

# Report of the Editor

## ***American Economic Journal: Economic Policy***

The *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, or *AEJ: Policy* for short, published four issues in 2011.

As stated in the call for papers posted on the journal's website:

*AEJ: Policy* will publish papers covering a range of topics, the common theme being the role of economic policy in economic outcomes. Subject areas will include public economics; urban and regional economics; public policy aspects of health, education, welfare and political institutions; law and economics; economic regulation; and environmental and natural resource economics.

### **Editorial Procedures**

*AEJ: Policy* is a peer-reviewed journal. The submission fee is \$100 for AEA members and \$200 for nonmembers. The journal reserves the right to reject some papers on the basis of an initial screening by the editors (in which cases submission fees will be returned to authors). Unlike the *AER*, *AEJ: Policy* does not have separate sections of longer and shorter papers. Along with the other new journals, we have adopted a liberal republication policy, granting authors of published papers the right to republication in any work in any form, including digital repositories. We follow the *AER*'s policy with respect to the posting of information, requiring that authors of accepted papers that employ data in econometric exercises, simulation models, or experiments agree to post their data and programs on the journal website unless an exemption for proprietary data is requested and granted.

*AEJ: Policy* no longer follows the double-blind process previously followed by the AEA journals. As other AEA journals now do, *AEJ: Policy* now discloses the author's name to referees. As before, referee names are not revealed to the author.

Submissions to the journal must be made electronically, via the journal website, [www.aeaweb.org/aej-policy/](http://www.aeaweb.org/aej-policy/), using editorial software set up for the journal by Manuscript Central, the same software platform being used by the other *AEJs* and also by the *AER*. All subsequent editorial correspondence with referees and authors is also being done electronically, including the provision of ultimate decision letters and referees' reports to authors.

One novel element of the journal's operation is coordination of the review process with the *AER*, following a common procedure worked out in consultation with the editors of the *AEJs* and the *AER*. When submitting their papers via the *AEJ: Policy* submissions website, authors of manuscripts previously reviewed by the *AER* may request that, subject to the referees' agreement, the full correspondence files of the *AER* referees (including not just the referees' reports but the referees' cover letters as well) be shared with the editors of *AEJ: Policy*, who will have the discretion to make a decision based on these reports or to request additional reports.

This process of transferring information from the *AER* has been utilized extensively and has worked very smoothly.

The editor assigns each manuscript either to himself or to the coeditor, and all subsequent responsibility for handling the manuscript, including the decision of whether to reject summarily, the choice of referees, and the ultimate disposition of the paper, rests with the person to whom the paper has been assigned. The journal has adopted a policy to avoid conflicts of interest that papers by department colleagues, current students, or coauthors will be assigned to the other member of the senior editorial team. Other members of the editorial board may, on occasion, be asked to assume responsibility for papers.

## **Editorial Staff**

The journal's coeditor is John Karl Scholz of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The 23 members of the *AEJ: Policy* editorial board are Douglas Almond (Columbia University), Robin Boadway (Queens University), Severin Borenstein (University of California at Berkeley), Stephen Coate (Cornell University), Julie Berry Cullen (University of California at San Diego), Dhammika Dharmapala (University of Illinois), Mark Duggan (University of Maryland), Robert C. Feenstra (University of California at Davis), David N. Figlio (Northwestern University), Roger H. Gordon (University of California at San Diego), Jonathan Gruber (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Louis Kaplow (Harvard University), Henrik Jacobsen Kleven (London School of Economics), Brian G. Knight (Brown University), Christopher Knittel (University of California at Davis), Wojciech Kopczuk (Columbia University), Jens Ludwig (University of Chicago), Erzo F. P. Luttmer (Dartmouth College), Jens Ludwig (University of Chicago), Brigitte Madrian (Harvard University), Thomas J. Nechyba (Duke University), John M. Quigley (University of California at Berkeley), Dan Silverman (University of Michigan), and Jonathan Skinner (Dartmouth University).

Board members provide valuable advice concerning journal policy, aid in the identification of suitable referees, serve as referees themselves, and have been asked on occasion to assume additional editorial responsibilities. Additional members may be added to the board as the distribution of submissions by field indicates missing areas of expertise.

## **Editorial Data**

As of October 31, 2011, the journal had received 1,001 submissions since launching in July 2007. The distribution of these submissions by year is shown in Table 1, indicating a steady growth over time. Of the 300 original submissions during the year ending October 31, 2011, 114 (38 percent) were summarily rejected, including a small number of papers that were deemed to be on topics outside the journal's purview; another 6 papers were withdrawn from submission, prior to being reviewed, and 94 additional papers were rejected after the normal refereeing process. Of the remaining papers, 1 was immediately accepted, 47 received an invitation to revise and resubmit, and the other 38 papers were still in the initial review process as of that date.

TABLE 1—MANUSCRIPTS SUBMITTED AND PUBLISHED,  
2007–2011

Year	Submitted	Published	Previously submitted to the <i>AER</i>
2007	57	0	6
2008	176	0	23
2009	217	18	23
2010	251	31	20
2011	300	30	31

*Notes:* Submissions to the *AEJ: Policy* for each year include all new submissions from November 1 of the previous year through October 31 of the stated year. Publications for 2009 include the February and August issues. Publications for 2010 and 2011 include the February, May, August, and November issues.

