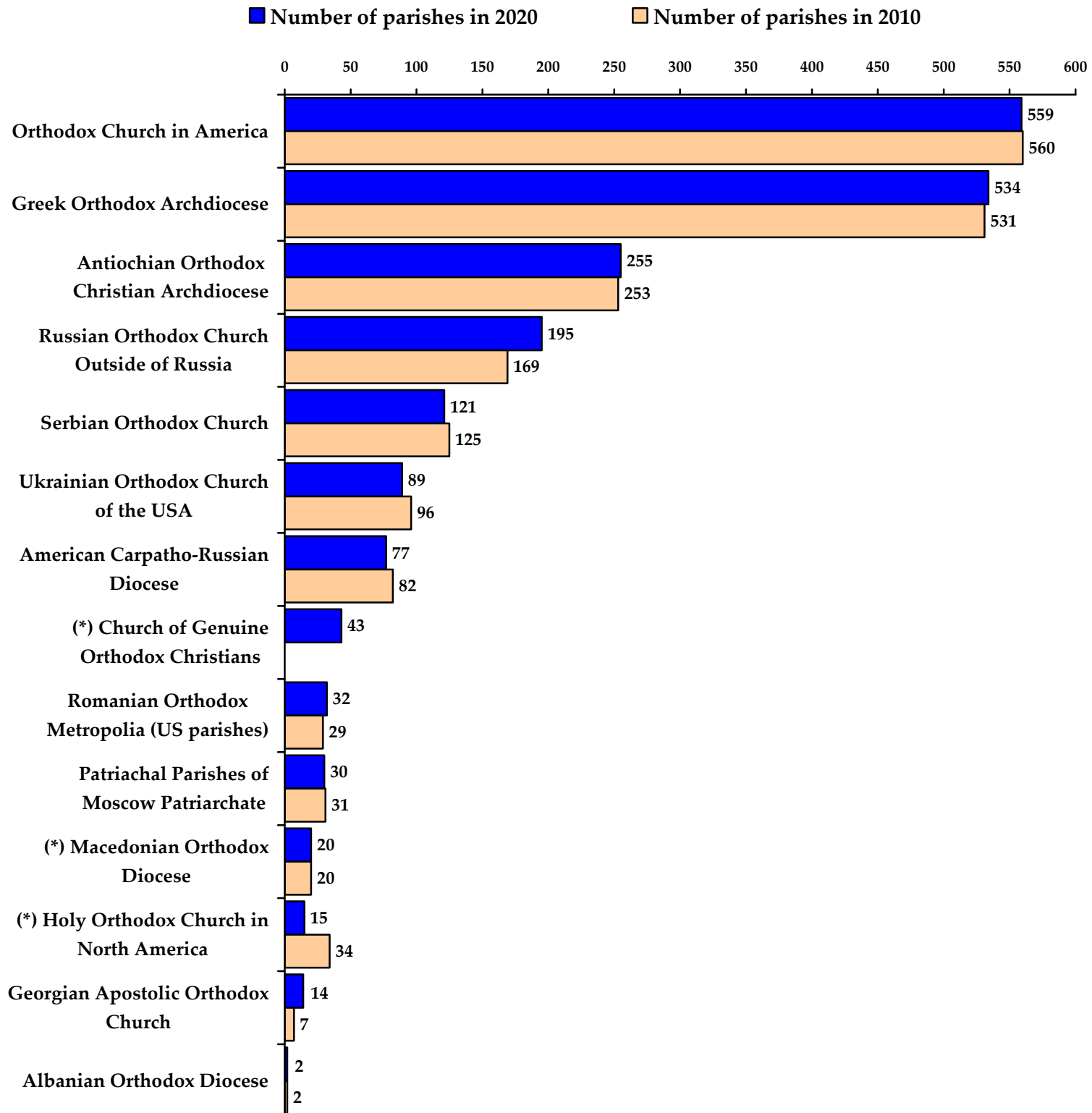
