



New research on the Fridays for Future “Global Climate Strikes” suggests an older protestor

In a recent study, researchers from Humboldt-Universität and the Technische Universität Berlin have investigated the mobilisation pattern of the Fridays for Future movement

The typical profile of a Fridays for Future (FFF) demonstrator is that of a rather young, school-going female – a profile largely and unremarkably associated with climate activist Greta Thunberg. The accuracy of this profile was illustrated in a previous multi-national report on the March 2019 Global Climate Strikes. However, a just-released research report by Berlin-based sociologists Dr. Beth Gharrity Gardner (Humboldt-Universität) and Dr. Michael Neuber (Technische Universität Berlin)¹ shows the movement in Germany managed to mobilize older, less politically active adult participants on the 20th of September 2019 (Neuber and Gardner 2020).

Using surveys of September climate strikers in Berlin and Chemnitz, the report on Germany highlights changes in mobilization patterns from March events in Berlin and Bremen. For example, the median age increased by 12 years between the two events (19 in March and 31 in September). In their examination of what is sometimes called the “Greta effect” on FFF protestors, the authors find mixed results. While participants – especially younger ones – continue to report that Greta Thunberg made them more *interested* in climate change, her influence on their *decision to join* the strike was more limited.

This research is part of a larger multi-national initiative surveying Climate Strikes (Walström et al. 2020). The newest report on the September 20-27, 2019 international week of actions in 15 countries (19 cities), also reflects an older protestor base and offers an updated picture of FFF’s evolving protest dynamics. According to estimates from organizers and others, the demonstrations in Germany mobilized over a million protestors (270,000 in Berlin alone) and over 7 million internationally.

¹ In collaboration with Dr. Piotr Kocyba of the Technical University of Chemnitz as well as the Institute for Protest und Movement Studies e.V., the report authors conducted 266 face-to-face and 401 online interviews with participants of the Climate Strike on the 20. September 2019 in Berlin and Chemnitz. According to the organizers, the demonstrations mobilized 270.000 protesters in Berlin and over 300.000 all over Germany.

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