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Tempo and its Tribulations

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Abstract

Bongaarts and Feeney offer alternatives to period life expectancy with a set of demographic measures equivalent to each other under a Proportionality Assumption. Under this assumption, we show that the measures are given by exponentially weighted moving averages of earlier values of period life expectancy. They are indices of mortality conditions in the recent past. The period life expectancy is an index of current mortality conditions. The difference is a difference between past and present, not a "tempo distortion" in the present. In contrast, the Bongaarts-Feeney tempo-adjusted Total Fertility Rate is a measure of current fertility conditions, which can be understood in terms of a process of birth-age standardization.

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