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The demographic characteristics of national minorities in certain European States
The demographic characteristics of Roma/Gypsies in selected countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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1. Introduction

A survey of bibliographies, like *Population Index* or the *Review of Population Reviews*, reveals an absence of demographic studies about Roma/Gypsies with only a few specific titles, and more general descriptive studies set in the context of race, ethnic or national group, language or origin covering the topic. Roma/Gypsy minorities do not fit neatly into any of the standard definitions of national or linguistic minorities. As a result of this, sources of statistical data are rather limited, which may help explain why demographers have not devoted more attention to this group.

The countries selected for inclusion in this report are restricted to Central and Eastern Europe and comprise: Bulgaria (BG), Czech Republic (CZ), Hungary (H), “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (MAC), Romania (R), Slovakia (SR) and Slovenia (SLO). There are several reasons for this. Not least is the long tradition of interest in matters of nationality and ethnic structure throughout the region, which continues to this day. Questions on ethnicity and mother tongue have become routine matters of census inquiry and a range of statistical data on the national and ethnic structure of the populations of the various countries are available. The Roma/Gypsy minority continues to be social and political issue in this part of Europe and the need for information is evident. The presence of large numbers of Roma/Gypsies throughout the area and the willingness of countries to participate in the study were other factors taken into account.

Unless otherwise specified, the tables and figures presented in the paper have been derived solely from the national censuses of the selected countries. It may be noted that the registration of vital events for Roma/Gypsies is either non-existent or incomplete. For each country, census data on Roma/Gypsies are based on self declaration and therefore only include persons willing to be identified as such. Although there is little doubt that this method of enumeration leads to an understatement of their true numerical strength and also raises questions about representativeness, the number of Roma/Gypsies picked up in this way - 1,011,900 according to the most recent census data for the selected countries - is adequate to support a demographic study. A lack of corresponding statistical information for earlier decades means that the analysis of their demographic characteristics is based mainly on the first half of the 1990s. The findings are presented in a comparative setting in order to document differences in demographic behaviour with the population at large, although the caveat about representativeness means that the results should be treated with care. Information about selected geographical, social and economic characteristics are also included.

2. Short historical overview

Being in the area for many centuries, Roma/Gypsies may be regarded as an indigenous European minority. They are, however, also found in the United States, Latin America, Asia and Australia, and are one of the few distinctive groups that have no country to call their own. Roma/Gypsies are in fact composed of many peoples, who have been given various names by outsiders, the most frequent forms of which are connected with the medieval word *Atsinganos* - *Tsiganes* in France, *Zigeuners* in Germany, *Zingary* in Italy, *Ciganos* in Portugal, *Cikáni* in the Czech Republic, *Cigáni* in Slovakia, *Cigány* in Hungary and *Tigan* in Romania. The name *Atsinganos* was applied to diverse groups of people in the Byzantine Empire and was transformed to *Tsiganes* after they migrated from Greece in the 12th century (Liégeois, 1994). In France, the term *Bohemian* is sometimes used, stemming from the arrival of a group bearing letters of protection from the King of Bohemia during the 15th century. The name *Gypsy* - used in the English-speaking world and its variation, *Gitanos*, in Spain - is derived from *Little Egypt* (*Egyptians*), which was one of the many regions frequented by travelling groups of eastern origin. Since these terms now have a certain racial connotation and may be offensive to Roma/Gypsies, the name *Rom* (plural *Roma*), meaning man or husband in the Romany language, is now the appellation generally preferred by the group in Central and Eastern Europe. In western Europe, the terms *travellers*, *travelling people*, *persons of nomadic origin* are used both inside and outside the community nowadays. The existence of historical and cultural differences among Roma/Gypsies in individual European countries should also be noted. Anthropologically, socially and even ethnically, they are far from homogeneous and various sub-groups, such as the *Sinti*, *Calé*, *Kaale*, *Manouches*, *Romanichals* and *Vlachs* are recognised. Indeed, the *Vlach Roma* may be further sub-divided into the *Lovara* and *Kalderash* (Fraser 1992). None the less, a common origin justifies treating them as a single ethnic group.

Documents about the Roma/Gypsies have generally been written by others, and their own collective memory is based more on legend than on historical fact. Despite the work of researchers in different disciplines - historians, linguistics, sociologists and so on - there are numerous theories about their origin and history. India is generally accepted as their country of origin and is confirmed by historical linguistics, which has demonstrated the relationship between the Romany language and Hindi and even Sanscrit. Recent research into the chronicles of Persian and Arab historians and geographers confirms the findings of these linguistic studies (Liégeois, Gheorghe, 1995). The ancestors of the Roma/Gypsies left India in a series of waves over a long time scale, but the most significant exodus occurred during the 10th century. Two migration streams have been recognised: from the Middle East to Egypt and from Turkey to Andalusia. The first traces of the Roma/Gypsies in Europe date from the 15th century, and from the 16th century in the Nordic countries. As a group, they have lived on the margin of society throughout the centuries and their main achievement has been to survive at all. Despite being exposed to numerous influences and pressures, they have managed to preserve their own identity, which attests to their power of adaptation and survival. They have absorbed what they have considered useful from surrounding populations while remaining true to themselves.

3. Data sources on the size of the Roma/Gypsy population

When dealing with national/ethnic groups, numerical size is one of the questions that almost inevitably provokes discussion. There are various opinions about how to estimate ethnic group size, the ways in which an ethnic group might differ from the majority community or other ethnicities, and the extent to which individuals still identify with the group and maintain ethnic customs and traditions. It is seldom possible to obtain exact data and the totals that do exist may vary according to the purpose of the data collection exercise and fluctuate widely over time. The principal sources of such population data are censuses, the registration of vital events, migration records, population registers and special surveys. In the case of the Roma/Gypsies, the main sources of data in the selected countries are the national censuses.

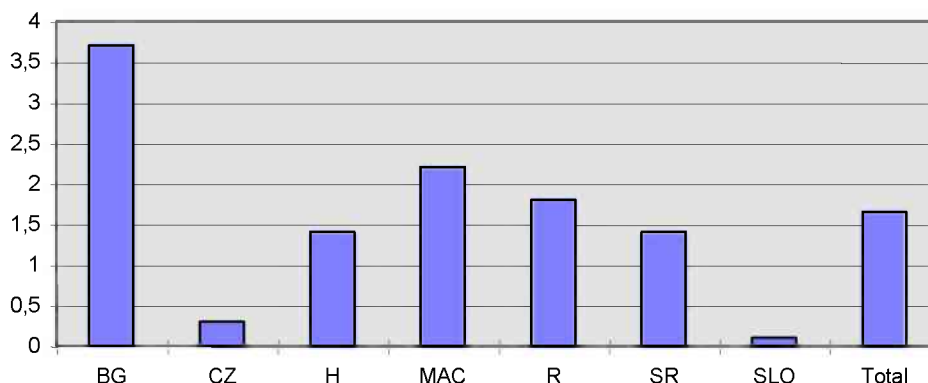
3.1. Population censuses

Census enumerations occur within political and national settings and the role of political interests on national statistics can be evident. The approach adopted for culturally homogenous and geographically concentrated minorities differs from that for fragmented and dispersed people like the Roma/Gypsies. In the latter case, there are difficulties in defining the target population, whether migratory or settled, and in persuading all its members to declare their identity (Fraser, 1992). Roma/Gypsies often seek to avoid enumeration because of their historical experiences, believing that revealing themselves could well be followed by repression. As a result, in the former socialist countries they have practised concealment of their ethnic identity on a massive scale as a means of self-protection against actual and perceived discrimination. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that the size of the Roma/Gypsy population is invariably understated in census statistics based on self-declaration.

Questions about nationality, ethnicity and mother tongue have traditionally been included in the population censuses of former European communist countries. For instance, the last census held in former Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia) and also in Slovenia inquired into nationality. In the former, nationality was defined as membership of a 'nation' and was based on self-declaration, whereas in Slovenia, the concept was given no precise definition. In like manner, the most recent censuses of Hungary, Romania and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" categorised the population by national group, while in Bulgaria it was ethnic group that was enumerated. The concepts of national group and nationality as used here are to all intents and purposes identical and are attempts to define ethnic affiliation. In the case of Bulgaria this is made explicit in the sense that ethnic group is defined as embracing persons of a common origin, language, culture and way of life. In addition, each of the seven countries poses a question on mother tongue, with Hungary also asking about language spoken, and Slovenia about language used.

Census data suggest that there was over 1 million persons of Roma/Gypsy nationality or national/ethnic group in the seven countries examined here at the beginning of 1990s (table 1). The highest total enumerated was in Romania, followed by Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, although expressed as a percentage of total population, the Roma/Gypsy presence was actually most pronounced in Bulgaria and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Against that, the proportion of Roma/Gypsies in the Czech Republic and Slovenia is negligible (fig. 1).

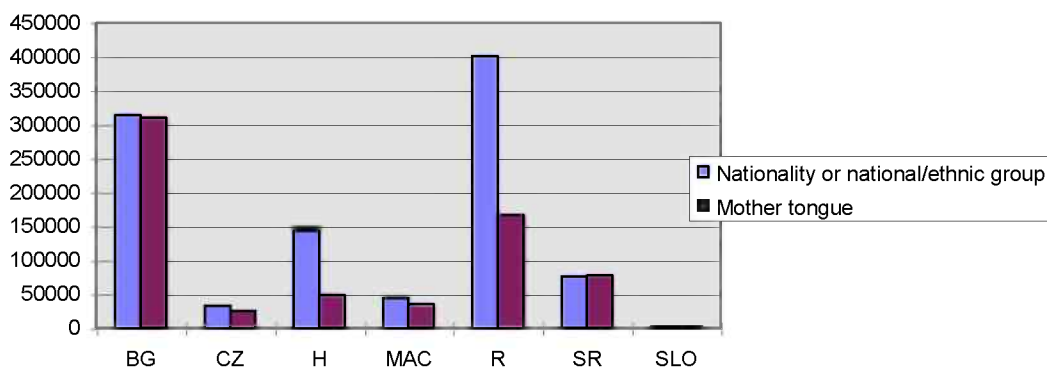
Fig. 1 Roma/Gypsies as a percentage of total population



Source of data : National population censuses : Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

When mother tongue statistics are compared with the corresponding data for nationality/national group/ethnic group (abbreviated to national group hereafter) a significant relationship emerges. In Bulgaria the estimated number of Roma/Gypsies is virtually identical on both criteria. By contrast, in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, the Czech Republic, Romania and Hungary the counts based on mother tongue are substantially lower than those based on national group - by 20, 26, 58 and 66 percent respectively, whereas in Slovakia and Slovenia the mother tongue data yield the higher estimates - by 2 and 24 per cent respectively (fig. 2).

