Spatial Disparities in Young Adults’ Early Residential Independence in France

Claire Kersuzan* and Matthieu Solignac**

Abstract – Leaving the parental home happens at a relatively young age in France but not much is known about spatial variations in this. Using data from the DREES-Insee ENRJ survey (Enquête nationale sur les ressources de jeunes, a national survey on the resources of young adults), this work analyses the differences in accessing independent accommodation between the age of 18 and 24 according to parental home location. Young adults leave home considerably sooner outside large towns and cities, in the large majority of cases when pursuing studies: 80% of young people from rural areas or small towns have left home before the age of 25, compared with 40% of young Parisians. The former’s parents more commonly support them in leaving home, in particular with financial assistance. While there is little variation in the average amount of regular support provided according to parental area of origin, this nevertheless equates to a significantly higher burden-to-income ratio for parents living outside large Urban Units, in particular for young adults still studying, and the amounts given cover different items of expenditure.

JEL Classification: J13, R23, D64, Z13
Keywords: leaving home, spatial inequalities, transition to adulthood, young adult, housing, accommodation, parent, intergenerational transfers

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Despite the extended length of studies and longer time taken to secure stable employment, social pressure and the aspiration for independence at a young age remain particularly strong for young French adults (Cichelli, 2015; Van de Velde, 2012). Among the markers of this emancipation, leaving the parental home, with the access to independent accommodation that it implies, constitutes a significant event on which society places considerable importance (Mulder, 2009: Van de Velde, 2008; Amsellem-Mainguy, 2016). Now the age and patterns for leaving home may differ considerably according to the young adults’ region of origin. If the parental home is a long way from centres of education and employment, this is liable to encourage young adults to leave home at a young age, with geographical mobility to urban areas that offer more facilities or opportunities. Leaving home to somewhere less distant may also be prompted by more affordable property prices, especially for people setting up home together as a couple or starting their working career at a younger age. The heterogeneity in the transition to adulthood can be seen through the spatial dimension of access to residential independence.

However, little is known about the scale of sub-national spatial variations in the process of leaving home, in its different forms. Literature on the subject remains very fragmented, with most works being restricted to certain particular areas (Renahy, 2005; Gambino & Desmesure, 2014; Thissen et al., 2010), focused on a specific category of young people (Lemistre & Magrini, 2010; Fabre & Pawloski, 2019; Dufour-Kippelen, 2001), or centred on a particular type of mobility, notably including a move from one administrative region to another (Dumartin, 1995). While these works provide a glimpse of the great regional diversity in practices, the specific features of each approach make it hard to compare results. Hence the interest in offering a standardised comprehensive overview of the spatial variations in practices as regards people in France leaving home at a young age, according to the region they are leaving.

Grasping the spatial dimension of achieving residential independence involves an analysis based on data representative of all young adults and their parents across the entire French territory. The primary objective of this work is to draw up a precise statistical picture of the association between location of parental home and the timing, reasons and conditions for young adults to achieve residential independence. The second objective is to study the consequences for the parents in each region of these spatial disparities in access to residential independence, as regards covering costs during the young person’s school-to-work transition period.

This analysis, based on data from the DREES-Insee ENRJ survey (Enquête nationale sur les ressources de jeunes, a national survey on the resources of young adults), concerns young people aged 18 to 24 in 2014. These first years of adulthood are a time of intense residential mobility, which plays a part in redrawing the local socio-demographic composition (Dumartin, 1995; Bergouignan, 2009) through the spatial sorting of young adults (Berck et al., 2016). Whilst there is still an association with basic life decisions (field and length of studies, entering the labour market, setting up home as a couple, etc.), young adults’ access to independent housing is largely conditional on the level of family transfers, due to their own level of income and the emphasis on family values inherent in the French social system (Déchaux, 2007). So, there is an association between parental home location and specific issues in regard to leaving home at a young age and the material and financial support provided by parents.

Leaving home before the age of 25 occurs in the large majority of cases when pursuing studies and is more common among people who are not from large towns or cities: 80% of young adults from rural areas or small towns leave home by the time they are 25, compared with 40% of young adults from the Greater Paris Area. These disparities according to parental home municipality can be explained by socio-demographic factors and/or certain characteristics about the parental home location, such as distance from universities, which concerns leaving home to move somewhere a long distance away, and the cost of accommodation when leaving home to move somewhere nearby. Even after introducing these characteristics, however, the probability of leaving home is still two to three times lower in the Paris Urban Unit than in other areas. These spatial variations are accompanied by unequal reliance on parents, with those from rural areas more commonly giving the young adult support, in particular financial assistance, in order to leave home. While the amount of regular support given by parents is similar regardless of the region where they live, this support represents a greater burden for parents living outside large Urban Units, in particular where it concerns young adults still pursuing their studies, and covers different areas of expenditure.
The first section puts into perspective this paper’s contribution to the literature on leaving home. The second section is dedicated to the data from the ENRJ survey. The third section examines the regional disparities in the timing and conditions for first leaving the parental home, while the fourth section considers these regional disparities with reference to the differences in parental involvement in this process.

1. Leaving Home: Assessment of the Situation from a Spatial Perspective

1.1. Leaving the Parental Home

The median age for young French adults to leave their parental home for the first time is about 23, which is quite early in comparison to young people in Southern Europe and Ireland (27-28) but later than for young British and Nordic European adults (20-21) (Van de Velde, 2008; Amsellem-Mainguy, 2016). Contrary to widespread belief, this age has remained relatively stable in the last forty years (Galland, 2000; Régnier-Loilier, 2006). The models for achieving residential independence, on the other hand, have been transformed due to the effect of economic and social changes (Robette, 2020). The model for permanently leaving home through one’s own financial means, often linked, in the case of men, to them getting their first job and, in the case of women, to marriage, is not necessarily straightforward any longer. Achieving residential independence has become a lengthy process with variable forms, frequently carried out in stages and which very often does not put an end to the young adult’s financial dependence on their parents (Villeneuve-Gokalp, 1997).

