

Executive Summary

The following analysis uses Annual Church Profile (ACP) data from 2018 and 2023. The purpose of this work is to look at different church demographics and explore differences in growth. This analysis provides insight into areas with variations in church growth.

Percentage growth was calculated by dividing the 2018 total membership by 2023 total membership. Only churches which reported non-zero data in both years were included.

NOTES:

- The New England Division was the only one with positive church growth. Declines were lower in the Middle Atlantic, East South Central, and Mountain divisions. (*Figure 1*)
- There are differences across states, but this must be viewed cautiously due to low sample size. Of the ten largest states by total membership in 2023, only Texas saw an increase. (*Figure 2*)
- Churches organized since 2000 have experienced an overall church growth of 9%. Churches in the Northeast (-2%) and Suburban (-10%) areas have seen the list amount of decline among regions and population zones, respectively. (*Table 1*)

Churches were placed into one of three categories based on percentage growth in total membership between 2018 and 2023. The growth categories are defined as follows.

- Declining: A decrease in total membership of 10% or more.
- Growing: An increase in total membership of 10% or more.
- Plateaued: A change in church membership between declining or growing.

NOTES:

- Weekly Worship Average Attendance 2018: Churches with in person average attendance of 500+ (26%) are the most likely to have grown. Churches with 50-99 (18%) and 100-249 (19%) are the least likely to have grown. (*Figure 3*).
- Year Organized: Churches organized between 2000-Present (44%) are the most likely to have grown. Those organized between 1950-1999 (20%) are the next most likely. (*Figure 4*)
- Population Zone: Churches in Urban areas (25%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in Suburban areas (20%) and Rural areas (16%). (*Figure 5*)
- Region: Churches in the Northeast (38%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in the West (29%), Midwest (22%), and South (19%). (*Figure 6*)

Churches were placed into size categories based on their average worship attendance in 2018. For churches which reported non-zero attendance in 2018 and 2023, nearly seven in ten churches (69%) remained within their same size category. (*Table 2*)

Percent Growth between 2018 and 2023

Percentage growth was calculated by dividing the 2018 total membership by 2023 total membership. Only churches which reported non-zero data in both years were included.

DIVISIONS:

- New England (10%): Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- Middle Atlantic (-10%): New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania
- East North Central (-13%): Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin
- West North Central (-15%): Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota
- South Atlantic (-14%): Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia
- East South Central (-8%): Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee
- West South Central (-8%): Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas
- Mountain (-12%): Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming
- Pacific (-18%): Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington

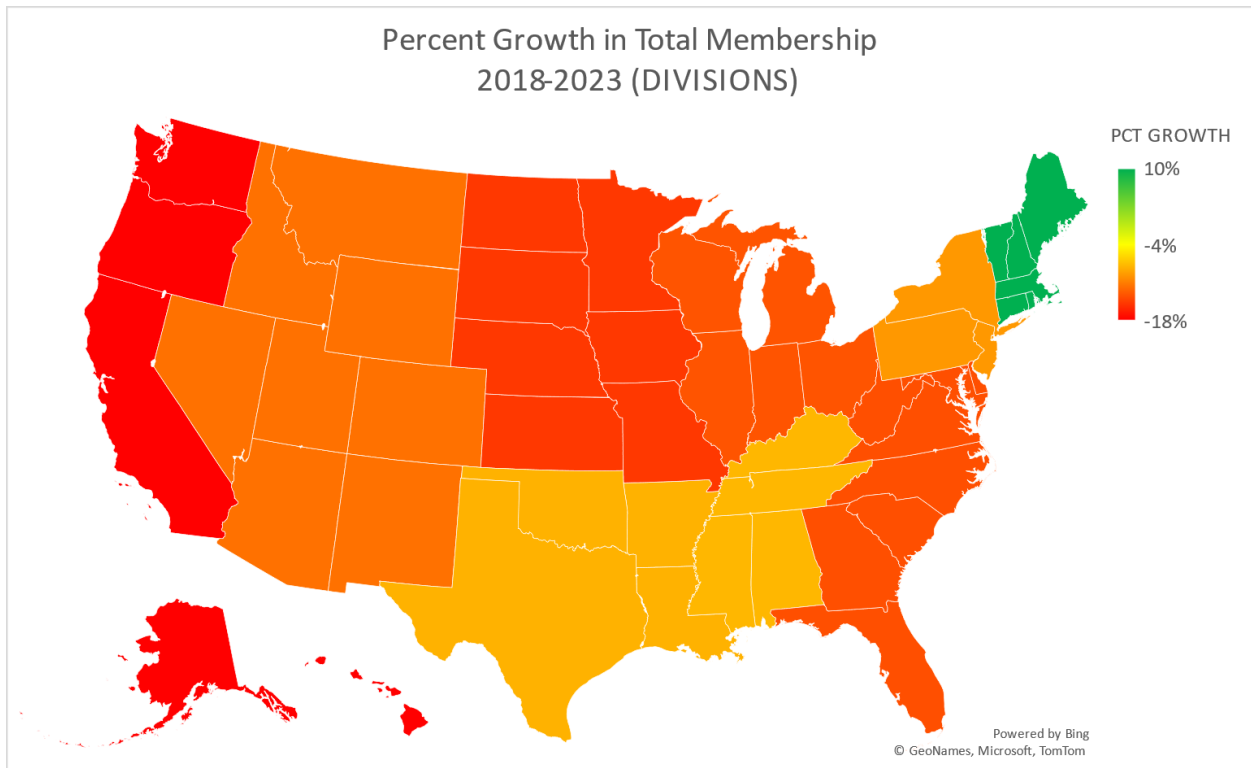


Figure 1: Percentage Church Growth by Census Divisions

2023 ACP Church Performance

States:

The following states have less than 30 churches in the calculation and need to be considered with caution. The number listed next to each state is the sample size.

- Delaware (5), Minnesota (5), New Hampshire (11), Rhode Island (11), North Dakota (12), Wisconsin (18), Maine (23), Utah (23), Nebraska (26), South Dakota (26).

Ten states with the largest growth percentage (**highlight** indicates less than 30 churches).

- **Maine (19%)**, **Minnesota (5%)**, Massachusetts (12%), Michigan (11%), Vermont (9%), **Rhode Island (8%)**, Arizona (5%), Connecticut (4%), Texas (3%), Iowa (1%).

Ten states with the lowest growth percentage (**highlight** indicates less than 30 churches).

- **Nebraska (-40%)**, **North Dakota (-39%)**, Wyoming (-36%), **Delaware (-33%)**, Kansas (-31%), **Utah (-28%)**, Washington (-25%), Idaho (-24%), Alaska (-24%), **New Hampshire (-22%)**.

Growth percentage in the ten largest states.

- Georgia (-12%), Tennessee (-7%), Florida (-18%), Alabama (-9%), Texas (3%), North Carolina (-13%), Kentucky (-10%), South Carolina (-10%), Louisiana (-11%), Arkansas (-10%).

