



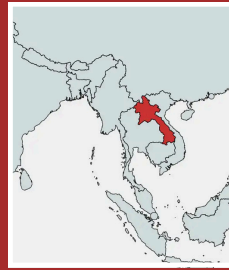
Bible Access List

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

Laos

Bible Restrictions Rank: **21**
SEVERE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **55**
Bible needs estimate between ten and twenty five thousand



An Overview of Bible access in Laos

Laos, a Southeast Asian nation with a population of approximately 7.7 million, is home to a small but growing Christian community. Less than 3% of the population—about 224,000 people—identify as Christians. Believers that want to get a personal copy of a Bible face severe access restrictions. It is estimated that a little more than half of believers have access to Scripture, highlighting an urgent need to make Bibles available to Christians across the country.

Laos' Communist government tightly controls religious activities, making Bible distribution difficult. The Lao Evangelical Church (LEC) is the only legally recognized Protestant church allowed to import Bibles, forcing most evangelical churches to rely on it. Strict regulations on printing, storing, and distributing Bibles create major barriers, especially for rural and ethnic minority believers. A new law adds layers of bureaucratic red tape, requiring multiple levels of approval before religious materials can enter the country. Outside major cities, delays and government scrutiny further restrict access, and some believers fear that owning a Bible could lead to discrimination, fines, or even expulsion from their communities.

Rural areas, home to 60% of Laotians, pose the biggest challenge for Bible access. Many communities follow animist and Buddhist traditions and see Christianity as a foreign threat. Converts often face intense pressure, risking eviction, social exclusion, and loss of communal resources like burial grounds and farmland. Further holding a Bible in a local language here is dangerous as the local authorities and communities do not allow Bibles in the local languages.

Economic hardship adds another barrier. Around 1 in 3 Laotians live in poverty, making Bibles unaffordable even when available. In some villages, Christians must pay fines or bribes just to have their faith legally recognized, leaving little money for Scripture.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing opportunity for digital Bible distribution in Laos. The country has a relatively high literacy rate and a little over 60% of the population has internet access, suggesting that digital and audio Bibles could be a strategic way to reach believers.

But first, would you take a moment to pray for Laos?

How can I pray for Laos?

- **Protection and Provision.** Pray that believers in Laos will be shielded from persecution and that God will provide creative ways for them to access His Word.
- **Open Access and Innovative Solutions.** Pray that **digital, audio, and printed Bible efforts** will expand and reach every believer in Laos, despite government restrictions.
- **Change in Government Regulations.** Pray that the **Lao government will ease its restrictions on Bible importation and distribution**, allowing for greater freedom for believers to access and share Scripture.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Considerable Access Restrictions

- Import restrictions
- No printing
- Storage restrictions
- Ownership restrictions
- No distribution

Other Limiting Factors

Considerable Other Factors

- Poor
- Poor infrastructure

Bible Shortages Among Believers

- Bible ownership is over 50%, **estimated** Bible need is between 10 and 25 thousand

Main religion: Buddhism

Country population: 7,737,000

Christian population:

- 224,000, 2.89% of total population

World Watch List: #22

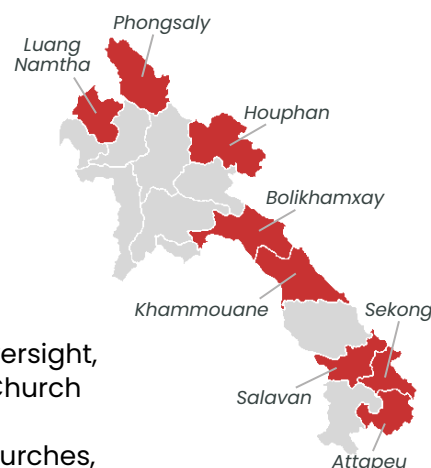
WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN LAOS?

A Region Under Tight Control

In Laos, Christians—especially those in rural villages—face intense opposition when attempting to print, own, store, or distribute Bibles. Although the Lao Constitution technically guarantees religious freedom, in practice, Christianity is heavily restricted. In provinces such as Luang Namtha, Phongsaly, Houphan, Khammouane, Bolikhamxay, Salavan, Sekong, and Attapeu, Christians are often monitored, harassed, and even expelled from their homes.

The Communist government views Christianity as a foreign influence that challenges national unity and Communist ideology. This results in strict oversight, particularly for non-state-approved churches. While the Lao Evangelical Church (LEC), the Catholic Church, and the Seventh-Day Adventists are officially recognized, even these groups face surveillance and limitations. House churches, independent congregations, and new Christian converts face intense persecution from local authorities, ethnic leaders, and their own families.

Authorities have also raided house churches, burned Bibles, and forced congregations to disband. In some cases, believers have been arrested for simply gathering for worship. One of the most extreme cases was the assassination of a pastor back in July 2024, after he ignored repeated warnings to stop his Christian activities.