In recent decades, studies on leaving home in France have revealed substantial disparities in the timing and conditions for leaving the parental home according to the various socio-economic and family characteristics of the young adults and their parents. These studies show that, in comparison with young men of exactly the same age and level of education as them, a lower proportion of young women live with their parents and a higher proportion live with a partner (Castell et al., 2016). Those with permanent employment contracts are more likely not to live at home, whereas the probability of leaving home is lower for those who are unemployed or not working, although gaining employment would not appear to be one of the main drivers for leaving the parental home (ibid; Dormont & Dufour-Kippelen, 2000; Mora et al., 2008; Portela & Dezenaire, 2014). Moreover, access to independent accommodation is common in young adults in higher education (Castell et al., 2016; Menard & Vergnat, 2020), thus characterising “the privilege of the successful” (Solard & Coppoletta, 2014). With regard to family factors, leaving home happens sooner in the event of parental separation, the death of a parent or the presence of a step-father or step-mother (Bellidenty, 2018; Laferrière, 2005; Bozon & Villeneuve-Gokalp, 1995) whilst a higher number of siblings increases the probability of a young person leaving home (Castell et al., 2016; Despalins & de Saint Pol, 2012). Parental income can have contradictory or even paradoxical effects (Laferrière, 2005): while high income can finance the move away from home, it can also delay it by offering housing conditions that may encourage young adults to continue living with their parents for longer. However, it is less common for young students from modest backgrounds to leave home during their studies (Herpin & Verger, 1997; Robert-Bobée, 2002). When young adults from a working-class background and with a lower level of education leave home, it tends to involve a move of a shorter distance and is often linked to setting up home with their partner (Fabre & Pawlowski, 2019; Margirier, 2004).

1.2. Spatial Dimension to Leaving Home and Young Adult Mobility

Many studies have tackled the issue of residential mobility and location. Following the work of Sjaastad (1962), residential mobility is understood to be a form of investment in human capital, with the costs of migration having to be offset by the benefits it will generate: migration must, in particular, provide access to more favourable local labour markets. Access to initial training, allowing expectations of a higher standard of living, follows a similar principle for young adults not yet in work. The field of urban economics developed in particular around the effects of urban agglomeration (Behrens et al., 2015; Combes & Gobillon, 2015), highlighting the various mechanisms for the spatial sorting of individuals by size of town or city. This sorting may take place notably through parental choices about location, making birthplace a decisive factor in determining wages (Bosquet & Overman, 2019). In the wake of Rosen (1974) and Roback (1982), general equilibrium models that have been developed incorporate the charms and attractions specific to each town or city, which play a part in determining wages and rents. Amongst these features, the range of factors involved includes:

1. Increasing length of studies and longer period for getting a job, change in family relations and, more recently, the increase in housing costs.

ECONOMIE ET STATISTIQUE / ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS N° 522-523, 2021
higher education programmes and institutions available can affect standard of living, through the skills generated locally, and the interaction and selection of individuals moving to and remaining in the biggest towns and cities (Diamond, 2016). Housing characteristics and the attributes of the place (natural attractions such as the landscape and climate, transport services, leisure and cultural facilities, etc.) can work in the same way. Détang-Dessendre & Piguet (2017) show that unlike older people, young adults, especially the most highly qualified, base their mobility choices more on local training and labour market characteristics than on the natural charms and attractions offered by regions. Eyméoud & Wasmer (2016) nevertheless point out the difficulty young adults face in accessing the most dynamic areas in terms of training and employment, which also have the most strained property markets. While the appeal of towns and cities is evident, they seem to hold less attraction for young adults with a lower level of education, who show a greater tendency to remain in rural areas (Détang-Dessendre et al., 2008). This economic literature is also heavily focused on the link between migration and the labour market, generally restricting itself to individuals already in work (Gobillon, 2001) and often neglecting rural areas.

While demonstrating that geographical mobility is higher in young adults than in other age groups (Baccaïni, 2009; Delance & Vignolles, 2017), analysis of domestic mobility within France tends to confirm the attraction young adults feel for areas with better training and employment potential. So, mobility in young adults, which is also different from that of other age groups in terms of the greater distances involved (Baccaïni, 2001), leads them to move mainly to large urban areas, notably the regional capitals (Baccaïni, 2007; Couet, 2006). These studies also highlight the importance of region of origin. In the period from 1990 to 1999, residential mobility was higher for 18-24-year-olds from Urban Units with a population of less than 100,000 than for those from larger Urban Units, especially in the case of moves to another département. Moving home is less common among young adults from rural municipalities and generally involves shorter distances, within the same municipality or département (Couet, 2006). Other studies about young people who have finished secondary school having gained their Baccalauréat qualification, or those entering the labour market for the first time, also corroborate the significant effect of the place of origin’s characteristics on mobility and school-to-work trajectories (Fabre & Pawlowski, 2019; Margirier, 2004). But while these studies may point out the crucial role played by a young adult’s region of origin on residential mobility, their aggregate nature combines a very varied array of movements: moving home with parents, leaving home for the first time, leaving home again on subsequent occasions to move in with a partner or in relation to births, returning to the parental home, etc. The results obtained are also sensitive to the spatial framework chosen for analysis (the MAUP, Modifiable Areal Unit Problem). In particular, where mobility is defined as a change of residential administrative unit, all cases of people leaving home to move somewhere in the same administrative unit will be likened to immobility. A proportion of cases where people leave home to move somewhere a short distance away, which is particularly common in rural areas, is thus liable to be overlooked.

