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2020 Census of Orthodox Christian Churches / US Religion Census

**Putting American Orthodox Churches on the Map:
Geography of Parishes and Members 2010-2020**

Contents:

About this Report: Source of Data and Their Inclusiveness	p. 2
To Catch Your Interest: Examples of Facts Presented in This Report	p. 4
Where in America Do Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christians Live and Worship?	p. 4
What Are the Most "Orthodox Christian" Cities in the USA?	p. 9
From 2010 to 2020: Has the Geography of American Orthodox Churches Changed?	p. 12
Maps of American Orthodox Christian Churches	p. 15

About This Report: Presented Data and Their Inclusiveness

This is the *second report* that presents results from the National Census of American Orthodox Christian Churches, conducted in 2020. The first report, “US Religion Census 2020: Dramatic Changes in American Orthodox Churches,” is available at:

<https://orthodoxreality.org/latest/second-census-2020-of-american-orthodox/>

If you have already read the first report, you can skip this introductory section. It explains what type of data we collected, what their source was, and how complete these data are. The first report offered diverse information on parishes, total membership, and worship attendance of both the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches in the United States. It also described significant changes in American Orthodox Christianity that have occurred since the previous Census in 2010.

Both the 2010 and 2020 data collections from US Orthodox Churches were part of a much larger US Religion Census, which gathered information on all American religious congregations. US Religion Census data are publicly available at: www.usreligioncensus.org. In both the 2010 and 2020 Census, we approached local Orthodox parishes and asked two questions:

- 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* 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 be mentioned that some data were gathered before the lock-downs 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.

© Alexei Krindatch, “Geography of American Orthodox Christian Churches: From 2010 to 2020”

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 in North America	Yes	Yes
Holy Orthodox Church in North America (*)	Yes	Yes	Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church	Yes	Yes
Macedonian Orthodox Diocese (*)	Yes	Yes	Syrian 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.

To Catch Your Interest: Examples of Facts Presented in this Report

- ❖ As of 2020, nearly half of all American Eastern Orthodox Church adherents (47.9%) lived in six states: California (10.9% of all Eastern Orthodox adherents), New York (10.7%), Illinois (7.6%), Florida (6.4%), New Jersey (6.2%), and Pennsylvania (6.1%). In comparison, only slightly more than one-third (34.8%) of the general US population live in these six states.
- ❖ The adherents of American Oriental Orthodox Churches are even more geographically concentrated than the followers of the Eastern Orthodox Churches. In 2020, more than half (51.7%) of all American Oriental Orthodox adherents were in just four states: California (30.1% of all adherents), New Jersey (7.7%), New York (7.4%), Illinois (7.6%), and Texas (6.5%). In comparison, only 29% of the general US population live in these four states.
- ❖ Judging by the number of both adherents and parishes, New York is the major center of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in the USA, while Chicago can be seen as their second “US capital.” For the Oriental Orthodox Churches, there are two equally important “US capitals”: New York and Los Angeles.
- ❖ Between 2010 and 2020, the geography of American Eastern Orthodox Churches did not change significantly. In contrast, for Oriental Orthodox Churches the decade of 2010-2020 witnessed noticeable geographic shifts of adherents between various US macro-regions.

Where in America Do Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christians Live and Worship?

This *second report* from the 2020 National Census of US Orthodox Christian Churches examines the geographic distribution of their members and parishes. As we will see later, the geography of American Orthodox Christianity is quite different from the geography of the US general population. This report will also discuss geographic changes in American Orthodox Churches that have occurred since the previous Census in 2010.

It should be noted that the territorial distribution of the two large Orthodox Christian Church families in America – the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox – are distinct from each other. Each Church family has certain areas (or even particular cities) of the country with especially high concentration of adherents and parishes. Therefore, this report will present the data and findings separately for Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches.

The **Eastern Orthodox Churches** have parishes or missions in all states. At the same time, as of 2020, nearly half of all Eastern Orthodox *adherents* (47.9%) were in six states: California (10.9% of all adherents), New York (10.7%), Illinois (7.6%), Florida (6.4%), New Jersey (6.2%), and Pennsylvania (6.1%). In comparison, only slightly more than one-third (34.8 %) of the general US population live in these six states. The list and rank order of the states with the largest number of Eastern Orthodox *parishes* is different. The seven states which account for nearly half of all US Eastern Orthodox parishes are: Pennsylvania (10.9% of all Eastern Orthodox parishes), New York (9.3%), California (8.6%), Florida (5.3%), Ohio (5.3%), Illinois (4.7%) and Alaska (4.6%). See Figures 1a and 1b.

The reason that states account for different shares of total adherents versus total parishes, is that typical parish size differs from state to state: some states account for a larger percentage of parishes than adherents and vice-versa. Pennsylvania is a good example of the first situation, with more than one-tenth (10.9%) of all American Eastern Orthodox parishes but only 6.1% of all Church adherents. This means that the parishes in Pennsylvania tend to be smaller than the national average. In contrast, if a state has a higher percentage of US Orthodox adherents than its percentage of parishes (instance.g., Illinois, as shown in Figures 1a and 1b), this means that typically its parishes tend to be larger than the national average.

Figures 1a and 1b also show that the top ten states account together for a higher share of all Eastern Orthodox adherents (67.8%) than of parishes (56.3%). This means that the Eastern Orthodox parishes are more evenly distributed throughout the USA, while the adherents are more concentrated in particular areas of the country.

Figure 1a. Top Ten States by Share of Total Eastern Orthodox Adherents in the USA (2020)

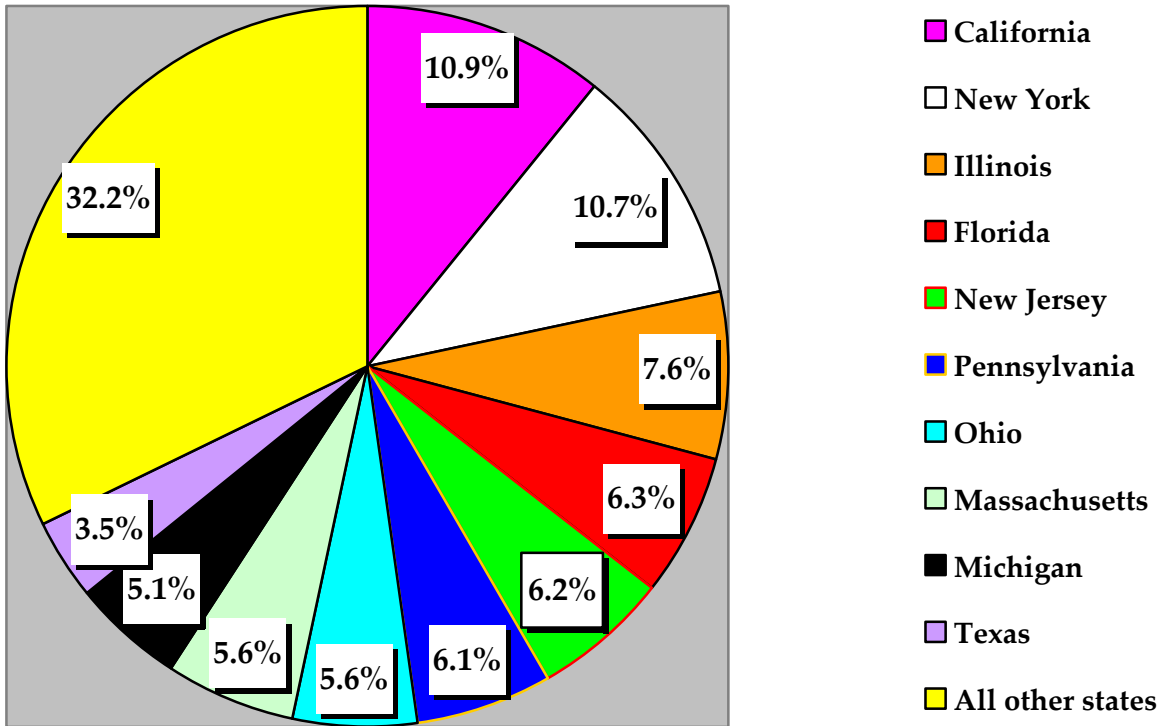
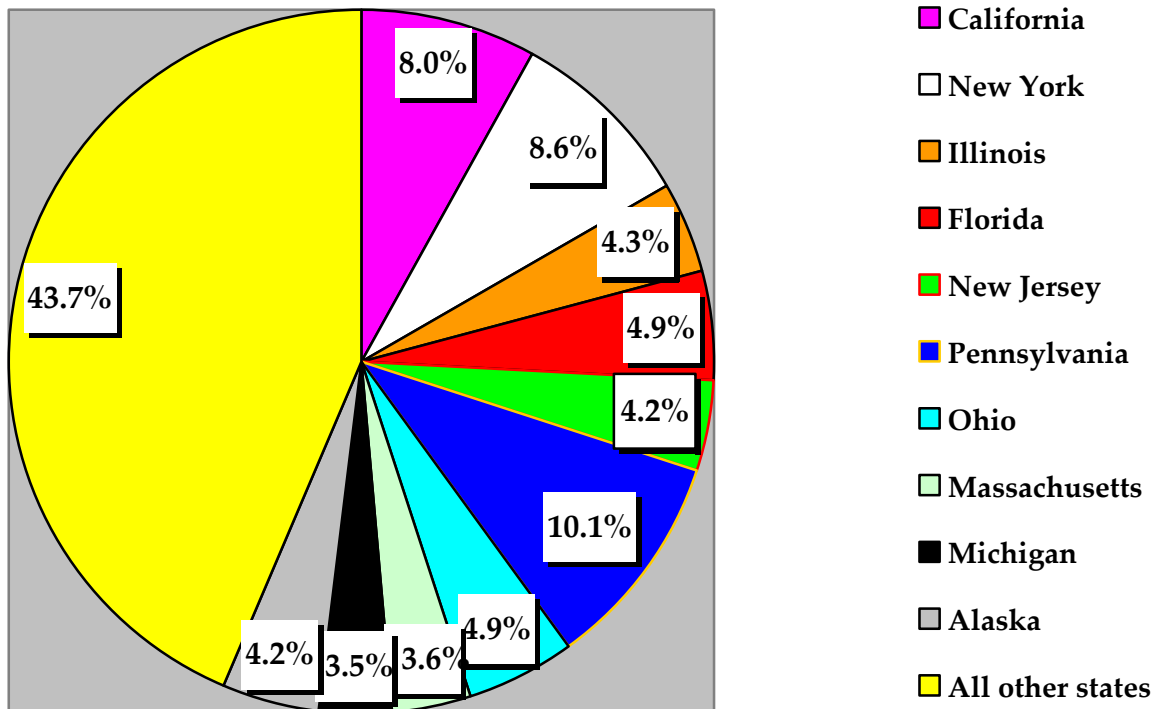


Figure 1b. Top Ten States by Share of Eastern Orthodox Parishes in the USA



The geography of **Oriental Orthodox** Churches in America is different from that of Eastern Orthodox Churches in several ways. First, they have parishes or missions in *nearly all states but not in* Alaska, Montana and Wyoming.

Second, Figures 2a and 2b show that the adherents of Oriental Orthodox Churches are even more geographically concentrated than the followers of the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Figure 2a. Top Ten States by Share of Total Oriental Orthodox Adherents in the USA (2020)

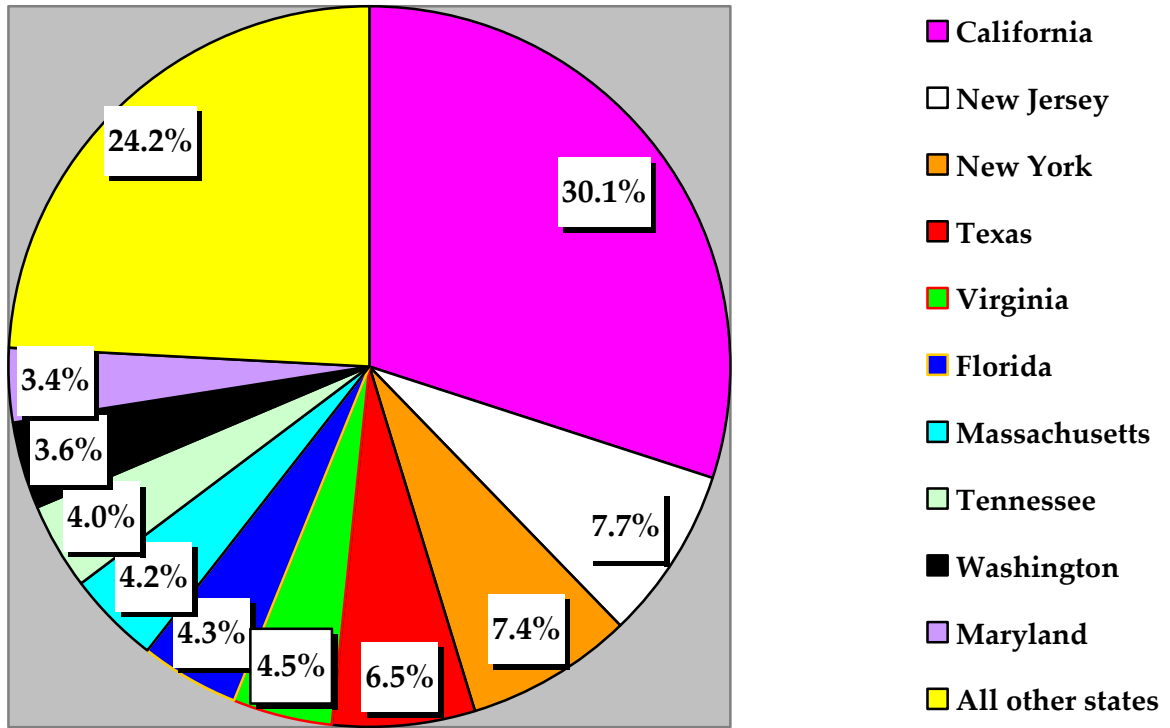
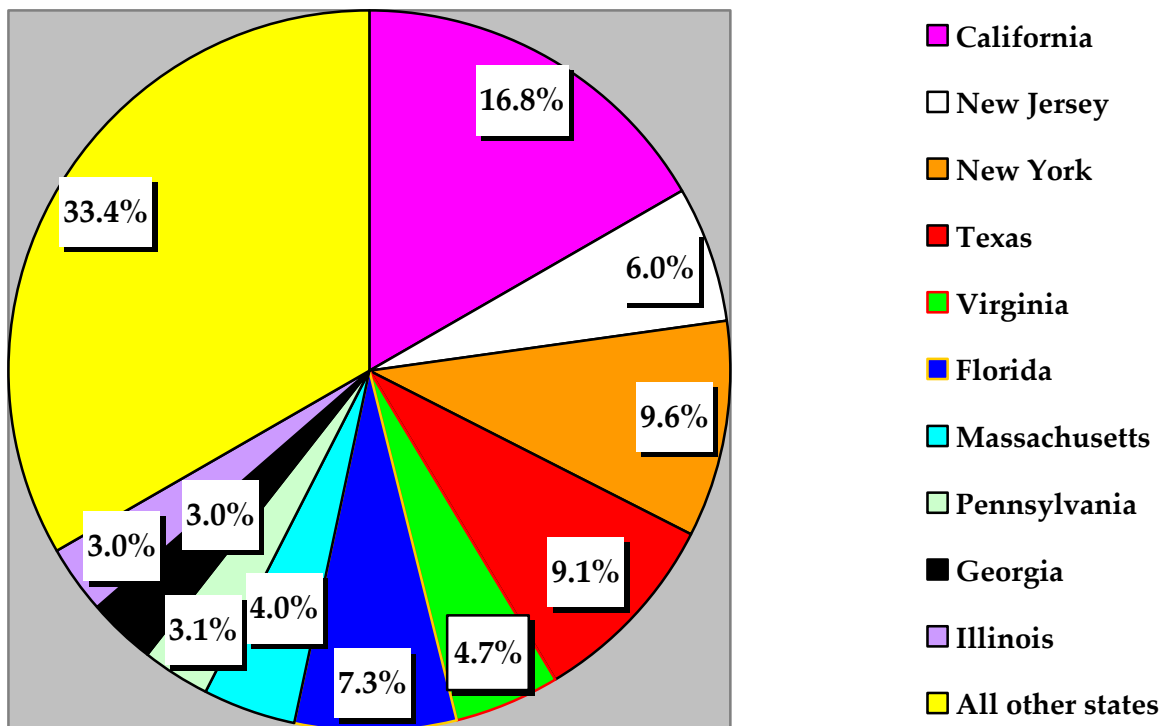


