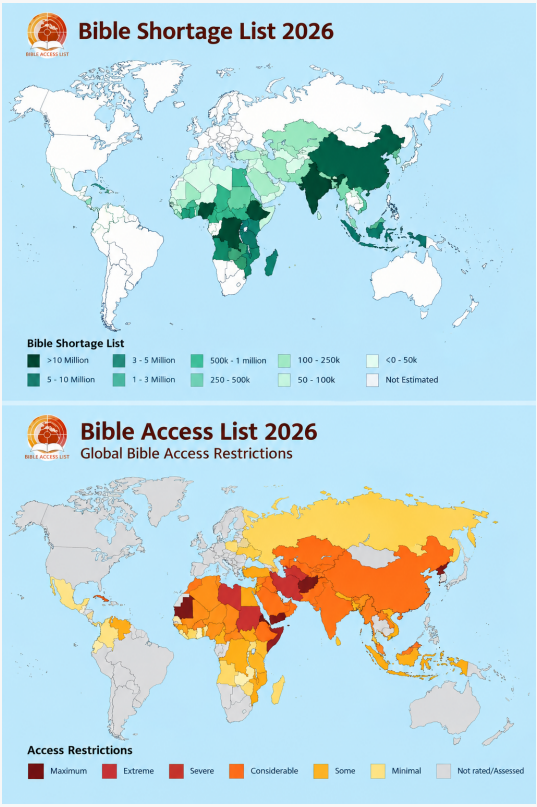
New Report: More Than 500 Million Christians Worldwide Face Bible Access Restrictions Despite Increased Availability

The Bible Access List identifies countries with the highest restrictions and shortages, revealing often-hidden factors that limit Scripture access



Bible Shortage and Bible Access List 2026

CHICAGO , IL, UNITED STATES, October 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The second annual Bible Access List highlights the complex issue of Bible access and shortages worldwide, revealing that persecution-related restrictions, socioeconomic barriers and safe digital access limitations continue to put Scripture beyond reach despite increased availability. Released by Bible Access Initiative, a coalition of ministries committed to Bible accessibility, the report evaluates 106 countries and pinpoints the countries facing the greatest obstacles to Bible access.

“We often hear that the Bible is more accessible than ever, but we must not confuse availability with access,” said Wybo Nicolai, co-founder of the Bible Access List. “Persecution-related Bible access restrictions can make accessing Scripture difficult or dangerous, while socioeconomic barriers can put a Bible beyond people’s reach. Even where Scripture is available digitally, limited internet coverage or unsafe online environments can still prevent people from accessing it.”

The Bible Access List includes data from two key categories:

• The Bible Restrictions List highlights where it is most difficult to access a Bible, combining persecution-related Bible access restrictions, including legal restrictions, social hostility and extremist or other non-state action, with socioeconomic barriers such as poverty, poor infrastructure, limited electricity, low literacy and limited internet access.
• The Bible Shortage List estimates how many Christians still want a Bible but don’t yet have one.

Countries with the Most Limited Bible Access

The 2026 Bible Access List builds on the inaugural assessment through expanded country coverage, refined methodology and improved evidence, supported by input and validation from local experts. The number of countries assessed increased from 88 countries in 2025 to 106 countries in 2026. Of the countries evaluated, 87 met the criteria for the Bible Restrictions List while 81 countries are included in the Bible Shortage List.

The top five countries on the 2026 Bible Restrictions List are:

1. Afghanistan (up from No. 3 in 2025)
2. Yemen (no change since 2025)
3. Somalia (down from No. 1 in 2025)
4. North Korea (up from No. 6 in 2025)
5. Eritrea (no change since 2025)

The top five countries on the 2026 Bible Shortage List are:

1. DR Congo (Shortage Range: >10 million)
2. Ethiopia (Shortage Range: >10 million)
3. Nigeria (Shortage Range: >10 million)
4. India (Shortage Range: >10 million)
5. Uganda (Shortage Range: 5-10 million)

Three Key Findings on Bible Access

The 2026 assessment revealed three key findings:

• Persecution-related Bible access restrictions affect millions worldwide: More than 500 million Christians face restrictions through government controls, extremist violence, and family and community pressure, including more than 250 million for whom access is very difficult.
• Socioeconomic barriers put Scripture beyond people's reach: More than 550 million Christians across 33 countries face severe socioeconomic barriers, including poverty, poor infrastructure, limited electricity, low literacy and limited internet access. Across these countries, an estimated 82 million Christians are without a Bible.
• Digital availability does not guarantee access: More than 400 million Christians across 42 countries are estimated to live without internet access, while 277 million Christians across 48 countries live where accessing Scripture online is unsafe or restricted.

"The annual assessment is more than a picture of the problem but a roadmap for showing where intentional, strategic action is needed," said Ken Bitgood, founder and CEO of Digital Bible

Society, co-founder of the Bible Access List. “We believe everyone deserves access to God’s Word, and our goal is to equip others to join us in this mission, combining our efforts, resources and energy together to make this a reality.”

The Bible Access List is developed and published by Bible Access Initiative, which is led by five steering partners: Bible League International, Digital Bible Society, Frontlines International, The Voice of the Martyrs and YouVersion. The Bible Access Initiative holds a shared vision of making Scripture accessible and available to every person, in every nation, regardless of religious background.

For more information including data, country profiles and maps related to the Bible Access List, visit bibleaccesslist.org.

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About Bible Access Initiative
The Bible Access Initiative is a collaborative of global partners formed to develop and compile the annual Bible Access List. Its mission is to provide crucial information for enhancing strategic planning efforts aimed at addressing Bible access challenges more effectively.

Lauren Briggs
KC Communications
lauren@kccommunications.co

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