



Vietnam

Bible Restrictions Rank: **41**
CONSIDERABLE ACCESS RESTRICTIONS

Bible Shortage Rank: **24**
Bible needs estimate between five hundred thousand and one million



An Overview of Bible Access in Vietnam

Vietnam, a country of nearly 100 million people, is home to a Christian population estimated at close to 10 million, close to 10% of the population. Even with believers numbering in the millions, Bible access remains alarmingly limited due to considerable access restrictions. It is estimated that just about one out of five Christians have direct access to scripture, highlighting a significant gap that needs to be addressed.

Bible access in Vietnam is shaped by a tightly controlled religious environment under the rule of the Communist Party. On paper, Christians may own Bibles, and some individual copies can be found in registered bookstores or church settings. However, the perception of open availability is misleading. In reality, printing Bibles in many languages is not permitted, while others are subject to strict government quotas. For any Bible, regardless of language or format, to be printed or distributed, an official permit is required. These permits are extremely difficult to obtain, especially for minority language editions and for church-based distribution efforts.

Government restrictions are compounded by bureaucratic red tape and regional inconsistencies. For example, in some tribal areas, particularly in the Central and Northwest Highlands, distribution of Bibles is functionally impossible. Even storing Bibles can be a legal gray area; only officially printed versions can be kept in churches, and those found with unapproved copies—especially ethnic minority Christians—face pressure, harassment, or worse.

Compounding these regulatory challenges is the marginalization of new converts. Christians from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly those who reject ancestral worship practices, experience rejection not only from the state but also from their own families and communities. This double vulnerability, both ethnic and religious, makes access to the Word of God a spiritual and physical battleground.

Yet amidst these difficulties, there is also potential. Vietnam boasts a high literacy rate and a digitally connected population, with nearly 80% of the population having internet access. This opens doors for online Bible engagement, especially in urban areas where monitoring is less intense.

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

How can I pray for Vietnam?

- **Increased Bible Supply and Access.** The scarce availability of Bibles in Vietnam has been a long-standing issue. Let's seek God's intervention to enhance the distribution and availability of Bibles. Pray that believers will find miraculous ways to access Scriptures, away from the scrutiny of authorities.
- **Global Partnerships and Innovative Strategies.** Pray for the international Christian organizations committed to aiding Vietnamese Christians. Ask for the Lord's guidance in discovering groundbreaking and effective strategies that enable the unimpeded flow of Scriptures to those who need it most.
- **Transformation of Hearts and Leadership.** Intercede for the leaders of Vietnam, praying for a shift in their hearts and minds. May God instill in them a new spirit of tolerance and openness, leading to policies that champion religious freedom and the free spread of the Gospel. Together, let's envision a Vietnam that welcomes and celebrates the teachers of the Bible with open arms.

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

Bible Access Restrictions

Considerable Access Restrictions



Import restrictions



Print restrictions



Storage restrictions



Ownership restrictions



Distribution restrictions

Other Limiting Factors

Some Other Factors



Poor

Bible Shortages Among Believers



Bible ownership is very low, **estimated** Bible need is between 500 thousand and 1 million

Country population: 99,498,000

Christian population:



9,778,000, 9.83% of total population

World Watch List: #44

WHAT'S BLOCKING BIBLE ACCESS IN VIETNAM?

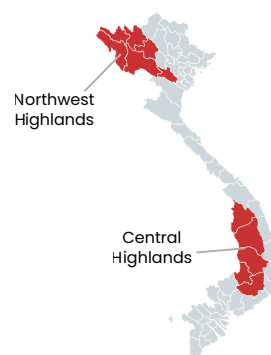
A System of Control, Not Freedom

Despite Vietnam's constitutional provision for religious freedom, in practice, Bible access is severely restricted by government systems designed to monitor and suppress Christian expression. All religious activities must be registered and approved by the state, and even state-registered churches face interference. Decree 95, enacted in 2024, grants officials broad power to shut down religious institutions, limit international donations, and restrict movement of Christian leaders, reinforcing the government's grip on religious life.

