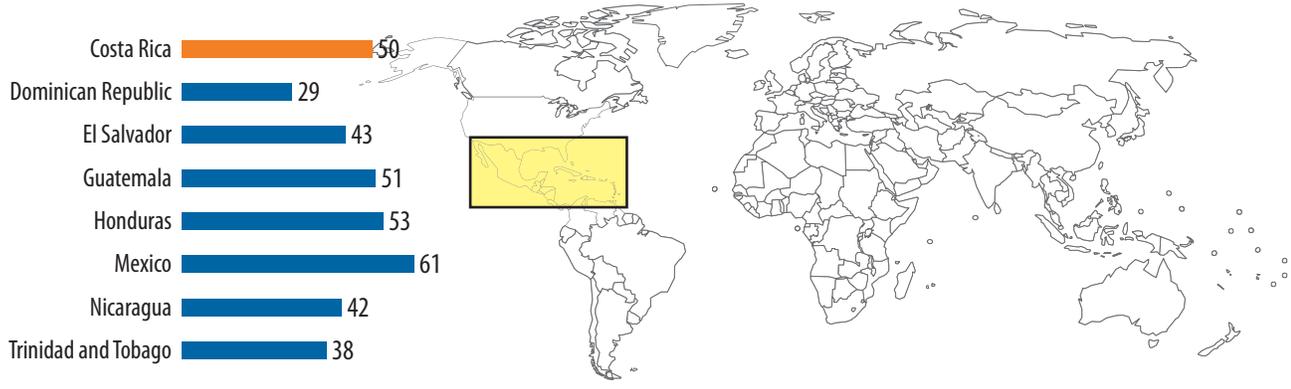


OPEN BUDGET INDEX SCORE  
— OUT OF 100 —

- 81-100 Extensive
- 61-80 Substantial
- 41-60 Some
- 21-40 Minimal
- 0-20 Scant or None

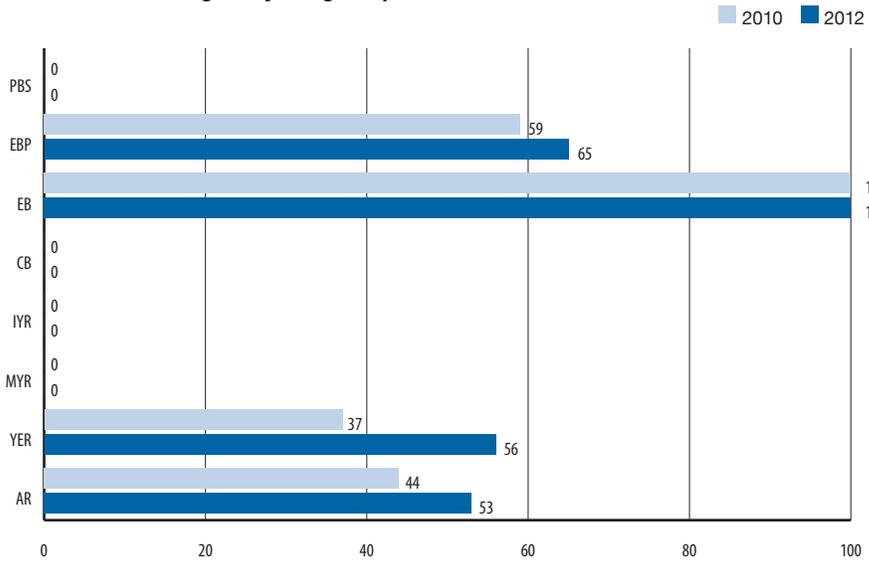
### How does Costa Rica compare to its neighbors in Central America and the Caribbean?



