

## Overview



Transparency:

**79** /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public  
Participation:

**41** /100



Budget Oversight:

**76** /100

## About the survey

Government budget decisions – what taxes to levy, what services to provide, and how much debt to take on – affect how equal a society is and the well-being of its people, including whether the most disadvantaged will have real opportunities for a better life. It is critical that governments inform and engage the public on these vital decisions that impact their lives.

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 the legislature and auditor 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 7th edition of the OBS covers 117 countries.

Visit [www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey](http://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey) for more information, including the full OBS methodology, the 2019 Global Report, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.

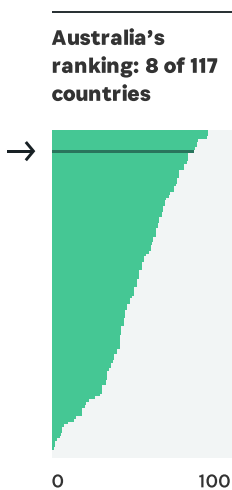


# Transparency

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).

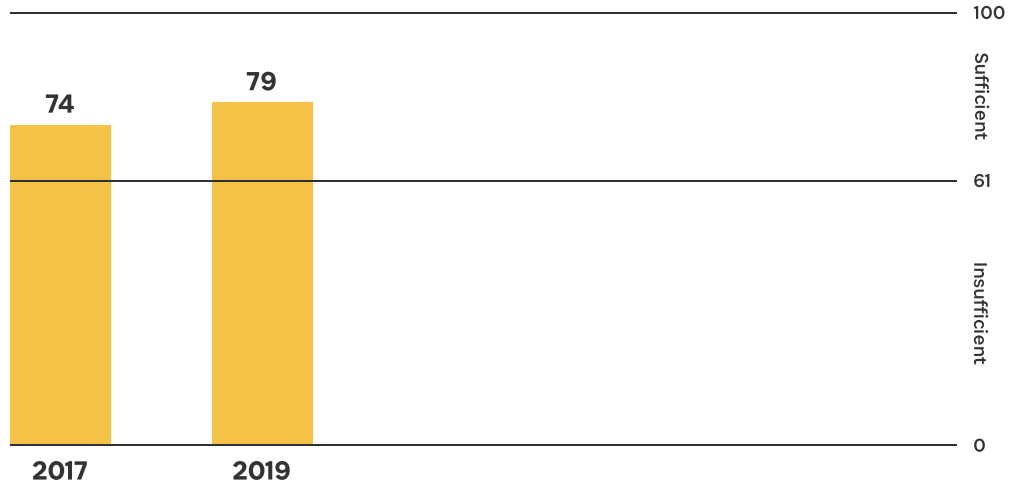
## Transparency in Australia compared to others



Global Average	45
OECD Average	67
New Zealand	87
Australia	79
United States	76
France	74
Canada	71
United Kingdom	70
Germany	69
Japan	62
South Korea	62

0                      Insufficient                      61                      Sufficient                      100

## How has the transparency score for Australia changed over time?



## Public availability of budget documents in Australia

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

Document	2017	2019
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?

- 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.	2018-19	Internal Use
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.	2018-19	88
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2018-19	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.	2018-19	58
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2017-18 & 2018-19	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.	2018-19	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.	2017-18	76
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2017-18	81

Australia's transparency score of **79** in the OBS 2019 is near its score in 2017.

### What changed in OBS 2019?

Australia has increased the availability of budget information by:

- Providing additional information in its Year-End Report.

## **Recommendations**

Australia should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Publish the Pre-Budget Statement online in a timely manner.
- Identify public preferences for information in the Citizens Budget, such as explaining and justifying the impact of the budget on particular groups.
- Issue reports on the steps the executive has taken to address audit recommendations or findings that require remedial action.



