

## **Mixed-ethnic Roma Partnerships and Ethnic Reproduction Among Such Couples in The Last 20 Years in Hungary**

### **Short abstract**

The demographic effect of mixed ethnic marriages appears in the next generations via the classification of the children of such marriages into one or another ethnic subpopulation. Quantifying these processes is especially important in the case of Roma, one of the largest ethnic minorities in East and Central European countries. Our question is, if there is a sign of ethnic assimilation of children born in Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships in 1990 and 2011 in Hungary. We are using the individual level data from full population national censuses from these years.

As a first step in our analysis we review the prevalence of Roma mixed ethnic partnerships in Hungary in 1990 and 2011. Our results indicate that the share of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships has increased in the last 20 years. As indicated by multivariate analyses, the probability to enter in a Roma mixed-ethnic partnership increased with increasing age and educational attainment.

Next we examine how the ethnicity of children born in such partnerships is classified by parents. 57 percent of children in Roma mixed-ethnic partnership is identified as non-Roma by their parents in 2011 in Hungary. The higher the educational attainment of Roma mothers and Roma fathers, the less likely they are to report their child as Roma, controlled for the sex, age groups and place of residence of parents. We tend to conclude that our results do not reinforce the awareness/competition, but rather the assimilation hypothesis.

### **Extended abstract**

## **Mixed-ethnic Roma Partnerships and Ethnic Reproduction Among Such Couples in The Last 20 Years in Hungary**

### **Introduction**

Mixed ethnic marriages are of great interest from a demographic point of view because they affect the size of the subpopulations in the long run. There is no such a treat if one of the two spouses joins the group to which his or her partner belongs. *The demographic effect of the mixed ethnic marriage appears in the generations which follow, mainly via the classification of the children of such marriages into one or another ethnic subpopulations.* Examining and quantifying these processes is especially important in the case of Roma ethnic minority, in Hungary and other countries as well, because only the numeric facts can be contrasted with the rumors that there will be more Gypsy babies than non-Gypsy in the near future in 2034 (in Hungary, for example). Indeed, Roma population projections rarely take into account the processes of assimilation (Habicsek 2000, Varga 2000, Vano 2002).

Ethnicity is an important characteristics in choosing a spouse or a partner (Šprocha 2020, Kiss 2019, Smits 2009). Being aware that structural factors deeply affect the selection of a partner, the low ethnic endogamy (and thus the high share of mixed-ethnic marriages) could also mean that the social stratification structure of the society is not taken into account when choosing a spouse. In this sense, ethnic endogamy can be an indicator of a multicultural society. While mobility partly disrupts the transmission of social inequalities from generation to generation, the status homogamy reconstitutes unequal social strata among members of the next generation (F.L. Jones 1987).

In the case of the Roma ethnic minority (in Central and East European countries), however, it is very important that, in addition to structural constraints, a social exclusion and a high degree of rejection from the ethnic majority also prevails (Kiss 2019, Šprocha 2020). And although this aspect is less often taken into account by researchers, of course, there is also a rejection from the Roma side of the non Roma peers, mainly for cultural reasons. Thus it is interesting to see who are crossing the boundaries of structural and cultural constraints in choosing a partner with other ethnicity; and whether they will do the same, and in which direction, when they choose the ethnic affiliation of their children.

This presentation has a twofold goal. As a first step, we review the prevalence of Roma mixed ethnic partnerships in Hungary in 1990 and 2011. Next we examine how the ethnicity of children born in such partnerships is classified by parents, when register it in population censuses. Our question is, if there is a sign of ethnic assimilation of children born in Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships in Hungary in 1990 and 2011 using the individual level data from full population national censuses.

