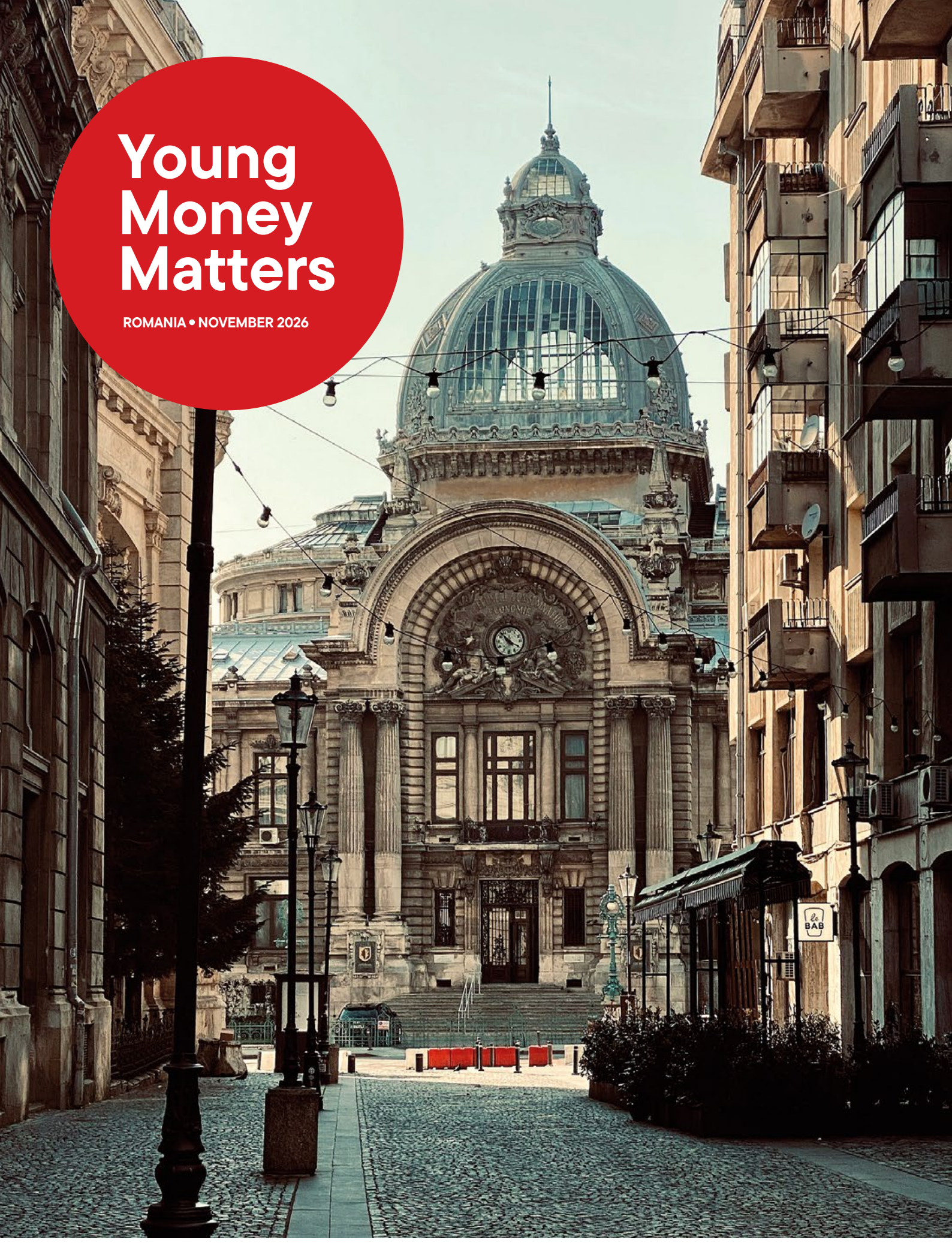
Young Money Matters

ROMANIA • NOVEMBER 2026



Cook® Communications



Publisher's Letter

Welcome to our third edition of **Young Money Matters**, a survey of young people and their money in Romania, the Czech Republic and Poland, the three largest markets in which Cook Communications operates.

Our surveys are truly independent. The questionnaires upon which they are based were developed in-house by our teams in Prague, Warsaw and Bucharest, with 3Gem Media conducting the polls. And we again turned to writer Nicholas Watson to turn the findings into coherent and readily understandable reports. This year our designers, studio ginger&fred, gave the reports a light refresh, and we have new illustrations from the talented Alice Slavíček.

Our sample size was 1,000 people in each country, with respondents weighted against the populations in administrative regions, thus providing truly representative surveys.

Cook Communications has since its founding in 2003 advised clients requiring financial communications support in banking, capital markets, investment, investor relations, M&A, private equity, and retail financial services. **Young Money Matters** is a natural extension of our broader communications work.

We take an inquisitive, journalistic approach. Our questionnaires were designed to harvest basic information, to identify patterns of behaviour, and to raise topics that could be examined in closer detail. In addition to our proprietary data, we reference official statistics and other recent surveys to provide context and supplementary information for our own surveys. We again shuffled the questionnaire by introducing some new ones about recent trends and topics. In this way, we can see that AI is a major concern for youngsters entering the job market; that financial pressure is influencing family formation; supplementary work and family support are important sources of income for many young people; a significant majority say they would consider relocating, at home or abroad, in order to improve their career and earning prospects; and we took a look at gender differences in terms of income, savings and investing — perhaps it will not surprise you to read that young women fare less well than young men on a number of counts in all three countries. On a more upbeat note, optimism remains high among young people in all three countries, with comfortably more than two-thirds of all respondents reckoning that their financial aspirations are achievable.

We hope that **YMM 2026** generates debate within the financial services sector, in the media, and among educators, regulators and, above all, young Czechs, Poles and Romanians.

Joe Cook

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Survey Parameters

The main objectives of the 2026 Young Money Matters report were to identify the current financial situation of young people aged between 18 and 35, their attitudes towards money and financial products, and their sources of information on money management.

