

**Zoomers to the Rescue:**  
**How the Irish Public Service can overcome its**  
**recruitment gaps by attracting and retaining**  
**Generation Z**

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Master of Business Administration

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# **ABSTRACT**

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**Title:** Zoomers to the Rescue: How the Irish Public Service can overcome its recruitment gaps by attracting and retaining Generation Z

This dissertation explores how the Irish public service can address its recruitment challenges by attracting and retaining Generation Z candidates. The Irish public and civil service currently faces issues in recruiting the “Generation Z” age group, at a time when the public sector is also facing a retirement “cliff edge” as many of its older workforce retires. The purpose of this research is to explore how best to attract this cohort from the perspective of public service recruiters and hiring managers.

Qualitative research was carried out using semi-structured interviews with 10 senior civil service staff members who fit the identified criteria. The interviews, which utilised open-ended questions, were designed with a view to addressing the research question and objectives. The researcher subsequently thematically analysed the results, critically reviewing them alongside the identified existing literature on the topic of Generation Z, their workplace values and preferences, and public sector recruitment. This research demonstrates that the Irish public service is not currently attracting Generation Z candidates in any significant numbers, but that there is potential to entice this cohort by emphasising the rewarding “mission” of the public service and enhancing and promoting the current benefits on offer, particularly at entry level. Furthermore, the research shows that promoting and implementing a more adaptable, flexible approach to employment will be critical if the public service is to better attract Generation Z candidates and establish itself as an employer of choice.

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## ***1.1. Background and Context***

Being able to attract and retain the right people is critical to organisational high performance (Kontoghiorghes, 2016). This is particularly the case at a time when employers struggle to stand out in a competitive marketplace and work in general is becoming more technical and highly skilled (Zheng, 2009).

The Irish public service currently employs more than 300,000 staff members, over 40,000 of which work in the core civil service (Public Jobs, 2024). One challenge facing the Irish public and civil service is the “retirement cliff edge”, where the numbers of staff retiring surpasses the number of available potential recruits. In October 2020, it was reported that 28% of the Irish Civil Service workforce was aged over 54, while just 16% was under 35 (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2020).

For public sector organisations with many “Baby Boomer” employees heading towards retirement, especially at senior and/or critical roles, this trend is compounded by the fact that the Millennial generation have not opted for public service careers in significant numbers (Clark, 2016). Taken together, these challenges present the public service with a looming human talent issue as well as a worrying lack of “young blood” in the workforce of the public service.

Gen Z represents the generation born from 1997 to 2012 and now accounts for 22% of the Irish population (CSO, 2022). The oldest “Zoomers” are currently 27 years of age and the youngest are 12 years old (Dimock, 2019; Half, 2015). It is increasingly clear that analysis of Generation Z’s attitudes towards work, with a view to attracting and retaining this potential workforce, will be critical in the years ahead (Iorgulescu, 2016).

## ***1.2. Identified Problem***

The Irish public and civil service is currently facing a challenge in recruiting from the “Generation Z” age cohort. In addressing this challenge, the researcher has identified a problem: while there is a large amount of existing research on motivation theory and on Generation Z’s attitudes to work, there is a lack of research on how best to attract this cohort to work in the public service in general and in the Irish public service in particular.

### ***1.3. Proposed Research***

In addressing the problem of how to attract Generation Z to work in the Irish public sector, the researcher was keen to conduct research by speaking to those most keenly aware of this topic – people managers and HR professionals in the public service in Ireland. The study therefore explores, from the experience of these hiring managers and HR staff members, whether Generation Z candidates are attracted to work in the Irish public service, what barriers may exist to attracting these candidates and what, if anything, can be done to reduce these barriers. Semi-structured interviews with ten senior hiring managers and HR professionals from across the Irish public sector were carried out for data collection purposes. The data was subsequently thematically analysed with a view to fully addressing the research question and objectives.

### ***1.4. Dissertation Structure***

This dissertation is presented in five chapters:

**Chapter 1** presents the context to the research and explains why it is an important and worthwhile research subject. The key research problem is outlined, and a summary of the dissertation and its chapters is provided.

**Chapter 2** centres around a thorough review of the relevant literature on the key topics of motivation, Generational Cycle Theory (GCT), Generation Z and their workplace preferences and values and the Irish public sector and its recruitment challenges.

**Chapter 3** presents the research question and objectives that this study proposes to address as well as the chosen research methodology.

**Chapter 4** provides synthesised analysis of the key empirical and literature review findings.

**Chapter 5** provides critical analysis of these findings along with practical recommendations arising from this analysis.

### ***1.5. Conclusion***

This study is both important and topical because, as mentioned previously, there is a dearth of past research on the subject of attracting Generation Z to work in the public service in Ireland, even though – as the literature and primary research will demonstrate - this is a live

problem. Some of the key literature for this topic has been outlined in this chapter as well as the identified research gaps that this study aims to address and a summary of the structure of this dissertation.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. *Introduction***

To investigate the issues behind attracting and retaining Generation Z workers into the Irish public service, it is first necessary to examine the theoretical structures behind motivating job candidates to select a particular industry or employer. The researcher explores motivational theory – in particular Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory - and how it informed Strauss and Howe's Generational Cycle Theory (GCT). There follows analysis of Generation Z as a cohort and their singular workplace preferences as well as their overall generational characteristics. In particular, this research focusses on Generation Z's entry into the workplace in an increasingly globalised world, where the war for talent rages on. More specifically, it critically analyses Generation Z's attitudes towards the public service, as well as the talent shortages that currently exist in this sector and the reasons behind these talent vacuums.

The researcher has identified certain gaps in the literature and these gaps will be highlighted where appropriate.

### **2.2. *Theoretical View of Motivation***

Much has been written on the subject of motivation and its nature, processes and forms (e.g. Bagozzi et al., 2003; George and Brief, 1996; D'Andrade, 1992; Locke, 1991; Kanfer, 1990; Hyland, 1988; Locke and Henne, 1986).

Of the two theories of motivation that are widely recognised - process theories and content theories - it is content theories, which aim to recognise and explain the internal factors that inspire individuals (Basset-Jones and Lloyd, 2005), that will act as the theoretical foundations for this study. These theories analyse which objectives drive people to take action, and as such are appropriate for a research study examining workplace motivation.

Prominent theories in this category include Maslow's hierarchy of needs, developed in 1954, Frederick Herzberg's two-factor theory, and David McClelland's learned needs theory from 1961. While Maslow's 1943 theory focussed on motivation propelled by basic human needs including financial drivers, Herzberg's theory (1959) argued against money being an effective key motivator in the workplace.

### **2.3. *Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory***

The theory of motivation proposed by Friedrich Herzberg in his 1959 work, “The Motivation to Work”, referred to as the two-factor theory, can serve as a solid basis for investigating the factors that drive Generation Z to select a particular industry or employer. This theory highlights the fundamental motivators for humans and categorises rewards into two types: intrinsic factors that inspire (satisfiers) and extrinsic factors that prevent dissatisfaction (hygiene factors).

The theory suggests that the existence of internal, intangible motivators leads to positive results such as emotional commitment to the company, drive, and higher staff retention. On the other hand, the lack of hygiene factors, which are external and concrete, can result in discontentment or reduced motivation. These can include elements such as remuneration, relations with colleagues, and overall company culture. Herzberg noted that simply removing “dissatisfiers” does not in itself improve employee motivation or satisfaction.

In studies on human resource development (HRD), the two-factor theory has been extensively referenced in discussions focussing on employee motivation, recruitment, reward and job satisfaction (e.g. Rahim et al, 2012; Montana and Petit, 2008). Despite differing opinions, and criticism of Herzberg's theory for its perceived simplicity (e.g. Gerhart and Rynes, 2003, p. 50), more recent empirical literature supports the two-factor theory regarding the impact of motivators on job satisfaction (e.g. Bassett-Jones & Lloyd, 2005).

The motivation-hygiene theory is integral to understanding the research problem at hand as it offers insight into employee motivation from an organisational behaviour perspective. In efforts to attract and retain public sector employees, tangible extrinsic elements such as greater remuneration may appear to be key. However, Herzberg's theory highlights the limited ability of extrinsic rewards to provide long-term motivation, instead emphasising the importance of combining extrinsic and intrinsic benefits to increase commitment, role satisfaction and retention.

### **2.4. *Strauss and Howe's Generational Cycle Theory***

Differing life experiences have been shown to influence not only our behaviour but also the workplace preferences and work values of different generations (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). Thus, a generation that lives through a time of economic turmoil may be much more driven by extrinsic work benefits such as remuneration. This is of key

importance as it has been proven by research to impact staff attraction and retention (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010) and provides valuable clues as to why candidates choose one employer over another. The particular work values of one generational cohort in particular acts as the primary focus of this study, but it will first be important to further examine the study of generations overall.

“History creates generations, and generations create history” is the main argument of Strauss and Howe’s Generational Cycle Theory (GCT), whose 1991 book “Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069” first invented the term, “Millennial”. Their theory posits that those born during a specific time span of approximately 20 years share similar experiences, beliefs and outlooks marked by political and social events during the period in which they come of age (Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). As each generation become aware of the experiences and attributes that they have in common with their peer group during their childhoods and teenage years, they begin to assume a mutual “membership” of that generation, which they then take into adulthood and therefore into the workplace.

Strauss and Howe (1991) categorized generational groups, with the most recent four being:

- Baby Boomers (1943-1960), influenced by the Cold War era,
- Gen X (1961-1981), shaped by significant economic and social changes in the Sixties and Seventies,
- Millennials (1982-1996), who grew up during the tech boom of the 1990s.

