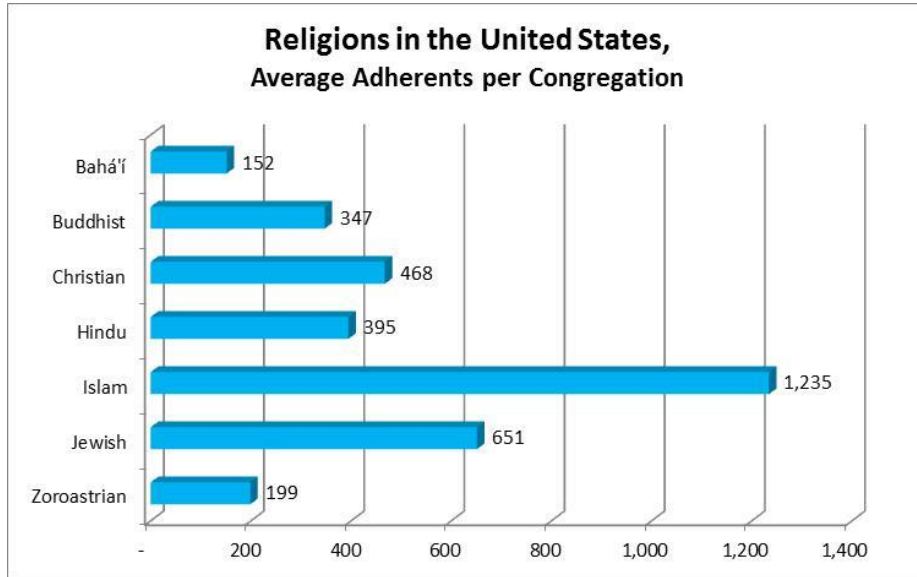


Religion Census Newsletter

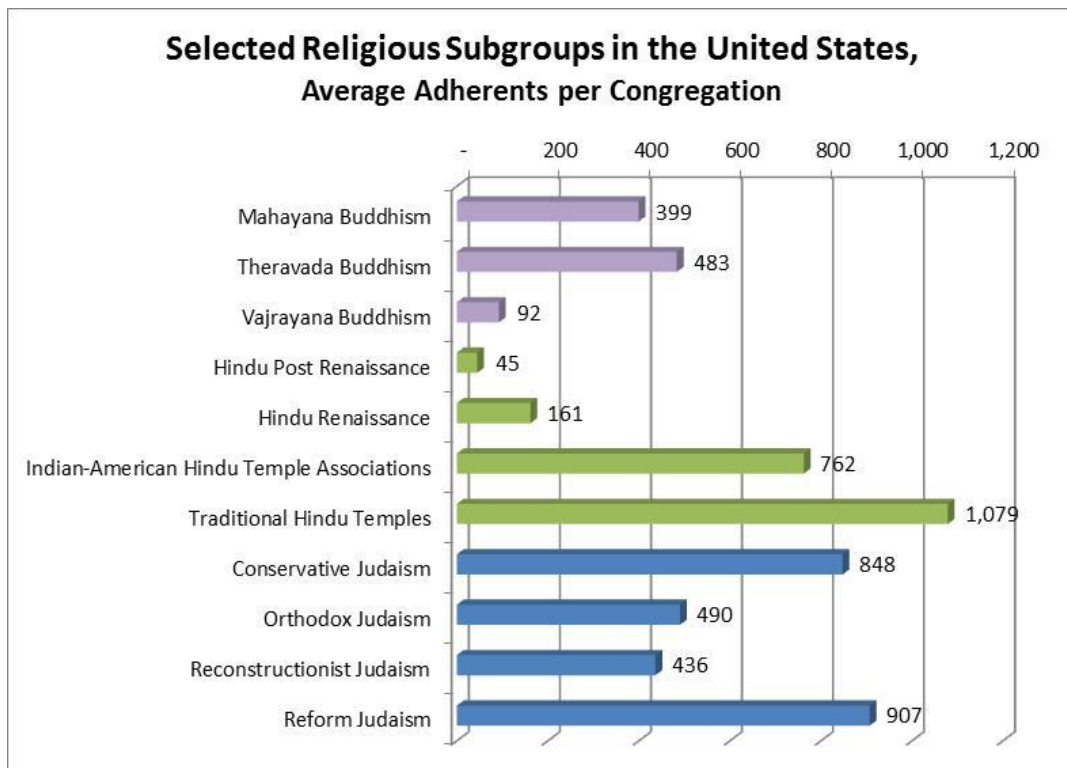
June, 2017

Religious Group Sizes

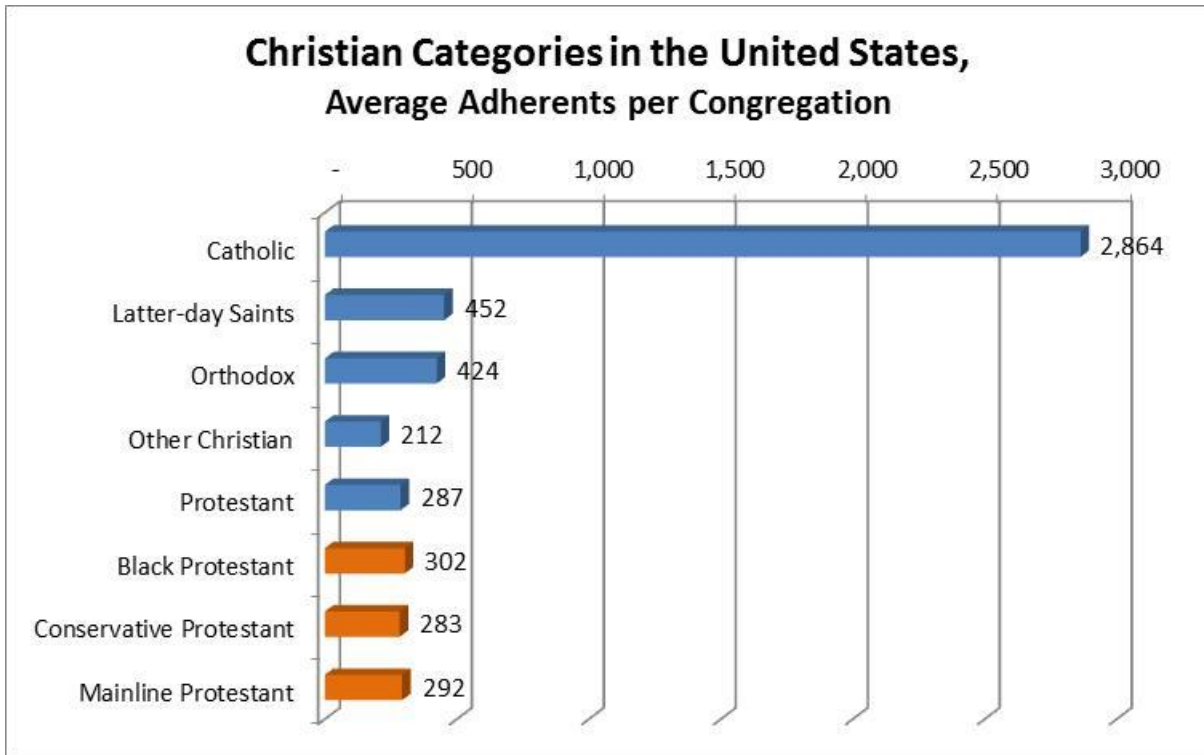
Seven world religions* provided both congregational counts and adherent information** in the 2010 U.S. Religion Census. Therefore, it is possible to compute the average congregational size for each of these religions.



On average, an Islamic congregation is much larger than that of any other major religion, while Baha'í and Zoroastrians tend to be much smaller. But within these major religions, there are sometimes very great differences among their various branches. For instance, Varyana Buddhist groups tend to have much smaller congregations than other Buddhist groups, while Traditional Hindu Temples begin to approach the average size of Islamic masjids.

