Dr. Csilla Petro PhD.

Generational Challenges in Hungarian Public Administration: Comparing Organisational Demographics and Generation Z Career Preferences

Abstract

Public administrations across Europe are facing significant demographic challenges as ageing workforces and declining numbers of young employees threaten the long-term sustainability of public sector organisations. In response, attracting and retaining younger generations has become a strategic priority for many governments. This study examines generational challenges in Hungarian public administration by comparing the findings of two large-scale empirical surveys: the nationally representative Generations 2024 study conducted among civil servants and a representative survey of Hungarian young adults aged 18–29.

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of representative bureaucracy and Public Service Motivation (PSM), the study investigates how public administration is perceived internally by employees and externally by young people, and explores the factors influencing the attractiveness of public sector careers. The findings reveal substantial demographic ageing within Hungarian public administration and significant recruitment challenges among younger generations. While salary, work–life balance, job security, flexibility, and career opportunities emerged as the most important employment-related factors for both groups, important differences were identified regarding technological expectations, organisational flexibility, and workplace culture.

The results further demonstrate a discrepancy between internal and external perceptions of public administration. Civil servants generally perceive their organisations as professionally competent and socially valuable, whereas young people are more likely to associate public administration with bureaucracy, rigidity, and limited innovation. The study also highlights that highly educated young adults exhibit lower levels of interest in public sector employment than respondents with lower educational attainment.

The findings suggest that workforce renewal in public administration requires not only competitive compensation systems but also organisational modernisation, flexible work arrangements, digital transformation, and targeted employer branding strategies. The study contributes to the literature on public sector workforce sustainability and provides practical recommendations for strengthening the attractiveness of public administration among younger generations.

Keywords: public administration, Generation Z, workforce renewal, representative bureaucracy, public service motivation, public sector careers, generational management, human resource management

1. Introduction

The demographic challenges currently facing Hungary are far from unique. Across the European Union, ageing public administrations have become an increasingly pressing concern. According to Eurostat (2023), more than 40% of public sector employees in EU member states are over the age of 50, while countries such as Germany, Italy, and Poland exhibit particularly high proportions of older civil servants. Similarly, the OECD (2021) has highlighted that recruitment and succession challenges in public administration are systemic in nature: the proportion of younger employees is declining, while employees approaching retirement age constitute an increasingly large segment of the workforce. This trend extends beyond labour market concerns and raises important questions regarding knowledge management,

organisational learning, and innovation capacity. Without successful generational renewal, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of public administration may be jeopardised.

In this context, Hungary's demographic challenges should be interpreted within a broader international framework. Public sector organisations across Europe are confronted with similar dilemmas and increasingly regard the attraction and retention of younger generations as a strategic priority.

The concept of representative bureaucracy, originally introduced by Donald Kingsley in 1944, provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding these challenges. According to this perspective, the effectiveness, legitimacy, and perceived fairness of public administration are strengthened when the demographic composition of public organisations reflects the characteristics of the society they serve, including gender, age, social background, and generational diversity. This idea was later expanded by Samuel Krislov, who argued that representativeness should not merely be understood as passive demographic reflection but also as active representation in decision-making processes. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of generational succession. The future effectiveness of public administration depends significantly on its ability to attract, integrate, and retain younger generations while recognising their distinct motivations and expectations. The recruitment of young professionals and the facilitation of intergenerational knowledge transfer should therefore be regarded not only as human resource management issues but also as mechanisms that strengthen organisational legitimacy and public trust through a more representative bureaucracy.

Hungarian scholarship has similarly emphasised that the long-term sustainability of public administration is closely linked to the successful management of workforce renewal. Hazafi (2016) argues that succession is not merely a quantitative staffing issue but a strategic human resource challenge. Without attracting and retaining younger generations, public organisations may struggle to maintain service quality and organisational performance. Consequently, workforce renewal should not be viewed solely as a recruitment issue but as a prerequisite for preserving and transferring organisational knowledge, expertise, and competencies. Building on this argument, Hazafi (2022) identified strategic support for public sector talent pipelines as a key factor in maintaining a competitive public service. Although several initiatives, including EU-funded talent development programmes, have contributed to attracting younger employees, the proportion of young people within many areas of Hungarian public administration remains relatively low. This indicates not only succession challenges but also limitations in the long-term attractiveness of public sector careers. Workforce renewal must therefore be understood as one of the most critical pillars of public sector sustainability and organisational renewal, closely connected to generational management and the career motivations of younger cohorts.

