



# Bible Access List Methodology

Publication date: October 2026

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## ***Bible Access List***

- ***Bible Restrictions list: Where Bible Access is Most Difficult***
- ***Bible Shortage list: Where Bible Shortage is Greatest***

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## Executive Summary – Bible Access List Methodology

The **Bible Access List (BAL)** is a global initiative developed by the Bible Access Initiative, a collaborative of Bible agencies to identify where access to the Bible is most difficult and where shortages among Christians are greatest. It aims to inform Bible agencies, mission organizations, and churches, and mobilize global prayer and resources to accomplish the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

The 2026 edition covers 106 countries, providing a structured, data-informed framework to support strategic planning, distribution, and advocacy for Bible accessibility and addressing Bible shortages. Not all assessed countries are ranked in the published Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage lists, as predefined methodological thresholds determine eligibility for ranking or for the publication of a Bible Shortage estimate.

### Core Assessments and Data Sources

1. **Bible Restrictions list:** A country is assessed using **11 indicators** grouped in two blocks.
  - **Block 1 (75% weight):** Restrictions imposed by government, religious extremists, or other actors (e.g., laws banning Bible printing or distribution)
  - **Block 2 (25% weight):** Socio-economic challenges (e.g., poverty, poor infrastructure, low literacy)
2. **Bible Shortage list:** Estimates the number of **Christians** (not seekers) who desire a Bible but lack one. Results are expressed in **range-based estimates** (e.g., 100k–250k) to reflect uncertainty and variability.

### The BAL methodology combines:

- **Primary data:** Global surveys, expert interviews, and field observations
- **Secondary data:** World Christian Database, Open Doors' World Watch files, and World Bank development indicators.

Each estimate and score is rigorously validated through a multi-tier process involving analysts, experts, and country-based reviewers to ensure both technical accuracy and contextual relevance.

### Key Outputs and Presentation of Results:

- **Bible Restrictions list:** A ranked score identifying where Bible access is most difficult
- **Bible Shortage list:** A ranked overview of where the greatest number of Christians lack Bibles
- **Country Profiles:** Narrative and visual summaries of Bible access realities and prayer needs

Results are communicated through 1. **Ranked Lists:** Based on total scores or shortage estimates and 2. **Descriptive Groupings:** Labels like “Extreme Access Restrictions” to help interpret scores.

### Conclusion

The BAL 2026 offers a unique, evidence-based lens on Bible access and ownership across the globe. By blending data analysis with local insights, the BAL equips Bible agencies, mission organizations, and the Church to respond with strategic clarity and urgency.

# 1. Introduction and Scope

This document provides a comprehensive overview of the methodology used to develop the Bible Access List (BAL). It is intended for analysts, partners, and leaders who seek to understand the underlying research framework.

The BAL methodology integrates structured indicators, scoring benchmarks, and contextual insights gathered at the grassroots level. It is regularly updated and includes detailed descriptions of data sources, validation processes, and calculation examples that inform country-level conclusions.

## How to Read This Document

- **Chapter 1** outlines the rationale, purpose, and scope of the BAL, and introduces the Bible Access Initiative, a collaborative that publishes the BAL, and guiding principles.
- **Chapter 2** details the scoring methodology for Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage estimates across 88 countries. It also introduces the Country Profiles and summarizes the 2025 BAL results.
- **Appendices** provide supplemental details and supporting data for further reference.

Readers seeking a high-level overview may focus on Chapter 1 and Section 2.8. Those interested in a deeper understanding of the indicators, scoring, and examples are encouraged to read both chapters in full.

## 1.1 Background and Purpose

The Bible Access List (BAL) is published by the Bible Access Initiative (BAI), a collaborative of global Bible organizations. The BAL provides a structured, repeatable, and scalable methodology for assessing Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage by combining structured data, field insight, and expert validation. It represents a collaborative effort to integrate quantitative analysis with contextual understanding.

The BAI<sup>1</sup> believes that every individual on Earth has an inherent right to access God's Word and to own a copy of the Bible if they so desire.

However, in today's world, it is important to recognize that **unfettered access to the Bible is not a universal standard**. Across various countries, or specific regions of the world, there are significant barriers that impede individuals from accessing or owning a Bible.

The BAI recognizes that numerous Christians globally encounter significant obstacles in accessing God's Word. These challenges vary widely depending on the religious context which shapes the political and socio-economic context.

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<sup>1</sup> See section 1.2 for more details

In certain regions, governmental restrictions, the influence of religious extremist groups or other actors serve as primary barriers to Bible access. For instance, in countries with authoritarian regimes or where religious extremists reign with terror, they may impose strict censorship laws or restrictions that limit (religious) freedoms, including the distribution and ownership of Bibles. In such environments, individuals often find themselves at risk for simply owning a Bible or attempting to get one.

Conversely, in other nations, socio-economic factors play a crucial role in hindering access to Bibles. High poverty levels can limit individuals' ability to purchase a Bible, while inadequate infrastructure, such as unreliable electricity and limited internet connectivity—further complicates access to digital versions of the Bible. In these contexts, even when individuals desire to own or access a Bible, these challenges make it difficult or impossible for them to do so.

The size and context of the church within a given country also significantly influence accessibility. In areas where Christianity is a minority, congregations or individuals may struggle to secure resources necessary to obtain Bibles. Additionally, cultural attitudes, or attitudes from other religions towards Christianity can impact how openly Christians are able to share and access Bibles.

Moreover, the presence of internal or international armed conflicts or violence exacerbates these issues by creating populations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees who often lose their possessions—including Bibles—during displacement.

The level of difficulty to access a Bible is typically a combination of the factors outlined above. **The primary objective of the Bible Access List is to provide Bible agencies, mission organizations, and churches with a comprehensive and reliable overview of restrictions on Bible access and shortages experienced across different countries.** This information is crucial for enhancing strategic planning efforts aimed at addressing these challenges effectively. Moreover, the BAL serves as a vital resource for mobilizing prayer among Christians globally and generating necessary resources to tackle the identified barriers.

At the core of the BAL methodology is a commitment to interdisciplinary rigor. The process to produce the BAL integrated quantitative data analysis, survey research, and a qualitative validation review with experts and/or country-level practitioners. This combination of methods makes sure that the BAL is supported by solid analysis and takes the surrounding context into account.

In summary, the rationale for establishing the BAL is to illuminate the multifaceted barriers that hinder individuals worldwide from accessing God's Word due to religious persecution, political oppression, socio-economic challenges, church context dynamics, and the impacts of conflict-induced displacement, while equipping organizations with actionable insights to foster greater accessibility to Bibles.

## 1.2 Development and Governance of the Bible Access Initiative

The Bible Access Initiative (BAI) originated in 2020 through a joint effort to better understand global Bible accessibility. Through successive phases of research, pilot testing, and methodological refinement, this work developed into the Bible Access List (BAL), a structured, evidence-based framework for assessing Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage. The methodology continues to evolve through annual reviews, expanded country coverage, improved indicators, and ongoing collaboration with partner organizations.

The BAI operates as a collaborative partnership, bringing together organizations that contribute strategic leadership, research expertise, operational support, funding, data, and field experience. This collaborative model helps ensure that the BAL methodology benefits from diverse perspectives, practical experience, and continuous refinement. An up-to-date overview of Steering Partners and Contributing Partners is available at **BibleAccessList.org**.

The Bible Access List methodology and associated publications are published by the BAI. They may be used, shared, and reproduced for non-commercial purposes, provided appropriate attribution is given to the BAI and **BibleAccessList.org** as the source. The BAI is responsible for the development, maintenance, and publication of the Bible Access List methodology and the research on which it is based.

## 1.3 Guiding Principles

### Multiple Realities of Bible Access Within a Country

It is essential to recognize that within a single nation, diverse realities regarding Bible access and ownership can coexist. These differences often arise from varying religious traditions, sociopolitical and legal frameworks, or the influence of religious extremist groups or other actors, all of which affect the availability and ownership of Bibles.

### Access Variability

In some regions of a country, individuals may freely access and own Bibles without legal or social risks. However, in other areas, especially those governed by restrictive legal systems, such as Sharia law or anti-conversion laws, or influenced by religious extremist groups, significant barriers and dangers may exist.

### Population Disparities

Access to Bibles may also vary among different segments of the population within the same country. For example, Christians might be permitted to own Bibles, while individuals of other faiths, such as Muslims or others, may face restrictions.

**Implications for the BAL:** Given these complexities, it is vital to acknowledge that multiple realities of Bible access may exist within a single country due to religious contexts that shape the political

### BAL Guiding Principles

- 1. Accessibility to all.** Every individual should be able to access and own a Bible if they wish, regardless of their religious affiliation.
- 2. Unrestricted accessibility.** There should be no legal or socio-economic barriers that impede or complicate access to Bibles, ensuring that everyone can obtain them without hindrance.
- 3. Access in any quantity.** Churches, Bible agencies, and mission organizations should be able to acquire Bibles in any quantity necessary to support their activities, without restrictive limits.

and socio-economic context. To address this, the BAL has established three fundamental guiding principles (see box above).

**Further, BAL is Data-informed, not Data-driven.** While structured data is valuable, the BAL recognizes its limitations. Rather than pursuing a perfect model, the goal is a practical one that combines quantitative data with contextual interpretation and expert validation. This approach is grounded in theological, missional, and methodological reflection, emphasizing collaboration over purely technical analysis.

**These guiding principles**, together with the BAL's data-informed approach, provide the foundation for the methodology. They guide the interpretation of findings, the application of indicators, and methodological decisions throughout the development of the Bible Access List.

## 1.4 Methodological Refinements for 2026

The BAL methodology is iterative and continues to evolve as country coverage expands, new data become available, and feedback is received from partners, analysts, and country experts. The 2026 edition builds on the BAL 2025 methodology rather than replacing it, introducing targeted refinements that improve consistency, contextual accuracy, transparency, and comparability while maintaining continuity with previous editions.

