

## Overview



Transparency:

**87** /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public  
Participation:

**54** /100



Budget Oversight:

**81** /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.

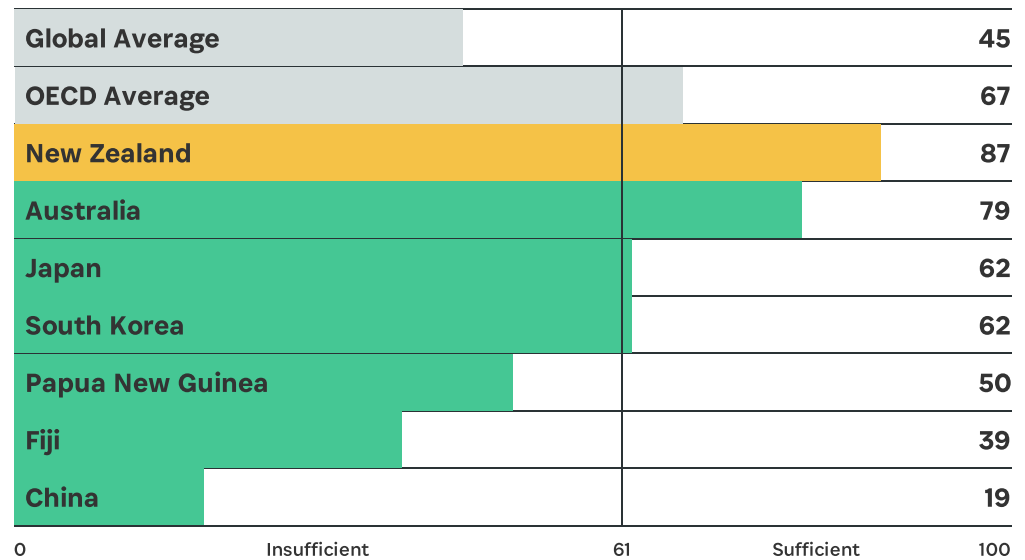
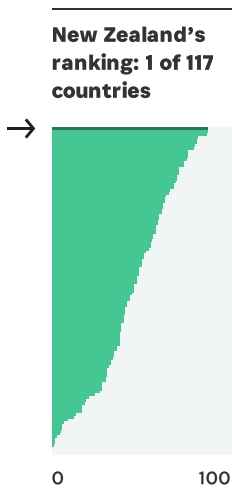


# Transparency

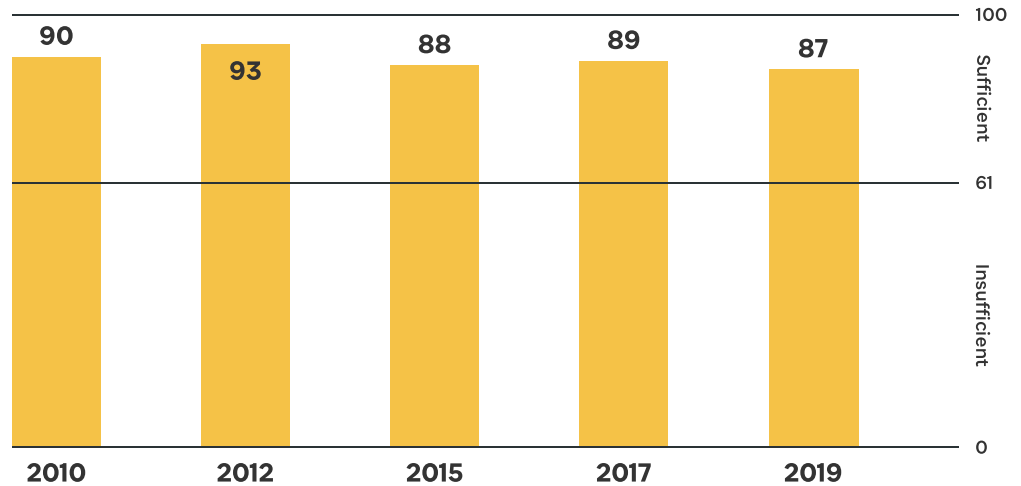
This part of the OBS measures public access to information on how the central government raises and spends public resources. It assesses the online availability, timeliness, and comprehensiveness of eight key budget documents using 109 equally weighted indicators and scores each country on a scale of 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.

New Zealand has a transparency score of **87** (out of 100).

## Transparency in New Zealand compared to others



## How has the transparency score for New Zealand changed over time?



## Public availability of budget documents in New Zealand

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

Document	2010	2012	2015	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 New Zealand 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.	2019	95
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	91
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2018	100
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	67
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2017 & 2018	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	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.	2017	81
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2017	86

New Zealand's transparency score of **87** in the OBS 2019 is near its score in 2017.