Previous Hungarian research suggests that the career motivations of Generation Z differ considerably from those of older generations. Szakács (2022) found that external motivations tend to dominate among young people, contributing to a gradual decline in interest in public administration careers during university studies. Other studies have shown that Generation Z places particular emphasis on work–life balance, recognition and appreciation, and a supportive work environment (Kozák & Pózner, 2024). These findings can also be interpreted through the lens of Public Service Motivation (PSM) theory, which highlights commitment to serving society and contributing to the public good as important drivers of public sector employment. Hungarian adaptations of the PSM framework have further incorporated factors such as job security and organisational stability, both of which are highly relevant in the context of demographic challenges and public sector succession planning (Horváth & Hollósy-Vadász, 2019).

International evidence supports these observations. The *Gen Z Report* (2024) suggests that Generation Z generally prefers more flexible and less hierarchical organisational structures, characteristics that may reduce the attractiveness of traditional public administration. Similarly,

a Polish study found substantial generational differences regarding interpersonal relations, teamwork, and approaches to work organisation, creating new leadership challenges in fostering employee engagement and loyalty (Sowa & Mikuła, 2022). Furthermore, the OECD (2022) emphasises that effective knowledge transfer between generations has become a critical issue for multigenerational public sector organisations. Human resource strategies based on talent management and mentoring programmes can simultaneously preserve the expertise of older employees while supporting the integration and development of younger generations.

Several European Union initiatives have sought to strengthen young people's engagement with the public sector. One notable example is the European Commission's Blue Book Traineeship Programme, which annually provides approximately 600 graduates with opportunities to gain professional experience and insight into EU policymaking and institutional operations (European Commission, 2020). Another significant initiative is the Youth Guarantee, which aims to ensure that young people aged 15–29 receive an offer of employment, education, training, or traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. By the end of 2024, the programme had supported nearly 50 million young Europeans (Youth Forum, 2025).

The ageing of the public sector workforce remains particularly pronounced across OECD countries. In many cases, the median age of civil servants exceeds 50 years, while relatively few countries have implemented comprehensive interventions aimed at retaining older employees, supporting talent development, or introducing multigenerational workforce strategies (OECD, 2025). These international experiences demonstrate that Hungary's succession challenges are not isolated phenomena but rather part of a broader European trend. Consequently, attracting and motivating younger generations has become an increasingly strategic issue for governments across Europe.

Against this backdrop, the present study compares the findings of two large-scale generational research projects conducted by the Public Service Human Resource Management Research Workshop of the University of Public Service. The analysis focuses on the Generations 2024 study, a nationally representative survey conducted in Hungary, and a subsequent representative survey examining the attitudes of Generation Z towards careers in public administration.

The Generations 2024 project was launched to explore trends and opportunities related to workforce renewal and succession policies. Between July and December 2024, Hungary held the Presidency of the Council of the European Union and simultaneously chaired the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN). Generational management in public administration was identified as one of the priorities of the Hungarian Presidency Programme. The Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development and the Ministry of Interior commissioned the Public Service Human Resource Management Research Workshop of the University of Public Service to conduct the associated scientific research.

The second study was conducted during the first quarter of 2025 among Hungarian young adults aged 18–29. Its objective was to examine attitudes towards public administration, perceptions of public sector career attractiveness, and expectations regarding work, employers, and workplace characteristics.

By comparing the results of these two studies, the present research seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of generational differences within Hungarian public administration while exploring the relationship between the demographic challenges faced by public organisations and the career motivations of young people. Combining the two datasets allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of the future of Hungarian public administration. The survey of civil servants provides an internal perspective, revealing demographic trends, career-related challenges, and succession issues within government organisations. In contrast, the Generation Z survey offers an external perspective, illustrating how young people perceive

public administration, the extent to which they consider it an attractive career path, and the workplace expectations they prioritise.
The integration of these perspectives enables the simultaneous examination of the supply side—organisational demographics and human resource challenges—and the demand side—career motivations and attitudes of young people. This research design is particularly valuable because it not only describes current conditions but also offers predictive insights. It helps identify areas where the expectations of younger generations and the realities of public administration either diverge or align, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the future attractiveness and sustainability of public sector careers.

