

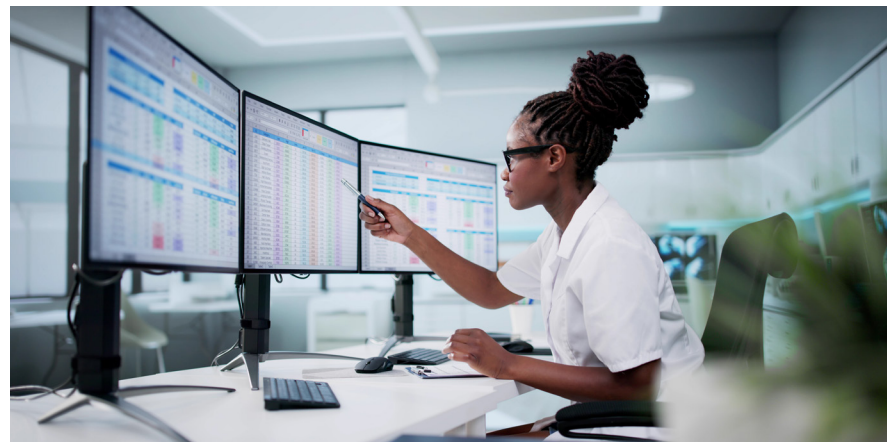
CAPSULE



This report presents the findings of the 2023 Open Budget Survey (OBS) for Jamaica – an assessment of the “openness” of the government’s budget process, which examines how comprehensively the government provides public access to budget information, facilitates public participation in the budget process, and accommodates scrutiny of the outcomes. It is the third instalment of this assessment for Jamaica, covering the 2022-23 fiscal year and comparing it to the performance of past years as well as to those of 124 other countries using the same methodology.

Jamaica scored 50 out of a maximum 100 for transparency (Figure A). This score is 5 points above the global average, but 11 points below the benchmark of 61 designated as “sufficient” by the Open Budget Survey (OBS) and even further below the average of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD - a collective of mostly rich countries).

Jamaica’s transparency score has not improved since the previous assessment was conducted two years earlier. To improve this score, the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service (MOFPS) would need to publish a Pre-Budget Statement to complete the set of eight essential budget documents. Furthermore, the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) should improve the comprehensiveness of the Enacted Budget (the Appropriations Act), the Citizen’s Budget, the Mid-Year Review (Fiscal Policy Paper - Interim Report), the Year-End Report (Fiscal Policy Paper), and the Audit Report so that all budget documents meet the OBS’s standards for sufficiency.



Jamaica is at or above the global average in all aspects of openness: transparency, participation, and oversight.

Jamaica’s public participation score of 18 is three points above the global average, but well below the OECD average of 24. Furthermore, this score has not improved since 2021. To promote greater public participation in the budget process, the GOJ should establish mechanisms for citizen input in decision-making across the four stages of the budget process – formulation, approval, implementation, and auditing.

The formulation stage is a priority area for improving public participation opportunities as this stage currently excludes citizen participation entirely. In the approval stage, citizens’ rights should be expanded to allow them to not just observe budget discussions but also provide feedback before the budget proposal is approved. In the implementation stage of the budget process, the Jamaica Investment Map (JIM) and the Constituency Development Fund address two of the six key topics recommended by the OBS for citizen engagement – implementation of public investment projects and implementation of social spending, respectively. The GOJ should expand participation in the implementation stage to engage citizens in monitoring changes in macroeconomic circumstances, changes in deficit and debt levels, delivery of public services, and collection of revenue. In the auditing stage, the Auditor General’s Department should clearly indicate how citizen feedback is utilised in this process.

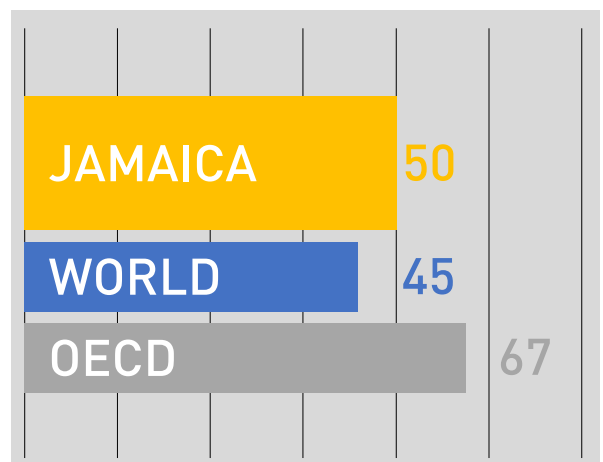


Jamaica has made minimal progress across the three areas of budget openness since the country was first assessed in the 2019 OBS.