The online quantitative study that serves as the basis for this year's Young Money Matters report was carried out by 3Gem Media Group between 1–16 June 2026, using questionnaires that were prepared by Cook Communications.

3Gem polled 1,000 Romanians aged 18–35, with the largest single group (32%) being 30–35 years old (Millennials). The other three groups (Gen Z) were: 18–21 (24%), 22–25 (22%) and 26–29 (22%).

In terms of education, 25% of our respondents were university educated, 53% were educated to high school diploma level, and 11% attended a vocational high school. Those quizzed reside in a diverse range of villages, towns and cities across Romania. The gender balance of respondents was 49% male, 51% female.

GDP: **$480 billion**
GDP per capita: **$25,690**
Population: **21.671 million**

Source: 2025/2026 data from IMF, INS



Key Findings

- In the 2026 YMM survey, 55% of 18–35s **are in full-time employment**, broadly unchanged from last year (54%), though the number in part-time employment has fallen to 5% from 8% in 2025. Only a fifth (19%) are earning above the national average salary of RON 9,272 (€1,766), with 38% earning below average.
- Just under half (45%) of employed respondents **do supplementary work to generate extra income**, with most (70%) earning less than RON 2,600 (about €500) a month from this. 54% consider this additional work a small entrepreneurial business.
- Just over two-fifths (42%) say **their discretionary income has decreased over the past year**, with only 14% saying they now have more discretionary income.
- The proportion of 18–35s **receiving financial support from their family** has fallen from last year, but still remains high at 50%. Among those receiving family support, a quarter (26%) receive RON 5,200–10,400 per year, while 11% get over RON 10,400 per year.
- Just under three-quarters (72%) **would consider moving to boost their income or advance their career**, with relocation within the wider EU (60%) the most attractive option, followed by moving elsewhere within Romania (34%).
- Two-thirds (66%) believe **the number of entry-level jobs has fallen over the past year due to the rise of AI**. Over a fifth (22%) of those employed feel **their job is currently threatened by the rise of AI**; 33% believe it will be threatened in the next few years.
- The way 18–35s are spending remains consistent with the 2025 YMM report, with **the biggest outlays being food (25%) and utilities** (16%). Savings remain at 11% while transport rose from 10% to 12%, the largest increase among spending categories.
- Two-fifths (42%) say **their financial situation has delayed plans to start a family**, with 24% postponing for up to five years, 14% for longer than that, and 4% deciding not to start a family at all.
- A quarter **never have any money left over at the end of the month**. Just under a third (29%) move any remaining money into a savings account, while 26% leave it in their current account.
- Three-fifths **only have one month or less of savings to fall back on**, with 22% having one to two months and 18% having three or more months.
- **The financial aspirations of 18–35s are largely unchanged**, with "having enough money to provide for their family" and "not worrying about paying bills" (both 17%) still the top aspirations. "Owning my own home" remains third at 14%.
- Three-quarters (74%) believe **their financial aspirations are attainable**. Among those who don't feel they are attainable, cost of living (37%), not earning enough (34%), high taxes (32%) and not being able to save/invest (32%) are cited as main reasons.
- There have been falls in the number of people who use a credit card (35% vs 39% in 2025) and those with a personal loan (12% vs 15% in 2025), **suggesting greater caution towards borrowing** compared with 2025.
- Top financial advice and information sources remain **internet searches (37%) and parents (33%)**. School is far down the list at 10%, though more (9% vs 6%) now use a personal banker or financial advisor.
- Three-quarters (73%) believe **their financial education is sufficient for them to avoid being scammed**, but 17% do not think it is.

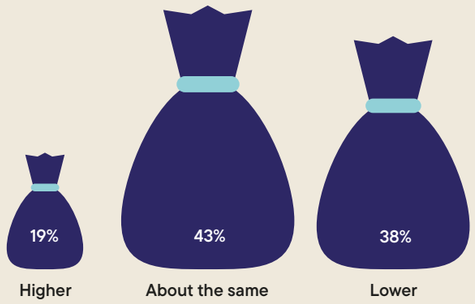
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Jobs and Income

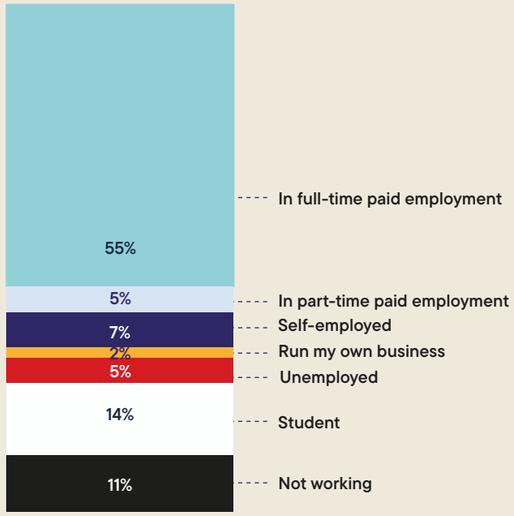
In the 2026 Young Money Matters report, 55% of young Romanians are in full-time paid employment, in line with last year's survey (54%). Those in part-time employment fell to 5% from 8% in 2025, while 7% are self-employed versus 8%. This year, 2% say they run their own business. The 69% in some kind of employment is broadly consistent with Romania's employment rate for the working age population (15–64 years), which was 63% in 2025, according to Romania's National Institute for Statistics (INS).

