Gender Equality in Romania:
WHERE DO WE STAND?

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GENDER EQUALITY IN ROMANIA:
Where Do We Stand?

Romania Gender Assessment

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANES National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men

AUR The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (Alianta pentru Unirea Romanilor)

CARE Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere

CCDR Country Climate, and Development Report

CEO Chief Executive Officer

CGAP Country Gender Action Plan

CGA Country Gender Assessment

CPF Country Partnership Framework

CoE Council of Europe

CSO Civil Society Organizations

DES Department for Emergency Situations

EC European Commission

ECA Europe and Central Asia

ECE Early Childhood Education

EFTA European Free Trade Association

EIG European Institute for Gender Equality

EP European Parliamentary Forum

EU European Union

EU-LFS European Union Labour Force Survey

EU-MIDIS EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey

EU-SILC European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions

EUROSTAT European Statistical Office

FDP Forcibly displaced people

FINDEX Financial Inclusion Database

FRA EU Agency for Fundamental Rights

GBV Gender-Based Violence

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GEI Gender Equality Index

GOR Government of Romania

GP Global Practice

GRETA Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings

GREVIO Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

GSNI Gender Social Norm Index

HBS Household Budget Survey

ICT Information and Communication Technologies

IHS Integrated Household Survey

INS The National Institute for Statistics

LGBTQI Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

NCCD National Council for Combating Discrimination

NEET Not in education, employment, or training

NGO Nongovernmental Organization

NPM National Plan of Measures

NSO National Statistics Office

OECD Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

PISA Programme for International Student Assessment

PLUS Liberty, Unity, and Solidarity Party

PNL The National Liberal Party

PPP Purchasing Power Parity

PSD Social Democratic Party

Q1 Quarter 1

SAD Single Administrative Document

SCD Systematic Country Diagnostic

OECD/SDD OECD Statistical and Data Directorate

SEGE Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality

SINERGY National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence

SOGI Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

STEM Science, technology, engineering and math

UDMR The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania

UK United Kingdom

UN United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNECE United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

USR Union Save Romania

WBG World Bank Group

WBL Women, Business, and the Law

WDI World Development Indicators

WDR World Development Report

WEF World Economic Forum

Overview
Where Does Romania Stand Today?

Gender inequality is a hindrance to economic development.

Romania is ranked second lowest in terms of gender equality among EU countries. If the country were to eliminate gender inequality, its economy could grow by 8.7 percent (additional GDP) by 2030 (McKinsey and Company 2021). Furthermore, removing barriers could add nearly half a million women entrepreneurs in Romania and drive inclusive economic growth.

The gender gap in labor force participation and entrepreneurship: A lost economic opportunity. What's holding women back?

Romania exhibits the highest gender gaps in labor force participation among all EU countries, which are accompanied by significant disparities in entrepreneurship opportunities and a substantial gender gap in pensions during the later stages of life. According to McKinsey and Company (2021), by achieving gender equality, Romania has the potential to achieve growth of 8.7 percent in its economy by 2030, equivalent to increased GDP. Several key barriers contribute to gender inequality in Romania. Limited access to child- and eldercare services, as well as an unequal care burden, create challenges for women in balancing work and family responsibilities. Although parental leave policies are tailored for parents, paid paternity leave reserved for fathers is below the OECD average and significantly lower than paid maternity leave levels. Overall, these policies predominantly favor mothers, leading to a disproportionate share of parental leave being taken by fathers. Work arrangements often lack flexibility, particularly for employed mothers. Pervasive gender norms and discrimination perpetuate the belief that men should be given priority when it comes to job opportunities, with the expectation that their primary role is to earn money. Moreover, while the wage gap in Romania is relatively small compared to the EU average, it cannot be fully explained by observable characteristics, suggesting that discrimination may play a role in contributing to this disparity. Tackling these barriers, together with pension reform, can help narrow the pension gap observed later in life.

Figure 0.1 Gender Gap in the Labor Force Participation Rate, Ages 15–64, 2013 vs. 2022 (%)

● 2013 ● 2022
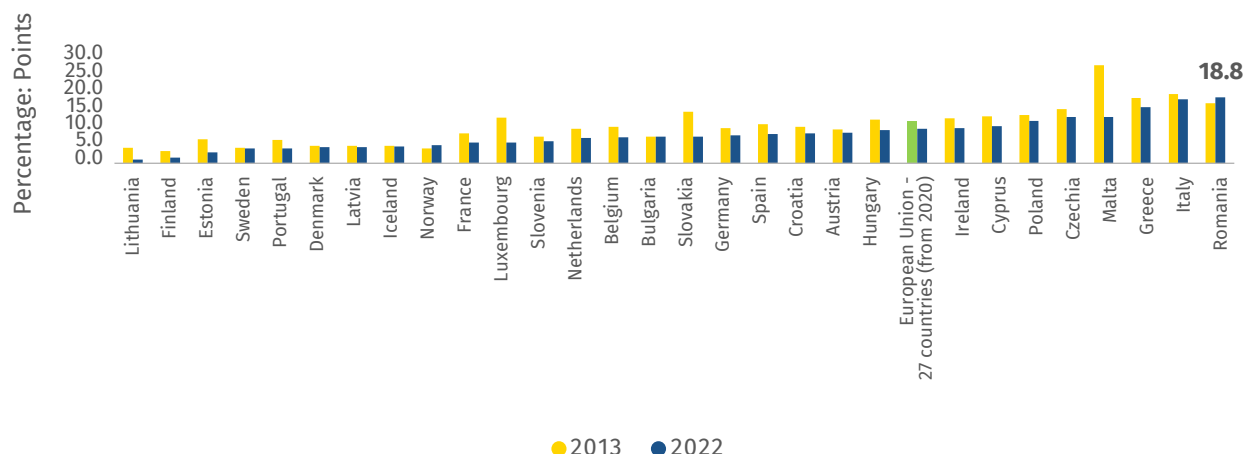
Human capital is a pathway to an increase in economic opportunities, but some challenges remain.

The education landscape in Romania faces several challenges. Net enrollment rates in early childhood development (ECD) are alarmingly low for both boys and girls in the zero- to two-year-old age group. Additionally, the gross enrollment rates for boys and girls in primary and secondary education, already below the EU average, are declining. School dropout is also relatively high, a concerning trend, and evidence shows the link with the heightened rates of teenage pregnancy. Moreover, the performance of both boys and girls, as measured by PISA results, shows a decline. The barriers to effective early childhood development include affordability constraints, particularly among the poor, with childcare costs as a percentage of women's median full-time earnings higher than the EU average. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring inclusive and quality education for all children in Romania. Many challenges persist in the health sector, including rates of adolescent birth and teenage pregnancy that are among the highest in the EU and high maternal mortality; affordability of health services is an important barrier, particularly for females, as they are more likely to report difficulties paying for unexpected medical expenses.

Figure 0.2 Adolescent Birth Rate, Ages 15–19 (per 1,000 Women)
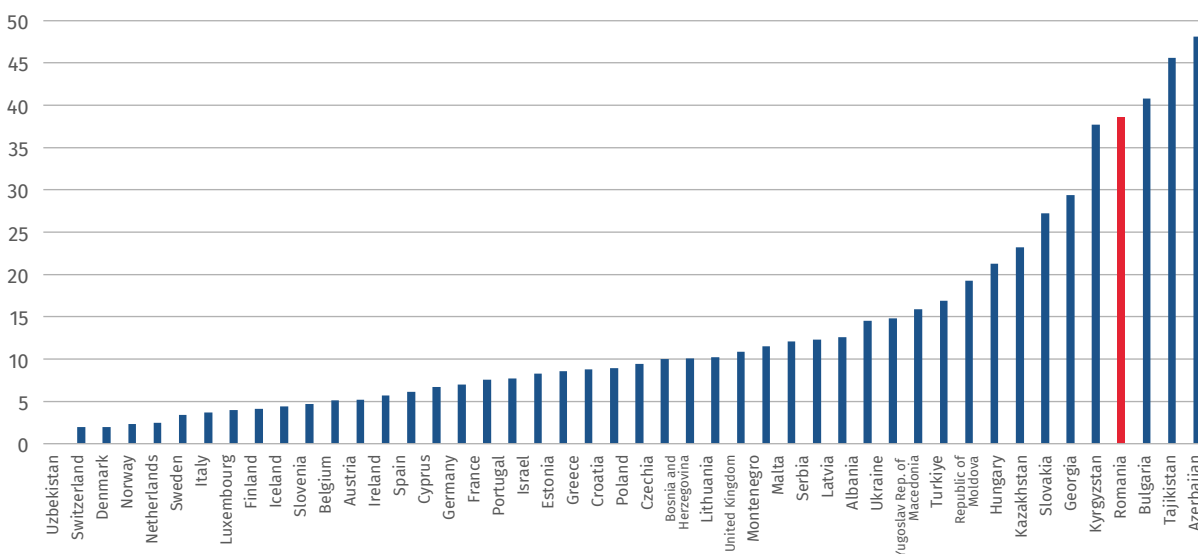
Freedom from violence is an essential domain of agency, and yet gender-based violence remains hidden in plain sight in Romania, undocumented and invisible in the public agenda.

With the lack of an integrated data collection system on various forms of gender-based violence (GBV), it is difficult to estimate the extent of the problem in Romania. Where some data are available, the situation is grim compared to elsewhere in the EU. Despite its decreasing incidence of early marriages, Romania has the highest national incidence of early marriages in the EU. In addition, Romania remains predominantly a country of origin for human trafficking in Europe and is among the top five countries in the EU when it comes to human trafficking victims. A snapshot of the administrative data across the GBV referral pathway shows significant gaps in response and service provision to support survivors. The main significant barrier is the underreporting, underfunding, and lack of coordination in addressing GBV. Moreover, Romania shows low levels of female political participation and persistent gender norms that both enable violence and impede gender representation in elected and appointed offices. Overcoming these challenges is crucial for empowering women, ensuring their safety, and promoting their active participation in decision-making processes.

Is there a robust data and institutional framework to integrate a gender perspective into policies, programs, and projects?

Although Romania has established strong legislative and institutional frameworks, there are still significant challenges to effectively implementing and monitoring specific measures, as well as evaluating their outcomes, and pensions is a lagging area. Consultations and stakeholder mapping indicate that the majority of sectoral policies and interventions aim to enhance sector-specific results, but there is a lack of systematic gender mainstreaming, comprehensive and regular monitoring and evaluation of gender-specific outcomes, and impact evaluations. Although understanding the gender implications of fiscal incidence is crucial for informing tax, transfer, and expenditure reforms, available evidence is

limited. One major constraint is the absence of reliable ethnically disaggregated data, which hinders the ability to conduct accurate diagnostics and inform policies that target the Roma population. Additionally, there is a lack of up-to-date data on time use, which poses difficulties in understanding and addressing time-related issues in various spheres of life. Addressing these data gaps is crucial for informed decision-making and effective policy implementation.

What can be done to narrow the gender gaps?

We recommend focusing on four key areas:

1. Improve women's access to quality jobs, along with care infrastructure and domestic work

In order to enhance women's access to quality jobs, it is essential to focus on several key areas. Firstly, there is a need to improve women's access to quality job opportunities, which can be achieved through the development of care infrastructure that supports working parents. Secondly, efforts should be made to address the skills gap among older cohorts and the issue of school dropout among younger cohorts, considering its connection with teenage pregnancy. Thirdly, an important aspect is promoting the redistribution of care responsibilities, enabling individuals to effectively balance family needs and work, as well as flexible work arrangements. Fourthly, policies should be implemented to eliminate disincentives and barriers to employability for working-age women, with a particular emphasis on ensuring access to child and eldercare. Complementing these efforts, pension reform can also contribute to empowering women in the workforce. By prioritizing these measures, Romanian society can foster an environment where women have equal opportunities to thrive.

2. Strengthen data-driven fiscal policy for gender equality

To ensure equitable outcomes and address gender disparities, it is crucial to undertake fiscal incidence studies that shed light on the role of fiscal policies. Such studies can provide valuable insights into how fiscal measures can promote greater equity and contribute to the closing of gender gaps. Additionally, the use of innovative monitoring and gender budgeting tools, such as PARIS 21 and the EIGE Gender Budgeting Tool, can significantly strengthen data collection, monitoring, and evaluation efforts, and build on current initiatives.[1] These tools emphasize the importance of improving survey and administrative data, particularly in relation to Roma populations, and of conducting comprehensive and frequently updated time-use surveys. By leveraging these tools and approaches, policy makers can make informed decisions and implement fiscal policies to foster greater gender equality and inclusivity in Romanian society.

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1   The country took the first steps in gender budgeting, promoting a pilot program implemented by ANES with EC funding.

3. Promote entrepreneurship and financial and digital inclusion

Encouraging entrepreneurship is a significant policy objective for both the EU and its member states, as it serves as a vital means to advance various priorities outlined by the European Commission (EC) for the 2019–24 period. This includes implementing strategies that specifically address the barriers faced by women entrepreneurs, thus ensuring their equal access to opportunities and financial resources. Additionally, it is essential to encourage the participation of female entrepreneurs in the green transition, given their important role in implementing sustainable and environmentally friendly business practices. To support women's entrepreneurship, key measures include improving access to entrepreneurial education from an early age, fostering women's entrepreneurship networks, empowering female investors, establishing sustainable financing schemes, addressing workplace harassment and discrimination, and improving access to childcare for mothers and aspiring mothers. These initiatives aim to create an enabling environment for women to succeed as entrepreneurs while tackling barriers they commonly encounter.

4. Dismantle systemic barriers to economic and political decision-making and gender norms

To empower women and eliminate the persistent barriers and societal norms women face, several key actions can be taken. Firstly, amending the Domestic Violence Law to fully incorporate the principles of the Council of Europe would ensure comprehensive and consistent frameworks for data collection, prevention, and evidence-driven responses to GBV. Secondly, enhancing political and economic decision-making can be achieved through strengthened policy responses, including temporary special measures such as gender quotas. Lastly, it is crucial to allocate sufficient financing to service providers along the GBV referral pathways,. Efforts to address gender norms and promote equality in various domains require targeted interventions. Norm-based and behavioral interventions are necessary to challenge social norms that hinder educational participation among both boys and girls and health utilization. These interventions can encompass campaigns that provide targeted information and normative messaging, educational initiatives that challenge gender and racial stereotypes while advocating for equal opportunities in all fields, including addressing the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. Additionally, interventions should raise awareness among employers, employees, and educational institutions about the advantages of fostering diverse and inclusive workplaces. Furthermore, it is essential to roll out interventions that specifically target and counter harmful gender norms that impede women's progress in the business realm.

Executive Summary

Ensuring women's economic and social inclusion in Romania is not only a moral imperative, but also smart economics, given the country's demographic context.** According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (EIGE 2022), Romania is the second-worst-performing EU country in gender equality (figure ES1). The educational and labor market gender gaps also translate into productivity losses, underutilization of the country's talent pool, foregone fiscal revenues, higher social protection spending, and significant opportunity costs. Investing in the development of women's human capital and working toward women's economic inclusion becomes even more pressing in the context of the country's aging population. A recent study by EIGE (2022) shows that improvements in gender equality could result in large economic gains in the EU as a whole.[2] Following their estimates, GDP per capita in the EU would increase by 6.1 percent to 9.6 (approximately 1.95 to 3.15 trillion euros in total). Evidence for Romania shows that the economy could grow by 8.7 percent (additional GDP) by 2030 by eliminating gender inequality (McKinsey and Company 2021) (figure ES2).[3]

Tackling gender inequality is vital not only for growth and productivity, but also for promoting an equal and inclusive society and reducing income inequality. Persistent gender gaps in Romania hinder progress toward other critical development goals, such as poverty reduction and improvements in human capital and economic opportunities. Gender inequality in Romania limits job opportunities and contributes to income inequality. Addressing gender inequality is essential for promoting a more-equal and inclusive society and reducing income inequality. This is particularly important for Romania, because the country has one of the highest levels of poverty and inequality in the EU. Finally, gender equality is a fundamental human right, and gender gaps impede women's effectiveness as agents in the development process.

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2   https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/policy-areas/economic-and-financial-affairs/economic-benefits-gender-equality

3   Increased economic growth is a result of higher LFP, increased working hours, and changes in the gender distribution of employment sectors and the overall productivity levels of those sectors. The additional 8.7 percent refers to gains of the best-in-region scenario compared to a business as usual scenario.

Figure ES1. Gender Equality Index, 2022

Figure ES2. Economic Gains of Eliminating Gender Inequality
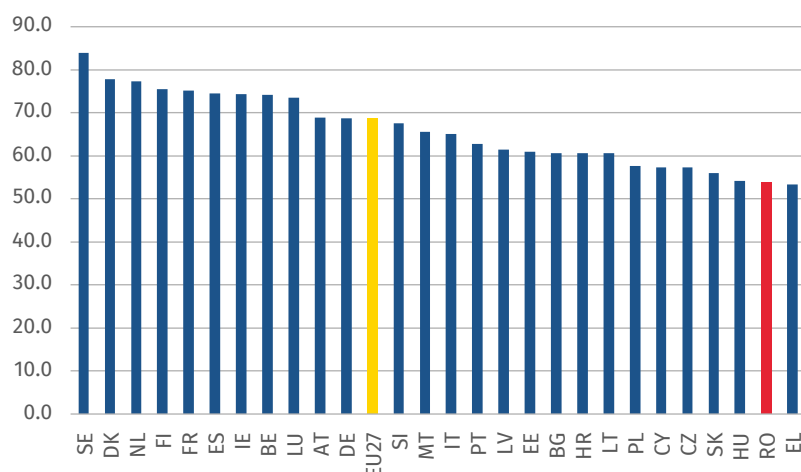
Source: EIGE 2022 and McKinsey and Company 2021.

Where Does Romania Stand in Terms of Gender Inequality?

This Gender Assessment highlights the significant gender inequalities across several dimensions that persist in Romania. The report reveals that gender gaps in education start early (though they reverse later on) and are often larger in rural areas and among the bottom 40 (B40) portion of the income distribution. Despite living longer, women see their overall and mental health as poorer, and report a higher level of unmet medical needs than men. Romania still has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the EU, which puts women at risk of health problems associated with early childbearing and can lead to school dropout, among other harmful factors. The gender gap in labor force participation rates (LFP) is now the highest in the EU, and there are significant gaps in entrepreneurship, especially for women living in poorer households. Women's political representation in the Romanian Parliament remains well below the EU-27 average and Romanian women remain underrepresented at the local level. Businesswomen are also underrepresented on the boards of the largest listed companies. Gender norms about the appropriate roles of women and men in providing child- and eldercare for family members seem to be sticky, as more than 8 out of 10 Romanians believe that women's primary role is to care for the home and family.

When looking at health, Romania faces significant challenges in improving outcomes and addressing gender disparities. Although life expectancy in the country has increased, it remains one of the lowest in the EU, with significant gender gaps, as women live almost eight years longer than men. Unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and heavy drinking are more prevalent among men, likely contributing to their lower life expectancy. Women also face challenges in accessing health care and experience age-related health issues for a longer period, which can impact their overall well-being and financial

security. The high rates of teenage pregnancy, limited access to sex education, and restrictions on abortion rights further compound the reproductive health risks for women, as do their higher rates of unmet medical needs and affordability barriers.

Despite higher health care utilization by women, including their seeking of more medical consultations and taking of prescribed medication, Romania's health care system faces limitations in terms of government spending, infrastructure, and quality of services. The country's health care expenditure falls significantly below the EU average and high-income countries, likely impacting health outcomes overall for both men and women. While there has been an increase in the numbers of hospital beds and physicians, the quality of services and the extent to which these developments address gender gaps remain unclear. Additionally, many health indicators lack sex-disaggregated data, hampering the comprehensive understanding of gender-specific health issues.

When looking at education overall, Romania scored only 52.2 index points in the knowledge dimension of the EIGE 2022 (the second-lowest score in the EU), which underscores how far the country is from parity in this indicator. Girls perform better than boys (by 5 percentage points) in all dimensions of the Human Capital Index (HCI) measures. To unpack these findings, this report assesses gender inequalities in education using a life cycle approach that considers the various stages of education individuals go through, from early childhood to tertiary education and beyond, when Romanians transition from school to work. Ensuring equal access to education is crucial to achieving gender equality and this begins with early childhood education and care.

From a gender-equality perspective, it is important to address both reversed and positive gender gaps in education and look beyond national averages. This report focuses on identifying areas where boys and girls are lagging. To tackle inequality, it is crucial to address gender disparities as part of a comprehensive agenda that also focuses on improving educational opportunities for lagging boys, because every individual should have the same opportunities to develop their skills, knowledge, and capabilities, regardless of their gender. Tackling reverse gender gaps in education also challenges societal norms and stereotypes that limit the potential of both girls and boys. Research suggests that boys with higher levels of education tend to have a greater likelihood of endorsing gender equality (Levtov et al. 2014). Moreover, when feasible based on data representativeness, this report presents evidence below the level of national averages to provide a more nuanced understanding of gender disparities, because national averages tend to mask underlying variations and inequalities within different segments of the population.

Net enrollment rates in early childhood education and care services (zero- to two-years-old) are very low for both sexes in Romania, particularly in rural areas and among children in poor families. Though the rates are significantly higher in urban areas, there are sizable gender differences disfavoring girls. Administrative data show that early childhood education enrollment for children ages zero to two in Romania was only 5.7 percent in 2020 (INS 2023)[4] and further analysis of survey data reveals extremely low levels in rural areas for both boys and girls. Though the levels are higher in urban areas,

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4   INS, Baze de date statistice, http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table.

wide gender gaps disfavoring girls are observed[5]. Romania's investment in early childhood education and care is less than 0.6 percent of its GDP, significantly lower than the EU and OECD average of just above 0.8 percent (OECD 2020b).

As Romanian children grow older, the enrollment disparity between girls and boys tends to lessen, but not across the board. Gaps among children ages three to six start to narrow in preprimary school. However, the progress in reducing this gender gap is not consistent across all socioeconomic groups, with gender discrepancies still present among children from lower-income families, suggesting that socioeconomic factors can play a role.

As children enter primary school, girls not only catch up with boys in terms of educational levels, the former surpass the latter, achieving significantly higher levels of schooling. However, there is a concerning trend of declining net enrollment rates in both primary and secondary education, with the rates for both boys and girls being significantly below EU standards. Leaving school early is even more acute among Roma, as most young Roma leave school early without further training or employment. Gender-related social norms could pressure men into leaving school early in rural areas, and teenage pregnancy could partly explain school dropout among girls. Studies investigating the heightened rates of teenage pregnancy in Romania do reveal a link to school dropout (Radu et al. 2022; Diaconescu et al. 2015), but further evidence is needed to establish a causal effect.

Though girls in older age groups have, on average, higher gross enrollment rates than boys in tertiary education, these rates are significantly below the EU average. Moreover, the tertiary education domain displays a significant level of gender segregation, with women being underrepresented in certain fields. Only 4 out of 10 graduates in STEM-related fields were female in 2016. On the contrary, the female share was significantly higher in fields that are traditionally considered to be more feminine, such as education (91 percent), health and welfare (72 percent), and social sciences (75 percent). Gender-related social norms around the role of men and women in society could also explain why access to education for men and women differs by income groups. Certain groups of students are disproportionately affected by gender-related social norms within the family and the educational system. Research from other countries indicates that parents, teachers, and parent-teacher interaction are significant in promoting gender equality in education.

One important finding across the educational system is that national averages can mask significant gender gaps between rural and urban areas and income groups. For example, there are gender gaps in net enrollment rates of 0- to 2-year-olds in rural and urban areas, net enrollment rates of 3- to 5-year-olds for all groups, net secondary enrollment rates of children between 16 and 18 years old for those living in urban areas or belonging to the B40, and net tertiary enrollment rates for those living in urban areas or belonging to the B40. Other groups experience small or reverse gender gaps. This information, which emerged as an important knowledge gap during consultations, is critical, because it enables policy makers to identify the unique challenges different groups face and develop tailored interventions to address their specific needs.

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5   The estimates are based on EU-SILC survey data and might deviate from estimates based on administrative data.

In addition to declining enrollment rates, the trends in the quality of education are a reason for concern: PISA test scores decreased between 2015 and 2018 for both boys and girls and Romanian female students underperform males in math test scores. Though measuring the quality of education is challenging, recent evidence from PISA indicates declining performance among both boys and girls, with more-significant drops observed among girls in science and math scores and among boys in reading scores. Though girls report a lower learning poverty rate early on, older female students in Romania perform worse than male students on math tests but better on reading tests and tend to have more- limited digital skills. We identify a number of potential drivers behind these gaps, mostly around social norms regarding the importance of education and masculinity.[6] In 2018, 14.7 percent of highly educated men (strongly) agreed that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl, compared to 20.2 percent of lower-educated men.[7] Low government expenditure could also explain the gaps compared to the EU average, as our benchmarking exercise shows low expenditure on education in the country compared to EU levels and high-income countries (benchmarking exercise).

When looking at economic opportunities, we found that although girls on average outperform boys in many dimensions of educational access and performance, these advantages do not translate into favorable labor market outcomes, as gender gaps in the labor market and entrepreneurship persist. Though educational attainment for adult (15+) women and men is similar, labor market gaps with respect to LFP and employment persist. One of the most concerning issues is the widening gender gap in LFP, which has reached the highest level in the EU. The gaps are particularly large among low-skilled workers in childbearing age and those living in rural areas and towns and suburbs, and among vulnerable populations, such as Roma.

Moreover, there is significant sectoral segregation among those employed; the shorter working life and accumulation of disadvantages lead to large gender gaps in pension income, exacerbating gender inequality in the later stages of life. When women are employed, they often work in different occupations and economic sectors than men, leading to a concentration of women in lower-paying jobs. In particular, 4 out of 10 tertiary students who graduate in STEM-related fields are female, but only 1 out of 10 employed women work in STEM occupations. Although the gender pay gap is lower than the EU average, women still earn less than men and the gap is largely unexplained by observed differences between genders. Finally, due to gender gaps in labor market outcomes, longer lifespans, different employment histories, interruptions in their careers related to family responsibilities, and lower contributions to pension schemes due to eligibility for pensions at a lower pension age, Romanian women often face disadvantages when it comes to pensions and experience a pension gender gap later in life.

We found that limited access to formal child- and eldercare represents an important barrier, and innovative evidence produced for this report indicates that implementing a publicly available, comprehensive childcare system could be an effective approach to increasing maternal employment. The employment rate of mothers tends to be lower for those with younger children. Currently, formal child- and eldercare arrangements are scarce in Romania compared to other countries in the region,

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6   World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org); Bratucu et al. 2020.
7   World Values Survey, 2023, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org).

and most care is provided by household members. Furthermore, a significant gap exists in childcare services provided to rural and urban households, with the latter having more access to various types of such services. New quasi-experimental evidence produced for this report exploiting the introduction of preprimary preparatory school classes targeting six-year-olds in 2012 shows that compulsory universal public care provision could have sizable impacts on maternal employment. The effects are larger for women who experience more constraints to employability, such as those living in rural areas or caring for additional children. Consultations highlight the lack of early childcare and eldercare services and the perpetuation of stereotypes and biases reinforcing the notion of women as primary caregivers in domestic settings as major barriers needing to be tackled to promote female economic opportunities.

Interestingly, the impact of compulsory public care provision on maternal employment is smaller for women living with elderly at home, suggesting that grandmothers or grandfathers might absorb some of the care responsibilities previously assumed by mothers. Nevertheless, the use of care by the elderly to increase female LFP is not a long-term solution, given the increasing gender gaps in health among those over 64 years old. Real solutions require addressing the unequal care burden between genders and facilitating the balance of work and care responsibilities for both men and women. In addition to care responsibilities, inflexible work arrangements and flaws in parental policies play a role in gender gaps. Notably, most employed women in Romania work full-time, suggesting that the lack of flexible hours imposes a constraint.

Entrepreneurship is an increasingly important source of employment for women across many countries. Still, new evidence for this report shows that female entrepreneurship is undercapitalized in Romania and that there is a sizable entrepreneurial gender gap in terms of income. The incidence of entrepreneurship (proxied by self-employment) among women is significantly lower than among men, even when women are compared with men with similar characteristics. Other measures suggest similar results. For example, only 17.2 percent of companies have a female top manager, and just one-third have at least one female owner. Female entrepreneurs report lower income than their male counterparts. Our results suggest that improving the situation of poor women and men through self-employment could be one important entry point for tackling poverty and inequality in Romania. This would have multiple benefits, including sparking more-sustainable growth patterns, empowering women in the middle and long run, increasing economic activities around social entrepreneurship, and facilitating the green transition.

The drivers behind these gender gaps in the labor market and entrepreneurship are numerous and complex. Limited skills are a constraint among older women and Roma, but other barriers also matter. Unequal care distribution, gender-related social norms, unequal access to assets, gaps in financial inclusion, and flaws in parental leave policies are some of the realities that might explain gender gaps in labor market outcomes. This report finds that gender-related social norms around men's and women's roles likely intertwine with most gender gaps in Romania. The World Values Surveys 2017–2022 found that 4 out of 10 men (strongly) agree that men make better business executives than women.[8] Strikingly, there are significant negative correlations between the probability of being self-

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8   World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org).

employed as a woman and living in a household with at least one child, but positive correlations with having access to childcare. These results suggest that while motherhood and entrepreneurship are difficult to combine, childcare makes "mompreneurship" more feasible. Addressing these underlying factors is crucial for promoting gender equality in the labor market and entrepreneurship, as well as for reducing gender inequality more broadly.

Breaking through the glass ceiling does not benefit women alone; the literature shows that gender-balanced and inclusive decision-making is good for business, increases economic growth, and drives positive societal changes. According to the 2022 EIGE Gender Equality Index, Romania ranks 21st among the EU-27 member states in terms of the power dimension, which measures gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic, and social spheres. Women's political representation in the Romanian Parliament is well below the EU-27 average of 33 percent and decreased in the last electoral cycle in 2020 to only 19.1 percent (it had been 21.9 percent in the previous cycle). In 2022, only two women were cabinet ministers (9.1 percent), and a woman is yet to be elected as head of state. On the same index, Romania ranks last among the EU-27 in terms of women's economic decision-making power. According to EIGE's 2022 index, when it comes to economic power, Romania's score in women's economic decision-making decreased from 19 in 2019 to 17.8 in 2020, with few women leading and being represented on boards and serving as CEOs of the top listed companies on the stock exchange. Various drivers of women's underrepresentation in politics and at the top levels of economic decision-making are explored in this report, including sociocultural and ideological factors, lack of women's political role models, the electoral system, the legislative framework, and the ideologies and organizational culture of political parties.

Freedom from violence is an essential domain of agency, and yet gender-based violence remains hidden in plain sight in Romania, undocumented and invisible in the public agenda. GBV data are marked by several issues that make it challenging to capture the scale and nature of the problem accurately. One key issue is underreporting, as survivors may not come forward due to fear of stigma, shame, or retaliation, which leads to underestimation of the issue. Furthermore, not all forms of GBV are criminalized, because data collection methods are not standardized, leading to incomplete or unreliable data. Additionally, GBV research is often underfunded, and resources are not allocated to support comprehensive data collection and analysis. Finally, technology-facilitated violence, such as online harassment or stalking, poses new challenges for data collection, as it can be difficult to track and identify the perpetrators. These data issues can limit the effectiveness of prevention and response efforts. Based on the available data, Romania remains a major country of origin for human trafficking in Europe and is among the top five countries in the EU when it comes to human trafficking victims. Similarly, despite seeing a decline in recent years, Romania has the highest national incidence of early marriages in the EU, and early marriage is even more prevalent among Roma girls. According to a survey conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU, Romania, and Poland are the EU countries registering the highest rate of physical or sexual attacks motivated by a person's identifying as LGBTI. Hence, despite having a constitution as well as specific laws that address the issue of domestic violence, gender stereotypes, patriarchal social norms coupled with persisting gendered economic inequalities, and limited political participation, as well as ethnic and racial bias and discrimination, render Romanian women vulnerable to violence, exploitation, and exclusion both within the household and in public.

The making of this report benefited from a wide range of stakeholder consultations, and consequently, the important role being played by women's rights organizations and groups in setting and shaping the gender equality agenda in the country is highlighted. In particular, women's rights organizations have been complementing the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and other key actors in knowledge generation to fill gender data gaps and contribute broadly to (1) service provision and advocacy for survivors of GBV, (2) women's access to health and to reproductive health and services, (3) education and norm-changing educational interventions focused on increasing awareness of equality and diversity, (4) the tackling of discrimination and the empowerment of Roma women, and (5) the accentuating of intersectionality in the gender discourse and programming.

The analyses conducted in this report were subject to important data constraints and knowledge gaps. For new analyses, we mainly relied on data from the EU-SILC 2020, the latest available survey round to which we had access when preparing this report. Consequently, data often only refer to 2019–20. We also encountered challenges in obtaining updated data for the post-COVID-19 period in the case of several other data sources we relied on. Next, data were often unavailable at disaggregated levels or suffered from small samples, so our disaggregated analyses mainly focus on rural versus urban areas, the B40 versus the T60, and different skill levels. We also encountered data restrictions in the case of administrative data and noted these caveats accordingly. Moreover, in most cases, it was not possible to disaggregate data by ethnicity, which greatly limited our capability to shed light on the lived realities of Roma women and men. Lastly, we identified several knowledge gaps as we prepared this report, especially around potential drivers behind observed (reversed) gender gaps. While we tried to close some of the identified knowledge gaps, closing all of them was not possible in the scope of this report and would require more-detailed and focused analyses and studies. Closing these gaps in future research would benefit the agenda of achieving gender equality in Romania. Section 3.3 outlines the data and knowledge gaps in detail.

Overall, this report highlights the urgent need to address gender gaps in Romania in order to achieve gender equality and improve the situation of women in the country across several dimensions. Additionally, addressing gender gaps and generating additional evidence could foster evidence-based policy making around gender equality. There are several policies and interventions that could address the key gender gaps and improve the situation of women in Romania.

What Policies and Interventions Can Promote Gender Equality in Romania?

Romania has a strong legal and policy framework for gender equality and has established national strategies to achieve gender equality, but systematic gender mainstreaming is not the norm. By law, women have equal rights to men in Romania. The Romanian Constitution guarantees equal opportunities for both genders in terms of accessing jobs and receiving equal pay. The country has also passed laws that protect maternity and parental leave and prohibit discrimination based on sex. In terms of laws and regulations impacting women's economic opportunities, the country performs positively, but there is a notable gap in pension reforms. In the Women, Business, and Law Index by the World Bank in 2023, the country achieved a score of 90.6, surpassing the regional average for Europe and Central Asia (ECA) (84.4). The National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men is the primary governmental

body tasked with gender mainstreaming in all policies and government sectors and coordinates the implementation of measures spelled out in two major international conventions to which Romania is a party, UN CEDAW and the EU Istanbul Convention. The agency has been instrumental in instituting policy measures to promote gender equality and address domestic and sexual violence, such as the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence Synergy 2021-2030, adopted in June 2021, and the National Strategy to Promote Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence 2022–2027, which the government approved in December 2022.

While the law does not offer strong protection for LGBTI persons, the courts have been progressive in upholding their rights in the country. In June 2020, the Romanian Constitutional Court ruled against a proposed law that aimed at banning the discussion of gender in education, particularly the theory and stakeholder mapping of opinion on gender identity. Nonetheless, Romania remains one of the few countries in the EU that do not offer avenues for same-sex couples to enter civil marriage or civil partnership and does not recognize same-sex couples who get married abroad.

Romania also has sector-specific policies and initiatives to advance gender outcomes. The Ministry of Education has priorities to reduce school dropout, fight educational poverty, eliminate school segregation, and enhance the quality of pre-university education. Romania's entrepreneurship strategy included some gender-targeted initiatives from 2014 to 2020 and currently relies mainly on EU directives applicable to the private sector. There have been various initiatives to foster creation and growth of SMEs in the country. While some of the initiatives do not have specific monitoring or targets for female-led start-ups, incentives for female leadership or employment in such start-ups are included. The Romanian government has made efforts to reduce GBV, including (1) passing new and amending laws, (2) training 1,100 gender equality experts and 4,000 technicians to implement local and national strategies promoting gender equality and eliminating domestic violence, and (3) expanding the provision of shelters for those experiencing domestic violence. However, it is important to note that attitudes toward GBV continue to affect the effective prevention of and response to it. Nevertheless, country consultations and stakeholder mapping do confirm that most sector-specific policies and actions aim to enhance outcomes within their respective sectors, though there is a lack of systematic gender mainstreaming and limited recognition of the inadvertent consequences on gender disparities in other sectors. As a result, there is an opportunity to incorporate the gender perspective throughout the cycle of sector-specific policies and gain a deeper understanding of the unintended effects on gender outcomes. Additionally, consultations revealed that ANES, operating as an agency rather than a ministry, faces limitations within its mandate and encounters funding shortfalls for its various actions and programs.

Despite the robust legislative and institutional framework in place, challenges persist in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating concrete measures for gender equality. The National Institute of Statistics (INS), in collaboration with the Department for Sustainable Development, has established national targets and indicators to track progress on SDG 5, which focuses on gender equality. However, the continuous monitoring of indicators related to unpaid work is hindered by the lack of up-to-date data from time-use surveys. Data on GBV also face limitations in accurately capturing the scale and nature of the problem. Additionally, the absence of reliable ethnically disaggregated data

poses challenges to the understanding and addressing of gender gaps specific to the Roma population. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive knowledge and data regarding gender gaps in decision-making processes. Enhancing women's representation in politics at all levels and indicators measuring the number of women candidates participating in elections would provide valuable insights with regard to tracking progress in this area. Consultations revealed a limited systematic monitoring and evaluation of gender-disaggregated outcomes, further compounding the challenge. Impact evaluations are limited and the potential gendered impacts of fiscal policy are also unknown.

In order to improve data monitoring and evaluation, Romania could adopt innovative gender budgeting and monitoring tools like PARIS21 and the EIGE Gender Budgeting Tool. The country took the first steps in gender budgeting, promoting a pilot program implemented by ANES with EC funding. These efforts can be scaled up. PARIS21's framework proposes ways to assess the ability of national statistical offices to produce high-quality gender statistics that meet users' needs. EIGE's Gender Budgeting Tool, on the other hand, provides guidance to managing authorities, intermediate bodies, and gender equality bodies at the EU level on implementing gender budgeting as a gender mainstreaming tool in EU Funds processes. Gender budgeting promotes accountability and efficiency in the management of EU funds while ensuring compliance with EU legal requirements. Consultations validate gender budgeting as an emerging opportunity, particularly by building on the ongoing efforts and pilot program implemented by ANES with EC funding.

This report identifies a set of sectoral policies and interventions that can help with narrowing gender gaps. The recommendations are based on the constraints and opportunities identified across the three broad dimensions (human capital, economic opportunities, and voice and agency) and on international evidence concerning what works in countries with similar development levels and contexts.

Human Capital

Stakeholder consultations confirmed health and education as key sectors where potential interventions to reduce gender gaps would yield the most results. Addressing areas where girls fall behind boys, as well as areas where boys fall behind girls in their educational life cycles is crucial to achieving gender parity in that sector. While it is important to implement programs that specifically target the barriers girls face, it is equally essential to recognize that Romanian boys are also experiencing alarming educational outcomes. The current situation in Romania reflects adverse trends in human capital accumulation, affecting educational outcomes for both genders on multiple levels. By addressing the declining educational outcomes among boys and girls, interventions can ensure that all children have equal access to quality education, creating a level playing field where both genders have the same chance to develop their skills, talents, and knowledge. While Romania significantly lags behind the EU average for boys and girls, closing these gaps might help close the significant gap with the EU average regarding gender equality more broadly. It is therefore important to prioritize policies and programs that address the education gaps highlighted in this report.

In education, the following high-level recommendations can help address gender disparities in the sector:

1. **Study and address the constraints, both in terms of demand and supply, that affect access to early childhood education (ECE) for children ages zero to two.**
   Recommendations for addressing low enrollment rates of zero- to two-year-olds in early childhood education (ECE) are based on evidence highlighting constraints related to availability, affordability, and acceptability. These constraints include limited availability of formal public childcare centers, an increasing reliance on private institutions for childcare, a decline in the number of available creches/nurseries and kindergartens, and a low level of affordability among the poor. Additionally, a significant proportion of children under three years old are cared for solely by their parents. To address these issues, the following interventions are proposed: (1) conduct a comprehensive study to assess the demand for and supply of formal childcare and ECE services, considering gender-sensitive factors. This assessment will inform the development of targeted interventions to improve access; (2) implement financial incentives to support enrollment among economically disadvantaged families, aiming to alleviate the affordability challenge they face; and (3) increase public investment in ECE, focusing on enhancing the quality of services and expanding available infrastructure. These interventions will contribute to improving acceptability, encouraging parental workforce participation, and increasing willingness to utilize institutional care.

2. **Implement gender-sensitive policies that target access, supply, and usage of ECE.**
   As mentioned above, gender gaps in net enrollment rates for three- to five-year-olds are observed across all groups. International evidence suggests that families prioritize sending boys to school when resources are limited (MEB Primary Education General Directorate and UNICEF Turkey 2011). Therefore, we make the following recommendations: (1) implement targeted interventions to address financial constraints and ensure equal access to early ECE for all children, (2) conduct a study to identify additional constraints faced by girls in accessing ECE, and (3) develop gender-sensitive policies that focus on improving access, supply, and usage of ECE for three- to five-year-old girls.

3. **Develop policies specifically aimed at reducing school dropout and improving low enrollment rates.**
   Implementing interventions to reverse the recent negative trends in educational outcomes among both boys and girls in Romania is also critical, due to the spillover effects on economic opportunities and voice and agency. Negative trends in educational outcomes can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes. By reversing these trends, interventions can challenge societal norms that limit the potential of boys and girls, thus encouraging young people to pursue diverse educational paths and careers. Interventions that improve educational outcomes for both genders in Romania will in turn endow boys and girls with greater agency in their lives, careers, and contributions to society. From an economic standpoint, a well-educated population is crucial for growth and productivity. By ensuring that both boys and girls receive a quality education, interventions contribute to developing a skilled workforce. Finally, by reversing negative trends in educational outcomes, interventions pave the way for more equal participation and decision-making by both genders. Therefore, urgent action is needed to avoid vicious cycles around gender inequality.

Apostu (2014) identifies three key reasons why children are out of school and at risk of dropping out in Romania: (a) sociocultural demand-side factors, (b) economic demand-side factors, and (c) supply-side barriers. These factors can affect boys and girls asymmetrically, leading to (reversed) gender gaps. To tackle these factors, the following interventions are recommended, based on best practices: (1) implement norm-based interventions to challenge social norms that restrict boys' and girls' educational participation; (2) conduct interventions to raise awareness among parents and children about the importance of education; (3) provide teacher training on gender stereotypes and the sensitivities around the marginalization of and discrimination against Roma students; (4) implement school-based violence-prevention interventions; (5) increase public spending on education and improve its quality and attractiveness; (6) establish reentry programs and childcare services for young mothers; (7) address marginalization and discrimination faced by Roma boys and girls through bottom-up approaches and (8) implement (conditional) cash transfer programs, which have been shown to improve educational outcomes

4. **Incentivize and invest in the development of girls' skills and interests in STEM and ICT and of boys' skills in reading and female-dominated fields of study**
   Taking action to reduce gender segregation in the choice of academic majors and bridging the digital literacy gap could contribute to reducing gender inequalities in the future. Our research indicates that gender segregation persists in academic fields of study and that there are noticeable disparities in digital literacy rates between males and females. Implementing measures to enhance girls' digital literacy skills and stimulate their interest in STEM or ICT-related subjects could help address these gender gaps in the future. Some strategies to achieve this include providing role models, partnering with the private sector, addressing gender stereotypes in learning materials, engaging parents, and encouraging girls to participate in extracurricular activities. To reduce gender segregation in education and encourage and invest in the development of girls' skills and interests in STEM and ICT fields, as well as boys' skills in reading and fields traditionally dominated by females, international evidence shows the lack of role models and gender stereotypes may play a key role. Potential entry points are (1) facilitation of interactions with mentors who have similar backgrounds, (2) implementation of norm-based interventions to challenge gender stereotypes, (3) collaboration with the private sector to address biases in learning materials and parental attitudes, and (4) addressing gender stereotypes in the education system through various interventions.

5. **Understand gender equality as a multidimensional subject**
   Evidence produced for this report shows that gender gaps are multidimensional and constraints may be more binding for some groups. Therefore, it is critical to implement targeted interventions, with a focus on vulnerable groups, such as Roma boys and girls.

6. **Implement policies that address reversed gender gaps**
   To tackle reversed gender gaps, Romania should follow international recommendations around the underachievement and low enrollment of boys and roll out interventions in the macro-, meso-, and microenvironments (UNESCO 2022). These include interventions to target gendered social norms around traditional concepts of masculinity and violence-prevention programs.

7. **Allocate funds for gender-sensitive research projects and monitoring and evaluation initiatives**
   This report identifies a lack of systematic, accessible, updated studies on what works best in the educational sector in Romania, especially around gender gaps. Resources should be provided for undertaking gender-sensitive research projects and monitoring and evaluation initiatives in order to identify what works best in the Romanian context and inform evidence-based decision-making.

8. **Generate systematic information on Roma children compared to non-Roma children, as well as data on child labor and children's time use**
   Given the lack of ethnic identifiers in official household surveys and administrative data, it is important to generate and make public systematic information on Roma children. Administrative data by subgroups and on child labor and time use of children can enhance the understanding of educational outcomes and related factors.

9. **Increase public spending on education**
   Given the low education spending in Romania by EU standards, it is recommended that public spending on education be increased in order to reduce competition for limited resources and address inequalities, in tandem with conducting a gender-sensitive public expenditure review of the educational sector to understand the role of health spending in narrowing gender gaps in the sector.

10. **Develop gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) and utilize an operationalized gender-sensitive assessment tool**
    To identify and overcome gender barriers, develop effective strategies, and implement policy interventions, it is recommended that gender-responsive education sector planning be developed and a gender-sensitive assessment tool to identify and overcome gender barriers in the education system be utilized.

To address gender gaps in the health sector, we identified seven high-level policy recommendations, drawing from our diagnostic evidence, previous studies in Romania, and best international practices:

1. **Develop gender-sensitive political strategies at the national level throughout the entire process of implementation, from goal setting and budgeting to monitoring and evaluation**
   To develop gender-sensitive strategies at the national level in the health sector, it is crucial to apply gender mainstreaming approaches, which involves integrating the perspectives and experiences of both women and men throughout the entire policy process, and to learn from best practices). Romania could implement several tailored interventions to address gender gaps in self-perceived health status and mental health and in access to healthcare. Key constraints contributing to these gaps include the stigmatization of mental health, lack of available infrastructure, and social factors affecting women disproportionately. To tackle these issues, international evidence (Thornicroft et al. 2022) shows that campaigns, networks, national action plans, and increased funding for mental health care can be effective. Affordability is another challenge, particularly for women from vulnerable and marginalized groups, and targeted interventions should address financial constraints. Unhealthy behavioral patterns among Romanian women, such as lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating habits, can be addressed through interventions targeting

time constraints, gender stereotypes, social norms, lack of facilities, and low self-esteem, with potential benefits observed from matched mentoring programs for girls in sports.

2. **Recognize gender gaps in the health sector as a complex issue and take into account various dimensions.**
   Gender disparities are more evident in low-income and rural areas. The extent of these limitations varies among different groups. Financial constraints differ, particularly for women, rural households, and low-income groups. Therefore, to promote gender equality in health outcomes, interventions should be specifically tailored and targeted. This understanding needs to be incorporated into national strategies, considering the different vulnerabilities faced by various groups.

3. **Invest in the health of women during their childbearing years**
   This report found concerning disparities in various health outcomes among women of childbearing age in Romania, with significant gaps compared to the EU average. To address these gaps, the following tailored interventions are recommended:

   - *Address teenage pregnancy:* Provide special support and access to education for young women, including reentry programs) that consider their perspectives and challenges. Address their childcare needs and provide counseling and social support to help them overcome challenges and stigma

   - *Allocate resources for prevention services:* Increase public spending on prevention services and per capita spending on health services for women of reproductive age. Conduct awareness campaigns targeting women, and incentivize health staff to work in rural areas while providing training to address stereotypes and social stigmas.

   - *Address stigmatization of abortions:* Implement norm-based interventions and workshops to combat social stigmas associated with abortions at both the individual and structural levels.

   - *Improve access to contraception:* Incorporate reimbursement schemes into healthcare policies to ensure comprehensive coverage, specifically considering the needs of adolescents and vulnerable populations. Offer counseling services, online information, and communication campaigns to destigmatize and provide information about modern contraceptives. Subsidies for low-income and vulnerable groups, as well as involving boys and men in reproductive health discussions, can also be effective strategies. Romania could look into the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Implementation Toolkit by UNESCO, which provides guidance on a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality.

4. **Implement strategies that improve the health outcomes of men**
   To address the gender gaps in longevity and improve men's health outcomes, interventions should focus on tackling unhealthy behaviors observed among men. Section 2.1 highlights that men are more prone to substance usage, such as alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes. Effective solutions include

targeted interventions to address alcohol and drug usage and smoking among boys and men. Awareness campaigns and prevention programs are potential strategies to consider

5. **Implement strategies to encourage men to utilize health services when necessary**
International evidence (Chatmon 2020) suggests that men may face social stigma when seeking health care. To address this issue in Romania, research on whether social stigma limits men's use of health care services and what additional constraints may exist should be undertaken. If this hypothesis is confirmed, interventions targeting social norms and behavior should be implemented to overcome these barriers.

6. **Foster collaboration among the INS, academia, and relevant ministries to enhance the overall statistical system for collecting gender-disaggregated health data**
Close collaboration among the INS, academia, relevant ministries, along with political champions and civil society, is crucial to enhance the statistical system for gender-disaggregated health outcomes in Romania. This involves systematic data collection and analysis that considers factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability. This collaboration is key to addressing the knowledge gaps identified in this report, including Roma health outcomes, disaggregated contraceptive usage data, barriers to abortions, drivers of mental health outcomes, and factors contributing to reverse gender gaps in health. The closing of these gaps can facilitate evidence-based decision-making in the health sector.

7. **Allocate more public spending toward health initiatives**
Compared to the EU average, Romania's public funding for health outcomes is low. This can lead to competition among different population groups for limited resources, resulting in inequalities for marginalized and vulnerable populations. These disparities can also contribute to gender gaps. To address this issue and promote gender equity, it is urgent that the government of Romania increase its financial investment in the health sector. In addition, a gender-sensitive public expenditure review of the health sector using gender-budgeting tools should be conducted so that funds are allocated where they are most needed.

Economic Opportunities

The following seven high-level policy measures can help improve outcomes for working-age Romanian women, including salaried workers, entrepreneurs, and pensioners, based on barriers identified in this diagnostic and international best practices.

1. **Improve skills among older women cohorts**
Implement targeted lifelong learning programs and conduct skills assessments to enhance the employability of older women in the evolving labor market. Doing so can help to narrow the skills gaps among older women cohorts in the labor market and increase their chances of finding employment.

2. **Promote redistribution of care responsibilities to make possible a better combination of family and work and flexible work arrangements**

   Given the role that unequal care distributions play in the gender gaps in labor market outcomes and entrepreneurship in Romania, a strategy that makes possible a better combination of work and family life is recommended to improve these outcomes. Encouraging a better balance between family and work through flexible work arrangements and the redistribution of care responsibilities between men and women is critical. Similarly, a greater amount of paid paternity leave and greater share of parental leave earmarked for fathers and compulsory universal public childcare could increase the female labor supply.

3. **Improve attitudes and address discrimination**

   Given the evidence presented on sticky gender norms around the role of women as primary care provider and lack of role models, underrepresentation of women in STEM, and the evidence of "unexplained" wage gaps that point to potential gender discrimination, some entry points include interventions to challenge gender norms and stereotypes through targeted information campaigns, educational initiatives, and awareness-raising activities for employers, employees, and educational institutions about the benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces.

4. **Gender-sensitive perspective for policies targeting refugees**

   A gender-sensitive perspective in policies targeting the refugee population should be incorporated to ensure positive distributional effects and monitor impacts on vulnerable populations.

5. **Foster an overall healthier entrepreneurial ecosystem**

   Promoting female entrepreneurship could also positively affect the green transition and inclusive economic models. Women are more interested in "impact" entrepreneurship and are motivated by intentions to make a difference. Therefore, they could play a leading role in creating more-sustainable and inclusive business models, particularly in the primary sector, and could assume a leading role in the green transition. These findings highlight the need to foster an environment that facilitates female entrepreneurship, which could have far-reaching economic and societal benefits. Several tailored interventions could be adopted to foster an overall healthier entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania, while tackling some of the constraints disproportionately affecting women. These include (1) improving access to entrepreneurial training and education even during childhood; (2) fostering women entrepreneurship networks; (3) increasing the investment power of female investors; (4) providing sustainable financing schemes targeting gender-smart investment and addressing harmful gender norms around women in business; (5) addressing workplace harassment and discrimination through prevention programs; and (6) improving access to childcare and facilitating a better work-life balance for mothers and aspiring mothers.

6. **Implement a nuanced and tailored approach to female entrepreneurship that considers the unique challenges faced by different groups and intersectoral approaches**

   Our diagnostic and the consultations we undertook highlight the need for a nuanced and tailored approach to promoting female entrepreneurship in Romania. The study shows that women in the lowest income quintile and those living in rural areas face more-severe barriers to entrepreneurship

and yet rely on it more. The challenges for women with and without children also differ. We recommend taking a tailored approach that considers the unique challenges faced by different groups of women. This approach should include targeted interventions to improve access to education, finance, and childcare and should address harmful gender norms.

7. **Promote gender equality in pensions**

   The gender pension gap in Romania can be addressed by implementing interventions that incentivize LFP among working-age women, such as the ones described above, complemented with pension reform. With an aging population and a projected old-age dependency ratio of 58 percent by 2075, the gender pension gap in the country raises concerns about poverty and inequality levels. To address this issue, redistributing care responsibilities between men and women and implementing strategies that make possible a better combination of family and work would be effective in decreasing gender inequalities in the labor market and entrepreneurship. Encouraging remote work and flexible work models would also benefit women's LFP. The pension system should transition to a sustainable and fair system that ensures all contributors are treated equitably, including women. Pension reform can include equalizing the ages at which men and women can retire with full pension benefits and explicitly accounting for periods of absence due to childcare in pension benefits (World Bank 2023a). These interventions would help to close the gender pension gap for future generations and promote greater gender equality in Romania. Finally, addressing gender gaps in the labor market and promoting gender equality requires intersectoral approaches and close cooperation between public and private sectors. Monitoring and evaluation initiatives should be implemented that use gender-sensitive indicators to track progress and the effectiveness of interventions.

Voice and Agency

Addressing gender inequality in political and economic decision-making requires a comprehensive policy response. The following three high-level policy measures can help improve outcomes for Romanian women, in political and economic decision-making:

1. **Establish a robust gender equality institutional architecture that can leverage gender equality performance indicators by means of funding, sanctions, and other monitoring mechanisms to ensure that gender gaps are addressed, whether the EU or other international partners are the source of funding**

   At the highest levels, we recommend establishing a robust gender equality institutional architecture that can leverage gender-equality performance indicators through funding, sanctions, and other monitoring mechanisms to ensure that gender gaps are addressed, whether the source of funding is the EU or other international partners. We also recommend the following set of tailored interventions: (1) the implementation of temporary special measures such as gender quotas, shown by research to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes; these "hard" measures can be complemented with soft measures, such as campaigns to encourage more women to run for office (see next policy measure); (2) the improvement of the collection and the instituting of real-time availability of Permanent Electoral Authority data regarding women's representation on electoral lists and as elected officials; and (3) the creation of a database on gender, diversity, and inclusion in

the business world that specifically targets the companies listed on the Bucharest Stock Exchange, so as to ensure transparency regarding the gender composition of the boards of directors and other relevant committees of the listed companies in accordance with European best practices.

2. **Develop awareness and communication tools targeting change in social norms with regards to (a) societal norms around violence, (b) women's contributions to economic development, and (c) encouraging more women to run for office or seek top government or private sector jobs**
Addressing social norms is a complex and long-term task. It requires adopting an evidence-based approach, harnessing the efforts of various stakeholders, and close monitoring to ensure that the methods are responsive to the context. The following specific interventions are recommended: (1) The use of gender equality experts and internationally used tools such as gender assessments, gender audits, and gender action plans to grow a more gender-equitable culture in political organizations, public institutions, the National Bank, and businesses; and (2) The development and implementation of evidence-driven awareness and communication tools targeting change in social norms with regard to societal norms around violence, women's contribution to economic development, and encouraging more women to run for office or seek top government and private sector jobs.

3. **Amend the Domestic Violence Law to incorporate the principles of the Council of Europe fully to ensure a harmonized cross-institutional framework for combating gender-based violence**
To tackle gender-based violence, the key high-level action is to amend the Domestic Violence Law to incorporate the principles of the Council of Europe fully. This will ensure a harmonized cross-institutional framework for combating GBV. The amendment of the law will also create an enabling environment for the compiling of coordinated institutional data and monitoring to trace survivors' trajectories across services. This action can create an enabling environment for the following set of tailored interventions: (1) The improving of data collection and real-time data availability on the prevalence and incidence of all forms of GBV; (2) The harmonizing of institutional data collection and monitoring to trace survivors' trajectories across services and ensure the adequate financing, accessibility, availability, and effectiveness of GBV prevention and response services provision, and (3) The determination of allocations of adequate financing for GBV services, awareness-raising campaigns, and efforts to change societal norms around violence. By taking these steps, progress can be made in reducing GBV and promoting a safer and more equitable society for all.

Finally, given the cross-sectoral nature of gender issues, the successful collaboration of diverse stakeholders, encompassing both public and private sectors, will play a pivotal role in addressing gender gaps. It is crucial to recognize that policies implemented in one sector can have broader repercussions, possibly impacting gender disparities in other sectors, either intentionally or not. The consultations we undertook for this reported highlighted the reality that current policies may have unintended effects on gender gaps and yet that there is limited recognition of these cross-sectoral impacts. Thus, establishing robust partnerships and mechanisms for collaboration is imperative to ensure that policies and initiatives are harmonized and collectively contribute to the overarching objective of achieving gender equality. This collaborative approach will not only enhance the effectiveness of gender-related policies, but will also potentially mitigate the adverse effects they may have on other domains.

Chapter 1
Introduction

Gender equity is a vital aspect of the country's development process and as such cannot be overlooked. There are several reasons why this is the case.

First, gender gaps need to be addressed to promote inclusive economic growth. Despite progress around the world, gender disparities still exist, as evidenced by many important indicators of well-being, such as access to education and health, economic opportunities, equal pay, and voice and agency. In many countries, women are clearly disadvantaged in these areas, and Romania, as shown in this report, is no exception. Gender inequality can lead to the underutilization of a significant portion of a country's talent pool, hindering innovation and economic growth. Evidence collected around the world shows that moving toward gender equality can improve female labor force participation, human capital, and total factor productivity, leading to higher economic growth (Cuberes and Teignier 2014; Klasen and Lamanna 2009). In Romania, the potential gains are significant: a recent study shows that the economy could grow by 8.7 percent (additional GDP) by 2030 by eliminating gender equality (McKinsey and Company 2021). In addition, gender inequality can result in an inefficient use of resources, an inefficiency that can be exacerbated if women realize lower returns on their investments in human capital. This may discourage girls from pursuing further education and training (Cavaglia et al. 2020).

Romania's closing demographic dividend and significant gender gaps in labor force participation mean the need for action is even more acute. Romania's demographic dividend is closing in the next decade, partly due to migration trends, but also due to a decline in fertility rates and a rise in longevity, with economic and social implications. According to the 2022 census, the population will continue to decrease, driven mainly by negative natural growth and external migration.[9] Going forward, according to UN Population projections, the relative size of older age groups will rise (figure 1), a development will that will lead to an increase in the age dependency ratio (figure 2).[10] These demographic changes have important implications for the labor market and the health and pension systems. The slow growth in the working-age population implies that the labor force is also expected to grow slowly without significant increases in labor force participation, particularly that of females. These trends can increase job mismatches. Furthermore, as the age dependency ratio increases, the need for a financially robust pension scheme increases; an aging population will exert pressure on the health system and could worsen fiscal policy outcomes. Women's participation in the labor force can contribute to economic growth by increasing the size of the workforce and boosting productivity, thus contributing to the sustainability of social security systems.

