

Methodological issues in the development of accessibility measures to services: challenges and possible solutions in the Canadian context

Alessandro Alasia (presenter), Frédéric Bédard, Julie Bélanger - Statistics Canada

The concept of “accessibility” has been generally associated with the easiness of physical, social or economic access to specific services. The purpose of this communication is twofold. First, to outline some methodological issues related to the development of measures of physical accessibility to selected services at the municipal level; second, to present possible solutions in the Canadian context, which might be relevant to the experience of other member countries and might be used as a base for discussing further development of these measures.

Even when the focus of “accessibility” is restricted to physical access (not necessarily of capability to use by any group of individuals) there are a variety of data and methodological challenges. For instance, accessibility to a selected type of services requires the assessment of interactions between a reference location and multiple points across space; accessibility measures are often more relevant in cases where the geographic conditions of isolation make it particularly difficult to identify a common unit of measure for the computation of an index; data requirements are generally demanding and might call for innovative thinking in the direction of so-called “Big Data”, i.e., high volume and variety of data not normally associated with the data produced by an official statistical program.

This communication presents an application in the development of a measure of accessibility to health services and other selected services in the Canadian context. The test results are generated with a methodology hinging on the idea of a gravity model. The methodology integrates data from official statistical programs with non-traditional data sources, which might become an increasingly relevant strategy for national statistical agencies in the forthcoming future.