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Creating Job Security And Retaining Employees Among Different Generations In The Public Sector

Kenneth R. Sisneros
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CREATING JOB SECURITY AND RETAINING EMPLOYEES AMONG DIFFERENT GENERATIONS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

By

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies

at the University of New England

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education

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2018
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ABSTRACT

There is a need to train and retain the 85 million Generation Yers and 35 million Generation Xers within and entering the workforce to fill the Baby Boomers’ vacant positions, as 52 million of them continue to exit the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The Baby Boomer generation is exiting the workforce with extensive institutional knowledge gained through years of experience within the public sector. Without the transfer of their experience and knowledge to younger generations, a loss of organizational knowledge will occur, adversely affecting organizations’ productivity and wasting taxpayer funds. Therefore, though Generation Xers may fill some vacancies, not enough Generation Xers are in the US workforce to fill the Baby Boomer vacancy (Geber, 2000; Levit, 2016). To maintain sustainability, public-sector organizations need to adapt to the changing workforce by utilizing the Generation Xers’ knowledge and transfer the knowledge held by Baby Boomers to the Generation Yers, while working to retain Generation Xers and Yers.

This study reveals four key findings that could help public sector employers revise the job securities and benefits they offer. All generations are sensitive to job security and benefits and rated their most important job security as healthcare. While the Baby Boomers and Generation X were interested in the public-sector pension plan, Generation Y was more interested in a steady paycheck and paid time off. Gen Y is more highly formally educated
overall, but those in this public sector setting were not more educated than the older generations. The majority of the public-sector employees sought a core desire of healthcare, compensation, a pension, steady paycheck, and have recourse to retain their jobs. If these findings are utilized properly, the public sector could position itself for a higher retention rate and avoid losing institutional knowledge during the transition from one generation to another. The recommendations provided in this study will promote retention and attract others wanting to join the public sector for employment. Generation Y has an incentive to stay and allow Generation Xers and Baby Boomers to continue their employment, with fewer lost to attrition.
University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in history, there are four generations in the United States workforce (Milligan, 2014). This is due to the extension of life by medical advancement, which has allowed individuals to live and work longer (Griffin, 2016). Due to the vast number of individuals within the Baby Boomer generation, this generation within the workforce is aging rapidly and exiting quickly without passing on institutional knowledge of their organization. As a result, the inability of workers to replace the Baby Boomer generation directly affects the American economy and workforce (Newport, 2015). However, it is recognized by employers that as the workforce ages, the public and private sectors will need to replace those older individuals who are in critical executive positions, such as Traditionalists (born between 1901 and 1945) and Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) (Sprague, 2008), with younger individuals, such as Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1995) (Dorsey, 2010).

As Dorsey describes in his book, Y-Size Your Business: How Gen Y Employees Can Save Your Business, generations are not homogeneous, and although they are often stereotyped based on the generation in which they are born, due to different life experiences and upbringings all of them do not act the same way. For example, if an individual is born between 1980 and 2001, that doesn’t mean that individual is going to act in a specific way or have all the stereotyped characteristics of a Generation Yer. However, research does suggest that some of those characteristics are present and may be a starting point for how and/or why someone within that generation may act or why they desire some of the same things (Dorsey, 2010). In an exploratory study by Perry, Hanvongse, and Casoinic (2013), the researchers were able to make a case for generational stereotypes using the frequency of generation themes, where the majority of a
generation looked at something differently or saw more value in something than another generation (Perry, Hanvongse, & Casoinic, 2013, p. 421).

In response to the many Baby Boomers exiting the workforce, many private-sector companies have recruited Generation Yers to fill vacancies left by them. The private sector typically has more diverse financial resource options than the public sector and, therefore, has made some headway in filling vacancies left by retiring Baby Boomers, because affordability becomes a factor when considering retention options. Replacing workers has been harder for the public sector, which relies heavily on a defined benefit (commonly known as a pension) to retain talent (Salki, 2014). The private and public sectors also have significant differences in relation to organizational culture and the employees they recruit and retain. In addition to the difference between culture and employees, there are also fewer restrictions on private-sector companies in hiring, as opposed to the public sector, which requires adherence to certain rules, laws, and regulations (Klare, 1981) in order to demonstrate equity and equality within hiring practices.

Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1980) would be a likely choice to replenish the Baby Boomers and Traditionalists within the public-sector workforce due to their present institutional knowledge and closeness to the Baby Boomer’s work ethic. Unfortunately, there are not sufficient numbers of Generation Xers to fill all the vacancies caused by the exit of Baby Boomers from the workforce. In these five to seven years (2017 to 2024), it is estimated that more than 30% of the Baby Boomer workforce will retire completely, whereas 42% of the Baby Boomer workforce states they will transition from full-time to part-time positions (Taylor, Pilkington, Feist, Dal Grande, & Hugo, 2014, p. 3). With a significant reduction in the workforce either through resignations, retirement, or death, public-sector employers should be looking for younger generations to fill staffing voids within their organizations.
Large, public-sector employers, seeking to replace existing workers like the Traditionalist and Baby Boomers, face a challenge because each generation, if one believes the stereotypes associated with them, has a different set of values, needs, and desires relating to their employer (Costanza, Badger, Fraser, Severt, & Gade, 2012; Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). This study examined the typical generational values, needs, and desires and sought to correlate them to the retention options for public-sector employers. Further, when it comes to public-sector employers, job security and benefit factors are a major driving force in recruiting, obtaining, and retaining many employees. These job securities can range from benefits, retirement options, work structure, and property rights to a position. The generational change in the workforce has created a culture clash within some organizations where Baby Boomers were satisfied with the past job securities and benefits, primarily a predictable salary and benefits. However, the younger generations seek other job securities and benefits that are not as prevalent in the contemporary workplaces, specifically in the public sector, such as flexible work schedules and telecommuting.

Based on this literature, many private-sector industry leaders are not as concerned with retaining the older generations due to how their organizations are established. Private-sector organizations are modeled in such a way that changing human capital is a good thing because it allows for new ideas to be brought into the organization. However, that is the opposite for the public sector that relies on retaining all generations in their workforce. The purpose of this study is to probe a sub-question relevant to the generational transition, which is as follows: In the public sector, which job security and benefit factors are likely to be the most important in obtaining and retaining each generation?
Problem Statement

As the United States workforce transitions into the 21st century and as 52 million Baby Boomers continue to exit the workforce, there is a need to train and retain younger generations (85 million Generation Yers and 35 million Generation Xers) who are within or are entering the workforce in order to fill vacant positions (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). The Baby Boomer generation is exiting the workforce with institutional knowledge gained through years of experience, particularly within the public sector. Without the transfer of knowledge to the younger generations, there will be a loss of institutional knowledge, which will adversely affect organizations. Currently, there are only 35 million Generation Xers in the workforce, who will fill some vacancies; however, there are not enough individuals in Generation X to fill all the Baby Boomers’ vacancy (Geber, 2000). For public-sector organizations, to maintain their sustainability, not only will they need to adapt to the changing workforce by utilizing the institutional knowledge held by Generation Xers, but also transfer the institutional knowledge held by exiting Baby Boomers to Generation Yers. This will need to be done in conjunction with the organization having to retain Generation Xers and Yers. This is a significant problem for the public sector because unlike the private sector that does not anticipate retaining employees for a long time, the public sector does anticipate retaining employees for a long time. One way the public sector achieves its goals of retaining employees is through the provision of a definite benefit plan, also known as a pension plan, which has been revamped over the years to allow for sustainability and appeasement of the public (Munnell et al., 2011).

As stated, the private sector is not as interested in long-term employee retention because with attrition comes new ideas and processes that bring growth and new opportunities. The private sector tends to have its benefits set up to respond to its revolving door of employees. For
example, a 401(k)-retirement plan is designed so that when an employee leaves the private-sector organization, they can roll it over to their next company’s 401(k) plan. This type of retirement plan generally involves risk and are based on the employees’ contributions, contrary to a public-sector pension plan that has a guaranteed payout based on the retiree’s age and years of service. These pension plans can only be rolled over to another public-sector employer who is enrolled in that identical pension plan. Unlike 401(k) retirement plans, pension plans are based on time in service and top salary, with a defined payout for the rest of the retiree’s life (Bodie, Marcus & Merton, 1988).

Prior to Generation Y, it was assumed that people wanted to work for an organization with an acceptable compensation and would leave the organization for a better paying job (Maurer, 2015). While this ideology worked for the Baby Boomer and Traditionalist generations, this may no longer be the case according to the literature. Some Generation Xers and Yers entering the workforce do not consider the compensation alone when applying for and accepting positions (Meier & Crocker, 2010). These generations are looking for a social, economic, and work-life balance from their prospective employer, prior to becoming vested with an organization (Clifford, 2014). Achieving work-life balance is a challenge for employees within the public sector because changes do not occur quickly within the government. Since work-life balance is a newer consideration for employers, bringing about the change that supports such a culture shift would take longer to implement than in the private sector. This is a problem for the public sector, as Generation Yers will compose the majority of the current United States workforce in the next several years if they don’t already do so. It is recognized that Generation Yers identify and expect more than just a financial bottom-line, but they are rather a data, knowledge, and sociologically driven generation. As a result, Generation Ys tend to be attracted
to the organizations that inspires them and nurtures their creative abilities. They want to work for a company with a strong triple-bottom line (Kerr, 2011). This triple-bottom line is not usually present within the public sector. The public sector exists to serve the citizens who are tax, fee, or rate-payers. Furthermore, Generation Y employees do not desire to work solely for the sake of working and are more likely to work for an organization whose purpose if for the upliftment of the local community. If Generation Y employees do not like the message displayed by the organization, they are less likely to work for that organization. Some Generation Yers are even willing to hold out for the ideal job, taking up refuge in the homes of their Baby Boomer parents, until such time when an attractive position and/or organization emerges (Stahl, 2016).

In order to effectively balance the attractive benefits the private sector can offer Generation Xers and Generation Yers, the public sector offers different and unique job securities and benefit options to help attract members of the younger generation to their organizations. These job security and benefit options have been effective for the public sector in the past but may need to be altered to in order to help retain Generation Xers and Yers as the Baby Boomer workforce retires.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to explore what kind of job securities and benefits public-sector employees from each generation in the workforce consider important when deciding to stay or leave a public-sector employer. The private sector can offer many different enticing benefits to their employees, which are not always offered by the public sector. Public-sector employers must contend with many limitations, both bureaucratic and financial, since the money being used to employ their employees is taxpayer or ratepayer money (Donovan & Finn, 2013). Private-sector workplaces can offer bonuses, high salaries, big offices, and other perks to the
preferred candidates. However, the public sector can offer greater job securities and benefits than private companies like a pension and healthcare (Berman, Bowman, West, & Van Wart, 2012). This research will provide information that may help public-sector employers identify and tailor their total compensation packages to attract and retain talent within the United States workforce, filling a gap of employees by responding to the different needs of the different generations.

Research studies have been conducted regarding ways to attract and retain the different generations within the private sector, but there is limited research about retaining generations within the public sector in the United States (Donovan & Finn, 2013; iCIMS, 2016). Of the researches available, the paper Generations at work: Are there differences and do they matter? (Benson and Brown, 2011) focuses only on two generations versus the desires of all generations within the present workforce. This lack of information will be filled by this research, giving public-sector employers the understanding of each generation’s desire within their own workforce.

**Research Questions**

The research questions below will help guide the research in understanding the importance of the job securities and benefits in relation to the public sector. These questions should be answered throughout the course of the research and will be able to help public-sector employers understand how unique generation-specific job securities and benefits will help retain and attract employees of different generations.

1) How do public-sector employees from different generations compare the importance of job security and benefits?

2) Do demographic trends impact how much public-sector employees’ value the job securities and benefits?
3) How can understanding the difference in desires of job securities and benefits among generations in the workplace help inform employers seeking to recruit and retain younger workers?

**Conceptual Framework**

There is an emerging body of research about the changing expectations of the United States workforce, which is being held by different generations (Clifford, 2014). The characteristics of the workplace described by different generations provide the conceptual framework for this study. The framework draws from research about Baby Boomers’ decision to work in the public sector and what keeps this generation working in the same. It also addresses factors which researchers suggest are of different in importance to the younger generations. The conceptual framework is based on the following job securities and benefits being of value to an employee due in part to their social, economic, and/or work-life balance desires (Clifford, 2014).

Identifying the job securities and benefits that attract different generations to the public sector will help human resources departments strategically recruit and retain talent. There has been an increased call in recent decades for research about generational differences regarding workplace expectations. These calls previously came from the private sector; however, the need for research has arisen in the public sector as the Baby Boomer generation is starting to retire, and there is a need for organizations to understand how to fill the gap in retention strategies better to retain younger workers.

Understanding the desires of different generations, regarding the human resources context, is very important because it allows for strategic planning and organization/cultural change. Additional support for the continued study is necessary to promote change within the public sector. Currently, the public sector relies heavily on a defined contribution plan to attract
and retain talented individuals. However, there is evidence in the literature obtained during studies on the private sector that supports the hypothesis that younger generations are more intrigued by job securities and benefits different from those which attract older generations, not currently offered by some public-sector employers. These job securities and benefits fit into the social, economic, and work-life balance desires that are described by Clifford (2014). For this reason, it is important for the public sector to have the information necessary to implement change now, in order to attract and retain different generations.

Much research is conducted regarding the private-sector employees’ desires among different generations, but there is limited research regarding the public-sector employees. One might think that the research is transferable between the public and private sectors, but due to significant differences among funding, culture, laws, and job securities, the two sectors should be studied separately. As stated, the private sector has more flexibility to offer special incentives, while the public sector is governed by strict federal, state, and local laws and regulations. This identifies the need for a second type of integrative review, as described by Torraco (2005), which addresses an emerging topic within the public sector and the potential of future research related to different generations and their willingness to vacate if management is not competent or the manager and the employee’s styles are different. This area of integrative typology allows the development of research that focuses specifically on the generational desires within the public sector.

The research methodology chosen for this study was a quantitative methodology that produced descriptive statistics using a survey. It will allow for the analyzation of data within a Pacific Northwest City in order to determine the generational desires of public-sector employees.
Studies, like the PwC and iCIMS, have been conducted in this area, but they have focused on the private sector whereas this study will specifically focus on the public sector.

**Significance of the Study**

Determining different ways to attract and retain younger generation employees to the public sector is the primary gap being filled by this research study. These initial findings may lead to a continuance of research relating to cultural or managerial impacts on the younger generations’ retention plans within the workforce. This study is important because it focuses on the public sector, which has a significantly different culture, funding, and ability to provide various job securities and benefits than the private sector. As a result, public-sector organizations will be afforded the opportunity to understand the job securities and benefits influencing Generation Xers and Generation Yers so that these organizations can prepare and strategize how to prevent the loss of their institutional knowledge.

It is difficult to retain talent, such as Generation Yers, who are known to change employers every 3.2 years on average (Doyle, 2017) because once they are trained, they tend to leave for better opportunities. However, some private-sector organizations have tapped into the needs and expectations of the younger generations in order to retain them. This has not entirely been the case with the public sector. The ability for public-sector organizations to stabilize their workforces and create an environment where they can prepare by succession planning and for future staffing needs is invaluable, since turnover is expensive for any public organization, costing thousands of dollars in public funds. Although literature is abundant on the subject of generational differences in the private sector, a gap exists in the literature about retaining employees in the public-sector organizations. The public sector has relied heavily on a defined benefit plan (pension), which is constantly modified in order to remain sustainable or maintain
fiscal responsibility to the public. Torraco (2005) showed that these modifications detract from obtaining employees because of the instability within the job securities and benefits offered by a public-sector organization.

This study presents an in-depth look at the different generations currently in, or soon to be entering, the public-sector workforce, and the workplace job securities and benefits they most desire. The information will lead to finding out the best practices to attract and retain different generations through these job security and benefits. The study will be conducted using a quantitative methodology that produces descriptive statistics in order to analyze the data. The surveys that were filled out by the participants allowed individuals from different generations within the public sector to describe their expectations in relation to different job securities and benefits.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

Participants in this study were asked a series of questions that were to be answered in a survey format. There were several repetitive questions worded differently to gauge whether participants were consistent in their responses. This was done to assure accuracy of the participants’ responses. Furthermore, the participation in this study was completely voluntary, which is a limitation, but it should increase the number of honest responses. The purpose of the questions asked is to help public-sector employers identify job security and benefits that are the most desirable from a public-sector employee. Such knowledge may help determine causes of separation and how current public-sector employers can improve job securities and benefits to attract and retain employees.