Few works provide any detailed analysis of achieving residential independence at a young age in connection with parental home location (Mulder, 2009). Spatial variations have often only been considered in the context of comparisons between countries. It is then a question of bringing to light the structural forces of the national systems directing young adults’ access to independent housing (Van de Velde, 2008; Gaviria, 2005; Cavalli et al., 2008). There are a few exceptions, however.

Lastly, the rare studies that have considered parental home location as a key determining factor in transition to adulthood are generally focused on a particular type of area, notably the rural environment. Young adults from rural areas, with comparable social backgrounds and educational level to their urban counterparts, are more likely to favour short vocational training courses, as these are overrepresented in the range of educational options available in rural locations (Cereq, 2011; Coquard, 2015; Arrighi, 2004). The explanations put forward include the extra financial and psychological cost associated with the requirement for residential mobility in order to pursue studies and the strength of their attachment to the region (Bouquet, 2018). Other works, however, paint a more nuanced picture concerning socio-demographic immobility in young people from these areas, emphasising the growing imperative among young adults from rural areas to take longer higher education or post-graduate courses (Alpe, 2018; Orange & Renard, 2018). Conversely, Laferrère (2005) qualifies the picture regarding mobility in young adults from urban areas: a spacious parental home in an urban area encourages them to stay at home.
1.3. Spatial Dimension to Leaving Home and Parental Support

The role of financial support from the family to access personal accommodation takes on particular importance in France where the accepted convention of independence at a young age contrasts with the low level of public support in achieving this. Unlike the universalist approach to youth care in Scandinavian social-democracies, French public policies are mostly organised on the principle of the family covering the cost of the period spent studying, training and getting established in a job. Consequently, public support is aimed more at parents than at young adults under the age of 25, who remain largely excluded from access to the statutory minimum allowances (Magord, 2016).

Admittedly, young adults aged 18-24 can receive certain social transfers directly. So, student status gives access to grants, which are still means-tested according to parental income, however, while taking into account, in an incidental way, the distance between parental home and place of study. However, these grants are not designed to replace parental support, as the size of grant often remains well below what is needed to cover all the expenses associated with residential independence (Chevalier, 2018). Moreover, the granting of housing benefits, open to anyone aged 18 and over (Van de Velde, 2014) differentiates France from the extreme family-centric welfare state approaches of Southern European countries, where family values and strong family ties do little to encourage people to leave home at a young age (Holdsworth, 2004). Although the housing allowance (APL, Allocation personnalisée au logement) seems to have made it easier for students to leave home (Laferrière & Le Blanc, 2004), its legitimacy is frequently contested (Fack, 2005).

In a context characterised by the increasing length of studies, difficulties in getting established in a job and the growing strain on the housing market, parental resources and intergenerational support constitute increasingly decisive factors in young adults moving into personal accommodation (Vanoni, 2013; Maunaye, 2016). A number of authors highlight the misguided consequences of this emphasis on family values in public support systems, which might encourage the deepening of social inequality (Herpin & Déchaux, 2004; Majamaa, 2013; Castell et al., 2016; Déchaux, 2007; Grobon, 2018). Nevertheless, despite the expected influence of parental home location on young adults’ residential trajectories, little work has been done on investigating the regional variability in parental support.

2. Data

The data used in this paper are from the Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes (ENRJ, a national survey on young adults’ resources), conducted jointly by DREES (the statistical department of the French Ministry of social affairs) and Insee in October 2014 among 5,776 young adults aged 18 to 24, living in an ordinary household or in a community, and the parents of these young adults. This survey is representative of all young adults in France, whether living at home with their parents or in independent accommodation, thus avoiding selection bias. The survey also has the advantage of collecting information both from young people and their parents. It thus provides detailed information about the type of municipality where the parental home is located, details of the first time the young adults left home (if ever), and the various kinds of parental support provided, notably to help them move into independent accommodation. The ENRJ survey therefore goes beyond just the young adult’s residential situation observed at the time of the survey, and helps to reconstitute the path they take to living separately, starting from when they first leave the parental home.

2.1. Characterisation of Parental Home Location

The location of the parental home is defined on the basis of the Urban Unit size category to which it belongs. The explanation for this approach is the limited size of the survey sample, the representativeness of which is ensured at a national level but not at a more detailed geographic level. In order to make it easier to interpret the results and have sufficiently large numbers of people within each category, the nine classes of Urban Unit have been aggregated to distinguish between rural areas, small urban areas (Urban Units with a population of 200,000 - 1,999,999), medium-sized urban areas (Urban Units with a population of 20,000 - 199,999), large urban areas (Urban Units with a population of 200,000 - 1,999,999)
and the Urban Unit of Paris. For certain analyses, they are split into three groups: the Urban Unit of Paris together with large urban areas, small or medium-sized urban areas, and rural municipalities.

2.2. Identifying First Home-Leaving

We have information about the young adults’ age when they first moved into accommodation other than their parental home (if ever), whether or not they pay for this accommodation themselves, and whether or not the young adult alternates between this accommodation and their parental home. The young adults also provide information on the main reason for first leaving home and the distance between that first accommodation and their parental home. The young adults also provide information on the main reason for first leaving home and the distance between that first accommodation and their parental home. With the exception of certain events (parents splitting up, first job, first stable romantic relationship), most of the characteristics regarding the young adults and their parents are also measured as of the survey date. It is therefore not possible to look at the young adults’ residential history in comparison with all earlier characteristics.