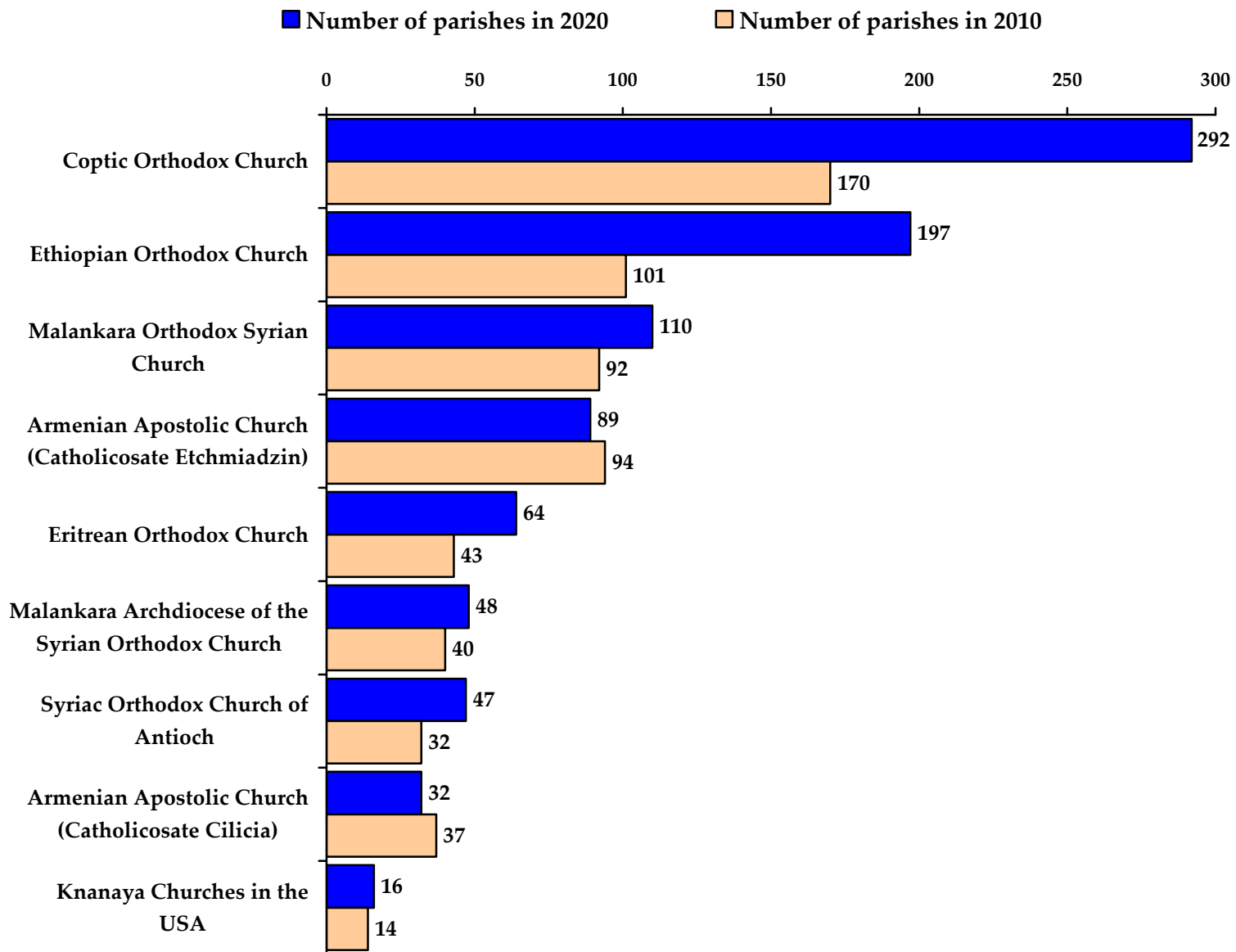


