THE 20TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION
REALITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

Generational Perspectives on Work-Life Balance in Romania: A Cross-Sectional Study

Ciprian Manea[1]

Abstract: The paper analyzes generational differences regarding work–life balance in Romania, based on a quantitative study targeting four generations active in the labor market: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z. The research explores eight critical dimensions – ranging from financial and social benefits to perceptions of the healthcare system, working hours, and social rights – with the aim of understanding the priorities, expectations, and satisfaction levels of each generation in relation to current working conditions. The findings highlight clear trends: younger generations prioritize flexibility and personal well-being, while older generations value stability and economic security. The study also reveals that Romania faces a significant gap compared to European standards in terms of work–life balance, a fact supported by international studies. The paper proposes avenues for intervention through public policies, organizational initiatives, and educational strategies designed to harmonize the diverse needs of active generations and contribute to a more balanced and sustainable organizational culture.

Keywords: Work-life balance; Generational analysis; Labor market; Human resources; Public policy

1. Introduction

Work-life balance (WLB) is a central determinant of productivity, well-being, and long-term social development. Romania's persistent position at the bottom of the European rankings suggests systemic gaps not only in labor policies but also in employer practices. This research investigates generational patterns in WLB preferences and perceptions, identifying both structural issues and cultural disparities. The paper aims to contribute to the theoretical framework on intergenerational dynamics and offer actionable recommendations for policy and business.

2. Methodology

In order to analyze generational perceptions of various work-related benefits, an online questionnaire was developed and distributed across multiple digital platforms. Unlike traditional demographic segmentation, this study structured responses around the four generational cohorts currently active in the labor market. The questionnaire included a consistent set of core questions related to key

[1] Senior Lecturer, School of Global Business & Leadership, Danubius International University, Romania, Address: Galati, Blvd. 3, 800654 Galati, Romania, Corresponding author: ciprianmanea@univ-danubius.ro.

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial (CC BY NC) license
(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)

employment topics—paid leave and public holidays, sick leave and salary/allowance benefits, maternity and paternity leave, and the minimum wage. The central innovation of the research design was to collect and analyze responses in a generation-specific manner, allowing for a comparative understanding of how each cohort perceives these employment benefits.

The study gathered a total of 222 responses, distributed as follows: 17 from Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), 89 from Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980), 73 from Millennials or Generation Y (born between 1981 and 1996), and 43 from Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012). This segmentation enabled a more nuanced examination of generational attitudes and expectations regarding work-life benefits, offering valuable insights for policymakers and employers seeking to tailor benefits packages to diverse workforce needs.

3. Generational Analysis – Perception of Paid Leave and Public Holiday Benefits

A cross-generational analysis reveals distinct attitudes toward paid leave and public holidays among different age cohorts:

- **Baby Boomers (BB)** exhibit high satisfaction, with 58.8% reporting being very satisfied and 35.3% satisfied. Only 5.9% are dissatisfied. This suggests a strong appreciation for structured and stable benefits.
- **Generation X** shows a more moderate level of satisfaction: 52.8% very satisfied and 25.8% satisfied. A notable 16.9% are neutral, while 4.4% express dissatisfaction. This indicates a growing openness to alternative or more flexible benefit structures.
- **Generation Y (Millennials)** demonstrates the lowest rate of "very satisfied" responses (47.9%), with 26% satisfied, 16.4% neutral, and a combined 9.6% dissatisfied. This may reflect shifting expectations and a preference for more personalized or flexible benefits.
- **Generation Z** is the most satisfied group, with 61.5% very satisfied and 18.6% satisfied. A neutral stance is held by 16%, while only 2.3% express dissatisfaction. This points to a broad acceptance of current benefit models and a potential appreciation for traditional employment rights.

These findings highlight generational differences in benefit expectations, with younger generations showing both satisfaction and signs of evolving priorities.