Figure 2b. Top Ten States by Share of Oriental Orthodox Parishes in the USA



As of 2020, more than half of all Oriental Orthodox adherents (51.7%) were in just four states: California (30.1% of all adherents), New Jersey (7.7%), New York (7.4%), Illinois (7.6%), and Texas (6.5%). In comparison, only 29% of the general US population live in these four states. When looking state-by-state at the number of Oriental Orthodox parishes, the following five states combined account for nearly half of all Oriental Orthodox parishes in the USA: California (16.8% of all Oriental Orthodox parishes), New York (9.6%), Texas (9.1%), Florida (7.3%), and New Jersey (6.0%).

Third, comparing Fig. 2a (top ten states by share of US Oriental Orthodox Church adherents) and Fig. 2b (top ten states by share of Oriental Orthodox parishes in America), one can observe more marked differences between the “weights” of individual states in total adherents versus total parishes than in the case of Eastern Orthodox Churches. This indicates that the Oriental Orthodox Church has even greater state-by-state variation in size of a typical parish than does the Eastern Orthodox Church

Two good examples of such differences are the states of California and Florida. California accounts for 30.1% of all US Oriental Orthodox Church adherents but only 16.8% of Orthodox Oriental parishes. Thus, the parishes in California tend to be much larger than the national average. Florida, on the other hand, has only 4.3% of all US Oriental Orthodox Church adherents, but its share of Oriental Orthodox parishes is 7.3%. This indicates that Florida parishes are typically smaller than the national average.

One more interesting observation can be made when comparing the state-by-state geography of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches (not presented in Figures 2a and 2b). Nearly one-tenth (9.9%) of all American Oriental Orthodox Christians are in the area of Washington, DC: in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia itself. In contrast, only 4.7% of Eastern Orthodox Church adherents worship in parishes which are in geographic proximity to the US national capital.

What Are the Most “Orthodox Christian” Towns and Cities in America?

This question can be addressed both with regard to number of adherents and number of parishes. Figures 3a and 3b provide the answers for American Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Fig. 3a. American Cities/Towns with Greatest Numbers of Eastern Orthodox Church Adherents
 (listed are cities with more than 5,000 adherents)

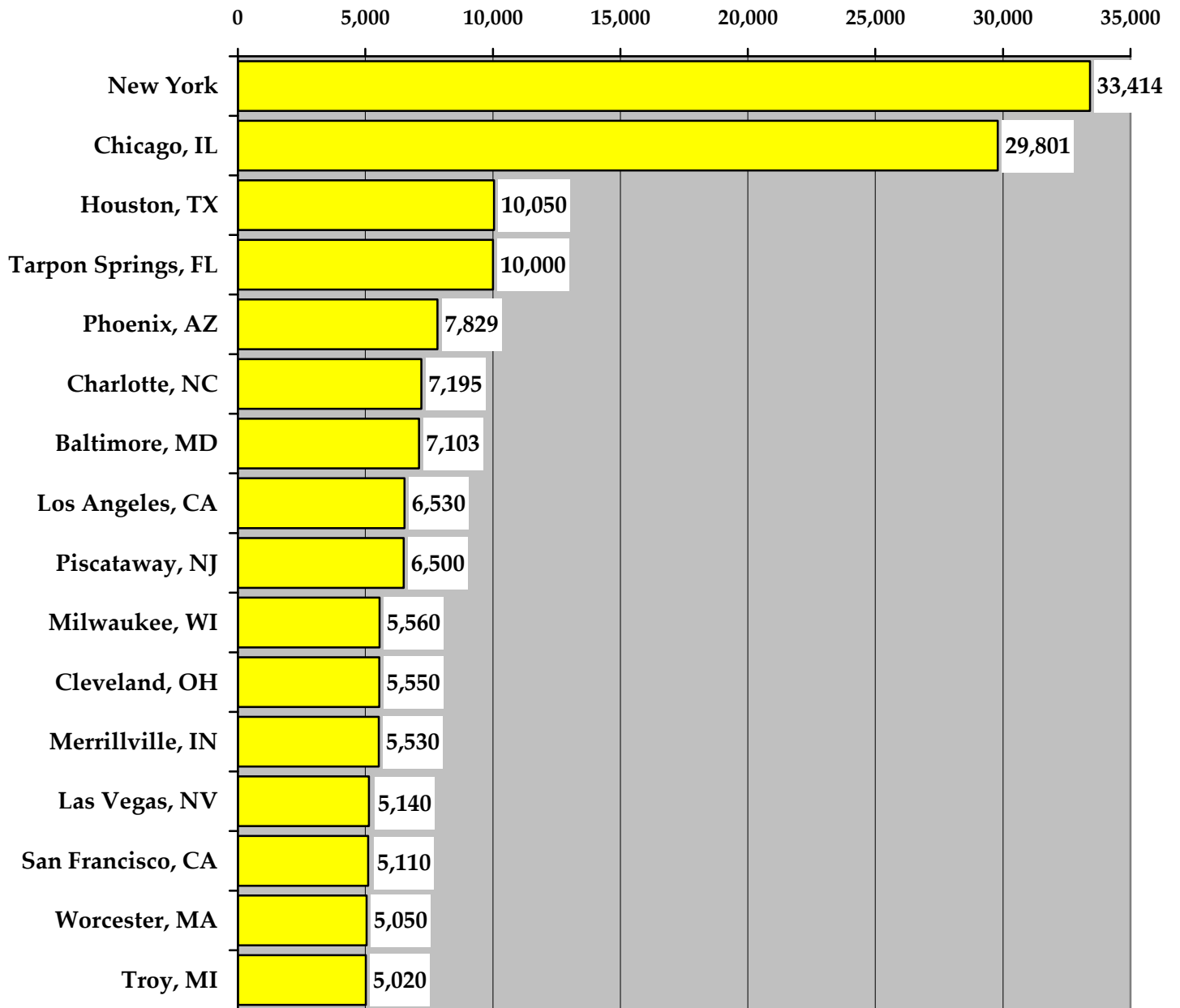
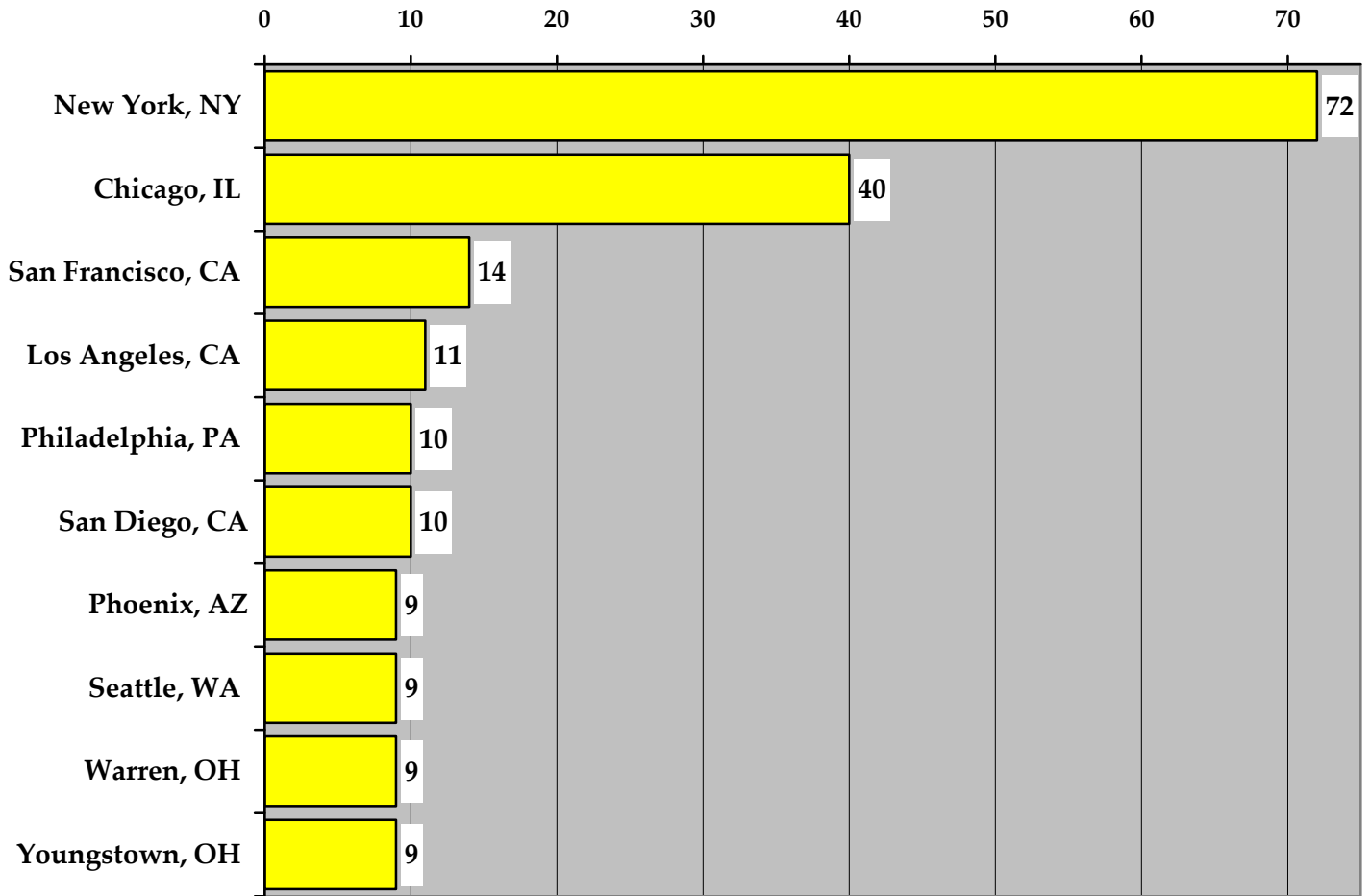


Fig. 3b. American Cities/Towns with Largest Numbers of Eastern Orthodox Parishes
 (listed are cities with at least 9 parishes)



Judging by the number of both adherents and parishes, New York is the major center of the Eastern Orthodox Churches in the USA. Chicago can be seen as their second “US capital,” as it has the second largest number of both Eastern Orthodox Church adherents and parishes.

Figures 4a and 4b offer similar information for Oriental Orthodox Churches. Judging strictly by formal administrative borders, New York is also the major center of American Oriental Orthodox Churches both in number of adherents and parishes. However, in reality, Los Angeles can also rightfully claim the status of the “US capital” of Oriental Orthodoxy. Indeed, when combined with the immediately adjacent cities of Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena, Los Angeles has by far the greatest number of Oriental Orthodox Church adherents.

