

Cultural Research Center



Cultural Research Center 2020 Post-Election Survey: At a Glance **Report #03: America's Thirst for Socialism Has Plummeted**

Support for socialism in the United States is at its lowest level in years—with less than a third of all American adults (32%) preferring socialism to capitalism in the wake of the 2020 election—after reaching a peak of 41% of U.S. adults only two years earlier.

The latest findings from the [2020 Post-Election Survey](#) from the [Cultural Research Center](#) at Arizona Christian University suggest a sharp and relatively rapid rejection of socialism and many of the policies likely to be promoted by President Joe Biden and the Democrat Party in the next four years.

The 9 percentage-point decline among U.S. adults since 2018 represents more than 20 million fewer preferring socialism over capitalism. A two-thirds majority (68%) said they prefer capitalism to socialism (more than 170 million adults). Still, having one-third—about 80 million Americans—prefer socialism is significant, despite the overall decline in support for socialism nationwide.

A majority or more of those who support socialism also favored the following expansive federal government actions: reducing racial discrimination through legal means (62% support); providing universal healthcare insurance (59%); restoring financial solvency to Social Security and Medicare (55%); redistributing wealth (52%); and establishing more stringent environmental standards (50%).

Our nation's ongoing ambivalence over socialism, seen in these significant swings in support over such a short time period, likely reflect an underlying absence of deep understanding of how our nation's economic system and institutions operate, according to Barna.

Support for socialism by age: The most precipitous decline in support for socialism was among Americans ages 30 to 49, with a 15 percentage-point decline from 49% to 34%. Younger Americans (under 30) continued to show the highest support for socialism of any age group, yet even their support dipped slightly from 48% to 43%. Americans 50 and older posted an 8 percentage-point decline (30% to 23%), remaining the age group most consistent in supporting capitalism over socialism.

Mixed support for socialism by perspective:

- Those with a biblical worldview (identified as “integrated disciples”) were least likely to support socialism (only 12%). Similarly, SAGE Cons (i.e., Spiritually Active Governance Engaged Conservative Christians) also showed only 12% support for socialism.
- Support for socialism among self-identified Christians was 30%, down 9 percentage points since June 2018. About one-third (32%) of born-again Christians expressed support for socialism (down only slightly from 35%).
- Those of non-Christian faith saw the greatest increase in support for socialism, from 38% to 44%.
- Interestingly, spiritual skeptics demonstrate the most volatility when it comes to socialism. More than half (51%) of spiritual skeptics embraced socialism over capitalism in early 2018, but that number dropped by 16 percentage points to 35%, in the wake of the 2020 election. Spiritual skeptics are those who say they do not know, do not believe, or don't care if God exists.

Those most likely to support socialism over capitalism: political liberals (54%), Democrats (45%), people who didn't vote in the 2020 election (43%), and those under 30 years old (43%). Those least likely to support socialism over capitalism: political conservatives (21%), those 50-years-old or over (23%), and those with a biblical worldview (12%).

The nationwide 2020 Post-Election Survey was conducted November 4 through 16, 2020. The third release of findings from that survey are below. The first two releases of findings from the [2020 Post-Election Survey](#) and other CRC research are available [here](#).

CRC 2020 Post-Election Survey Finds America's Thirst for Socialism Has Plummeted

Dr. George Barna, Director of Research, Cultural Research Center

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(Glendale, AZ) – After more than a decade during which growing numbers of Americans pined for a transition from capitalism to socialism, it appears that the Democrat Party's aggressive marketing of a government-driven culture has dampened national enthusiasm for such a system.

The *2020 Post-Election Survey* from the Cultural Research Center (CRC) at Arizona Christian University shows that the previously rising proportion of adults who preferred socialism to capitalism has now dropped to its lowest level of support in several years. After reaching a peak of 41% of U.S. adults supporting a shift to socialism in January of 2018, the mid-November, post-election survey reveals a decline to just 32% who now desire a socialist America.

Having one-third of the population express a preference for socialism is significant. That represents about 80 million adults who would like to alter our economic and governance systems. However, the nine percentage-point decline among adults during the past two years represents more than 20 million people fewer expressing their desire to have socialism prevail. The two-thirds majority (68%) who said they prefer capitalism to socialism constitutes more than 170 million adults.

A small majority of political liberals (54%) backed socialism compared to less than half as many advocates among political conservatives (21%).

Among the other population segments most enthusiastic about shifting to socialism are Democrats (45%), blacks (44%), and people who did not vote in the 2020 election (43%).

Young Adults Indecisive

At the start of 2017, surveys conducted by CRC's lead researcher Dr. George Barna found that there was a clear-cut division between those younger than 50 and those 50 or older regarding socialism. At that time, 44% of people 18 to 29 years old, and 41% of those in the 30-to-49 age group stated a preference for socialism. That compared to only 30% among those 50 and older.

