

How much do market researches count? Assessments regarding the life quality and the pauperism among the employed workforce

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Abstract

Pauperism eradication and economic and social development are essential to achieve sustainable development. The increased access to productive resources and operative public institutions are the most important instruments of the fight against pauperism. Private and public investments in education, health and social programs are indispensable instruments meant to provide necessary means for the poor people to integrate in the market economy and to contribute to the economic development for the benefit of all.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates: „Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.” But they are still virtual rights. The pauperism apparition, grounds and eradication are essential questions for which we should look for and find answers, to develop and apply efficient and appropriate strategies for economic and social development of each country. The gathering of all useful information is needed in order to understand the cultural, social, economic, political and institutional realities, determining opportunities and obstacles for poor to escape from the “pauperism entrapment”.

“Polling is complex, fascinating and important. Pollsters give themselves the task of figuring out what millions of people are thinking about a given topic and report the results in a matter of days or even hours... Polling uses small samples to represent the views of very large numbers of people, and it is difficult for many people to believe that this process provides a true understanding of what everyone in the larger society thinks....I'm convinced that once people go behind the scenes and learn how polling really works, they will be much more likely to appreciate the valuable role polling can play in a democratic society” (Frank Newport)

Key words: life quality; income; pauperism; welfare.

1. Introduction

The pauperism approach across multiple plans and from various perspectives developed statistical and mathematical quantification instruments, diversification of data sources and used indicators, each of them having their qualities and limits from the point of view of practical possibilities and difficulties concerning application.

The analysis (Voicu Bogdan, 2005) regarding the pauperism defining and measurement Ringen (1987), as well as Kangas and Ritakallio (1998) took into consideration the utilisation of the estimation methods based on dual criteria: *direct measurement* (life conditions, way of living, habits,

attitudes) and *indirect measurement* (income measurement did not offer a direct information regarding the satisfaction stage of subject needs). *The systematisation of differences between the two types of concepts results from the perception of welfare (Kohl, 1996), the pauperism supposing rather the deprivation from the welfare attributes.*

The pauperism perception among population represented the object of a medium extended socio-economic investigation from the point of view of volume and covered area.

The purpose of poll:

- Identification and analysis of standard of life in Romania;
- Examination of pauperism process in Romania;
- Control for maintaining the correlation pauperism incidence – regional dimension.

Objectives of research:

- identification of standard of life in comparison with subjects' studies;
- identification / non-identification of pauperism and impact on investigated population;
- identification of life quality among the investigated population;
- identification of standard of life in comparison with the monthly revenue per family.

Research hypothesis:

- if the persons have a certain instruction degree, a higher standard of life shall be registered;
- if the persons have a low monthly revenue, they appreciate the characteristic aspects of social life differently and differences concerning the orientation towards certain types of activities shall be ascertained;
- if certain social conditions/aspects exercise a negative influence over the life of persons, a high level of pauperism a low standard / style of life shall be registered.

2. Methodology of research

Investigated population:

- the target population represented by only urban employed persons aged 18 – 65 years and belonging to a diversified number of socio-professional categories;
- as in Romania the pauperism apparition is in correlation with the regional dimension, the inquiry was developed in four Romanian municipalities: Bucharest, Galati, Lugoj and Suceava, representing four country's development regions according to NUTS II level.

Poll sample sizes:

- we estimated that a sample of 504 subjects (155 subjects-Galati; 150 subjects -Bucharest; 100 subjects -Lugoj; 99 subjects - Suceava) allows statistical processing admissible from the point of view of our research purpose. Taking into consideration a 95% guaranteed probability of results ($t=1,96$), for an error of 4 %, the sample volume was calculated using formula :

$$n = [t^2 p(1-p)] / \Delta w^2, \text{ where:}$$

n = sample size;

t = coefficient of guaranteed probability of results;

p = ratio of sample components with the examined characteristics;

Δw = admitted error limits (admitted deviation).

- the selection process for sample subjects aimed the proportional representation of the most important characteristics of target population: distribution by sex, age groups, marital status, marital status or place of origin.

Data collection:

- for this investigation, we used three questionnaires as research instrument. with 46 items (Galati), respectively 40 items (Bucharest) and 30 items (Lugoj and Suceava), one of the items was an open question.
- *Some items* from questionnaire have been partially taken from *the Public Opinion Barometer, the Research Institute for the Quality of Life* and I thank them for their kindness.
- the initial form of questionnaire was tested on a number of 27 subjects, in this way, the total volume of the interviewed population was 531 respondentsⁱ. After the completion of the final form, the questionnaire was applied on ground field. Questionnaires were applied by myself, excepting Suceava, where I used an interview operator.

Data processing:

- The questionnaires were applied during the period May – July 2007.
- Different programmes and methods for analysis and interpretation were used for the purpose of a better verification of data validity.
- The collected data after the application of questionnaire *46 items* were processed with statistical analysis SPSS and Latent GOLD® 4.0. The answers to open item were encoded after analysis and completion.
- The questionnaire *40 items*, structured with pre-established closed and open answers was encoded with 3-17 levels of answers. The questions were correlated depending on the involved variable.
- The questionnaire *40 items* was structured with filter questions by the funnelling technique (closed, with multiple precoded questions or open), open questions concerning the population

attitude towards a given problem, a system of closed questions with multiple precoded questions, open questions concerning the population opinion towards the respective problem.

