

U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism

October 2020

YouGov®



VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM
MEMORIAL FOUNDATION



Annual Report on U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism

The Report on U.S. Attitudes Toward Socialism, Communism, and Collectivism has surveyed Americans annually since 2016. The survey is commissioned by the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation (VOC) and conducted by YouGov.

The goal of the report is to explore perceptions of collectivist systems, such as communism and socialism, among Americans ages 16 or older. This has been explored through direct questions concerning different economic systems and knowledge about the history of collectivist systems and their leaders and movements.

The last four reports have garnered wide attention from media outlets across the country, highlighting the knowledge gaps and perceptions of collectivism among the American public. This research has furthered VOC's mission of educating future generations about the ideology, history, and legacy of communism.



Findings reflect the responses of 2,100 Americans.



The survey was conducted between September 9th and 28th, 2020, and had an average survey length of 12 minutes.

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KEY INSIGHTS: Views on Ideologies

The term ‘capitalism’ is still viewed most favorably but has waned slightly in the past few years

- Overall, the term ‘capitalism’ is viewed far more favorably than that of other economic systems — however it has trended down to 55% from a high in 2018 of 61%.
- Favorability of the term ‘socialism’ has rebounded slightly to 40% this year after falling to 36% in 2019 (from 42% in 2018).
- Favorability of ‘socialism’ is up from 2019 among Gen Z (9 points), Gen X (6 points), and among Baby Boomers (5 points).
- While most Americans perceive the label ‘capitalist’ as neutral, it is the only label that is considered a compliment by more than those who consider it an insult.
- ‘Socialist’ is viewed as an insult by 37%, with ‘Marxist’ and ‘communist’ being viewed as insults by 53% and 67%, respectively.
- The percentage who say ‘communist’ is an insult is up 6 points from 61% in 2019. This is driven by the following generations:
 - Millennials: 40% → 53%
 - Gen X: 65% → 71%
 - Silent Generation: 80% → 88%

Favorability of the term ‘Marxism’ is falling among Millennials and rising for Gen Z

- ‘Marxism’ still has the highest favorability among Gen Z (30%) and Millennials (27%) compared to other generations.
- Yet the favorability of ‘Marxism’ is down 9 points for Millennials while it is up 6 points for Gen Z from 2019.

Knowledge of Marxism and socialism remains varied

- 26% of Gen Z believe Marxism most looks like a totalitarian state that suppresses the freedom of its citizens, compared to 72% of the Silent Generation and 58% of Boomers.
- Overall, 85% say they know at least a little about socialism. However, 68% of Americans do not define socialism as the government owning all property and controlling nearly 100% of the national economy.

GENERATIONS DEFINED

Gen Z (ages 16-23)	14%
Millennial (ages 24-39)	26%
Gen X (ages 40-55)	23%
Boomers (ages 56-74)	31%
Silent Generation (75+)	6%



Americans are uncertain about the past consequences of communism, but there are signs of change

- Just over one-third (36%) of Americans agree that the Chinese Communist Party is responsible for more deaths than Nazi Germany, and nearly half (46%) don't have an answer.
- Seventy-nine percent of Americans accurately say China is a communist, rather than a democratic, country.
- Notably, the percent who say China is a communist country is up among:
 - Gen Z: 57% → 66%
 - Millennials: 62% → 71%
 - Gen X: 73% → 79%
- Over three-quarters (77%) of Americans believe the Declaration of Independence better guarantees freedom and equality over the Communist Manifesto.
- The percent of Millennials who believe the Communist Manifesto better guarantees freedom (9%) is down 10 points from 2019.

A quarter of Americans favor the gradual elimination of the capitalist system

- Over a quarter (26%) of Americans say they support the gradual elimination of the capitalist system in favor of a more socialist system.
- Support is higher among Gen Z (31%) and Millennials (35%) and lower among Baby Boomers (18%) and the Silent Generation (16%).

Hesitancy to vote for a democratic socialist is decreasing

- Compared to 2019, fewer Americans are "hesitant" or "would never" vote for a democratic socialist.
- Gen Z opposition to voting for a democratic socialist candidate decreased from 44% to 29% this year.





Americans trust themselves to take care of their interests over government and community

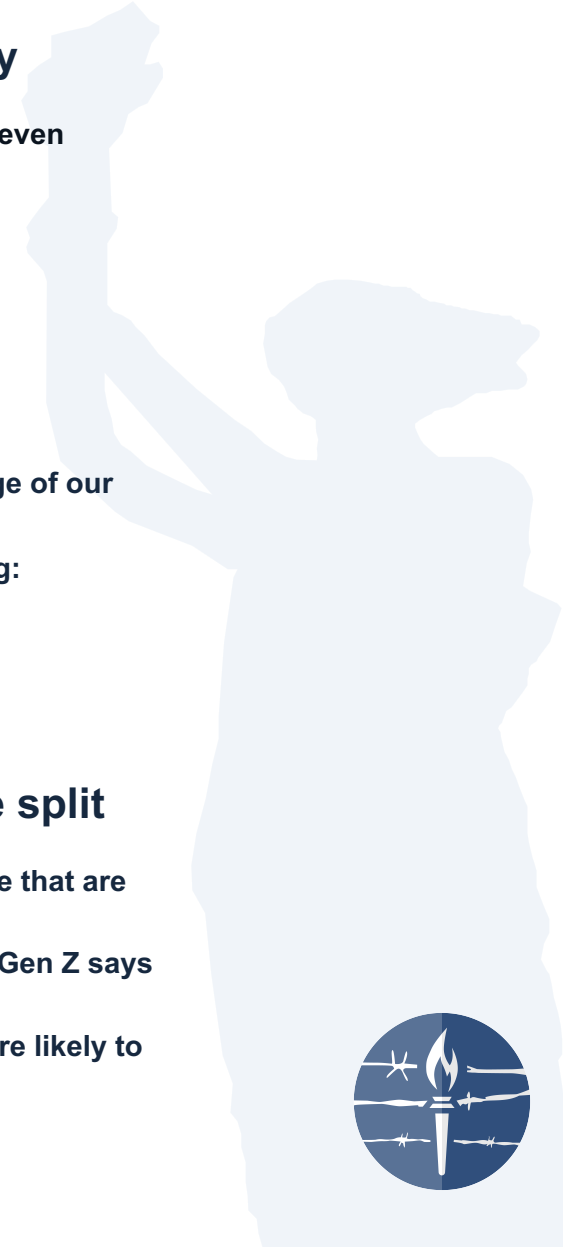
- **In Self We Trust** — now more than ever. The percentage who say they most trust themselves to take care of their interests is up seven points from 2019. This is driven by the younger generations:
 - Gen Z: 66% → 77%
 - Millennials: 66% → 82%
 - Gen X: 86% → 91%

The sentiment that America is an unequal society is increasing

- Of the more than half (68%) of Americans who think the highest earners are not paying their fair share, 49% say a complete change of our economic system is part of the solution.
- The percent of Americans who favor a universal basic income has increased 8 points (26% to 34%). This is driven by the following:
 - Millennials: 36% → 43%
 - Gen X: 26% → 37%
 - Baby Boomers: 17% → 22%

Across generations, Americans value free speech, but views on the identity of America are split

- Across all generations, nearly four-in-five Americans believe that we should tolerate a broad diversity of opinions, including those that are personally offensive.
- There is a sizable generational gap in how Americans view athletes taking a knee during the National Anthem. Twenty percent of Gen Z says it is unpatriotic versus 58% of the Silent Generation.
- Across generations, Americans believe the U.S. flag most accurately represents freedom. However, Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to say it represents imperialism or greed than other generations.





Donald Trump is seen as the greatest threat to world peace

- In an increase from 2019, one-third of Americans see Donald Trump (33%) as the biggest threat to world peace (across every generation) over figures like Kim Jong-un (18%) and Vladimir Putin (12%).
- Thirty-two percent of Americans hold Donald Trump responsible for COVID-19 becoming a global pandemic over Xi Jinping.

Climate change tops a list of four threats to national security (ahead of China and Russia)

- Over a quarter of Americans think climate change is the #1 threat to America's national security — when presented a list of four threats, including the rise of the People's Republic of China or Russian expansionism.
- Baby Boomers are the only generation that definitively views the rise of the People's Republic of China (27%) as a greater threat than climate change (22%).

Americans value individual rights but say the best system for handling a pandemic is one that prioritizes public health over individual rights

- Fifty-three percent of Americans say that a good government should favor the freedom of its citizens over their safety.
- Fifty-four percent of Americans say that the best type of government or society to handle a pandemic is one that prioritizes public health over individual rights.
- Only half of Americans believe capitalism drives more innovation than socialism. Over one-third (36%) of Americans are “not sure”.



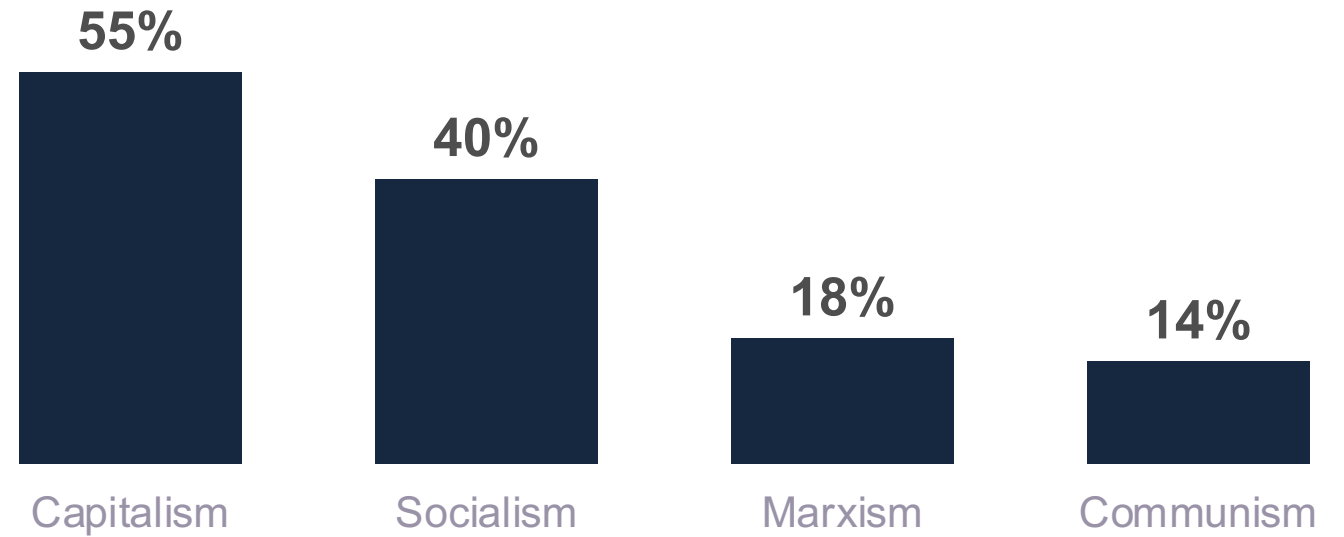
VIEWS ON IDEOLOGIES

Capitalism remains favored above all other ideologies, though its favorability has faltered in the past few years — particularly among Millennials. Socialism is favored by four-in-ten Americans (with Gen Z and Millennials viewing it more favorably than other generations).

Overall, the term 'capitalism' is viewed more favorably than other economic systems.



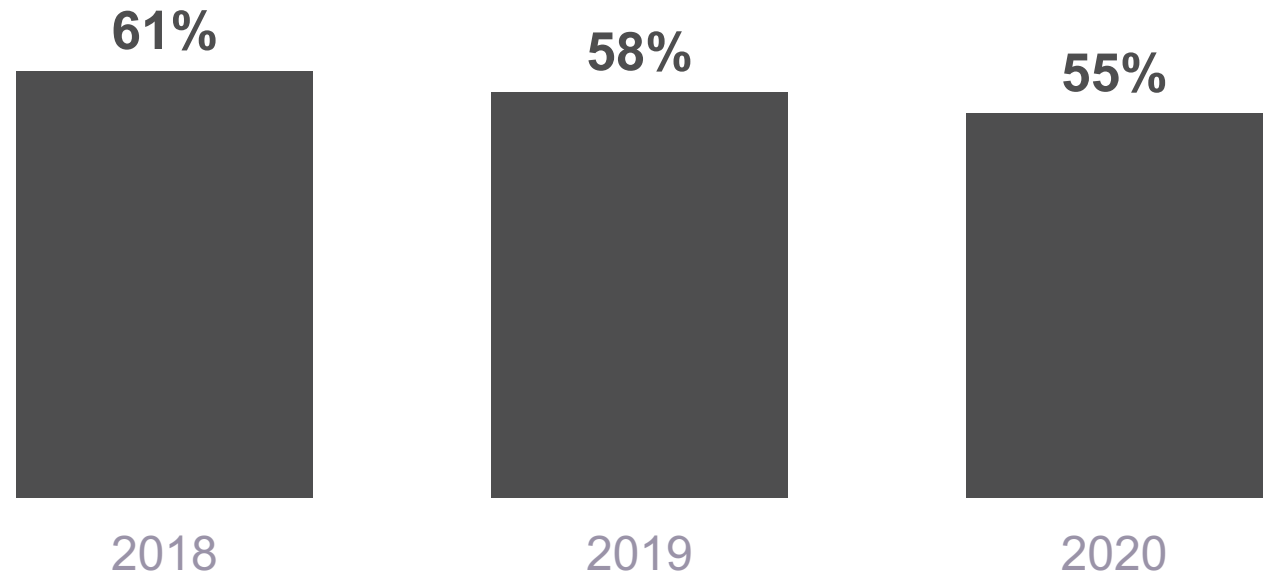
Favorable opinion of the term...





However, its favorability has trended down slightly since 2018, when it was at 61%.

Favorable opinion of the term 'capitalism'





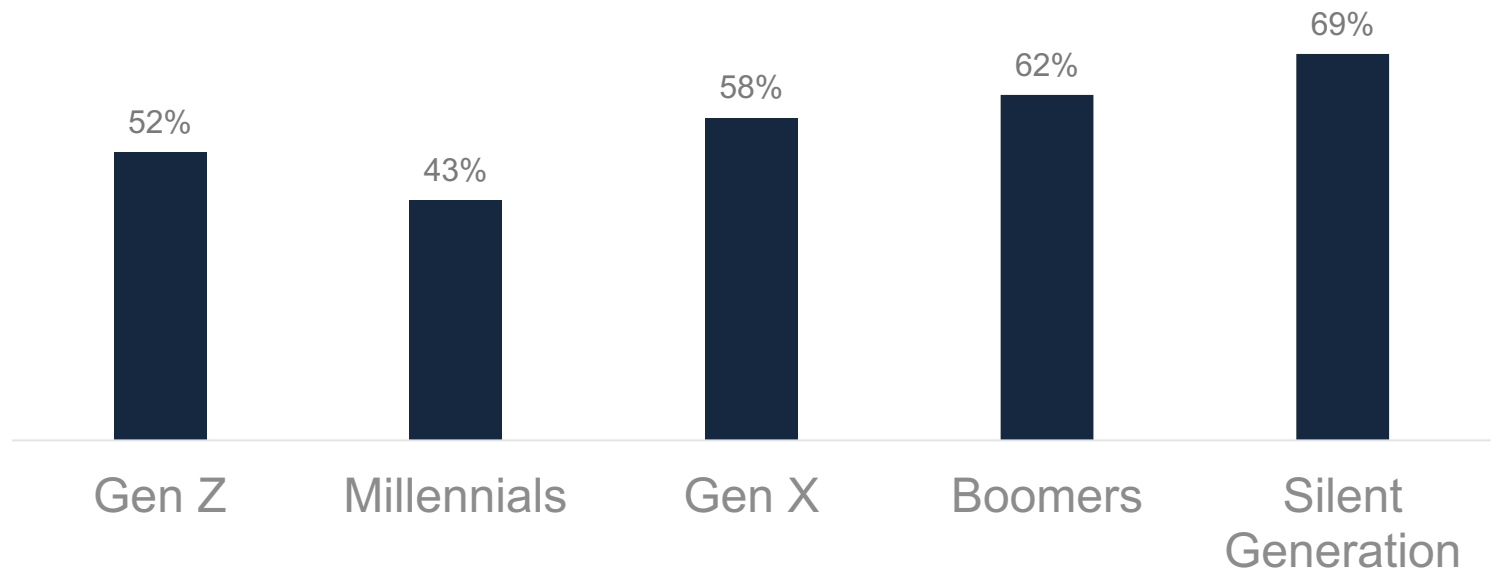
Favorability of ‘capitalism’ is far lower among younger generations — dipping to a new low of 43% among Millennials.

Its favorability rises among Gen X, again among Boomers, and again among the Silent Generation, where 69% have a favorable opinion of it.



Favorability of the term ‘capitalism’ is down 7 points among millennials from 2019. It is also down 8 points among the Silent Generation, though they are still the most likely to have a favorable opinion.

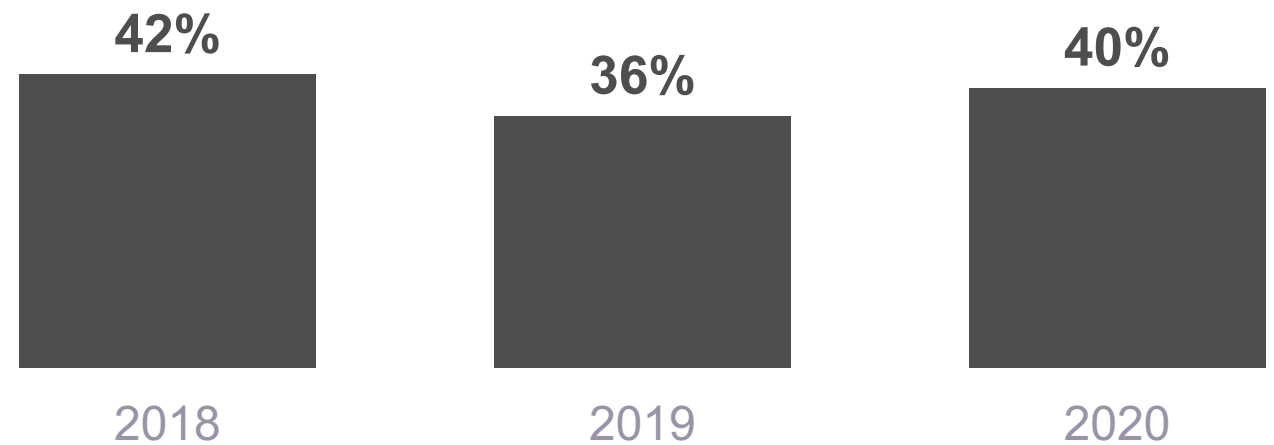
Favorable opinion of the term ‘capitalism’



‘Socialism’ favorability has rebounded slightly to 40% after falling in 2019.



