

# Membership trends in the CRCNA, 1965 to 2022

Council of Delegates meeting  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
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DataWise Consulting, LLC



# Outline

- **Personal introduction**
- **Dying out?**
- **Signs of life**
- **Suggestions**

# Who is it who dares speak?

- Charismatic conversion at 7 in Los Angeles
- Wheaton College class of 1990
- Young Life administrator, 1990 to 2002
- Duke University PhD, 2004
- Calvin University Center for Social Research (CSR), August 2004 to April 2022
- DataWise Consulting, LLC as of this week

# Explanation matrix

Why is our denomination's / congregation's membership decreasing?

2 x 2 matrix:

- Fault others or fault self
- Fault ideology or fault demographics

# Explanation matrix

Why?	Whose fault?	
	Others	Self
Ideology	Others believed the wrong things	I didn't love others more than myself
Demographics	Gen X had too few children	<b>WE had too few children</b>

A bouquet of dried, brown roses in a white vase against a dark background. The roses are wilted and have a deep orange-brown color, suggesting they are old or dried. The leaves are dark green and some are also dried. The vase is white and has a curved handle. The background is a solid dark grey or black.

# Dying out?

Denomination-level data

# Other Resources

You'll find useful tools for the work of church leaders, classis, Yearbook information, address changes and calendar updates, videos from the work of the CRCNA, and language resources (other than English) in this section.

## [E-Newsletters »](#)

Your inbox is a great way to stay connected to the ministries of the CRC.

## [Devotions »](#)

Refresh, refocus, and renew your faith in Christ Jesus.

## [Change of Address »](#)

Update your mailing address, subscribe to The Banner, and more.

## [Yearbook and Online Data »](#)

Links to membership statistics, the Yearbook, and much more.

## [Resources in Other Languages »](#)

A collection of links to language-specific resources.

## [CRCNA Calendar »](#)

Upcoming events from the CRCNA and its ministries.

# Yearbook Information

Persons Ordained in the CRCNA



Churches and Classes



Statistics



Churches by Classis

[2022](#) | [2021](#) | [2020](#) | [2019](#) | [2018](#) | [2017](#) | [2016](#) | [2014](#) | [2013](#) | [2012](#) | [2011](#) | [2010](#) | [2008](#) | [2006](#) | [2005](#) | [2003](#)

Denominational Summary

[2022](#) | [2021](#) | [2020](#) | [2019](#) | [2018](#) | [2017](#) | [2016](#) | [2014](#) | [2013](#) | [2012](#) | [2011](#) | [2010](#) | [2008](#) | [2006](#) | [2005](#) | [2004](#) | [2003](#)

Membership Growth / Decline

[2022](#) | [2021](#) | [2020](#) | [2019](#) | [2018](#) | [2017](#) | [2016](#) | [2014](#) | [2013](#) | [2012](#) | [2011](#) | [2010](#) | [2008](#) | [2006](#) | [2005](#) | [2004](#) | [2003](#)

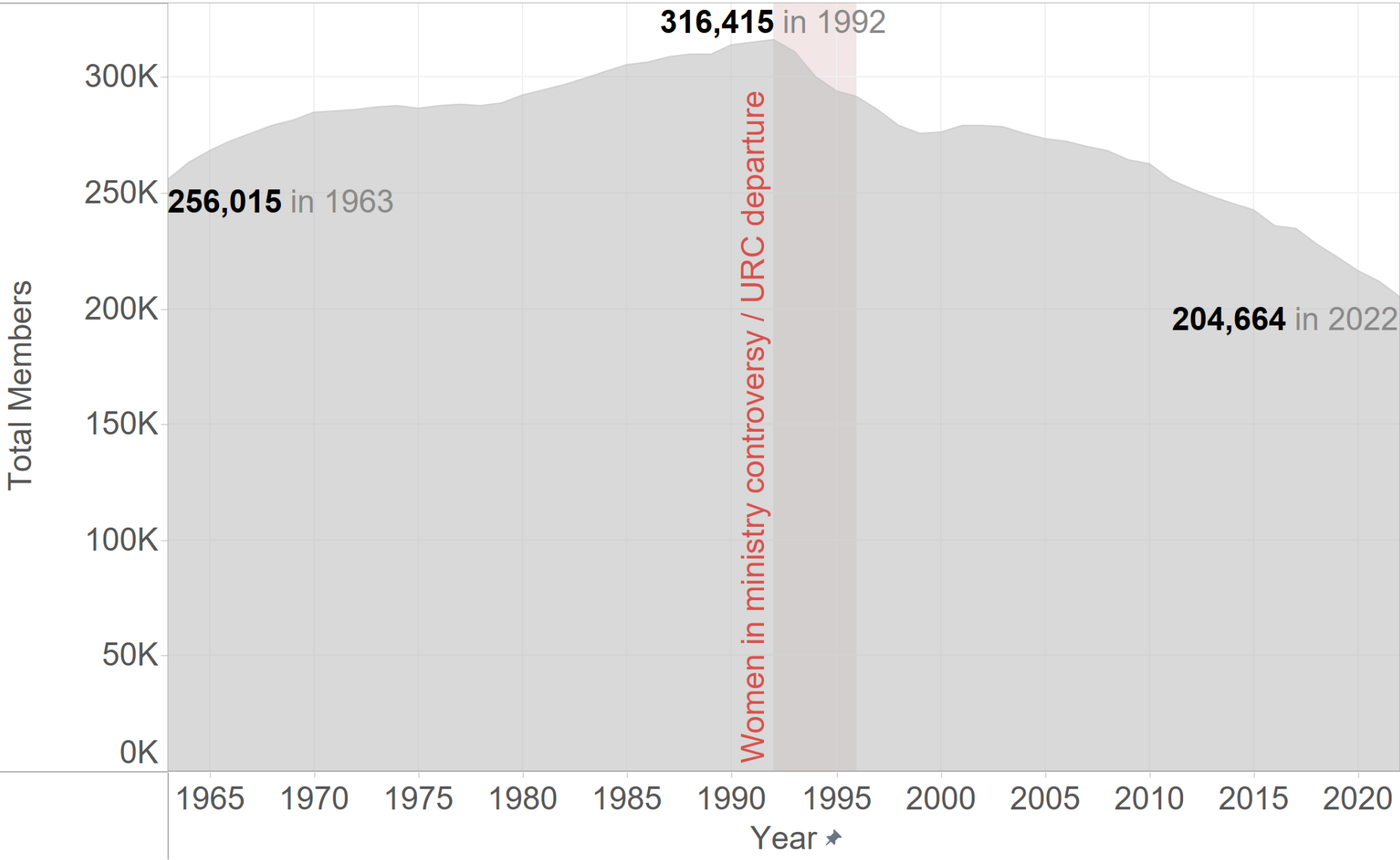
Historical Membership

[1963 - Present](#)