The researcher’s assumption of the participants who voluntarily responded to the survey is that all answers to the questions are honest and accurate. In addition, the researcher assumed
that the term “millennial” is the same as Generation Y. Some researchers suggest that Generation Y is made up of two generations combined into one; for the purpose of this research, the two terms have been used interchangeably, and the participants were also told to assume that the terms were interchangeable.

One limitation of this study is the location in which it was conducted, Portland, Oregon. Portland is known to be a progressive city, and therefore, the findings may show that benefits offered to the public sector may align more readily to those expected of Generation X and Y due to the progressive nature. This could skew the data collected, as opposed to asking the same survey questions in a more traditional and conservative city, like Arlington, Texas. This may lead to future research that focuses on the determination of the nature of the ideology based on the type of city (such as progressive or conservative), which may impact expectations of employees. Another limitation is that each employee may have a different set of living circumstances, which may influence the expectations of individual responses. Lastly, the sample size was 112 public-sector participants in a division of 175 employees. This is a fairly small sample size for the type of study being conducted. A larger sample size is preferable in order to increase the accuracy of the results. It is recognized that the sample size may not determine the exact expectations of respondents, but it is expected to provide generalized expectations, which can be further studied.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to explore what kind of job securities and benefits public-sector employees from each generation in the workforce consider important when deciding to stay or leave a job. This study was quantitative in nature, and the researcher strived to use an unbiased approach in order to obtain accurate data. The study took place in a
metropolitan city in the Pacific Northwest and contained a sample size of 112 public-sector employees. The data obtained from these individuals led to conclusions about the required job security and benefits factors necessary to attract and retain different generations within the workforce. The next chapter will discuss the evidence and supporting documentation for this study. It will also define and give context to the generations and why each generation might find different job securities and benefits important.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States workforce has experienced a dramatic overhaul, from 2008 to 2014, with the Great Recession nearly bankrupting those heavily invested in the stock market, more specifically in stocks. Although the market today has rebounded since the crash of 2008, that economic disruption meant that individuals near retirement, like Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), who were 62 to 44 years of age, were forced to stay longer in the workforce because they did not have the monetary funds to retire on a fixed income (McCrindle, 2012). The type of retirement plans available to employees is one of the most significant differences between the private and the public sector. Most public-sector employees have a defined benefit plan, or pension, that allows them to retire with a stable income. The private sector relies on a 401(k) plan and defined contribution plans in order to attract and retain talent. Although the stable income from a pension plan is beneficial, historically, pension plans have been adjusted to accommodate the employees' longer lifespan. Most pension plan administrators have increased the minimum time their employees need to work and raised the age for retirement, which, in turn, has altered the retirement age of the employee (Peterson, 2015).

Literature review covers the research examining several key areas, which served as the foundation for the survey. The literature review compares the work setting for both the public and the private sector. This is done to allow readers to see the difference in types of work done between the public and the private sector. These differences could drive varying results from past research conducted in the private sector compared to the research being conducted in this research project that centers around only the public sector. In the following section, the difference in how each of the sectors operates is examined to give the reader an understanding of
why they do not operate in the same way. The second section of the literature review examines the generational differences to explain why different generations act the way they do. Finally, the last section discusses why a public-sector organization should hire multiple generations.

**Work Setting for Public and Private Sector**

Baby Boomers are now working past the age their parents worked before retiring. One outcome of older workers staying in the workforce longer is a term called compaction, which means that the workplace now includes other generations that have entered into the workforce alongside the Baby Boomers, thus compacting several generations into the United States workforce all at once (Mermin, Johnson, & Murphy, 2006). As Baby Boomers were due to retire, Generation Xers (born between 1965 and 1979) and Generation Yers (born between 1980 and 1994) were expected to fill in those vacancies (McCrindle, 2012). However, since Generation X is sizably smaller than Generation Y, the majority of the positions that need to be filled by the Baby Boomer vacancies will be left to Generation Ys. This phenomenon has created a different dynamic than the previous ones and has introduced a challenge for those in the human resources field, leading workforce development. In addition to the sizable difference in population of workers available, Generation Xers have a stereotype or stigma associated with their work attitude and beliefs. In the following sections of this paper, these serotypes are addressed further for an explanation.

As the Baby Boomer generation is having to stay longer in the workforce, it has created the largest generational gap in the United States history, where the difference in age is almost 50 years between younger and older workers in the workforce. The reasons as to why older generations stay within the public-sector workforce vary. These reasons differ from why Baby
Boomers stay in the private sector. The following section explains the possible difference between the public and the private sector:

Public Sector: Notably, within the public sector, employees hold property rights. This means that they own the position they are in and do not have to vacate it as long as they can perform the essential functions of the position (Acemoglu & Verdier, 1998). This, in turn, allows people to hold and retain positions longer in the public sector. However, as attrition happens, these positions are more than likely to be filled with younger workers.

Due to the large generational gap in the public-sector workforce, there is a disconnect about the knowledge of the desires of each generation within public-sector employers. Many studies have been conducted in the private sector by iCIMS and PwC, which have shown the gaps in generations and how they must plan to fill the vacancies left by Baby Boomers (Donovan & Finn, 2013; iCIMS, 2016). However, the stark cultural differences between the public and the private sector have an impact on how employees respond in regards to retention (Mares, 2013).

Private Sector: On the other hand, the private sector can remove positions as necessary because their positions are “at-will.” In the private sector, many employees are “at will” and can be let go at any time for any reason as long as they don’t fire a member of protected class (Technical Assistance for Employers, 2017). This allows companies to swap out employees who are not fulfilling expectations and replace them with the ones who are capable of doing so. This shortens the age difference between younger and older workers in the private sector.

Private-sector organizations are responsible to shareholders. They are driven by profit because profit breeds capital and growth. The funds from the private sector come from consumers and/or shareholders (Mazzucato, 2015). In essence, an employee’s success determines their worth in the organization and drives the job security and benefits they receive.
from the organization. On the opposite side of that spectrum is the public sector, which is not driven by profit, but out of an obligation to serve the community. The public sector exists to fulfill the public’s needs. These include the need to have a safe community (law enforcement), roads to travel on (transportation department), and clean and safe drinking water (water district). The public sector gets its funding from public sources, including taxes, rates, and fees, among other funding mechanisms. Therefore, the public sector has a responsibility of stewardship to the community it serves and must be accountable to the community when services are not carried out (Van Dooren, Bouckaert, & Halligan, 2015).

Affirmative Action Plans, American’s with Disabilities Act, Paid Parental Leave, Veterans Preference Points, Multiple Collective Bargaining Contracts, Equity Pay Scales and many more such regulations are placed upon the public-sector employers. While some of these regulations do affect the private sector, the public sector has tighter restrictions or obligations associated with the law. Due to the nature of the law, employees are guaranteed more favoritism and leniency regarding certain regulations in the public sector (Berman et al., 2016).

Furthermore, people in the public sector are compensated 5.9% less than to the ones in the private sector in the surrounding community (Orr, 2011). This type of compensation gap between the private and the public sector hinders the latter because they cannot compete based on salary. This causes the public sector to miss out on top educated talent that would have been attracted to the public sector if the compensation was comparable to private sector. This, in turn, reduces applicant pools for the public-sector employers.

With more regulations and lower compensation, it is important to determine what attracts people to want to work in the public sector and, more importantly, what keeps them there. Over the past six decades, the public sector has relied on Baby Boomers to keep the government
running smoothly (Wilson & Simson, 2006). The Baby Boomer generation has had different desires and expectations, which attracted them to the public service. However, with the younger generations (both Generation X and Y) in or entering the workforce, a difference in their desires and expectations with that of the Baby Boomer generation is emerging. This was apparent when the research was conducted in the private sector, and the younger generations had stark differences in desires, expectations, and culture (iCIMS, 2016). For example, Generation Yers come into the workforce immediately following college graduation with high desires and expectations; however, they do not go anywhere without their phones and are not bashful when they address senior employees (Dorsey, 2010). To older generations, this is a lack of business acumen and a sign of disrespect. To complicate the issue further, Generation Yers do not believe they are doing anything wrong due to how they were raised (Dorsey, 2010). To them, a satisfactory performance appraisal is not sufficient. In fact, Generation Yers may react by having their parents call management to discuss the matter with them (Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone, 2011). This is just an example of how different the generations are.

This may seem a little farfetched and extreme, but it is a new reality that the private sector is starting to master, while the public sector has yet to understand or react to it. The public sector needs workers, but Generation Y is causing difficulties due to their entitled mentalities (Rourke, 2011). The public-sector employers can offer seasoned, and new employees job security and benefits that are different than the ones in the private sector, like a pension or better healthcare. These job security and benefits can come in many different forms like property rights to a position, a defined retirement plan, and guaranteed work (Slavov, 2013). However, the public sector still struggles to hire certain demographics.
Nevertheless, the Generation Y’s mentality is leaving public-sector management with the lingering question of how they will be able to retain new and current workers when the average employee in the private sector only stays with a company for 3.2 years per the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Doyle, 2017). However, not everyone fits into these generational boxes (Dorsey, 2010). For example, some Baby Boomers have adapted to the Generation Y’s technology, and probably some Generation Yers intend to stay with their public-sector or private-sector employer indefinitely. However, it is safe to say that generational stereotyping does give an employer a starting point on how an employee may act if they belong to a specific generation.

With all the uniqueness aside, Generation Y can deliver pretty powerful workplace performance and loyalty at a generous value if they are managed correctly, meaning given the autonomy they desire, and have the proper job securities and benefits that will keep them grounded and loyal to a private-sector company (Bolton et al., 2013). However, the gap in the research is exploited when looking at this generational problem through the lens of the public sector. For Generation Y and Generation X, having the necessary skill-set and entering the public sector could not have come at a better time, as many Baby Boomers are due to retire within the next several years (Wilson & Simson, 2006). With job opportunities being so competitive in the private sector, the public sector will have vacancies due to its aging workforce that will be going through attrition soon. To Generation Xers and Yers, the public-sector work may appear rewarding and give them the sense of community involvement as well as giving back to the community they serve (Burger, 2014). Generation Xers and Yers are willing to put in long hours when engaged, do not require much direction when motivated, and are less expensive compared to their Baby Boomer counterparts, which makes them affordable to organizations and are prime targets for selection (Dorsey, 2010).
Comparison Between Private Versus Public Sector

PwC and iCIMS conducted studies focusing on the private-sector to show what attracts and retains certain generations to a private-sector employer (iCIMS, 2016). However, these studies do not consider the differences between private-sector and public-sector, such as funding, culture, laws, job securities, and benefits. These differences have an impact on how organizations attract and retain talent.

Funding

In the private sector, funding is obtained through the consumption of goods, services, or an initial public offering (IPO) on the open market for investors (Boyte-White, 2015). The more a company sells, the more money they have for growth, which translates into being able to hire more educated and talented employees. If consumers stop purchasing, the company would ultimately cease to exist. This means that a private-sector company is very volatile, and if it is starting up, it can be perceived as risky because it could lay workers off at any time if the company is not doing well (Simons, 1999). The public sector is very different. The public-sector funds are obtained through taxes or fees that are collected to pay for services (Malm & Kant, 2013). For example, many municipalities have transportation departments or bureaus that use road taxes and gas taxes to pave roads for its citizens to use across their jurisdiction. These taxes will always be there as long as citizens keep buying gas and paying for certain goods to obtain the tax revenue (Njus, 2016). Also, as long as the city stays incorporated, there will be a stable flow of cash from those revenue streams. Therefore, employees who choose to work for the public sector find less risk of being laid off from work since there is a lower risk of a shutdown.
Culture

In the private sector, the company’s employees are accountable to shareholders or owners. If the company is not doing well, the company can easily replace employees who are not performing. This, in turn, creates a very stressful culture where everything is driven by performance (Conner, 2014). Those who perform the best tend to advance, and those who do not perform tend to lose their position. In the public sector, there is also stress because instead of shareholders, employees need to answer to the public. However, the stress of being let go is often absent in the public sector because when employees are hired and pass probation, they obtain a property right to their position (Christensen, Laegreid, Roness, & Revik, 2007). This makes it very hard to remove a public-sector employee from service without a just cause. Just cause is a legal term that means a reasonable and lawful ground for action. It refers to a standard of reasonableness used to evaluate a person's actions in a given set of circumstances. The difference in culture could have an impact on certain generations, like Generation Y, which prefers a loose, upbeat, and flexible type of culture of the private sector, over the strict black and white, heavily regulated culture of the public sector (Business.com Editorial Staff, 2017).

Laws

In the private sector, there are laws that impact the company, depending on the company’s size. For example, the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) impacts those companies with 50 or more employees on their payroll. Small companies may be able to circumvent the FMLA because of their size, where public-sector employers have more than 50 employees, forcing them to abide by the federal law (Department of Labor, 2016). Private-sector employers can also offer a variety of different compensations (bonuses, hiring incentives, etc.) and benefits to an employee. For example, if a company decides to hire a chief information officer and
negotiate a 401(k) contribution, they could offer a different package to another prospective employee for the same position, if the first candidate turned them down. In the public sector, benefit packages are equal among all employees. There is little room for negotiations. Furthermore, all salaries are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (Department of Justice, 2016). This means a public official could have their salaries posted in the local newspaper, as is the case with employees who work for the City of Portland. Every year almost all the top city officials have their salaries posted in the local newspaper, the Oregonian. Also, in the public sector, employees have an Affirmative Action Plan (AAP), which says an organization should resemble the community in which it services, when it comes to hiring individuals (Brest & Oshige, 1995). For example, if the community has 6% Black Americans, the local government should have 6% Black Americans within the organization. This has an impact on hiring practices within a local government, where private-sector companies do not have this regulation attached to it unless they are receiving federal funds (Leonard, 1985). Private-sector companies can hire the best qualified applicant based on their merit and compensate them accordingly.

**Job Security and Benefits**

In the private sector, a company can offer job securities and benefits, such as retirement plans, healthcare benefits, and guaranteed work/steady workflow, but often they are at a deflated level than those offered by the public sector. For example, a private-sector employer could offer a 401(k) retirement plan, but because they are not a local government, they cannot offer a 403(b) plan or a 457(b) plan that tend to have looser restrictions (Department of Labor, 2016). It is also not easy for a private-sector employer to offer a pension plan. This is mainly due to funding and sustainability purposes, as well as the risk of the company closing, resulting in the loss of a pension to all retired employees. However, a public-sector employer has to offer a pension plan
as it is the common practice. They can do this because of the steady stream of guaranteed revenue from citizens that pay taxes and fees. Lastly, private-sector employers do not offer property rights to a position either. Most private-sector positions are “at will,” which means employees can be dismissed at any time without a just cause as long as it is not for any discriminatory factors (Allen, 2011). In most public-sector positions, unless specified otherwise, an employee has a property right as established in the case of Skelly v. State Personnel Board (Supreme Court of California, 1975). An employee who passes probation obtains property rights and a certain due process must be employed in order to remove those rights from the employee. This makes it harder to terminate employees in the public sector.

The examples above draw a clear distinction between the private and the public sector. Due to these distinctions, it is sensible to conclude that different people would enter one sector versus the other based on their motivations. Although studies in the private sector have established the reasons for certain generations being attracted to and staying within private-sector companies, still a study is needed to establish the reasons why different generations stay with public-sector employers.

While every generation has its strengths and weaknesses within the workplace, there are four categories of job securities and benefits that factor into public-sector employees staying with their current employer. These categories also fall into the social, economic, and work-life balance described by Clifford (2014). However, these factors are looked upon differently by each generation, adding pressure to the public-sector employer to think creatively in order to attract and retain different generations of employees. To further complicate the situation, some of these factors are regulated by other parts of government or by laws, which can alter the course of
employee retention. These four categories of job securities are benefits, retirement options, property rights, and the work availability.

