



# Bible Access List

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

# Colombia

Bible Restrictions Rank: **66**  
**MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

**Bible shortage has been confirmed**



## An Overview of Bible access in Colombia

Colombia is a nation where Christianity is deeply ingrained, with almost 95% of its population identifying as Christian amounting to nearly 50 million believers in a country of just over 52 million people. Yet, despite Christianity's widespread presence and minimal legal restrictions, **only about half of believers have access to a Bible**. This means **millions** of our brothers and sisters are left without Scripture, a sobering reality that highlights the urgent need to bridge this gap.

While there are no national laws restricting Bible distribution, most of the problem lies within indigenous communities, particularly in regions such as the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Cauca, and Choco. Here, the indigenous authorities strictly regulate Bible access. In some cases, only community leaders are permitted to keep Bibles, which must be concealed to avoid severe repercussions. Children are denied access to Scripture until they reach an age deemed appropriate by community elders, and those who openly practice Christianity risk expulsion.

Beyond indigenous communities, Colombia's persistent conflict with organized crime and guerrilla groups are huge factors affecting Bible access. Christian leaders who speak against corruption, human rights abuses, or the recruitment of minors by armed groups face constant threats, forced displacement, or even assassination. Churches and Christian gatherings are frequently monitored by criminal organizations, particularly in regions such as Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Cauca, and Valle del Cauca, making it dangerous to distribute or own Bibles.

Colombia's economic instability also plays a role. Despite being classified as an upper-middle-income country, nearly 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. Many families simply won't prioritize purchasing Bibles over their basic needs, making free or subsidized distribution efforts critical. While internet access is high, digital Bibles remain out of reach for those in remote areas where electricity and connectivity are unreliable. High literacy rates mean that print and digital Bibles are viable options, but affordability and access remain major challenges.

Before we move further, would you take a pause and pray for Colombia?

### How can I pray for Colombia?

- **Provision for Bible Shortage.** Pray for the fulfillment of Bible shortages, especially in areas where poverty, indigenous restrictions, and criminal violence prevent access to Scripture. Ask God to open doors for safe and creative Bible distribution.
- **Global Partnerships.** Pray for strong global partnerships to develop innovative and effective Bible distribution strategies that can overcome logistical and security challenges, particularly in regions controlled by guerrilla and criminal groups.
- **Peace and Protection for Christians.** Ask for divine protection over pastors, church leaders, and believers, particularly those in high-risk areas. Pray for peace in Colombia, that efforts to end violence and persecution will be successful, and that every believer will have unhindered access to God's Word.

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

### Bible Access Restrictions

#### Minimal Access Restrictions

- Import restrictions for part of population
- Print restrictions for part of population
- Storage restrictions for part of population
- Ownership restrictions for part of population
- Distribution restrictions for part of population

### Other Limiting Factors

#### Some Other Factors

- Poor infrastructure

### Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bibles are needed for believers and seekers
- Impacted by armed conflicts

**Main religion:** Christianity

**Country population:** 52,341,000

**Christian population:**

49,693,000, 94.94% of total population

**World Watch List:** #46

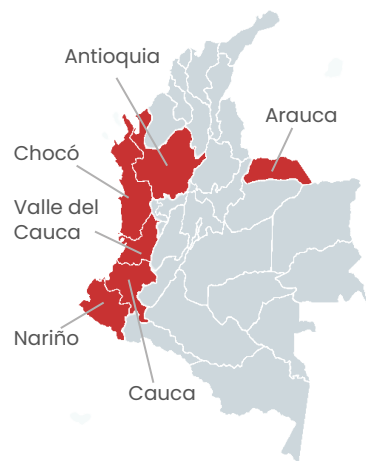
# WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN COLOMBIA?

## A Nation Under Siege by Criminal Groups

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In Colombia, the spread of the Bible is severely hindered by organized crime and armed groups that exert control over large territories. Christian leaders and believers who attempt to share their faith or distribute Bibles in regions dominated by these groups face threats, extortion, and even murder. In areas such as Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, and Valle del Cauca, criminal organizations view Christian teachings as a threat to their authority, often banning gatherings and confiscating religious materials.

