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Second Census of Orthodox Christian Churches / 2020 US Religion Census

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (GOA)

from 2010 to 2020:

Changes in Parishes, Membership, and Worship Attendance

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To trigger your interest, here are examples of what the 2020 Census revealed:

- ❖ From 2010 to 2020, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese (GOA) experienced a significant membership decline. Nationwide, the number of all GOA adherents dropped from 481,921 to 375,972 (-22% change). The decrease in regular attendees (i.e. the parishioners who come to church regularly) was equally strong: from 106,846 to 84,552 (-21% change).¹
- ❖ However, this overall decline in membership was different in the individual Metropolises. The parishes of Archdiocesan District experienced the greatest losses. On the opposite end, the Metropolis of Atlanta was the least affected by the decrease in members between 2010 and 2020.
- ❖ GOA Metropolises vary in terms of how many of their parishioners attend church regularly. Parishes in the Metropolis of Pittsburgh have the highest percentage of regular attendees among total adherents (28%). On the opposite end is the Metropolis of New Jersey, where only one-fifth of parishioners (20%) attend worship services regularly.
- ❖ More than half of all GOA adherents (53%) live in just six states: New York (12.2% of all GOA adherents), California (11.5%), Florida (7.9%), Illinois (7.7%), Massachusetts (6.9%), and New Jersey (6.8%). In comparison, less than one-third (32.7 %) of the general US population lives in these six states.

Data and Definitions Used in this Report

In the 2010 and 2020 US Religion Census (www.usreligioncensus.org), each GOA parish was asked two questions:

- How many individual persons 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 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.

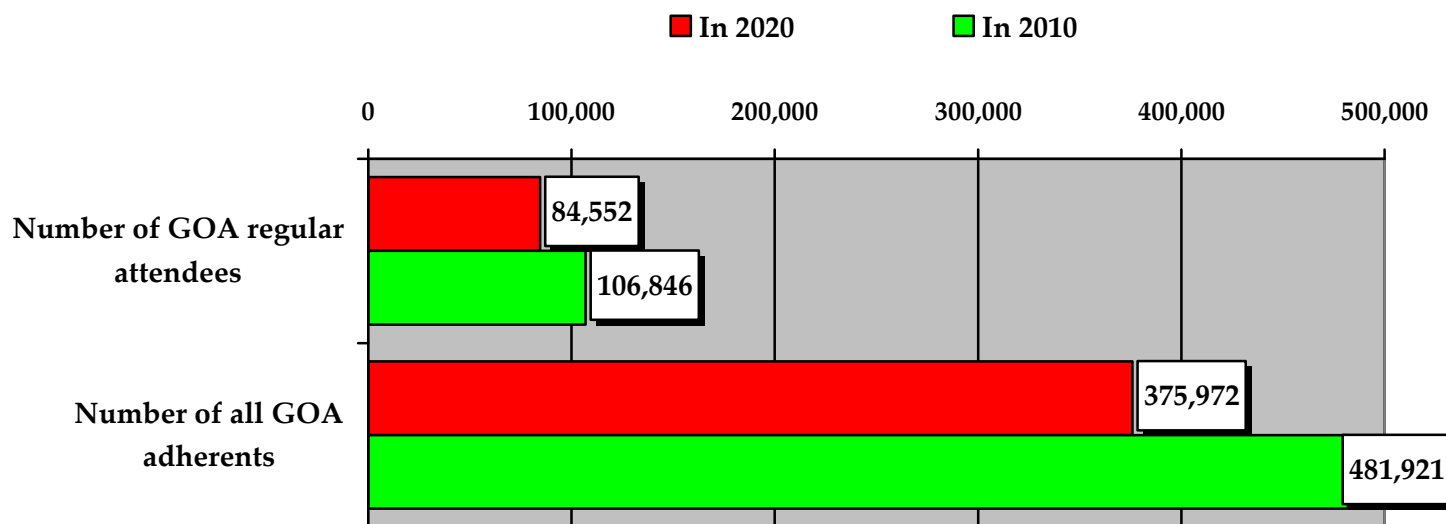
¹ For definitions of “adherents” and “regular attendees,” see the section *Data and Definitions Used in this Report*

GOA in 2020: National Overview

If measured by the number of all adherents (regular attendees plus occasional/marginal participants, adults and children combined), the estimated membership of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in 2020 was 375,972 people. Looking *only at the number of regular attendees*, the estimated GOA membership is 84,552 (this figure includes children). That is, 22% of GOA parishioners (84,552 out of 375,972) participate in church life on a regular basis.

During the past decade, the GOA has lost more than one-fifth of its members. More specifically, since 2010, the number of all adherents dropped from 481,921 to 375,972 (-22% change). The decline in regular attendees was equally strong: from 106,846 to 84,552 (-21% change). See Fig. 1.

Figure 1 GOA: Change in Membership from 2010 to 2020



When looking at changes in adherents parish-by-parish, out of 524 parishes that existed in both 2010 and 2020, 324 declined, 42 remained the same, and 158 increased. When looking at changes in regular attendees, 321 parishes declined, 59 remained the same, and 144 grew. Table 1 on the next page summarizes 2010-2020 developments in GOA membership and parishes. It also indicates the changes in the size of a “typical” median² parish measured either by all adherents or only by regular attendees. In 2020, the “typical” GOA church had 350 total adherents (compared with 400 in 2010). When counting only those people who attend regularly, the median GOA church had 110 active participants (compared with 125 in 2010). Table 1 also offers

² For a list of values that is in 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.

the list of the largest GOA parishes measured either by total adherents or by regular attendees. 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.

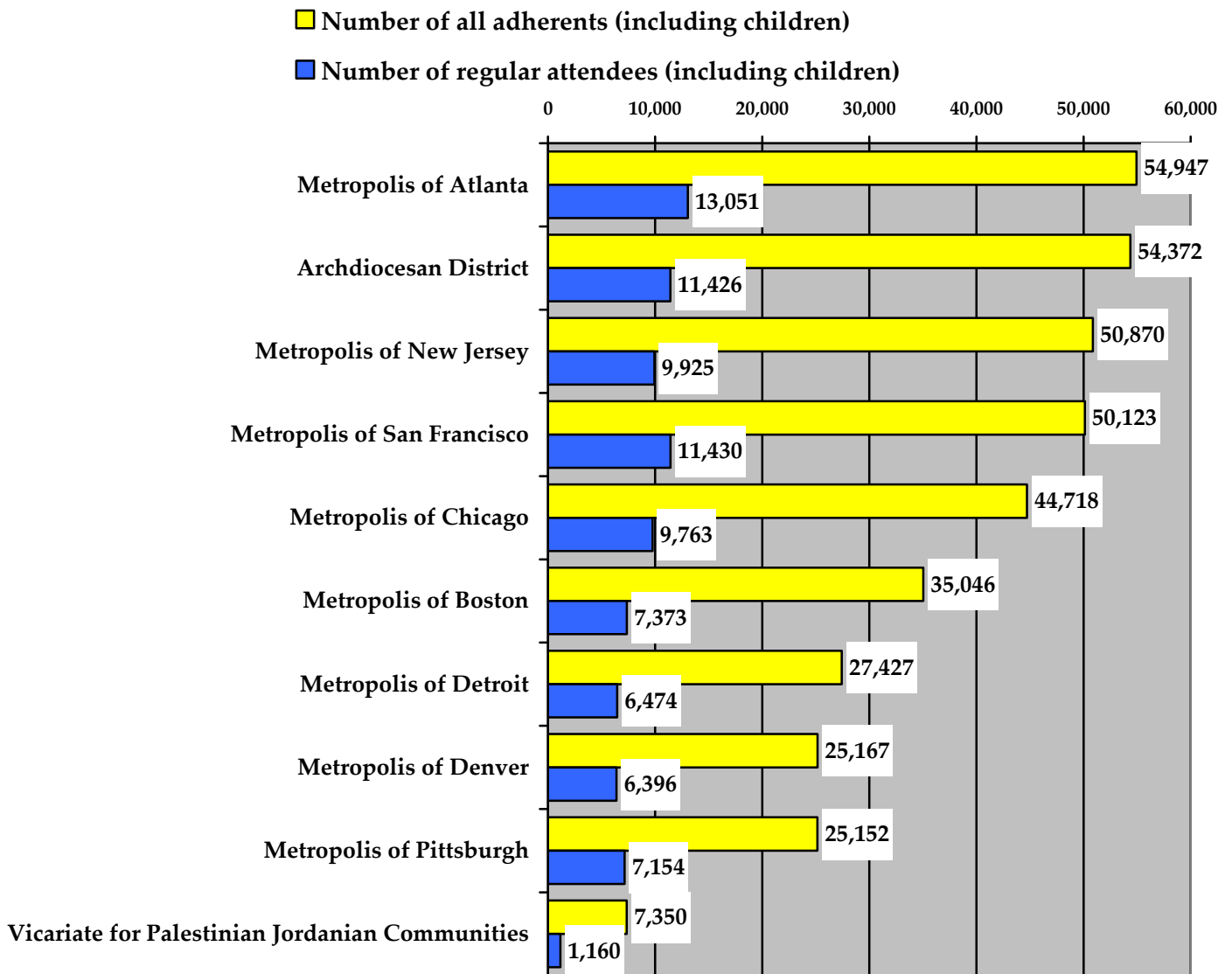
Table 1 Overview of Parishes and Membership of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Change in the number of parishes and missions: 2010 → 2020	531 parishes and missions → 534 parishes and missions (since 2010, 10 parishes were founded while 7 closed)
Change in the number of total adherents: 2010 → 2020	481,921 → 375,972 (-22%)
Change in the number of regular attendees: 2010 → 2020	106,846 → 84,552 (-21%)
Change in the size of a median parish measured by number of total adherents: 2010 → 2020	400 → 350
Change in the size of a median parish measured by number of regular attendees: 2010 → 2020	125 → 110
Largest parishes by number of total adherents (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ St. Nicholas, Tarpon Springs, FL (10,000 people) ➤ St. George, Piscataway, NJ (6,500) ➤ Annunciation, Houston, TX (5,000) ➤ Holy Trinity, Charlotte, NC (4,500) ➤ St. Nicholas, Flushing, NY (4,000) ➤ Sts. Constantine and Helen, Merrillville, IN (3,750) ➤ St. Demetrios, Elmhurst, IL (3,500) ➤ St. Vasilios, Peabody, MA (3,500) ➤ Assumption, St. Clair Shores, (3,500) ➤ St. Thomas, Cherry Hill, NJ (3,500)
Largest parishes by number of regular attendees (including children) in 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ St. Nicholas, Flushing, NY (850 people) ➤ Three Hierarchs, Brooklyn, NY (800) ➤ Holy Trinity, Charlotte, NC (750) ➤ Annunciation, Houston, TX (700) ➤ St. Nicholas, Troy, MI (700) ➤ St. Catherine, St. George and St. Demetrios, Astoria, NY (650) ➤ St. Nektarios, Charlotte, NC (600) ➤ St. Katherine, Falls Church, VA (550) ➤ St. George, Piscataway, NJ (525)

