

## STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION OF ROMANIA ACCORDING TO RELIGION AT THE 1992 AND 2002 CENSUSES

### Introduction

From 1992 to 2002, the population of Romania changed considerably. The most significant change of all is the decrease of the population number that is going to affect in the long run future generations. As the population number decreased, several structure changes occurred, among which the religion structure change.

The population study according to this feature was made on the grounds of the data of the 1992 and 2002 Population Censuses. As we all know, the census recordings were made based on the free statements of the censused person, sacred principle with every census.

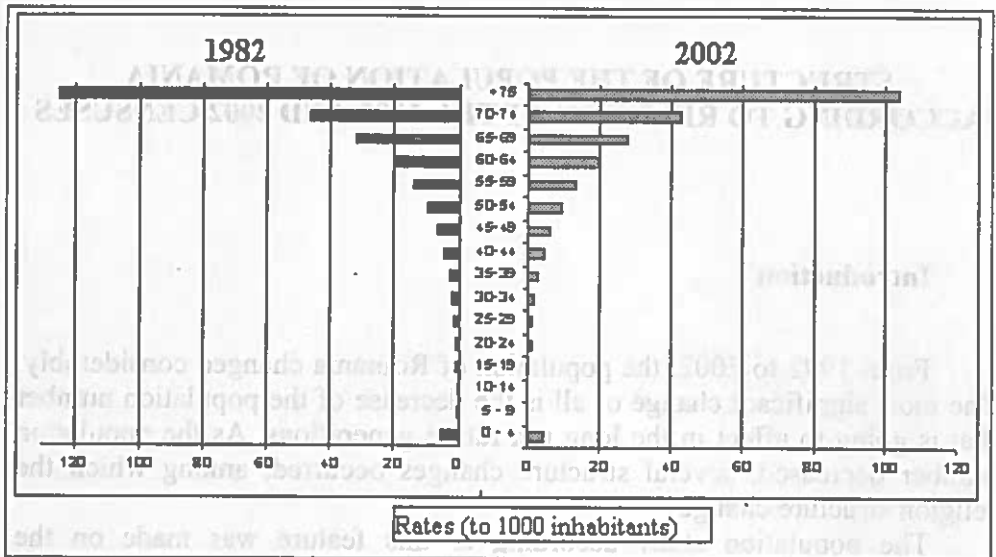
From 1992 to 2002, the population of Romania lowered from 22,810,035 to 21,680,974 persons, that is by 1,129,061 persons, phenomenon that is due to the negative natural growth, to which the negative balance of the international migration is added.

Population birth rate is continuously decreasing. Thus, over the considered period, the conjectural index of fertility (the number of children born by a woman during her fertile life, from 15 to 49 years) is under the generation replacement level. In 1992, the value of this index was of 1.5 and in 2002 it was of only 1.3 children.

The second process that contributes to the formation of the negative natural growth is mortality, which rose systematically from 1992 to 1999, after which it started lowering, reaching 11.4% in 2002. As to the mortality rate shared on five-year age groups, even at a brief analysis we can see the following phenomena (Figure 1):

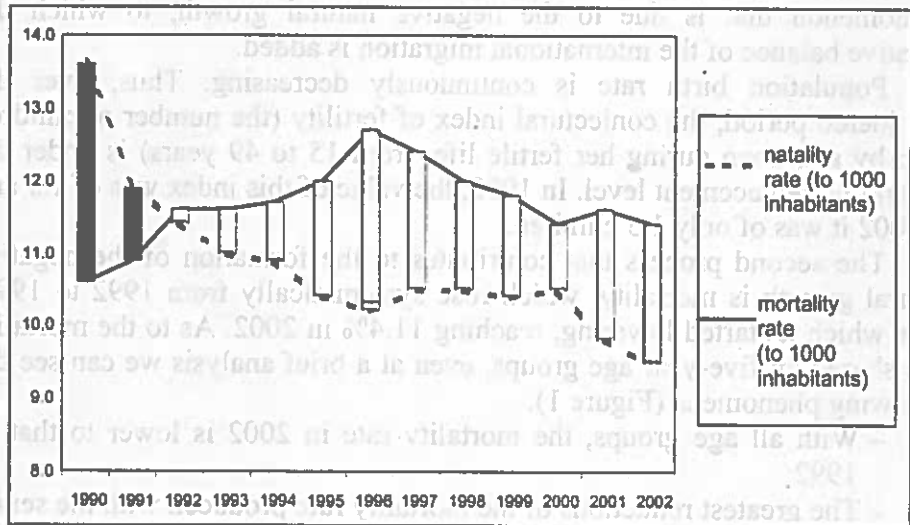
- With all age groups, the mortality rate in 2002 is lower to that of 1992;
- The greatest reductions of the mortality rate produced with the senior groups: 65–69 years (4.2 to 1000 inhabitants), 70–74 years (3.9 to 1000 inhabitants), 75 years and over 75 years (21.6 to 1000 inhabitants);

