

# THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT SCORE, 2000

by

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## ***Purpose***

The Policy Environment Score (PES) is intended to measure the degree to which the policy environment supports the reproductive health of the population, with particular focus on access to high quality family planning and reproductive health services. It is designed to reflect both the current level of support and the changes that take place over a one to three year period as a result of policy activities.

The POLICY Project has developed a prototype questionnaire to offer to each interested country, with the understanding that local adaptations would often be desirable. That was the case in Egypt, and considerable thought was given to the particular items of the questionnaire. The PES instrument has now been used 5 times in Egypt ( 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000).

The PES score has two major purposes:

1. To indicate the current status of the policy environment including the strongest and weakest elements.
2. To evaluate the impact of policy activities.

The elements of the policy environment that policy activities attempt to influence define the categories of the policy environment score. These categories are:

- Political support
- National policy (or policy formulation)
- Organization and structure
- Resources
- Evaluation and research
- Legal and regulatory
- Program components

A number of specific items are included under each of these headings. The selection of items is intended to capture the most important indicators in each category.

## ***Data Collection***

Data have been collected from 13- 25 respondents in each year (25 in 2000). For the first 3 years (1996, 1997, 1998) the data were collected by POLICY. For the last two years (1999, 2000) POLICY provided training and technical assistance to USAID–Egypt to collect the data. In 1999, 15% of respondents were changed while in 2000 35% of respondents were changed, leaving two thirds of the former respondents.

### **Scoring**

Respondents are asked to rate the items for “this year” e.g. 2000, and for “last year” e.g. 1999. All items in the seven major categories have been scored from 1 to 5 in all five rounds, and the scores are converted to percent of maximum.

The first step in calculating the total score is to consider each of the seven categories separately. The number of items varies within the categories, so the average score is calculated separately for each category, yielding seven means that can each range from 1 to 5. These receive equal weight in the total, which is simply the sum of the seven means, giving a maximum score of 35. As a convenience each respondent’s total is expressed as a percentage of that, so in practice the range is from zero to 100.

The effect of these procedures is to standardize the categories so that the number of individual items within a category does not affect the total score. The seven categories receive equal weights in the total.

### **Total Scores and Seven Category Scores, 1996-2000.**

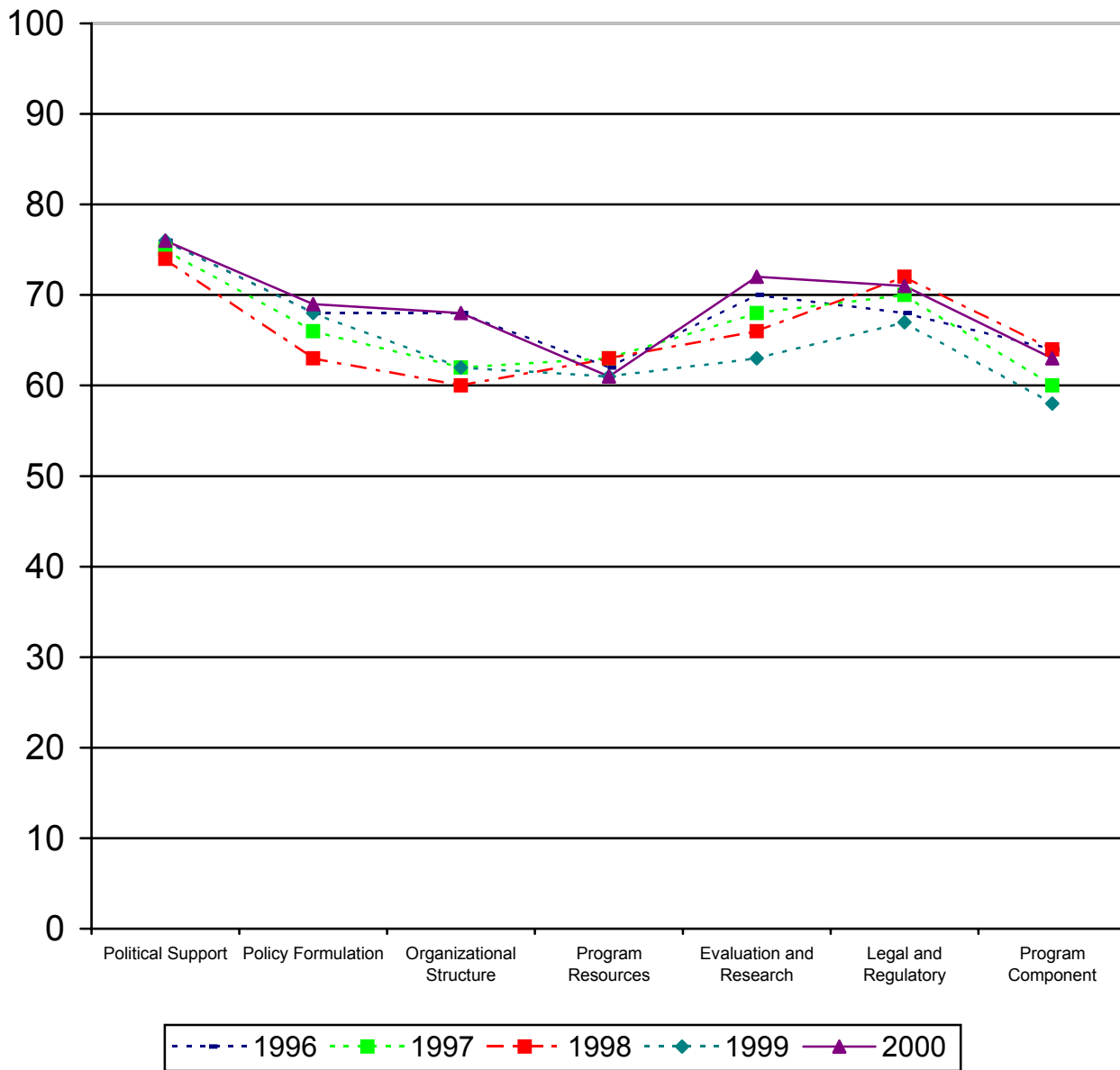
The single best view of the results comes from the responses for “this year” in the five rounds. These appear in Table 1 and Figure 1.