GOA in 2020: Metropolis-by-Metropolis³

If measured by the number of total adherents, the membership of the GOA regular Metropolises (i.e. excluding the Vicariate for Palestinian Jordanian Communities and the Vicariate for Slavic Communities) ranges from 54,947 in the Metropolis of Atlanta to 25,122 in the Metropolis of Pittsburgh. When counting only regular attendees, the GOA Metropolises vary in size from 13,051 in the Metropolis of Atlanta to 6,396 in the Metropolis of Denver (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 GOA Metropolises: Number of Adherents and Regular Attendees (2020)

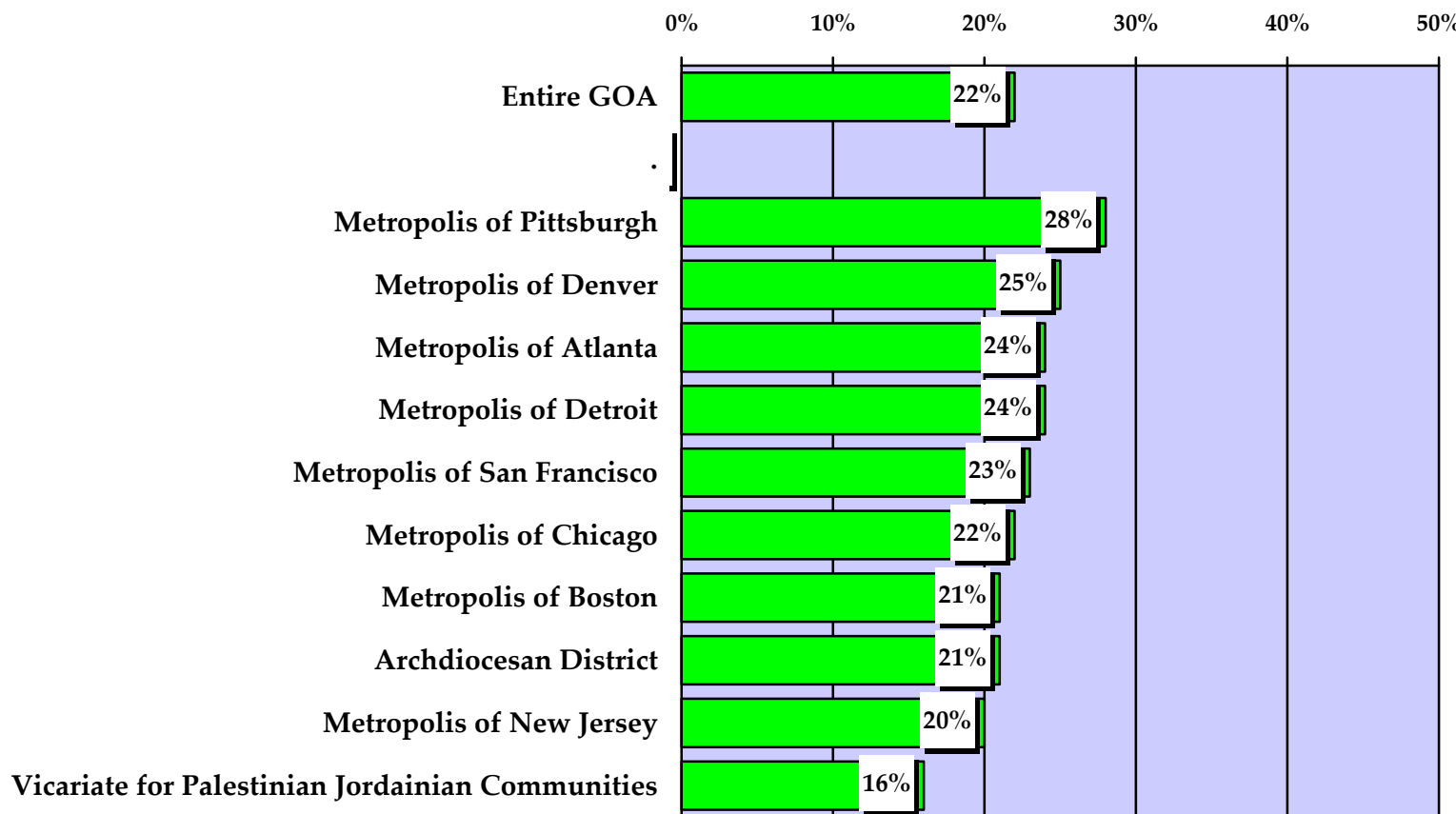


The GOA Metropolises vary in the percentage of regular attendees among total adherents. Figure 3 shows that the best “church-goers” are in Metropolis of Pittsburgh: it has the highest proportion of active members who participate in the parishes on a regular basis (28%). On the opposite end is the Metropolis of New Jersey where

³ This section does not include information on the recently formed Vicariate for Slavic Communities.

only one-fifth of parishioners (20%) attend their churches regularly. The rates of church attendance in the Vicariate for Palestinian Jordanian communities are even lower: 16%.

Figure 3 Percentage of Regular Attendees among Total Adherents



Because of these variations in the percentage of regular attendees among total adherents, the exact “weight” of each Metropolis in total GOA membership depends on how membership is measured: by all adherents or only by the regular attendees. Figures 4a and 4b on the next page demonstrate this.

In both measures of membership, however, the Metropolis of Atlanta is the largest GOA Metropolis. It accounts for 14.6% of all GOA adherents and for 15.5% of the regular attendees.

Figure 4a. Share of each Metropolis in Total GOA Adherents (2020)

