

A demographic portrait of Romanian immigrants In California

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Abstract

The most numerous Romanian community in the United States of America is in the “Golden State”, California – a state that is a traditional immigration state since the beginning of the gold rush. Officially, there are currently over 60.000 people of Romanian origin established in California, although that number might be much higher because of two factors: undocumented migration and the loss of gradual loss of identity through each generation. Starting from as little as 15-16 families back in 1912 (Alecse, n.d.), Romanians established in California make up 14.5% of the 449,928 immigrants of Romanian origin living in the the United States of America (Voinea, 2014, 62). The aim of this paper is to analyze the current demographic portrait of Romanian immigrants in California, using data from the 2013 American Community Survey.

Keywords: immigration, Romanian diaspora, Romanians in the United States of America, demography, immigrant communities

1 Introduction

For the purpose of this study we will be using information from the American Community Survey 2011 – 2013, a mandatory statistical survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, with over 3 million respondents every year (census.gov), with a focus on communities. We have chosen California as a geographical area of study for two reasons: there is a very large Romanian presence in this state, the largest in the United States of American, and the number of Romanian immigrants is significant in the whole population, even if California

has a large number of immigrants. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2007), Romanian is the 12th most spoken language in Riverside County, California, and ranks in the top 20 in most counties in the Golden State. The most important part of the population of Romanian immigrants live in southern California (Datciuc et. al, 2014)

2 Demographic data

“The demographic approach aims at describing and explaining the process of continuous change experienced by a population with the passing of time.”. (Vilquin, 2009). For this study, the point in time is the 2011 – 2013 period in which the data for current ACS was collected, and the point in space is the state of California. Our analyzed target group is defined by residents of California who define themselves as Romanian or of Romanian origin.

The total number of Romanians that live in California is 65,434. 47.0% are male and 53.0% are female, while in the general californian population the ratio being 49.7% to 50.3%. A higher percentage of female is common in areas of modern migration.

The median age in our selected group is 42.3 years, much higher then the one in the general population – 35.6 years. 6.2% of Romanians in California are under 5 years old and 12.8% are between 5 and 17 years. The adult population is composed of 7.5% 18 to 24 years old, 12.3% are 25 to 34 years old and 16.1% are 35 to 44 years old. 12.4% of our selected immigrants are between 45 and 54 years old, while 16.3% are 55 to 64 years old.

Table 1. Age

| | |
|-------------------|-------|
| Under 5 years | 6.2% |
| 5 to 17 years | 12.8% |
| 18 to 24 years | 7.5% |
| 25 to 34 years | 12.3% |
| 35 to 44 years | 16.1% |
| 45 to 54 years | 12.4% |
| 55 to 64 years | 16.3% |
| 65 to 74 years | 9.1% |
| 75 years and over | 7.4% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *American Community Survey 2011-2013 S0201: SELECTED POPULATION PROFILE IN THE UNITED STATES – Romanians (144-147) in California.*

While immigration is usually considered a solution to the ageing problem of developed nations (Muysken et al, 2008), this is not the case for the Romanians in California, mainly because the Romanian immigration process to the USA is ongoing since the 1880s. In California, there at the beginning of the twentieth century, there are only 16 known romanian families, forming later one of the first romanian organizations in America – a fraternal society called the Romanian Future, with a purpose of mutual help.

In 2013, there is a large number of elderly persons – 9.1% are 65 to 74 years old, while 7.4% ar 75 years and over.

The average household size is composed of 2.54 persons, while the average family has 3.10 members. According to the ACS, the immigrants live in 28,160 households – 64.1% are family households, while 35.9% are nonfamily households. 52.3% are married-couple families, while only 8.7% are female householders families with no husband present. There is a larger number of living alone femle householders – 16.4%, compared to 11.7% male householders.

The marital status is another important demographic statistic – 55.1% of the romanian immigrants in California that are 15 years and older are now married, while 5.5% are widowed, 11.4% divorced and 1.7% separated. Just 26.3% have never bene married. There’s a larger percentage of currently married males – 60.5% out of the 25,286, compared to 50.5% out of the 29,638 females, but also a larger percentage of never married males – 27.9% compared to 24.9% in the female population. Females are more likely to be divorced – 14.2%, compared to 8.2% for males.

