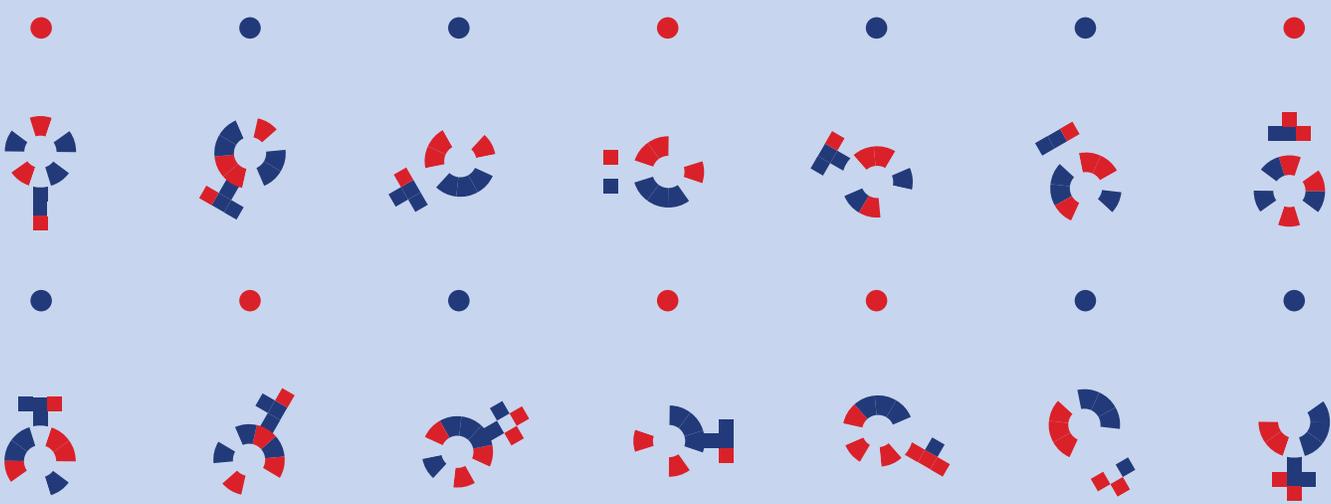


Gender assessment



R O M A N I A

Gender assessment



WORLD BANK GROUP



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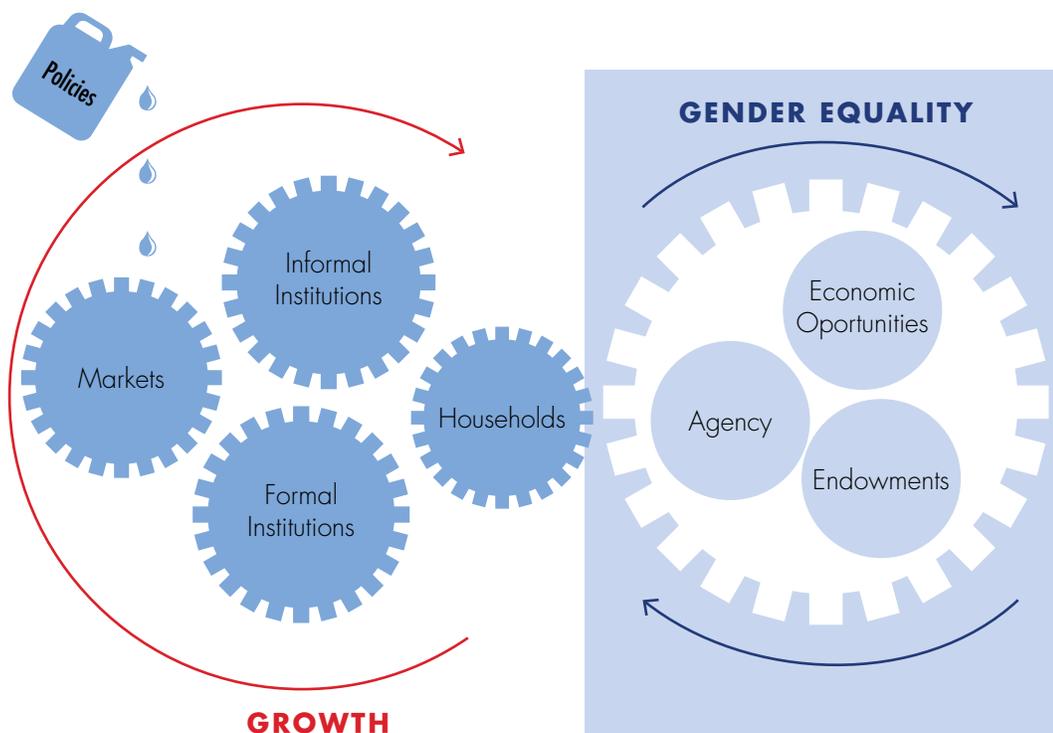
• Executive Summary

This Country Gender Assessment presents a broad picture of the main gender disparities in Romania. It defines gender equality in terms of access to opportunities, that is, equality in rights, resources, and voice among women and men (World Bank 2007).

Gender equality is a core development objective in its own right, and it is also smart economics. Greater gender equality pays off by helping advance a host of development goals, such as improvements in children's health and education and better labor outcomes for adults, at the same time boosting overall economic growth (Morrison, Raju, and Sinha 2007 and World Bank 2011). For example, gender gaps in the Romanian labor market may be harming aggregate productivity due to inefficient use of female potential. These gaps are estimated to potentially lower gross income per capita by 11.53 percent in the short run and 12.63 percent in the long run (Cuberes and Teignier 2016).¹

The report builds on the framework provided by the *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (World Bank 2011 and WDR 2012) and the World Bank's Gender Strategy (FY16–23), titled “Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, and Inclusive Growth” (World Bank 2015). According to the WDR 2012, gender equality is a result of gains in three domains: (1) human endowments, notably health and education, (2) economic opportunity, as measured by participation in economic activities and access to and control of key productive assets, and (3) voice and agency, as expressed in political participation, freedom from gender-based violence, and the ability to make key decisions. These three outcome dimensions are shaped by interactions among households, markets, formal institutions such as schools and government ministries, and informal institutions such as gender roles, beliefs,

¹ About 58 percent of this loss in GDP per capita derives from distortions in occupations held by women relative to men. The remaining 42 percent corresponds to the costs associated with gaps in labor force participation. The model estimation implies that two factors lead to the income loss. First, a misallocation of entrepreneurial talent reduces the productivity of the economy. Second, women's lower participation in the market leads to the underutilization of the available human capital.

Figure 1: Gender Equality Framework Developed for the WDR 2012

and social norms. The framework shows that economic opportunities, endowments, and agency mutually reinforce or block progress.

This report underlines the importance of understanding and analyzing the intersection of gender with other identities. The intersectionality approach holds that a combination of identities produces different experiences and relations when comparing different groups, and therefore affects wellbeing outcomes (Tas, Reimao, and Orlando 2013). Hence, the intersection of gender, age, ethnicity, and place of residence can bring significantly worse outcomes than the effects of gender alone.

Data from three major surveys form the basis of analysis, with supplementary input from other sources. The assessment relies, to a great extent, on the Romania Household Budget Survey (HBS) 2016,² which is a nation-

ally representative survey produced by the National Institute of Statistics of Romania. It collects information on household consumption and other aspects of living standards, and allows for disaggregation by ethnicity and by urban/rural location. This survey is also used by the World Bank's Global Poverty Monitoring program to study poverty and shared prosperity trends, based on consumption. A second source of data is the latest Life in Transition Survey III (LiTS), round 2015-2016, which was conducted in 34 European and nearby countries³ and is representative at the country level and for population over the age of 18. This survey captures information on quality of life as well as views on gender values, and allows for comparison with peer countries in the EU. A third source of information, to complement the analysis of the situation of Roma minorities, is the EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey 2016 (EU-MIDIS II). This survey collected information from

2 This is the harmonized ECAGEN version which, for poverty calculation purposes, provides information on consumption.

3 LiTS III (2016) was implemented in 31 Central and Eastern European and Central Asian countries and Turkey, countries in which the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) invests. The countries were Albania, Armenia, Azer-

respondents of different ethnic minority groups in all 28 EU member states.⁴

For the purposes of presenting comparisons with EU regional averages or with peer countries in the region, data from the following complementary sources were used: the Eurostat statistics, the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI), Global FINDEX, and the World Bank 2014 report "Diagnostics and Policy Advice for Supporting Roma Inclusion in Romania." Finally, information on the institutional environment is mostly based on the Women, Business, and the Law database.

After reviewing the state of equality between women and men in Romania in endowments, economic opportunities, and voice and agency, the assessment finds that the country has made substantial progress in some areas. For example, women in Romania participate more in the traditionally male-dominated fields of science, math, and computing (Eurostat 2016), unlike in many other EU countries. They represent a higher share of graduates in engineering and manufacturing than the EU average. Furthermore, on health, Romania has shown significant improvements over the past 20 years, as reflected in increased life expectancy of both women and men.

In addition to its improvements in human endowments, Romania has advanced its legal and institutional framework. Recently, the government moved to increase use of data to track and report gender-based violence. In addition, Romania has enacted key laws⁵ and regulations on gender including Law No. 202/2002 ("Equality Opportunities of Women and Men") and generous leave benefits (see section on Voice and Agency).

However, Romania still lags behind EU countries in other areas of gender equality, with many of these gaps driven by rural and ethnic inequalities. For one,

the country remains below EU averages of life expectancy for both genders, though its figures have risen (WDI). Romania's old-age dependency ratio is projected to grow substantially, imposing great costs in labor resources and the long-term care that often falls onto the shoulders of women (see section on Demography). Moreover, Romania's maternal mortality rate remains one of the highest among EU member states, at almost four times the EU's average. These numbers are even worse for the country's Roma ethnic group, in which maternal mortality stands more than 15 times higher than in the non-Roma population (World Bank 2014).

Romania also faces challenges with regards to gender equality in education enrollment and attainment. For example, Romanian men are particularly behind women in tertiary enrollment and performance (WDI and Eurostat). In terms of performance, the percentage of male low-performing students exceeds that of women particularly in reading and, to a lesser extent, in science. Enrollment and attainment rates are especially low among Roma and rural women. Gender gaps in attainment are largest among rural older men and women (World Bank 2014).

Furthermore, a significant share of Romanian young women are neither in employment nor in education and training, the so-called "NEET" group. These gender gaps are significant, especially when compared to other EU countries (Eurostat). Further, there are disparities by location. For example, NEET rates in rural areas are almost three times the levels in cities.

Besides these challenges in endowments, Romania struggles in economic opportunities for women. Female participation in the Romanian labor force remains limited, with fewer women reporting being economically active (employed or unemployed) than men. This gen-

baijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. For the sake of comparison with more prosperous neighbors, two Western European comparator countries were included, Germany and Italy.

4 This report does not present detailed figures from the EUSILC and EU-LFS surveys (harmonized surveys on income, socio-economic status and labor market for the EU), other than what is made publicly available by Eurostat.

5 While we have information regarding the focus and intent of Romania's gender laws, we do not have enough details on their implementation. Thus, in this assessment, we have not included material regarding the actual impact of the laws.

der gap in labor participation exceeds the EU's (Eurostat 2016). Furthermore, Roma women are even more disadvantaged in the labor market: only a small share of women over the age of 16 describe their current main activity as "employed" (FRA and EU-MIDIS II 2016). According to a World Bank study on labor market exclusion in Romania, low education, care responsibilities, health limitations, low work experience, and lack of recent experience are some of the main barriers limiting female and other vulnerable groups' presence in the workforce (World Bank 2017b).

In addition, issues related to time use and household responsibilities appear to be drivers of low levels of labor force participation. Women spend two more hours per day than men on household and family care, while men engage in paid work for one more hour per day than women, on average (Romania National Institute of Statistics 2013). More women than men reported household duties as one of the main reasons for not looking for a job (LITS 2016).

Responsibility for caring for small children and aged adults usually falls on women in Romania, where lack of formal care makes informal care at home the most common option. Based on data from the 2016 LITS survey, at least one person in a typical Romanian household needs looking after due to age or disability, including children under the age of six and seniors over the age of 75. Compared to the EU, fewer children are in formal childcare arrangements in Romania. In addition, children between the ages of four and six (the starting age of compulsory education) are less likely to be in early childhood education and care (ECEC) compared to the EU's average. Concerning the elderly, Romania has the ECA region's third-highest share of people living in households that have seniors over the age of 65 (LITS 2016). Cost and shortage of institutionalized services are some of the reasons why households (and women, in particular) typically take care of the elderly.

Finally, societal norms seem to be important drivers of women's limited participation in labor markets. More than half of respondents in the most recent Eurobarometer survey (2017) on gender equality⁶ believe that men should take responsibility for earning money and women should take care of the home and children. There is also support from both sexes for the idea that women should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working. Similar traditional opinions are expressed on the participation of women in politics.

Romania has high rates of gender-based violence. Large shares of women in Romania have experienced physical and/or sexual violence and harassment and only a few of them reported these incidents to the police (FRA 2014). Alarming, compared to other EU countries fewer respondents in Romania condemn domestic violence against women. Many Romanians believe that domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled within the family (European Commission 2016b).

Lastly, high incidences of teenage pregnancy and child marriage, especially in Roma communities, signal other challenges for Romania. The country's adolescent fertility rate is almost twice the ECA average and more than three times the EU average (WDI). The rate stands at similar levels of countries that belong to lower income groups such as Rwanda, Haiti, Morocco, Vietnam, and Burundi. Among Roma women, adolescent fertility and child marriage rates are higher than in the non-Roma population, which presents challenges to human capital in terms of school dropouts, increased maternal health risks, and constraints on employment (World Bank 2014).

In short, Romania has made progress towards greater equality between women and men but specific challenges persist, in part because aggregate levels can hide substantial heterogeneity within the country. Belonging to the Roma population and living in rural areas of the country are strongly associated with poor showings in a number of welfare outcomes. Yet being Roma alone places

⁶ This survey, sponsored by the European Commission, explores citizens' opinions about gender equality, with a focus on gender equality in politics and at work, and the gender pay gap, in general and in companies where respondents work. It was carried out in the 28 member states of the European Union in June 2017. A total of 28,093 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face at home in their mother tongues.

one at a disadvantage in many human development indicators, including health, education, and employment. For instance, Roma women fare worse on reproductive and sexual health compared to non-Roma and maternal mortality is more than 15 times higher among Roma women than non-Roma (World Bank 2014). Roma women marry and have children at younger ages than non-Roma women. In addition, there are significant gender gaps between Roma and non-Roma in school enrollment, completion, and attainment of all levels of education. Finally, Roma women face more limitations than non-Roma women with regards to the labor market. Similarly, rural communities fall behind urban areas in terms of poverty reduction, employment, health and education, access to services, and infrastructure (European Commission 2017). For example, limited access to modern contraceptives and lower educational attainment and labor force participation rates are especially challenging for rural communities. Moving

forward, addressing these challenges, especially with a focus on how aggregate levels can mask heterogeneity, will be critical in achieving gender equality. Roma and rural women fare significantly worse in many indicators, and ensuring their social inclusion should be at the top of the gender agenda.

This report is organized into five sections. Section 1 provides an overview of demographics. Section 2 analyzes gender disparities in endowments such as health and education. Section 3 examines gender and ethnic disparities in poverty. Section 4 focuses on gender gaps in the labor market, entrepreneurship, and access to productive inputs. Section 5 discusses the Romanian government's commitment to gender equality, women's agency, and factors that may shape the process in which men and women use their endowments and economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. The report ends with conclusions and policy recommendations.



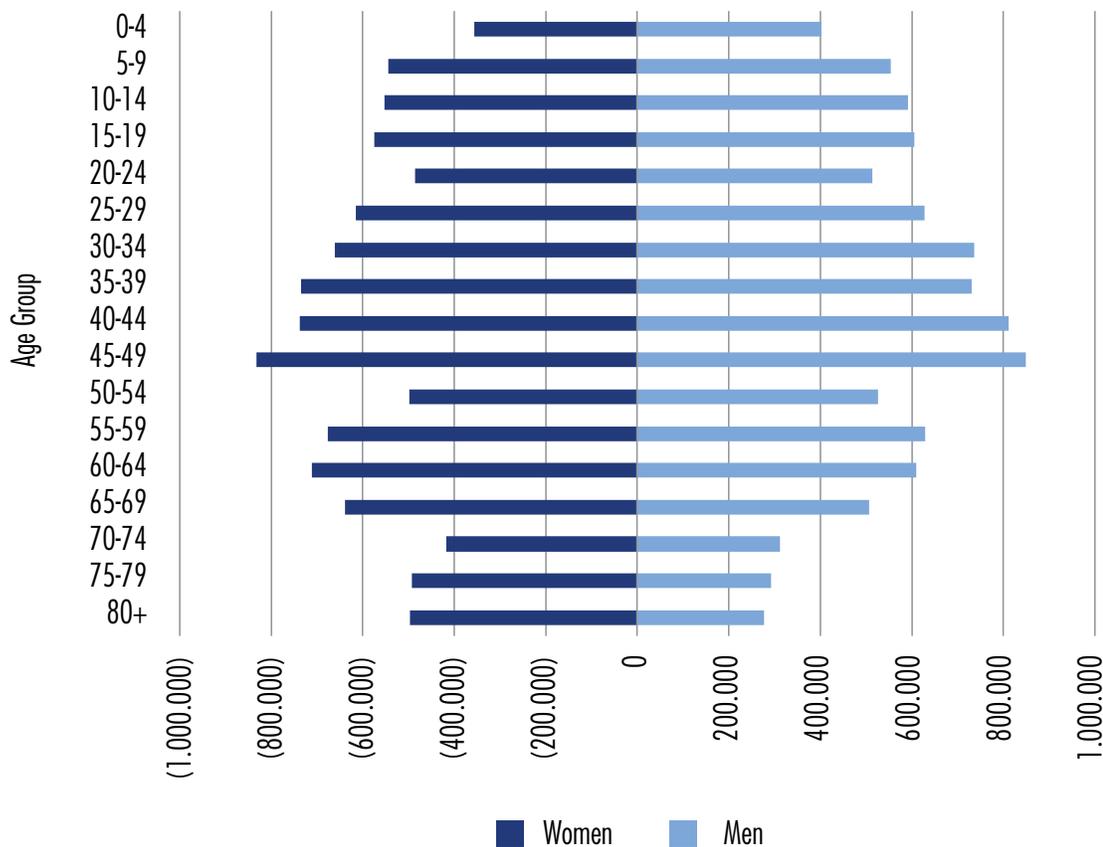
- Section 1:
Demography

Changes in Romania's population pyramid impose risks in terms of labor resources and adequate provision of long-term care—the population has shrunk by six percent since 2007, and it is also ageing. By 2020 the working-age population is projected to further decline by around four percent, and the elderly are likely to increase by 13 percent by 2060 (EC 2017). With a total population of over 19.6 million people, of whom 51.2 percent are women and 48.9 percent are men, Romania has striking sex imbalances among its senior population (Figure 2). In 2016, 23.8 percent of the population was 65-plus years old, with twice as many elderly women as men. Of the seniors over 65, 22.5 percent are over 80 years of age. Moreover, the old-age dependency ratio, now estimated at 25.9 percent, is predicted to grow substantially over the next few decades, reaching 53.9 percent by 2050 (WDI 2016).