The principal methodological refinements introduced for BAL 2026 are:

**Expanded scope and publication criteria.** The number of assessed countries increased from 88 to 106, providing broader global coverage while introducing explicit criteria governing the ranking of countries in the Bible Restrictions List (BRL) and the publication of Bible Shortage estimates. These refinements improve consistency and transparency while ensuring that published rankings remain meaningful and supported by sufficient evidence.

**Refined Bible Restrictions indicators.** Several Block 1 and Block 2 indicators were refined while preserving continuity with the 2025 methodology. The Online Bible Safety indicator was enhanced to better distinguish between infrastructure-related limitations and actor-imposed restrictions, while more accurately reflecting targeted digital risks. The Poverty indicator was refined through the use of income-appropriate international poverty thresholds and affordability measures, while the Infrastructure indicator was strengthened by combining national logistics performance with measures of rural accessibility. Together, these refinements provide a more accurate and context-sensitive assessment of barriers affecting Bible access.

**Enhanced Bible Restrictions analytical framework.** The analytical framework supporting Bible Restrictions scoring was strengthened through the introduction of the Country Access Restriction Details (CARD) system, complementing the existing Country Access Restriction Scoring Overview (CARSO). While the CARSO continues to provide a concise summary of each country's assessment, the CARD captures indicator-level evidence, analytical rationale, supporting sources, regional variations, quotations, and other supporting information in a structured format. This refinement improves transparency, traceability, consistency, and continuity across scoring cycles

while providing a stronger evidence base for quality assurance and the development of Country Profiles.

**Refined Bible Shortage estimation.** The Country Shortage Estimate (COSE) methodology builds on the Bible Ownership, Need, and Format (ONF) approach introduced in BAL 2025. Refinements to survey design, automated quality controls, validation procedures, and estimation processes improve the consistency and reliability of Bible Shortage estimates while maintaining comparability with previous editions.

Together, these refinements strengthen the transparency, consistency, and comparability of the BAL methodology. When comparing results across editions, readers should recognize that changes may reflect methodological refinements, expanded country coverage, improved evidence, or genuine developments affecting Bible access. Further details on each of these refinements are provided in the relevant methodology sections that follow.

## 1.5 Scope and Publication Criteria for 2026

### Coverage

The BAL 2026 assesses **106 countries**, representing continued expansion from **67 countries in 2024** and **88 countries in 2025**. Countries are selected through a systematic process that considers factors such as the size of the Christian population, known or suspected Bible access challenges, geographic representation, and the feasibility of collecting reliable information from diverse primary and secondary sources.

### Ranking on the Bible Restrictions List (BRL)

Although 106 countries are assessed and included in the BRL, not all are ranked. To ensure that rankings remain meaningful and comparable, countries must meet predefined methodological thresholds.

Countries are included in the BRL when they obtain 20 points or more across the Bible Restrictions indicators. These indicators measure both restrictions imposed by governments, religious extremists, or other actors (Block 1), and socio-economic barriers that limit Bible access (Block 2). In addition, countries with more than 10 points for Block 2 indicators alone are also ranked, recognizing that severe socio-economic barriers can significantly restrict Bible access even where legal or societal restrictions are relatively limited.

Of the countries assessed, 87 meet the ranking criteria for the Bible Restrictions List. Countries that are assessed but do not meet the ranking criteria are included in the BRL and listed alphabetically following the ranked countries.

### Ranking on the Bible Shortage List (BSL)

Similarly, although 106 countries are assessed, not all receive a Bible Shortage estimate or are ranked in the Bible Shortage List (BSL). Publication of a Bible Shortage estimate is subject to additional methodological requirements. A shortage estimate is published only where sufficient

survey data, supporting evidence, and expert validation provide adequate confidence in the estimate.

Of the countries assessed, 81 meet the criteria for publication and ranking in the Bible Shortage List. Countries that are assessed but do not meet these criteria are included in the BSL and listed alphabetically following the ranked countries.

### **Data quality**

The BAL aims to publish both Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage results wherever methodological quality standards are met. Where available information is insufficient, inconsistent, or inconclusive, results may be withheld until further research is completed. This approach prioritizes the reliability and credibility of published findings over completeness of coverage.

## **1.6 Products**

The BAL produces a set of practical outputs designed to support strategy, prioritization, and planning. These products reflect the core findings of the methodology and serve different types of users—from local field teams and strategists to researchers and partners.

Three products will be produced:

1. **Bible Restrictions list:** Identifies and ranks countries where access to the Bible is most difficult.
2. **Bible Shortage list:** Identifies and ranks countries where Bible shortage among Christians is greatest.
3. **Country Profiles:** Provide detailed country-level analysis of Bible access, Bible shortage, key barriers, and strategic prayer priorities.

To produce these products, the BAL utilizes data from various primary and secondary sources. Key resources include the BAL survey data, World Christian Database, Open Doors' World Watch List files, and World Bank development indicators. For a complete list of data sources, please refer to section 2.3.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Bible Access and Ownership Definitions**

As articulated in the sections related to rationale and principles, the BAL measures if all people in a given country can own or access a Bible if they so desire.

It is essential to have a clear understanding of the definitions of “Bible Access” and “Bible Ownership” as the BAL uses both these terms, but they are fundamentally different.

The term **Bible Access** refers to the ability to obtain or read the Bible, which can occur through various means such as physical copies, digital formats, or availability in public/ community locations (e.g. churches, libraries etc.) or even a family setting (e.g. accessing a Family Bible kept in the home versus having a personal copy of the Bible).

On the other hand, the term **Bible Ownership** signifies a personal ownership of a Bible. This ownership typically arises from having access; without the opportunity to encounter or acquire a Bible, ownership would not be feasible. Therefore, one could argue that ownership is a personal decision and to some extent influenced by the availability of Bibles in one's environment.

The distinction lies in the nature of each term: access is about availability and opportunity, whereas ownership pertains to personal possession and choice.

The BAL measures if unfettered access to Bibles is present, or if not, what kind of restrictions are in place. It is expected that the level of restrictions will impact ownership levels.

Indicators to measure access to Bibles are essential to create the Bible Restriction list and will be discussed section 2.4.

## 2.2 Bible Shortage Definition

The term **Bible Shortage** refers to the estimated deficit of Bibles among current Christians who desire to own a personal copy but encounter various barriers that prevent them from obtaining one.

As outlined in section 1.4, this list specifically focuses on Christians only and does not account for seekers, those who are non-Christian but have shown interest in exploring the Bible.

For a comprehensive understanding of how these needs are quantified on a country-by-country basis, please refer to section 2.5, which details the methodologies employed in estimating Bible requirements across different nations.

## 2.3 Reporting Period and Data Sources

### Reporting Period

The BAL follows an annual reporting cycle, with the standard reporting period from 1 June through 31 May of the following year. Data collection, analysis, and reporting are conducted with reference to this reporting period to ensure consistency and comparability across editions.

### Data Sources

This section outlines the primary and secondary data sources utilized in the development of the BAL and the Country Profiles. These sources were selected based on their relevance, credibility, and suitability for assessing Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage.

BAL integrates multiple primary and secondary data sources. No single source determines a country's score or Bible Shortage estimate. Instead, information is triangulated across BAL surveys, expert interviews, field observations, established international datasets, and other supporting evidence before findings are finalized. This multi-source approach strengthens the accuracy,

consistency, and credibility of the methodology while reducing reliance on any individual dataset or opinion.

### Primary Data Sources

| Source Type                | Description                                                                                                                                                        | Purpose                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>BAL Survey</b>          | Distributed to respondents in over 100 countries, translated into 7 languages. Respondents included a combination of residents and diaspora-based country experts. | To collect quantitative data on Bible Restrictions, current Bible ownership, and Bible shortages.       |
| <b>Expert Interviews</b>   | In-depth interviews with country-specific experts.                                                                                                                 | To gather qualitative insights and validate survey findings.                                            |
| <b>Field Observations</b>  | On-site visits to selected countries or regions as needed.                                                                                                         | To verify reported data and collect additional ground-level information.                                |
| <b>Plausibility Review</b> | Online and email consultations with partner organizations and country experts to review preliminary findings and deliverables.                                     | To confirm the validity of findings and ensure alignment with expert knowledge and historical research. |

### Secondary Data Sources

| Source Name                              | Publisher/Owner                                              | Data Accessed/Relevance to BAL                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>World Christian Database (WCD)</b>    | Gina A. Zurlo and Todd M. Johnson, Brill (Accessed May 2026) | Population, world religion, and denominational data at national and provincial levels; people groups; church growth; and Bible translation status.                    |
| <b>World Watch List (WWL) Survey</b>     | Open Doors International (Accessed January 2026)             | Public reports and selected underlying data are used, where relevant, as one of several secondary sources to support indicator assessment and evidence triangulation. |
| <b>World Bank Development Indicators</b> | World Bank (Accessed November 2025)                          | Extracted indicators: country income level, internet usage (%), logistics performance, access to electricity (%), literacy rate (% ages 15+).                         |

## 2.4 Bible Restrictions list: Indicators, Rationale, and Scoring

The Bible Restrictions list consolidates the outcomes of evaluating each country against a comprehensive set of 11 indicators, which are organized into two categories: **Block 1** encompasses restrictions imposed by governments, religious extremist groups or other non-state actors, while **Block 2** includes socio-economic indicators.

To accurately position a country on the Bible Restrictions list, each indicator within both Block 1 and Block 2 is scored. Countries that exhibit more severe access restrictions or higher levels of poverty receive greater point allocations. Consequently, these countries rank higher on the Bible Restrictions list compared to those with fewer or no restrictions and relatively lower poverty levels.