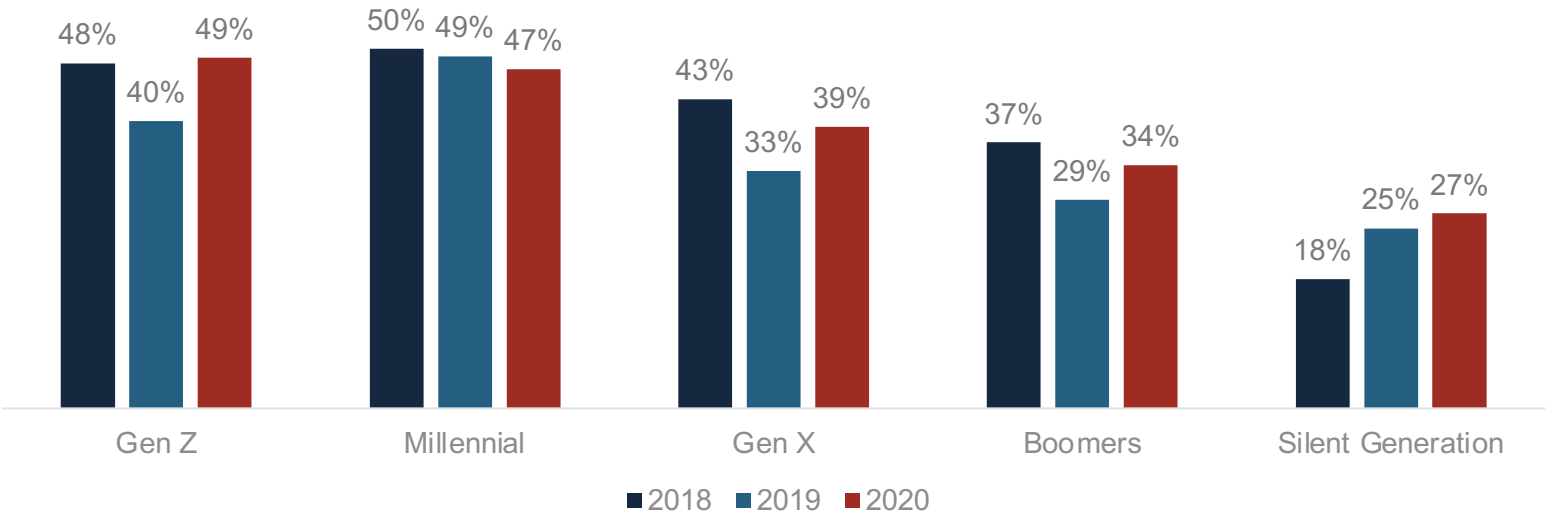
Favorable opinion of the term ‘socialism’





Favorability of 'socialism' is up from 2019 among Gen Z (9 points), Gen X (6 points), and directionally among Baby Boomers (5 points).

Favorable opinion of the term 'socialism'



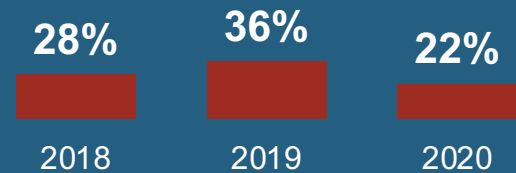


‘Communism’ is viewed more favorably by younger generations, from 28% among Gen Z down to 3% among the Silent Generation.

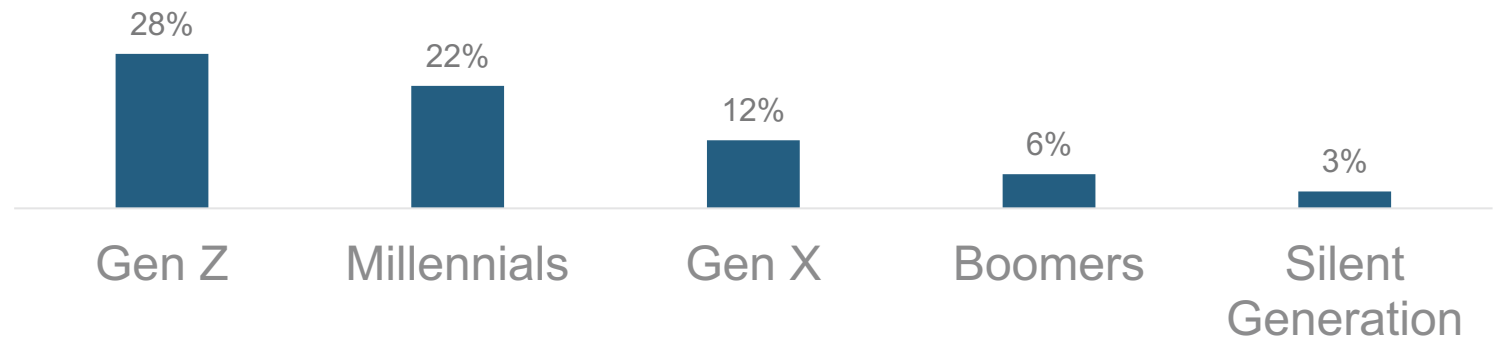
Favorability of ‘communism’ among Millennials is down from 2019.



Percent of Millennials who say the term ‘communism’ is favorable



Favorable opinion of the term ‘communism’



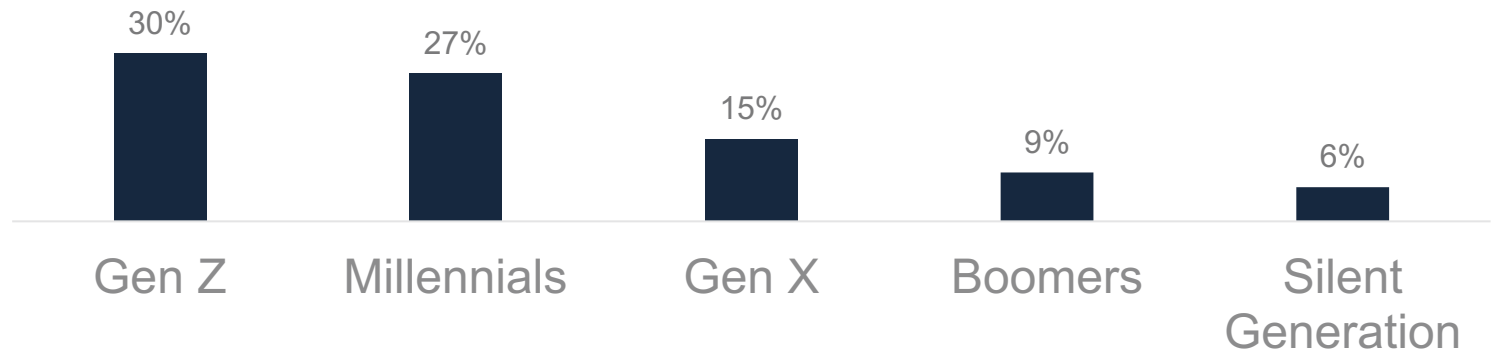


‘Marxism’ has the highest favorability among Gen Z (30%) and Millennials (27%).



Favorability of ‘Marxism’ is up 6 points for Gen Z and down 9 points for Millennials from 2019.

Favorable opinion of the term ‘Marxism’





While most Americans perceive the label ‘capitalist’ as neutral, it is the only ideology that is considered a compliment by more than those who consider it an insult.

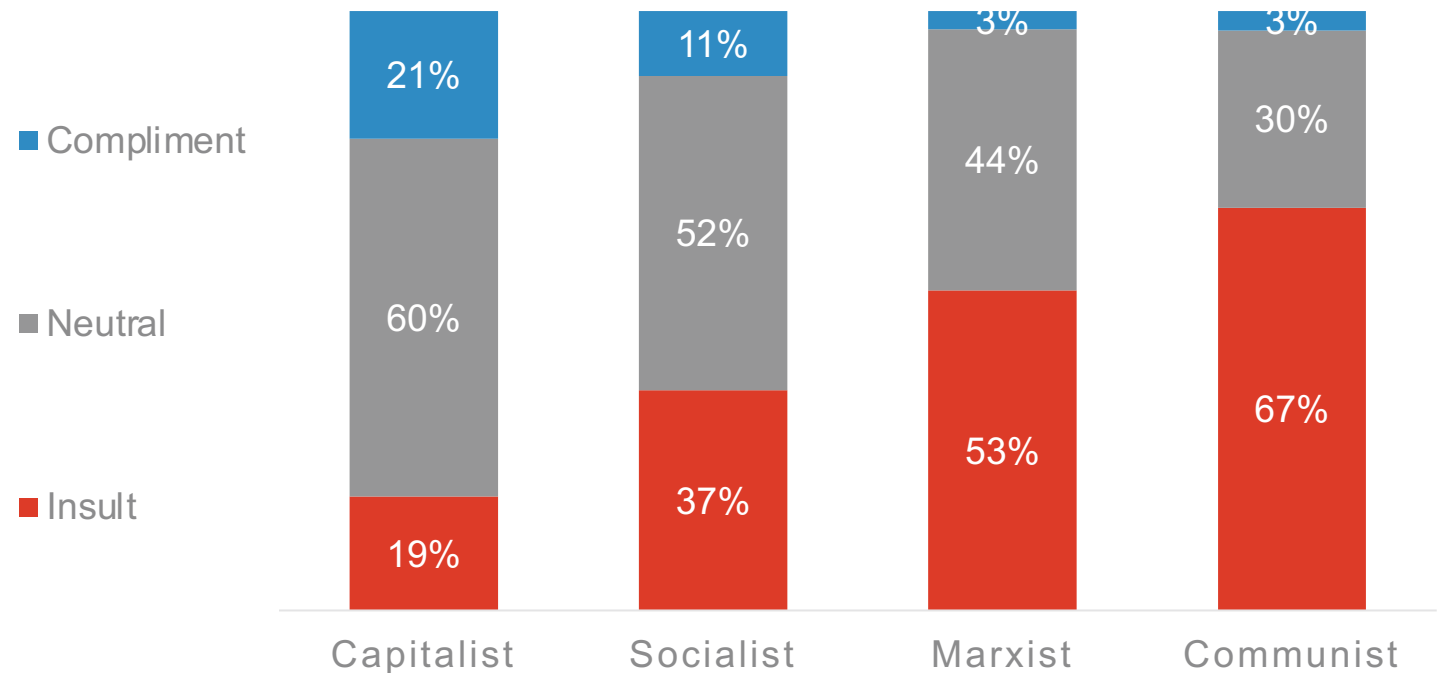
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Percent who say ‘communist’ is an insult is up 6 points from 61% in 2019. This is driven by the following generational trends:

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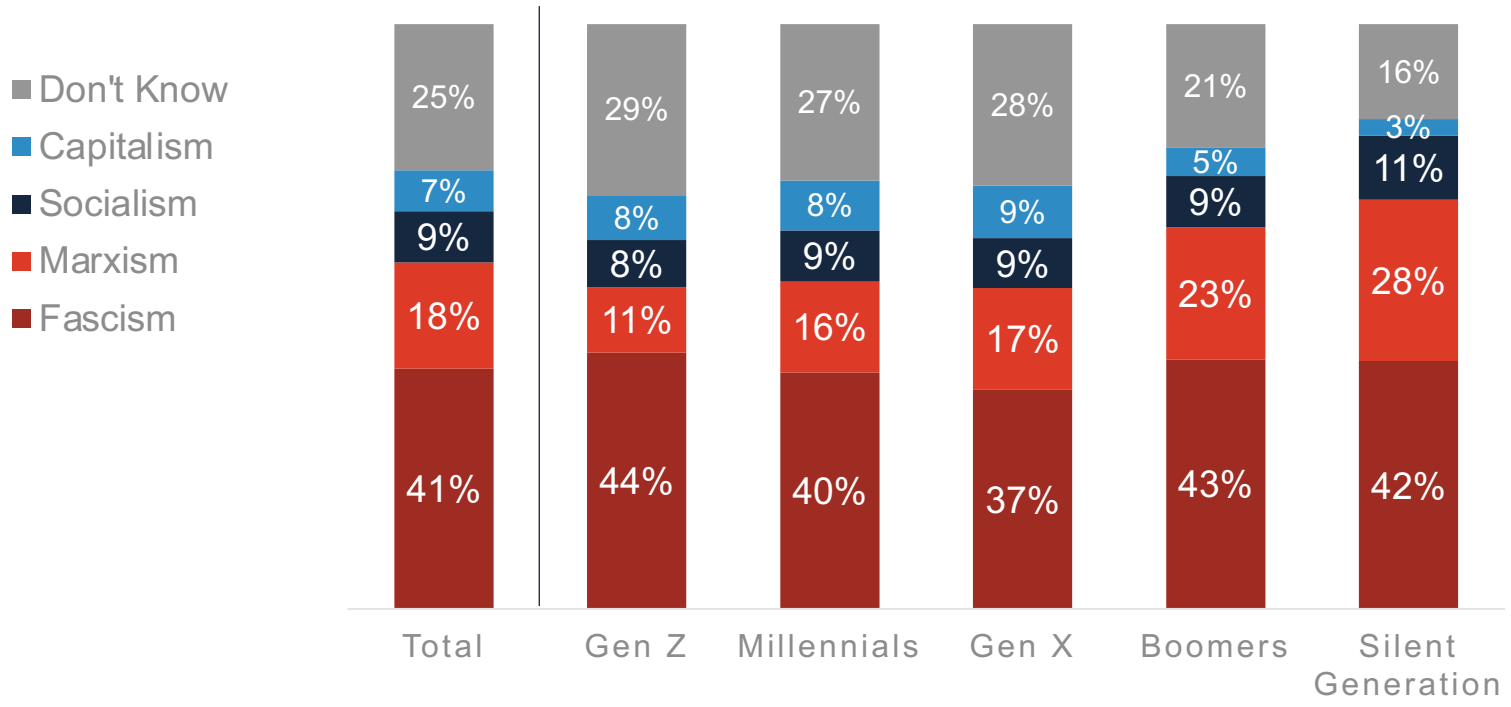
Compliment, insult, or neutral to call someone a...





Fascism is viewed as more violent than any other ideology across generations.

Most violent ideology/system



Percent who say socialism is most violent is down among:

- Gen Z: 16% → 8%
- Millennials: 15% → 9%

At the same time, the percent of Millennials who say capitalism is the most violent is down to 8% from 14% in 2019.

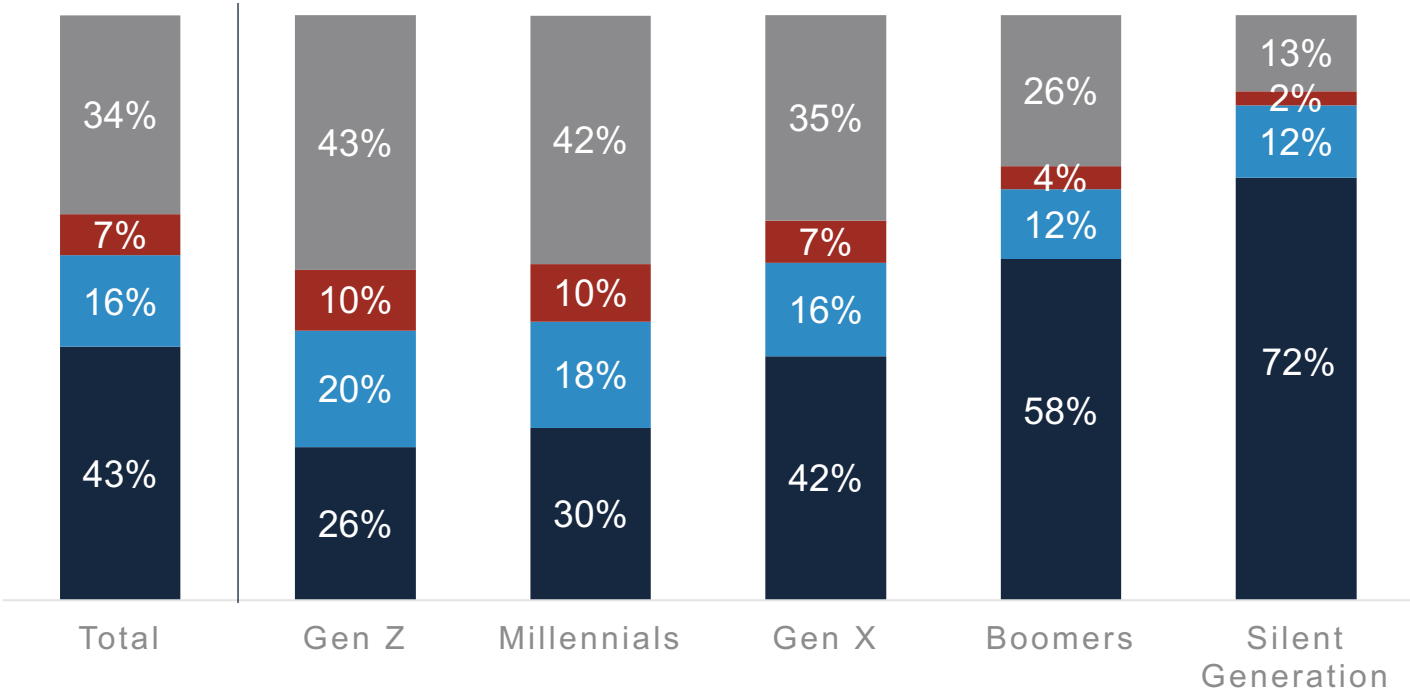


One-third of Americans admit they are not sure what Marxism most looks like.

26% of Gen Z believe Marxism most looks like a totalitarian state that suppresses the freedom of its citizens.