Benefits

The economic downturn in 2008 has dramatically influenced the United States’ global economy and the benefits the private sector offers to its employees (Fronstin, 2010). It appears that there are very few industries that have not been impacted by the economic crisis. However, the public sector has been able to continue to provide their employees with affordable and good quality benefits (Fronstin, 2010). While Lehman Brothers, Washington Mutual, General Motors, and other large private-sector companies were filing for bankruptcy at an alarming rate (Schaefer, 2011), many other private-sector employers were doing everything within their power to reduce costs, and cutting benefits was one of the best ways to do that (Walker, 2010). Cutting benefits allowed companies to keep employees while still providing shareholders with a return. The public sector was almost immune to this, as their funds are raised through taxes and fees paid by the citizens, not by shareholders or the consumptions of goods and services like that of the private sector (Mazzucato, 2015). Since there is a stable flow of funds, the public-sector can offer healthcare, dental care, vision care, life insurance, flexible savings accounts, and health savings accounts because; unlike the private sector, the public sector will continuously have taxpayers funding the government. A private-sector employer is reliant upon consumers to consume and pay for their goods. If consumers cannot afford a company’s goods or services, then the company cannot pay for their employees. These immunities to market fluctuations enjoyed by the public sector appeal to some employees and help keep current employees with the public-sector employer (Daley, 2012).
Retirement Options

Many people within the workforce care about long-term financial planning, regardless of the generation. Preparing for retirement is a critical aspect in selecting an employer. However, this does not mean that all generations want the same retirement options as the generation before them. For example, many Baby Boomers value living on a fixed income when they retire (Scommegna, 2014). This works perfectly into a pension system where the employee contributes a certain amount of years to a specific employer and will receive a certain amount of income until the end of their life or their spouse’s life. On the opposite end of that, the literature suggest that Generation Y is content with the viewpoint that if a job is lost, they will simply find another one. Generation Xs and Ys want the ability to take their retirement income with them as they switch careers or employers (LaPonsie, 2016). This is where an alternative plan like a 401(k), 403(b), or a 457(b) is beneficial. Generation Ys have made conscious decisions not to follow in the footsteps of their Baby Boomer or Generation X parents (Dorsey, 2010). Generation Y wants to invest their time in things of their interest. In order for public sector employers to attract talent, these organizations use their pension plan to keep employees for long periods of time and rely on their long-term employees to teach others who come into the workplace (Amayah, 2013). For this reason, public-sector employers, like the County of San Diego and the City of San Diego, are offering 401(k), 403(b), or 457(b) plans in order to allow employees the flexibility to invest for their own retirement (County of San Diego, 2017). Some public-sector employers have even worked healthcare plans into their pension and retirement plans, which allows an employee to have flexibility when they leave service and not have to wait and rely on Medicare for healthcare. To qualify for Medicare, an individual has to be 65 years of age.
Property Rights to a Position

People complain about how hard it is to fire a public-sector employee, but what they do not know are the reasons behind these difficulties (Hoffman, 2014). These difficulties stem from the Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the United States Constitution, which does not allow the removal of someone’s property right to a public employee’s property interest in their job (Allmendinger, 2009). This means that to be removed from a position, it is necessary for the employer to go through a due process. This due process right was upheld in the case of Skelly v. State Personnel Board, where a public employee was removed from service without due process (Skelly v. State Personnel Bd., 1975). This process is tedious and time-consuming as it allows several individuals to weigh in on the removal of an employee from their position (Jensen, 2015). If any one of the individuals weighing in on the removal do not agree with the removal, this allows for the employee to possibly keep their job. This difficulty in terminating employees leads to inherent job security. In the event of employee misconduct, there are many fail-safes involved before the position can be terminated. Many employees are attracted to the security of having several chances to correct their actions before being terminated. Alternatively, it is hard to remove employees who deserve to be terminated for just cause because they have these property rights (Hoffman, 2014).

Work Availability

As previously discussed, in 2008, there was a large economic downturn that resulted in the unemployment of several individuals. With regard to public-sector work, less volatility is observed. Hence, there are fewer reasons to be concerned over market fluctuations and its effect on employment. Data collected from the third quarter of 2007, when the economy was near its cyclical peak, to the end of the third quarter of 2011 – the most recent data available from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages published by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics –
showed that both sectors increased their total wages paid because of inflation. However, the state and local governments saw greater growth of 10.8% and 8.5%, respectively, as compared to the private-sector growth rate of 6.4%, and the federal government grew the most at a rate of 20.6% (Richwine, 2012). This showed that during the downturn, public-sector jobs continued to grow, while private-sector jobs decreased. While it is possible for public-sector employees to be terminated during an economic downturn, there are securities, such as recall rights. For example, the District Council of Trade Unions (DCTU) collective bargaining contract with the City of Portland states that any member laid off shall have five years of recall rights. As a result, if an employee is laid off by the City, and if a position is reinstated within the same job class, the member who was laid off will be recalled into service (Portland, 2013). This appeals to employees because the security of knowing that their employer will be there as long as taxpayers are paying their taxes and services need to be provided (Lubby, 2016).

Public Versus Private Employers

Perry and Rainey (1988) discussed how business theorists generally did not identify public organizations with positivity. However, primary business enterprise theorists have occasionally stated that public-sector organizations have exclusive traits. Theorists also advise that public recognition can be an important component in determining some organizational characteristics. It is also recognized that all human beings, regardless of the nation of origin, face choices relating to governance in society and political economies, including whether to work in a public or private-sector organization (Bullock, Stritch, & Rainey, 2015).

Most studies consider public and private differences in work reasons, attitudes, and perceived rewards consciousness. As a result, researchers have repeatedly emphasized the overlap between the public, private, and non-profit sectors. It has been argued that it is not
possible to make easy distinctions in the different organizations. Bullock, Stritch, and Rainey (2015) stated that they found strong evidence in their study that public-sector employees have better gauges of public-service-orientated motives and additional perceptions of their facility’s social impact. There is also evidence that public-sector employees are less motivated by economic gain than their private-sector employee counterparts, despite the fact that the differences are often too small enough to have any statistical significance. Public-sector employees are found to have higher ranges of organizational commitment than their private-sector employee counterparts. Finally, public-sector employees continually place higher emphasis on work rewards that involve helping others and serving society and less emphasis on earnings (Bullock et al., 2015).

Moreover, those employees that have specific altruistic motives and reasons for obtaining employment in the public sector that benefits society generally tend to opt for positions of authority (Van de Walle, Steijn, & Jilke, 2015). It has also been recognized that public-sector employees express higher ranges of altruistic and public-service-oriented outcome reasons. It has been recognized that public organizations have unique characteristics, which may lead to future implications for public and private employees (Dur & Zoutenbier, 2014).

Generations of Workers and Their Characteristics

As the term generations is so loosely used in the United States, it is necessary to clearly understand the definition of the generation. Per the research of Elwood Carlson, a Florida State University professor, generation can be defined by “… count[ing] the years between the births of each parent and child (2009). Because the ages of the mother and father differ, parents of the same child can have different family generation lengths” (Ryder, 1985). This type of generation definition pertains mostly within individual families and does not translate into distinct groups of a larger population at any particular time (Carlson, 2009). For example, in a family with a
generation length of 25 years, there could be 45-year-olds each with a 20-year-old child and 70-year-olds with 45-year-old children. The second distinct type of generation is people born together in a particular year or a sequential range of years. This may also be called a historical or cohort generations (Carlsson & Karlsson, 1970). Per Carlson (2009, p. 8) states that “…cohort generations are to societies what family generations are to families. The earlier generation is always older than the next and normally exercises authority over those that follow.” The difference is that the cohort generation is in a public setting, whereas the family generation in a private setting (Strauss & Howe, 1992). For the context of a nation, this second definition is the most appropriate. A study conducted by Carlson (2008) identified seven historical generations that composed American society of the 20th century and the 21st century. Of these seven generations, there are only four within the workforce today: the Traditionalist (Greatest Generation), Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y (Millennials) (Dorsey, 2010).

**Traditionalist Generation**

Traditionalists, born between 1901 and 1945, were raised in similar families and neighborhoods (Sprague, 2008). The Traditionalist generation is referred to by several names, such as Veterans, Silent, Moral Authority, Radio Babies, and the Forgotten Generation (Eisner, 2011, p. 70). Significantly, the Traditionalist “generation observed the rise of the white collar jobs and has a strong commitment to higher education” (Sprague, 2008, p. 7). Traditionalists grew up with strong role models in the household, commonly attributed to 89% of the individuals in this generation having both parents living with them (Carlson, 2009, p. 6). The significant events that occurred during this period, which ultimately defined this generation, were World War I, World War II, and the Great Depression (Rogler, 2002).
There are 57 million members of the Traditionalist generation within the United States and, of that number, 30 million are currently in the workforce, commonly working part-time (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This generation was part of the World War II and the Great Depression. As a result, many of these individuals saw the effects of the war on the economy and know the value of job security (Wiedmar, 2015). The desire to have job security makes these individuals ideal candidates for public-sector positions because of the government’s stability. Traditionalists tend to be very loyal to their employers and are not solely focused on advancement within the company (Kane, 2017). This loyalty is important in the discussion of job security factors that are offered by the public sector because of the property rights to the position held by the individual. Traditionalists like to feel needed and “understand the nobility of sacrifice for the common good” (University of Missouri, 2016, p. 1). Working within the public sector meets the Traditionalists’ need to feel needed because most, if not all, positions in this sector are for the people of the community. Significantly, many of these individuals are currently working in a different field than they worked in previously. This change in career can be attributed to their re-entering the workforce following retirement, due to financial reasons or for medical benefits which commonly attract Traditionalists (R. W. Johnson, Butrica, & Mommaerts, 2010).

**Baby Boomer Generation**

The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964 (Sprague, 2008), was shaped by the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Civil Rights movement, as well as the assassinations of Martin Luther King, John F Kennedy, and Robert Kennedy. Baby Boomers are more suspicious of authority than their Traditionalist generation parents mainly because of events, such as Watergate and governmental engagement in unpopular wars (Sprague, 2008). Baby Boomers grew up with parents who not only experienced World War II but also lived through
the Great Depression. Those events commonly led to a strict upbringing (Wuthnow, 2010). This generation had a high family unity rate with 86% of the family unit intact with both mother and father present in the household (Carlson, 2009, p. 5). This meant that children had the opportunity to learn from both parents while growing up.

There are 81 million Baby Boomers within the United States and, of that number, 54 million are currently in the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Baby Boomers were the children of the people who had seen World War I and World War II. Due to the values with which they were raised, the Baby Boomer generation has a strong work ethic and lives to work (Dorsey, 2010). This generation saw their parents work hard and, as a result, they attempt to emulate these values. Baby Boomers tend show up to work early and leave late (University of Missouri, 2016). While this generation may not be the most technologically advanced, they do outwork other generations (Wiedmar, 2015). The difference between the Baby Boomers and the Traditionalists is that Baby Boomers tend to believe that if they work hard, they will advance (Cuffin, 2013). Baby Boomers are good with interpersonal skills because they grew up with a phone at home and business being conducted in person (University of Missouri, 2016). They tend to believe that with age comes experience, knowledge, and respect. Within the public sector, it is common to find many Baby Boomers in executive-level positions because they started in government positions at an entry-level position and worked up through the system, using the job securities and benefits offered by the public sector. The Baby Boomer generation was not reared with technology. Instead, they grew up with a typewriter, and if they made a mistake, they had to start over (University of Missouri, 2016). Thereby, attention to detail is a key factor in this generation because they tend to focus on minute details. The public sector offers advancement opportunities, job securities, and benefits simultaneously. As a result, the Baby Boomer
generation was able to gain experience and respect from others while moving up within the public sector.

However, the idea that age equals experience and respect held by Baby Boomers tends to collide with the younger generations’ ideologies, despite suiting the Baby Boomers very well in their careers (Lancaster & Stillman, 2004). Baby Boomers tend to be less educated as compared to the younger generations because the Baby Boomer generation was expected to enter the workforce following graduating high school (Dorsey, 2010). The public sector caters to this mentality because, within the public sector, it is often possible to trade an education with time in service or years of experience. Most commonly, Baby Boomers working in the public sector do not exit the workforce and retire because of either of the two reasons: They need a purpose in life, or they did not or were unable to save enough money for retirement (Kane, 2017).

**Generation X**

Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980 (Sprague, 2008), was shaped by seeing the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Shamma, 2011). This generation gave the world rock, heavy metal, and the ‘love everyone’ movement (Carlson, 2009). However, Generation Xers were the first to experience a divide in the family unit with the divorce rate doubling from the previous generation (Losyk, 1997). In addition to the high divorce rate, many Generation Xers also saw either their parents or relatives losing jobs to the recessions of the 1980s and 1990s (Sprague, 2008). This generation experienced a steep decline in family unity, where 79% had only a mother and father in the household” or “where only 79% had both a mother and father in the household (Carlson, 2009). This number does consider stepparents, so the actual biological family unit percentage would be lower. Furthermore, this generation was
the first to experience the Internet and global access to information, which created an information-rich environment (Dorsey, 2010).

There are 34 million Generation Xers within the United States and, out of which, 30 million are in the workforce (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This generation had late-Traditionalist or early-Baby Boomer parents. They saw their parents work hard and have chosen a different approach (Dorsey, 2010). This approach is matched in the public-sector mentality where if employees show up for work and meet the responsibilities of the position; they are paid and get to return home, showing a work-life balance. Generation Xers tend to be flexible within the organization and try not to draw unwanted attention to themselves. The majority of this generation do not mind working, yet do not love it as prior generations. Most Generation X employees are employed in order to collect a check and relax on the weekends. Generation Xers have been referred to as the ‘in between’ generation because some have technology skills, but lack the hard work ethic and others have the work ethic but not the technology skills (Dorsey, 2010). This generation was the last generation which grew up without a computer in the household (Jorgensen, 2003). Within a workgroup, Generation Xers tend to be quiet and easygoing, only adding input when necessary (University of Missouri, 2016). These employees seek out promotions believed to have been earned yet are not qualified for these promotions (Sprague, 2008). Most Generation Xers are more concerned with the benefits of the job as opposed to job stability. The public sector tends to cater to Generation Xers through the provision of benefits and, more specifically, an effective work-life balance. Generation Xers tend to be slightly educated because their Traditionalist and Baby Boomer parents argued that some education was required for advancement in the workforce.
Generation Y

Generation Yers, born between 1981 and 1995 (Howe & Strauss, 2007), are the children of the Baby Boomers and the siblings of Generation X. They are often referred to as millennials. The major events that shaped this generation are “the Columbine school shootings and September 11th terrorist attacks [that] created an almost constant state of vigilance for many of these young people” (Sprague, 2008, p. 8). Generation Yers are constantly exposed to technology, making them not only technologically savvy but also technologically dependent (Dorsey, 2010, p. 21). Due to the constant stream of information and technology, Generation Y has become pro-learning, spiritual by nature, and socially conscious with very high self-esteem (Sprague, 2008). According to Carlson’s (2009) statistical research, the percentage of Generation Yers family unit decreased compared to previous generations, showing that only 69% of this generation grew up with both mother and father in the household.

There are 85 million Generation Yers within the United States and, of that number, 61 million are in the workforce. Many of these individuals are working while they attend school (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). This generation has Baby Boomer parents who worked hard so the next generation was not required to work as hard. However, the Baby Boomer generation inadvertently created a generation where everyone gets a trophy regardless of the outcome of the activity (Dorsey, 2010). Generation Yers work to live, not live to work, which is the opposite of the Baby Boomer mentality. Baby Boomers tend to believe this generation is lazy and uncaring (Hansen, 2016). However, this belief is a stereotype. The reality is that Generation Yers are ambitious and eager to achieve high goals (Dorsey, 2010, p. 208). They are technologically savvy and use technology to find and create a need within the current workforce. They are the creators of the work-life balance movement and tend to work at their own pace and within their
own time preference (Ferri-Reed, 2015). Generation Yers most likely had at least one computer in the house hold growing up, and more than likely also had a personal laptops they used as well, while Generation Xers were fortunate enough if they had one computer for the whole house to use, while growing up. Generation Y tends to collide with Baby Boomers because of the differences in work mentality (Kaifi, Nafei, Khanfar, & Kaifi, 2012). Generation Yers see their formal education and technology as putting them at an advantage in the workforce (Lancaster & Stillman, 2004). Moreover, Generation Yers are commonly highly educated. As a result, they have influenced changes in the perspective of employers where it is desirable, if not required, to have at least a bachelor’s degree as opposed to solely a high school diploma (Rampell, 2014). This becomes an issue within the public sector because the employer historically focused more on experience. Therefore, advancement within the public sector is hard for Generation Yers because of the lack of experience and younger age. However, this environment is shifting as Baby Boomers leave their public-sector positions, prompting many Generation Yers to become increasingly aware of the vacancies and migrating to the public sector to fill these vacancies and obtain the benefits offered by this sector.

**Generational Characteristics Stability, Bridging the Gap, and Life Events**

Generational traits are characteristics that are common within the individuals of a particular generation. It is recognized that while these traits are not conclusive as individuals are unique, they do assist in the predictions of behaviors of individuals in specific generation based on commonalities. These traits have been molded over the lifetime of an individual and are impacted by how they were raised and what was available during the period in which they were raised (Carlson, 2009).
As work conducted by Hui-Chun and Miller (2003), it is recognized that national culture is influential to the work-related values, expectations, and attitudes of employees. By investigating the generation gap about the West (western nations, like the U.S.) and Taiwan, it was found that within the manufacturing industry, there are generational differences shared between Taiwan and Western counterparts. Moreover, the western nations had results that show generational differences in relation to research in Taiwan do not apply to the education sector (Hui-Chun & Miller, 2003).