3. Results and interpretation

The interpretation of data resulted from research shall be distinctly presented for each region in order to better emphasise the results. Taking into consideration the amplitude of the interpretative elements, I shall present only *two aspects*:

- I. the respondents' estimation of revenueⁱⁱ - in order to deduce pertinent conclusions and to obtain indicators regarding the decent revenue, the realised revenue and the survival revenue.;
- II. respondents' «self-labelling»ⁱⁱⁱ as paupers or not.

Ia. BUCHAREST

As a result of the data/information gathered within the Bucharest population, a process contrary to pauperism resulted. The population has a *satisfying financial medium - high degree of well-being* and the primary necessities are satisfied, even 28.67% from the total of inquired subjects have made credits.

The social changes did not produce the diminution of the population revenues, but contrary, lead to the formation of a new middle social category / class comprising subjects with higher or postuniversity education .

Over 50% of the interviewed population self-declare their satisfaction for the working place, their present living conditions, their life standard compared to the previous period of the year 1989 and do not accuse an acute level of poverty, maybe because they are following the alert rhythm of society and make different supplementary activities in order to increase their revenues.

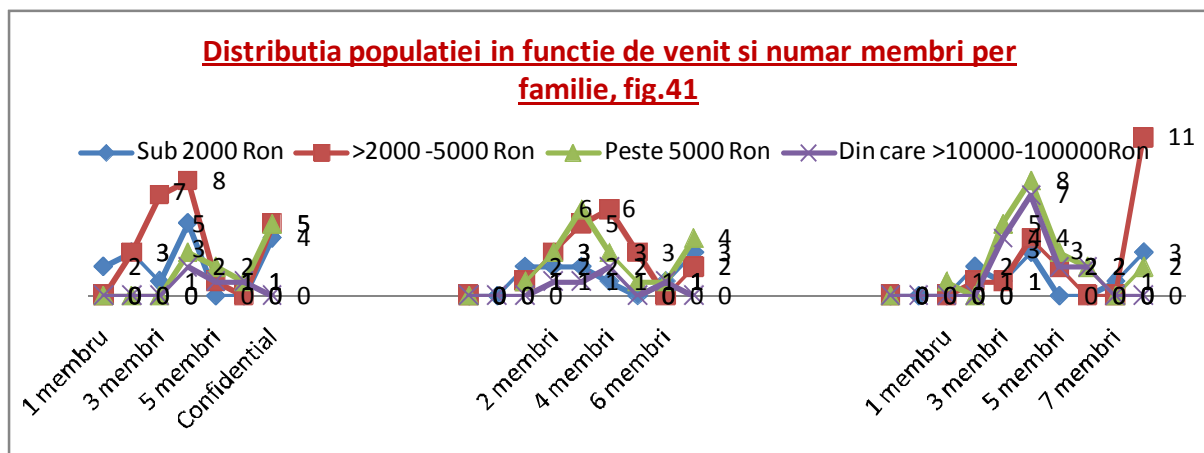


Figure no.1 **Population distribution depending on revenue and number of members per family**

As regards the other regions of the studied country, we had different conclusions.

Ib. SUCEAVA

Generally, in the last year, the financial situation of inquired subjects is good. 17.17% saved money, 25.25% are on a straight line, the cashing remaining unmodified and 34.34% have credits. Credits do not mean these people are poorer, but contrary, they have medium revenues / incomes so that the payment of an instalment based on the real analysis of the financial situation leads to 40% decrease in revenue, but improves the standard of life.

At questions:

Which is the limit of your family survival? ...New Lei (1New Leu =10,000 Old Lei)

Mention the monthly amount necessary for your family decent living New Lei

The situation is presented below:

Table no.1 The population distribution depending on the amount necessary for decent living

| Lot → | Lot 1 | Lot 2 | Lot 3 | Total |
|----------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ↓ Amount for decent living | | | | |
| Non answer | 4 | 3 | 3 | 10 |
| < 1.000 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 12 |
| >1.000 – 2.000 | 9 | 11 | 5 | 25 |
| >2.000 – 5.000 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 34 |
| >5.000 – 10.000 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| >10.000 – 15.000 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 15 |
| Total | 33 | 33 | 33 | 100% |