### **Background information**

Mixed-ethnic partnership research has a long history in the United States, where it was first examined mixed-ethnic marriages between black and white populations (Qian 1997, Qian and Lichter 2001, Bratter and Zuberi 2001, Gullickson 2006), and then mixed-ethnic marriages between immigrants and the local population. The topic became prevalent also in Western European countries in these decades as migration intensifies and more and more people are entering mixed-ethnic partnerships (Coleman 1994, Dribe and Lundh 2008, Potarca and Bernardi 2018). In the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, analyses of mixed-ethnic partnerships between historical ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority have been conducted (Kiss 2016, Gyurgyik et al 2010, Monden and Smits 2005, Smits 2009, Bessudnov and Monden 2021, Šprocha 2020). Roma, as a marginalized ethnic minority group in the Central and eastern European countries, are less likely to form ethnically mixed partnerships, because they face a high degree of isolation and exclusion from the non-Roma (Kiss 2016, 2019). Research in Hungary also confirms this exclusionary attitude towards the Roma. In micro-regional qualitative studies, it has been repeatedly stated that mixed-ethnic marriages between Roma/Gypsies and Hungarians are rare (Gyenei 1993, Kovai 2017). Analysing the data from the 2001 census, Tóth and Vékás (2008) estimated that 85 percent of Roma women were living in a homogeneous partnership. The Roma people from Slovakia live in a strong homogamy also: the proportion of heterogamous marriages did not exceed 5% in the period of 1992-2016, and there is an even stronger homogamy among women of Roma nationality, who only exceptionally enter into marriage with a person of another nationality (Šprocha 2020). In Romania, according to the 2011 census, 92.9 percent of Roma couples are ethnically endogamous (Veres 2015). However, as interviews (The Slovak Spectator 2003) with Roma mixed-ethnic couples in Slovakia highlighted, negative attitudes were on both sides. The difference in cultures is cited as one of the explanations of the negative attitudes (*"Roma marriages don't break up as often as [ethnic] Slovak ones,"* says a Roma man. *"For the Roma, when you marry it's for good, and a break up of marriage is a tragedy."*; *"If a white man comes into a Roma family, the brothers usually rebel a lot,"* says another Roma man. *"The white man really has to convince them. Otherwise they will do everything to stop the relationship"*).

Measuring the ethnic assimilation at the individual level is not possible via cross-sectional census data (i.e. measuring the degree of auto-identification<sup>1</sup> or hetero-identification<sup>2</sup> is not possible with census data). That is, we are aware of that declaring ones' ethnic identity or the children' may change over time and may change from one census to another. However, there is a third case next to auto- and hetero-identification, when there is no change of ethnic identity at the individual level, but what happens is that the children of a Roma mixed ethnic couple are no longer reported as Roma. The literature analysing the racial and ethnic affiliation of children born in mixed-ethnic partnerships presents two hypotheses when tries to explain the factors influencing the parents' choice of one or another identity for their children. The *assimilation hypothesis* assumes that the more the generation of parents is assimilated or integrated into majority society, the more their children will be reported to have majority identities, in this type of mixed-ethnic partnerships (Xie and Goyette 1997). The *awareness or ethnic competition hypothesis*, in turn, states that the ethnic awareness of minorities increases when they come into contact with the majority society. This leads to conflicts, a competitive situation in which the minority further protects its identity or privileged position (Xie and Goyette 1997, Finnäs and O'Leary 2003), or because it feels demographically threatened (Bruce 1992), so their children are more likely to be raised and reported to have minority identities. In both hypotheses, parental education plays a key role. Following the assimilation hypothesis, educated parents would classify their children as majority nationalities (because those with higher education have a higher chance of assimilation and integration). According to the awareness hypothesis, it is the parents with higher levels of education who transfer their minority identity more, especially at a higher level of ethnic hierarchy within a given area - such as Swedish speakers in Finland or Protestants in Ireland (Finnäs and O'Leary 2003).

## Methodology

We analyse the individual level full population data from national censuses from 1990 and 2011 in Hungary. The censuses apply *self-identification* for ethnic identification. When we make a temporal comparison, however, we compare the data from 1990 and those figure from 2011 that identify Roma people in connection to their *first* ethnicity (Mouranszki and Papp 2014, Kapitány 2013, 2015). As in 2011 there were two individual questions allowing the double ethnic identification for the respondents (but not in 1990!), we also analyse the demographic behaviour of the Roma who identified themselves as Roma either on the first or on the second ethnic identity question. Using the data from double identification, the number of Roma people is 308.9 thousand, higher than if we consider Roma only those who identify themselves as Roma as their first ethnic identity (130.6 thousand).

