



Broadening the Agenda

**The Status of
Romani Women
in Romania**



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A Research Report Prepared for the Roma Participation Program
Open Society Institute–Budapest



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
NEW YORK

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Published by

Open Society Institute
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www.soros.org

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Cover designed by Jeanne Criscola | Criscola Design
Text layout and printing by Judit Kovács | Createch Ltd.
Cover photo courtesy of the European Roma Rights Center

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Acknowledgements

The Open Society Institute's Roma Participation Program (RPP) would like to acknowledge the great contribution of Mihai Surdu and Laura Surdu for compiling, analyzing, and presenting the data that forms the basis of this report. Additional gratitude goes to Raluca Maria Popa for providing useful information that enhanced the project. RPP is also deeply indebted to the entire project team—Daniela Beatrice Dicu, Ramona Dita, Lorena Doghi, Mirela Faitas, Lacramioara Georgescu, Crinuta Mariana Gutui, Estera Roxana Hetea, Margareta Hochin, and Mihaela Zatreanu—for collecting the data and all their other efforts that brought this project to fruition. Finally, we would like to thank all the Romani women who participated in the surveys. The generous sharing of their time and thoughts made this entire project possible.

*“I don’t think making distinctions is good.
We are all human beings, and we are all Romanian citizens.”*
—Romani woman in Cluj

Preface

Romani women in Romania, as elsewhere in Europe, are stereotyped as illiterate, loud, lazy, and irresponsibly burdening the state by bearing too many children, too early, and too often.

The findings in *Broadening the Agenda: The Status of Romani Women in Romania* offer a strong rebuttal to this set of crude, inaccurate, and racist stereotypes. The report provides a realistic portrayal of the challenges that Romani women in Romania face through first hand accounts and solid data compiled by Romani women themselves.

Broadening the Agenda comes at a crucial time as it coincides with a growing awareness of the urgent need for concrete data to develop policies that effectively address the forms of discrimination and exclusion that hit Romani women particularly hard.

The report clearly and convincingly shows that Romani women constitute the most deprived category of the Romanian population due to the discrimination and social exclusion they experience as a result of the intersection of race, gender, and class. Within Romania, Romani women are the ones who are most likely to suffer from inadequate health care and housing conditions, poor quality of education, and lack of job opportunities.

Romani girls learn in educational settings characterized by segregation and face discrimination from teachers. The lack of a stimulating learning environment, devoid of hope and inspiration, compounded by an absence of positive role models contributes to high dropout rates among Romani girls and boys. Acute poverty and the daily struggle for survival forces many girls to leave school and help their parents with household responsibilities.

The resulting lack of qualifications and marketable skills renders most Romani women powerless to compete in a labor market already permeated by anti-Gypsyism. This leaves many open to exploitation in the informal sector in their desperate need to put bread on the table at the end of the day.

The health status of Romani women in Romania is critically low, as they rarely go for check ups, and then only if they become seriously ill. Romani women with children see doctors more frequently but this is largely because of visits concerning the health of their children. Overall, a combination of discriminatory practices, high treatment costs, complex administrative procedures, and lack of ID papers and social insurance work together to effectively limit or deny health care to an overwhelming majority of Romani women in Romania.

The failure of national governments in Romania to elaborate and implement policies on Romani women raises serious concerns and suggests that there is little to no political will to address the problems they face as one of the most vulnerable groups in Romanian society. The government's adoption of the National Action Plan of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in February 2005, which also makes limited specific provisions for Romani women, has yet to be backed up with any budget allocations for 2006.

In the context of social inclusion within an enlarging European Union, Romani women face total exclusion. The European Commission's regular reports on Romania's progress toward accession have failed to reflect the situation of Romani women. They contain no recommendations that might prompt the Romanian government to recognize the need to create or amend mechanisms on gender equality that will have a positive impact on the lives of Romani women.

In addition to its participation in the EU accession process and the fact that it has Europe's largest Romani population, Romania was also chosen for this research because it offered a wealth of Romani human resources.

Beyond producing and analyzing critical data, *Broadening the Agenda* worked to empower Romani women and set a precedent by presenting research conducted by Roma about Roma. Romania had all the prerequisites for meeting these goals: confident Romani women with strong educational qualifications and deep backgrounds in social work in Romani communities; and a Romani academic with a wealth of research experience to coordinate the research, provide training and oversight for the field researchers, and analyze the collected data.

The report also provides much needed follow up to a number of priority research areas identified by the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, an initiative supported by OSI and the World Bank, and endorsed by the Prime Ministers of eight Central and Eastern European countries. The Decade is an unprecedented international effort to combat discrimination and ensure that Roma have equal access to education, housing, employment, and health care. A recurring theme in all deliberations concerning the Decade is the need for reliable data to inform policymakers in their efforts to combat social exclusion and poverty among Roma. To identify and challenge the effects of exclusion and poverty on Romani women, there is a criti-

cal need for gender disaggregated data. The qualitative and quantitative assessment of the status of Romani women in Romania contained in this report is designed to meet that need and provide a template for future Roma-led research.

In conclusion, *Broadening the Agenda* is intended to provoke debate among stakeholders, including Romani civil society, women's organizations, governmental institutions, and other state authorities. Policymakers should be able to use this report and its recommendations to promote effective policies that erase gender disparities and combat discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion. Finally, I hope that the Romani women who provided the data for this study by completing questionnaires and participating in focus groups will find *Broadening the Agenda* to be an accurate and worthy reflection on their lives and experience.

Isabela Mihalache
Roma Participation Program
Open Society Institute

I. Executive Summary

This report argues that the situation of Romani women can only be accurately addressed by focusing on the simultaneous forms of gender, racial, and ethnic based discrimination that are particular to Romani women and are often compounded by poverty and social exclusion. It is not enough to elaborate and implement initiatives that deal with each issue in isolation: first racial and ethnic discrimination, then gender discrimination, then poverty and social exclusion. Rather, the interaction and relationship among these issues and types of discrimination need to be recognized and form the basis of policies.

While there are significant national and EU-level laws and policies dealing with discrimination and gender equality, there are currently no comprehensive policies *specifically* addressing the situation of Romani women, either at the national or the European level. However, a growing number of advocacy initiatives are pushing for the incorporation of Romani women's issues into both the Roma inclusion and gender equality agendas.

The surveys and discussion results featured in this report are intended to provide some of the crucial data to help policymakers and Romani advocates effectively incorporate the needs and concerns of Romani women into Roma inclusion and gender equality agendas. The following are some of the main research findings:

Gender Inequality

- ▶ More than 63 percent of the Romani women surveyed declared that women have fewer rights than men in Romani communities.
- ▶ More than half of the Romani women respondents declared that equality between women and men is a pressing and unrealized goal in the following areas:
 - Decision making in the family (79 percent)
 - Raising and nurturing children (75 percent)
 - Access to labor markets and employment opportunities (59 percent)

Family Life

- ▶ Romani women in Romania get married and have children today at older ages than a generation ago, but the averages are still much lower than the national ones. Romani women get married, on average at 17 and have their first child when they are 19, while women in the general population get married at 26 and have their first child at 24.
- ▶ Eighty-six percent of Romani women surveyed felt it was their duty to do the house-keeping. When asked about their occupation, 68 percent of the women answered that they were “housewives.” Furthermore, there was the expectation among 83 percent of the Romani women surveyed that the man would be the main contributor to the family budget.
- ▶ For 41 percent of Romani women, the man was considered to be the leader of the family. Partnership in childcare was expected by 65 percent of Romani women, who considered that both parents are responsible for bringing up their children. In reality, it was mainly women who performed domestic work and childcare in Romani families.
- ▶ Girls’ virginity at marriage is still considered a value in Romani communities, according to Romani women’s statements. A girl’s conduct before marriage is closely observed by her family, as well as her future husband’s family, and violent sanctions are sometimes applied if she fails to obey the virginity norms.

Education

- ▶ There is a gender gap in access to formal education between Romani women (among whom, 23 percent have not received any formal education) and Romani men (among whom, 15 percent have not received any formal education). The gap in access to formal education is even more significant between Romani women and women in the general population. At 23 percent, the number of Romani women who have not received any kind of formal education is almost six times higher than among women in the general population (4 percent).
- ▶ Romani girls are generally expected to complete lower levels of education than Romani boys. The percentage of Romani women who believe that basic, primary school education is enough for girls (21 percent) is two and a half times higher than the percentage of those who share the same opinion for boys (8 percent).
- ▶ In 76 percent of Romani families, the mother alone is responsible for attending meetings and maintaining relations with the children's school. The mother is also the main provider of help with children's homework.
- ▶ Based on the answers of Romani women whose children attend school, we found that 19 percent of Romani children are currently learning in a segregated environment—i.e. their classmates are either mostly or entirely Roma. Of Romani women whose children attend segregated schools, 83 percent said they would prefer to have their children educated in a mixed learning environment.
- ▶ Of the Romani women surveyed, 56 percent felt that the educational system discriminates against Romani children. A significantly lower percentage (16 percent) of Romani women perceive that their girls suffer from gender discrimination in school.
- ▶ Romani women endorse strong gender segregation in job orientation for boys and girls. Romani women in our sample considered the following fields and occupations appropriate for girls: education—teacher and kindergarten teacher (28 percent); health care—physician or nurse (27 percent); garment industry—mainly seamstress (23 percent). By contrast, appropriate jobs for boys are considered to be: driver (19 percent); car mechanic (19 percent); engineer (15 percent); physician (14 percent) and lawyer (12 percent).

Health and Reproductive Rights

- ▶ Romani women evaluated their own health condition as poor—a cumulative 47 percent of Romani women declared they feel “neither good, nor bad,” “bad” or “very bad.” Children were perceived to be in much better health than their mothers, although approximately 15 percent are thought to be in poor health.
- ▶ In 82 percent of Romani families, mothers are overwhelmingly responsible for taking children to the doctor and looking after them when they are sick.
- ▶ Most Romani women from our sample (88 percent) are familiar with contraceptive methods, but 36 percent said they had never used any. Abortion is the main contraceptive method for 78 percent of Romani women in our sample. In general, Romani women have control over the decision to have an abortion.
- ▶ The health needs of Romani women and their children generally give them more interaction with health care systems. Of the Romani women surveyed, 71 percent of them felt that Roma suffer ethnic discrimination from medical staff. Twenty-three percent of them felt their gender was also grounds for discriminatory treatment from health care providers. Acts of discrimination, in the respondents’ opinion, included lack of interest in Romani patients, prescriptions for the cheapest, most easily available, and often ineffective drugs, and payment requirements for medicine ordinarily provided for free by the public health system.

Paid and Unpaid Labor

- ▶ The majority of Romani women surveyed (58 percent) said that employers discriminate against Roma on ethnic grounds. More than 21 percent of respondents thought that their discrimination at the workplace was based on gender. Workplace discrimination toward Romani women is often demonstrated by employers who offer Romani women the worst work conditions and lowest paying jobs.
- ▶ A third of the Romani women surveyed felt that men have more opportunities for employment than women who are equally qualified.
- ▶ According to the survey, 39 percent of Romani women had not earned any money in the last year. Those who had earned money, generated it mostly from agricultural work,

small commerce, and services, as well as from collecting and selling refuse and medicinal plants. Of the Romani women who were gainfully employed, 54 percent said that the employment was informal, unreported, and based only on verbal agreements with their employer.

- ▶ A majority of respondents (68 percent) identified themselves as housewives, while 26 percent said they were economically active, as employees, daily-labourers and freelancers.

Housing

- ▶ Over 10 percent of the Romani households surveyed in this report lack electricity and 53 percent of Romani families do not have a separate kitchen, but cook and live in the same rooms. Running water is absent from 84 percent of Romani households. Less than 15 percent of Romani homes have a bathroom, an inside toilet, and gas connections.
- ▶ The most wanted domestic appliance among Romani women is a washing machine—67 percent of respondents declared that a washing machine would be the first item to buy, if they had the money.
- ▶ Most Roma live in houses where more than two people share a room, and 27 percent of Romani families live in houses with more than three people per room.

Participation in Political and Civic Life

- ▶ Of the Romani women surveyed, 48 percent believed more involvement of women in politics would have a positive impact on society. However, Romani women's participation in political and civic life is low. Only 26 percent of the Romani women surveyed are involved in political, civic or community based organizations.
- ▶ Romani women's participation in elections is very high—82 percent of Romani women voted in Romania's 2004 elections.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The quantitative and qualitative data highlighted above demonstrate that Romani women in Romania are facing a devastating mix of discrimination, exclusion, inequality, and destitution that is unique and specific to them. Due to their ethnicity and gender, Romani women simultaneously endure both the ethnic discrimination faced by Romani men and the gender inequality faced by majority women.

Based on the results of this study, the Roma Participation Program is calling for a dual approach to improving the situation of Romani women in Romania. Such an approach requires both the mainstreaming of Romani women's issues into current policies for Roma inclusion and gender equality, and the development of targeted programs to address the specific situation of Romani women. The recommendations below, selected from this report's conclusion, can help meet these goals:

General Recommendations

1. The Romanian government and civil society organizations should pursue research and programs using an empowering methodology that includes Romani women in the elaboration and implementation of initiatives and studies for and about them.¹
2. The Romanian government, ministries, and specialized bodies must make a greater commitment to mainstreaming gender policies into promoting Roma inclusion through agencies such as the National Agency for Roma and the Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. Government Ordinance no. 84 should be reviewed and revised to include specific references to Romani women and issues of multiple discrimination.
3. The Romanian government, national development agencies, and the private sector should work together to follow the European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma in the European Union regarding employment. Access to labor markets for Romani women should become a priority issue for development policies and the Roma inclusion and gender equality agendas.
4. The National Council for Combating Discrimination, the National Agency for Roma, and the Agency for Equality of Opportunities between Men and Women should carefully coordinate their activities in order to avoid overlapping, redundant policies and programs for fighting discrimination and promoting the inclusion of Romani women.

Specific Recommendations

Education

1. “After school” classes should be organized for under-achieving pupils in order to improve their school results. Romani girls would especially benefit from such programs.
2. Adult education programs (including literacy) should be designed with a special focus on Romani women.
3. The current achievements of Romani school mediator programs in Romania, in which 36 out of 74 mediators are women, should be strengthened by ensuring the local sustainability of the programs and expanding their scope to include more cities and counties.
4. All teachers should receive training in “discrimination-free” education, especially in respect to ethnicity and gender-based discrimination and how these forms can impact Romani girls. School administrators should continuously monitor teachers for discriminatory behavior.
5. Career councilors in schools should promote gender desegregation in job orientation, by encouraging Romani girls to pursue studies and applications for vocational schools and colleges.

Health

1. The current achievements of the health mediator programs should be strengthened. The Ministry of Health, with the help of Romani health mediators, should organize information campaigns in Romani communities about the negative medical consequences of giving birth at an early age for both mother and infant. Issues surrounding the health and psychological risks involved in early marriage should also be addressed.
2. The Ministry of Health, and the authorized statistical offices, should strengthen their capacity to collect gender-disaggregated and gender specific health data from Romani communities. The involvement of Roma themselves is crucial for developing this capacity.

Employment

1. Government development policies and the National Action Plan for implementing the Roma Decade should identify gender discrimination as an important cause of unemployment among Romani women.
2. Employers should be offered incentives (such as tax exemptions) to hire Romani women.
3. Access to credit should be facilitated for Romani women who want to start small businesses.
4. Gender segregation in job training should be combated at the level of unemployment offices and other providers of professional training for unemployed Roma.
5. The National Council for Combating Discrimination, as well as specialized NGOs, should strengthen their capacity to monitor gender, racial, and ethnic discrimination in the labor market, as well as cases involving multiple forms of discrimination.

