

ROMANIA

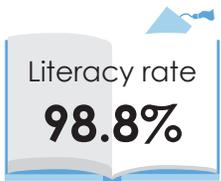
Romania has dramatic mountain scenery, a coastline on the Black Sea and is known for the forested region of Transylvania, which are ringed by the Carpathian Mountains. It has preserved medieval towns and there are many fortified churches and castles, notably the cliff-top Bran Castle, long associated with the Dracula legend. It has seen numerous empires come and go from the Roman and Ottoman to the Austro-Hungarian. Bucharest, the country's capital, is the site of the gigantic, Communist-era Palatul Parlamentului government building. Romania borders Bulgaria, Ukraine, Hungary, Serbia, and Moldova. Romania joined NATO in 2004 and is the seventh most populous member state of the European Union, which it joined in January 2007. The national language is Romanian and the currency is the leu.



Population
21,457,116



92,043 Mi²
Slightly smaller than Oregon

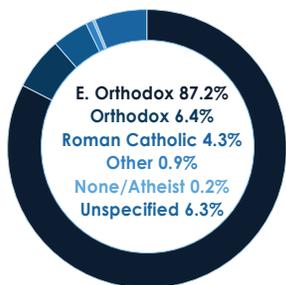


Literacy rate
98.8%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Romanian families usually have 1-2 children and grandparents and extended family often live nearby. It is common for both parents to work in families that live in larger cities, but mothers will often stay at home in families that live in the country. Romania is known as a matriarchal society where women tend to set the rules and make financial decisions, especially in rural areas. Communication between family members is usually informal, but may be more formal among extended relatives. Increasingly, parents are encouraging their children to be more direct and open in their communication style.

It is considered normal for family members to have time to themselves and to pursue individual activities. At least one daily meal is usually eaten together as a family, but other meals may be eaten separately depending on schedules. It is generally understood that a family member should ask first before borrowing something.

Teenagers usually have chores that follow traditional gender roles and will help keep their rooms clean and are responsible for cleaning up after themselves in the house. Children receive a small monthly stipend from the government and parents may also give their children money for daily expenses since it is not common for teenagers to work part time.

The level of parental involvement differs from family to family. Some parents may empower their children to make their own decisions while others choose the activities their children will participate in outside of school. Parents usually drive their children to school if public transportation is not available. They usually enforce rules such as limiting time spent on the computer if the student isn't doing well in school. Teenagers usually decide for themselves how they spend their leisure time.

Owning pets is common for families who live in houses and less common for those in apartments. The most common pets are cats and dogs and they are not usually treated as family members.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships in Romania are often formed through school and extracurricular activities, but seldom with relatives. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. The term "friend" is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships.

Teenagers interact with each other through social media, at school, or while participating in activities offered in the community. It is common to borrow small amounts of money between friends and is always expected to be paid back in full.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally take 8-10 subjects per semester and grades are based on homework, oral and written examinations and participation in additional academic activities which include Olympiads. Students choose high schools specializing in mathematics, foreign language or information technology beginning in the 9th grade and continue with that curriculum until graduation. Students stay with the same group of students for all four years of high school. Classes are usually mixed genders with the exception of religious schools which may be segregated by gender. Students have the option of choosing 1-2 subjects a semester which must be approved by the school administration. Cafeterias and a designated lunch hour are not common in Romanian schools, so students usually bring lunch from home.

Cheating is not allowed, but consequences vary. Some teachers fail students while others may just give a warning. Students are not expelled for cheating and parents are not usually called. Cheating during a national exam might result in a student needing to repeat a school year or simply having to re-take the exam. Wearing uniforms is becoming more common in Romanian high schools.

There is one teacher designated for each group of students who organizes parent meetings during the year. There are no report cards in Romanian schools and each student is given a record book which has the grades signed by each teacher instead. Students show their appreciation to their teachers by thanking them and buying them gifts for different holidays.

There are some schools that support extracurricular activities, but mostly there are many clubs and activities outside of school which are available in the community, and are usually fee-based. Students in the city usually have more opportunities for after school clubs and sports than those in rural areas.

FOOD

Romanian cuisine usually contains large portions of meat and, although uncommon, vegetarianism is becoming more popular among younger people. Restaurant portion sizes vary and it is common to ask to take food home.

RELIGION

Martisor is a holiday to celebrate the beginning of spring during which boys (and girls in some regions) give red and white bracelets or ornaments, called martisoare, to teachers, family, and friends. Orthodox and Catholic Christianity are the two main religions in Romania. Orthodox churches do not serve as community centers; Catholic churches may provide activities for children. Families do not go to church often but attend services during major holidays. Some people do not eat meat, eggs, or dairy for 40 days before the Christmas and Easter holidays. During Easter, Romanians paint eggs and eat lamb and a traditional pastry called pască. They also may go to church to retrieve a candle known as a “holy light” to bring home in celebration of the holiday. During Christmas, families usually get a tree and sing carols and in some parts of the country, children go from door to door with a decorated star that announces the birth of Jesus. On December 31, children also go door to door to give best wishes for the New Year and receive sweets and money.

PERSONAL CARE

Romanians usually shower daily and it is common for them to wear clothes more than once. Mothers often do the laundry for the household and iron clothes. Teenagers are responsible for tidying up the bathroom after they use it. It is common to use a bath towel more than once, and each family member usually has both a bath towel and a washcloth in the bathroom.



The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 27,000 alumni.