The methodology employed in scoring these indicators is crucial for understanding the relative access challenges faced by different nations. By systematically assessing both government-imposed restrictions and socio-economic conditions, the Bible Restrictions list presents a detailed overview of the factors influencing accessibility issues across countries.

#### **2.4.1 Block 1: Restrictions Imposed by Government, Religious Extremists or Other Actors.**

Governments may utilize existing laws or legal frameworks to impose restrictions on Bible access that apply either to the entire country or to specific regions and populations. In some instances, certain areas or segments of the population may fall under the control of religious extremist groups (e.g., Muslim extremists, Hindu fundamentalists, organized crime groups) that actively prevent access to Bibles. Furthermore, distinct legal frameworks, such as Sharia law or anti-conversion laws, may govern specific populations and impose additional limitations on Bible access.

Block 1 consists of six specific indicators that assess the degree to which individuals can freely access the Bible in any quantity. These indicators evaluate whether restrictions exist on importing, printing, storing, owning, or distributing Bibles, as well as on safely accessing Bibles online.

The six indicators are:

- Ability to freely import Bibles, in any quantity
- Ability to freely print Bibles, in any quantity
- Ability to freely store Bibles, in any quantity
- Ability to freely own Bibles, in any quantity
- Ability to freely distribute Bibles, in any quantity
- Ability to safely access Bibles on the internet

The first five of these are referred to as **Physical Access Restrictions Indicators**, while the last one is referred to as the **Internet Safety Indicator**.

#### **2.4.2 Block 2: Access Restrictions Because of Socio-economic Factors**

In contrast to the restrictions described in Block 1, Block 2 focuses on broader socio-economic conditions that indirectly restrict access to Bibles.

While many socio-economic factors can influence access to the Bible, Block 2 focuses on a carefully selected set of indicators that, based on expert input and available data, offer a representative picture of the broader challenges. These indicators do not capture every possible barrier, such as all aspects of education or infrastructure, but were chosen for their strong and

direct relevance to Bible access and their ability to collectively reflect the indirect limitations many communities face.

Block 2 includes the following five indicators:

**Poverty Levels:** High poverty levels can severely limit individuals' financial resources, making it difficult to purchase Bibles. In many regions, the cost of printed materials remains prohibitive for those living below the poverty line.

**Lack of Access to the Internet:** Bibles are widely available online, often at no cost. However, individuals without internet access, particularly in rural or underdeveloped regions, are unable to benefit from these digital resources.

**Lack of Access to Electricity:** Reliable electricity is important for using digital devices to access electronic versions of the Bible. In areas where electricity is scarce or unavailable, even those with digital devices may be unable to use them effectively.

**Low Literacy Levels:** Literacy is a prerequisite for reading the Bible. In countries with low literacy rates due to limited educational opportunities, access is restricted not by availability but by the capacity to engage with the content.

**Poor Infrastructure:** Weak infrastructure, such as limited access roads, transportation options, or bridges, can make physical distribution of Bibles to remote or rural areas exceedingly difficult.

These socio-economic factors are collectively referred to as **Block 2 Socio-economic Indicators**. They contribute to access challenges in ways that may be less visible but are no less critical than government-imposed restrictions.

### 2.4.3 Relative Weight of Block 1 and Block 2 Indicators

Block 1 indicators assess restrictions imposed through formal rules, laws, or measures enforced by governments, religious extremist groups, religious authorities, or other actors. These constraints are often embedded in legal or societal frameworks, making them particularly difficult to change. In countries where Bible access is regulated or prohibited, individuals may face severe consequences such as fines, arrest, imprisonment or even death, for attempting to obtain a Bible.

In contrast, Block 2 indicators reflect socio-economic conditions that, while serious, are generally more responsive to external support and investment. Challenges like poverty, illiteracy, and poor infrastructure may limit Bible access but are typically mitigable over time through financial or in-kind assistance from external sources or policy interventions, development programs, and improved access to services.

Reflecting this distinction, the BAL assigns a **weighting ratio of 75:25 to Block 1 and Block 2 indicators**, respectively. **The maximum score a country can receive on the Bible Restrictions list is 100 points, with up to 75 points derived from Block 1 and up to 25 points from Block 2.**

For more information and a sample of scoring indicators please refer to section 2.4.6

## 2.4.4 Scoring Block 1 Indicators

To enable a consistent, transparent, and evidence-based scoring approach for each country, the Bible Access List uses a two-tier documentation framework comprising the **Country Access Restrictions Scoring Overview (CARSO)** and the **Country Access Restriction Details (CARD)**. CARSO provides a concise summary of the assessment and recommended scores for each Block 1 indicator, while the CARD serves as the detailed analytical record supporting those scores. It captures indicator-level evidence, analytical rationale, source references, regional and subgroup variations, and other supporting information. Together, CARSO and CARD strengthen transparency, traceability, consistency, and continuity across scoring cycles, while providing a robust evidence base for review, validation, and the development of Country Profiles.

### 2.4.4.1 Physical Access Restrictions Indicators

The first five indicators of Block 1, referred to as the **Physical Access Restrictions Indicators**, are scored across four distinct dimensions. The final score for each indicator is calculated as the average of the sub-scores across these dimensions:

1. **Proportion of the Christian population affected by Bible access restrictions**
2. **Severity for the Christian population**
3. **Proportion of the non-Christian population affected**
4. **Severity for the non-Christian population**

Each dimension is scored on a scale from 0 to 4. For indicators with restricted access, both the affected population and severity levels are evaluated separately for Christian and non-Christian populations.

### 2.4.4.2 Scoring Grid: Physical Access Restrictions

The scoring grid for each dimension includes a “No” column (0 points) and four “Yes” categories, scaled to reflect different levels of severity and coverage (see Diagram 1). Each response is assessed, and if restrictions exist, their severity is further scored. Explanatory comments are included in the CARSO document to justify scores when needed.

**Diagram 1: Scoring Grid for Physical Access Restrictions Indicators**

| Points | Proportion of Christian Population | Severity (Christians) | Proportion of Non-Christian Population | Severity (Non-Christians) |
|--------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 0      | None                               | None                  | None                                   | None                      |
| 1      | >0% – 25%                          | Low                   | >0% – 25%                              | Low                       |
| 2      | 26% – 50%                          | Medium                | 26% – 50%                              | Medium                    |
| 3      | 51% – 75%                          | High                  | 51% – 75%                              | High                      |
| 4      | 76% – 100%                         | Very High             | 76% – 100%                             | Very High                 |

## Additional Information on Dimensions

**Proportion of Christians Affected:** This evaluates how widespread the restrictions are among Christians. For example, if Bible access restrictions apply to all Christians in a country like Afghanistan, a score of 4 (76–100%) would be applied. Or in Malaysia the ownership restrictions apply to Muslim population only. Muslims make up 55% of the country hence a score of 3 (51-75%) would be applied. WCD data and survey inputs are used to estimate affected percentages.

**Scoring Severity of Restrictions:** Severity considers both the intensity and frequency of a restriction's impact.

The answer options for this element are defined as follows:

- **None** – When there are no consequences.
- **Low** – Despite (the formal) existence of the restriction, people are able to get around it quite easily and without any negative repercussions.
- **Medium** – Despite the restrictions in place, people can get around it, but they would encounter some challenges and creativity to overcome the restriction and if caught it would have some impact on the personal safety of the person(s) involved.
- **High** - If despite the restrictions in place, Christians or seekers ignore the restrictions, and in order to access Bibles, they need to overcome significant difficulty. Further, if caught, it would have severe repercussions for their personal safety and could include fines, possibly imprisonment, or other sentences.
- **Very high** – Similar to high, but the implications are more severe, and these would likely stretch beyond the individual and may also impact their families and/or networks they belong to and may include death as well.

Factors assessed include personal risk, ease of workaround, harassment, and surveillance. These are scored using the matrix below.

**Diagram 2: Severity Assessment Criteria**

| Severity         | Risk/Danger                            | Hindrance                                     | Harassment/Abuse                               | Monitoring                |
|------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>None</b>      | None                                   | None                                          | None                                           | None                      |
| <b>Low</b>       | Minimal or no consequences             | Minor hindrances with easy workarounds        | Mild or occasional harassment                  | Infrequent or non-serious |
| <b>Medium</b>    | Some consequences                      | More complex workarounds needed               | Moderate harassment, bearable                  | Noticeable but manageable |
| <b>High</b>      | Severe: fines, imprisonment, etc.      | Very difficult to bypass, severe consequences | Severe harassment or abuse                     | Widespread monitoring     |
| <b>Very High</b> | Severe + extends to family or networks | Extremely difficult, high personal risk       | Very severe and persistent harassment or abuse | Intensive and invasive    |

*Note: A restriction may qualify for a severity level even if not all criteria are present. Choose the level that best fits the overall impact.*

**Proportion of Non-Christian Population Affected:** This assesses whether seekers or religious minorities are also impacted. If Bible restrictions apply broadly across the population, as in Afghanistan, a score of 4 is warranted for this dimension as well.

### 2.4.4.3 Internet Safety Indicator

The Internet Safety Indicator assesses whether Christians can safely access Bible content online. Unlike the Internet Access indicator in Block 2, which evaluates the availability of internet connectivity, this Block 1 indicator measures restrictions or risks imposed by governments, communities, religious authorities, extremist groups, or other actors that may discourage, restrict or prevent the safe use of online Bible resources.

For BAL 2026, the Internet Safety Indicator was refined to align with the methodology used for the other Block 1 indicators. The revised approach focuses on actor-imposed restrictions, distinguishes between nationwide and localized restrictions, and allows additional risks faced by specific groups or regions to be reflected without overstating the national picture.

The assessment consists of two complementary sections:

#### Section A – General Digital Restrictions

This section evaluates the overall national digital environment by assessing:

- the severity of monitoring, enforcement or other restrictions imposed by governments or other actors; and
- the proportion of the total population affected.

