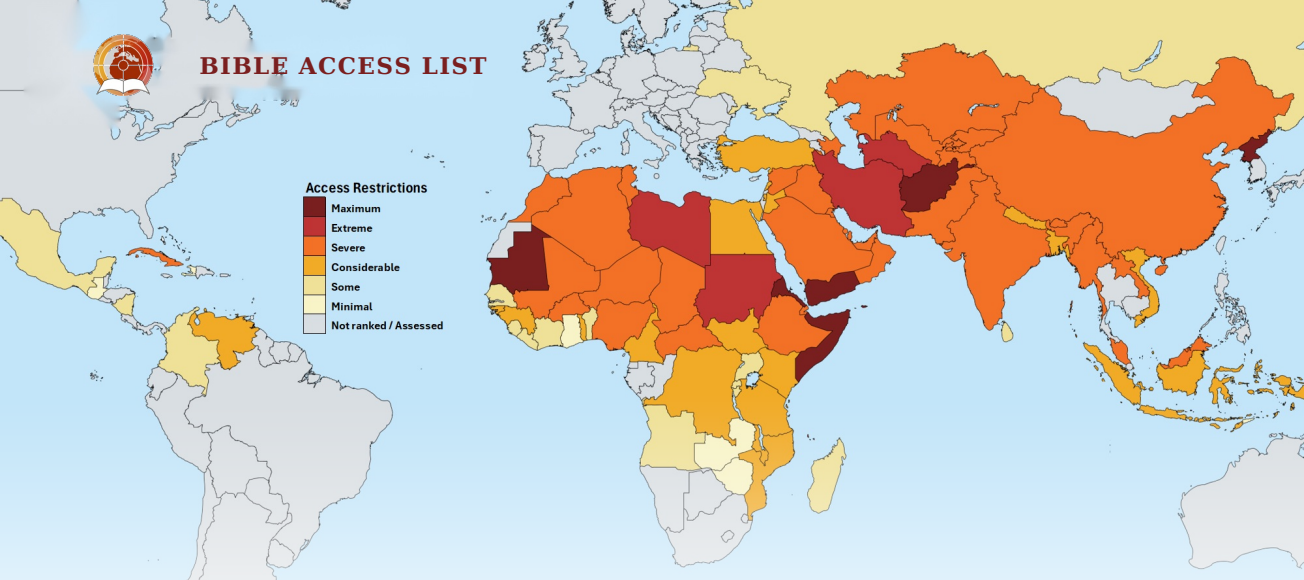




BIBLE ACCESS LIST



2026 REPORT • BIBLE ACCESS INITIATIVE

KEY FINDINGS ON WORLDWIDE BIBLE ACCESS

Availability of Scripture, Not the Full Story

500+ Million

CHRISTIANS FACE BIBLE
ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

125+ Million

CHRISTIANS WANT A BIBLE
BUT DON'T HAVE ONE

106

COUNTRIES ASSESSED
IN 2026



Key Findings on Worldwide Bible Access

Availability of Scripture, Not the Full Story

In Afghanistan, God's Word is the most dangerous book any Afghan can possess, and discovery can cost them their life. In Haiti, the Bible is available, and the church is free, yet extreme poverty makes a Bible too expensive for many families. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, some printed Bibles are available, and Scripture can also be accessed online; yet limited internet coverage and poor road access mean most communities cannot access or use a Bible.

Three countries. Three different barriers. In each, Bible access remains out of reach for many. These very different barriers point to the same reality: availability does not necessarily mean access. The Bible in 2026 is available in more translations and formats than ever: printed editions, audio, video, and mobile apps. That progress is significant and worth celebrating. But for millions of people, having Scripture available does not mean they can obtain or safely use it. The Bible Access List asks that deeper question: for those who want a Bible, can they actually get one?

The Bible Access List 2026 highlights three key findings.

1

Bible access is restricted for more than 500 million Christians.

2

Millions more cannot afford or reach one.

3

Even translation, publication, and digital availability are not enough.

