

## Cultural Research Center

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### *American Worldview Inventory 2021*

#### **Release #7: What Americans Find Attractive about Marxism**

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An alarming number of U.S. adults—especially younger Americans—are embracing key tenets of the Marxist worldview, including negative views of private property, individual economic success, and traditional moral values.

According to new research from the Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University, America's increasing rejection of objective truth and loss of the biblical worldview has created a cultural context conducive to the growth of Marxist thought and practice. And in that context, many ideas reflecting the Marxist worldview may be unwittingly accepted by many Americans who otherwise would reject the label "Marxist."

The study found that about a quarter of U.S. adults hold negative views of private property. Specifically, 27% believe that allowing people to own property facilitates economic injustice, and almost as many (23%) believe that individual property ownership is bad for society.

Millennials (ages 18 to 37) are far more likely than older adults to hold such beliefs, creating concern that shifting worldviews among younger Americans will continue to fuel the growth of support for Marxism and its offshoots such as Critical Race Theory (or CRT) in American culture.

Throughout the past decade national surveys have trumpeted the substantial proportion of U.S. adults who claim they would prefer socialism to capitalism, typically somewhere in the 30% to 40% range.

Millennials, in particular, have displayed an affinity for the Marxist-based political system.

This new research from CRC Director of Research George Barna identifies a dozen elements of the Marxist worldview that appeal to at least one-third of American adults. While fewer than 1% of

American adults have adopted Marxism as their primary worldview, 10% consistently draw from the Marxist philosophy in their daily decision-making.

The findings from the *American Worldview Inventory 2021* also discovered that two of the central tenets of Marxism—claims of the harmful effects of marriage on society and the belief that people were originally good but became corrupted by society—are widely rejected by Americans.

#### **Rarely a Dominant Worldview**

Overall, less than 1% of Americans have adopted Marxism as their dominant worldview. If that proportion seems low, keep in mind that there is no worldview among the seven studied by the Cultural Research Center that has amassed a following that reaches double figures. The biblical worldview is the most widely embraced, but at 6% it hardly has a commanding presence or dominance in this country. The fact that Syncretism—a customized blend of elements drawn from a spectrum of competing worldviews—is the dominant worldview among Americans (88%) is indicative of the convoluted nature of people's intellectual, spiritual, and moral commitments.

Yet, this latest research shows that 10% of adults have been exposed to and are enamored with a sufficient number of the components of Marxism that they consistently draw from that life philosophy in their daily decision-making. That is much less than the proportion of people who draw heavily from Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (39%) and Biblical Theism (i.e., the biblical worldview, at 31%), and slightly less prolific than Secular Humanism and Postmodernism (each regularly relied upon by 16%). Both Nihilism and Eastern Mysticism were also a heavy influence to 10% of those surveyed.

### People, Property, and Wealth

Some crucial foundations of the Marxist ideology have developed a notable minority following within the United States. For instance, two of the central tenets of the philosophy have been adopted by about one-quarter of adults. The notion that allowing people to own property facilitates economic injustice is accepted by 27%. Slightly fewer—23%—believe that individual property ownership is bad for society.

Other Marxist ideals are wildly unpopular. For instance, only one in 20 adults (5%) claims that the primary source of guidance for personal moral decisions should be government laws or direction provided by political leaders. A mere 6% agree with Karl Marx’s dictum that marriage is harmful to society and is a practice that should be eliminated. And barely one out of every 10 adults (11%) accepts the Marxist idea that people were originally good but became corrupted by society.

<b>Millions of Americans Embrace Marxist Views about Race, Money &amp; Success</b> (Percentage of US adults who embrace the outlook described)	
<b>Race is used by white people to advance their economic and political interests at the expense of people of color</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Allowing people to own property facilitates economic injustice</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>Success is living a healthy and productive life, without economic oppression</b>	<b>18%</b>
<b>The personal accumulation of money and other forms of wealth is an example of how unfair society can be to those who work hard but do not get ahead</b>	<b>17%</b>
Source: <i>American Worldview Inventory 2021</i> , Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; N=2,000 U.S. adults.	

Yet, some Marxist economic ideas have developed a larger following. Almost one-fifth of adults (18%) believe that success is best described as living a healthy and productive life, unencumbered by economic oppression. A similar number (17%) believes that the personal accumulation of money and other forms of wealth are practices that demonstrate how unfair society can be to those who work hard yet are unable to get ahead.

By contrast, the biblical worldview—starting with the 10 Commandments— asserts that we should not steal or covet the private property of others, that greed and envy are equally sinful, and that work that produces wealth to pay for food and shelter is an important and necessary part of life and human flourishing. Those who are blessed with wealth should voluntarily give to help the poor, but the poor are not entitled to steal private property from the rich and should not envy their wealth.