If this section reaches the maximum score, no additional adjustment is required.

#### Section B – Targeted Digital Restrictions

If Section A does not reach the maximum score, the assessment continues by considering whether particular population groups or geographic regions experience additional digital risks not reflected in the national environment. This section captures targeted restrictions affecting groups such as Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), Christians living in high-risk regions, or communities under the control of non-state actors. It considers both the proportion of people affected and the severity of the additional risk.

The combined score from Sections A and B is capped at the maximum value of **12.5 points**, ensuring that targeted restrictions are recognized while maintaining an appropriate balance between localized risks and the overall national environment.

**The following diagram** illustrates the scoring framework for the Internet Safety Indicator:

| Internet Safety Assessment Framework (Max. 12.5 points)                                     |                       |                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Section A –<br>General Online Restrictions                                                  |                       | Section B –<br>Targeted Online Restrictions                                                                          |
| <b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bible websites blocked</li> </ul> | +<br>(only<br>applied | <b>Examples:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MBBs</li> <li>• Christians in high-risk regions</li> </ul> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Legal restrictions to access Christian content on line</b></li> <li>• <b>Active monitoring and pursuit of those accessing Bibles on line</b></li> </ul> <b>Assessment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Severity of government or other actor monitoring or restrictions</b></li> <li>• <b>Proportion of the population affected</b></li> </ul> | if<br>Section<br>A <12.5<br>points) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities under non-state actors</li> </ul> <b>Assessment:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of the population affected</li> <li>• Severity</li> </ul> |
| <b>Maximum Score 12.5</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                     | <b>Maximum Score 6.25</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               |

#### 2.4.4.4 Special Scoring Considerations

The BAL methodology is designed to reflect real-world Bible access by considering both the proportion of the population affected and the severity of restrictions. This allows the framework to accommodate situations where restrictions differ across specific population groups or geographic areas without requiring separate indicators. The following examples illustrate how these situations are incorporated into the scoring methodology.

##### **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees**

IDPs and refugees may experience Bible access restrictions that differ from those of the wider population. The BAL methodology incorporates these situations through its existing proportion and severity dimensions, allowing their circumstances to be reflected where relevant without requiring a separate indicator.

##### **Muslim Background Believers (MBBs)**

In many countries, Muslim Background Believers (MBBs) experience substantially higher levels of Bible restrictions than other Christian communities. The BAL methodology explicitly considers these situations by assessing both the proportion of Christians affected and the severity of the restrictions. This ensures that the experiences of smaller but highly vulnerable Christian populations are appropriately reflected in country scores without disproportionately influencing the national assessment.

## Partially Controlled Countries

In some countries, Bible restrictions vary significantly between regions due to conflict, insurgent control, or differing legal and social environments. The BAL methodology assesses actual Bible access rather than assuming uniform national conditions. Where restrictions apply only to specific regions or populations, the proportion of the population affected, and the severity of the restrictions are evaluated together to ensure the overall score accurately reflects the national situation.

### 2.4.5 Scoring Block 2 Indicators

The evaluation of Block 2 indicators follows a systematic approach based on reference data from various World Bank databases, which provide comprehensive and reliable information for assessing country performance.

**Reference Data and Thresholds** – Each Block 2 indicator is scored based on clearly defined thresholds, which classify conditions from extremely poor to excellent. These thresholds are based on reference data, ensuring that the scores are meaningful and contextually appropriate.

**Assessment of Country Performance** - Country-specific data are compared against these thresholds to assign scores that reflect performance relative to global standards and benchmarks.

**Documentation of Results** - Scores for Block 2 indicators, like those for Block 1, are recorded in the Country Access Restrictions Overview (CARSO). CARSO offers a summary of all indicator scores across both blocks. It provides a view of a country's socio-economic and access-related status. For further details and examples, see section 2.4.6.

#### 2.4.5.1 Poverty Indicator and Thresholds

The Poverty Indicator assesses the extent to which financial constraints limit access to Bibles. For BAL 2026, the methodology was refined to move beyond the use of World Bank income classifications alone by incorporating internationally recognized, income-appropriate poverty thresholds that better reflect household purchasing power across different economic contexts.

The assessment combines these poverty thresholds with an affordability measure to capture households that may not be classified as living in extreme poverty but still face significant barriers to purchasing non-essential items such as a Bible. Low-income countries continue to receive the maximum poverty score, recognizing the persistent structural barriers to Bible affordability, distribution, and access that characterize these contexts.

This refined approach maintains continuity with BAL 2025 while providing a more accurate and context-sensitive assessment of financial barriers to Bible access. The detailed scoring thresholds are shown in the table below.

| Income Category     | Method Used                                                               |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Low income          | Automatically assigned 5 points                                           |
| Lower-middle income | \$4.20 poverty threshold + affordability adjustment (\$8.30), capped at 5 |
| Upper-middle income | \$8.30 poverty threshold                                                  |
| High income         | 0 points                                                                  |

#### 2.4.5.2 Internet Access Indicator and Thresholds

Scores depend on the percentage of the population with internet access. Data was sourced from the World Bank. Lower access results in higher points, reflecting the challenge of accessing free online Bibles without internet connectivity. Thresholds define the point allocation (see table).

| % of the Population |        |
|---------------------|--------|
| Score/Threshold     | Points |
| <10%                | 5      |
| 10-25%              | 4      |
| >25-50%             | 3      |
| >50-75%             | 2      |
| >75-90%             | 1      |
| >90%                | 0      |

#### 2.4.5.3 Logistics Indicator and Thresholds

Points are allocated based on the overall quality of infrastructure, assessed using the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index or LPI. Poor infrastructure (roads, bridges, transport) leads to higher points, as it impedes Bible distribution, especially in remote areas. Thresholds translate infrastructure levels into scores.

| Logistics / Infrastructure |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Score/Threshold            | Points |
| <2.4                       | 5      |
| 2.4 - 2.7                  | 3.75   |
| 2.7 - 3.2                  | 2.5    |
| >3.2                       | 0      |

For BAL 2026, the LPI was refined by incorporating the World Bank's Rural Access Index (RAI) as a complementary measure. The assessment begins with the LPI, which remains the primary indicator. Where a country receives the maximum score based on the LPI, no further assessment is required. For countries that do not reach the maximum score, the RAI is used to assess whether limited rural accessibility creates additional barriers to Bible distribution. The RAI may therefore confirm or increase the infrastructure score but does not reduce the score assigned by the LPI.

| Step | Assessment                                                                | Outcome                                                                                                                          |
|------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1    | Assess the country's Logistics Performance Index (LPI)                    | If the maximum score is assigned, the assessment is complete.                                                                    |
| 2    | If the maximum score is not assigned, assess the Rural Access Index (RAI) | The RAI may increase the score where poor rural accessibility creates additional barriers, but it does not reduce the LPI score. |

#### 2.4.5.4 Electricity Access Indicator and Thresholds

Scores are based on the percentage of the population with electricity access. Data was sourced from the World Bank. Lower electricity availability results in higher points, since lack of electricity restricts the use of online Bibles even if internet access exists. Thresholds determine point allocation (see table).

| <i>Electricity Access</i> |        |
|---------------------------|--------|
| Score/Threshold           | Points |
| <50%                      | 5      |
| 50 - 70%                  | 2.5    |
| >70 - 90%                 | 1.25   |
| >90%                      | 0      |

#### 2.4.5.5 Literacy Indicator and Thresholds

Points are assigned according to the literacy rate for the population aged 15 and above. Lower literacy rates lead to higher points, as non-literate populations require alternative Bible access methods (e.g., audio Bibles), which may be more complex and costly. Thresholds define the scoring ranges (see table).

| <i>Literacy Rate</i> |        |
|----------------------|--------|
| Score/Threshold      | Points |
| <50%                 | 5      |
| 50 - 70%             | 2.5    |
| >70 - 90%            | 1.25   |
| >90%                 | 0      |

### 2.4.6 Country Access Restriction Details (CARD) and Country Access Restriction Scoring Overview (CARSO)

To support transparent, evidence-based and consistent scoring, the BAL uses a two-tier documentation framework consisting of the Country Access Restriction Details (CARD) and the Country Access Restriction Scoring Overview (CARSO). Together these documents form the analytical record underpinning each country's Block 1 assessment.

The CARD is the primary internal analytical document supporting each country assessment. It captures indicator-level evidence, analytical rationale, source references, regional and population-group variations, quotations, and field observations, together with the justification for proportion and severity assessments. It may also contain confidential source material, unpublished survey responses, and other sensitive supporting information that cannot be made public. For this reason, the CARD is maintained as an internal analytical record and is not reproduced in this methodology. Its validated findings are summarized in the Country Access Restriction Scoring Overview (CARSO).

**CARSO** provides a concise summary of the validated findings contained in the CARD and presents the recommended scores for each Block 1 indicator. It is used during comparative country reviews, scoring discussions, and publication preparation, and serves as the principal summary document for reviewing and validating country scores.

The images below provide a sample of the CARSO. It comprises three sections:

#### Section 1: Country Overview and Summary Scoring

This section includes reference data for population and Christian population, previous year's results, the number of surveys and data points gathered. It also contains the final scores for:

- Block 1: Restrictions imposed by government, religious extremists, or other non-state actors

- Block 2: Socio-Economic challenges
- Combined access restrictions score

The sample below shows the total score for Block 1 indicators is 46 points, and the total score for Block 2 indicators is 12 points. The detailed scoring for each indicator is shown on the next pages.