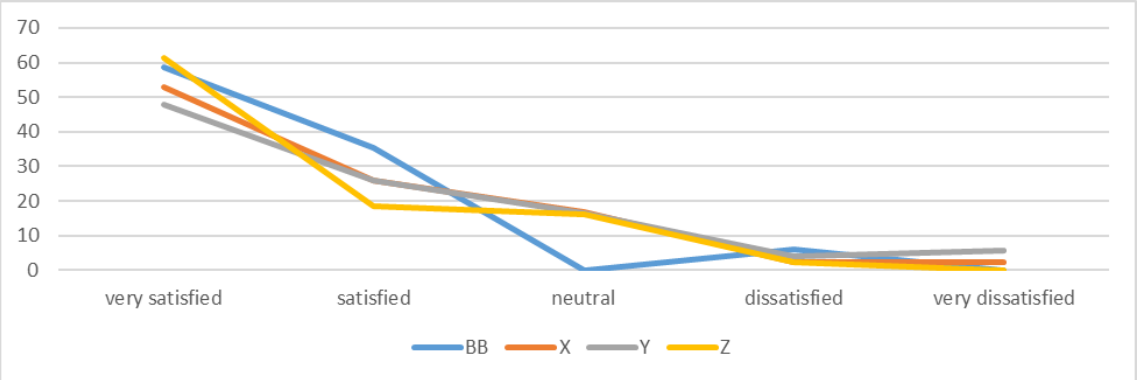


Figure 1. centralization of answers to the question: How important are the current benefits related to the number of vacation days and legal holidays for you?

Similarities Across Generations:

All generations display a high level of satisfaction with paid leave and public holiday benefits, suggesting that these are still regarded as essential and valuable workplace perks. Notably, the percentage of neutral responses is consistent across Generations X, Y, and Z, indicating a potential shift in how these benefits are prioritized compared to other aspects of work.

Differences Between Generations:

- **Baby Boomers** and **Generation Z** are the most satisfied groups, indicating a strong preference for stability and the preservation of traditional employment rights.
- **Generation Y (Millennials)** shows the highest level of dissatisfaction, suggesting a desire for more flexibility or alternative benefits aligned with their lifestyle.
- **Generation X** sits in the middle, showing appreciation for paid leave but also openness to change and innovation in benefit structures.

Potential Causes:

Cultural and Generational Factors:

- Baby Boomers came of age during a time when traditional benefits were perceived as critical to job security and workplace stability.
- Generations Y and Z were shaped by different cultural values, with greater emphasis on flexibility, autonomy, and work-life balance.

Workplace Evolution:

- Millennials and, to a lesser extent, Gen Z, may view paid leave as a standardized entitlement that falls short in meeting the needs of a digitally connected and rapidly evolving workplace environment.

Solutions and Recommendations:

Customization of Benefits: Offer personalized benefits packages that go beyond standard leave policies to include options such as unpaid leave, additional days off for personal needs, or mental health days.

Communication and Awareness: Organize informative sessions to demonstrate how traditional benefits like paid leave can be effectively integrated into one's professional life, particularly for younger employees who may undervalue these offerings.

Flexible Work Arrangements: Introduce flexible work schedules, including remote work and compressed workweeks, especially for Generations Y and Z. These strategies can help mitigate dissatisfaction with traditional benefits and align workplace offerings with generational expectations. Implementing such measures may lead to increased employee satisfaction across all age groups and foster a more balanced and productive work environment.

4. Generational Analysis – Perception of sick leave and salary/allowance benefits

Baby Boomers (BB):

- **Very satisfied (52.9%) & Satisfied (17.6%)**: A large portion of this generation highly values financial security during medical leave, reflecting a strong appreciation for these benefits.
- **Neutral (17.6%)**: An equal percentage is neutral, suggesting that some may not view this benefit as critical.
- **Dissatisfied (11.8%) & Very dissatisfied (0%)**: While some dissatisfaction exists, the lack of extreme discontent indicates this is not a major concern.

Generation X:

- **Very satisfied (40.4%) & Satisfied (23.6%)**: Slightly less satisfied than BB, but still a majority shows appreciation. This difference might stem from shifting views on financial stability or evolving personal priorities.
- **Neutral (18%)**: A similar percentage to BB, suggesting that these benefits are seen as standard.
- **Dissatisfied (12.4%) & Very dissatisfied (5.6%)**: A higher level of dissatisfaction than BB, possibly reflecting higher expectations or unmet needs.

