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COMPARATIVE ASSESMENT OF THE FINANCIAL WELL-BEING OF ETHNIC MINORITIES IN A POLYETHNIC REGION

ABSTRACT

The paper examines ethnic minority households in the Transcarpathian region with specific attention to their financial well-being. Focus is on Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, Roma, and Russian ethnic groups. The purpose of the research is to define the inequalities and similar characteristics of the financial well-being of ethnic minorities in a polyethnic region. The principal results demonstrate that salary constitutes the predominant share of ethnic households' income – 66,94%. In the general structure of expenditures, the share of consumer expenditures is the highest, in particular among Slovaks, Ukrainians, Romas, and Hungarians. The share of savings is low, as indicated by 23,92% of the respondents. Among the analyzed ethnic minorities, Romanians are characterized by the highest level of financial well-being – the share of Romanians living below the relative poverty line is the lowest (13,63%), and the share of Romanians considering themselves to be poor is 0%. Almost half of the respondents assessed their income level as very low, in particular, Romas and Russians, and only 4,23% of the respondents highly rate their income satisfaction (Romanians, Ukrainians, and Hungarians). The main conclusions of the study show many similarities in the level of financial well-being of the analyzed ethnic minorities, with the exceptions are the Roma, which, in contrast to the others, is the most socially vulnerable ethnic group, with more than 85% of the deprived population. Due to the sociological survey results Romanian ethnic group is characterized by the highest level of financial well-being. This distribution partly depends on the specifics of the functioning of the regional labour market, with some holding that the disproportions in the level of the financial well-being of different ethnic groups are related to their historical labour traditions, the gender inequalities and family roles, the level of education, entrepreneurial potential, migration propensity, etc.

Keywords: ethnic minorities, financial well-being, household, poverty line, incomes, expenditures, stratification

JEL Classification: J15, I31, I32, D1, D14

INTRODUCTION

A characteristic feature of all socio-economic systems is income inequality, which is associated with significant differences in the financial well-being of society and influences human capital formation. According to Bruggen et al. (2017), amid persistently low savings rates and inadequate strategies for long-term retirement planning, the issue of financial well-being has gained prominence for individuals, households, communities, and entire nations. However, current scholarly research remains sparse and fragmented across disciplines. The study of the financial well-being in polyethnic regions, such as Transcarpathia, requires special attention. The Transcarpathian region is located in the Southwest of Ukraine. In the northeast, it shares borders with the Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions of Ukraine; in the south with Romania, in the southwest with Hungary, in the west with Slovakia, and in the northwest with Poland. The majority of the national composition of the population are Ukrainians. Hungarians, Russians, Romanians, Slovaks, Germans, and Roma also live here, in all more than 30 nationalities. In 1989, the number of Ukrainians in the Transcarpathian region was 77,8%, Hungarians – 13,7%, Russians – 3,6%, Romanians – 2,3%, Slovaks – 0,7%, Roma – 0,5%, Jews and Ger-

mans – 0,3%, Belarusians – 0,2% (Kovach, 2018). According to the All-Ukrainian Population Census 2001, the region's ethnic structure has experienced minimal change: Ukrainians represent the predominant and native population (80.5%), while other significant groups include Hungarians (12,1%), Romanians (2,6%), Roma (1,1%), Slovaks (0,5%), and Germans (0,3%) et.al (Census, 2001). Hungarians are the second largest ethnic group in Transcarpathia; in 2001 their number in the national population structure of the region was 151,5 thousand people (Census, 2001). The 2001 Census recorded 14 thousand Roma living in Transcarpathia (Census, 2001). In 1989, their number was 12 thousand people, but Roma families have a high birth rate, and according to experts, the obtained results may not accurately reflect the real situation (Kovach, 2018). During 1989-2001, due to emigration to their historical homeland, the number of Slovaks in the region decreased from 7,3 thousand people (0,6%) in 1989 to 5,7 thousand people (0,5%) in 2001. Similar trends were observed among representatives of the German and Russian ethnic groups (Kovach, 2018). The transformation of the ethnic structure of the region's population includes a change in its own ethnic characteristics, in particular linguistic and ethnic self-identification. No less important are the development of national culture and traditions, methods of management and forms of individual entrepreneurship, specialization of labour, which is partly determined by the ratio of urban and rural population in each ethnic community, also has a direct impact on the level of employment, incomes and determines the level of the financial well-being of ethnic minorities, which is the object of our study.

The study is based on the results of sociological survey of the population of Transcarpathian region, a sample of which based on self-identification by the respondents of their ethnicity and include representatives of Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Roma, Russian and other ethnic groups, which allowed to identify the interethnic differentiations in the current state of their financial well-being and identify the most specific aspects related to the financial inequalities of different ethnic groups.

