

ROMANIA (*Romania*)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 21,666,350

Area: 238,391 sq. km (slightly smaller than Oregon)

Capital: Bucharest (1.9 million)

Languages: Romanian (official) 85.4%, Hungarian 6.3%, Romani (Gypsy) 1.2%

EDUCATION

Romania has a free and compulsory 11-grade education system for ages 6-16. At age 14 students must pass examinations to enter secondary school. About half of these students go on to vocational schools; others continue their education at technical institutes or teacher-training programs. Grading is on a 10-point scale (9 and 10 = excellent, 7 and 8 = good, 5 and 6 = acceptable, 4 and under = unacceptable). The literacy rate for 15 and over is 97.7%. Traditionally, greater emphasis has been placed on rote-learning rather than inquiry-based or critical thinking and exams are typically oral.



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Children in traditional Romanian clothing

The name "Romania" was chosen in 1859 upon the unification of Wallachia and Moldavia, reflecting the Roman descent of the people. For centuries Romanian provinces fought against the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian empires to maintain their autonomy. The 1940 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact forced Romania to cede Bessarabia and Bukovina to the USSR. Soon after, Transylvania was taken by Hungary. After World War II, Romania regained Transylvania. After communism was overthrown in 1989, Romania became a democracy, joining NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007. Romania is home to Europe's largest Roma (Gypsy) population.

RELIGION

The majority (86%) of the population identify with the Eastern Orthodox or Romanian Orthodox Church, 7.5% are Protestant (including Pentecostal and Reformed), 4.7% are Roman Catholic and less than 1% identify as other (mostly Muslim). The country's Jewish population was decimated during World War II.

ETHNICITY

Romanian can imply a nationality, ethnicity or language and not all citizens are ethnic Romanians. While Romanians make up 89.5% of the population, there is a sizeable Hungarian minority (6.6%) as well as Europe's largest Roma population (2.5%), and smaller populations of Ukrainians, Germans, Russians, and Turks.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Due to tradition as well as housing shortages, it is common for many generations to live together. Under Ceausescu, abortion was outlawed and women were instructed to have four children. While this produced the desired population boost, it also resulted in an increased number of abandoned babies. With both parents working outside the home, it is common for children to be left in day cares all day from a very early age. Belief in vampires has a long history in folk culture but was popularized by the story of Dracula in the 1800s. Food offerings to ward off vampires are made on Saint George's Day (April 23) and Saint Andrew's Day (Nov. 29). The custom of covering mirrors in the home of the deceased has its origin in vampirism and the fear that the spirit of the dead person will see its reflection and not be able to leave. Romanian folklore is rich in pagan rituals: Paparuda is performed in times of drought, Dragobete and Martisor usher out winter and welcome spring. Calusari is the spring dance that was recently declared one of the "masterpieces of oral and intangible heritages of humanity" by UNESCO. Romania's National Day is December 1, which commemorates the union of the principalities.



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CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA

The 1989 overthrow of the communist regime in Romania came via violent revolution, in which more than 1,000 people were killed. Among the dead was the longtime President Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife, Elena, who were executed after a hasty trial. The transition to free-market capitalism and democracy were not easy in Romania, and the 1990s were a time of great economic hardship. This dramatically changed in the 2000s, as the Romanian economy began a period of tremendous growth, leading some to call Romania the “Tiger of the East.”

Since the late 1990s, Romania has been a staunch ally to the United States, backing even controversial US policy decisions. Romania joined George Bush’s “Coalition of the Willing” in 2003, and maintained a military presence in Iraq until 2009. Romania also participated in NATO interventions in Afghanistan, Libya, and Kosovo. The US has also been allowed joint use of Romanian military facilities since 2005, and a new US Navy base opened in Romania in 2014. In exchange, Romania has been allowed to join NATO (2004) and the EU (2007), and substantial bilateral trade and investment agreements have been signed between the US and Romania. NATO plans to build a continental missile shield have been supported by Romania and have been stepped up since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014.

Romania was hit hard by the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 and received a large loan from the IMF in 2009. However, the economy had largely recovered by 2013, and today Romania again has one of the strongest economies in the region. Despite this progress, corruption and organized crime remain big problems. The current president of Romania is Klaus Iohannis, of the center-right Christian Liberal Alliance, elected in late 2014 on an anti-corruption platform. The Romanian government has been reluctant to accept large amounts of Syrian refugees, but Romania’s desire to gain admittance into the Schengen Area led them in 2016 to acquiesce to the EU’s mandatory refugee quotas. It is likely that over 4,000 Syrian refugees will be eventually settled in Romania.



Transylvania

ROMANIANS IN THE USA

Romanian immigrants have been arriving in the US since the late 19th century. Early immigrants were unskilled laborers working in factories. Later waves brought a variety of professionals who often took jobs outside of their profession. Major surges occurred during the threat of Nazi occupation and after the 1989 revolution, which brought an end to communism and travel restrictions. Romanians are the fourth largest community at Microsoft in Washington State.



The colors date back to the shields and banners of Michael the Brave, who united Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania in 1601. The stripes were horizontal until 1886 when they adopted the French vertical model. The communist coat of arms was removed in 1989.



Traditional Romanian painted eggs

LANGUAGE

Romanian is an Eastern Romance Language belonging to the Indo-European language family and has much in common with Italian, French, Portuguese, and Spanish.

NAMES

Frequent suffixes for Romanian names are: -escu (-escu), -an (-anu), and -ean (-eanu).

FAMOUS AMERICAN-ROMANIANS

A few famous Romanians and Americans of Romanian descent include: Elie Wiesel—Nobel Laureate and Holocaust survivor, Nadia Comăneci – Olympic gold medalist in gymnastics, Dominique Moceanu – US Olympic gymnast, Lauren Bacall—actress, Winona Ryder—actress, Naomi Wolf – author, Matt Lauer—*Today Show*

ROMANIAN WORDS

- Hi Salut!
- Bye La revedere
- Good day Buna ziua
- Yes Da
- No Nu
- Please..... Multumesc
- Thank you..... Cu plăcere
- You're welcome..... Bun venit
- How are you? Ce mai faceti?
- I do not understand Nu inteleg
- Do you understand? Dumneavoastra l ntelegeti
- What is your name?..... Cum va cheama
- My name is Ma numesc...
- Where are you from? De unde sunteti?

USEFUL LINKS

- [CIA World Factbook: Romania](#)
- [BBC Country Profile Romania](#)
- [National Geographic Romania Guide](#)
- [English Language news from Romania](#)