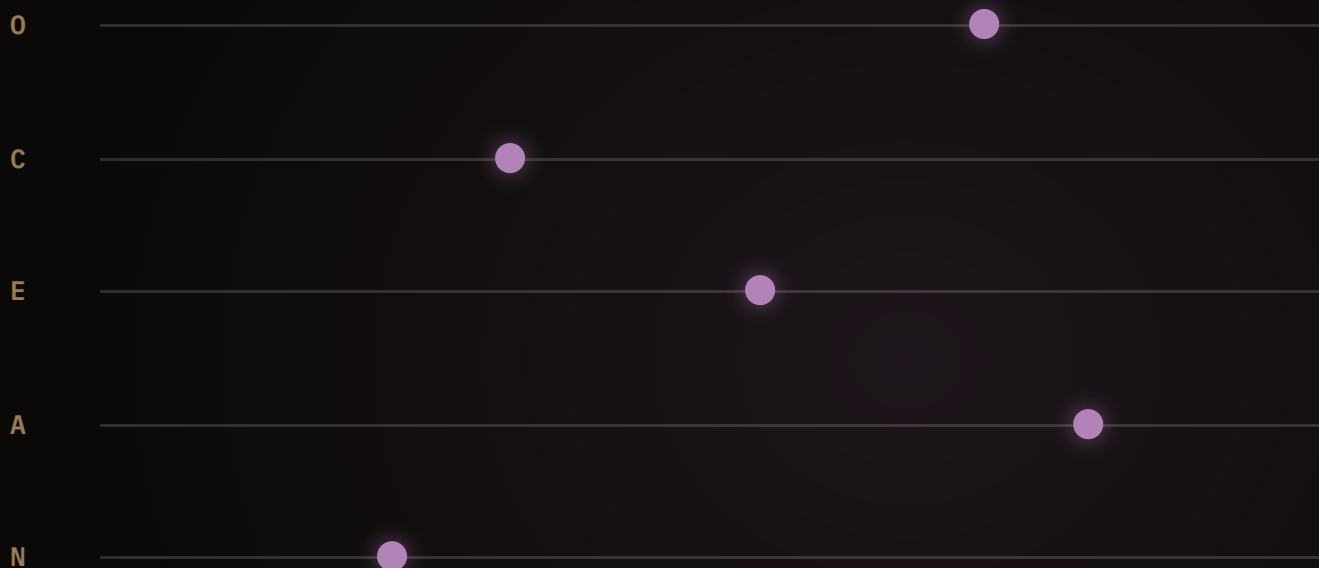




● A FREE GUIDE TO WHO YOU ARE

# The five factors, *decoded*.

Psychology's best-replicated map of personality — where it came from, what the five dimensions actually mean, and why you don't fit in a box (nobody does).

# Five dimensions, found in the dictionary.

In 1936, two psychologists combed the dictionary and found **~18,000 words** humans use to describe each other. When researchers later asked thousands of people to rate themselves on those words and ran the statistics, the answers kept collapsing into the **same five clusters** — in study after study, language after language.

O

**Openness** imagination, curiosity, taste for the new

prefers the proven & practical



seeks ideas, art & novelty

C

**Conscientiousness** order, discipline, follow-through

flexible & spontaneous



organized & driven

E

**Extraversion** where your energy comes from

recharges in quiet



energized by people

A

**Agreeableness** how you weigh others' interests

sceptical & direct



trusting & warm

N

**Neuroticism** sensitivity of your emotional alarm

even-keeled under stress



feels the weather keenly

## 4,504

**Trait words in Allport & Odbert's 1936 dictionary sweep.** Ninety years of factor analysis later, they still boil down to these five dimensions — the “Big Five” (Goldberg, 1990). Every pole has real advantages; there is no correct place to be.

