

New poll shows American youth are increasingly supportive of socialism

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A Harris poll exclusively reported by *Axios* has found that a larger majority of youth—Millennials and Generation Z—are embracing “socialism” and policies associated with it. The increasingly positive view of socialism is a continuation of a trend recorded in the last few years.

According to the poll, which was conducted in February 2019, 61 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 (born after 1995) view socialism in a positive light. Furthermore, 73.1 percent of Millennials, those born between 1980 and 1994, and Generation Z, those born after 1995, believe the government should provide universal health care, and 67.1 percent think college should be tuition-free.

The top three voting issues for Gen Z, according to the Harris poll, are mass shootings, racial equality, and immigration policy and treatment of immigrants. Millennials’ top issues are access to health care, global warming/climate change and mass shootings.

A similar 2018 Gallup poll found that 51 percent of Americans between 18 and 29 viewed socialism positively, while less than half of the same age group found capitalism agreeable. The Gallup poll’s inclusion of ages 25 to 29 makes an exact comparison difficult, but the results from the new Harris poll suggests an increased interest in socialism compared to last year, an ongoing trend since the aftermath of the Great Recession.

The source of the interest in socialism is not hard to find. American youth are part of a generation that has experienced nothing but economic crises, social degradation, unending violence, and the deteriorating living conditions of the working class.

Many are without access to decent paying jobs and are forced to live with their parents. The average student graduating from college with debt has a total

debt of nearly \$30,000, with no guarantee of employment. Furthermore, research shows that Millennials are the first generation set to be worse off than their parents.

Youth have grown up in the shadow of the “war on terror” and have been subject to police brutality and gun violence at home and in schools. The US military’s murderous campaign in the Middle East is immensely unpopular among youth. For the fifth year in a row, police have killed over 1,000 people, and last year’s March for Our Lives was a response to the stream of school shootings that claimed the lives of hundreds of children.

The widespread support for socialism terrifies the ruling class, which fears above all that the growth of working class struggle over the past year will acquire a socialist orientation and perspective. The US has seen an escalating wave of strikes and workers’ militancy. From 2009 to 2018, strike activity jumped from 124,000 work days lost, to 2.8 million, an increase of over 2,000 percent.

Last month, US President Donald Trump unleashed a tirade against socialism and declared a global crusade against it. He declared the United States would “never be a socialist country” in the State of the Union speech. Trump’s speeches are a direct appeal to ultra-right forces in the US and spout the poison of nationalism and xenophobia.

For their part, the Democrats have had two distinct but parallel responses. A dominant faction of the party establishment has hastened to repudiate any association with socialism. Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris recently told reporters she was not a “democratic socialist” but a “progressive Democrat.” In 2017, when responding to an NYU student asking about the future of the party, Speaker of the House

Nancy Pelosi declared, “We’re capitalists.”

The Democrats have worked with the pseudo-left to promote identity politics and the claim that race, gender and other identities are the dividing forces in society instead of class. The promotion of middle-class politics over the class divisions in society is aimed at dividing the working class, undermining class consciousness, and therefore socialist consciousness, and advancing the interests of privileged layers of the upper-middle class.

On the other hand, there are figures such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who are tasked with channeling opposition to capitalism behind the Democratic Party. Significantly, Millennials and Generation Z will make up 37 percent of voters in the upcoming 2020 elections. Large sections of young people are responding favorably to Sanders’ second presidential election.

Ocasio-Cortez’s Green New Deal, and Sanders’ denunciation of big banks and Wall Street, are part of a desperate effort to prevent the leftward movement of workers and young people from breaking with a political organization that advances a right-wing, militarist, anti-working class and pro-capitalist agenda.



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