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# Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century

*Concentrated in Europe, Orthodox Christians have declined as a percentage of the global population, but Ethiopian community is highly observant and growing*

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While the analysis for this report was guided by our consultations with the advisers, Pew Research Center is solely responsible for the interpretation and reporting of the data.

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# Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century

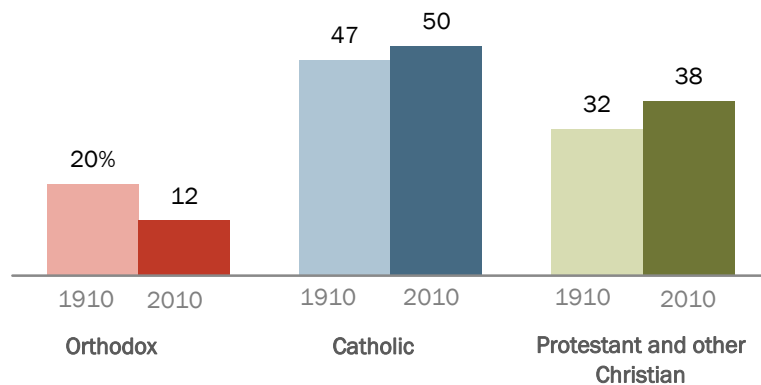
*Concentrated in Europe, Orthodox Christians have declined as a percentage of the global population, but Ethiopian community is highly observant and growing*

Over the last century, the Orthodox Christian population around the world has more than doubled and now stands at nearly 260 million. In Russia alone, it has surpassed 100 million, a sharp resurgence after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Yet despite these increases in absolute numbers, Orthodox Christians have been declining as a share of the overall Christian population – and the global population – due to far faster growth among Protestants, Catholics and non-Christians. Today, just 12% of Christians around the world are Orthodox, compared with an estimated 20% a century ago. And 4% of the total global population is Orthodox, compared with an estimated 7% in 1910.

## Among Christians globally, Orthodox share falling, Catholic, Protestant shares increasing

*% of world Christians who are ...*



Note: "Protestants and other Christians" includes Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists and other small Christian groups.

Source: 1910 data from World Religion Database. 2010 data from Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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The geographic distribution of Orthodoxy also differs from the other major Christian traditions in the 21st century. In 1910 – shortly before the watershed events of World War I, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the breakup of several European empires – all three major branches of Christianity (Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism) were predominantly concentrated in Europe. Since then, Catholics and Protestants have expanded enormously outside the continent, while Orthodoxy remains largely centered in Europe. Today, nearly four-in-five Orthodox Christians (77%) live in Europe, a relatively modest change from a century ago (91%). By contrast,

only about one-quarter of Catholics (24%) and one-in-eight Protestants (12%) now live in Europe, down from an estimated 65% and 52%, respectively, in 1910.<sup>1</sup>

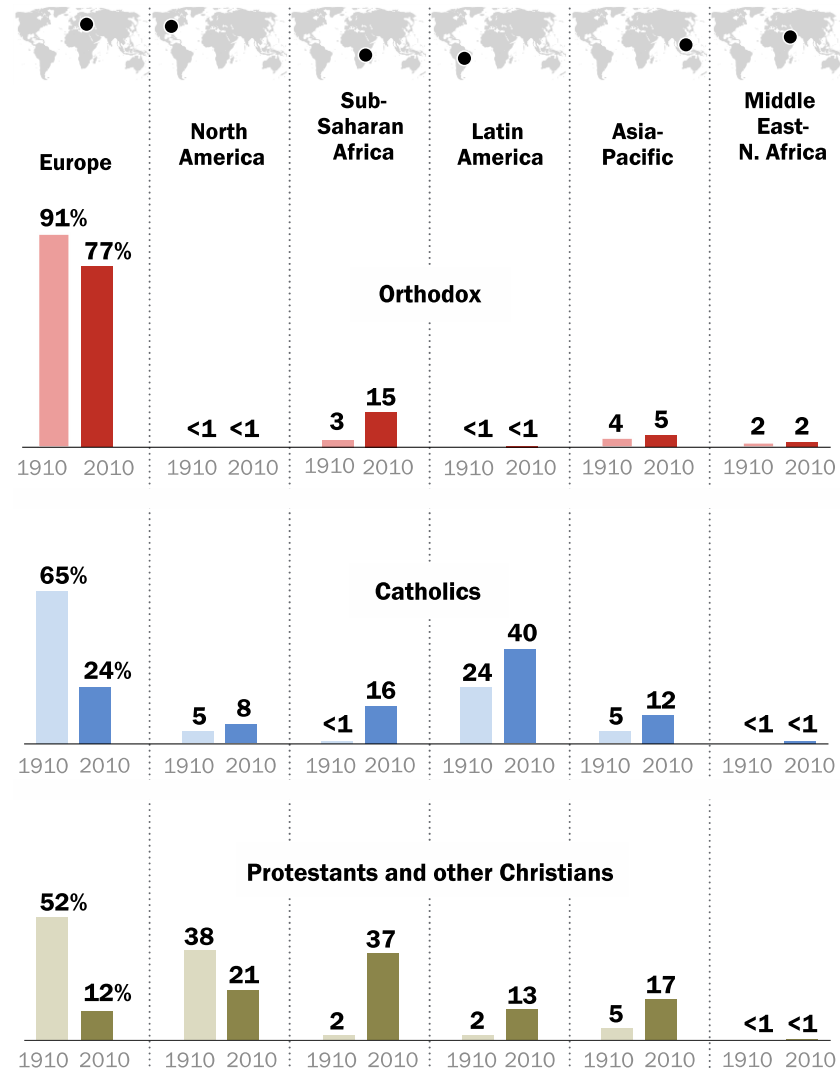
Orthodoxy's falling share of the global Christian population is connected with demographic trends in Europe, which has lower overall fertility rates and an older population than developing regions of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia. Europe's population has long been shrinking as a share of the world's total population, and, in coming decades, it is projected to decline in absolute numbers as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Population figures for 2010 are based on Pew Research Center analysis of numerous censuses and surveys, including Pew Research Center's 2011 report, "[Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population](#)." The 1910 estimates are derived from Johnson, Todd M. and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. "[World Christian Database](#)." Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, accessed April 2017.

## A century ago, all three major branches of Christianity were concentrated in Europe. That is still the case for Orthodox Christians, but not Protestants and Catholics

*% of each group living in each region, 1910 and 2010*



Note: "Protestants and other Christians" includes Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists and other small Christian groups.

Source: 1910 data from World Religion Database. 2010 data from Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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Historically, the presence of what is now called Orthodox Christianity in the Slavic portions of Eastern Europe dates to the ninth century, when, according to church tradition, missionaries from the Byzantine Empire's capital in Constantinople (now Istanbul, Turkey) spread the faith deeper into Europe. Orthodoxy came first to Bulgaria, Serbia and Moravia (which is now part of the Czech Republic), and then, beginning in the 10th century, to Russia. Following the Great Schism between the Eastern (Orthodox) churches and the Western (Catholic) church in 1054, Orthodox missionary activity expanded across the Russian Empire from the 1300s through the 1800s.<sup>2</sup>

While Orthodoxy spread across the Eurasian landmass, Protestant and Catholic missionaries from Western Europe went overseas, crossing the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and British empires, among others, carried Western Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) to sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and the Americas – regions that in the 20th century experienced much faster population growth than Europe. On the whole, Orthodox missionary activity outside Eurasia was less pronounced, although Orthodox churches retained footholds through the centuries in the Middle East, and Orthodox missionaries won some converts in such far-flung places as India, Japan, East Africa and North America.<sup>3</sup>

Today, the largest Orthodox Christian population outside of Eastern Europe is in Ethiopia. The centuries-old Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has an estimated 36 million adherents, nearly 14% of the world's total Orthodox population. This East African outpost of Orthodoxy reflects two broad trends. First, its Orthodox Christian population has grown much faster than Europe's over the past 100 years. And, second, Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia are more religiously observant, by several common measures, than Orthodox Christians in Europe. This is in line with a broader pattern in which Europeans are, on average, less religiously committed than people in [Latin America](#) and [sub-Saharan Africa](#), according to Pew Research Center surveys. (This is true not just of Christians in Europe but also of Europe's Muslims, who are less religiously observant, as a whole, than [Muslims elsewhere in the world](#).)

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<sup>2</sup> According to church tradition, the two best known Byzantine missionaries were brothers named Cyril and Methodius, who are saints in the Orthodox Church and who have been called "Apostles to the Slavs." See Tachiaos, Anthony Emil N. 2001. "Cyril and Methodius of Thessalonica: The Acculturation of the Slavs." Also see Veronis, Luke A. 1994. "Missionaries, Monks and Martyrs: Making Disciples of All Nations." Also see Herrin, Judith. 2008. "Byzantium: The Surprising Life of a Medieval Empire."

At the time of these ninth-century missions, Christianity in Central and Eastern Europe was not yet called Orthodoxy. The group became known as Orthodox Christians after the Great Schism of 1054 divided most of the era's Christian world between its Latin West and its Greek East. High among the dividing issues was a dispute over papal authority; the Western Church (now called Roman Catholic) contended that the pope's religious authority over Christians was universal. The Eastern Church (now called Eastern Orthodox) disagreed, investing their highest religious authority in various patriarchs across the Eastern Orthodox world, with the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople traditionally holding the title "first among equals."

<sup>3</sup> See Veronis, Luke A. 2008. "[Eastern Orthodox Missions](#)." In "Encyclopedia of Christianity Online." Also see Stokoe, Mark and Leonid Kishkovsky. 1995. "[Orthodox Christians in North America \(1794-1994\)](#)."

Orthodox Christians in the former Soviet Union generally report the lowest levels of observance among those of their faith, perhaps reflecting the legacy of Soviet repression of religion. In Russia, for example, just 6% of Orthodox Christian adults say they attend church at least weekly, 15% say religion is “very important” in their lives, and 18% say they pray daily. Other former Soviet republics display similarly low levels of religious observance. Together, these countries are home to a majority of the world’s Orthodox Christians.

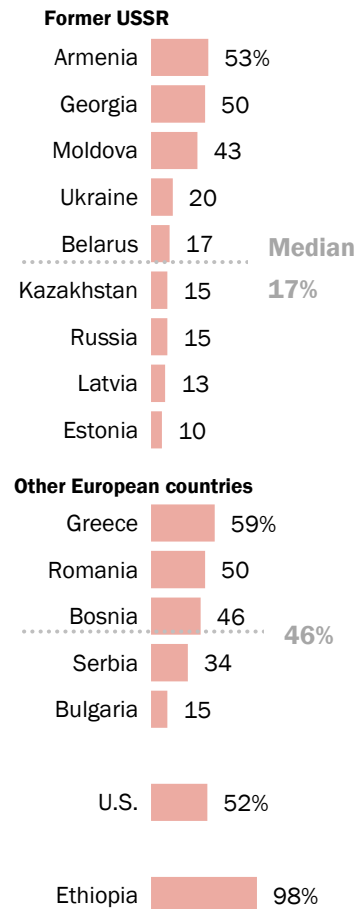
In sharp contrast, Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia report considerably higher religious observance, on par with other Christians (including Catholics and Protestants) across [sub-Saharan Africa](#). Nearly all Ethiopian Orthodox Christians say religion is very important to them, while roughly three-quarters report attending church weekly or more often (78%) and about two-thirds say they pray daily (65%). (For more information on Ethiopia’s Orthodox Tewahedo Church, see the sidebar on page 29.)

Orthodox Christians living in Europe outside the former Soviet Union show somewhat higher levels of religious observance than those in the former Soviet republics, but they are still far less observant than Ethiopia’s Orthodox community. In Bosnia, for example, 46% of Orthodox Christians say religion is very important in their lives, while 10% say they attend church weekly or more often, and 28% report that they pray daily.

Orthodox Christians in the United States, who make up roughly 0.5% of the overall U.S. population and include many immigrants, display moderate levels of religious observance, lower than in Ethiopia but higher than most European countries, at least by some measures. About half (52%) of Orthodox Christian adults in the United States say religion is very important to them, roughly one-in-three (31%) report that they attend church weekly or more, and a slim majority say they pray daily (57%).

## Fewer Orthodox in post-Soviet republics say religion ‘very important’ in their lives

*% of Orthodox Christians who say religion is “very important” in their lives*



Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey.

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In addition to their shared history and liturgical traditions, what do these disparate communities have in common today?

One nearly universal practice among Orthodox Christians is the veneration of religious icons. Most Orthodox Christians around the world say they keep icons or other holy figures in their homes. In fact, having icons is among the few indicators of religiosity on which Central and Eastern European Orthodox Christians surpass Orthodox Ethiopians in surveys. Across 14 countries in the former Soviet Union and elsewhere in Europe with large Orthodox populations, the median share of Orthodox Christians who say they have icons at home is 90%, while in Ethiopia, the share is 73%.

Orthodox Christians around the world also are linked by a married, all-male priesthood; church structures headed by numerous national patriarchs and archbishops; recognition of divorce; and moral conservatism on issues such as homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

These are among the key findings of a new Pew Research Center study of Orthodox Christianity around the world. The data in this report come from a variety of surveys and other sources. Data on the religious beliefs and practices of Orthodox Christians in nine countries across the former Soviet Union and five other countries in Europe, including Greece, are from [surveys conducted by Pew Research Center in 2015-2016](#). In addition, the Center has recent data on many (though not all) of the same survey questions among Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia and the United States. Together, these surveys cover a total of 16 countries, collectively representing about 90% of the estimated global Orthodox population. In addition, population estimates are available for all countries based on information gathered for the 2011 Pew Research Center report [“Global Christianity”](#) and the 2015 report [“The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.”](#)

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## Most Orthodox Christians keep icons at home

*% of Orthodox Christians who ...*

|                                 | <b>Have icons at home</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |                           |
| Moldova                         | 97%                       |
| Georgia                         | 96                        |
| Ukraine                         | 91                        |
| Armenia                         | 89                        |
| Belarus                         | 88                        |
| Russia                          | 87                        |
| Kazakhstan                      | 85                        |
| Latvia                          | 84                        |
| Estonia                         | 74                        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>88</b>                 |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |                           |
| Greece                          | 95%                       |
| Romania                         | 95                        |
| Bosnia                          | 93                        |
| Serbia                          | 92                        |
| Bulgaria                        | 83                        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>93</b>                 |
| Ethiopia                        | 73%                       |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.  
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## Wide support among Orthodox for the church's teachings on priesthood, divorce

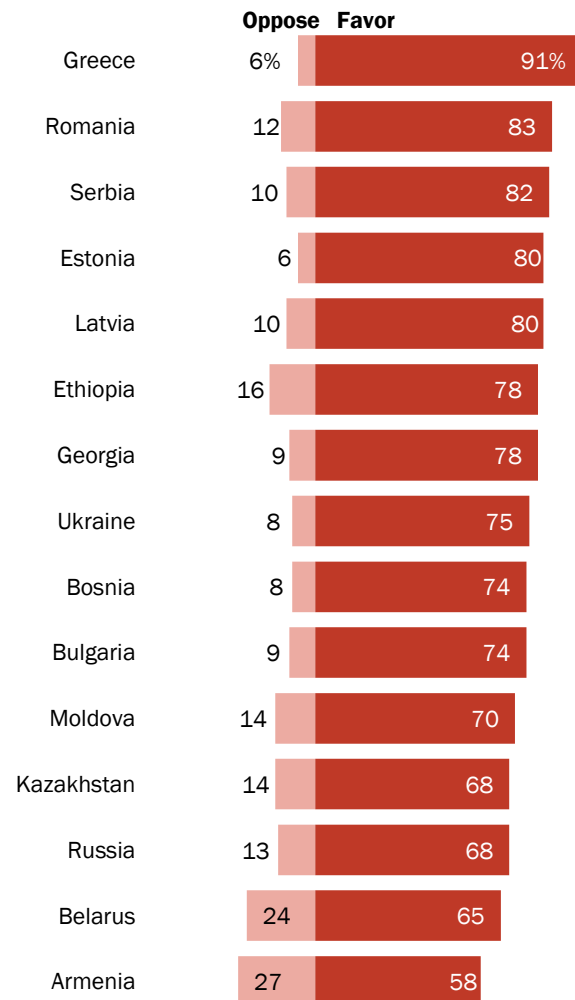
While they vary widely in their levels of religious observance, Orthodox Christians around the world are largely united in their affirmation of some distinctive church policies and teachings.