### FOOTNOTE FOR THE CURIOUS

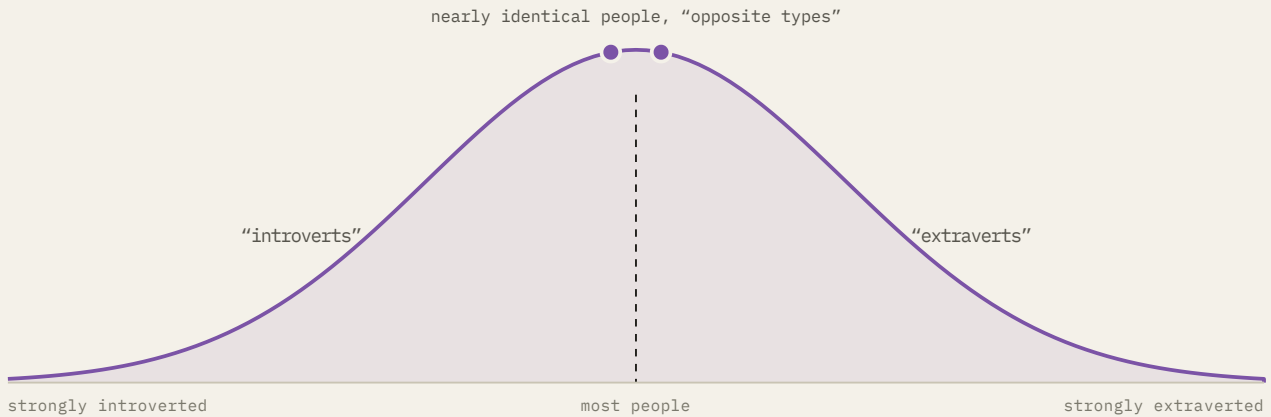
*Some researchers count six — the HEXACO model adds Honesty–Humility. The five here are simply the best-replicated map: think continents, not every island.*

# You're a dial, not a switch.

Type systems sort people into tidy boxes — introvert *or* extravert, thinker *or* feeler. But measure any trait carefully and you get a bell curve: **most people sit near the middle**, not at the poles. Cutting that curve in half manufactures categories nature never drew.

## Where people actually sit on extraversion

Distribution of extraversion scores · the dashed line is where a “type” would cut



The two dots sit a hair apart on the trait — yet a type system files them in opposite boxes. That’s why modern psychology scores personality on continuous dimensions.

### A TYPE SAYS

*“You are an introvert.”*

One bit of information, and wrong for everyone near the middle — which is most people.

### A TRAIT SCORE SAYS

*“You sit at the 38th percentile of extraversion — quieter than most, with plenty of range.”*

A position on a dial: precise, comparable, and honest about the middle.

### HERITABILITY

**≈40%**

Of personality differences trace to genes (meta-analysis of twin studies) — the rest is life.

### REPLICATION

**5**

The same factors keep re-emerging across decades, instruments and dozens of languages.

