

HANDOUT 5.1: VIEWS ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

People who find themselves on each end of the political spectrum usually have opposing views on a range of social or economic/fiscal issues. Below is a general summary of views based on a two-dimensional political spectrum.



ECONOMIC/FISCAL ISSUES

Individuals who are **left-leaning** most often believe that:

- Government should play a role in managing the economy and creating jobs, as opposed to simply letting the private sector be responsible for creating jobs.
- A large gap between the richest and poorest parts of society should be avoided as much as possible.
- Wealthier individuals and corporations should pay a greater share of taxes than poorer individuals.
- There is good value in government services, such as education and healthcare, and higher taxes and government debt may be necessary to ensure these services are sufficient.
- Policies and regulations that may be considered inconvenient for businesses but are intended to alleviate social or environmental problems are important for the greater good.

Individuals who are **right-leaning** most often believe that:

- Government should avoid direct intervention in the economy and instead support businesses and individuals as much as possible in order to create jobs, wealth and innovation.
- It is not fair to penalize people for making more money. People who are financially successful are being rewarded for their contributions to society.
- Smaller government is the best approach, which means less government influence on the economy and fewer government services.
- Taxes should be as low as possible and the government should avoid going into debt.
- Regulation on businesses is not necessary because the free market provides sufficient incentives for businesses to pursue important social and environmental outcomes.



SOCIAL ISSUES

Individuals who are **left-leaning** most often believe that:

- Society is not bound by tradition.
- Social conditions should change as needed and promptly when necessary.
- It is sometimes necessary to address inequities by giving preferential treatment to disadvantaged groups.
- Active efforts are needed to protect every individual's rights under all circumstances.

Individuals who are **right-leaning** most often believe that:

- Traditions should be respected because they provide society with stability and security.
- Change should be slow and careful when it comes to social conditions.
- Preferential treatment is not necessary; everyone should follow the same established rules and receive equal access.
- In making decisions about society as a whole, it is not always possible to protect everyone's rights.

If you are at either end of the spectrum, you will feel most strongly about the views mentioned. People who are closer to the **centre** may feel less strongly about some issues, or only support some views.