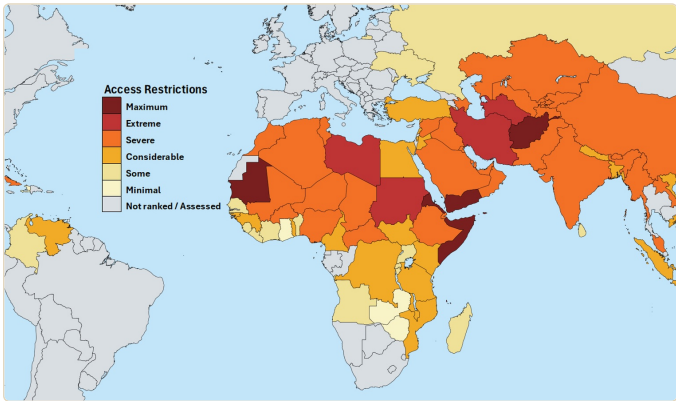
In many countries, persecution through legal, political, and social restrictions limits access to Scripture. A Bible can be legal, printed, or available in a country, but poverty, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, lack of electricity, or internet limitations prevent millions from obtaining or using one. And a finished translation is not a delivered Bible: a Bible available online is not necessarily accessible if the internet is unavailable or accessing it is unsafe.

Each finding points to the same problem: a Bible that exists somewhere is not necessarily accessible to the person who wants it. Together, these findings show where Bible access remains most limited and why.

What Is the Bible Access List?

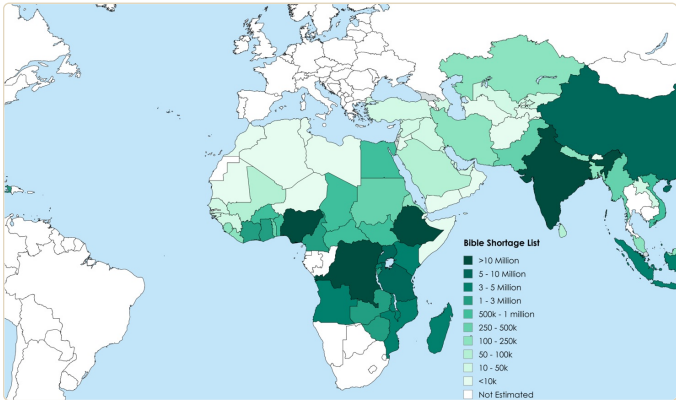
Every person should be able to access and own a Bible if they wish, **regardless of their religious background**, without restrictions and in any quantity. This guiding principle animates the Bible Access List, an annual global assessment published by a collaborative partnership of Bible agencies and ministries called the Bible Access Initiative. From this principle come two questions: **where is Bible access most restricted?** That is the Bible Restrictions List. **Where are Bible shortages among Christians greatest?** That is the Bible Shortage List. In 2026, the Bible Access List assessed both questions for **106 countries**.

BIBLE RESTRICTIONS LIST · TOP 10, 2026



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

BIBLE SHORTAGE LIST · TOP 10, 2026



1 Democratic Republic of Congo	>10 million	6 Tanzania	5-10 million
2 Ethiopia	>10 million	7 China	5-10 million
3 Nigeria	>10 million	8 Indonesia	3-5 million
4 India	>10 million	9 Angola	3-5 million
5 Uganda	5-10 million	10 Mozambique	3-5 million

Showing the top 10 of **106 countries assessed** in 2026, 87 ranked in the Bible Restrictions List, 81 in the Bible Shortage List. **Full rankings & Country Profiles → bibleaccesslist.org**

125+ Million Christians across 81 countries want a Bible but don't have one. For every ranked country, the Bible Access List also publishes a Country Profile bringing together findings from both lists.

KEY FINDING 1

1 Bible Access Is Restricted for More Than 500 Million Christians

Bible access is restricted for more than 500 million Christians, including more than 250 million for whom access is very difficult. Persecution through government controls, extremist violence, and family and community pressure make accessing Bibles difficult or dangerous. The scale extends across every dimension of Bible access. In 39 countries, printing is prohibited or severely restricted, as is distribution in 39 countries. Importing Bibles faces this level of restriction in 38 countries, storing in 37, and personal ownership in 34.

500+ Million

Christians face Bible access restrictions

250+ Million

face very difficult / severe restrictions

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE ON THE GROUND: RESTRICTIONS TAKE MANY FORMS

CENTRAL ASIA

Across much of Central Asia, no Bible moves without the state's permission. In Kyrgyzstan, every religious text, including the Bible, must pass a state review before it can be imported, printed, or distributed, and this process is used to delay or prevent access indefinitely. In Uzbekistan, every legal Bible must carry a state stamp, and ownership is capped at one copy per person. In Turkmenistan, Bibles in the Turkmen language are outright illegal, and a Bible without the state stamp is grounds for confiscation.