Fig. 4a. American Cities with Greatest Numbers of Oriental Orthodox Church Adherents
 (listed are cities with at least 5,000 adherents)

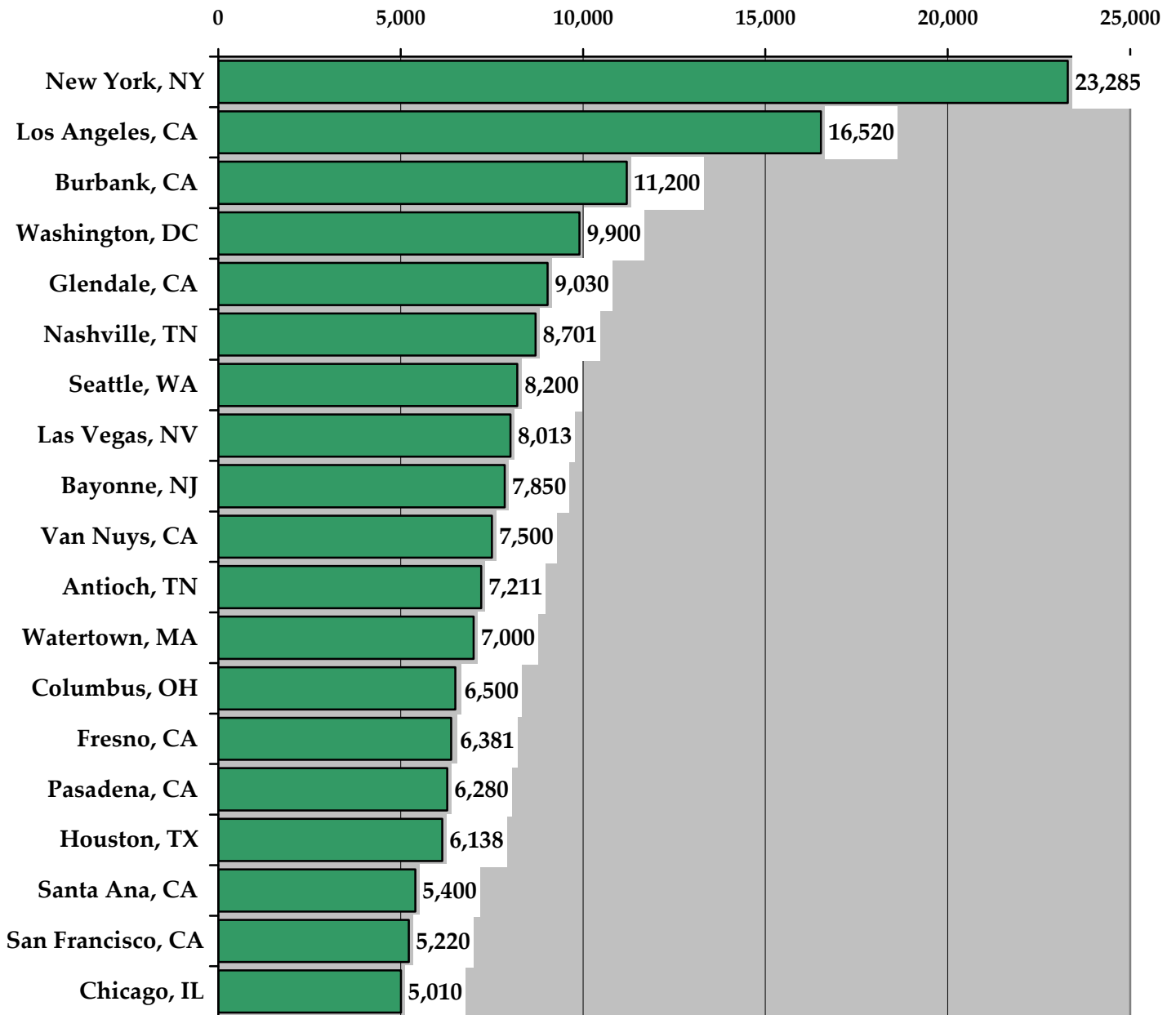
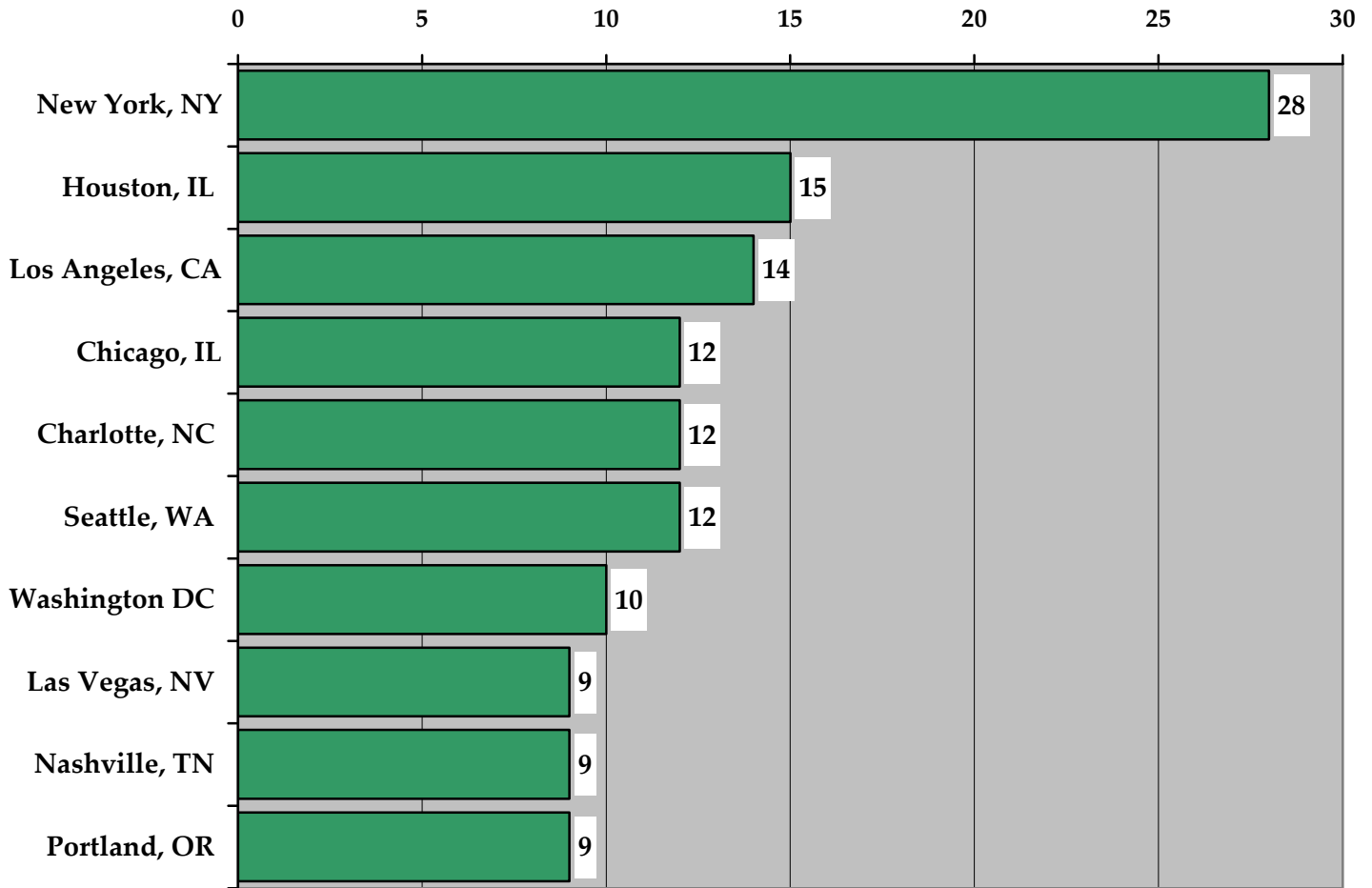


Fig. 4b. American Cities with Largest Numbers of Oriental Orthodox Parishes
 (listed are cities with at least 9 parishes)



From 2010 to 2020: Has the Geography of American Orthodox Churches Changed?

The short answer to this question is: not much for the Eastern Orthodox Churches, but more significantly for Oriental Orthodox Churches.

Figures 5a and 5b show the shares (percentages) of the ten top states for total US Eastern Orthodox adherents in 2020 (Fig. 5a) and 2010 (Fig. 5b). The most obvious change is the decrease in share of adherents for New York State, from 14% in 2010 to 10.7% in 2020, causing California to become the top US state with respect to number of adherents. The other noticeable change was that Maryland dropped off the list of top ten US states for Eastern Orthodox Church adherents, now replaced by Texas.

Figure 5a. Top Ten States in Share of Total Eastern Orthodox Adherents (2020)

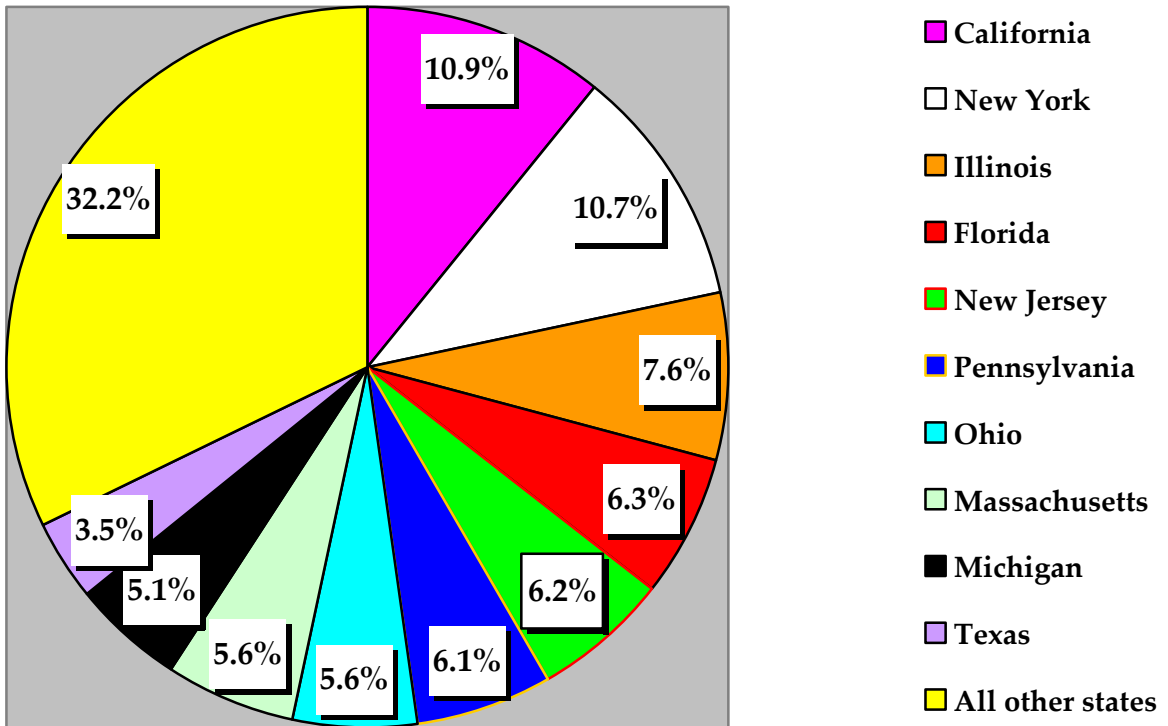
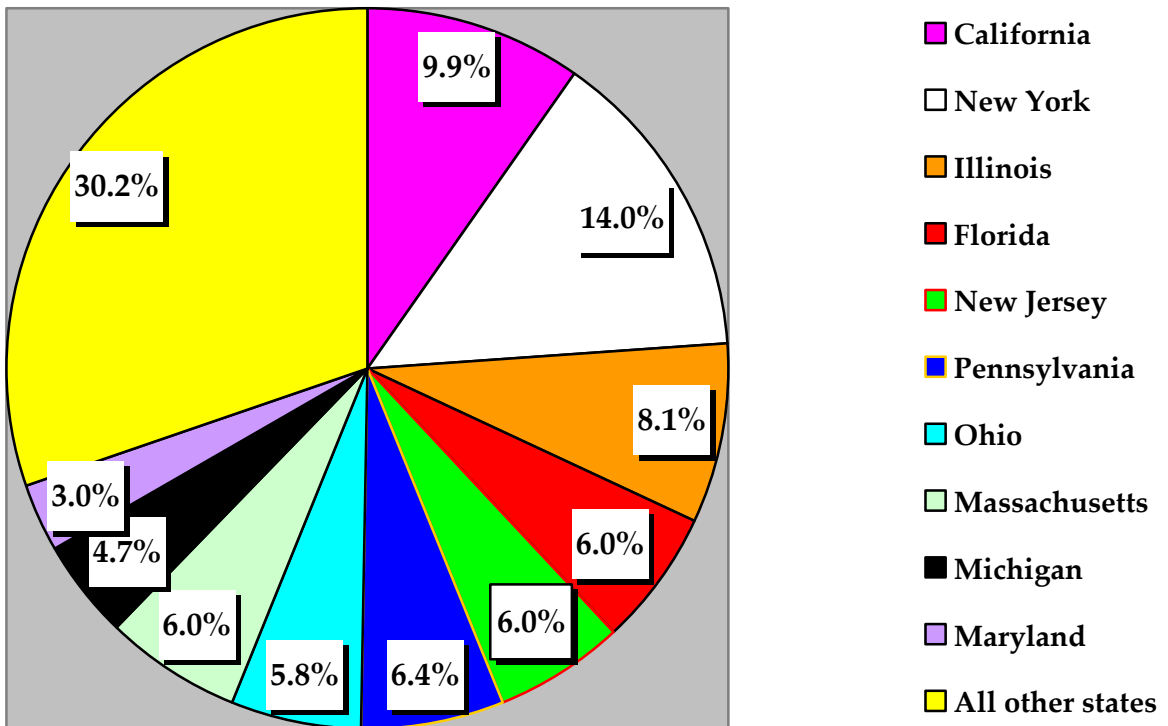


Figure 5b. Top Ten States in Share of Total Eastern Orthodox Adherents (2010)



Figures 6a and 6b present similar information for Oriental Orthodox Churches. The greater – compared to Eastern Orthodox Churches - macro-regional shifts in total numbers of adherents are evident.

