

TRENDS IN PERMANENT MIGRATION IN ROMANIA DURING THE PERIOD 1991- 2022

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Abstract

The study aims at identifying the trends in the permanent migration of the population at the county and primary city levels in Romania. The primary data source for the work is Tempo-online, along with other national and international statistics. Significant changes in the dynamics of migration in Romania are identified based on the studied data. The study notes a significant increase in emigration and permanent immigration, especially in the years post-accession to the EU. On the other hand, Romania seems to be slowly but entirely clearly entering a period of population replenishment in the last five years by attracting significant flows of permanent immigrants, leading to a relatively balanced relationship between emigration and immigration.

Keywords: permanent emigration; permanent immigration; regional patterns; demographic decline

1. Migration - Introduction

Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon with complex social, economic, and political causes and consequences (Wallace et al., 2001; Sandu, 1984, 2004, 2010, 2019; Rotariu, 2009). Migration can be defined as the movement or mobility of the population from one residence or domicile to another. It can, among other classifications, be temporary or permanent. Considering the nature of the territory where it occurs, it can be internal (within a country, between various zones, regions, etc.) or external (from one country to another). However, these classifications of

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migration are partial. Even if we analyse only external (international) migration in the context of this study, it can be intercontinental, intra-EU, or extra-EU. In analysing migration at the EU level, Eurostat uses the terms migration within the EU and migration from non-EU countries¹.

Migration is one of the most discussed and contested research issues, primarily due to the diversified methodologies of administrative and legal migration registration at the international level (Penninx et al., 2008; Scholten & Geddes, 2016). From this perspective, there is a unique methodology for recording migration at the EU level. The differences in the registration of migrants can be considerable between an EU country and a non-EU country, as is the case with Romania and the Republic of Moldova (Balch, 2013; Burian, 2010; Crețu, 2018; Jennissen, 2004; Moșneagă, 2023).

Migration is a demographic phenomenon that impacts the volume and structure of a population. Depending on its type, either emigration or immigration, migration can lead to decreases or increases in the population of a country or region. In situations where most developed countries experience a negative natural increase (more deaths than births), migration becomes the sole method of population growth for these countries (Favell, 2008). A less-discussed demographic function of migration is the alteration of the demographic structure of a population, both in the departure and receiving populations. This function is generally underrated because its magnitude is challenging to estimate. Migrants are generally young populations with higher fertility, even under economic stress (uncertainty related to income, residence, and citizenship). They not only directly alter the demographic structure but also indirectly affect it through changes in the fertility levels of both sending and receiving populations (Rotariu, 2019). The consequences can be more extensive than estimated by migration balance (the difference between entries and exits from the population), and areas where emigration persists for an extended period can face depopulation (Marina, 2022). It is crucial, therefore, for migration flows not to become permanent and, at some point, even be reversed. A country that has been an emigration country for decades will be affected much more than can be estimated through a simple calculation of migration.

Migration has collective causes and consequences alongside individual motivations. Various scientific disciplines, two of which – sociology and economics – have had a constant concern for theorisation for decades and even centuries, play a role in explaining migration and the direction of migration flows (Rotariu, 2009). While

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics

demography focuses on the trends in migration evolution, sociological or economic analyses aim to explain primarily the social and economic determinants of migration.

Political and administrative factors, legislation, or the occurrence of disasters heavily influence the impact of migration and its economic and social consequences. Migration can sometimes be a positive phenomenon, even in war (Moşneagă, 2023).

Migration can be a more or less managed phenomenon by governments or authorities. Sometimes, migration enormously escapes authorities' control, even under robust or stringent regulation (Bowell, 2018; Coleman, 2008; Favell, 2008).

Migration policies are usually selective, aiming to attract well-educated professionals to the labour market with a good command of the country's language. Even individuals can self-select by orienting themselves towards countries where the national or regional language is familiar. Migration can lead to linguistically more homogeneous populations, even if not necessarily culturally or religiously homogeneous (Alvarez, Bernard & Lieske, 2021). In the United Kingdom, 85.5% of emigrants were fluent speakers of the country's language, 73.8% in Australia, and 69.1% in Portugal, but only 6.1% in France (Alvarez, Bernard & Lieske, 2021).

Migration is a phenomenon that generates regional development and economic redistribution, both at the country level and internationally (Hăruță, 2016; Stalker, 2002).

Demographic trends regarding the migration patterns of an EU country, such as Romania, can only be understood by considering the regulations and demographic situation of the EU (Salt, 2005). On the other hand, each country has a unique demographic structure that both influences and is influenced by the evolution of migration.