Generation Y (Millennials):

- **Very satisfied (32.9%) & Satisfied (34.2%)**: The lowest rate of "very satisfied", but a significant number are still generally satisfied. This shows appreciation, though with less enthusiasm.
- **Neutral (17.8%)**: Consistent with other generations, implying this benefit is not seen as a decisive factor.
- **Dissatisfied (8.2%) & Very dissatisfied (6.8%)**: Similar to Gen X, but a slightly higher proportion are "very dissatisfied", possibly due to how these benefits are managed or perceived.

Generation Z:

- **Very satisfied (65.1%) & Satisfied (18.6%)**: The highest satisfaction level across all generations, showing strong appreciation for financial protection during medical leave. This may reflect concern for job security.
- **Neutral (11.6%)**: A relatively low number, indicating broad agreement on the benefit's importance.
- **Dissatisfied (4.7%) & Very dissatisfied (0%)**: Very few complaints, suggesting high overall satisfaction with these benefits.

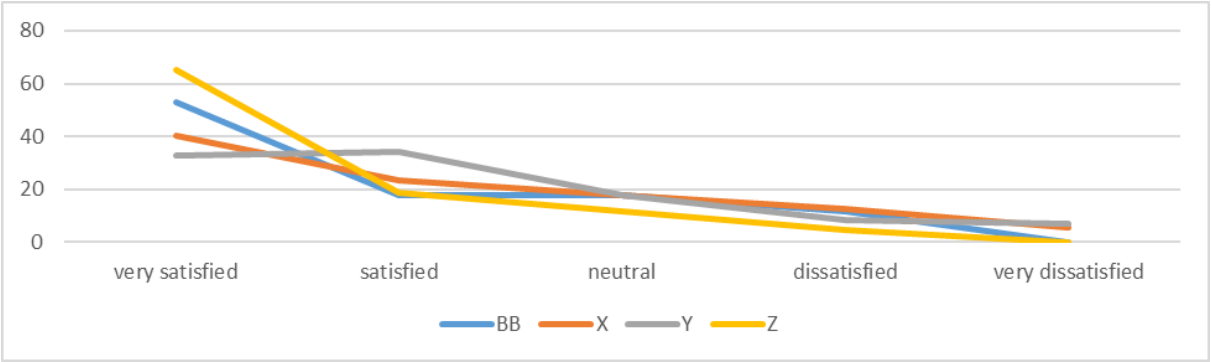


Figure 2. Centralization of answers to the question: How important are the current benefits related to sick leave and salary/allowance to you during this period?

Key Observations

Similarities Across Generations:

- All generations report a significant percentage of satisfaction, indicating that medical leave and salary-related benefits are seen as important.
- The percentage of neutral responses is relatively constant, implying that while valued, these benefits are not seen as pivotal by all employees.

Differences Between Generations:

- **Gen Z** shows the highest satisfaction, highlighting a strong preference for stability.
- **Gen Y and Gen X** are less satisfied compared to BB and Gen Z, possibly indicating a need for more options or flexibility.
- **Baby Boomers** remain highly satisfied but still show notable dissatisfaction (11.8%), pointing to possible concerns with benefit administration.

Potential Causes

Generational and Economic Factors:

- **Baby Boomers** value these benefits based on their workplace experiences where job security and financial stability were paramount.
- **Gen Z** may prioritize these benefits due to economic uncertainty and a desire for protection from financial risks.
- **Gen X and Gen Y** may perceive traditional sick leave as insufficient in meeting their broader expectations, such as increased flexibility or additional compensatory benefits.

Workplace and Benefit Evolution:

- The perception of what defines an attractive benefit has shifted. For Gen X and Y, the focus may be more on workplace flexibility and additional insurance options rather than traditional sick leave alone.

Recommendations

1. Personalized Benefit Packages:

- Introduce more flexible options, such as additional insurance coverage, paid absence compensation, and other financial support mechanisms.

2. Transparent Communication:

- Clearly inform employees of their rights and available benefits, along with how to access them, to reduce dissatisfaction and enhance satisfaction.

3. Enhanced Sick Leave Conditions:

- Consider offering fully paid medical leave for a certain period or additional support for long-term illness, in line with the expectations of younger generations.