Marxism most looks like:

- Not sure
- Social movement to effect positive change against injustice
- Governments which manage the aspect of productivity of society for the good of all
- Totalitarian state that suppresses the freedom of its citizens

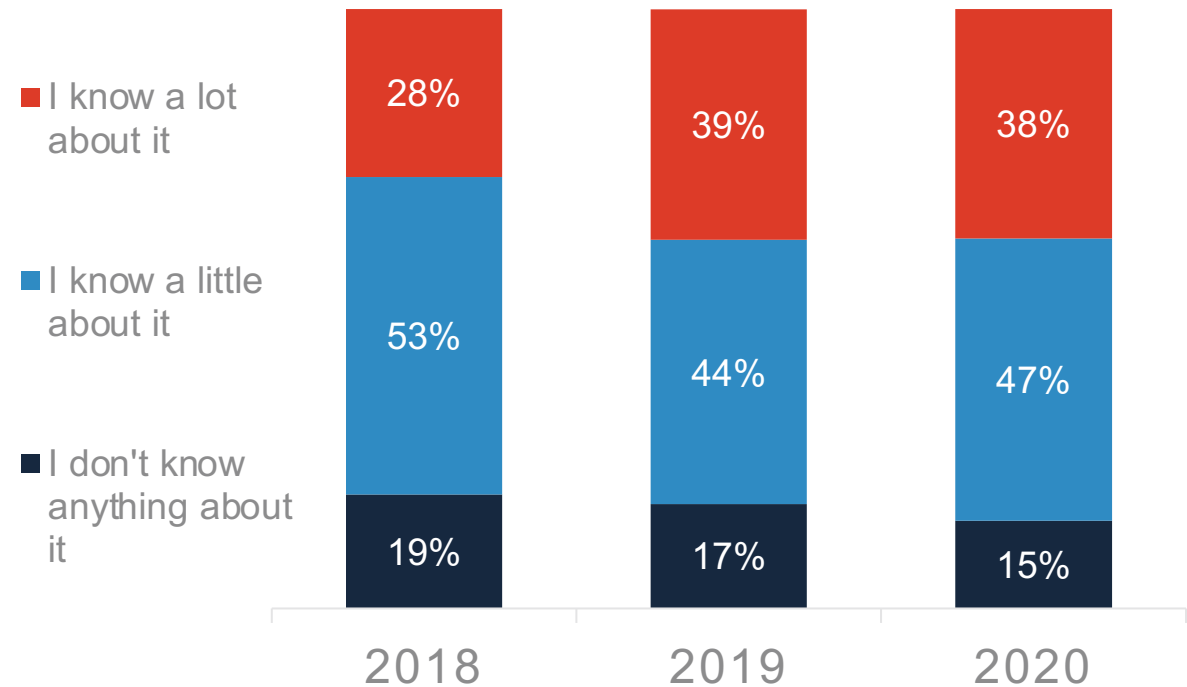




Thirty-eight percent of Americans say they “know a lot” about socialism — steady from 2019.

Overall, 85% say they know at least a little about socialism.

Self-professed knowledge of socialism





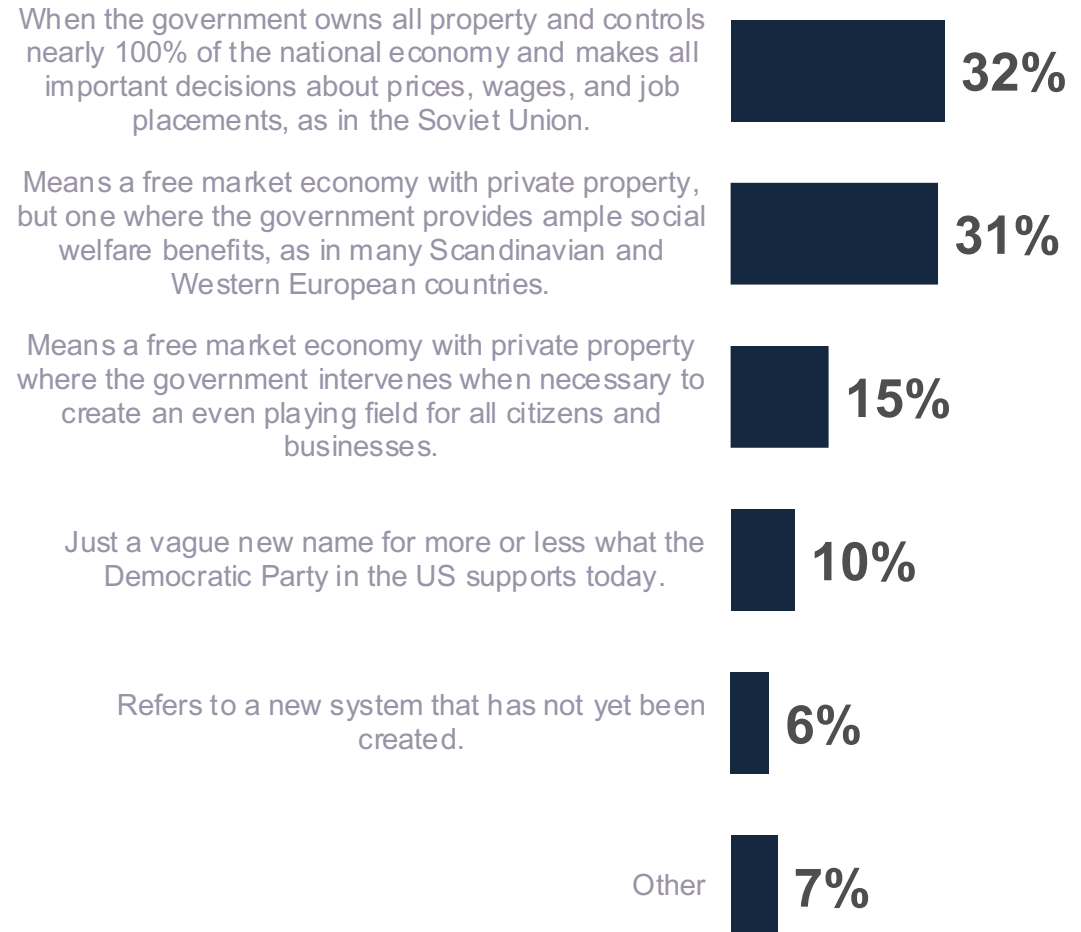
Sixty-eight percent of Americans do not define socialism as the government owning all property and controlling nearly 100% of the national economy.

***Oxford English Dictionary
Definition of Socialism:***

A theory or system of social organization based on state or collective ownership and regulation of the means of production, distribution, and exchange for the common benefit of all members of society; advocacy or practice of such a system, esp. as a political movement.

Now also: any of various systems of liberal social democracy which retain a commitment to social justice and social reform, or feature some degree of state intervention in the running of the economy.

Defining socialism



This is steady from 2019.

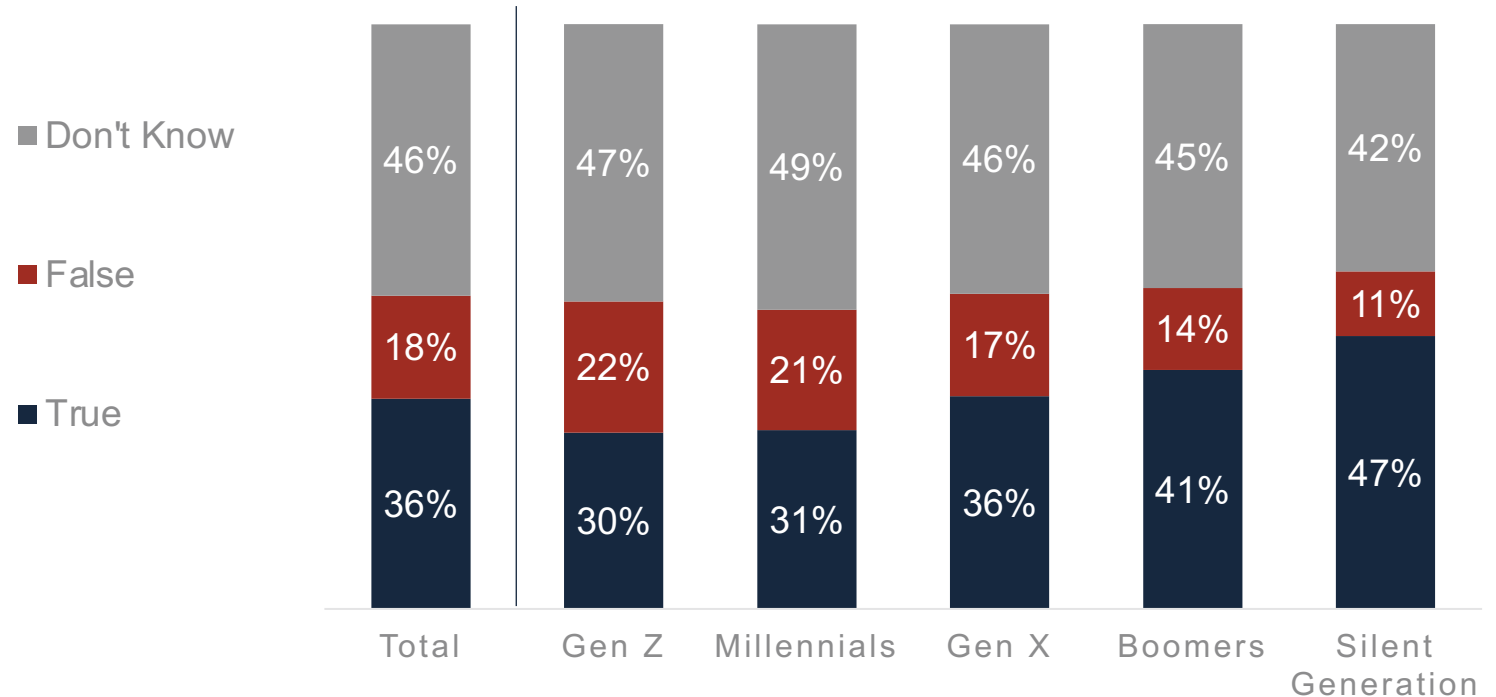
IDEOLOGIES: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

America's understandings of both the past and the present, as well as hopes for the future, are divided across a generational line.



Just over one-third (36%) of Americans agree that the Chinese Communist Party is responsible for more deaths than Nazi Germany, and nearly half (46%) don't have an answer.

True or False: The Chinese Communist Party is responsible for more deaths than Nazi Germany.





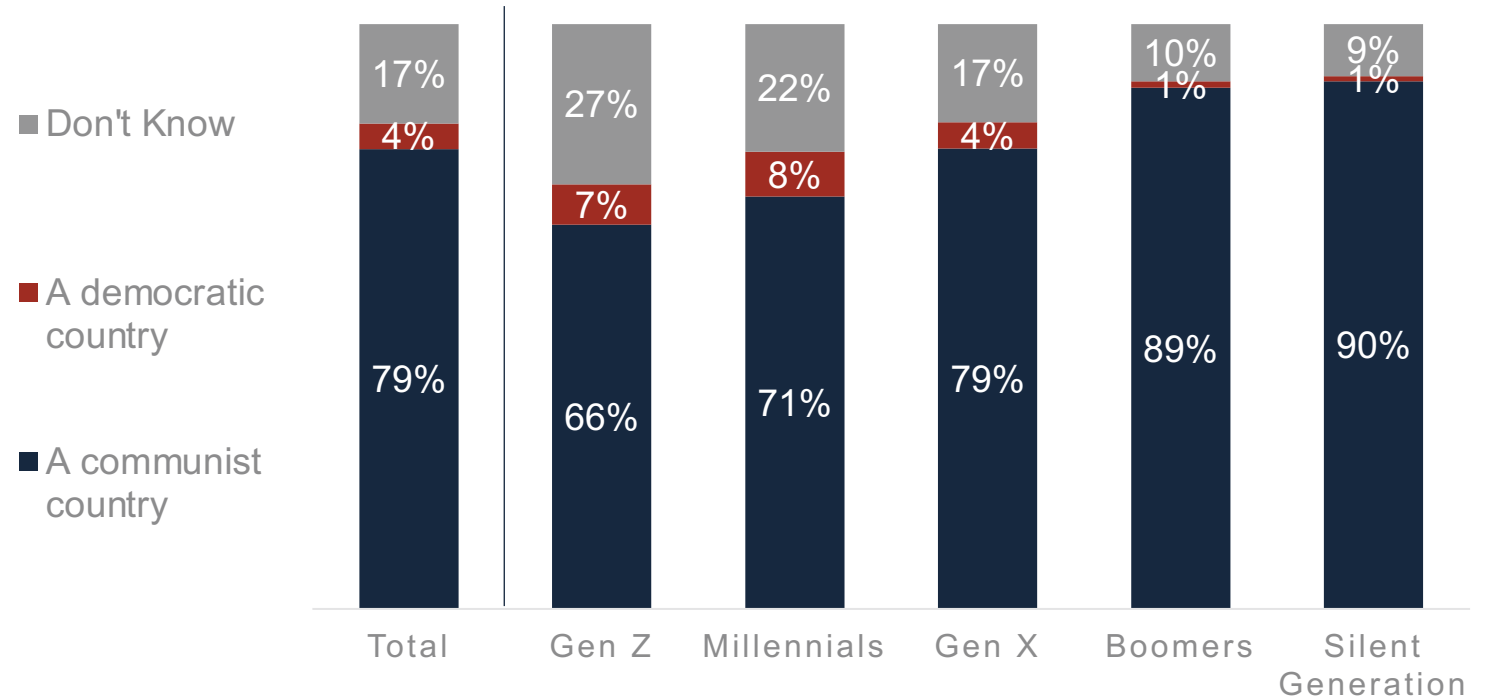
Seventy-nine percent of Americans accurately say China is a communist, rather than a democratic, country.



Percent who say China is a communist country is up among:

- Gen Z: 57% → 66%
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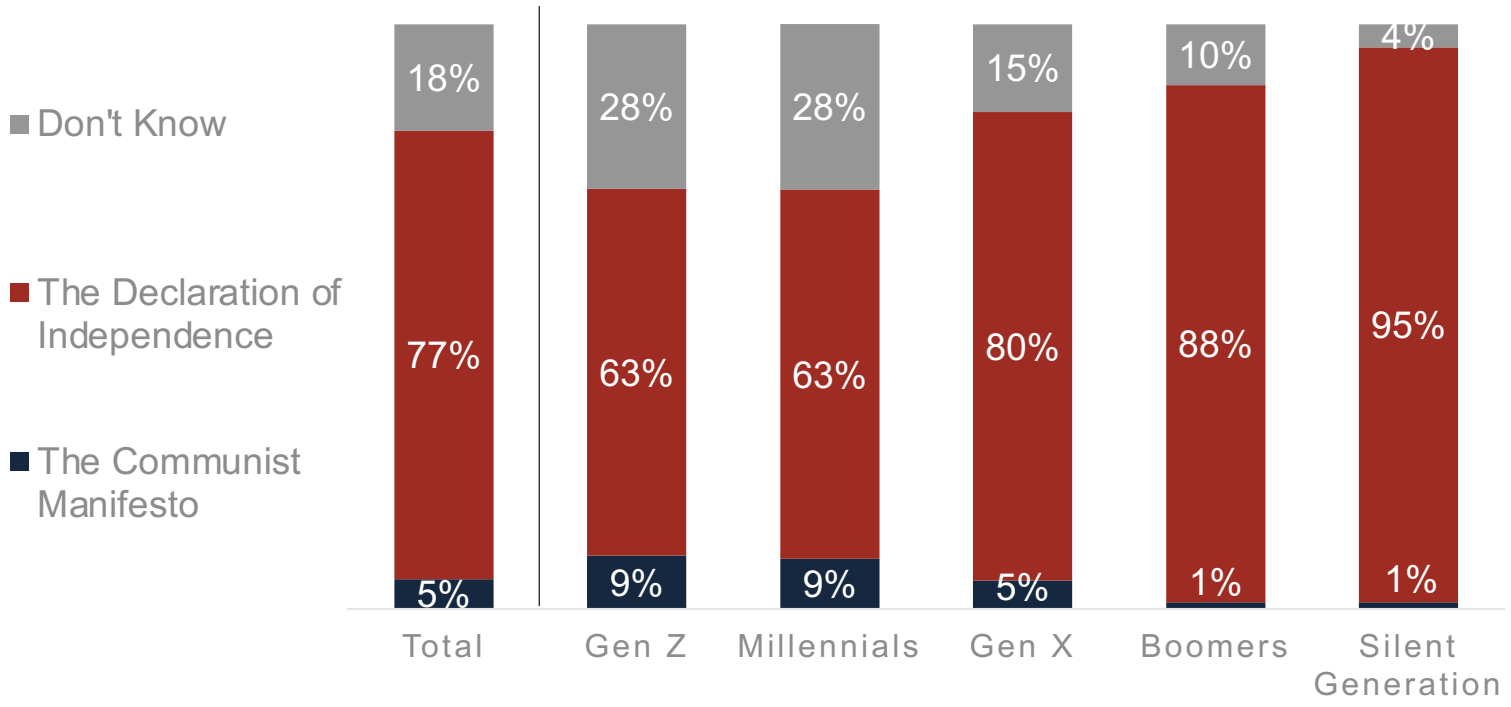
Is China...?





Over three-quarters (77%) of Americans believe the Declaration of Independence better guarantees freedom and equality over the Communist Manifesto.

Which document better guarantees freedom and equality for all?



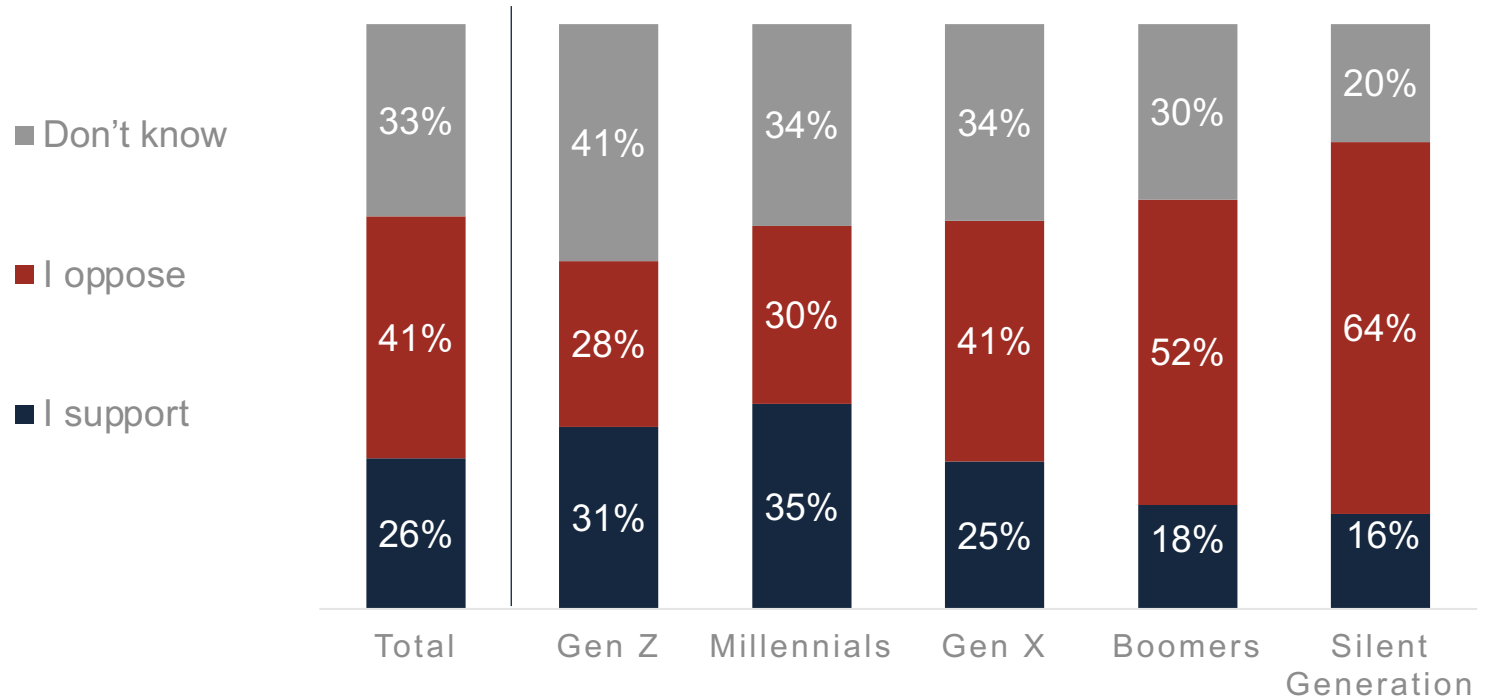
The percent of Millennials who think the Communist Manifesto better guarantees freedom (9%) is down 10 points from 19% in 2019.