While Romania's overall population is aging, the Roma minority, which makes up 3.4 percent of the total population (HBS 2016), is comparably much younger. The average age of Roma women is 29 years compared to 43 among the non-Roma. For Roma men, the average is 28 against 40 for non-Roma. According to the HBS (2016) household survey, about 33 percent of the Romanian Roma population is under 15 years of age, compared to 15 percent for the population as a whole. Thus, as Romania's general population continues to age, the Roma will play an increasingly larger role in shaping the future demographic composition of the country.

Life expectancy of the general population has increased over the past decade, but lags behind the EU's levels, and has remained almost unchanged among men, causing a wider gender gap. Compared with the EU average, Romania lags by 7.1 years for men and 5.2 years for women (Figure 3). The male disadvantage of 7.3 fewer years of life than women has been fluctuating slightly but in 2015, it returned to the level of 2001, 71.4 years versus 78.7 years

Figure 2: Population Pyramid, 2016



Source: Romania HBS 2016.

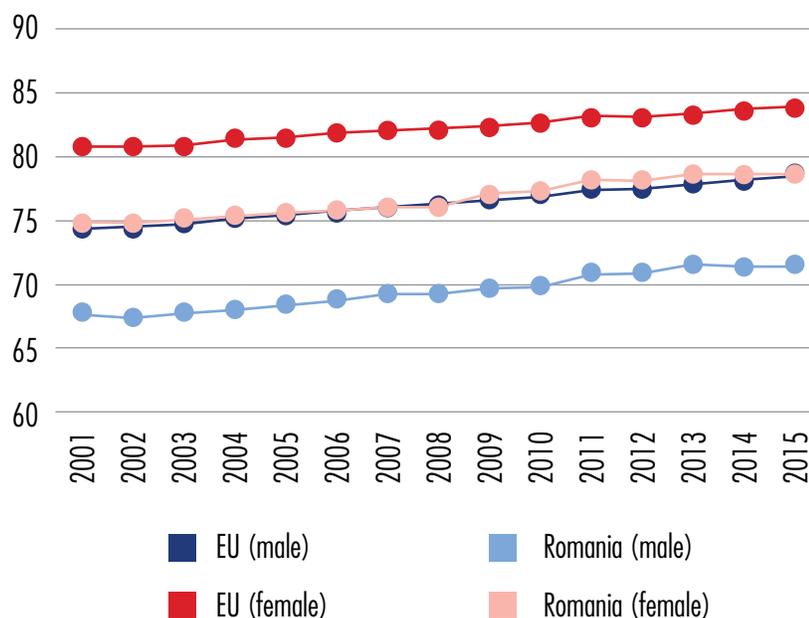
(see section on Health for more details on factors behind life expectancy differences between men and women). In contrast, the male disadvantage in the EU region decreased during the last decade.

Life expectancy of Roma is on average six years lower than non-Roma in the country (World Bank 2014). Much of this can be attributed to higher rates of infectious and chronic disease in Roma communities.

Romania’s changing demographic composition is also influenced by high outward migration, especially among men. Since 1990, about three million Romanians have moved abroad, a flow that greatly exceeds the 1.8 million in-country migrants who have relocated to urban areas (World Bank, 2017). Romania’s emigration rate is

one of the highest in the EU: about 500 people leave the country every day. Their main destinations include Italy (47 percent), Spain (22 percent), Germany (6 percent), and the UK (6 percent). In terms of characteristics, 46 percent of Romanian emigrants are between the ages of 20 to 34, 16 percent are over 45, while 51 percent are male. External migration rates are higher in remote and densely populated areas outside of dynamic urban centers. In 2011, more than a third of Romanians aged 25 to 29 lived abroad. Matching levels in countries such as India and Poland, Romania’s diaspora population grew between 2000 and 2015 at an average annual rate of 7.3 percent (UN 2015b).

Lack of job opportunities in sectors traditionally held by men, such as heavy industry, agriculture, and trans-

Figure 3: Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) by Gender, 1997-2015

Source: WDI.

port, have helped drive the high rates of external migration by men, while women have tended to migrate internally. Women make up 57 percent of people relocating from one part of the country to another, and have filled jobs offered by the new economy in the light industries and services sectors.

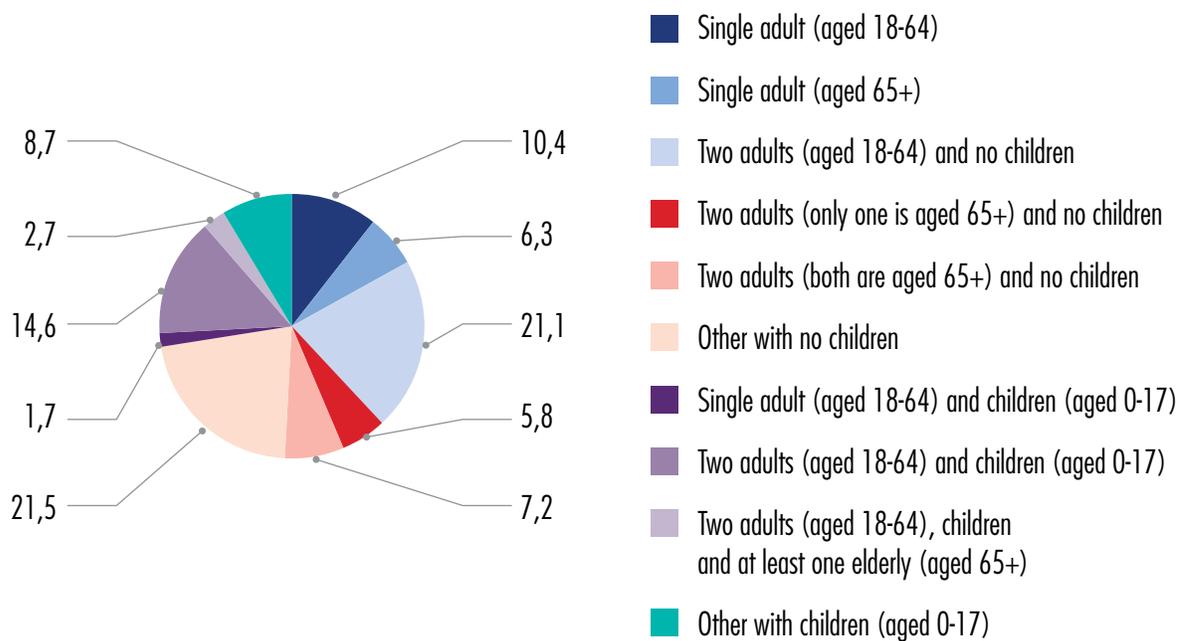
Back home, the majority of households in Romania are headed by males and have no children, but are home to many seniors (Figure 4). Like in many countries in the ECA region, 68.3 percent of the population live in male-headed households while only 31.7 percent live in female-headed households (LiTS 2016). In addition, as in most “transition” countries⁷ included in the LiTS III survey, 72 percent live in households with no children. Only 27.8 percent report having children among their dependents (LiTS III 2016). In contrast, Romania has the ECA region’s third-highest share (35.4 percent) of people living in households with seniors aged 65-plus, exceeded only by

Georgia at 45.4 percent and Armenia at 37 percent (LiTS III 2016).

Roma tend to marry and have children at younger ages than the national population. Approximately 28 percent of the Roma population between the ages of 15 and 19 are married, compared to only two percent of the non-Roma population of these ages (World Bank 2014). More striking, about 63 percent of the Roma population between the ages of 20 and 24 are married, compared to just 17 percent of the general Romanian population. These differences are also reflected in the age at which Roma girls have their first child: 10 percent for girls aged 12-15 and 48 percent for the 16-18 age bracket.

⁷ “Transition” countries means post-communist countries of Eastern Europe that have transitioned to market economies, according to the definition originally proposed by the EBRD.

Figure 4: Household Composition Structure in Romania



Note: Children are defined as people aged 0-17. "Other with/without children" includes any combination of three or more adults with/without children, where adults are people aged 18-plus.

Source: LITS III 2016.

- Section 2:
Human Capital
Endowments

HEALTH

Investments in health are important because they affect the ability of individuals to reach their full potential in society. For boys and girls alike, childhood investments in health have particular impact on outcomes throughout their lives. For example, less healthy children are more likely to develop illnesses that will lower their attainment in education. Poor health in adulthood can hurt economic outcomes by such affects as health-related absence from work and lower work hours and earnings (World Bank 2011). Improvements in health thus help women and men live longer and more productive and fulfilling lives.

Romania has achieved improvements in health outcomes in areas such as maternal mortality and increased life expectancy for men and women, but the country still faces many health-related challenges, especially among rural households and the Roma population. Romanian women have higher rates of maternal mortality, breast and cervical cancer, and adolescent fertility, compared to EU averages. These conditions are even more severe among Roma women and women living in rural areas. Men face different health problems, typically related to risky behavior including alcohol consumption and smoking.

Risky behavior appears to be a contributing factor in Romanian men's shorter life expectancy. For instance, 36.9 percent of Romanian men age 15-plus smoke cigarettes at least once a week compared to 22.7 percent of Romanian women. There are also gender differences in alcohol consumption—27.7 percent of males report consuming alcohol every week compared to 5.3 percent of women. The Ministry of Health has attributed low life expectancy to

risky behaviors in the population. Other risks include unhealthy diet, use of illicit drugs, and low physical activity (WHO 2017).

Romanian women face a particular risk from cervical cancer. The country has the highest incidence and mortality of cervical cancer in the EU, exacting a severe toll on women's health. In 2012, incidence and mortality rates of the cancer reached 34.9 percent and 14.2 percent, respectively, compared to the EU's rates of 11.3 percent and 3.7 percent (European Cancer Observatory 2012). Cervical cancer ranks as the leading cause of cancer deaths in women between the ages of 15 and 44 years in Romania (HPV Information Centre 2017). There are many reasons behind these high rates, including late diagnosis due to factors such as limited screening opportunities, and low vaccination rates (Arbyn et al. 2011). In 2014, about half of Romanian women between the ages of 20 and 69 in cities reported never having had a smear test (Eurostat). This share was even higher among women living in towns and suburbs (62.5 percent) and rural areas (73.3 percent). In 2008, the government introduced an HPV vaccine campaign targeting girls between the ages of 10 and 11, but only 2.5 percent of the 110,000 eligible girls were vaccinated. Reasons for the low take-up include fear of risks associated with the vaccine and mothers' negative perception of it (Craciun et al. 2012).

Minority women and women from low socio-economic backgrounds in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to cervical cancer. A qualitative study found that Roma women's participation in the national screening program for cervical cancer in 2012 was lower in rural than in urban areas (Andreassen et al. 2017). Some have attributed low screening coverage among Roma women to barriers such as lack of knowledge, different health beliefs, and low levels of education. However, the authors of the qualitative study argued that the main barrier was the screening system itself, which they said was not tailored to the targeted audience. Another study on the national screening program found significant differences between women in rural and urban areas in terms of knowledge and acceptance of the Pap smear (Grigore et al. 2017). The authors noted that 97.5 percent of women in urban areas and 92 per-

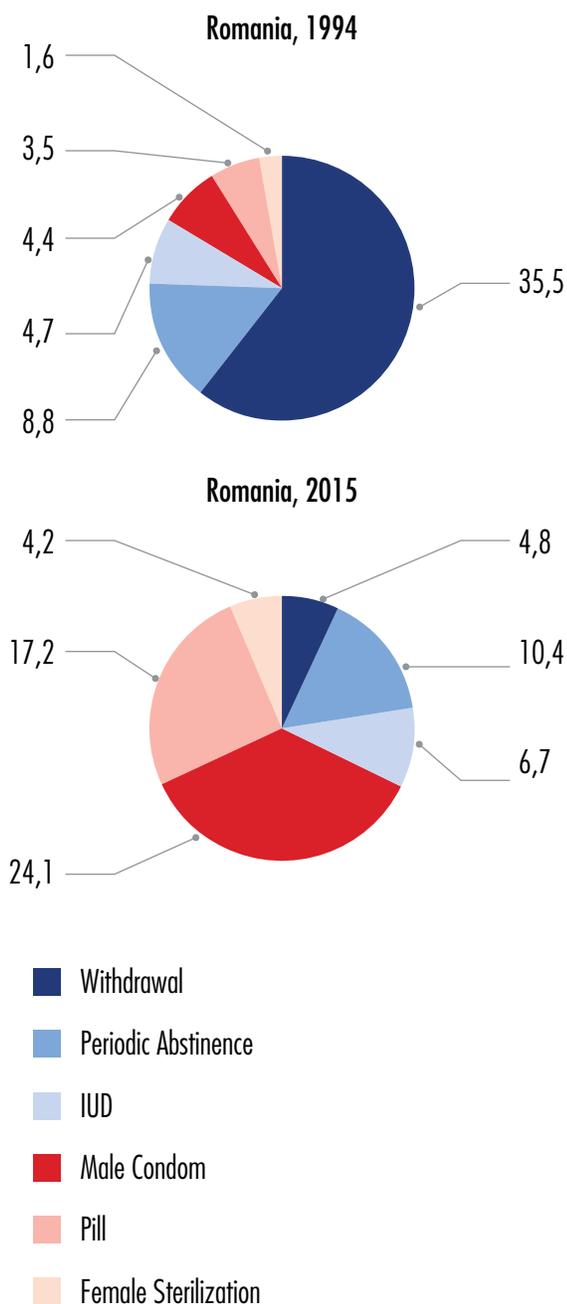
cent of women in rural areas had heard about the test. The main reasons that urban women gave for not participating in it were lack of time (38.1 percent) and "other reasons" (35.7 percent), while in rural areas, the main reason was lack of financial resources (49.2 percent).

Roma face poorer overall health and lower coverage of health insurance compared to the rest of the population. Approximately 45 percent of the ethnic group indicated that health problems limit their daily activities, compared to 20 percent of the general population (World Bank 2014). Romas' poorer health has been linked to the socio-economic conditions in which they grow up and live, which expose them to greater risk factors in comparison with non-Roma: Roma engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, poor diet, and early pregnancies at higher rates than the non-Roma population (World Bank 2014). In addition, the EU-MIDIS II 2016 survey shows that only 54 percent of Roma are covered by the national basic health insurance scheme or other insurance. This percentage has not improved since the previous survey in 2011. Romania still ranks with Bulgaria as having the EU's lowest health insurance coverage among Roma.

Overall use of contraceptives has risen in recent years in Romania, coming in line with EU levels, while use of modern contraceptives has also increased. In 1994, 60.5 percent of Romanian women aged 15-49 who were married or in a union used some type of contraceptive, compared to 69 percent in the EU. By 2015, the Romanian number had risen to 69 percent, while the EU's held roughly steady at 69.2 percent (UN 2015). In 2015, the average use of modern contraceptives in Romania and the EU was 53.7 percent and 58.8 percent, respectively, among that group of women. In recent years, male condoms and oral hormonal pills have become the top modern methods of contraception in the country (Figure 5). Periodic abstinence has remained the major traditional method of contraception.

Romania's maternal mortality rate (MMR) declined steadily from 1997 to 2007, but stagnated after that and remains one of the highest among EU member states at 31 per 100,000 live births in 2014 (Figure 6). In 2014, Romania's MMR was almost four times the EU's average.

Figure 5: Prevalence of Modern and Traditional Contraceptive Use among Married or In-Union Women Ages 15-49, in Romania and EU



Source: UN 2015.

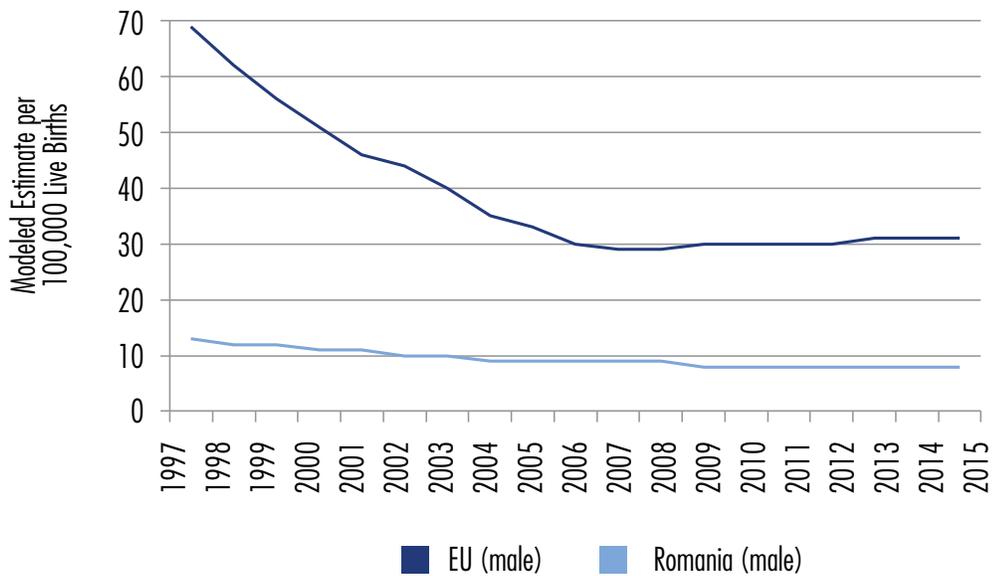
Romania's levels were comparable to rates in countries such as Tajikistan (32 per 100,000 live births), Egypt (33), and Sri Lanka (30) (WHO 2015 and Vlădescu et al. 2016).