2. Research Objectives and Methods

The primary objective of this study was to examine generational differences within Hungarian central government administration and to explore the attitudes of younger generations towards careers in public administration. The research was based on two complementary empirical pillars: a large-scale survey conducted among civil servants employed in Hungarian government administration and a nationally representative survey targeting young adults aged 18–29.
For the purposes of this study, government administration refers to organisations operating under the scope of the Act on Government Administration, as well as the National Tax and Customs Administration (NTCA). Although the NTCA is governed by a separate legal framework, its specific institutional status and role justify its inclusion within the broader category of government administration. The analysis distinguished between central and territorial levels of government administration. The former includes ministries, central government offices, government agencies, and their deconcentrated units, while the latter comprises county and metropolitan government offices and district offices.
The concept of government administration applied in this study broadly corresponds to what was previously referred to as state administration in Hungarian public administration scholarship. This approach facilitates comparison with earlier public service statistical databases and administrative workforce studies. However, the analysis does not cover local government administrations, autonomous administrative bodies, or independent regulatory authorities.
In addition to the primary survey data, the analysis incorporated several complementary sources, including data from the Government Personnel Decision Support System (KSZDR), OECD databases, the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN) survey on generational management practices, and historical public service statistical datasets.

2.1 Survey of Civil Servants

Data collection was conducted using a Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing (CAWI) methodology. This approach enabled respondents to complete the questionnaire independently through an online platform in their own environment.
The target population consisted of government officials employed in organisations operating under the scope of the Act on Government Administration. The Ministry of the Interior distributed the questionnaire to the entire population of approximately 77,000 employees. Consequently, no sampling procedure was required, and the study sought to reach the full target population.
A total of 12,500 responses were received. Following data cleaning procedures, 12,435 questionnaires were retained for analysis.
Although the survey generated an exceptionally large dataset, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations associated with voluntary participation. As with all self-administered surveys, a degree of self-selection bias cannot be excluded. For example, employees with

stronger opinions—particularly those experiencing dissatisfaction—may have been more likely to participate, while highly overloaded or less engaged employees may be underrepresented. These considerations were taken into account when interpreting the findings.

2.2 Survey of Generation Z

The second empirical pillar focused on young adults aged 18–29 and aimed to examine attitudes towards public administration, perceptions of public sector careers, and work-related values and expectations.

The survey was conducted by Protocall 2009 Web- and Telemarketing Ltd. between 15 January and 7 February 2025 using Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). The final sample consisted of 1,008 respondents.

The sample was designed to be nationally representative with respect to gender, educational attainment, region of residence, and settlement type. This ensured that the findings could be generalised to the Hungarian population aged 18–29.

While the representative sampling design provides a strong basis for generalisation, the results should nevertheless be interpreted within the limits of the survey's margin of sampling error.

2.3 Comparative Research Design

The combination of these two datasets provides a unique opportunity to analyse the future of Hungarian public administration from both internal and external perspectives.

The survey of civil servants offers an internal organisational perspective by revealing demographic trends, workforce challenges, perceptions of public sector employment, and succession-related issues within government administration.

In contrast, the Generation Z survey represents an external perspective by examining how potential future employees perceive public administration, how attractive they consider public sector careers, and which workplace characteristics they regard as most important.

The simultaneous analysis of these perspectives enables the examination of both the supply side and the demand side of public sector employment. The organisational perspective highlights existing demographic challenges and human resource realities, while the youth survey reveals expectations, motivations, and potential barriers affecting future recruitment.

This research design extends beyond a simple description of current conditions. It allows for the identification of areas where organisational characteristics and generational expectations either diverge or align. Consequently, the study provides valuable insights for succession planning, workforce renewal strategies, and the long-term sustainability of public administration.

