

New dimensions regarding demographic behaviour and marriage-to-divorce ratio in Romania and Bihor County: a comparative analysis

Marcu Stasac^{1, CDM}, Marius I. Stupariu^{2, DM}, Corina Florina Tătar^{3, FMR}, Ribana Linc⁴,
Liviucur^{5, MR}, Stelian Nistor^{6, MR}

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Oradea, Romania, ¹e-mail: marcu_stasac@yahoo.com, ¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5935-0433>; ²e-mail: marius.stupariu@didactic.uoradea.ro, ²<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9533-6783>; ³e-mail: corina_criste_78@yahoo.com (corresponding author), ³<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4256-6454>; ⁴e-mail: ribana.linc@didactic.uoradea.ro, ⁴<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4526-0095>; ⁵e-mail: liviucur@yahoo.com, ⁵<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3658-1743>; ⁶e-mail: snistor@uoradea.ro, ⁶<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5338-814X>

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Abstract. This study analyses recent demographic trends in Romania, focusing on changes in the female population, especially women of childbearing age, as well as marriage and divorce rates at both national and local levels in Bihor County. The aim is to identify patterns of demographic behaviour and assess family stability through the dynamics of the marriage-to-divorce ratio. By examining these trends, we can highlight regional differences in demographic behaviour. The study employs an evolutionary and comparative analysis of demographic patterns in Romania, with a specific focus on Bihor County. Using official data from the National Institute of Statistics, it provides a descriptive analysis of trends and evaluates key factors influencing demographic stability and instability at both national and regional levels. Results indicate that, since 1990, Romania has increasingly aligned with Western demographic models, reflecting shifts in key indicators such as marriage, fertility and family stability.

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1. Introduction

The situation of Romania's economic, social and political life in the last three decades of the post-communist period left its mark directly or indirectly on the population distribution and demographic growth.

Demographic behaviour has played a key role in Romania's population trends. Until 1960–65, these trends followed a relatively natural course. However, after this period, the communist regime imposed strict controls, significantly shaping demographic evolution (Ministry of Justice, 1966; Bolovan, 2004; Anton, 2010; Jinga et al., 2011; Coman, 2021; Miron, 2021; Slyvka, Pantyley & Braychevskyy, 2023). After the fall of communism, Romania began reverting to pre-1966 demographic patterns (Ianoş & Guran, 1995). Demographic trends are influenced by various local and external factors. Some of the most stable demographic components include natural population dynamics, such as marriage rates, which are shaped by the relatively equal number of men and women and the proportion of women of childbearing age (Ianoş & Guran, 1995). On the other hand, divorces disrupt these patterns and contribute to demographic shifts. Both marriage and divorce rates fluctuate over time and across regions, influenced by economic conditions, social and political factors, and legislative changes. Additionally, societal attitudes and personal choices also impact these trends. Key indicators used to assess demographic behaviour include demographic potential (the population's capacity for growth) and family stability/instability, which reflect the overall strength and resilience of family structures.

2. Research materials and methods

In order to understand the complexity of the proposed topic and to expand the perspective of the study in an international context, we referred to demographic studies related to women of childbearing age. Research conducted on changes in family structures highlights the profound influence that social and economic norms have on how the concept of family is perceived and constructed (Harat et al., 2015; Walsh, 2016; Clarke, 2018). Issues related to demographic behaviour and its structural changes became very topical issues in Central and Eastern Europe with the changes in political regimes after 1990. Demographic behaviour, family structures and economic realities intersect, providing a basis for deeper regional analyses, especially in the post-

socialist European context. More scientific works, including those by Śleszyński et al. (2018), Szymańska and Wylon (2019), Goldscheider et al. (2015) and Zaidi and Morgan (2017), fall within this approach. Studies on the relationship of starting a family to purchasing a home show that the accessibility and availability of housing play a key role in decisions related to marriage and family formation. Delayed marriages and low fertility rates in several European countries have been linked to housing shortages or economic instability, which disproportionately affect younger populations, as discussed by Brauner-Otto (2021), Dik et al. (2015) or Parysek (2012).

The problems related to demographic behaviour, with the elements that define it (birth, marriage and divorce rates, etc.), represent research topics for a very wide range of researchers in the field of sociology, demography, geography or other related fields. In the current study, we aimed for a comparative analysis of the Romanian population demographic behaviour aspects, then transposed it to the county level, through the example of Bihor County. In this sense, we will only refer to certain approaches focused on those components that lay at the basis of Romania's demographic behaviour. Among the many studies approaching various demographic aspects with implications on the Romanian population demographic behaviour, those of the demographer Trebici (1971, 1991, 1996) can be mentioned. A much more concrete study, focused directly on the demographic behaviour of Romanian cities belongs to the geography authors Ianoş and Guran (1995). The problems related to the demographic crisis in Romania referring to birth rate, fertility, marriage rate, divorce rate or the phenomenon of demographic aging have been topics of scientific research among sociologists Rotariu (2003, 2009, 2010), Rotariu, Dumănescu and Hărăguş (2017) or Cucu-Oancea (2005). The demographic evolution, the current demographic situation (i.e., demographic decline) and the demographic perspectives of the Romanian population are analysed and explained by the demographer Gheţău (1997, 2004, 2007), Staşac et al. (2010) and Sandu (2018).

3. Research results

For the current study, we mainly used the primary statistical data provided by the National Institute of Statistics for the period 1992–2021. With the support of these data, corroborated with information from the specialised literature, the main objective of the study is to make the demographic evolution

model to which Romania currently subscribes, highlighting the particularities of Bihor County in the north-west of the country, but also outlining some demographic risks (i.e., family instability).

We used a methodological data series in which we find the statistical method by which these data were processed through the Excel program, the result being rendered in the form of evolutionary diagrams, and the cartographic representation (i.e., the demographic potential index map and divorce-to-marriage ratio rate map) at national and local level. These were accomplished using the GIS work tool that facilitated the interpretation of the statistical material but that also acts as a source of new data.

These are accompanied by the comparative method by which the main demographic indicators that influence demographic behaviour and divorce-to-marriage ratio are analysed on two scalar levels: on a macro scale, Romania is analysed, and on a lower scalar level, Bihor County with its demographic peculiarities. Thus, we considered two indicators that characterise family phenomena (Cucu-Oancea, 2005), represented by marriage and divorce rates, as well as the composite indicator represented by the demographic potential based on which the family instability risk map was created.