Fig. 2 Roma/Gypsies: numbers based on mother tongue as opposed to nationality, national group or ethnic group



Source of data : National population censuses : Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

Roma/Gypsies have been in central and Eastern Europe for many centuries and a gradual integration with the majority communities is evident. The roles played by forced as opposed to voluntary assimilation in this process are difficult to assess but the fact that around 70 per cent of self declared Roma/Gypsies in Hungary stated Hungarian as their mother tongue suggests that the process of integration has gone furthest there. It is also relatively advanced in Romania and the Czech Republic where 50 and 40 per cent respectively enumerated the language of the majority as their mother tongue but, using the same criterion, less so in Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia and “the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia” It is, of course, the case that Roma/Gypsies have to acquire the language of majority population for such practical reasons as finding employment not to mention the lack of education in their own language.

Tab. 1. Roma/Gypsy population numbers in the post-war period by population census

Population census	Absolute number	Percentage in total pop.	Population census	Absolute number	Percentage in total pop.
Bulgaria			Romania		
1946	170011	2,4	1956	104216	0,6
1956	197865	2,6	1966	64197	0,3
1965	148874	1,8	1977	227398	1,1
1975	18323	0,2	1992	401087	1,8
1992	313396	3,7			
Czech Republic			Slovakia		
1970	60279	0,6	1970	159275	3,5
1980	88587	0,9	1980	199853	4,0
1991	32903	0,3	1991	75802	1,4
Hungary			Slovenia		
1949	37598	0,4	1953	1663	0,1
1960	56121	0,6	1961	158	0,0
1980	6404	0,1	1971	977	0,1
1990	142683	1,4	1981	1435	0,1
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”			1991	2293	0,1
1948	19500	1,7			
1953	20462	1,6			
1961	20606	1,5			
1971	24505	1,5			
1981	43125	2,3			
1991	52103	2,6			
1994	43707	2,2			
Source of data: National population censuses.					

The methodology of census enumeration, including the listing of minorities recognised for census purposes, was the subject of political decision during the communist period. As a consequence, the trend in Roma/Gypsy numbers during the post war period is more a reflection of this methodology, plus the relative position of Roma/Gypsies in society and vacillations in ethnic awareness than of the actual dynamics population change. For instance, because of their forced registration as Bulgarians, the 1975 census of Bulgaria recorded 88 percent fewer Roma/Gypsies than the previous census ten years earlier. Again, in Hungary, Roma/Gypsy was not listed as a possible response to the question on national group on the 1980 census schedule and the number enumerated was 89 percent down on the total recorded in 1960 as a consequence of this. Similarly, throughout the communist period in Romania, the numbers willing to declare their true identity was always understated primarily because of a certain wariness about being considered a Roma/Gypsy.

The special position of Roma/Gypsies can be illustrated by reference to successive census enumerations in the former Czechoslovakia. At no time during the period 1945-1990 were Roma/Gypsies treated as a separate nationality for census purposes; nor is there any mother tongue data available for the group. Under these circumstances they were either obliged to declare themselves as belonging to one of the nationalities listed for census purposes - Czech, Slovak, Ukrainian and Russian, Polish, Hungarian or German or they were included in the residual category 'others'. Officially this was justified on the grounds that Roma/Gypsies lacked their own territorial administrative unit, had no distinctive economy, and did not possess their own written language. None the less, attempts were made to identify and count Roma/Gypsies in the 1970 and 1980 censuses relying upon information supplied to enumerators by local authorities plus the enumerators' own judgement about how individuals should be categorised based on family circumstances, life style, language knowledge, cultural level and anthropological features. The local authority information used for this exercise included data about the social needs of individuals and families, together with information on persons requesting special social allowances. The statistical material collected by these means was elaborated separately and kept distinct from the census.

The outcome of this approach was to classify Roma/Gypsies as being of Czech, Slovak, Hungarian nationality and so on. Hence, in 1980 more than 60 per cent of Roma/Gypsies enumerated in the Czech Republic declared their nationality to be Slovak, 33 per cent stated that they were Czech and 3 per cent Hungarian. By contrast, in Slovakia, almost 80 per cent declared themselves to be Slovak and 20 per cent Hungarian. This method of enumerating Roma/Gypsies was criticised as a potential infringement of human rights because individuals affected were not informed of the methods being employed. The response to this criticism was to append Roma to the list of possible responses to the questions on mother tongue and nationality in the 1991 census, i.e. to move to the more acceptable method of self-declaration. The outcome of this was quite unexpected in that the number of Roma/Gypsies so enumerated was well down on the number recorded in 1980. There would appear to be two possible explanations for this; either the 1991 figures were underestimated because of a reluctance on the part of many individuals to identify themselves as Roma/Gypsies or because the 1980 methodology produced an overstatement. A combination of both these factors cannot, of course, be discounted.

3.2. Estimates

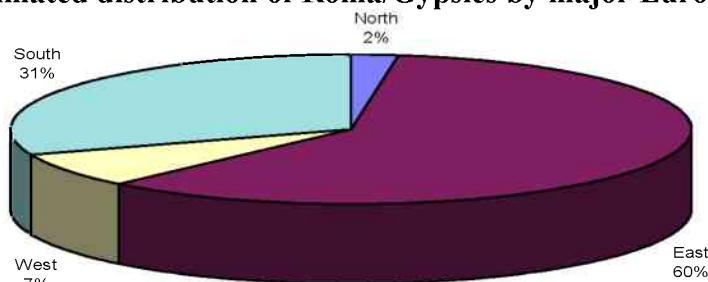
In addition to official statistics and records, unofficial estimates also exist, based on information held by state authorities, ethnic organisations, ethnic leaders and the media. Estimates of the total number of Roma/Gypsies in Europe and in the different countries vary widely, most of which are inadequately substantiated and are frequently clearly gross overestimates. Often it is the entire non-sedentary population or inhabitants belonging to the lowest social rank that are lumped together as Roma/Gypsies. For these reasons, it is not an easy task to place a reliable figure on how many Roma/Gypsies live in Europe or even to define who should be regarded as a Roma/Gypsy. The Roma/Gypsy Congress held in 1978 put their number at between 6 and 15 million in the whole world, of whom about 4 million were in Eastern Europe. The World Directory of Minorities (1986) has estimated the number in the former socialist countries as around 2,3 million and in the rest of Europe at about 1,6 million. These figures are based on available census data and other information sources and include associated sedentary and nomadic groups. Country by country analyses made by Vossen (1983) would put the number in Europe at between 2-5.6 million compared with Liégeois's (1986) estimate of some 3.4-4.9 million, and Puxon's (1987) figure of 6 million, including associated sedentary and nomadic groups. According to Fraser (1992) the minimum number of European Roma/Gypsies in the late 1980s was around 2,6 million. In other words, there are quite striking discrepancies in the estimated number of Roma/Gypsies in Europe, although they are more consistent when it comes to possible geographical distribution. When dealing with national/ethnic minorities, it is necessary to accept the reality that there is no final certainty in the matter. Estimates, no matter how well based, are, after all, only estimates. The Czech experience suggests that the greater part of the available figures come from Roma/Gypsy leaders and their organisations. Even though the provenance of such estimates is often unclear, there is a tendency for the media to present them as objective reality. It is evident that Roma/Gypsy leaders have every incentive to overestimate the size of their communities if only to maximise the funds allotted to their people by the state.

From the point of view of demography, the estimates suffer from several limitations. They generally represent the subjective views of authors and are rarely based on survey work or demographic analysis. Compositional aspects like age structure are hardly ever given and it is therefore difficult to compare the demography of Roma/Gypsies with that of the population at large. Furthermore, estimates of their numerical size quite often reflect little more than the political and social position of Roma/Gypsies vis a vis majority groups. In addition, the precise composition of the population comprising the estimate is often unclear and it may not be apparent whether the figures relate to Roma/Gypsies per se or to all marginal and nomadic groups.

4. Geographical distribution

Statistical data for the Roma/Gypsies are not available for all European countries and their geographical distribution can only be assessed from estimated figures. As a people, they are found in almost all European countries and constitute a true European minority. Around 60 per cent of them are located in the central and eastern parts of the continent, with a further 30 per cent in southern Europe and the remaining 10 per cent in western and northern Europe (fig. 3).

Fig. 3 Estimated distribution of Roma/Gypsies by major European region



Source of data: Liégeois J.P., Gheorghe N. (1995): *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority*. Minority Rights Group.

The geographical distribution of Roma/Gypsies in Central and Eastern Europe is uneven. It is only at the village level that they are seen to constitute the majority and even the largest concentrations made up of a few thousand persons are merely enclaves within the population at large. Usually, they occur as small dispersed groups of relatives and separate families. When we examine individual countries, a variety of patterns emerge. In Bulgaria, they are widely distributed with a slight predominance in the north-eastern and north-western parts of the country. Although marginally more urban than rural (52 and 48 per cent respectively), they generally prefer to reside in small towns and villages. The distribution of Roma/Gypsies in the Czech Republic is more uneven than in Bulgaria. There they are predominantly urban dwellers - 80 per cent live in the country's cities and towns - and tend to be concentrated in north-western Bohemian and in the industrial regions of northern Moravia. In "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" the urban nature of the Roma/Gypsy population is even more accentuated with an estimated 94 per cent living in urban areas, which is well above the figure observed in population overall. Hungary is yet again different to the extent that only a little over a third (36 per cent) of its Roma/Gypsy population are urban dwellers. Otherwise, they tend to be distributed widely throughout the country but with particular concentrations in the villages of the Tisza region in north east Hungary and in the southern parts of Transdanubia. While a continual flow from the villages to the urban areas of the country may be observed, Roma/Gypsies have also tended to repopulate many of the small villages largely vacated by their former inhabitants as a result of the restructuring of agriculture. It may be noted that the concentration of Romas in north eastern Hungary extends also into the Crisana-Maramures region of Romania together with the Banat and Transylvania, as well as into the eastern parts of Slovakia. However, the Roma/Gypsy population of Romania is widely dispersed with just over two fifths of the total residing in urban areas; the corresponding value for the urban areas of Slovakia is around 60 per cent. As for Slovenia, over half (57 per cent) of the Roma/Gypsy community are urban dwellers, with relatively higher concentrations being associated with the Dolejska and Pomurska regions in the south east and north east of the country respectively.

