

## INTRODUCTION

Socialism! Politicians throw around this word, sometimes as a positive, but mostly as an insult. But all this name-slashing has distorted the definition of Socialism in the minds of the American people. It has become a dog whistle, a buzzword.

America's History with Socialism has been forever tainted by the first and second Red Scares, along with McCarthyism during the Cold War. Many people who lived through the Cold War will still conflate Socialism with the USSR's Communism.

Despite this complicated history, more and more young people are turning towards leftism. Though this historical trend is hardly new, Pew Research Center charts Gen Z as being significantly more progressive its predecessors, both socially and economically. What caused this shift?: likely young people's increasing exposure to grim news like that of the Climate Crisis. PEW has found Gen Z as a whole to be much more socially aware.

In my research, I seek to understand how exactly Americans perceive the ideologies of Socialism and Capitalism and how these shifts will affect future US politics.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

To conduct my surveys, I posed 15 questions to over 260 respondents using Survey Monkey. These questions came in 3 categories measuring the participants' beliefs, knowledge, and then behavior in regards to Socialism and the surrounding politics. The Belief categories questions came on a sliding scale from 0-100 (0 being Very much disagree, 100 being Very much agree).

To analyze the open ended "knowledge" questions asking about the participant definition of both Socialism and Capitalism, I used the tagging tool to sort responses into several general descriptions, as shown in figures 1 and 2. I then counted how many times that definition was mentioned across 180 useable responses (responses indicating lack of knowledge were not included)

Fig. 3 shows the percentage of people who agreed (rated over 50) with the statements issues.

Fig. 4 shows a word cloud of countries labeled as Socialist.

Fig 5. shows the correlation coefficients between questions in the "belief" category (columns) and "behavior" (rows). Though these correlations, I seek to prove that people do not always follow through with their beliefs when it comes to voting Socialist.

