

Statistical Analysis of Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-day Adventist, and Mormon Growth and Retention in Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, 1985-2018



Findings, Trends,
and Analysis

David Stewart
Cumorah Foundation



Conflict of Interest Disclosures



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Level of Evidence



JBJS, Inc. Journals Level of Evidence

The Level of Evidence should be assigned for all Clinical articles according to the definitions in the following table (as explained in our January 2015 editorial).

Levels of Evidence for Primary Research Question^{1,2}

Study Type	Question	Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Level V
Diagnostic— Investigating a diagnostic test	Is this (early detection) test worthwhile? Is this diagnostic or monitoring test accurate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Randomized controlled trial Testing of previously developed diagnostic criteria (consecutive patients with consistently applied reference standard and blinding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective³ cohort⁴ study Development of diagnostic criteria (consecutive patients with consistently applied reference standard and blinding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrospective⁵ cohort⁴ study Case-control⁶ study Nonconsecutive patients No consistently applied reference standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case series Poor or nonindependent reference standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanism-based reasoning Mechanism-based reasoning
Prognostic— Investigating the effect of a patient characteristic on the outcome of a disease	What is the natural history of the condition?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inception³ cohort study (all patients enrolled at an early, uniform point in the course of their disease) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective³ cohort⁴ study (patients enrolled at different points in their disease) Control arm of randomized trial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrospective⁵ cohort⁴ study Case-control⁶ study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case series 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanism-based reasoning
Therapeutic — Investigating the results of a treatment	Does this treatment help? What are the harms? ⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Randomized controlled trial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective³ cohort⁴ study Observational study with dramatic effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrospective⁵ cohort⁴ study Case-control⁶ study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case series Historically controlled study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanism-based reasoning
Economic	Does the intervention offer good value for dollars spent?	Computer simulation model (Monte Carlo simulation, Markov model) with inputs derived from Level-I studies, lifetime time duration, outcomes expressed in dollars per quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) and uncertainty examined using probabilistic sensitivity analyses	Computer simulation model (Monte Carlo simulation, Markov model) with inputs derived from Level-II studies, lifetime time duration, outcomes expressed in dollars per QALYs and uncertainty examined using probabilistic sensitivity analyses	Computer simulation model (Markov model) with inputs derived from Level-II studies, relevant time horizon, less than lifetime, outcomes expressed in dollars per QALYs and stochastic multilevel sensitivity analyses	Decision tree over the short time horizon with input data from original Level-II and III studies and uncertainty is examined by univariate sensitivity analyses	Decision tree over the short time horizon with input data informed by prior economic evaluation and uncertainty is examined by univariate sensitivity analyses

Level of Evidence IV
(case series, surveys
of limited quality)

Level of Evidence V
(oral histories,
observational/anecdotal
studies,
mechanism-based
reasoning)

1. This chart was adapted from OCEBM Levels of Evidence Working Group, "The Oxford 2011 Levels of Evidence," Oxford Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine, <http://www.cebm.net/ocbml-levels-of-evidence/>. A glossary of terms can be found here: <http://www.cebm.net/glossary/>.

2. Level-I through IV studies may be graded downward on the basis of study quality, imprecision, indirectness, or inconsistency between studies or because the effect size is very small; these studies may be graded upward if there is a dramatic effect size. For example, a high-quality randomized controlled trial (RCT) should have ≥80% follow-up, blinding, and proper randomization. The Level of Evidence assigned to systematic reviews reflects the ranking of studies included in the review (i.e., a systematic review of Level-II studies is Level II). A complete assessment of the quality of individual studies requires critical appraisal of all aspects of study design.

3. Investigators formulated the study question before the first patient was enrolled.

4. In these studies, "cohort" refers to a nonrandomized comparative study. For therapeutic studies, patients treated one way (e.g., cemented hip prosthesis) are compared with those treated differently (e.g., cementless hip prosthesis).

5. Investigators formulated the study question after the first patient was enrolled.

6. Patients identified for the study on the basis of their outcome (e.g., failed total hip arthroplasty), called "cases," are compared with those who did not have the outcome (e.g., successful total hip arthroplasty), called "controls."

7. Sufficient numbers are required to rule out a common harm (affects >20% of participants). For long-term harms, follow-up duration must be sufficient.

Introduction to Levels of Evidence in Research Methodology:
Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery

<https://journals.lww.com/jbjsjournal/Pages/Journals-Level-of-Evidence.aspx>

Data and Sources



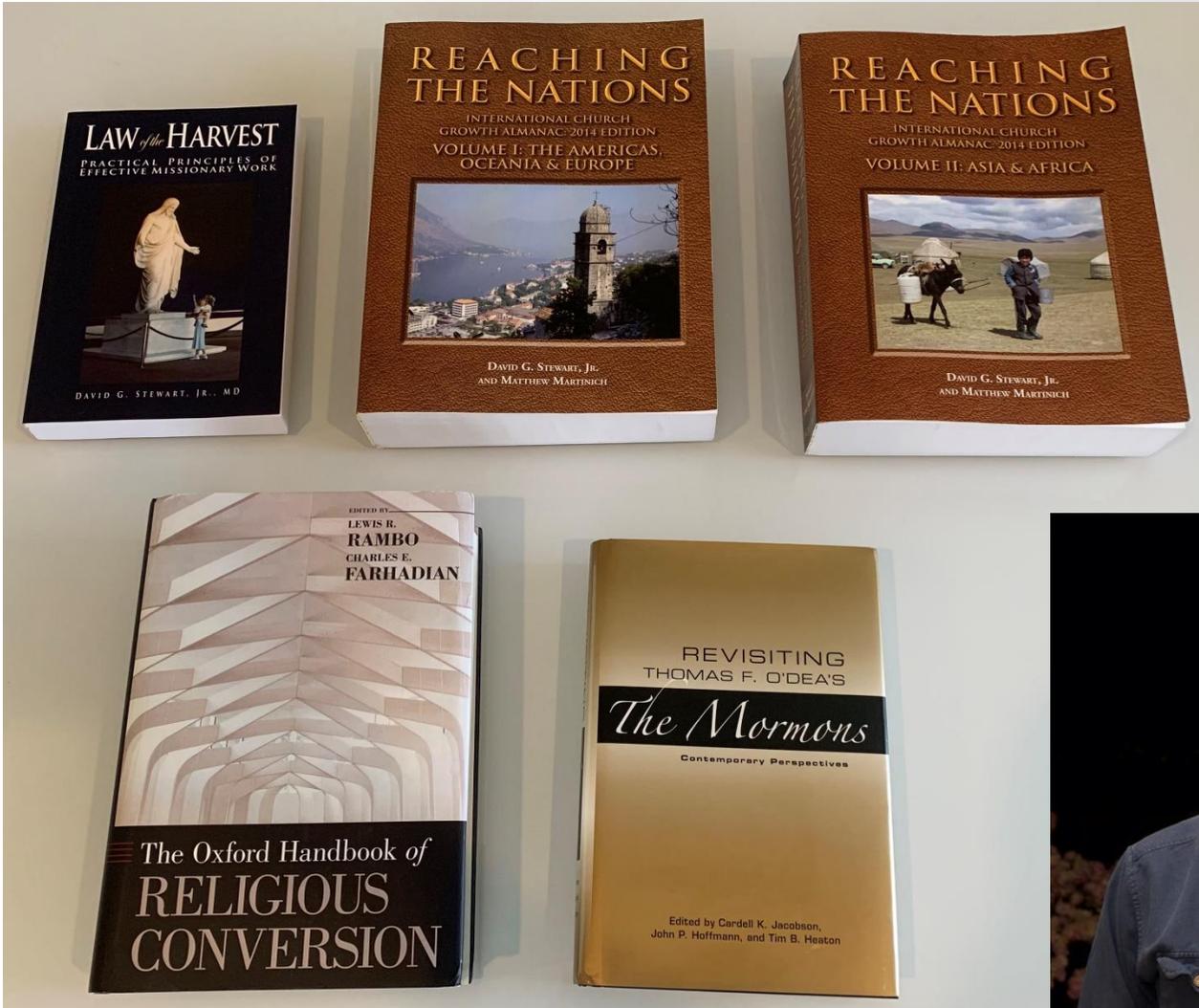
LDS Meetinghouse, Reykjavik, Iceland

- LDS national membership and congregation statistics (*LDS Church Almanacs, lds.org*)
- Human Development Index (*UN Development Program*)
- GDP per capita (International Monetary Fund)
- Fertility rates (*UN Population Division*)
- Population growth rates (*World Bank, UN Population Division*)
- Urbanization (*UN Population Division*)
- Net migrants per 100K population (*UN Population Division*)
- JW growth and 1000s of preaching hours per baptism (*Jehovah's Witness annual yearbooks 1982-2017*)
- LDS activity rates, national outreach percent (*Reaching the Nations*)
- Regression analysis and charts - Minitab statistical software and Microsoft excel –

Research Background



- Missiology: Study of Church Growth



Areas Visited



The Enlightenment and Higher Criticism



- Challenges to scriptural narratives
- “I had no need of that hypothesis [God]” – Laplace
- Higher Criticism of Tubingen school –Baur
- Geological findings difficult to reconcile with Genesis flood narrative
- Evolution through Natural Selection – Darwin
- Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions
- Medical advances and theory of disease
- Less perceived dependence on supernatural

USSR Anti-Religious Campaigns

- Communist state atheist “utopia”
- “Scientific” and “rationalist” claims
- “Religion is the opiate of the masses” – Karl Marx
- USSR anti-religious campaigns 1921-1928 and 1928-1941.
- Priests were painted as enemies of the working classes.
- 85,000 Russian Orthodox priests were killed in 1937 alone.
- The Russian Orthodox Church lost most of its churches, declining from 29,584 to fewer than 500 in the Russian Republic
- Its remaining institutions were heavily infiltrated by government informants.



Post-World War II



- Disillusionment of religious believers
- Questions of suffering, existence of God
- Many did not believe in a God who cared and actively participated in the world as a force for goodness and justice
- Skepticism towards mainline churches
- Perceived by some as corrupt, power-hungry, or political
- Increasing identification as atheist, agnostic, and “spiritual but not religious.”
- Many identified as cultural Christians, but without conviction
- Attrition of mainline churches

Christian Restorationist Movements



- Christian new religious movements
- Founded in US in 19th century
- Background of Second Great Awakening
- Restoring beliefs and practices of early Christianity
- Changes of Protestant Reformation not enough
- “Second Reformation” or Restoration



Christian Restorationist Movements



- **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** (LDS or Mormon Church) — **Joseph Smith** – Fayette, New York, 1830
- **Seventh-day Adventist Church** — **Ellen White** – Battle Creek, Michigan, 1863
- **Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society** (Jehovah's Witnesses) – **Charles Taze Russell** – Pittsburg, Pennsylvania (formed 1881, incorporated 1884)
- Global outreach and growth
- Growth and expansion dynamics in Central and Eastern Europe

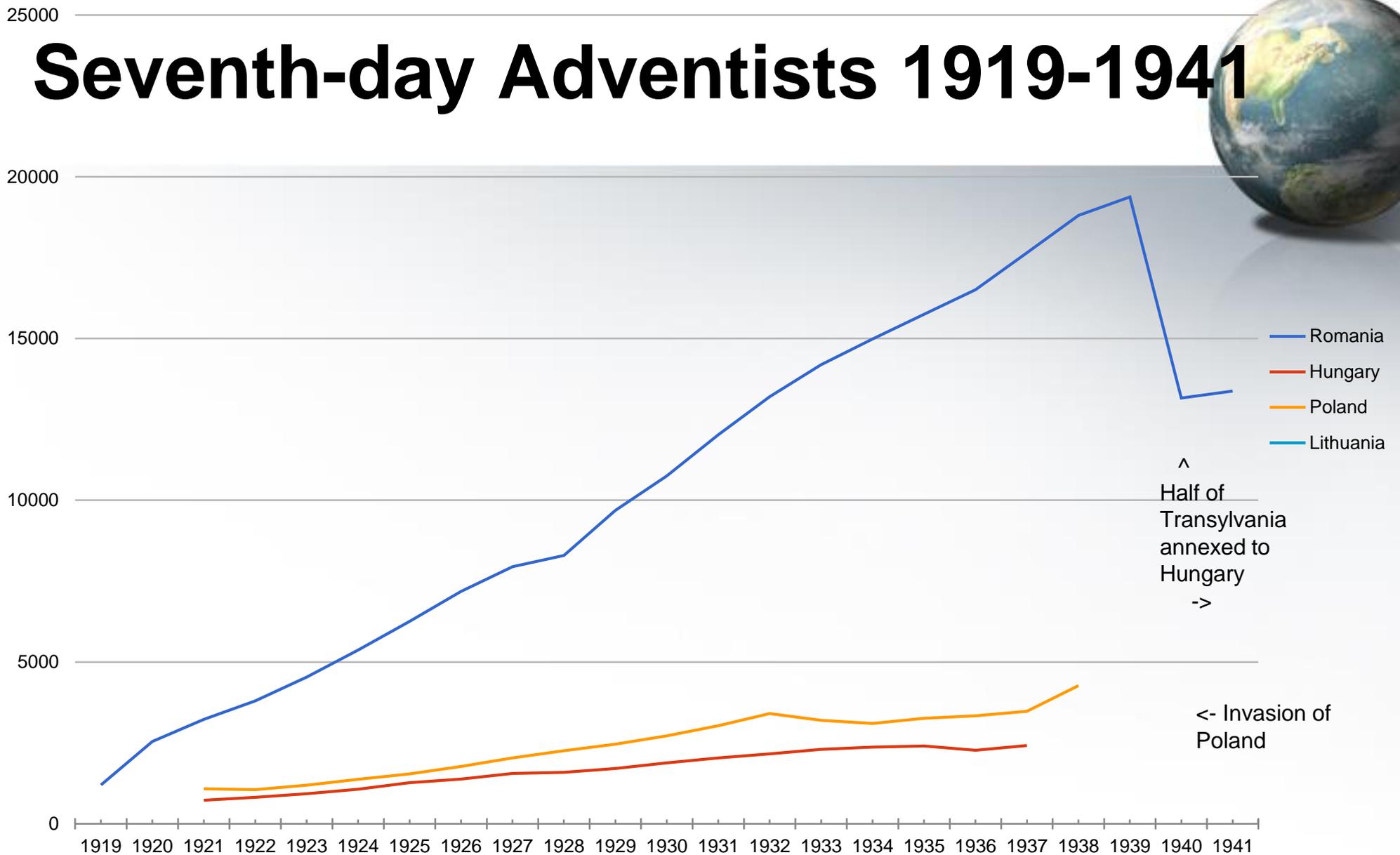


LDS (Mormon) Church in Eastern Europe in the early and mid 20th Century

- Mischa Markow (LDS) – preached in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Russia around the turn of the century, but no congregations formed
- Gathering to Zion – European converts emigrated to United States
- 1939: 13,402 Mormons in Germany and Austria
- At least 997 killed during World War II.



Seventh-day Adventists 1919-1941



SDA presence in Romania since 19th century. Michał Belina Czechowski, former Polish Roman Catholic priest, preached in Europe and settled in Romania. Ludwig R. Conradi organized German Adventists in Romania in 1890s. Johann F. Ginter, a German from Russia, moved to Bucharest in 1904 and organized congregations and training school.