## Recommendations

New Zealand should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Strengthen the scope and quality of data visualizations in budget documents to simplify data access and analysis.
- Present alternative displays of expenditures (such as by gender, by age, by income, or by region) to illustrate the financial impact of policies on different groups of citizens in budget documents.
- Publish the budget calendar before the budget cycle begins and include designated opportunities for public engagement in that calendar.
- Build on the “Basics” series for the Executive's Budget Proposal, Enacted Budget, Mid-Year Review, and Year-End Report by including a broader range of information about sector- and policy-specific spending.
- Include estimates of revenue forgone for all tax expenditures in the Tax Expenditure Statement.
- Include in the Year-End Report differences between forecasts of core macroeconomic indicators and actual outcomes.



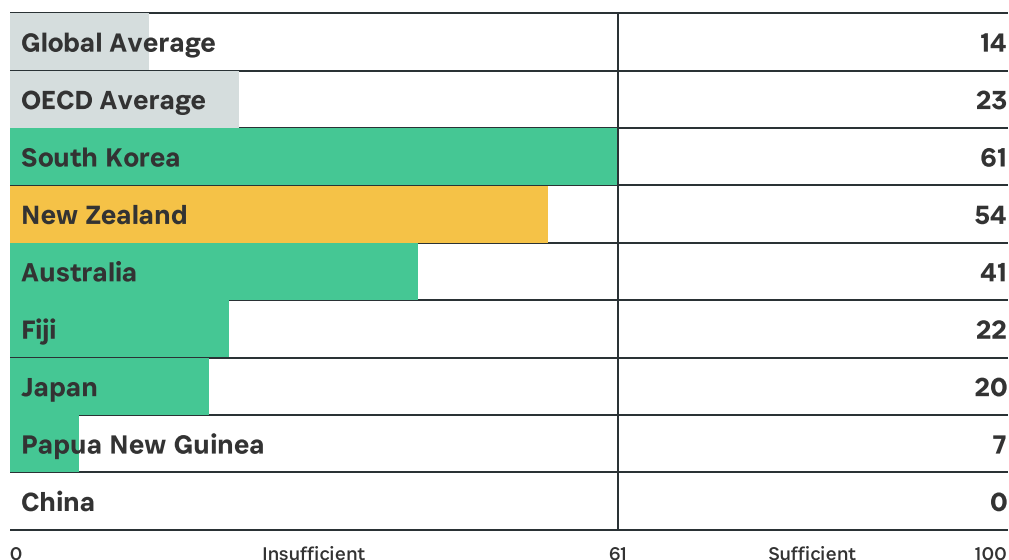
# Public Participation

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.

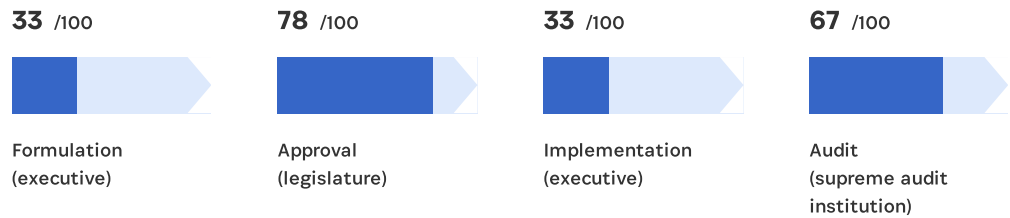
New Zealand has a public participation score of **54** (out of 100).

## Public participation in New Zealand 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

New Zealand's Treasury has established public consultations 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 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.
- Expand opportunities for public engagement in budget formulation through a system of localised public consultative processes.

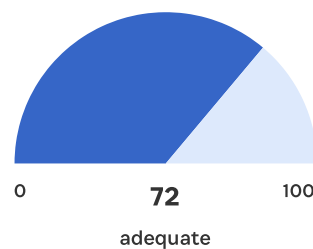


# Budget Oversight

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 New Zealand, together, provide adequate oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **81** (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

New Zealand's Parliament provides limited oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and adequate oversight during the implementation stage. To further improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- Encourage more active public engagement in select committee hearings for both the review of proposed sector budgets (“vote” estimates) and hearings on the implementation of sector programs during the budget year and performance reports at year-end.
- Include in the mandate of the Parliamentary Budget Office, scheduled to begin operations in 2021, bolstering parliamentary review processes during budget formulation and implementation.



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

New Zealand does not currently have an independent fiscal institution (IFI), but plans to establish a Parliamentary Budget Office (*Kaitiaki Kaupapa Rawa*) in July 2021. This PBO will provide independent fiscal and economic policy analysis to Parliament, and a policy costing service for political parties.

IFIs are increasingly recognized as valuable independent and nonpartisan information providers to the Executive and/or Parliament during the budget process.

*\*These indicators are \*not\* scored in the Open Budget Survey.*

# Methodology

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- 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:  
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- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert, and in New Zealand by a representative of the Treasury.