This study focuses on Generation Z, the latest generation to enter the workforce, whose experiences have been impacted by global events such as the 2008 recession and the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic (Barhate and Dirani, 2021).

Based on the GCT (Strauss and Howe, 1991), history is divided into four repeating “generational archetypes”, which are determined by the year individuals are born as well as significant historical events that occur during their lifetimes and in particular their formative years. Baby Boomers are categorized as "idealists," Generation X as "reactive," Millennials as "civics," and Generation Z as "adaptive." The Generational Cycle Theory proposes that each generational cycle lasts about 20 years, with a complete cycle totalling 80 years, representing a full life span. Each of these cycles consists of four “turnings”, each with its own specific

individual properties. Strauss and Howe describe these four turnings as a transition from one cohort to the next.

The GCT has been criticised for not considering inter-generational differences based on race, gender, education, etc. (Costanza et al, 2023; Rudolph et al, 2021) as well as individual personalities, and for a perceived lack of supporting empirical evidence (e.g. Van Twist and Newcombe, 2021). However, the theory does provide useful insights into each generation's motivations and underlying values. With four generations currently in the workforce (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010), the GCT has become a potentially important tool for managers to understand what motivates each generation in the world of work.

## **2.5. *Generation Z's Values and Characteristics***

To understand what truly motivates Generation Z to choose one role or sector over another, it will first be critical to identify this cohort's key characteristics. It is generally agreed that Generation Z are the generation born between 1997 and 2012, making the oldest Zoomers twenty-seven years old in 2024 and the youngest just twelve years old.

Zoomers are known for their active online presence (Acheampong, 2021; Adecco, 2015), with over 30% of Gen Z individuals spending more than 2 hours a day on social media according to a McKinsey survey (Coe et al, 2023). They consider digital as their primary form of communication, with 80% using screens to connect with the world (Maioli, 2016). This can bring them into conflict with older generations in the workplace, with Gen Z having firm opinions on preferred technology platforms and even different views on the use of technology, particularly for communication (Mayne, 2024).

However, Coombs (2013) noted that while Gen Z are tech-savvy, they have not yet developed the problem-solving skills to match their technical abilities. Several studies (e.g. Shatto and Erwin, 2016) have also identified that Generation Z have lower attention spans than previous generations and can struggle with attention to detail. They are also highly visual and frequently use images in their communication to others (Seemiller and Grace, 2016), as well as opting for Youtube when it comes to learning new skills (Mumpuni et al, 2021). This may all stem from their status as "electronic multitaskers" (Hampton and Keys, 2016), which on the one hand enables them to consume a huge amount of digital content but on the other hand has reduced their ability to concentrate on one thing (Seemiller and Grace, 2016). They rarely watch



television or listen to the radio but instead use streaming, on-demand services such as Netflix or Spotify for their entertainment (Mumpuni et al, 2021).

Despite their ease with online communication, some researchers (i.e. Schawbel, 2014) have found that Gen Z employees prefer face to face, in-person communication at work. They are not afraid to present their views and expect their ideas and inputs to be considered, regardless of their young age and lack of experience (Benítez-Márquez et al, 2022; Schawbel, 2014). This trait, as well as their relentless focus on work/life balance can result in Zoomers being perceived as “entitled” by other generational groups (Szyndler, 2024; Creary et al, 2019). However, Gen Z value a friendly, collegiate workplace (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018), and honesty and transparency are very important to this cohort, particularly from their leaders (Half, 2015; Middlemiss, 2015).

When it comes to their economic beliefs, Gen Z are inclined towards entrepreneurship, as shown by various studies (e.g. Weligodapola et al, 2023; Benítez-Márquez et al, 2022; Half, 2015). Almost 30% of current students are interested in starting their own businesses after graduation, according to research by DCU (DCU, 2017). Hampton and Keys (2016) note that Gen Z college students prefer courses with practice, real-world experience and a 2014 study at Northeastern University in the U.S. found that over 40% of the students surveyed had a desire to be self-employed (Northeastern University, 2014). This naturally presents a challenge to potential employers of Generation Z candidates.

Gen Z are also motivated by a desire to be productive, with 80% of Generation Z college students in Ireland expressing a willingness to work even without financial incentives (Maynooth University, n.d.). Schwieger and Ladwig (2018) note that Generation Z are not afraid to work hard but do expect to be recognised and compensated for it.

The phenomenon of the "Great Resignation" has raised concerns about Gen Z being seen as job-hoppers (Acheampong, 2021; Csiszárík-Kocsír & Garai-Fodor, 2018; Adecco, 2015), with 74% of 18–24-year-olds in Ireland citing a desire to secure a new role within a year (Bond, 2021).

Nabahani and Riyanto (2020) note that many companies are still relying on retention strategies that worked for previous generations such as offering higher salaries than competitors and

emphasising their prestigious brand name. However, they further note that this is unlikely to work with Generation Z candidates, who appear to value a very different set of benefits than their parents or grandparents (Nabahani and Riyanto, 2020; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010). This new set of values is what this study will examine in detail next with a view to identifying what may attract Generation Z to one workplace over another.

## **2.6. *Generation Z and Career Progression***

Numerous studies (e.g. Heitmann, 2018; Chamberlain, 2017; Dhanapal et al, 2013) have identified career progression, generally in the form of a clear career path through an organisation, as an essential element in building good staff retention and avoiding employee burnout and stagnation.

Generation Z in particular appear to view career progression as a key benefit, both when they are seeking a new role and as a retention measure for remaining with an organisation (e.g. Campione, 2015; Ng et al., 2010; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008). Iorgulescu's (2016) study found that a high percentage of the Generation Z cohort surveyed listed career advancement as their primary concern in the workplace, while Russell (2019) found that career progression mattered more than salary to over a third of the Zoomers surveyed.

Ambitious and hard-working, Generation Z are determined to build and develop their careers through mastering professional competencies and growing their portfolios of skills (Bohdziewicz, 2016). However, they do not necessarily harbour an ambition to be at the top of the corporate ladder (Agarwal and Vaghela, 2018), with just 4% of employees surveyed in a recent U.S. study (Visier, 2023) regarding achieving a C-suite role as a priority and less than 40% expressing an interest in managing other staff members. The reasons given for this reluctance to take the reins included increased working hours and stress arising from extra responsibility (Visier, 2023). Indeed, Gen Z employees appear to lean towards lateral moves rather than upward moves within an organisation, developing their skillsets across multiple roles (Arar and Önerenb, 2018). This will be unwelcome news for employers facing a succession crisis, particularly as their Baby Boomer and Generation X staff members retire over the next decade.

However, that is not the only bad news for potential employers seeking to hire this generational cohort. Generation Z appear to value companies that offer medium-term career development opportunities, flexibility, and accessibility in the workplace (Bohdziewicz, 2016). And if their career development expectations are not met, they are not hesitant about leaving a job (Ghazali et al., 2018; Fister Gale, 2015). Studies also show that Generation Z aims to achieve rapid career growth and start families by their early thirties, indicating their desire for stability and success (Grow and Yang, 2019).

As previously noted, job hopping, defined as leaving a job within two years, is a common phenomenon among Generation Z, like the Millennial cohort before them, as they are willing to change jobs for better opportunities and display a tendency to switch jobs frequently (e.g. Zahari and Puteh, 2023; Benítez-Márquez et al, 2022; Heitmann, 2018; Dhanapal et al, 2013). A Deloitte survey (Deloitte, 2021) revealed that a little over 50% of Generation Z staff members would be interested in a new role within the next 2 years if the right opportunity presented itself. The same survey found that just 21% of the Zoomers had a preference to remain with the same organisation for five years (Deloitte, 2021).

However, research suggests that with the right approach to career progression, Generation Z employees can be retained in a company. The key may be to offer opportunities for growth and development within the organisation (Iorgulescu, 2016), as this fosters loyalty among Generation Z employees, rather than focussing entirely on upward mobility.

## ***2.7. Generation Z and the Desire for Work/Life Balance***

Levenson (2010) noted that work-life balance played a key role on Millennial employees' attitudes toward their jobs, and this is even more the case with Generation Z. As one Gen Z entrepreneur in his early 20s put it, "For previous generations, self-actualization came at the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs once everything else has been sorted. Gen Z start out with that in mind" (O'Connell, 2024).

Over half of Gen Z employees surveyed in the U.S. (Visier, 2023) cited a positive work-life balance as a quality they seek in a workplace, while over 35% cited a positive, relaxed work environment (also cited by McCarthy, 2019 and Strömberg and Karlsson, 2009). This generation of workers tend towards a rose-tinted view of what work will be like – there is an

expectation that it will always be satisfying and fulfilling, and that work will fit around their lifestyle (Nabahani and Riyanto, 2020; Schroth, 2019).

A recent Irish newspaper article (O’Connell, 2024) recounted a number of stories that appeared to encapsulate Generation Z’s reputation for emphasising lifestyle over work, with one employer recalling a younger colleague declining a meeting as the weather was due to be bad in Dublin that day, and another citing a Gen Z colleague who turned down a call as it clashed with their yoga class. A recruiter in the same article noted that Generation Z candidates tend to ask a lot of questions at interviews about hybrid working arrangements and show little interest in working nine to five.

Indeed, it is increasingly noticeable that Generation Z staff members value having some control over their working hours (McCarthy, 2019). According to Irish recruitment agency CPL, flexibility, including flexible working hours, appears to be one of the key factors to attract Gen Z (CPL, 2019; Geary, 2018; Maioli, 2016). 30% of public sector workers surveyed by McKinsey in 2022 (Athanasakopoulos et al, 2022) cited workplace inflexibility as a potential reason to leave (by contrast, 41% of them cited the meaningful work available in that sector as a reason to stay).