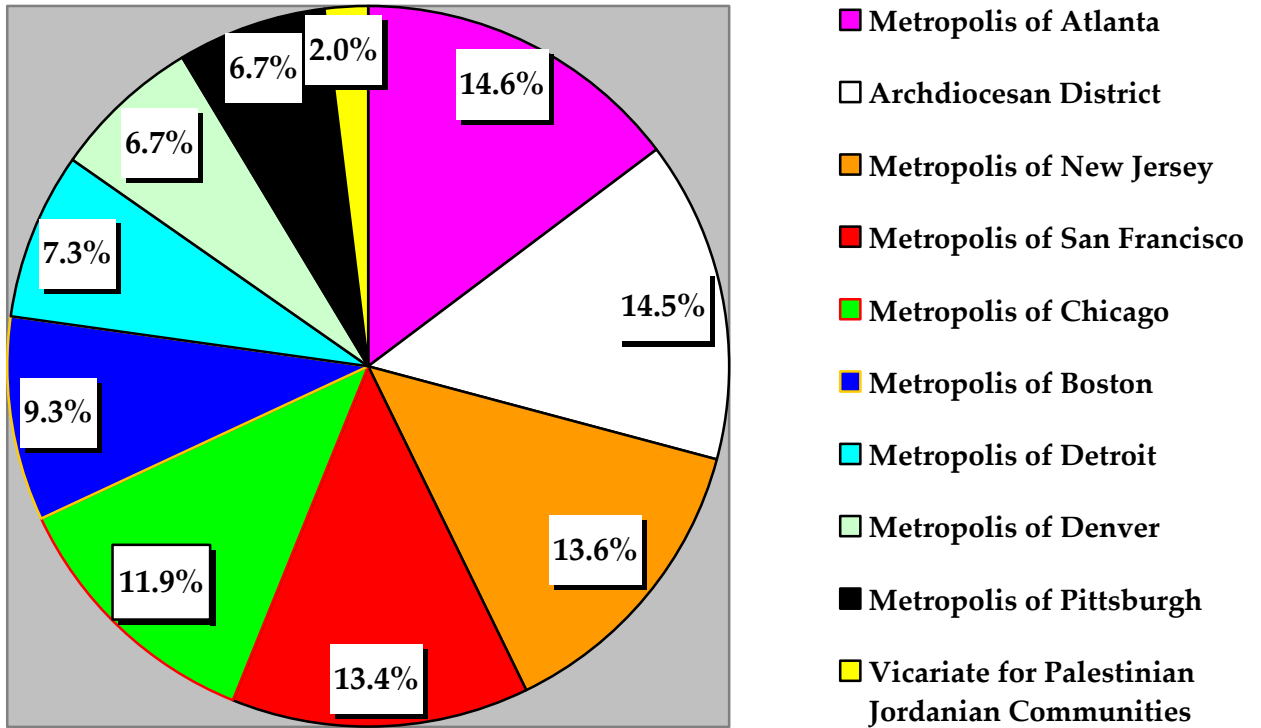
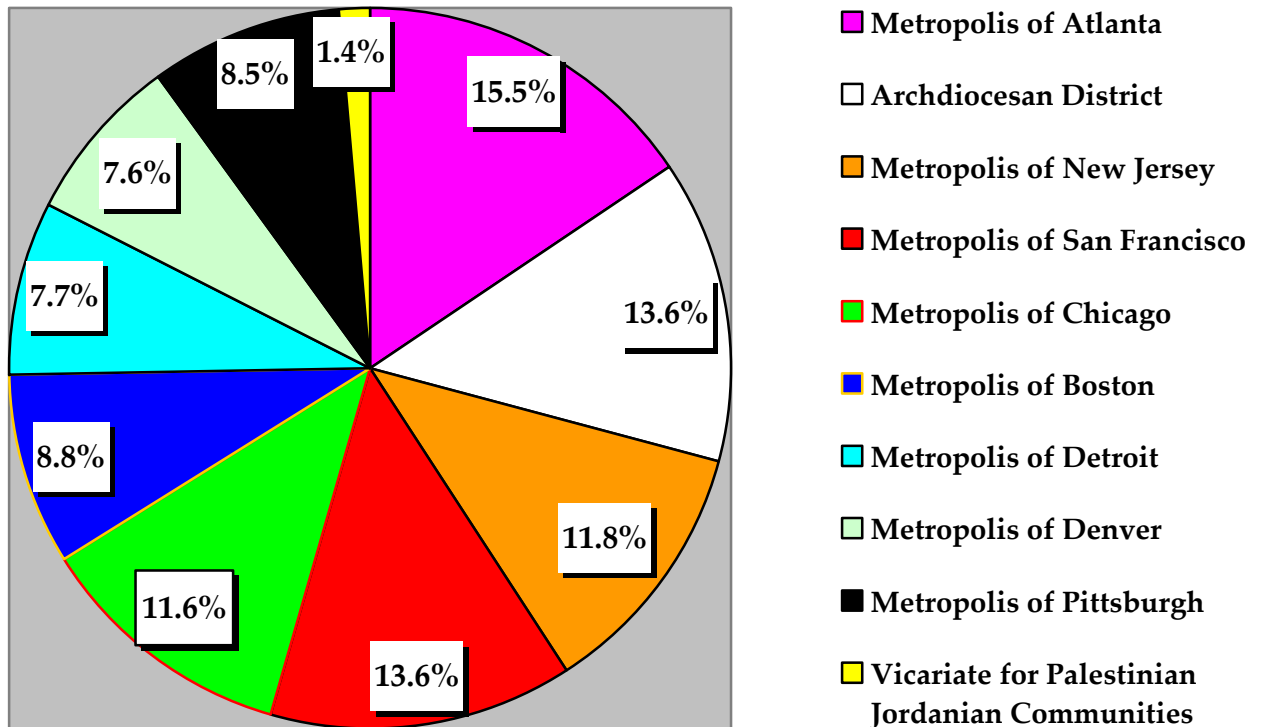


Figure 4b Share of Each Metropolis in Number of GOA Regular Attendees (2020)

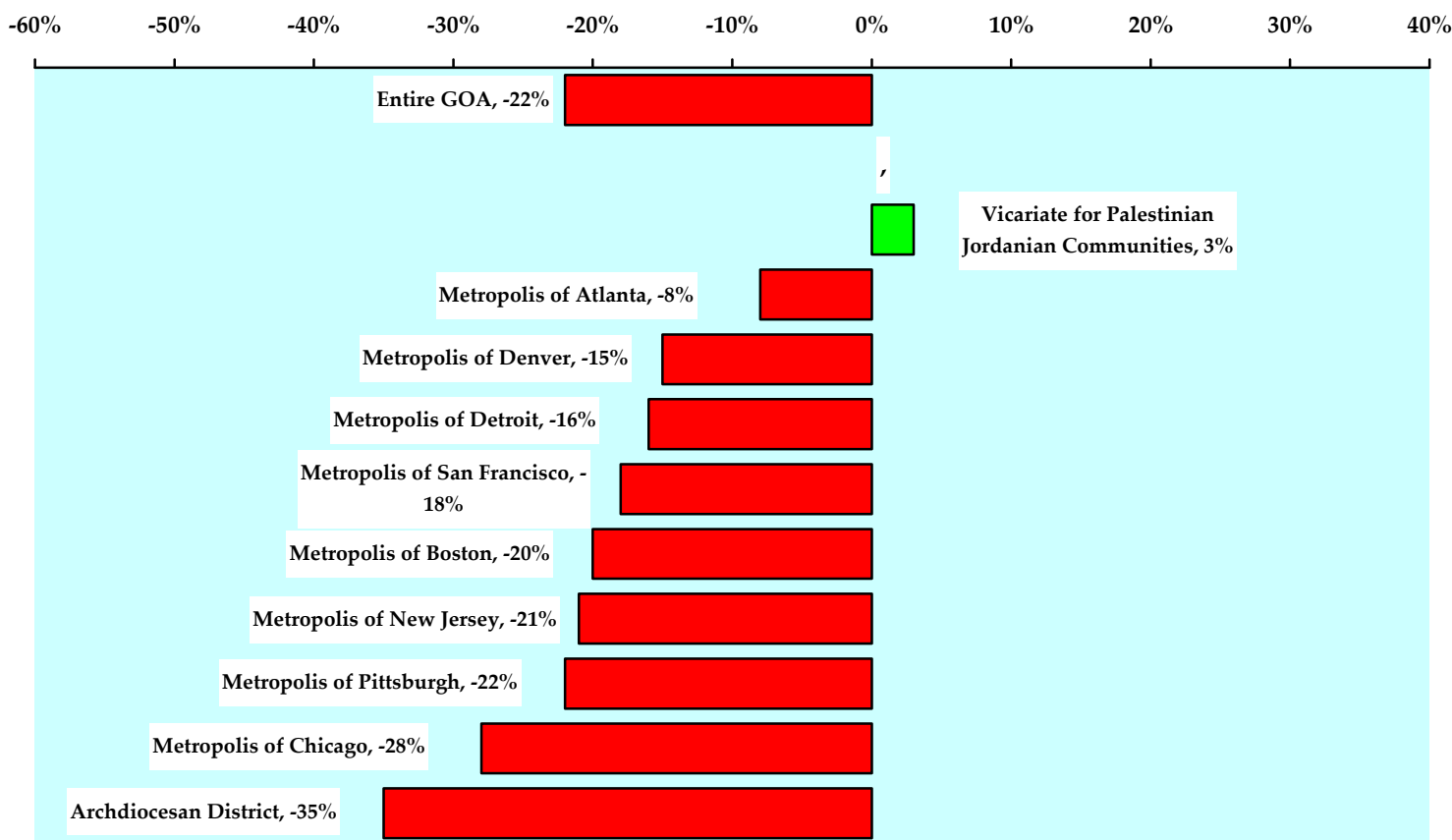


Changes in GOA Metropolises: from 2010 to 2020

It was reported already that between 2010 and 2020 the GOA overall experienced a membership decline of -22% in the number of all adherents and -21% in the number of regular attendees. However, this dynamic was quite different for various Metropolises: in some of them the losses were much more severe than in the others.

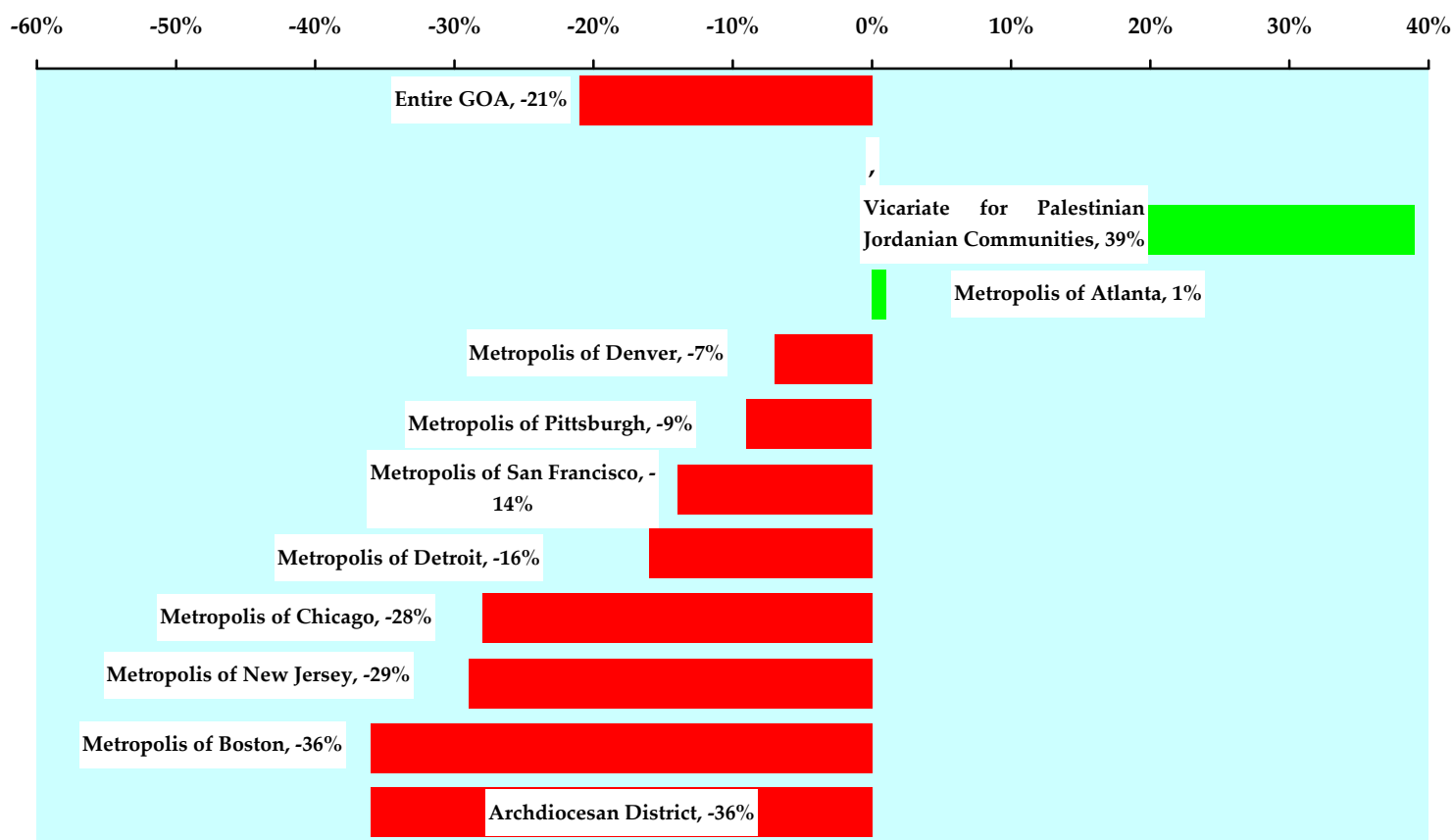
Judging by 2010-2020 changes in total adherents, two Metropolises suffered the greatest declines: the Archdiocesan District (-35%) and the Metropolis of Chicago (-28%). The only part of GOA which slightly grew in adherents was the Vicariate for Palestinian Jordanian Communities: +3%.