The article is structured in 5 sections. The first section of the article is an introduction. The second is based on the literature review and theoretical analysis of the main factors that influence the financial well-being and income inequality among the ethnic minorities of the USA, China, Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries, etc. The third section describes methods and methodology of the study, such as formation and characteristics of the survey sample and description of the group of indicators included in the analysis. The fourth section describes the analytical comparison of sociological survey results and shows the main characteristics of financial well-being, such as the similarities and differences in the level of incomes and expenditures of households of different ethnic groups. The conclusions present the key research findings and underline their significance within the context of maintaining balance in the level of the financial well-being of different ethnic minorities in order to equalize the quality of life in the Transcarpathian region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of the financial well-being, as well as income inequalities of ethnic minorities and their differentiation, depending on the influence of various factors, is within the field of view of many scientists. According to Bashir and Qureshi (2023), financial well-being is increasingly recognized in academic discourse as a complex and evolving construct, characterized by multiple dimensions. The scholars under review formulate a series of significant conclusions, among which are the following:

1. Scholarly attention has been largely directed toward exploring the antecedent factors influencing financial well-being, whereas empirical investigations into its outcomes remain comparatively limited. Also, the assessments of financial well-being have predominantly employed subjective measures, reflecting individuals' perceptions and experiences.
2. The empirical evidence is largely derived from studies conducted in economically advanced nations such as the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom, which constrains the broader applicability of the findings across diverse socio-economic contexts.
3. Financial well-being has also been extensively analyzed in connection with related domains, including poverty, financial behaviour, income levels, health status, and macroeconomic growth indicators.

The findings of the study show that from the early 1980s to the mid-2010s, scholars have highlighted that income inequality and financial well-being across different ethnic groups are predominantly influenced by structural economic changes, institutional dynamics, and persistent socio-demographic disparities (the level of education, health, sector of employment, etc). According to Kakwani (1980), various theories explaining income distribution among individuals originate from two principal schools of thought: the theoretical-statistical approach, which attributes income generation to stochastic processes, and the socio-economic perspective, which emphasizes economic and institutional determinants such as gender, age, occupation, education, geography, and wealth distribution. The study of Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov (1992) explores

the impact of spatial segregation on economic disparities among ethnic minorities in Israel, contending that segregation plays a dual role by simultaneously reflecting and reinforcing inequality, as evidenced by its function within local labour markets not only as a consequence but also as a catalyst for persistent inequality. As maintained by Schierup and Custles (2011) historically distinct experiences of class struggle, territorial expansion and colonial rule across nations have significantly influenced welfare state ideologies and policy design, shaping national models of social inclusion and determining how migrants and ethnic minorities are integrated into host societies, also the possibility of their integration in the labour market, obtaining an appropriate level of incomes and also the financial well-being of their families or households. Myers Jr et al. (2013) argue that, during the socialist era, income inequality in Central and Eastern European states was significantly lower than in other countries at comparable stages of development; their research, as one of the earliest longitudinal and cross-national studies, explores the structural determinants of evolving income disparities in ten post-socialist nations following the 1989 transition, concluding that the rise in inequality is primarily driven by the expansion of the private sector, the erosion of redistributive state mechanism, the socio-economic marginalization of ethno-national minority groups, and the increasing integration of foreign capital into domestic economic systems.

In his analysis of ethnic income disparities in Singapore, Lee (2004) employs the frameworks of labour market segmentation and human capital theory, ultimately determining that these models inadequately account for the observed inequalities, as variations in educational attainment among Chinese, Indian, and Malay populations explain only a marginal portion of the overall income differentials. The study indicates that a substantial portion of income disparities can be attributed to discriminatory practices, which primarily stem from the concentration of ethnic minorities in lower-wage positions and occupations across various sectors of the economy. The research conducted by Campos et al. (2016) also explores the influence of education on income disparities between ethnic minorities and the Han majority in China over the period 1993 to 2011. The results reveal a significant income disadvantage for ethnic minorities in overall, female, and urban samples. Similar trends appear in the rural sample depending on the measurement approach. Generally, an additional year of schooling increases ethnic minorities' earnings by 26,3-28%, with gains of 13,5-14,4% for minority women, 10,4-14% for those with urban household registration, and 10,8% for rural registered individuals.

Tuyen (2016) examines income inequality sources among ethnic minorities in Vietnam's Northwest region – the poorest and most unequal area – using Gini index decomposition by income source and concludes that diversification into non-farm activities may exacerbate inequality if opportunities favour wealthier groups or mitigate it when accessible to poorer populations. The research by Nguyen et al. (2020) reveals that between 2004 and 2014, the income gap among Vietnam's ethnic groups widened, with the Gini index decomposition highlighting wages and nonfarm business income as key factors of income inequality, reflecting a shift in the economy from agriculture to non-agricultural activities.