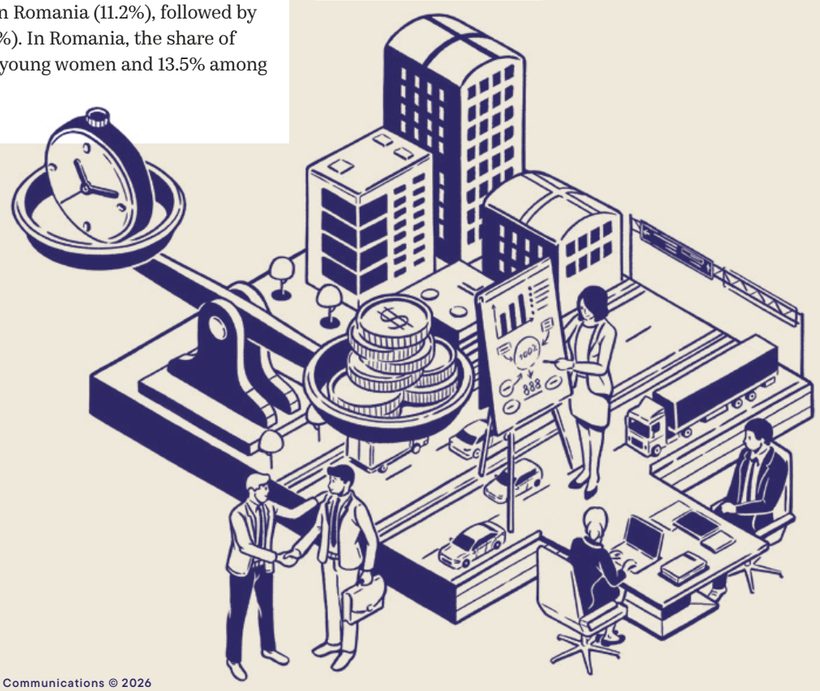
Those 18–35s who say they are unemployed (5%) and not working (11%) were virtually unchanged from last year's YMM report. In June 2026, Romania's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was estimated at 6.3%, according to INS. The 16% in our survey who are not working is reflected in the country's exceptionally poor national record in this regard. According to data re-leased by Eurostat, the EU's statistics agency, the share of young people in the EU aged 15–29 who have no jobs and do not follow any educational or training programmes, so-called NEETs, fell to 11% in 2025. Yet Romania continues to have the highest share of NEETs at 19.2%. Member state comparisons show that in 2025, the percentage of NEETs was about four times higher in Romania than in the Netherlands, which had the lowest share at 5.3%. The figure is much worse for those young Romanian NEETs with a low education level at 35.8% compared with just 6.1% in Poland at the other extreme. And there is also a big gender difference in Romania too: in 2025, there were two countries where the share of young women in the NEETs category was at least 7% higher than that of young men. The biggest difference was in Romania (11.2%), followed by the Czech Republic (7.4%). In Romania, the share of NEETs was 25% among young women and 13.5% among young men.

Monthly income vs national average gross monthly salary

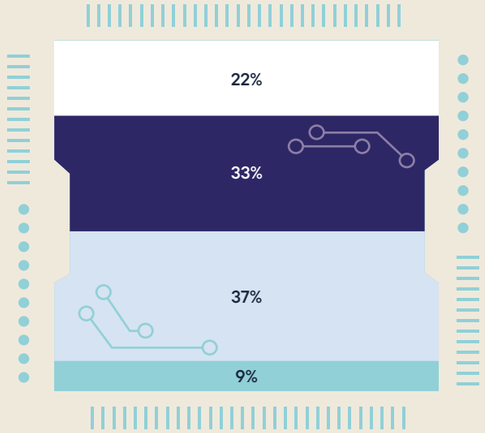


Employment

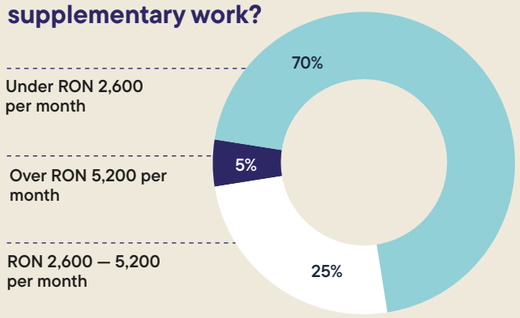




Is your current job position threatened by the rise of AI?



How much extra income from supplementary work?



Do you receive financial help from relatives?



The shadow of AI hangs over the job market for young Romanians. In our survey, two-thirds (66%) of 18–35s believe the number of entry-level jobs has fallen over the past 12 months due to the rise of AI. Over a fifth (22%) of those employed currently feel their job is threatened by the rise of AI, while another third believe their job will be under threat in two or more years.

Salaries remain poor in Romania, especially for young people. Just a fifth (19%) of 18–35s in our 2026 YMM survey are earning above the national average salary of RON 9,272 (€1,766) – the same proportion as last year. However, the number of young Romanians now earning below the national average has increased to 38% from 35% in last year's survey, while the number earning about the same as the national salary has fallen to 43% from 46% last year. Men and those aged 26–29 are most likely to be earning above the national average in Romania, while women and 18–21s are least likely to be earning above the national average. A recent national survey found that more than half of Romanian employees (52%) are dissatisfied with their salary.

It's no surprise that many in the 2026 YMM survey feel their discretionary income has either fallen (42%) or stayed the same (44%) over the past year. Just 14% say it has actually increased. The lower income group (58%) is the most likely to report a fall in discretionary income, while the higher income group (29%) is the most likely to report a rise.

With the high cost of living (especially in Bucharest) and relatively low salaries, 45% of employed 18–35s do supplementary work to generate extra income. Over half (54%) view this additional work as a small entrepreneurial business, with those on higher incomes (70%) more likely to consider this supplementary work to be such compared with those on lower incomes (22%). The vast majority (70%) earn less than RON 2,600 (€500) a month from this extra work. A quarter earn between RON 2,600–5,200, and just 5% above RON 5,200 (€1,000). This is backed by other surveys that found over a third (35%) of Romanian employees are ready to take on extra jobs to generate more income.

Family remains an important source of income for many young Romanians, though it has fallen slightly from last year's survey. Half of 18–35s reported receiving help from parents and other relatives in the 2026 YMM survey, down from 55% in 2025. Most (63%) receive up to RON 5,200 a year, while 26% receive RON 5,200–10,400 per year and 11% receive over RON 10,400.