*If you are unable to find the information you are looking for, please email your request to [yearbook@crcna.org](mailto:yearbook@crcna.org).*

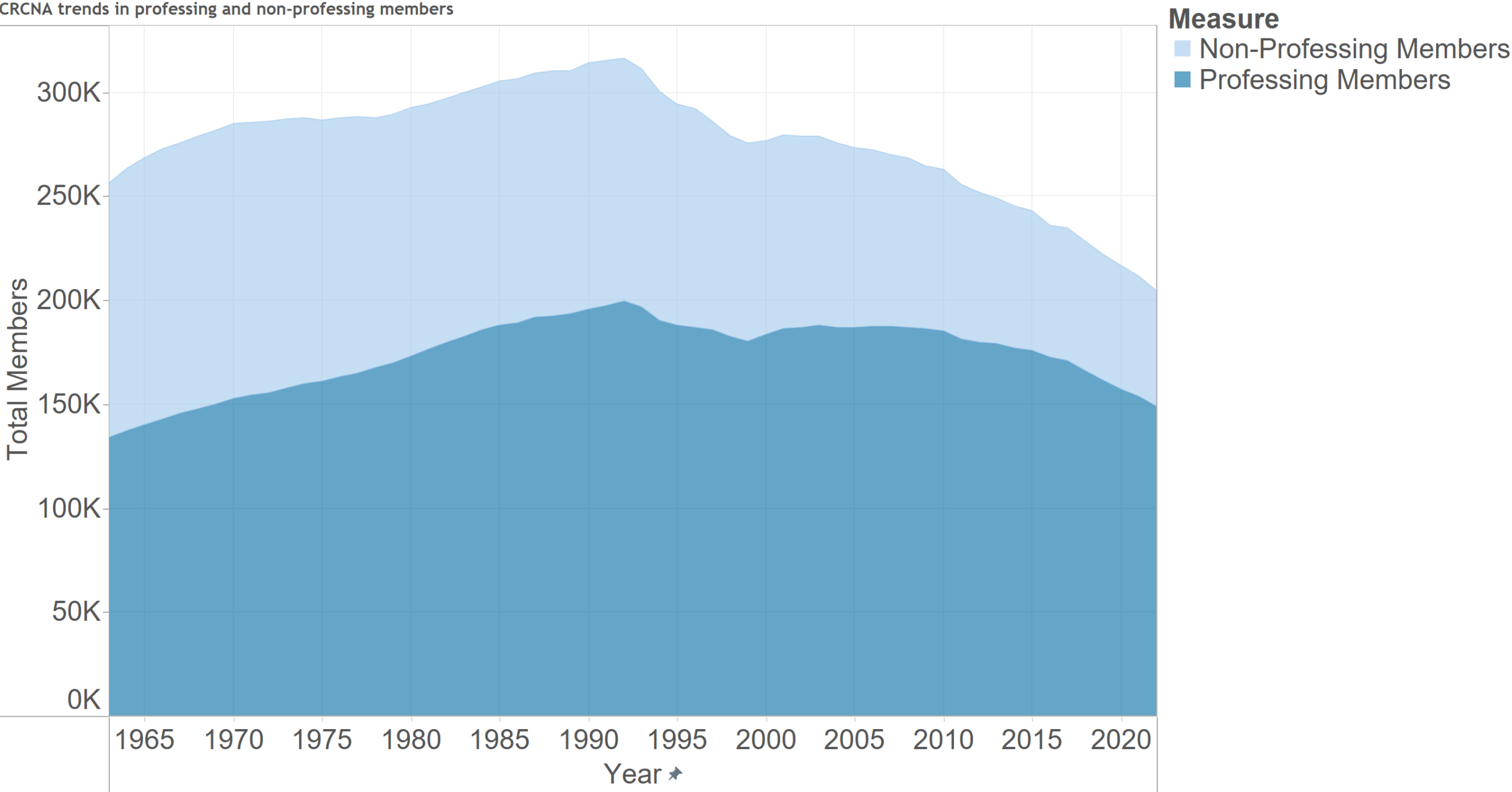


# Christian Reformed Church total membership trend



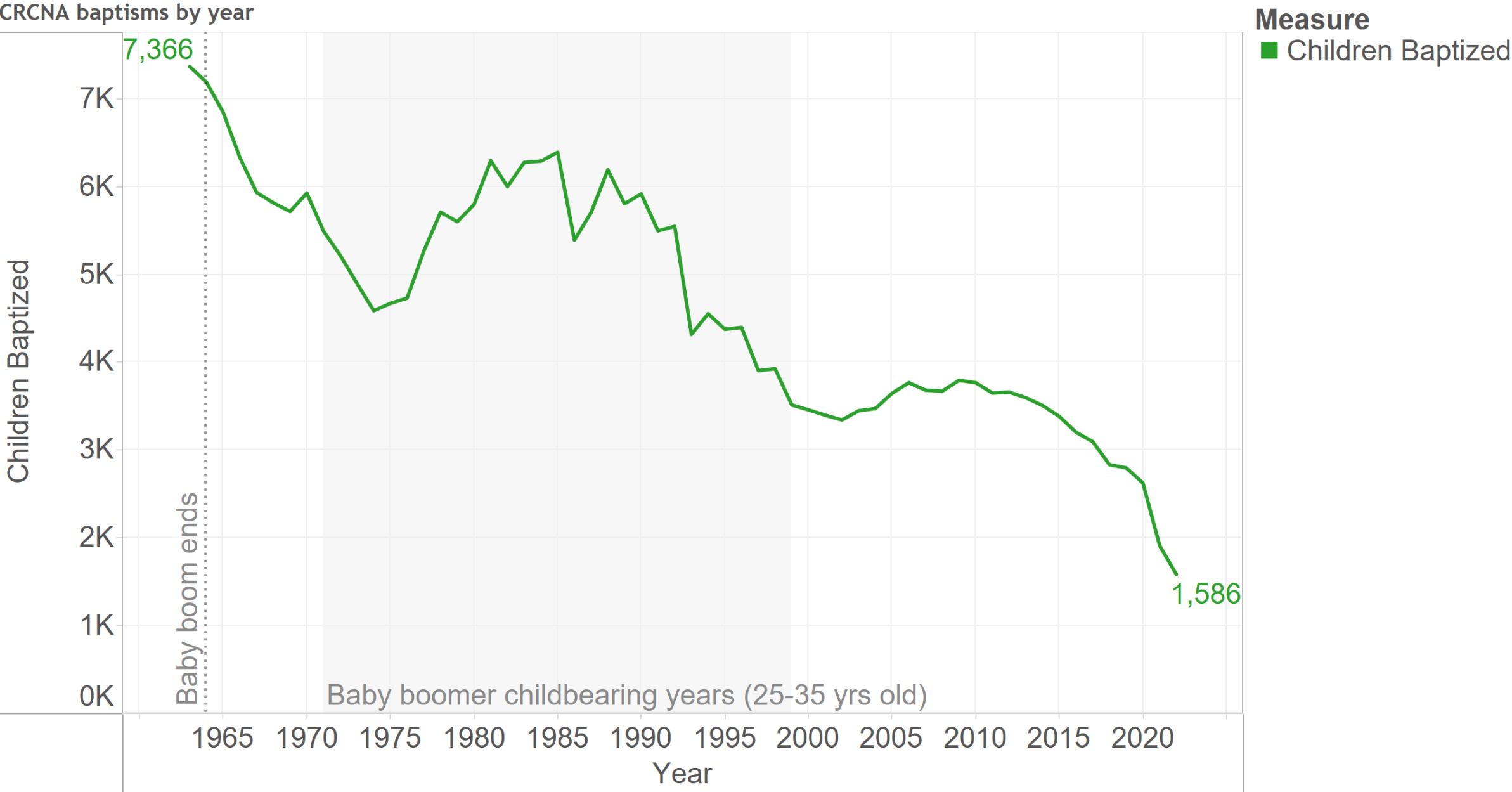
Source: CRCNA Yearbook summary,  
[https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/membership\\_stats\\_2022.docx](https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/membership_stats_2022.docx)