### MIDDLE DWELLERS

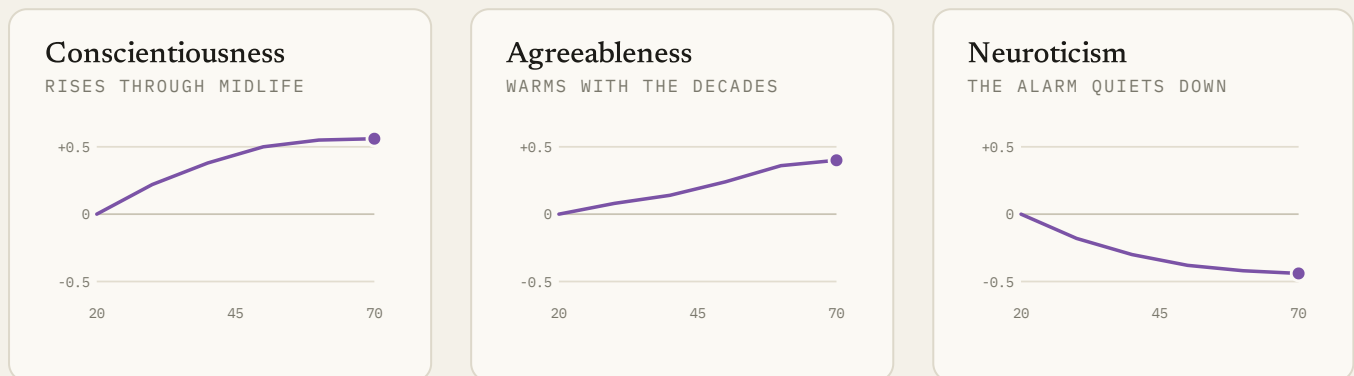
**≈2 in 3**

People sit within one standard deviation of average on any given trait — ambiverts are the norm.

# Your personality isn't finished.

Traits are stable enough to be worth measuring — and plastic enough to keep life interesting. Across dozens of longitudinal studies, most adults drift the **same direction with age**: steadier, warmer, more disciplined. Psychologists call it the maturity principle.

Cumulative change from age 20, in standard deviations · stylized after Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer (2006)



## What actually shifts a profile...

- a** **Age itself.** The maturity drift above happens to most people, in most cultures, without anyone trying.
- b** **New roles.** First real job, first child, new responsibility — role demands pull traits along behind them.
- c** **Deliberate effort.** People who choose a trait goal and practice behaviours that express it show real, measured change (Hudson & Fraley, 2015).
- d** **Today's mood.** Self-reports wobble with sleep and stress — another reason a profile is an estimate, not an engraving.

**16** wks

**Long enough for measurable, chosen trait change.** In Hudson & Fraley's study, people who set a trait goal and practised concrete behaviours expressing it moved their scores within a semester. Personality listens to what you repeatedly do.

# How to read a profile like a *scientist*.

## A PROFILE CAN...

- + **Name your defaults** — the settings you return to when nobody's pushing.
- + **Explain frictions** — many “personality clashes” are just two people at opposite ends of one dial.
- + **Show trade-offs honestly** — every pole has an edge: high C ships on time, low C improvises brilliantly.
- + **Track your drift** — retest in a year and watch the maturity principle work on you.

## A PROFILE CAN'T...

- **Put you in a box** — five continuous dials generate millions of profiles; yours is one of them.
- **Grade you** — there is no winning combination; context decides which pole pays.
- **Excuse you** — “low agreeableness” describes a default, not a destiny.
- **Diagnose you** — trait questionnaires are self-portraits, not clinical assessments.

## YOUR MOVE

### Meet your *five dials*.

MindSpan's personality suite is live — original items, untimed, scored on continuous dimensions. Start with the Mini if you're curious; take the full Profile when you're serious.

|                     |                           |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Five-Factor Profile | the full portrait         | 100 items · untimed |
| Five-Factor Mini    | a first sketch            | 20 items · ~5 min   |
| Emotional Style     | how you feel & steer      | 60 items · untimed  |
| Values Compass      | what you'd trade for what | 60 items · untimed  |

Your welcome grant of **1,000 neurons** covers your first tests.

[mindspanlabs.app](https://mindspanlabs.app)

## SOURCES & FURTHER READING

Allport, G. & Odbert, H. (1936). Trait-names: a psycho-lexical study. *Psychological Monographs*. · Goldberg, L. (1990). An alternative “description of personality”: the Big-Five factor structure. *JPSP*. · Vukasović, T. & Bratko, D. (2015). Heritability of personality: a meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*. · Roberts, B., Walton, K. & Viechtbauer, W. (2006). Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits. *Psychological Bulletin*. · Hudson, N. & Fraley, R. (2015). Volitional personality trait change. *JPSP*.

This guide — and every MindSpan test — is an educational tool for self-exploration, not a clinical instrument.