In the course of studying the relationship between inequality in financial well-being and health status, the study by Le Clere and Soobader (2000) found that the impact of income inequality on self-perceived health in the United States varies across demographic groups, while Adams et al. (2006) highlighted that socio-economic health disparities have seen limited success in interventions, suggesting that increasing income for the most deprived could improve their health, although past income supplementation experiments have not been thoroughly examined for their health impacts.

The findings of this study indicate that since the third decade of the 2000s, researchers examining income inequality and financial well-being have increasingly emphasized the role of education, financial literacy, inclusion, and self-efficacy, while also focusing on how structural, cultural, and institutional barriers unevenly affect marginalized and ethnic minority groups in achieving financial security and resilience. Assari et al. (2024) held that financial well-being is a critical component of overall well-being, characterized by an individual's ability to meet financial obligations, secure future financial stability, and attain a sense of financial independence. Education is often viewed as an essential tool for enhancing financial well-being. However, the advantages associated with education in the context of financial well-being are not evenly distributed across various racial, ethnic, and nativity groups. In their study, the authors utilize the theory of Minorities' Diminished Returns (MDRs) to suggest that the positive impacts of education on outcomes such as income and financial security are less significant for marginalized populations, including Black individuals, Latinos, and immigrants.

Umeh and Cornelius (2024) note that as ethnic diversity in the United Kingdom increases, numerous studies have examined the financial well-being and exclusion of ethnic minority groups through aggregated survey data. However, the specific experiences of financial inequalities among these groups remain insufficiently understood. This study reviews existing literature and analyzes the comparative status of various ethnic groups regarding savings, credit utilization, and access to debt advice, while also investigating the underlying causes of disparities and factors contributing to financial exclusion. Our findings indicate that addressing inequalities in financial well-being requires the development of inclusive financial products and services that consider relational, cultural, familial, and communal dynamics, alongside the integration of

financial solutions within broader social initiatives. It is essential for government entities and policymakers to play a crucial role in this process.

The study of Gupta et al. (2025) exploring the financial well-being of working women in the Indian context investigates the complex interrelation between financial literacy, financial inclusion, and well-being among employed women in India, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of financial self-efficacy. The findings reveal that the link between financial inclusion and well-being is significantly mediated by individuals' financial self-efficacy. This suggests that the efficacy of financial inclusion initiatives in enhancing the well-being of working women is contingent upon their beliefs, perceptions, and confidence in managing personal financial matters. Financial self-efficacy thus serves as a crucial mechanism through which financial inclusion contributes to improved well-being. By examining the indirect pathways through which financial literacy and inclusion influence well-being via self-efficacy, this research offers a novel theoretical lens for understanding the dynamics of financial empowerment among marginalized and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations.

The study of Lusardi and Streeter (2023) highlights the critical importance of financial knowledge, which remains low across various demographics, particularly among younger individuals in the United States, those with lower education levels, women, and the unemployed. Conducted during a period of rising inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic, the research reveals a significant lack of understanding of inflation-related concepts. Furthermore, it establishes a correlation between financial literacy and financial well-being, indicating that correct answers to the "Big Three" financial literacy questions are linked to positive financial behaviours and outcomes, including retirement planning, financial resilience, and responsible debt management.

In the work of de Oliveira Cardoso et al. (2023), the authors aim to identify and assess the psychometric properties of the instruments available to measure financial well-being. Their findings showed that there are 10 scales with good psychometric properties available to measure financial well-being, five of which are multidimensional and three have ≥ 6 types of validity evidence. The authors note that the multidimensional Subjective Financial Well-Being Scale (MSFWBS) seems to be the most complete instrument, although it only assesses the subjective aspect of financial well-being. The authors note that in their future research directions to guide the definition of financial well-being, the construction, cross-cultural adaptation, and the use of psychometric instruments are suggested.

The findings of Czibere and Loncsák (2020) deserve special attention in the context of the study of the financial well-being of ethnic minorities in a polyethnic region. In their article, the authors provide a comprehensive overview of the living conditions of Hungarian minority households with children in Ukrainian rural areas of Transcarpathia, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data with qualitative insights. The central focus of their analysis lies in examining the particular labour market circumstances, earning potentials and employment types that sustain these households, revealing not only the economic underdevelopment of the Transcarpathian region but also highlighting the unique strategies and life conditions of its Hungarian ethnic minorities, which extend beyond conventional European poverty frameworks and demonstrate complex social and economic vulnerabilities.

In this study, based on the method of sociological survey, we also examined the differences between ethnic groups living in the Transcarpathian region and identified the common and distinctive features reflecting the level of financial well-being of the analyzed ethnic groups, including Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Roma, Russians, etc. The results of our study show a relatively similar situation in the level of financial well-being of the ethnic minorities in Transcarpathia, with the exception of Roma, who belong to the most socially vulnerable ethnic group and require special focus of attention in the case of studying the key factors that influence the level of their financial well-being.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the research is to define the differences, inequalities, and also the same characteristics of quality of the financial well-being of ethnic minorities in a polyethnic region, on example of the Transcarpathian region.