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9   According to the 2011 census, the stable population of the country was 20.12 million, 1 million more than today.

10   As figure 2 makes clear, the increase in the age dependency ratio is driven by an increase in the old-age dependency ratio. In contrast, the child dependency ratio has been relatively constant since 2004, though a slight increase in the share of children in the overall population is projected.

Figure 1. Population by Age Groups, 1950–2100 (in Thousands)
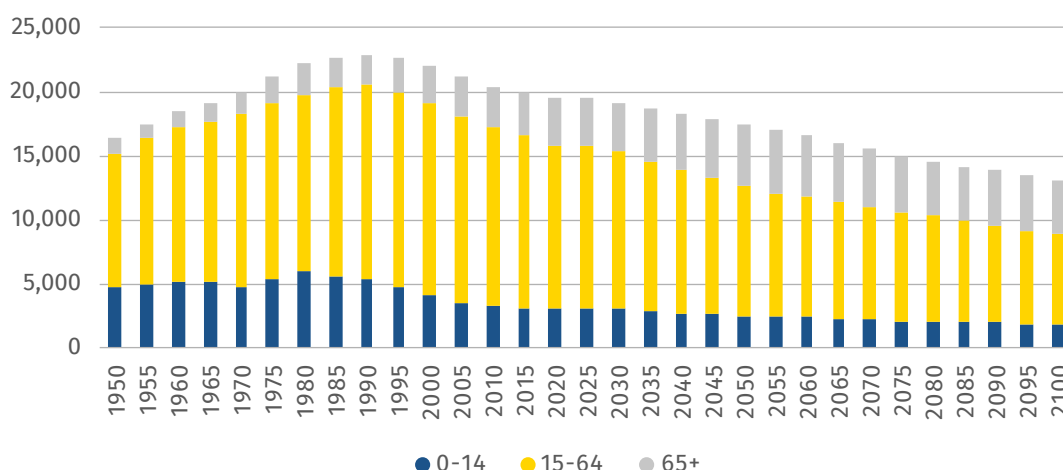
Source: UN Population Projections 2022.

Note: Population projections (values from 2021 onward) rely on the medium-fertility variant.

Figure 2. Age Dependency Ratios, 1950–2100 (Estimated and Projected)
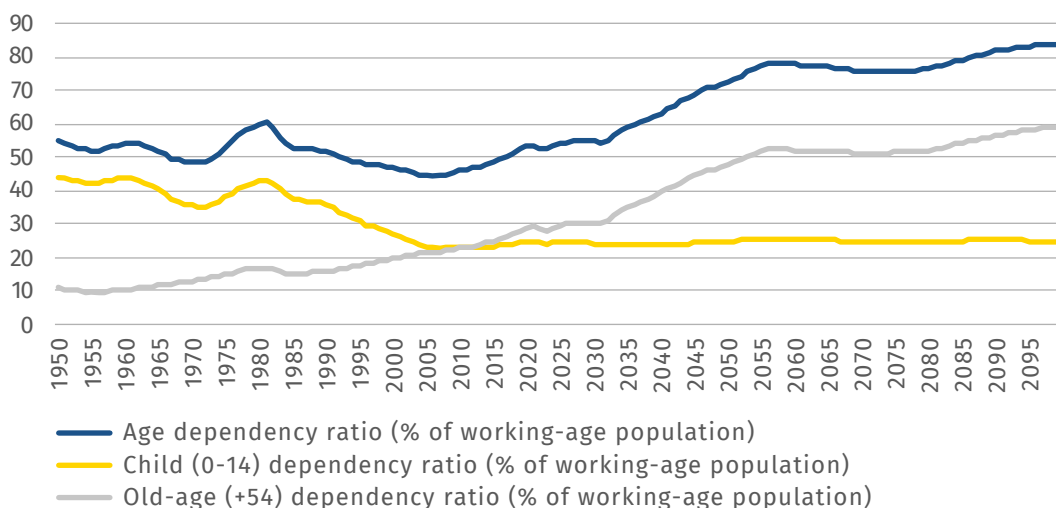
Source: UN Population Projections 2022.

Note: Population projections (values from 2021 onward) rely on the medium-fertility variant.

Second, persistent gender gaps in crucial measures not only hurt disadvantaged groups, but also hinder progress toward other critical development goals, such as poverty reduction and improvements in overall levels of human capital and economic opportunities. Because of Romania's significant and barely improving gender gaps, the country is in the second-lowest place (26th) among EU-27 member states on the 2022 Gender Equality Index (GEI) compiled by the European Institute for

Gender Equality (EIGE).[11] The average score of Romania on the GEI 2022 (which uses data from 2020) is 53.7 out of 100 points, well below the EU-27 average of 68.6 points (only Greece has a lower score), indicating a high level of gender inequality. Moreover, since 2010, Romania's score has increased by only 2.6 points.[12] Romania also ranks lower than most European countries on several other composite gender equality indicators.[13] At the same time, the at-risk-of-poverty rate in Romania is among the highest in the EU, and there is a growing gender gap in at-risk-of-poverty rates, indicating that women are becoming more susceptible to poverty than men. These gender gaps are also larger than the EU average. Gender inequality can affect poverty reduction efforts by limiting economic opportunities for women and perpetuating unpaid care work. It also limits women's access to assets and credit, exposes them to GBV, and reduces their political representation, which in turn can hinder the implementation of policies and programs that address gender inequalities and poverty effectively. Moreover, gender inequality intersects with other forms of discrimination, such as race, ethnicity, and social class, further exacerbating poverty rates among marginalized groups of women, such as Roma. Finally, a higher life expectancy and an accumulation of disadvantages throughout life lead to differing trajectories for women: many live longer than men,[14] but are often in poorer health and suffer from poorer educational attainment and labor market outcomes.

Third, gender inequality can hinder income inequality by limiting job opportunities, perpetuating wage discrimination, increasing the burden of unpaid care work, limiting access to education and training, and perpetuating discriminatory social norms and practices. Inequality in Romania remains persistently high, with the Gini index (per adult equivalent) reaching 34.3 in 2020, making it the fourth largest in the EU and well above the EU average. Gender inequality can limit job opportunities for women, leading to lower lifetime earnings and fewer chances to move up the career ladder. This can contribute to lifetime income inequality, as men are more likely to be employed and hold higher-paying jobs, thus having greater earning potential. Moreover, though the differences are not large, Romanian women are still paid less than men for doing the same job, even when they have the same qualifications and experience; such wage discrimination can perpetuate income inequality. Furthermore, women are often responsible for a greater share of unpaid care work, such as caring for children, elderly parents, and family members with disabilities. This can limit their ability to participate in paid work and can also contribute to widening income disparities. Gender inequality can also limit women's access to education and training, leaving them with fewer skills and less experience and thus less able to take advantage of good employment opportunities. This can perpetuate income inequality, as men are more likely to have the skills and qualifications needed for high-paying jobs. Finally, discriminatory social norms and practices, such as the belief that women should not work outside the home, can reduce the scope of

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11 The index represents a composite indicator that combines information from several different EU sources or areas into one standard measure, and it is used by the European Commission (EC) to track gender gaps. See details of the EC's approach for monitoring gender equality in annex 2.

12 "Gender Equality Index 2021," European Institute for Gender Equality, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index.

13 Romania ranked 67th on the Gender Inequality Index of UNDP in 2021. Importantly, Romania registers decreasing gender inequality, which is reflected in a constantly decreasing gender inequality index. In addition, it scored 0.994 on the Gender Development Index of UNDP in 2021 (compared to 0.980 for Norway, for example). It ranks 55th out of 170 on the Women, Peace, and Security Index of the Georgetown University, which measures three dimensions of gender equality: social inclusion, justice, and security. The country caught up in regard to several of these from 2017 to 2021, but lost ground on women's financial inclusion and women's share of parliament seats.

14 The overall feminity ratio (or sex ratio) stood at 106.8 in 2021 (UN Population Projections 2022); however, the ratio stood at 153.3 for the 65+, indicating a higher share of women in this age group.

women's employment opportunities and contribute to income inequality. Overall, addressing gender inequality is essential for promoting more-equal and inclusive societies and reducing income inequality.

Finally, gender equality is a fundamental human right, and gender gaps pose an "agency" concern, as they impede women's effectiveness as agents in the development process, as framed by Amartya Sen 1999). Gender gaps can constrict women's agency by limiting their ability to participate fully in economic, social, and political life, preventing them from realizing their full potential and contributing fully to the development process. Agency can play a critical role in removing the inequities that affect women's well-being (Sen 1999). According to the GEI, Romania lags mostly in terms of the power and time dimensions, reflecting disparities in decision-making positions across the political, economic, and social spheres and time spent doing care and domestic work and social activities, particularly after the pandemic.[15] A close look at Romania's performance on the subindicators, which are part of the GEI, shows that the country scores lowest on the power dimensions, with a score of 32.6.[16] It also performs poorly on the time dimension as well as the knowledge dimension of the index (with scores of 50.3 and 52.2, respectively) compared to other dimensions.[17] Women's agency can be significantly impacted by the lack of GBV data, which makes it difficult to identify and address patterns of violence that may be affecting women.[18]

To develop and promote effective gender equality policies, updated evidence on gender gaps is essential that can help with the design of targeted interventions, the evaluation of policies, and the ensuring of accountability and mainstream gender perspectives in all policy areas. Evidence of the recent gender gaps in Romania and their driving factors remains limited, as the previous World Bank gender assessment covered trends up to 2015. The recent Romania SCD Update (World Bank 2023d) also identifies the lack of understanding of the determinants of gender gaps in labor market opportunities as a key knowledge gap with regard to addressing the root causes of the gender gaps in economic opportunities. Updated evidence on gender gaps in Romania is crucial for policy making for several reasons. First, policy making requires accurate and up-to-date data on gender gaps in various areas, such as education, employment, health, and political participation. Without reliable data, policies may be designed and implemented based on assumptions or outdated information, leading to suboptimal outcomes. Second, updated evidence on gender gaps can help policy makers identify where gender inequalities exist and target interventions to address those gaps. This can improve the effectiveness of policies and ensure that resources are used efficiently. Third, policies and interventions aimed at reducing gender gaps need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Updated evidence can help policy makers assess policies' impact and identify areas where improvements are needed. Fourth, updated evidence on gender gaps can help to hold policy makers accountable for their commitments to promoting gender equality and enable civil society organizations and other stakeholders to monitor progress and advocate for change. Finally, updated evidence on gender gaps is essential for effective

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15 The GEI from 2022 puts particular emphasis on care responsibilities during the pandemic and reveals persistent gender disparities in care activities.

16 The power dimension of the index measures a country's gender equality in terms of political, economic, and social outcomes.

17 The country performs best on the health dimension of the index (with a score of 70.4), followed by the work dimension (67.3) and the money dimension (70.2). However, compared to the EU average, Romania still lags in terms of all these dimensions.

18 The GEI identifies a data gap on GBV and therefore we could not update the country's performance on this subindicator.

gender mainstreaming, as it enables policy makers to identify and address gender inequalities in all policy areas.

This Country Gender Assessment (CGA) presents updated evidence on the recent gender gaps in Romania and identifies entry points for the sustainable reduction of gender inequalities to support the World Bank country program and the Romanian government's efforts. This CGA updates the 2018 Romania Gender Assessment (World Bank 2018a) while adding new insights concerning the key drivers and policies to reduce gender inequalities in the country. The report diagnoses the most critical barriers (structural, institutional, and behavioral) that females face, particularly when accessing education and employment, and further, how women's employment and educational outcomes are constrained to a greater degree than the same outcomes for males. This is informed by key findings from thematic studies or "deep dives" into areas that have been identified as key determinants of the gender gaps in the country[19] and where knowledge gaps in the country or the lack of recent information are hindering the development and implantation of evidence-based policy. It also presents rigorous evidence on what works in countries with similar income levels and contexts to address those barriers in order to highlight policies and interventions that can move the needle toward gender equality. This analysis aims to strengthen the knowledge base so as to inform the design of policies and interventions to improve progress toward gender equality. In particular, it is expected to inform the government's and the World Bank's[20] efforts to close the gender gaps.

Figure 3. WDR Framework to Assess Gender Inequalities
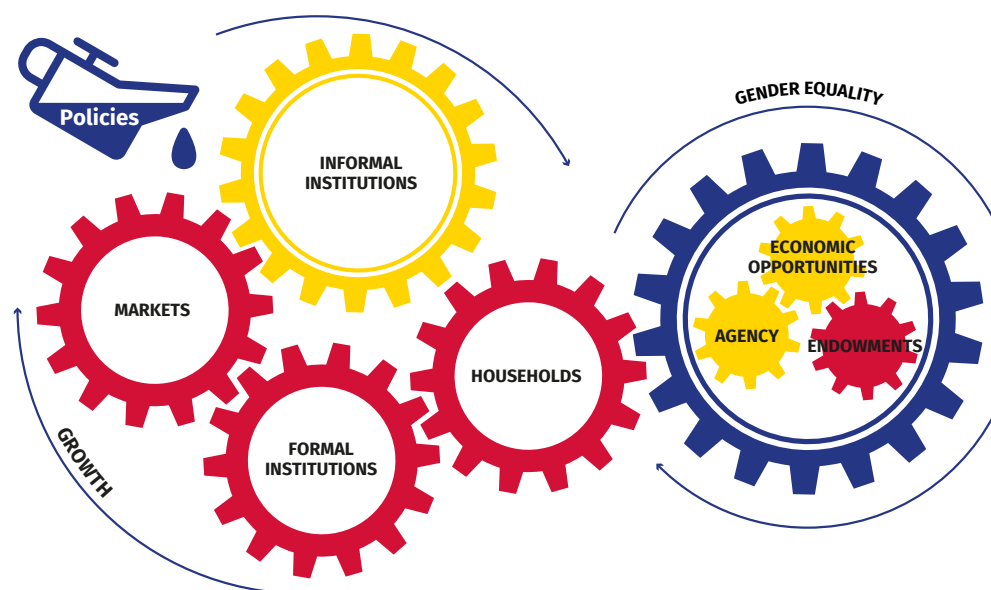
Source: World Bank 2012.

19 Two thematic policy notes (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a, 2023 b) and one research paper (Robayo-Abril 2023 c) provide an analytical foundation for the deep dives. They focus on the (1) constraints to female entrepreneurship, (2) role of public care provision in maternal employment, and (3) key barriers in the education sector.

20 This evidence is expected to support the development of Romania's Country Gender Action Plan and guide the World Bank Group's efforts to address gender equality challenges relevant to meeting the upcoming Country Partnership Framework priorities for Romania.

Chapter 2 updates the understanding of the core gender disparities in the country by describing the key gender gaps in Romania along the three broad dimensions highlighted in the conceptual framework of the 2012 World Development Report (Gender Equality and Development) (World Bank 2012) and the World Bank's Gender Strategy (FY16–23) (World Bank 2015a). The analysis provides information on specific gaps (education, health, labor market characteristics, and voice and agency), focusing on the most recent period. The framework revolves around the notion that gender equality is essential to achieving sustainable poverty reduction and shared prosperity (Figure 3). The economic costs of the misallocations entailed by gender gaps are large—around US$160 trillion, according to recent estimations (Wodon and de la Brière 2018). On the contrary, gender equality leads to multiple positive economic outcomes, including increased productivity and more inclusive institutions and policies (World Bank 2012). The framework assumes that gender gaps result from the interplay between households, markets, and institutions across three main areas: agency, endowments, and economic opportunity. We use this framework as it was used in the 2018 CGA: it provides a close link to the WBG's existing and new gender strategies,[21] which are useful for informing policy and operations. We use the WDR (World Bank 2012) framework as it covers the overall aspects of the gender conceptual framework used by the EC;[22] this Gender Assessment also presents evidence related to the key strategic developments of the EC.[23]

The report is developed around two thematic components: (1) Constraints to and opportunities for gender equality and (2) Policy recommendations. The first provides an update on the core gender disparities in the country based on a conceptual framework, focusing on endowments (health and education), economic opportunities, and voice and agency. It also assesses determinants of key gender gaps in the country based on data sourced from global and regional databases and the latest household surveys (HBS, EU-SILC, EU-LFS, and WB Rapid Surveys), as well as recent research published by the World Bank and others. The second component builds on this evidence to provide policy recommendations for reducing gender inequality in the country. It includes an assessment of implementation gaps in the legal, monitoring, and evaluation systems and evidence on sectoral and fiscal policies and interventions to narrow or close these gaps. This new analysis will help fill knowledge gaps regarding critical issues identified to reduce gender gaps and enable the government to access information to make more evidence-based decisions in their gender strategy and action plan.

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21 The World Bank is currently developing its new Gender Strategy 2024–2030 (World Bank. Forthcoming), which builds upon the previous strategy. The new strategy aims to pursue four gender outcomes and capitalize on the synergies between them. These outcomes include building and safeguarding human capital; generating more and higher-quality job opportunities; expanding ownership, control, and management of assets; and strengthening women's leadership, voice, and agency.

22 See annex 2 for a detailed overview of the EC's engagement in gender equality

23 There are currently six priorities of the EC for 2019–2024: the European Green Deal, a Europe fit for the digital age, an economy that works for people, a stronger Europe in the world, promoting the European way of life, and a new push for European democracy: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy_en.

Chapter 2
Constraints to and opportunities for gender equality

Thís chapter provides a snapshot of where the country stands in terms of gender equality by updating previous analyses conducted for the first CGA using the more-recent databases and evidence published by the World Bank and others. It relies on data from available household surveys and uses benchmarking analysis for cross-country comparisons.[24] Moreover, the chapter assesses bottlenecks limiting access in key areas. Finally, it incorporates the main findings of the ongoing energy affordability analysis to shed light on the potential gendered impacts of the current energy crisis and policies.

To understand gender inequality in the wake of COVID-19 and the Ukraine war, the chapter draws upon recent evidence from Eurostat, the more recently available EU-LFS and EU-SILC surveys, and the 2022 rounds of World Bank rapid phone surveys. The impacts of crises are never gender neutral and this is true of COVID-19 as well. Therefore, this chapter includes selected evidence to shed some light on the impacts of the pandemic on women and gender inequality, as well as for their ability to participate in the country's economic recovery.

Moreover, the chapter dives deeply into the key factors underlying key gender inequality patterns to help identify the constraints and opportunities for gender inequality reduction; this makes available critical new insights for the design of policies and interventions to reduce gender inequality in the country. In Romania women and girls face systemic—ranging from structural to behavioral—barriers that bar them from full and equal participation in the workforce and the formal economy. We aim to determine the specific challenges confronting women, based on information from global and regional databases and the latest household survey data (HBS, EU-SILC, and EU-LFS), as well as recent research conducted by the World Bank and others. Without a proper diagnosis of the bottlenecks, the national government and international actors cannot put the needs and priorities of Romanian women and girls at the center when designing and implementing policies and interventions.

This chapter answers the following questions:

- Where does Romania stand regarding gender inequality across three key areas: endowments (health and education), economic opportunities, and voice and agency? Compared to its peers, how has the country performed with respect to gender inequality in the different key areas?

- What are the key drivers of change and factors impeding improvement in terms of gender disparities in the identified key areas?

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24 In addition to comparisons to EU countries, we rely on a global benchmarking tool for other comparators (see annex 3 for more details).

2.1. Human Endowments – Health and Education

Gender inequality in human capital and access to economic opportunities means that talent and potential go untapped, limiting economic growth prospects and producing less-positive development outcomes related to poor agency. As mentioned above, the constraints that females face may result in the misallocation of talent, which leads to sizable per capita income losses. Female employment promotes development through its impact on overall employment, productivity, and economic growth, and increases in women's voice and agency, also associated with higher human capital, can lead to positive spillovers at the individual, family, and societal levels (Klugman et al. 2014).

The importance of addressing gender gaps disfavoring girls or boys in the education sector cannot be overstated. While the phrase "gender gap" often brings to mind the disadvantage faced by girls, it is essential to recognize that gender parity means addressing boys' struggles as well. Educating girls has numerous benefits, including decreasing the likelihood of early marriage, promoting healthier and more productive lifestyles, and building more-inclusive and resilient societies, as highlighted by UNICEF (2023). Educated girls also tend to have increased earnings, positively impacting a country's economy. That said, educating boys and men is also crucial, as promoting gender equality means ensuring equal opportunities and outcomes for all individuals, regardless of gender. Tackling reverse gender gaps can also have positive spillovers on other dimensions, as studies have shown that education is linked with more-gender-equitable attitudes among men (Levtov et al. 2014). However, the role of boys and men in achieving gender equality has traditionally been overlooked (Farré 2012).

Figure 4. Human Capital Index Gap (Girls vs. Boys), Romania vs. Selected EU and Enlargement Countries, 2020
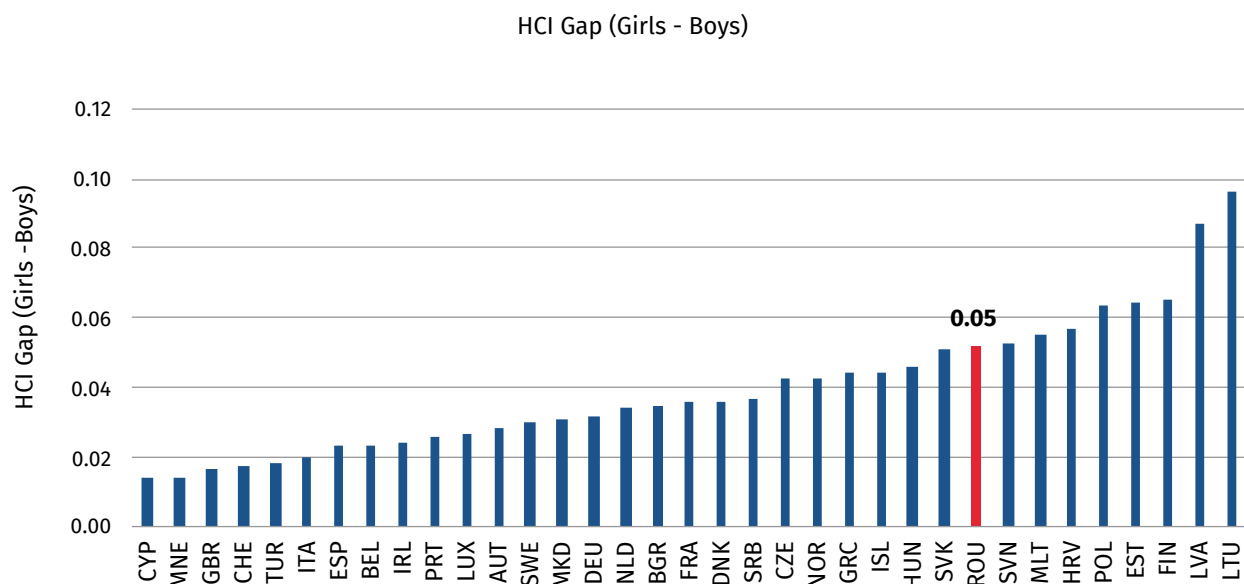
Source: Estimates based on the World Bank Human Capital Index.

Note: A positive gap means girls are better off.

As in other EU countries, girls in Romania are better off than boys in the dimensions the Human Capital Index measures. A girl born in Romania today will be 61 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health, a level much higher than boys (56 percent). These "reverse" gender gaps are similar to those observed in other countries in the region (Figure 4). This is explained by higher adult survival rates and learning-adjusted school years among girls. For example, the number of years of education girls born today can expect to achieve by the age of 18 is slightly higher than the number for boys (11.9 vs. 11.8 years), but, factoring in what children learn, more-significant differences favoring girls appear (8.5 vs. 8.2 years), because girls have better learning outcomes than boys in harmonized test scores. It is worth noting that the levels of HCI for both boys and girls are among the lowest in the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, even when considering GDP per capita levels.

Although girls outperform boys on the HCI, other indicators, such as those included in the Knowledge and Health dimensions[25] of the EIGE Index 2022, demonstrate that Romania is among the poorest-performing countries in the EU, with wide gender inequalities in education and health. Romania scored only 52.2 index points in the Knowledge dimension of the EIGE 2022, the second-lowest country score in the EU (panel a of Figure 5). Although Romania has improved by 5 index points since the EIGE 2013 report, it has lost ground compared to the EIGE 2021,[26] with a decrease of 0.6 index points. The EIGE Index 2022 also reveals that Romania is the lowest-performing country on the Health dimension among all EU countries, achieving only 70.4 index points in 2022, significantly below the EU average of 88.7 (panel b of Figure 5). Gaps in behavioral patterns around health mainly drive Romania's poor performance; for the other indicators, the country lags the EU average to a much smaller degree. In this domain, the country only achieved 40.7 index points, significantly below the EU average of 77.8 index points.

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25   The Knowledge dimension of the EIGE Index measures tertiary education attainment, participation in formal and nonformal education and training, and segregation, represented by the percentage of tertiary students in education, health and welfare, the humanities, and art. The Health dimension includes indicators regarding health status (self-perceived health, life expectancy at birth, and healthy life years at birth), behavioral patterns (smoking and drinking, diet and physical activity habits) and access (unmet needs for medical or dental examination).

26   EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2022/domain/knowledge/RO.

Figure 5. Knowledge and Health Subdimensions, EIGE Index 2022
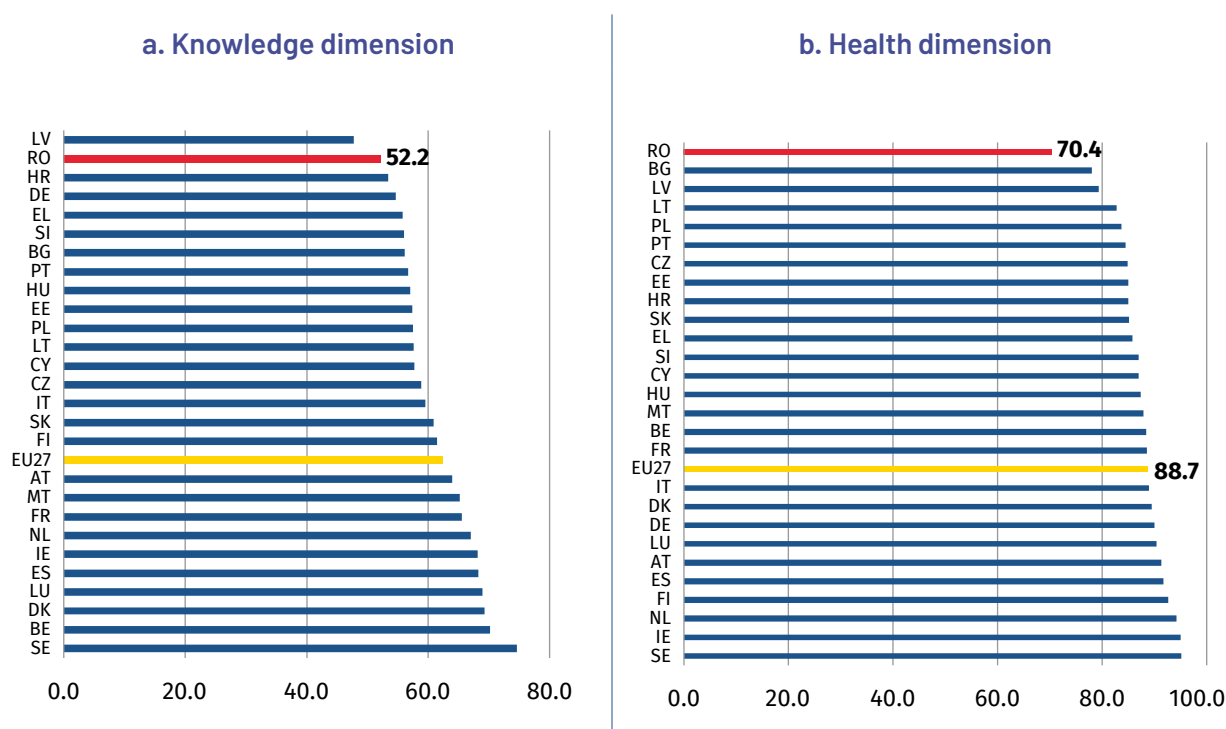
Sources: EIGE 2022 based on Eurostat (2020 EU SILC and mortality data, 2020 EU LFS and 2020 Education statistics) and the 2019 European Health Interview Survey. The data for 2022 Index are mostly from 2020.

Note: A score of 100 means a country has reached full equality between women and men. The knowledge dimension of the EIGE Index measures tertiary education attainment, participation in formal and non-formal education and training, and segregation, represented by the percentage of tertiary students in education, health and welfare, humanities, and art. The health dimension includes indicators of health status (self-perceived health, life expectancy at birth, and healthy life years at birth), behavior (smoking and drinking, diet and physical activity habits), and access (unmet needs for medical or dental examination).

Given Romania's low performance on the subdimensions of health and knowledge of the EIGE Index 2022, we next dive into potential gender gaps (disfavoring either females or males) in education and health in more detail. Although composite indicators are useful to simplify complex information, facilitate cross-country comparisons and broader trends, and capture policy-relevant concepts, it is certainly important to use a more nuanced and comprehensive approach that examines individual indicators and considers the unique social, cultural, and economic factors that shape gender equality.[27] In the following, we analyze gender gaps in health and education and key barriers to equality.

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27 Relying on composite indicators can limit our understanding of the complex issues underlying gender inequality in different contexts. By taking a more detailed and context-specific approach, policy makers and other stakeholders can identify the specific areas where gender inequalities exist and design targeted interventions to address them. This approach helps to create a more accurate picture of the situation and enables the development of tailored solutions that are more likely to be effective. Additionally, by monitoring progress over time, policy makers and stakeholders can track the effectiveness of interventions and identify areas where further work is needed. It is essential to go beyond these indicators and examine individual sub indicators, as well as to consider the unique factors that shape gender inequalities so as to develop targeted interventions that effectively achieve gender equality.

Health

This subsection analyzes several dimensions of health and health care, including objective health outcomes, self-perceived health status, unmet need for medical care, and utilization of health services, as well as potential barriers to equality, and relies on a descriptive analysis of available data sources. To this end, we use data from the EIGE 2021,[28] which contains a special section on health and rich information on gender disparities in this sector, and EIGE 2022. We also use data from the WDI, WHO, Eurostat, and World Contraceptive Use Survey 2022. We describe the gender gaps in indicators utilized in these datasets and data portals for the latest available year.

Figure 6. Health Status by Gender, Romania vs. the EU-27 Member State Average, 2020
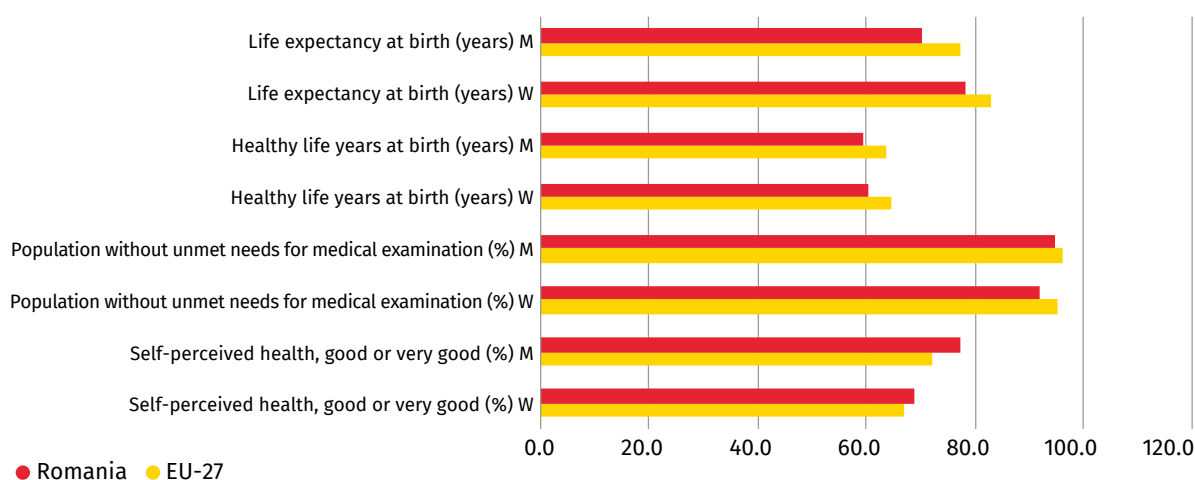
Source: EIGE 2022.

Note: M refers to men, and W refers to women.

Life expectancy at birth in Romania has increased, but remains among the lowest in the EU, though with a significant gender gap favoring women. In Romania, life expectancy at birth increased by more than 4 years between 2000 and 2019 (from 71.2 to 75.6) but remained among the lowest in the EU,[29] almost 6 years below the EU average of 80.5. Yet in 2020, the gender gap in life expectancy was marked: women lived almost 8 years longer than men (78.4 compared to 70.5), among the largest such gaps in the EU. Health life years at birth for men and women, on the other hand, were roughly equal in 2020 (figure 6).

Life expectancy in Romania tends to be higher among women due to various factors, such as biological advantages and, notably, a lower incidence of risk-taking behaviors despite slightly less access to health care. A study by the OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (2021) finds that risky health behaviors account for more than half of all deaths in Romania. This is important, as it signifies a better quality of life and increased productivity for women and highlights

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28   https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/health/country/RO.
29   It is also low compared to Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and high-income countries (benchmarking exercise, annex 3).

the need to address health disparities among genders. Men tend to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as tobacco or alcohol consumption. The smoking rates among men (31 percent) is nearly four times higher than it is among women (8 percent), while more than half of men (53 percent) report heavy drinking, while fewer than one in five women (18 percent) report the same. However, women tend to have less access to health care than men. One disadvantage of the higher life expectancy for women is that they may experience age-related health issues for a longer period than men. Additionally, women may face financial challenges in their later years due to the differential labor market outcomes and career interruptions related to caregiving responsibilities, which can impact their retirement savings and social security benefits.

In line with this evidence, more men are admitted for treatment following drug consumption, with the gap increasing over time; there are also secondary negative effects on other aspects of men's health, school dropout, and violence and crime. In 2021, more than 3,000 men (out of a total of 9.4 million) were admitted for treatment following drug consumption, compared to 390 women (out of a total of 9.81 million).[30] Numbers have increased for men (2,608 out of 9.8 million in 2012) and declined for women (629 out of 10.3 million in 2012). Studies show that high levels of alcohol and drug consumption among men are often related to cultural norms and social acceptance (Sudhinaraset et al. 2016) and could also drive the gender differences in Romania (Lotrean et al. 2009; Lotrean et al. 2010), low awareness and lack of prevention programs (Lotrean et al. 2010; Nasui et al. 2021). Studies conducted on students also revealed the importance of peer pressure and stress (Lotrean et al. 2010; Nasui et al. 2021). Substance usage is also problematic, because it has secondary negative effects on boys' and men's (mental) health, can lead to low performance and school dropout, and might result in elevated levels of crime and violence (Welsh et al. 2019).

Women for their part are less likely than men to engage in physical activity and consume a diet with fruits and vegetables. Only 6.2 percent of women indicated they did sports or consumed fruits/vegetables in 2020, a negligible share (EIGE 2022)(figure A.1.1). In comparison, 37.6 percent of women in the EU did so in 2020. Gaps with regard to the EU average are similarly marked for men. While a larger share of men than women in Romania engaged in these healthy behavioral patterns in 2020 (14.0 percent), the gap with the EU average is significant (28 percentage points)(EIGE 2022). These behavioral patterns could explain why life expectancy and healthy life years at birth are lower in Romania than the EU average for both men and women and could have significant implications for women's overall health and well-being, particularly in terms of their risk for chronic diseases. The reasons why women and girls do fewer sports (in Romania and other countries) than men are a lack of facilities and opportunities to do sports, especially in rural areas; gender stereotypes and social norms that discourage women from doing sports and pursuing sports careers; family responsibilities and domestic work which leaves them with less energy and time available for physical activities; and low self-esteem and body-image issues (Ball et al. 2010; Dogaru 2022; Heesch and Mâsse 2004; Sabiston et al. 2019; Scelles and Pfister 2021).

Health outcomes among women of reproductive age are worrisome. Romanian women face high maternal and infant mortality rates and lower survival rates for cervical and breast cancers. Romanian

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30   INS, Baze de date statistice, http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table.

women continue to face health risks associated with childbearing (high maternal and infant mortality rates[31]). Although the maternal mortality ratio decreased from 18 to 10 between 2012 and 2020, it is still above the EU average of 6 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.[32] In addition, Romanian women have lower chances of surviving cervical and breast cancers than the average EU-27 woman (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021).

The adverse health outcomes of women of reproductive health might be related to gaps in prevention, public spending, infrastructure, and access, as well as the low quality of maternity care in the public sector. These adverse outcomes might be related to relatively low spending on prevention services: per capita spending on prevention in Romania is the second lowest in the EU (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021). For example, only 9 percent of Romanian women ages 50–69 reported accessing breast cancer screening in 2019, compared to 59 percent in the EU on average, a huge gap (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021). A study by Miteniece et al. (2023) on barriers to accessing adequate maternal care in Romania, Bulgaria, and Moldova finds that in Romania access-related barriers are more likely to be experienced by women who encounter health complications, women who undergo cesarean births, and women who give birth in public health care facilities and that in addition women report having fewer antenatal checkups. The authors also mention a shortage of staff, especially in rural areas. This is worrisome, considering that the percentage of births attended by skilled health staff decreased significantly between 2012 and 2019 (latest available data), from 100 to 93 percent, well below the European average of 98 percent. Women also reported both low satisfaction with the maternity care available in the public sector and affordability constraints (Miteniece et al. 2023).

Romania has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the EU, particularly in rural areas with limited access to sex education and reproductive health services. Romania's adolescent fertility rate is significantly above the EU average (figure 7) and is also high compared to CEE and Southeastern (SE) countries (benchmarking exercise). Previous research in other countries shows that teenage pregnancy potentially distorts educational attainment (Gyan 2013), which is worrisome, given that it could generate vicious circles around gender inequality. Romania has one of the highest rates of child pregnancy in the ECA region (figure 8). In 2020, Romania ranked seventh in terms of abortion rate in the EU, for which the average is 4 percent (Eurostat 2017). The rate was higher in rural than urban areas, probably driven by lower socioeconomic levels and access to education in such areas (Iorga, Socolov, and Socolov 2016).

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31 UNICEF, "Romania: key demographic indicators," https://data.unicef.org/country/rou/.
32 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.STA.MMRT?locations=RO.

Figure 7. Adolescent Fertility, Romania vs. EU Average, 2000–20
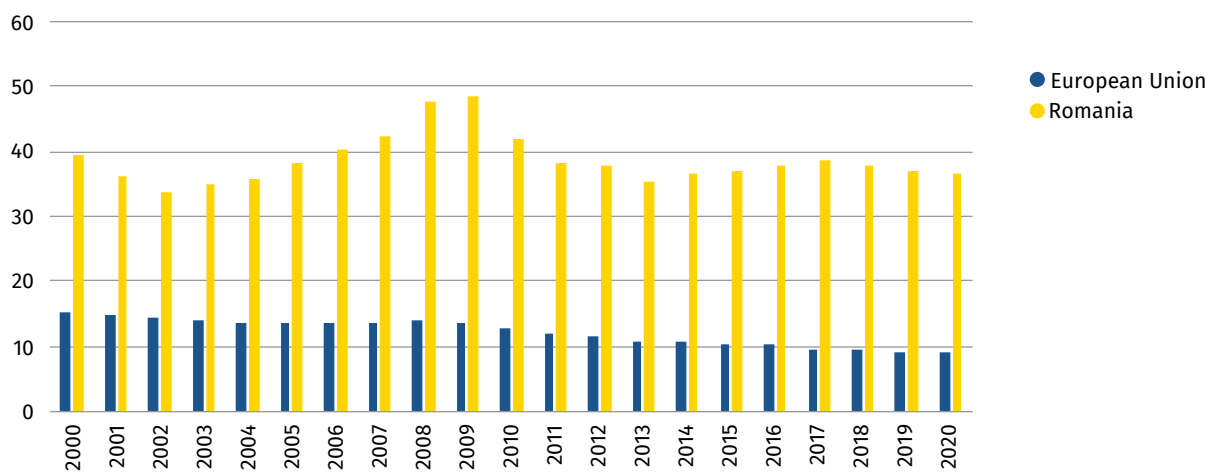
Figure 8. Adolescent Birth Rate, Romania vs. Selected Countries (per 1,000 Women ages 15–19 Years)
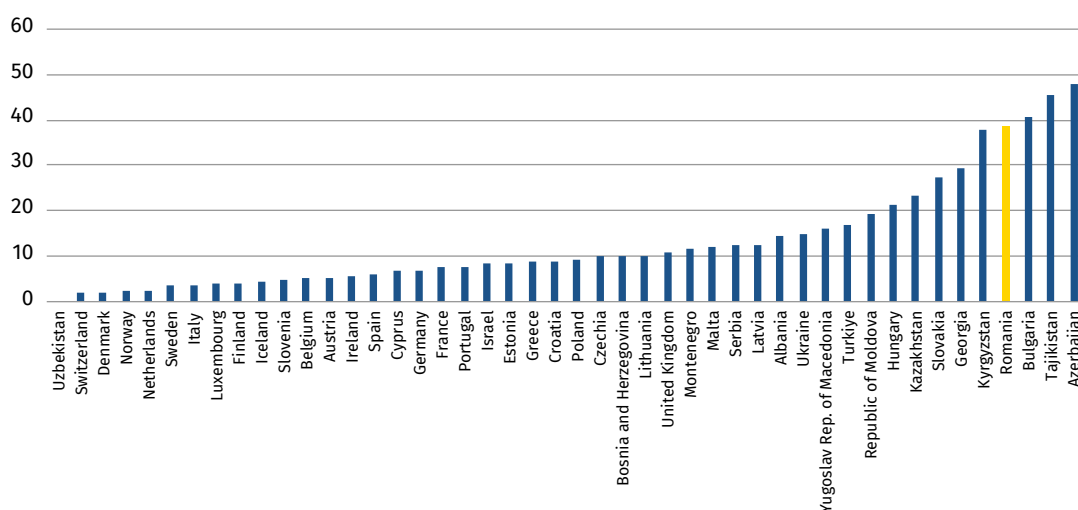
Sources: World Bank, Adolescent Fertility Rate (Births per 1,000 Women Ages 15–19) – Romania, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=RO; WHO, Adolescent Birth Rate (per 1000 Women), https://www.who.int/data/gho/indicator-metadata-registry/imr-details/4669.

Parallel to the high rate of teenage pregnancy, contraceptive usage among Romanian women has increased over time, although there are still a significant number of women who do not use modern methods; updated data are not available. Romania ranks in the middle of the Contraception Atlas and has a contraceptive prevalence rate of 54.44 percent (EPF 2023). However, updated statistics by age and income groups are needed for tailored policy design. Despite the extensive evidence showing that sex education results in lower adolescent birth rates (UNESCO 2023), sex education is not mandatory. Since 2022, sex education can only be taught from eighth grade onward and only with parents' written consent (Gyaraki 2022). These developments could negatively impact boys' and

girls' access to important information about safe sex, sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptive use, and consent. Consultations indicated that abortion rights, which were legalized in December 1989, are facing threats from hardening attitudes, which could lead to unsafe abortions and increased maternal mortality rates. These developments are worrisome, given that there is evidence showing that unsafe abortions and overall maternal mortality rates rose sharply during the time abortion was illegal in Romania (1966 to 1989) (Horga et al. 2013). Official data show that abortion rates have fallen below the EU average (figure 9). International evidence shows that abortions are often stigmatized (Kumar, Hessini, and Mitchell 2009).

Figure 9. Abortion Rates (per 1,000 Women of Reproductive Age), Romania vs. the EU Average, 2013–20
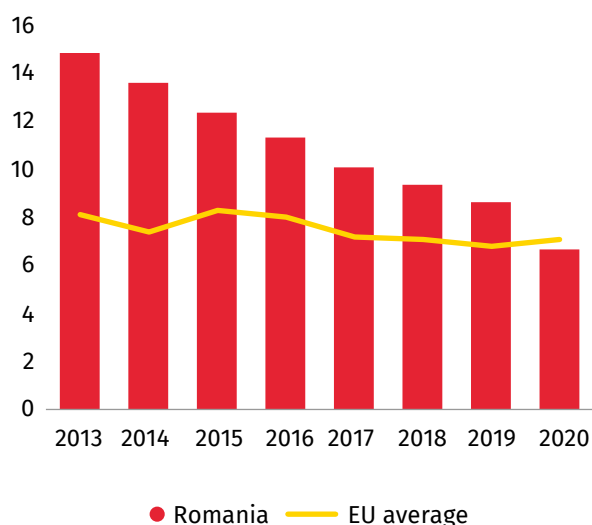
Figure 10. Share of Women of Reproductive Age Using Contraception (Any vs. Any Modern Method)
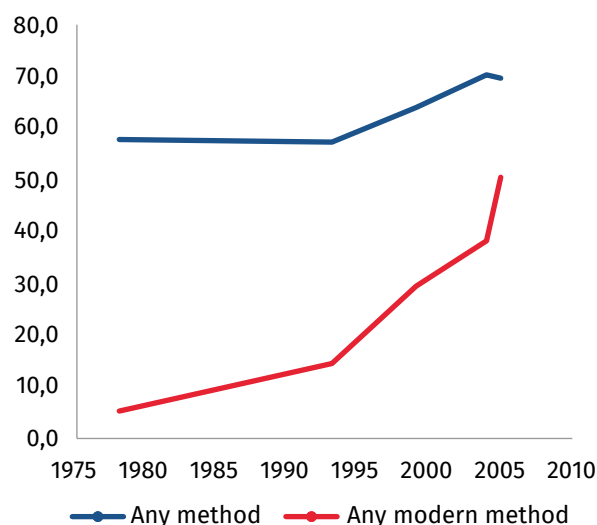
Sources: Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database), indicator "abort," (figure 9) and World Contraceptive Use 2022 (figure 10).

Note: Average is calculated by taking the average abortion rates of all countries in the EU that report data. More recent data on contraception usage is not available.

Self-perceived health is poorer among women than men and women perceive more restrictions in performing their routine activities due to health-related issues. A significant gender gap also exists in men's and women's self-perceived health status (figure A.1.2). While women live longer lives, they perceive themselves to be in worse health than men. In 2021, about 64 percent of women of age 65 report limitations in usual activities due to health problems, compared to 54 percent of men.[33] This could mean that—although women live longer—they perceive their health to be poorer when reaching a certain age.

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33 https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/health/country/RO.

Women rate their mental health lower than men, probably driven by discrimination, stigmas, the uneven care distribution, and greater exposure to other social factors that negatively affect mental health. Women also rate their mental health lower than men. On a scale from 0 to 100, women rate their mental health on average at 59 index points, significantly below the average rate of men (65 index points) (figure A.1.3). Both men and women lag behind the EU average in this indicator, but the difference is larger for women than men. While Romania lacks detailed studies on the underlying drivers behind these gender gaps in mental health, research by the international academic community shows that poorer mental health for women is often related to discrimination (Stepanikova et al. 2020) and to women's greater exposure to social factors that impair mental health, such as financial insecurity or stigma (Chandra, Varghese, and Supraja 2017). Uneven care distribution might also play a role (Seedat and Rondon 2021).

Evidence shows that stigmatization, both by the public but also self-imposed, might limit access to mental health in Romania. According to the study by Manescu et al. (2023), the media plays a crucial role in maintaining and validating negative stereotypes around mental health in Romania. This is in line with international evidence showing that stigma often impedes access to mental health support (Thornicroft et al. 2022). A related study by Copăceanu and Costache (2022) identifies additional challenges around mental health in Romania, at least for children and adolescents, such as lack of funding, human resources, infrastructure, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, quality standards, community services, prevention programs, anti-stigma initiatives, family support, social inclusion, human rights protection, research capacity, and evidence-based practice. A more comprehensive overview on mental health in Romania is by Stefcu and Ungureanu (2020). Updating this type of analysis applying a gender-sensitive approach could generate valuable insights on how to close the gender gap in mental health in Romania.

Both women and men in rural areas report poorer health outcomes than those in urban areas; gender gaps are larger in rural areas, too. Across a broad range of health indicators, in 2020 women and men reported poorer health outcomes in rural areas than in urban ones.[34] For example, while 8 out of 10 men in urban areas self-reported their health to be (very) good, this was true of three-fourths of men in rural areas.[35] While women report their health to be worse compared to men in both rural and urban areas, the gaps are larger in rural areas (9.1 percent versus 7.9 percent). Similar patterns become visible when analyzing the share of men and women who report chronic illnesses, limitations in their activities due to health problems, and unmet medical needs.

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34 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
35 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Figure 11. Difficulties in Paying for Unexpected Medical Expenses by Gender, Ages 18+, 2016 (%)

Source: EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/health/country/RO.
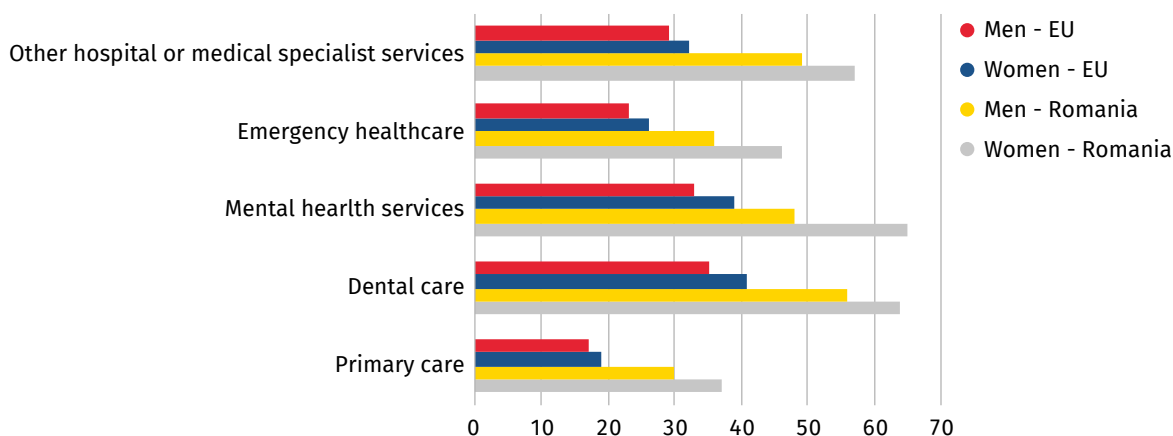
Gender gaps in health outcomes persist in the low- and high-income groups, but are more significant among the B40. Across a broad range of health indicators, in 2020 women and men in the low-income group reported poorer health outcomes than did those in the high-income group.[36] For example, nearly one-third of women in the B40 indicated that they limited their activities due to health problems, while this only applied to 2 out of 10 men in this group.[37] In addition, one-fourth of women in the B40 indicated that they had a chronic illness, compared to 15.9 percent of men in this group.[38] While similar gaps were present in the T60, the gender gaps were smaller.

Women are less able to invest in their own health, due to slightly reduced access to health care services, as evidenced by their higher rate of self-reported unmet needs for medical care, and affordability of health care is an important barrier, particularly among females. Gender differences influence health outcomes and behaviors and access to health care services. In 2021, over 8 percent of women and 6 percent of men reported unmet medical needs (figure 6), primarily due to a lack of money to access this service.[39] Affordability of health services is an issue, as households' out-of-pocket expenditure remained above the EU average of 15.7 percent of current health expenditure in 2019,[40] despite having slightly decreased over time, from 21.3 percent in 2015 to 18.9 in 2019 (World Bank 2023a). According to data published by the EIGE,[41] women were more likely to report difficulties paying for unexpected medical expenses. This applies to primary care, dental care, mental health services, emergency health care, and other hospital or medical specialist services (figure 11). However, both men and women struggle with the cost of health care services in Romania more than their peers across the EU. Affordability seems to play a significant role in both rural and urban areas, with more than half of

36 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
37 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
38 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
39 EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/health/country/RO.
40 WDI, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.OOPC.CH.ZS?locations=RO-EU.
41 https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/health/country/RO.

the population reporting that they could not afford medical services.[42] The share was slightly higher in rural areas (56.0 versus 51.4 percent). Unsurprisingly, the share was significantly larger among the B40 than the T60 (64.9 versus 42.8 percent).[43]

When looking at health utilization, Romanian women tend to seek medical consultations more than men in both urban and rural areas and let less time go by between doctor visits, possibly indicating they use primary care more than men, who might be concerned with social stigma. It is essential to look beyond health access and examine health utilization, because having access to health care does not necessarily mean that individuals are receiving the appropriate care they need, and health utilization data can provide valuable insights into health behaviors, patterns, and preferences. In 2019, a significant number of men and women did not consult with a medical professional (Eurostat, 2023).[44] Gender gaps are wide, with a higher percentage of men not seeking medical advice in both urban and rural areas (80 and 82.8 percent, respectively). Among females, the proportions were 72.4 and 73.3 percent, respectively. Men also let more time go by without seeing a doctor. In 2019, nearly 60 percent of women living in urban areas had visited a medical doctor less than one year ago, compared to half of the men.[45] In rural areas, the gender gap around this issue persists (50 percent of women versus 40 of men). While detailed studies on the underlying drivers behind these adverse gender gaps are missing in the case of Romania, international evidence relates them to social stigma: men might interpret help seeking as a sign of weakness or vulnerability (Chatmon 2020).

Women are also significantly more likely to take both prescribed and unprescribed medicine. According to data from Eurostat,[46] nearly 3 out of 10 women reported taking prescribed medicine in 2019, compared to only 18.7 percent of men. These rates are well below the EU average (43.2 percent for men and 52.3 for women). The difference persists for those living in rural and urban areas, with self-reported rates being very similar. These patterns of results hold for self-reported usage rates of unprescribed medicine. Estimates from 2019 show that 14.5 percent of men took unprescribed medicine, compared to 23.4 percent of women.[47]

Limited government spending could explain why Romania lags in terms of several health dimensions for both men and women. In 2019, Romania only spent 5.7 percent of its GDP on health,[48] with limited changes having been seen over time. In comparison, EU nations spent 10.2 percent of their GDPs on health on average. The domestic general government health expenditure (as a proportion of general government expenditure) is low compared to EU and other high-income countries (benchmarking exercise). Romania spends far less than the EU average in all health care areas (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021). Out-of-pocket expenditure on health is also above

42 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
43 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
44 Eurostat Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database.
45 Eurostat Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database.
46 Eurostat Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database.
47 Eurostat Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database.
48 WDI, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.CHEX.GD.ZS?locations=RO-EU.

the EU average.[49] In relative terms, health spending is progressive and has an equalizing effect, as a significant proportion of the funds are allocated toward those with lower income or socioeconomic status (Badiani-Magnusson and Militaru 2022). Further analysis of the gendered impacts of health spending is needed.

Indicators on available infrastructure and medical staff paint a positive picture, but it is not clear how these developments impact gender gaps, and information on the quality of services is missing. At the same time, the ratio of available hospital beds has improved slightly (from 6.6 per 1,000 people to 6.9 per 1,000 people) over the period 2012–17.[50] In parallel, the ratio of physicians also improved (from 2.6 per 1,000 people in 2012 to 3 per 1,000 people in 2017).[51] While this information is useful for understanding developments in the available health infrastructure, information on the quality of these services is missing. Also, it is not clear how these developments impact gender gaps. Moreover, many indicators are not disaggregated by sex (such as new cases of illness by disease classes). While Romania trains enough medical staff, many emigrate, leaving Romanians with constraints in terms of access to care and long waiting times (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021). The number of physicians and nurses per capita has remained well below the EU average (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021).

(Reversed) gender gaps might be larger for certain subgroups for the population, such as the Roma population, but gender-disaggregated data are not available; overall, Roma report lower health outcomes than the rest of the population. Robinson et al. (2022) found that the Roma population reported health outcomes that were significantly poorer than those reported by the non-Roma population. Specifically, many Roma people spoke of problems with self-care, anxiety and depression, and pain and discomfort (Robinson et al. 2022). These findings are in line with those of earlier studies, namely that the life expectancy of the Roma was shorter by up to 20 years compared that of non-Roma (European Union 2014), for numerous and multidimensional reasons.

Education

We explore educational gender gaps in Romania across the life cycle, considering early childhood education, preprimary, primary, secondary, and tertiary education. We take a comprehensive approach in examining educational gender gaps in Romania across the various stages of the education system. By exploring gender disparities across the entire life cycle, researchers can better understand how gender differences in education evolve and identify specific areas where gender inequalities persist.

This section presents an analysis of the educational sector in Romania, utilizing various data sources and drawing on an extensive review of the existing literature. The primary source is the Romanian Ministry of Education, which collects administrative data that provide valuable insights into overall enrollment rates and the existing educational infrastructure within the country. However, it is

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49   These data are captured by the indicator TEPSR_SP310 published by Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database). It should be noted that the only publicly available data are for all households; there is no breakdown by head (male versus female) of household.

50   WDI, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.BEDS.ZS?locations=RO-EU.

51   WDI, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.PHYS.ZS?locations=RO-EU.

important to note that the ministry does not release data that specifically pertains to subgroups. To comprehensively assess equity considerations, examining potential disparities among different segments of the child population in Romania is crucial. Therefore, household surveys are utilized as well in order to identify variations in educational outcomes across income groups as well as across rural and urban areas, with the primary data set employed for this purpose being the EU-SILC 2020 survey.[52] It should be noted that this data set has inherent limitations when it comes to measuring children's outcome's and messages might deviate when compared to administrative data. For an in-depth understanding of these limitations, please refer to the work of Greulich and Dasré (2018). Accordingly, caution should be exercised when interpreting the subnational estimates presented in this report.

To provide a comprehensive overview of gender disparities in the educational sector, we use some additional data sources. These include the World Development Indicators database and the Human Capital Index from the World Bank, as well as the Gender Data Portal of the World Bank, Eurostat, the World Contraceptive Use 2022, and PISA test scores published by the OECD. Furthermore, estimates of household expenditure on education are generated using data from the household budget survey (HBS). Finally, insights from previous studies on gender equality in education in Romania are incorporated to enhance the overall understanding of the topic.

To identify the drivers of the identified (reversed) gender gaps in educational enrollment and attainment, we follow frameworks presented in the literature that highlight the study of individual and contextual factors. Gendered inequalities in education are complex, multifaceted, and situated, and cannot be described by a series of linear constraints (Aikman and Rao 2012). An early study by Rumberger (2001) summarizes the theoretical and empirical research that takes up the question of why students drop out of school and concludes that there were two approaches: those focusing on individual factors and those focusing on contextual factors. Individual factors might refer to demographics, attitudes, and educational backgrounds, whereas contextual factors are students' families, schools, communities, and peers (Rumberger 2001). While gender is an individual factor per se, we argue that additional individual factors, as well as contextual factors, might affect boys and girls differently and could therefore explain some of the observed gender inequalities in education gaps. This line of reasoning is in line with that of other researchers, such as Oyvat and Onaran (2022), who find that higher social infrastructure expenditure (on education, childcare, health, and social care, for example) increases female employment more than male employment. Other studies stress the significant influence of gender stereotypes on gender gaps in educational outcomes (see, for example, Breda et al. 2020; Chisamya et al. 2012; Gray and Leith 2004). Previous research from other countries also shows that when families face limited resources, they prefer that boys attend school (MEB Primary Education General Directorate and UNICEF Turkey 2011). We therefore look at a number of contextual factors related to supply-side constraints (available funding, infrastructure, and quality), other contextual factors (gender stereotypes, social norms, violence) and demand-side constraints (awareness of the importance of education, poverty).

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52   EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

The participation rates of both boys and girls in early childhood education[53] and care services (ages zero to two) are extremely low in Romania, especially in rural areas and among children from low-income families. While the rates are notably higher in urban areas, there are significant gender disparities that disadvantage girls. Nationally, enrollment in early childhood education is low for both boys and girls. According to administrative data, only 5.7 percent of children between zero and two years old were enrolled in early childhood education in 2020.[54] Upon further analysis of survey data, it becomes evident that enrollment levels in rural areas are remarkably low for both girls and boys, as well as among families experiencing poverty. However, the most significant gender disparities in enrollment rates are observed in urban areas, where girls face a disadvantage compared to boys (figure 12).

