

## CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE BIRTH RATE, FERTILITY AND NUPTIAL RATE OF YOUNG POPULATION OF ROMANIA

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**Abstract.** The young population is a demographic component with multiple qualitative and quantitative valences. In 2006, the young population counted 5031.3 thousand people, representing 23.3 percent of the total Romanian population, with nearly 200 thousand less than in 1990. The decreasing trend of the cohort of young people is according to the downward trend of the total population of the country. Also, the statistics reveal the reduction of the fertility from 56.2 ‰ in 1990 to 39.5 ‰ in 2006. Between the analyzed limit, the number of the new born children was with 30 percent lower. The nuptial rates by age group and by sex registered the highest values in 20-24 year age group at the female population along the analyzed interval; at men, the same age group had a maximum value in the ninth decade of the last century. The economic difficulties have a negative impact on certain demographic phenomena.

**Keywords:** birth rate, fertility, nuptial rate, Romania.

According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (1998, p.1076), the notion of young (lat. *tenerus*) designate a person who is, as age, between childhood and adulthood, that is not yet mature. The upper age limit up to which people are considered young whipped numerous controversies. The sociologists consider that the age is not a relevant criterion, considering that the youth existence is marked or by completing the studies and entering on the labor market, or by forming their own families. The demographics places the upper limit of young age around 30, but bringing arguments for "a point of transition" situated around the age of 25.

Silvia Popescu (2006, p.12) said that young people represent the segment of the population who is between 15 and 29 years old, when there take place some of the most important events in one's life: choosing a profession, participating in competition on the labor market and finding a job, enriching social relationships, marriage etc.

In 2006, young population counted 5031.3 thousand people, representing 23.3 percent of the total Romanian population, nearly 200 thousand less than in 1990 (5229.1 thousand people, respectively 22.5 percent of the national herd). The decreasing trend of the cohort of young people is according to the downward trend of the total population of the country. (Fig. no 1)

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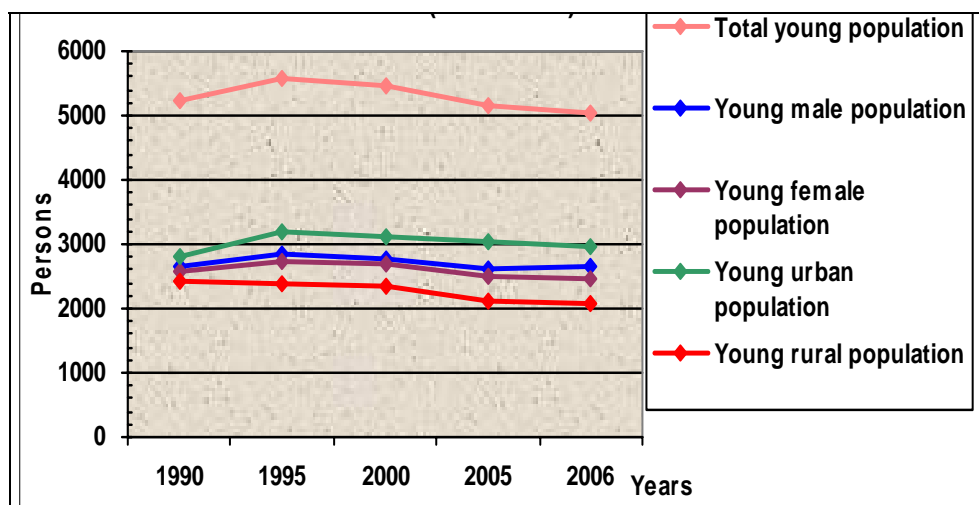


Fig. no 1. The numerical evolution of young population by sex and residence (1990 – 2006)

Important changes occurred in the *age structure* of the young population, with implications in the general phenomenon of demographic ageing. These changes are the direct result of the significant decrease of the birth rate. Many generations born in the '80s, the last century, have entered in the age groups of young people, inducing a significant increase in the age groups of 25-29 years. Thus, the share of this group in the young population increased from 27.3 percent (in 1990) to 35.4 percent (in 2006) (Table no. 1).