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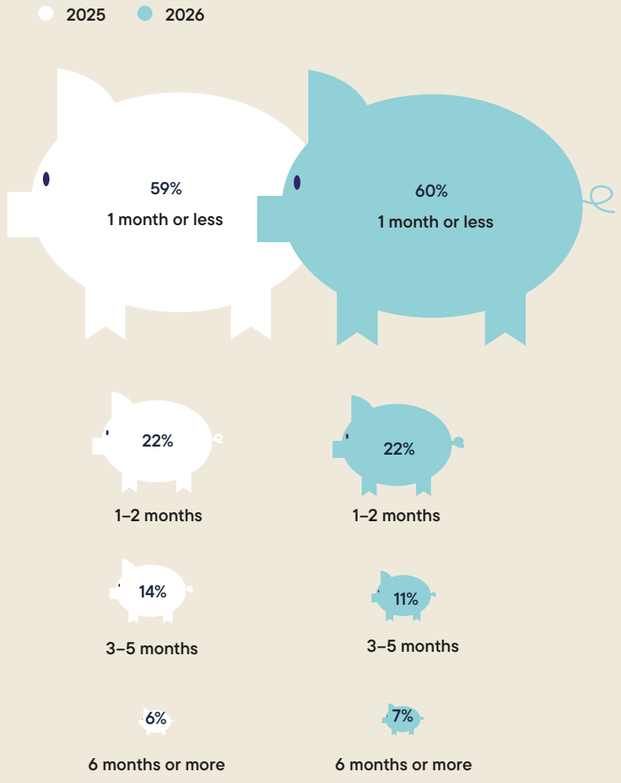
Spending and Saving

Food (25%) and utilities (16%) remain the biggest monthly outlays for young Romanians, exactly the same as last year's survey. Though a survey by Eurostat found that in the second half of 2025 average electricity prices for households in the EU remained largely stable, these price levels remain well above levels from before the 2022 energy crisis. Expressed in purchasing power standard (PPS), electricity prices were the highest for households in Romania (€49.52 per 100 kWh), Czechia (€38.65) and Poland (€37.15).

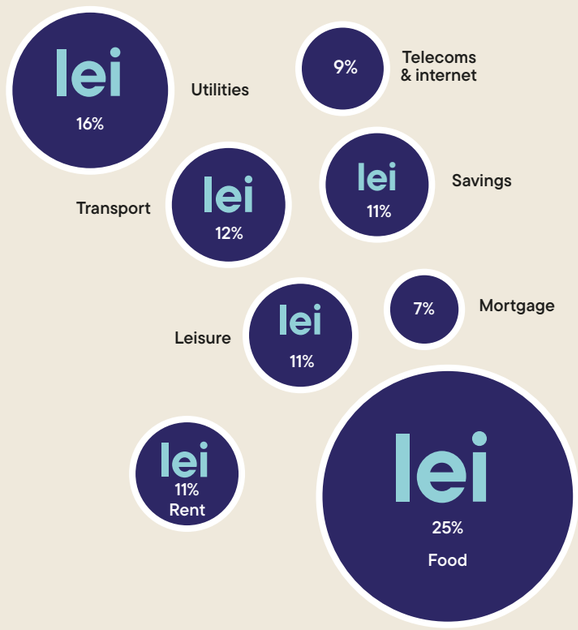
At 11% of monthly income, rent, leisure and savings are the next biggest items — consistent with last year's survey give or take a percentage point. Unsurprisingly, those on higher incomes (15%) are the greatest savers; as a general rule, as incomes grow, a larger share is allocated to savings and a smaller share to consumption. Men are saving more (12%) of their monthly income than women (9%).

The level of savings is still a problem for most Romanians, though. In a Eurostat survey, Romanians had the lowest household saving rate out of all the 27 member states of the EU. In our survey, three-fifths (60%) of 18–35s have less than one month's worth of living expenses to fall back on (vs 59% last year), while 22% have between one and two months, 11% between three and five months, and just 7% with six months or more. Inevitably, those on lower incomes (71%), women (68%) and 18–21s (64%) are the groups most likely to have less than one months' worth of living expenses saved.

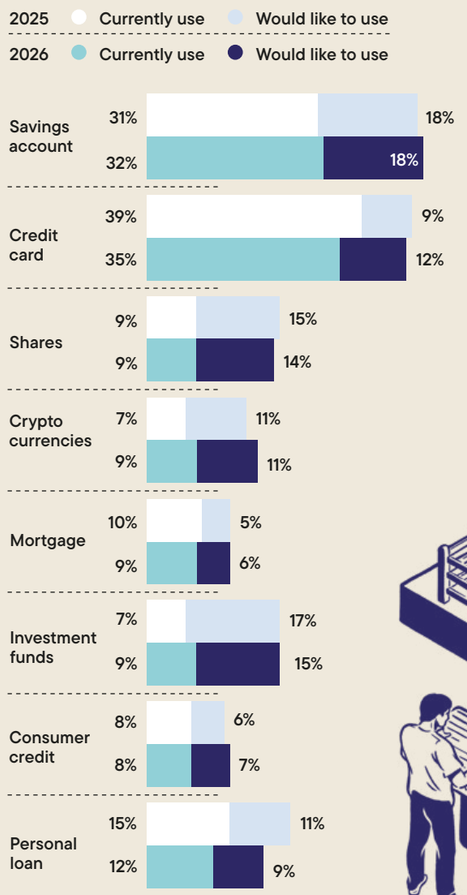
My savings will cover...



Where my money goes...



My financial products...

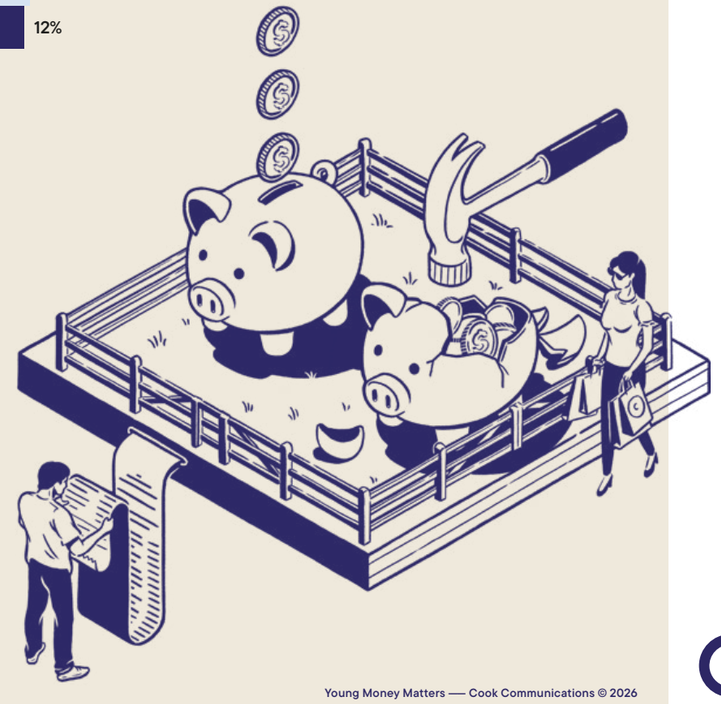


The upshot is that the same number of young Romanians (25%) report having no money left over at the end of the month as a year ago. This rises to 35% among those on lower incomes and 31% among women.