Unregistered Churches and Ethnic Minorities at Risk

Unregistered house churches, especially those among the Hmong and Montagnard ethnic minorities in the Central and Northwest Highlands, face the harshest restrictions. Christians in these areas risk being surveilled, interrogated, detained, and even beaten for holding worship gatherings or possessing Scripture.

Some have had homes destroyed or been forced out of their villages entirely for refusing to abandon their faith.



Surveillance, Harassment, and Fear

Vietnamese Christians, especially converts, are monitored both online and offline. The government mobilizes neighborhood watch systems and informants to report Christian gatherings. Phones are tapped, emails are censored, and informants often infiltrate churches. Christians who post about their faith online are harassed or reported.

Even minor public displays of faith, such as crosses on homes, can trigger police action.

Barriers to Printed and Imported Bibles

Importing Christian materials, including Bibles, is heavily regulated. Churches must submit all printed materials to government review, and translated texts, especially those in ethnic minority languages, face even more scrutiny.

The process for importing or printing Bibles is intentionally burdensome, leading many churches to smuggle in small quantities or rely on hand-copied Scripture.

Education, Social Services, and Access Denied

Christian children are sometimes denied school registration or forced to participate in rituals that contradict their faith. Converts lose access to essential government documents like birth certificates and household registrations, effectively cutting them off from education, employment, and healthcare. In some cases, social benefits such as clean water or food aid are withheld from Christian families.

A Culture of Coercion

Beyond government policies, Christians face intense pressure from their families and communities to abandon their faith. Accusations of betraying ancestral traditions often lead to ostracism or violence. Tribal leaders may expel converts from the village, destroy their fields, or cut them off from community resources. These acts are rarely punished by local officials and sometimes carried out with their cooperation.

Unmasking the Forces That Restrict Bible Access in Vietnam

Vietnam	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 ↓	Not at all	Very weak	Very weak	Strong	Not at all	Very strong	Not at all	Medium	Medium	
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 Vietnam, multiple persecution forces operate simultaneously to restrict Bible access, including **Communist and post-Communist oppression, clan oppression, dictatorial paranoia,** and **organized corruption and crime**. These are driven by government officials, Communist Party leaders, extended family members, ethnic group leaders, and even neighbors in remote communities.

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 Vietnam?

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.



Controlling the Faithful

The Vietnamese Communist Party maintains strict ideological control, treating Christianity, especially among ethnic minorities, as a threat to national unity and cultural identity. Religious groups must register with the government's Committee on Religious Affairs, but this process is opaque, slow, and frequently manipulated. Even registered churches like the Evangelical Church of Vietnam-South (ECVN-S) have been denied permission to gather or expand.

In 2024, Decree No. 95 replaced earlier laws with even tighter restrictions, allowing authorities to shut down churches, religious schools, and local fundraising efforts. The law enables local authorities to block the printing, importing, or distribution of Bibles, particularly in ethnic minority languages. In one case from March 2024, police in Dak Lak province interrupted a church gathering and later interrogated attendees, illustrating how local officials implement national directives to limit Bible-related activity.

In the Central Highlands and northwestern provinces, Christians, many of whom are Protestant converts from ethnic minorities, are seen as "American religion followers" or remnants of foreign influence. In these areas, Christians are under constant surveillance, with informants stationed outside churches, and phone calls and emails monitored.



Faith vs. Ancestral Allegiance

For ethnic minority Christians, persecution often begins at home. Converts to Christianity—especially from traditional animist or ancestor-worshipping backgrounds—are viewed as traitors to their clan's identity. Families may cut off ties, withhold inheritance, and in some cases, force divorce or deny child custody.

Entire villages have enforced "zero-Christian" policies, forcing believers to recant their faith or leave. In one reported case, a Hmong Christian woman was expelled from her village along with her daughter after refusing to renounce her faith. Such expulsions mean not just social rejection but the loss of access to shared land, water, and essential services, cutting off any possibility of receiving a Bible or participating in Christian fellowship.

Village leaders, in collaboration with local authorities, have been known to destroy Christian homes and fields to drive out converts. These acts, while framed as protecting cultural heritage, effectively erase any physical or spiritual access to Scripture for the affected families.