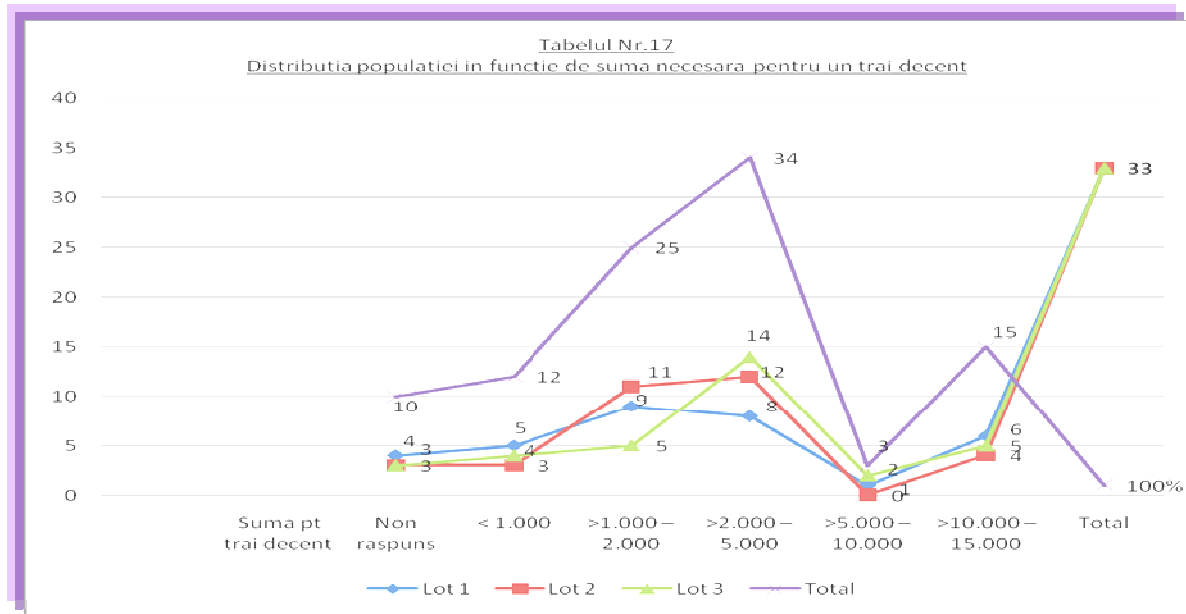


Figure no.2 The population distribution depending on the amount necessary for decent living

The highest relative frequency (weight) is 34.34% for 2,000-5,000 Ron, but the category of paupers (12,12%) was not neglected; for a decent living, they would be satisfied with less 1,000 Ron per month. 25.25% of population represents the category of population estimating that 1,000 – 2,000 Ron would assure a decent living.

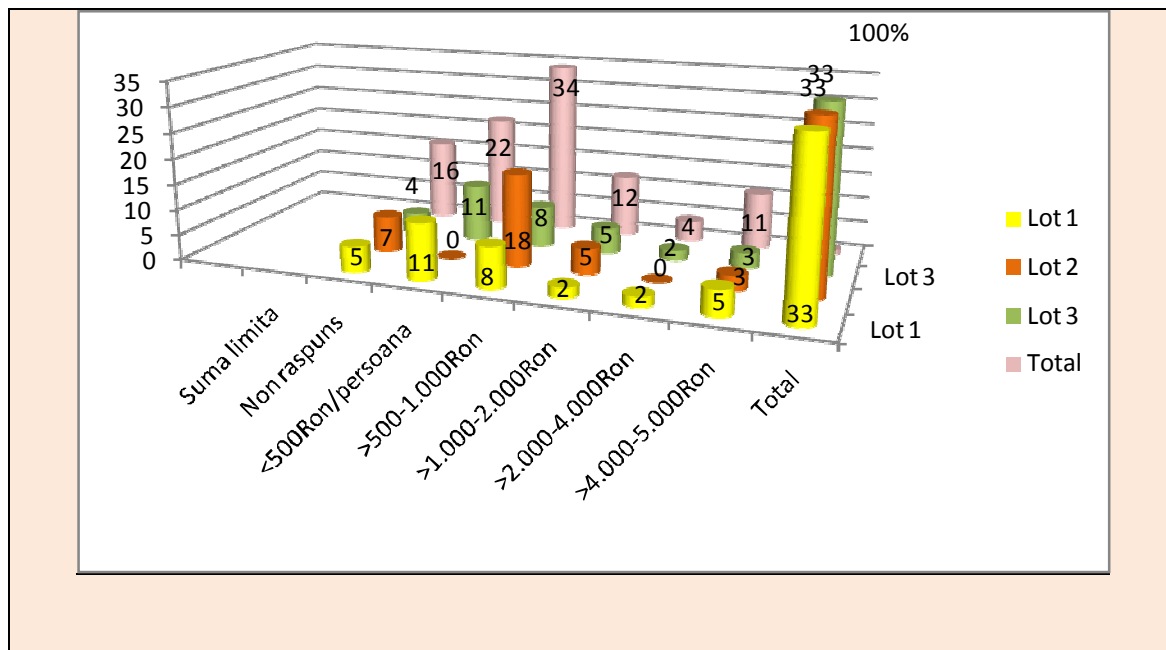


Figure no.3 The population distribution depending on the limit survival amount

The highest relative frequency is 500 – 1,000 Ron/person for 34.34% interviewed subjects.

At question

How do you appreciate your family revenues?