That pattern held firm through 2018. At that time, as the 2020 campaign season began in earnest, socialism became a hot topic. Democrat presidential candidates Bernie Sanders, Andrew Yang, Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, Joe Biden, and others campaigned on platforms that extolled the virtues of a strong, expansive and active federal government that provided a myriad of "free" services in exchange for higher taxes, more restricted freedoms, more extensive government regulations, and government with dramatically expanded power.

The capitalist-socialist divide was clarified for voters by the diametrically opposed agendas of Donald Trump and Joe Biden during the 2020 campaign. While Biden was ultimately declared the victor, the survey data show that it was not because of his determination to advance socialism as much as the fact that he was not Donald Trump.

While the Democrat Party's call for expanded and more authoritative government continues to appeal to the 18-29-year-old crowd (43% preferred socialism during the week after the election, when the CRC survey was conducted), there was a marked decrease in the 30-to-49-year-olds who claimed a preference for socialism.

Among people in their 30s or 40s, support plummeted from 49% in mid-2018 to just 34% in November of 2020. Meanwhile, support for socialism even declined substantially among the 50-plus crowd, going from 31% in mid-2018 to only 23% in November.

The *2020 Post-Election Survey* by the Cultural Research Center also noted that nearly half of the people who voted for Joe Biden (44%) said they would prefer socialism to capitalism, while less than half as many of those who voted for Donald Trump (18%) shared that view.

Patterns in Faith and Governance

Various faith groups demonstrated divergent levels of support for socialism.

- Among the seven out of 10 adults who consider themselves to be Christian, 30% stated a preference for socialism. That reflects a substantial nine-point decline from the middle of 2018.
- One-third of the people (32%) who believe they will live in God’s presence eternally after they die on earth, only because they have confessed their sins and embraced Jesus Christ as their savior—a group labeled “born again Christians” but not based on the respondent claiming that label—were pro-socialism. That segment has remained among the most consistent in their views on this matter since the onset of the Trump Administration in 2017.
- Americans who are aligned with non-Christian faiths were the religious segment most likely to opt for socialism. Overall, 44% of those adults wanted a shift to socialism.
- Spiritual skeptics reflected the largest decline among all the faith segments tested in their support for socialism. Their endorsement plummeted from 51% in early 2018 to 35% in November 2020.
- The faith groups demonstrating the least interest in socialism were Integrated Disciples (i.e., people who have a biblical worldview), and SAGE Cons (i.e., Spiritually Active Governance Engaged Conservative Christians). Just 12% of each group expressed support for a shift toward socialism. The current level represents a decline of 10-percentage points among Integrated Disciples since November of 2017. The high point of support for socialism among SAGE Cons was in January of 2018, when 22% backed such a transition in government and economics. The new findings show a 10-point decline for them, as well.
- Only 8% of individuals who are evangelicals based on their theological views (i.e., not based upon self-identification) prefer socialism to capitalism. Strikingly, 40% of adults who call themselves evangelical said they prefer socialism.

Who Claims to Prefer Socialism to Capitalism?			
	February 2017	June 2018	November 2020
All Adults	37%	41%	32%
Integrated Disciples	21	17	12
SAGE Cons	18	18	12
Self-identified Christians	37	39	30
Born-again Christians	34	35	32
Non-Christian faith	39	38	44
Spiritual Skeptics	35	47	35
Political conservatives	23	23	21
Political liberals	54	53	54
Under 30 years old	44	48	43
30 to 49 years old	41	49	34
50 or older	30	31	23
Sample size	1,000	1,000	1,000
Descriptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Disciples are adults who have a biblical worldview • SAGE Cons are Spiritually Active Governance Engaged Conservative Christians • Born-again Christians are adults who believe they will go to Heaven after they die only because they have confessed their sins and accepted Jesus Christ as their savior • Spiritual Skeptics are people who say they do not know, do not believe, or don't care if God exists • Political conservatives and liberals are based on self-identification by respondents related to fiscal matters and social issues 			
Source: 2020 Post-Election Survey by Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, November 2020, N=1,000			

The survey also discovered that those who support socialism have some significantly different religious views from those who support capitalism. For instance, a majority of pro-socialists (61%) believe that the Bible is ambiguous in what it teaches about abortion, facilitating a strong argument either for or against the act.

In comparison, a minority of pro-capitalists (46%) hold that same view. Also, more than three-quarters of all pro-socialists (77%) contend that there are no absolute moral truths that apply to all people at all times versus less than two-thirds (62%) of pro-capitalists who embrace that perspective.

Issues of Interest

Those who want America to turn socialist have a much more extensive list of government policies they support than do those who opt for sticking with capitalism. Among the pro-socialist adults there were five policy approaches that half or a more backed, compared to just one policy effort backed by at least half of the pro-capitalists.

