

# Lesson 3: Political Ideologies



## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How do personal beliefs and values influence political perspectives and opinions on issues?**
- 2 How does the political spectrum help us understand different political ideologies?**
- 3 What role do political parties play in our democracy, and how do they represent different perspectives in Canada?**

## OVERVIEW

In a democratic society, people have different beliefs and values influencing their position on political issues. Political parties bring together people who share similar beliefs and political perspectives.

In this lesson, students explore political perspectives, learn about the political spectrum, and examine the role of political parties in Canada. Through *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition*, they reflect on their political views and analyze their position on the political spectrum. In the *Consolidation* activity, students reflect on their political ideology, the influences behind their views, and why respecting diverse opinions is important.

## LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- articulate their opinion on a variety of issues;
- explain the political spectrum and how it helps categorize different political ideologies;
- evaluate their position on the political spectrum compared to other voters; and,
- evaluate the factors shaping their political views and the importance of respecting diverse perspectives.

## Starter

1. Begin by highlighting that different people have different beliefs and values, which can influence their position or opinion on an issue.
2. Play a rapid-fire game of “This or That?”:

Read a series of fun or thought-provoking statements and ask students to move to one side of the classroom for one answer and the other side for the opposite. Alternatively, you can ask students to raise hands if space is limited or if moving is too disruptive.

Sample questions:

- Should we have longer school days but fewer homework assignments **or** shorter school days but more homework?
- Should we ban social media for kids under 16 **or** let parents decide?
- Should we invest more in public transit **or** highways?
- Should we ban single-use plastics **or** let businesses decide?

Keep it fast-paced—no long debates, just quick choices!

3. Conclude the activity by inviting students to share one insight they gained about how personal beliefs influence opinions, emphasizing the value of embracing diverse perspectives.

## Activities

1. Review the concept of political ideologies using Slide Deck 3.
  - The political spectrum provides a way to characterize and distinguish between different political ideologies and policy positions. Economic and social issues are often separated into two distinct dimensions (Handout 3.1).
  - On economic issues, left-leaning people tend to support social services and government intervention in the economy. Right-leaning people tend to support lower taxes, free markets, and less government intervention.
  - On social issues, people who identify as progressive tend to support the improvement of society through change and the promotion of social justice values. People who identify as social conservatives tend to support the preservation of traditions and established values.

2. Discuss the role of **political parties**.
  - A political party is a group of people who share a similar political ideology and goals about society and government.

For the political party to have the chance to work towards its goals, the party tries to win an election and lead the government.

3. Ask students if they can name any of the political parties and party leaders at the federal level. Afterward, review the list of registered parties and those represented in the House of Commons.
4. Introduce students to *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* ([youth.votecompass.com/can](https://youth.votecompass.com/can)). This online tool helps young people reflect on their political views and where they might be on the political spectrum. At the end of the survey, they will be placed on the two-dimensional political spectrum to analyze their position compared to the “average voter” of different political parties in Canada.

**Important Note:** *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* plots students in relation to the average voter of the different parties. It does not plot them in relation to party platforms.

### TEACHER NOTES

- Arrange for computer or internet access so that students can complete the survey. It should take approximately 15–20 min to complete.
- Background information has been included for many questions, along with definitions, to help students better understand the issues and key terms.
- Give students time to analyze their results (their position on the spectrum and how they compare to the average voter of the main political parties).
- If you register your class and have students use the provided class code, you will receive access to the average results for your class, along with a list of the questions where students are most and least aligned. These topics could be used for further discussion.
- To create a class code, select the ‘I am a teacher’ option at [youth.votecompass.com/can](https://youth.votecompass.com/can). You will then be emailed the code to share with students and a unique link to access your class results.

## Consolidation

Through a written reflection, ask students to consider their responses to one or more of the following questions:

- Do you agree with where you were placed on the political spectrum? Why or why not?
- What do you think has shaped your political views most and why?
- Why is it important to listen to and respect others' opinions and perspectives?

## Extended Learning

Use the 'Structured Academic Controversy' discussion protocol (Guide 3.2 and Activity 3.3) to discuss an election issue. This protocol encourages students to gain a deeper understanding of an issue and work toward consensus-building.

You can create your own issue backgrounder or use the case studies on CIVIX's PoliTalks website, which outline the arguments for and against for various topics (<https://politalks.ca/case-studies/>).

## Assessment

Have students write an opinion piece focused on a position they agree or disagree with from *Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition* ([youth.votecompass.com/can](https://youth.votecompass.com/can)).

Steps to writing an opinion piece:

- i) Decide whether you agree or disagree with the position.
- ii) Think of reasons why you hold that opinion.
- iii) Write an introductory paragraph, clearly stating your position.
- iv) Write at least one body paragraph that gives your reasons for your opinion and how it relates to your life experiences.
- v) Write a concluding paragraph that summarizes your position.

## Adaptations and Supports

<b>Language Learners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide students with key terms and definitions in advance (e.g., political issue, perspective, political ideology, political spectrum, political party).</li><li>• Support students' understanding of political positions with real-world examples.</li><li>• Review terminology on <i>Vote Compass: Canada Youth Edition</i> that may be challenging for your students. Consider talking through the questions as students progress through the survey.</li></ul>
<b>Culturally Responsive Pedagogy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know your learners. Consider the cultural backgrounds of your students and be aware of discussions that may involve sensitive topics and could trigger an uncomfortable or unsafe environment.</li><li>• Sharing opinions is always challenging. Be aware of issues that may be controversial and support students in positive ways if they are uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Offer written or digital alternatives.</li><li>• Ensure a respectful environment remains a focus as students share opinions with which others may disagree.</li></ul>
<b>Accommodations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If you need an alternative to physical movement or prefer digital engagement for the <i>Starter</i> activity, consider using an online poll, such as Google Forms, Kahoot, Mentimeter, or Slido.</li></ul>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **political issue** is a topic or problem related to how a community or country is governed, the rights and responsibilities of its people, and the decisions made by its government. These issues often spark debate, as people may have different perspectives on how they should be addressed.

A **perspective** is one particular point of view or outlook. Our perspectives are shaped by who we are and our environment or experiences. High school students may have a different perspective about life and priorities than their parents or caregivers. Alternatively, people living in different countries may have different priorities or values in life.

An **opinion** is a personal belief, judgment, or viewpoint about a topic. It is shaped by an individual's values, experiences, and perspective.

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between actions on political issues and different political parties.

The political spectrum can be constructed with one or more dimensions, where each dimension represents a distinct set of issues. One common method is to have one dimension (or axis) for economic policies and one dimension (or axis) for social policies, which creates a quadrant.

Canadians who are **left-leaning on economic issues** tend to support higher taxes and more government spending, more government involvement, and more social services.

Canadians who are **right-leaning on economic issues** tend to support lower taxes and less government spending, less government intervention, and the free market.

Canadians who are **progressive on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate promoting social justice issues by changing established practices and institutions. An example could be a policy that increases hiring opportunities for underrepresented groups, such as Indigenous peoples, racial minorities, or people with disabilities.

Canadians who are **conservative on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate preserving traditional values and established institutions. An example could be preferring to keep statues, street names, and school names honouring historical figures the same rather than renaming them due to modern controversies.

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with similar beliefs and a shared political ideology who intend to elect members to the legislative body.

Political parties are made up of interested members of the general public. Anyone above the required age (usually 14 years old) can be a member of a political party. Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates, and help them get elected.

Many believe society is becoming increasingly polarized or politically divided, causing political debate to become hostile with little room for compromise. We must respect that everyone has different influences and life experiences that shape their values and political perspectives, and that those things impact how they approach different issues.