The *mixed-ethnic marriages and partnerships are measured* also from the cross-sectional census data. With these stock-measures we underestimate the prevalence of mixed-ethnic partnerships as those individuals are missing who are no longer registered as living in a union. To reduce this bias, we focuses on Roma mixed-ethnic couples in which women are 30 years of age or younger, assuming that at such a young age, women may still be in their first marriage or union; might likely have relatively low divorce rates; and that these new/recent partnerships were initiated geographically at the residence place of the couple (i.e. the residence place is the same as the 'marriage' market). To calculate *ethnic reproduction* from census data, we selected families with at least one 'mother' - child

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<sup>1</sup> The cross-sectional census data from Hungary cannot be merged at individual level.

<sup>2</sup> The methodological practice of the censuses is that parents answer the questions about the ethnic identity of their minor children (HCSO 2011).

relationship (with or without a father).<sup>3</sup> However, we do not have the information if that woman living in a family is the biological mother or (only) foster mother or caregiver of a child who lives in that family. Therefore, in the second step, we further narrowed the range of selected families: only those families were considered that had at least one child aged 5 or younger, and we assumed that these children aged 5 years or younger were the biological children of women from that family. From this data, we can calculate the share of children identified as Roma and non-Roma from Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships.

## Results

### *Prevalence of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships, 2011*

The proportion of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships (at least one party is of Roma ethnicity) among all partnerships was 3.5% in 2011 in Hungary (Table 1). This share is 11% if we consider only those women living in partnership who are younger than 30 years old.

**Table 1: The number of all partnerships, number of Roma partnerships and share of Roma partnerships among all partnerships in Hungary, 1990, 2011**

	Change in time		2011(1,2)
	1990	2011(1)	
No of all partnerships	2,446,299	1,842,028	1,842,028
No of Roma partnerships*	27,796	28,932	65,166
Share of Roma partnerships* among all partnerships	1.1%	1.6%	3.5%
No of all partnerships, where woman is 30-years old or younger	461,737	204,524	204,524
<b>No of Roma partnerships*, where woman is 30-years old or younger</b>	<b>12,632</b>	<b>10,124</b>	<b>22,572</b>
Share of Roma partnerships* with woman 30-years old or younger among all partnerships with woman 30-years old or younger	2.7%	5.0%	11.0%

Source: 1990 and 2011 censuses. Own calculation. Note: \*Roma partnership = partnership, where at least one of the parties is Roma. 2011 (1): only Roma of first ethnicity; 2011 (1,2): Roma of first or second ethnicity.

Looking at the ratio of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships among *all Roma partnerships* (when at least one of the parties is Roma) we see that 27.3 percent were Roma mixed-ethnic couples in Hungary in 2011 (Table 2).<sup>4</sup> A higher proportion of Roma men lived in mixed-ethnic partnerships than Roma women (16.8% vs 14.8%).

<sup>3</sup> We were able to do this because in the census database, all persons living in a family at the time of the census are identified with the same family-identifier number, and the position of the persons in the family is also indicated with another variable, i.e., role in the family.

<sup>4</sup> The log-odds ratio of Roma endogamous partnerships calculated from marriage-tables based on Kalmijn 1998 is 2.5.

**Table 2: Mixed-ethnic partnerships and people living in these partnerships, by sex and educational attainment, 1990, 2011**

	Change in time		2011(1,2)
	1990	2011(1)	
<b>No of Roma partnership (at least one party is Roma, N)</b>	<b>12,632</b>	<b>10,124</b>	<b>22,572</b>
Share of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships	25.2%	31.3%	27.3%
Share of Roma men in mixed-ethnic partnerships	13.5%	20.2%	16.8%
Share of Roma women in mixed-ethnic partnerships	15.2%	16.8%	14.8%
Non-Roma men in mixed-ethnic partnerships	0.4%	0.7%	1.5%
Non-Roma women in mixed-ethnic partnerships	0.3%	0.9%	1.8%

Source: 1990 and 2011 censuses. Own calculation. Note: \*Roma partnership = partnership, where at least one of the parties is Roma. 2011 (1): only Roma of first ethnicity; 2011 (1,2): Roma of first or second ethnicity. Women are aged 30 years old or younger.

