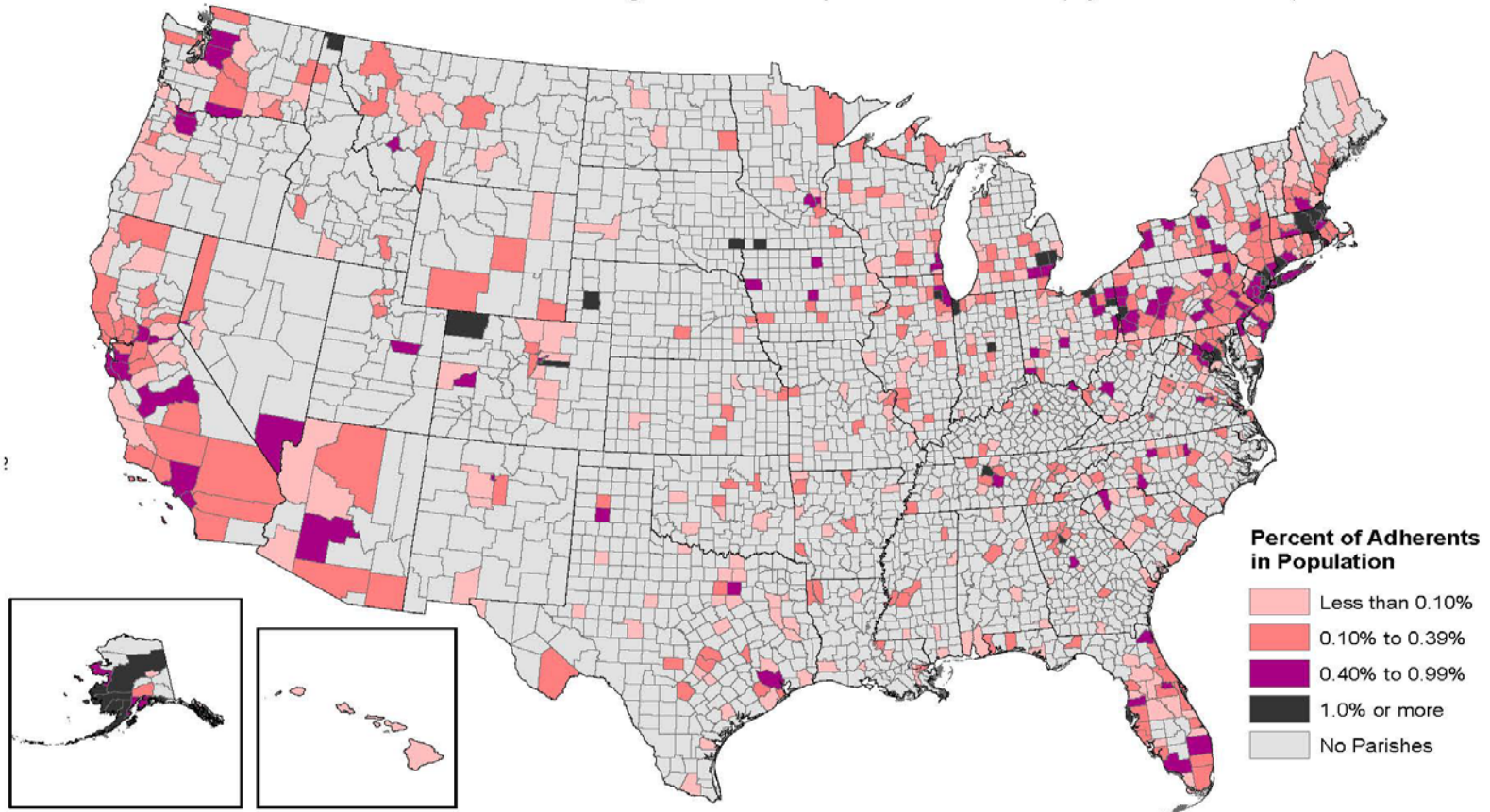


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Orthodox Christian Churches in the USA: What Happened between 2010 and 2020?

Orthodox Christian Churches (Eastern and Oriental):
Adherents as a Percentage of Total Population in 2020 (by US Counties)



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2020 U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations & Membership Study

In 2020, 23 Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches had 2,909 parishes in 699 counties.
1,167,178 adherents total were reported by the parishes.

