

# Quality of life in Romania: a current analysis in a European and global context

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**Abstract:** This article examines the quality of life in Romania, based on current indicators such as life expectancy, cost of living, access to healthcare and education, and the country’s position in international rankings. While Romania has made progress in areas such as personal safety and civil liberties, significant challenges remain, particularly in healthcare, pollution, and regional inequalities. The analysis highlights the need for strategic investments to improve social well-being, amid global stagnation observed in 2024-2025. The article provides a balanced perspective, emphasizing both positive aspects and areas requiring urgent interventions.

**Keywords:** *quality of life, Romania, life expectancy, social progress index, cost of living, healthcare, education.*

## Introduction.

The quality of life in Romania is a complex indicator reflecting the population’s satisfaction with economic, social, and environmental conditions. According to recent studies, the quality of life is significantly influenced by disposable income, access to public services, healthcare and educational infrastructure, as well as perceptions of safety and social stability (Eurostat, 2024). Although Romania has recorded considerable economic progress in recent decades, disparities between urban and rural areas continue to affect social equity and equal development opportunities (Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2023).

Beyond economic factors, the subjective component of quality of life—related to psychological well-being, job satisfaction, and social relationships—has become increasingly significant in recent evaluations (OECD, *How’s Life?*, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic, external migration, and demographic changes have exacerbated vulnerabilities in the social system, leading to a temporary decline in feelings of safety and trust in state institutions (World Bank, Romania Country Economic Memorandum, 2022). However, current trends in administrative modernization and digitalization provide a foundation for improving quality of life in the coming years, particularly in large urban areas (Romanian Ministry of Development, 2023).

Quality of life is a multidimensional concept encompassing health, education, income, the environment, and personal safety. In Romania, the evolution of this indicator reflects the post-communist transition, European integration, and recent challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and climate change. According to the 2024 Social Progress Index (SPI), Romania achieved a score of 74.61, ranking 45th globally, a slight improvement from the previous year (Deloitte, 2025). However, the country lags behind the EU average, where scores often exceed 85 points. This article analyzes key indicators, highlighting progress and shortcomings to provide a realistic picture of the current state and future prospects.

## 1. Main Indicators in Quality of Life.

The quality of life in Romania can be assessed through various international indices that combine economic, social, and environmental data.

The Social Progress Index, calculated by the Social Progress Imperative with Deloitte’s support, measures three dimensions: basic needs, well-being, and opportunities. In 2024, Romania ranked 45th

out of 170 countries with a score of 74.61, a slight increase from 2023 (Deloitte, 2025). The country performs above the global average (64.02) but below countries like Poland (ranked 36th) or Hungary (40th) (SPI 2024). Strengths include personal freedom (37th) and access to information (42nd), while weaknesses persist in healthcare (83rd) and basic education (80th). (Deloitte, 2025)

Numbeo Quality of Life Index. According to the Numbeo platform, Romania has a quality of life index of 142.2 out of 240 in 2025, placing it 44th globally (Quality of Life Index by Country, 2025). The country excels in safety (index of 71.9 in Bucharest, surpassing Paris or London) but struggles with pollution and heavy traffic. Cities like Timișoara (167) (Safety Index by City, 2025) and Cluj-Napoca (163.7) outperform Bucharest (131.1) in local rankings.

Indicator	Romania Score (2024-2025)	EU/Global Position
<b>SPI General</b>	74.61	45/170 (last in EU)
<b>Numbeo QoL</b>	142.2	44/88
<b>Life Expectancy</b>	75.1 years	3rd lowest in EU (Alpha Bank, 2025)
<b>Safety (Numbeo)</b>	71.9	Top 10 in Europe (Safety Index by City, 2025)

For the city of Craiova, the Quality of Life Index is 153.09—high, surpassing the national average (142.2) and comparable to Dublin (155.91 in recent comparisons). Limited data suggests comfortable urban living.

Economic Indicators. A country’s economy forms the objective foundation of quality of life, as income determines access to goods, services, and personal development opportunities (Eurostat 2024). In Romania, GDP growth in recent years has positively impacted living standards, but regional and urban-rural disparities remain significant (Romanian National Institute of Statistics 2023). Average net income and purchasing power are key indicators used to assess economic well-being.

