

Overview



Transparency:

76 /100

(Open Budget Index score)



Public
Participation:

22 /100



Budget Oversight:

83 /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.

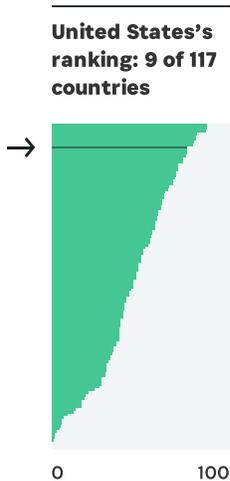


Transparency

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.

The United States has a transparency score of **76** (out of 100).

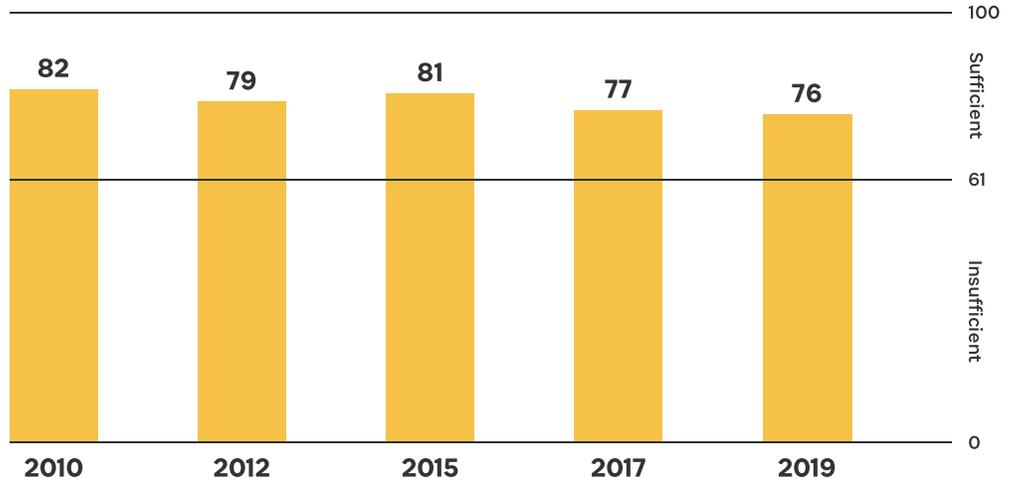
Transparency in United States compared to others



Global Average	45
OECD Average	67
New Zealand	87
Sweden	86
Mexico	82
Brazil	81
Norway	80
United States	76
France	74
Canada	71
United Kingdom	70
Germany	69

0 Insufficient 61 Sufficient 100

How has the transparency score for United States changed over time?



Public availability of budget documents in United States

- 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 United States 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	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.	2019	95
Enacted Budget	The budget that has been approved by the legislature.	2018	39
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.	2019	Not Produced
In-Year Reports	Include information on actual revenues collected, actual expenditures made, and debt incurred at different intervals; issued quarterly or monthly.	2018	96
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.	2019	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	48
Audit Report	Issued by the supreme audit institution, this document examines the soundness and completeness of the government's year-end accounts.	2017	91

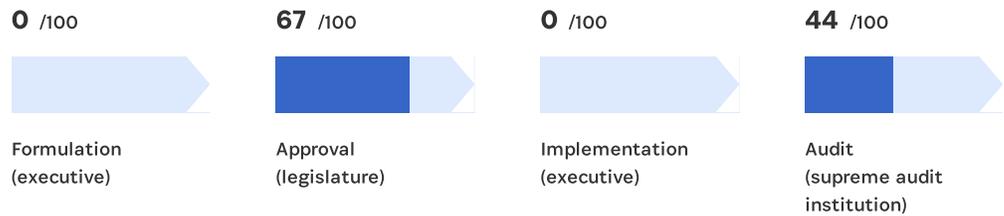
The United States' transparency score of 76 in the 2019 OBS is near its score in 2017.

Recommendations

The United States should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Produce and publish a Citizens Budget online in a timely manner.
- Include in the Year-End Report comparisons between planned expenditures and revenues and actual outcomes.

Extent of opportunities for public participation in the budget process



Recommendations

To further strengthen public participation in the budget process, the US Office of Management and Budget should prioritize the following actions:

- Pilot mechanisms to engage the public during budget formulation and to monitor budget implementation.
- Actively engage with vulnerable and underrepresented communities, directly or through civil society organizations representing them.

The US Government Accountability Office should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in the budget process:

- Establish formal mechanisms for the public 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 the United States, together, provide adequate oversight during the budget process, with a composite oversight score of **83** (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

The US Congress provides adequate oversight during the planning and implementation stages of the budget cycle. To further improve oversight, the following actions are recommended:

- Congress should approve annual appropriations before the start of the budget year.
- A congressional committee should examine the Audit Report and publish a report with its findings online.

The emerging practice of establishing independent fiscal institutions

The United States' independent fiscal institution (IFI) is the Congressional Budget Office. Its independence is set in law, and it reports to the legislature. It publishes its own macroeconomic and fiscal forecasts, and its own cost estimates of all 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:
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- To further strengthen the research, each country's draft questionnaire is also reviewed by an anonymous independent expert.