Overall percentage of all Orthodox Church adherents in US total population - 0.35%

Orthodox Christianity in the USA

- **Self-perception: Orthodox Church is the Church that “never changes.” It is most authentic and original expression of Christianity**
- **Globally, there are two “families” of Orthodox Christian Churches: Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The former did not accept the formula of the Chalcedon Council (AD 451) that Jesus existed “in two complete natures”: human and divine**
- **Composition of Orthodox Christianity in America reflects the great internal diversity of worldwide Orthodox Christianity**
- **2020 Census counted 14 national Eastern Orthodox Church bodies (2,014 congregations total) and 9 Oriental Orthodox Church bodies (895 congregations)**

Challenges in Enumerating US Orthodox Churches

- **Some do not maintain membership data at all**
- **Some count members in very different manners (families/households, individual adults, all “baptized souls”)**
- **Some (e.g., Eritrean, Ethiopian) remain extremely “ethnic”:**
linguistic barriers in obtaining information either verbally or from their websites/FB pages
- **Some are growing exponentially (since 2010, Coptic Church doubled in adherents and congregations): leadership is unaware of new congregations**
- **Internal splits into hostile factions based on political splits back in the Old World (Eritreans): each faction is suspicious of any requests for information**
- **Bishops who were “unhappy” with low numbers from 2010 Census**

Importance of 2020 Census for counting US Orthodox Churches

- **For the first time in the history of US Religion Census, the same procedure was used and fully comparable data obtained for the 2010 and 2020 counts. This is first-time possibility to look at the changes in American Orthodox Christianity over a period of time**
- **Most comprehensive and accurate count of US Orthodox Churches ever. Previous, 2010, Census had limited data on some Orthodox Church bodies (Ethiopian, Eritrean)**
- **Since 2010 Census, some entirely new Orthodox Church bodies emerged (e.g., Knanaya Orthodox Church)**

2020 Census Procedure

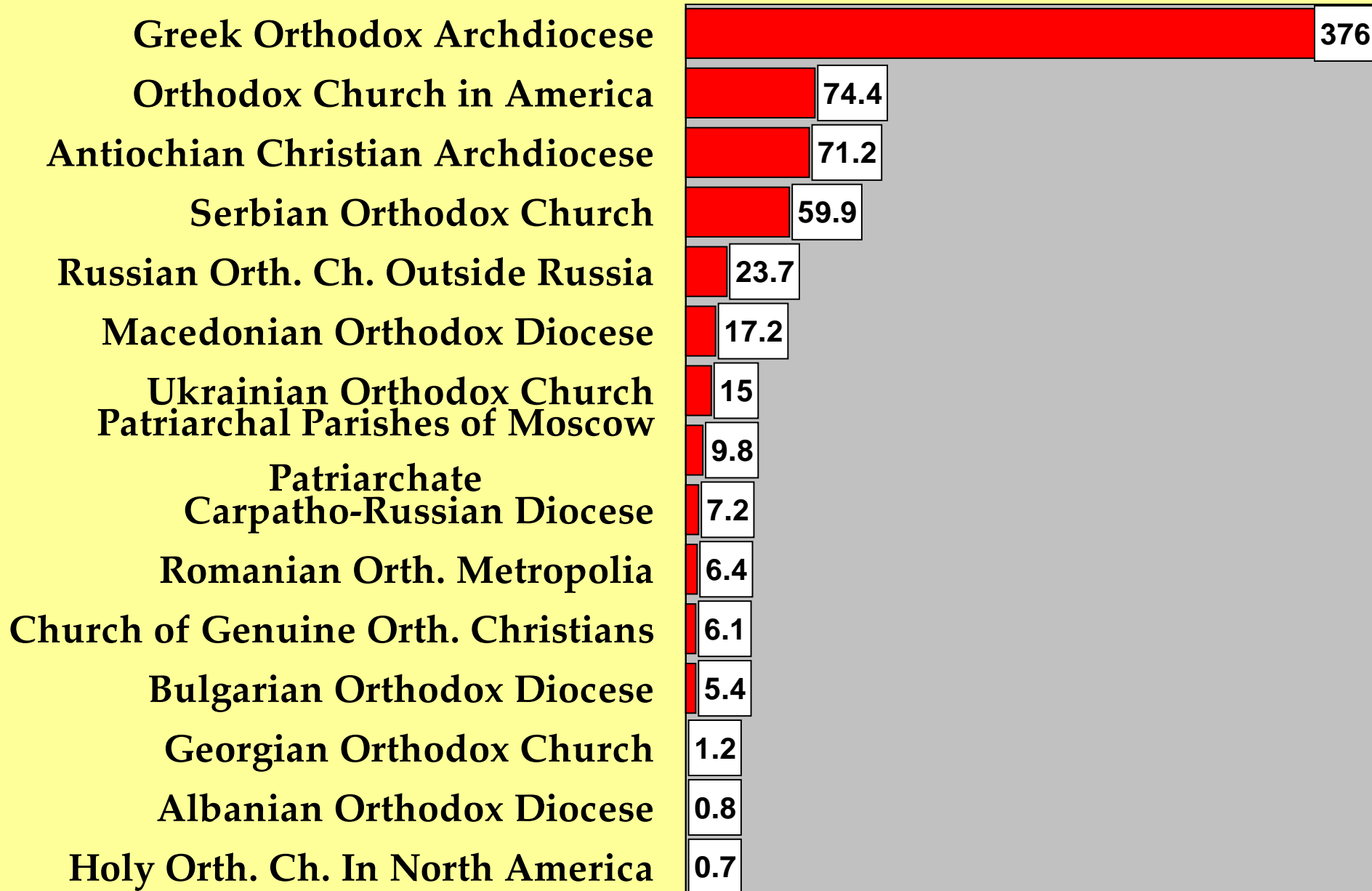
Each congregation (parish) was asked two questions:

- 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 adults and children – attend Liturgy in your parish on a typical Sunday? (prior to COVID)
- The answer to first Q gives the number of all adherents (most inclusive membership category). The answer to second Q gives the number of regular attendees (most involved members).
- The percentage of attendees among all adherents is a good measure of church commitment among members: it shows the size of the “membership nucleus” vs. members participating only marginally

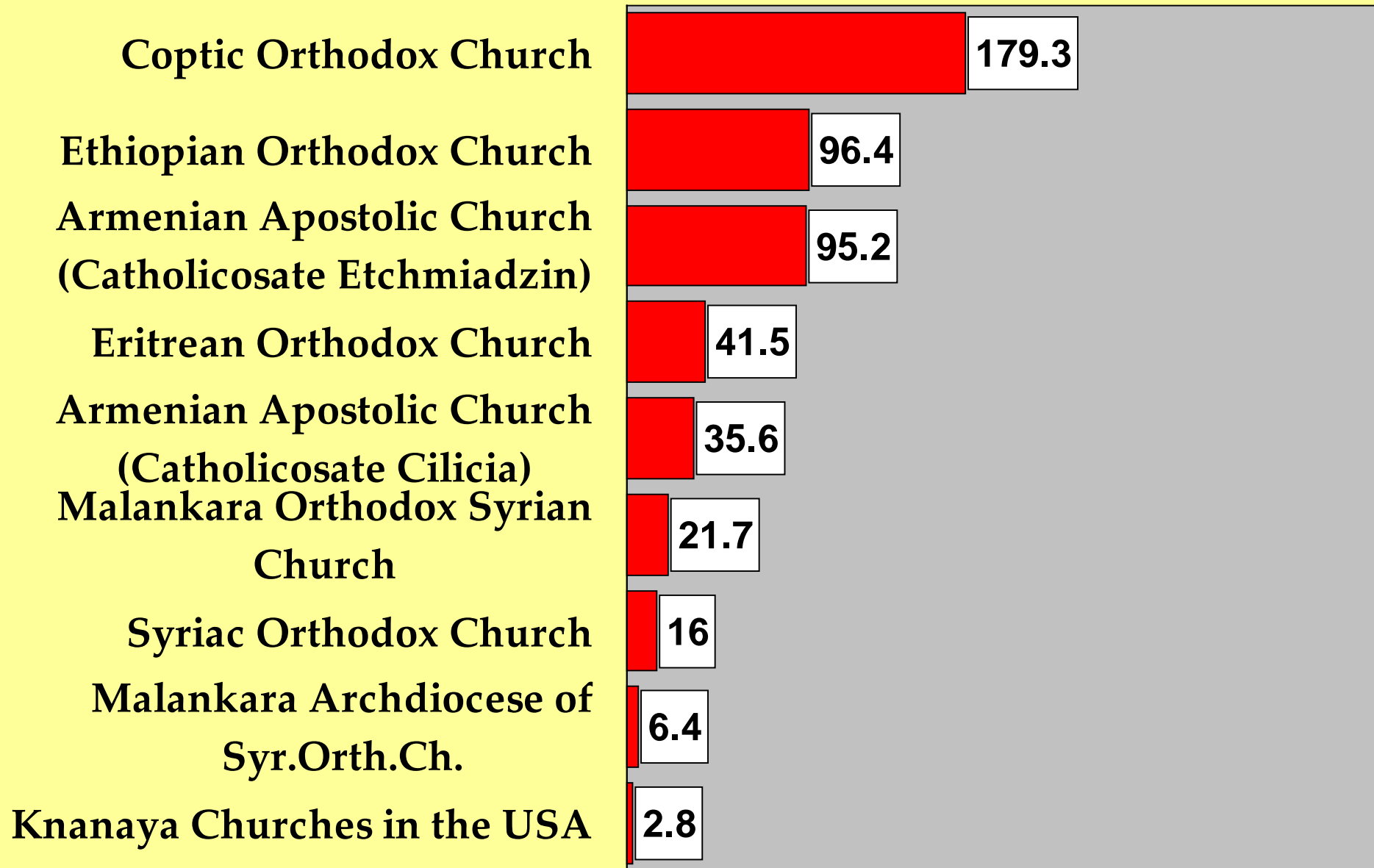
Combined, for all US Orthodox Churches:

- Total number of parishes (congregations) is **2,909**, including:
 - 2,014** Eastern Orthodox and **895** Oriental Orthodox parishes
- Total number of all adherents is **1,167,178**, including:
 - 675,765 adherents of Eastern Orthodox Churches and
 - 491,413 adherents of Oriental Orthodox Churches
- The number of regular attendees is **354,065**, including:
 - 183,020 attendees in Eastern Orthodox Churches
 - 171,045 attendees in Oriental Orthodox Churches
- Oriental Orthodox Christians are better church-goers:
percentage of regular attendees among all Oriental Orthodox adherents is **35%** vs. **27%** for Eastern Orthodox Churches