Over a quarter (26%) of Americans say they support the gradual elimination of the capitalist system in favor of a more socialist system.

Support is higher among Gen Z (31%) and Millennials (35%) and lower among Baby Boomers (18%) and the Silent Generation (16%).

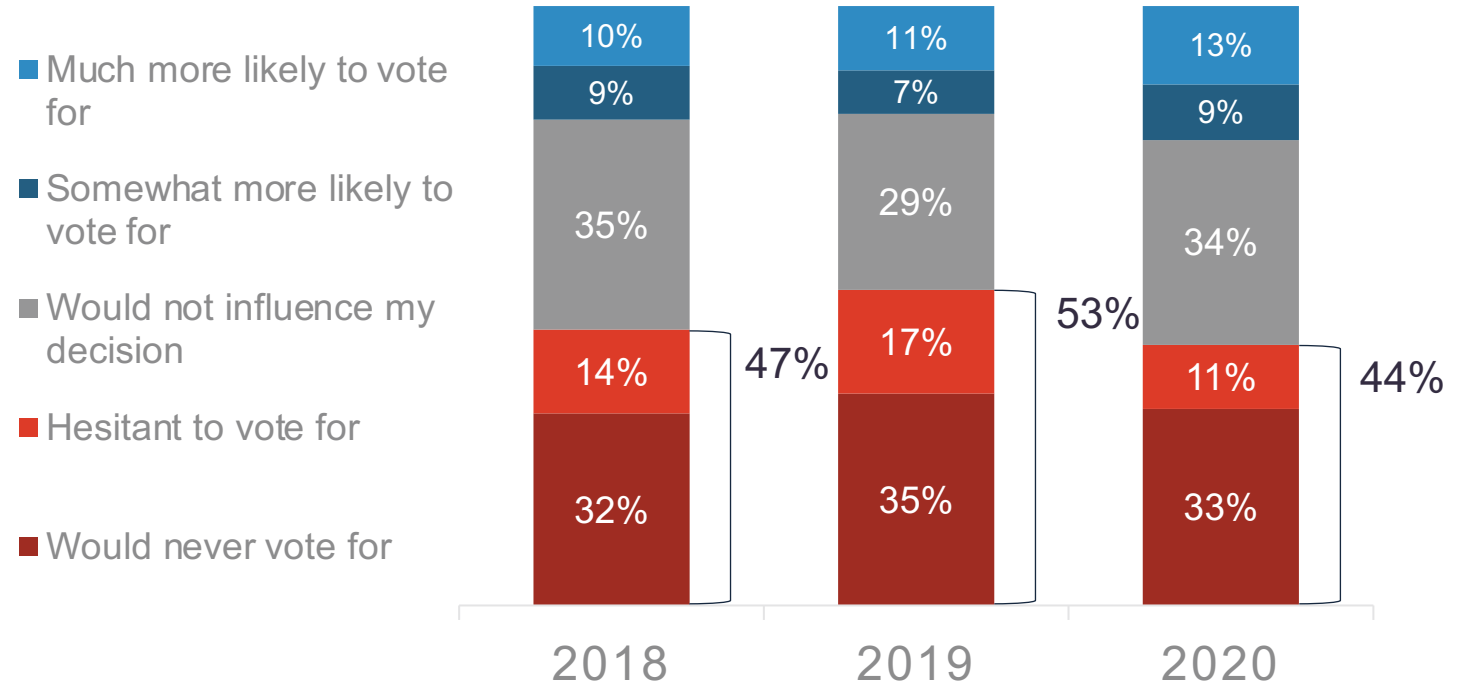
Would you support the gradual elimination of the capitalist system in favor of a more socialist system of government?



Compared to 2019, fewer Americans are 'hesitant' or 'would never' vote for a democratic socialist.



Likelihood of voting for a 'democratic socialist'



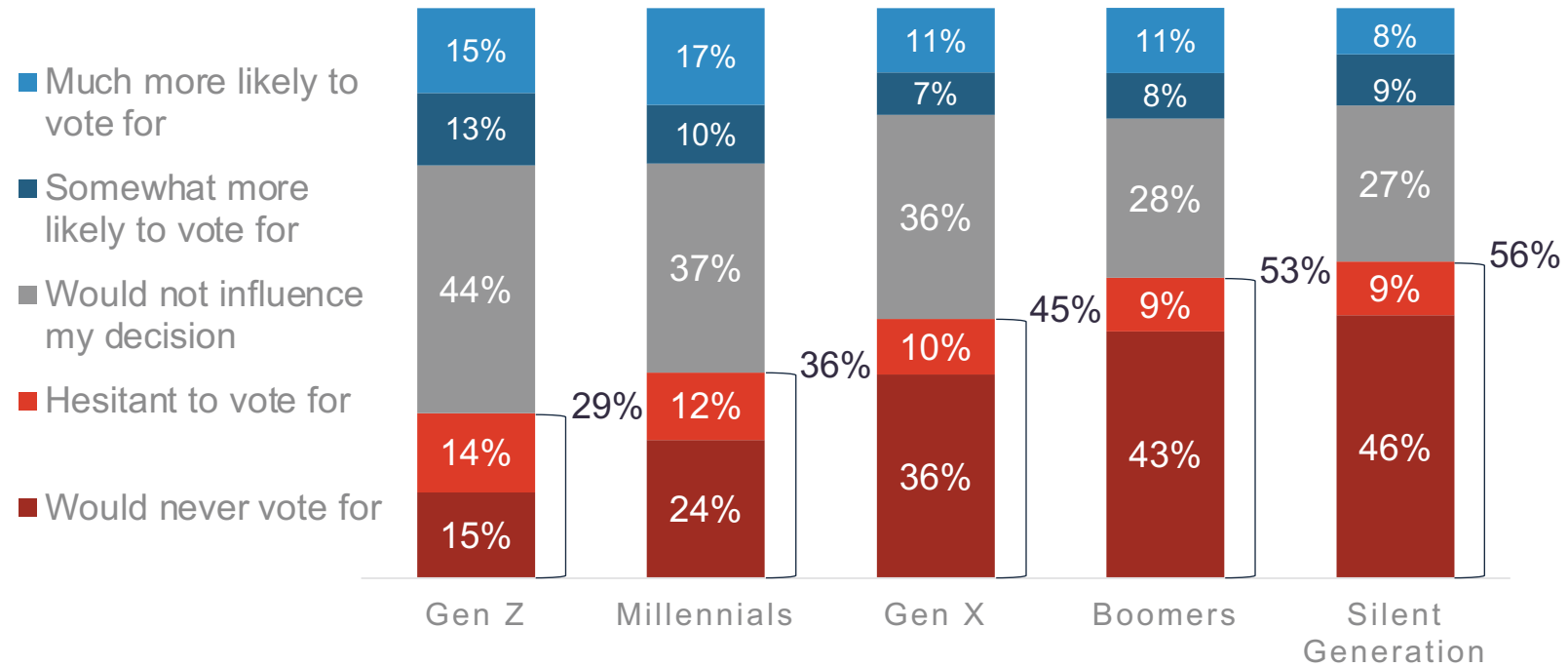


Opposition to voting for a 'democratic socialist' increases with age.

Likelihood of voting for a 'democratic socialist'



Gen Z opposition to voting for a democratic socialist candidate decreased from 44% to 29% this year.

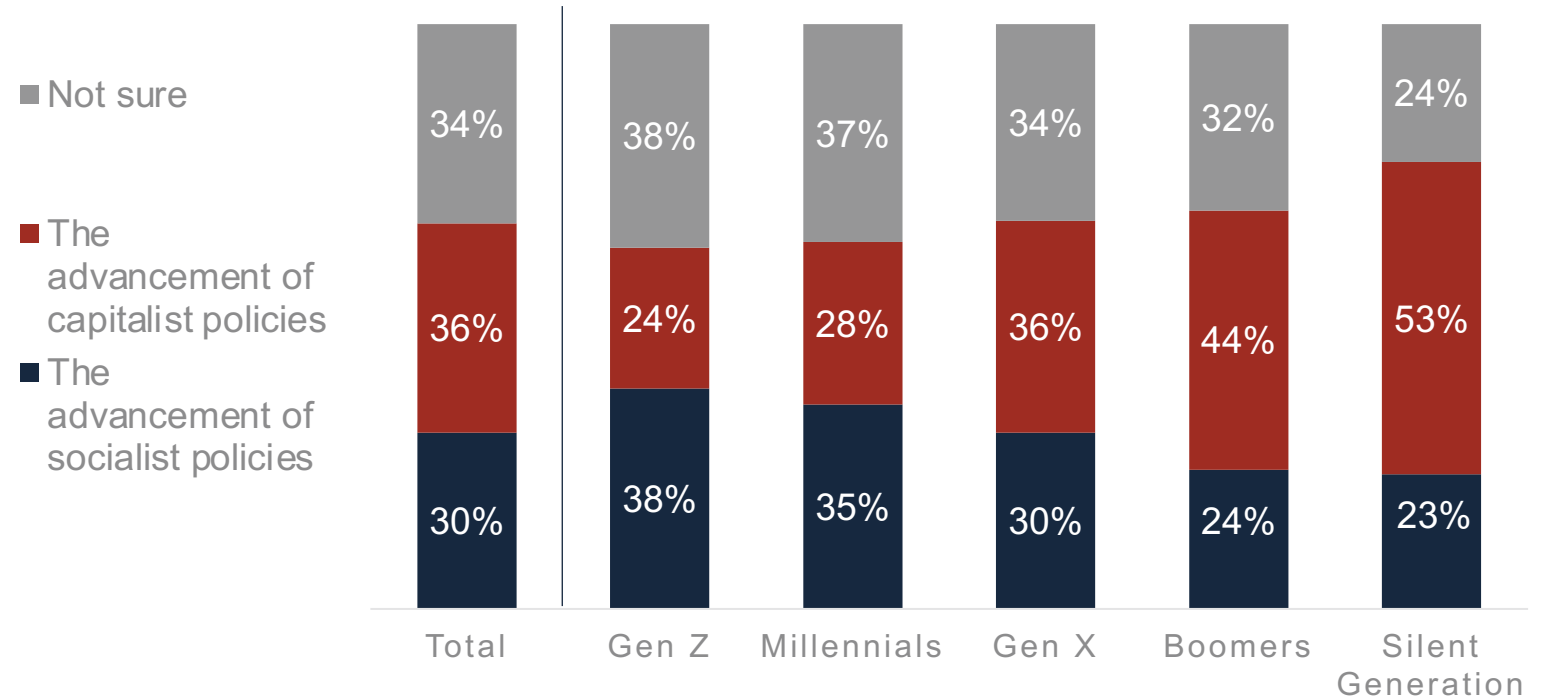




Under a potential Joe Biden presidency, 30% of Americans desire the advancement of socialist policies, 34% are undecided, and 36% desire the advancement of capitalist policies.

Gen Z and Millennials prefer the advancement of socialist policies over capitalist policies.

If Joe Biden becomes president, preferences for the advancement of socialist policies vs. capitalist policies



AMERICA AND ITS VALUES

The generational divide persists in most value areas, from the fairness of our economic system to how we view the American flag. Yet, there is one area where the generational divide is narrowing — Americans agree they most trust themselves to take care of their interests (above government and community).

In Self We Trust — now more than ever.



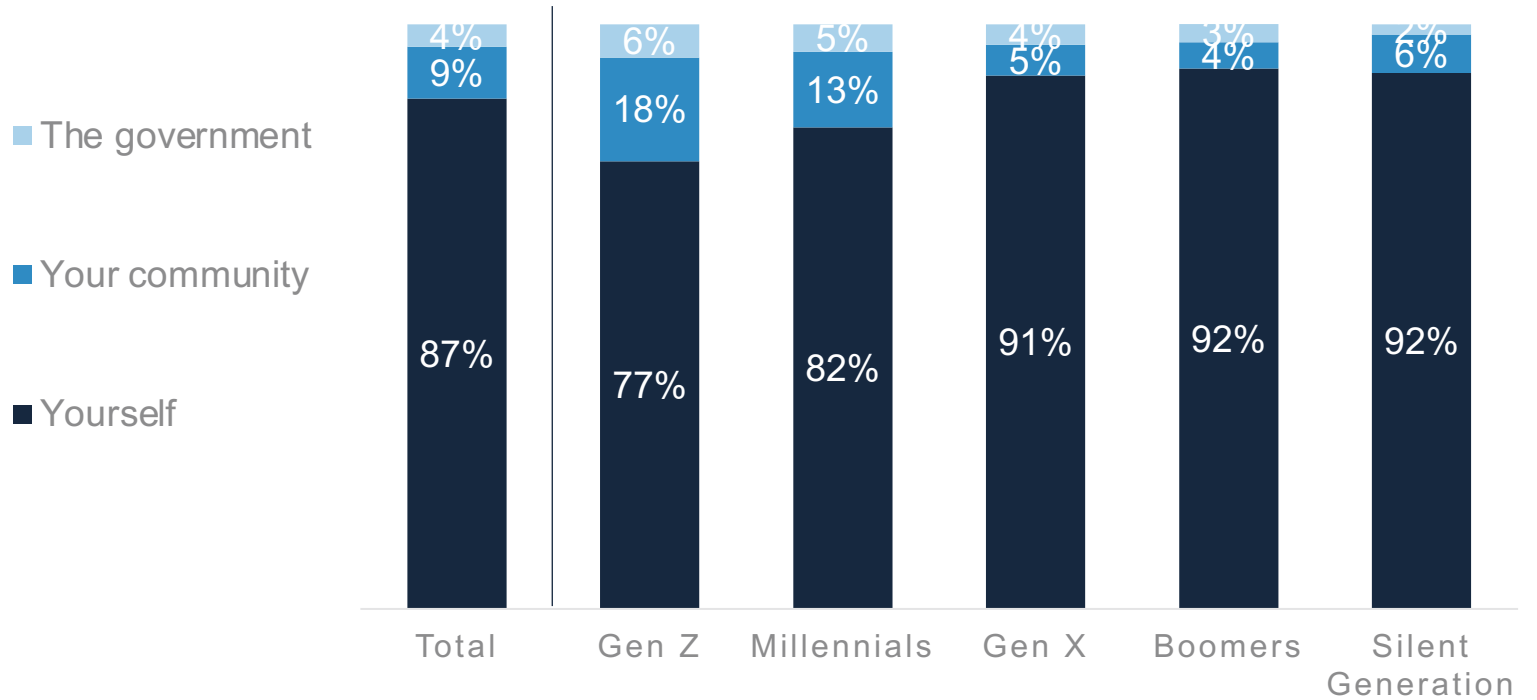
Who is trusted to take care of our interests?



The percentage who say they most trust themselves to take care of their interests is up seven points from 2019. This is driven by the younger generations:

- Gen Z: 66% → 77%
- Millennials: 66% → 82%
- Gen X: 86% → 91%

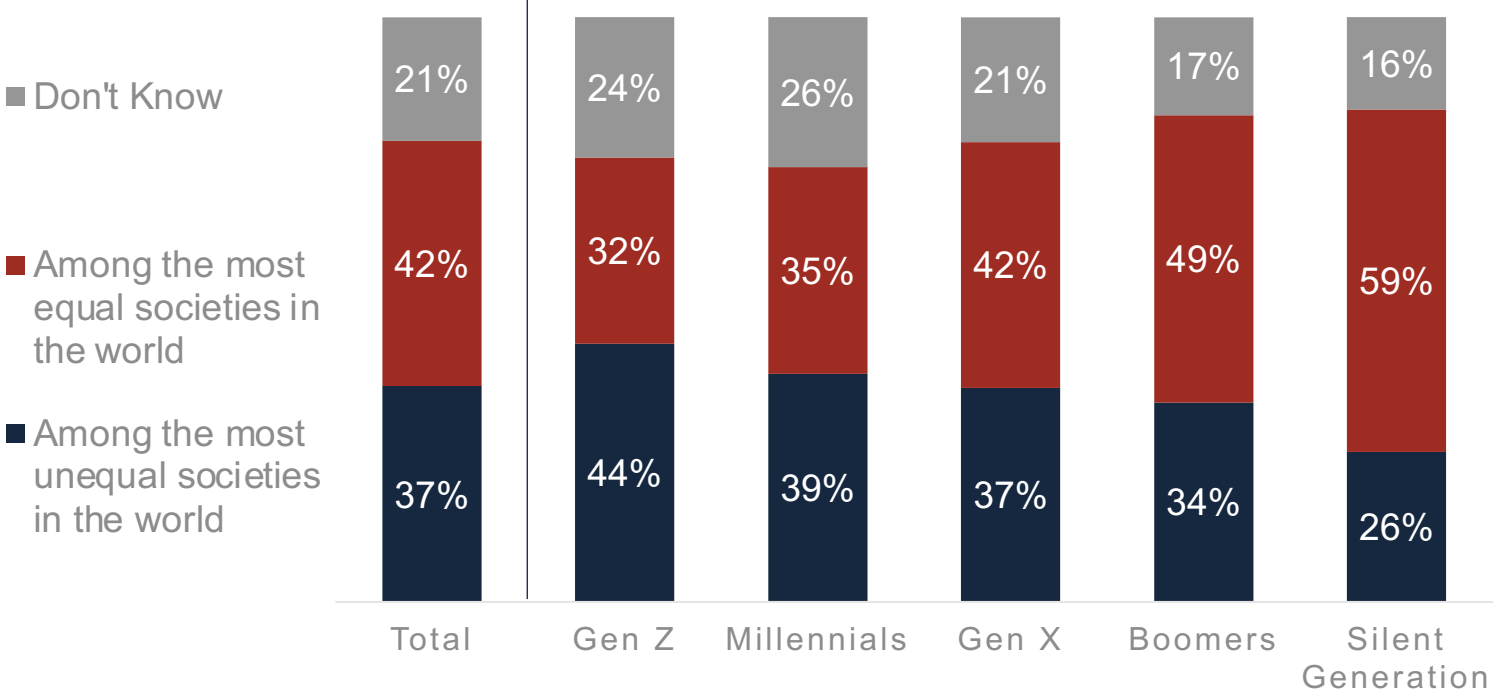
This brings them closer to the nine-in-ten of both the Silent Generation and Baby Boomers who think the same (steady from 2019).