- a). assure a decent living;*
- b). do not assure a decent living;*
- c). assure a decent living, but we can't afford goods more expensive;*
- d). we can afford goods more expensive, but with restrictions in other fields;*
- e). we can afford everything, without any restriction.*

Table no.2 The distribution of lots depending on the estimation of existing revenues

| Lot → | Lot 1 | Lot 2 | Lot 3 | Total |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ↓ Revenue estimation | | | | |
| Assure a decent living | 15 | 9 | 11 | 35 |
| Do not assure a decent living | 3 | 10 | 10 | 23 |
| Assure a decent living, but... | 7 | 9 | 10 | 26 |
| We can afford goods more expensive, but... | 7 | 4 | 2 | 13 |
| We can afford everything, without any restriction | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Total | 33 | 33 | 33 | 99 |

35.35% of inquired population appreciate that the present monthly revenues assure a decent living, 26% appreciate that strictly assure the necessary living standards, 13.13% can afford to buy expensive goods but with restrictions in other fields, only 2% have satisfying revenue and can afford everything without restrictions, and 23% appreciate that the present monthly revenue do not assure the necessary living standard.

Ic. LUGOJ

In Lugoj municipality, the situation is presented below:



Figure no.4 The population distribution depending on the amount necessary for a decent living standard

The highest relative frequency (weight) is 32% for 2,000-4,000 Ron, but the category of paupers (representing 17% of inquired population) was not neglected; for a decent living, they would be satisfied with less 1,000 Ron per month.

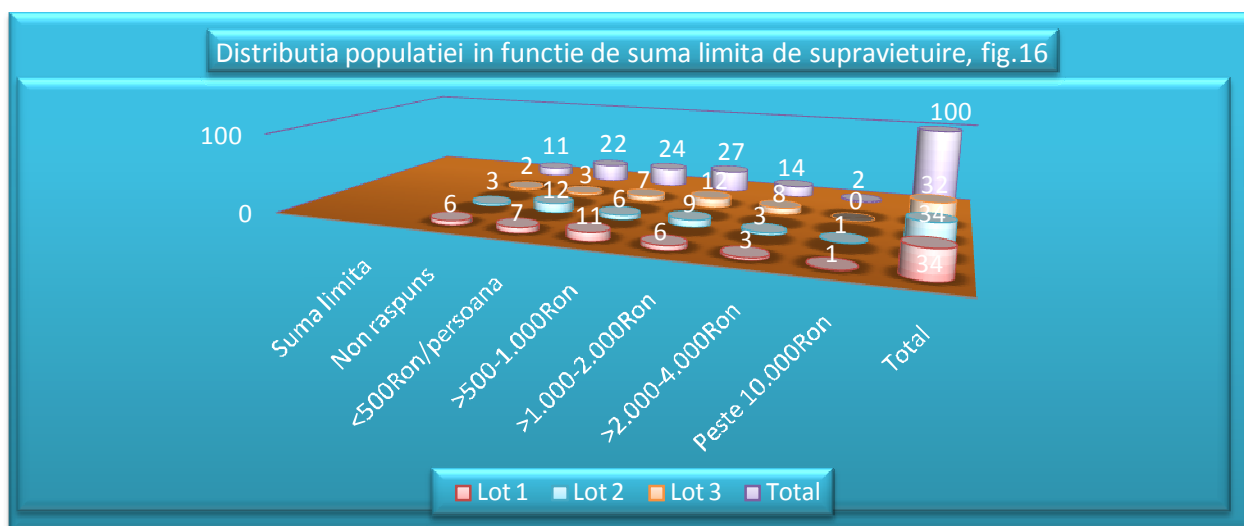


Figure no.5 The population distribution depending on the limit survival amount

The highest relative frequency (weight) is 500 – 1,000 – 2,000 Ron/person.