This also extends, as noted previously, to a preference for remote/hybrid working. 61% of Zoomers surveyed by Deloitte in 2023 were working remotely or in a hybrid pattern, and 75% of them stated that they would consider looking for a new role if their employer asked them to return to work in the office full-time (Deloitte, 2023). Notably, that over half of the Zoomers cited hybrid working as being positive for their mental health (Deloitte, 2023). As these staff members have experienced the freedom of working remotely/hybrid working early on in their careers, it seems unlikely that a large-scale return to full-time working is foreseeable for this generational cohort.

That is not to say that Gen Z staff members do not experience work pressures, even when working remotely. 81% of them admit to answering emails outside of normal working hours at least one day a week, while over a third do this five days a week (Deloitte, 2023). They are also a more anxious cohort than several previous generations, with 46% of Gen Zs experiencing anxiety or stress most or all of the time – which rises to 54% for Gen Z females (Deloitte, 2023; Staglin, 2022).

One reason for this anxiety is potentially a feeling of disconnection. According to a Gallup survey, over half of the Gen Z respondents cited being disengaged at work, more than any other generation (Pendell and Vander Helm, 2022). Similarly, nearly 40% of Gen Z staff members report feeling exhausted or low on energy at work, and 35% admit to holding negative attitudes towards work (Parmalee, 2023).

The main reason behind this workplace ennui among Zoomers may lie in the Covid pandemic, when many of this generation were in college or just starting their first jobs (Harari et al, 2022; Barhate and Dirani, 2021). It has been suggested that this highly unusual online workplace introduction, defined by several years of pandemic-induced disruption, has added a cynical edge to this generation's approach to work (O'Connell, 2024; Hirsch, 2021; Dorsey and Villa, 2020).

## **2.8. *Generation Z and Corporate Social Responsibility***

Employers hoping to attract Zoomers and keep them must now offer more than just a pay cheque to retain valuable staff. For example, employers could differentiate themselves by highlighting their diversity, inclusion and equality policies (Racolța-Paina and Irina, 2021). This would be of interest to Gen Z job candidates, who represent a more diverse group than previous generations (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018; Hampton and Keys, 2016) and are seen as holding more inclusive views on issues relating to diversity and equality (Atkins, 2021; Lanier, 2017; Maioli, 2016) as well as having strong views on environmental issues (Mihelich, 2013).

Gen Z staff members also appear to have a preference to work for an organisation with strong ties to its local community (Middlemiss, 2015) and whose values align with their own values (Maloni et al, 2019). Nearly 40% of Generation Z members surveyed by Deloitte cited rejecting employers that did not share their values (Deloitte, 2023), while Gen Z candidates have been shown to look favourably on employers that demonstrate strong commitments to environmental and social issues (Narayanan, 2022).

However, a study carried out by Cho, Bonn, and Han (2018) revealed that just 26% of the Generation Z survey participants who expressed a high interest in volunteering had actually taken up volunteering opportunities, far lower than their Millennial predecessors, while their cited reasons for volunteering mainly centred around acquiring new skills to use in their careers, rather than purely altruistic reasons.

On a more optimistic note, Marin (2022) found that Gen Z would-be volunteers appeared to be simply unsure how to get started with volunteering and put off by lengthy, old-fashioned onboarding processes. Similarly, Garai-Fodor et al (2021) also cite lack of information as a barrier to Generation Z volunteering. They further note that appealing to Generation Z's desire for self-development and acquirement of new skills would be one way to tempt them toward volunteer programmes.

## **2.9. *Generation Z and Remuneration***

Herzberg (1959) described remuneration as a 'hygiene' factor, as in, something that acts as a motivational factor only when it is absent, such as a clean and safe work environment. However, while we have seen that Generation Z value satisfying work, salary also appears to be a notable motivational factor for this cohort. 72% of Generation Z candidates appear to seek out roles that come with good salaries and 62% seek attractive benefits (Mondres, 2019), while Gen Z candidates have shown a tendency to rank high salary as a priority factor when choosing a new employer (Csiszárík-Kocsír & Garai-Fodor, 2018; Iorgulescu, 2016; Cho & Lewis, 2011).

In terms of what specifically motivates them, Zoomers appear to value both intrinsic (interesting work, autonomy, personal development) and extrinsic rewards (pay and benefits) equally (Iorgulescu, 2016, Maynooth University, n.d.). The Maynooth researchers noted that a common refrain was "I dream of a career that will permit me to integrate my personal, family and work needs" but also "having...a sense of security and stability" (Maynooth University, n.d.).

Schawbel (2014) found that Gen Z tended to be less motivated by remuneration than the Millennial generation, but several other researchers (e.g. O'Connell, 2024; Csiszárík-Kocsír and Garai-Fodor, 2018; Iorgulescu, 2016; Anatole, 2013) have evolved the view that Generation Z are financially cautious and have a keen need for financial security. This craving possibly stems from the economic instability that they have witnessed so far in their lifetimes but is also likely informed by the current tough economic climate where many Gen Z workers are working entry level roles and struggling to save or pay off debt (Carnegie, 2023; Deloitte, 2023; O'Connor, 2022).

Still, some researchers (e.g. Fodor et al., 2017) have concluded that while remuneration (including other benefits) is important to the Generation Z cohort, it is not – as per Herzberg's theory – sufficient in and itself to keep Gen Z staff members at any particular workplace.

### ***2.10. The War for Talent***

The term "war for talent" originated from McKinsey in 1997 after surveying over 6,000 executives at 77 US companies (Chambers et al., 1998). Generation Z's entry into the workforce is taking place against a backdrop of what is an exceptionally tight labour market.

Globalisation is identified as a key driver of changes in the world of work, impacting how individuals experience employment and develop their careers. Key recent transformations in the labour market have involved an increase in transnational movement of capital, international businesses with operations across multiple countries, and a shift towards flexible, informal, and precarious labour contracts (Siegmann and Schiphorst, 2016). This has led to the emergence of protean careers (Hall, 2002, pp. 23-24), characterised by mobility and personal management of career progression, as opposed to traditional organisational careers. A recent survey in Ireland revealed that almost half of those surveyed were considering a change of job this year (Gleeson, 2024).

In response to the global war for talent and a borderless workforce (Brown & Tannock, 2009; Florida, 2007, pp. 145-146; Brown & Hesketh, 2004; Michaels et al, 2001, pp. 4; Chambers et al., 1998), governments and companies are adjusting their policies to attract and retain skilled individuals. However, there is a growing gap between the demand for skilled talent and the available workforce, leading to increased competition among employers.

### ***2.11. The War for Talent and the Public Sector***

Globally, the public sector's efforts to address these talent issues are being met with a response that is at best indifferent and at worst unenthusiastic. A survey carried out in the U.S. among citizens of voting age found that just 1 in 5 of those surveyed cited the public service as an attractive career option (McCarthy, 2019). Athanasakopoulos et al (2022) noted that out of every ten public service roles advertised between July 2021 and August 2022, just four were filled. This researcher has noted a significant shortage of previous studies on attracting staff - including those in the Generation Z cohort - to the Irish public service, even though recruitment of workers appears to present as an ongoing problem in this sector in

Ireland too. For example, in a 2020 survey on public sector career attractiveness carried out among 681 final year and Masters students in NUI Galway, just 37% stated that a career in the public sector was an attractive option (O'Connor and McCarthy, 2021).

Indeed, a 2023 meeting of European public sector unions in Dublin concluded that problems with recruitment in government bodies was posing as an issue across Europe (O'Connor, 2023), partly caused by the inability of the public service across Europe to effectively compete with more attractive private sector prospects. The lack of interest from Millennials in particular in public service careers (Clark, 2016) has only added to the looming human talent issue.

This phenomenon has led to governments worldwide depending increasingly on contract staff to meet their growing talent gaps. Younger (2021) notes that the US public service is currently devoting almost \$700 billion dollars a year to external contractors, while the UK and German governments are allocating 30% of their budgets to paying for contracted staff. Such figures would suggest that governments are becoming increasingly reliant on an expensive – and potentially fickle – set of resources.

## ***2.12. Generation Z and the Public Sector***

It has been demonstrated previously in this paper that the Irish public service is not currently attracting Generation Z candidates in any significant numbers. This trend is also observed in within the public sector in various other regions (McKinsey, 2023; Deloitte, 2022).

In terms of identifying what drives candidates to choose specific roles or sectors (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008), the literature on this subject suggests that many candidates tend to select organisations that align with their preferences and values when deciding on a role (Hicklenton et al, 2021). It also points to individuals with a strong inclination to work in the public service being attracted to it due to the promise of internal satisfaction rather than external rewards (Georgellis et al., 2011). Indeed, studies have shown that employees in the public sector are highly self-motivated and strive to exceed expectations in their work (Gregg et al, 2011; Feeney, 2008; Dilulio, 1994). Some researchers have even suggested that public sector workers lean more strongly towards altruistic pursuits compared to their counterparts in the private sector (Bullock et al., 2015; Houston, 2000; Crewson, 1997). Lastly, employees



with significant levels of internal motivation tend to be dedicated and high-performing individuals (Kim, 2005; Crewson, 1997).

These conclusions imply that the Irish public sector would greatly benefit from attracting Generation Z candidates, who are not only proficient in technology but are also internally motivated and may therefore be willing to accept the lower compensation offered by the public sector (Besley & Ghatak, 2005; McCarthy, 2019).