2.3. Measuring Material and Practical Support Provided by Parents

Young people who have had a first experience of residential independence are questioned about the type of support, if any, that they received from their parents to move in and get settled: help with finding accommodation, doing alterations to it, or paying the rent. The amounts and detailed forms of support (acting as guarantor, paying the deposit, paying all or part of the rent, support in moving in) are only provided by the parents and only if the young adult usually lives (i.e. for at least one month in the year) in personal accommodation at the time of the survey. With the exception of certain events (parents splitting up, first job, first stable romantic relationship), most of the characteristics regarding the young adults and their parents are also measured as of the survey date. It is therefore not possible to look at the young adults’ residential history in comparison with all earlier characteristics.

Our reference unit is the young adult, unlike Grobon (2018) who talks in terms of parental households. Parental income equates to the total combined personal income of each parent7 rather than household disposable income, which could encompass the young adult’s income. The type and amount of support received by the young adult is as declared in the survey. In this respect, the approach is different from that adopted by Castell et al. (2016), where the young adults’ statements are given preference, even if different from those given by the parents.

3. Disparities in Early Residential Independence by Place of Parental Home

3.1. Earlier Home-Leaving in the Countryside and Small Towns than in Large Urban Areas

The proportion of young adults getting their first experience of residential independence at a young age varies substantially by location of transition to adulthood. Before the age of 25, about 4 out of 10 young adults from the Urban Unit of Paris have lived in accommodation other than their parental home, compared with nearly 8 out of 10 from rural municipalities or small Urban Units (Figure I). Where this happens, the average age at which young adults from the capital and other large urban areas leave home for the first time is older (22-23) than is the case for other young adults (20-21). Half of young adults from rural areas or small to medium-sized urban areas leaving home for the first time do so when they come of age, whereas it is more common for young adults from larger urban areas to do so after the age of 21.

3.2. Leaving Home Most Often Linked to Studying

Before the age of 25, the differences between young adults from urban areas and other young adults in achieving residential independence can mostly be explained by mobility related to the pursuit of studies (Figure II). About half of young adults from rural municipalities and small or medium-sized urban areas first leave the parental home before the age of 25 to pursue their studies, often when entering higher education (aged 18-19). Out of young adults from large urban areas, fewer than 3 in 10 leave home for the first time in order to study and are older when they do so. Leaving the parental home for the first time to get work or move in with a partner happens relatively infrequently before the age of

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5. However, no further details are available on the place to which they moved.
6. Note that the monthly amount paid to young adults that is not preallocated for a set purpose means it is not possible to get a precise measurement of the total support used to pay the rent.
7. If the parents are separated, they are paired together again for the purposes of determining parental income. Where the young adult’s parents are living as a couple at the time of the survey (67%) or where one of them is deceased (8%), the information on the support received by the young adult is derived from the statement made by one parent about the support provided by their household. Where the young adult’s parents are separated, the support given to the young adult is calculated based either on the statement made by both parents (12%), or that of the sole parent encountered during the survey (14%). In half of all cases where one of the separated parents could not be interviewed, the young adult no longer had a relationship with that parent.
8. Assuming there is little variation in the rate of achieving residential independence for the first time over the seven cohorts surveyed in the ENRU.
Spatial Disparities in Young Adults’ Early Residential Independence in France

Figure I – Percentage of young adults who have left parental home for the first time at age of 25 (cumulative risk rate) and average age when first left

Note: The cumulative risk rate at age 25 $F(25)$ corresponds to the estimated probability that a young person has left the parental home for the first time before his or her 25th birthday. It results from the cumulated instant probabilities of decohabitation calculated over each year of age from 15 to 24. The instant probability of decohabitation over an age interval $t$, is the conditional probability that a young person will leave the parental home for the first time over this interval knowing that he or she has not yet left the parental home until $t$.

Reading Note: At the age of 25, 40% of young adults originally from the Paris Urban Unit have left their parents’ home for the first time, compared with just under 80% of young adults whose parents live in a rural municipality. The average age of young adults from the Greater Paris Area when they first left home was 22.6, compared with 20.5 for young adults from a rural municipality.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ); 4,950 young adults aged 18-24 in 2014 (26,298 young adult-years).

Figure II – Distribution of reasons for first leaving by age at time of leaving and parental home municipality type

Reading Note: At the age of 25, 47% of young adults originally from a rural municipality left their parental home for the first time in order to pursue studies, 8% for work purposes, 12% to set up home with their partner, 9% to seek independence and 2% for some other reason.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ); 4,950 young adults aged 18-24 in 2014 (26,298 young adult-years).
25 (7% and 9% of young adults, respectively). However, these departures concern young adults from rural municipalities (20%) more than those from the Urban Unit of Paris or large Urban Units (12%).

These results emphasise the role played by the training and employment opportunities offered locally, meaning that it is easier for young adults from large urban areas to pursue their studies or start their working career without leaving the parental home. Conversely, young adults from areas offering few options for them to pursue their studies are forced to leave. But other factors such as housing costs or regional norms regarding transition to adulthood may also contribute to these differences.

3.3. Moving Further Away from Home in Large Urban Areas

More than half of young adults who achieve residential independence before the age of 25 move more than 50 km away from where their parents live (Table 1). The primary reason for this distance is to pursue studies, which on average involves a broader radius of movement than the other reasons for leaving home for the first time. Where the first experience of residential mobility is associated with work or studying, distance from the parental home is greater for young adults from larger Urban Units: 2/3 of them move over 100 km away from the parental home, compared with fewer than half of young adults from other areas. In the largest Urban Units, the wide variety of higher education options and transport facilities limit the need for residential mobility for study purposes to a few highly specialist degree courses and career paths. Conversely, young adults from rural municipalities and small or medium-sized urban areas are more obliged to move home right from when they first embark on higher education programmes. Getting independent accommodation for the first time to set up home with a partner or to gain some independence is, on the other hand, associated with significantly more limited mobility, regardless of parental home municipality type.