### Marxism and Faith

Marxist ideology denies the existence of God or a living deity in favor of vesting authority in government and social elites. Although a slight majority of adults in the United States (52%) still believes in the existence of some type of transcendent, supernatural being(s), the most rapidly growing religious segment of the population (34%) contends that they don’t believe, know, or care whether God

exists. This expanding niche—labeled the Don'ts—is providing a spiritual foundation that is increasingly comfortable with Marxist thought and practice.

<b>The Prevalence of Marxist Views on Creation &amp; Humanity</b> (Percentage of US adults who embrace the outlook described)	
<b>Human beings have developed over a long time from less advanced forms of life in a process that occurred naturally, without any supernatural intervention</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Either there is no such thing as God; or a higher power may exist, but nobody really knows for certain; or don't know what to believe about the existence of God or a higher power</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>The universe came into existence without any type of divine assistance; it is solely a physical phenomenon</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>History is a human narrative, so it may differ from person to person</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Man is a biological machine whose natural goodness is inevitably corrupted by society</b>	<b>23%</b>
Source: <i>American Worldview Inventory 2021</i> , Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; N=2,000 U.S. adults.	

There are a variety of other religious and philosophical beliefs that tens of millions of Americans embrace that are compatible with Marxism. For instance, the majority's rejection of the existence of absolute or objective moral truth is a case in point. Similarly, roughly half of adults believe in evolution. And the increasingly widespread doubts about the reliability of the Bible facilitate alternative sources of moral guidance and lifestyle boundaries. This shift in religious and philosophical beliefs away from God and biblical truth creates a climate conducive to broader acceptance of Marxist ideas.

### **Marxism and Moral Choices**

Over the past two decades, in particular, Americans have been abandoning biblical morality. Many common moral choices in the United States these days are consistent with Marxist ideals.

Two-thirds of adults (68%) say that sexual relations outside of marriage are morally tenable. Given the Marxist dogma that marriage is a form of sexual and economic oppression, unfettered sexual expression fits the Marxist framework.

Half of U.S. adults (48%) believe that having an abortion because their partner left and taking care of the child would therefore be difficult is also morally reasonable. Because Marxism does not value human life, and prioritizing children over the state is counterproductive to the Marxist vision, abortion is viewed in that framework as a useful option.

<b>Truth and Morality, Marxist Style</b> (Percentage of US adults who embrace the outlook described)	
<b>Determining moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Objective moral truth does not exist; all moral truth is personal and subjective</b>	<b>42%</b>
<b>Having sexual relations with someone you love and expect to marry in the future is morally acceptable</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Having an abortion because one's partner has left, and the mother knows she cannot reasonably take care of the child, is morally acceptable</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Telling a falsehood of minor consequence in order to protect personal interests or reputation is morally acceptable</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Regardless of the motivation, suicide and euthanasia are morally acceptable choices</b>	<b>32%</b>
Source: <i>American Worldview Inventory 2021</i> , Cultural Research Center at Arizona Christian University; N=2,000 U.S. adults.	

And more than four of every 10 people (43%) believe that lying to protect one's best interests or reputation is morally acceptable. Marxism, of course, does not support the idea of moral truth, so personal deceptions are accepted as a way of life.

Without a firm belief in the existence of an active, personal God who has provided moral guidance in the Bible and to whom we are accountable, behaviors that were once thought to be immoral are now considered by large numbers of Americans to be defensible as matters of personal choice. That perspective enables people to increasingly embrace points of view that are consistent with Marxist ideals and lifestyles.

### **Critical Race Theory**

One of the more controversial worldviews these days is an offshoot of Marxism, known as Critical Theory, an eclectic, multi-disciplinary approach to explaining and addressing forms of oppression based on personal identity, especially racial identity.

Critical Race Theory is part of the larger Critical Theory philosophy that seeks social transformation based on ending racial oppression through a multi-faceted reliance upon race-based narratives, black nationalism, calling out the existence of institutionalized racism, and "interest convergence" (i.e., racism that advances the personal interests of the oppressor). CRT also advocates "intersectionality"—that is, race intersects with class, gender, and sexual orientation to form and inform a person's identity and thereby produce complex forms of oppression.

With groups such as the 1619 Project, NEA (National Education Association, the nation's largest teachers' union), Black Lives Matter, and American Association of University Professors, among many others, advocating on behalf of CRT, the philosophy has garnered heavy media coverage and integration into the national conversation about society.

The Cultural Research Center's study adds insights to the views of Americans regarding several key arguments of Critical Race Theory. In addition to the Marxist foundations discussed earlier, the survey also revealed that 41% of U.S. adults believe that race is used by white people to advance their own economic and political interests at the expense of people of color.

Conversely, the biblical worldview holds that all people are created equal by God, and that each person—no matter their race, gender or level of wealth—should be treated equally and with respect as a person created in the image of God. The biblical worldview rejects racism, racial categorization, identity and race-based politics, and breaks down barriers while promoting unity through a relationship with Jesus Christ that makes all men and women brothers and sisters, part of the family of God, and worthy of human dignity, respect and love.

