



Bible Access List

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

Rwanda

Bible Restrictions Rank: **79**
MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **14**
Bible needs estimate between one and three million



An Overview of Bible Access in Rwanda

Rwanda's Christian population makes up nearly 92% of its 14.4 million people, meaning that over 13 million Rwandans identify as believers. Despite this strong Christian presence, access to Bibles remains a significant challenge. Less than one-third of Christians in Rwanda own a copy of Scripture. While there are no legal restrictions in place, practical barriers exist that heavily hinder Bible access.

Rwanda's history is one of unimaginable pain and remarkable recovery. The 1994 genocide left behind wounds that no infrastructure or economic growth alone could heal. In the years since, the country has rebuilt with impressive strides. However, while physical reconstruction is visible, the need for spiritual restoration runs just as deep.

Legally, there are no restrictions on importing, owning, or distributing Bibles in Rwanda. But religious institutions, especially churches, must adhere to strict regulations. This is where the bottleneck often happens, where Christians can be cut off from resources and hindered from fully practicing the faith (including accessing Bibles) if requirements are not met.

The challenge also lies in affordability and access. The cost of printing locally is so high that the Bible Society of Rwanda must outsource production to countries like Korea and China. Even then, the final cost makes Bibles unattainable for many, especially in rural and impoverished communities.

Digital options are expanding, but they are not yet a dependable solution. Many areas still lack reliable internet or electricity, making online Bibles inaccessible to those who might need them most. For believers in these regions, printed and audio Bibles are essential, but remain in short supply.

Before we continue, would you take a moment to pray for Rwanda?

How can I pray for Rwanda?

- **Spiritual Growth & Healing.** Pray that every Rwandan Christian who desires a Bible would receive one, and that God's Word would bring healing to communities still recovering from past trauma.
- **Provision & Access.** Ask God to provide the financial and logistical means to increase Bible distribution across the country, especially for those in rural and impoverished areas.
- **Strength for the Church.** Pray for the continued growth of the Church in Rwanda, that believers would remain strong in their faith and have access to the spiritual resources they need to thrive.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Minimal Access Restrictions

Other Limiting Factors

Considerable Other Factors



Extremely poor



Poor internet access



Poor infrastructure



50-70% of population access to electricity

Bible Shortages Among Believers



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

Main religion: Christianity

Country population: 14,415,000

Christian population:



13,226,000, 91.76% of total population

World Watch List: #64

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN RWANDA?

A Nation Under Tight Control

Despite Rwanda's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom, the government maintains a tight grip on religious institutions. Churches must comply with strict regulations, including obtaining legal status through the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), meeting building safety codes, and ensuring that all pastors hold theological degrees from accredited institutions. These requirements disproportionately impact smaller, less-resourced churches, many of which have been shut down as a result.

Over the past few years, at least 4,000 churches and other Christian properties have been attacked or damaged, effectively closing most of their operations, further limiting Bible access and spiritual community for thousands of believers. Many of these churches struggle to reopen due to bureaucratic hurdles and government scrutiny, leaving Christians—especially those from non-traditional denominations—without places to gather, worship, or share Scripture.

Daily Risks and Bible Access

While owning and distributing Bibles is not illegal in Rwanda, believers—especially those in non-traditional church communities—operate under constant surveillance. The government has embedded security agents within religious circles, monitoring church activities, Christian leaders, and even personal conversations. This widespread surveillance creates a climate of fear, discouraging open Bible study, evangelism, and Christian gatherings.

Beyond government control, practical barriers further restrict access. Nearly two-thirds of Rwandan Christians do not own a Bible, often due to economic hardship. The government does not restrict Bible imports, but high taxation and the costs of printing force organizations to outsource production, making Bibles too expensive for many.

Poverty and Practical Barriers

Rwanda's economic landscape presents significant challenges for Bible distribution. While the country has experienced rapid economic growth, poverty remains widespread, with over half of the population living below the international poverty line. For many families, purchasing a Bible is simply not a financial priority when survival needs come first.

Additionally, Rwanda's digital infrastructure is expanding, but internet penetration remains low, particularly in rural areas where many Christians live. Just over a third of the population has access to the internet, and fewer than 7% use social media, making digital Bible access limited. For those in remote areas, the lack of electricity and internet further complicates access to both print and digital Bibles.

The Hidden Struggles of Non-Traditional Christian Communities

Pentecostal and Evangelical churches in Rwanda, which have grown significantly in recent years, face the brunt of government interference. These churches have been disproportionately affected by closures, surveillance, and restrictions on leadership training. Some traditional religious institutions have aligned with the government to suppress the growth of these groups, further marginalizing their members.

With many churches closed and gathering spaces restricted, Bible access for these believers is increasingly difficult. Some resort to underground meetings or private Bible study, but the risks of government monitoring and intervention remain high.

