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The proximate determinants of fertility and birth intervals in Egypt
An application of calendar data

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Abstract
In this paper we use calendar data from the 2000 Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) to assess the determinants of birth interval length among women who are in union. We make use of the well-known model of the proximate determinants of fertility, and take advantage of the fact that the DHS calendar data provide month-by-month data on contraceptive use, breastfeeding and post-partum amenorrhoea, which are the most important proximate determinants among women in union. One aim of the analysis is to see whether the calendar data are sufficiently detailed to account for all variation among individual women in birth interval duration, in that once they are controlled, the effect of background social, economic and cultural variables is not statistically significant. The results suggest that this is indeed the case, especially after a random effect term to account for the unobserved proximate determinants is included in the model. Birth intervals are determined mainly by the use of modern methods of contraception (the IUD being more effective than the pill). Breastfeeding and post-partum amenorrhoea both inhibit conception, and the effect of breastfeeding remains even after the period of amenorrhoea has ended.

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