



# Generational Differences in the Public Sector

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**Abstract.** The objective of this research was to analyze how generational differences impact the public sector, specifically in aspects such as technology management, traditional management methods, and administration. A systematic review methodology was used, consisting of the selection of relevant articles published between 2017 and 2024 in Spanish and English, from the Scopus and Scielo databases. Key terms such as Generation X, millennials, public management, and governance were considered, and inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance of the sources. The initial analysis identified 310 articles, of which 30 pertinent studies were selected after applying the defined criteria. The results highlight intergenerational tensions related to technological adaptation and work methods, emphasizing the need for inclusive strategies to improve cohesion and modernize the public sector

**Keywords:** Administration, Gap, Generation, Management.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The public sector is currently facing significant challenges due to the generational differences that exist between generation X and millennials. These differences are not only reflected in their work styles, but also in their levels of adaptation to new technologies and their perception of traditional management and administration methods. In a context where digital transformation plays a central role, the coexistence of these generations within public institutions represents a challenge to ensure efficient and adaptive management that responds to contemporary social demands (Chávez and Heredia, 2024; Calderón et al., 2022).

Globally, the use of digital technologies in the public sector has grown exponentially, facilitating administrative processes and improving the interaction between the state and citizens. However, in many Latin American countries, these tools are not implemented with the same speed, exacerbating generational differences. While millennials, as digital natives, are more familiar with these tools, generation X, formed in a less technological environment, tends to prefer traditional methods, which generates tensions and limits the advancement of innovative processes (Gaspar et al., 2021; Sanchez and Loyola, 2021).

These tensions are most evident in the management of technologies in the public sector, where millennials show an outstanding ability to integrate digital tools in their daily work, favoring efficiency and agility in processes. In contrast, Generation X faces more pronounced barriers, often resulting in resistance to change. This contrast not only affects productivity, but also hinders the implementation of public policies that require a collaborative and technological approach (Lee and Circella, 2019; Zavala and Frías, 2018).

In addition, the traditionally hierarchical organizational structure of the public sector has been an obstacle for millennials, who value flexibility and horizontality in their work environments. This conflicts with Generation X, who are more comfortable operating under structured and predictable models. This difference in perspectives affects workplace cohesion and highlights the need for inclusive leadership that facilitates the integration of both generations (Rubio et al., 2021; Krause and Park, 2024).

Another relevant aspect is the modernization of public management. While millennials seek to transform public institutions through the adoption of innovative technologies and processes, members of generation X tend to perceive these initiatives as a threat to traditional structures and institutional stability. This has resulted in the slowdown of key projects for digital transformation in many public sector institutions (Calderón et al., 2022; Chávez and Heredia, 2024).

On the other hand, the impact of these generational differences can also be seen in human talent management. Millennials tend to prioritize continuous learning opportunities, constant feedback and a dynamic work environment, while Generation X values stability and long-term benefits. These differences have generated a mismatch in public sector human resources policies, underscoring the need for reforms that consider the expectations of both generations (Zavala and Frías, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2019).

In this context, this research seeks to analyze how generational differences impact the public sector, specifically in aspects such as technology management, traditional management methods and administration. The relevance of the study lies in identifying the main barriers and opportunities to effectively integrate these generations, promoting a more dynamic, inclusive and efficient public sector. By exploring these issues, it is expected to contribute to the design of strategies that facilitate intergenerational cohesion and enhance the transformation of the public sector in an increasingly digitized and adaptive environment.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Considering the development of this research, a methodology based on systematic review was used. This methodology consisted of selecting relevant sources related to the topic of study, prioritizing research conducted

in recent years. This approach allowed not only to collect current data on the object of study, but also to generate reflections on the content and expand the aspects analyzed, thus achieving a deeper analysis aligned with the objectives (Villasis et al., 2020).