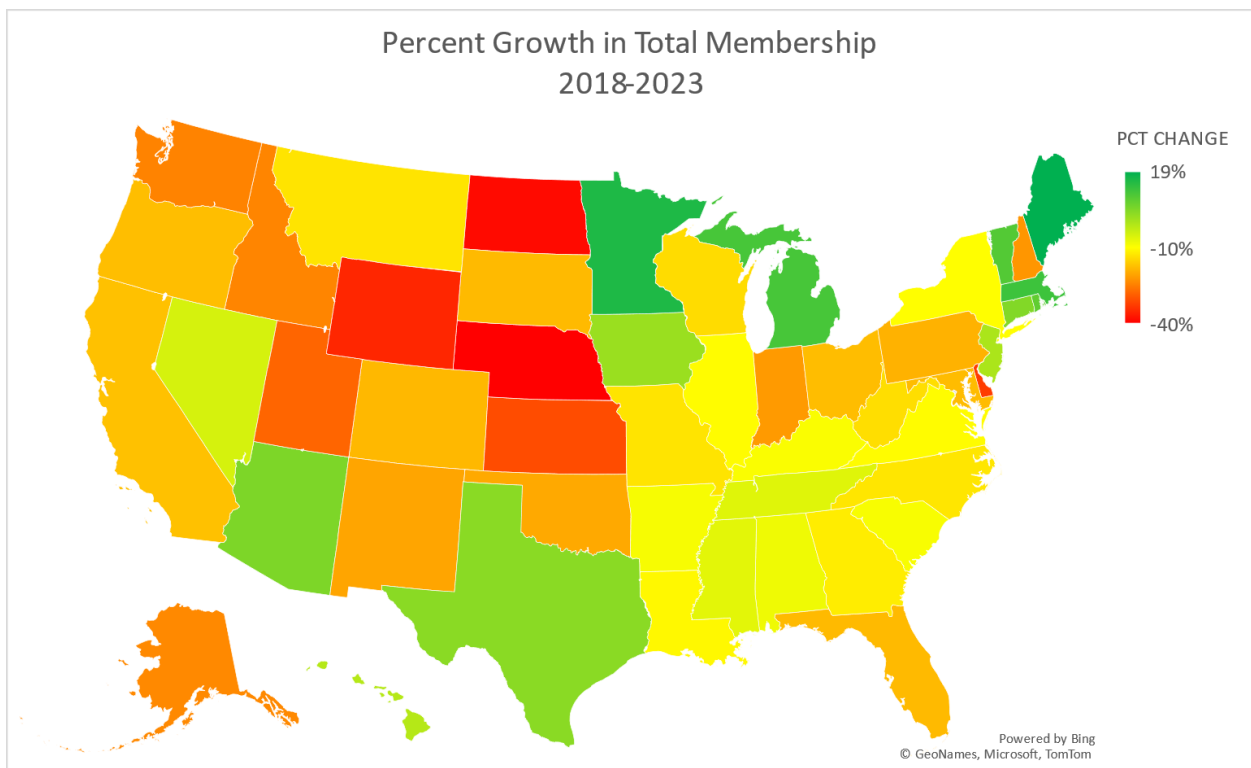


Figure 2: Percentage Church Growth by State

2023 ACP Church Performance

Three different measures of percentage growth were calculated for three church demographics. Churches were divided based on the year organized, population in their city, and region of the United States as defined by the Census Bureau.

Population Zone: Population size as of May 6, 2024, was used for assigning group. Street address defined the city when available and mail address supplemented the data when necessary.

- Rural: Population less than 2,500
- Suburban: Population greater than or equal to 2,500 and less than 50,000
- Urban: Population greater than or equal to 50,000

The following table shows the different measures for percentage growth: mean, median, overall. These measures as defined in the following manner.

- Mean: The average church percentage growth.
- Median: The median church percentage growth.
- Overall: The quotient of the sum of total membership in 2018 and sum of total membership in 2023.

The difference between mean and median indicates there are churches with extreme population growth values. The overall value can be different due to changes in churches with larger total membership.

There was one church whose growth was an outlier. This can be seen in the mean for 2000-Present, Urban, and South churches.