Both among Roma women and men and non-Roma women and men, there is a high proportion of those who have a partner belonging to the same ethnicity. The share of Roma mixed ethnic partnerships is higher among older Roma men and women than among younger individuals (Table 3). It is true both among Roma men and women that the higher their level of education, the more likely they are to be in a mixed-ethnic partnership. While for non-Roma men and women, the correlation is reversed: the higher their level of education, the least likely that they are living in an ethnically mixed partnership (more precisely: with a Roma partner).

**Table 3: Proportion of Roma mixed ethnic partnerships by ethnicity, sex, age groups and educational attainment of peers, 1990, 2011**

A.		1990	2011(1)	2011(1,2)	B.		1990	2011(1)	2011(1,2)
Roma women	13-20y	15.2	12.5	10.1	Roma women	Primary	14.5	14.2	11.3
	21-30y	15.3	18.1	16.1		Vocational	30.5	27.6	27.0
	Total	15.2	16.8	14.8		High school	48.1	36.3	37.6
				Total		15.2	16.9	14.8	
Roma men	13-20y	16.9	18	14.9	Roma men	Primary	12.1	16.9	13.9
	21-30y	13.1	18.7	15.8		Vocational	23.8	30	24.8
	31-40y	12.8	23.1	18.8		High school	37.3	43.3	37.6
	40y+	18.4	32.8	26.2		Total	13.6	20.3	16.9
Total	13.5	20.2	16.8						
Non-Roma women	13-20y	1	3	6.7	Non-Roma women	Primary	0.9	3	6.8
	21-30y	0.2	0.8	1.5		Vocational	0.1	0.9	1.9
	Total	0.3	0.9	1.8		High school	0	0.2	0.5
				Total		0.3	0.9	1.8	
Non-Roma men	13-20y	1.7	2.3	4.9	Non-Roma men	Primary	1.2	2.1	4.7
	21-30y	0.4	0.8	1.7		Vocational	0.2	0.7	1.7
	31-40y	0.3	0.5	1.1		High school	0.1	0.1	0.4
	40y+	1.0	1.0	2.6		Total	0.4	0.7	1.5
Total	0.4	0.7	1.5						

Source: 1990 and 2011 censuses. Own calculation. Note: \*Roma partnership = partnership, where at least one of the parties is Roma. 2011 (1): only Roma of first ethnicity; 2011 (1,2): Roma of first or second ethnicity. Age of women is 16-30 years in panel B, age of men 16+. "Primary education" covers ISCED 1997 0-2 levels; "vocational education" covers ISCED 1997 3 level and "high school" covers ISCED 1997 4-5-6 levels.

However, these percentages provide a simple and informative overview of the proportion of Roma and non-Roma men and women choosing a partner of similar or different ethnicity, but they cannot

indicate the strength of ethnic endogamy within a given group because with regards to the above-presented data there is no reference group. If we look at the more reliable log-odds ratios (Table 4), we can see that its value is somewhat lower in the youngest age group (2.0) than in the older ones (2.1), and in the low level of educational attainment (2.0) than in the higher one (2.6).

**Table 4: Odds ratio (log (OR)) of ethnically endogamous partnerships by age groups and educational attainment, 1990, 2011**

A.	Change in time		2011(1,2)	B.	Change in time		2011(1,2)
	1990	2011(1)			1990	2011(1)	
15-20 years old	2.5	2.3	2.0	Primary	2.6	2.3	2.0
21-30 years old	2.4	2.8	2.1	Vocational	3.4	2.5	2.2
				High school diploma	3.2	3.0	2.6

*Source:* 1990 and 2011 censuses. Own calculation. *Note:* Under panel B, age of women: 16-30 years, age of men 16+. 2011 (1): only Roma of first ethnicity; 2011 (1,2): Roma of first or second ethnicity. "Primary education" covers ISCED 1997 0-2 levels; "vocational education" covers ISCED 1997 3 level and "high school diploma" covers ISCED 1997 4-5-6 levels.

