

# Religion Census Newsletter

February, 2018

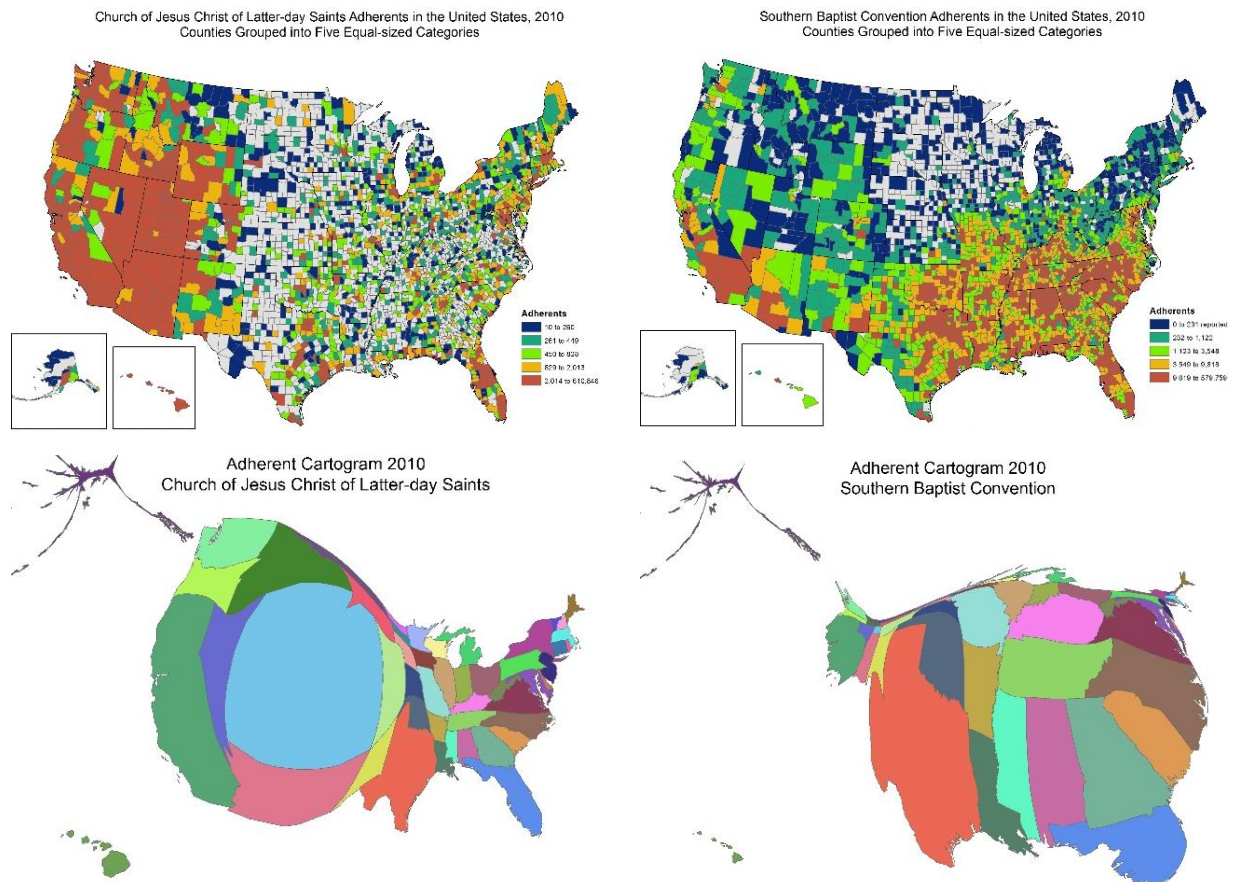
## Redrawing the U.S. with Cartograms

*Check the note at the bottom of the page for how YOU can help make the next wave of religious studies even better!*

The [U.S. Religion Census](#) is often used to identify dominant religions within individual counties\*. It is the best source for comparative county-level data across the nation. The published book lists numbers of churches, members, adherents, and worshippers for 236 different groups in 3,143 counties.