Eastern Orthodox Churches: Total Adherents (000's)

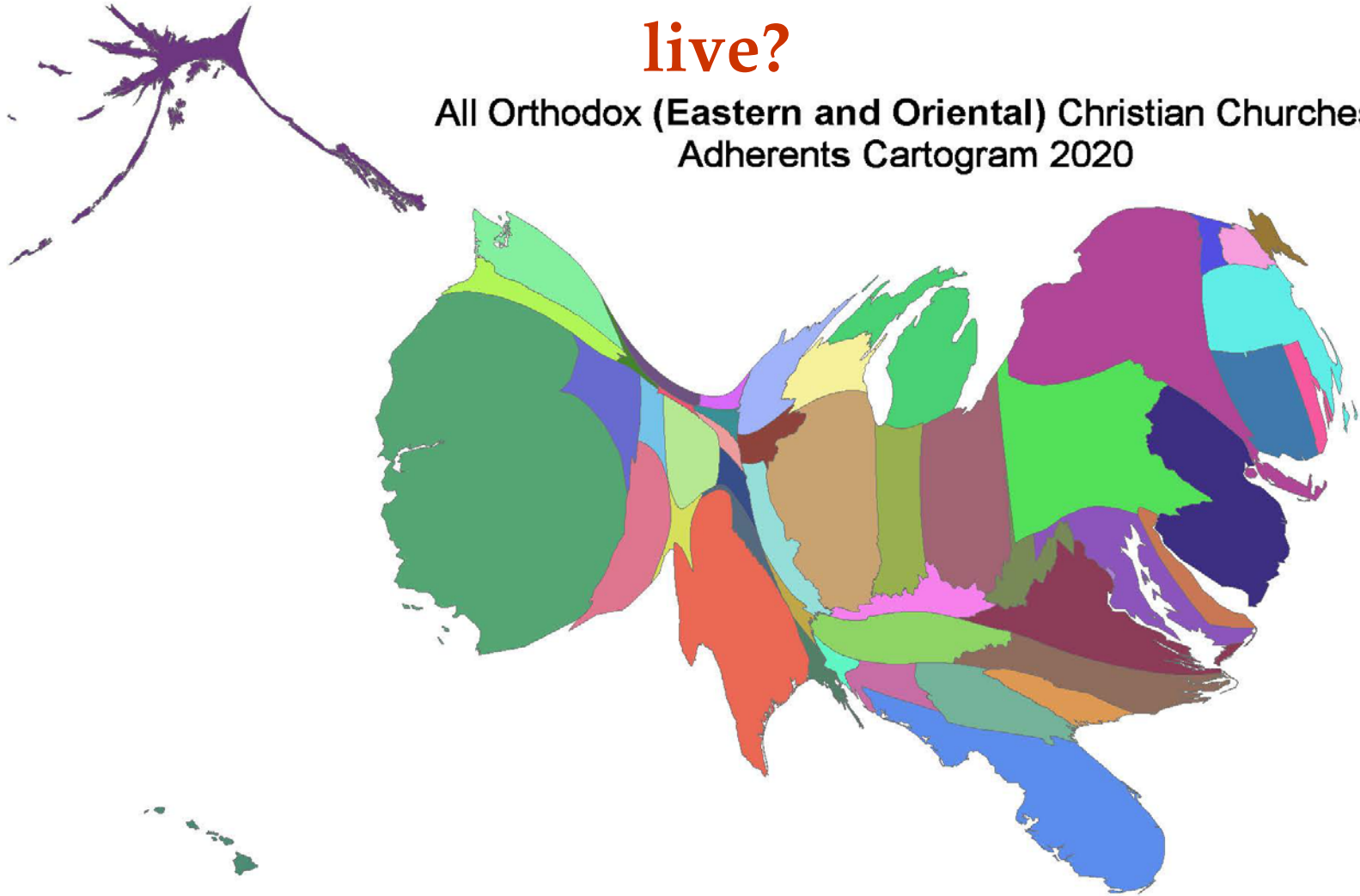


Oriental Orthodox Churches: total adherents (000's)



Where do the members of Orthodox Churches live?

