BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY

ACORD UK
Advisory Council on Romanian Diaspora in the United Kingdom

THE ROMANIAN DIASPORA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BRITISH ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

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Dr Alina Dolea
Chair of ACORD UK
Associate Professor of Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy, Bournemouth University

The Advisory Council on Romanian Diaspora in the United Kingdom (ACORD UK) is an independent apolitical organisation set up in 2025 by a multi-disciplinary team of UK-based Romanian experts, comprising community engagement specialists, entrepreneurs, clinical practitioners, academics and communication professionals.

As an expert in diaspora diplomacy, I founded ACORD UK with the belief that the Romanian diaspora can be a powerful asset, generating soft power and building reputational security – through people-to-people diplomatic work – for both Romania and the UK. To unlock this potential, the Romanian community – the fourth largest foreign-born community in the UK and the most economically active migrant group – needs stronger awareness and self-organisation. ACORD UK operates within a diaspora diplomacy framework, advancing the interests of this vibrant community while strengthening mutual understanding, cooperation, and engagement between Romanians and wider British society.

This report provides a comprehensive, evidence-based and data-driven analysis of how Romanians in the UK contribute to the British economy and society. It also brings to the fore the lived experiences of Romanians in the UK - all authors are first-generation migrants and have conducted extensive, multi-disciplinary academic and practice research projects within or inclusive of the Romanian communities. These direct experiences and socio-cultural insights inform and enhance the qualitative contributions of the report beyond the value of statistical data.

The report addresses significant gaps in quantitative and qualitative data about the Romanian communities across the UK and aims to support policymaking processes at local, regional, national and transnational levels. The evidence shows that the Romanians in the UK are not only an economic contributor, but also an integral

part of British society, with strong ties to Romanian society, constituting a key pillar of the Romania-UK Strategic Partnership established in 2003. In fact, there is further economic benefit to be gained by optimising the economic contribution of Romanians to both the UK and Romania (for example, by better matching jobs with existing skills).

There is a powerful human story to be told about how Romanians across the UK are building, enriching, and caring for Britain. This report surfaces the complexities that need further bespoke and systematic research and exploration, especially given the consistent negative picture painted about Romanians in the UK, mainly around, but also after Brexit. A key question that can be posed is what would happen if 100,000 Romanians left the UK tomorrow? What would the impact be for Britain and its economy?

The research and data collected for this report have also generated numerous insights into the risks and vulnerabilities of the Romanian communities in the UK that exceed the scope of this report. ACORD UK aims to develop further reports addressing these aspects with a view to informing the current and future strategies and priorities of the UK, the EU and Romania. To this end, our overarching recommendation is to establish a British - Romanian Governmental Working Group with a mandate to maximise the positive contributions of the Romanian community and tackle challenges – including around countering disinformation and strengthening social cohesion.

I wish to thank my colleagues in ACORD UK, our funder, and the policy experts who have reviewed the report. We are grateful to the British and Romanian representatives who have supported us in this endeavour.

We trust this timely report sparks important conversations and serves as a catalyst for continued collaboration and the development of future initiatives with meaningful, measurable impact.

Dr Alina Dolea, Chair of ACORD UK
Associate Professor of Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy, Bournemouth University

This report is a timely reflection on the growing contribution and enduring presence of the Romanian community in the United Kingdom, as well as on the increasingly close partnership between our two countries.

For many years, discussions about migration have often focused on numbers. This research helps us move beyond perceptions towards a more evidence-based understanding of the role Romanians play in British society. It documents, with rigour and balance, the significant role played by Romanians as healthcare professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, skilled workers, community leaders and active citizens.
I particularly welcome the depth of analysis underpinning this study and its ambition to inform future policymaking. Better understanding communities leads to better policies, stronger institutions and more resilient societies.

It also reminds us that the relationship between Romania and the United Kingdom is shaped not only by governments and institutions, but also by people-to-people ties. This important initiative is both an assessment of achievements already made and an invitation to unlock the full potential of a bilateral partnership that continues to be enriched by its people.

HE Laura Popescu
Ambassador of Romania to the United Kingdom

This brilliant report provides a first comprehensive and compelling account of the contribution of the Romanian diaspora to the United Kingdom. It shows clearly that the Romanian community is not only one of the most economically active in the UK, but also an integral part of our society - supporting essential public services, building businesses and contributing to growth across a wide range of sectors.

Romanians throughout the United Kingdom strengthen ties between our two countries every day through their work, their communities and their cultural presence. They bring skills, energy and resilience, while enriching the social and cultural fabric of modern Britain. Now, for the first time, we have the evidence in hard data which allows us to prove and celebrate this.

Understanding and valuing this contribution matters more than ever in times of political and economic challenge. Our strategic partnership is stronger for these people to people ties, and destined to grow only closer.

HMA Giles Portman
British Ambassador to Romania

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects on the significant contributions the Romanian diaspora in the UK brings to the British economy and society, emphasising their bilateral and European significance. It presents evidence, including an account of the less visible, intangible and difficult to quantify inputs - such as the social and cultural capital or accounts of agency and resilience - that strengthen British society.

Funded through the Bournemouth University Research Impact Acceleration Fund, the report covers multiple, complex policy areas and is conducted from an apolitical, ethical, and methodologically rigorous standpoint. Its content is informed by prior research, UK - Romania policy strategic priorities, the current geopolitical context, and the demographic and cultural make-up of the UK-based Romanian diaspora. Purposefully aiming to avoid duplication, priority topics have also been selected on the basis that there is limited pre-existing research available; thus, the report encompasses under-researched areas, data and evidence gaps, as well as original perspectives. This approach is strengthened by drawing on in-depth analysis of existing quantitative data, original qualitative research, and authors' specialist expertise.

Data collection methods include submitting Freedom of Information requests to relevant public bodies, online searches of official and vetted information, cross-referencing findings, online searches on public databases such as Companies House register of companies, analyses of existing statistical information, AI-assisted source discovery, followed by manual verification, and benchmarking against existing research and analyses. The ACORD UK experts that have monitored the methodology and methods engaged in the process are leading experts in their fields and have a strong track record of conducting peer-reviewed academic research and supervision. This strengthens the report and the working methods engaged in producing it.

The report sets out a series of recommendations designed to inform future policymaking, support the work of community organisations and public services, and unlock the further development potential of the Romanian diaspora in the UK. It can serve three key functions:

- **Provide written evidence** by outlining specific, actionable recommendations aligned with current national priorities of both the Romanian and UK Governments.

- **Serve as a foundational evidence base** for future research on the Romanian diaspora, enabling the development of follow up studies and specialised submissions to forthcoming calls for evidence issued by Parliamentary Committees or Government Departments on matters relevant to Romanian, European, and migrant communities in the UK.

- **Act as a cultural resource** for policymakers and practitioners across the public and voluntary sectors, including in areas such as education, health, and social care.

Fundamentally, the report has a clear purpose to inform inclusive policymaking and specifically support public sector departments directly linked to the Key Recommendations of this report. Due to the report's breadth of content, stakeholders such as Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Office for National Statistics (ONS), National Health Service (NHS), Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Education (DfE), Parliamentary Committees and APPGs, and most other local, regional, and national public services can benefit from the findings of this report, its general and specific recommendations.

KEY FINDINGS

Britain's Romanian community is no longer a marginal migration story. It has a significant demographic and geographical presence, showing a clear desire to participate in society and continue to contribute across essential sectors of the UK economy.

The picture that emerges is that of a young and thriving Romanian community which sustains, staffs, and funds essential public services, builds businesses, enriches British society and anchors the bilateral relationship between Britain and Romania, a key North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally on the Eastern flank of the European Union (EU).

Romanian diaspora profile.

The 2021 Census recorded 557,554 Romanian-born residents in the UK, which is likely an underestimate, since Home Office data confirmed that over 1.3 million Romanians have been granted a form of status under the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). This discrepancy stems from the Census's self-declaration data collection, whereas EUSS registration requires proof of nationality to secure rights in the UK. Census and EUSS indicators measure different things: they are related, but not additive. Together, they show both a substantial resident population and a much wider post-Brexit rights/status footprint. ONS showed that in the last decade, on average, Romania ranked 3rd by country of birth for non-UK-born mothers in England and Wales and around 100,000 Romanians have acquired British citizenship over the last decade. **78% of Romanian-born residents in England and Wales were aged 20–49 at the Census, with a near-balanced gender profile.** The Romanian population is significantly younger than the UK population as a whole and highlights the strong labour-market relevance of this group.

Local visibility.

The strongest Census local-authority concentrations were in Harrow, Brent, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Waltham Forest, Luton, Redbridge, Barnet, West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire. EUSS data complements this and shows that **Birmingham now hosts the largest Romanian community outside London.**

Most economically active migrant group.

EU2 countries (Romania and Bulgaria) have the **highest percentage in employment or self-employment (80.4%)** and the smallest percentage of people economically inactive (15.2%), of people retired (1.6%), and of adults inactive due to illness or disability (0.6%). **73.9% of Romanian-born international students in England and Wales were also in employment,** according to the 2021 Census.

Transferable skills, adaptability, and work ethic.

39% of Romanian workers in the UK are overqualified for their current jobs and are more likely to work in temporary jobs, have zero-hour contracts and work night shifts. The 2021 Census indicates that **one in three Romanian adults in England and Wales are qualified to university degree level or higher.**

Highly skilled workforce.

Romanian-founded firms and Romanian-born executives are increasingly visible across key UK growth sectors, including robotics, artificial intelligence, fintech, enterprise software, cybersecurity, automation, energy, property development, and research-intensive start-ups. Alongside established contributions in sectors such as construction and health and social care, a new generation of young technology entrepreneurs and senior professionals is emerging. Although these groups operate within distinct professional communities, they collectively demonstrate significant drive and ambition. This represents a **substantial asset for the UK economy and highlights the potential for further economic value creation within the Romanian diaspora.**

Work and public finances.

HMRC recorded 349,700 Romanian payrolled employments in December 2025, with a **median monthly pay of £2,427** - up by roughly 45% since 2019 - and close to the UK median monthly pay of £2,555. The last official nationality-specific fiscal estimate, for 2019/20, puts **Romanian nationals' direct Income Tax and National Insurance contributions at £2.399bn.**

Labour market specifics.

According to December 2025 HMRC PAYE industry data for EU2 nationals (Romanian and Bulgarian combined), payrolled employments are concentrated in administrative/support services, wholesale and motor repair, transport and storage, manufacturing, hospitality, health and social work, and construction. Because Romanians are the larger EU2 group in both population and EUSS data, this is the best available proxy for Romanian sector distribution, but it should not be read as a Romanian-only count.

Public sector services.

Recorded Romanian-nationality staff in NHS England more than doubled from 3,098 in June 2016 to 6,575 in June 2025. In June 2025, **Romania ranked fifth among EU nationalities in NHS England and ninth among non-British nationalities overall**. They are concentrated in nursing and support roles, with further Romanian-trained professionals on the Nursing and Midwifery Council and General Medical Council registers and in adult social care.

Building Britain.

The Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) 2022 workforce analysis found Romania to be the single largest foreign source of UK construction workers, supplying around 5% of the workforce nationally and roughly 19% in London, with no other single country supplying more than 1%. The Home Builders Federation's 2023 workforce census found Romanians to be the largest EU nationality in the home-building workforce.

Crisis support.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, EU2 workers made up around two-thirds of the seasonal horticulture workforce that **kept the national food supply running**, alongside essential work in logistics and construction.

Bilateral trade.

UK-Romania trade reached £10.3bn in the four quarters to Q4 2025, having nearly doubled over the decade, and **UK exports to Romania alone support an estimated 23,500 UK jobs**. This shows the potential of a thriving diaspora community to accelerate growth with targeted frameworks of support in place.

Language and identity.

Romanian is the second most common foreign language after Polish in England and Wales, with around 472,000 speakers and 159,000 in London alone.

Community infrastructure.

At least 14 Romanian language weekend schools, 50 community organisations, 110 Romanian Orthodox churches and monasteries, and over 160 Evangelical churches form a **large, grassroots network which provides frontline support for community members reducing pressure on UK public services.**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Improve the visibility of migrant contributions through better data capture and harmonisation.

The UK Government should address discrepancies between datasets, including those produced by the ONS and the Home Office's EU Settlement Scheme, to ensure that the economic and social contributions of non-UK-born communities are accurately measured and reflected in public policy.

Strengthen the measurement of self-employment contributions.

HMRC and relevant government departments should improve the collection and publication of data on self-employment, including tax, National Insurance and Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) contributions by nationality where appropriate. This would provide a more accurate picture of the fiscal contributions made by migrant entrepreneurs and self-employed workers, including members of the Romanian community.

Improve workforce data within the NHS.

NHS England should develop a linked workforce dataset that captures nationality, country of qualification, staff group, region, specialty, grade or band, retention and career progression. Improved workforce intelligence would enable policymakers to distinguish between recruitment challenges, retention issues and data-recording limitations.

Tackle UK skills shortages and fulfil the potential of qualified Romanians for wider British economic growth.

The UK Government should develop a targeted skills-mobilisation initiative to better recognise, retain, and deploy the expertise of qualified Romanian nationals in sectors facing acute labour and skills shortages. This can include improved recognition of professional qualifications, particularly in high-demand fields such as engineering, digital technologies, health, and research-intensive industries; the launch of a national government scheme to encourage higher-skilled job uptake by Romanians in the UK, thus matching expertise and qualifications with industry needs in line with the UK's Industrial Strategy 2025.

Strengthening the UK-Romania enterprise and investment partnership.

The UK Government should work with business organisations, local authorities and diaspora networks to create a new strand of the UK-Romania partnership, such as a bilateral mentorship, investment and enterprise programme. Such a programme should support market entry, supplier matching, export opportunities, business development and diaspora-led investment, unlocking the growth potential of the thriving Romanian diaspora.

Adopt culturally informed approaches to policymaking and public service design.

Policymakers and public service providers should adopt culturally informed approaches by building the cultural competencies needed to meaningfully engage Romania's diverse communities, including tailored training for elected representatives and frontline staff. This should cover the cultural specificity and internal diversity of Romanian communities, and in areas with significant Roma populations it should include training on Roma identity, history and cultural practices. Strengthening this awareness would support more effective policy design, improve engagement, and enhance service delivery across areas such as modern slavery and human trafficking, health and social care, community cohesion and societal resilience.

Invest in the capacity and professionalisation of diaspora organisations.

The British and Romanian Governments should provide targeted support for diasporic voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSOs), enabling them to strengthen governance, access funding opportunities and deliver services that promote integration and social cohesion.

Increase VCSOs' capacity to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking.

The UK Government should create a registry (database) for VCSOs supporting victims of modern slavery and human trafficking and an accreditation programme and toolkit for the organisations included in the register. This will support the upskilling, professionalisation and capacity building of VCSOs on safeguarding and reporting, making grassroots interventions sustainable and safe for victims.

Build diasporas' psychological and cognitive resilience to disinformation.

Diaspora communities are a missing target group in the current societal and institutional resilience strategies and therefore are difficult to reach by governments, authorities, and civil society organisations. As part of the national resilience action plan, the UK Government should develop culturally informed, bespoke disinformation and resilience toolkits for the diaspora communities in the UK. There is an immediate need for training targeting diaspora organisations and community leaders as key nodes in diaspora networks and information flows.

Support trusted digital information services.

Work with community organisations to develop Romanian-language digital information hubs that provide timely, reliable and accessible information. These platforms could play an important role in countering misinformation and improving access to public services.

Invest in bilingualism, heritage, and multiculturalism.

Increase supplementary-school capacity and Romanian language classes in mainstream schools across the UK to respond to the rising demand of Romanian language education. This investment will strengthen educational attainment, increase economic competitiveness and international engagement, and will help expand multilingual competencies to counter disinformation. It would also complement the campaign for an optional Romanian GCSE qualification.

Bolster official communication through social media.

British and Romanian public institutions should make greater use of social media platforms and plain-language communication to engage migrant communities. Clear, accessible and multilingual messaging can help build trust in public institutions and improve awareness of rights, responsibilities and available services.

BACKGROUND AND UK-ROMANIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Formal diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and Romania were established in 1880, although British engagement with Romania dates back much earlier, with the opening of Britain's first diplomatic mission in Bucharest in 1803. Bilateral ties were further strengthened through royal connections, most notably via Marie of Edinburgh, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, who became Princess of Romania in 1893 through her marriage to Ferdinand I of Romania and later served as Queen of Romania. Unusual for a royal consort, Queen Marie played a significant political and diplomatic role, helping to secure Romania's entry into the Triple Entente in 1916 and contributing to international recognition of Greater Romania following the First World War.

Relations between the British and Romanian royal families remained close even after the forced abdication of King Michael I in 1947. Today, HM King Charles III continues to maintain strong personal and charitable links with Romania, particularly through his longstanding support for conservation, heritage preservation and sustainable rural development. What is now The King's Foundation established activities in Romania in 2015, reflecting these commitments.

HM King Charles III has publicly described Romania as holding "a very special place in my heart"[1], highlighting both his ancestral connections and his enduring support for the protection of the country's villages, historic buildings, biodiversity, wildlife and forests.

Modern Romania emerged following the Great Union of 1918 and developed at the crossroads of the collapsing Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. Its modern history has been shaped by shifting borders, substantial national minorities and competing political systems. Throughout the twentieth century, Romania experienced constitutional monarchy, interwar authoritarianism and fascism, the Holocaust, communist dictatorship, and the complex democratic transition that followed the fall of communism in 1989. These historical legacies have had a lasting impact on levels of institutional trust, social cohesion and civic participation. They have also contributed to successive waves of emigration,

[1] Transylvanian Now. n.d. "Prince Charles Video Message Promoting Domestic Tourism in Transylvania." Accessed June 7, 2026. https://transylvanianow.com/prince-charles-video-message-promoting-domestic-tourism-transylvania/

with the United Kingdom becoming a particularly attractive destination following the introduction of free movement rights for Romanian citizens in 2014.

Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the EU in 2007, with the United Kingdom among the strongest supporters of both accession processes. Today, Romania occupies a strategically important position on NATO's Eastern flank and in the Black Sea region, making it a key partner for the UK in supporting Ukraine and strengthening wider European security. Bilateral cooperation has been underpinned by the UK-Romania Strategic Partnership[2], launched in 2003, and further reinforced through the 2011 Joint Statement on Enhancing the Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

Economic relations have also expanded significantly. Total trade in goods and services between the United Kingdom and Romania reached £10.3 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2025, a £480 million (4.9%) increase from the previous year, making Romania the UK's 32nd largest trading partner[3].

The Romanian diaspora in the United Kingdom, initially small following the Second World War, expanded rapidly during the 1990s and grew substantially after free movement rights were extended to Romanian citizens in 2014. Today, it constitutes the second-largest Eastern European-origin community in the UK. In the post-Brexit context, the Romanian population has increasingly shifted from a predominantly mobile workforce to a more settled community, with growing numbers choosing to establish long-term roots in the UK. As a result, a significant second generation of British Romanians is now coming of age, further strengthening the social, cultural and economic links between the two countries.

[2] UK Government. 2023. *Romanian–British Strategic Partnership: Joint Statement 2023*. Accessed June 7, 2026. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/romanian-british-strategic-partnership-joint-statement-2023.
[3] UK Government. 2026. *Romania: Trade and Investment Factsheet. May 14, 2026.* Accessed June 8, 2026. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a01f9822a6137e93226b9d2/romania-trade-and-investment-factsheet-2026-05-14.pdf

1. MAPPING THE ROMANIAN COMMUNITY IN THE UK

By Marius Comper

1.1 At a Glance

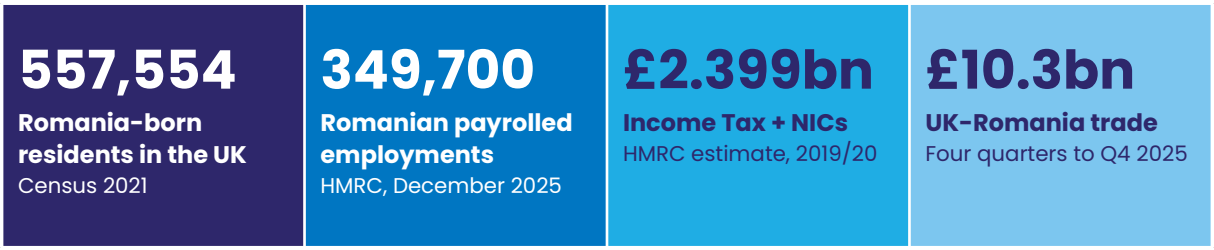

Figure 1. Estimated contributions.
Sources: ONS Census 2021, HMRC.

1.2 Demographic profile of Romanian communities in the UK

For England and Wales, the 2021 Census recorded 538,840 Romania-born residents, 550,298 people holding a Romanian passport, 477,000 people identifying as 'Romanian only', and approximately 472,000 people reporting Romanian as their main language. Scotland recorded 12,102 Romania-born residents in 2022 and Northern Ireland recorded 6,612 Romania-born residents in 2021.

According to Home Office data, by 31 December 2025 Romanian nationals had submitted 1,951,494 applications to the EU Settlement Scheme. Of the 1,926,986 concluded applications, 660,763 had resulted in settled status and 724,515 in pre-settled status (510,910 were repeat-applicant conclusions; 324,740 were granted settled status following pre-settled status).

Migration Observatory analysis of Home Office data found that, at the end of September 2025, Romanians were the largest nationality group still holding pre-settled status (around 413,000 people), pointing to a continuing need for advice, settled-status conversion support and digital-status literacy.

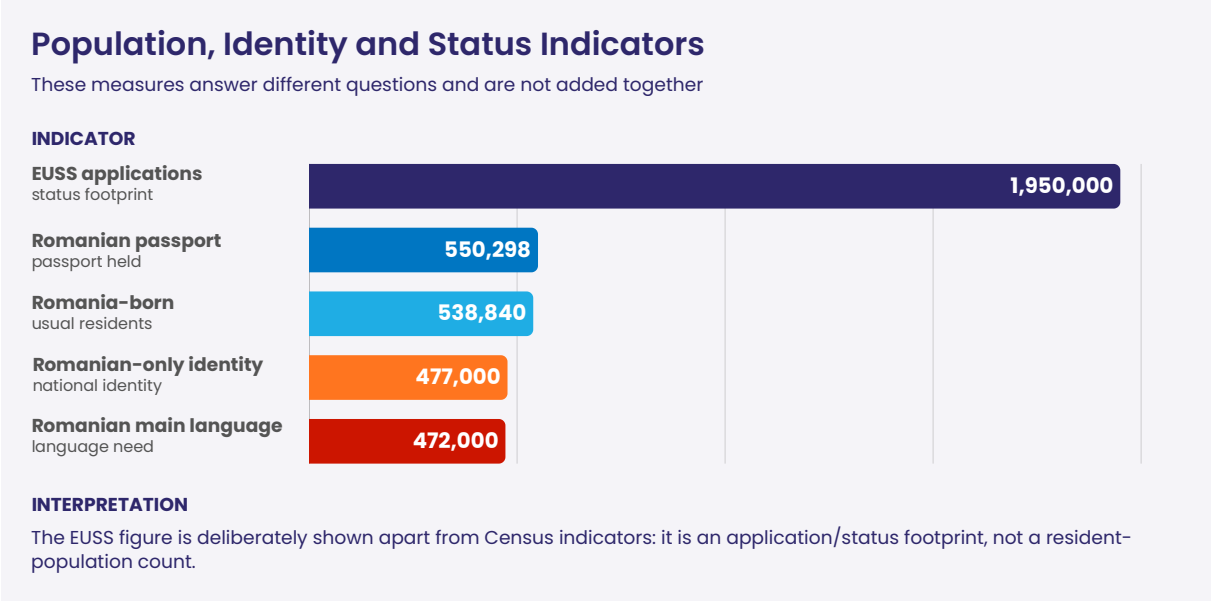

Figure 2. Population, identity and status indicators are related but not additive.
Sources: ONS Census 2021; Home Office EU Settlement Scheme summary tables to 31 December 2025.

Data from ONS indicates that the Romanian-born population in the UK is overwhelmingly concentrated in the prime working-age bracket. Of the total Romanian-born residents captured in the dataset, 420,461 individuals were aged 20–49, representing 78% of the entire population. This age profile is significantly younger than the UK population as a whole and highlights the strong labour-market relevance of this group.

The largest single age cohort is 30–34, comprising 109,572 people, underscoring the presence of a substantial mid-career workforce with established skills and experience. This demographic structure suggests sustained capacity for economic contribution across multiple sectors, particularly those experiencing persistent skills shortages.

The gender distribution—279,886 men (51.9%) and 258,953 women (48.1%)—is broadly balanced, indicating a diverse labour supply across both male- and female-dominated industries. This balance supports the potential for Romanian-born workers to contribute across a wide range of occupational areas, from construction and logistics to health, social care, hospitality, and professional services.

Taken together, these demographic characteristics point to a highly active, economically engaged migrant population with the potential to play a strategic role in addressing UK workforce gaps. The concentration of Romanian-born residents in key working-age groups strengthens the case for targeted policies that improve skills recognition, support progression, and facilitate full labour-market participation. Such measures would not only enhance individual outcomes but also contribute to wider UK productivity and economic growth.

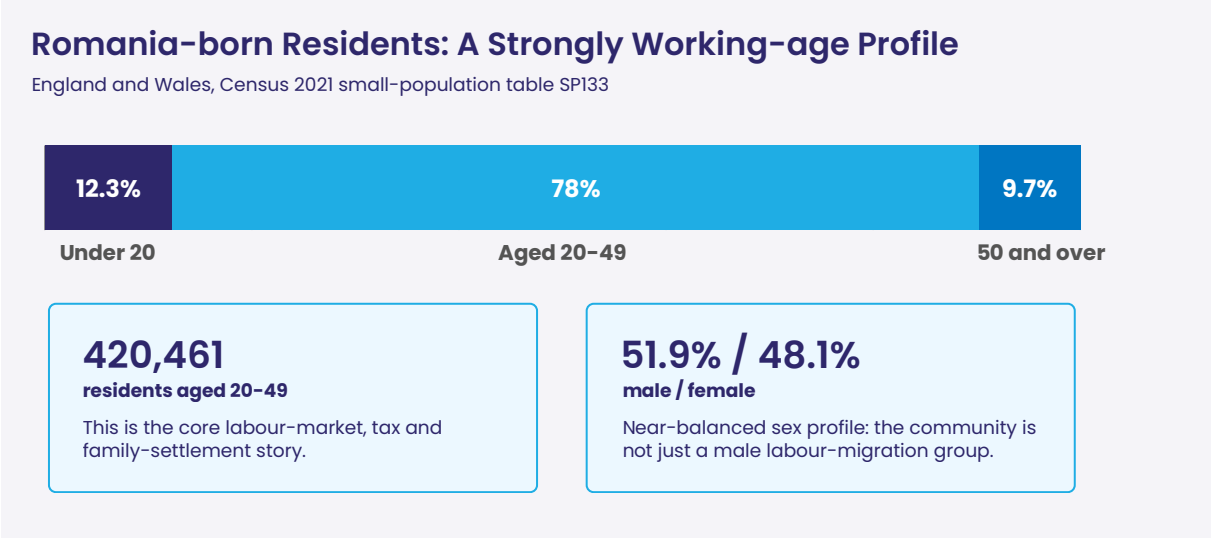

Figure 3. Romanian-born residents have a strong working-age profile.
Source: ONS/Nomis Census 2021 small-population table SP133.

Romanian settlement is concentrated in outer London boroughs, particularly linked to the service and construction industries, but also High Street businesses. Further concentrations are around the Midlands logistics node and a number of commuter towns and counties (e.g., Essex, Kent).

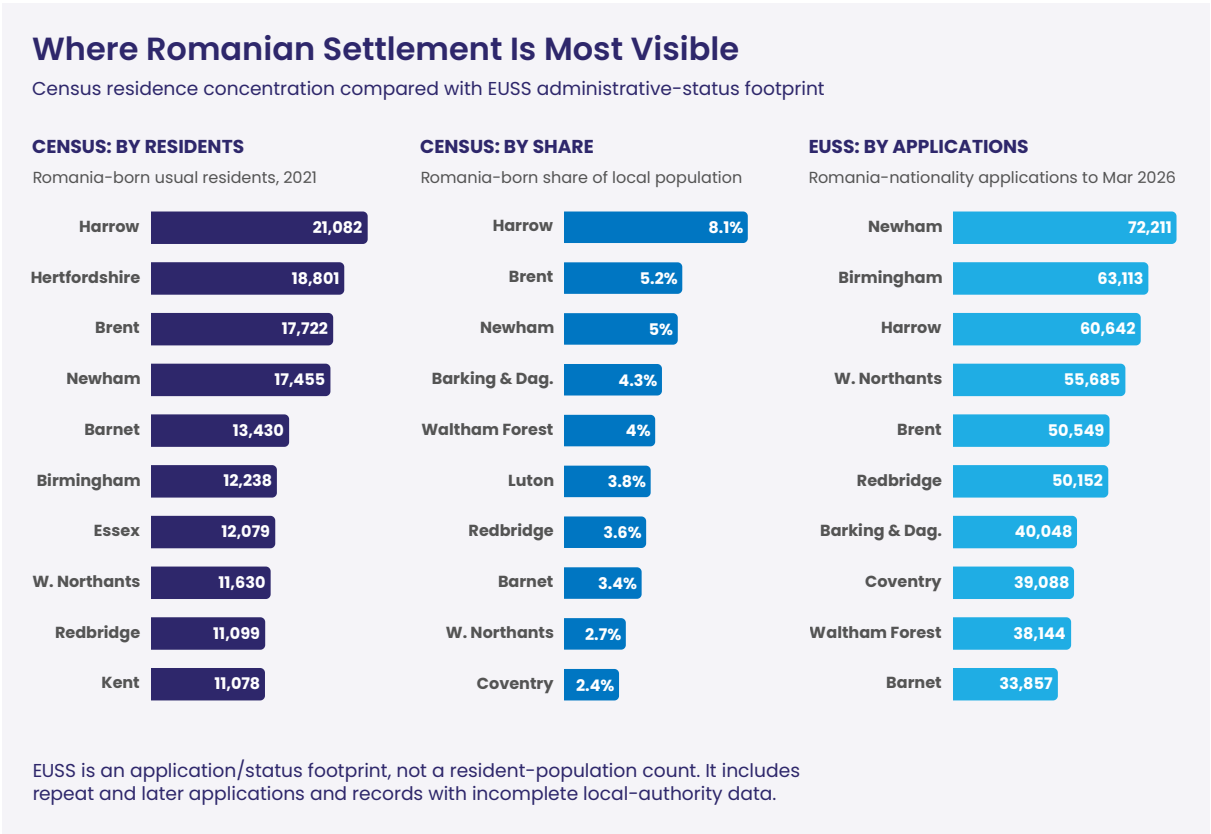

Figure 4. Romanian settlement is nationally spread but locally concentrated.
Sources: ONS Census 2021 local-authority data via ONS FOI release; Home Office EUSS_LA_01, EU Settlement Scheme local authority summary tables, 28 August 2018 to 31 March 2026.

The Romanian community is not a homogeneous block[4]. It includes long-settled professionals, post-2014 EU-mobility workers, self-employed tradespeople, entrepreneurs, highly-skilled technology and research professionals, students, children educated or born in the UK, mixed-nationality families, Romanian Roma communities, Romanian citizens from other national minorities (including, Jewish, Hungarian, German), Moldovans who hold Romanian citizenship, and people with complex EUSS or digital-status needs. Romanian presence in the UK is thus multi-class, multi-sectoral and locally embedded. Consequently, Romanians have differing language competencies and support needs, as well as varied communication channels and abilities to navigate institutional systems.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanians are now a major community in England and Wales. Romanian citizens have one of the largest post-Brexit status footprints in the UK. The community is important for the labour market, although not always visible, but its value does not uniquely reside in labour supply: it contributes to tax revenue, enterprise, local spending, public-service staffing, research, leadership and forms an important bilateral trade bridge.

[4] Alina Dolea, *Diaspora Diplomacy, Emotions, and Disruption: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework*. CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, paper 1, 2024. Los Angeles: Figueroa Press. https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/default/files/Diaspora%20Diplomacy%2C%20Emotions%2C%20and%20Disruption_6.19.24.pdf

2. LABOUR-MARKET IMPACT: ESSENTIAL WORK, SKILLS AND PROGRESSION

By Marius Comper

2.1 Labour-market engagement

Romanians have formed a strong labour market attachment combined with under-utilisation. ONS Census 2021 analysis found that EU2-born adults (Romania and Bulgaria), had an 80.4% employment rate in England and Wales, the highest among the major country-of-birth groupings. At the same time, only 9.1% of EU2-born adults were in professional occupations, while elementary/unskilled occupations were the most common occupational group for this category, despite the 2021 Census indicating that one in three Romanian adults in England and Wales are qualified to university degree level or higher.

Economic activity by country of birth, usual residents aged 16 years and over, 2021, England and Wales

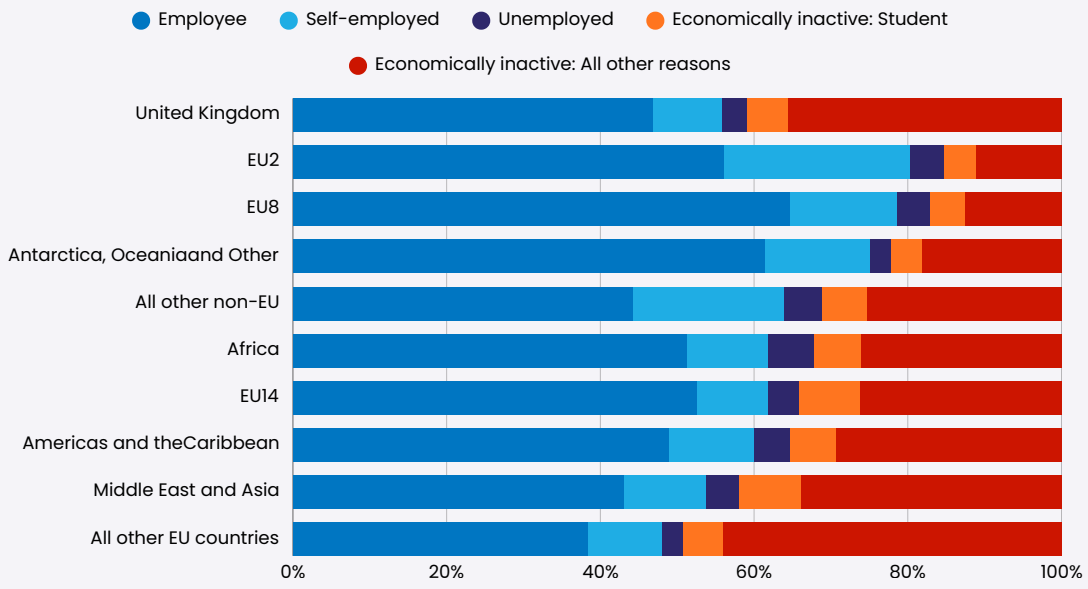

Figure 5. Employment rates of non-UK-born residents vary across different country of birth groupings
Source – Office for National Statistics – Census 2021
Note: Students who are economically active are included in either the Employee, Self-employed, or Unemployed (Looking for work) category.