Figure 12. Net Enrollment Rates in Early Childhood Education (0–2 Years Old) by Gender in Urban and Rural Areas and B40, 2020
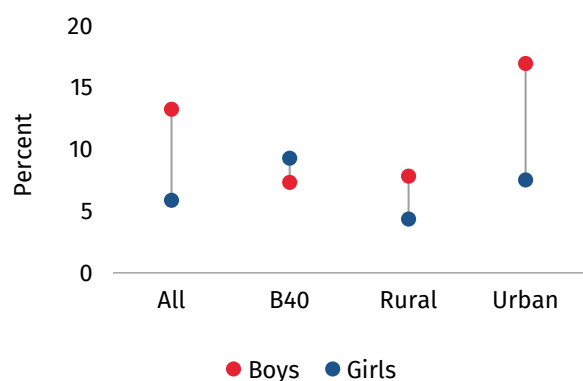
Source: World Bank estimates based on EU-SILC, https://ec.euro-pa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-in-come-and-living-conditions.
Note: Figure depicts the net enrollment in early childhood, calculated as the number of children ages zero to two who receive at least one hour of education per usual week in an early childhood education facility, expressed as a share of the population in this same age group. Sample size is small so as to present indicators for T60. The estimates might deviate from estimates based on administrative data.

Figure 13. Net Preprimary Enrollment Rates (3–6 Years Old) by Gender in Urban and Rural Areas and B40 and T60, 2020
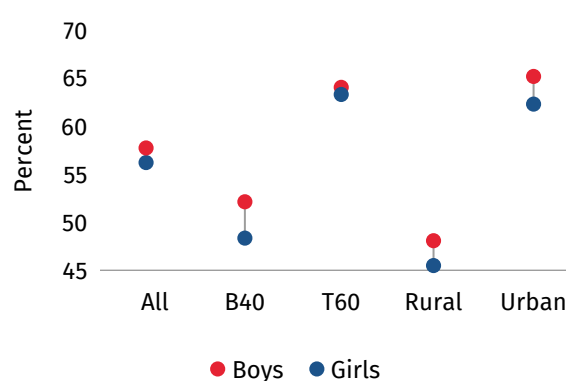
Source: World Bank estimates based on EU-SILC, https://ec.euro-pa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-in-come-and-living-conditions.
Note: Figure depicts the net enrollment rate for female and male students between three and six years old in 2020, calculated as the number of children ages three to six who receive at least 1 hour of education per usual week in an early childhood education facility, expressed as a share of the population in this same age group. B40 is defined as the households located in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution and T60 is defined as those households located in the top 60 percent of the income distribution. The sample sizes for children ages zero to two and three to six are small (117 and 257 children, respectively) and estimates might be biased due to the small sample size. The estimates are based might deviate from estimates based on administrative data.

The gender gap between girls and boys tends to decrease as Romanian children age, particularly between the ages of three and six; however, this improvement is not uniform across all socioeconomic groups, with gender differences persisting among children living in poorer families. Figure 13 displays smaller, but still positive, gender gaps in the net enrollment rate of three- to six-year-old children,

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53   Early childhood education includes all children between zero and six years old in Romania (Ministry of Education 2022).
54   INS, Baze de date statistice, http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table.

independent of the area of living or the income group. The gender differences in net enrollment rates are comparable between urban and rural areas. However, enrollment rates for both boys and girls are significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. In addition, the gender gap in education is narrower among families with high incomes than among families in the B40 group, suggesting that socioeconomic factors can play a role in shaping the gender gap in education. Therefore, policies and programs aimed at reducing gender gaps in education should consider the specific challenges faced by low-income families and provide targeted support to address these challenges.

It is critical to understand the barriers that limit enrollment and design policy interventions to tackle them. High prevalence of informal care arrangements often indicates inadequate availability of early childhood care and education (ECCE) services and affordability of ECD services seem to be a barrier among the poor, but more research on the supply and demand for childcare for children in early childhood is needed. According to OECD (2020b) data, Romania invests less than 0.6 percent of its GDP in early childhood education and care, with negligible expenditure on childcare, lower than the EU and OECD average (just above 0.8 percent). More-recent administrative data suggest that for 2022 and 2023, the coverage of rural and urban areas is good, though a more recent childcare supply assessment is needed. As shown in section 2.2, most families and low-income families in particular rely on the support of other family members (figures 34 and 35), as early childhood care and education (ECCE) services (before preschool level (0-3 years) in Romania are not yet part of compulsory education. High informal care figures can reflect insufficient provision of ECCE. However, several factors can limit the demand for early child development (ECD), including lack of awareness about the importance of early childhood education, cultural and social factors influencing the perception of the importance of early childhood education, affordability and accessibility, parental workforce participation, and quality concerns. The cost of ECD services and their accessibility can be significant barriers. If services are expensive or located far from where families reside, it can limit the demand, especially among economically disadvantaged families. The net cost of childcare is below the EU average, but not for the B20. According to a study by Brussino and McBrien (2022), gross and net childcare costs,[55] as a percentage of women's median full-time earnings, are overall below the EU average of 14 percent in Romania, but are higher among the poor. Gender differences in spending on educational fees and schoolbooks/supplies are observed, with parents spending slightly more on schoolbooks and supplies for their female children below six years old, while spending more on childcare services, school accommodation, and preschool and primary education fees in the case of households with boys below six years old (figure 14). Labor market status of parents is important, as in 2021, a large majority of children ages less than three years were cared for only by their parents (76.8 percent), the largest proportion in the EU.[56]

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55   The OECD net childcare cost (NCC) indicator reflects the net reduction in family budgets resulting from the use of center-based childcare.
56   Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_CAPARENTS__custom_6629577/default/table?lang=en.

Figure 14. Educational Expenditure by Category and Gender in Households with At Least 1 Child Ages 6 Years Old or Less, 2019
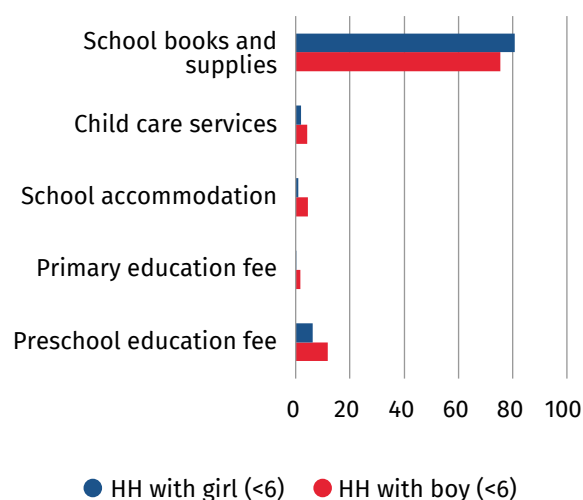
Source: Authors' estimates based on HBS 2019.

Figure 15. Educational Expenditure by Category and Gender in Households with At Least 1 Child Ages 6 to 11 Years Old, 2019
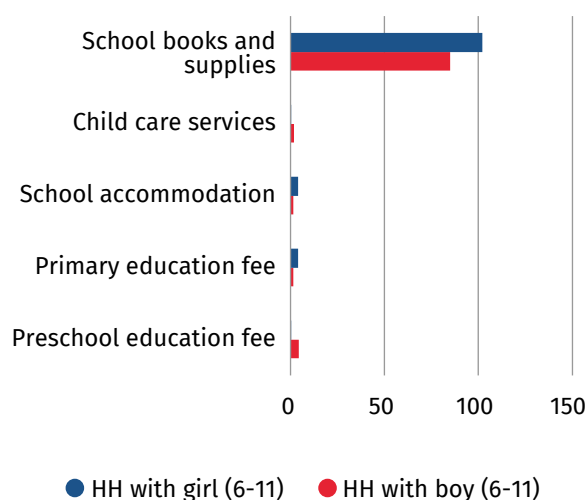
Source: Authors' estimates based on HBS 2019.

There is a significant shift in gender disparities in educational attainment as Romanian children enter primary school. Girls not only catch up with boys in terms of educational enrollment, they surpass them, achieving significantly higher levels of schooling. Figure 16 suggests the appearance of reverse gender gaps across rural and urban areas and for different socioeconomic statuses. Among low-income families, net enrollment rates are significantly lower for boys than girls, and in addition, enrollment rates are below the EU averages in the case of both boys and girls. The gaps between the averages in Romania with the EU averages are slightly larger for girls.[57]

Low-income families may face financial barriers that make it difficult to afford school fees, uniforms, and textbooks. Educational expenditure in absolute terms varies slightly by gender (figure 15). While families spend more on schoolbooks and educational supplies when they have a girl between 6 and 11 in the household, they spend more on preschool and childcare services fees when they have a boy in the household, but the absolute spending on these items is negligible overall. Differences in these spending patterns between rural and urban areas are small (HBS 2019).

Relatively low public spending on primary education and decreases in educational quality could also be responsible for the observed gaps in net primary enrollment rates. The more restricted public resources are, the higher the number of groups competing for the scarce resources, and disadvantaged

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57   WDI. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.NENR.

groups might suffer more from this competition. Therefore, it is worrisome that the government expenditure per primary student (as a percent of GDP per capita) decreased from 11.1 percent to 7.8 percent between 2012 and 2016, the latest available data point for this indicator.[58] The gap between the Romanian average and the EU average in spending, which fluctuated between 20.1 and 20.3 percent between 2012 and 2016, consequently also increased significantly. Decreases in educational quality could also drive some of the reversed gender gaps. One indicator often used to measure educational quality is the pupil-teacher ratio. This indicator increased over time,[59] which could mean that educational quality decreased.

The family context could also play a role in the low net enrollment of boys in particular, but updated information on the time use of children is needed to confirm this hypothesis. The literature shows that low-income families might have their children engage in income-generating activities, which might drive children out of school (ILO and UNICEF 2021). Child labor affects boys more than girls and is more prevalent in rural than urban areas (ILO and UNICEF 2021). These patterns would be in line with our observations in figure 16. However, determining whether child labor is a driver of low net enrollment rates, especially among boys, would require updated and disaggregated data on child labor and time use among children.

When young Romanians reach the secondary educational levels, there is gender parity is net enrollment rates, though levels are extremely low compared to the EU; further data analysis reveals different patterns across groups, with some gender gaps reappearing among low-income groups and in urban areas. Although secondary education is compulsory in Romania , gross enrollment rates for male and female students in secondary education are below the EU average. Further analysis shows that gender gaps among 16- to 18-year-olds differ by income groups. While net enrollment rates are lower for girls than boys in the B40, the opposite is true for the T60. Similarly, gender gaps differ by area. In contrast to girls in rural areas, girls living in urban areas report lower enrollment rates than their male counterparts (figure 17). Boys might drop out in rural areas in order to support their families through income-generating activities instead of attaining additional education. This finding suggests that socioeconomic status is crucial in determining gender disparities in education, with children from low-income families and urban areas facing greater barriers to accessing education.

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58   WDI, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.PRIM.PC.ZS?locations=RO.
59   https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.ENRL.TC.ZS?locations=RO.

Figure 16. Net Primary Enrollment Rates of Children by Gender Ages 6–11, 2020
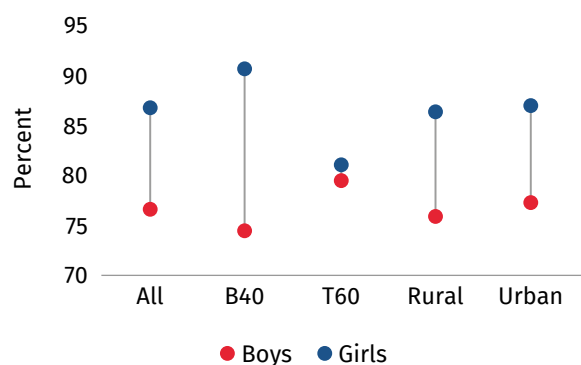
Figure 17. Net Secondary Enrollment Rates of Children by Gender Ages 16–18, 2020
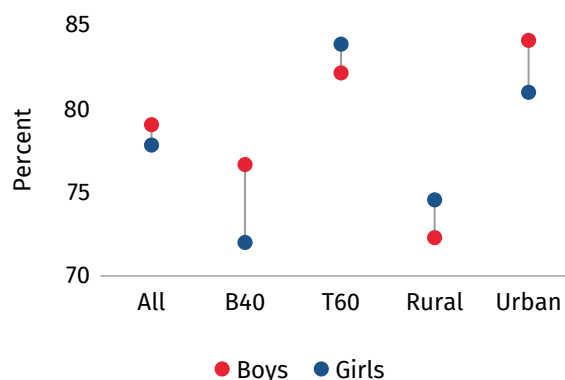
Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Note: Figure depicts the net enrollment rate for female and male students between 6 and 11 years, calculated as the number of children ages 6–11 who receive at least one hour of education per usual week in a compulsory education facility, expressed as a share of the population in this age group. The sample size is small, with 611 children, and estimates might be biased.

Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Note: Figure depicts the net enrollment rate for female and male students between 16 and 18 years old, calculated as the share of children ages 16–18 who intend to attend a secondary education facility at the time of the interview. We restrict the sample to 16 to 18 years old children given that data for the 13- to 15-year-old children is not available for this indicator as part of the EU-SILC. B40 is the Bottom 40 and T60 is the Top 60.

Though this report aims to give a snapshot of the more-recent gender gaps in the sector, it is worth noting that net enrollment rates in both primary and secondary levels have decreased over time and are significantly below EU levels for boys and girls, a worrisome trend. Though the gender gaps in primary education are overall negligible, net enrollment rates in primary education have fallen in the period 2016–20 (by nearly 3 percentage points) (figure 18). The decrease has been even more marked in the case of lower secondary schooling (but not higher secondary schooling; see figure A.1.4), registering a decrease of 4.4 percentage points (figure 19). Moreover, the gaps between the Romanian and the EU averages are significant for both female and male students. Romania does not perform well compared to the EU in terms of adolescents out of school (as a proportion of those of lower secondary school age) and children out of school (proportion of those of primary school age) (benchmarking exercise). These trends are worrisome, given that education is crucial for gender equality. More-educated men and women are less likely to believe in harmful gender norms.[60] To counter these negative developments, Romania should invest in studies that shed light on the key drivers behind this decrease and design evidence-based interventions that target the underlying mechanisms. Further evidence on early school leaving suggests that individuals ages 18–24 in low-income families are significantly more affected, which could mean that boys and girls drop out to generate household income (figure A.1.6).

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60 World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org).

Figure 18. Net Enrollment Rates in Primary Education by Gender, Romania vs. EU, 2016–20
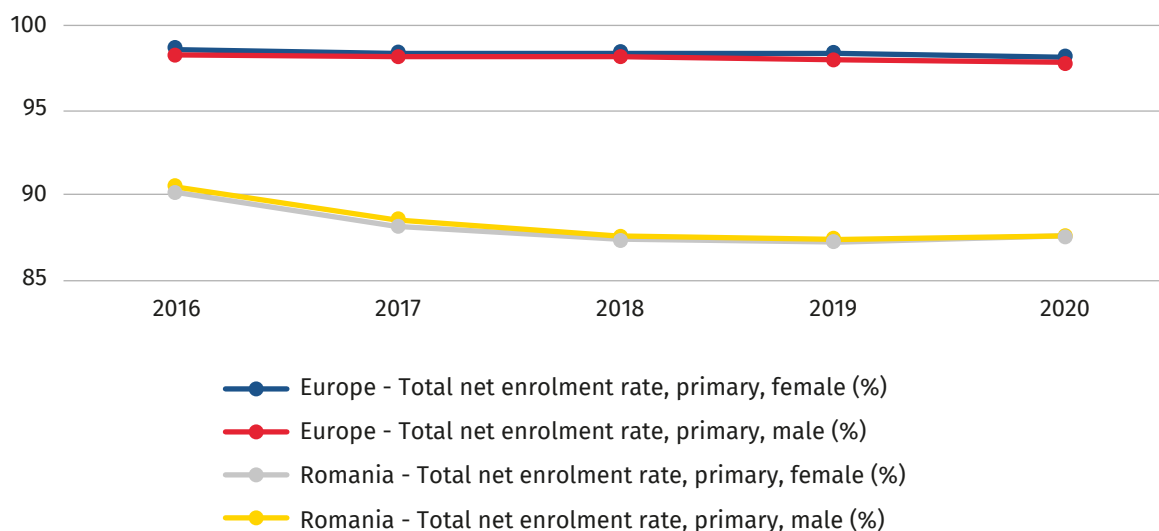
Figure 19. Net Enrollment Rates in Lower Secondary Education by Gender, Romania vs. EU, 2016–20
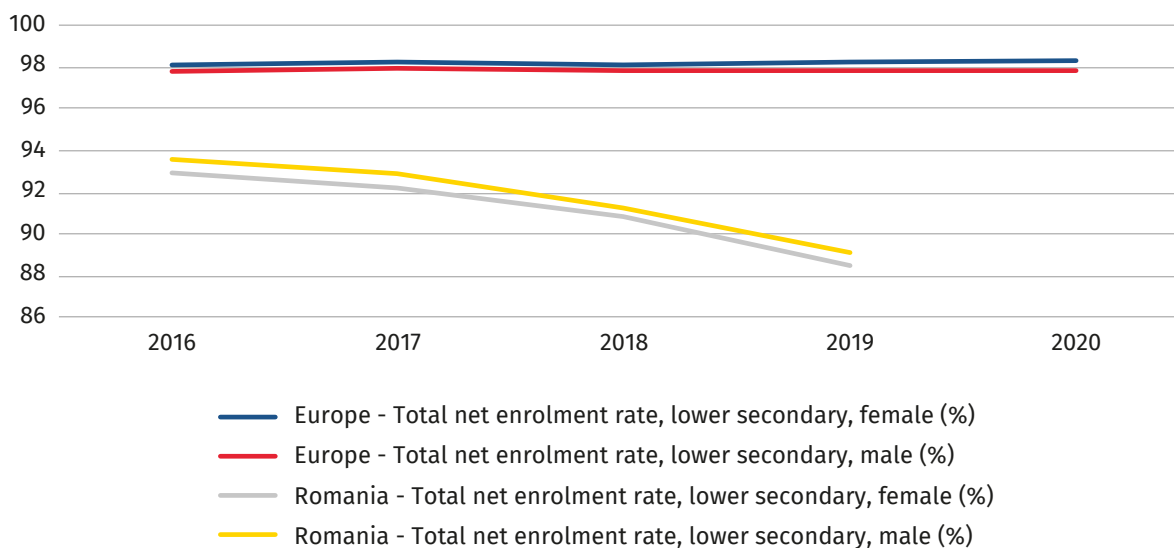
Source: UNESCO Database, http://data.uis.unesco.org/http://data.uis.unesco.org/.

Teenage pregnancy could partly explain school dropout among girls, given that numerous studies have established a correlation between school dropout and high teenage pregnancy rates. Research examining the causes and effects of the elevated levels of teen pregnancy in Romania demonstrates that they often lead to school dropout (Radu et al. 2022; Diaconescu et al. 2015). Iorga et al. (2021) found that 7 out of 10 mothers of girls who became pregnant considered school dropout to be the most common consequence of teenage pregnancy, followed by psychological trauma. Further research is needed to establish the cause–effect relationship. Additionally, three out of four interviewed mothers agreed that school-based sexual education should be offered. These studies suggest that Romania urgently

needs a comprehensive national intervention that integrates medical access, sexual education, and family involvement to tackle the issue of teenage pregnancy (Diaconescu et al. 2015).

Gender-related social norms could pressure men into leaving school early in rural areas. Men are subject to gender-related social norms and face higher pressure to be primary breadwinners in rural areas. According to data from the World Values Survey,[61] in 2018 a higher share of Romanians living in rural areas believed that a man should have a greater right to a job when jobs are scarce (46.2 percent versus 34.2 in urban areas). These perceptions might lead to men's dropping out of school early to meet their responsibilities as primary breadwinners. Early school leaver rates support this rationale (figure A.1.5). Previous studies on school dropout in Romania confirm that the need to support families financially is one important reason, especially among poorer children (Rotaru 2019).

Broadly speaking, the family and school system play a crucial role in explaining school dropout in Romania, as do gaps in educational spending. In a study conducted by Ciolca (2020), respondents indicated that a lack of awareness of the importance of education and a lack of parental support for children's education, learning difficulties, and low development levels of personal skills drive school dropout in Romania, next to the involvement of children in household chores and income-generating responsibilities. Violence at school might also play a role; in general, low school attractiveness is a crucial factor driving school dropout (Apostu 2014). Relatedly, the relative government expenditure per secondary student increased at first, but then dropped during 2014–16 (from 16.3 to 15.2 percent of GDP per capita). As of 2016 it remained well below the EU average of 23.0 percent.

Apostu (2014) concluded that school dropout and out-of-school rates in Romania were due to three factors: sociocultural demand-side factors, economic demand-side factors, and supply-side factors; we argue that these affect boys and girls asymmetrically. Apostu (2014) found that supply-side constraints, such as lack of infrastructure, human resources, and inadequate teacher training partly explain school dropout and out-of-school rates. In addition, the report identified economic demand-side factors, such as poverty and extreme poverty, and sociocultural demand-side factors, such as cultural customs and traditions (for example, leaving school early), low educational levels of parents, medical and health problems, low family support, and discrimination and special needs, also play a significant role. We argue that these factors are gender sensitive and create (reversed) gender gaps between boys and girls. For example, boys might be more affected by the tradition of leaving school early to enter the labor market, while girls might leave to start a family. Similarly, boys might be more affected by adverse health behavior, such as drinking and substance abuse, leading to low school performance and dropout, while girls might suffer more from mental health issues. An updated gender-sensitive assessment could generate valuable insights and systematically confirm these hypotheses.

In Romania girls in older age groups have, on average, higher gross enrollment rates than boys in tertiary education, but these rates are significantly below the EU average. Both male and female students have lower gross enrollment rates in Romania compared to the EU, even though there are reversed gender gaps in both regions (figure A.1.7). That said, gross enrollment rates have increased

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61 World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org).

over time. The gender ratio of enrolled students in tertiary education is nearly equal to one in both rural and urban areas, showing that gender gaps are nearly closed in both areas.[62] Moreover, the gender ratio is less than one for the lowest three income quintiles and greater than one for the two highest income quintiles.

We observe reversed gender gaps in net tertiary enrollment rates among rural and high-income groups, but positive gender gaps among those residing in urban areas or belonging to the b40. Gender gaps in net enrollment rates are negligible overall, but mask important heterogeneities across income groups and areas. Girls in rural areas have higher net enrollment rates than boys, while boys in urban areas have higher net enrollment rates than girls. Both boys and girls have substantially higher net enrollment rates in urban areas. Additionally, there are noticeable differences in enrollment rates among income groups. The T60 group reports reversed gender gaps, whereas the B40 group reports positive gender gaps (figure 20).[63]

Figure 20. Tertiary Net Enrollment Rates by Gender, 19–23 Years Old

Source: EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
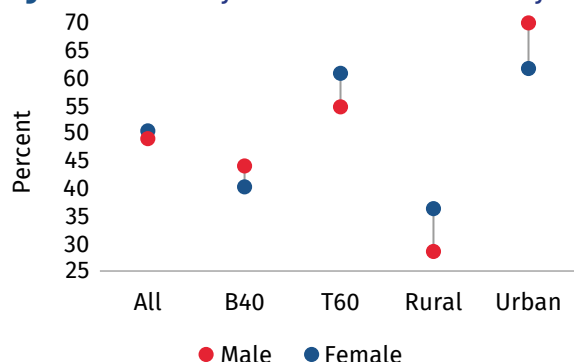
Note: The graph depicts the net enrollment rate in tertiary education (short-cycle, bachelor's, master's, Ph.D.) by gender in 2020, overall, by income groups, and by area, for 19 to 23-year-olds. B40 is the Bottom 40 and T60 is Top 60.

Tertiary education displays a significant level of gender segregation, with women being underrepresented in certain fields. In 2016, only 4 out of 10 graduates in STEM-related fields were female, a share similar to other countries in the region (figure 21). This disparity is also evident in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and veterinary fields, where only 4 out of 10 graduates were female, a significantly lower share than in other countries in the region (figure 22). However, the proportion of women is much higher in fields traditionally associated with femininity, such as education (91 percent), health and welfare (72 percent), and social sciences (75 percent). These figures reveal the existence of substantial gender segregation in the fields of study. Ending this segregation is critical to bridging the gender pay gap, because STEM jobs often pay higher salaries.

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62   EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
63   EU-SILC 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Figure 21. Female Share of Tertiary Graduates in STEM, Romania vs. Other ECA Countries, 2016/2017 (%)

Figure 22. Female Share of Tertiary Graduates in Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, and Veterinary Fields, Romania vs. Other ECA Countries, 2016/2017 (%)
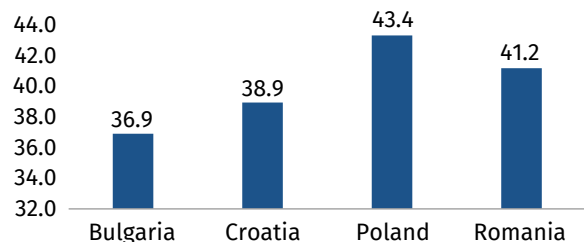
Source: World Bank 2023b.

Note: Figure 21 shows the female share of graduates in STEM programs in tertiary education, calculated as the number of female graduates over total graduates, in Romania in 2016 and Bulgaria, Croatia, and Poland in 2017. Figure 22 only uses data from 2016.
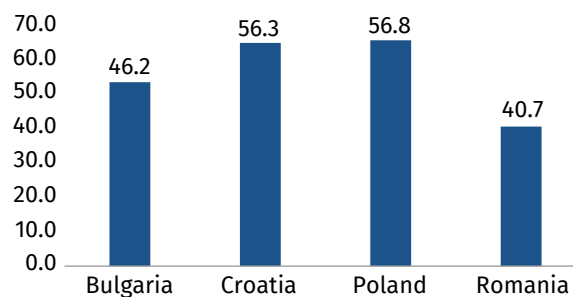
Gender-related social norms around the roles of men and women in society could also explain why access to education for men and women differs by income groups. Previously, we showed that girls report lower (higher) net enrollment rates in the low-income group (high-income group) during secondary education (see figure 23). Similar results were found for tertiary enrollment rates (see figure 20). These differences could be related to gender norms faced by girls that present constraints. Although men in the lower-income group are also affected by gender norms that could drive them out of school, such as social pressure to contribute to household income and assume the role of the breadwinner,[64] the pressure on women to start a family might be greater and lead to dropout. The evidence on high rates of teenage pregnancy and the fact that women on average are relatively young when they have their first child (27.1 years) supports this hypothesis.[65] Moreover, Romanians in the low-income group are also slightly more likely to believe that a university education is more important for a boy than a girl (figure 24). Additionally, the evidence presented in figure 23 shows that women seem to internalize these harmful beliefs about the importance of female education. These types of gender norms could also be present in early education cycles and explain some of the observed positive gender gaps, but data are lacking and should be generated.

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64 According to the World Values Survey 2023 (Online Data Analysis, WVS Database [worldvaluessurvey.org]), 51.7 percent of Romanians in the low-income group believe that men should have more rights to a job when jobs are scarce, compared to 36.9 percent in the high-income group.

65 UNECE, Mean age of women at birth of first child. Link: https://w3.unece.org/PXWeb/en/Table?IndicatorCode=34.

Figure 23. Responses to the Statement "University is more important for a boy than for a girl" by Gender, 2018 (%)
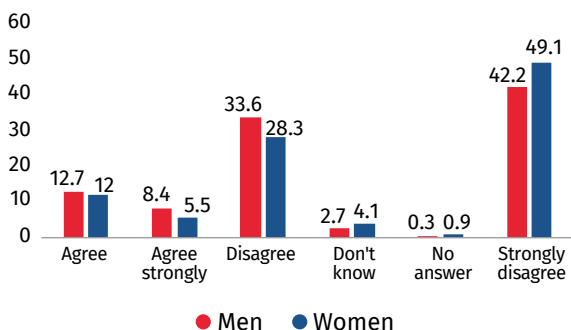
Figure 24. Responses to the Statement "University is more important for a boy than for a girl" by Income Level, 2018 (%)
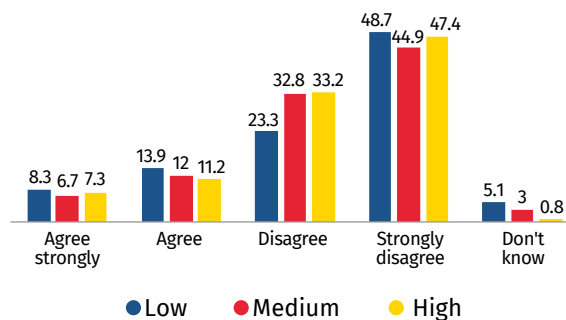
Source: World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org). Data refer to 2018.

In addition, research suggests that certain groups of students are disproportionately affected by harmful norms within the family and the educational system. These harmful norms can contribute to cycles of abuse and are often manifested in high levels of school-based violence and bullying within the Romanian educational system (for a detailed overview of the evidence, see Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 b). Furthermore, students with a Roma background frequently experience discrimination, particularly Roma women and girls, who face additional barriers to education. Another concerning issue is the high level of teenage pregnancy, which can result in school dropout and may also be related to harmful gender norms.

Overall, recent evidence shows that including Roma children in the educational system in Romania remains a challenge. A recent study by Patache, Ghencea, and Negurita (2022) found that the Roma community had lower levels of education, higher levels of illiteracy, higher rates of early school leaving, less school success, and lower educational attainment. According to the study, the reasons for these gaps are mainly stigmatization, poverty, low expectations of Roma parents with respect to the schooling of their children, a lack of role models, early marriage, and the need to support families by performing chores and engaging in income-generating activities.

Research on the roles of parents, teachers, and parent-teacher interaction in promoting gender equality in Romania is scarce, but studies from other countries indicate that all three are significant. Parental gender stereotypes can be influential in driving gender inequality (UNESCO 2020), as can the biases of teachers, which can create obstacles to gender equality, as demonstrated in several studies (see, for example, Carlana 2019 and Alan, Ertac, and Mumcu 2018). At the same time, both parents and teachers can help mitigate harmful gender norms, and the latter can play a vital role in raising awareness of gender equality through gender-responsive parent-teacher interactions, as noted by Warner and Barrera (2005).

Figure 25. PISA Test Scores by Gender, 2015 vs. 2018

Source: OECD, https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/.
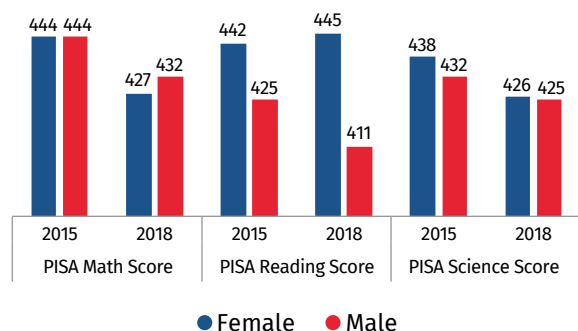
When analyzing gender gaps in educational performance, recent evidence from PISA indicates that, on average, female students in Romania perform worse (better) than male students in math (reading) tests (figure 25). According to 2018 PISA data on reading scores, boys exhibit significantly poorer performance than girls, with a score of 411 index points compared to 445 for girls. This discrepancy might be attributed to boys' having less interest in reading than girls. In contrast, differences in PISA science scores are insignificant, with boys and girls scoring 426 and 425, respectively. Regarding PISA math scores, girls perform slightly worse than boys, scoring 427 versus 432, respectively. Although these differences are not statistically significant, they are concerning, because girls are already underrepresented in STEM-related fields. The decline in girls' math and science scores calls for further attention to address the gender gap in STEM fields.

Between 2015 and 2018, there was a decline in performance among both boys and girls, with a more significant drop observed among girls in science and math scores and among boys in reading scores. Additionally, compared to the 2015 PISA reading scores, the reversed gender gap in reading proficiency worsened, with boys experiencing a decline in scores from 425 index points to 411, while girls slightly improved their performance from 442 to 445. The PISA math scores showed no gender gaps in 2015, with both male and female students scoring 444 points. However, by 2018 the performance of both boys and girls had worsened, with girls experiencing a more significant drop. Moreover, the reversed gender gap in PISA science scores decreased between 2015 and 2018, which can be attributed to a performance drop, particularly among girls. In 2015, girls' scores were 438 points and boys' 432 points, while in 2018 the scores were 426 and 425, respectively.

Boys report a higher learning poverty rate while girls report lower attainment of digital skills. Learning poverty[66] is more prevalent among boys than among girls (figure A.1.8), while learning-adjusted years of schooling are higher for female than for male students (figure A.1.9). These numbers confirm that girls outperform boys in many dimensions. Still, girls have a lower probability of acquiring digital skills. Given the importance of digital skills in today's labor markets, these gaps should be addressed, as they might relate to gender gaps in STEM occupations. For example, in 2021, boys ages 16 to 19 were

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66   Learning poverty is defined as the percentage of 10-year-old children who cannot read and understand a simple story.

more likely (by 6 percentage points) to have basic or above-basic digital skills than girls.[67] In addition, the GEI from 2020 included a special theme on digitalization and the future of work, showing that there are significant gender gaps in digital skills and occupational choices, as well as ICT at work.

To achieve gender equality in education, it is essential to not only ensure that girls or boys have access to education, but also to provide them with the necessary form of education to flourish. Gender-responsive education seeks to provide girls or boys with access to education and establish a supportive and secure learning environment (UNICEF 2023). Failure to adopt gender-responsive teaching practices may result in the reinforcing of gender stereotypes. Research has indicated that school textbooks are often biased toward males. This issue is also prevalent in Romanian curriculums, as evidenced by the findings of Concordă (2018), which demonstrate gender discrimination against women in the curriculum material. It is crucial to address these biases and replace outdated, biased textbooks with updated materials that promote gender equality in Romania.

In conclusion, gender gaps in education differ in size and magnitude depending on the age group, income group, and area. Overall, boys seem to have more access to education during preprimary education, but girls outperform boys in net enrollment rates during primary education. During secondary and tertiary education, net enrollment rates are higher for girls in the T60 and rural areas, but not in the B40 and urban areas. Gender gaps in school performance also differ. While boys outperform girls in math, the opposite is true for reading. Differences are negligible in the case of science. In addition, we show that there is significant gender segregation in terms of the field studied during tertiary education. Moreover, Romania lags behind the EU average in the educational sector in the case of both boys and girls. Closing these gaps would benefit both boys and girls in Romania and support the country's future development.

Moreover, reversed gender gaps and the dropping school performance among boys is worrisome, because education is crucial for a variety of development outcomes. In societies that perpetuate gender equality, both men and women can develop to their fullest potential. Therefore, reversed gender gaps and the decreasing school performance among boys is worrisome from an equity perspective. Education is an important precondition for positive development outcomes later in life. It should be noted that the negative developments and underachievement associated with the educational outcomes of boys and young men in Romania are in line with recent global trends (UNESCO 2022).

These developments are also troublesome, because more-educated men are less likely to believe in harmful gender norms. In 2018, 14.7 percent of highly educated men (strongly) agreed that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl, compared to 20.2 percent of less-educated men.[68] Similarly, just 14.4 percent of highly educated men thought that men should have more rights to a job than women when jobs are scarce, while 43.8 percent of lower-educated men held this belief.[69] These results underscore the need to address declining school performance among men with regard to

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67   Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ISOC_SK_DSKL_I21__custom_6630550/default/table?lang=en— ISOC_SK_DSKL_I21.

68   World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org).

69   World Values Survey, Online Data Analysis, WVS Database (worldvaluessurvey.org).

achieving gender equality, as a higher level of educational attainment reduces the likelihood that men will believe in harmful gender norms.

Recent evidence on the underachievement of boys indicates that multiple factors drive these negative developments, which have been observed globally, not only in Romania. A recent study by UNESCO (2022) that reviewed the international evidence on underachievement of boys found that these developments are driven by factor at the macrosystem (societal, economic, cultural), mesosystem (schools and other institutions), and microsystem (interpersonal and personal) levels. The report mentioned that learning and education often stand in contrast to expressions of masculinity and make education unpopular among boys. The need to work is another important driver, as are bullying and violence at school, realities that impact boys more significantly than girls.

We conclude that barriers related to social norms and limited infrastructure, together with low public spending, could drive (reversed) gender gaps; the family context also plays a role. We analyze several potential drivers that could be responsible for the (reversed) gender gaps studied in this report. First, we show that certain gender norms could drive boys and girls out of the educational sector into the labor market or into having a family early, respectively. Stigmatization and marginalization of poor and/ or Roma children might also play a role. Second, deficits in educational quality and infrastructure could drive some of the gaps. Third, low educational spending could be responsible some of the (reversed) gender gaps and negative trends in the educational sector, as children are forced to compete over scarce resources. In 2020, Romanian government expenditure on education was 3.7 percent of its GDP, substantially below the EU average of 5.1 percent.[70] Lastly, the family context also plays a role. Parents might take children, especially boys, out of school so that they can engage in income-generating activities or parents might not be aware of the value of education altogether.

However, rigorous impact evaluations could help to understand the interactions in more detail. To better understand the interactions between the different mechanisms analyzed in this report and (reversed) gender gaps in educational access and performance, Romania should invest in impact evaluations that study these issues in more detail. It is also crucial to further study the drivers of declining school performance and dropout and to design policy interventions based on the generated evidence. Finally, we present some evidence; but more detailed research studies could help to bolster this evidence.

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70 WDI, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=RO-EU.

2.2. Economic Opportunities

Accumulated human capital in Romania does not necessarily get utilized and there are considerable gaps in labor market opportunities. It is critical to ensure that females have access to meaningful employment opportunities in which they can utilize their skills and knowledge and transition smoothly from education to work. Despite the evidence of reverse gender gaps in several educational outcomes we presented above, we next show that females are in a disadvantaged position in the labor market and that there are still wide gender gaps in labor market outcomes. Females have significantly lower labor force participation rates than males, which led to poor employment prospects both before and after the COVID-19 crisis.

It is critical to ensure that females have access to meaningful employment opportunities in which they can utilize their skills and knowledge and transition smoothly from education to work. A detailed analysis of female economic opportunities is important to understand Romania's barriers to equity and growth. When individuals are unable to utilize their human capital, they may become disengaged from the workforce and education systems and may not reach their full potential. For example, the share of young females not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in 2021 was 26.3 percent in 2021, the largest in the EU and significantly larger than the share of Romanian males (14.6 percent).[71] Incentivizing female employment is important, because it promotes development through its impact on productivity, employment, and economic growth.

This subsection first provides a snapshot of the key gender gaps in the labor market, together with an analysis of the critical barriers to female employability. It then presents evidence on the entrepreneurship gap, gender gaps among the elderly, and the role of eldercare.

Key Labor Market Outcomes

The gender gap in labor force participation rates (LFP) increased from 2013 to 2022 and as of 2022 was the highest in the EU. The LFP gender gap increased from 17.1 percentage points in 2013 to 18.8 percentage points in 2022, reaching the highest level among all 27 EU countries (panel a of figure 26). In contrast, the average gender participation gap declined in EU-27 countries during the same period. In 2022, working-age females (15–64) in Romania were significantly less likely to participate in the labor market than males (57.3 vs. 76.1 percent). This is consistent with the EIGE,[72] in which Romania scored 78.8 on female LFP compared to the EU-27 score of 81.3, with the country ranking 25th, followed only by Greece and Italy. As a result, gender gaps in employment are among the largest in the EU (panel b of figure 26).

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71 Eurostat Database, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database. The country also per-forms poorly with regard to female NEETs compared to other comparator countries, such as the CEE and SE countries (benchmarking exercise).

72 EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/domain/work/RO

Figure 26. Gender Gaps in Labor Force Participation and Employment (Percentage Points), 2013 vs. 2022

Panel a. Gender difference (men minus women) in the labor force participation rate (15- to 64-year-olds)
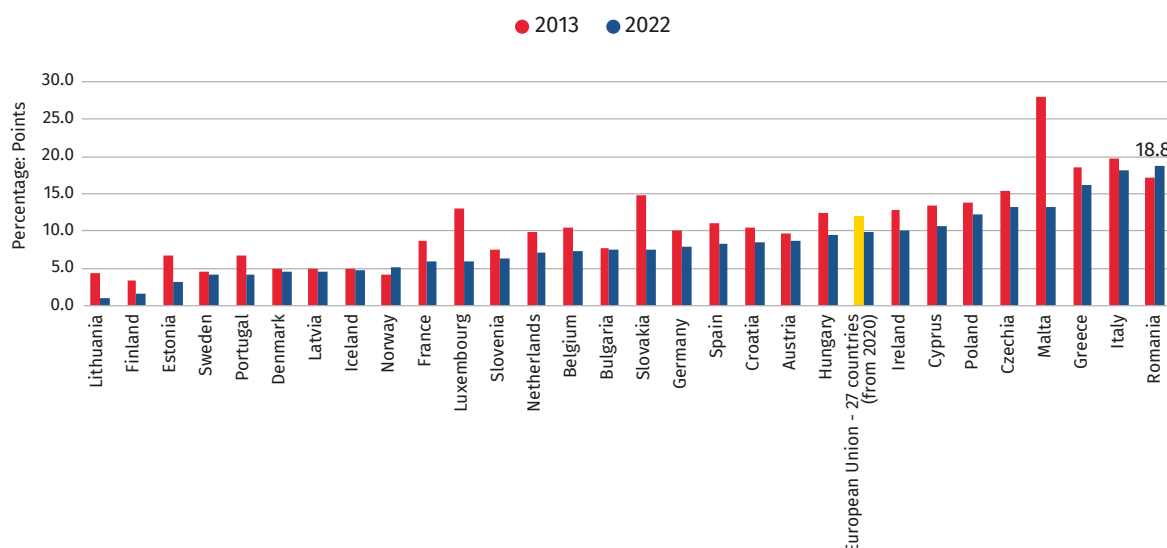
Panel b. Gender difference (men minus women) in the employment rate (15- to 64-year-olds), 2013 vs. 2022
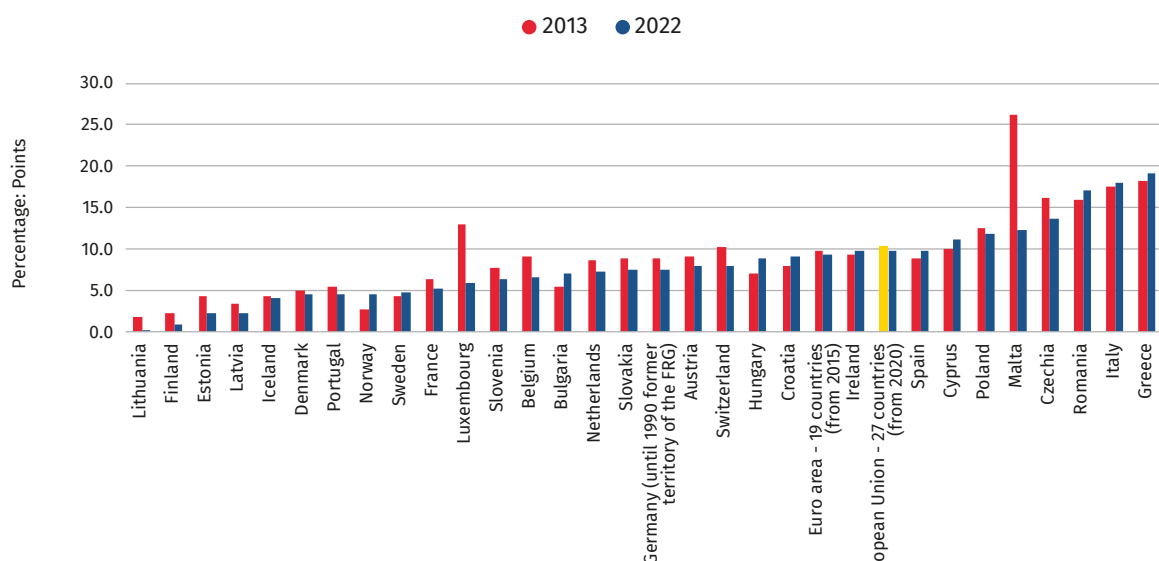
Source: Author's calculations based on Eurostat [lfsa_ipga].

Gender gaps in labor force participation are particularly large among the low skilled, especially during the child-bearing years and those living in rural areas and towns and suburbs. Figure 27 reveals that there are barely any gender gaps in labor force participation rates among the high skilled (panel c).

On the contrary, there are significant gaps between men and women among the low skilled, especially during the child-bearing years (panel a). While the gaps become smaller with age, they remain significant. A similar picture emerges for the middle skilled (panel b), although gender gaps are smaller than for the low skilled. This suggests that women with lower levels of education might face greater barriers when it comes to accessing employment opportunities than men, especially if they need to prioritize caregiving responsibilities, such as raising children. This could be particularly binding for women who live in rural areas or towns and suburbs, where traditional gender roles and family values are often more deeply entrenched.[73] When looking at areas with different degrees of urbanization, the larger gender gaps are observed among the unskilled, particularly those living in town and suburbs, with these gaps being driven by low female LFP rates (panel d).

Figure 27. Labor Force Participation Rates in Romania by Skill Groups, Age Groups, and Gender, 2022
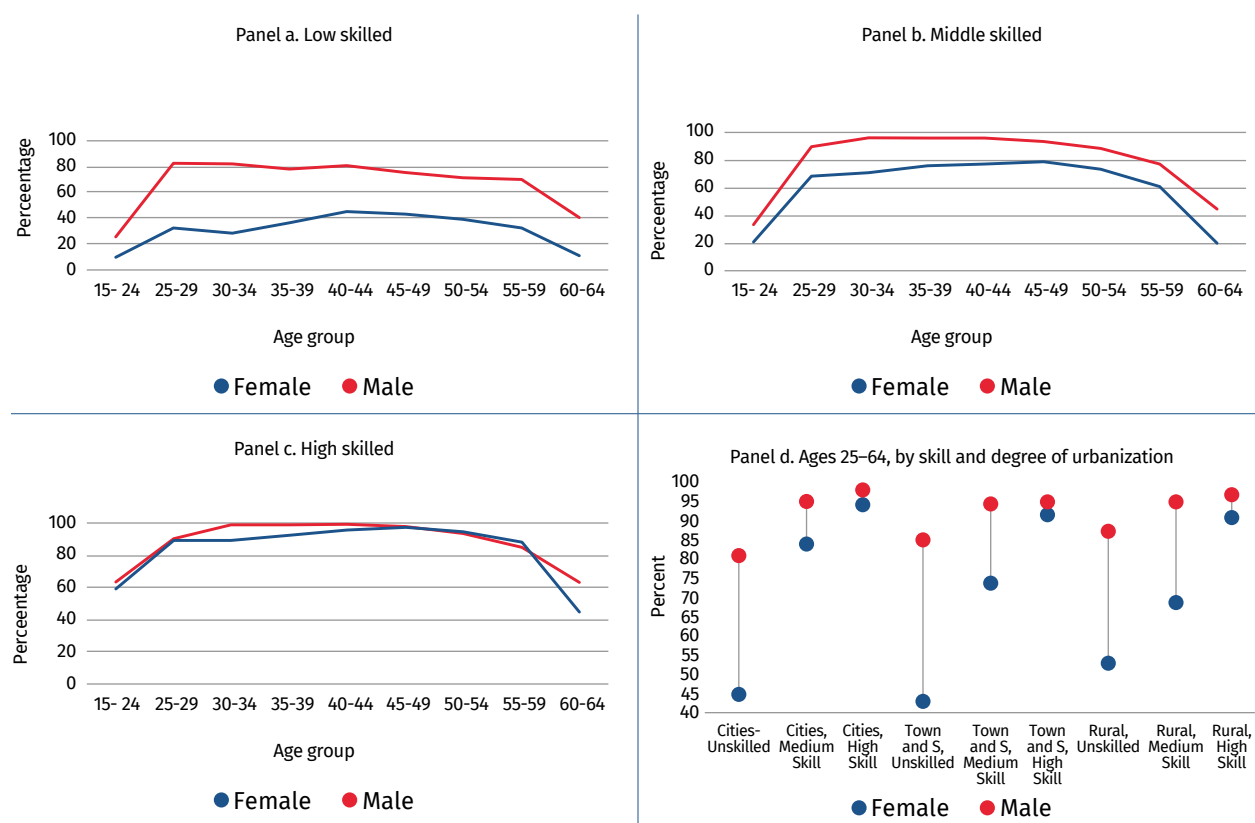
Source: Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/page/lfsa_argaed.

Note: High skilled is defined as those with ISCED 5+ education, medium skilled as those with ISCED 3–4, and low skilled as those with ISCED 0–2 [LFSA_ARGAED].

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73   This becomes evident when analyzing data from the World Values Survey, for example. The share of the population in rural areas in Romania who (strongly) agree with the statement that men should have more rights to a job when jobs are scarce and that it is a problem if women have higher incomes than their husbands is larger than the share in urban areas.

When employed, women concentrate in different sectors and occupations than men in Romania, with a larger share being employed in retail trade and education and health and a small share employed in STEM-related occupations. Women's most important employment sectors are retail trade, education, health, and apparel manufacturing. For men on the other hand, the most important employment sectors are the primary sector, the construction sector, wholesale and retail trade, and land transport and transport via pipelines (figure 28). These gendered employment patterns reflect a range of social and economic factors, including historical gender roles associated with care, as women are often encouraged to pursue jobs that are perceived as nurturing or domestic in nature (see the discussion on social norms later in this chapter), occupational segregation (Istrate and Banica 2015), and discrimination (Stanila, Vasilescu, and Militaru 2020). In terms of occupations, only 1 out of 10 employed women work in STEM-related occupations (EIGE 2019), even though 4 out of 10 graduates in STEM-related fields in Romania are female (see figure 28). In comparison, 3 out of 10 men work in these occupations (EIGE 2019). As a consequence, there are deficiencies in terms of role models and of diverse perspectives on STEM disciplines and female networks are weak (EIGE 2019). The reasons behind the disconnect between educational outcomes and labor outcomes with respect to STEM are not well understood (EIGE 2019) and should be investigated in more detail.

Figure 28. Employment by Gender and Sector of Economic Activity, 2021

- 86 - Human health activities
- 85 - Education
- 80 - Security and investigation activities
- 49 - Land transport and transport via pipelines
- 47 - Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- 46 - Wholesale trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- 45 - Wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles
- 41 - Construction of buildings
- 29 - Manufacture of motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers
- 14 - Manufacture of wearing apparel
- 10 - Manufacture of food products
- 01 - Crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities

Source: ILO 2023.

Figure 29. Overall Gender Earning Gap, Romania vs. EU-27 Countries, 2018
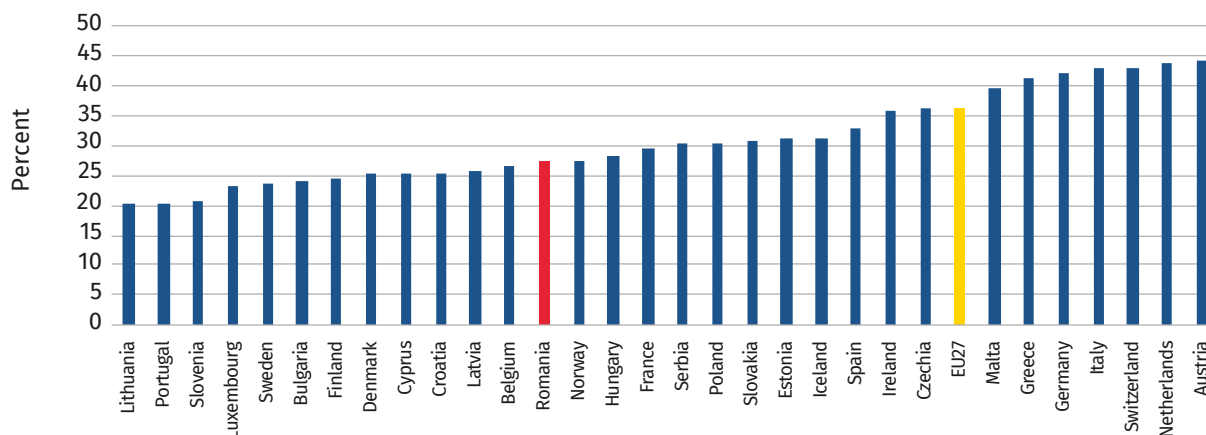
Sources: Eurostat, based on monthly and hourly earnings from the structure of earnings survey and employment rate from labor force surveys. It Includes industry, construction and services (except public administration, defense, compulsory social security), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/teqges01/default/table?lang=en.
Note: This is a Eurostat synthetic indicator, measuring the impact of three factors: average hourly earnings, monthly average of the number of hours paid (before any adjustment for part-time work and the employment rate), and the average earnings of all women of working age—whether employed or not employed—compared to men. No more-recent year data available.

The gender wage gap is relatively small but persistent, and mostly unexplained by differences in male and female characteristics, suggesting discrimination and other unobservable factors may play a role. Though gauging the gendered wage gaps is challenging, different measures point out small to moderate differences. In 2020, the gender gap in median earnings of full-time employees was around 3.3 percent, among the lowest found in OECD countries (which ranged from as high as 31.1 percent in Korea to as low as 3.4 percent in Luxembourg).[74] This estimate is similar to the 2021 unadjusted gender pay gap of 3.6 percent published by Eurostat.[75] A Eurostat synthetic indicator measuring the impact of three combined factors[76] on the average earnings of all women of working age—whether employed or not employed—compared to men places Romania below the EU-27 average regarding the overall earnings gap (figure 29). Redmond and McGuinness (2017), who decomposed the gender wage gaps for EU countries using Oaxaca decompositions and the 2014 European Skills and Jobs Survey (ESJS), found that in Romania, as well as in other Eastern European countries, the explained component is either very close to zero or negative, suggesting the gender wage premium cannot be explained by females having lower levels of wage-enhancing characteristics compared to males. This is consistent with Christofides, Polycarpou, and Vrachimis (2013), who, using 2007 EU-SILC data, found that most, if not all, of the average gender wage gap in Europe is unexplained. Unobservable factors associated with women's preferences or female disadvantages, including discrimination, may explain the observed wage differentials.

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74   OECD Employment Database, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm

75   This is measured by the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as a proportion of male gross earnings. Eurostat (sdg_05_20).

76   The three factors are average hourly earnings, monthly average of the number of hours paid (before any adjustment for part-time work and the employment rate), and the average earnings of all women of working age—whether employed or not employed—compared to men.

Although the Romanian government has enacted laws prohibiting discrimination in the workplace, there is evidence of discrimination taking place. Romania considers sexual harassment in the workplace a form of discrimination and treats it as a criminal offense and prohibits workplace discrimination generally (EIGE 2023). Still, there is some evidence that points toward women's facing discrimination in the workplace. Women might see themselves as being confronted with motherhood myths (Verniers and Vala 2018) and gender biases more broadly speaking (Faragalla et al. 2023). Furthermore, Heilman and Parks-Stamm (2007) have demonstrated that these experiences can have detrimental effects on women's career progress.

The Romania rapid surveys conducted recently by the World Bank on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and the recovery period on females found that they faced more work stoppages during the crisis, but showed greater resilience and in general managed to overtake men, though uneducated women have not fully recovered. Globally, the pandemic tended to have disruptive and uneven impacts on different population subgroups and sectors. Gender employment segregation is key to understanding the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women. Romanian women are overrepresented in sectors negatively affected by the COVID-19 crisis, such as hospitality and other categories of nonessential services and retail trade.[77] Women employed in these sectors prior to the pandemic faced either unemployment or decreased income. For vulnerable women, this impact was magnified, because they are more likely to be engaged in less-secure forms of employment and to be dismissed first (Kobakhidze 2021; World Bank 2023e). However, the latest survey rounds show that women were more resilient during the recovery period (figure 30).

Figure 30. Work Stoppage by Gender, 2020–22
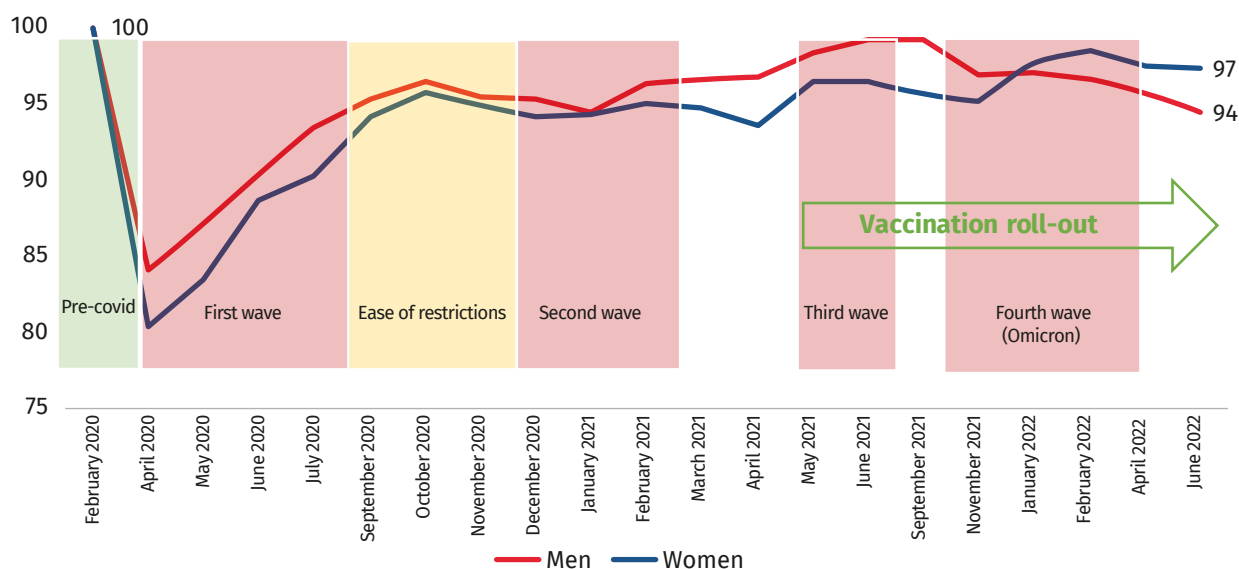
Source: World Bank Romania Rapid Phone Surveys.

Note: This indicator represents the probability of being employed in each month, conditional on being employed in February 2020.

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77   ILO (2020); Kulic et al. (2020).

The COVID-19 crisis and the spillovers from the war in Ukraine have had asymmetric effects on employed females. The latest employment data show that uneducated women are still experiencing employment levels significantly below pre-pandemic levels, while educated women have been extremely resilient to both crises. Low-educated female workers faced the most significant employment contraction during the COVID-19 crisis and have not recovered enough to reach pre-pandemic levels. In the depth of the pandemic, employment among female workers with primary education dropped by nearly 10 percentage points compared to pre-COVID-19 levels. In comparison, the employment rate among highly educated female workers was minimally affected.[78] During the recovery period, employment growth among the low-educated group was significantly higher than among the high-educated group, but not enough to reach pre-pandemic levels.

Going forward, the relatively large flow of Ukrainian refugees, predominantly females, could impact labor market outcomes among the female host populations. Aracı, Demirci, and Kırdar (2022) and Del Carpio and Wagner (2015) are two examples of studies that have demonstrated the negative effects of refugee shocks on women's employment and labor force participation. This is worrisome for Romania, given the large labor market disparities. One particularity of the Ukrainian refugee crisis is that FDP are largely female. Barslund, Di Bartolomeo, and Ludolph (2017) have shown that the labor market integration of female refugees is especially challenging. In this context, interventions targeting the refugee population in Romania should incorporate a gender-sensitive perspective to realize positive distributional effects.

Finally, while we focused above on the labor market outcomes of working-age Romanian females, analyzing gender gaps among the elderly is also important, given that 2 out of 10 Romanians are above 64 years old. As do many other developed countries, Romania currently struggles with demographic change and a significant share of the population is above 64 years old. In 2019, 19.4 percent of the population was above 64 years old.[79] This share is slightly larger than the EU average (17.4 percent) and has significantly increased over the last decades. The old-age dependency ratio was 32.0 percent in 2020 and is predicted to increase to 58 percent by 2017.[80] These numbers raise questions about how to finance elderly care in a sustainable and equitable way in the future and how these developments might affect poverty and inequality in the middle and long run.