5. Generational Analysis – Perception of Maternity and Paternity Leave Benefits

Baby Boomers (BB)

- **Very Satisfied (35.3%) and Satisfied (35.3%)**: Approximately 70% of Baby Boomers report being either very satisfied or satisfied with current maternity/paternity leave benefits. This indicates a reasonable level of appreciation, although less enthusiastic than younger generations.
- **Neutral (11.8%)**: A relatively small neutral segment suggests that most respondents have a clear opinion on the matter.
- **Dissatisfied (0%) and Very Dissatisfied (17.6%)**: While no respondents report being simply dissatisfied, the significant percentage of "very dissatisfied" individuals reveals a polarized perception within the generation.

Generation X

- **Very Satisfied (27%) and Satisfied (21.3%)**: Generation X shows the **lowest overall satisfaction** (48.3% combined), suggesting higher expectations or unmet needs regarding maternity/paternity-related benefits.
- **Neutral (20.2%)**: A notable proportion appears uncertain or indifferent, possibly indicating disengagement or ambivalence toward the current offerings.
- **Dissatisfied (13.5%) and Very Dissatisfied (18%)**: Gen X reports the **highest combined level of dissatisfaction**, underlining a considerable degree of discontent with existing benefits.

Generation Y (Millennials)

- **Very Satisfied (44.4%) and Satisfied (23.6%)**: Millennials demonstrate strong appreciation (68% satisfied or very satisfied), reflecting a heightened emphasis on work-life balance.
- **Neutral (18.1%)**: Roughly one in five respondents remain neutral, aligning with trends seen in other age groups.
- **Dissatisfied (6.9%) and Very Dissatisfied (6.9%)**: Overall dissatisfaction is significantly lower than in Gen X, indicating greater contentment with current benefits.

Generation Z

- **Very Satisfied (57.1%) and Satisfied (23.8%)**: Gen Z emerges as the **most satisfied cohort**, with over 80% expressing positive opinions. This underscores a strong appreciation for the support and stability these benefits provide.
- **Neutral (7.1%)**: The **lowest neutral percentage** across all generations, indicating clearly formed views.

- **Dissatisfied (4.8%) and Very Dissatisfied (7.1%)**: Relatively low levels of dissatisfaction reflect general approval of the policies.

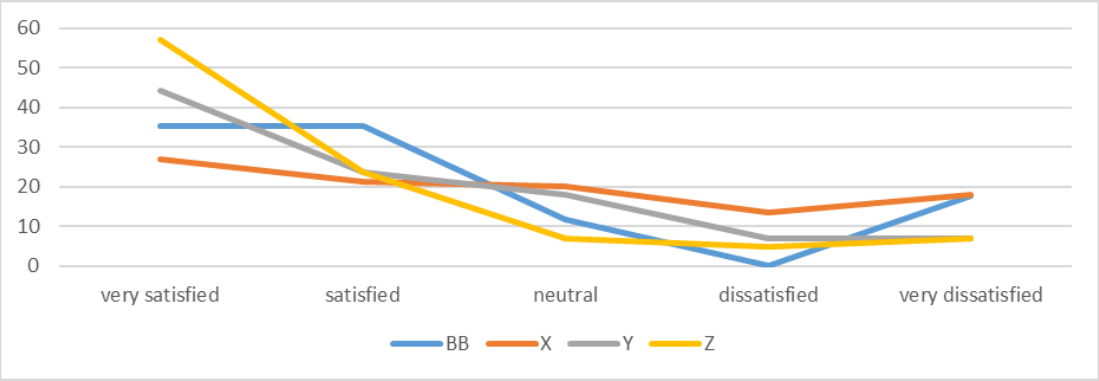


Figure 3. Centralization of answers to the question: How important are the current benefits related to maternity/paternity leave and the payment of salary/indemnity during this period for you?

Key Insights and Interpretations

Similarities Across Generations:

- A considerable share of each generation expresses satisfaction with maternity/paternity leave benefits, suggesting general approval of the system.
- The neutral stance ranges between 7.1% and 20.2%, hinting that for some individuals, these benefits are either standard or non-influential in their work-life equation.

Intergenerational Differences:

- **Gen Z and Millennials** display the highest satisfaction levels, likely valuing family-friendly policies and holistic approaches to work-life balance.
- **Gen X** stands out for its **notable dissatisfaction**, possibly reflecting unmet needs or growing frustrations.
- **Baby Boomers** show a **bifurcated attitude**, with a split between strong satisfaction and strong dissatisfaction—possibly due to divergent personal priorities regarding work and family.