All Orthodox (Eastern and Oriental) Christian Churches
Adherents 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 Orthodox Christian Church adherents reported in that state in the 2020 U.S. Religion Census

Compared to general US population, Orthodox Christians are more concentrated in certain geographic areas

46% of Orthodox Christian Church adherents live in just five states:

- California – 19.0% of all Orthodox Church adherents**
- New York – 9.3%**
- New Jersey – 6.8%**
- Florida – 5.5%**
- Illinois – 5.4%**

At the same time, only 31% of the US population lives in these five states

Compared to general US population, Orthodox Christians are more concentrated in certain geographic areas

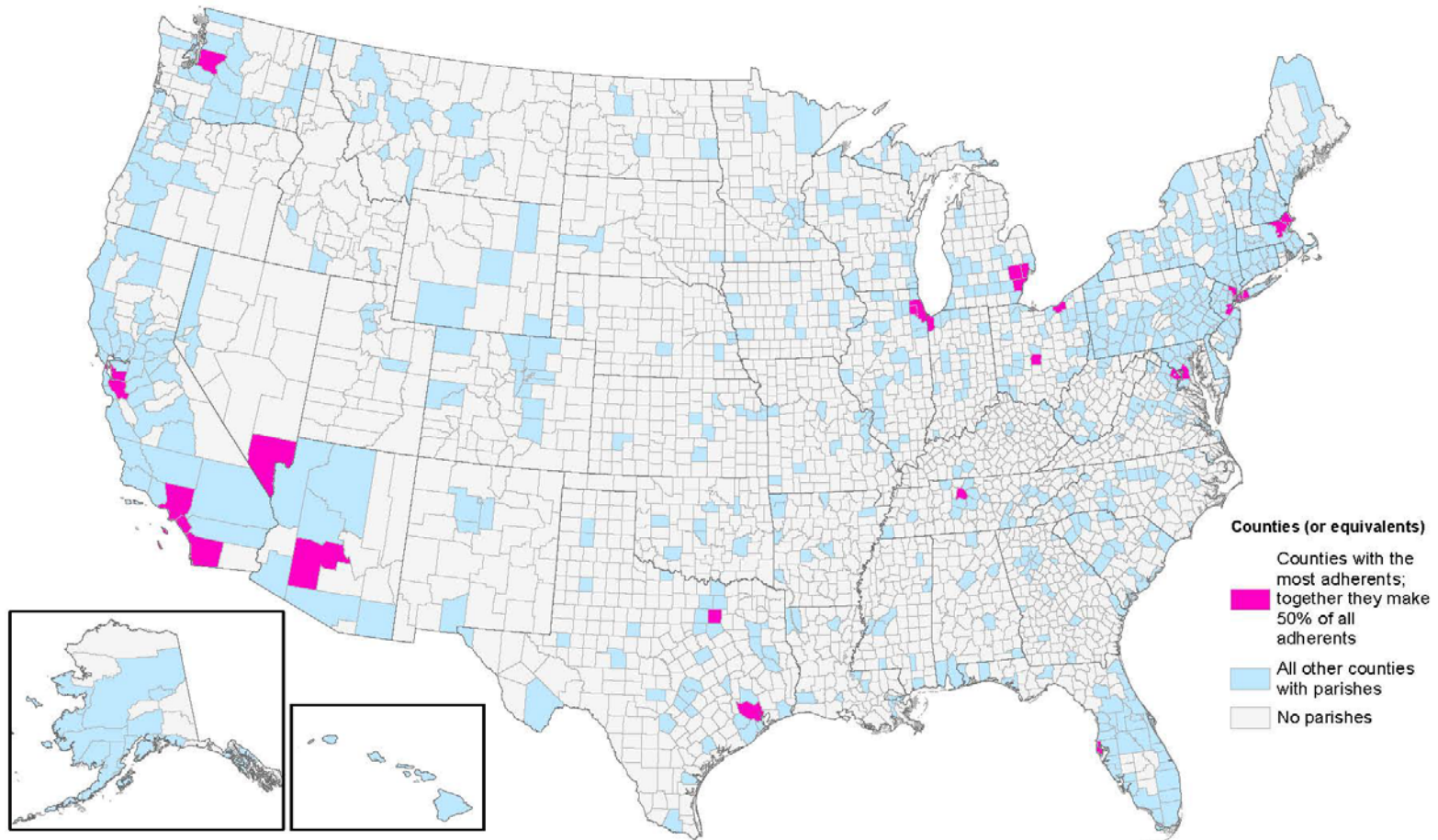
17.8% of Orthodox Christian Church adherents live in just five counties

- Los Angeles county, CA (99,094) - 8.5% of all Church adherents**
- Cook county, IL (40,685) – 3.5%**
- Orange county, CA (22,636) – 2.0%**
- Queens county, NY (22,183) – 1.9%**
- Middlesex county, MA (21,951) – 1.9%**

At the same time, only 6.8% of the US population lives in these five counties

Where do the members of Orthodox Churches live?

Orthodox Christian Churches (Eastern and Oriental): 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, 23 Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christian Churches had parishes in 699 counties. Of these, the 33 counties with the most adherents (colored red), when added together, account for half of all their adherents.

