

THE DYNAMICS OF POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIAN FAMILIES IN THE CONTEXT OF LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT: *Within the increased globalised world, labour market configuration is deeply influenced by demographic trends. Starting from the premise that the family, in all its complexity, continues to be a key element of current society, this paper analyses its evolution in post-communist Romania. Consequently, firstly the dynamic configuration of family is analysed from a demographic point of view, while the second part overviews key characteristics of the labour market mainly by places of residence, by age, and by gender. From a methodological point of view, the paper is based on the literature review alongside the secondary analysis of statistical data gathered at European level (Eurostat) as well as domestic one (National Institute of Statistics). The paper supports the development of appropriate sustainable social policies to support the development of families in the current context and challenges of the labour market.*

Keywords: *family, post-communist Romania, marriage, divorce, labour market*

JEL Classification: *E24, J12, J13, J16, J21*

1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding the challenges faced by contemporary Romanian families requires an in-depth analysis of their post-communist evolution. Demographic indicators-based analysis supports this scientific approach doubled by an overview of the labour market also based on statistical relevant key indicators. Compared EU Romania labour market related indicators were included. The first part of the paper looks at what family continue to be in the contemporary society, while the second one is focus on findings related to family dynamics from demographic point of view as well as to the labour market characteristics. Official European Union and domestic statistics were used within the paper. Main conclusions are referred within the last part.

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2. What is family nowadays?

We start this section by two complementary questions: what is a family, and what is meant by family dynamics? The answer, although seemingly simple, is in fact quite complex, as this question itself serves as a source of inquiry for other topics within the broader subject. Social dynamics from this perspective have been—and continue to be—surprising, although clearly, they are also enduring and adaptive to the era in question. However, in order to study the social behaviour of families—their social, economic, and emotional interactions—it is imperative to ask, first of all, whether the transformation of traditional family dynamics represents a social problem, or rather a new social construct that threatens the equity and social stability of individuals and society as a whole. Although at first glance we might be tempted to affirm, “Yes, this is a social problem,” a more detailed analysis reveals that the transformation of the family nucleus (as we have known it through the traditional model) could, in fact, help us answer more precisely targeted questions that may lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon, rather than merely criticizing the process. For instance, we might instead turn our attention to questions such as: what are the historical and social contexts that have led to or continue to lead to the development of family alternatives? what are the causes and effects of the changing family behaviours? To what extent and in what ways are social structures affected by the new configurations of the family unit? What are the social and behavioural consequences of these new alternative family models? What are the adaptive social models toward which the actors involved in this process are moving?

As Goode pointed out, ‘the family is the fundamental instrumental nucleus of the broader social structure, in the sense that all other social structures depend on its influence. The role behaviours learned within the family become the core or prototype for the role behaviours required in other segments of society. The content of the socialization process constitutes the cultural traditions of society; by transmitting these to the new generation, the family acts as a channel or conveyor belt through which the viability of culture is ensured’ (1964, pp. 4–5).

Social patterns influence the behaviour of the family system and, consequently, the behaviour of society. Likewise, family behaviour influences the modes and patterns of conduct that derive from various layers of society (such as social policies, economic strategies, public policies, and institutional reforms).

Influences within the socio-cultural and economic context changes over time. As a general observation within the contemporary context, the so-called “Second Wave Family” (Thaxton & L’Abate, 1982)—is no longer the defining model for society. However, this is not to say that it has disappeared in the classic sense. Rather, it has evolved, giving rise to various alternative models of traditional marital relationships.

Starting from the period of industrialization, with the continuous changes in societal structures, migration, the proliferation of employment opportunities, and the dramatic rise of feminism (which itself was partly a consequence of industrialization), alternatives to the traditional family have steadily developed. These alternatives, somewhat surprisingly, prioritize personal fulfilment over economic or financial comfort.

Types of Families

The traditional family model was widespread at the end of the 19th century, especially in Western Europe. Its general characteristic is that of a conservative microsystem. Values were shaped by religious affiliation, strict rules, inherited traditions, and values. Within this context, the core of the family was primarily driven by economic factors. Preserving or increasing material wealth was a key indicator of success in marriage. This was a patriarchal family structure, where the husband was the primary breadwinner, a role that also gave him the status

of "head/decision-maker of the family." Decisions were not made collaboratively or based on the shared interests of all family members but rather at the discretion of a single decision-maker. The woman's status was aligned with this role; her fulfilment was experienced through her husband's success and status.

The modern family type emerged as a result of changes brought about by industrialization, especially after World War II. Once education became a constant, even among women, some institutions began to take on roles that were previously exclusive to the family. Profound social, financial, conceptual, and spiritual changes began to unfold. We are beginning to witness profound social, financial, conceptual, and spiritual changes. The modern family emerged alongside post-industrial and postmodern development. A defining element that contributed to this transformation is considered to be globalization. Economic growth, advancements in modern technology, and the expansion of multinational corporations were all essential factors that reshaped the concept of the family and familial union. With this transformation came an increased emphasis on individualization. The well-being of the individual has gradually replaced the well-being of the group or the family. At the same time, the network of friendships and references to traditional family norms has been recalibrated. Social interaction and play—entertainment in general—have also come to play an essential role in the pursuit of self-fulfilment.

All of this has come at the expense of the role previously fulfilled by the traditional family. As a result, new forms of cohabitation and alternative family structures have emerged. Thus, currently, "the family represents a major issue in our culture because we expect it to fulfil psychological and symbolic functions through a structure that has become fragile and disconnected from the political and economic realities of contemporary society" (Nisbet, 1953, p. 62). Consequently, the family is no longer the sole source of personal satisfaction. Through the development of social alternatives and new forms of entertainment, people are seeking—and finding—fulfilment within broader and more socially diverse networks. Nisbet argued that there can be no single model of the family, just as there can be no single religion, both being essential for personal security and collective prosperity (1953, p. 70).

The essential turning point in this shift lies in the fact that the individual begins to live for themselves. Even though relational alternatives are now far more varied than traditional perceptions of the family structure, social actors still value marriage, at least theoretically, as one of the preferred ways to develop and maintain a partnership.

Referring to the evolution of family related social-policy in Romania, their accent towards 'familialisation' reflects 'a scarcity in the model of policy' ((Popescu, 2014, p. 109). The representation of family within related governmental strategies adopted in post EU accession Romania (2007-2014) reflects a 'nuclear, heterosexual family as the fundamental origin of the patriarchal gendered roles' (Dohotariu, 2024, p. 14). At the same time, the family related policy in Romania fits into the general European tendency but with a specific accent on the relation between family and poverty (idem, p. 16).

Work versus Family

The framework for increasing women's visibility and for challenging their identification with 'nature' has been the redefinition of their role in the labour market. Activities that were once considered "natural"—and thus uninteresting from a theoretical or historical perspective—such as childcare and domestic tasks, have begun to be recognized as actual *work*. Labelling these activities as 'work' had a significant impact, leading to a fundamental shift in the understanding of the boundaries between work and family, as well as between work and leisure time. Part-time jobs are preferred by member of families with various in-house responsibilities such children education, caring for depending persons and health related issues

(Ilie, Preoteasa, 2017, p. 246) due to their time- management incapacity to assume a full time job.