As per Jorgensen (2003), discussions have been held within the organizational and management literature regarding generational differences and the possible impact held on workforce strategy design. However, it is recognized that much research is based on observation as opposed to empirical data. Jorgensen (2003) argued that there is a requirement that Generation X and Generation Y issues must be considered when managing the workforce. Talent, for instance, is being retained through the modification of employment policy to match the modern era dynamism as opposed to generational values. Therefore, it has been suggested that a workforce strategy would be more effective if the organization acknowledged the entire modern era dynamism – social, economic, political, and economic – as opposed to solely generational literature (Jorgensen, 2003).

Dries, Pepermans, and De Kerpel (2008) sought to examine if there were different beliefs between different generations (Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y) regarding career, specifically career importance, career type, evaluation of career success, and organizational security. By constructing a vignette task with 750 people, where 32 fictitious people were rated in relation to career success, different career features were analyzed (salary, promotion speed, functional level, satisfaction, and number of promotions), as well as career
type and extent of organizational security importance were studied. It was found that most participants held ‘traditional’ careers. However, the younger generations showed larger differences between the preferences of their career as opposed to the actual career situation. It was also found that in the evaluation of the fictitious people that job satisfaction was the most important criterion. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between the generations. The Silent Generation and Generation Y gave greater importance to organizational security (Dries et al., 2008). However, as per Johnson and Lopes (2008), there are few generational differences relating to organizational behavior and fundamental motivations based on the different age groups.

Kapoor and Solomon (2011) recognized the challenges that employers faced due to having four different generations within the workplace. Some of the most significant challenges are about the creation of a productive environment that meets the needs of all employees regardless of generation. The researchers found that it is necessary to identify the generational characteristics of each generation within the workplace, as well as to foster a work environment for all generations. The understanding between the generations must be promoted through employee education, such as through generational diversity training, mentor programs, and enhanced communication (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). According to Schuman and Scott (1989), generational effects are caused by the intersection of events that occur in the individual’s life and through national history.

**Rationale for Hiring and Retaining Multiple Generations**

There are multiple reasons why an employer would want to hire and retain employees of different generations. However, when it comes a government agency, it usually comes down to dollars and cents. In the public sector, there are few things more important than tax revenue and
how it is spent. However, one of the things more important than revenue are the employees running the day-to-day operations of the organization. As per research conducted by LIMRA Research and reported by Garber (2015), Baby Boomers were more expensive to hire and maintain within a benefit system because of high medical costs. On the other hand, Baby Boomers tend to have more experience and are better equipped at handling other employees due to their prior experiences (Calo, 2008). They also have institutional knowledge and an unbeatable work ethic. Generation Xers are neutral employees. It is recognized that they are more expensive than Generation Yers yet less expensive than Baby Boomers. Generation X has more experience than Generation Y but require different job security and benefit factors, which may be offset by Baby Boomer costs. Generation Xers like having flexible work schedules and are content in their positions unless they have a desire to advance. Generation X has a work ethic that is manageable and therefore is the most cost-effective choice among the different generations. However, Generation Yers are expected to replace the aging workforce, prompting employers to consider different components of their job packages. For example, in the private sector, Generation Yers showed that they are not concerned with pension plans like the Baby Boomers and prefer to control their money, including having an opinion on where the money goes (such as in investments); therefore, Generation Yers are benefited by 457(b) or 403(b) plans.

Public-sector employers may have problems associated with competition relating to price (wages and benefits) and/or quality. This is because public-sector employers tend to offer a lower salary due to the benefits packages offered to employees. In contrast, the private-sector employers tend to offer a higher salary yet smaller benefits packages. Therefore, private-sector employers will be able to attain and retain more talent than the public sector because the former
is willing to adapt to the changing workforce (Dorsey, 2010). As a result, there are different reasons held by both the public and private sectors for hiring different generations, particularly about differences in desires held by each generation.

**Traditionalist Generation**

Traditionalists are hardworking and attend work regardless of their personal circumstances (such as illness), and, as a result, a few can still be found within the workforce, particularly within the public sector (Kane, 2017). The public sector offers this generation job security and benefits, which is one of their biggest desires. Retention is not a major concern at this time for the Traditionalist generation, and employers recognize that little effort is required for employee retention because Traditionalists love working (University of Missouri, 2016). Moreover, the job security and benefits factors for Traditionalists include not only position security but also the retirement plan, which allow for retirement, if desired, between 55 and 65 (McIntosh-Elkins, McRitchie, & Scoones, 2007). To retain this generation, the public sector should maintain an adequate retirement system and provide consistent work.

**Baby Boomer Generation**

Baby Boomers are unique because they love to work and have no desire to leave the workforce until it is necessary or affordable (University of Missouri, 2016), due, in part, to the strong work ethic passed down from their Traditionalist parents (Kane, 2017). Part of the appeal of working for Baby Boomers is the pension system. It is recognized that while Baby Boomers heavily relied on pension systems in order to afford retirement, the changes in the economy have made many Baby Boomers hesitant to leave the workforce. Moreover, Baby Boomers have seen and felt the effects of the economic fluctuations. Another influential factor in the Baby Boomer workforce is how these individuals saw the after-effects of World War II, which provided them
with a difficult learning experience associated with caution and planning for the future. As a result, Baby Boomers value the benefits received from their positions (Carlson, 2008), particularly as age requirements for both Medicare and Social Security keep increasing. The public sector, therefore, offers appealing benefits, as well as a stable income for Baby Boomers. While Baby Boomers have the capacity to retire with almost their full salary in pension, rising medical costs keeps these individuals within the workforce until they become eligible for Medicare enrollment, showing that Baby Boomers are reliant on benefits, retirement systems, and consistency of work securities (University of Missouri, 2016). In order to retain this generation, the public sector must maintain an adequate retirement system, affordable benefits, and provide consistent work.

**Generation X**

Not only do Generation Xers have either late Traditionalist or early Baby Boomer parents, they have also seen government operations at their best and worst. As a result of these events and their upbringing, Generation Xers look for stability and little volatility in a workplace (University of Missouri, 2016). Generation Xers are considered to be, in some ways, a ‘between’ generation, where they are caught between the Baby Boomers and Generation Yers. For example, when Generation Xers entered the workforce, computers were becoming mainstream (something not experienced by Baby Boomers when they entered the workforce in most cases, yet Generation Y is expected to know computers because they grew up with them). Generation Xers, as a result, grew up learning the technological advances as they emerged. However, Generation Xers are more relaxed than the Baby Boomers or Traditionalists (Dorsey, 2010). These employees prefer a stable workplace with few changes, causing them to be attracted to government and public-sector positions to meet this security need. Another attraction to these
positions for Generation Xers is the property rights to the position held, which makes it even harder to remove the employee from the position, increasing this security attraction. Although this generation enjoys the benefits received, these benefits are not enough to retain them. For example, Generation X has seen the fluctuations of the stock market, causing many of these individuals to believe they can more effectively manage their money, despite the pension plan offered. Due to the relaxed atmosphere surrounding Generation Xers, they are not afraid to leave positions, as were other generations, placing more value on job security, even if it means leaving one position for a more secure position (Kane, 2017). In order to retain this generation, the public sector must maintain stable work and advancement opportunities.

**Generation Y**

The most significant rival in relation to the public sector is Generation Y because this generation is unlike any prior generation due to the wide range of requirements expected from employers. For example, 70% of Generation Yers will leave their current positions within two years, and when reaching the third year with one employer, Generation Yers are 75% more likely to leave their position (Salerno, 2015). As a result of this rapid turnover rate, the public sector has been negatively impacted financially due to operational downtime and new employee recruitment costs (Collins, 1997), which can take, on average, between two to nine months, costing approximately two-thirds of the annual salary of the former employee (Merhar, 2014). Moreover, the public-sector retention system was based on the foundation of a pension system that would retain employees over a long period. While Generation Yers look for job stability, they are accepting of change and willing to take risks by obtaining a new, preferred position (University of Missouri, 2016). The pension system doesn’t necessarily appeal to them.
While Generation Y does care about job security, these employees do not typically place much value on workload stability, property rights to a position, or pension systems. Instead, Generation Yers focus on other benefits. Some public-sector employers have wizened to these preferences, offering preferred benefits, such as flexible work schedules and work-life balance positions that typically involve job sharing, part-time, and/or teleworking opportunities.

Generation Yers are not reliant upon pensions because they commonly believe they can more effectively manage money and retirement funds better than others, prompting some public-sector employers to offer 457(b), 403(b), and 401(k) plans, as opposed to pension systems. However, it is recognized that the public sector will have to increase its efforts to retain Generation Yers as Baby Boomers exit the workforce. Interestingly, Generation Yers are not always retained based on salary alone, but more likely because of available programs such as mentorship, teleworking programs, or management training opportunities, as well as leadership opportunities. Public-sector employers can cater to these preferences by offering more effective and flexible work schedules, stable salary, and leadership opportunities. Thus, as the older generations exit the workforce, employers must look to retain Generation Y employees in innovative and effective ways, such as through (1) initiating and maintaining an open dialogue, (2) making work more meaningful and more fun, (3) appealing to their sense of community service and civil engagement, (4) finding out their passions and interests and tailoring their jobs to utilize them, and (5) providing leadership training opportunities and programs.

**Initiate and Maintain an Open Dialogue**

Generation Yers want to feel that their opinions and suggestions are valued, welcomed, and appreciated in the workplace (Hcareers, 2008). This need stems from the praise received for the majority of their lives when performing well or making a significant contribution. Therefore,
Generation Yers want to feel like their employers value their contributions (University of Missouri, 2016). Keeping open lines of communication between management and Generation Y employees can also help in meeting this need for this group. However, it is recognized that many public-sector employers are unsuccessful at maintaining open dialogue opportunities because of the previously established hierarchy. On the other hand, Generation Yers may be attracted to and retained within the public sector due to work security and importance given to their contribution. 

*Make Work More Meaningful and Fun*

Many Generation Yers feel that work is not just about collecting a paycheck (Dorsey, 2010). The common belief in relation to conducting work is that Generation Yers want to feel fulfilled and personally inspired within their positions. Without these factors, they are more likely to look for other positions where these needs are met (Hcareers, 2008). The goal of the employer is to establish Generation Yers in positions with responsibilities that have a deeper meaning. Although being a public servant already leads Generation Yers to be attached to the community, it is necessary for the public-sector employer to recognize the employee’s importance to the community. This need is related to the responsibility felt by Generation Yers to positively impact their communities (Dorsey, 2010, p. 201). One way to meet this need is to select Generation Yers to lead charity committees, neighborhood development initiatives, green makeover efforts, and other activities that maximize their civic engagement and sense of community (Hcareers, 2008).

*Determine their Passions and Interests*

Generation Y employees take pride in their individuality and have a natural resistance to attempts to characterize them in relation to other people. As a result, Generation Yers are more likely to have unconventional hair colors, piercings, and tattoos (Dorsey, 2010). Therefore, traditional retention strategies are not as effective for Generation Yers because they see
themselves as individuals first and members of a team second (Hcareers, 2008). Because of this mindset, Generation Yers are stereotyped as being self-centered. To retain Generation Yers, it is important that employers do not take a collective approach, but instead engage with each employee as an individual, focusing on what that individual brings to the organization, as opposed to a collective contribution to the organization. This can be achieved by displaying a genuine interest in their employees, such as finding out hobbies, which can foster employee loyalty (Giang, 2012). The public sector can use these tactics, as well as succession planning, in an effort to align employee interests and work that may appeal to them, which could lead to increased retention rates of Generation Yers and benefit the employer through employee engagement.

**Leadership Training Opportunities and Programs**

Within the current public-sector workforce, there is a resurgence of leadership and management programs because Generation Yers want, need, and demand these for retention (Nikravan, 2014). Within the past several years, the public sector has begun to realize the potential and benefits of making the public sector ‘Generation Y friendly’ (Dorsey, 2010). Kellogg Company and The General Electric Company (GE), for example, have created leadership training programs, where students enter the program and are trained for three to five years on how to become leaders within the private sector. This type of program is beneficial to the private and public sector because it not only provides an effective succession plan but also assists in employee retention, allowing these employees to develop necessary skills for management positions. Mentor programs are another effective tactic because Generation Yers grew up with much guidance from the adults around them (Dorsey, 2010). A mentorship program is beneficial in retaining Generation Yers because they are given the opportunity to gain
experience as they are guided by a successful and soon-to-retire Baby Boomer (Kaifi et al., 2012). This type of connection keeps Generation Yers engaged and makes them feel like their contributions are valuable, leading to successful succession plans and higher retention rates anticipated due to meeting these character trait needs (Hcareers, 2008). Coaching programs have similar outcomes because Generation Yers are able to learn and understand new concepts in real-time situations, allowing for more effective retention of knowledge for future use (Dorsey, 2010). Specifically, coaching can be effective prior, during, or following different situations (such as a lifting injury in the case of a nursing assistant), which allows Generation Yers to receive needed feedback in a secure environment yet gain valuable decision-making skills for similar decisions in the future.

Conclusion

The United States workforce is constantly evolving due to the differences in generations. Each generation has a set of different needs, desires, and expectations that should be analyzed to attract employees and promote employee retention. New talent can be attracted to the public sector through changes to different job securities and benefits. For example, according to the private-sector research, Generation Y is more concerned with having a flexible work schedule, adequate time off, tuition assistance, and an effective work-life balance. As each generation considers different factors when choosing an employer, the public sector should change their job security and benefits for retention purposes. Current job security and benefit factors of the public-sector center around pension plans, which were one of the top demands of previous generations. The following chapter provides the methodology used to guide the study in the conduction of data analysis in revealing what job securities and benefits are important to each generation.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In 2009, at the Society for Human Resources (SHRM) Conference in Las Vegas Nevada, the organization addressed the need to recruit different generational talent within organizations. SHRM speakers offered multiple strategies to attract, recruit, and retain the different generations to diversify the workforce. The SHRM and researchers suggest that the most effective way to attain this goal is to consider different forms of media like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn as ways to attract qualified candidates to the public sector (Dorsey, 2010). However, the recruitment process becomes more complicated when trying to attract talent to public agencies, particularly due to the length of the process, the requirement of multiple interviews, and the negotiation of compensation and benefits (Dorsey, 2010). Since there is a limited advertising budget for most public-sector organizations for attracting talent, this sector must emphasize their benefit systems to draw in qualified candidates (Schullery, 2013). Although, attracting talent through the different generations is relatively simple, retaining these different generations of employees is much more complicated because certain generations have different longevity rates with employers (Schullery, 2013).

The purpose of this quantitative study is to explore the desires of different generations of public-sector employees employed by a municipality in order to determine what desire attracted them and is retaining them within the public sector. The literature shows that the private sector can offer different benefits to employees that the public sector cannot, such as bonuses, hiring incentives, employee discounts, and other benefits (Fronstin, 2010). However, the public sector offers greater job security and benefits that are not always tangible (Fronstin, 2010). This research is sought to identify generational desires regarding job security and benefits that are
designed to attract/retain talent. Limited research has been conducted regarding attracting and retaining generations within the public sector (Donovan & Finn, 2013; iCIMS, 2016). The study will analyze information collected using descriptive statistics in order to draw conclusions.

**Research Methodology and Design**

This study was conducted as a quantitative study using descriptive statistics to analyze information with a goal of summarizing the main characteristics of the survey, utilizing the information obtained by employees within the public sector. While statistical models are not required within the exploratory analysis, they often do contain these models for comparison of results. Tukey (1977) suggested that exploratory analyses are often conducted in two-folds, focusing first on data exploration and then on hypothesis determination based on data exploration.

This particular exploratory analysis was also two-folded, particularly focusing on assessing assumptions that are associated with the different generations in relation to retention, where data was collected from survey results, and then developing the hypotheses from the existing literature.

**Population and Sampling**

According to Coghlan and Brannick (2014) and Creswell (2013), it is important for independent researchers to understand the study population. For this study, the population is public-sector employers in the Pacific Northwest, while the sample came from current public-sector employees in Portland, Oregon area. The focus of this study was to identify what desires initially attracted these employees to the public sector and have motivated them to remain with their current employers. The sample was obtained from a public municipality – located in the Pacific Northwest, more specifically, in Portland, Oregon. This agency was used due to its size,
the age range of employees, and its location. However, it was recognized that this site provides certain limitations as only employees from this agency were included. This sample only reflects the urban context, as opposed to including suburban or rural contexts that would have increased diversity. Again, the use of this agency was beneficial due to its possible size, range of ages represented, and ease of access.