Underutilization of prenatal care and assistance during delivery may be associated with the high maternal mortality. About 94 percent of women in Romania had at least one antenatal visit and 76 percent had at least four such visits (UNICEF, 2015). However, a recent study on prenatal care utilization among pregnant Romanian women found that 78 percent of study participants did not fully utilize the available services. Those who received inadequate care were likely to be less than 25 years of age, Roma, unmarried, uneducated, living in rural areas, and of low socio-economic status (Stativa et al. 2014). The share of births attended by skilled health staff has been relatively stable over the past years at a near-universal figure of 98.5 percent (WDI).

Low usage of prenatal care and other health services is even more common among Roma women. Roma pregnant women reported an average number of three prenatal consultations, while non-Roma reported five. This gap was driven, at least in part, by a higher share of Roma women who did not receive any medical check-ups at all, 13 percent. Maternal mortality is over 15 times higher among Roma women than non-Roma. This reflects structural obstacles that Roma women face such as exclusion from the health insurance system due to their absence from the formal labor market (see section on economic opportunities) and various discriminatory practices that they face when trying to access healthcare (World Bank 2014).

Finally, Romania's adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women aged 15-19) is about 34, the second-highest in the EU region (after Bulgaria) and comparable to levels in countries such as Rwanda, Haiti, Morocco, Vietnam, and Burundi that belong to a lower income group. These rates are especially high among the Roma population. Ten percent of Roma girls have their first child when they are aged 12 to 15 and 48 percent become first-time mothers between the ages of 16 and 18 (World Bank 2014). Teenage pregnancy is an integral indicator of young women's agency. It not only reflects social norms

Figure 6: Maternal Mortality Rates, 1997-2015

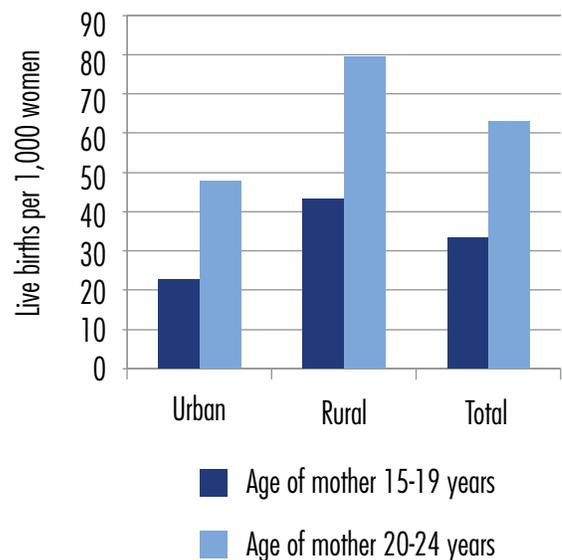


Source: World Bank and WDI.

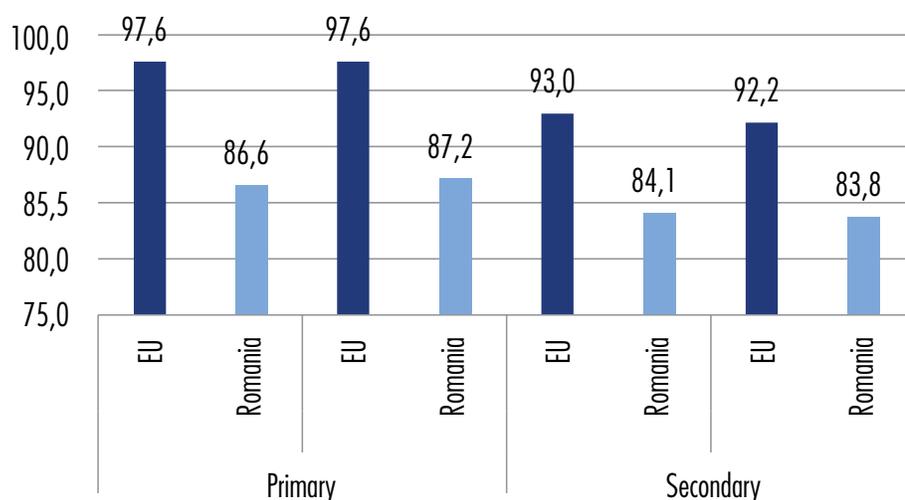
and expectations around women’s role in society but can signal lack of capacity to effectively access and use contraceptives based on gendered power dynamics within couples (Heilborn and Cabral 2011 and Jorgensen et al. 1980). In addition, it has consequences for women’s personal development and ability to make and implement choices (Azevedo et al. 2012 and Kruger and Berthelon 2012).

Fertility rates vary significantly by age and degree of urbanization. In Romania, fertility rates are higher among women in rural areas, and for women aged 20 to 24 compared to adolescent women (Figure 7). For example, in 2015, the fertility rate for women aged 20 to 24 was 79.4 live births per 1,000 women in rural areas and 47.8 in urban areas. The adolescent fertility rate in rural areas was also higher at 43.3 live births compared to 22.6 in urban areas. Moreover, rural women were getting married at earlier ages compared to women living in cities—at age 26 on average versus age 29 (National Institute of Statistics).

Figure 7: Fertility Rate, 2015



Source: Romania National Institute of Statistics.

Figure 8: School Net Enrollment in 2015 (Percent)

Note: Net enrollment for Primary and Secondary, gross enrollment for Tertiary.

Source: World Bank and WDI.

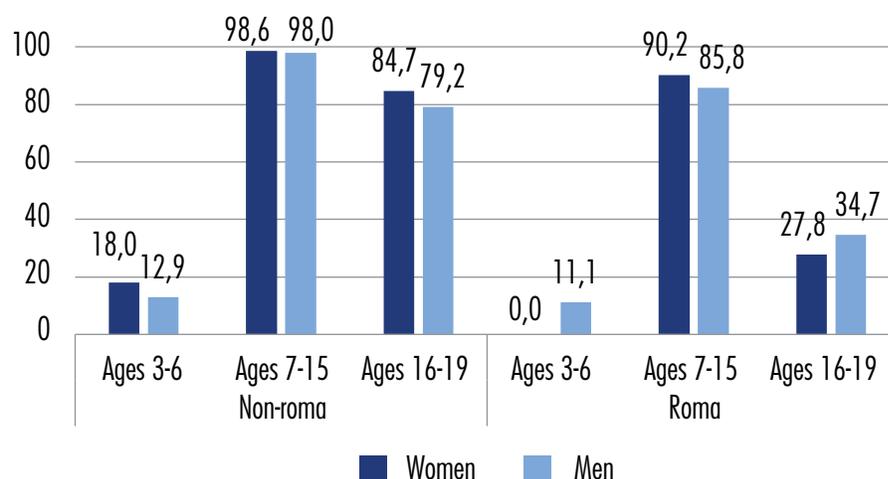
EDUCATION

Investments in education impact the ability of men and women to reach their full potential in society (World Bank 2011). Investments in education affect women's success in such activities as earning wages and managing firms and farms. Gender differences in education have greatly contributed to the wage and productivity gap between men and women. Furthermore, children born to more-educated mothers are less likely to die in infancy and more likely to be immunized and have higher birth weights. Thus, educating both boys and girls and men and women is critical for tapping into human capital.

On education, Romania has achieved some laudable advancements including high rates of females studying subjects traditionally dominated by men, such as science and math. Yet Romania still falls behind the EU in many education indicators. Women have higher enrollments in tertiary schools than men and make up more tertiary graduates in the fields of education and training, health, social sciences, and humanities (European Commission 2012). However, gender issues persist in other measures of education. For example, primary and secondary enrollment rates for boys and girls in Romania are

still very low compared to EU countries (Figure 8), and a higher percentage of women than men between the ages of 15 and 24 are neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET). Finally, as in health, women living in rural households rank behind the general population in terms of educational enrollment and attainment.

A look at enrollment in basic education by ethnicity shows disparities between Roma and non-Roma, and gender differences within the Roma population (Figure 9). Inequalities across ethnic groups start early with very few Roma children between the ages of three and six years making it into the school system compared to their non-Roma peers. Among those who do, the majority are boys. Most Roma households report they don't send children to preschool because home care is available and/or because the kindergarten is too expensive. Only 38 percent of Roma children between the ages of four and six, (the starting age of compulsory education) in Romania take part in early childhood education, compared to 86 percent of the general population (FRA and EU-MIDIS II 2016). Among Roma children aged seven to 15 years, the proportion of girls who make it into school is slightly higher than that of boys. In the next age group, 16-19,

Figure 9: Enrollment Rates by Ethnicity, Sex, and Age Group

Source: Romania HBS 2016.

however, that pattern is reversed: there are more Roma males than females in school. This age group also shows the biggest gap in enrollment between Roma and non-Roma (Romania HBS 2016). Overall, disparities in enrollment and attainment between Roma and non-Roma result in large gaps in their education levels as adults.

In addition, drop-out rates are much higher among the Roma population. Seventeen percent of Roma students drop out of primary education, and Roma students in lower secondary education are six times more likely than non-Roma students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds to drop out of school (Gatti et al. 2016). Reasons for these high rates include cost of education, feelings of being sufficiently educated, marriage, and need to make an income. A survey on this topic also found that Roma in Romania are vulnerable to leaving school early due to poverty, cultural factors, and spatial segregation.

Beyond mere access to education, learning and the accumulation of skills matter. Among Romanian youth age 15-plus who make it to secondary education, a high share do not possess adequate basic skills. The percent-

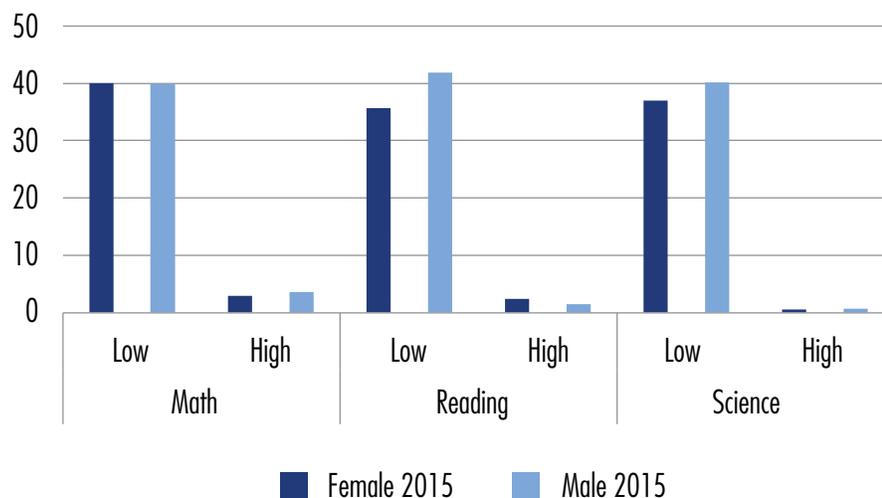
age of male students who are low performers exceeds that of females particularly in reading and to a lesser degree in science (Figure 10). Data from the PISA 2015 assessment shows that almost 25 percent of young Romanians around the age of 15—compared to 12.3 percent in the EU—lack the foundational cognitive skills required for lifelong learning and productive employment.⁸ In science, Romanian girls perform six percentage points higher than boys, which differs with the OECD where boys perform better by 3.5 points. In reading, the country follows the same trend as the OECD with girls outperforming boys by 18 points.

Concerning accumulation of skills, Romania has the EU's third-highest level of "early leavers" (18.5 percent compared to 10.7 percent in the EU), many of whom are from rural areas and ethnic groups (Figure 11). Much of Romania's high numbers of early leavers⁹ is driven by location and ethnicity rather than by sex (the percentages of early leavers are similar among men and women). For instance, 6.2 percent of early leavers were in cities, 17.4 percent in towns and suburbs, and 26.6 percent in rural areas

8 European Commission 2016. Refers to the percentage of low performers (below Level 2) in science, reading, and math.

9 "Early leavers" are people aged 18-24 who have completed at most a lower secondary education and are not in further education or training.

**Figure 10: Share of Men and Women Age 15-plus by Proficiency Levels in PISA.
High (Level 5 and Above) and Low Achievers (Below Level 2)**



Source: PISA 2015.

(Eurostat 2017). As in other EU countries, the majority of early leavers in Romania are Roma (FRA and EU-MIDIS II 2016). Roma make up 77 percent of early leavers in Romania, 90 percent in Portugal, 68 percent in Hungary, 90 percent in Portugal, and 57 percent in the Czech Republic.

In addition to Romania's high share of early leavers, coupled with a high share of people outside the labor market have resulted in an increasing rate of female youth who are neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET). There are significant gender gaps among Romania's NEETs (Figure 12), especially when compared to other EU countries. In 2016, 21 percent of females and 14 percent of males between the ages of 15-24 were NEETs (Eurostat). As with early leavers, NEETs are more common in rural areas than cities, and the gender disparities are found in both areas.¹⁰

Furthermore, Romania lags behind in tertiary enrollment compared to the EU average, but more women are

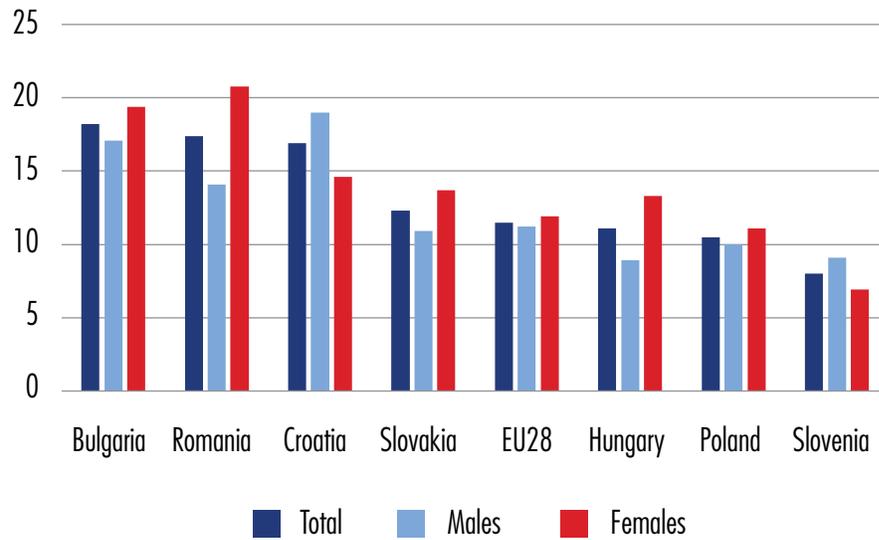
enrolled than men. Despite a slight increase from 2007, tertiary attainment in Romania is one of the lowest in the EU (Figure 12). Moreover, as is true in the EU at large, a higher share of Romanian women (59 percent) is enrolled in tertiary than men (48 percent).

Moreover, despite higher tertiary school enrollments among females, sex segregation by fields of education persists among tertiary graduates. Almost all tertiary graduates in the fields of education and training and at least 60 percent of graduates in health, social sciences, and humanities are women, a trend that has been constant for the past 10 years. Interestingly though, Romanian women represent the majority of graduates in the traditionally male fields of science, math, and computing, and they account for 35 percent of graduates in engineering and manufacturing, a figure eight percentage points higher than the EU average (Eurostat), as shown in Figure 13.¹¹

¹⁰ Furthermore, there are also substantial differences in NEET rates between cities and rural areas throughout the EU (Figure 19). In Romania, the share of NEETs between the ages of 15 and 24 was almost three times higher in rural areas (21.2 percent) than in cities (8.6 percent) (Eurostat 2016). The rate of NEETs in suburbs and towns, at 19.7 percent, was also much higher than the rate in cities.

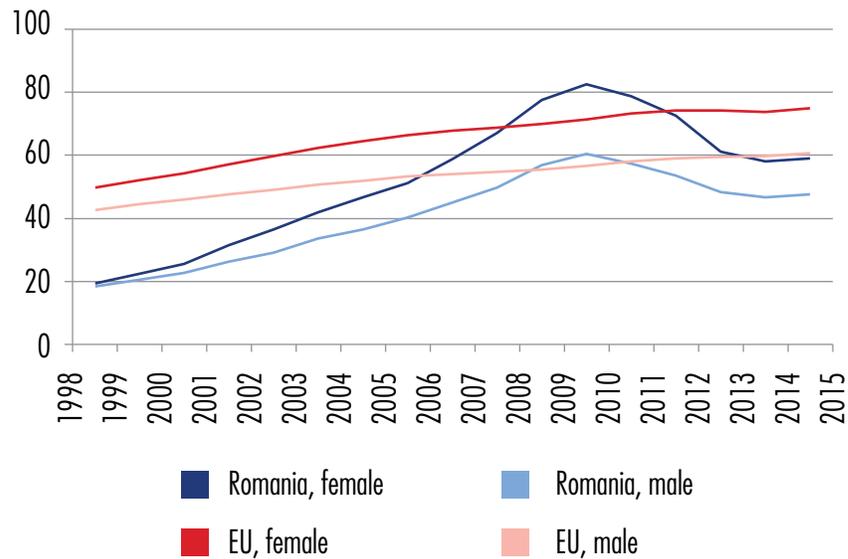
¹¹ The fields of science, math and computing, together with engineering and manufacturing, account for 29 percent of all graduates from tertiary schools in Romania.

