



Ivory Coast

Bible Restrictions Rank: **69**

MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **28**

Bible needs estimate between five hundred thousand and one million



An Overview of Bible access in Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast's Christian population makes up nearly 38% of its almost 30 million citizens, amounting to an estimated 11 million believers across the country. While Bible access is generally higher here than in many parts of West Africa, with over half of Christians estimated to have a copy of Scripture, there remain real challenges that hinder full and free access to God's Word.

Legally, Ivory Coast allows for the importing, owning, storing, printing, and distribution of Bibles without national-level restrictions. However, regional dynamics, especially in the less-populated northern and northeastern regions, tell a different story. In these areas, extremist groups and hostile community leaders have been known to raid homes and confiscate Bibles, particularly targeting Muslim-background believers (MBBs). Though these incidents affect a relatively small percentage of Christians due to low population density, the threat is growing as jihadist movements spread across West Africa.

In addition, societal pressure and fear of retaliation lead many Christians to practice their faith quietly. In some communities, owning or reading a Bible can make someone a target, pushing believers toward self-censorship and underground worship.

Accessing digital Bibles online are generally safe since the government does not actively block them. However, less than half of the population is connected to the internet. Furthermore, economic inequality still leaves many Christians unable to afford a Bible, despite a desire to engage with Scripture.

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

How can I pray for Ivory Coast?

- **Protection and Boldness.** Pray for believers in the north and northeast regions, especially Muslim-background Christians, to have courage and divine protection as they seek and share God's Word in dangerous environments.
- **Access and Provision.** Ask God to provide the resources so that every believer in Ivory Coast can access the Bible in a way that fits their context.
- **Wisdom for Leaders.** Pray for spiritual and community leaders to have wisdom and favor as they navigate complex social dynamics and help guide their people toward truth and hope.

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

Bible Access Restrictions



Minimal Access Restrictions

- Import restrictions for part of the country
- Print restrictions for part of the country
- Storage restrictions for part of the country
- Ownership restrictions for part of the country
- Distribution restrictions for part of the country

Other Limiting Factors



Considerable Other Factors

- Poor
- Poor internet access
- Poor infrastructure

Bible Shortages Among Believers



- Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is between 500 thousand and 1 million

Main religion: Christianity

Country population: 29,603,000

Christian population:

11,229,000, 37.93% of total population

World Watch List: #73

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN IVORY COAST?

Access to the Bible in Ivory Coast is hindered by a complex web of religious, cultural, political, and security-related challenges. While Christianity is legally permitted and widespread in the southern regions, multiple forms of pressure make it difficult for many to engage with Scripture openly and freely.

Discrimination Against Converts

One significant obstacle to Bible access comes from the treatment of individuals who convert to Christianity from Islam or African Traditional Religions (ATR). Muslim Background believers or MBBs, especially in the Muslim-majority northern regions, often face expulsion from their families, community ostracism, and even physical harm. The risk of social isolation discourages engagement with Christian practices, including Bible reading or possession.

Barriers to Church Infrastructure

In the north, Christians face serious difficulties in obtaining land to build churches. This includes government bias in land allocation that favors Muslim communities. Without secure church infrastructure, the distribution and communal study of the Bible is heavily restricted.

Intimidation by Authorities

Government officials in certain regions, especially where radical Islamic influence is strong, have intimidated pastors and monitored sermons, restricting religious freedom. Christian leaders from Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions have also been selectively targeted for minor legal infractions like noise violations, further limiting opportunities to gather and teach Scripture.

Jihadist Threats in the North

The growing presence of jihadist groups in northern Ivory Coast, many with regional ties to extremist organizations, has created a climate of fear. These groups are known to target Christians and church property, creating security risks that affect worship gatherings, Bible studies, and missionary outreach.

Cultural Pressure and Clan Control

In the western regions, Christians are often excluded from community life during animist festivals like 'mask holidays'. Such exclusion reduces their social integration and limits public expressions of faith, including reading or sharing the Bible.

Additionally, clan leaders in some areas enforce traditional religious norms, opposing any faith practices that challenge their authority, including Bible reading and evangelism.

Surveillance and Fear of Exposure

In many parts of the country, particularly the north and west, Christians are monitored by their communities. Local youth or elders may observe and report Christian activities, making private Bible reading or group studies dangerous and discouraging any visible signs of faith.