Employment stability directly influences economic security and life satisfaction. Unemployment rates, job quality, and professional security are often correlated with education levels and digital skills (Employment Outlook, 2023). While Romania’s overall unemployment rate is relatively low, generational disparities exist, with young people and those over 55 facing reintegration challenges in the labor market. (Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2023)

Poverty and social inequality, measured by indicators like the poverty risk rate and the Gini coefficient, are also relevant (World Bank, 2023). Although relative poverty has steadily declined, territorial disparities, particularly in the Northeast and Southwest regions, remain pronounced, affecting not only material conditions but also social cohesion and trust among citizens (Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2023)

Social indicators reflect access to education, healthcare, and social services, which are essential for a dignified and productive life. In Romania, the quality of the education system directly impacts employment opportunities and social mobility. Investments in education remain below the EU average, and early school dropout rates are still high (Eurostat, 2023). Education also influences social capital and civic participation. (Simon & Schuster, 2000)

In healthcare, key indicators include life expectancy, infant mortality, and access to medical services (World Health Statistics, 2023). Despite some progress, Romania lags behind the EU average in most of these metrics (Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2023). Shortages of medical personnel, inadequate infrastructure, and the exodus of specialists continue to affect healthcare quality and public perception of the system (Romanian Ministry of Health, Annual Report, 2024).

On a social level, quality of life is influenced by community cohesion, social support, and opportunities for cultural participation. Societies with high levels of solidarity and civic engagement tend to report greater life satisfaction. In Romania, community initiatives and social inclusion projects are gradually strengthening social capital and reducing exclusion (UNODC, 2023)

**Environmental and Housing Indicators.** The quality of the natural environment is a critical factor in quality of life, directly impacting public health and overall well-being (European Environment Agency, 2023). In Romania, air pollution, inefficient waste management, and shrinking urban green spaces remain persistent challenges (Romanian Ministry of Environment, 2023). While European green transition policies have spurred programs to reduce emissions and energy consumption, gaps between developed and rural regions persist. Housing conditions reflect another fundamental aspect of quality of life, correlating with health, safety, and psychological comfort. A significant portion of Romania's population lives in overcrowded or poorly equipped homes, particularly in rural areas (Romanian National Institute of Statistics, 2023). The quality of housing infrastructure, access to modern utilities (water, sewage, gas, internet), and housing maintenance are commonly used to assess living standards (OECD, 2023). The built environment also contributes to community identity and social cohesion. Areas with balance urban planning, accessible green spaces, and sustainable infrastructure promote social integration and reduce daily stress (WHO Europe, 2023). In recent years, sustainable urban development and the regeneration of degraded neighborhoods have become strategic priorities for Romania's major cities. (Romanian Ministry of Development, 2024). **Safety and Governance Indicators.** Perceptions of public safety and institutional stability are defining elements of quality of life, directly influencing trust and psychological balance (Eurofound 2023). In Romania, overall crime rates have significantly decreased over the past decade, but cybercrime and economic-financial offenses have risen steadily (Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs 2023). Perceived safety depends not only on crime rates but also on the quality of public services and authorities' responsiveness (UNODC, 2023).

Effective governance requires a transparent, participatory, and citizen-oriented institutional system (World Bank 2023). Progress in public administration digitalization and bureaucracy reduction is strengthening public trust, though perceptions of corruption remain a challenge (Transparency International, 2023). Corruption perception, press freedom, and civic participation are key indicators for assessing governance quality. (OECD, 2023). Active citizen participation in democratic processes and community involvement are also expressions of social quality of life. Societies with high civic engagement exhibit greater satisfaction and social resilience (Norris, 2011). In Romania, increasing civic education and decision-making transparency can strengthen the state-citizen relationship (Romanian Ministry of Justice, 2024).