Daily Risks and Bible Access

Owning or distributing a Bible in Laos comes with serious risks, particularly for Christian converts from Buddhist and animist backgrounds. In many villages, Christianity is seen as a betrayal of traditional beliefs and an offense to the spirits. This belief fuels acts of violence against Christians, including forced evictions, property destruction, and physical beatings.

Local officials, village leaders, and even family members work together to suppress Christianity in Laos. Bibles are frequently confiscated or destroyed. One such incident happened in February 2024, when authorities burned Bibles and shut down a house church in Savannakhet province.

Christians live under constant surveillance, with neighbors and officials reporting them for simply possessing Scripture. Many are also forced to participate in Buddhist and animist rituals, and refusing can result in social exclusion or accusations of bringing misfortune to their communities. Even travel for Christian purposes, such as distributing Bibles or visiting other believers, is heavily restricted, requiring government approval that is often delayed or denied altogether.

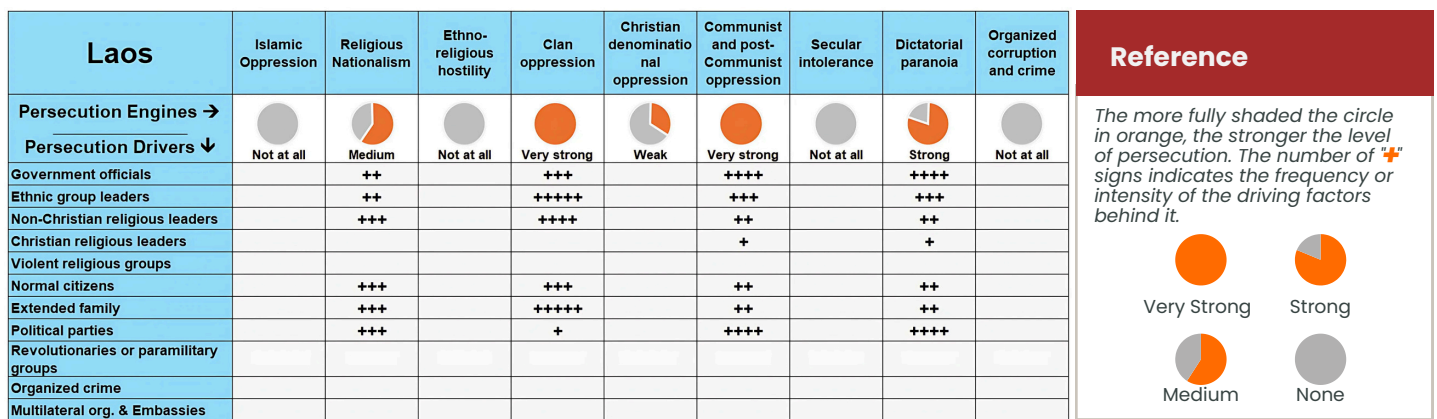
Poverty and Practical Barriers

Beyond persecution, systemic poverty further hinders Bible access. Around a third of the population lives in multidimensional poverty, making it difficult for many believers to afford a Bible even if they desire one.

In rural areas, literacy rates are lower, which increases the need for audio Bibles, yet these resources remain scarce. Additionally, many parts of Laos lack internet access or electricity, further limiting access to digital Bibles.

The importation and printing of Christian materials is strictly controlled by the government, making it difficult to distribute Bibles legally. Even the LEC and Catholic Church must seek government approval for religious materials, a process that is slow and often obstructed.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Laos



As you can see in the chart, Bible access in Laos is hindered by persecution on multiple fronts. The most dominant forces restricting access to Scripture include **Communist and post-Communist oppression**, **dictatorial paranoia**, and **clan oppression**. The primary drivers behind this web of persecution include ethnic **group leaders**, **extended family**, **non-Christian religions leaders**, **government officials**, and **political parties**.

Research from 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 Laos?

A CLOSER LOOK AT PERSECUTION ENGINES



Government control over religion in Laos is absolute. Every religious activity, including Bible distribution, must be approved by the government under Decree 315, which strictly regulates religious materials. Churches must submit detailed reports of their activities, and any attempt to print or import Bibles requires permission from the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism. These bureaucratic barriers make it nearly impossible for churches to legally provide Bibles to believers, forcing many to seek underground channels.

The Communist government does not openly ban Christianity but actively stifles its growth. Even the registered Lao Evangelical Church (LEC) operates under heavy surveillance, with leaders being pressured to report on independent congregations. In rural areas, house churches meeting for Bible studies are regularly raided, and their members interrogated. In some cases, police confiscate Bibles or burn them to send a clear message that Christianity is unwelcome.



Laos remains one of the few remaining Marxist-Leninist states, and the Communist Party tightly controls media, education, and religious expression. Any ideology seen as a potential threat—including Christianity—is suppressed. Bible distribution is seen as part of a Western agenda, leading authorities to block the printing and import of Christian literature.