Throughout Central and Eastern Europe, most Roma/Gypsies are now settled and have abandoned their traditional nomadic way of life in no small part because nomadism has been restricted by governments during the post-war period. Nomadism and high rates of migration are not necessarily characteristic of all Roma/Gypsy groups and significant differentiation is evident at a sub-level. For example, the Slovak and Hungarian Roma of former Czechoslovakia have been settled since about the 18th century, whereas the Vlach Roma, who make up around 5 per cent of all Roma/Gypsies, followed a nomadic way of life until 1958, when laws restricting the practice were passed. In order to prevent the emergence of new Roma/Gypsy concentrations, the authorities in the former Czechoslovakia organised a planned dispersion of the group during the second half of the 1960s. Under communism, economic factors comprised the main reasons for migration including employment related factors such as seeking or changing work, as well as the quest for better living conditions and improved housing. Even so the natural desire of Roma/Gypsies to migrate was still evident in that they used such opportunities to seek out their own people and visit relatives over periods of time that could extend up to several months. Such moves also tended to be temporary in nature that did not involve permanent changes of residence.

During the post war period, the movement of Roma/Gypsies has generally been limited to within the internal borders of countries and external migration has been on a comparatively small scale. Like other groups, many Roma/Gypsy families have been forced to migrate as political refugees at various times since 1945. In the late 1950s, for instance, Roma/Gypsy refugees arrived in Great Britain from Hungary, while others left the former Czechoslovakia for Austria in 1968. Again, the late 1980s saw thousands of Roma/Gypsies leaving Macedonia, mainly for Germany where they claimed the status of political refugees, while there was also some small scale movement of Roma/Gypsies from Romania to Germany at around the same time. More recently, the easing of travel restrictions following the demise of totalitarianism in 1989-90 has initiated a new wave of emigration, which not only involves the migration of Roma/Gypsies to Western Europe but also to America. The reasons for this outflow stem mainly from a desire for economic betterment but the urge to escape racial discrimination and violence are additional factors. As a consequence of this, for the first time in their history, the plight of Roma/Gypsies now attracts international attention and is a subject of discussion at the highest political levels.

5. Age and sex structure

Age composition is not only indicative of the potential for future population change but also encapsulates differences in demographic behaviour. This is evidenced by a comparison of the age profiles of the overall populations in the selected countries with those of the associated Roma/Gypsy communities (table 2). The population of Central and Eastern Europe as a whole is characterised by low fertility and an ageing population, with an increasing proportion of elderly people and a commensurate decline in the population of child age. In strong contrast, Roma/Gypsy communities are characterised by high proportions of children and low proportions of elderly.

Tab. 2. Selected Roma/Gypsy populations by major age group

Age group	BG	CZ	H	MAC	R	SR	SLO	Total
Roma/Gypsies - absolute number								
0 - 14	118406	12383	56496	14845	166105	32858	935	402028
15 - 49	160730	17887	71710	23119	190829	37161	1183	502619
50 - 64	25134	2024	11052	4219	32766	4151	118	79464
65 +	9127	609	3425	1524	11387	1632	57	27761
Total	313397	32903	142683	43707	401087	75802	2293	1011872
Roma/Gypsies - percentage								
0 - 14	37,8	37,6	39,6	34,0	41,4	43,3	40,8	39,7
15 - 49	51,3	54,4	50,3	52,9	47,6	49	51,6	49,7
50 - 64	8,0	6,2	7,7	9,6	8,2	5,5	5,1	7,9
65 +	2,9	1,8	2,4	3,5	2,8	2,2	2,5	2,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Total population -percentage								
0 - 14	19,0	21,0	20,5	25,1	22,7	24,9	20,6	21,7
15 - 49	48,4	51,0	49,0	51,8	49,0	50,9	51,7	49,6
50 - 64	18,3	15,3	17,3	14,6	17,3	13,9	16,7	16,7
65 +	14,3	12,7	13,2	8,5	11,0	10,3	11,0	12,0
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.								

Accordingly, the Roma/Gypsy age pyramid has a broad base, reflecting the preponderance of young people, but tapers in sharply above the age of 60. Young persons under the age of 15 represent about 40 per cent of the Roma/Gypsy total compared with between 19 and 25 per cent in the population at large (figs. 4 & 5). The respective proportions aged 15 to 49 are about the same in both populations but at older ages the differences again become pronounced. Hence, in relative terms, there are almost three times as many persons aged 50 and over in the overall population as among Roma/Gypsies, with persons aged 50 and over making 30 and 10 per cent respectively in the two groups. When individual countries are examined, the highest proportion of Roma/Gypsies under the age of 15 is found in Slovakia, followed by Romania and Slovenia, where they make up over 40 per cent of the respective totals. Indeed, the younger generation is so numerous, that even were their fertility to decline to replacement level, the Roma/Gypsy population of the region would still grow rapidly over the medium term.

Fig. 4 The aggregate age composition of Roma/Gypsies in the selected countries

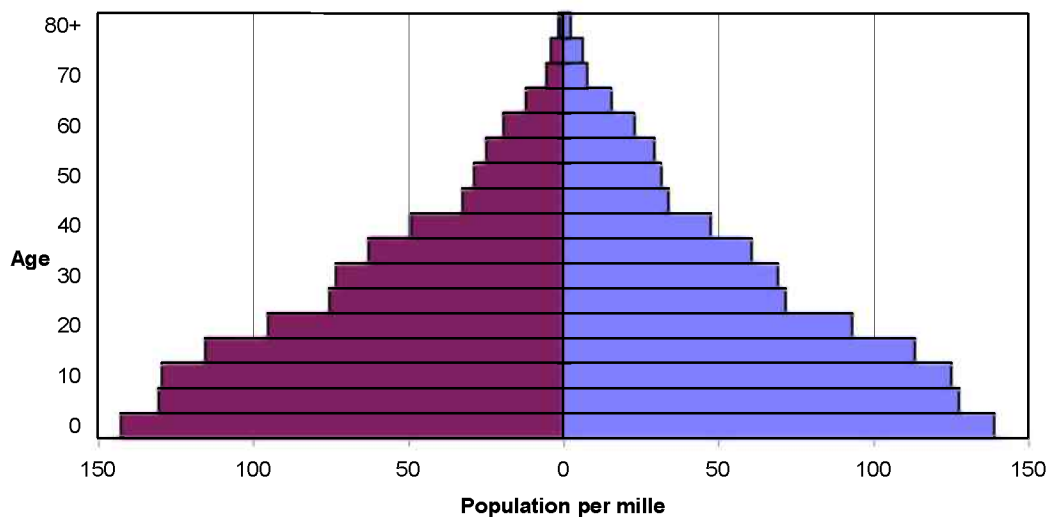
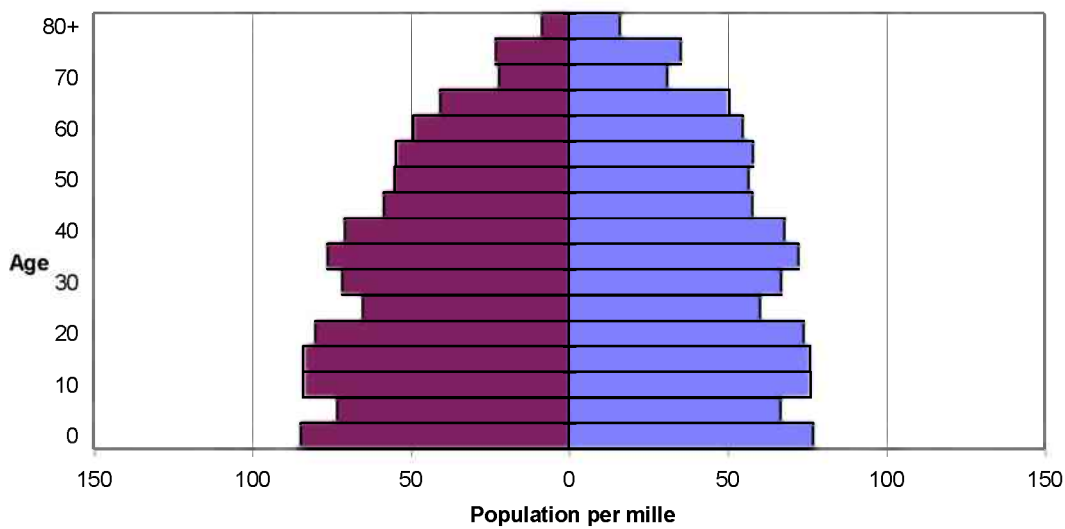


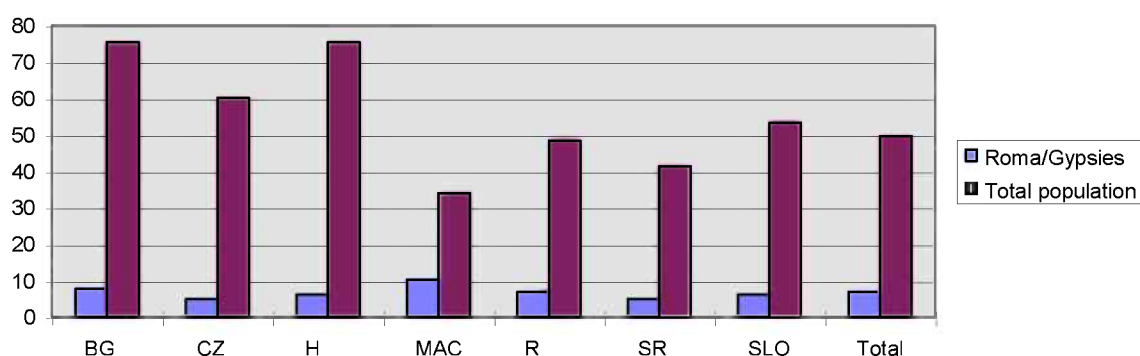
Fig. 5 The aggregate age composition of the overall population in the selected countries



Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

The advanced ageing observed in the overall population compared with the very young age profile of the Roma/Gypsies is a highly significant demographic characteristic. According to the ageing index (defined as the ratio of persons aged 65+ to the population aged 0-14) there are only 7 Roma/Gypsies aged 65 and over for every 100 persons under the age of 15 compared with 50 per 100 persons in the population at large (fig. 6). The most pronounced disparities in age structure between Roma/Gypsies and the population overall are to be seen in Bulgaria and Hungary followed by the Czech Republic and Slovenia because it is in these countries that population ageing is most advanced.

