

Regional Differences in Family Proximity in Canada: Leaving Mom Behind?

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The proximity of adult children to their parents has implications for child care and for long-term care of the disabled elderly and the labour force participation of women. Since adult children may benefit from childcare at early stages, and elderly parents from long-term care at later stages, the balance of benefits and burdens of proximity may vary over the life cycle. As a result, it is necessary to consider both transfer directions when considering family influences on location. In this paper, I use Cycle 21 of the General Social Survey to estimate the determinants of close proximity across mother-child pairs and the impact of proximity on eldercare, childcare and labour force participation of women. To my knowledge there is no paper that considers this issue for the Canadian context. Fast et al (2004) consider proximity of caregivers to the elderly, but the authors did not have information on family members not providing care. This latest cycle of the GSS allows us to consider the link between proximity and transfers explicitly. For example, are elderly women less likely to receive institutional care if they have a child living nearby? For mothers of young children, is close proximity to an elderly mother positively related to labour force participation because of childcare availability or negatively related to labour force participation due to the 'sandwich' generation effect? Special attention is paid to differences across geographical regions of Canada. Interprovincial migration patterns over the past forty years, and regional differences in the age distribution suggest that elderly women in the Maritime provinces, for example, may be less likely to have children in close proximity compared to elderly women in Ontario. This has implications for elderly care in depressed regions, as well as child care for migrants