CRCNA trends in professing and non-professing members



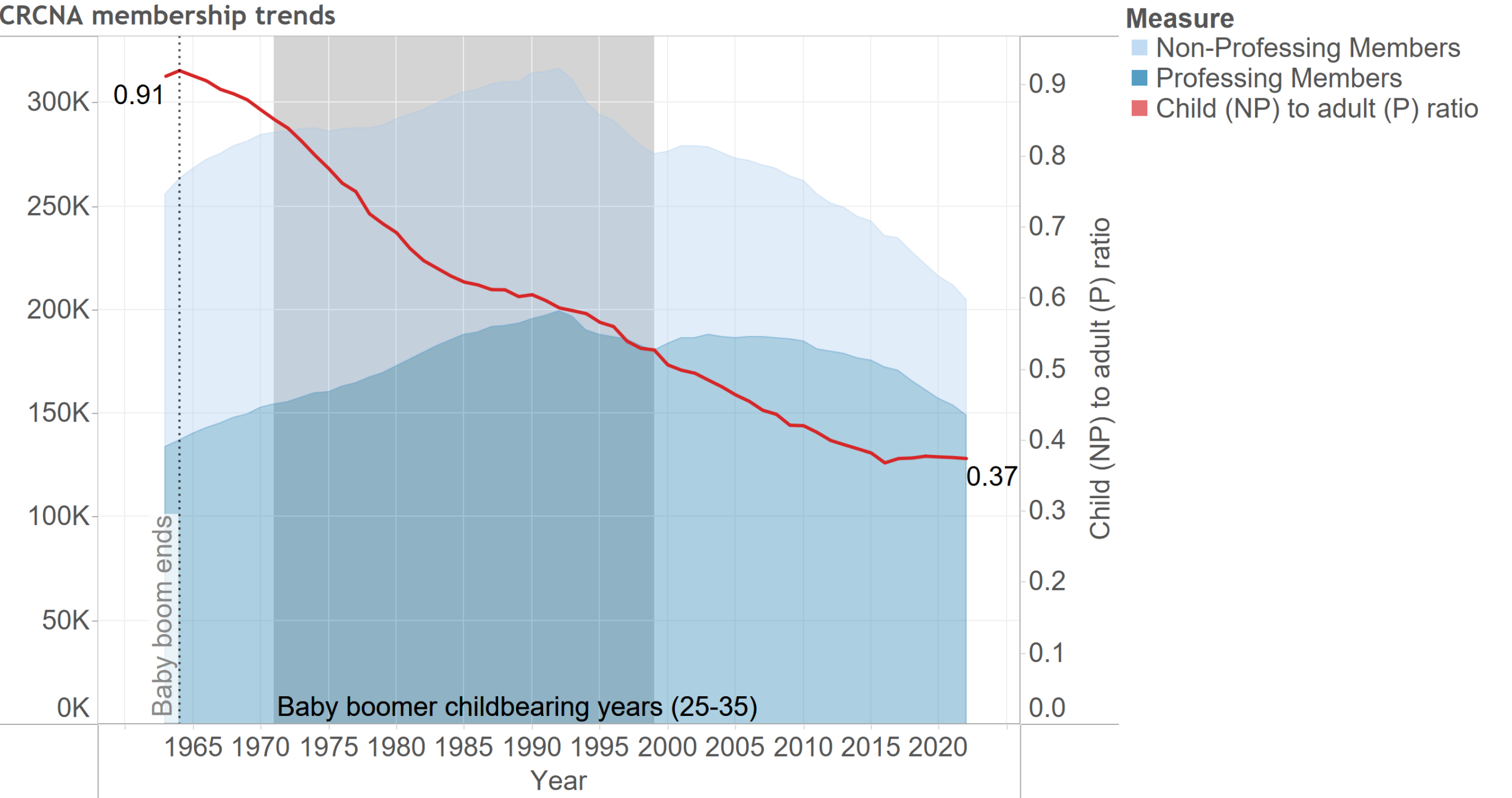
Source: CRCNA Yearbook summary,  
[https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/membership\\_stats\\_2022.docx](https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/membership_stats_2022.docx)

CRCNA baptisms by year



Source: CRCNA Yearbook summary,  
[https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/membership\\_stats\\_2022.docx](https://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/membership_stats_2022.docx)