**Please be informed that certain sections of CARSO have been redacted to ensure confidentiality.**

| BAL 2026 Country Access Restriction Scoring Overview            |       |                          |       |                      |  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------|--|
| Country                                                         |       | BAL 2025 Surveys         | 20    | BAL 2026 Surveys     |  |
| Population                                                      |       | BRL 2025 Rank            | 47    | BAL 2026 Data Points |  |
| Christians #                                                    |       | BAL 2025 Total BRL Score | 57.94 | WWL 2026 Data Points |  |
| Christians %                                                    |       | WWL 2026 rank            | 33    |                      |  |
| << < click "+" to expand section and see key country statistics |       |                          |       |                      |  |
| Block 1 (Access Restrictions) - score                           | 46.41 | BAL 2025 Block 1 score   | 45.94 |                      |  |
| Block 2 (Other Limiting Factors) - score                        | 12.00 | BAL 2025 Block 2 score   | 12.00 |                      |  |
| BAL 2026 - BRL score                                            | 58.41 | BAL 2025 Total BRL Score | 57.94 |                      |  |

## Section 2: Scoring of Block 1 Indicators

This section presents the scoring for each of the six Block 1 indicators, as outlined in Section 2.4.4. The first five indicators are evaluated using four dimensions: the proportion of Christians affected, the severity for Christians, the proportion of non-Christians affected, and the severity for them. The sixth indicator, Internet safety, is assessed using two dimensions: surveillance and access safety. Each score is accompanied by a summary of findings and explanatory comments, with references to relevant BAL survey responses and World Watch List data. Please note that the “rationale/comments” provide a high-level summary; detailed incidents and country-specific findings are documented separately in individual country files.

| Block 1 - Access Restrictions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Answers                                                                                                  | Sub Score                      | Indicator Score | Rationale / Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1. Can the Bible be imported freely?</b><br><i>Proportion of Christians impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>Proportion of Non Christian Population impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>If restrictions are in place - what is the scope</i>                                                      | <b>Yes, with (some) restrictions</b><br>>90%<br>Low<br>>90%<br>Low<br>Similar for everyone               | 12.50<br>3.13<br>12.50<br>3.13 | <b>7.81</b>     | The import of Bibles into [REDACTED] is permitted under the existing framework, importers must comply and obtain approval. In practice authorities have at times delayed or refused shipments of Bibles. This applies to all, both Christians and non-Christians. While permits can often be obtained, the process is unpredictable and can cause significant delays, making Bible importation not fully free or unrestricted. As a result, the overall severity of import-related restrictions is assessed as low.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>2. Can the Bible be printed freely?</b><br><i>Proportion of Christians impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>Proportion of Non Christian Population impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>If restrictions are in place - what is the scope</i>                                                       | <b>Yes, with (some) restrictions</b><br>>90%<br>Low<br>>90%<br>Low<br>Similar for everyone               | 12.50<br>3.13<br>12.50<br>3.13 | <b>7.81</b>     | The printing of Bibles in [REDACTED] is permitted but subject to the same law as for import. In practice, Bible printing is carried out by the registered Bible societies or other mission/ agencies that have obtained government recognition. While this registration requirement represents a formal restriction, it has not negatively affected Bible availability or resulted in significant barriers to printing in practice. As the registered Bible societies are able to meet demand, the severity of print-related restrictions is assessed as low for both Christians and non-Christians.                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>3. Can the Bible be stored freely?</b><br><i>Proportion of Christians impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>Proportion of Non Christian Population impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>If restrictions are in place - what is the scope</i>                                                        | <b>Yes, with (some) restrictions</b><br>>90%<br>Medium<br>>90%<br>Medium<br>Similar for everyone         | 12.50<br>6.25<br>12.50<br>6.25 | <b>9.38</b>     | The storage of Bibles in [REDACTED] is permitted but often constrained in practice by social pressure, intimidation, and localized interference, particularly affecting converts and new believers. Field reports indicate incidents of Bible confiscation, inspection of religious materials, and threats by local religious leaders or extremist actors. While these pressures are most severe for Muslim-background believers, other Christians also face risks. Overall this contributes to widespread self-censorship among Christians more broadly. As a result, storage-related restrictions affect all, though severity varies by group and location (much higher for MBBs). Overall severity is assessed as medium.                                        |
| <b>4. Can the Bible be owned freely?</b><br><i>Proportion of Christians impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>Proportion of Non Christian Population impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>If restrictions are in place - what is the scope</i>                                                         | <b>Yes, with (some) restrictions</b><br>26-50%<br>Medium<br>>90%<br>Medium<br>Similar for everyone       | 6.25<br>6.25<br>12.50<br>6.25  | <b>7.81</b>     | Bible ownership in [REDACTED] is permitted but widely constrained in practice by social pressure, family opposition, and community scrutiny. While traditional Christians are generally able to own a Bible, they often do so discreetly, particularly in Muslim-majority or conservative areas. For converts from Muslim backgrounds, ownership carries significantly higher risk, including harassment, intimidation, and pressure to renounce their faith. As a result, Bible ownership affects a portion of Christians nationwide, though severity varies by group and context. Overall severity is therefore assessed as medium, reflecting high risk for a small but vulnerable group and lower yet persistent pressure for the broader Christian population. |
| <b>5. Can the Bible be distributed freely?</b><br><i>Proportion of Christians impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>Proportion of Non Christian Population impacted</i><br><i>Severity</i><br><i>If restrictions are in place - what is the scope</i>                                                   | <b>Yes, with (some) restrictions</b><br>0-10%<br>High<br>>90%<br>High<br>Similar for everyone            | 1.25<br>9.38<br>12.50<br>9.38  | <b>8.13</b>     | Bible distribution in [REDACTED] is permitted but highly sensitive in practice. Distribution within church settings can generally take place with caution, particularly among established Christian communities. However, public or open distribution—especially involving seekers, converts, or outreach beyond church contexts—carries significant risk. Field reports indicate strong resistance, intimidation, and threats from local communities and religious groups, with the highest severity affecting Muslim-background believers and evangelists. As a result, the severity is assessed as high.                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>6. Is the Internet safe?</b><br><i>Is the government monitoring internet use?</i><br><i>Proportion of Total Population impacted</i><br><i>Targeted Digital Restrictions</i><br><i>% Population impacted by Targeted Dig. Restrictions</i><br><i>If restrictions are in place - what is the scope</i> | <b>No, some exceptions, partially unsafe</b><br>N/A<br>None<br>High<br>76-100%<br>Part of the population | 0.00<br>0.00<br>4.69<br>6.25   | <b>5.47</b>     | Accessing the Bible online in [REDACTED] is legally permitted and not subject to systematic government monitoring or content blocking. From a technical and legal standpoint, online Bible access is generally safe. However, risks arise from social and familial contexts rather than state action. Muslim-background believers and other converts will face severe consequences if discovered accessing Christian content online, including pressure, harassment, or intimidation from family or community members. As a result, while only a small proportion of the population is directly affected, the severity for those impacted is assessed as high.                                                                                                      |

The sample above illustrates how each of the six indicators have scored for the 4 dimensions. In this sample the country scores 46 out of a maximum of 75 points. Based on this: ownership restrictions score the highest which means that ownership has most restrictions in that country, relative to the others.

### Section 3: Scoring of Block 2 Indicators

The final section shows the socio-economic scores derived from external datasets (primarily the World Bank). Each indicator displays the actual value for the country (e.g., poverty rate, literacy level) along with its corresponding score from the methodology in section 2.4.5.

Together, these three components provide an auditable summary of how each country's access restrictions are assessed and ranked.

| Block 2 - Socio Economic Factors |                |                 |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Question                         | Range or Score | Indicator Score |
| 1. Poverty level                 |                | 4               |
| 2. Internet availability         | 26-50%         | 3               |
| 3. Logistics / Infrastructure    |                | 3.75            |
| 4. Electricity access            | 100%           | 0               |
| 5. Literacy                      | 79%            | 1.25            |

The sample above illustrates how each of the five indicators have scored for this country. In this sample, the total score for Block 2 is 12 points out of a maximum of 25 points. Poverty is a significant factor in this country prohibiting free access to Bibles as it scores 4 out of 5 points.

## 2.5 Bible Shortage list: Indicators, Rationale, and Scoring

### 2.5.1 Bible Shortage Estimation Based on Key Indicators

To assess the prevalence of Bible shortages within a specific country, this research relies on three core survey-based indicators:

1. **What percentage of Christians currently own a Bible, as measured across the principal denominations present within the country?**

This indicator quantifies current Bible ownership among Christians and provides a baseline for evaluating ownership across different denominational groups.

2. **What percentage of Christians who express a desire for a Bible do not currently own one, categorized by each of the main denominations?**

This question identifies the gap between desire and ownership. It highlights the unmet need for Bibles among individuals who actively want one but do not currently possess it.

3. **What is the tradition of Bible ownership among individual Christians within each denomination?**

This item captures cultural and denominational norms around Bible ownership.

Understanding these traditions is critical for interpreting ownership data in context.

Together, these three indicators provide a structured framework for estimating Bible shortages. They allow the survey data to be analyzed in a systematic and comparative manner, forming the basis for calculating a proposed shortage range per country.

Each country's proposed shortage estimate underwent review by experts. These experts validated findings, flagged potential anomalies, and contributed contextual insights based on their localized

knowledge. This review process is intended to ensure that the final estimates used in the BAL are as accurate, credible, and relevant as possible.

### 2.5.2 Bible Shortage Estimates and Use of Ranges

While the BAL uses a structured and data-driven process to estimate Bible shortages in each country, the methodology includes a critical review and validation phase with country experts. After initial estimates are generated based on quantitative inputs and data sources, these results are reviewed collaboratively with experts familiar with the specific context. This validation step helps to confirm the accuracy of the data, identify potential outliers or inconsistencies, and make corrections where necessary.

Despite this thorough process, other inherent uncertainties, such as population fluidity, inconsistent data availability among all denominations, and conflicting data reported by various survey respondents, even expert-reviewed estimates are best understood as indicative rather than definitive.

