The Policy Process

WEEK 4: CURRENT TRENDS IN THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT
This Session’s Objectives

- Consider the idea of a policy making system
- Understand the current trends that influence the system
- Next week: historic and structural trends
A Typical Systems Model

The environment—structural, social, political, and economic—affects all parts of the system.

Inputs:
- Election results
- Public opinion
- Communications to elected officials
- Media coverage of issues
- Personal experiences of decision makers

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM or "THE BLACK BOX"

The political system translates inputs into outputs. The structural, social, political, and economic environments influence political and policy-making activities.

Outputs:
- Laws
- Regulations
- Decisions

Feedback influences the political system and the nature of the demands that continue the cycle.
Policy Making as a System

Figure 2.1
The Stages Model of the Policy Process

Issue emergence → Agenda Setting → Alternative Selection

Enactment → Implementation → Evaluation

Feedback
Population Trends: Size

Figure 2–3: United States Population, 1960–2007 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, in the Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2009, Table 2)
Population Trends: Annual Growth Rate

Figure 2-4: Annual Rate of Population Growth, United States, 1960-2007 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau, in the Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2009, Table 2)
Population Trends: Age

Figure 2.5: Portion of U.S. Population by Age Groups. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, in the Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2009, Table 7.
Population Trends: Race and Ethnicity

Figure 2.6: Proportion of Population by Select Ethnic or Racial Group

Implications

- The U.S. is not growing quickly, but is growing faster than many EU countries
- Population growth is related to economic growth
  - Will the economy grow as fast to create jobs?
- A decline in younger workers = more pressure on retirement systems, social security
Gender Equity: Labor Force Participation

Figure 2-7: Labor Force Participation, Men and Women, 1975 to 2008

Gender and Family Income

![Graph showing median family income by household type from 1949 to 2007.](image)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States Table 677 (2009).

Figure 2-8: Median Family Income, by Household Type, 1949-2007
Implications
Politics: Voter Turnout

Figure 2–11: Proportion of Voting-Age Population Participating in Elections, 1932–2008

Public Opinion: Most Important Problem


Figure 2.9: Proportionate Answers to “Most Important Problem Question”
Figure 2-9: Answer to the “right track” poll question

Source: NBC/Wall-Street Journal Poll, via pollingreport.com, http://www.pollingreport.com/right.htm, December 1, 2009. The question is “All in all, do you think things in the nation are generally headed in the right direction, or do you feel that things are off on the wrong track?” Samples vary by registered voters, likely voters, and all adults.
Politics: Presidential Approval Ratings


Figure 2.12: Presidential Approval Ratings, Harry Truman through George W. Bush
Presidential and Congressional Approval Ratings

Average Annual Approval Rating (percent)

- Average Presidential Approval
- Average Congressional Approval
Implications
Economy: Gross Domestic Product

Figure 1.1: U.S. Gross Domestic Product, Constant (2000) Dollars, 1930 to 2007. (Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2009: Table 645)
Economy: Unemployment Rate


Figure 2.17: Unemployment Rate, January 1948 to November 2009
Economy: Federal Budget Deficits

Source: Office of Management and Budget, The President's Budget FY-2010, Historic Tables.
http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/historicals/

Note: Figures for FY-2009 forward are estimates. Scale is reversed; surpluses are negative numbers.

Figure 2.15: Federal Budget Deficits, Current 2000 dollars, 1940 to 2014
Figure 2-11: Gross Federal Debt and Debt as Percent of GDP, 1940 to 2013 (estimated). Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States 2009, Table 452. Note: Figures for FY 2008 through FY 2013 are estimated. FY 2008 will likely be higher than shown.
Economy: Income Distribution

Figure 2.18: Income Distribution in the United States, 1967 to 2006

Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States 2009, Table 675
Twenty Percent of Households Earn 50% of National Income

- Highest Quintile: 50%
- 4th Quintile: 23%
- Middle Quintile: 15%
- 2nd Quintile: 9%
- Lowest Quintile: 3%
Economy: Comparative Wealth Equity

Sources:
- OECD member nations from www.oecd.org


Figure 2-19: Comparative income distribution (Gini index), OECD states and overall European Union
Implications

- What does low voter turnout suggest?
What Do These Trends Mean?

- Recessions happen
- Confidence declines and dissatisfaction increases