



UNIVERSITY OF LIFE SCIENCES "KING MIHAI I" FROM
TIMISOARA
"YOUNG PEOPLE AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH
IN APPLIED LIFE SCIENCES"



13-14 November 2025

TRENDS AND DYNAMICS OF THE SCHOOL POPULATION IN THE ROMANIAN PRE-UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

PLEȘCA CLEOPATRA VERONICA^{1,2}, TEODOR MATEOC-SIRB¹, ADAMOV TABITA¹, NICOLETA MATEOC-SIRB^{1,3}

¹University of Life Sciences "King Michael I", from Timisoara, Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism

²Doctoral School - Engineering of Plant and Animal Resources

³Romanian Academy - Branch of Timisoara, Research Center for Sustainable Rural Development of Romania

* Corresponding author's e-mail: jita.cleopatra@yahoo.it

Abstract:

The school population in Romania has undergone notable transformations in recent decades due to demographic, social, and economic developments. Against the backdrop of population decline and external migration, the pre-university education system faces a continuous decrease in student numbers, affecting the planning of educational resources, class organization, and institutional development strategies. This study analyzes the trends and dynamics of the school-age population, providing critical insights into the impact of these changes on education and informing the development of policies aligned with societal needs. The research methodology was based on the collection, processing, and interpretation of data from official publications. The analysis of school population evolution enabled the identification of key determinants, the assessment of short- and long-term effects, and the formulation of measures aimed at ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of Romania's pre-university education system.

• Introduction

Over recent decades, Romania's school population has experienced significant transformations due to demographic, social, and economic factors. Population decline and youth emigration have contributed to a continuous reduction in student numbers, affecting class organization, resource planning, and institutional development strategies. According to the *Education at a Glance 2025* report, approximately 16% of children aged 6–14 were not enrolled in school in 2023, compared to the OECD average of 2%, indicating substantial challenges in student retention, even at primary and lower secondary levels. Analyzing these trends in the school-age population is critical for understanding their impact on education and for designing evidence-based policies that ensure the sustainability and quality of Romania's pre-university education system.

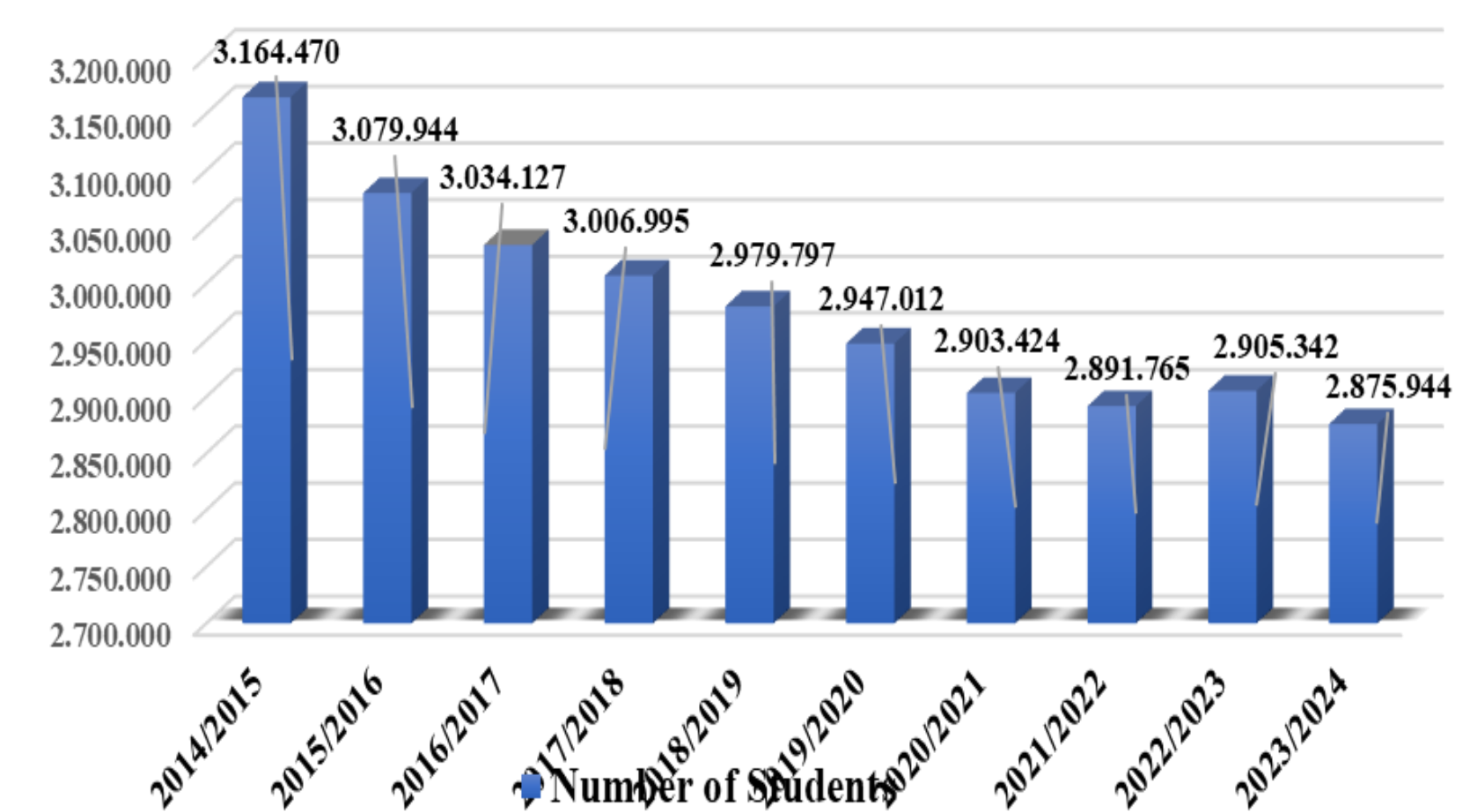
• Material and method

This study examines the pre-university school population in Romania over the period 2014–2024, drawing on official national and international data sources. The research employs data collection, quantitative analysis, and interpretation to assess the impact of demographic decline and external migration on student numbers and educational resource planning. The findings highlight the main determinants of change within the education system and inform policy recommendations aimed at ensuring the long-term sustainability of Romanian pre-university education.