Figure 5a Percentage Changes in Total Adherents between 2010 and 2020



Looking at 2010-2020 changes in the number of regular attendees (Figure 5b), the variations among Metropolises were even more pronounced. The Archdiocesan District and the Metropolis of Boston experienced the greatest losses: in both of them, the number of regular attendees decreased by 36%. On the opposite extreme are the Vicariate for Palestinian Jordanian Communities and the Metropolis of Atlanta. Both of them have grown in regular attendees by 39% and 1% respectively.

Figure 5b Percentage Changes in Number of Regular Attendees between 2010 and 2020



Hence, since 2010 and in the overall picture – considering changes in both all adherents and only regular attendees – the parishes of the Archdiocesan District suffered the greatest losses in members. Among all the regular Metropolises (i.e. except the Vicariate for Palestinian Jordanian Communities), only the Metropolis of Atlanta was relatively unaffected by the general GOA membership decline.

As a result of these uneven changes in members, the rank-order of the size of various Metropolises (i.e. their relative “weight” in the entire GOA) has changed significantly in the past decade. Indeed, in 2020, the Metropolis of Atlanta has become the largest GOA Metropolis compared to being only fifth largest in 2010. Fig. 6a, 6b and 6c help to visualize the 2010-2020 changes in the relative weight of each Metropolis in the entire GOA membership.