Forty-four percent of Gen Z think America is one of the most unequal societies in the world.

Do you think America is...?



The sentiment that America is among the most unequal societies in the world has increased by 7 points since 2019. This is driven by the following:

- Gen Z: 29% → 44%
- Gen X: 26% → 37%
- Silent Generation: 19% → 26%

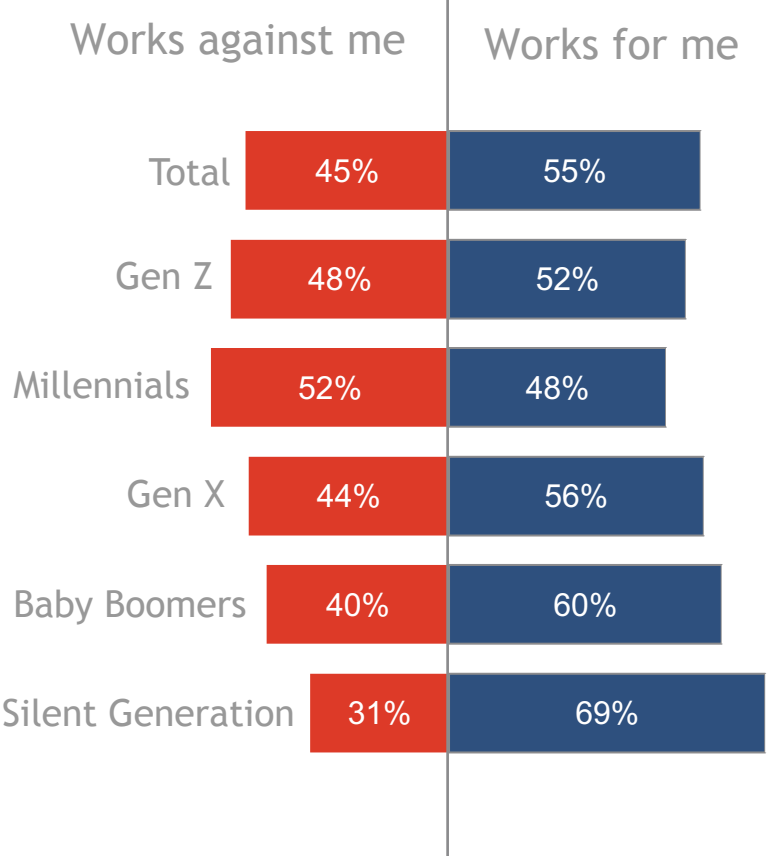


Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation continue to be the most likely to view America's economic system as working for them.



Millennials are more likely to say America's economic system works against them than they were in 2019 (46% to 52%).

America's current economic system

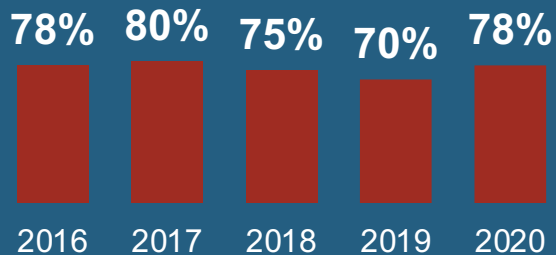




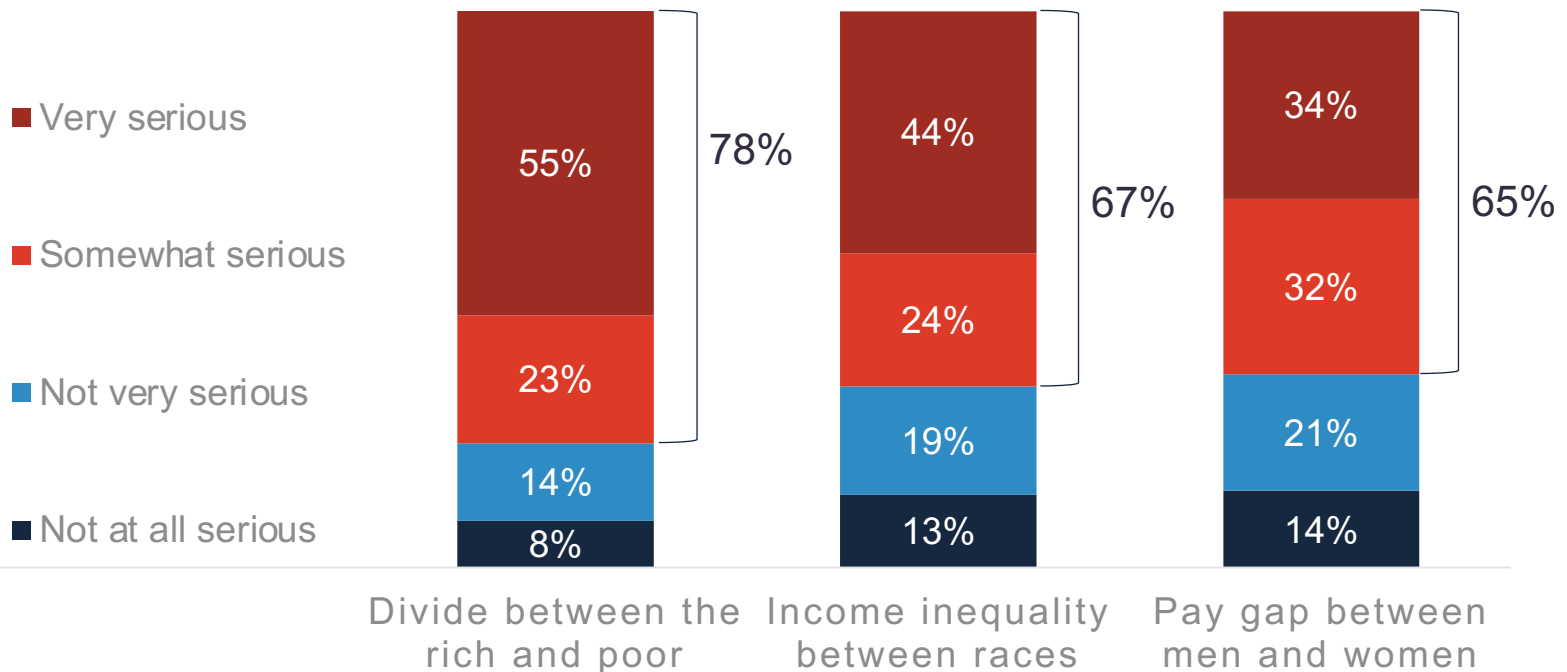
Seventy-eight percent of Americans say the divide between the rich and the poor is a serious issue — trending back up after decreasing in the past couple of years.



Percent who say the divide between the rich and the poor is very/somewhat serious



How serious are facets of income inequality





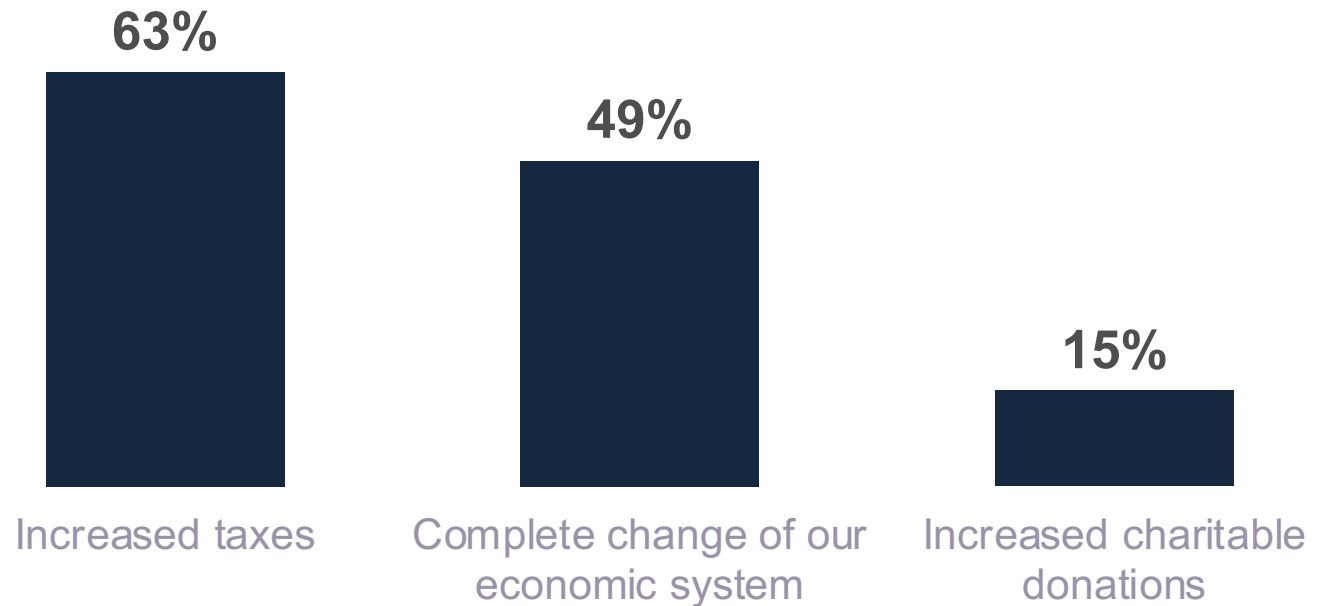
Of the more than half (68%) of Americans who think the highest earners are not paying their fair share, 49% say a complete change of our economic system is part of the answer, and 63% think increased taxes are needed.



The view that increased taxes would ensure the highest earners in the U.S. pay their fair share has increased 9 points from 2019 (54% to 63%).

What change would ensure the highest earners pay their fair share?

AMONG AMERICANS WHO DISAGREE THAT THE HIGHEST EARNERS PAY THEIR FAIR SHARE





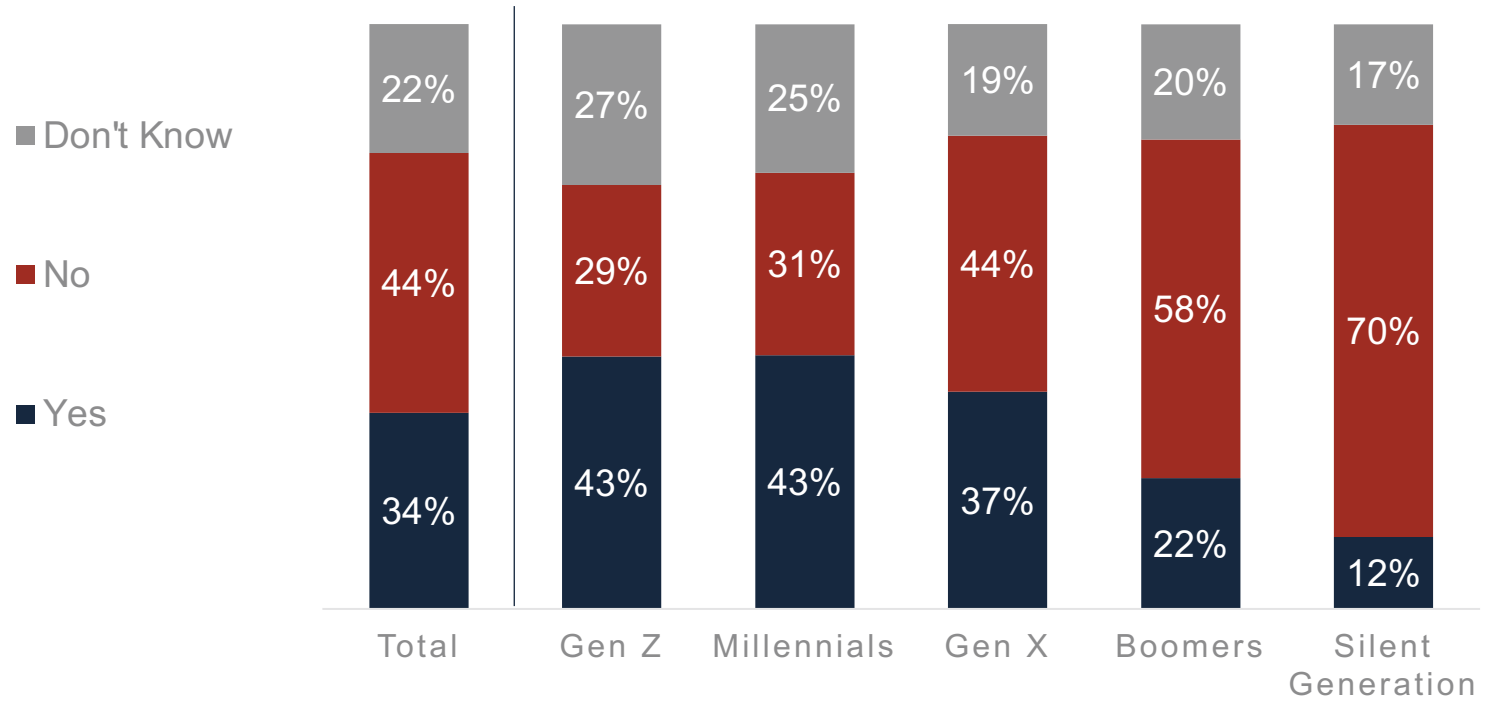
Overall, more Americans oppose the idea of a universal basic income, but support for it has increased by 8 points since 2019.

Should government provide a universal basic income where every citizen receives a monthly stipend from the government?



The percent who favor a universal basic income has increased 8 points (26% to 34%). This is driven by the following:

- Millennials: 36% → 43%
- Gen X: 26% → 37%
- Baby Boomers: 17% → 22%



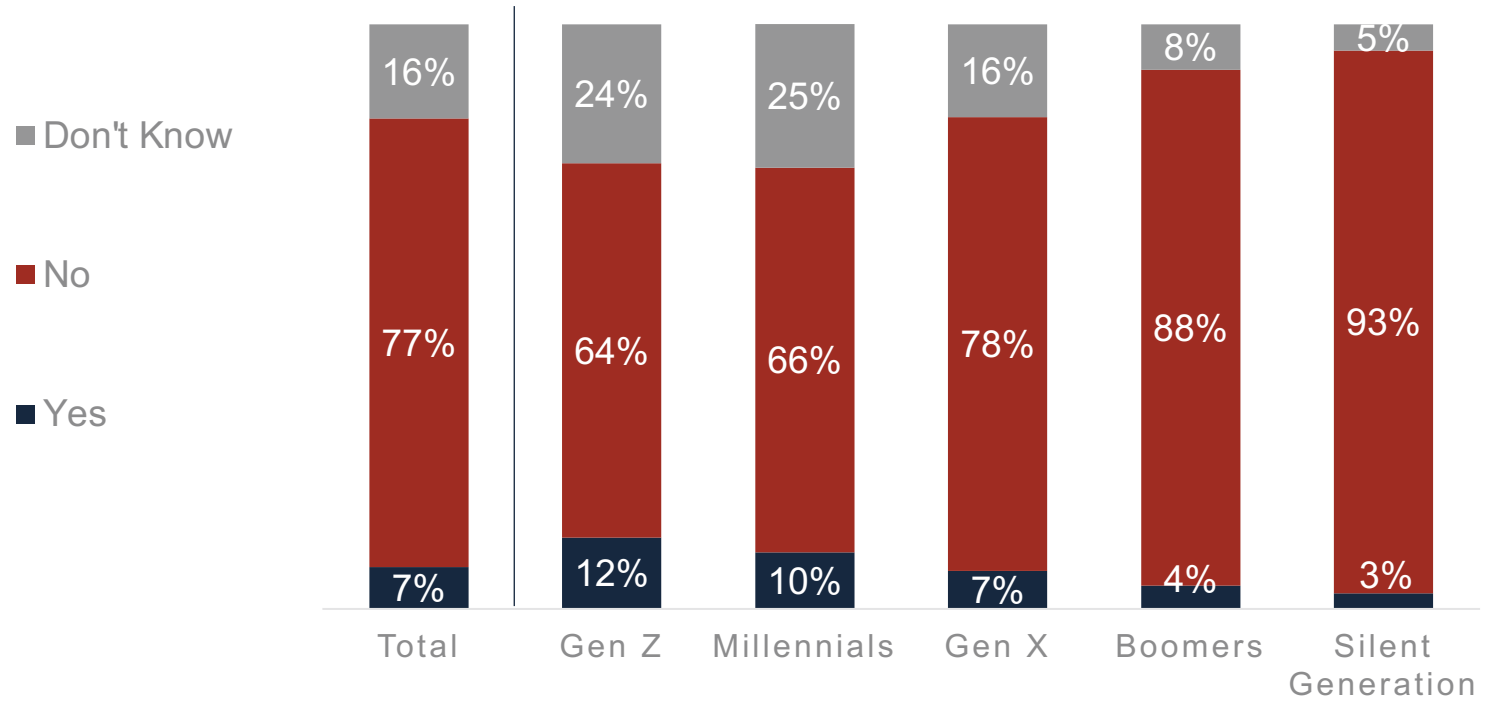


Gen Z and Millennials are less likely than other generations to say private property should NOT be abolished and held by the government.

Would society be better off if all private property was abolished and property held by government for the good of all?



Millennials are more than 50% less likely to say that private property should be abolished (and held by the government) than they were in 2019 (22% to 10%).