By integrating internal organisational realities with external labour market expectations, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with generational renewal in Hungarian public administration.

3. Results

3.1 Perceptions of Public Administration

International studies consistently demonstrate that Generation Z's perceptions of public administration and their willingness to pursue public sector careers are strongly influenced by organisational culture, perceived prestige, and working conditions. A comparative study conducted among university students in Canada, Norway, and Poland found that more positive perceptions of public administration—particularly regarding organisational efficiency and lower levels of bureaucracy—significantly increased the likelihood of considering a public sector career (Phys.org, 2025). Similar findings were reported by Rendon (2024) in the United States, where Generation Z exhibited relatively high levels of public service motivation, yet many respondents perceived public administration as bureaucratic and outdated, reducing its

attractiveness as an employer. Research conducted in Romania also highlighted the importance of financial security, mentoring opportunities, and flexible organisational environments in shaping the employment preferences of younger generations (Stanciu, 2021).

Against this background, the present study examined both internal and external perceptions of Hungarian public administration. Particular attention was paid to how respondents evaluate the sector's professional characteristics, social role, employment conditions, and overall attractiveness as a career option.

The comparison of internal and external perceptions is particularly important because it provides insight into both organisational self-assessment and broader societal attitudes. Internal perceptions reveal how civil servants evaluate their own organisations and working environment, whereas external perceptions reflect how potential future employees and society at large view public administration. Analysing these perspectives simultaneously makes it possible to identify areas of convergence and divergence and to highlight potential challenges in recruitment and employer branding.

The findings indicate that public administration is perceived similarly in several respects by both groups. Both civil servants and young respondents strongly associate public administration with serving citizens and contributing to society. Stability and predictability also emerged as commonly recognised characteristics.

However, important differences can also be observed. Civil servants tend to evaluate professional expertise within public administration more positively than external respondents. While employees perceive the sector as professionally competent and staffed by highly qualified experts, this image is less visible from the outside. In contrast, external respondents more frequently associate public administration with bureaucracy, slow decision-making processes, and organisational rigidity.

The results further suggest that both groups regard innovation, flexibility, and organisational agility as areas requiring improvement. Public administration is rarely perceived as a dynamic or highly innovative work environment. This finding is particularly relevant when considering the preferences of younger generations, who often place a high value on adaptability, autonomy, and modern workplace practices.

One of the most striking differences concerns perceptions of social and financial recognition. Civil servants evaluate both dimensions significantly more negatively than external respondents. Employees frequently report feeling undervalued both financially and socially, whereas young people and members of the general public tend to assume that public sector employment enjoys greater recognition than civil servants themselves perceive.

This discrepancy is particularly important from a human resource management perspective. If employees perceive their work as insufficiently recognised or rewarded, this may negatively affect motivation, organisational commitment, and retention. Over time, such perceptions can also influence external employer attractiveness, as negative experiences are shared through informal networks and social interactions.

Overall, the findings reveal a dual image of Hungarian public administration. Certain characteristics—such as stability, predictability, and bureaucratic procedures—are consistently recognised by both internal and external stakeholders. In contrast, perceptions of professional expertise, social prestige, and organisational attractiveness differ substantially between the two groups.

The results suggest that one of the central challenges facing Hungarian public administration is not only improving organisational performance but also making existing professional strengths more visible to the public. While employees generally perceive high levels of expertise and public service commitment within their organisations, these qualities are not adequately reflected in the external image of the sector.

Consequently, strengthening the public image of professional competence, public value creation, and meaningful societal contribution may represent an important component of future recruitment and employer branding strategies aimed at attracting younger generations.

3.2 Labour Market Preferences

Understanding labour market preferences is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of public administration. Attracting and retaining talented employees requires not only knowledge of the expectations of current civil servants but also a clear understanding of the values and priorities of younger generations entering the labour market. Comparing these perspectives provides valuable insights into the extent to which public administration aligns with the expectations of potential future employees.

To facilitate comparison between the two datasets, a relative ranking approach was adopted. This methodological solution was necessary because the surveys employed different measurement scales. In the survey of civil servants, respondents evaluated workplace characteristics using a four-point scale, whereas the Generation Z survey applied a three-point scale. Consequently, direct numerical comparison was not appropriate.