The analysed period is 1992 and 2021. The data used for the demographic analysis are taken from the National Institute of Statistics of Romania, Statistical Databases section: Tempo-Online (National Institute for Statistics of Romania, 2024). These refer to the total population by residence on 1st July of each year, the number of marriages, the number of divorces, the female population and the female population of childbearing age (i.e., 15–49 years). Based on these data, demographic indices were calculated: divorce-to-marriage ratio, marriage rate, divorce rate and demographic potential.

The tested hypothesis is that the structure of the female population, especially the fertile segment, influences the demographic potential of a geographical area. It can undergo a series of changes over time, generating a certain demographic stability or instability. Hence the second hypothesis, according to which stability is determined by the intensity of marriages (i.e., the marriage rate), while instability can be caused by the phenomenon of divorce.

4. Results

To be able to observe how the demographic behaviour manifests, both at the national level and at the local

level (this latter through the case of Bihor County), we focus on the analysis of some representative demographic indicators, namely the demographic potential index, which can be evaluated using the ratio between the number of women of fertile age and their total number, then the marriage rate and the divorce rate. Thus, the intensity of marriages and divorces is shown at the national and local level.

4.1. Demographic potential (i.e., share of childbearing age women in total number of women)

A territory's demographic potential index can be evaluated by the relationship established between the number of women of childbearing age and the total female population. Indirectly, through this indicator, the degree of vitality of a population can be expressed, as well as the real possibilities of its regeneration (Ianoş & Guran, 1995).

Therefore, the evolution and structure of the female population, and especially of the female population of childbearing age, can influence the fertility phenomenon, generating a certain type of demographic behaviour. There is an interdependence between fertility and birth rate, in the sense that the intensity of fertility influences the birth rate.

The female population of Romania in the last 30 years follows the general trend of demographic decline of the total population. Thus, according to the data from 1992, there were 11,733,975 women registered out of a total of 23,126,797 inhabitants (50.7%); by 2021 their number had decreased to 11,285,967 women, but with a more obvious percentage compared to the male population (51.2%) out of a total of 22,046,917 inhabitants. This change is a decrease of the female segment of 480,008 women, which means a rate of negative decrease of 3.8% over the entire mentioned period (i.e., 1992–2021).

The female population of childbearing age registered a slight increase in the period 1992–2004, from 5.6 million to 5.9 million, as a consequence females born before 1990 having reached childbearing age during 1992–2004. After 2004, a downward trend follows, reaching 5,167,438 women of childbearing age in 2021, one of the main causes being female emigration after Romania's accession to the EU (Fig. 1).

The national demographic potential index starting from the post-December period (from 1992 to 2021) fell from 48.1% in 1992 to 45.8% in 2021 (Fig. 1). Within this overall negative trend, a local peak of 51.3% occurred in 2004, against

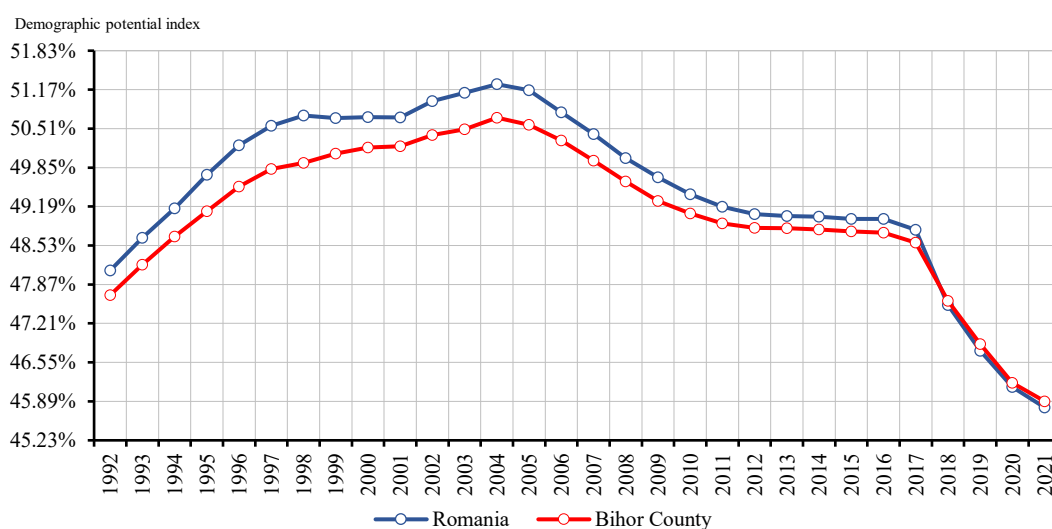


Fig. 1. Demographic potential index in Romania and Bihor County during 1992–2021

Source: National Institute for Statistics of Romania

the background of a growing female population of fertile age.

For the recent period of 2021, above-average values were recorded in the counties in the north-east of the country, where the value of this index exceeds 47%, (i.e., the counties of Iași with 49.4% and Vaslui with 48.8%). The higher level of the demographic potential index for these counties indicates a higher degree of vitality of the population, a consequence of a traditional demographic behaviour still with higher birth than mortality rates (i.e., procreative behaviour – children are considered a support for old age, the phrase is frequently encountered: “to have someone to give me a cup of water in my old age”). The young and especially female segments of the population are quite significant, somewhat delaying the demographic aging phenomenon. However, the highest value of this index was recorded in Ilfov county (50.9%) in southern Romania (Fig. 2). The vitality increment in this county occurred against the background of an internal migratory movement, from neighbouring counties more sensitive in terms of economic development, thus contributing to the increase in the number of inhabitants both naturally (i.e., positive natural balance) and through migration.

Values just below the average are registered by the vast majority of counties in the centre, west, south and south-east of Romania. The demographic potential index is lowest for Teleorman county (40.6%), followed by Vrancea (42.9%). In general, the lower degree of vitality appears in counties with less economic development and especially where the young able-bodied population preferred to migrate

either to more developed counties or outside the borders. Thus, a demographic deficit occurred, including women, with an emphasis on the young segment that should contribute to demographic growth.

