



Bible Access List

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

Burundi

Bible Restrictions Rank: **76**
MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **15**
Bible needs estimate between one and three million



An Overview of Bible access in Burundi

Burundi's Christian population makes up an overwhelming majority—almost 94% of the nation, totaling nearly 12.8 million believers. Yet despite this strong Christian presence, less than a third of them are estimated to have access to a Bible. This points to a deeply rooted need for Scripture, even in a country where Christianity is widespread.

Legally, there are no restrictions on Bible access in Burundi. This makes Burundi one of the more open countries in the region. However, practical challenges still hinder the spread of Scripture, particularly in rural areas where infrastructure is limited and poverty is widespread. Even when Bibles are available, many cannot afford to purchase one.

Compounding this challenge is the country's surveillance landscape. In 2018, a law was passed allowing government agencies to intercept online communications and seize computer data. This has expanded the state's surveillance powers, and while accessing the Bible remains safe, this has created an atmosphere of caution and hesitancy.

Furthermore, just over 10% of the population is connected to the internet and has consistent electricity. This limits the viability of digital Bible formats for many.

Despite these hurdles, the openness to Christian materials presents a unique opportunity. Millions of Christians are still lacking access to the Word of God. Meeting this need could have a transformative impact on discipleship, spiritual growth, and gospel outreach across the country.

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

How can I pray for Burundi?

- **Wider Access to Bibles.** Ask God to open doors for more believers to receive their own copy of Scripture, especially in remote and impoverished areas.
- **Provision and Affordability.** Pray that Bibles—especially in printed formats—would become more affordable and accessible to those who hunger for God's Word.
- **Wisdom for Digital Strategy.** Pray for wisdom and protection over digital Bible distribution efforts in light of surveillance laws, that technology can still be used safely and effectively to reach many.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Minimal Access Restrictions

Other Limiting Factors

Extreme Other Factors



Extremely Poor



Extremely poor access to internet



Extremely poor infrastructure



<50% of population access to electricity

Bible Shortages Among Believers



Bible ownership is low, **estimated** Bible need is between 1 and 3 million

Main religion: Christianity

Country population: 13,592,000

Christian population:



12,748,000, 93.79% of total population

World Watch List: #63

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN BURUNDI?

At first glance, Burundi presents a unique case: there are no formal legal restrictions on owning, printing, importing, storing, or distributing Bibles. Yet despite this legal openness, believers still face persistent and growing barriers to accessing God's Word—especially those outside the traditional religious structures.

A Landscape of Surveillance and Fear

Since 2018, government surveillance has intensified. With the passage of Law No. 109, authorities were granted expanded powers to intercept electronic communication and seize digital data. This has created a chilling effect, particularly for Christians using mobile apps or online platforms to share or access Scripture.

Additionally, the ruling party's youth wing, Imbonerakure, has been widely reported for monitoring church activities, intimidating congregants, and even disrupting worship gatherings that don't align with government expectations.

Discrimination and Pressure Against Non-Traditional Churches

Burundi's majority-Catholic population has seen a rise in evangelical and Pentecostal churches, which face mounting challenges. These include forced closures, difficulty obtaining legal registration, and community opposition.

Christians who choose to join or lead these churches may face social exclusion, even within their families, and are often accused of "noise pollution" or noncompliance with government criteria for religious organizations.

Economic and Infrastructure Barriers

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with over 60% of the population living below the poverty line. While there may not be legal obstacles to acquiring a Bible, economic realities often make it an unreachable luxury for many households. Add to this the fact that only about 11% of the population has internet access and just 14% live in urban areas, and the pathway to digital Bibles becomes even narrower.

A Church Under Pressure

Government authorities have increasingly demanded loyalty from church leaders and congregations, with some churches pressured to support political narratives or risk losing their license to operate. In recent years, dozens of Christians have been arrested or detained for participating in unauthorized worship gatherings.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Burundi

Burundi	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
Persecution Engines →									
Persecution Drivers ↓	Very weak	Not at all	Not at all	Very weak	Medium	Not at all	Not at all	Strong	Strong
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									

Reference

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

In Burundi, persecution stems from several overlapping forces—particularly **dictatorial paranoia**, **organized corruption and crime**, and **Christian denominational protectionism**. These are driven by state actors, political parties, religious leaders, organized crime networks, and even families and local communities.

The World Watch List by Open Doors sheds light on the broader context of persecution of Christians. But now we have 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 Burundi?

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.



Crushing Dissent, Silencing the Church

The Burundian government exerts tight control over all sectors of society—political, civil, and religious. Christians, especially leaders who refuse to align with the ruling CNDD-FDD party, face intimidation, surveillance, or worse. Churches that do not support the regime risk being shut down.