Rather than attempting statistical standardisation, the analysis focused on the relative importance of individual workplace attributes within each survey. Factors were ranked according to their perceived importance, and the resulting rankings were subsequently compared. This approach allowed for the identification of shared priorities as well as areas where preferences diverged.

The findings reveal a remarkable degree of consistency between the two groups. In both surveys, financial compensation emerged as the most important factor influencing employment decisions. Salary and benefits were ranked first by both current civil servants and young respondents.

Work–life balance occupied the second position in both datasets, indicating a strong consensus regarding the importance of balancing professional and personal responsibilities. This finding is particularly noteworthy given the growing attention devoted to employee well-being and sustainable employment practices in contemporary human resource management.

Job security and organisational stability also ranked among the most important considerations. Both groups regarded stability as a key attribute of desirable employment, confirming earlier findings suggesting that public administration continues to derive part of its attractiveness from its reputation as a secure and predictable employer.

Similarly, flexible working arrangements appeared among the highest-ranked priorities in both surveys. The increasing importance of flexibility reflects broader transformations in labour market expectations and suggests that public organisations seeking to attract younger employees must continue adapting their working arrangements to changing workforce demands.

Career opportunities and opportunities for professional advancement occupied a middle-to-upper position in both rankings. Although respondents clearly valued career development, immediate concerns such as financial security and work–life balance appeared to take precedence.

Several notable differences also emerged. Stress-free working conditions were ranked more highly by younger respondents than by civil servants, indicating that Generation Z may place greater emphasis on psychological well-being and healthy work environments. This finding is consistent with international research highlighting the growing importance of mental health considerations among younger employees.

The role of modern technologies also deserves particular attention. Access to contemporary technological tools and digitally supported work environments was considerably more important for younger respondents than for current civil servants. This result reflects the digital

socialisation of Generation Z and underscores the importance of technological modernisation as a recruitment and retention strategy.

In contrast, factors such as cultural programmes, mentoring opportunities, and corporate social responsibility initiatives occupied relatively low positions in the rankings. While these elements may contribute positively to organisational culture and employee engagement, they appear to be secondary considerations compared to more immediate employment conditions such as salary, flexibility, and stability.

The findings also indicate that self-fulfilment and meaningful work are gradually increasing in importance among younger generations. Although these factors did not rank among the very top priorities, they received greater attention than might traditionally be expected in public sector employment research. This suggests that younger employees increasingly seek opportunities for personal growth and professional purpose alongside financial and career-related benefits.

Overall, the comparison demonstrates substantial alignment between the expectations of current civil servants and those of Generation Z. Financial compensation, work–life balance, stability, flexibility, and career opportunities consistently emerged as the most important determinants of employment attractiveness.

At the same time, the results highlight areas where public administration may need to adapt in order to remain competitive in the labour market. In particular, the growing importance of digitalisation, flexible working arrangements, employee well-being, and opportunities for self-development suggests that traditional public sector employment models may require further modernisation.

These findings provide important implications for workforce planning and succession management. If public administration aims to attract highly qualified young professionals, recruitment and retention strategies must address not only compensation and career structures but also broader generational expectations regarding work environments, organisational culture, and professional development opportunities.

3.3 Generation Z's Willingness to Work in Public Administration

One of the central objectives of the study was to examine the extent to which members of Generation Z consider public administration an attractive career option. Given the demographic challenges facing Hungarian public administration and the growing importance of workforce renewal, understanding the employment intentions of young people is of particular strategic relevance.

The findings indicate a relatively limited level of interest in public sector employment among young adults. Approximately one-third of respondents expressed some degree of openness towards working in public administration. More specifically, around 30% stated that they would consider employment in the sector if the opportunity arose, while only a small minority (approximately 3%) indicated that they would exclusively seek employment within public administration.

In contrast, nearly two-thirds of respondents displayed a negative attitude towards public sector employment. Around one-fifth of the sample categorically rejected the possibility of working in public administration, while approximately 46% reported that they would only consider such employment if no alternative opportunities were available.