Today, majorities of Orthodox Christians in every country surveyed say they favor their church's current practice of allowing married men to become priests, which contrasts with the Catholic Church's general requirement of celibacy for priests. (Lay Catholics in some countries prefer allowing married priests; in the United States, for example, 62% of Catholics say the Catholic Church should allow [priests to get married](#).)

Similarly, most Orthodox Christians also say they support the church's stance on recognizing divorce, which also differs from Catholicism's position.

## Orthodox Christians favor their church's position of allowing married men to become priests

*% of Orthodox Christians who favor/oppose the Orthodox Church's current position of allowing married men to become priests*



Note: Don't know/refused responses not shown.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.

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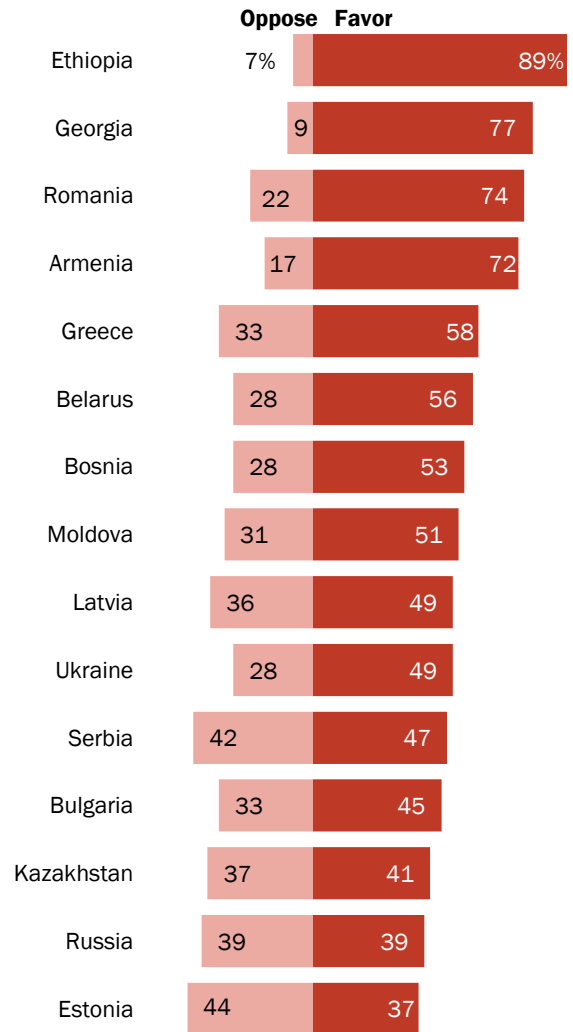
Orthodox Christians also broadly favor a number of church positions that happen to align with those of the Catholic Church, such as the prohibition on women's ordination. In fact, there appears to be more agreement with this position within Orthodoxy than within Catholicism, where majorities in some places say women should be able to become priests. For example, in Brazil, which has the world's largest Catholic population, most Catholics say the Catholic Church should allow female ordination (78%). Similarly, in the United States, [59% of Catholics](#) say the Catholic Church should allow women priests.

Orthodox opinion is closely divided on the issue of female ordination in Russia and some other countries, but in no country surveyed do a majority of Orthodox Christians support ordaining women as priests. (In Russia and some other countries, roughly a fifth or more of respondents do not express an opinion on women's ordination.)

Orthodox Christians also are broadly united against the idea of the church performing same-sex marriages (see Chapter 3).

## On balance, Orthodox Christians favor their church's prohibition on female priests

*% of Orthodox Christians who favor/oppose the Orthodox Church's current position of forbidding women from becoming priests*



Note: Don't know/refused responses not shown.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.

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Overall, Orthodox Christians see plenty of common ground between their own faith and Catholicism. When asked if Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism “have a lot in common” or “are very different,” most Orthodox Christians across Central and Eastern Europe respond that the two faiths have a lot in common. For their part, Catholics in the region also tend to see the two traditions as more similar than different.

But this perceived kinship only goes so far; there is limited support among Orthodox Christians for “being in communion again” with Roman Catholics. Formal schism owing to theological and political disputes has divided Eastern Orthodoxy from Roman Catholicism since the year 1054; while some clerics on both sides have tried for half a century to foster reconciliation, the view that the churches should reunite is a minority position across most of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup>

In Russia, just one-in-six Orthodox Christians (17%) say they want Eastern Orthodoxy to be in communion with the Roman Catholic Church, the lowest level of support for reconciliation found in any of the national Orthodox populations surveyed. Only in one country, Romania, do a majority of respondents (62%) express support for reunification of the Eastern and Western churches. Across the region, many Orthodox

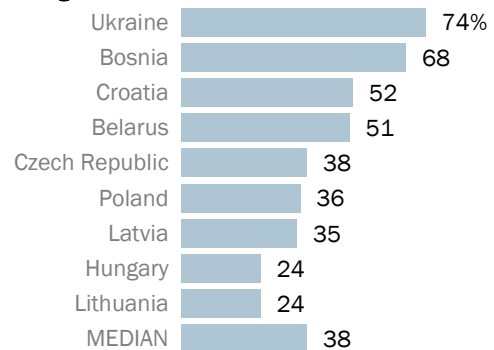
## Relatively low shares of Orthodox and Catholics favor Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism being in communion

*% who favor communion between the two churches*

### Among Orthodox ...



### Among Catholics ...



Note: Armenia is not included in the chart because its national church is not in communion with Eastern Orthodoxy. In Ukraine, most Catholics identify as Byzantine Rite Eastern Catholics. In other countries, most Catholics are Roman Catholics.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia and U.S. not available.

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<sup>4</sup> Orthodox-Catholic relations began improving just over a half-century ago, in January 1964, when Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras met in Jerusalem. In December 1965 they lifted mutual excommunications from the year 1054 that had long helped define the schism. Since then, many clerics from both traditions have worked to ease tensions. See the Dec. 7, 1965, statement, “[Joint Catholic-Orthodox Declaration of His Holiness Pope Paul VI and the Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras I.](#)”

Christians decline to answer this question, perhaps reflecting a lack of familiarity with the issue or uncertainty about what communion between the two churches would entail.

This pattern may be linked to a wariness of papal authority by Orthodox Christians. While most Orthodox Christians across Central and Eastern Europe say Pope Francis is improving relations between Catholics and Orthodox Christians, far fewer express a positive opinion of Francis overall. Views on this topic also may be bound up with geopolitical tensions between Eastern and Western Europe. Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe tend to orient themselves, both politically and religiously, [toward Russia](#), while Catholics in the region generally look toward the West.

Overall, in Central and Eastern Europe, Orthodox support for reconciliation with Catholicism is about as high as Catholic support for it. But in countries with substantial shares of both Orthodox Christians and Catholics, Catholics tend to be more supportive of a return to communion with Eastern Orthodoxy. For example, in Bosnia, a majority of Catholics (68%) favor communion, compared with a minority (42%) of Orthodox Christians. A similar pattern is seen in Ukraine and Belarus.

### **Sidebar: Eastern Orthodoxy vs. Oriental Orthodoxy**

Not only are there important theological and doctrinal differences among Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Protestants, but there also are differences *within* Orthodoxy, which conventionally is divided into two major branches: Eastern Orthodoxy, most of whose adherents live in Central and Eastern Europe, and Oriental Orthodoxy, most of whose adherents live in Africa.

One theological difference has to do with the nature of Jesus and how to articulate Jesus's divinity – part of a theological field of study called Christology. Eastern Orthodoxy, as well as Catholicism and Protestantism, teach that Christ is one person in two natures: both fully divine and fully human, accepting the language from an early Christian gathering called the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451. But Oriental Orthodoxy, which is considered “non-Chalcedonian,” teaches that Christ's divine and human natures are unified, not separated.<sup>5</sup>

Oriental Orthodoxy has separate self-governing jurisdictions in Ethiopia, Egypt, Eritrea, India, Armenia and Syria, and it accounts for roughly 20% of the worldwide Orthodox population. Eastern Orthodoxy is split into 15 jurisdictions heavily centered in Central and Eastern Europe, accounting for the remaining 80% of Orthodox Christians.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hastings, Adrian. 1999. "150-550." In Hastings, Adrian, ed. "A World History of Christianity." Also see Kirkorian, Mesrob K. 2010. "Christology of the Oriental Orthodox Churches: Christology in the Tradition of the Armenian Apostolic Church."

<sup>6</sup> One of these 15 jurisdictions is the Orthodox Church in America, which is not universally recognized as its own jurisdiction by Eastern Orthodox churches.

Data on the beliefs, practices and attitudes of Orthodox Christians in Europe and the former Soviet Union come from surveys conducted between June 2015 and July 2016 through face-to-face interviews in 19 countries, including 14 for which samples of Orthodox Christians were large enough for analysis. Findings from these surveys were released in a [major Pew Research Center report](#) in May 2017, but additional analysis (including results from Kazakhstan, which were not included in the initial report) is included throughout this report.

Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia were polled as part of Pew Research Center’s 2015 Global Attitudes survey, as well as a 2008 survey on religious beliefs and practices of Christians and Muslims in sub-Saharan Africa; Orthodox Christians in the U.S. were surveyed as part of Pew Research Center’s 2014 U.S. [Religious Landscape Study](#). Since the methodology and the mode of the U.S. study are different from surveys conducted in other countries, comparisons between them are made cautiously. In addition, due to differences in questionnaire content, data are not available from all countries for every question analyzed in this report.

The largest Orthodox populations that were *not* surveyed are in Egypt, Eritrea, India, Macedonia and Germany. Despite the lack of survey data on Orthodox Christians in these countries, they are included in the population estimates in this report.

Although Orthodox Christians comprise roughly 2% of the Middle East’s population, logistical concerns make it difficult to survey these groups. Egypt has the Middle East’s largest Orthodox population (an estimated 4 million Egyptians, or 5% of the population), mainly members of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Additional data on the demographic characteristics of Middle Eastern Orthodox Christians, including their declining shares over time, can be found in Chapter 1.

Historical population estimates for 1910 are based on Pew Research Center analysis of data from the World Christian Database, which was compiled by The Center for the Study of Global Christianity at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The estimates from 1910 provide a vantage point on worldwide Orthodoxy at an important historical moment, preceded by an especially active period for Orthodox missionaries across the Russian Empire and shortly before war and political upheaval threw most Orthodox populations into tumult.<sup>7</sup> By the end of the 1920s, the Russian, Ottoman, German and Austro-Hungarian empires had all ceased to exist – replaced by new, self-governing nations, as well as, in some cases, self-governing national Orthodox churches. Meanwhile, the Russian Revolution of 1917 ushered in communist governments that persecuted Christians and other religious groups for the length of the Soviet era.

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<sup>7</sup> See Veronis, Luke A. 2008. “[Eastern Orthodox Missions](#).” In “Encyclopedia of Christianity Online.”



This report, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John Templeton Foundation, is part of a larger effort by Pew Research Center to understand religious change and its impact on societies around the world. The Center previously has conducted religion-focused surveys across sub-Saharan Africa; the Middle East-North Africa region and many other countries with large Muslim populations; Latin America and the Caribbean; Israel; and the United States.

Other key findings in this report include:

- Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe widely favor protecting the natural environment for future generations, even if this reduces economic growth. In part, this view may be a reflection of the [environmentalist stance of Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople](#), who is considered a theological authority in Eastern Orthodoxy. But environmentalism seems to be a widespread value across the Central and Eastern European region as a whole. Indeed, a majority of Catholics in the region also say the natural environment should be protected, even if this reduces economic growth. (For more details, see Chapter 4.)
- Most Orthodox-majority countries in Central and Eastern Europe – including Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine – have national patriarchs who are regarded as preeminent religious figures in their home countries. In all but Armenia and Greece, pluralities or majorities see the national patriarchs as the highest authority of Orthodoxy. For example, in Bulgaria, 59% of Orthodox Christians say they recognize their national patriarch as the highest authority of the church, although 8% also point to Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, who is known as the ecumenical patriarch across Eastern Orthodoxy. Patriarch Kirill of Russia also is highly regarded among Orthodox Christians in the region – even outside Russian borders – a trend that is in line with Orthodox Christians’ overall affinity [for Russia](#). (For Orthodox Christians’ views on patriarchs, see Chapter 3.)
- U.S. Orthodox Christians are much more accepting of homosexuality than are Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe and Ethiopia. About half of U.S. Orthodox Christians (54%) said same-sex marriage should be legal in a 2014 survey, similar to the share of Americans overall who took that position in that year (53%). By comparison, the vast majority of Orthodox Christians across Central and Eastern Europe are opposed to same-sex marriage. (For Orthodox Christians’ views on social issues, see Chapter 4.)

- Overwhelming majorities of Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe say they have been baptized, even though many came of age during Soviet times. (For more on religious practices of Orthodox Christians, see Chapter 2.)