WEST AFRICA

In areas where extremist groups are active, accessing or possessing a Bible is dangerous for Christians. Across parts of West Africa, jihadist raids on churches and homes specifically target Bibles. For example, in several regions of Burkina Faso, being found with a Bible has led to confiscation, the burning of Bibles, and in some cases, severe violence or death. In Niger, during raids, Bibles and Christian materials have been confiscated, burned, soaked in water, or torn apart.

MALAYSIA & LAOS

Owning and sharing Scripture carry risks of their own. In Malaysia, Bibles may be owned and distributed among Christians, but distribution and ownership by Muslims is prohibited, illustrating how Bible access can differ according to religious background. In Laos, public distribution can trigger raids and the burning of Bibles. In many countries, being discovered with a Bible also carries serious consequences within the family or community.

ONLINE: ERITREA, ETHIOPIA & CHINA

Bible access can also be restricted or dangerous online. In Eritrea, phones are inspected at checkpoints, and the state monitors Christian content online. In Ethiopia, Christian websites are intermittently blocked. In China, foreign Christian websites are blocked, Bible apps have been removed from app stores, and a new online ID system makes digital activity increasingly traceable.

Bible access is not restricted equally. In many countries, people from other religious backgrounds who seek the Bible or become Christians can face serious consequences from family, community, or the state for accessing, owning, or sharing Scripture.



SPOTLIGHT · NORTH KOREA

A Bible cannot safely be kept

Bible Restrictions Rank 4: Maximum Access Restrictions. In North Korea, every dimension of Bible access is prohibited. Christians are treated as enemies of the state, and a Bible discovered in a routine house search can mean execution or a life sentence in a forced labor camp. Internet access for ordinary citizens is essentially zero; devices are state-controlled and monitored. Believers rely on memorized Scripture, because a physical Bible is too dangerous to keep. Here the question is not how many Bibles are needed, but how one can be kept at all.



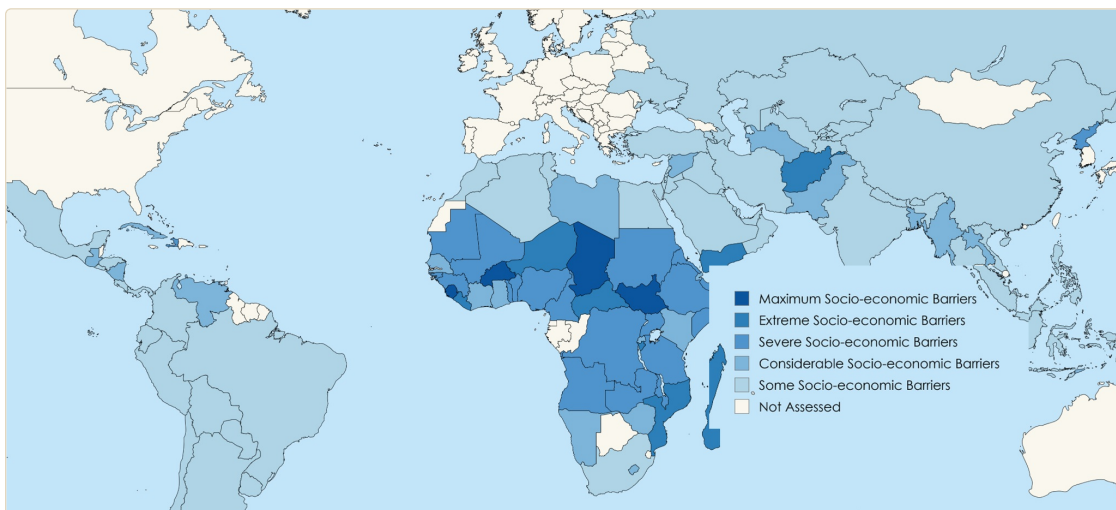
KEY FINDING 2

2 Socioeconomic Barriers Are a Major Obstacle for Millions of Christians Worldwide

Socioeconomic barriers can make Bible access difficult even where few or no persecution-related restrictions exist. A Bible can be perfectly legal, printed in the country, and stocked in the city, and still never reach a believer who cannot afford it, cannot travel to it, cannot read it, or has no electricity to charge the phone that might otherwise carry it.