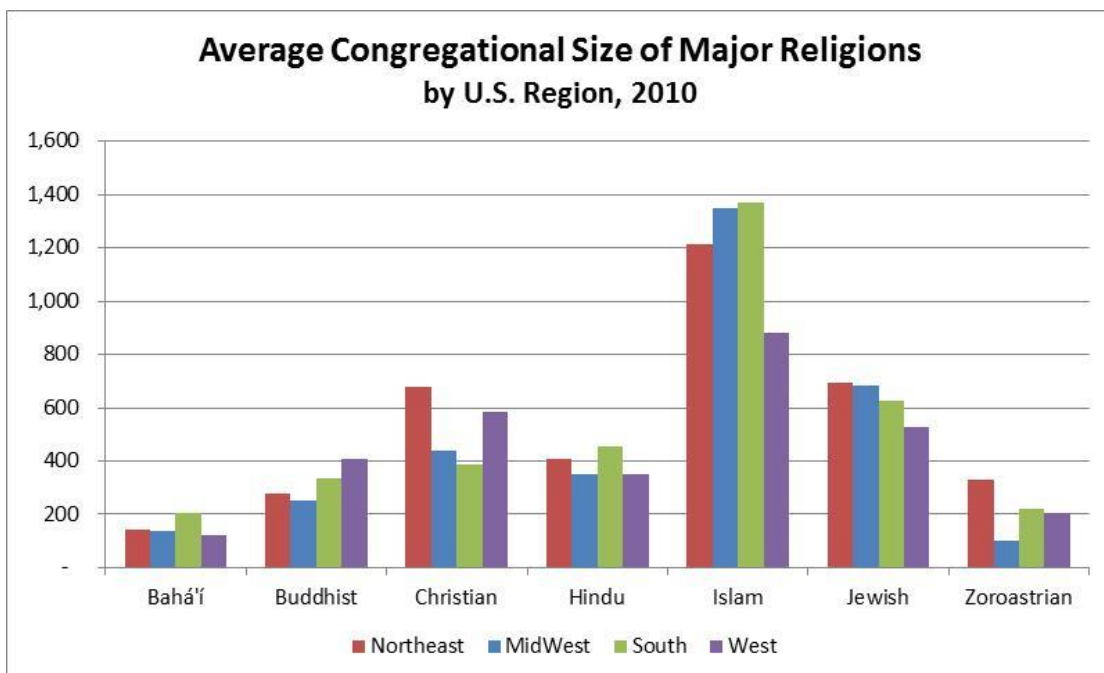


And within the Christian religion, the differences are even more pronounced. On average, Catholic congregations are five to ten times as large as other Christian congregations. And while the average Christian congregation was barely one-third the size of the average masjid, Catholic congregations on average are more than twice as large, at least on the national level.