Therefore, to responsibly reflect the magnitude of need while accounting for these variables, the BAL presents shortage estimates in ranges. This approach maintains the integrity of the calculation process while acknowledging that exact precision is not always feasible.

The following ranges are used to categorize estimated shortages:

| Range Labels      | Estimated Shortage                       |
|-------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <10k              | Less than 10,000                         |
| 10 – 25k          | Between 10,000 and 25,000                |
| >25 – 50k         | More than 25,000 and up to 50,000        |
| 50 – 100k         | More than 50,000 and up to 100,000       |
| >100 – 250k       | More than 100,000 and up to 250,000      |
| >250 – 500k       | More than 250,000 and up to 500,000      |
| >500k – 1 million | More than 500,000 and up to 1 million    |
| >1 – 3 million    | More than 1 million and up to 3 million  |
| >3 – 5 million    | More than 3 million and up to 5 million  |
| >5 – 10 million   | More than 5 million and up to 10 million |
| >10 million       | More than 10 million                     |

### 2.5.3 Bible Ownership among Christians Estimation

Denominational traditions regarding Bible ownership are taken into account during analysis. These contextual insights provided in the surveys help identify whether reported ownership levels are consistent with typical practices; for example, if a certain denomination generally favors shared household Bibles rather than individual ownership or vice versa. Where survey results conflict with known patterns, such anomalies are flagged for further review.

To estimate Bible ownership levels among Christians in each country, the BAL methodology uses a structured, multi-step process that combines quantitative survey data with expert validation. Below is a description of the process, and a sample is provided in section 2.5.6.

### **Step 1: Aggregation of Survey Responses**

Survey responses are consolidated from the raw data collection into a central database. Each respondent indicates a percentage range representing Bible ownership within their denomination (e.g., 0–15%, 16–30%, etc.). These responses are plotted in a summary table that shows the frequency of each ownership range by denomination (e.g., Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant).

### **Step 2: Calculation of Average Ownership per Denomination**

Each ownership range is assigned a numerical value using a standardized scoring formula. The weighted responses are then used to calculate an average estimated ownership percentage for each major denominational group. In cases where responses are inconsistent or unclear (e.g., responses labeled “Unknown”), these are excluded from the valid count used in the final average calculation.

### **Step 3: Extrapolation to National Denominational Populations**

The calculated average ownership percentage is then applied to the estimated number of Christians in each denomination, derived from the World Christian Database. This step generates an estimated number of Bible-owning individuals per denomination and an overall national average.

### **Step 4: Analyst Recommendation**

An analyst reviews the calculated ownership estimates and assigns a corresponding ownership range (based on the predefined ownership bands used in the survey, e.g., 46-60%). This preliminary recommendation forms the basis for further review.

### **Step 5: Review by the BAL Expert Team and Approval**

The BAL Expert Team, comprising of experts in Bible ownership and distribution from the various partner organizations, conduct a validation session to review the preliminary findings. Adjustments may be made to the recommended range based on contextual knowledge, previous research, or identification of data anomalies. If the approved ownership percentage deviates from the calculated estimate or analyst recommendation, a rationale must be documented to ensure transparency and traceability.

This process ensures that Bible ownership estimates are both **data-driven and contextually verified**, allowing it to be used in subsequent calculations of Bible shortages.

## **2.5.4 Bible Shortage among Christians calculation**

The calculation of Bible shortages among Christians follows a similar structure to the ownership estimation process but is specifically focused on identifying **shortages** for the proportion of Christians who desire but do not currently own a Bible. Below is a description of the process, and a sample is provided in section 2.5.6

### **Step 1: Survey Data Aggregation**

Respondents are asked to estimate the percentage of Christians in each denomination who want a Bible but do not have one. Their responses are categorized into pre-defined percentage ranges (e.g., 0–15%, 16-30%, etc.) and plotted by denomination to summarize the perceived level of need.

## **Step 2: Scoring and Average Needs Estimation**

A standardized scoring system is applied to convert these ranges into numerical values. From these values, an average “Bible shortage percentage” is calculated for each denominational group (e.g., Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant), excluding incomplete or “Unknown” responses. This provides a quantitative estimate of the share of the population within each denomination that desires to own a Bible.

## **Step 3: Extrapolation to Denominational Population**

The average shortage percentage is applied to the total estimated number of Christians in each denomination. This yields a raw total of individuals who desire a Bible but do not currently have one. However, this total includes all individuals, regardless of age.

## **Step 4: Adjustment for Adults Using Household Size**

Since the survey question targets adult needs, an adjustment is made to account for children and non-adult household members. To do this, the number of Bible-needing individuals per denomination is divided by the country’s average household size and then multiplied by 2 for protestants or 1 for Catholics and Orthodox considering their Bible ownership traditions. This adjusted figure represents a more accurate estimate of adult Bible needs.

## **Step 5: Analyst Recommendation and BAL Panel Validation**

The adjusted totals are reviewed by an analyst, who assigns the appropriate range based on the results. The range corresponds with the predefined ranges (e.g., 500k–1 million). This is followed by a review session with the BAL expert panel, during which adjustments may be made based on field knowledge, data concerns, or other considerations. Any changes from the initial recommendation are documented with a rationale.

## **Step 6: Country Expert Validation**

Following the BAL expert panel’s approval of the estimated Bible shortage range, the findings are then reviewed with a country-specific expert. This expert is ideally based within the country or has extensive, recent knowledge of its religious and social dynamics. During this consultation, the overall synthesis and conclusions are presented, offering a final opportunity to validate assumptions, flag potential blind spots, or apply context-specific corrections. This additional step helps confirm that the estimates are technically sound and reflect the local context based on available information and expert input.

The calculated shortage estimates are further cross-checked against qualitative responses gathered in the survey; specifically, the tradition of Bible ownership per denomination (Question 3 in section 2.5.1). This helps confirm that the numeric estimates align with reported shortages and does not exhibit significant anomalies or inconsistencies across denominational contexts.

This calculation method ensures that estimates of Bible shortage are both **quantitatively grounded** and **contextually refined**, leading to realistic and actionable data that informs distribution planning and advocacy.

### 2.5.5 Synthesis and Validation Summary

The BAL methodology relies on multiple, triangulated data points, including direct survey indicators, denominational traditions, and perceptions of shortages, to form a coherent estimate of Bible ownership and shortage. Throughout the process, findings are cross validated with expert panels and local country experts to ensure both quantitative accuracy and contextual relevance. This layered approach is used to improve the consistency of the proposed ranges and to account for uncertainty in the underlying data.

### 2.5.6 Sample Illustration of Bible Ownership and Bible Shortage Estimation

To enhance transparency and understanding of the estimation process, this section provides a **sample walkthrough** of how Bible ownership (Section 2.5.3) and Bible shortage (Section 2.5.4) are calculated in practice. The following example is drawn from one of the countries assessed, anonymized here for privacy and neutrality.

Each illustration corresponds to specific steps in the methodology previously outlined, offering a visual snapshot of how survey responses, demographic data, and validation processes work together to produce a country-level estimate.

#### Reference Data

| Population | % Christians | # Christians | Catholics  | Protestants | Orthodox |  | House hold size | BAL 2025 Ownership | BAL 2025 Shortage |
|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|-------------|----------|--|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 57,324,000 | 79.5%        | 45,590,000   | 10,441,000 | 34,774,000  | 375,000  |  | 3.75            | 51-70%             | 1-3m              |
|            |              | 12,157,333   | 2,784,267  | 9,273,067   | 100,000  |  |                 |                    |                   |

This first visual provides the **baseline demographic and denominational data** for the country. This includes total population, percentage of Christians, number of Christians by major denomination, the average household size (the 2<sup>nd</sup> row of data reflects # of Christian household for the selected country) and breakdowns for Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians. These figures serve as the denominational base for both ownership and shortage estimates.

#### Sample of Bible Ownership Estimation (see section 2.5.3)

##### Steps 1 & 2: Survey Response Consolidation and Ownership Score Calculation

The ownership chart below visualizes the distribution of survey responses by ownership band (e.g., 0–20%, 21–35%, etc.) for each denomination. It also includes the average ownership percentage per group based on a standardized scoring method.

| Survey Responses to Ownership per Denomination |       |        |        |        |        |        |      |  |         |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|--|---------|
| Denomination                                   | 0-15% | 16-30% | 31-45% | 46-60% | 61-75% | 76-90% | >90% |  | Average |
| Catholics                                      | 1     | 1      | 1      | 1      | 0      | 1      | 0    |  | 42%     |
| Orthodox                                       | 1     | 1      | 0      | 2      | 0      | 0      | 0    |  | 35%     |
| Protestants                                    | 2.5   | 3.5    | 0      | 3      | 0      | 0      | 1    |  | 36%     |
| Converts                                       | 4.5   | 1      | 0      | 0      | 0      | 1      | 0    |  | 22%     |

##### Step 3, 4 and 5: National Ownership Estimate, Recommendation and Validation

The next chart shows the total number of individuals with a Bible in each group and the national total and percentage. The BAL Analyst proposes a range which is then reviewed by the BAL Operations Team and the approved ownership range is then reflected on the right side.

| Denominational Ownership Summary | Believers with Bible | Bible Ownership Range Decision |           |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Catholic Assumption              | 4,364,338            | Approved Range:                | 31-45%    |
| Orthodox Assumption              | 131,250              | Date approval:                 | 01-Apr-26 |
| Protestant Assumption            | 12,553,414           | Authority:                     | BOT       |
|                                  |                      | <b>Comments:</b>               |           |
| Estimated # with Bible           | 17,049,002           |                                |           |
| Estimate with Bible in %         | 37%                  |                                |           |
| Proposed Range                   | 31-45%               |                                |           |

