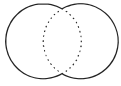


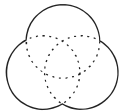
Overview



Transparency:

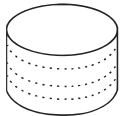
79 /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public Participation:

37 /100



Budget Oversight:

63 /100

About the survey

Government budget decisions – what taxes to levy, what services to provide, and how much debt to take on – have important consequences for all people in society. When governments provide information and meaningful channels for the public to engage in these decisions, we can better ensure public money is spent on public interests.

The Open Budget Survey (OBS) is the world’s only independent, comparative and fact-based research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; and the role of budget oversight institutions, such as legislatures and national audit offices, in the budget process.

The survey helps local civil society assess and confer with their government on the reporting and use of public funds. This 8th edition of the OBS covers 120 countries.

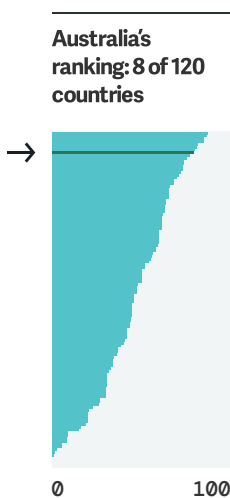
Visit www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey for more information, including the full OBS methodology, the 2021 Global and Regional Reports, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.

Transparency

This part of the OBS measures public access to information on how the central government raises and spends public resources. It assesses the **online availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness** of eight key budget documents using 109 equally weighted indicators and scores each country on a scale of 0 to 100. **A transparency score of 61 or above indicates a country is likely publishing enough material to support informed public debate on the budget.**

Australia has a transparency score of **79** (out of 100).

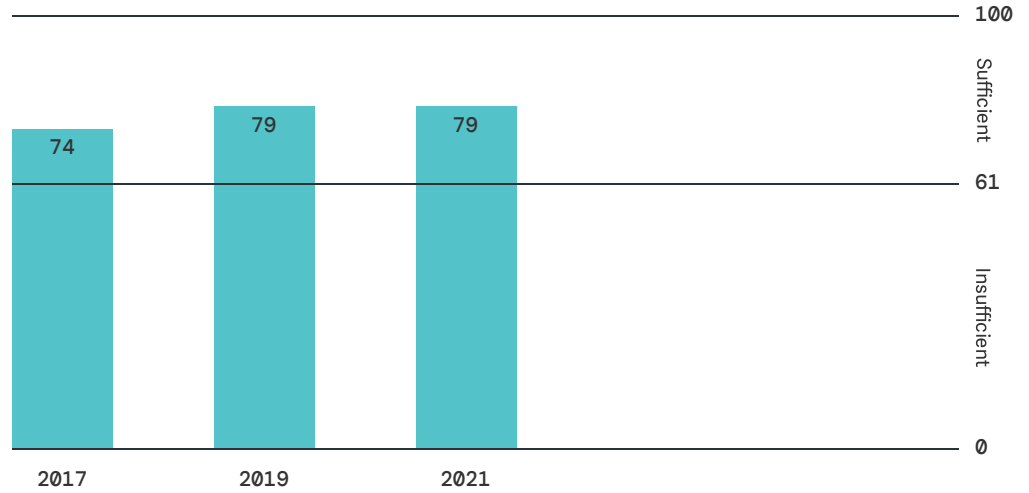
Transparency in Australia compared to others



Global Average	45
OECD Average	66
New Zealand	85
Australia	79
United Kingdom	74
Germany	73
France	72
United States	68
Canada	31

0 Insufficient 61 Sufficient 100

How has the transparency score for Australia changed over time?



Public availability of budget documents in Australia

KEY	
●	Available to the Public
●	Published Late, or Not Published Online, or Produced for Internal Use Only
⊘	Not Produced

Document	2017	2019	2021
Pre-Budget Statement	●	●	●
Executive's Budget Proposal	●	●	●
Enacted Budget	●	●	●
Citizens Budget	●	●	●
In-Year Reports	●	●	●
Mid-Year Review	●	●	●
Year-End Report	●	●	●
Audit Report	●	●	●

How comprehensive is the content of the key budget documents that Australia makes available to the public?

