



Socialism

Discussion Guide

Let's review

At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.

And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

The "Table-it" Rule: If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

Let's begin

- Take five minutes to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief:
 - Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
 - What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- In the 18th century, the [gap in living standards](#) between London and Beijing was roughly 2:1; in the 20th century, when the U.K. saw the benefits of free trade while China lived under socialism, that gap expanded to 6:1.
- About [one-fifth of the world's population](#) lives under regimes falling on the socialist/communist spectrum, mainly in China, Cuba, Laos, North Korea, Vietnam, and Venezuela.
- Despite being labeled as socialist, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland [score higher](#) than the U.S. in terms of security of property rights, monetary freedom, and trade freedom, and score practically equal in terms of business freedom, investment freedom, and overall economic freedom.

Let's discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** The U.S. economy is often described as mixed - which parts are more socialist? Which parts are more capitalist? How do these aspects affect you?
- **Government:** What parallels and differences do you see between countries labeled as socialist and policy discussions in the U.S.?
- **Business:** What are the services provided by the government and what are those provided by the private sector? What does each do well?

Let's act

1. **Take it local.** Talk to neighbors, friends, family, entrepreneurs and local business owners. Ask for their views on economic policies in the U.S., how they are affected, and what works. Consider hosting another conversation with these community members.
2. **Explore the impact of legislation in your community.** Changes to economic and social policies affect practically all aspects of life. Search on your state's website for agencies, departments, or web pages relating to healthcare, taxes, business, and employment to familiarize yourself with your state's policies.
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. Talk to local business owners and entrepreneurs, or share your experiences, with regard to how policies affect businesses, economic growth, and job creation.
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on economic and social policies, and their vision for how to tackle related challenges facing Americans and your community. You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
 - [Socialism: Venezuela](#)
 - [Free Enterprise & Economic Freedom](#)
 - [Government Regulation](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.