Deep understating of the family potential role within the labour market contributes to support of economic resilience in terms of ‘identifying the ways and manners of solving the issues related to increasing the capacity of averting or recovering the negative effects of external shocks’ (Zaman, Vasile, 2014, p. 5).

In the dominant tradition, the family was seen as a space where women carried out labour in an unrecognized and unrewarded way, while men's leisure time was in fact earned through the *invisible labour* of women. The idea of "working men" and "dependent women" was widespread but did not reflect the reality of care work that women performed daily to support both men and society as a whole.

The history clearly shows that the gender-based division of labour has been—and continues to be—a hierarchy of labour that produces and perpetuates inequalities between men and women, both in terms of the *value* placed on labour and its *remuneration*. These inequalities are visible even in contemporary contexts, in many countries including Romania, where female-dominated fields such as social work, education, or the textile industry are paid significantly less than male-dominated fields like the military, police, or mining industry. This structure reflects not only an economic disparity, but also a deep cultural devaluation of the work performed by women—a phenomenon that remains a global reality. Labour vulnerability is directly reflected within the family by restricting options for personal development, hobbies, and even everyday consumption (Ilie, Preoteasa, 2017, p. 254). Besides, economic shocks such as the ones induced by unemployment due to COVID-19 outbreak impacted on vulnerable children from poor families (UNICEF, 2024, p. 70).

These inequalities highlight a crucial aspect of gender relations and the economic system, where women's work is often seen through a lens of *lesser value*, reflecting gender stereotypes about traditional roles assigned to women in society. By recognizing women's labour as *real work*, the old hierarchy—where women's labour was considered inferior and less valuable—has been directly challenged. These new conceptualizations have been essential in better understanding gender relations and in building a discourse that includes women's contributions in *all areas* of work. All of this has contributed, not least, to the redefinition of traditional family values.

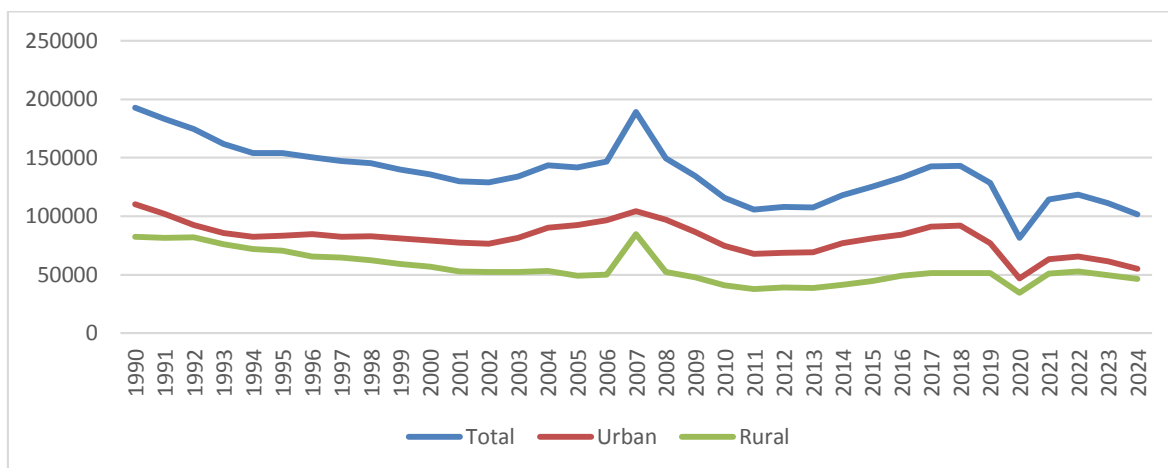
3. CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY IN ROMANIAN

This section of the paper overviews Romanian post-communist family related dynamic based on relevant demographic indicators concerning marriage (marriage by place of residence, marriage rates) or divorces (divorces by place of residence, divorce rates, divorces by number of children left behind). Other indicators refer to average age of mothers at both first birth and all births by place of residence. The last section of the paper includes EU Romania comparisons focus on crude marriage and crude divorce rate, both for selected years 1964-2023. The last part of this section includes analysis referring to live births outside marriage for 2000-2023 selected years.

The total number of marriages in post-communist Romania has fluctuated for the period 1990-2024. Comparison between urban and rural areas highlights a constant higher number of marriages in urban area. Top three smallest differences between marriages in urban versus rural areas has been registered in 2024 (with 8558 more marriages in urban area), in 1993 (with 9415 more), and in 1994 (with 10305 more) slightly different than 1992 (with 10733 more). On the opposite side, top three higher differences between marriages in urban versus rural areas has been registered in: 2006 (with 46573 more marriages in urban area), in 2018 (with 44487 more), and in 2005 (with 43470 more). In the same time, evolution of marriages in rural area

was marked by a higher 2006-2007 difference than urban one: 34763 marriages compared with 7840 respectively. By contrast, the 2019-2020 difference in urban area was felt more strongly than in rural: 30199 marriages compared with 17068 respectively. The 2019-2020 gap marriage was directly influenced by public restrictions imposed within COVID-19 pandemic period. For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 1. Marriages by place of residence in post-communist Romania (total number)

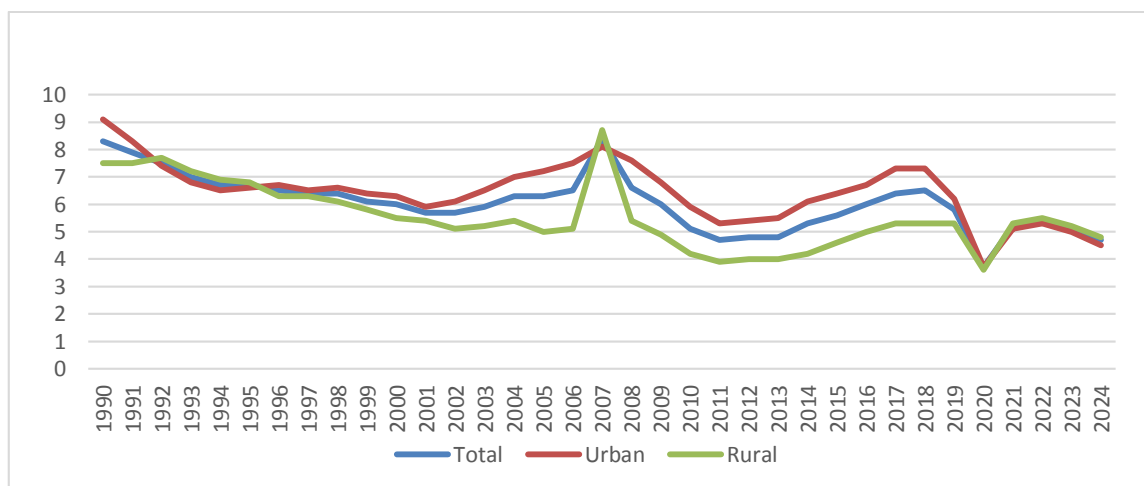


Source: National Institute of Statistics

The Romanian post-communist dynamic of marriage rate highlights a fluctuation between urban and rural areas. In the case of nine partially consecutive years (1992-1995, 2007, 2021-2024) out of 25 analysed, the marriages rate in rural area has been registered as higher. Looking closer, the highest difference has been recorded in 2007 (0.6), while the lowest in 1995, as well as 2021-2023 (0.2). On the opposite side, the marriage rate has been recorded by its smallest value in 2020 (0.1) and the highest in 2008 (2.2).