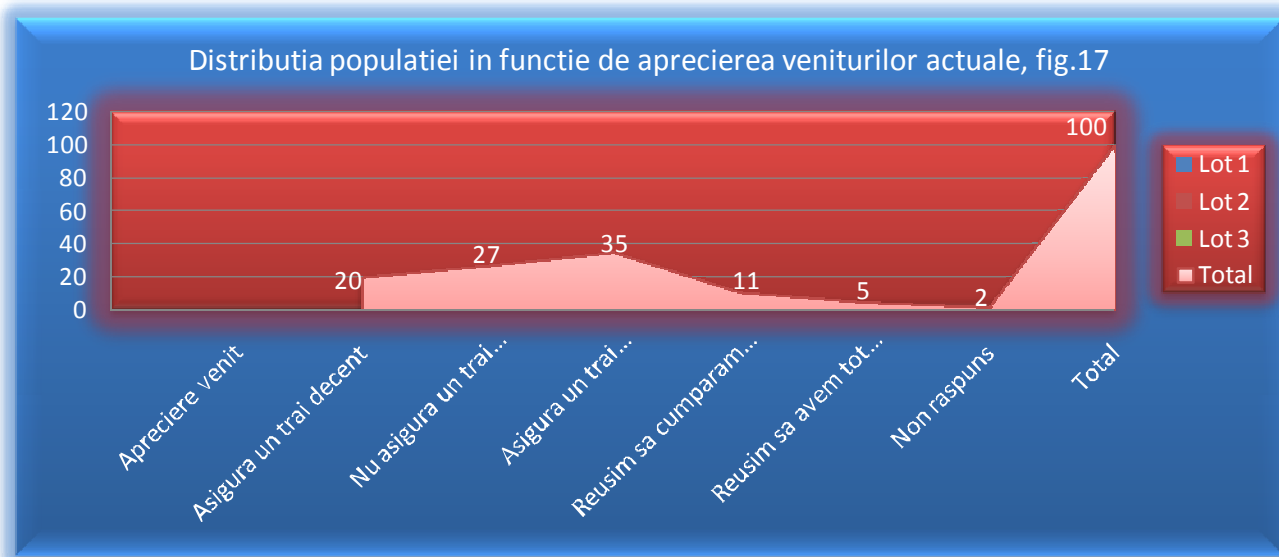
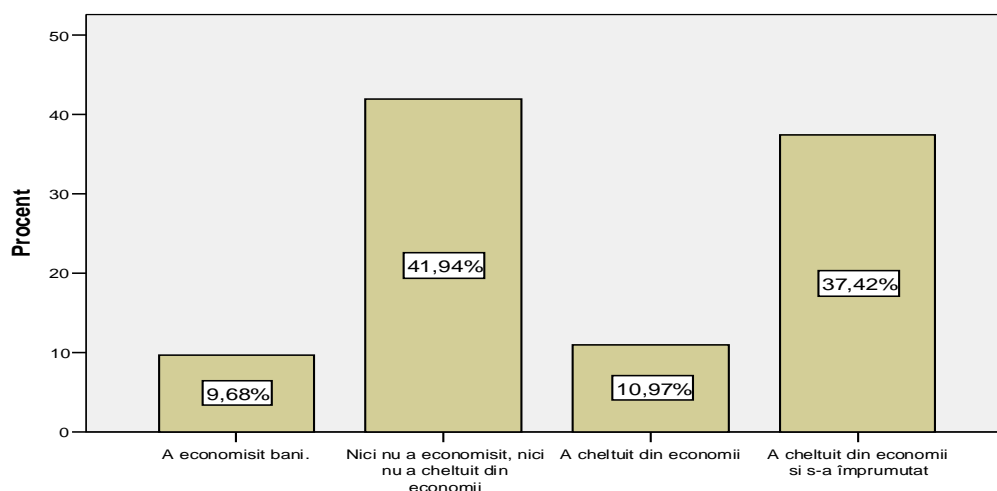


Figure no.6 The distribution of lots depending on the estimation of present revenues

36% of inquired population appreciate that the present monthly revenues assure a decent living, 28% appreciate that the revenue do not assure the necessary living standard, 20% appreciate that the monthly revenue assure a decent living standard, but without acquisition of goods more expensive.

Id.GALATI

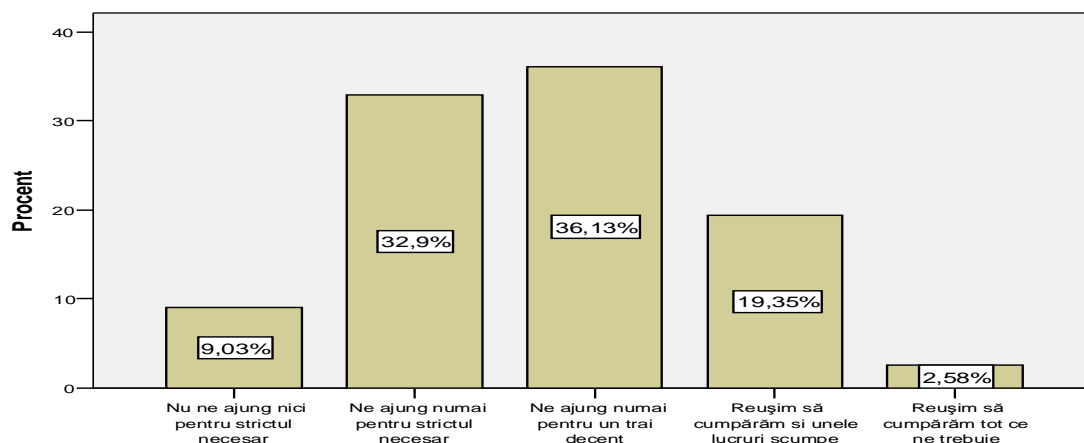
Subjects were questioned about the management of revenues and expenses in the last year. Only **10% (9.68)** could save money, 41.94 % spent everything, 10.97% spent their savings, and 37.42% made credits.



Subjects were questioned about the total revenue gained by all family members in the previous month, in New Lei. The distribution of total revenues gained ($REVENUE_{GAINED}$) has a normal aspect, but with asymmetry and positive flattening. The average of the sample revenue is approximately **1900 RON** with a maximum of 6000 RON and a minimum of 200 RON.