Policing the Church

Vietnam's one-party regime uses laws and security forces to suppress anything it views as a challenge to state control. The church, particularly non-traditional or unregistered congregations, is treated as a potential source of dissent.

In 2024, at least two Christian men were sentenced to long prison terms for holding or attending unauthorized religious meetings. In one case, the court sentenced a man to 13 years for allegedly "sabotaging national unity" by organizing online faith-based gatherings. In another case, a house church in Dak Lak was raided and banned from further assembly, with attendees interrogated afterward.

These forms of state intimidation often target Bible access directly. Churches cannot hold events without prior government approval, and unregistered churches are prohibited from receiving or distributing Christian literature. Any shipment of Bibles, especially in minority languages, is subject to seizure under the vague terms of "dangerous" or "subversive" content.



The Price of Silence

Corruption among local officials and police often intersects with persecution. In urban areas, government officials and criminal groups target Catholic and ethnic minority church property for land-grabbing. Although the frequency of such incidents may be declining, the threat persists.

Churches often face extortion during the application process to register their congregation or import Christian materials. Without bribes or political connections, it is virtually impossible to obtain permission to print Bibles, conduct outreach, or even hold small study groups. In some cases, officials confiscate church land and repurpose it for development, forcing congregations to disband and relocate, with zero access to their resources, including Bibles.

THE URGENT NEED FOR BIBLES IN VIETNAM

Against the backdrop of increasing surveillance, systemic poverty, and deep-rooted hostility toward Christianity, especially in ethnic minority communities, Bible access in Vietnam remains alarmingly low. Given that the number of believers are in the millions, supplying them between 500,000 and up to a million Bibles will make a huge difference in bridging the gap.

A Growing Church, A Growing Demand

Despite persistent persecution, the church in Vietnam is growing. Over the past five years, the Christian population has expanded! This growth represents not only a sign of spiritual hunger but also a challenge. As more people come to faith, the supply of Scripture must keep pace.

In the Central and Northwest Highlands, where Evangelical movements among ethnic minorities are growing fastest, the demand for Bibles is rising sharply. Many of these communities are already isolated and face increasing scrutiny from authorities, meaning any delay in Scripture access risks stalling the growth of the church.

Bible Formats for Diverse Needs

Given the context of Bible access in Vietnam, the priority format for Scripture is still **printed hardcopies**. For those who cannot read or live in high-surveillance zones where printed materials may pose a risk, **audio Bibles** serve as a crucial alternative.

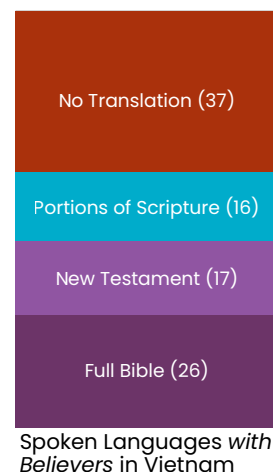
While internet penetration is high in urban areas, digital formats remain inaccessible to many in remote regions where connectivity is weak or monitored. Offering Bibles in multiple formats is essential to reach believers across all socioeconomic and regional barriers.

The Translation Gap

Vietnam's linguistic diversity further complicates access to Scripture. Christians in the country speak at least 96 languages. Of these languages:

- Only **26** of these languages have a complete Bible translation
- **17** have only the New Testament translated
- **16** have only portions of Scripture translated
- **37 are languages still without any Scripture available**

This translation gap means that many ethnic believers, particularly among the Hmong, Jarai, Sedang, and Mngong peoples, are still waiting to encounter the Gospel in a language they fully understand.



THE CLARION CALL

Vietnam's need for Bibles is not just statistical; it is a spiritual wake up call. In a country where Christian children are mocked in schools, converts are expelled from their villages, and pastors are imprisoned for preaching the Word, the Bible becomes more than a book. It is a source of courage, identity, and hope.

Now is the time for the global Church to respond. Through prayer, generosity, and partnership, we can meet this growing need. We must prioritize Bible distribution in print and audio, invest in translation work for the remaining languages, and develop strategies to safely get Bibles into the hands of those who are desperate for truth.

The harvest is ripe in Vietnam. Let us not delay in sending the seed of God's Word.