From 2010 to 2020, all Orthodox Churches combined have grown both in members and congregations

Membership growth: +5% in all adherents, +11% in regular attendees

■ In 2020 ■ In 2010

0 200,000 400,000 600,000 800,000 1,000,000 1,200,000

Number of all adherents

1,167,178

1,111,415

Number of regular attendees

354,065

319,515

Growth in number of parishes: +13%

■ In 2020 ■ In 2010

0 500 1,000 1,500 2,000 2,500 3,000

Number of all Orthodox parishes

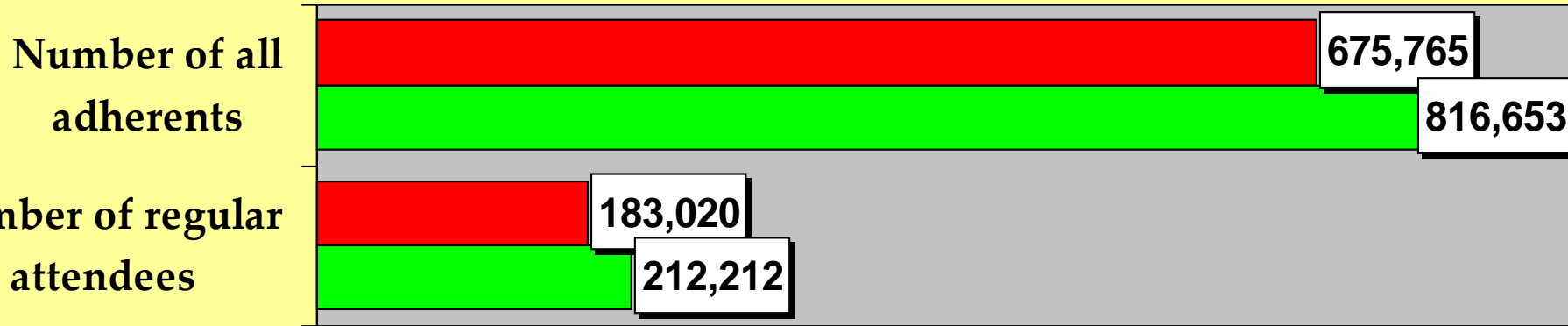
2,909

2,580

However, changes in membership were “opposite,” when looking separately at Eastern and Oriental Orthodox

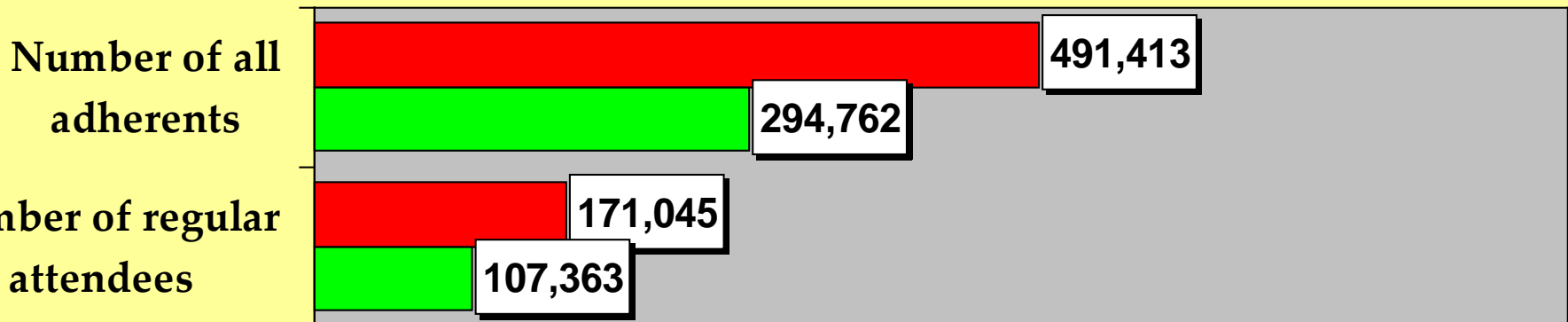
**Significant Decline in Eastern Orthodox Churches: -17%
in adherents and -14% in regular attendees**