# CRCNA membership trends



# Demographics is destiny

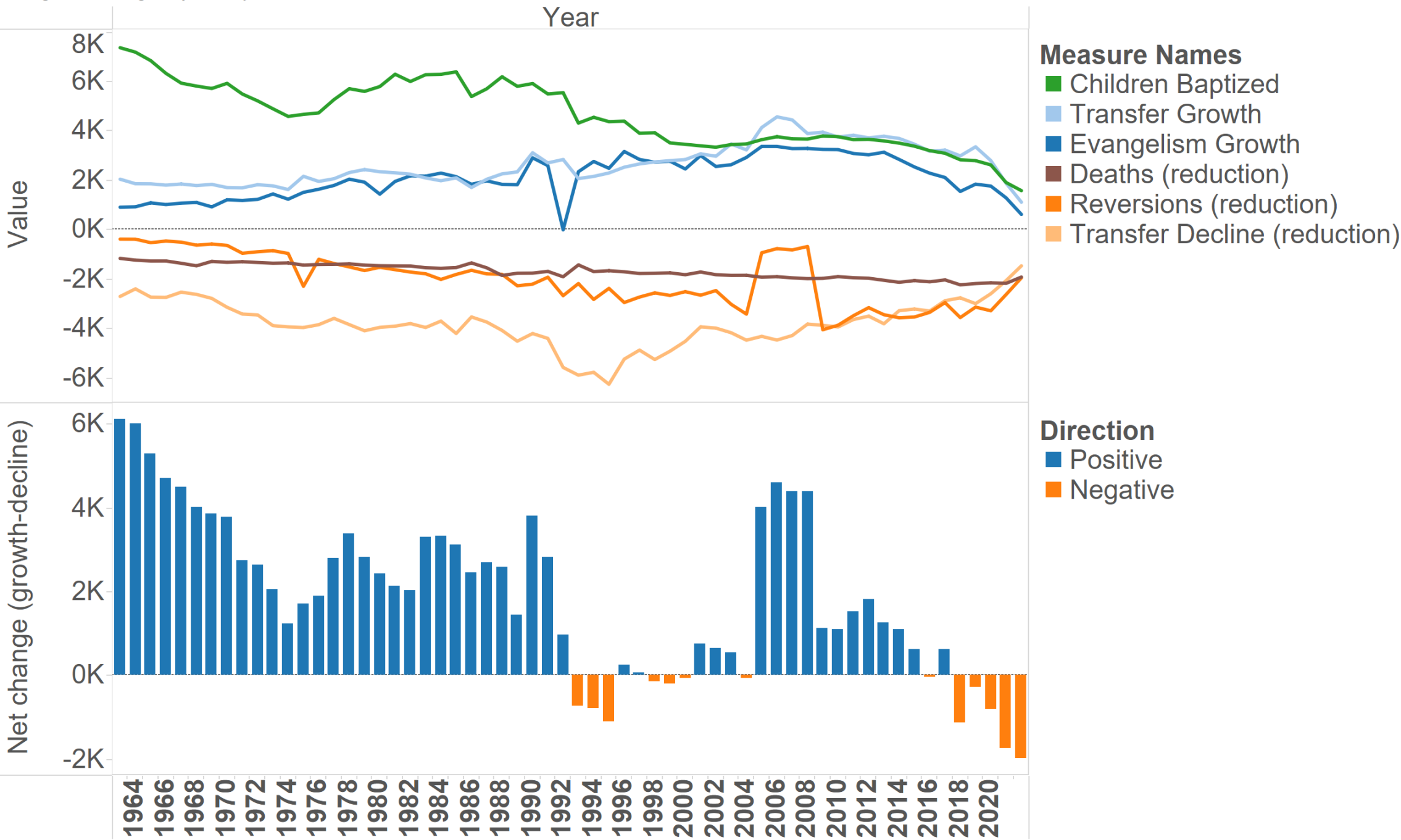
- **76% of variation in Protestant cohorts attributable to fertility and childbearing age**

Hout, Greeley, and Wilde (2001), The demographic imperative in religious change in the United States. *American Journal of Sociology* 107(2):468–500.

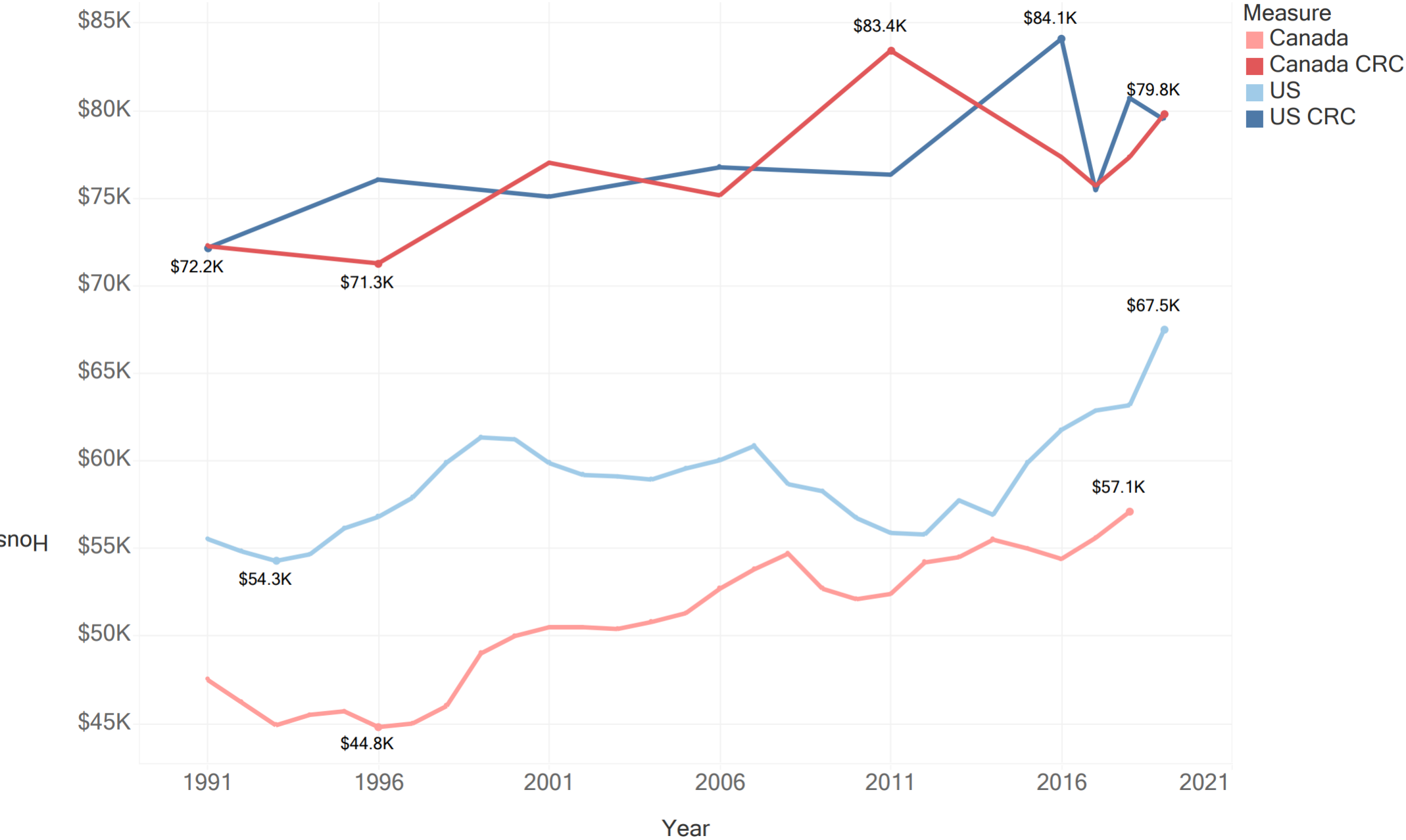
- **US religious “nones” growth tracks Europe closely after aligning demographic patterns: a critical density of moderates leads to a rise in “nones.”**