Given that women work fewer years during their life, the gender pension gap is significant due to lower lifetime earnings. The gender pension gap is significant, because women are more likely to have breaks in their employment due to caregiving responsibilities, such as caring for children or elderly parents. These breaks can lead to lower earnings and reduced pension contributions, which in turn can result in lower pension income for women. The duration of working life is on average shorter for women than for men (30 versus 37 years) (EIGE 2021).[81] Furthermore, women tend to live longer than men, which

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78   These represent changes in the employment rate among adult (15-64) female workers between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the first quarter of 2021: Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/view/LFSI_EMP_Q?lang=en&category=labour.employ.lfsi.lfsi_emp.

79   OECD, Elderly population, https://data.oecd.org/pop/elderly-population.htm.

80   OECD, Elderly population, https://data.oecd.org/pop/elderly-population.htm.

81   EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/thematic-focus/health/country/RO.

means they require a pension income for longer. These differences might explain a significant gender pension gap of 24.0 percent in Romania (figure A.1.10). While this gap is below the EU average, barely any progress was made between 2012 and 2019.

Barriers to Female Employability and Labor Force Participation

Considering the intricate nature of female participation in the workforce, it is crucial to emphasize how some socioeconomic factors impact the ability and decision of Romanian women to participate in the job market. The hindrances Romanian women face when attempting to enter the job market can be summarized by differences in male and female endowments, such as access to productive resources, skills, networks, information, time, and services. Preferences such as family formation, mobility, and time use, as well as contextual factors such as social norms and institutions (work arrangements, legal rights) that determine gender roles in society, also play a role. These barriers can influence female employability (figure 31). While these barriers also affect men, some disproportionately affect women, especially when they overlap with others. It is critical to comprehend these key barriers affecting women's economic activity levels in Romania to determine potential options for policies that could address these limitations.

Figure 31. A Framework of Barriers to Female Employability
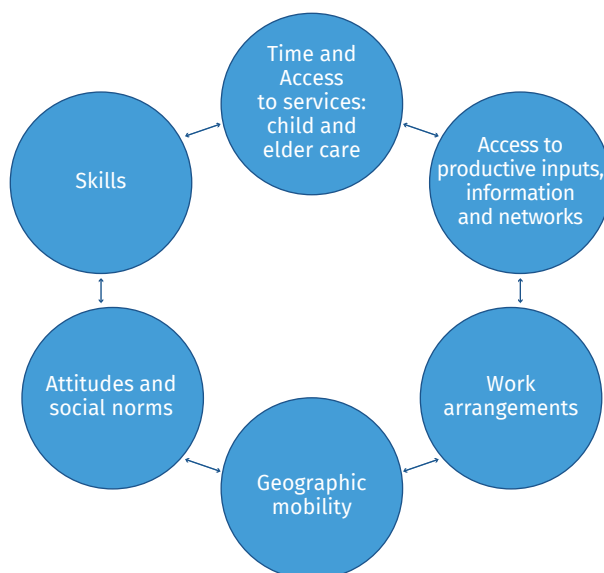
Source: Arias et al. 2014.

Lack of skills and other productive inputs can be a barrier to women's employability; educational attainment of younger cohorts is higher than that of their older counterparts. Figure 32 plots the educational distribution for men and women across age groups. The graph reveals that for both, younger cohorts are more educated than older cohorts and the share of people reporting tertiary education degrees decreases with age. In line with these results, a higher share of older cohorts reports having completed only primary education or not having any school diplomas or degrees. These differences are more visible for women than for men. At the same time, gender gaps are more pronounced in older than

in younger cohorts. Figure 32 shows that there are positive gender gaps for the +55-year-olds. These gaps decrease with decreasing age. For younger cohorts, we observe reversed gender gaps, meaning that women are more educated than men, on average. Policy makers should keep these trends in mind when thinking about retraining programs, especially around the green transition. Unequal access to assets such as land ownership or in digital and technological skills presented in this report could also limit employability.

Figure 32. Educational Attainment by Gender and Age Groups (Highest Level Obtained), 2019
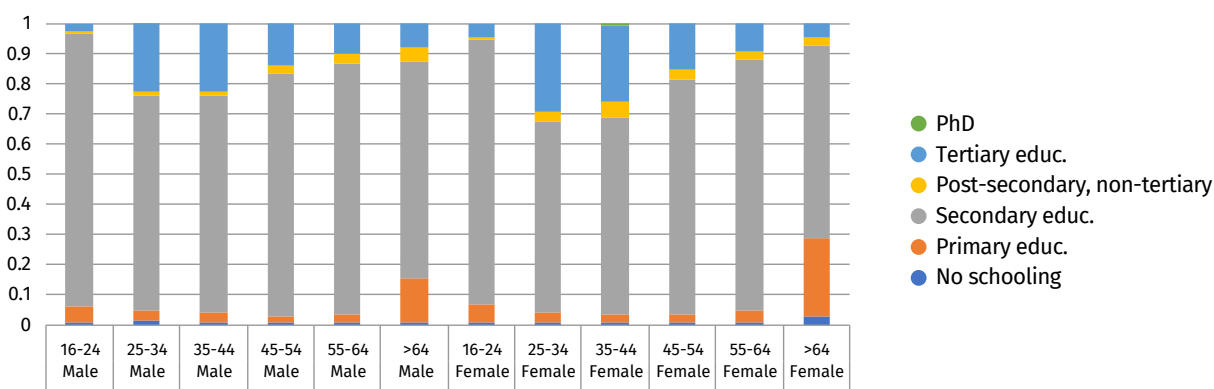
Source: EU-LFS 2019.

Managing childcare and work might be challenging in Romania. According to the OECD,[82] the rate of maternal employment in Romania falls below the average rates observed in both the EU and the OECD. Moreover, the employment rate tends to be lower for women with younger children. Notably, the majority of employed women in Romania work full-time. Figure 33 plots the employment rates for women (15–64-year-olds) with at least one child age 0–14 by part-time/full-time status. The graph reveals that Romania falls behind many other OECD/EU countries on this indicator. These data indicate that mothers, especially of young children, face important barriers to LFP. At the same time, most mothers work full-time. In general, there are few gaps in the hours worked between men and women in Romania. More than 95 percent of employed men and women work full-time.[83] In comparison, in the OECD on average only half of women work full-time, compared to three out of four men.[84] This could mean that women face constraints at the extensive but not the intensive margin. Once they become employed, they do not face constraints around full-time work, but they face constraints to working in the first place.

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82   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.

83   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.

84   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.

Figure 33. Employment Rates for women (15–64 Years Old) with At Least 1 Child Ages 0–14, by Part-Time/Full-Time Status, Romania vs. Selected Countries, 2019 (or Latest Available Year) (%)
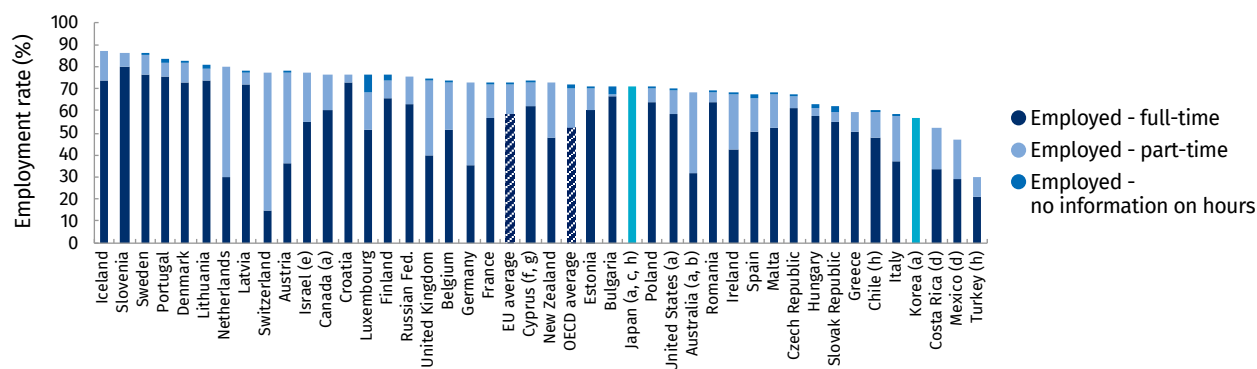
Source: OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.

Note: Part-time employment is defined as usual weekly working hours of less than 30 hours per week in the main job, and full-time employment as usual weekly working hours of 30 or more per week in the main job. Exact definitions differ for some countries. For Australia, part-time employees are those who usually work less than 35 hours a week (in all jobs) and either did so during the reference week, or were not at work in the reference week; for Chile and Costa Rica, the distinction between part-time and full-time work is based on actual hours worked in the main job in the previous week, rather than usual weekly working hours in the main job; for Israel, part-time is defined as actual working hours of less than 35 hours during the survey reference week; for Mexico, part-time employment is defined as weekly working hours of less than 35 hours per week; for Switzerland, part-time work is defined on the basis of the respondent's own perception of their main job. However, average weekly hours at 90% or more of the occupational standard are considered full-time. In some countries (those for which information comes from the EU-LFS, plus the United States) it is possible for individuals to report that they do not have usual set hours in their main job. Where this is the case, the individual's actual hours worked in their main job during the survey reference week are used in place of their usual weekly working hours. For some countries in some years, sample sizes can be small. Estimates based on fewer than 50 cases have been removed. For Korea and Japan, only overall employment rates are available.

a. For Australia and Japan, data cover all women aged 15 and over, and for Korea married women aged 15-54. For Canada, Korea and the United States, children aged 0-17.
b. For Australia, women with 'at least one child aged 0-14' are those whose 'relationship in household' is classified as either 'wife or partner with children under 15' or 'lone parent with children under 15'. Women with 'no children aged 0-14' are those with any other type of 'relationship in household'. Data refer to June months.
c. For Japan, data refer to the employment status of the (youngest) mother in households with a mother and a youngest child in the given age group, rather than to mothers as individuals. In households that contain more than one mother (e.g. some same-sex parent households and some three-generation households), the employment status of the older mother(s) is not covered.
d. For Costa Rica and Mexico, data cover mothers who are reported as the head of the household or the spouse/partner of the head of the household, only.
e. The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.
f. Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue";
g. Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.
h. Data for Japan refer to 2018, for Chile to 2017 and for Turkey to 2013.

Limited access to formal child- and eldercare represents an important barrier; currently, formal child- and eldercare arrangements are scarce in Romania compared to other countries in the ECA region, and most care is provided by household members. Data from Eurostat show that formal care provision was still low in Romania in 2021. Less than 10 percent of children three years or younger have access to formal childcare (figure 34).

Figure 34. Children Ages Less than Three Years Old Attending Formal Childcare More than One Hour per Week), Romania vs. Selected Countries, 2021 (%)
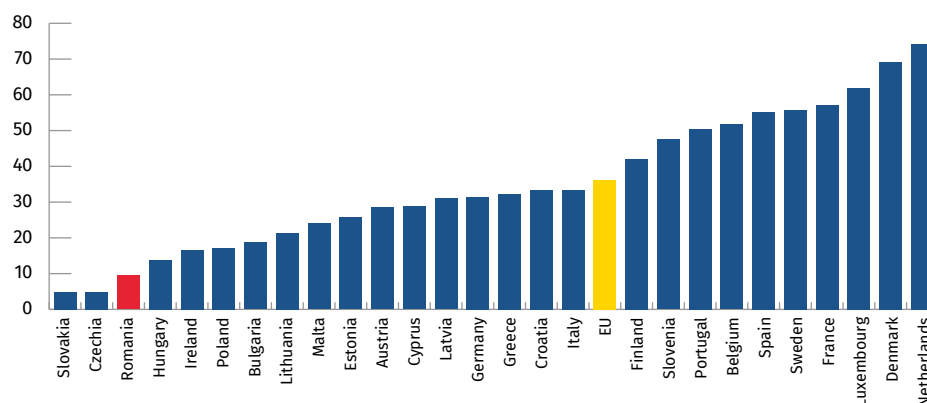
Source: Eurostat (online data code: ilc_caparents). Note: Formal childcare definition per ISCED 2011 classification.

For older children (three to compulsory school age), the share of those not accessing formal childcare decreased to 48.2 percent in 2021. Compared to 2014, there have only been slight improvements in this dimension. At that time, 44.2 percent of those with children ages three to six accessed formal childcare. Moreover, eldercare needs have increased in the past decade. Demographic projections show that Romania's old age dependency ratio (65+ per 15- to 64-year-old) is projected to double between 2019 and 2060, reaching 58.8 percent.

The contribution of formal daycare centers to childcare provision is insignificant, whereas childcare provided by household members is of great importance; moreover, there is a noticeable discrepancy in childcare provision between rural and urban households, with the latter being more privileged in terms of access to different types of childcare services. Figure 35 illustrates the four categories of childcare arrangements identified in the EU-SILC 2020,[85] namely care given by a family member, professional care, center-based or daycare care, and care in preschools for households with at least one child below the age of six across both rural and urban settings. The graph indicates that in general the proportion of households reporting participation in some form of childcare was higher for urban than rural households, regardless of the type of care provided. The difference is particularly pronounced in the case of preschools. However, the contribution of daycare centers or childcare centers to childcare provision was almost negligible in both rural and urban areas. Poorer families reported lower access for all types of childcare (figure 36). These results could mean that women from low-income families face especially large tradeoffs between work and family life, for example due to social norms, as they use formally provided childcare to a lower extent, or that they face greater constraints around their access to this type of childcare provision.

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85   EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Figure 35. Childcare Usage by Type for Rural and Urban Households with At Least One Child Less than Six Years Old, 2020
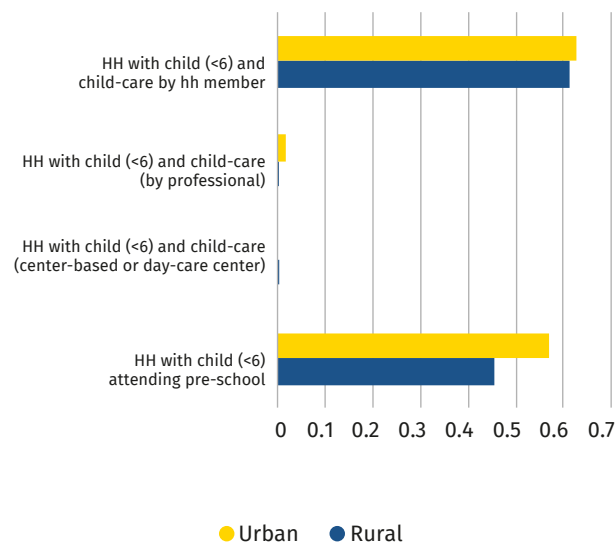
Figure 36. Childcare Usage by Type for Households with At Least One Child Less than Six Years Old by Income Quintiles, 2020
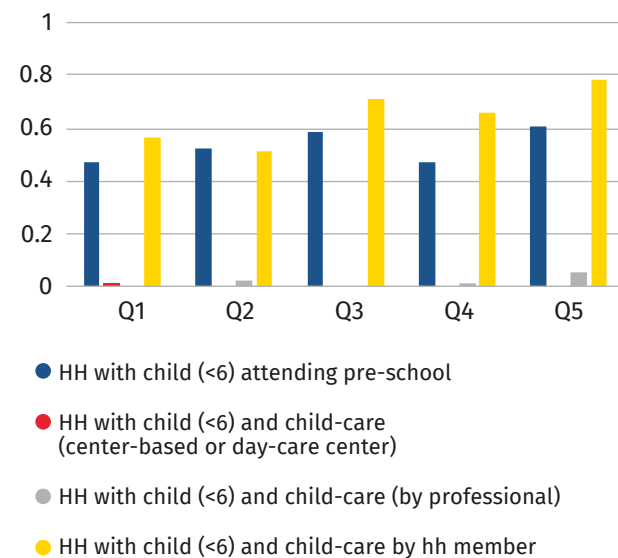
Source: Author's estimates based on EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Source: Author's estimates based on EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

A better understanding of the gaps in formal and informal child- and eldercare can shed important light on how intersectional factors compound the economic exclusion of women. For example, women who live in rural areas, who have less education, or who have three or more children have the slightest chance of earning a regular income, with only 50.5 percent of such women employed as of 2020, in contrast to urban areas, where the employment rate was 15 percentage points higher.[86] The largest employment gender gaps are observed for women of reproductive age (figure A.1.11). This may reflect care responsibilities in childbearing years or for elderly or dependent family members with long-term care needs. Still, additional analysis is needed to unpack the key drivers. Other groups also have significantly lower employment rates. While women above 50 years account for 72.5 percent of the women with disabilities[87] (nearing the statutory retirement age), only 37.1 percent of women with disabilities are employed, compared against 56.2 percent of men with disabilities.[88] The European Semester 2020–2021 country fiche on disability equality (Gîrlescu 2021) found that the economic activity rate for persons with disabilities in Romania was 45.9 percent, compared to 74.8 percent for other persons and with a lower activity rate for women with disabilities (37.8 percent). The same document noted that the legal framework in Romania does not effectively incentivize the employability of people with disabilities and that public employment support services are limited.

New evidence generated for this report shows that childcare provision is critical and that introducing public, universal childcare could be an effective strategy to increase female LFP in Romania (see box 2.1 for details). In line with previous evidence showing that, on the one hand, employment rates are low for mothers, and on the other formal childcare provision is low in Romania, we show that increasing access to this type of childcare can increase maternal employment (see box 2.1).

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86   Eurostat, Datasource: LSFT_r_ergau for 2018–2020.

87   Women account for more than half (53.1 percent) of the total number of registered persons with disabilities in Romania, which is about 3.8 percent of the total population, according to data provided by the National Authority for Persons with Disabilities sourced from the INS.

88   Gîrlescu (2021), citing the EU-SILC.

Box 2.1. Preparatory School Years and Maternal Employment: What Is the Role of Universal Public Care Provision?

As part of this gender assessment, the team analyzed whether public childcare could increase female labor force participation in Romania. Our work is motivated by previous evidence showing that households face a tradeoff between childcare and work (Kleven, Landais, and Søgaard 2019; Lundborg, Plug, and Rasmussen 2017; Blundell et al. 2016; Agüero and Marks 2008). To analyze this question, we explore the impact of an educational reform introduced in Romania in 2012 that added a compulsory school year for six-year-old children to the school system, aiming to prepare children better for primary schooling. We investigated whether this reform increased LFP rates of mothers of affected children and found positive effects (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 c). However, the effect is not as significant for mothers who live with elderly individuals. Still, it is more significant for those who previously were faced with more-challenging choices before the reform. We explained this finding by a potential substitution of childcare by the public sector through the school system, which liberated mothers in terms of time constraints and enabled them to enter the labor market.

For more details, see the background policy research paper (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 c).

Suggestive evidence on the relationship between female LFP and eldercare points to beneficial results for women. To determine whether women see themselves as confronted with a care burden for elderly people that might impose barriers to their LFP, as has been found in relation to childcare, we empirically estimate the relationship between eldercare and LFP.[89] Surprisingly, we find that living with an elderly person increased the probability of participating in the labor market for men (by 4.4 percentage points) and for women, although the effect is smaller (1.5 percentage points). Two reasons could drive these results. First, living with an elderly person might increase the pressure to generate additional income, given that there are more dependent household members. Another possibility is that the elderly support working-age men and women by attending to other care responsibilities, such as household chores or childcare. Bratti, Frattini, and Scervini (2018) demonstrated this connection in the case of other countries.

Nevertheless, relying on the elderly to increase female LFP rates is not a sustainable solution. Previously, we showed that more than half of women and men report limitations in usual activities due to health problems at age 65, with women being more affected than men. Consequently, relying on the elderly to absorb care responsibilities in households is not a sustainable solution and might in fact increase gender gaps in health among men and women above the age of 64. Real solutions need to address the root causes of low inactivity, including the unequal care burden between men and women, and should facilitate the attending to work and care responsibilities by both men and women.

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89 To this end, we estimate a logit model based on data from EU-SILC 2010–2021, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions. The outcome variable is an indicator variable that assumes the value of one if a person participates in the labor market and zero otherwise. The explanatory variable is a dummy variable that is equal to one if a person lives in a household with an elderly person (>64 years old). We control for year and region fixed effects, the region by year unemployment rate, a variety of individual characteristics, and the gender of each person. We also include an interaction term of gender and eldercare to investigate whether the impact of eldercare differs for men and women. We restrict our sample to people between the ages of 16 and 64 years and corroborate our findings by probit regression.

Research shows that parental leave policies are often another driver behind low female LFP rates. Although Romania has legally addressed the gaps in parental leave policies, important shortfalls persist. Parental leave policies can significantly increase mothers' LFP rates (Akgündüz and Plantenga 2013). According to data from the WBL Index by the World Bank (2023b), Romania scores 100 out of 100 on the pay dimension of the index (World Bank 2023b). The government administers 100 percent of maternity leave benefits.

When compared globally, Romania fares better in terms of its maternal leave policies than many countries, but lags slightly behind the OECD and EU average. Romania's length of paid maternity leave (18 weeks) is greater than that of many other countries, but is still slightly below the OECD and EU averages (18.5 and 21.1 weeks, respectively) (figure A.1.12). Another 90.7 weeks of paid parental and home care leave are theoretically available to mothers.[90] The average payment rate across paid maternity leave for an individual is only 85 percent of national average earnings and as such is below other countries in the region.[91] On the other hand, parental leave theoretically available to mothers in addition to maternity leave is more generous in Romania than most countries and also above the EU and OECD averages (43.5 and 32.3 weeks, respectively) (figure A.1.13).[92] At the same time, parents who resume employment prior to the expiration of the two-year period are eligible for incentives (L&E Global 2023).

One important shortfall is the paternity leave policy: paternity leave is significantly shorter than maternity leave and only a small portion of parental leave is earmarked for fathers. Paternity leave, which can only be taken by fathers, in Romania is only one week.[93] While paternity leave is low in general, in Romania the length lags behind the EU and OECD averages (figure 37). In addition, the current parental policy framework only grants 4.3 weeks of parental leave to fathers.[94] Again, this value is low in general for all countries, but other countries have been pioneers in this field (for example, the Republic of Korea and Japan). The current design of compulsory parental leave policy in Romania does not encourage a redistribution of child-rearing responsibilities from women to men.

While fathers can decide to take non earmarked parental leave, international evidence shows that they do not often do so. The reluctance to take parental leave is mainly driven by cultural values and the family economy (Reimer 2020). In addition, Duvander and Johansson (2019) have shown that workplace norms and policies significantly influence the taking of parental leave by fathers and Baxter et al. (2019) have identified fathers' level of education and income, partner's level of education and income, and child's birth order as contributing factors. While paid leave is available to fathers in Romania, it is considerably shorter than it is for mothers. This gap could generate gender gaps in LFP rates, given that design plays a significant role in the effectiveness of parental leave policies (Patnaik 2014; Brandth and Kvande 2018; Marynissen et al. 2019; Frodermann, Wrohlich, and Zucco 2020). Redesigning parental leave policies in light of empirical evidence could increase fathers' contribution to care responsibilities.

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90   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.
91   The payment rates are 100 percent in Croatia and 90 percent in Bulgaria, for example. OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.
92   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.
93   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.
94   OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.

Figure 37. Paid Leave Reserved for Fathers, Romania vs. Selected Countries (Length in Weeks)

● Paternity leave   ● Father-specific parental and homecare leave
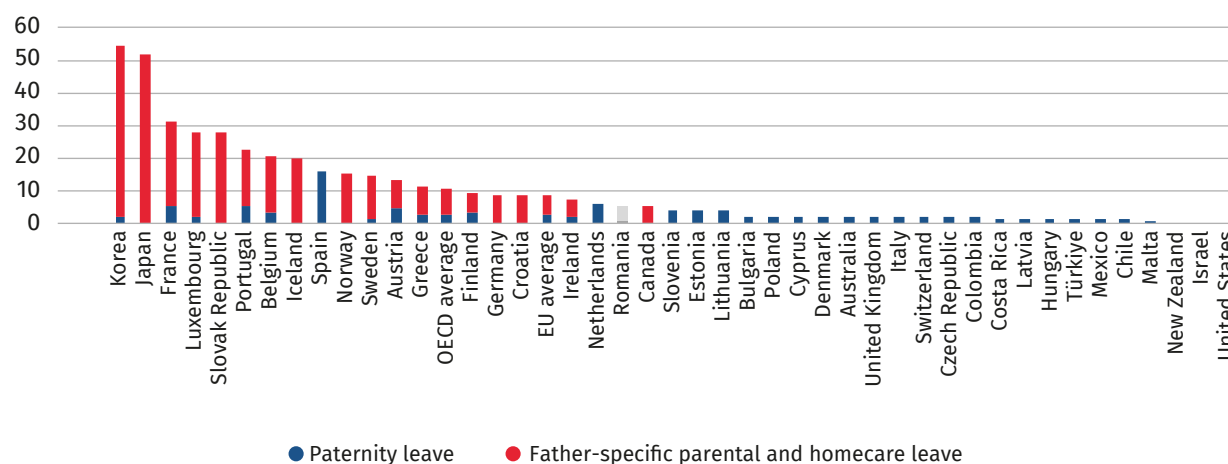
Source: OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD.

Note: Paternity leave is an employment-protected leave of absence for employed fathers at or in the first few months after childbirth. Father-specific parental and home care leave covers all weeks of employment-protected parental or home care leave that can be used only by the father or 'other parent.'

Flexible work arrangements are another way to facilitate the combination of work and family, but as of 2015, they were barely available in Romania. Research shows that flexible work arrangements make it easier to combine work and family life (Tang and Cousins 2005). However, only a small share of employees was able to set their own working time arrangements as of 2015 (figure 38). Not even 2 out of 10 men and women in Romania reported being able to do so. In comparison, more than half of employees could make their own work arrangements in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands. Bearing in mind that updated data are not available, greater flexibility in work arrangements are an important entry point to facilitate work-life balance in Romania.

Figure 38. Proportion of Employees with At Least Some Ability to Set Their Own Working Time Arrangements by Gender, Romania vs. Selected Countries

● Female employees   ◆ Male employees
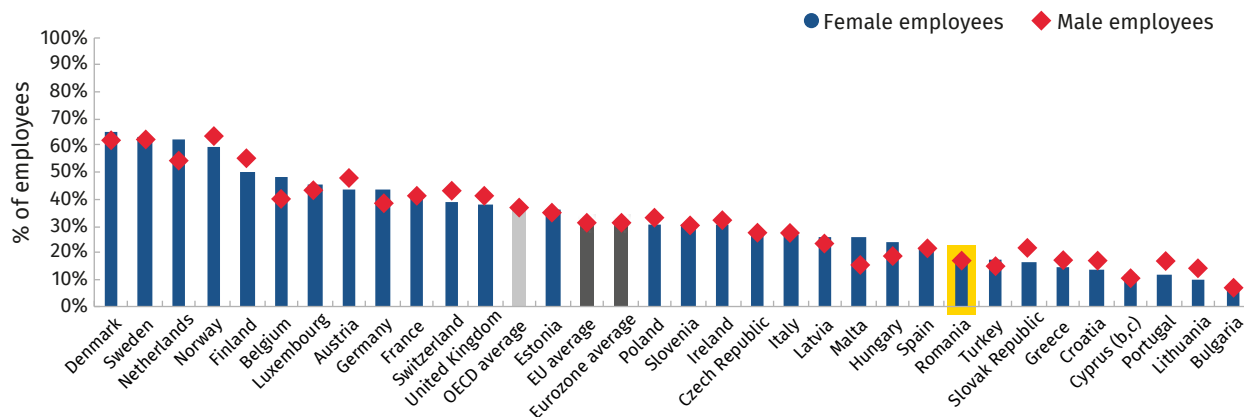
Source: OECD Family Database, OECD Family Database - OECD. Data are from the European Working Conditions Survey 2015.

Gender biases are highly prevalent in Romanian society, affecting attitudes and behaviors across various domains, including education, work, and family life; these biases can reinforce stereotypes, limit opportunities, and contribute to gender inequality in various domains. A 2020 survey conducted by the Department for Sustainable Development in Romania revealed a conservative take on gender roles, especially within the family. A significant percentage of Romanians (76 percent) believe that a man's primary role is to earn money.[95] This belief reinforces the ideas that men should be the breadwinners in households and that their value is tied to their ability to provide for their family financially. This societal expectation can put pressure on men to prioritize their careers over other aspects of their lives, such as their family or personal interests. It can also limit women's opportunities for advancement in the workforce, because they may face discrimination or resistance when pursuing traditionally male-dominated careers.

Moreover, 83 percent of Romanians believe that women's primary role is to care for the home and family.[96] This belief reinforces the idea that women should prioritize domestic duties over their own personal or professional ambitions. This stereotype can contribute to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions and limit their earning potential. It can also create an unequal division of labor within households, so that women are responsible for most of the household chores and childcare. At the same time, men are expected to focus on their careers. Finally, the Gender Social Norm Index (GSNI) constructed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) shows that 85.5 percent of Romania's population held at least one gender bias in the period 2010–14 and 60.8 percent held at least two gender biases. Addressing these biases and promoting gender equality requires a concerted effort on the part of individuals, communities, and institutions. It involves challenging traditional gender roles, promoting inclusive attitudes and behaviors, and creating equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

Finally, though restricted geographical mobility can limit access to high-paying, high-productivity jobs and thus deter participation in certain regions, the evidence suggests this barrier might be less important than others, as overall internal mobility is high. Although Romania experiences considerable international migration, improving regional mobility for vulnerable groups, including women residing in deprived areas with limited employment opportunities, is equally important. Research on ECA suggests that less than one-third of unemployed workers were willing to relocate to regions with greater employment opportunities, potentially resulting in limited geographical mobility (figure A.1.14). However, there is more-recent evidence that, while international migration is important, the great majority of Romanians migrate within the country's borders.[97] Data from the 2011 census also show that the incidence of internal migration is significantly higher among women; the 2021 census may or may not confirm that these patterns still hold.[98] Also, the degree of internal mobility among disadvantaged women is unknown, but could be lower among women in rural communities. Consultations have revealed

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95 Additional research from the European Values Survey shows that a slightly lower, but still high proportion (48 percent) of Romanians believe that the role of men is to earn money and that of women is to take care of the home and family, compared to only 26 percent of the population on average in the EU and less than 10 percent in Scandinavian countries.

96 Department for Sustainable Development, Opinion Survey on SDG 5 Gender Equality, http://romania-durabila.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/RD10-Livrabil-E-Narativ-002.pdf.

97 World Bank 2023f.

98 The opposite is true when it comes to international migration.

that transportation options may be limited for these women and poor transport infrastructure makes it difficult to access the areas in which they live (Dumitru et al. 2021). These pieces of evidence suggest that the internal mobility barrier might be less important than others, but could loom larger for more-vulnerable groups along with lack of portability of social benefits, inadequate skills, limited information about the labor market, and constraints associated with frictional markets.

Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment

Entrepreneurship is one of the key policy objectives of the EU and its member states, because it is a key tool for achieving progress toward several of the EC priorities 2019–24; tapping the entrepreneurial potential of underrepresented groups such as women is one of the main strategies. Entrepreneurship is one of the key policy objectives of the EC and its member states, as it helps to address several of the key EC priorities 2019–24, especially around the green transition and digitalization (European Commission 2023). SMEs are the backbone of the European economy and contribute more than half of Europe's GDP (European Commission 2023). To further capitalize on the potential of entrepreneurs, a key strategy of the EC is to support underrepresented groups in entrepreneurship with the goal of unlocking their entrepreneurial potential. The EC specifically refers to women, along with young people, when defining these groups (European Commission 2023b).

Based on the importance of inclusive entrepreneurship within the EU, we next investigate the potential drivers behind the gender gap in entrepreneurship in Romania, given that female entrepreneurs have great potential to generate and support sustainable and inclusive economic business models. While overall self-employment rates in Romania are close to the EU average, it is worth analyzing the existence of gender gaps in entrepreneurship in the country. Female entrepreneurship is a largely undercapitalized tool for generating more inclusive and sustainable growth. There is evidence that companies with female founders perform better than all-male founders (Anita Borg Institute 2014). At the same time, less than 4 percent of venture capital dollars are allocated to female entrepreneurs (The Diana Project 2014). Given that numerous studies have shown that women score higher on corporate social responsibility measures and spur social entrepreneurship (Braun 2010; Post, Rahman, and Rubow 2011; Brieger et al. 2019; Hechavarrria and Brieger 2022), supporting female entrepreneurs could not only close gaps in gender equality in entrepreneurship and the labor market more broadly, but could help women assume a leading role in the green transition and in creating a more sustainable economic model.

Another reason to spotlight female entrepreneurship and self-employment is the high in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate in Romania, which is mainly driven by self-employed and family workers. Romania has the highest in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate in the EU. The rate of employed living in at-risk-of-poverty households is nearly twice as large as the European average (figure 39). Figure 40 demonstrates that the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate is driven by family workers and the self-employed without employees. This applies to men and women, although men are more affected than women. Consequently, from an equity perspective it is important to explore the situation of self-employed women in more detail. Improving their situation would be one entry point for addressing poverty in Romania.

Figure 39. In-Work At-Risk-of-Poverty Rate, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States (Average), 2011–21
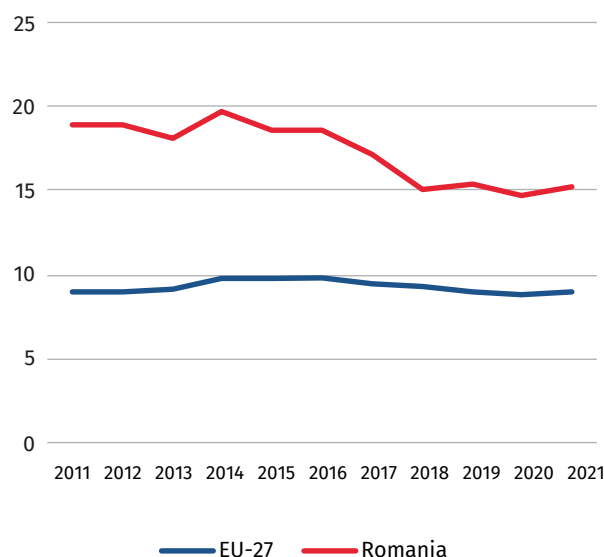
Figure 40. In-Work At-Risk-of-Poverty Rate by Gender and Type of Employment in Romania, 2019

Source: Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database)—TESPM070.

Source: EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
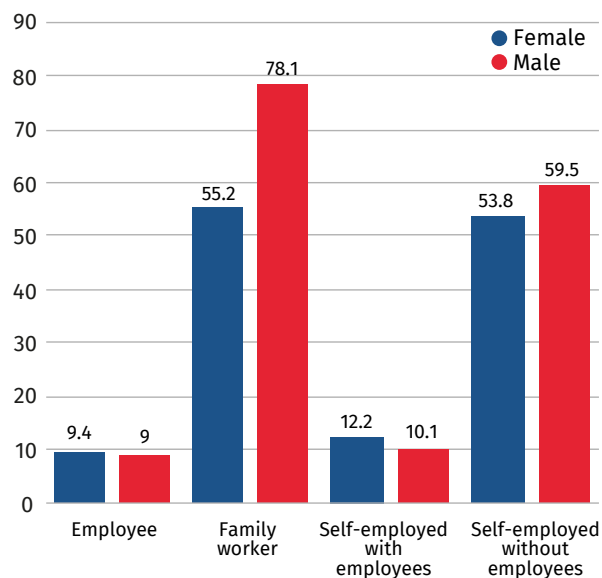
Additionally, analyzing female self-employment and entrepreneurship is important, because they are common forms of employment for the poorest women. While only 5.9 percent of working women in the upper income quintile declared themselves to be self-employed in 2020, this was true of 43.1 percent of working women in the lower income quintiles.[99] The differences are even more marked for working men.[100]

We find evidence that there is a gender gap in entrepreneurship in Romania: women are lesslikely to become entrepreneurs in Romania than men (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a). Only 4 out of 10 self-employed people, one measure of entrepreneurship, are female (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a). Of all working women, only 14.9 percent are self-employed, whereas nearly 2 out of 10 working men engage in self-employment as their main activity (figure 41). Alternative measures confirm that there is a long way to go to achieve gender equality in business ownership and entrepreneurship (figure 42). Not even one-third of companies have a female owner and only 17.2 percent of top managers are female, according to latest data from the World Bank Enterprise Survey (World Bank 2023c). Overall, Romania ranks in the lowest third of 65 countries ranked as part of the Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2021 (Mastercard 2022). Among European countries included in the index, it is the lowest ranked (Mastercard 2022).

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99 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
100 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Figure 41. Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship in Romania Measured as Share of Self-Employed Workers by Gender, 2020
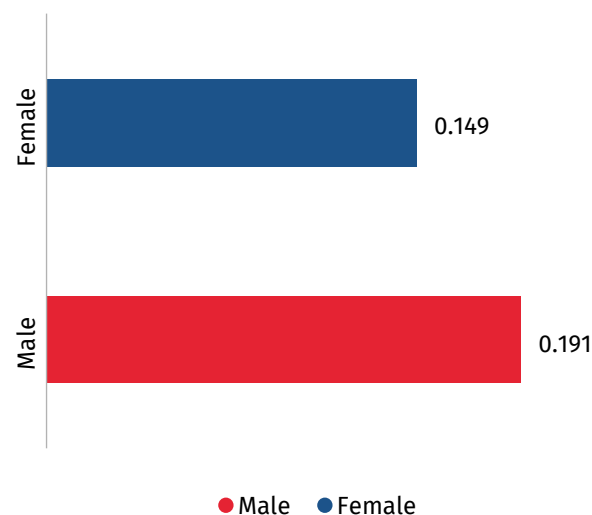
Figure 42. Gender Gap in Entrepreneurship in Romania Using Alternative Measures from the World Bank Enterprise Survey, 2018–20
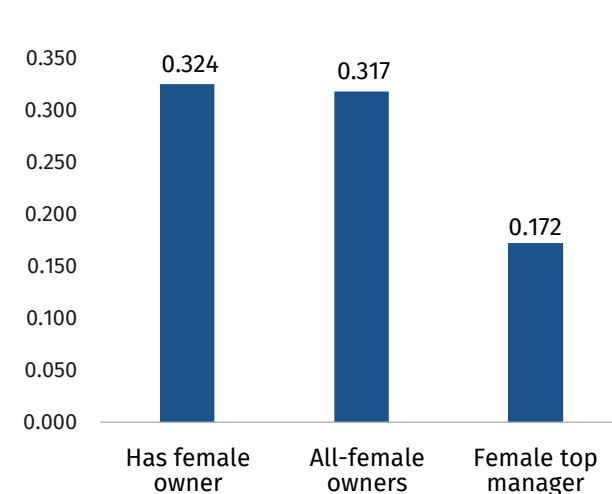
Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions (figure 41).

Note: Self-employment is self-declared and includes those with and without employees (figure 41).

Source: World Bank 2023c (figure 42).

Note: We use median survey weights (figure 42).

There has been little improvement over time in addressing these gender gaps and in some cases, even some deterioration. Table 1 indicates that although the share of female employment in senior and middle management rose slightly in the period 2013–19, the percentage of firms with a woman among the principal owners dropped significantly, and there were still large gender gaps in financial inclusion as of 2019. Women held 30.6 percent of senior and middle management positions in 2013 and as of 2019 their share had increased to 34.2 percent (table 1). At the same time, the rest of the indicators presented in table 1 present a much less positive picture. First, the share of female business owners decreased by close to 15 percentage points between 2013 and 2019. There was also a slight decrease in the share of top female managers. In addition, the increase in the days needed to start a business could point to a significant obstacle for entrepreneurs. However, women and men seem to be equally affected.

Table 1. Gender Gaps in the Private Sector (2013 vs. 2019) (%)

	2013	2019
Female share of senior and middle management positions	30.6	34.2
Proportion of firms with female participation in ownership	47.2	32.4
Proportion of firms with a top female manager	18.3	17.2
Days required to start a business (female)	8	20
Days required to start a business (male)	8	20
Account ownership (financial institution or mobile money, female)	56.9*	65.7**
Account ownership (financial institution or mobile money, male)	65.2*	72.7**

Source: World Bank 2023a.

Note: * indicates that these values are from for 2014 and ** indicates that these values are from 2021.

Self-employment plays a larger role in rural than urban areas for both men and women; the gender gap in entrepreneurship is slightly larger in rural areas. Self-employment ratios (the ratio of self-employed workers to all workers) were higher in rural than urban areas for both sexes (figure 43). Approximately 3 out of 10 working men and women in rural areas reported being self-employed in 2020, compared to fewer than 1 out of 10 working men and women in urban areas.[101] The ratios were slightly lower for working women than working men in both rural and urban areas. The gender gap was slightly larger in rural than urban areas (3.6 versus 2.4 percentage points). Female entrepreneurs mainly engaged in activities in the primary sector: nearly 8 out of 10 self-employed women and nearly 7 out of 10 self-employed men worked in that sector in 2020.[102] These data indicate that our measure of self-employment might capture both entrepreneurs and vulnerable forms of self-employment taken on due to lack of better employment opportunities. Data from 2017 by Eurostat (2023) show that on average 15.7 percent of the self-employed population in the EU wished to be employed.

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101 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
102 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Figure 43. Female Share of All Self-Employed by Income Quintiles, 2020
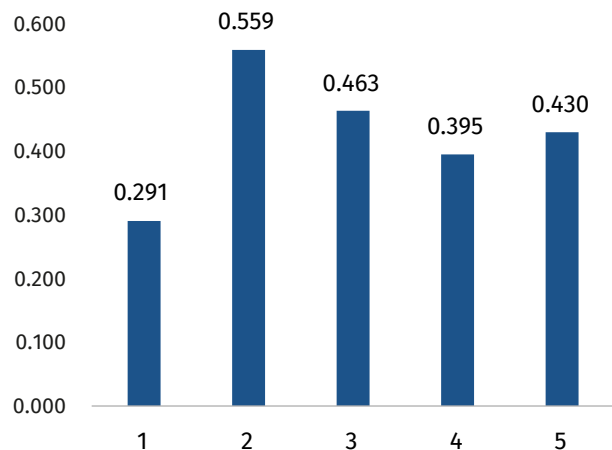
Figure 44. Self-Employment Rates by Gender, Rural vs. Urban Area, 2020
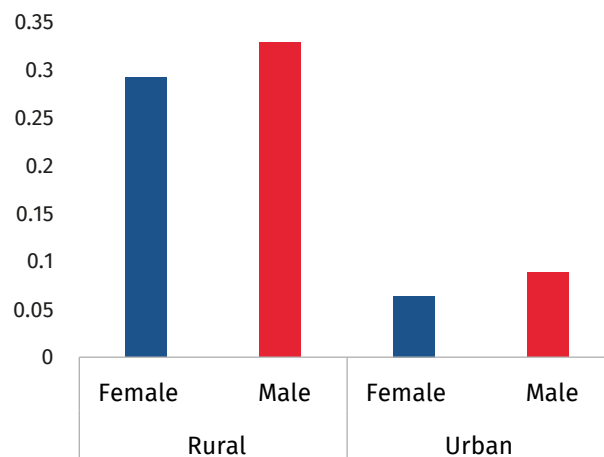
Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

Note: Self-employment is self-declared and includes those with and without employees.

As part of this Gender Assessment, the team conducted an extensive analysis of female entrepreneurs and the gender gap in female entrepreneurship in Romania, given the importance of entrepreneurship for sustainable development and the lack of knowledge on this topic in Romania. Given the importance of entrepreneurs for spurring economic growth, jobs, and productivity (Low, Henderson, and Weiler 2005), the high in-work at-risk-of-poverty rates among the self-employed, the importance of self-employment among the poor, and data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2022) showing that women are more attracted to and engaged in social—or so-called "impact"—entrepreneurship, we conducted an in-depth analysis of the entrepreneurial gender gap in Romania. The findings are summarized in box 2.2; see Robayo-Abril and Rude (2023 a) for the full study.

Based on the evidence, many barriers hinder female entrepreneurship in Romania, ranging from gender gaps with respect to financial inclusion to harmful gender norms around women in business to unequal access to assets. The study conducted by Robayo-Abril and Rude (2023 a) showed that many factors drive the gender gap in female entrepreneurship in Romania. First, women face barriers in the financial system and lower levels of financial inclusion. The share of females 15+ who have an account at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider is significantly low, not only compared to their peers in other EU countries, but also to those in comparator countries, such as CEE, SE, and high-income countries (benchmarking exercise). Moreover, the banking sector is male dominated, which might introduce biases (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a). Despite the European venture capital market experiencing significant growth in 2021, achieving record levels, a notable gender-based funding gap

remains prevalent within the EU. Current studies consistently confirm the presence of gender inequality in the European venture capital ecosystem, indicating that this problem is not unique to Romania (Pavlova and Gvetadze, 2023). Second, we demonstrate gender gaps in access to assets such as land ownership or in digital and technological skills could create gaps in female entrepreneurship. Third, many harmful gender norms around women in business persist in Romania (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a). Lastly, we show a negative relationship between motherhood and entrepreneurship (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a); investments in public childcare could address this barrier.

Box 2.2. Understanding the Gender Gap in Female Entrepreneurship in Romania

Evidence on the importance of female entrepreneurship for inclusive and sustainable growth is overwhelming, but gender gaps and barriers persist. Many studies have documented that female entrepreneurship is crucial for achieving gender equality. At the same time, numerous analyses document gender gaps in entrepreneurship and consistent barriers to female entrepreneurship (OECD and European Commission 2021; Brush, De Bruin, and Welter 2009; Guzman and Kacperczyk 2019; Caliendo et al. 2015; Krieger et al. 2022; Dheer, Li, and Treviño 2019; Richomme-Huet, Vial, and d'Andria 2013).

Based on this evidence, we conducted a detailed analysis of female entrepreneurs and the challenges they face in Romania. To this end, we first described female entrepreneurs in Romania and the gender gaps in entrepreneurship and then followed a framework developed by Brush, De Bruin, and Welter (2009) to investigate potential drivers behind the gaps. In this analysis, we relied on several available data sets, academic studies, and the gray literature. We applied simple descriptive analysis and regression to understand what drives women's probability of being self-employed. Detailed results can be found in Robayo-Abril and Rude (2023 a).

Our analysis reveals that there is a persistent gender gap in entrepreneurship in Romania; female entrepreneurs also earn less and are socially motivated to a greater extent than male entrepreneurs. Women are less likely to be self-employed than men (figure 41) and only 4 out of 10 self-employed people in Romania are women. Alternative measures paint an even darker picture (figure 42). The gap is especially large in the poorest income quintile (figure 43). Female entrepreneurs tend to be older, less skilled, and less prone to originate from households with children compared to their male counterparts. They are also less likely to employ people and mostly work in the primary sector. Importantly, female entrepreneurs' income is 65.5 percent of the income of male entrepreneurs—a significant gap. Incentives for female entrepreneurship center around financial and economic reasons, with women being more interested in "impact entrepreneurship" than men. Combined with the fact that female entrepreneurs concentrate in the primary sector, they could assume a leading role in the green transition and the creation of inclusive, sustainable economic models.

We show that women are less likely to be self-employed than men. Evidence from a simple regression, using data from the EU-SILC from 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions), shows that women are 3.73 percentage points less likely to engage in self-employment than men, controlling for observable characteristics.

The factors that impede women from engaging in entrepreneurial activities are manyfold. First, similar to men, women face a challenging business environment in Romania, with an underdeveloped VC and angel investment sector as well as a high level of corruption and bureaucracy in the public sector and an underdeveloped entrepreneurial culture. In addition, women entrepreneurs report that it is difficult to find adequately educated workers and that they suffer from high tax rates (IFC 2019). In addition, there are several barriers specific to women. First, they have less access to finance, which might be related to both lower financial inclusion and to a male-dominated banking sector. Next, they have less access to assets such as land ownership and digital and technological skills. Moreover, they are confronted with persistent harmful gender norms around women in business. Finally, we generate novel evidence demonstrating a negative relationship between motherhood and entrepreneurship and that access to childcare increases women's probability of being self-employed.

2.3. Voice and Agency

Outcomes of human endowment and economic opportunities that are unequal in terms of gender influence gender outcomes in voice and agency and at the same time, gender gaps in human endowment and economic opportunities are influenced by the political underrepresentation of women and by exposure to GBV. For example, women's lower financial gains are a barrier to their political careers, hindering them from standing as candidates or running effective campaigns (OSCE and ODIHR 2016). The lack of women's participation in decision-making may lead to a neglect of topics and policies; and correspondingly women's involvement may illuminate areas of policy making otherwise left out (Kittilson 2010; Holman 2015). D'Almeida, Haffner, and Hörst (2017) argue that women's increased participation has influenced EU foreign policy specifically with regard to decision-making: the share of women in peace missions has contributed to the coverage and acceptance of investigations into sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict.

Freedom from violence, political voice, and collective action impact women's life choices and the opportunities that are available to them. The constraints that women face when attempting to access decision-making positions and the forms of violence that women face throughout their life course in public places and in the domestic sphere represent a limitation on basic human rights, gaps in governance processes, and economic costs and loss of human and professional talent that can be otherwise avoided. For example, an EIGE report (2021) estimates that GBV in Romania results in economic losses of 16 billion euros a year. At the same time, the glass ceiling in business, administration, and politics prevents many women from reaching their full potential, contributing to sustainable economic growth, and stepping in to correct labor shortages (skilled) in times of demographic decline.

Breaking through the glass ceiling not only benefits women, as the literature shows that gender-balanced and inclusive decision-making is good for business generally, increasing economic growth and driving positive societal changes at the same time. Empowering women to take leadership positions and diversifying the makeup of decision-making boards improve individual companies' performances and promote sustainable economic growth. Studies from various countries show that companies with a higher share of women at the top levels deliver strong organizational and financial performance. Other arguments relate to the market-added value of including women in decision-making, because women drive consumer spending across the world. More women in management positions can therefore provide a broader insight into economic behavior and consumers' choices, leading to market share gains through the creation of products and services that are more responsive to consumers' needs and preferences. Finally, diversity among employees and board members boosts creativity and innovation by adding complementary knowledge, skills, and experience.

Political Decision-Making

Romania faces a major challenge when it comes to gender representation at the top level of politics. According to the latest World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap (GGG) Report (2022), Romania ranks 90th (with a score of 0.698, where 1 indicates parity) among the 146 countries surveyed, dropping 2 places from the previous year. The GGG Report examines four macro topics of gender equality: opportunities and participation in the economy, education, health, and access to political empowerment. According to the GGG Report, when compared to other countries in the European region, Romania ranks third to last in terms of gender equality, followed only by Cyprus and Greece (p. 20). The political empowerment dimension, which measures the extent to which women are represented in political office, records the poorest performance globally (with only 25 percent of the gap being closed), but Romania's ranking is particularly low, below that of other countries in the European region. In the area of political empowerment, Romania ranks 122nd (with a score of 0.102, where 1.0 represents equality) out of 146 countries surveyed by the WEF, below countries such as Hungary (ranked 117th) and Greece (108th)(p. 20). Romania's poor performance in terms of gender equality in politics is recorded in another global index that ranks all 193 UN countries. In the Women's Power Index (Vogelstein and Bro 2021), Romania ranks 163rd, with a gender parity score of only 11 points (where a score of 100 indicates that women have at least 50 percent representation in all levels of government).

To date, only few women have places in the highest echelons of executive power. In 2022, only two women were ministers (the Minister for Family, Equal Opportunities and Youth and the Minister of Education). This meant that 9.1 percent of cabinet ministers were women. No female head of state has been elected to date.

According to the EIGE Index 2022, Romania ranked 21st among the EU-27 member states in terms of the power dimension, indicating there is significant gender inequality in decision-making. The GEI for the power domain measures gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic, and social spheres. Romania's score of 32.6 index points in 2022 was 25 percentage points below the EU average and indicated an increase of just 2 percentage points since 2013. In the realm of political power, Romania scored 36.1, evidencing an increase of 10 percentage points since 2013. Romania's score was better in the social power sub-domain, where it ranked 16th among the EU-27 member states; the score was only 9 percentage points below the EU average (EIGE 2022). Between 2013 (the first year of the GEI) and today, Romania has thus marginally improved its score in terms of women's political power.

Figure 45. Power Domain Scores for Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, Gender Equality Index 2022
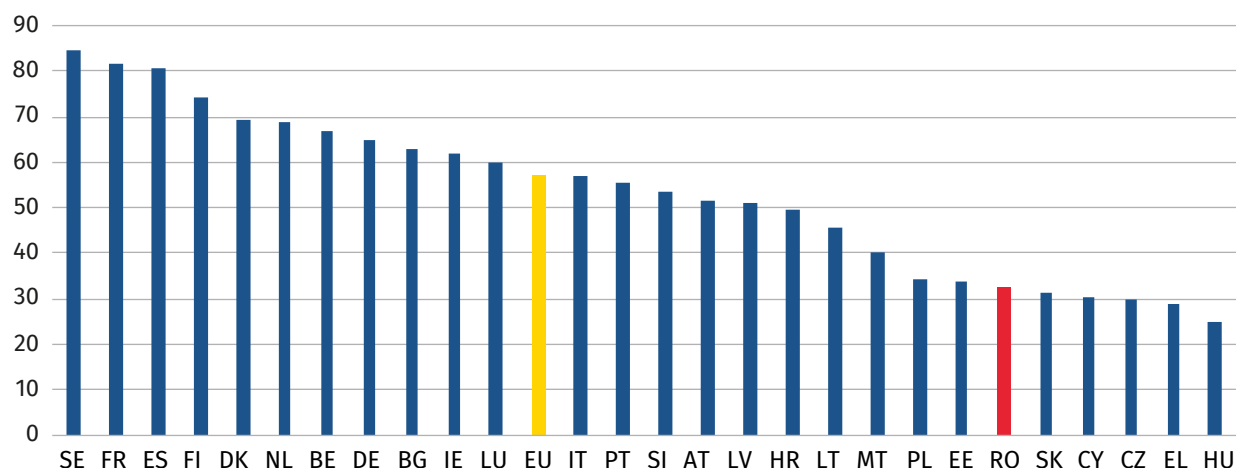
Source: EIGE 2022.

Note:The figure shows the index points achieved by each country on the power dimension of the EIGE Index. The domain of power measures gender equality in decision-making positions across the political, economic, and social spheres. The subdomain of political power reflects the representation of women and men in national parliaments, government, and regional/local assemblies. The subdomain of gender-balance in economic decision-making is measured by the proportion of women and men on corporate boards of the largest nationally registered companies listed on stock exchanges and national central banks. The subdomain of social power includes data on decision-making in research-funding organizations, media, and sports.

The EIGE power indicator also measures gender equality in the area of social power. Here the GEI is measuring the share of women and men in the top decision-making positions (board members) in research funding organizations, publicly owned broadcasting organizations, and in the National Olympics Committees.

Figure 46. Social Power Subdomain for Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, Gender Equality Index 2022
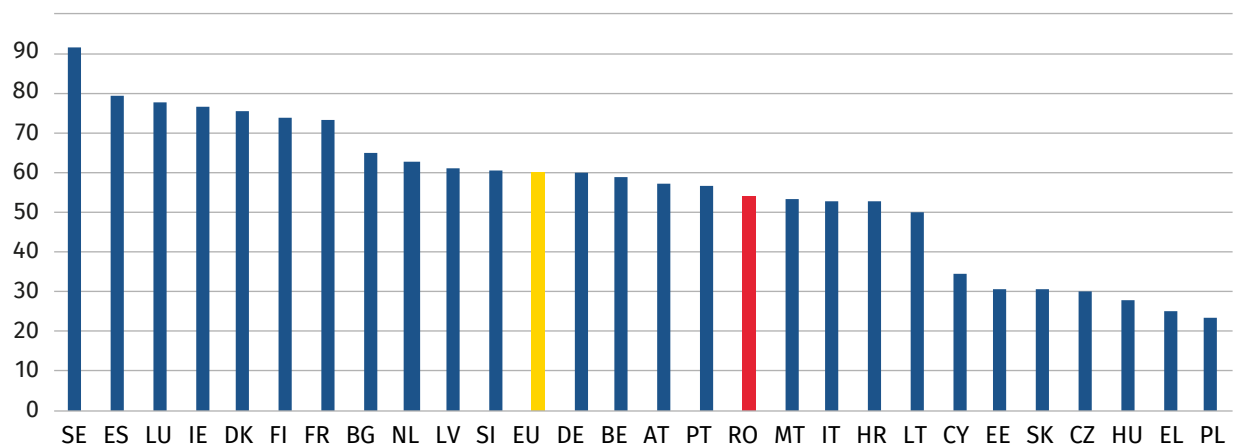
Source: EIGE 2022.

Note: The subdomain of social power includes data on decision-making in research-funding organizations, media, and sports.

Given Romania's low performance in the subdimensions of political and economic decision-making of the EIGE Index 2022, the following paragraph looks in more detail at these gender gaps to identify their potential drivers and further toward the end of this section, a short exploration of women's representation in the social field of power is presented with reference to women's participation in civil society organizations.

Figure 47. Drivers Influencing Women's Participation in Decision-Making
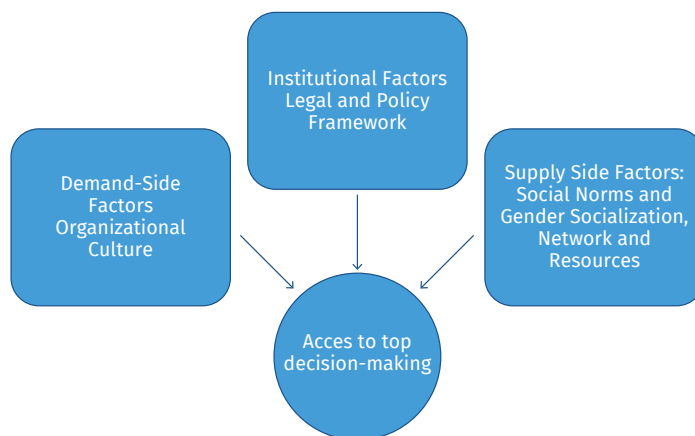
Women's political representation in the Romanian Parliament remains well below the average for EU-27 member states (33 percent per the EIGE GEI Index) and decreased in the most recent electoral cycle (2020) for which there are data. Only 19.1 percent of parliament members are currently women (figure 48), a decrease of almost 2 percent from the previous legislature, in which 21.9 percent were women. The low percentage of women in the country's parliament places Romania third to last among the EU member states, followed only by Cyprus and Hungary. This downward trend in women's participation in parliament is the first time in an otherwise constant though slow-paced ascending trend.

Figure 48. Gender Distribution of Members of National Parliaments, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2023 (Q1)
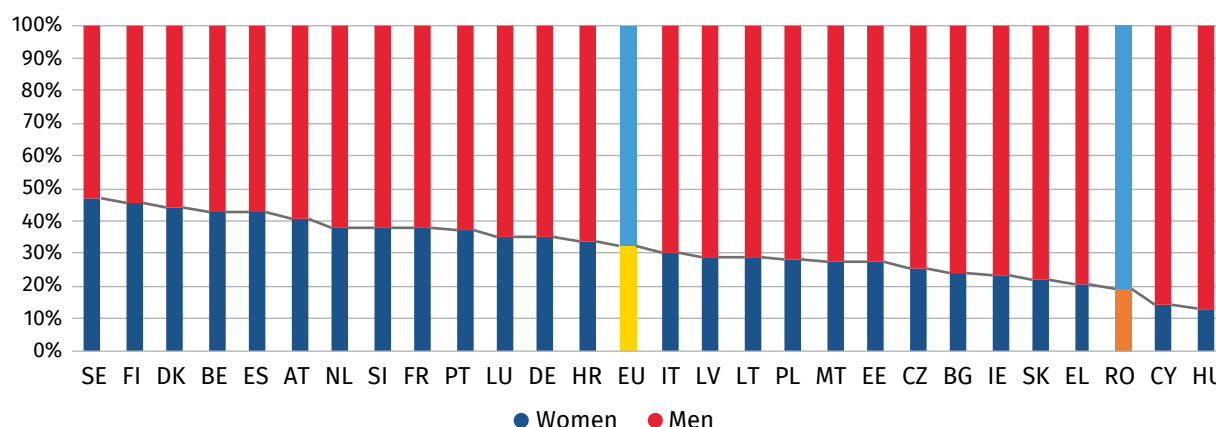
Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, Women and Men in Decision-Making, National Parliaments 2023.