550+ Million

Christians live in 33 countries facing severe socioeconomic barriers



Global Socioeconomic Barriers: poverty, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, lack of electricity, and limited internet access.

SIERRA LEONE & CÔTE D'IVOIRE

The scale is substantial: more than 550 million Christians live in 33 countries facing severe socioeconomic barriers. For example, in Sierra Leone, most rural households spend nearly everything they earn on food, making a printed Bible unaffordable for most families. In Côte d'Ivoire, a Bible available in the largest city, Abidjan, may not reach a rural family where roads are poor, income is seasonal, and the cost of a Bible may equal a week's food for the whole family.

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Digital access can provide alternatives to printed Bibles, but it also depends on electricity and internet access. In the Central African Republic, only about one in five people have electricity, so digital and audio Scripture cannot be relied on consistently.

NIGER, MYANMAR, TURKMENISTAN & CUBA

In some countries, persecution-related restrictions and socioeconomic barriers overlap, making Bible access especially difficult. This is the case in countries such as Niger, Myanmar, Turkmenistan, and Cuba, where both contribute to restricted Bible access. Where poverty means many people cannot afford a Bible, free or subsidized distribution may be necessary. Yet persecution-related restrictions limit churches and ministries through which those Bibles would otherwise be distributed.

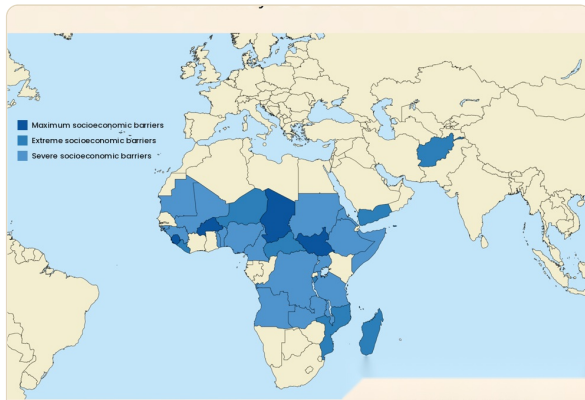
THE 33 COUNTRIES TELL TWO DIFFERENT STORIES

Looking across the 33 countries where socioeconomic barriers are most severe, two different patterns emerge. In 15, severe socioeconomic barriers overlap with significant persecution-related restrictions, and an estimated 28 million Bibles are needed in those countries. In the other 18, persecution-related restrictions are minimal or absent, yet an estimated 54 million Bibles are still needed. In these countries, poverty, distance, poor infrastructure, and other socioeconomic barriers are themselves enough to severely limit Bible access.

15

countries: severe socioeconomic barriers + significant persecution-related restrictions

~28 Million Christians who want a Bible but do not have one



18

countries: severe socioeconomic, minimal/absent persecution-related restrictions

~54 Million Christians who want a Bible but do not have one



SPOTLIGHT · DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

No law restricts access: poverty and distance do

Home to ~107 Million believers, one of the largest Christian populations on earth. No law restricts access, yet fewer than one in three believers own a Bible. The DRC is among the poorest countries in the world: only about one in five people have electricity, and poor roads make remote communities difficult to reach in a country the size of Western Europe.



KEY FINDING 3

3 Translation, Publication & Digital Availability Are Not Enough to Bridge the Bible Access Gap

The translation movement is one of the great achievements of the modern Church. Bible translation has made remarkable progress, with Scripture now available in more languages and formats than ever. However, completing a translation does not by itself make Scripture accessible. It must also be published in formats people can use, whether printed copies, audio, or digital. And it must reach the people who want it. Printed Bibles must be produced and distributed, while digital Scripture depends on internet access and a safe online environment.