3.4. Marked Spatial Differences by Gender and Social Background

Regardless of region of origin, young women leave their parental home earlier than young men (Figure III). This difference is mainly due to them leaving for reasons other than to study. Although leaving home at a young age for work purposes is slightly less common among young women (-5 percentage points), they are more likely than young men to leave their parental home before the age of 25 to live with a partner (+9 points) and, to a lesser extent, to gain some independence (+5 points). This

Table 1 – Distribution of first home-leaving by distance (km) from parental home and reason for leaving

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Parental Home Municipality Type</th>
<th>Paris UU / Large UU</th>
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</table>

Reading Note: Out of all young adults who have left home and are originally from the Paris Urban Unit or other large Urban Unit, 20.9% moved less than 10 km from their parental home.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ); 2,836 young people aged 18-24 in 2014 who have left home for the first time.
Spatial Disparities in Young Adults’ Early Residential Independence in France

The survival function denoted $S(t)$ is a function of time $t$ (expressed here in years of age) which quantifies the estimated proportion of young people who have not yet left the parental home at an age $t$ since the age of 15 ($t_0$). The probability of not having left the parental home at time $t$ is thus the probability of not having left the parental home before $t$, multiplied by the conditional probability of not having left the parental home at time $t$.

Reading Note: At the age of 25, 62% of young men and 57% of young women originally from the Paris Urban Unit have never left their parental home, compared with 27% of young men and 17% of young women from a rural municipality.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ); 4,950 young adults aged 18-24 in 2014 (26,298 young adult-years).

There is a link between social differences in achieving residential independence at a young age and social differences in leaving to pursue studies; in comparison with young adults from privileged social backgrounds, it is decidedly less common for young people from modest backgrounds to leave their parental home before the age of 25. One exception to this, however, concerns young women from working class backgrounds in rural areas who, because of the proportion of them leaving to set up home with their partner, are just as likely as women from privileged backgrounds to have achieved residential independence at the age of 25.

3.5. Leaving Home at a Young Age Increases with Distance from Universities and Strained Property Markets

The influence of the size of the parental home’s Urban Unit on the decision to leave home at a young age may be attributed to composition effects (the individuals making up each of the areas have different characteristics) or to contextual effects (specific properties of the local environment). Highlighting the importance of each of these dimensions is complicated by the host of factors liable to have a bearing on mobility decisions and their potential interaction.

9. A working class (or disadvantaged) background is defined as having parents whose socio-professional category is manual worker, clerical worker or non-working, as opposed to a privileged background, where the parents belong to management or middle-level occupations.
In order to evaluate the effect of individual variables and contextual variables on regional disparity in leaving home at a young age, modelling is done of the first time young people leave home by applying a discrete-time model with competing risks. With this type of model, it is possible to control for the effect of right-censoring associated with the use of data from a retrospective survey: on the date of the survey, some of the young adults aged 18-24 have not yet left their parental home. It also means consideration can be given to the development in the individuals’ situations over time, through a change of modality for certain variables.

Reading Note: At the age of 25, 80% of young men from a privileged background in a rural municipality left their parental home for the first time in order to study, 6% left for work purposes, 3% to seek independence and 3% to set up home with a partner.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ); 2,619 young men and 2,331 young women aged 18-24 in 2014 (14,156 young men-years and 12,242 young women-years).
The model’s dependent variable differentiates between two types of home-leaving, based on mobility distance: less than 50 km from the parental home or 50 km and over. The reference category is young adults who have never left their parental home. Compared with an approach that might regard the three modalities as ordered, the modelling avoids the equal slope or “proportional odds” assumption (which is not met).

Discrete-time modelling is justified by the recording of the event of interest (first time the young adult left home) over a relatively long unit of time (year of age). So, a large number of young adults leave the parental home in the course of a single age interval, which is liable to lead to bias in a continuous-time estimation context (Cox, 1972; Yamaguchi, 1991). We assume that the process of leaving home starts at the age of 15 and comes to an end when a young person leaves the parental home for the first time. An observation is censored if the person was living with his/her parents in 2014, the last year of observation. The parameters estimated by the models have been corrected for the grouping together of person-year observations for the same young adult.

We study the factors that might explain the link between the Urban Unit size category to which the parental home municipality belongs and the probability of leaving home at a young age. Three versions of the model are estimated, each including additional explanatory variables compared with the previous one, with young adults from each type of region notably having different individual and family characteristics.10

Starting with an empty model, including only the Urban Unit size category for the parental home and the time period (Model 1), variables are gradually introduced at the individual level and relative to the young adult’s socio-economic and family background (Model 2), followed by the introduction of three contextual variables characterising the parental home municipality, which might have a direct or indirect effect on the young adult leaving home for the first time (Model 3). We thus examine the effect of the gradual introduction of groups of explanatory variables in the competing risks model on the odds ratios estimated in the empty model. The results obtained with each of the models are shown in Figure V. Details of the variables included in each model (1, 2 and 3) are given in the Box.