2. Data and Working Methods

Romania is generally perceived, in most studies and analyses, both domestically and internationally, as a country of emigration (Sandu, 2010). The country's objective situation (economic positioning within the EU) and the predominantly negative assessments by Romanian citizens regarding the country's direction, the quality of public services, administration, and infrastructure reinforce the stereotype that Romania is a country you would prefer to leave rather than stay. After integration into the EU, Romania is a country where migration tends to have a more temporary,

work-oriented character. The most significant volume of migration post-2007 is for temporary rather than permanent migration (Baciu, 2018).

In the context described above, this study pursued three objectives:

- a) Analysing the trends in the evolution of permanent migration since 1991, including its relationship with temporary migration;
- b) Identifying regional patterns of permanent migration, both as emigration and immigration, post-EU accession;
- c) Diagnosing the situation of Romania in terms of permanent migration based on official statistics.

The data were extracted and adapted from Tempo-online, the Population and Housing Census Romania 2021 final data, and Eurostat. We employed the Excel program and the data processing software SPSS 23.0 to process these data. For permanent migration (or definitive migration, according to some terminologies), we utilised the definitions provided by INSSE from the Tempo-online application.

The data used were extracted and adapted from Tempo-online¹, the Population and Housing Census Romania 2021 final data² and Eurostat³. We employed the Excel program and the data processing software SPSS 23.0 to process these data.

For permanent migration (or definitive migration, according to some terminologies), we utilised the definitions provided by INSSE from the Tempo-online application:

- a) Permanent emigration consists of “...emigrants with a change of residence are individuals (of Romanian citizenship) who emigrate abroad. Emigration is the action by which a person renounces their domicile in Romania and establishes their domicile in the territory of another state. The person's domicile in Romania is the address where they declare their primary residence, as recorded in the identity document (ID card/temporary ID, birth certificate), as registered in the records of the administrative authorities of the state.”
- b) Permanent immigration includes “immigrants with a change of residence.” These individuals (of Romanian citizenship) are those who immigrate to Romania. Immigration is when a person renounces their domicile in another state and establishes their domicile in Romania. The person's domicile in Romania is the address where they declare their primary

¹ <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/>, accessed September 2023.

² <https://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-rpl-2021/rezultate-definitive/>, accessed September 2023.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics, accessed September 2023.

residence, as recorded in the identity document (ID card/temporary ID, birth certificate), as registered in the records of the state's administrative authorities."

Alongside permanent migration, to facilitate comparisons and reinforce certain conclusions, we also utilised data on temporary migration from the Tempo-online application.

3. Results and Discussions

Immediately after 1990, the number of permanent emigrants was significantly higher than that of permanent immigrants (see Figure 1).

In 1990, migration began as a predominantly multiethnic phenomenon, with the most significant number of emigrants being Transylvanian Saxons. For example, according to INSSE data, out of 96,929 emigrants, 60,072 were of German ethnicity (61.97%). The multi-ethnic character of emigration gradually diminished so that by 2011, the number of permanent emigrants included only eight individuals of German ethnicity, 42 of Hungarian ethnicity, 8 of Jewish ethnicity, 7,834 of Romanian ethnicity, and 14 of other ethnicities. Over the entire period from 1990 to 2012, there were 458,821 permanent emigrants, of which 269,359 were Romanian nationals (58.7%), 103,031 (22.5%) were of German nationality, 42,163 (9.2%) were of Hungarian nationality, 3,061 (0.7%) were of Jewish nationality, with the remainder being of other nationalities.