Figure 6a GOA Metropolises: Number of Adherents in 2020 vs. 2010

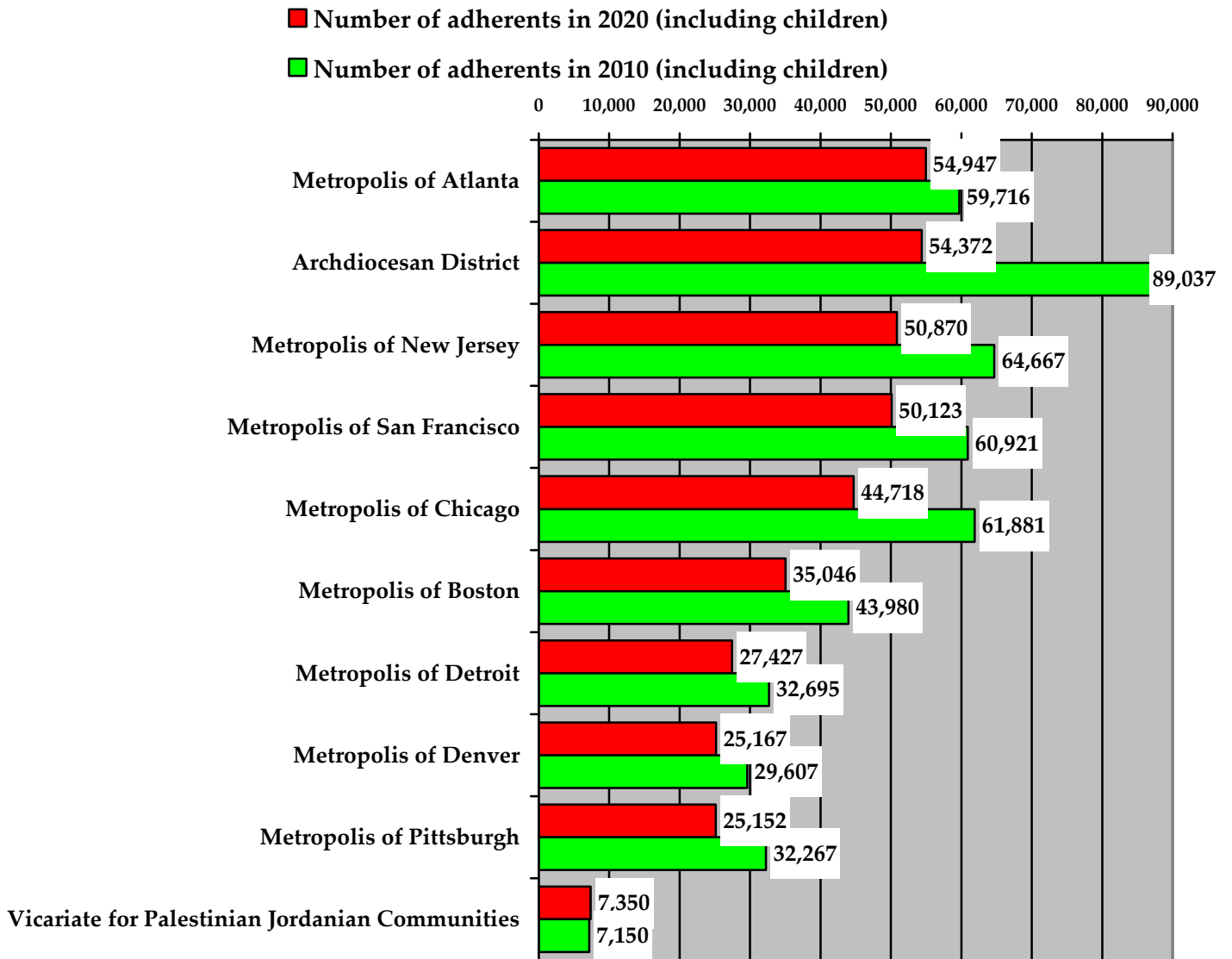


Figure 6b Share of Each Metropolis in total GOA Adherents in 2010

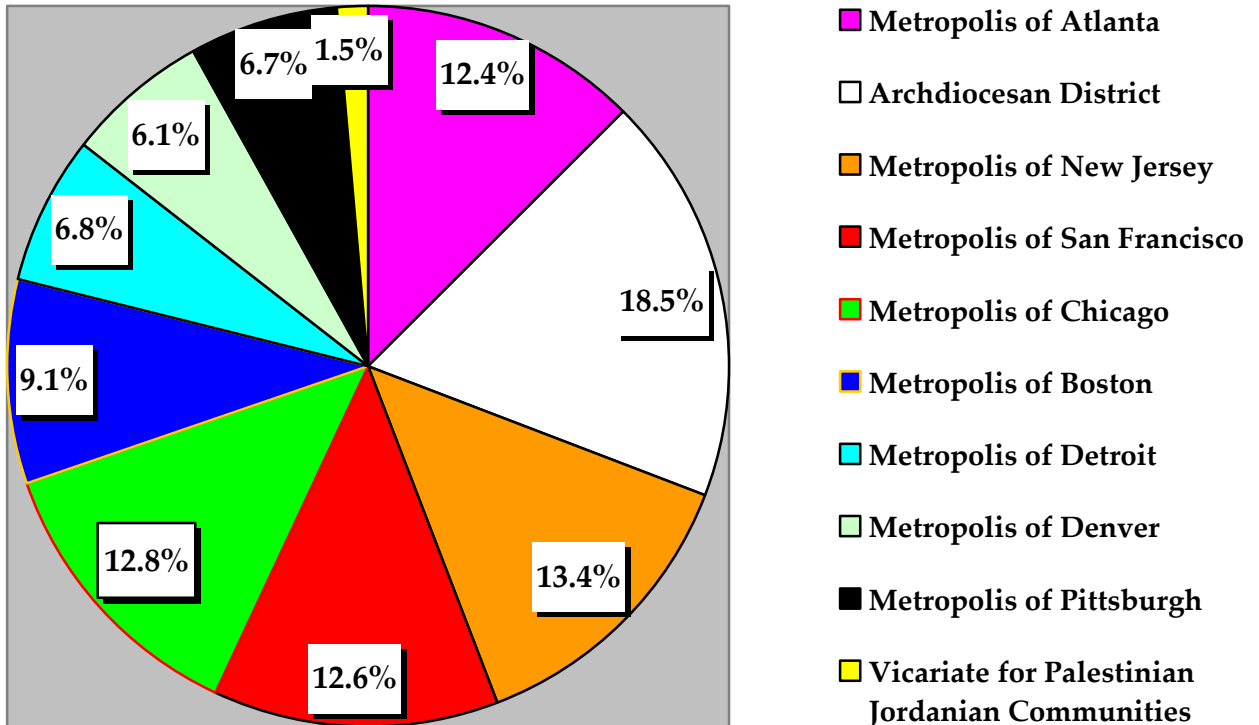
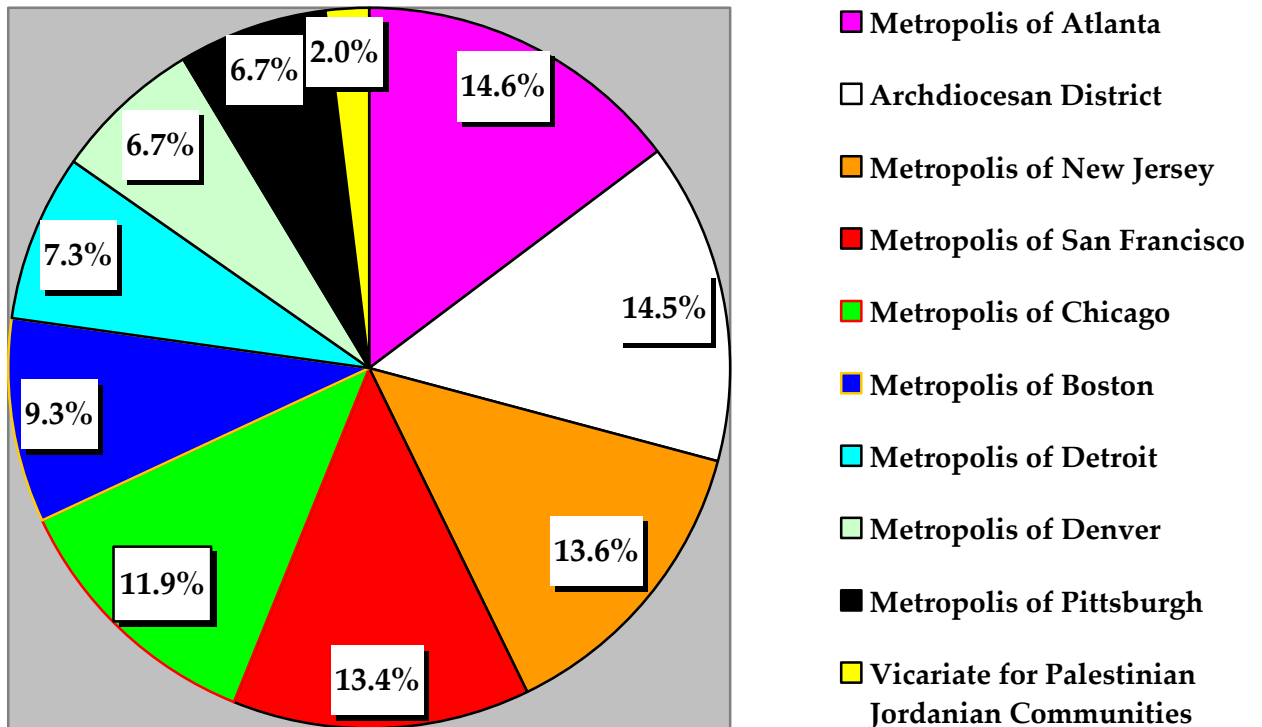


Figure 6c Share of each Metropolis in total GOA Adherents in 2020



GOA Geography

The GOA has parishes or missions in all states except North Dakota. At the same time, her members and parishes are especially concentrated in certain areas of the country. As of 2020, more than half of all GOA adherents (53%) were in just six states: New York (12.2% of all GOA adherents), California (11.5%), Florida (7.9%), Illinois (7.7%), Massachusetts (6.9%), and New Jersey (6.8%). In comparison, less than one-third (32.7 %) of the general US population lives in these six states. The list and rank order of the states with the largest number of GOA parishes is only slightly different: New York (11% of all GOA parishes), California (10%), Massachusetts (7.1%), Florida (6.6%), Illinois (6.4%) and Pennsylvania (6.4%).

We noted previously that regular attendees at services constitute 23% of all GOA adherents nationwide. It was also indicated (see Fig. 3) that the percentage of regular attendees, relative to the total number of adherents, differs among the Metropolises. We can further “zoom in” and ask: in which states do GOA parishes have the highest and lowest rates of church attendance?

The top five states by the percentage of regular attendees among all adherents are Idaho (76%), Mississippi (71%), Hawaii (61%), Vermont (58%) and New Mexico (55%). The five states with the lowest rates of attendance are Delaware (10%), Rhode Island (12%), Indiana (16%), New Jersey (17%) and Missouri (18%).

In conclusion, we offer readers several maps to help visualize both the current geography of GOA members and parishes, as well as the major geographic changes between the first Census of US Orthodox Parishes in 2010 and the recent 2020 Census. Map 1 is the so-called “cartogram map.” It is a US map where each state is resized proportionate to the number of GOA adherents in this state. For example, the GOA has 29,540 adherents in Florida and 11,904 in Texas. Therefore, on the map Florida is shown as 2.5 times larger than Texas.

Map 2 depicts the concentration of adherents by the counties. The red-colored counties have the largest numbers of GOA adherents. Combined, the 35 red-colored counties account for half (50%) of all GOA adherents. The blue counties show the remaining counties with GOA parishes and missions, accounting for the other half.

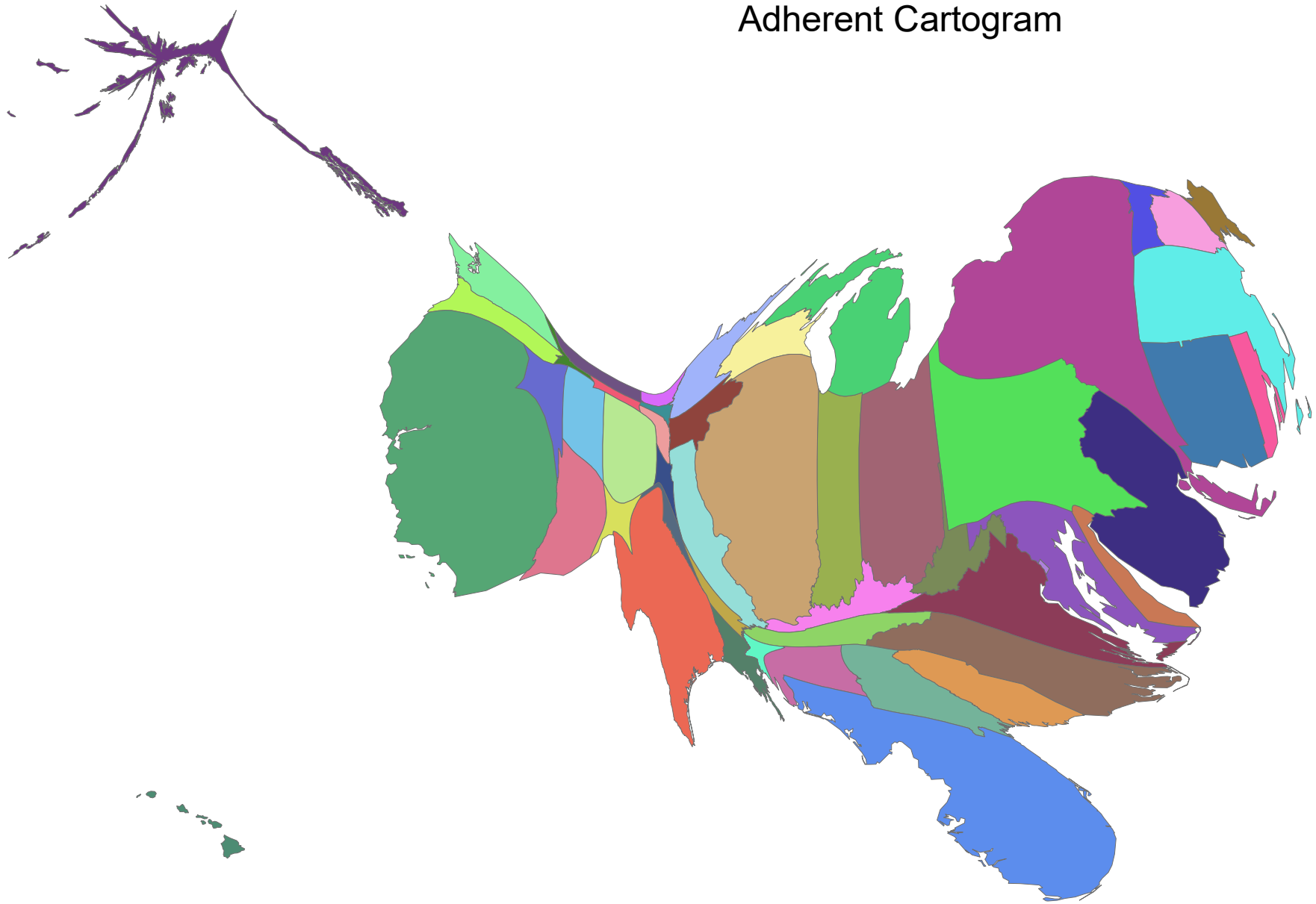
Map 3 shows the total number of GOA adherents per county (for all counties with GOA parishes or missions).

Maps 4 and 5 show the number of GOA parishes and missions in each US county.