Figure 1. Birth rate, mortality and natural



Birth rate to 1000 inhabitants  
Mortality rate to 1000 inhabitants

Figure 2. Mortality rate on age groups  
Rates (to 1000 inhabitants)



These values show that the mortality rate in Romania is greater as compared to that in Central and West European countries.

From 1990 to 2002 a "scissors" of the negative natural growth of the population was created, as the mortality rate surpasses every year the birth rate (see Fig. 2).

#### *Population structure according to religion*

The data published on grounds of the 1992 and 2002 censuses make reference to 15 religions, including to the group "another religion". The later group comprised the Old-Style Orthodox Church for 1992 and the Armenian Church and the Gospel Church – the Roman Gospel Church for 2002. Besides these, the following groups were recorded: "Atheists", "Without religion" and "Undeclared religion".

It is worth noticing that from the population total, a percentage of 99.8% stated their belonging to a religion. Persons who stated to be atheists, without religion or did not state their religion are merely 0.20%.

Both in 1992 and in 2002, religions having at least 50,000 believers were, in a descending order, the following: Orthodox, Roman-Catholic, Reformed, Pentecostal, Greco-Catholic, Baptist, Adventist, Unitarian, and Muslim.

A comparative approach of the population distribution according to religion and faith with the 1992 and 2002 censuses may be made starting from the data of Table 1.

#### *Orthodox faith*

The preliminary results of the 2002 census on the population structure according to religion show that the Orthodox population is 86.8% and has 18,817,975 believers. Although the percentage of the Orthodox remained relatively constant, in 1992 and 2002 their number lowered by 984,414 persons.

Such a loss is closely connected to the reduction of the number of total population by 1,129,061 persons.

Although spread all over the country, some denominations have a certain area concentration, on grounds of historical and ethnical factors.

In the peri-Carpathian area, which includes the historical provinces of Moldova, Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea, upon the 2002 census, 18 counties and the city of Bucharest had more than 95% rate of Orthodox population, out of which two counties had more than 99% (Olt county by 99.3% and Valcea county by 99.1%), and 8 counties with more than 98% - 90%. Then three counties follow with a rate of 90.5% - 92.9% and 3

counties with 81.2% - 88.1%. These data show that the peri-Carpathian area has the highest degree of population homogeneity in relation to religion and ethnos. Romanians are at a rate of 95% Orthodox.

In the intra-Carpathian area (Transylvania, Banat, Crisana, Maramureş), except for the Covasna (22.4%) and Harghita counties (13.3), the other 14 counties have also a majority of Orthodox population, although slightly lower, ranging from 83% - to 86% - 5 counties; 72 - 79% - 4 counties; 60% - 67% - 3 counties; 51% - 53% - 2 counties.

The evolution of the denominational structure on social life environments shows us that in the rural areas the percentage of the Orthodox population is 87%, slightly higher as to 1992, while in the urban areas it slightly decreased from 86.8% to 86.3%. We can say that there is a balanced distribution of the Orthodox population in the rural and urban areas.