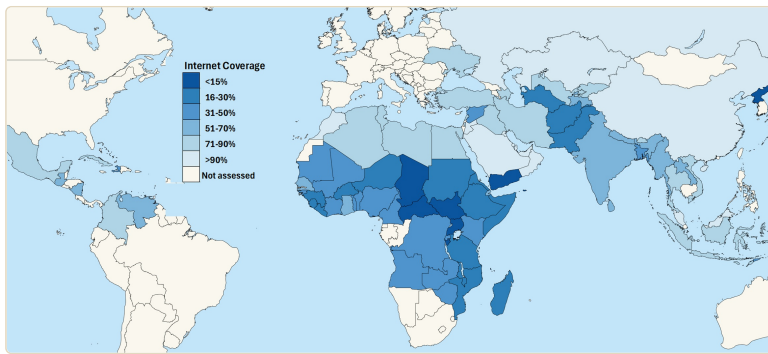
WHEN A TRANSLATION EXISTS, BUT A COPY DOESN'T

Some smaller language communities have Bible translations completed decades ago, but printed copies are no longer available. Because potential print runs are small, producing another edition can be relatively expensive. For believers who want a physical Bible in their own language, the translation exists, but a copy may no longer be available.

400+ Million

Christians in 42 countries live without internet access

Digital availability presents a different challenge. More than 400 million Christians across 42 countries are estimated to live without internet access. For them, a Bible available online is inaccessible.



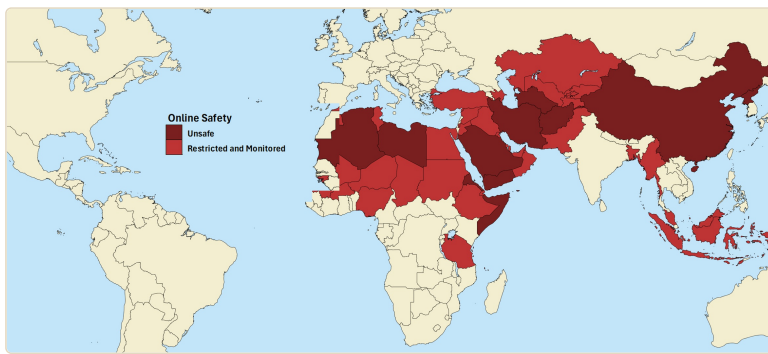
Can people get online?

Digital access also depends on electricity, a suitable device, and the means to connect, all of which are constrained by poverty in many countries. In Ethiopia, electricity reaches only about 55 percent of the population and internet access just 17 percent, making digital Scripture out of reach for most. In Cuba, frequent power failures and internet disruptions prevent believers from accessing Scripture on a phone or a shared device.

277 Million

Christians in 48 countries face an unsafe or restricted online environment

Where internet access exists, safety can present another restriction. In 48 countries, the online environment for Scripture is unsafe or restricted, affecting an estimated 277 million Christians.



Where online, is it safe to access Scripture?

In Iran, Bible apps and Christian websites remain accessible at times, yet believers who read Scripture online risk discovery and surveillance. In Saudi Arabia, religious content is monitored, and some Christian websites are blocked.

In a country like Somalia, these challenges converge. The full Bible exists in a major national language and digitally, yet government monitoring makes online access dangerous, and extremist groups watch for Bible use and distribution. The translation exists. The digital Bible exists. Safe access does not.

Even when Scripture is available in the right language, people may not know it exists or how to access it. Among some indigenous communities, limited connectivity and unfamiliarity with digital technology mean churches, missionaries, and local Christian workers remain important in helping believers find Scripture in their own language.



SPOTLIGHT · BURKINA FASO

Poverty and persecution, compounding each other

In Burkina Faso, electricity reaches less than one in four people, internet access is even lower than that, roads cover only half the country, and more than half the population cannot read. Together, these barriers already severely limit the ways people can access Scripture, whether physically or digitally. In areas where jihadist groups are active, restrictions make access even more difficult and dangerous: some churches have moved services and Bibles to remote bush locations to avoid detection, and in some areas, believers avoid carrying a Bible even on their phone because discovery could put them at risk.



THE TWO LISTS · METHODOLOGY RECAP

The Bible Access List asks two principal questions: Where is Bible access most restricted? And where are Bible shortages among Christians greatest?

These two questions form the basis of two complementary lists: the Bible Restrictions List and the Bible Shortage List.

HOW THE BIBLE RESTRICTIONS LIST AND BIBLE SHORTAGE LIST ARE BUILT

The two lists are complementary but built differently.

The first question produces the Bible Restrictions List, which ranks countries by how severely Bible access is restricted. The Bible Restrictions List combines two sets of indicators: persecution-related restrictions imposed by governments, extremist actors, family members, or society; and socioeconomic barriers such as poverty, poor infrastructure, illiteracy, lack of electricity, and limited internet coverage.