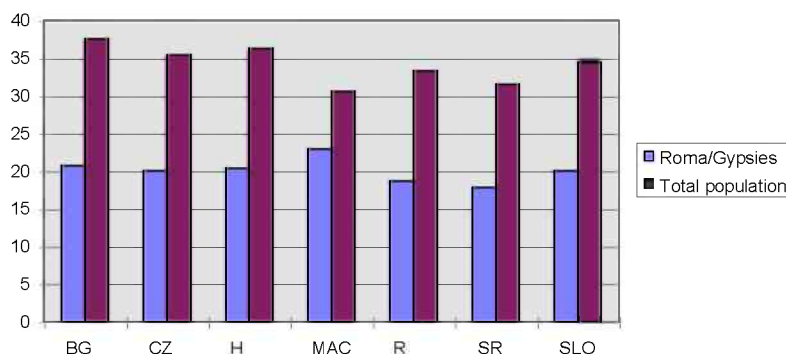
Fig. 6 The ageing index (65+/0-14): Roma/Gypsies compared with total population



Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

The median age, i.e. that age at which the number of older people is equal to the number of younger people in any population, is a useful means for highlighting the differences. Hence, the median age for Roma/Gypsies is 19.3 years compared with 33.6 years in the population at large - that is a difference of 14.3 years (fig. 7). In Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia about half the Roma/Gypsy population is comprised of young persons below the age of 20; in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" the median age is 23 years and in Romania and Slovakia 18 years.

Fig. 7 The median age of Roma/Gypsies compared with total population in the selected countries

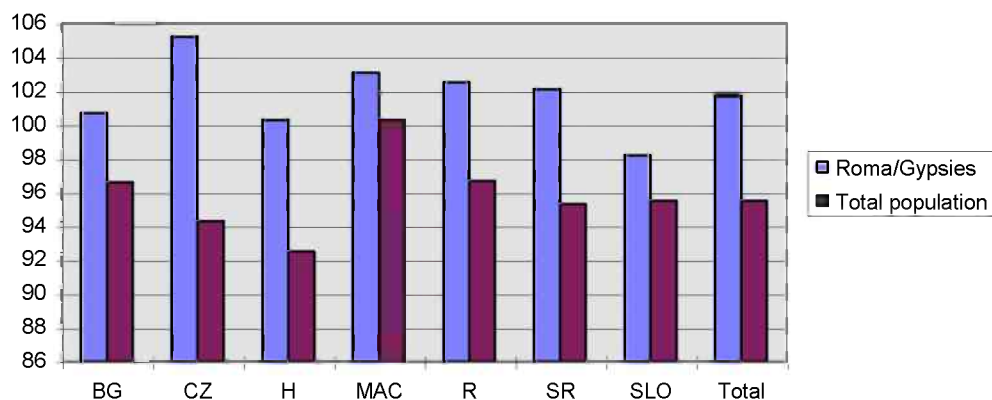


Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

These distinctive features of the Roma/Gypsy age profile significantly affect other structural characteristics, like marital composition, the size of households, the proportion of economically active and inactive population and the relative number of dependents.

Population sex composition is determined not only by the male female breakdown at birth but also reflects sex differentials in mortality and migration, as well as the status of women in society. The sex structure of Roma/Gypsies differs from that of the majority populations of the region in displaying similar characteristics to those found in developing countries. Sex ratios at birth are generally of the order of 105 - 106 males per 100 females. Thereafter, they shift progressively in favour of women because female mortality is ordinarily lower throughout the entire age range with the result that female surpluses are generally the rule when populations are viewed as a whole. Although the same processes may be observed among Roma/Gypsies, their overall sex ratio is significantly influenced by the high proportion of young people which, by reducing the impact of differential mortality, means that Roma/Gypsy communities are different in generally exhibiting male surpluses (fig. 8). It is also likely that the under-registration of women that derives from their low social status is a contributory factor. When Central and Eastern Europe were communist, international migration was limited and had no significant impact on sex ratios in the region. The one exception to this would appear to be Slovenia where women outnumber men among the country's Roma/Gypsy population. The position may be summarised in terms of the aggregate values for the countries examined in the report which shows that 49.6 per cent of all Roma/Gypsies were female compared with 51.2 per cent in the population at large.

Fig. 8 The sex ratios of Roma/Gypsies compared with those observed in the populations overall (males per 100 females)



Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

6. Natural change

Roma/Gypsies are quite distinctive not only in respect of their social, economic and cultural life but also in their demographic behaviour. This distinctiveness is due to their early history outside Europe and their isolation after migrating to the continent. Traditionally there has been little inter-marriage between Roma/Gypsies and other groups and it is therefore not surprising that they have retained certain features in their demographic behaviour which are now seen to be outmoded. They are characterised by high levels of mortality and fertility and, although both are now undergoing decline, any precise evaluation of the demographic behaviour and reproductive characteristics of Roma/Gypsies is hampered by a lack of reliable data. In the absence of this, interpretations are often based on estimated figures of debatable quality. Vital events are registered by national group in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia (excluding mortality in the last mentioned country), although the data in respect of Roma/Gypsies in these countries are incomplete and unsuitable as a basis for demographic analysis. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Roma/Gypsy was first included in the list of recognised nationalities only in the 1991 census and vital statistics for the group based on registration are virtually absent. Similarly, there are no vital data available for Roma/Gypsies in Hungary while those for Romania are of questionable quality. Given these deficiencies, the evaluation of mortality and fertility presented in this report is based on a combination of population census data and additional information derived from the records of health authorities and data from special surveys.

6.1. Mortality

Life expectancy and infant mortality are the principle measures used to evaluate mortality. Not only do they reflect the respective levels of mortality and morbidity, but they are also indicative of the stage of overall development reached by a country, its welfare provision, health status, medical care and way of life. Medical care was guaranteed to all the population in the former socialist countries regardless of national group. None the less, the level of Roma/Gypsy mortality still compared unfavourably with other population groups because of the way they approached their own health and medical care, and the generally adverse conditions of their lives, including poor housing and inadequate nutrition.

One of the few attempts to estimate the life expectancy of Roma/Gypsies was undertaken by Kalibova (1989) for the former Czechoslovakia. Taking the enumerated age breakdowns for Roma/Gypsies as recorded in the 1970 and 1980 censuses as the starting point, the method is based on determining the probability of surviving over the 10 year inter-censal period. The accuracy of the findings is dependent upon the inter-censal period being exactly 10 year long and the population being closed to international migration. Both conditions are in fact fulfilled; in particular, it is clear that Roma/Gypsy migration was negligible during the communist period. In addition, it is also crucial that the target population enumerated at each census is comprised of the same individuals and is accurately recorded. As regards this third condition, the data were broadly acceptable although a degree of age heaping was evident at the age of 6, the commencement of compulsory school attendance, and at higher ages ending with a zero, i.e. 50, 60 and so on. The method suggests an infant mortality rate of around 40 per thousand for the period 1971-1980 and life expectancies at birth of 55.3 years for males and 59.5 years for females. Exceptionally high mortality was also observed in the age group 6-35. The level of mortality associated with these figures equates with that observed in the Czech Republic during the 1930s.

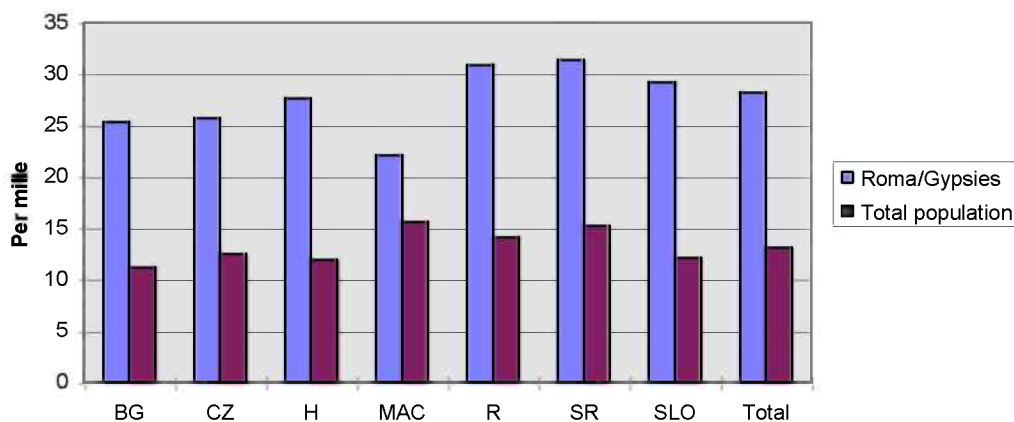
Data on infant mortality are incomplete and vital records exist only for “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Romania. In “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, an infant mortality rate of 26.8 per thousand was recorded among Roma/Gypsies in 1996, compared with 16.4 per thousand in the population overall, whereas the corresponding values for Romania in the same year were 32.3 and 22.3 per thousand respectively. In the former Czechoslovakia, health authority data provide a partial picture of infant mortality among Roma/Gypsies (Report on health status of the Roma-Gypsies in the Czech Republic in 1985). These suggest a rate of 24 per thousand in the Czech Republic in 1985 compared with 12.5 per thousand in the population at large and corresponding rates in Slovakia of 35 and 16.3 respectively. Viewed in a somewhat different way, whereas Roma/Gypsy children accounted for 2.5 per cent of all live births in the Czech Republic in 1985 they made up 4.9 per cent of all infant deaths. The corresponding values for Slovakia were 8.4 and 17.8 per cent respectively. The poor diet of mothers during pregnancy and inadequate care of infants have been cited as reasons for such figures. This interpretation is supported by the observation that neo-natal mortality, i.e. deaths occurring during the first 28 days of life, among Roma/Gypsy children born in maternity hospitals where a uniform standard of care pertains was practically the same as that of other children (10.7 compared with 8.6 per thousand overall). Otherwise, Roma/Gypsy mortality during the first five years of life was 9.7 per thousand which is 2.5 times higher than among the population at large. Poor social and health consciousness have been mentioned as reasons for such unfavourable figures with Roma/Gypsy parents being tardy in seeking health care for their children. Sudden and unexpected deaths are also higher than would be expected. In this context, the positive relationship between the educational attainment of mothers and the care of children may be noted. A high rate of hospitalisation among Roma/Gypsy children, especially infants, was also mentioned in the quoted report.