Year of 2020 registered the lowest values of the marriage rate: 3.7 in total, 3.7 for urban area, and 3.6 for rural area. The opposite highest value has been registered in 2007 for both the total (8.4), and rural area (8.7), and in 1990 for the urban area (9.1). For more details, please see the figure below.

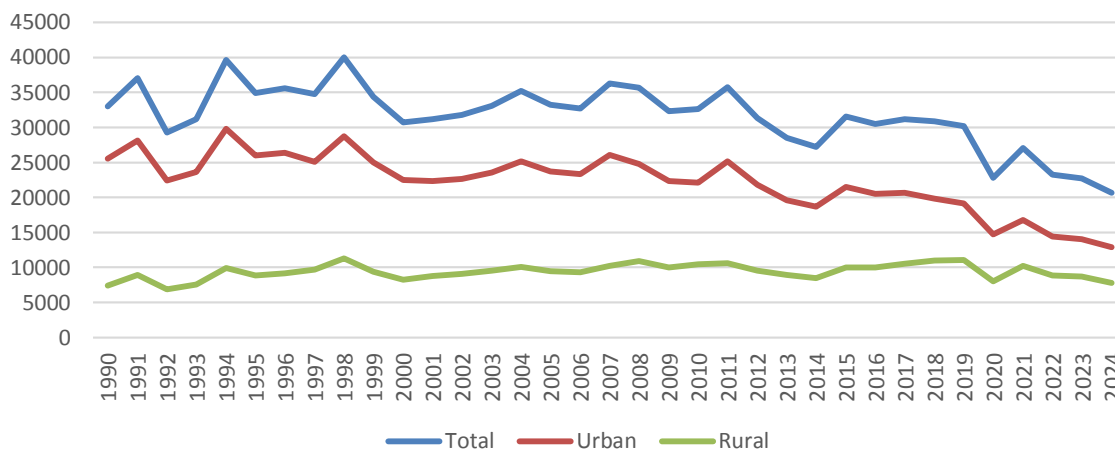
Figure 2. Marriage rate by place of residence in post-communist Romania (at 1000 inhabitants)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

Nominal difference analysis between urban-rural divorces shows a constant higher number of divorces in urban area. As time passes, the urban-rural post-communist difference has diminished with the lowest value registered in 2024: with only 5154 more divorces in urban area. Top three smaller urban-rural differences also includes the year of 2023 (with 5367 divorces) as well as 2022 (with 5581 divorces). By contrast, first three higher urban-rural divorce differences were listed in: 1994 (with 19871 more divorces in urban area), 1990 (with 18140 more), and in 1998 (with 17419 more). For more details, please see the figure below.

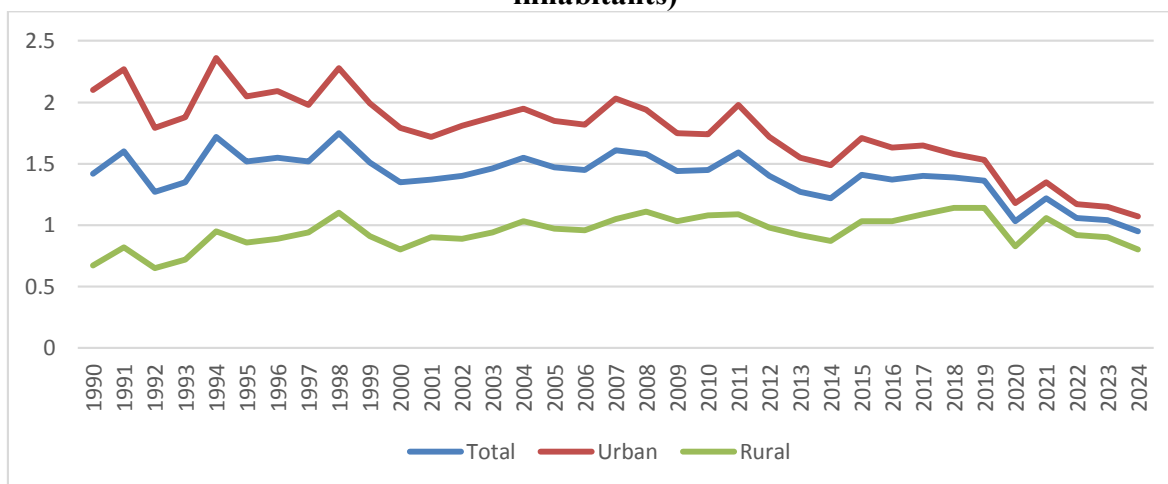
Figure 3. Divorces by place of residence in post-communist Romania (total number)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

The overview of divorces rate in post-communist Romania stands out for a higher number of divorces registered in urban zone compared with rural. The highest difference has been recorded in 1991 (1.45) while the smallest in both 2022 and 2023 (0.25). Looking closer, the smallest divorce rates have been registered in 2024 for the total (0.95), for urban area (1.07), and also for rural area (0.8). The highest divorce rates have been recorded in 1998 for the total (1.75), in 1994 for the urban (2.36), and in 2018 as well as 2019 for the rural (1.14). For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 4. Divorce rate by place of residence in post-communist Romania (at 1000 inhabitants)

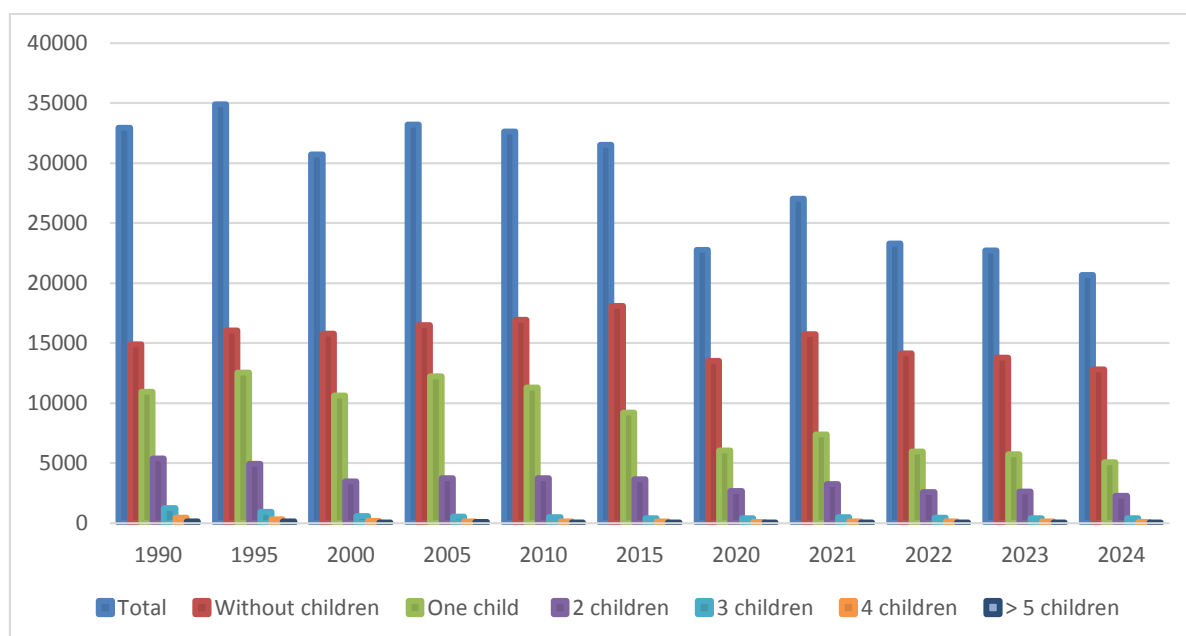


Source: National Institute of Statistics

The next demographic indicator selected for our analysis is divorces by number of minor children left behind after the dissolution of marriage. For the whole 1990-2024 period the highest number of divorces was registered in 1998 (with a total of 39985 divorces), while the lowest in 2024 (with a total of 20692 divorces). In terms of dynamic, the highest number of divorces in the case of families without children was registered in 2011 (19626 divorces), and in 1994 for families with one child (14672 divorces). The year of 1991 has been scoring the highest number of divorces for families with two children (5876 divorces), with three children (1369 divorces), with four children (477 divorces), and for five children and more (158 divorces).