Note: Q1 stands for Quarter 1

Women's political representation changed dramatically for the worse after 1990, once a democratic system of elections was put in place. Women's representation in parliament dropped from 30 percent during the communist dictatorship to below 4 percent in the first democratically elected parliament (Băluță and Tufiș 2021). This is due to the abandonment of the gender quota system supported by the previous regime and the disappearance of social institutions that regulated the communist gender regime (Bucur and Miroiu 2021). Throughout the 1990s, women's political participation increased slowly, reaching 10 percent of parliament, and it plateaued for the following decade and a half (Băluță and Tufiș 2021). Women's representation in parliament increased in the 2016 electoral cycle but dropped once again in 2020 (Băluță and Tufiș 2021).

Figure 49. Evolution of Female Representation in the Romanian Parliament, 1997–2020, Percent
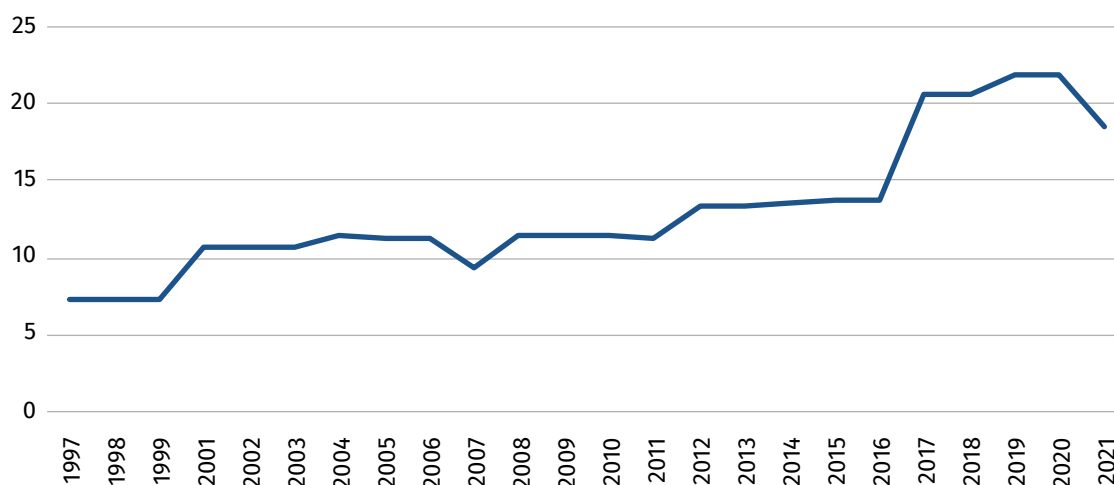
Source: World Bank 2022.

Evidence has shown that women's political careers are often determined by early exposure to politics and experience at local levels of decision-making. Yet Romanian women remain underrepresented at local level. In 2020, when the last local elections took place, the number of women mayors increased marginally. Only 136 women secured mayoral seats (representing 4.5 percent of the total mandates) while 3050 men were elected in office. This percentage places Romania in the last place among EU-27 member states (Pârvu 2020). According to civil society monitoring, the number of candidate pools for the local elections increased by 1.5 percent in between the elections held in 2016 and those held in 2020. Independent monitoring data showed that for the 2020 elections, 22.9 percent of the 256,038 candidates running for office in local elections were women. The same report indicates that the percentage of women candidates was below 20 percent for political parties with the highest chances of winning seats, such as the PNL and PSD, and that their percentage was higher among smaller political parties. A total of 10 percent of candidates who ran for office as independents were women (Pârvu 2020). The situation is slightly better when it comes to women's representation in regional councils. Here women make up 32 percent of all delegates.

Figure 50. Gender Distribution of Local Mayors and Leaders of Municipal Councils, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2022

● 2022 Local/municipal councils: mayors and other leaders and members Men
● 2022 Local/municipal councils: mayors and other leaders and members Women
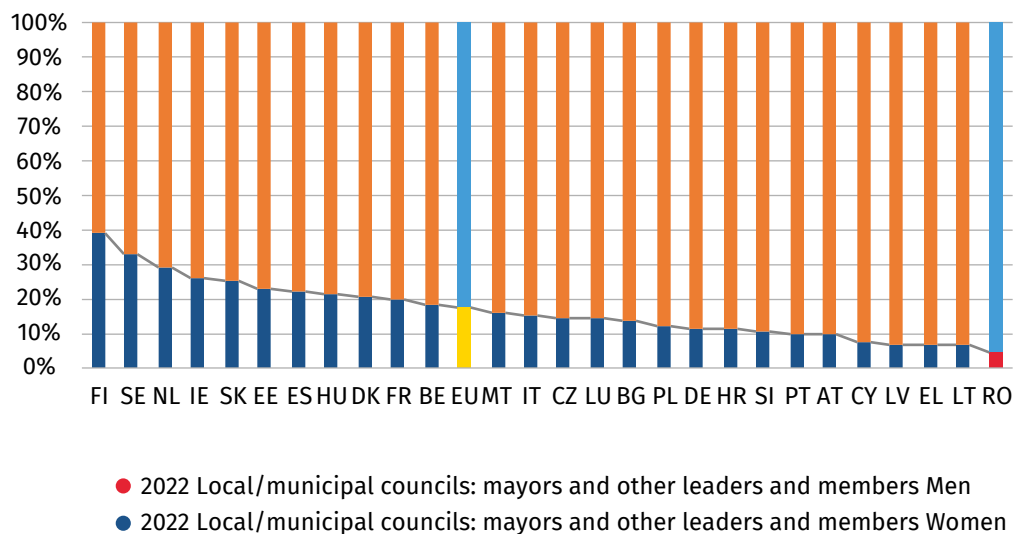
Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, Women and Men in Decision-Making, Women Mayors or Leaders of the Municipal Councils 2023.

Figure 51. Gender Distribution of Members of Regional Assemblies, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2022
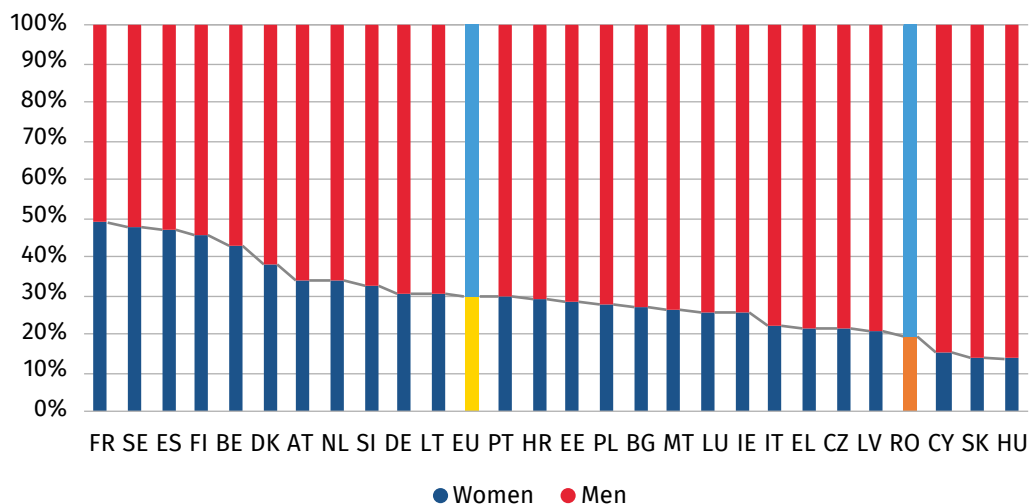
● Women ● Men

Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, Women and Men in Decision-Making, Women and Men Members of Regional Assemblies 2023.

Economic Decision-Making

Within the domain of economic decision-making, women in Romania have yet to catch up with their EU counterparts. According to the EIGE Index 2022, Romania ranks last in terms of women and economic decision-making among the EU-27 member states. There are still too few women leading at the top of listed companies and there seems to be a downward trend in this respect. Women are missing from decision-making at the top level of the Romanian National Bank. Romanian businesswomen are also underrepresented on the boards of the country's largest listed companies, with only 17.5 percent of board members being women in Q1 2023, fifth to last among EU-27 member states. In the main market of the Bucharest Stock Exchange 83 companies are listed. In 2020, there were 184 women on supervisory or executive boards out of a total of 760 members. However, 62 percent of the companies had at least one woman supervisory board member and 65 percent had at least one woman on their board of directors. According to the latest data from EIGE, the percentage of women CEOs in Romania has dropped to a 10 year low of only 5.9 percent.[103]

Figure 52. Economic Power Subdomain of Gender Equality Index, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2013 vs. 2022
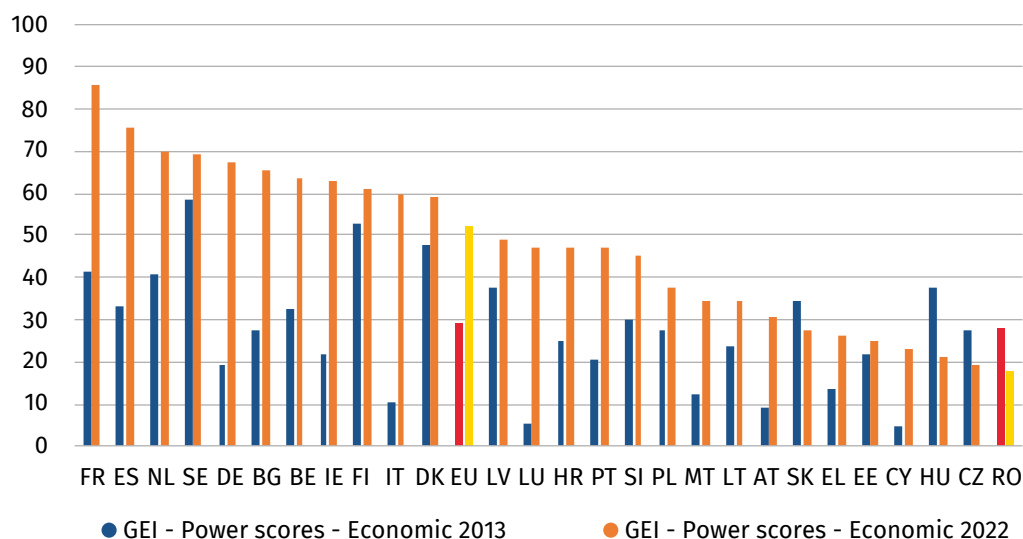
Source: EIGE 2022.

Note: The GEI was first released in 2013. The subdomain of gender-balance in economic decision-making is measured by the proportion of women and men on corporate boards of the largest nationally registered companies listed on stock exchanges and national central banks.

This evidence on women's engagement in economic decision making resonates with the discussion on entrepreneurship in section 2.2 and box 2.2, which shows that women are more likely to engage in social impact ventures and that a range of factors impede women from thriving in entrepreneurial activities.

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103 EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, Women and Men in Decision-Making, Women and Men CEOs of largest listed companies.

Figure 53. Membership of Boards of the Largest Listed Companies by Gender, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2022
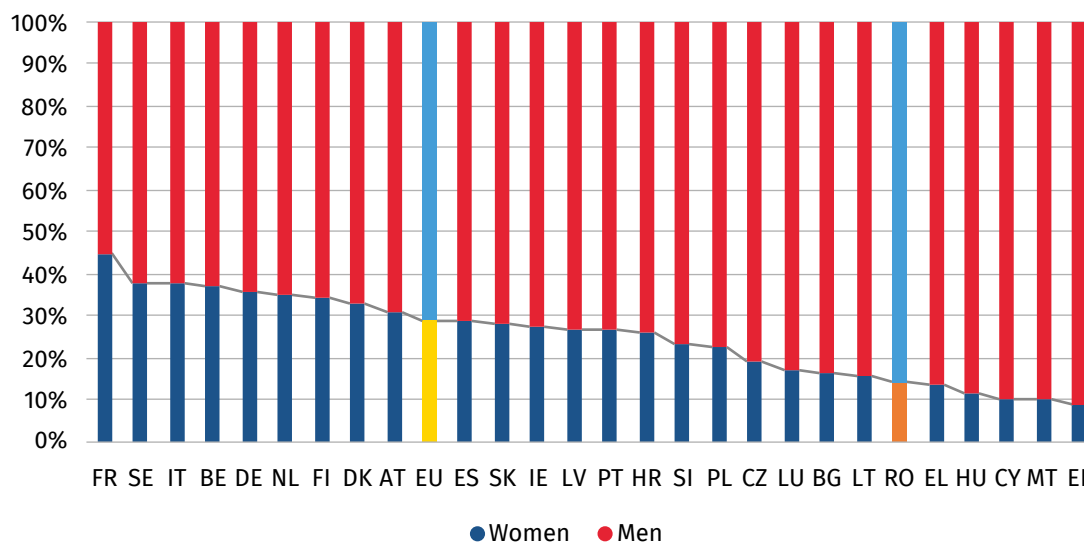
Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database, Women and Men in Decision-Making, Women and Men Members of Boards (supervisory and board of directors) of the Largest Quoted Companies 2023.

Civil Society and the Role of Women's Rights Organizations

While women's representation at the highest levels of economic and political decision-making remains limited, women's rights organizations and groups do play a key role in shaping a gender equality agenda, as noted during the consultations for this report. The team met with a group of 14 women rights activists under three umbrella organizations, representing civil society organizations, academia, and women entrepreneurs. The agendas of the organizations represented included service provision and advocacy for survivors' of GBV and reproductive health; education and norm-changing educational interventions focused on increasing awareness of equality and diversity, tackling discrimination against and the empowerment of Roma women, bringing forth the agenda of rural women, and providing services for refugee women. Their work often complements the government's initiatives and adds to the expertise on gender equality. Moreover, some of the organizations mentioned that they shared a commitment to an intersectional approach (designing programs targeting women who face multiple forms of discrimination), especially in the grassroots work conducted in communities with Roma women and girls. Throughout the consultation, women's rights activists shared concerns related to the constantly shrinking space for their activism and agenda due to a rising anti gender movement.

Social Norms and Voice

Various drivers have been explored, in terms of the low level of political participation of women in Romania. These include sociocultural and ideological factors, lack of female political role models, the electoral system, the legislative framework, and the ideologies of the existing political parties. Other research has looked at the organizational culture of political parties.

One key set of factors that contributes to women's underrepresentation in politics and at the top level of economic decision-making relates to unequal gender norms and gender stereotyping in the wider society. These influence the "supply' of women entering politics or advancing to the top economic decision-making levels, as well as inform women's individual perceptions of their abilities and the costs and risks of running for office or vying for senior positions, discouraging them from doing so. Under the influence of gender stereotyping, obstacles to women's participation in politics can manifest at a very young age, with the shaping of different career aspirations for girls and boys in school. Part of this stereotyping can be a message that women "are not made for" politics or big business. The association of women with power continues to elicit strong, negative reactions that remain a barrier to women wishing to enter—and thrive in—politics and other areas of leadership.

Along these lines, compared to the rest of the EU countries included in the European Values Survey, Romania stands out for having large proportions of its population who believe that men are better political leaders than women (40 percent) or that men are better at business than women (36 percent). The 2021 Special Eurobarometer 508. Values and Identities of EU Citizens (Becuwe and Baneth 2021) shows that Romanians have strong family values, with over 76 percent reporting their primary identification as being with their family and citizenship.

Existing research underscores that the organization and the culture of political parties is a key factor affecting gender equality in politics. Political parties are institutions that have historically been dominated by men and are characterized by traditional conceptions of gender relations (Kenny and Verge 2016). The structure of political parties favors the presence of men in leadership positions and implicitly in decision-making. Through various norms, practices, and behaviors (formal or informal, conscious or unconscious), political parties make gender (Kenny and Verge 2016). A recent analysis showed that among the six political parties with parliamentary representation in Romania in 2020 ((The Alliance for the Union of Romanians, AUR; Liberty, Unity, and Solidarity Party, PLUS; The National Liberal Party, PNL; Social Democratic Party, PSD; The Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, UDMR; Union Save Romania, USR), only four have special provisions in their statutes relating to support for the presence of women in party leadership structures (PLUS, PNL, PSD, UDMR) (Băluță and Tufiș 2021). While PLUS's and PNL's gender policies do not refer specifically to the representation of women in the leadership structures of those parties, UDMR and PSD statutes make explicit references to women's participation in leadership. The latter provides for internal quotas of at least 30 percent for women in the governing bodies of the party and at all levels of representation (art. 46, 3) and the former stipulates that women must also appear in the elected bodies. In their statutes, the AUR and USR do not have articles to ensure the representation of women in leadership structures. The same analysis shows that all six political parties have male presidents and that the representation of women in party leadership varies between 8 and 27 percent. The creation of women's organizations in political parties is another strategy that can be deployed in order to enhance women's political participation. Of the six political parties in Romania, four (AUR, PNL, PSD, and UDMR) have statutes on the presence on or the possibility of creating women's organizations.

Limited data exist on the organizational culture of large companies and on the internal gender dynamics of economic decision-making. Gender analysis of the top levels of the economy's leadership

lags and "studying up" has policy potential, because it can highlight gate-keeping dynamics that can be regulated to create an even playing field. The 2022 Women on Boards in Romania study conducted by Deloitte Romania in collaboration with Professional Women's Network Romania highlights a series of expert interviews with women at the top levels of the largest listed companies. The interviewees describe an evolving profession where women still face challenges related to social norms and to male- dominated networks. However, because the domain has only recently become more regulated and transparent, there are opportunities for improvement.

Gender-Based Violence

Voice and agency are crucial to the empowerment of women, securing them freedom from violence, control over their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ownership and control of assets. Voice and Agency is also an enabler for women's collective action. Although Romania has a constitution as well as specific laws that promote equal opportunities between women and men[104] and address the issue of domestic violence,[105] as presented in more detail in chapter 3, gender stereotypes, patriarchal social norms coupled with persisting gendered economic inequalities, and limited political participation as well as ethnic and racial bias and discrimination render Romanian women vulnerable and excluded both within the household and in public (Băluță and Tufiș 2022).

Freedom from violence is an essential domain of agency, and yet GBV remains hidden in plain sight in Romania, undocumented and invisible in the public agenda. An umbrella term that refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group based on their gender, GBV also includes various forms of violence against women[106] and targeted violence against LGBTI populations. GBV manifests in various forms, including (1) domestic violence (economic, psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual violence), (2) femicide (the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender, including cases of fatal domestic violence or "honor killing"), (3) sexual violence (sexual harassment, rape, corrective rape), (4) human trafficking, (5) child marriage, (6) female genital mutilation, and (7) digital violence.[107] These forms of violence, as discussed below, are also specified by the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention with regard to preventing and combating violence against women (also referred to as the Istanbul Convention), which further sets out the obligation of state parties to the convention to "protect women against all forms of violence, and prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women and domestic violence" and to "contribute to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and promote substantive equality between women and men, including by empowering women" in order to effectively ensure women's human rights. Romania ratified the CoE Istanbul Convention in May 2016 and has since taken considerable steps to integrate the convention's provisions into the national legal framework. However, more remains to be done. One first and key step is to revise the existing legal provisions in order to effectively cover all forms of GBV against women described under the convention.

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104 Law No 202/2002 regarding equal opportunities between women and men.

105 Law No 217/2002 regarding preventing and combating domestic violence.

106 According to the CoE Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, gender-based violence against women "refers to all violence directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (Article 3, paragraph D).

107 UN Women has a comprehensive list: see https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence, accessed March 15, 2022.

For the purposes of this report, we have focused on key forms of GBV against women that have been raised as persistent problems by international organizations such as the CoE's GREVIO Committee (Council of Europe 2022), the United Nations Working Group on Eliminating Violence Against Women and Girls (2021), and CoE's GRETA Committee (Council of Europe 2021). Moreover, violence against the LGBTI community is also addressed separately in box 2.3. The choice to limit the scope of the chapter to (1) domestic violence, (2) sexual violence and early marriages, and (3) human trafficking (especially for sexual exploitation) reflects on the one hand the limitations regarding available data and on the other the policy intent of this report, which aims to consolidate national policy efforts in accordance with its international commitments.

The widely cited EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) data on GBV in Romania dates to 2014[108] and remains the most comprehensive GBV assessment in the country. According to these data, 30 percent of women in Romania have experienced either physical or social violence or both by the age of 15, and only 23 percent of the survivors reported the most serious incidents to the police. In terms of various forms of GBV, the report estimated that in Romania, psychological violence affects between 30 and 39 percent of women, 32 percent of women have experienced sexual harassment, 23 percent of women have experienced intimate partner violence, 32 percent of women have been sexually harassed, and 8 percent report having been stalked. It is expected that an update to these data by FRA and EIGE will be released in 2024.

What follows is a snapshot of GBV against women in Romania, focusing on the following three dimensions: domestic violence,[109] sexual violence and child marriages, and human trafficking (especially for sexual exploitation).[110] In line with the framework provided by CoE, we then look at social norms related to GBV against women to seek targeted interventions that aim to shift social norms to be more gender equitable and thus to reduce the incidence of GBV against women. While the scope of this report is limited, it is worth noting that no single factor can explain GBV in our societies. Rather, a myriad of factors contribute to it and the interaction of these factors lies at the root of the problem. However, most research looks at the interplay of four factors: the cultural, legal, economic, and political contexts.

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108 These data were cited extensively in the previous Romania Gender Assessment Report (World Bank 2018a).

109 While Romania does not have a legal definition of femicide, it is worth noting that according to EIGE, in 2020 44 women were murdered by a family member and/or intimate partner (EIGE 2022). This report could not add a detailed assessment of this because of a lack of data.

110 While we recognize that human trafficking is not per se a form of GBV, there is increasing literature that considers human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation a form of GBV. Human trafficking can also be considered as a form of GBV when its outcomes are considered, because the majority of identified trafficking victims are women and girls. Notwithstanding, GBV is recognized as a key factor influencing the incidence of human trafficking.

Figure 54. Council of Europe Model of Risk Factors that Influence Gender-Based Violence

Cultural Factors:
gender norms, gender socialization, gender stereotypes, unconscious bias

Economic Factors:
lack of financial resources for independent life

Legal Factors:
Laws and Policies, Effective Judiciaruy

Political Factors:
Women's under-representation in politics and decision-making
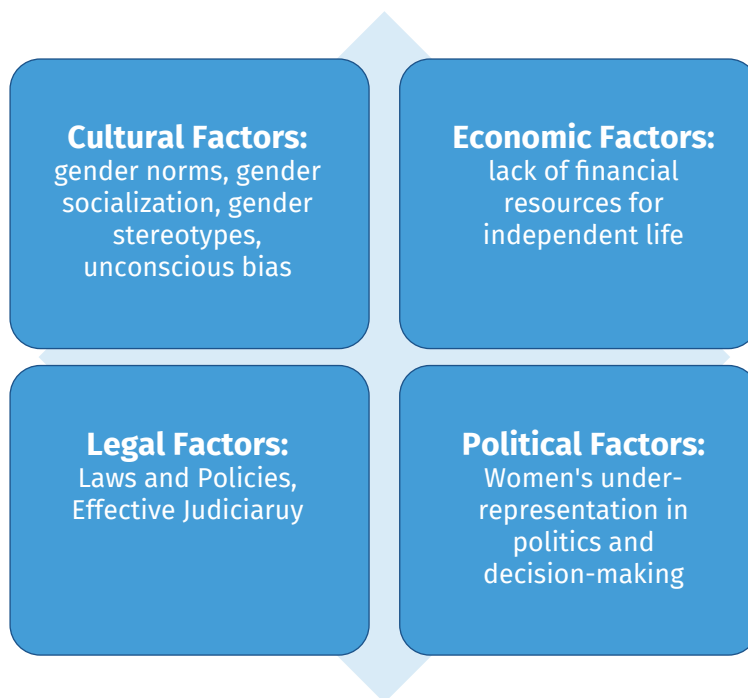
Domestic Violence
Domestic violence, which according to the Romanian legal framework includes economic, psychological, emotional, physical and sexual, social, spiritual, and cyber violence is perhaps the most widespread form of GBV and most difficult to capture. Extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders in Romania during the preparation of this report confirmed what the CoE has observed: Romania lacks an integrated system of data collection on domestic violence as well as a comprehensive system of data collection covering all forms of violence against women (Council of Europe 2022).

While various authorities, including the national police, the public prosecutor's office, the Superior Council of Magistracy, the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) (through the General Directorates for Child Protection and Social Assistance), the National Agency for Child Protection and Adoption (through the General Directorates for Child Protection and Social Assistance for children of survivors of domestic violence), and the public hospital system record administrative data related to domestic violence, these data are not systematically stored in a central database or corroborated to give a comprehensive assessment of the incidence of domestic violence among the general population. Moreover, these administrative data reveal gaps in the legal and policy framework with regard to the definition of various forms of domestic violence across public systems, as well as inconsistencies regarding the tabulation of incidents, tabulation of "victims," and recording of the relationship between "victim" and perpetrator, which when resolved, could support the compilation of a quality database to inform analysis. Broadly, these administrative data fall short in terms of complying with the definitions of violence against women and appropriate data collection system standards described by the CoE Convention for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and

Domestic Violence.[111] For example, both data from the Public Ministry, which records number of cases prosecuted, and those of the Superior Council of Magistracy, which collects data from the court system, do not record domestic violence as defined in the Domestic Violence Law, but rather use the more-restrictive definitions under the Criminal Code[112] of violence within the family (Council of Europe 2022). Hence details regarding cohabiting or former cohabiting partners are passed over and intimate partner violence is not distinguished from intergenerational violence in terms of relationship categories(Council of Europe 2022). Moreover, the data from the health care sector as recorded by the National Institute of Public Health[113] are deficient in many ways, because, for example, information such as "victim's" sex, the type of violence, the type of relationship of the alleged perpetrator to the "victim", and number of survivors who seek outpatient health care services in relation to their experience of violence are not collected (Council of Europe 2022).

Notwithstanding its limitations, when the available administrative data are juxtaposed, gaps in the domestic violence response mechanisms and referral pathways appear that need to be further explored. For example, Băluță and Tufiș (2022)[114] analyzed data records from the National Inspectorate of Romanian Police as follows: in absolute numbers, the police recorded a total of 45,504 victims of domestic violence in 2020.[115] On the other hand, data provided on an annual basis by the Romanian General Prosecutor's Office shows that in 2020, only 1512 domestic violence survivors had their case heard in court,[116] which is a very small portion of the 45,504 complaints made that year. Given these data points, a mere 3.3 percent of those survivors who reported their cases to the police found a legal remedy, a situation that needs to be further investigated (Băluță and Tufiș 2022). Looking further into access to services[117] for survivors of GBV based on administrative data compiled by ANES,[118] annually over 2000 women receive services from public and NGO-based providers. When contrasted with police data of complaints received, the number of GBV survivors who access specialized services paints a picture of low coverage, especially for those in rural areas. Figure 55 shows that when broken down by place of residence, social service data indicate less accessibility for survivors of domestic violence who live in rural areas as compared to those residing in urban settings (even though this data set is not age or gender disaggregated). What is more, the figure indicates there was a decrease in the number of

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111 Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210: *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence,* 11.V.2011, https://rm.coe.int/168008482ehttps://rm.coe.int/168008482e, accessed March 12. It should be noted that there have been efforts to make improvements, as noted during consultations: the National Institute of Statistics worked in partnership with ANES to improve its data collection methodology by improving its validation requirements. The current data set was rebuilt and starts from 2008.

112 The Criminal Code expressly regulates the crime of domestic violence in Article 199 of Chapter III: Crimes committed against a family member. Thus it limits its data collection to domestic violence among married partners.

113 The National Institute for Public Health collects costing hospital data based on diagnosis-related group (DRG) costs. DRG is a system that classifies hospital cases according to certain groups, also referred to as DRGs, that are expected to have similar hospital resource use (cost).

114 Băluță and Tufis 2022. This report is published by The FILIA Center, a feminist organization that makes women's voices heard through direct community work and advocacy, activism and outreach, research, and analysis.

115 This captured statistics on criminal complaints, type of crime, and the number of perpetrators and survivors segregated by age, sex, relationship between them, and place of residence, as well as the number of provisional protection orders issued and those breached.

116 https://www.mpublic.ro/ro/content/date-statistice-privind-victimele-violen%C8%9Bei-%C3%AEn-familie.

117 The types of services include basic information services, social counseling, psychological counseling, shelter, legal assistance and legal representation, reimbursement of forensic examinations, and vocational training.

118 These data are derived from submissions from general departments for social assistance and child protection, as well as data collected through the national helpline. ANES also collects data from the General Directorate for Child Protection and Social Assistance in each county on the number of women survivors of domestic violence who seek help from social service providers.

women seeking specialized help in 2020, compared to the previous year. Altogether, the comparison of these absolute numbers across various sources of administrative data shows that each year, the number of complaints received by police is high, conviction rates remain low, and the capability of specialized social services for domestic violence survivors falls short of addressing the magnitude of the problem. This underscores the need for a comprehensive study to assess the extent of GBV in the country, as well as the availability and accessibility of various response services throughout the referral pathways, especially in rural areas and among vulnerable groups.

Figure 55. Female Survivors of Domestic Violence (18 Years Old or Older) Who Received Social Services, 2016–20
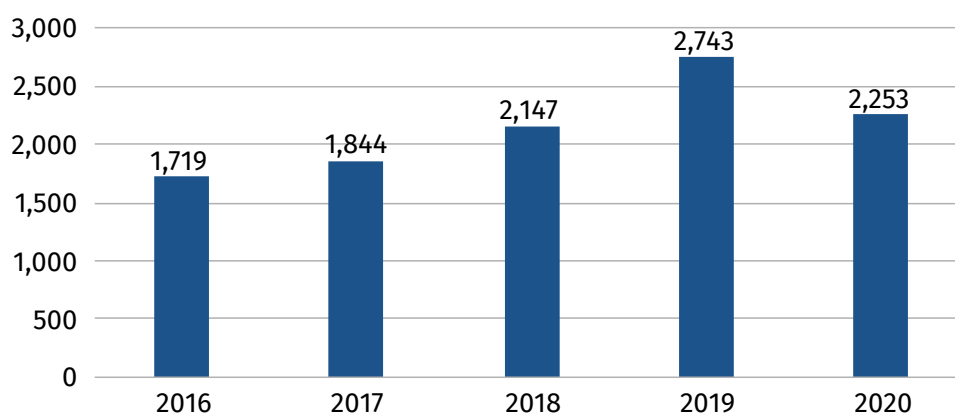
Source: INSE, Sustainable Development Goals Statistics, SDG 5, Target 2 Elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, Number of women ages 18 and above survivors of domestic violence who receive social services. Cell TFT0521.

Figure 56. Incidence of Domestic Violence Offenses per 100,000 Inhabitants as Recorded by Police, 2014–20
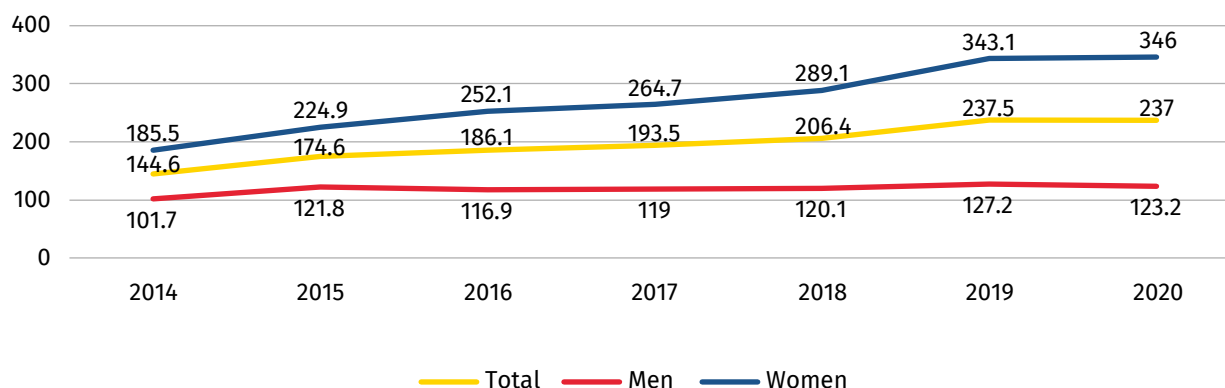
Source: INSE, Sustainable Development Goals Statistics, SDG 5, Target 2 Elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, Number of domestic violence offenses per 100,000 inhabitants. Cell TFT0522.

Note: Data in this figure should not be understood as reflecting the actual prevalence of domestic violence in Romania. The upward trend in the incidence of domestic violence shown in the figure can also be explained as a result of the increased availability of or trust in policing institutions or increased awareness of the general population, so that the rate of reporting is what is increasing.

Sexual Violence and Early Marriages

The report on Romania by the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls (2021) indicated that the criminal justice mechanisms for combating sexual violence have shortcomings that violate the human rights of women and girls. Other international monitoring reporting instruments, such as the U.S. Department of State (2022) also noted that human rights activists had reported cases when survivors of sexual or domestic violence were dissuaded from pressing charges against perpetrators. At the same time, the GREVIO Committee Baseline Evaluation Report (Council of Europe 2022) notes deficiencies in relation to investigation and prosecution of sexual violence cases, especially those involving persons under 18; and a general lack of available and accessible social services for survivors.

The report on the practice of the courts and the prosecutor's offices attached to them regarding the investigation and resolution of cases regarding sexual crimes involving children highlights the inconsistency in the procedures of investigations and the adjudication of cases of sexual violence in cases where minors are involved and in the assessment of consent (Superior Council of Magistracy – Judicial Inspection 2021). The report shows that depending on the prosecutor's office or court where the case is examined, children might be either considered survivors of rape or survivors of the offense of sexual act with a minor, with the latter carrying a lower penalty. In this context, crime statistics must be read with caution and should not be considered illustrative of the violent phenomenon in itself. Rather, they record the phenomenon's most extreme and visible peaks, incidents where survivors of sexual violence were able to overcome hurdles such as dissuasion, victim blaming, societal prejudice, or gender stereotypes (on the part of law enforcement officials or other professionals involved in the case management). Nevertheless, crime statistics are a useful instrument for gender statistical analysis and contribute to the assessment of the level of sexual violence in Romania.

Despite experiencing a declining trend in early marriages, Romania has the highest national incidence in the EU (United Nations Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls 2021). Early and unregistered marriages remain present in Romanian society, violating children's rights and representing a form of GBV. While traditionally early marriages were reportedly a feature of conservative Roma communities, Crai (2015) notes that "early marriage is manifest in a number of Roma and non-Roma communities" (p. 5), connecting the practice of early marriage with increased levels of poverty within those communities. It is also worth pointing out that early marriages captured by official statistics represent only the tip of the iceberg, because many of the unions involving underaged children remain unformalized. Official data mark a stark decrease in early marriages from an upward trend that peaked in 2017, when 7733 women were ages 15 to 19 at the time of first marriage, to 5455 a year later. Since then, official data indicate a downward trend, partially attributed to the changes in the legal framework that increased the minimum age from 14 to 16 for lawful civil marriages involving an underage partner. According to Article 272 of the Civil Code, marriages involving persons under 16 can be granted, provided that the parent or legal tutor agrees to the union of the underaged person.

Figure 57. Number of Women Ages 15–19 at Time of First Marriage, 2015–20
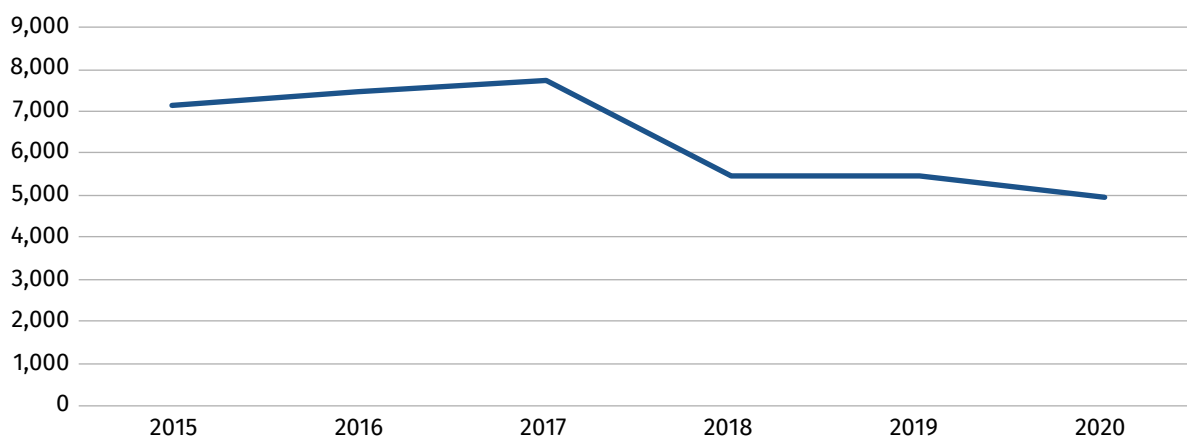
Source: EUROSTAT.

Trafficking in Persons

Romania remains a leading country of origin for human trafficking in Europe and is among the top five countries in the EU when it comes to human trafficking victims. According to the 2022 Trafficking in Persons report (Romania, National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons 2022), Romanian trafficking victims are exploited predominantly in other EU countries such as the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Spain, Italy, and the UK.

Romania remains a primary source country for sex trafficking and labor trafficking victims in Europe. The vast majority of identified victims (77 percent) in 2021 were sex trafficking victims. Traffickers are typically Romanian citizens working as part of an organized crime group based on family and ethnic ties who exploit Romanian women and children in sex trafficking in Romania and across borders.

Government officials and NGOs report increased recruitment of children via the internet and social media because of the pandemic. Media outlets allege the online sexual exploitation and abuse of girls as young as 12 years old. Children in government-run institutions, particularly girls living in homes and placement centers for persons with disabilities, are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking. Several NGOs note former residents of government-run homes and residential centers serve as recruiters of underage girls from the same facilities. Traffickers exploit Roma children in sex trafficking and forced begging. Child labor abuse continues to be underreported, with children as young as five exploited in this way.

Romania is a destination country for foreign migrants from Africa, Europe, and South and Southeast Asia who are exploited in the construction, hotel, and food-processing industries. Migrants from East Asia, who work in the construction and hospitality industries, are at a particular risk of trafficking, due to the lack of access to information in their native language and deceptive practices by employers. The nearly two million foreign nationals and Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women, children, and the elderly, who fled Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and

crossed the Romania border seeking sanctuary, are highly vulnerable to trafficking; approximately 110,000, of which more than a third are children, have stayed in the country. Human trafficking risks remain high among this group due to language barriers and to their limited economic resources. As with the other forms of violence analyzed above, crime statistics and official administrative data represent only the tip of the iceberg; at minimum they are indicative of law enforcement efforts to tackle this type of crime.

According to the Romanian National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (2022), over 500 victims of human trafficking are identified by authorities annually.

Figure 58. Annual Number of Victims of Human Trafficking by Gender as Recorded by National Authorities, 2018–22
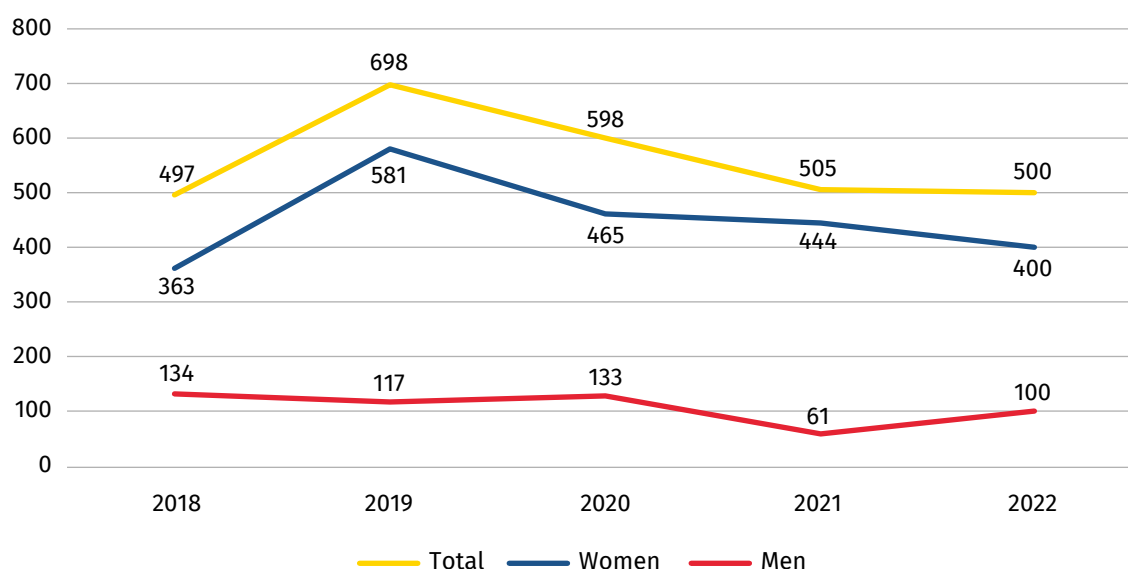
Source: Figure based on data from the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (Agenția Națională Împotriva Traficului de Persoane, ANITP) Annual Statistical Reports: https://anitp.mai.gov.ro/date-deschise/.

A 2020 costing study at the EU level (Walby et al. 2020) set the cost of human trafficking in 2016 at 337,462 euros per victim, over their lifetime, with costs going up for child victims of trafficking. These authors argued that this is a conservative cost estimate that does not account for unrecorded victims of human trafficking. According to the exercise performed by the authors, the costs related to the use of services (coordination and prevention, specialized services, law enforcement, health services, and social protection) amounted to 42 percent of the total, with loss of quality of life accounting for 40 percent and loss of economic output the remaining 18 percent. In the case of Romania, a rough estimate of human trafficking costs in 2020 is 170.4 million euros.

Social Norms and Agency

According to the OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) (2019), Romania presents a very low level (16.6 percent) of discrimination in social institutions, a higher level of discrimination (28 percent) in family institutions, and a very low level (7.7 percent) in physical integrity.[119] As presented in Section 2.1, gender norms are still quite traditional, with gendered segregation of responsibilities. Per the latest data from the World Values Survey, about 15 percent of the respondents considered it to be, to a certain degree, morally justifiable for a husband to beat his wife.

Băluță and Tufiș (2022), a recent perception survey on GBV conducted in partnership with Filia Center (a Romanian women's rights organization), concluded that some attitudes toward tolerance for GBV and especially domestic violence have changed. The perception survey was a rerun of a similar opinion poll conducted in 2003. The study found that for physical, verbal, and sexual violence, the level of intolerance was much higher in 2022 than it was in 2003, indicating a positive shift in social attitudes with regard to violence against women. The increase in the cumulative percentages of those who consider these acts very serious and serious was, on average, 10 percent, but more importantly, those who consider these acts very serious were much more numerous in 2022. In this respect, the highest increase was 47 percent: in 2003, only 28 percent of respondents considered it very serious if a woman is threatened by her partner, whereas in 2022, 75 percent did so. The survey also polled opinions on economic and psychological violence. Here the survey found more sticky gender norms. The survey asked participants the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "A woman is not allowed by her partner to spend her own money as she pleases." Surprisingly, 1 in 4 people (25 percent) considered it acceptable for a man to not let his partner use her money as she pleases. Moreover, when it came to psychological violence, a similar situation was noted. A survey question asked participants to rate their agreement with the statement, "A woman is not allowed to go out without her partner," and almost 1 in 4 respondents agreed with it. This is consistent with the findings of the European Commission's Special Eurobarometer Report 449 on Gender-Based Violence (2016), according to which Romanians were less inclined to consider overly controlling behavior by a partner a crime. Furthermore, Lithuania (35 percent) and Romania (33 percent) were the only countries where at least one-third of respondents said that controlling a partner by preventing them from seeing and contacting family and friends, denying them money, or confiscating mobile phones or official documents should not be a crime. This compares to just 5 percent of respondents in Portugal and 6 percent of those in Sweden.

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119   The Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) by the OECD's Development Centre measures discrimination against women in social institutions in 179 countries by taking into account laws, social norms, and practices that restrict women's and girls' rights and access to empowerment opportunities and resources to capture the underlying drivers of gender inequality

Intersectional Vulnerability and Gender Poverty Gaps

Roma women experience a double exclusion layer: as Roma and as women. The gender gap in education during the compulsory ages has been closed, but opportunities for Roma girls and boys to stay in higher education remain low. That said, most young Roma leaves school early without further training or employment. Early marriage remains highly prevalent among Roma girls, with over 39 percent of Romanian Roma women reporting having married for the first time before the age of 18. The employment gender gap is substantial: only 27 percent of Roma women participate in paid work compared to Roma men, 64 percent of whom do so, and well below the non-Roma population (66 percent). In addition, the proportion of Roma women ages 16–24 who are NEET is 77 percent, whereas the average for Romania as a whole of 29.6 percent, a reality that is mainly attributed to marriage and starting a family. Roma women are mostly active as unpaid family workers (59 percent self-identify as such), an occupational category that does not yield the financial or social benefits associated with the work. Care responsibilities keep 34 percent of Roma women ages 16–64 from seeking work (European Union 2018), a proportion congruent with that of the non-Roma population. Both Roma males and females have limited skills, constraining their access to the labor market. The Fundamental Rights Agency Roma Pilot Survey in 11 EU member states (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, UNDP, and WORLD 2013) found that in Romania, 31 percent of Roma surveyed said that they could not read or write, second to last after Portugal (35 percent). Social inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex (LGBTI) people also represent significant challenges (see Box 2.3 for details). Female refugees can face gender vulnerabilities in many dimensions (see Box 2.3 for details).

Box 2.3. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)

The World Bank approaches sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) inclusion through its commitments to gender equality as well as social inclusion—two crucial components of the World Bank's twin goals to eradicate extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity. Like heterosexual and cisgender women and girls, sexual and gender minorities are held to and impacted by prevailing restrictive gender norms and thus struggle to participate equally in markets, services, and spaces. Despite the progress achieved in the promotion of equality, sexual and gender minorities in Romania still experience exclusion, discrimination, and violence. The same restrictive norms that hinder women and girls from achieving their full potential lie at the root of stigma, prejudice, and violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex (LGBTI) people. Therefore, in order to achieve gender equality and social inclusion in Romania, it is important to tackle exclusion based on SOGI.

The main source of quantitative data on the experiences of LGBTI people in Romania is the survey on LGBTI people in the European Union (EU), North Macedonia, and Serbia conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2019 (LGBTI Survey Data Explorer, https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2020/lgbti-survey-data-explorer). According to the FRA's survey, Romania and Poland are the EU countries registering the highest rate of physical or sexual attacks motivated by a person identifying as LGBTI. Specifically, 15 percent of Romanian LGBTI respondents reported experiencing physical or sexual attacks because of their identity in the five years before the survey and the proportion was even higher for trans people (29 percent). Only 6 percent of LGBTI respondents said they had reported the most recent incident to any organization or institution. Concerning the main reasons for not reporting the incident to the police, the respondents listed fear of homophobic/transphobic reaction from the police (38 percent) and feeling shame or embarrassment (34 percent).

The existing data suggest LGBTI people in Romania often face barriers in different areas of life. Specifically, 65 percent of Romanian LGBTI respondents in the FRA survey witnessed negative comments or behavior during their time at school because a peer was perceived to be LGBTI and 46 percent of respondents experienced bullying. Moreover, 33 percent of LGBTI respondents reported having felt discriminated against due to their identity by school/university personnel in the year before the survey, either as a student or as a parent. When it comes to employment, data gathered by FRA indicated that 24 percent of LGBTI respondents (and 44 percent of intersex respondents) had experienced SOGI-based discrimination at work or when looking for a job in the year before the survey. A small-scale survey conducted by the Romanian NGO MozaiQ (Fotache 2021) among 127 trans persons showed that most respondents (70 percent) felt anxious while looking for a job because of their gender identity. Many respondents reported experiences of unpleasant situations in employment, such as being asked personal questions at job interviews, issues concerning their legal gender and name, and gossip among colleagues and superiors. According to the FRA survey, 15 percent of LGBTI respondents reported having felt discriminated against by health care or social services personnel in the year before the survey. The situation is particularly difficult for trans and intersex respondents, as 25 percent of trans and 27 percent of intersex respondents reported having faced discrimination by health care or social services personnel. A small-scale study by a Romanian NGO ACCEPT Association (Popa et al. 2020) conducted among 123 trans persons found that almost half of the respondents (43 percent) had considered committing suicide many times and that 12 percent had tried suicide several times. Almost half of the respondents (44 percent) did not seek help when they had suicidal thoughts, and those who did seek help turned to family and close friends (28 percent) or professionals (18 percent).

Gender disparities in poverty in Romania exceed the EU average, with a growing gender gap in at-risk-of-poverty rates. However, among employed individuals, the gender gap narrows. Women are slightly more affected by poverty than men; while the at-risk-of-poverty rate has decreased for both sexes, the gender gap in at-risk-of-poverty has increased. Data published by Eurostat show that the at-risk-of-poverty rate in Romania is higher than the EU average and that there are also differences by gender.[120] For example, while 23.4 percent of women had an income below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in 2021, this was true of 21.7 percent of men. The gender gap in relative poverty was, therefore, 1.7 percentage points in Romania, compared to 1.4 percentage points in the EU-27 countries. Figure 59 also shows that the poverty gap has increased over time. While it was -0.4 percentage points back in 2014, it had become positive by 2021. The gender gap in the at-risk-of-poverty group reverses when restricting the population to employed people above 18 years old. While 11.1 percent of employed women above 18 years old were at risk of poverty in 2021 (down from 16.1 percent in 2014), this was true of 18.6 percent among employed males (down from 22.6 percent in 2014). These values were above the EU average for both sexes. The lower in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate for women indicates that, while women were less likely to participate in the labor market, they were less affected by working poverty when they did. This highlights the importance of considering employment opportunities and economic empowerment in addressing gender disparities in poverty.

Figure 59. At-Risk-of-Poverty Rate by Gender, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2007–21
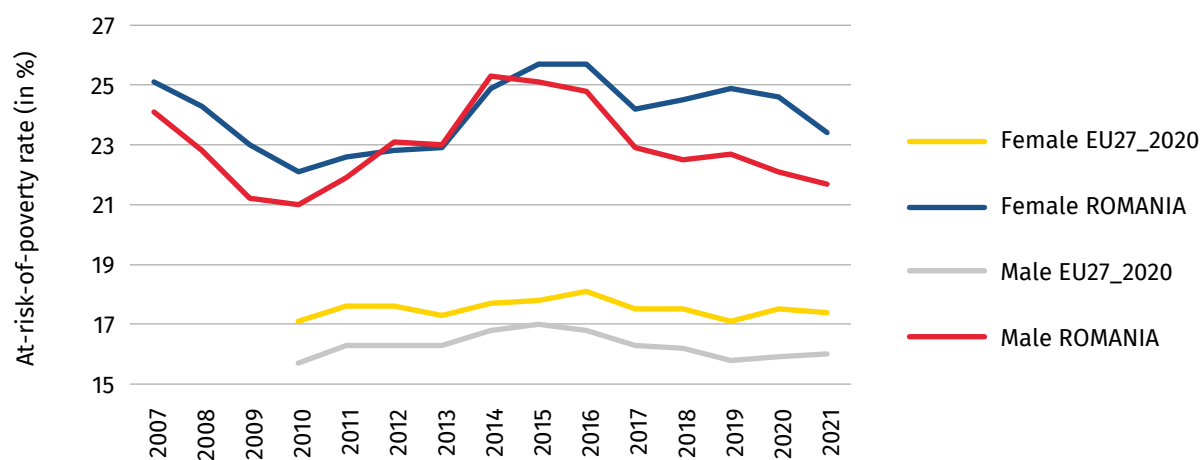
Source: Eurostat 2022.

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120 Eurostat, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_LI02/default/table?lang=en&category=livcon.ilc.ilc_ip.ilc_li. In the assessment, the team looked at anchored poverty rates to evaluate changes in these gaps over time.

According to a study by the European Anti-Poverty Network (2017), there are several drivers behind the feminization[121] of poverty, which takes place in all European countries but Finland. The network highlights three overall drivers behind the observed feminization of poverty in the EU: unequal power, patriarchal norms, and discrimination. More concretely, the following factors are identified as driving forces: lower employment of women, wage gaps, unequal intrahousehold distribution of resources, unequal access to property, lack of childcare, gaps in education and the labor market, and unequal distribution of care work.

In the context of the current energy crisis, 'female' households do not have energy expenditure patterns that put them in significantly higher levels of vulnerability than other groups. Figure A.1.15 shows energy spending patterns based on the most recent data available for different types of households: female-headed households, female-headed households with at least one child, households with a female majority, households with a female breadwinner, households with a male breadwinner, dual-earner households, and households with no employed adult. The figure shows that the energy expenditure share fluctuates between 5.6 and 13.1 percent. We do not observe significant variations in the share of household income on energy expenditure across the different gender groups. Consequently, the vulnerability of the Romanian population to rising energy prices seems to be driven by factors other than gender.

There are no clear gender patterns in households' exposure to leakages, but households with female breadwinners report higher exposure to environmental problems. Housing conditions are another important indicator of vulnerability around climate change, especially when thinking about energy efficiency. Based on this rationale, we analyze housing conditions of the household types presented in figure A.1.17, using data from EU-SILC 2020.[122] We do not find evidence in favor of women's being more exposed. On the contrary, households with male breadwinners seem to be the most affected by leakages (figure A.1.17). This might be driven by these households' being more likely to live in detached houses (figure A.1.16). At the same time, households with female breadwinners are slightly more likely to report some kind of environmental problem: 13.6 percent of households with female breadwinners reported that they were exposed to environmental problems, while only 10.5 percent of households with male breadwinners did so.[123]

The steep increases in food and energy prices in 2021–22 due to the Ukraine conflict are expected to reduce disposable income for the poorest and expose their vulnerability to further shocks, but female-headed households are not expected to be significantly affected. Despite government efforts to reduce food and energy prices, food inflation has continued to rise in Romania. A forthcoming study examines the impact of rising inflation caused by global supply chain disruptions resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine on household income and living conditions in these countries (Robayo-Abril et al. forthcoming). Microsimulations show that the income losses of female-headed households will be close to the average rate due to their expenditure patterns. Despite having a precrisis poverty rate of

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121 Feminization refers to the fact that the share of women in the poor population has mostly increased over time.
122 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
123 EU-SILC, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.

12.6 percent (using the US$6.85 poverty line), higher than the national poverty rate of 11.3 percent, they are not expected to be disproportionately affected. In contrast, other groups, such as single-elderly households, are more vulnerable to the inflation burden because they have a higher proportion of their expenditures allocated to energy. Despite female-headed households' not having a higher inflation burden, other gender vulnerabilities may arise due to the conflict (see box 2.4 for details).

Figure 60. Simulated Changes in Per Capita Disposable Income by Population Subgroups in Romania
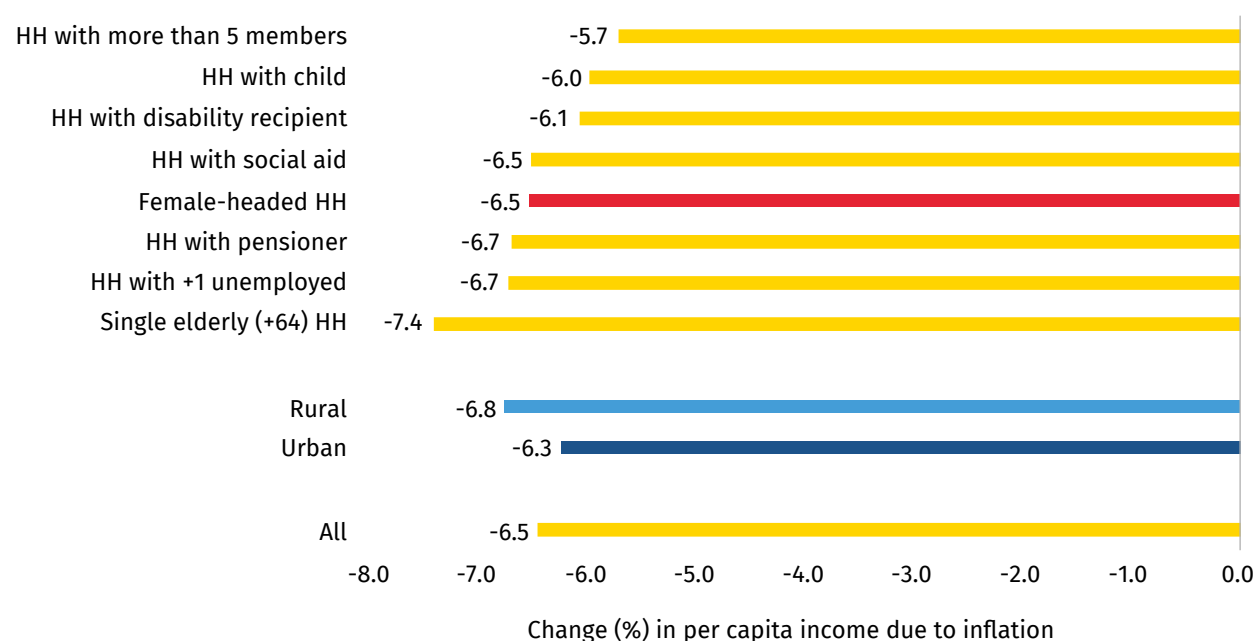
Source: World Bank micro simulations based on Eurostat Harmonized Indices of Consumer Prices (HICP) and the latest consumption data available from the HBS and income data from the EU-SILC.

Note: The income measure is per capita disposable income in EU-SILC 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/europe-an-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions, For the simulation of direct impacts, we use inflation changes from October 2022 relative to October 2019 and assume that the price elasticity of demand is the same for food and energy. Still, the price elasticity differs across the income distribution. EU-SILC does not use the term "head of household." Instead the "household respondent" is considered to be the person responsible for the dwelling. This is used to construct the proxy for female-headed households.

Box 2.4. Ukraine War-Gendered Vulnerabilities in Romania

BACKGROUND

Since the start of the war in Ukraine following Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022, 7.7 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced, while 8 million people have crossed Ukraine's borders into neighboring European countries in search for safety. Romania has remained an important refugee-receiving country since the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine. Over 2.2 million border crossings, including pendular movements, have been recorded into Romania from Ukraine and Moldova since February 24, 2022. By April 2023, a total of 104,823 individuals fleeing Ukraine (Ukraine and third-country nationals) were recorded to be living in Romania. Moreover, by the same date, 126,711 individuals had received Temporary Protection Status from Romanian authorities. Over 67 percent of those granted temporary protection status had previously lived in the following oblasts: Odeska, Kyiv, Mykolaivska, Zakarpatska, and Kharkivsa. According to the latest UNHCR data, the demographic breakdown of the Ukrainian refugee population living in Romania is 53 percent women, while 22 percent of the total refugee population is made up of children under the age of 18 and 25 percent are adult men.

According to the latest UNHCR Protection Profiling and Monitoring Brief 2023 (UNHCR 2022), almost half of the refugee households (45 percent) have at least one child under 18, while 13 percent of households who arrived in Romania have one family member who has a disability or suffers from a serious medical condition. Among the respondents surveyed by UNHCR, 7 percent of refugees in Romania are made up of pregnant or lactating women. An additional axis of vulnerability highlighted in the survey points to the fact that 26 percent of the refugees from Ukrainian had been displaced prior to arriving in Romania and thus have limited economic resources. Over 90 percent of Ukrainian refugees under temporary protection (TP) live in urban and peri urban areas, primarily in private accommodations within the host communities. Nearly 70 percent of respondent refugee households in Romania currently benefit from the 50/20 program, through which lei 50 per person per day are provided for accommodation and lei 20 per person per day for food. Around 7,700 refugees live in accommodation centers managed by the government of Romania.

