



Overall score: **14%** Provides scant information to the public in its budget documents during the year.

## Highlights Information in Public Documents

China's score on the Open Budget Index shows that the government provides the public with scant information on the central government's budget and financial activities during the course of the budget year. This makes it very difficult for citizens to hold government accountable for its management of the public's money.

The Open Budget Index 2008 evaluates the quantity and type of information that governments make available to their publics in the seven key budget documents that should be issued during the budget year. One of the most important documents is the executive's budget proposal. It should contain the executive's plans for the upcoming year along with the cost of the proposed activities. The proposal should be available to the public and to the legislature prior to being finalized, at least three months before the start of the budget year to allow for sufficient review and public debate.

In China, the proposal is not made public, meaning citizens do not have a comprehensive picture of the government's plans for taxing and spending for the upcoming year. The only document that is made public is a summary of the budget.

Moreover, it is difficult to track spending, revenue collection and borrowing during the year. China publishes in-year reports, but the reports do not include information on actual expenditures, and it does not publish a mid-year review. Publishing detailed information in these documents would greatly strengthen public accountability, since they provide updates on how the budget is being implemented during the year.

It is also difficult to assess budget performance in China once the budget year is over. A year-end report is produced, allowing comparisons between what was budgeted and what was actually spent and collected. However, it lacks important details. Also, though China makes its audit report public and provides information on whether the audit report's recommendations are successfully implemented, the scope of audit coverage is fairly limited.

Access to the highly detailed budget information needed to understand the government's progress in undertaking a specific project or activity remains very limited. This is despite the fact that China has codified the right to access government information into law.

## Public Participation and Institutions of Accountability

Beyond improving access to key budget documents, there are other ways in which China's budget process could be made more open.

Opportunities for citizen participation in budget debates could be increased. For example, the legislature does not hold hearings on the budget in which the public can participate.

The independence of China's Supreme Audit Institution is somewhat limited. The National Audit Office has significant discretion to decide which audits to undertake but faces some limitations.



### Availability of Key Budget Documents and Citizens Budget (in order of expected release)

Pre-Budget Statement	<input type="radio"/> No
Executive's Budget Proposal	<input type="radio"/> No
Citizens Budget	<input type="radio"/> No
Enacted Budget	<input type="radio"/> No
In-year Reports	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
Mid-Year Review	<input type="radio"/> No
Year-End Report	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes
Audit Report	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes

# Open Budget Index 2008



## China

The Open Budget Index evaluates the quantity and type of information available to the public in a country's budget documents. A country's placement within a performance category was determined by averaging the response to 91 questions on the Open Budget Questionnaire related to information contained in the eight key budget documents that all countries should make available to the public.

Research to complete the Open Budget Questionnaire was undertaken by:

The Open Budget Initiative  
International Budget Partnership  
The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
800 First St NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Website:  
[www.internationalbudget.org](http://www.internationalbudget.org)  
Tel: +1 202 408 1080  
Fax: +1 202 408 8173  
Email: [info@internationalbudget.org](mailto:info@internationalbudget.org)

The International Budget Project was established as part of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington, DC-based non-partisan non-profit research organization, in 1997 to support civil society organizations around the world interested in strengthening public budget processes, institutions and outcomes. For more information on the IBP and the Open Budget Initiative 2008, please visit [www.openbudgetindex.org](http://www.openbudgetindex.org)