Table 1

Structure of the population of Romania as to religion with the 1992 and 2002 censuses

| Religion                      | 2002       |        | 1992       |        | 2002 as to 1992 % |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------|------------|--------|-------------------|
|                               | Number     | %      | Number     | %      |                   |
| Orthodox                      | 18,817,975 | 86.80  | 19,802,389 | 86.81  | 95.0              |
| Roman-Catholic                | 1,026,429  | 4.73   | 1,161,942  | 5.09   | 8.3               |
| Greco-Catholic                | 191,556    | 0.88   | 223,327    | 0.98   | 85.8              |
| Reformed                      | 701,077    | 3.23   | 802,454    | 3.52   | 87.4              |
| Pentecostal                   | 324,462    | 1.50   | 220,824    | 0.97   | 146.9             |
| Baptist                       | 126,639    | 0.58   | 109,462    | 0.48   | 115.7             |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> Day Adventist | 93,670     | 0.43   | 77,546     | 0.34   | 120.8             |
| Unitarian                     | 66,944     | 0.31   | 76,708     | 0.34   | 87.3              |
| Muslim                        | 67,257     | 0.31   | 55,928     | 0.25   | 120.3             |
| Gospel Christian              | 44,476     | 0.21   | 49,963     | 0.22   | 89.0              |
| Old-Rite Christian            | 38,147     | 0.18   | 28,141     | 0.12   | 135.6             |
| Synodo - Presbyterian         | 27,112     | 0.13   | 21,221     | 0.09   | 127.8             |
| Lutheran Evangelic            | 8,716      | 0.04   | 39,119     | 0.17   | 22.3              |
| Mosaic                        | 6,057      | 0.03   | 9,670      | 0.04   | 62.6              |
| Another religion*             | 107,374    | 0.49   | 88,557     | 0.39   | 121.2             |
| Atheists                      | 8,524      | 0.04   | 10,331     | 0.05   | 82.5              |
| Without religion              | 12,825     | 0.06   | 24,314     | 0.10   | 52.7              |
| Undeclared religion           | 11,734     | 0.05   | 8,139      | 0.04   | 144.2             |
| Population total              | 21,680,974 | 100.00 | 22,810,035 | 100.00 | 95.1              |

Source: Census of the population and dwellings made on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1992. *The ethnic and denominational structure of the population*. National Board for Statistics, Bucharest, 1995; Census of the population and dwellings made on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 2002. National Board of Statistics, Bucharest 2003, in [www.insse.ro](http://www.insse.ro)

\* Including the Evangelic and Armenian denominations for 2002, and the Old-Rite Orthodox Church and the Armenian Church for 1992.

#### *Roman-Catholic faith*

The Roman-Catholic faith is represented by 1,026,429 adepts, which stand for 4.7% of the country population, being at a low as to 1992, when it had a rate of 5.1%. The same lowering tendency takes place with the environments, in the urban areas the Romano-Catholic population lowering much under the rural population. Roman-Catholic believers are at a rate of more than 50% Hungarian, almost one-third Romanian and about 6% German. As for territories, the Roman-Catholic population has a percentage of more than 9% in 9 counties, where about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the adepts of this religion are focused.

Among the counties with the largest Romano-Catholic population percentage, we may mention: Harghita (65.3%), Covasna (36.2%), Satu Mare (18.0%), Bacău (17.0%), Neamț (10.9%), Timiș (10.6%). As to 1992, the percentages of these counties are getting lower, except for the Neamț county, whose percentage remained relatively constant.

#### *Greco-Catholic faith*

The Greco-Catholic faith is made up of 191,556 adepts, which stood in 2002 for 0.9% of the country population, having been lowering since 1992 by 31,771 persons. Almost  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Greco-Catholic population is in the urban areas. The counties where the Greco-Catholic population is focused are: Satu Mare (8.0%), Maramureș (5.5%), Cluj (4.3%), Alba (3.6%), Bihor and Mureș by 2.3% each.