Limited Religious Freedom in Public Institutions

Christians face discrimination in public offices and are sometimes hindered from promoting Christian values in public discourse. Christian civil society organizations may also face informal restrictions or boycotts, making it harder to publicly distribute or advocate for Scripture access.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast	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 →										<p>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.</p>
Persecution Drivers ↓	Medium	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Weak	Not at all	Not at all	Medium	Weak	
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										

In Ivory Coast, there are three main forces that create barriers to Bible access. These forces include **Islamic oppression**, **clan oppression**, and **dictatorial paranoia**. The main drivers behind these are government officials, ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, violent religious groups, normal citizens, and sometimes extended family.

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 Ivory Coast?

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.



In Ivory Coast, Islamic oppression is a significant and growing threat, particularly in the Muslim-majority northern regions. Although officially a secular country, local governance in the north often favors Muslim communities, creating an environment where Christians, especially MBBs, face discrimination and hostility. Radical Islamic teachings and jihadist ideologies have increasingly taken root, with extremist groups expanding their influence from neighboring countries. These forces contribute to a climate of fear, where churches are vandalized, MBBs are ostracized, and pastors are intimidated or monitored.

Access to land for church construction is frequently denied, and Christians are often excluded from community resources or leadership opportunities. This pressure systemically restricts not only freedom of worship but also the ability to access, distribute, and read the Bible, especially in the very areas where it is most needed.



Clan-based persecution in Ivory Coast primarily targets those who leave African Traditional Religions (ATR) for Christianity. Converts often face exclusion from family rituals and are forced to stay home during cultural celebrations. This exclusion from community life isolates believers and restricts Bible fellowship or group study.

In rural areas, clan leaders wield significant influence, and any attempt to challenge traditional beliefs, such as witchcraft, can provoke hostility, vandalism of churches, or social exclusion. These community-level pressures suppress open expressions of faith and limit access to Scripture, especially in shared spaces or public forums.



Although Ivory Coast remains politically stable, the persecution driven by dictatorial paranoia manifests most clearly in the uneven treatment of religious groups by local authorities, mostly in the northern regions. Government officials have been known to intimidate pastors, deny permits for church gatherings, and selectively enforce regulations that disadvantage Christian communities.

Land disputes are often resolved in favor of Muslim applicants, and Christian organizations face bureaucratic roadblocks or even outright bans when trying to operate publicly. This structural marginalization translates into reduced visibility of Christian faith in public life and fewer opportunities for Bible teaching, training, and distribution.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN IVORY COAST

Despite a growing hunger for the Word of God in Ivory Coast, access to the Bible remains alarmingly limited. To meet the spiritual needs of current Christians alone, it's estimated that at least **500,000 and 1 million Bibles** are required. And since many are seeking to explore the Christian faith, a number close to a hundred thousand can help supplement this.

An Expanding Church, An Increasing Demand

The church in Ivory Coast has grown significantly in the last five years, even amid increasing persecution and social tension. But without the Bible in the hands of these new believers and church planters, this growth risks becoming unsustainable.

As Christianity spreads, so does opposition from local leaders, families, and even government authorities in Muslim-majority regions. The need to equip believers with Scripture is not just a matter of discipleship; it is a matter of survival.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

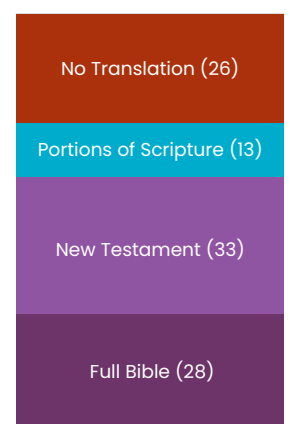
While **print Bibles** remain the highest priority, **audio Bibles** are also essential, particularly for the many who are illiterate or visually impaired. These formats ensure more households will get to engage with the Word of God.

The Translation Gap

Language barriers present another major obstacle in Ivory Coast. Out of over 100 languages spoken by Christians in Ivory Coast:

- Only **28** have a full Bible translation.
- **33** have only the New Testament.
- **13** have just portions of Scripture,
- **26 languages have no Scripture at all**

This translation gap leaves millions without access to God's Word in a language they truly understand.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Ivory Coast

THE CLARION CALL

Now is the time for the global church to rise. The window is open, but it may not stay open for long. In a nation where the church is both growing and suffering, the need for Bibles is not just practical; it's an urgent need that needs the attention and support of the international Christian community.

Will we answer the call to equip this hungry nation with the life-changing Word of God?



5.2%

Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both

**Believers
& Seekers**



**500k-
1 million**

Bible needs estimate



**Printed
Bible**

Preferred Format



**Audio
Bible**

Format 2nd Priority