Jehovah's Witnesses 1918-1939



- Prophetic Disappointments of 1918, 1925
- Lost ¾ of members in 1920s
- 1936:
- Romania: 518
- Poland: 714
- Poles in France: 508
- Yugoslavia: 51
- Outreach by:
- Individual witnessing
- Literature distribution
- Lectures broadcast by radio
- Requests by mail

Annual Report of the Central European Office regarding the activity of companies and pioneers in

Austria	Italy	Saar Basin
Belgium	Luxemburg	Switzerland
Danzig	Poland	The Netherlands
France	Rumania	Yugoslavia

from September 16, 1934, to September 15, 1935:

417 organized companies	3,691 company publishers
147 pioneers (average)	(average)
42 auxiliary pioneers (average)	5,388 highest number of publishers
834 Jonadabs (occasional workers)	10,537 Memorial attendants
	8,258 Memorial participants

Country	Publishers (average)	Hours	Books	Booklets	Golden Age Copies	Bibles Sub's
AUSTRIA						
Companies	467	54,877	14,418	169,463	100,823	1 699
Pioneers	3	3,328	1,298	12,637	507	4 24
Auxiliaries	6	4,001	841	9,042	1,219	2 13
BELGIUM						
Companies	55	7,811	635	31,294	3,220	80
Pioneers	9	16,597	1,334	61,262	7,074	53 76
Auxiliaries	5					
DANZIG						
Companies	191	20,658	2,856	85,437	7,613	109 78
FRANCE						
French comp's	133	15,089	1,145	37,600	22,686	65 99
Polish comp's	508	61,245	4,070	139,994	114,034	823 466
German comp's	204	23,467	4,023	84,065	30,843	161 62
Pioneers	41	60,371	26,324	190,374	48,403	176 334
Auxiliaries	3	2,028	565	5,624	2,103	10 11
Shop in Paris			2,010	17,577	3,628	1,097 244
ITALY						
Forwarded to individuals			59	233		
LUXEMBURG						
Companies	12	1,652	602	5,040	1,742	4 57
POLAND						
Companies	714	86,943	8,353	96,452	128,692	1,586
Pioneers	34	51,380	7,887	61,560	34,691	512
Auxiliaries	12					
RUMANIA						
Companies	518	44,477	499	94,829		946
Pioneers	7	13,718	483	46,913		269
Auxiliaries	4					
SAAR BASIN						
Companies	83	10,964	2,465	26,941	11,265	23 19
SWITZERLAND						
Companies	684	76,322	21,121	305,043	103,041	744 63
Pioneers	4	9,908	4,156	33,492	7,694	31 8
Auxiliaries	7					

Persecutions of Jehovah's Witnesses

1939 JW Yearbook



The literature embraced in the above total has been distributed within the territory embraced under the jurisdiction of the Central European office as follows:

Austria	35,069	Italy	85
Belgium	173,662	Luxemburg	13,614
Bulgaria	12,430	Poland	145,242
Czechoslovakia	300,205	Rumania	72,606
Danzig	5,233	Switzerland	417,677
France	560,109	The Netherlands	201,697
Hungary	22,946	Yugoslavia	92,310

Freedom of Worship

There is no liberty in Rumania. Whosoever dares worship God independently of the Ministry of Public Worship has to appear in court and is sentenced to from six months to two years in prison, as a first punishment.

A brother who has just been released from prison told us that all prisons are overcrowded. There is scarcely room to lie on the floor, and they swarm with filth, lice and bugs. Watery soups are the only food given. Members of the various sects are there for having met together. Whole families have been sentenced to six months for that reason, and young mothers have had to leave their babies only a few weeks old. It is impossible to depict the inhuman activity of religious politicians in this country.

The clergy have their own detectives, who are paid by them and have to inform them of all the people are doing not in conformity with their religion. In a house opposite the Society's office a flat has been rented for the lodging of detectives. Some weeks there are up to six men, and then again only women. They are disguised as workmen, peddlers, etc., and watch from their balcony what we do and who comes to us.

POLAND

The conditions in Poland during the past year have been distressing beyond expression in words. The enemy has violently assaulted God's people in its attempt to destroy all their liberty and privilege of serving Jehovah, and much of the Society's literature has been suppressed at the instance of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy-Fascist combine. Says the report of the local servant of the Society:

Circulars containing a list of all this suppressed literature were sent by the postal and railway administration to all offices under their management, with instructions to check carefully all shipments from or to witnesses of Jehovah, to confiscate any forbidden literature and institute criminal procedure against the consignor as well as the consignee.

This made it nearly impossible for us to furnish literature to the pioneers at their posts on the battle front, since the shipments were not delivered and resulted only in lawsuits against us. We were compelled, therefore, to recall the pioneers and put them at the disposal of the companies, to assist in working their remote territory.

We experienced even more difficulty when, in the second half of the year, on March 22, 1938, all office, dispatch and storage

Witnesses in Romania

936: 518

944: 9,624

945: 12,289

3rowth notwithstanding persecution

2entral emphasis on personal evangelism – not a "social club" church

Members prepared to suffer for beliefs

Faith in the Post-War Period



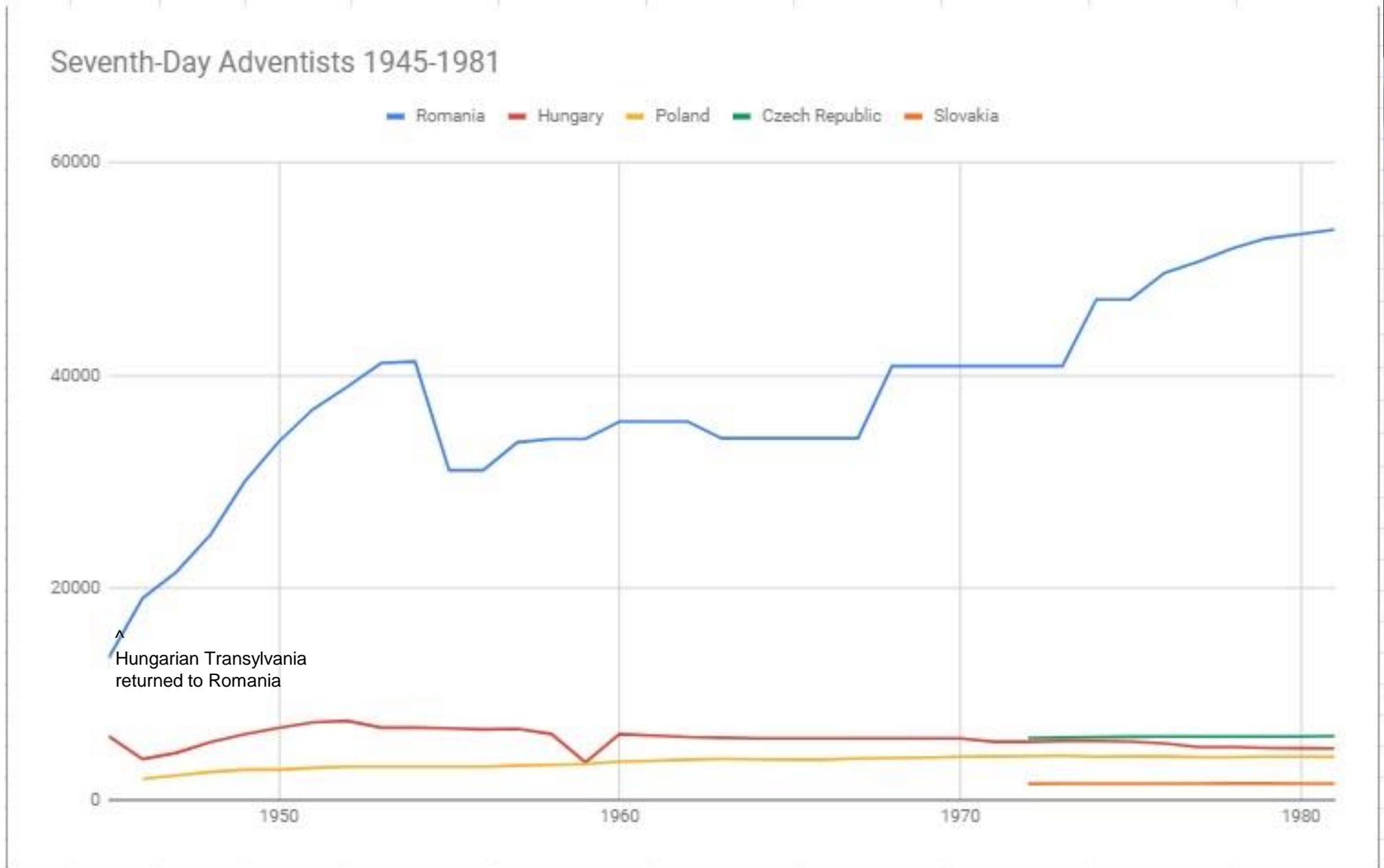
- Implementation of Communism in much of Central/Eastern Europe
- Seventh-day Adventists: data available for some countries throughout Communist period
- Jehovah's Witnesses – data inferred from first year reported of post-communist period and prior “other lands” category.
- Latter-day Saints (Mormon) – no official congregations or registration. A few members worshipped individually or as families.

Latter-day Saints (Mormons) during Communist Period



- No organized congregations
- No proselytism or outreach
- A few isolated believers (primarily in Czechoslovakia and East Germany) who worshipped individually and kept in contact with institutional church

Seventh-day Adventists 1945-1981

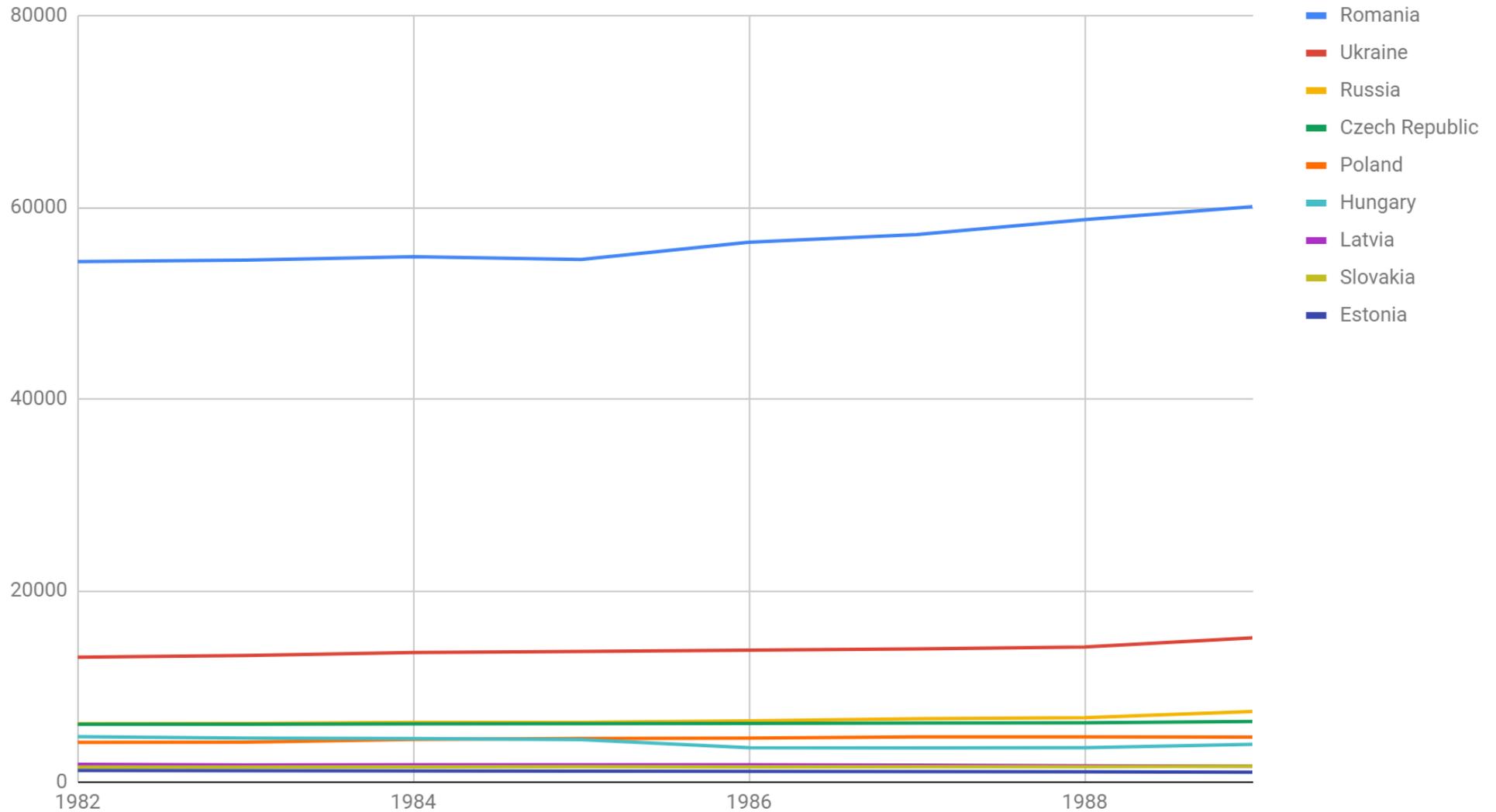


Seventh-day Adventist faith one of fourteen recognized in the Romanian 1948 Law on Cults. Adventist printing house, travel to conferences abroad allowed, despite some challenges

SDAs in the 1980s



Seventh-day Adventists in Eastern Europe, 1982-1989





Jehovah's Witnesses during the Communist Period

- Jehovah's Witnesses in lands where proselytism is not legal or in which activities are not deemed safe to report publicly are listed in annual reports under the category of "Other Lands."
- Jehovah's Witness "average publishers" in "Other Lands:"
 - Initial nations: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Poland, Yugoslavia, +1 (USSR?)
- 1953: 44,127 in 6 nations
- 1954: 58,165 in 6 nations
- 1964: 100,848 in 11 nations
- 1974: 163,486 in 11 nations
- 1978: 205,073 in 16 nations
- 1986: 255,148
- 1987: 267,296
- 1988: 282,280
- 1991: "Other lands" down to 64,027 (22% of 1988 figure)
- Over 75% of "other lands" members pertained to Eastern Bloc
- Witnesses experienced high growth during Communist period



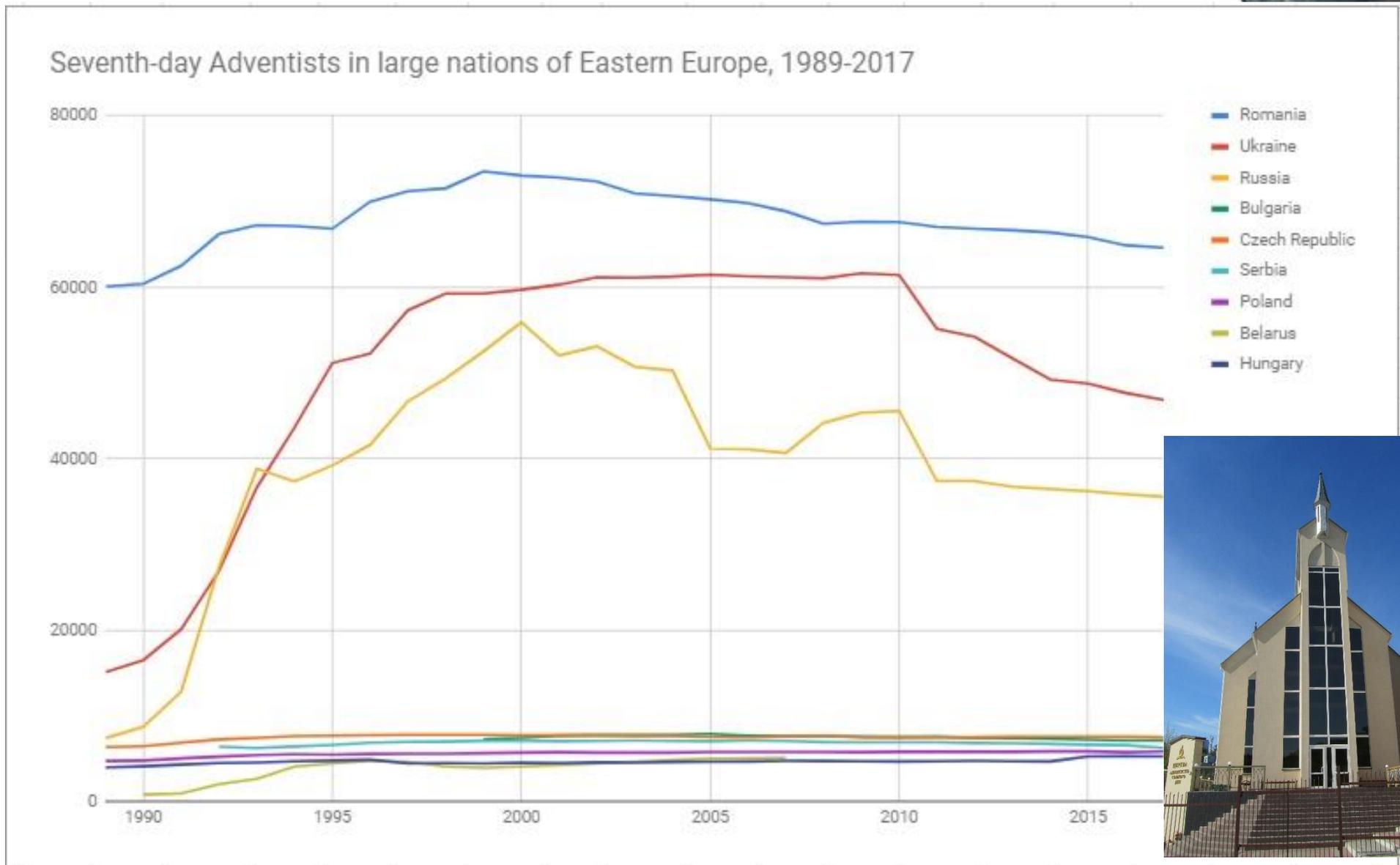
Entered new lands during Communist period