These findings are consistent with broader international trends. Research conducted across Europe suggests that the attractiveness of public sector careers among younger generations has gradually declined in recent years. Eymeri-Douzans (2022), for example, argues that public administrations face increasing difficulties in attracting young talent, particularly among highly educated individuals with diverse labour market opportunities. At the same time, the study

highlights that young people who have not yet formed strong occupational preferences remain a potentially accessible target group for public sector recruitment initiatives.

Recent international evidence further suggests that Generation Z evaluates employers according to a distinct set of expectations. A systematic literature review conducted by Shinde and Surve (2025) found that work–life balance, transparent compensation systems, rapid career progression, digitally supported work environments, and informal organisational cultures are among the most influential factors affecting employment decisions among young adults. Public administration often struggles to meet these expectations due to its hierarchical structures, slower promotion systems, and bureaucratic organisational culture.

An additional objective of the survey was to explore differences according to educational attainment. The results reveal substantial variation between respondents with secondary and tertiary education.

Among respondents with secondary-level qualifications, slightly more than one-third indicated a willingness to work in public administration, while approximately two-thirds expressed little or no interest in pursuing a public sector career.

The picture becomes considerably less favourable among university graduates and individuals with higher educational attainment. Within this group, only slightly more than one-quarter reported openness towards public administration employment, whereas nearly three-quarters expressed reluctance or outright rejection of such career opportunities.

These findings are particularly significant because highly educated young people represent one of the most important recruitment targets for public administration. Their comparatively low level of interest raises concerns regarding the future availability of highly skilled professionals within the public sector.

Several factors may contribute to this pattern. First, graduates typically have access to a wider range of career opportunities and therefore face fewer constraints when selecting between sectors. Public administration must consequently compete with private-sector employers that are often perceived as offering higher salaries, faster career progression, greater flexibility, and more innovative work environments.

Second, findings presented earlier in this study suggest that younger respondents perceive public administration as relatively weak in areas that are particularly important to highly educated members of Generation Z. These include opportunities for rapid professional development, organisational flexibility, technological modernity, and innovative workplace practices.

The discrepancy between organisational realities and generational expectations may therefore represent one of the key challenges facing public sector recruitment in the coming years. While public administration continues to offer stability, predictability, and opportunities for meaningful societal contribution, these strengths alone may no longer be sufficient to attract highly qualified young professionals.

From a strategic perspective, the findings indicate that future recruitment efforts should focus not only on communicating the traditional strengths of public service but also on addressing those organisational characteristics that younger generations increasingly value. This may include greater emphasis on flexible working arrangements, digital transformation, professional development opportunities, and more dynamic career pathways.

Overall, the results suggest that public administration remains a viable employment option for a segment of Generation Z; however, its attractiveness is significantly lower among highly educated young adults. Unless public organisations are able to adapt to changing workforce expectations, demographic renewal and the recruitment of future talent may become increasingly difficult.

These findings reinforce the argument that succession planning and workforce renewal should be treated as strategic priorities rather than operational human resource issues. The future

effectiveness and sustainability of public administration will depend largely on its ability to attract, develop, and retain the next generation of civil servants.

4. Discussion, Policy Implications and Conclusions

The findings of this study contribute to a growing body of literature examining generational change, workforce renewal, and the future sustainability of public administration. By combining the perspectives of current civil servants and members of Generation Z, the research provides a comprehensive overview of both the supply side and demand side of public sector employment. This dual perspective represents one of the study's primary contributions, as it enables a more nuanced understanding of the challenges associated with attracting and retaining future generations of civil servants.

The results demonstrate that demographic ageing is not merely a workforce management issue but a strategic challenge with implications for organisational sustainability, knowledge retention, and institutional legitimacy. The ageing profile of the Hungarian public administration reflects broader European trends, confirming that workforce renewal has become an increasingly urgent priority across the public sector.

The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study further reinforce the significance of these findings. From the perspective of representative bureaucracy theory, the demographic composition of public administration should reflect the society it serves. The underrepresentation of younger generations may therefore have implications not only for organisational effectiveness but also for the perceived legitimacy and responsiveness of public institutions. Similarly, the Public Service Motivation framework highlights the importance of aligning organisational characteristics with the values and motivations of potential civil servants. If public administration fails to address the expectations of younger generations, recruitment challenges may intensify in the coming decades.