6.2. Fertility

The analysis of fertility suffers from the same lack of hard data as the analysis of mortality. None the less, it is clear that high fertility pertains among Roma/Gypsies throughout the childbearing period, which may be attributed to a value system that favours many children, is opposed to birth control, and practices very early marriage. State financial support for children is also thought to play a role here. High fertility produces an ever growing number of fecund young people and generates a momentum towards further rapid population growth even when fertility is declining. It also generates a specific family structure comprised of many children and affects both the standard and style of living. Generally, high fertility is considered a significant factor in slowing down the integration of Roma/Gypsies with the majority.

The evaluation of Roma/Gypsy fertility in the countries examined in the report is based on national population census data. The crude birth rate has been estimated from the population aged 0, which is taken as one fifth of the 0-4 age group given in a particular census. This exercise suggests that Roma/Gypsy crude rates are at least twice as high as in the associated general populations, reaching values of between 25 and 31 per thousand with the highest values being observed in Romania and Slovakia (fig. 9). That the crude rates are, in fact, of this order has been borne out by medical record data for the region of Košice, eastern Slovakia, for the period 1981-88, where a very high concentration of Roma/Gypsies is to be found.

Fig. 9 Selected crude birth rates for Roma/Gypsies set against those for the associated total populations

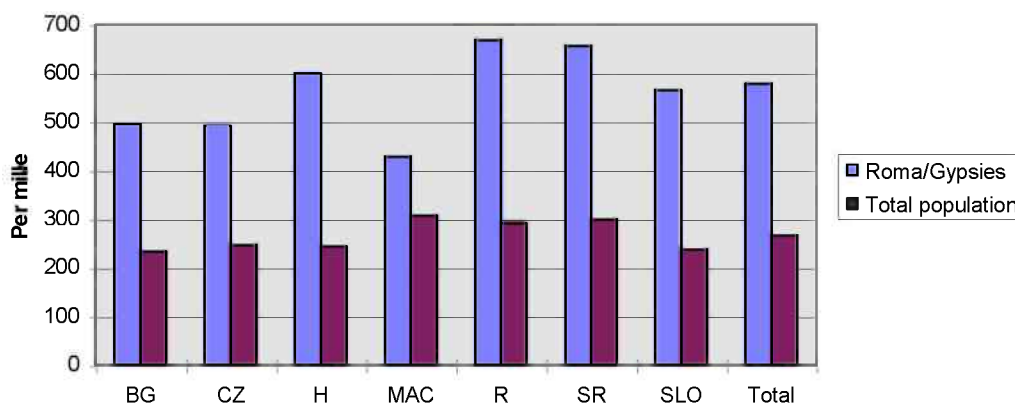


Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

As would be expected, the child-women ratio yields similar findings. The ratio of children aged 0-4 to women aged 15-49 in the Roma/Gypsy population is typically some 120 percent higher than in the associated total populations, reaching values that range from just under 500 to almost 700 per thousand. The disparity is pronounced in all the countries examined, but the gap is widest for Romania and Slovakia. “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” is the only country where the difference is relatively less pronounced.

Census-based data on the average number of children per woman are not available for all the countries examined and, where they are, they may not be strictly comparable because of differences in the base categories used, i.e. they may relate to all women, women with children, married women or married women with children. Nevertheless the figures again confirm the higher fertility of Roma/Gypsies (fig. 11). The average for Roma/Gypsy married woman is 70 percent higher in the Czech Republic and 74 percent higher in Slovakia. In Hungary, where the value is for all women, it is 83 higher and in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 30 per cent higher. The disparity is even more pronounced when completed family size, approximated here as the average number of women born to women aged 45-49, as opposed to average family size is examined. This suggests that Roma/Gypsy completed fertility is at least twice as high as in the comparable total populations of the countries examined with the exception of Romania.

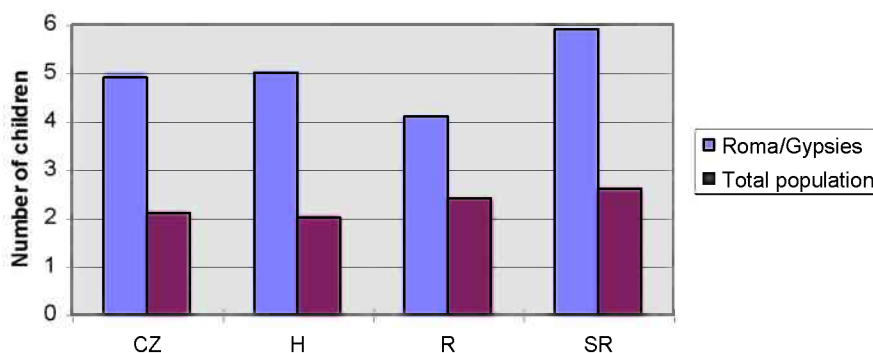
Fig. 10 Selected child woman ratios for Roma/Gypsies set against those for the associated total populations



Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” is the only country with full vital registration by national group. The total fertility rate for Roma/Gypsies in 1996 was 4.1 children per woman and was twice as high as in the overall population. Additionally, the corresponding TFR in the Czech Republic has been put at 5.8 and 4.0 children per woman for the period 1971-1980 and in 1990 respectively (Kalibová K., 1993). Further indications in support of high Roma/Gypsy fertility come from an examination of the average size and structure of households. The definitions of household type and the age of children living in families vary by country and do not permit of precise comparison, but the high level of Roma/Gypsy fertility is always implicit.

Fig. 11 Average number of live-born children per married woman in the age group 45-49 for Roma/Gypsies and in the associated total populations



Source of data: National population censuses: Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991.

Hence, there were twice as many children under the age of 26 in complete Roma/Gypsy family households as in the overall population in the former Czechoslovakia in 1991. Similarly, in Romania, where Roma/Gypsy family households comprise an average of 2.8 children per family against 1.4 children per family in the population at large; in this case all single children regardless of age are included in the calculation. However, when broken down by marital status, the differential is seen to be less pronounced and would seem to confirm assumptions about the presence of high extramarital fertility and frequent consensual unions in the Roma/Gypsy population. For instance, data from the 1980 census for the former Czechoslovakia reveal the following distribution of average live-born children per Roma/Gypsy woman in the 45-49 age group: single 3.6 against 0.5 in the total population; married 6.4 against 2.4; divorced 4.2 against 2.0; and widowed 6.2 against 2.5 children.

Although state financial support for children varied by individual country, the population policies of former socialist countries contributed to the maintenance of high fertility among Roma/Gypsies. In the former Czechoslovakia, targeted social care was used in support of Roma/Gypsies until 1989, in addition to the assistance available to the whole population. For many families, child allowances represented an important part of the family income and were often higher than the salary of the father and might even exceed the income of both parents. In this way, the pro-natalist population policy of the country helped to bolster the high fertility of Roma/Gypsies, even though other measures were in place to reduce it. Targeted assistance included financial and material help with food, housing and education. Assistance was differentiated by level of social integration and the main recipients of such help were the most backward and least socially integrated families. However, this strategy proved to be unsuccessful and did not improve the situation of the Roma/Gypsies themselves. It served only to prolong the given situation by acculturating the children to become potential recipients of social and financial help. Since 1989, social assistance has been provided regardless of ethnic background and is now more limited in scope.

On the basis of the available information, we may therefore infer that Roma/Gypsy fertility is approximately twice as high as that of the overall populations in the countries examined, although this should not be considered exceptional in view of their stage of development. Since their high fertility may be attributable to the specific socio-economic characteristics of the group, it is only by modifying these characteristics that change in the demographic behaviour of Roma/Gypsies with regard to fertility will come about. However, fundamental change of this nature is likely to occur quite slowly and even then there will probably be a lag of the order of a generation before the full demographic response is apparent. None the less, viewed in this way, it is perfectly realistic to expect the demographic behaviour of Roma/Gypsies to undergo the same sort of changes in future as have already occurred in other European populations. Although one should not underestimate the group's collective resistance to external pressure given their separate and quite distinctive development over the centuries, the process of fertility decline would already appear to be underway. This can be seen, for instance, in the former Czechoslovakia where census information suggests that the average number of live-born children per marriage decreased by 20 per cent between 1970 and 1980. The decline was evident across all ages, but was most marked in the youngest groups. One question that remains is the likely response of Roma/Gypsies to the new political situation in the region. In all the countries examined here, strong fertility decline may be observed under the new conditions. In the absence of data from vital registration, it is still too early to draw any conclusions about what might be happening in the Roma/Gypsy population, however. For this, we shall have to await the next round of census results.

7. Population growth

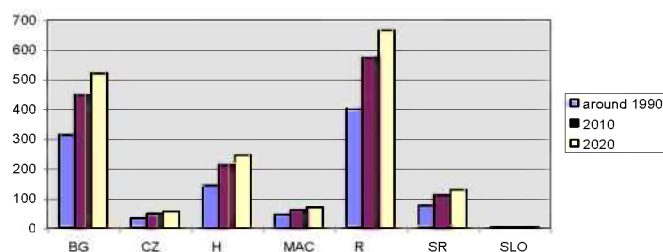
The rapid growth of the Roma/Gypsy population is a function of the group's stage of demographic development and is of interest to both specialists and the public at large. As to their future numbers, it is only possible to provide generalised estimates due to the non-availability of accurate information about fertility, mortality and migration rates. The data that do exist for the "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and also for Romania show rates of natural increase of 27.2 and 20.4 per thousand respectively in 1996. A census-based estimate for the former Czechoslovakia for the period 1970 to 1980, when external migration was negligible, is in the same range and gave an annual growth rate of 27.1 per thousand, that is 4.5 times higher than in the population overall.