Jamaica’s transparency score is above the global average but below the benchmark developed country average.



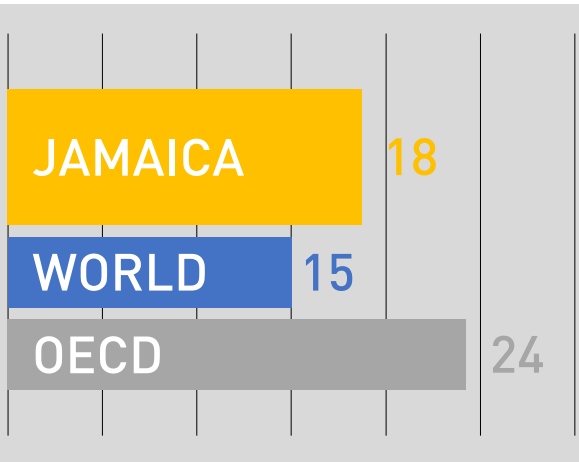
Transparency Score



Source: International Budget Partnership’s (IBP) 2023 OBS Survey

Jamaica's participation score is above the global average but below the benchmark developed country average.

B Participation Score



Source: International Budget Partnership's (IBP) 2023 OBS Survey

Budget oversight comprises audit and legislative oversight. Audit oversight in Jamaica is the responsibility of the Auditor General's Department (AuGD), which is the supreme audit institution that assesses the effectiveness and regulatory compliance of Jamaica's financial management systems. Jamaica scored 56 for audit oversight, the same as in the previous assessment, five points below a "sufficient" score, six points below the global average, and 29 points below the OECD countries' average.

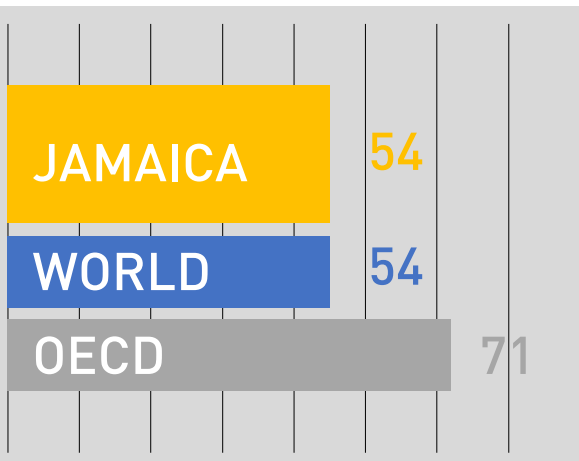
Legislative oversight in Jamaica is the responsibility of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee (PAAC), which is a body consisting of government and opposition representatives. Jamaica scored 53 for legislative oversight, which is three points above the last assessment's score and eight points above the global average score, but eight points below a "sufficient" score and ten points below the OECD countries' average.

Jamaica's aggregate budget oversight score of 54 equals the global average, has only improved two points since 2019, and remains 17 points below the OECD countries' average. To strengthen budget oversight, the AuGD and PAAC must meet their benchmark reporting requirements for audit and legislative oversight, while coordinating effectively with the newly established Independent Fiscal Commission (IFC).

Jamaica has made minimal progress across the three areas of budget openness since the country was first assessed in 2019. In order to advance towards best practices, the GOJ must do more to enhance the provision of comprehensive and timely budget information, foster public communication and engagement, and strengthen budgetary oversight.

Jamaica's oversight score equals the global average but is below the benchmark developed country average.

C Oversight Score



Source: International Budget Partnership's (IBP) 2023 OBS Survey



Selected Recommendations

1. Publish a *Pre-Budget Statement*.
2. Set up an online submission portal to collect feedback throughout the budget process.
3. Allow citizens' input during discussions before the budget is enacted.
4. Make the Appropriations Act, the Fiscal Policy Paper, and the Audit Report more comprehensive.
5. Promote the Jamaica Investment Map and expand it to include detailed data on recurrent expenditures and amortisation costs.



Budget Scorecard 2024 compares Jamaica's 2023 Open Budget Survey (OBS) results to the 124 other countries that participated in the 2023 OBS and to Jamaica's previous scores in the 2019 and 2021 OBS.



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