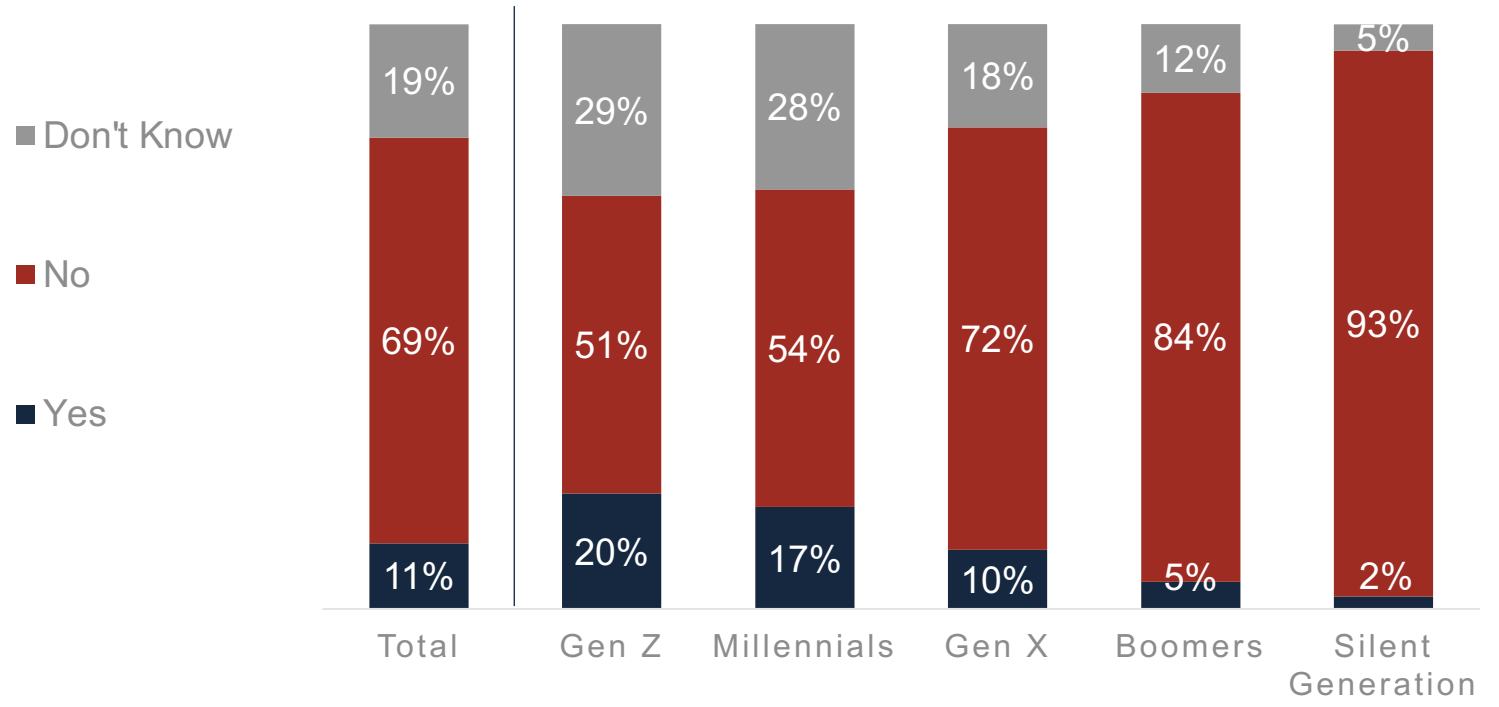




Americans are slightly less opposed to the idea of abolishing private property if the public owns it rather than the government.

About two-in-five Gen Z and Millennials support this idea.

Would society be better off if all private property was owned by the public and managed by the government for the good of all?

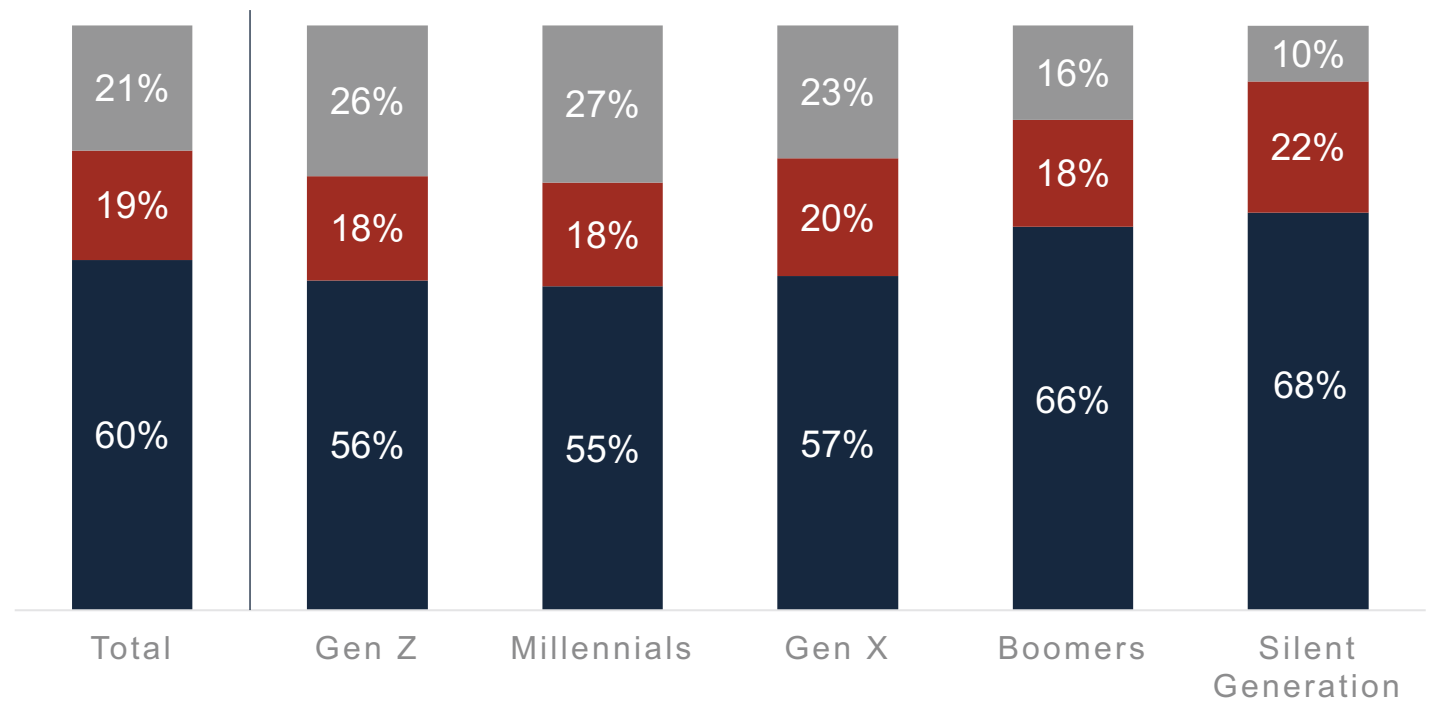




Sixty percent of Americans say the press is an essential part of democracy and should not be censored.

Views on press, government, and democracy

- Not sure
- The press can be regulated if government decides it is disseminating false information
- The press is an essential part of democracy and should not be censored

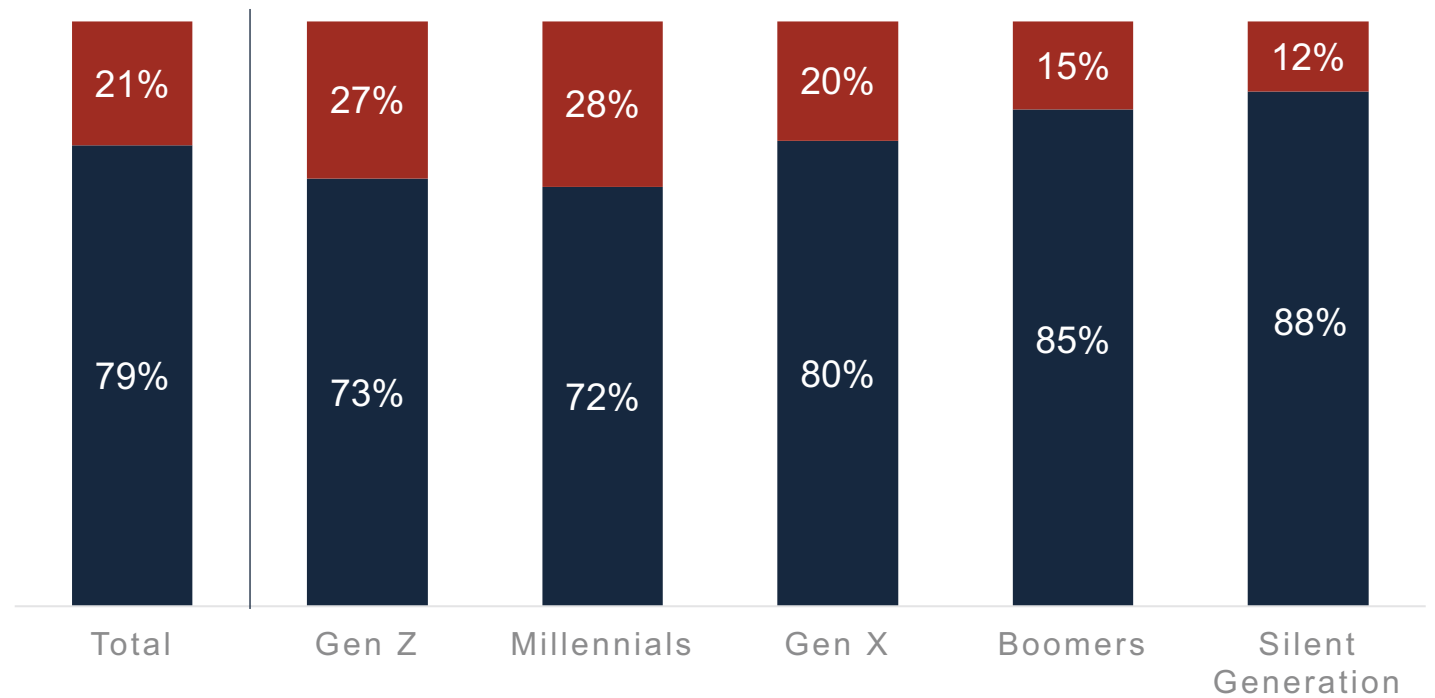




Across all generations, nearly four-in-five Americans believe that we should tolerate a broad diversity of opinions, including those that are personally offensive.

Views on freedom of speech

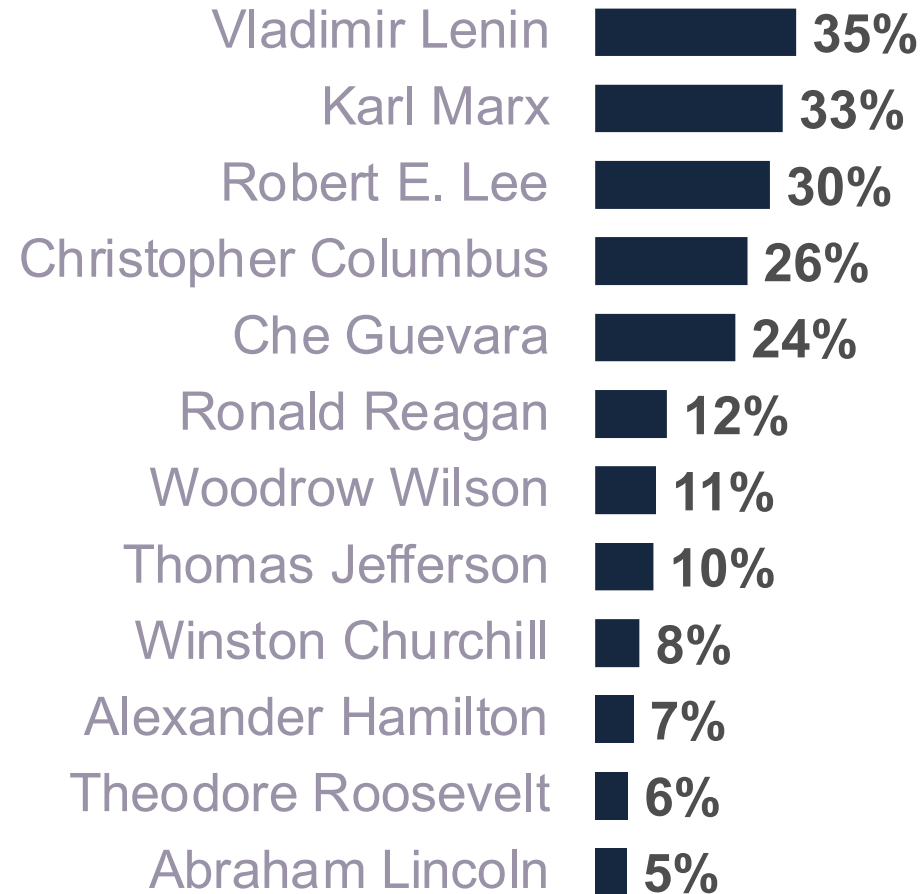
- Government should regulate and restrict speech to protect people from hate and bigotry
- We should tolerate a broad diversity of opinions, including those that are personally offensive





More Americans would support the removal of statues of Robert E. Lee than that of Argentine Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara.

Support for removing statues of public figures in the U.S.



Half of Americans say they don't support the removal of statues.

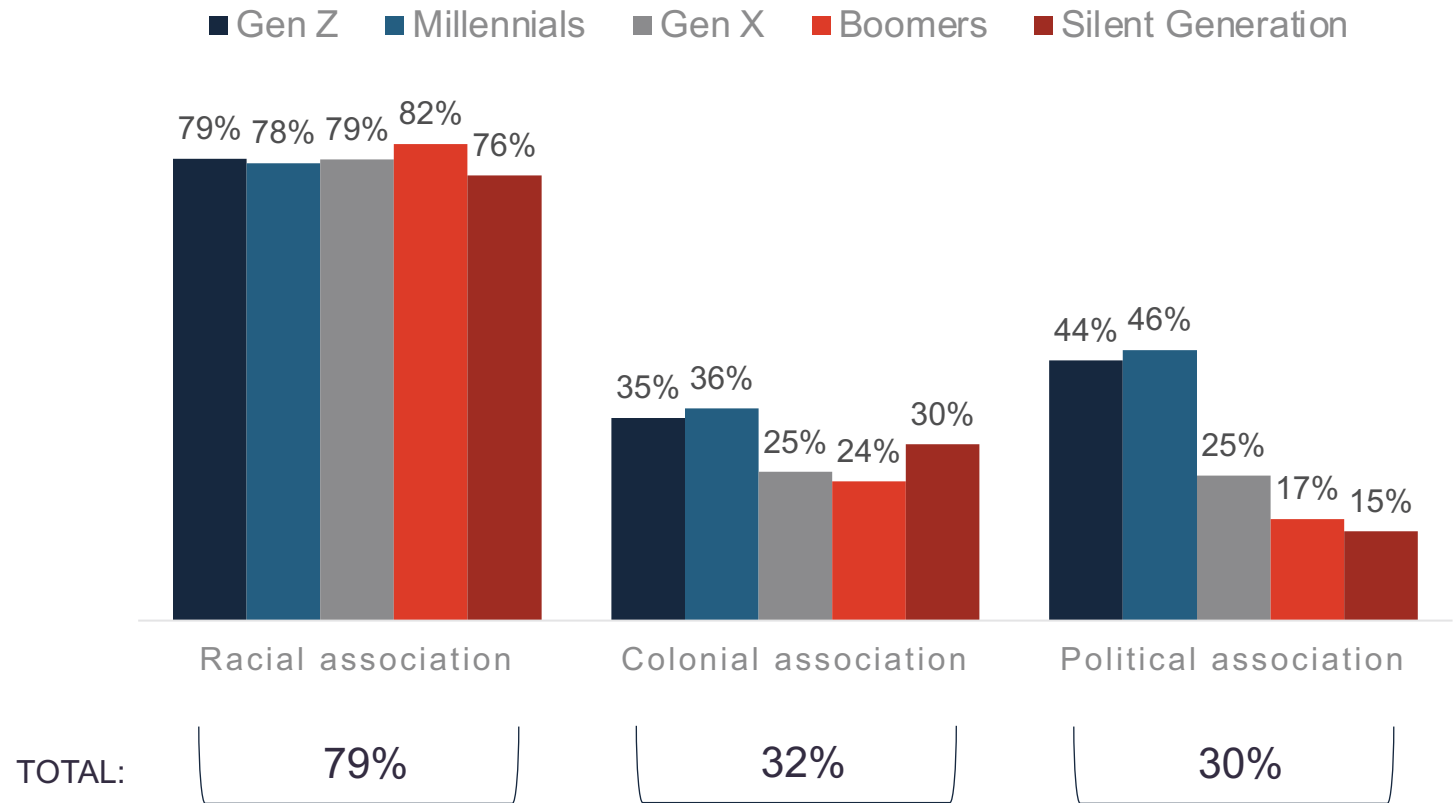
For those who do support their removal, support is greater when it comes to racial association.

51%

say "I don't support removal of statues, this erases history"
(40% Gen Z, 42% Millennials, 53% Gen X, 58% Boomers, 64% Silent Generation)



Reasons for supporting the removal of statues (among those who support their removal)

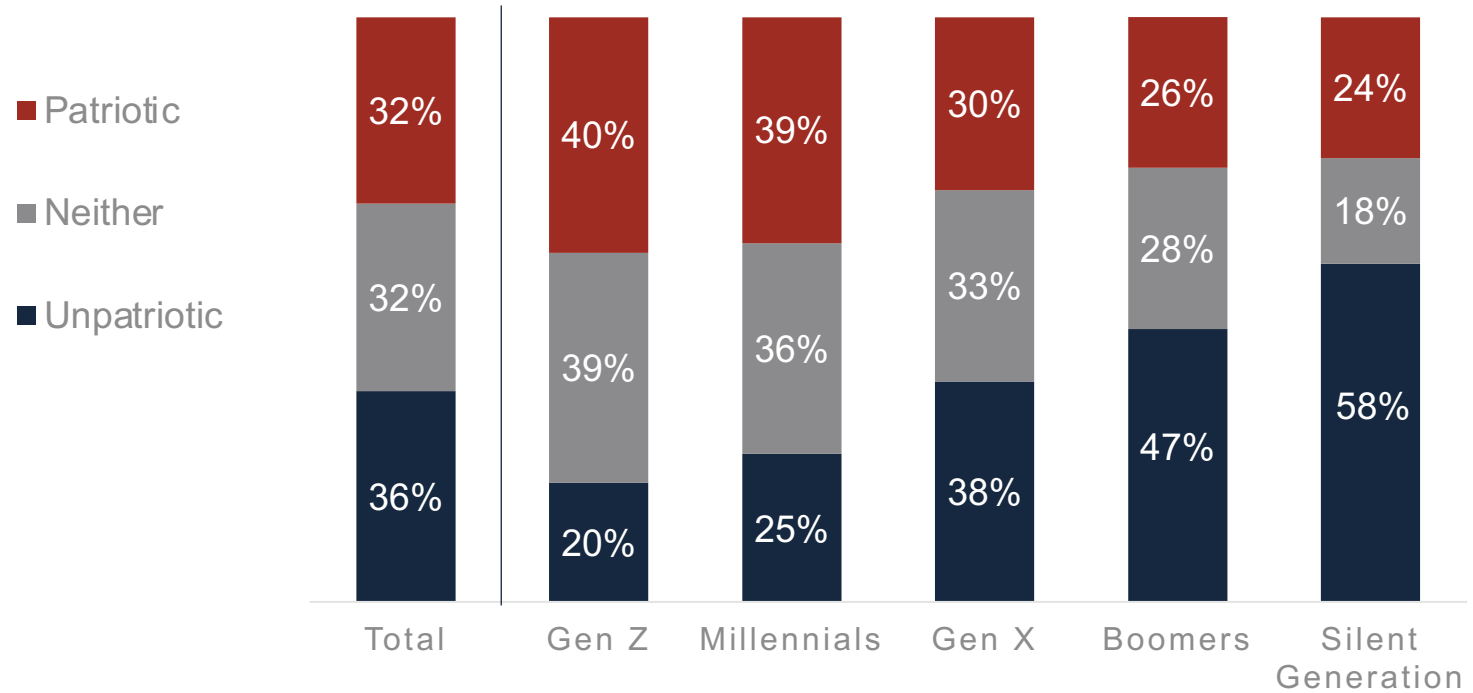




There is a sizable generational gap in how Americans view athletes taking a knee during the National Anthem.

