



El Salvador

Bible Restrictions Rank: **85**
MINIMAL ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible shortage has been confirmed



An Overview of Bible access in El Salvador

El Salvador is a nation where Christianity is deeply woven into the fabric of society, with around 96% of the population identifying as Christian. Unlike in many other parts of the world, there are no legal barriers to Bible access. Scripture can be freely imported, printed, and shared through bookstores and churches across the country. However, despite these freedoms, a significant portion of believers still lack access to a Bible. Only a little over half of the Christian population have access, highlighting a deeper need to make the Bible more available.

For many Salvadorans, poverty remains a major barrier. While Bibles are accessible in theory, economic hardship means that purchasing one is simply not a priority for those struggling to meet basic needs. In communities where resources are scarce, even freely available Bibles do not always reach those who need them most. While El Salvador has made remarkable progress in reducing gang violence, memories of past instability still shape how some ministry work is carried out. In certain communities, pastors and Christian leaders remain cautious, as former gang strongholds may still carry residual risks. Though Bible access is not formally restricted, these dynamics can influence how and where Scripture is shared.

When it comes to accessing Bibles online, only over 60% of the population is connected, limiting the reach of digital Bibles, apps, and online Christian resources. For those in rural or impoverished areas, access to God's Word remains primarily dependent on printed copies, which may not always be available or affordable.

Before we continue, would you take a moment to pause and pray for El Salvador?

Bible Access Restrictions

Minimal Access Restrictions

Other Limiting Factors

Some Other Factors



Poor infrastructure

Bible Shortages Among Believers



Bibles are needed for believers and seekers

Main religion: Christianity

Country population: 6,396,000

Christian population:



6,165,000, 96.39% of total population

How can I pray for El Salvador?

- **Provision and Accessibility.** Ask God to provide Bibles to those who desire them but cannot afford them, ensuring that every believer has the opportunity to engage with His Word.
- **Safety for Christian Leaders.** Pray for pastors and ministry workers, especially in areas affected by gang violence, that they may continue sharing the gospel without fear or opposition.
- **Spiritual Growth.** Pray that the church in El Salvador would continue to grow in faith and discipleship, making the most of the resources available to strengthen believers.

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

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN EL SALVADOR?

At first glance, El Salvador seems like a country with without obstacles to Bible access. With a predominantly Christian population, no legal restrictions on owning, printing, or distributing Bibles, and a strong religious presence in society, one might assume that every believer has easy access to Scripture. However, beneath these freedoms lie deeper, less visible barriers—ones rooted in poverty, violence, and limited educational infrastructure.

Violence and Security Concerns

El Salvador has made remarkable strides in reducing crime and gang violence. Once considered one of the most dangerous countries in the world, the nation has seen its homicide rate plummet from an all-time high of 115 per 100,000 people in 2015 to just 1.89 in 2024—a stunning improvement that reflects major national efforts toward safety and stability.

Despite this progress, the legacy of gang control still lingers in some communities. Groups like MS-13 and Barrio 18, while weakened, continue to hold influence in certain areas, creating a climate of caution for churches and Christian leaders. While there are no official restrictions on Bible distribution, the presence of organized crime in these pockets can complicate outreach efforts.

In rare cases, pastors have been accused—sometimes unjustly—of affiliating with gangs, especially when working in marginalized neighborhoods. These dynamics do not amount to nationwide persecution, but they do introduce complexity and risk in localized ministry work. For some believers, especially in lower-income or high-risk zones, Bible access can be affected not by legal obstacles, but by the undercurrents of fear and tension that still exist in parts of the country.

Though there are no direct reports of Bibles being confiscated or banned in these high-crime areas, the indirect impact of violence cannot be ignored. Fear of retaliation, movement restrictions, and the unpredictability of gang-controlled zones create an environment where Bible distribution efforts may be hindered. Churches in affected areas may struggle to function as safe community hubs for discipleship and spiritual growth, limiting access to Bibles even in a country where they are technically available.