We also compared the impact of the ethnicity and education of the parties on the probability of forming a mixed-ethnic partnership. The results highlighted that the educational attainment of the non-Roma party, whether female or male, has a stronger influence on this choice.

#### *Change in time in the prevalence of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships, 1990, 2011*

Analysing the change between 1990 and 2011 (and working with only Roma of the first ethnicity in order to ensure comparability between 1990 and 2011), we found that the proportion of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships has increased in the last 20 years from 25.2 to 31.3 percent (Table 2). 13 to 20 percent of Roma men and women living in Hungary have lived in Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships in the past 20 years (Table 2). Looking at change over time we see that proportion of people living in ethnically mixed partnerships increased in all age groups between 1990 and 2011, regardless of gender and ethnicity, with the exception of the group of Roma women under the age of 20 (Table 3). The proportion of 13-20 years old Roma women living with a non-Roma partner decreased between 1990 and 2011 from 15.2 percent to 12.5 percent. The share of Roma women with primary education, medium education or high school diploma, who have a non-Roma partner, decreased between 1990 and 2011, at all level of educational attainment, against the fact that the total percentages increased from 15.2 percent to 16.9 percent (Table 3).

To eliminate the consequences of the change in composition of the two populations according to ethnicity, age and education between 1990 and 2011, we calculate and compare again the odds ratios of partnerships within ethnicity, educational and age groups according to the usual calculations from the marriage tables (Kalmijn 1998). The log-odds ratios from Table 4/Panel A clearly indicate that ethnic endogamy decreased among Roma under the age of 20 between 1990 and 2011 from 2.5 to 2.3 and increased among Roma aged 21-30 from 2.4 to 2.8. The ethnic odds ratios presented in Table 4/panel B indicate that ethnic endogamy decreased in all educational groups between 1990 and 2011, but among those with vocational education to the greatest extent.

*Ethnic identification of children born in Roma mixed ethnic partnerships, 1990, 2011*

Table 5 summarizes the distribution of all children aged 5 and younger living in a family, according to their parents' actual partnership status and ethnicity. In 2011, 57.0 percent of children born to parents in Roma mixed ethnic partnerships were registered as non-Roma by their parents. Looking at the only Roma of first ethnicity to be able to check the change in time, we see that the share of non-Roma children in Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships increased between 1990 and 2011 from 60.8 percent to 67.4 percent.