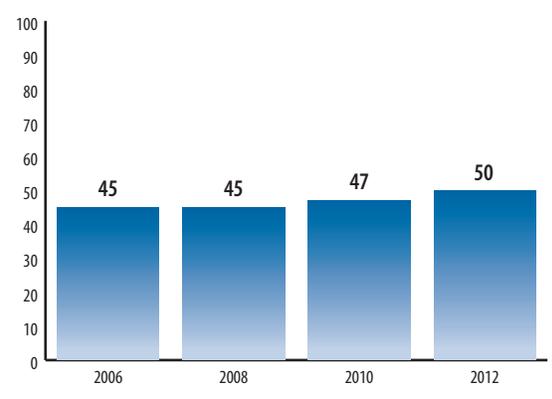
### What are each of the eight key budget documents, and does the public have access to them?

Document	Description of Document	Publication Status
<b>PBS</b>	<b>Pre-Budget Statement:</b> Provides information that links government policies and budgets and typically sets forth the broad parameters that will define the budget proposal that is presented to the legislature.	Not Produced
<b>EBP</b>	<b>Executive's Budget Proposal:</b> Presents the government plans to raise revenues through taxes and other sources and spend these monies to support its priorities, thus transforming policy goals into action.	Published
<b>EB</b>	<b>Enacted Budget:</b> The legal instrument authorizing the executive to raise revenues, make expenditures, and incur debt.	Published
<b>CB</b>	<b>Citizens Budget:</b> A nontechnical presentation to enable broad public understanding of a government's plans for raising revenues and spending public funds in order to achieve policy goals.	Not Produced
<b>IYR</b>	<b>In-Year Reports:</b> Periodic (monthly or quarterly) measures of the trends in actual revenues, expenditures, and debt, which allow for comparisons with the budget figures and adjustments.	Produced for Internal Use
<b>MYR</b>	<b>Mid-Year Review:</b> An overview of the budget's effects at the midpoint of a budget year and discusses any changes in economic assumptions that affect approved budget policies.	Not Produced
<b>YER</b>	<b>Year-End Report:</b> Information comparing the actual budget execution relative to the Enacted Budget.	Published
<b>AR</b>	<b>Audit Report:</b> Independent evaluation of the government's accounts by the country's supreme audit institution. It typically assesses whether the executive has raised revenues and spent monies in line with the authorized budget, and whether the government's accounts of its revenues and expenses are accurate and provide a reliable picture of the fiscal situation.	Published

### From Zero to 100: Has Costa Rica increased the amount of information it makes available in the eight key budget reports?



### OBI scores over four Surveys



## Open Budget Index

The **Open Budget Survey** assesses whether the central government in each country surveyed makes eight key budget documents available to the public, as well as whether the data contained in these documents is comprehensive, timely, and useful. The Survey uses internationally accepted criteria to assess each country's budget transparency developed by multilateral organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

The scores on 95 of the 125 Open Budget Survey questions are used to calculate objective scores and rankings of each surveyed country's relative transparency. These composite scores constitute the Open Budget Index (OBI), the world's only independent and comparative measure of budget transparency.

Costa Rica's score is 50 out of 100, which is higher than the average score of 43 for all the 100 countries surveyed but is lower than the scores of its neighbors Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico. Costa Rica's score indicates that the government provides the public with only some information on the national government's budget and financial activities during the course of the budget year. This makes it challenging for citizens to hold the government accountable for its management of the public's money.

**Costa Rica's OBI 2012 score of 50 has increased three points from its score of 47 on the OBI 2010.**

The Open Budget Index is composed of subscores for each of the eight key budget documents assessed in the Survey. These subscores represent the average of the scores received on a set of questions in the Survey that measure the public availability of and amount of information in the documents. The subscores are comparable across all of the countries included in the Survey.

### Recommendations

Costa Rica's score on the Open Budget Index has consistently increased since the first round of the Open Budget Survey, which is an encouraging development and for which the government is congratulated. However, with a score of 50 out of 100 on the Open Budget Index 2012, the government of Costa Rica has the potential to greatly expand budget transparency by introducing a number of short-term and medium-term measures, some of which can be achieved at almost no cost to the government.

The International Budget Partnership recommends that Costa Rica undertake the following steps to improve budget transparency:

- Publish the In-Year Reports which are currently being produced for internal use (detailed guidance on the content of this document can be found in this guidebook: <http://bit.ly/QGzHv8>). As per the Open Budget Survey 2012, 78 countries publish In-Year Reports, including all of Costa Rica's neighbors except Trinidad and Tobago

Links to the budget documents published by these countries can be accessed from the IBP's website <http://bit.ly/P8NPOV>.

