



# A FLASH STUDY THE WOMEN'S MARCH CONVERSATION

## THE LARGEST DEMONSTRATION IN US HISTORY, ECHOED WORLDWIDE

The Women's March of January 21, 2017 was among the largest demonstrations of peaceful protest that has ever occurred, with as many as 5 million participants.

The march captured the imaginations of people in 80 countries.

Images of the march dominated the news cycle and social media. We wanted to know what impact the march had on the individuals who participated, or were simply interested observers.

## A FLASH STUDY

Relaxing on a few days' vacation after a conference, a few of us were talking about the women's march. Why not launch a flash study to learn more? So we did.

Using a simple, powerful online qualitative platform, and the power of social media, we invited people to share their thoughts and feelings about the women's march.

Here's what we learned.

Study authors: Susan Abbott, Ilka Kuhagen, Rebecca Bryant, Janina Weigl, with input from ThinkGlobal associates worldwide.



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# 8 TAKEAWAYS: OUR ANALYSIS

## ■ TAKEAWAY #1

The march inspired pride, for marchers, and non-marching supporters.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #2

The message of the march is loosely defined, but centres on human rights.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #3

People are skeptical about the direct impact of the march on political leaders.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #4

The march helped those who felt isolated in their views, and provided a source of optimism about the future.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #5

Some feel the march was a misplaced effort, launched by women who should be happy with their situation.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #6

The march has already acted as a catalyst for further action for some.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #7

The march highlighted the many divisions that exist, among women, and among progressives.

## ■ TAKEAWAY #8

The march showed what is possible, and may be a foundation for further action.

## ■ PARTICIPANTS AND METHOD

Participants from 11 countries were recruited via social media. The study was launched and largely complete within days.

👉 Click headings for link navigation

# TAKEAWAY #1: THE MARCH INSPIRED PRIDE, BOTH FOR MARCHERS, AND FOR NON-MARCHING SUPPORTERS

We heard tremendous pride expressed both from those who marched, and those who could not attend but had friends marching, and supporters of the event.

The atmosphere of the event was both positive and peaceful, another source of pride.

Those who have experienced demonstrations before expected this positive emotions: "having been in a few marches I know how energizing and memorable it is."

*I'm proud to say I personally know some friends and family members who attended*

*I loved that people came together, even though they were motivated by different things. And there was no violence.*

*I wasn't able to attend, but I thanked as many marchers as I knew personally ... I was really proud of "us"*

*I'm a man. I marched. I saw nothing in New York but smart, committed people in solidarity. There was love, humor and kindness in abundance.*

Photo Credit: By Melissa Brunet / <http://MelissaBrunet.com> - [https://www.instagram.com/melissabrunet\\_paris/](https://www.instagram.com/melissabrunet_paris/) - <https://www.instagram.com/p/BPiEzVlhUCO/>, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=55214813>

# TAKEAWAY #2: THE MESSAGE IS LOOSELY DEFINED, BUT CENTRES ON HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUSIVENESS, OPPORTUNITY

The election of Donald Trump was seen as a catalyst, but the focus was rights, equality, and human kindness.

*I don't think this was ever just about Trump. His election was just the catalyst that encouraged large numbers of people to say "enough"*

Some people were dismayed that the march did not have more clarity of message: *"I worry that there was no clear objective."*

The march also started a conversation on a large scale, providing a focal point for discussion.

*The march embodied what we are asking of our country: intelligence, cleverness, respect of others, kindness acceptance and inclusiveness of all, positive regard for humanity.*

*"Whole world" showed to Trump that we want to live in society with equal opportunities without ridiculing behavior from above.*

*It shows people don't resign themselves to accepting the new world order that Trump and his cronies want to install.*

*One major impact was providing an outlet for us to share in the discussion in a meaningful and very visible way.*

# TAKEAWAY #3: PEOPLE ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE DIRECT IMPACT OF THE MARCH ON POLITICAL LEADERS

Both pro and anti-march voices expressed the view that the march is likely to have little direct impact on President Trump or other leaders.