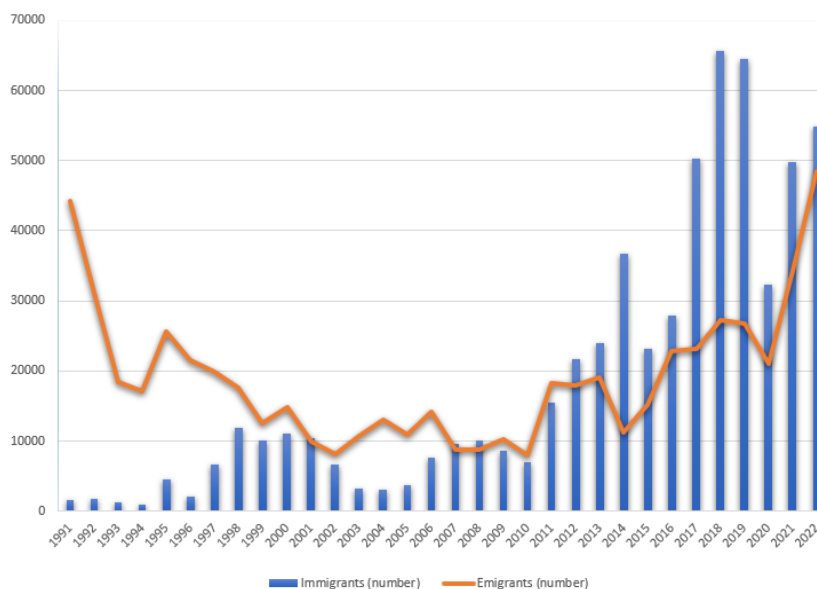


Figure 1. Evolution of permanent migration in Romania between 1991-2022

Data Source: Tempo-online.

Analysing the graph of permanent migration over the period 1991-2022 (Figure 1), four distinct phases emerge:

- 1991-1996 Period: Characterised by a high number of permanent emigrants and a relatively low number of permanent immigrants;
- 1997-2007 Period: During this phase, there is a more significant number of permanent emigrants than permanent immigrants, although migration figures remain low, involving fewer than 20,000 individuals;
- 2007-2016 Period: In this period, both the number of permanent immigrants and emigrants increases, but neither group dominates the other;
- 2017-2022 Period: In this phase, the number of permanent immigrants significantly surpasses that of permanent emigrants.

In the regional context, during the first two migration periods, which coincide with the time when Romania was not a member of the EU, permanent migration was a relatively inconspicuous phenomenon in social and economic terms, except in certain counties and localities in Transylvania, where there was strong migration among those of German nationality.

Throughout 1994-2022, mainly due to significant increases in permanent immigrants after EU accession, the country's capital and 12 counties together accounted for 88.11% of the total 582,805 immigrants over the 29 years.

Regarding emigration, there is more excellent dispersion, as seen in Table 1. Outside the capital, which provides 14.48% of permanent emigrants, immigration counties are no longer significant contributors to emigration. It is important to note that the counties in Moldova and Ilfov have a positive migration balance. In contrast, Constanța, Brașov, Cluj, and Timișoara have negative balances, meaning they had more permanent emigrants than immigrants throughout the period.

Table 1. Number and percentage of total permanent migrants in 12 counties and the municipality of Bucharest, based on their share in total migration from 1994-2022

<i>County</i>	<i>Number of immigrants</i>	<i>Immigrants percentage per county from the total in Romania</i>	<i>Number of emigrants</i>	<i>Emigrants percentage per county from the total in Romania</i>
Municipality of Bucharest	157,197	26.97%	102,510	14.48%
Iasi	102,637	17.61%	25,691	3.63%
Vaslui	80,601	13.8%	10,436	1.47%
Galati	38,927	6.68%	15,214	2.15%
Suceava	31,537	5.41%	14,271	2.02%
Botosani	29,760	5.11%	6,705	0.95%
Bacau	17,354	2.98%	16,359	2.31%
Cluj	11,585	1.99%	18,108	2.56%
Timis	10,875	1.87%	32,256	4.98%
Neamt	11,251	1.93%	12,576	1.78%
Brasov	7,974	1.37%	23,884	3.37%
Ilfov	7,227	1.24%	3,855	0.54%
Constanta	6,716	1.15%	15,338	2.17%
Total permanent immigrants/emigrants in 12 counties and the Municipality of Bucharest	513,641	88.11%	297,203	42.41%
Total permanent immigrants/emigrants in Romania	582,805	100%	708,140	100%

One hypothesis tested in the study was that county capitals function as focal points of attraction for immigrants at the county level. Examining the data in Table 2, the

conclusion is that the hypothesis is confirmed, with some exceptions. For example, the cities of Botoşani and Piatra Neamţ attract fewer permanent immigrants than their importance at the county level. On the other hand, we have the city of Vaslui (87.17% of permanent immigrants at the county level are in the county capital). At the city level, a fact is reported by the media, which cannot be verified in this study but may lead us to exercise caution in concluding the analysed data. The media signals an unusually high influx of “Basarabeni” (people from Moldova) in Vaslui who have their residence at the same address¹. These individuals may not reside in Vaslui or Romania and will migrate rapidly to Western countries. With a total population (by residence) on January 1, 2022, of 140,262 people (Tempo-online data), the population census from December 1, 2021, identifies 63,035 residents in Vaslui (those who have lived in the city for at least 12 months). The stable population of the city of Vaslui is, on the other hand, increasing compared to the 2011 census: 55,407. It is worth noting that the stable population of Vaslui has increased, whereas all county capitals analysed have recorded decreases in stable population between the two censuses (2011 and 2021). For example, Iaşi decreased from 290,422 stable population in 2011 to 271,692. Moreover, Timişoara's decrease is even more dramatic: from 319,279 in 2011 to 250,849 in 2021.