Figure 11: Young People Aged 15-24 Who Are Neither in Employment Nor in Education and Training (NEETs)—Romania and EU Peer Countries (Percentage)

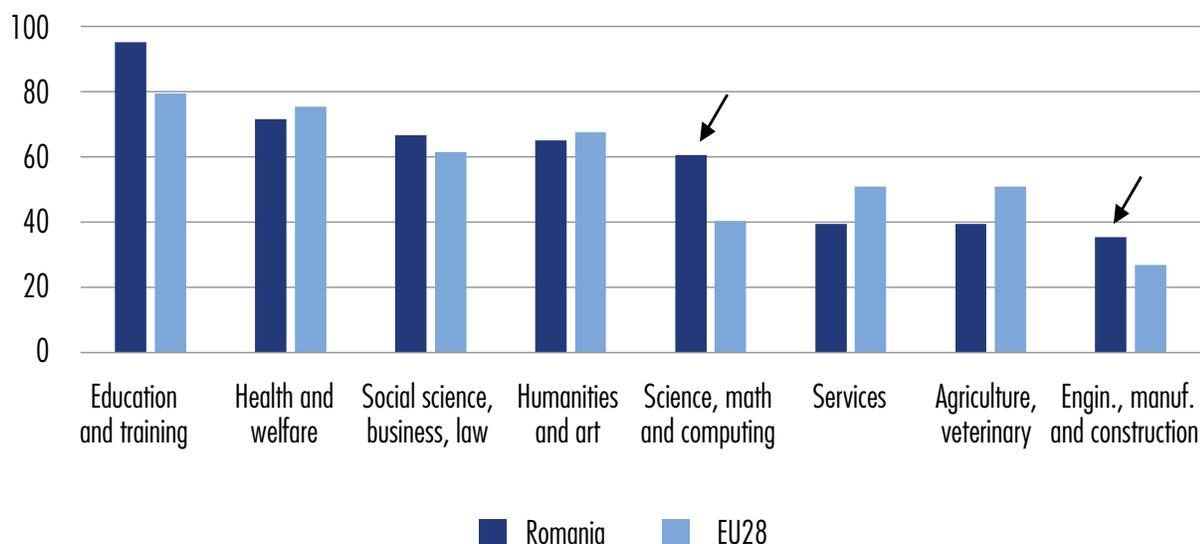


Source: Eurostat 2016.

Figure 12: Enrollment in Tertiary Education (Percent, Gross)



Source: World Bank and WDI.

Figure 13: Female Tertiary Graduates as a Percentage of Total Graduates

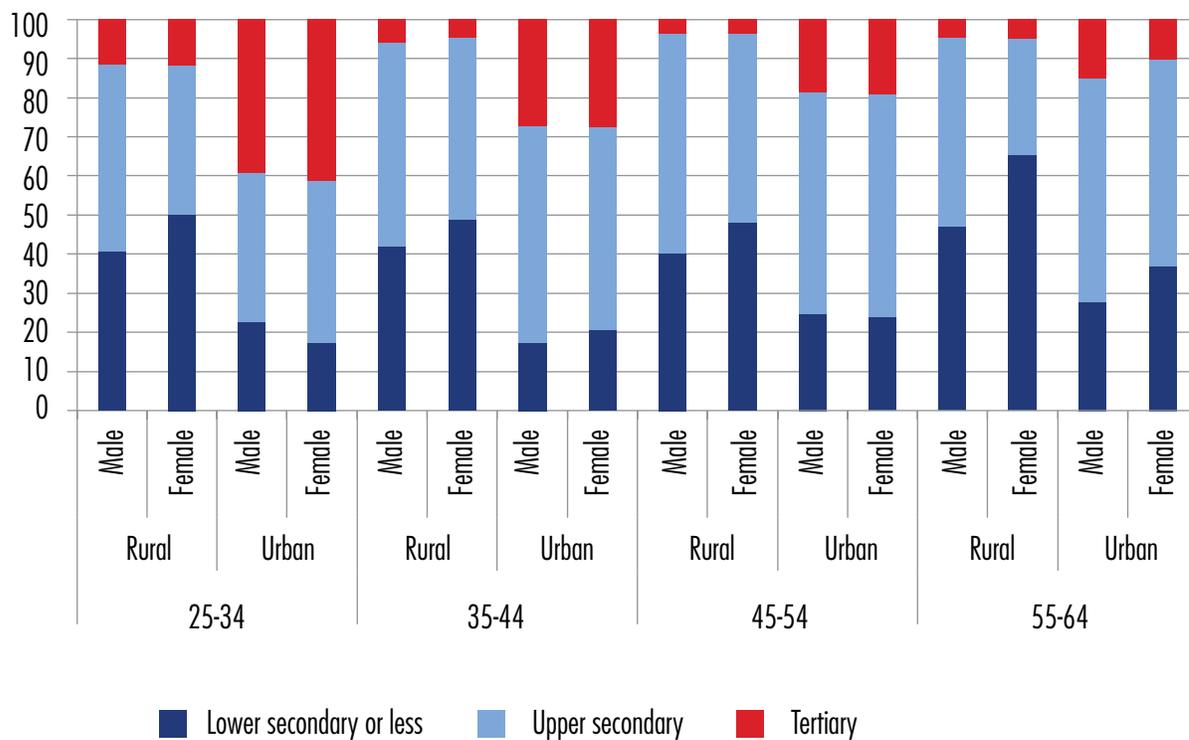
Source: Eurostat 2016.

Concerns about the overall quality of education and achievement in Romania have become more pressing among the Roma population. School and classroom-level segregation have undermined both teaching and learning. Recent studies suggest that segregation affects between 31 and 60 percent of the schools in areas that have high shares of Roma population (World Bank 2014, FRA, and EU-MIDIS II 2016). Functional literacy among Roma women is higher than among Roma men (79 percent versus 70 percent). Among Roma youth (ages 16-24), functional literacy rates are improving compared to the general Roma adult population. Thus, the overall functional literacy rate among Roma youth is 80 percent, but a five percentage point gap between women and men remains, with 83 percent for men and 78 percent for women (World Bank 2014). Enrollment in education among Roma in the 18-25 age group is extremely low for both men and women (less than 1 percent for each sex), and shows a severe gap when compared with the non-Roma: about 40 per-

cent attend some kind of school at that age (HBS 2016). In surveys, Roma express an aspiration to achieve tertiary education only half as often as their non-Roma peers. This may be influenced by discouraging prospects on the job market, as well as experience of discrimination (World Bank 2014).

As with Roma communities, analysis by location shows that rural communities—and especially the women living there—are at a disadvantage in education, both in terms of enrollment and attainment (Figure 14). Romanians living in rural areas are much less likely to attain secondary or tertiary education than people in urban areas. Almost half of rural men and women make it only to lower secondary. There are also differences among men and women in these geographic areas. More rural women than men have only lower secondary education, but this is due to a higher share of rural men with upper secondary schooling (Eurostat 2016).

Figure 14: Educational Attainment by Age, Sex, and Urban/Rural Location, 2016



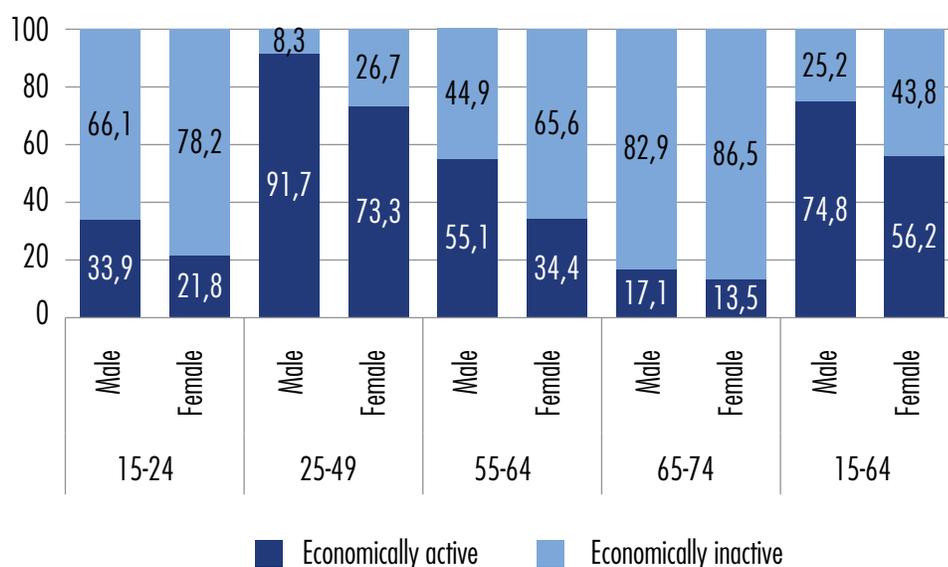
Source: Eurostat.

• Section 3: Economic Opportunities

Romanian women's inability to fully participate in the labor market can stifle economic growth. Gender gaps in the labor market are likely to result in lower aggregate productivity due to inefficient use of female potential. In Romania, these gaps have been estimated to cause potential economic losses of 11.53 percent in gross income per capita in the short run and 12.63 percent in the long run (Cuberes and Teignier 2016).¹² As the World Development Report 2012 notes, “gender segregation in access to economic opportunities in turn reinforces gender differences in time use and in access to inputs, and perpetuates market and institutional failures.”

Romania has made progress in creating greater economic opportunities for women. However, compared to the EU, the country still faces several challenges in this task. For instance, Romania has high female participation in jobs typically dominated by men and has achieved decreasing unemployment among both men and women in recent years, which reflect advances in economic opportunities. Yet issues such as lower labor force participation for women than men, a widening gender gap in employment, and high burden on females for providing care at home all indicate that the country needs to make further improvements to ensure equality in economic opportunities for women.

¹² About 58 percent of this loss in GDP per capita derives from distortions in occupations held by women relative to men. The remaining 42 percent corresponds to the costs associated with gaps in labor force participation. The model estimation implies that two factors lead to the income loss. First, a misallocation of entrepreneurial talent affects the productivity of the economy. Second, women's lower participation in the market leads to the underutilization of the available human capital.

Figure 15: Labor Force Participation, by Age Group and Sex

Source: Eurostat 2016.

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

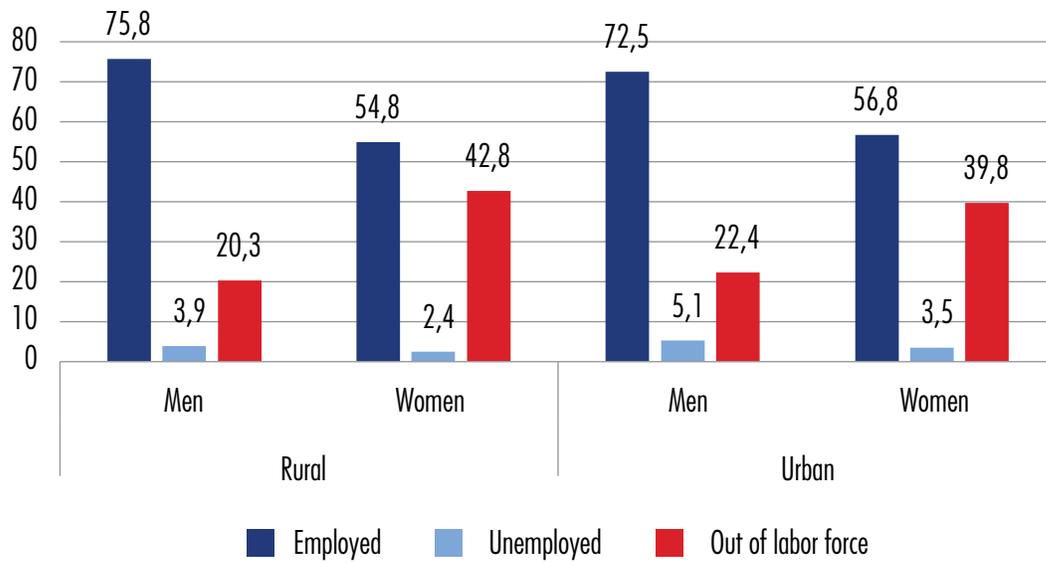
Female participation in the Romanian labor force remains limited: only 56.2 percent of women report being economically active (employed or unemployed) compared to 74.8 percent of men (Eurostat 2016).¹³ Economic inactivity in Romania is one of the highest in the EU (Eurostat) and is almost twice as high among women as men (Figure 15). The gender gap in participation (18.6 percentage points) is higher than the 13 point gap in the EU. In the 2007-2017 period, differences with respect to the region were driven by Romanian female participation rates that were constant-over-time lower than EU levels, and the stabilization of participation rates among Romanian men at EU levels (WDI). The gender gap in participation differs across age groups (Figure 16). It is at its maximum during the late productive years (the 55-64 age group), with lower levels in the peak productive age group (25-49) and retirement age (65-74) (Eurostat 2016).

Gender gaps in labor market indicators are present in both urban and rural areas, particularly in employment and economic inactivity (Figure 16). The gap in labor force participation is wider in rural areas, where the difference in the rates for men and women is 22.5 percentage points (79.7 percent of men and 57.2 percent of women take part in the market). This compares to a 17-point difference in urban areas (77.6 percent for men and 60.2 percent for women). Overall, women are significantly more likely than men to be outside the labor force, a pattern that is particularly strong among women living in rural areas (Romania HBS 2016).

Men and women have notably different reasons for not looking for a job (Figure 17). While 29 percent of women report “looking after the family/house” as their main reason, that figure drops to 10 percent among men. In contrast, among men, more than fifty percent do not look for a job due to “retirement.”

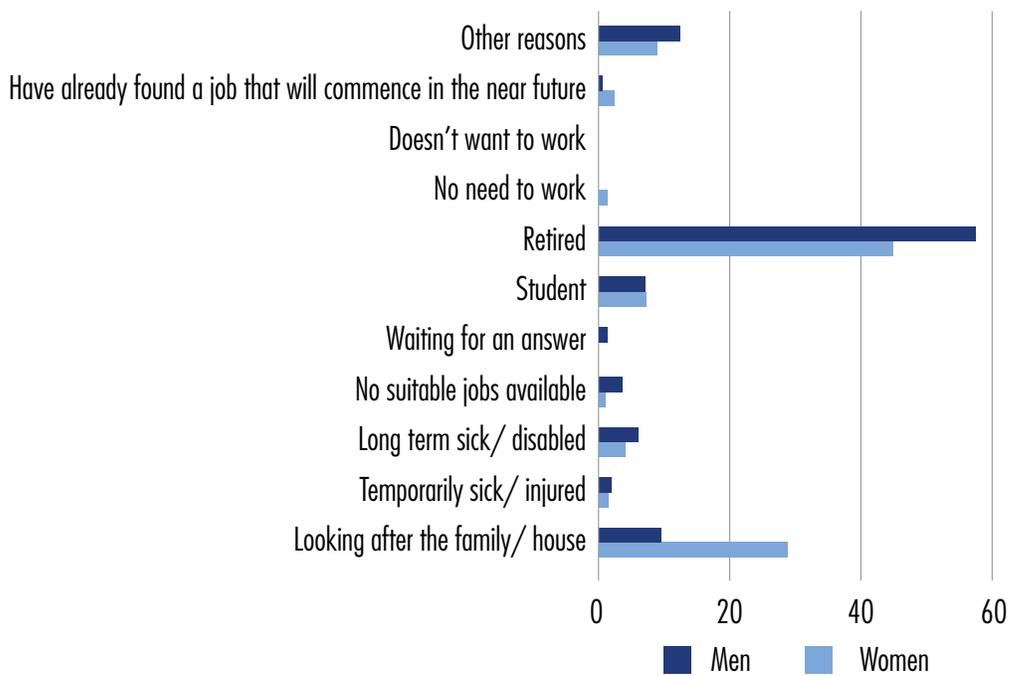
13 Note that according to the Romania HBS 2016, labor force participation rates are 58.9 percent for women and 78.7 percent for men in the 15-64 age group. Data from Eurostat are presented for comparison purposes with the EU regional average.

Figure 16: Labor Force Participation Status, by Sex and Urban/Rural Location (Percent of People Aged 15-64)



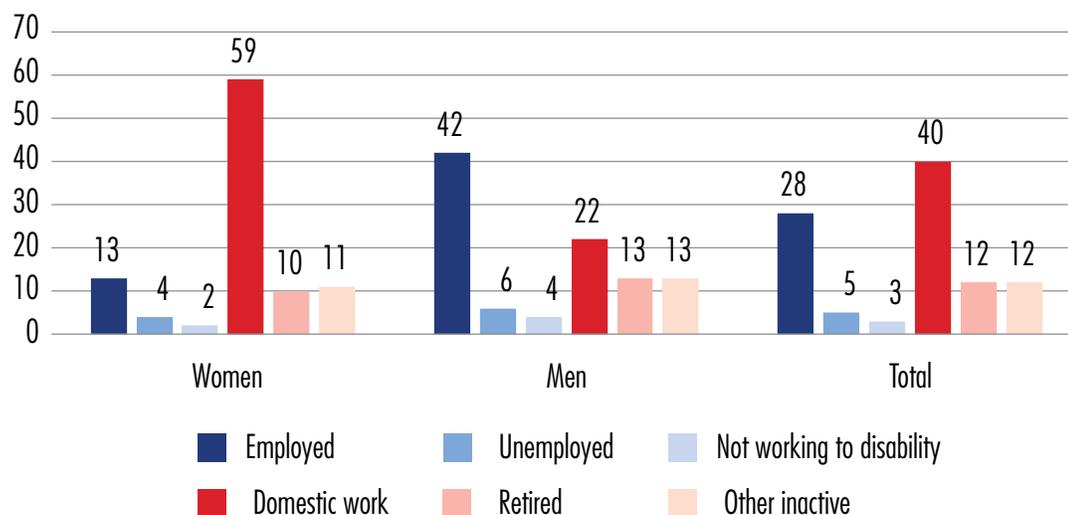
Source: Romania HBS 2016.

Figure 17: Reasons for Not Looking for a Job, Percentage of People Aged 18-64



Source: LiTS III 2016.

Figure 18: Self-Declared Current Main Activity Status, Percentage of Persons Aged 16-Plus in Romanian Roma Households



Source: FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016, Roma.

Roma are one of the most disadvantaged groups in the labor market, and there are substantial gender gaps within this ethnic group. Participation among working-age Roma has consistently been lower than that of non-Roma, reflecting a combination of barriers for the minority group. Indeed, according to the EU-MIDIS II 2016 survey, only three in ten Romanian Roma aged 16 and older reported being employed. In addition, while 42 percent of Roma men of this age described their current main activity as “employed,” only 13 percent of Roma women did (Figure 18). The discrepancies by sex are more pronounced in Romania than in the other EU countries surveyed where, on average, the employment rate for Roma men is 34 percent and 16 percent for Roma women.¹⁴ The gender gaps in Romania are explained in part by higher numbers of women reporting domestic work as their main activity (59 percent of women over the age of 16 compared to 22 percent of men). This is the second-high-

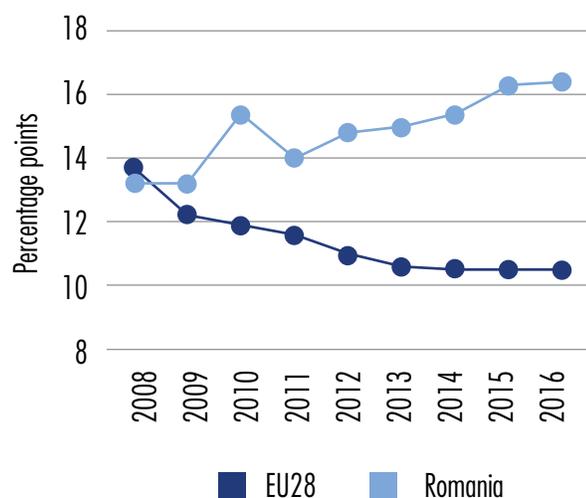
est category of self-reported activity after “inactivity” (see details in Box 3).