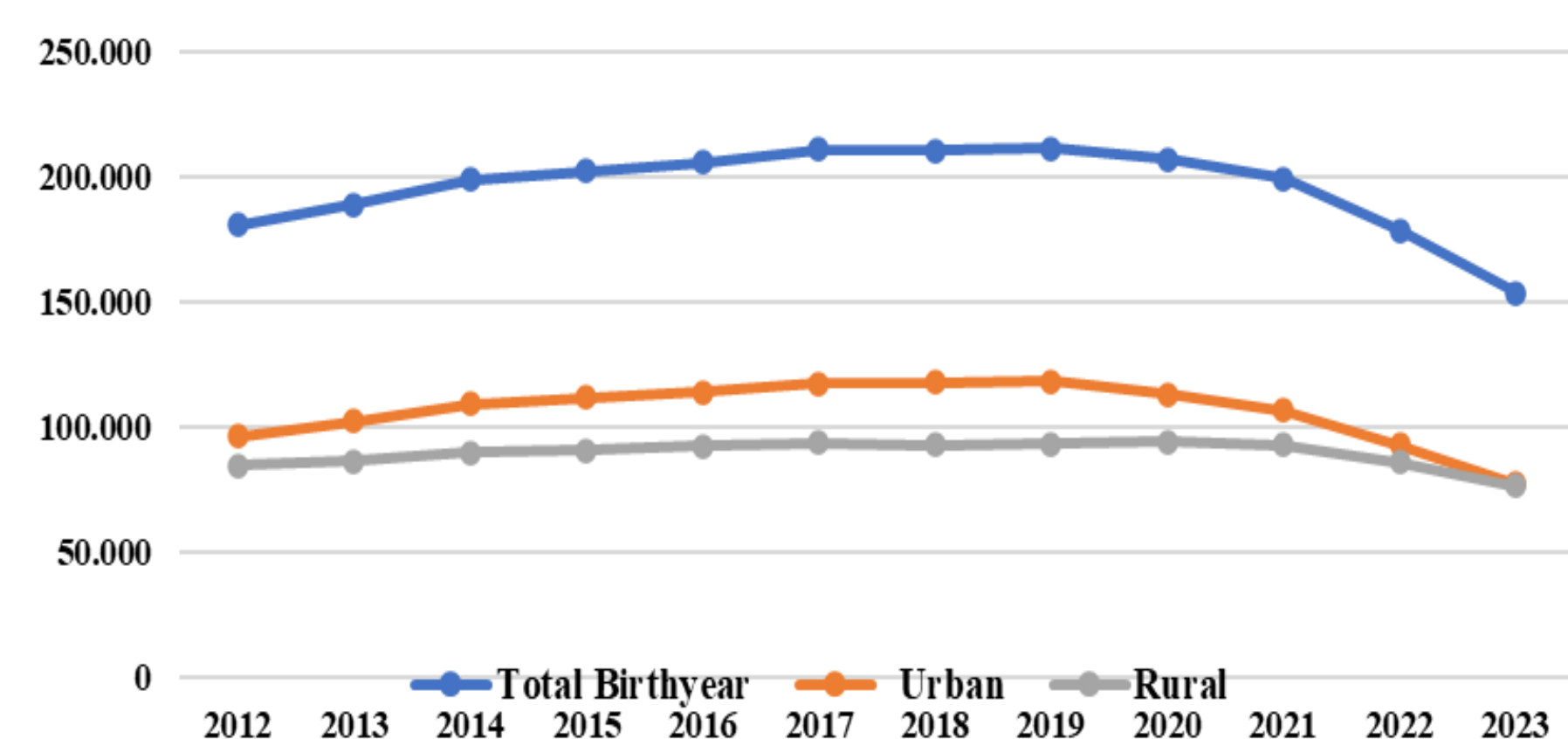
• Results and discussions

The analysis of Romania's school population over the period 2014–2024 reveals significant demographic and social challenges impacting the pre-university education system. Declining birth rates have progressively reduced the size of student cohorts at all educational levels, while youth emigration has further exacerbated this trend by decreasing the number of potential parents and shifting part of births to other countries.

As a result, enrollment rates have declined, and the existing school infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, faces increasing pressures. These developments have broader implications beyond education, contributing to a shrinking labor force, a smaller active population, and an accelerated rate of population aging.



The findings underscore the critical need for integrated, medium- and long-term policy interventions aimed at stimulating fertility, mitigating external migration, and adapting educational planning and demographic strategies. Such measures are essential to ensure the sustainability of Romania's pre-university education system, maintain the quality of education, and align the future workforce with societal and economic needs.



• Conclusions

The evolution of Romania's school population reveals critical demographic trends driven by declining birth rates and youth emigration. These factors have led to reduced student cohorts across all educational levels, lower enrollment rates, and increased pressure on the school infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Beyond the education system, the combined effects of low fertility and emigration contribute to a smaller labor force, reduced active population, and accelerated population aging. These findings highlight the necessity of integrated policy measures that promote fertility, mitigate external migration, and adapt educational and demographic strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of the education system and prepare a workforce aligned with future societal and economic needs.