### Sample of Bible Shortage Estimation (see section 2.5.4)

#### Steps 1 & 2: Aggregation and Average Shortage Calculation

The initial Bible shortage chart shows how respondents estimated the percentage of Christians who desire but do not currently own a Bible. These are grouped by ownership bands and averaged for each denomination.

| Survey Responses to Bible Shortage Estimate per Denomination |       |        |        |        |        |        |      |  |         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|--|---------|
| Denomination                                                 | 0-15% | 16-30% | 31-45% | 46-60% | 61-75% | 76-90% | >90% |  | Average |
| Catholics                                                    | 1     | 0      | 4      | 2      | 0      | 2      | 1    |  | 54%     |
| Orthodox                                                     | 1     | 1.5    | 2.5    | 2      | 0      | 0      | 1    |  | 43%     |
| Protestants                                                  | 1     | 2.5    | 1      | 4.5    | 1      | 0      | 0    |  | 42%     |
| Converts                                                     | 2.5   | 0      | 5      | 2      | 0      | 2      | 1    |  | 47%     |

#### Step 3, 4 and 5 : Shortage estimates, adjustments to Household and Ranges

The next illustration multiplies the need percentage by each denominational population to yield a **raw estimate of Bible shortage** among Christians. Because the need estimate must focus on adults (not total population), the totals are adjusted by using the average household size. The assumption is that two adults per protestant household and one adult per Catholics or Orthodox household desire a Bible. The revised table reflects a more accurate, adult-focused Bible need estimate.

| Denominational Storage Summary                    | HH Bible Shortage | Bible Shortage Range Decision |           |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Catholic Assumption*                              | 1,489,583         | Approved Range:               | 5-10m     |
| Orthodox Assumption*                              | 43,063            | Date approval:                | 01-Apr-26 |
| Protestant Assumption*                            | 7,770,830         | Authority:                    | BOT       |
|                                                   |                   | <b>Comments:</b>              |           |
| Estimate Bible Shortage                           | 9,303,475         |                               |           |
|                                                   |                   |                               |           |
| Proposed Range                                    | 5-10m             |                               |           |
| * Cath/Orth: 1 Bible per HH, Prot: 2 Bible per HH |                   |                               |           |

## Steps 5 & 6: Analyst Proposal and Final Validation

The image above also presents the **analyst’s proposed Bible shortage range**. The final step is to do a review of the proposed range with a Country expert, followed by the final review of the BAL expert panel. If the finally approved range differs from the initial recommendation, the rationale is recorded.

The approved range is expressed using BAL’s predefined need-based intervals (e.g., 500k–1 million or 5 – 10 million as in the sample above).

Together, these illustrations show how the BAL process combines structured methods, such as survey data, demographic modeling, and expert review, to estimate Bible ownership and need in a consistent and replicable way.

## 2.6 Plausibility Review

Before the Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage lists are finalized and published, a **plausibility review** is conducted. This process serves as a critical and final step in ensuring the validity, reliability, and strategic relevance of the BAL findings.

As part of the review, a preliminary version of the ranking per country is shared with a select group of internal and external experts. These include each country’s total score, individual block scores, and corresponding rank. Reviewers are asked to assess whether the outcomes align with their understanding of the local context and broader regional dynamics.

Feedback may include validation, requests for clarification, or the identification of potential inconsistencies or alternative interpretations. In such cases, the BAL team engages in follow-up analysis and, if warranted, conducts additional research or data refinement. This can result in adjustments prior to final publication.

The experts consulted during this review contribute country-specific knowledge and subject matter expertise. Their input helps align the BAL findings with local realities and available field insights. This plausibility review is intended to support the use of BAL results in strategic planning, advocacy, and resource allocation within the global Bible movement.

## 2.7 Country Profiles: Format and Purpose

Each country included in the BAL is accompanied by a **dedicated country profile**, and presents key findings in a structured, accessible, and visually engaging format. These profiles translate complex scoring and estimation processes into clear, country-specific insights, enabling both strategic use and spiritual engagement.

The **first page** of every profile opens with a header displaying the country name, its ranking on the Bible Restrictions list and the Bible Shortage list, and a location map. The layout balances narrative and visual content: a left-hand **text block** titled “**Bible Access in [Country]**” offers a concise summary of the country’s Bible access landscape, while a **right-hand infographic** visualizes the primary constraints. This infographic is organized into three sections:

- **Bible access** – a descriptor plus icons for relevant restriction indicators
- **Socioeconomic barriers** – a descriptor plus icons for relevant socio-economic indicators
- **Bible access snapshot** – population, church demographics, Bible ownership, and shortage estimates

Each profile also includes a prominent **“How Can I Pray for [Country]?”** section. This feature highlights actionable prayer requests based on the data, inviting readers to respond and intercede for Christians and seekers in that country.

Subsequent pages provide a structured narrative unpacking the key challenges in greater detail:

- **“Why Bible Access is [status] in [Country]?”** outlines legal, political, or social restrictions, often with samples of specific incidents or country specific examples.
- **“The Need for Bibles in [Country]”** quantifies estimated Bible need and prioritizes preferred Bible formats.
- The final section, **“The Call to Action,”** summarizes the country’s Bible access and shortage situation, accompanied by an infographic distilling the findings for easy reference.

Country profiles serve as both **analytical briefings** and **mobilization tools**, enabling agencies, churches, and partners to respond to Bible needs in a targeted, informed, and prayerful manner.

## 2.8 Bible Access List 2026 Results

### 2.8.1 Communicating Results: Ranks and Descriptors

As part of the BAL methodology, results are communicated through multiple complementary lenses. These allow users to understand and interpret the findings in ways that support both strategic planning and contextual insight.

To balance numerical accuracy with qualitative meaning, the BAL presents country results through two primary formats:

#### 1. **Ranked Lists**

Countries are ranked based on their final scores for both Bible Restrictions and Bible Shortage. These rankings provide a clear view from highest to lowest restriction or unmet need.

#### 2. **Descriptive Groupings**

Each score, whether for individual blocks or overall totals, is translated into a qualitative descriptor (e.g., “Extreme Access Restrictions,” “Severe Socioeconomic Barriers”). These categories are based on predefined score intervals and help summarize levels of access or shortage without relying solely on raw numbers.

These perspectives, offer different ways to examine patterns in Bible access. They allow for comparative analysis across countries and support more tailored interpretation of the data.

## 2.8.2 Ranked Lists

As one of the core presentation formats of the BAL, **ranked lists** offer a direct and comparative view of countries based on their level of Bible Restrictions and estimated Bible Shortage.

Building on the multi-lens approach outlined in the previous section, ranked lists provide the most straightforward way to assess how countries compare in terms of restriction and need. Two primary lists are generated at the end of the scoring and estimation process:

- **The Bible Restrictions list** ranks countries from highest to lowest based on their combined total score from Block 1 (Restrictions from government, religious extremists, or other actors) and Block 2 (Other Limiting Factors).
- **The Bible Shortage list** ranks countries by the estimated number of people in need of a Bible. These figures are presented as ranges (e.g., 100k–250k) to reflect the estimation methodology and the inherent uncertainty in projecting unmet need. As noted in Section 2.5, not all countries appear on this list, as inclusion depends on meeting specific data quality and validation criteria.

Both ranked lists are complemented by detailed **Country Profiles** (see Section 2.7), which provide narrative interpretation, visual summaries, and additional contextual data to support the scores and rankings.

A copy of the **BAL 2026 Bible Restrictions list** and the **BAL 2026 Bible Shortage list** can be accessed on [Bibleaccesslist.org](https://Bibleaccesslist.org)

## 2.8.3 Descriptive Groupings

In addition to ranked lists, the BAL presents scores using **descriptive groupings**, standardized labels that summarize the level of restriction, need, or ownership in qualitative terms. These descriptors provide an accessible way to interpret results, especially for users less familiar with the technical scoring framework.

Whereas rankings show **relative position**, descriptors communicate **severity or prevalence** based on predefined thresholds. They are applied at multiple levels across the scoring system: individual blocks, combined scores, and Bible ownership percentages.

The following tables summarize the categories used in BAL descriptive groupings:

### A. Block 1 Score Descriptors – Restrictions from Government, Religious Extremists or Other Actors

(Score range: 0 – 75 points)

| Score | Range Descriptor                 |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| 0     | No Access Restrictions           |
| 1–15  | Minimal Access Restrictions      |
| 16–30 | Some Access Restrictions         |
| 31–45 | Considerable Access Restrictions |
| 46–60 | Severe Access Restrictions       |

|       |                             |
|-------|-----------------------------|
| 61-70 | Extreme Access Restrictions |
| 71-75 | Maximum Access Restrictions |

## B. Block 2 Score Descriptors – Socioeconomic barriers

(Score range: 0 to 25 points)

| Score | Range Descriptor                    |
|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 0 -5  | No Socioeconomic barriers           |
| 6-10  | Some Socioeconomic barriers         |
| 11-15 | Considerable Socioeconomic barriers |
| 16-20 | Severe Socioeconomic barriers       |
| 21-23 | Extreme Socioeconomic barriers      |
| 24-25 | Maximum Socioeconomic barriers      |

## C. Combined Score Descriptors – Total Access Restrictions

(Combined maximum score: 100 points)

| Score | Range Descriptor                 |
|-------|----------------------------------|
| 0     | No Access Restrictions           |
| 1–20  | Minimal Access Restrictions      |
| 21-40 | Some Access Restrictions         |
| 41-60 | Considerable Access Restrictions |
| 61-80 | Severe Access Restrictions       |
| 81-90 | Extreme Access Restrictions      |
| 90+   | Maximum Access Restrictions      |

These descriptors are applied consistently across BAL 2026, BAL country profiles, and analysis to ensure that the qualitative summaries align with the underlying numerical data.