Possible Root Causes

Cultural and Social Factors:

- Gen Z and Millennials increasingly prioritize well-being and personal life integration, viewing these benefits as crucial components of a modern employment package.
- Gen X may experience mounting pressure in balancing careers and family responsibilities, and thus find existing benefits insufficient or misaligned with their current life stage.

Differences in Priorities:

- Baby Boomers may hold a more traditional perspective, valuing financial stability and work consistency over parental leave benefits, which might explain the polarization in responses.

Recommendations and Solutions

1. Tailoring Benefits by Generation

- Develop customizable benefits packages that address generational needs more accurately—e.g., extended leave durations for younger employees, or financial alternatives for Gen X professionals.

2. Enhancing Leave Policy Flexibility

- Introduce flexible parental leave models, allowing for shared leave between partners or offering options in compensation type. Such changes may particularly boost satisfaction among Gen X employees.

3. Improving Communication and Support

- Ensure clear, proactive communication regarding available benefits and provide supportive measures for employees preparing for parental leave. This can enhance trust and satisfaction across all age groups.

6. Generational Analysis – Perception of the minimum wage

Baby Boomers (BB Generation)

- **Very Satisfied (76.5%)**: A strikingly high percentage of this generation is very satisfied with the current minimum wage level. This suggests that most Baby Boomers view the minimum wage as an important point of economic stability.
- **Satisfied (5.9%)**: A very small percentage is merely satisfied, which implies that among those who are not highly satisfied, the rest are either neutral or dissatisfied.
- **Neutral (11.8%)**: A small proportion holds a neutral opinion, which may indicate either indifference or an acceptance of the status quo.
- **Dissatisfied (5.9%) and Very Dissatisfied (0%)**: The percentage of dissatisfaction is low, and the complete absence of those who are very dissatisfied reflects a generally high level of satisfaction among Baby Boomers.

Generation X

- **Very Satisfied (39.3%) and Satisfied (21.3%)**: Only 60.6% of Gen X respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the minimum wage. This is the lowest satisfaction rate among all generations, indicating a more critical perspective toward wage policies.
- **Neutral (20.2%)**: A relatively large proportion of neutral responses suggests uncertainty or a perceived lack of direct impact of the minimum wage on this generation.
- **Dissatisfied (11.2%) and Very Dissatisfied (7.9%)**: Gen X has the highest dissatisfaction rates, signaling notable discontent with the government's minimum wage level.

Generation Y (Millennials)

- **Very Satisfied (49.3%) and Satisfied (23.3%)**: Millennials display a relatively strong level of satisfaction, with 72.6% satisfied or very satisfied. This likely reflects appreciation for basic economic support measures.
- **Neutral (8.2%)**: The lowest rate of neutral responses among all generations, suggesting that Millennials have strong opinions about the minimum wage.

- **Dissatisfied (11%) and Very Dissatisfied (8.2%)**: Still, a significant level of dissatisfaction exists, pointing to higher expectations or discontent with the current wage level.

Generation Z

- **Very Satisfied (62.8%) and Satisfied (16.3%)**: Gen Z ranks second in satisfaction with the minimum wage, with a combined 79.1%. This indicates high appreciation for the economic stability the wage provides.
- **Neutral (9.3%)**: Similar to Millennials, a relatively small percentage is neutral, showing that Gen Z has well-formed views on the issue.
- **Dissatisfied (4.7%) and Very Dissatisfied (7%)**: Dissatisfaction levels are relatively low, suggesting that most of Gen Z finds the current minimum wage acceptable or reasonable.