## DATA AND FINDINGS

Fig 1

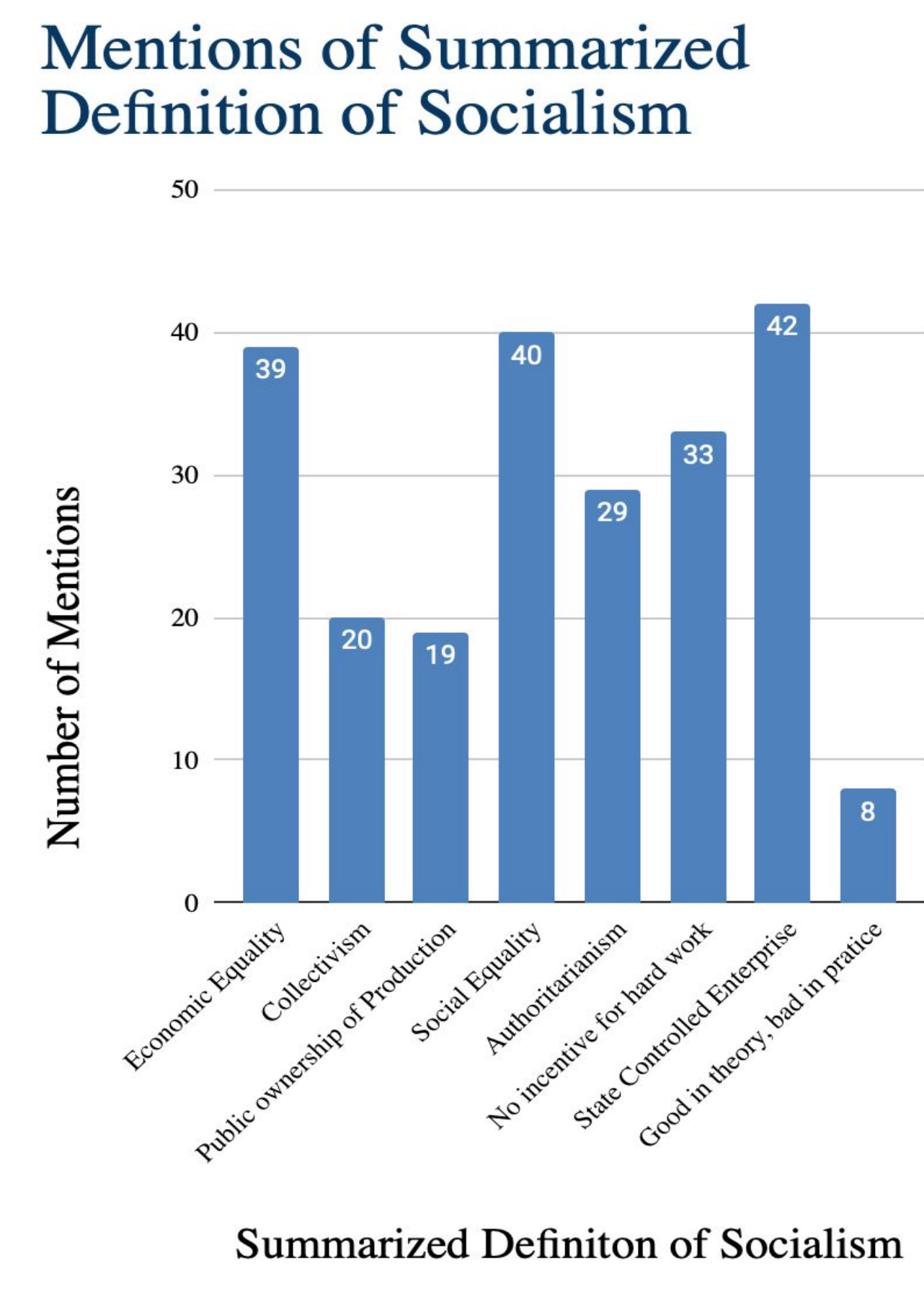


Fig 5

Correlation between Beliefs and Likely Behaviors	Favors Universal Education	Favors Universal Healthcare	Favors higher wages for lower class	Believes top 1% make too much money	Favors Government Intervention to help inequality	Believes employers often exploit employees
Likelihood to vote for Socialist labeled politician?	0.468	0.556	0.448	0.35	0.581	0.414
Likelihood to support a Socialist policy, law, or proposition?	0.439	0.548	0.428	0.375	0.549	0.402

Fig 2- percent agreeing with the statement

Favors Universal Education	82%
Favors Universal Healthcare	82%
Favors higher wages for Blue-Collar workers	84%
Believes top 1% make too much money	80%
Favors Government Intervention to help remedy inequality	77%
Believes one's work ethic isn't greatest factor that determines their economic success	35%
Believes current US wealth distribution is unfair	72%
Believes employers often exploit employees	82%

Fig 3: Likelihood to vote for a Socialist-labeled Politician by Age

Age	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Likely	Very Likely
18-29	23.5%	17.6%	39.2%	19.7%
30-44	28.3%	9.6%	39.2%	22.9%
45-60	29.4%	16.7%	27.0%	26.9%
> 60	53.5%	14.2%	17.8%	14.2%

Fig 4



## DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

Based on the correlation coefficients between the Beliefs and Behaviors, which were relatively low, I conclude that most people (typically around 70-80% of those surveyed, as shown in Fig 2) agree with Socialist principles like universal healthcare and government intervention to remedy inequality. In a perfect world, the correlation coefficient between the opinions and the voting indication would be 1, a perfect correlation. What I conclude is that people very much agree with many of the main tenets of leftism, as displayed by their negative descriptions of Capitalism, but are reluctant to vote this way because of the stigma associated with the words "Socialism", "The Left", and "Marxism. When asked the definition of Socialism, more than 20% of those surveyed did not know, and an even larger percentage gave a completely inaccurate definition. Who can blame them, with all the information and confusing surrounding this buzzword. What was evidenced from both questions 1-8 as well as the open ended question about Capitalism definition was a clear dissatisfaction with the current system. Despite other negative opinions of Capitalism, at least 10% of those surveyed held firm in their belief that the US is a Meritocracy, a place where anyone can advance if they work hard enough. Even though many of those same people said that they supported agreed with Socialist concepts, 65% of those surveyed said that work ethic was the most important factor towards success in this country. This idea of Meritocracy is commonly attached to American Capitalism, the "American Dream" in which anyone can enrich themselves.

## CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

As stated, my main conclusion is that the majority of people do agree with the main tenets of Socialism, and they are dissatisfied with the current economic, political, and social system. What the data shows, however, is that their perception of Socialism has been so distorted by reactionary news people and American propaganda from decades ago that they are not willing to carry these leftist beliefs to the polls. When analyzing American politics it is important to view it through a global lens, to realize that even the most "far-left" candidates in the US (Sanders) would be considered moderates elsewhere. These opinions are shifting, though, and as young people are born without prejudices against Socialism leftover from the Cold War, they have come to increasingly embrace leftism. Unless current politicians and news people stop misusing these terms, however, this cycle of misinformation will continue to cloud the political spectrum and voting patterns from the voters' true sentiments.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS /

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