Figure 6a. Top Ten States in Share of Total Oriental Orthodox Adherents (2020)

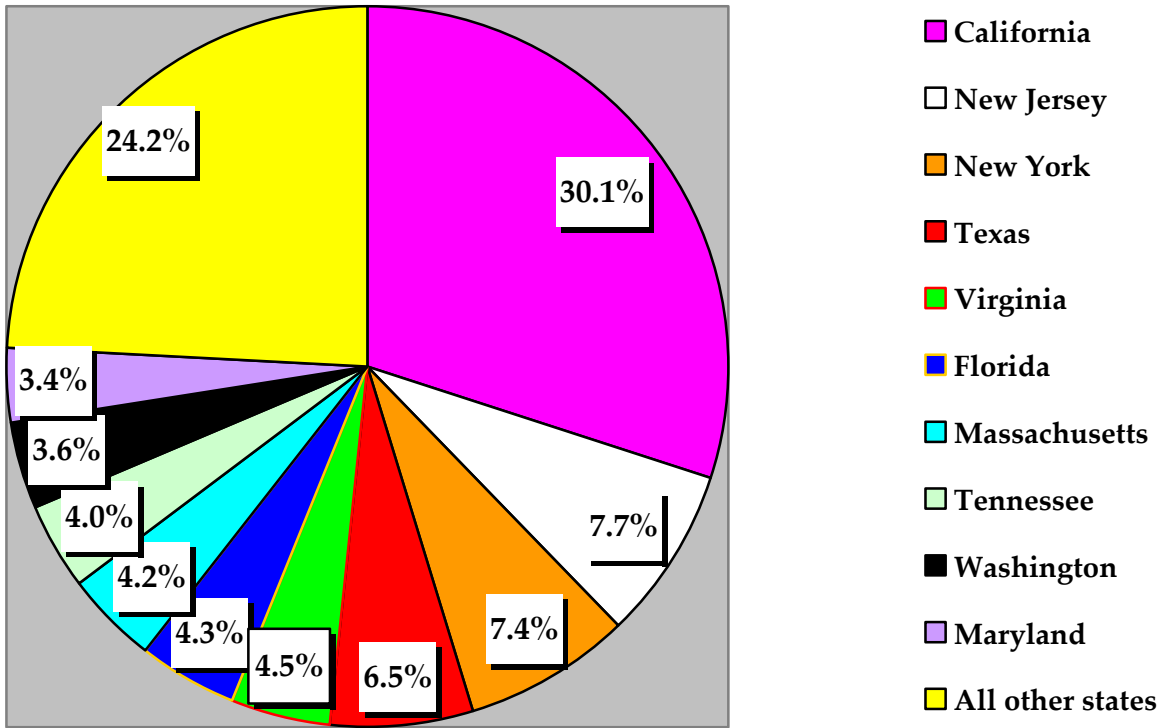
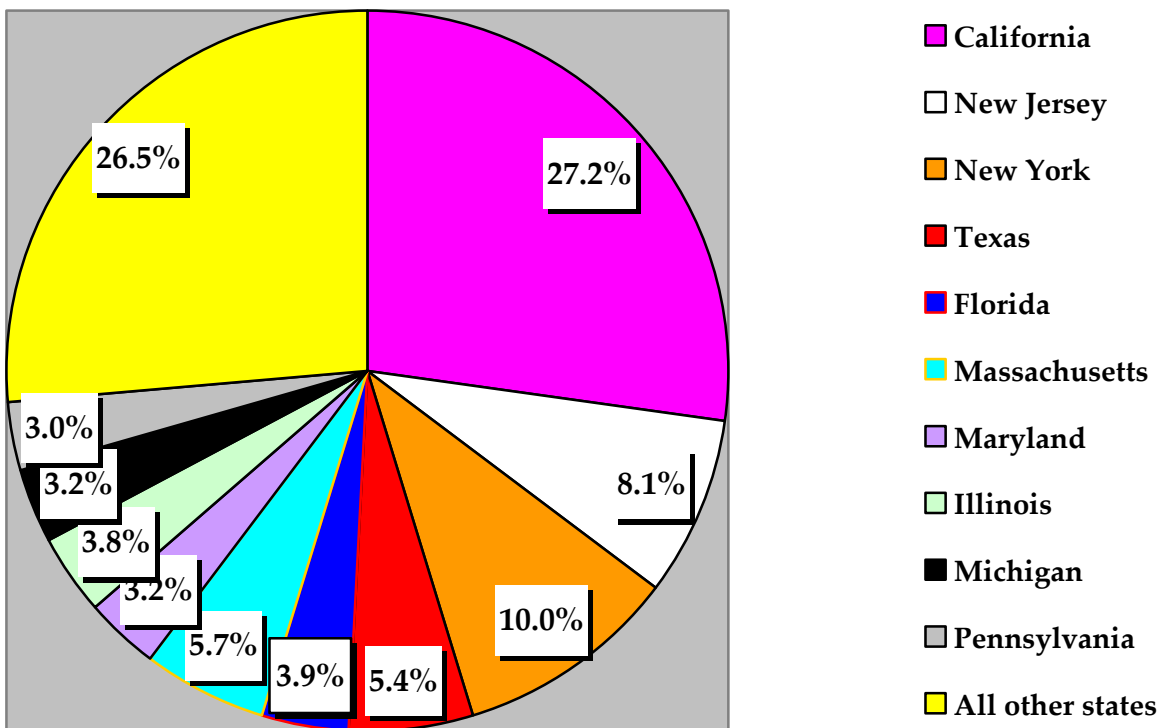


Figure 6b. Top Ten States in Share of Total Oriental Orthodox Adherents (2010)



Comparing Figures 6a and 6b, one can clearly see that overall, the Northeastern¹ (NY, NJ, MA, PA) and Midwestern (IL, MI) states decreased in share of Oriental Orthodox Christians. Correspondingly, the Southern (FL, TX, TN, VA, Maryland) and Western (CA, WA) states have gained more “weight” in the total of US Oriental Orthodox Church adherents.

More detailed (county-level) information on changes in geography of parishes and members of American Orthodox Churches can be obtained from maps 6 and 7 in the following section of this report.

Maps of American Orthodox Christian Churches

In this concluding section of the report, we offer several maps to help visualize both the current geographical distribution of the American Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches, as well as the major geographic changes which have occurred since the first Census of US Orthodox Parishes in 2010. Maps 1a and 1b are the so-called “cartogram maps.” These are US maps in which the size of each state is shown in proportion to the number of either Eastern Orthodox (Map 1a) or Oriental Orthodox (Map 1b) Church adherents that it contains. For example, the various Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches in Florida have a total of 42,896 adherents in Florida, while they have 23,807 adherents in Texas. Therefore, on this map, Florida is shown as 1.8 times larger than Texas.

Maps 2a and 2b depict the concentration of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Church adherents by county. Counties with greatest numbers of adherents are colored red. On Map 2a, 664 counties are shown in color: either red or blue. The 37 red counties combined add up to half (50%) of all Eastern Orthodox Church adherents. The remaining 627 blue counties are all the other counties with Eastern Orthodox parishes and missions. Together these 627 counties account for the other half of adherents. Similarly, Map 2b shows that in 2020 the Oriental Orthodox Churches had parishes and missions in 253 counties (all red and blue counties). Of these 253 counties, the 18 red-colored counties with the most adherents, when added together, accounted for half of all Oriental Orthodox Church adherents.

Maps 3a and 3b show the total number of Eastern Orthodox (Map 3a) and Oriental Orthodox (Map 3b) Church adherents per county (for all counties with Orthodox Christian parishes or missions).

¹ This report follows US Census Bureau definition of geographic regions
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Maps 4a and 5a show (in two different ways) the number of Eastern Orthodox parishes and missions in each US county. The same data are presented for Oriental Orthodox parishes and missions in Maps 4b and 5b.

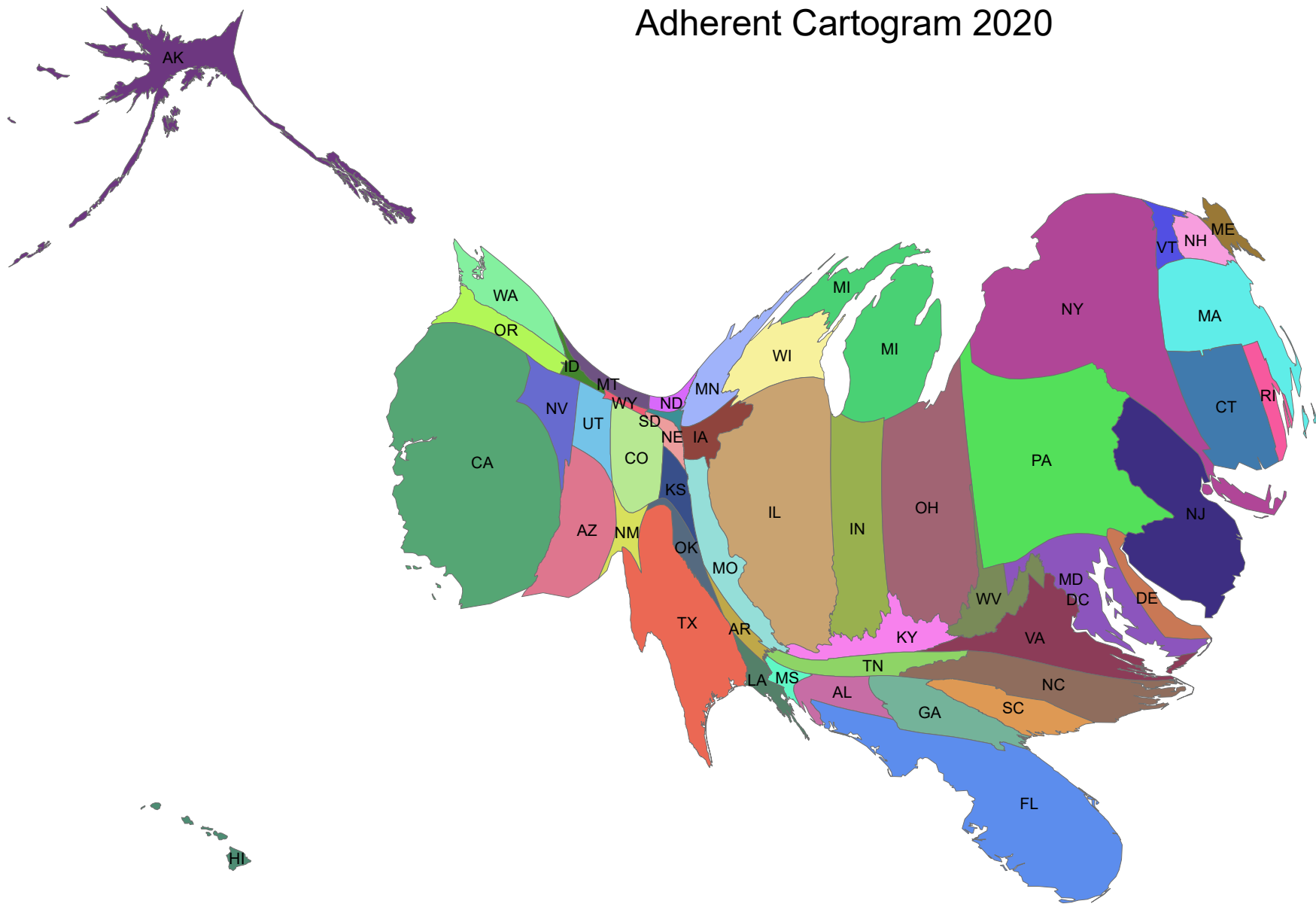
The next two sets of maps show the most important county-by-county changes in the geographic distribution of American Orthodox Christian Churches between 2010 and 2020. Maps 6a and 6b deal with changes in parishes. In Map 6a, we see that during 2010-2020, the Eastern Orthodox Churches “entered” and established parishes and missions in 60 new counties (colored dark-green). During the same period, however, 26 counties “lost” Eastern Orthodox parishes and missions (colored dark red). As a result, in 2020, the Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches had parishes and missions in 664 counties, in comparison with 630 counties 10 years ago. Similarly, Map 6b indicates that between 2010 and 2020 the Oriental Orthodox Churches ceased their presence in 7 counties, but, at the same time, “entered” and formed first parishes in 56 counties. As a result, in 2020, the Oriental Orthodox parishes and missions were present in 253 counties versus 204 ten years ago.

Maps 7a and 7b deal with county-level changes in adherents. In some counties, during 2010-2020, there were significant changes in the total number of Orthodox Church adherents: either impressive growth (more than +50%) or decline (more than -50%). In Maps 7a (Eastern Orthodox Churches) and 7b (Oriental Orthodox Churches), these counties are colored in light green and pink, respectively.

Finally, Maps 8a and 8b shows the percentage of Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Church adherents, respectively, in the total population of each county.

Map 1a

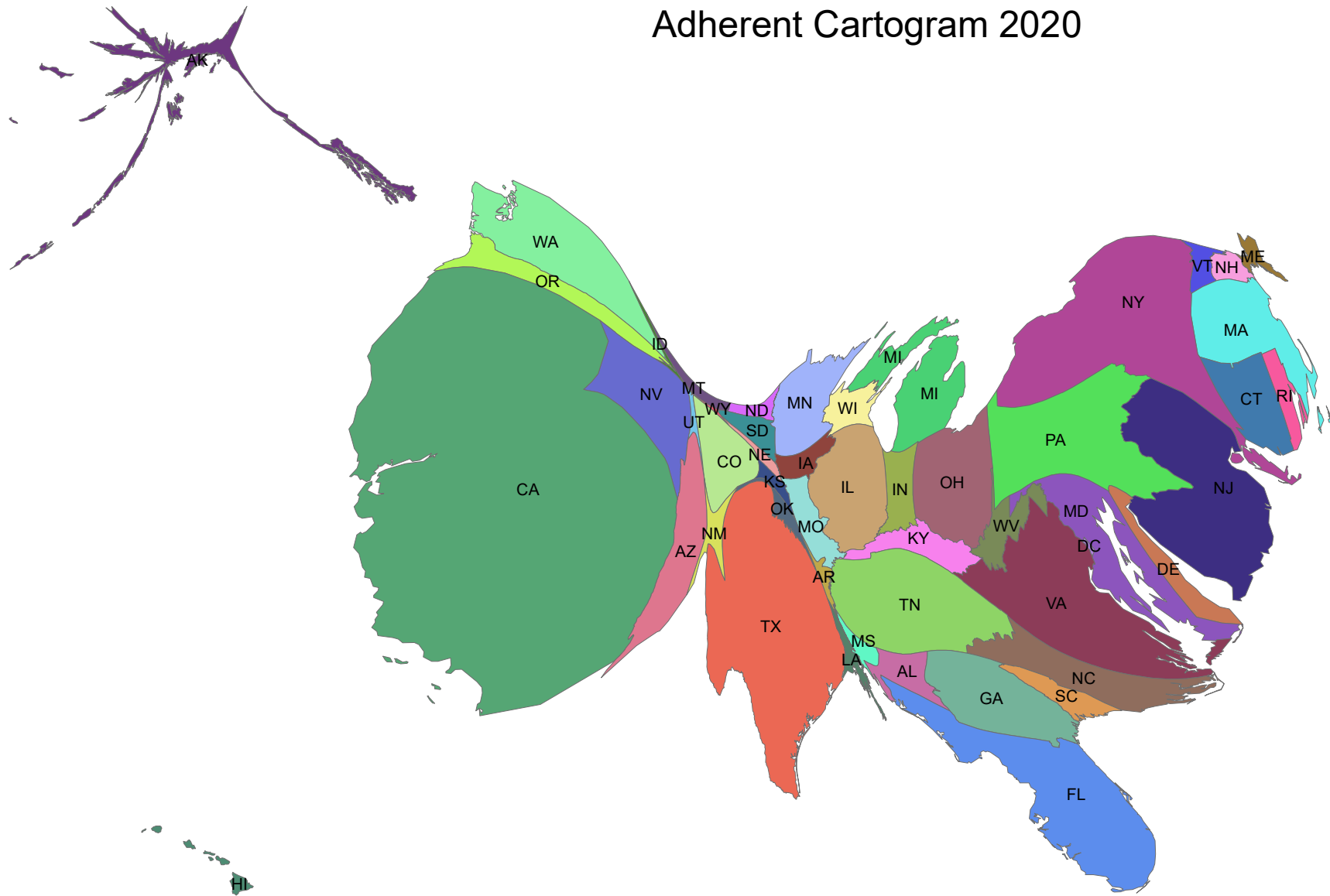
Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches Adherent Cartogram 2020