II. Introduction

Broadening the Agenda: The Status of Romani Women in Romania aims to help fill what has been a gaping hole in efforts to challenge the discrimination and exclusion faced by Romani women. Previously available data failed to accurately reflect the social and economic realities of Romani women's lives, either because they did not focus on Roma, or because they were not gender-disaggregated. As a result, policymakers, as well as Romani rights and gender equality advocates lacked the necessary tools for formulating policies and strategies that are sensitive to the specific challenges that confront Romani women. Women from Romani communities face the intersectional barriers of racial, ethnic, and gender-based discrimination, which are then often compounded by poverty and social exclusion.

This report provides policymakers and the larger public with an updated assessment of the status of Romani women in Romania and the challenges they face. It also offers recommendations for improving existing policies and how to elaborate future policies aimed at improving their situation. The data and analyses in this report are the result of research conducted between September 15 and November 1, 2004, and supported by the Roma Participation Program (RPP) of the Open Society Institute–Budapest.

In 2004, the European Commission report, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*, analyzing the situation of Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller communities in the EU-25, found that there was “a failure of existing policies within both the EU-15 and the new member states to address adequately discrimination against these communities and to promote their social inclusion.”² RPP assessments at the time showed that the failure of these policies was

likely to have an even greater impact on Romani women, but this impact was difficult to prove and assess because of the lack of relevant quantitative and qualitative data. RPP responded by commissioning the present report to address this information gap and to provide a policy tool grounded in a thorough empirical analysis of the needs and aspirations of Romani women.

The findings presented on the following pages indicate that governmental policies, as well as regional and European policy tools must include specific instruments for Romani women, both in their strategies and in their implementation. As this report finds, Romani women in Romania face additional challenges when compared to Romani men as well as women from the majority population. Addressing the discrimination and exclusion of Romani women cannot be simply resolved by blending policies aimed at Roma on one hand, and women on the other. The overwhelming reality shows that Romani women, because of their particular status and situation, are not reaping the full benefits of initiatives that focus broadly on either Roma inclusion or gender equality.

The research and production process behind *Broadening the Agenda* also aims to create an empowering experience for Romani women. Both the quantitative and the qualitative research elicited Romani women's own views and opinions on topics such as gender roles in family life, education, health, domestic work and the labor market, community and political participation, and discrimination and gender policies. Furthermore, the program used an empowering methodology that included Romani women at all stages of the elaboration and realization of the research. The project was supervised by a Romani woman with a strong academic background and experience in Roma policy research and advocacy. Most members of the research teams were Romani women with university degrees or undergraduates who participated in a special research methods training before beginning the data collection process.

Methodology

The research conducted for this report consisted of two parts: a survey of Romani women, between the ages of 18 and 73, based on an 80 item questionnaire; and a series of focus group discussions with Romani women, based on a 58 item interview guide.

Characteristics of the Sample

Seven hundred and seventeen adult Romani women (over the age of 18) responded to the questionnaire. Respondents were selected from different localities, taking into account criteria of accessibility—the respondents usually came from communities that the members of the research teams were familiar with; and diversity—an appropriate geographical distribution was sought. (For the complete geographical spread of the respondents, see Table 1 in the Appendix.) In each locality, the research teams selected the respondents' households using the random

route method. The precise level of representativity of this sample for the entire population of Romani women in Romania cannot be estimated. The consistency and accuracy of data is ensured by the relatively large size of the sample (717 respondents).

Out of 717 interviewees, 440 (61 percent) lived in urban areas and 277 (39 percent) lived in rural areas. Of the women interviewed, 82 percent of them identified themselves as Roma, 1 percent as Romanian, 0.3 percent as Magyar (Hungarian) and 0.3 percent as having another ethnic background. Over 15 percent of them did not declare their ethnic background. Those who declared themselves Roma also indicated belonging to the following Roma kinships: 27 percent *Ursari*; 13 percent *Romungri*; 10 percent *Căldărari*; 7 percent *Lăutari*; 6 percent *Romanizați*; 6 percent *Vătrași*; 6 percent *Cărămidari*; 4 percent *Costorari*, and 2 percent *Rudari*. Eleven percent of those who declared themselves Roma indicated affiliations comprising less than 1 percent of the sample each (*Lăieși*, *Aurari*, *Argintari*, *Fierari*, *Ciurari*, *Țigani de Mătase*, *Spoitori*, *Zlătari* and others). Eight percent of those who declared themselves Roma did not indicate their belonging to any specific Romani kinship. Sixty-four percent of the Romani women who answered the questionnaire spoke Romany. Interviewees lived in households with an average size of more than five persons, and were members of families having more than two children.

Focus Group Interviews

Focus group interviews were the second major source of data for this study. This type of qualitative research allowed researchers to explore answers to various “*why*” questions, which are hard or impossible to investigate based on quantitative studies. The focus group interviews in this study offer an in-depth perspective on the motivations of Romani women’s choices, opinions, and attitudes.

The focus group discussions were conducted in the same nine counties where the questionnaire was applied in order to maintain the same diverse geographical spread. (For the complete geographical distribution of the focus groups, see Table 2 in Appendix.) Fourteen group discussions were held in 13 localities, with a total number of 100 participants. Six was the minimum number of participants for one focus group discussion and nine was the maximum.

The interviewees were distributed in groups through a three-tier process. First, they were selected so that the number of focus group discussions held in rural areas equaled those held in urban areas. Secondly, they were split into two age categories—interviewees between the ages of 25 and 35, and interviewees between the ages of 36 and 55. Such groups were formed in each case, with the exception of Caracal City, in Olt County, where there were not enough participants in the second age group. Thirdly, the Romani women who participated in each focus group were selected so that they were not related (or at least not closely related) and that they had at least one daughter. The condition of having at least one daughter was applied in order to ensure that respondents had the necessary life experience to give informed answers

for some of the main topics of the research (marriage, family planning, decision making in families, and education concerning girls and boys), as well as to allow for intergenerational comparisons. Since Romani communities are relatively small, it was not realistic to apply the stricter criterion that the participants should not know each other. As a result, the focus group discussions resembled what is methodologically known as *peer group interviews*.

Research Process

Prior to beginning the data collection, the members of the research teams participated in a two-day research methods training, during which they practiced skills for applying a survey questionnaire and leading a focus group. The training sessions also provided an opportunity for pre-testing and adjusting the questionnaire.

Secondary Analyses and Other Data Sources

The findings in this study were compared to previous data on women in Romania in order to assess how Romani women fare in comparison with all women in Romania. The second term of comparison—the situation of women in Romania—was provided by the Gender Barometer 2000 database (GB 2000), compiled by the Gallup Organization Romania for the Open Society Foundation–Romania. (The database is available at <http://www.gallup.ro>.) Several items in the questionnaire used for the present study were in fact designed to allow for the specific comparison. For those items, secondary data analyses were conducted on the GB 2000 database by selecting only female respondents. Similar comparisons on other items were drawn using data provided in the Statistical Yearbook 2003, issued by Romania’s National Institute of Statistics.

The situation of Romani women in Romania was compared to that of Romani men using data provided by research in *Romii în România* (Roma in Romania)³ carried out by the Research Institute for Quality of Life, and supported by the Open Society Foundation–Romania. Secondary data analyses from this research were used especially in the chapter on education of the present report. The comparison reveals the extent of the gender gap in educational attainment between Romani women and Romani men.

III. Current Legislation and Policies

National Level

Antidiscrimination Legislation

The first legislative initiative to combat discrimination in Romania, Governmental Ordinance no. 137/2000, was adopted in 2000 largely under pressure to fulfill the requirements for EU accession, especially regarding the Copenhagen political criteria. Since then, there have been significant developments toward establishing and improving Romania's antidiscrimination legislation. The initial governmental ordinance was approved and modified by Law no. 48/2002, modified by Government Ordinance no. 77/2003, and then approved and further modified by Law no. 27/2004. The current antidiscrimination legislation in Romania covers all grounds in the EU Council Directives 2000/43/EC (Racial Equality) and 2000/78/EC (Employment Equality), and additional grounds including sex.

Although the legal and institutional mechanisms for combating discrimination have been created in Romania, there are still gaps in the current framework. Human rights groups and Romani and women's NGOs in Romania have repeatedly pointed out that antidiscrimination work in Romania is hindered by the lack of independence of the main antidiscrimination body (the National Council for Combating Discrimination), the absence of the notion of multiple forms of discrimination, and the lack of legal provisions that shift the burden of proof to the respondent when the claimant has established facts indicating that discrimination took place.

Gender Equality Legislation

The Government of Romania has committed itself to the principle of gender equality and fighting discrimination against women by signing the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), often described as an international bill of human rights for women. Gender equality is also enshrined in the Romanian Constitution, which provides under Article 16, paragraph 3, that equality between men and women is guaranteed in holding public offices and public authority.

Recent gender equality legislation centers on Law no. 202/2002 for equality of opportunities between women and men, which has been amended by Governmental Ordinance no. 84/ 2004 to comply with EC Directive 2002/ 73/ EC (amending the Directive 76/ 207/ EEC). Directive 2002/ 73/ EC introduced the obligation for member states to “designate and make the necessary arrangements for a body or bodies for the promotion, analysis, monitoring, and support of equal treatment of all persons without discrimination on the grounds of sex.” Following the directive, the ordinance provides for the establishment of a National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, which became an institutional reality in June 2005. A National Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men was approved by Government Decision no. 285/ 2004. Work toward ending existing gender inequalities is further enabled by the adoption of a legislative frame to combat domestic violence (Law no. 217/ 2003) and to fight trafficking in human beings (Law no. 678/ 2001).

Minority Rights Legislation

There are few legislative provisions that directly protect minorities and the rights of citizens belonging to national minorities. Romania has been a party to the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities since 1995. The Constitution of Romania outlines a system for protecting national minorities, although Romania continues to define itself as a “unitary nation state,” therefore symbolically enshrining the primacy of the Romanian nation over its national minorities. Article 6 of the Constitution⁴ stipulates that the Romanian state “recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to preserve, to develop and to express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.”

The application of the constitutional system for protecting national minorities is currently hindered by the lack of an agreed upon definition of what constitutes a “national minority.” This issue may be clarified if the Law on the Status of National Minorities in Romania is adopted. The Government of Romania has drafted the law, and the draft was approved on May 19, 2005. The draft law is currently going through parliamentary procedures and deliberations.

EU level

Recent EU legislation offers the following major tools for combating discrimination and enforcing the right of equal treatment for all:

- ▶ **The Racial Equality Directive:**
Council of the European Union directive that implements the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of their racial and ethnic origin (2000/43/EC)
- ▶ **The Employment Equality Directive:**
Council of the European Union directive that prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (2000/78/EC)
- ▶ Council Directive 2004/113/EC of December 13, 2004: implements the principle of **equal treatment between men and women in access to and supply of goods and services**
- ▶ Directive 2002/73/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of September 23, 2002: amends Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions

Romania has transposed both the Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive in its antidiscrimination legislation. Furthermore, through the creation of the National Agency for Equality of Opportunities between Men and Women, Romania has complied with the requirements of Directive 2002/73/EC.

Article 13, paragraph 1 of the Treaty establishing the European Community gives the Council the right to take action on matters of discrimination and has provided the legal basis for the European Union Network of Experts in Fundamental Rights to propose that the EU adopt a “Directive specifically aimed at encouraging the integration of Roma.”⁵ The proposal and the need for an EU Roma Integration Directive are reiterated in the 2004 report, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*.⁶ The authors of the report believe that “without such a Directive, there will not be sufficient impetus for EU Member States to integrate Roma and other groups regarded as ‘Gypsies.’” However, the same report acknowledges that the proposal raises “a number of legal and practical questions,” that may prove sufficient to persuade legal opinion against the issuing of such a directive.

So far, the only document specifically addressing the situation of Roma in Europe is the European Parliament Resolution on the Situation of Roma in Europe, adopted on April 28, 2005. The resolution calls on the European Council, the European Commission, the member

states, and the candidate countries to consider recognizing the Roma as a European minority and urges the European Commission to include the issue of combating anti-Gypsyism across Europe among its priorities for the 2007 “European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.”

The resolution makes specific calls to member states and candidate countries to increase the participation of Roma in elections as voters and candidates at all levels; solve the situation of lack of official documents for many Roma; improve Romani access to labor markets; move forward with school desegregation programs; ensure that all Romani children have access to mainstream education; ensure equal access to health care and social security services for all; end all discriminatory practices, in particular the segregation of Roma in maternity wards; and prevent the practice of nonconsensual sterilization of Romani women.

Current Policies

From a policy perspective, addressing the current situation and challenges faced by Romani women in Romania involves considering the many interrelated factors that create the social and economic realities of their lives. Romani women face the intersectional barriers of gender, racial and ethnic discrimination, compounded by poverty and limited access to employment and education.

The challenges that Romani women face often differ from those of Romani men, and from those of majority women. Romani women and children are disproportionately affected by the poverty that shatters the lives of many Roma; Romani women usually work longer hours than Romani men, and for significantly less pay. The gap between Romani women and majority women is significant in respect to employment, education, reproductive health, and general well-being. Given such differences and inequalities, it is striking that there have been so few policy initiatives that specifically aim to improve the situation of Romani women, either at the EU or national levels or from the Romanian government and its specialized institutions.

In contrast, the commitment to promoting the rights of women and the integration of Roma in general is upheld in a diverse range of policies, strategies, and initiatives as broad as the Lisbon Strategy, the Decade of Roma Inclusion, and the Beijing Platform for Action. In the Romanian context, the National Plan to Combat Discrimination, the National Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma, the National Roma Action Plan, and the National Plan for Equality between Men and Women enshrine similar commitments to fight discrimination and promote social inclusion. Yet because these strategies do not make specific commitments to Romani women, they are not reaching their full potential as powerful tools for fighting discrimination and challenging inequality.

As it stands, Romani women are invisible as a specific target group for policies. For example, at the EU level, the Community Action Program to Combat Discrimination

(2001–2006) covers racial or ethnic origin as grounds for discrimination, but does not address discrimination based on sex.⁷ On the other hand, gender is specified as a priority issue within the EU Employment Strategy, but the same emphasis has not been given to race and ethnicity.⁸ Such omissions are especially detrimental for Romani women, as there is a high risk that Romani men would be privileged among the beneficiaries of programs for combating racial and ethnic discrimination, and majority women might be overrepresented as beneficiaries of programs for reducing gender inequality.

Initiatives Specifically Addressing the Situation of Romani Women

In recent years, a few initiatives led by Romani civil society and several international NGOs have tried to identify Romani women's specific needs and challenges, and have suggested directions for action. Romani women advocates and other civic activists have been at the forefront of advocacy initiatives demanding the inclusion of Romani women's issues on both the Roma inclusion and gender equality agendas.

► **Lisbon Strategy**

The Lisbon European Strategy adopted at the European Council in Lisbon, March 2000, represents an important commitment to a new framework for social inclusion as part of the European Union's strategic goal to increase competitiveness and job growth.⁹

In this context, it is important to stress that the greater social cohesion enshrined in the Lisbon goals cannot be achieved without tackling and solving the social exclusion and discrimination Romani women face in all member states, particularly in new member states and candidate countries. Romani women's empowerment and the advancement of their rights are critical for alleviating the poverty and plight of Roma and thus creating a knowledge-based and competitive economy in the European Union.