**Table 1. Annual Results from “This Year” Replies, Egypt**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Average* (5 Rounds)
	<b>Percent of Maximum</b>					
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>67</b>
I. Political Support	76	75	74	77	76	75
II. Policy Formulation	68	66	63	68	69	67
III. Organizational Structure	68	62	60	61	68	64
IV. Program Resources	62	63	63	61	61	62
V. Evaluation and Research	70	68	66	64	72	68
VI. Legal and Regulatory	68	70	72	67	71	70
VII. Program Component	64	60	64	59	63	62

- No of respondents varies from 15, 17, 13, 16 and 25 in the five rounds.

Figure (1) Policy Environment Scores in Five Rounds, Egypt 1996-2000



Looking at the year-by-year pattern gives more insight into the trends in the various components of the score (Figure 2). In it, **four** features stand out:

***1. Improvement in the scores of 2000***

Although the total score has been stable at around 67%, or two-thirds of the possible score (see top line), the data suggest an increase in the scores this year in most components. These improvements may be real, or partially so; however, the differences are small and fall well within the standard deviations (except for Evaluation and Research). The improvement in the Evaluation and Research component reflects a recent emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of interventions and recent serious efforts to link research to the needs of the national program.

It is also interesting to note that each of the seven scores in 2000 is very close to the comparable one in 1996, the first year and the best year before 2000. The intervening years scored lower for the total, and many or most of the intervening seven scores were below both 1996 and 2000.

***2. The basic stability of the scores across five years of measurement.***

In spite of the apparent improvement, true policy change in this multi-year span has been relatively minor, at least when examined across these seven components and the many items that make them up. The variations are clearly within the small random fluctuations that must be expected, probably mixed in with some genuine policy modifications that have been small. The low score for the “Program Resources” component reflects concerns about the decreasing donor support.