Brauer (2018), The surprising predictable decline of religion in the United States. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 57: 654-675.

Change according to specific yearbook numbers



**Figure 7** Real (inflation-adjusted in 2018 dollars) median household income continues to exceed US and Canadian<sup>18</sup>



**Our problems are ...**

**... predictable symptoms  
of our own success**



# Other national and global factors in declining religiosity

- **Declining social pressure to affiliate.**

[Pew Research Center](#), 2016

- **Political polarization and disillusionment**

Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, 2012

- **Institutional resistance to leadership ambition**

Hope and Packard, *Church Refugees*, 2015

- **An epidemic of loneliness**

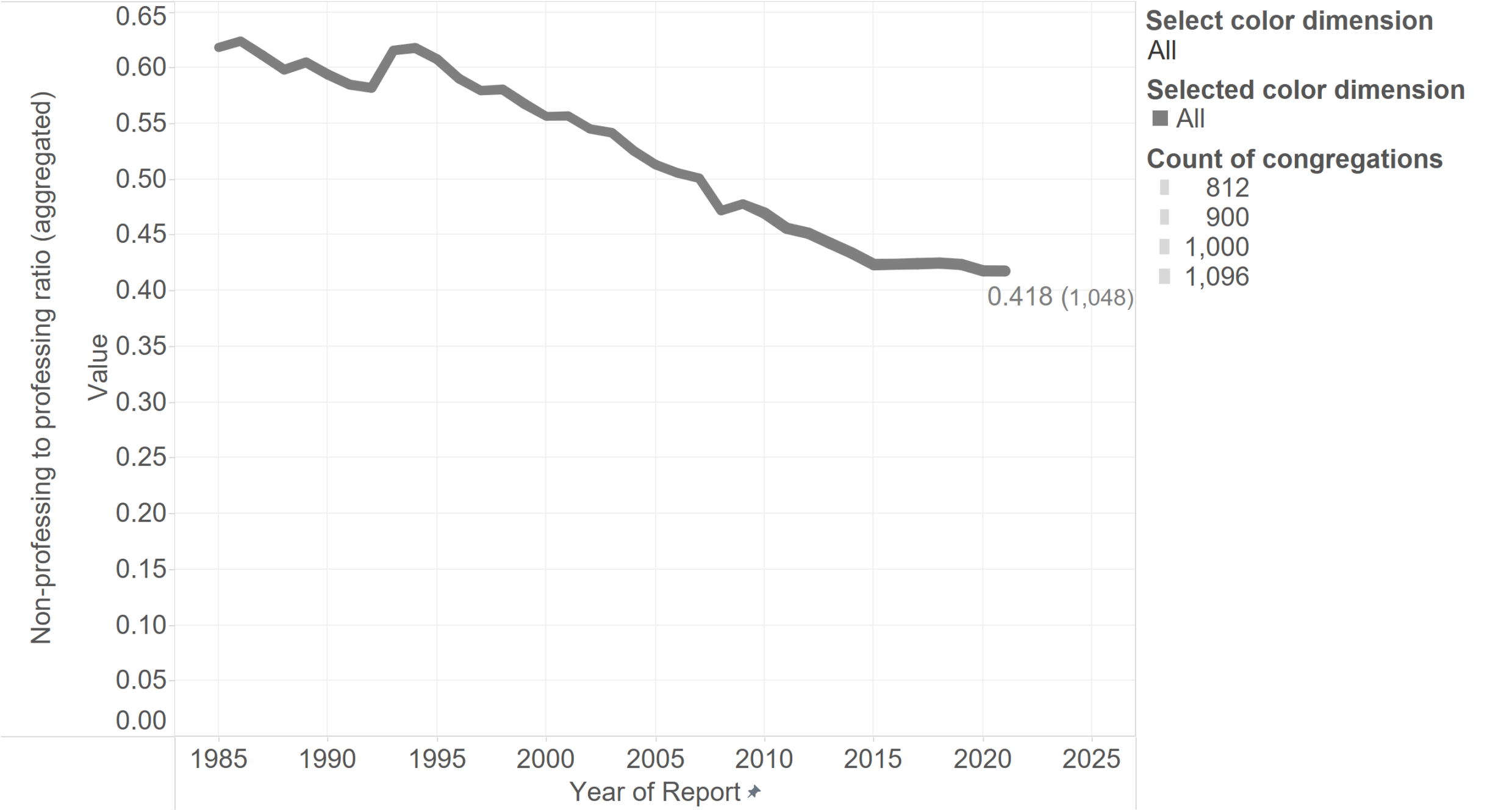
[Survey Center on American Life](#), 2022