The City of Portland has 8,482 employees, and 585 of them work with the Portland Water Bureau (City of Portland, 2017). Therefore, the Portland Water Bureau represents approximately 6.90% of the city’s employees (585/8,482). Since this is a low percentage, the margin of error acceptable was 8%, which allowed for the assumption that the results would not be accurate for approximately 47 employees of the Portland Water Bureau, which accounted for approximately 0.6% of the population. In the case of this study, the margin of error referred to changes in circumstances, such as withdrawal of consent or fewer participants than anticipated. The use of the margin of error of 8% came from using the population size (585 in the water bureau) and number of participants (112). The significance level used was 90%, which is common for this type of study (Tukey, 1977). Based on this information, the calculated sample size was a minimum of 105 participants (Tukey, 1977). This calculation was based on the population size of 585, the confidence level of 90%, and margin of error of 8%. However, to obtain the required minimum sample size, the researcher targeted a specific division in which the number could be easily obtained. A survey was sent to 175 people from the sampling frame, with 112 participants returning the survey, accounting for 19.1% of the population within the Bureau as a whole.
Data Collection

Data collection occurred through requesting participation from potential participants or gathering data from secondary sources (Creswell, 2003). Within the City of Portland, if a study is to be conducted on city time, the city can request that the employee participate in the survey and pay them for their time spent. This regulation is in accordance with the collective bargaining agreements the city has with the unions. However, for the purposes of this study, the surveys were done voluntarily. Furthermore, the surveys were conducted and completed on city paid time in order to ensure that there were no violations to the contract and that employees were paid to taking out time for providing their opinions. There was no mandate to complete the study, only a request to participate by the researcher. The general approach was to have employees with email addresses submit their surveys online in order to avoid the researcher from having to manually input information into the system. For those employees with no city e-mail address, surveys were distributed in printed form at an all-hands staff meeting, which is held weekly. Not only were all participants required to sign a consent form (see Appendix A), but the division manager also signed a consent form due to the data collection occurring on city time and under his purview. The provision was made possible because permission had been obtained from the division manager. The researcher made the study strictly voluntary to all those wishing to participate. Furthermore, voluntary participation avoided any union concerns that could have possibly arise, since the union was in the middle of a collective bargaining secession.

Data collection occurred using Survey Monkey, and the link to the survey was distributed through e-mail in most cases, allowing to fill out the survey online. It was recognized that not all employees had city e-mail access, requiring the use of paper surveys in these situations. The data from the paper surveys were then taken and inputted into Survey Monkey for analysis. In the
case of internet surveys, the data was stored on the Survey Monkey’s cloud and then exported to Microsoft Excel for analysis.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher designed the survey (see Appendix B) based on categories discussed in current generational research. Demographic information included were generation, union representation status, future employment possibilities, education, and personal household demographics. This information is increasingly important for organizations because it provides needed information regarding the characteristics of each generational group belonging to the organization (Sedgwick, 2012). This information is relevant to this study because of the changes in the generational structures of the workforce. While these results are not applicable to every organization, they can be used as a starting point or baseline to begin retention efforts based on commonalities associated with each different generation and their specific desired job securities and benefits.

Other aspects of the survey’s design addressed the employee generation, hierarchy (upper management, lower management, supervisor, and employee), and gender. Further questions/prompts asked about detailed job securities and benefits offered by the public sector. Demographic survey questions were taken from similar surveys where demographics were needed (Eisner, 2011). The survey also asked employees to identify those job security and benefit factors that are not currently offered yet would promote employee retention. Prior to conducting the survey, the city requested the opportunity to review all materials that may be requested or given to their employees. This review was conducted by the Training Director for the Bureau of Human Resources. Although a review was conducted by the director, no revisions
were requested, and the surveys were distributed. No pilot study was conducted because of the extensive review by multiple educators.

All questions addressing job security and benefit preference and desires were screened through the University of New England. This was done by having two business and statistics educators review the study for comprehension. Limited changes were requested, and those requests involved rephrasing for clarity. Following the revisions, two new educators from each field reviewed the survey, finding no need for revisions and affirming the clarity of the survey. Finally, an ethics educator reviewed the survey for any ethical concerns in the survey questions.

**Data Analysis**

First, the demographics were described (based on questions 1 – 9 and 18 – 20) based on the dataset as a whole and the generations. Next, means were established for ranking questions (based on questions 10 – 14) based on the dataset as a whole and the generations. The following section contained a comparison of decisions to potentially or definitely leaving the public-sector employer (based on questions 15 and 16) using percentages of agreement/disagreement. A frequency distribution was conducted to show the frequency of agreement (desire) regarding reasons for choosing the employer and job security and benefit factors desired (based on question 17 and 21). The individuals were split into two groups, where the first group involved those individuals who plan to remain with the organization and the second group involved those who plan to leave the organization. The percentages – based on those that agreed they would consider leaving or definitely leave the organization if job securities or benefits changed – were used for descriptive statistic purposes.
Limitations and Assumptions

There were several limitations associated with this study. To begin with, a survey instrument was used. The survey instrument was approved by the city’s training director, who had experience and knowledge, as well as educator review. A pilot test was not considered because these reviews contribute to face validity. Another limitation is that the survey was conducted in Portland, Oregon. It was reasonably assumed that the results of this study would be beneficial to the city in improving existing practices because the results of the study provided evidence on the potential impact of different job securities and benefits. The results in this urban context may not be applicable in a suburban or rural context. While the survey was beneficial to the public sector, the sample obtained from the Portland Water Bureau was substantially smaller than the entire city’s workforce.

Efforts were made to eliminate all instances of bias from the study. To start, the anonymity of the survey prevented the researcher from knowing the identities of the participants, which was important regarding entering the results of paper surveys. Internet surveys were used as much as possible to ensure that the results were recorded as participants intended. Multiple data analysis tactics were identified for use in the study, which showed different ways of presenting the same data, thereby decreasing bias. The use of the margin of error also reduced bias, because it accounted for assumptions and errors in data. The study is also limited as a result of the constructs being used. Literature suggests that membership within a particular generation determines what is valued in a public-sector job; however, it is possible that the membership within a particular generation does not influence what is valued in jobs.
Ethics and Allowances

Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Personal data was not collected in order to objectively obtain key information from participants and analyze the survey data. This anonymity also protects the participants from any type of retaliation that could occur under the city, state, and federal laws. After the data was collected, it was maintained on a password-protected USB drive and on the Survey Monkey server, which has its own 256-bit encryption attached to it. In exchange for allowing the completion of the study, the City of Portland, more specifically, the Portland Water Bureau, will be using the collected data to tailor their recruitment materials to help attract and retain future employees. While these results are not applicable to every organization, they can be used as a starting point to begin retention efforts based on commonalities based on different groups.

Conclusions

A survey was used to obtain information from the Portland Water Bureau with the permission of the division manager. The data analysis consisted of descriptive statistics and the chi-square test of independence and goodness of fit. Descriptive statistics consisted of frequencies based on the different generational groups. The chi-square test was used to test the hypotheses. As noted, the population was the City of Portland, with the sample being obtained from the Water Bureau. The research questions were based on the differences between the private and public sectors in relation to retention, the desires of public employees regarding securities, and the factors important to employees within the Water Bureau of the City of Portland in the decision to remain in or leave a position. The study was conducted using quantitative measures that were designed to answer the research questions efficiently. Confidentiality was achieved by not collecting identifying information from the participants.
While some information was collected for demographic descriptive purposes, the results were combined to form aggregated results, which made it virtually impossible to determine the identities of the respondents. There were concerns regarding researcher bias, which were mitigated in part by providing discussions regarding the data collection and analysis process and in part by ensuring that the researcher did not know the identity of the participants.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings from the survey have been analyzed to demonstrate the value of job security and benefits among different generations in the public sector. This was done using descriptive statistics and presented in the form of graphs and tables. This chapter, organized into four sections, will report the findings of the survey. The first section provides a summary of the demographics of the individual participants and aligns the participants with generational characteristics. The second section consists of the participants’ economic desires and the common or divergent values identified through the data analysis. The third section comprises of data pertaining to the participants’ beliefs about work-life balance. Their beliefs are expressed in relation to which job securities and benefits different generations perceive as most important to them. Those benefits may contribute to them being attracted to the public sector for reasons such as job retention and employees’ perceptions of work-life balance. Finally, the last section addresses the common themes or workplace desires amongst the three generations.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1) How do public-sector employees from different generations compare the importance of job security and benefits?

2) Do demographic trends impact how much public-sector employees’ value the job securities and benefits?

3) How does understanding the difference in the value of job security and benefits among generations in the workplace help inform employers seeking to recruit and retain younger workers?
These questions were addressed by collecting demographic data and analyzing it using descriptive statistics to paint a picture of what public-sector employees are looking for in an employer and what factors they believe influence their decision to stay. Descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic trends among the different generations. Percentages were used within the study to show how often participants selected the option. The methodology used could show a potential relationship between a generation and specific job security or benefit. The responses to the survey questions showed similarities and differences among generations employed in a public-sector organization, which were then organized using Clifford’s three dimensions of social, economic, and work-life balance (Clifford, 2014).

**Generational Demographic Representation**

Within the dataset below, 112 public sector employees fully completed the survey. 139 surveys were started, but 17 employees did not fully complete the survey; those surveys were removed. The generational breakdown of those who fully completed the surveys were three Traditionalists, 24 Baby Boomers, 45 Generation Xers, and 40 Generation Yers. Due to the rarity and small number of Traditionalists in the workforce, the three employees that fall within the Traditionalist generation were added to the Baby Boomer data group.
Figure 1. Generation Status based on Survey Results

Looking at the graph in Figure 1, the majority of the individuals surveyed were from Generation X, making up 40% of those surveyed. The second largest group was Generation Y at 36%, and lastly, Baby Boomers made up 24% of those surveyed. This demographic is the most important statistic because it is a foundational statistic used for computing the majority of the data.

Union Representation vs Non-Represented

Within the dataset, there were 69 union members and 39 non-union members. Of those represented by the union, eight were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, 31 were Generation Xers, and 32 were Generation Yers. Of those not represented by the union, 17 were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, 14 were Generation Xers, and 7 were Generation Yers. Since the questionnaire had an option of “do not wish to disclose,” three individuals did not disclose their union/non-represented status: two were Baby Boomers and one was a Generation Yer. By identifying the percentage of each generation that has union members and non-union members,
one can assume that such membership indicates value for an employee who may see the union as an added level of job security. A union provides its members with representation during disciplinary actions and gives employees a voice during bargaining and negotiations, which could result in added benefits or pay increases. Union membership provides employees with a sense of security, knowing that someone will support them if a disciplinary issue occurred and grievances needed to be filed on an employee’s behalf.

![Union vs Non Represented](image)

**Figure 2.** Union vs. Non-Union representation based on survey results

*Figure 2* above expresses the percentage of employees who belong to a union versus those not represented by a union. According to the data, 63% of those surveyed are union members, while the union does not represent only 34% of employees. The data indicates that Generation X has more union member employees than any other generation. The more interesting data set is that Generation Y has 30% of its employees in non-represented positions.
while only 11% of Generation X has employees in non-represented positions. Generation X is the largest group in the survey, yet they have the lowest number of non-represented employees.

When analyzing non-represented positions, the majority of those not represented by a union reside in Generation Y. This is interesting since Generation Y is still coming into the workforce, yet they have taken positions that are not union-represented. While it appears that those individuals from Generation X, who have been in the workforce for a longer period, have more individuals in union-represented positions and less in non-represented positions, Generation Y has exceeded even Baby Boomers in non-union represented positions, even though Baby Boomers should have the majority in these types of positions as they are at higher level positions, potentially requiring experience and longevity within the public sector.

**Current Employment Information**

The following tables show employment hierarchy information. The table below breaks down the various roles employees have within the organization. For example, a senior manager reports to a director, managers report to a senior manager, supervisors report to managers, and employees can report to a senior manager, manager or supervisor. For this study, *leads* are defined as employees. All leads within the organization do not supervise, and they only lead assignments. Leads also do not conduct performance reviews. The table below identifies the roles of the 112 public sector employees surveyed.
Table 1

Generation Status based on Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Baby Boomer/Traditionalist</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above paints a clearer picture of role distribution when combined with Figure 2. Reviewing the data from Table 1, it can be seen that Generation Y has only seven employees in supervisory positions but had 12 employees in non-union-represented positions. That means that there are five employees in the data set that took on non-supervisory positions without union representation. One implication of this findings is that Generation Y is less concerned about being a part of a union and are willing to accept roles that are not as protected.

The following table shows the length of time employees have been with the public sector. This information offers insight into why employees may have elected to stay with a public-sector employer. The table demonstrates that Baby Boomers have been with the organization longer than other generations, which can be predicted due to their age. Generation Y has a the largest number of individuals according to statistical population data from the United States, and most of those individuals have been with the city two years or less. This demonstrates that much of the institutional knowledge is being held by the Baby Boomers, and the majority of new hires are from Generation Y.
Table 2

Length of Time with the Public-Sector Employer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Baby Boomer/Traditionalist</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 5 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 20 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;21 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the surveyed group of 112 employees, the length of employment figures for people entering the workforce indicates that, of those having served five years or less, Generation Y has almost a 2:1 advantage over Generation X. Generation Y has 30 employees in this service group while Generation X has 15. These figures may be due to the population difference between the two generations. There are reportedly almost 82 million individuals in Generation Y, while there are only 32 million individuals in Generation X.

Another data point to focus on from the table above is the drop off in hiring over the last six to 10 years across all generations. These low numbers could be because of the economic crash in 2008, which was approximately 10 years ago (2008). As economic recovery took place, public-sector organizations began to hire more individuals, which happened to slightly favor Generation Y. The data also shows that most of the employees have been with the public sector for longer than 11 years. This finding reflects a trend that employees in the public sector stay for longer periods compared to those in the private sector (do Monte, 2017).

One potential explanation for why employees tend to stay with public-sector employers is the retirement benefits, such as a 457 (b), pension, and a 403 (b). Of the 112 participants, 98 planned to retire within the public sector because of the pension, two did not plan to retire within the public sector, and 12 did not know if they would retire within the public sector. Statistically,
that means that 88% of the people surveyed plan to retire with a public-sector entity.

Figure 3. Plans to Retire with a Public-Sector Employer

This information, combined with the data from Tables 1 and 2, reflects national trends regarding population aging. In fact, national trends show that Traditionalists and Baby Boomers are either reaching retirement age or have retired. Therefore, there are fewer individuals in this category. However, the longevity in the workplace is evident in Table 2 with the majority of Traditionalists and Baby Boomers having at least 11 years of experience within the public sector. This breakdown is shown in the graph below. Of those planning to retire with their public-sector employer, 26 were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, 40 were Generation Xers, and 32 were Generation Yers. Of the two not planning to retire with their public-sector employer, both were from Generation Y. Of those that did not know if they were going to retire with their public-sector employer, one was a Baby Boomer, five were Generation Xers, and six from Generation Yers. Only two employees said they would not retire from a public-sector employer, and both those individuals were from Generation Y. This information is very important because it shows
that the majority of the people coming to work for the public sector are planning to retire within it. Therefore, job security and benefits tied to retirement may be more valuable to employees than other items the public sector offers, such as flexible schedules, vacation time, or sick time.

**Figure 4. Plans to Retire in the Public-Sector**

In the case where an employee considered a hypothetical situation wherein the participant left their current public-sector employer (with the exception of the 25 who have no plans to leave their current public-sector employer), 57 said they would work for another public-sector employer, eight said they would not work for another public-sector employer, and 22 did not report a strong preference one way or another. Of those that reported no plans to leave their current public-sector employer, nine were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, nine were Generation Xers, and seven were Generation Yers. Of those that would work for another public-sector employer, 11 were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, 26 were Generation Xers, and 20 were Generation Yers. Of those that would not work for another public-sector employer, three were
Baby Boomers, three were Generation Xers, and two were Generation Yers. Of those that did not know if they would work for another public-sector employer, one was a Baby Boomers, five were Generation Xers, and six were Generation Yers. This means that of the 112 employees interviewed, 86.5% said they were planning on retiring with the public sector, indicating that the pension is still a driving force for people staying with the public sector.