Religion in Post-Communist Era



Seventh-day Adventists, 1989-2017



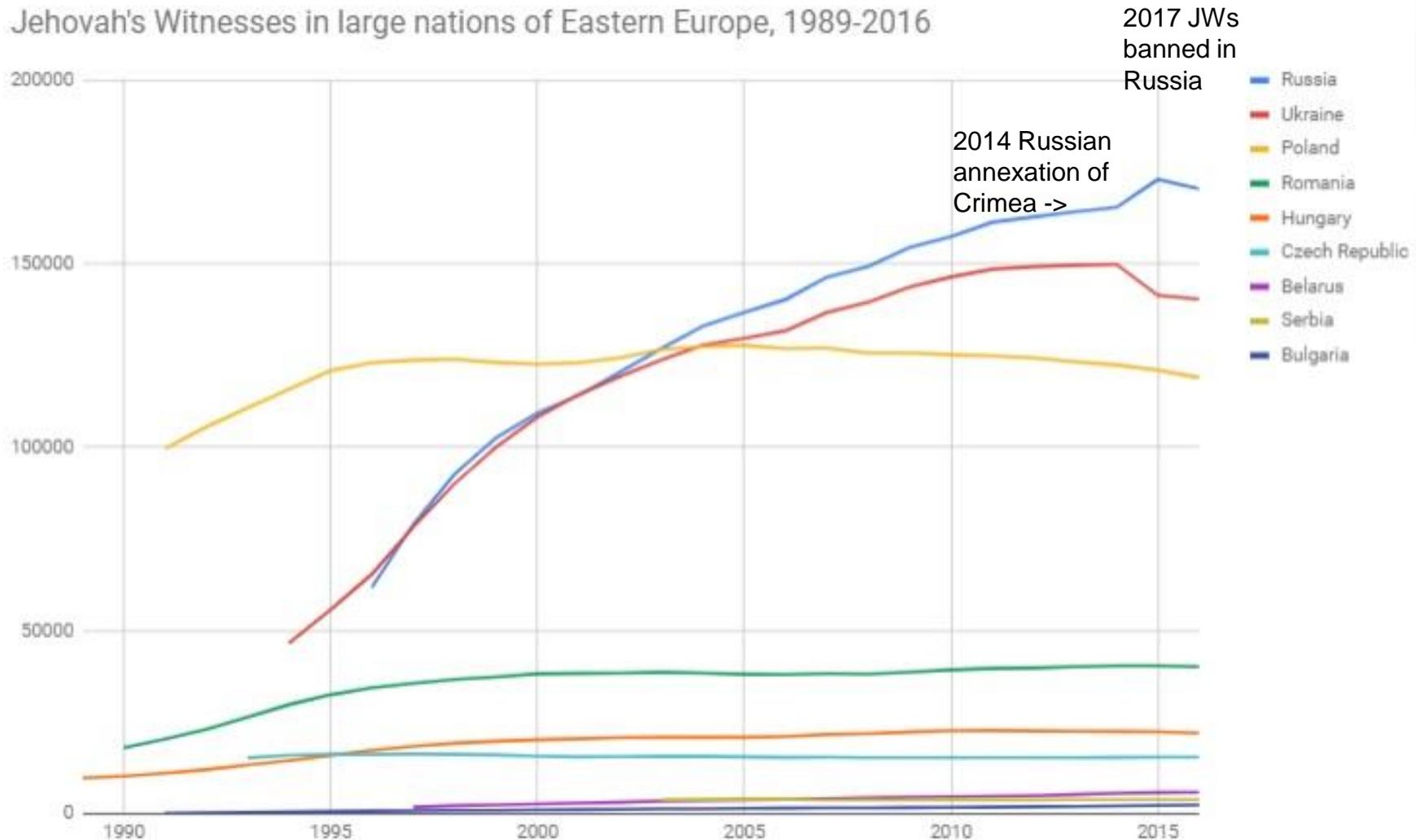
Growth velocity flattened after 1995. Peak membership 1995-2000.
2015 membership at or near 1995 levels. Two “Lost Decades” of stagnation or decline.

Counter-Proselytism Movements in Post-Communist Era



- Deceleration in growth of new religious movements
- Resurgence of national faiths
- Emphasis on traditional religious identities as tied to ethnicity
- Backlash against pluralism
- Representation of foreign-based faiths as unpatriotic
- Laws and regulations restricting religious outreach
- Secularization and Materialism
- European integration

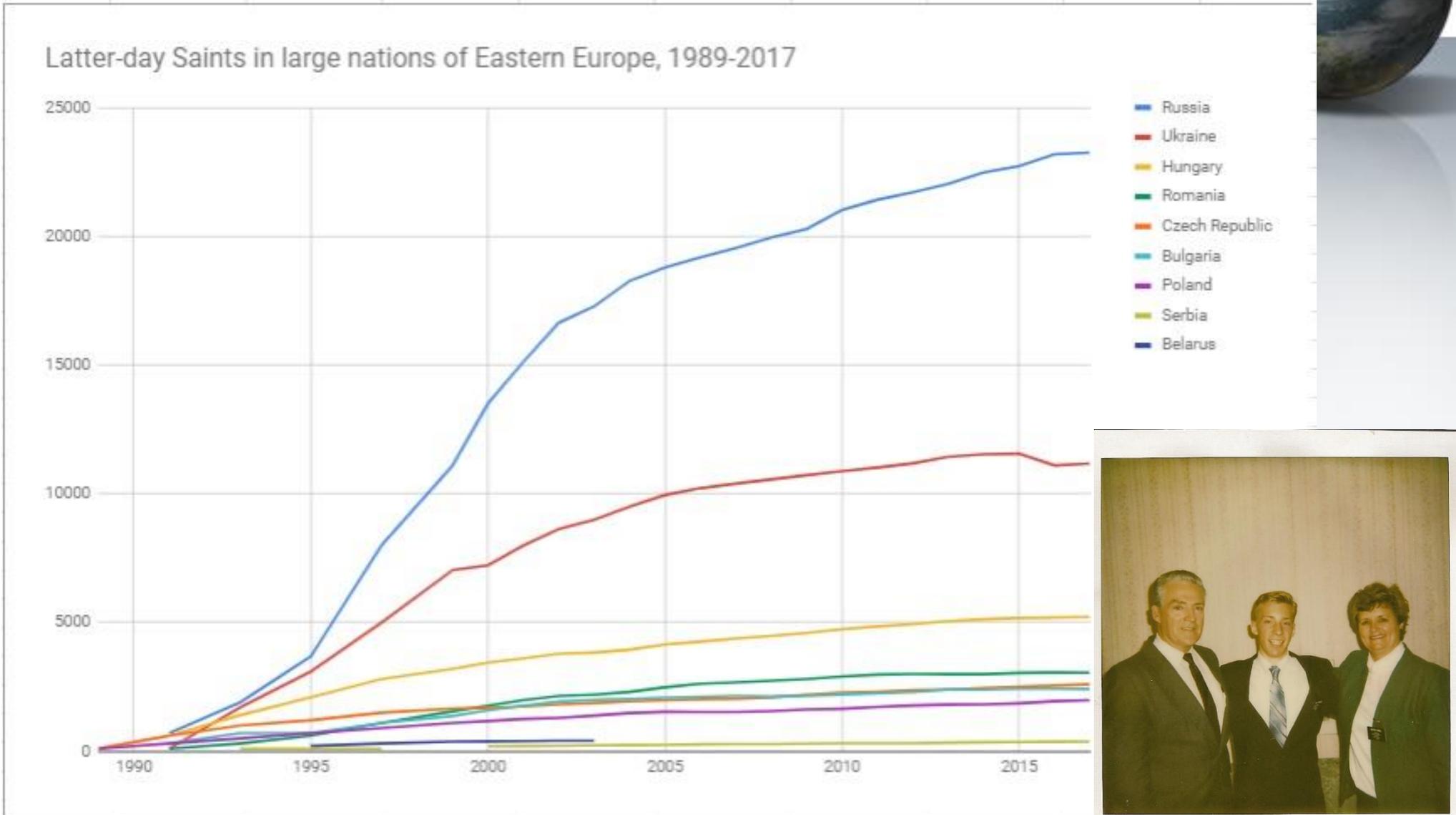
Jehovah's Witnesses, 1989-2016



Poland: JW's main protest movement to Catholic Church during communist years. But stagnant since 1995

Continuing growth at lower velocity. Jehovah's Witnesses resilient with continued expansion in competitive, low growth religious markets where Adventists and Mormons have stagnated or declined (i.e. Western Europe).

Latter-day Saints (Mormons), 1989-2017



LDS started essentially from zero in these countries, de novo growth.

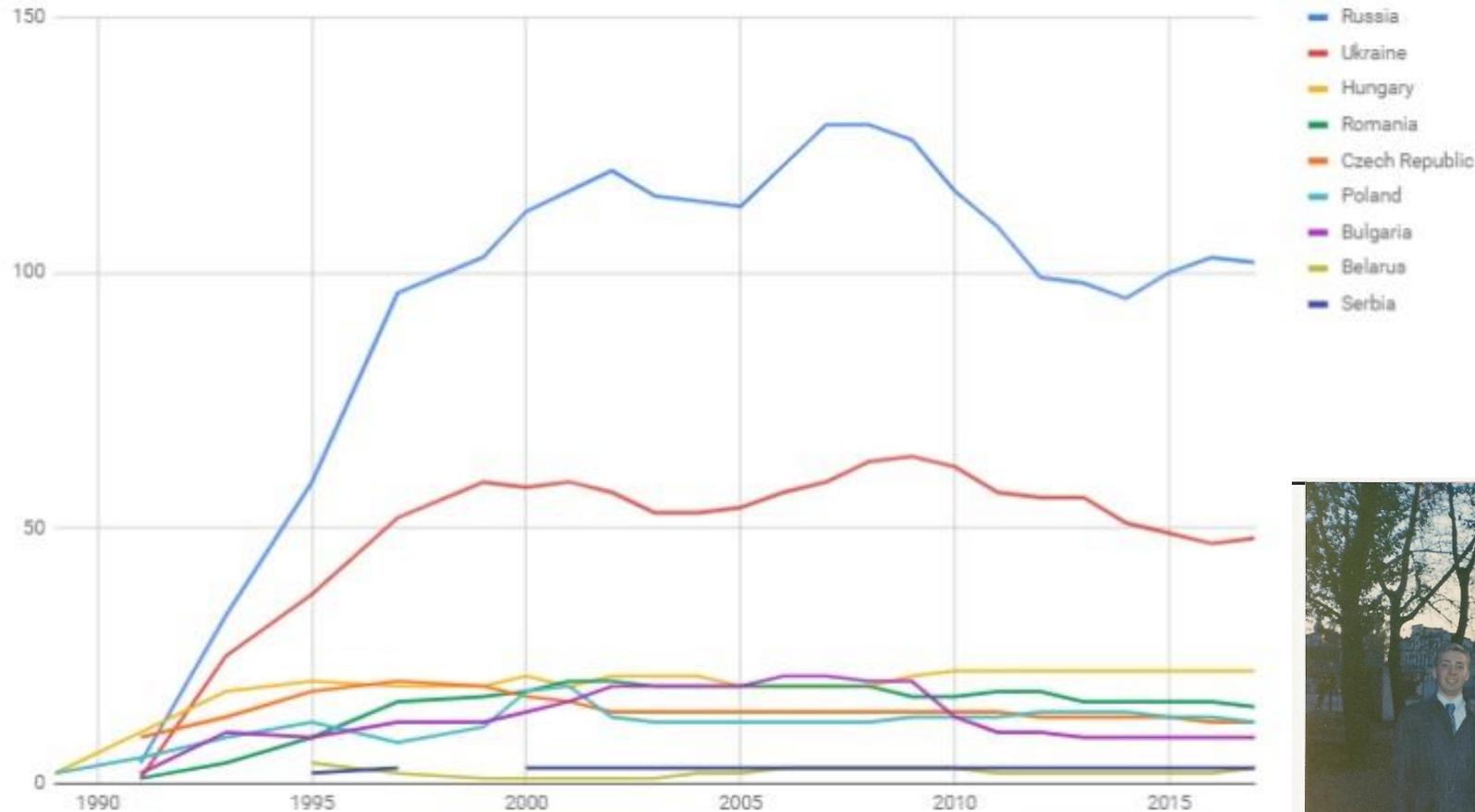
In contrast to SDAs and JW's, official LDS membership DOES NOT imply continued attendance or participation.

Official membership continues to grow even as attendance is flat or declines.

LDS Congregational Growth, 1997-2017

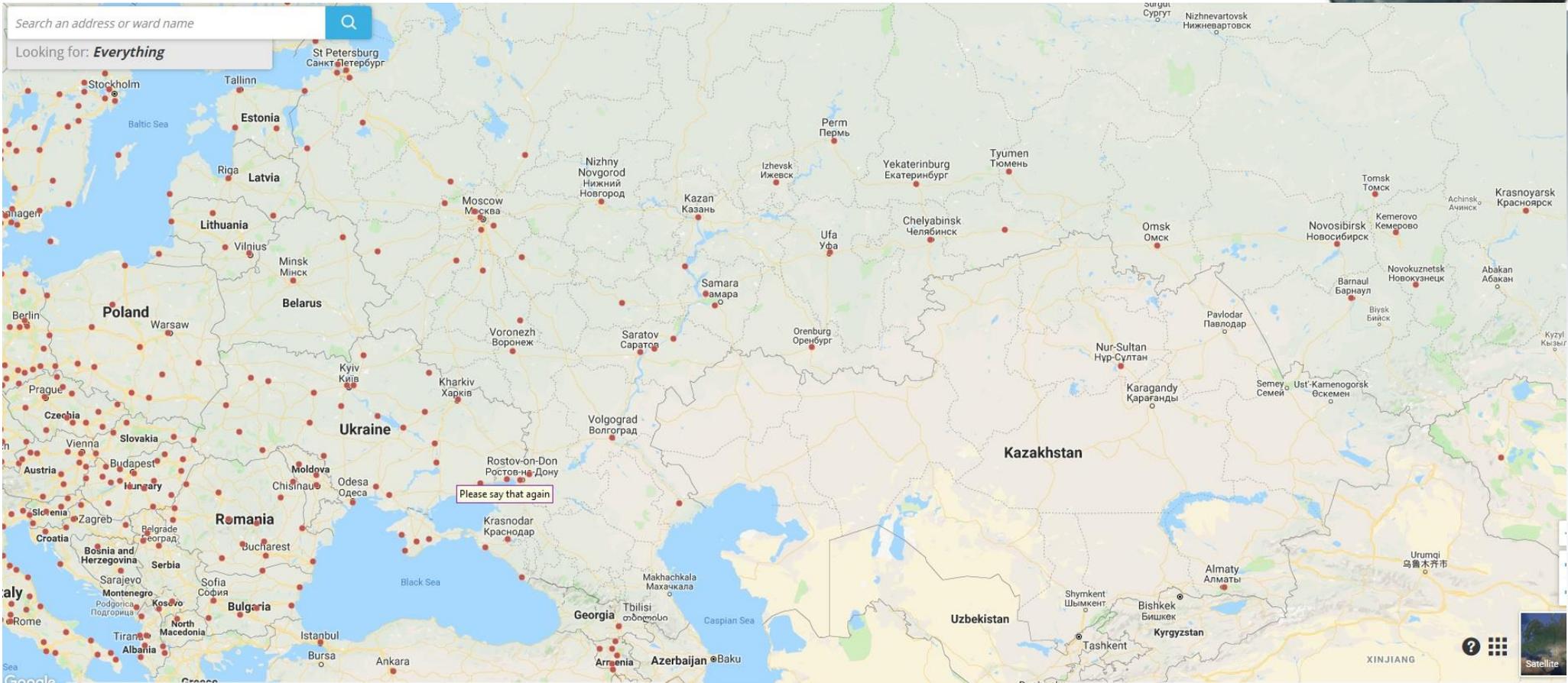


LDS Congregations in large nations of Eastern Europe, 1989-2017



Congregational growth more reflective of actual LDS member participation. Congregations cannot be organized or maintained without active members. Most growth achieved by 1995-2000. Similar to Seventh-day Adventist pattern. 2017 congregations similar to 1997 – two “lost decades.”