In order to fulfill the established purposes, international articles related to the difference and generational gaps between generation "X", "Z", Millennials within the inherent social processes within the public sector from any perspective were selected. The search included papers published between January 2017 and 2024 in English and Spanish languages, using Scopus and Scielo databases as sources. Regarding the inclusion criteria, references aligned with the key variables were considered, employing specific search terms, extended geolocation criteria and reliable sources from the aforementioned databases. The selected content included terms such as: a) generation X b) Millennials; and c) public management and governance. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria eliminated documents outside the established date range, those not included in the databases consulted, research with unrelated topics and duplicate articles.

The initial process identified a total of 310 articles related to the analysis of the problems between generation gaps and conflict resolution in different contexts. However, after applying exclusion criteria, including educational subject matter, duplications and other justified reasons, 30 scientific articles relevant to the topic were selected. This process was documented by means of a PRISMA flow chart, which is presented in Figure 1.

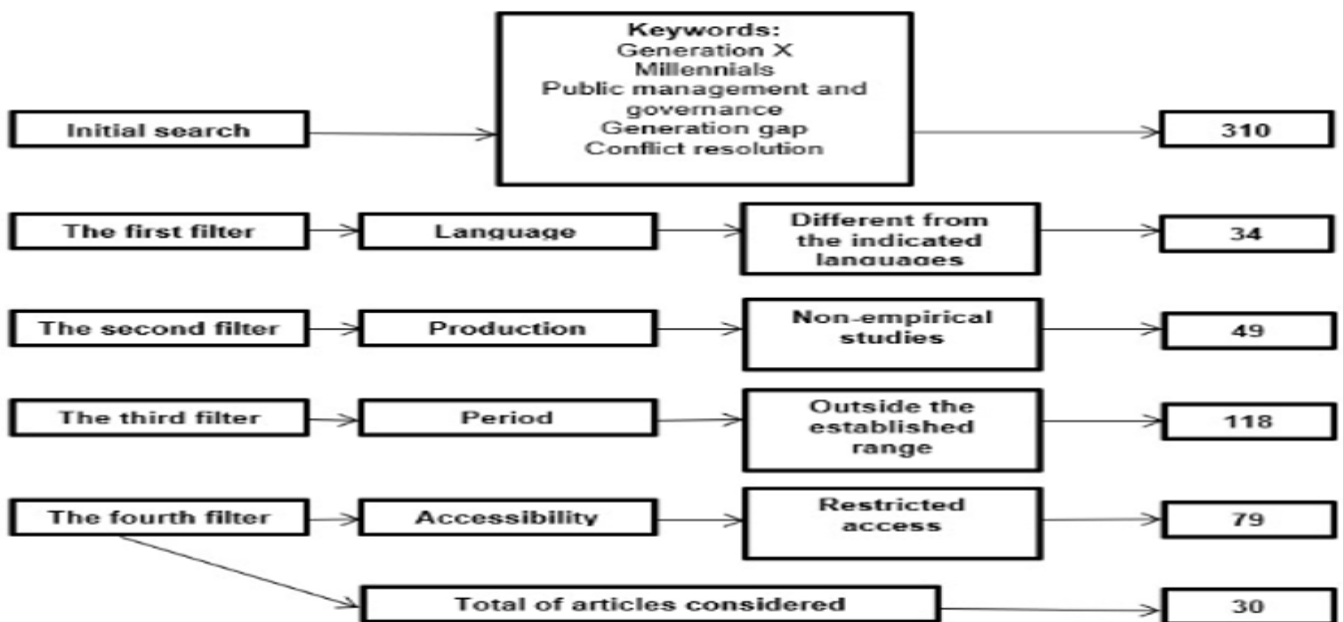


Figure 1: Systematic search of articles, PRISMA flow.

### 3. RESULTS Y DISCUSSIONS

Initially, 310 scientific articles were approached for the analysis of the topic in question. After the PRISMA analysis, 30 were selected for the corresponding systematization. In this sense, the inherent link is made to the authors, year of publication, publication database, language of publication and name of the publication.

Table 1: Main characteristics of scopus review studies.

