



A Connected Generation: From Awareness to Action

As the first true digital natives, Generation Z has grown up more “connected” than any other previous group. Gen Z has never known a world without a smartphone. This familiarity with technology has had many effects. Constant connectivity, increased screen time and social media savvy have honed this generation’s ability to make connections online and filter through the barrage of messaging.

Beyond the enabling of more distanced personal relationships, connectivity has furthered global awareness in ways different from previous generations. Well before the COVID-19 pandemic pushed all generations to find social connection online, Gen Z had been using social media platforms to connect with other like-minded individuals, particularly around social issues. Social media has served as the tool of choice for increasing awareness, organizing, and compelling action around a wide range of collective concerns and injustices.

Protests never really went out of style, but today they are not always happening in the streets. This is a generation that has seen how regular people with a cause can drive change using nothing more than a smartphone. From the March for Our Lives Movement, spurred by the 2018 shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, to the #MeToo social media discussions around sexual violence, Gen Z is not afraid to use [technology](#) to amplify the call for change.

The push for change accelerates

The challenges of 2020 have created an even more socially-conscious generation and affirmed the critical need to be able to engage online. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it placed a great responsibility on young peoples’ shoulders to distance themselves from friends and family. The generation’s reliance on social media and the Internet for daily communications—and ability to form authentic relationships by digital means—has only accelerated under the unique constraints of social distancing.

In 2020, this online connection also drove Generation Z’s global awareness into overdrive. The pandemic shook the world, but its aftershocks ranged far and wide. For starters, COVID-19 mortality rates have magnified health inequities among ethnic and racial minority groups. The emerging K-shaped recovery to the pandemic has highlighted tremendous economic disparity and financial insecurity among members of this generation.