

## B3. Challenges and limits of parliaments and their members for effective oversight

The section above outlines the roles of MPs and parliaments in budget oversight. In practice, however, they are not always fulfilled, and parliamentary oversight functions are often limited for many reasons, which include formal power arrangements (that is, what is mandated to them), lack of technical capacity, lack of access to information and non-compliance with their roles for other reasons.

Box 17 is from reference 110. It shows the opportunities identified by a sample of 100 parliamentary chambers from different countries for engagement in budget oversight.

### Box 17. Opportunities for parliamentarians to engage in budget oversight



The results are consistent with traditional parliamentary engagement with the budget process, as most MPs identified more opportunities for oversight during the approval and auditing stages of the budget process. Some important limitations are highlighted, however, which should be considered by MPs who wish to play a substantive role in overseeing UHC- and SDG-related budgets:

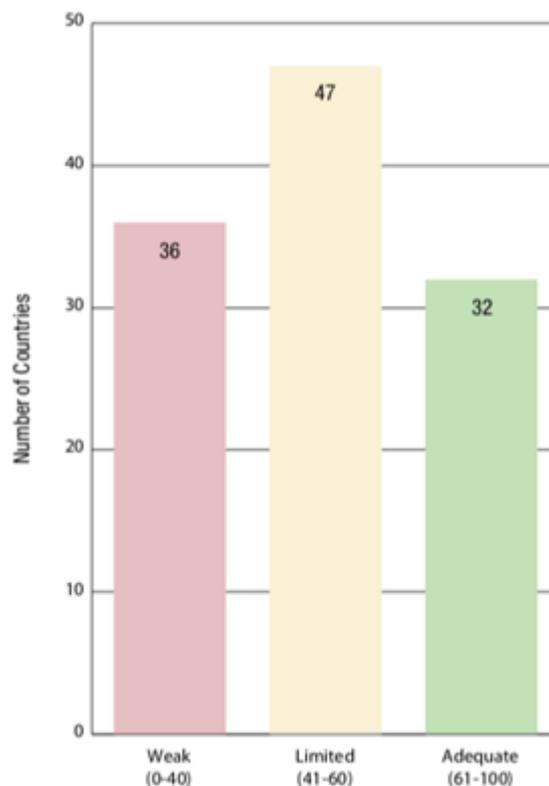
- at least 40% do not have the internal capacity to conduct budget analysis;
- less than 50% have unrestricted power to amend the budget; and

- 60% do not have 3 months to review the budget before its approval.

In many countries, therefore, parliaments should be further strengthened to oversee public budgets effectively and to monitor and ensure advances towards UHC. This is an important challenge, which should be recognized if MPs are committed to and are expected to ensure accountability in the achievement of UHC.

The [Open Budget Survey](#) (68) provides additional evidence of the sometimes limited oversight power of parliaments in some countries. The survey assessed the extent of oversight power by national parliaments, and Fig. 13 summarizes the results in terms of the strength of oversight of the budget by parliaments.

**Fig. 13. Countries grouped by legislative oversight score**



Source: reference 68

Most parliaments have weak or limited budget oversight power (68):

only 32 legislatures (28 percent) out of 115 surveyed have adequate oversight practices. A plurality of 47 countries (41 percent) have only limited legislative oversight, while 36 countries (31 percent) have weak legislative oversight.