How do you appreciate the present revenues of your household? 9% appreciate that their revenues are not sufficient for the necessary living standard. 36.1 % appreciate that the revenue are sufficient only for a decent living standard, 32.9% - only for the necessary living standard and 19.4% appreciate that they can spend some of their revenues for several expensive goods. Only 2.6% of respondents declared that can afford to buy everything they need.

Cum apreciați veniturile actuale ale gospodăriei dvs.



The subjects have been asked to appreciate, theoretically, the monthly revenue necessary for a decent living standard ($REVENUE_{DECENT}$) and the minimum monthly survival revenue ($REVENUE_{SURVIVAL} = \text{MINIMUM SURVIVAL REVENUE}$).

In order to evaluate the perception on the necessary revenue, we have created three indicators calculated as ratio between revenues, as follows:

$$R_1 = \frac{REVENUE_{DECENT}}{REVENUE_{SURVIVAL}}$$

$$R_2 = \frac{REVENUE_{REALISED}}{REVENUE_{SURVIVAL}}$$

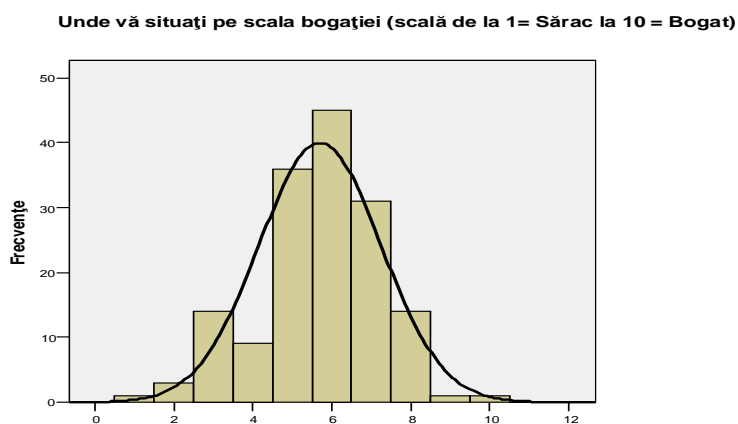
$$R_3 = \frac{\text{REVENUE}_{\text{REALISED}}}{\text{REVENUE}_{\text{DECENT}}}$$

The distribution of the calculated parameters is not normal, consequently we have appreciated their central tendencies through M estimators (Huber, Tukey, etc.). The analysed data demonstrate that subjects estimate the ratio R_1 at 3.41, R_2 at 1.55 and R_3 at 0.50 (Huber estimators).

This means that **the revenue necessary for a decent living standard is approximately 3.41 bigger than the revenue necessary for survival. The realized revenues are 1.55 bigger than the revenues necessary for survival and only 0.5 times bigger than the revenues necessary for a decent living standard, i.e. under this limit.**

II a. GALAȚI

On a “richness” scale of 1 – 10, the subjects were asked to estimate how “rich” or “poor” they are. The diagram of the frequencies of scores awarded by subjects indicates an approximately normal distribution. The general average of scores is **5.70** and the median is **6.0** which indicate that the subjects are closer from the “rich” zone. The scores vary from 1 to 10.



As for the previous analysis, the test “t” indicates a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the persons with supplementary revenues and those without these kind of revenues, i.e. the persons with supplementary revenues consider themselves rich on the rich scale, with an average of **6.11** and the persons without supplementary revenues has an average of **5.39**.

The Pearson correlation test indicates that, on a scale from 1 to 10, between the 3 scores awarded by subjects for professional satisfaction (job), financial satisfaction and richness there are significant

positive associations at a significance threshold $p < 0,01$. The most important association (correlation) is the financial satisfaction and the assessment on the richness scale, **$r = 0,764$** .

The correlation between professional satisfaction and financial satisfaction is medium, $r = 0,515$. The correlation between professional satisfaction and estimation on richness scale is much more reduced, $r = 0,412$.

Linear regression analysis indicates that the pattern for self evaluation on the richness scale and the financial satisfaction are linearly dependent; it is a significant statistical pattern at a significance level $p < 0,01$. The equation of the linear pattern is

$$\text{SCORE}_{\text{RICHNESS}} = 1.713 + 0.645 \times \text{SCORE}_{\text{FINANCIAL SATISFACTION}}$$

The coefficients of the linear equation are significantly different from zero at a significance threshold $p < 0,01$. The score of professional significance does not contribute significantly to the regression pattern equation.

Ib. BUCHAREST

The self-labelling level of population inquired in Bucharest is percentage-wise represented on the scale pauperism - richness and depending on the lot distribution.