EMPLOYMENT

Similar to the labor force participation patterns among men and women, there is a growing gender gap in employment, which increased from 13.2 percentage points to 16.4 points in the 2008-2016 period and moved away from the EU trend (Figure 19). This gap is explained by an increased employment rate among men (six percentage point growth in the 2008-2016 period) and a stagnated rate among women—only one point growth in the past nine years. Furthermore, the gap in employment between men and women is pronounced among certain groups: those in the “peak” productive age 25-49 years (a 15.9 point gap), people aged 55-64 years (19.4 points), and those with one or two children (21.3 and 25.1 points, respectively).¹⁵

14 FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016, Roma. The study surveyed Roma in 11 EU countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain.

15 According to the Romania HBS 2016, the employment rate for women aged 15-64 is 94.9 percent and for men in this age group 94.2 percent. Data from Eurostat are presented to compare with regional EU averages.

Figure 19: Evolution of the Gender Gap in the Employment Rate (Percentage Points Difference)

Source: Eurostat 2016.

Differences in participation and employment between women and men are partly due to competing demands on women's time and on care burden. Data on time use reveals that, regardless of the day of the week, women on average spend two more hours per day than men in household and family care while men engage in paid work one more hour per day than women (Romania National Institute of Statistics 2013). In addition, employment is highly influenced by the presence of young children in the household (Table 1). The higher the number of

children under the age of six, the lower the share of employed women. As the age of children increases, the share of working women increases with it. Data indicate this pattern has not improved over the years (Eurostat). Marital status influences employment differently as well: employment among married and cohabiting men between the ages of 25 and 49 is higher than among their single counterparts (94 and 81 percent, respectively). However, this trend reverses by gender, with single women having higher employment than married women, 76.4 and 72.2 percent, respectively (HBS 2016).

As with fields of education, there are interesting patterns in the distribution by sex across sectors of employment in Romania (Figure 20). For example, the professional, scientific, and technical sector, traditionally one of the most "male" fields of work, is now among the top four sectors employing women: 60 percent of its workers are women. Sex segregation persists, however, with the country following old patterns of female domination of health and social work and education, and male domination continuing in construction and transportation and storage.

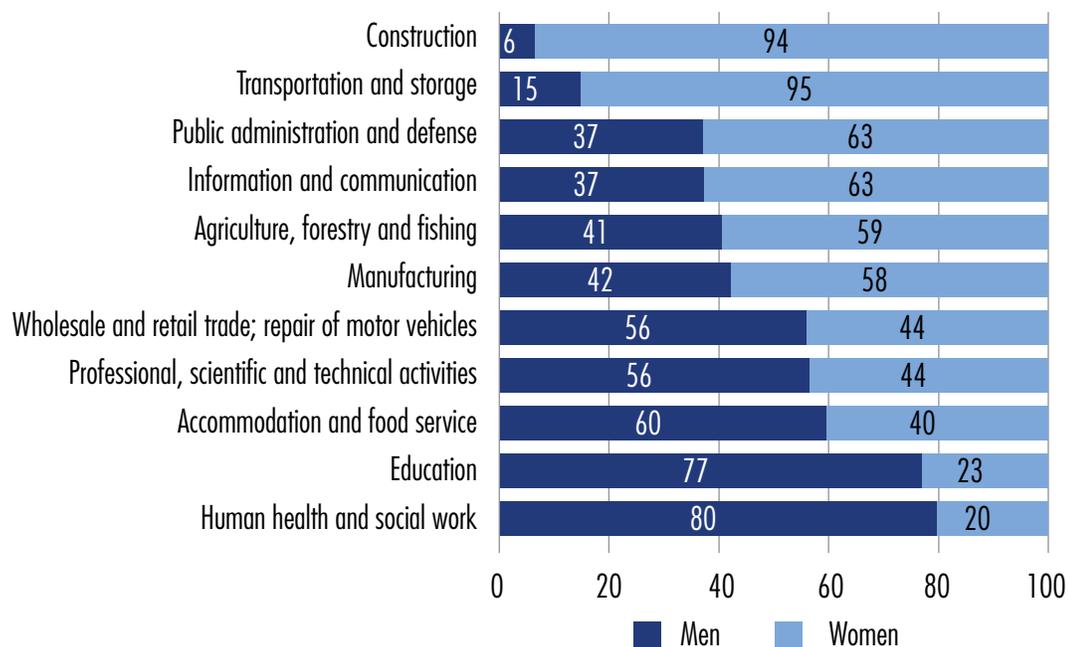
In addition, more women tend to work in the public sector than men (Figure 21). According to the LITS III 2016 survey, the main work places for women were medium enterprises in the private sector (33.4 percent) and public sector institutions, including in education and administration (20 percent). While almost half of the men also reported working in medium enterprises in the pri-

Table 1: Employment Rate for Persons Aged 25-49 Years, With and Without Children (Percent)

Year	Without children		One child <6		Two children <6		One child 6-11	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
2012	81.4	73.4	89.0	70.0	87.9	66.8	89.8	71.8
2013	81.3	73.8	87.7	66.8	85.2	64.7	89.2	70.6
2014	82.4	74.3	88.8	70.3	86.7	64.0	89.9	71.4
2015	82.5	74.0	90.0	68.8	90.0	64.9	89.8	72.9
2016	83.0	75.0	91.3	70.0	87.2	62.1	91.1	72.2

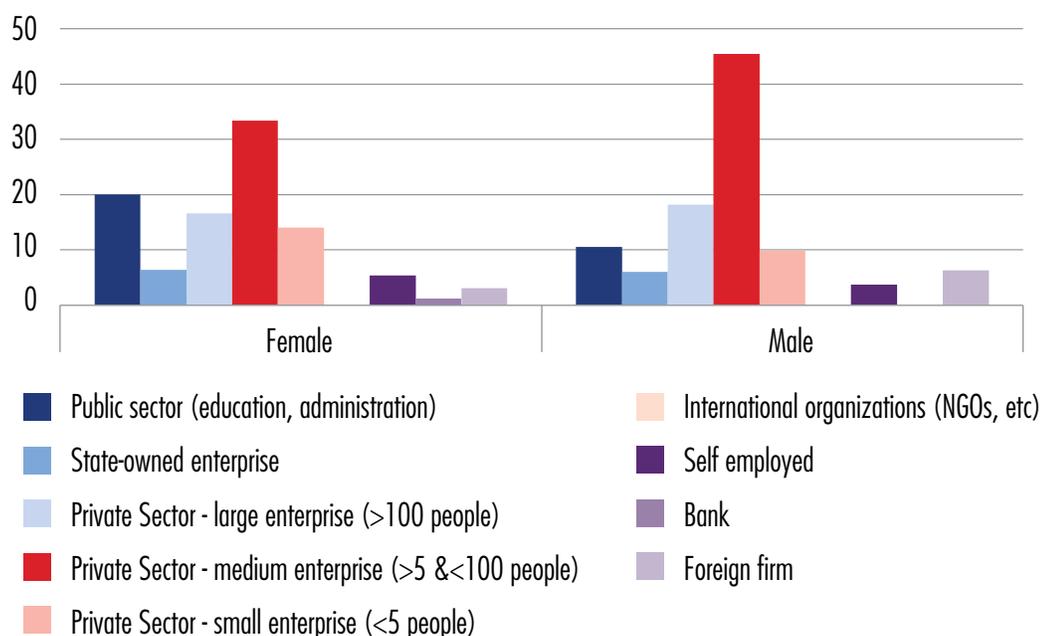
Source: Eurostat 2016.

Figure 20: Male and Female Shares of Employment by Sector (Percent)

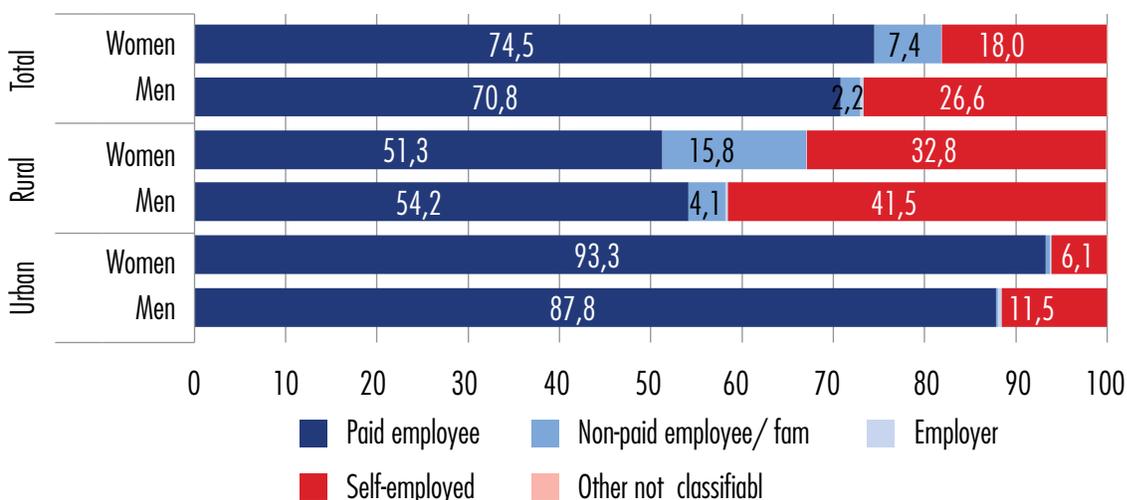


Source: Eurostat 2016.

Figure 21: Type of Place of Work for People Aged 18-64 Who Worked in the Last 12 Months (Percentage)



Source: LITS III 2016.

Figure 22: Type of Employment among People Aged 15-64, by Sex and Urban/Rural Location (Percentage)

Source: Romania HBS, 2016.

vate sector (45.5 percent), the share of men working in the public sector was much lower (10.5 percent) than women's. Instead, after medium enterprises in the private sector, the next biggest place of employment for men (18.2 percent) was large enterprises in the private sector.

Rural areas remain particularly behind in employment and quality of jobs. The gender gap in employment is larger in rural than urban areas (Figure 16) and rural women are more likely to have an unpaid job than rural men and urban women (Figure 22). While the difference in the employment rate between men and women in urban areas is 15.7 percentage points, the difference is almost 21 points in rural areas (Romania HBS 2016). At the same time, family workers account for 16 percent of total employment among rural women, whereas in urban areas this share is less than 1 percent. In the case of rural men, only 4 percent are in unpaid employment, and less than 1 percent of urban men are (HBS, 2013).

As with people living in rural areas, Roma men and women face special challenges in labor force participation

and employment. For example, cultural norms including expectations that women will stay at home and take care of children, and high incidences of child marriage among Roma families are associated with lower labor-force participation rates.¹⁶ These norms, along with obstacles for women in general in the labor market, make it even more difficult for Roma women to participate (World Bank 2014). In addition, Roma communities in rural areas (and especially their women) have trouble accessing public employment services (PES) due to reasons that include distance. On average, rural people live more than 10 kilometers from the closest PES centers, compared to three kilometers for urban residents (Gatti et al. 2016). This helps explain why 80 percent of the unemployed Roma in rural Romania are not registered with PES. Female Roma job seekers living in rural areas are especially vulnerable, as they face issues of child-care and household responsibilities in addition to the distance and travel costs.

As its society ages, Romania falls far short of the EU in terms of life-long training for adults over the age of 45, highlighting the need for more skilled adults in the la-

16 Roma households are usually twice the size of non-Roma households, and Roma women begin household and childcare responsibilities at an early age.

bor market. The participation rate in Romania in formal or informal education and training among people between the ages of 45 and 54 was just 0.6 percent for women and 0.5 percent for men (Eurostat). These figures are well below the EU rates of 10.5 percent and 7.7 percent, respectively.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Romania has achieved a constant reduction in unemployment over the past years, resulting in lower unemployment for women than men and rates that are lower than the EU average for both sexes. Five percent of women in Romania are unemployed compared to 6.6 percent of men. The EU average is reversed: 8.4 percent for women and 6.6 for men (Eurostat).¹⁷

Unemployment in Romania is higher in rural areas, and is particularly higher among Roma men than Roma women. In rural areas, 5.1 percent of men are unemployed compared to 3.5 percent of rural women (Romania HBS 2016). In urban areas, unemployment rates are 3.9 percent for men and 2.4 percent for women. In Roma communities, 13 percent of women and 16.3 percent of men are unemployed (World Bank 2014). The high rates of unemployment and unstable employment rates do not reflect preference: the majority of both Roma and non-Roma men and women express a desire for stable jobs (World Bank 2014).

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

While overall entrepreneurship rates are low in Romania like in other countries in the Europe and Central Asia region, men are still more likely than women to attempt to go into business for themselves. In Romania, the percent of men trying to operate a business is 9.1 compared to 5.6 percent of women (LITS III 2016). These rates reflect overall low incidence of entrepreneurship in the country. Among those who attempted to start a business, approximately 77 percent of men and 82 percent of women succeeded. For those whose businesses did not succeed, bureaucracy and lack of capital were some of the main obstacles that both men and women cited (Figure 23).

The percentage of firms with female participation in ownership increased in recent years, but is still low. The percentage of firms with majority female ownership registered an important rise from 26 percent in 2005 to 48 percent in 2009 but has remained constant at that level, as the most recent measure for 2013 shows. Only 12.5 percent of firms are owned by women and only 20.1 percent have a woman in top management, which is slightly higher than the average for upper-middle income countries, 20.7 percent (Enterprise Surveys 2013 and WDI 2017).

PROVISION OF CARE

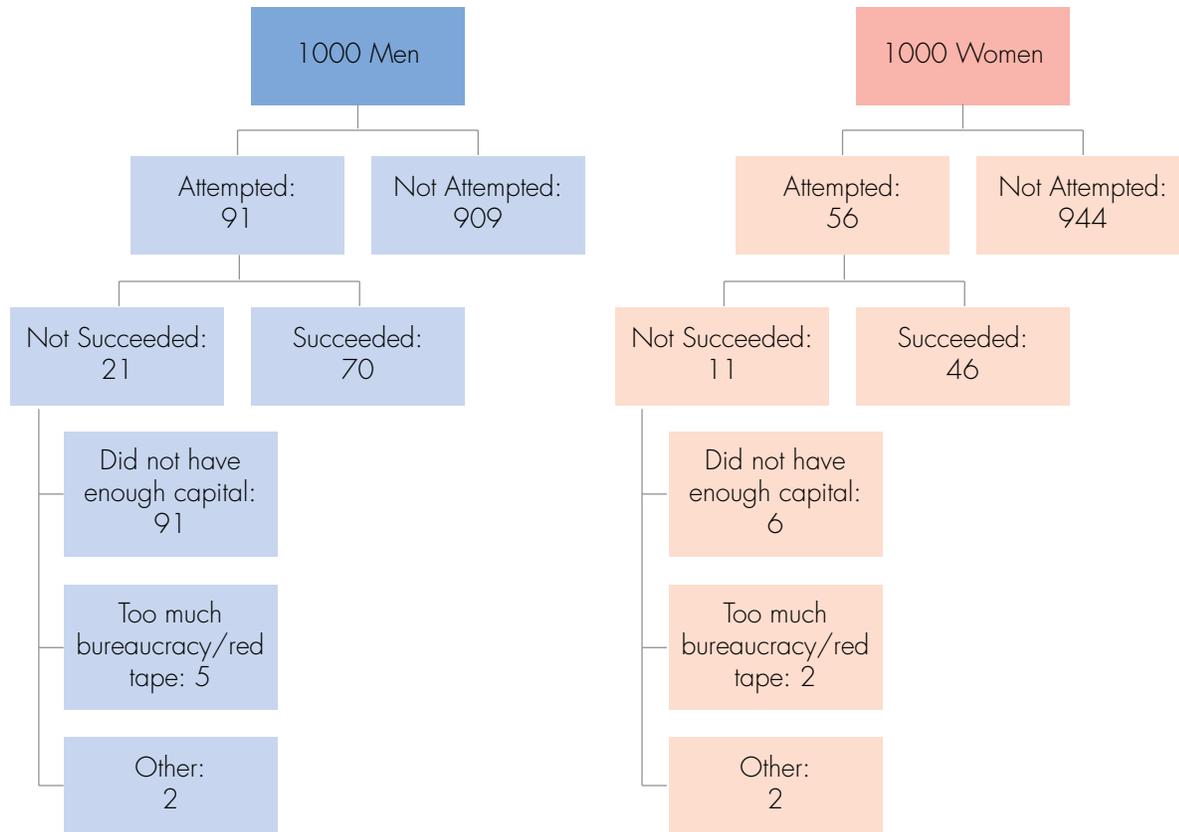
If more women are to enter the labor market, Romania must create the necessary framework for the reconciliation of work and family life. Policies that allow for more equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men can support the economic independence and well-being of both men and women. As a recent report by the EU pointed out, the lack of affordable child and long-term care and after-school facilities has contributed to the stubbornly lower employment rate among women since 2008 (European Commission 2017).

Care needs are large in Romania. The LITS survey (2016) shows that about one fifth of the population in Romania (21.2 percent) report a need for some type of care in their household, meaning it has at least one person who requires being looked after due to age (children under six years, or seniors older than 75) or disability (Figure 24).

Currently, formal childcare and eldercare arrangements are scarce in Romania compared to other countries in the ECA region and most care is provided by household members (LiTS). This is especially true for eldercare, where almost all households state that it is household members who take care of seniors. Only 1 percent use institutional care for eldercare. In the case of childcare, only 30 percent report having any type of institutional arrangements (Figure 25).