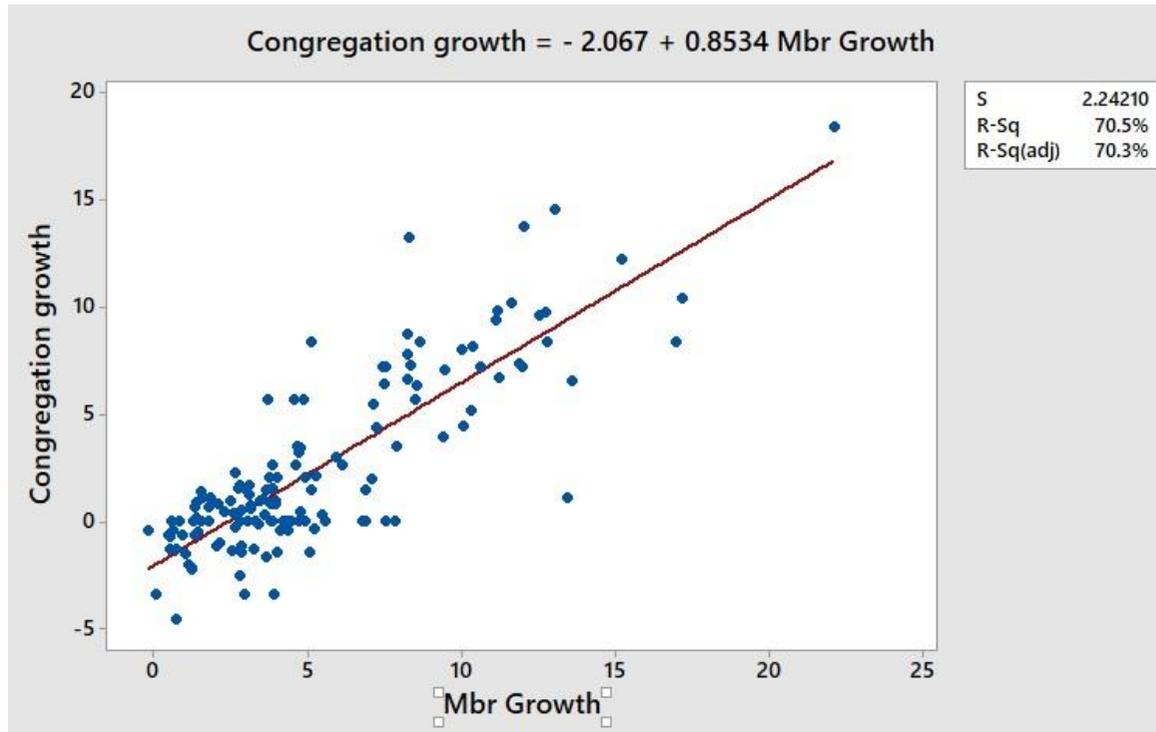
LDS Congregations in Eastern Europe



<https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/maps/meetinghouses>, accessed 9 June 2019



LDS Congregational vs Membership Growth



LDS meetinghouse, Chisenau, Moldova

Average LDS congregational growth rate = 85% of member growth rate minus 2%

Suggests that LDS membership rolls accrue many non-participating members: address unknown file, inactives, disaffiliated, etc.

A 2% annual LDS member growth rate, on average, corresponds to a congregational growth rate of zero over the study period

Less than 2% annual membership growth rate correlates with average congregation loss

Congregational growth predicts 70% of variance in membership growth

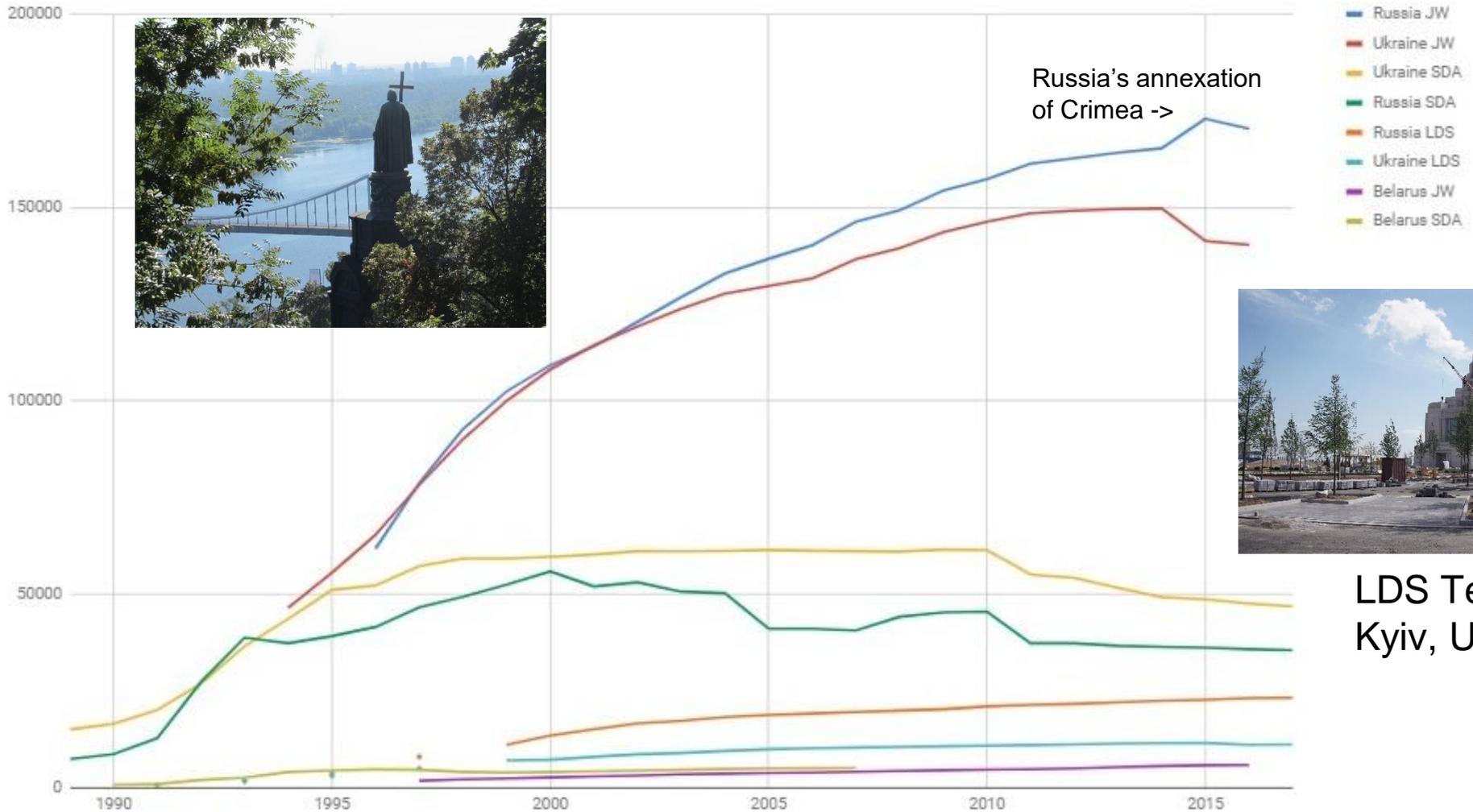
JW and SDA member to congregational growth ratios close to 1:1

Due to higher JW/SDA convert retention and inactives dropped from rolls

Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus



Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Latter-day Saints (Mormons) in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus



Russia's annexation of Crimea ->



LDS Temple, Kyiv, Ukraine

Jehovah's Witnesses: Modest continued growth

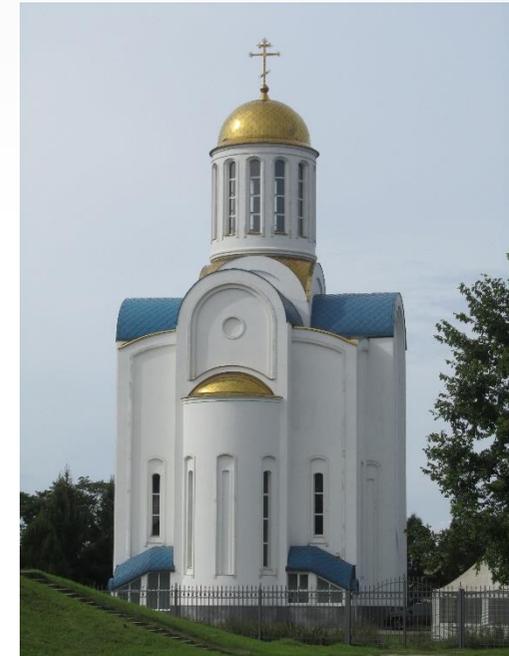
Seventh-day Adventists: Initial growth, then decline to 1995 levels

Latter-day Saints: slow growth in membership; attendance declined to 1995 levels.

Russia Religious Restrictions



- Legislation favoring Russian Orthodox Church
- Close ties of Russian Orthodox Church to government
- Foreign Agent Law – 2012. Difficult registration, extensive audits, mandatory public disclosure of activities as by “foreign agent.”
- Many foreign NGOs have left.
- Foreign missionary visas restricted and cumbersome; must leave and re-enter every three months.
- Long delays or refusal to grant permits to construct church buildings
- Surveillance and “Anti-Terrorism” Laws – 2016
- Restricting proselytism
- Minority faiths cannot share faith in homes or online; only in registered church buildings.
- Cannot speak about religion even if asked outside of church
- No public advertisements



Adaptations to Russian Religion Laws



Seventh-day Adventists have experienced uneven growth, with stable or modestly declining membership in the 2000s towards 1995-2000 levels.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have largely ignored government restrictions on proselytism but have been embroiled in legal controversies in several nations, culminating in an outright ban on Jehovah's Witnesses in Russia following a Russia Supreme Court ruling in 2016. Removed from JW reports in 2017.

- 2015: 38,833 peak publishers in 30 other lands
- 2016: 171,828 peak publishers in Russia, 41,775 in 31 other lands (stopped reporting average publishers) (213,603 total).
- 2015-2016 Other lands increase +1 new country = 2,942
- 2017: 218,095 peak publishers in 33 other lands
- 2018: 223,747 peak publishers in 33 other lands (increase of 10,144 from 2016)
- Witnesses still active and growing in Russia – outlook not unfavorable

The LDS (Mormon) Church is most dependent on foreign missionaries, and has experienced the greatest decline in growth rates. Mormons have tried to scrupulously comply with local laws and regulations. Weekly Mormon church attendance across most countries has declined to rates of the mid-1990s.

Saint Petersburg, Russia:

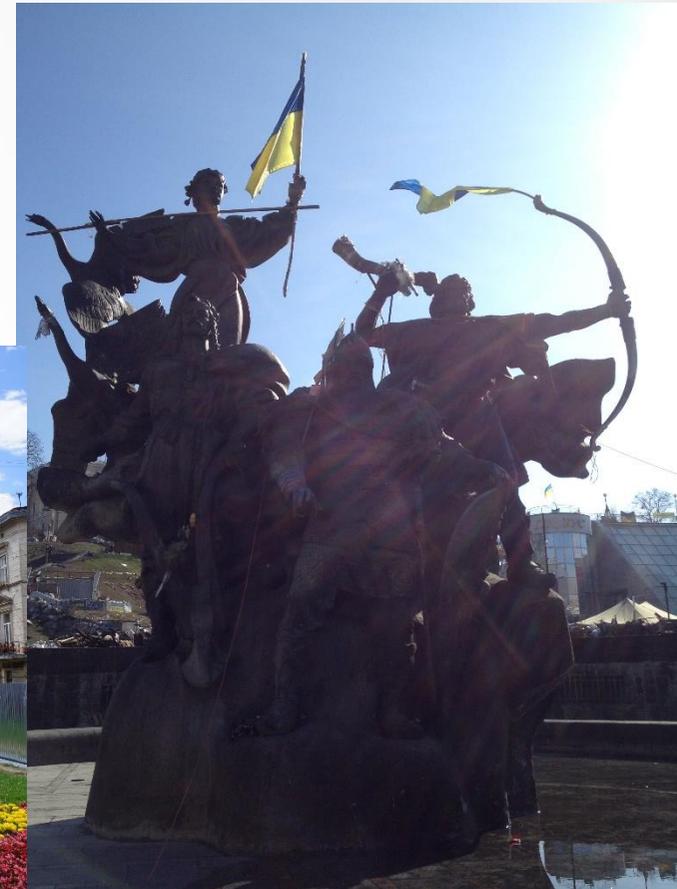
mid-1992: 5 congregations, 200 attending, 500 nominal members

mid-1994: 15 congregations, 500 attending, 1500 nominal members

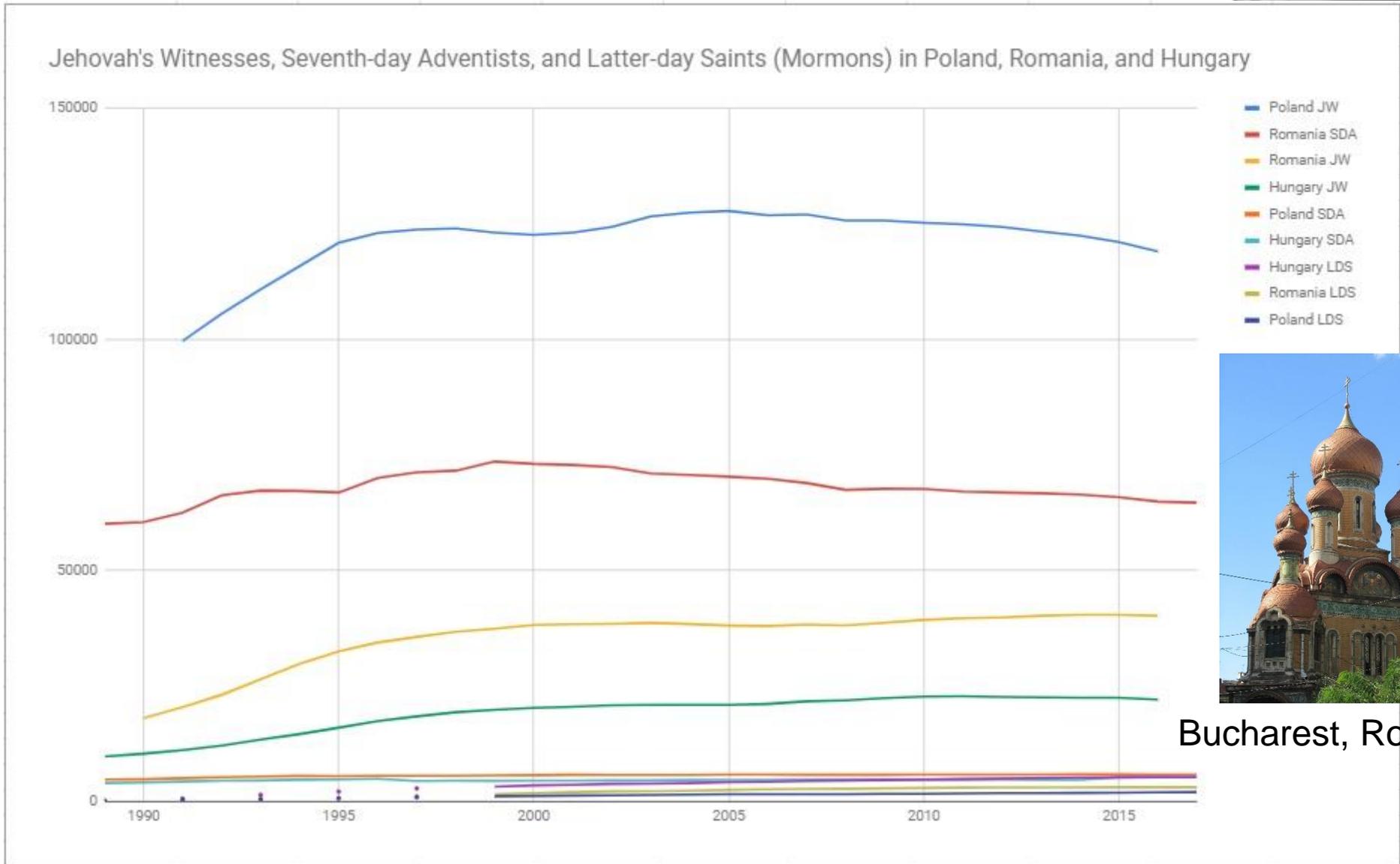
mid-2019: 4 congregations, 300 attending, 3000+ nominal members
(most inactive or disaffiliated)

Belarus and Ukraine

- Belarus – restrictions on proselytism since inception
- Church growth through word of mouth of members
- Ukraine – greater religious freedom
- Greater religious pluralism and tolerance
- Highest receptivity per capita among Eastern Slavic nations