Objectives:

1. Description of the formation and characteristics of the survey sample of the main ethnic groups of the Transcarpathian region (Ukrainians, Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Roma, and Russians).
2. Systematic review of the methodology and methods of researching the financial well-being of ethnic groups in the Transcarpathian region, including a description of the group of indicators included in the analysis.
3. Analysis and assessment of the theoretical basis of the study, such as the main factors that influence the financial well-being among different ethnic groups.

4. Comparative examination of findings from a sociological survey of ethnic groups in the Transcarpathian region and highlighting of the main characteristics that reflect the level of financial well-being of ethnic groups in the region, such as the similarities and differences in the level of incomes, expenditures, and other indicators that reflect the individual assessment of household members of their financial position.
5. Generalization the results of the study and show the presence or absence of disparities in the level of financial well-being of different ethnic groups of the region using the example of the Transcarpathian region.

METHODS

Formation and characteristics of the survey sample. The primary research instrument consisted of a self-administered survey, distributed in 2021-2022 throughout the Transcarpathian region (Ukraine), covering all districts and settlements with concentrated ethnic minority populations. The survey was conducted using personal structured interviews based on a stochastic sample representative of the Transcarpathian population aged 18 and over. It included seven questions on respondents' demographic characteristics, six closed-ended, and three open-ended questions. The tabulated results were presented in absolute numbers and percentages to provide a foundation for further analysis and conclusions. During the selection of the respondents, attention was paid to the equal coverage of rural and urban residents, male and female. Ethnicity was determined on the basis of the respondent's self-identification. The total number of respondents is 418 people. The group of "others" includes the respondents who identified themselves as Poles, Czechs, Georgians, Jews, and Ruthenians. The sample structure is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics of the respondents by ethnicity.

Indicator	Ukrainians	Hungarians	Romanians	Slovakians	Roma	Russians	Other	Total
The number of respondents in the ethnic group, people	252	70	25	15	30	16	10	418
The share of the respondents in such an ethnic group, %	60.26	16.75	5.98	3.59	7.18	3.83	2.39	100
The share of female respondents, %	56.75	64.29	60.00	86.67	40.00	43.75	60.00	57.66
The share of male respondents, %	43.25	35.71	40.00	13.33	60.00	56.25	40.00	42.34
The share of urban residents, %	61.11	47.14	16.00	86.67	36.67	100.00	70.00	56.94
The share of rural residents, %	38.89	52.86	84.00	13.33	63.33	0.00	30.00	43.06

Description of the group of indicators included in the analysis. There are several approaches in the scientific literature that assess the level of economic well-being of the population. Some of them are based on measuring of social welfare (based on analysis of GDP dynamics), determining the level of quality of population development (measuring the outcome of benefits for human or social capital) and determining the level and quality of life, based on analysis of factors determining the availability of goods (see Drazhnytsia, 2013). In some studies, the consumers' budgets are the basis for comparing the real incomes and consumptions with the needs of the individuals and their households (see Chechel, 2011). In the study of Libanova et al. (2013), the main components of assessing the level of welfare of the population are GDP per capita (purchasing power parity), analysis of the dynamics of the consumer price index, and availability of consumer goods and services. In the European Quality of Life Surveys (EQLS) (Eurofound, n.d.), as well as during the calculation of The Urban Liveability Index (see The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2024) and Canadian Index of Wellbeing (see Canadian Index of Wellbeing, n.d.) are used the indicators that reflect the property stratification of the population (as the ratio of the last and first quintiles of total incomes), inequality of distribution and the Gini index. Also, the indicators that reflect the subjective attitude of individuals to the level of their incomes, such as satisfaction with the financial condition of households, income and wage levels, etc.

Important components in the calculation of the Better Life Index (see OECD, 2024) and Canadian Index of Wellbeing (see Canadian Index of Wellbeing, n.d.) are indicators such as net disposable income and net financial assets of households, and according to the methodology of European Union (2024) the assessment of quality of life involves the calculation of average and median incomes by age and sex. In the methodology of the Canadian Life Index (n.d.), special attention is also paid to the calculation of the level of deprivation of the population, in particular such indicators as the share of

materially deprived persons; the share of the population that defines their income as those that meet not only food but also the other needs; deprivation index.

For the purposes of this study, three groups of indicators are formed that combine the characteristics of the level of incomes and expenditures of households, as well as subjective indicators that reflect the subjective assessment of the financial well-being of the respondents:

1. Incomes: the average households' income per one member of the household, median incomes level per one member of household, the relative poverty rate (proportion of the population with total incomes less than 75% of the median level), property stratification (the ratio of total incomes of the last and first quintiles), the share of the different income sources in the total households' income structure (salary, pension, subsidy, income from labour migration, etc.).
2. Expenditures: the share of the consumer expenditures in the total households' income, share of costs for feeding, distribution of basic expenses in households' expenses, the average level of consumer spending per one household member (individual consumption per one person), the median expenditure level (per 1 household member), the relative poverty rate (proportion of population with total expenditures less than 75% of the median level).
3. Subjective assessment of the financial well-being (on a 10-point scale): satisfaction with the financial situation of the household, impossibility to make ends meet, and people who consider themselves poor.