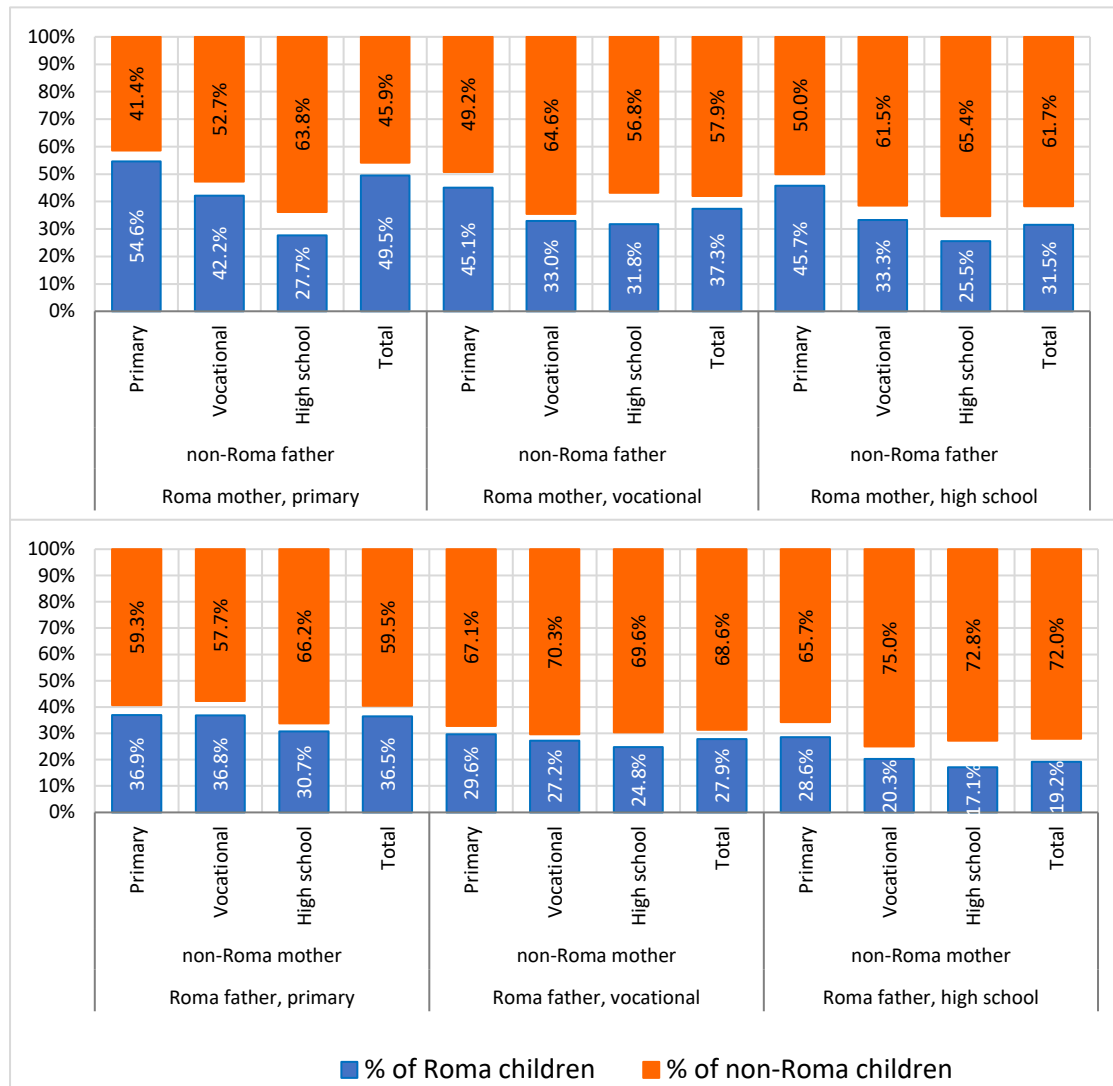
**Table 5: Distribution of Roma and non-Roma children aged 5 or younger by parents' nationality and actual partnership status, 1990, 2011**

Parents Children	Roma mother & Roma father	Mixed-ethnic partnership			Single mother		Non-Roma parents	Total
		Total mixed- ethnic partnerships	Roma mother	Roma father	Roma	Non-Roma		
<b>1990</b>								
Roma	96.2%	39.2%	46.4%	31.1%	90.0%	0.2%	0.0%	2.9%
Non-Roma	3.8%	60.8%	53.6%	68.9%	10.0%	99.8%	100.0%	97.1%
N	14,973	3873	2057	1816	3913	81,189	571,984	675,932
<b>Change in time</b>								
<b>2011(1)</b>								
Roma	91.5%	27.8%	36.6%	20.7%	79.5%	0.3%	0.1%	3.2%
Non-Roma	8.1%	67.4%	57.9%	75.1%	16.0%	93.9%	96.4%	93.0%
no data	0.4%	4.8%	5.5%	4.2%	4.5%	5.9%	3.5%	3.8%
N	12,339	4958	2212	2746	2606	58,084	395,217	473,255
<b>2011(1,2)</b>								
Roma	98.5%	38.4%	45.2%	32.7%	84.7%	0.6%	0.2%	8.0%
Non-Roma	1.2%	57.0%	49.9%	63.0%	11.4%	93.4%	96.2%	88.3%
no data	0.3%	4.6%	4.9%	4.3%	3.9%	6.0%	3.7%	3.8%
N	28,759	9105	4167	4938	5991	54,699	374,701	473,255

Source: 1990 and 2011 censuses. Own calculation. Note: only among parents of known nationality; and children of unknown nationality are also taken into account in the distribution. 2011 (1): only Roma of first ethnicity; 2011 (1,2): Roma of first or second ethnicity.

