

New survey shows Australian youth prefer socialism

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A poll of 1,500 people in Australia has revealed that the majority of youth surveyed prefer socialism over capitalism.

Despite the limitations of the survey and of polling more generally, the result is an indication of a broad leftward movement among youth in Australia and internationally against the capitalist system, which presents young people with a future of war, dictatorship, social misery, climate catastrophe and mass illness.

The results come from a public data poll conducted between 31 May and 4 June by the international data collection company YouGov and released earlier this month.

Participants were asked to what extent they believed Australia should be “more socialist” or “more capitalist” on a scale of 0 to 10. Zero indicates strong support for socialism, five is neutral, and 10 is strong support for capitalism.

It is not clear what the questionnaire authors mean by “more socialism” or “more capitalism.” Rather than clarifying the distinction between socialism and capitalism—two diametrically opposed economic systems—the questionnaire clouds this.

Even so, the results of the poll are a clear indication of a growing attraction to socialism, particularly among the youth.

Among 18–24-year-olds, 53 percent chose a number between zero and four, indicating support for socialism. Only 22 percent in this age range indicated support for “more capitalism,” while a quarter chose a neutral response.

When expanded to 18–34-year-olds, the support for socialism is not as pronounced, but is still nearly double the indicated support for capitalism. This age range shows 41 percent in favour of socialism, 22 percent supporting capitalism and 34 percent neutral.

While the overwhelming support for socialism is not expressed when participants of all ages are included, neither do the results indicate strong support for capitalism. Among respondents of all ages, support for socialism is at 27 percent, support for capitalism marginally higher at 31 percent and neutral responses making up 42 percent of the

total.

Similar results have been seen in recent years around the world including in the US where anti-communism has been promoted by the state for decades and in Europe.

It is unsurprising that, particularly among the youth, there is growing opposition to the existing political set up and the capitalist system.

Capitalism is associated among broad sections of youth with the war, skyrocketing cost of living, joblessness and housing insecurity.

Last year’s “Youth Barometer” report showed 90 percent of Australian youth have faced financial difficulty the previous year and 61 percent believe they will be financially worse off than their parents. It also revealed 72 percent of Australian youth believe they will never be able to buy a home.

Growing opposition to the capitalist system has only accelerated in the years since the beginning of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which has killed tens of millions worldwide and the explosion of imperialist militarism globally including the US-overseen Gaza genocide and the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine.

These profit-driven policies of war and austerity are defended by all the capitalist parties. The YouGov poll is an indication of why there is a crisis of the establishment parties in Australia and internationally.

In Australia, the results were published amid a major crisis of the Labor government of Anthony Albanese which is hated for its support for Israel’s genocidal campaign in Gaza and attacks on the living conditions of ordinary people. Headed by the far-right Peter Dutton, the Liberal-National Coalition opposition is no less reviled by ordinary workers and youth.

As the political establishment lurches further to the right, the YouGov results indicate that the working class and youth are moving to the left. It highlights the growing sense among young people in Australia that the current system cannot advance their interests.

There is little doubt that the results would be even more

pronounced among young people if they asked questions like: Should society be run by billionaires (as it is under capitalism)? Should resources that could benefit society be used to bolster the military (as they are under capitalism)? For that matter, should the government actively support an ongoing genocide in Gaza and stoke tensions against Russia and China that would lead to a nuclear third-world war (as it does under capitalism)?

The growth of anti-capitalist sentiment is a healthy and important development. But the central question is what is socialism, and how is it fought for?

The YouGov questionnaire contains the misleading conception that socialism can be dialled up within the existing order. It is presented as something that can be increased or decreased depending on the person or party in power.

This conception is associated with the promotion of figures such as Bernie Sanders in the US or Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, who present themselves as “democratic socialists.” They advance the perspective that the conditions of ordinary youth and workers can be improved within the existing capitalist framework.

But this is an utterly false conception that the question-askers know full well.

In the US, Sanders has backed every Democratic Party candidate for president, including “Genocide Joe” Biden and made clear his support for US-led wars. Corbyn in Britain has facilitated the further right-wing trajectory of the Labour Party, which has come into power this month on a program of supporting genocide, war and austerity.

Sanders and Corbyn show how socialism is *not* to be fought for. Whatever excesses of capitalism these layers may object to, they are lifelong defenders of the capitalist system. They play the role of lightning rods for popular discontent, which they funnel back behind the same capitalist system that causes war and social misery.

In a period of capitalist crisis, posing the alternatives of war and revolution, the senile reformism of figures such as Sanders and Corbyn does not produce reforms but merely paves the way for even deeper attacks on the working class, including the rise of far right and fascistic tendencies.

Instead, youth should take up a fight based on the following principles.

- A socialist perspective:

The threat to the very existence of humanity through war, climate change and pestilence is the result of the outmoded and bankrupt capitalist system. Only through the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society based on production for need, not profit, can this threat be averted.

- Internationalism:

These threats face the world’s population and cannot be resolved within the framework of the nation-state system. The perspective must be the development of a unified movement of the working class internationally.

- The turn to the international working class:

As the class that produces all wealth and the majority of the world’s population, the working class is the sole force that has the social power to overthrow the profit system in a revolutionary movement.

- A break with all the parties and organisations of capitalism:

Workers and youth must establish their own parties and fighting organisations, independent from all those who prop up the decaying capitalist order. This includes establishment parties such as Labor, the Coalition, and the Greens in Australia, the likes of Corbyn in the UK and Sanders in the US, which promote the illusion that capitalism can be reformed. It also includes the trade union bureaucracies, which act as industrial police to suppress workers’ growing struggles.

- The fight for Trotskyism, the Marxism of the 21st century:

The bitter experiences of the struggles of the working class over more than 100 years have demonstrated that hatred and anger are not enough. Youth and workers must learn the lessons of the revolutionary struggles of the 20th century. The 1917 October Revolution in Russia proved that the working class, equipped with a revolutionary leadership, can take power and begin the socialist reorganisation of society. The struggle waged by the Trotskyist movement against the developing rule of a privileged bureaucracy in the Soviet Union similarly demonstrated that Stalinism was not socialism but its opposite—a nationalist tendency that resulted in the restoration of capitalism.

More than 30 years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, it is indisputable that the Trotskyist movement represents the genuine socialist and internationalist political tendency. It exists in the form of the International Committee of the Fourth International, which publishes the WSWs. Students and youth wanting to fight for a future and for socialism should join its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, and build the Socialist Equality Party.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)