Table 1: Percentage Church Growth by Demographics

PERCENTAGE GROWTH CHANGE			
	Mean	Median	Overall
Year Organized			
Pre-1900	-8%	-4%	-11%
1900-1949	-7%	-5%	-14%
1950-1999	-7%	-7%	-12%
2000-Present	163%	3%	9%
Population Zone			
RURAL	0%	-4%	-10%
SUBURBAN	9%	-4%	-10%
URBAN	50%	-7%	-13%
US Region			
NORTHEAST	19%	0%	-2%
MIDWEST	-1%	-4%	-14%
SOUTH	16%	-4%	-11%
WEST	1%	-6%	-15%

Growth Categories

Churches were placed into one of three categories based on percentage growth in total membership between 2018 and 2023. A church had to have reported a non-zero value in both years to be included in the analysis. The growth categories are defined as follows.

- Declining: A decrease in total membership of 10% or more.
- Growing: An increase in total membership of 10% or more.
- Plateaued: A change in church membership between declining or growing.

The frequency of churches within the growth categories were analyzed across a variety of church demographics.

Weekly Worship Average Attendance 2018: Churches were divided into categories based on their in person average worship attendance: 0-49, 50-99, 100-249, 250-499, 500+.

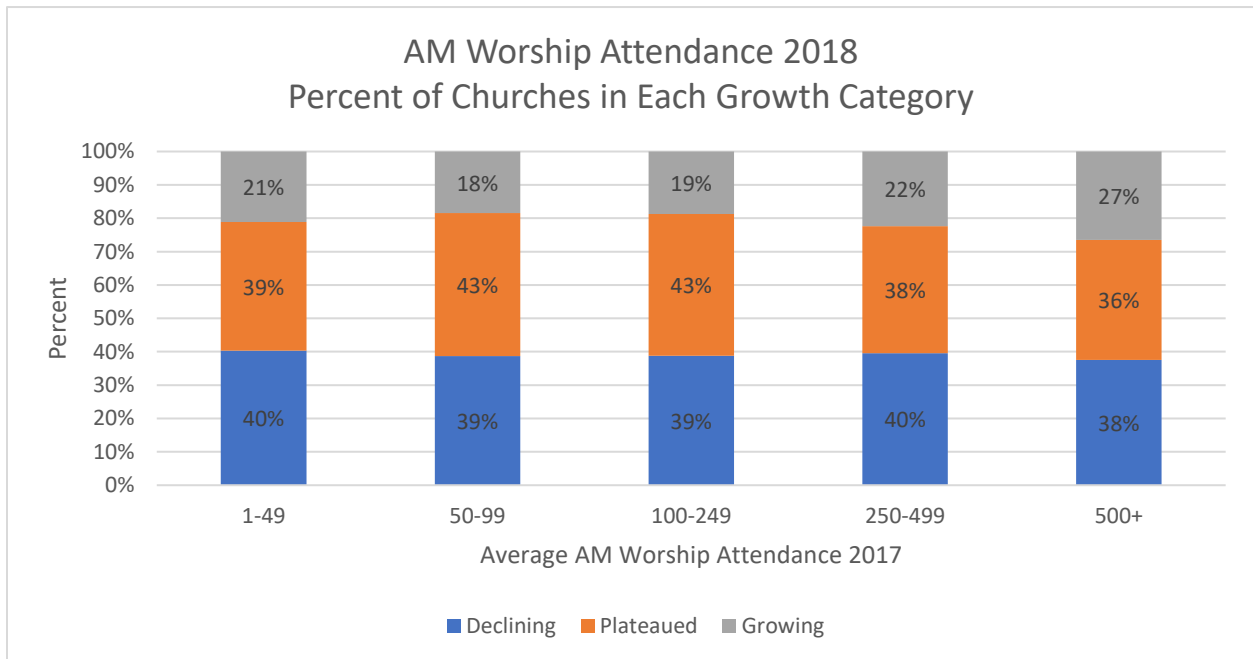


Figure 3: Percentage Church Growth by Average Attendance in 2018

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches with in person average attendance of 500+ (26%) are the most likely to have grown. Churches with 50-99 (18%) and 100-249 (19%) are the least likely to have grown.
- Plateaued: Churches with 50-99 (43%) and 100-249 (43%) are the most likely to have plateaued.
- Declining: No statistically significant differences.

