

Overview



Transparency:

30 /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public
Participation:

7 /100



Budget Oversight:

39 /100

About the survey

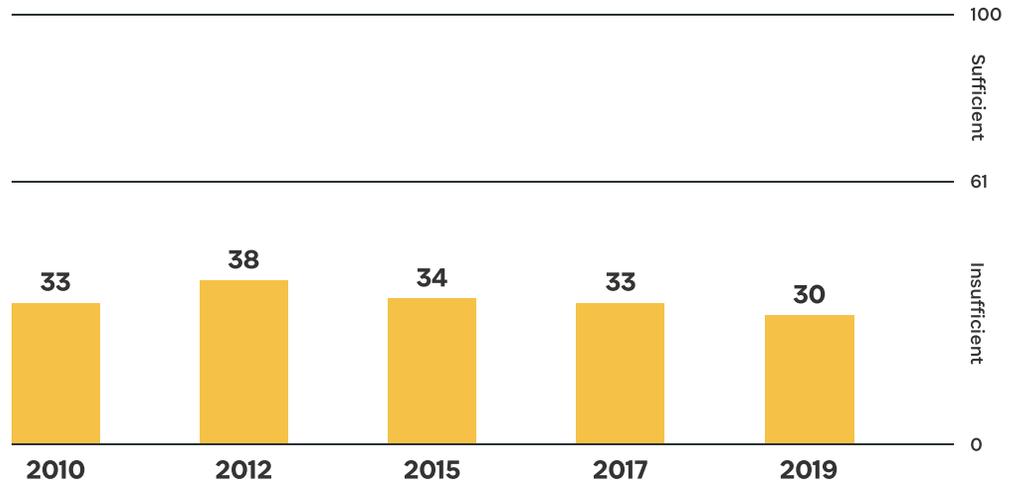
Government budget decisions – what taxes to levy, what services to provide, and how much debt to take on – affect how equal a society is and the well-being of its people, including whether the most disadvantaged will have real opportunities for a better life. It is critical that governments inform and 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 for more information, including the full OBS methodology, the 2019 Global Report, findings for all surveyed countries, and the Data Explorer.

How has the transparency score for Trinidad and Tobago changed over time?



Public availability of budget documents in Trinidad and Tobago

- 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 Trinidad and Tobago 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 | 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. | 2018 | 52 |
| Enacted Budget | The budget that has been approved by the legislature. | 2018 | 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. | 2018 | Not Produced |
| In-Year Reports | Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly. | 2017-18 | Not Produced |
| 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. | 2017 | Not Produced |
| 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 | Not Produced |
| Audit Report | Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts. | 2016 | 48 |

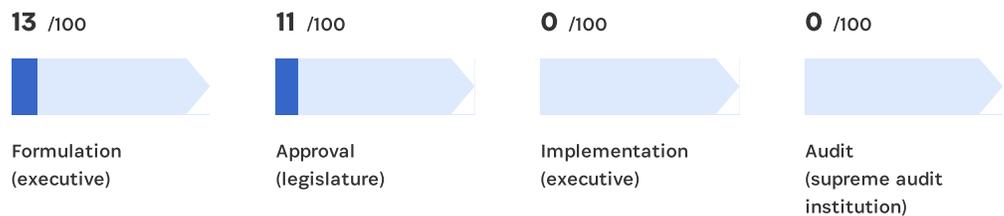
Trinidad and Tobago's transparency score of **30** in the OBS 2019 is near its score in 2017.

Recommendations

Trinidad and Tobago should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Produce and publish the Pre-Budget Statement, Citizens Budget, In-Year Reports, Mid-Year Review, and Year-End Report online in a timely manner.
- Include in the Executive's Budget Proposal more comprehensive financial and macroeconomic information.
- Improve the comprehensiveness of the Audit Report and Enacted Budget.

Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



Recommendations

Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Finance has established council during budget formulation but, to further strengthen public participation in the budget process, should also prioritize the following actions:

- Pilot mechanisms to monitor budget implementation.
- Expand mechanisms during budget formulation 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.

Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament has established public hearings related to the approval of the annual budget and public hearings 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.
- Allow any member of the public or any civil society organization to testify during its hearings on the Audit Report.

Trinidad and Tobago's Office of the Auditor General should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in the budget process:

- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist in developing its audit program and to contribute to relevant audit investigations.

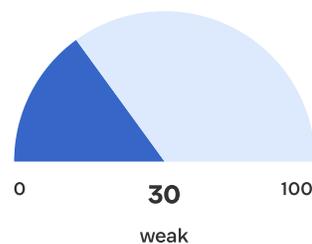


Budget Oversight

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 Trinidad and Tobago, together, provide weak oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **39** (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

Trinidad and Tobago's Parliament provides weak oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and weak oversight during the implementation stage. To improve oversight, the following actions should be prioritized:

- 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 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 shifts funds specified in the Enacted Budget between administrative units; spends any unanticipated revenue; or reduces spending due to revenue shortfalls during the budget year.

To strengthen its independence and improve audit oversight by Trinidad and Tobago's Office of the Auditor General, the following actions are recommended:

- Require legislative or judicial approval to appoint the head of the supreme audit institution.
- Ensure audit processes are reviewed by an independent agency.

The emerging practice of establishing independent fiscal institutions

Trinidad and Tobago does not have an independent fiscal institution (IFI). 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

- 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.