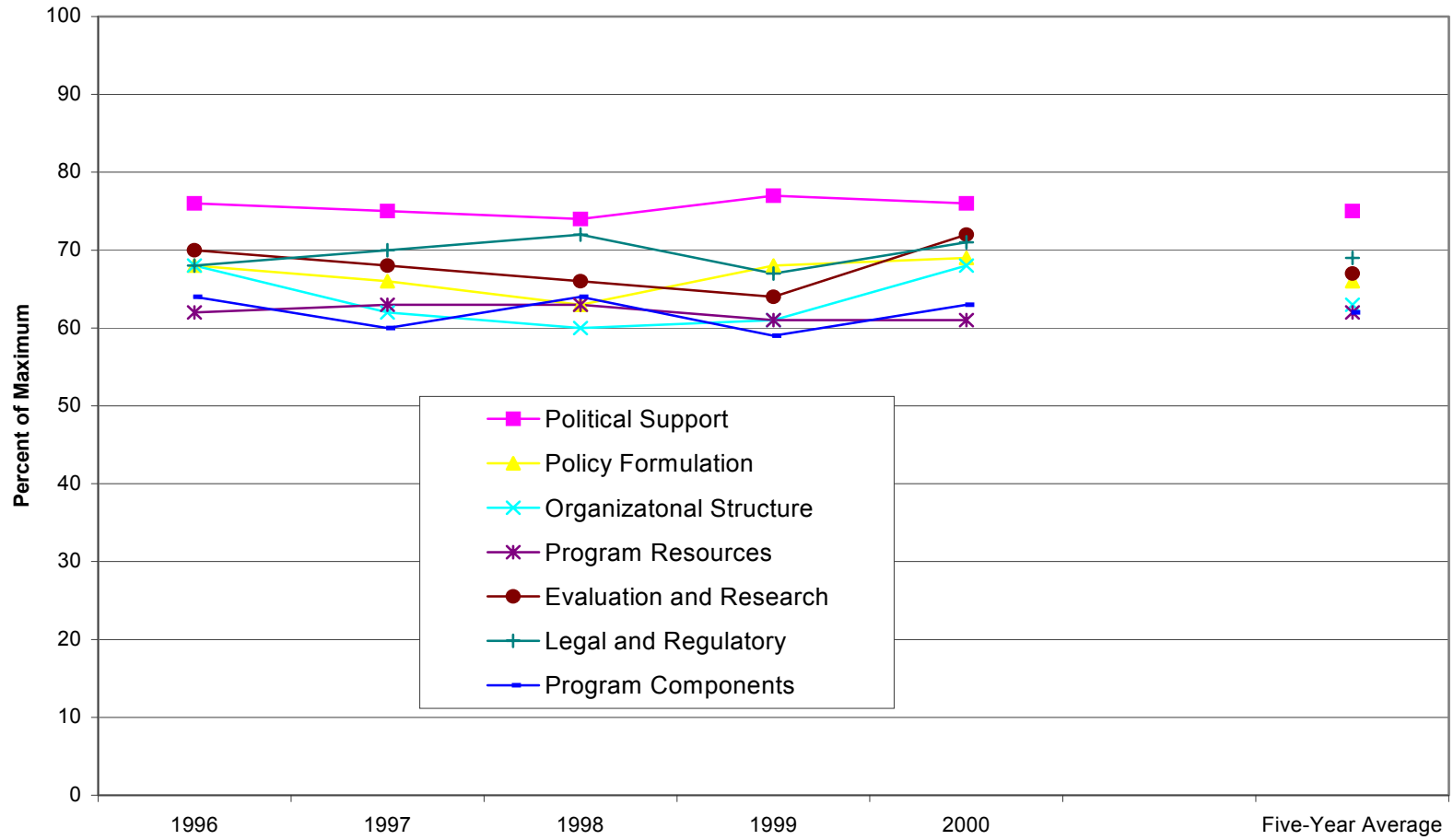
***3. The systematic differences between the components.***

Political Support is always on top (Figure 2), followed fairly consistently by Legal and Regulatory. Program Components and Program Resources lie at the bottom, along with Organizational Structure, all of which makes sense in the Egyptian context. At intermediate levels are Policy Formulation and Evaluation and Research, again, a reasonable outcome.

***4. The narrow range of differences.*** Even though the components differ systematically, they do not differ much. The maximum difference, from the lowest to the highest score, is only 13 to 18 points depending upon the year (13 for the average). Most differences, between pairs of components, are far less. The total score has stayed close to 66-67, and the seven components are clustered fairly closely around it.

All of these features lend a good deal of confidence to the methodology. The five rounds were independent of each other. Those respondents who were the same persons in various years surely did not remember what their ratings were on each of the many items that compose the seven components, and those who were new each year gave independent scores. Yet the readings are within reasonable bounds, make sense in the light of other knowledge about local policies, and provide a consistent internal pattern.