RESULTS

The analysis of the financial well-being of different ethnic groups in the Transcarpathian region finds that in the structure of their incomes and expenditures, the lowest level of income is found among the Roma population: 59.38% of Roma have an average income per 1 household member less than EUR 75. The highest level of income is observed among Romanian and Ukrainian ethnicities – respectively 3.64% and 13.11% of respondents have an average income per 1 household member of more than EUR 325. The study confirms that education is a key factor that influences the differentiation in financial well-being and the level of income of ethnic groups. According to the sociological survey results, the largest share of people with higher education is Slovaks (80%), Russians (75%), and Ukrainians (61.1%). In contrast, the smallest share of the respondents with higher education is among Roma, only 6.67%. Most of the respondents of the Roma ethnic group have only primary education (56.67%), secondary education – 26.67%, vocational or special secondary education – 10%. Another factor that appears to impact the well-being of ethnic groups is their activity in the social life of society. The survey results show that the smallest share of those belonging to civil society organizations and political parties is Roma, 3.33%, and the largest is the Russians (75%). Almost half of Romanians (48%) belong to religious organizations (58.33%), national/ethnic associations (50%), and nongovernmental organizations (4.67%).

To determine the share of the ethnic population of Transcarpathia that lives below the poverty line, such indicators are calculated as median expenditures/incomes, the level of relative poverty, and income stratification of the population. The study found that the highest level of stratification is observed among Ukrainians, as well as among the Hungarian ethnic group (Table 2).

Ukrainians	Hungarians	Romanians	Roma	Slovaks	Russians	Others	In general
Median income level (per 1 household member), EUR							
5.53	5.13	4.43	4.1	3.33	3.33	4.23	4.43
The share of the population with total equivalent income less than 75% of the median level (the relative poverty rate), %.							
47.08	53.57	13.63	86.67	13.33	53.33	44.44	30.39
Income stratification (the ratio of the total incomes of the last and first quintiles)							
11.67	8.00	3.5	1.24	1.14	2.64	8.2	11.79
Median level of expenditures (per 1 household member), EUR							
2.5	2.5	2.76	2.53	1.66	1.66	2.76	3.1
The share of the population with total equivalent expenditures less than 75% of the median level (the relative poverty rate), %.							
21.42	21.15	36.36	73.33	6.67	7.69	12.5	36.9

According to the survey results, the highest share of the respondents with a total equivalent income of less than 75% of the median level (relative poverty line) is observed among the Roma population – 86.67%, the lowest – among Slovaks and Romanians – 13.33% and 13.63% respectively (Figure 1).

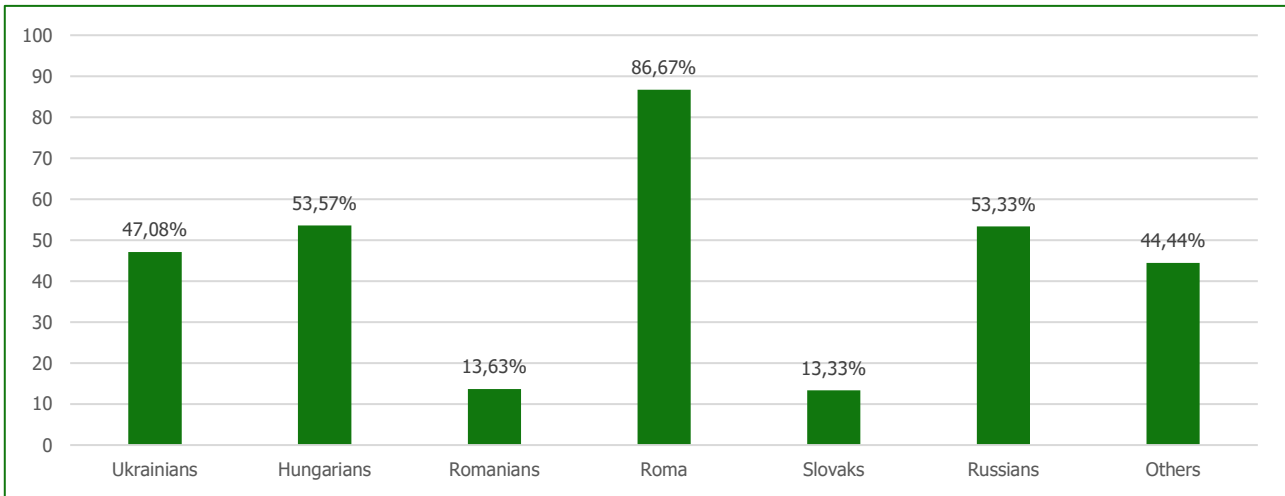


Figure 1. The share of the respondents living below the relative poverty line by income, %.