- Produce and publish a Pre-Budget Statement, Citizens Budget, and Mid-Year Review (detailed guidance on the contents of these documents can be found in these guidebooks <http://bit.ly/QGzHv8> and <http://bit.ly/QGzFmJ>). As per the Open Budget Survey 2012, 47 countries publish a Pre-Budget Statement, including Costa Rica's neighbors Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico; 26 countries publish a Citizens Budget, including its neighbors El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico; 29 countries publish a Mid-Year Review, including its neighbor Honduras.
- Increase the comprehensiveness of the Executive's Budget Proposal, specifically by focusing on providing information on the following areas:
  - include greater detail of anticipated expenditures for at least two years beyond the budget year and six months of actual expenditures of the previous budget year (see questions 6 and 22 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - debt composition, such as interest rates on the debt, maturity profile of the debt, currency denomination of the debt, or whether it is domestic or external debt (see question 13 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - different macroeconomic assumptions used in developing the budget (see question 15 of the Open Budget Questionnaire);
  - improve the linkages in the budget to the government's stated policy goals and the quality of nonfinancial information and performance indicators; include performance indicators in all expenditure programs; and provide policy goals, by administrative unit or functional category (see questions 16, 48-49, and 51-54 of the Open Budget Questionnaire); and
  - intergovernmental transfers, transfers to public corporations, quasi-fiscal activities, financial and nonfinancial assets, expenditure arrears, contingent and future liabilities, donor assistance, and tax expenditures (see questions 36-45 of the Open Budget Questionnaire).
- Increase the comprehensiveness of the Year-End Report by explaining differences between the original macroeconomic forecast, original nonfinancial and performance information, and enacted levels of funds intended to benefit the poor in the country and their actual outcomes (see questions 82-85 of the Open Budget

Questionnaire).

- Increase the comprehensiveness of the Audit Report by including all expenses and publish reports listing actions taken by the executive to address audit recommendations (see questions 88, 95, and 108 of the Open Budget Questionnaire).

## Strength of Legislatures and Supreme Audit Institutions in Budget Oversight

The Open Budget Survey examines the extent of effective oversight provided by legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs). These institutions play a critical role — often enshrined in national constitutions — in planning and overseeing the implementation of national budgets.

The Open Budget Survey assesses whether legislatures provide effective budget oversight by measuring performance on 11 indicators, including: consultations with the executive prior to the tabling in the legislature of the draft budget, research capacity, formal debate on overall budget policy, time available to discuss and approve the budget, legal authority to amend the budget proposal, approval of shifts in expenditure budget and excess revenues collected, supplemental budget powers, authority to approve use of contingency funds, and scrutiny of audit reports.

The Open Budget Survey assesses whether supreme audit institutions are empowered to provide effective budget oversight by using the following four indicators: authority to remove the head of the supreme audit institution, legal power to audit public finances, financial resources available, and availability of skilled audit personnel.

### Costa Rica and Honduras are the leaders in Central America & the Caribbean on budget oversight and engagement

Country	Legislative Strength	SAI Strength	Public Engagement
Costa Rica	Strong	Strong	Weak
Dominican Republic	Moderate	Strong	Weak
El Salvador	Moderate	Strong	Weak
Guatemala	Moderate	Strong	Weak
Honduras	Strong	Strong	Weak
Mexico	Moderate	Strong	Weak
Nicaragua	Moderate	Moderate	Weak
Trinidad and Tobago	Strong	Moderate	Weak

**Strong:** average score above 66 of 100; **Moderate:** average score between 34 and 66; **Weak:** average score below 34

## Recommendations

Although oversight by the legislature and the supreme audit institution in Costa Rica is strong, the Open Budget Survey 2012 finds that this can be further strengthened by the following actions:

- The legislature should have a formal pre-budget policy debate prior to the tabling of the Executive’s Budget Proposal and should scrutinize all audit reports; the executive should consult with members of the legislature as part of its process of determining budget priorities; the legislature should be given unlimited authority in law to amend the Executive’s Budget Proposal; and the audit reports should be viewed and scrutinized by a committee of the legislature (see questions 59, 98, 100, and 107 of the Open Budget Questionnaire).