### **Millennials Are More Accepting of Marxism**

Millennials have consistently emerged as the generation most supportive of socialism, the entry-level political application of Marxist ideology. The Cultural Research Center's study confirmed that the youngest adult generation, currently comprised of people ages 18 through 37, is leading the way toward adopting ideas that facilitate socialist and Marxist activity.

Millennials were notably more likely than their elders to possess a variety of beliefs that are conducive to Marxist thought and action:

- determining moral truth is up to each individual; there are no moral absolutes that apply to everyone, all the time
- objective moral truth does not exist; all moral truth is personal and subjective

- don't know, don't care, or don't believe in the existence of a supernatural, personal, living God
- people are merely biological machines whose natural goodness is inevitably corrupted by society
- the personal accumulation of money and other forms of wealth exemplify how unfair society can be toward those who work hard but do not get ahead
- allowing people to own property facilitates economic injustice
- individual property ownership is bad for society
- race is used by white people to advance their economic and political interests at the expense of people of color
- lying to protect personal interests or reputation is morally acceptable
- having an abortion because one's partner left, making it difficult or a hardship to care for the child, is morally acceptable
- having sexual relations with someone you love and expect to marry in the future is morally acceptable
- regardless of the motivation, suicide and euthanasia are morally acceptable choices
- more likely to consider themselves to be LGBTQ

Besides Millennials, the study noted that non-white individuals were more likely than whites to accept some of the ideas that fit with Marxism. Among those were the rejection of God and absolute moral truth; agreeing that property ownership fosters economic injustice; the belief that whites use race for their own benefit at the expense of non-whites; human life is not sacred; and moral behaviors are better decided on the basis of personal best interest than any kind of standard, unchanging principles or truths.

### **Conditions are Ripe for Expansion of Marxism**

Although America has few self-described Marxists, the table is set for Marxism to grow in this nation, according to researcher George Barna.

"Previous surveys I've conducted regarding socialism and Marxism have shown that most Americans do not understand the foundations of socialism, or that socialism and Marxism are joined at the hip," commented the author of more than 50 books about cultural conditions in the United States. "The increasing rejection of basic biblical principles by adults has left an ideological vacuum that Marxism and its offshoots, such as Critical Race Theory, are seeking to fill."

Barna noted that a Marxist revolution within the United States is not as far-fetched as some people assume. "Keep in mind that the LGBTQ community smoothed the way for radical changes in the law and in the way Americans think about gender identity and sexual orientation, despite being less than four percent of the population. Movements that are small in the number of passionate supporters but are well-funded and adroitly execute strategic plans can transform the larger culture despite their size.

"So when it comes to the encroachment of Marxism or socialism in America, consider the situation carefully," he said. "Most Americans do not realize they support elements of Marxist ideology. A large share of the youngest adult generation—the Millennials—has positive feelings about socialism. Combine those realities with powerful and strategically placed government officials and agencies currently putting Marxist ideals into practice."

Barna explained, "These conditions mean that it is feasible that America could unwittingly embrace an increasing degree of Marxist principles and practices during the coming two decades."

## **About the Research**

The data referred to in this report are taken from the *American Worldview Inventory (AWVI)*, an annual survey that evaluates the worldview of the U.S. adult population (age 18 and over). Begun as an annual tracking study in 2020, the assessment is based on several dozen worldview-related questions that fall within eight categories of worldview application, measuring both beliefs and behavior.

*AWVI 2021* is the first-ever national survey conducted in the United States measuring both biblical and competing worldviews. It was undertaken in February 2021 among a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults, providing an estimated maximum sampling error of approximately plus or minus 2 percentage points, based on the 95% confidence interval. Additional levels of indeterminable error may occur in surveys based upon non-sampling activity.

## **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. In addition to conducting the annual *American Worldview Inventory*, CRC also introduced the ACU Student Worldview Inventory (SWVI) in 2020. That survey is administered to every ACU student at the start of each academic year, and a final administration among students just prior to their graduation. The ACU SWVI enables the University to track the worldview development of its student body and to make changes to that process as recommended by the research. The Cultural Research Center also conducts nationwide research studies to understand the intersection of faith and culture and shares that information with organizations dedicated to transforming American culture with biblical truth.

CRC is guided by George Barna, Director of Research, and Tracy Munsil, Executive Director. Like ACU, CRC embraces biblical Christianity but serves with a variety of Bible-centric, theologically conservative Christian ministries and remains politically non-partisan. Access to the results from past surveys conducted by CRC, as well as additional information about the Cultural Research Center, can be accessed at [www.culturalresearchcenter.com](http://www.culturalresearchcenter.com). Further information about Arizona Christian University is available at [www.arizonachristian.edu](http://www.arizonachristian.edu).