GENDER-RELATED VULNERABILITIES

Overall, there is a lack of assessment of gender-related vulnerabilities, though the refugee population largely consists of women and children and Romania as a country lags in terms of gender equality. The risks associated with GBV and human trafficking have been highlighted in the May 2022 CARE Rapid Gender Analysis Brief[124] on Ukrainian Refugees in Romania. CARE's Rapid Gender Analysis Brief on Romania found that "in private accommodation (under 50/20 program), the lack of vetting of accommodation and hosts and the power imbalances between the host and the refugee can create additional protection risks, particularly for single women, those who do not have other social support or networks in Romania, and refugees who have limited resources." The same report found that practices around GBV risks and safety and measures put in place for mitigation vary across transit centers around the country with no unitary approach or best practice example disseminated by government of Romania or UN agencies. The same report assessed the possibility of increased vulnerability to human trafficking, as both Ukraine and Romania are major human-trafficking origin countries. However, little information is available and little research has been done in respect to gender-based discrimination and intersectional discrimination potentially affecting Roma women with TP status when accessing employment, health, education, social protection, or specialized social services, including domestic violence services.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Romania's response to the refugee crisis has been structured as two layers of intervention: a first-phase emergency response and a second-phase response centered on the protection and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees. The emergency response is led by the Department for Emergency Situations (DES) and refers to the support ensured by Romania to all refugees crossing the borders from Ukraine: it involves the deployment of resources and services at the main border crossing points, humanitarian transport, and the provision of emergency shelter, food, and basic medical assistance. The second phase, the protection and inclusion response, refers to the medium- and longer-term measures put in place for the protection and inclusion of Ukrainian refugees who choose to live in Romania.

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124 The RGA brief was produced jointly by CARE, SERA, the Federation for Child Protection, the Federation for Social Services and Plan International in Romania.

Chapter 3
Policies to Promote Gender Equality in Romania

This chapter assesses the legal and policy framework, takes stock of the knowledge and data gaps, and provides policy recommendations for narrowing gender inequality. First, the chapter reviews the legal, institutional, and policy framework that affects gender equality in the country, including programs to implement and efforts to enforce gender laws and policies. Beyond the review of laws to promote gender equality, we account for the extent to which the existing legislation is being implemented, complementing information from the latest Women, Business, and the Law report, to determine explicit and implicit biases in the legislation and assess the implementation gaps in the legal system. Second, the chapter identifies key data and knowledge gaps that can affect the effectiveness of gender policy. Finally, the chapter builds on the diagnostic evidence provided in chapter 2 and identifies overarching policies and tailored interventions that can play a role in addressing the drivers of gender inequality going forward.

The diagnosis is complemented with a review of rigorous international evidence on interventions and policies that successfully tackle the critical barriers identified in the country, so that more-granular policy recommendations, grounded in the country's context, can be developed. This chapter reviews rigorous evidence (including high-quality impact evaluations, systematic reviews, and evidence gap maps) on what works, how, and the cost to tackle the identified challenges in order to inform programs and policies that can contribute to closing the sizable and persistent gender gaps. It also specifies the actions the government and/or civil society organizations have taken to address gender inequities.

This chapter aims to answer the following questions:

- Has the country established institutions and programs to enforce laws and policies?

- What are the key gender data and capacity gaps in the national statistical system that impede proper monitoring and evaluation?

- What sectoral policies, fiscal policies, and interventions can lead to the narrowing of gender gaps in the country? Based on rigorous evidence, what works in countries with similar development levels and contexts to tackle the critical barriers identified in chapter 2?

- Which actors are playing a key role in the gender equality space?

3.1. Legal and Policy Framework

The EU gender equality and legal and policy framework recognizes equality between women and men as a core value and necessary condition for achieving EU growth, employment, and social cohesion objectives. Since 1996, the EU has committed to a "dual approach" to the achieving of gender equality by mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies while implementing specific measures to eliminate, prevent, or remedy gender inequalities. During the EU accession process, there was a large disparity of gender mainstreaming requirements for candidate countries, and a focus was placed on a specific range of issues, namely those prioritized in EU legislation and policy-making (primarily employment and social policy), potentially excluding critical issues (Roth 2004; Chiva 2010). More recently, the EU 2020–2025 gender equality strategy sets out policy objectives and actions toward a gender-equal Europe in a broad set of areas, including GBV, gender stereotypes, gender inequality in the labor market, equal participation in various economic sectors, gender pay and pension gaps, gender disparities in caregiving, and gender balance in decision-making and politics. The EU has also adopted six directives covering equality between women and men in various areas that are designed to ensure broad protection from discrimination. The EU's work-life balance directive introduces minimum standards for family leave and flexible working arrangements for workers and the EU calls upon member states to facilitate equal access to parental leave for women and men and equal distribution of unpaid care work between women and men.[125]

Romania has established a solid legal and institutional framework mandating equal rights for women in most areas of life (World Bank 2019).[126] Article 16(3) and Article 41(4)(equal pay) of the Constitution of Romania enshrine equal opportunities for women and men in accessing public, civil, and military jobs and Article 47(2) provides for maternity leave and implicitly provides for the right to other forms of leave. In 2002, the Gender Equality Law was passed; Article 4(e) of the law sets forth positive actions to be taken temporarily to accelerate the realization of gender equality and Article 9 comprehensively prohibits discrimination based on sex. Finally, Article 4(k) of this law was amended and supplemented by a provision on gender budgeting (Law 229/2015).

There are relevant state mechanisms for protecting the rights of disadvantaged groups, including women and girls. The National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, under the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities, is mandated to coordinate the implementation of government policies and strategies in the field of equal opportunities between women and men and in the area of preventing and combating domestic violence. The agency can introduce draft bills and is tasked with policy actions related to gender equality and the prevention of GBV. As of 2021, the agency had secured government approval for a National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Sexual Violence 2021–2030, and in December 2022, the government approved the National Strategy to Promote Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence 2022–2025. In

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125 EIGE, Annex 2: The EU's Gender Equality Legal and Policy Framework, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-budgeting/annex-2-eus-gender-equality-legal-and-policy-framework.

126 Romania scored 90.63 points (out of 100), with perfect scores on indicators such as starting a job, getting paid, running a business, and managing assets. The OECD Development Centre's 2019 Social Institutions and Gender Index (OECD Development Centre 2019) ranked Romania as a country with very low gender discrimination in social institutions with a score of 17 percent.

addition, the National Agency for Roma works toward the social inclusion of the Roma minority. Another key player is the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), a tribunal-like equality body that upholds the principles of nondiscrimination. The NCCD works as an enforcement structure, formulating decisions on cases regarding gender-based discrimination and legally binding recommendations and sending legal opinions to the courts.

The country fares well regarding laws and regulations that affect women's economic opportunities, but pension reforms emerge as a key lagging area. The country scored 90.6 on the World Bank's Women, Business, and Law Index[127] in 2023, higher than the regional average observed across Europe and Central Asia (84.4). However, though the country fares well when looking at mobility, the workplace, entrepreneurship, assets, pay, marriage, and parenthood, it lags with regard to laws concerning pensions.[128] There are laws mandating equal pay for men and women, women do have the same rights to remarry as men, and there is parental leave; however, the mandatory retirement age for men and women is not the same, and men and women cannot retire with full or partial pension benefits at the same age. This, together with lower lifetime earnings and longer life expectancies, lead to significant inequalities in retirement wealth. Implicit bias in legislation, that is, laws or regulations that, because of typical social arrangements and economic behavior, tend to have different implications for men than for women, needs to be carefully considered (Stotsky 2020).

Regarding laws and regulations affecting political decision-making, Romania does not have a quota system to address gender gaps in terms of the candidates put forth by parties in local or national elections. Still, the Romanian Parliament is examining a new bill to introduce gender quotas for the 2024 elections. A few soft measures aimed at increasing women's participation in political decision-making have been introduced throughout the years. The overall legal framework to support women's political representation is not particularly specific and has not produced clear outcomes. Existing measures set forth financial incentives for political parties and legal obligations for gender inclusiveness: for example, Law 202/2002 on Equal Opportunities and Treatment between Women and Men stipulates that political parties are obligated to ensure a balanced representation of women and men in the nomination of candidates in local, general, and European Parliament elections. However, this law does not elaborate on what balanced representation means, the methods to obtain it, or a sanction system in case political parties or electoral authorities fail to achieve it. In 2016, the Electoral Laws that govern local, national, and European elections were amended to address gender balance. However, the phrasing remains general: "The lists of candidates for the election of members of Romania in the European Parliament shall be drawn up to ensure the representation of both sexes." However, there are no sanctions if a political party submits an entirely male list of candidates. Observers noted a decrease in the number of all-male candidate lists submitted from 23 in the 2016 Parliamentary elections to just 6 in the 2020 elections. Law 334/2006, which addresses political party financing, stipulates that the percentage of public financing that political parties receive will be increased proportionally to the elected mandates received by women. Finally, the Romanian Parliament is examining two draft bills proposing a gender quota system for the upcoming 2024 elections.

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127 The Women, Business and the Law index measures explicit discrimination in the law, legal rights, and the provision of certain benefits, areas in which reforms can bolster women's LFP.

128 The pension performance is not only low with respect to the EU, but also other comparator groups (see benchmarking exercise, annex 3).

Regarding economic decision-making, few steps have been taken to address gender gaps in management or supervisory board composition. The 2016 Bucharest Stock Exchange Governance Code recommended that "the board and its committees should have an appropriate balance of skills, experience, gender diversity, knowledge, and independence to enable them to perform their respective duties and responsibilities effectively." The recommendation is nonbinding and lacks a direct gender equality and gender transformative character. The code does make it compulsory for listed companies to disclose board membership, gender diversity status, and selection procedures, but there is no provision regarding pay transparency for executive or supervisory board members. Romania has not yet transposed EU Directive 2022/2381 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures. There is no legal obligation or internal policy regulation to ensure gender parity on the board of directors of the National Bank.

3.2. Recent Policies and Interventions

The National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) is the primary governmental body tasked with gender mainstreaming in all policies and government sectors.[129] ANES is also the coordinating body for the implementation of the measures specified in two major international conventions of which Romania is part, UN CEDAW and the EU Istanbul Convention. ANES's role in the social service ecosystem is to formulate policy and to provide the know-how (or the methodology) for the provision of specialized services for survivors of domestic violence. However, consultations revealed that ANES is constrained by its mandate as an agency (as opposed to a ministry), and its capacity is limited by significant funding gaps for its actions and programs.

ANES has been instrumental in instituting policy measures put in place to address sexual violence. In 2020, ANES adopted the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence, "SINERGY" 2020-2030, which lays out a comprehensive approach to the prevention of sexualized violence and aims to decrease the number of cases of sexual violence and to prevent recidivism. This policy document sets up a working framework for data collection for offenses of sexual violence (including street sexual harassment and online offenses), the provision of specialized psychological support, and the setting up of specialized units within prosecutors' offices and law enforcement agencies. In addition, forensic services for women survivors of rape and sexual violence are being introduced, which complement the approach. In terms of policy implementation, ANES has taken the lead in the (1) creation of 10 regional sexual violence crisis centers based on the one-stop-shop model of service provision in cases of rape and sexual assault, the creation of 8 regional counseling services for perpetrators of domestic violence, and awareness-raising campaigns;[130] (2) creation of a network of 42 protected houses (small-capacity shelters for survivors of domestic violence) and provision of specialized services (counseling, support for employment, etc.) for domestic violence survivors;[131] (3) the setting up of training sessions of police officers, members of the judiciary, and social service providers on the promotion of human rights

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129 Established in 2004, disbanded in 2009 and reinstated in 2019, ANES is currently under the direction of the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities.

130 ANES supports the Implementation of Istanbul Convention Provisions in Romania, funded by the Norwegian Funding Mechanism 2014–2021, through the Justice Program, a grant administered by the Romanian Ministry of Justice.

131 This initiative, VENUS – Together for Combating Violence, is funded by the European Social Fund, Operational Program Human Capital, and a grant administered by the Romanian Ministry of European Funds.

standards for the protection of survivors of domestic violence;[132] and (4) the creation of the National Barometer on Domestic Violence, Trainings and Toolkits for social service providers, especially for mobile teams responding to domestic violence cases.[133] Moreover, the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities aims to develop mechanisms that contribute to the development of awareness tools aimed at changing social norms regarding violence, the role of women in economic development and their involvement in political life.

Romania has established national strategies to achieve gender equality. From 2018 to 2021, the National Strategy for the Promotion of Equal Opportunity and Treatment between Women and Men was implemented in Romania, which focused on addressing disparities across several sectors. The strategy involved three primary interventions: the integration of gender perspectives into policies and programs, the establishment of expert networks, and the enhancement of the capacities of NGOs through gender budgeting (EIGE 2022). For 2022 to 2027, the Romanian government has approved an update, the National Strategy for Promoting Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and Preventing Domestic Violence 2022–2027.

Overall, the consultations and stakeholder mapping confirmed that most sectoral policies and interventions are designed and implemented to improve sectoral outcomes, but there is no systematic gender mainstreaming. Therefore, there is scope to integrate the gender dimension into the policy cycle of sectoral policies and better understand the unintended gender impacts of sectoral policies.

The Ministry of Education has prioritized the reduction of school dropout, the combating of educational poverty, the elimination of school segregation, and the enhancement of the quality of preuniversity education; considerable efforts have been made to boost academic achievement in Romania, as evidenced by the "Educated Romania" initiative. This national project was introduced by the president of Romania to reevaluate the educational culture in Romania and was supported by an allocation of 3.6 billion euros (International Trade Administration 2023). Other reforms carried out during the current programming phase, which will end in 2023, have encompassed curriculum changes, the professionalization of teaching, and the provision of support to vulnerable children. This can potentially improve educational outcomes among children in vulnerable families and, in turn, correct gender disparities. Currently, the Ministry of Education has tabled before the Parliament two draft education bills, the Preuniversity Education and the Law on Higher Education, as part of the Educated Romania policy.

A conditional cash transfer (CCT) program tied to preschool attendance and projects expanding school infrastructure has been instituted that can potentially lead to positive education outcomes for boys and girls, with spillover effects on female employment. The CCT initiative was inspired by the "Every Child in Preschool" project initiated by a local association, Asociatia OvidiuRo, and launched in 2015 (Gheorghiu et al. 2020). The primary objective of this program was to bridge gaps in access to

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132 This initiative, VioGen – RoJust, is funded by the Norwegian Funding Mechanism 2014–2021 through the Local Development Grant Scheme and by a grant administered by the Romanian Social Development Fund.
133 This program funded by the Norwegian Funding Mechanism 2014–2021, through the Justice Program, a grant administered by the Romanian Ministry of Justice.

kindergartens among Roma and other marginalized groups. This social benefit is provided to children between three and six years from underprivileged families and is disbursed as a shopping voucher or "social ticket," with a value of lei 119.6 per month. The social ticket can be redeemed for the purchase of educational or food-related goods and is only granted to impoverished children who attend kindergarten regularly. Moreover, the "Early Education Reform" project, co-financed by the government of Romania and the Development Bank of the Council of Europe (BDCE), is improving and expanding the country's school infrastructure by building and equipping new and existing kindergartens. The "Development of a unitary, inclusive and quality early education service system" project also has an infrastructure component that consists of building, equipping, and operationalizing 110 nursery schools. If effective, these policies can alleviate the burden of care for mothers with preschool children, potentially increasing their employment.

With regard to entrepreneurship, Romania's strategy included some gender-targeted initiatives from 2014 to 2020, and consultations disclosed the existence of a legal framework in the country that relies on EU directives applicable to the private sector. The SME and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2014–2020 served as a guiding framework for Romania's entrepreneurship strategy, with additional support for underrepresented groups (OECD 2020a). Nevertheless, there are important initiatives in place and specific criteria in European financed programs aiming to address this lack of diversity. A program specifically designed for women was the "Programme for the Development of Entrepreneurial Culture among Female Managers in the SME Sector 2020," which strongly emphasized the development of entrepreneurial skills. This program also offered grants and loan guarantees, albeit on a small scale, with only about 160 beneficiaries targeted (OECD 2020a). Overall, the entrepreneurial programming in Romania mainly focused on providing grants for new entrepreneurs, with the grants being financed primarily by EU Structural Funds and the Start-Up Nation program (OECD 2020a). The legal framework for entrepreneurship follows EU directives; however, there is no monitoring and tracking of gender-specific outcomes.

In 2022, the Romanian Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism launched the "Woman Entrepreneur Program," which aims to narrow the gender gap in entrepreneurship within the country (Van Kline 2022). The program strives to stimulate and support the establishment and development of private economic structures established and managed by women, enhancing their performance for sustainable and inclusive economic growth, with a primary objective of bridging the gender gap in entrepreneurship in Romania (Van Kline, 2022)The program has an estimated budget of 200 million euros allocated for the years 2022–27 and is expected to benefit 5,000 individuals (Van Kline 2022). Eligibility for the program is restricted to businesses with at least one female partner who holds a minimum of 50 percent of shares. Additionally, the program has a novel digital design, with applications and support measure implementation being handled entirely online through a dedicated platform. Depending on its design and implementation features, this initiative can potentially narrow the gender gaps.

An important entrepreneurial initiative in Romania is the Start-Up Nation program, which aims to foster the creation and growth of SMEs and improve their economic performance; however, no specific monitoring mechanism is in place to track female-led start-ups' performance. In 2023, the program's third iteration was launched, which focuses on generating sustainable development, smart

economic recovery, sustainable and inclusive digitization, innovation, entrepreneurial training, and new jobs. According to the World Bank consultations in April 2023, the program assigns more points during the application process to start-ups that employ women or are led by women. As of September 2023, government data reveals that in 2022, 50.2% of companies applying to the Start-Up Nation program's Pillar 1 and Pillar 2 have women as shareholders. This suggests the program's potential as a significant support mechanism for female entrepreneurship

The Romanian government has made efforts to reduce GBV. For example, Law No. 217, passed in 2003 to reduce GBV, defined various forms of violence and criminalized marital rape. It was amended in 2012 and 2017 to provide protection orders. As of 2017, Romania had trained 1,100 gender equality experts and 4,000 technicians to implement local and national strategies to promote gender equality and eliminate domestic violence. In 2016, the Istanbul Convention—the Council of Europe agreement on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence—was signed and ratified by Romania. Romania has made considerable progress in expanding the provision of shelters for those experiencing domestic violence with concerted efforts being made by the government, NGOs, and faith-based institutions, though many shelters are not run for women only.[134] However, it is important to note that attitudes toward GBV continue to affect the effective prevention of and response to GBV. For example, the 2016 Special Eurobarometer reports that 32 percent of respondents in Romania viewed domestic violence as a private matter (compared to 15 percent at the EU level); thus, women may be less inclined to report violence cases to authorities (World Bank 2018a).

While Romanian law does not offer strong protection for LGBTI persons, the courts have been progressive in upholding their rights in the country. In June 2020, the Constitutional Court ruled against a proposed law that aimed at banning the discussion of gender in education, particularly the theory and opinion on gender identity.[135] Nonetheless, Romania remains one of the few countries in the EU that do not offer avenues for same-sex couples to enter into civil marriages or civil partnerships and the country denies recognition to same-sex couples married abroad.[136]

While evidence on the gender dimensions of fiscal incidence holds significant relevance for informing policy guidance on tax, transfer, and expenditure reforms, the evidence for Romania is scarce. The evidence on the potential use of fiscal policy instruments to reduce some of the identified gender gaps is limited in Romania. A fiscal incidence analysis was conducted in 2020 (Badiani-Magnusson and Militaru 2020), but it did not incorporate a gender lens in order to understand the impacts of fiscal policy on the gender gap or simulate the potential impacts of fiscal reforms on gender gaps.

A stakeholder mapping exercise based on desk research and consultations was conducted by the authors to identify key stakeholders working on gender equality in the country. This report was grounded in external consultations with a wide range of stakeholders from the government, development partners, and NGOs intended to serve as brainstorming sessions on policy recommendations and

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134 EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021/country/RO
135 Human Rights Watch, December 17, 2020.
136 As per the Civil Code of Romania, Article 277 (2).

priorities to narrow gender gaps. The consultations complemented the desk research by bringing out nuances and confirming some key challenges and constraints to accessing assets, economic opportunities, and voice and agency. The stakeholder mapping exercise described existing activities and programs initiated by different actors, and, based on the findings, the authors identified key entry points for reducing gender inequality (see annex 5 for details).

The mapping and consultations identified a wide set of actors and policies in the gender space. Despite the solid legal and institutional framework, implementing and monitoring concrete measures to tackle gender gaps remains challenging. The stakeholder mapping exercise as well as the consultations revealed that while many of the sectoral policies are not designed to reduce gender disparities, the policies may have unintended impacts on them.

Effective cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders, including those within the public and private sectors, is crucial, because policies in one sector can have ripple effects on gender gaps in other sectors, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Therefore, it is essential to establish strong partnerships and collaboration mechanisms to ensure that policies and initiatives are aligned and work toward the shared goal of gender equality. This approach can also enhance the effectiveness of gender-related policies and minimize the potential negative impacts on other areas.

3.3. Data and Knowledge for Reporting, Monitoring, and Evaluating Progress on Gender Inequality

Despite the robust legislative and institutional setup, challenges remain high when implementing and monitoring concrete measures and evaluating outcomes.

Gender statistics are vital to the monitoring of the progress of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the evaluation of gender policies. Gender statistics are more than just data broken down by sex.[137] The mainstreaming of a gender perspective in statistics entails systematically taking into account gender issues and biases in producing all official statistics at all stages of data production (Hedman, Perucci and Sundström 1996; United Nations 2001a, 2001b, 2002, 2006).

The National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INS), in partnership with the Department for Sustainable Development under the Secretariat of Government, has developed national targets and indicators to monitor progress on SDG 5 on gender equality. The set of indicators and targets are presented in figure 61. Notably, one SDG indicator measures the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, disaggregated by sex. There is an emphasis on the elimination of violence against women, which relies on administrative data sources from social service departments and police data. However, there are no indicators based on prosecution or court data.

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137 Gender statistics are defined by several characteristics, such as being collected and presented by sex as the primary classification, reflecting gender issues, capturing all aspects of women's and men's lives, and accounting for stereotypes and cultural factors that may induce gender bias in data.

The share of time spent in unpaid work indicators cannot be regularly monitored due to the lack of continuous and updated data collection on time-use surveys. Full-scale time-use surveys are usually conducted once every ten years in many countries due to the high cost and relatively slow changes in time-use habits. This is also the case in Romania, which collected time-use data in 2000 and 2012. The next time-use survey data collection has been delayed due to the population and housing census conducted in 2022 and will take place between July 2024 and July 2025. According to UNECE guidelines (UNECE, 2014), full-scale time-use surveys should be conducted at least every ten years. This is also the frequency required to meet the EU regulation 2019/1700.[138] However, more regular time-use data collection is crucial for obtaining data on unpaid work, non-market production, well-being, and gender equality, in addition to proper monitoring of SDGs and identification of policy effects. In line with the recommendations by UN Women and the Global Centre of Excellence on Gender Statistics (UN Women, 2021), the country can consider conducting light surveys with pre-coded diaries between full-scale surveys every three to five years, following best practices in other developed countries.[139] Light diaries could be systematically appended to labor force surveys and complete diaries to living conditions surveys more frequently (i.e., every five years). However, the comparability of results should be carefully assessed when analyzing time-use trends using both full-time and light diaries.

Figure 61. National Targets and Indicators for Monitoring Progress on SDG 5 Gender Equality
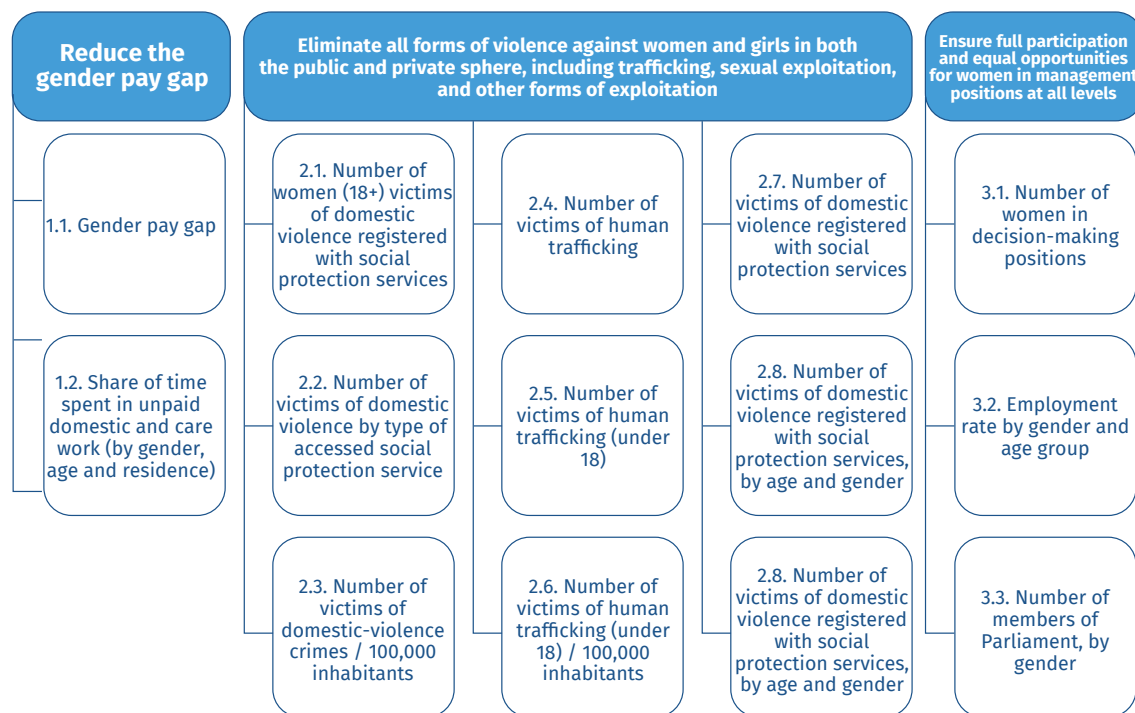
Source: Author's elaboration.

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138 This regulation established a common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households based on data at the individual level collected from samples. According to this legal framework, this data should be collected every ten years.

139 Some countries, such as Canada, Japan, Korea, and the Netherlands, conduct time-use surveys at intervals of five or six years. The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) is the only survey that collects diaries continuously, providing opportunities to study trends in time spent in market work, leisure, families, and food-related time use.

There is a general lack of reliable ethnically disaggregated data, a constraint for Roma-relevant diagnostics that can inform policy. The household budget survey collects information on nationality ("Roma" being one of the groups), but ethnicity identifiers are not incorporated into other surveys (for example, EU-SILC and the EU-LFS). The World Bank has no access to the national SILC and LFS, which would enable more geographically disaggregated analysis and analysis of wages. There is a lack of data on hard-to-reach populations, such as LGBTI, refugees and asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants, and other marginalized groups.

Across the board, data are often not available for disaggregated groups. In the case of survey data, sample sizes are often too small to generate disaggregated estimates. Administrative data, on the other hand, are mostly not available for subgroups or are subject to important caveats, such as not fully representing the entire population in Romania. These limitations in the data environment in Romania reduce the possibility of generating valuable insights or tracking gender equality for subgroups. Moreover, often data are not publicly available or not represented at the local level. Policy interventions, on the other hand, are often implemented in cooperation with local policy makers and communities, and therefore creating these data would be crucial. We identify these gaps for each sector in red in the figures that follow in this chapter.

We also identify several knowledge gaps, especially when trying to link drivers of identified (reversed) gender gaps to existing descriptive evidence. When preparing this report, we noted several knowledge gaps, especially when trying to identify the drivers of several of the detected (reversed) gender gaps. Closing these gaps would require detailed studies and close cooperation with academia, international organizations, and other relevant stakeholders. We identify some of the detected knowledge gaps in yellow in the figures that follow in this chapter. Data gaps are in red.

Concerning the gender gaps in the educational sector, we identify several knowledge and data gaps in our analysis.

First, there is a gap in available indicators around the multidimensionality of gender gaps in education. For example, there was limited information on access and performance among Roma children or displaced children, because ethnicity data are not collected in household surveys. In general, data were often only available at the national level; disaggregating it by municipalities and for different population groups would help with the designing of more-targeted and more-effective policy interventions. Lastly, the analysis of affordability as a potential mechanism behind educational gaps was limited by data restrictions. Generating additional information on this topic will help to determine whether low-income groups face additional barriers to education.

Second, there is limited evidence on the quality of education, harmful gender norms, and school-based discrimination. It is important to understand not only girls' and boys' access to education, but also whether the educational system appropriately meets their needs. Importantly, these needs might differ for girls and boys or between different population groups (for example, between rural and urban areas). One topic that is worth exploring is the presence of harmful gender norms in both parents' and teachers' ways of thinking and acting. In addition, generating additional indicators on school-based violence, bullying, and discrimination could help to bring to light circles of abuse and violence, which could affect levels of GBV later in life.

Furthermore, while we present suggestive evidence on potential mechanisms behind (reversed) gender gaps in educational access and performance, tailored impact evaluations could help to generate additional insights. A fruitful line of research would involve the study of the interaction between school performance and enrollment as well as spending patterns on education by the Romanian government, applying a gender lens to both. Furthermore, impact evaluations could analyze potential interventions around teacher bias and parental stereotypes. Lastly, more-thorough impact evaluations could confirm our indicative evidence on a potential connection between teenage pregnancy and school dropout.

Lastly, Romania urgently needs to understand why school enrollment rates and performance are declining. We show that enrollment rates in primary and lower secondary schooling have declined and that school performance as measured by test scores has as well. Understanding the drivers of these trends can help with understanding how best to counter these adverse developments. Figure 61 summarizes the three primary knowledge and data gaps. In this context, generating data on time use of children and child labor could generate insights on whether this is a driver, especially in rural areas and among low-income families.

With regard to (reversed) gender gaps in the health sector, several knowledge and data gaps limit a better understanding. First, given that teenage pregnancy is one of the main problems around gender equality in Romania, having updated indicators around abortion, contraceptive usage, and the rate of teenage pregnancy is crucial. These indicators should be available at the national level as well as disaggregated levels (such as at the municipal level or for different population groups) to facilitate the design of tailored and targeted policy actions. [140]

Next, there is limited updated information on social norms around health in Romania. Current information on social norms around health would generate insights into attitudes concerning not only the usage of contraception and sexuality education, but also concerning the importance of having children. This information could help illuminate the potential barriers and drivers around teenage pregnancy and the role of mothers in Romania's society.

Lastly, while some indicators of infrastructure and access to health services are available, they could be improved. First, indicators of medical consultations and medicine usage should be conditioned on the population reporting health problems to improve their applicability. While absolute numbers are published by the INS, relating them to the respective population of interest would make these indicators more informative. Information on the quality of services provided is also not available. Second, collecting information on the availability of health education and awareness campaigns would be helpful for identifying potential drivers of unhealthy behavioral patterns. Lastly, the design of policy actions would greatly benefit from information on disaggregated indicators around affordability and public spending, for example, for female- and male-headed households or at the subnational level. Figure 62 summarizes the key knowledge and data gaps in education and health.

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140 Data on abortions, for example, are collected by the Ministry of Health through their standardized forms and is available only by age groups, but not additional population subgroups.

Figure 62. Knowledge and Data Gaps in Human Capital

a. Education

Multidimensionality of gender gaps	Quality of education	Impact evaluations around…	Evidence on drivers behind worrisome trends
Disaggregated and publicly available administrative data on school access/performance	Greater availability of indicators measuring the quality of education	… the interaction of public infrastructure and spending and gaps in educational outcomes	Understand declining net enrollment rates
Clear indicators that allow to identify Roma and refugees in surveys, following data protection standards	Indicators on the presence of harmful gender norms/stereotypes in schools	…the interaction between teacher bias, stereotypes among parents and (reversed) gender gaps	Understand declining school performance
Additional surveys on the affordability of education by income groups	Indicators on school-based violence/discrimination	…the interaction between teenage pregnancies and school dropouts	

b. Health

High teenage pregnancies	Social norms	Infrastructure and access	Impact evaluations on…
Data on abortions (disaggregated for subgroups and regions)	Data on social norms around contraceptive usage	Number of hospitals, medical centers, medical staff at disaggregated levels	…which behavioral interventions work to address unhealthy behaviors among men and women
Data on contraception (overall and disaggregated for subgroups and regions)	Surveys on attitudes towards sexuality education and the underlying drivers	Information on the availability of education and awareness campaigns around health	…how to address teenage pregnancies in Romania
Data on teenage pregnancies (overall and disaggregated for subgroups and regions)	Data on social norms on the importance of having children and the impact of men working on child development	Disaggregated indicators for affordability and public spending on health services	…how to address anti-abortion attitudes

Source: Author's elaboration.

Note: Data gaps are in red and knowledge gaps are in yellow. Data on abortions is collected by the Ministry of Health and only disaggregated by age groups. Data on the number of hospitals, medical centers, medical staff is available but could be further operationalized and set into relation to the underlying population. Data on adolescent birth rates (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19) is collected by the Ministry of Health and available at subnational levels (county, regions, and macro-regions). However, teenage pregnancy rates (pregnancies per 1000 women aged 15–19 years) are not readily available. This can be potentially calculated using the reported teenage live births, but also needs data on induced abortions per 1000 women in the same age group (as done in Part et al., 2013), and ideally, also includes the numbers of miscarriages and ectopic pregnancies. This is not an issue exclusive of Romania, but in many other EU countries.

In terms of economic opportunities, this report highlights the need to address several data gaps regarding gender gaps in the labor market. First, there is a need for updated survey data on time use and care responsibilities to better understand the impact of caregiving on women's participation in the labor force. The last time use survey was carried out by the INS in 2012. Such surveys are critical for gaining insights into the types of care responsibilities that women bear, their time in caregiving, and the potential barriers they face in balancing work and care responsibilities.

Second, there is a need for updated information on flexible work arrangements, working conditions, and working from home. This will enable policy makers to better understand the types of flexible work arrangements that are available to women, the extent to which they are being used, and the potential impact of such arrangements on women's employment outcomes. Additionally, updated information on working conditions will help to identify potential gender-based discrimination and harassment that women may face in the workplace.

Lastly, there is a need for accessible data on matched employer–employee data, or population registers, following the Scandinavian model. This will provide policy makers with more comprehensive data on the gender wage gap, the gender pension gap, and the impact of policies aimed at improving gender equality in the labor market. Additionally, such data will enable the evaluation of policies that promote equal pay, work-life balance, and other measures aimed at reducing gender gaps in the labor market.

Addressing these data gaps would help to generate additional information on the working-life situation of women and men in Romania. Evidence generated from these data sources could inform the design of effective labor market policies to address gender gaps in the labor market, entrepreneurship, and the private sector.

Figure 63. Knowledge and Data Gaps on Women in Decision-Making and Related Social Norms

Women and Political Decision-Making	Social Norms
Percentage of women elected officials at all levels	Social norms around women in leadership positions
Percentage of women on candidate lists for elections at all levels	Attitudes toward political participation
Percentage of women ministers and state secretaries	Self-perceived barriers to career progression
Percentage of women working in the CSO sector	Attitudes toward civic engagement

Source: Author's elaboration.

Note: Data gaps are in red and knowledge gaps are in yellow.

In terms of voice and agency, several knowledge and data gaps hamper a better understanding of gender gaps and norms in decision-making in Romania (figure 63). First, given that women's representation in politics at all levels is low and lags behind the numbers in other EU member states, it would help to generate indicators around female elected officials at all levels (local, regional, national, and European) and reflect these indicators in national statistics products. Another indicator that could help track progress in terms of women's representation in politics is the number of women candidates participating in local, regional, national, and European-level elections. These data are not compiled and publicly available and this absence prevents accurate monitoring of the "pipeline" of women politicians and the political parties' commitments to gender equality. These indicators should be available at both the national level and at disaggregated levels (such as at the level of counties; they could capture other demographic data such as age, civil status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation) so that the diversity of women in politics could be tracked. In addition, a publicly accessible database that included the number of women cabinet ministers and state secretaries (junior ministries) would help with monitoring progress in closing the gender gap in political representation. Information on female membership (SAD data) in political parties can also improve the monitoring of women's political participation. Another significant knowledge gap relates to the lack of available data on women working and leading in the nongovernmental sector. This is a major avenue for women's civic and political engagement. Yet little information is available at the national level regarding the number of women in the third sector, their decision-making roles, and their motivation for engagement. Information on women in managerial positions and at the top levels of economic decision-making could greatly shape sustainable economic development with diversity and inclusion at its core. Next, there is limited information on social norms around women and decision-making. Data on this topic would yield insights into attitudes toward women in leadership positions; into political participation and political engagement, especially among youth; into self-perceived barriers to career advancement; and into drivers of the low representation of women in decision-making. Lastly, while some research exists on the organizational culture of political parties and large companies, more research in this field could track organizational barriers that prevent women from making headway.

Gender-based violence data collection faces several issues that make it challenging to capture the scale and nature of the problem accurately. One key issue is underreporting, as survivors may not come forward due to fear of stigma, shame, or retaliation, which leads to an underestimation of the magnitude of the problem. Furthermore, not all forms of GBV are criminalized because data collection methods are not standardized, leading to incomplete or unreliable data. Additionally, GBV research is often underfunded and resources are not allocated to support comprehensive data collection and analysis. Finally, technology-facilitated violence, such as online harassment and stalking, poses new challenges for data collection, because it can be difficult to track and identify the perpetrators. These data issues can limit the effectiveness of prevention and response efforts. Figure 64 summarizes the knowledge and data gaps.

Figure 64. Knowledge and Data Gaps in Voice and Agency

Gender-Based Violence Data	Social Norms	Legal and Policy Indicators
Prevalence data on various forms of gender-based violence	Social norms toward GBV	Recognition of all forms of gender-based violence as per Istanbul Convention definitions
Administrative data portal for monitoring: domestic violence, femicide, rape, sexual assault, early and forced marriage, sexual harrassment, harassment of women, FGM, human trafficking	Social norms and masculinities	Local level referral pathways for survivors of GBV
	Social norms toward reporting of GBV	Local action plans to prevent and respond to GBV
Justice system data on criminal cases related to gender-based violence	Knowledge of rights and services available to survivors of GBV	Gender budgeting for GBV services
Data on GBV and intersecting inequalities	Cultural norms and GBV attitudes and knowldge among vulnerable communities	Costing studies of GBV and its consequences
Data on protective measures for GBV survivors		

Source: Author's elaboration.

Note: Data gaps are in red and knowledge gaps are in yellow.

Research on the impact of migration on gender gaps is limited, despite being highly relevant, and further research is required to understand the potential effects of migration on gender gaps especially in terms of labor market outcomes. Migration can influence gender gaps in various ways. It can create brain drain and skill gaps in professions traditionally dominated by one gender. Remittances can empower women economically, but have unintended consequences as well, such as disincentive effects on LFP. Changes in family structure and care work can occur when one or both parents migrate for work. Despite the relevance of these issues, individual-level international data on cross-country mobility are currently unavailable, and even at the national level, there is limited information on migrating workers due to the absence of systematic continuous collection in official household surveys. The labor market situation of migrants has been covered in the EU-LFS survey ad-hoc modules conducted in 2008, 2014, and 2021. Estimates of emigration flows in Romania after EU accession vary greatly among different sources. Official migration statistics from the NSI rely on individuals who register their change in residence with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, so that there is the potential for underreporting. There is a strong need to better observe labor mobility across EU countries in national administrative data sources and to match them with other administrative databases, both domestically and across countries (Bossavie et al. 2022). Moreover, up-to-date analysis of migration patterns, their relation to labor market demand and supply, and the detailed characteristics of Romanian migrants is also needed. The forthcoming EU-wide census data from 2022 can serve as an important resource to address this knowledge gap (World Bank 2023e). This is crucial to accurately measure the scale of migrant flows and analyze their characteristics and assess potential gender impacts.

Finally, further research is necessary to understand how demand- and supply-side constraints hinder gender equality across all sectors.[141] Moreover, consultations and desk research revealed the lack of systematic monitoring of gender-disaggregated outcomes and lacking evaluation of policy interventions. While demand-side constraints are easier to tackle through straightforward policy instruments, such as gender quotas or mentorship programs, supply-side constraints are more difficult to address, as they are mainly driven by the persistent difficulty of combining care work with professional work, as well as personal preferences in risk-taking, competition, and bargaining. The difficulty in addressing supply-side constraints—and the hidden and mostly unobserved drivers of supply-side constraints—has recently led to a surge in the literature studying the role of social norms in gender equality. However, it is still not well understood which policy instruments are most effective and efficient in addressing the many dimensions of gender equality, either from the demand or the supply side. A systematic overview of what works (and does not work), both in general and in Romania, could help to systemize the knowledge that will fill this gap.

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141   See for example Matsa and Miller (2021) on demand- and supply-side constraints to female leadership.

3.4. Policy Directions

This subsection summarizes the diagnostic of the obstacles identified in chapter 2 and suggests policy recommendations along the three dimensions: human capital, economic opportunities, and voice and agency. The purpose is to identify policies and interventions that can reduce gender inequality based on the diagnostic of the barriers, as well as the lessons learned from interventions aimed at addressing these bottlenecks. The evidence concentrates mostly on interventions in education and labor market policies, because these two fields have significant issues; moreover, these two sectors tend to document and assess their impact on their beneficiaries more rigorously and systematically. Nonetheless, advancing gender equality goals necessitates a comprehensive and integrated approach, as explained in the following section. Moreover, for disadvantaged groups such as the Roma, the policy tool kit should broaden to deal with 'nontraditional' barriers.

Although gender inequality is a pervasive problem with deep cultural roots, narrow sectoral policies can help reduce disparities between men and women by tackling the multiple barriers and disincentives the latter face. Equalizing access to quality basic services such as health and education among females will likely require improvements in the coverage and quality of services and their gender sensitivity. Achieving gender parity in employment may also demand specialized jobs or entrepreneurship interventions to tackle constraints that affect significantly more young females. Working on social norms likely underpinning the especially large gaps in outcomes experienced by vulnerable groups (for example, Roma women and girls) may be fundamental across all areas studied and as such will most likely involve a combination of education, information, and awareness-raising activities targeting young people and parents.

We provide high-level recommendations as overarching guidelines or principles to address gender inequality in the specific sectors and provide a menu of tailored and specific interventions designed to address the specific challenges or barriers faced by particular groups, which are more concrete and actionable. These policy interventions should not be taken as a comprehensive list, but rather as potential entry points for addressing the observed gender gaps. The recommendations and tailored interventions are based on the diagnostic evidence generated for this report, previous studies conducted in Romania, and best practices and impact evaluations from the academic literature.

Policy Measures in Health and Education

Box 2.5 summarizes the diagnostic and the constraints affecting gender equality in education and health.

Box 2.5. Summary of Diagnostic and Constraints for Gender Equality in Education and Health

HEALTH

- Life expectancy at birth in Romania has increased, but remains among the lowest in the EU, with a significant gender gap favoring women.
- Although women live longer, they perceive their health to be poorer than men.
- Health outcomes among women of reproductive age are worrisome.
- The rate of teenage pregnancy in Romania is among the highest in Europe.

Potential drivers of health gaps:

- Women are less able to invest in their own health due to slightly less access to health care services.
- Life expectancy tends to be higher among women due to various factors, such as biological advantages, less risk-taking behavior, despite slightly lower access to health care; in Romania, behavioral aspects seem to play an important role, as men on average are more likely to demonstrate unhealthy behavioral patterns around smoking and drinking.
- Limited government spending could explain why Romania lags behind the EU average in several health dimensions.

EDUCATION

- Addressing educational gaps between boys and girls is crucial to achieving gender equality. This means addressing both areas where girls fall behind boys and areas where boys fall behind girls.
- Overall, gender gaps in enrollment start early, but they close or reverse later. Still, Romania significantly lags behind the EU average for boys and girls. Closing these gaps might help to close the significant gap with the EU average with respect to gender equality more broadly speaking. Against this background, it is worrisome that we find negative trends in some of the educational indicators analyzed.
- ECD: There are very low net enrollment rates in early childhood education and care services for both boys and girls (zero- to two-year-olds).
- Small gender gaps in enrollment rates mask somewhat significant (reversed) gender gaps in enrollment rates between rural and urban areas and by income groups. There are gender gaps in

    - Net enrollment rates of zero- to two- year-olds in rural and urban areas
    - Net enrollment rates of three- to five-year-olds for all groups
    - Net secondary enrollment rates of children between 16 and 18 years old and those living in urban areas or in the B40
    - Net tertiary enrollment rates for those living in urban areas or in the B40.

- Gross enrollment rates for both boys and girls in Romania are lower than the EU average and there has been a decline in enrollment rates for primary and secondary education. Additionally, the country faces relatively high rates of school dropout. There is gender segregation in terms of the fields studied during tertiary education. Girls underperform in STEM- and ICT-related skills.
- Girls are more likely to leave school early in urban areas.
- Gender gaps in educational attainment significantly differ by age cohort, with older cohorts reporting larger gaps.
- Performance: PISA test scores decreased between 2015 and 2018 for both boys and girls, and Romanian female students underperform males in math test scores.

Potential drivers of gender gaps:

We identify a number of potential drivers of these gaps:

- ECD: Several barriers are identified, including (a) availability: potential limited availability of formal public childcare centers as legal entities and increasing role of childcare provided by private institutions; negative trends in the number of available creches/nurseries and kindergartens as legal entities, both in rural and urban areas; (b) affordability constraints among the poor, with gross and net childcare costs (as a proportion of women's median full-time earnings) below the EU average of 14 percent in Romania, but higher among the poor; (c) acceptability: parental workforce participation and willingness to use institutional care—a large share of children younger than three years old are cared for only by their parents (76.8 percent), the largest share in the EU.
- Gendered social norms: A significant share of the population in Romania believes that a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl. These types of social norms could also be present during early education cycles and explain some of the gender gaps faced by girls. Men also face harmful social norms around their role of being the main breadwinner. Descriptive evidence suggests that children might be subject to these norms both at home and at school, for example, via stereotypes perpetuated in schoolbooks or at home.
- Government expenditure could also play a role in explaining the gaps when compared to the EU average, as Romania reports a relatively low public spending share on education compared to EU and high-income countries (benchmarking exercise).
- More detailed studies are needed to gain in-depth insights into the causal mechanisms.

Seven high-level policy measures could address gender gaps in the health sector. These are (1) develop gender-sensitive political strategies at the national level, following gender-mainstreaming approaches and best practices; (2) understand gender gaps in the health sector as a multidimensional phenomenon and incorporate this reality into national strategies, because several groups face additional vulnerabilities and because the depths of gender gaps vary across income groups and between urban and rural areas; (3) invest in the health of women of childbearing age; (4) adopt strategies that improve health outcomes of men; (5) implement strategies that increase health utilization by men when necessary; (6) foster close cooperation between the INS, academia, and the involved ministries and political champions to improve the overall statistical system on gender-disaggregated health outcomes; and (7) increase public spending on health.

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 1: Develop gender-sensitive strategies at the national level, when setting goals, following gender-mainstreaming approaches and best practices

Health systems are not gender-neutral (WHO 2023). To achieve gender equity, the application of gender mainstreaming is key (WHO 2011b). Gender mainstreaming is a comprehensive and ongoing approach that seeks to incorporate the perspectives and experiences of both women and men throughout the entire process of planning, executing, tracking, and assessing policies and programs in the health sector. The government could follow best practices from Canada (Canada, Health Canada 2023) or Sweden (Öhman et al. 2022). As part of a gender-sensitive strategy in the health sector, Romania could roll out tailored interventions that target gender gaps in self-perceived health status, mental health, and access. We find evidence of several constraints that could drive these gender gaps, such as

- **Stigmatization of mental health as well as a lack of available high-quality infrastructure around mental health.** Women in Romania are also more exposed to social factors that are often associated with poorer mental health outcomes, such as discrimination or unequal care distribution (Seedat

and Rondon, 2021). Examples are interventions that address social stigmas around mental health (Manescu et al. 2023). International evidence shows that campaigns, networks, national action plans, and research are effective ways to improve access to mental health (Thornicroft et al. 2022). In addition, Romania should increase its funding for mental health careSfetcu and Ungureanu 2020. Multisectoral approaches to mental health should be sought because the underlying factors of mental health problems are multidimensional, especially for women (Chandra, Varghese, and Supraja 2017).

- **Affordability:** Data show that women are more affected by financial constraints (see section 2.1). Based on this evidence, we recommend targeted interventions that address these constraints, especially among women from vulnerable and marginalized groups.

- **Behavioral patterns:** We demonstrate that women engage in unhealthy behavioral patterns by not doing sports and not eating healthy food (see section 2.1). These behavioral patterns could be addressed by interventions that target constraints around women's engaging less in physical activities, such as time constraints, gender stereotypes and social norms, lack of facilities and opportunities, and low self-esteem and body image issues (Ball et al. 2010; Dogaru 2022; Heesch and Mâsse 2004; Sabiston et al. 2019; Scelles and Pfister 2021). The literature also shows positive effects of matched mentors on girls doing sports (Midgley et al. 2021).

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 2: Understand gender gaps in the health sector as a multidimensional phenomenon and incorporate this reality into national strategies

Our analysis reveals that gender disparities are more pronounced within low-income populations and in rural regions. The depth of constraints also differs across these groups. For example, we show that financial constraints differ by group, especially among women, populations in rural households, and low-income groups. Tailored targeting of interventions is, therefore, best suited to addressing gender equality in health outcomes in Romania.

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 3: Invest in the health of women of childbearing age

We find several worrisome health outcomes for women of childbearing age with large gaps to the EU average. Based on this evidence, the following interventions could address these gaps:

- Romania has one of the **highest teenage pregnancy rates** in the region. These young women need special support to ensure access to education. Reentry programs into school should incorporate teenage mothers' views and challenges (Chiyota and Marishane 2020) and also address childcare needs (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a). Counseling and social support for young mothers that address their multiple challenges and stigmatization are also recommended (Erfina et al. 2019). Moreover, it is recommended that the stigmatization around sexuality education be addressed. Sexuality education should be mandatory and follow international best practices (Dongarwar and Salihu 2019; UNESCO 2023; Goldfarb and Lieberman 2021; WHO Regional Office for Europe and BZgA 2010; Hall et al. 2019).

- Based on the existing literature, we identify several constraints around **low spending** on prevention services and constraints around available **infrastructure**, especially in rural areas (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021). Studies have also identified the **low quality of and discrimination** by health staff as additional constraints (Miteniece et al. 2023). Based on this evidence, Romania should increase its public spending on prevention services and per capita spending on health services for women of reproductive age (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021). Awareness campaigns targeting women (Schliemann et al. 2019) and incentivizing health staff to stay in the country and rural areas as well as training them concerning stereotypes and social stigmas is also recommended (Campbell, Hirnschall, and Magar 2018).

- There is evidence from other countries showing **stigmatization of abortions at the individual and structural level** (Kumar, Hessini, and Mitchell 2009). Addressing these social stigmas is important and can be achieved via norm-based interventions (Cullen and Korolczuk 2019) or workshops (Harris et al. 2011).

- **Access to contraception** could be improved. To ensure comprehensive health care coverage, reimbursement schemes should be incorporated into health care policies, taking into account the needs of adolescents and vulnerable populations (EPF 2023). Counseling services and online information can help with destigmatization and increasing awareness of modern contraceptives (EPF 2023). Increasing access to and information about contraception, for example via communication campaigns (EPF 2023) and subventions for low-income and other vulnerable groups (Rada 2014), as well as including boys and men in reproductive health education (Farré 2012), are additional possible strategies. The involvement of boys and men in reproductive health education is crucial, because fertility and family planning programs focusing only on females have shown limited success. Romania could look into the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Implementation Toolkit by UNESCO, which provides guidance on a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality.

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 4: Implement strategies that improve health outcomes of men

Strategies that address reversed gender gaps in longevity by improving health outcomes of men should be implemented. Examples of such interventions could be those that tackle the unhealthy behavioral patterns among men we document in section 2.1: men are more likely to report usage of substances such as alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes. Example solutions are interventions that target alcohol and drug usage and smoking among boys and men. Possible strategies are awareness campaigns and prevention programs (Nasui et al. 2021).

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 5: Implement strategies that increase health care utilization by men when necessary

International evidence indicates that men might face social stigma around health care utilization (Chatmon 2020). We recommend that Romania invests in research that investigates whether social stigmas limit health care utilization by men in Romania and identifies potential further constraints. If so, Romania should roll out norm-based and behavioral interventions that tackle these social norms.

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 6: Foster close cooperation between the INS, academia, and the involved ministries and political champions

Close cooperation between the INS, academia, and the involved ministries and political champions should be fostered to improve the overall statistical system on gender-disaggregated health outcomes. It is crucial to gather and analyze data in a methodical manner, taking into consideration different categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability (WHO 2011a). These improvements could result in better **evidence-based decision-making** in the health sector. Some knowledge gaps we identified in this report are related to (a) information on the health outcomes of Roma compared to non-Roma; (b) updated, disaggregated information on contraceptive usage; (c) barriers to abortions; (d) drivers of mental health outcomes; and (e) drivers of (reversed) gender gaps in health outcomes. Generating this knowledge should follow practices that foster **close cooperation** between the INS, academia, and the involved ministries and political champions as well as civil society to improve the overall statistical system. Reserving additional funds for research projects in the health sector is also recommended.

HEALTH POLICY MEASURE 7: Increase public spending on health

Public funding in Romania regarding health outcomes is low when compared to the EU average. This might lead to a situation in which different population groups compete over limited resources, creating inequalities for marginalized and vulnerable populations. These inequities might also result in gender gaps. Therefore, from an overall, but also from a gender equity, perspective, it is urgent that Romania increase its financial investment in the health sector. A gender-sensitive public expenditure review of the health sector should be conducted and money invested where it is most needed by applying gender-budgeting tools.

Table 2 summarizes the links between the diagnostic of gaps and constraints, the high-level policy recommendation, and the tailored policy interventions in the health sector.

Table 2. Health Gender Gaps in Romania: Evidence, Barriers, Policy Recommendations, and Interventions

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Interventions
Gender gaps			
Self-Perceived Health Status and Access: Women perceive their health to be poorer than men; women are more likely to report chronic diseases, limitations in their activities due to health problems, and unmet medical needs	**Financial constraints,** especially among women, populations in rural households, and low-income groups	(1) Develop **gender-sensitive strategies** at the national level, when setting goals, regarding budgeting, for monitoring and evaluation, following **gender mainstreaming** approaches (WHO 2011b) and best-practices (Canada, Health Canada 2023; Öhman et al. 2022)	• **Provide Financial support** for health services via tailored targeting
	Unhealthy behavioral patterns: Women are less likely to do sports and eat healthy foods		• **Awareness** campaigns (Wakefield et al. 2010); (b) interventions that target **body image issues and cultural norms,** that increase the **supply** of sports activities for women, especially in rural areas, and that **alleviate time constraints** due to care responsibilities (Dogaru 2022; Mihai 2022; Scelles and Pfister 2021); (c) incorporate role models who do sports and physical activities (Midgley et al. 2021)
Women rate their **mental health** as being poorer than men	(a) **Stigmatization** of mental health and low access to mental health (Manescu et al. 2019); (b) based on international evidence, greater exposure of women to social factors that negatively impact mental health, such as discrimination (Stepanikova et al. 2020); (c) constraints around quality and quantity, among others (Sfetcu and Ungureanu 2020)		• Address **social stigmas** around mental health (Manescu et al. 2023) via awareness campaigns, education, and the media (Thornicroft et al. 2022); (b) increase **investment** in mental health services (Sfetcu and Ungureanu 2020); (c) **seek multisectoral approaches** to mental health, because underlying factors of mental health problems are multidimensional, especially for women
Sizes of gender gaps differ by groups: men and women in rural areas/low-income groups rate their health as poorer than men and women in urban areas/high-income gorups; gender gaps are larger in rural areas/low-income groups	Financial (and potentially also other) constraints **differ by group,** especially among women, populations in rural households, and low-income groups; Roma report significantly lower health outcomes than non-Roma (European Union 2014)	(2) Understand gender gaps in the health sector as a **multidimensional phenomenon** and incorporate this reality into national strategies	• Roll out financial support for health services and interventions more broadly speaking via **tailored targeting mechanisms** that factor in multidimensional vulnerabilities and marginalization

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Interventions
Romania reports one of the **highest levels of teenage pregnancy** in the world	Special support for **young mothers** to ensure access to education and avoid isolation from society	(3) Invest in the health of women of childbearing age	• Counseling and **social support** for young mothers that address their multiple challenges and stigmatization (Erfina et al. 2019), public and free **childcare** for their children (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a), and additional **reentry programs** into school for young mothers (Chiyota and Marishane 2020)
	Evidence of constraints around access to **contraceptive use** (EPF 2023)		• **Counselling** services and online **information** can help with **destigmatization** and information on modern contraceptives and **reimbursement** schemes should be revised (EPF 2023). Increasing access to and information about contraception, for example via communication campaigns (EPF 2023), subventions for low-income and other vulnerable groups (Rada 2014), as well as including boys and men in reproductive health discussions (Farré 2012) are additional possible strategies
	Stigmatization around sexuality education		• Sexuality education should be **mandatory**, following **best practices** from the international literature
Relatively poor health outcomes of **women of childbearing age:** Romanian women face high maternal and infant mortality rates, lower survival rates for cervical and breast cancers, and have one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the EU, particularly in rural areas with limited access to sex education and reproductive health services	**Multiple constraints:** Low spending on prevention services, constraints around available infrastructure, especially in rural areas (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021); low quality and discrimination by health staff (Miteniece et al. 2022)		• Increase **spending** on prevention services and per capita health spending on the care of women in reproductive ages (OECD and European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies 2021); conduct **awareness campaigns** targeting women; incentivize **health staff** to stay in the country and rural areas, and train them on stereotypes and social stigmas (Campbell, Hirnschall, and Magar 2018).
There is evidence of constraints around the access to **abortions**	**Stigmatization** of abortions		• Address **social stigma** via awareness campaigns, the media, education, norm-based interventions (Cullen and Korolczuk 2019), and workshops (Harris et al. 2011).

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Interventions
Reversed gender gaps			
Reversed gender gaps in longevity: Women live longer on average than men	**Unhealthy behavioral patterns:** Men are more likely to report use of substances such as alcohol, drugs and cigarettes	(4) Strategies that **improve health outcomes of men**	• Possible strategies are awareness campaigns and prevention programs (Nasui et al. 2021; Popa et al. 2020)
When looking at **health utilization**, Romanian women tend to seek medical consultations more often than men in both urban and rural areas and let less time go between doctor visits, possibly indicating a higher use of primary care than men	International evidence indicates that men might face **social stigma** around health utilization (Chatmon 2020)	(5) Strategies that **increase health utilization of men** when necessary	• Fund research on whether social stigma might limit health utilization by men in Romania, and identify potential further constraints; (b) if this is the case, roll out **norm-based and behavioral interventions** that tackle these social norms; (c) other strategies are training health care workers
Additional gaps			
Lack of systematic disaggregated and representative information on several health outcomes, especially around Roma's access to health	Evidence-based decision-making in the health sector is limited by data and knowledge gaps	(6) Close cooperations between the INSSE, academia, and the involved ministries and political champions to **improve the statistical system on gender-disaggregated health outcomes as a whole:** it is crucial to gather and examine data in a methodical manner, considering different categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and disability (WHO 2011a)	• Generate **additional data and knowledge** on (a) Romas' health outcomes compared to non-Romas'; (b) contraceptive usage; (c) barriers to abortions; (d) drivers of mental health; (e) drivers behind (reversed) gender gaps in health outcomes—all via close cooperation between the NIS, academia, and the involved ministries and political champions as well as civil society to improve the statistical system as a whole; additional funding for research projects
Lack of systematic information on drivers behind reversed gender gaps in longevity and health utilization			
Relatively l**ow public spending** on health (as a proportion of GDP) compared to the EU average	Relatively l**ow public spending** in the health sector	(7) Increase **public spending** on health	• Conduct a **gender-sensitive public expenditure review of the health sector** and invest money where it is most needed, applying gender-budgeting tools

Similar to our exercise for the health sector, we now identify high-level recommendations and tailored concrete measures based on our own evidence, previous studies conducted in Romania, and best practices and impact evaluations from the academic literature. The following 10 high-level policy recommendations could address gender gaps in the educational sector: (1) study and addressing of demand- and supply-side constraints behind access to ECE for zero- to two-year-olds; (2) gender-sensitive policies targeting access, supply, and usage of ECE; (3) policies targeting school dropout and low enrollment rates, (4) policies to incentivize and invest in the development of girls' skills and interests in STEM and ICT and of boys' skills in reading and female-dominated fields of study; (5) understanding of gender equality as a multidimensional subject; (6) policies that address reversed gender gaps; (7) funding of gender-sensitive research projects and M&E initiatives; (8) generation of systematic information on

Roma children compared to non-Roma children as well as on child labor and time use of children; (9) increased public spending on education; and (10) development of gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) and an operationalized gender-sensitive assessment tool.