It is also an interesting question whether the choice of ethnicity assigned by parents to their children is related to their educational attainment: how do high school-educated Roma mothers and fathers decide when determining the ethnic identity of their children? Do they rather follow the logic of the assimilation hypothesis and report mostly to have non-Roma children or do they follow the awareness/competition hypothesis and rather report to have ethnic Roma children? We tested this question based on data from 2011, working with the extended Roma identity, i.e., being Roma based either on the first or on the second ethnicity question. We conclude that according to the assimilation hypothesis, highly educated Roma mothers and fathers living in mixed-ethnic partnerships report their children *to be non-Roma*. The highest proportion of children were identified as non-Roma by highly educated Roma fathers with a lower educated (with vocational school) non-Roma partner (75%), similarly, to mixed-ethnic couples of black men/white women in the United States (exchange theory).

**Figure 1: Distribution of Roma and non-Roma children aged 5 and under by parents' nationality and educational attainment, 2011**



Source: 2011 census; own calculation. Note: a Roma person someone who reported himself/herself to be Roma as primary or secondary nationality. "Primary education" covers ISCED 1997 0-2 levels; "vocational education" covers ISCED 1997 3 level and "high school diploma" covers ISCED 1997 4-5-6 levels.

As a final step, we looked at the parental and environmental factors associated with reporting a child in a mixed-ethnic parental family as non-Roma: that is, when ethnic loss occurs regarding the minority party of an ethnically mixed couple. We employed a logistic regression analysis. The model shows that the higher level of education of parents more likely that they identify their child ethnicity as non-Roma, controlled for ethnicity and age group of mother and father separately, weighted proportion of Roma at the place of residence and the geographical location of the place of residence.

## Conclusion

In 2011 in Hungary, nearly three-quarters of Roma couples (in which at least one party was Roma) were endogamous couples: that is, both parties defined themselves as Roma (73%), while a quarter defined themselves as mixed-ethnic couples (27%). The proportion of Roma men in mixed-ethnic partnerships is slightly higher (15%) than that of Roma women in such partnerships (13%). If we work with a narrow definition of the Roma population in 2011, that can be used for temporal comparison



(Roma are those who identify their primary nationality as Roma), we find that the proportion of mixed-ethnic partnerships increased between 1990 and 2011, from 25 percent to 31 percent. Thus, the openness between Roma and non-Roma groups has increased over time. And, as indicated by our multivariate analyses, the chance to enter in a mixed-ethnic partnership also increases with increasing age and educational attainment.

In a mixed-ethnic partnership, ethnic reproduction will be ensured if children follow 50-50 percent of their parents' ethnic distribution, but this is generally not the case. In Roma-non-Roma mixed partnerships, the nationality of the children follows the nationality of the mother and not the father: while 45 percent of the children of Roma mothers, only 33 percent of the children of Roma fathers were identified by the parents to be of Roma nationality. These rates vary according to the parents' gender, ethnicity, and educational attainment: the higher the educational attainment of Roma mothers and Roma fathers, the less likely they are to report their child as Roma. We tend to conclude that our results do not reinforce the awareness/competition, but rather the assimilation hypothesis.

Roma parents who have already achieved a relatively higher level of education do not report mostly their children to be of Roma nationality or of Roma-Hungarian mixed nationality, but often to be of non-Roma nationality. As if in their opinion, being "Roma" also means to be an indication of lower social status, and as they break out of this low social status through higher education, they believe that because their children are already at a higher level within the social hierarchy, they are no longer to be seen as Roma.

### Further steps

We plan to compare the prevalence of Roma mixed-ethnic partnerships and the ethnic reproduction rate in such families from Hungary and Slovakia, using the national population census from 1991 and 2011 in Slovakia.

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