

Sharing a row with Rover? Age and gender drive massive differences of opinion about pets on planes

Many concerned that the 'service animal' label is being abused to bring larger, exotic animals on board

August 9, 2018 – Most frequent flyers have criteria for a pleasant flying experience. Leave on time. Avoid a seat by the bathroom. Keep some distance between yourself and the screaming baby.

But there's another nagging – or should we say – *wagging* issue dividing Canadians that take to the skies: pets in the passenger cabin.

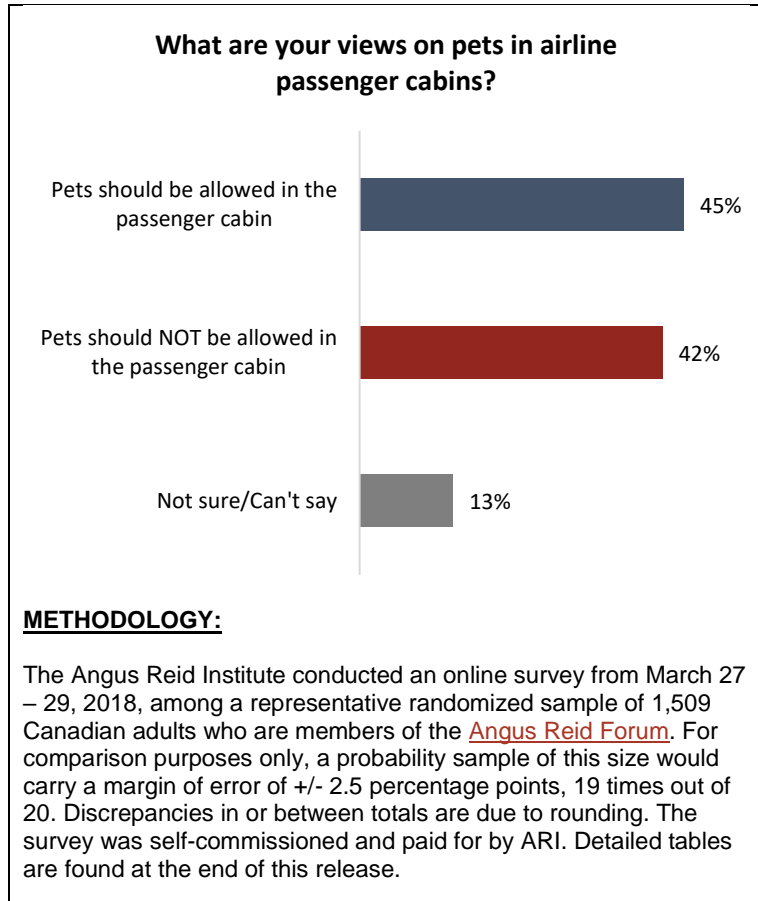
A new study from the Angus Reid Institute finds that while 45 per cent of Canadians say that they're fine to fly with Fido, nearly the same number (42%) say that Bella should be banished to cargo.

That said, answers to such question largely depends on who is being asked. Young women? They're likely on board. Two-thirds (66%) are accepting of another passenger's feline friend, while just one-in-five (21%) are not. Older men? Not so fast. Twice as many say pets should not be allowed (61%) as say they should (29%).

Many of those opposed have specific reasons as to why they'd prefer not to share the cabin with kitty. Two-in-five (41%) say allergies are their primary concern, while one-in-five (21%) are concerned about the noise that might result from more pets on board. Further, a majority of Canadians feel that travellers are abusing the 'service animal' label in order to get otherwise unauthorized animals on the plane with them.

More Key Findings:

- Opinions about allowing pets on planes are connected to the size and placement of the animal. Among those Canadians who say pets should be accommodated, almost nine-in-ten (86%) say they are happy to have small pets aboard if they fit under the seat. Fewer than half (47%) however, support a large pet sitting in an extra seat purchased by the owner
- Canadians are more likely to agree (53%) than disagree (35%) that people who want to travel with pets should pick a destination within driving distance



CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 shachi.kurl@angusreid.org @shachikurl
Dave Korzinski, Research Associate: 250.899.0821 dave.korzinski@angusreid.org

- Millennials are more comfortable sitting near an animal while flying. Six-in-ten (63%) say this is not a problem for them, compared to two-in-five (42%) Canadians over the age of 55