## 1. Orthodox Christianity's geographic center remains in Central and Eastern Europe

While the worldwide population of all non-Orthodox Christians has virtually quadrupled since 1910, the Orthodox population has merely doubled, from approximately 124 million to 260 million. And as the geographical center of the overall Christian population has shifted since 1910 from its centuries-old European base into developing nations in the Southern Hemisphere, most Orthodox Christians (roughly 200 million, or 77%) still live in Central and Eastern Europe (including Greece and the Balkans).

Indeed, nearly four-in-ten of the world's Orthodox Christians live in a single country – Russia. During the Soviet era, millions of Russian Orthodox Christians moved to other parts of the Soviet Union, including Kazakhstan, Ukraine and the Baltic States, and many remain there today. Ukraine has both a substantial Russian Orthodox population and many members of its own self-governing Ukrainian Orthodox Church, with an estimated 35 million Orthodox Christians in total.

Ethiopia has a similarly large Orthodox population (36 million); its Orthodox Tewahedo Church claims lineage back to Christianity's earliest centuries. Due to rapid population growth, Africa also has experienced a more recent increase in both the number and share of Orthodox Christians. In sub-Saharan Africa, the Orthodox population has risen more than tenfold over the last century, from an estimated 3.5 million in 1910 to 40 million in 2010. Sub-Saharan Africa, including a substantial Orthodox population in Eritrea as well as Ethiopia, now accounts for 15% of the Orthodox Christian population worldwide, up from 3% in 1910.

Meanwhile, there also are substantial populations of Orthodox Christians in the Middle East-North Africa region, mostly in Egypt (an estimated 4 million in 2010), with smaller numbers in Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

In all, 19 countries around the world have at least a million Orthodox Christians, including Romania (19 million) and Greece (10 million). Fourteen countries worldwide have Orthodox majorities, and all of them except Eritrea and Cyprus are in Europe. (In this report, Russia is classified as a European country.)

### **Most of the world's 260 million Orthodox Christians live in Central and Eastern Europe**

The doubling of the worldwide Orthodox Christian population to about 260 million has not kept pace with the growth rates of the global population – or of other Christian populations, which collectively have nearly quadrupled in size from 490 million in 1910 to 1.9 billion in 2010. (The total Christian population, including Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants and others, has risen from 614 million to 2.2 billion during that period.)

Central and Eastern Europe remains the main base for Orthodox Christians, and is home to more than three-quarters (77%) of them. An additional 15% live in sub-Saharan Africa, 4% live in the Asia-Pacific region, 2% live in the Middle East and North Africa, and 1% live in Western Europe. Another 1% live in North America, while even fewer live in Latin America. This geographic distribution distinguishes Orthodox populations from the other major Christian groups, which are far more evenly distributed around the world.

Still, the share of Orthodox Christians living outside Central and Eastern Europe has increased somewhat, to 23% in 2010 from 9% a century ago. In 1910, only 11 million Orthodox Christians – out of a global Orthodox population of 124 million – were living outside the region. Now, there are 60 million Orthodox Christians living outside Central and Eastern Europe, out of a global Orthodox population of 260 million.

While the current share of Orthodox Christians living in Europe overall (77%) does represent a decline since 1910, when 91% of Orthodox Christians were living there, the share of the *total* Christian population living in Europe has decreased much more sharply, from 66% in 1910 to 26% in 2010. Indeed, nearly half (48%) of the broader Christian population now lives in Latin America and Africa, up from 14% in 1910.

One non-European part of the world that *has* experienced significant Orthodox population growth is sub-Saharan Africa, where the 15% share of the global Orthodox population is up from 3% in 1910. Most of the 40 million Orthodox Christians in this region live in Ethiopia (36 million) or Eritrea (3 million). At the same time, Orthodox Christians remain a small minority of sub-Saharan Africa's Christians, most of whom are Catholics or Protestants.

## Russia, Ethiopia and Ukraine have largest national Orthodox populations

In 1910, Russia's Orthodox population was 60 million, but the number of Russians identifying as Orthodox dropped steeply during the Soviet era (to 39 million in 1970), when the Communist government was repressing religious worship and promoting atheism.<sup>8</sup> Since the fall of the USSR, though, the number of Orthodox Christians in Russia has rebounded sharply, to more than 100 million.<sup>9</sup>

Results from a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2015 suggest that the end of communism played a role in the rise of religion in this part of the world; more than half (53%) of Russians who say they were raised without religion but are now Orthodox cite an increasing societal acceptance as a major reason for their shift.

The second-largest Orthodox population in the world is found in Ethiopia, where Orthodox numbers have risen tenfold since the early 20th century, from 3.3 million in 1910 to 36 million in 2010. The overall population of Ethiopia has risen nearly tenfold during that timespan, from 9 million in 1910 to 83 million in 2010.

Ukraine's Orthodox population (35 million) is nearly as big as Ethiopia's. In all, 19 countries have Orthodox populations of 1 million or more.

## Countries with more than 1 million Orthodox Christians

*Orthodox Christian populations in the 19 countries with Orthodox populations over 1 million, showing change*

|                       | 2010        | 1910       |
|-----------------------|-------------|------------|
| Russia                | 101,000,000 | 59,520,000 |
| Ethiopia              | 35,710,000  | 3,290,000  |
| Ukraine               | 34,870,000  | 21,800,000 |
| Romania               | 18,740,000  | 10,500,000 |
| Greece                | 9,880,000   | 3,090,000  |
| Serbia                | 6,940,000   | 2,780,000  |
| Bulgaria              | 6,070,000   | 3,250,000  |
| Belarus               | 5,900,000   | 4,310,000  |
| Georgia               | 3,790,000   | 2,060,000  |
| Egypt                 | 3,710,000   | 1,600,000  |
| Moldova               | 3,410,000   | 1,320,900  |
| Kazakhstan            | 3,240,000   | 90,000     |
| Eritrea               | 3,030,000   | 210,000    |
| Armenia               | 2,680,000   | 560,000    |
| India                 | 2,320,000   | 670,000    |
| United States         | 1,820,000   | 460,000    |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina    | 1,420,000   | 580,000    |
| Republic of Macedonia | 1,210,000   | 430,000    |
| Germany               | 1,110,000   | 4,000      |

Source: 1910 data from World Religion Database. 2010 data from Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Todd M. and Gina A. Zurlo, eds. "World Christian Database." Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, accessed June 2017.

<sup>9</sup> See Pew Research Center's 2014 report, "[Russians Return to Religion, But Not to Church.](#)"

Of the 10 countries with the largest Orthodox populations in 2010, eight are located in Central and Eastern Europe. In the two separate years for which data are available – 1910 and 2010 – the countries with the 10 largest Orthodox populations have remained mostly the same, with populations of the same nine countries ranking in the top 10 both times. Two additional countries each made the list once: Turkey in 1910 and Egypt in 2010.

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### Ten biggest Orthodox populations by country, 1910 and 2010

| 1910 |          |            | 2010 |          |             |
|------|----------|------------|------|----------|-------------|
| 1.   | Russia   | 59,520,000 | 1.   | Russia   | 101,000,000 |
| 2.   | Ukraine  | 21,800,000 | 2.   | Ethiopia | 35,710,000  |
| 3.   | Romania  | 10,500,000 | 3.   | Ukraine  | 34,870,000  |
| 4.   | Belarus  | 4,310,000  | 4.   | Romania  | 18,740,000  |
| 5.   | Ethiopia | 3,290,000  | 5.   | Greece   | 9,880,000   |
| 6.   | Bulgaria | 3,250,000  | 6.   | Serbia   | 6,940,000   |
| 7.   | Turkey   | 3,200,000  | 7.   | Bulgaria | 6,070,000   |
| 8.   | Greece   | 3,090,000  | 8.   | Belarus  | 5,900,000   |
| 9.   | Serbia   | 2,780,000  | 9.   | Georgia  | 3,790,000   |
| 10.  | Georgia  | 2,060,000  | 10.  | Egypt    | 3,710,000   |

Source: 1910 data from World Religion Database. 2010 data from Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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There are 14 Orthodox-majority countries in the world, and all are located in Europe except for Eritrea, which is in sub-Saharan Africa, and Cyprus, which is categorized in the Asia-Pacific region in this report. (Ethiopia's 36 million Orthodox Christians are not a majority; they comprise about 43% of Ethiopia's population.)

The country with the highest percentage of Orthodox Christians is Moldova (95%). In Russia, the largest of the Orthodox-majority countries, about seven-in-ten people (71%) are Orthodox. The smallest country with an Orthodox majority is Montenegro (which has a total population of 630,000), where 74% of the population is Orthodox.<sup>10</sup>

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### Countries with Orthodox majorities

|            | Orthodox<br>percentage<br>% | Orthodox<br>population | Overall<br>population |
|------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Moldova    | 95                          | 3,410,000              | 3,570,000             |
| Romania    | 87                          | 18,740,000             | 21,490,000            |
| Greece     | 87                          | 9,880,000              | 11,360,000            |
| Georgia    | 87                          | 3,790,000              | 4,350,000             |
| Armenia    | 87                          | 2,680,000              | 3,090,000             |
| Serbia     | 86                          | 6,940,000              | 8,090,000             |
| Bulgaria   | 81                          | 6,070,000              | 7,490,000             |
| Ukraine    | 77                          | 34,870,000             | 45,450,000            |
| Montenegro | 74                          | 470,000                | 630,000               |
| Cyprus     | 72                          | 790,000                | 1,100,000             |
| Russia     | 71                          | 101,000,000            | 142,960,000           |
| Belarus    | 62                          | 5,900,000              | 9,600,000             |
| Macedonia  | 59                          | 1,210,000              | 2,060,000             |
| Eritrea    | 58                          | 3,030,000              | 5,250,000             |

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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<sup>10</sup> Orthodox population and percentage figures are based on Pew Research Center analysis of census and survey data. See Methodology for details.

## Orthodox diasporas have developed in Americas and Western Europe

Over the last century, several sizable diaspora communities of Orthodox Christians have developed in the Americas and Western Europe, areas that, a century ago, had only small Orthodox populations.

There are seven countries in Western Europe that had fewer than 10,000 Orthodox Christians in 1910 but now have Orthodox populations over 100,000. The largest of these are Germany, which had just a few thousand Orthodox Christians in 1910 and now has 1.1 million, and Spain, which had no Orthodox community to speak of in 1910 and now has 900,000 Orthodox Christians.

In the Americas, there are three countries with over 100,000 Orthodox Christians that had fewer than 20,000 a century ago: Canada, Mexico and Brazil. The United States, which has 1.8 million Orthodox Christians, already had 460,000 in 1910.

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## Countries with fewer than 20,000 Orthodox in 1910 but 100,000+ now

|                                 | 2010      | 1910   |
|---------------------------------|-----------|--------|
| <b>Western Europe</b>           |           |        |
| Germany                         | 1,110,000 | 4,000  |
| Spain                           | 900,000   | <1,000 |
| France                          | 370,000   | 10,000 |
| United Kingdom                  | 500,000   | 2,000  |
| Switzerland                     | 130,000   | 1,000  |
| Sweden                          | 120,000   | <1,000 |
| Italy                           | 110,000   | <1,000 |
| <b>Americas</b>                 |           |        |
| Canada                          | 470,000   | 18,000 |
| Brazil                          | 130,000   | 3,000  |
| Mexico                          | 110,000   | 1,000  |
| <b>Asia</b>                     |           |        |
| Kyrgyzstan                      | 500,000   | 13,000 |
| Turkmenistan                    | 270,000   | 5,000  |
| <b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>       |           |        |
| Kenya                           | 650,000   | <1,000 |
| <b>Middle East-North Africa</b> |           |        |
| Lebanon                         | 350,000   | 16,000 |
| <b>Asia-Pacific</b>             |           |        |
| Australia                       | 700,000   | 5,000  |

Source: 1910 data from World Religion Database. 2010 data from Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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**Sidebar: Orthodoxy in the United States**

The presence of Orthodox Christians within the present boundaries of the United States dates to 1794, when a small group of Russian missionaries arrived in Kodiak, Alaska, to proselytize its inhabitants. This missionary work continued during the 1800s, but the bulk of Orthodoxy's growth in the United States owes to late 19th- and early 20th-century immigration from countries across Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup> By 1910 nearly half a million Orthodox Christians lived in the United States, and in 2010 the figure was approximately 1.8 million – about half of 1% of the U.S. population.

The Orthodox presence in the U.S. is a fragmented one. The population's splintered state across more than 21 denominations reflects varied ethnic ties to countries around the world with their own self-governing Orthodox patriarchates.<sup>12</sup> Nearly half (49%) of U.S. Orthodox Christians identify as Greek Orthodox, 16% as Russian Orthodox, 3% as Armenian Orthodox, 3% as Ethiopian Orthodox and 2% as Coptic/Egyptian Orthodox. In addition, 10% identify with the Orthodox Church in America, a self-governing denomination based in the United States that, despite its Russian and Greek roots, has many parishes that are predominantly Albanian, Bulgarian and Romanian. Another 8% of Orthodox Christians in the U.S. say they are Orthodox without specifying further (6%) or are ambiguous about their affiliation (2%).<sup>13</sup>

In all, nearly two-thirds (64%) of U.S. Orthodox Christians are either immigrants (40%) or the children of immigrants (23%), the highest such share of any Christian denomination in the United States.<sup>14</sup> Other than the U.S., some of the most common birthplaces for U.S. Orthodox Christians are Russia (5% of the total U.S. Orthodox population), Ethiopia (4%), Romania (4%) and Greece (3%).

By common measures of religiosity, Orthodox Christians in the United States are somewhat less likely than most other American Christian groups to say religion is very important in their lives (52%) and to say they attend church at least once a week (31%). By comparison, 68% of U.S. Christians overall say religion is very important to them and 47% say they are weekly churchgoers.

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<sup>11</sup> Stokoe, Mark and Leonid Kishkovsky. 1995. "[Orthodox Christians in North America \(1794-1994\)](#)."

<sup>12</sup> They include, for example, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in America, the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, the Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA, and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, among others.

<sup>13</sup> See Pew Research Center's [2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study](#).

<sup>14</sup> The highest such level among U.S. religious groups is found among Hindus, 96% of whom are either immigrants (87%) or second-generation Americans (9%). See Pew Research Center's [2014 U.S. Religious Landscape Study](#).