There were 10 participants planning to retire in less than a year, four planning to retire in one to two years, eight planning to retire in three to five years, 12 planning to retire in six to 10 years, 36 planning to retire in 11 to 19 years, and 42 planning to retire in 20+ years. Of those planning to retire in less than a year, 10 were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists. Of those planning to retire in one to two years, three were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, and one was from Generation X. Of those planning to retire in three to five years, seven were Baby Boomers, and one was from Generation X. Of those planning to retire in six to 10 years, four were Baby Boomers, and eight were from Generation X. Of those planning to retire in 11 to 19 years, two were Baby Boomers, 25 were from Generation X, and nine were from Generation Y. Of those planning to retire in 20+ years, one was a Baby Boomer, 10 were from Generation X, and 31 were from Generation Y. The high number of retirees within the Baby Boomer generation illustrates that there will be an institutional knowledge gap between generations in the workforce.

**Personal and Household Demographics**

The following table shows levels of education completed by the employees surveyed. This information provides insight into educational demographics, which can further explain the possible selections employees make due to their social or economic status. This information demonstrates that there is a diverse amount of education across the members of this organization. It also provides a context that indicates that having a college degree does not necessarily lead to
one taking a job in the private sector where there are higher salaries. There are other factors employees consider when choosing an employer.

*Table 3*

*Education Held by Respondents*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Baby Boomer/Traditionalist</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate’s</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data from the table illustrates that among all the generations, Baby Boomers are more educated, followed by Generation Y. It is interesting is to see the drop off between the Baby Boomers and Generation X and Y. Baby Boomers have more than twice the numbers of employees with bachelor’s degrees than the other two generations. One explanation for this pattern is that the City of Portland doesn’t have requirements for education. This means that if an employee applies for a skilled position that should require a degree, as long as they have the experience needed and can qualify for the position, they can compete for it. For example, many public-sector employers require accountants to have a degree in accounting. At the organization in the study, this is not a requirement. If an applicant has more than six years of accounting experience, they qualify for the position. The criteria were established to help reduce inequities and provide opportunities for minorities who may not be able to afford a formal education.

*Gender*

Within the dataset, there were 28 female participants, 82 male participants, and two participants who chose not to disclose this information. Of the females, 11 were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, five were Generation Xers, and 12 were Generation Yers. Of the males,
14 were Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, 40 were Generation Xers, and 28 were Generation Yers. Both respondents who chose not to disclose their status were Baby Boomers. This data illustrates an important demographic of the workforce at this public-sector organization. Of those surveyed, 73% were male while only 25% were female. This demographic may play an important part in informing employers about how job security or benefits may be preferred by different genders.

![Male vs Female Chart](image)

**Figure 5. Male vs Female**

Looking at the gender difference within the workforce and seeing a larger number of females within the Baby Boomers and Generation Y, one could formulate an argument that females within Generation X are around child rearing age and have opted to stay at home or look for an employer that offers a better work-life balance. The city doesn’t have a lot of flexibility when it comes to scheduling, and this may have impacted females’ decision to work elsewhere. Females in the Baby Boomer generation could be returning to work or have worked through child-rearing years. Females from Generation Y are either yet to have children or are starting to
have children and deciding whether or not to work while raising children. The male to female ratio is not surprising as this section of the Bureau is made up of blue collar workers, and many females opt out due to the heavily male-dominated workforce and culture.

**Household Demographics**

The table below shows employees’ living situations. This pattern is important for employers to consider because job security and benefits may appeal to individuals with families more than to those that are single. For example, using the data below, one may conclude that Generation X and Generation Y have more people within their households, and therefore, the value benefits that favor their household size and make up the cost of healthcare for a family or the number of sick days awarded to take care of family members.

**Table 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Baby Boomer/Traditionalist</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Live alone</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 people</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 people</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 people</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ people</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the data above, one can see that Generation X and Y tend to have more than two people living in the household. Generation X and Generation Y are still in the child-rearing phase of life. This is different than the Baby Boomers who have already reared children and are now empty nesters. This information is reflected in the table above.

Within the dataset, there were 25 participants earning $50,000 or less a year, 54 participants earning $50,001 to $75,000 a year, 18 earning $75,001 to $100,000 a year, 13 earning $100,001+ a year, and two participants who chose not to disclose this information. This
information is important to understand that job security or benefits that cost money may not impact people making over a certain figure. Since the City has a flat rate for benefits among the employees and a very affordable healthcare plan where employees only pay 5% of the cost of healthcare to the city, employees making under $75,000 and paying $55.00 every two weeks for a family of three or more is an incentive and may attract more individuals to the City. It is important to note that the data below is for individuals within the public sector. These rates are shown in the following table.

**Table 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Income Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$50,000/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50k to $75k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$75k to $100k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$100k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get a complete picture of the household makeup, the next set of data was collected in order to determine household incomes, rather than just the employee’s income. Overall, family income and whether a partner or spouse has good benefits will influence what job security and benefits an employee values. Within the dataset, there were 13 participants with a household income of $60,000 or less a year, 31 participants with a household income of $60,001 to $85,000 a year, 26 with a household income of $85,001 to $110,000 a year, 17 with a household income $110,001 to $140,000 a year, 21 with a household income of $140,000+ a year, and four participants that chose not to disclose this information. This is shown in the following table.
Table 6:

Household Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Baby Boomer/Traditionalist</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;$50,000/year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60k to $85k</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$85k to $110k</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$110k to $140k</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;$140k</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data above is an addition to Table 5. When looking at both Table 5 and Table 6, one can see that the flow of funds is more dispersed. In Table 5, most of the employees made under $75,000. In Table 6, one can see that spouses help increase the wealth of the public-sector employee. This could mean that although the public sector doesn’t pay as well, the employee may choose to stay because of job security or other benefits. This would indicate that another factor like a pension may be more valuable than a better salary.

Descriptive Means and Rates of Importance

The following table shows the means of the variables, based on what benefits employees say are most important. The dataset examines the whole group and their differences based on the individual generations. The information gathered with the data below represents what benefits employees indicated were most important to them. Employees were asked to rank the job securities and benefits from one to six, where one was the most important. The data set below is structured where a score of one is most important, and a score of six is the least important.
### Table 7

**Ranking Benefits by Importance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Baby Boomer/Traditionalist</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Generation Y</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension Plan</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady paycheck</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At-Will (has due process)</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No closure fear</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Rep</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-life balance</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>457(b)</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid/Partial Paid Healthcare</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recall Rights</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid time off</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>3.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life insurance</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401(a)</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth opportunities</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set schedule</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement health savings</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible spending account</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health savings account</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>4.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local discounts</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearly defined work</td>
<td>5.12</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>5.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all cases (as a whole and generationally), health care benefits were very important. However, having a health savings account was not as important, either for the whole group or within the different generations. Value for work-life balance was rated moderate, with the highest rating by those from Generation Y, which was expected, based on generational research. Being provided with life insurance was rated lower, yet it was most important to Traditionalists. The flexible spending account was also of low importance for all groups yet was most important to those from Generation X. Local discounts were very low on the list of importance for all groups. All groups, especially the Baby Boomers/Traditionalists, reported that a steady paycheck was important. Taking into consideration how those from Generation Y want meaningful work, it was interesting to note that there was a low importance placed on having clearly defined work, where Baby Boomers/Traditionalists placed much more importance on this variable. There was a moderate rate of importance for a set schedule, with the most significant being for those from Generation Y. Compensation also had a moderate impact, yet it was most important for Baby Boomers/Traditionalists. Paid time off was of lower importance, yet most important for those from Generation Y. Growth opportunities were moderate for the dataset, yet most important to Generation Y. Pension plans were high in importance, as expected, yet the least important to Generation Y. Having paid/partially paid healthcare was moderately important, with Generation X noting it as the most importance. The provision of a 401(a) was of little importance, yet most important for Generation Y, whereas a 457(b) was comparatively of more important, and, again, most important to Generation Y. Retirement health savings were of low importance for all groups, yet most important for Baby Boomers/Traditionalists. Being provided with a due process for job retention was important for all groups, but especially so for those from Generation Y. There was less importance for recall rights, with Traditionalists placing the most value on these
benefits. Having union representation was of moderate importance, yet most important to Generation X. Job security and benefits in the sense that there were no concerns over the position closing was also important, especially for Traditionalists. The following graph shows how benefits ranked across all generations, with those near number one being of most importance and those near number six being of least importance.

![Ranked Importance of Benefits -- All Generations](image)

**Figure 6. Average Importance of Benefits – All Groups**

The above graph depicts all the generations surveyed. The data helped unpack some of the key things within the survey. If a public-sector employer was trying to understand the masses, this graph would help them do that. As one can see, the top four items of importance to all generations are healthcare, pension, steady paycheck and not being an at will employee (due process rights). These selections are not surprising since many private-sector employers no longer have a pension or affordable healthcare, whereas the public sector has both. Furthermore, items like a steady paycheck and not being at will are also enticing due to government layoffs being rare and employees not having to worry about whether their employer can pay them for their time worked.
The items less desired by employees who took the survey are items that are heavily advertised by the private sector. Those items are Flexible Savings Accounts, Health Savings Accounts, and Local and Company Discounts. Private-sector employers advertise items like a Flexible Savings Account and Health Savings Account because their healthcare plans are not adequate. These two items are designed to allow employees to save money on the side for health expenses, which comes in handy when the healthcare plans are not great. Also, local and company discounts are a large selling point for some employees. Take Adidas and Nike, for example; their employees get large discounts off company goods as an incentive to work for them. Lastly, clearly defined work came in last, but the researcher wants to point out that it came in last due to Generation X and Generation Y. This item becomes more interesting when looking at what is important to Baby Boomers. However, the items used to entice people to the private sector are not as attractive to those working in the public sector.

**Baby Boomers and Traditionalists**

The graph below shows job security and benefits ranked by level of importance for Baby Boomers and Traditionalists. The data indicates that healthcare was the number one benefit desired by Baby Boomers and Traditionalists. The top three desires of this generation match the overall top three desire from all generations combined in *Figure 6* (healthcare, pension and steady paycheck). Interestingly, the number four job security was “no fear of closure” for this generation. This response may be because Baby Boomers and Traditionalists have witnessed a lot of job loss throughout their careers due to economic swings that impacted public-sector employers.
Figure 7. Average Importance of Benefits – Traditionalists/Baby Boomers

The takeaways from the graph above for Baby Boomers/Traditionalists are that the items of importance are fairly similar to that of the overall graph in Figure 6, but life insurance moves up from number 13 to number six. Keep in mind that Baby Boomers and Traditionalists are the older generations in the workforce, so it is no surprise that life insurance is higher up on the list. The even more surprising factor is that clearly defined work ranked seventh from the bottom for Baby Boomers, in comparison to ranking last for other generations. This is probably because Baby Boomers tend toward clearly defined roles. Keep in mind that Baby Boomers “live to work” and want their job clearly defined. Also, be aware that work-life balance ranked fifth from the bottom for Baby Boomers. This is important because it was near the top of the overall list in Table 6.

Generation X

The graph below shows job security and benefits ranked by importance for Generation X. Healthcare was the number one benefit desired by Generation X. The top three desires from this generation match the overall desires in Figure 6 (healthcare, pension, and steady paycheck). However, the top fourth choice differs from the Baby Boomers because Generation X favored
the job security of going through a due process before being terminated from a position. The employer must follow a progressive discipline protocol and provide the employee due process. This means to removed employee from their position within the public sector, one would need to go through a protocol which consists of/requires a due process. This formal review process provides an added level of security when disciplinary action is being taken. It also allows for multiple correction opportunities on behalf of the employee since progressive disciplinary action needs to be taken before one could be terminated.

Figure 8. Average Importance of Benefits – Generation X

The information in Figure 8 is in line with Table 6 from the overall graph. This is one of the larger demographics surveyed. As one can see, life insurance isn’t as important to Generation X as it was to Baby Boomers/Traditionalists. Furthermore, work-life balance moves up on the chart when compared with Baby Boomers. The benefits and job securities that are most important to Generation X are almost in the middle of what Baby Boomers and those from Generation Y see as important in an employer.
Generation Y

The graph below shows that job security and benefits ranked by importance for Generation Y. Healthcare was still the number one benefit desired by Generation Y. However, the top three desires from this generation are different from previous generational data. Whereas the Baby Boomers and Generation X had their top three desires as healthcare, pension, and a steady paycheck, Generation Y ranked pension as number five in order of importance. Due process for job retention was ranked at number three, and work-life balance was ranked as number four. This finding aligns with research that indicates that Generation Y desires work-life balance from an employer, in order to even consider it as a place to work. This also helps support the stereotype that many from Generation Y are interested in a better lifestyle versus better pay or the fear of being fired.

![Ranked Average Importance of Benefits -- Generation Y]

*Figure 9. Average Importance of Benefits – Generation Y*

The information in the graph above is interesting in the sense that it adds new items that Baby Boomers/Traditionalists and Generation Xers didn’t truly desire. The fact that work-life balance is high on the list just shows the shift in mentality between Baby Boomers and Generation Y. Although the desire for a pension plan fell slightly, it remained high on the list of
desirables. This goes to show that the presence and the establishment of a pension plan is key to attracting and retaining employees.

**Overall Generational Comparisons**

It is worth noting that the most significant job security and benefit among Baby Boomers and Generation X was healthcare and pension. Although healthcare was number one for Generation Y, the pension was ranked number five for this generation, and steady paycheck was ranked second.

In trying to determine the importance of job security and benefits, two questions in the survey presented hypothetical situations where important benefits might be altered and/or eliminated if the participant would either consider possibly or definitely leaving the public-sector employer. The percentage results shown in the figures below are those who would consider leaving or would definitely leave the public-sector employer. As can be seen in Figure 8 below, there are often similarities between considering leaving and definitely leaving the company in the event of a change to job securities and benefits.
Figure 10. Possibly Would or Would Definitely Leave if Benefits Changed

Although there are some differences in the level of importance placed on each individual benefit or job security, all generations are in agreement about their sensitivity regarding changes to their job security and benefits. The graph above shows what public-sector employees would be willing to possibly leave or definitely leave if job security or benefits were altered, cut, or eliminated. In analyzing the graph above, compensation and healthcare has the highest marks, with over 90% of the employees willing to leave if their healthcare was cut or their compensation downgraded. Both of those items are related to economic wants and needs. Taking the information a little further, if a government agency where to alter, change, or even eliminate compensation or healthcare, many of their employees could leave, resulting in government slowdowns, delays, lost services, or even an increase in certain taxes as things would need to be outsourced to keep the government running. These types of implications could cause a public outcry and the accusation of the misuse of government funds.

The areas of highest importance after compensation and healthcare were: steady paycheck, paid time off, and set schedule. Over 80% of the employees surveyed said they would leave if those job securities and benefits were eliminated. Two of the three items are related to work-life balance.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, local benefits such as flexible spending accounts and health savings accounts were the least of the employee’s concerns. This means that very few people indicate they would leave if these job securities or benefits were altered, cut, or eliminated. This information is helpful to an organization seeking to retain employees because it shows which benefits are perceived as less important to its employees.
Conclusions

This chapter addressed a series of characteristics relating to job security and benefits of the employees at a public-sector organization. Some of the main descriptive statistics examined looked at generations and gender, generations and union/non-union, generation and household demographics, and finally the job securities and benefits desired by each generation. The data was analyzed to see if there was certain information that could be used to help attract and retain employees within the public sector. The survey did reveal some interesting information about what certain generations are looking for in a public-sector employer and what job securities and benefits should not be altered or eliminated. The data was placed into three categories of social, economic, and work-life balance to help determine its importance.

There were significant findings that will inform employers seeking to hire and retain younger generations of employees. Knowledge about generational workplace expectations can help current public-sector employers align their compensation packages with the desires of current and future employees. As employees cycle out through attrition, it is in the interest of the public-sector employer and the taxpayers to find out what employees are looking for in an employer. More specific knowledge of younger generations’ workplace values will cut down on the cost of recruitment, staff turnover, and inefficiencies within the organization.

The first finding was that 98 out of 112 participants surveyed said they plan on retiring within the organization. One interpretation of this finding is that the pension system, the major benefit that can be offered by public sector employers, is still relevant and helps to prevent current employees from leaving. This reduces turnover and cuts down on the number of recruitments conducted to find qualified candidates. Another interpretation is that there are other benefits the public sector offers that would cause people to want to stay with the public sector.
Further research can be done in this area to confirm if the pension is the reason for staying. However, the above information combined with more information from the study would suggest that the pension is the true cause of employee retention.

