



Bible Access List

Where Bible access is most difficult, and Bible shortage is greatest

China

Bible Restrictions Rank: **25**
SEVERE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **5**
Bible needs estimate between five and ten million



An Overview of Bible access in China

In a nation of 1.4 billion people, millions of believers are still waiting for a Bible they can't obtain. China is home to more than 100 million Christians—a small percentage of the population, but a vast number in absolute terms. And yet, many of them still don't have access to God's Word. Severe restrictions mean that even though some believers do own a Bible, millions more find it out of reach.

Bible access in China is complicated. While on the surface, there appears to be some religious freedom; access remains tightly controlled. The Amity Printing Press in Nanjing is the only authorized facility permitted to print Bibles in China. Each year, it produces an estimated 11–15 million Bibles; however, the vast majority are exported. For the local Chinese market, the government imposes a strict quota of approximately 2 million copies annually. These limited quantities are distributed exclusively through the government-sanctioned Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) church bookstores and the official, state-controlled Protestant church network, making it difficult for many to obtain scripture.

For the remainder of Chinese believers, who attend unregistered house churches, Bible access is far harder. Printing or distributing Bibles outside of government control is illegal, and discovery can lead to serious consequences. Restrictions also apply to quantity, as it can be dangerous to own more than one Bible in some areas, leading some to hide their or even delete Bible apps from their phones to avoid surveillance.

What about going online? Since March 2022, unauthorized Bible distribution online has been banned. Christian websites and apps are often blocked, and online activity is closely watched. Some believers say they can still find ways to read Scripture digitally, but they must do so carefully to avoid detection.

And yet, the hunger for Scripture is growing, especially in the poorer, less-developed western, central, and northern provinces, where Bibles remain both scarce and expensive. While Bibles may be somewhat easier to find in major cities and coastal regions, believers in the country's interior face far greater barriers. Poverty makes it nearly impossible for many to purchase a copy, leaving countless believers waiting and praying for God's Word to reach them.

Before we continue, would you take a pause to pray for China?

How can I pray for China?

- **Protection and Innovative Distribution.** Pray for God's protection over the believers in China, especially those in rural and remote areas who risk fines, raids, and imprisonment just to own a Bible. Ask the Lord to provide wisdom and creative strategies for safely getting Scripture into the hands of those who need it most.
- **Church Growth and Scripture Access.** Pray for the church in China to grow stronger, even under pressure. Ask that every believer would have access to the Bible and be able to grow in their faith through it.
- **Change of Heart and Global Collaboration.** Pray that God would move the hearts of those in authority. Ask for change and pray for Christians around the world to come together to help meet the urgent need for Bibles in China.

After praying for China, continue reading on the next page to learn more.

Bible Access Restrictions

Considerable Access Restrictions

- No importing
- Print restrictions
- Storage restrictions
- Ownership restrictions
- Distribution restrictions

Other Limiting Factors

Some Other Factors

Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is between 5 and 10 million

Main religion: Agnostic

Country population:
1,425,179,000

Christian population:

- 121,448,000, 8.52% of total population

World Watch List: #15

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN CHINA?

Bible access in China is severely restricted due to an intricate combination of legal barriers, surveillance systems, ideological control, and government regulation. Although the Chinese government officially recognizes Christianity under state-sanctioned structures, these permissions come with tight regulation. For millions of believers, especially those outside of the state system, access to Bibles remains a significant risk.

Bibles Restricted to State Channels Only

Bibles in China are not sold in regular bookstores or online. The only legal option is through state-registered churches under the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). Estimates indicate that these churches, serve only about one-third of China's Christian population.

All approved Bibles are printed exclusively by Amity Printing Press in Nanjing, with an official domestic quota of about 2 million copies annually, a fraction of what is needed for the estimated 100+ million Christians.

Distribution follows a tightly controlled chain: Bibles are first sent to 77 regional distribution centers, after which they can be passed on to about 55,000 TSPM churches, where they are sold, often at prices too high for rural Christians. As a result, most of these copies end up in major cities, leaving vast rural regions underserved.

Unofficial Churches Have No Legal Access

More than half of Chinese Christians belong to unregistered "house churches," which are illegal in the eyes of the state. These believers have no authorized way to obtain Bibles. Any attempt to print or distribute Scripture outside state control is a criminal offense, often punished with raids, confiscation, fines, or imprisonment. Many house church members survive on smuggled Bibles or handwritten copies of Scripture—if they have access at all.