10. The descriptive statistics for the population as a whole, by location and dependent variable values, are shown in the Online Appendices, Tables C1-1 and C2-1. Link to the Online Appendices at the end of the article.
the logarithmic transformation of the average price per m² for property sold in the parental home municipality between 2014 and 2018. This indicator is based on the DVF Real Estate Transaction data files, available on the data.gouv.fr website, containing information at municipal level on all property sales made over a five-year period. For each municipality, the average property price per m² was calculated by comparing the total property value of apartments and/or houses sold between 2014 and 2018 with the aggregate value of their built area. For greater consistency, we excluded from this calculation any real estate property including business, commercial or industrial premises or similar, and any for which the price per m² logarithm was 1.5 times higher or lower than the interquartile range for the price per m² for property of the same type (apartment or house) in the same municipality. In addition, the average price per m² logarithm was not calculated for municipalities where the number of properties sold was less than 5, nor for any municipalities in the départements of Bas-Rhin, Haut-Rhin and Moselle, for which DVF data are unavailable. These exclusions apply to 7.5% of young adults in our sample. Other variables were considered at a municipal level or by employment sector (adult unemployment rates, proportion of NEET aged 18-24, percentage of young adults living in the municipality where they were born, and percentage of young adults aged 18-24 living with a partner) but the results were inconclusive. The same applied as regards type of training available, distinguishing between areas within the different local education authorities based on the training and courses available there, as compiled by Fabre & Pawlowski (2019).

Model 1 confirms that there is a statistically significant link between the size of Urban Unit to which the parental home belongs and the probability of leaving it at a young age: the probability of leaving home before the age of 25 is greater the smaller the size of Urban Unit of origin. This link is similar for moves over a short distance (less than 50 km) and longer distances (50 km and over). The probability of young adults from the Urban Unit of Paris moving to independent accommodation less than 50 km or 50 km or more away from their parental home is over 70% less than for young adults from rural municipalities. The introduction of observable individual and family characteristics into the model (Model 2) makes little change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Moved less than 50 km away (vs. ‘Never Left’)</th>
<th>Moved 50 km away or further (vs. ‘Never Left’)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P Value</td>
<td>P Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paris UU (vs. Rural Munic.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large UU (vs. Rural Munic.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium UU (vs. Rural Munic.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small UU (vs. Rural Munic.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The estimated relative odds ratios are shown here with a 95% confidence interval for parental home location according to the different models (1, 2 and 3). In the empty model (Model 1), the probability of a young adult from the Paris Urban Unit leaving home for the first time to move a distance of 50 km or more compared with staying with their parents is 0.27 times that of a young adult of the same age from a rural municipality. This ratio changes to 0.17 once the effects of the socio-demographic and family composition differences between young adults from different areas are controlled (Model 2). Lastly, after introducing contextual variables as regards the property market situation and distance from university (and youth unemployment rate) for the municipality that is being left, this same ratio remains significant but is now no more than 0.41.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ), 4,950 young adults living with their parents or who first left the parental home at the age of 15 or over.
11 However, once the effects of over-representation of students and young adults from privileged backgrounds in the Paris Urban Unit have been controlled, the differences related to the type of municipality increase for moves away from home involving a longer distance. So, after introducing the control variables, the probability of young adults from the Greater Paris Area moving 50 km or more away from their parental home is nearly 85% less than for young adults from rural municipalities.

Lastly, the variables introduced in Model 3 provide information about the influence of parental home municipality type on the probability of leaving home at a young age.12 Local difficulties in access to the labour market, measured here by the unemployment rate for young adults aged 18-24 in the parental home municipality, do not seem to be linked to leaving home for the first time at a young age. Being a long distance away from a university, on the other hand, is associated with getting independent accommodation 50 km or more away from the parental home, but there is no link with mobility involving a shorter distance. The probability of moving 50 km or more away from the parental home (compared with the probability of never having left home) increases the greater the distance between a university and the municipality of origin. Short-distance mobility seems to be linked more to strain on the local property market. So, the probability of a young adult getting independent accommodation for the first time somewhere less than 50 km away from the parental home (compared with the probability of never having left home) is higher the less strain there is on the property market13 in the municipality they are leaving.

Finally, the introduction of contextual variables (Model 3) noticeably mitigates differences in long-distance mobility and, to a lesser extent, short-distance mobility, between young adults from large Urban Units, medium-sized Urban Units, small Urban Units and rural municipalities (Figure V). However, there are still significant differences in mobility between young adults from these four types of area and those from the Greater Paris Area. This continued disparity may reflect imperfection consideration of journey time or distance to more selective training courses in the variables considered in the final model.

4. Regional Differences in Demands on Parents

While parental support for the transition to adulthood may take several forms, young adults’ access to personal accommodation can, however, entail a particularly significant burden. Regional disparities in achieving residential independence are thus accompanied by differences in demands made on parents depending on their region of residence.

4.1. Parental Support when Leaving Home for the First Time

Nearly eight out of ten parents have provided at least one form of support when the young adults moved into personal accommodation for the first time, whether this involved helping to pay the rent, making alterations to the accommodation or helping to find it.14 Parents almost systematically provide support for young adults leaving home for the first time to pursue studies, especially financial support (80% have helped to pay the rent, compared with 20% of parents of other independent young adults). Geographical distance makes little difference to the general pattern of parental support, other than for making alterations to the first accommodation when the young adult leaves home for a reason other than to study. Similarly, the region of origin has little effect on the forms of parental support given to young adults when moving into independent accommodation for the first time. However, a higher proportion of parents living in rural areas support young adults leaving home to move in with a partner: 70% have provided at least one form of support, compared with less than a third of parents from large urban areas.