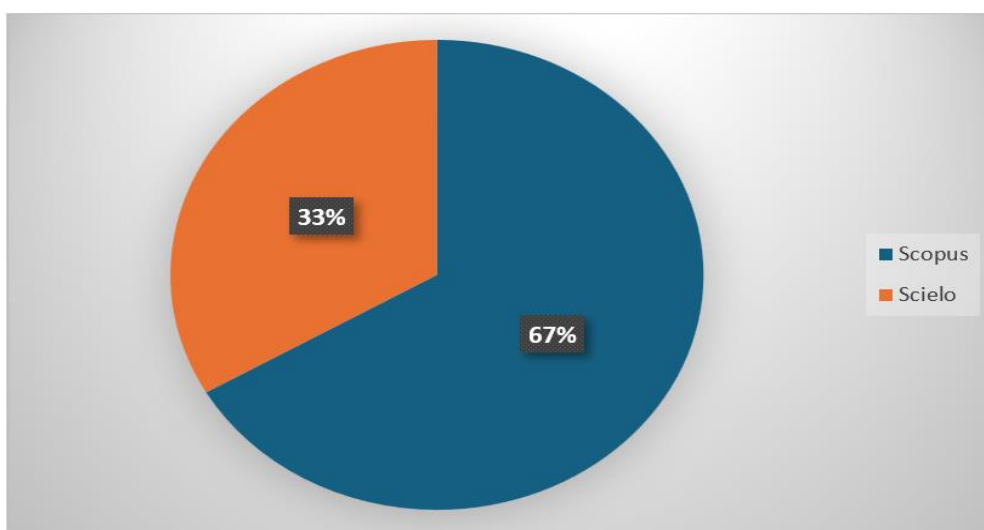
Autor(es)	Base de datos	de Lengua publicación	de Nombre de la publicación
(Mac-Gregor, 2023)	Scopus	Español	Las personas mayores en la jurisprudencia de la Corte Interamericana de Derechos Humanos
(Dabove, 2023)	Scopus	Español	Cuidados gerontológicos de largo plazo. Los derechos de las personas mayores como meta política
(Ortega y Vásquez, 2024)	Scopus	Español	Representaciones sociales de la masculinidad en el discurso parlamentario en Chile
(Perugorría, García y Ruiz, 2024)	Scopus	Español	El movimiento Hakuna: estructura organizacional y estrategias para la recristianización de la juventud en España
(Urteaga, 2024)	Scopus	Español	Principales manifestaciones de la sociedad de la incertidumbre: análisis desde una perspectiva francesa
(Krause y Park, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	Improving Social Equity Within Public Organizations: Authority Differentials as Reference Points for Fostering Diversity and Inclusion Within U.S. Federal Agencies
(Ambrose y Siddiki, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	Assessing drivers of sustained engagement in collaborative governance arrangements
(Lofaro y Sapat, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	Deservingness, humanness, and representation through lived experience: analyzing first responders' attitudes
(Farmer, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	Frigginomics Begins in Kindergarten: The Social Construction of "Normal" Citizens and Their Dreams
(Lee y Circella, 2019)	Scopus	Inglés	The Evolving Impacts of ICT on Activities and Travel Behavior

(Grimal, 2020)	Scopus	Inglés	Are French millennials less car-oriented? Literature review and empirical findings
(Ehitman, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	United States Policy on Africa: Do We (Still) Matter?
(Fitzgerald, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	From Argentina to Zimbabwe: Exploring the global appeal of the International Baccalaureate
(Crampton y Coe, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	Age enterprising: "Old" age on the make in Ghana
(Lundberg, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	Intergenerational redistribution in a pay-as-you-go pension system
(Xu, Meng, Xhu y Ding, 2024)	Scopus	Inglés	The role of local officials in promoting public participation during local urban planning processes: Evidence from Chinese cities
(Ballart y Galais, 2019)	Scopus	Inglés	Public, private or third sector management? Differences in the results in Primary Care in Catalonia
(Ramírez y Cámara, 2023)	Scopus	Español	Impacto económico de una implantación plena del Plan de Choque en Dependencia 2021-2023 en España
(Rubio, Almansa y Pastor, 2021)	Scopus	Español	Relaciones sexistas en la generación X y Millennials
(Peña, 2017)	Scopus	Español	Vivimos la revolución: los voceros del alvearismo y el discurso de la memoria revolucionaria en Yucatán