Table 2. School enrollment

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Population 3 years and over enrolled in school | 14,789 |
| Nursery school, preschool | 6.8% |
| Kindergarten | 6.5% |
| Elementary school (grades 1-8) | 33.0% |
| High school (grades 9-12) | 16.9% |
| College or graduate school | 36.7% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *American Community Survey 2011-2013 S0201: SELECTED POPULATION PROFILE IN THE UNITED STATES – Romanians (144-147) in California.*

School enrollment in the children of romanian immigrants is pretty high compared to the normal population at college or graduate level – 36.7% of

immigrants 3 years that are enrolled in school are working on their college education, compared to 30.2% in the general population. We can find 16.9% to be enrolled in high school (grades 9-12), and 33.0% in elementary school (grades 1-8). Just 6.5% are going to kindergarten and 6.8% are in preschool or in a nursery school. There's a significant gender difference in college enrollment – 44.7% of the 7,780 women who are currently ongoing formal education are enrolled in college or grad school, compared to just 27.8% of men.

Table 3. Educational attainment

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Population 25 years and over | 48,092 |
| Less than high school diploma | 6.4% |
| High school graduate (includes equivalency) | 16.6% |
| Some college or associate's degree | 26.0% |
| Bachelor's degree | 24.8% |
| Graduate or professional degree | 26.2% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *American Community Survey 2011-2013 S0201: SELECTED POPULATION PROFILE IN THE UNITED STATES – Romanians (144-147) in California.*

Educational attainment is the term frequently used by statisticians to determine the highest level of education a certain person has completed, therefore the data will not include ongoing studies. Out of the 48,092 persons that are 25 years and over (an age at most adults have already finished their education), only 5.4% of our group have less than a high school diploma. 16.6% are high school graduate, while 26.0% have some college or an associate's degree. The Romanians are a very qualified group – 24.8% have a bachelor's degree, while 26.2% have a graduate or professional degree – much higher than the average in California, where 19.5% have a bachelor's degree and just 11.3% a graduate degree.

We have found two possible theories for this - "*migrants tend to be more educated than those who stay in the place of origin*" (Feliciano, 2005), mostly because emigration is a very selective process, the ones that manage to move to a new country are not random but share similar goals and problems and the second – that immigrants and their children are more likely to develop their education, due to their need to compensate for the lack of social knowledge, capital and networks in their new home.

Table 4. Place of birth, citizenship status and year of entry

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Native | 38,917 |
|---------------|---------------|

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Male | 48.3% |
| Female | 51.7% |
| Foreign born | 26,517 |
| Male | 45.2% |
| Female | 54.8% |
| Foreign born; naturalized U.S. citizen | 18,836 |
| Male | 44.0% |
| Female | 56.0% |
| Foreign born; not a U.S. citizen | 7,681 |
| Male | 48.2% |
| Female | 51.8% |
| Population born outside the United States | 26,517 |
| Entered 2010 or later | 5.1% |
| Entered 2000 to 2009 | 26.4% |
| Entered before 2000 | 68.5% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *American Community Survey 2011-2013 S0201: SELECTED POPULATION PROFILE IN THE UNITED STATES – Romanians (144-147) in California.*

The place of birth, citizenship status and year of entry in the United States of America for the Romanians in California can give us more information about their migratory process – 38,917 of the persons in the selected group are native, or born in the US, and 48.3% of those are male while 51.7% are female. Of the 26,517 that are foreign born, 45.2% are male and 54.8% are female – we can see here the process of feminization of migration. “*More and more women have started to follow the path of migration, making the career a priority, instead of choosing a family life*” (Quffa, 2014) or even chose to have a family in a new country. Out of the 25,517 that are foreign born, 18,836 have managed to become U.S. citizens through the process of naturalization, while just 7,681 are not yet US citizens. 68.5% of foreign born have entered the United States before the year 2000, while just 26.4% came between 2000 and 2009 and 5.1% in 2010 or later.

