

University of Virginia Center for Politics

Political Ideology Survey

www.centerforpolitics.org

www.youthleadership.net

© 2013 by the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia

Purpose: Are you a liberal? A conservative? Or somewhere in between? Are you more likely to agree with Democrats or Republicans or another party? Or do you consider yourself an Independent? How does your ideology square with some of the common political issues at the forefront of debate today?

Students very often have little understanding of the meaning of ideological terms. While these terms are often vague and elusive to adults as well, it is possible through this survey and the subsequent two lessons for students to gain a better understanding of your personal ideology.

Objectives:

1. Examine your political beliefs.
2. Understand some of the nuances between common political labels like *liberal* and *conservative*.
3. Discern the significance of your *political ideology* in examining political issues.

Procedure: Read the handout *Ideological Survey* and *print it out if you wish*. Place a "T" for true if you agree with the statement or "F" for false if you disagree with the statement, in the column labeled "T/F." Write nothing yet in the column labeled "L/C."

Ideological Survey

© 2013 by the Rector and Visitors of the University of Virginia

| Question | T/F | L/C |
|--|-----|-----|
| 1. The Federal Government places too many restrictions on modern corporations. | | |
| 2. Union workers receive wages and benefits so high that they damage their company's ability to compete. | | |
| 3. High government taxes hurt the economy. | | |
| 4. Only people who cannot work should be eligible for welfare programs. | | |
| 5. Illegal immigration lowers wages and increases crime. | | |
| 6. New government programs should be created to further assist poor people in the United States. | | |
| 7. The wealthy should be taxed at a higher percentage than the lower and middle classes. | | |
| 8. One of the best ways to help the poor is to set policies that help businesses earn a profit and create new jobs. | | |
| 9. Government programs discourage able bodied people from helping themselves. | | |
| 10. The government should not restrict abortion and other reproductive choices. | | |
| 11. The government has a special responsibility to assist minorities. | | |
| 12. Faith-based organizations should be used to improve poverty and crime in local communities. | | |
| 13. Public funding should not be used to support religious institutions including schools. | | |
| 14. Government should not financially support art projects that are morally objectionable. | | |
| 15. The First Amendment should protect pornography from government censorship. | | |
| 16. Free trade between the U.S. and other nations is generally beneficial. | | |
| 17. America's high crime rate is directly traceable to a cycle of poverty, poor health care, poor education, and discrimination. | | |
| 18. A less regulated capitalist system increases innovation and creates long-term economic success. | | |
| 19. Gay marriage should be legal. | | |
| 20. Economic success should take precedent over environmental policies. | | |
| 21. The federal government should not get involved in setting academic standards for local public school districts. | | |
| 22. Americans should have a <i>right</i> to affordable health care. | | |
| 23. The death penalty is cruel and unusual punishment. | | |
| 24. Limiting the sale and possession of firearms does not violate the second amendment right to bear arms. | | |
| 25. The giving of a prayer before public school sporting events, activities and other programs should be allowed. | | |

1. After completing the survey, go back through the survey using the key below, which reveals which statements are toward the conservative end of the spectrum and which are more toward the liberal end of the spectrum. Place an "L" for liberal and a "C" for conservative according to the nature of your response. For instance, if you respond to a conservative statement with "T" then you should place a "C" in the last column. If responding to the same statement with an "F" the you would place and "L" in the column. The following are the ideologies of the statements on the ideological survey.

| | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. L | 11. L | 16. C | 21. L |
| 2. C | 7. L | 12. C | 17. L | 22. L |
| 3. C | 8. C | 13. L | 18. C | 23. L |
| 4. C | 9. C | 14. C | 19. L | 24. L |
| 5. C | 10. L | 15. L | 20. C | 25. C |

2. After you have coded your responses, count the total number of "L" and "C" responses and compare that number to the chart below.

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| 21-25 Liberal responses | = | Strong Liberal |
| 16-20 Liberal responses | = | Weak Liberal |
| 21-25 Conservative responses | = | Strong Conservative |
| 16-20 Conservative responses | = | Weak Conservative |
| 10-15 of either responses | = | Moderate |

We make no judgment about personal ideology. A diverse political spectrum fosters debate and interest in politics. It promotes a wide variety of ideas. This is simply an academic exercise. It is offered for illustrative purposes and should not be construed as the final word on your personal ideology or on how political issues are framed. Only you can decide what your political ideology is and where you stand on the issues!

Any ideological survey is imperfect in that it is not sophisticated enough to cover the entire gamut of a personal political beliefs and varied nuances of every political issues, but we encourage you to use this exercise to continue to examine and hone your political beliefs.

If you enjoyed the exercise please visit the Center for Politics signature program called The Youth Leadership Initiative at www.youthleadership.net and sign up (free of charge) for all our lesson plans and resources.