Year Organized: Churches were placed into four categories based on the year the church was organized: Pre-1900, 1900-1949, 1950-1999, 2000-Present.

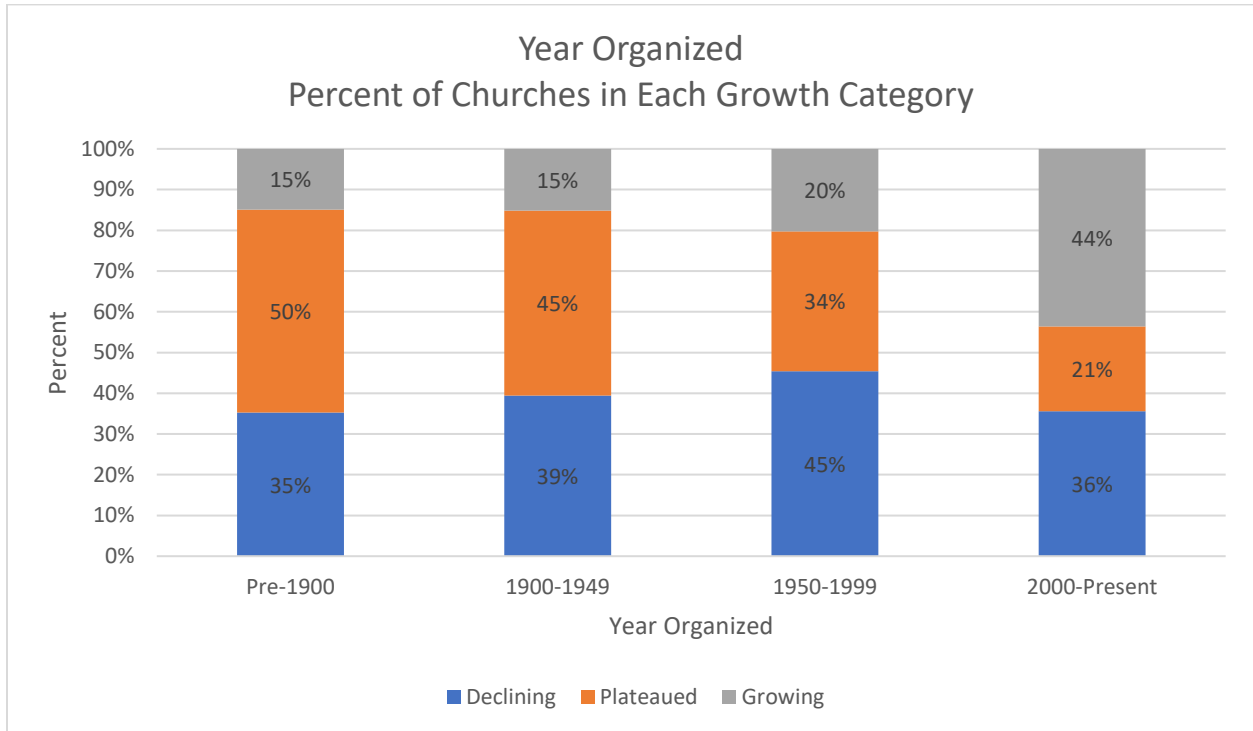


Figure 4: Percentage Church Growth by Year Organized

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches organized between 2000-Present (44%) are the most likely to have grown. Those organized between 1950-1999 (20%) are the next most likely.
- Plateaued: The frequency of churches that plateaued decreases from year the church was organized: Pre-1900 (50%), 1900-1949 (45%), 1950-1999 (34%), 2000-Present (21%).
- Declining: Churches organized between 1950-1999 (45%) are the most likely to have declined. Those organized between 1900-1949 (39%) are the next most likely.

