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The Key to Understanding Socialism? Get a Job

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It's sometimes said that boys don't really become men until they're at least 25 — in other words, when they've entered the real world. That's overgeneralizing, of course, but there's a lot of truth in that insight. A great illustration is found in an [opinion piece](#) by Cato Institute's Emily Ekins in The Washington Post. To summarize Americans' notion of socialism:

Millennials are the only age group in America in which a majority views socialism favorably. A national Reason-Rupe survey found that 53 percent of Americans under 30 have a favorable view of socialism compared with less than a third of those over 30. Moreover, Gallup has found that an astounding 69 percent of millennials say they'd be willing to vote for a "socialist" candidate for president — among their parents' generation, only a third would do so. Indeed, national polls and exit polls reveal about 70 to 80 percent of young Democrats are casting their ballots for presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, who calls himself a "democratic socialist."

However, there is an interesting caveat in these results:

Yet millennials tend to reject the actual definition of socialism — government ownership of the means of production, or government running businesses. Only 32 percent of millennials favor "an economy managed by the government," while, similar to older generations, 64 percent prefer a free-market economy. And as millennials age and begin to earn more, their socialistic ideals seem to slip away.

Ekins says most Millennials think of Scandinavia in the context of socialism, mostly because of its attractive welfare state. But "will it last?" Ekins wonders. "Are millennials ushering in a sea change of public opinion? Do they signal the transformation of the United States into a Scandinavian social democracy?" It's debatable, but "there is more reason to expect that support for their Scandinavian version of socialism may wither as they age, make more money and pay more in taxes." Here's why:

As they reach the threshold of earning \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year, the majority of millennials come to oppose income redistribution, including raising taxes to increase financial assistance to the poor. Similarly, a Reason-Rupe poll found that while millennials still on their parents' health-insurance policies supported the idea of paying higher premiums to help cover the uninsured (57 percent), support flipped among millennials paying for their own health insurance with 59 percent *opposed* to higher premiums. When tax rates are *not* explicit, millennials say they'd prefer larger government offering more services (54 percent) to smaller government offering fewer services (43 percent). However when larger government offering more services is described as requiring high taxes, support flips and 57 percent of millennials opt for smaller government with fewer services and low taxes, while 41 percent prefer large government.

A similar reversal occurred with baby boomers and Generation Xers: “both baby boomers and Gen Xers grew more skeptical of government over time and by about the same magnitude.” As Matt Vespa responds, “So, alas, maybe there is hope for Millennials on the economic front; they just need to find jobs.” But finding one in the Obama recovery? Good luck with that.