On the opposite side, the lowest number of divorces by children left behind has been registered in 2024 in terms of total (20692 divorces) as well as for families without children (12819 divorces), with one child (5070 divorces) and with two children (2264). The year of 2014 has been listed the lowest number for both families with three children (347 divorces), four children (83 divorces similar with 2020), and for families with five or more children (39 divorces). Due to space limitations within the article, we have chosen to present below an analysis of the selection for the years 1990-2024. For a detailed overview, please see the annex 1.

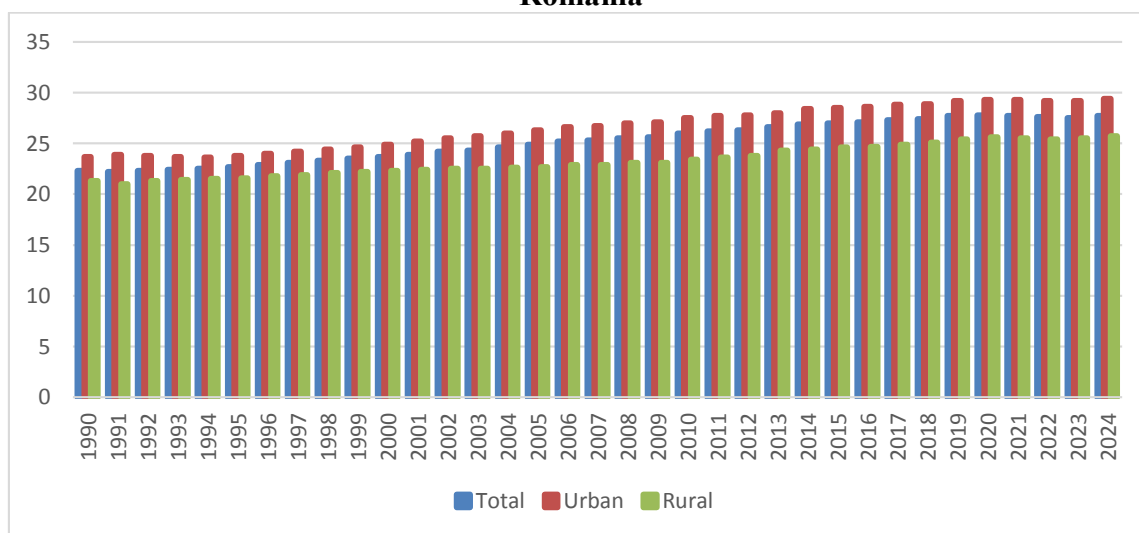
Figure 5. Divorces by number of minor children left behind after the dissolution of marriage in post-communist Romania, selected years 1990-2024 (number)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

The average age of mothers at first birth by place of residence in post-communist Romania constantly increased since 1990 with an urban higher degree in all selected and analysed years. The total lowest value was registered in 1991 as 22.2 years., while the highest was in 2020 as 27.8 years (comparably with 2024 as 27.7 years). Concerning urban average age, the smallest value was registered in 1992: 23.8 years as the higher in 2024: 29.4 years. In rural area, the smallest average year of mothers at first birth was listed as 21 years in 1991 and the highest 25.7 years in 2024. Looking at the whole 1990-2024 period of time, the smallest urban-rural average age difference was recorded in 1994 as 2.1 years, while the highest in both 2010 and 2011 as 4,1 years. For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 6. Average age of mothers at first birth by place of residence in post-communist Romania



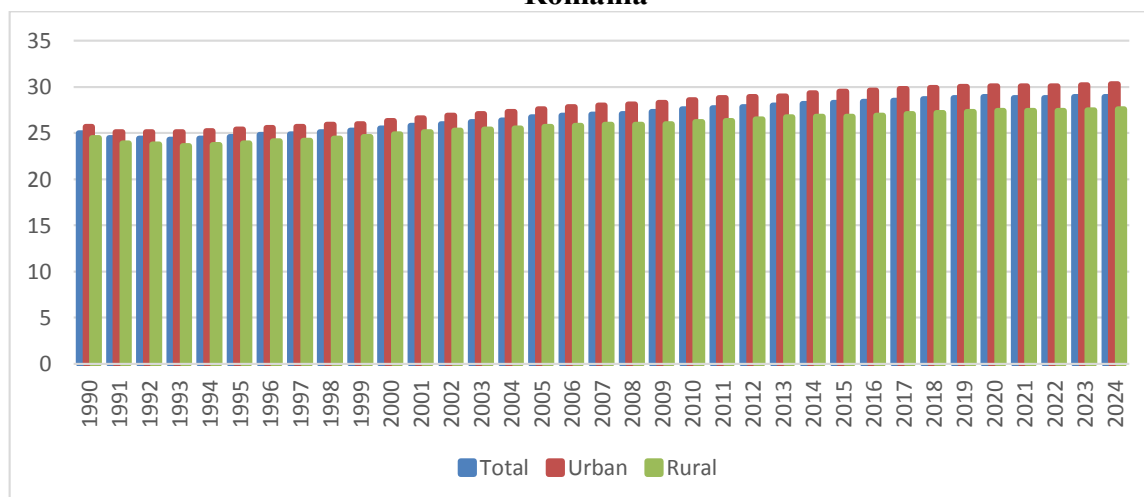
Source: National Institute of Statistics

Deficient access to proper medical services especially in rural area determinate a high rate of minor pregnancies and mothers (Alexandrescu, 2024). Compared with other EU member states, Romania registered in 2025 the second position in the top of youngest first time mothers: 27.1 years following Bulgaria with 26.9 years (European Commission, 2025).

Following the same trend as detailed above, the urban-rural comparison between average age at all births by place of residence in post-communist Romania reflects higher values in urban area for the whole analysed period. The smallest urban-rural difference was recorded in early '90s: more precisely 1.2 years in both 1990 and 1991, while the highest was registered starting with 2015: 2.7 years.

At the same time, the average age constantly increased with slightly common values starting with 2020. Going in more details, the lowest values of average age were registered in early '90s: in 24.3 years for 1993 as total, 25.1 years for the period 1991-1993 as urban area, and 23.6 years in 1993 as rural area. The highest values were registered in 2020, 2023 and 2024 as total: 28.9 years, in 2024 as urban area: 30.3 years, and in 2024 as rural area: 27.6 years. For more details, please see the figure 7.