Socialist enthusiasts wanted to see the federal government do the following:

- Reduce racial discrimination through legal means (62% support)
- Provide universal healthcare insurance through the federal government (59%)
- Restore financial solvency to Social Security and Medicare (55%)
- Use the law to end income inequalities and to redistribute wealth (52%)
- Set and enforce more stringent environmental standards (50%)

Among the pro-capitalist majority there were no policy prescriptions that a majority supported, although half (50%) were in favor of the federal government working to aggressively increase the number of manufacturing jobs in the U.S.

Close to half of the pro-socialist group identified five other policy ideals that they supported. Those included increasing manufacturing jobs in the U.S. (49%), investing heavily in improving infrastructure (48%), increasing restrictions on gun ownership (45%), decreasing federal income taxes on individuals (43%), and increasing school choices for parents (43%).

Among the pro-capitalism segment the only other policy supported by at least four out of 10 people were: Restore financial solvency to Social Security and Medicare (49%) and decreasing federal income taxes on individuals (40%).

Past Insights on Opinions about Socialism

Past research conducted by Barna concerning governance preferences discovered that on most of the specific applications of governance, Americans solidly preferred a capitalist approach. In a 2018 nationwide survey exploring peoples' knowledge of and preferences regarding how socialism works, the survey concluded that the more people thought or learned about socialism, the less appealing it was. Specifically, that research reported the following:

- An overwhelming ratio of adults (12-to-1) said they preferred a nation with individual ownership of private property to one where all property is owned by the government (82% - 7%)
- By a 6-to-1 ratio, Americans wanted a government that takes its direction from the people rather than to live in a nation where the population takes its direction from the government (76% - 12%)
- Economically, there were six Americans who wanted a country featuring prices of goods based on the free market for every one person who preferred to have the price of goods determined by government policies (75% - 12%)
- Americans preferred a society based on self-reliance rather than government reliance by a 5:1 ratio (69% - 14%)
- U.S. citizens were four times more likely to desire an economy based on private enterprise than one based upon government-run industries (65% - 15%)
- Americans were more than three times as likely to opt for a government with limited power and an agenda defined and monitored by the public than to desire a government with high ideals and unlimited authority to pursue those ideals (67% - 19%)
- People were more than twice as likely to want a government of servant-leaders whose job is to discern and carry out the will of the people than to opt for a government of experts who have good intentions and substantial power to make decisions for the people (60% - 28%)

One of the conclusions drawn from that survey was that the term “socialism” is not be widely understood by Americans. For instance, the 2,000 survey respondents were given a series of governance situations in which a capitalist and a socialist solution were offered for consideration. Their situational preferences were then compared to their overall form of government they claimed to prefer.

Those who claimed to prefer socialism were ***eight times less likely*** than those who said they preferred capitalism to consistently choose the governance alternatives posed that reflected their stated system of choice. Just as significant was the finding that most adults, regardless of their stated systemic preference, possessed an inconsistent philosophy of governance.

Lessons from the Research

Having tracked public opinion on this matter for nearly a decade, Barna, CRC’s Director of Research, provided a general assessment of where things stand.

“Many Americans know little about the practicalities of how our national economic and governance systems operate, much less their ideological underpinnings,” Barna explained. “The quality of people’s decisions about such important matters is a function of the quality and breadth of knowledge and understanding they possess. It is clear that today Americans are suffering from a deficit of insight into the details of governance and national economics.”

“Transitioning from socialism to capitalism would be a major, life-changing choice that will have dramatic consequences and far-reaching impacts on the health and well-being of our country and its people,” Barna continued. “Yet, because they are inadequately educated on these matters, many people are easily swayed by superficial, tangential, or emotional arguments. It is in the best interests of the nation and its future to help people of all ages better understand the meaning and long-term implications of socialism before substantial systemic changes are made.”

About the Research

The nationwide *2020 Post-Election Survey* conducted by the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University was conducted November 4 through 16, 2020. The survey was completed online by 1,000 adults who were part of a demographically balanced national panel.

The research undertaken in 2018 was based upon a nationwide online survey conducted among a demographically balanced panel of 2,000 adults, age 18 or older. That survey was conducted January 26 – February 4, 2018.

About the Cultural Research Center

The Cultural Research Center (CRC) at Arizona Christian University is located on the school’s campus in Glendale, Arizona, in the Phoenix metropolitan area. CRC conducts nationwide research studies to understand the intersection of faith and culture and shares that information with organizations dedicated to transform American culture with biblical truth. Like ACU, CRC embraces the Christian faith, as described in the Bible, but remains non-denominational and non-partisan. Access to past surveys conducted by CRC, as well as additional information about the Cultural Research Center, is available at www.culturalresearchcenter.com. Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at www.arizonachristian.edu.