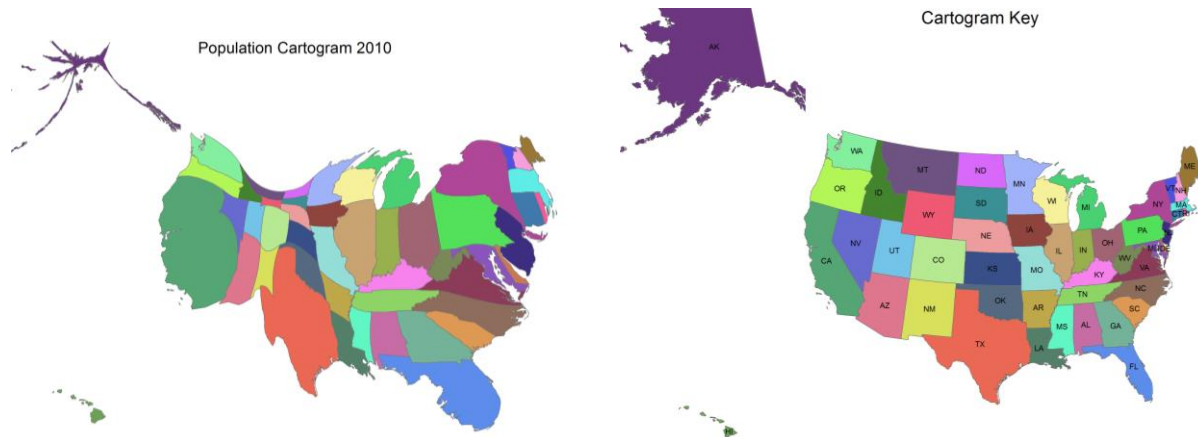
That level of detail is important for researchers, reporters, and religious leaders. But it is hard to communicate overall findings with lists of numbers. Maps are a great way to display data, and our [monthly newsletters](#) have highlighted several ways to do this.

This month, we're going to redraw the state boundaries based on the size of various religious groups. For instance, which of these two sets of maps better shows the concentration of Mormons and Southern Baptists in the United States?

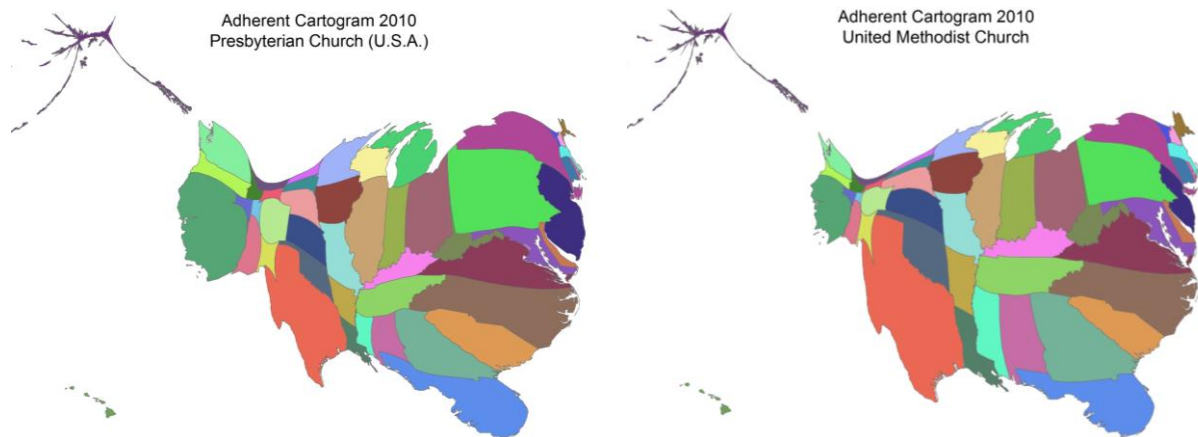


Both the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Southern Baptist Convention report adherents\*\* throughout the nation. Standard maps (top row) show their concentrations in the west and southeast, respectively. But the cartograms on the bottom row really emphasize how much the groups are concentrated in specific geographies.

Of course, not all groups are so obviously geographic. But even that tells a story. For comparative purposes, the map below left redraws the states according to their population in the 2010 census. The adjoining map shows the states as we usually see them with their postal abbreviations.



The Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church are two denominations that are fairly well distributed throughout the U.S. population. As a result, their cartograms (the technical term used for the distorted maps) is very similar to that of the U.S. map above.



Side by side, this type of map makes it easier to see that the Presbyterian group has a more balanced representation along the west coast than does the Methodist denomination.

On our website's [mapping page](#), cartograms are available for twenty-six religious groups. Select the religious group in the drop-down box, then the list of available maps is shown. If the group reported adherents in all fifty states and the District of Columbia, one of the options in the next box will be "Cartogram." Select that style, then confirm your selection. Depending on your browser, you may then have to confirm whether to open or save the resulting file.\*\*\*

But all these comparisons depend on data supplied by individual groups. This is why we are counting on people like YOU to encourage your own religious group to take part in the 2020 study.

*\*As in nearly all national research, “counties” is a broad term that includes the District of Columbia, Louisiana’s parishes, independent cities in several states, and boroughs and census divisions in Alaska. The more correct phrase is “counties or equivalents,” but many reports use the verbal shorthand of “counties.”*

*\*\*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](#).*

*\*\*\*Cartograms are problematic when one or more states have no data. If you are interested in a cartogram for a group not present in all states, [contact us](#) and we can discuss the options.*

#### HOW YOU CAN HELP MAKE THE DATA EVEN BETTER

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, nearly 6,000 people visited our website in December. 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.



[www.asarb.com](http://www.asarb.com)

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 Census. 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.***