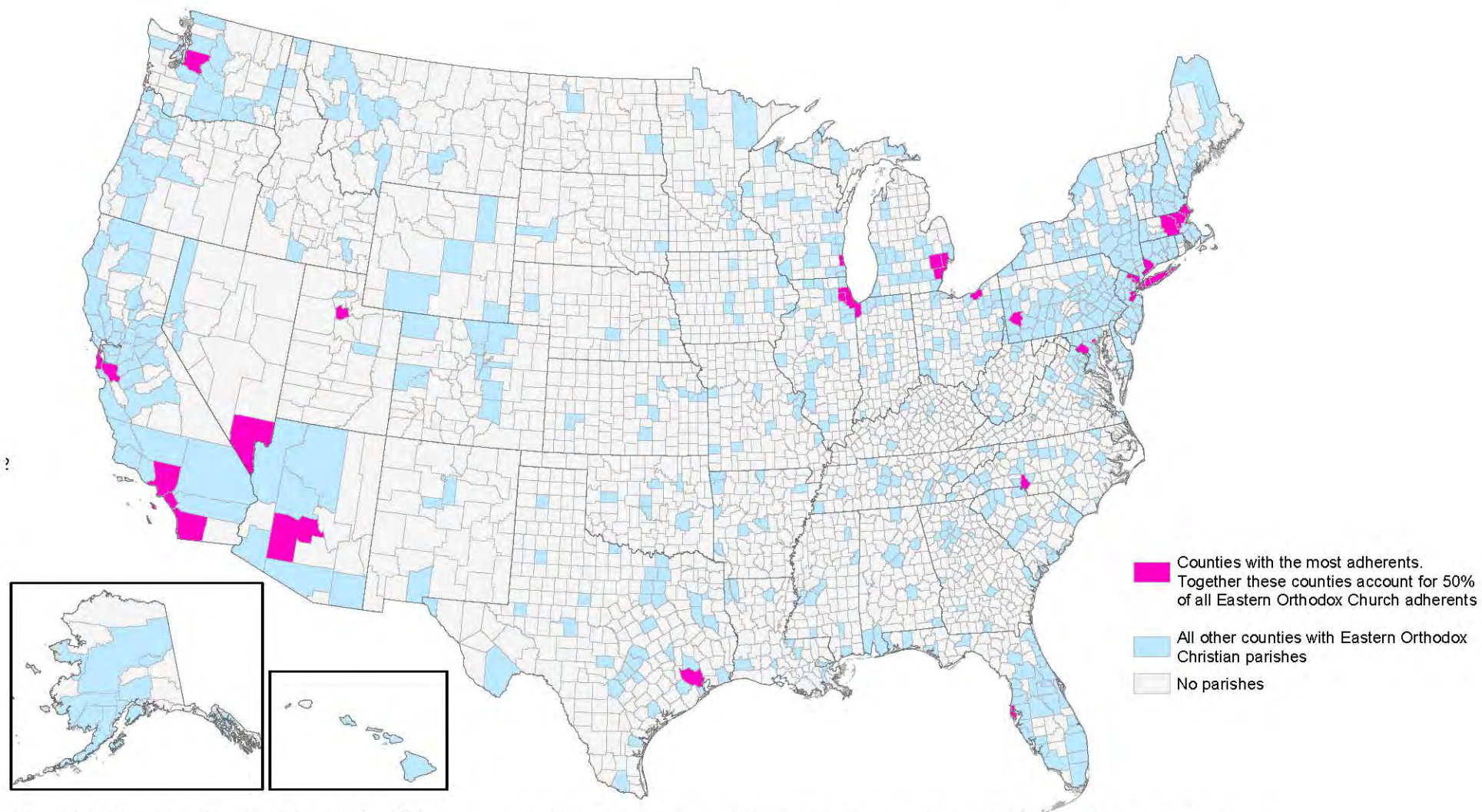
© Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 2020
2020 U.S. Religion Census: A County-level Enumeration
of Religious Congregations and Adherents
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

Adherents Cartogram resizes each state proportionate to the number of Eastern Orthodox Christian adherents reported in that state in the 2020 U.S. Religion Census.

Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches Adherent Cartogram 2020



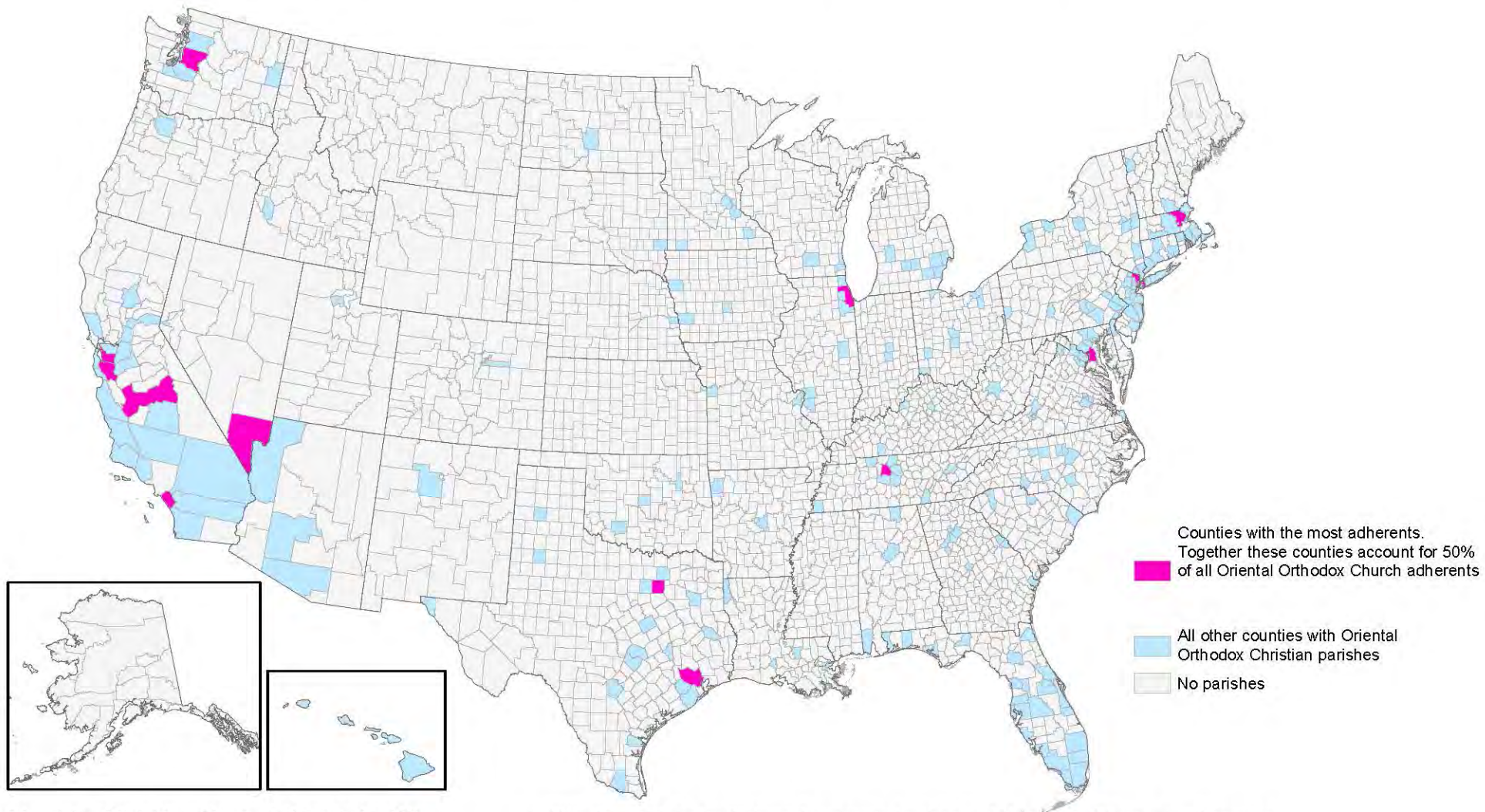
Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: Geographic Concentration of Adherents in 2020 (by US Counties)



© Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 2021
2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches had parishes in 664 counties. Of these, the 37 counties with the most adherents (colored red), when added together, account for half of all their adherents.

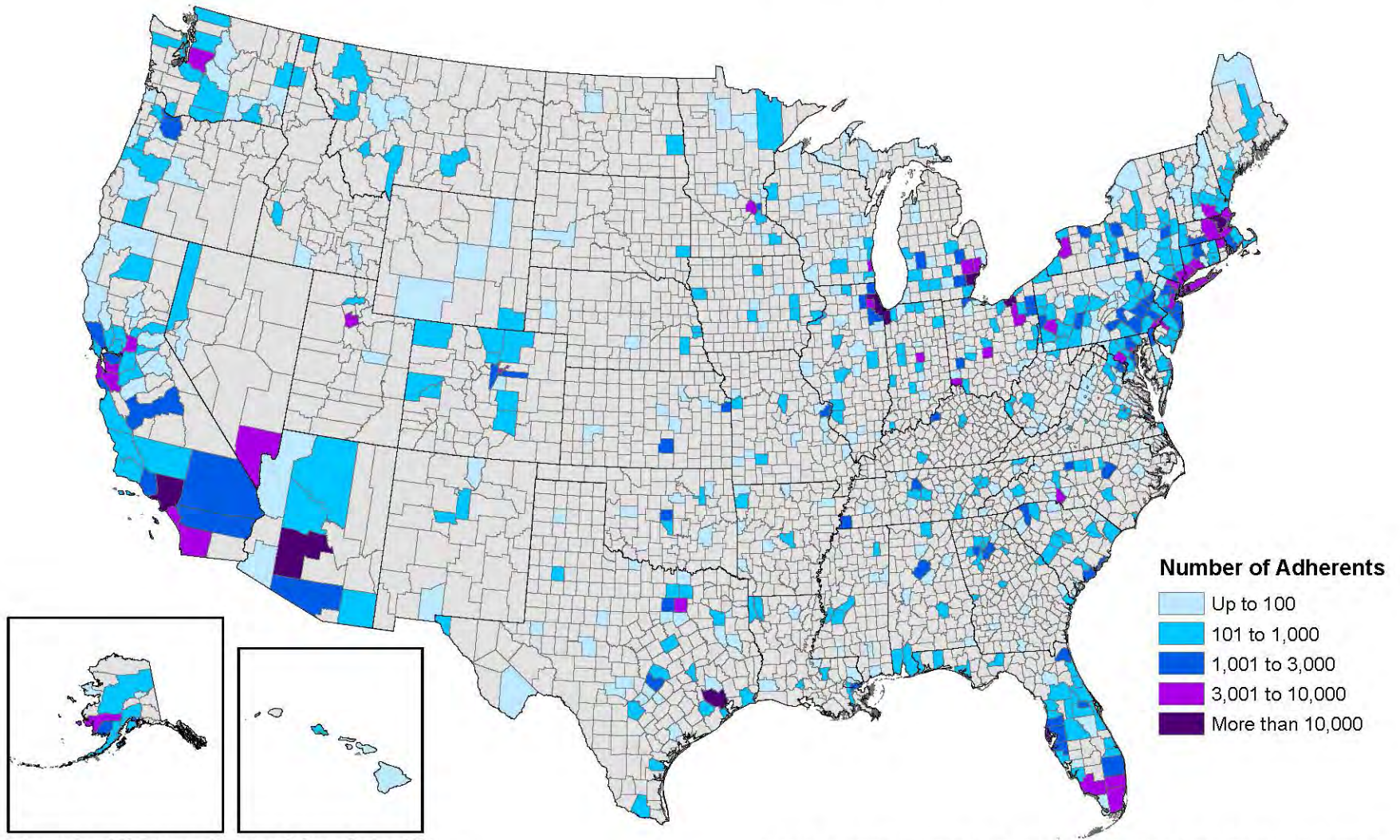
Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: Geographic Concentration of Adherents in 2020 (by US Counties)



© Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, 2021
2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches had parishes in 253 counties. Of these, the 18 counties with the most adherents (colored red), when added together, account for half of all their adherents.