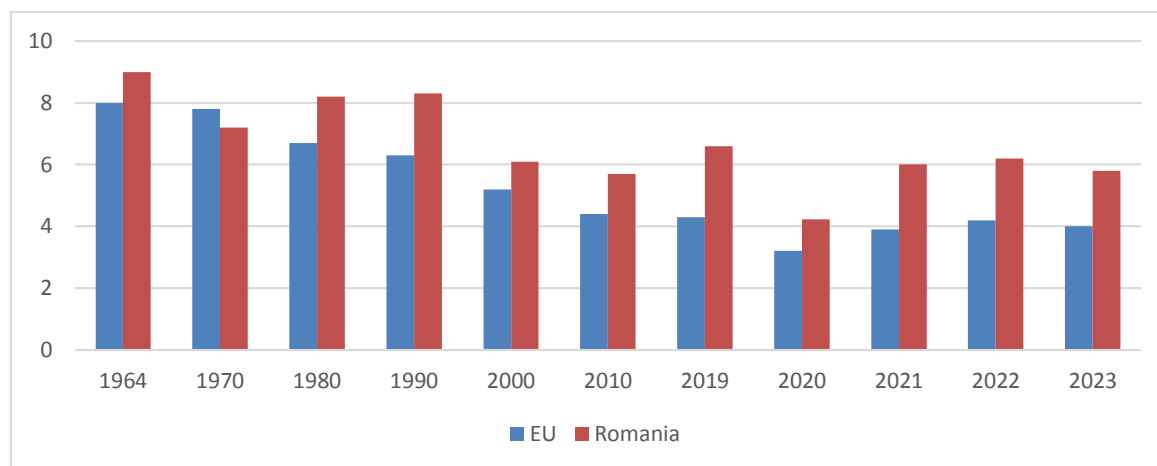
Figure 7. Average age of mothers at all births by place of residence in post-communist Romania



Source: National Institute of Statistics

2023 Romania registered the highest crude marriage rate among EU member states¹⁴. The comparison of EU-Romania crude marriage rate (per 1000 persons) for selected years 1964-2023 reflects a constant higher Romania value with the exception of the year 1970 (EU rate was 0.6 years higher than Romania). For the rest of selected analysed years, the highest difference was registered in the year of 2019: Romania scoring 2.3 years more than EU average. As a whole, the smallest crude marriage rates for both EU and Romania were registered in 2002 due to the outbreak COVID-19 safety restrictions imposed: 3.2 years for EU, respectively 4.2 years for Romania. For more details, please see the figure below.

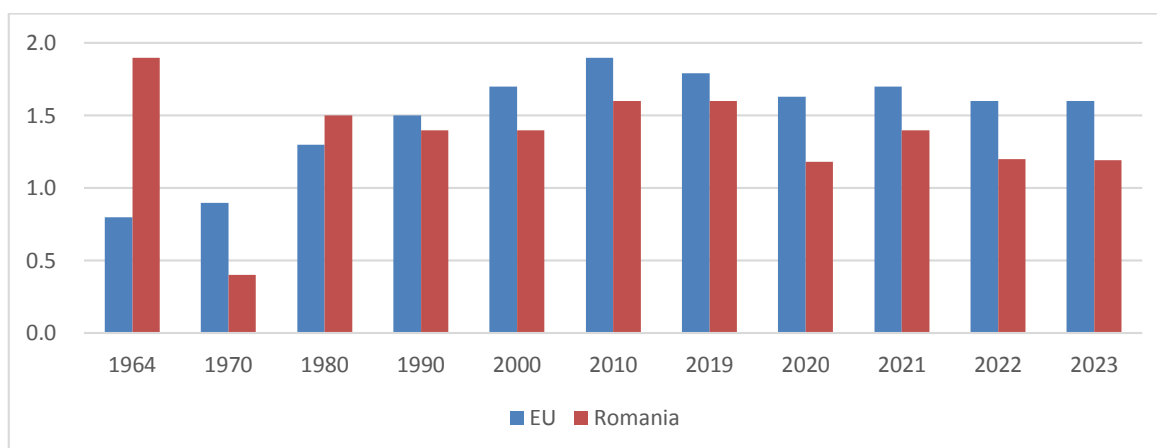
Figure 8. Crude marriage rate EU Romania, selected years, 1964-2023 (%)



Source: Eurostat

EU Romania comparison of crude divorce rate for 1964-2023 selected years reflects higher EU values starting with 1990. The smallest difference in this respect was registered in the year of 1990 with 0.1 years, while the highest in the year of 2010 with 0.3 years. Romania scored highest crude divorce rate in 1964 with a difference of 1.1 years, followed by 1980 with 0.2 years. For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 9 Crude divorce rate EU Romania, selected years, 1964-2023 (%)

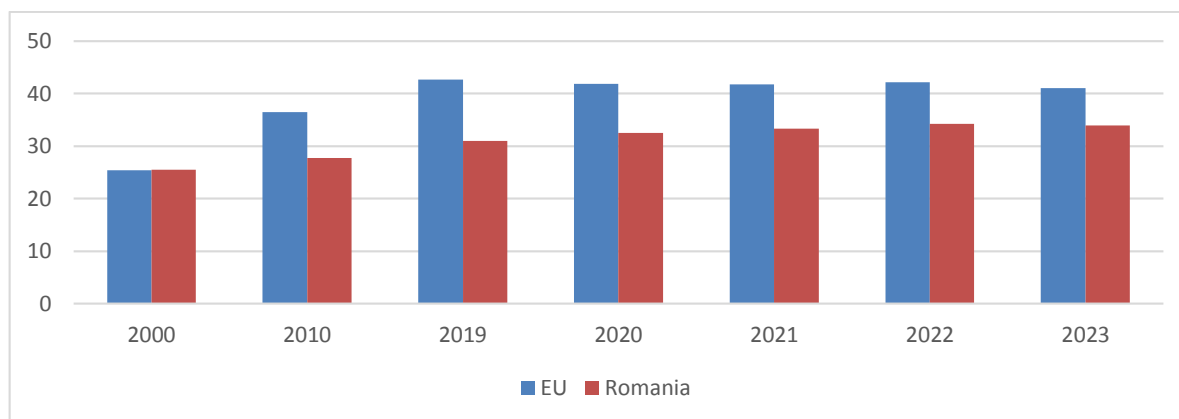


Source: Eurostat

¹⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/>

EU Romania comparison on live births outside marriage for selected years 2000-2023 as % of total live births shows a constant EU higher value except for the year of 2000 (slightly 0.1 % higher percent registered in Romania). The highest EU Romania difference was recorded in 2019 with 11.7%. Also for compared selected years, the smallest values were registered in the year of 2000 for both EU (25.4%) and Romania (25.5%). On the opposite side, the highest values were registered in: 2019 in EU (42.7%), and in 2023 in Romania (33.9%). For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 10. Live births outside marriage EU Romania, selected years, 2000-2023 (share of total live births, %)