However, regional disparities in achieving residential independence at a young age are reflected in considerable differences in the proportion of parents within each Urban Unit who are called on to support the young adult in getting settled. Fewer than 30% of parents living in the Greater Paris Area and about half of those in other large urban areas have provided at least one form of support for the young adult to achieve residential independence, compared with nearly 70% of parents from rural municipalities and 65% of those living in small

11. The effect of these characteristics does not constitute the principal subject of this work and the related coefficients are therefore not detailed here but are available from the authors. We note, however, that females, young adults who have already had a stable romantic relationship, and students who have already had their first experience of work, leave home sooner, while young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds leave the parental home later. In addition, the probability of leaving home for the first time to somewhere within 50 km of the parental home is higher for young adults with many siblings, those who have experienced their parents’ separation or the death of a parent, and those working in a stable job.
12. The coefficients are available in the Online Appendix C3-1.
13. That is to say, a municipality where the average price per m² logarithm for property sold between 2014 and 2018 is low.
14. More than half, two thirds, and over half of parents, respectively.
or medium-sized urban areas. Looking just at contributing towards the rent, this concerns fewer than 20% of parents in the Greater Paris Area, 30% of those living in another large urban area, and over 40% of parents living in a rural municipality or small or medium-sized urban area. These differences in parental contribution by type of place of residence are greatest for parents of young people still near the age of majority (18-19) and become less marked as the age of the young adult increases. These differences in parental contribution rate by type of place of residence remain the same regardless of social background.

These spatial disparities in parental contribution may reflect lasting differences in covering costs during the school-to-work transition period, with a corresponding increase in the cumulative differences in parental assistance. Firstly, the proportion of young adults receiving parental support is higher the younger they are when they first leave home.\(^{15}\) This support is then destined to continue for as long as their studies last. So, the earlier age at which young adults from rural municipalities and small urban areas leave home is likely to mean not just a higher incidence of parental support but also longer-lasting support.

### 4.2. A Greater Demand Made on Parents Living in Rural Municipalities for Financial Support

During the first two years of higher education, nearly 40% of parents living in rural municipalities or small or medium-sized urban areas cover the cost of the young adult’s rent, a proportion that is over four times higher than for parents in other large urban areas\(^ {16}\) (Table 2). For young adults on undergraduate courses (two years of higher education), the proportion of parents who have supported the young adult in one way or another to move into independent accommodation for the first time (42%) is eight times higher among parents living in a rural municipality than among parents living in the Urban Unit of Paris (5%), and over twice as high as among parents living in a large town or city with a population of over 200,000 (16%). Providing financial support to young adults to move into accommodation after they have finished their education is also a more common occurrence among parents living in a small urban area or rural municipality: 16% of young adults in work and 5% of young adults who are unemployed or non-working whose parents live in a rural area have received this type of support, compared with less than 2% of young adults from the Paris Urban Unit who have finished their education.

Acting as guarantor for accommodation and paying the deposit are two other burdens commonly borne by parents living outside urban areas. Each of these burdens concerns about 20% of parents living in a rural municipality, compared with less than 10% of parents living in a large urban area (40% and 15% respectively in the specific case of young adults pursuing their studies). Lastly, in 2014, nearly a quarter of parents living in a rural municipality were also called upon to contribute towards other expenses associated with moving into accommodation (agency fees, moving expenses or furniture and furnishings), with this contribution amounting to around €1,000 on average. For young adults pursuing their studies, this amount is slightly lower (€900), but about €150 higher than the amount provided by parents living in the Paris Urban Unit.

### 4.3. Among Young Adults Given Support, Amounts Received Show Little Sensitivity to Parental Home Location

Spatial disparities in leaving home at a young age, combined with the greater financial burden for parents when the young adult no longer lives with them,\(^ {17}\) might suggest considerable differences in the amount of support received by young adults depending on parental home location. Now the overall amount of support received by young adults getting regular payments from their parents (whether or not they live with them) does not vary much by parental municipality type. These young adults receive, on average, about €3,900 a year, regardless of their parents’ place of residence. However, this amount represents a slightly higher proportion of the income of parents living in a rural municipality or in a small or medium-sized urban area (10% compared with 8% for others).

This situation can be explained in part by structural differences: pursuing studies, which sees the highest levels of parental support, is more common for young adults from urban areas. So, out of the young students receiving support, with

\(^{15}\) A financial contribution towards housing costs concerns 2/3 of young adults who left the parental home at the age of 18-19, compared with about 20% of those who left at the age of 22-24 (80% and 50%, respectively, for young adults who left home to pursue studies).

\(^{16}\) Note that the average rent for independent young adults is higher (by around €100 a month) for those from the Urban Unit of Paris rather than rural municipalities. However, the data do not allow precise calculation of the budget parents allocate to paying towards their young adult’s rent.

\(^{17}\) See, in particular, Grobøn (2018) on use of ENRU data.
Spatial Disparities in Young Adults’ Early Residential Independence in France

independent accommodation at the time of the survey, the average annual total given by parents is in the order of €9,500 for those from a large urban area, compared with less than €8,000 for others (i.e. 12% and 14%, respectively, of parental income). Given the same position as regards studying and work, young adults from a rural municipality and, to a lesser extent, those from a small or medium-sized urban area receive slightly higher total levels of support annually, representing markedly higher burden-to-income ratios for their parents. Looking at young adults in their second year of a masters degree or studying for a doctorate degree or Grande École, those who come from a large urban area receive a level of support equivalent to 10% of their parents’ income, compared with 14% for young adults from a small or medium-sized urban area and 16% for those who come from a rural municipality.

Besides any differences related to the rent, the scale of support given by parents from large Urban Units can be explained by their coverage of other expenses (Figure VI). So, the annual total received by young students from an urban area in order to pay tuition fees (€1,130) represents virtually twice that received by young adults coming from other areas. These differences are evident regardless of the level of tertiary educational course being followed by the young adult. The differences are also more evident for young adults with independent accommodation at the time of the survey, probably because those from an urban area with independent accommodation are the ones on the most expensive courses.