When asked what they would normally do with any money left over at the end of the month, 29% of all respondents selected a savings account, 26% would leave it in their current account, and just 11% (vs 13% in 2025) would seek out an investment product. Given that women and those on lower incomes are most likely to never have any money left over at the end of the month, both groups are less likely to seek out financial investment products (just 6% of women and 5% on lower incomes would).

Regarding which financial products young Romanians already use or are interested in using, cash/current account remains the most widely used (44%), followed by credit cards (35%). There is a small but noticeable shift in this year's survey towards traditional investment products like savings accounts (32%), shares (9%) or funds (9%), and away from debt. Such a trend is mirrored in other national surveys, which found Romanians tending toward financial prudence and preferring low-risk, highly liquid instruments amid a social and economic climate marked by uncertainty.

For young Romanians a credit card is the second most popular product, but the percentage of those with one has fallen from last year (35% vs 39% in 2025). The percentage with a personal loan is down to 12% from 15% last year, an overdraft down to 4% from 6%, and a car lease down to 4% from 5%. Cryptocurrencies bucked the trend, with the percentage using them rising to 9% from 7% last year.



Gender Differences

Overall, the 2026 YMM survey of Romanians aged 18–35 shows very clear gender differences regarding income, savings, investments and financial goal achievability.

On income, 43% of young Romanian women say they earn below the national average salary of RON 9,272, while just 34% of men do. That compares with 42% of women in last year's survey. Just 14% of women earn above the national average, while 24% of men do. This despite Romania having one of the lowest gender pay gaps in the EU. According to the latest data from Eurostat, Romania had the third lowest gender pay gap (defined as the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees) at 3.7%, behind only Belgium and Luxembourg. This compares with an EU average of 11.1%.

Almost half (48%) of all women aged 18–35 in Romania have seen a decrease in their discretionary spending in the last year, compared with just 36% of men.

Our survey found that such income disparities are reflected in other financial measures: 68% of young Romanian women have less than one month's worth of savings compared with 52% of men, while only 13% of women have three months' or more of savings compared with 24% for men. More women (31%) have no money left over at the end of the month than men (20%).

Our survey found that only 6% of young Romanian women seek out investment products for leftover money compared with 16% of men. There is a clear divide among investment choices too: just 3% of women own cryptocurrencies compared with 15% of men, while 3% of women own shares compared with 16% of men.

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get your news out
argue your case
enhance your reputation
monitor your competitors
analyse the media
map your stakeholders
tell your story
enter new markets
explain your position
maintain your visibility
support your business development
address your audiences
promote your product or service
& plan your event
act as your media office






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Home and Family

Households in the 2026 YMM survey look similar to those in 2025, with more than half (57%) of 18–35s living with their family (spouse/partner/children). Around a third (29%) live with parents or other relatives. There has been a small reduction in the number of young Romanians living with non-family members, from 9% in 2025 to 7% this year. The number living alone is stable at 11%. Unsurprisingly, those in the 18–21 age group (48%) and on lower incomes (37%) are most likely to be still living with parents or other relatives.

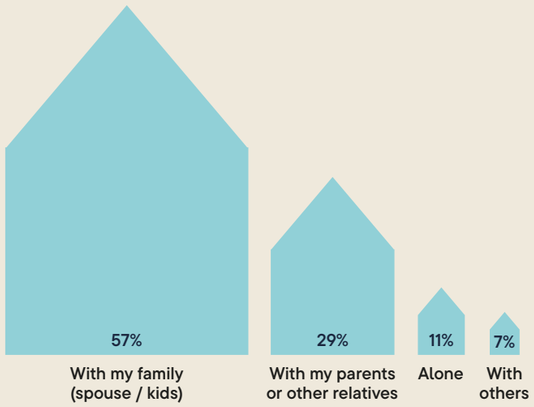
Our survey found that 49% own or jointly own their own home – and are more than twice as likely to own it outright (34%) than with a mortgage (15%). A further 26% live in non-rented accommodation with friends or family; and 23% live in rented accommodation. The high ownership rate among 18–35s is related to the relative affordability of Romanian housing compared with the Czech Republic and Poland. While three Czech cities and two Polish cities appear in the top-20 least affordable cities to buy a property (defined as a standardised new home with an average size of 70m²) in Deloitte's *Property Index 2025* report, Bucharest doesn't appear on the list of 39 cities at all.

For renters, the prices are similarly low relative to other cities in the region. Where the Deloitte report puts Prague's average monthly rental costs at €16.5/m² and Warsaw's at €17.9/m², in the three most expensive Romanian cities to rent – Bucharest, Cluj Napoca and Brasov – the average monthly rental costs are €10.3/m2, €10.3/m² and €9.2/m² respectively. Nevertheless, Romania has not been immune to steep rises in both property prices and rents: according to Eurostat, in the fourth quarter of 2025, house prices in the EU rose by 5.5%, while rents increased by 3.2% from a year earlier. This has left rents in Romania over 60% higher than they were in 2015 and house prices more than 70% higher.