HMRC payroll data show that Romanian nationals continue to constitute a large workforce. In December 2025, there were 349,700 payrolled employments held by Romanian nationals in the UK, with a median monthly pay of £2,427. Romanian PAYE employments rose rapidly after labour-market restrictions ended, from 98,600 in July 2014 to 400,100 in December 2019. Growth stabilised after Brexit and COVID-19 and remained at 349,700 in December 2025.

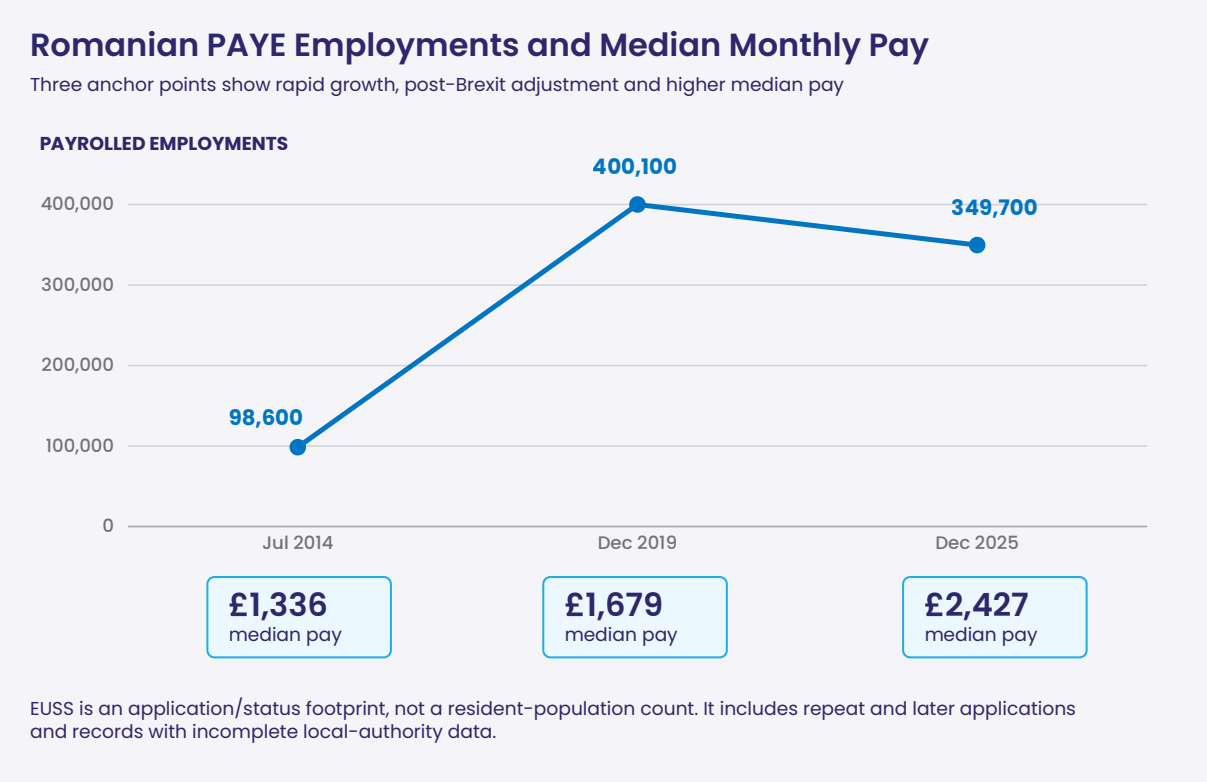

Figure 6. Romanian PAYE employments rose rapidly after 2014 and remained substantial in 2025.
Source: HMRC, UK payrolled employments by nationality, July 2014 to December 2025.

The evidence describes a high-work, high-contribution community whose skills are often being used below their actual level. For the UK, this is a productivity and tax-revenue issue as much as a fairness issue.

2.2 Sector representation and skill-shortage functions

The strongest public source for current sector distribution is HMRC's EU2 payroll-by-industry data, which combines Romanian and Bulgarian nationals[5] [6]. It cannot isolate Romanians alone by sector but remains the most relevant current administrative proxy: Romanians are the larger EU2 group in both population and EUSS data. This caveat applies to every headline or graphic using EU2 sector figures.

[5] David Tross and Adina Măglan, *Migrant Representation in UK Local Government Workforces: Advancing Justice and Participation for Equitable Governance*, Research Report (London: Social Equity Centre, 2025), https://www.socialequity.org.uk/research
[6] The Migration Observatory. *Migrants in the UK Labour Market: An Overview*. Accessed June 7, 2026. https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-labour-market-an-overview/

The largest EU2 PAYE category in December 2025 was administrative and support services, followed by retail and motor repair, transport/storage, manufacturing, hospitality, care and construction (view Section 6 of this report for a detailed analysis of Romanians' contribution to the construction industry).

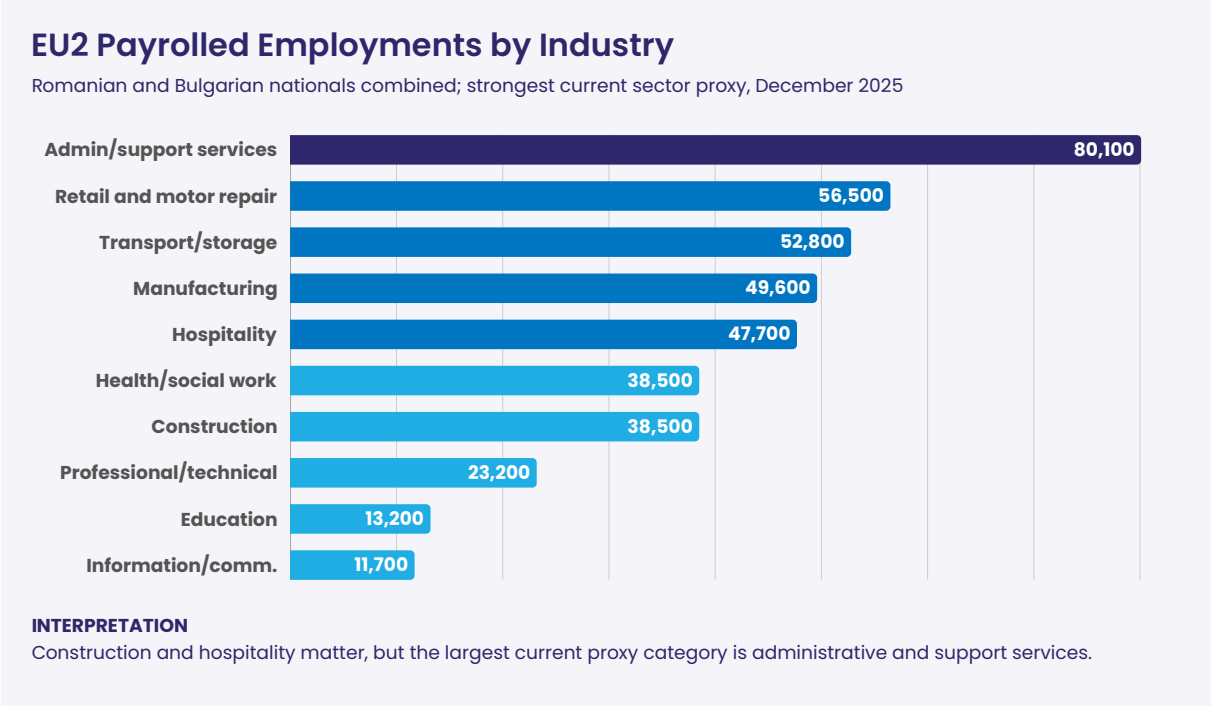

Figure 7. EU2 payroll distribution shows a broader contribution than construction and hospitality alone. Source: HMRC PAYE nationality release, EU2 industry breakdown, December 2025. EU2 combines Romanian and Bulgarian nationals.

2.3 Healthcare and adult social care

Healthcare is the strongest public-service case for Romanian contributions to the UK. The NMC recorded 7,270 professionals trained in Romania with UK addresses on the register in September 2025. The GMC recorded 2,605 licensed doctors with a Romanian primary medical qualification in June 2021. Skills for Care's 2025 workforce report identifies Romanian nationals as an important part of the non-British registered-nurse workforce in adult social care (Section 7 of this report provides a fuller NHS England profile and professional-register data).

2.4 Hospitality, food and local services

Hospitality is where labour-market visibility and public under-recognition often diverge. Within the wider EU2 (Romanian and Bulgarian) payrolled workforce, December 2025 HMRC data show 47,700 employments in accommodation and food service activities. This should be treated as an EU2 proxy, not a Romanian-only count. The Romanian contribution is visible in hotels, restaurants, catering, cleaning, customer service and food preparation, but large employers rarely publish nationality-level workforce breakdowns.

2.5 Tech, finance and advanced business services

The Romanian story in Britain should not be limited to construction and services. Romanian-origin founders and executives are visible in warehouse robotics, AI, fintech, automation, financial software, cybersecurity, proptech and responsible AI tooling.

Dexory is the strongest flagship example: a UK-based warehouse robotics and industrial AI company founded by Romanian entrepreneurs, with a publicly reported USD165m Series C funding round in October 2025. FlowX.AI, backed by London-based Dawn Capital, shows the capital bridge between Romanian technical founders and London venture markets. Tractable, FintechOS, UiPath UK-linked activity and Etiq AI broaden the evidence across AI, fintech, automation and responsible machine-learning tooling.

Two further examples make the technology trade route even more compelling. Bitdefender is a Romanian-founded global cybersecurity company with a UK presence, protecting users and organisations across 170 countries and maintaining Bucharest as a global headquarters and innovation hub. Endava is a UK-headquartered technology-services group with well-established delivery units in Romania, making it a UK-Romania technology-corridor case, not a Romanian-founder claim. UiPath's London AI Innovation Hub adds a current UK-facing example of Romanian-founded automation technology operating at the centre of the British AI and business-transformation agenda.

2.6 Education, students and research leadership

In 2024-2025, 2,435 Romanian students were studying in the United Kingdom. Romanian foreign-policy reporting in February 2026 put the number of Romanian professors and researchers in the UK at 2,000. The Romanian Language Lectorates funded by the Romanian Government and established at Oxford (since 2012) and Cambridge (since 2025) also provide a cultural and institutional bridge.

2.7 Skill utilisation and progression

The labour-market argument is strongest when it is treated as a progression issue, not only a headcount issue. The combination of high employment and low professional-occupation share among Romanian-born adults points towards gains to be made from qualification recognition, sector progression, English language and skills support, entrepreneurship advice, and creating routes from construction, care, hospitality and logistics into technical, supervisory and management roles.

This could have positive outcomes for the UK because under-used skills reduce productivity and tax revenue. It matters for Romanian workers because occupational downgrading can trap skilled people below their training level.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanians are strongly attached to the UK labour market, although there is available evidence that their skills are underutilised. They make an important contribution to support, transport, service industries, construction and care sectors, while a small group are leading in robotics, fintech, automation, financial software, cybersecurity and proptech. The strongest public service contributions are to the NHS, education and research.

3. TAX, SPENDING AND LOCAL ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

By Marius Comper

3.1 Direct fiscal contribution

Romanian nationals were estimated to have paid £1.027bn in Income Tax and £1.372bn in Class 1 and Class 4 National Insurance contributions, according to HMRC's nationality-based fiscal release for 2019/20 (predating Brexit implementation, COVID-19 and recent earnings growth). That is £2.399bn in direct Income Tax and NICs before wider taxes are counted.

The £2.399bn figure is therefore the last official nationality-specific fiscal estimate that exists for Romanian nationals, and it is almost certainly an understatement of the position today, given that Romanian median PAYE pay has since risen by roughly 45%, from £1,679 in December 2019 to £2,427 in December 2025. Moreover, this figure is even more significant when benchmarked against the overall UK median monthly pay of £2,555[7] (end of December 2025). The lack of updated data stems from the fact that HMRC moved to discontinue its nationality-level Income Tax and NICs series after the 2019/20 release published in August 2022, citing reduced coverage as tax-credit claimants migrated to Universal Credit.

The same HMRC release estimated £184m in tax credits and £172m in Child Benefit payments linked to Romanian nationals in 2019/20. Income Tax and NICs alone were many times larger than those two family-support payment categories, evidencing often misleading benefit-deficit framing.

Business taxes, VAT, corporation tax and employer NICs are harder to isolate because public tax data are not usually released by the owner's nationality. We know that there were 349,700 Romanian payrolled employments in December 2025. Companies House evidence shows that Romanian-linked firms were documented in construction, tech, finance, hospitality and services.

[7] Office for National Statistics, *Earnings and Employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information*, UK: January 20, 2026. Accessed June 7, 2026. https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/bulletins/earningsandemploymentfrompayasyouearnrealtimeinformationuk/january2026.

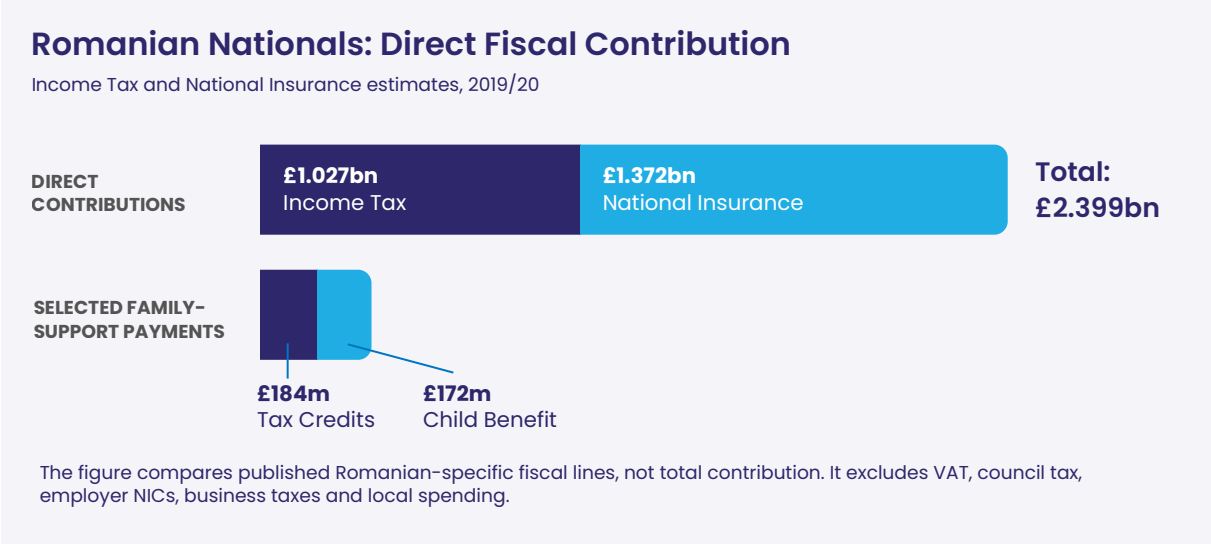

Figure 8. Direct Romanian-nationality Income Tax and National Insurance contributions exceeded the selected family-support payment categories in 2019/20.
Source: HMRC, Income Tax, National Insurance contributions, tax credits and Child Benefit statistics for non-UK nationals, 2019/20.

Note: Child Benefit is a fixed payment made to a parent or guardian for each child they're responsible for, regardless of whether the parent is employed. It is not means-tested in the traditional sense (you don't need a low income to claim it). Tax Credits have been phased out and replaced by Universal Credit, which is a mean-tested benefit and claimants (of any nationality, including British) could be out of work, working (including self-employed, or employed full time or part time) or unable to work, for example because of a health condition. Immigration/Residence status matters for both these benefits.

3.2 Consumer spending and local economies

Household spending, contribution to council tax, rents and local services, as well as small-business turnover can only be approximated from geographic concentration, because ONS family-spending data do not publish Romanian-nationality expenditure.

Spending in areas like Harrow, Brent, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Waltham Forest, Luton, Redbridge, Barnet and Northamptonshire is nonetheless visible in housing markets, schools, nurseries, translation needs, local retail, trades, transport and High Street services.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanians' fiscal contributions to the UK considerably exceed benefit entitlements. Income Tax and National Insurance contributions were many times larger than the selected family-support payment categories recorded in the same HMRC release. Household spending and direct contributions to the local economy are impossible to quantify.

4. TRANSNATIONAL CONTRIBUTION: TWO-WAY UK-ROMANIA BENEFIT

By Marius Comper

4.1 Trade, investment and diaspora networks

The Romanian community sits at one end of a two-way economic corridor, not merely as a migrant workforce embedded inside Britain. The Department for Business and Trade reported total UK-Romania trade in goods and services of £10.3bn in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2025, up 4.9% in current prices year on year. UK exports to Romania were £3.0bn and UK imports from Romania were £7.3bn.

Trade also sustains jobs in both directions. OECD trade-in-employment estimates carried in the same DBT factsheet indicate that UK exports to Romania supported around 23,500 jobs in the UK in 2022, while Romanian exports to the UK sat within an export sector supporting around 103,600 Romania-based jobs tied to the UK market. The corridor is therefore a mutual employment relationship, not a one-way flow of labour into Britain.

Figure 9. UK-Romania trade and investment form a two-way economic corridor.
Source: Department for Business and Trade, Romania trade and investment factsheet, 14 May 2026

Diaspora networks provide language capability, commercial trust, founder links, supplier knowledge, recruitment channels, cross-border professional networks and investor familiarity. Dexory, FlowX.AI, UiPath, FintechOS, Tractable and Romanian-linked UK venture activity make this visible in the technology corridor.

The British Romanian Chamber of Commerce is an example of a British Romanian business-network. With more than 220 members and offices in London, Bucharest, Cluj and Sibiu it provides a concrete trade-and-investment bridge.