The language spoken by them at home is proof that we are talking about two different groups of citizens – those that are native, of romanian origin, but born in the US and those that are foreign born. 53.2% of the 61,361 who are 5

years and older speak only English at home, while 46.8% speak a language other than English (in most cases, Romanian). Autoreference ego is sometimes dependent of language (Vlăduțescu, 2014), and the language spoken at home is very important in defining the individual self.

Table 5. Employment status

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Population 16 years and over | 54,194 |
| In labor force | 65.0% |
| Employed | 57.8% |
| Unemployed | 7.2% |
| Percent of civilian labor force | 11.1% |
| Not in labor force | 35.0% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *American Community Survey 2011-2013 S0201: SELECTED POPULATION PROFILE IN THE UNITED STATES – Romanians (144-147) in California.*

We determined earlier that we are studying a group of highly educated persons and this also reflects in the employment status and occupation of Californian Romanians - 65.0% of the population 16 years and older are in the labor force, while just 35.0% are have not yet held a job. Out of these, 57.8% are employed and only 7.2% unemployed, all data within two percents of the general population.

Table 6. Occupation

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Civilian employed population 16 years and over | 31,314 |
| Management, business, science, and arts occupations | 56.8% |
| Service occupations | 13.2% |
| Sales and office occupations | 19.4% |
| Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations | 6.8% |
| Production, transportation, and material moving occupations | 3.8% |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2013). *American Community Survey 2011-2013 S0201: SELECTED POPULATION PROFILE IN THE UNITED STATES – Romanians (144-147) in California.*

The high education shows its effect even more when analysing occupation. Just 3.8% of the 31,314 civilian employed population 16 years and over of our selected group work in production, transportation and material moving occupations, compared to 11.0% in the general golden state population.

Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations are chosen by 6.8% of our group, much lower when compared to 9.2% in the general population. 19.4% of Romanians choose a sales and office occupation, while 13.2% a service occupation. Management, business, science, and arts occupations, the ones that usually require the highest level of education, are the most common in our group – 56.8%, compared to a very little 36.8% in the Californian population.

When analysing industry, very few Romanians in California work in agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting and mining – 0.3%, while 6.6% work in construction and 7.6% in manufacturing. Wholesale trade jobs are also very rare in our group, being held by 2.1% of respondents, while 8.5% work in retail trade. Transportation and warehousing, and utilities, give jobs to 2.1% of our immigrant group and 4.4% work in information. A larger percentage, 9.3%, is employed in finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing. Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services, one of the highest skilled but also best paid industries, is the workplace of 13.9% of our group. Educational services, and health care and social assistance manage to employ 27.4% of the working population, while arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services give income to 7.4%. Other services (except public administration) provide a workplace for 5.4% of our selected group and just 4.9% are in public administration.

The high level of education, normal employment status and good distribution in the occupational field and industries lead to very good economic outcomes for immigrants of romanian origin that are established in California – the median household income was in the past 12 months much higher than the one in the median California household - \$75,282 compared to just \$59,645. If we only take those with earnings into account, the difference is even higher - \$112,112 for the median romanian immigrant household against \$84,902 for the median californian household.

The median family income is at \$94,543, while the median for a married-couple family is at \$105,713. The per capita income is at \$45,104, compared to \$29,103 of a californian.

Both mean and median earnings in full-time, year-round workers, are higher for males than females - \$108,476 mean for males, \$74,319 for females, and \$78,626 median for males with a \$58,037 median for females. Even with this difference, a female romanian immigrant earns more than a male californian, who have a mean earning of \$70,835 and a median earning of \$50,438.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The number of romanian immigrants that have established in California is significant, both when compared to other immigrants in California and to the Romanian communities in the United States of America. We found a slightly aged, highly educated group, that was mostly born in the USA. They have adjusted very well to their new country, holding highly skilled jobs in all sectors of industry, but especially in the tertiary sector of the economy.

Their incomes are significantly higher then those of the average californian, proving that they are well integrated both socially and economically.

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