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 1: Study and addressing of demand- and supply-side constraints behind access to ECE for zero- to two-year-olds

Based on our evidence showing very low enrollment rates in Romania of zero- to two-year-olds relative to the EU average, we recommend a systematic study that can help to address demand- and supply-side constraints behind access to ECE for zero- to two-year-olds. We show that constraints center around availability (potential limited availability of formal public childcare centers as legal entities and increasing role of childcare provided by private institutions and negative trends in the number of available creches/nurseries and kindergartens as legal entities, both in rural and urban areas); affordability among the poor, with gross and net childcare costs (as a proportion of women's median full-time earnings) below the EU average of 14 percent in Romania, but higher among the poor; and acceptability (parental workforce participation and willingness to use institutional care), because a large share of children younger than three years old are cared for only by their parents (76.8 percent), the largest in the EU. Based on this evidence, we recommend

- Detailed and updated gender-sensitive demand and supply assessment of formal childcare and ECE services in order to design tailored interventions to increase access.

- Provide financial incentives to support enrollment among the poor.

- Increase public spending, quality, and available infrastructure in the area of ECE (Interventions to tackle acceptability).

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 2: Gender-sensitive policies targeting access, supply, and usage of ECE

We identify gender gaps in net enrollment rates of three- to five-year-olds for all groups (section 2.1). Based on international evidence, families might prefer to put boys into school when facing limited resources (MEB Primary Education General Directorate and UNICEF Turkey 2011). Based on this evidence we recommend

- Alleviation of financial constraints through targeted intervention strategies.

- Study of girls facing additional constraints to ECE.

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 3: Policies that target school dropout and low enrollment rates

Interventions that target school dropout and low enrollment rates are critical. We identify negative trends in school dropout and enrollment rates (section 2.1). Based on previous evidence (Apostu 2014), there are three factors behind children being out of school and at risk of dropping out in Romania: (a)

sociocultural demand-side factors, (b) economic demand-side factors, and (c) supply-side barriers. We argue that each of these factors affects boys and girls asymmetrically, leading to (reversed) gender gaps. Based on this evidence, we recommend

- Norm-based interventions that tackle social norms that constrain boys' and girls' educational participation (Brussino and McBrien 2022).

- Interventions that target the awareness of the importance of educational attainment among parents and children (Apostu 2014).

- Teacher training on gender stereotypes (Apostu 2014).

- School-based, violence-preventing interventions, such as teacher training, incorporating curricular-based intervention via history or health classes, and teaching conflict resolution (Anderson 2011).

- Increased public spending and investment in educational quality and attractiveness (Apostu 2014).

- Reentry programs and childcare services for young mothers (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a).

- Addressing the marginalization and discrimination faced by Roma boys and girls that plays a crucial role in school dropout in Romania (Apostu 2014), which requires bottom-up approaches (Andrei, Tkadlecova, and Martinidis 2015). Teacher training on the sensitivities around the marginalization and discrimination of Roma students is also crucial (Apostu 2014).

Previous studies have shown that (conditional) cash transfer programs lead to improved educational outcomes (Baird et al. 2014).

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 4: Policies to incentivize and invest in the development of girls' skills and interests in STEM and ICT and of boys' skills in reading and female-dominated fields of study

Addressing gender segregation in education by incentivizing and investing in the development of girls' skills and interests in STEM and ICT as well as of boys' skills in reading and female-dominated fields of study could **alleviate gender segregation in educational fields.** The international literature shows that these might be driven by a lack of role models and gender stereotypes (Brussino and McBrien 2022). Potential entry points are

- Facilitation of interactions with matched-background mentors (Kricorian et al. 2020).

- Norm-based interventions that target stereotypes (Brussino and McBrien 2022).

- Partnering with the private sector, addressing gender biases in learning materials and among parents, and encouraging girls' participation in extracurricular activities (Hammond et al. 2020).

- Strategies that address the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in the educational system, such as the introduction of bias-free schoolbooks, instrumentalization of the media, gender-responsive teacher training, and parental workshops (Bruck and Cater 2016; Concordă 2018; Unterhalter et al. 2014; UNICEF 2023; Farré 2012).

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 5: Understand gender equality as a multidimensional subject

We show that gender gaps are multidimensional (section 2.1). They differ across income groups and between rural and urban areas, but there are no clear patterns across educational levels. We show that the severity of constraints differs across groups (section 2.1). Therefore, targeted interventions that factor in the multidimensionality of (reversed) gender gaps are best suited to addressing educational gender gaps in Romania. Teachers should focus on addressing the marginalization and discrimination that impede vulnerable groups, such as Roma boys and girls, from fulfilling their potential in the schooling system (Rotaru 2019).

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 6: Implement policies that address reversed gender gaps

We show that boys underperform girls in several educational indicators and across several groups. Consequently, Romania needs strategies to address reversed gender gaps. Reversed gender gaps evolve because of complex and multiple constraints (UNESCO 2022). International evidence points to the role of gender norms that could lead to children leaving school early. International evidence also points to the role of labor market demands, household needs to generate income, and boys' being asymmetrically affected by school-based violence and bullying (UNESCO 2022). Romania should follow international recommendations around the underachievement and low enrollment of boys and roll out interventions in the macro-, meso-, and microenvironment (UNESCO 2022). Examples are interventions that target gendered social norms around traditional concepts of masculinity (Farré 2012; Heilman 2018) and violence-prevention programs (UNESCO 2022). A recent literature review, by UNESCO (2022), provides a detailed list of interventions at the micro-, meso-, and macrolevels.

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 7: Fund gender-sensitive research projects and M&E initiatives

We identify a lack of systematic, accessible, updated studies on what works best in the educational sector in Romania, especially around gender gaps. To ensure evidence-based decision-making and the cost-effective usage of scarce resources, Romania should invest in research to identify what works best, for example via impact evaluations and rigorous monitoring and evaluation strategies, in collaboration with the academic community and technical specialists.

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 8: Generate systematic information on Roma children compared to non-Roma children as well as on child labor and time use of children

There is no updated, representative, systematic information on the educational outcomes of Roma children by gender. We recommend including ethnicity parameters in surveys and generating administrative data on subgroups and making the information accessible to the public. Similarly, to

better understand whether low enrollment rates and school dropout are related to poverty and the need to generate income, it would be helpful to generate data on child labor and time use of children.

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 9: Increase public spending on education

Education spending in Romania is low, compared to other EU countries. This might lead to a situation in which different population groups compete over limited resources, creating inequalities for marginalized and vulnerable populations. These inequities might also result in gender gaps. Therefore, from an overall, but also from a gender equity, perspective, it is urgent that Romania increase its financial investment in the educational sector. It is recommended that a gender-sensitive public expenditure review of the educational sector be conducted and that money be invested where it is most needed by applying gender-budgeting tools and gendered fiscal incidence.

EDUCATION POLICY MEASURE 10: Develop gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) and an operationalized gender-sensitive assessment tool

Gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) is a strategic approach that aims to integrate gender equality principles into national education systems, with the goal of addressing gender disparities in a systematic and intentional manner (UNGEI 2023). By adopting GRESP, education systems can identify and overcome gender barriers, develop effective strategies, and implement policy interventions to promote gender equality. This planning process involves the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, inclusive planning processes, and the creation of supportive learning environments. GRESP encompasses a wide range of interventions, including incorporating gender issues in teacher training and curricula, eradicating GBV and discrimination in schools, and establishing gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation systems, taking into account supply- and demand-side constraints. Table 3 summarizes the diagnostic and suggested policies in the education sector.

Table 3. Education Gender Gaps, Barriers, Policy Recommendations, and Interventions

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
Gender gaps			
ECD: Very low net enrollment rates in ECD for both boys and girls (zero- to two-year-olds)	(a) **Availability:** Potential limited availability of formal public child-care centers as legal entities and increasing role of childcare provided by private institutions; negative trends in the number of available creches and nurseries and kindergartens as legal entities, both in rural and urban areas; (b) **Affordability** constraints among the poor, with gross and net childcare costs (as proprotion of women's median full-time earnings) below the EU average of 14 percent in Romania, but higher among the poor; (c) **Acceptability:** Parental workforce participation and willingness to use institutional care—a large share of children ages less than three years are cared for only by their parents (76.8 percent), the largest in the EU	(1) Study and address demand and supply side constraints to access to ECE for the zero- to two-year-olds	(a) Undertake detailed and up-dated gender-sensitive **demand and supply assessments** of formal childcare and ECE services to design tailored interventions to increase access; (b) provide **financial incentives** to support enrollment among the poor; (c) increase **public spending,** quality, **and available infrastructure** in the area of ECE (interventions to tackle acceptability)
ECE: Gender gaps in **net enrollment rates of three- to five-year-olds** for all groups	Based on international evidence, under limited resourcesfamilies might prefer to put boys into school (MEB Primary Education General Directorate and UNICEF Turkey 2011)	(2) **Gender-sensitive policies** targeting access, supply, and usage of ECE	(a) Alleviation of **financial constraints** through targeted intervention strategies; (b) Study of girls facing **additional constraints** to ECE

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
Primary and Secondary: Negative trends for boys and girls. Gross **enrollment rates** are below the EU average for boys and girls, and have fallen over time in the case of primary and secondary education; **school dropout** is relatively high; Performance drops for boys and girls according to PISA results	Based on previous evidence (Apostu 2014), there are three factors behind children being out of school and at risk of dropping out in Romania: (a) **sociocultural** demand-side factors; (b) **economic** demand-side factors; (c) **supply-side** barriers—we argue that each of these factors **affects boys and girls asymmetrically,** leading to (reversed) gender gaps	(3) Implement policies that target **school dropouts** and **low enrollment** rates	(a) **Norm-based interventions** tackling social norms that constrain boys' and girls' educational participation; (b) Interventions that target the **awareness** of the importance of educational attainment among parents and children (Apostu 2014); (c) **Teacher training** on gender stereotypes and marginalization of other subgroups of the population (such as the poor or Roma) (Apostu 2014); (d) School-based, **violence-preventing** interventions and elimination of violence at schools (Anderson et al. 2011); (e) Increased **public spending** and investment **in educational quality and attractiveness** (Apostu 2014); (f) Reentry programs and childcare services for **young mothers** (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 a) and those that address teenage pregnancy; (g) Addressing of marginalization and discrimination faced by **Roma boys and girls,** which plays a crucial role in school dropout in Romania (Apostu 2014) and requires bottom-up approaches (Andrei et al. 2015). Teacher training on the sensitivities around marginalization and discrimination of Roma students is also crucial (Apostu 2014); (h) Previous studies show that **(conditional) cash transfer** programs lead to improved educational outcomes (Baird et al. 2014)

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
Educational segregation in the **field of study** and gender gaps in **digital literacy; girls underperform boys in math while boys underperform girls in reading**	Lack of **role models** and **gender stereotypes**	(4) Address gender segregation in education: Incentivize and invest in the development of girls' **skills and interests** in STEM and ICT and of boys' skills in reading and female-dominated fields of study	(a) Facilitation of interactions with matched-background **mentors** (Kricorian et al. 2020); (b) **Norm-based interventions** that target stereotypes; (c) **partnering with the private sector, addressing gender biases in learning materials** and among parents, and encouraging girls' participation in extracurricular activities (Hammond et al. 2020); (d) Implement strategies that **address the perpetuation of gender stereotypes** in the educational system, such as the introduction of bias-free schoolbooks, instrumentalization of the media, gender-responsive teacher training, and parental workshops (Bruck and Cater 2016; Concordă 2018; Unterhalter et al. 2014; UNICEF 2023; Farré 2012)
Gender gaps are multidimensional: they differ across income groups and between rural and urban areas	**Severity of constraints differs across groups:** The persistence of social norms that could limit boys' and girls' access to education differs across groups, as do the available infrastructure and economic conditions	(5) Understand gender equality as a **multidimensional** subject	**Targeted** interventions that factor in the **multidimensionality** of (reversed) gender gaps are better suited
Reversed gender gaps			
Boys **underperform** in several educational outcomes, such as learning-poverty rates	**Complex and multiple constraints:** There is evidence of gender norms that could lead to children's leaving school early; international evidence also points to the role of labor market demands, household needs to generate income, and boys' being asymmetrically affected by school-based violence and bullying (UNESCO 2022)	(6) Implement Policies that address **reversed** gender gaps	Follow **international recommendations** around the underachievement and low enrollment of boys and roll out interventions in the **macro-, meso-, and microenvironment** (UNESCO 2022)

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
Additional gaps			
Knowledge gaps: Lack of systematic, accessible, updated studies on what works best	**No systematic knowledge** on what works best to address the multidimensional (reversed) gender gaps	(7) Fund gender-sensitive **research projects** and **M&E** initiatives	Invest in research to identify what works best, for example via **impact evaluations** and **rigorous monitoring and evaluation** strategies, in **collaboration** with the academic community and technical specialists
Data gaps: Roma children perform worse on educational outcomes compared to non-Roma children, but gender-sensitive information is missing	No updated, representative, systematic information on educational outcomes of Roma children	(8) Generate **systematic information** on Roma children compared to non-Roma children	Include **ethnicity parameters** in surveys; generate administrative data on subgroups and make information **accessible** to the public
Relatively **low public spending** on education (as a percent of GDP) when compared to the EU average	Relatively **low public spending** in the educational sector	(9) Increase **public spending** on education at all education level	Conduct a **gender-sensitive public expenditure review** of the educational sector and invest money where it is most needed, applying gender-budgeting tools
Overall, **gender inequalities in the educational sector** in Romania exist	No gender-sensitive strategies to date	10) Develop **gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP)** and an operationalized gender-sensitive assessment tool	**Gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP)** is an efficient way to engrave gender equality into the heart of national education systems and consequently address gender equality by design (UNGEI 2023). An **operationalized gender-sensitive assessment tool** could help to track educational gender gaps more closely

Policy Measures in Labor Markets

Box 2.6 summarizes the diagnostic and the constraints affecting gender equality in education and health.

Box 2.6. Summary of Diagnostic on and Constraints to Gender Equality in Labor Markets

- Romanian females especially lag in labor markets. Accumulated human capital does not necessarily get utilized and there are considerable gender gaps in labor market opportunities in Romania.
- Raising female LFP is a major priority. The gender gap in LFP rates increased from 2013 to 2022 and is now the highest in the EU, leading to large gender gaps in employment. The inactivity gaps are especially large among the low-skilled in childbearing age, and those in rural areas and towns and suburbs. Employment among mothers with young children and among Roma populations is very low.
- Key barriers to employability are the prevalence of low skill levels among older cohorts and Roma, a larger care burden and unequal care distribution, flaws in parental leave policies (with mothers absorbing a larger part of parental leave than fathers), limited flexibility of work arrangements (with most employed mothers working full-time), and harmful gender norms. For example, both men and women think that when jobs are scarce, men should be given priority over women.
- When employed, women earn less than men, though the wage gender gap is relatively small and below the EU average. This gap is largely explained in terms of differences between men and women; when employed, women and men concentrate in different occupations and economic sectors (women work more in services and less in STEM than men do).
- There is a gender gap in entrepreneurship, regardless of the measure used. The gap is larger among B20 and mothers; moreover, in contrast to the small wage gap, there is a large entrepreneurial income gap.
- Key barriers to entrepreneurship include unequal access to assets (land ownership and digital and technological skills), gaps in financial inclusion, and discriminatory societal structures. However, differences in risk aversion can play a role. Some groups with larger gaps (B20, rural, mothers) may face potentially overlapping barriers.
- There is untapped potential for female entrepreneurs in the green transition. Fostering greater female entrepreneurship could spark more-sustainable growth patterns, empower women in the middle and long run, increase economic activities around social entrepreneurship, and facilitate the green transition.
- There is a large pension gender gap later in life due to large breaks in women's employment careers due to care responsibilities, leading to a shorter working life and lower lifetime earnings and pension contributions. Gender gaps in labor market outcomes, longer life expectancy, and lower pension age are the main contributors.
- Large flow of Ukrainian refugees, predominantly females, could increase the pressure on service provision on existing vulnerable groups, particularly in the medium term, and affect labor market outcomes

Seven high-level policy measures may help improve outcomes among working-age Romanian women, both salaried and entrepreneurs, as well as among pensioners. Policy measures should be put in place that (1) improve skills among older cohorts; (2) promote redistribution of care responsibilities, thus making possible a better combination of family and work and flexible work arrangements; (3) improve attitudes and address discrimination; (4) incorporate a gender-sensitive perspective into policies targeting the refugee population to secure positive distributional effects; (5) foster an overall healthier entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania and the role of female entrepreneurs in the green transition, while implementing strategies to tackle barriers that disproportionately affect females; (6) implement a nuanced and tailored approach, considering the unique challenges faced by different groups; and (7) promote gender equality in pensions by focusing on policies to remove disincentives and barriers to employability among working-age women, complemented with pension reform. These are entry points for addressing the identified gaps in labor market outcomes based on the identified barriers and a review of the literature and best practices.

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 1: Improve skills among older women cohorts

To address the issue of low skills among older women cohorts in the labor market, a comprehensive approach can be implemented. This may involve the adoption of targeted measures, such as specialized lifelong learning programs designed to enhance the skills of older workers. Additionally, conducting skills assessments and training needs analysis can help identify any gaps in these workers' current skill sets, paving the way for tailored retraining programs to be developed and implemented. By focusing on these strategies, older women can acquire the necessary skills and competencies to improve their employability and navigate the evolving labor market landscape.

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 2: Promote redistribution of care responsibilities, thus making possible a better combination of family and work and flexible work arrangements

A redistribution of care responsibilities among men and women and strategies that make possible a better combination of family and work are effective strategies to decrease gender inequalities in the labor market and entrepreneurship. Our analysis shows that unequal care distributions likely play a crucial role in the gender gaps in labor market outcomes and entrepreneurship. An overall strategy that makes possible a better combination of work and family life would be beneficial to women's labor force participation (Thévenon 2013). Both remote work and flexible work models should be encouraged at the country level, because previous evidence shows the beneficial effects on female LFP (Dettling 2017). Stakeholder consultations have confirmed the lack of early childcare and eldercare services, as well as the presence of stereotypes and prejudices perpetuating the idea that females are the main providers of domestic care, as major constraints that must be tackled in order to improve economic opportunities among women.

A combination of tailored interventions can be adopted to tackle this barrier:

- Our evidence shows that the provision of compulsory universal public childcare could increase the female labor supply (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 c). However, the success of these policies

may depend on other factors, such as the quality and costs of public childcare and other care responsibilities, such as for elderly people.

- A greater amount of paid paternity leave and a larger share of parental leave earmarked for fathers could increase the female labor supply. We show that father-related parental leave policies are nearly inexistent in Romania. Addressing this policy gap could redistribute care responsibilities from mothers to fathers.

- Encourage flexibility and remote work arrangements at the national level via legislation. Evidence shows that such work arrangements have positive effects on female LFP (Dettling 2017).

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 3: Improve attitudes and address discrimination

This report presented evidence presented on sticky gender norms around the role of women as primary care providers and the lack of role models, the underrepresentation of women in STEM, and "unexplained" wage gaps that point to potential gender discrimination. Some interventions to tackle gender norms include targeted information and normative messaging campaigns, educational initiatives that challenge gender and racial stereotypes and promote equal opportunities in all fields (underrepresentation in STEM), and interventions to raise awareness among employers, employees, and educational institutions about the benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces.

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 4: Gender-sensitive perspective for policies targeting the refugee population to secure positive distributional effects

Following findings from international studies, interventions targeting the refugee population in Romania should incorporate a gender-sensitive perspective to secure positive distributional effects. Moreover, it is important to monitor labor market impacts closely, particularly on vulnerable populations.

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 5: Foster an overall healthier entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania and the role of female entrepreneurs in the green transition, while implementing strategies to tackle barriers that disproportionately affect females

Romania is not realizing the potential of female entrepreneurs for the green transition, more-equitable and sustainable growth patterns, and social entrepreneurship. Eliminating obstacles to female entrepreneurship could lead to an additional 500,000 women entrepreneurs in Romania and foster inclusive economic growth (OECD 2020a). Given that women mention social and impact reasons more often than men as motivations to start a business, Romania is not benefitting from the valuable contribution of a portion of the population, who could spur more inclusive and sustainable growth. In addition, giving women entrepreneurs a more prominent role in the green transition could be beneficial from an environmental perspective. Based on our review of female entrepreneurs in Romania, we recommend fostering the involvement of female entrepreneurs in the green transition. The following tailored interventions can be adopted to create an overall healthier entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania (European Commission 2020) while tackling some of the barriers more likely to affect women:

- Improve access to entrepreneurial training and education, even during childhood (Jardim, Bártolo, and Pinho 2021).

- Foster women entrepreneurship networks, mentoring, and tutoring (Markussen and Røed 2017).

- Based on evidence from Europe, increase the number and the investment power of female general partners and push for stronger venture capital and angel investor Diversity and Inclusion Strategies (IDC 2022).

- Generate sustainable financing schemes for women and better communicate initiatives targeting gender-smart investment (Chowdhury et al. 2018; Goel and Madan 2019; IFC 2019).

- Roll out interventions that target harmful gender norms around women in business (Field, Jayachandran, and Pande 2010; Yordanova and Tarrazon 2010; OECD and European Commission 2021).

- Address workplace harassment and discrimination by creating prevention and support programs, establishing effective complaint and grievance processes, providing anti-harassment training, and taking immediate and appropriate action when complaints arise (EEOC 2023).

- Improve access to childcare and facilitate a better work-life balance for mothers and aspiring mothers (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 c).

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 6: Implement a nuanced and tailored approach, considering the unique challenges faced by different groups and intersectoral approaches

Our diagnostic and consultations highlight the need for a nuanced and tailored approach to promoting female entrepreneurship in Romania that considers the unique challenges faced by different groups of women and utilizes a variety of policy interventions. Our findings demonstrate that gender gaps in entrepreneurship are not uniform across all subgroups of the population and therefore there is no universal solution to increase the number of women entrepreneurs in Romania. Specifically, women in the lowest income quintile and those residing in rural areas encounter more significant and overlapping barriers to entrepreneurship, despite relying more on this avenue for income than other groups of women. The challenges faced by women with and without children also differ. Given our identification of gender differences in various aspects that could hinder female entrepreneurship, policy makers should adopt a range of interventions. These may include improving access to education, finance, and childcare, as well as addressing harmful gender norms. A comprehensive list of policy recommendations is available in Robayo-Abril and Rude (2023 a).

Addressing labor market gaps between men and women in Romania requires a set of short- and long-term strategies, all based on intersectoral approaches. Our report shows that gender gaps in the labor market are connected to gender gaps we observe earlier and later in life. We show that labor market inequalities between men and women are connected to (reversed) gender gaps during

childhood and young adulthood and translate into significant pension gaps later in life. This is why we recommend intersectoral approaches to address gender gaps in the labor market. These approaches require close cooperation and coordination between different stakeholders in the public and private sectors. At the same time, to address the gender gap in labor market outcomes, it is recommended that interventions targeting short-term barriers to women's labor market outcomes (such as increasing the provision of public childcare) be combined with interventions targeting long-term barriers (such as addressing harmful gender norms). This approach needs the establishment of a larger number of gender-disaggregated indicators and implementation of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation initiatives (IFC 2019) (see policy measures in data below for more detail.)

LABOR MARKET POLICY MEASURE 7: Promote gender equality in pensions by focusing on policies to remove disincentives and barriers to employability among working-age women, complemented with pension reform

To address the gender pension gap, Romania urgently needs to implement interventions that facilitate the labor market incorporation of women, complemented with pension reform. The aging population poses significant challenges for Romania's development pattern as well as also from a gender-equality perspective. The old-age dependency ratio is projected to be 58 percent by 2075. Paired with evidence showing a significant pension gender gap, probably related to gender gaps in labor market outcomes, these projections raise concerns about how these demographic developments could impact poverty and inequality levels between men and women. Facilitating the LFP of women in the labor market would help with closing the gender pension gap, at least for future generations.

In addition to the directing of attention toward policies that eliminate obstacles to and disincentives for the employment of women in the working-age group, a more equitable and fair pension system is needed. To ensure a sustainable and just pension system that prevents old-age poverty, it is crucial to establish a system that treats all contributors fairly and provides adequate benefits in proportion to their contributions. Not only are pension gender gaps large, but pension coverage among the rural poor is low and falling (SCD Update). A pension reform equalizing the ages at which men and women can retire with full pension benefits or explicitly accounting for periods of absence due to childcare in pension benefits could help narrow these gaps (World Bank 2023a).

Table 4 summarizes the links between the diagnostic of gaps and constraints, the high-level policy recommendation, and the tailored policy interventions.

Table 4. Labor Market Gender Gaps: Evidence, Barriers, Policy Recommendations, and Interventions

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
• **Highest LFP gender gap** in the EU and it is increasing. Large gender gaps in employment. Gaps are especially large among the low-skilled during childbearing age, in towns, and in suburbs; employment among mothers with young children and among Roma is very low • **Pay gap and occupational segregation:** Women earn less than men; however, the gender gap is below the EU average. Women and men concentrate in different occupations and economic sectors (more women are in services and less are in STEM)	• **Lack of skills** among older cohorts and Roma • **Limited access to child- and eldercare** services and unequal care burden • **Flaws in parental leave policies.** Mothers absorb a larger part of parental leave than fathers. • **Work Arrangements:** Most employed mothers work full-time and have limited flexibiity on work arrangements • **Perverse gender norms and discrimination.** Both men and women think that, when jobs are scarce, men should be given priority over women, and a man's primary role is to earn money; Wage gap mostly unexplained by observable characteristics, discrimination may play a role • Large **flow of Ukrainian refugees,** predominantly females	(1) Improve skills among older cohorts (2) Promote redistribution of care responsibilities to make possible a better combination of family and work and flexible work arrangements (part-time; home-based work) (3) Improve attitudes and address discrimination (4) Gender-sensitive perspective for policies targeting the refugee population to realize positive distributional effects	• Implement targeted lifelong learning programs and skills assessments and training needs analysis for older workers to identify gaps in their skill sets; Retraining programs • Improve access to childcare and facilitate a better work-life balance for mothers or aspiring mothers (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 c). • Make parental leave more gender neutral (greater amount of paid paternity leave and a larger share of parental leave earmarked for fathers) • Enforce flexibility and remote work arrangements at the national level via legislation and implement practices that reduce conflicts between work and family demands (Dettling 2017) • Interventions to tackle gender norms. These can include targeted information and normative messaging campaigns, educational initiatives that challenge gender and racial stereotypes and promote equal opportunities in all fields (underrepresentation in STEM), and interventions to raise awareness among employers, employees, and educational institutions about the benefits of diverse and inclusive workplaces • Monitor impacts, particularly on vulnerable populations

Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High–Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
• There is a gender gap in entrepreneurship, regardless of the measure, there is larger among B20 and mothers; Large entrepreneurial income gap; Underutilized potential of female entrepreneurs for the green transition	• Unequal access to assets (land ownership and digital and tehnological skills); Important deficits in entrepreneural education • Gaps in financial inclusion • Discriminatory societal structures; differences in risk aversion can play a role • Some groups (B20, rural) have larger gaps, with potential overlapping barriers; mompreneurs	(5) Foster an overall healthier entrepreneurial ecosystem in Romania (European Commission 2020), while implementing strategies to tackle barriers that disproportionately affect females; foster the role of female entrepreneurs in the green transition (6) Implement a nuanced and tailored approach that considers the unique challenges faced by different groups	• Improve access to entrepreneurial training and education, even during childhood (Jardim et al. 2021) • Foster women entrepreneurship networks, mentoring, and tutoring (Markussen and Røed 2017) • Increase the number and the investment power of female general partners and push for stronger venture capital and angel investor Diversity and Inclusion Strategies (IDC 2022) • Generate sustainable financing schemes for women and better communicate initiatives targeting gender-smart investment (Chowdhury et al. 2018; Goel and Madan 2019; IFC 2019). • Roll out interventions that target harmful gender norms around women in business (Field et al. 2010; Yordanova and Tarrazon 2010; OECD and European Commission 2021) • Improve access to childcare and facilitate a better work-life balance for mothers and aspiring momentrepreneurs (Robayo-Abril and Rude 2023 c)
• Large pension gender gap later in life	• Large breaks in employment careers due to care responsibilities, leading to a shorter working life and lower lifetime earnings and pension contributions • Gender gaps in labor market outcomes • Longer Life Expectancy	(7) Policy focus to remove disincentives and barriers to employability among working-age women and institute pension reform	Same as above • Equalize the ages at which men and women can retire with full pension benefits or explicitly account for periods of absence due to childcare in pension benefits (World Bank. 2023a)
Data and Knowledge Gap	• A larger number of gender-disaggregated indicators and implementation of gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation initiatives (IFC 2019) are needed		

Policy Measures in Voice and Agency

Box 2.7 provides a summary of the diagnostic and the constraints affecting women's voice and agency.

Box 2.7. Summary of Diagnostic and Constraints for Voice and Agency

Key gaps in relation to political and economic decision-making

- Women's political representation in the Romanian Parliament remains well below the EU–27 average and has decreased in the last electoral cycle in 2020.
- The low percentage of women in Parliament places Romania third to last among EU member states.
- There are too few women in the top leadership of listed companies and there seems to be a declining trend in this respect.

Key gaps in relation to gender-based violence

- There is a knowledge gap related to the prevalence of GBV among the general population, given that since the FRA study of 2012/2014, no other countrywide survey has been carried out in order to measure the extent of GBV against women in Romania.
- There is a lack of a harmonized cross-institutional framework for collection of and making publicly intelligible administrative data collection regarding all forms of GBV, which impedes monitoring, trend analysis, and evaluation of policy and programmatic interventions.
- There are deficiencies in the legal framework in terms of harmonized definitions and the provision of protective measures against all forms of GBV.
- There is a lack of ownership at the local level with regard to the prevention and combating of various forms of GBV and domestic violence, manifesting largely as funding gaps for specialized social services and gaps in local-level coordinated responses across various groups of frontline personnel such as the police, health professionals, and social workers.
- There is a lack of training for professionals working with survivors of sexualized violence.
- There is little consistent information on social norms related to GBV: there have been only two attitude and perception polls on GBV in the more than two decades since domestic violence was first the subject of legislation.

Potential drivers

- Sociocultural and ideological factors influencing the low level of women in Parliament.
- Lack of women political role models.
- Electoral systems and the ideologies of political parties as related to women's political participation.
- Organizational culture of political parties.
- Lack of awareness and information about GBV due to limited programs tackling harmful gender norms, toxic masculinity, abuse in intimate relationships. and consequences for survivors and communities
- Societal norms influence professional responses and a high level of tolerance and impunity for sexualized violence.

Three main high-level policy measures may help to improve outcomes in voice and agency.

VOICE AND AGENCY POLICY MEASURE 1: Establish a robust gender equality institutional architecture that can leverage gender equality performance indicators by means of funding, sanctions, and other monitoring mechanisms to ensure that gender gaps are addressed, whether the EU or other international partners are the source of funding

Two tailored interventions can support this policy measure: (a) the introduction of legal requirements for gender representation in selected decision-making positions and (b) the adoption of EU Directive 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the European Council. Gender inequality in political and economic decision-making can be addressed through a strengthened policy response that includes both "hard" measures such as the introduction of temporary special measures like gender quotas through legal requirements for gender representation in Parliament and in other elected offices and on company boards. These measures can be complemented with soft measures, such as campaigns to encourage more women to run for office (see next policy measure). Research has shown that in areas where progress on gender equality is slow, such measures can increase women's participation in decision-making activity. It is recommended that the current electoral law be amended to introduce a system of gender quotas for elected officials at all levels in order to increase women's participation in local, county, and parliamentary elections. In addition, it is advisable to adopt the provisions of the EU Directive 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the European Council on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures in national legislation.

   Other specific interventions to ensure gender representation include

- The improvement of the collection and real-time availability of the data of the Permanent Electoral Authority regarding women's representation on electoral lists and as elected officials.

- The creation of a database on gender, diversity, and inclusion in the business world and the specific targeting of the companies listed on the Bucharest Stock Exchange. Transparency with regard to the gender composition of the boards of directors and other relevant committees of the listed companies in accordance with European best practices should be ensured.

VOICE AND AGENCY POLICY MEASURE 2: Develop awareness and communication tools targeting change in social norms with regards to (a) societal norms around violence, (b) women's contributions to economic development, and (c) encouraging more women to run for office or seek top government or private sector jobs

Addressing social norms is a complex and long-term task. It requires adopting an evidence-based approach, harnessing the efforts of various stakeholders, and close monitoring to ensure that the methods are responsive to the context. The following specific interventions are recommended:

- The use of gender equality experts and internationally used tools such as gender assessments, gender audits, and gender action plans to grow a more gender-equitable culture in political organizations, public institutions, the National Bank, and businesses.

- The development and implementation of evidence-driven awareness and communication tools targeting change in social norms with regard to

  - societal norms around violence,

  - women's contribution to economic development, and

  - encouraging more women to run for office or seek top government and private sector jobs.

VOICE AND AGENCY POLICY MEASURE 3: Amend the Domestic Violence Law to incorporate the principles of the Council of Europe fully to ensure a harmonized cross-institutional framework for combating gender-based violence

To address GBV, the Domestic Violence Law should be amended to fully incorporate the principles of the Council of Europe. This action can create an enabling environment for the following set of tailored interventions:

- The improving of data collection and real-time data availability on the prevalence and incidence of all forms of GBV.

- The harmonizing of institutional data collection and monitoring to trace survivors' trajectories across services and ensure the adequate financing, accessibility, availability, and effectiveness of GBV prevention and response services provision.

- The determination of allocations of adequate financing for GBV services, awareness-raising campaigns, and efforts to change societal norms around violence. By taking these steps, progress can be made in reducing GBV and promoting a safer and more equitable society for all.

The implementation of these policy recommendations and interventions will promote gender equality in political and economic decision-making and ultimately contribute to a more inclusive and diverse society in Romania. Table 5 summarizes the diagnostic and suggested policies in voice and agency.

Table 5. Voice and Agency Gender Gaps: Evidence, Barriers, Policy Recommendations, and Interventions

	Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
Political and Economic Decision-Making	**Women's political representation in the Romanian Parliament remains well below the EU-27 average** and decreased in the last electoral cycle in 2020	**Sociocultural, ideological** factors, organizational **culture** of political parties, and political **socialization**	**(1)** Establish a robust gender-equality institutional architecture** that can leverage gender-equality performance indicators with funding, sanctions, and other monitoring mechanisms to ensure that gender gaps are addressed, whether funded by the EU or by other international partners	• **Improve collection and real-time availability of Permanent Electoral Authority data** regarding women's representation on electoral lists and as elected officials
	Too few women in leadership positions at the top of listed companies and there seems to be a descending trend in this respect	Lack of female political **role models**		• Implement a strengthened policy response that includes the **introduction of temporary special measures** such as gender quotas
	The low proportion of women in the Romanian Parliament places the country third to last among the EU member states	**Electoral systems** and the ideologies of political parties as they relate to women's political participation		• **Set up a database on gender, diversity, and inclusion** in the business world and specifically target the companies listed on the Bucharest Stock Exchange. This would also ensure transparency of the gender composition of the boards of directors and other relevant committees of the listed companies in accordance with European best practices
Knowledge and Data Gaps	**No recent data on prevalence of GBV** among the general population, because since the FRA study of 2012/2014, no countrywide survey has been carried out in order to measure the extent of GBV against women in Romania	**Lack of a harmonized cross-institutional framework** for administrative data collection and making publicly intelligible those data and the means of collection regarding all forms of GBV, which impedes monitoring, trend analysis, and evaluation of policy and programmatic interventions	**(2) Develop and implement evidence-driven awareness and communication tools** targeting change in social norms with regards to (a) societal norms around violence, (b) women's contributions to economic development, and (c) encouraging more women to run for office or seek top government or private sector jobs	• **Make use of gender equality experts and internationally used tools** such as gender assessments, gender audits, and gender action plans to (a) grow a more gender-equitable organizational culture in political organizations, public institutions, the National Bank, and businesses; (b) adopt good practice examples to address GBV; (c) design and implement evidence-driven policies and programs; and (d) determine allocations to finance gender equality
	Little consistent information on social norms related to GBV; only two attitude and perception polls on GBV have been conducted in the more than two decades since legislation on domestic violence passed			• **Develop and implement evidence-driven awareness and communication tools** targeting change in social norms

	Evidence on Gaps	Barriers	High-Level Policy Recommendations	Tailored Intervention
Gender-Based Violence	**Romania is a primary country of origin for human trafficking in Europe** and is among the top five countries in the EU when it comes to human trafficking victims	**Societal norms** influencing professional response and a high level of tolerance and impunity for sexualized violence	**(3)** Amend the Law on Violence to fully incorporate the principles of the Council of Europe to ensure a harmonized cross-institutional framework for combating GBV	• **Improve data collection and real-time data availability** on the prevalence and incidence of all forms of GBV
	Deficiencies in the legal framework regarding the harmonization of definitions and provision of protective measures against all forms of GBV	Lack of **awareness and information** about GBV due to limited programs tackling harmful gender norms, toxic masculinity, abuse in intimate relationships, and the consequences for survivors and communities		• **Harmonize institutional data and monitoring to trace survivors' trajectories** across services and ensure adequate financing, and accessibility, availability, and effectiveness of GBV prevention and response services provision
	Lack of ownership at the national and local levels in terms of prevention and combating of various forms of GBV and domestic violence			
	Despite its decreasing incidence of early marriages, Romania has the **highest national incidence of early marriages in the EU**	**Funding gaps** for specialized social services and gaps in local-level coordinated responses across various groups of frontline personnel such as the police, health professionals, social workers		• **Determine allocations of adequate financing** for GBV services, awareness-raising campaigns, and efforts to change societal norms around violence
	Lack of training for professionals working with survivors of sexualized violence			

Policy Measures in Data, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Further gender fiscal incidence studies can illuminate fiscal policy's role in promoting equitable outcomes and addressing gender disparities. The limited availability of evidence regarding the gender dimensions of fiscal incidence underscores the need for further exploration and analysis to ensure that fiscal policies are designed and implemented in a manner that addresses gender-specific impacts. This evidence can provide valuable insights for guiding policy decisions related to tax, transfer, and expenditure reforms. The filling of this knowledge gap will support policy makers in making informed decisions with regard to promoting gender equality and provide the basis for simulating the potential gendered impacts of fiscal reforms.

Finally, Romania has the potential to implement innovative monitoring and gender budgeting tools, such as PARIS 21 and the EIGE Gender Budgeting Tool, to strengthen the collection, monitoring, and analysis of the relevant data.

A detailed assessment of the strength of the statistical system with respect to gender-disaggregated indicators is recommended. During the preparation of this report, we noticed several data and knowledge gaps. A detailed assessment of the statistical strength of Romania's data environment with respect to gender-disaggregated data sources is recommended. To monitor SDG indicator (5.4.1) which measures the proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, the country can consider increasing the frequency of time-use surveys, by conducting light surveys with pre-coded diaries between full-scale surveys every three to five years.

In partnership with UN Women, PARIS21 Secretariat OECD and SDD have developed a comprehensive framework to evaluate data and capacity gaps related to gender statistics. This framework proposes methods, activities, and tools to assess the capacity of national statistical offices to produce quality gender statistics that meet the needs of a range of users. It also provides a basis for formulating national strategies for developing statistics, as it recognizes the importance of the active participation of various stakeholders involved in the production, communication, and use of gender statistics. The framework takes a holistic approach to national statistical system capacity by considering the soft skills of individuals, as well as the motivations and political dimensions that influence the capacity to produce quality gender statistics. Additionally, it emphasizes the use of gender statistics by various sectors, including lawmakers, media, the private sector, and civil society organizations, for evidence-based policy creation and monitoring, transparency, good governance, and societal change.[142]

EIGE has developed a tool kit—the EIGE Gender Budgeting Tool—for managing authorities, intermediate bodies, gender equality bodies, and staff working at the EU level with EU Funds. The tool kit aims to apply gender budgeting as a gender mainstreaming tool in EU Funds processes. The tools included in the tool kit range from ones for analyzing gender inequalities and needs at the national and subnational levels to others for integrating a gender perspective into evaluation and monitoring processes. The tool kit also emphasizes the importance of coordination between EU Funds to advance

142 https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/Framework%202020_update_web_0.pdf.

work-life balance and the use of gender-sensitive project selection criteria. Additionally, the tool kit provides guidance on tracking resource allocations and developing quantitative and qualitative indicators for advancing gender equality.[143] Implementing gender budgeting in EU Funds would help ensure compliance with EU legal requirements while promoting the effectiveness and accountability in the management of EU monies. Additionally, it would enhance transparency by engaging both women and men in budgeting processes and support the EU's social objectives of sustainable growth, employment, and social cohesion, given the links between gender equality and these development objectives. A pilot program on gender budgeting is currently being implemented by ANES with EC funding and could be scaled up; the consultations for this report validated gender budgeting as an emerging opportunity. Gender budgeting is also consistent with the national recovery and resilience plans (NRRPs), which see gender equality as a horizontal objective.

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143 https://eige.europa.eu/publications/toolkit-gender-budgeting-eu-funds.

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Annexes

Annex 1.
Additional Graphs and Tables

Figure A.1.1. Healthy Behavioral Patterns by Gender, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2020
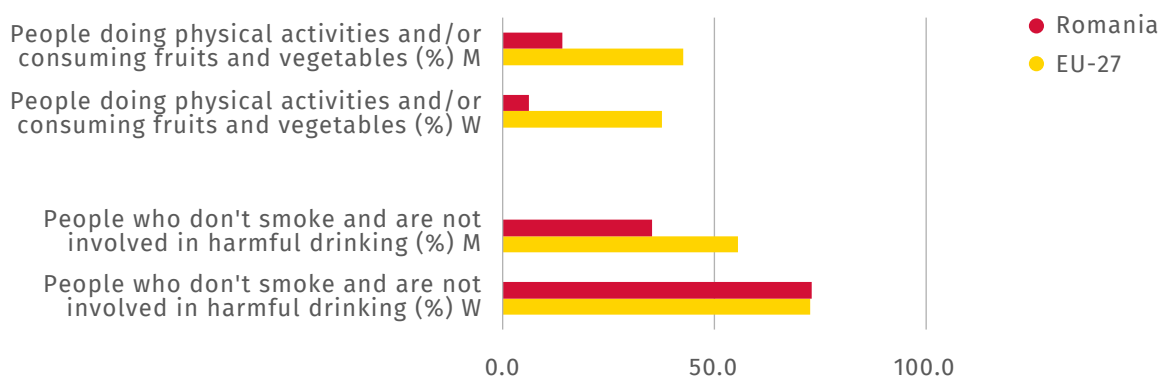
Source: EIGE 2022.

Note: M stands for men and W stands for women". Same wording as with previous graph

Figure A.1.2. Reporting of Limitations in Usual Activities due to Health Problems at Age 65 by Gender, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2019 (%)

- ● Limitations in usual activities due to health problems at age 65 (in %) W
- ● Limitations in usual activities due to health problems at age 65 (in %) M

Source: EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/the-matic-focus/health/country/RO.
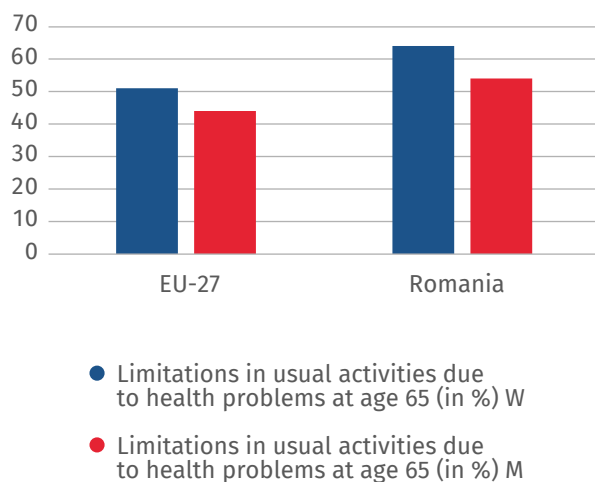
Figure A.1.3. Mental Health Self-assessment by Gender, Romania vs. EU-27 Member States, 2019

- ● Self-rated mental well-being (WHO-5 scale 0-100) W
- ● Self-rated mental well-being (WHO-5 scale 0-100) M

Source: EIGE, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/the-matic-focus/health/country/RO.
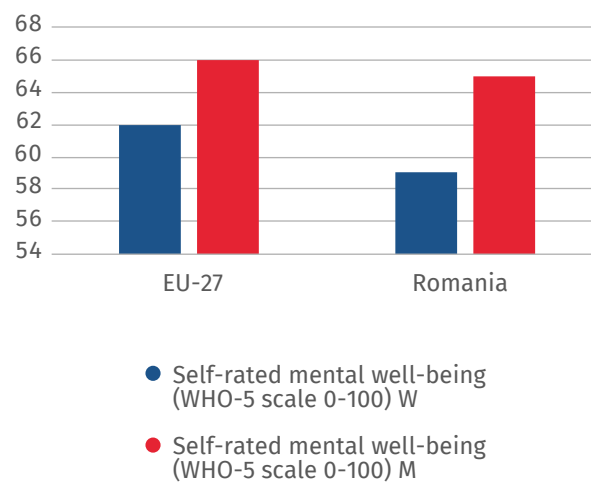
Figure A.1.4. Net Enrollment Rates in Higher Secondary Education by Gender, Romania vs. EU Member States, 2016–20
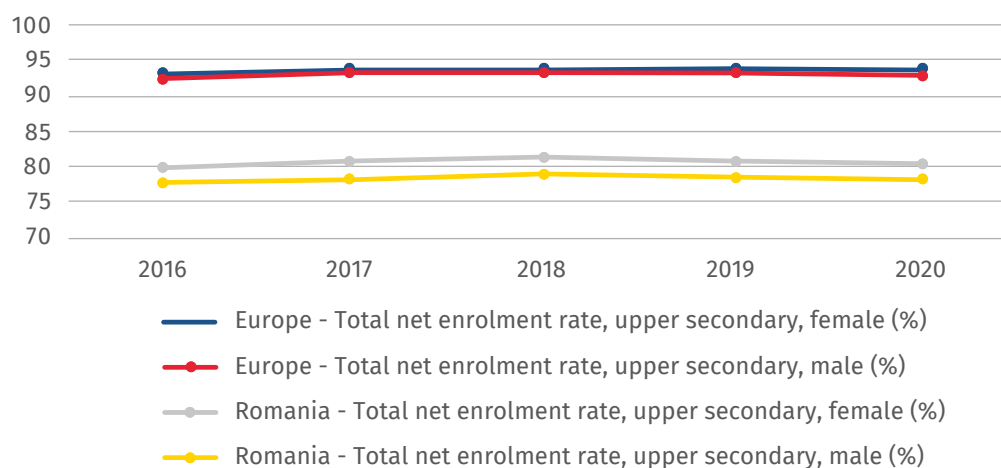
Source: UNESCO 2023.

Figure A.1.5. Early-school-leaving Rate (18–24 Years Old) by Gender, Rural vs. Urban Areas, 2020
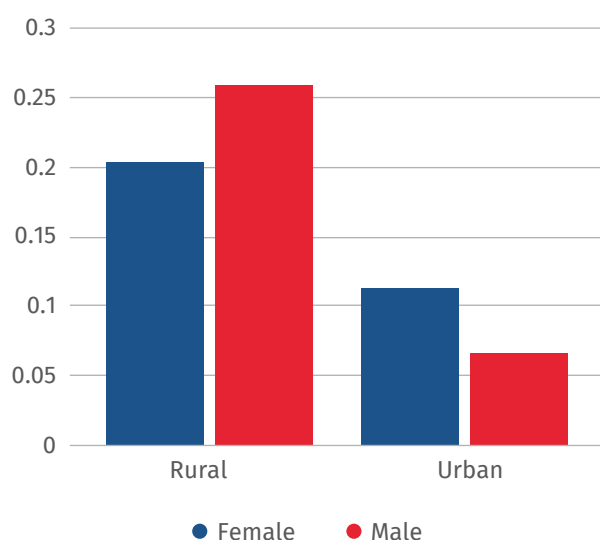
Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
Note: The share of 18- to 24-year-olds who leave school early is defined as the number of people in this age group with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training over the total number of 18- to 24-year-olds.

Figure A.1.6. Early-school-leaving Rate (18–24 Years Old) by Gender and Income Group, 2020
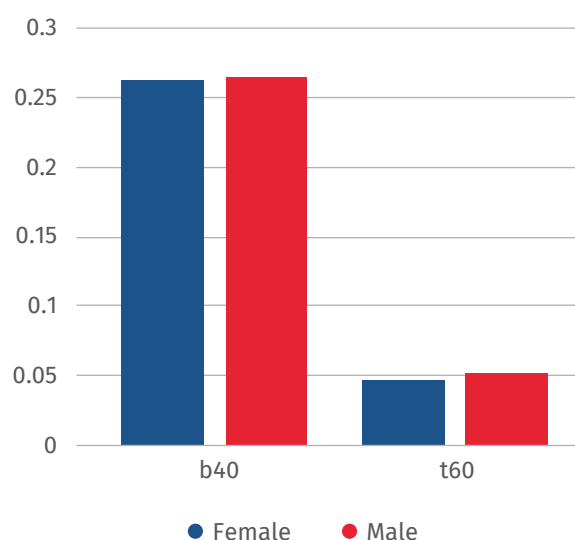
Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions.
Note: The share of 18-to-24-year-olds who leave school early is defined as the number of people in this age group with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training over the total number of 18- to 24-year-olds.

Figure A.1.7. Gross Enrollment Rates (Tertiary) by Gender, 2013–19
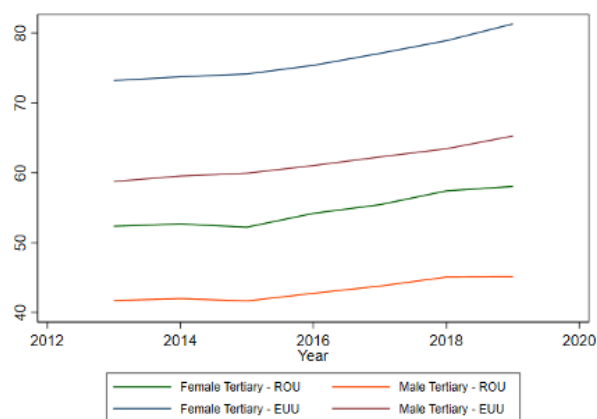
Source: World Bank, World Bank Data, https://data.worldbank.org/.

Figure A.1.8. Learning Poverty Rate by Gender, 2011 (%)

Source: World Bank, Gender Data Portal, https://genderdata.world-bank.org/indicators/2023.

Note: Learning poverty is the share of (female) children at the end-of-primary age below minimum reading proficiency adjusted by out-of-school children.

Figure A.1.9. Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling by Gender, Romania vs. Other ECA Countries, 2020
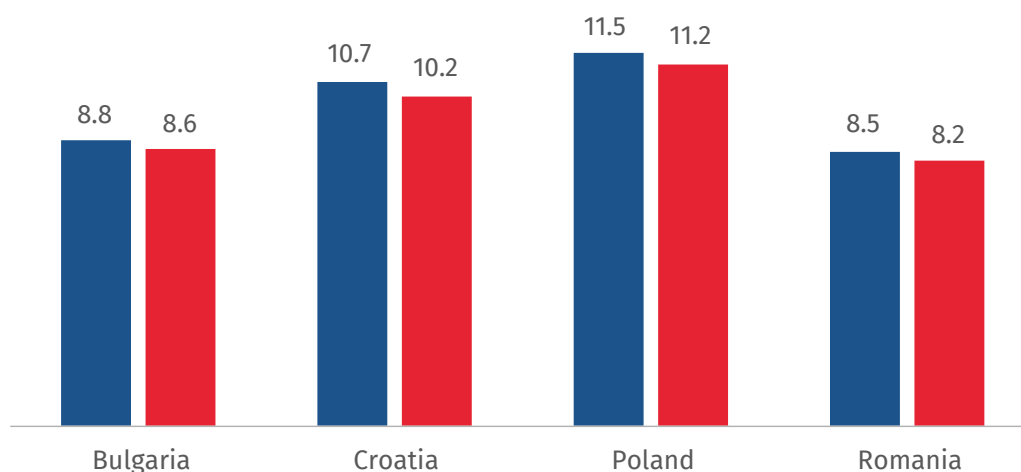
● Learning-Adjusted Years of School, Female   ● Learning-Adjusted Years of School, Male

Source: World Bank, Gender Data Portal, https://genderdata.worldbank.org/indicators/2023.

Note: This figure shows the correct learning-adjusted years of schooling by gender in Romania and three other ECA countries. Learning-adjusted years of school are calculated by multiplying the estimates of expected years of school by the ratio of most recent harmonized test scores to 625.

Figure A.1.10. Gender Pension Gap, Romania vs. EU–27 Member State Average, 2010–19
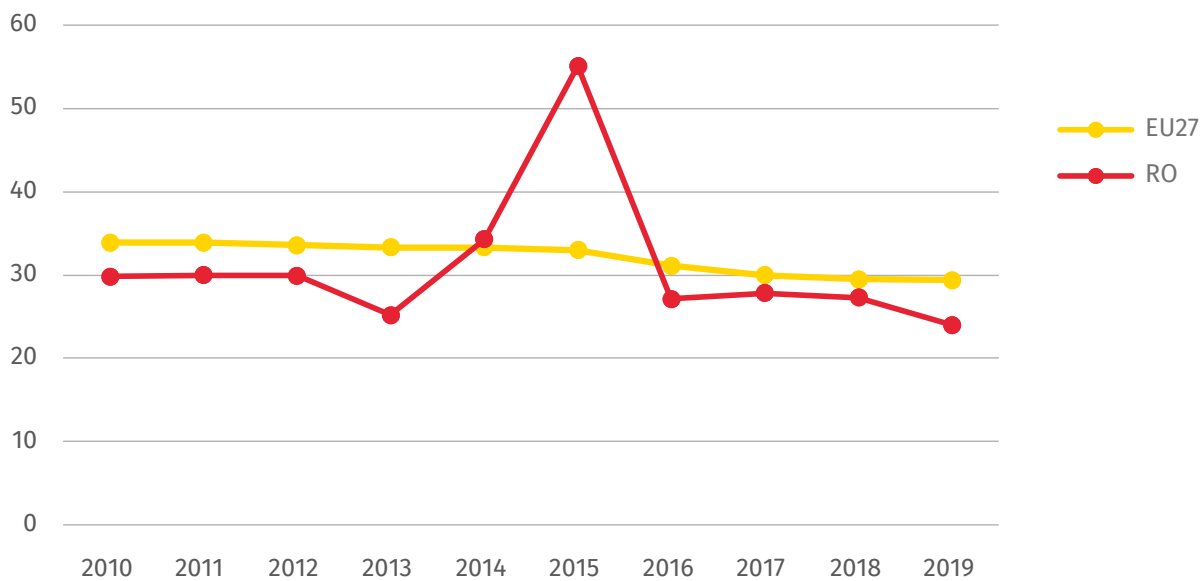
Source: Eurostat (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/databasehttps://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database)–ILC_PNP13.

Figure A.1.11. Gender Gap in Employment by Age, 2012 vs. 2021
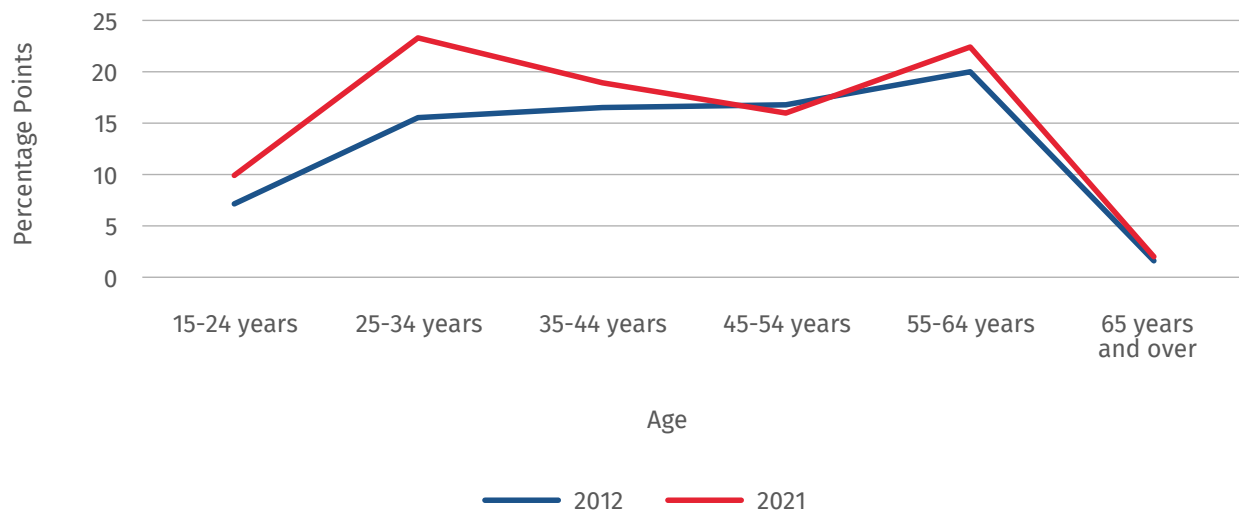
Source: INS.

Figure A.1.12. Paid Maternity Leave (Length and Payment Rate), Romania vs. Selected Countries, 2022

● Length in weeks   ● Payment rate (%)

Source: OECD 2023; https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm
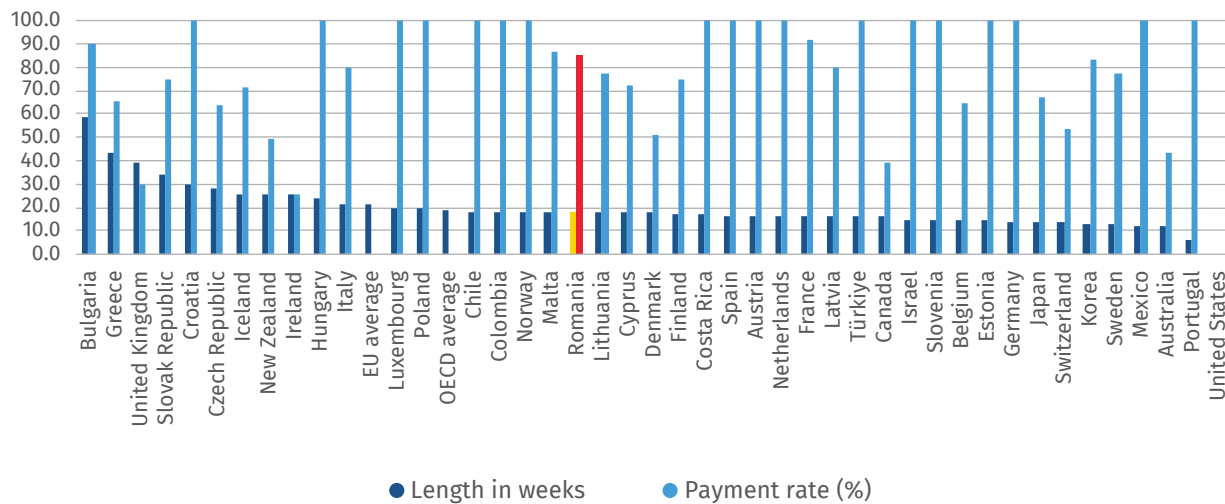
Note: Maternity leave (or pregnancy leave) is an employment-protected leave of absence for employed women directly around the time of childbirth (or, in some countries, adoption). Some countries integrate maternity/pregnancy leave into overall parental leave schemes and do not list them separately.