Table no. 1

**The structure of young population by age-groups in 1990 and 2006**

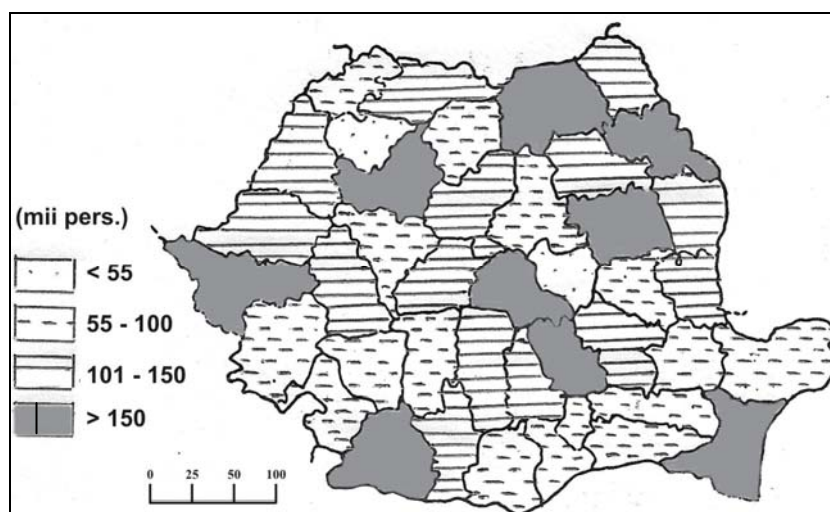
| Age-groups    | 1990            |      | 2006            |      | 2006/1990       |       |
|---------------|-----------------|------|-----------------|------|-----------------|-------|
|               | Hundred persons | %    | Hundred persons | %    | Hundred persons | %     |
| 15 – 19 years | 1894,6          | 36,2 | 1653,0          | 32,8 | -241,6          | -12,8 |
| 20 – 24 years | 1908,4          | 36,5 | 1599,5          | 31,8 | -308,9          | -16,2 |
| 25 – 29 years | 1426,2          | 27,3 | 1778,7          | 35,4 | 352,5           | 24,7  |

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 1991, 2007 – processing; I.N.S. București

The less numerous generations born after 1990 have entered in the segment of population of 15-19 years, causing a decline of the share from 36.2 percent (in 1990) to 32.8 percent (in 2006). The specific of this segment of the population is the sensitive numerical dominance of the male population, with the upward trend to the end of the period. Thus, if in 1990 the masculinity index was 104 men to 100 women in 2006, there were 105 men to 100 women. Differences were recorded in the structure of the young population by *residences* too. If in 1990, in urban areas, there lived 53.8 percent of the total population, in 2006, the differentiations were stressed, the share in the urban areas being 59.1 percent.

The evolution was different by age group, too. The share of young people from the age group of 15-19 is 1.3 times higher in urban areas than in rural areas. In the other two groups, the share increases up to 1.5 in favor of young people from the cities.

Territorially, young population has continuously decreased. The North-East Region has about 18 percent of the total of this demographic category. Because of the higher birth rate, the counties from this part of the country form a compact area with high effective of youth, the most favorable position being held by the district Iași with over 218.7 thousand young people. It is followed by the counties Prahova (184.9 thousand), Constanța (176 thousand), Cluj (166.2 thousand), Dolj, Timiș, Brașov. The lowest values of young people are registered in the counties Covasna, Sălaj, Tulcea, Giurgiu, and Ialomița.

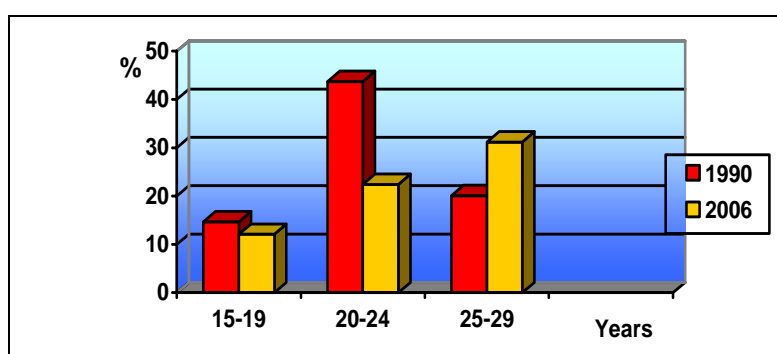


**Fig. no 2. Geographical distribution of young population (2006)**

The changing of the political system in December 1989 determined numerous changes, not only in the economic field, but also in the social one. The demographic behavior of the population has changed, the size and the functions of the family have evolved, there appeared disruptions in the distribution of the population by age groups, the values of the fertility and the birth rate decreased etc.

Thus, in the period 1990-2006, *the fertility* declined from 56.2 ‰ to 39.5 ‰; between the analyzed limits, the number of the new born was 30 percent lower. Generally, the decrease of the birth rate is determined by a number of factors which include: the emancipation of women and the increase of their role in society, the mutations in the women's aspirations, the increase of studies duration, the level of education, the social mobility, the disintegration of the customs related to family, modern means of contraception, the increase of the costs of growing a child, the maintenance and the education of children, the reduction of the children's role in the economic security of the elders etc.