Maps 6 and 7 show the most important county-by-county changes in the geography of GOA parishes and membership between 2010 and now. Map 6 shows that during this decade, the GOA “entered” and established parishes and missions in 5 new counties (colored in green). During the same period, however, 3 counties “lost” GOA parishes and missions (colored in red). As a result, in 2020, the GOA had parishes and missions in 348 counties in comparison with 346 counties 10 years ago. In some counties, there were significant changes in the total number of GOA adherents: either impressive growth (more than +50%) or dramatic decline (more than -50%). On Map 7, these counties are colored in light green and pink respectively.

Finally, Map 8 shows the percentage of GOA adherents in the total population of each county.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (2020): Adherent Cartogram

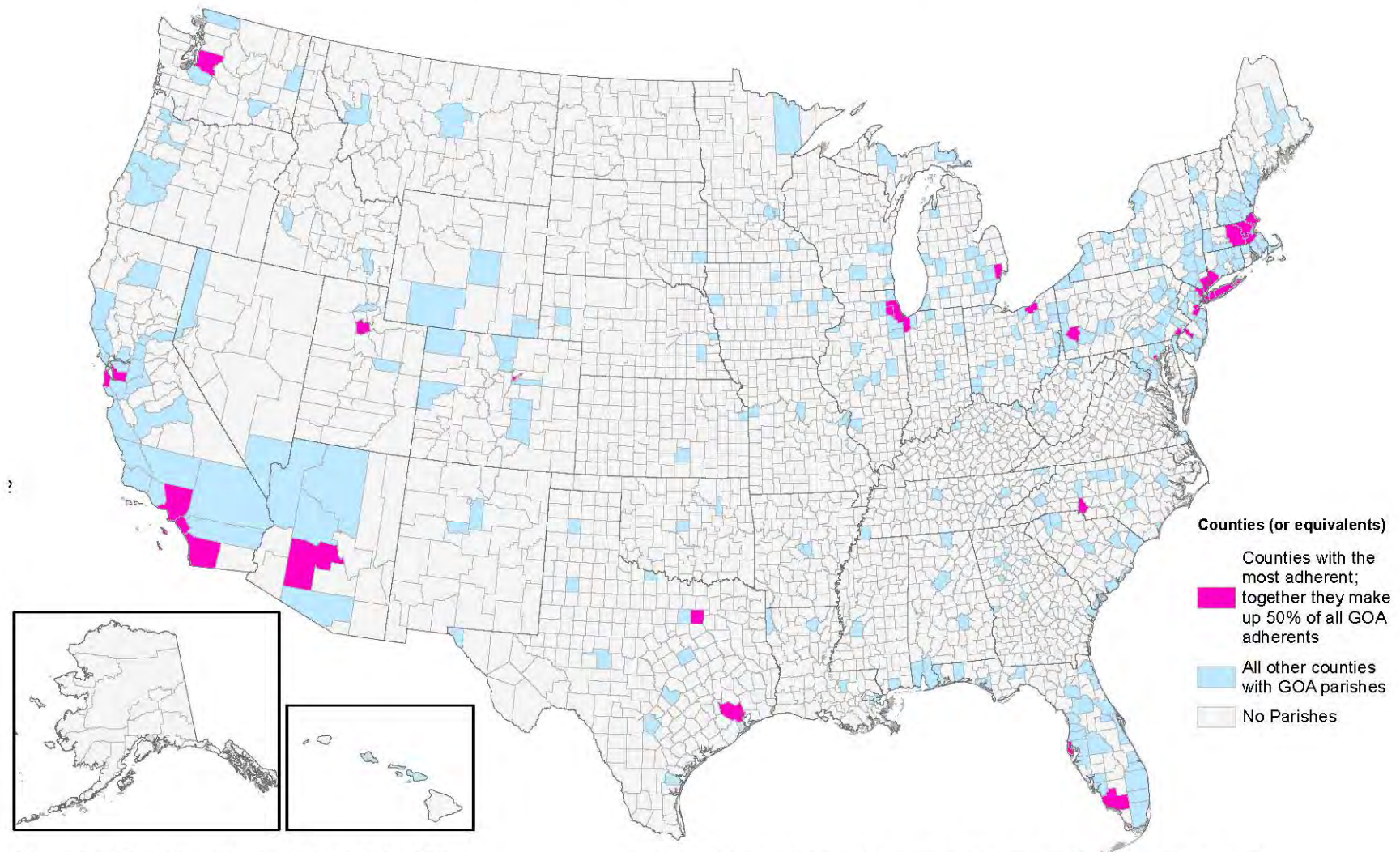


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2020 U.S. Religion Census: A County-level Enumeration
of Religious Congregations and Adherents
Created by Dale E. Jones using ESRI ArcMap

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

Map 2

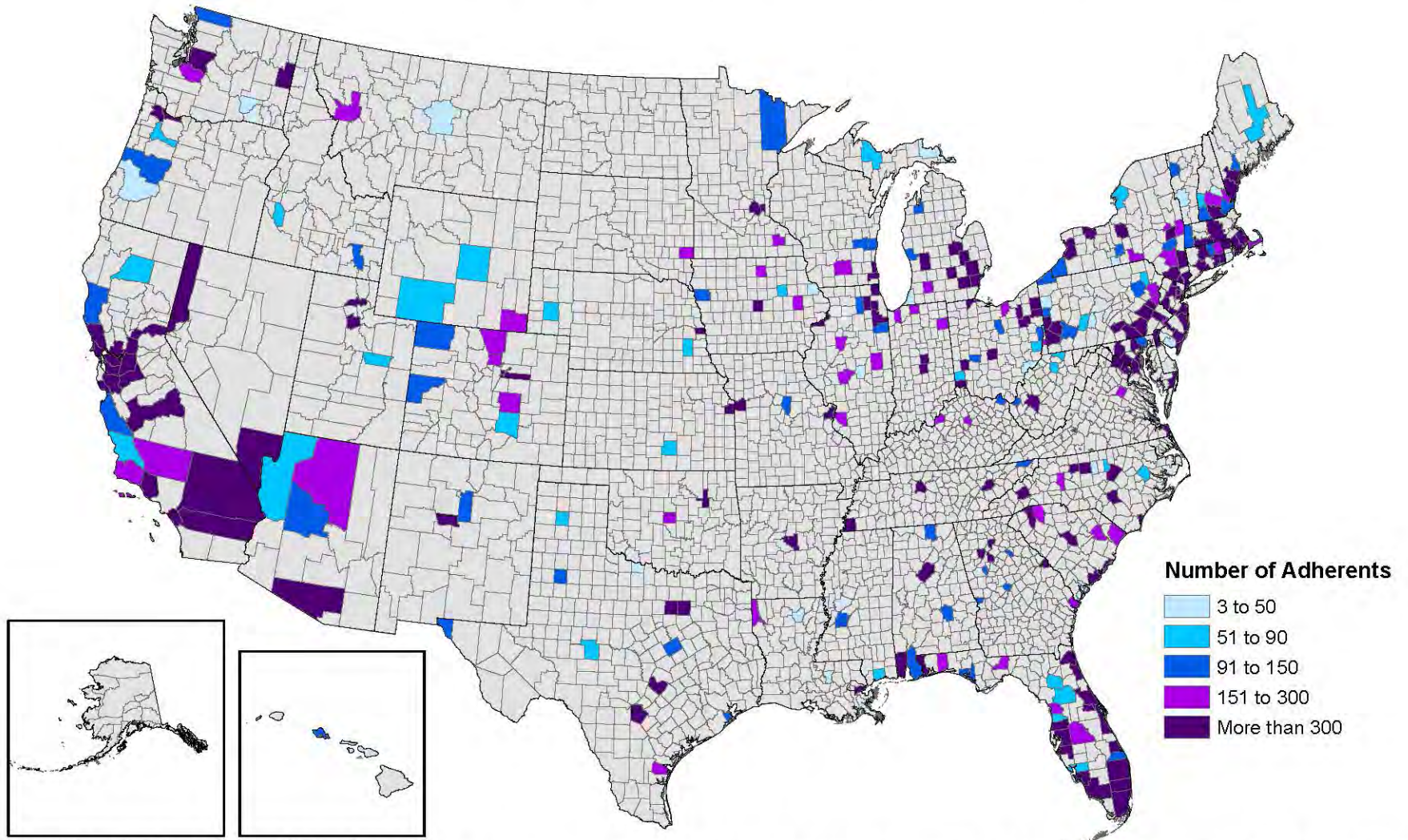
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: Geographic Concentration of Adherents in 2020 (by US Counties)



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

In 2020, GOA had parishes in 348 counties. Of these, the 35 counties with the most adherents (colored red), when added together, account for half of all GOA adherents.