Population Zone:

- Rural: Population less than 2,500
- Suburban: Population greater than or equal to 2,500 and less than 50,000
- Urban: Population greater than or equal to 50,000

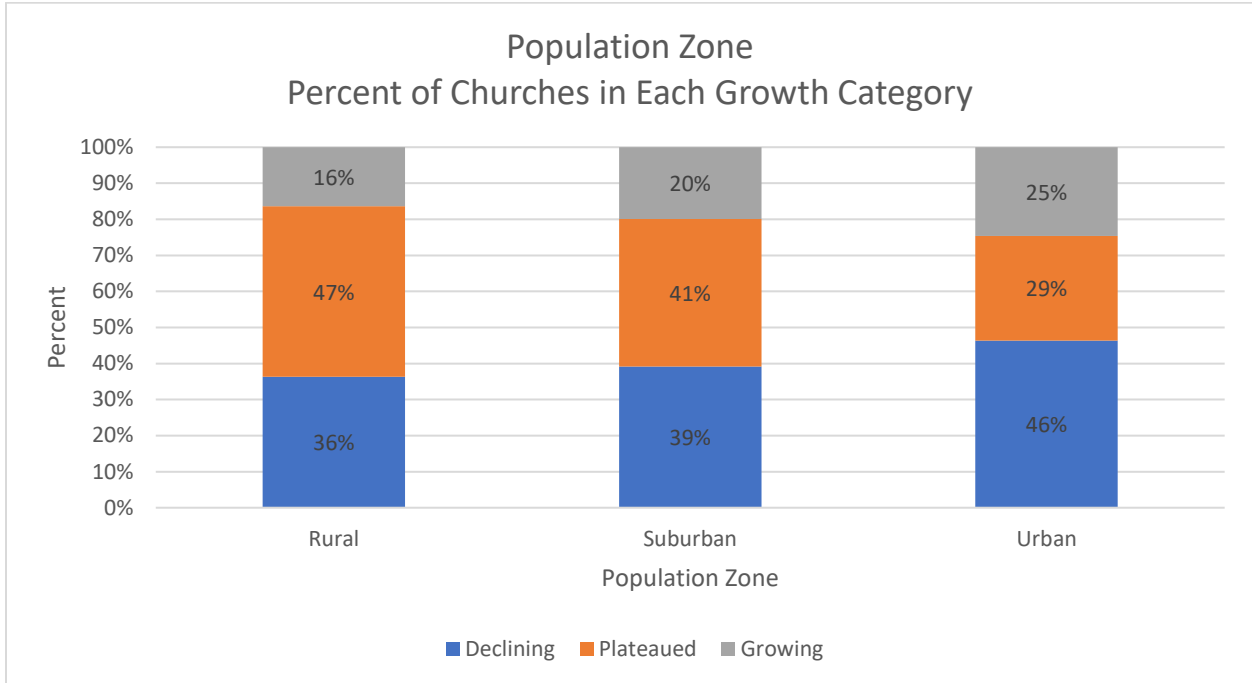


Figure 5: Percentage Church Growth by Population Zone

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches in Urban areas (25%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in Suburban areas (20%) and Rural areas (16%).
- Plateaued: Churches in Rural areas (47%) are the most likely to have plateaued followed by those in Suburban areas (41%) and Urban areas (29%).
- Declining: Churches in Urban areas (46%) are the most likely to have declined followed by those in Suburban areas (39%) and rural areas (36%).

Regions: US Census Bureau regions are used to define Northeast, Midwest, South, and West.