It is Africa, though, that has seen the largest Orthodox population growth outside of Central and Eastern Europe. Ethiopia, where the Orthodox population has increased over the last century from 3 million to 36 million, is not part of an Orthodox diaspora; its Orthodox history dates to the fourth century of Christianity, more than half a millennium before Christianity developed a substantial following in Russia. The growth in Ethiopia's Orthodox population over the last century, as well as in neighboring Eritrea, owes largely to natural population growth in the countries. Orthodox Christianity in Kenya, on the other hand, developed during the early to mid-20th century through the assistance of missionaries and became affiliated with the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in the 1960s.<sup>15</sup>

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### African countries with large Orthodox populations

|               | 2010       | 1910      |
|---------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Africa</b> |            |           |
| Ethiopia      | 35,710,000 | 3,290,000 |
| Eritrea       | 3,030,000  | 210,000   |
| Kenya         | 650,000    | <1,000    |

Source: 1910 data from World Religion Database. 2010 data from Pew Research Center analysis of censuses and surveys, originally published in 2011 report "Global Christianity." "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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<sup>15</sup> Githieya, Francis Kimani. 1997. "The Freedom of the Spirit: African Indigenous Churches in Kenya."

## **2. Orthodox Christians are highly religious in Ethiopia, much less so in former Soviet Union**

Orthodox Christians around the world display widely varying levels of religious observance. For example, while just 6% of Orthodox Christians in Russia say they attend church on a weekly basis, a large majority of Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia (78%) say they do this.

Indeed, by several standard measures of religious observance, Orthodox Christians living in countries that were part of the erstwhile USSR are less religiously observant than those living elsewhere. A median of 17% of Orthodox adults across the countries surveyed that were part of the former Soviet Union say religion is “very important” in their lives, compared with 46% in other surveyed countries in Europe (Greece, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia), 52% in the U.S. and 98% in Ethiopia.

Lower religious observance among Orthodox Christians living in former Soviet countries may be connected to the suppression of religion under the Communist regime. But religion is far from irrelevant in the former Soviet republics surveyed: While few Orthodox Christians in this part of the world frequently attend church, majorities say they believe in God, and at least half in most countries believe in heaven, hell and miracles. And Orthodox Christians in these former Soviet republics are just as likely, if not more so, than Orthodox Christians elsewhere to say they believe in fate and the existence of a soul.

Many Orthodox Christians living in the former USSR also express religious or spiritual beliefs that are not traditionally associated with Christian teachings. For example, at least half of Orthodox Christians in most former Soviet Republics say they believe in the “evil eye” (i.e., that certain people can cast curses or spells that cause bad things to happen to someone). Fewer Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia (35%) hold this belief, even though belief in the evil eye is considerably higher elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa.

## A near-universal proportion of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians say religion is ‘very important’ in their lives

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are considerably more religiously observant than Orthodox Christians living in Europe and those living in the United States. The majority of Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia say they attend church weekly (78%) and pray daily (65%), and nearly all (98%) say religion is “very important” in their lives.

Levels of religious observance are especially low among Orthodox Christians in the former Soviet republics surveyed, where the shares saying they attend church weekly range from 3% in Estonia to 17% in Georgia. Similarly, in five other European countries surveyed with significant Orthodox populations, fewer than a quarter of Orthodox Christians in each country surveyed say they are weekly churchgoers, although people in these countries are, on average, far more likely than those in the former USSR to say religion is “very important” in their lives.

Among those surveyed, American Orthodox Christians show moderate levels of religious observance. A slim majority say they pray daily (57%), while about half say religion is very important to them personally (52%). Roughly one-in-three (31%) Orthodox Christians in the U.S. say they attend church weekly – a higher level than in any European country surveyed, but much lower than the attendance rate among Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia.

## Lower rates of religious observance among Orthodox in former Soviet republics than elsewhere

*% of Orthodox Christians who ...*

|                                 | Say religion is “very important” | Attend church weekly | Pray daily |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |                                  |                      |            |
| Armenia                         | 53%                              | 9%                   | 45%        |
| Georgia                         | 50                               | 17                   | 40         |
| Moldova                         | 43                               | 13                   | 49         |
| Ukraine                         | 20                               | 12                   | 28         |
| Belarus                         | 17                               | 12                   | 22         |
| Kazakhstan                      | 15                               | 6                    | 15         |
| Russia                          | 15                               | 6                    | 18         |
| Latvia                          | 13                               | 5                    | 22         |
| Estonia                         | 10                               | 3                    | 14         |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>17</b>                        | <b>9</b>             | <b>22</b>  |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |                                  |                      |            |
| Greece                          | 59%                              | 17%                  | 31%        |
| Romania                         | 50                               | 21                   | 42         |
| Bosnia                          | 46                               | 10                   | 28         |
| Serbia                          | 34                               | 6                    | 27         |
| Bulgaria                        | 15                               | 5                    | 11         |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>46</b>                        | <b>10</b>            | <b>28</b>  |
| U.S.                            | 52%                              | 31%                  | 57%        |
| Ethiopia                        | 98%                              | 78%                  | 65%        |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey.

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**Sidebar: Orthodoxy in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia has the world's second-largest Orthodox population – approximately 36 million people – and a Christian history that dates to the fourth century. Church historians say that during the early 300s, a Christian traveler from Tyre (located within the present boundaries of Lebanon) named Frumentius was taken captive in the Kingdom of Aksum, located in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea. After his release, he helped spread Christianity in the region and was later named the first Bishop of Aksum by the Patriarch of Alexandria (located in Egypt). Today's Orthodox community in Ethiopia traces its religious roots to Frumentius' period.<sup>16</sup>

Survey results indicate that Orthodox Ethiopians, who now constitute 14% of the global Orthodox population, are much more religiously observant than are Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe and the United States. For example, 78% of Orthodox Ethiopians say they attend church at least weekly, compared with a median of 10% of Orthodox Christians in the European countries surveyed and 31% of Orthodox Christians in the United States. And 98% of Orthodox Ethiopians say religion is “very important” to them, compared with 52% in the United States and a median of 28% of Orthodox Christians in Europe who say this.

The Orthodox Church in Ethiopia is part of the “Oriental” branch of the tradition, in communion with five other Oriental Orthodox churches (Egypt, India, Armenia, Syria and Eritrea). One distinguishing factor of Ethiopian Orthodoxy is its usage of practices rooted in Judaism. For example, Orthodox Ethiopians observe the Jewish Sabbath, circumcise their sons at eight days old, and follow Jewish dietary laws. In addition, a text celebrated by Orthodox Ethiopians draws an historical connection to King Solomon of Israel, who is believed to have fathered a son with Queen Makeda of Ethiopia (the Queen of Sheba). This son, Menelik I, became an emperor of Ethiopia about 3,000 years ago and is said to have taken the Ark of the Covenant from Jerusalem to Ethiopia, where many Orthodox Ethiopians believe it still resides.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Moore, Dale H. 1936. “[Christianity in Ethiopia](#).” Church History.

<sup>17</sup> The text is called the “Kebra Nagast” (In English, “The Glory of Kings”). For more on Ethiopian Orthodox connections to Judaism, see Hammerschmidt, Ernst. 1965. “[Jewish Elements in the Cult of the Ethiopian Church](#).” Journal of Ethiopian Studies. Also see Pankhurst, Richard. 1992. “[The Falashas, or Judaic Ethiopians, in Their Christian Ethiopian Setting](#).” African Affairs. Also see Marcus, Harold G. 1994. “A History of Ethiopia.” Also see Raffaele, Paul. 2007. “[Keepers of the Lost Ark?](#)” Smithsonian Magazine.

## Majority of U.S. Orthodox Christians are absolutely certain of their belief in God

The vast majority of Orthodox Christians around the world believe in God, but many are less than certain about this belief.

Overall, Orthodox Christians living in former Soviet republics are considerably less likely than those living in other countries surveyed to say they are absolutely certain about their belief in God. Majorities say this in Armenia (79%), Georgia (72%) and Moldova (56%), but fewer Orthodox Christians express this certainty elsewhere, including just 26% in Russia.

Meanwhile, majorities of Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia, the U.S., Romania, Greece, Serbia and Bosnia say they are absolutely certain that God exists. Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are more likely than others surveyed to say they believe in God with absolute certainty: Nearly nine-in-ten (89%) say this.

## Orthodox Christians in former USSR less than certain about belief in God

*% of Orthodox Christians who ...*

|                                 | Believe in God with absolute certainty | Believe in God but less certain | Do not believe in God/DK/ref. |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |  |                                 |                               |
| Armenia                         | 79%                                    | 17%                             | 3%                            |
| Georgia                         | 72                                     | 27                              | 1                             |
| Moldova                         | 56                                     | 42                              | 3                             |
| Latvia                          | 36                                     | 50                              | 13                            |
| Kazakhstan                      | 33                                     | 59                              | 8                             |
| Ukraine                         | 32                                     | 59                              | 9                             |
| Russia                          | 26                                     | 61                              | 13                            |
| Belarus                         | 22                                     | 66                              | 12                            |
| Estonia                         | 22                                     | 57                              | 22                            |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>33</b>                              | <b>57</b>                       | <b>9</b>                      |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |  |                                 |                               |
| Romania                         | 64%                                    | 31%                             | 5%                            |
| Greece                          | 62                                     | 34                              | 4                             |
| Serbia                          | 59                                     | 32                              | 9                             |
| Bosnia                          | 56                                     | 36                              | 7                             |
| Bulgaria                        | 26                                     | 53                              | 22                            |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>59</b>                              | <b>34</b>                       | <b>7</b>                      |
| U.S.                            | 61%                                    | 36%                             | 4%                            |
| Ethiopia                        | 89%                                    | 10%                             | 1%                            |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia from survey conducted December 2008-April 2009 in 19 countries.

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## Most Ethiopian Orthodox Christians say they tithe, fast during Lent

Tithing, receiving Communion and fasting during holy periods such as Lent are common practices among Orthodox Christians in countries outside the former USSR. Although fasting during Lent is less common in Bulgaria, majorities in Bosnia (77%), Greece (68%), Serbia (64%) and Romania (58%) say they fast during Lent, as do 87% of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. By comparison, in the former Soviet republics surveyed, only in Moldova do a majority (65%) of Orthodox Christians report that they fast during Lent.

In no former Soviet country do a majority of Orthodox Christians report tithing – that is, giving a set percentage of their income to charity or to the church. Tithing is a more common practice among Orthodox Christians in Bosnia (60%), Ethiopia (57%) and Serbia (56%). Once again, Bulgaria stands out on the low end; only 7% of Orthodox Christians there say they tithe.

## Tithing, fasting and taking Communion less common among Orthodox Christians in former Soviet republics

*% of Orthodox Christians who say they ...*

|                                 | Tithe     | Fast during holy times such as Lent | Take Communion |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |           |                                     |                |
| Armenia                         | 27%       | 16%                                 | 45%            |
| Moldova                         | 20        | 65                                  | 74             |
| Kazakhstan                      | 16        | 24                                  | 27             |
| Belarus                         | 14        | 27                                  | 34             |
| Georgia                         | 12        | 25                                  | 34             |
| Estonia                         | 8         | 16                                  | 25             |
| Russia                          | 7         | 27                                  | 30             |
| Ukraine                         | 7         | 29                                  | 38             |
| Latvia                          | 6         | 23                                  | 35             |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>12</b> | <b>25</b>                           | <b>34</b>      |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |           |                                     |                |
| Bosnia                          | 60%       | 77%                                 | 65%            |
| Serbia                          | 56        | 64                                  | 48             |
| Romania                         | 41        | 58                                  | 71             |
| Greece                          | 22        | 68                                  | 67             |
| Bulgaria                        | 7         | 17                                  | 15             |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>41</b> | <b>64</b>                           | <b>65</b>      |
| Ethiopia                        | 57%       | 87%                                 | n/a            |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from survey conducted December 2008-April 2009 in 19 countries. Data for the U.S. not available. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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## Nearly all Orthodox Christians in Europe have been baptized

Two religious practices that are very common among Orthodox Christians regardless of where they live are baptism and keeping religious icons in their home. The vast majority of Orthodox Christians in the countries surveyed say they have icons of holy figures, including nine-in-ten or more in Greece (95%), Romania (95%), Bosnia (93%) and Serbia (92%). And despite their low levels of overall religious observance, majorities of Orthodox Christians living in all former Soviet republics surveyed say they have icons in their homes.

Even though religious practices were largely suppressed during the Soviet era, the vast majority of Orthodox Christians living in the former USSR say they were baptized. Baptism is nearly universal among Orthodox Christians in Greece, Romania and a few other European countries.

## Having icons in home is common practice among Orthodox Christians

*% of Orthodox Christians who ...*

|                                 | Have icons at home | Were baptized |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |                    |               |
| Moldova                         | 97%                | 99%           |
| Georgia                         | 96                 | 98            |
| Ukraine                         | 91                 | 97            |
| Armenia                         | 89                 | 76            |
| Belarus                         | 88                 | 96            |
| Russia                          | 87                 | 90            |
| Kazakhstan                      | 85                 | 91            |
| Latvia                          | 84                 | 94            |
| Estonia                         | 74                 | 98            |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>88</b>          | <b>96</b>     |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |                    |               |
| Greece                          | 95%                | 100%          |
| Romania                         | 95                 | 100           |
| Bosnia                          | 93                 | 97            |
| Serbia                          | 92                 | 96            |
| Bulgaria                        | 83                 | 90            |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>93</b>          | <b>97</b>     |
| Ethiopia                        | 73%                | n/a           |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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## Large majority of Orthodox Christians in Europe say they light candles in churches

The vast majority of Orthodox Christians in every European country surveyed say they light a candle when they visit a church, and, in most countries, majorities say they wear religious symbols.

Wearing religious symbols (for example, a cross) is more widespread in countries of the former Soviet Union than elsewhere. In every country surveyed in the former Soviet Union, most Orthodox Christians say they wear religious symbols. By comparison, in European countries that were not part of the Soviet Union, majorities in Greece (67%) and Romania (58%) say they wear religious symbols, but the practice is less common in Serbia (40%), Bulgaria (39%) and Bosnia (37%).

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## Most Orthodox Christians in former Soviet republics wear religious symbols

*% of Orthodox Christians who ...*

|                                 | <b>Wear religious symbols</b> | <b>Light a candle at church</b> |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |                               |                                 |
| Georgia                         | 81%                           | 94%                             |
| Kazakhstan                      | 76                            | 82                              |
| Russia                          | 72                            | 79                              |
| Moldova                         | 70                            | 92                              |
| Armenia                         | 67                            | 98                              |
| Ukraine                         | 66                            | 88                              |
| Latvia                          | 64                            | 80                              |
| Belarus                         | 61                            | 76                              |
| Estonia                         | 59                            | 86                              |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>67</b>                     | <b>86</b>                       |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |                               |                                 |
| Greece                          | 67%                           | 97%                             |
| Romania                         | 58                            | 94                              |
| Serbia                          | 40                            | 96                              |
| Bulgaria                        | 39                            | 94                              |
| Bosnia                          | 37                            | 94                              |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>40</b>                     | <b>94</b>                       |
| Ethiopia                        | 93%                           | n/a                             |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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## Belief in heaven, hell, miracles common among Orthodox

Most Orthodox Christians around the world say they believe in heaven, hell and miracles. While these beliefs are especially widespread in Ethiopia, even in the countries of the former Soviet Union, beliefs in heaven, hell or miracles are common.