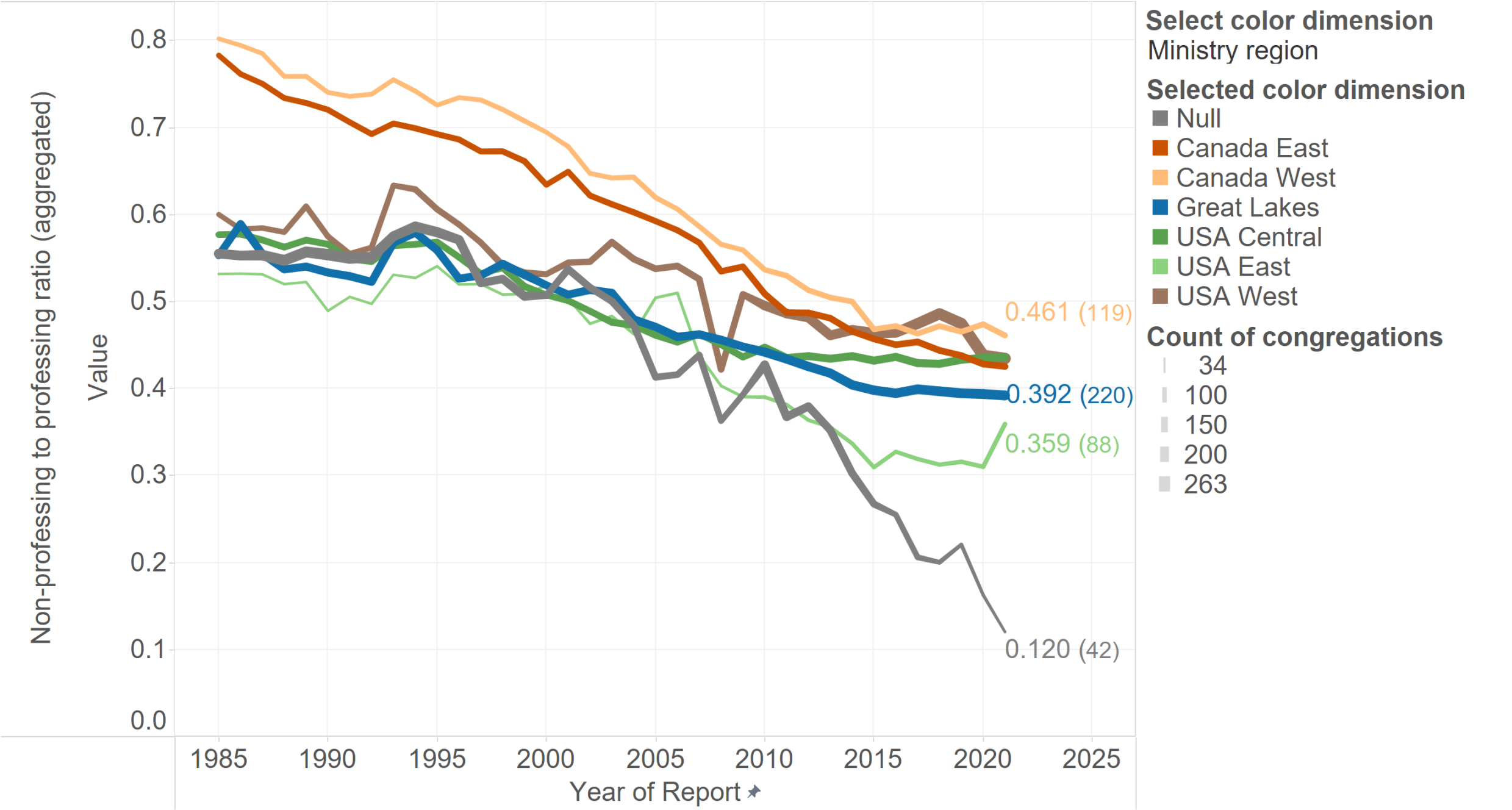
# Signs of life

Congregation-level data

Congregation-level by Year by All

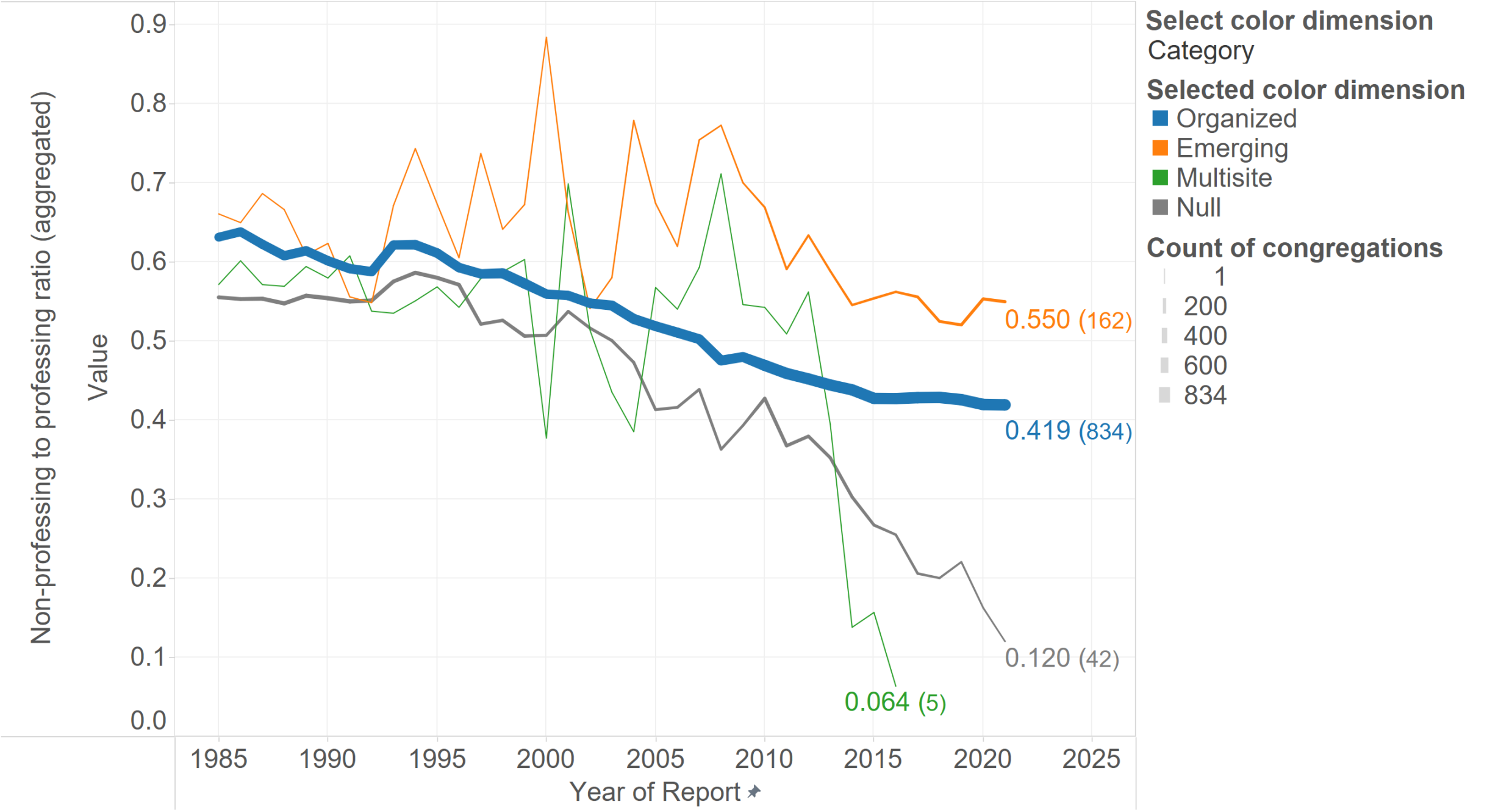


Congregation-level by Year by Ministry region

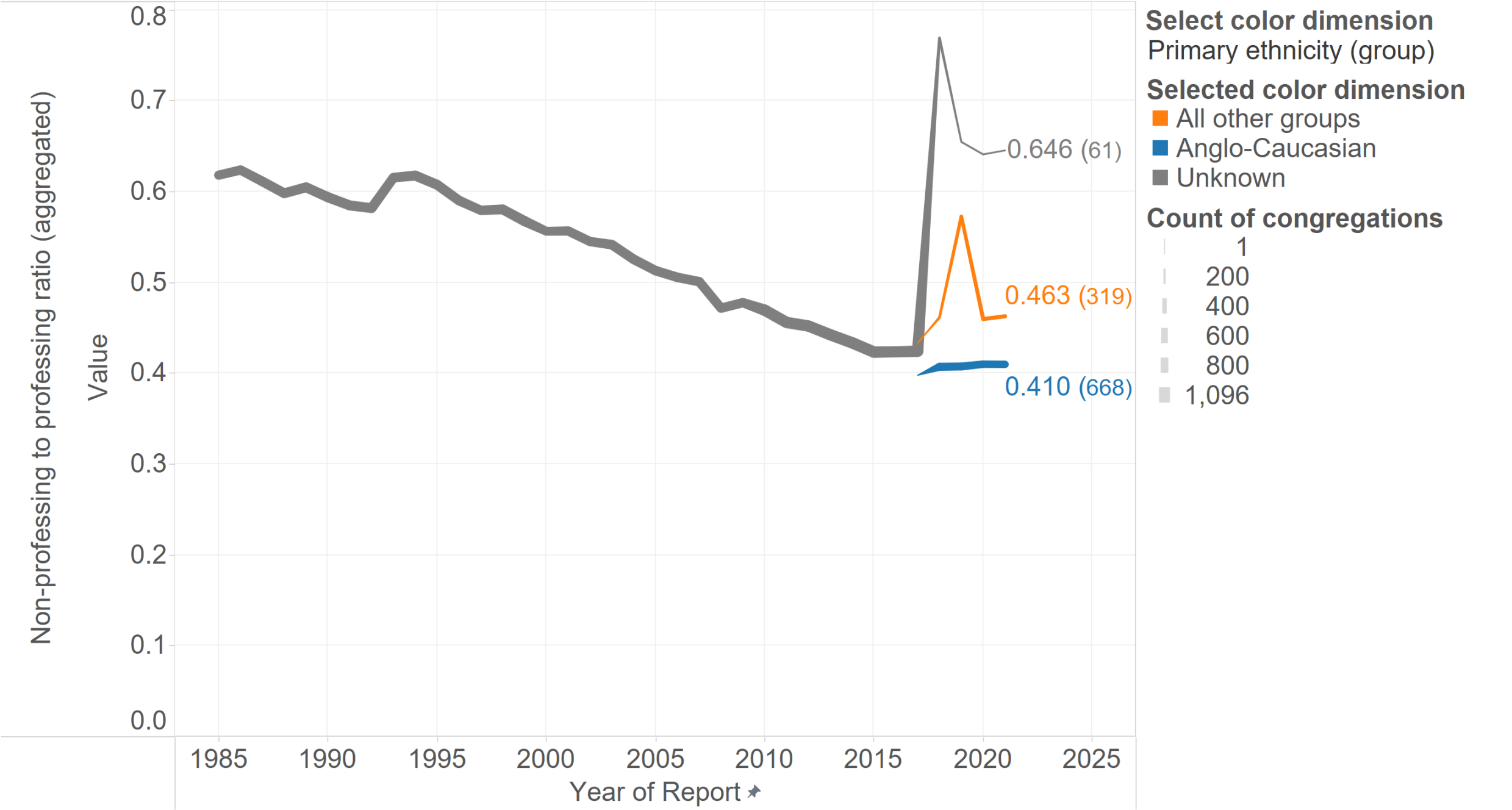




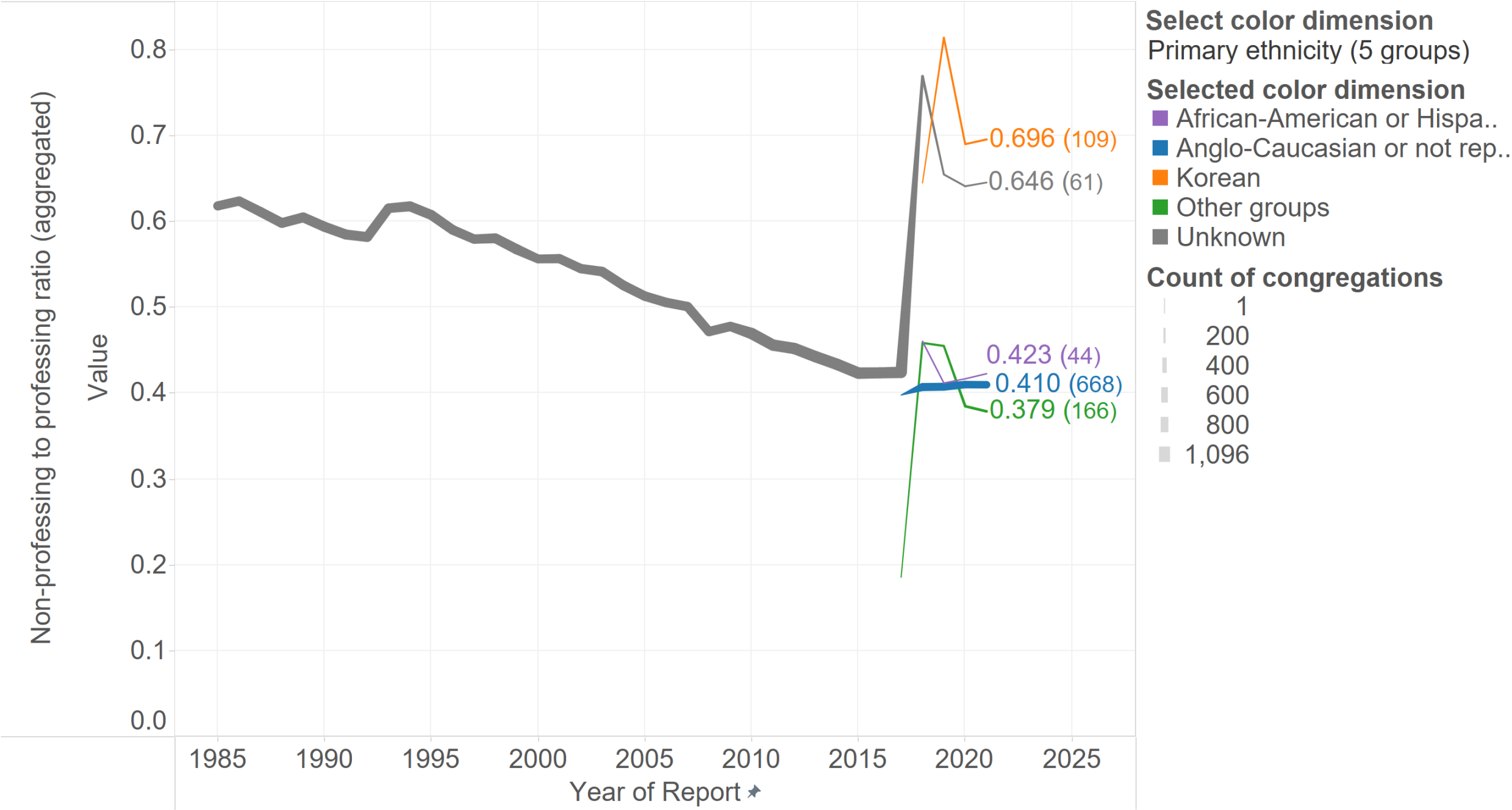
Congregation-level by Year by Category