At a lower scalar level, for Bihor County, the demographic potential index has a similar evolution to that of Romania. Three distinct evolution intervals can be noted: during 1992–2004, this index is slightly lower than at the national level; during 2004–2017 the difference between the two diminishes, and in the interval 2017–2021 the values of this index are approximately equal. For 2021, a value very close to the Romanian average is highlighted (45.9% in Bihor County, compared to 45.8% in Romania), which shows the degree of population average vitality (Fig. 1).

Figure 3 shows that the highest demographic potential values are found in the urban environment, with values over 47% (Valea lui Mihai with 48.1%, Aleșd with 47.4%, Săcuieni with 47.3%), but also in the area corresponding to the Oradea Metropolitan Area (the communes of Paleu with 53.8%, Sântandrei with 52.4%, Nojorid with 51.6%, Sânmartin with 49.4%, Oșorhei with 48.7%). If the municipality of Oradea is characterised by an average demographic potential index (45.8%), the peri-urban communes that form the metropolitan area have higher above-average values, which indicates a higher vitality. Benefiting from an advantageous geographical position in the immediate vicinity of Oradea municipality, these communes play the role of genuine “bedroom” type localities, with many residents, especially young people, preferring

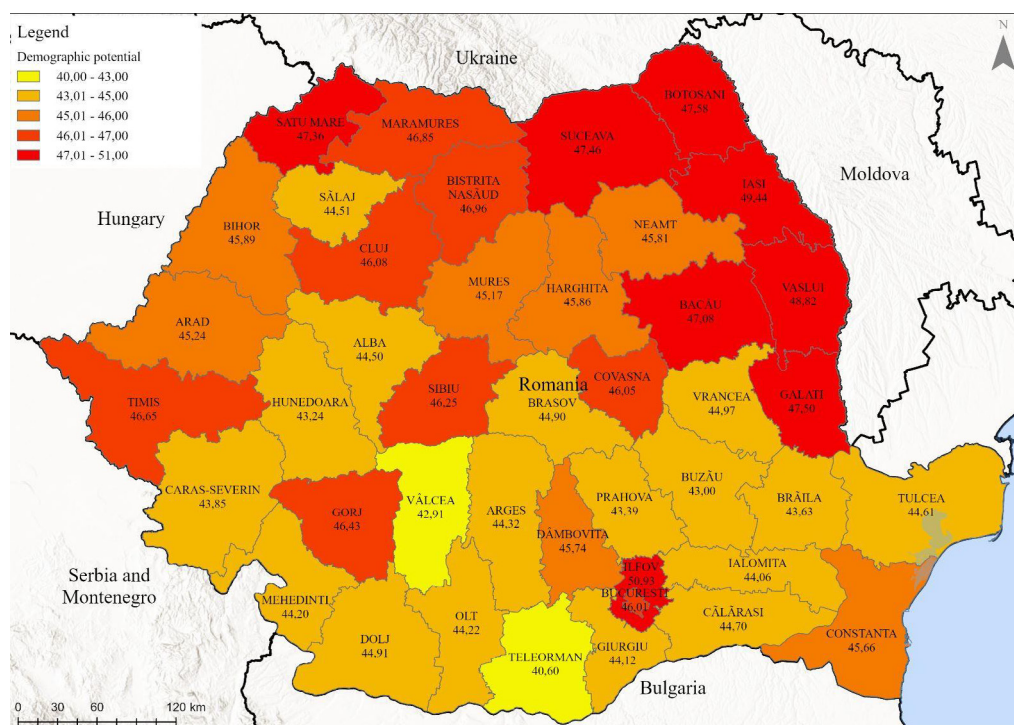


Fig. 2. Demographic potential index in Romania (2021)

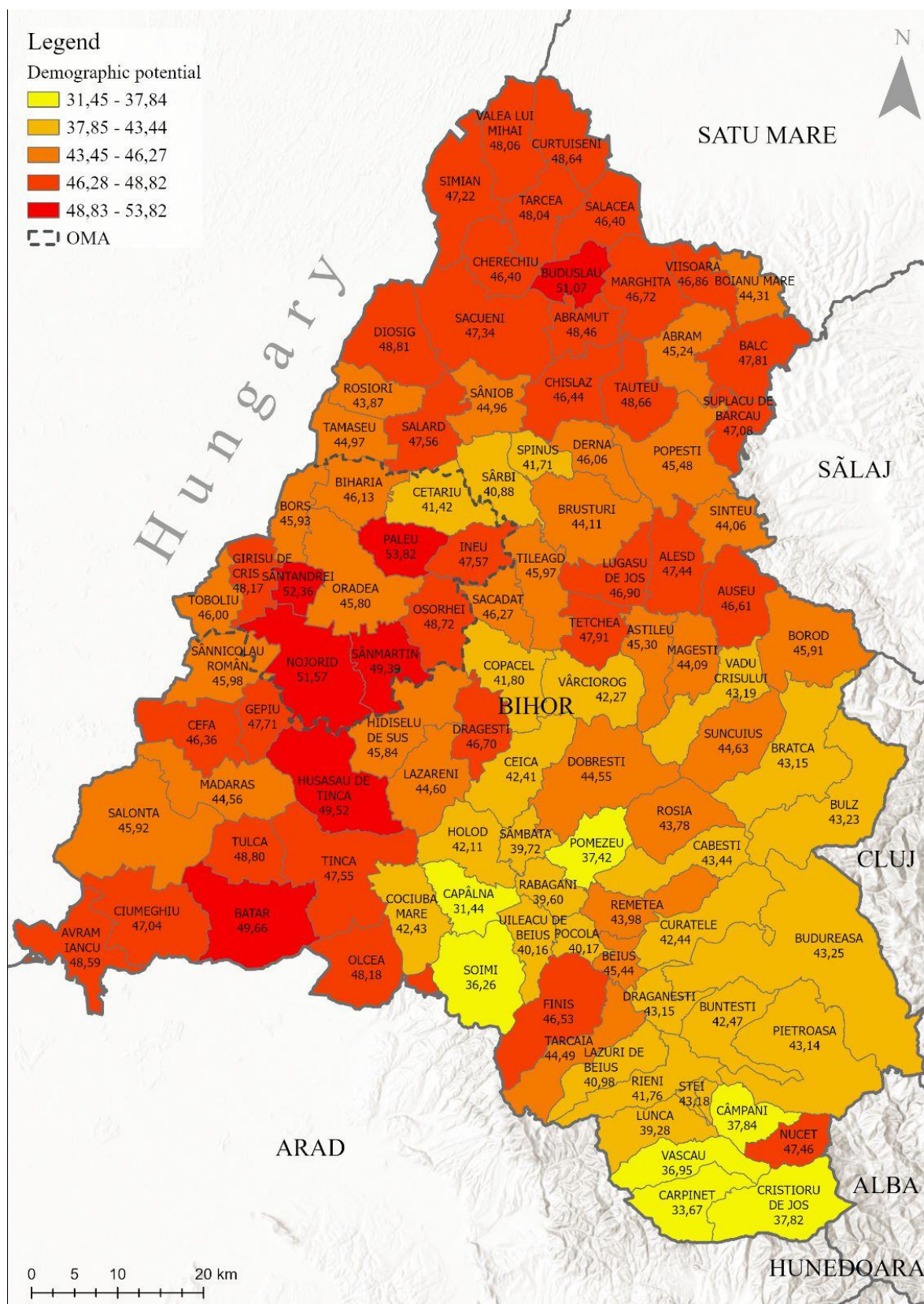
Source: The authors' calculations based on data obtained from the National Institute for Statistics of Romania