Poland, Romania, and Hungary



Bucharest, Romania

JWs growing in Romania, Hungary

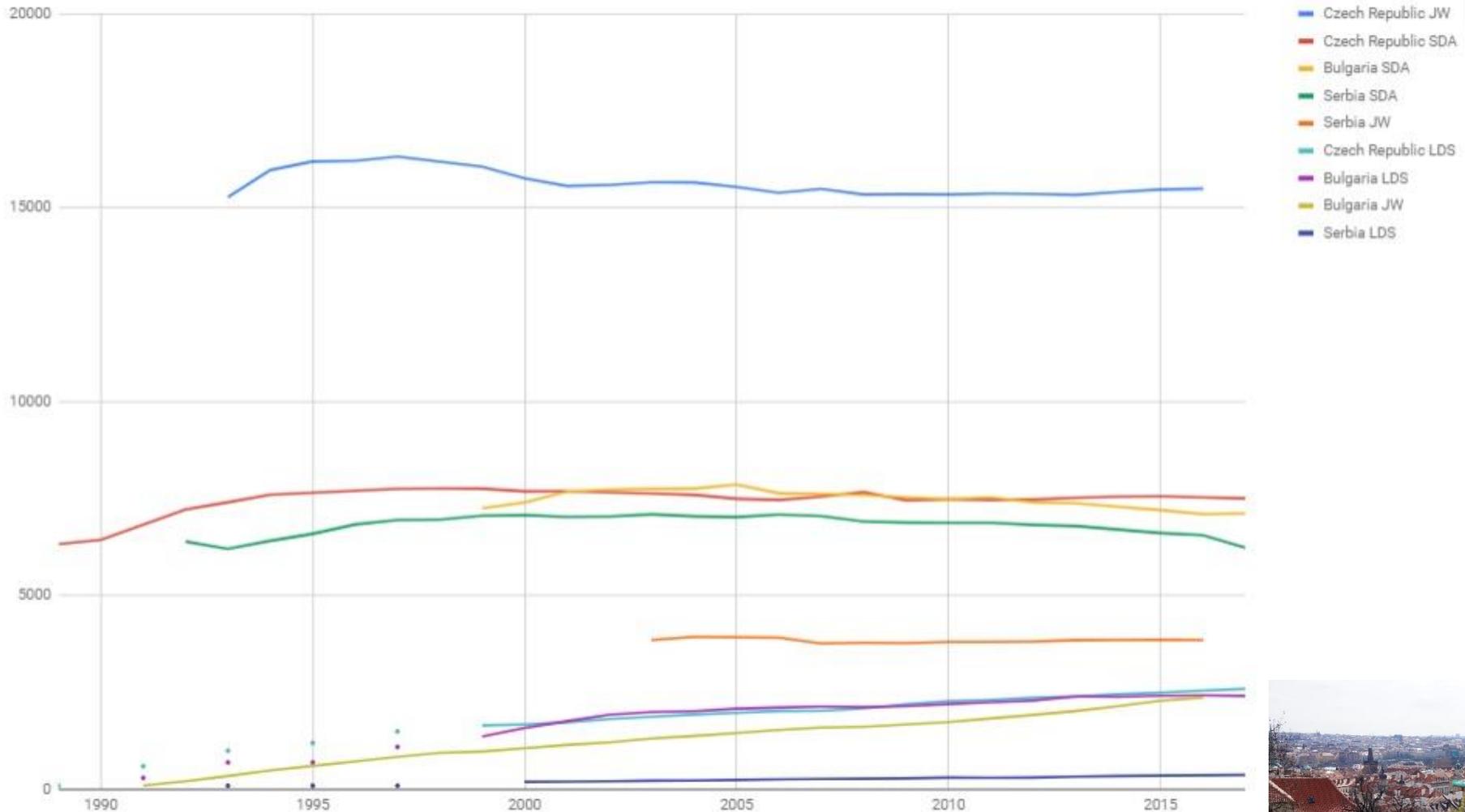
JWs stagnant in Poland, SDAs in Romania since 1995

Others flat or low numbers

Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Serbia



Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-day Adventists, and Latter-day Saints (Mormons) in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Serbia

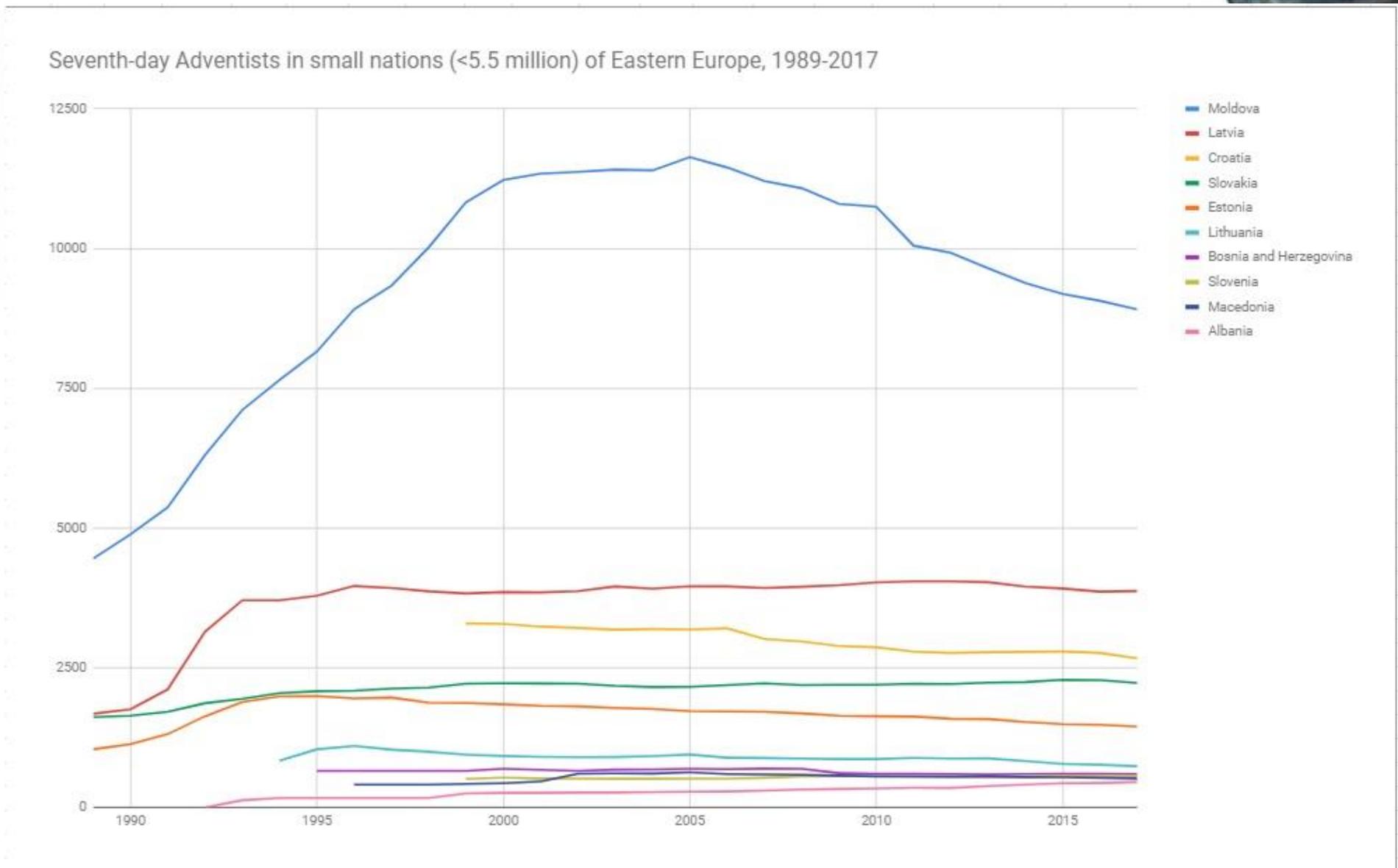


Growth of JW's in Bulgaria
Otherwise little change since 1995





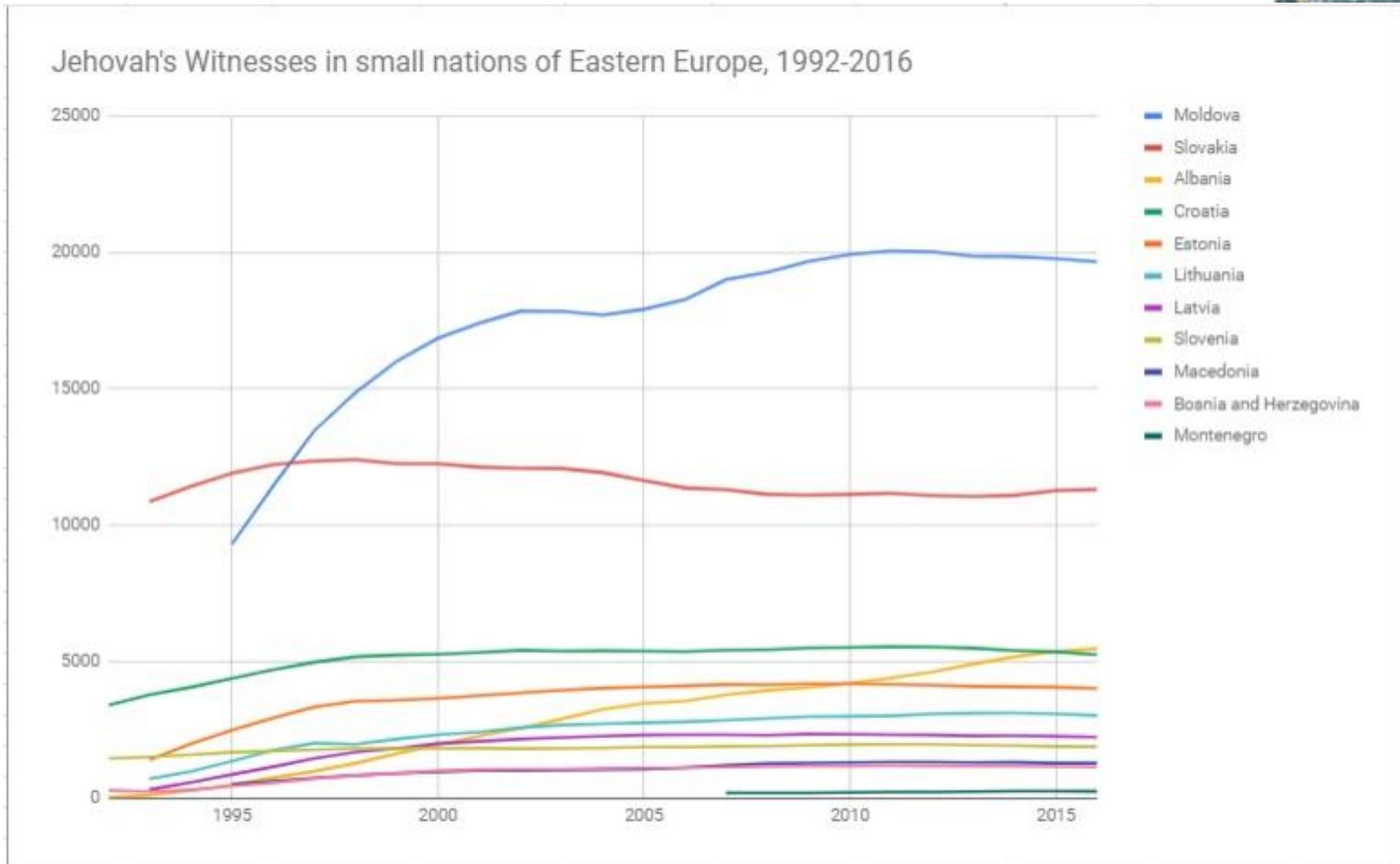
Seventh-day Adventists in Small Nations



Most growth had been achieved by 1995.

In Moldova, membership peaked in 2005, and by 2017 declined to 1997 levels.

Jehovah's Witnesses in Small Nations



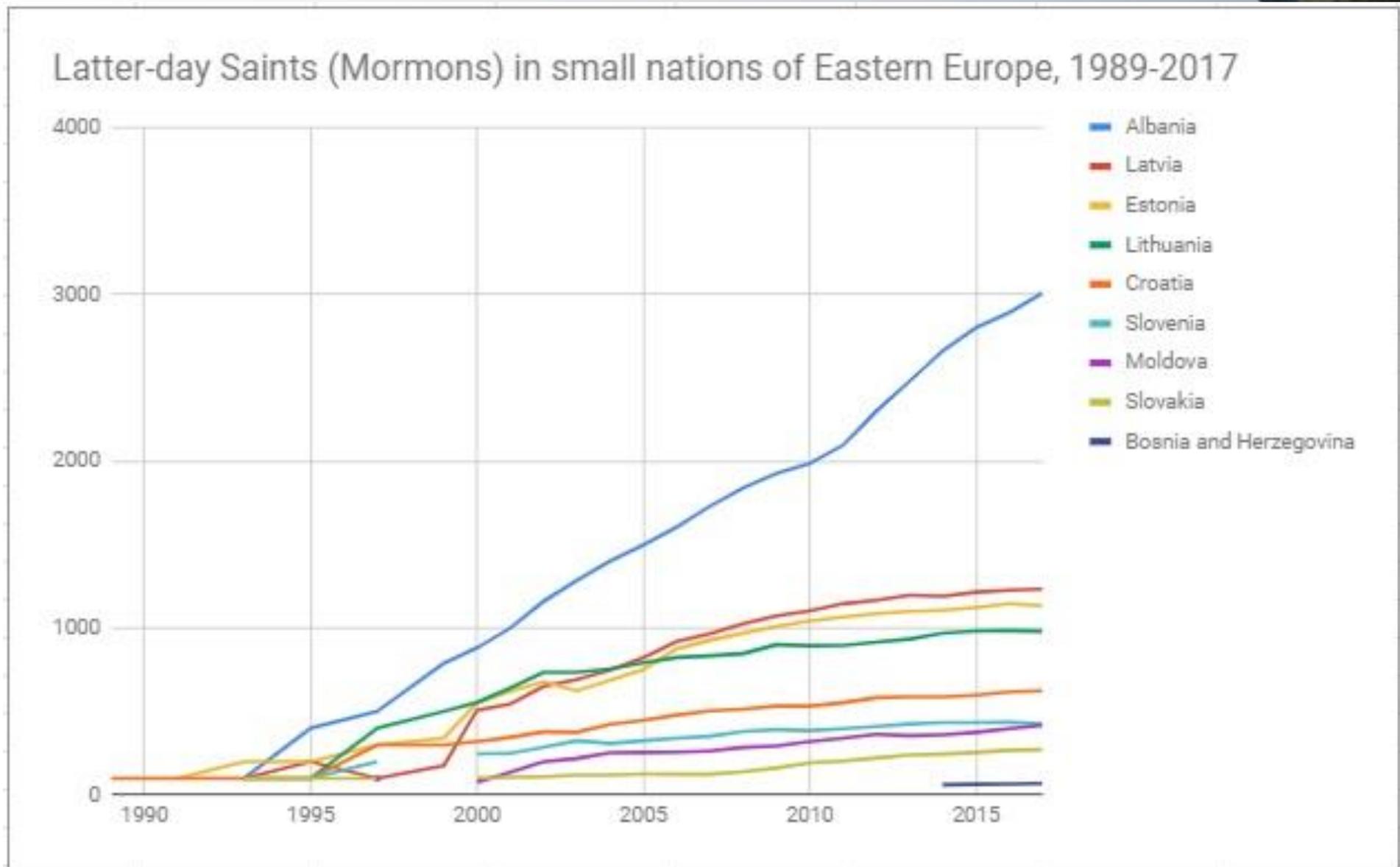
Large increases in Moldova, Albania

Slovakia near 1995 levels in 2015

Meaningful growth achieved post-2000 in most other nations.

No real declines, no lost decades.