The distribution of lot 1 depending on the living standard from financial point of view

Table no.3 Living standard, 2007

| Poor 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Rich 10 |
|-----------|---|-------|-------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| Lot 1 | 0 | 1.33% | 3.33% | 11.33% | 5.33% | 9.33% | 5.33% | 0.66% | 0 |

The distribution of lot 2 depending on the living standard from financial point of view

Table no.4 Living standard, 2007

| Poor 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Rich 10 |
|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|----|-------|-------|------------|
| Lot 2 | 0.66% | 1.33% | 4.67% | 6.67% | 6% | 6% | 6.67% | 1.33% | 0 |

The distribution of lot 3 depending on the living standard from financial point of view

Table no.5 Living standard, 2007

| Poor 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Rich 10 |
|-----------|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|----|-------|-------|------------|
| Lot 3 | 0 | 1.33% | 5.33% | 4.67% | 5.33% | 8% | 5.33% | 1.33% | 0 |

IIc. SUCEAVA

Table no.6 The distribution of lot 2 depending on the living standard from financial point of view

Poor

Rich

| Pole - | | | - <=> + | | | | Pole+ | | |
|-------------|---|---|--------------|---|---|---|-------------|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| a.f. = 7 | | | a.f. = 85 | | | | a.f. = 7 | | |
| r.f. = 7.07 | | | r.f. = 85.85 | | | | r.f. = 7.07 | | |

a.f. = absolute frequency

Average = 38.2

r.f. = relative frequency

Median = 46

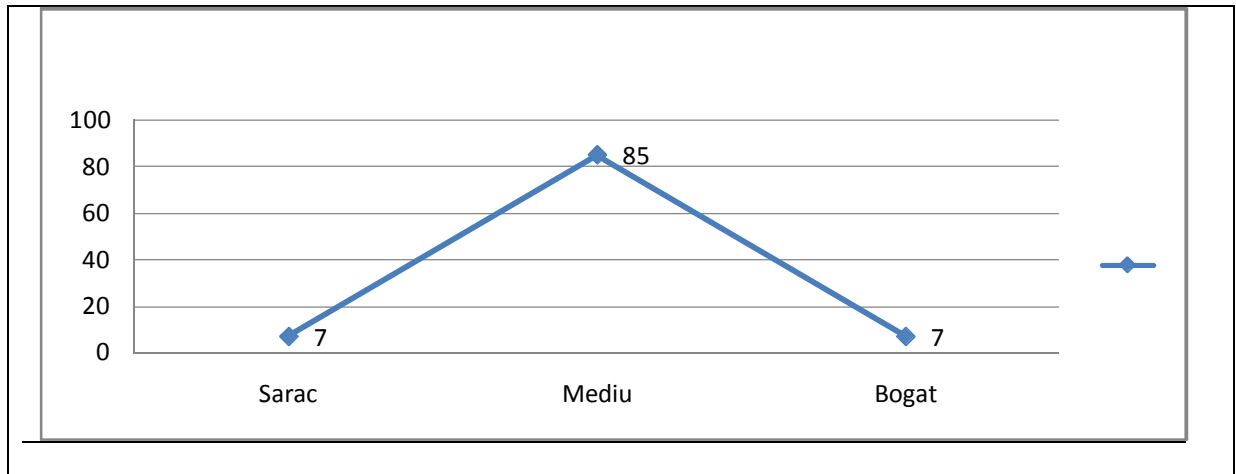


Figure no.7 The distribution of population depending on the living standard from financial point of view

The graphic scale with 10 degrees of intensity represents an arbitrary technique which allows a logical analysis regarding the hierarchical classification of subjects depending on monthly revenue.

We established the two poles – and + (negative and positive) with a view to standardising the data and correctly defining the continuum in order to give the same significance to all inquired subjects. Thus, we have only 7.07% subjects with a low living standard at the negative pole (-) and 7.07% subjects with a high living standard at the positive pole (+). Taking into consideration the above graphical scale, these represent extreme values and 85.85% of subjects have a medium living standard.

IId. LUGOJ

Table no.7 The distribution of lots depending on the living standard from financial point of view

| Poor | | | - <=> + | | | | Rich | | |
|-----------|---|---|------------|---|---|---|------------|---|----|
| Pole - | | | - <=> + | | | | Pole + | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| a.f. = 7 | | | .a.f= 73 | | | | a.f. = 10 | | |
| r.f. = 8% | | | r.f. = 81% | | | | r.f. = 11% | | |

a.f. = absolute frequencies; r.f. = relative frequencies; Non answer = 10 (10%)



Figura nr.8 The distribution of population depending on the living standard from financial point of view

The negative pole (-) comprises 8% of subjects with a low living standard compared to 11% from the positive pole (+), represented by subjects with a high living standard. Taking into consideration the data from the above graphic scale, we notice that 81% of subjects have a medium standard of living and the percentage is similar to the percentage obtained in the previous analysis.

4 Conclusions and suggestions

The results of the sociological inquiry performed in municipalities: Bucharest, Galati, Lugoj and Suceava on a sample of 531 employed subjects allow us to draw the following conclusions:

- Same as the national studies of the Research Institute for Quality of Life (ICCV), the Public Opinion Barometer (BOP) and the Commission of Anti-Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion (CASPIIS), after a quantitative and qualitative analysis of living standards of Romania’s population and as a result of the subjects classification procedure after several criteria and the analysis of dependent and independent variables, this study established that high levels of poverty have not been identified but contrary, a medium living standard.
- According to the “Poverty Map” for regions and urban environment elaborated by CASPIIS, poll and census results of this study indicate the following: the population from the West Region towns have a high welfare level and is followed by the South-East Region and North-East Region population. Bucharest Municipality is the detached leader as regards the welfare level of inquired population.