4.2 Remittances and development links

The Migration Observatory estimated that migrants in the UK sent around £9.3bn in remittances in 2023, but no official data isolates the Romanian contribution. World Bank data records Romania receiving around US$9.53bn in personal remittances globally in 2024. This is not a UK-to-Romania corridor figure but proves that diaspora remittance flows are macro-economically material for Romania. An analysis by the Romanian National Bank published in December 2025[8] revealed that almost half of these personal remittances come from the UK and Germany due to the better qualified workforce in these countries. Remittances support household resilience, education, housing, care and small investment in Romania, while diaspora entrepreneurship and trade links feed value back into the UK through companies, services, exports, capital markets and professional networks (specific examples are discussed in Section 6 of this report). The two-way contribution is therefore broader than remittances alone.

4.3 Talent mobility and circular benefit

Romanian-trained clinicians, engineers, researchers and entrepreneurs represent human capital partly trained in Romania, and their UK contribution can be seen in Romania as a loss, brain-drain, if it becomes a permanent one-way movement. However, mobility can become mutual benefit if the opportunity for better managed mobility is acknowledged. This can translate into better qualification recognition, joint research and innovation links, diaspora investment channels, employer partnerships, mentorship and pathways for temporary return or knowledge transfer. This approach makes the UK-Romania relationship more strategic and avoids reducing Romanian talent either to labour supply for Britain or loss for Romania.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Transnational diaspora networks support trade and investment exchanges, as well as growing remittance flows that have a two-way benefit. What can be perceived as a one-way flow phenomenon (Romania to UK brain drain or UK to Romania remittance depletion) must inspire better managed mobility processes, resulting in joint opportunities, links and partnerships.

[8] National Bank of Romania, "Financial Stability Report - December 2025," National Bank of Romania (BNR), last modified December 2025, https://www.bnr.ro/en/25395-financial-stability-report-december-2025.

5. CASE STUDY:
ROMANIANS' KEY CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURE AND FOOD PROCESSING DURING COVID-19

By Dr Oana Burcu

Romanian workers played a critical, measurable, and highly visible role in keeping the UK economy functioning during COVID-19, especially in agriculture where labour shortages became acute, prompting concerns about the potential wastage of food harvests. Restrictions were lifted on migrant workers in agriculture, and a few other sectors such as construction, which were seen as essential in supporting the UK's infrastructure. The COVID-19 crisis provided visibility to the most invisible – the migrant workers who ultimately worked to "feed the nation". Yet visibility also prompted increased attention to the welfare of seasonal workers, many of whom took considerable risks to travel to the UK and work during a health crisis. It showcased the post-Brexit tension between the UK's significant reliance on migrant labour and migrants who were often politically problematised.

The UK agricultural sector relies on approximately 40,000 seasonal workers annually. By 2017, the National Farmers Union estimated that two-thirds of the seasonal workforce in horticulture were from Romania and Bulgaria, figures which were similar during the COVID-19 pandemic. Workers in the agricultural and food processing sector faced several challenges: the journey to the UK which exposed them to the virus and required a quarantine; outbreaks in food factories and in caravans often used as accommodation where agricultural workers lived in close proximity; a lack of adequate PPE in the workplace; shortened quarantines; and a lack of appropriate hygiene rules. From a sample of 450 workers[9], 11% of those working in food and agriculture reported having their wages withheld, not being allowed to take holidays, not receiving holiday pay, 15% working below minimum wage, 16% not being issued a contract, and 19% reported experiencing emotional abuse. Roma, who represented 17% of the 450 sample, were significantly more likely to report emotional abuse, not being issued with a contract, not being issued with payslips and working below minimum wage.

[9] Oana Burcu, Alison Gardner, Charlotte Gray. *Impact of COVID-19 on Romanian and Bulgarian Workers in UK Agriculture*. The University of Nottingham Rights Lab report (July 2021). https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2021/july/impact-of-covid-19-on-romanian-and-bulgarian-workers-in-the-uk-agriculture.pdf

It is important to note that these experiences were reported in sectors that are well regulated, while the figures in other sectors, such as hospitality, were much higher within the same sample.

Efforts to replace migrant labour with British workers in agriculture proved largely unsuccessful, as the work is physically demanding, sometimes in difficult weather conditions, seasonal, and often located in remote rural areas, making it difficult to attract and retain a domestic workforce. The "Pick for Britain Campaign" launched by the government in an attempt to target domestic workers and support the agricultural sector did not yield the expected results. Separately, one large labour provider reported around 15,000 applications, yet only 3% led to successful placements. In that provider's separate cohort of 450 UK-based workers, including British and EU citizens already living in the UK, fewer than 4% completed their assignments. To meet labour needs, some agricultural companies went as far as chartering flights to the UK[10] just to ensure they got the necessary workforce, highlighting the essential role of migrant workers.

The conditions under which this work was done highlight the tensions in this policy area. Romanian workers delivered essential labour while bearing risks and treatment that much of the wider workforce did not, and the evidence on poor conditions above is best read as a measure of what was asked of them, rather than as a characterisation of the community itself. The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority Report[11] showed that Romanians were among the most exploited immigrant groups in the UK, and more commonly identified in the food processing sector. Moreover, post-Brexit hostility towards Romanians, and Eastern Europeans more generally meant that many continued to be negatively stereotyped and vilified despite being economically essential. Overall, a key contradiction emerged between economic reliance on Romanians and social exclusion.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanian workers' contribution to agriculture during COVID-19 deserves recognition that was largely absent at the time. The pandemic made visible an often-invisible workforce, while also exposing the tension between the UK's reliance on migrant labour and the continued political problematisation of migrant workers.

[10] Lisa O'Carroll, "Romanian Fruit Pickers Flown to UK Amid Crisis in Farming Sector," *The Guardian*, April 15, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/15/romanian-fruit-pickers-flown-uk-crisis-farming-sector-coronavirus

[11] Oana Burcu, Alison Gardner, Charlotte Gray. *Understanding risks of exploitation for vulnerable migrant workers in the UK during COVID-19*. The University of Nottingham Rights Lab report (July 2021). https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/beacons-of-excellence/rights-lab/resources/reports-and-briefings/2021/july/impact-of-covid-19-on-romanian-and-bulgarian-workers-in-the-uk-agriculture.pdf

6. ROMANIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE UK

By Cristina Irimie

6.1 From labour-market restrictions to enterprise formation

Entrepreneurship is one of the Romanian community's least counted but most visible contributions to the UK. It runs from one-person trades and self-employed work — builders, drivers, cleaners, hairdressers, nail technicians, bakers, caterers and interpreters — through established construction, logistics, food, care and professional-services firms, to venture-backed technology companies. After the 2007 EU accession, Romanians faced restrictions to the UK labour market until 2014. For many, self-employment became the only practical route into lawful economic participation, from the Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) to cleaning, logistics, care and hospitality. This resulted in a form of forced entrepreneurial learning, whereby a community learned, largely by necessity, how to create a largely invisible layer of self-employment that cannot be measured through employee/payroll or company director data alone. The scale of Romanian entrepreneurship is therefore consistently understated by the very data used to measure it.

6.2 Construction: the invisible workforce behind the named contractors

Construction is one of the clearest Romanian entrepreneurship pathways (as detailed in Section 2 of this report), combining labour-market restriction, self-employment, practical skills, subcontracting and company formation. The 2021 Census found that 17.6% of EU2-born adults worked in construction. The Construction Industry Training Board's (CITB) 2022 workforce analysis found Romania to be the single largest foreign source of UK construction workers[12], supplying around 5% of the workforce nationally and roughly 19% in London, with no other single country supplying more than 1%. The Home Builders Federation's 2023 workforce census found Romanians to be the largest EU nationality in a London home-building workforce that is more than half EU/EEA[13]. The sector's tiered structure is what makes

[12] Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), *Construction Skills Network: UK Report 2022-2026* (Bircham Newton: CITB, 2022), https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/109839/pdf/

[13] Home Builders Federation, Home Building Workforce Census 2023 (London: Home Builders Federation, 2023), https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/12623/HBF_Workforce_Census_2023.pdf

the invisible layer so important: a tier-one contractor wins the project and lets specialist packages to subcontractor firms, which in turn engage CIS-registered self-employed trades. Romanian workers and businesses populate the lower tiers of that supply chain in large numbers within the supply chains of major contractors. Yet, they rarely appear in headline contractor narratives or official datasets because delivery is often structured through subcontractors, CIS workers, labour-only gangs and specialist trade packages.

Above that base sit Romanian-founded companies that have grown into substantial businesses, showing the full arc of the sector from self-employed trade to specialist subcontractor, main contractor and acquisition target.

Leading examples range from a small drylining company growing into a main-contractor role, a social-housing specialist whose Romanian managing director became a group chief operating officer — alongside specialist glazing, civil engineering, social-housing repairs and builders'-merchant businesses. Another company also illustrates circular diaspora investment: value earned in British construction was reinvested into Romanian food manufacturing that exports back to the UK. This qualitative evidence requires further mapping, but it points to an important insight: in its more mature form, Romanian entrepreneurship in Britain generates not only remittances but circular diaspora investment — cross-border capital, know-how and regional-development links between the two countries.

The scale this has reached can be tested directly against filed accounts. A Companies House sample compiled and reviewed for this report included 18 Romanian-linked construction, built-environment, infrastructure, supply-chain and property companies. The sample shows two distinct models side by side. Some firms employ directly at scale; multi-million turnovers with tens of employees. The contrast reflects the construction-sector pattern in which incorporated firms manage contracts and core staff while delivery is supported by subcontractors. The incorporated company is the visible layer; beneath the leaner firms sits a larger self-employed labour base that PAYE statistics never capture. Read together, the two models show Romanian construction entrepreneurship reaching genuine employer scale while still resting on the invisible CIS workforce.

The findings also understate scale in a second, more revealing way. Companies House records the founder-directors of one of the largest construction groups as British because they have naturalised as British citizens. A search for companies with Romanian Moldovan national directors would miss this £58m Romanian/Moldovan-origin group entirely. It is the clearest illustration in this chapter of the central problem: once migrant-origin founders naturalise, their contribution can sit inside official data simply as a British company, invisible to any nationality-based count.

The success of the large Romanian companies demonstrates that Romanian entrepreneurship has moved beyond sole trading into civil engineering, contract

management, employment, retained assets, supply-chain capacity, construction software and, in some cases, acquisition-level scale. It also demonstrates rapid upscaling ability.

6.3 Logistics: from the owner-driver to the fleet

If construction is the founding sector of Romanian self-employment in Britain, logistics is its second great road-based economy, with the same invisible-to-visible structure. The model runs the same course as construction. At the base are self-employed van and HGV drivers, multi-drop couriers, owner-drivers, removals workers and warehouse operatives, many starting by hiring or leasing a vehicle and taking subcontracted routes — night trunking, supermarket deliveries, parcel and furniture contracts — before building small fleets and/or subcontracting other Romanian drivers. The work is therefore not simply driving but route management, vehicle finance, insurance, compliance, maintenance and subcontractor coordination. Findings show the shape of the incorporated tier: a lean company managing vehicles, routes and contracts over a much wider driver network it does not directly employ, the same gap between company scale and headcount seen in construction.

Above domestic haulage sits the UK-Romania corridor: courier and parcel operators carrying not only commercial freight but the material of family life — documents, tools, food, appliances, furniture and parcels moving between British and Romanian households. The sector functions as social infrastructure as well as commercial service. This is supported by a Romanian economy of accountants, insurers, garages, MOT stations, vehicle-leasing and compliance advisers, for whom the self-employed driver is the client base. Like construction, the sector is systematically undercounted, because activity classification codes alone do not capture real activity: a firm coded as freight, courier, warehousing or vehicle repair may operate across all of them.

6.4 Cleaning: the largest invisible sector of all

Cleaning is one of the largest single forms of Romanian economic participation and one that is completely invisible. In the 2021 Census occupation data, cleaners and domestic staff are among the largest EU2 occupations, comparable in scale to warehouse work, yet almost none of this appears in business statistics because it often begins as unincorporated self-employment, visible to HMRC through Self-Assessment but largely invisible in company-ownership statistics.

The pathway is identical to that observed in the construction sector, but with an even lower barrier to entry, since these are mostly micro-businesses. Cleaning is rarely a celebrated scale-up, which is part of why it is overlooked, but a sole trader may hire others, form a limited company and bid for spaces to clean, including in construction. Moving from self-employment into ownership is also an important feature of this trade.

6.5 Food, the High Street and community clusters

The Romanian food economy shows how community demand becomes business infrastructure in distinct layers: the high street first (shops, bakeries, butchers, cafes and restaurants in areas of settlement such as London boroughs with high Romanian populations), then wholesale and refrigerated distribution, and finally UK-based manufacturing. The strongest scale example is of a Birmingham-based Romanian food wholesaler whose filed accounts show turnover rising from £40.7m to £98.5m and employment from 67 to 92 between 2022 and 2025, operating from around 150,000 square feet of warehousing including temperature-controlled storage.

CASE STUDY

The newest layer is UK-based manufacturing — the point at which the community moves from importing and retailing familiar products to producing them on British soil. A Romanian meat factory in Birmingham established in 2021 on a reported £3m investment, describes itself as the first Romanian-dedicated meat-production factory in the UK. It employs around 20 people, produces traditional Romanian meat products at a capacity of about 15 tonnes a day, and distributes across England within 24 hours. Alongside it sits a layer of Romanian wholesale bakeries supplying bread and pastries to grocery shops and delis. This manufacturing layer, though real and in places substantial, is the least visible of all: it surfaces mainly through companies' own reporting rather than any dataset, so the move from diaspora demand to domestic production is happening largely uncounted — a further instance of the measurement gap.

These businesses concentrate into dense, visible community clusters. The Harrow, Brent and Barnet corridor of north-west London — the area of highest Romanian settlement density in the country — supports bakeries, butchers and wholesalers, grocery chains, mainstream-facing restaurants, and event venues and Romanian restaurants, brasseries, coffee shops and patisseries. The clustering is visible at the level of a three streets intersection across councils in Queensbury, North-West London, where a well-known Romanian medical clinic shares the same street with a reputable construction-training centre, placed across the road from a food wholesaler and a Romanian grocery shop within a few yards of one another — the ecosystem in miniature. Some of these businesses sit where three boroughs meet, in a corridor leading to Burnt Oak, the suburb the national press[14] has called London's "Little Romania".

[14] George Harrison. "How Romanian Immigration Changed This Small London Suburb Beyond Recognition". *The Sun*, May 31, 2018. https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6379368/how-romanian-immigration-changed-this-small-london-suburb-beyond-recognition/

6.6 Care, health and regulated training: building on compliance

Health, care and accredited training are a more regulated, trust-dependent stage of entrepreneurship that can only be built on compliance — professional qualifications, clinical or quality governance, safeguarding and inspection. Here too an invisible base of self-employed care workers, domiciliary carers, freelance dentists, doctors, nurses, trainers and assessors feeds a visible layer of regulated providers, clinics and approved training providers. Leading examples are a national CQC-regulated care franchise recognised in the Elite Franchise Top 100, operating over 30 franchises; and a Romanian family dental and medical business that grew from one chair to two clinics and runs its own in-house digital dental laboratory, with a patient database of over 24,000. At the top of the regulated-medical layer sit Romanian-trained consultants in private practice. Romanian medical training therefore feeds the UK at every level — from care workers and family clinics through to consultant-level private surgery — a contribution that, like the rest of the sector, is nowhere counted by nationality.

Accredited training providers belong to this same regulated layer and show its rigour most clearly. A training business cannot simply trade: it must operate as an approved centre of a recognised awarding organisation — such as Pearson Edexcel, GQA Qualifications, NOCN, ProQual, the Scottish Qualifications Authority or Highfield — under the oversight of Ofqual or its devolved equivalents (including CCEA in Northern Ireland) and the relevant sector regulators, such as the Security Industry Authority and the Construction Industry Training Board. It can operate only by meeting that body's quality-assurance requirements under external monitoring. Through them, Romanian-linked providers deliver National Vocational Qualifications and safety certificates on which the construction (CSCS Cards), security industry (SIA licences) and care workforces depend, and the model reaches into education through Romanian-founded nurseries and accredited supplementary schooling. Regulated training is therefore a connective sector, building on the same compliance discipline as care and health and feeding documented competence into the rest of the ecosystem.

6.7 Professional services: how the invisible base sustains the visible economy

Professional services are where the connection between the two layers is clearest, and where the ecosystem becomes self-sustaining. They are the formalisation engine, converting work into tax records, skill into qualifications, settlement into mortgages, risk into insurance and community trust into scalable enterprise — and they depend on the invisible layer for their clients. A CIS subcontractor might often rely on a Romanian-speaking accountant who understands the CIS, UTR and Self-Assessment; the same trader needs a Romanian-speaking insurance broker, the CSCS card and, as he settles, a mortgage adviser who can evidence self-employed income. In each case an invisible self-employed trader is the paying client that creates and sustains a visible Romanian professional-services firm.

The layer is itself made of many distinct sub-sectors: accountancy and bookkeeping (the largest); solicitors and legal advisers across immigration, conveyancing, family, employment, commercial and personal-injury work; court-certified interpreters and sworn translators indispensable both to access to justice and to consular services; mortgage, protection and insurance advisers; recruitment agencies covering temporary and permanent placement, care and hospitality staffing, and student recruitment into UK education; and notarial and company-formation services — each resting on a professional or regulatory authorisation that makes it a formal, accountable business. It is also maturing with the community it serves: the Romanian who arrived needing only a CIS registration and a translator now, as a homeowner, employer and director, needs growth advice, asset protection, pensions and succession planning. In turn, the advisers who climbed that value chain are the ones now building substantial firms. Romanian women are prominent as founders throughout this layer, not only as its clients.