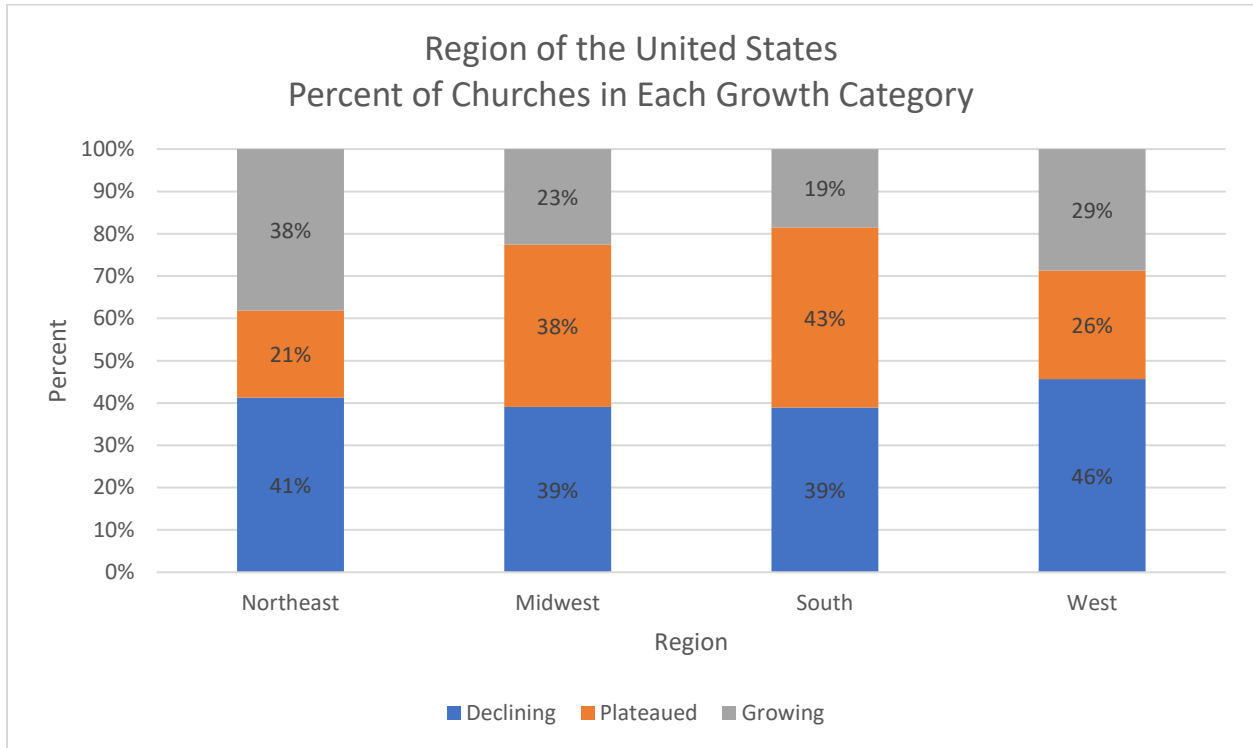


Figure 6: Church Growth Category by Region

NOTES:

- Growing: Churches in the Northeast (38%) are the most likely to have grown followed by those in the West (29%), Midwest (22%), and South (19%).
- Plateaued: Churches in the South (43%) are the most likely to have plateaued followed by those in the Midwest (38%), West (26%), and Northeast (21%).
- Declining: Churches in the West (46%) are more to have declined than those in the Midwest (39%) and South (39%).

Weekly Worship Average Attendance 2018 vs 2023

For churches which reported non-zero in person attendance in 2018 and 2023, nearly seven in ten churches (69%) remained within their same size category. The table below shows churches by size category.

NOTES:

- Nearly all churches with 1-49 average attendance in 2018 remained in that category.
- 73% of the largest churches (500+) from 2018 are still in that category.
- For churches between 50-499 in 2018, 36% moved down in size category.

Table 2: Attendance Group 2018 versus 2023

	Worship Attendance 2023				
Worship Attendance 2018	1-49	50-99	100-249	250-499	500+
1-49	91%	8%	1%	>1%	>1%
50-99	36%	57%	7%	>1%	>1%
100-249	3%	32%	60%	4%	>1%
250-499	>1%	2%	39%	53%	6%
500+	>1%	>1%	3%	24%	73%