The second question produces the Bible Shortage List, which uses separate survey data to estimate how many Christians want a Bible but do not have one. It identifies where Bible shortages among Christians are greatest.

While the Bible Shortage List specifically measures shortages among Christians, the Bible Restrictions List considers Bible access for the wider population. In some countries, Christians may be able to access Bibles while people from other religious backgrounds face significant restrictions.

For every ranked country, the Bible Access List also publishes a Country Profile that brings together the findings from both lists and explains the country's unique Bible access situation and Bible needs. Together, the rankings and Country Profiles provide both a global overview and the country-level context behind the findings. Explore full Country Profiles at bibleaccesslist.org.

What Changed in the Bible Access List 2026

At the top of the Bible Restrictions List, several countries changed position. Afghanistan moved from third to first, while Somalia moved from first to third. North Korea moved from sixth to fourth, Turkmenistan from tenth to seventh, and Sudan entered the top 10. These changes should not automatically be interpreted as conditions worsening or improving. A country's ranking is relative to other countries and can also be affected by updated evidence and changes in how particular indicators are measured.

Some movements further down the list were considerably larger. Djibouti moved up 19 places, Venezuela 17, and Mali and Myanmar 15. In the other direction, Laos moved down 18 places, Mozambique 15, while Nepal, Uganda and Madagascar each moved down 12. These ranking movements reflect changes in countries' underlying scores as well as movement elsewhere on the list, and the expanded number of countries assessed in 2026.

Looking at scores rather than rank provides another view of what changed. Among the largest increases were Venezuela, whose overall restrictions score rose by 19 points, Rwanda by 14, and Ethiopia by 11. Among the largest decreases were Uganda and Madagascar, both by about 11 points. These changes do not all have the same cause.

COUNTRY	2026	2025
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

Bible Restrictions List, top 10, 2026 vs. 2025.

THE CHANGES BROADLY REFLECT THREE FACTORS

CONDITIONS ON THE GROUND

In Mali, for example, a larger share of the country is now affected by jihadist violence, increasing restrictions on Bible access. In Uganda, the decrease in jihadist violence reduced several restriction scores, while in Mozambique the proportion of the population affected by violence declined.

STRONGER EVIDENCE

In Madagascar, additional research confirmed that previously reported restrictions on Bible printing were not in place, contributing to a substantially lower score.

REFINEMENTS TO INDICATORS

Elsewhere, revised indicators, particularly Internet Safety, poverty and infrastructure, changed how existing conditions are measured. The [companion analysis](#) examines the largest changes and their causes in greater detail.

A [companion article](#) examines the year-to-year changes in greater detail, including the largest movements in the Bible Restrictions List and Bible Shortage List, changes to key indicators such as poverty, infrastructure and Internet Safety, and the role of new evidence and changing conditions on the ground.