► **The Decade of Roma Inclusion**

The Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2015) is an international initiative of the Open Society Institute and the World Bank to bring about substantive change in the lives of Roma. The initiative has received the support of nine governments—Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia—that have declared their political commitment to close the gap of poverty and social exclusion between Roma and non-Roma in a ten-year period. Other international institutions—the European Commission, UNDP, OSCE, CoE, ERRC, and ERTF also support the initiative in a joint effort to ensure success through monitoring, funding, data collection, and expertise. The priority areas that the Decade's initiators and the signing governments have committed themselves to are: education, health, employment, and housing. A special fund—the Roma Education Fund—was established to

further the education goals of the Decade. The cross-sectional concerns of the Roma Decade are gender, poverty, and discrimination.

The National Action Plans developed by the governments that have endorsed the Decade of Roma Inclusion make several specific provisions for Romani women. Romania's National Action Plan mentions boys and girls under education, and gender (women) as a cross-cutting theme linked with the implementation of national health programs in Romani communities. It further suggests information campaigns targeting Romani women to prevent infectious diseases and drug dependency. However, Romani women activists have evaluated these previewed actions as "weak and unmeasurable," and certainly insufficient for the goal of "mainstreaming Romani women's issues" in the areas of the Decade.¹⁰

► **Beijing Platform for Action**

Romania signed the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), together with all of the 189 governments present at the 1995 United Nations Fourth Global Conference for Women, held in China. In signing the BPfA, the government of Romania has committed itself to take measures to, among other things, alleviate the burden of poverty on women; reduce inequalities in and unequal access to education and health; fight violence against women; increase access to employment; and reduce inequalities between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels.¹¹

However, the gender equality agenda outlined by the plan does not make any specific reference to Romani women's issues or to the notion of multiple discrimination.

Government Implementation of International and National Initiatives

Following its commitment to support the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Romanian government approved a National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Roma Decade. The Romania Chapter of the Roma Decade Program was officially launched in February 2005. As already mentioned, Romania's National Action Plan identifies gender as a relevant cross-cutting theme only for two issues: the participation of Romani children in education, and the implementation of national health programs in Romani communities. Given the high levels of unemployment among Romani women, it is surprising that gender was not considered a relevant theme when elaborating the employment section of the National Action Plan.

An "older" initiative is the National Governmental Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma in Romania (The Strategy for Roma), approved in 2001. Romani women are specifically mentioned in the health, economic, and protection of children provisions within the strategy.

Yet independent monitoring of the implementation of the strategy carried out in 2004 by the Resource Center for Roma Communities in Cluj-Napoca concluded that the local implementation of the strategy has been especially ineffective. Therefore, the local dimension of the

application of the strategy is one of the key areas where both government and local authorities should make efforts to improve the current mechanisms.¹²

National Equality Bodies

The establishment of equality bodies has a recent history in Romania, as the first steps toward such institutional structures were taken only after 1995. The central institution for the elaboration of governmental policies in the field of antidiscrimination, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) was created in 2002.

Several independent assessments have emphasized that the NCCD cannot hope to have a real impact in combating discrimination unless it significantly expands its current capacities by creating local structures.¹³

Government Agencies and Other Institutional Mechanisms

The main governmental institution for elaborating, implementing, and coordinating programs and strategies for Roma inclusion is the National Agency for Roma, established in October 2004. The agency deals specifically with Romani women in the areas of medical assistance, family planning, and child and family protection services.

National Women's Agencies

A National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women (within the Ministry of Labor, Social Solidarity and Family) was established in January 2005. The agency has only begun its activity, and it is therefore very difficult to assess its impact, but it should play a significant role in tackling the situation of Romani women in Romania. However, the legal document establishing the agency (Government Ordinance no. 84/2004) does not make any reference to the issue of multiple discrimination or to discrimination against Romani women as a special area of focus or activity.

IV. Perceptions of Gender Inequality

Among the Romani women surveyed for this study, 63 percent believed that women have fewer rights than men within Romani communities. The rest of the respondents thought either that Romani women and men enjoyed equal rights (27 percent) or that women had more rights than men (6 percent).

The percentage of women in our sample who thought that women have fewer rights than men in Romani communities was higher in rural areas (69 percent) than in urban settings (54 percent). The level of education also influences the perception of whether Romani men and women enjoy equal rights. Among women with no formal education, the percentage of those who believed that women and men enjoy equal rights (15 percent) was almost three times lower than among women with secondary school levels of education (43 percent).

During focus group discussions, most Romani women expressed the opinion that gender inequality results from differences in social status between men and women, and from traditional attitudes. Some Romani women think that men are considered natural leaders because they can do heavy physical labor that women cannot do. A Romani woman from Cluj noted: “Since a man is usually a little bit bigger [his word has more weight]. Also as head of the family, what the man has to say may be a bit more important.”

Other women said that men can more easily get a job or gain access to social resources because they are more educated than women.

Several Romani women said that men are better speakers, and they can more easily gain the trust of non-Roma and public authorities and this is why they have higher positions in society.

“I am not an equal of him,” said a woman from Maglavit. “If he goes to talk to a Romanian, [the Romanian] will pay attention to him. But if I go, then he doesn’t pay attention to me.”

Generally, Romani women took men’s authority and their position as leaders for granted, although some indicated a desire for change.

“That is the way women must be—equal with the men,” one respondent from Caracal said. “But with us, Roma, this doesn’t work, the man is where he is, although we, women, do almost everything.”

When asked which areas of life they would prioritize for achieving equality in rights between women and men, survey participants identified the following:

- ▶ Decision making in the family (79 percent)
- ▶ Raising and nurturing children (75 percent)
- ▶ Access to labor market and employment opportunities (59 percent)
- ▶ Treatment by employers and in the workplace (35 percent)
- ▶ Domestic work/housework (31 percent)

Almost 73 percent of Romani women surveyed said that equality in rights between men and women primarily needs to be realized inside the household around issues such as decision making, raising children, and housework. This priority most probably reflects the gender inequalities within Romani households and the fact that men’s involvement in domestic activities is very low. In public life, Romani women indicated that establishing equality for employment opportunities between Romani men and women was their first priority.

V. Family Life

Relationships

Most of the adult Romani women (54 percent) who participated in this study are legally married. A significant percentage of the remaining participants are in a consensual relationship. There is a slight percentage decrease in the prevalence of the choice to stay in a consensual couple among the Romani women who were interviewed in comparison with their mothers' generation: 33 percent for Romani women in our sample, compared to 37 percent for their mothers. Among the Romani women who were interviewed, 12 percent were single (unmarried, divorced, widowed or abandoned).

Focus group data reveal that most Romani women think civil marriage has certain benefits, for women as well as children. During focus group interviews, Romani women stated that marriage can help mothers and children by providing the following benefits and possibilities:

- ▶ Taking father's name
- ▶ Receiving alimony and child support in case of a divorce
- ▶ Being eligible for health care services

- ▶ Inheriting assets upon the death of a parent/parents
- ▶ Avoiding the stigma of being a child born out of wedlock
- ▶ Abiding by the customs and conventions of the larger Romanian society

The same women declared that, in their opinion, civil marriage also brings more rights for the wife: succession rights, legal status for their children and the benefits that ensue, and also a higher social status for women and more recognition from other groups. As one respondent put it, “If we are in Romania, then let’s be legal. It’s good to have documents: if you get divorced from your husband, he will pay alimony for rent. If you are not married, why should he pay at all?”

“It gives you advantages in society,” said another Romani woman. “If you go somewhere and you are not married and you need a certificate from the hospital for the children, they don’t give you anything. You are treated differently.”

On the other hand, some Romani women regarded civil marriage as an unimportant formality and that mutual understanding between partners is what really matters for a lasting relationship. “It doesn’t matter to be married, it matters to be happy,” said a Romani woman from Oraştie. “It is important to have good communication with your husband. It is not marriage that keeps you together, but having agreement in the family.”

Others pointed out the potential legal and financial costs of marriage.

“It is better without documents,” noted one discussion participant. “Because if you [have an official marriage] with documents, you have to give money when you get divorced, and we usually don’t have money for divorce.”

A few Romani women wanted the advantages of both types of relationships. They thought that “living together” (as a consenting couple) is just a way for the partners to know each other better, and to test the strength of the relationship before actually getting married.

Marriage and Children

The research findings suggest that the average age at marriage has increased for Romani women. The Romani women who answered the questionnaire for the current study got married, on average, at the age of 17 and a half. This value represents an increase of 9 months compared to their mothers’ generation (who, on average, got married at 16 years and 9 months). Nonetheless, the research showed that Romani women, on average, are more than 8 years younger than the national marriage age of 26, calculated with data from the last census in 2002.

The findings of this report also showed that fewer Romani women marry before the age of 18 today than they did a generation ago, and the trend is for the number of early age marriages to decrease even further. Among our sample, 53 percent of Romani women married before the age of 18, while 70 percent of their mothers got married before they were 18. The percentage is even smaller among the respondents' daughters. Less than half of them (43 percent⁴⁴) married before the age of 18.

The average age at first birth increased for Romani women in our sample, compared to their mothers' generation. According to the survey data, Romani women gave birth for the first time when they were, on average, 19 years-old, while their mothers were, on average, 18 years and 2 months when they had their first child. A similar comparison shows that 43 percent of Romani women from our sample gave birth for the first time when they were younger than 19, while this experience was shared by 63 percent of Romani women in their mothers' generation. However, Romani women who were giving birth for the first time were still 5 years younger than the national average age of 24 years-old, according to the 2003 Romanian Statistical Yearbook.

Opinions on the appropriate age for marriage varied among our respondents, and the expectations are different for boys and girls. Romani women said that the appropriate age for girls to marry is, on average, between 19 and 20 years-old, thus higher than the current averages. The general expectation is for boys to marry when they are almost 22. Furthermore, mothers consider 21 to be the appropriate age for their daughters to have their first child.

Qualitative data from the current research is consistent with these findings. Most respondents stated that girls should marry when they are older than 18. The main reason why Romani women think this is an appropriate age for a girl's marriage is that they expect her to finish school by then, be able to get a job, and secure relative financial independence. As one respondent put it: "I would like my daughter to get married at the age of 20 at the earliest, in order for her to complete her studies...and so that she can earn her bread."

Furthermore, Romani women who participated in the focus groups said they preferred marriage at an older age for their daughters because they wanted them to avoid facing overwhelming family responsibilities and material deprivations before they turned 18.

However, some respondents believed that it was better for a girl to marry early, when she is 15, 14 or even younger. Much of this seems based on physical appearance and opportunities to catch a man.

"At the age of 20 you can't get any suitors, a girl has already lost her youth," said one Romani woman. "If we don't get married at the age of 14 or 15, whom will they [the men] take? A woman who is 20? What can he do with her?"

Virginity Norms and Violence Against Romani Girls

In Romani communities, as well as in many other communities in Eastern Europe, notions of male honor and female chastity put women at risk. Most Romani women think that girls should be virgins when they get married. They argue that if a girl is a virgin when she gets married, then she potentially avoids tensions with her husband, her mother-in-law, and being stigmatized by the community. Describing her feelings about her daughter, one discussion participant said, “She must preserve herself for her mother-in-law, for her husband, not for me. If she is a virgin, however, I will also be proud.”

Romani women who participated in the focus group discussions noted that a girl’s virginity at marriage is considered a sign of having received a good upbringing from her family. Because of the large symbolic value associated with virginity at marriage, ostracization and even violence may be directed against girls who fail to conform to the virginity norm. Romani women report that a girl’s virginity is considered a valuable good that she brings into the marriage. This “asset” is the basis for a symbolic trade between the families of the husband and the bride. Sometimes, the trade is more than symbolic, as some women reported that in their communities the husband and his family pay for the bride.

“With us Roma, you must be a virgin when you marry the man you have chosen,” said one woman during a discussion in Caracal. Another added: “In our case, the girls are bought and if they are not virgins, then they bring them back to their parents and take their money back.”

In cases when a girl is returned and the marriage cancelled, the girl can acquire a strong stigma of “shame” and even “hate” from her community. Such strong sanctions are considered necessary to perpetuate what is perceived as a custom, and a shared Romani tradition.

Several Romani women who participated in the focus group discussions said that they or their communities no longer observe the norm of virginity at marriage for girls. They argued that acceptance of women who may have had pre-marital sexual experiences can improve married life.

“Old men say that [virginity] is important,” said one woman. “But I think women should have some experience. Young couples should have time to get to know each other better. In many cases where the men and women don’t have much experience, the women are too timid and the men are too jealous and possessive.”

Several women also argued that the virginity norms belong to a tradition that is no longer relevant to modern society and welcome the influence of cultural norms from beyond the Romani community.

“Nowadays, the Gypsies copy the Romanians,” said a woman from Lipovu. “You can hardly find this practice—namely that girls must be virgins [at marriage]. I think we can follow the Romanians, and not always do what Gypsy [traditions] say.”

Expectations for boys are different than for girls. Almost all Romani women who participated in the discussions stated that boys should marry only after they finished military service, which is compulsory in Romania and usually completed by the age of 21. Most of the Romani women surveyed also expected boys to have finished school and learned a profession by the age of 21, thus enabling them to financially support their families.

One Romani woman expressed the sentiments of most of her peers when she summed up a boy's progression to manhood in the Romani community as follows: "They should get married after military service and after they have graduated from school. This will give them qualifications and a job, since it is the husband's duty to provide for his family."

What Makes a Marriage Successful?

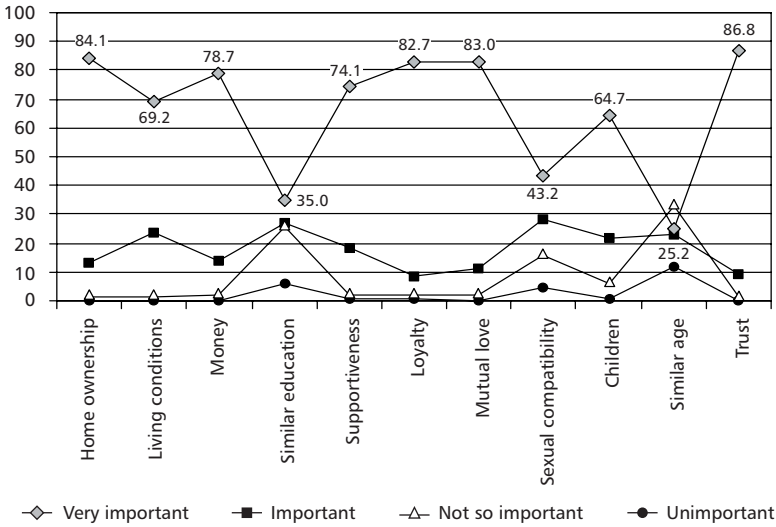
The survey revealed that Romani women considered the following conditions critical to a successful marriage:

- ▶ mutual trust (87 percent)
- ▶ owning a home (84 percent)
- ▶ reciprocal love (83 percent)
- ▶ having a good income (79 percent)

Other conditions considered important, although not as important as the four above were:

- ▶ comfortable living conditions (69 percent)
- ▶ having children (65 percent)
- ▶ mutually satisfactory sex life (43 percent)
- ▶ spouse with similar level of education (35 percent)
- ▶ spouse of similar age (25 percent)

The Conditions for a Successful Marriage [%]



These findings are very similar to those of the Gender Barometer 2000. However there were two significant differences between our sample of Romani women and the general sample of women on the issue of the importance of partners “being sexually compatible for each other” and couples being of a similar age. In the sample of Romani women, these conditions ranked as less important than in the general sample of women.