Figure A.1.13. Paid Parental Leave (Length and Payment Rate), Romania vs. Selected Countries, 2022

● Length in weeks   ● Payment rate (%)

Source: OECD 2023; https://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm
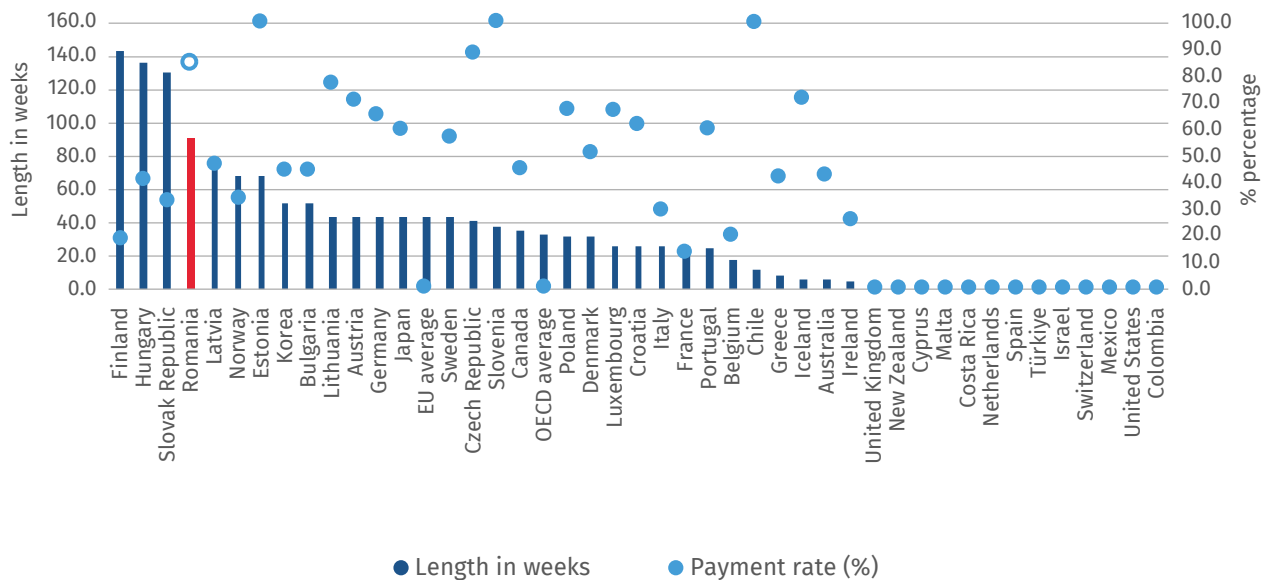
Note: Parental leave is an employment-protected leave of absence for employed parents, which is often supplementary to specific maternity and paternity leave periods, and frequently, but not in all countries, follows the period of maternity leave.

Figure A.1.14. Limited Geographical Mobility, Romania vs. Selected Countries, 2016

Share of those unemployed willing to move within country for a job
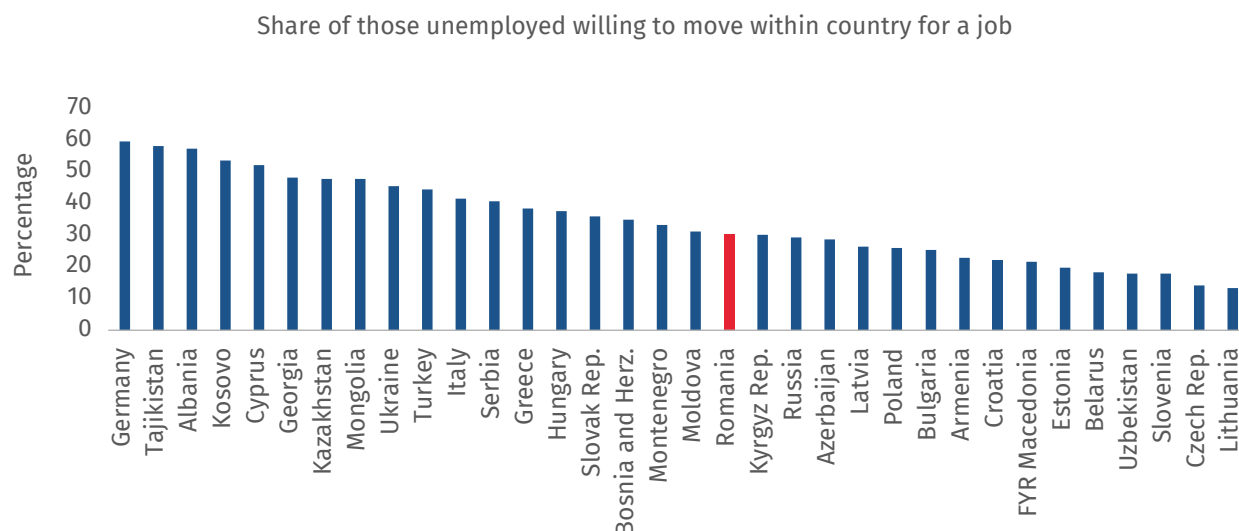
Source: Authors' calculations based on Life In Transition Survey (EBRD 2016). https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/economic-research-and-data/data/lits.html

Note: More-recent estimates are not available.

Figure A.1.15. Energy Poverty and Energy Spending Shares across Gender Households
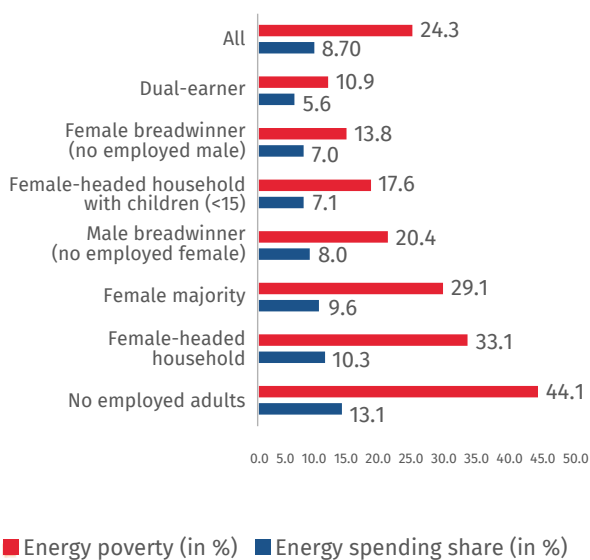
Source: Authors' estimates based on HBS 2021.

Figure A.1.16. Type of Residence for 'Female' Households

Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions).
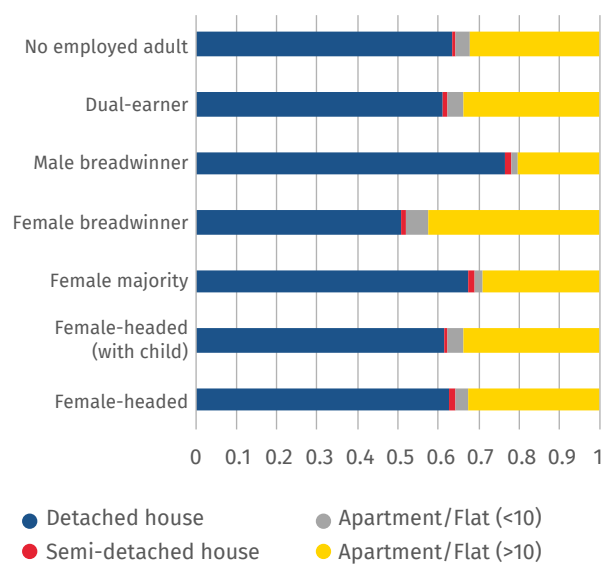
Figure A.1.17. Incidence of Leakages across Different Household Types

Leakage (roof, wall, floor, foundation, window)

Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions).
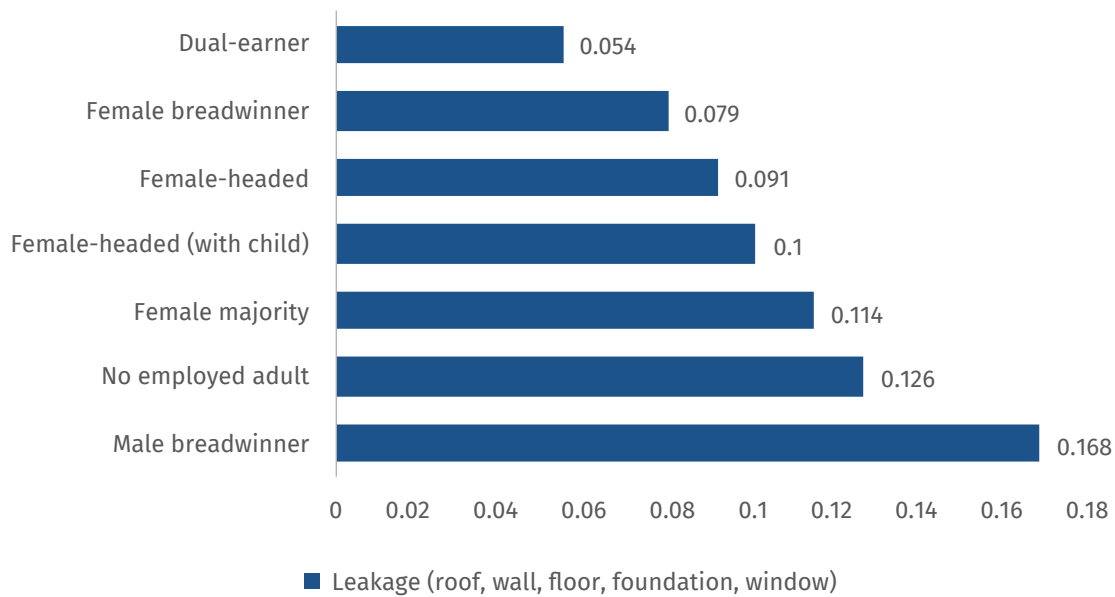
Figure A.1.18. Incidence of Self-reported Environmental Problems across Different Household Types

Environmental problems

Source: Authors' estimates based on EU-SILC 2020 (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/microdata/european-union-statistics-on-income-and-living-conditions).
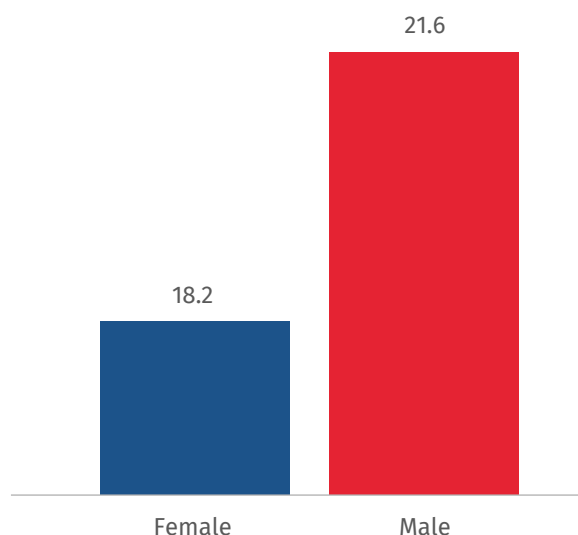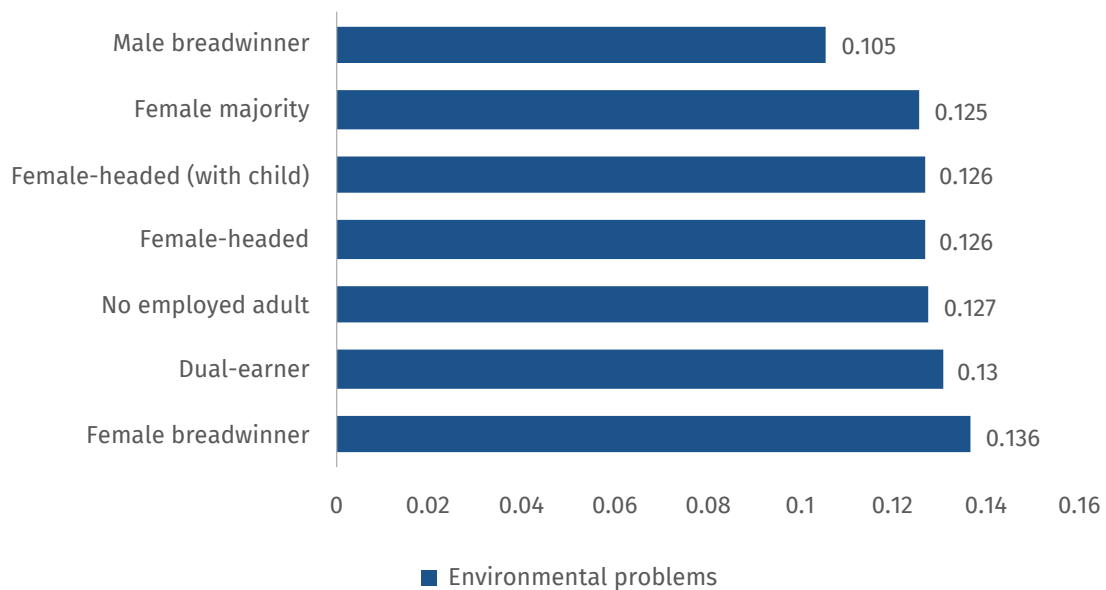
Annex 2.
The European Commission's Approach toward Gender Equality

The European Commission (EC) works hand in hand with a variety of different institutions, at the national as well as the regional level, in order to push forward to gender equality in the EU. In addition, it established and formed part of several networks working toward gender equality in all aspects, such as the closure of loopholes in legislation, the creation of thematic research and reports, and policy making. It also works closely together with experts on gender equality.

Figure A.2.1. European Commission Engagement in Gender Equality
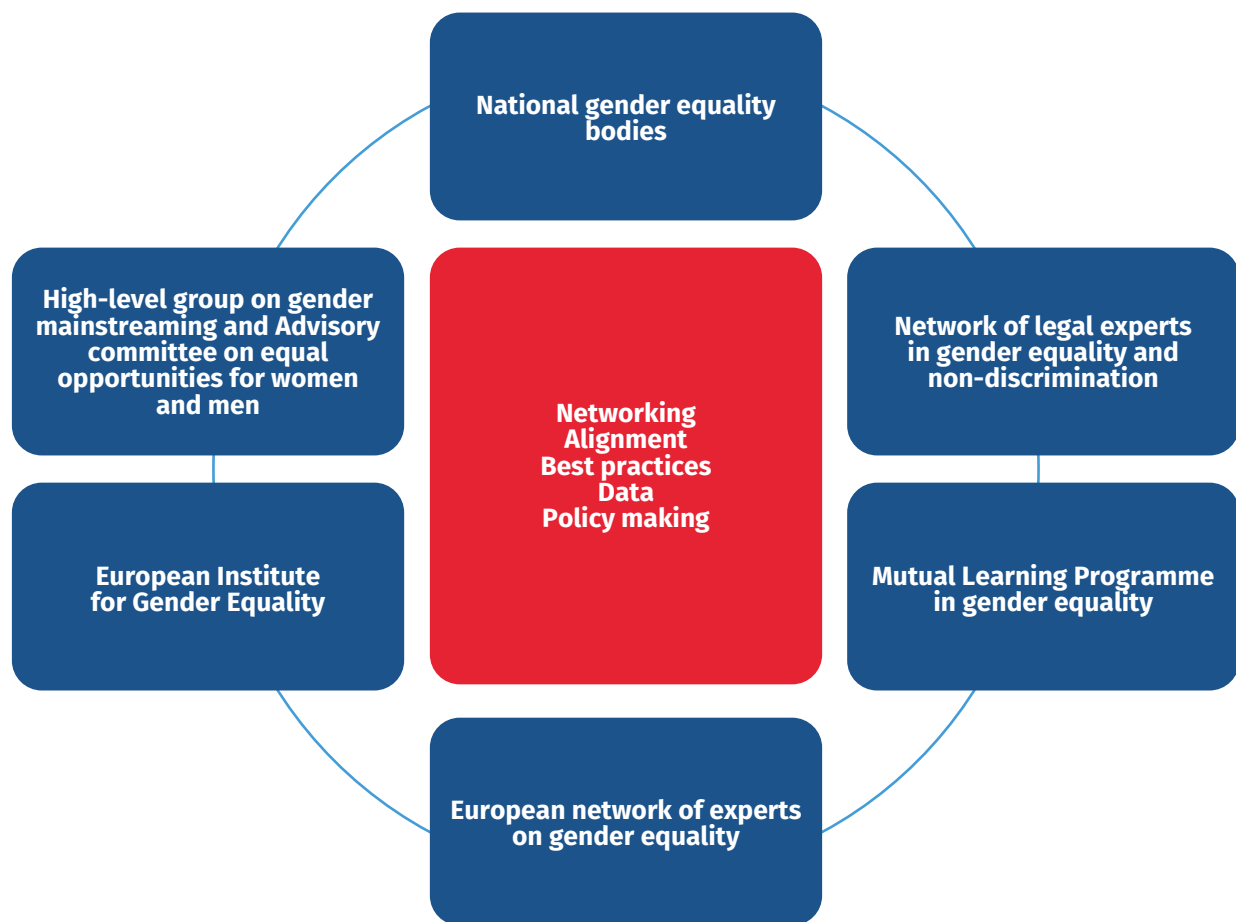
Source: European Commission 2022: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/who-we-work-gender-equality_en.

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The EC has mainly relied on its Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality (SEGE) framework for gender equality. This framework originally encompassed five thematic areas (female LFP and equal economic independence; equal pay and poverty reduction among women; equal decision-making; GBV; gender equality worldwide).

During the period 2016–19, the EC traditionally followed its SEGE framework for gender equality (Gago 2019). The SEGE framework was used from 2014 to 2019 and relied on five priority thematic areas:

1. Increasing female labor market participation and equal economic independence.

2. Reducing the gender pay, earnings, and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women.

3. Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making.

4. Combating GBV and protecting and supporting victims.

5. Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

SEGE currently has one *transversal area*, namely the integration of a gender equality perspective into all EU policies. Still, gender budgeting is not applied to the EU budget. SEGE also does not have its own financial allocation.

Figure A.2.2. SEGE Objective Tree
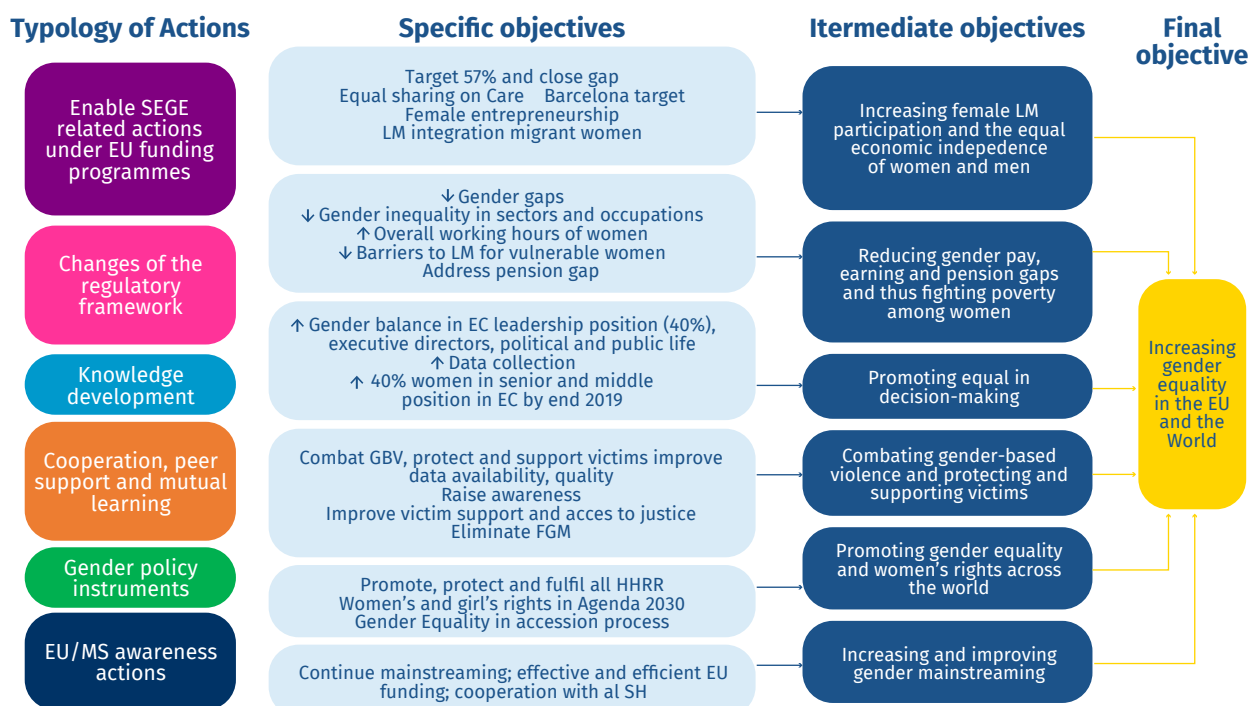
Source: European Commission 2019.

The framework has been revised and updated over the last decade, resulting in a more precise framework for the period 2020–25. In 2019, the European Network of Experts on Gender Equality published a revised approach toward gender equality. The revised framework covers six dimensions (GBV, gender stereotypes, gender gaps, equal participation across economic sectors, gender pay, and pension gaps, gender care gap, and gender balances in decision-making and politics). All six dimensions of SEGE are covered broadly under the WDR framework. This revised approach encompasses three areas:

- *Work/Life Balance:* This dimension mainly considers areas belonging to employment and care work (for example, the employment-fertility nexus, the double earner model, paid work-time reduction policies, work-life balance, and household labor, as well as flexible work)

- *Inequality, Discrimination, and Welfare:* This dimension focuses on a gendered perspective on poverty and welfare, such as the gender pay gap and its limitations and the feminization of poverty, as well as multiple dimensions and intersectional approaches toward gender equality (for example, migrant women, low-skilled workers, and similar)

- *Power Relations in Society:* This dimension considers potential intervention strategies targeting gender inequality, such as gender quotas, economic decision-making, and abuse, as well as GBV.

Figure A.2.3. Revised Approach toward Gender Equality
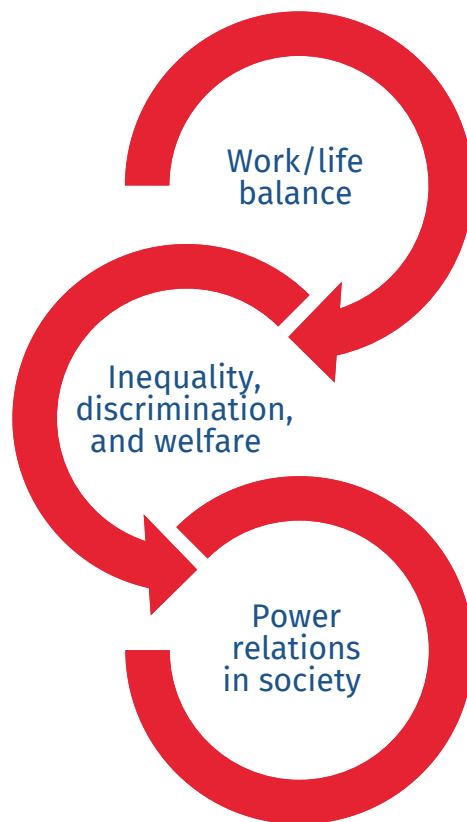
Source: European Commission 2019.

The EC's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 includes several new aspects.[144] The overarching goal is to work toward a gender-equal Europe. The new strategy takes a more intersectional approach. The main goals of the strategy are

- ending gender-based violence

- challenging gender stereotypes

- closing gender gaps in the labor market

- achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy

- addressing the gender pay and pension gaps

- closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics.

The Role of EIGE

EIGE, the European Institute for Gender Equality, is the European agency creating evidence for policy making. It provides research and information on gender equality and has four thematic focuses: gender mainstreaming, GBV, gender statistics, and the Beijing Platform for Action. EIGE constructs and makes publicly available the Gender Equality Index, which looks at the following seven different thematic areas:[145]

- Work

- Money

- Knowledge

- Time

- Power

- Health

- Violence.

   In 2020, the index had an additional special dimension on digitalization and the future of work.

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144 https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en.
145 See, for example https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-index-2020-romania.

Annex 3.
Global Benchmarking Exercise: Comparing Romania's Performance on Gender Indicators

Monitoring and evaluation based on clearly defined indicators are integral to the development of sound policies. They support policy makers in evaluating the extent to which policy objectives have been met and provide a solid basis for identifying strengths and weaknesses. Monitoring can ensure better coordination and consistency between policies. When carried out on a comparative basis with peers, it can provide further support for reform. Quantitative indicators have proven highly effective in drawing attention to the challenges for inclusive growth and poverty reduction, identifying priorities for reform, and communicating success and progress. The use of a standard "scorecard" also facilitates public-private consultations.

In this context, we develop an index to perform a benchmarking exercise that enables the comparison of the selected countries' performance with other economies across a broad set of dimensions and across time. Comprehending the data availability as well as the countries' most recent performance across several development areas is essential, because it enables us to track progress (or lack of progress) on key indicators and broader development areas to determine critical areas in which the countries are lagging. This quantitative exercise also has the potential to inform the prioritization of policy reforms in these countries, to support core diagnostics as SCDs, Poverty and Gender Assessments, and so forth. Relevant gender-disaggregated indicators were included to inform this Gender Assessment.

Methodology

We construct an Index to identify, assess, and monitor several dimensions of development outcomes for Romania, in comparison with countries in six main reference groups: (1) The World, (2) High-Income (HI) countries, (3) EU-27, (4) Central and Southeast Europe (CEE), (5) Southern Europe (SE), and (6) Enlargement countries. Because the index does not include policy indicators, it provides an objective basis for discussing the underlying contextual drivers. However, we recognize that some of the indicators may be affected by previous policies and therefore can reflect positive or negative outcomes of past developments. High Income and EU-27 countries are considered aspirational comparators, while CEE, SE, and Enlargement countries are considered structural comparators. The countries included in the last three groupings are as follows:

- **Central and Southeast Europe (CEE):** Bulgaria (BG), Croatia (HR), Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (HU), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovak Republic (SK), Slovenia (SI)

- **Southern Europe (SE):** Cyprus (CY), Greece (EL), Italy (IT), Malta (MT), Portugal (PT), Spain (ES)

- **Enlargement:** Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova

The Index includes 19 dimensions and approximately 278 indicators[146] and ranks countries according to their performance in each dimension. The indicators have been selected based on data availability for several countries and their social and economic relevance. We relied upon global databases, including the World Development Indicators, TCdata360, International Financial Statistics, ASPIRE, ILO, and other datasets covering most countries in the world. This provides a snapshot of where each of the countries stands regarding some fundamental outcome indicators in these priority areas. The index is constructed using a five-step process that is outlined below.

STEP 1: Compute the average of variables over time
First, we compute averages for each variable for the periods circa 2008–14 and 2015–22, respectively. The use of averages responded to the need to avoid distortions caused by outlier values and overcome the lack of information for a certain data point.

STEP 2: Homogenize variables
The variables require modification, given that the scales and direction of the variables can differ considerably. The direction of all indicators included in a composite index needed to be homogenous (for example, all variables must have a positive sign, so that a higher value would indicate being closer to a "desirable situation" or a better performance on the same scale).

STEP 3: Standardize variables
The magnitude of the differences between the countries and the best achiever in each domain is assessed using the normalized distance to the best-performing countries. Accordingly, we standardized the variables according to the following formula for the countries i in period t:

$$SVar_{Country\ i,t} = \frac{var_{BPt,t} - var_{Country\ i,t}}{var_{BP,t} - var_{WP,t}}$$

The standardization follows the methodology used for the North Macedonia, Colombia, Chile, and El Salvador SCDs (World Bank 2018b, 2015b, 2017, Robayo-Abril & Barroso, 2022). This way, a country obtains a score of zero when it is the best performer in one specific variable and one if it is the worst performer.

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146 The number of indicators varies by country, depending on data availability.

STEP 4: Distance to the best performer
After the variables are standardized, we calculate the distance to the best performer for each variable by assigning countries to one specific decile. We create deciles (1 for the best performers, 10 for the worst). When a country gets a score of 1, it is among the best performers in the relevant group, and when it receives a score of 10 it is among the worst performers.

Step 5: Using the index to inform prioritization
Based on the results of the benchmarking exercise, we apply a criterion to identify emerging priority areas. A priority level is assigned to each indicator according to the criteria described in table A.1. Priority areas of importance are where a country lags compared to the best performer within the EU-27 region, HI, the World, or relevant comparators. Moreover, to determine the ranking of each, the average performance across all comparison groups is calculated.

Table A.1. Criteria for Selecting Priority Levels

	Normalized Gap to Top Performer in the Group
1 (lowest priority)	Less than 10 percent
2	10 to 20 percent
3	20 to 30 percent
4	30 to 40 percent
5	40 to 50 percent
6	50 to 60 percent
7	60 to 70 percent
8	70 to 80 percent
9	80 to 90 percent
10 (highest priority)	90 percent or more

Summary

The benchmarking exercise enables the assessment of the availability of a country's statistics. It also supports identifying emerging constraints to inclusive growth and vulnerability and poverty reduction in a specific country. We use the results of the benchmarking analysis to build an inventory of key statistics and identify a preliminary set of important areas in which a specific country's performance is lagging. This method for identifying emerging constraints has advantages as well as drawbacks. Benchmarking offers a simple, intuitive, and consistent method for establishing a country's performance in certain areas. However, it does not explain why a country outperforms or underperforms. Also, deeper gaps (relative to the best performer) do not necessarily imply a more significant impact on inclusive growth and the twin goals. Therefore, this exercise needs to be complemented by a deeper diagnostic that digs deeper into the hypotheses around the constraints. The benchmarking exercise relies on careful decisions concerning the types of comparators to include (for example, structural peers, aspirational

peers, income group peers, regional peers), criteria to select such comparators, indicators to benchmark, and how to measure the distance or gaps. Despite potential shortcomings, the benchmarking exercise yields critical insights into Romania's growth and inclusion challenges. The lagging areas are "red," indicating a large distance to the best performer.

Table A.2 below shows the results.

Table A.2. Benchmarking Exercise Results, Romania vs. Selected Countries

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022
Demographics												
Age dependency ratio, old (% of working-age population)	5	4	5	5	6	4	5	5	8	8	5	4
Age dependency ratio, young (% of working-age population)	1	1	3	4	10	10	9	10	3	4	2	2
Fertility rate, total (births per woman)	1	2	4	7	10	10	10	10	6	8	3	4
Life expectancy at birth, female (years)	3	3	10	10	10	9	10	10	5	4	7	7
Life expectancy at birth, male (years)	3	4	8	9	10	10	10	10	5	5	9	9
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	3	3	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	5	8	8
Population growth (annual %)	2	4	3	2	1	5	1	1	6	6	2	2
Population in the largest city (% of urban population)	9	9	8	8	6	6	8	8	8	9	9	9
Population living in slums (% of urban population)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Urban population (% of total population)	6	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	6	6	6	6
Urban population growth (annual %)	9	8	8	10	10	9	10	10	9	8	9	9
Financial	7	6	9	8	9	9	9	9	5	6	8	8

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022
Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, female (% of population ages 15+)	6	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	6	8	8
Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, older adults (% of population ages 25+)	5	4	10	10	10	10	10	10	4	6	8	7
Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, poorest 40% (% of population ages 15+)	7	6	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	6	8	8
Account ownership at a financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider, young adults (% of population ages 15-24)	6	5	9	10	9	10	10	10	3	4	7	7
Governance												
WBL: Assets Indicator Score	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1
WBL: Entrepreneurship Indicator Score	1	1	1	N/A	1	N/A	1	N/A	1	N/A	1	1
WBL: Marriage Indicator Score	1	1	1	1	1	N/A	1	1	1	N/A	1	1
WBL: Mobility Indicator Score	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	1	1	N/A	N/A	1	1
WBL: Parenthood Indicator Score	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
WBL: Pay Indicator Score	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
WBL: Pension Indicator Score	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	8	8
WBL: Workplace Indicator Score	1	1	1	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1	1	1
WJP rule of Law Index	5	5	9	8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	8	7

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008-2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015-2022
Women Business and the Law Index Score (scale 1-100)	2	2	5	9	2	10	5	9	3	3	2	2
Health												
Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19)	3	3	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	5
Cause of death, by communicable diseases and maternal, prenatal and nutrition conditions (% of total)	1	1	3	4	6	8	1	1	6	10	2	2
Cause of death, by injury (% of total)	1	1	3	3	4	3	6	3	3	3	1	1
Cause of death, by non-communicable diseases (% of total)	10	10	7	7	6	5	10	10	7	4	10	10
Domestic general government health expenditure (% of GDP)	8	8	9	9	10	10	8	7	6	7	7	7
Domestic general government health expenditure (% of general government expenditure)	7	6	7	7	8	6	5	5	5	5	7	7
Low-birthweight babies (% of births)	2	3	9	9	8	7	8	8	10	9	4	4
Out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure)	3	3	4	4	3	3	1	1	1	1	4	4
Prevalence of anemia among children (% of children ages 6-59 months)	4	3	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	7	6
Prevalence of obesity, female (% of female population ages 18+)	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	5	5	3	3
Prevalence of obesity, male (% of male population ages 18+)	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	10	10	4	4

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022
Human Capital												
Adolescents out of school (% of lower secondary school age)	1	2	8	8	7	8	10	10	2	8	3	4
Children out of school (% of primary school age)	1	2	7	10	6	10	10	10	1	10	1	6
Current education expenditure, primary (% of total expenditure in primary public institutions)	2	2	3	2	4	1	5	4	6	1	4	2
Current education expenditure, secondary (% of total expenditure in secondary public institutions)	2	2	6	2	9	3	8	3	8	2	2	2
Current education expenditure, tertiary (% of total expenditure in tertiary public institutions)	3	2	6	1	7	1	8	1	10	3	4	2
Current education expenditure, total (% of total expenditure in public institutions)	3	2	8	3	10	2	10	3	10	4	4	3
Expected Years of School	2	3	10	10	10	10	10	10	2	7		7
Fraction of Children Under 5 Not Stunted	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP)	9	8	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	8
Government expenditure on education, total (% of government expenditure)	9	8	9	8	9	9	9	7	10	10	9	8
Harmonized Test Scores	6	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	6	5	7	6
Human Capital Index (HCI) (scale 0–1)	5	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	8	8	8

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022
Learning-Adjusted Years of School	4	5	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	6	7	7
Primary education, teachers	10	10	8	9	8	9	8	9	6	7	10	10
Probability of Survival to Age 5	1	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	4	3	2
Pupil–teacher ratio, primary	9	9	3	1	3	1	1	1	9	1	6	7
Pupil–teacher ratio, secondary	9	9	2	4	1	1	1	1	5	1	6	7
School enrollment, preprimary (% gross)	6	5	7	6	6	6	9	8	2	1	6	6
School enrollment, primary (% gross)	7	5	10	10	9	10	10	10	6	10	7	10
School enrollment, primary (% net)	2	3	7	10	6	9	10	10	6	10	5	7
School enrollment, primary, female (% net)	2	3	7	10	7	10	10	10	7	10	5	7
School enrollment, primary, male (% net)	2	3	6	9	5	9	10	10	5	10	4	7
School enrollment, secondary (% gross)	5	5	10	10	6	10	10	10	4	7	8	7
School enrollment, secondary (% net)	2	2	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	7	5	5
School enrollment, secondary, female (% net)	2	2	10	10	10	10	10	10	6	6	5	5
School enrollment, secondary, male (% net)	2	2	10	10	10	10	10	10	5	7	4	5
School enrollment, tertiary (% gross)	5	7	6	8	10	10	8	10	6	7	6	7
Secondary education, teachers	10	10	8	8	6	6	7	8	1	7	10	10
Survival Rate from Age 15–60	2	2	7	7	9	9	10	10	5	5	7	8
Labor	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	2	3	4	4
Employment to population ratio, 15+, total (%)(modeled ILO estimate)	6	6	6	5	5	6	5	4	1	1	7	8

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022
Female-15+Time related underemployment	2	2	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	2
Female-Aggregate bands: Total-Discouraged job-seekers (THOUSANDS) annual	1	1	1	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1
Firms competing against unregistered firms (% of firms)	3	2	3	2	3	2	N/A	1	1	1	3	1
Labor force participation rate for ages 15-24, total (%)(modeled ILO estimate)	8	8	9	9	7	6	10	9	4	4	8	9
Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+)(modeled ILO estimate)	5	5	6	8	8	10	6	8	3	4	5	6
Labor force participation rate, total (% of total population ages 15+)(modeled ILO estimate)	6	6	7	7	6	7	7	7	2	3	8	8
Labor force with basic education, female (% of female working-age population with basic education)	8	8	6	7	1	1	8	10	7	10	8	8
Labor force with basic education, male (% of male working-age population with basic education)	7	7	5	5	1	1	10	9	5	7	7	8
Male-15+Time related underemployment	3	3	3	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4	3
Male-Aggregate bands: Total-Discouraged job-seekers (THOUSANDS) annual	1	1	3	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022
Share of youth not in education, employment or training, female (% of female youth population)	3	3	9	10	8	10	8	10	2	4	3	6
Share of youth not in education, employment or training, male (% of male youth population)	3	2	6	6	6	9	5	4	1	1	3	4
Share of youth not in education, employment or training, total (% of youth population)	3	2	8	8	7	10	7	7	1	1	3	5
Total-15+Time related underemployment	3	2	2	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3
Total-Aggregate bands: Total-Discouraged job-seekers (THOUSANDS) annual	1	1	2	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	1
Unemployment with basic education (% of total labor force with basic education)	2	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	3
Unemployment with intermediate education (% of total labor force with intermediate education)	3	2	2	2	2	4	2	1	2	3	4	3
Unemployment, female (% of female labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2
Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)	3	2	2	2	1	4	1	1	1	1	4	3
Unemployment, youth total (% of total labor force ages 15–24) (modeled ILO estimate)	4	3	4	4	3	6	3	3	3	3	5	5

Sectors	World as comparator group		UE27 as comparator		CEE as comparator		SE as comparator		Enlargement as comparator		HIC as comparator	
	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022	Ranking indicator (Baseline) circa 2008–2014	Ranking indicator (Recent) circa 2015–2022
Poverty												
Gini index	3	4	10	7	10	7	10	10	8	8	5	5
Poverty headcount ratio at $2.15 a day (2017 PPP)(% of population)	1	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	7	8	10	10
Poverty headcount ratio at $3.65 a day (2017 PPP)(% of population)	2	1	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	9	9	10
Poverty headcount ratio at $6.85 a day (2017 PPP)(% of population)	4	2	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	6	6	10
Ratio Income share of top 10/Income share of bottom 10 decile	2	3	10	8	10	8	10	10	5	7	3	4
Survey mean consumption or income per capita, bottom 40% of population (2017 PPP $ per day)	N/A	9	N/A	10	N/A	10	N/A	10	N/A	4	N/A	10
Private												
Firms with female participation in ownership (% of firms)	5	6	2	8	1	9	N/A	8	2	4	3	8
Firms with female top manager (% of firms)	5	8	6	7	4	10	N/A	1	3	7	5	7

Annex 4.
Data Sources

Data from three major surveys form the basis of the analysis in this Gender Assessment, with supplementary input from other sources.

The main sources of information for this analysis include

- **EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS):** EU-LFS is a large household sample survey providing quarterly results on labor participation of people ages 15 and over and people outside the labor force. EU-LFS is conducted in all member states of the EU, four EU candidate countries, and three European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. EU-LFS microdata are gathered by the national statistics offices (NSOs) in the European Union member states and collated by Eurostat. For Romania, the NSO started data collection in 1996. EU-LFS is carried out quarterly as a continuous survey and provides short-term data on the size and structure of labor force supply and points out seasonal phenomena in the labor market. The survey provides quarterly and annual (average) results. The main limitation of these data is the lack of continuous wage information (they only contain wage deciles), which limits the analysis of gender wage gaps.

- **The European Union Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC):** EU-SILC is a cross-sectional and longitudinal sample survey coordinated by Eurostat, based on data from the EU member states. It provides data on income, poverty, social exclusion, and living conditions in the EU. EU-SILC microdata are gathered by the NSOs in the European Union member states and collated by Eurostat. It is the official instrument for measuring income poverty. This report uses surveys collected in the period 2014–21 (income year 2013–20). These data can provide invaluable information for "female" households during the crisis year. Data to evaluate the post-COVID-19 period covering the Ukraine crisis (2022 and later) were not available for this assessment.

- **The Rapid Phone Surveys** were carried out by the EU team in the Poverty and Equity Global Practice between May 2020 and May 2022. Data sets, to a certain extent harmonized, are already available for the four countries in the EU in which there is a country program. In Romania, eight survey rounds have been conducted. These surveys provide information on food insecurity and job losses, among other outcomes in the post-COVID-19 period. However, the surveys do not collect information about income levels, so these data need to be combined with the EU-SILC to understand the poverty and inequality picture. A new survey round is being conducted in June 2023.

Other data sources include

- **Romanian Household Budget Survey (HBS):** HBS is a multipurpose, nationally representative survey implemented by the INS. The survey was first administered in April 1994 as the Integrated Household Survey (IHS) and in 2001, the IHS was replaced with the HBS. The HBS is a continuous, quarterly survey that collects information on household composition, income, expenditure, consumption, and other aspects of population living standards.

- **2016 and 2021 EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II):** EU-MIDIS II is a survey of around 26,000 people with immigrant or ethnic minority backgrounds living in the EU collected by the FRA; though outdated, it provides key data on the Roma population. The data are representative of Roma living in the nine EU member states in geographic or administrative units with a density of Roma population higher than 10 percent who self-identify as "Roma" or as members of one of the other groups covered by this umbrella term. This report relies on official statistics published by FRA.

- **2016 Life in Transition Survey:** The 2023 Life in Transition survey round is in the field and was not available for this publication, so the 2016 round was used for this report. These data can provide statistics on care provision in Romania vis-à-vis other EU countries.

- **Population Census:** The latest Population Census was in 2011; the census is one of the few information sources covering minority communities who are hard to reach. A new census was undertaken in 2022, but information is not yet publicly available.

As with the previous CGA, data from complementary sources are used to present comparisons with EU regional averages or peer countries in the region. These include Eurostat statistics, the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI), Global FINDEX, UNICEF MICS, Eurobarometer Surveys on Discrimination (2015) and Gender Equality (2017) in the EU, World Values Survey, the UNDP Social Norms index, and so forth. Finally, information on the legal and institutional environment is mostly based on the Women, Business, and the Law database, and more detailed revision of specific legislation and implementation gaps.

Annex 5.
Stakeholder Consultations
and Mapping

We conducted a stakeholder mapping exercise to identify key stakeholders working on gender equality. External consultations with a wide range of stakeholders from government, development partners, and NGOs to consult and brainstorm ideas and priorities on gender equality were held from October 2022 to April 2023. Consultations were complemented by desk research to get a more granular picture of the different programs. The main objectives were to validate some of the key challenges and constraints to access to endowments, economic opportunities, and voice and agency, as identified in previous analytical studies and the current study, with local stakeholders; map existing activities and programs initiated by different actors; and, based on the findings, identify key entry points for engagement, focusing on areas in which the World Bank can add value compared to other stakeholders in Romania. Table A.3 summarizes the list of agencies consulted to date and the key focus areas of the programs reviewed.

Table A.3. Stakeholder Mapping

Institution	Brief Description	Website
Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities	The Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities was established in 2021 and functions according to E.M. 121/2021 and G.D. 22/2022. The ministry coordinates national policies in the following areas: family, youth, child protection and adoption, domestic violence, and equal opportunities between women and men. The ministry oversees the implementation as well as the monitoring of policies and national strategies in the listed areas and ensures coordination with local-level administration. The Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities coordinates the activity of two public institutions that are responsible for sectorial policies in the areas of equal opportunities and domestic violence and children's rights: The National Agency of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men and the National Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption. Gender- and age-disaggregated data remain a challenge for the monitoring of policy implementation across the work of the ministry and its coordinated institutions.	https://mfamilie.gov.ro/

Institution	Brief Description	Website
Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity	The Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity (MLSS) coordinates legislation and policy in the areas of employment (including unemployment benefits and programs, maternity, and parental leave), social protection, social benefits and poverty reduction, social integration, and social dialogue. MLSS is also responsible for policy design in disability, elderly care, and social service delivery. MLSS coordinates the activities of the following institutions: the Labor Inspection, the National Agency of Payments and Social Inspection, the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disability, the Public Pension Authority, and the National Agency for Employment. Within MLSS, one workstream focuses on policy measures and monitors performance indicators on tackling poverty according to the National Strategy Regarding Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction 2022–2027. Gender- and age-disaggregated data remain a challenge in the monitoring of policy measures across the sectors.	http://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/index.php/ro
Ministry of Justice	The Ministry of Justice is the specialized body of the central public administration, with legal personality, subordinated to the government, that contributes to the proper functioning of the judiciary and to ensuring the conditions of the administration of justice as a public service and the defense of legal order and of the rights and freedoms of citizens. The Ministry of Justice is also a program operator for the Norway Grants Justice Program, which aims to "strengthen the rule of law" through a series of interventions targeting access to civil rights for vulnerable groups and equal treatment and protection in the justice system. One priority area of the program is that of domestic and gender-based violence. Through this stream of funding the Ministry of Justice and the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men aim to improve central and local authorities' capacity to implement the Istanbul Convention. The project "Supporting the implementation of the Istanbul Convention in Romania" (2,500,000 euros; implemented by the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men) aims to improve the capacity of the Romanian authorities to implement the Istanbul Convention, including by establishing 10 centers for survivors of sexual violence and 8 counseling centers for aggressors and by running a campaign for preventing domestic violence and violence against women. The project "VERA - Positive change through integrated actions in difficult times!", funded by The Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014-2021, managed by the Ministry of Justice and implemented by the National Agency for Men and Women Equality (ANES) aims to improve and adapt the public response capacity of central and local authorities in order to provide better and adequate support to victims of domestic and gender-based violence.	https://www.just.ro/despre-noi/programe-si-strategii/programe-si-proiecte/

Institution	Brief Description	Website
Ministry of Education	The Ministry of Education is the governmental body tasked with the responsibility of developing and implementing national education policy. It has a mandate to legislate and provide the policy framework for all stages of education, including early and preschool education, compulsory primary and secondary education, and tertiary education. The Ministry of Education finances and oversees human resources in education. Among the values assumed by the Ministry of Education in its mission and vision are those connected with creating an educational environment that ensures the harmonious development of all its beneficiaries by promoting excellence and facilitating equal access to education. The ministry aims to give all beneficiaries access to a quality education so that everyone can reach their maximum potential. The ministry ensures the recognition and guarantee of the beneficiaries' rights to preserve, develop, and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identity within the educational process. The ministry has set forth the following priorities regarding equal opportunities: (1) reducing school dropout through a national plan of action, (2) fighting educational poverty, and (3) eliminating school segregation and enhancing the quality of pre-university education. In Romania, compulsory education starts at age six. In the fall of 2021, the Ministry of Education took over the management and coordination of early childhood care facilities (zero to two years) from the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Education worked on an ample reform of the educational system that materialized in a new draft Education Law, tabled before the Romanian Parliament in March 2023. The Ministry of Education collects gender- and age-disaggregated data regarding the school participation of boys and girls at all educational levels. The ministry does not collect gender-disaggregated data related to school-related GBV nor does it provide for distinct guidance on formal or informal educational materials or activities related to gender equality or equal opportunities between women and men.	https://www.edu.ro/ https://www.edu.ro/proiecte_legi_educatie_Romania_Educata

Institution	Brief Description	Website
ional Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES)	The National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (ANES) is the government agency tasked with promoting the principles of gender equality and with the prevention and sanctioning of domestic violence. ANES is currently under the coordination of the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities (as of 2021). ANES was established in 2004. Its main mission was to implement the European Union acquis on gender equality and nondiscrimination within the national legislative framework. The ANES mandate also entailed cross-government partnerships and a mainstreaming of gender-equality outcomes within sectorial policies. The agency was disbanded between 2009 and 2016. Government Decision No 177/2016 reinstated ANES and expanded its role to cover two priority areas: (1) the promotion of gender equality with a view to eliminating all discrimination against women and (2) the prevention and combatting of domestic violence through victim-centered policies and programs. ANES strategic actions are based on two strategy documents: • The National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence 2021–2027, adopted by the government in December 2022; • The National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Sexual Violence SINERGIE 2020–2030, adopted by the government in 2020; At the county level, ANES works to promote its mission through county-level commissions for equal opportunities (COJES), which are ad hoc committees that gather representatives of local administrations with representatives of the County Directorates for Social Assistance and Child Protection (DGASPC), representatives of the County Agency for Employment, local NGOs, and others on a regular basis. The bulk of the work on prevention and management of domestic violence lies with the DGASPC. Some counties set up special structures such as bureaus for domestic violence within the DGASPC. Local NGOs have also set up specialized services for survivors of domestic violence, including shelters and counseling services. Since 2016, ANES has operated a national helpline offering support and information to survivors of domestic violence, victims of sexual harassment, and victims of human trafficking. ANES is currently implementing projects aimed at improving the capacity to respond to domestic violence and sexual violence of local-level stakeholders. At the same time, ANES is working toward expanding knowledge on gender budgeting across various government departments. ANES collects annual sex- and age-disaggregated data on usage of domestic violence social services. The data that ANES collects also include information on types of violence. ANES also collects annual data on Women and Men in Decision Making Positions within the central public administration. In 2018, ANES commissioned a nationwide survey on the main forms of domestic violence.	https://anes.gov.ro/
National Agency for Roma (NAR) Not included in the country mission for this project	The National Agency for Roma (NAR) is a specialized body of the public administration that promotes policies, activities, projects and sectoral programs aimed at improving the situation of Roma people living in Romania by promoting and asserting Roma people's rights. The NAR is subordinated to the government and coordinated by the General Secretariat of the Romanian Government. The NAR has designed and is currently implementing the Government Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian citizens of Roma background 2022–2027, adopted by the Government Decision 560/2022. This policy document makes references to Roma women's needs across the document's objectives and identifies some targeted interventions in the areas of employment, education, access to health, and preservation of Roma cultural heritage. The NAR does not collect gender- and age-disaggregated data, but has proposed a series of gender-disaggregated indicators for the measurement of the outcomes of the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian citizens with a Roma background.	http://www.anr.gov.ro/

Institution	Brief Description	Website
National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) Not included in the country mission for this report	The National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) is an autonomous institution under parliamentary control that monitors, controls, and enforces the principle of nondiscrimination. The council, set up in 2002, acts as a quasi-judicial body with the tasks of protecting human rights and administratively sanctioning discrimination along a series of 14 protected characteristics. The NCCD has the legal right to intervene before the court in cases that fall under its competency and to formally decide on complaints registered with the institution. The NCCD issues decisions and recommendations that are legally binding for the parties involved in the case. NCCD also conducts research into social attitudes and perceptions regarding discrimination in Romania and produces publications relating to antidiscrimination, human rights, legislation, and minority rights issues.	https://www.cncd.ro/despre-cncd-prezentare-generala/
Ministry of Finance	The Ministry of Finance is organized and functions as a specialized body of the central public administration, with legal personality, subordinated to the government, that develops, implements, and monitors the fiscal policies and the budgetary policies of the government. The Ministry of Finance policy aim is to ensure a safe and predictable fiscal landscape as well as efficient and predictable management of the national budget. At present, the Ministry of Finance is not developing a gender-budgeting framework but, in line with EU instruments, the Ministry of Finance is scoping the need for a green-budgeting framework as part of the measures under the National Plan for Resilience and Recovery.	https://mfinante.gov.ro/ro/web/site
Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism	The Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Tourism is a government branch that is tasked with policy and program development in the following sectors: development of entrepreneurship, enabling a business environment for small- and medium-sized enterprises, policies targeting sustainable tourism, and commercial policies for liberal professions. The ministry aims to stimulate the initiative of economic operators in order to become competitive in the EU market. The ministry was established in December 2021 and, in the field of entrepreneurship, it has set up a grant scheme for small- and medium-sized businesses owned by women. This is a continuation of a similar project that encouraged women to develop their own businesses (2018–2020).	http://www.imm.gov.ro/ro/
National Institute of Statistics (INS)	The National Institute of Statistics (INS) is the main producer of official statistical data. It is responsible for the coordination of all activities at the national level regarding the development and dissemination of European statistics. INS has the mission to meet the information needs of all categories of users of statistical data and information by collecting, producing, and disseminating data in accordance with the Law on the Organization and Functioning of Official Statistics in Romania. Currently, INS is working on finalizing the full data of the National Census conducted in 2021. Partial official results were released in December 2022, with the final results expected to be made available at the end of 2023. Since 2021, INS has partnered with the Government Department for Sustainable Development to develop a statistical matrix and indicators to measure national targets in the framework of Sustainable Development Goals. The matrix includes a series of indicators mirroring national targets under SDG 5 – Gender Equality.	https://INS.ro/cms/

Institution	Brief Description	Website
United Nations Agencies in Romania		
UNICEF	Social inclusion of all children is at the core of UNICEF's mandate in Romania. UNICEF Romania has developed two models of social inclusion for vulnerable children: The Minimum Package of Services for vulnerable children and their families and the Quality Inclusive Education Package. These models focus on preventing unnecessary separation of children from their families, poverty reduction, prevention of early pregnancy, illness, discrimination, absenteeism, and school dropout. The models are now ready to be scaled up nationwide, with national or European funding. Through Communication for Social Change campaigns, UNICEF Romania is also working on preventing discrimination and violence against children and empowering parents, caregivers, and legal guardians to provide a protective, stimulating environment for every child. UNICEF Romania and ANES have partnered through an MOU in order to promote and integrate a gender dimension in Romanian public policies in the benefit of children and adolescents.	https://www.unicef.org/romania/
WHO	WHO has partnered with the Romanian government to provide technical assistance on various public health policy issues, including the management of the COVID-19 crisis, mental health issues, maternal and perinatal health, costs, and financial barriers in accessing health care, and more recently on responding to the health needs associated with the refugee crisis associated with the war in Ukraine.	https://www.who.int/romania
UNHCR	UNHCR Romania works toward ensuring that asylum seekers can safely access a safe territory, that they have access to fair and efficient asylum procedures, and that reception conditions are decent and safe. UNHCR also promotes the effective integration of recognized refugees into host societies or their resettlement when it is not possible for them to remain in the country that granted them refugee status. UNHCR has partnered with the Romanian government and offered support to refugees fleeing the Ukraine conflict. UNHCR operations have increased dramatically since the war in Ukraine. UNHCR publishes monthly reports on the status of refugee communities in Romania and conducts regular needs assessments for various groups of refugees from Ukraine. Prevention of GBV and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse are at the core of the refugee response.	Link to data portal https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10782
Civil Society Organizations		
Center for Policy Research on Equal Opportunities, Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest	The Center for Policy Research on Equal Opportunities is an academic research center affiliated with the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest. The center is not only an academic research center, but also a teaching and expertise unit that aims to investigate the processes of democratization and citizenship building and the design and evaluation of public policies, as well as the social processes that construct gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual differences in hierarchical structures. The center's most recent projects have focused on women and their contribution to Romanian literature and a multicountry research project that examined the anti-gender campaigns in three European countries: Romania, Bulgaria, and Belgium.	https://cpes.fspub.unibuc.ro/
Coalition for Gender Equality (NGO Network)	The Coalition for Gender Equality was established in 2014 and brought together five women's rights NGOs (Center Partnership for Equality, Front Association, Society for Feminist Analyses AnA, Association for Liberty and Gender Equality, E-Romnja Association). The mission of this coalition is to create opportunities for strengthening civil society organizations active in gender equality and to promote the principles of equal opportunities between women and men in private and public life. The coalition conducts advocacy campaigns for the introduction of gender equality activities in schools, supports the introduction of evidence-based sexuality education in schools, acts as a watchdog for women's rights, counters gender-based discrimination, and promotes an equal partnership between women and men in private life with an equal sharing of care responsibilities.	https://ongen.ro/

Institution	Brief Description	Website
Violence Against Women Network (VIF Network)	This is an informal structure, without juridical personality, getting together 24 Romanian NGOs active in the field of women rights and protection from gender-based violence and discrimination. The mission of the network is to increase the protection of women survivors of violence through improved legislation, access to specialized services for survivors of gender-based violence, and access to information and awareness for potential victims, as well as the elimination of GBV through education, information, and advocacy. All member organizations are politically independent, are aligned with human rights principles and work toward eliminating racism, sexism, homophobia, and gender-based discrimination. The member organizations have expertise in various fields, which include advocacy, criminal law reform, provision of services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual violence, promotion of Roma women's rights, and gender research.	https://violentaimpotrivafemeilor.ro/ Filia Organization Association of Independent Midwives
Professional Women's Network Romania (PWN)	The Professional Women's Network Romania is part of **PWN Global**, a worldwide nonprofit association that aims to support and encourage women to develop themselves at a professional level. The Professional Women's Network in Romania was established at the end of 2011. Currently the organization focuses on promoting women's leadership skills in business, on providing peer mentorship, and encouraging women to break the glass ceiling at the top of decision-making. The organization also focuses on promoting entrepreneurship among women through an annual Entrepreneurship Academy. PWN has also done extensive advocacy for promoting gender quotas on company boards.	https://pwnbucharest.net/about-us/what-we-offer.html
Filia Center	FILIA Center is a feminist organization that focuses on bringing women's voices closer to decision-making by direct community work and advocacy, activism and outreach, and research and analysis. In past years, FILIA was a knowledge and advocacy hub for issues such as women's access to reproductive health, prevention and combating of domestic violence, and prevention of sexual harassment in universities. In 2018, Filia Center commissioned a gender barometer to test the perceptions of Romanians on gender equality. More recently, Filia Center has conducted research on access to abortion services, polled women's experiences in the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic, analyzed gender gaps in sports, and continued its projects and advocacy on combating domestic violence.	https://centrulfilia.ro/
E- Romnja	E-Romnja is a Roma feminist nonprofit organization that promotes the rights of Roma women and girls through community development work, advocacy, and monitoring. The activities of the organization are aimed at involving and consolidating the position of Roma women in Romanian society, in the community, and at the workplace through the following actions: advocating for programs that address the issues of Roma women; introducing the gender perspective in all projects and programs designed for Roma and not only; improving policies and measures taken in the areas of the labor market, education, health, justice, culture, or any other field that could bring security and protection; claiming the rights of Roma women; and encouraging civic and political participation at the local and national levels.	https://e-romnja.ro/
V.I.S. Association Victims of Sexual Crimes Association	The Victims of Sexual Crimes Association works toward changing judicial practices by educating prosecutors, judges, police officers, and child protection specialists on child-friendly interviewing techniques. These techniques are important during the investigation of sexual crimes committed against children.	https://www.zidebine.ro/ong_partener/asociatia-vis/

Institution	Brief Description	Website
Independent Midwives Association	The Independent Midwives Association (AMI) is a nonprofit organization that has provided medical care for pregnant women, mothers, and newborns for the past decade. The organization also provides medical services and helps vulnerable people and refugees to navigate the public health system, and when needed provides reimbursement of medical costs to the most vulnerable of its beneficiaries. The Independent Midwives Association has also advocated for women's rights to access quality and affordable reproductive health services and worked toward the prevention and combating of sexual and gender-based violence. The organization is also delivering training to other health professionals on the needs of the most vulnerable women. The Independent Midwifes Association continues to argue for a greater professional recognition of midwifery in Romania.	https://moasele.ro/despre/
Giuvlipen	Giuvlipen is the first independent Roma feminist theater company in Romania. The organization has also worked as a catalyst for setting up the first Roma Actors Association, the aim of which was to provide a space for reflection and action in the field of art as a form of combating Roma exclusion. At the national level, the Association of Roma Actors advocates for the creation of the first Roma Theater in Romania, which will also serve as a center of resources and expertise on Roma culture in Romania.	https://giuvlipen.com/en/
Fundatia Corona	Corona Foundation works toward the development of local rural communities. The foundation focuses on environmental and social interventions in order to ensure sustainable and equitable development for rural areas. Corona Foundation also advocates for rural women's rights and opportunities and works toward creating productive employment alternatives for women in rural areas.	https://www.fundatiacorona.ro/
Romanian Women's Lobby	The Romanian Women's Lobby (RoWL) is an umbrella association that is a member of the European Women's Lobby (EWL). RoWL's mission is to promote real and effective equality between women and men in all spheres of public and private life by fostering a friendly environment for gender equality in Romania. The organization works to establish equality goals for Romania, advance EU policies that aim to strengthen women's human rights, and support new and young women's voices in public debates. The organization has experience with gender budgeting at the local level. The organization was established in 2007.	https://romanianwomenslobby.com

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