

Seventy percent of US Millennials say they are likely to vote socialist

Genevieve Leigh
29 October 2019

The fourth annual report on “US Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism,” commissioned by the anticommunist Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation and conducted by YouGov, found a sharp growth in interest in socialism among youth in the US over the past year.

The study has been conducted annually since 2016 and bases itself on interviews with over 2,000 people.

This year’s results reveal a significant radicalization taking place among youth, particularly in the Millennial Generation (those aged 23-38) and Gen Z (aged 16-22). Compared to last year’s report, favorable views of capitalism dropped 6 percentage points and 8 percentage points for Gen Z and Millennials, respectively.

Other notable findings include:

- * 70 percent of Millennials say they would be “somewhat likely” or “extremely likely” to vote for a socialist candidate. The percentage of Millennials who say they would be extremely likely to vote for a socialist candidate has doubled (from 10 percent in 2018 to 20 percent in 2019).

- * Overall, 83 percent say they know at least a little about socialism, and 39 percent of Americans say they “know a lot”—a nearly 40 percent increase from 2018.

- * Nearly half of Millennials think the government should provide a job to everyone who wants to work but cannot find it.

- * Forty percent of Americans (45 percent of Gen Z and Millennials) think all higher education should be free.

- * Around one in five Millennials thinks society would be better off if all private property were abolished.

- * Seventy percent of Americans say the divide between the rich and the poor is a serious issue.

- * Of the more than half (63 percent) of Americans

who think the highest earners are “not paying their fair share,” 54 percent think increased taxes are part of the answer, and 47 percent say a complete change of the economic system is needed.

- * Thirty-seven percent of Millennials think the US is one of the most unequal societies in the world.

- * Over a quarter of Americans across all generations said Donald Trump is the biggest threat to world peace.

The source of this radicalization is not hard to find. The chief characteristic of life for Millennials and Gen Z has been skyrocketing social inequality. Many are forced to work two, three or even four jobs to make ends meet. One in five millennials is living below the poverty line.

The growing interest in and support for socialism coincides with a significant growth of class struggle and social protest internationally. In Lebanon, massive protests have brought an estimated one quarter of the country’s six million people onto the streets. In Chile, millions of people continue to flood the streets protesting social inequality and state violence in the largest demonstrations in the country’s history.

In the US, the strike by 32,000 Chicago teachers and support staff is in its second week, following the largest autoworker strike in 30 years by GM workers.

This eruption of the class struggle on a global scale terrifies the ruling class. They are acutely aware of social tensions and the growing interest in socialism.

The response of the Trump administration has been an open turn towards fascistic and authoritarian forms of rule. His hysterical denunciations of socialism, now a feature of nearly every rally, express the growing fear of the rich that demands for social reform will set off a mass movement for social equality.

On the other hand, the Democrats, speaking for another faction of the ruling elite, are determined to

avoid anything that would mobilize popular anger against Trump. They are systematically keeping out of their impeachment inquiry any reference to Trump's brutal crackdown on immigrants and refugees, unending war and the social catastrophe confronting workers and youth. Instead, they have focused their impeachment campaign on issues of foreign policy.

It is within this framework that the Democratic Party's elevation of figures such as Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez must be understood. In order to provide a left cover for their right-wing policies, these self-proclaimed "socialists" have been brought forward to direct growing social anger back behind the Democratic Party.

In this latest campaign rally in Detroit on Sunday, Sanders once again directed his remarks against social inequality, listing many of the social ills confronting workers and youth. Most significant, however, was what was not said.

Sanders made no reference to the more than month-long strike by General Motors workers, which was just shut down by the United Auto Workers on the basis of a contract that facilitates the massive expansion of temporary workers, which has become the "new normal" for young people. Sanders also made no reference to the ongoing Chicago teachers strike.

The omissions were not accidental. The Democratic Party, through figures like Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez, propose a "socialism" (though they almost never use the word) that does not involve the class struggle. Ending the domination of the "billionaire class" is supposedly to be achieved without any mass social movement or any challenge to the economic domination of the capitalist class.

And it is supposedly to be done within the framework of the Democratic Party, which is no less responsible than the Republicans for the social conditions confronting workers and young people.

The critical question is to build a socialist leadership in the working class and youth, to explain what genuine socialism is and how it must be fought for. The fight for socialism means the fight to establish democratic control of the giant banks and corporations by the working class. It means an end to social inequality through a radical redistribution of wealth and the expropriation of the ill-gotten gains of the corporate and financial aristocracy. It means an end to war and

abolition of the military-intelligence apparatus.

The foundation for a socialist movement is the working class, in the United States and internationally. The reorganization of economic life on a world scale, on the basis of social need, not private profit, requires the independent mobilization of the working class to take power and establish a workers' government.

This is the perspective fought for by the Socialist Equality Party and its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality. We urge all those who want to take up the fight for socialism to join the SEP and the IYSSE.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact