

Asymmetry in Intergenerational Transfers to Husbands' and Wives' Mothers

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Using the 2008 Fourth National Survey on Family in Japan, I examine how adult daughters who do not co-reside with mothers/mothers-in-law organize transfers of assistance (financial, emotional/personal care) to aging mothers and whether the amount and likelihood of transfer differ by family lineage. The majority of assistance provided to aging mothers is emotional and personal care. Few adult daughters provide solely financial or both financial and emotional/personal care. The share of mothers receiving emotional/personal care from adult daughters is much higher for mothers than mothers-in-law. In contrast, although the number of mothers receiving financial assistance is very limited, the share of mothers receiving financial assistance is slightly higher for mothers-in-law than mothers.

The determinants of assistance vary by type of care, recipient, and patterns of parental survival. Primarily, adult daughters are responsive to needs of both mothers and mothers-in-law. Personal care assistance is also sensitive to the distance between caregivers and care recipients. With respect to the financial assistance, daughters are more sensitive to financial needs of mothers-in-law, while they are more responsive to personal care needs of their own mothers. Also, daughters working full-time and those self-employed are more likely to assist their mothers only. The result implies that distribution of resources by daughters is based also on gender norms and structural factors such as distance between daughters and mothers (mothers-in-law), sib size and its composition.