## Opportunities for Public Participation

Research and advocacy experience of civil society over the past 15 years has demonstrated that transparency by itself is insufficient for improving governance. Transparency along with opportunities for public participation in budgeting can maximize the positive outcomes associated with open budgeting. Therefore, the Open Budget Survey assesses opportunities available to the public to participate in national budget decision-making processes. Such opportunities can be provided throughout the budget cycle by the executive, legislature, and supreme audit institution.

Based on these indicators, the Open Budget Survey 2012 finds that opportunities for public participation in the budget process in Costa Rica are limited.

### Costa Rica has much room to improve public participation

Requirement	Finding
<b>Process Followed Before Consultation</b>	
Formal requirement for public participation (Q114)	Does not exist
Articulation of purposes for public participation (Q115)	Does not exist
Communication by the SAI of audit findings beyond publication of audit reports (Q124)	Does not exist
<b>Process of Consultation</b>	
Mechanisms developed by the executive for participation during budget planning (Q116)	Does not exist
Public hearings in the legislature on macroeconomic budget framework (Q119)	Exists but is weak
Public hearings in the legislature on individual agency budgets (Q120)	Exists but could be improved
Opportunities in the legislature for testimonials by the public during budget hearings (Q121)	Does not exist
Mechanisms developed by the executive for participation during budget execution (Q117)	Does not exist
Mechanisms developed by the SAI for participation in audit agenda (Q123)	Exists but could be improved
<b>Process Followed After Consultation</b>	
Feedback by the executive on use of inputs provided by the public (Q118)	Does not exist
Release by the legislature of reports on budget hearings (Q122)	Exists but is weak
Feedback by the SAI on use of inputs provided by the public (Q125)	Exists but is weak

## Recommendations

The International Budget Partnership recommends that Costa Rica expand public engagement in budgeting after considering the Open Budget Survey indicators on which the country performs poorly (see Table 3 above and questions 114-119, 121-122, and 124-125 in the Open Budget Questionnaire).

## Description of Survey, Methodology, Reliability, and Researcher Contact information

The Open Budget Survey is a fact-based research instrument that uses easily observable phenomena to assess what occurs in practice. The research conclusions are typically supported by citations and comments, including reference to a budget document, a law, or other public document; a public statement by a government official; or comments from a face-to-face interview with a government official or other knowledgeable party. The Survey is compiled from a questionnaire completed for each country by independent budget experts who are not associated with the national government. Each country's questionnaire is then independently reviewed by two anonymous experts who also have no association with government. In addition, the IBP invites national governments to comment on the draft results from the Survey and considers these comments before finalizing the Survey results. The entire research process for 2012 took over 18 months between July 2011 and December 2012 and involved approximately 400 experts.

The Open Budget Survey provides a reliable source of data on national budget transparency practices for governments, development practitioners, the media, and citizens. Current users of the Survey results include the Open Government Partnership, Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative, INTOSAI, the World Bank in its Worldwide Governance Indicators, and a number of bilateral aid agencies and international and regional multilateral bodies. The publication of the Open Budget Survey 2012 has reinforced the Survey's preeminent position as a global data repository on budget transparency, participation, and accountability.

Research to complete this country's Open Budget Survey was undertaken by Juan Guillermo Murillo Chinchilla and Steffan Gómez Campos, Programa Estado de la Nación, Pavas, San José, Costa Rica, [jmurillo@estadonacion.or.cr](mailto:jmurillo@estadonacion.or.cr); [sgomez@estadonacion.or.cr](mailto:sgomez@estadonacion.or.cr).

Despite repeated efforts, the IBP was unable to get comments on the draft Open Budget Questionnaire results from the Costa Rican government.