Twenty percent of Gen Z says it is unpatriotic versus 58% of the Silent Generation.

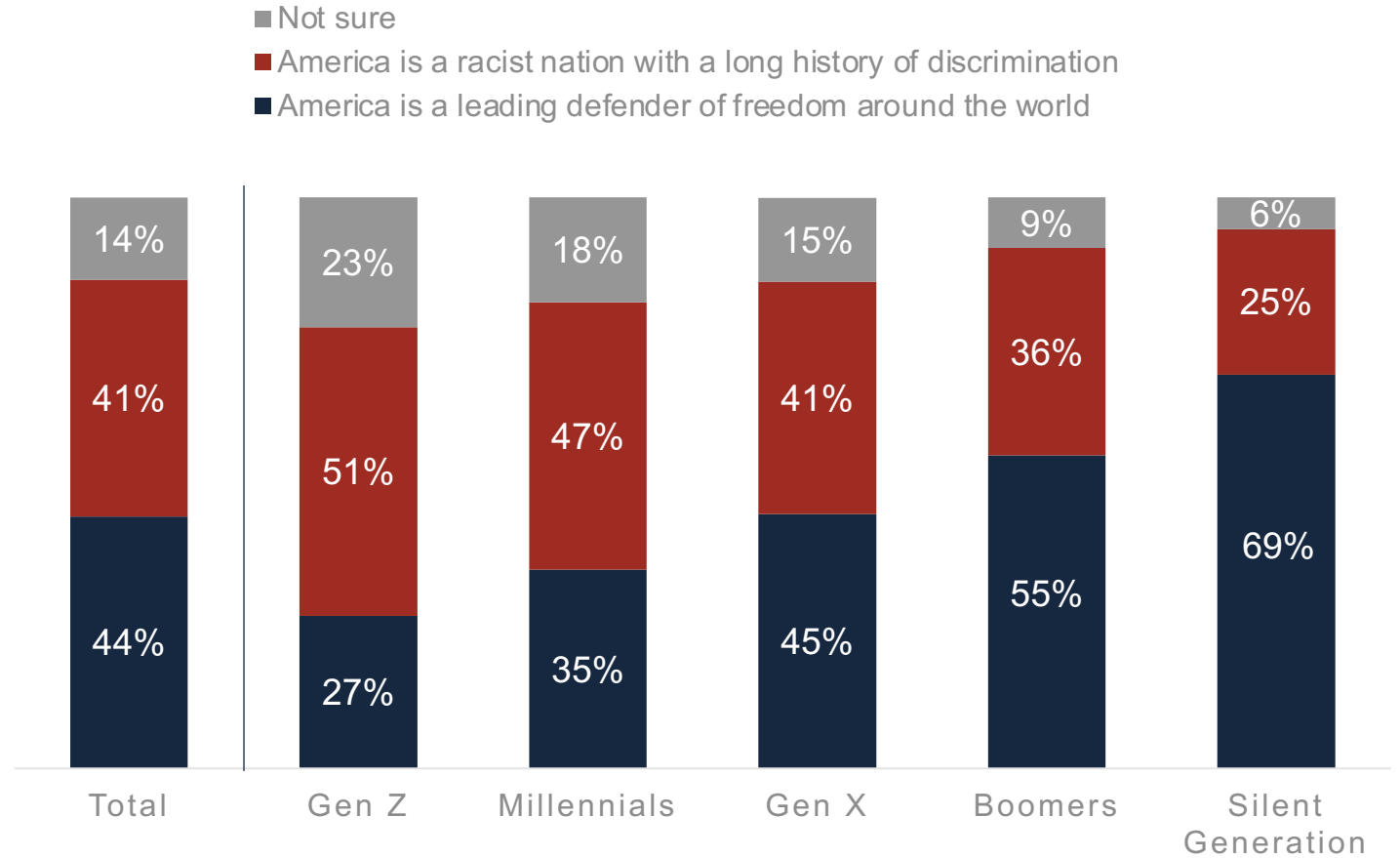
Do you think athletes taking a knee to protest during America's national anthem is patriotic, unpatriotic, or neither?





Over half (51%) of Gen Z views America as a racist nation with a long history of discrimination over a leading defender of freedom, compared to only 25% of the Silent Generation.

Views on the United States: defender of freedom or racist nation?

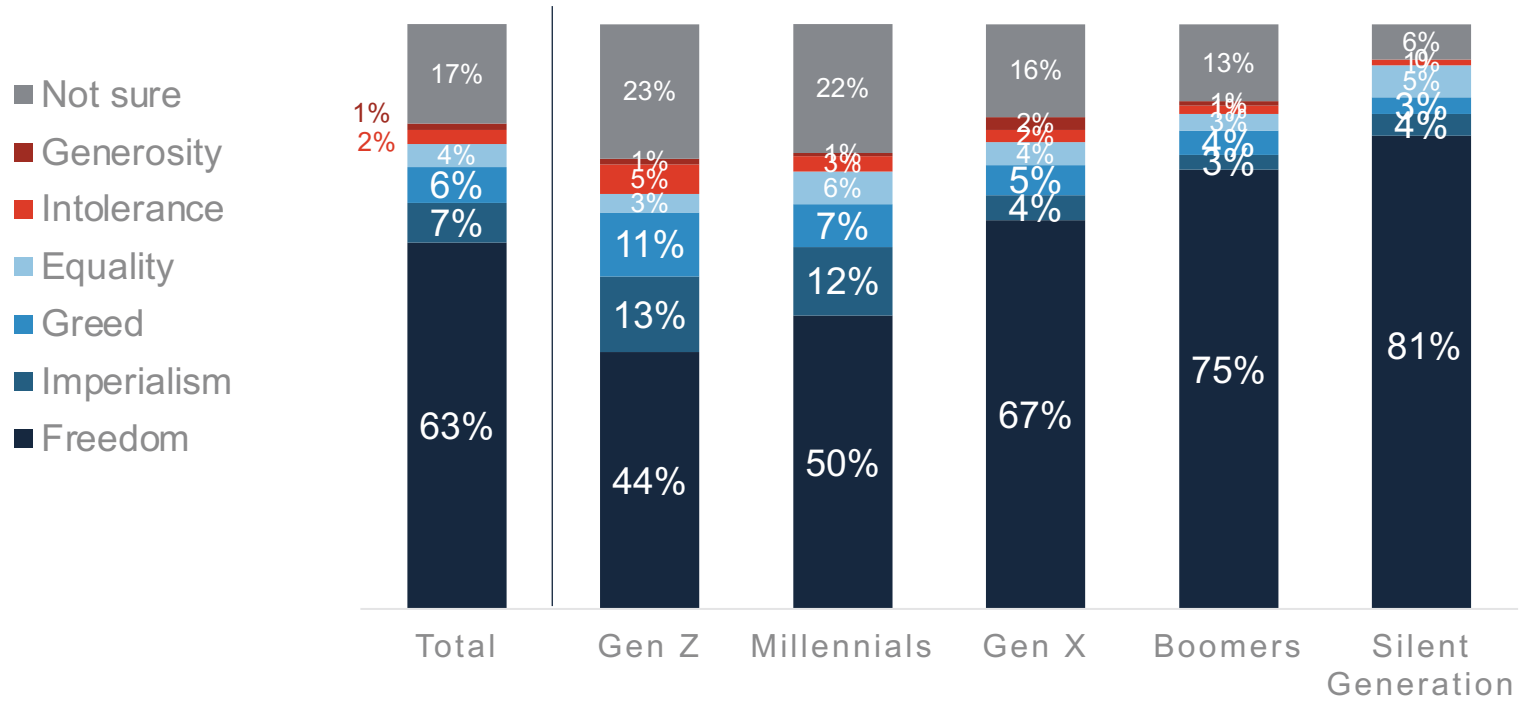




Across generations, Americans believe the U.S. flag most accurately represents freedom.

However, Gen Z and Millennials are more likely to say it represents imperialism or greed than other generations.

The flag of the United States most accurately represents:



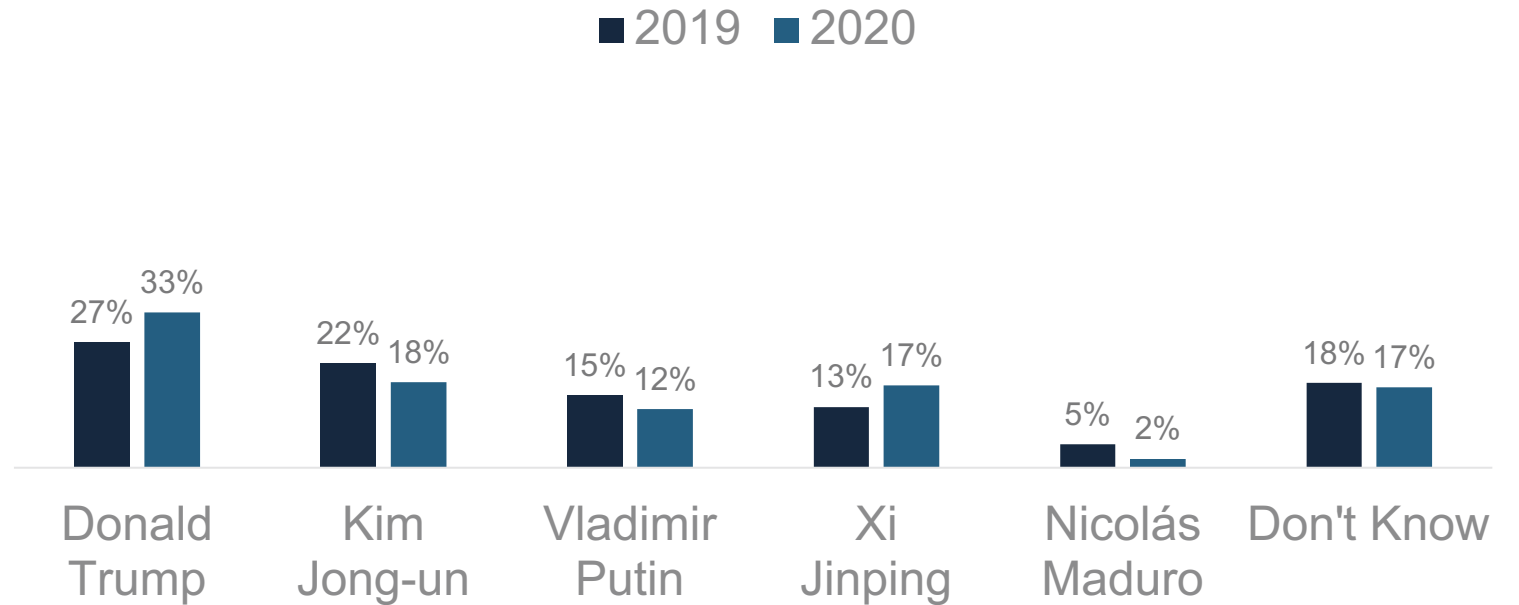
STATE OF THE WORLD AND COVID-19

Among other threats to peace and security, the pandemic has thrown the world into a state of upheaval and has sparked reflection on how governments should handle such crises.



One-third of Americans see Donald Trump (33%) as the biggest threat to world peace (across every generation) over figures like Kim Jong-un (18%) and Vladimir Putin (12%).

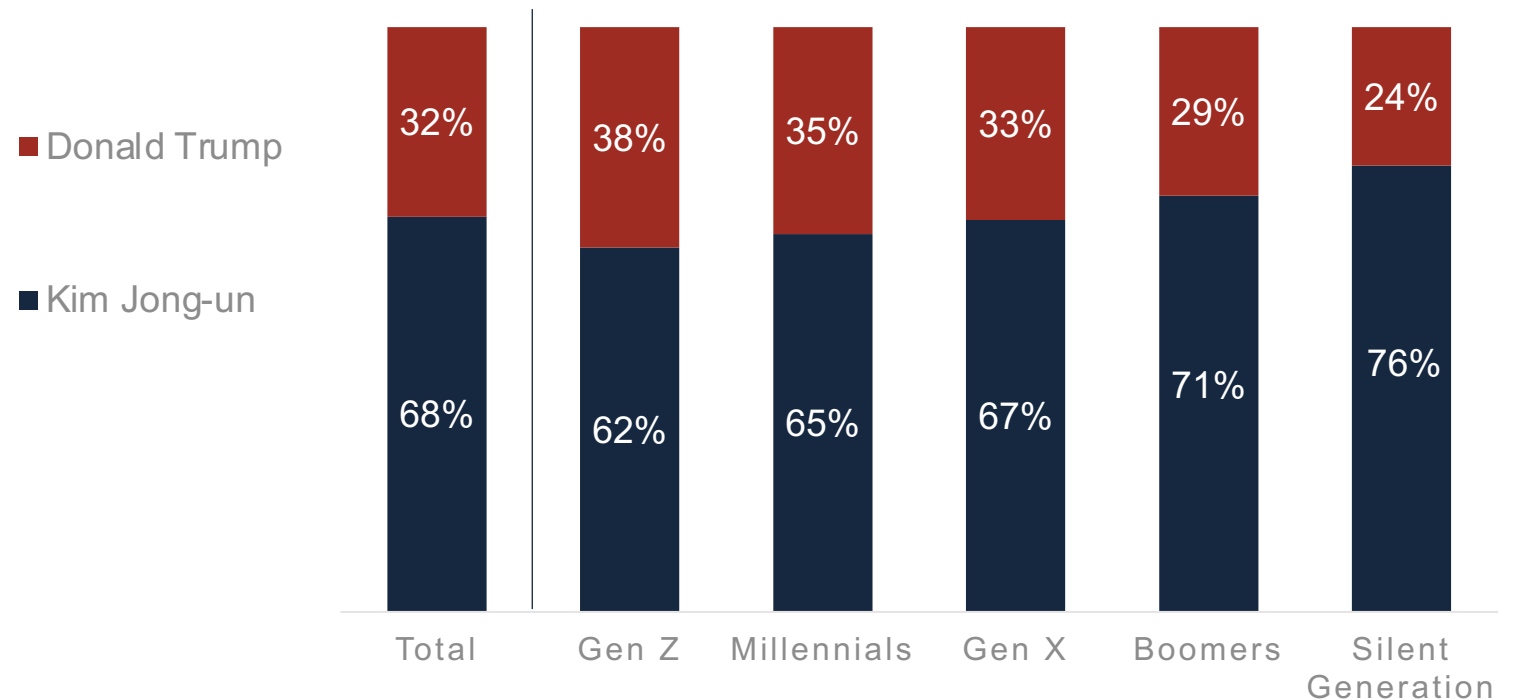
Who is the biggest threat to world peace?





Thirty-two percent of Americans think that Donald Trump is responsible for the deaths of more people than Kim Jong-un.

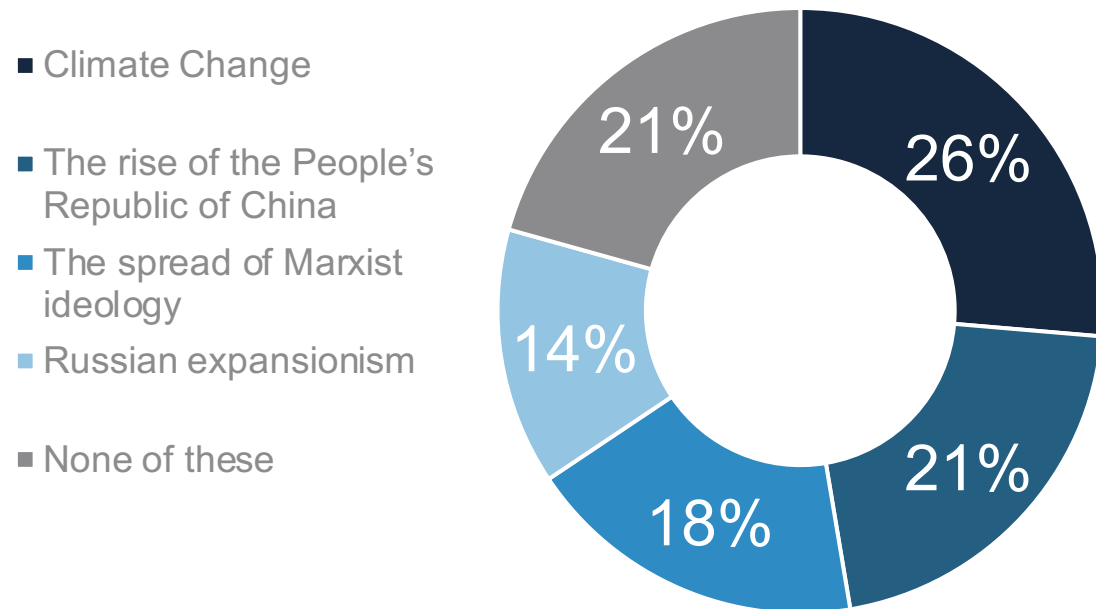
Who is responsible for the deaths of more people?





Over a quarter (26%) of Americans think climate change is the #1 threat to America's national security when presented a list of four threats, including the rise of the People's Republic of China or Russian expansionism.

What is the #1 threat to America's national security?