Some believe that democratic institutions in the US are still responsive, and "the establishment will have to listen."

March supporters think the event spoke mainly to those of like mind, and was unlikely to change opinions.

But the worldwide attention was still seen as important, bringing a focus to a set of issues, and showing that people are paying attention.

*The Trump administration probably paid no attention.*

*Unfortunately, as with most modern protests I do not believe that real change in the mindsets will come about from this.*

*It's already grabbed the attention of so many people worldwide. The message is out there that women do not feel represented in the new global political landscape.*

*The impact is our law makers including the president now know that we are watching and we will take active participation in what our public servants do. And that we will no longer be the silent majority.*

# TAKEAWAY #4: THE MARCH HELPED THOSE WHO FELT ISOLATED, AND PROVIDED A SOURCE OF OPTIMISM

For some, the march was the first positive event they associated with the political process: "Finally something to be proud of and a glimmer of positive hope."

People who may have felt isolated in their views could see many others who were equally concerned. By itself, this was felt to be a worthy goal of the event.

*...it shows what is possible.*

*People sympathetic to the marchers' issues but who did not march now realize that they are not alone, which makes them open to being recruited.*

*Hopefully it will fill the participants and their sympathisers with the emotional energy and optimism that they need to proceed.*

*It makes the participants feel better, it makes liberal-thinkers feel better.*

# TAKEAWAY #5: SOME SAY MISPLACED EFFORT, LAUNCHED BY WOMEN WHO SHOULD BE HAPPY WITH THEIR SITUATION

Non-supporters of the march expressed the view that it was unnecessary, a waste of effort, and largely anti-Trump.

Some see no issue with the status of women in America.

Others believe the energy would have been better spent on volunteer activities in the community: "visiting senior citizens, volunteering at their local library, food bank, animal shelter."

The march would not have been needed, some felt, if more people had voted.

*I don't see the need for it. ...Women in America don't have it that bad. Look at women in other countries who are being raped, sold into slavery, and disfigured daily and can't even vote or speak up for change. ... We have it easy. I say this is just a bunch of complaining like a spoiled child.*

*It was about the fact that about half the women (and men) in the United States are stuck with a president they don't like. It was an anti-Trump protest.*

*It is too late now, the good action was to vote before.*



# TAKEAWAY #6: THE MARCH ACTED AS A CATALYST FOR FURTHER ACTION FOR SOME

Some individuals reported that they have already taken further steps personally to become more involved in promoting change.

More generally, the march showed people what is possible, and started a process that may lead to change.

Others felt that the march was actually the end of something, "an illustration of the frustration about Trump's election."

*It has made me look for opportunities to make a difference in my own community; I hope it has the same effect on others.*

*...these marches help give permission for people to speak up when they do see inequality, racism, sexism - rather than letting it lie.*

*Ultimately, it's up to each of us to volunteer our time to causes we believe in. I have, and I'm seeing my friends do the same.*

*I believe that any activism spurs more activism. In the small town where I live I've heard people saying they are going to start acting locally, e.g. running for town council, attending town council meetings.*

# TAKEAWAY #7: THE MARCH HIGHLIGHTED THE MANY DIVISIONS THAT EXIST

Even as the march brought people together, it also highlighted the divisions that exist in society. Between supporters and non-supporters, but also within the ranks of supporters.

The march was felt to exclude some groups, such as the disabled. Spokespeople for the events were predominantly "privileged, white women," and the marches themselves attracted relatively low numbers of visible minorities.

The involvement of men in larger numbers is important: "Women can't fight for equality on their own, it is essential men become actively involved."