## D. Bible Ownership Descriptors

In addition to access-related scores, the BAL assigns descriptive labels to Bible ownership levels, based on national averages derived from survey responses and validated through expert review.

| Score  | Range Descriptor                  |
|--------|-----------------------------------|
| 0–20%  | Bible ownership is extremely low. |
| 21–35% | Bible ownership is very low.      |
| 36–50% | Bible ownership is low.           |
| 51–70% | Bible ownership is over 50%.      |
| 71–90% | Bible ownership is high.          |
| >90%   | Bible ownership is very high.     |

These ownership descriptors give a general indication of how widely Scripture is owned among a country's Christian population and help put the level of unmet need into context.

## Interpreting the Descriptors

The scale used in all descriptors reflects the BAL's commitment to expressing **degrees of access and need**, rather than relying on binary classifications. As introduced in Section 1.3, this approach acknowledges the reality of **multiple lived experiences** within each country.

A descriptor such as “Severe” or “Extreme” does not imply that everyone faces identical challenges, but rather that significant and persistent challenges are present. These groupings help partners quickly understand Bible access conditions and use that understanding to guide their planning and response.

Descriptive labels are applied across all major BAL outputs, including ranked tables, country profiles, dashboards, and reports, creating a common interpretive language for both technical and non-technical audiences.

## 2.9 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

While the BAL methodology strives for rigor, transparency, and contextual accuracy, certain limitations and ethical considerations must be acknowledged.

### 2.9.1 Methodological Limitations

- **Data Availability and Quality:** In some countries, particularly those with severe restrictions or limited connectivity, reliable data is difficult to collect. Estimates may rely more heavily on expert judgment or secondary sources.
- **Subjectivity in Scoring:** Though structured scoring grids and validation processes are applied, some indicators inherently require subjective interpretation (e.g., severity of restriction). Validation by local experts reduces but does not eliminate this subjectivity.
- **Survey Representativeness:** Respondent samples are not statistically randomized. While geographically and denominationally diverse respondents are targeted, bias in survey response patterns may persist.
- **Estimation Ranges:** Bible shortage estimates are based on context specific data expressed as ranges to accommodate uncertainty, but these still depend on assumptions (e.g., household size, adult population estimates) that may vary by context.

### 2.9.2 Ethical Safeguards

- **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Survey participants, expert reviewers, and field observers are not publicly named. Identifying details are excluded to protect individuals, especially in high-risk or surveillance-heavy contexts.
- **Informed Consent:** All contributors to surveys or interviews participated voluntarily, were informed about the purpose of the research, and could decline or withdraw at any time.
- **Sensitive Country Data Handling:** In cases where publication of specific data may compromise security or dignity of individuals or churches, the BAL either omits such data or anonymizes it in consultation with local experts.

- **Missional Responsibility:** All data use and reporting decisions are guided by the missional intent to serve the Church and advance Bible access without endangering communities.

The BAL team acknowledges these constraints openly, not to undermine confidence in the findings, but to encourage informed and cautious use of the data for prayer, strategy, and advocacy.

## 2.10 Future Methodology Development

The BAL methodology is designed to evolve over time. The current version reflects extensive consultation, field testing, and validation. However, the BAL acknowledges several areas for future refinement and development:

- **Inclusion of Seekers:** While the current shortage estimates focus solely on existing Christians, future editions aim to explore methodologies to responsibly include seekers, individuals interested in accessing the Bible but not yet identifying as Christian.
- **Improved Data Precision:** Bible shortage estimates are currently expressed in ranges to reflect uncertainty and variation. Future refinements may include narrower bands or probabilistic models to improve precision while maintaining transparency.
- **Expanded Country Coverage:** The 2026 edition covers 106 countries, up from 88 from the list in 2025. Ongoing efforts aim to expand global reach while maintaining methodological integrity.
- **Enhanced Digital Access Indicators:** As internet-based Bible access grows in importance, future editions may further refine the scoring of online risks, censorship, and digital literacy.
- **Estimation for Children and Youth:** The current methodology focuses on adult Bible ownership and need. Future development will assess whether separate estimates for children's and youth Bibles should be included, recognizing their critical role in the life of the Church.
- **Granular Scoring for Minorities:** While minority access restrictions are captured within current indicators, future versions aim to more explicitly identify and quantify Bible access challenges and needs among minority populations within each country.
- **Increased Local Ownership:** Continued investment will be made in expanding the base of local contributors, including more grassroots respondents and in-country experts, to improve contextual accuracy and diversity of insight.

## Appendix 1: Bible Access List 2026 Survey Questions

The Bible Availability and Restrictions Survey was used to gather first-hand insights from local respondents and experts across 106 countries. The survey has been translated into Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and Russian.

The questions below formed the foundation for calculating Access Restriction scores (Section 2.4), Bible ownership and shortage estimates (Section 2.5), and expert validations (Section 2.6).

## 1. Access Restrictions to the Bible

These questions correspond to the **Block 1 indicators** used in Section 2.4.1.

For each of the five physical access areas, respondents were asked:

- Can you **import, print, store, own, and distribute the Bible freely** in your country in **any quantity**?
- If there are limitations, what is their **nature, severity, geographic scope**, and which groups are affected (e.g., entire population, Christians, minorities)?

In addition, follow-up questions assessed:

- Whether restrictions differ for **expats or guest workers**
- If **non-legal challenges** (e.g., corruption, poverty, lack of paper) further restrict access

## 2. Online Bible Access & Safety

Corresponds to the **Internet Safety Indicator** (Section 2.4.4.3–4).

Respondents answered:

- Is it technically possible to access the Bible online? If no, or with limitations then explain the situation or the nature of the limitations.
- Is the government or other groups/actors monitoring the internet activity of individual users? If yes, then explain the situation and how it impacts Christians.
- How safe is it to access Bibles through websites, apps, or SD cards? If it is not safe, then details and examples are requested.

## 3. Bible Ownership and Shortage Estimation

Used in calculating shortage ranges (Section 2.5.1–2.5.4).

Respondents provided:

- **Estimated ownership percentages** by denomination (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Converts)
- Traditions regarding **Bible ownership practices**
- Estimated **percentage of Christians who want a Bible but don't own one**
- Preferred **Bible formats** (print, audio, app, SD card)

## Appendix 2: Glossary of Definitions and Terms Used in the BAL

| Term                     | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bible Access List</b> | A ranked list of countries based on barriers to Bible access, due to limitations imposed by governments, religious extremist or other actors and socio-economic limitations. (Section 2.4) |
| <b>Bible Access</b>      | The ability to obtain or read a Bible through physical, digital, or shared means, whether at home, in church, or a public setting. (See Section 2.1)                                       |
| <b>Bible Ownership</b>   | Personal possession of a Bible. Ownership implies individual access and choice and may be affected by availability or legal constraints. (Section 2.1)                                     |

| Term                                                        | Definition                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Bible Shortage</b>                                       | The estimated number of Christians who desire but do not own a personal Bible. Calculated using survey data, demographic modeling, and expert review. (Section 2.5.1)                    |
| <b>Bible Shortage list</b>                                  | A list ranking countries based on estimated numbers of Bible-deprived Christians. Presented in ranges. (Section 2.5.2)                                                                   |
| <b>Block 1 Indicators</b>                                   | Bible access restrictions imposed by government, religious extremist groups or other actors. Assigned 75% weight. (2.4.1)                                                                |
| <b>Block 2 Indicators</b>                                   | Socio-economic conditions that hinder access. Assigned 25% weight in scoring. (Section 2.4.2)                                                                                            |
| <b>CARSO (Country Access Restrictions Scoring Overview)</b> | A standardized scoring sheet summarizing how each country scores across all access indicators and dimensions. (Section 2.4.6)                                                            |
| <b>Cluster Typology</b>                                     | Grouping of countries based on shared access barriers (e.g. Muslim majority with severe restrictions and varying socio-economic challenges). Supports thematic strategy. (Section 2.8.4) |
| <b>Country Profiles</b>                                     | Visual summaries of each country's ranking, Bible access environment, and prayer needs. Based on results and narrative context. (Section 2.7)                                            |
| <b>Expert Validation</b>                                    | Review of findings by experts with country-level knowledge, ensuring scoring accuracy and contextual alignment. (Section 2.5.6)                                                          |
| <b>Plausibility Review</b>                                  | A final expert consultation phase to validate country scores and ensure they align with local realities. (Section 2.6)                                                                   |
| <b>Range-Based Estimates</b>                                | Bible shortage values are presented in ranges (e.g. 1–3 million) to account for data gaps, fluid populations, and reporting variance. (Section 2.5.2)                                    |
| <b>Scoring Grid</b>                                         | A table assigning points to different levels of coverage or severity for each indicator, used for calculating scores across countries. (Section 2.4.4.2–2.4.4.4)                         |
| <b>Seeker</b>                                               | An individual interested in accessing the Bible but not yet identifying as Christian. (Sections: Executive Summary, 1.4, 2.2, 2.4.4.2, 2.5.1, 2.10 and Appendix 1)                       |
| <b>Severity</b>                                             | A rating of how dangerous or difficult it is to access a Bible under restriction, including personal risk and consequences. (2.4.4.2)                                                    |

### Appendix 3: Glossary of Abbreviations Used in the BAL

| Abbreviation | Definition                                   |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>BAI</b>   | Bible Access Initiative                      |
| <b>BAL</b>   | Bible Access List                            |
| <b>BRL</b>   | Bible Restrictions list                      |
| <b>BSL</b>   | Bible Shortage List                          |
| <b>CARD</b>  | Country Analysis Restriction Details         |
| <b>CARSO</b> | Country Access Restrictions Scoring Overview |
| <b>DBS</b>   | Digital Bible Society                        |
| <b>IDP</b>   | Internally Displaced Person                  |
| <b>ODI</b>   | Open Doors International                     |
| <b>WCD</b>   | World Christian Database                     |
| <b>WWL</b>   | World Watch List                             |