■ In 2020 ■ In 2010



**Dramatic Growth in Oriental Orthodox Churches: +67%
in adherents and +54% in regular attendees**

■ In 2020 ■ In 2010



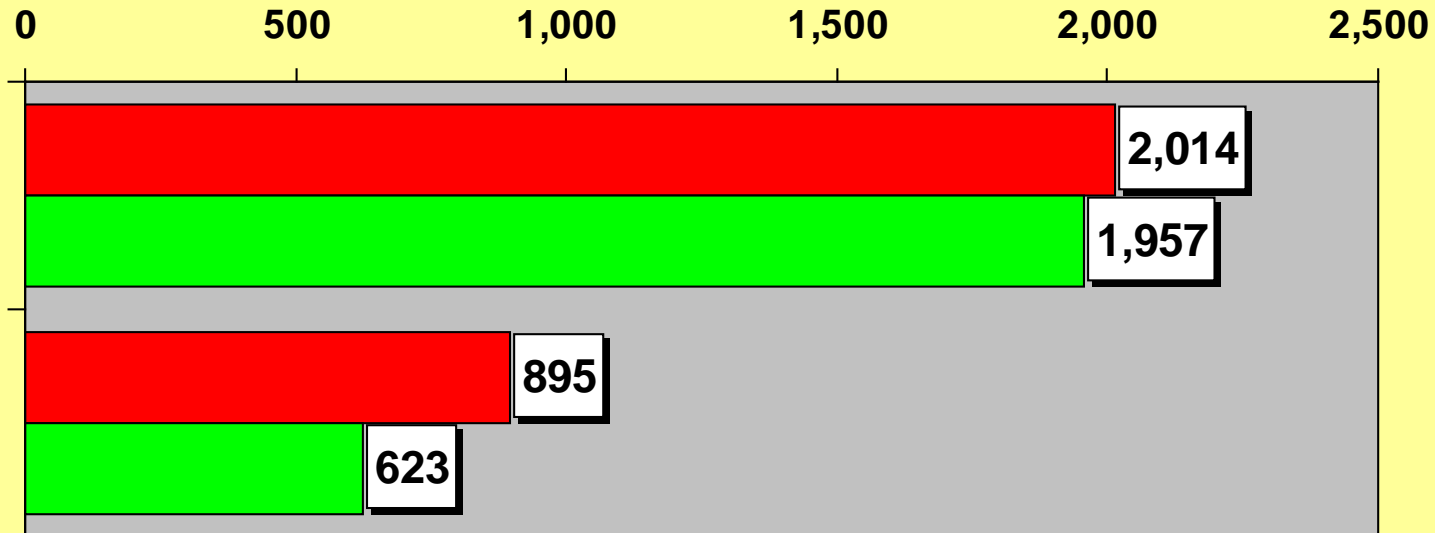
From 2010 to 2020: Changes in Parishes when looking separately at Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches

Modest growth in Eastern Orthodox parishes: +3%

Impressive increase in Oriental Orthodox parishes: +44%

■ In 2020

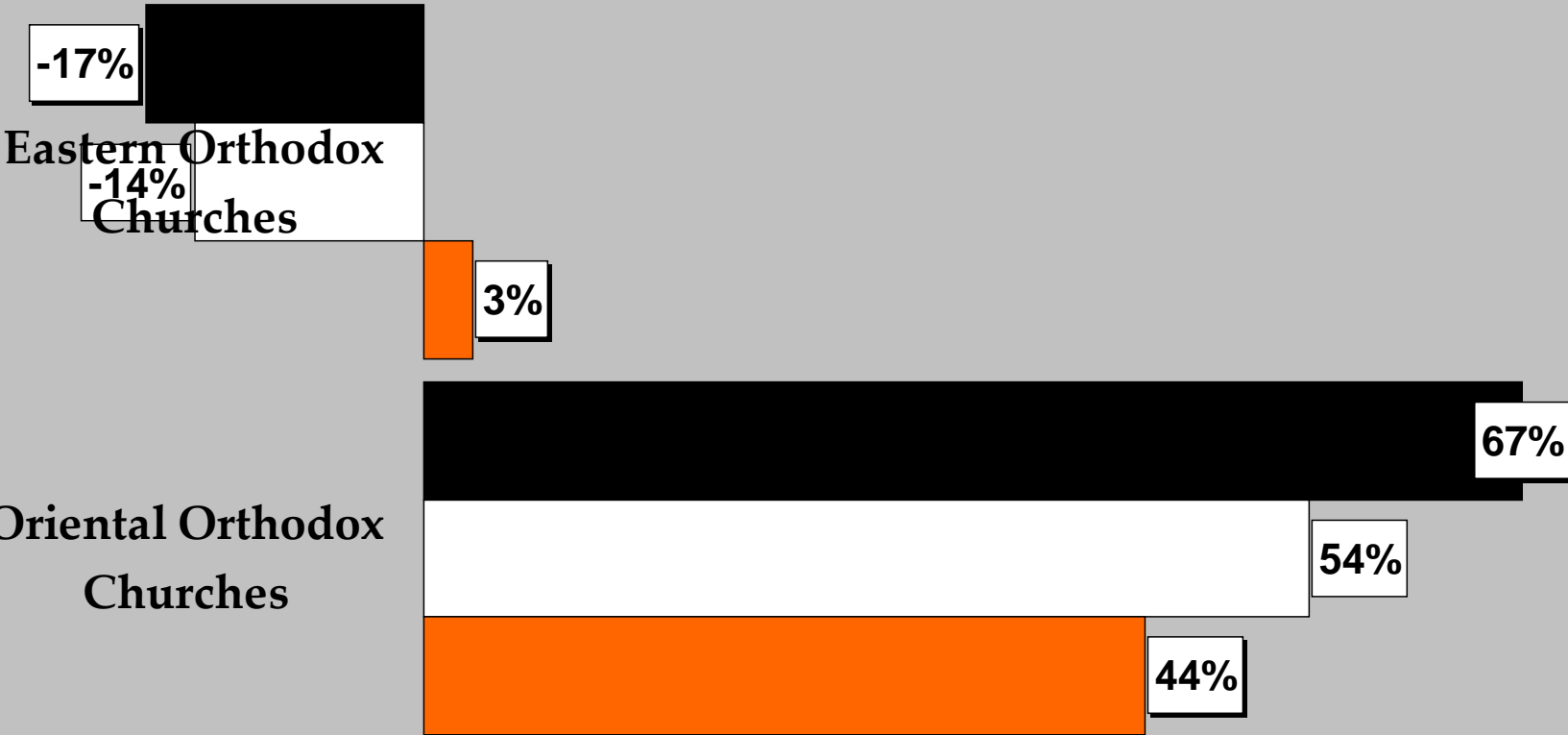
■ In 2010



In summary, from 2010-2020: overall decline in Eastern Orthodox vs. exponential growth in Oriental Orthodox