*Why is this a womens movement (only) if there are much bigger problems on the agenda currently? Shouldn't this involve other groups like LGBT or immigrants as well?*

*If it's a women's march, all women should be welcome. But they weren't.*

*There is so much in-fighting between women about what feminism is ...*

*This is a majority black city but the march was very white.*

*The society (especially in the U.S.) is deeply divided, which is never good.*

# TAKEAWAY #8: THE MARCH SHOWED WHAT IS POSSIBLE, AND MAY BE A FOUNDATION FOR FURTHER ACTION

*I hope it will be the start of a peaceful revolution, conducted by women, that can change the evolution of nations, of the world (may be because women give life). I'm sure it's moving ...but it may be very long and hard !*

March supporters believe the marches showed what can be achieved by people who commit themselves. The speed at which the march was organized was "amazing" and showed what is possible.

The march provided a space for the inexperienced and the young to "learn how to organize and protest."

Supporters hope to see continued momentum on multiple fronts, as individuals are inspired to take action.

But keeping the momentum going, finding channels for people to make meaningful change, is clearly the challenge.

*Hopefully, the momentum of these events can be sustained through increased participation in future elections, local programs and non-profit organizations...*

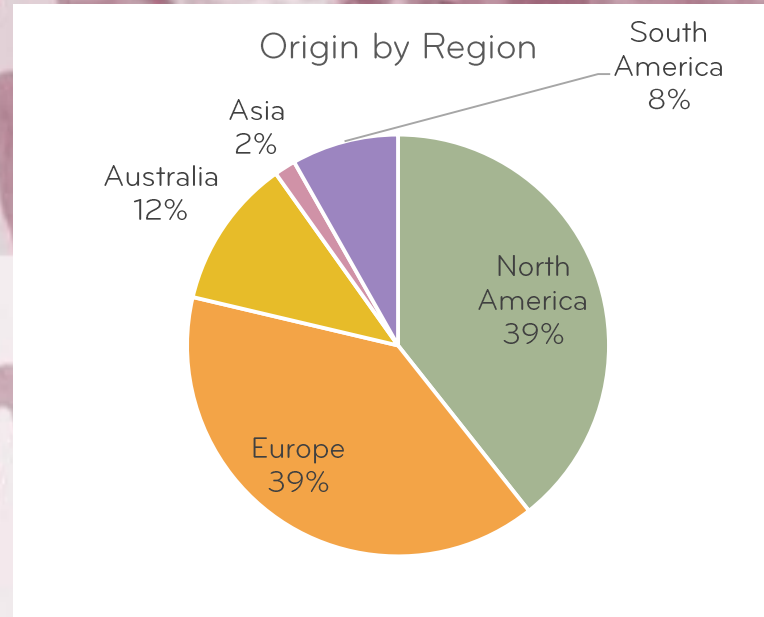
*...its astonishing how women all over the globe can gather so quickly to make an impact*

*It is vital that people counter the neoliberal policies that dominate the world today. The marches provided a focus for such dissent.*

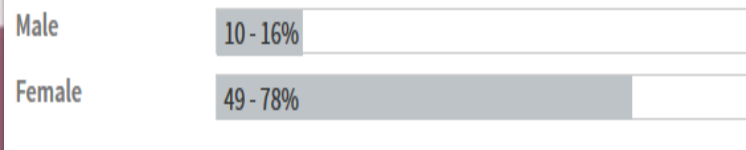
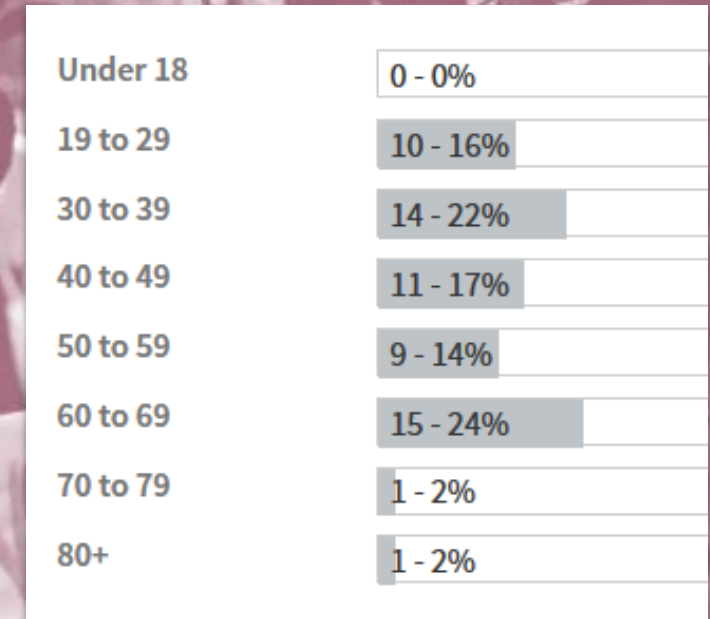
*The march galvanized us into action. But keeping the momentum is going to be the real challenge. How do we show courage and leadership in our every day lives?*