A 2022 study by McKinsey (Athanasakopoulos et al, 2022), suggested that public sector employers could take action to address their ongoing talent gaps by taking the following steps:

- **Developing a clear value proposition for potential recruits** - rather than focussing exclusively on traditional public service “benefits” such as good pensions, secure jobs and stability, public service employers should instead centre their offerings around benefits that the private sector might struggle to compete with, such as an appealing “mission”, meaningful work, job flexibility and opportunities for career development.

Interestingly, as previously demonstrated in this paper, many of these benefits are also those most attractive to Generation Z candidates – i.e. purposeful work (" (Maynooth University, n.d.; Schawbel (2014), a work-life balance and flexible work (e.g. McCarthy, 2019; Geary, 2018; Maioli, 2016; Strömberg and Karlsson, 2009) and career development (e.g. Campione, 2015; Ng et al., 2010; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008).

- **Taking a proactive approach to seeking out diverse pools of candidates** – including targeting non-traditional candidate pools from diverse and/or marginalised groups.

Again, this will be attractive to Generation Z candidates, who are themselves a diverse group (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018; Hampton and Keys, 2016) and generally hold inclusive views on diversity and equality issues (Atkins, 2021; Lanier, 2017; Maioli, 2016).

- **Moving quickly to secure candidates** – the McKinsey study cites government agencies in the U.S. as taking three times longer than their private sector counterparts to fill open roles, resulting in a loss of potential talent (Athanasakopoulos et al, 2022).

### **2.13. Conclusion**

The link between motivational theories and the workplace preferences and work values of different generations has been explored and critically analysed by the literature review. Specifically, this research has demonstrated what these theories reveal about the motivations of one particular generation of employees, Generation Z. It has also investigated Generation Z's particular workplace characteristics and workplace values, as well as the ongoing war for talent and how this relates to Zoomers. It has explored the difficulties that many governments are experiencing in attracting and retaining staff members, particularly those in the Generation Z cohort.

The literature review has not revealed any peer-reviewed papers directly dealing with the question of how the Irish public service can effectively attract and retain Generation Z workers. This gap indicates an area to be further explored. The next chapter will describe the research methodology proposed.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. *Characteristics of the Research Process*

According to Saunders et al (2019, p. 5), research involves systematic data collection and interpretation with a clear purpose of discovering new information. It is a process that individuals undertake to enhance their knowledge systematically through logical reasoning (Ghauri et al, 2020, p. 13). Research can serve several purposes, including “describing, explaining, understanding, criticising, and analysing” (Ghauri et al, 2020, p. 9). Additionally, researchers must have a clear objective or questions they seek to answer.

This study follows the six-step framework proposed by Malhotra et al (2020, p. 9) for any research project: Problem Definition; Development of an Approach to the Problem; Research Design Formulation; Data Collection, Data Preparation and Analysis; and Report Definition and Presentation:

#### 3.2. *Problem Definition*

One of the overall findings in the literature exploration was the fact that the public sector in Ireland is facing a retirement cliff edge yet is failing to attract the youngest cohort in the current workforce, Generation Z, in any great numbers. The exploration also revealed a real shortage of previous investigation about effectively attracting Generation Z workers to the public service as well as retaining them. The researcher proposed to explore the reasons for this recruitment gap, the consequences of the gap and ways in which the public service might seek to resolve it.

The following key question for exploration was identified:

***“How can the Irish public service effectively attract and retain Generation Z workers, considering their work values, career preferences, and the sector's potential challenges and opportunities?”***

The researcher aimed to explore the attraction and retention of Generation Z staff members to the Irish public service, the values and career preferences of this generational grouping and any perceived barriers inhibiting employers in attracting them into the public service in Ireland. Accordingly, the key question of the study can be elaborated to identify four research objectives:

### ***Research Objective 1***

- To define “Generation Z” and identify their work values.

### ***Research Objective 2***

- To identify whether Generation Z are attracted to work in the Irish public service.

### ***Research Objective 3***

- To identify perceived barriers inhibiting public service employers in attracting the Generation Z workforce into the Irish public service.

### ***Research Objective 4***

- To identify possible improved or alternative approaches to attracting “young blood” to the Irish public service.

## ***3.3 Development of an Approach to the Problem***

The philosophy chosen by a researcher reflects their fundamental beliefs about the world, which in turn shape their research approach and methods. The "philosophical commitments" (Saunders et al, 2019, p. 108) made through the selection of a research strategy not only influence the actions taken, but also impact how the research topic is understood (Gill and Johnson, 2010, p. 188). For instance, research conducted by an individual focused on factual evidence will differ significantly from that conducted by a researcher interested in the emotions and attitudes of study participants.

This research considers two main philosophies: positivism (objective) and interpretivism (subjective). Positivism asserts the existence of a single objective reality that is separate from individual consciousness (Quinlan et al, 2019, p. 13). In contrast, interpretivism suggests that social reality is subjectively constructed through interaction and interpretation; interpretivist research aims to observe and interpret the meanings behind human behavior rather than making generalisations about causes and effects (Neuman, 2013, p. 105; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In this particular study, the researcher adopted an interpretivist philosophy because the primary source of data was the knowledge and experiences of key stakeholders, requiring a subjective rather than objective approach.

### **3.4. Research Design Formulation**

Saunders et al (2019, pp. 124-125) point out the key distinctions between deductive and inductive research approaches.

- Deductive research relies on scientific principles and involves gathering quantitative data.
- Inductive research, on the other hand, involves collecting qualitative data and allows for a more flexible structure to accommodate shifts in research focus. It also acknowledges the researcher's role in the research process. Qualitative data is interpretive as researchers must interpret the subjective and socially constructed meanings conveyed by their participants.

The researcher chose to use a qualitative approach for this study due to the subjective nature of the topic. This approach enables the exploration of underlying reasons and opinions, for example, to delve into the reasons behind the difficulties in attracting Generation Z to work in the Irish public service. In qualitative research, meanings emerge from words rather than numbers, so it is essential to thoroughly explore and understand these meanings as words can have multiple interpretations. The researcher opted for qualitative methods as they can reveal underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and sentiments on a topic (Malhotra et al, 2020, p. 255), allowing for a deeper understanding.

### **3.5. Data Collection**

Different types of interviews, such as structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews, are often used as data-gathering tools in research. Structured interviews focus on obtaining quantifiable data (Saunders et al, 2019, p. 320), while semi-structured interviews are more suitable for exploring psychological or behavioural themes when the researcher lacks definitive knowledge about the study's problems. The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they provide a deeper understanding of the interview subject's perspectives (Quinlan et al, 2019, p. 221) and allow for more flexibility for the subject to elaborate on their points and signal cues to the researcher.

The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews to gather data on talent shortages from various perspectives. While this approach involved fewer respondents compared to a survey, it allowed for the collection of valuable and complex data (Cameron and Price, 2009, p. 427). The flexible nature of this method also enabled the researcher to make

changes during the interviews to obtain insights into emerging issues as the discussion progressed (Bryman, 2016, p. 468 and p. 498).

Several other studies referenced in the literature review also utilised qualitative techniques, such as the use of semi-structured interviews in Racolța-Paina and Irini's work on analysing how human resource departments can best utilise Gen Z talent in the workplace. Building on these examples, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 key stakeholders (see Figure 1 on the following page), including:

- one senior member of the management team at their place of work (a medium-size public service body in Dublin)
- two senior line managers from large civil service bodies in Ireland,
- seven middle/senior members of the HR/recruitment teams from Dublin-based public sector organisations of varying sizes.

All individual interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed via the Teams app, with the transcriptions checked for accuracy as soon as possible after each interview.

In the context of this research study within the Irish public service, the researcher had to be mindful of their own biases as an HR insider. As this insider perspective could potentially influence the research findings, the researcher conducted a pilot interview with a senior colleague to identify and address any biases before the main research began (Chenail (2011)).

### **3.6. *Sampling Technique***

Sampling is a technique used to gather data from a group that represents the larger population. This method is often employed when there are constraints such as limited resources, time, or access that prevent the collection and analysis of data from the entire population.

Researchers have two main options when it comes to sampling techniques: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves selecting participants randomly, with each case having a known chance of being chosen from the population Saunders et al (2019, p. 213). This method allows researchers to estimate characteristics of the population from the sample, making it ideal for quantitative research like surveys.

**Figure 1: Interview Subject Characteristics**

<b>Interview Subject</b>	<b>HR1</b>	<b>HR2</b>	<b>LM1</b>	<b>LM2</b>	<b>HR3</b>	<b>HR4</b>	<b>HR5</b>	<b>LM3</b>	<b>HR6</b>	<b>HR7</b>
<b>Position</b>	HR and OD manager	Head of Human Resources	Chief Corporate Affairs Officer	Director	HR lead	Project Lead Business Partner	Senior HR Manager	Board Member	Head of HR	Senior Recruiter
<b>Gender</b>	F	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	F	F
<b>Time in current organisation (years)</b>	20	16	Less than 1 year	9	4	1.5	2	10	19	10
<b>Time working in public sector (years)</b>	20	16	27	39	4	7	5	13	19	10

**Legend:**

**LM** – Line Manager

**HR** – Human Resources Professional

On the other hand, non-probability sampling does not involve random selection, and researchers must use their own judgement to choose participants (Saunders et al, 2019, p. 213). This method is more suitable when researchers need to speak to individuals with specific expertise or experience, as was the case in this study within the Irish public sector.

In this case, it was necessary to select subjects who had a perspective gained from recruiting and/or managing staff members, including those from Generation Z, so choosing participants at random was not viable. Non-probability sampling, which as Malhotra et al (2020, p. 498) notes relies on the researcher's own judgement when selecting subjects, was the more appropriate option.

The decision to select participants with substantial public sector experience was made to ensure the credibility of the data collected for this study.