This layer also offers the clearest available proof that the contribution is real but uncounted. Community evidence indicates that Romanian accountancy and tax practices between them act for thousands of Romanian-linked limited companies and tens of thousands of self-employed workers, while Romanian-linked construction training and testing providers have certificated tens of thousands of Romanian workers in the past 10 years. Neither figure appears in any official dataset, for instructive reasons: the accountancy data is invisible because HMRC does not publish Self-Assessment or CIS deductions by nationality and Companies House does not record ownership by nationality in an easily accessible format, while the training, assessment and testing diploma and reports data is invisible because providers record learners by ethnicity, not nationality — even though they copy and retain identity documents and therefore physically hold the nationality data.

6.8 Women's enterprise and home economies

Romanian women's entrepreneurship is the most undercounted dimension of the whole ecosystem, and the deepest part of the invisible layer, because it is so often small, flexible, home-based and relational that no dataset registers it. Research[15] from 2025 finds that Romanian women migrant entrepreneurs are among the largest such communities in the UK and contribute significantly to both host and origin countries yet have been largely ignored by research and policy. Their enterprise runs as a single thread from the kitchen table to the regulated business: from home baking, catering, tutoring and childcare, bookkeepers, translators, through the bakeries, patisseries and cafes through dense networks. These include carers, cleaners, hairdressers, nail and beauty technicians, medical aesthetics practitioners, physiotherapists who move from a home chair to a salon that employs a team, and on to the institutional apex.

[15] Iuliana Chitac. "Identity is a matter of place: intersectional identities of Romanian women migrant entrepreneurs on the Eastern-Western European route". *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, Vol. 31 No. 1 (2025) pp. 80–108, doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEBR-10-2022-0897

The great majority of women's enterprise is formed of bakeries, salons and beauty studios. While these are often visible on the high street, and create local employment, they remain almost entirely absent from official data. Supporting businesses at their early, often informal stage enables them to grow into visible, registered enterprises. This pathway helps explain how home-based and relational forms of Romanian women's entrepreneurship can develop into high-street businesses, local employers and, in some cases, scalable ventures.

6.9 Technology: the high-growth frontier

Romanian technology entrepreneurship is driven by talent, education and London's venture-capital ecosystem. The Technology Report: *Understanding and Advancing the UK-Romania Opportunity* (2024), launched at the Palace of Westminster, identified 56 UK-origin start-ups with at least one Romanian co-founder — 13 with wholly Romanian founding teams and 14 with a Romanian woman founder — which had collectively raised close to €300m and created more than 600 UK jobs.

The portfolio is diverse: Tractable, the first UK-origin company with a Romanian co-founder to reach a $1bn valuation; Dexory, a robotics and AI warehouse-logistics firm that raised $165m. Other companies that make inroads in this field are Vita Mojo in restaurant technology; FilmChain in film and television fintech; and Neurolabs in retail-automation machine learning, just to name a few. The wider lesson is instructive: technology founders are more visible because the venture ecosystem knows how to name, fund and track them, whereas Romanian businesses in construction, care, food and logistics may be larger in number but lack equivalent mapping and convening infrastructure.

All the above are the often invisible and unreported stories of Romanian entrepreneurship — although real, filed and verifiable, they remain absent from every official statistic. This matters strategically as well as statistically: because the invisible self-employed layer is the base of the whole ecosystem, its contraction through return migration would be felt first in local economies — in construction labour supply, high streets, school rolls and demand for Romanian-facing services — long before it became visible in national statistics. Mapping this layer is an early-warning tool for labour-market resilience as much as a research exercise.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanian entrepreneurship is best understood as a single connected ecosystem with two layers. The visible layer is the incorporated-business layer: limited companies, directors, VAT-registered firms and employers with public accounts. The invisible layer is the self-employed and micro-enterprise base: Construction Industry Scheme (CIS) subcontractors, owner-drivers, cleaners, beauticians, home bakers, tutors and interpreters. The two are not separate worlds. The invisible layer is where most Romanians enter the economy, and it continuously feeds the visible layer. Romanian entrepreneurs are concentrated in sectors central to Britain's present needs: housing and construction skills, logistics, adult social care, local High Streets, food supply chains, workforce upskilling and the UK-Romania trade corridor. This is evidence of the gradual, but steady shift from informal arrangements and self-employed economy to formal economy.

7. A DECADE OF CONTRIBUTIONS OF ROMANIAN NATIONALS TO THE NHS (2016 TO 2026)

By Dr Tudor Toma

7.1 Multiple data sources

The key questions regarding Romanian nationals' contributions to the NHS are how many Romanian nationals are recorded in the NHS workforce, what workforce profile they have, and what can be said about their contribution to NHS service delivery. NHS employment, professional registration and migration data provide distinguishable sources of information. NHS England publishes staff nationality tables from the Electronic Staff Record, including historic time series and staff-group breakdowns. By contrast, the General Medical Council and Nursing and Midwifery Council mainly publish registration data, which are wider than NHS employment and include people not necessarily working in NHS posts. The Home Office and ONS migration data are wider again, covering visa grants and international migration flows rather than NHS staffing alone. No official source links Romanian nationality to waiting times, activity, productivity or patient outcomes. There is also no routinely published UK-wide NHS employee series by Romanian nationality across all four nations, no Romanian-specific published age profile, and no published Romanian-by-specialty NHS series.

7.2 Workforce size and trends

According to NHS England Hospital and Community Health Services, the recorded Romanian workforce in NHS England rose from 3,098 in June 2016 to 6,575 in June 2025, an increase of 3,477 staff or 112.2%. In 2025, Romania was the fifth largest EU nationality in NHS England, after Irish, Polish, Portuguese and Italian staff.

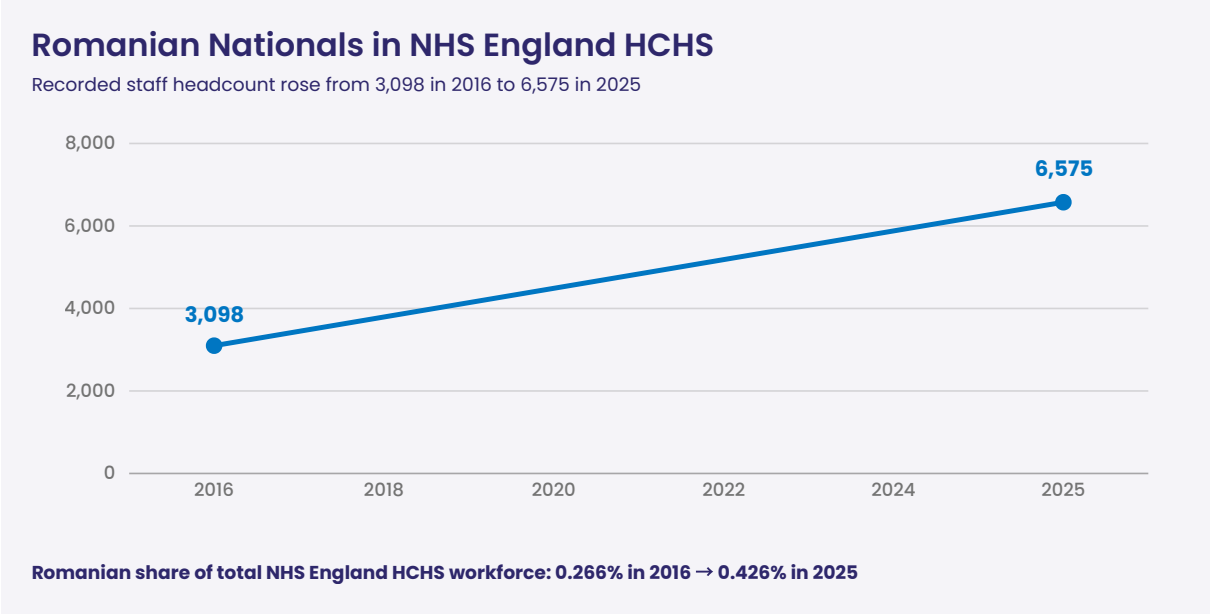

Figure 10. Recorded Romanian-nationality staff in NHS England more than doubled from 2016 to 2025.
Sources: NHS England workforce statistics; House of Commons Library NHS overseas staff briefing.

The largest recorded Romanian groups are nurses and support staff. These are staff groups in which the NHS continues to report material vacancy pressure. NHS Vacancy Statistics to December 2025 recorded 22,559 vacancies in the registered nursing staff group, a 5.2% vacancy rate; the workforce as a whole had a 6.7% vacancy rate, equal to 100,165 vacancies.

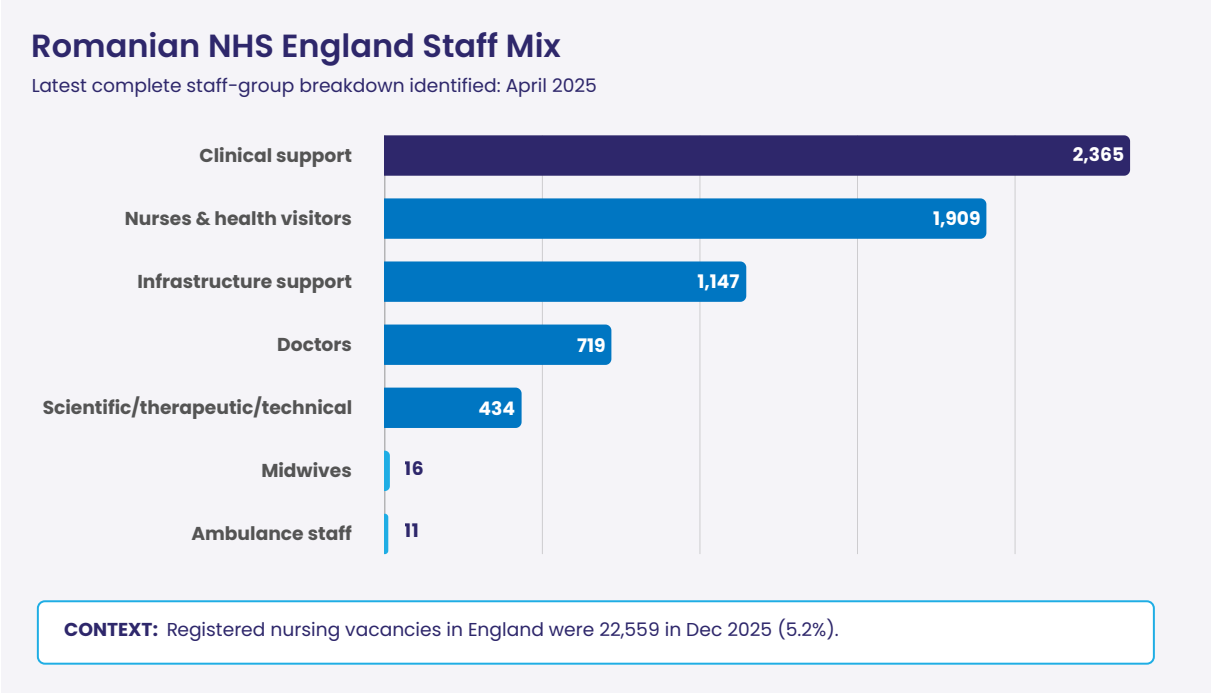

Figure 11. Romanian NHS staff are concentrated in nursing, clinical support and infrastructure support roles.
Source: NHS England HCHS workforce tables, April 2025 staff-group breakdown.

The Romanian share of the total NHS England HCHS workforce rose steadily across the period, from 0.266% in June 2016 to 0.425% in June 2024 and 0.426% in June 2025. Notably, the steady growth path continued after the 2016 referendum and after the end of the EU transition period.

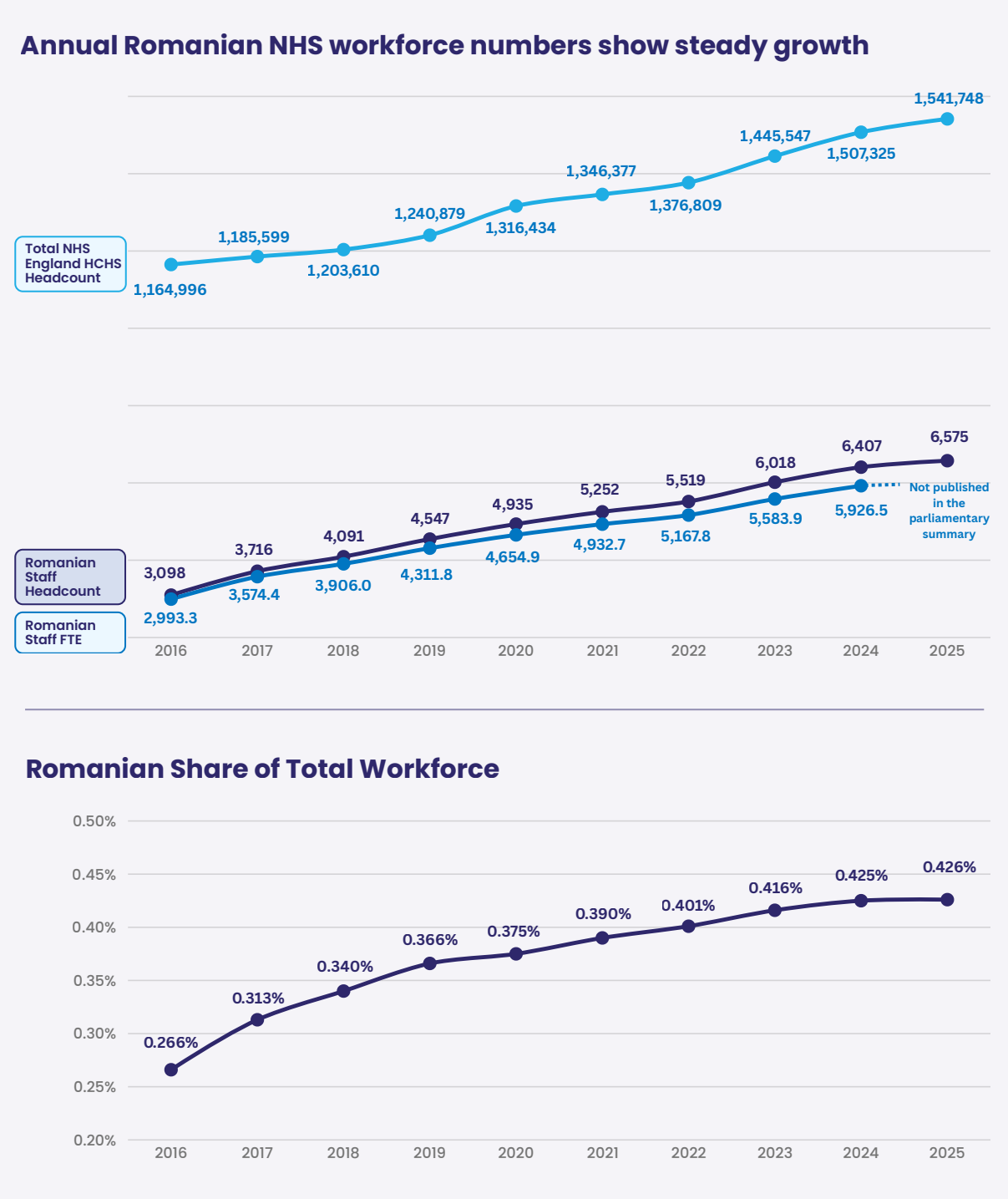

Figure 12. Annual Romanian NHS workforce numbers show steady growth.
Source note. Data for 2016 to 2024 were extracted from the official NHS England equality and diversity workbook linked from the June 2024 HCHS workforce statistics release. June 2025 headcount and total workforce figures were taken from the House of Commons Library briefing based on NHS workforce statistics.

7.3 Workforce profile and service delivery

The latest available staff-group profile (April 2025) shows the largest recorded Romanian groups in NHS England were clinical support staff, nurses and health visitors, and infrastructure support staff. Doctors formed a smaller but still material group at 719. A longitudinal analysis shows that all profiles experienced growth, but at different rates. The fastest recorded growth was in support and infrastructure roles, not in medical roles. This pattern matters because support staff underpin care delivery, patient flow and operational resilience even when they are not the most visible part of the workforce.