Such rapid growth contrasts sharply with the general situation in the countries examined in this report which are now facing the low levels of fertility that characterise the second demographic transition. Natural increase was negative in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania in 1996, was around zero in Slovenia, and was positive only in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Slovakia. Everywhere, with the exception of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", the total fertility rate is below replacement level. Although theory would suggest that the demographic behaviour of the Roma/Gypsy population should converge towards that of the majority, progress to this end is likely to be slow given the special value system of the group and its resistance to change. Nevertheless changes in Roma/Gypsy demographic behaviour have already begun and will probably continue, although growth rates may be expected to stay higher in all countries for the foreseeable future.

There are a number of reasons why it is difficult to be specific about future trends in the size and structure of this population. Firstly, there is no certainty about their present numbers in Central and Eastern Europe and our knowledge of their demographic behaviour is limited by the lack of vital records. The only reasonably reliable sources of information are the various population censuses, which cover persons who declared themselves to be Roma/Gypsies. Here, we present a simple scenario of the future development of the Roma/Gypsy population up to the year 2020 based on the assumption that the current annual growth rate of around 2 per cent will decline to 1.5 per cent during the period 2010 to 2020. The number of declared Roma/Gypsy in the various national censuses conducted at the beginning of the 1990s are taken as the initial populations. The result suggests that their numbers will have grown to about 1.5 million by 2010 and to 1.7 million by the year 2020 in the countries examined in this report, that is respectively 44 and 67 per cent more than were enumerated at the beginning of the 1990s. The pattern of change will, however, vary from country to country depending upon the present demographic situation of both Roma/Gypsy and majority populations (fig. 12).

The author's use of the component method to project Roma/Gypsy numbers in the former Czechoslovakia to the year 2005 may also be cited here (Kalibova 1990). Using data from the 1970 and 1980 censuses and life table survivorship probabilities for the same period (Kalibova 1989), the exercise was based on the assumption that the group's fertility and mortality will decline towards the levels found in the general population. The projection was driven by estimated gross reproduction rates for the group of 2.1 for the period 1981-85, 1.95 for 1986-90, 1.8 for 1991-95, 1.65 for 1996-2000 and 1.5 for the period 2001-5. On the basis of these assumptions, Roma/Gypsy numbers were projected to grow from the 288,440 enumerated in 1980 to 495,000 by the year 2005, with about one third of the total being found in the Czech Republic and two thirds in Slovakia.

Fig. 12 Estimated size of the Roma/Gypsy population in the years 1990, 2010 and 2020 (in thousands)



8. Selected social and economic characteristics

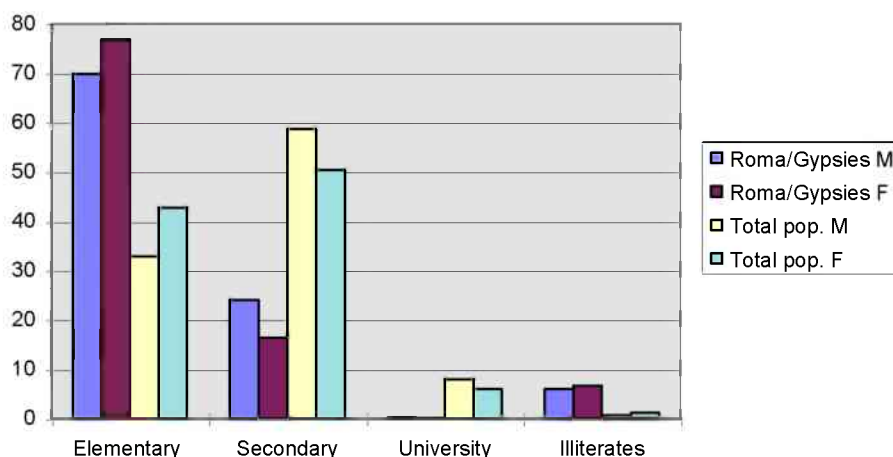
8.1. Education

School represents an important point where Roma/Gypsies and „gadgé“, i.e. the non Roma/Gypsy population, meet. About 25 per cent of Roma/Gypsies are children of compulsory school age, and schooling the young generation must be considered a priority in the context of helping them into work, and getting to know and understand the non-Roma/Gypsy world so that they can coexist with it. Education policies for Roma/Gypsy children have generally been unsuccessful throughout Europe because existing school systems do not usually cater for children who are poorly adapted to attending school for reasons of social background and inadequate language ability. In addition, the value system of Roma/Gypsies also tends to play down the relevance of education.

The lack of uniformity and varying availability of data on Roma/Gypsy education means that it is only possible to compare countries from information contained in the most recent national censuses and from school statistics. But since population census data only reflect the situation of declared Roma/Gypsy, there are questions about the correct interpretation of such data. For instance, Romanian experience shows that Roma/Gypsies who failed to declare themselves as members of the group are generally of higher educational attainment than those identified in the population census (Research Institute on Quality of Life in Romania, 1992). Roma/Gypsy representatives and demographers in the Czech Republic also share this opinion. At the very least, it is clear that the gross under-representation of Roma/Gypsies with the highest, namely university, standard of education in national censuses is real as most of this group are known to declare themselves as Roma/Gypsy.

Figure 13 compares the pattern of educational attainment for Roma/Gypsies with that of the population at large in the seven countries examined in this report. The figures for elementary schooling also include individuals who did not complete this stage of their education and is composed primarily of Roma/Gypsies with small numbers of, mainly older, individuals from the general population. Hence, in the former Czechoslovakia during the 1970s only 35 per cent of Roma/Gypsies of school age had completed primary school (Kalvoda 1991). In Hungary, according to data for 1991, 50 per cent of Roma/Gypsy children had not completed primary education (6-10 years) and 75 per cent left school in advance of the compulsory leaving age (6-14 years) (Costarelli, 1993); while in Bulgaria in the same year, although 95 per cent attended school only 30 per cent had actually completed their primary education (Helsinki Watch Committee, 1991).

Fig. 13 Distribution of educational attainment for Roma/Gypsies and the population at large based on the population aged 15 and over (in per cent)



Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

However, in sum total, the available statistical evidence for the seven countries examined here suggests that around two thirds of Roma/Gypsies over the age of 15 have completed elementary school. This is a significantly higher proportion than in Western Europe where, according to a 1985 survey, some 30-40 per cent of Roma/Gypsy children in the European Union attend school on a fairly regular basis with about half never going to school (Liégeois, 1994). This is an interesting disparity because the Roma/Gypsies of Central and Eastern Europe have been sedentary now for many decades and under the central control of the former communist governments of the region children could not avoid compulsory attendance at school. Moreover, neither private schools nor alternative forms of education existed and in many cases social allowances were conditional upon school attendance. Although Roma/Gypsies were and are still compelled to start school, problems begin to emerge at the very outset. It would appear that many of these children are not able to follow the lessons for a variety of reasons, including difficulties with the language of instruction, an inability to conform to a pattern of regular activity, lack of support in the home and so on. As a result, many fail at school and very often leave before completing the final elementary grade. In some cases they are transferred to special schools for the socially handicapped or even the mentally retarded which then jeopardises their further educational progress. The proportion of Roma/Gypsy children placed in such institutions is far higher than for the school-going population as a whole. For instance, in the former Czechoslovakia in 1980, about 17% of the Roma/Gypsy school population attended 'special' schools rising to 28% in 1985 (Bulír, 1987). However, despite this highly unfavourable situation, even an incomplete elementary education inculcates a degree of literacy and provides a basic knowledge of writing and reading.

A direct correlation is evident between level of literacy and age among Roma/Gypsies. In the former Czechoslovakia, the proportion with no education (including unknowns) was about 5 % in the age group 20-34 and rose progressively with increasing age. Furthermore, according to the 1980 census, whereas almost 10 per cent of the 30-34 age group were illiterate, this had grown to about a quarter in the population aged 50 and over. Similarly, in 1991, 5 per cent of males aged 15 and over and 6 per cent of the corresponding group of females were illiterate. Census data reveal that illiteracy rates are even higher in Bulgaria (11 per cent among males and 19 per cent among females) and in Slovakia (9 per cent for males and 13 per cent for females). It is also very high in Romania, with the 1992 census enumerating around 20 per cent of Roma/Gypsies over the age of 12 as illiterate. Many of these were in fact young people with 16 per cent of males in the 12-19 age group and 20 per cent of females being illiterate. Although this degree of illiteracy among the Roma/Gypsies of Central and Eastern Europe is obviously a negative phenomenon, it is not significantly different from the situation in western Europe. Hence, adult illiteracy among Roma/Gypsies and travellers in the various countries of the European Union was generally above 50% in 1985, reaching values as high as 80 or even 100 per cent in places (Liégeois, 1994). In Spain, adult illiteracy among Roma/Gypsies was 80 per cent in 1987, and was put at 65 per cent in France in 1991 (Costarelli, 1993).

In Roma/Gypsy society, education is often viewed as a non Roma/Gypsy activity and those who achieve a relatively high level of attainment are often repudiated by the society. Without doubt, the retention of such an outlook hinders the social integration of Roma/Gypsies. Only about a quarter of Roma/Gypsy males over the age of 15 and 16 per cent of females had commenced their secondary education in the countries examined here and many of these leave without achieving a formal qualification. Moreover, these figures also include vocational training, which is the form of secondary education favoured by Roma/Gypsies, especially males - for instance, males comprise 90 per cent of Roma/Gypsies in vocational training in the Czech Republic and 91 per cent in Slovakia. Roma/Gypsies rarely go on to university and recent data show that only 0.2 per cent of males over 15 and 0.1 per cent of females were educated to this standard in the countries examined here. The educational standards of Roma/Gypsies remain far below the levels found in the majority communities in all countries and affect many aspects of their lives. It has negative consequences for the education of the next generation, the kind of employment they are suited for and so on. Roma/Gypsies also tend to be concentrated in the lowest social stratum and as a result often only have contact with the most marginal groups among the majority. Clearly, such characteristics do little to help inculcate positive attitudes towards education. Education is also important in the context of changing demographic behaviour in so far as fertility decline is usually associated with the spread of education to the female population.

The available data shows a strong correlation between age and educational attainment in the Roma/Gypsy population. Basic literacy appears to be spreading in the youngest generation and schooling is gradually becoming accepted as important and useful. Efforts are being made to develop teaching methods that meet the needs of Roma/Gypsy children and a number of experiments are in progress. Special courses are available for teachers so that they can acquire the Roma/Gypsy language and appreciate more fully the Roma/Gypsy way of life so that misunderstandings and even the rejection of schooling can be avoided. The low level of education that characterises the Roma/Gypsy population severely restricts their chances of participating in economic activity. Improving the educational standard of the youngest generation should be a key objective for international activities.