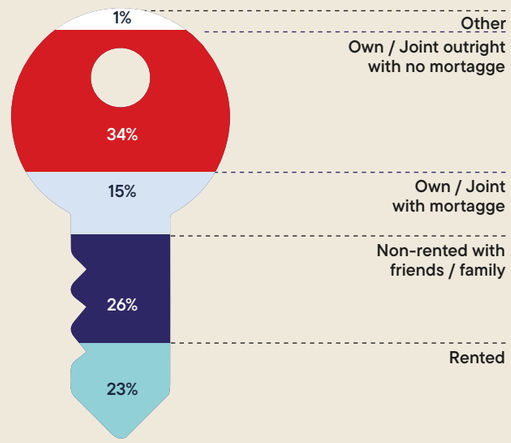
For those wanting to buy a property with a mortgage the market remains tough, especially for those aged 18–21 and those on lower incomes, who express significantly lower interest in our survey about taking out a mortgage (3% and 4%, respectively, vs 9% for those on higher incomes). Among the 28 countries analysed in Deloitte's *Property Index 2025* report, Romania was one of six countries (including also the Czech Republic and Poland) where the highest average mortgage interest rate exceeded 5.0%.

For most, rising property prices/rents and financial pressures are impacting on plans to start a family. In our survey 38% of 18–35s say their financial situation has negatively affected their plans to start a family either in the short or long term; 4% have decided not to start a family at all. This is backed by other surveys

Where I live...



Property ownership



Financial education level

73%

Sufficient to avoid fraud or scams

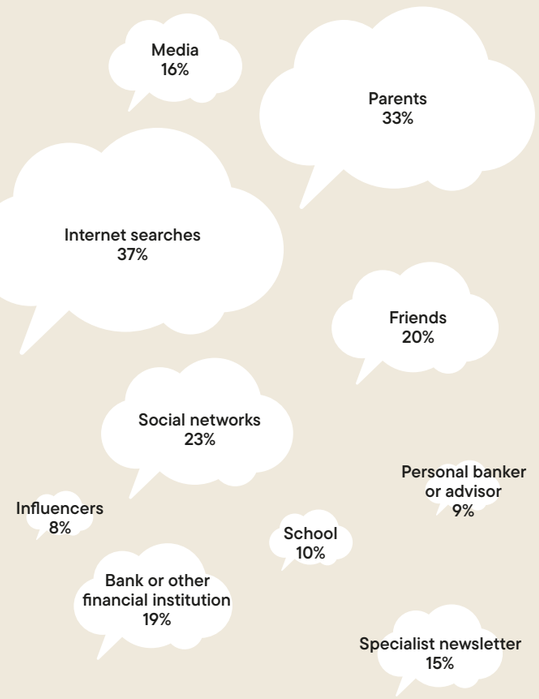
17%

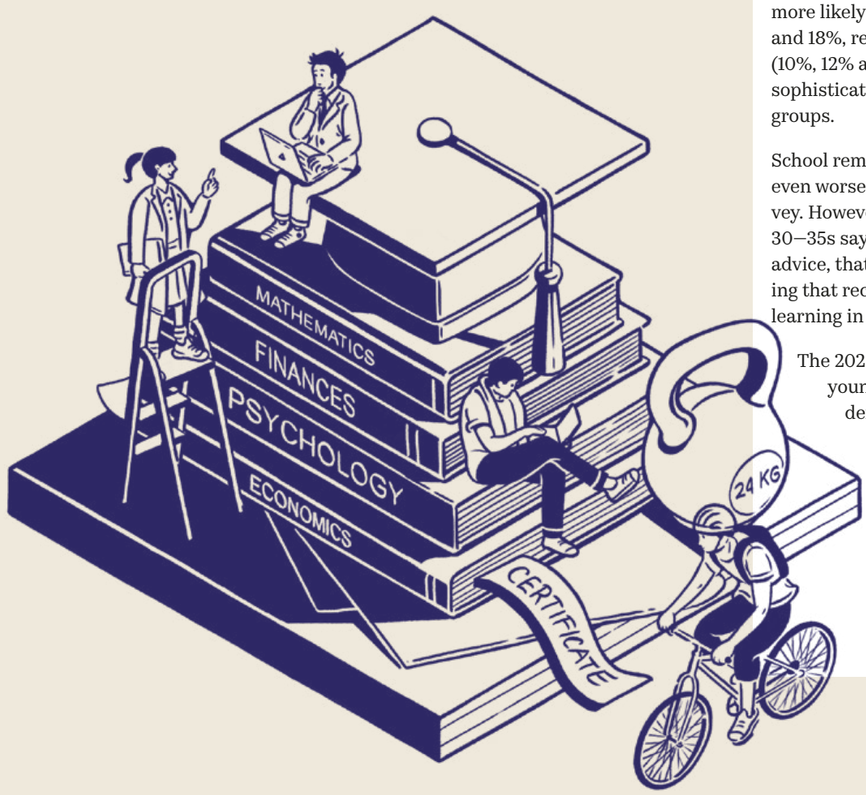
Not sufficient to avoid fraud or scams

10%

Don't know

Where I get my info...





of young people. Deloitte's *2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey* found that more than half of Gen Zs (55%) and Millennials (52%) say they are delaying major life decisions, such as marriage, starting a family or business, or furthering education due to their financial situation.

Educating and Empowering

The five most important sources for advice and information about managing finances remain the same as last year's YMM survey, though each has fallen in percentage terms: internet searches at 37% were the top source, followed by parents at 33%, social networks (excl. influencers) at 23%, friends at 20%, and bank/other financial institution at 19%. Financial influencers (or 'finfluencers') were chosen by 8%; in the 2024 YMM survey, 20% of respondents said they follow at least one financial influencer online.

Interestingly, the two sources that have risen the most from last year are specialist newsletter (15% vs 7% in 2025) and personal banker/advisor (9% vs 6%). Men, those aged 30–35 and those on higher incomes are more likely to rely on specialist newsletters (16%, 19% and 18%, respectively) and personal banker/advisor (10%, 12% and 13%, respectively), suggesting a more sophisticated level of financial education among these groups.

School remains far down on the list at 10%, which is even worse than the 11% recorded in last year's survey. However, our survey shows that while just 7% of 30–35s say their school days were a source of financial advice, that figure rises to 16% among 18–21s, suggesting that recent attempts at introducing more financial learning in school are starting to have an effect.

