

Do Protests Actually Work?

WHY WE PROTEST AND THE IMPACT



By Gabrielle Henderson

Why Are People Protesting to Begin With?

- Ortiz et al found that most common reason for protest is "perceived failure of democracies"¹
 - e.g. failure of political representation and political systems
- Other reasons include:
 - Real democracy
 - Corruption
 - Justice
 - Sovereignty/ Patriotic Issues
 - Transparency and Accountability

Defining Common Types of Protests

- **March:** "to walk with a large group of people who are protesting or supporting something"²
- **Sit-in:** "a tactic of nonviolent civil disobedience. The demonstrators enter a business or a public place and remain seated until forcibly evicted or until their grievances are answered"³
- **Boycott:** "withdraw from commercial or social relations with (a country, organization, or person) as a punishment or protest"⁴

Examples of Notable Protests

March on Washington⁵

Aim: to draw attention to continuing challenges and inequalities faced by Black Americans a century after emancipation

Outcome: Creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Protest⁶

Aim: to stop the construction of a pipeline expansion into British Columbia which poses a violation to environmental protection commitments and Indigenous land rights

Outcome: Construction was halted

What about the 'Freedom Convoy' ?

- This protest started as opposition to vaccine mandates and restrictions from truckers crossing the Canada-USA land borders.
- Gradually, this movement rallied support from non-truckers, including those who oppose lockdowns, masks, and Covid-19 restrictions overall
- This also attracted far-right extremist groups and those who wanted to remove Prime Minister Justin Trudeau from office

What about the 'Freedom Convoy' ?

- Due to the various causes being rallied for and groups involved, the movement lacked a clear mission and policy amendments
- Some of the "calls to justice" were not legally possible
 - i.e. If x amount of people call the Governor General's office, she will dissolve Parliament
 - i.e. Convoy organizers writing a letter to Prime Minister Trudeau telling him to step down

Why Protests Work

Protests work both in the short-term and long-term⁷

Short-term:

- Scares authorities into changing their behaviour

Long-term:

- It causes people (ordinary citizens and people in positions of power) to change their minds and perspectives on issues, thus leading to change

Sources

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