The results of the study indicate that in the overall income structure of ethnic households, the highest shares are:

- salary – 66.94 at whole (the highest level is observed in the income structure of Slovaks – 83% and Hungarians – 72.95 %, Ukrainians – 68.2%, Russians – 60.43%);
- profits from business running – 8.69% (such as Russians – 16.7%, Ukrainians – 10.76%);
- pension – 8.51% (Russians – 18.33%, Slovaks – 15.31%, Roma – 13.3%);
- the social assistance – 7.95% (compared to other nationalities, in the structure of incomes of the Roma population, this share is notably higher – 25%);
- labour migration incomes – 7.65% (Romanians – 15%, Ukrainians – 10.5%, Slovaks – 6.66%);
- incomes from the sale of households' agricultural products – 2.23% (Russians – 6.25%, Romanians – 5.83%, Hungarians – 1.92%, Ukrainians – 1.66%);
- financial support from family members/relatives – 1.13% (Romanians – 2.7%, Russians – 1.85%, Roma – 1.6%).

The highest share of the respondents with the total equivalent expenditure of less than 75% of the median level (relative poverty rate) is 73.33% – Roma ethnic group, the lowest – 6.67% and 7.69% respectively, Slovaks and Russians (Figure 2).

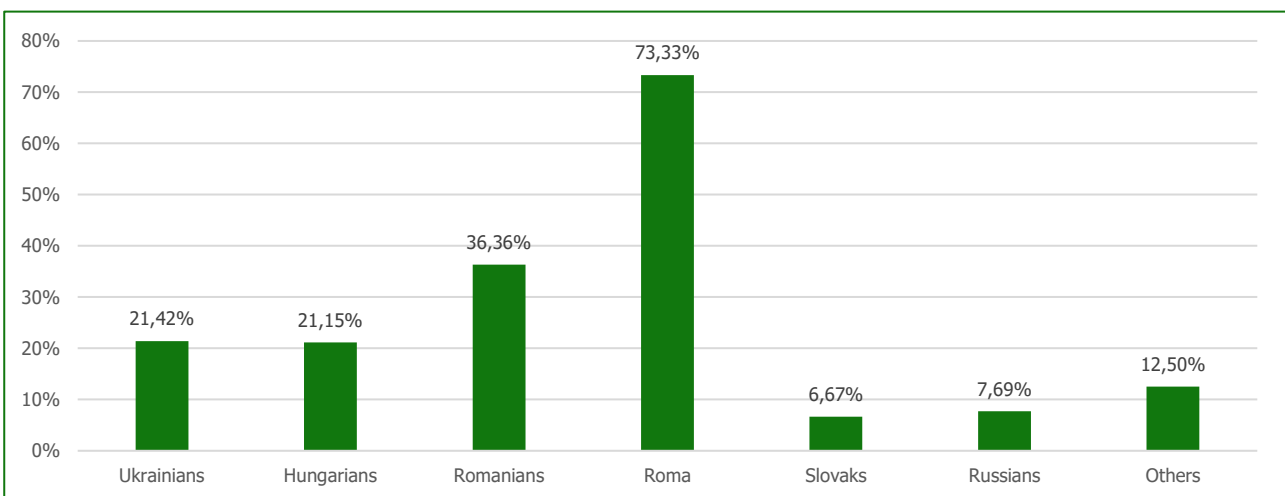


Figure 2. The share of the respondents living below the relative poverty line by expenditures, %.

The analysis shows that in the general structure of the households' expenditures, the share of consumption expenditures is the highest, as indicated by 54.55% of the respondents (including Slovaks – 100%, Ukrainians – 54.37%, Roma – 53.33%, Hungarians – 52.86%). The significant share of this structure is the home repair costs/housing renovation – 37.32% of respondents (Roma – 46.67%, Romanians – 41.43%) and the costs of children's education – 33.97% of respondents (Romanians – 44.29%, others – 50%). In the general structure of the expenditures there is the low share of households' savings, indicated by 23.92% of the respondents (including Roma – 0%, Romanians – 4%, Slovaks – 13.33%), as well as the expenditures for running business– 13.88% (Romanians – 48%, Hungarians – 17,14%, Ukrainians – 13.10%). The results of this study suggest that potentially a higher level of financial well-being is among those ethnic groups that are characterized by a higher level of entrepreneurial and migration potential, in particular Romanians, Slovaks, and Ukrainians. Due to the sociological survey results, none of the interviewed Roma respondents were involved in any entrepreneurial activity. To some extent, this means that the analyzed type of activity is not typical for the Roma ethnic group and does not play a significant role in the generation of their incomes and ensuring their financial well-being.