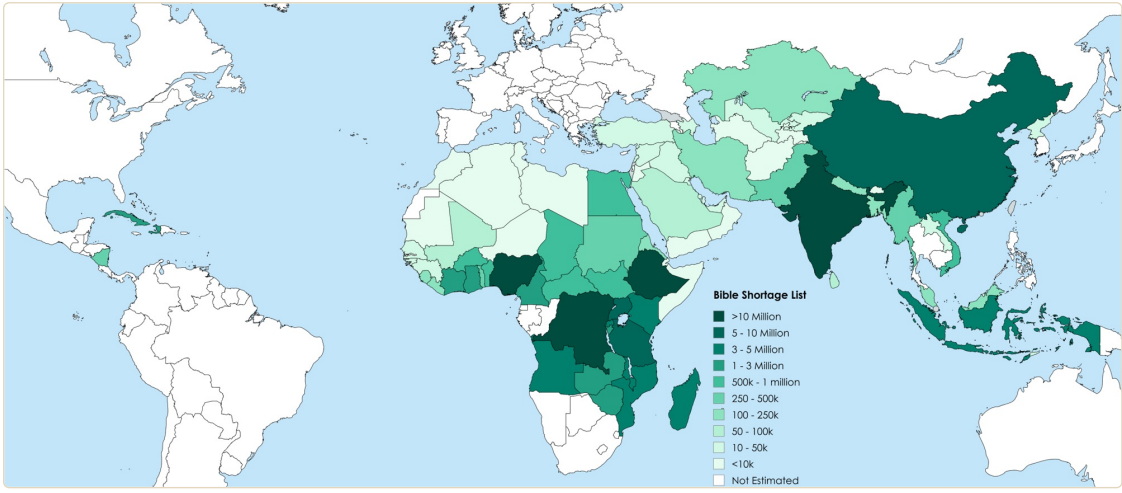
88 → 106 countries

The Bible Access List 2026 expanded the scope of the assessment. The number of countries assessed increased from 88 to 106. Of these, 87 meet the criteria for inclusion in the Bible Restrictions List. Eligibility criteria were introduced for the Bible Access List 2026, and year-to-year ranking comparisons should therefore be interpreted with this expanded coverage in mind.

A Clearer Picture of Bible Shortage

An estimated 125 million Christians across 81 countries want a Bible but do not have one. This is an increase from the more than 100 million reported in the Bible Access List 2025. The increase reflects both expanded country coverage and improved evidence about Bible ownership and shortage.

Seven countries are newly included in the Bible Shortage List in 2026, accounting for about one-third of the increase in the underlying estimate. Most of the increase therefore comes from countries assessed in both years. Among these countries, 10 moved to a higher shortage range and 10 to a lower range, while 54 remained within the same range. In many of the countries where estimates changed, additional survey data and in-country research provided a clearer picture of Bible ownership and the number of Christians who want a Bible but do not have one. New evidence resulted in higher estimates in some countries and lower estimates in others.



Bible Shortage List 2026: estimated number of Christians who want a Bible but don't have one.

125+ Million

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

BIBLE SHORTAGE LIST 2026: WHERE ESTIMATES CHANGED	
Newly included	Angola, Zambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Timor-Leste, Guinea-Bissau
Largest upward movements	Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Madagascar
Largest downward movements	Burkina Faso, Guinea, Syria, Pakistan, Togo

The 2026 figure therefore reflects both broader coverage and a better-informed estimate of the scale of Bible shortage; it should not be read simply as a year-on-year increase in the number of Christians needing a Bible. The [full Bible Shortage List](#) provides the country-level estimates behind the global picture.

As a result of all of this, the Bible Access List 2026 provides the clearest global picture yet of where, and why, people still struggle to access a Bible.

What This Means

FOR THE CHURCH

For the global Church, Bible ministries, and prayer networks, the Bible Access List findings show where prayer and action are needed: for persecuted believers who risk consequences for accessing or owning a Bible; for those kept from one by poverty, distance, or poor infrastructure; and for those whose Scripture exists but has still not reached them.

FOR AGENCIES & FUNDERS

For organizations and funders able to respond, the findings also help identify where and how to act. They point beyond translation alone to the full journey from translation to access, and to practical responses such as affordable distribution, stronger delivery channels, improved connectivity, and safer ways for believers to access Scripture.

What's Next?

Every finding in this report sharpens the same question:

How do we get Bibles to our brothers and sisters in Christ?

To those who need them but cannot afford them?

To those who are seeking, but cannot get one?

The Bible Access List is more than a picture of the problem; it helps show where action is possible. An estimated 54 million Bibles are needed in 18 countries where persecution-related restrictions are minimal or absent and socioeconomic barriers are the primary obstacle. Elsewhere, the challenges are more complex, but the need is no less urgent.

Country by country, the findings provide a clearer roadmap for prayer and action.

To explore the findings and inform prayer and action, view the [full Bible Access List results](#), individual Country Profiles, and more information about the [methodology](#) at bibleaccesslist.org.



2026 REPORT

Bible Access List 2026: Key Findings

- 1 Bible Access Is Restricted for More Than 500 Million Christians.
- 2 Socioeconomic Barriers Are a Major Obstacle for Millions More.
- 3 Translation, Publication & Digital Availability Are Not Enough.

THE BIBLE ACCESS LIST AT A GLANCE

500+
Million

Christians for whom Bible access is restricted

125+
Million

Christians who want a Bible but do not have one

106

Countries assessed in 2026

bibleaccesslist.org

A Bible that exists somewhere is not necessarily accessible to the person who wants it.

THE BIBLE ACCESS INITIATIVE

STEERING PARTNERS

Bible League International · Digital Bible Society · Frontlines International · Voice of the Martyrs · YouVersion

CONTRIBUTING PARTNERS

Biblica · Close the Bible Gap · OneHope · Open Doors International