### **3.7. *Ethical Issues and Limitations***

In the field of research, Quinlan et al (2019, p. 70) emphasise that ethical principles are just as important as they are in business. Blumberg et al (2014, p. 92) define ethics as the principles that influence our moral decisions and conduct towards other individuals. This study adhered to core ethical principles such as non-harm to participants, informed consent, and privacy. All interview subjects willingly participated in the study and were assured that their data would only be used for academic purposes. The Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2018 in Ireland ensures the protection of confidential information provided by research subjects. Maintaining confidentiality and respecting the anonymity of respondents is crucial in research, as emphasised by Silverman (2010, p. 155).

### **3.8. *Conclusions***

This chapter has outlined the chosen research methodology for addressing the research questions that arose from the literature review: the qualitative research method was utilised, with semi-structured interviews serving as the data collection technique. Following this data collection process, focus shifted to the data analysis phase.



## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. *Introduction*

This chapter describes the procedure adopted for analysing primary research data collected from ten semi-structured interviews. Data preparation and analysis included transcription, coding, thematic analysis, and synthesis of data (Malhotra et al, 2020, p. 11). The interviews were recorded and transcribed via Teams, with the transcriptions subsequently checked for accuracy.

The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis, providing flexibility to ensure rigorous review (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 507). This process involves identifying recurring patterns and organising them into themes. The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for conducting thematic analysis, which included familiarising themselves with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing these themes, defining and naming them, and lastly producing the report.

### 4.2. *Framework for Qualitative Data Analysis*

In the Literature Review chapter, the researcher identified key themes from the literature review and used them to inform the interview questions aimed at addressing the research goals. Following the empirical research, the researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework to pinpoint themes in the collected data. Ten main themes emerged from the analysis.

**Analysing Data:** Initially reviewing the transcripts, the researcher highlighted relevant sections in the interviews and categorized them according to the research objectives. Following Dey's (1993) guidelines on category identification, it was noted that categories should have both internal meaning in relation to the data and external meaning in relation to other categories and theoretical frameworks.

**Coding Process:** Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 101) described the process of identifying concepts and exploring relationships among interview subjects' views. The goal was to break down the data into manageable units for analysis by re-reading the interview texts and making notes. Key words and sentences were identified to link the interviewees' perspectives to the research focus.

**Axial Coding:** Axial coding involved finding connections between categories identified during open coding, as explained by Saunders et al (2019, p. 511). This process aimed at theoretical development by reorganising fractured data and summarising topics with codes like TH1 for Theme 1.

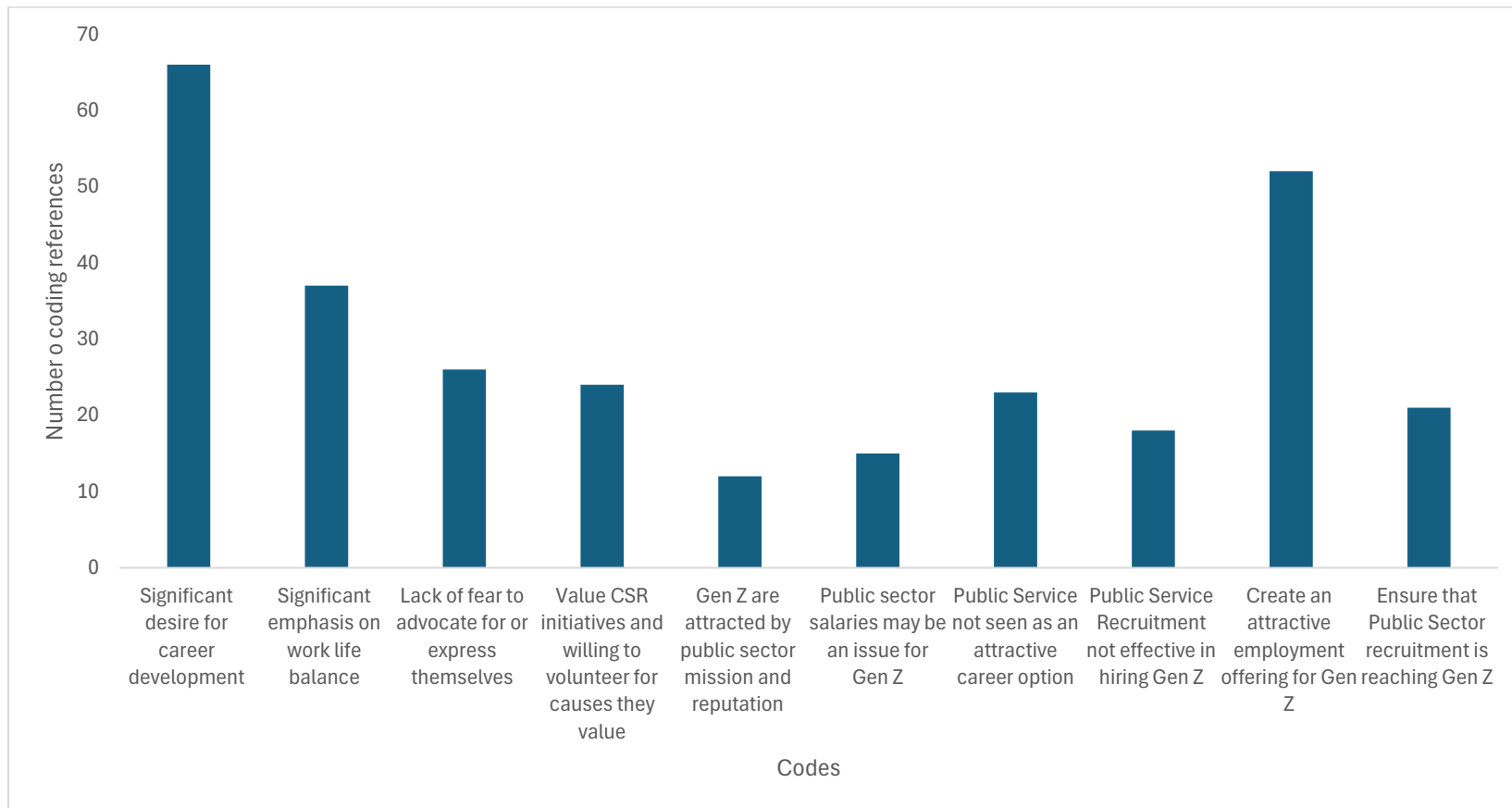
**Selective Coding:** At this point, the researcher focused on identifying central categories to integrate the research findings and develop a grounded theory. By delving deeper into the analysis, the researcher specified relationships and eliminated irrelevant initial codes to create a coherent structure.

**Interpreting:** Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 161) defined interpretation as giving meaning and coherence to themes, patterns, and categories in the data. In this final stage, the researcher examined the data to identify key themes related to the research objectives.

To improve the precision of their analysis, the researcher utilised “Nvivo” to confirm that these themes accurately reflected the collected data. NVivo is a commonly used software tool in qualitative research for data analysis.

The process of using NVivo to identify themes enables visual display of the coding references. Figure 2 illustrates the codes on the X-axis, with the Y-axis displaying the number of related references. After creating 17 codes and refining them, the researcher identified 10 key themes. The themes identified through the NVivo software aligned with those identified through Braun and Clarke’s framework, proving the relevance of the themes.

**Figure 2: Nvivo Coding Chart**



Significant attention was paid to analysing the data to determine which themes were most important and relevant to the research objectives. Those that were identified as most relevant for the purpose of addressing the research question and objectives are marked as “salient”, while findings that were deemed intriguing but not fully relevant are marked as “peripheral”.

The thematic analysis has identified the following themes, which will be discussed in detail:

- Theme 1.** Significant desire for career development (Salient finding)
- Theme 2.** Significant emphasis on work life balance (Salient finding)
- Theme 3.** Lack of fear to advocate for or express themselves (Peripheral finding)
- Theme 4.** Value CSR initiatives and willing to volunteer for causes they value (Peripheral finding)
- Theme 5.** Gen Z are attracted by public sector mission and reputation (Salient finding)
- Theme 6.** Public sector salaries may be an issue for Gen Z (Salient finding)
- Theme 7.** Public Service not seen as an attractive career option (Salient finding)
- Theme 8.** Public Service Recruitment not effective in hiring Gen Z (Salient finding)
- Theme 9.** Create an attractive employment offering for Gen Z (Salient finding)
- Theme 10.** Ensure that Public Sector recruitment is reaching Gen Z (Salient finding)

These themes will be addressed in sequence, demonstrating where appropriate how they relate to the research objectives, which are summarised as follows:

- Objective 1.** To define “Generation Z” and identify their work values and career preferences.
- Objective 2.** To identify whether Generation Z are attracted to work in the Irish public service.
- Objective 3.** To identify perceived barriers inhibiting public service employers in attracting the Generation Z workforce.
- Objective 4.** To identify possible improved or alternative approaches to attracting “young blood” to the Irish public service.

