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**Young People More Likely To Favor Socialism Than Capitalism: Pew**



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Young People More Likely To Favor Socialism Than Capitalism: Pew



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Young people -- the collegiate and post-college crowd, who have served as the most visible face of [the Occupy Wall Street movement](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/occupy-wall-street) -- might be getting [more comfortable with socialism](http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/?src=prc-headline). That's the surprising result from a Pew Research Center poll that aims to measure American sentiments toward different political labels.

The poll, published Wednesday, found that while Americans overall tend to oppose socialism by a strong margin -- 60 percent say they have a negative view of it, versus just 31 percent who say they have a positive view -- socialism has [more fans than opponents among the 18-29 crowd](http://www.people-press.org/2011/12/28/little-change-in-publics-response-to-capitalism-socialism/?src=prc-headline). Forty-nine percent of people in that age bracket say they have a positive view of socialism; only 43 percent say they have a negative view.

And while those numbers aren't very far apart, it's noteworthy that [they were reversed just 20 months ago](http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1583/political-rhetoric-capitalism-socialism-militia-family-values-states-rights), when Pew conducted a similar poll. In that survey, published May 2010, 43 percent of people age 18-29 said they had a *positive* view of socialism, and 49 percent said their opinion was negative.

It's not clear why young people have evidently begun to change their thinking on socialism. In the past several years, the poor economy has had any number of effects on young adults -- [keeping them at home with their parents](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/05/adults-living-with-parents_n_1077067.html), [making it difficult for them to get jobs](http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2011/09/22/325717/unemployment-young-adults-highest/), and likely [depressing their earning potential for years to come](http://articles.moneycentral.msn.com/Investing/Extra/young-bear-brunt-of-the-recession.aspx) -- that might have dampened enthusiasm for the free market among this crowd.

Indeed, the Pew poll also found that just 46 percent of people age 18-29 have positive views of capitalism, and 47 percent have negative views -- making this the only age group where support for socialism outweighs support for capitalism.

Young people have also been among the most involved in [the nationwide Occupy movement](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/news/occupy-wall-street), whose members have leveled pointed criticism at the capitalist ethos and often called for a more equal distribution of American wealth.

In general, income inequality -- which a Congressional Budget Office report recently pointed out is [at historic levels](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/26/income-inequality_n_1032632.html) -- has received more and more attention in politics and the media since the Occupy movement launched in mid-September. [Usage of the term rose dramatically](http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/1111/Occupy_Wall_Street_is_winning.html) in news coverage following the start of the protests, and politicians from [Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/11/01/harry-reid-occupy-wall-street-the-1-percent_n_1069452.html) to [President Barack Obama](http://maddowblog.msnbc.msn.com/_news/2011/12/06/9253882-president-obama-talks-99-percent) have used the movement's language to describe divisions in the American public.

Still, the nationwide Occupy demonstrations notwithstanding, socialism doesn't score very well in other age groups in the Pew poll, or across other demographic categories.

Pew broke down its results by age, race, income and political affiliation, as well as support for the Occupy Wall Street and Tea Party movements. There were only two other groups among whom socialism's positives outweighed its negatives -- blacks, who say they favor socialism 55 to 36 percent, and liberal Democrats, who say they favor socialism 59 to 39 percent. These were also the only two groups to show net favor for socialism in the 2010 poll.



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