Censorship and Confiscation of Christian Materials

The government conducts regular raids on non-registered churches, confiscating Bibles and Christian literature. Digital access is equally restricted. Since March 2022, online Bible sales have been banned, and Christian websites and apps are routinely blocked or removed from China's heavily monitored internet.

Sinicization: Reinterpreting Scripture to Serve the State

China's policy of Sinicization, a government-led effort to reshape religion to conform to Chinese Communist Party (CCP) ideology and culture, requires all religious activity to align with Communist Party ideology. For TSPM churches, this means sermons must incorporate Socialist core values and demonstrate political loyalty. Reports indicate that the government once aimed to reinterpret and re-annotate biblical texts to reflect "Xi Jinping Thought" and socialist ideals.

While some altered passages have appeared in official teaching materials—such as textbooks—there are signs the broader effort to produce a fully “Sinicized Bible” may have stalled due to complexity. Still, the policy remains in place, serving as a cautionary signal of the CCP’s intent to reshape faith under state control.

Ideological Indoctrination and Religious Suppression

All aspects of church life, from sermon content to leadership appointments, are tightly managed by the Religious Affairs Office. Even legal churches must demonstrate political loyalty, with pressure mounting to replace traditional theology with ideology aligned with “Xi Jinping Thought”.

Neighborhood Surveillance and Grassroots Monitoring

Local surveillance systems make covert gatherings nearly impossible. In provinces like Yunnan, over 12,000 “grid officers” monitor 85% of villages, reporting religious activity to authorities. These networks, combined with facial recognition technology and data monitoring, create an atmosphere of fear that discourages Bible distribution.

Rural and Remote Areas Face Extreme Disadvantages

The shortage is most severe in rural, impoverished regions of West, Central, and Northern China, where nearly 38% of the population lives. Bibles from state channels are not only scarce; they are too expensive for many rural believers. In these areas, Christians often wait months or years on unofficial distribution lists or go without Scripture altogether. Meanwhile, wealthier coastal cities and urban centers have comparatively better access, widening the gap between urban and rural Christians.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in China

China	Islamic Oppression	Religious Nationalism	Ethno-religious hostility	Clan oppression	Christian denominational oppression	Communist and post-Communist oppression	Secular intolerance	Dictatorial paranoia	Organized corruption and crime	Reference
Persecution Engines → Persecution Drivers ↓										The more fully shaded the circle in orange, the stronger the level of persecution. The number of + signs indicates the frequency or intensity of the driving factors behind it. Very Strong Strong Medium None
Government officials	+	+				+++++		+++++		
Ethnic group leaders	++	++				+				
Non-Christian religious leaders						++				
Christian religious leaders						++				
Violent religious groups										
Normal citizens	++	++				++				
Extended family	++	++				++				
Political parties						+++++		+++++		
Revolutionaries or paramilitary groups										
Organized crime										
Multilateral org. & Embassies										

Seeing Identifying the forces of persecution can help us understand how Bible access is hindered. In China, there are two main forces of persecution: **Communist and post-Communist oppression** and **dictatorial paranoia**. These are often driven by government officials and political parties.

Now, we can go deeper to ask the question: How does this affect Bible access? Furthermore, where can we pinpoint the problem so we can address the need and demand for Bibles in China?

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES

A persecution engine is simply this: the source of persecution in the country. A persecution driver (or actor) is the one “driving” the persecution. Taking a closer look at these engines and drivers, in proper context, will give us insight on how we can solve the problems of Bible access in the country.



The Perfect Combination of Communist Oppression and Dictatorial Paranoia

In China, Bible access is heavily restricted by a centralized, authoritarian government that sees Christianity as both a foreign influence and a political threat. For decades, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has worked to suppress or tightly control religious activity.

This control has deepened under Xi Jinping. What was once passive regulation has shifted to direct and aggressive intervention—impacting both registered churches and underground house fellowships. New Religious Affairs regulations in 2018 and 2020 gave authorities sweeping powers: to shut down services, confiscate Bibles, censor digital content, and arrest pastors.

The CCP’s policy of **Sinicization**—reshaping religion to align with Party ideology—now governs all legal faith practices. For official Protestant churches under the **Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM)**, this means sermons must promote “Socialist Core Values” and signal loyalty to the state.

At one point, the government reportedly aimed to create a fully “Sinicized Bible,” rewritten to reflect **Xi Jinping Thought**. While that ambitious effort may have stalled due to complexity, the policy remains in force. Already, altered Scripture passages have appeared in official textbooks. Believers are still urged to abandon “content that cannot keep pace with the times.”