Analysis of the households' subjective assessment of the level of satisfaction with their financial well-being indicates a low level of satisfaction among the respondents (Table 3).

Table 3. Subjective assessment of the satisfaction with the financial situation in the households, %.

Score/Ethnicity	Ukrainians	Hungarians	Romanians	Roma	Slovaks	Russians	Others	Total
1-2	26.56	37.50	0.00	92.59	50.00	54.55	75.00	44.37
3-5	50.00	45.83	66.67	7.41	33.33	36.36	0.00	38.73
6-8	17.19	12.50	16.67	0.00	16.67	9.09	25.0	12.68
9-10	6.25	4.17	16.67	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.23

As can be seen from Table 3, 44.37% of the respondents rated their incomes level as very low (1-2 points) (in particular, 92.59% of Roma indicated this answer), 38.73% indicated an average score (3-5 points) (66.67% Romanians, 50% of Ukrainians, 45.83% of Hungarians) and only 4.23% of the respondents highly rate the level of satisfaction with their incomes (9-10 points) (including 16.67% of Romanians, 6.25% of Ukrainians and 4.17% Hungarians).

Figure 3 shows the subjective assessment of the respondents who classified themselves as poor (Figure 3).

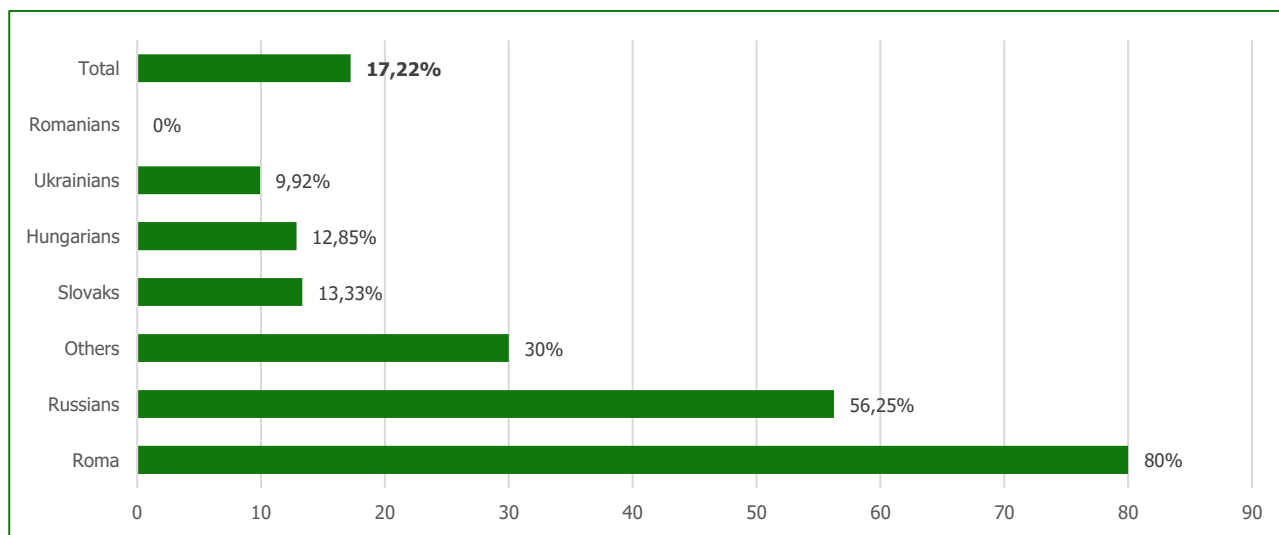


Figure 3. The share of the respondents considering themselves to be poor.

As can be seen from the figure 3, in general 17.22% of the respondents considering themselves to be poor (such as 80% of Roma, 56.25% of Russians, 50% – others), 34.69% of respondents indicated the difficult financial situation and low level of welfare of their household (90% of Roma, 68.75% of Russians, 40% of Slovaks).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study offers a comprehensive, aggregated analysis and comparative assessment of financial well-being among five ethnic minorities and the titular population within the multiethnic context of the Transcarpathian region. The analysis integrates both objective and subjective indicators of financial well-being, enabling a multidimensional assessment of disparities among the examined groups.

Two prevailing research paradigms in the academic discourse on financial well-being are confirmed and further contextualized in this study. The first, dominant from the 1980s to the mid-2010s, emphasizes the role of structural economic shifts, institutional dynamics, and socio-demographic determinants—such as education, health, and the employment sector—in shaping financial outcomes across ethnic lines. The second, emerging in recent decades, shifts attention toward factors such as education, financial literacy, inclusion, and individual self-efficacy, highlighting the disproportionate impact of institutional and cultural barriers on marginalized and minority communities.