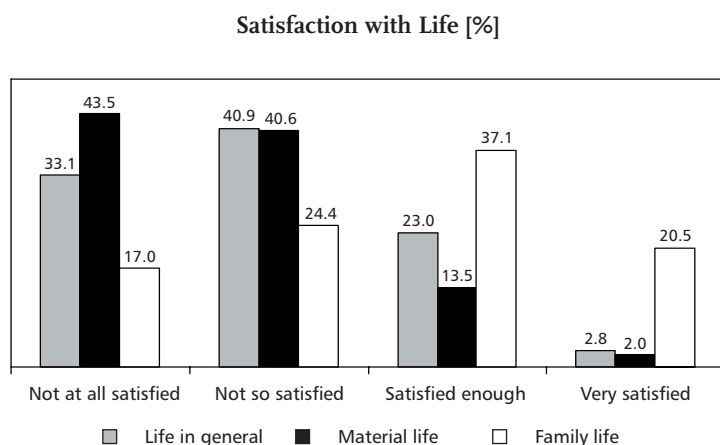
Both samples rank the same factors as most important for a successful marriage: “trust,” “home ownership,” and “mutual love.” However, the two samples differ in the hierarchy of these common factors. In the national sample of women, these factors are ranked as: “mutual love,” “trust,” “home ownership.” Romani women, however, ranked the three most important conditions in the reverse order with “trust,” followed by “home ownership” and “mutual love.”

The discussions provided an insight into why Romani women believe home ownership is so important for a successful marriage: many Romani women said that living together with a mother-in-law is one of the causes of an unsuccessful marriage. However, owning a home remains just an aspiration for most couples, as almost all respondents lacked the financial means to help their children acquire their own home.

Satisfaction with Life

Seventy-four percent of Romani women from our sample stated they were, generally speaking, “unsatisfied” or “not so satisfied” with life. More than twice as many Romani women (43 percent) were “not at all satisfied” with their material lives than with their family lives (17 percent),

suggesting that family life becomes a source of satisfaction when material conditions are poor. Over 57 percent of respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their family lives.



The survey indicated that satisfaction with life positively correlates with the level of education. For example, 60 percent of Romani women with no education were also “not at all satisfied” with life, but the percentage of those who were unsatisfied with their lives decreased to 30 percent among Romani women with primary school educations and to 21 percent among Romani women with secondary school educations. Conversely, only 12 percent of Romani women with no education were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their lives, while the same percentages were higher among Romani women with basic education (24 percent) and much higher among those with average education (39 percent).

Survey results also showed that age negatively correlates with satisfaction with life: young Romani women tended to be more satisfied with life than older Romani women. For example, in the 18–30 age group, 34 percent of respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with life, while the percentage decreased to 23 for the 31–45 group, and to 14 for those older than 46. The reverse is also true. Among Romani women over the age of 46, 54 percent were “not at all satisfied” with life; the percentage points decreased to 32 for the 31–45 group, and to 26 for the 18–30 group.

There were no significant differences in satisfaction with life between Romani women from urban and rural areas. The findings from our sample are similar with those based on data collected for the Gender Barometer 2000. However, the percentage of women who expressed complete dissatisfaction with life (“not at all satisfied with life”) was 5 points higher among Romani women than in the national sample of women. Romani women were also 10 percent more dissatisfied with their material lives than Romanian women. The percentage of Romani women who said they were “not at all satisfied” with their family lives was almost double that of the general population of women (17 percent compared to 9 percent).

Socialization for Gender Roles

Primary socialization plays a significant part in teaching gender roles. The research for *Broadening the Agenda* found that in many Romani families, girls are raised to be hard working and obedient, and to focus on domestic activities inside the household. By contrast, boys are socialized to value freedom and independence, and to be outward-oriented in order to provide for their families.

During focus group discussions, Romani women declared that girls helped their mothers much more frequently than boys and they began to work inside the household from childhood.

“You must understand that my son helps me—he brings water and chops wood,” explained a woman from Caracal. “But he does this when he has time since he also goes to school. My daughter definitely helps me more.”

According to Romani women’s reports, girls contribute to all the daily domestic work and taking care of their siblings. Boys do work mostly outside the household, in contrast to girls who work mostly inside the household.

“If you have a girl in the house, she takes part in all the housework,” said one Romani woman. “She washes, cooks, cleans, does the ironing, cleans the yard. All housework must be done by the woman. She does all the difficult jobs.”

The Romani women who gave these accounts also explained that familiarizing girls with domestic work represents a learning process for adult life, and necessary training for becoming a good wife.

The conclusion that emerged from focus group discussions with Romani women is that boys’ socialization for adult life is different from girls. Boys are given both more free time and more time for schoolwork. Boys are taught that a man’s role is to do “heavy jobs,” such as carrying heavy things, repairing things around the house, raising domestic animals, and gathering wood.

“Men do what is more difficult,” said a Romani woman in Maglavit. “If there is work to be done for a Romanian, he must go to him. Women don’t go. The man must also help us dig in the garden, chop the wood, and sometimes help me at tidying up, but the man is the one who has to lift the heavy things in the house.”

Gender Division of Childcare and Household Responsibilities

Almost 67 percent of Romani women consider a family with two children as the optimum. Twenty-six percent of Romani women want to have more than two children, and 7 percent stated that one child per family is ideal.

Most Romani women in our sample (65 percent) consider both parents responsible for raising their children. Almost 33 percent say that the mother is particularly responsible for taking care of the children, thus endorsing a traditional gender division of childcare responsibilities. These findings are similar to those of the Gender Barometer 2000, which asked the same question to a representative sample of the Romanian population.

The level of education significantly influences Romani women's opinions about the gender division of childrearing responsibilities. Romani women with a higher level of education are more likely to declare that both parents should be responsible for taking care of children. Among the group of women with secondary school educations in our sample, 82 percent expressed an egalitarian vision of gender roles in childrearing, while the same perspective is shared by a lower number of women with only a primary school education (62 percent), and by only half (52 percent) of the women with no education. Conversely, fewer women said that mothers should be the only ones responsible for childcare in the group of women with primary school educations (36 percent) than in the group of women with no education (45 percent). The percentage is even lower among Romani women with secondary school educations (17 percent).

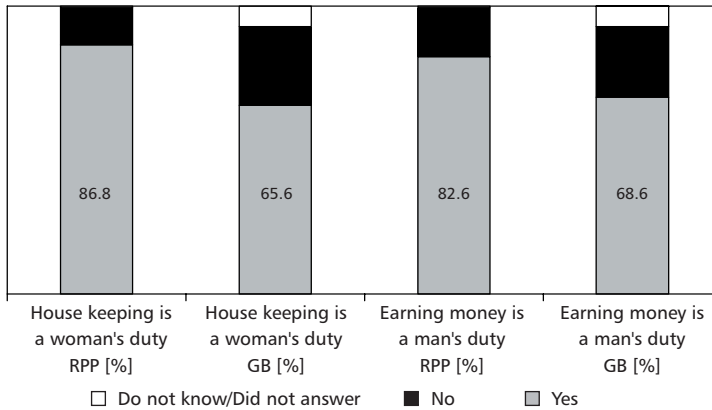
Almost 87 percent of Romani women in our sample considered housework more of a woman's duty than a man's. A lower percentage (66 percent) of the entire population of women in Romania endorse the same view, according to the Gender Barometer 2000 research.

Family “Breadwinners”

According to the Romani women surveyed, men (husbands or partners) are the main financial providers for 65 percent of Romani families. In 25 percent of all cases, the role of main contributor to the family budget is played by women. One third of the Romani women who identified themselves as main income providers, did so because they were single.

Over 82 percent of Romani women said it was desirable for men to be the main contributors to the family budget. However, only 65 percent of Romani women in our sample said that men are the main financial providers in their families, which shows that the expectation is nevertheless upheld even in cases where men are not the breadwinners. A comparison with the findings from the Gender Barometer 2000 shows that the expectation for the man to be the breadwinner is more widespread among Romani women than among all women in Romania (69 percent).

Gender Roles

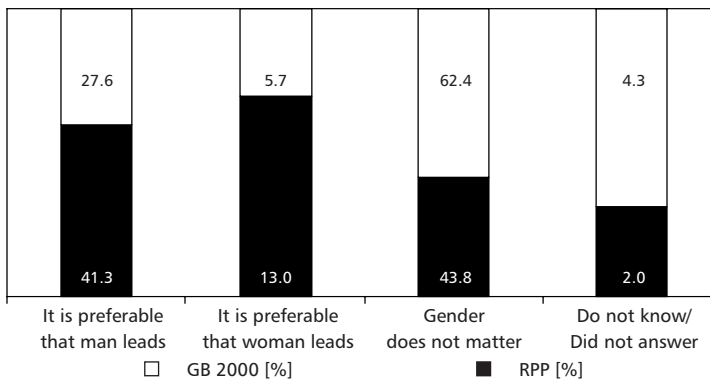


Note: "GB" refers to Gender Barometer 2000 research and "RPP" refers to research conducted for the present report.

The Prevalence of the Patriarchal Family

The patriarchal model of the man as the leader of the family is endorsed by 41 percent of Romani women in our sample. According to data from the Gender Barometer 2000, the model receives less support from women in Romania as a whole, from which 28 percent agree with the man as the leader of the family model. On the other hand, the percentage of women who declared that it is desirable for women to lead the family is more than double among Romani women (13 percent) than among all women in Romania (5 percent). This attitude is potentially due to the fact that there were more single Romani women in this study compared to single women in the national sample. Another factor may be that Romani women generally face more adversity and deprivation in their daily lives and are more often put into positions in which women take a leadership role.

Family Leader [%]



Note: "GB" refers to Gender Barometer 2000 research and "RPP" refers to research conducted for the present report.

Gender and Decisionmaking Power in Romani Families

Based on Romani women's survey responses, men have the greatest decision making power in Romani families. Men tend to make the important family decisions on family matters and money management issues.

"In my family, men—my husband, my father-in-law—are the ones who decide what we do and what we don't do," explained a discussion participant from Caracal. "If I want to buy something for the house, I must ask them first. If they say yes, it's all right, if they say no, then it's no."

Women have less decision making power, but more responsibility for how money is spent. Women are in charge of doing the daily food shopping in 91 percent of the Romani families in our sample. Only 21 percent of the Romani women surveyed said husbands or partners accompany them on daily shopping trips or are solely responsible for shopping. When these results are compared with the findings of the Gender Barometer 2000, the unequal division of household shopping duties seems to be more widespread among Romani women than among the sample of all women.

Women make decisions about daily expenditures in 86 percent of all Romani families who participated in the study. Men have a much bigger role in decisions about large purchases (refrigerators, TVs, gas cookers, etc.), although women remain the key decision-makers in the majority of cases (62 percent). However, 22 percent of Romani households in our sample cannot afford to buy such commodities.

Important family decisions are made either by men alone or by men in consultation with women. Qualitative accounts from focus group discussions show that men have the power to make the most important decisions in their families.

"I would have liked my older child to go on with his schooling," said one Romani woman from Agrij. "But since he [the husband] said that it was useless to go to school, what could I say?"

The same qualitative research shows that women can make their own decisions only in matters that are considered unimportant, such as daily spending, or when men are not at home.

VI. Education

Previous Findings on Gender Inequalities in Romani Education

A clear picture of the inequalities in educational attainment between Romani women and Romani men emerges from data provided by a 1998 large scale study conducted by the Research Institute for the Quality of Life (RIQL).¹⁵

For the intergenerational analysis, the RIQL study used the following generational definitions:

- ▶ “younger” refers to people between the ages of 17 and 25
- ▶ “middle age” refers to people between the ages of 26 and 45
- ▶ “older” refers to people over the age of 45

The results of this study indicate that gender inequalities persist among Roma over the age of 16 in respect to formal education. Significantly more Romani women (23 percent) than Romani men (14 percent) have not received any formal education. From the perspective of an intergenerational analysis, a pattern of diminishing gender inequalities can be observed

for school enrollment. Among the older generation, the percentage of women who have not received any formal education is more than double compared to men (35 percent for women, and 16 percent for men). The ratio decreases among the middle age generation (19 percent for women, and 11 percent for men), and even reverses among the younger generation (17 percent for men and 16 percent for women).

The level of gender inequality in professional school training (i.e., the number of Romani women and men who complete professional schools) varies from one generation to another, but Romani women from all generations remain disadvantaged. Among the older generation, the number of Romani men who graduated from professional schools exceeds that of women by a five point margin. Among the middle age generation, three times more men than women graduated from professional schools, while among the younger generation “only” twice as many Romani men as women received this type of professional training.¹⁶

Gender inequalities from one generation to another in secondary and higher education have also decreased between Romani women and men. However, the overall number of Roma (men or women) who graduate from an institution of higher education remains very low.

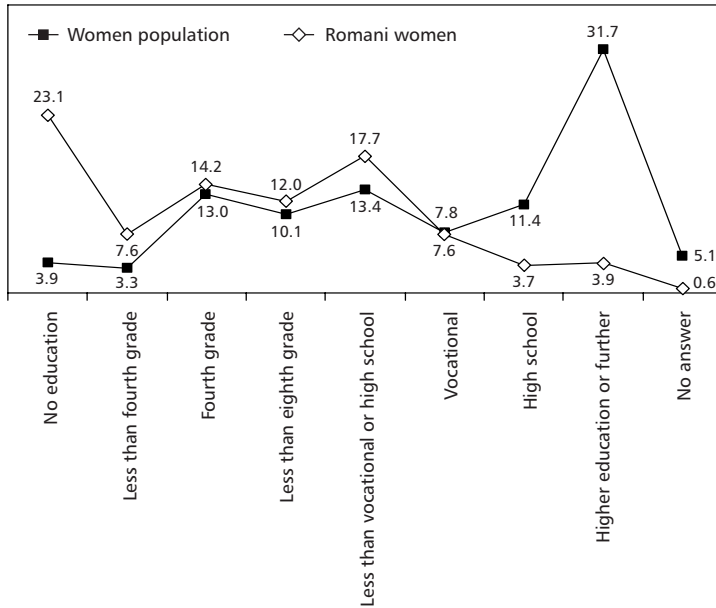
Illiteracy rates are higher among Romani women than Romani men. Thirty-eight percent of Romani girls and women over the age of 10 are illiterate, while the rate is 33 percent for boys and men over 10.¹⁷

A secondary analysis of data from the RIQL database shows that the percentage of women who have not received any formal education is higher in rural areas (26 percent) than in urban settings (19 percent). Romani women from urban areas are twice as likely to graduate from professional schools as Romani women from rural areas. Residential background (urban/rural) similarly influences the likelihood of completing secondary education. Five percent of urban Romani women complete secondary education compared to 2 percent for rural Romani women.

The figure below shows a comparison between the level of education of Romani women (compiled from the RIQL 1998 database) and the average level of education of women in Romania (compiled from the secondary analysis of data performed on the Gender Barometer 2000 research).

As the figure shows, Romani women, on average, have a significantly lower level of education relative to Romania’s overall female population. The percentage of women without formal education is six times higher for Roma than for the overall female population and the percentage of women who have completed higher education is about eight times lower for Roma than for the overall female population.