These groups also recruit children into their ranks, forcibly separating them from their families and exposing them to extreme violence. Christian families who resist this pressure are targeted for harassment, abduction, or forced displacement. Many pastors and evangelists are threatened or assassinated for speaking out against corruption and violence, making it increasingly dangerous to distribute Bibles and lead Christian communities in these areas.



## Daily Risks and Bible Access

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Beyond the dangers of criminal control, systemic issues such as corruption, poverty, and inadequate infrastructure limit access to Bibles. In indigenous communities, Christian converts are often persecuted for abandoning traditional animistic practices. Those who refuse to participate in non-Christian religious ceremonies face imprisonment, beatings, or exile.

Even in urban areas, ideological pressure groups and secular authorities scrutinize and restrict Christian teaching. Churches and faith-based organizations face legal challenges when advocating for biblical views on marriage, family, and human dignity, leading to social discrimination and lawsuits. Schools and universities impose strict secular guidelines that often marginalize Christian students and teachers, discouraging open discussion of faith.

## Poverty and Practical Barriers

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The economic crisis further exacerbates the challenge of Bible access. Many Colombian families struggle with extreme poverty, making the purchase of a Bible an unaffordable luxury. Christian communities in rural areas often lack access to electricity and internet, limiting digital Bible distribution as an alternative.

# Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Colombia

| Colombia                               | 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  |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| <b>Persecution Engines →</b>           |                    |                       |                           |                 |                                     |   |                     |                      |                                | <p><b>Reference</b></p> <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> |
| <b>Persecution Drivers ↓</b>           | Not at all         | Not at all            | Not at all                | Strong          | Weak                                | Not at all                              | Medium              | Not at all           | 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          |                    |                       |                           |                 |                                     |   | +                   |                      |                                |  |

Colombia's landscape is shaped by three primary forces: **organized corruption and crime, clan oppression, and secular intolerance**. The primary actors behind these forces include **ethnic group leaders, non-Christian religious leaders, extended family, revolutionaries or paramilitary groups, organized crime**, and on some occasions includes **government officials, violent religious groups, and normal citizens**.

The World Watch List 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 Colombia?

## A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES

A persecution engine 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 will give us insight on how we can solve the problems of Bible access in the country.



### The Grip of Armed Groups

Colombia ranks as one of the most dangerous countries for Christian leaders due to the pervasive influence of organized crime cartels, revolutionary factions, and paramilitary groups. Criminal organizations such as the **Gulf Clan** (currently the largest drug cartel in Colombia), **FARC dissidents, the National Liberation Army or the ELN, and other armed groups** exert territorial control, especially in rural areas where state presence is weak.

In many parts of Colombia, Christian leaders who preach against corruption, advocate for peace, or oppose drug trafficking become direct targets of criminal groups. Pastors face relentless threats, forced disappearances, and even assassination, while churches are pressured to pay "protection money" to avoid attacks. Young Christians, especially boys, are at high risk of forced recruitment, and entire congregations live under the grip of fear.

Even gathering for worship is dangerous. Armed groups monitor churches, scrutinize sermons, and interrogate pastors to ensure their messages don't challenge their control. Many church leaders and their families are forced to flee, leaving behind their homes and communities. Those who remain live under constant surveillance, unable to worship freely, and often forced to hide their faith.



### Persecution of Indigenous Christians

The Colombian government grants broad autonomy to indigenous leaders, allowing them to enforce their own religious laws with little interference. This leaves Christian converts with no legal protection, as national authorities rarely intervene. Without a way to challenge these injustices, many believers are forced into secrecy or exile, isolated from their communities simply for holding onto their faith.

For indigenous Christians in Colombia, particularly those in Cauca, Chocó, and Norte de Santander, face persecution from their own communities. Conversion to Christianity is seen as a betrayal of ancestral traditions, leading to imprisonment, forced displacement, and denial of essential services.