to settle here, to the detriment of the much more congested municipality of Oradea.

Another trigger of above-average values would be economic. Urban and peri-urban areas, respectively those in the Oradea Metropolitan Area, offer better opportunities for employment, infrastructure and public services, attracting the young population, including women of childbearing age. There is another cause, this time socio-cultural; the urban environment and the Oradea Metropolitan Area may be perceived by the population as having a more modern lifestyle and better opportunities for stability and for raising children.

At the opposite end, the lowest population vitality and regeneration is registered in the communes close the mountain area, especially those in the southern and south-eastern extremity of Bihor County, with values between 30 and 40% (i.e., Căpâlna 31.4%, Cărpînet 33.6%, Șoimi 36.2%). They are characterised by a high degree of population aging, including of the female population. In this sense, the young female population under the age of 15 is smaller than the female population over 50 years of age, and we are thus witnessing the demographic aging process setting in, which, to the extent of its increment, may lead to some of these localities' depopulation.

Furthermore, the lack of economic opportunities, and especially of jobs that could stabilise the population in the area, encourages the phenomenon of internal or external migration, which again contributes to the decrease in the proportion of women – and especially fertile women. The low degree of accessibility and the lack of basic services and effective support programmes for these rural localities reduce the attractiveness for young people and may contribute to the worsening of disparities. Therefore, these disparities in the demographic potential indicator in Bihor County (with validity also at national level) reflect a combination of structural and circumstantial factors. Urban and peri-urban areas, with economic dynamism and high accessibility, are advantageous for the young population, while isolated localities, with limited economic opportunities and demographic aging, are faced with a decline in the female fertile segment. These differences require adapted interventions, including economic investments, infrastructure modernisation and demographic policies that encourage stability and even the attraction of the fertile population in vulnerable areas.



4.2. Divorce-to-marriage ratio

Divorce-to-marriage ratio is an important feature of demographic behaviour. This indicator was analysed through the lens of the ratio between the number of divorces and the number of marriages, which can be expressed in the form of an inversely proportional global indicator. More precisely, it is the index of family instability, which represents a state conducive to demographic growth (Ianoş & Guran, 1995).

Taking into account the analysis of two emblematic demographic indicators (marriage rate and divorce rate), it will be possible to particularise and explain certain territorial differentiations of the population demographic behaviour both at the level of the nation and of a region (Bihor County, in our case).

The study of marriage rates is of particular importance in demographic research, as it constitutes an important premise for the birth phenomenon. Marriage is a natural act in the evolution of society and normally results in offspring, leading to obvious population growth. At the individual level, the organisation of married life, i.e., the creation of a family, represents for most young people an important event of personal achievement.

Seven to eight decades ago, Romania was based on a traditionalist cultural-family model in which marriage, family and religion represented the main moral and spiritual values of the population, which led to an increase in the number of births and

consequently to demographic growth. Across time, along with the modernisation of society and the young generations of the last three to four decades, we have witnessed a series of changes in family behaviour as well, generated by the numerous social, economic, cultural and political transformations (Bulgaru & Bulgaru, 2020). Thus, family behaviour based on certain traditional rules of family creation and organisation, marriage relations and the predominance of the nuclear family has now been replaced by a diversity of alternative family models, such as postponing marriage until older ages (after the age of 30), cohabitation, celibacy, the desire to have as few children as possible (one, maximum two, or maybe none), etc. All this leaves its mark on a regressive demographic behaviour and thus, instead of having demographic growth, we are, on the contrary, faced with population decrease on the background of increased demographic aging.

Statistical data indicate a decrease in the number of marriages in the last 30 years, from 174,593 marriages registered according to data from 1992, to 107,460 in 2012, and only 81,343 marriages in 2020 (National Institute for Statistics of Romania 2024). This lower value in 2020 can be attributed, most likely, to the restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic, which led to the postponement/cancellation of many marriages.