*The specific fertility by age groups*, falling during the analyzed period, was predominantly influenced by the desire of the couples to limit the number of their offspring. We can add, starting with the mid-'90s, the change of the fertility way. In a traditional way, the fertility in Romania was an early one, associated with a similar model of nuptial rate, both corresponding to the Eastern European model. The statistics show that, since 1997, the fertility rate for women aged 25-29 has grown steadily. If until 2002 the 20-24 age group had the biggest contribution to the evolution of fertility, on the whole interval, it recorded the most severe decline (from 145.2 ‰ in 1990 to 69.8 ‰ in 2006), unlike the 15-19 year group, where the reduction was with 32 percent. (Fig. no 3)



**Fig. no 3. The new born children structure by age groups of young mother in 1990 and 2006**

If in 1990, the fertility of young women from rural areas was 1.5 times higher than those in the cities, in 2006, it slightly declines (1.3), but it still remains higher. Within the urban environment, the curve of the fertility rates has already deviated from the early model and presently displays the features of the “exposed” model, with the highest values registered in the 25-29 years old age group, as an intermediary phase between the tardive model specific to Western Europe population.

Most of the new born children come from married families; the share of children born outside marriage has increased from 17.0 percent in 1993 to 29.0 percent in 2006, due to the increasing population of the children brought into the world by unmarried women belonging to the age group of 15-19. The share of women up to 20 years old from 15.2 percent of total births in 1990 to 13.2 percent in 2006. In rural areas, the frequency of births outside marriage was higher (33.6 percent) than in urban areas (25.1 percent). Most of the children born outside marriage (60.5 percent) come from young women up to 25 years old.

In terms of *the average age of the mother at birth*, in 2006, this was 26.9, and at first birth of 25.2, growing from the beginning of the studied period, respectively from 25.0 and 22.4 years old. Women in rural areas continued to give birth at a younger age (25.8 years old) compared with those in urban areas (27.8 years old). The difference between the two areas is maintained even when we

speaking about the age of the mothers at their first birth (26.6 years old in urban areas and 22.9 years old in rural areas) (Fig. no 4).

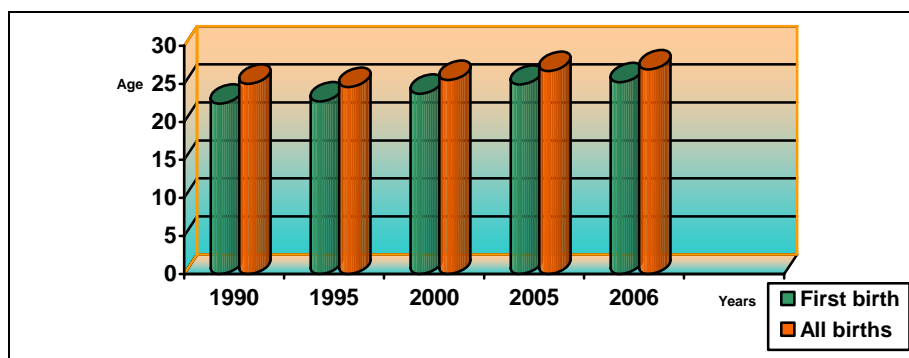


Fig. no 4. The evolution of the mother average age at birth and at the first birth (1990 – 2006)

The increase of the average age at birth is due to the reduction of fertility by age group and the decrease of the number of new born children of higher ranks (III and above) for younger generations. Being directly influenced by the distribution of marriages, by the age at which marriage is achieved, the average age at birth is correlated with the rank of new born children. After 1990, almost 4/5 of the new born children represent the first and second ranks (Table no. 2).

Table no. 2

**The ratio of new born children by ranking (1990-2006) (%)**

| Year | The rank of new born children |            |           |                     |
|------|-------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------------------|
|      | First one                     | Second one | Third one | Fourth one and over |
| 1990 | 50.8                          | 30.0       | 10.7      | 8.5                 |
| 1995 | 59.6                          | 28.3       | 7.0       | 5.1                 |
| 2000 | 57.9                          | 28.9       | 8.0       | 5.2                 |
| 2005 | 60.1                          | 28.1       | 7.2       | 4.6                 |
| 2006 | 61.4                          | 27.2       | 7.0       | 4.3                 |

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 1991, 1996, 2007 – processing; I.N.S. București

The fact that during this period, approximately 80 percent of new born children were brought into the world by young women below 30, shows that the fertility of the population of our country remains relatively early, early type, concentrated in the ranks I and II.

