

Support for socialism jumps by nearly 10 percent among US youth amid pandemic depression

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This year's annual survey by the anticommunist Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, conducted by leading pollster firm YouGov, found an immense increase in support for socialism over the last year, particularly among those between the ages of 16 and 39.

Within the Gen Z group (ages 16-23), support for socialism increased nearly ten percentage points over the course of a single year: from 40 percent in 2019 to 49 percent when this poll was taken in September 2020.

Looking at the entire population, support for capitalism declined from 58 percent in 2019 to 55 percent in 2020, while support for socialism among all Americans increased from 36 percent in 2019 to 40 percent in 2020.

An overwhelming majority, 78 percent of all Americans, believe that the divide between the rich and the poor is a serious issue. Of the 68 percent of all Americans who believe that the rich are not paying their fair share in taxes, 49 percent believe that “a complete change of our economic system” is in order.

These statistics quantitatively express a significant shift in political mood and perspective that has occurred over just the last year, as the COVID-19 pandemic has ravaged the US and the world.

While polls from the last few years have shown a substantial increase in support for socialism among young people, as the millennial generation reeled from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, this data shows that COVID-19, and the descent of the country into political and economic turmoil, has only further discredited the capitalist system.

In fact, according to the report, 60 percent of Millennials (age 24-39) support a “complete change of

our economic system away from capitalism,” and 57 percent of Gen Z does as well: increases of 8 and 14 percentage points, respectively, from just last year.

The statistics from the report are also remarkable in demonstrating not only a growing interest in socialism, which contains a mixture of conceptions, but a growing interest in Marxism, specifically.

Thirty percent of Gen Z has a favorable view of Marxism, and 27 percent of Millennials. While the report authors believe their polling has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.32 percent, this explicit support for Marxism among almost a third of young people is a remarkable figure in a country that has been the center of anticommunism for decades.

Furthermore, 74 percent of Gen Z and 70 percent of Millennials do not see Marxism as a “Totalitarian state that suppresses the freedom of its citizens.” According to the report, over a quarter (26 percent) of all Americans support “the gradual elimination of the capitalist system in favor of a more socialist system.” Particularly, 35 percent of Millennials and 31 percent of Gen Z.

These figures reveal an immense political shift that has been taking place over the last several decades within the working class as a whole, and which has been greatly exacerbated by the current political crisis. The defining political experiences of both Millennials and Gen Z have been made up of historic convulsions and crimes of the capitalist system.

Growing up, the Millennial generation witnessed the sociocide of Afghanistan and Iraq resulting from United States imperialism. When they were coming of age and entering the job market, their futures were severely impacted by a colossal breakdown of the

global economic system spurred by rampant, systemic corruption and speculation. In the following years, they learned from Edward Snowden that the US, under Barack Obama, oversaw the largest illegal mass surveillance system in history.

Meanwhile, the lives of the super-rich became even grander. The stock market rebounded as the lives of the vast majority of people became more precarious. Young people could not afford rent, were forced to take low-paying piecemeal work in the “gig economy,” faced declining access to health care, massive student loan debt, and the almost nonexistent possibility of having kids, homes, or the prospect of a comfortable retirement.

Now, as Gen Z enters into political life, all that is rotten and corrupt within US society has ascended to the presidency. Facing the worst pandemic since the Spanish Flu, the ruling class has refused to implement the necessary protocols, and commit the necessary funds, to suppress the spread of the virus. Rather, the response of the American ruling class, like capitalist countries around the world, has been the adoption of the policy of “herd immunity”—that is, to allow the virus to spread unabated, sacrificing countless lives in the name of protecting private profit.

Amid this immense health crisis, it was revealed this month that advanced plots exist for fascist militias to keep the president in power by abducting officials and seizing state capitals.

The Democrats, meanwhile, have mounted no significant opposition to the Trump administration, including his attempt to stay in power. They are terrified that if they encouraged mass opposition to this, it would spark a social powder keg that would engulf them as well, and thus they use the intelligence agencies, militarism, and sex scandals as their basis of their opposition to Trump.

While Trump seeks to oppose socialism through the mobilization of a popular base for fascist politics, the Democratic Party seeks to encourage dissatisfied youth to see society as a conflict between races and sexes, in an effort to confuse and redirect popular anger towards identity-based, not class-based, politics. These politics are doing nothing to address the fundamental rot at the heart of society, and are oriented towards providing benefits to a wealthier layer of upper-middle-class supporters of the Democratic Party, while the vast

majority of the population—regardless of their skin color—are pushed deeper into desperation.

Within this context, it is hardly surprising that workers, especially young workers, and young students, are interested in socialism and Marxism. While there is certainly immense confusion over the meaning of these terms, there is no doubt a general sense that socialism represents greater social equality, the guarantee of a job at a decent wage, free high-quality education and the right to universal health care—things that capitalism has proven itself incapable of providing.

The WSWs wrote at the start of 2020 that the “decade of socialist revolution” had begun. We noted: “The masses, accumulating experience in the course of struggle, are undergoing a profound change in their social and political orientation. It is in the context of this revolutionary process that the fight for socialist consciousness will develop.”

The Socialist Equality Party is spearheading the fight to arm the developing objective movement of workers and youth with an uncompromising revolutionary program and perspective.



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