A Call to Overcome the Barriers

Despite these challenges, there is a clear and growing hunger for Scripture in Rwanda. Providing Bibles in accessible formats—whether print, digital, or audio—will be essential in overcoming economic and logistical barriers. Additionally, supporting church communities that face government pressure and persecution will help ensure that every Rwandan Christian can access and engage with God’s Word.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Rwanda

Rwanda	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 → Persecution Drivers ↓	Weak	Not at all	Not at all	Very weak	Medium	Not at all	Weak	Very strong	Not at all	<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>
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										

Despite Rwanda’s high percentage of Christians and lack of direct legal restrictions, some forces still create barriers to hinder Bible access. These forces stem primarily from **dictatorial paranoia** and **Christian denominational protectionism**, which are often driven by **government officials**, **violent religious groups**, **normal citizens**, and **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 Rwanda?

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.



Government Control Over Churches

In recent years, the Rwandan government has tightened its control over religious life in the country. The current government has enacted laws that give it sweeping authority over religious institutions.

A clear example of this came in 2018, when a law was introduced requiring all churches to register with the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB). To do so, they had to submit extensive documentation, meet strict safety and noise standards, and ensure that their pastors held a university-level degree in religious studies.

The consequences of this policy were severe. By 2024, over 4,000 churches were forced to shut down, with many unable to meet the government’s requirements for building safety or theological credentials. In some cases, churches were closed for lacking parking lots, even in communities where congregants typically walk to church. Others were required to install sound-proofing, a standard not equally applied to entertainment venues or other gathering spaces.

The government’s involvement didn’t stop at regulation. Christian leaders reported that security agents routinely conducted searches of pastors’ homes, contributing to a pervasive atmosphere of surveillance and intimidation. Churches that do not align with the government’s ideological expectations risk being labeled “revisionists” and shut down without warning.

This climate of fear directly impacts Bible access. Many of the churches that were closed once served as central points for distributing Bibles, hosting study groups, and nurturing new believers. Without them, thousands of Rwandan Christians, especially in lower-income or rural areas, have lost reliable channels to obtain and engage with Scripture.



Pressure from Within

Alongside government pressure, internal religious dynamics also play a role in restricting Bible access. In 2024, there have been examples of some leaders within the Catholic Church who have provided information to government officials about these emerging churches, contributing to closures and increased scrutiny.

Even within families, converts who leave Catholicism for non-traditional Christian groups often face ostracism or rejection. Extended family members sometimes report their activities to authorities, adding yet another layer of control and discouragement. These forms of social and institutional pressure can isolate believers, making it far more difficult to gain access to Bibles for personal use, especially in group settings such as home churches or study circles that may now be deemed suspicious.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN RWANDA

Despite Rwanda's large Christian population, the need for Bibles is profound. Research estimates that less than one-third of Christians have access to Scripture, leaving millions without God's Word. To meet the needs of believers, an estimated between 1 to 3 million Bibles are required. Additionally, as Rwanda's churches grow, additional Bibles are needed for seekers exploring the Christian faith.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Rwanda's church has experienced modest growth in the last five years, demonstrating an urgent need to supply new believers with Bibles. With people turning to Christ, access to Scripture is critical for discipleship, spiritual maturity, and strengthening the faith of Rwanda's Christian community. Without access to the Bible, many believers are left without the foundational truths needed to deepen their relationship with God and navigate life's challenges.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

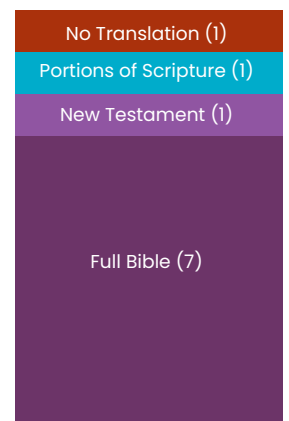
In terms of Bible formats, **printed copies** remain the most urgent priority due to the limited digital infrastructure in rural areas. **Audio Bibles** are also essential, particularly for those who are unable to read or have restricted access to written materials.

The Translation Gap

Christians in Rwanda speak at least 10 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **7** languages in Rwanda have the full Bible
- **1** has only the New Testament
- **1** has only a portion translated
- **1 language still lacks any Bible translation at all**

The current translation gaps leave some communities without the ability to fully engage with God's Word, limiting their spiritual growth and discipleship opportunities.



Spoken Languages with Believers in Rwanda

THE CLARION CALL

The need for Bibles in Rwanda is not just about numbers; it is about lives longing for the truth of God's Word. The Bible represents hope, healing, and transformation for a nation still rebuilding from its painful past.

For millions of believers, it is the key to spiritual resilience and growth. Meeting this urgent need requires a global response, one that prioritizes distribution, translation, and innovative solutions to overcome economic and logistical barriers. Every believer in Rwanda deserves access to Scripture.

Now is the time to act, ensuring that no Christian is left without the life-changing power of God's Word.



2.1%

Annual Church
Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



1-3 million

Bible needs estimate



**Printed
Bible**

Preferred Format



**Audio
Bible**

Format 2nd Priority