Overall, Orthodox Christians in the former Soviet republics surveyed are slightly more likely than those in other European countries to say they believe in heaven, and considerably more likely to say they believe in hell.

And in the U.S., majorities of Orthodox Christians say they believe in heaven and in hell, although there is a particularly large gap between the share who say they believe in heaven and those who say they believe in hell (81% and 59%, respectively).

## Nearly all Ethiopian Orthodox Christians believe in heaven

*% of Orthodox Christians who say they believe in ...*

|                                 | Heaven    | Hell      | Miracles  |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |           |           |           |
| Georgia                         | 81%       | 77%       | 80%       |
| Kazakhstan                      | 77        | 72        | 55        |
| Belarus                         | 68        | 65        | 43        |
| Moldova                         | 65        | 57        | 62        |
| Ukraine                         | 64        | 60        | 60        |
| Latvia                          | 61        | 59        | 70        |
| Russia                          | 60        | 58        | 55        |
| Armenia                         | 56        | 49        | 72        |
| Estonia                         | 51        | 42        | 52        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>64</b> | <b>59</b> | <b>60</b> |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |           |           |           |
| Romania                         | 83%       | 74%       | 71%       |
| Greece                          | 67        | 64        | 68        |
| Serbia                          | 56        | 46        | 64        |
| Bosnia                          | 51        | 45        | 59        |
| Bulgaria                        | 39        | 32        | 55        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>56</b> | <b>46</b> | <b>64</b> |
| U.S.                            | 81%       | 59%       | n/a       |
| Ethiopia                        | 97%       | 92%       | 78%       |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia from survey conducted December 2008-April 2009 in 19 countries. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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## Widespread belief in fate and the soul among Orthodox Christians

Among the countries surveyed, majorities of Orthodox Christians say they believe in fate – that is, that circumstances in one’s life are largely predetermined.

Similarly, across Europe, majorities of Orthodox Christians say they believe in the existence of the soul. Orthodox Christians in former Soviet republics are just as likely as those living in other European countries to believe souls exist.

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## Belief in the soul common among Orthodox in Europe

*% of Orthodox Christians who say they believe in ...*

|                                 | The soul  | Fate      |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |           |           |
| Latvia                          | 84%       | 79%       |
| Ukraine                         | 84        | 74        |
| Kazakhstan                      | 83        | 63        |
| Moldova                         | 79        | 77        |
| Russia                          | 77        | 64        |
| Estonia                         | 74        | 68        |
| Belarus                         | 71        | 68        |
| Georgia                         | 71        | 73        |
| Armenia                         | 67        | 84        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>77</b> | <b>73</b> |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |           |           |
| Greece                          | 86%       | 60%       |
| Romania                         | 83        | 70        |
| Serbia                          | 77        | 72        |
| Bosnia                          | 66        | 71        |
| Bulgaria                        | 65        | 72        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>77</b> | <b>71</b> |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. and Ethiopia not available. “Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century”

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## Many Orthodox Christians believe in evil eye, magic

The survey in Central and Eastern Europe, and the survey in Ethiopia included a few questions about religious or spiritual beliefs that are not directly associated with Christianity, and the results show that many Orthodox Christians adhere to these beliefs. Majorities in about half the countries surveyed say they believe in the “evil eye” (i.e., that certain people can cast curses or spells that cause bad things to happen to someone), and more than a third in most countries say they believe in magic, witchcraft or sorcery.

Fewer Orthodox Christians believe in reincarnation, a concept more associated with Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions. Still, in most countries, at least one-in-five Orthodox Christians say they believe in reincarnation.

Belief in the evil eye is especially common among Orthodox Christians living in the former USSR. Across these countries, a median of 61% say they believe in it. In other European countries surveyed, belief in the evil eye is relatively high in Greece (70%), but lower elsewhere.

In Ethiopia, just about a third (35%) of Orthodox Christians say they believe in the evil eye – a lower level than among Orthodox Christians in Europe and among Christians elsewhere in Africa.

## Belief in evil eye more common among people in former Soviet republics than elsewhere

*% of Orthodox Christians who say they believe in ...*

|                                 | Evil eye  | Magic, witchcraft, sorcery | Reincarnation |
|---------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |           |                            |               |
| Latvia                          | 74%       | 61%                        | 43%           |
| Ukraine                         | 63        | 52                         | 29            |
| Estonia                         | 62        | 38                         | 31            |
| Kazakhstan                      | 62        | 55                         | 40            |
| Armenia                         | 61        | 20                         | 27            |
| Russia                          | 61        | 48                         | 31            |
| Moldova                         | 59        | 37                         | 22            |
| Georgia                         | 51        | 41                         | 10            |
| Belarus                         | 44        | 40                         | 29            |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>61</b> | <b>41</b>                  | <b>29</b>     |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |           |                            |               |
| Greece                          | 70%       | 41%                        | 20%           |
| Bulgaria                        | 54        | 40                         | 37            |
| Romania                         | 48        | 34                         | 23            |
| Serbia                          | 43        | 40                         | 26            |
| Bosnia                          | 31        | 27                         | 16            |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>48</b> | <b>40</b>                  | <b>23</b>     |
| Ethiopia                        | 35%       | n/a                        | 23%           |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from survey conducted December 2008-April 2009 in 19 countries. Data for U.S. not available.

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## Majority of Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia take exclusivist views of religion

Most Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia say theirs is the one true faith leading to eternal life in heaven, and that only a single way exists to correctly interpret their religion's teachings. But among Orthodox Christians elsewhere, these views of religion are less common.

Generally, Orthodox Christians in the former Soviet republics surveyed are somewhat less likely than other Orthodox Europeans to hold exclusivist views. In most of these countries, well under half say that *only* their religion leads to eternal life in heaven, or that there is only one correct way to understand their religion. By comparison, in Romania, nearly half take these views (47% each).

## Minorities of Orthodox Christians in Europe say theirs is the one true faith

*% of Orthodox Christians who say...*

|                                 | <b>Theirs is the one true faith leading to eternal life</b> | <b>There is only one way to interpret their religion</b> |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |   |  |
| Georgia                         | 80%   | 68%  |
| Armenia                         | 74  | 68   |
| Moldova                         | 58  | 38   |
| Ukraine                         | 31  | 40   |
| Belarus                         | 31  | 30   |
| Kazakhstan                      | 29  | 35   |
| Russia                          | 25  | 36   |
| Estonia                         | 23  | 31   |
| Latvia                          | 16  | 27   |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>31</b>   | <b>36</b>  |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |   |  |
| Romania                         | 47%   | 47%  |
| Greece                          | 45  | 52   |
| Bosnia                          | 38  | 49   |
| Serbia                          | 35  | 47   |
| Bulgaria                        | 23  | 29   |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>38</b>   | <b>47</b>  |
| Ethiopia                        | 79%   | 66%  |

Note: Neither/both/don't know/refused responses not shown.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from survey conducted December 2008-April 2009 in 19 countries. Data for U.S. not available.

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### **3. Orthodox Christians support key church policies, are lukewarm toward reconciling with Roman Catholic Church**

A host of disputes – ranging from theological to political – have divided Orthodoxy from Catholicism for nearly 1,000 years. But while some leaders on both sides have tried to resolve them, fewer than four-in-ten Orthodox Christians in the vast majority of countries surveyed say they favor their church reconciling with the Roman Catholic Church.

At the same time, Orthodox majorities in most countries say their religion and Catholicism have a lot in common, and Orthodox majorities across most of Central and Eastern Europe say Pope Francis has helped improve Orthodox-Catholic relations. Regarding Pope Francis in general, however, Orthodox opinion is mixed; half or fewer of Orthodox respondents in most countries surveyed say they view him favorably, including just 32% in Russia.

On two of the issues where Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic teachings diverge – whether to allow married clergy and whether to permit divorce – most Orthodox Christians favor their official church stances permitting divorce and allowing married men to be ordained as priests. Orthodox Christians also tend to support their church’s stances barring same-sex marriage and prohibiting the ordination of women as priests, issues on which their church aligns with Catholic positions. On balance, Orthodox women are as likely as men to oppose the ordination of women to the priesthood.

Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia were asked two additional questions. The results show that most respondents favor church policies that prevent married men from becoming bishops and forbid the Orthodox Church from marrying couples unless both spouses are Christian.

### Orthodox Christians ambivalent about communion with Roman Catholic Church

Neither Orthodox Christians nor Catholics widely favor communion between their two churches, which have been in an official state of schism since the year 1054. In 12 of the 13 Central and Eastern European countries surveyed with sizable Eastern Orthodox populations, fewer than half of Orthodox Christians say they favor the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches being in communion again. Only in Romania do a majority (62%) of Orthodox Christians support reunification, and only in Ukraine (74%) and Bosnia (68%) do most Catholics take this position. In many of these countries, about a third or more of Orthodox and Catholic respondents say they don't know or can't answer the question, perhaps reflecting a lack of understanding of the historical split.

In Russia, which has the largest Orthodox population in the world, just 17% of Orthodox Christians support communion with Catholicism.

Overall, Orthodox Christians and Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe offer similar responses to this question. But in the countries surveyed with sizable Eastern Orthodox *and* Roman Catholic populations, Orthodox Christians are often much less likely than their Catholic compatriots to support communion between the two churches. For example, in Bosnia, 42% of Orthodox Christians favor communion, compared with 68% of Catholics. Significant gaps also exist in Ukraine (34% of

### Orthodox Christians, Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe lukewarm to idea of reconciliation

*% of Orthodox Christians and Catholics in each country who favor/oppose the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox churches being in communion again*

|                             | Favor     | Oppose    | DK/ref.   |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Orthodox populations</b> |           |           |           |
| Romania                     | 62%       | 25%       | 13%       |
| Bulgaria                    | 42        | 29        | 29        |
| Bosnia                      | 42        | 32        | 26        |
| Estonia                     | 36        | 22        | 42        |
| Serbia                      | 36        | 42        | 22        |
| Greece                      | 35        | 40        | 25        |
| Latvia                      | 35        | 30        | 35        |
| Ukraine                     | 34        | 23        | 43        |
| Belarus                     | 31        | 28        | 42        |
| Moldova                     | 26        | 42        | 31        |
| Kazakhstan                  | 21        | 33        | 46        |
| Georgia                     | 19        | 41        | 40        |
| Russia                      | 17        | 41        | 41        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>               | <b>35</b> | <b>31</b> | <b>38</b> |
| <b>Catholic populations</b> |           |           |           |
| Ukraine                     | 74%       | 8%        | 18%       |
| Bosnia                      | 68        | 8         | 24        |
| Croatia                     | 52        | 30        | 17        |
| Belarus                     | 51        | 29        | 20        |
| Czech Republic              | 38        | 34        | 27        |
| Poland                      | 36        | 29        | 35        |
| Latvia                      | 35        | 34        | 31        |
| Hungary                     | 24        | 34        | 42        |
| Lithuania                   | 24        | 40        | 36        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>               | <b>38</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>27</b> |

Note: Armenia is not included in the table because its national church is not in communion with Eastern Orthodoxy. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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Orthodox vs. 74% of Catholics) and Belarus (31% vs. 51%).



### Orthodox, Catholics about equally likely to view their religions as similar

While relatively few favor a hypothetical communion between their churches, Orthodox Christians and Catholics generally say their religions have a lot in common. Majorities in 10 of the 14 Orthodox populations surveyed say this, as do majorities in seven of the nine Catholic populations.

Proximity to people of the other faith often seems to be a factor; respondents from these two traditions are especially likely to say their denominations have a lot in common if they live in countries with sizable populations of both. In Bosnia, for example, 75% of Orthodox Christians and 89% of Catholics say their religions have a lot in common. In Belarus, 70% of Orthodox Christians say this, as do 75% of Catholics.

Ukrainian Catholics are among the most likely in the region to say Catholicism has a lot in common with Orthodox Christianity. In part, this may be because most Ukrainian Catholics identify as Byzantine Rite Catholics and not Roman Catholics.

### Orthodox Christians, Catholics in Central and Eastern Europe see common ground between their religions

*% of Orthodox Christians and Catholics who think their two religions ...*

|                             | Have a lot in common | Are very different | DK/ref.   |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| <b>Orthodox populations</b> |                      |                    |           |
| Bosnia                      | 75%                  | 21%                | 3%        |
| Belarus                     | 70                   | 20                 | 10        |
| Bulgaria                    | 66                   | 20                 | 13        |
| Romania                     | 63                   | 33                 | 4         |
| Estonia                     | 60                   | 26                 | 14        |
| Latvia                      | 60                   | 27                 | 13        |
| Ukraine                     | 60                   | 22                 | 18        |
| Serbia                      | 58                   | 36                 | 6         |
| Greece                      | 56                   | 35                 | 8         |
| Kazakhstan                  | 55                   | 26                 | 18        |
| Georgia                     | 47                   | 38                 | 16        |
| Russia                      | 46                   | 28                 | 26        |
| Armenia                     | 40                   | 36                 | 24        |
| Moldova                     | 40                   | 41                 | 19        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>               | <b>59</b>            | <b>28</b>          | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Catholic populations</b> |                      |                    |           |
| Bosnia                      | 89%                  | 11%                | <1%       |
| Ukraine                     | 87                   | 5                  | 8         |
| Croatia                     | 78                   | 17                 | 5         |
| Belarus                     | 75                   | 20                 | 5         |
| Latvia                      | 58                   | 23                 | 18        |
| Czech Republic              | 57                   | 27                 | 17        |
| Poland                      | 57                   | 22                 | 20        |
| Lithuania                   | 53                   | 26                 | 22        |
| Hungary                     | 37                   | 31                 | 32        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>               | <b>58</b>            | <b>22</b>          | <b>17</b> |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.  
Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries.  
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## Many Orthodox say Pope Francis is helping Catholic-Orthodox relations, but fewer view him favorably

In 1965, Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople and Pope Paul VI agreed to rescind the mutual excommunications issued by their churches 911 years prior, in 1054. And today, majorities of Orthodox Christians in most countries surveyed say they believe Pope Francis – who has issued joint declarations with both [Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople](#) and [Patriarch Kirill of Moscow](#) – has been improving relations between Catholicism and Orthodoxy.

More than two-thirds of Orthodox Christians in Bulgaria, Ukraine and several other countries say Pope Francis has been improving relations. In Russia, however, only half take this view.

Much lower Orthodox shares report positive opinions of Pope Francis in general. Across the region, a median of just under half (46%) of Orthodox Christians view Francis favorably, including about a third (32%) in Russia. That is not to say that all others view him *unfavorably*; a median of just 9% of Orthodox Christians across these countries take this position, while a median of 45% say they have not formed an opinion or otherwise decline to answer.