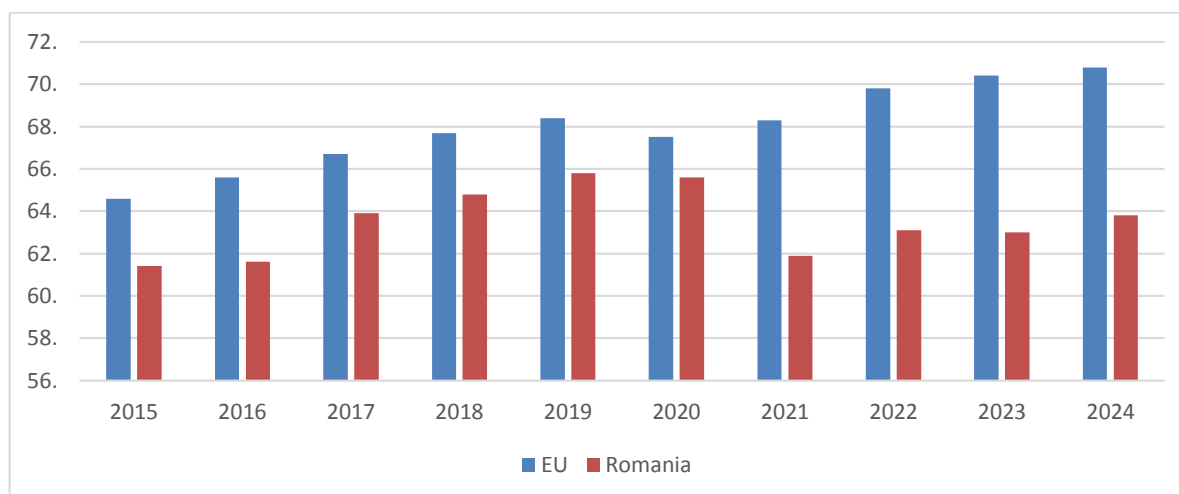
Source: Eurostat

This section provided an overview of dynamics of family in post-communist Romania based on statistical indicators available at EU level as well as domestic ones. Emerging scientific literature is developed towards more nuanced family aspects, especially within the context of recent crises such as the sanitary one. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic related challenges impacted on transnational families in terms of ‘their resilience and ability to reinvent family connections’ (Végh et al, 2025, p.18). Besides, as its potential impacts on fertility ‘biological reduction of fertility is less likely to occur, while behavioural mechanisms involving couples’ decisionmaking will impact fertility intentions’ (Voicu, Deliu, 2021, p. 209).

4. TRENDS ON THE ROMANIAN LABOUR MARKET

This section of the paper includes EU Romania comparisons focused on employment rates by citizenship and gender, as well as Romania employment related indicators (total 2024 activity versus employment rates by age, 2024 labour force participation by gender and place of residence). The last part of the section includes 2016-2024 evolution of the employment rate of the population aged 15-74 years by age group.

EU Romania comparison on employment rates by citizenship (% from 15 to 64 years) reflects a higher value for EU. The smallest values were registered for both EU and Romania in the year of 2015: 64.6%, respectively 61.4%. EU Romania lower difference in term of employment rate was recorded in 2017 with 2.8%. On the opposite side, the highest percent was registered for EU in 2024 with 70.8%, while in 2019 Romania was 65.8%. EU Romania higher difference was in 2023: 7.4%. Figure Employment rates by citizenship EU Romania (%). For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 11. EU Romanian employment rate by citizenship (% from 15 to 64 years)

Source: Eurostat lfsa_ergan\$defaultview

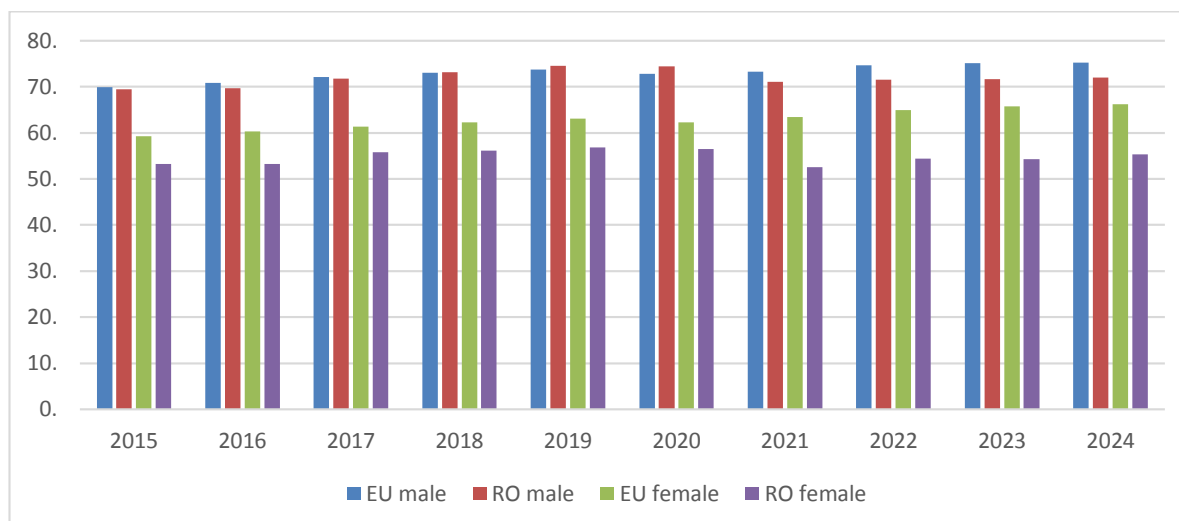
Both EU and Romanian labour markets have contracted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and progressively recovered after. At the EU member states level, the health-related shock had a temporary effect on the labour market (European Commission, 2023, 13-14). Referring particularly to Romania, socio-economic measures oriented towards affected labour segments were doubled by the public policy need to address large flows of migrants returning to their home country, especially from Western European countries. With respect to labour related effects on employees, we mention: ‘the obligation to comply with hygiene and social distancing measures, changes to working arrangements (working from home/teleworking), a significant number of individual employment contracts suspended or terminated, reduction in working hours’ (Chivu, Georgescu, 2020, 27).

With reference to COVID-19 pandemic impact on Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEETs) young people, the most exposed ones were the ones from rural areas rural areas, ‘with disadvantaged backgrounds or from marginalized communities’ for which an increase in the school dropout rate is expected alongside unemployment rate (Bălan et al, 2022, 25). Romanian significantly decrease of 2020 as well as 2021 employment due to COVID-19 pandemic period and its 2020 labour market related regulations ‘confirm the hypothesis that deregulatory labour market interventions have a negative short-term effect when implemented in times of crisis’ (Adăscălței & Pignatti Morano, 2016, 24).

EU Romanian comparison on employment rate by citizenship and gender (% from 15 to 64 years) reflects a higher employment of EU men compared to women. Among women, the Romanian ones show smallest employment values. The smallest values for men employment rate were registered for both EU and Romania in the year of 2015: EU 69.9%, respectively 69.5 in Romania. On the opposite side, the highest values were recorded in 2024 in EU with 73.8%, and in Romania in 2019 with 74.6%. The smallest compared EU Romania values was noticed in 2020 with - 1.6%, while the highest was in 2023 with 3.4%.

Concerning EU Romanian women employment rate, the lowest EU and Romanian rates were registered in the year of 2015: 59.3%, 53.2% respectively. On the opposite side, the highest values were recorded in 2024 for EU with 66.2%, and in 2019 for Romania with 56.8%. Comparatively, EU Romanian employment rate registered the smallest value in 2020 with 5.8%, while the highest was in 2023 with 11.4%. For more details, please see the figure 12.