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: Number of Adherents in 2020 (by US Counties)

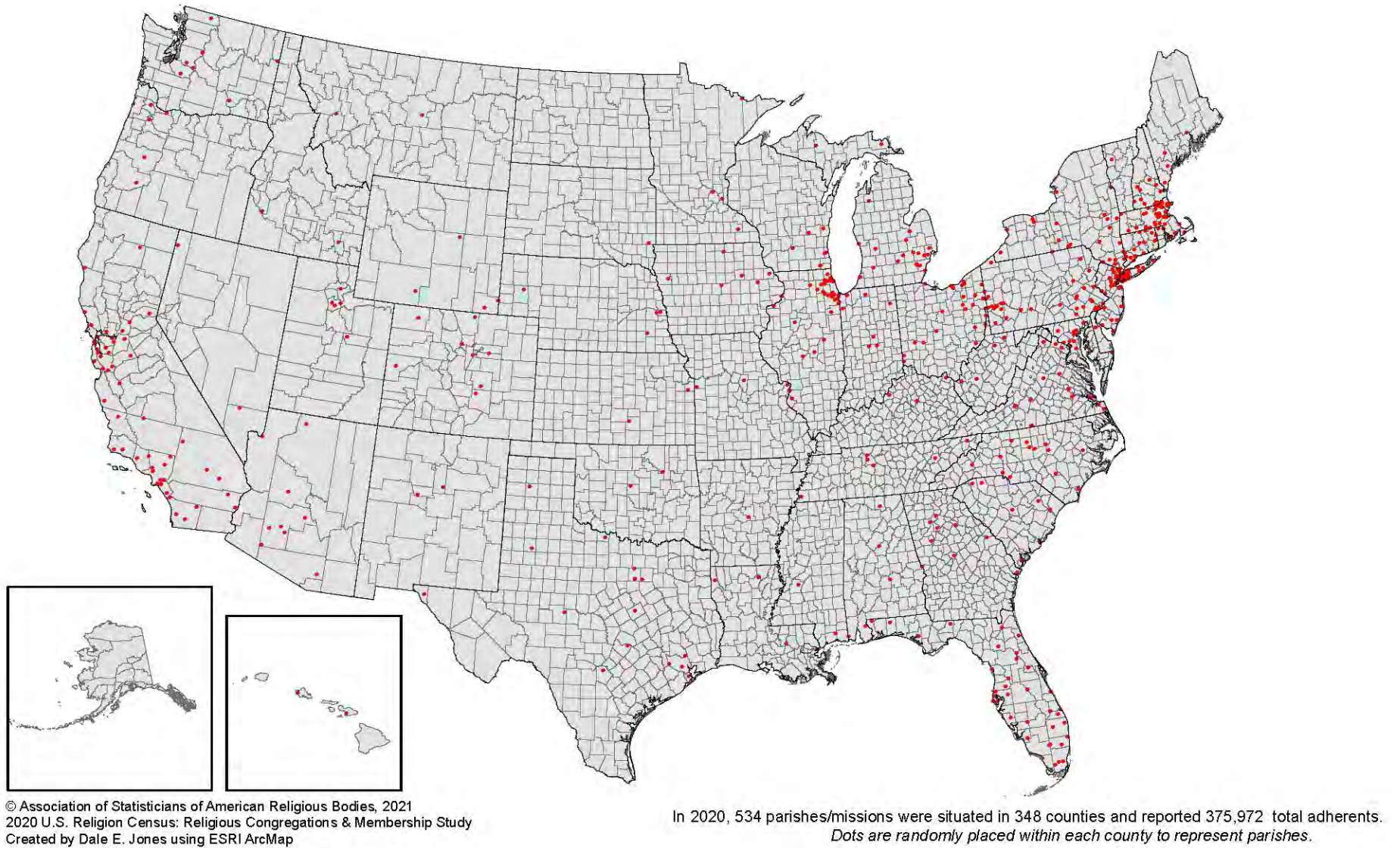


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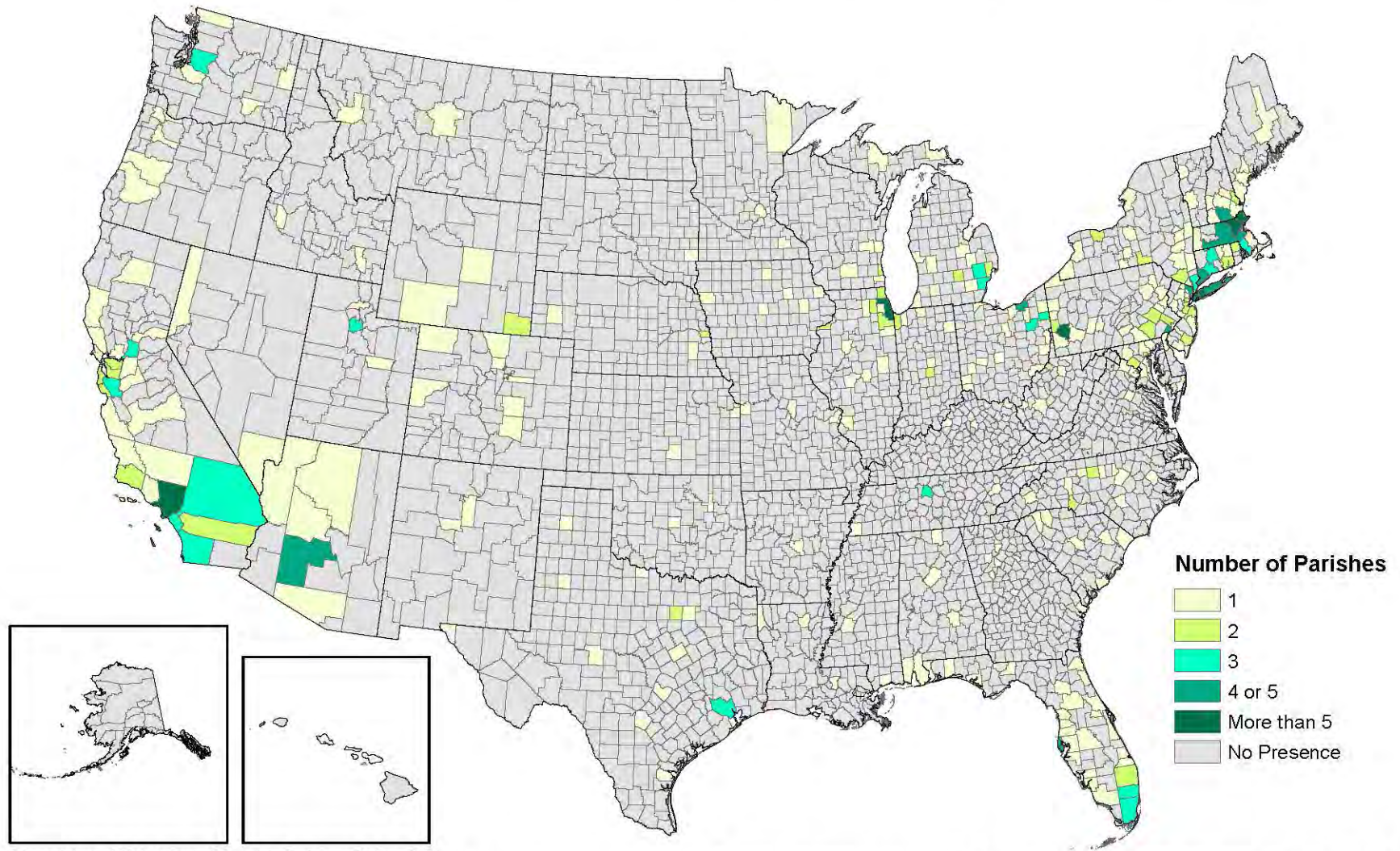
In 2020, GOA had 534 parishes and missions in 348 counties. 375,972 adherents total were reported by the parishes.

Map 4

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: 2020 Location of Parishes in the United States (by US Counties)



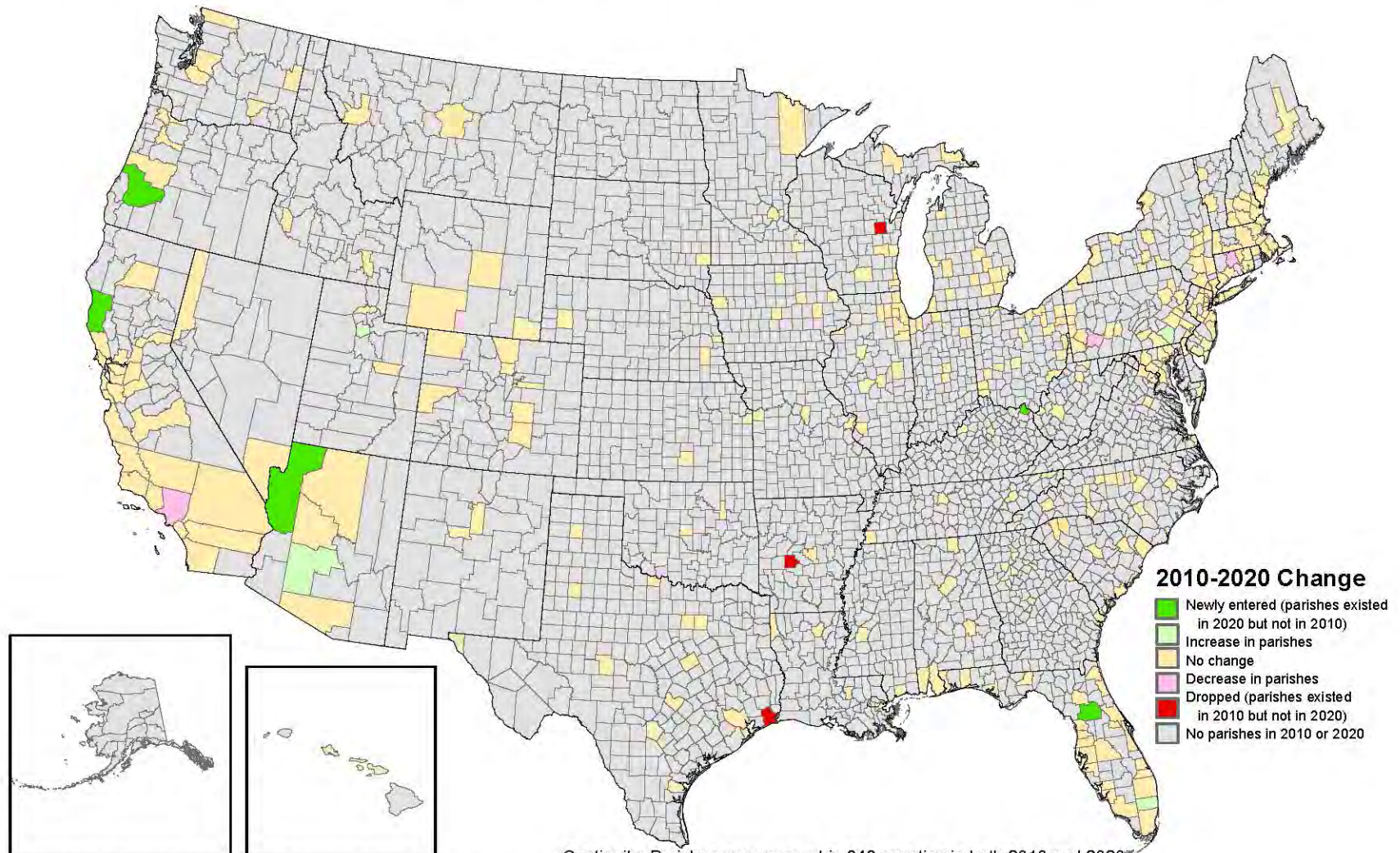
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: Number of Parishes by US Counties (2020)



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

In 2020, 534 parishes/missions were situated in 348 counties and reported 375,972 total adherents.