The increasing of the concentration of the new born children at young ages, under 30, analyzed in correlation with the structure of new born children by rank, leads to the conclusion that the decrease in the number of births was triggered by the increasing share of the couples that do not wish to have children or postpone the coming of the first child and by avoiding or the deferment of the children birth of ranks two and superior. The significance of this observation is important from the perspective of knowing the model of family planning and of the attitude of

young couples toward the number of children they want, foreshadowing future objectives for demographical politics, respectively, a birth rate that has a moderate level and it is stable in its evolution (Silvia Popescu, 2006, p. 31).

It is remarkable that, although the general level of knowledge of methods for family planning among the population increased, the use of modern methods of contraception has a small share among young women, particularly those in rural areas. Though declining, the abortion remained the main means of controlling and reducing family size, while increasing the risk of sterility and ill health of women.

In 2006, 56.5 percent of all abortions were performed by young persons, up to 30 years old. The highest frequency of *abortions* has been recorded, as well as in 1990, at the age group of 25-29. In spite of all these, in the last analyzed year, the abortion rates have decreased (44.0 ‰ in 2002, 27.0 ‰ in 2006) at all age groups; more than half were recorded at young women, with about 2 percent more than in the first reference year of the study.

Regarding *the marriage*, Romanian cultural model is characterized by the universality of marriage, pretty fast rhythm of concluding a marriage and definitely celibacy insignificance, a relative stability of the couples, low average age at the first marriage (Nimigeanu, V., 2001, p. 32).

The evolution of the nuptial phenomenon was in line with the changes occurring in the population in the age group of 15-29, at which most marriages end. In 2006, the number of people who were married at an age below 20 was nearly 9 times higher at women than at men compared to 7.4 times, how it was in 1990. Most men preferred to marry later; in 2006, the share of the male population aged up to 30 who got married was 60.8 percent as compared to 80.0 percent in 1990.

The nuptial specific rates by age group and by sex had the highest values in the age group of 20-24 at the female population during the entire analyzed interval; for men belonging to the same age group, the maximum value was registered in the ninth decade of the last century and in the following period, the age group of 25-29 had the largest share. Unlike in 1990, in 2006, the nuptial rate fell significantly at young people under 25 in both sexes, but increased at the next group (Table no. 3).

*On residences*, the nuptial rate had almost similar values for the male population under 30, in contrast to the female population under 20 in rural areas, that was over 2 times higher.

Table no. 3

**The evolution of nuptial rate of young population**

| Year | < 20 years |        | 20-24 years |        | 25-29 years |        |
|------|------------|--------|-------------|--------|-------------|--------|
|      | Male       | Female | Male        | Female | Male        | Female |
| 1990 | 20.3       | 62.4   | 105.4       | 98.0   | 56.4        | 24.5   |
| 1995 | 10.5       | 42.7   | 70.8        | 73.7   | 52.8        | 29.0   |
| 2000 | 5.5        | 37.5   | 47.4        | 63.3   | 52.2        | 31.3   |
| 2005 | 3.3        | 19.9   | 36.0        | 61.4   | 61.1        | 46.1   |
| 2006 | 4.2        | 21.3   | 35.1        | 61.3   | 63.8        | 48.8   |

Source: Anuarul Statistic al României, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006, 2007 – processing; I.N.S. București

Territorially, in 1990, the lowest values of the nuptial rate were recorded in Harghita district, and the largest in Timiș (at both sexes). In 2006, there is a differentiation in the sense that the lowest values were in Harghita, too, but only at men and in Mureș for women; the highest rates for young people were recorded in Suceava for men and in Bucharest for women.

Arguing the tendency of young people of delaying the completion of the first marriage – as a phenomenon after 1990 – the average age at first marriage was in the last analyzed year of 28.6 for men and 25.3 for women as compared to 25.0, respectively 20.0 years in 1990.

The gap between spouses age at first marriage was higher in rural areas during the whole analyzed period. In 2006, the lowest value of the average age at first marriage was registered in Botoșani district (24.1 for females and 28.4 for men) and the largest in Bucharest (30.4 respectively 33.7).

It has to be mentioned that in recent years, the socio-economic changes that the Romanian society has underwent, influence the traditional model of nuptial rate with a reduction of the intensity of the phenomenon and the increasing age at marriage.

*In conclusion*, we appreciate that the economic difficulties that the young population is facing have a negative impact on certain demographic phenomena.

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