KEY	
● 61-100 / 100	
● 41-60 / 100	
● 1-40 / 100	

Key budget document	Document purpose and contents	Fiscal year assessed	Document content score
Pre-Budget Statement	Discloses the broad parameters of fiscal policies in advance of the Executive's Budget Proposal; outlines the government's economic forecast, anticipated revenue, expenditures, and debt.	2020-21	67
Executive's Budget Proposal	Submitted by the executive to the legislature for approval; details the sources of revenue, the allocations to ministries, proposed policy changes, and other information important for understanding the country's fiscal situation.	2020-21	81
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2020-21	78
Citizens Budget	A simpler and less technical version of the government's Executive's Budget Proposal or the Enacted Budget, designed to convey key information to the public.	2020-21	58
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2019-20 & 2020-21	74
Mid-Year Review	A comprehensive update on the implementation of the budget as of the middle of the fiscal year; includes a review of economic assumptions and an updated forecast of budget outcomes.	2020-21	93
Year-End Report	Describes the situation of the government's accounts at the end of the fiscal year and, ideally, an evaluation of the progress made toward achieving the budget's policy goals.	2019-20	79
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2019-20	81

Australia's transparency score of **79** in the OBS 2021 is largely the same as its score in 2019.

What changed in OBS 2021?

Australia has increased the availability of budget information by:

- Publishing the Pre-Budget Statement online.

Recommendations

Australia should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

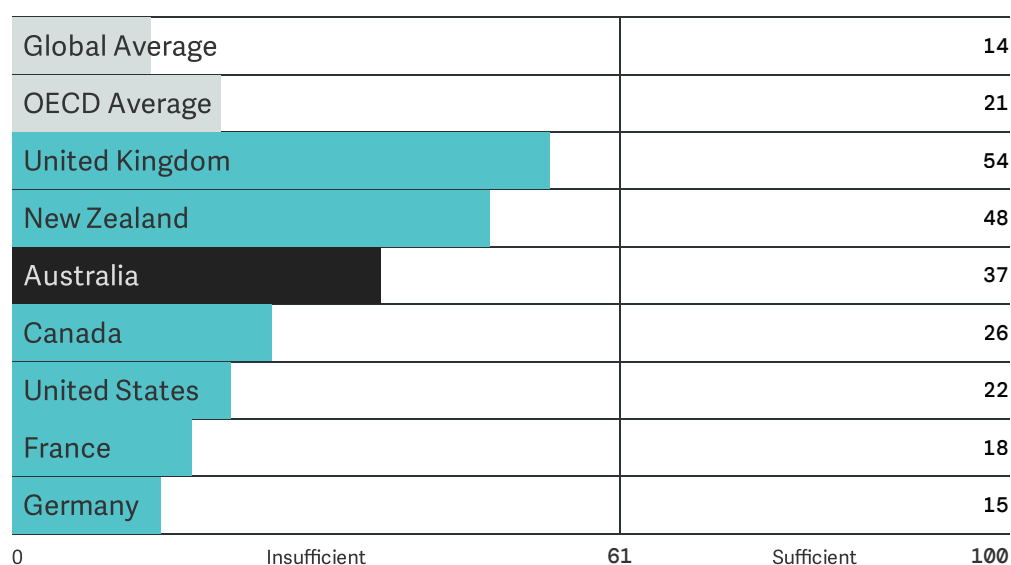
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Citizens Budget by establishing mechanisms to identify the public's requirements for budget information, and by publishing citizens versions of budget documents covering the approval, execution, and audit phases of the budget cycle.

Public Participation

The OBS assesses the formal opportunities offered to the public for meaningful participation in the different stages of the budget process. It examines the practices of the central government’s executive, the legislature, and the supreme audit institution (SAI) using 18 equally weighted indicators, aligned with the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency’s [Principles of Public Participation in Fiscal Policies](#), and scores each country on a scale from 0 to 100.