Table 2. Number and percentage of immigrants in counties with a significant number of migrants and in their county capitals, period 2012-2022

<i>County</i>	<i>Immigrants number per county</i>	<i>Immigrants number in the county capital</i>	<i>Immigrants percentage in the county capital from the county's total</i>
Iasi	93,702	46,747	49.89%
Vaslui	78,402	68,343	87.17%
Galati	35,653	24,962	70.01%
Suceava	27,087	12,773	47.16%
Botosani	28,013	1,935	6.91%
Bacau	15,146	10,011	66.10%
Cluj	7,055	4,979	70.67%
Timis	5,318	2,546	47.88%
Neamt	7,864	2,060	26.20%
Brasov	4,820	2,850	59.13%
Constanta	3,372	1,868	55.40%

¹ <https://www.libertatea.ro/opinii/factorul-basarabean-cazul-straniu-al-orasului-vaslui-care-aproape-si-a-triplat-in-acte-populatia-in-doar-cativa-ani-si-implicatiile-sale-4300192>, accessed September 2023.

Another aspect we tested in the study was related to the country of origin of permanent immigrants, considering the observations made above. In the post-accession period, the most significant number of permanent immigrants came from the Republic of Moldova: 293,938 out of 501,203 (58.65%), as shown in Table 3. Considering the geographical proximity, shared history, and standard language (sometimes dialect), the percentage is not surprising; contrary, it is expected. We can appreciate that the number of immigrants from the Republic of Moldova to Romania is relatively small, considering not only the linguistic, cultural, historical, and geographical community but also the economic differences between the two countries and Romania's membership in the European Union for over 15 years. This small number may be caused by local or national bureaucratic barriers rather than legislation, as mentioned in a relatively recent study (Rentea, 2013). Nevertheless, the December 1, 2021 census notes that 71,705 of Romania's stable population is made up of individuals born in the Republic of Moldova.

Table 3. Number of permanent immigrants by country of origin, period 2007-2022

<i>Country</i>	<i>Immigrants number</i>	<i>Immigrants percentage</i>
Austria	2,113	0.42%
Canada	4,985	0.99%
France	3,080	0.61%
Germany	9,377	1.87%
Israel	2,125	0.42%
Italy	15,593	3.11%
Moldova	293,938	58.65%
USA	7,947	1.59%
Ukraine	35,612	7.11%
Hungary	3,599	0.72%
Other countries	122,834	24.51%
Immigrants total	501,203	100%

Another hypothesis tested within the study concerned the youthfulness of permanent migrants compared to the overall population. As observed in Table 4, both immigrants and emigrants are youthful populations, slightly younger in the case of immigrants. What is significant at the level of these analysed populations is that many children aged 0-4 years are involved in the migratory process, as well as elderly individuals over 75 years old. The migratory process is not only an individual act but also a familial and sometimes communal one.

Table 4. Number of permanent immigrants and emigrants by age groups in 2007-2022

Age group	Immigrants	Emigrants	Difference I-E
0- 4 years	15,849	13,943	1,906
5- 9 years	18,337	16,724	1,613
10-14 years	15,924	21,745	-5,821
15-19 years	24,001	33,833	-9,832
20-24 years	62,187	24,760	37,427
25-29 years	84,142	38,853	45,289
30-34 years	76,393	40,766	35,627
35-39 years	59,188	41,732	17,456
40-44 years	45,026	33,293	11,733
45-49 years	34,534	22,690	11,844
50-54 years	26,062	14,569	11,493
55-59 years	18,097	8,133	9,964
60-64 years	11,069	5,282	5,787
65-69 years	5,831	2,429	3,402
70-74 years	2,415	1,195	1,220
75-79 years	1,164	710	454
80-84 years	640	425	215
85 years and above	344	216	128
Total	501,203	321,298	179,905

To strengthen the conclusion related to the changing direction of permanent migration flows, we have also examined the evolution of temporary migration officially recorded by INSSE. Figure 2 shows an almost similar trend to permanent migration, a growing significance of immigration, especially in the last five years.