#### *Reformed (Calvin) faith*

The Reformed (Calvin) faith had in 2002 a number of 701,077 adepts as to 802,454 in 1992. Their proportion within country population lowered from 3.52% to 3.23%. From the total of the Reformed persons, eight tenths are focused mostly in the following counties: Mureș (27.0%), Bihor (18.1%), Cluj (12.4%), Covasna (33.4%), Satu Mare (18.7%), Salaj (19.5%), Harghita (12.7%). More than half the Reformed-religion population lives in towns and cities, that is 54.5%. The adepts of this faith are at a rate of 95% Hungarian.

### *Pentecostal faith*

The Pentecostal faith is represented by 324,462 persons, rising since the last census by about 1.5 times. The percentage of the Pentecostal persons in the country population is of 1.5%, rising significantly since 1992, when it was 1%. This fast evolution is due to the increase of the number of the Pentecostal population in the rural areas and to the attracting of new adepts. At a rate of about 91% the adepts are Romanian.

Out of the Pentecostal population total, of 324,462, more than 2/3 are focused in 9 counties in the North, West and South-West of the country: Suceava (6.3%), Bihor (5.7%), Arad (6.2%), Timiș (4.2%), Cluj (2.9%), Bistrița Năsăud (6.3%), Hunedoara (3.4%), Maramureș (3.1%) and Botoșani (2.5%).

Except for Hunedoara county, where Pentecostal population lowered by 15% from 1992 to 2002 in the other country counties, including in Bucharest, this raised both relatively and absolutely.

### *Baptist faith*

The Baptist faith had in 2002 a number of 126,639 adepts, rising by 15.7% since 1992, with a rate of 0.60% of the total country population. Most believers are Romanian, about 86%. Over half the Baptist population was focused in Banat and Crișana. Therefore, its percentage was 3.7% for Bihor county, 4% for Arad county, 1.5% for Timiș county and 4.2% for Caraș-Severin county.

The number of Baptist persons has risen in all country counties, mostly in those with a low number of adepts, except for Harghita county, where their number remained constant. At a majority rate – about 85% - the adepts of this faith are Romanian.

### *7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist faith*

The 7<sup>th</sup> Day Adventist faith is represented, according to the last census, by 93,670 persons, rising by 16,124 since 1992. Over the same period, the percentage of the ones that adhered to this denomination within the whole country population has risen from 0.34% to 0.43%. Set a rate of 2/3, this denomination is spread in the rural areas. About 85% of the adept number are Romanian. From a territorial perspective, the Adventist population is not characterized by a significant focusing on certain areas, like other

denominations. More likely, we can see a better distribution of this population in the country counties. Nevertheless, more than 1/3 of the total believers are in a larger number in the Mureş, Teleorman, Prahova, Arad, Suceava, Dâmboviţa and Cluj counties.

A rather rare phenomenon is the fact that in absolutely all country counties, Bucharest included, from 1992 to 2002 the number of believers increased.

#### *Unitarian faith*

The Unitarian faith held in 2002 a rate of 0.31% of the country population, which means 66,964 believers, lowering by 9,764 adepts since 1992. The adepts are at a majority rate Hungarian.

It is worth noticing that more than 9/10 of this denomination is focused in the area of Braşov, Covasna, Harghita, Mureş, Cluj. Such a territorial distribution was determined mostly by historical factors.

#### *Muslim religion*

The Muslim religion has 67,257 believers, representing 0.31% of the country population. Since 1992, this population increased by 11.329 persons. Most part (more than 72%) is grouped in Constanţa county.

This religion is practiced mostly by Turks (51.9%) and Tartars (43.5%), Romanians (1.7%), Gipsies (1.1%), Jews (0.1%), other nationalities (1.7%).

#### *Gospel Christian faith*

The Gospel Christian faith has 44,476 adepts, representing 0.21% of the country population. As to the last-but-one census, the number of believers lowered by 11.0%. This faith is distributed at a rate of 3/4 in three main country areas:

- the area of Moldova with the Suceava, Botoşani, Neamţ, Iaşi, Vaslui counties;
- the area of Muntenia – Prahova, Dâmboviţa, Teleorman, Argeş and Bucharest;
- the area of Transilvania – Braşov, Sibiu, Alba and Mureş.