**Table 2:** Main characteristics of scielo review studies.

Autor(es)	Base de datos	Lengua de publicación	Nombre de la publicación
(Sánchez y Loyola, 2021)	Scielo	Español	Análisis bibliométrico de las generaciones etarias
(Gaspar, Ronquillo, Robles y Paucar, 2021)	Scielo	Español	Aprendizaje permanente en millennials para renovar la praxis jurídica en generación digital
(Zavala y Frías, 2018)	Scielo	Español	Discurso millennial y desafíos en la gestión de recursos humanos en Chile
(Cobián y Estrada, 2023)	Scielo	Español	Percepcion de los millennials sobre el fondo para el retiro
(Forero, 2023)	Scielo	Español	Valoración de la gestión pública de la cultura: análisis en tres llamadas
(Calderón, Braga y Arana, 2022)	Scielo	Español	Control interno y la modernización del Estado en un gobierno regional e institución educativa peruana
(Chávez y Heredia, 2024)	Scielo	Español	Modernización de la Gestión Pública en los diferentes niveles de gobierno, una revisión literaria
(Akawie, Cuesta y Lara, 2023)	Scielo	Español	Millennials: El fin de los sueños. Una revisión acerca de la situación de la Generación Y en Latinoamérica y el mundo
(Gutiérrez, 2019)	Scielo	Español	Percepciones, imágenes y opiniones sobre la vejez desde la mirada de los adultos y jóvenes en México
(Piña y Gómez, 2019)	Scielo	Español	Envejecimiento y género: Reconstruyendo los roles sociales de las personas mayores en los cuidados

In relation to the percentage distribution of the selected research by database, Figure 2 shows that 67% of the articles come from the Scopus database, while the remaining 33% correspond to Scielo. This reflects a predominance of Scopus as the main source of the scientific resources used, which may be associated with the robustness and recognition of this database in the academic field.



**Figure 2:** Percentage of scientific resources by database.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the selected scientific resources by year of publication. The highest percentage of articles corresponds to the year 2024, with 43.33% of the total. The rest of the articles are distributed more evenly among the previous years, with 2023 being the year with the second highest contribution (20%), while the years 2017, 2018 and 2022 present the lowest number of selected publications (3.33% each). This data highlights the relevance of the most recent scientific production in the analysis.

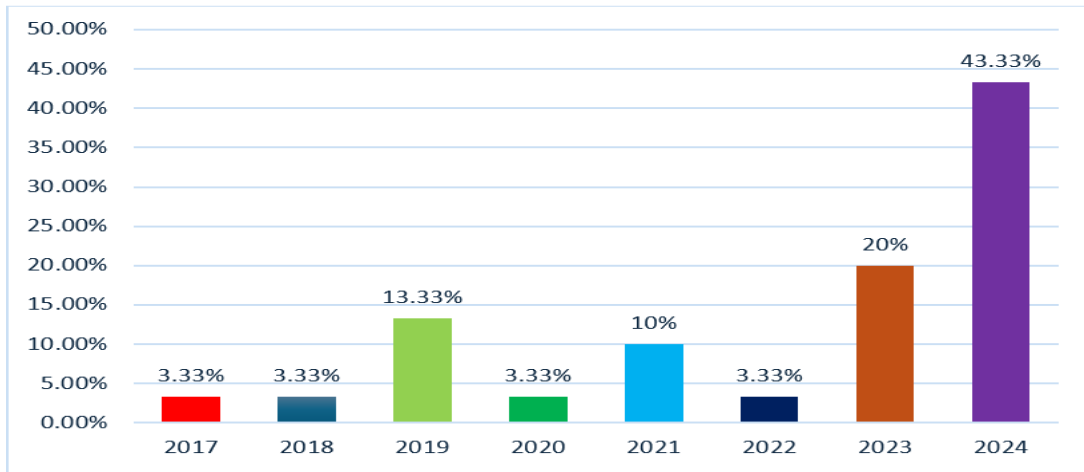


Figure 3: Number of scientific resources per year.