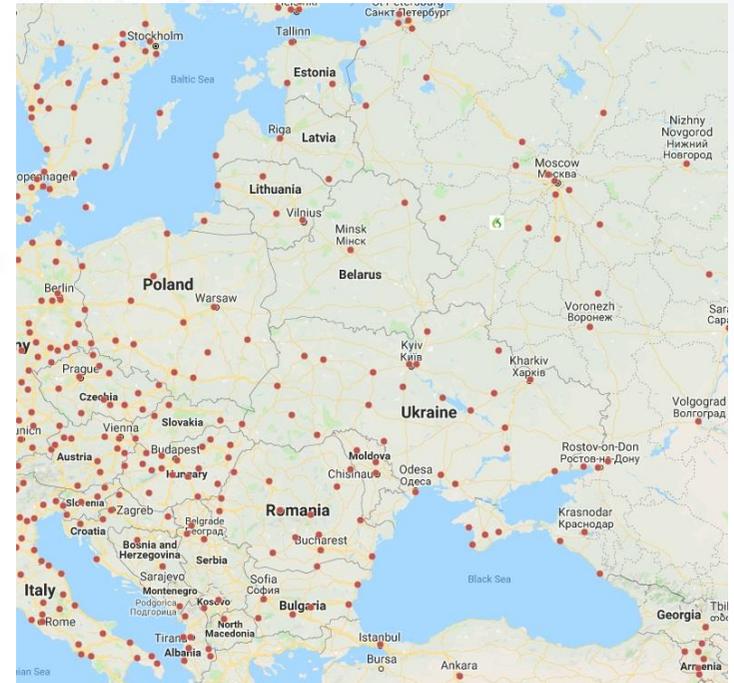
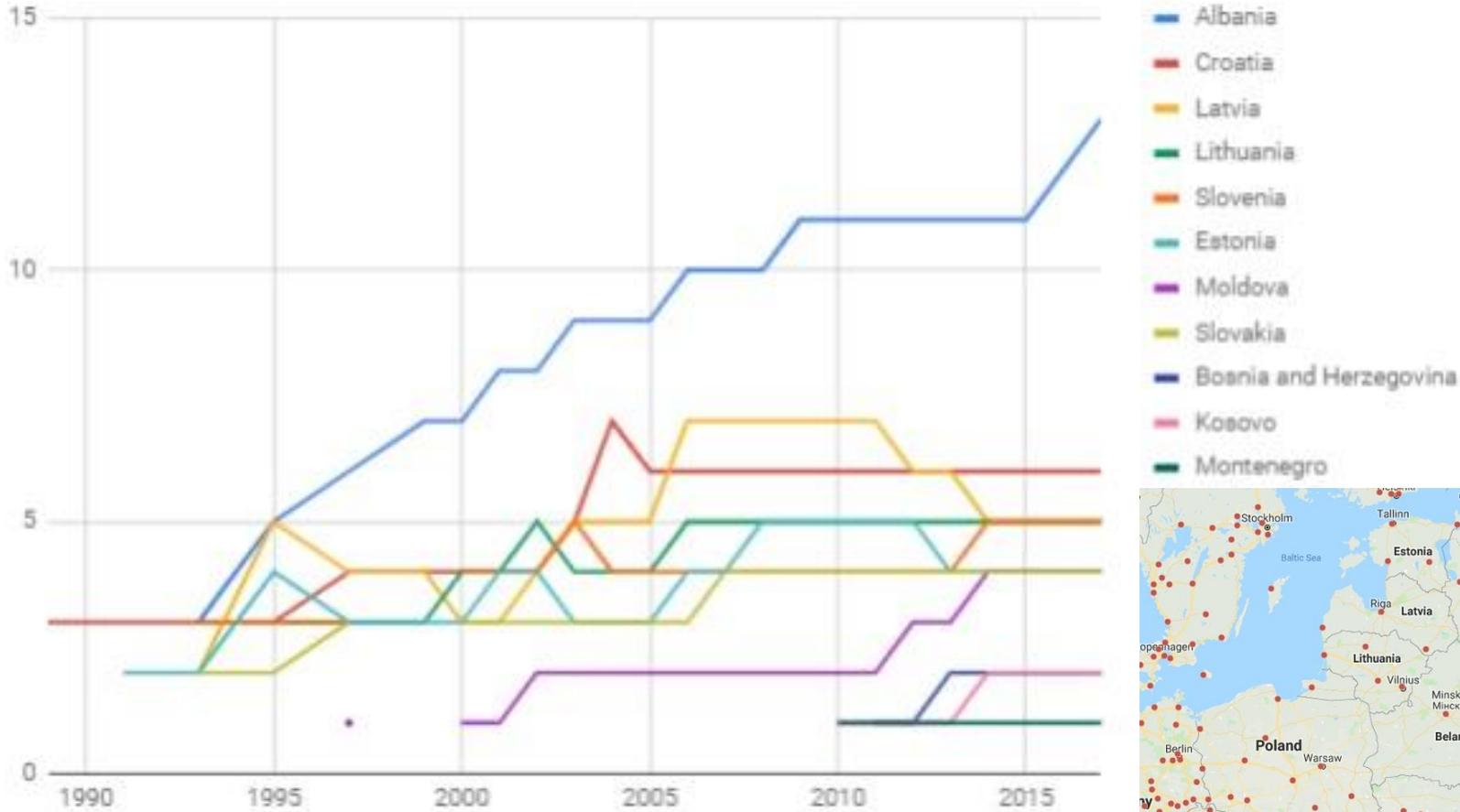
Latter-day Saints in Small Nations



LDS Congregations in Small Nations



LDS (Mormon) Congregations in small nations of Eastern Europe, 1989-2017



Real growth in many small nations
Founder Effect



" КОЛПИНСКИЙ ИНТЕРЕС" ←

НА ЭТОТ РАЗ МОРМОНЫ

Зарубежные религиозные миссии, похоже, становятся обычным делом в Колпино. «Колпинский интерес» старается держать в курсе своих читателей об этом явлении.

Буквально на днях редакцию посетили два молодых американца, отрекомендовавшиеся как старейшина Стюарт и старейшина Паркер - представители церкви Иисуса Христа святых последних дней.

стальных дней, и вот, что рассказал о себе и миссии Стюарт.

- Недавно в Колпино приехали мы, четверо миссионеров из Церкви Иисуса Христа святых последних дней, так же известные как мормоны. Приехали сюда на два года, чтобы донести свою веру до людей здесь, в России.

163 года назад, когда наша Церковь была основана, религиозная нетерпимость стала причиной её преследования и гонений, но теперь Церковь распространена по всему миру, в 144 странах, и растёт быстрее всех других.

Почему у неё такая огромная способность привлекать к себе последователей?

Она отличается от других церквей тем, что у неё то же устройство, которое существовало в первоначальной церкви Христа: она руководима сегодня пророками и 12-ю апостолами, которые считаются членами церкви и получают откровения от Бога.

Церковь Иисуса Христа святых последних дней сейчас распространяется в России. 9 приходов существуют в Санкт-Петербурге, 15 - в Москве, 13 - в Киеве. Служат миссионеры и в Выборге, Донецке, Одессе, Харькове, Самаре, Нижнем Новгороде и других городах.

Основной единицей Церкви является семья. И Церковь - не просто место, куда мы ходим по воскресеньям, а образ жизни. Самая важная роль Церкви - укрепление семьи. Пророки в наши дни сказали её членам:

- Помните, что самое важное из того, что вы когда-нибудь бу-

дете делать во имя Господа своего, есть то, что вы сделаете в стенах своего дома».

«Семейная жизнь - наилучший метод достижения счастья в этом мире - это прекрасный образец того, что ждёт нас в мире следующем.»

«Нет таких успехов, которые могли бы компенсировать провал в доме».

Семейное чтение священных писаний Библии и книги Мормона вместе с братьями, сёстрами и родителями укрепило моё желание служить Господу и передать Его слово тем, кто ищет истины. Книгу Мормона много раз прочитал и уверен, что в ней слова Иисуса Христа.

Крещение в Церкви Иисуса Христа - святой обряд. Это обет на всю жизнь повиноваться заповедям Иисуса Христа. Поэтому до крещения человек должен провести шесть уроков (проводятся вместе с миссионерами), каждый из которых посвящён особой теме, и желать следовать Христу до конца. Эти бесплатные уроки мы проводим с желающими на квартирах в течение недели. Поскольку у нас нет профессионального духовенства, члены Церкви должны участвовать в её жизни и ежедневно изучать священные писания.

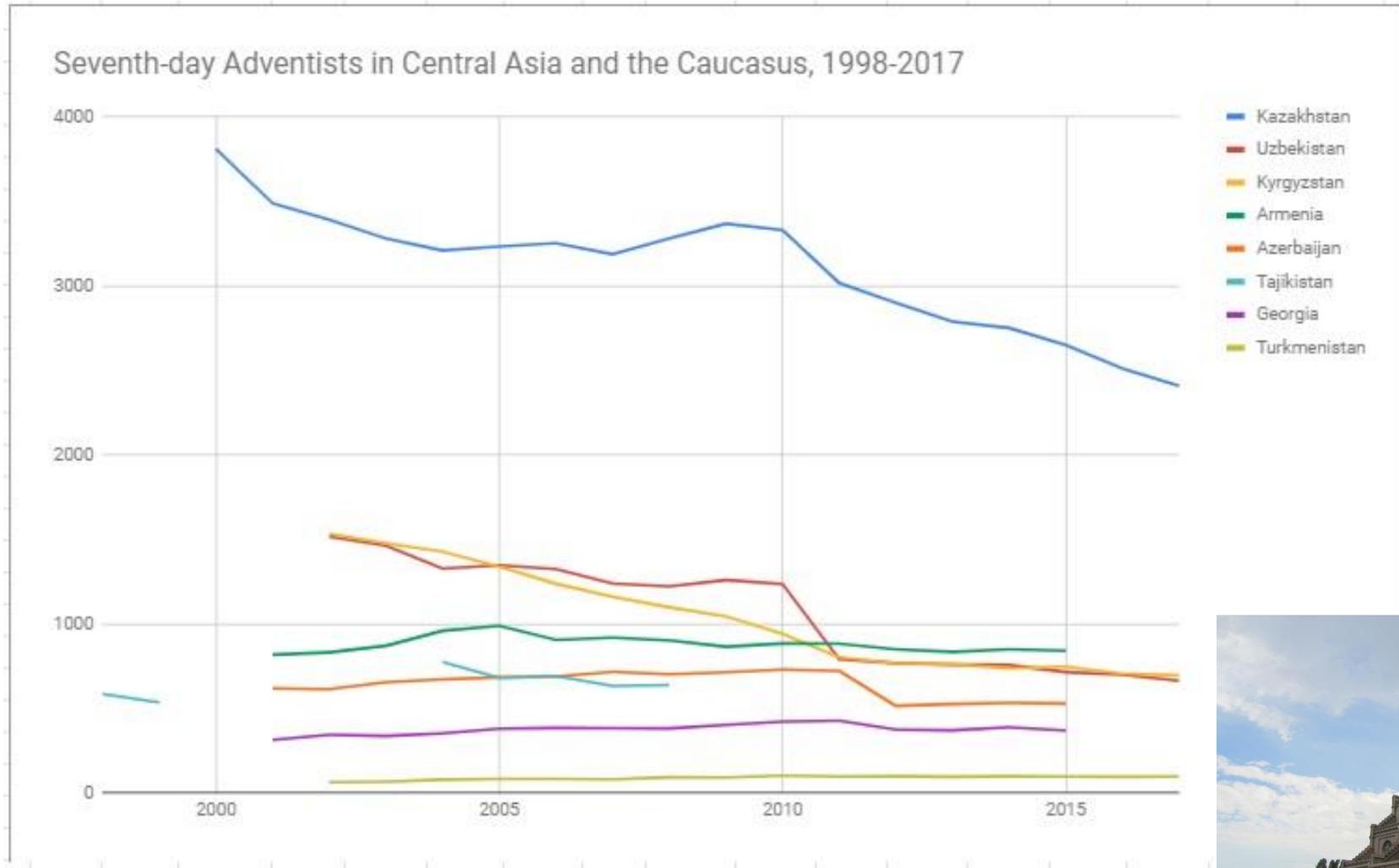
P.S. Такая вот концепция. Приятно удивила молодость старейшин миссионеров и прекрасное знание русского.

На снимке: справа налево Стюарт и Паркер

Фото: Сергея МУРУНОВА



SDAs in Central Asia and Caucasus



Lutheran Church, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

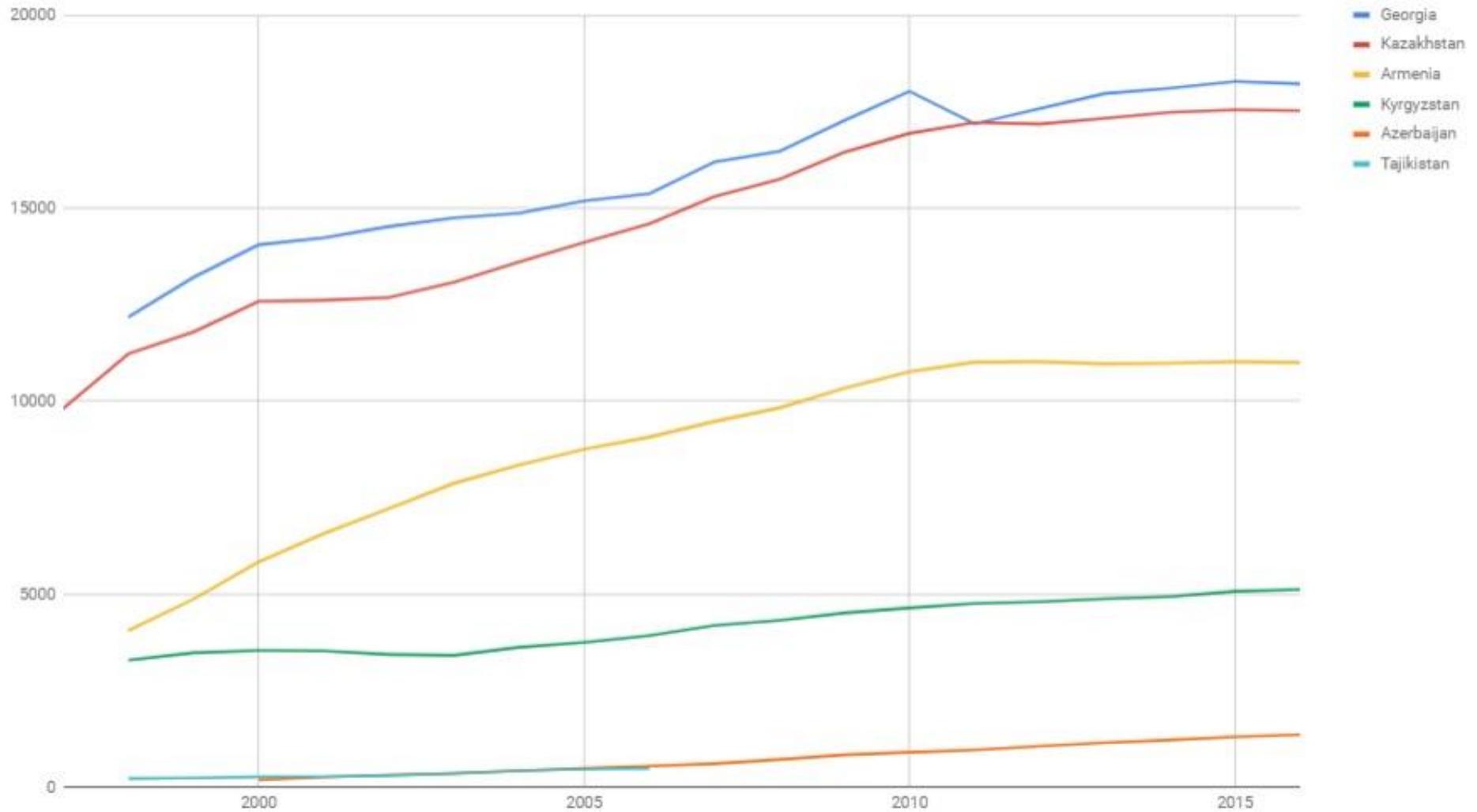
Decline or stagnation

Membership dropped from 8,280 (2002) to 5,936 (2015) across the region

JWs in Central Asia and the Caucasus



Jehovah's Witnesses in the Caucasus and Central Asia, 1997-2016

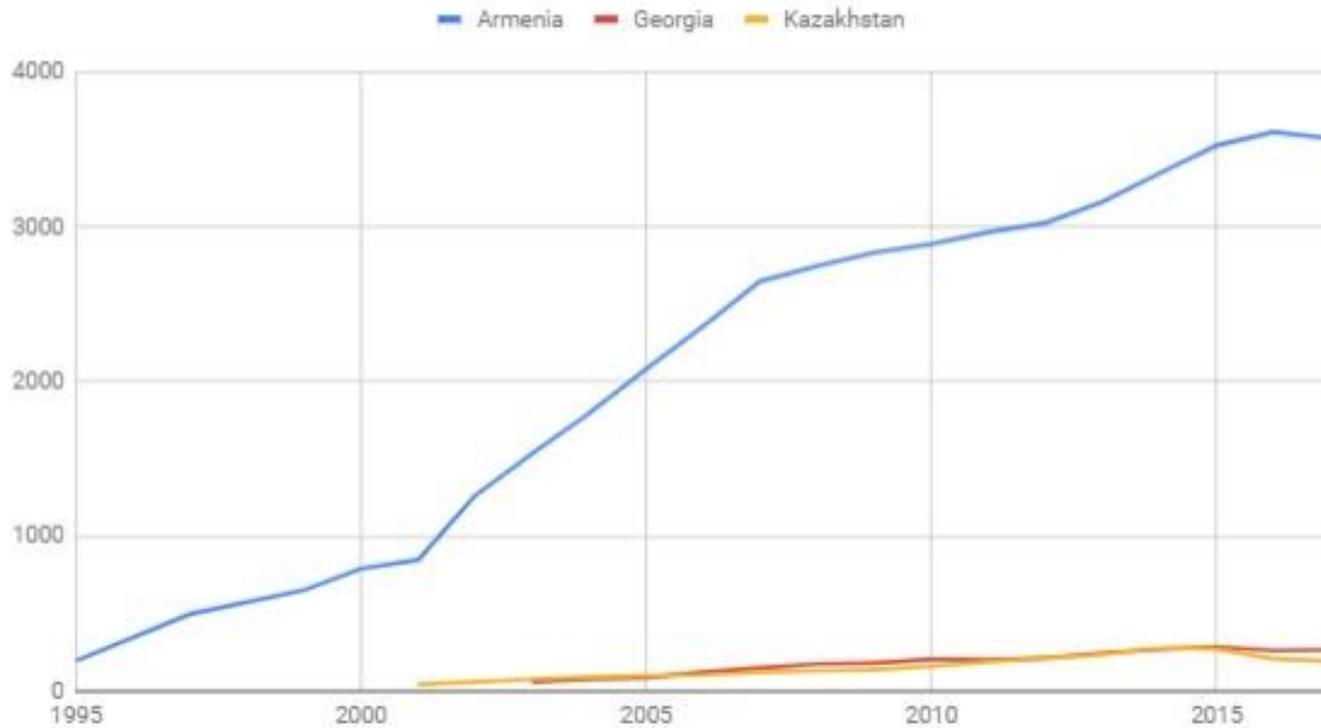


Modest but continuing growth in all nations

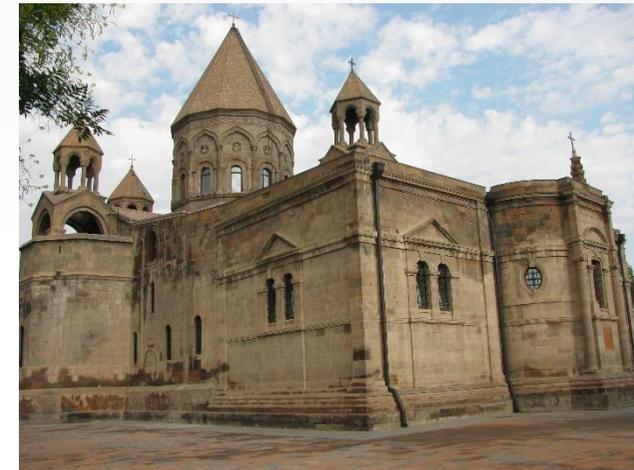
LDS in Central Asia and the Caucasus



Latter-day Saints in Central Asia and the Caucasus, 1995-2017



Presence in only three nations
Founder effect in Armenia – Huntsman Chemical
Low membership in Kazakhstan and Georgia

