

Report of the Editor

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

The *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* (*AEJ: Applied*, for short) is one of the four new journals launched by the American Economic Association in July 2007. We have now completed our second full calendar year, and four issues were published in 2009.

The number of submissions received by the *AEJ: Applied* has grown rapidly. In 2007, 69 submissions were received; in 2008 (the first full year in operation), 228 submissions were received. In 2009, 348 submissions were received (a “year” runs from November 1 of the previous year till October 31 of that year). Figure 1 shows the number of submissions per month since the journal started.

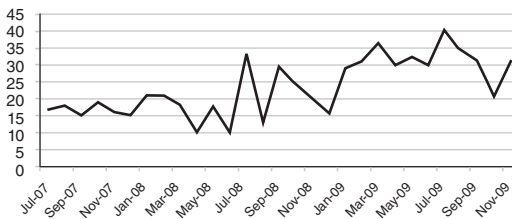


FIGURE 1. *AEJ: APPLIED* SUBMISSIONS, BY MONTH

The *AEJ: Applied* publishes papers covering a broad range of topics in applied economics, with a focus on empirical microeconomic issues. In particular it covers labor economics, development microeconomics, health, education, demography, empirical corporate finance, empirical studies of trade, and empirical behavioral economics. Table 1 gives the distribution of fields covered by the papers that were published in the first four issues. It reflects the broad diversity of papers received. The papers have different empirical approaches (from descriptive studies and lab experiments to structural estimation) and address a broad array of topics. They are united by the fact that they make a substantive and empirical (i.e., not purely methodological) contribution to important economic issues.

Editorial Staff

AEJ: Applied has one co-editor, Thomas Lemieux (University of British Columbia), to

TABLE 1—SUBJECT MATTER OF PUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS, 2009 (Counts of areas)

Subject category	2009
General economics and teaching	1
Mathematical and quantitative methods	3
Microeconomics	11
Macroeconomics and monetary economics	1
International economics	1
Financial economics	1
Public economics	7
Health, education, and welfare	20
Labor and demographic economics	31
Law and economics	4
Industrial organization	5
Business administration and business economics; marketing; accounting	3
Economic history	2
Economic development, technological change, and growth	15
Economic systems	2
Agricultural and natural resource economics; environmental and ecological economics	3
Other special topics	3
Total:	113

Notes: Includes all *JEL* codes reported for each manuscript submitted to *AEJ: Applied Economics*. Entries represent totals for January, April, July, and October issues.

whom I am extremely indebted. We work in very close collaboration to make the *AEJ: Applied* a first rate journal and offer authors a fast and efficient service.

The editors rely heavily on the Board of Editors for evaluation of manuscripts, but also, at this early stage, for general advice, the identification of promising work, and spreading the word on the journal. Board members are selected for their expertise and high level of scholarship in the many different subfields covered by the *AEJ: Applied*, and reflect the diversity of methods and topics covered by the journal, to ensure high quality editorship for all manuscripts.

The board of editors comprises: Jerome Adda (University College London), Joshua Angrist (MIT), Abhijit Banerjee (MIT), John Bound (University of Michigan), Marianne Bertrand (Chicago GSB), David Card (UC Berkeley), Raymond Fisman (Columbia), Andrew Foster (Brown), Gordon Hanson (UCSD), Brian Jacob (University of Michigan), Chinhui Juhn (University of Houston), Jeffrey Kling

(Brookings Institution), Michael Kremer (Harvard), David Lee (Princeton University), Alan Manning (LSE), Edward Miguel (UC Berkeley), Robert Margo (Boston University), Sendhil Mullainathan (Harvard), Luigi Pistaferri (Stanford), Imran Rasul (University College London), Antoinette Schoar (MIT), and Duncan Thomas (UCLA).

We want to thank the board members for their help, as well as for their commitment to making *AEJ: Applied* a great journal.

The *AEJ: Applied* is supported in the Pittsburgh office by Michelle DeBlasi, Kelly Markel, and Matthew Newton, whom we thank for their excellent and tireless support.

General Nature of the Editorial Process

All manuscripts published by the *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* are regular submissions and go through the full refereeing process. Manuscripts submitted are handled by the editor, the co-editor, and the staff located in Pittsburgh. Papers are submitted online electronically at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/aej-applied>, using editorial software set up for the journal by Manuscript Central, the same software platform being used by the other new journals and also now by the *AER*. Most subsequent editorial correspondence with referees and authors is done electronically, including the provision of ultimate decision letters and referees' reports to authors.

The *AEJ: Applied* has the same data posting policy as the *AER*. It requires 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 Web site unless an exemption for proprietary data is requested and granted. Exemptions are generally granted only if the data can be accessed by other researchers in some alternative fashion.