Regarding the language of the scientific resources, Figure 4 shows that 60% of the selected articles are written in English, while 40% are in Spanish. This evidences a trend towards the predominant use of scientific literature in English, which generally has a broader scope and greater international visibility compared to production in other languages.

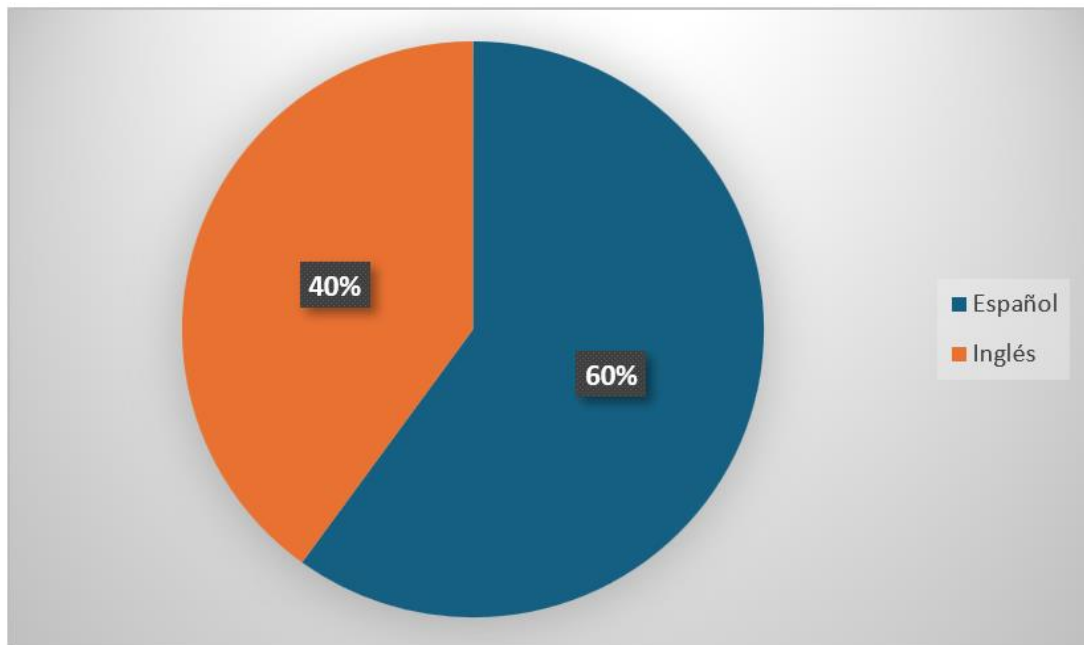


Figure 4: Number of scientific resources by language.

In relation to the reconciled results, it is agreed that generational differences in the public sector, particularly between generation X and millennials, represent significant challenges in terms of technology, traditional management methods and administration. These differences not only reflect gaps in competencies and labor expectations, but also in the way each generation relates to digital transformation and modernization processes in the public sector (Chávez and Heredia, 2024). While millennials tend to adapt quickly to advanced technological tools, Generation X may show resistance to these changes due to their preference for traditional methods, which limits administrative efficiency (Zavala and Frías, 2018).

In terms of technology management, millennials are considered digital natives, which allows them to master technological tools with relative ease. According to Gaspar et al. (2021), this ability facilitates the renewal of traditional bureaucratic processes in the public sector, promoting greater agility in management. In contrast, Generation X, who did not grow up in a technological environment, may face a steeper learning curve, delaying the implementation of digital solutions in their work areas (Lee and Circella, 2019). This generates intergenerational tensions that affect the work climate and institutional productivity.