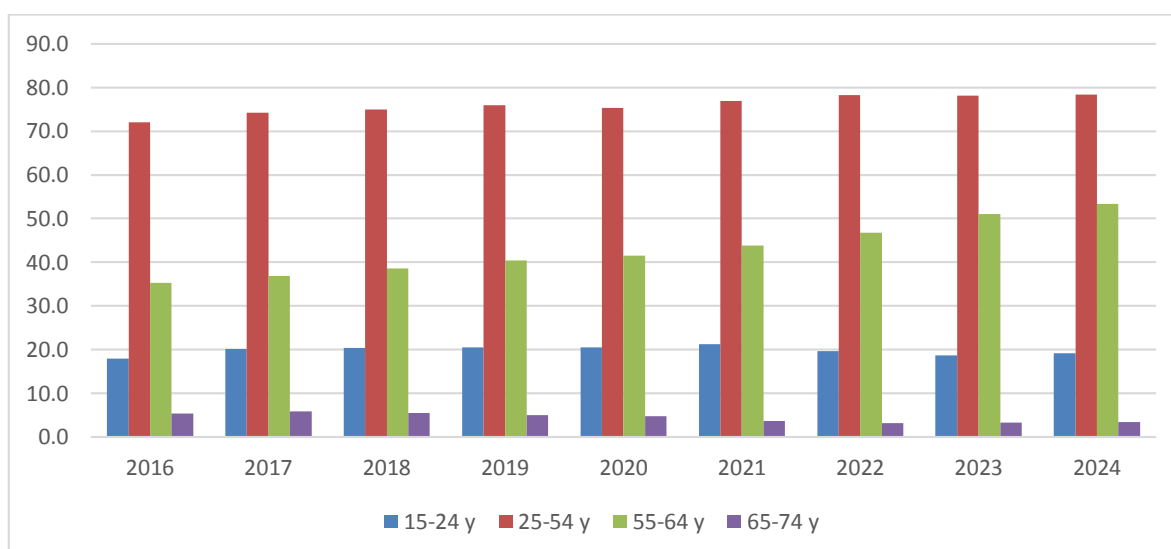
Figure 12. EU Romanian employment rates by citizenship and gender (% from 15 to 64 years)



Source: Eurostat lfsa_organ\$defaultview

The analyse of 15-74 years employment rates for the period 2016-2024 shows the constant highest value for the 25-54 years followed by increasing employment rate for the category 55-64 years. For more details, please see the figure below.

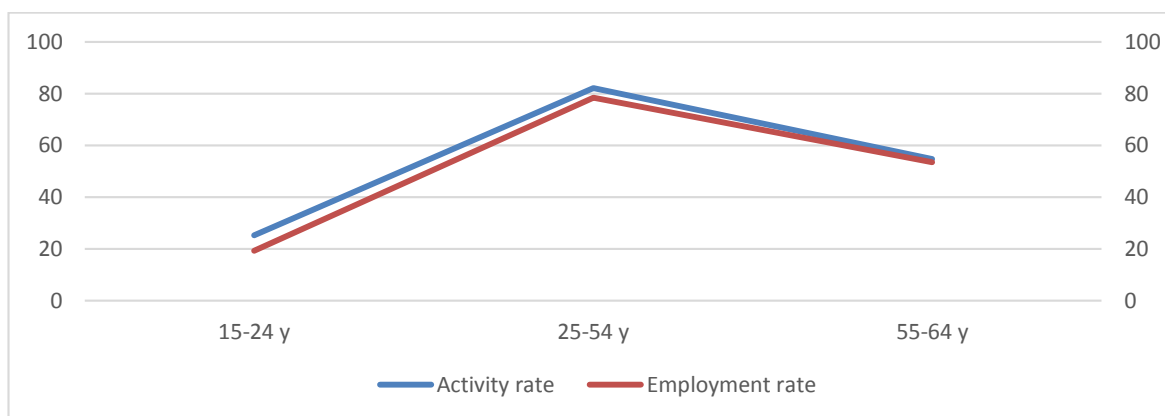
Figure 13. Evolution of the employment rate of the population aged 15-74, by age group in Romania (%)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

Activity rate in 2024 Romania is higher than employment one for all three age analysed categories which reflect a vacant labour related potential, especially for the category 25-54 years. Comparing the three age categories, the 15-24 years are the less represented on labour market. For more details, please see the figure below.

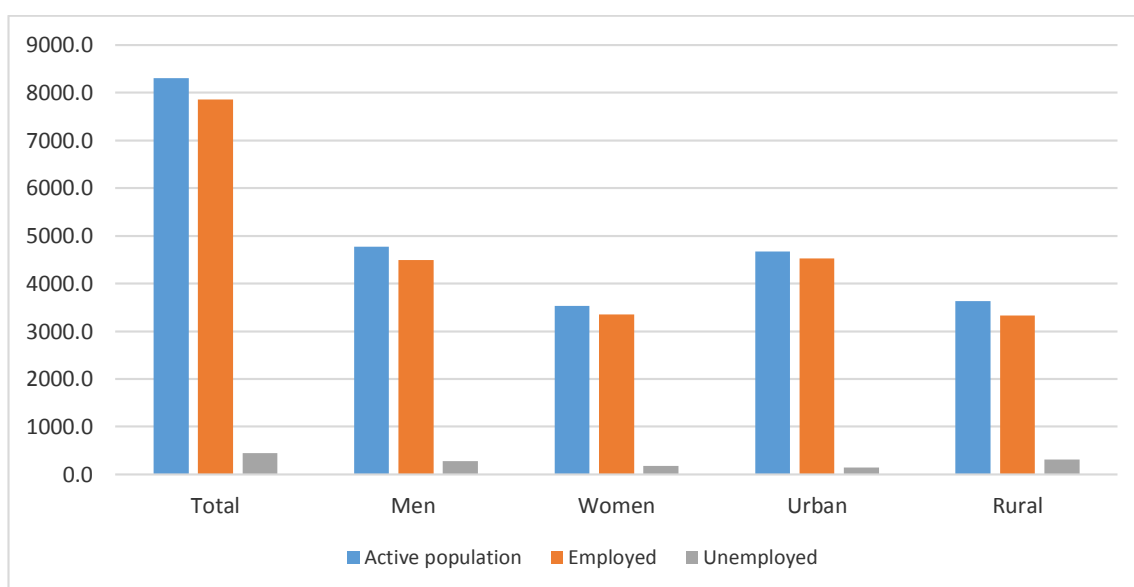
Figure 14. Total activity versus employment rates by age in 2024 Romania (%)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

Looking closer to active 2024 Romanian population, one can notice a higher value for men compared with women both as total and as employed. People living in rural areas are more employed than in rural. For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 15. Labor force participation by gender and place of residence in Romania 2024 (thousands of people)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

A more detailed 2024 picture on labour force participation by age and place of residence shows concern for young women (15-24 years) as well as people living in rural area for all age categories. Highest rates of employment were registered in the case of men and urban area (except for the category of 15-24 years). The highest difference between employed men and women was registered in the category 55-64 years (21.6%) followed by 25-54 years (16.9%), and by 15-24 years (8.8%). In respect to urban-rural difference, the highest was registered for the category 25-54 years (17%), and 55-64 years (7.7%). In the case of the category 15-24 years, the employment rate was 8.3% in rural area compared to urban. For more details, please see the figure below.