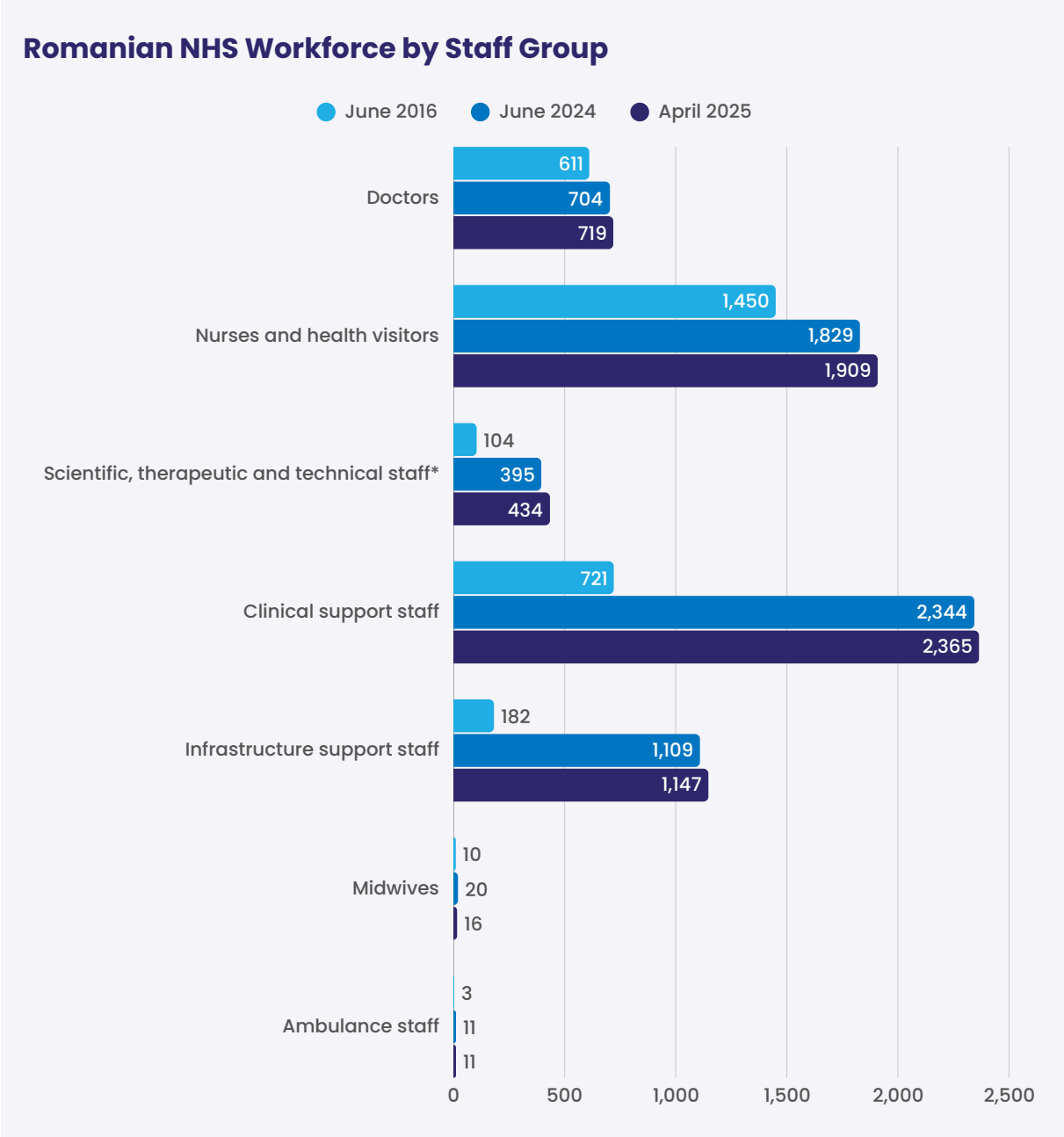

Figure 13. Evolution of the Romanian NHS workforce profile by staff group.
Note: The published scientific, therapeutic and technical category is broader than allied health professions alone. Staff-group headcounts are not additive because some staff may be recorded in more than one role.

The published evidence is much weaker on age, training background, geography and specialty. No Romanian-specific age distribution was identified. No routinely published Romanian-specific geographic distribution across the UK was identified either.

Training background can only be addressed indirectly. For nursing, the NMC reported that Romania was the largest EEA country of training among professionals on the register in England in March 2020, with 6,443 registrants. The NMC also states that these data do not show what role nurses are currently working in, and they are not limited to NHS employment.

For medicine, the GMC states that country of primary medical qualification is not a reliable proxy for nationality, because many doctors qualify in countries of which they are not citizens and nationality is only captured when they join the register. Brennan and colleagues[16] analysed GMC data on internationally trained doctors and found that, in 2019, 34.5% of UK doctors were trained internationally, with Romania among the main source countries.

No published Romanian-by-specialty NHS employment series was identified. NHS England publishes doctors by specialty and nationality in separate products, but the published series do not cross-tabulate specialty by nationality. As a result, any claim about which medical specialties have the highest Romanian representation would go beyond the evidence.

The available data do not support a reliable assessment of service delivery. The safest assessment is that Romanian nationals have made a measurable contribution to NHS staffing capacity, chiefly by helping staff nursing and support functions in a system that continues to face high vacancy pressure and ongoing reliance on international labour.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The absence of meaningful data linked to country of origin, nationality or ethnicity paints a patchy picture, and the limited information that does exist relates primarily to NHS England and Wales. The Romanian-origin NHS workforce rose steadily over the last decade, with the fastest recorded growth in support and infrastructure roles, proving that Romanians made a measurable contribution to NHS staffing capacity, particularly against the backdrop of vacancy pressures.

[16] Natasha Brennan et al., "Drivers and Barriers of International Migration of Doctors to and from the United Kingdom: A Scoping Review," *Human Resources for Health* 21, no. 1 (2023): 1-16. https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1798&context=pms-research

8. CULTURE, SPIRITUALITY, EDUCATION & LANGUAGE

By Ramona Gonczol & Prof. Ruxandra Trandafoiu

8.1. The spread of Romanian - becoming a heritage language

Romanian was the second most common main language other than English/Welsh in England and Wales at Census 2021, after Polish. In London, Romanian is the top spoken foreign language[17]. The UK is home to a generation of Romanian heritage speakers—children and adolescents born or raised in Britain to Romanian-speaking families, who are a unique linguistic group, situated at the intersection of heritage cultural maintenance and societal integration. The interests of this heritage generation are under-represented in public discourse, educational curricula, and language policy, which represents a risk to both cultural maintenance and social integration.

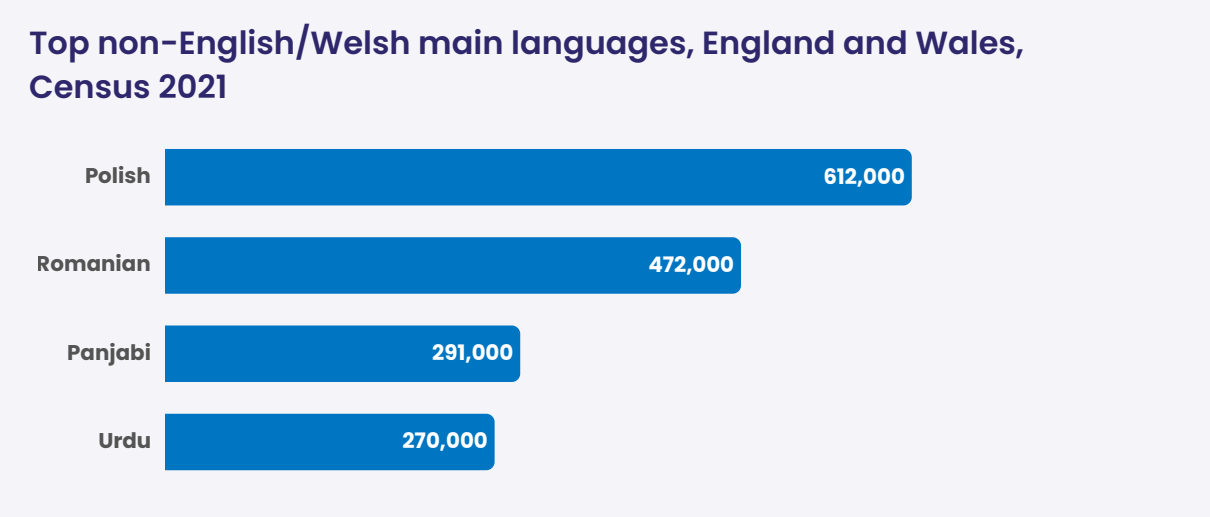

Figure 14. Romanian is one of the largest non-English/Welsh main languages in England and Wales.
Source: ONS Census 2021 main-language data for England and Wales.

[17] Helen Drew, Victoria Cook. The campaign for Romanian to become a GCSE option, BBC, March 1, 2026, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c0e5z004z7eo

8.2 Educational attainment of Romanian children in the UK

No official source publishes a clean count of Romanian-first-language pupils in UK schools. The Department for Education (DfE) first-language data is grouped broadly and does not disaggregate Romanian as a distinct category. Ethnicity and first-language coding captures overlapping but different populations: some Romanian-speaking pupils are recorded as Roma, White Other or Mixed, and some report English as their first language. Working from the available DfE and ONS material, ACORD UK's provisional estimate points to roughly 60,000 pupils who may speak Romanian at home, with a wide margin of uncertainty and a strong concentration in London. These are labelled estimates, not official counts; a clean figure would require a dedicated data request. The policy point holds regardless of the exact number: Romanian-speaking pupils are numerous and geographically concentrated, with clear implications for English as an Additional Language (EAL) support, parent engagement and progression.

The development of several guides and recommendation papers would help British actors understand the reality of the Romanian community, including the linguistic association between the words Romanian and Roma. The Roma community represents an important ethnic minority in Romania and Moldova, alongside several other ethnic minorities, so the maintenance of their language and culture must also be recognised.

Previous research on attainment is slim and outdated[18]. It exclusively focused on recent arrivals (not UK-born Romanian children), whose level of English was poor. The report "Educational Outcomes of Children with English as an Additional Language"[19] found that attainment is affected by arrival time with severe attainment penalty for pupils arriving late into the English school system. This effect was compounded by a lack of specialist expertise compared to other countries – with England's system for developing support for EAL pupils through specialist roles insufficient.

Outside school, young members of the community act as ad hoc translators for their families, in situations which are not suitable for their age, such as GPs or solicitors, and this can affect their development.

8.3 Heritage research evidence

Romanian is a heritage language for 2nd and 3rd generations born here, who need support to maintain and preserve it, to avoid attrition or disappearance of the language in the diasporic communities. Learning the family language is also a major contributor to one's overall wellbeing and mental health.

[18] Feyisa Demie. Educational Attainment of Eastern European Pupils in Primary Schools in England", *London Review of Education* 17, no. 2 (2019): 159–177, https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/lre/article/2957/galley/17710/view/
[19] Jo Hutchinson, *Educational Outcomes of Children with English as an Additional Language*, London: Education Policy Institute (2018). https://www.bell-foundation.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/02/Educational-Outcomes-of-Children-with-EAL.pdf

'Searching for Romanian Heritage in London Museums'[20], a UCL *ChangeMaker* Student-Staff Collaboration Project evidenced that the Romanian heritage had poor visibility in London Museums.

> There were moments when expectations weren't met or plans had to shift, such as being underwhelmed with the objects on display at the Horniman Museum."
>
> **MARIA (student)**

Gaps in heritage representation, coupled with often negative stereotyping and prejudiced representation of Romanians in the British public space, can affect the way young Romanians relate to their Romanian identity.

> ...One of the most important lessons we learnt was the importance of reflection, of understanding and prodding our identities as we have grown up with multiple prejudices, discriminations and stereotypes, which have been internalised and intertwined with what we believed Romanian identity meant. This project allowed us to truly delve into the depths of these unfair identity structures, and really challenge and rewrite their existence, making this project invaluable for the skills and opportunities it offered us."
>
> **RAREȘ (student)**

Maintaining one's heritage language(s) and cultural artefacts is also directly related to the feeling of wellbeing and ultimately positive mental health, as being denied access to family roots or part of someone's identity has negative mental health consequences, for instance a feeling of being incomplete.

8.4 Romanian churches as supporters of cultural transmission

The Romanian Orthodox Church[21] maintains 92 parishes in England, 10 in Scotland, 2 in Wales and 2 in Northern Ireland, alongside 4 monasteries, with an important role in maintaining Romanian language, culture and traditions. In addition, there are over 160 Romanian Protestant or Pentecostal churches throughout the UK[22]. There are two Greek-Orthodox churches. A symbiotic relationship is being forged between the diaspora and institutionalised religion: the rapid growth of the

[20] University College London, "Searching for Romanian Heritage in London Museums," Case Studies, July 2025, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/study/case-studies/2025/jul/searching-romanian-heritage-london-museums.
[21] Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, accessed June 5, 2026, https://roarch.org.uk.
[22] Marea Britanie Evanghelică, accessed June 5, 2026, https://mareabritanieevanghelica.wordpress.com/biserica/

diaspora has created the need for Romanian language worship and religious rites, while the churches' main role is to provide cultural maintenance and transmission. This results in a laicisation of the church's role in a diaspora context, whereby the church fulfils multiple roles. Moldovan citizens often share churches with Romanians, as services tend to be similar. While most priests are Romanian, it is not unusual for some to originate from the four UK nations, thus providing a complex link between spirituality, languages and two cultures. Worshiping often takes place in previously abandoned churches or buildings, thus contributing to local regeneration.

8.5 Bilingualism: mindset, competence, critical thinking and wellbeing

The official position of the UK government as well as other linguistics associations and institutes is to support multilingualism in society. However, the reality shows the opposite. Recent research conducted by Ramona Gongzol[23] highlights that bilingualism initially aids the development of both languages in children. Learning how to switch languages increases the child's ability to gauge the cultural context and make appropriate choices. UCL's 'Proficiency in Eastern European Languages' (PEEL)[24] outreach project with UK secondary schools reveals bilingualism cultivates resourcefulness, in terms of learning how to compensate for gaps in knowledge, which develops both critical and creative thinking.

However, these projects also highlight that progress in acquiring a heritage language can slow down or stop in adolescence and language acquisition often remains incomplete, thus requiring active intervention to avoid language attrition and a decrease in bilingualism skills (subtractive bilingualism). Maintaining bilingualism is important for future career choices.

A body of peer-reviewed research associates lifelong bilingualism with greater cognitive reserve[25] and, in some studies[26], a later average age at which dementia symptoms present. The evidence is associational rather than causal, but it supports the wider case that maintaining a heritage language may carry cognitive as well as cultural and economic value across the life course.

[23] Ramona Gonczol. "What does the future hold for Romanian as a heritage, home and community language in the UK?", (n.d.), forthcoming.
[24] University College London. Proficiency in East European Languages: Schools Visit to UCL, May 2, 2024, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/arts-humanities/news/2024/may/proficiency-east-european-languages-schools-visit-ucl
[25] Craik, F. I. M., Bialystok, E., & Freedman, M. (2010). "Delaying the onset of Alzheimer disease: Bilingualism as a form of cognitive reserve." Neurology, 75(19), 1726-1729. https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.0b013e3181fc2a1c
[26] Alladi, S., Bak, T. H., Duggirala, V., Surampudi, B., Shailaja, M., Shukla, A. K., Chaudhuri, J. R., & Kaul, S. (2013). "Bilingualism delays age at onset of dementia, independent of education and immigration status." Neurology, 81(22), 1938-1944. https://doi.org/10.1212/01.wnl.0000436620.33155.a4

Anecdotal evidence highlights the importance of Romanian weekend schools[27] for cultivating bilingualism and heritage transmission. Partial data reveals that there are currently at least 14 Romanian language weekend schools[28] in Birmingham, Bristol, Cheltenham, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Nottingham, Portsmouth and Preston. This small number suggests that there are considerable gaps in accessing these services, crucial for maintaining bilingualism. These schools are also rather unsupported by a regulatory entity that would ensure a sound and robust curriculum and training for tutors. Local community support (e.g., access to free or unused venues) is also needed for weekend language schools in order to enlarge their provision.

Some supplementary schools are more active. For example, a school in Kent[29] started to develop a set of lessons for the AQA Unit Award Scheme. However, the need for a more formal and nationally recognised qualification such as an optional GCSE in Romanian as a community language is paramount. A campaign and a petition have started in 2026. MP Gareth Thomas has organised a meeting in Parliament in April 2026 to gather support and visibility on the need for a GCSE. So far, no positive outcomes have been identified.

UCL is the only university in the UK that offers a degree in Romanian through their School of Slavonic and East European Studies, therefore pupils taking a GCSE could continue their studies in Higher Education, in combination with other subjects, such as economics, history, sociology and politics and more. A regular campaign run by authorities aimed at parents to inform them of the various options available to their children in the future, would be beneficial.

Enhancing and supporting bilingualism in schools through establishing specific EAL support roles and inclusion teams would be beneficial for new arrivals. Governments must continue to provide funding for Nuffield Early Language Intervention (NELI) or similar nursery intervention projects aiming to provide oral language intervention for children with EAL.

The Romanian institutions need to coordinate updated datasets of Romanian bilingual or multilingual children in the UK as well as of children of Romanian descent without an active use or knowledge of heritage Romanian.

[27] Leanne Brown. School helps Romanian children connect with roots. *BBC News*, May 14, 2025, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3rpxj5q0ryo
[28] Consulate General of Romania in Edinburgh. Consular Services. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accessed June 5, 2026. https://edinburgh.mae.ro/node/757
[29] Rokent, accessed June 8, 2026, https://www.rokent.co.uk

BILINGUALISM CASE PROFILE:

> I am very grateful that my parents decided to make sure I learned Romanian. Being bilingual is an extraordinary gift. It isn't just useful for getting around Romania. It's a lens into another culture which helps to broaden my mind in an increasingly globalised society. I enjoy being able to speak Romanian with my grandmother and understand the energy of phrases that are difficult to translate literally like "vai de capul meu". I enjoy the idea of having another society I could feel at home in. I find it easier to learn even more languages, having studied German to B1 level. I feel being bilingual really helped with this. Monolingualism constrains you to a fraction of human society, whereas multilingualism expands your horizons, allowing you to make more meaningful connections, become more employable, and be able to enjoy and understand beautiful cultural traditions."
>
> **JOHN (bilingual heritage speaker from a mixed household, 19 years old)**

John's insights tie in with his extraordinary achievements, having attained ten grade 9s at GCSE level and 4A* grades later on. He has gone on to study Aeronautical Engineering at Imperial College, University of London.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Acculturation can make the maintenance of Romanian heritage difficult for many families. The community should be supported in an integration process, rather than an assimilation one. Research resulting in practical solutions should be prioritised in order to maintain multilingualism and vibrant cultural and spiritual networks to enhance the wellbeing of the diaspora and its future career prospects.

9. THE ROMA COMMUNITIES AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN THE UK

By Mihai Călin Bica

Romania and Romanians have a complex history, shaped by interaction with expanding empires and migrants. Romanian ethnic diversity is a testimony to this history. The most significant ethnic communities in Romania are the Hungarian and the Roma communities.

