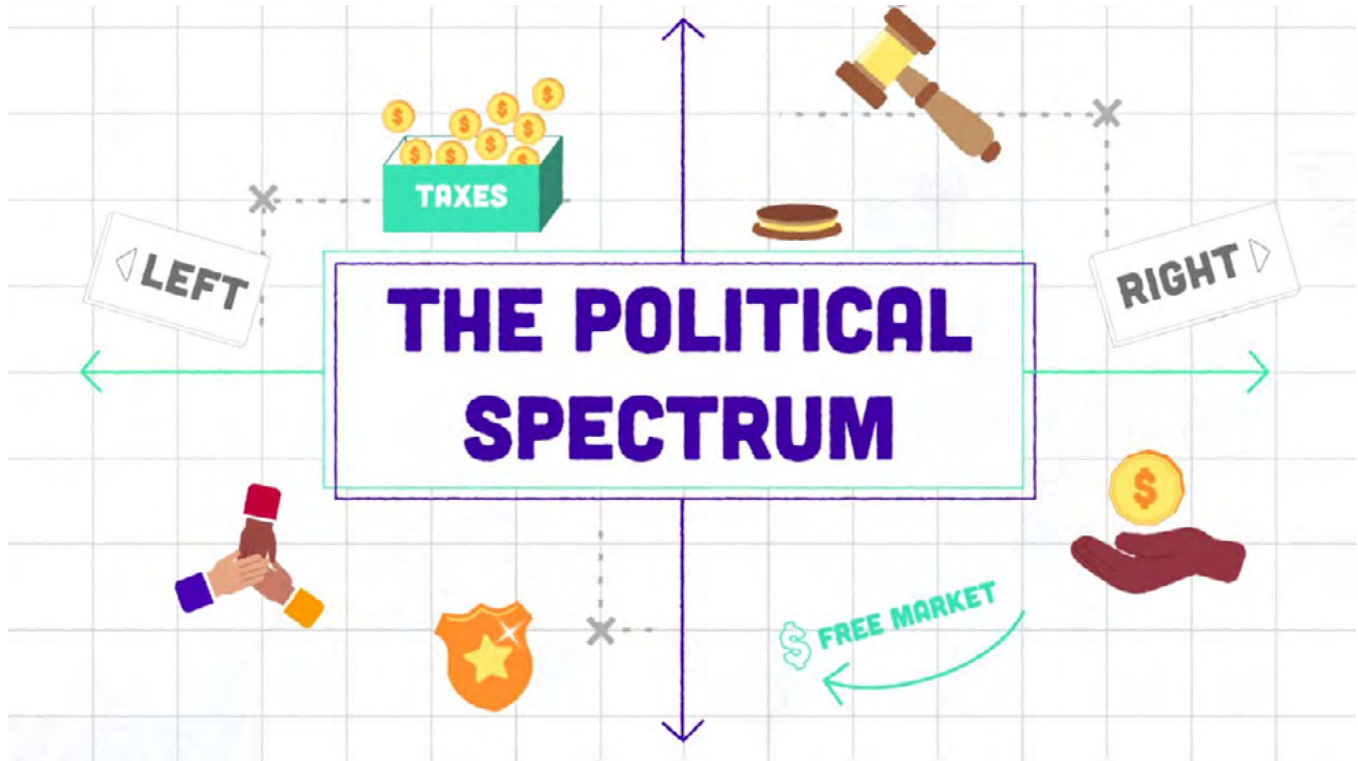


# Lesson 6

## The Political Spectrum



### GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How are people's beliefs and values connected to their political views?
- 2 What is your position on the political spectrum?
- 3 Why is it important to respect others' opinions and perspectives?

### OVERVIEW

In a democratic society, people have different beliefs and values, which influence their position on political issues. Political parties bring together people with similar beliefs and political perspectives.

In this lesson, students explore different political perspectives and the importance of respecting and engaging with others who hold different views. After learning about political parties at the provincial level in Ontario, students participate in an online survey (*Vote Compass: Ontario Youth Edition*) to better understand the political spectrum and which party they might be most closely aligned with.

### LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- analyze how beliefs and values shape positions and actions on political issues;
- describe different ideologies on the political spectrum;
- analyze their position on the political spectrum and which political party they might be most closely aligned with; and,
- demonstrate respect for others' perspectives.