In addition, the traditional methods used by generation X in management and administration tend to prioritize structured and hierarchical processes, which contrasts with the collaborative and horizontal approach that millennials prefer to

implement. Rubio et al. (2021) point out that this difference in work styles can generate conflicts in decision-making and in the distribution of responsibilities. Millennials, by prioritizing innovation and flexibility, tend to

question the rigid regulations and slow procedures that characterize the public sector, which is perceived by generation X as a lack of respect for tradition and experience.

Perceptions of modernization also vary considerably. Calderón et al. (2022) stress that the modernization of the State requires the integration of digital technologies to optimize processes, a proposal mostly supported by millennials, who see in this modernization an opportunity to transform the public sector into a more efficient and accessible space. On the other hand, generation X tends to perceive these transformations as a threat to proven methods and institutional stability (Chávez and Heredia, 2024).

In terms of leadership and human talent management, generational differences are also evident. Krause and Park (2024) note that millennials value social equity and diversity in the work environment, prioritizing participative and transparent leadership. This contrasts with the more traditional Generation X approach, which often relies on a rigid hierarchical structure, which can limit the inclusion of new ideas and perspectives in the public sector (Akawie et al., 2023).

Human resource management is another area where these differences are clearly manifested. Zavala and Frías (2018) identify that millennials have expectations of rapid professional growth, access to continuous training and constant feedback. These demands are not always met in a public sector that, according to Piña and Gómez (2019), continues to prioritize work structures designed for previous generations, such as long-term job stability and traditional benefits.

In relation to the administration of public policies, Xu et al. (2024) point out that millennials tend to be more involved in participatory processes, demanding transparency and accountability in management. This contrasts with generation X, which prefers more formal and less open approaches, which may generate a disconnect between the two groups when defining strategies and priorities in the public sector.

Challenges in intergenerational integration also affect cohesion within public institutions. According to Cobián and Estrada (2023), millennials often perceive the public sector as a not very dynamic and rigid space, which contrasts with their desire to work in agile and results-oriented environments. On the other hand, Gutiérrez (2019) notes that generation X often perceives millennials as impatient and disengaged with established structures, which hinders effective collaboration.

Regarding the impact of these differences on organizational culture, Ambrose and Siddiki (2024) argue that Generation X and millennials have divergent views on the purpose of work in the public sector. While the former focus on stability and rule compliance, the latter seek direct and meaningful social impact. This reflects a lack of alignment in work values and priorities between the two generations.

Finally, Farmer (2024) stresses that overcoming these generational gaps requires adaptive public management that fosters technological training, mutual understanding and respect for differences. This will involve not only the modernization of processes, but also the creation of an environment that allows harmonious coexistence between both generations, taking advantage of the best of each group for the development of the public sector.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

From the review conducted, it is concluded that generational differences in the public sector, particularly between generation X and millennials, represent a significant challenge for the modernization and efficient management of institutions. These differences are manifested in aspects such as technology management, where millennials show greater adaptability, while generation X tends to prefer traditional methods, which can slow down digital transformation processes. Likewise, differences in work approaches, with millennials leaning towards flexibility and collaboration, contrast with the hierarchical and rigid structure predominant in traditional methods.

Modernizing the public sector requires overcoming these intergenerational barriers through strategies that foster mutual understanding, technological training and the integration of innovative approaches. Although millennials have

driven changes towards a more participatory and dynamic approach, the entrenchment of traditional practices limits the impact of these transformations. This highlights the need for structured planning to effectively integrate new technologies and modern work approaches.

In addition, it is essential to promote a work environment that facilitates intergenerational cohesion, taking advantage of the strengths of each group to improve efficiency and institutional performance. This implies implementing inclusive policies, continuous training programs and leadership models that promote both innovation and respect for accumulated experience. In this sense, a cultural change is needed within the public sector that allows the harmonious coexistence of the different generations.

Finally, these differences represent not only challenges, but also opportunities to strengthen the public sector. The integration of technological skills, together with a balanced approach between tradition and innovation, can transform these institutions into more dynamic, accessible spaces that are prepared to face the challenges of a constantly changing world. In this way, taking advantage of generational differences can contribute to the development of a more efficient and adaptive public management.

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