In April 2024, 61 Christians from a local church in Ngozi province were detained province for worshipping in an unauthorized location. Since then, ten churches were closed because their pastors refused to cooperate with political authorities.

Surveillance of church activities has become routine, with the youth wing of the ruling party, the *Imbonerakure*, monitoring congregations and reporting any signs of dissent. This environment of intimidation leads many churches to self-censor, limiting their capacity to distribute or even openly read Bibles. Christians who voice opposition to injustice are at risk of arrest, beatings, or being forced to flee their homes.



A Climate of Fear and Impunity

Corruption is embedded at every level of governance in Burundi, and this affects Christians in deeply personal ways. Authorities are known to detain or intimidate church leaders who speak against corruption, and organized criminal networks, sometimes backed by the government, operate with impunity. The *Imbonerakure* has also been implicated in violent acts, including killings and property destruction.

In May 2024, Burundi's bishops publicly condemned a wave of political murders and human rights violations. Reports confirm that many of these acts, including abductions, target Christians, particularly those seen as not supporting the regime. Bible possession or public religious gatherings can become pretexts for harassment, especially when linked to groups outside state favor.



Internal Barriers to Access

While Burundi is a majority-Christian country, the growth of non-traditional evangelical churches has created friction with dominant Catholic circles. Traditional religious leaders, citizens, and even extended family members often stigmatize believers who leave Catholicism for newer denominations.

This pressure takes multiple forms: accusations of noise pollution during worship, denial of church-building permits, and social ostracism. Converts face pushback not only from local communities but even within their own households. In educational settings, children from evangelical families are sometimes harassed or subjected to biased curricula that reflect only traditional religious norms.

Even within the Christian community, access to Bibles is hindered, non-traditional churches often lack the political clout and formal recognition needed to distribute Scripture widely. Registration laws further complicate matters: churches must meet rigid requirements, including having at least 300 members and engaging in socio-economic activity—standards many smaller, evangelical churches cannot meet.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN BURUNDI

Amid rising persecution and political instability, Bible access in Burundi remains alarmingly low. With spiritual hunger growing across the nation, it is estimated that **up to 3 million Bibles** are urgently needed to meet the emerging needs of believers. These figures represent more than numbers—they represent families, churches, and communities longing for the comfort, guidance, and truth found in God's Word.

A Rapidly Growing Church Demands Urgent Supply

Despite a restrictive political climate and mounting pressure on churches, the Body of Christ in Burundi is expanding. Over the last five years, the Christian community has been expanding rapidly. That means hundreds of thousands of new believers, many from non-traditional denominations, are being added to the Church. However, the current lack of Scripture severely limits the Church's ability to nurture faith, equip leaders, and withstand persecution.

Prioritizing the Right Bible Formats

Given Burundi's rural population and poor infrastructure, **printed Bibles** remain the most critical format. However, **audio Bibles** are also essential, especially in communities with limited education or access to written material.

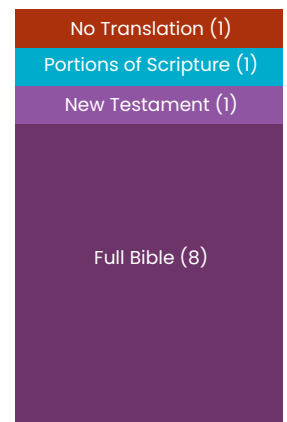
Internet access is low (only 11%), and government surveillance of digital communication adds another layer of caution for online resources. To meet the diverse needs across age, region, and education levels, a multi-format strategy must be deployed, with an emphasis on printed and audio formats.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Burundi is home to Christians who speak at least 11 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **8** have a full Bible translation available.
- **1** language has only the New Testament.
- **1** has partial Scripture translated.
- **One language is without any Bible translation at all**

This linguistic gap leaves thousands without access to God's Word in their heart language. For a nation already battling oppression and fear, hearing God speak in a familiar tongue can be life-changing. The good news? Only one language remains in need of a Bible translation.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Burundi

THE CLARION CALL

The Church in Burundi is growing, but it is growing under pressure. As Christians face government surveillance, church closures, and social ostracism, the Bible becomes more than a source of spiritual truth; it becomes a lifeline. Meeting this need is not just a logistical mission; it is a spiritual imperative.

The global Church must rise to this moment. By prioritizing translation, distribution, and format accessibility, we can help ensure that no believer in Burundi is left without the life-giving words of Scripture.

Now is the time to act. The Church in Burundi is asking. Will we answer? Let's help them stand firm in their faith.

