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Social liberalism vs social conservatism

What is the difference between a **social liberal** and a **social conservative**?

A **social liberal** believes:

- We live in the world as individuals, each different and distinct.
- We should be allowed to make our own choices about how we live; where we live; what we believe; whom we love.
- Identities shared across national borders such as race, gender and sexuality are more important than identities based around nationality or region.
- Change, variety and fluidity are higher goods than familiarity, similarity and community.
- A country or region has a responsibility to accept and welcome incomers, and to allow them to preserve their identity.
- Tolerance of different ways of life is a higher good than conformity to shared ways of life.

A **social conservative** believes:

- We live in the world as part of a community defined by common values and practices.
- We should respect these common values and practices, and prioritise them over our own personal desires.
- National or regional identities are more important than transnational identities based on race, gender or sexuality.
- Familiarity, similarity and community are higher goods than change, variety and fluidity.
- Incomers to a country or region have a responsibility to adapt to their new home's way of doing things, abandoning their own values if necessary.
- Conformity to shared values is a higher good than tolerance of diversity.

How can you apply this clash of values to debate motions?

1. This house would abolish immigration controls

Social liberalism sides with the proposition; **social conservatism** sides with the opposition.

Change or familiarity?

A **social liberal** argues:

- Our economy depends on immigrants; they tend to be hard working and willing to do jobs natives wouldn't do. They are also more likely to be young and fit, contributing to the country through taxes rather than using health care and benefits. **(Social liberalism works better than social conservatism.)**
- Immigration has enriched our society culturally. Britain is a more diverse and exciting place because of it. **(Variety and change are better than familiarity and uniformity; we should adapt to welcome incomers.)**
- We have a moral responsibility to welcome people less fortunate than ourselves. **(Our responsibility is to the whole of humanity, not just our national community.)**

A **social conservative** argues:

- Immigrants drive down wages and take jobs from local workers. **(Social conservatism works better than social liberalism.)**
- Immigration has caused Britain to lose its identity; we no longer have common values. **(Familiarity and uniformity are better than change and variety; incomers should adapt to a community rather than the other way round.)**
- We need to look after our own country first. **(Our responsibility is to our immediate community, not the whole of humanity.)**

2. This house would make it compulsory for all schools to teach that gay relationships are equal to straight relationships.

Social liberalism backs the proposition; **social conservatism** backs the opposition.

A **social liberal** argues:

- Diverse sexualities and ways of living enrich our society, and should be celebrated at all ages and all levels of society. **(Diversity is a higher good than uniformity.)**
- What we teach in our schools defines who we are as a society, and we want to be a tolerant society. **(Tolerance is a higher good than conformity.)**

Open or closed?