Figure 12b Oriental Orthodox Churches: Number of Parishes in 2020 vs. 2010

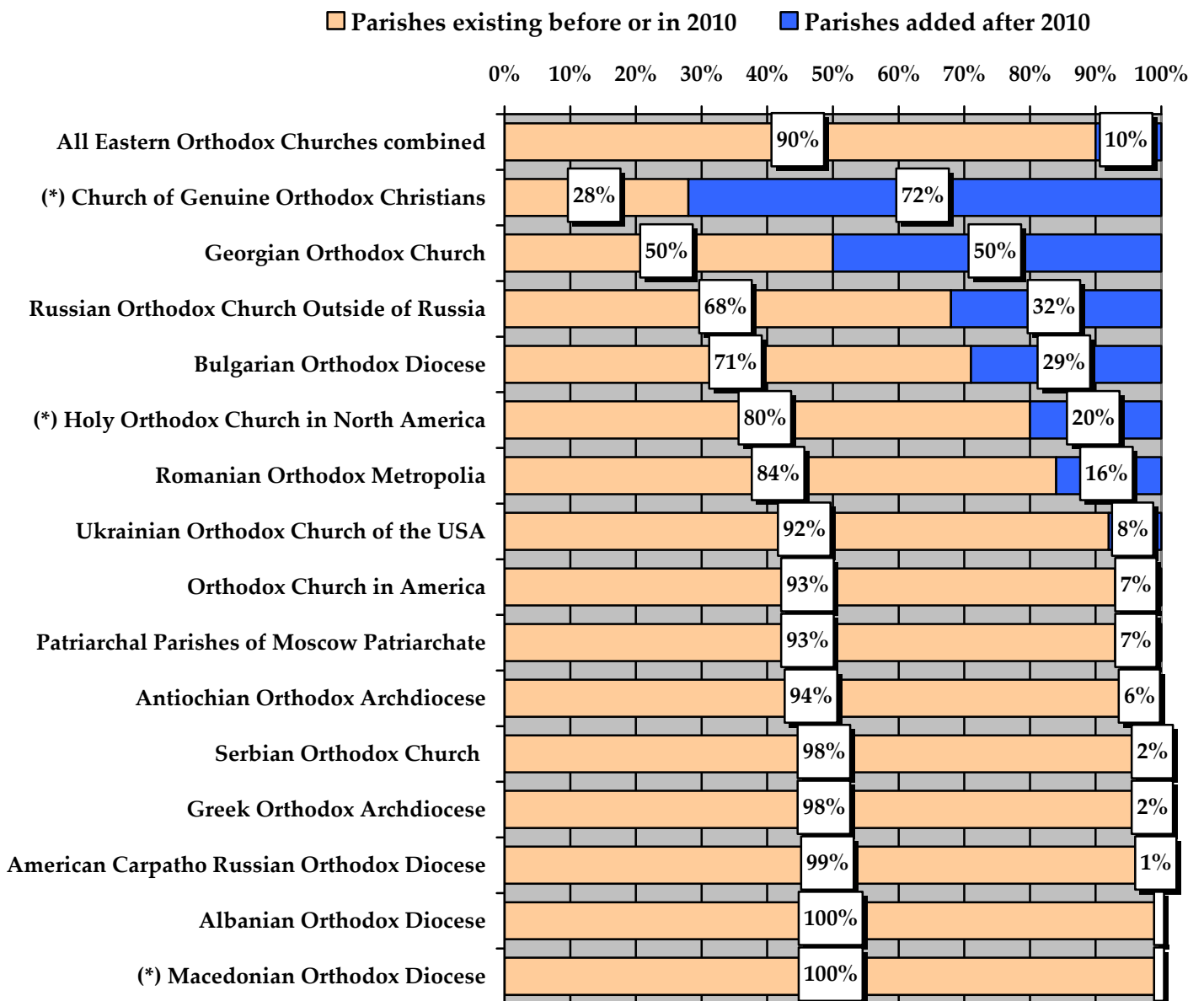


The fact that some Churches have grown in number of parishes, while others declined, does not mean that the former were only opening new congregations and the latter were simply closing parishes. In most instances, it was a two-way process: the Churches both founded a number of new parishes and closed some existing ones. The question is: “How significant was this decadal turnover in parishes for each Church? Subsequently, among all presently existing parishes, what is the share of new (post-2010) congregations?”

Fig. 13 shows the percentage of the new parishes (added after 2010) among all parishes of various Eastern (Fig. 13a) and Oriental (Fig. 13b) Orthodox Churches.

Among Eastern Orthodox Churches, four stand out by their high share of new parishes:⁹ the Church of Genuine Orthodox Christians (72%), Georgian Orthodox Church (50%), Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (32%), Bulgarian Diocese (29%). Among the Oriental Orthodox, three Churches have added more than one-third of their parishes since 2010: Ethiopian Orthodox Church (73%), Coptic Orthodox Church (43%) and Eritrean Orthodox Church (36%).

Figure 13a Eastern Orthodox Church: Percentage of Parishes Added After 2010



⁹ The “new” parishes include both newly founded parishes and the parishes which were acquired because of their switching between various Orthodox Churches.

Figure 13b Oriental Orthodox Churches: the Percentage of Parishes Added After 2010