Poverty and Economic Hardships

El Salvador's economic challenges also present a significant barrier to Bible access. While there are Christian bookstores and Bibles available for purchase, the reality is that many Salvadorans simply cannot afford one. With nearly a third of the population living in poverty, survival takes precedence over spiritual resources. For those struggling to provide food, shelter, and basic necessities, the cost of a printed Bible may be beyond reach.

Even when Bibles are made available through donation programs, distribution can be inconsistent, particularly in rural or underserved communities. Many families rely on their church or local ministries for access to Scripture, rather than owning a personal copy. In cases where churches are unable to provide Bibles due to financial constraints, believers may go without, relying instead on shared resources or verbal teaching.

Educational and Digital Barriers

Another factor impacting Bible access is the digital divide. While internet access is considered safe in El Salvador, only a little over 60% of the population has reliable connectivity. This means that digital Bibles, Bible apps, and online Christian resources, while growing in popularity, are still inaccessible to a significant portion of the country. In remote areas, unstable internet connections make it difficult for believers to engage with Scripture through digital platforms, leaving them reliant on printed copies that may not always be available.

The Hidden Barriers to Bible Access

While El Salvador does not experience the extreme persecution or legal restrictions seen in other nations, indirect obstacles still create a significant gap in Bible access. Gang violence, economic hardship, and digital limitations all contribute to the reality that many believers, particularly those in low-income or high-crime areas, do not have a personal copy of the Scriptures.

Addressing this need requires more than just making Bibles available; it demands targeted efforts to reach those most affected by these challenges, ensuring that every Salvadoran believer has the opportunity to engage with God's Word.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN EL SALVADOR

Despite El Salvador's strong Christian presence, access to the Bible remains a significant challenge. Research estimates that only a little over half of believers in the country own a Bible, leaving nearly half of the Christian population without personal access to Scripture. To meet the current need, **a significant number of Bibles are needed for believers, and in addition, copies for seekers are needed** as well.

A Church Growth Plateau

Being predominantly Christian, the church has remained relatively stable over the last five years. However, this lack of numerical growth does not lessen the urgency for Bibles, it in fact supports it. With Christianity already embedded in the majority of the population, the priority is no longer just evangelism but sustaining and equipping the church. Without widespread access to Scripture, faith can stagnate, discipleship can weaken, and the next generation may grow up without the biblical foundation they need.

Bible Formats For Unique Needs

Given the realities of poverty and unique landscape, **printed Bibles** remain the most crucial format for distribution in El Salvador. As digital and online resources are growing, accessing **Bibles on the internet** is also a viable solution to solve access issues. Additionally, for those who struggle with literacy or live in isolated regions, audio Bibles provide a vital alternative, ensuring that the Word of God reaches even those who cannot read.

The Challenge of Bible Translations

Language diversity presents another challenge to Bible access. Salvadoran Christians speak at least **11 different languages**. But more needs to be done:

- Only **6** languages have full Bible translations.
- **1** language has only the New Testament.
- **2** have only portions of Scripture translated.
- **2** remain without any translation at all

Until every language group in El Salvador has access to the complete Word of God, many will remain unable to engage with Scripture in a way that speaks directly to their hearts.



Spoken Languages with Believers in El Salvador

THE CLARION CALL

This is a defining moment for the global church to respond. The need in El Salvador is not just about numbers—it is about sustaining faith, strengthening believers, and ensuring that every Christian has the opportunity to grow in God’s Word.

The Bible is more than a book; it is the foundation of spiritual life, a source of hope, and a guide for transformation. By stepping in to meet this need—through print distribution, audio resources, and translation efforts—we can empower a nation that is already rooted in Christianity but desperately needs access to the very words that strengthen faith. The church in El Salvador is waiting. Will we answer the call?



-0.2%
Annual Church Growth



Bibles needed for both
**Believers
& Seekers**



Printed Bible
Preferred Format



Internet Bible
Format 2nd Priority