From an ethnic perspective, most of the ones who practice the Gospel Christian faith are Romanians, at a rate of about 88.8%, followed by Hungarians, 4.8%, Germans, 4.5%, other nationalities (Gipsies, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Bulgarians, etc.) – 2.9%.

### *Old-Rite Christian faith*

The Old-Rite Christian faith is represented by 38,147 persons, rising since 1992 by 10,000 new adepts. The percentage in the country population is 0.18%.

From the total number of Old-Rite Christians, most of them are grouped in Dobrogea and Brăila counties and in Moldova – Suceava, Iași, Vaslui, Neamț, Bacău counties.

Most part of Old-Rite Christian adepts are Russians – Lippovans (85%) and Romanians (13%).

### *Synodo-Presbyterian Lutheran Evangelic faith*

The Synodo-Presbyterian Lutheran Evangelic faith had at the last census 27,112 believers, rising since 1992 by 1/3. This faith is represented by Hungarians – 60%, Slovaks – 17%, Germans – 13%, and Romanians – 8%.

This rise cannot be explained by demographic indices (fertility, average age, etc.) and neither by the external migratory movement, factors which by their evolution have not determined such a rise.

A hypothesis that must be checked would be the transfer of population from other denominations, should we have available the necessary and sufficient data.

About 70% of the Synodo-Presbyterian Lutheran Evangelic population lives in urban areas. Most of them are focused in the area of Brașov, Sibiu, Mureș and Arad counties.

### *Augustan Evangelic Christian faith*

The Augustan Evangelic Christian faith comprises only 8716 persons in comparison to 39,119 in 1992. The percentage within the total population is very low (0.04%). The important lowering by more than 77% can be explained by the structure on nationalities of this denomination: Germans, by about 70%, Hungarians – 18%, Romanians – 9%. The main actor was the Germans' emigration, to which the indices of feminine fertility are also associated, much under the national average with Germans and Hungarians.

The adepts of this faith are localized at a great extent in the urban areas, about 62%, and from a territorial perspective they are focused in Brașov, Sibiu, Mureș, Alba counties.



### *Mosaic religion*

The Mosaic religion is represented with the 2002 census by a number of 6057 believers, lowering since the 1992 census by about 1/3. Most part of the Mosaic adepts are Jews, about 78%, the Romanians follow by 17%, the Hungarians by 2%, the rest of the ethnical groups having a percentage of less than 0.4%. The significant reduction of the Mosaic population is due to the more intense emigration of Jews and due to the fertility much under the country average, as the population aging processes with this ethnical group are getting more intense.

The Mosaic population lives at a rate of 98% in the urban areas. It is concentrated mostly in Bucharest, about 44% of the total number, and in Timiș, Iași and Cluj about 20%.

### **Conclusions**

Analyzing the evolution of the population structure according to religion based on the 1992 and 2002 censuses, it results that in Romania the prevailing religion is the Christian Orthodox religion, at a rate of 86.8%. The other faiths with percentages to 1% are: Roman-Catholic faith 4.7%, Reformed 3.2%, Pentecostal 1.5%. Over this period, it is worthwhile noticing a few important changes.

The significant lowering of the number of persons of Augustan Evangelic denomination and Mosaic denomination caused mainly by the migration of Germans and Jews, process noticed as early as since the 1956 census, should we consider only the after-war period.

The considerable increase of the number of persons belonging to Neoprottestant denominations: Pentecostals, Baptists, and Adventists, except for Gospel Christians whose number lowered slightly.

On this respect, through studies are necessary on the processes of lowering and increase of the percentages of such denominations, including on the extension of the Old-Rite Christian faith, the Synodo-Presbyterian Lutheran Evangelic and Muslim denominations.

When researching such a complex religious phenomenon, it is important to take into account the distribution of religions per ethnic group, from the perspective of interdependencies with the demographic and social-economic variables.

It is worth mentioning that in this paper we approached merely a few aspects regarding the structure of the population of Romania according to religion, depending on the partial statistical data of the 2002 and 1992 population and dwelling censuses. The continuation of research based on new statistical data is necessary, considering that the specialized literature has insufficient works related to this field.

### References

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