In many communities, choosing to follow Christ comes at a high cost. Converts often face physical beatings, imprisonment, and even exclusion from basic necessities like clean water and healthcare—all enforced by indigenous authorities determined to preserve their traditional beliefs. In March 2024, in **Cesar**, indigenous leaders **imprisoned four Christians** for attending an evangelical church and denied them food in an attempt to force them to renounce their faith. Christian children are particularly vulnerable, as schools in these areas often require participation in animist rituals. Parents who resist risk harassment, heavy fines, or even expulsion from their homes. This has been a consistent pattern across several indigenous communities, where local leaders, empowered by legal autonomy, **punish Christian families who reject traditional religious customs.**



### Hostility Toward Christian Beliefs

While Colombia's constitution guarantees religious freedom, secular intolerance is rising in urban areas, particularly in Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali. Christians who speak openly about marriage, family values, or pro-life issues often face strong backlash from political and ideological groups. Some church leaders and professionals have lost their jobs simply for standing by their beliefs. As secular intolerance grows, faith-based perspectives are increasingly pushed out of public conversations, forcing many Christians to self-censor to avoid discrimination or legal trouble.

Churches have also become targets of hostility, with places of worship vandalized and Christian symbols removed from public spaces. In some cases, authorities turn a blind eye to these attacks, further isolating Christian communities. Judges, teachers, and doctors who refuse to compromise their faith face mounting pressure, legal challenges, and even dismissal, making it harder for Christians to live out their beliefs without fear of consequences.

# THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, large groups of believers long for access to God’s Word, yet many face overwhelming barriers. Bibles are needed both for Catholic and Protestant believers, and in addition, Bibles are needed for seekers as well.

## A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

The church is also growing in Colombia. But in many regions, especially those affected by conflict, displacement, and economic hardship, believers are left without the Scriptures they need. Church leaders working in areas controlled by guerrilla and criminal groups face constant threats, extortion, and persecution, further complicating Bible distribution. For those forced to flee violence, owning a Bible is often an impossible luxury.

## Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

Providing Bibles in different formats is crucial to reaching every believer:

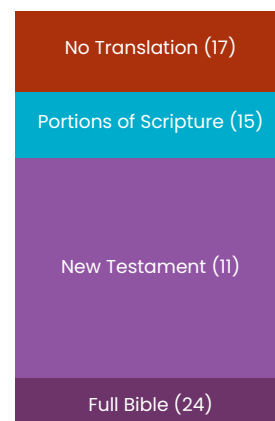
- **Print Bibles are the top priority.** Many communities lack consistent electricity and internet access, making physical copies the most effective way to get Scripture into the hands of believers.
- **Digital access follows closely behind.** With a growing number of Colombians using the internet, digital Bibles can reach many—especially in urban areas—but connectivity remains unreliable in remote and indigenous regions.
- **Audio Bibles** that are solar powered are the preferred format for indigenous communities, especially given the lack of electricity access.

## The Challenge of Bible Translations

Colombia is a linguistically diverse nation, with **believers speaking at least 83 different languages**. However, a significant translation gap remains:

- Only **10 languages** have a **complete** Bible.
- **44 languages** have only the **New Testament** translated.
- **13 languages** have just a **portion** of the Bible available.
- **16 languages** still have **no Scripture** at all

This means that many believers still do not have access to God’s Word in their heart language. Without urgent investment in Bible translation, entire communities will remain spiritually isolated.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Colombia

# THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Colombia is urgent and growing. Beyond just logistics, this is a response to a deep spiritual hunger in the nation. From city centers to remote villages, from seekers to lifelong believers, the demand for Scripture remains great even in this Christian-majority country.

Through strategic efforts in print distribution, digital access, audio Bibles, and Bible translation, we can ensure that every believer, no matter their background, has the opportunity to encounter God's Word and experience its life-changing power. Now is the time to act. Together, we can bridge this gap and bring the hope of the Bible to those who need it most.



**0.8%**

Annual Church  
Growth



Bibles needed for both

**Believers  
& Seekers**



**Printed  
Bible**

Preferred Format



**Internet  
Bible**

Format 2nd Priority