Percent (%) change in total adherents, regular attendees and parishes between 2010 and 2020

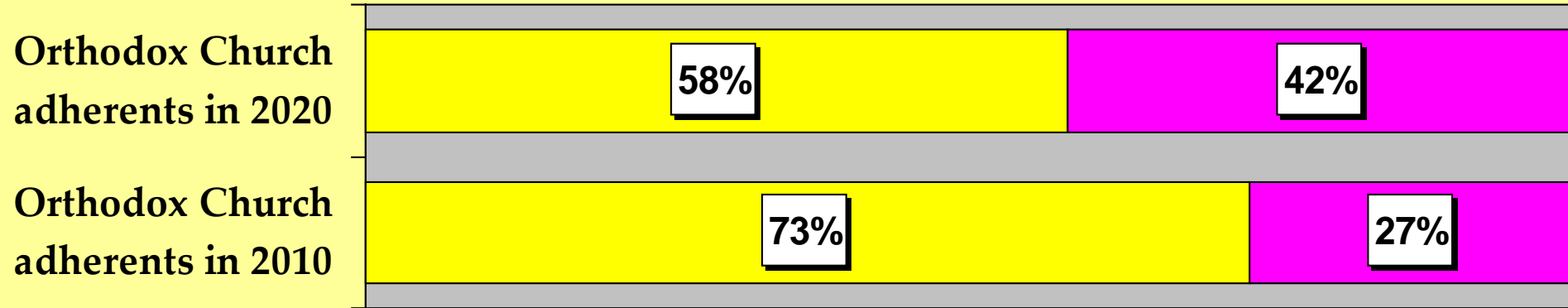
■ Change in adherents □ Change in regular attendees ■ Change in number of parishes



As a Result, “Big Brother” Became Smaller, while “Small Brother” Became (Much) Bigger

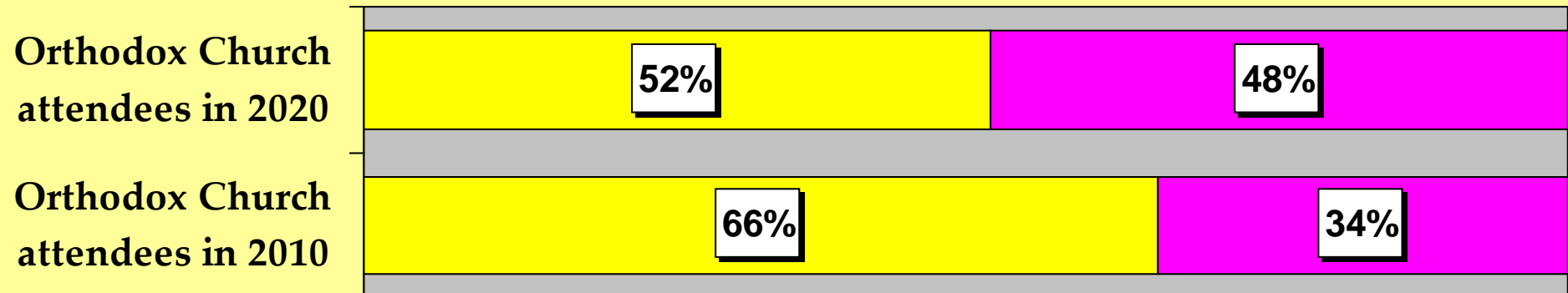
Shares of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches
among all Orthodox Church Adherents: 2010 vs. 2020

■ Eastern Orthodox Churches ■ Oriental Orthodox Churches



Shares of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches
among all Orthodox Church Attendees: 2010 vs. 2020

■ Eastern Orthodox Churches ■ Oriental Orthodox Churches



Does the Growth in Orthodox Church Adherents Matches Growth in US General Population?

- **A (relatively) reliable estimate of the total Orthodox adherents in 1936 is 378,200 (US Census of Religious Bodies)**
- **Good news. Long-term (1936-2020) growth in Orthodox Church adherents is significantly ahead of the growth in general population: +209% vs. +159%**
- **Bad news. During the past decade (2010-2020) growth in Orthodox Church adherents lagged behind growth in general population: +5% vs. +7%.**

**Look for more information on
2020 US Orthodox Church data at:**

www.orthodoxreality.org

or email me at Akrindatch@aol.com