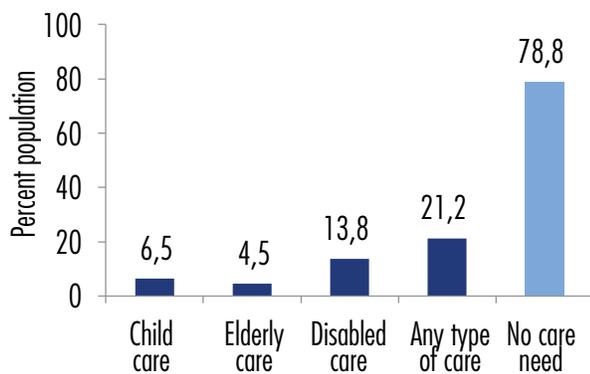
¹⁷ Figures from Eurostat are presented to compare with the EU regional average. According to the Romania HBS 2016 survey, unemployment among people aged 15-64 is 5.0 percent for women and 5.7 percent for men.

Figure 23: Problems and Outcomes in Setting Up a Business in Romania



Source: LiTS III 2016.

Figure 24: Care Needs in Romanian Households

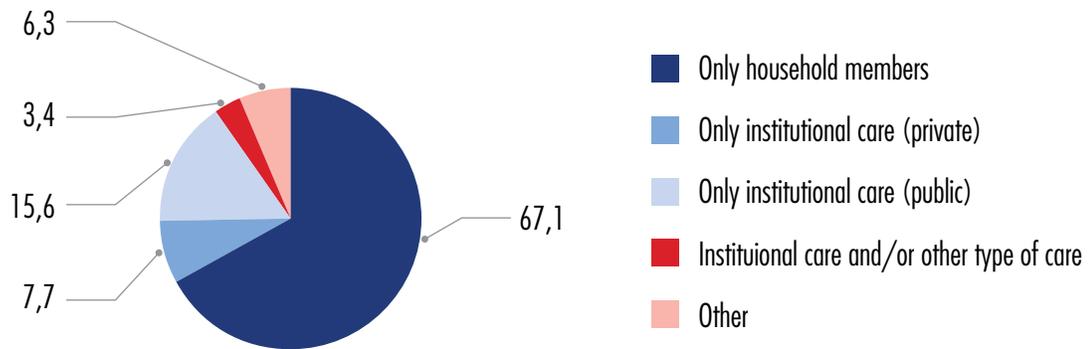


Source: LiTS III 2016.

CHILDCARE AND PRESCHOOL

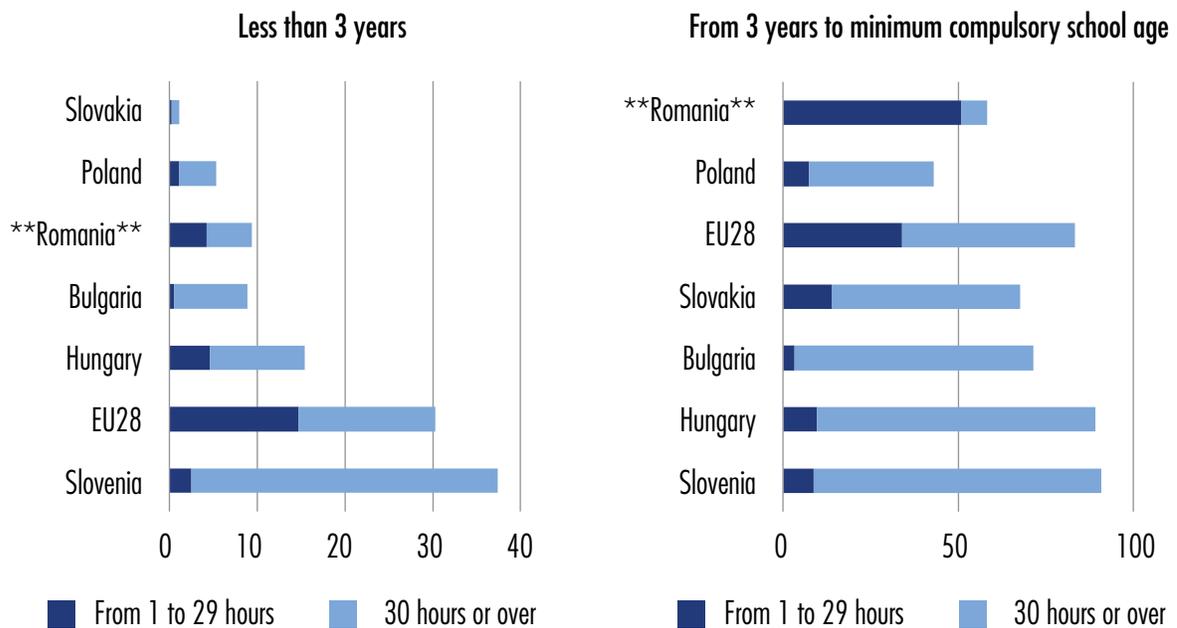
Romania’s Early Childhood Education and Care (EEC) services consist of ante-preschool facilities for children zero to three years of age (crèches) and kindergartens for children between the ages of three and six (European Parliament 2013). These facilities were created to “ease mothers’ participation in the workforce and in social and cultural life” (PERFAR 2014). The crèches offer specialized social services for children under the age of three. They also provide food, medical, and hygienic care, and the care-takers are usually medical and child-care professionals. Kindergartens are part of the educational system for children ages three and older.

Figure 25: Childcare Types: Percent of Population Living in Households with Childcare Needs



Source: LiTS III 2016.

Figure 26: Proportion of Children Cared for under Formal Arrangements, 2015: Romania and EU Peer Countries



Source: Eurostat.

Yet the most recent data from Eurostat indicate that only 9.4 percent (versus the EU average of 15.6 percent) of children younger than three years have a formal childcare arrangement, one of the lowest rates in the EU region (Figure 26). Among children under three, 4.2 percent receive care for less than 30 hours a week, and 5.2 percent receive it for 30 hours or more per week. The situation for older children (three years up to age six) improves but is still deficient compared to the region: 51 percent of children in that age group receive up to 30 hours of childcare per week but only 7.3 percent receive care for at least 30 hours a week. The EU average is 49.4 percent of children in formal care arrangements for at least 30 hours per week. Childcare services bring special benefits to members of the household, most likely women in particular.¹⁸

There are many reasons why childcare services are little used in Romania, including low availability, lack of affordable prices (despite government subsidies), and low government spending on children and families (SIGI 2017). In Romania, more than half of children under the age of three are cared for informally (RAND Europe 2014). Grandparents, friends, and neighbors play a significant role in Romania's high rates of informal care for children of this age. Romania is one of only two EU countries (Greece is the other) where grandparents care for more than 10 percent of children under the age of three. In addition, high childcare costs influence mothers' labor decisions. Use of formal care is also lower among disadvantaged groups, including rural and Roma communities (RAND Europe 2014 and UNICEF).

LONG-TERM CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

Romania has a pressing shortage of formal long-term care (LTC) arrangements for elderly people, and consequently, women family members often step up to do the job. With a population that is both shrinking and aging,

and a national shortage of formal services, the country has an acute and ever-growing need for long-term care services. Though the country has some institutional care and nursing homes, home care is the most common option for the dependent elderly, partly because of the comfort the family provides and costs that are lower than institutionalized care's (ENEPRI 2010). However, the responsibility for caring for the elderly usually falls to a household's women. Further, due to limited accessibility and financial resources, inequalities occur in geographical distribution and the number of services available (ENEPRI 2010).

ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE INPUTS

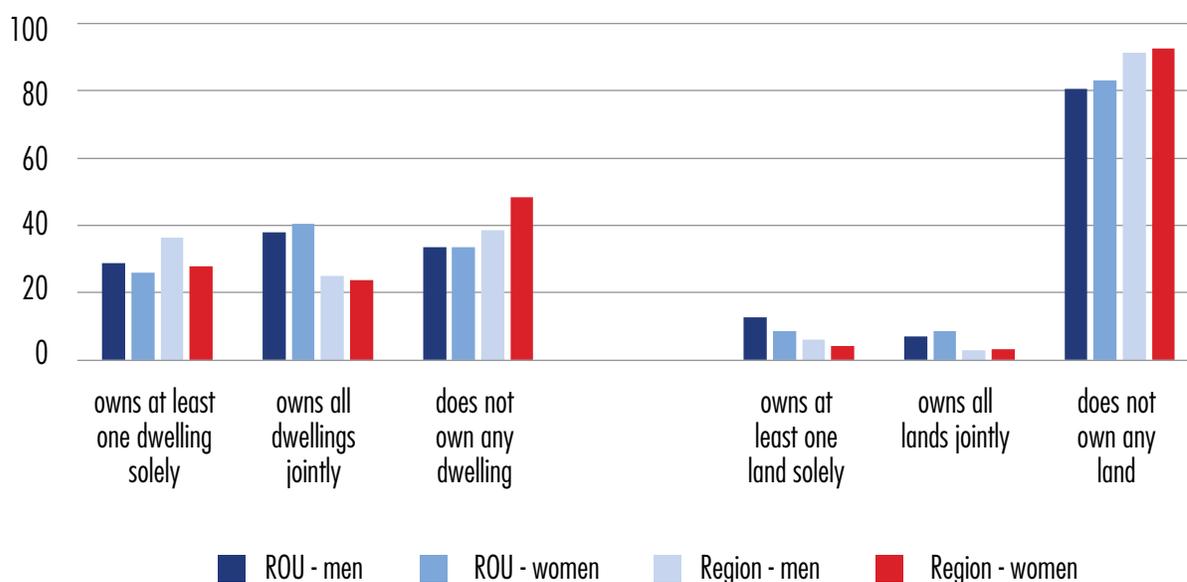
Lack of access to productive inputs—land, dwellings, and credit—constrains women's economic opportunities, particularly as entrepreneurs. Generally speaking, a positive correlation exists between asset ownership and women's empowerment (LITS 2016).¹⁹ In Romania's case, however, its results are puzzling: even though the country stands out for having one of the ECA's highest levels of women owning assets (69 percent, with no major difference compared to men), this does not translate into a higher percentage of female entrepreneurs: only 4.6 percent of Romanian women are entrepreneurs, compared to 7 percent of men.

One of the explanations is entrepreneurial role models that reflect a masculine bias concerning participation in business. These gender norms can make women feel excluded from the field of entrepreneurship, and sully their own perceptions about their entrepreneurial abilities and the perceptions of stakeholders whose support is crucial to business creation and growth. Stereotypes and the lower exposure of women to women role models might explain why they report less interest in entrepreneurial careers and feel less able to become successful entrepreneurs (EIGE 2016b). One other possible reason may be

18 Depending on age, formal childcare refers to child care at a day-care center organized/controlled by a public or private structure; child care at a center outside school hours; education at pre-school or equivalent; and attendance at compulsory education.

19 LITS (2016) constructs a Women's empowerment index based on women's ability to make decisions or presence of shared responsibilities in the following matters: 1) Managing day-to-day spending and paying bills; 2) Making large household purchases (e.g. cars, major appliances); 3) The way the children are raised; 4) Social life and leisure activities; 5) Savings, investment and borrowing; and 6) Looking after the children.

Figure 27: Asset Ownership by Men and Women in Romania



Note: Region refers to the average of the ECA region.

Source: LiTS 2016.

women’s limited access to business networks. As the IFC 2016 found, “one of the biggest challenges to women entrepreneurs in Romania is their inability to benefit from business referrals and connections to avail themselves of valuable market information in the same way their male counterparts do. They also seem to be more reliant on (but also less able to access) peer support in order to address some of their challenges.”

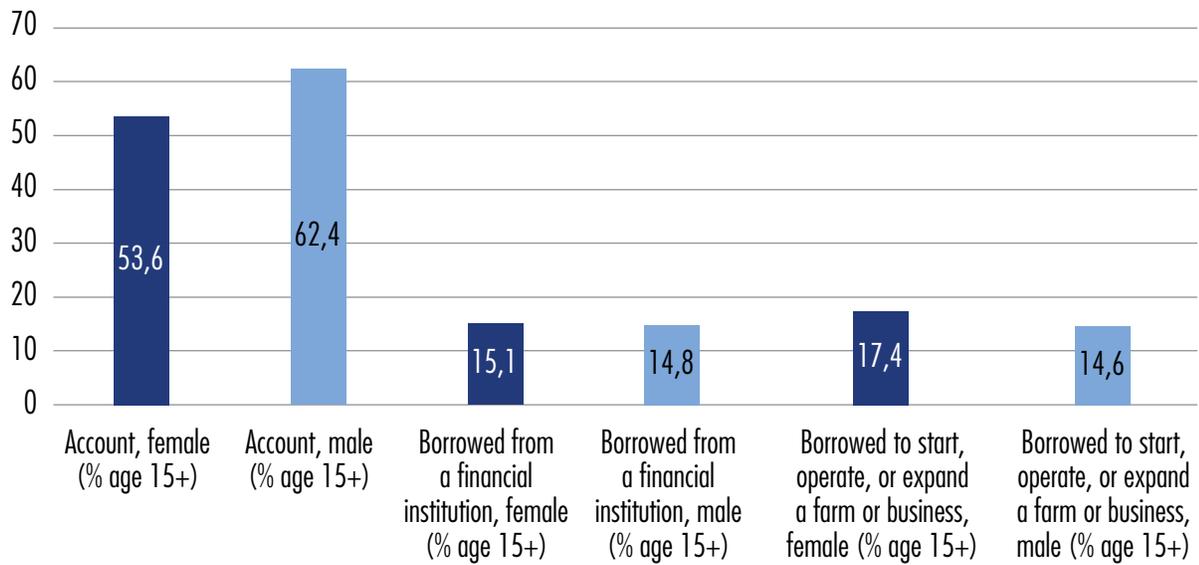
Female ownership of assets consists mainly of dwellings rather than land and there are no gender differences with regards to whether the ownership is joint or sole. Land ownership is very low for both men and women in Romania (Figure 27). In the case of ownership of dwelling, the country performs better than the ECA region. The Romanian Constitution states that women and men have the same right to own and access land and other property. The Civil Code guarantees that all property obtained prior

to marriage remains under the ownership of the individual spouse. The default marital property regime is partial community of property, and thus, any assets acquired during the marriage are the joint property of both spouses and can only be sold with their joint consent (SIGI).

Access to financial markets is low for both men and women. Around half of the Romanian population aged 15 and higher owns a bank account, but the share is higher for men than women (Figure 28). The shares of those who borrow from a financial institution or borrow to start or expand a business are very low among both sexes. The law in Romania prohibits lenders from discriminating on the basis of gender in access to credit (WBL).²⁰ While there are no reports of women experiencing discrimination in getting credit, it is difficult for people on low incomes to obtain credit because of the high interest rates charged by banks (SIGI 2014).

20 The law is Ordinance No. 137 of August 31, 2000 on Preventing and Sanctioning all Forms of Discrimination, Articles 2, 3(c) and 10(d).

Figure 28: Financial Inclusion Indicators, Romania 2017



Source: Global Financial Inclusion database.



- Section 4:
Gender, Ethnicity,
and Poverty

Romania remains the EU country that has by far the largest share of poor people measured by the \$5.50/day poverty line (2011 PPP), with more men than women living in poverty and with disproportionately higher poverty rates among Roma people and rural residents. The latest figures from the World Bank's Poverty and Equity databank indicate that 18.5 percent of the Romanian population lives on less than \$5.50 a day, more than double the 8.7 percent rate of Bulgaria (World Bank Global Poverty Monitor).²¹ In the case of Romania, the poverty estimates presented in this report are based on consumption data from the HBS 2016. Using this survey to calculate poverty rates by sex finds that 18 percent of women live in poverty, compared to 19.1 percent of men (Table 2). Taking into account the shares of women and men in the total population, this means that for every 100 men living in poverty, there are fewer women, 94 of them, in a similar situation.

World Bank poverty estimates indicate that Roma men and women are both particularly disadvantaged compared to their non-Roma counterparts. About 80 percent of the Romanian Roma population (78.9 percent) lives in poverty, almost five times the share of non-Roma. Furthermore, while the poverty gap ratio for the Roma—that is, the “depth” of poverty, a calculation of how far on average the poor are from that poverty line—is 27 percent, the figure is just 3.7 for non-Roma. The high poverty rate of the Roma population is coupled with high unemployment, low education (more than half of adult Roma have not completed the minimum compulsory level of education), and low coverage of social health insurance—51 percent of Roma compared to

²¹ Poverty is defined as existence below the per capita household income or consumption level that marks the poverty threshold.

Table 2: Poverty Headcount, by Sex and Ethnicity, US\$5.50/day (2011 PPP)

	All		Non-Roma		Roma		Urban		Rural	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Below poverty line (percent)	19.1	18.0	16.9	15.9	78.6	79.2	11.3	10.3	26.6	26.0
Poverty gap ratio (percent)	4.6	4.4	3.8	3.58	26.7	27.3	2.5	2.3	6.7	6.5

Note: Poverty rates are based on per capita household consumption. The larger the poverty gap, the poorer on average are people below the poverty line and the more resources are needed to lift everyone out of poverty.

Source: World Bank staff calculations based on Romania HBS 2016.

85 percent of the non-Roma population (Vlădescu et al. 2016). All of these factors make it harder for Roma people to overcome poverty.

Poverty rates are also high among Romanians living in rural areas, and the share of rural men living in poverty is slightly higher than of rural women. Half of the Romanian population lives in rural areas, which remain far behind urban areas in terms of poverty reduction, employment, education, and access to services and infrastructure (European Commission 2017). The share of rural people with consumption below the US\$5.50 a day threshold stands at 26.3 percent, 2.6 times higher than the urban rate of 10.8 percent.

