


# Chapter 5

## Managing Five-Generational Workforces Amid Labour Shortages and Technological Change

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter examines the management of five-generational workforces amid labour shortages and technological transformation in OECD countries. Drawing from interdisciplinary research spanning organisational studies, psychology, sociology, economics, and human resource management, it analyses how organisations can leverage age diversity while addressing staffing shortfalls and technological disruption. The analysis operates at macro (societal/policy), meso (sectoral), and micro (organisational/individual) levels, revealing that effective management approaches view technology as augmenting rather than replacing human labour. Key findings suggest successful organisations implement age-inclusive practices, formalise knowledge transfer mechanisms, adapt workplaces ergonomically, and foster intergenerational collaboration. The chapter concludes that workplaces cultivating complementarity between different generations' strengths while supporting inclusive technological adoption are best positioned to thrive in rapidly evolving labour markets.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In many OECD countries, workplaces now encompass as many as five distinct generations of employees, from those who began their careers in the post-war era to digital natives just entering the labour market. This unprecedented age diversity coincides with two significant trends reshaping work environments: persistent labour shortages and the rapid adoption of productivity-enhancing technologies. Labour shortages have become acute in the wake of demographic changes (such as population ageing) and socio-economic shocks (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), leading to tight labour markets and challenges in filling vacancies (Handel, 2024). At the same time, organisations are increasingly turning to advanced technologies – such as automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) – to boost productivity and compensate for workforce gaps (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017; International Federation of Robotics [IFR], 2023).

The convergence of a five-generational workforce with labour shortages and technological change raises complex management questions. How can organisations leverage the unique strengths and perspectives of each generation to mitigate staffing shortfalls? In what ways do older and younger workers differentially adapt to or resist new technologies, and how can employers support all age groups through digital transformations? What policies at the national or sectoral level can address demographic challenges while fostering inclusive technological progress? This chapter examines these questions through an interdisciplinary lens, integrating insights from organisational studies, work psychology, sociology, labour economics, and human resource management (HRM).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Multigenerational Workforce Dynamics**

Early research on generational differences in the workplace gained popularity in both academic and practitioner literature, often characterising each cohort (Traditionalists or Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials or Generation Y, and Generation Z) with distinct work values, attitudes, and behaviours. Common depictions suggest, for example, that Baby Boomers (born roughly 1946–1964) value loyalty and stability, Generation X (1965–1980) prizes independence, Millennials (1981–1996) seek meaningful work and feedback, and Generation Z (1997–2012) are digitally savvy and expect rapid advancement (Parry & Urwin, 2011). However, a critical review by Parry and Urwin (2011) found that much of this narrative was

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