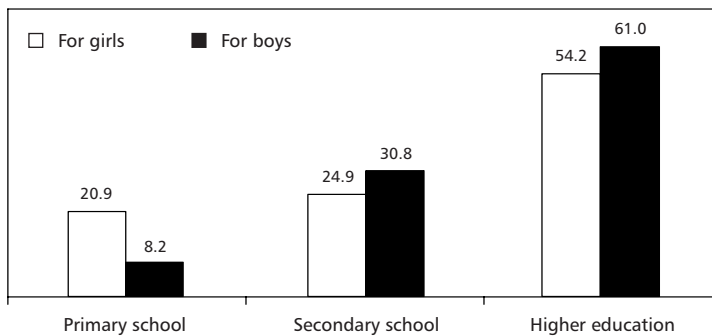
Educational Attainment for Romani Women and Overall Female Population in Romania [%]



Gender Differences in Educational Expectations for Girls and Boys

Romani women in our sample generally wish for a higher level of education for their children than what the data show they can actually expect. The evidence of high aspirations for school achievement contradicts the widespread stereotype that Roma do not want to receive education. In fact, the survey data reveal the tensions between high aspirations and limited education possibilities that generate social frustration among the Roma.

Educational Expectations by Gender [%]



Of the Romani women interviewed, a majority generally expects lower levels of education for girls than for boys. The percentage of women who believe that primary school education is enough for girls is two-and-a-half times higher than the percentage of women who share the same opinion for boys.

At the same time, there are more women who expect that boys would complete secondary or higher education than women who have the same expectation for girls.

Data from qualitative research confirm the results of the quantitative study. Opinions expressed by Romani women during focus group interviews show that they favor higher levels of education for boys than for girls. Romani women give the following reasons for their preferential treatment of boys:

- ▶ Men are the breadwinners of their families. Having a better education and becoming trained for a job can help secure an income.
- ▶ Men need a better education in order to uphold their roles as family leaders.

“We don’t have any expectations when it comes to girls,” said one Romani woman, commenting on Romani girls and education. “It is likely that tomorrow she’ll get married and then follow her man, and she doesn’t need to study anymore. Plus, her husband probably won’t let her get a job, anyway.”

In another discussion group, one Romani woman said: “Boys should finish their school till the end, since women ‘stand near the cooking stove,’ as the proverb says, and the man brings home the money.”

Most of the Romani women who participated in the focus group discussions agreed that a girl’s success in life depends very much on a successful marriage; hence, it is less important for girls to become educated. Another reason for supporting less education for girls is the belief expressed by a number of Romani women that women should have a lower social status than men. Several Romani women also declared that, in their opinion, if girls continue school beyond puberty, they risk losing their virginity, and thus acquire a stigma in their community and become less eligible for marriage.

Gender Divisions in Supporting a Child’s Education

There are marked inequalities in the division of parenting responsibilities for supporting children’s education. In 76 percent of cases, the mother is the only person who maintains the relationship with the school, and attends meetings organized by the school. In 15 percent of Romani families, both parents attend school meetings. Cases in which the father is the only person who maintains the relationship with the school are very rare (4 percent).

When Romani mothers were asked why and how they became more involved with the children's school than the fathers, they gave several reasons, all highlighting commonly held beliefs about the gendered division of family roles.

"It's me who goes more to school, because my husband has got a job," said one woman. "I am a housewife and I think that the children would rather that I go, since the mother is more lenient, not that severe."

Another woman said, "I am responsible for the connection with the school since my husband doesn't like to go anywhere, only to work and back."

The idea of maintaining relations with a child's school as a part of a women's childcare "duties" and that women are more suited for this activity was quite strong among Romani women, as illustrated by the following exchange between several Romani woman and an interviewer:

—"I have gone to school five times since the beginning of the school year."

—"And does your husband go?"

—"No, he never does."

—"This is the way it works with us, usually mothers go. I have never seen a man go to school."

—"Men don't have to go, what would they do there? Quarrel with the teachers? Men are different. The woman must go."

—"In our community the woman goes to the school, this is the way it works with us, women are interested in the destiny of the children, at home, at school, anywhere they go."

—"In most of the cases mothers go."

—"Why?"

—"Because the mother has more patience; the mother finds the necessary time even if she doesn't have enough—she finds the time to go to school."

—"The mother is more curious to see how the child is doing at school. She provides all the support!"

Mothers also have the biggest share in helping their children do homework. Over 52 percent of the Romani women interviewed said that they were the ones who provided homework help to their children. Romani fathers, however, were more involved in doing homework with children than in maintaining relations with school. More than 23 percent of Romani fathers worked together with their wives in helping children with homework, while 13 percent of Romani fathers were solely responsible for helping with homework.

Data from qualitative research confirm the findings of the quantitative analysis, and give additional insight into the possible reasons behind this gender division of parenting responsibilities.

“For me, the most important thing in life is school and my daughter’s education,” said one Romani woman. “I help her with the homework, and sometimes my husband does too. But this is rather rare, not because he is not interested, but he has to go to work.”

Furthermore, group discussions revealed that Romani mothers think they are more supportive, more patient, and more tolerant with their children than the fathers.

–“Who in your family supervises the children when they do homework?”

–“The mother.”

–“Why ? What is father doing in the meantime?”

–“Generally, children are afraid of their fathers.”

–“Mothers are calmer.”

–“Mothers listen more.”

Overall, the Romani women discussion participants considered themselves as more “skilled” at educating their children. They did, however, note some exceptions when fathers are involved in helping children with their homework, especially if the father has a higher level of education than the mother.

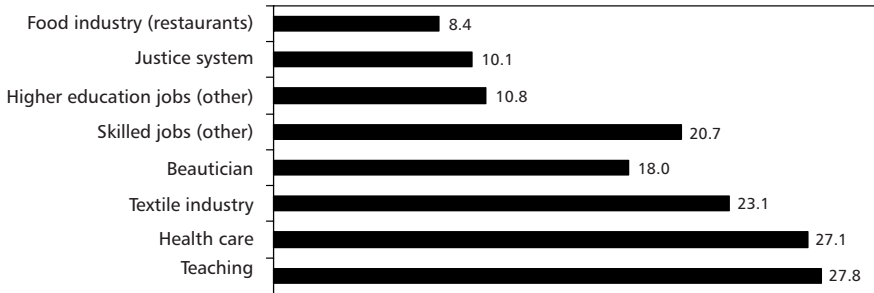
Gender Segregation in Job Orientation

Over 27 percent of the women surveyed considered education/teaching to be the most appropriate field of work for a girl, and indicated the following job preferences for girls within the education sector:

- ▶ Professional teacher: 12 percent
- ▶ School headmaster: 9 percent
- ▶ Nursery school teacher: 6 percent

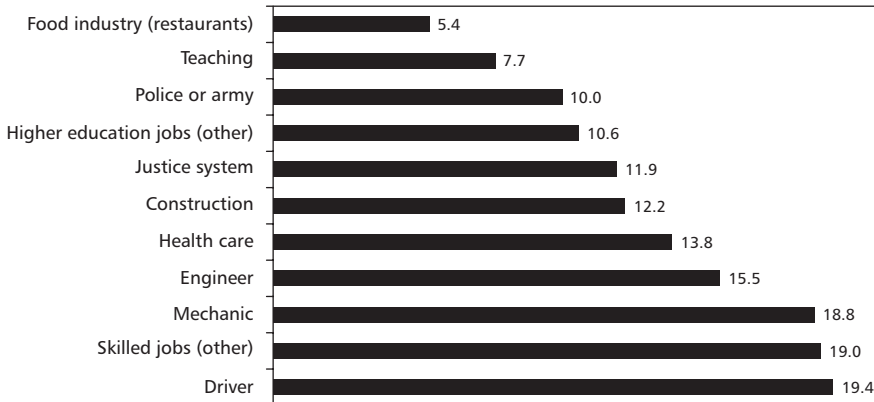
Overall, the respondents’ preferences reflect an acute sense of gender segregation in job orientation within Romani families. For example, the figure below shows that Romani women considered the education, health care, and textile industries as the most appropriate fields and occupations for women. Romani women ranked beauty salons fourth on their list of preferred jobs.

Appropriate Fields and Occupations for Women [%]



Meanwhile, respondents ranked the following fields and occupations as the most appropriate for men: driver, auto mechanic, engineer, physician, and lawyer.

Appropriate Fields and Occupations for Men [%]

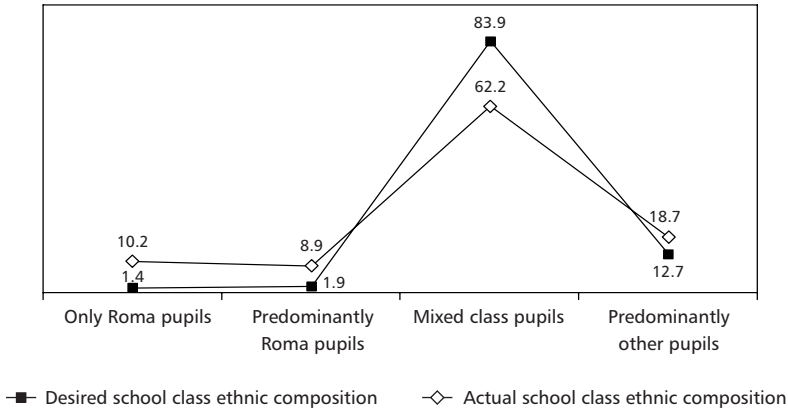


School Segregation and Quality of Education

Nineteen percent of Romani mothers whose children go to school reported that their children attended classes predominantly or exclusively with other Roma pupils. (see figure below)

Contrary to assertions by some officials that Romani communities prefer to have their own separate schools, only 3 percent of the Romani women surveyed in this study said that segregated education was appropriate. Instead, more than 83 percent of respondents said they wanted their children to learn in classes with mixed ethnic groups. Yet actual classroom ethnic compositions indicate that almost 38 percent of Romani students are in classes which are either exclusively Roma, predominantly Roma, or predominantly other ethnic groups.

Actual and Desired Classroom Ethnic Composition [%]



The Romani mothers who participated in discussion groups articulated a number of reasons for preferring mixed classes.

“It’s better when they are mixed,” said a Romani woman from Caracal. “Romanian children often get better education. Our children could learn something from them.” She also noted how Romanian schools and students generally had better resources that could help her children learn.

Language learning was also a priority. “I would like [my child] to study together with the Romanians,” said one mother. “That’s why he studies at school—to learn Romanian.”

“If there are schools only for Roma, children would learn only in the Romani language,” noted a mother from Lipovu. “If they go somewhere else, they won’t know how to express themselves in Romanian. Sending them to school where they learn in Romanian is better. Besides this, they are likely to learn foreign languages too, like English and French.”

One respondent said that mixed classes are good because they allow Romani and majority population students to “get accustomed to each other.” Another felt that the segregation of Romani and non-Romani children in schools “becomes the basis for ethnic hatred.”

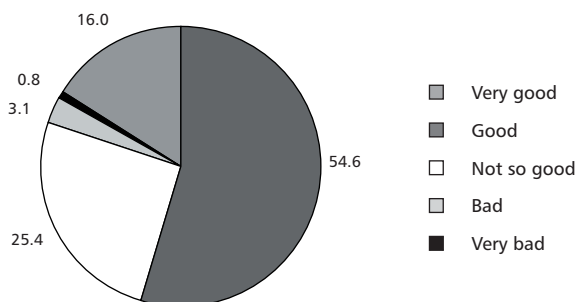
A small number of Romani women said they preferred some forms of segregation because they felt integration and diversity could be hazardous.

“There should be only Roma children in the classroom,” said a woman from Bontida. “[The Romanians] don’t take Roma students into account anyway, and this way they can be together.”

Romani women who favored separation also mentioned that learning the Romani language was a benefit for Romani children who do not have a good knowledge of Romanian during their first years of school. Also, having a Romani teacher was considered a positive influence on the learning environment.

Seventy percent of the Romani mothers surveyed considered the quality of education their children receive as “very good” or “good,” while over 29 percent were dissatisfied with the quality of their children’s education.

Perceptions of Education Quality [%]



Perceptions of Ethnic and Gender Discrimination in School

Romani women perceived ethnic discrimination to be widespread throughout the school system, with 56 percent stating that Roma are treated worse than pupils from other ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of Romani women who identified gender discrimination as a problem is much lower, with 16 percent stating that Romani girls are treated worse than boys in school.

The Romani women who said that girls are treated worse than boys felt strongly that Romani girls faced double discrimination, with 93 percent of respondents agreeing that their daughters were exposed to discrimination because of both their gender and ethnicity.

According to Romani women’s personal accounts, discrimination against Roma in school is not a new phenomenon; it was present also in the communist period. “Regardless of the democracy that we have now,” said one woman. “Distinctions have always been made between Romani children and Romanian children.”

Segregation of Romani children in special classes is the most frequent type of discrimination. When classes are mixed, a frequent form of discrimination is to make Romani children sit in the last desks. Such treatment is one example of the general lack of attention that Romani pupils receive from their teachers.

“I told the teacher that I would take my daughter out from her class if she didn’t work with her at the blackboard,” said one mother. “Still, she worked only with the Romanian children, and she kept Romani children in the back of the classroom.”

In some cases, Romani children experience discrimination not only from their teachers, but also from other students who treat their Romani classmates with suspicion and taunt them with names like “Gypsy” or “*crow*.” Romani children are often blamed for negative incidents that happen in school.

“Somebody broke a window in my son’s classroom and all of them said ‘look, that Gypsy broke the window,’” one Romani mother recounted. “My son came home and said, ‘the Romanians blame me because I am a Gypsy, and they hate me and blame me for stealing pens and books.’”

The woman said her daughter also experienced discrimination. “In my daughter’s class there were only two or three Gypsies,” she said. “[The teacher] didn’t take them into consideration. They sat separately—on one side the Gypsies, on the other side the Romanians. Both the teachers and the students treated them differently.”

VII. Health and Reproductive Rights

Women and Children's Health

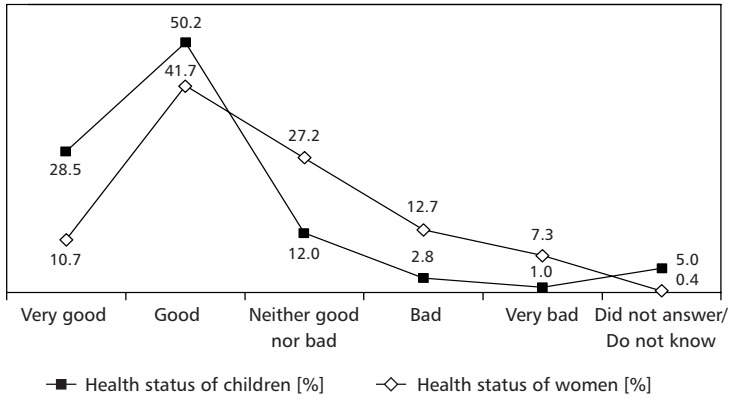
As shown by the graph below, almost half of the Romani women surveyed rated their health as ranging from either “very bad,” “bad” or “neither good nor bad.” Twenty percent said they had some type of serious health problem. Only 10 percent described their health as “very good.” Mothers tended to perceive their children’s health as much better than their own. Still, 16 percent of Romani women said their children were not in “good” or “very good” shape.

When a child is sick, it was most often the mother alone who visited the physician (82 percent of all cases). In 75 percent of all cases, Romani mothers were responsible for caring for sick children as well. Fathers or other members of the household taking the sick child to the doctor were rather exceptional (0.9 percent of all cases). However, in 17 percent of cases, the father accompanied his partner or wife on the visit to the doctor.

Most Romani women paid close attention to their children’s health and took the health problems of a child more seriously than the health problems of an adult.

“If I get sick, I hardly ever go to the doctor” said one woman. “But when children are sick, I go more frequently. If the doctor gives me a prescription, I borrow money so I can buy the medicine.”

