



COMPANION PAPER • Bible Access List 2026

Bible Access List 2026: Understanding What Changed

Companion paper to [KeyFindings of Worldwide Bible Access](#).

The Bible Access List 2026 is the most complete assessment of global Bible access yet: covering more countries, and drawing on refined indicators and updated or stronger evidence. This paper explains the differences between the 2025 and 2026, and how they should be understood.

106

Countries assessed in 2026

19

Countries assessed for the first time

125+ Million

Christians who want a Bible but don't have one



HOW TO READ YEAR-ON-YEAR MOVEMENT

A change in score or rank does not necessarily mean that country conditions improved or deteriorated. It may reflect updated evidence, refined indicators, expanded country coverage, changes on the ground, or a combination of these factors. It is therefore important to understand what caused a shift before concluding that conditions in a country have changed.

1 Which Countries Are Ranked: The Eligibility Criteria

Bible Access List 2026 introduced eligibility criteria for the ranked Bible Restrictions List. Each country's score combines restrictions on Bible access with socioeconomic barriers that can make access difficult even where it is legally permitted. Countries are ranked if they score 20 points or more overall, or if their socioeconomic barriers alone exceed 10 points. The second criterion ensures that countries where persecution-related restrictions may be relatively limited, but where poverty, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, lack of electricity, or limited internet access severely limit Bible access, are still represented in the ranked list.

Countries that were assessed but did not meet either criterion are published, listed alphabetically rather than ranked. For each of them the Bible Access List states that the country was assessed for inclusion, and that any access restrictions or socioeconomic barriers present are not severe or widespread enough for it to be included in the ranked list.

In Bible Access List 2026, 19 countries were assessed but not ranked.

2 Expanded Coverage: What Is New in 2026

Bible Access List 2026 assessed 106 countries, including 19 assessed for the first time. Seven of these entered the ranked Bible Restrictions List, four based entirely on the severity of socioeconomic barriers.

Newly Assessed and Ranked

Country	Rank	Total score
Guinea-Bissau	64	41.13
Senegal	73	28.72
Angola	77	24.56
Sierra Leone	78	24.00
Liberia	81	20.25
Zambia	84	15.50
Timor-Leste	86	13.00



3

Refined Indicators: What Changed and What Difference It Made

Three indicators were refined for Bible Access List 2026 to provide a more precise and context-sensitive assessment of factors affecting Bible access.

INTERNET SAFETY

In the 2025 report, the internet safety indicator was based primarily on contributors' experience of whether people could safely access Scripture online in their context. For the 2026 report, this was expanded to include additional independent evidence, including documented incidents, technical evidence of blocking and filtering, digital-rights assessments, and religious-freedom reporting.

Bible Access List 2026 also distinguishes between online environments that are unsafe and those that are restricted or monitored. “Unsafe” means that accessing digital Scripture creates significant personal risk if discovered. “Restricted or monitored” means that access is limited or watched and discovery may have repercussions. The assessment considers risks across the entire population, including those faced by people from other religious backgrounds.

These changes provide a clearer picture of where accessing Scripture online is unsafe, restricted, or monitored. Bible Access List 2026 identifies 48 countries where the online environment for Scripture falls into one of these categories, affecting an estimated 277 million Christians.

48 countries / 277 million

Christians face an online environment for Scripture that is unsafe, restricted, or monitored

POVERTY

The poverty indicator was refined to use internationally recognized poverty thresholds appropriate to each country's income level, together with an affordability measure that also captures households living just above the poverty line. This provides a more precise, context-sensitive picture of how limited purchasing power affects people's ability to afford a Bible.

INFRASTRUCTURE

For Bible Access List 2026, the infrastructure indicator was refined by combining national logistics performance with rural road access. This provides a more complete picture of whether Bibles can not only enter and move through a country, but also reach people in rural and remote communities.



4

How These Changes Are Reflected in Bible Access List 2026

The changes described above are reflected differently across the Bible Access List 2026 results. Some movements arose from updated evidence, others from the refined indicators, and some from changes in country conditions. The top ten comparison below provides an illustration.

Bible Restrictions List, Top 10 — 2026 vs. 2025

Country	2026 rank	2025 rank
Afghanistan	1	3
Yemen	2	2
Somalia	3	1
North Korea	4	6
Eritrea	5	5
Mauritania	6	4
Turkmenistan	7	10
Libya	8	7
Sudan	9	11
Iran	10	9

Updated evidence. Somalia moved from first to third because updated World Bank index data resulted in a lower assessment of its socioeconomic barriers, not because restrictions on Bible access had eased. North Korea moved from sixth to fourth after updated evidence led to a reassessment of restrictions on Bible distribution.

Refined indicators. These refinements affected country results in different ways. For example, the poverty indicator better captured limited purchasing power in Turkmenistan, while the addition of rural road access revealed greater infrastructure barriers in the Central African Republic than national logistics data alone had shown. In Bhutan, the internet safety assessment found no identified risk to people accessing Scripture online, resulting in a lower score.