Applying an alternative household composition typology based on the employment status and demographic composition of households provides more detail about gender and poverty (Figure 29). Since poverty is mea-

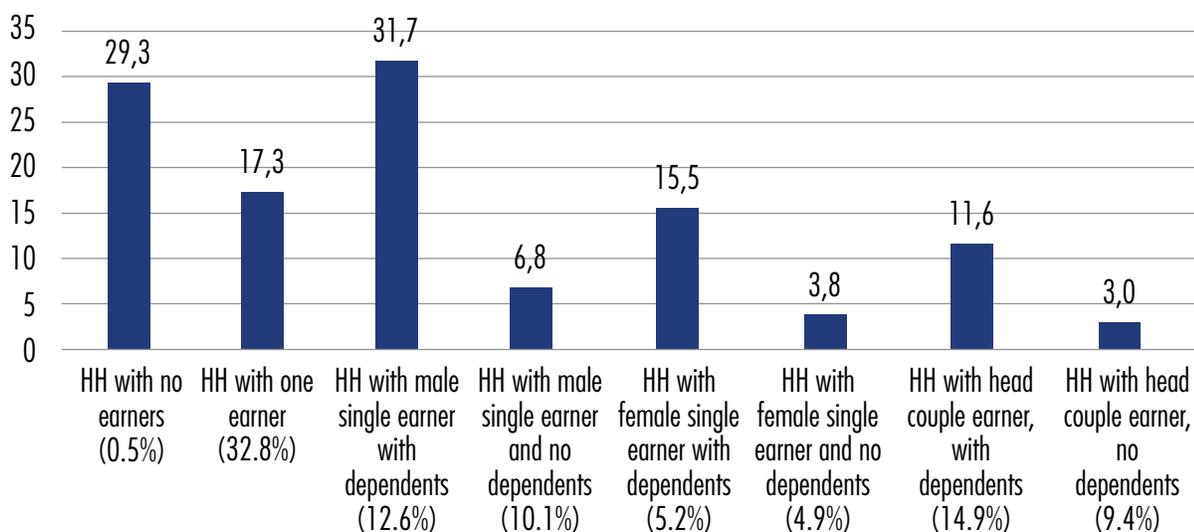
sured in relation to per capita household income (or consumption), the poverty rates of men and women cannot be used to understand gender differences in poverty or the poverty rates of male and female-headed households.²² An alternative proposed operational definition of the household (see World Bank 2018) combines (1) the presence/absence and sex of earners²³ aged 15-plus in the household, based on their employment status and whether they have paid/unpaid employment (male earner, female earner, dual earner, no earner), and (2) the presence of dependents younger than 18 or older than 64.²⁴

The presence of dependents (most likely seniors) in a household makes a difference in terms of poverty rates, and so does the number of earners in the household, stressing the importance of providing the necessary conditions to allow women and men to fully participate in the labor market. The gaps in poverty rates between presence and absence of dependents are particularly large

22 A number of studies have contested the use of headship as a relevant analytical category, for reasons that include the lack of comparable definitions of the terms “household” and “head of household;” the ambiguity in the term “head of household” when the assignment of headship is left to the judgement of household members; and the fact that the term “head of household” does not reflect internal conflicts in the allocation of resources. See Buvinic and Gupta 1997, Quisumbing et al. 2001, and Budlender 2008.

23 Note that the harmonized version of the Romania HBS 2016 survey does not report income at the individual level. For this reason, the definition of earner is based on the employment status and whether employment is paid. This classification does not capture income coming from other sources such as pensions and inheritances.

24 Due to data limitations, this classification does not capture individuals age 15-plus who are outside the labor force or retired but receive a monetary income.

Figure 29: Poverty Rates of Households by Demographic and Employment Composition

Note: Poverty based on per capita household consumption. A household with no earners refers to a household where all members age 15-plus report being unemployed or in unpaid employment. Earner is defined as a person with paid employment (as employee, employer, or self-employed). Dependent refers to a person younger than 18 or older than 64. Numbers in parenthesis indicate share of typology in the total number of households.

Source: World Bank staff calculations based on Romania HBS 2016.

in households with a male single earner, which are the most common type of household in Romania. Analysis of poverty by employment status of the household shows that households with a male single earner and dependents, and households with no earners fare worst (31.7 and 29.3 percent, respectively, live in poverty), followed by households with a single female earner and dependents.

In addition, households with only one earner fare worse than those with two or more earners, and are over-rep-

resented among poor households. They make up 33 percent of total households, yet their share among poor households is a higher 46 percent. Households that have two earners—with or without dependents—are less likely to be poor than their single-earner counterparts. These findings make clear that, given the current demographic circumstances facing the country, Romania cannot afford to underutilize the substantial share of women whose lifetime productivity in the labor market is reduced by having to provide informal care in the home.



• Section 5: Voice and Agency

Agency is an individual's ability to make choices to achieve desired outcomes. Amartya Sen defines an agent as “someone who acts and brings about change” (Sen 1999). Agency matters both in its own right and its instrumentally in development. The WDR 2012 on Gender Equality and Development put dedicated emphasis on agency and its instrumental value to achieve gender equality in a number of other dimensions: It affects one's ability to accumulate endowments such as land or property, education, or health—and to act on economic opportunities.

Romania has taken important steps to promote women's agency, but many challenges remain. For example, the share of women in the national parliament has increased in recent years, and in 2018, Romania elected its first female prime minister. In addition, more women are represented in ministerial-level positions. However, continuing under-representation at the local level, societal norms on the traditional role of women, and high levels of gender-based violence hinder further progress in agency.

GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO GENDER EQUALITY: THE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Law No. 202/2002 on “Equal Opportunities of Women and Men,” Romania's main law governing gender equality, was adopted during the country's entrance into the European Union in 2007 (EIGE 2017). The law provides for equality between men and women in areas such as labor, access to education, health, culture, and information. It created the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (NAEOWM) (2005-2010) and the National Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (CONES) (2006-2010). In 2010, the Directorate for Equal Opportunities be-

tween Women and Men (DEOWM) replaced NAEOWM and was created under the Ministry of Labor, Family, and Social Protection to develop and coordinate the implementation of policies on gender equality (EIGE 2018). In addition, Romania has the National Anti-Discrimination Council, which works on matters of gender equality (SIGI 2017). In 2014, the Department for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men was established within the Ministry of Labor. The department is responsible for “drawing up, coordinating and applying government strategies and policy in the field of equal opportunities between men and women, and exercising state competencies in strategy and regulation for the field of equal opportunities between men and women.”

The Romanian government has taken other steps to promote equality between women and men. In 2015, the government announced it would organize training to create two new professions: Expert in Gender Equality and Gender Equality Technician. These new roles would implement local and national strategies to promote gender equality and eliminate domestic violence. By 2020, 70 percent of Romania’s 1,680 public institutions are scheduled to have these experts or technicians (HeForShe 2016). As of 2017, Romania had trained 1,100 gender equality experts and 4,000 technicians (ANES 2017). Furthermore, an integrated system to track, report, and prevent violence against women was launched in 2015.

Romania has also integrated gender into the law. The following are some important examples of some important laws and regulation:

- **Article 16 of the 1991 Constitution recognizes that all citizens are equal before the law and public authorities.** While this nondiscrimination clause does not mention gender, it states that Romanian men and women have equal opportunities to occupy public positions. Yet it does not create quotas for women representatives in parliament, local government, national elections, local elections, or corporate boards (WBL).
- **Married and unmarried women have the same rights as married and unmarried men.** This applies to such things as applying for a passport, obtaining

a national ID card, traveling outside the home and country, obtaining a job, choosing where to live, and being head of the household (WBL). Likewise, there are no restrictions for married and unmarried women on signing a contract, registering a business, and opening a bank account. Regarding marital responsibility, a woman can convey citizenship to a non-citizen spouse in the same way as a man, and under Article 325 of the Civil Code, spouses must jointly financially maintain the family.

- **Articles 345 and 346 of the Civil Code state that both husband and wife must agree on who administers marital property (WBL).** Article 44(1) of the constitution grants married and unmarried men and women equal ownership rights to property. Also, sons and daughters, as well as surviving spouses, have equal inheritance rights based on Articles 260, 963, and Articles 970-975 of the Civil Code.
- **Romanian law does not differentiate the evidentiary value of a woman’s testimony from that of a man in court (WBL).** However, out of the nine constitutional court justices, only two are women and currently, there is no female chief justice.
- **Ordinance No. 137 on Preventing and Sanctioning all Forms of Discrimination prohibits discrimination by lenders on the basis of gender in access to credit (WBL).** However, the law does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of marital status in access to credit.
- **Article 41 of the Constitution states that all employees have the right to social protection.** This covers working conditions for women and pay. The article provides that women “shall get equal wages” (Romania Chamber of Deputies). But based on Law No. 263, women can retire and receive benefits at an earlier age than men—63 versus 65 (WBL). There are no restrictions regarding the types of jobs that women can hold. Employment discrimination based on gender is prohibited under Article 5 of the Labor Code.

In addition, Romania has passed legislation aimed at reducing gender-based violence, such as Law No. 217

on Preventing and Fighting against Domestic Violence in 2003 (WBL). This law defines domestic violence as “any physical or verbal action deliberately perpetrated by a family member against another member of the same family that causes a physical, psychological, sexual suffering or a material prejudice” (UN Women 2016). Any act that hinders a woman’s ability to exercise her fundamental rights and liberties is also considered domestic violence (Ibid). However, the government has faced challenges in implementing the law. For example, a report by the Council of Europe (2016) stated that many police officers view domestic violence as a “family matter” and are hesitant to intervene. But the government has taken other actions to protect women, which include criminalizing rape and addressing sexual harassment in legislation (WBL). Furthermore, in 2016, the Romanian government signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe agreement on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Council of Europe 2016).

Finally, Romania stands out in terms of generous leave benefits. It has laws that mandate paid and unpaid maternity, paternity, and parental leave.²⁵ For instance, under Emergency Ordinance No. 158, pregnant women can take up to 126 days of paid maternity leave, with 85 percent of the wage covered by the government.²⁶ Fathers, meanwhile, can take up to 15 days, with wages paid at a 100

percent rate by the employer (WBL), as required by Law No. 210.²⁷ Dismissal is prohibited during pregnancy under Article 21(1) of Governmental Emergency Ordinance No. 96/2003 (European Commission 2016). After maternity leave, mothers are guaranteed the right to return to their jobs under Article 10(8) of the Gender Equality Law (European Commission 2016).²⁸

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

The share of women in national parliament rose significantly in Romania from 13.7 percent in 2016 to 20.7 percent in 2017 (Figure 30). In addition, in 2018, Viorica Dancila became the country’s first female prime minister. Romania is close to reaching the world’s average share of women in parliament, but it still falls behind the performance of the EU (Figure 31). As of 2017, women held 30.4 percent of seats in EU parliaments, almost ten percentage points more than the average in Romania (WDI).

But Romanian women are still underrepresented at the local level, as in the EU (Table 3). In 2017, Romanian women accounted for only 4.5 percent of mayors and other municipal council leadership positions, and the share of female members of municipal councils was only 12.4 percent (EIGE 2017). It is worth noting that Romania has no quotas to promote women’s participation in politics at both the national and local levels.

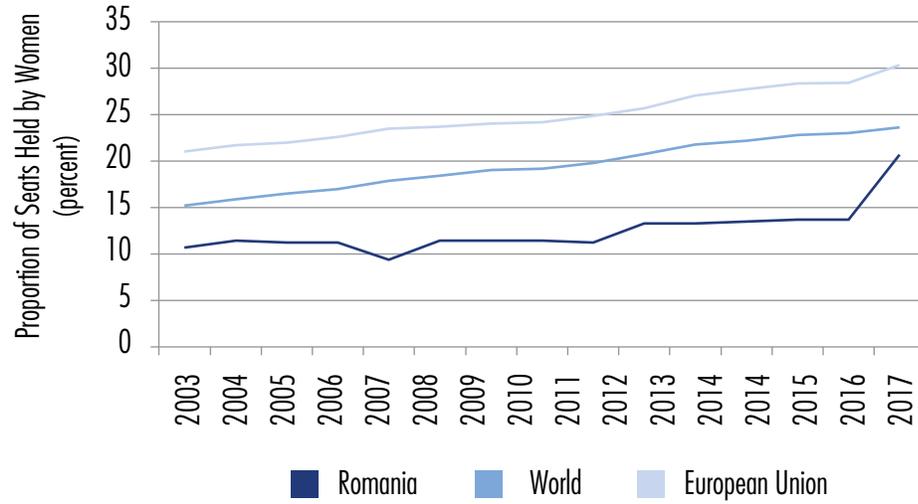
25 WBL defines parental leave as leave for both mothers and fathers, regardless of unequal distribution of benefits between the two parents. Maternity leave refers to leave only for mothers, while paternity leave is only available to fathers.

26 A study by the European Parliament (2015) found that Eastern European countries have a higher average duration of maternity leave (27 weeks) than non-Eastern European countries (20.4 weeks). Romania’s length of 126 days or 18 weeks is slightly lower than the EU average of 21.8 weeks (OECD 2017). Other EU member states that have the same length include Malta, Lithuania, Denmark, and Cyprus. Among the countries with the longest maternity leaves in the EU are Bulgaria (58.6 weeks), Greece (43 weeks), and the United Kingdom (39 weeks), while Germany (14 weeks) and Sweden (12.9 weeks) are among the countries with the lowest. The duration of paternity leave also varies. Romania’s duration of about one week is close to the EU average of 1.4 weeks but less than in countries such as Belgium (two weeks), Lithuania (four weeks), and Portugal (five weeks). Some countries, such as Germany, Austria, and Slovakia, do not have paternity leave but some of those do have parental leave provisions that fathers can invoke.

27 Article 1 of Law No. 210/1999 provides that fathers will be paid in full for five days of leave. If the father completes a class on parenting, he is also entitled to be paid in full for ten extra days of leave.

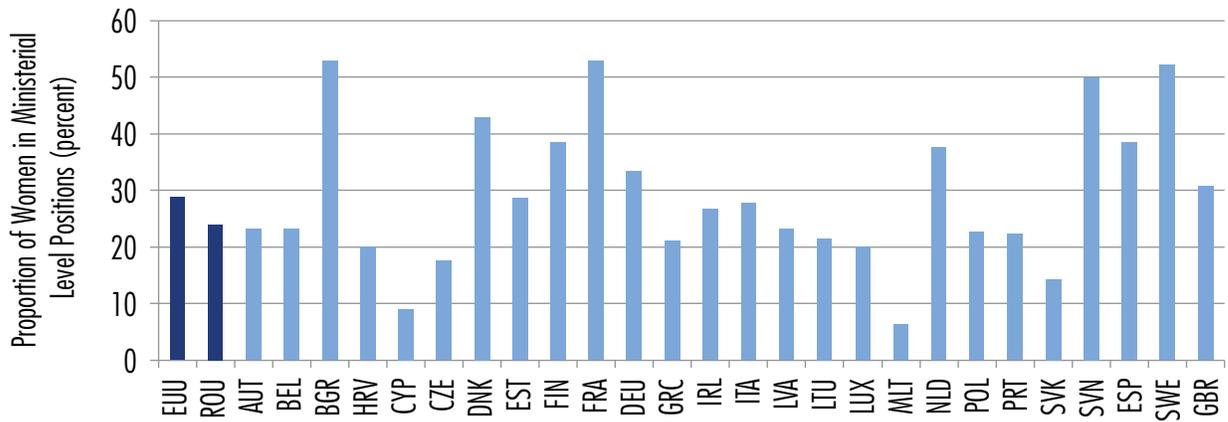
28 During parental leave, the jobs of employed parents are protected.

Figure 30: Share of Women in Parliament



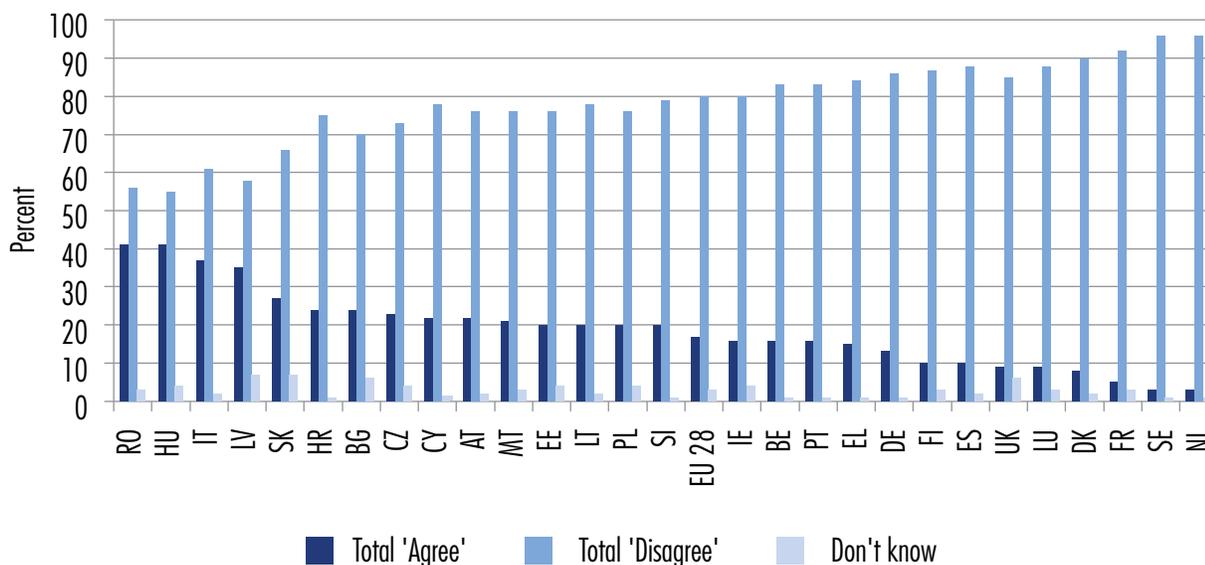
Source: World Bank Gender Statistics.

Figure 31: Share of Women in Ministerial-Level Positions in the EU, 2016



Source: World Bank Gender Statistics.

Figure 32: Perceptions Regarding Women’s Skills to Participate in Politics: “Women do not have the necessary qualities and skills to fill positions of responsibility in politics.”



Source: European Commission 2017b.