Figure (2): Policy Environment Scores: Five Rounds and 1996-2000 Average



## High and Low-Scoring Items in 2000

Among particular items (within certain major categories) for 2000, high scorers and low scorers were the following (high: received a mean of 4 and over; low: received a mean less than 3).

**Table (2): High and Low Rated Items (Round 5, 2000)**

### (a) High Rated Items

<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>
Political Support	1. High level government support exists 2. Media campaigns are permitted
Policy Formulation	1. A favorable national policy exists 2. Formal program goals exist
Organizational Structure	1. The service delivery program has a high level placement in government. 2. The director for service delivery is full-time and reports to an influential superior officer
Program Resources	1. Enough service points and providers exist for reasonable access by most clients.
Legal and Regulatory	1. There are no medical barriers for IUD, Pill, Condom, Injectables. 2. There are no eligibility barriers for Pill, Injectables, and IUD
Program Component	1. By formal policy the use of mass media to inform and motivate is included in the program 2. The private sector is deliberately encouraged through policies that leave medical practitioners free to provide contraception.

### (b) Low Rated Items

<b>Category</b>	<b>Item</b>
Policy Formulation	1. Ministries other than MOHP are involved in policy formulation.
Program Resources	2. Contraceptive sustainability: GOE has a realistic plan to phase out donor contraceptives

2. Fee-for-supply (method): GOE has established a stable policy strategy to maintain fee-for-supply with limited exceptions for truly indigent groups.

Legal and Regulatory

1. There are medical barriers for Tubal Ligation and Vasectomy
2. There are eligibility barriers for Tubal Ligation and Vasectomy.

Program Component

1. By formal policy the home visiting workers are included in the program
  2. By formal policy, Community Based Distribution (CBD) is included in the program
  3. Voluntary Surgical contraception (VSC): The policy environment for VSC is favorable (GOE position in National Policy).
  4. Provider Roles: GOE policy towards contraceptive supply services given by para-professionals (RN, midwives, pharmacists) is favorable.
  5. Import duties are minor or absent.
  6. Price controls on contraceptives are minor or absent.
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### ***Comparison of “This Year” and “Last Year” Results.***

The data offer opportunities to examine current vs. retrospective scores. For each round scores were measured in the specific year and again retrospectively as “last year.” Table 3 compares these responses.

Table 3: Comparison of “This Year” and “Last Year” Ratings (Percent of Maximum), Egypt (1996-2000)

	1996*			1997*			1998*			1999		
	Rated in 1996	Rated in 1997	Diff-erence	Rated in 1997	Rated in 1998	Diff-erence	Rated in 1998	Rated in 1999	Diff-erence	Rated in 1999	Rated in 2000	Diff-erence
	<b>68</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>-6</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>-3</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>0</b>
Political Support	76	74	-2	75	74	-1	74	75	1	76	72	-4
Policy Formulation	68	63	-5	66	64	-2	63	67	4	68	65	-3
Organizational Structure	68	57	-11	62	57	-5	60	61	1	62	66	4
Program Resources	62	58	-4	63	58	-4	63	58	-5	61	58	-3
Evaluation and Research	70	61	-9	68	62	-6	66	59	-7	63	64	1
Legal and Regulatory	68	66	-2	70	71	1	72	67	-5	67	69	2
Program Component	64	55	-9	60	62	1	64	57	-7	58	60	2

\* As shown in previous reports.

The most remarkable feature of Table 3 for the 1999 comparison is the near equality of the overall mean score and also for three of the seven policy categories, where the ratings for 1999 as done in 1999 and those done in 2000 agree closely. That also implies stability over time in the Egypt scores.

However, the rating for “organizational structure” for 1999 was rated lower in 1999 than in 2000; on the other hand “political support” was rated higher in 1999 than in 2000. Possibly, improvements are taking place in organizational structure while there is a drop in political support.

In all such changes random factors can be at work; also respondents may psychologically be inclined to believe that things must be getting better, and so they slightly downgrade the past in favor of the present. Over all the years the pattern is clearly for the past to be viewed worse than the present – the average difference is three point, though with a fall from 6 to 0 over the 1996 – 2000 period in Table 3.

***Respondent Variation in Scores***

Respondents vary somewhat in the ratings they give, and they vary more on some items than on others. Excessive disagreement can result from lack of information, from genuinely different viewpoints, and from ambiguity in the item itself. Respondent variation can be seen first in the total score, then in the seven category scores, and finally in particular items. The following pertain to the 2000 results.

