

ROMANIA (*Romania*)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 19.7 million

Area: slightly smaller than Oregon

Capital: Bucharest (1.9 million)

Languages: Romanian (official) 91%, Hungarian 6.7%, Romani (Gypsy) 1.1%, other 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 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.



Updated: 3/4/13

Children in traditional Romanian clothing

The name "Romania" was chosen in 1859 upon the unification of Walachia 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 Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact forced Romania to cede Bessarabia and Bukovina to the USSR; soon after Transylvania was taken by Hungary. After WWII, 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 WWII.

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 4 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 (4/23) and Saint Andrew's Day (11/29). 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

Romania's location at the crossroads of the Austrian-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires, later the USSR, and today's Russian Federation, played a major role in the country's history and politics. After surviving 3 dictatorial regimes during the 20th century – Charles II's dictatorship, fascist regime of Marshal Antonescu, and the communist rule – Romania overthrew communism in 1989. Since then, Romanians elected democratically 3 presidents: Ion Iliescu (1992-96, 2000-04), Emil Constantinescu (1996-2000), and Traian Basescu (2005-). Liberal and reformist governments alternated with more conservative and socialist ones. As a semi-presidential representative democratic republic, Romania is currently ruled by a democratic-liberal president, Basescu, and a social-democratic government led by Victor Ponta.

In the Post-Cold War era, Romania has increasingly turned westward, strengthening democratic institutions and its relations with Europe and the US. It has participated in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as the military operations in Libya. According to a 2011 agreement, in 2015 Romania will host Europe's first NATO anti-missile shield. Despite democratic change, former communists leaders have retained a majority in alternating elections. Prior to the recent recession, Romania enjoyed considerable economic growth and was referred to as "the Tiger of Eastern Europe" as its citizens enjoyed considerable improvements in living standards. However, it was hit hard by the recession, forced to borrow heavily, and became the largest debtor to the IMF in 2010, although it was the unique debt-free nation among the communist states in 1989. After the economic downturn which led to public unrest and a political crisis in 2012, Romania's economy beat expectations by growing 3.5% the next year and still remaining strong at 2.5% in 2014. The EU estimates that the public debt will increase while the GDP will decrease in the near future.



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 4th 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](#)