Compared to last year, the fraction of papers rejected is roughly the same, although the mix has shifted to more summary rejections and fewer rejections after refereeing. If one assumes that the papers still in review will be rejected or invited to revise in the same fractions as reviewed papers for which decisions have already been made, then approximately 20 percent of papers submitted this year eventually would have received positive first-round decisions, compared to 18 percent based on the same calculation last year. Table 1 also shows the number of manuscripts submitted each year via transfer from the *AER*, with 31 such manuscripts in 2011 (including the one submission that was accepted directly).

Table 2 shows the estimated performance of the journal with respect to the distribution of first decision times for papers submitted during the period Nov. 1, 2009–Oct. 31, 2011, projected using Kaplan-Meier hazards for the period Nov. 1, 2010–Oct. 31, 2011.

Table 3 shows the total publication lags for papers published during 2009, 2010, and 2011. Both tables suggest similar response times in 2010 and 2011. It is still the case that virtually all manuscripts receive a first decision within six months.

Table 4 lists the number and average page length of published papers in each year, and Table 5 lists the *JEL* classifications of these papers (with multiple categories possible). In 2011, there has been a noticeable shift away from the previous strong concentration in Public Economics (H), with corresponding increases in Health, Education and Welfare (I) and Labor and Demographic Economics (J). Table 6 lists statistics regarding our journal's data posting policy, showing that all papers published in 2011 are in compliance with this policy, and that none of the authors requested exemption from the policy.

TABLE 2—DISTRIBUTION OF FIRST DECISION TIMES, BY SUBMISSION YEAR

Months to response	2010		2011	
	Monthly percent	Cumulative percent	Monthly percent	Cumulative percent
1	33	33	41	41
2	11	44	5	46
3	31	75	19	65
4	13	88	19	84
5	5	93	10	93
6	5	98	6	99
7	2	100	1	100
8	0	100	0	100
9	0	100	0	100
10	0	100	0	100
11	0	100	0	100
12	0	100	0	100

*Notes:* Submission year denotes period from November 1 of the preceding year to October 31 of the stated year. The 2010 distribution is the actual distribution. The 2011 distribution is projected from Kaplan-Meier hazards computed from the right-censored distribution of decision times of manuscripts submitted between November 1, 2010 and October 31, 2011. Percents are rounded to the nearest integer. Figures in this table supersede those contained in previous *AEJ: Policy* reports.

TABLE 3—AVERAGE PROCESSING LAGS BY YEAR OF PUBLICATION  
(in weeks)

Year of publication	Number of weeks		
	Receipt to acceptance	Acceptance to publication	Receipt to publication
2009	20	35	56
2010	26	38	64
2011	23	34	56

*Notes:* Average receipt to acceptance is the mean number of weeks in the editorial decision process at the *AEJ: Policy* for published manuscripts. Lags for acceptance to publication and receipt to publication are for all papers published in the indicated year.

TABLE 4—AVERAGE PAGE LENGTH OF PUBLISHED ARTICLES

Year of publication	Number of articles	Average page length
2009	18	28
2010	31	27
2011	30	29

*Note:* The table refers to the 2009 February and August issues and the 2010 and 2011 February, May, August, and November issues of *AEJ: Policy*.

TABLE 5—SUBJECT MATTER OF PUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS (*Counts of areas*)

JEL Codes	2009	2010	2011
A—General economics and teaching	0	0	0
B—History of economic thought, methodology, and heterodox approaches	0	0	0
C—Mathematical and quantitative methods			1
D—Microeconomics	6	18	18
E—Macroeconomics and monetary economics	2	2	2
F—International economics	1	7	3
G—Financial economics	0	5	5
H—Public economics	14	39	17
I—Health, education, and welfare	8	10	19
J—Labor and demographic economics	5	8	24
K—Law and economics	1	2	2
L—Industrial organization	6	12	6
M—Business administration and business economics; marketing; accounting	0	4	0
N—Economic history	0	2	0
O—Economic development, technological change, and growth	3	3	5
P—Economic systems	0	0	0
Q—Agricultural and natural resource economics; environmental and ecological economics	5	4	1
R—Urban, rural, and regional economics	1	0	3
Y—Miscellaneous categories	0	0	0
Z—Other special topics	0	3	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Total</b>
	52	116	108

*Notes:* Includes all *JEL* codes reported for each manuscript submitted to *AEJ: Policy*. 2009 entries represent totals for February and August issues. 2010 and 2011 entries represent totals for February, May, August, and November issues.

TABLE 6—2011 DATA-POSTING POLICY STATISTICS

Issue	Number of papers	Papers with data	Exemptions	First-round compliance	Second-round compliance	Noncompliance
February	7	6	0	6	0	0
May	7	6	0	6	0	0
August	8	8	0	8	0	0
November	8	8	0	7	1	0

### Office Staff and Other Assistants

The main editorial office for AEA journals, including *AEJ: Policy*, is in Pittsburgh. I would like to thank Michelle DeBlasi, Managing Editor of *AEJ: Policy*, Kelly Markel, the journal's Senior Editorial Assistant, and Kelly Andrews, the journal's Editorial Assistant, for their efforts at keeping the journal's operations running very smoothly.

Finally, I extend my deep appreciation to those who have refereed for this journal in its opening years. Their willingness to provide timely and informative reports for yet another journal is a satisfying demonstration of professional commitment.

ALAN J. AUERBACH, Editor