Generation Zero:
online activism & political engagement in NZ

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Generation Zero
a youth-led organisation

FIX OUR FUTURE
WE HAVE THE TOOLS. LET'S USE THEM.

It was founded with the central purpose of providing solutions for New Zealand to cut carbon pollution through smarter transport, liveable cities & independence from fossil fuels

All we want for Christmas is a fair go for light rail

www.generationzero.org.nz/wellington

The Constable Connection

Fast For Welling

TELL AUCKLAND TRANSPORT WE NEED SEPARATED CYCLEWAYS

SIGN THE PETITION!

Not like this.

Like this.

World's most liveable city?

Generation Zero

Current Campaigns

Support PROTECTED CYCLE LANES on KARANGAHAPE ROAD

THE BIG ASK

One Key Step for Real Climate Action

FAST FORWARD WELLINGTON

FIX OUR FUTURE

congestion free network

the research project

Membership/network survey:

- to establish a *profile* of Generation Zero's membership/network
- to understand the network's *level of engagement* with *climate change* issues
- to assess the network's *level of political engagement* and participation.

Survey B	495	174 (35.15%)	46 (9.29%)
Survey A	491	170 (34.62%)	54 (11.00%)
Survey Final	7162	2424 (33.85%)	773 (10.79%)

…the empirical context

- ….within the field of *online activism & political participation*

- …. focused on international organisations such as **MoveOn.org** (US), **avaaz.org** (global) & **GetUp!** (Australia)

- ….. GenZero shares characteristics with these organisations & may offer new ways for young New Zealanders to engage in citizen political participation

generation zero

…theoretical framework

WHO ARE THE MILLENNIALS?

#Activism
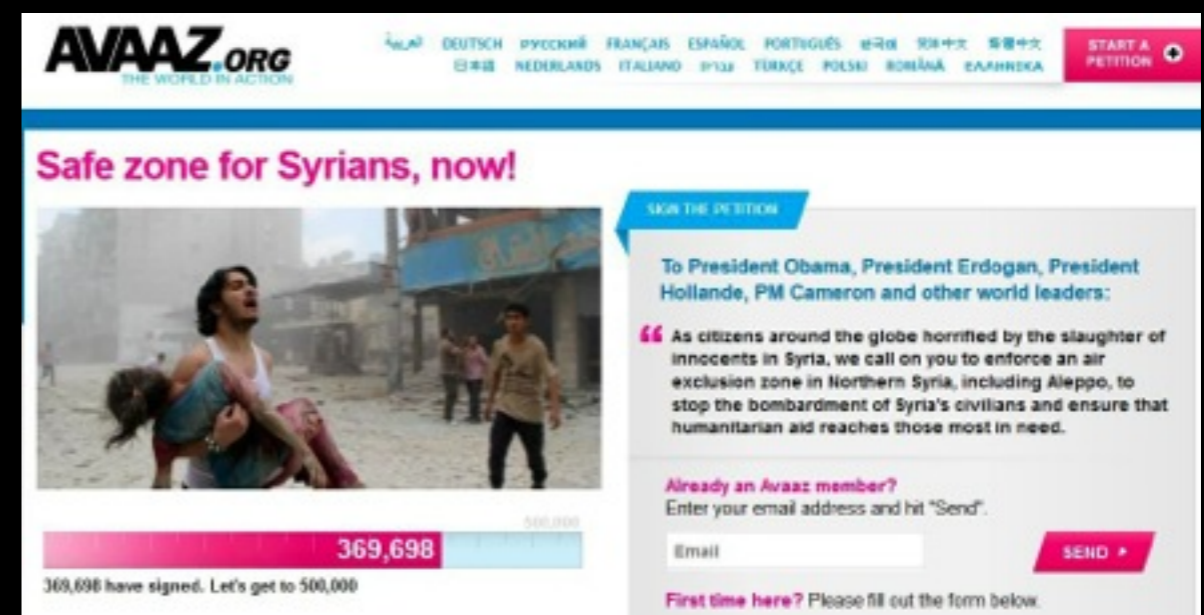
- Civic engagement: civil society, political engagement, participatory decision making, public sphere/e-democracy/progressive politics, sphericules? (Putnam, 2000; Friedland, 2006; Backhouse, 2007; Rassmussen, 2013

- Youth & political engagement: engagement (youth perspective) vs. disengagement (distrust, invalid views, lacks of options/weak policies, apathy, marginalization) voter turnout, Millenials… (Henn et al, 2002; Fyfe, 2009; Farthing, 2010)

- Internet mediated activism, online activism (symbolic power, visual labour, slacktivism) vs. offline activism (mobilization), hybrid-interest groups (Chadwick, 2007); novel forms of political engagement..connective action (Bennett and Segerberg); storytelling (Vromen, 2013)

key findings

- Generation Zero's network:
  - significantly homogenous
    - across several demographic indicators:
      - age
      - geographic location
      - socio-economic class
      - political preference
- Generation Zero network is politically engaged and highly supportive of pro-climate policies and rhetoric.

demographics

- **Gender**: Female (54%) Male (46%) **Age**: 73.1% under 40

- **Ethnicity:** Pākehā **81.8%** ('Other': 12.4%; Māori: 6.4%)

- **Occupation**: Managerial/professional (27.7%); Student (30.7%) - clerical/admin (5.3%)+parent (1.9%)+labourer (1.0%) +technical/trade (2.2%)+unemployed (2.2%) - **Total: 12.6%**