The second finding was that, although Generation Y is the most educated generation generally, they are not well represented within the public sector. Almost 63% of Baby Boomers have an associate degree or higher, where 28% of Generation Yers had only an associate degree. The private sector is currently attracting and retaining an educated workforce from the younger generations better than public-sector employers. Although education is only one data point when looking at qualified candidates, it is important that some positions are held by individuals with a certain level of education. One example is a civil engineer within the public sector. To be a civil engineer, one must have a bachelor’s degree and hold a professional engineering certificate. Without the degree, it is almost impossible for an employee to obtain that position. This requirement would limit recruiting for these types of positions. This could indicate that although Generation Y is very educated, they may seek other opportunities within the private sector as opposed to the public sector.

The third finding shows that Baby Boomers and Generation X value healthcare, pension, and steady paycheck more than other job securities or benefits, which is slightly different than Generation Y. Generation Y’s top three job securities and benefits are healthcare, steady paycheck, and not at will (which means they must go through due process before being they are let go). The interesting part is that work-life balance moved up on the list and the pension moved down on the list for Generation Y. This could be the beginning of a shift in perspective on work that is reflected in the research. Another interpretation is that Generation Yers are not thinking
about retirement yet. Since retirement is so far away, many may not be focused on that, or they believe that retirement may not be an option for them.

Lastly, in examining public-sector employees’ beliefs about their job securities and benefits, more than 90% of the employees said that they would leave their current employer if their compensation or healthcare benefits were downgraded or cut. More than 80% of the employees surveyed would possibly leave if their compensations were altered, whereas 70% would possibly leave if their healthcare was altered. This finding shows a sensitivity to healthcare and compensation. However, between the two job securities and benefits, healthcare is more sensitive than the compensation. This means that employees are willing to sacrifice more money for better healthcare because healthcare is more valuable to them.

This information is key for the public-sector employer in recruiting and retaining new and current employees. The information gives employers an insight into what job securities and benefits are more important than others. It also lets them know what job securities and benefits should not be altered and/or removed. For example, removing the pension plan would be catastrophic, with upwards of 90% or more employees potentially leaving due to this change. Another example is healthcare, where removing or altering the healthcare would cause an overwhelming number of employees to leave their current job within the public sector.

In conclusion, the survey pointed out four main items: first, the pension plan is a significant reason for why people come seek jobs within the public sector. Second, Generation Y, that is the most educated generation, is not seeking and/or willing to obtain employment in the public sector. Third, the Baby Boomers and Generation X are seeking the same job securities and benefits, while Generation Y sees work-life balance as a benefit of key importance when seeking
out an employer. Lastly, altering or eliminating certain job securities or benefits (pension or healthcare) would result in an extremely high turnover rate.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on what job securities and benefits will help public-sector employers attract and retain employees of different generation. The retention of employees is a critical part of running any successful organization. Every time an organization loses an employee, it must invest in attracting and selecting a new employee to join the organization. In addition to the financial obligation, there is a loss of institutional knowledge that can also take a heavy toll on an organization because it makes the organization less productive. This study examined what causes certain generational employees to leave and how they might be retained using different techniques. The findings from a survey of 112 public-sector employees were presented in Chapter 4. The data obtained in the survey helps explain why certain generations may desire different job securities or benefits. The data collected will also help public-sector employers better understand what job security and benefits they must put in place to retain current employees and if altering certain desires could lead to a mass exit of employees.

Research on generational turnover indicates that organizational and institutional knowledge is lost when senior and long-term employees leave the organization without the proper transitioning of staffing that supports retention of institutional knowledge. Public-sector employers need to retain long-term employees and hire new employees who will come and learn from the more experienced employees. However, younger employees have different expectations about job security and benefits, which opposes some problems for public-sector employers. Public-sector employers need to identify what the younger generations desire in an organization, so that the employer can tailor their job securities and benefits to retain them.
In the followings section, the researcher briefly reviews the data collection process, the demographics of the participants, an analysis of responses, and the findings generated by the survey responses. These descriptive statistics used in this study assisted the researcher in answering the initial research questions. The initial research questions will also be addressed in this chapter.

The 112-surveyed participants were achieved using a voluntary survey that allowed the researcher to gather enough data to draw a series of conclusions about each generation within the public sector. The first nine questions of the survey were questions pertaining to the demographic profile of the individual being surveyed. However, the most important primary demographic question was the pertaining to which generation the participant belonged to, since this was the foundation of the research. The survey was completed by three Traditionalists, 24 Baby Boomers, 45 Generation Xers, and 40 Generation Yers. No employees who took the survey were under the age of 18, so the newest generation, Generation Z, was not included in this survey. There were also 17 surveys that were started but not completed. All of those surveys did not progress past the demographics page. Of those 17 incomplete surveys, 15 had been started by Generation Y, and two were started by Generation X. Since these surveys were not completed, they were removed from the study. This research was conducted in order to help answer the following questions listed below.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1) How do public-sector employees from different generations compare the importance of job security and benefits?

2) Do demographic trends impact how much public-sector employees’ value the job securities and benefits?
3) How can understanding the difference in desires of job securities and benefits among generations in the workplace help inform employers seeking to recruit and retain younger workers?

The research questions were designed to determine what different generations value in the workplace, so public-sector employers could prepare appropriate job securities and benefits to attract and retain the younger generations who are in the workforce or who are now entering the workforce. Creating a responsive workplace is essential as Baby Boomers transition out of the workforce and younger generations are needed to replenish the public-sector workforce. In the next sections, the research questions were used to organize the findings and draw further conclusions.

1) How do public-sector employees from different generations compare the importance of job security and benefits?

A section of the survey analyzed what job securities and benefits each generation desired or were more interested, pertaining to working for the public sector. This was achieved by identifying 22 job securities and benefits that were reflected in the three areas stated by Cliffords (2014): social, economic, and work-life balance. The participants were then asked to rank the job securities and benefits in each category from most important to the least important. After this step was completed, the following question asked the participants to rank their top six items from the list of 22 that were of most importance to them, in the order of highest to lowest, one being the highest and 6 being the lowest. The data collected in this question produced some interesting findings that do not exactly line up with the literature from the private sector.

First, all the generations, Baby Boomer, Generation X, and Generation Y in this public-sector organization rate their most important job security as healthcare. Healthcare is an
economic desire. It among the public sector is reasonably better than the private sector, due to
costs and coverages (Childs, 2013; Partnership for Public Service, 2018). One interesting finding
was that all four generations selected healthcare as its most important job security or benefit. The
literature suggests that Generation Y would have picked a more work-life balanced job security
or benefit; however, the public-sector Generation Ys healthcare is their number one benefit. This
does not reflect the literature and private-sector studies in which work-life balance desires were
at the top of Generation Y’s list (iCIMS, 2016).

Second, while the Baby Boomers and Generation X were interested in the public-sector
pension plan, Generation Y was more interested in a steady paycheck. Baby Boomers are able to
retire now or are capable of retiring within the next 5 years, and Generation X can retire within
the next 5 to 15 years. Because of their age, they may be more aware of the value of the pension
plan, paying close attention to it. The pension plan for these generations are more lucrative for
these generations as well, which means they have not been reformed (or lost value). Generation
Y has much more time before retirement and may not be as focused on their retirement benefits.
For this reason, they may desire to have a steady paycheck over the pension plan. This finding is
not surprising as a top job security or benefit since the public sector uses the pension plan as a
key selling point to retain individuals to the organization (Munnell, Aubry, Hurwitz, & Quinby,
2011).

Finally, Baby Boomers and Generation X have the similar top third, fourth, and fifth
selections where steady paycheck is the third and due process for job security and no fear of
closure is fourth and fifth choices. Baby Boomer and Generation X have similar values, which
aligns with the literature. The literature suggests that the outlier from this ranking of job factors
of importance is Generation Y. They indicated they want something different from the Baby
Boomers and Generation X. In this case, Generation Y does have a work-life balance as a desire within the top five desires and does not really care about a closure of the company. This was supported by the literature from Jason Dorsey in *Y Size My Business*, where Dorsey stated that a key desire for Generation Y is a sensible work-life balance (Dorsey, 2009). These findings prompt further exploration, hypothesizing that maybe one generation values pension more than better work-life balance or maybe one generation didn’t care about a pension at all.

There is a great similarity between generations when participants were asked if the job securities they desired or received currently were altered or canceled, would they consider leaving or looking for another position? This question was asked to test the tolerance level among the generations for loss of benefits. However, the data displayed in Table 3 that includes all generations showed that employees were sensitive to certain job securities and benefits. For example, in a situation where an employee’s compensation was altered negatively, 86% of people surveyed said they would start looking for another position. The survey then asked employees if they would work for an organization that did not provide a reasonable wage for performance. 95% of participants said they would leave the organization if the job duties and compensation were not aligned. This item is out of alignment from the literature because the generations surveyed did not list compensation as a high desire. This is interesting because in the stack ranking situation, only 13% of employees labeled compensation as their top choice, 22% labeled it as their second choice, and 6.5% said it was their third choice; however, 95% said they would leave if the compensation did not reflect the work being performed. This shows that there is a low tolerance level between compensation and duty performed.

For example, the tolerance level for Generation Y is relatively low regarding altering their paid time off. Among Generation Y, 90% of the participants surveyed said they would start
to look for another job if the organization altered their paid time off. This is drastically different from the 46% of Baby Boomers who said they would start looking for another job. A more interesting finding is that even if paid time off was eliminated or reduced to state minimums, only 54% of Baby Boomers would leave. In this example, the Baby Boomers have a higher level of tolerance compared to Generation Y. This data is supported in the literature review in the iCIMS (2016), where Generation Y is very attached to job securities or benefits that pertain to work-life balances.

2) Do demographic trends impact how much public-sector employees’ value the job securities and benefits?

The demographic data was selected to determine factors that could possibly influence the employee into their decision to stay with a public-sector employer or desire certain job securities and benefits. When analyzing this data, the factors of the employee’s household size and education produced some interesting results. The majority of the people in the study said they had a high school degree or some college. This was interesting because the private sector tends to use education as a litmus test for hiring individuals, whereas the City hires and promotes based on experience and time in service. Another interesting data result was that among the generations, education was fairly consistent, perhaps because Generation Yers has been pushed to further their education. Once educated, they look for growth within an organization to stay with that organization (Rattner, 2015). The data indicate that the public sector is attracting Generation Yers; however, those Generation Yers that come to work for the City have not chosen to further their education.

Another key demographic of the sample surveyed was gender, where either male, female, or do not wish to disclose were offered as a valid choice. In analyzing the information, males
heavily dominated the survey. This was expected since the majority of the employees in that particular Portland Water Bureau division are male due to the nature of the work, which is primarily manual labor. Two individuals didn’t wish to disclose their gender; this made up 2% of the graph, leaving the remaining 25% of participants as female. This three to one ratio isn’t uncommon among field crews where the work tends to be more labor-intensive, attracting more male employees. The majority of the females, at least 18 employees out of 28 who participated in the survey, worked on the administrative support side of the division.

Another demographic was employee status as non-union represented versus represented. This question did influence participation in the study, because the City was in bargaining at the time the study was conducted, and some of the represented employees chose to withdraw from the survey or turn in an incomplete survey that stopped at that particular question. This number was obtained by identifying the participant as female and working in a non-represented position. There are no non-represented field-staff positions; however, there are represented positions in administrative support that could drive the number above 18 individuals. A total of 10 females identified themselves as represented, which would indicate that they are either working in a labor-intensive position or lower level administrative staff position, in such roles as time-keepers or dispatchers.

As with the majority of the City of Portland, the workforce is heavily represented by the union. The graph on the left in Figure 2 shows that 73% of the surveyed participants were represented, 2% did not wish to disclose their status, and the remaining 25% are non-represented. Of the non-represented staff surveyed, 5% were in executive management, 6% were managers, 13% were supervisors, and the remaining 10% are employees whose positions are non-represented for a variety of reasons. For example, they deal with confidential information, have
access to bargaining information, or other various reasons under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. In addition to non-represented and union data, gender was another demographic analyzed. 25% of the participants surveyed were female, 73% were male, and 2% wished not to be identified. Although these numbers appear to be extremely lopsided, the division that was surveyed is a very labor-intensive unit, where females may not want to apply because of the physical nature of the jobs. A surprising demographic was that 63% of Baby Boomers working in this division of the Portland Water Bureau have an associate degree or higher, whereas Generation X and Generation Y have 20% and 28%, respectively, with an associate degree or higher. This defies the research that states that Generation Y is the most educated generation to date (Kent, 2015).

As diverse as the demographic data indicate staff were, it was apparent that there was minimal impact to the desired job securities and benefits. The literature suggested that certain demographic categories may have selected different job securities or benefits because of those demographics. The majority of the public-sector employees sought a core desire of healthcare, compensation, pension, steady paycheck, and not being at will.

3) How can understanding the difference in desires of job securities and benefits among generations in the workplace help inform employers seeking to recruit and retain younger workers?

Knowing what employees desire from an employer is essential for recruitment and retention of qualified staff. With information such as that garnered from this survey comes the power to analyze and predict what employee patterns are coming next. Public-sector employers can make a more effectively succession plan, target new hires, and retain employee within their public sector. They can do this by altering their job securities and benefits to recruit younger
employees and entice them to stay by providing them with workplace benefits they desire. Employers can phase out programs that retained more seasoned members of the workforce as they choose to retire, and they can keep their Generation X workforce by altering some of the job securities and benefits, which they need to stay productive.

The data collected in Figure 9 shows that work-life balance and other items pertaining to the same are higher on the list of Generation Yers than the Baby Boomers and Generation Xers. The literature suggests that the Generation Y is more concerned with work-life balance items and less concerned with the economic items. However, this study showed that they still do care about healthcare, which is an economic factor, but a suggestion to attract them may be to focus a little more on some of the work-life balance items like flexible schedules, teleworking, and, perhaps, more vacation time.

Generation Y rated their compensation as of lower importance. However, 90% did say that if their compensation was reduced or cut, they would leave. This is an area for exploration. If the compensation remained the same, but time off, flexible schedules, and teleworking increased, would that attract more Generation Yers to the public sector? The private-sector literature suggests that adding work-life balance items does increase the likelihood that Generation Yers noticing the employer (iCIMS, 2016), as well as those in the private sector transferring over into the public sector for those benefits.

**Implications of the Findings**

Clifford’s (2014) research suggests that the dimensions of social, economic, and work-life balance are all important to the younger generations. This study primarily addressed economic factors, such as job securities and benefits associated with the public sector but found that the lines were blurred between all generations when it came to job securities and benefits.
that dealt with the social and work-life balance aspects. All the generations agreed on their top choice for the benefit of healthcare, which is an economic desire. As the researcher further analyzed the data, some differences emerged between Generation Y and the other generations. If a public-sector employer was able to hone in on those differences, they might be able to set themselves apart from other public-sector agencies and retain younger workers.

**Recommendations for Public-Sector Employers**

After conducting the research and analyzing the information from the survey, the researcher can make several recommendations to public-sector employers. Utilizing the four themes from chapter 4, the following recommendations are provided.

The first finding was that 98 out of 112 participants surveyed said they plan on retiring with the organization. This information combined with the information obtained from the survey suggests that the pension is one of the key reasons employees plan to stay in the public sector. Therefore, the recommendation is that employers should continue with current pension plans, forgoing any further alterations to those plans. If future changes in pension benefits occur, public-sector employees may choose to leave the service, which would obstruct the government’s functioning.

The second finding was that although Generation Y is the most highly educated generation, they are not well represented within the public sector. The survey revealed that even though Generation Yers are graduating from college at a higher rate than past generations, they are not taking an interest in the public sector. This could be because many private-sector employers offer what Generation Y wants, which is a better work-life balance and alternative benefits like paying off student loan debt or tuition assistance. The recommendation to public-sector employers is to find or implement alternative work schedules, teleworking agreements,
and/or nontraditional work week (work based on the demand of assignments, not 40 hours of work). Another suggestion is publicizing the Public-Sector Student Loan Forgiveness Program, which allows public-sector employees the ability to erase student loan debt after paying for 10 years.

The third finding shows that Baby Boomers and Generation Xers value healthcare, pension, and steady paycheck more than other job securities or benefits, which is slightly different than Generation Y. This finding aligns with the second finding that Generation Y is looking for an employer who can offer a better work-life balance. Many private-sector employers offer alternative work schedules, teleworking, and come-and-go policies (which means that the employee is free to stay in the office until the assignments are done). The public sector is lacking regarding work-life balance items because many taxpayers are skeptical about employee productivity and the waste of taxpayer funds. The recommendation is to establish alternative work schedules and teleworking agreements. This would attract the younger generations to the public sector.