8.2. Economic activity

The participation of Roma/Gypsies in economic activity and their numbers as a proportion of the economic active population reflect their demography, educational attainment, value system and their position in society. The high fertility of Roma/Gypsies in the countries examined here means that, as a group, they are characterised by young age dependency (table 3). The ratio of persons under the age of 15 to the number aged 15-64 is almost twice as high as in the population at large. Even though old age dependency is very low, the overall dependency burden of the group - approximated here as the ratio of the population aged 0-14 plus the population aged 65 and over to the number of economically active age, i.e. 15-64 - is around 50 per cent higher than in the total population.

Tab. 3 Dependency ratios for Roma/Gypsies and in the total population

Dependency ratio	BG	CZ	H	MAC	R	SR	SLO	Total
	Roma/Gypsies							
0-14 of 15-64	63,7	62,2	68,3	54,3	74,3	79,5	71,9	69,1
65+ of 15-64	4,9	3,1	4,1	5,6	5,1	4,0	4,4	4,8
0-14 and 65+ of 15-64	68,6	65,3	72,4	59,9	79,4	84,5	76,2	73,8
	Total population							
0-14 of 15-64	28,4	31,7	31,0	37,7	34,3	38,5	30,3	32,8
65+ of 15-64	21,4	19,1	20,0	12,9	16,6	15,9	16,0	18,1
0-14 and 65+ of 15-64	49,9	50,7	51,0	50,5	50,9	54,4	46,0	50,9

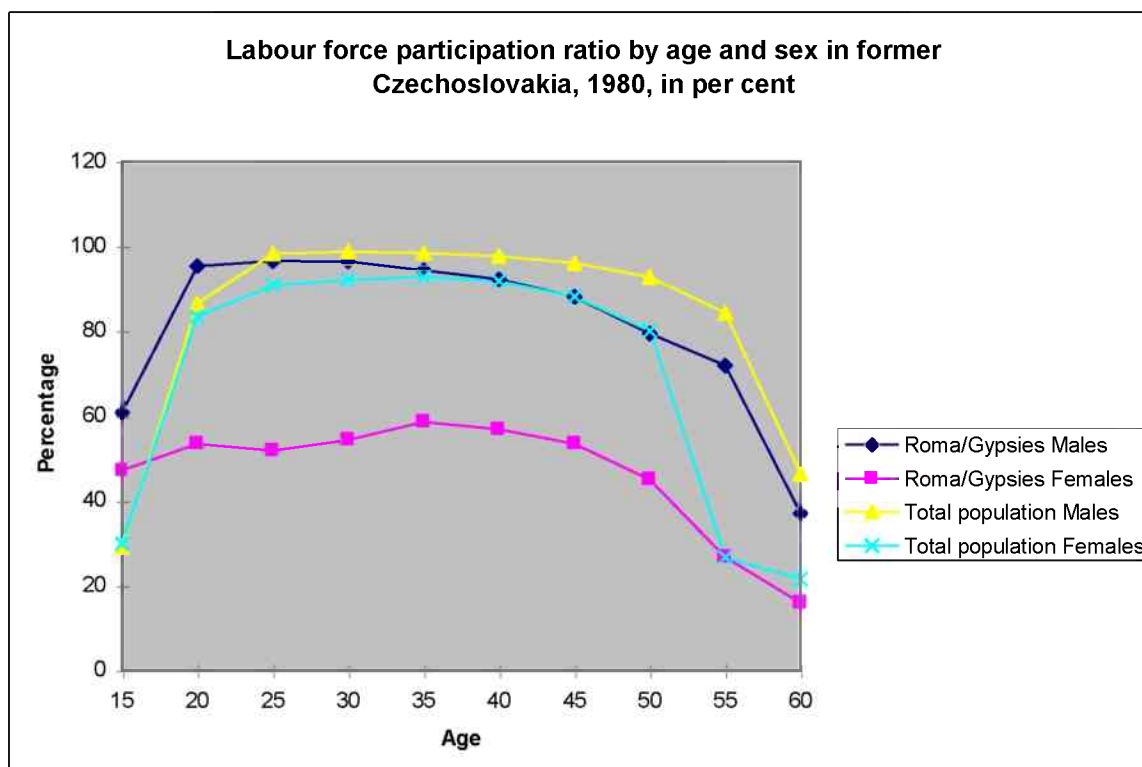
Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1990, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

Compared with the majority populations, the economic activity rates of Roma/Gypsy males were higher up to the age of 24 and for females up to the age of 19, reflecting the differences in school attendance between the two groups. The relatively low labour force participation of males after the age of 50 is a product of a relatively high rate of limiting long term illness that impedes their ability to work. For instance, only 79 per cent of Roma/Gypsy men in the 50-54 age group were economically active in the former Czechoslovakia in 1980, compared with 93 per cent of total males. Otherwise, one may note the low labour force participation of Roma/Gypsy women which may be explained as a function of their high fertility and preference to care for their families at home.

Until relatively recently in Central and Eastern Europe, to work was regarded as an individuals' duty and was enforced, as was an employer's duty to offer work to people. As a consequence of this, relatively high activity rates were even found among Roma/Gypsies of economically active age; citing the instance of Czechoslovakia once again, 88 per cent of Roma Gypsy males aged 15-59 and 55 per cent of females aged 15-54 were active in the labour force in 1980 compared with figures of 92 and 89 per cent in the population overall. Although the figure for males had dropped a little in 1991 to 85 per cent, the activity rate for females actually rose to 57 per cent. Activity rates were identical for males in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, although the values for females varied significantly - namely, 71 per cent in the Czech Republic but only 50 per cent in Slovakia. By comparison, in Romania their rates of labour force participation were lower at almost every age, compared with the total population, especially for females, and these differences were sometimes substantial. Male levels were higher than in the total population up to the age of 20, and reflect the differences in secondary school attendance already referred to (Labour Force Survey 1997).

Czechoslovak data for 1980 on labour force participation among Roma/Gypsies by age and sex reveal comparatively high rates, especially of males, because under the communist regime, it was unlawful not to work (fig. 14). However, the new political and economic circumstances of the 1990s have been accompanied by the emergence of high rates of Roma/Gypsy unemployment. State enterprises have been closed, sold off or returned to their previous owners and Roma/Gypsies not only have difficulties finding work but are also more likely to be made redundant. They lack the marketable skills and business experience now required, their standard of education is low, and in most cases they have no professional skills or qualifications. They have difficulties in adjusting to the new conditions and are reluctant to retrain. Moreover, employers have a traditional distrust of Roma/Gypsy workers and a reluctance to offer them work is not easily distinguishable from racial discrimination. The irrelevance of the education system to Roma/Gypsy children maintains this cycle and recreates exactly the same set of circumstances for the next generation. The degree to which Roma/Gypsies participate in economic activity clearly reflects the differences in values between cultures. Roma/Gypsy culture generally rejects the concept of stable, long-term employment. They prefer the independence and freedom provided by self employment in which the family group is the basic economic unit. Control over their own time is fundamental to their idea of work (Liégeois, 1994). From their perspective, to be unemployed is not necessarily a negative phenomenon but may well be a sign of successful resistance to assimilation.

Fig. 14



Source: Czechoslovak population census 1980.

Data are not available for all the countries examined in this report, but those which are to hand confirm the existence of high unemployment among Roma/Gypsies. Census data for Slovenia for 1991 showed that 22 per cent of Roma/Gypsy males and 28 per cent of females were looking for their first job, compared with 2 per cent of males and females in the total population, while 28 per cent of males and 20 per cent of females were seeking work, compared with 5 per cent of males and 4 per cent of females in the population at large. In Romania, the 1992 census uncovered an unemployment rate of some 30 per cent although later figures present a more positive picture. Hence, the most recent information from the 1997 Labour Force Survey show unemployment down to 14 per cent (13 per cent for males and 15 per cent for females) but this was still about 2.3 times higher than in the population at large, according to the ILO definition of unemployment.

Traditionally a low standard of education and lack of vocational qualification has inevitably placed Roma/Gypsies on the lowest rungs of society. Most males are employed doing heavy manual labour in industry and construction, while women undertake menial and ancillary work. In addition, a new trend is beginning to emerge in the Czech Republic in so far as Roma/Gypsies are now being displaced from their jobs by immigrant workers from East Europe, mainly from the former Republics of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia. The acceptance of lower levels of pay by such immigrants, a better work ethic and greater reliability are the main reasons cited by employers for this trend.

9. Conclusions

The numerical size of the Roma/Gypsy population is a subject that not only attracts the attention of research workers and statesmen but also the general public. There is no consensus about how many Roma/Gypsies live in Europe or their distribution by individual country and under these circumstances various estimates are bound to exist. Population census data for the early 1990s for the countries included in this report provide information about number of persons of declared Roma/Gypsy nationality or Roma/Gypsy national/ethnic group, i.e. about those who regarded themselves as Roma/Gypsy. The demographic study of the group is hindered by a lack of direct information about their fertility, mortality and migration characteristics and the population census is in most cases the only statistical source available. Roma/Gypsies have retained a considerable diversity in their social, economic and culture life as well as in their demographic behaviour. Their rates of fertility and mortality are high and young people make up a substantially greater part of the group than of the total population. The rapid rate of population increase that results from high fertility is expected to be maintained for the foreseeable future and significant change in their demographic behaviour will only come about as a result of social and economic development.

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Census data on Roma/Gypsy population were prepared by members of Group of specialists on the demographic situation of national minorities in Europe (Council of Europe) in collaboration with National Statistical Offices.