## Starter

1. Watch one of the videos below to introduce the idea of finding common ground with others and the importance of engaging in discussion with people that share different perspectives.
  - “[Worlds Apart: Open Your World](#)” (produced by Heineken): This video features a social experiment where strangers, who have opposing beliefs on topics like feminism and climate change, must work together to complete a challenge. After the challenge, their opposing opinions are revealed and they are given the option to either walk away or stay and discuss their political differences.
  - “[Environmental Activist Meets Retired Environmentalist tanker](#)” (produced by RAD, part of CBC/Radio-Canada): In this video, a mother of three who is concerned about climate change engages in a discussion with a retired oil worker in Calgary about their political views. The conversation is in English, but French subtitles are included.
2. Using Think-Pair-Share, discuss the following questions:
  - What is the main takeaway from the video?
  - What can we do to improve our political conversations?

## Activities

1. Using Slide Deck 6 and “The Political Spectrum” video, review the concept of the political spectrum. The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize and distinguish between different policy positions, political ideologies and political parties. Often, economic issues and social issues are separated into two distinct dimensions (Handout 6.1).
  - On **economic issues**, left-leaning people tend to support social services and government intervention in the economy. Whereas right-leaning people tend to support lower taxes, free markets and less government intervention in the economy.
  - 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. Using Slide Deck 6, review the purpose of **political parties**.
  - A political party is a group made up of people who share a similar political ideology and goals about society and government.
  - In order 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 provincial level. Using Slide Deck 6, review the list of registered parties and the parties represented in the Ontario legislature.

### TEACHER NOTE

- Reinforce the idea that political parties at the provincial and federal level are different and distinct entities.
- To see a current list of registered parties, please visit the Elections Ontario website (<https://finances.elections.on.ca/en/registered-parties>).

4. Explain to students that the *Vote Compass: Ontario Youth Edition* ([youth.votecompass.com/on](https://youth.votecompass.com/on)) is a political spectrum tool, which helps young people familiarize themselves with different ideological positions at the provincial level. At the end of the survey, they will be placed on the two-dimensional political spectrum so that they can analyze their position compared to voters who support different political parties at the provincial level in Ontario.

### TEACHER NOTE

- Arrange for computer or internet access so that students can complete the survey. It should take approximately 15 min to complete.
- Reinforce to students that there are no right or wrong answers, but the questions are meant to encourage reflection on their political views.
- Background information has been included, along with definitions, to help students better understand the issues and key terms.
- Give students time to analyze their results (the area where they locate themselves on the spectrum and how they compare to voters who support the various political parties).
- Teachers who sign up in advance and create a class code will receive analytics about their class(es) via e-mail. These are aggregate results only. Individual student results are not shared. To create a class code, select the ‘I am a teacher’ option at <https://youth.votecompass.com/on/>
- The ‘student code’ option is just for tracking participation in the activity.

5. In small groups or as a class, debrief on the activity using the following prompts:

- Were you surprised where you placed on the political spectrum? Why or why not?
- What insights can you draw from the results of the *Vote Compass: Ontario Youth Edition* about the political landscape in Ontario? Can you make any predictions about the upcoming election?

If you signed up in advance, review the Youth Vote Compass analytics for your class. You will receive a class average placement on the political spectrum and information about average positions for all the questions.

## Consolidation

Through a written reflection, ask students to consider their responses to the following questions:

- What was the most significant learning from today?
- What is one takeaway that you can apply outside of the classroom?
- Alternatively, as students leave the room, ask them to share one word or concept that they learned today.

## Assessment

Ask students select a statement from *Vote Compass: Ontario Youth Edition* and complete the Both Sides Now activity sheet (Activity 6.2).

## Extended Learning

**Case Study:** [A Rural/Urban Divide in Canada?](#)

Are voters in rural areas different from those in urban areas? Do they believe different things, and want different things? If they do, what does that mean for the future of our democracy?

A report published by the Public Policy Forum examined these questions. It used survey data to examine the beliefs and preferences of Canadians living in urban versus rural parts of the country.

Review the summary of the research findings (Slide Deck provided). Afterwards, engage students in a discussion about the rural/urban divide in Canada and political perspectives.

## 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: Ontario Youth Edition</i> that may be challenging for your students.</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 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 working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs or Google Jamboard for collaborative activities and discussion.</li> </ul>

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **civic or political issue** is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects many people in society and, often there are different opinions about how to view or address the issue.

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between different policy positions, political ideologies and 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 the promotion of social justice issues by changing established practices and institutions. An example of such a policy could be addressing inequities by giving special treatment to disadvantaged groups.

Canadians who are **conservative on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate for the preservation of traditional values and established institutions. An example could be ensuring that everyone follows the same established rules and has equal access.

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with similar goals and political ideology whose intention is to achieve power and create meaningful political change.

Political parties are made up of interested members of the 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 people believe that 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 influence how they approach different issues.