After being processed by the Pittsburgh office staff, the manuscripts are distributed by the editor to herself or Thomas Lemieux for refereeing and a publication decision. Papers are assigned on the basis of field of expertise, combined with a variety of other considerations including equalization of work load and conflict-of-interest rules (papers are generally not assigned to a co-editor working in the same institution, or to a co-editor for whom the author was a graduate student at the time the paper was written).

Once assigned, papers are handled by the designated co-editor or editor until they are ready for a decision. Rejections are not required to be reviewed by the editor. However, to ensure a fair decision process, all "revise and resubmit" and "accept" decisions require approval of both editor and co-editor. In practice, for several "marginal" manuscripts, the decision is also taken after consultation of the other co-editor.

Manuscripts are reviewed in double-blind fashion: the name of the author is removed from the manuscript before it is sent out for review, and referee names are not revealed to authors. To expedite the decision process, a number of papers are returned to the author without referee review. The decision to return a manuscript without review is based upon a variety of considerations, including field considerations (when the field seems to be more appropriate for another *AEJ*, this is mentioned to the author), and the editor or co-editor judgment on the likelihood of being finally accepted in the *AEJ: Applied*.

An important feature of all the *AEJs* is that an author of a manuscript previously submitted to the *AER* can elect to request to have the *AER* file (referees' comments and cover letters) passed on to the *AEJ* editor. This is done by answering a question on the Web site and supplying the *AER* manuscript number. The Pittsburgh staff then contacts the original referees for authorization to disclose their names and their cover letters and upload the relevant review files. The editors of the *AEJ: Applied* reserve the right to decide on the basis of the previous referees only (and their reading of the paper), or to ask for new referees for their opinion. Both methods have been employed at this point. From November 2008 to October 2009, we have received 41 submissions through this channel (12 percent of first submissions). The *AER* referees agreed to share their reports in almost all cases. Decision times are much faster for these papers, as they often do not require asking new referees.

Editorial and Publication Statistics

The turnaround times reported in Table 2 reflect *AEJ: Applied's* commitment to a rapid decision process. The average time to first decision for papers which have received a first decision already is 36 days across all papers (including summary rejections and papers rejected on the

TABLE 2—EDITORIAL STATISTICS, NOVEMBER 1, 2008—OCTOBER 31, 2009
(As of November 20, 2009)

Total submissions	406
Total first submissions	348
Decisions: out of first submissions	
Summarily reject (including previous <i>AER</i> submission without new referees)	30.2%
Reject	52.0%
Revise and resubmit	13.1%
Pending manuscripts	4.7%
Decision times: first submissions	
Average time to first decision (for manuscripts with decisions)	36.1 days
Average time to first decision (excluding summary rejections)	50.3 days
Longest decision time	91 days
Fraction of decisions made within one month	43.3%
Fraction of decisions made between one and two months	37.2%
Fraction of decisions made between two and three months	19.5%
Fraction of decisions made in more than three months	0%
Decisions: out of second submissions	
Accept	40.0%
Revise and resubmit	57.5%
Reject	2.5%
Decision times: second submissions	
Average time to decision, for revised manuscripts	24.7 days
Fraction of second decisions made within one month	70.0%
Fraction of decisions made between one and two months	22.5%
Fraction of decisions made between two and three months	7.5%

basis of *AER* referee reports). Including only the manuscripts sent to referees, the average time to first decision is 50 days. These numbers are very similar to the 2008 numbers (38.5 days and 52 days, respectively), as well as the 2007 numbers (38 days and 53 days, respectively). We are happy to have maintained a good turnaround in the face of a greatly increased number of manuscripts. We are working hard, with exceptionally good cooperation from the referees, to maintain a rapid turnaround. Eighty percent of the submissions received in 2008 and for which we already have a decision were handled within two months and all of them within three months. Controlling for censoring (since not all decisions have already been made on the papers received in 2008) using a Kaplan-Meier transformation (see the *American Economic Review* report in this issue for details on the method), we estimate that 39 percent of the submissions are handled within a month, 75 percent within 2 months, and virtually all within 3 months).

The ratio of revise and resubmit to submissions on which a decision has been reached is 13 percent (similar to 2008). The *AEJ: Applied* is committed to shortening the overall review

process by giving a revise and resubmit only when the chances of eventual publication are high, so the final acceptance ratio is high. Many revisions are not sent back to referees. Virtually all the first revised and resubmit papers that have been resubmitted have either been accepted or been sent for a second (often fairly minor) revision. All second revisions have been accepted, without consulting referees.

The *AEJ: Applied* has received submissions from authors from a variety of institutions, both in the United States and abroad. It attracts both junior and senior authors. We are particularly happy to have received a number of strong submissions by junior authors. Twenty-eight of the 59 papers that have been accepted for publication so far are authored by junior faculty.

These submission numbers reflect a combination of soliciting promising submissions, the commitment of the board of editors and other senior members of the profession, and (we hope) the growing reputation of the journal, in particular for fast turnaround. We are particularly grateful to all the referees for making this possible.

ESTHER DUFLO, *Editor*