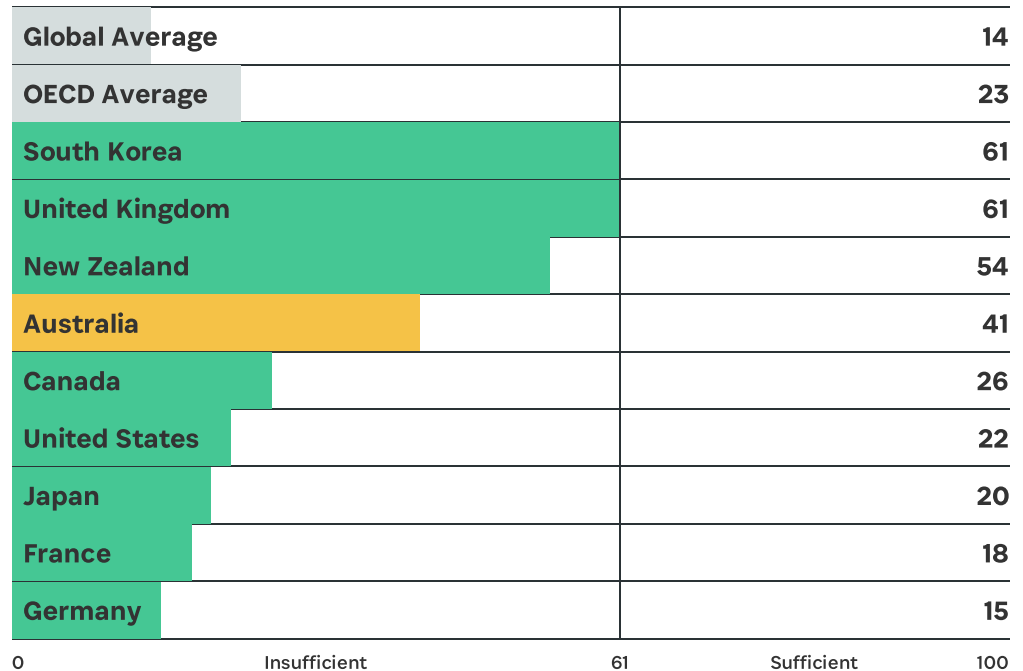
# Public Participation

Transparency alone is insufficient for improving governance. Inclusive public participation is crucial for realizing the positive outcomes associated with greater budget transparency.

The OBS also 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.

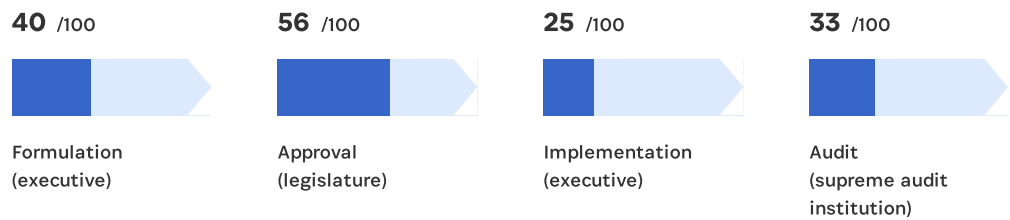
Australia has a public participation score of **41** (out of 100).

## 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



few: 0 - 40; limited: 41 - 60; adequate: 61 - 100

## Recommendations

Australia's Treasury calls for pre-budget submissions during budget formulation and holds some 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 that 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.

Australia's National Audit Office has established mechanisms through which the public can 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 identifying audit priorities.

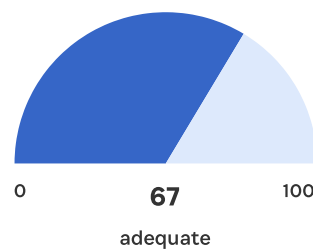


# Budget Oversight

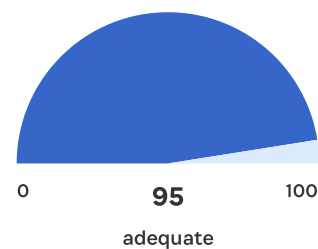
The OBS also examines the role that legislatures and supreme audit institutions (SAIs) play in the budget process and the extent to which they provide oversight; each country is scored on a scale from 0 to 100 based on 18 equally weighted indicators. In addition, the survey collects supplementary information 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 **76** (out of 100). Taken individually, the extent of each institution's oversight is shown below:

## Legislative oversight



## Audit oversight



weak: 0 - 40; limited: 41 - 60; adequate: 61 - 100

## Recommendations

Australia's Parliament provides adequate oversight over the budget cycle, reflecting limited oversight during the planning stage and adequate oversight during the implementation stage. To improve oversight, Australia should prioritize the following actions:

- The legislature 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 and made publicly available at least two months before the start of the budget year.



- The legislative committee examining the Audit Report should conduct its review and publish a report with its findings online in a more timely manner.

## **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 for IFIs are \*not\* scored*

# Methodology

---

- Only documents published and events, activities, or developments that took place through 31 December 2018 were assessed in the OBS 2019.
- The survey is based on a questionnaire completed in each country by an independent budget expert:  
Miranda Stewart; Teck Chi Wong  
Australian National University  
Canberra, ACT, 2600 Australia  
miranda.stewart@anu.edu.au; teckchi.wong@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.