Lastly, in examining public-sector employees’ beliefs about their job securities and benefits, more than 90% of the employees said that they would leave their current employer if their compensation or healthcare benefits were downgraded or cut. This finding is consistent with the first finding, which supports that a pension plan is important to public-sector employees. The information that informed this finding would suggest a mass exit from the workplace if compensation or healthcare were altered or eliminated. The recommendation to a public-sector employer would be to monitor compensation carefully and ensure that the compensation being offered is competitive. The employer should also find ways to keep healthcare premiums as low as possible. Involving employees in educational health programs is one approach to help keep
healthcare insurance programs low. Certain insurance companies offer breaks to those who get routine checkups or those who wear step bands, for example. These strategies will work not only in the employer’s favor but the employees as well.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The study pertains to generations and the job securities and benefits that each generation desires, but it leaves the door open for further research to be conduct. Several topics throughout the paper can build upon the research present here. Below are three specific topics that could use this research to help aid future research.

- Research showing a correlation between generations and their willingness to vacate if management is not competent or the manager and the employee’s styles are different. There have been studies in the private sector that shows a correlation between poor management and the willingness of an employee to leave. However, there has also been studies that show this could be a generational issue, since Generation Y has a lower tolerance for being micromanaged.

- Another area of further research is on different generations in the public sector and their tolerance levels towards specific job security or benefit, such as compensation, pension, and healthcare. These areas where the highlights in this research, but this research only outlined if an employee would leave, stay, or find the topic important. Further research can be conducted into the level in which each employee has a tolerance for. For example, if compensation was slashed by 5%, would an employee leave? This type of research would allow public-sector employers to understand the level of tolerance between employees and the generations they represent.
Lastly, another area of further research is the correlation between male and female and the roles they take on within the public sector. This research touched on the possibility that females may not choose a heavily male-dominated position because of the culture. Further research could be conducted to see if there is a correlation, and if it is so, how to get more females involved in the trades.

**Conclusion**

This study brought forward the beliefs and values about how different generation desire different job securities and benefits. Although the generations were in line with one another regarding some of the job securities and benefits, there is a need to add more of a work-life balance into the public-sector workforce. The conceptual framework for this study was Clifford’s understanding that employee’s desires could be based upon their social, economic, and work-life balance needs (Clifford, 2014). The finding of the survey suggests that each generation’s desires do fall in one of the three themes, where economic desires (healthcare, steady paycheck, and pension) are higher than that of work-life balance. The findings offer stakeholders a better understanding of what different generations want within the public sector, about job securities and benefits. The study examined differing values about social or demographic status, economic considerations (job securities and benefits), and work-life balance.

The findings suggest that removal of certain job securities or benefits would adversely affect the public sector. For example, if healthcare benefits were removed or reduced, over 90% of the participants surveyed indicated they would leave their public-sector position. The survey also reaffirmed that those employees who responded value their pension. This finding implies that the public sector still relies on its pension plan to keep individuals.
However, there may be a shift coming as Baby Boomers, and Generation Xers labeled the pension within their top three desires, whereas Generation Y placed it as their fifth desire and focused a little more on the 457 (b) plan.

This research has opened up the opportunity for more research into the specific needs of Generation Y and possibly Generation X as to what benefits and job security factors might influence decisions about their employment decisions. As the data showed, Generation Y, which is supposed to be the most educated Generation, has fewer educated individuals within the public sector. This finding suggests there is a need for additional research about why educated Generation Yers are turning away from the public sector and moving towards the private sector. The further research might explore whether salary plays a larger role in deciding if Generation Yers land in the private the public sector.

As the Baby Boomers are exiting the workforce, the two younger generations will become more important to the public-sector workforce. This, in turn, will make it even more important for these public-sector agencies to attract and retain younger talent. This research has laid the foundation, but more research is needed to zero in on what attracts these generations. Without this information, the public sector will be left to speculate on the needs and desires of the younger generations, wasting taxpayer funds as they try to determine root desires without prior research.
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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form for Participation in the Research Study Entitled:
Job Security Among Generations in the Public-sector

Introduction:
- The research being conducted will help public-sector employers understand what each generation of employees is looking for in regard to employment, to attract and keep them working in the public-sector.
- Required language: “Please read this form. Your participation is voluntary”.

Why is this study being done?
- To understand what each generation prefers regarding job securities in order to keep them employed in the public-sector.
- To determine whether there is room for improvement within job securities being offered (work, benefits, retirement options, and property rights).
- What additional benefits could public-sector employers offer to attract top tier talent.
- The researcher involved in this study has no consultative or financial interest relating to the study. This study is for academic purposes only.

Who will be in this study?
- Employees with the Portland Water Bureau – Maintenance and Construction Group.
- Employees with different generational backgrounds (Traditional/Silent Generation, Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X and Generation Y).
- Employees with different up bringings.
- Employees of different genders.
- Employees at different levels of the organization (Senior Managers, Managers, Supervisors, and Employees).

What will I be asked to do?
- Provide honest answers to the questions asked.
- Answer all the various multiple choice and ranking questions.
- You may provide some written feedback if you feel it will be helpful to the study.

What are the possible risks of taking part in this study?
- Some of the questions can be viewed as personal questions.
- There are no other reasonably foreseeable risks associated with your participation in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in this study?
- Public-sector employers may improve or adjust job securities based on the study results.
- A better understanding of what each generation desires from their employer.

What will it cost me?
- There is no accrued cost to you as a participant.
How will my privacy be protected?
- The data and the individual’s identity will be encrypted using industry standards for the protection of the participants.
- The encryption system being used will only be known to the researcher, so no one can identify the participants.
- Only the group results of the study will be shared with the public. No personal information will be released.
- This study is being distributed in paper form and electronic form.
- The information gathered in paper form, will be secured in locked drawers and once uploaded electronically, destroyed.
- Electronic results will be encrypted and stored on a cloud server.

What are my rights as a research participant?
- Your participation is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations.
- You are free to withdraw from this research study at any time, for any reason. If you choose to withdraw from the survey after you have submitted your answer, there will be no penalty and no retaliation to you.
- If you choose not to participate there is no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits that you are otherwise entitled to receive.”
- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the use of human subjects in this research. The IRB is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of the people involved in this research.”

What other options do I have?
- This is a completely voluntary research survey. If you do not wish to participate, you do not have to. There will be no retaliation for you not participating.

Will I receive a copy of this consent form?
- You will be given a copy of this consent form.

Participant’s Statement
I understand the above description of this research and the risks and benefits associated with my participation as a research subject. I agree to take part in the research and do so voluntarily.

________________________________________________________
Participant/Legally Authorized Representative Signature

_____________________________________________________
Date
Printed Name

**Researcher’s Statement**
The participant named above had sufficient time to consider the information, had an opportunity to ask questions, and voluntarily agreed to be in this study.

________________________________________________________

Researcher Signature

Date

________________________________________________________

Printed Name

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APPENDIX B: SURVEY

Research Assigned ID Number: (For Researcher Only)  Date:

Instructions:

The following survey will help the public-sector better understand what job securities are desired among different generations within the workforce. The information gathered from this survey is intended for academic use only. It is important to answer all the questions fully and honestly. This is a voluntary survey and you should not take it if you do not wish to do so. Once you have completed the survey please place the survey, along with your consent form, in the envelope and seal it. Please return the envelope to the researcher. Do not write your name on the envelope in order to maintain confidentiality.

1. What level is your current position within the public-sector? (please circle one)
   a. Senior Manager
   b. Manager
   c. Supervisor
   d. Employee

2. Are you represented by a union or are you not represented (non-rep)? (please circle one)
   a. Represented
   b. Not represented
   c. Do not wish to disclose

3. Please select from the following. In what year were you born in? (please circle one)
   a. Before 1945
   b. 1946 to 1964
   c. 1965 to 1980
   d. 1981 to 2000
   e. 2001 to present

4. What is your highest level of education? (please circle one)
   a. High School Diploma or GED
   b. Some College (less than 2 years)
   c. Associates Degree (2 years of college education)
   d. Bachelor’s Degree (4 years of college education)
   e. Graduate Degree (6+ years of college education)

5. What gender do you identify as? (please circle one)
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Do not wish to disclose

6. How long have you been with your current employer (City of Portland)? (please circle one)
   a. Less than 2 years
   b. 2 to 5 years
c. 6 to 10 years  
d. 11 to 20 years  
e. 21 years or more

7. How many people reside in your household including yourself? (please circle one)  
   a. Just you  
   b. 2  
   c. 3  
   d. 4  
   e. 5 or more  
   f. Do not wish to disclose

8. Select your average annual salary per year (City of Portland)? (please circle one)  
   a. $50,000 or less a year  
   b. $50,001 to $75,000  
   c. $75,001 to $100,000  
   d. $100,001 or more a year  
   e. I do not wish to disclose

9. Select your family’s combined average salary per year? (please circle one)  
   a. $60,000 or less a year  
   b. $60,001 to $85,000  
   c. $85,001 to $110,000  
   d. $110,000 to $140,000  
   e. $140,000 or more a year  
   f. I do not wish to disclose

10. Looking just at the items related to benefits, please rank the benefits that are most important to you? (1-being the most important and 6-being the least important)  
   ___ Affordable Medical, Dental, and Vision Coverage (Insurance that covers you and your family)  
   ___ Health Savings Account (Money that is set aside for a large medical expense)  
   ___ Work-Life Balance (The ability to elect different work schedules that fit your needs)  
   ___ Life Insurance (Money that is given to a designee in the event of your death)  
   ___ Flexible Spending Account (Money you elect to set aside each paycheck for medical expenses or childcare)  
   ___ Local Discounts (Discounts offered to public-sector employees. i.e. cell phone bill or cable bill)
11. Looking just at the items related to work, please rank the aspects about your work that are most important to you? (1-being the most important and 6-being the least important)

___ Steady Paycheck (You have a paycheck you can count on as income)

___ Work is Clearly Defined (Every job has a class spec. with specific work outlined in it)

___ Set Schedule (There are no rotating schedules that you are unaware of)

___ Compensation (You are adequately paid for the work done, compared to the private-sector)

___ Paid Time Off (You receive a reasonable amount of vacation, sick and holiday time off from work)

___ Growth Opportunities (The public-sector has room for promoting or learning new things)

12. Looking just at the items related to retirement options, please rank the retirement options that are most important to you? (1-being the most important and 5-being the least important)

___ Pension Plan (After a certain amount of years, you will receive a set paycheck until your death)

___ Paid or Partial Paid Health Care (Once you retire there is a healthcare plan you can enroll in)

___ 401(a) / 403(b) Retirement Plan (These are retirement plans that are separate from your pension)

___ 457 (b) Deferred Comp. Plan (Retirement plan that allows you to save in addition to a pension)

___ Retirement Health Savings Account (Account that allows you to set aside money for health expenses after retirement)

13. Looking just at the items related to protections to employment, please rank the items that are most important to you? (1-being the most important and 4-being the least important)

___ Not an At-Will Employee (You cannot be fired without due process)

___ Recall Rights (If layoffs occur, you have rights back to your position if a similar position becomes available)

___ Union Representation (You have rights under a negotiated contract)
__Little Fear of Closure (Public-sector has a revenue stream that is unlikely to be discontinued)

14. Reflecting on Question 10, 11, 12 and 13, please rank your **top eight (8)** selections in order of importance to your personal wants and needs from an employer. (*1-being the most important and 8-being the least important*)

__Affordable Medical, Dental, and Vision Coverage (Insurance that covers you and your family)

__Health Savings Account (Money that set aside for a large medical expense)

__Work-Life Balance (The ability to elect different work schedules that fit your needs)

__Life Insurance (Money that is giving to a designee in the event of your death)

__Flexible Spending Account (Money you elect to put to the side each paycheck for medical expenses or childcare)

__Local Discounts (Discounts offered to public-sector employees. i.e. cell phone bill or cable bill)

__Steady Paycheck (You have a paycheck you can count on as income)

__Work is Clearly Defined (Every job has a class spec. with specific work outlined in it)

__Set Schedule (There are no rotating schedule that you are unaware of)

__Compensation (You are adequately paid for the work done, compared to the private-sector)

__Paid Time Off (You receive a reasonable amount of vacation, sick and holiday time off from work)

__Growth Opportunities (The public-sector has room for promoting or learning new things)

__Pension Plan (After a certain amount of years, you will receive a set paycheck until your death)

__Paid or Partial Paid Health Care (Once you retire there is a healthcare plan you can enroll in)

__401(a) / 403(b) Retirement Plan (These are retirement plans that are separate from your pension)
___ 457 (b) Deferred Comp. Plan (Retirement plan that allows you to save in addition to a pension)

___ Retirement Health Saving Accounts (Account that allows you to money away for health expenses after retirement)

___ Not an At-Will Employee (You cannot be fired without due process)

___ Recall Rights (If layoff occurs, you have rights back to your position if a similar position becomes available)

___ Union Representation (You have rights under a negotiated contract)

___ Little Fear of Closure (Public-sector has a revenue stream that would not likely discontinue)

15. Please answer the following questions (*circle Y for Yes, N for No*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your medical, dental, and vision coverage in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your health savings account in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your ability to have a flexible work-life balance, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your life insurance policy in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your flexible spending account (FSA) in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your discounts within the community in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> the hours you worked, causing your paycheck to be unstable and different amounts every pay period, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> the type of work you did on a daily basis, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your work schedule causing you to constantly have a different work schedule weekly or monthly, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your compensation in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> your paid time off in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <strong>altered</strong> the method or the ability to advance yourself in the organization in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If your employer *altered* your pension plan in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
---|---
If your employer *altered* your pension benefits related to medical, dental or vision in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your employer *altered* your 401(a) / 403(b) Retirement Plans in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your employer *altered* your 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your employer *altered* your retirement health savings account in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your employer *altered* your due process rights (changing your work status to at-will), would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your employer *altered* your recall rights by changing the length of time you are on a list in a negative way, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your union contract was *altered* in a manner you didn’t like, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N
If your employer *showed signs* of layoffs or cutting back on positions, would you consider leaving your employer? | Y | N

16. Please answer the following questions (*circle Y for Yes, N for No*):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>stopped offering</em> you medical, dental, and vision coverage, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>stopped offering</em> you a health savings account, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>stopped allowing</em> a flexible work-life balance, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>stopped offering</em> a life insurance policy, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>stopped offering</em> a flexible spending account (FSA), would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>canceled or prohibited</em> you from getting discounts within the community, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>couldn’t guarantee</em> a set number of hours you worked, causing your paycheck to be unstable and different every pay period, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>constantly changed</em> the type of work you did, would you leave your employer? <em>(work was never defined and always changing)</em></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>could not guarantee</em> a set work schedule, causing you to constantly have a different work schedule weekly or monthly, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>was not willing</em> to pay you a reasonable wage for the work you conducted, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If your employer <em>eliminated</em> your paid time off, or <em>only allowed</em> for time off at the legal minimum rate, would you leave your employer?</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If your employer **would not allow** for any upward mobility or advancement within the organization, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **eliminated** your pension plan, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **eliminated** your pension benefits related to medical, dental or vision during retirement, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **eliminated** your 401(a) / 403(b) Retirement plans, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **eliminated** your 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **eliminated** your retirement health savings account, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **could remove you from employment** at any time, without offering a reason, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer **had no** recall rights, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you **had no** union representation, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If your employer’s revenue was constantly **unstable** and you were uncertain or facing layoff at any given time, would you leave your employer?  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

17. When looking at possible employers in both the private and public-sectors, what made you choose to work in the public-sector over the private sector? *(please provide three items from the generated list in question 14, that persuaded you to take the job in the public-sector)*

I)               

II)              

III)             

18. Do you plan to retire with your public-sector employer? *(please circle one)*
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know

19. If you left your public-sector employer, would you work for another public-sector employer? *(please circle one)*
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I don’t know
   d. I don’t plan on leaving

20. What is your retirement timeline? *(please circle one)*
   a. Less than a year
   b. 1 to 2 years
c. 3 to 5 years  
d. 6 to 10 years  
e. 11 to 19 years  
f. 20 or more years

21. What are three items that you would like your public employer to offer and why? (please write in the three items)

I) ____________________________________________________________

II) ____________________________________________________________

III) ____________________________________________________________

22. For the following questions, please circle the statement that best describes your opinion of your employer: (SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, N= Neutral, D= Disagree, and SD= Strongly Disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People want to come work for the public-sector?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public employers offer a good place to work?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compensation in the public-sector is better than working for the private-sector?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public-sector could do more to attract individuals?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public-sector offers room for growth?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The public-sector has a diverse group of employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am making a difference in the community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There are other public-sector employers who offer more</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are private-sector employers that offer more to their employees?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel that my job is secure?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I like my position within my organization?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to move up within the organization?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for taking this survey. The information you have provided will help public-sector employers understand what items are important to their employees.