Figure 16. Labor force participation by age and place of residence in 2024 Romania (% 15-64 years)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

5. CONCLUSIONS

1990-2024 dynamic of Romanian marriages officialised in urban *versus* rural areas reflects higher values in urban area with the smallest difference registered in 2024 while the highest was listed in 2006. The same urban-rural trend has been maintained in what regards the total number of divorces: with higher differences in early 1990s (namely 1994, 1990 and 1998) and smaller in recent years (namely 2024, 2023, and 2022). In respect to the children left behind the dissolution of a marriage, the families without children tend to divorce more for the selected 1990-2024 years. The year of 1991 has been registered the highest number of divorces for families with two or more children. On the opposite side, the year of 2024 recorded the lowest values of divorces for families with three and more children. Concerning the average age of mothers at first birth for the whole post-communist period in Romania, the value continuously increased, while the urban area scores higher values than rural. The same trend has been followed in the case of average age of mothers at all births.

The 2023 highest crude marriage rate within EU was registered in Romani. In the same time, EU Romania comparison on crude marriage for selected 1964-2023 years indicates a constant higher Romanian value except for the year of 1970. In what regards the crude divorce rate, EU Romania comparison for selected 1964-2023 years emphasizes a higher EU value for the post-communist period. Similarly, EU Romania comparison regarding live births outside marriage for selected 2000-2023 years, shows a constant higher EU value followed by a constant decrease of the EU Romania difference.

Compared 2015-2024 EU employment rate has been recorded higher values compared to Romanian one. By gender, both EU and Romanian men are better represented on the labour market than women.

With respect to Romanian activity rate compared to the employment one, the highest 2024 value has been recorded for the age category 25-54 years with a better representation of 55-64 years compared to 15-24 years. NEETs young people as a 'very heterogeneous group' (Bălan, 2015, 12) records higher representation of women compared to men and of youth with low education level (Bălan, 2015 idem, Bălan et al 2022) Their research scientifically supports the tailoring of specific labour insertion policies.

Looking closer at 2024 labour force participation by gender and place of residence, men are better represented than women, and urban are than rural. This follows previous literature as less women presence on the labour market also means that households run by women are more exposed to poverty comparative with the ones managed by men. In the same time, larger households are more exposed to poverty than the ones composed by a person (Bălan, 2013). Poverty in rural areas continue to be high due to access to formal jobs (Bălan, 2013, Bălan et all 2017).

In line with in depth analyse of 2024, young women and people living in rural area are the most vulnerable ones. 2016-2024 analyse of employment rate evolution for the population aged 15-74 years by age group, reflects a higher proportion of 25-54 years followed by 55-64 years. This conclusion followed the trend of higher employment representation of older people, especially with higher education (Bălan et all, 2017). On the other hand, difficult labour market insertion is noticed for the youngest category: 15-24 years. In other words, youth continue to be vulnerably exposed to poverty due to exclusion from the labour market (Bălan, 2013), reality reconfirmed for the year of 2024 with the highest unemployment rate registered for this age category (National Institute of Statistics, 2025).

The paper outputs are in line with previous literature connecting deep understanding of demographic trends with potential for economic growth (Stupariu et all, 2024; Ikhlef & Aziez, 2025). Furthermore, the paper supports the progress of socio-economic policies more suitable to the current demographic tendencies. Development of more nuanced social indicators focus on connection between family and labour market would be useful in this respect. Future research on the post-communist Romanian family dynamic provides the scientific basis for launching adaptative and inclusive long-time related programs.

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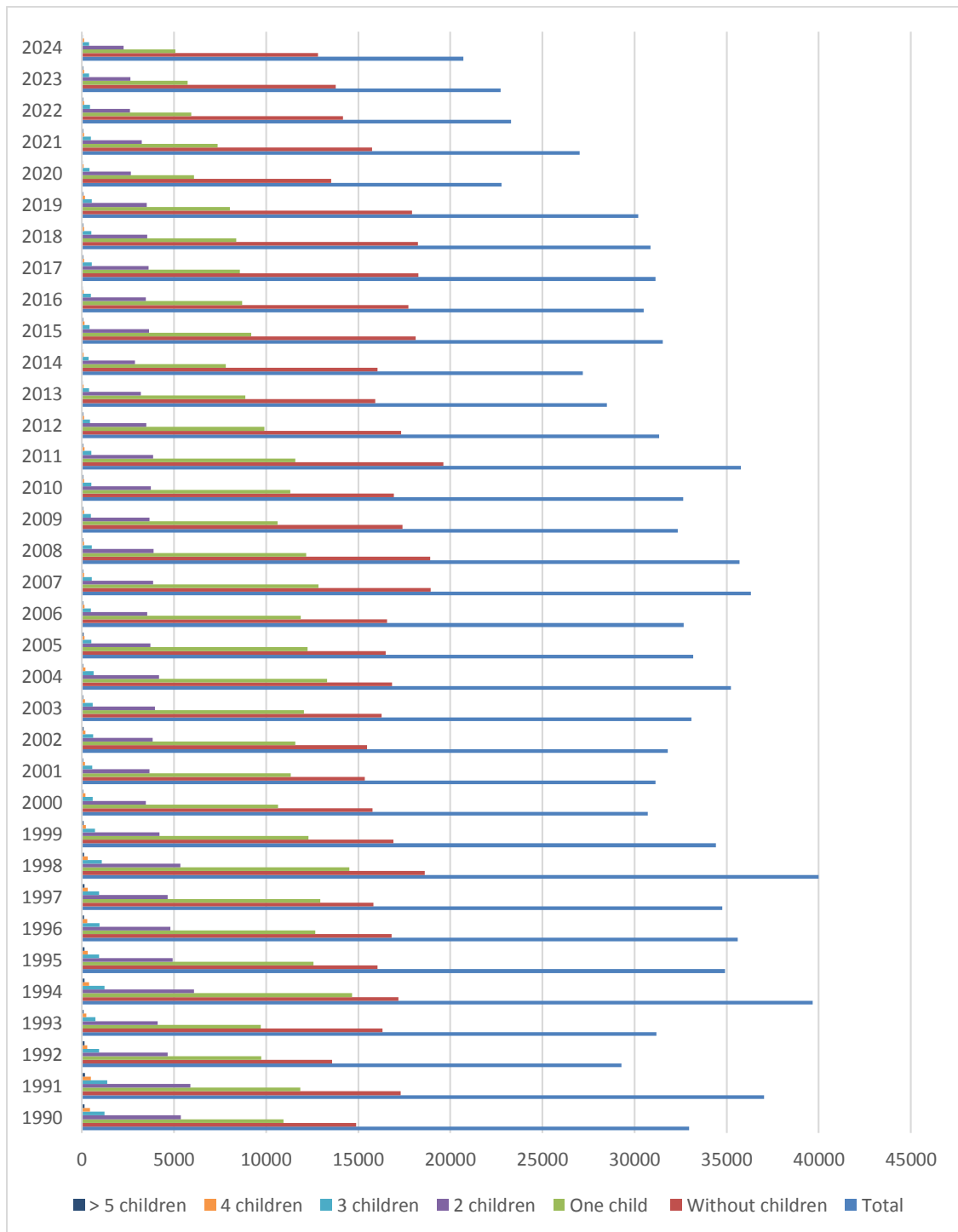
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Annex 1

Figure: Divorces by number of minor children left behind after the dissolution of marriage in post-communist Romania, 1990-2024 (number)



Source: National Institute of Statistics