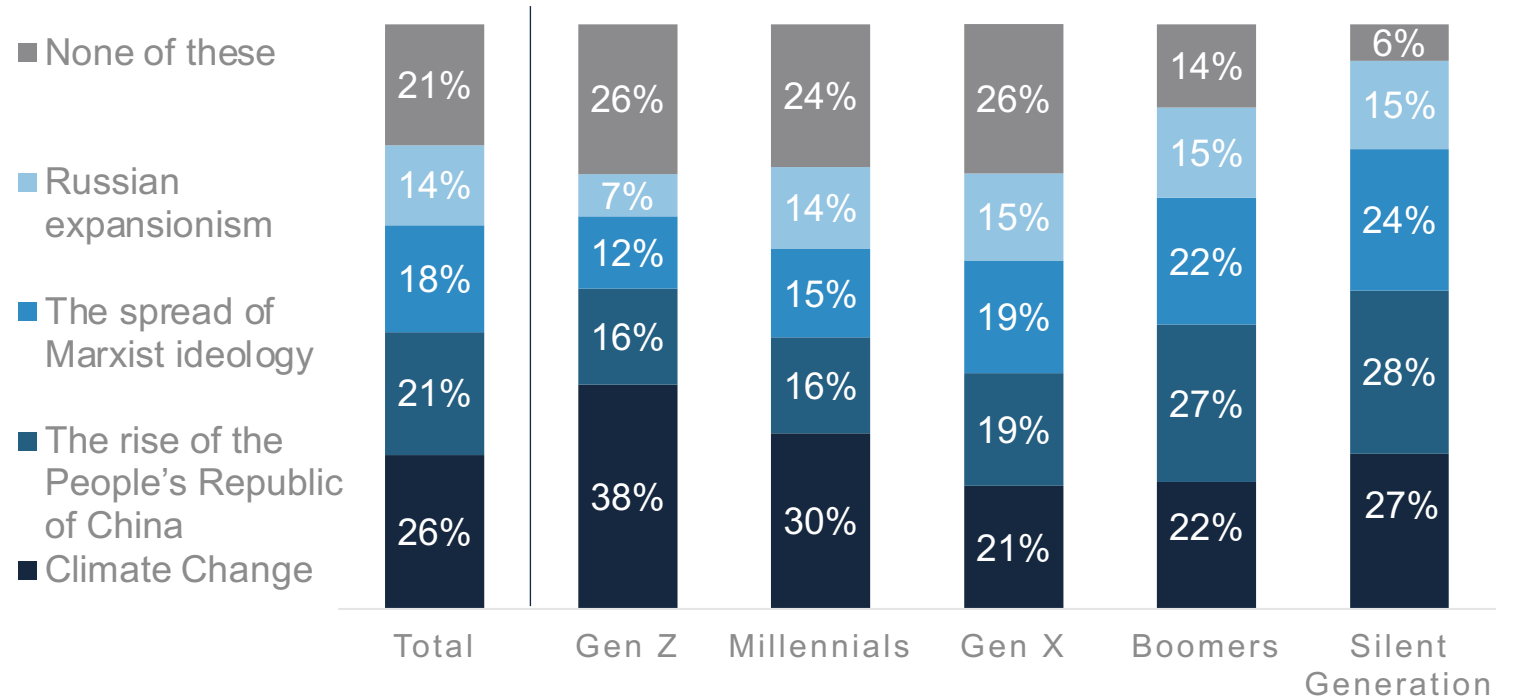




Millennials are nearly twice as likely (and Gen Z even more) to view climate change as a greater threat to America's national security than the rise of the People's Republic of China.

Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation are more likely than younger generations to identify the People's Republic of China as the greater threat.

What is the #1 threat to America's national security?

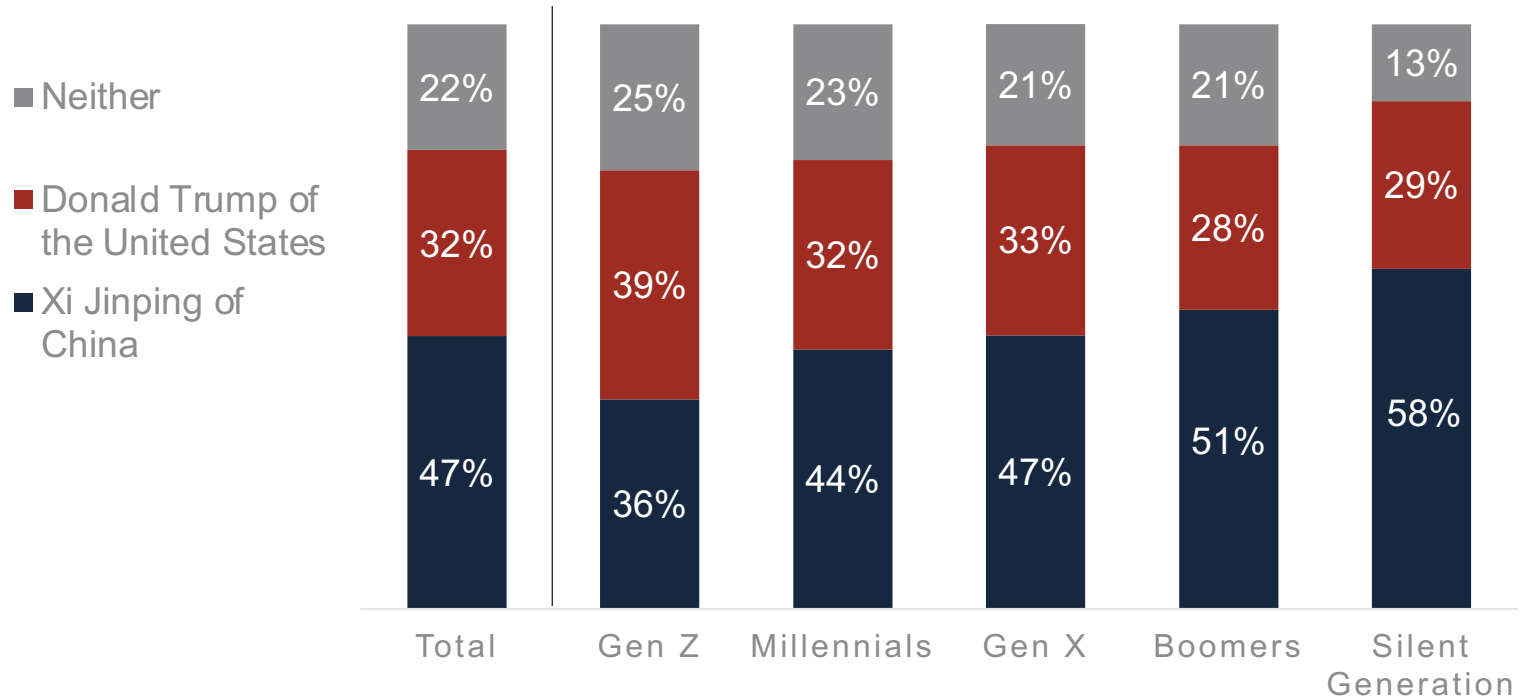




Thirty-two percent of Americans hold Donald Trump responsible over Xi Jinping for COVID-19 becoming a global pandemic.

Gen Z is more likely to hold Donald Trump responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic over other generations.

Who is more responsible for COVID-19 becoming a global pandemic?

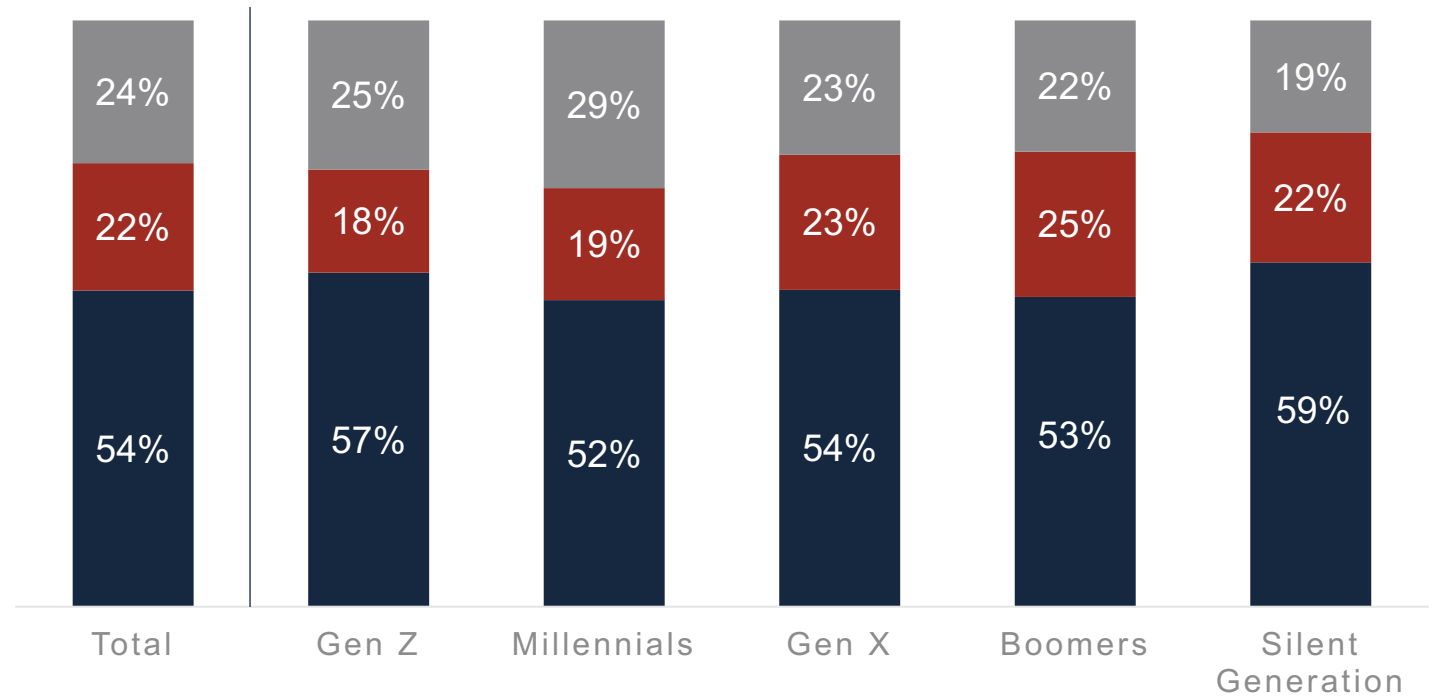




Fifty-four percent of Americans say that the best type of government or society to handle a pandemic is one that prioritizes public health over individual rights, with minimal differences across generations.

Which of the following types of governments or societies is best-suited to handle a pandemic?

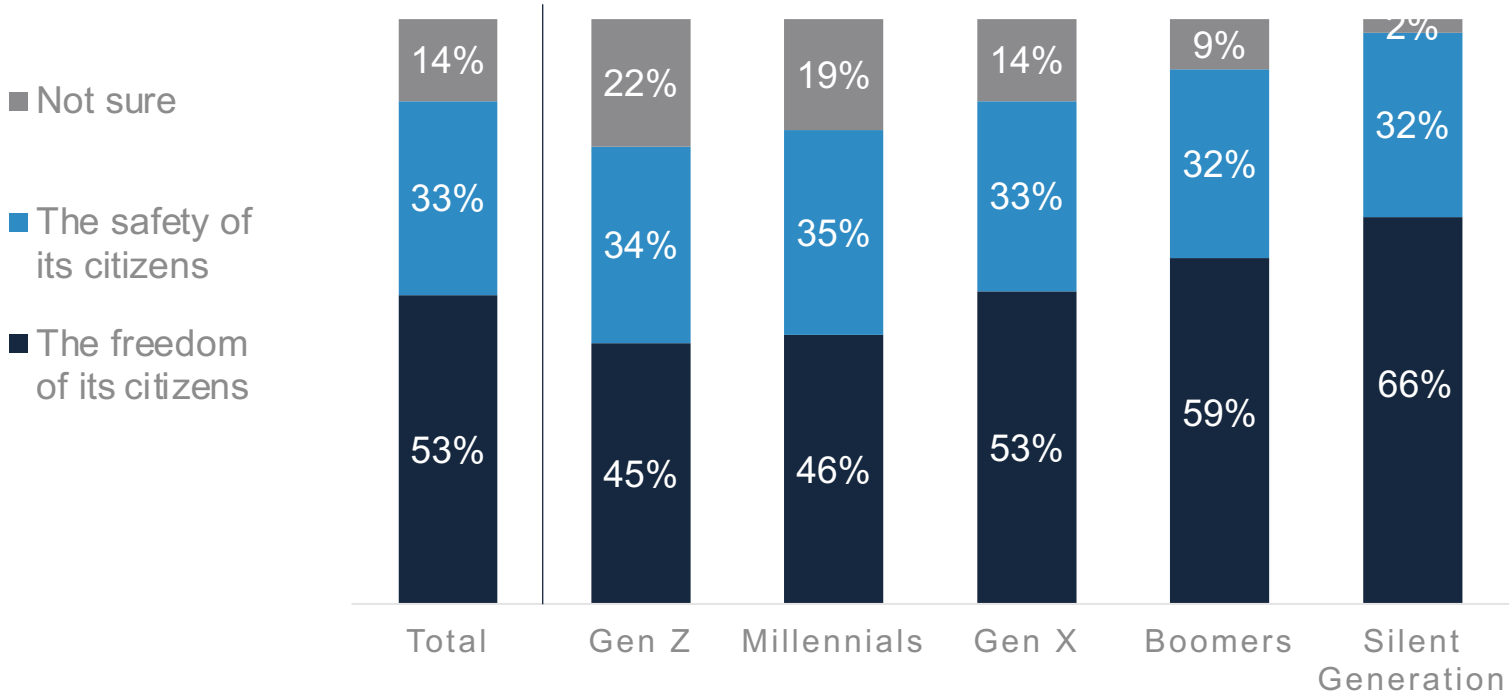
- Not sure
- One that prioritizes individual rights over public health
- One that prioritizes public health over individual rights





Fifty-three percent of Americans say that a good government should favor the freedom of its citizens over their safety.

A good government should most favor:

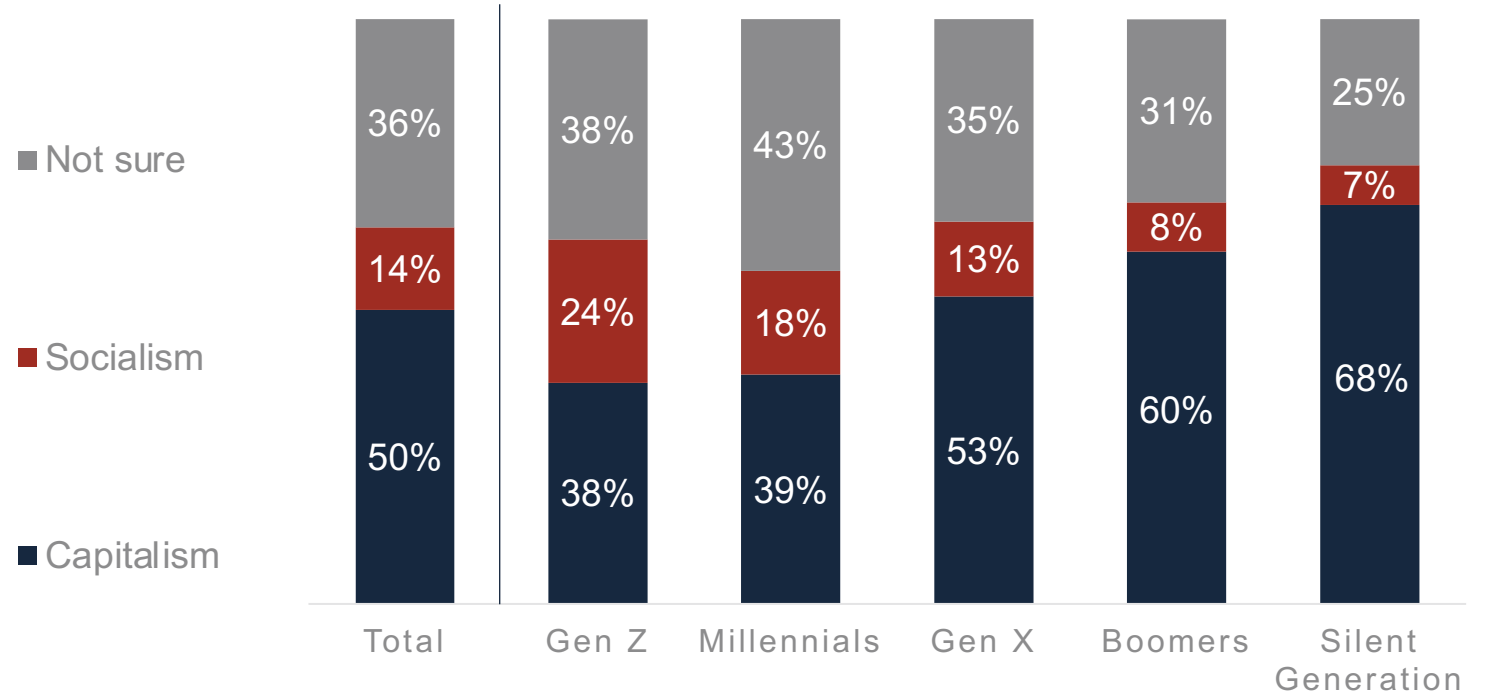




Only half of Americans believe capitalism drives more innovation than socialism. Over one-third (36%) are “not sure”.

Nearly one quarter (24%) of Gen Z believe socialism drives more innovation.

Does socialism or capitalism drive more innovation?



DETAILED METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Detailed Methodology

YouGov interviewed 2,493 respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 2,100 to produce the final dataset. 2,000 respondents were matched to an adult (18+) frame, and 100 respondents were matched to a 16-17 year-old sampling frame. The respondents were matched to a sampling frame on gender, age, race, and education. The frame was constructed by stratified sampling from the full 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) 1-year sample with selection within strata by weighted sampling with replacements (using the person weights on the public use file).

The matched cases were weighted to the sampling frame using propensity scores. The matched cases and the frame were combined, and a logistic regression was estimated for inclusion in the frame. The propensity score function included age, gender, race/ethnicity, years of education, and region. The propensity scores were grouped into deciles of the estimated propensity score in the frame and post-stratified according to these deciles.

The weights were then post-stratified on 2016 Presidential vote choice (among 18+), and a four-way stratification of gender, age (4-categories among 18+), race (4-categories), education (4-categories), and region to produce the final weight.



Survey conducted from September 9th to September 28th 2020



Average Survey Length: 12 minutes



Sample Demographics

Education



No high school	9%
High school graduate	35%
Some college	21%
2-year	9%
4-year	17%
Post-grad	10%

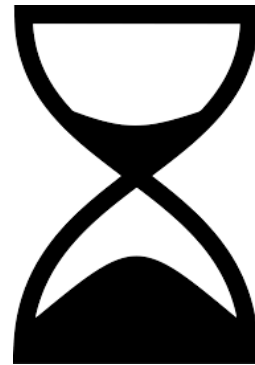
Income



Less than 10,000	8%
\$10,000 - \$24,999	15%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	22%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	25%
\$100,000 or More	16%
Prefer not say	14%

Age

Gen Z (16-23)	14%
Millennial (24-39)	26%
Gen X (40-55)	23%
Boomers (56-74)	31%
Silent Generation (75+)	6%



Ethnicity

White	65%
Black	12%
Hispanic	15%
Asian	3%
Native American	1%
Middle Eastern	0%
Mixed Race	2%
Other	2%



Gender

Female
51%



Male
49%