

# United Kingdom

## Overview



### Transparency:

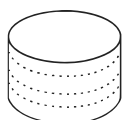
**62** /100

(Open Budget Index score)



### Public Participation:

**54** /100



### Budget Oversight:

**56** /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.

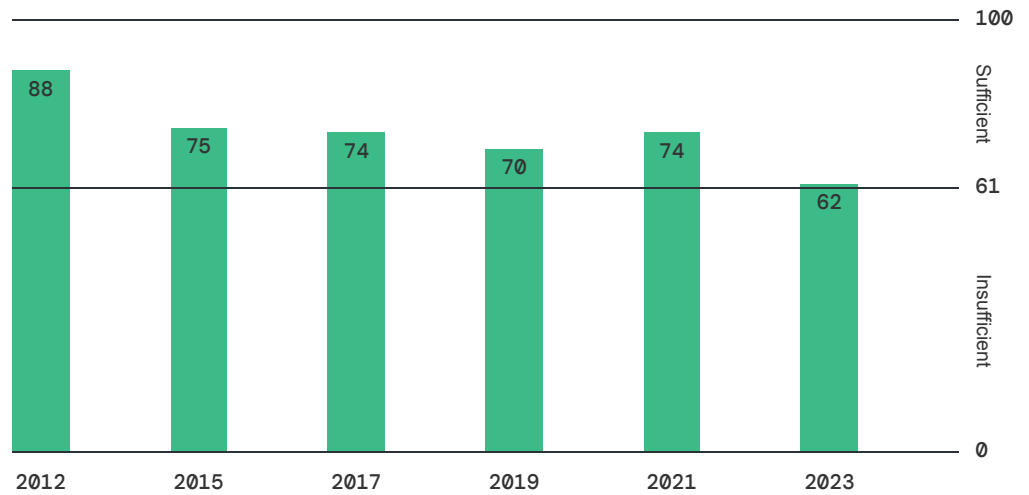
**The Open Budget Survey (OBS)** is the world’s only independent, comparative and fact-based research instrument that uses internationally accepted criteria to assess public access to central government budget information; formal opportunities for the public to participate in the national budget process; 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 9th edition of the OBS covers 125 countries.

Visit [www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey](http://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey) for more information, including the full OBS methodology, the 2023 Global Report, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.



# How has the transparency score for United Kingdom changed over time?



## Public availability of budget documents in United Kingdom

KEY	
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	Available to the Public
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	Published Late, or Not Published Online, or Produced for Internal Use Only
<span style="color: red;">⊘</span>	Not Produced

Document	2012	2015	2017	2019	2021	2023
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 United Kingdom makes available to the public?

KEY	
<span style="color: green;">●</span>	61-100 / 100
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span>	41-60 / 100
<span style="color: red;">●</span>	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.	2022-23	Not Produced
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.	2022-23	70
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2022-23	22
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.	2022-23	Not Produced
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2022-23	93
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.	2022-23	85
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.	2021-22	69
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2020-21	Internal Use

United Kingdom's transparency score of **62** in the OBS 2023 is substantially lower than its score in 2021.

## What changed in OBS 2023?

United Kingdom has decreased the availability of budget information by:

- Producing the Audit Report for internal use only.
- Failing to produce the Pre-Budget Statement.

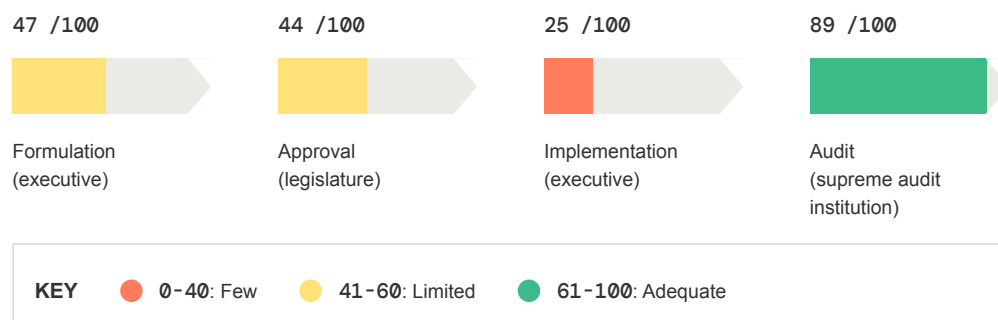
## Recommendations

United Kingdom should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish the Audit Report online in a timely manner.
- Produce and publish the Pre-Budget Statement and Citizens Budget online in a timely manner.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Enacted Budget by including a presentation of expenditures by functional and economic classifications, as well as by individual program.



# Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



## Recommendations

United Kingdom's Treasury has established pre-budget submissions during budget formulation and e-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.

United Kingdom's Parliament has established public hearings related to the approval of the annual budget and public hearings and submissions related to the review of the Audit Report, but should also prioritize the following actions:

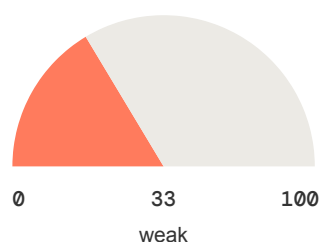
- Allow any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the budget proposal prior to its approval.

# Budget Oversight

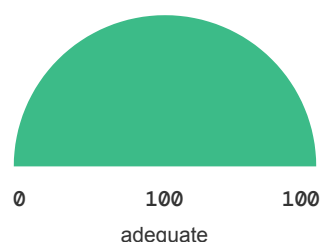
The OBS examines the role that legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play in the budget process and the extent to which they provide oversight; each country is scored on a scale from 0 to 100 based on 18 equally weighted indicators. In addition, the survey collects supplementary information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

The legislature and supreme audit institution in United Kingdom, together, provide limited oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **56** (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

United Kingdom's Parliament provided weak oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and limited oversight during the implementation stage, owing to an atypical political context and budget cycle in 2022. To improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- The Executive's Budget Proposal should be submitted to legislators at least two months before the start of the budget year.
- Legislative committees should examine the Executive's Budget Proposal and publish reports with their analysis online.
- The legislature should approve the Executive's Budget Proposal before the start of the budget year.



- A legislative committee should examine in-year budget implementation and publish reports with their findings online.
- In practice, ensure the legislature is consulted before the executive reduces spending due to revenue shortfalls.

### **The emerging practice of establishing independent fiscal institutions**

United Kingdom's independent fiscal institution (IFI) is the Office for Budget Responsibility. Its independence is set in law, and it reports to the Executive and to Parliament. It publishes its own macroeconomic and fiscal forecasts, and its own cost estimates of all 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 2022 were assessed in the OBS 2023.
- The survey is based on a questionnaire completed in each country by an independent budget expert:  
Elizabeth Pimentel  
U.K. Women's Budget Group
- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert, and in United Kingdom by a representative of the Treasury.