One of the most important findings of the study is the substantial alignment between the employment preferences of current civil servants and those of Generation Z. In both datasets, salary, work–life balance, job security, flexibility, and career opportunities emerged as the most important determinants of employment attractiveness. This suggests that younger generations are not fundamentally different from current employees in terms of their core employment expectations. Rather, the challenge lies in the extent to which public administration is perceived as capable of meeting these expectations.

At the same time, important generational differences were identified. Younger respondents place greater emphasis on technological modernity, flexible work arrangements, self-development opportunities, and psychologically supportive work environments. These findings are consistent with international research highlighting the increasing importance of digitalisation, autonomy, and employee well-being among younger cohorts.

The results also reveal a significant discrepancy between internal and external perceptions of public administration. Civil servants generally perceive their organisations as professionally competent and committed to serving society. However, these strengths are not fully reflected in the external image of the sector. Young people continue to associate public administration primarily with bureaucracy, rigidity, and slow organisational processes. This suggests that one of the major challenges facing public administration is not only improving organisational performance but also communicating existing strengths more effectively.

Particularly concerning is the finding that highly educated young adults exhibit lower levels of interest in public sector employment than respondents with secondary education. Given that university graduates represent a critical source of future professional expertise, this trend raises important questions regarding the long-term competitiveness of public administration in the labour market. If highly qualified young professionals increasingly choose alternative career

paths, public organisations may face growing difficulties in maintaining the expertise required to address complex policy challenges.

The findings point towards several policy implications.

First, public administration must strengthen its employer attractiveness by addressing the factors that younger generations consider most important. Competitive compensation remains a fundamental prerequisite. Although public service motivation and commitment to societal values remain relevant, the results clearly indicate that financial considerations continue to play a decisive role in career decisions.

Second, organisations should further expand opportunities for flexible working arrangements. Hybrid work models, flexible scheduling practices, and greater autonomy in work organisation may contribute significantly to increasing employer attractiveness among younger employees.

Third, digital transformation should be viewed not only as an efficiency-enhancing reform but also as a recruitment strategy. Modern technologies, digital tools, and innovative work processes are increasingly regarded as indicators of organisational attractiveness by Generation Z.

Fourth, public administration should invest more systematically in mentoring and talent development programmes. Such initiatives can facilitate intergenerational knowledge transfer, reduce the risks associated with workforce ageing, and support the professional integration of younger employees. International evidence consistently demonstrates that mentoring programmes represent one of the most effective mechanisms for preserving institutional knowledge while fostering employee development.

Fifth, organisational communication strategies require reconsideration. The findings suggest that many of the strengths valued by civil servants—including professional expertise, meaningful work, and contribution to society—are insufficiently visible to external audiences. Public organisations may therefore benefit from employer branding strategies that communicate these attributes more effectively, particularly to younger generations.

The study also highlights the importance of organisational culture. Future recruitment and retention efforts should not focus exclusively on compensation and career structures. Creating supportive, participatory, and innovation-oriented workplace environments may be equally important in attracting younger employees and strengthening organisational commitment.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. While both surveys relied on large datasets and nationally representative methodologies, the findings remain subject to the limitations inherent in self-reported survey data. Furthermore, the analysis focuses primarily on attitudes and perceptions rather than observed behaviour. Future research may therefore benefit from longitudinal approaches that examine actual career choices and retention patterns among younger generations.

Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into one of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary public administration: ensuring successful generational renewal. The findings suggest that the future sustainability of public administration will depend on its ability to preserve its traditional strengths—stability, professionalism, and public service values—while simultaneously adapting to the changing expectations of younger generations.

Ultimately, the long-term success of public administration will not be determined solely by its ability to replace retiring employees. Rather, it will depend on whether public organisations can create employment environments that are both professionally attractive and aligned with the values, expectations, and aspirations of future generations. Achieving this balance may represent one of the defining challenges of public sector human resource management in the coming decades.

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