Catholics, meanwhile, are largely united in their approval of the pope. Majorities of all nine Catholic populations surveyed also say Pope Francis has been improving their church's relationship with Orthodoxy.

## Across Central and Eastern Europe, majorities and pluralities think Pope Francis is improving relations between Catholics and Orthodox Christians

*% of Orthodox Christians in each country who ...*

|                             | Say Pope Francis is improving relations between Catholics and Orthodox | Say their overall opinion of Pope Francis is favorable |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Orthodox populations</b> |  |  |
| Bulgaria                    | 84%  | 49%  |
| Latvia                      | 81   | 52   |
| Ukraine                     | 77   | 51   |
| Belarus                     | 76   | 57   |
| Armenia                     | 74   | 74   |
| Estonia                     | 74   | 39   |
| Kazakhstan                  | 72   | 43   |
| Moldova                     | 69   | 49   |
| Romania                     | 69   | 72   |
| Bosnia                      | 59   | 36   |
| Greece                      | 59   | 39   |
| Russia                      | 50   | 32   |
| Georgia                     | 49   | 41   |
| Serbia                      | 39   | 24   |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>               | <b>71</b>  | <b>46</b>  |
| <b>Catholic populations</b> |  |  |
| Bosnia                      | 95%  | 98%  |
| Belarus                     | 95   | 83   |
| Croatia                     | 87   | 95   |
| Ukraine                     | 84   | 74   |
| Czech Republic              | 82   | 89   |
| Latvia                      | 77   | 69   |
| Lithuania                   | 75   | 74   |
| Poland                      | 67   | 93   |
| Hungary                     | 66   | 77   |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>               | <b>82</b>  | <b>83</b>  |

Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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## Orthodox more likely to view Moscow patriarch as highest religious authority than ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople

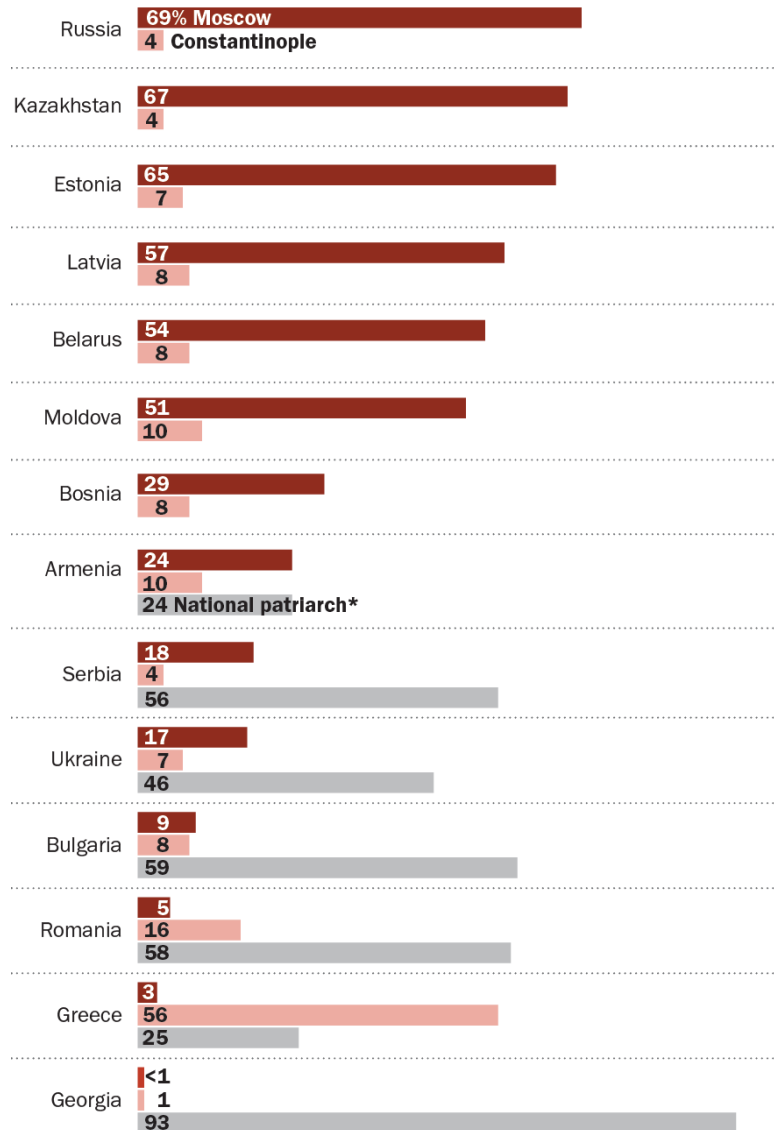
Orthodox Christians are more likely to invest religious authority in the patriarch of Moscow than in the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, even though the latter is traditionally known as the “first among equals” among Eastern Orthodox leaders.<sup>18</sup>

In every Orthodox-majority country surveyed that lacks a self-governing national Orthodox church, Orthodox Christians are much more likely to say they recognize the patriarch of Moscow (currently Kirill) as the highest authority in Orthodoxy than to say this about the patriarch of Constantinople (currently Bartholomew).

In the countries surveyed that *do* have a self-governing national Orthodox church, Orthodox respondents are generally more likely to view their own national Orthodox patriarch as the highest authority within Orthodoxy. At the same time, others in some of these countries are more likely to say they view the Moscow patriarch this way

## Stronger support for patriarch of Moscow than patriarch of Constantinople in Central and Eastern Europe

*% of Orthodox Christians who say they recognize the patriarch of \_\_\_\_\_ as the highest authority of the Orthodox Church*



\*In Armenia, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece many respondents volunteered their national patriarch as the highest authority of the Orthodox Church. In Ukraine, respondents were also offered “patriarch of Kiev” as a response, and many respondents also volunteered “the metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine.” These responses are combined.

Source: Survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. “Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century”

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<sup>18</sup> While recognized as “first among equals,” the patriarch of Constantinople is not imbued with governing authority over other Eastern Orthodox patriarchs, aside from the power to call and preside at gatherings.

(rather than the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople). Greece is an exception; a majority of Orthodox Greeks view the ecumenical patriarch as the highest Orthodox authority.

**Sidebar: Russia, the largest Orthodox country**

In 1988, the Soviet Union marked the 1,000th anniversary of the historical event known for bringing what is now known as Orthodox Christianity to Russia and its environs – a mass baptism believed to have occurred in 988 in the Dnieper River in Kiev, which was overseen by Vladimir the Great, ruler of the region then known as Kievan Rus and himself a convert to Orthodoxy.<sup>19</sup>

Back then, Constantinople was the center of the Orthodox world. But in 1453, the Muslim-led Ottoman Empire conquered the city, and, in the ensuing centuries, Russia's leaders would come to view themselves as inheritors of the mantle of Orthodox leadership. Moscow, in the words of some observers, had become the "Third Rome," or leader of the Christian world, following Rome itself and then Constantinople, which was called the "second Rome."<sup>20</sup>

Russia's leadership role in the Orthodox world changed during the Communist era, when Soviet authorities worked to enact atheism across the USSR, putting religious institutions in the country on the defensive. From 1910 to 1970, the Orthodox population in Russia fell by a third, from 60 million to 39 million. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev even envisioned a day when just a single Orthodox priest would remain in the country.<sup>21</sup> But since the end of the Soviet era, Russia's Orthodox population has rebounded, more than doubling to 101 million. Now, roughly seven-in-ten Russians (71%) identify as Orthodox, up from 37% in 1991.<sup>22</sup>

Even in 1970, Russia's Orthodox population was the world's largest, and now it is almost three times bigger than the next-largest national Orthodox populations, Ethiopia's (36 million) and Ukraine's (35 million). One indicator of religious influence from Russia is that while the patriarch of Constantinople commands the title of "first among equals" among Orthodox religious leaders, more Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe view the patriarch of Moscow as the highest Orthodox authority, even outside of Russia. (See survey results on page 43.)

At the same time, Orthodox Christians in Russia rank among the least religious in Central and Eastern Europe by several measures. For example, just 6% of Orthodox Christians in Russia say they attend church weekly, 15% say religion is "very important" to them, 18% report praying daily and 26% believe in God with absolute certainty.

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<sup>19</sup> Heppell, Muriel. 1987. "The Baptism of Rus." Religion in Communist Lands.

<sup>20</sup> Toumanoff, Cyril. 1955. "Moscow the Third Rome: Genesis and Significance of a Politico-Religious Idea." The Catholic Historical Review.

<sup>21</sup> Kulavig, Eric. 2002. "Dissent in the Years of Khrushchev: Nine Stories about Disobedient Russians."

<sup>22</sup> See Pew Research Center's 2017 report "[Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe](#)."

## Wide support among Orthodox Christians for church position that allows divorce

Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism have different positions on some controversial issues. For example, Orthodoxy typically allows divorce and remarriage, while Catholicism forbids it.<sup>23</sup> And while Orthodoxy allows married men to become priests, the Catholic Church generally does not.<sup>24</sup>

Most Orthodox Christians support their church's positions on these issues. Indeed, majorities of Orthodox Christians in 12 of the 15 countries surveyed say they support the church position allowing Orthodox Christians to divorce. This position is most common in Greece, where about nine-in-ten Orthodox Christians (92%) support it.

## In most countries, Orthodox majorities support church policy allowing Orthodox Christians to divorce

*% of Orthodox Christians in each country who \_\_\_\_\_ the Orthodox Church's current position allowing Orthodox Christians to divorce*

|            | Favor | Oppose | DK/ref. |
|------------|-------|--------|---------|
| Greece     | 92%   | 7%     | 2%      |
| Bulgaria   | 77    | 13     | 11      |
| Bosnia     | 76    | 11     | 14      |
| Romania    | 75    | 18     | 7       |
| Estonia    | 73    | 16     | 11      |
| Latvia     | 73    | 17     | 10      |
| Georgia    | 72    | 13     | 15      |
| Belarus    | 70    | 17     | 14      |
| Serbia     | 70    | 23     | 7       |
| Ukraine    | 62    | 19     | 19      |
| Ethiopia   | 59    | 36     | 5       |
| Russia     | 56    | 26     | 18      |
| Kazakhstan | 49    | 32     | 18      |
| Armenia    | 47    | 40     | 13      |
| Moldova    | 47    | 39     | 14      |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.

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<sup>23</sup> While Eastern Orthodox teachings are critical of divorce, they generally allow it in cases of infidelity. Its churches generally allow people in these situations to have up to three marriages, though the liturgies for second and third are penitential in nature. A traditional Orthodox saying is that the church "blesses the first marriage, performs the second, tolerates the third, and forbids the fourth." The limit of three is often linked to the writings of a fourth-century theologian named Gregory of Nazianzus that were viewed as permissive relative to other, stricter Christian prohibitions on divorces. Oriental Orthodox churches also discourage divorce but tend to allow it in certain circumstances. For example, in the Coptic Orthodox churches, divorce is only allowed in cases of adultery or a spouse's conversion to another religion (though from 1938 to 2008 it had a more permissive stance). See Beeley, Christopher A. 2008. "Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God." Also see Schembri, Kevin. 2015. "[The Orthodox Tradition on Divorced and Remarried Faithful.](#)" Melita Theologic. Also see April 23, 2012. "[Coptic Christians call for divorce law relaxation.](#)" Ahrum Online. Also see Allen, John L., Jr. June 29, 2015. "[Francis is not the only pope facing a divorce dilemma.](#)" Crux.

<sup>24</sup> Orthodox men who are married can become priests, but they cannot marry once in the priesthood. The Vatican makes exceptions for some already-married Protestant clergy, such as Anglicans, who convert to Catholicism, and for priests of Eastern Rite Catholicism.

### Majorities of Orthodox support church position letting married men be priests

Orthodox majorities in every country surveyed with a substantial Orthodox population say they approve of their church's policy on permitting married men to become priests. This position – which runs counter to a general Catholic prohibition of married priests – is again most accepted in Greece, where 91% of Orthodox respondents support it. This view is least widespread in Armenia, though even there it is still supported by a majority (58%) of Orthodox Christians.<sup>25</sup>

Ethiopian Orthodox Christians also generally agree that married men should be allowed to become priests; 78% favor the policy permitting it.

### In all countries, Orthodox majorities favor church policy allowing married men to become priests

*% of Orthodox Christians in each country who \_\_\_\_\_ the Orthodox Church's current position allowing married men to become priests*

|            | <b>Favor</b> | <b>Oppose</b> | <b>DK/ref.</b> |
|------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Greece     | 91%          | 6%            | 3%             |
| Romania    | 83           | 12            | 5              |
| Serbia     | 82           | 10            | 8              |
| Estonia    | 80           | 6             | 14             |
| Latvia     | 80           | 10            | 10             |
| Ethiopia   | 78           | 16            | 6              |
| Georgia    | 78           | 9             | 13             |
| Ukraine    | 75           | 8             | 16             |
| Bosnia     | 74           | 8             | 17             |
| Bulgaria   | 74           | 9             | 17             |
| Moldova    | 70           | 14            | 16             |
| Kazakhstan | 68           | 14            | 17             |
| Russia     | 68           | 13            | 19             |
| Belarus    | 65           | 24            | 11             |
| Armenia    | 58           | 27            | 15             |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.

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<sup>25</sup> Armenia's national church, part of Oriental Orthodoxy rather than Eastern Orthodoxy, also allows married men to become priests.

## In most countries, Orthodox majorities or pluralities support church policy on women not becoming priests

While some Orthodox jurisdictions allow women to be ordained to the position of deaconess – which entails a variety of official church duties – and others are considering allowing this, Orthodoxy is aligned with Catholicism in forbidding women’s ordination as priests.<sup>26</sup>

Orthodox majorities or pluralities in many countries support this prohibition, including as many as 89% in Ethiopia and 77% in Georgia. But in a few places, Orthodox Christians are divided. This includes Russia, where 39% favor the current policy and an equal share oppose it, instead saying that women *should* be ordained as priests. Nearly a quarter of Orthodox Christians in Russia do not take a position on this issue.

On balance, Orthodox women support this prohibition as often as men do. In Ethiopia, for example, 89% of women and men alike favor it, while in Romania it is favored by 74% of both men and women. In Ukraine, 49% of both men and women say women should not be ordained as priests.