The empirical findings reveal a convergence in financial well-being levels among Ukrainians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and, to some extent, Romanians, with the latter group demonstrating slightly superior indicators. Conversely, a marked disparity is observed in relation to the Roma ethnic group, among whom over 85% of respondents fall below the relative poverty threshold.

The results of the study show that wage income represents the dominant source of ethnic household revenue across all groups (66.94%), while consumption accounts for the largest portion of expenditures. Savings rates are notably low, with only 23.92% of respondents reporting any savings; also, this figure drops to 0% for the Roma ethnic group. Subjective evaluations of financial status reflect similar patterns: nearly half of all respondents, including the majority of Roma, assessed their income as very low, while only 4.23%—predominantly Romanians, Ukrainians, and Hungarians—reported high income satisfaction.

Contrary to the conclusions of Czibere and Loncsák (2020), our data do not support the claim that the Hungarian minority in Transcarpathia exhibits the lowest financial well-being among regional groups. Instead, the findings of the study indicate a positive association between elevated levels of entrepreneurial activity and improved financial outcomes within certain minority groups. Consistent with Myers Jr. et al. (2013), our results suggest that the expansion of the private sector contributes to income growth, while potentially exacerbating income inequality. In particular, the Romanian group demonstrates the highest level of financial well-being in the region, with only 13.63% living below the poverty line and none self-identifying as poor. A defining characteristic of this group is its pronounced entrepreneurial orientation, with 48% of household expenditures allocated to business-related activities—significantly higher than in other ethnic cohorts.

Our findings partially align with Bashir and Qureshi (2023), arguing that earlier evaluations of financial well-being were largely based on subjective measures reflecting how individuals perceive and experience their financial circumstances. In line with the multidimensional framework proposed by de Oliveira Cardoso et al. (2023), this study incorporates both subjective and objective measures, thereby enriching the interpretative scope of financial well-being across ethnic groups.

Additionally, our analysis integrates a socio-economic lens, considering educational attainment, employment sector, and income sources, in accordance with approaches advocated by Kakwani (1980), Campos et al. (2016), and Assari et al. (2024). In partial agreement with Levin-Epstein and Semenov (1992), we argue that segregation not only reflects existing inequalities but actively reinforces them—a dynamic clearly observable in the socio-economic marginalization of the Roma population.

Nonetheless, it remains challenging to isolate the influence of subjective, culturally embedded variables on income levels—such as personal characteristics, intergenerational employment traditions, and environmental context. According to this, in future studies, we propose the development of mathematical modelling tools in future research to quantitatively assess the impact of these factors on financial well-being among ethnic minorities.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors have contributed equally.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ПОРІВНЯЛЬНА ОЦІНКА ФІНАНСОВОГО БЛАГОПОЛУЧТЯ ЕТНІЧНИХ МЕНШИН У ПОЛІЕТНІЧНОМУ РЕГІОНІ

У статті досліджено домогосподарства етнічних меншин Закарпатської області, зокрема рівень їхнього фінансового добробуту. У центрі уваги – українська, угорська, румунська, словацька, ромська та російська етнічні групи. Мета дослідження – визначити нерівності та спільні ознаки фінансового добробуту етнічних меншин поліетнічного регіону. Основні результати дослідження підтверджують, що в структурі доходів аналізованих домогосподарств найбільшою є частка заробітної плати – 66,94%. У загальній структурі витрат частка споживчих витрат є найвищою, зокрема серед словаків, українців, ромів та угорців. Досить низькою є частка заощаджень, на що вказало 23,92% респондентів. Серед аналізованих етнічних меншин найвищим рівнем фінансового добробуту характеризується румунська етнічна група – частка респондентів, які живуть за межею відносної бідності, є найнижчою (13,63%); частка румунів, які вважають себе бідними, становить 0%. Майже половина респондентів оцінили свій рівень доходів як дуже низький, зокрема роми та росіяни, і лише 4,23% респондентів високо оцінюють задоволення рівнем доходів (переважно румуни, українці та угорці). Головні висновки дослідження демонструють наявність спільних ознак у рівні фінансового добробуту проаналізованих етнічних меншин, винятком є роми, які, на відміну від інших, є найбільш соціально вразливою етнічною групою з понад 85% депривованого населення. За результатами соціологічного опитування, румунська етнічна група характеризується найвищим рівнем фінансового добробуту. Такий розподіл частково залежить від специфіки функціонування регіонального ринку праці та дає підставу зробити припущення, що диспропорції в рівні фінансового добробуту різних етнічних груп пов'язані з їхніми історичними трудовими традиціями, гендерною нерівністю та сімейними ролями, рівнем освіти, підприємницьким потенціалом, схильністю до міграції тощо.

Ключові слова: етнічні меншини, фінансове благополуччя, домогосподарство, межа бідності, доходи, витрати, стратифікація

JEL Класифікація: J15, I31, I32, D1, D14