

A spotlight on Millennials



Known as the connected generation, with technological capabilities

1/7

Millennials have no home internet



Millennials are the highest educated generation to date

43%

of Millennials have no qualification above secondary education



Struggled with the GFC

3.4x

Less likely to be employed than those Millennials with tertiary education post GFC



Using social investment

Key questions remain about social investment in the Millennial generation

How might we:

Understand

Engage

Empower



Hidden Millennials?

Social investment and the hidden Millennials

The premise of social investment – investing in vulnerable citizens today to realise social and financial benefits in the future – fundamentally involves the Millennial generation in two ways: as the beneficiaries of its success, and as the generation that will be largely responsible for its implementation.

The Millennial generation

The Millennial generation is generally defined as those born between 1980 and 2000. Millennials are the largest generation since the Baby Boomers, with over 1.2 million born in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2016a) and 1.8 billion born worldwide (The Economist, 2016).

Millennials are commonly known as a ‘connected generation.’ Immersion in technology has shaped Millennials experience, values and social norms in ways unknown to previous generations.

Millennials are also the most highly educated generation. New Zealand has experienced a 50% increase in students since Millennials entered the tertiary sector in 1998, with over 70% of students being supported by the student loan system (Ministry of Education, 2015). Five years after completing their studies, New Zealand university graduates now earn 40% more than the median income (Ministry of Education, 2016).

The global financial crisis (GFC) had a significant impact on Millennials, many of whom were entering the workforce or holding junior positions at the time. Despite being the most educated generation to enter the workforce, at the post-GFC peak Millennials were over five times more likely to be unemployed than non-Millennials in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand, 2016b).

The hidden Millennials

Of course, the common generalisation of a Millennial as technologically savvy, well-educated and laden with future opportunities is not reflective of all Millennials in New Zealand.

One in seven Millennials do not have home internet access (Statistics New Zealand, 2012), 43% have no qualifications above secondary education and 11% have no recognised qualifications at all (Statistics New Zealand 2013). Additionally, approximately half of those embark on tertiary education fail to finish, yet leave with an average debt of \$14,000 (Statistics New Zealand, 2013b).

In a future society where employees are expected to be technologically savvy and post-school qualifications are now the norm, the ‘hidden Millennials’ who grew up without either face a daunting task to draw level with their peers.

Hidden Millennials face a daunting task to draw level with their peers

This challenge was exemplified during the GFC, where the increase in unemployment for less educated Millennials was 3.4 times that of Millennials holding a tertiary qualification (Statistics New Zealand, 2016c). These high levels of unemployment for less educated Millennials – reaching 26% in December 2009 – have also persisted significantly longer in the wake of the GFC than the levels experienced by their peers (Statistics New Zealand, 2016c).

Higher levels of unemployment mean that the hidden Millennials are faced with the prospect of very low social mobility. At present, the MSD has reported that 45% of those in the bottom fifth of earnings remain in or fall back into that category within seven years (Perry, 2015).