On the downward trend in the number of marriages between 1992 and 2002, a slight recovery can be noted, especially after 2002, when we witness a gradual increase in their number, until 2007, which

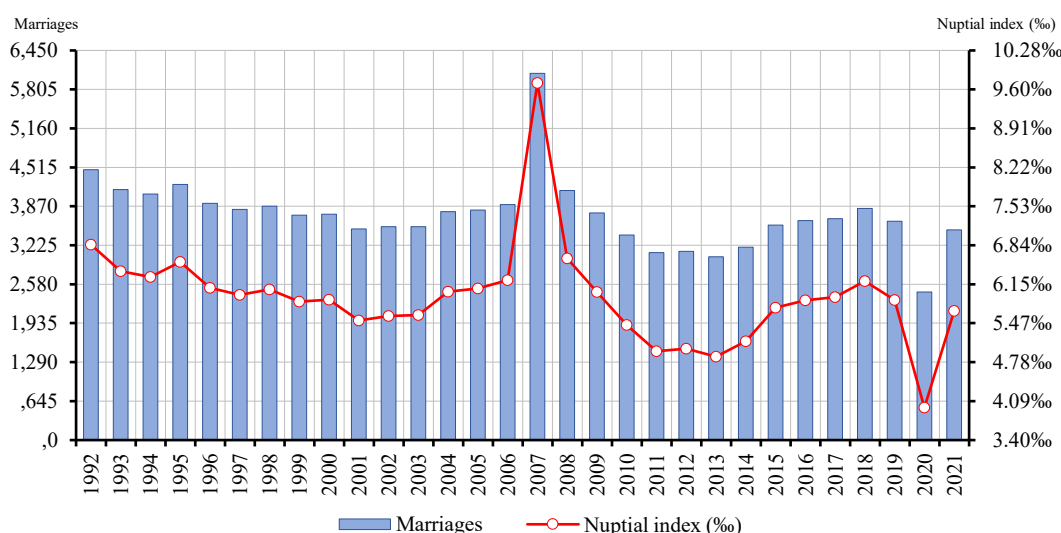


Fig. 4. Marriages and nuptial index in Romania during 1992–2021

Source: National Institute for Statistics of Romania

marks the maximum value for the last 30 years, i.e. 189,240 marriages. This peak may be due to a law that offered financial support to couples getting married for the first time (Parlamentul României, 2006).

The same situation can be noted for the marriage rate, whose values decreased from 7.6‰ in the 1992s, to 5.1‰ in 2012, and 3.7‰ in 2020. In 2021, we witness an important increase in number of marriages, with values even exceeding those recorded ten years ago (5.2‰). This is probably a “recovery” of those established and lost during the pandemic (2020–2021) (Fig. 4). With this, Romania aligns with the European standards regarding the marriage rate (4–5‰).

Going down to the lower scalar level, the marriage rate for Bihor County is the same as the national average (5.68‰), with values slightly above average in both urban (5.75‰) and rural (5.62‰) environments.

Compared to these averages, higher values emerge, even exceeding 8‰ in some municipalities: Balc (8.49‰), Cefa (8.93‰), Ceica (8.30‰) or Ineu (13.48‰), where the value of this index is more than double the average of Bihor county. These high values above the county (5.68‰) and national (5.18‰) averages can be attributed to a traditional cultural model that focuses on the family, its stability and its progress. As for the commune of Ineu, this value well above the average (13.48‰) could also be justified by the presence of a very large number of Roma population, who are oriented towards a specific ethnic demographic behaviour, traditions and customs.

If marriage is a natural act accepted with the consent of both partners (husband and wife) in order to found

a family that will further contribute to the evolution of society, resulting in offspring and consequently demographic growth, divorce is manifested by the separation of the two partners for various reasons (i.e., misunderstanding, incompatibility of character, infidelity, shortcomings in terms of lifestyle, etc.) and which will have effects from a demographic perspective, translated into family instability and problems related to demographic evolution (Cucu-Oancea, 2005).

In 2021, in Romania, 27,024 divorces were registered either through final lawsuits or through notary and civil status officers' decisions, the divorce rate being 1.23 divorces per 1,000 inhabitants, on an increasing trend compared to the previous year (2020) when 20,785 divorces were registered, with a divorce rate of 1.03‰. The year 2020 marks the lowest number of divorces and the lowest divorce rate in the last seven years (2015–2021)(Fig. 5). A main cause is, of course, the restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the divorce rate in Romania is relatively low, compared to other European countries (Härkönen et al., 2020), which determines a certain family stability (Baetica, 2015).

The counties with most divorces registered in 2021 were: the capital Bucharest (2,600 divorces), followed by Iași, Constanța, Prahova with values of over 1,000 divorces. If we consider the divorce rate, here we can see that Bihor County ranks second after Brașov county, with rates of 1.51‰ and 1.56‰ respectively, followed by Constanța county with 1.5‰ – clearly higher values compared to the national average.

In Bihor County, the most numerous divorces were registered in the year 2021 in the municipality of Oradea (379), followed by the municipalities

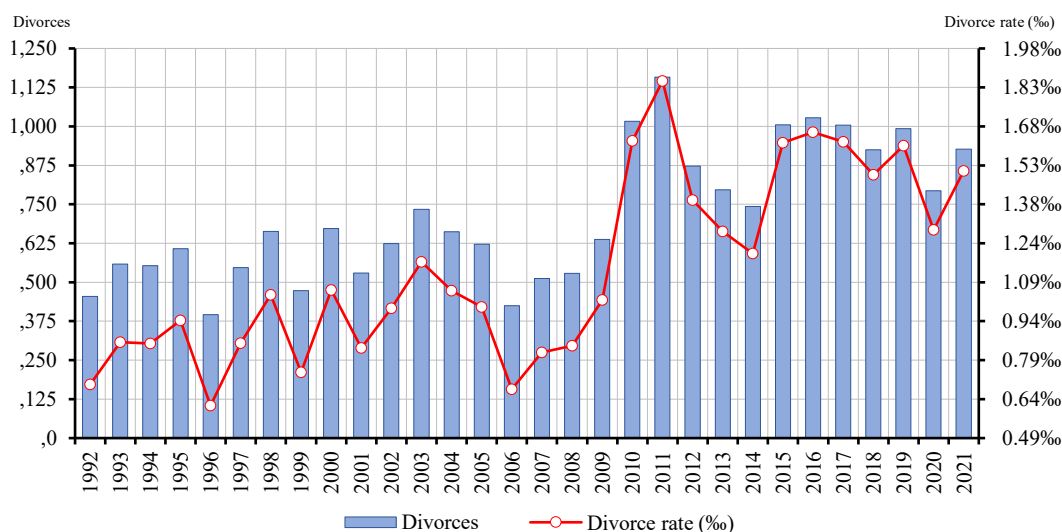


Fig. 5. Divorces and the divorce rate in Romania during 1992–2021

Source: National Institute for Statistics of Romania

of Marghita (46) and Salonta (26). Moreover, the urban environment stands out with higher values of both the number of divorces and the divorce rate (1.7‰), compared to the rural environment (1.3‰), the latter being much more conservative, in terms of divorce-to-marriage ratio.

