



## Locus of Control

The Locus of Control (LOC; Rotter, 1954) refers to the degree to which one feels in control of significant personal experiences and their outcomes; specifically, the extent to which outcomes are substantively and directly influenced by one's own behaviour, other people's behaviour, luck, fate, or random factors.

Often, categories are expressed as Internal LOC, whereby one has autonomy and personal control of own life, or External LOC whereby one is often controlled by outside forces which could be (i) ordered and controlled and influenced by Powerful Others, e.g., parents, leaders, God, or (ii) chaotic and unordered and influenced by Chance, e.g., luck, fate, or randomness.

A person's LOC will influence their own behaviour, reward expectancy, personality, and idea of self, e.g., self-care, self-development, self-efficacy, and in particular, self-esteem. Importantly, a person with an Internal LOC will likely have a mindset of (or working towards) personal development, independence, maturity, motivation, ambition, life satisfaction, confidence, acceptance of own fault, responsibility, good self-worth, and being authentic with life; successes and failures could be attributed to own hard work and efforts, e.g.:

- ❖ *"I've earned this good essay grade";*
- ❖ *"If it's to be, it's up to me";*
- ❖ *"I must learn to be more successful";*
- ❖ *"He who dares, wins";*
- ❖ *"I am responsible for what happens in my work";*
- ❖ *"The harder I try, the luckier I get"*

Whereas a person with an External LOC will likely have a mindset of (or trying to break away from) stagnation, dependence, immaturity, de-motivation, apathy, life dissatisfaction, anxiety, blaming others for own fault, irresponsibility, poor self-worth, and being inauthentic with life; successes and failures could often be attributed to others behaviour, e.g.:

- ❖ *"My good grade was due to the examiner taking it easy on me";*
- ❖ *"The competition must have been poor if I did so well";*
- ❖ *"It's so hard to succeed with all the competition out there";*
- ❖ *"Something always goes wrong on me";*
- ❖ *"That examiner was always against me, just look at that poor grade";*
- ❖ *"If it wasn't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all. Why bother?"*

However, it is important to note that neither External nor Internal LOC is good or bad per se; furthermore, most of us can find that our own Locus of Control can be influenced by various factors, e.g., mood, situation, task at hand. Nevertheless, it would seem that by harnessing an Internal LOC one can live a more rich and authentic life. Consider the questionnaire below to see where your Locus of Control is.



## Levensen's (1973) Locus of Control Questionnaire

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather information to help you to understand your Locus of Control. Answer all questions quickly and as honest as possible: -3 = strongly disagree; -2 = disagree somewhat; -1 = slightly disagree; +1 = slightly agree; +2 = agree somewhat; +3 = strongly agree.

Locus of Control Questionnaire	
Item	Score
1. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.	
2. To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings.	
3. I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.	
4. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am.	
5. When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work.	
6. Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck.	
7. When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky.	
8. Although I might have good ability, I will not be given leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power.	
9. How many friends I have depends on how nice a person I am.	
10. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.	
11. My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.	
12. Whether or not I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.	
13. People like me have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.	
14. It's not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune.	
15. Getting what I want requires pleasing those people above me.	
16. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends on whether I'm lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time.	
17. If important people were to decide they didn't like me, I probably wouldn't make many friends.	
18. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.	
19. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.	
20. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other driver.	
21. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.	
22. In order to have my plans work, I make sure that they fit in with the desires of people who have power over me.	
23. My life is determined by my own actions.	
24. It's chiefly a matter of fate whether or not I have a few friends or many friends.	
<b><u>Focussing on items that you answered, which areas of your life need particular attention?</u></b>	
<b><u>Scoring:</u></b>	
Internal Locus of Control: Total your responses for items 1, 4, 5, 9, 18, 19, 21, and 23.	Score: _____
Powerful Others: Total your responses for items 3, 8, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, and 22.	Score: _____
Chance: Total your responses for items 2, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, and 24.	Score: _____