*By Total Scores*

The range for total scores (plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean) is from 58 to 80 percent of maximum, around the mean of 69 percent.

*By Scores within Categories*

The following gives the standard deviations for the 25 respondents in each of the seven categories (this accompanies the seven means in Table 1 for 2000 (Round 5))

Political Support	15.0
Policy Formulation	14.2
Organizational Structure	15.3
Program Resources	14.4
Evaluation and Research	18.4
Legal and Regulatory	7.9
Program Component	12.5
Total Score	11.2

All but one exceeds the standard deviation for the total score (11.2), which is naturally more stable than any single part. We note that the items with the highest standard deviations (highest respondent disagreement) are exactly those for which the respondents probably have the least information or clear impression, as seen in Table 4.

It is of interest to identify the particular questionnaire items on which respondents agreed least, as judged by the standard deviations. Table 4 is also based on the 25 respondents in the 2000 (Round 5) study. Items have been grouped by category to show similarities. The larger the standard deviation, the larger is the degree of disagreement among respondents. Disagreements were substantial regarding items that respondents do not have clear information for, such as barriers for vasectomy, eligibility barriers for “other,” and the policy toward postpartum FP. Others, like Social Marketing and CBD, have varied greatly in their character over the years, which leads to respondent confusion. This pattern of greater disagreement where it is expected to occur is reassuring as to the methodology. *When respondents don’t know much about an item they tend on average to rate it low.*

**Table 4: Items with Highest Degrees of Variation in Respondent Ratings, Egypt, 2000**

Items	Standard Deviation of Response
<b>Political Support</b>	
*Political parties support effective policies and programs	1.16
*Media campaigns are permitted	1.11
<b>Policy Formulation</b>	
*Policy dialogue and formulation involves NGOs, community leaders, and representatives of the private sector and special interest groups	1.10
*Ministries other than MOHP are involved in policy formulation	1.08
*A national coordinating body exists and functions effectively	1.02
<b>Organizational Structure</b>	
*The private sector is formally included in policy deliberations	1.17
*Decentralization: GOE policy for decentralization	1.16
*Ministries other than MOHP are mandated to help with program implementation	1.13
*NGOs are formally included in policy deliberations	1.05
<b>Program Resources</b>	
*Resources are allocated by explicit priority guidelines	1.09
<b>Evaluation and Research</b>	
*A system exists to monitor secondary data sources (surveys, censuses, others) for the benefit of policy guidance	1.26
*Special studies are undertaken on occasion to address leading policy questions	1.10
*A system exists to bring information from these sources directly to the attention of policy makers.	1.08
*A vigorous policy is in place to ensure effectiveness of the service statistics system.	1.03
<b>Legal and Regulatory</b>	
Medical barriers Vasectomy	1.52
Medical barriers Tubal Ligation and Vasectomy	1.34
Medical barriers Other	1.16
Medical barriers Condom	1.04
Eligibility barriers Other	1.26
Eligibility barriers Commercial	1.20

### **Program Component**

*By formal policy the postpartum provision of family planning is included in the program.	1.35
*By formal policy Contraceptive Social Marketing (CSM) is included in the program	1.34
*By formal policy Community Based Distribution (CBD) is included in the program	1.22
*Contraception advertising is permitted	1.19
*Price controls on contraceptives are minor or absent	1.18
*By formal policy the use of mass media to inform and motivate is included in the program	1.15
*Voluntary Surgical contraception (VSC): The policy environment for VSC is favorable (GOE position in National Policy).	1.10
*By formal policy home visiting workers are included in the program	1.09

### ***Conclusion***

The indicators presented in this report are drawn from the ratings given by expert observers of the national policy environment for family planning and reproductive health. The annual series of data from 1996 to 2000 is unique; no other country has such an information resource, using common methodology and an unchanging questionnaire. Three important points can be noted.

1. Overall the Egyptian situation as measured here may be improving.
2. The stability of the indicators over time is reassuring as to the methodology with a clear tendency for the raters to downgrade the past. The strength of the methodology supports repeated use of the PES as a measurement tool.
3. The improvements in the components of “Evaluation and Research” and “Organizational Structure” are positive indications, which encourage further efforts at population policy reform.

Finally, the methodology seems to be working well, in a setting where there has in fact been little policy modification.