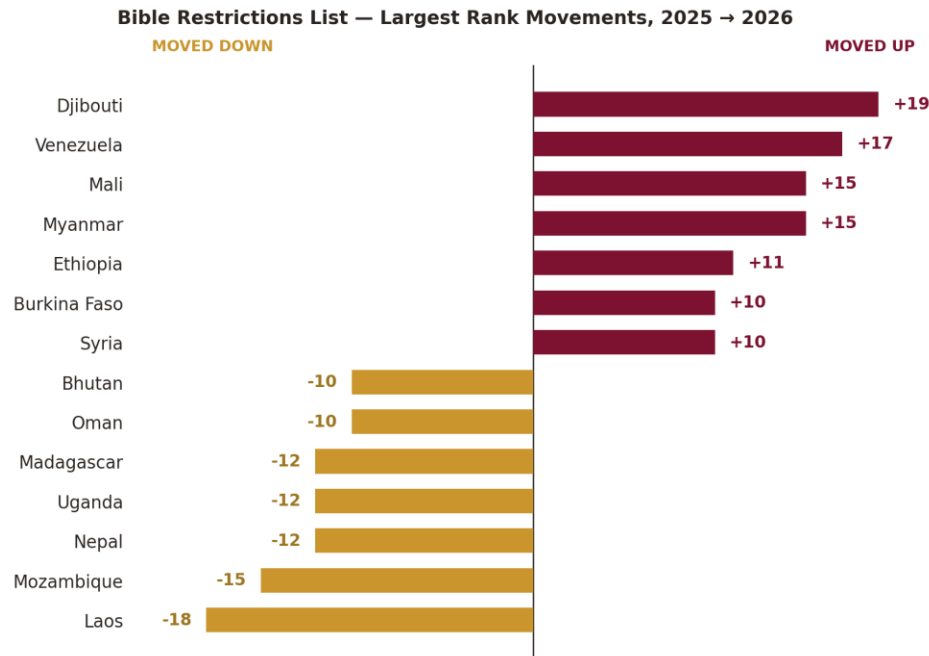
Changes on the ground. Some movements reflect genuine changes in country conditions. As extremist control expanded and insecurity increased, Bible access restrictions intensified in Mali and Burkina Faso. At the same time, reduced violence contributed to improved access conditions in Uganda and Mozambique. Changes in rank can therefore signal either worsening or improving conditions and must always be interpreted alongside the underlying evidence.



5

Other Significant Changes in Rank

Beyond the changes within the top ten, several countries experienced significant movements elsewhere on the Bible Restrictions List. The chart below highlights the largest changes in rank.



Djibouti moved up 19 places, primarily because the refined Internet Safety indicator more fully captured existing risks associated with accessing Scripture online. Increased severity of import restrictions also contributed to the movement. Venezuela's movement reflected increased restrictions on importing and printing Bibles. Updated evidence contributed to movements in countries such as Laos, Myanmar and Madagascar.

Several movements reflect genuine changes in country conditions. Expanding extremist control and worsening insecurity intensified Bible access restrictions in Mali, Burkina Faso and Syria. In Ethiopia, the refined Internet Safety indicator captured intermittent blocking of Bible websites, while updated evidence showed that insurgency and violence affected a larger share of the population, contributing to its movement up the list. By contrast, reduced violence contributed to improved access conditions in Uganda and Mozambique.

The revised internet safety assessment contributed to the downward movement of Oman and Bhutan, while revisions to other indicators influenced several additional countries.

Rank alone does not tell the complete story. Because many countries have similar overall scores, even a relatively small change can result in a noticeable movement in rank. Looking at both the score and the ranking therefore provides a more accurate picture of what changed.



6

The Bible Shortage List: What Changed

The Bible Shortage List, built from separate data, estimates that 125 million Christians across 81 countries want a Bible but do not have one, an increase from the more than 100 million reported in Bible Access List 2025.

125+ Million

Christians across 81 countries want a Bible but don't have one

The countries with the largest estimated shortages remained broadly consistent (see table). The four countries with the largest shortages in the 2025 report, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and India, each still need more than 10 million Bibles, and China remains in the 5 to 10 million range.

Estimated Bible Shortage by Country, Bible Access List 2026

Country	Estimated Bible shortage
Democratic Republic of Congo	More than 10 million
Ethiopia	More than 10 million
Nigeria	More than 10 million
India	More than 10 million
Uganda	Between 5 and 10 million
Tanzania	Between 5 and 10 million
China	Between 5 and 10 million
Indonesia	Between 3 and 5 million
Angola	Between 3 and 5 million
Mozambique	Between 3 and 5 million

The seven newly included countries account for about one-third of the increase. The remainder comes from revised estimates for countries assessed in both years. Additional survey data and country-level research provided a clearer picture of Bible ownership, raising estimates in some countries and lowering them in others. As a result, ten countries moved to a higher shortage range, ten moved to a lower range, and 54 remained within the same range.

The 2026 figure therefore reflects both broader country coverage and updated estimates of the number of Christians who want a Bible but do not have one.



7 Where to Look Next

For any single country, the [Country Profile](#) tells the story behind this year's score: what the restrictions and barriers mean in practice for the people who live there. The [full lists](#) and the [methodology](#) methodology are available at bibleaccesslist.org.