The Millennial generation and social investment

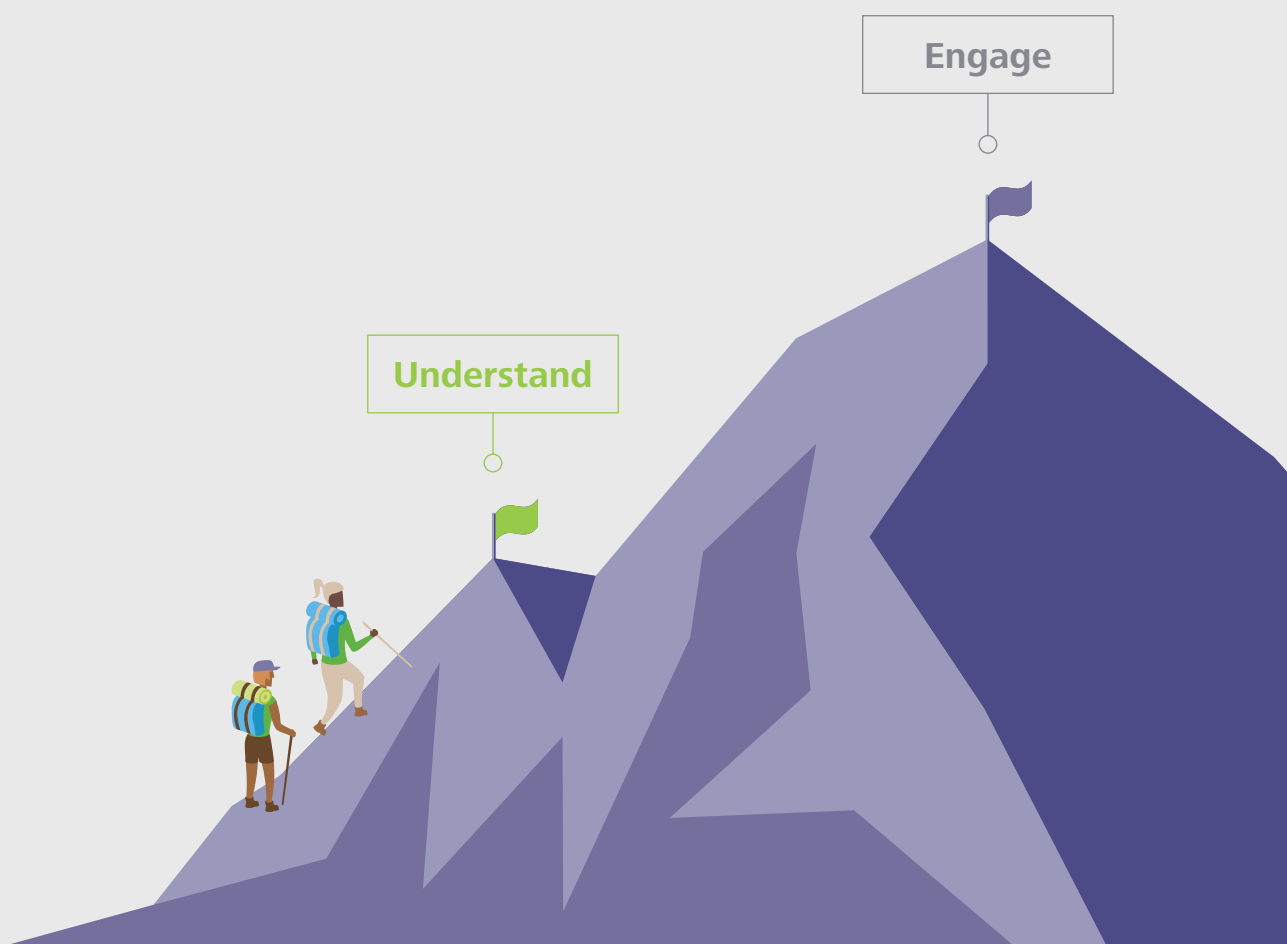
Today, Millennials are already the largest single group in the New Zealand workforce (34%) (Danner, 2015). Should social investment successfully transition to a mainstream way of working, it will be Millennials who will be largely delivering it. Yet key questions remain about social investment in the Millennial generation.

How might we better understand the hidden Millennials?

Social investment data already tells us much about hidden Millennials from a descriptive perspective: we know their age, location, contacts with key government social systems and likelihood of poor life outcomes. But the data we have on them as people – their values, drivers and beliefs – is largely absent from the discussion. How might Millennials go beyond the descriptive data to understand hidden Millennials in a more meaningful way?

How might we engage with hidden Millennials?

The addition of the 'Red Peak' flag option in the recent referendum via a significant online movement demonstrated that the internet and social media can be a powerful tool for engaging non-mainstream voices in political and social debate. But how relevant are these tools to engaging hidden Millennials? And if they aren't appropriate, what alternatives do Millennial policy-makers have to engage hidden Millennials in the development of social programmes?



How might we empower hidden Millennials to lead change?

Social services are already adopting a co-design approach, where hidden Millennials would not simply be consulted but would work together as equals in the design process to deliver impact to themselves, their whanau and community. Co-design has been shown to be more effective than traditional consultation – in an Australian co-designed employment programme 64% of participants were placed in full-time employment – twice the number achieved through traditional processes (The Policy Space, 2015).

Newer approaches move beyond co-design to an empowerment model, where participants have control and are responsible for setting the direction of their own solution. This approach was employed in Camberley, in Hawke's Bay, where traditional approaches to lift this community out of deprivation were unsuccessful. In 2002, the residents of Camberley joined together to create their own community leadership, which the Council allowed to make decisions for their community. With the assistance of other government agencies and key community stakeholders they developed 'Camberley 2015' – an action plan focussing on economic, social and environmental goals (Hastings District Council, 2003).

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The community driven results have been significant. In 4 years, 12 of the 21 original goals had been achieved (Hastings District Council, 2008), such as the reduction of the unemployment rate, which dropped from 16.4% to 10.7% (Statistics New Zealand, 2006), alongside the establishment and construction of a community hub. Could similar concepts be applied to empower Hidden Millennials to create change? If so, how do we provide appropriate and real power on a national scale?

There are many challenges ahead for social investment, both philosophical and technical. Among them, the task of handing the approach over to the Millennial generation generates interesting questions and finding the answers may be crucial to its overall success.



Empower