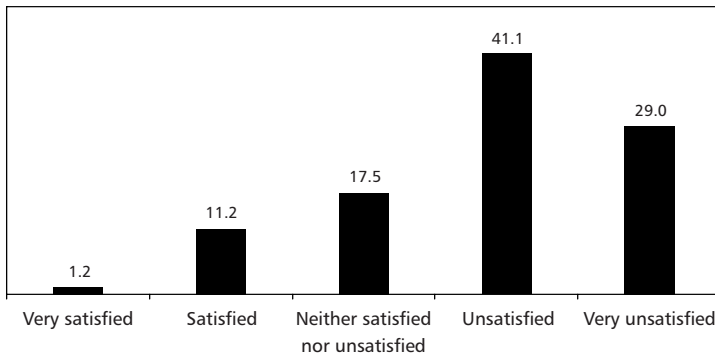
Health Status of Women and Children [%]



Birth and Maternity Benefits

Seventy percent of Romani women felt that the birth and maternity benefits granted by the state were insufficient and were “unsatisfied” or “very unsatisfied” with the amount of benefits they received.

Satisfaction with Birth and Maternity Benefits [%]

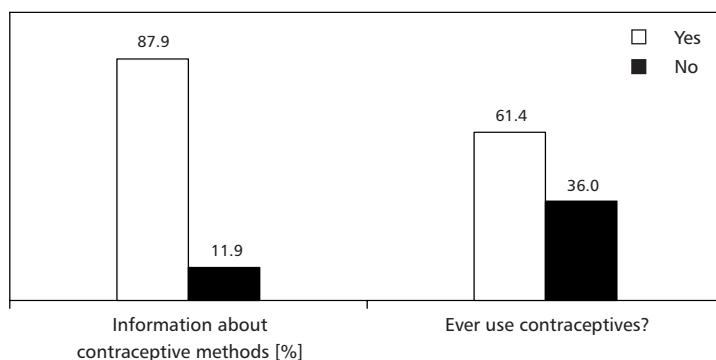


The qualitative research revealed that one source of Romani women’s frustration over benefits is that they are excluded from the state childcare allowance of about 150 euros, which is granted only to employed women.

Knowledge and Use of Contraception

Most Romani women from our sample (88 percent) had heard about contraception. The relatively small segment of Romani women who did not know about contraception were mostly women without formal education (43 percent) or those who had a low level of education (50 percent had eighth grade educations). A large majority (88 percent) of the women who had no information about contraception were married. Urban and rural distinctions seem to have little influence as the percentages of women from both areas who did not know about contraception were similar.

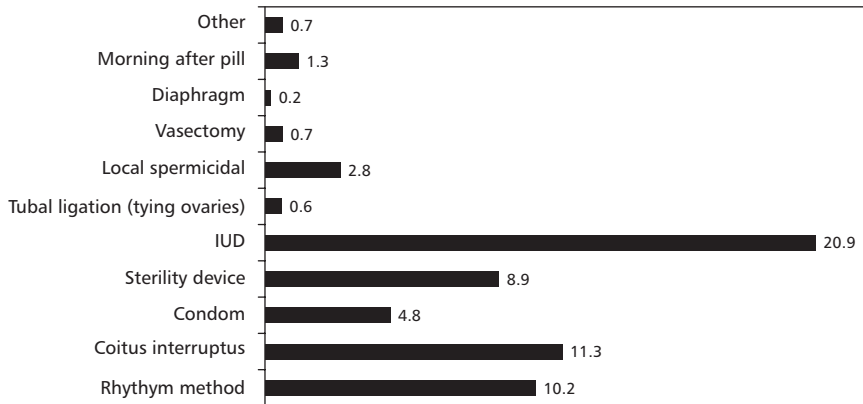
Information About and Use of Contraceptives [%]



Note: The remaining, unspecified percentage consisted of “no answer” given

The use of contraceptive methods was more limited than knowledge about contraception. Thirty-six percent of Romani women surveyed said they had never used contraceptives. Most Romani women who answered that they had never used contraceptives were not educated or had a low level of education (84 percent) and were residents of rural areas (60 percent). Among all the Romani women surveyed, abortion was by far the main method for controlling reproduction. Seventy-eight percent of the Romani women sampled use abortion to prevent unwanted births. A much lower percentage of Romani women used one or a combination of the following forms of contraceptives: birth control pills, condoms, coitus interruptus, the rhythm method, and IUDs.

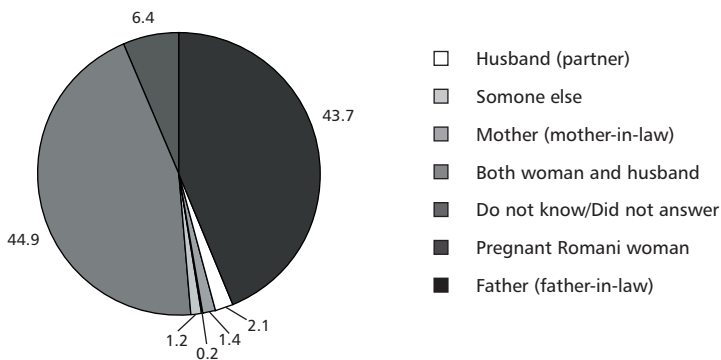
Contraceptive Methods Used (Other than Abortion) [%]



Deciding on Abortion

Forty-three percent of Romani women who had at least one abortion said that they had made the decision alone. Of the same group, 45 percent said that their partners participated in the decision. In 5 percent of all cases, the woman was compelled to have an abortion by other members of the household such as the husband, the mother or the mother-in-law, or the father or father-in-law. The incidence of forced abortions may be higher, however, as the influence of social norms makes some women reluctant to acknowledge a forced abortion. In our survey, these women may be among those who did not answer the question or declared they did not know who made the decision.

Who Decides on Abortion [%]



During focus group discussions, most Romani women said they made their own decisions about whether or not to have an abortion. “When it’s about giving birth to a child, we both decide,” said one woman. “When it is about having an abortion, it’s only me.”

In most cases, the women said they made the decision because they were the only caregivers in their families, and felt they could not raise another child.

“It’s me who takes the decision to have an abortion or keep the child,” said another discussion participant. “Since it is we who suffer, and not men.”

Another frequent reason for having an abortion was poverty. The exchange below highlights some of the reasons a few women were willing to make the decision without informing their husband or having their consent:

–“I was pregnant but I couldn’t keep the baby because we didn’t have the means to support another child.”

–“Did you decide by yourself?”

–“Yes.”

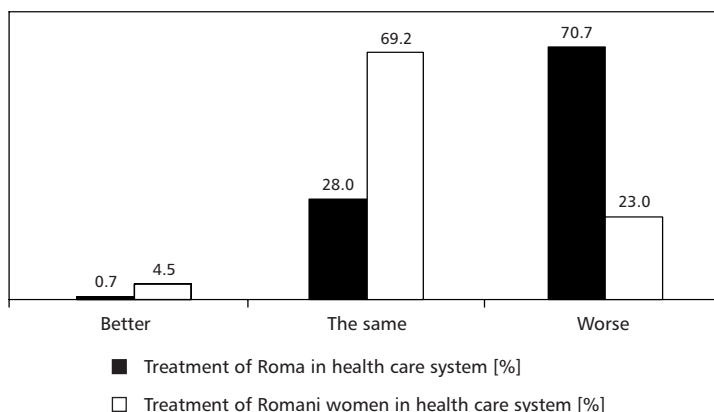
–“Your husband didn’t participate?”

–“No, my husband didn’t want [me to abort]; he wanted to keep the baby.[But] it’s me who decides, since we suffer with the children. He tried to stop me by beating me, but despite this I did it.”

Ethnic and Gender Discrimination in the Health Care System

According to the Romani women surveyed, discrimination against Roma in the health care system is widespread. Seventy percent asserted that medical personnel discriminate against Roma. A smaller percentage perceived gender discrimination as also present in the health care system. Twenty-three percent of the Romani women thought that health care workers treat women worse than men. An overwhelming majority (95 percent) of those who perceived gender discrimination also believed that health care workers discriminate against Roma. Survey results indicate that 22 percent of Romani women perceived ethnic and gender discrimination in the treatment they receive from health care workers. Two thirds of the women who perceived this double discrimination came from rural areas and had no formal education (30 percent) or had low levels of education (52 percent have eighth grade educations). This same group of women was also characterized by lower living standards (an average of 65 euros per household) than the average of the total sample (85 euros per household). The women who perceived double discrimination also had lower average monthly incomes (less than 19 euros) than the average of the total sample (31 euros).

Ethnic and Gender Discrimination in the Health Care System [%]



Focus group discussions with Romani women revealed some of the consequences of both ethnic and gender discrimination against Romani women.

“I was in the emergency room,” said one woman. “And as soon as they noticed that I was relatively clean, they started to examine me. However, if they think you are dirty or notice that your skin is darker, then they push you aside.”

Participants also said that doctors were inattentive and often discriminated against Romani women because of their lower social status and lack of money. Sometimes, medical personnel treated Romani women badly, because they did not have the financial resources to offer bribes of small gifts or money to the doctor. Many also felt that they received weaker or cheaper medications or were denied prescriptions because they were Roma.

“I have had the same doctor for two years,” said another woman. “And she has never given me a free prescription...I bring her the certificate for the children issued by their school; the certificate about the social allowance issued by the city hall; but it is useless—she continues to prescribe medicine that I have to pay for.”

VIII. Paid and Unpaid Labor

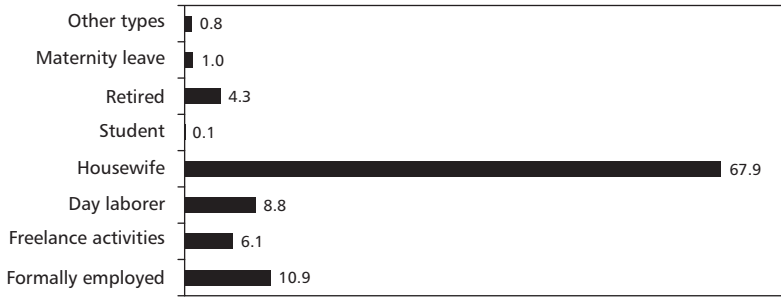
Participation in the Labor Force

A large segment of Romani women are not part of the labor market. Almost 68 percent of the Romani women in our sample described themselves as housewives. However, the “housewife” label is misleading. In many cases, it does not reflect a choice by women, but rather the lack of employment opportunities available to them. Only 26 percent of the Romani women surveyed were part of the workforce. This percentage encompasses employees, day laborers, and freelancers. While the combined formal/informal sector employment rate for Romanian women was 45 percent in 2002, according to the Romanian Statistical Yearbook, the employment rate for Romani women was less than 20 percent.

Only 11 percent of Romani women surveyed for this study were formally employed. The corresponding percentage for women, at the national level was almost two and a half times higher at 27 percent in 2002, according to the 2003 Romanian Statistical Yearbook. Almost two thirds of the Romani women who were employed lived in urban areas and had secondary or higher education. From the group of employed Romani women, almost half were skilled workers and more than one third were unskilled workers.

Almost 15 percent of Romani women, although not employed, were engaged in income-earning activities as day laborers or freelancers. The number of retired persons with pension benefits represented a very small percentage (only 4 percent) from the sample of Romani women.

Romani Women's Occupations [%]



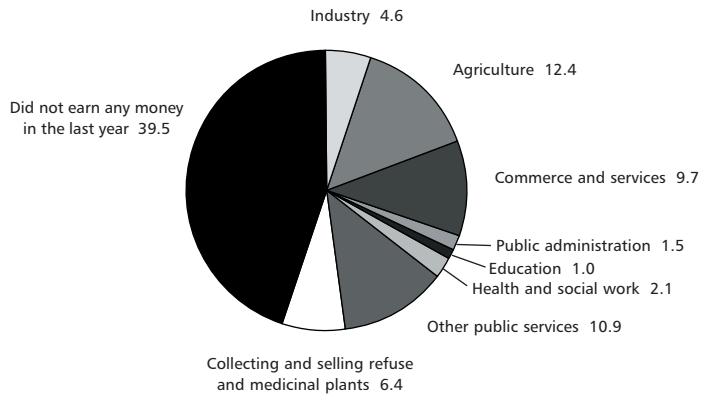
Women's employment is a significant factor in the welfare of the family. In Romani families where women were employed, the average monthly income was approximately 140 euros, which represents a significant increase compared with the family average of 85 euros for the entire sample. Employed Romani women in this survey had an average income of 68 euros, more than two times the average income of 31 euros for the entire sample of Romani women surveyed.

Average Incomes and Income Inequalities

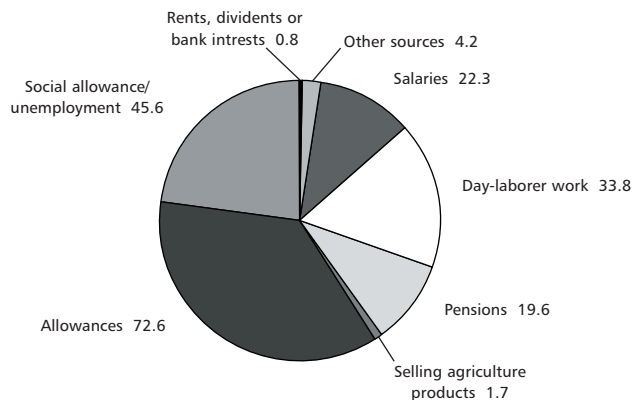
Almost 40 percent of the Romani women who responded to the RPP questionnaire said they did not earn any money in the last year. The most important income-earning activities for Romani women were in agriculture, buying and selling small goods, services, and collecting waste and medicinal plants, as shown in the figure below. The education, health, and public administration systems contributed a total of only 9 percent to Romani women's employment. Almost 11 percent of respondents said they were working for "other public services," which means that they were required to perform community service in order to receive welfare payments from the state.

Romani families were highly dependent on welfare benefits as a source of income. Seventy-two percent of the respondents indicated child allowances were the main source of income for their families. Social allowances or unemployment allowances were the main source of income for 46 percent of the Romani women surveyed. Over 33 percent of Romani households earned their income from members' work as day laborers, which is available almost exclusively during summer. Only 22 percent of Romani households received their main income from salaries, which represents less than half of the national average for Romania (46 percent). Furthermore, only 20 percent of Romani households could rely on pension benefits for their income. Less than 2 percent of Romani families surveyed earned their incomes by selling agricultural products, largely due to the fact that hardly any of the Roma who live in rural areas own land.

Sectors of Income Generating Activity for Romani Women [%]



Sources of Household Income [%]



Based on accounts from Romani women, the average income of Romani households of five members or more in August 2004 was 85 euros. The average income for urban Romani households was about 96 euros, while the same value for rural households was approximately 73 euros.

However, the data in this study show there are marked inequalities in earnings between Romani women and Romani men, despite the fact that both groups have low incomes. According to reports from the Romani women in our sample, the average earnings for Romani men were higher than for Romani women. Thus, in September 2004, men earned on average 52 euros, while women earned only 31 euros. Twice as many women as men were not earning any money. At the same time, the percentage of women earning more than 100 euros (the highest category in our sample) was four times lower than the percentage of Romani men in this income group.

Data from this report also show that there were income inequalities between different groups of Romani women. Earning averages for Romani women in our sample equaled 20 euros per month for those with no formal education and 26 euros per month for those with a primary school level of education. Roman women with a secondary school level of education earned approximately 46 euros per month.

Work in the Informal Economy

Fifty-four percent of Romani women who have been employed at least once said that they did not complete legal forms upon employment, but they only received a verbal guarantee of their job. Effectively, these women are part of the informal economy, which means that their jobs and salaries are uncertain, and they do not receive any social benefits, such as health insurance or a pension.