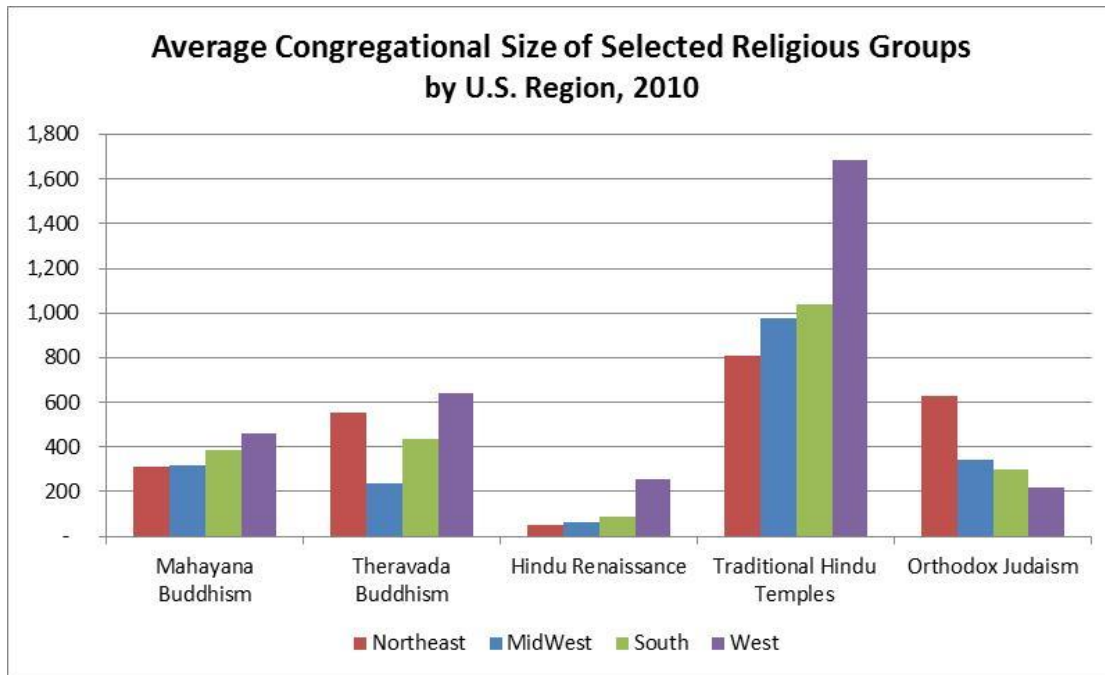


But that is where the Religion Census can help to refine the data even further.

National totals are available from many sources, but only the Religion Census dataset is able to supply sub-national counts for literally hundreds of religious groups. Even the broadest geographic breakdown reveals different patterns for many of these groups.

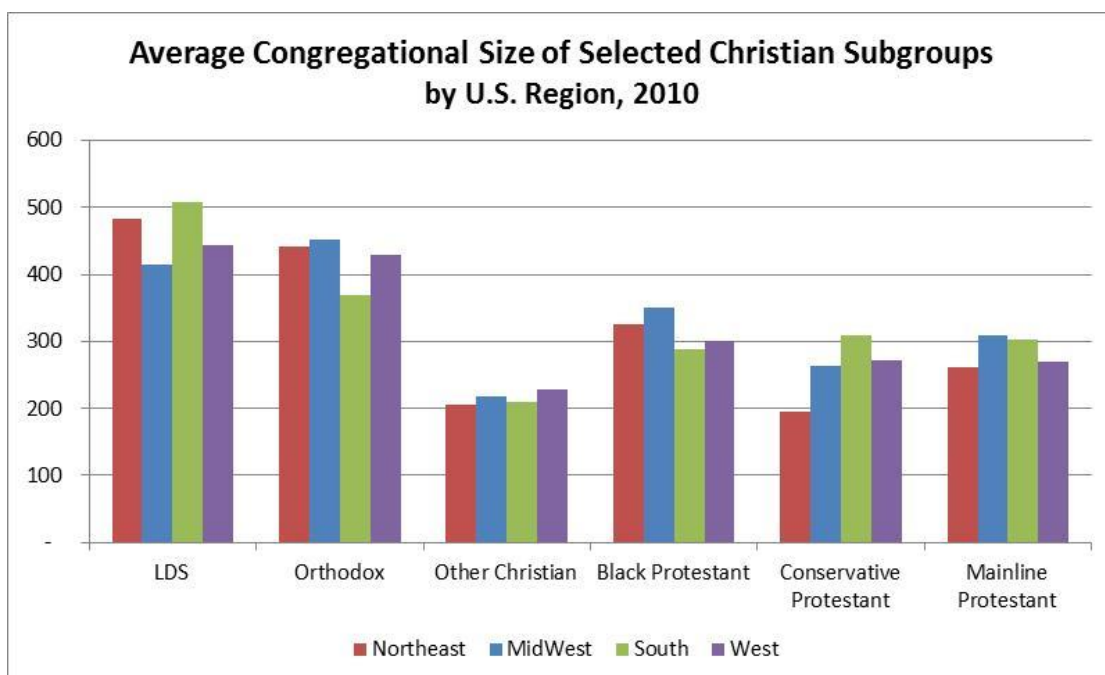


Overall, Hindu groups are about the same size throughout the country, while Zoroastrian congregational size differs greatly across the country. Masjids in the West are typically much smaller than those elsewhere in the country, while Buddhist groups tend to be largest there. Again, some of the subgroups show much more variation.