Photo Credit: By Garry Knight - <https://www.flickr.com/photos/garryknight/32444439755/>, CCO, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=55247009>

# PARTICIPANTS FROM 11 COUNTRIES WERE DRAWN FROM SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS OF THE RESEARCHERS



Country reported by 61 out of 112 participants. USA, France, Canada, Germany, Australia, Brazil, Czech Republic, Italy, Belgium, Japan, UK are included in these results.



*I truly think and hope that this is the beginning of a true awakening for all the women in the country and the world to realize that we have more power than what we have been led to believe. And to realize that it is us the ones with the moral obligation to redirect the future*

Photo Credit: By Voice of America - <http://www.voanews.com/a/photo-gallery-women-march-worldwide/3686038.html>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=55207752>

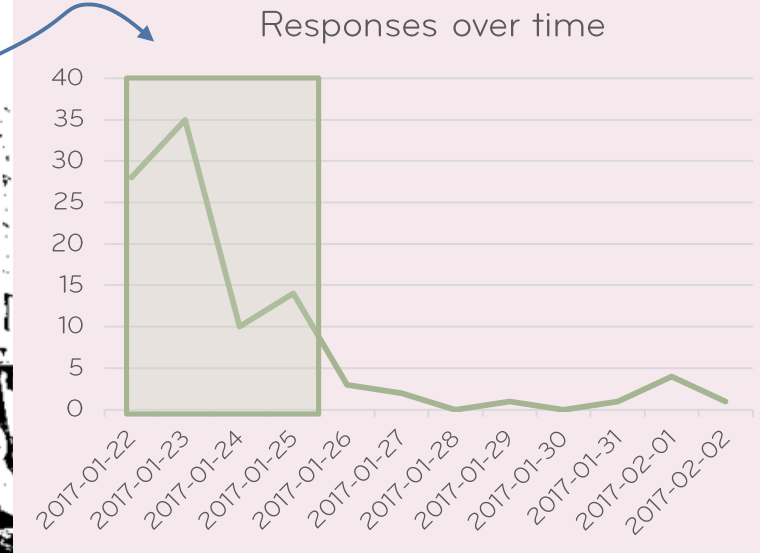
# HOW WE CREATED A FLASH STUDY

## THE STUDY WAS LAUNCHED VERY QUICKLY

More than half of our data was collected within 48 hours of launch. Links in some countries did not go out immediately, so some countries came in later than others.

For this study, all questions were in English, and participants were invited to respond in their preferred language. This worked surprisingly well: the questions were kept purposefully short and simple.

We asked only three questions, to encourage fuller responses. Some back and forth dialogue occurred spontaneously, even with minimal moderator probing.



## SAMPLE

The sample in this instance was biased as the result of recruiting using only the researchers' extended social networks. The opinions are valid, but may not be reflective of all the views in the general population.

## GENDER

Some participants objected to our wording of the gender question as being too binary and restrictive. In future we would recommend to all researchers to make the wording of gender questions as inclusive as possible. For example, offer an "other" option.

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