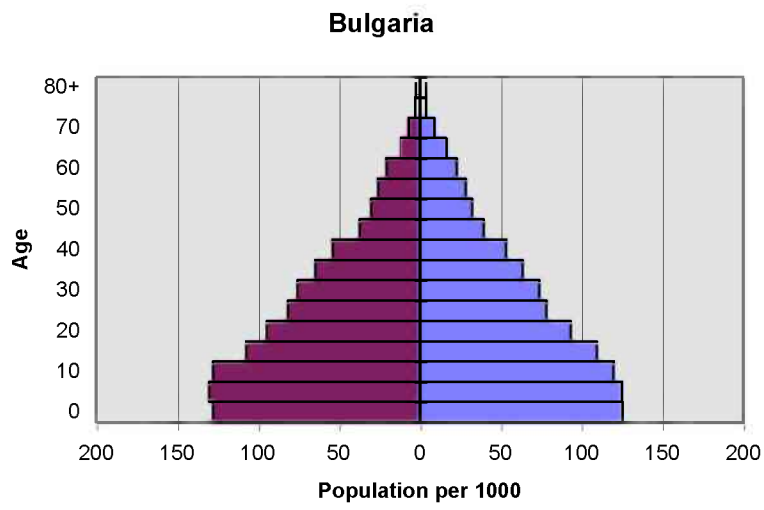
Appendix

Table 1 Age structure of the Roma/Gypsy population

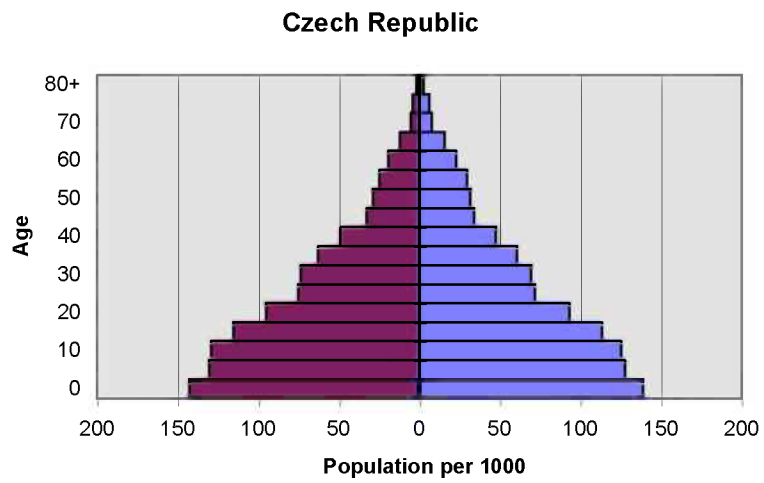
	BG	CZ	H	MAC	R	SR	SLO	Total region
Age group	Absolute number							
0 - 4	39634	4227	19698	4836	61907	11893	335	142530
5 - 9	39978	3964	17625	4956	52660	11108	299	130590
10 - 14	38794	4192	19173	5053	51538	9857	301	128908
15 - 19	33954	4046	16781	4818	46986	8873	263	115721
20 - 24	29410	3160	12830	3846	38638	7182	217	95283
25 - 29	25033	2845	12061	3435	24291	6483	214	74362
30 - 34	23418	2782	11046	3328	25810	5608	164	72156
35 - 39	20087	2374	8324	3194	24147	4265	155	62546
40 - 44	16818	1808	5744	2653	18773	3008	100	48904
45 - 49	12010	872	4924	1845	12184	1742	70	33647
50 - 54	9852	790	4472	1543	12314	1533	54	30558
55 - 59	8491	704	3814	1505	11539	1438	33	27524
60 - 64	6791	530	2766	1171	8913	1180	31	21382
65 - 69	4596	301	1685	750	5755	785	16	13888
70 - 74	2445	126	679	398	2648	336	16	6648
75 - 79	1083	103	659	170	1698	248	12	3973
80 +	1003	58	402	133	1243	216	.	3055
Unknown	.	21	.	73	43	47	13	197
Total	313 397	32903	142683	43707	401087	75802	2 293	1011872
Age group	Per 1000							
0 - 4	126,5	128,5	138,1	110,6	154,3	156,9	146,1	140,8
5 - 9	127,6	120,5	123,5	113,4	131,3	146,5	130,4	129,1
10 - 14	123,8	127,4	134,4	115,6	128,5	130,0	131,3	127,4
15 - 19	108,3	123,0	117,6	110,2	117,2	117,1	114,7	114,4
20 - 24	93,8	96,0	89,9	88,0	96,3	94,7	94,6	94,2
25 - 29	79,9	86,5	84,5	78,6	60,6	85,5	93,3	73,5
30 - 34	74,7	84,6	77,4	76,1	64,4	74,0	71,5	71,3
35 - 39	64,1	72,2	58,4	73,1	60,2	56,3	67,6	61,8
40 - 44	53,7	54,9	40,3	60,7	46,8	39,7	43,6	48,3
45 - 49	38,3	26,5	34,5	42,2	30,4	23,0	30,5	33,3
50 - 54	31,4	24,0	31,3	35,3	30,7	20,2	23,6	30,2
55 - 59	27,1	21,4	26,7	34,4	28,8	19,0	14,4	27,2
60 - 64	21,7	16,1	19,4	26,8	22,2	15,6	13,5	21,1
65 - 69	14,7	9,1	11,8	17,2	14,3	10,4	7,0	13,7
70 - 74	7,8	3,8	4,8	9,1	6,6	4,4	7,0	6,6
75 - 79	3,4	3,1	4,6	3,9	4,2	3,3	5,2	3,9
80 +	3,2	1,8	2,8	3,1	3,1	2,8	.	3,0
Unknown	,	0,6	.	1,7	0,1	0,6	5,7	0,2
Total	1000,0	1000,0	1000,0	1000,0	1000,0	1000,0	1000,0	1000,0

Source of data: National population censuses: Bulgaria 1992, Czech Republic 1991, Hungary 1991, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 1994, Romania 1992, Slovakia 1991, Slovenia 1991.

Fig.1 Age pyramids for Roma/Gypsies by country

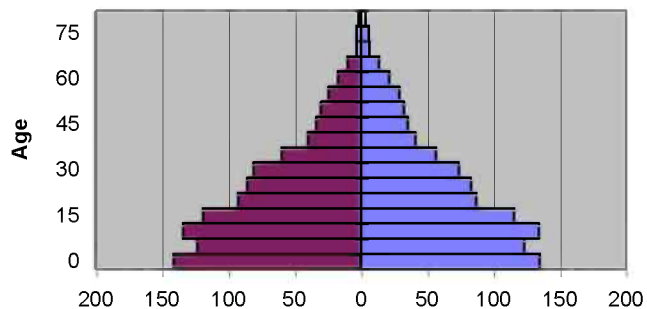


Source of data: Population census 1992.



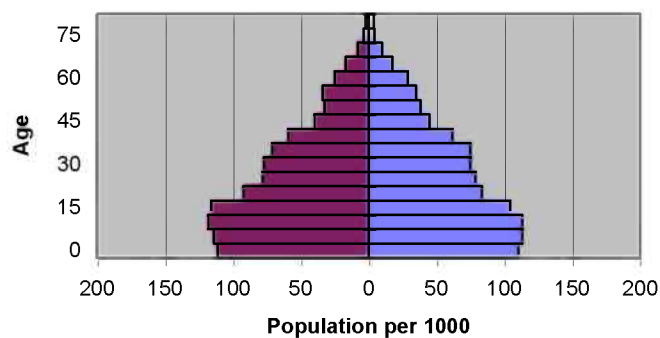
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Hungary



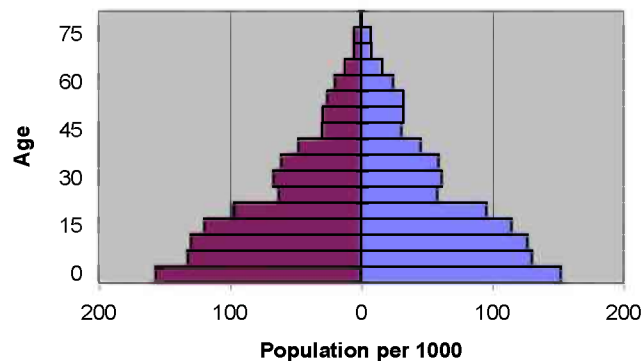
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"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"



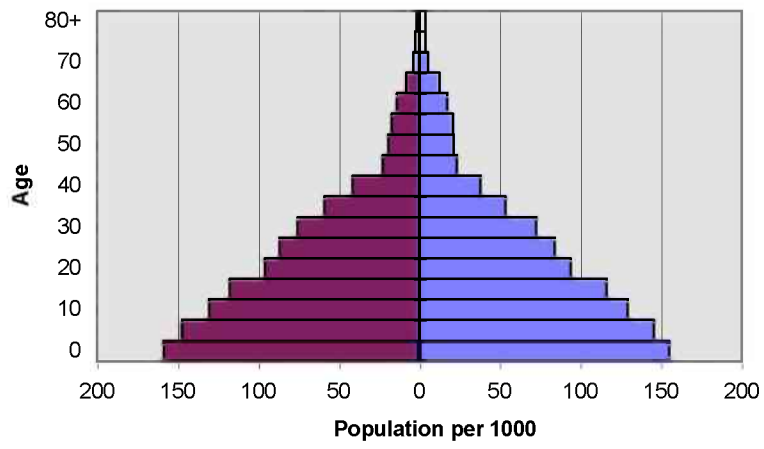
Source of data: Population census 1994.

Romania



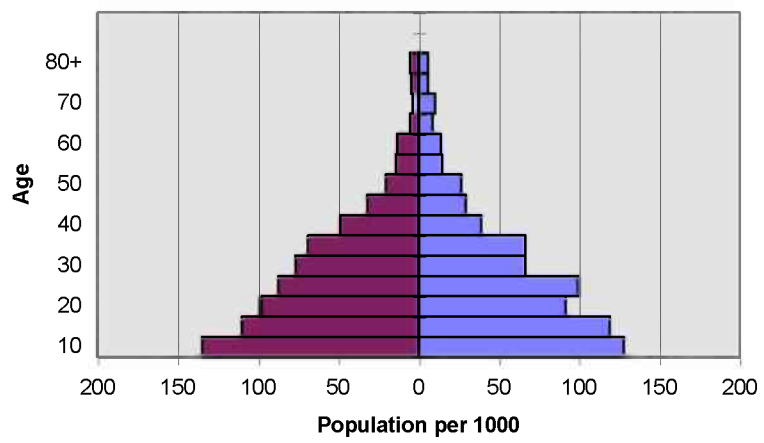
Source of data: Population census 1992.

Slovakia



Source of data: Population census 1991.

Slovenia



Source of data: Population census 1991.