Divorce-to-marriage ratio is a composite demographic indicator highlighting the ratio between the number of divorces and that of marriages, manifested in a period of time, within a well-defined territory. The higher the value of this indicator, the lower the divorce-to-marriage ratio – in other words, we are facing an instability phenomenon. Conversely, the lower the value, the higher the degree of stability.

In the case of Romania, the family instability rate began to increase in the last three decades, its values increasing from 16.8% in 1992 to 23.7% in 2021. Nevertheless, the highest degree of family instability (Fig. 6) was recorded in 2011 (33.9%), after which it gradually decreased until the present. In general, the divorce-to-marriage ratio is higher in the rural area, compared to the urban area and, at county level, for the year 2021, the most unstable are: Tulcea (34.3%), Brăila (33.6%), Hunedoara (32.6%), Alba (32%). Meanwhile, those with greater divorce-to-marriage ratios are: Arad (13.4%), Cluj (16.3%), Suceava (16.4%), Ilfov (17.3%). Of course, these values fluctuate. They vary from one (Fig. 7) year to the next and the hierarchies change depending on the intensity of some social, political and demographic factors that can influence marriages and divorces in a certain territory.

For Bihor County, the lowest value of this indicator was recorded in 2007 (8.4%)(Fig. 8), thus indicating the highest divorce-to-marriage ratio (the cause

being, probably, the impact of that law that offered financial support to couples on their first marriage) while the value of 37.3% from 2011 indicates the highest degree of family instability.

The territorial analysis of divorce-to-marriage ratio for the year 2021 highlights the fact that Bihor County (Fig. 9) is located in a “balance zone” with the average value of this index of 26.6% being slightly lower than the average value of 23.7% recorded at a national level. A higher divorce-to-marriage ratio can be noted in the rural environment, where the average value in 2021 was 23.8%, compared to the urban environment (29.3%). The highest degree of family instability was in Marghita (61.3%), followed by Valea lui Mihai (40.4%) and Beiuș (38.2%), while the municipality of Oradea with 27.7% had a much more stable family.

Furthermore, the communes in the southern and eastern half, overlapping deep rural spaces, show a higher degree of stability compared to the communes closer to the urban spaces, especially those that are part of the metropolitan area.

5. Discussion

The evolution of the main demographic behaviour components in the last three decades reveals the disruptive character of external interventions, especially of a legislative nature (Ianoș & Guran, 1995). The goal of the old totalitarian regime to “standardise” living conditions, in parallel with a family planning system based on pronatalist influences, did not yield the expected results at the