- **Income**: 80-100K (8.4%); 100K (6.5%); 120K+ (17.2%) - **Total: 32.1%)**

- **Location**: Auckland (56.9%) Auckland Isthmus (38.5%)

political engagement

- **Enrollment:** 95.7% (93.4% general roll; 2.3% Māori roll)

- **National average under 40**: 84.21%; **Auckland Central**: 60.54%

- **Political Preference**:

Political Party	Support
Greens	74.7%
Labour	8.1%
National	5.3%
Internet-Mana	3.0%
None	7.6%
Others	1.0%

main issues

- **Main Issues**: 'environment' (81.4%); wealth inequality (57.2%); education (44.2%); poverty (39.2%);housing affordability (32.1%)

Political Support	Main Issues		
Greens	Environment (87.3%)	Wealth Inequality (60.8%)	Education (43.1%)
Labour	**Environment (57.1%)**	**Education (51.8%)**	**Wealth Inequality (50%)**
National	**Education (54.1%)**	Environment (51.4%)	Economy (45.9%)
Internet-Mana	Environment (76.2%)	Wealth Inequality (61.9%)	Poverty (57.1%)
None	Environment (75%)	Housing Affordability (50%)	Wealth Inequality (50%)

influence, political behaviour, media usage

Lifestyle Influence

	Greens	I-M	LAB	NAT	NONE
Friends and family	44.4%	**33.3%**	44.6%	43.2%	47.2%
Online networks	10.8%	9.5%	7.1%	10.8%	9.4%
NGOs/ community groups	11.6%	9.5%	10.7%	**0.0%**	5.7%
Politicians	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	**8.1%**	0.0%
Scientists	23.9%	28.6%	30.4%	29.7%	30.2%
The media	3.3%	**14.3%**	5.4%	8.1%	7.5%

political behaviour & influence

Political Influence

	Greens	I-M	LAB	NAT	NONE
Friends and family	28.4%	19.0%	25.0%	**48.6%**	22.6%
Online networks	24.5%	19.0%	19.6%	**10.8%**	20.8%
NGOs/ community	19.3%	19.0%	14.3%	**2.7%**	18.9%
Politicians	5.2%	0.0%	3.6%	**16.2%**	3.8%
Scientists	11.6%	28.6%	10.7%	**5.4%**	20.8%
The media	3.5%	9.5%	10.7%	**13.5%**	7.5%

political behaviour & influence

How likely are you to attend a public meeting?

	Greens	I-M	LAB	NAT	NONE
Extremely unlikely	0.6%	4.8%	1.8%	8.1%	0.0%
Unlikely	8.3%	4.8%	14.3%	5.4%	17.0%
Neutral	23.0%	14.3%	30.4%	40.5%	20.8%
Likely	**43.4%**	**57.1%**	**42.9%**	**37.8%**	**37.7%**
Extremely likely	24.1%	19.0%	10.7%	8.1%	24.5%

generation zero media consumption

Daily Media Use

	Greens	I-M	LAB	NAT	NONE
TV	26.8%	**9.5%**	50.0%	51.4%	24.5%
Radio	40.5%	28.6%	44.6%	43.2%	22.6%
Newspapers	**43.4%**	**61.9%**	**62.5%**	**56.8%**	**47.2%**
Books	**36.7%**	**47.6%**	**46.4%**	**29.7%**	**30.2%**
Internet Blogs	25.7%	23.8%	39.3%	18.9%	20.8%
Social Media	75.5%	85.7%	71.4%	64.9%	71.7%
Facebook	77.0%	65.0%	69.2%	74.3%	72.0%
Twitter	16.9%	25.0%	21.2%	8.6%	10.0%

generation zero network profiles

- **Green Party** - 'the environment' and wealth inequality; <u>**not**</u> immigration or economy; highly concerned/convinced about climate change; highly engaged online; <u>**not**</u> Pacifica;

- **Labour** - More likely Pacifica; immigration an issue; relatively unengaged politically or civically; less likely engaging with scientists or politicians

- **National** - Less personal concern about environment, climate change, inequality; much more likely to pay attention to the media, to politicians and to be influenced by them; much less likely Pacifica

- **Internet-Mana** - More likely direct participation and direct action; male; equivalent level of internet/social media use

- **None** - Enrolled to vote; less likely convinced by climate change; more online activity

generation zero ….some recommendations

- Generation Zero appears to offer (young) NZers new ways of 'doing' politics - issue-based, values based, digitally mediated, connective…possesses a highly engaged membership across party-political lines. But is 'the political' being redefined?

- For wider engagement & participation beyond a highly engaged, homogenous & activist core, to deepen public engagement with issues of climate politics and communication, and to achieve change in these areas, broadening the appeal of the organisation to diverse membership may be required (beyond urban middle class).

- Multivariate analysis indicates several opportunities for Generation Zero to shape its campaigns and communication towards a more diverse membership, primarily among supporters of centrist political parties.

- Analysis along party lines may not be so relevant given above - except for continued centrality of electoral politics - Green Party faces same challenge. How to appeal to more diverse constituency?

A question of political and communicative strategy….

Generation Zero

"To put it bluntly, they are 99% young privileged white hipsters who hang out with people too similar with themselves for anyone who's not part of that world to feel comfortable joining. A more diverse range of people would mean changing significant parts of how the org functions socially, and right now that homogenousness is a strength. People make great sacrifices for their own clan. Like a cult in some ways."