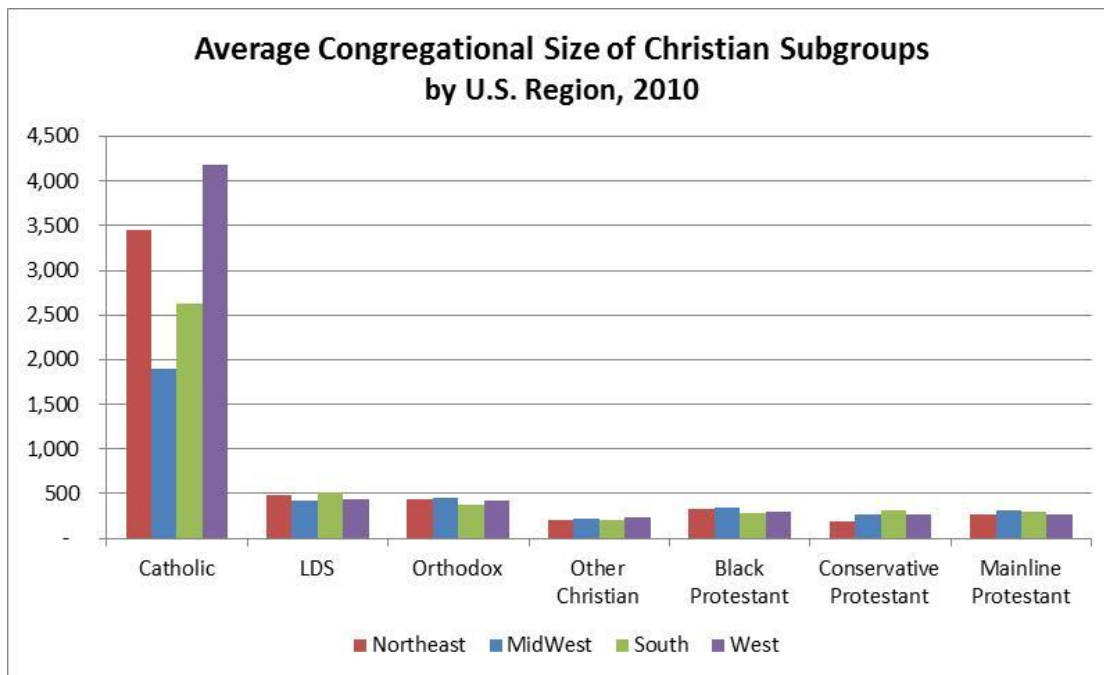


About half the non-Christian subgroups showed little variation between the various regions. However, four of the the five shown above tended to have significantly larger congregations in the Western region of the country. The major exception was for Orthodox Judaism, with Northeastern congregations on average having a much larger number of adherents.

Overall, Christian churches tend to be smaller in the MidWest and South, which might seem to be counter-intuitive with parts of those regions dubbed the “Bible Belt.” But when the non-Catholic Christian subgroups are analyzed, major differences are seen. Not one of these is largest in the Northeast.



Both Mainline and Conservative Protestants tend to have larger congregations in the South and MidWest. Catholics are not shown on the chart above because their figures dwarf those of the other groups, but their Western congregations average over 4,182 adherents compared to 3,444 in the Northeast, 2,633 in the South, and 1,892 in the MidWest.



Important note for researchers: **Broad averages can hide important distinctions.** As just shown with the Christian groups, averaging across denominational lines gave us the true-but-misleading figure of the Northeast having the largest Christian congregations. Because the Catholics are largest in the West and the Protestants in the Midwest and South, averaging cancelled each other's strengths in those areas and left the Northeast as apparently largest.

And there are probably significant differences by state for some of these groups. Perhaps property costs in California lead to larger congregations for many groups, distorting the average size in the West region. Or the relative scarcity of Conservative Protestants in New England may hide a larger congregational size in Pennsylvania.

These potential distinctions among smaller geographic units serve to reinforce the importance of the decadal Religion Census. As we gear up for the 2020 study, can you help us ensure that as many groups as possible will provide data at the county level?