Most of the informal jobs done by the Romani women in our sample were in agriculture and they were hired either directly by landowners, or by companies as day laborers. Only 25 percent of Romani women in our sample had consistent, full-time employment. Eight percent worked part time, on a limited contract basis, while 5 percent said they were authorized entrepreneurs for various small-scale, self-employed activities.

The qualitative data collected for this study show that Romani women were more involved in seeking additional sources of income than men. Many Romani women who participated in focus group discussions said they try to supplement their families' incomes by doing odd jobs, gathering mushrooms, medicinal plants, or even collecting corn and potato remnants after the summer harvest.

"In winter, we [women] are more at home," said a Romani woman from Maglavit. "I cook, wash, tidy up. I light the fire everyday and feed the cattle. In summer, I add to all of this when I get a job working in the fields."

Romani women sometimes go from village to village with their husbands or children offering handicrafts and other goods for money or food.

"In summer, I go with my husband by cart and sell objects made of plastic," said another woman. "So we get some money and if the customers have no money we also accept food. On other occasions and in autumn, we go to dig, or pick grapes, apples, corn."

One woman described how her work went from agricultural to informal services on a seasonal basis: "In the summer, we work for wealthier people, digging in their gardens. In winter, I usually do house cleaning."

A number of women noted that children are also expected to work, indicating that the nature of Romani women's non-domestic labor can change with the arrival of children.

"When I was young I used to work in the forest," said a woman from Brăila. "Then I had a boy and a small daughter. We would go on streets, sift through debris. We worked side by side."

Domestic Labor

On average, Romani women from urban and rural areas spent seven hours a day on domestic labor (cooking, cleaning, taking care of children). Education levels, however, seemed to influence the number of hours women spent on housework and childcare. Romani women with no formal education spent an average of eight hours a day on housework, while women with primary and secondary school educations spent seven and six hours a day, respectively, on housework. Employed Romani women spent an average of three hours less on daily domestic work than unemployed Romani women.

Romani girls also participated in housework, particularly as childcare providers in larger families. Girls were more involved in housework than boys, and sometimes their domestic duties prevented them from attending classes, even during primary education.

As one mother noted during a discussion: “The older children take care of the younger ones. I have a daughter and she repeated first grade twice. I kept her home, because she was older and stayed with the younger children, so that I could go and work and earn bread to feed her and the others.”

Ethnic and Gender Discrimination in the Labor Market

More than 21 percent of the Romani women surveyed believe that women are treated worse than men in the labor market. Furthermore, 33 percent of them believe that women have lower chances of getting hired than men with the same qualifications. During focus group discussions, Romani women said that men find work more easily than women, because there are more heavy labor jobs available that are more appropriate for men. They also thought that men found work more easily because they are better educated.

“A man can find work faster,” said one woman from Orastie. “Because he can dig, work with cement, and do heavy labor.”

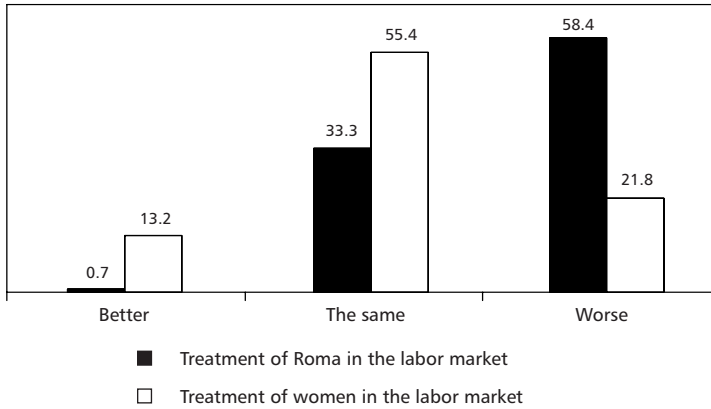
She continued by noting the role of education and gender: “I have never worked. I only finished 10 grades. Everywhere I’ve applied, I’ve been refused, so my husband works. He has a degree from a vocational school.”

Some Romani women noted that traditional gender roles exert pressures on women to stay home and take care of the children, and thus prevent them from seeking work outside the household.

Among the Romani women surveyed, perceptions of ethnic discrimination were much stronger than feelings about discrimination based on gender. A majority of Romani women (58 percent) believed that employers treat Roma worse than they treat Romanians. Over 82 percent of those who stated that women were treated worse than men also said that Roma were

treated worse than other groups, indicating that 18 percent of Romani women in our sample perceive both types of discrimination.

Ethnic and Gender Discrimination in the Labor Market [%]



Note: The remaining, unspecified percentage consisted of “no answer” given

The perception of gender discrimination is more frequent among women with no formal education, as 35 percent of this group felt that employers treat women worse than men. Among the women with primary school educations, the percentage decreases to 22, and falls even further, to 13 percent, among women with secondary school educations.

In focus group discussions, Romani women described cases of what they perceived of as discrimination in job recruitment. A woman from Cluj said, “When I worked in a market, other [Romani] women also wished to be hired, but they didn’t hire them because they were darker or because they were afraid they would disappear with the money.”

Another discussion participant noted that simply coming from a “Romani” neighborhood consistently reduced opportunities to find a job.

“If they see that you live on Digului Street,” said the woman. “They refuse everything. I have finished 10 grades and I handed in employment applications everywhere. All were refused.”

Other Romani women described experiences in which they would apply for sales jobs but were told things such as “customers won’t buy from Gypsies. They prefer Romanians, people of their own ethnicity,” and that customers avoid “Gypsies because they think they’ll try to cheat them.”

If they did manage to find a job, the Romani women who participated in the focus group discussions said they experienced discrimination by their employers and found that they were offered the worst work conditions and the lowest paid jobs.

IX. Housing

Living Conditions and Household Facilities

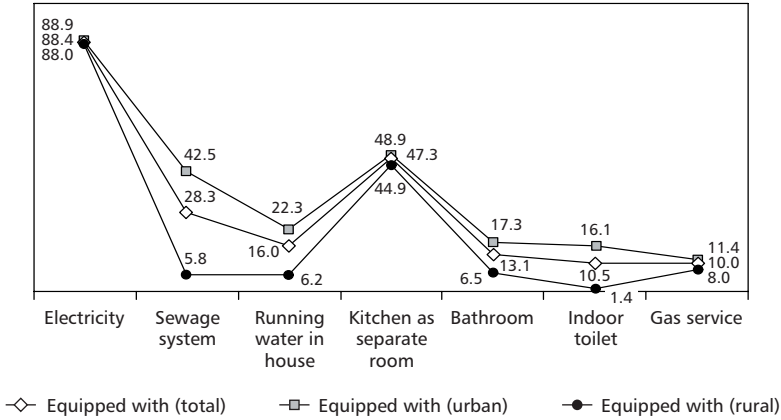
Survey findings show that most Romani families live in one or two-room dwellings. Considering that Romani households have more than five members on average, Romani families often live in very crowded households with more than two persons per room. According to responses from Romani women in this study, 27 percent of Romani families live in houses with more than 3 people per room.

Higher levels of education are associated with better housing conditions. Over six percent of the Romani women with secondary school educations lived in houses having more than four persons in a room. For women with primary school educations, the number of households having over four people per room more than doubled to 15 percent. Women with no formal education fared the worst as 30 percent of them lived in homes with more than four people per room.

Many Romani households lack basic facilities. According to survey respondents, 10 percent of Romani families lacked electricity. Only 28 percent of Roma households benefited from having sewage systems, with only 6 percent of rural households having such facilities. Fifty-one percent of Romani families did not have a separate kitchen, and used one space for living and cooking. Over 82 percent of Romani families lacked running water. The situation was most severe in rural areas, where 94 percent of households lacked fixed running water

inside the house. Other facilities such as a bathroom, an indoor toilet, or connections to gas service were equally scarce with less than 15 percent of all Romani households in the survey having these facilities.

Household Facilities by Residence [%]



More than 69 percent of Romani families heated their houses with wood or coal. Only 10 percent of households had central heating or used natural gas for heating. Sixteen percent of Romani families used waste (wood or paper) for heating, while 1 percent of Romani households had no heating at all.

The subjective evaluations provided by Romani women participating in this study match these findings. Most Romani women evaluated their housing conditions as “modest” (29 percent), “bad” (25 percent) or “very bad” (16 percent). Twenty-three percent of Romani women rated their housing conditions as good, and only 4 percent said their living conditions were very good.

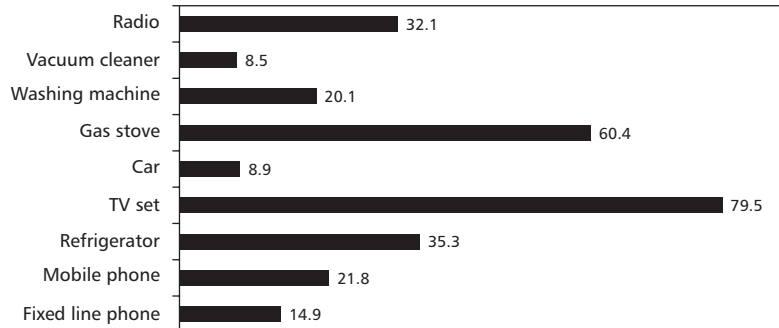
Household Appliances

Most Romani households had a TV set (79 percent) and a gas tank stove (60 percent). The next most common assets were a refrigerator (35 percent) and a radio (32 percent). Only 20 percent of Romani households had a washing machine. And only nine out of every one hundred Romani families had a car.

There were significant differences between urban and rural areas in the number of Romani families who owned a car, a washing machine, and a gas stove. More than twice as many urban Romani families owned a car (11 percent) as those living in rural areas (5 percent).

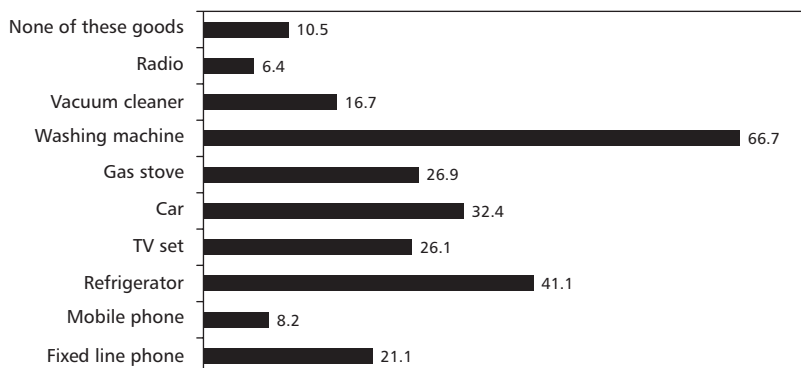
Urban Roma were two times more likely to have a washing machine than rural Roma. Over 70 percent of urban families had a gas tank stove, while only 44 percent of rural families had this appliance.

Household Appliances [%]



The first item on Romani women’s priority list of household appliances was a washing machine. Over 66 percent of the Romani women surveyed for this study said that, if they could afford it, a washing machine would be their first investment. A refrigerator was the second choice, with 41 percent of respondents saying they would buy one if they had the money.

Desired Household Appliances [%]



X. Participation in Political and Civic Life

Romani women's participation in political and civic life appears to be rather weak. Only 26 percent of the Romani women surveyed said that they were involved in political, civic, or community-based organizations. Most Romani women who participated in political or civic activities were involved in NGOs (11 percent⁸) (Although this could reflect a bias in our sample). Other avenues for civic participation were school-organized parent committees in which 8 percent of Romani women surveyed were members. Only 20 women in our sample were members of a trade union, and only 14 were members of a political party. Only three survey participants were members of a local government council.

The qualitative component of the current study shows that Romani women perceived both ethnicity and gender as barriers to their access to staff positions in political parties or community organizations. Some Romani women said that they would not get involved with the leadership of political or community organizations because these are men's roles.

"Women can hardly succeed [in politics]," said a Romani woman from Orastie. "There are no possibilities, and [women] are not that clever. We are with the children...our minds are not focused on politics and such things. Men, yes, but women, no!"

Others perceived a general lack of trust in both Roma and women that would prevent them from achieving any type of leadership position.

“I think that for [Romani women] it is more difficult,” said a woman in Caracal. “It doesn’t matter how brilliant you are. If you are a Gypsy, they don’t accept you in...a leadership position.”

Yet other Romani women felt that gender discrimination in the form of the dominant society’s standards of physical appearance combined with ethnic discrimination and lack of education to marginalize Romani women from public life.

“Romani women are often pushed aside from certain positions, especially if being good looking is ‘necessary’ for the job,” said a discussion participant from Valea Viilor. “And even if you aren’t good looking but have the necessary education, you still have fewer chances because you are Roma.”

At the same time, Romani women argued that more and better education for their daughters and Romani girls in general may eventually increase their social status and change their ideas about the world.

“Romani women should send their daughters to school,” said one woman. “With the help of the school they can change their attitude. They cannot do this if they stick with tradition. They must change their attitude and enroll in school—that’s the way they will become somebody.”

Although they felt blocked from entering political life, almost half of all survey respondents (48 percent) believed that increased involvement of women in political life would change things for the better.

Survey data also show that urban Romani women with secondary school educations were more likely to be optimistic about the consequences of women’s greater involvement in politics. Conversely, women in rural areas tended to be more pessimistic about the results of more women becoming political decision-makers.

Romani women’s turnout in Romania’s 2004 local, national, and presidential elections was very high (82 percent). Among the survey sample, voting participation was higher among women with secondary school educations (89 percent) than among women with no formal education (63 percent). The high participation of Romani women in the elections was probably related to their expectations for a better life. Most Romani women thought that participation in the elections would bring improvements to their lives, as indicated from the exchange below during a discussion in Bontida:

–“Why did you go to vote?”

–“We went to get things solved.”

–“We went because we need supplies for our children’s school and wood for winter.”

–“I participated so they would help us, once we elect them.”

–“Yes, I voted and I hope I will get some help getting gas [for cooking and heating].”

Participation in voting was sometimes also seen as a civic duty. As one Romani woman in Valea Viilor said, “We always participate...for the benefit of the country and for the benefit of Roma and Romanians alike. I think that everybody should go to vote.”

More than 14 percent of the Romani women surveyed¹⁹ said they benefited at least once from a project financed by European Union programs, the World Bank or other international NGOs and donors. The percentage of women who benefited from a social project funded from external resources was higher in rural areas (26 percent) than in urban settings (7 percent). The percentage of women who benefited from at least one social project financed by international donors increased with the level of education: 11 percent for women with no formal education; 14 percent for Romani women with primary school educations; and 19 percent for Romani women with secondary school educations. Four percent of survey respondents also worked to implement social projects funded by international donors.

Survey results indicate that Romani women have low levels of participation in community life. During discussions, Romani women explained that their participation was low due to the decreasing number of cultural or community events in Romani neighborhoods. There are fewer and fewer such events, according to the women, because Roma receive little outside funding for such activities and members of the Romani community do not have the money to either pay admission fees or sponsor events.

“We’ve organized a harvest ball in the past,” said a woman from Orastie. “And we would like to organize it again, but we don’t have any money. We’ve also set up a Gypsy music group, but we don’t have sponsors and we can’t go anywhere.”

Community socializing often takes the form of informal visits that Romani women pay to each other and events such as dances, concerts, and weddings, although many Romani women indicated that the costs of these events usually prevents them from attending.

XI. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study demonstrates and confirms that Romani women in Romania are facing a devastating mix of discrimination, exclusion, inequality, and destitution that is unique and specific to them. Due to their ethnicity and gender, Romani women simultaneously endure both the ethnic discrimination faced by Romani men and the gender inequality faced by majority women.