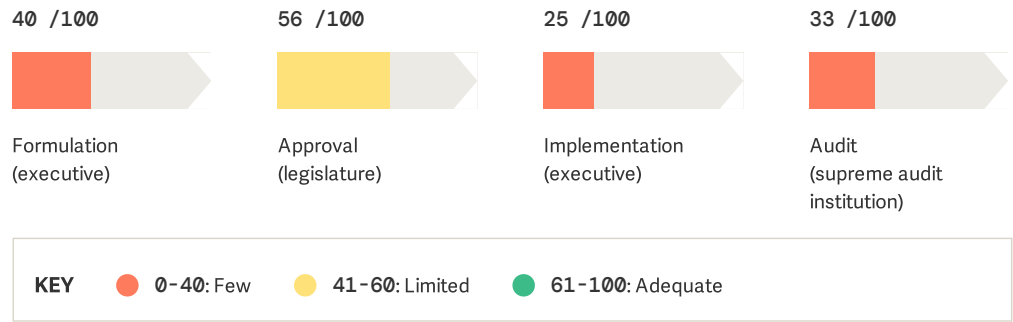
Australia has a public participation score of **37** (out of 100).

Public participation in Australia compared to others



For more information, see [here](#) for innovative public participation practices around the world.

Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



Recommendations

The Treasury, Australian Government has established pre-budget submissions during budget formulation and policy consultations during budget implementation but, to further strengthen public participation in the budget process, should also prioritize the following actions:

- Expand mechanisms during budget implementation to engage any civil society organization or member of the public who wishes to participate.
- Actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them.

The Parliament of Australia has established public submissions related to the approval of the annual budget, but should also prioritize the following actions:

- Allow any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval.
- Allow members of the public or civil society organizations to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.

The Australian National Audit Office has established mechanisms to contribute to relevant audit investigations. It should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in the budget process:

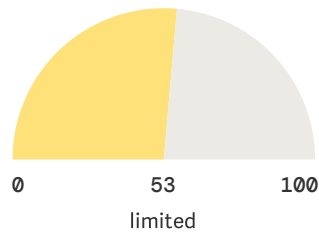
- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist in developing its audit program.

Budget Oversight

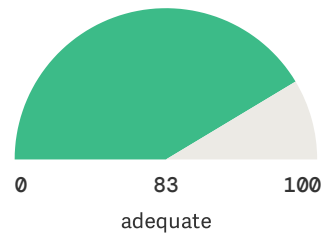
The OBS examines the role that legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play in the budget process and the extent to which they provide oversight; each country is scored on a scale from 0 to 100 based on 18 equally weighted indicators. In addition, the survey collects supplementary information on independent fiscal institutions (see Box).

The legislature and supreme audit institution in Australia, together, provide adequate oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **63** (out of 100). Taken individually, the extent of each institution's oversight is shown below:

Legislative oversight



Audit oversight



KEY ● 0-40: Few ● 41-60: Limited ● 61-100: Adequate

Recommendations

The Parliament of Australia provides limited oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and limited oversight during the implementation stage. To improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- The Parliament of Australia should debate budget policy before the Executive's Budget Proposal is tabled and approve recommendations for the upcoming budget.
- The Executive's Budget Proposal should be submitted to legislators at least two months before the start of the budget year.

- The Parliament of Australia should again approve the Executive's Budget Proposal (EBP) before the start of the budget year. The delayed 2020-21 EBP was an exception due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to a delayed budget. During a standard budget cycle, the EBP is normally approved by the legislature before the start of the budget year on 1 July.
- A legislative committee should examine in-year budget implementation and publish reports with their findings online.
- A legislative committee should examine the Audit Report and publish a report with their findings online.

To strengthen independence and improve audit oversight by the Australian National Audit Office, the following actions are recommended:

- Ensure that the Australian National Audit Office has adequate funding to perform its duties, as determined by an independent body (e.g., the legislature or judiciary).

The emerging practice of establishing independent fiscal institutions

Australia's independent fiscal institution (IFI) is the Parliamentary Budget Office. Its independence is set in law, and it reports to the legislature. It publishes its own medium-term fiscal forecasts, and its own cost estimates of some new policy proposals.

The indicators on IFIs are not scored in the Open Budget Survey.

Methodology

- Only documents published and events, activities, or developments that took place through 31 December 2020 were assessed in the OBS 2021.
- The survey is based on a questionnaire completed in each country by an independent budget expert:
Miranda Stewart; Teck Chi Wong; Riley Smithers
Australian National University
Canberra, ACT, 2600 Australia
m.stewart@unimelb.edu.au; teckchi.wong@anu.edu.au;
u6955443@anu.edu.au
- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert, and in Australia by a representative of the Treasury.