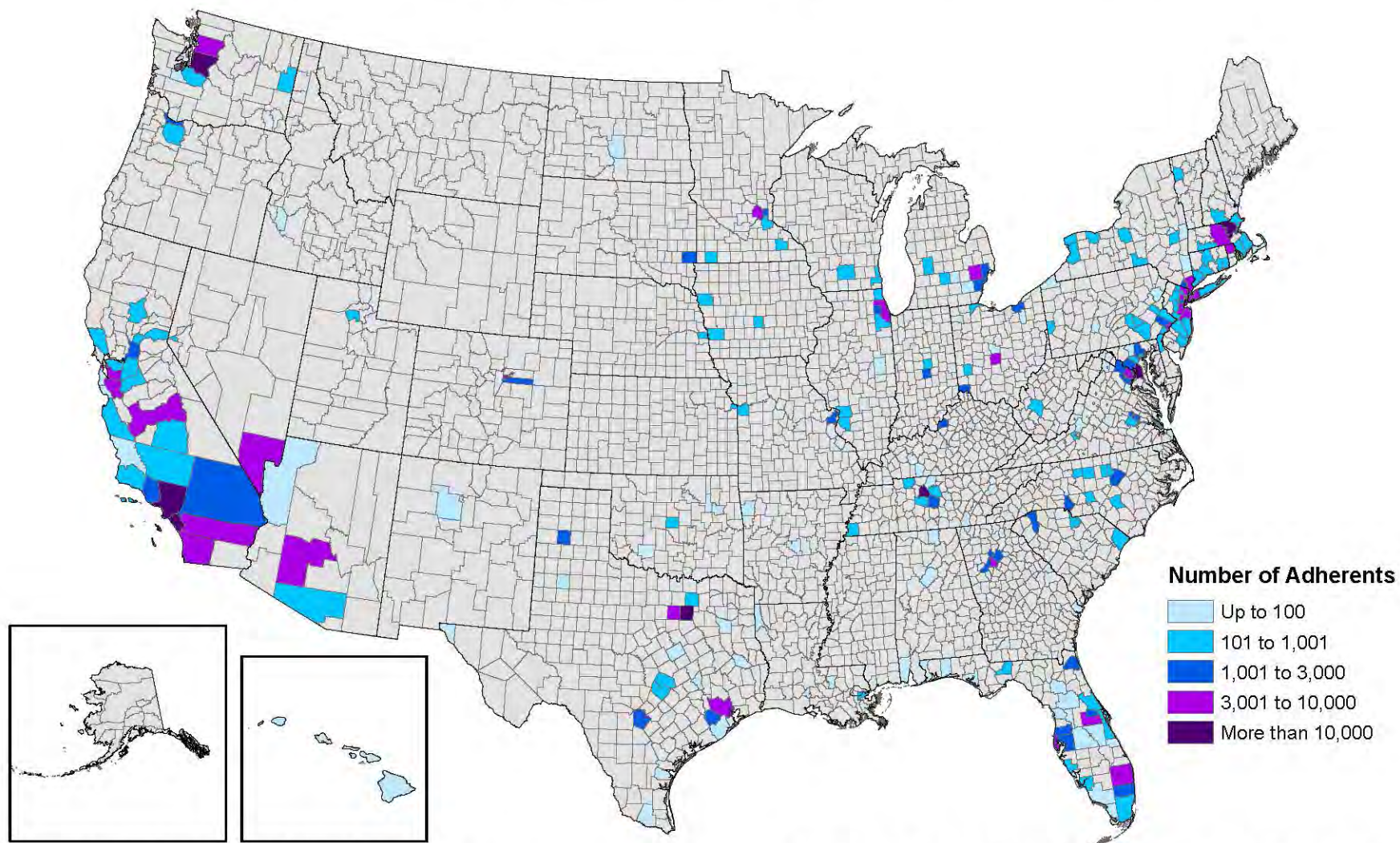
Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: Number of Adherents in 2020 (by US Counties)



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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches had 2,014 parishes in 664 counties.
675,765 adherents total were reported by the parishes.

Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: Number of Adherents in 2020 (by US Counties)

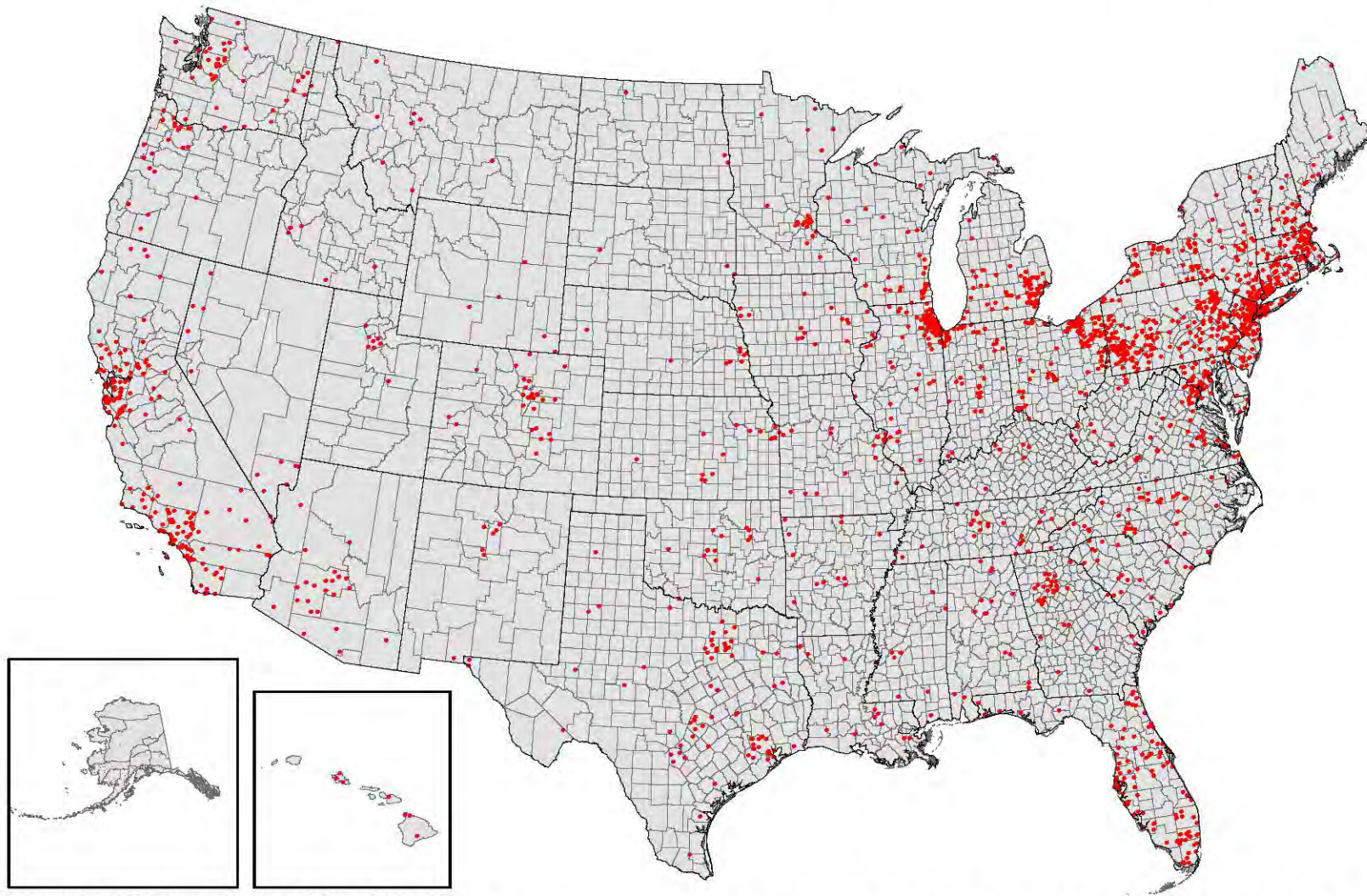


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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches had 895 parishes in 253 counties.
491,413 adherents total were reported by the parishes.

Map 4a

Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: 2020 Location of Parishes in the United States (by US Counties)

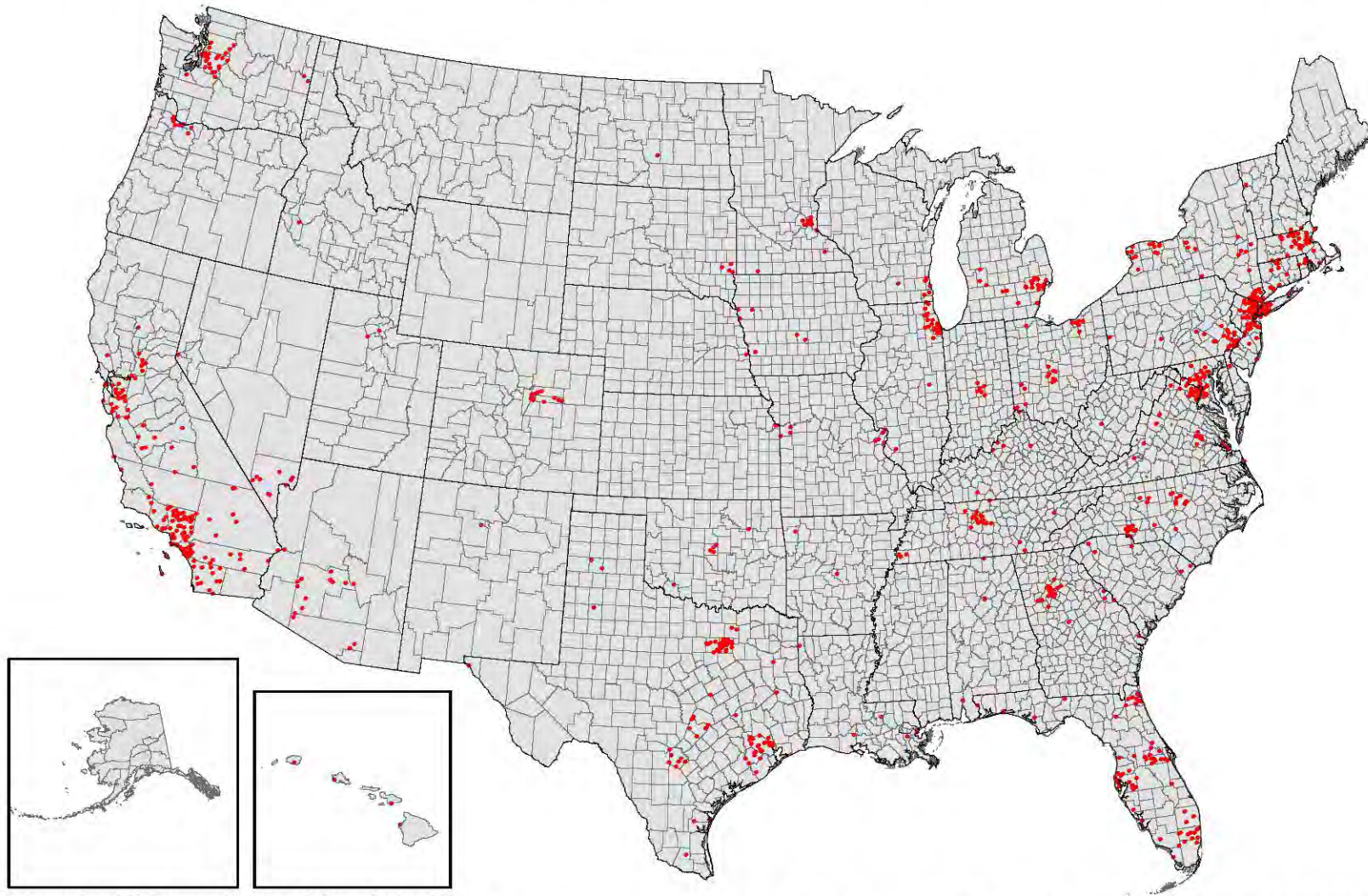


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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, 2,014 parishes were situated in 664 counties and reported 675,765 total adherents.
Dots are randomly placed within each county to represent parishes.

Map 4b

Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: 2020 Location of Parishes in the United States (by US Counties)

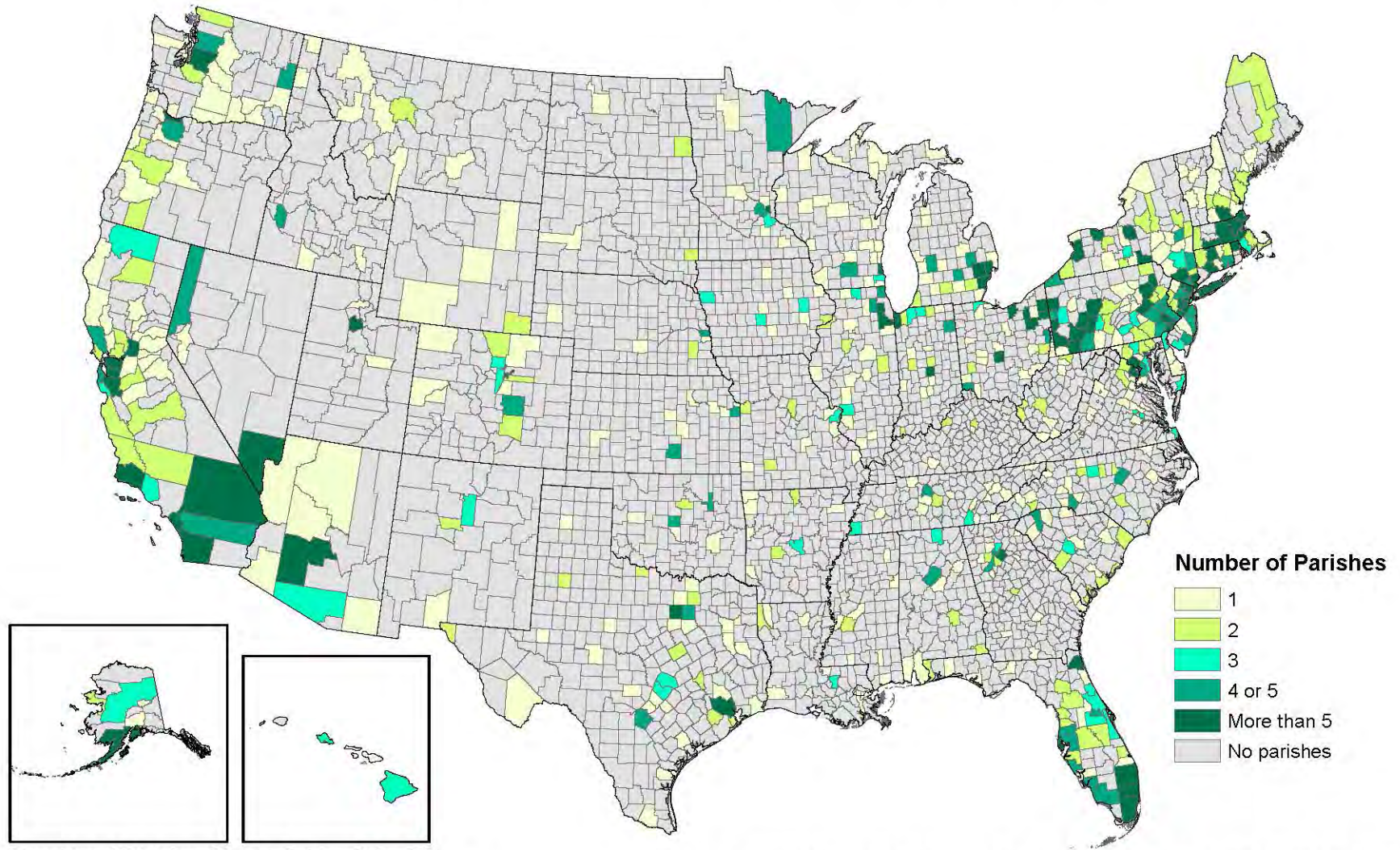


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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, 895 parishes were situated in 253 counties and reported 491,413 total adherents.
Dots are randomly placed within each county to represent parishes.