Table 3: Distribution of Positions at the Local Level, by Sex

	Mayor or other leader of municipal councils (percent female)	Mayor or other leader of municipal councils (percent male)
Romania	4.5	95.5
EU	14.9	85.1

	Members of municipal councils (percent female)	Members of municipal councils (percent male)
Romania	12.4	87.6
EU	32.1	67.9

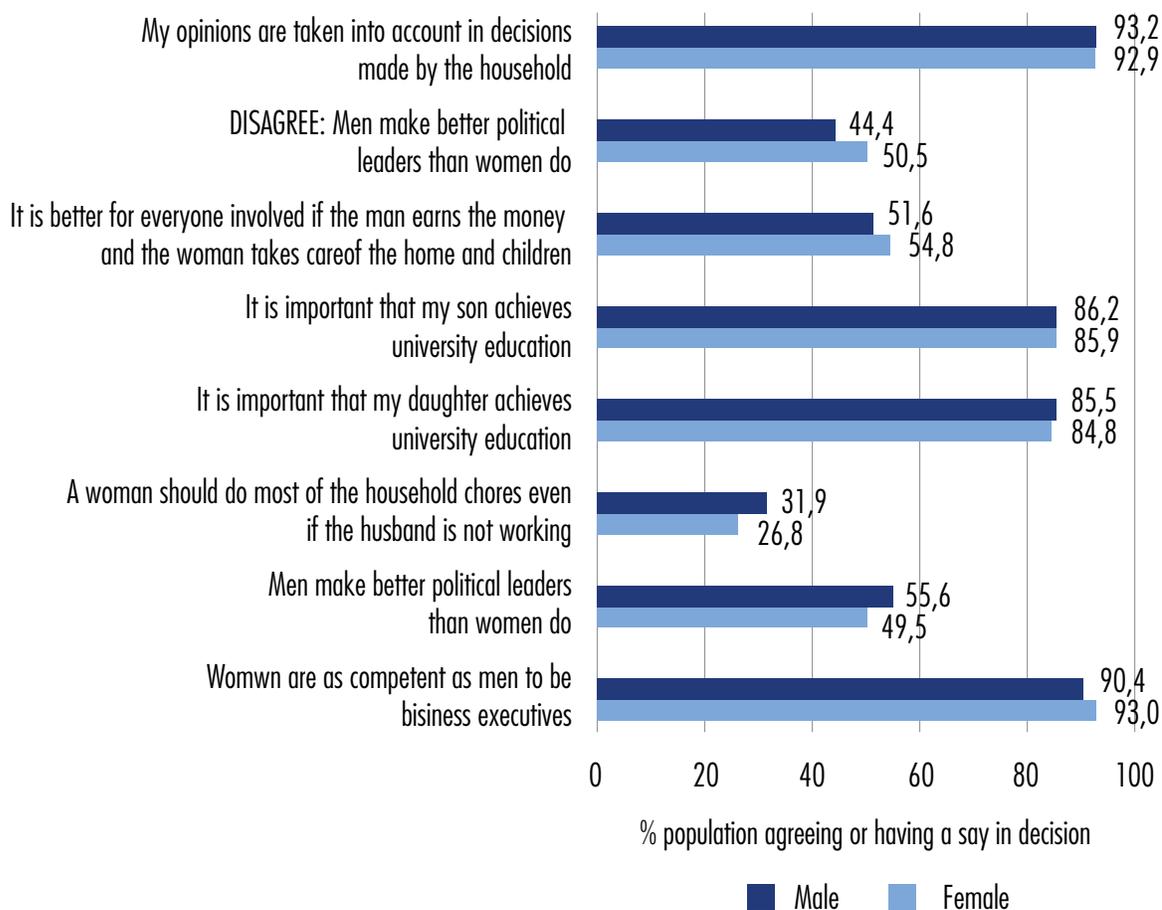
Source: EIGE 2017.

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

The most recent Eurobarometer survey (2017) on gender equality²⁹ reveals strong gender norms and stereotypes in Romania against participation of women in politics. The survey found that among the 28 EU member states, Romania and Hungary had the strongest tendency toward gender stereotypes related to women in politics. For example, 41 percent of respondents from these two countries agree with the statement that “women do not have the necessary qualities and skills to fill positions of responsibility in politics” (Figure 32). In Sweden, in contrast, only three percent of respondents agreed with that statement. Also, 54 percent of Romanians believe that the current number of women in political decision-making positions is about right, and 12 percent believe there

²⁹ This survey, sponsored by the European Commission, explores citizens’ opinions about gender equality, with a focus on gender equality in politics and at work, and the gender pay gap, both in general and in companies where respondents work. It was carried out in all 28 EU member states in June 2017. A total of 28,093 respondents from different social and demographic groups were interviewed face-to-face at home in their mother tongues.

Figure 33: Norms and Perceptions Regarding Decision-Making in Romania



Source: LiTS 2016.

should be fewer women in politics (European Commission 2017b).

The media tends to type-cast women politicians in limited roles. For example, one study on women’s leadership in Romania (Mitu et al. 2014) found that the media tends to associate female politicians with home-related issues such as health care and education. This could undermine perceptions of their leadership, while associating men with issues that are of significant concern for voters, such as the economy and foreign affairs.

From a broader perspective, traditional views of gender roles are still prevalent in Romania. The LiTS (2016)

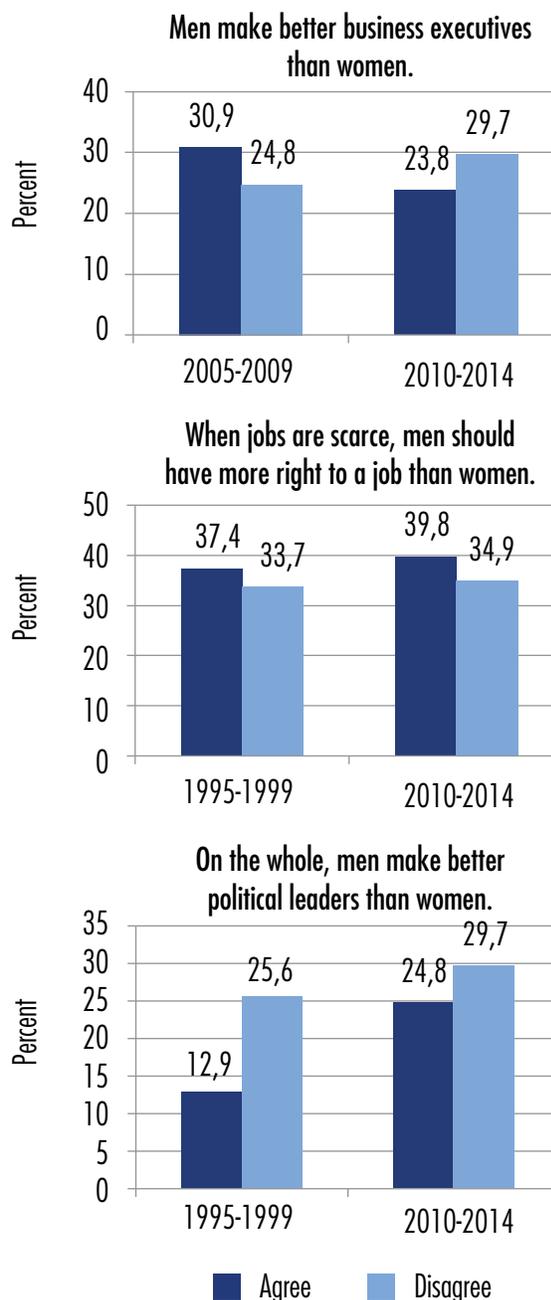
survey asked respondents for their opinions on appropriate roles and responsibilities for men and women in the household as well as about women taking part in economic life and decision making. As seen in Figure 33, men and women tend to agree about women’s traditional role in society. Both sexes feel that it is men who should take responsibility for earning money and women who should take care of the home and children. There is also support among both sexes for the idea that women should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working. Interestingly, even when both sexes support traditional gender roles, a big share of female respondents still believe that their opinions on household decision-making,

like those of men, matter. The same occurs with regards to perceptions about the importance of higher education for daughters (and sons): the shares of women and men who agree are both large.

The traditional social perception of women as mothers, wives, housekeepers, or the “guardians” of the family inevitably impacts attitudes towards women in politics. While there is agreement from both men and women with the statement that women are as competent as men to be business executives, that is not the case for attitudes towards women regarding politics. For example, 53 percent of men and 45 percent of women believe that men are better political leaders than women. In Europe as a whole, less than 20 percent of men and women agree with this view. In addition, the Eurobarometer 2017 survey on Gender Equality found that only 28 percent of respondents in Romania believed that more women should be in political decision-making positions while 54 percent in the EU believe there should be more women (European Commission 2017b). It is interesting that a lower share of Romanian respondents agrees that “promoting gender equality is important to ensure a fair and democratic society”—83 percent in Romania versus 91 percent in the EU (European Commission 2017b).

Yet perceptions towards the role of women have changed over time. On some issues, the evolution of gender-related beliefs is encouraging. For example, data from the World Values Survey found that Romanian respondents who agreed with the statement “men make better business executives than women” decreased from 30.9 percent during the 2005 to 2009 wave to 23.8 in the 2010 to 2014 wave (Figure 34). However, in other areas, including politics, views on women’s role in decision making have not improved. On the contrary, the percentage of respondents believing that men make better political leaders than women approximately doubled from 12.9 percent during the 1995-1999 wave to 24.8 percent in the 2010-2014 wave (World Values Survey). Similarly, over the years, higher numbers of people have come to agree that when jobs are scarce, men should have more rights to them than women.

Figure 34: Perceptions and Attitudes in Romania towards the Role of Women, over Time



Source: World Values Survey

DOMESTIC AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is a major issue of concern across the European Union, and Romania is no exception. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) database, 32 percent of Romanian women have experienced sexual harassment. In addition, 30 percent have experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and only 23 percent reported the most serious incident to the police. The EIGE (2014) estimates that gender-based violence in Romania carries an economic cost of about 10.3 billion euros each year.³⁰

Table 4: Women Who have Experienced Physical and/or Sexual Violence by a Partner and/or a Non-Partner since the Age of 15

Country	Percent
Denmark	52
Finland	47
UK	44
France	44
Germany	35
Slovakia	34
EU	33
Lithuania	31
Romania	30
Hungary	28
Bulgaria	28
Slovenia	22
Poland	19

Source: FRA database 2014.

The Romanian population, in general, acknowledges the prevalence of this kind of violence. Eurobarometer

(2016) found that 36 percent of respondents in Romania believe that domestic violence against women is very common and 48 percent believe it is fairly common.

Other attitudes on gender-based violence reveal disparities between Romania and the EU, and suggest that Romania needs to do more work on the issue. For example, compared to the EU, fewer respondents in Romania to the 2016 Eurobarometer believe that violence against women is unacceptable and should always be punishable (74 percent compared to 96 percent). Nineteen percent believe that it is unacceptable but should not always be punishable by law (European Commission 2016b). Furthermore, while a small proportion (15 percent) of respondents in the EU believe that domestic violence is a private matter that should be handled within the family, there is a pattern among several Eastern European countries, including Romania (32 percent), to view domestic violence as a private matter. As a result, women may be less inclined to report cases of violence to authorities. Views like these hamper Romania's ability to reduce violence against women.

However, the country deserves recognition for its adoption of legal and institutional measures to combat violence against women. For example, Law No. 217/2003 on Preventing and Fighting against Domestic Violence was amended in 2012 to provide for restraining orders. It also includes various definitions of violence such as verbal, psychological, physical, sexual, economic, and social (EIGE 2016). The law criminalizes marital rape and the Criminal Code contains other provisions and criminal penalties for sexual harassment (WBL). In 2012, the Romanian government published a national strategy for preventing and combating domestic violence, and signed and ratified the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe agreement on combating violence against women and domestic violence in general (EIGE 2016).

30 The study calculated cost of gender-based and intimate partner violence by lost economic output, provision of services (such as health, legal, and social), and personal (physical and emotional) impact on the victim.

• Conclusions

This Country Gender Assessment reviewed the state of equality between women and men in Romania in endowments, economic opportunities, and voice and agency. It found that Romania has made substantive progress on including gender equality both institutionally and legally into its policy agenda. Certain indicators of gender equality have improved, while others remain stuck, indicating a need for further effort.

Amid progress on sexual and reproductive health, Romania's maternal mortality rate declined steadily from 1997 to 2007 but it has held steady in the past ten years. It remains one of the highest amongst EU member states at almost four times the grouping's average.

While there are no major differences between men and women in terms of enrollment rates in primary or secondary education, the rates are still low in comparison to EU averages. Furthermore, Romania has the EU's third-highest share of "early leavers" (young people aged 18-24 who have completed at most a lower secondary education and are not in further education or training). The share of women enrolled in tertiary education is higher than men's, but Romania lags behind the EU in overall tertiary attainment. It notable that girls are outperforming boys in reading and science. And Romanian women have become strongly engaged in the traditionally male-dominated fields of science, math, and computing, and make up comparably high shares of graduates in engineering and manufacturing.

In terms of economic opportunities, female participation in the Romanian labor force remains limited. The gender gap in labor force participation in Romania is much larger than in the EU. Women and men who do not engage in paid work do so for different reasons: issues related to care and family duties are among the most prominent for women while men's explanations center more around external constraints related to the supply side of jobs. Romania has the ECA region's third-highest share of population living in households with seniors over the age of 65, which highlights the need for formal long-term care for elderly people.

Regarding women's voice and agency, Romanian women hold fewer seats in parliament than the EU average. Perception surveys suggest that gen-

der norms and stereotypes with regards to participation of women in politics may be holding back their participation. Remarkably, there is considerable support from both sexes for the idea that women should do most of the household chores even if the husband is not working. Moreover, many people of both sexes believe that men make better political leaders than women and that men should have more rights to jobs when they are scarce. Furthermore, gender-based violence remains a major challenge for Romania, with almost one in three women having experienced physical and/or sexual violence since the age of 15 and only few of those having reported the worst incident to the police. Finally, the adolescent fertility rate is much higher than ECA and EU averages and stands at levels similar to those of poorer countries such as Rwanda, Haiti, Morocco, Vietnam, and Burundi.

It is important to note that aggregate national results may obscure substantial variations in development outcomes among women and other groups in Romania. Belonging to the Roma population and living in rural areas of the country are strongly associated with poor outcomes along several welfare dimensions. Yet being Roma alone is enough to place a person at a strong disadvantage in many human development indicators including education, health, and employment.

Roma women fare worse on reproductive and sexual health compared to non-Roma, and maternal mortality is more than 15 times higher among Roma women than non-Roma. Roma face significant gender gaps with non-Roma concerning school enrollment, completion, and attainment of all levels of education. Furthermore, Roma women are more disadvantaged in the labor markets compared to their non-Roma female peers. Finally, family formation patterns differ, with Roma women marrying earlier: Almost one in three Roma women is married by the age of 19, compared to one in fifty among the non-Roma population. In addition, about 33 percent of Roma women and only 17 percent of the general Romanian population are married by the age of 24. Age at first birth follows a similar trend: 10 percent of Roma girls have their first child when they are between the ages of 12-15, and close to half of them are mothers by the age of 18.

Rural areas remain far behind urban areas in terms of poverty reduction, employment, education, and access to services and infrastructure. Besides ethnicity, location of residence plays an important role in determining welfare outcomes among women in Romania. Fertility rates are higher for women in rural areas, and rural women also marry earlier than urban women. Access to modern contraceptives is lower among rural women, and they are disadvantaged in prenatal care and qualified birth assistance as well. Rural women are more prone to certain health-related problems, notably cervical cancer, and they receive less preventive care.

With regards to education, Romania's high percentage of early leavers is driven by location, with shares of early leavers more than four times higher in rural areas than in urban. Access to tertiary education is limited in rural areas. Labor force participation is lower among rural women compared to urban. In addition, educational attainment of adults is higher in rural areas than in cities, which could contribute to the gaps in labor market outcomes among adults.

In summary, Romania is lagging behind the EU averages on a number of aggregate indicators related to gender equality. For instance, with regards to endowments, Romania is faring worse in maternal mortality and overall educational achievement. While high shares of women have entered non-traditional sectors of education and the economy, women still remain disadvantaged in the labor market, even more than their European peers. In terms of voice and agency, political representation of women is comparably low, and gender-based violence as well as teenage pregnancy rates are serious issues of concern. Moreover, these gender disparities are strongly intertwined with ethnicity and location of residence. Roma women and rural women are more disadvantaged in almost all dimensions of gender equality. Similarly, strong discrepancies in outcomes occur between rural and urban women. Better understanding of the drivers of these deepened discrepancies will be crucial to crafting policies that will improve gender relations for all Romanians, regardless of ethnicity or place of residence.

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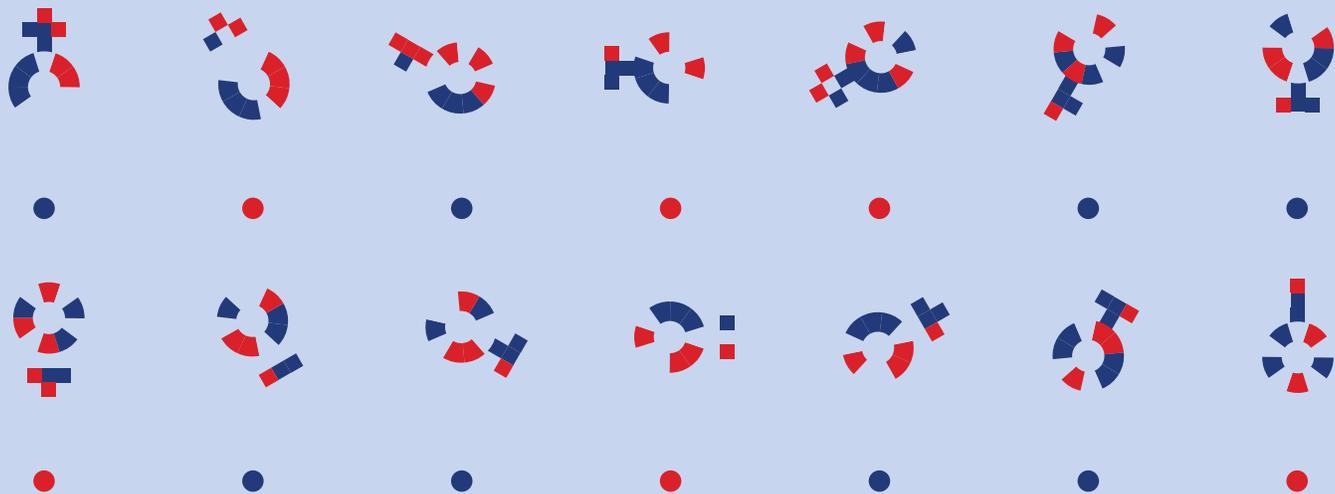
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