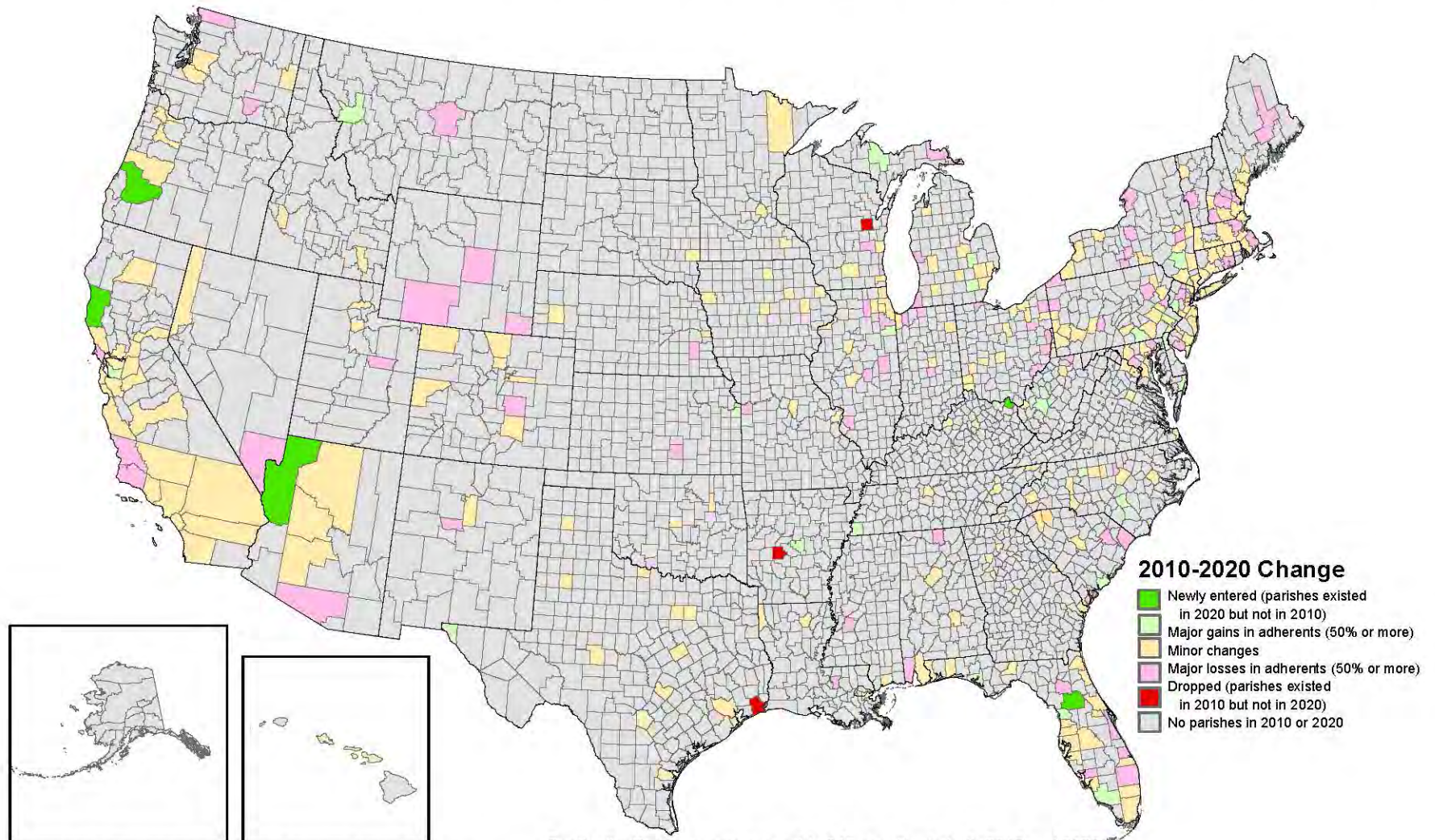
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: 2010-2020 Change in Numbers of Parishes (by US Counties)



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

Continuity: Parishes were present in 343 counties in both 2010 and 2020
 Gains: Parishes were present in 5 counties in 2020, but not in 2010
 Losses: Parishes were present in 3 counties in 2010, but not in 2020

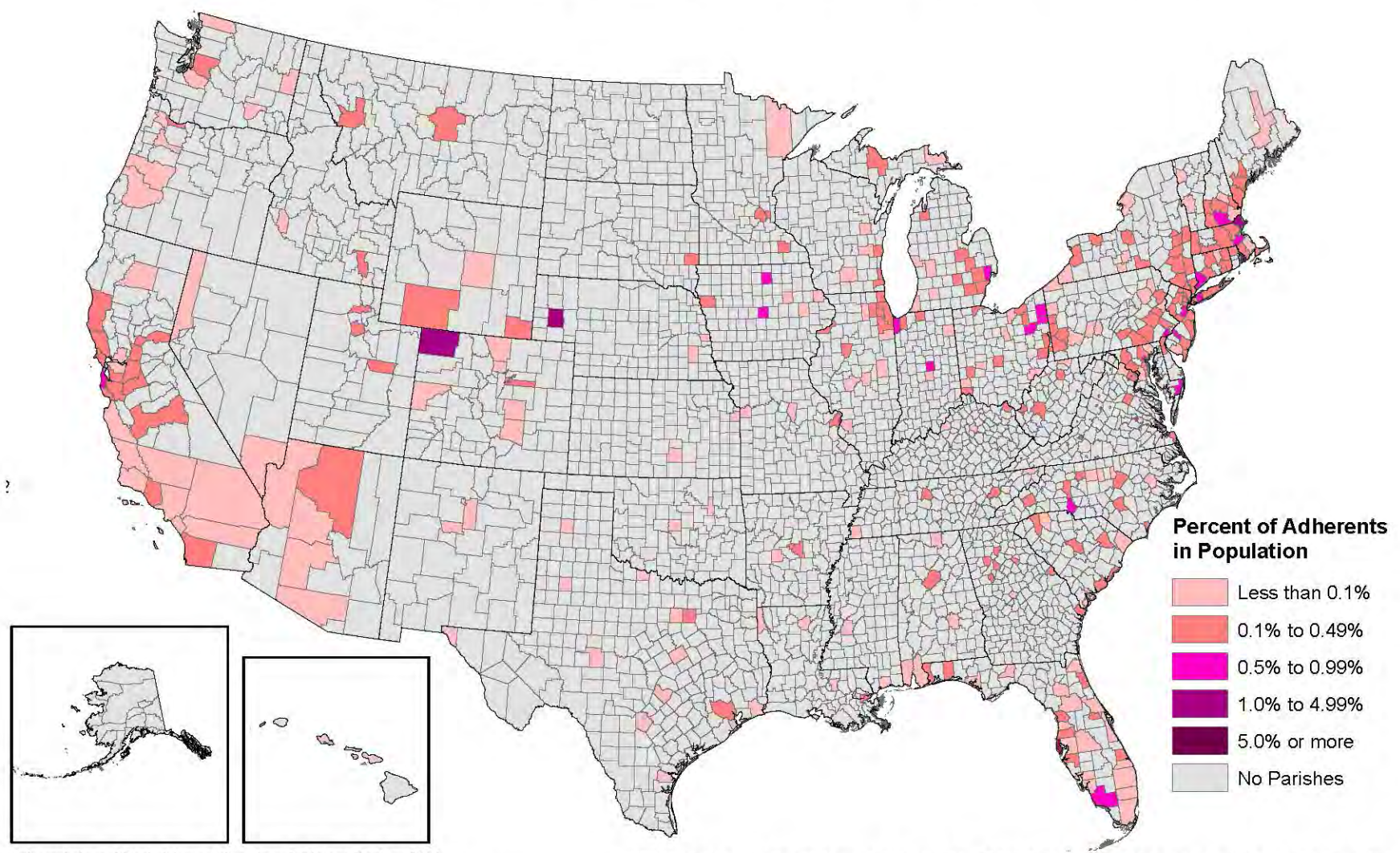
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: 2010-2020 Change in Number of Adherents (by US Counties)



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

Continuity: Parishes were present in 343 counties in both 2010 and 2020
 Gains: Parishes were present in 5 counties in 2020, but not in 2010
 Losses: Parishes were present in 3 counties in 2010, but not in 2020

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: Adherents as Percent of Total Population 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, GOA had 534 parishes in 348 counties. 375,972 adherents total were reported by the parishes.