## Orthodox Christians in Russia divided on whether women should be ordained as priests

*% of Orthodox Christians in each country who \_\_\_\_\_ the Orthodox Church’s current position forbidding women from becoming priests*

|            | Favor | Oppose | DK/ref. |
|------------|-------|--------|---------|
| Ethiopia   | 89%   | 7%     | 4%      |
| Georgia    | 77    | 9      | 15      |
| Romania    | 74    | 22     | 5       |
| Armenia    | 72    | 17     | 11      |
| Greece     | 58    | 33     | 9       |
| Belarus    | 56    | 28     | 17      |
| Bosnia     | 53    | 28     | 19      |
| Moldova    | 51    | 31     | 18      |
| Latvia     | 49    | 36     | 15      |
| Ukraine    | 49    | 28     | 24      |
| Serbia     | 47    | 42     | 11      |
| Bulgaria   | 45    | 33     | 23      |
| Kazakhstan | 41    | 37     | 23      |
| Russia     | 39    | 39     | 23      |
| Estonia    | 37    | 44     | 19      |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from Spring 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. Data for U.S. not available.

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<sup>26</sup> Orthodox jurisdictions including the Armenian Apostolic Church and the Alexandrian Patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church allow women to be ordained as deaconesses. (The Coptic Church also has a position of deaconess, though among Copts no ordination is involved.) See Meneshian, Knarik. July 6, 2013. “[A Nearly Forgotten History: Women Deacons in the Armenian Church.](#)” The Armenian Weekly. Also see FitzGerald, Kyriaki Karidoyanes. Nov. 25, 2016. “[Theologian’s Response to Patriarchate of Alexandria’s Decision to Restore the Ministry of Deaconess.](#)” St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess. Also see “[Can women hold or have women ever held positions of authority such as deaconess or priest-ess in your church?](#)” Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States.



### Orthodox ban on same-sex marriage has overwhelming support

The Orthodox Church, like the Roman Catholic Church, does not sanction same-sex marriages. This prohibition is supported by roughly six-in-ten or more Orthodox Christians in every Central and Eastern European country surveyed, including Georgia (93%), Armenia (91%) and Latvia (84%). In Russia, 80% of Orthodox Christians support it.

In most countries surveyed, younger adults favor this policy as much as older people do. A major exception is in Greece, where roughly half (52%) of those ages 18 to 29 support the policy, compared with 78% of those ages 50 and over.

While in some parts of the world, levels of religiosity are strongly tied to views on same-sex marriage, this does not seem to be a major factor among Orthodox Christians. With few exceptions, people who say religion is very important to them are about equally likely to support these church positions as are people who say religion is less important in their lives.

(For more on Orthodox views toward homosexuality and other social issues, see Chapter 4.)

### In Central and Eastern Europe, Orthodox majorities favor church policy prohibiting same-sex marriages

*% of Orthodox Christians in each country who \_\_\_\_\_ the Orthodox Church's current position prohibiting same-sex marriage*

|            | <b>Favor</b> | <b>Oppose</b> | <b>DK/ref.</b> |
|------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Georgia    | 93%          | 2%            | 5%             |
| Armenia    | 91           | 4             | 4              |
| Latvia     | 84           | 10            | 5              |
| Belarus    | 82           | 10            | 8              |
| Estonia    | 82           | 13            | 5              |
| Serbia     | 82           | 14            | 5              |
| Bosnia     | 81           | 7             | 12             |
| Russia     | 80           | 13            | 7              |
| Romania    | 78           | 19            | 3              |
| Ukraine    | 78           | 11            | 11             |
| Moldova    | 77           | 15            | 8              |
| Kazakhstan | 74           | 14            | 12             |
| Greece     | 69           | 26            | 5              |
| Bulgaria   | 61           | 30            | 9              |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia and U.S. not available.

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### Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia oppose married priests becoming bishops

In Ethiopia, which has the second-largest Orthodox population in the world, Pew Research Center asked two additional questions about specific church policies relating to marriage. Majorities here, too, overwhelmingly agree with these positions.

About seven-in-ten Orthodox Ethiopians (71%) agree with the church position that bars married priests from becoming bishops. (In Orthodoxy, men who are already married are allowed to be ordained as Orthodox priests, but they are not allowed to become bishops.)

### Most Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia favor church policy prohibiting interfaith marriages

*% of Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia who favor/oppose each Orthodox Church position*

|   | <b>Favor</b> | <b>Oppose</b> | <b>DK/Ref</b> |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Not allowing married priests to become bishops                        | 71%          | 17%           | 12%           |
| Not allowing Orthodox Christians to marry outside the Christian faith | 82           | 14            | 4             |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Pew Research Center's 2015 Global Attitudes Survey. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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An even larger majority (82%) of Orthodox Ethiopians favor Orthodoxy's prohibition on letting couples marry in an Orthodox church unless both spouses are Christians.

## **4. Orthodox take socially conservative views on gender issues, homosexuality**

On environmentalism and homosexuality, Orthodox Christians are largely united in their views. Most Eastern Orthodox Christians – whose spiritual leader, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, has been called the “Green Patriarch” – favor environmental protection, even at the expense of economic growth. And the vast majority of Orthodox Christians say homosexuality should be discouraged by society, though those in Greece and the U.S. are exceptions to this broad pattern.

On other issues, Orthodox Christians are divided. When it comes to whether abortion should be legal, for instance, there are mixed views in many countries surveyed, with those in former Soviet republics expressing more opposition to legal abortion than those elsewhere.

Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia are especially conservative on social issues. In answers to a series of questions on the morality of specific behaviors, Ethiopian Orthodox Christians are more likely than Orthodox Christians in most other countries surveyed to express moral opposition to abortion, sex outside of marriage, divorce and drinking alcohol.

This chapter explores Orthodox Christians’ views on a range of social and political issues, including human evolution and gender roles and norms. While not all questions asked of Orthodox Christians in Central and Eastern Europe (where the vast majority of Orthodox Christians live) were also asked of their co-religionists in the U.S. and Ethiopia, the chapter includes cross-regional comparisons whenever possible.

## Orthodox Christians largely reject homosexuality and oppose same-sex marriage

The vast majority of Orthodox Christians across Eastern Europe say homosexuality should *not* be accepted by society. This includes virtually all in Armenia (98%), and more than eight-in-ten in Russia (87%) and Ukraine (86%), which have the region's largest Orthodox populations. Overall, Orthodox Christians in former Soviet republics are less accepting of homosexuality than are those elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

Two exceptions to Orthodox Christians' overall rejection of homosexuality are in Greece and the United States. Fully half of Orthodox Christians in Greece say society *should* accept homosexuality, as do a clear majority (62%) of Orthodox Christians in the United States.

## Most Orthodox Christians say homosexuality should be discouraged, except in Greece, U.S.

*% of Orthodox Christians who say homosexuality should/should not be accepted by society*

|                                 | Should    | Should not | DK/ref.  |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|----------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |           |            |          |
| Armenia                         | 1%        | 98%        | 1%       |
| Georgia                         | 5         | 93         | 2        |
| Moldova                         | 5         | 93         | 3        |
| Russia                          | 7         | 87         | 6        |
| Ukraine                         | 6         | 86         | 8        |
| Kazakhstan                      | 8         | 85         | 7        |
| Belarus                         | 9         | 84         | 7        |
| Estonia                         | 9         | 83         | 8        |
| Latvia                          | 9         | 83         | 8        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>7</b>  | <b>86</b>  | <b>7</b> |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |           |            |          |
| Bosnia                          | 10%       | 86%        | 5%       |
| Romania                         | 10        | 86         | 4        |
| Serbia                          | 19        | 76         | 4        |
| Bulgaria                        | 34        | 59         | 7        |
| Greece                          | 50        | 45         | 5        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>19</b> | <b>76</b>  | <b>5</b> |
| U.S.                            | 62%       | 31%        | 8%*      |

\*U.S. DK/ref. category also includes a small proportion of respondents who volunteered an ambiguous response, such as "depends on the situation."

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia not available. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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Similarly, very few Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe say same-sex marriage should be legal. Even in Greece, where half of Orthodox Christians say society should accept homosexuality, only a quarter (25%) say gay and lesbian couples should be able to marry legally.

Same-sex marriage is not currently legal in any Eastern European country (although Greece and Estonia allow same-sex domestic partnerships or civil unions), and no Orthodox church sanctions same-sex weddings.

The United States, however, allows same-sex marriage nationwide. There, Orthodox Christians are more accepting of the practice; more than half (54% as of 2014) favor allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally, almost mirroring the share of American adults overall who took this position in 2014 (53%).

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## Relatively few Orthodox Christians support same-sex marriage

*% of Orthodox Christians who \_\_\_\_\_ allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally*

|                                 | <b>Strongly favor/favor</b> | <b>Oppose/strongly oppose</b> | <b>DK/ref.</b> |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |                             |                               |                |
| Armenia                         | 3%                          | 96%                           | 1%             |
| Georgia                         | 3                           | 95                            | 2              |
| Moldova                         | 5                           | 93                            | 2              |
| Kazakhstan                      | 6                           | 91                            | 3              |
| Russia                          | 5                           | 91                            | 5              |
| Estonia                         | 8                           | 89                            | 3              |
| Latvia                          | 9                           | 86                            | 5              |
| Ukraine                         | 9                           | 84                            | 7              |
| Belarus                         | 16                          | 81                            | 3              |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>6</b>                    | <b>91</b>                     | <b>3</b>       |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |                             |                               |                |
| Bosnia                          | 8%                          | 88%                           | 4%             |
| Serbia                          | 11                          | 85                            | 4              |
| Bulgaria                        | 19                          | 78                            | 3              |
| Romania                         | 27                          | 72                            | 1              |
| Greece                          | 25                          | 72                            | 4              |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>19</b>                   | <b>78</b>                     | <b>4</b>       |
| U.S.                            | 54%                         | 41%                           | 5%             |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia not available. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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### Mixed views among Orthodox Christians over abortion as a legal issue

Compared with homosexuality, there is less of a consensus among Orthodox Christians about whether abortion should be legal. In some countries, such as Bulgaria and Estonia, solid majorities of Orthodox Christians say abortion should be legal in all or most cases. But in Georgia and Moldova, majorities of Orthodox Christians take the opposite position: that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases. In Russia, too, most Orthodox Christians (58%) say abortion should be mostly or entirely illegal.

Abortion is currently legal in many situations in Russia, across most of Eastern Europe and in the United States.

As is true for homosexuality and same-sex marriage, Orthodox Christians in former Soviet republics are somewhat more conservative on the legality of abortion than are other Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe. A median of 42% of Orthodox Christians in the nine post-Soviet states surveyed say abortion should be legal in all or most cases, compared with a median of 60% in the five other European countries surveyed.

### Orthodox Christians divided over whether abortion should be legal

*% of Orthodox Christians who say abortion should be legal/illegal in all or most cases in their country*

|                                 | Legal     | Illegal   | DK/ref.  |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |           |           |          |
| Estonia                         | 68%       | 28%       | 4%       |
| Armenia                         | 56        | 39        | 5        |
| Latvia                          | 53        | 40        | 7        |
| Kazakhstan                      | 48        | 50        | 3        |
| Belarus                         | 42        | 54        | 4        |
| Russia                          | 36        | 58        | 6        |
| Ukraine                         | 36        | 53        | 11       |
| Moldova                         | 14        | 79        | 7        |
| Georgia                         | 10        | 85        | 5        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>42</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>5</b> |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |           |           |          |
| Bulgaria                        | 83%       | 14%       | 4%       |
| Serbia                          | 63        | 32        | 5        |
| Romania                         | 60        | 38        | 3        |
| Bosnia                          | 47        | 48        | 5        |
| Greece                          | 43        | 54        | 3        |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>60</b> | <b>38</b> | <b>4</b> |
| U.S.                            | 53%       | 45%       | 1%       |

Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia not available. "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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## Orthodox Christians see homosexual behavior, prostitution as morally wrong

While more recent surveys did not ask Orthodox Ethiopians about homosexuality, same-sex marriage or abortion, a 2008 Pew Research Center survey did ask this group about the morality of “homosexual behavior,” of “having an abortion,” and other behaviors. (It is possible opinions could have shifted since this survey was conducted.)

## Most Ethiopian Orthodox Christians say homosexual behavior, prostitution, abortion and divorce are morally wrong

*% of Orthodox Christians who say \_\_\_\_ is morally wrong*

|                                 | Using drugs | Homosexual behavior | Prostitution | Having an abortion | Drinking alcohol | Sex before marriage | Divorce   | Using contraceptives |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |             |                     |              |                    |                  |                     |           |                      |
| Armenia                         | 97%         | 98%                 | 96%          | 69%                | 56%              | 78%                 | 56%       | 42%                  |
| Moldova                         | 93          | 91                  | 91           | 65                 | 63               | 46                  | 41        | 35                   |
| Ukraine                         | 91          | 82                  | 83           | 46                 | 44               | 38                  | 25        | 12                   |
| Georgia                         | 89          | 91                  | 92           | 66                 | 34               | 75                  | 30        | 35                   |
| Russia                          | 89          | 86                  | 85           | 45                 | 43               | 36                  | 15        | 12                   |
| Estonia                         | 89          | 79                  | 84           | 26                 | 40               | 13                  | 13        | 3                    |
| Belarus                         | 88          | 85                  | 81           | 37                 | 32               | 26                  | 16        | 14                   |
| Kazakhstan                      | 87          | 85                  | 80           | 34                 | 55               | 32                  | 19        | 14                   |
| Latvia                          | 78          | 77                  | 78           | 35                 | 28               | 16                  | 16        | 8                    |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>89</b>   | <b>85</b>           | <b>84</b>    | <b>45</b>          | <b>43</b>        | <b>36</b>           | <b>19</b> | <b>14</b>            |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |             |                     |              |                    |                  |                     |           |                      |
| Romania                         | 82%         | 82%                 | 86%          | 59%                | 36%              | 39%                 | 28%       | 24%                  |
| Bosnia                          | 81          | 81                  | 78           | 51                 | 48               | 33                  | 17        | 20                   |
| Serbia                          | 75          | 71                  | 81           | 39                 | 44               | 25                  | 18        | 14                   |
| Bulgaria                        | 75          | 55                  | 73           | 16                 | 26               | 15                  | 15        | 13                   |
| Greece                          | 74          | 52                  | 79           | 54                 | 24               | 10                  | 13        | 16                   |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>75</b>   | <b>71</b>           | <b>79</b>    | <b>51</b>          | <b>36</b>        | <b>25</b>           | <b>17</b> | <b>16</b>            |
| Ethiopia                        | n/a         | 95%                 | 93%          | 83%                | 55%              | n/a                 | 70%       | n/a                  |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia from survey conducted December 2008-April 2009. Data for U.S. not available.  
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In 2008, nearly all Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia (95%) said “homosexual behavior” is morally wrong, while the vast majority (83%) also said this about having an abortion. Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia also tended to see prostitution (93%), divorce (70%) and drinking alcohol (55%) as morally wrong.

Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia are more likely than those in most Eastern European countries to raise moral objections to several of these behaviors, although Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe – both in former Soviet republics and elsewhere – also widely see homosexual behavior and prostitution as morally wrong. U.S. Orthodox Christians were not asked about the morality of these behaviors.



## Protecting environment more important than economic growth, Orthodox Christians say

Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, considered by some to be the spiritual leader of the world's Eastern Orthodox Christians, [has been called the "Green Patriarch"](#) for his environmental activism.

Most Orthodox Christians share the view that the environment should be protected even at the expense of economic growth. Orthodox majorities in every Eastern European country surveyed agree with the statement, "We should protect our natural environment for future generations, even if this reduces economic growth." In Russia, Orthodox Christians are more likely than the religiously unaffiliated to take this position (77% vs. 60%), although there are not always significant differences between Orthodox Christians and members of other religious groups within countries.

Orthodox Christians in post-Soviet states and those in other European countries have largely similar views on this topic. Orthodox Christians in the U.S. were asked a somewhat different question, but, again, most (66%) say that stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost.

### Most Orthodox Christians favor environmental regulations

*% of Orthodox Christians who lean toward protecting ...*

|                                 | Environment<br>over<br>economic<br>growth | Economic<br>growth<br>over the<br>environment | Neither/both<br>equally |
|---------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |   |   |                         |
| Armenia                         | 79%                                       | 13%   | 7%                      |
| Russia                          | 77  | 13  | 7                       |
| Belarus                         | 73  | 17  | 6                       |
| Moldova                         | 72  | 14  | 10                      |
| Ukraine                         | 70  | 14  | 12                      |
| Latvia                          | 65  | 22  | 11                      |
| Georgia                         | 64  | 20  | 11                      |
| Kazakhstan                      | 64  | 28  | 7                       |
| Estonia                         | 58  | 27  | 12                      |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>70</b>                                 | <b>17</b>                                     | <b>10</b>               |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |   |   |                         |
| Serbia                          | 83%                                       | 12%   | 4%                      |
| Bosnia                          | 77  | 15  | 7                       |
| Bulgaria                        | 76  | 14  | 9                       |
| Greece                          | 73  | 16  | 10                      |
| Romania                         | 70  | 24  | 4                       |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>76</b>                                 | <b>15</b>                                     | <b>7</b>                |
| U.S.                            | 66%                                       | 32%   | <1%                     |

Note: In the U.S., respondents were asked which option comes closer to their view: "Stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost" or "Stricter environmental laws and regulations cost too many jobs and hurt the economy." In all other countries, the options were "We should protect our natural environment for future generations, even if this reduces economic growth" and "We should use our natural resources for economic growth, even if this causes some harm to the environment." DK/refused not shown.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia not available.  
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## Orthodox Christians tend to believe in human evolution

Most Orthodox Christians believe that humans and other living things have evolved over time, although considerable shares in many countries reject the theory of evolution, saying instead that humans and other organisms have existed in their present form since the beginning of time.

Majorities of Orthodox Christians in most Eastern European countries surveyed say humans have evolved over time, and among those who take this view, the prevailing opinion is that evolution occurred due to natural processes such as natural selection (rather than being guided by a supreme being).

In the U.S., about six-in-ten Orthodox Christians (59%) believe in evolution, although they are more evenly divided between those who favor evolution due to natural selection (29%) and those who say evolution was guided by a supreme being (25%). About a third of U.S. Orthodox Christians (36%) reject evolution, similar to the share of Americans overall who say this (34%).

### Belief in evolution due to natural processes is the prevailing view among Orthodox Christians in many countries

*% of Orthodox Christians who say that human beings and other living things have ...*

|                                 | NET Evolved over time | Due to natural processes such as natural selection | Guided by supreme being | Existed in their present form since the beginning of time |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |                       |  |                         |   |
| Estonia                         | 69%                   | 49%  | 13%                     | 22%   |
| Latvia                          | 66                    | 45   | 17                      | 24  |
| Russia                          | 66                    | 48   | 12                      | 25  |
| Belarus                         | 63                    | 44   | 15                      | 24  |
| Kazakhstan                      | 62                    | 46   | 14                      | 29  |
| Georgia                         | 58                    | 32   | 22                      | 33  |
| Ukraine                         | 57                    | 36   | 17                      | 31  |
| Moldova                         | 49                    | 28   | 16                      | 41  |
| Armenia                         | 34                    | 18   | 14                      | 56  |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>62</b>             | <b>44</b>  | <b>15</b>               | <b>29</b>   |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |                       |  |                         |   |
| Greece                          | 65%                   | 45%  | 18%                     | 29%   |
| Bulgaria                        | 64                    | 52   | 10                      | 28  |
| Romania                         | 62                    | 39   | 20                      | 34  |
| Serbia                          | 60                    | 47   | 10                      | 29  |
| Bosnia                          | 39                    | 28   | 9                       | 45  |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>62</b>             | <b>45</b>  | <b>10</b>               | <b>29</b>   |
| U.S.                            | 59%                   | 29%  | 25%                     | 36%   |

Note: A small proportion of respondents who expressed a belief in evolution answered "don't know" or declined to answer the follow-up question about how evolution unfolded. Figures do not add to subtotals indicated because these responses are not shown.

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for U.S. from 2014 Religious Landscape Study, conducted June 4-Sept. 30, 2014. Data for Ethiopia not available.

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## Many Orthodox Christians in Europe say women have a responsibility to society to bear children, although fewer favor traditional gender roles in marriage

Across Eastern Europe, most Orthodox Christians say that women have a responsibility to society to bear children, although Orthodox Christians in the former Soviet republics are somewhat less likely than those in other European countries to hold this view.

Fewer Orthodox Christians in the region – although still substantial shares in most countries – say that a wife must always obey her husband, or that when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women. And still fewer say that an ideal marriage is one in which the husband earns money and the wife tends to the children and the home.

Overall, Orthodox Christians in Romania tend to have more traditional views on gender roles than do Orthodox Christians elsewhere in Eastern Europe: Roughly two-thirds or more say that women owe it to society to bear children, that wives should obey husbands and that men should have more rights to a job than women in times of high unemployment.

### Most Armenian, Romanian Orthodox Christians say a wife should always obey her husband

*% of Orthodox Christians who completely/mostly agree with each statement*

|                                 | Women have a responsibility to society to bear children | A wife must always obey her husband | When jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to a job than women | An ideal marriage is one in which the husband earns money and the wife tends to children and home |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Former USSR</b>              |   |                                     |   |   |
| Armenia                         | 82%   | 81%                                 | 54%   | 32%   |
| Georgia                         | 70  | 49                                  | 59  | 21  |
| Moldova                         | 69  | 45                                  | 56  | 25  |
| Ukraine                         | 64  | 39                                  | 26  | 31  |
| Belarus                         | 58  | 40                                  | 40  | 24  |
| Russia                          | 58  | 32                                  | 37  | 28  |
| Estonia                         | 54  | 34                                  | 28  | 28  |
| Kazakhstan                      | 50  | 55                                  | 57  | 27  |
| Latvia                          | 40  | 25                                  | 25  | 28  |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>58</b>   | <b>40</b>                           | <b>40</b>   | <b>28</b>   |
| <b>Other European countries</b> |   |                                     |   |   |
| Romania                         | 83%   | 72%                                 | 66%   | 17%   |
| Bosnia                          | 76  | 27                                  | 36  | 16  |
| Bulgaria                        | 76  | 22                                  | 26  | 15  |
| Serbia                          | 70  | 35                                  | 34  | 16  |
| Greece                          | 69  | 34                                  | 46  | 23  |
| <b>MEDIAN</b>                   | <b>76</b>   | <b>34</b>                           | <b>36</b>   | <b>16</b>   |

Source: Data for former USSR and other European countries from survey conducted June 2015-July 2016 in 18 countries. Data for Ethiopia and U.S. not available.  
 "Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century"

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Although U.S. Orthodox Christians were not asked these questions, most (70%) say, in response to a different question, that having more women in the workforce has been a positive change for American society.

On balance, Orthodox women are more supportive of women's rights than are Orthodox men. In most countries, women are less likely than men to agree that a wife is obligated to obey her husband. And in several countries, women are less likely than men to agree that men have greater employment rights than women, especially when jobs are scarce.

But women are not always more supportive of liberal positions regarding gender roles. In the majority of countries surveyed, women are about as likely as men to agree that they have a social responsibility to bear children. They also are as likely as men to agree that a traditional marriage, where women are primarily in charge of household tasks while men earn money, is ideal.

## Methodology

This report brings together analysis of survey and demographic data from various previously published Pew Research Center reports. It also includes new analysis of the religious beliefs and practices of Orthodox Christians in Ethiopia and historical data on the distribution of Orthodox Christians, Catholics and Protestants around the world.

Attitudinal data was collected through nationally representative surveys conducted in various countries. Demographic data is compiled through analyses of censuses, large surveys and other sources.

### Survey methodology

The report combines data from several Pew Research Center surveys. Short summaries of the methodologies used in each survey, along with links to the related reports and detailed methodologies, can be found below.

#### [“Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe”](#)

Data for Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine are from a survey in Central and Eastern Europe conducted via face-to-face interviews under the direction of three research partners – Ipsos MORI, Institute for Comparative Social Research (CESSI) and Georgian Opinion Research Business International (GORBI). (Kazakhstan was not analyzed as part of the initial report, but is analyzed throughout this report.)

The survey, conducted between June 2015 and July 2016, is based on samples of noninstitutionalized adults ages 18 and older. In some instances, samples exclude minor segments of the population due to accessibility problems, security concerns, very low population figures in rural areas or costs. All samples are based on multistage cluster designs, which typically entailed proportional stratification by region and locality size or urbanity, selection of primary sampling units (PSUs) proportional to population size, and random selection of secondary and tertiary sampling points within PSUs.

Interview teams were assigned to designated random routes at the block or street level and followed predetermined skip patterns when contacting households. Within households, interviewers randomly selected a respondent by using a Kish grid (a random selection from a detailed list of all household members) or by selecting the adult with the next or most recent birthday. For each country, the data were weighted to account for different probabilities of

selection among respondents. Where appropriate, data also were weighted through an iterative procedure to more closely align the samples with official population figures for gender, age, education, urbanity and region.

Detailed methodology: <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/appendix-a-methodology-8/>

### U.S. Religious Landscape Study

Data for the U.S. are from the 2014 Religious Landscape Study – a nationally representative telephone survey conducted June 4 to Sept. 30, 2014, among a sample of 35,071 U.S. adults. Sampling was conducted through random-digit dialing, with approximately 60% of the interviews conducted with respondents reached on cellphones (n=21,160) and 40% on landlines (n=13,911). Interviewing was conducted in English and Spanish. The survey is estimated to cover 97% of the noninstitutionalized U.S. adult population; 3% of U.S. adults are not reachable by telephone or do not speak English or Spanish well enough to participate in the survey. Data collection was divided equally among three research firms – Abt SRBI, Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI) and Social Science Research Solutions (SSRS).

The weighting of the data ensures that all states are represented in their proper proportion in the national weighted estimates. The data were weighted to account for different probabilities of selection among respondents. The data were also weighted to demographic benchmarks for the population covered by the survey. Most of the demographic weighting parameters came from the Census Bureau’s 2012 American Community Survey (ACS) one-year estimates, which was the most current data source available at the time the data were weighted.

Detailed methodology: <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/appendix-a-methodology-3/>

### Pew Research Center’s 2015 Global Attitudes Survey

Most of the data for Ethiopia are from Pew Research Center’s 2015 Global Attitudes Survey, conducted under the direction of PSRAI. Face-to-face interviews were conducted March 25 to April 17, 2015, with a nationally representative sample of adults ages 18 and older. The survey used a multistage area probability sample design with the PSUs stratified by region and urbanity. Individuals within households were selected using a Kish grid. The data were weighted by age and education.

Detailed methodology: <http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/international-survey-research/international-methodology/global-attitudes-survey/ethiopia/2015>

### “Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa”

Some other data for Ethiopia are from Pew Research Center’s previously released survey report that analyzed religion in sub-Saharan Africa. Results for the survey are based on face-to-face interviews with adults ages 18 and older conducted under the direction of PSRAI. The sample was designed as a stratified random sample of all nine ethnically based states and two self-governing administrative areas of the country, proportional to population size and urban/rural population. The fieldwork was conducted from Jan. 22 to Feb. 1, 2009, and was designed to be nationally representative of the adult population.

Detailed methodology: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2010/04/sub-saharan-africa-appendix-c.pdf>

#### **Methodology for demographic estimates**

The demographic estimates in this report draw upon religious demography research conducted by Pew Research Center over nearly a decade, involving analysis of more than 2,500 data sources, including censuses, demographic surveys, general population surveys and other studies.

Estimates of the size of Christian traditions in 1910 are based on Pew Research Center analysis of data from the World Christian Database (WCD) of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. WCD estimates take into account anthropological and ethnographic studies, statistical reports from religious groups, and data from censuses and surveys. The WCD enumerates many categories of Christians, which researchers at Pew Research Center have aggregated into the categories of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant and other Christians.

Estimates of the 2010 worldwide population of Orthodox Christians were based on data from Pew Research Center’s 2011 report [“Global Christianity – A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World’s Christian Population”](#) and the 2015 report [“The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050.”](#)

The 2011 study of global Christianity produced estimates of the size and share of the Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and other Christian populations at the country, regional and global levels for the year 2010 (see [Methodology](#)).<sup>27</sup> The 2015 report used data unavailable in 2011 (including

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<sup>27</sup> Although the categories of Protestant and “other Christian” are distinct in the 2011 “Global Christianity” report, they are aggregated here for comparability with WCD estimates. Protestants are broadly defined to include historic Protestant denominations, Anglicans and independent Christians. Other Christians include those labeled “unaffiliated Christians” in 1910 by the WCD, as well as Christian denominations grouped in this category by Pew Research Center in 2011, including the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Christian Science Church, the Unification Church, Swedenborgians and Christadelphians.

results from the 2010 wave of global censuses) and updated estimates of the size and share of Christian populations (as well as other major religious groups) in each country in 2010, projecting these populations through to the year 2050 (see [Methodology](#)). The 2015 report does not provide detail on the size or characteristics of subgroups of Christians (e.g., Orthodox Christians) or of subgroups among other major religions because the detailed demographic characteristics (structure of religious populations by age and sex, age-specific fertility rates, patterns of religious switching and patterns of migration between countries) that the report is based upon were generally unavailable for religious subgroups in most countries.

To generate the 2010 Orthodox population estimates used in this report, the country-level shares of Orthodox Christians among all Christians reported in “Global Christianity” were multiplied by the updated size of each country’s Christian population reported in “The Future of World Religions.”

The primary sources used for each country are listed in an appendix of each report cited above.