The risk is clear: biblical truth is at constant risk of being reinterpreted, or erased, by political ideology.

The fallout is severe. House churches, representing more than half of all Christians in China, are completely cut off from legal Bible access. They are forced to worship in secret, often without access to Scripture at all.

Printing is strictly limited to the **Amity Printing Press**, which operates under a government-imposed domestic quota of about 2.4 million Bibles per year. That number falls drastically short of the needs of over 100 million Christians. And importing Bibles? Entirely prohibited.

Digital options offer no refuge. Since 2022, online Bible distribution has been banned. Christian websites and apps are routinely blocked, and even sermons are removed. Even TSPM-approved churches face tightening restrictions. In provinces like Zhejiang, congregations are required to display Communist symbols and portraits of Xi Jinping at their entrances—a visual reminder that loyalty to the Party comes first.

In ethnic regions, such as **Xinjiang and Tibet**, the situation is even more alarming. There, Christianity is treated as an act of subversion. Believers are targeted not only by state surveillance but also by societal hostility. Church buildings have been destroyed. Converts from Islam or Tibetan Buddhism risk interrogation, harassment, or worse. Bible access in these areas is virtually nonexistent.

Across China, persecution doesn't come only from the top. Local neighborhood committees and informants—often rewarded for reporting religious activity—extend the government's reach. In Yunnan province alone, more than 12,000 informants were deployed in ethnic and religious “management grids” as of 2023. These systems make underground Bible distribution nearly impossible.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN CHINA

Despite China's global image as an economic powerhouse, it remains one of the most restrictive places in the world for religious expression, especially when it comes to Bible access. In coastal areas and major, some believers can obtain Bibles through state-approved channels. But in rural areas and among ethnic minorities, the reality is far more severe.

Roughly half of Chinese Christians are estimated to be without a Bible. The gap is widest in the western, central, and northern provinces, where poverty and isolation make it nearly impossible to obtain Scripture. In these areas, Bibles rarely reach distribution points. And when they do, the cost is more than most families can afford.

The barriers are even greater for ethnic minority believers in places like Xinjiang and Tibet. There, religious activity itself is viewed with deep suspicion. Owning a Bible can result in harassment, surveillance, or worse.

To meet the most urgent need, experts estimate that **at least 5 to 10 million Bibles** are required—without even factoring in the rising number of seekers as the underground church continues to grow. In a nation where open evangelism is virtually impossible, the availability of a single Bible often determines whether faith can take root and grow.

Bible Formats for Strategic Needs

When it comes to format, **printed Bibles** remain the top priority. While digital access might seem like a viable alternative, the reality in China tells a different story. Online Bible distribution is officially banned, and the internet is heavily monitored. Many believers report that downloading or using Scripture apps feels unsafe, as online activity can trigger government scrutiny. This fear is reflected in usage numbers: the Chinese version of the Bible app YouVersion has only a few thousand monthly active users in a country with more than 100 million Christians, an astonishingly low figure that underscores the climate of caution. Despite some believers finding creative ways to read Scripture online, these methods carry risk and cannot replace the security and permanence of a physical Bible.

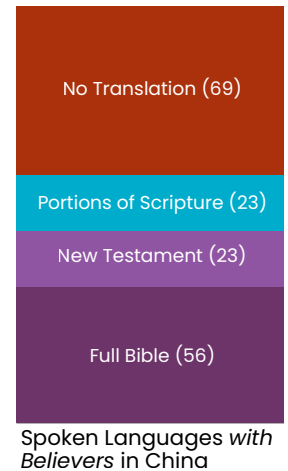
For this reason, printed copies remain the most reliable, discreet, and impactful format for getting God's Word into the hands of Chinese believers.

The Translation Gap

Given that Christians in China speak at least 171 distinct languages, the lack of full translation in over 100 of those languages poses a significant barrier to Bible engagement and discipleship.

- **56** have a full Bible translation
- **23** have only the New Testament
- **23** have only partial Scripture
- **69** have no translation work completed at all

This leaves millions unable to read God's Word in their heart language.



THE CLARION CALL

Now more than ever, the global Church must respond. The Chinese church is resilient, vibrant, and growing, but often in isolation and under pressure. In rural villages, remote provinces, and minority regions, believers are desperate for discipleship but lack the most basic tool of faith: God's Word in their hands.

Providing printed Bibles, the safest and most reliable format, is not just an act of compassion. It is an investment in a fast-growing movement of Christianity in the world. Every Bible placed is a lifeline for faith to flourish where evangelism is restricted and persecution is real.