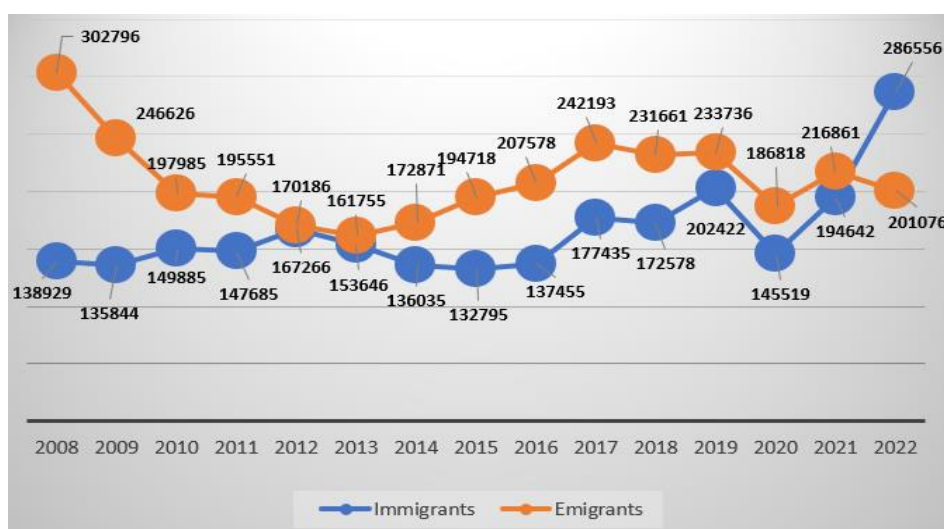


Figure 2. Evolution of temporary migration in Romania between 2008-2022

Demographic data, including those related to permanent migration, must, to draw conclusions, be contextualised and treated with due caution. The context is that Romania's population has been in demographic decline for many years, with a consistently negative natural increase (more deaths than births) and a steadily decreasing population (Gheţău, 2007, 2012; Preda, 2009). The recent population and housing census (conducted in 2021) estimates the population at 19,053,815.

4. Conclusions

The primary conclusion drawn based on the analysed data, when placed in context, is that permanent migration is a significant dimension that needs to be repositioned as a research theme, especially in Romania. Permanent migration is not merely a formal dimension of migration, a fact devoid of economic or social consequences. We emphasise that we must analyse permanent migration to adequately examine the entries and exits from a country's population. We have observed in the documentation of this study that many valuable works on Romanian migration need to touch upon the theme of permanent migration (for example, in Baciu, 2018).

As a state, Romania should allocate, through appropriate policies beyond implemented legislation, greater importance and regulation to both pre-immigration and post-immigration processes for permanent immigrants. More support programs for permanent immigrants and appropriate, nondiscriminatory assistance for those applying for citizenship or work permits are needed.

One of the most valuable resources in the modern world is human resources. The demographic transition towards meagre fertility rates leaves us with little hope of reversing a country's population through pro-natalist policies. The only chance for countries experiencing demographic decline, such as Romania, is to attract a young, educated, or educable and culturally compatible population. This opportunity exists as long as millions of Romanian speakers or individuals of Romanian ethnicity are outside the country's borders. The alternative of attracting other populations, sometimes very distant geographically and culturally, is not suitable, considering the difficulties of integration, the associated costs, and the limited experience and poor preparation of the Romanian state in this regard (see also Preda, 2009). Imposing obstacles to the Romanian diaspora in countries outside the EU because they only want to work in the EU is an administratively incorrect and even disloyal, unpatriotic act. People today are not attracted by collectivist ideologies; they continuously seek security and prosperity through migration outside their country.

The state must implement appropriate programs and policies to retain and ensure citizens remain within its borders (Scholten & Geddes, 2016).

The conclusion is related to the detected trend that permanent immigration tends to be larger annually, in percentage, at the country level than permanent emigration. Our conclusion is supported by the fact that legally registered temporary immigration also becomes more numerous than emigration. Part of this effect must be attributed to the external context, the economic crisis in many EU and non-EU countries, military conflicts in the surrounding areas, non-military wars for energy resources, etc. However, these positive demographic developments also have probable causes within the positive developments of Romanian society, many of which are supported by the process of EU membership. We remain cautious in stating that the ratio between immigration and emigration has changed, that immigration is more substantial, and that it is a sustainable trend. There are many variables and many factors influencing migration. It is a phenomenon too complex to be predicted. We appreciate that we are at the beginning of a positive trend process, which may continue and may have positive effects on the economy and society, but may also be a surface effect without sustainability, easily reversible.

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