

Document

USA : 43% des jeunes adultes considèrent le socialisme comme une valeur positive

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Un récent sondage confirme l'attachement des américains au capitalisme. Toutes tranches d'âge confondues, ils sont 52% à le juger positivement, contre 29% pour le socialisme. Mais la jeune génération est partagée : 43% des américains âgés de 18 à 30 ans jugent positivement le socialisme, et le même pourcentage le capitalisme. Charles Derber, qui enseigne la sociologie à Boston, analyse les résultats de cette enquête.

	Socialism		Capitalism		N
	Pos- itive	Neg- ative	Pos- itive	Neg- ative	
	%	%	%	%	
Total	29	59	52	37	1546
Men	25	65	59	34	740
Women	33	54	47	40	806
White, non-Hispanic	24	65	53	37	1172
Black, non-Hispanic	53	35	50	40	171
18-29	43	49	43	48	218
30-49	33	56	55	37	433
50-64	23	63	54	35	505
65+	14	73	56	29	373
College grad+	23	64	68	24	586
Some college	25	67	49	43	395
HS or less	35	53	44	42	562
<i>Family income</i>					
\$75,000 or more	19	71	66	25	440
\$30-74,999	24	64	47	47	496
Less than \$30,000	44	46	47	40	423

Par Charles Derber, Common Dreams, 18 mai 2010

According to the conventional wisdom, the US is a center-Right country. But a new poll by Pew casts doubt on that idea. It shows widespread skepticism about capitalism and hints that support for socialist alternatives is emerging as a majoritarian force in America's new generation.

Carried out in late April and published May 4, 2010, the Pew poll, arguably by the most respected polling company in the country, asked over 1500 randomly selected Americans to describe their reactions to terms such as "capitalism," "socialism," "progressive," "libertarian" and "militia." The most striking findings concern "capitalism" and "socialism." We cannot be sure what people mean by these terms, so the results have to be interpreted cautiously and in the context of more specific attitudes on concrete issues, as discussed later.

Pew summarizes the results in its poll title : “Socialism not so negative ; capitalism not so positive.” This turns out to be an understatement of the drama in some of the underlying data.

Yes, “capitalism” is still viewed positively by a majority of Americans. But it is just by a bare majority. Only 52% of all Americans react positively. Thirty-seven percent say they have a negative reaction and the rest aren't sure.

A year ago, a Rasmussen poll found similar reactions. Then, only 53% of Americans described capitalism as “superior” to socialism.

Meanwhile, 29% in the Pew poll describe “socialism” as positive. This positive percent soars much higher when you look at key sub-groups, as discussed shortly. A 2010 Gallup poll found 37% of all Americans preferring socialism as “superior” to capitalism.

Keep in mind these findings reflect an overview of the public mind when Right wing views seem at a high point - with the Tea Party often cast as a barometer of American public opinion. The polls in this era do not suggest a socialist country, but not a capitalist-loving one either. This is not a “Center-Right” America but a populace where almost 50% are deeply ambivalent or clearly opposed to capitalism. Republicans and the Tea Party would likely call that a Communist country.

The story gets more interesting when you look at two vital sub-groups. One is young people, the “millennial generation” currently between 18 and 30. In the Pew poll, just 43% of Americans under 30 describe “capitalism” as positive. Even more striking, the same percentage, 43%, describes “socialism” as positive. In other words, the new generation is equally divided between capitalism and socialism.

The Pew, Gallup and Rasmussen polls come to the same conclusion. Young people cannot be characterized as a capitalist generation. They are half capitalist and half socialist. Since the socialist leaning keeps rising among the young, it suggests—depending on how you interpret “socialism”—that we are moving toward an America that is either Center-Left or actually majoritarian socialist.

Turn now to Republicans and Democrats. Sixty-two percent of Republicans in the Pew poll view capitalism as positive, although 81 % view “free markets” as positive, suggesting a sensible distinction in their mind between capitalism and free markets. Even Republicans prefer small to big business and are divided about big business, which many correctly see as a monopolistic force of capitalism undermining free markets.

The more interesting story, though, is about Democrats. We hear endlessly about Blue Dog Democrats. But the Pew poll shows a surprisingly progressive Democratic base. Democrats are almost equally split in their appraisal of capitalism and socialism. Forty-seven percent see capitalism as positive but 53% do not. And 44% of Democrats define socialism as positive, linking their negativity about capitalism to a positive affirmation of socialism.

Moreover, many other subgroups react negatively to capitalism. Less than 50% of women, low-income groups and less-educated groups describe capitalism as positive.

So much for the view that Obama does not have a strong progressive base to mobilize. In fact, “progressive,” according to the Pew poll, is one of the most positive terms in the American political lexicon, with a substantial majority of almost all sub-groups defining it as positive.

You may conclude that this all add up to little, since we can't be clear about how people are defining "capitalism" and "socialism." But in my own research, summarized in recent books such as *The New Feminized Majority and Morality Wars*, attitudes registered in polls toward concrete issues over the last thirty years support the interpretation of the Pew data, at minimum, as evidence of a Center-Left country.

On nearly every major issue, from support minimum wage and unions, preference for diplomacy over force, deep concern for the environment, belief that big business is corrupting democracy, and support for many major social programs including Social Security and Medicare, the progressive position has been strong and relatively stable. If "socialism" means support for these issues, the interpretation of the Pew poll is a Center-Left country.

If socialism means a search for a genuine systemic alternative, then America, particularly its youth, is emerging as a majoritarian social democracy, or in a majoritarian search for a more cooperativist, green, and more peaceful and socially just order.

Either interpretation is hopeful. It should give progressives assurance that even in the "Age of the Tea Party," despite great dangers and growing concentrated corporate power and wealth, there is a strong base for progressive politics. We have to mobilize the majority population to recognize its own possibilities and turn up the heat on the Obama Administration and a demoralized Democratic Party. If we fail, the Right will take up the slack and impose its monopoly capitalist will on a reluctant populace.

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