Table 2 – Proportion of parents providing support to a young adult to move to or remain in independent accommodation, by type of support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Home Municipality Type</th>
<th>Paris UU</th>
<th>Large UU</th>
<th>Medium / Small UU</th>
<th>Rural Munic.</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partial or total payment of rent for a young adult (average amount of rent in € for a young adult living independently)</td>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>6.4 (553)</td>
<td>10.5 (493)</td>
<td>18.0 (443)</td>
<td>16.5 (446)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying</td>
<td>10.1 (552)</td>
<td>17.9 (493)</td>
<td>32.1 (435)</td>
<td>35.5 (427)</td>
<td>24.9 (449)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 years of higher education</td>
<td>7.9 (527)</td>
<td>19.6 (450)</td>
<td>36.9 (425)</td>
<td>40.9 (405)</td>
<td>28.5 (424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ years of higher education</td>
<td>13.4 (606)</td>
<td>24.2 (507)</td>
<td>40.5 (475)</td>
<td>44.9 (491)</td>
<td>30.3 (496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed or non-working</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Payment of deposit on accommodation for a young adult

| Overall | 4.7 | 13.1 | 19.6 | 20.4 | 15.8 |
| Studying | 7.5 | 20.5 | 35.0 | 37.4 | 26.4 |
| 2 years of higher education | 7.1 | 19.8 | 39.7 | 44.0 | 30.1 |
| 3+ years of higher education | 9.5 | 28.6 | 47.2 | 54.4 | 34.2 |
| Working | 0.0 | 4.2 | 6.2 | 7.0 | 5.2 |
| Unemployed or non-working | 0.9 | 4.1 | 6.0 | 5.6 | 4.5 |

Acting as guarantor on accommodation for a young adult

| Overall | 3.8 | 13.2 | 20.7 | 21.1 | 16.2 |
| Studying | 5.9 | 20.3 | 34.1 | 36.6 | 25.6 |
| 2 years of higher education | 3.3 | 18.4 | 36.9 | 42.6 | 27.7 |
| 3+ years of higher education | 8.9 | 29.1 | 48.5 | 54.9 | 34.7 |
| Working | 0.2 | 7.1 | 10.1 | 10.8 | 8.3 |
| Unemployed or non-working | 0.9 | 4.0 | 5.9 | 4.2 | 4.5 |

Financial support given to a young adult to move into accommodation (average amount of support in €)

| Overall | 4.8 (1,007) | 13.5 (1,130) | 20.9 (971) | 23.4 (1,107) | 17.0 (1,044) |
| Studying | 7.2 (732) | 19.4 (1,000) | 35.6 (919) | 37.6 (900) | 26.3 (919) |
| 2 years of higher education | 5.0 (670) | 15.9 (816) | 40.2 (853) | 42.0 (768) | 28.6 (815) |
| 3+ years of higher education | 10.7 (732) | 29.6 (1,130) | 48.1 (988) | 55.3 (1,045) | 35.3 (1,013) |
| Working | 0.6 | 7.4 | 9.1 | 15.5 | 9.4 |
| Unemployed or non-working | 1.5 | 7.1 | 4.6 | 5.2 | 5.0 |

Reading Note: In 2014, 6.4% of parents from the Paris Urban Unit pay all or part of their young adult’s rent. The average cost of rent for young adults from the Ile-de-France area living independently is €553. In addition, 4.8% of parents have provided financial support to help their young adult get settled in independent accommodation, support amounting to €1,007 on average.

Sources and Coverage: DREES-Insee, Enquête nationale sur les ressources des jeunes 2014 (ENRJ); 4,950 parents of young people aged 18-24 in 2014.
This study of young people leaving the parental home in the first years of adulthood reveals significant disparities by region of origin. Occurring mostly in order to pursue studies, leaving home happens at a much younger age outside large urban areas, with more pronounced parental involvement. The marked differences notably reflect the concentration of higher education establishments in large urban areas, unlike the situation in other European countries with a more dispersed network of universities.

The spatial dimension appears to be a determining principle in the social differentiation in the timing and forms of leaving home. So, the persistence of a “traditional” model for entering adulthood typified by setting up home with a partner at a young age mainly concerns young women with working class backgrounds from rural areas. The model of early empowerment related to pursuing studies mainly applies to young adults from privileged backgrounds, whose parents live in a rural municipality or in a small or medium-sized urban area. It is associated with a greater distance between the young adult’s accommodation and the parental home.

These spatial disparities in achieving residential independence at a young age are associated with a higher proportion of parents in rural municipalities or small urban areas being called upon for support, especially financial support. While there is little variation in the average amount of support given according to parental area of residence, it nevertheless equates to a significantly higher burden-to-income ratio for parents living outside large Urban Units, in particular for young adults still studying. Secondly, parents living in large urban areas direct their support more at paying for tuition and leisure activities than for accommodation.

This descriptive comprehensive overview sheds light on significant spatial disparities in achieving residential independence at a young age in France. Use of a more restrictive definition of residential independence does not fundamentally change the results (see Online Appendix, Figure C4-I). A more extensive analysis of the role of parental support for young people leaving home encounters the obstacle of a lack of information on the level of support that might have been received by those who have not left...
home. Moreover, it is only possible to get an imperfect grasp of the cumulative dimension of parental support throughout the period of transition to adulthood. Lastly, it would be worthwhile carrying out more in-depth analysis of spatial disparities down to a finer geographic level.

Biographic data retracing all of the young adult’s changes of residence and the associated parental support for each move would allow a better understanding of the way in which the spatial dimension structures the paths taken by young people towards residential independence.

Link to Online Appendix: https://www.insee.fr/en/statistiques/fichier/5347216/ES-522-523_Kersuzan-Solignac_Online_Appendices.pdf

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