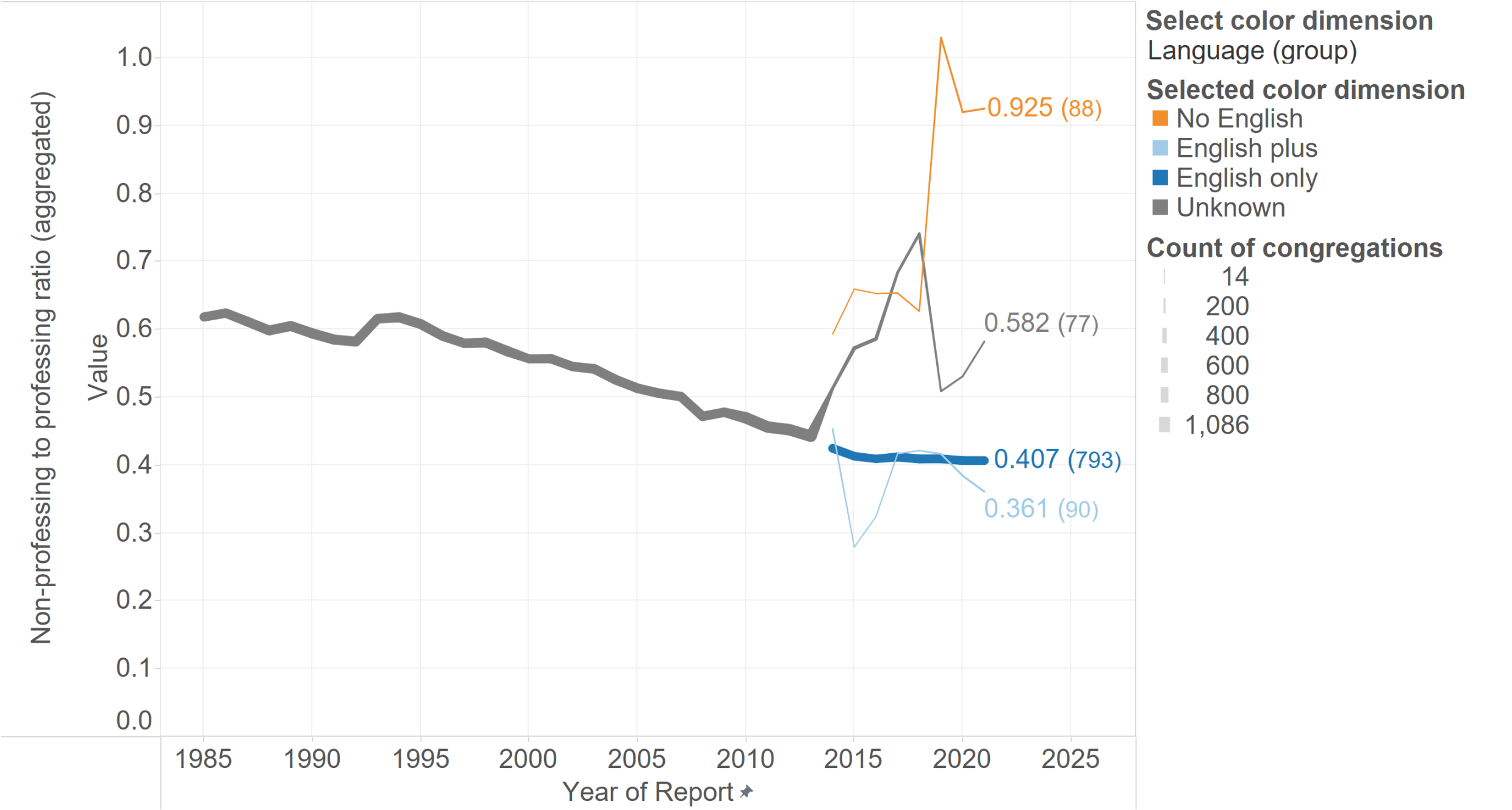
Congregation-level by Year by Primary ethnicity (group)



Congregation-level by Year by Primary ethnicity (5 groups)



Congregation-level by Year by Language (group)







# How to live

Biblical responses to demographic decline

# Things not to do

- **Don't blame the kids.**
- **Don't blame the pastor  
or the council  
or the seminary  
or the servants in this building.**
- **Don't favor Christians you know over  
those you don't.**

# Things to do

- **Do repent of self-righteousness.**
- **Do welcome immigrants and refugees and widows and orphans into worship.**
- **Do tear down walls of separation.**
- **Be attractive by being like Jesus.**