Drawing on internationally accepted criteria developed by multilateral organizations, the Open Budget Survey uses 109 equally weighted indicators to measure budget transparency. These indicators assess whether the central government makes eight key budget documents available to the public online in a timely manner and whether these documents present budget information in a comprehensive and useful way.

Each country receives a composite score (out of 100) that determines its ranking on the Open Budget Index – the world’s only independent and comparative measure of budget transparency.

How has the OBI score for Malaysia changed over time?

How comprehensive and useful is the information provided in the key budget documents that Malaysia publishes?

Malaysia’s score of 46 out of 100 is near the global average score of 42.
Transparency alone is insufficient for improving governance. Public participation in budgeting is vital to realize the positive outcomes associated with greater budget transparency.

To measure public participation, the Open Budget Survey assesses the degree to which the government provides opportunities for the public to engage in budget processes. Such opportunities should be provided throughout the budget cycle by the executive, the legislature, and the supreme audit institution.

The questions assessing participation in the Open Budget Survey 2017 were revised to align them with the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency’s new principles on public participation, which now serve as the basis for widely accepted norms on public participation in national budget processes. Therefore, data on the extent of public participation in budgeting in the Open Budget Survey 2017 cannot be compared directly to data from earlier editions.

However, Malaysia has failed to make progress in the following ways:
- Not producing a Pre-Budget Statement or a Mid-Year Review.

Since 2015, Malaysia has increased the availability of budget information by:
- Publishing the Citizens Budget online in a timely manner.

Malaysia’s score of 22 out of 100 indicates that it provides few opportunities for the public to engage in the budget process. This is higher than the global average score of 12.

How does public participation in Malaysia compare to other countries in the region?

Malaysia’s score of 22 out of 100 indicates that it provides few opportunities for the public to engage in the budget process. This is higher than the global average score of 12.

To what extent do different institutions in Malaysia provide opportunities for public participation?
The Open Budget Survey examines the role that legislatures, supreme audit institutions, and independent fiscal institutions play in the budget process and the extent to which they are able to provide effective oversight of the budget. These institutions play a critical role — often enshrined in national constitutions or laws — in planning budgets and overseeing their implementation.

These indicators were revised to better assess the role of formal oversight institutions in ensuring integrity and accountability in the use of public resources. Therefore, data on the role and effectiveness of oversight institutions in the Open Budget Survey 2017 should not be compared directly to data from earlier editions.

To what extent does the legislature in Malaysia provide budget oversight?

The legislature provides weak oversight during the budget cycle. This score reflects that the legislature provides weak oversight during the planning stage of the budget cycle and weak oversight during the implementation stage of the budget cycle.

The main barriers to effective legislative oversight are:

- A debate on budget policy by the legislature does not take place prior to the tabling of the Executive’s Budget Proposal.
- There are no parliamentary select committees to examine and publish reports on the annual budget proposal.
- In practice, as the budget is implemented, the legislature is not consulted before the government shifts funds between administrative units specified in the Enacted Budget, spends unanticipated revenue, or reduces spending due to revenue shortfalls.

To what extent does the supreme audit institution in Malaysia provide budget oversight?

The supreme audit institution provides limited budget oversight.

- Under the law, it has significant discretion to undertake audits as it sees fit.
- However, while the head of the institution cannot be removed without legislative or judicial approval, they are not appointed by the legislature or judiciary, which calls into question its independence.
- Finally, the supreme audit institution is provided with sufficient resources to fulfill its mandate, but its audit processes are not reviewed by an independent agency.


For more detailed information on the survey findings for Malaysia, please see the Open Budget Survey Data Explorer at survey.internationalbudget.org.

How can Malaysia improve transparency?

Malaysia should prioritize the following actions to improve budget transparency:

- Produce and publish a Pre-Budget Statement and a Mid-Year Review.
- Increase the information provided in the Executive’s Budget Proposal by, for example, providing comprehensive information on government’s liabilities including contingent and future liabilities as well as the sustainability of the government’s finances in the long term.
- Improve the information available in the In-Year Reports by providing more detailed information on actual expenditures by administrative, functional, and programmatic classifications.
How can Malaysia improve participation?
Malaysia should prioritize the following actions to improve public participation in its budget process:
- Take concrete steps to receive input from vulnerable and underrepresented parts of the population on the implementation of the annual budget.
- Hold legislative hearings on the formulation of the annual budget, during which members of the public or civil society organizations can testify.
- Establish formal mechanisms for the public to assist the supreme audit institution in formulating its audit program and to participate in relevant audit investigations.

How can Malaysia improve oversight?
Malaysia should prioritize the following actions to make budget oversight more effective:
- Establish parliamentary select committees that can examine the annual budget proposal.
- Ensure audit processes are reviewed by an independent agency.
- Consider setting up an independent fiscal institution to further strengthen budget oversight.

The Open Budget Survey uses internationally accepted criteria developed by multilateral organizations from sources such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTO- SAI) and the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT).

It is a fact-based research instrument that assesses what occurs in practice through readily observable phenomena. The entire research process took approximately 18 months between August 2016 and January 2018 and involved about 300 experts in 115 countries. The Open Budget Survey 2017 assesses only events, activities, or developments that occurred up to 31 December 2016. The survey was revised somewhat from the 2015 version to reflect evolving methods for disseminating budget information and to strengthen individual questions on public participation and budget oversight. A discussion of these changes can be found in the Open Budget Survey Global Report (see link below).

Survey responses are typically supported by citations and comments. This may include a reference to a public document, an official statement by the government, or comments from a face-to-face interview with a government official or other knowledgeable parties.

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Further Information
Visit openbudgetsurvey.org for more information, including:
- The Open Budget Survey 2017: Global report
- Data explorer
- Methodology report
- Full questionnaire