The 2026 YMM survey also shows that, in general, young Romanians exhibit a high degree of confidence that their financial education is enough to avoid becoming a victim of fraud. Almost three-quarters of 18–35s believe their financial education is sufficient to help them avoid scams, with just 17% believing it is not. One-in-ten say they aren't sure. Unsurprisingly, it is older, better-off men who are most likely to believe that their level of financial education is sufficient to help them avoid fraud or scams.

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Aspirations and Ambitions

Despite widespread concerns about AI, jobs, income and housing, the 2026 YMM survey found that almost the same number of young Romanians feel that their financial aspirations are achievable as last year. In the 2025 survey, 75% felt their financial goals were achievable, compared with 74% in this year's. Just 11% do not feel their financial aspirations are achievable, compared with 10% in 2025. Unsurprisingly, it is women (12%), those aged 18–21 (13%) and those on lower incomes (14%) who are less likely to feel that their financial aspirations are achievable, while just 11% of men and 9% of those earning above the national average feel they cannot achieve their financial goals.

This general positivity is consistent with global surveys. Deloitte's *2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey* found that despite life's pressures, optimism persists, especially among Gen Zs: 53% expect their personal financial situation to improve over the next year, compared with 45% of Millennials. And a Eurobarometer spring survey found that 55% of Romanians believe their personal standard of living will not change in the next five years; only 29% think it will decline.

Young Romanians' aspirations have not changed since last year's YMM survey. "Have enough money to be able to provide for myself and my family" and "Have enough money to not worry about paying bills and have some spare" are joint first at 17%, and "Own my own home" at 14%. Notably, given the unaffordability of housing and high mortgage rates, "Own my home" is now only considered a top-three aspiration by 33% of 18–35s compared with 36% in last year's survey. Deloitte's *2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey* found that 51% of Gen Zs and 41% of Millennials say they cannot afford to own a home.

Having enough money to provide for their family is more of a priority for women (52%) and those on lower incomes (54%), while having enough to pay bills is also more of a priority for lower earners (53%).

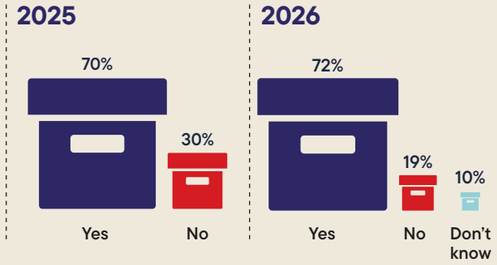
Among the 11% who do not believe their financial aspirations are achievable, 37% cite the high cost of living and 34% point to insufficient earnings. The same proportion, 32%, attribute this lack of confidence in meeting financial aspirations to high taxes and not being able to save or invest enough money. Just 22% believe property prices are too high, down from 33% in last year's survey.

In our survey, almost three-quarters (72%) of young Romanians say they would consider moving to further their career, increase their income or lower their cost of living, up slightly from 70% in last year's survey. Those aged 18–21 (79%) and those on lower incomes (74%) are most likely to consider a move to further their career or increase their income, with openness decreasing as people get older (likely as a result of greater family ties).

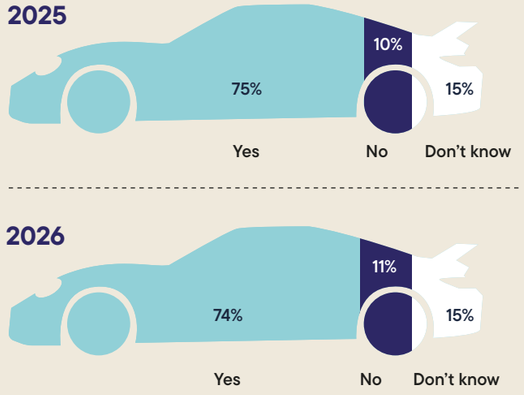
Those who are open to moving are most likely to move either within the wider EU (60%) or within Romania (34%). A further 12% would consider moving to the US. Almost a fifth (19%) say they would not move.

Key obstacles to relocating cited by 18–35s in our survey include: "Family ties or wanting to stay close to family" were cited by 44% of those who would not consider moving; "Housing costs in new locality" at 30%; and "High moving expenses" and "Insufficient savings to cover expenses until finding a job", both at 24%.

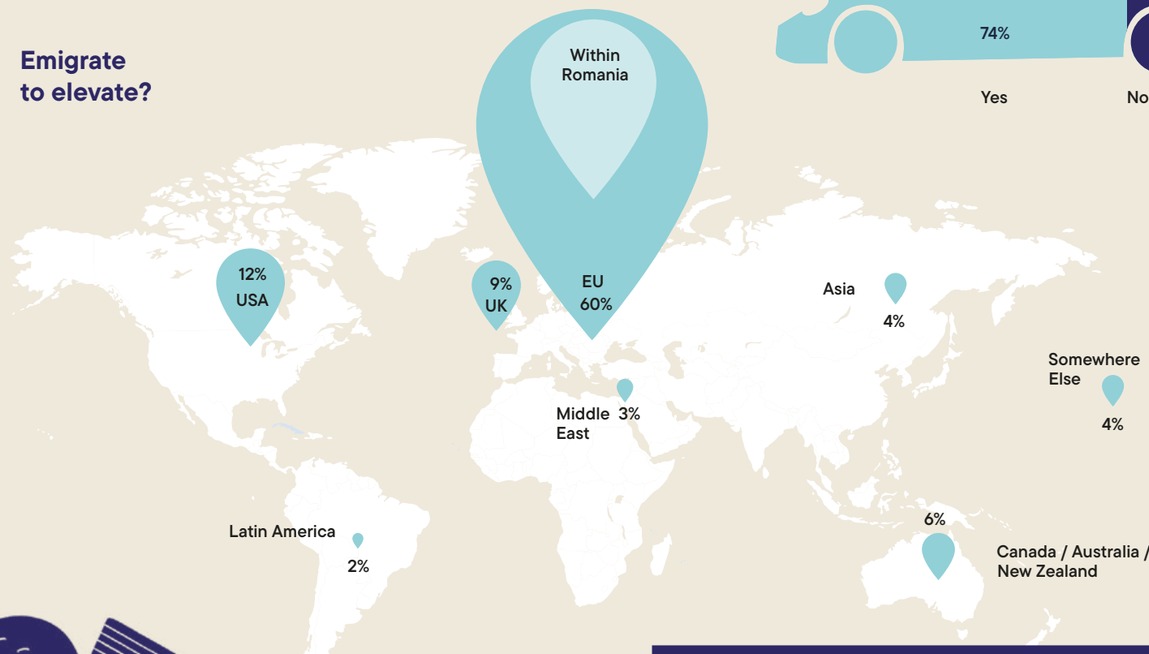
Would you move to get ahead?