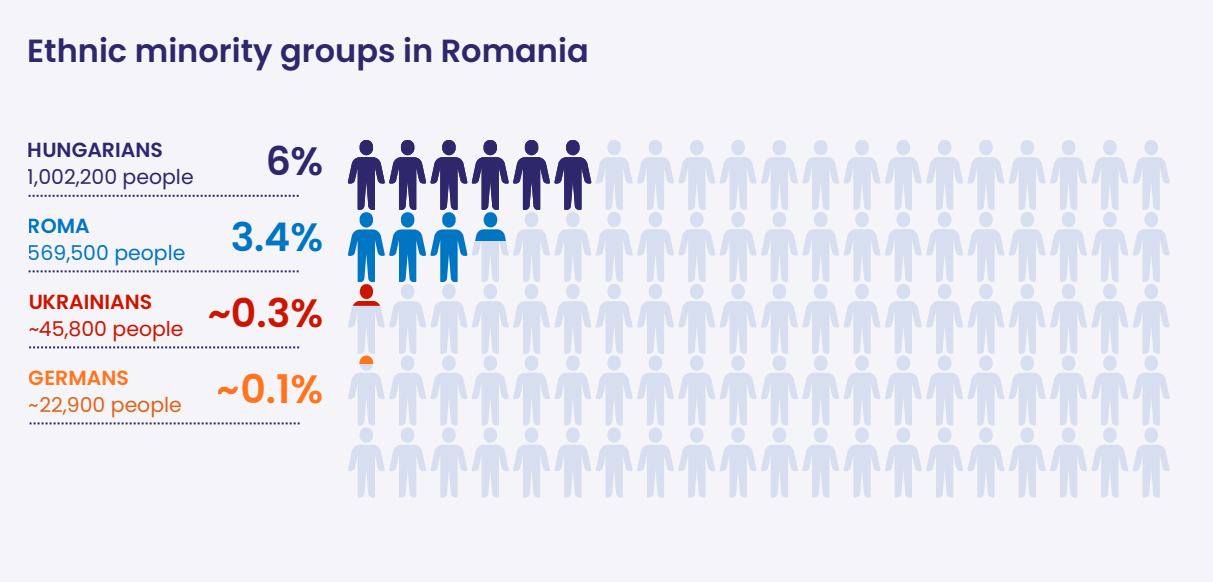

Figure 15. Ethnic minority groups in Romania
Source: Romanian Population Census 2021, National Institute of Statistics (commonly abbreviated as INSSE or INS in Romanian).

The official 2021 Romanian census recorded 569,477 Roma people, making them the second-largest ethnic minority in the country. The true figure may be significantly higher (between 1-2 million), because Roma often choose not to declare their ethnicity to avoid discrimination or stigma. This ethnic diversity is represented, to a degree, within the Romanian population living in the UK, where the Roma are the most prominent Romanian ethnic group. According to the 2021 Census in England and Wales there are around 24,000 Romanian Roma people, although this figure is likely an underestimate.

Given the Roma's European socio-economic context, human rights concerns and the confusion regarding the Roma versus the Romanian community, it is important to understand the specific identity and issues that may impact on the life of Romanian Roma in the UK.

It is believed that Roma people are originally from Northern India where they started migrating around 1000 years ago. Their migration towards the rest of the world spanned over several centuries. There are at least 6 million Roma living in the EU. Roma people speak various dialects of a distinct language called Romani, which is based on Sanskrit. The Romani language and the name have no connection with the Romanian language which is a Latin language that resulted from the conquests of the Roman Empire of the Dacian territory, where Romania is located today, before the arrival of the Roma in Europe. Roma people have a distinct culture in regard to their music, dance, outfits, traditional trades and approaches to family events such as funerals or weddings. In terms of religion, Roma people usually adopted the religion of the country or region they settled in.

Roma people are documented to be present in the Romanian territories as early as 1385. That very first presence of Roma in Romania is confirmed through an official document which also confirmed their enslavement. While slavery was abolished in Romania in 1856, the Roma people's existence in Romania remains marked by it. Following the end of slavery, Roma people in Romania, as in the rest of Europe, continued to be persecuted, especially during the Holocaust. While this part of Roma history in Romania remains to be documented to this day, a notable event occurred in 1942, during WWII, when around 25,000 Roma people were deported from Romania to Transnistria, where they were forced to live in deadly conditions which saw almost half of them dying of starvation, freezing or disease.[30]

In the absence of reconciliation efforts by official institutions and authorities, Romanians and their Roma ethnic counterparts are yet to fully cohabitate. A poignant example is the COVID-19 pandemic[31] when anti-Roma racism intensified across Europe, with governments, politicians, and media outlets scapegoating Roma communities and imposing discriminatory measures on them, despite the fact that poverty, overcrowded housing, and limited access to water or healthcare made Roma communities especially vulnerable to the virus. These structural inequalities, negative stereotypes and discriminatory approaches place Roma communities among the most disadvantaged across every socio-economic outcome. This context is the main driver for the socio-economic situation of Romanian Roma people living in the UK.

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[30] https://www.roma-sinti-holocaust-memorial-day.eu/recognition/the-holocaust-in-romania-and-deportations-of-roma-to-transnistria/; Alina Dolea and Arthur Suciu, "Ethnicity, Identity, and Branding in Postcommunist Romania," in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity, and Communication* (Oxford University Press, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1332; Marius Turda and Adrian Furtună. The Roma and the Question of Ethnic Origin in Romania during the Holocaust. *Critical Romani Studies*, 4(2), (2022), 8-32. https://doi.org/10.29098/crs.v4i2.143

[31] Margareta Matache and Jacqueline Bhabha, Anti-Roma Racism Is Spiraling during COVID-19 Pandemic, *Health and Human Rights* 22, no. 1 (June 2020): 379-382, https://www.hhrjournal.org/2020/04/anti-roma-racism-is-spiraling-during-covid-19-pandemic/

Robust UK data on the employment patterns of Romanian Roma specifically are not collected. Community organisations and advocates report a visible presence across the food supply chain — from agriculture to distribution — and in construction, alongside a smaller number of workers in skilled and managerial roles. Romanian Roma are also providing a significant contribution through the important activities of Roma advocates and professionals present in areas such as Newcastle, Luton, Sheffield, Ipswich, Peterborough, Leeds or London. Yet, UK authorities, public services, as well as political authorities have very limited understanding of the UK's Romanian Roma communities. This affects the nature of the support offered to the Roma communities, which is problematic given that, for example, Roma have poorer health outcomes[32] than other ethnic groups. This also weakens the potential for a fruitful engagement and civic cohesion between Roma and Romanian communities at a local level.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Historic patterns of exclusion and stigmatisation have followed Roma communities to the UK, where they often remain invisible. Because Roma are frequently conflated with Romanians, targeted support is largely absent. MPs, local authorities and frontline workers should receive training on the history, identity and specific needs of Romanian Roma communities. Public services also need better knowledge and resources to address specific wellbeing outcomes.

[32] Friends, Families and Travellers, Briefing: Health inequalities experienced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Brighton, (2022), https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Briefing_Health-inequalities-experienced-by-Gypsies-and-Travellers-in-England.pdf

10. COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

By Adina Măglan

10.1 Overview

Voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs) are key stakeholders in UK society, economy, and democracy. The Romanian diaspora in the UK has developed various organisations over time – formal and informal – to fulfil needs that are frequently unmet by mainstream statutory or voluntary provisions, which fail to account for the differences between the Romanian diaspora and other diaspora groups. The Romanian community in the UK is relatively new and the combination of Romania's delayed accession to the EU, curtailment of free movement rights to the UK until 2014, and the UK's austerity measures for most of the 2010s placed the Romanian diaspora at a disadvantage. The community had significantly reduced access to funds[33], community spaces, or training opportunities that would have otherwise enabled them to develop stronger and more diverse social infrastructures.

The Romanian VCSOs operate across a wide range of service areas – from education and immigration advice to food provision and mental health support.

10.2 Legacy of authoritarian civic suppression

Under communist rule which came to an end in 1989, participation in collective civic life was coerced rather than voluntary[34]: adults and children were required to perform unpaid labour as a mandatory expression of 'community duty' or 'patriotic labour'. This often included agricultural work, and noncompliance carried the risk of academic penalties or professional repercussions. These historical, systemic, and cultural factors play a key role in how Romanians perceive and understand the role of not-for-profit organisations. Their relationship with the voluntary sector is often marked by scepticism or a deep lack of trust.

[33] Gavin Jones, Richard Meegan, Patricia Kennett, and Jane Croft, "The Uneven Impact of Austerity on the Voluntary and Community Sector: A Tale of Two Cities," *Urban Studies* 53, no. 10 (2016): 2064–80. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0042098015587240

[34] Adriana Speteanu. The Restructuring of Free Time in 1980s Communist Romania. The Case of the 23rd August Works. Martor 17, (2012): 157-172. https://martor.muzeultaranuluiroman.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/speteanu_site.pdf

10.3 Absence of professional voluntary sector tradition

The relatively short history of voluntary sector and community organising in Romania means that the diaspora has had to learn and immerse itself in an entirely new professional and institutional field in the UK. The voluntary and community sector (as practised in the UK) has no direct institutional equivalent in Romania. As a result, there is a limited pool of Romanian professionals in the UK holding specific sector skills and qualifications such as charity governance[35], trustee leadership, community development, fundraising, and theory of change development. This is an acute deficit which deepens the inequalities impacting Romanian VCSOs in the UK as grant-makers prioritise equity-led governance: many require at least 50-80% of an organisation's trustees or senior leadership to be drawn from the communities it serves. Without a sufficient pipeline of skilled community leaders, Romanian organisations face systematic exclusion from funding opportunities, irrespective of the quality or reach of their work. The Department for Romanians Abroad offers funding for Romanian diaspora community projects, but the grants are limited, and the application process is highly competitive and bureaucratic.

These challenges coexist with a significant and underutilised resource[36]: the Romanian diaspora is demographically and professionally diverse and holds a wealth of transferable skills that already partly support the voluntary sector. Younger and second-generation Romanian migrants are deeply embedded in higher education in sector-relevant fields. There is a significant untapped potential in this sense, with many professionals holding cultural understanding and skills directly relevant or complementary to the voluntary and community sector. Harnessing these assets represents a material opportunity for consolidating and expanding the Romanian voluntary and community sector in the UK.

10.4 Data deficits and structural undercounting

There is limited data available on the size and impact of the Romanian VCSOs operating in the UK. The Romanian Embassy maintains an online register[37] capturing a selection of organisations, but coverage is incomplete and irregularly updated. Structural and governance differences add another complicating layer to the picture: most Romanian-led organisations are registered as Community Interest Companies (CICs) under Companies House and very few are Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs) registered with the Charity Commission.

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[35] Adina Măglan. Investing in Equity-Led Governance. Social Equity Centre, January 25, 2025. https://www.socialequity.org.uk/news-posts/investing-in-equity-led-leadership-to-capacity-build-a-diverse-voluntary-and-community-sector

[36] Alina Dolea, *Diaspora Diplomacy, Emotions, and Disruption: A Conceptual and Analytical Framework*. CPD Perspectives on Public Diplomacy, paper 1, 2024. Los Angeles: Figueroa Press. https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/sites/default/files/Diaspora%20Diplomacy%2C%20Emotions%2C%20and%20Disruption_6.19.24.pdf

[37] Ambasada României în Regatul Unit al Marii Britanii și Irlandei de Nord, Comunitatea românească, last accessed June 5, 2026, https://londra.mae.ro/node/753

There are material implications to this: CICs do not have formal boards of trustees, are ineligible for many funding streams, and cannot claim Gift Aid on donations - significantly limiting their fundraising capacity and financial sustainability. The preponderance of CIC registrations reflects, in part, the sector's unfamiliarity with charity law and governance requirements and the lack of available, trained trustees.

Beyond the formally registered organisations, a substantial share of support at community level exists in the form of Romanian social media groups (see Section 11 in this report) accounting for tens and hundreds of thousands of members. These platforms serve as primary channels for community information, peer support, access to social and care services, business development, and crisis mobilisation. While the groups often publish non-curated and non-fact-checked content, they do play an important role and offer uncharted but essential benefits. Notably, during the Brexit transition, they acted as essential information and engagement channels for EU Settlement Scheme awareness raising. However, their reach and impact are unrecorded in official data and there are other risks resulting from disinformation, social polarisation, or even extremism.

10.5 Cultural barriers to inclusive practice

Romanian VCSOs operate within a wider cultural context that presents distinct challenges for inclusive practice as defined under the Equality Act 2010. The Act requires all organisations delivering public-facing services in the UK — including voluntary sector bodies — to uphold protections across all protected characteristics, including disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, and ethnicity.

Socio-economic legacies explain some of the challenges faced by Romanian VCSOs in how they practice inclusion. For example, same-sex relations were criminalised in Romania in the communist era under Article 200 of the Penal Code and were only fully decriminalised in 2001. Similarly, until the 1990s, disabled people and those with mental health conditions were frequently placed in institutional facilities characterised by severe neglect and abuse. A Romanian parliamentary committee established to investigate communist-era crimes determined that over 15,000 children died in state orphanages during the Ceaușescu period[38]. International NGOs entered Romania after 1990 to support institutional reform, but the legacy of these systems (including the stigma associated with disability and with LGBTQ+ identities) continues to shape community attitudes[39]. This is evidenced by the lack of UK-based disability-specific or LGBTQ+-led Romanian organisations.

[38] Oana Despa. Starvation, Abuse: New Details Emerge About The Horrors Of Romania's Communist-Era Orphanages. *Radio Free Europe*. December 03, 2023. https://www.rferl.org/a/romania-communist-orphanages-starvation-abuse/32711948.html.
[39] Norocel, Ov Cristian, and Ionela Băluță. "Retrogressive Mobilization in the 2018 'Referendum for Family' in Romania." *Problems of Post-Communism* 70, 2 (2023): 153–62. doi:10.1080/10758216.2021.1987270.

This context does not reflect an absence of need. The wider or informal community networks mobilise important resources to support those vulnerable through donations and campaigns to support with repatriation of the deceased, covering costs for medical treatments, supporting survivors of domestic abuse, exploitation or slavery, and many more. These are sometimes mediated by organisations (formal) or by community members (informal).

While these types of networks and support are not specific to the Romanian diaspora only, acknowledging that they exist, mobilise, and act confirms that the groups – formal and informal – hold important agency and are resilient at individual and community level. However, this activity remains largely invisible to formal data systems.

From the viewpoint of existing provision, some equity and infrastructure-support programmes in the voluntary sector are scoped around ethnic-minority communities in ways that, in practice, do not reach White-minority migrant communities such as Romanians. The effect, whether intended or not, is that Romanian-led organisations can fall outside the targeted capacity-building support available to other minority groups. This would be best addressed through consultation and co-design.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanian VCSOs deliver substantial social value across the UK, maximising the impact of the very limited resources they have access to. Their contributions remain mostly invisible to policymakers, funders, and national infrastructure bodies. NCVO and local CVSs should review existing equity and inclusion programmes, and CVSs should run localised consultations to co-design culturally sensitive frameworks and programmes.

11. DIASPORIC MEDIA SPACES

By Bogdan Cronț & Prof Ruxandra Trandafoiu

11.1 Between home and abroad. Where do Romanians get their information from?

While the Romanian community in the UK represents an extremely important economic and social resource, there is still a significant discrepancy between the level of economic integration and the level of civic and informational integration of this community. Romanians in the UK consume a diet of homeland media through online newspapers, TV channels broadcasting via YouTube or other digital services, social media accounts, including of celebrities and influencers based in Romania. There are a handful of Romanian-language news media based in the UK, such as *Ziarul Românesc, Ziarul de UK* and *Gazeta Românească UK*. Some are heavily oriented towards classified ads and popular culture events and focus on London.

The main source of information for Romanians in the UK in relation to British society is represented by social media platforms, leading to the known phenomenon of information/filter bubbles or echo chambers[40]. Information is filtered through the prism of personal experiences, rumours, uninformed superficial analyses or even manipulation campaigns, to the detriment of official British sources, whose language and communication style remain difficult to access for many members of the Romanian diaspora. Thus, locally anchored Facebook groups, built on the model 'Romanians in the UK' or 'Romanians in London/Birmingham/Colchester etc.', YouTube channels or TikTok accounts of community members, which impart personal experiences and speak of the changes and challenges of life in the UK, are perceived as much more real, honest and useful than traditional media or official British institutions[41]. Romanian Consular communications, usually focussed on highbrow events or legal aspects, nonetheless relevant and important to the Romanian community in the UK, only reach a small segment of the Romanian community in the UK and seem to have little traction among the majority.

[40] Samuel C. Rhodes. Filter Bubbles, Echo Chambers, and Fake News: How Social Media Conditions Individuals to Be Less Critical of Political Misinformation. *Political Communication* 39, 1 (2022): 1–22. doi:10.1080/10584609.2021.1910887.
[41] Nevena Nancheva. Cleaners and Labourers on Facebook? Bulgarians in the UK between Free Movers and a Digital Diaspora. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration* Studies 48, 13 (2022): 3221–39. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2020.1866515.

11.2. Reaching the community – barriers and opportunities

THERE ARE SEVERAL BARRIERS TO A RELIABLE FLOW OF INFORMATION:

Distrust in the 'System' - this is not necessarily determined by the Romanian citizen's actual relationship with the British system, but is rather an inheritance, a cultural transfer of their relationship with the authorities of the country of origin[42]. For this reason, in many cases, there is a reluctance to interact, collaborate or ask for help, for fear that this could trigger repercussions. Often this tendency is magnified by rumours circulating on social media.

> **Example:** 'I will not report abuse that happened at work, because, in the end, I will be the one who will suffer.' or 'if I participate in the Census, I will end up paying more taxes'.