Most Romani families endorse traditional gender roles that ascribe domestic work and childcare to women and income earning to men. Romani women feel that gender inequality is most acute in areas perceived as private: decision making in the family and childcare. These are also the areas that, in their opinion, should become priorities for achieving equality between women and men.

Inequalities between Romani women and Romani men are conspicuous also in education and the labor market. Romani women are generally less educated than Romani men. Furthermore, they consider education to be less important for girls than for boys. The educational gap between Romani women and majority women is extremely high in higher education, and Romani women are almost absent from postgraduate education. Current positive action initiatives for increasing Romani participation in education should expand and gain a more pronounced focus on gender.

Romani women identify employment as the area of public life where the need to address issues of gender inequality is most urgent. The data in this study support this perceived urgency by showing that Romani women have less access to the labor market compared to Romani men and that their salaries are affected by the gender pay gap.

Based on the results of the present research, the Roma Participation Program advocates a dual approach to improving the situation of Romani women in Romania: mainstream Romani women's issues into current policies for Roma inclusion and gender equality, and targeted programs that would address the specific situation of Romani women.

Recommendations

General Recommendations

1. The Romanian government and civil society organizations should use some form of empowering methodology in all research and programs for and about Romani women. Using an empowering methodology requires that Romani women be included in the elaboration and implementation of research and programs for and about them.²⁰
2. The Romanian government, ministries and specialized bodies must make a greater commitment to mainstreaming gender into current, national level policies for promoting Roma inclusion. Mainstreaming Romani women's issues should become a priority for the National Agency for Roma and the Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. Government Ordinance no. 84. 2004, the founding document for the Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, promotes gender mainstreaming in policymaking, but contains nothing about Romani women. It should be reviewed and revised to include specific references to Romani women and issues of multiple discrimination.
3. The Romanian government and women's agencies should increase their efforts to make current programs for gender equality in Romania more relevant for Romani women. An effective targeting of Romani women's issues should become a priority for the national women's agencies in Romania.
4. The Romanian government, national development agencies, and the private sector should work together to follow the European Parliament resolution on the situation of Roma in the European Union, which "urges all member states and candidate countries to take concrete measures to improve the access of Roma to labor markets with the aim of securing better long-term employment." In light of the extent of unemployment

among Romani women revealed by the current research, access to labor markets for Romani women should become a priority issue both on the Roma inclusion and gender equality agendas.

Tackling unemployment among Roma (Romani women in particular) should become a priority of Romania's current and future development policy. Adopting this priority would require more and better funded strategies and initiatives for improving Romani women's access to the labor market and developing their capacities for small entrepreneurship.

5. Either an independent government agency or an appropriately mandated civil society organization should provide continuous monitoring of the allocation of relevant funds (both at the national and European level) to insure that budgeting complies with the principles of nondiscrimination and gender equality that both the European Commission and the Romanian government have committed themselves to. In particular, the EU structural funds should be monitored for their accountability to promoting greater inclusion of Roma and gender equality.
6. Governments and organizations participating in the development and implementation of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities initiative should include the issue of combating Anti-Gypsyism/ Romaphobia in Europe among its priorities.

Specific Recommendations

1. Equality bodies and Roma offices

- ▶ The National Council for Combating Discrimination, the National Agency for Roma, and the National Agency for Equality of Opportunities between Men and Women should carefully coordinate their activities in order to avoid overlapping, redundant policies and programs for fighting discrimination and promoting the inclusion of Romani women.
- ▶ The National Agency for Roma needs to strengthen its monitoring functions so as to ensure that the allocation of budgets complies with the principle of gender equality that both the European Commission and the Romanian government have endorsed.
- ▶ An implementation plan for the Strategy for Roma during the period 2005–2010 should be agreed upon as soon as possible, and its objectives and activities should be coordinated with those of the National Action Plan to implement the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

2. Education

- ▶ Access to higher education should be facilitated for Romani girls through scholarship schemes and other positive action measures.
- ▶ The process of ethnic desegregation should continue, especially at the pre-school and primary school levels.
- ▶ “After school” classes may be organized for under-achieving pupils in order to improve their school results. Romani girls would especially benefit from such programs.
- ▶ All teachers should receive training in “discrimination-free” education, especially in respect to ethnicity and gender. School administrators should continuously monitor teachers for discriminatory behavior.
- ▶ Adult education programs (including literacy) should be designed with a special focus on Romani women.
- ▶ The current achievements of school mediator programs should be strengthened by ensuring the local sustainability of the programs and expanding their scope to include more cities and counties.
- ▶ Career councilors in schools should promote gender desegregation in job orientation by encouraging Romani girls to pursue studies and applications for vocational schools and colleges.

3. Health

- ▶ Increasing efforts to improve health policy in Romania, including making the health care system more accessible to Romani communities and expanding the provision of free, quality medication, would be of particular benefit for Romani women who are largely responsible for family health matters.
- ▶ The current achievements of the health mediator programs should be strengthened by expanding the network of Romani health mediators and strengthening their role in relation to Romani communities. Health mediators should organize information campaigns in Romani communities about the negative medical consequences of giving birth at an early age for both mother and infant. Issues

surrounding the health and psychological risks involved in early marriage should also be addressed.

- ▶ Sex education (including contraceptive methods) should be introduced in schools' optional curricula.
- ▶ Trainings addressing both ethnic and gender discrimination toward Romani communities and Romani women should be organized for all medical and administrative health care personnel.
- ▶ The Ministry of Health and the authorized statistical offices should strengthen their capacity to collect gender-disaggregated and gender specific health data from Romani communities. The involvement of Roma themselves is crucial for developing this capacity.

4. Employment

- ▶ Government development policies and the National Action Plan for implementing the Roma Decade should make tackling unemployment among Romani women a priority. Currently, the National Action Plan for implementing the Roma Decade does not identify gender as a relevant theme for its employment section. There is a risk that this may lead to insufficient attention given to programs for creating jobs for Romani women.
- ▶ Employers should be offered incentives (such as tax exemptions) to hire Romani women.
- ▶ Access to credits should be facilitated for Romani women who want to start small businesses.
- ▶ Access to ownership of land should be facilitated for Romani families from rural areas, with the aim of supporting them to set up small farms.
- ▶ Romani women should gain better access to information about job vacancies through job fairs, local unemployment offices, and other services.
- ▶ Gender segregation in job training should be combated through unemployment offices and other providers of professional training for unemployed Roma.

- ▶ The National Council for Combating Discrimination, as well as specialized NGOs, should strengthen their capacity to monitor gender, racial, and ethnic discrimination in the labor market, as well as cases involving multiple forms of discrimination.

5. **Political and civic participation**

- ▶ Public administration institutions should be encouraged to employ Romani women college or university graduates.
- ▶ Romani NGOs should adopt the principle of equal employment.
- ▶ Efforts should be increased to provide additional training in leadership skills for highly educated Romani women. Such trainings would encourage and support Romani women to compete for various positions in prestigious international organizations and in political parties.

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http://www.romawomen.ro/reports_pages/romani_women_and_public_policies.htm (Report of the conference "Public Policies and Romani Women in Central and East European Countries", 1999)

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http://www.edu.ro/invrrom_a1.htm.

<http://www.erionet.org/JIM%20Romania.htm> (The Joint Inclusion Memorandum of Romania)

Appendix

TABLE 1.
Geographical distribution of the sample

County [number of cases]	Localities	Number of cases per locality
<i>Brăila (71)</i>	<i>Brăila</i>	71
<i>Cluj (70)</i>	<i>Bonțida</i>	50
	<i>Coastei</i>	20
<i>Constanța (110)</i>	<i>Constanța</i>	110
<i>Dolj (110)</i>	<i>Făcăi</i>	36
	<i>Lipovu</i>	56
	<i>Malu Mare</i>	18
<i>Hunedoara (45)</i>	<i>Orăștie</i>	45
<i>Iași (66)</i>	<i>Podu Iloaiei</i>	22
	<i>Târgu Frumos</i>	44
<i>Olt (110)</i>	<i>Caracal</i>	110
<i>Sibiu (25)</i>	<i>Valea Viilor</i>	25
<i>Sălaj (110)</i>	<i>Agrij</i>	69
	<i>Zalău</i>	41
Total		717 cases

TABLE 2.
The distribution of focus groups

County	Locality	Urban / Rural	Number of subjects	Age of subjects
<i>Brăila</i>	<i>Brăila – Lacul Dulce F1</i>	<i>Urban</i>	8	25–35
	<i>Făurei F2</i>	<i>Rural</i>	6	36–55
<i>Cluj</i>	<i>Cluj – Coastei F3</i>	<i>Urban</i>	6	25–35
	<i>Bontida F4</i>	<i>Rural</i>	6	35–55
<i>Constanța</i>	<i>Constanța – Palas F5</i>	<i>Urban</i>	8	36–55
<i>Dolj</i>	<i>Maglavit F6, F7</i>	<i>Rural</i>	6	25–35
			6	36–55
	<i>Lipovu F8</i>	<i>Rural</i>	7	25–35
<i>Hunedoara</i>	<i>Orăștie F9</i>	<i>Urban</i>	9	25–35
<i>Iași</i>	<i>Târgu Frumos F10</i>	<i>Urban</i>	8	25–35
	<i>Podu Iloaiei F11</i>	<i>Rural</i>	7	35–55
<i>Olt</i>	<i>Caracal F12</i>	<i>Urban</i>	8	18–47
<i>Sibiu</i>	<i>Valea Viilor F13</i>	<i>Rural</i>	8	36–55
<i>Sălaj</i>	<i>Agrij F14</i>	<i>Rural</i>	7	25–35

Endnotes

1 Other international development agencies, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have practiced an empowering methodology in their programs.

2 See the 2004 Report, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*, available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/publications/2005/ke6204389_en.pdf. The conclusions and recommendations of the 2004 report are highly relevant as the research included Romania and Bulgaria.

3 Zamfir, Cătălin and Marian Preda, *Romii în România* [Roma in Romania], (Bucharest: Expert Publishing House: 2002).

4 Hereafter, the translation in English of the original text of the Constitution of Romania belongs to the authors of the present report and it does not represent an official translation, as the official translation was not available at the time of printing.

5 See the full text of *Report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the European Union for 2003* on the website of the European Commission's Directorate General of Justice and Home Affairs: http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/index_en.htm.

6 See the full text of the report *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union* at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/publications/2005/ke6204389_en.pdf.

- 7 See the European Women's Lobby, *Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the European Union* (2004): available at: <http://www.womenlobby.org/pdf/beijing-en.pdf>.
- 8 See the 2004 Report, *The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union*, available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/publications/2005/ke6204389_en.pdf.
- 9 Among the 40 key Lisbon goals are the attainment of 70 percent employment for all, and 60 percent employment for women by 2010, as well as the development of priority actions addressed to specific target groups such as minority groups, children, the elderly, and the disabled.
- 10 Nicoleta Bițu, "National Action Plans and Equality for Roma Women" (2005): available at: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/women/articles_publications/articles/bitu_20050118.
- 11 For a review of how these goals have been implemented at the level of the European Union, see *Report by the European Women's Lobby on the Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action by the European Union*. November 2004, available at: <http://www.womenlobby.org/pdf/beijing-en.pdf>.
- 12 The full text of the monitoring (in Romanian) is available at: http://www.romacenter.ro/programme/programmonitorizare/monit_implem_strategie_romi_2004.pdf.
- 13 The Institute for Public Policy, for example, based on an extensive empirical study, *Intolerance, Discrimination and Authoritarianism in Romania* (2003), concluded that on a policy level it was crucial to "develop mechanisms to implement the national strategy to combat discrimination at the local level." The same conclusion about the lack of local dimension in the activities of the NCCD is reached in the report *Institutional Building in the Field of Anti-discrimination* (2003).
- 14 The percentage is compiled from the 346 respondents who answered the question "Have any of your daughters married before the age of 18?" Three hundred and fifty-three women answered "Does not apply" for situations when they had no daughter or the daughter was too young for marriage.
- 15 C. Zamfir, M. Preda (eds.), *Roma in Romania, 2002* (Bucharest: Expert Publishing House).
- 16 *Ibid.*, 117.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 120.
- 18 The percentage of Romani women who are active in NGOs may be higher in our sample than the real figure, at the national level. This bias is introduced because of the selection method applied in the research. To ensure access and communication, the research team members chose those localities in which they worked, in some cases with local Romani NGOs in local projects.
- 19 This percentage may also be higher than the real figure. See the previous note.
- 20 Other international development agencies, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have practiced an empowering methodology in their programs.

Open Society Institute Roma Participation Program

The Roma Participation Program (RPP) is a grants program that supports Roma activism in Central and Eastern Europe to promote wider civic participation among Romani women and men, to enable the voices of Romani activists and communities to be heard and heeded by state institutions, to mount effective challenges to segregation and exclusion, and to hasten the integration of Roma in society.

RPP provides institutional support to grass-roots Romani NGOs focused on issues that are important to Romani communities. RPP also supports national and international advocacy efforts, provides training and networking opportunities, and funds internships for young Romani activists.

http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/focus_areas/rpp

Open Society Institute

The Open Society Institute works to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Open societies are characterized by the rule of law; respect for human rights, minorities, and a diversity of opinions; democratically elected governments; market economies in which business and government are separate; and a civil society that helps keep government power in check.

To achieve its mission, OSI seeks to shape public policies that assure greater fairness in political, legal, and economic systems and safeguard fundamental rights. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to advance justice, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI builds alliances across borders and continents on issues such as corruption and freedom of information. OSI places high priority on protecting and improving the lives of marginalized people and communities.

Investor and philanthropist George Soros in 1993 created OSI as a private operating and grantmaking foundation to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to encompass the United States and more than 60 countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Each national foundation relies on the expertise of boards composed of eminent citizens who determine individual agendas based on local priorities.

www.soros.org

Broadening the Agenda: The Status of Romani Women in Romania provides a realistic portrayal of the challenges that Romani women face through first hand accounts and solid data compiled by Romani women themselves.

The report helps meet the urgent need for concrete data to develop policies that effectively address the discrimination and social exclusion that Romani women experience as a result of the intersection of race, gender, and class.

Within Romania, Romani women are the ones who are most likely to suffer from inequalities inside the home as well as inadequate health care, poor quality of education, and lack of job opportunities.

The following are a few of the results from the report's surveys and discussions involving Romani women:

- ▶ More than 63 percent of the Romani women declared that women have fewer rights than men in Romani communities.
- ▶ While 75 percent of Romani women wanted equality between women and men in raising a family, 82 percent said they were responsible for taking children to the doctor and caring for them when they are sick. In over three quarters of Romani families, the mother was responsible for overseeing the child's education and helping with homework.
- ▶ Seventy-one percent of the women felt that Roma suffer ethnic discrimination from medical staff, while 23 percent felt their gender was also grounds for discriminatory treatment from health care providers.
- ▶ Almost a quarter of the women have no formal education. Among Romani men, only 15 percent have no education. Meanwhile, less than 4 percent of the women in Romania's general population have no formal education.
- ▶ A majority of the women (58 percent) said that employers discriminate against Roma on ethnic grounds. More than 21 percent of respondents thought that workplace discrimination was based on gender.
- ▶ Thirty-nine percent of the women had not earned any income in the last year. Of those who were employed, 54 percent worked informally in jobs that provided no benefits or work agreements.

By combining fresh survey data and the voices of Romani women reflecting on their status, *Broadening the Agenda* is intended to provoke debate among stakeholders and promote effective policies that erase gender disparities and combat discrimination, poverty, and social exclusion.