Traveling within the country for religious purposes, such as delivering Bibles to remote Christian communities, is heavily restricted. Pastors and Christian leaders must obtain permits to visit churches outside their home districts—a process that can take weeks or months. In many cases, Christians simply proceed without permits, running the risk of arrest, detention, or expulsion.

Recent incidents highlight the severe consequences of Christian activity:

- In February 2024, authorities in Savannakhet province raided a house church, burned Bibles, and ordered the closure of the congregation.
- In July 2024, a pastor in Oudomxay was assassinated at his home after being warned multiple times to stop his Christian activities.
- In June 2024, six Christians were arrested in Khammouane province while preparing for a church service.

These examples reveal the government's fear of Christianity spreading and its readiness to take extreme measures to prevent access to the Bible



Laos' rural society is deeply rooted in animistic and Buddhist traditions, where religion is tightly interwoven with cultural identity. Converts to Christianity disrupt this balance and are seen as inviting misfortune on their communities by rejecting spirit worship. Village leaders often ban Christians from using local cemeteries, exclude them from community events, and even impose financial penalties on those found possessing a Bible.

In many villages, Christian families are forcibly expelled, losing their homes, farms, and possessions. Without access to land or employment, these displaced Christians face extreme poverty, making it nearly impossible to acquire a Bible. Families of converts often pressure them to recant their faith, and some resort to violence to force compliance.

One of the greatest challenges for Christians is burial rites. In many villages, Christian burials are forbidden unless the family performs animistic rituals or pays heavy fines. The fear of being cut off from their ancestral land prevents some families from fully embracing Christianity, further restricting Bible access and spiritual growth.



Buddhism is the dominant religion in Laos, with deep ties to the national identity. Many Christian converts, particularly those from Buddhist backgrounds, experience discrimination from both monks and community leaders. Christians are frequently accused of betraying their culture, and some Buddhist-majority areas have even attempted to re-convert believers through forced participation in Buddhist ceremonies.

Christian children in schools are often pressured into reciting Buddhist prayers or participating in religious ceremonies against their beliefs. Refusing to do so can lead to academic penalties or social exclusion. In some cases, Christian students have been denied access to education altogether simply because of their faith.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN LAOS

Against the backdrop of persecution, government restrictions, and limited resources, Bible access in Laos remains low. Further research indicates that only a fraction of believers have access to Scripture

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Despite facing severe restrictions, the Christian community in Laos is growing. However, with this growth comes an urgent need for Bibles to sustain discipleship and evangelism. Research indicates up to **25,000 Bibles** are needed urgently – most of these for existing believers, while there is also a need for Bibles for seekers exploring the Christian faith as the church continues to grow.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

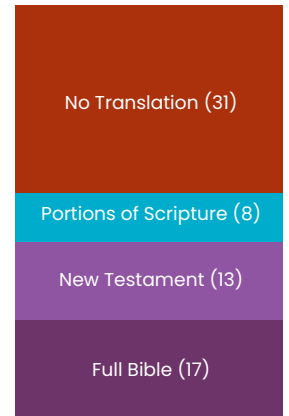
Due to Laos' socio-economic conditions and literacy challenges, **audio Bibles are the highest priority** for distribution, followed by printed copies. Many believers, especially in rural areas, have low literacy rates or limited access to printed materials. Audio Bibles provide an essential means for believers to engage with Scripture, particularly for those who cannot read or who live in areas where printed Bibles are scarce or risky to own. Print Bibles remain crucial, especially for church leaders and congregations who gather in secret.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Language diversity presents another significant challenge in making Scripture accessible. The 7.7 million people of Laos speak well over 90 different languages, research indicates that there are known believers among 69 of these languages. However, the availability of Scripture remains low among them:

- **Only 17 of these languages** have a full Bible translation.
- **13 languages** only have the New Testament.
- **8 languages** have only a portion of the Bible translated.
- **31 languages** still have no Scripture translation at all

This translation gap leaves entire communities without access to God's Word in their native tongue, making it difficult to fully engage with the gospel. While there may be additional languages spoken by believers that are yet to be identified, we know that millions of Laotians are still waiting to hear the gospel in a language they can understand. Expanding Bible translation efforts remain a critical step in ensuring that no believer is left without the hope and guidance of Scripture.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Laos

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Laos is not just a logistical issue—it represents a deep spiritual hunger among the country's believers. In a nation where Christianity is viewed with suspicion and where converts face expulsion, imprisonment, and even violence, access to Scripture is a lifeline of hope and strength. Meeting this urgent demand requires overcoming numerous barriers—whether government restrictions, economic hardship, or translation challenges.

By prioritizing **audio and print Bible distribution, investing in translation efforts, and developing innovative strategies to discreetly provide Bibles**, we can ensure that every believer in Laos has access to the transformative power of God's Word. The time to act is now.



2.5%

Annual Church Growth



Bibles needed for both

Believers & Seekers



10k-25k

Bible needs estimate



Audio Bible

Preferred Format



Printed Bible

Format 2nd Priority