**Subjective Well-Being Indicators.** Beyond objective measurements, quality of life includes subjective dimensions such as overall life satisfaction, emotional balance, and perceived happiness. These reflect how individuals interpret and value their daily experiences. Eurostat studies show that Romanians report an average satisfaction level of 6.5/10, an increase from recent years but still below the EU average (Eurostat, 2024). Work-life balance is another critical indicator, impacting mental health and social relationships (Diener, 2009). Overwork, emotional instability, and lack of leisure time can reduce perceived happiness (Kahneman, 2011). In Romania, policies supporting work-life balance, such as flexible work arrangements and parental leave, are being strengthened (Eurostat, 2024).

Interpersonal relationships and a sense of community belonging are major emotional resources for well-being (Ryff, 2018). A strong social network based on trust and empathy enhances resilience to stress and increases life satisfaction (Seligman, 2011). In Romania, local communities and informal support networks remain key pillars of social cohesion and psychological balance (UNICEF 2024).

### **3. Statistical Insights on Romania**

Life expectancy in Romania increased by 2 years between 2007 and 2022, reaching 75.1 years, but it remains the third lowest in the EU (Alpha Bank, 2025). Healthy life expectancy is only 59 years, the lowest in the region, affected by chronic diseases and limited healthcare access. Men live an average of 72 years, women 79, but only 58-61 of those are healthy years (Eurostat, 2023-2025). In the 2025 CEOWORLD ranking, Romania holds a modest position, influenced by high rates of cardiovascular diseases and unhealthy lifestyles (CEOWORLD, 2025).

Living standards have doubled in the past 10 years but remain low compared to Western Europe. A family of four spends €2,070 (10,364 RON) monthly for a normal lifestyle, excluding rent, while a

single person spends 5,980 RON (Deloitte, 2025). The cost of living index is 34, three times lower than Switzerland's (98.4). Local purchasing power is higher in Timișoara than in Bucharest, and food prices are lower in Constanța (Numbeo, 2025). However, regional inequalities persist, with rural areas at a disadvantage.

Basic education remains a weakness (80th in SPI), with unequal access between urban and rural areas (Deloitte, 2025). The environment is affected by pollution: no Romanian city ranks in the top 200 of the 2025 London Institute for Quality of Life, unlike Budapest (110th). Safety is a strength, with a high index compared to other European capitals. Overall life satisfaction is 7.7/10, equal to Austria and above the EU average (7.3). Key challenges include the digital divide, gender inequality in caregiving, and the impact of climate change on health. Prospects are optimistic through PNRR investments, but education and healthcare require focus (OECD, 2024). Experts estimate that reducing pollution could increase life expectancy in Bucharest by 4 years.

#### **4. Conclusions on Quality of Life in Romania**

Quality of life in Romania is a multidimensional phenomenon at the intersection of economic progress, social equity, and individual well-being. While the country has seen significant economic growth in recent decades, benefits have not been evenly distributed across regions and social groups. Territorial disparities, urban-rural gaps, and income inequalities remain obstacles to achieving a balanced and sustainable standard of living. Thus, quality of life cannot be assessed solely through economic indicators but must consider the interplay between material development and human well-being.

**Essential Dimensions of Well-Being.** Social, environmental, safety, and subjective indicators show that life satisfaction increasingly depends on non-material factors such as health, a clean environment, social relationships, and a sense of security. In Romania, these dimensions are undergoing gradual transformation, influenced by public service modernization, administrative digitalization, and growing awareness of emotional balance. Sustainable development is no longer seen merely as an issue of infrastructure or economy but as an integrated strategy involving education, health, culture, and civic engagement.

**Directions for Improvement.** Improving quality of life in Romania requires a strategic and integrated approach focused on investing in human capital, strengthening institutions, and reducing social vulnerabilities. Public policies must aim to reduce inequalities, increase access to quality services, and protect the environment. Fostering a culture of cooperation and solidarity is also essential to restore trust between the state and citizens. Such a vision would transform economic development into a human-centered process, where every individual finds dignity, balance, and hope for a better future.

Romania's quality of life shows signs of improvement, with progress in safety and access to information, but it remains hindered by deficiencies in healthcare and the environment. Its 45th ranking in the SPI highlights untapped economic potential. To advance, Romania must prioritize equitable investments, reduce regional disparities, and improve public services. Only then can the country translate its economic potential into real well-being for its citizens.

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