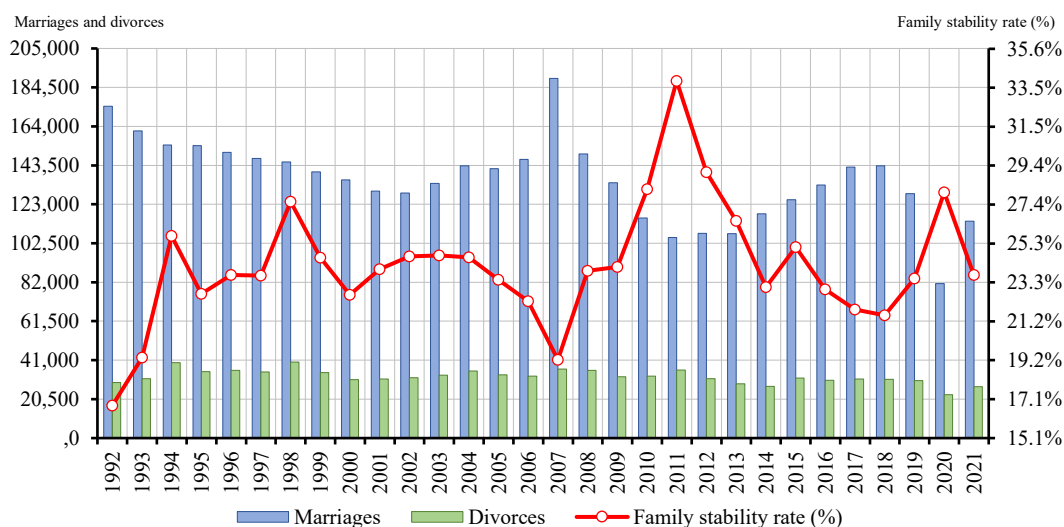


Fig. 6. Divorce-to-marriage ratio in Romania during 1992–2021

Source: National Institute for Statistics of Romania

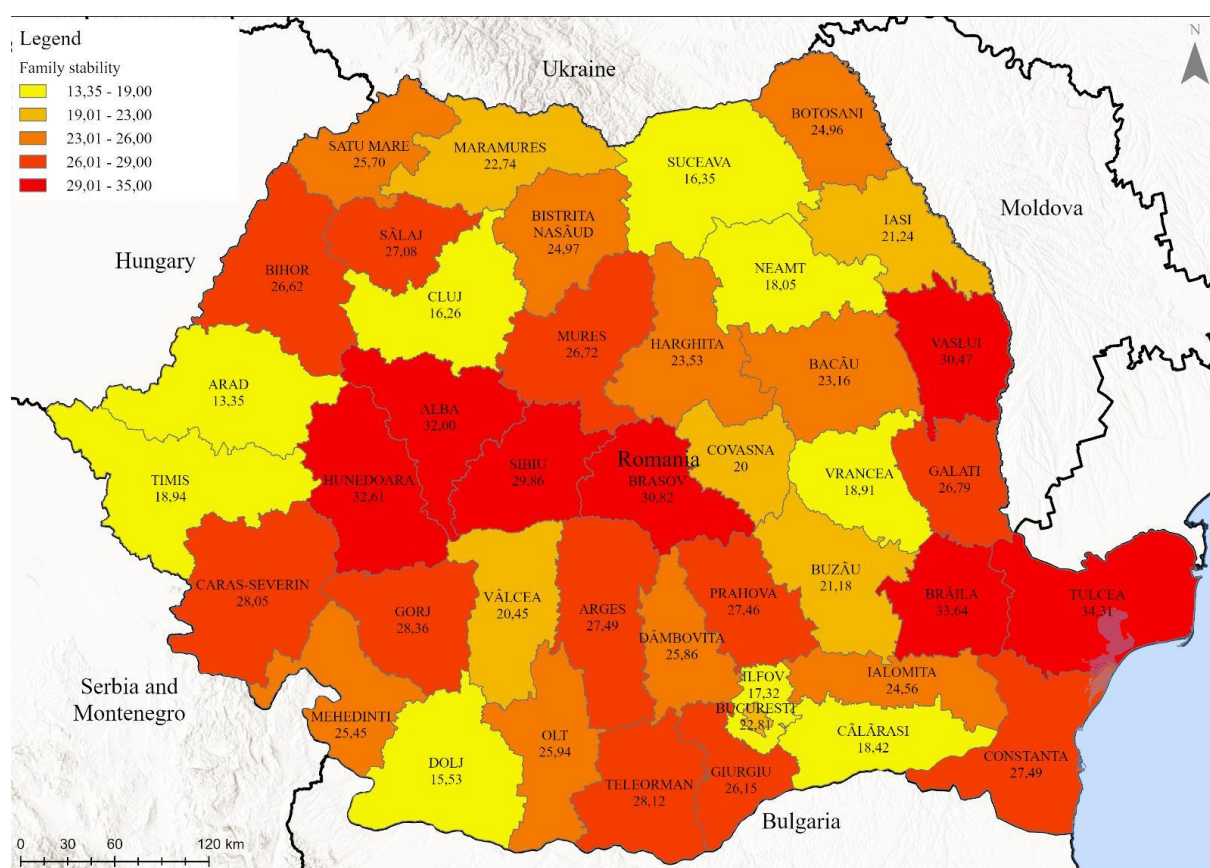


Fig. 7. Divorce-to-marriage ratio in Romania (2021)

Source: authors' calculations based on data obtained from the National Institute for Statistics of Romania

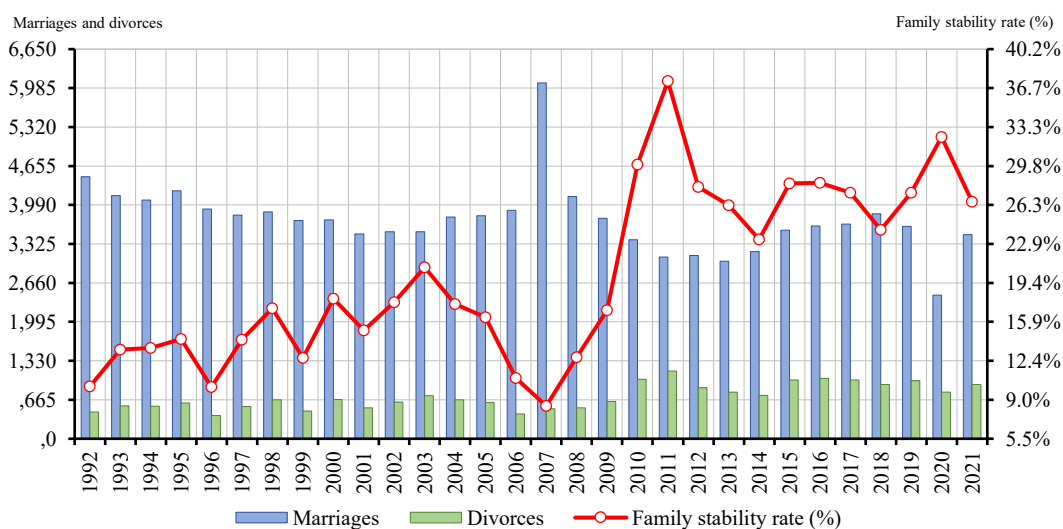
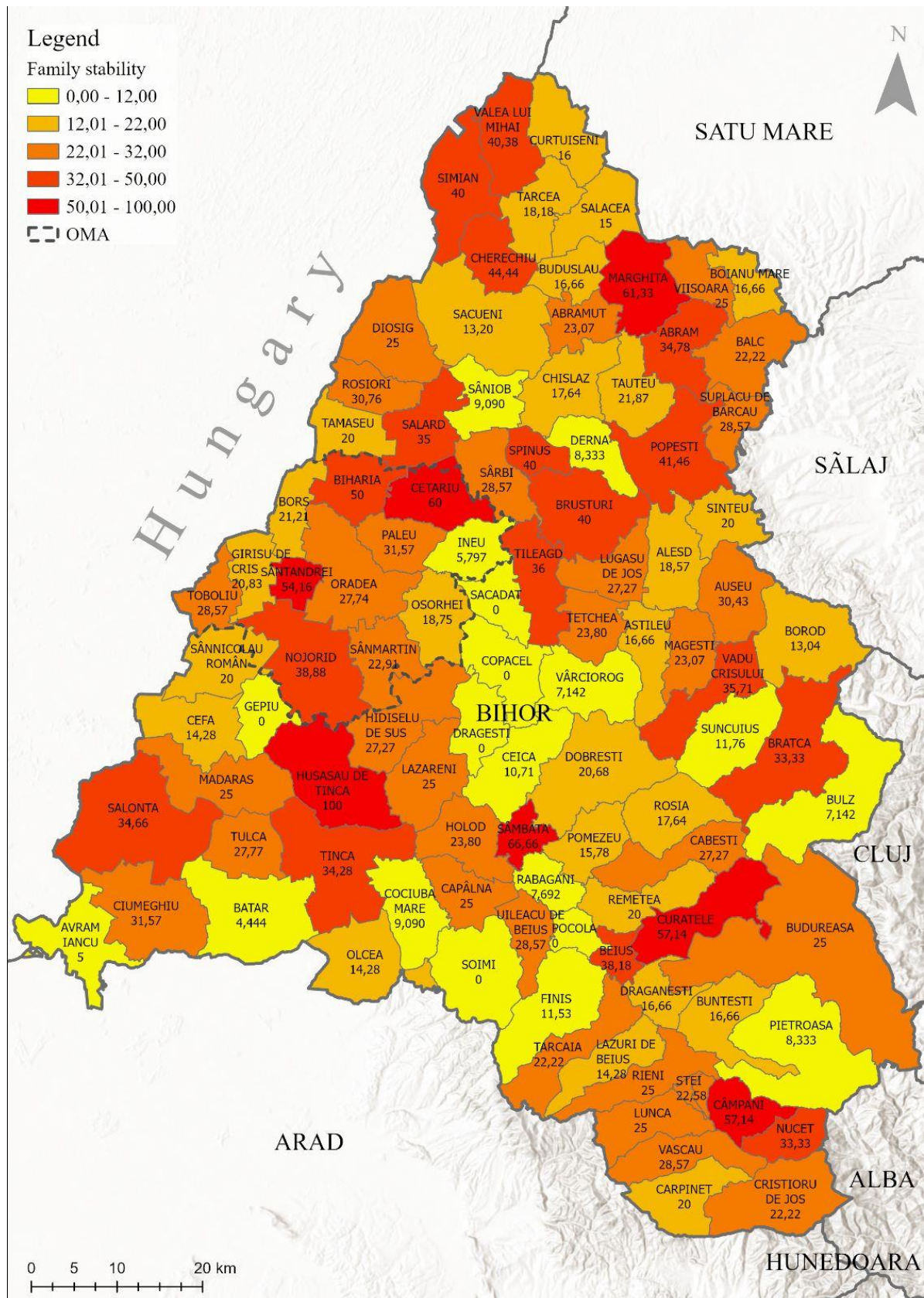