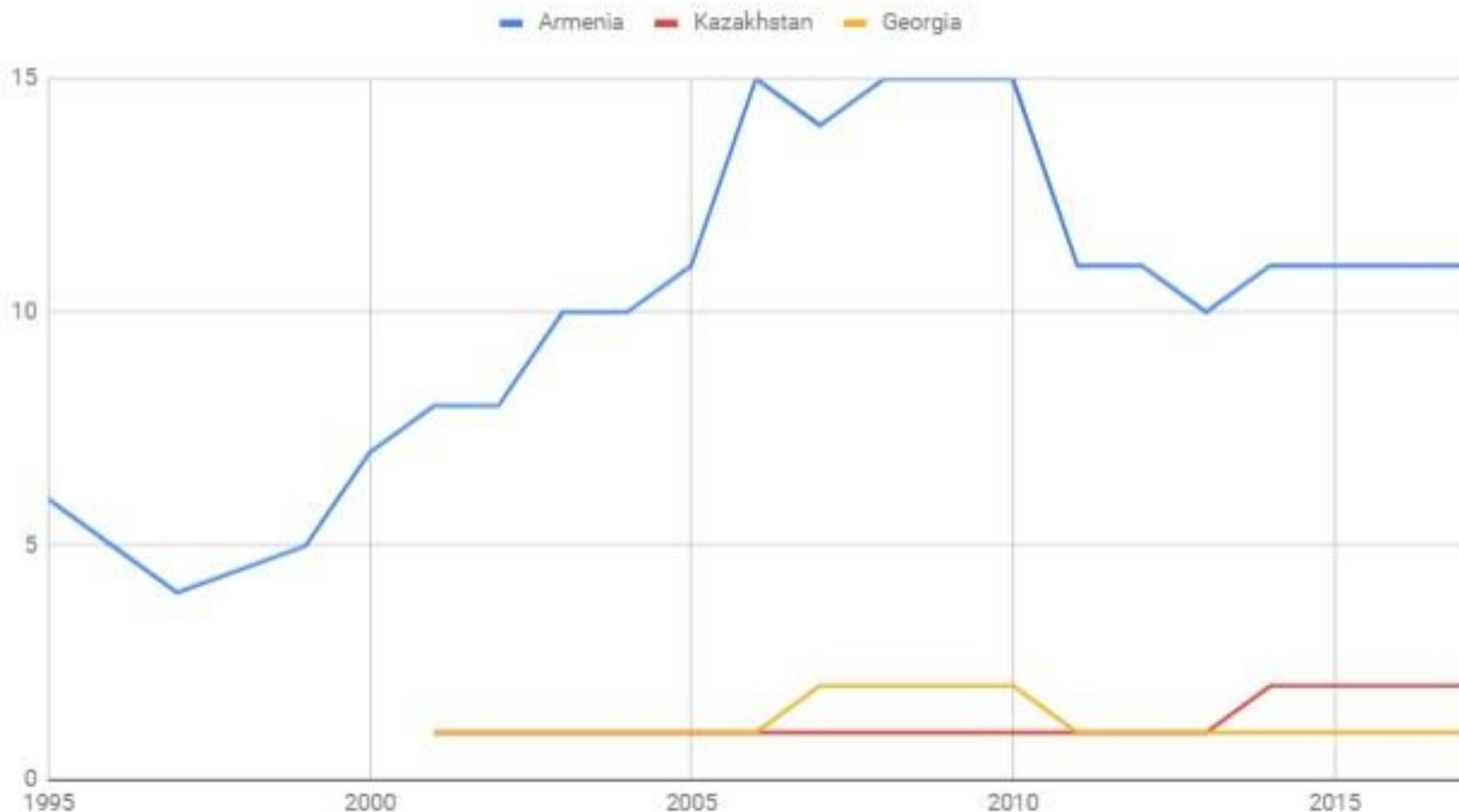


Echmiadzin, Armenia

LDS Congregations in Central Asia & Caucasus



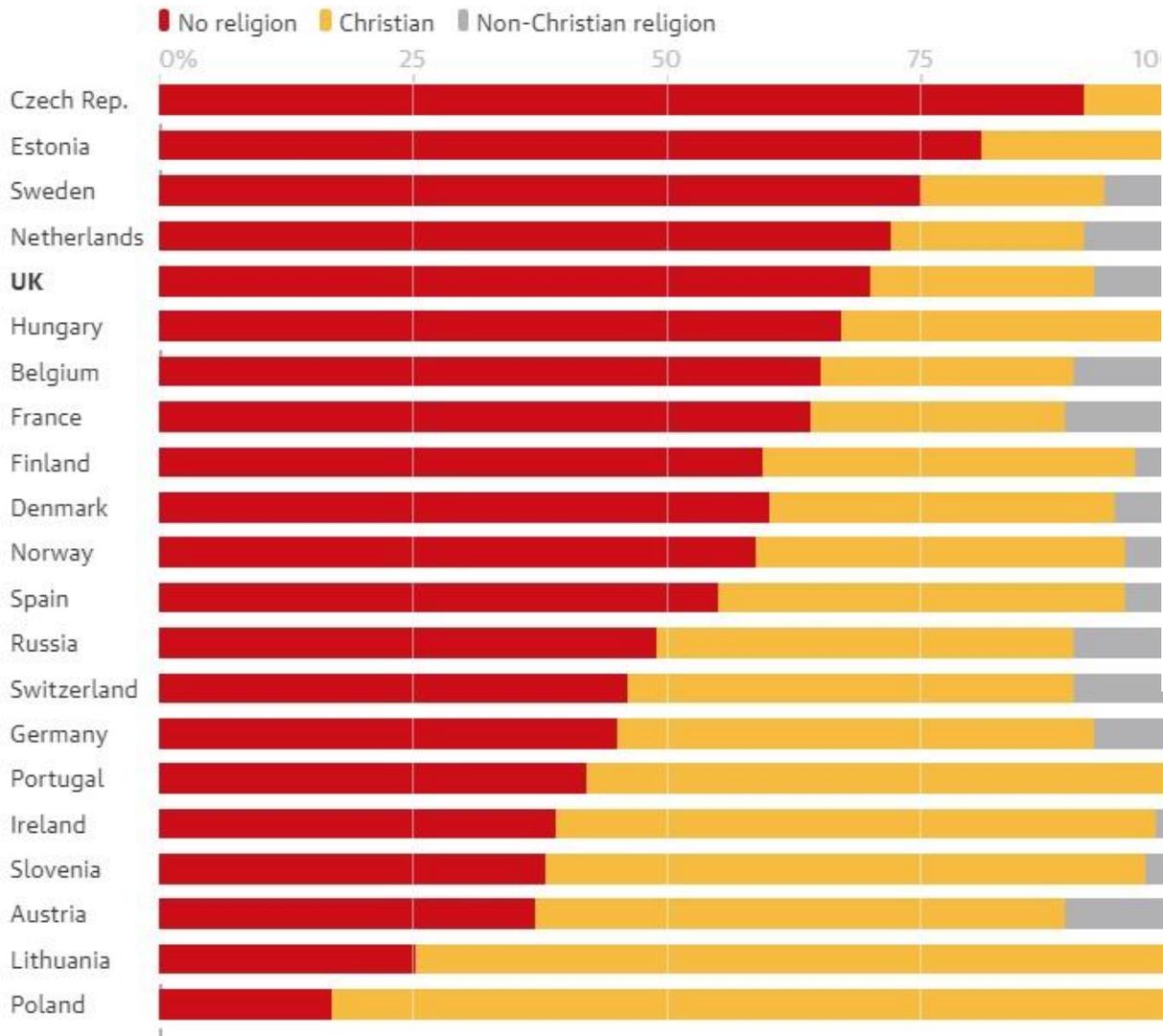
LDS (Mormon) Congregations in Central Asia and the Caucasus, 1995-2017



Religiosity among Young Adults

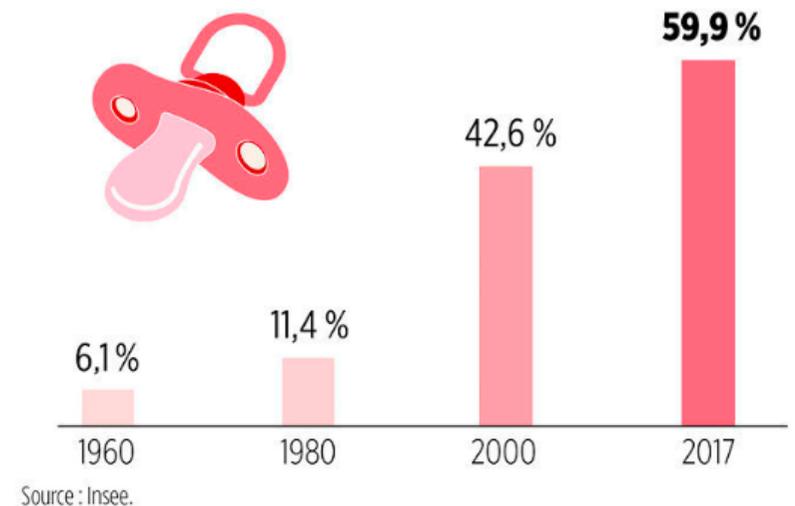


How 16- to 29-year-olds self-identify, %



Naissances hors mariage

« Ces enfants nés “dans le péché” sont demeurés rares jusqu’à l’orée des années 1980. »

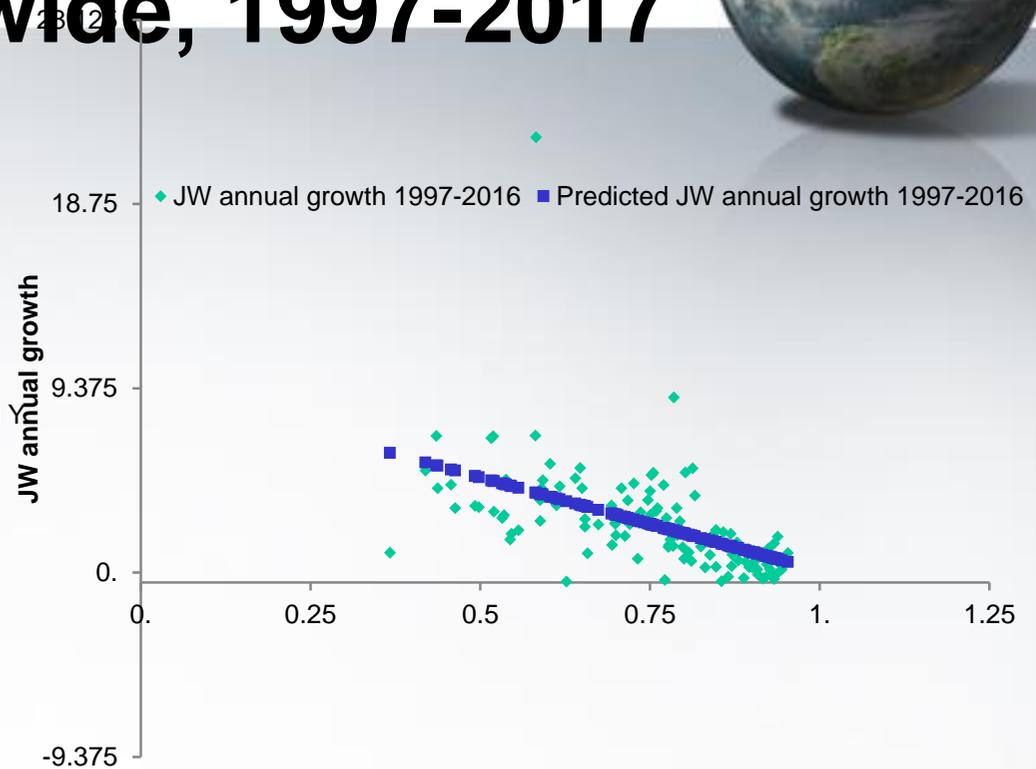
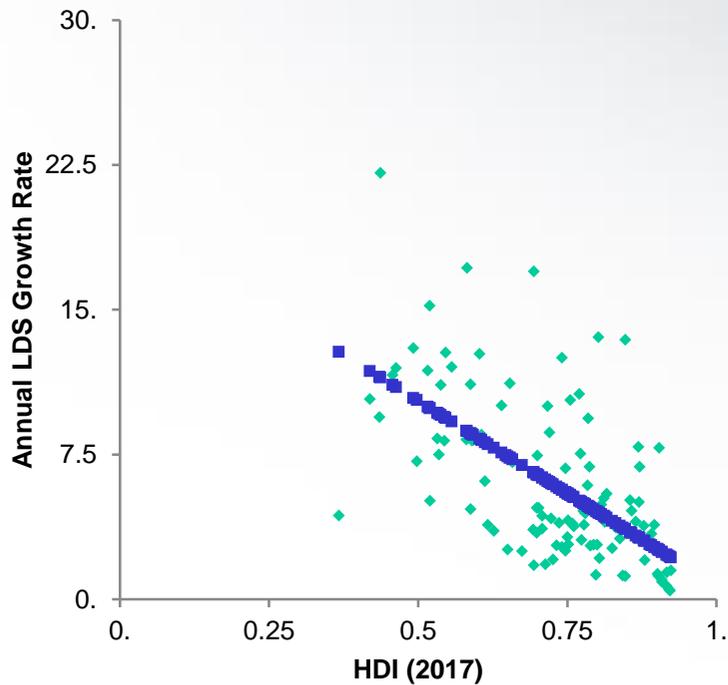


- Declining religiosity associated with societal changes across a range of indicators

- “Le grand bouleversement - La déchristianisation s’accélère”, lepoint.fr, 28 February 2019)

From Europe’s Young Adults and Religion, by Stephen Bullivant, a professor of theology and the sociology of religion at St Mary’s University in London. Based on data from the European Social Survey 2014-16.