**Figure 3: Theme References by Interview Subject**

Theme Refs	HR1	HR2	LM1	LM2	HR3	HR4	HR5	LM3	HR6	HR7	Total
Theme 1: Career Development	4	12	17	11	6	2	5	3	4	3	67
Theme 2: Work Life Balance	4	2	9	4	2	3	3	1	2	7	37
Theme 3: Speaking Up	5	1	3	2	2	4	5	4	0	0	26
Theme 4: Volunteering for Causes	2	2	3	3	2	3	4	1	2	2	24
Theme 5: Attracted by PS “Mission”	4	1	2	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	12
Theme 6: PS Salaries are an issue	2	3	2	0	1	2	2	1	2	0	15
Theme 7: PS not seen as attractive career option	4	3	4	1	4	0	2	3	1	2	24
Theme 8: PS Recruitment ineffective	0	5	2	3	0	1	2	1	1	3	18
Theme 9: Creating attractive Employment Offering	6	7	6	11	4	1	6	2	4	5	52
Theme 10: Ensuring PS Recruitment is reaching Gen Z	2	1	2	6	4	0	0	1	3	2	21
Totals	33	37	50	41	28	16	31	17	19	24	

### 4.3. *Thematic Analysis*

#### 4.3.1. *Theme 1: Significant desire for career development*

The first research objective centred around exploring the career preferences and work values of Generation Z. The interview participants echoed many of the overarching themes that emerged on these areas from the literature review.

Firstly, the ten participants generally felt that career development, and in particular accelerated career progression, was very important to Generation Z. The overall picture painted of Generation Z was that of a group with a strong desire for a broad range of work experience, who had high career expectations, and who fully expect to move around a number of different employers in order to grow their careers.

LM1 summarised many of the participants thoughts when she commented on the different expectations of this generation when it comes to the workplace:

*“People in my generation... we'd experienced unemployment. So, when you got a job, you were kind of delighted to have it. I certainly don't see that anymore”*

Many of the participants noted that Gen Z staff members have the expectation of rapid career progression, including HR4, who also commented on the low retention of Gen Z staff members, *“If they don't get the way they want, they tend to actually move quite quick.”* Some also commented that Gen Z's approach to work can be perceived by some as quite transactional, with the emphasis on what the workplace could do for them rather than what they could contribute.

There was also a view expressed by many of the participants that Gen Z appear to expect career progression without “putting in the work” to receive it, with HR5 commenting:

*“They should just be getting a promotion; they shouldn't have to work for that promotion. They need money, so why aren't they just been moved up to the next level?”*

However, HR3 noted Gen Z's desire for a broad range of work experience:

*“They really want to understand the bigger picture and how it all fits in”.*

There was also commentary on Gen Z’s entry into the workplace during or immediately after Covid, and the impact that is having on their early careers as they try to navigate this new blended working environment.

#### **4.3.2. Theme 2: Significant emphasis on work life balance**

All 10 participants agreed that a strong desire for a work life balance was one of the defining characteristics of Generation Z, with LM1 stating:

*“I get the impression that they feel like work is work and when you leave work you don't want to be thinking about it and you don't want to be bothered about it”.*

There was a general agreement that Gen Z staff members separate their work and personal lives and carefully ringfence their time. HR5 summarised this focus on work/life separation, noting:

*“There would be absolutely none of that, not staying one minute past your time... it's a different dynamic...they won't allow anything to eat into their own time.”*

On the one hand, many of the Millennial, Gen X and Baby Boomer interview participants admitted respecting this new emphasis on work/life balance and opined that their generation could learn from this approach.

The participants also noted, in keeping with the findings during the literature review, a lack of interest in progressing upwards if it includes extra responsibility. LM1, for example, remarked, *“I don't think there's the same kind of drive to be at the top of the tree. It seems to be more about like being personally happy and having the freedom to do things that they want to do”.*

Another huge common element in this theme was that of Generation Z taking time out of the workplace to travel. LM2 commented, for example:

*“We've also seen now younger cohorts just taking six months go off to do a bit of travel and come back again, which would have been unheard of previously”.*

#### **4.3.3. Theme 3: Lack of fear to advocate for or express themselves**

Several interview subjects mentioned that they have noticed that Generation Z staff members are not afraid to stand up for themselves or to question the status quo.

HR5 commented on this, saying, *“If they're not happy with the answer that you gave them, then they would approach you, or ask could you approach somebody else, or they'll go themselves.... and, they want to know, well why is that?”*

LM3 noted that Gen Z staff have the confidence to put their views across in the workplace in a way that previous generations previously did not:

*“They're much stronger advocates for themselves. They've a much stronger sense of their own worth.”*

There is potentially a generational culture clash in the workplace, however, between Gen Z who take a relaxed approach to presentation and even to grade hierarchies, and other generations. LM1 summarised this, saying:

*“People don't necessarily seem to fully understand the hierarchical nature of the civil service. You see some very casual types of communication going to people.”*

SY echoed this, stating, *“Definitely they don't abide by any hierarchy”*.

HR1 noted another issue for Generation Z – knowing how to communicate professionally following an extended period studying or even working remotely:

*“Some of kind of basic skills sometimes are missing for all, for all the qualifications and everything. I find things like writing skills and some of the core skills of communication have changed”*.

#### **4.3.4. Theme 4: Value CSR initiatives and willing to volunteer for causes they value**

Most of the participants reported having little difficulty in attracting Generation Z staff members to take part in Wellness or Green workplace committees, or to take part in CSR activities. HR7 commented, for example, on a recent recruitment drive internally for volunteers to join an ESG group, and how she was surprised by the number of younger, more recent hires who immediately volunteered:



While HR2 described how seriously some of her Generation Z colleagues take the Green initiatives rolled out by their organisation:

*“I’ve definitely had people come up to me to talk about getting frustrated about people not putting the right recycling stuff in the right bin. And they’re definitely hugely into being able to cycle to work”.*

That said, there were a few questions asked about whether some Generation Z staff members were more interested in paying lip service to CSR than actually participating in it. For example, HR4 noted:

*“When it comes down to it, they like the idea, but they don’t necessarily want to put the work in... if they are required to actually work additional hours, they expect to get paid overtime or expect something in return”.*

#### **4.3.5. Theme 5: Gen Z are attracted by public sector mission and reputation**

There was universal agreement among the interview participants that an organisation’s mission and culture are very important to Generation Z and that they are indeed attracted to work in the public service, partly due to the attractive overall “mission”. A typical response was that of HR2, who commented, *“There is a kind of an altruistic piece of it as well. They want to contribute to the wider mission”.*

HR3 also noted the positive reputation that many public service bodies can command in the job market:

*“We have hired very good people in who have then started to speak about us to their peers, etc. - a word has got around the network etc.”*

#### **4.3.6. Theme 6: Public sector salaries may be an issue for Gen Z**

HR1 summarised the key issue in attracting Generation Z by commenting:

*“The salary is probably the biggest stumbling block”.*

It was noted in the literature review that Generation Z are on the one hand hugely motivated by intrinsic rewards but on the other hand crave security, including financial security. This is exacerbated currently by the housing crisis, especially since many public and civil sector roles remain largely Dublin-based.

HR5 agreed that Generation Z feel “squeezed” by the cost-of-living crisis, especially since many of them remain in junior roles on lower pay:

*“They're very money focused... you can see why it's a big factor for them, you know, because at the moment with the way they're looking at it, sure, they could be 50 before they'll be able to get a deposit on a house”.*

#### **4.3.7. Theme 7: Public Service not seen as an attractive career option**

Many of the interview subjects felt that the civil service has an old-fashioned, “stuffy” public image, with LM1 commenting, *“There's still quite a negative connotation of, you know, you joined the civil service. You're just going to spend all day, every day doing data entry and processing forms and writing reports”.*

LM2 noted the scale of the work to be done in terms of improving the messaging around the public service as an employer:

*“I don't think we talk about the value of the work and the opportunities people have”.*

In terms of answering the research question of what the key barriers are inhibiting the public sector from attracting Generation Z, this image problem was presented as a critical factor, but it was far from being the only barrier identified. Another was the huge multitude of competing opportunities facing Gen Z candidates, with HR7 noting, *“I think that there's nothing but jobs.”*

Another issue raised by many of the participants was the fact that the public service’s old key selling point of the pensionable “job for life” was no longer an attractive proposition for Generation Z.

The other key barrier mentioned to attracting Generation Z to the public sector was a lack of mobility, which is an issue given Gen Z's predilection for taking time out to travel or even to move jobs. LM3 commented, for example:

*"I see in other jurisdictions, like in the United States... there's a lot more of a revolving door between the public and private sectors. Here, I think if you make a decision to leave the public sector, it's very hard to ever come back in again".*

HR6 made a salient point overall on making the public service a more attractive option to Generation Z:

*"I think we need to get better at selling what we have to offer".*

#### **4.3.8. Theme 8: Public Service Recruitment not effective in hiring Gen Z**

The interviewees universally agreed that civil service recruitment was not particularly effective in recruiting Generation Z candidates, and that while the picture in the public service was more positive, there were still improvements to be made.

HR2 summarised the key problem for the public and civil service when she commented:

*"The recruitment process for the public service is onerous and lengthy, and I think that younger colleagues, they just won't hang around for that, you know".*

HR5 also mentioned a key issue arising from the lengthy recruitment – that candidates tend to drop off during the process:

*"I find that that's frustrating because by the time you get somebody, which has happened to us, they've either left, or they've taken up another position".*

Lastly, another key barrier identified arising from recruitment was the lack of "matching" for roles in the civil service, wherein job candidates are assigned to generalist roles that do not necessarily match their skills or experience.

#### **4.3.9. Theme 9: Create an attractive employment offering for Gen Z**

In terms of solutions to the current issues in hiring Generation Z to the Irish public service, the overall theme identified among the participants centred around creating a more attractive employment offering. This included four main sub-themes: improving

entry-level public sector pay, developing more paid internships, apprenticeships and graduate programmes and introducing summer programmes, selling the public sector benefits such as the career development opportunities on offer and ensuring greater flexibility and mobility.

On the issue of pay, while the participants agreed that salary was never going to be the main motivating factor for someone entering the public service, they generally considered that the pay levels for the entry grades such as Clerical Officer and Executive Officer are currently too low to be sustainable. Another issue identified by many of the interview participants was that all new staff to the public sector must start on the lowest point of the scale, regardless of experience.