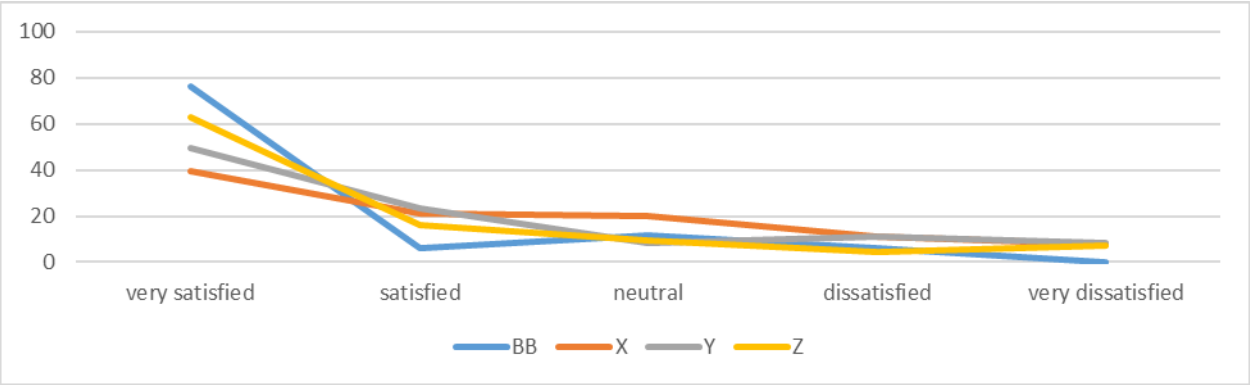


Figure 4. Centralization of answers to the question: How important is the level of the minimum wage established by the Government for you?

Observations and Interpretations

Similarities Across Generations:

- All generations show a significant percentage of "very satisfied" respondents, which indicates that the minimum wage is generally perceived as adequate or important for financial stability.
- The neutral response rate remains relatively low across all generations, suggesting that people tend to have clear opinions on the matter.

Differences Across Generations:

- **Baby Boomers** are the most satisfied with the current minimum wage, possibly due to their need for increased financial stability as they approach or enter retirement.
- **Generation X** shows the highest dissatisfaction, reflecting the view that the minimum wage may be inadequate to meet living costs and financial obligations.
- **Generation Z** shows high appreciation for the minimum wage, possibly due to their early career stage or emerging values around economic fairness and security.

Potential Causes

Career Stage Differences:

- **Generation Z** and **Millennials** are likely closer to the beginning of their professional journeys, where the minimum wage has a more direct financial impact.
- **Baby Boomers** may value the minimum wage for the guaranteed income stability it provides during a transition toward retirement.
- **Generation X** may be under greater financial pressure—supporting families or paying mortgages—making the minimum wage seem insufficient for their responsibilities.

Perception of Economic Fairness:

- **Generations Y and Z** may view the minimum wage as a measure of economic justice and equality, explaining their high satisfaction.
- **Generation X** may regard it as inadequate for ensuring a decent standard of living, particularly in light of rising expenses for housing and family needs.

Solutions and Recommendations

► Periodic Review of the Minimum Wage

- Propose regular reviews of the minimum wage to ensure it keeps pace with inflation and the cost of living. This could especially help reduce dissatisfaction among Generation X.

► Financial Literacy Campaigns

- Implement financial education programs to help employees better manage their personal finances, thereby softening the impact of earning minimum wage. This would be particularly beneficial for generations under higher financial pressure.

► Supplemental Benefits Packages

- Address dissatisfaction by offering additional benefit packages such as performance bonuses or non-monetary perks (e.g., extra vacation days). These could enhance overall satisfaction and complement the base salary.

Conclusions

A multigenerational workforce requires flexible, adaptive, and individualized benefit systems. Employers and public institutions must align their strategies to support diverse needs while encouraging sustainable labor engagement. Educational interventions and legislative clarity are essential to shift Romania closer to European norms in work-life quality.

Bibliography

https://remote.com/resources/research/european-life-work-balance-index.

Parry, E., & Battista, V. (2019). Generation Z: What we know and what we need to know. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 30(22), 1–27.

Lu, Y. (2023). Intergenerational differences in attitudes toward social policies: Evidence from Europe. *Journal of Social Policy*, 52(1), 45–66.

Chan, R. C. H.; Ho, J. W., & Tam, K. Y. (2020). Wage perceptions and expectations across generations: A comparative study in post-industrial economies. *Work, Employment and Society*, 34(5), 801–818.

World Economic Forum (2021). *The Future of Jobs Report 2021*.

OECD (2023). Paid parental leave: Big differences for mothers and fathers. Retrieved from https://oecdstatistics.blog/2023/01/12/paid-parental-leave-big-differences-for-mothers-and-fathers/oecdstatistics.blog.

The Times (2025). Minimum wage is socialist policy that fosters dependency on state. Retrieved from https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/minimum-wage-is-socialist-policy-that-fosters-dependency-on-state-s0l0rq3gpThe Times.