Digital Literacy Deficit Leading to Disinformation - the ability to understand and verify the information received, by checking with official sources, is generally reduced. Information about legislative changes, for instance, is often filtered through superficial analyses and skewed personal experiences presented in social media bubbles.

> **Example:** Someone asks the following question in a Facebook community group - 'If my husband and I have settled status, do we still have to apply for our child? I must add that he was born here', to receive the following answer – 'No, he gets it automatically! We went on holiday to Romania last year and we had no problem coming back.'

In such diasporic digital bubbles, confirmation by consensus often prevails. If several people 'like' or reinforce this information through their comments, many of the readers believe that the information has been verified. Thus, the truth is established by 'popular vote', not by legal arguments and access to reliable official sources.

Social isolation: Although integrated into the labour market, many Romanians remain socially and culturally isolated. Their social circles are usually limited to their family or Romanian friends. They may not choose this situation voluntarily nor feel comfortable in this isolation, but it is a phenomenon caused by a series of barriers, including the need for basic support or lack of linguistic, cultural and social skills, which they may feel they cannot overcome. Isolation creates frustration and disengagement from actively seeking to create ties with the British majority.

[42] Ana-Maria Georgiana Cirstea. *'England was the last hope': An ethnographic study of duty, favours and mistrust among Romanians in London.* Doctoral thesis, Durham University. (2024). https://etheses.durham.ac.uk/id/eprint/15720/

> **Example:** In community discussion groups, the idea that 'life in the UK is just about work' is frequently encountered. We have also encountered instances in which Romanians expressed mistrust in neighbours or work colleagues[43], often influenced by feelings of envy, and compounded by perceived differences, including class and race.

Consequently, living in cultural bubbles creates real risks of disinformation, potential exploitation (e.g., diaspora 'entrepreneurs' who promise to sort out legal or bureaucratic problems for a hefty fee), and marginalisation. However, understanding these risks brings the opportunity to rectify these issues and dismantle some of the existing barriers. Without targeted interventions, these issues will continue to affect social cohesion and the relationship between the Romanian community, the authorities, and other communities.

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE THE ROMANIAN DIASPORA'S DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM:

Building partnerships with 'Trusted Brokers'. The creation of digital information hubs would facilitate the collaboration between British institutions and Romanian associations/professionals from different fields, bridging existing gaps and helping connect the Romanian community to reliable sources of information. Trusted brokers are the administrators of important social media groups, influencers, podcast makers or Romanian professionals working in the UK and visible in the online space (accountants, lawyers, doctors, nurses, labour law specialists, etc.). Information shared through these hubs would be more clearly explained, in a more accessible language, and easier for the community members to understand.

Running digital campaigns that combat rumours, unprofessional interpretations and manipulations. The creation of platforms such as 'Myth-Busters' in Romanian would clarify, through analysis and practical examples, the rights and obligations of citizens at home and in the UK, the meaning of legislative changes that might affect Romanians in the UK and the way British institutions operate, thus helping to reduce uncertainty.

Using cultural community hubs, weekend language schools and church groups to draw attention to social norms and expected behaviours. Often these spaces are the primary sites of social interaction for the diaspora. Community leaders, event organisers and priests can act as real-life information conduits at the local community level.

Actively recruiting members of the Romanian community in public campaigns and projects. From recent practical experiences, we found that, when they are offered the right framework to get involved in the life of their local community,

[43] Ruxandra Trandafoiu, *Diaspora Online: Identity Politics and Romanian Migrants.* New York: Berghahn Books (2013). https://www.berghahnbooks.com/title/TrandafoiuDiaspora

many Romanian residents responded positively. Whether we are talking about greening public spaces, repairing a church or a school, or helping vulnerable people in crisis situations, as was the case during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Romanian residents have demonstrated, through their involvement, that they want to show that they belong to the community and that the community can count on them. As a result, encouraging, supporting and creating the necessary framework for as many cross-community activities as possible will bring benefits to both British and Romanian communities. The latter will feel valued and encouraged to get out of isolation.

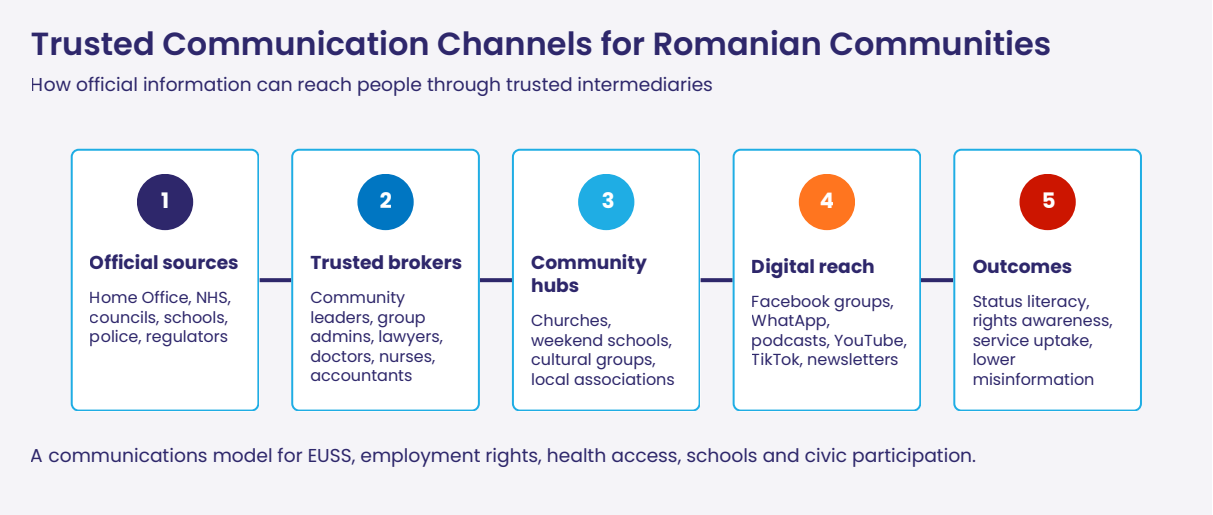

Figure 16. Trusted communication channels are central to Romanian community outreach.
Sources: report synthesis from community, faith, school, consular and information-ecosystem evidence.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The Romanian diaspora in the UK remains isolated behind the digital media barriers it initially created to aid settlement. This results in information bubbles that can be easily infiltrated by populist influencers and misinformation, including conspiracy theories. Both British and Romanian (consular) institutions need to provide digital communication in a simplified language to counter misinformation with verified evidence that can help rebuild trust.

12. DEMOCRATIC AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

By Adina Măglan

Romanian nationals living in the UK exercise a dual civic role, contributing to democratic life in both the UK and Romania. There is an increased interest in democratic and political participation in the UK and a significant appetite for democratic participation in Romanian elections[44], demonstrated by voting in very large numbers in each round of elections. Romanian citizens abroad retain full participation rights in Romanian national elections, including presidential and parliamentary elections, reinforcing a transnational civic identity. However, they can only vote in Romanian *local* elections if they are in Romania on election day and hold a valid Romanian ID card.

A significant difference between voter-registration systems in Romania and the UK affects participation. In Romania, citizens obtain their first identity card at 14, but they acquire voting rights only at 18. Eligible Romanian citizens are entered ex officio in the Electoral Register by the Permanent Electoral Authority when they have turned, or will turn, 18 by polling day, based on population-record data. In the UK, by contrast, eligible voters generally need to register to vote through an opt-in process. Notably, the newly implemented UK requirement for voters to present a photo ID at the polling station in order to be able to vote is not unusual for Romanians as this has always been the case for the Romanian elections. Moreover, photo IDs are thoroughly checked upon voting at the polling station to prevent voting and/or identity fraud. These checks are now digital and are cross-checked remotely against Romanian electoral registers, which confirm instantly whether a person can vote or has already voted elsewhere. This is an important strength of the Romanian democracy and voting system which feeds into a much-needed trust of the Romanian citizens into the state systems.

However, levels of democratic and political engagement among Romanians in the UK remain constrained by significant distrust in political institutions. This distrust is shaped by historical experiences under the communist regime, the persistence of high power-distance dynamics in post-communist politics, and widespread perceptions of corruption within the political class. As a result, many Romanians

[44] Zana Vathi and Ruxandra Trandafoiu, "EU Nationals in the UK after Brexit: Political Engagement through Discursive Awareness, Reflexivity and (In)action," *Journal of Language and Politics* 19, no. 3 (2020): 479–497, https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.19028.vat.

are hesitant to participate in UK political practices that have no direct equivalent in Romania. For example, door-to-door canvassing is often viewed with suspicion, and there is limited understanding of its purpose or role in democratic processes. Similarly, Romanians are less likely to make use of civic participation tools such as contacting their local councillors or Members of Parliament. They also confuse voter registration outreach (administrative) with canvassing (political); consequently, they do not register and cannot vote due to the opt-in system. Overall, only a relatively small proportion engage directly in UK political life, and when they do, their involvement tends to focus primarily on representing Romanian community interests rather than engaging with broader societal or policy issues.

In the UK, Romanian nationals with settled or pre-settled status are entitled to vote in UK local elections and can only stand for elected office at parish, town, borough, and county council level. Currently, approximately ten Romanian-heritage individuals serve as elected local councillors across England, representing a wide range of professional backgrounds and political parties on the entire political spectrum. However, post-Brexit voting rights for Romanian citizens are not uniform across the UK. In England and Northern Ireland, Romanian citizens who are not also British, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizens can vote in local elections only if they had permission to enter or stay in the UK, or did not need such permission, on or before 31 December 2020, and this has continued without a break. Romanian citizens who arrived from January 2021 onwards do not qualify on the basis of Romanian nationality alone, because Romania is not currently one of the EU countries covered by reciprocal local voting-rights arrangements with the UK. By contrast, Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and Spain are listed by GOV.UK as covered countries[45]. In Scotland and Wales, the local franchise is broader: Romanian citizens resident there can vote in local elections if they meet the relevant residence and immigration-status rules. This means that Romanian local voting rights after Brexit are narrower in England and Northern Ireland than in Scotland and Wales.

Romanians in the UK are politically engaged and follow closely political developments in Romania, which maintains an active transnational connection with their country of origin. Some UK-based Romanians – including UK elected Romanian councillors – are active members of Romanian political parties, participate in political initiatives abroad or in Romania, and engage with Romania's elected members who hold a diaspora portfolio. Such connections exemplify the increasingly transnational nature of political participation among migrant communities, including the Romanian diaspora. It also indicates that democratic and political engagement in the UK is not detrimental to participation in Romania and vice versa.

[45] UK Government. UK Establishes Voting Rights Treaty with Poland. *GOV.UK*, 2023. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-establishes-voting-rights-treaty-with-poland.

Beyond formal electoral politics, Romanian residents in the UK are increasingly active in school governing bodies, charity trusteeships, professional associations, cultural organisations, and community advocacy. Romanian-led civic organisations also serve a dual function: supporting community integration/participation and acting as interlocutors between statutory bodies and Romanian-speaking residents.

During previous Romanian parliamentary and presidential elections, Romanian voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSOs) in the UK played a significant role by hosting and staffing polling stations in partnership with the Romanian Government. In addition, several Romanian VCSOs supported the organisation of UK-based polling stations for UK Parliament elections, as well as for European Parliamentary elections. Through these activities, they have fulfilled an essential function in supporting democratic processes in the UK, Romania, and the wider European context.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Romanians in the UK have a dual political role: those who are eligible under the relevant UK rules can vote in local elections and stand for local office, while Romanian citizens can also participate in Romanian national elections from abroad. Post-Brexit, however, local electoral rights are uneven across the UK, with more restrictive rules for Romanian citizens in England and Northern Ireland than in Scotland and Wales. Even within this post-Brexit framework, Romanian-heritage councillors are becoming more visible in local government. Alongside formal politics, they are also increasingly active in civic and community roles, acting as a bridge between institutions and the wider Romanian community.

13. THE SOFT POWER OF THE ROMANIAN DIASPORA IN THE UK

By Dr Alina Dolea

13.1 Romanian diaspora – a strategic partner in strengthening society

Romanians in the UK are performing a key people-to-people diplomacy function connecting Romania and the UK through a complex set of economic, social, cultural, political and emotional ties. The Romanian diaspora strengthens the UK-Romania relations, acting as an engine of development in both the Romanian and British society; it does grassroots work and cultural mediation in the UK supporting the British local, regional and national authorities in priority policy areas such as modern slavery and human trafficking prevention, as well as health, education, rights awareness. Romanians in the UK bridge the two cultures through their daily interpersonal work, while mobilising to provide aid and support when crises emerge (e.g. during lockdowns or through support for Ukrainians after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine). The Romanian diaspora can strengthen British and Romanian democracy and their security, contributing to the bilateral efforts of defending Europe on the Eastern flank.

Like other diasporas, the Romanian community in the UK is heterogeneous, experiencing a split-existence with multiple belongings and identities that are constantly negotiated[46] between Romania and the UK. Awareness of the cultural specificity, emotional ties and the invisible luggage the Romanians brought with them to the UK is essential for efforts to foster Romanians' civic engagement, political participation and further integration. The Romanian diaspora organisations are key nodes in reaching out to the heart of the community to support bottom-up bilateral projects, top-down strategic programmes and wider policies.

[46] Alina Dolea *Written evidence submitted to the Foreign Affairs Committee's call for evidence into Soft power: a strategy for UK success?* UK Parliament. Published 13 January 2026. https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/138492/pdf/

13.2 Enriching society through cultural diplomacy

The Romanian Cultural Institute in London reports more than 600 events since opening in 2006 and partnerships with British institutions including Tate Modern, the British Film Institute, the Barbican Centre, the Horniman Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Wigmore Hall and Southbank Centre. The Ratiu Foundation UK established in London in 1979 (Ion Rațiu established ACARDA – The Cultural Association of Romanians in England in 1965), the Romanian Cultural Centre in London, established in 1994, and the Ratiu Center for Democracy launched in 2004 add an independent civil-society cultural bridge. The Romanian Film Festival in London started in 2003 has grown steadily over two decades; the 2025 edition placed Romanian cinema at Curzon Soho in London and Firstsite Gallery in Colchester. In turn, UK arts and culture are championed by the British Council Romania and celebrated also at Romanian local festivals such as the Craiova Shakespeare Festival and the Sibiu International Theatre Festival feature.

Arts and cultural production strengthen the contribution argument. Paul Neagu, the Romanian-born artist who settled in Britain, is a serious UK art-history case rather than a community add-on. Alexandra Dariescu provides a contemporary Romanian-born UK-based classical-music example, with international performance and education activity. The James Beard Award-winning food writer and cook Irina Georgescu is a UK author from Romania and an example of gastrodiplomacy, promoting Romanian and Eastern European cuisine, more broadly; her work brings visibility to an otherwise intangible grassroots food diplomacy work carried out across the entire UK by Romanian entrepreneurs baking cakes, smoking traditional meats to an increasingly international consumer market. These examples show Romanian presence not only as labour supply but as British Romanian cultural production, education and soft power.

13.3 Societal resilience in a hybrid war

The strong work ethic of Romanians who are building Britain, enriching Britain and caring for Britain, including as key essential workers during the pandemic and the highest employment rates of all migrant groups, is a testament to the soft power of the Romanian diaspora. In the UK, as well as across Europe, Romanians demonstrate an incredible physical and social resilience capital that stems from their ability and skills to cope with adversity and challenges on a day-to-day basis. They are an asset for the British national societal resilience in a global challenging environment; for example, over 2,000 Romanians are currently working at the nuclear power station Hinkley Point C, an essential infrastructure project for the UK energy and climate security. In addition, the second-generation Romanians educated in the British system have high attainment rates in compulsory, further and higher education, constituting a significant addition to a strong pipeline of resilient workforce for Britain's future.

Yet, the current hybrid war that targets the hearts and minds of people across borders and platforms requires new forms of resilience at societal level, including amongst diaspora groups. This is especially important because influence operations employ strategic narratives across digital ecosystems to sow division and amplify tensions in society in order to manipulate perceptions and behaviours. They benefit from a global emotional climate of uncertainty, compounded by geopolitical instability, the extended cost of living crisis, and the lingering effects of a pandemic that heightened loneliness. Together these dynamics contribute to a (perceived) state of permacrisis placing sustained pressure on societal cohesion.

The UK Government's national resilience framework[47] and action plan[48] should place a special emphasis on the psychological and cognitive resilience of the wider British society and of diaspora communities in the UK, including the Romanian diaspora. Diaspora communities in the UK are a missing target group in the current strategies of societal and institutional resilience; they are distinct and complex communities that need tailored approaches: due to their transnational and digital existence, they are targeted by hostile information activities and disinformation that crosses borders, aimed to catch them in a web of mixed local, national, and global narratives; they are also difficult to reach by governments, authorities, and civil society organisations. Capacity-building for psychological and cognitive resilience of diasporas is thus much needed. Romanian diaspora organisations and peer networks can be instrumental in developing culturally informed approaches to support the national resilience efforts.

KEY TAKEAWAY

The Romanian diaspora is an active and strategic partner in shaping the British and Romanian societies. Romanians' ability and skills to cope with adversity and challenges are an asset for a whole society approach to resilience. Cultural competencies among British policymakers are also key to building psychological and cognitive resilience of the Romanian diaspora. Bottom-up interventions, culturally informed disinformation toolkits and training targeting community leaders and micro-influencers are essential.

[47] The UK Government Resilience Framework December 2022, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63cff056e90e071ba7b41d54/UKG_Resilience_Framework_FINAL_v2.pdf
[48] The UK Government Resilience Action Plan The UK's strategic approach to resilience, July 2025, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/686d2fab10d550c668de3c6c/CCS0525299414-001_PN9801267_Cabinet_Office_-_HMG_Resilience_Strategy__3_.pdf

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