Fig. 8. Divorce-to-marriage ratio in Bihor County during 1992–2021

Source: National Institute for Statistics of Romania



level of the entire country. Thus, the western part of Romania, and especially Banat (Caraş-Severin and Timiş counties, partly also Arad), remained at a "Bănăţean"-type traditional demographic behaviour, based on low values of birth and mortality rates, so with a natural balance close to zero or even negative, resulting in slow population growth. At the opposite pole, the rest of Romania's territory, and especially the north-eastern part (counties in the region of Moldova), complied with the legal laws adopted by the state, the result being the spectacular increase in birth rates and their maintenance across time until the fall of the communist political system.

The transformations that took place after the 1990s in the political and economic system, in social life, but also in people's mentality, once again influenced the population's demographic behaviour. Thus, along with the repeal of the pronatalist law, against a background of deterioration in general economic conditions and standard of living, a normal demographic behaviour is returning, based on family planning (Bulgaru & Bulgaru, 2020).

Along with new evolution trends of the main demographic indicators after 1990, Romania intrinsically aligned itself with the Western countries' demographic models. Thus, on the one hand, birth and fertility rates are clearly decreasing, while divorces, the age of couples at first marriage, and the age of the mother at first birth have increased (National Institute for Statistics of Romania, 2012).

The results of this study clearly highlight a profound transformation of the family model in Romania and Bihor County, reflected in the decrease in number of marriages and increase in divorce rates. This transition can be attributed to the increase in the economic independence of women, especially those from urban areas, which gives them greater flexibility in making decisions regarding marriage and divorce. Modern forms of cohabitation, such as concubinage, are increasingly accepted among young people, thus reducing the pressure on traditional marriage as a social norm. It is precisely this replacement of the traditional model, based on the extended family with mutual obligations, with one oriented towards personal individualism, that can affect the stability of marriage. Along with rapid economic changes, these can influence the divorce rate. Thus, unemployment, migration for work and the lack or instability of jobs can create tensions in the family, leading to divorce. Likewise, differences between partners' incomes can affect family balance, increasing the likelihood of separation. A factor with a strong social impact on family stability and especially on children is migration (whether internal or international), which can destabilise marital

relationships, contributing to an increase in the number of divorces. Last but not least, we observed obvious disparities in demographic behaviour between the two living environments – urban and rural. In urban areas, the mentality, especially that of young people, is more open to modern forms of cohabitation, and the fact that they can become financially independent can lead to higher divorce rates. In rural areas, traditional norms maintain an apparent stability of the family, but economic changes and migration are gradually altering this reality. The results of the study on demographic behaviour and the phenomenon of family stability/instability in Romania and Bihor County reflect similar trends to those observed in other Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, such as Poland, Hungary or the Czech Republic. For example, the phenomenon of the decline of marriage in the post-socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe is a consequence of a whole set of economic, cultural and social factors that emerged after the transition from socialist regimes to market economies.

In Romania, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria and other CEE countries, the economic transition has generated financial insecurity for young adults, who are also faced with a series of challenges related to access to housing and jobs, which has led to the postponement of marriage (Cichowicz and Rollnik-Sadowska, 2018).

Therefore, economic, social and cultural changes leave a strong mark on demographic behaviour and family stability. Understanding these mechanisms is very important to anticipate future trends and adapt political and social strategies to meet the needs of the modern family.

6. Conclusions

Romania has, as a European country and a member of the European Union, taken important steps in reaching a new Western demographic behaviour. However, in the Romanian society, economic, social and political factors have also left their mark on demography. On the one hand, these factors are still related to traditional cultural values and, on the other hand, they are found in Western modernism (Baetica, 2015). In this sense, the family remains an essential element in the individual's life, and official marriage is still a means of establishing a family. However, the decision to get married is pushed to older ages, either for educational reasons or to first get a job that will provide for decent living conditions in married life.

Bihor County is in line with national standards, with balanced values in terms of both demographic potential (namely, the degree of vitality and the possibilities of regeneration of the population) and divorce-to-marriage ratio. Nonetheless, there are obvious differences imposed by the two types of rural-urban environments, mentalities, way of life and organisation of married life, and, finally, the possibilities of economic development.

The demographic potential reflects the demographic power of the nation and its ability to provide future population growth (Dalkhat, 2001), so this indicator reveals that, in the case of Romania, it decreased slightly during the analysed period, from 48.1% in 1992 to 45.8% in 2021.

Marriages create family stability, whose pattern in Romania generally varied little, except for its two extremes – the stability rate having been highest in 2007 (the year of Romania's integration into the EU) and lowest in 2020 (the year of the pandemic crises). In terms of divorce-to-marriage ratio, recent studies show that most partnerships begin as consensual unions than direct marriages, but marriage is preferred for childrearing when a child is born.

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