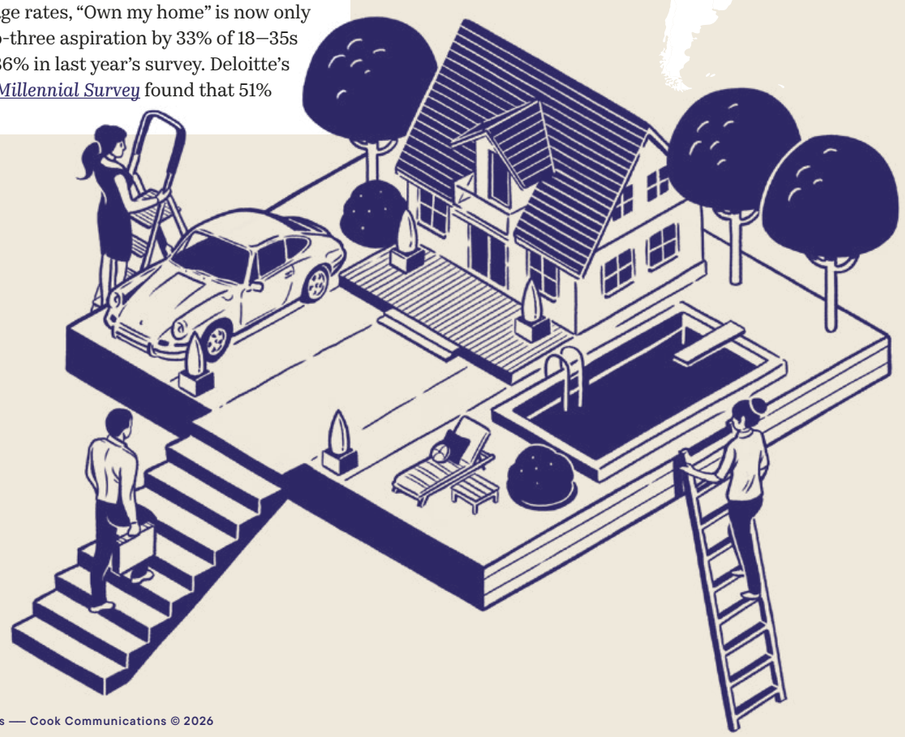


Are financial aspirations achievable?



Emigrate to elevate?





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What the survey tells us...

Rising AI anxiety impacting career outlooks. Two-thirds (66%) of young adults believe the rise of AI has reduced the number of entry-level jobs available over the past 12 months. Additionally, 22% of those employed feel their job is directly threatened by AI today, with another 34% expecting a threat within two or more years.

Widespread absence of financial safety nets. Savings remain at dangerously low levels across the age groups. 60% have one month or less of emergency savings (including 36% with no financial buffer at all), while 25% report running out of money completely by the end of every month.

Family security and financial resilience drive aspirations. Despite financial headwinds, 74% maintain their financial goals are achievable. The top aspirations are non-materialistic: providing for one's family (46%) and paying bills without anxiety (46%), closely followed by homeownership (33%). The primary barriers cited by those who view goals as unachievable are high cost of living (37%), insufficient earnings (34%), and high taxation (32%).

High willingness to relocate for career and income growth. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of young Romanians aged 18–35 would consider moving to advance their career, boost their income, or reduce living costs. Willingness is highest among the youngest age group (18–21) and declines progressively with age. Among those open to moving, significantly more express interest in moving abroad than relocating within Romania.

Broad reliance on side gigs and small-scale entrepreneurship. 45% of employed young adults engage in supplementary work to generate extra income. 70% earn under 2,600 RON/month from these side gigs, and over half (54%, rising to 70% among higher earners) perceive their supplementary work as a small entrepreneurial business.

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Notes

Notes and further reading

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https://www.deloitte.com/global/en/about/press-room/deloitte-2026-gen-z-and-millennial-survey.html

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics

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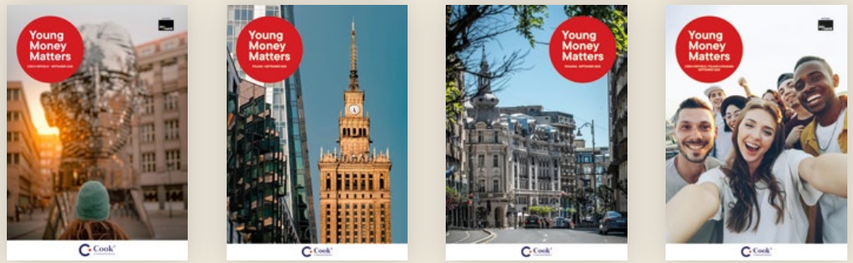
Young Money Matters was written by Nicholas Watson, and translated from the English by our teams in Bucharest, Prague and Warsaw. The questionnaires upon which the surveys were based were developed, collectively, by Alexandru Alexe, Daliana Bărbuică, Marie Chaloupková, Joe Cook, Matyáš Hopp, Agata Koczowską, Vít Šubrt, Nicholas Watson and Anna Ziubińską. The surveys were conducted by 3Gem Media Group. Designed by studio ginger&fred in Prague, illustrations by Alice Slavíček. Young Money Matters is published by, and is the copyright of, Cook Communications © 2026.

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