HDI vs LDS and Jehovah's Witness growth rates in nations worldwide, 1997-2017

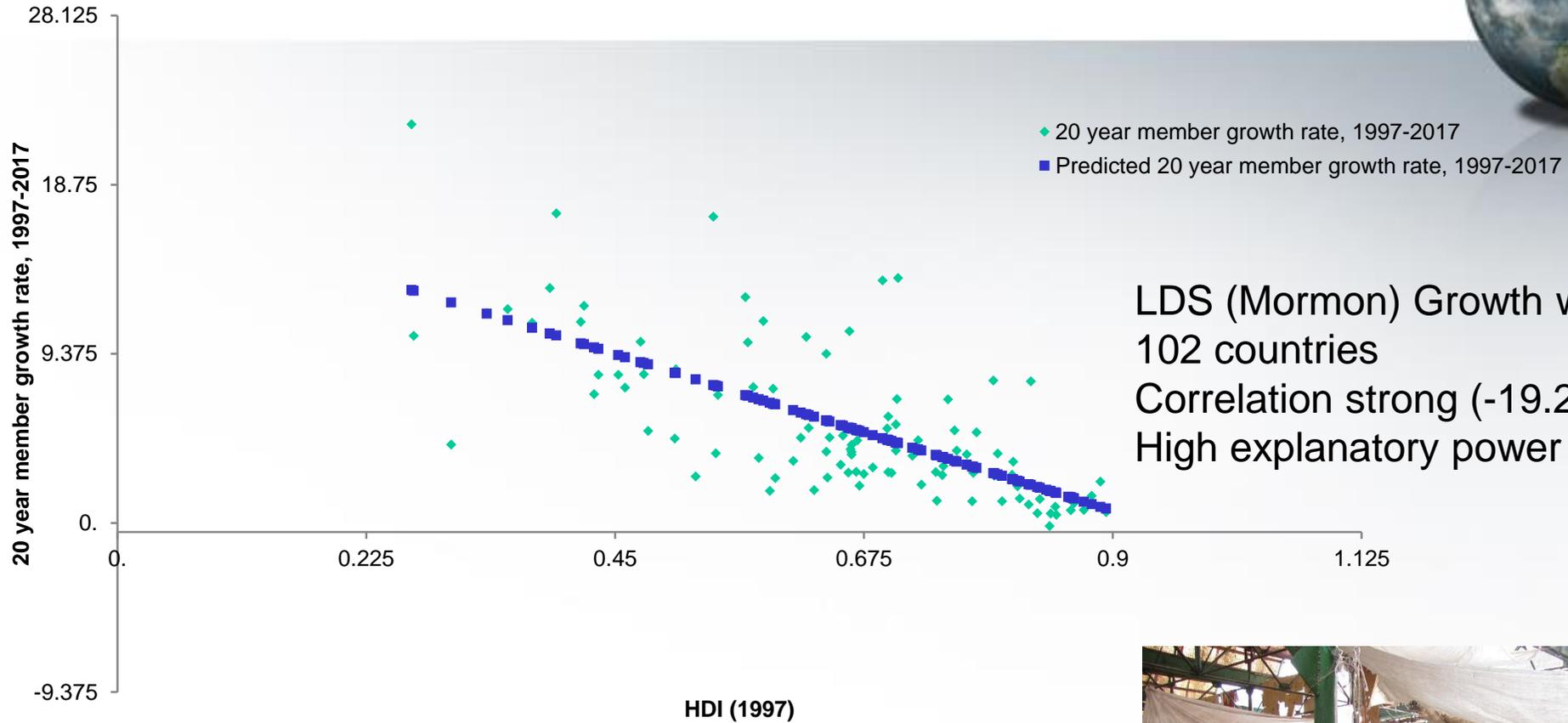


Indicator	Result	Explanation
Observations	121	Countries with data
Multiple R	0.645	Correlation coefficient (strength of relationship)
R Squared	0.417	41% of church growth variability explained by HDI
p-value	1.24×10^{-15}	Highly statistically significant, unlikely to be random
X coefficient	-19.13	An increase in HDI of 0.1 is expected to correlate with a 1.9% decrease in annual church growth rates.
Confidence Interval	-15.03 to -23.23	The true magnitude of correlation between HDI and annual church growth rate is expected to fall in this range

Indicator	Result	Explanation
Observations	111	Countries with data
Multiple R	0.511	Correlation coefficient (strength of relationship)
R Squared	0.261	Fraction of church growth variability explained
p-value	9.47×10^{-9}	Statistical significance, or chance correlation is random
X coefficient	9.47	A change in 0.1 in HDI is expected to correlate with a 0.94% decrease in annual JW growth rates
Lower and upper 95% confidence interval	-6.45 – -12.49	The true magnitude of correlation between HDI and annual JW growth rate is expected to fall in this range

Lower explanatory power of HDI for Jehovah's Witnesses:
 1997 HDI – 32% (JW) vs 49% (LDS)
 2017 HDI - 26% (JW) vs 41% (LDS)

Human Development Index (1997)



LDS (Mormon) Growth worldwide
 102 countries
 Correlation strong (-19.29)
 High explanatory power (49%)

Indicator	Result	Explanation
Observations	102	Countries with data
Multiple R	0.702	Correlation coefficient (strength of relationship)
R Squared	0.493	49% of church growth variability explained by HDI
p-value	1.85×10^{-16}	Highly statistically significant, unlikely to be random
X coefficient	-19.29	An increase in HDI of 0.1 is expected to correlate with a 1.9% decrease in annual church growth rates.
Lower and upper 95% confidence interval	-15.41 to -23.16	The true magnitude of correlation between HDI and annual church growth rate is expected to fall in this range



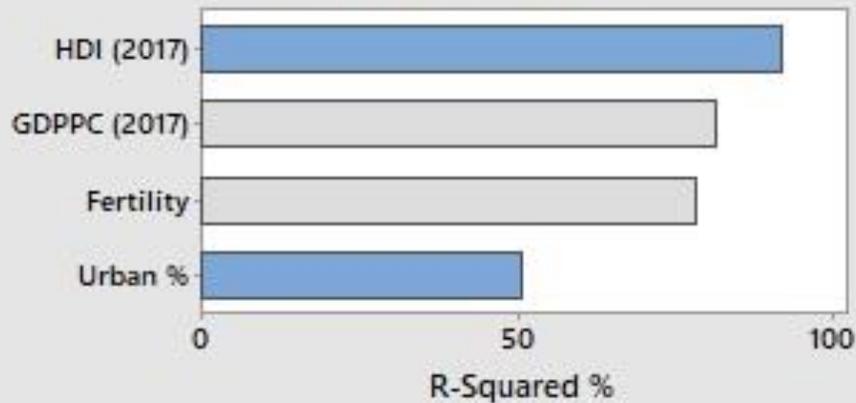
Market, Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan

HDI, GDP per Capita, Fertility, Urbanization



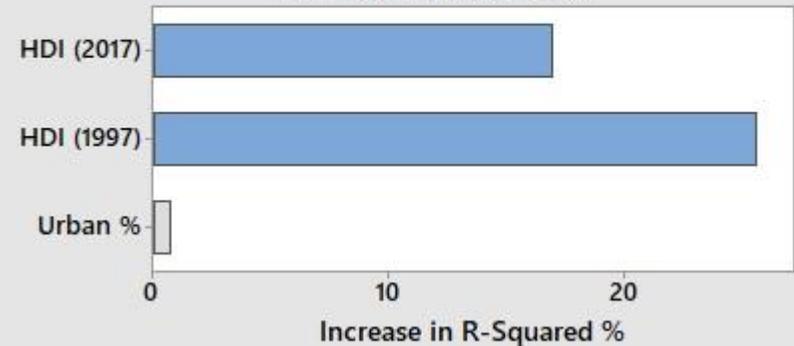
Each X Regressed on All Other Terms

Gray bars represent Xs that do not help explain additional variation in Y.



Incremental Impact of X Variables

Long bars represent Xs that contribute the most new information to the model.



- Initial (1997) HDI more predictive than final (2017) HDI
- GDP per capita, Fertility, Population Growth Rates, and Urbanization, although correlated, are NOT independent predictors of LDS growth when adjusted for HDI
- Migration not correlated

Multiple Regression for Congregation Model Building Report

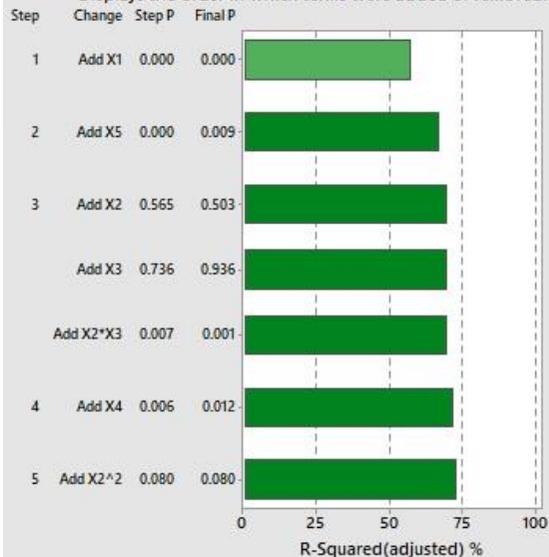
X1: HDI (1997) X2: JW avg growt X3: National Out X4: Activity Est X5: Members/Cong

Final Model Equation

$$\text{Congregatio} = 10.56 - 16.96 X1 + 0.986 X2 + 5.31 X3 + 6.89 X4 - 0.00430 X5 - 0.0220 X2^2 - 1.859 X2 * X3$$

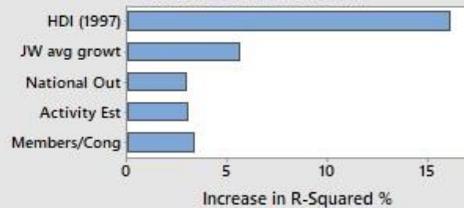
Model Building Sequence

Displays the order in which terms were added or removed.



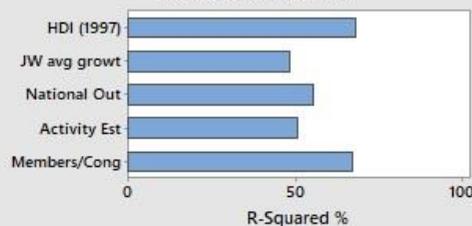
Incremental Impact of X Variables

Long bars represent Xs that contribute the most new information to the model.



Each X Regressed on All Other Terms

Gray bars represent Xs that do not help explain additional variation in Y.



Congregational Growth



Multiple Regression for Congregation
Model Building Report

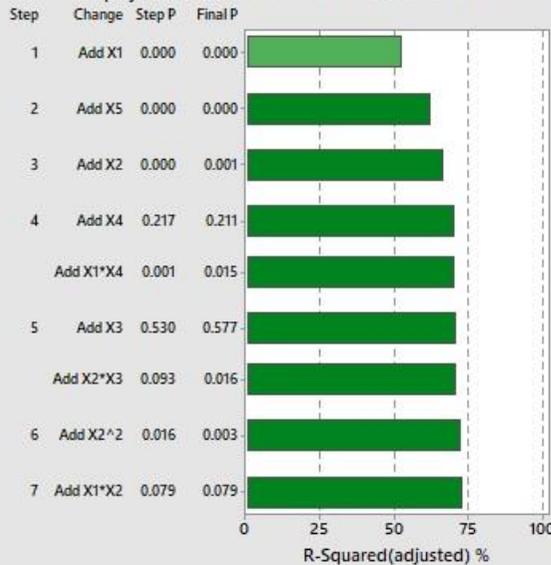
X1: HDI (2017) X2: JW avg growt X3: National Out X4: Activity Est X5: Members/Cong

Final Model Equation

$$\text{Congregatio} = 0.45 + 0.49 X1 + 2.323 X2 + 2.75 X3 + 27.37 X4 - 0.00559 X5 - 0.0401 X2^2 - 1.495 X1 * X2 - 33.1 X1 * X4 - 1.223 X2 * X3$$

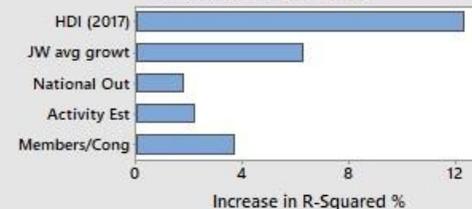
Model Building Sequence

Displays the order in which terms were added or removed.

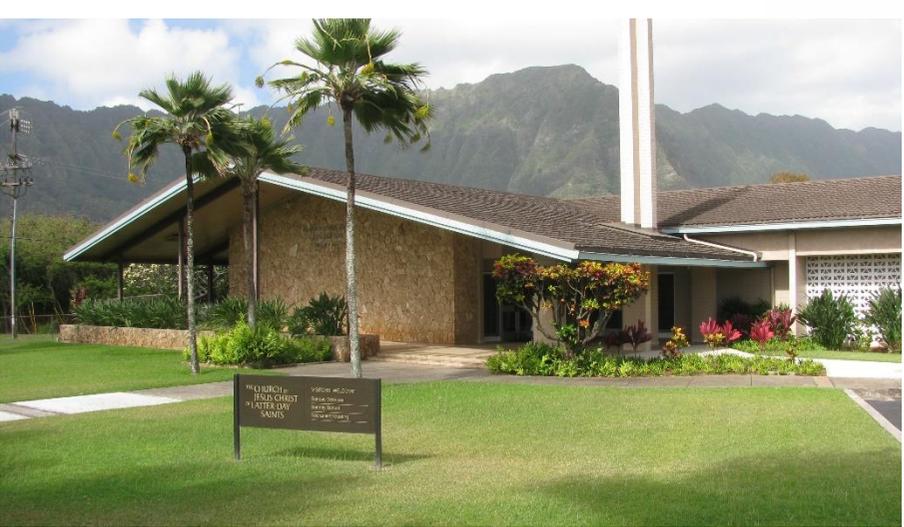
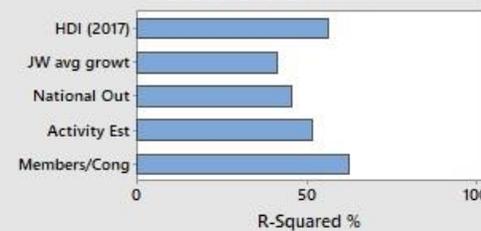


Incremental Impact of X Variables

Long bars represent Xs that contribute the most new information to the model.



Each X Regressed on All Other Terms
Gray bars represent Xs that do not help explain additional variation in Y.



Contemporary Critiques of Christianity



- Widespread critiques of Christianity
- Textual discrepancies and higher criticisms
–Tübingen School
- Unflattering histories of prominent figures
- Problematic policies and practices
- Disproportionate attention to marginalized and offended groups
- Blamed for various ills of modern society
- Criticism of beliefs or practices of fringe groups with no basis in Christianity's roots
- Critiques in media and political left



Saint Istvan (Stephen),
Budapest, Hungary

Disruptive Innovation

- Adaptation needed in rapidly-changing social landscape
- Yesterday's answers may not work for today's problems
- Even "timeless" answers may need different presentations and implementation
- Advantage to agile, timely and responsive
- Some faiths still fighting yesterday's wars and "closing barn doors after horse is out of the barn"
- "Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's inexorable imperative" HG Wells

The Google logo, featuring the word "Google" in its characteristic multi-colored font (blue, red, yellow, green, blue, red).The Netflix logo, consisting of the word "NETFLIX" in red, uppercase letters on a black rectangular background.The Amazon.com logo, featuring the text "amazon.com" in black, lowercase letters with a curved orange line underneath.

Seventh-day Adventists - Prospects



- Results in Eastern Europe are anomalously low.
- Overall, SDA Church growing rapidly worldwide
- Most emphasis in non-Christian areas (parts of Africa, India)
- Heavy worldwide reliance on schools, universities, hospitals, clinics – but few in Eastern Europe
- Have stepped back from exclusivist claims
- Devote more resources to growth in receptive areas of developing world

SDA Schools and Hospitals



- Worldwide in 2015:
 - 5,705 primary schools with 1,188,910 students
 - 2,226 secondary schools with 583,946 students
 - 114 tertiary institutions with 142,530 students
-
- In Euro-Asia area:
 - 12 schools in 2012
 - 48 in 2017
 - 50 more to be added by
2022



Seventh-day Adventist Church, Kyiv, Ukraine

Mormon (LDS) Future Prospects



- Considerable expansion since fall of Iron Curtain
- Little increase in congregations in large nations since 1995-2000
- Greater growth in small nations
- Growth has been uneven
- Limited prospects in Russia due to restrictive laws



Jehovah's Witnesses - Tradeoffs of Growth



- Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced continued growth in difficult and shrinking religious markets
- But the cost to adherents is high
- Some neglect educational and work opportunities to preach
- Non-participation in civic institutions
- Risk of exploiting adherents

Jehovah's Witnesses

- But...benefits of devotion best understood by adherents themselves
- Witnesses report enjoying preaching interactions, not only about converting others
- Personal and collective benefits of belief
- Cite strengthening of their own faith through sharing with others
- Faith gives them meaning, fulfillment and happiness
- Faith serves important roles both individually and societally which continue to be needed even in “post-christian” age (Forquet)



Jehovah's Witnesses in Tartu, Estonia

Conclusion



- Different strategies and methods
- Different goals
- Resilience and dedication in the face of challenges



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Thank You!

Tbilisi, Georgia



Istanbul, Turkey



Near Chopon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan

Samarkand, Uzbekistan



Kotor, Montenegro