Map 5a

Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: Number of Parishes by US Counties (2020)

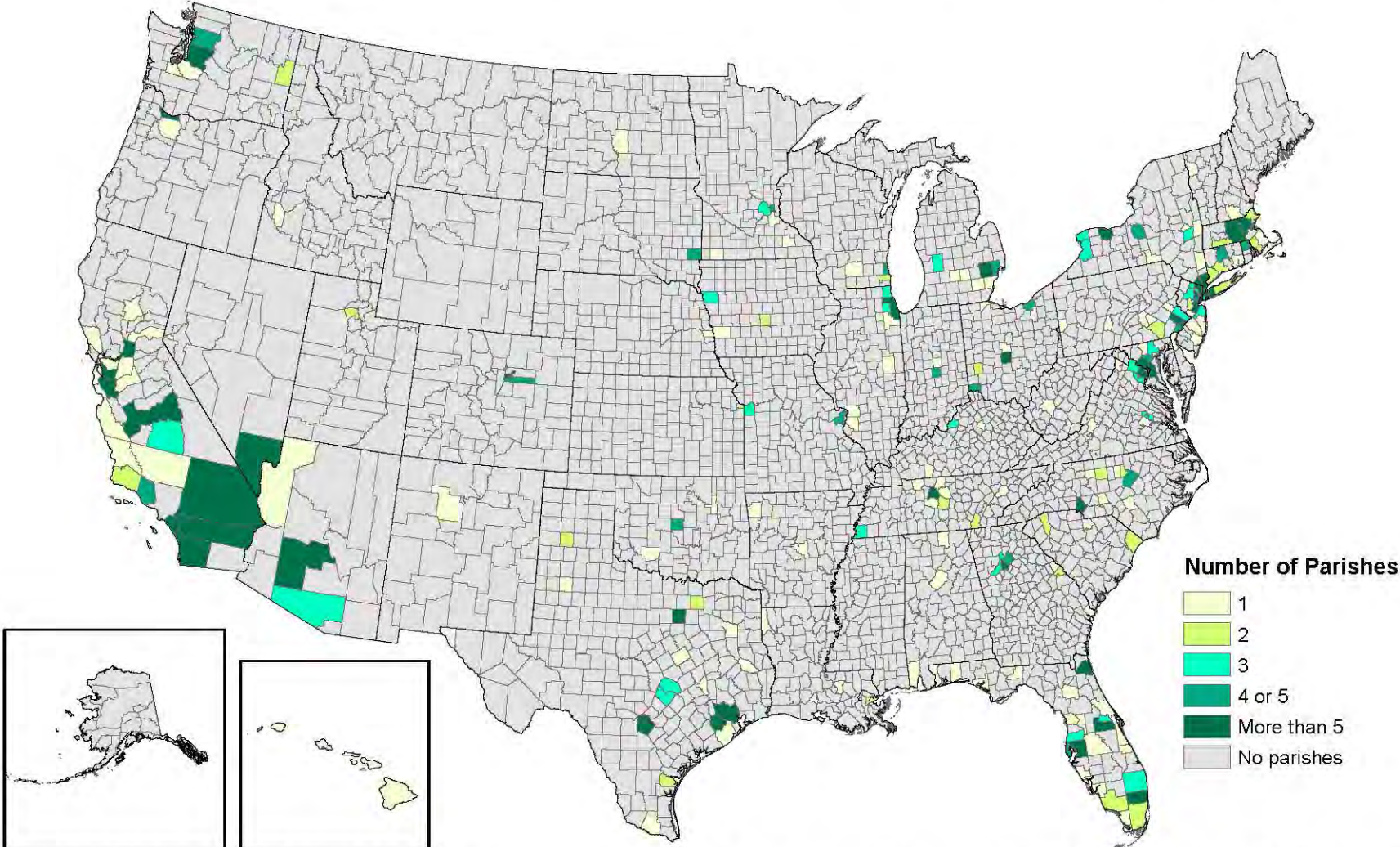


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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

In 2020, 2,014 parishes were situated in 664 counties and reported 675,765 total adherents.

Map 5b

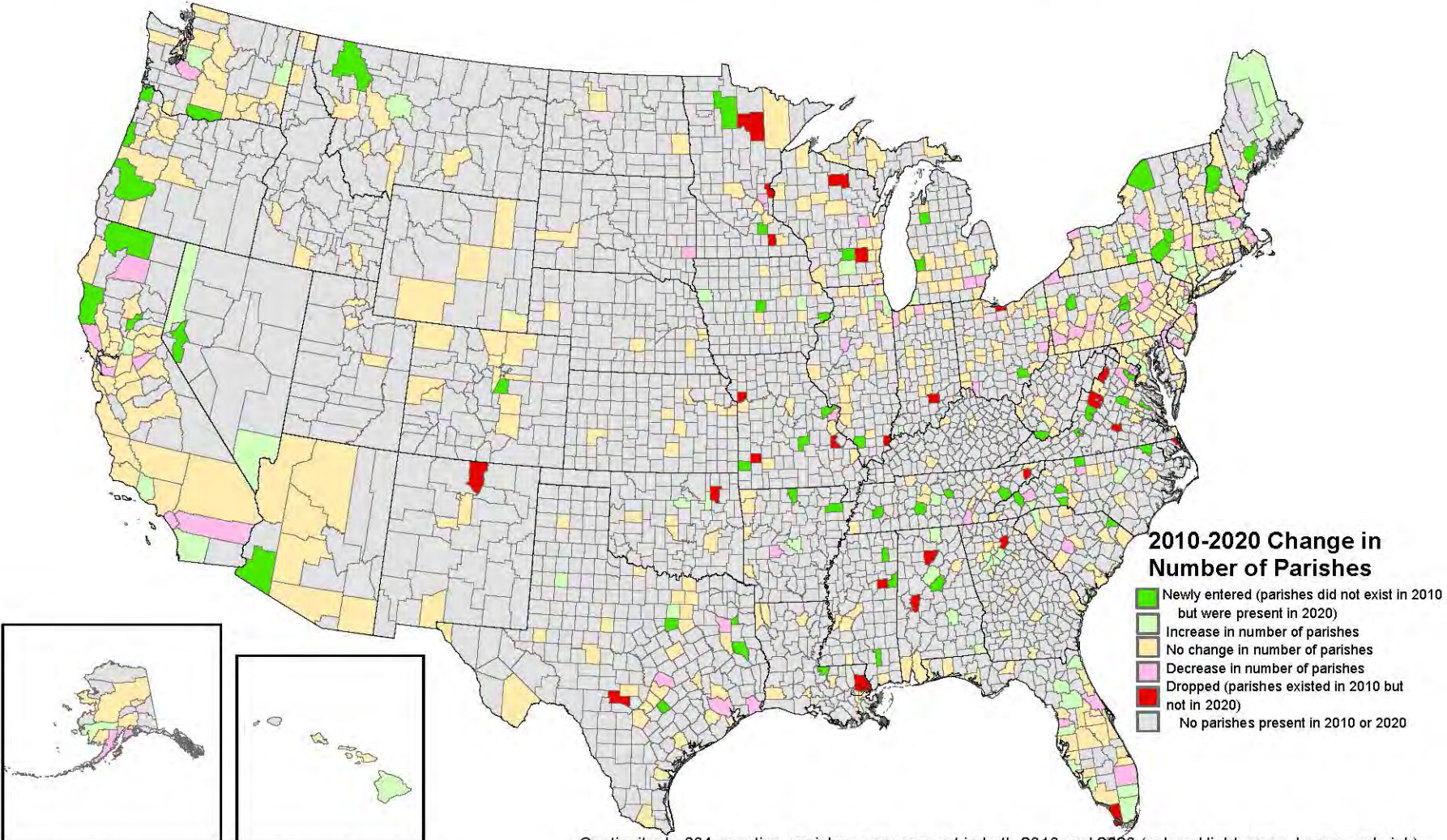
Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: Number of Parishes by US Counties (2020)



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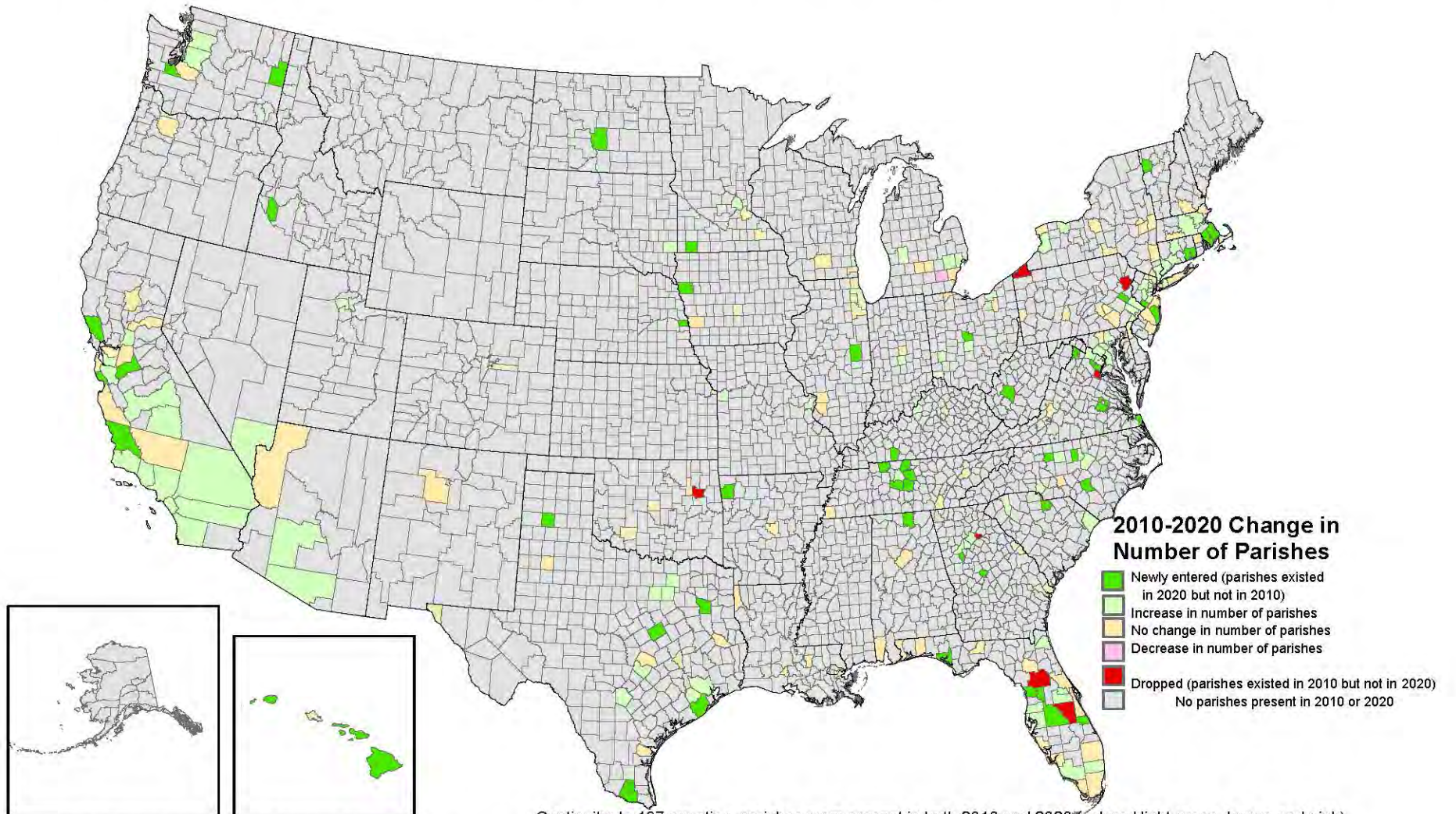
Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: 2010-2020 Change in Numbers of Parishes (by US Counties)



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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

Continuity: In 604 counties, parishes were present in both 2010 and 2020 (colored light green, brown and pink)
Gains: In 60 counties, parishes did not exist in 2010, but were present in 2020 (colored dark green)
Losses: In 26 counties, parishes were present in 2010, but not in 2020 (colored red)

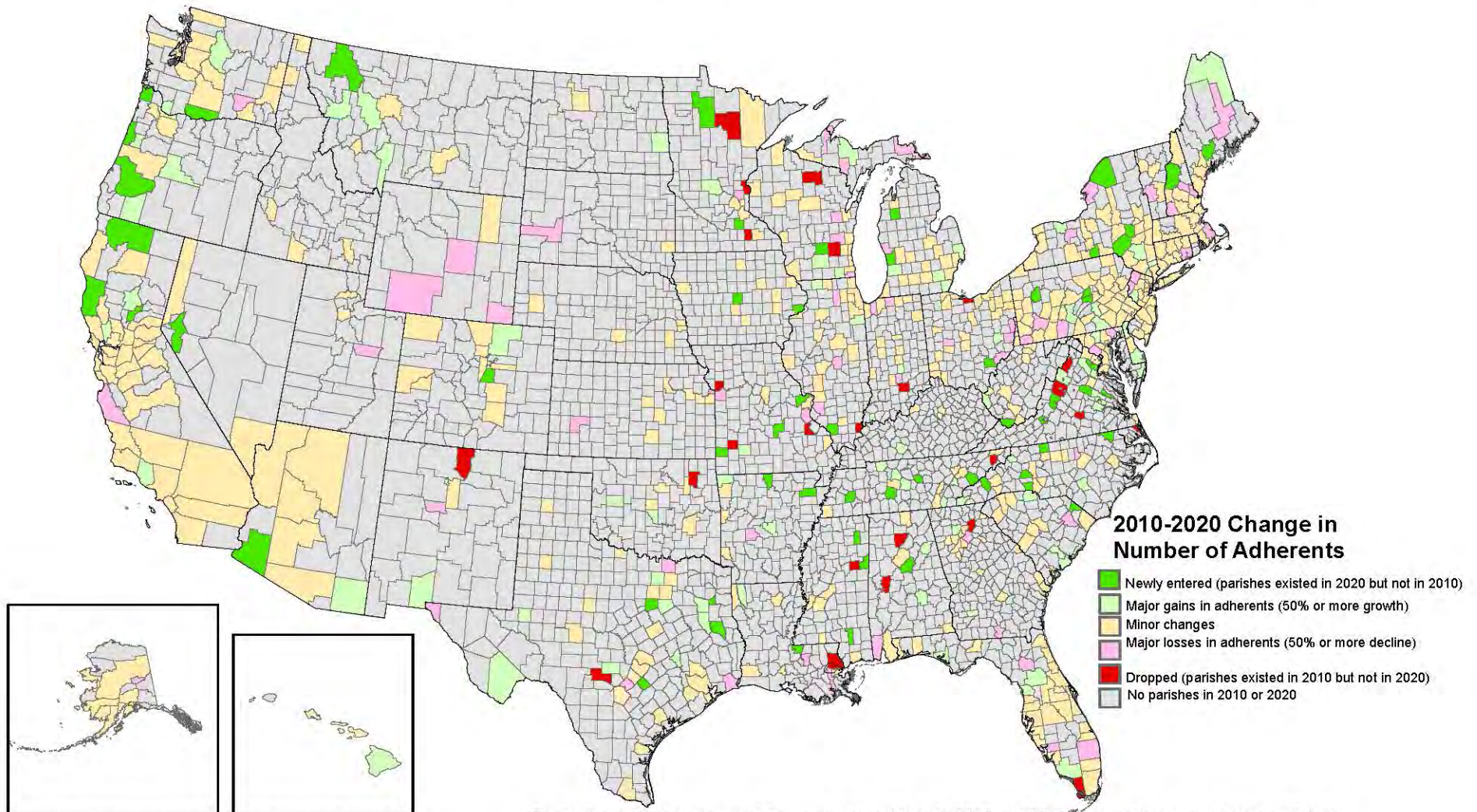
Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: 2010-2020 Change in Numbers of Parishes (by US Counties)