Table no.8 The “Poverty Map” for regions and urban environment, poll and census results

| <i>REGION</i> | <i>POLL</i> | <i>CENSUS</i> |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | POVERTY RATE | POVERTY RATE |
| <i>North-East</i> | 0.18 | 0.20 |
| <i>South-East</i> | 0.16 | 0.23 |
| <i>West</i> | 0.10 | 0.20 |
| <i>Bucharest</i> | 0.07 | 0.13 |

Source: “Romania’s Poverty Map”, Report elaborated by Bucharest University and the National Institute for Statistics at the request of the Commission of Anti-Poverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion

Because of the significant differences noticed in the above table, I support the annual data collection since the data gathered by census method are updated every ten years.

- Same as the studies of ICVV or BOP researchers, this study has obtained similar results after the application of the second self-labelling technique on the population representing 4 Romanian Counties. People avoid self-labels, even they are pauper and prefer a middle solution, as a result of previous analysis, the distribution mode is 5.7. Mention must be made that several subject, self-labelled rich, do not belong to high deciles of revenue.

”The avoiding of self-labeling as pauper is often noted during empiric researches, the persons avoiding to assume this identity because of derived consequences. ”(Voicu M.)

- At the date of inquiry, the social changes did not generate the reduction of population revenues, but, on the contrary, if we take into consideration all the analysed variables, leading to a multiple development. We noticed social problems leading to the general dissatisfaction of the interviewed population, i.e. quality of medical services, quality of education, Police activity, environment quality.
- 53% of Suceava population, 46% of Bucharest population, 42% of Lugoj population and 57.1% of Galati population are dissatisfied with the *low-quality environment*. 61% of Suceava population, 57% of Lugoj population, 26% of Bucharest population and 50.6% of Galati population are dissatisfied with *low-quality of medical services*; 43% of Lugoj population, 38% of Suceava population, 25% of Bucharest population and 36.6% of Galati population are dissatisfied with *police activity*; 53% of Suceava population, 41% of Lugoj population, 20% of Bucharest population and 28.6 % of Galati population are dissatisfied with *low-quality quality of education*. 44% of Lugoj population, 30% of Bucharest population, 11% of Suceava population and 22.4% of Galati population are dissatisfied with *the low quality of public transports*;

- The implementation of immediate measures through the adoption of solutions promoted by ecologists or borrowed from other countries, for example: motor vehicle by non-polluting transport means (ex. bicycle, motor bicycle, etc.) or restriction of vehicle use to alternate days depending on whether the registration number is even or odd. Another method of good sense and aesthetics represents the remaking of the Urban Planning in all big cities and protected areas, pedestrian zones, (historical centres, university centres, recreation centres). As regards the improvement of the quality of public transports, the short-term solution is represented by dedicated lanes for public transport. As regards the improvement of the quality of education, medical services and police activity, the releasing of a plan for remaking the system is needed: motivation in work place, continuous training and specialisation, responsabilization of actions and duties at work.

5. Study limits

- Certainly the results of our inquiry could be much improved, including an area extended to all 8 Development Regions of our country as well as by comparison with cities of countries with a medium IDU, respectively a low IDU. The delay of these questionnaires application in Mexico and Sudan by diplomatic and financial or time reason has considerably limited the aimed research.
- Conducted scientific research is subordinated to the as good as possible knowledge of the population pauperization process, the given image not providing an answer to all the questions raised by the complexity of the issues deriving from this phenomenon.

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ⁱ Care was needed in insuring that sample of subjects is representative and for that purpose the inquiry was developed only in urban environment and the inquired subjects were selected from the category of employee. According to Prof. Orshansky M. (he determined the first method of absolute threshold estimation in USA), „the poverty threshold does not necessitates the selection of a too small group by comparison with the whole population, not deserving a special program or a too big group making impossible the problem solving”. (Orshansky M. – „How poverty is measured”, *Monthly Labour Review*, 1969, No.2)

ⁱⁱ From „sociological” perspectives on family budgets (Veit-Wilson 1987, page201), ICCV analysis included and analysed in 1994 the answers to the question: „What monthly income would your family need need to insure the necessary living standard?” and the results were as follows:

- at sample level, the subjective minimum of life was 1.1% greater than the decent minimum;
- pauperism of 75% of population (1994), using the minimum decent determined through ICVV method.

ⁱⁱⁱ Estimations of the subjective pauperism index were developed through ICVV normative method. Zamfir C. & colab. have developed the Index of Subjective Poverty (ISS) a factorial factor explaining the variation of individual answers to questions for SLS measuring (Subjective Life Standard), IS (income satisfaction) and self-labeling as poor or not. (Voicu B., Poverty dictionary). The empirical researches used two methods for measuring the self-labeling as pauper (Voicu M., Poverty dictionary) through the utilization of two kinds of items: simple identification with paupers’ category and self-assigning of a mark from 1 to 10 regarding rich-poor status.