In terms of alternative approaches to attracting Generation Z talent, there was universal support for an increase in the number of paid internships and graduate programmes and the introduction of summer programmes. HR2, for example, commented on how programmes like this could demystify what working in the public service is actually like:

*“Maybe one of the best ways of attracting people is for them to actually have an experience of working there for a short period; ‘OK, this is somewhere where I’d like to work’ so that they understand what the environment is like.”*

The participants also viewed graduate programmes and apprenticeships as valuable recruitment tools. LM1 commented:

*“We need to be moving into growing our own, and that means bringing in younger people as trainees and as apprentices or graduate programmes”.*

The participants also felt that there was insufficient promotion of the range of opportunities available to staff in the public service, including those at entry level.

LM2 also made an important point, that as Generation Z do not appear to be interested in a “job for life”, the public service may need to accept this and take a more adaptable, flexible overall approach to employment:

*“I do think maybe being more flexible to say, look, come work with us for five years. Go away then and do whatever you like but come work and you might*

*come back to us in 10- or 15-years ' time. ... You want to go travel every summer? That's fine. You want flexibility? You want to work three days a week? Fine”.*

#### **4.3.10. Theme 10: Ensure that Public Sector recruitment is reaching Gen Z**

The other main area that participants discussed in terms of better attracting Generation Z candidates was to ensure better diversity and representation. There was a general feeling that the public service is not currently reaching all of its potential markets. HR7 commented on this, saying:

*“I think we need to show representation in everything we do, so you need to be able to look at an organisation and say “that's me. I could do that too”.*

One of the reasons for this was the high level of education now required to enter the public service for a lot of roles, while rules out school leavers. It was also noted that the civil service recruitment tests may be inadvertently ruling potential talent out.

Several participants expressed the view that there is a need for public sector recruitment to be targeted specifically at Generation Z, as well as engaging with them in order to recruit them effectively.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

This chapter discussed findings from the semi-structured qualitative interviews. The researcher examined the four research objectives previously outlined and analysed themes under each objective from the data collected in the interviews.

The following chapter will focus on conclusions from the literature and the interviews and will offer recommendation for further research.

## **5. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The aim of this research was to answer the following key question:

***How can the Irish public service effectively attract and retain Generation Z workers, considering their work values, career preferences, and the sector's potential challenges and opportunities***

This key question was elaborated to identify five research objectives:

- To define “Generation Z” and identify their work values.
- To identify whether Generation Z are attracted to work in the Irish public service.
- To identify perceived barriers inhibiting public service employers in attracting Generation Z workforce into the Irish public service.
- To identify possible improved or alternative approaches to attracting “young blood” to the Irish public service.

In this chapter, the empirical findings from the Data Analysis are compared with those found in the Literature Review, with the aim of fully addressing the research question and objectives. The final part of this chapter sets out recommendations relating to further research into and actions relating to the challenges of attracting Generation Z to the Irish public service and retaining them.

### **5.2. Findings**

#### **5.2.1. Research Objective 1: To define “Generation Z” and identify their work values.**

The literature review noted that Generation Z appear to view career progression as a key benefit (e.g. Campione, 2015; Ng et al., 2010; Wong, Gardiner, Lang, & Coulon, 2008), and display a tendency to switch jobs frequently (e.g. Zahari and Puteh, 2023; Benítez-Márquez et al, 2022; Heitmann, 2018; Dhanapal et al, 2013). Another key finding was that Gen Z staff members place a premium on achieving work/life balance (McCarthy, 2019; Strömberg and Karlsson, 2009) and having flexibility in the workplace

(Athanasakopoulos et al, 2022; CPL, 2019; Geary, 2018; Maioli, 2016). This generation holds more inclusive views on issues relating to diversity and equality (Atkins, 2021; Lanier, 2017; Maioli, 2016), and they prefer to work for an organisation whose values align with their own (Maloni et al, 2019).

The analysis of the empirical research conducted showed that the interview subjects regarded Generation Z as a cohort with high career expectations, who are content with regular job moves in order to progress their careers, and whose approach to work can be perceived as quite transactional. This is in line with another strong empirical finding, that Gen Z staff members are determined in their separation of their work and personal lives and ensuring that work does not interfere with their time outside working hours.

Another finding was a confirmation of something suggested in the relevant literature (e.g. Visier, 2023; Agarwal and Vaghela, 2018): a lack of interest on the part of Generation Z staff members in progressing upwards if it includes extra responsibility.

Another element found in the literature, and in the empirical research was the confidence Generation Z possess in putting their views/desires across in the workplace, as well as a generational culture clash between Gen Z, who take a relaxed approach to presentation and grade hierarchies, and previous generations. Part of this may relate to another finding that backs up the literature review (e.g. Harari et al, 2022; Barhate and Dirani, 2021) – the fact that Generation Z in many cases started their careers working remotely. It remains to be fully seen how this unique start to their careers has impacted this cohort, but it may explain part of Gen Z's willingness to cut through hierarchies and present in a more casual manner.

As per the literature, the empirical research demonstrated that Generation Z appear to have huge interest in volunteering for causes they value. Also, as per the literature (e.g. Cho, Bonn, and Han, 2018), there appears to be a disconnect in some cases between this apparent interest and a willingness to roll up their sleeves, but there were other examples presented of Generation Z staff members going above and beyond in their efforts.

### **5.2.2.    *Research Objective 2: To identify whether Generation Z are attracted to work in the Irish public service.***

The primary research revealed universal agreement among the interview participants that, as per the literature (e.g. Maloni et al, 2019; Middlemiss, 2015), an organisation's mission and culture are very important to Generation Z and most of the participants expressed the view that this cohort are indeed attracted to work in the public service, partly due to the attractive overall "mission". However, the fact remains that Generation Z are not joining the Irish public or civil service in large numbers.

This dichotomy may be explained by another key finding – that the salaries on offer in the public service, particularly at entry level, are a big issue for Generation Z. While some researchers quoted in the literature found that Gen Z tended to be less motivated by remuneration than other generations (e.g. Schawbel, 2014), other researchers (e.g. O'Connell, 2024; Csiszárík-Kocsír and Garai-Fodor, 2018; Iorgulescu, 2016; Anatole, 2013) identified them as having a keen need for financial security.

By nature of their age and career stage, many Generation Z staff members are working entry level jobs and struggling to save or pay off debt (Carnegie, 2023; Deloitte, 2023; O'Connor, 2022). Squeezed by the housing market and facing a cost-of-living crisis, this is a generation that may feel that working for public service salaries is a sacrifice too far.

### **5.2.3.    *Research Objective 3: To identify perceived barriers inhibiting public service employers in attracting the Generation Z workforce into the Irish public service.***

In respect of this objective, the literature showed that the Irish public service is not currently attracting Generation Z candidates in any significant numbers (e.g. Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, 2020; McCarthy, 2019).

During the empirical research, the public service's image problem was presented as a critical barrier to attracting Gen Z, with the interview participants citing the sector as having reputation for being stuffy and old-fashioned. There was also a general view that the public service does a poor job of promoting the value of what it does. Another huge problem in attracting Generation Z was the sheer multitude of competing opportunities



facing these candidates, from travel abroad to better paid roles in the private sector, as well as the looseness of the overall current labour market.

Compounding this is the fact that the public service's old key selling point of the pensionable "job for life" is not only no longer an attractive proposition for Generation Z, but it may also actually serve to drive away these candidates, given Gen Z's predilection for taking time out to travel and desire for flexibility.

On the one hand, the public service is making it difficult for Generation Z to leave the sector and return at a later date. On the other hand, it's also performing poorly at attracting them in the first place via the current public sector recruitment measures.

The interview participants were in universal agreement that public service recruitment was not currently effective overall in recruiting Generation Z candidates. There was a general acknowledgement that the recruitment process was too onerous, too lengthy and is resulting in candidates being lost along the way to other opportunities. One participant reported that it had taken 10 months to replace a candidate at an Assistant Principal grade, a critical upper middle management grade.

Apart from the process taking too long, another major issue is that the recruitment process, which still involves lengthy application forms in some cases, is just not appealing to Gen Z candidates who are used to applying for jobs on their phones, in real-time.

Another key barrier identified arising from recruitment was the fact that in the civil service, an old-fashioned approach persists where job candidates tend to be assigned to generalist roles that do not necessarily match their skills or experience. This system has now foundered with the arrival of Gen Z candidates, who face many potential opportunities and can pick and choose their roles.

#### ***5.2.4. Research Objective 4: To identify possible improved or alternative approaches to attracting "young blood" to the Irish public service.***

In terms of solutions suggested by the literature, Athanasakopoulos et al (2022), suggested that public sector employers could address their ongoing talent gaps by developing a clear value proposition for potential recruits and centring their offerings

around benefits that the private sector might struggle to compete with, such as an appealing “mission”, meaningful work, job flexibility and opportunities for career development. They also suggested taking a proactive approach to seeking out diverse pools of candidates.

Interestingly, the overall theme identified among the participants in the empirical research also revolved around creating a more attractive “employer value proposition”. There were four main sub-themes identified: improving entry-level public sector pay, developing more paid internships, apprenticeships and graduate programmes and introducing summer programmes, selling the public sector benefits such as the career development opportunities on offer and ensuring greater flexibility and mobility.

While public sector salaries are never going to adequately compete with those in the private sector, it was generally considered that the pay levels for the entry grades such as Clerical Officer and Executive Officer are currently too low to be competitive.