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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

Continuity: In 197 counties, parishes were present in both 2010 and 2020 (colored light green, brown and pink)
Gains: In 56 counties, parishes did not exist in 2010, but were present in 2020 (colored dark green)
Losses: In 7 counties, parishes were present in 2010, but not in 2020 (colored red)

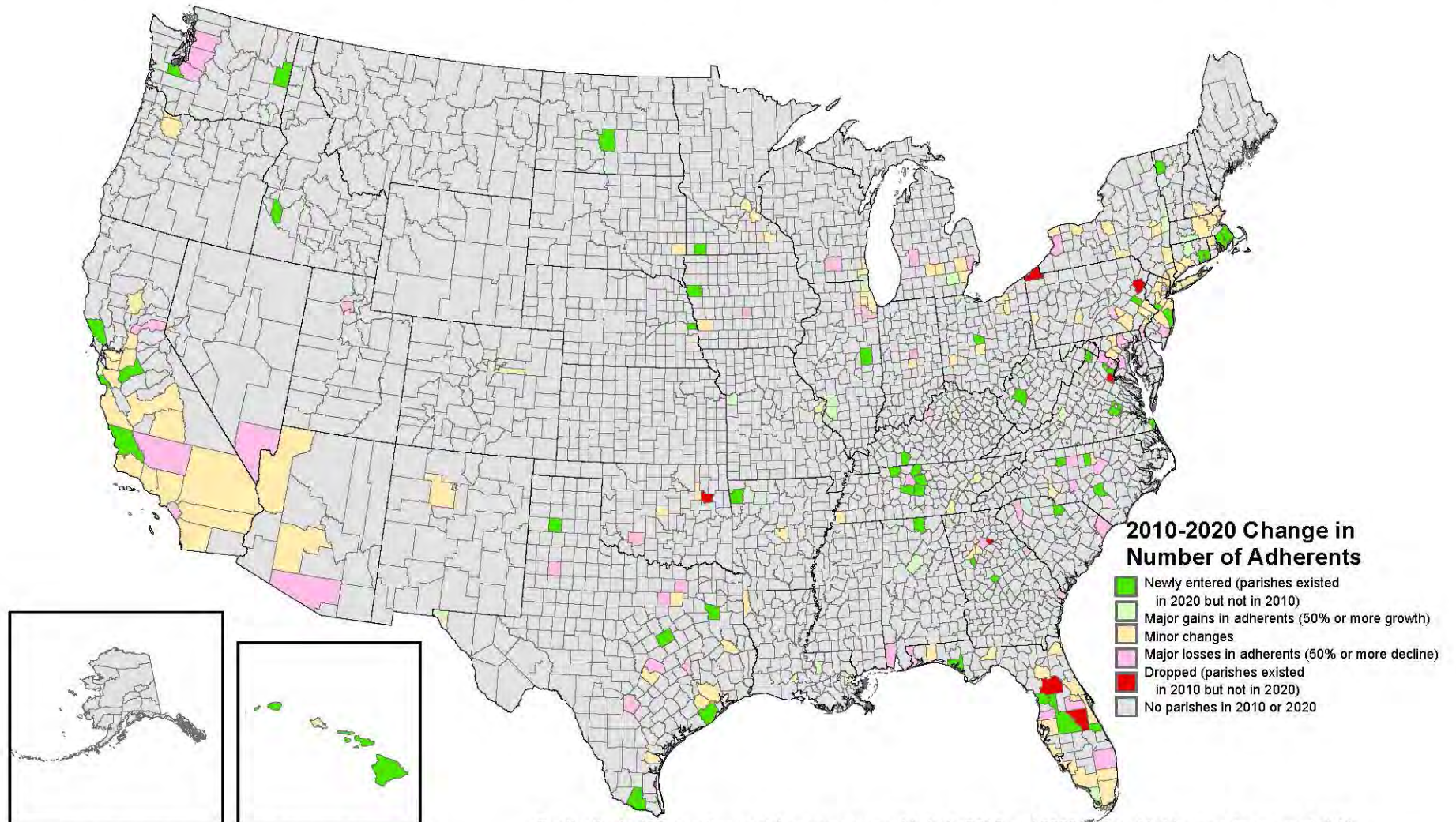
Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: 2010-2020 Change in Number of Adherents (by US Counties)



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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

Continuity: In 604 counties, parishes were present in both 2010 and 2020 (colored light green, brown and pink)
Gains: In 60 counties, parishes did not exist in 2010, but were present in 2020 (colored dark green)
Losses: In 26 counties, parishes were present in 2010, but not in 2020 (colored red)

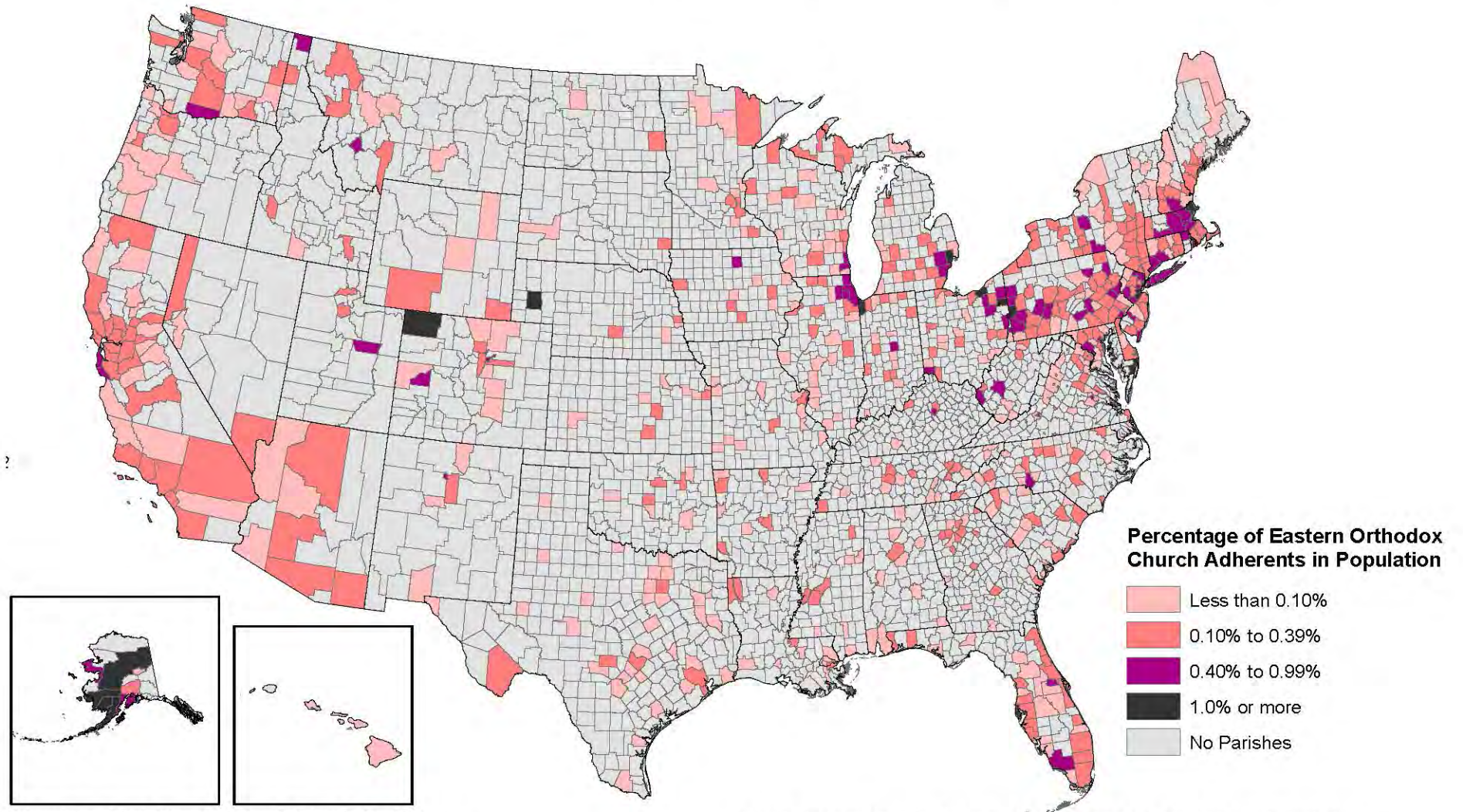
Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: 2010-2020 Change in Number of Adherents (by US Counties)



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Continuity: In 197 counties, parishes were present in both 2010 and 2020 (colored light green, brown and pink)
 Gains: In 56 counties, parishes did not exist in 2010, but were present in 2020 (colored dark green)
 Losses: In 7 counties, parishes were present in 2010, but not in 2020 (colored red)

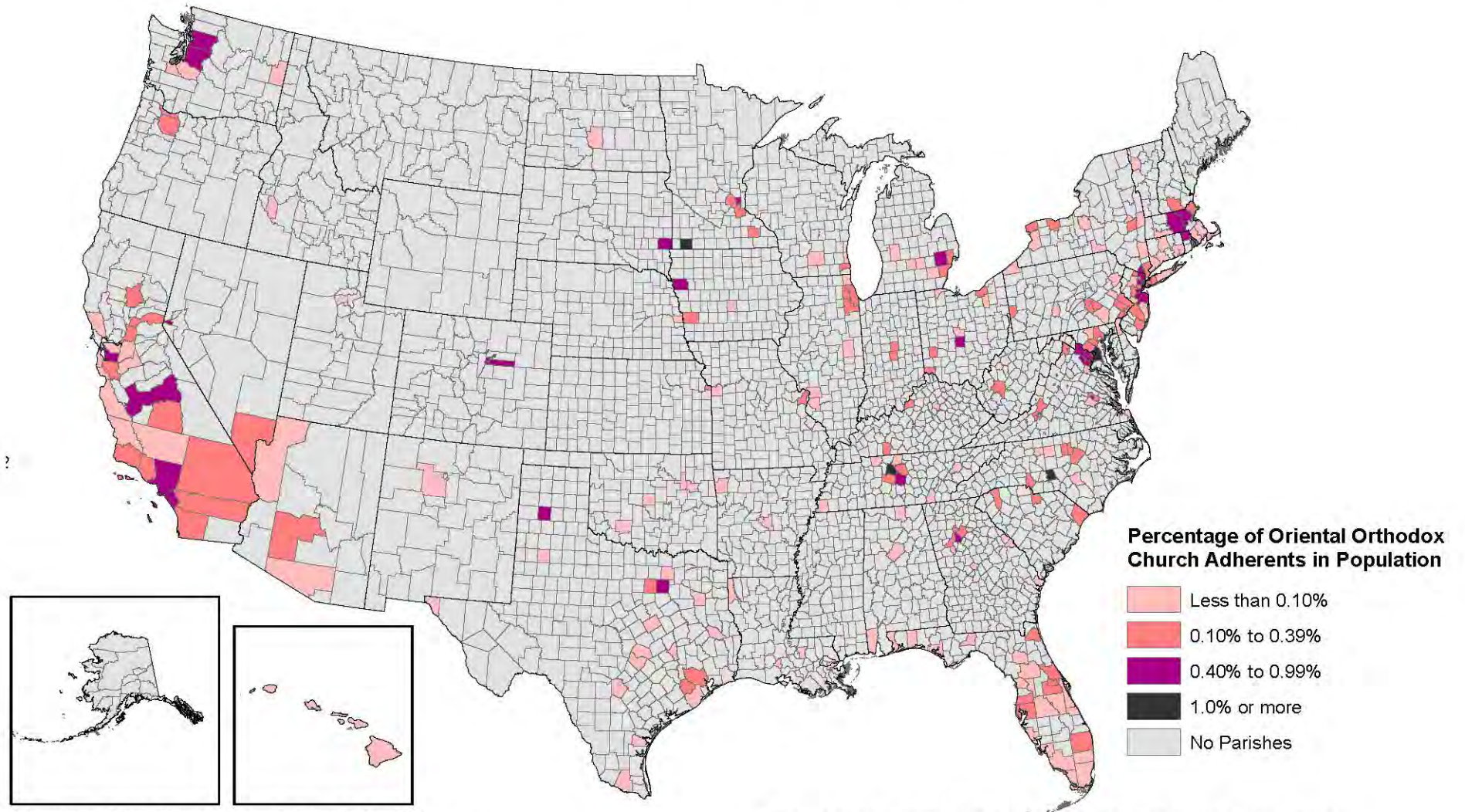
Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches: Adherents as Percent of Total Population in 2020 (by US Counties)



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In 2020, Eastern Orthodox Christian Churches had 2,014 parishes in 664 counties.
675,765 adherents total were reported by the parishes.

Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches: Adherents as Percent of Total Population in 2020 (by US Counties)



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In 2020, Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches had 895 parishes in 253 counties.
491,413 adherents total were reported by the parishes.