** Five additional religions took part in the study, but they were only able to provide congregational locations without adherent counts. We strongly hope that they, and others, will be able to participate more fully in the 2020 count.*

***Adherents: Every participating group is asked to provide an actual count or an estimate of the number of people associated with each local congregation. This number is termed "adherents." Ideally, adherents include all regular participants and/or all those regarding that congregation as their spiritual home. This is done because religious traditions differ in whether they would include children and regular worshippers in their normal membership counts; and some traditions do not even have a membership category.*

For specific adherent definitions for a particular group, see [Appendix A](#) on our [Methods](#) web page. For the general definition used when a group didn't have a specific adherent figure, see page xvi of the [introductory material](#).

For those who enjoy tables, these are the average adherent sizes of various groups regionally and nationally:

Religious Tradition	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	National
Bahá'í	138	141	208	121	152
Buddhist	253	278	336	408	347
<i>Mahayana Buddhism</i>	315	310	385	460	399
<i>Theravada Buddhism</i>	237	552	436	640	483
<i>Vajrayana Buddhism</i>	80	96	108	85	92
Christian	436	677	386	586	468
<i>Catholic</i>	1,892	3,444	2,633	4,182	2,864
<i>Black Protestant</i>	351	325	288	301	302
<i>Conservative Protestant</i>	263	195	309	271	284
<i>Mainline Protestant</i>	309	261	302	270	292
<i>LDS</i>	414	483	508	443	452
<i>Orthodox</i>	452	441	370	428	424
<i>Other Christian</i>	217	205	209	228	212
Hindu	352	408	455	350	395
<i>Hindu Post Renaissance</i>	33	71	37	39	45
<i>Hindu Renaissance</i>	65	51	86	255	161
<i>Indian-American Hindu Temple Associations</i>	594	837	818	725	762
<i>Traditional Hindu Temples</i>	978	808	1,041	1,687	1,079
Islam	1,348	1,214	1,367	880	1,235
Jewish	684	693	627	527	651
<i>Conservative Judaism</i>	1,001	748	989	852	848
<i>Orthodox Judaism</i>	343	626	297	219	490
<i>Reconstructionist Judaism</i>	421	417	341	589	436
<i>Reform Judaism</i>	921	962	833	912	907
Zoroastrian	103	328	223	207	212
Groups with at least 5,000 congregations	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	National
American Baptist Churches in the USA	281	272	446	245	298
Assemblies of God	257	207	215	288	240
Catholic Church	1,892	3,444	2,633	4,182	2,864
Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	279	152	244	384	275
Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)	172	129	202	106	182
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	414	483	508	443	452
Church of the Nazarene	191	135	162	201	177
Churches of Christ	103	88	137	105	126
Episcopal Church	204	277	346	261	287
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	504	380	316	338	425
Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod	442	294	304	269	376
Non-denominational Christian Churches	326	265	342	430	345
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	212	221	247	260	234
Seventh-day Adventist Church	156	182	213	267	211
Southern Baptist Convention	295	135	430	227	392
United Church of Christ	275	244	221	184	246
United Methodist Church	270	253	319	315	296

Every decade the US Religion Census tries to include additional religious groups, making the US Religion Census increasingly accurate. The 236 groups that took part in 2010 are listed [online](#). If you know of other faith groups that would like to participate and be included in this census effort, please [send us](#) the group's contact information or contact person.

Meanwhile, over 7,000 people visited our website in May. Several have let us know how valuable this resource is, and how they are looking forward to the 2020 update. Naturally, we hope to include information from your group in the 2020 counts.



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Published by the [Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies](#), sponsor of the U.S. Religion Census

This newsletter is intended for the following audiences:

Groups that participated in the 2010 Religion Census. The newsletter is sent to the latest contact we have for the supplier of the statistics.

Groups that are eligible to participate in the upcoming 2020 Religion. The newsletter is sent to the latest contact we have for the supplier of the statistics.

Members of the sponsoring agency for the Religion Census, the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies.

Those who requested to receive the newsletter through our website.