

# How to use the Automated Political Stance Identifier

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## What is the Automated Political Stance Identifier?

The **Automated Political Stance Identifier (APSI)** is a tool that analyzes text to estimate the political positions expressed within it. It uses the **Political DEBATE** (Burnham et al. [2024](#)) pre-trained language model to identify patterns in language use and generate likelihood-based scores across key political dimensions.

APSI users can analyze text to identify political positions in three dimensions:

- **Economic ideology**
- **Support for liberal democratic values**
- **Populist vs. pluralist rhetoric**

The tool is designed to support research, journalism, think tank and civil society organisation activities, and the critical analysis of political discourse.

# How to Use the Tool

## Step 1. Enter Text

In the *Analysis* page of the tool, paste or type the text you want to analyse into the input field.

Examples include:

- Speeches
- Articles
- Social media posts
- Policy statements
- Interviews or transcripts

The tool analyses the text based solely on the words provided; the context in which the text was created is not known by the tool.

## Step 2. Select Analysis Dimensions

Choose which political dimensions you want to analyze. APSI can evaluate text across one or more of the following:

- **Economic Left–Right:** Economic ideology and policy orientation.
- **Support for Liberal Democracy:** Attitudes toward democratic norms and institutions.
- **Populism–Pluralism:** Rhetorical emphasis on “the people” vs. pluralism withing society.

### **Step 3. Run the Analysis**

Click **Analyse** to process your text. The system evaluates linguistic patterns and calculates probabilistic scores indicating where the text falls along each selected dimension.

If the text does not express a political stance (e.g., neutral language or unrelated content), the tool will not infer one.

**Note: The tool may incorrectly infer political stances or fail to identify their presence in a text.**

### **Step 4. Interpret Your Results**

The results page shows:

- Position scores on a scale for each dimension.
- Interpretation labels describing the estimated stance.
- Confidence levels indicating model certainty.
- Explanatory indicators showing which hypotheses influenced the scoring.

Results reflect estimated tendencies in the language, not verified beliefs.

Further details on how the scores are calculated are available in the *Description and Methodology* document.

## **What the Tool Measures**

### **1. Economic Left–Right**

Evaluates language associated with economic policy positions such as redistribution, market regulation, and state involvement.

- The scale ranges from 0 to 10.

- Lower scores → more economically left-leaning language
- Higher scores → more economically right-leaning language

The analysis is based on the following survey question from the Chapel Hill Experts Survey (Jolly et al. 2022):

*“Parties and actors can be classified in terms of their stance on ECONOMIC ISSUES such as privatization, taxes, regulation, government spending, and the welfare state. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Those on the economic right want a reduced role for government.”* (Jolly et al. 2022, p. 22)

## 2. Support for Liberal Democracy

Measures language related to the support for liberal democratic institutions, rights, and governance norms.

- The scale ranges from 0 to 10.
- Lower scores → low support for liberal democratic values.
- Higher scores → strong support for liberal democratic values.

The analysis is based on the following survey question from the Varieties of Democracy indices (Lindberg et al. 2022):

*“...to what extent was [the actor or party] clearly committed to free and fair elections with multiple parties, freedom of speech, media, assembly and association? [Actors or parties] show no commitment to such principles if they openly support an autocratic form of government without elections or freedom of speech, assembly and association (e.g. theocracy; single-party rule; revolutionary regime). [Actors or parties] show a full commitment to key democratic principles if they unambiguously support freedom of speech, media, assembly and association and pledge to accept defeat in free and fair elections.”* (Lindberg et al. 2022, p. 27)

### 3. Populism–Pluralism

Assesses the extent to which a text contains populist or pluralist rhetoric:

- The scale ranges from 0 to 10.
- Lower scores → more pluralist rhetoric.
- Higher scores → more populist rhetoric.

The analysis is based on the following survey question from the Global Party Survey (Norris 2020):

*“Parties [or actors] can also be classified by their current use of POPULIST OR PLURALIST rhetoric. POPULIST language typically challenges the legitimacy of established political institutions and emphasizes that the will of the people should prevail. By contrast, PLURALIST rhetoric rejects these ideas, believing that elected leaders should govern, constrained by minority rights, bargaining and compromise, as well as checks and balances on executive power.”* (Norris 2020, p. 6, 7)

## Understanding the Results

The model evaluates the input text by comparing its language to sets of predefined hypotheses representing different positions on each political dimension (e.g. left vs. right, support vs. opposition to liberal democracy, or populism vs. pluralism). The text is processed by a pre-trained language model, which estimates how strongly the wording supports each hypothesis by assigning probabilities based on patterns in language use. These probabilities are then compared across opposing positions to determine the relative strength of each side. The final score reflects the balance of evidence in the text, indicating the position most strongly supported by the language while also reporting the model’s level of confidence.

When reviewing results, keep in mind:

- Scores indicate estimated tendencies, not absolute positions.
- Confidence levels reflect model certainty, not factual truth.
- The same text may be interpreted differently depending on context.
- Some texts may fall outside the tool’s scope.

## Important Limitations

APSI analyzes text **in isolation**, without contextual knowledge about the author, audience, or situation.

As such, the results obtained from the tool:

- Are approximate.
- May be inaccurate or incomplete.
- Do not represent definitive statements about beliefs or intentions.
- Should not be used for decisions affecting individuals.

Political language is complex and context-dependent, and model limitations or training data bias may affect outcomes.

## Ethical Considerations

APSI is intended:

- To support research and academic analysis.
- To inform journalistic work.
- To support think tanks and civil society activities.
- For general critical study of political discourse.

It should **not** be used for:

- Automated decision-making about people.
- Legal, employment, or policy judgments.

Human interpretation and critical evaluation are always required.

## References

- Burnham, Michael et al. (Sept. 2024). *Political DEBATE: Efficient Zero-shot and Few-shot Classifiers for Political Text*. arXiv:2409.02078 [cs]. DOI: [10.48550/arXiv.2409.02078](https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2409.02078). URL: <http://arxiv.org/abs/2409.02078> (visited on 08/25/2025).
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