In terms of alternative approaches to attracting Generation Z talent, many interview participants called for an increase in the number of paid internships and graduate programmes and the introduction of summer programmes. These were seen as valuable recruitment measures as well as demystifying what working in the public service is like.

As also previously demonstrated, the public service is not currently doing a good job of promoting the range of opportunities available to staff. This includes generous training and development opportunities which could be effectively marketed at Generation Z.

In terms of creating a better employment offering, another key step may be for the public service to accept that Generation Z are not interested in a “job for life”, and to move towards promoting and implementing a more adaptable, flexible overall approach to employment.

The last set of findings under this objective centred around ensuring that the public sector is effectively “reaching” Generation Z. In keeping with the literature findings (e.g. Athanasopoulos et al, 2022), there was a general feeling that the public service is not reaching all of its potential markets and must ensure better diversity and representation if it is going to attract Gen Z. Some participants pointed out, for example, that many parts of the public service have an ageing workforce and that this is not necessarily an attractive environment for younger staff to join.

One of the reasons for this lack of representation was the high level of education now required to enter the public service for a lot of roles, which was questioned by many of the interview participants. Again, programmes like apprenticeships could also serve to bridge this gap.

There was also a general opinion from the empirical research that public service would need to become more targeted – including campaigns targeted at Generation Z specifically.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

#### **5.3.1. Recommendation 1: Overhaul entry-level public sector pay**

To attract Generation Z candidates to the public service in any numbers, the salary bands must be addressed for the entry grades such as Clerical Officer, Administrative Officer and Executive Officer, which are currently too low to be sustainable. Another critical issue is that, currently, all new staff to the public sector must start on the lowest point of the scale, regardless of experience. Addressing these two pay issues will be a critical first step in creating a more attractive employment offering for Gen Z.

#### **5.3.2. Recommendation 2: Better promote the range of opportunities available to staff, including those at entry level**

The public service boasts a range of generous training and development opportunities and can offer both flexitime and hybrid-working, as well as an attractive “mission” – all of which could be more effectively marketed at Generation Z candidates. Better promoting and explaining these overall benefits will be key to better attracting Gen Z to the public service.

#### **5.3.3. Recommendation 3: Implement and promote a more adaptable, flexible employment approach**

Another significant step in attracting Generation Z will be for the public service to move towards promoting and implementing a more adaptable, flexible approach to employment. For example, it must be made easier for staff members to leave the civil or

public service and return. This could be done by overhauling the current career break policy to make it easier for staff members at all levels to leave for a few months/years.

Other important initiatives would be better promoting the shorter working year policy that allows staff at all levels to take unpaid “special leave”, and to promote and enhance the current part-time working arrangements. Both initiatives could be used as important recruitment marketing tools.

Lastly, opportunities to allow staff members to move between different public service bodies on programmes such as secondments should be explored as it will act as a retention tool by allowing staff to easily build their portfolios of skills and experience.

#### ***5.3.4. Recommendation 4: Overhaul and streamline public service recruitment***

The public service should focus more on valuable recruitment interventions such as paid internships and graduate entry programmes and should also consider introducing college summer programmes.

In addition, the public service must move faster if it is to secure Generation Z candidates, which can be done by streamlining the current recruitment processes. There must also be an acceptance within the civil service specifically that many younger candidates will not accept generalist roles and instead expect to be able to apply for specific roles.

Lastly, public service recruitment needs to move towards being more targeted – including campaigns targeted at Generation Z specifically.

#### ***5.3.5. Recommendation 5: Take a more proactive approach to seeking out diverse pools of candidates***

The public service must ensure better diversity and representation in order to attract Gen Z. This can be done partly by creating as many entry routes as possible, from return-to-work programmes for those in mid-career seeking to return to the workforce, to graduate programmes, to internships, to apprenticeships.

But the public service must also ensure that it is not blocking particular categories of candidate from applying for roles in the first place, whether by imposing high education standards for all roles, or by conducting recruitment tests that unnecessarily disadvantage some candidates and dissuade them from applying for roles.

### **5.3.6. *Recommendation 6: Further, more in-depth research should be conducted***

In undertaking this study, there were several limitations to be considered, including the following:

- The sample group comprised just 10 people although the range of experience and backgrounds was broad, with 7 senior HR professionals and 3 senior hiring managers from a range of Irish public and civil service organisations.
- Due to the researcher as well as the interview subjects working full-time, some of the interviews had to take place in the participants' workplaces via Teams. This presented challenges from a timing as well as a concentration perspective.

Bearing in mind these limitations, as well as the serious gaps identified in research on attracting Generation Z to the Irish public service, the researcher has the following recommendations for further research:

- While this study collected primary data from senior public sector staff involved in recruitment and hiring, conducting interviews with public sector staff in similar roles but at lower grades as well as at entry level would provide a broader scope of views and richer data.
- The researcher also believes it would be important to speak to Generation Z job candidates as well as existing Gen Z public sector staff members, to ensure a full circle of perspectives.

## **5.4. *Conclusion***

The goal of this research was to explore how the Irish public service can effectively attract and retain Generation Z workers, taking into consideration their work values, career preferences, and the public sector's potential challenges and opportunities.

By utilising qualitative analysis, this study has presented further insights into this subject from senior recruiters as well as hiring managers from across the Irish public service. While these staff members had differing views on some of the subjects presented, overall, there was broad consistency in their responses to the questions

around the research objectives and in their experience of working with Generation Z candidates.

The research demonstrated strongly that there is scope to attract Generation Z candidates to the Irish public service through effective promotion of its overall “mission”, as this generational cohort are altruistic and motivated by the promise of a higher purpose. The public service also has a range of benefits that Generation Z find attractive, including flexible working and the shorter working year, as well as career breaks. However, these benefits need to be far better promoted to candidates, with recruitment campaigns targeted specifically at Generation Z.

There are also elements of the public service that are serving to dissuade Gen Z from applying to join it, including lengthy, old-fashioned recruitment processes, low entry-level pay, and a lack of adequate diversity in the current public sector workforce. Another major issue for the public service in seeking to be an employer of choice for Gen Z is the fact that it is very difficult to leave the service and return without re-entering an onerous recruitment process – a serious problem for a generation that likes to move roles regularly to build experience. These issues must be addressed if the Irish public service is to successfully attract and retain this cohort.

It is hoped that the results of this research process and the recommendations arising will contribute to progress in this area in the near future.

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## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

### Interview Consent Form

**Title of Dissertation Project:** Zoomers to the Rescue: How the Irish Public Service can overcome its recruitment gaps by attracting and retaining Generation Z

Consent to take part in research:

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves participating in one interview via MS Teams where I will be asked a series of questions relating to the attraction and retention of Generation Z staff members to the Irish public service.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation to be submitted to the National College of Ireland by the researcher Éilis Mernagh as part of their Masters degree.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secure, password protected folder on the researcher's computer until the NCI exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact the researcher on this study, Éilis Mernagh, to seek further clarification and information.

**Researcher:** Éilis Mernagh (x22122214@student.ncirl.ie)

**Academic supervisor:** Victor del Rosal (Victor.DelRosal@ncirl.ie)

Signature of research participant

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Signature of participant                      Date

Signature of Researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

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Signature of researcher                      Date

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW THEME SHEET**

The objective with these interviews is to gather the perspectives of several selected public service professionals on the four key themes through a series of semi-structured interviews. In order to guide the progress of the interviews, preliminary sets of questions have been developed: however, it is understood that the direction taken in any given interview in relation to any particular theme might require subsidiary lines of questioning to be developed on the spot.

### **Personal Detail**

- Can you tell me your name?
- Can you tell me your job title?
- How long have you been in your present role?
- Can you tell me your length of service in your present organisation?

### **Your Public Service Organisation**

- Can you tell me about the age breakdown of staff members currently in your organisation?
- Have you noticed this age profile changing over the last 5 years?

### **Generation Z values and career preferences**

- What differences have you observed, if any, between the motivational requirements of different generations in the workplace?
- Are you aware of “Generation Z”, which includes staff members currently aged between 18 and 27 years?
- Have you noticed any difference in the workplace motivations of the Generation Z cohort, compared to other generations currently in the workplace?
- Have you noticed differences in values in Gen Z staff/candidates in relation to any of these elements, compared to other generational cohorts?
  - Career progression
  - Work/life balance
  - Corporate social responsibility
  - Salary/benefits
- In your opinion, do these values have an influence Gen Z’s career choices and if so, how?

### **Challenges for the public sector in attracting and retaining Gen Z candidates:**

- Is your public sector organisation currently attracting sufficient numbers of new staff members to meet its needs?
- Are you having difficulty attracting Generation Z talent (candidates from 18 to 27) to your organisation?
  - How are you responding to these challenges?
- What challenges do you see in the retention of Generation Z staff members in the public service? Where do you think these challenges arise from?
  - How are you responding to these retention challenges?
- What challenges do you think that the Irish public service will have in the future in respect of attracting Generation Z talent?
  - What do you perceive to be the possible consequences of these challenges?

### **Opportunities for the public service in attracting and retaining Gen Z talent:**

- What more do you think the public service in Ireland can do to attract Generation Z staff members?
- What, if anything, do you think an individual public sector organisation can do to better attract Gen Z talent?
- The Irish public service must compete with the private sector for the recruitment of talent. Do you think central civil service policy could improve the public sector's position in relation to this?
- Do you think there are any potential improvements to current processes that can be made to attract/retain more Gen Z candidates to the Irish public service?
- Do you think there are any potential new approaches to attracting Generation Z candidates to the Irish public service and/or retaining them?

Each interview will conclude with the question: “Are there any other issues you think might be relevant for this discussion, or any other comments you wish to make?”