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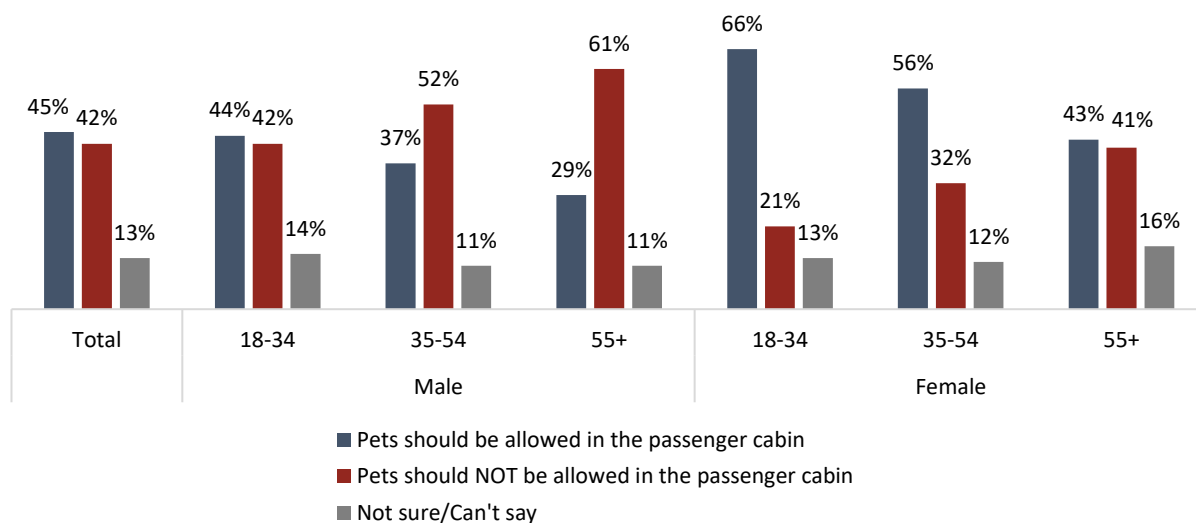
Older men say no to pets in cabins, young women welcome them

The decision to leave a pet at home, with a friend, or in a kennel can be a tough one – both emotionally and financially – while Canadians who decide to take their pup on a plane may also face difficulties. Will there be room on the plane? [Air Canada](#) allows a total of between two and four pets in the cabin on each flight, while [United Airlines](#) caps this at two. How much is it going to cost? It's between \$50 - \$150 per pet each way if the furry friend is going to fly with the humans and not in cargo.

This is before one even considers the reaction of fellow flyers when a pet is brought into the flying environment. For Canadians, the response depends on the age and gender of the person they share a row with.

Overall, 45 per cent say they have no problem with pets in the passenger cabin, while a similar number (42%) disagree. However, two-thirds of young women welcome such a situation, while a majority of men over 35 lean toward prohibiting pets in the cabin. Interestingly, the closest proxy for the views of young men, those age 18 to 34, are the opinions of women over the age of 55.

What are your views on pets in airline passenger cabins?

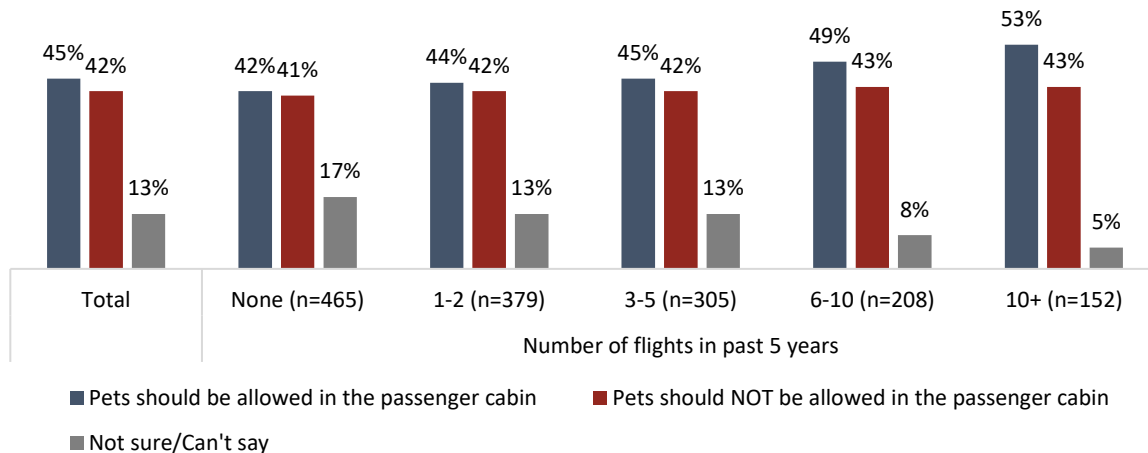


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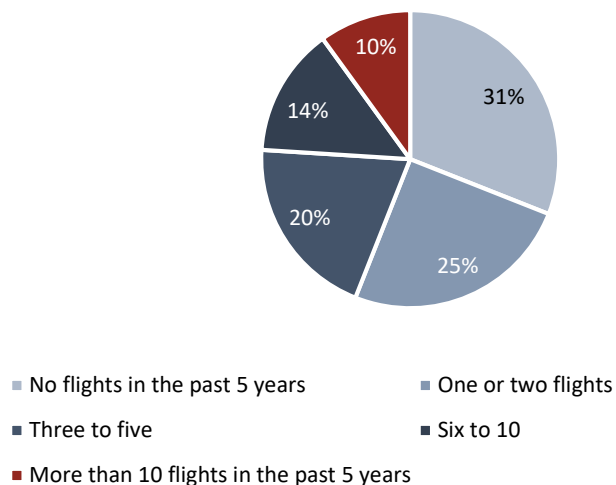
Those who fly most often are also most comfortable with the concept of sharing a cabin with a pet, but not overwhelmingly so. Just over half (53%) say they support the idea, while those who never fly are divided evenly among the two camps:

What are your views on pets in airline passenger cabins?



Notably, the division between men and women in relation to their flying habits is nearly identical. The following graph shows the frequency of flights for Canadians:

Frequency of flight for Canadians



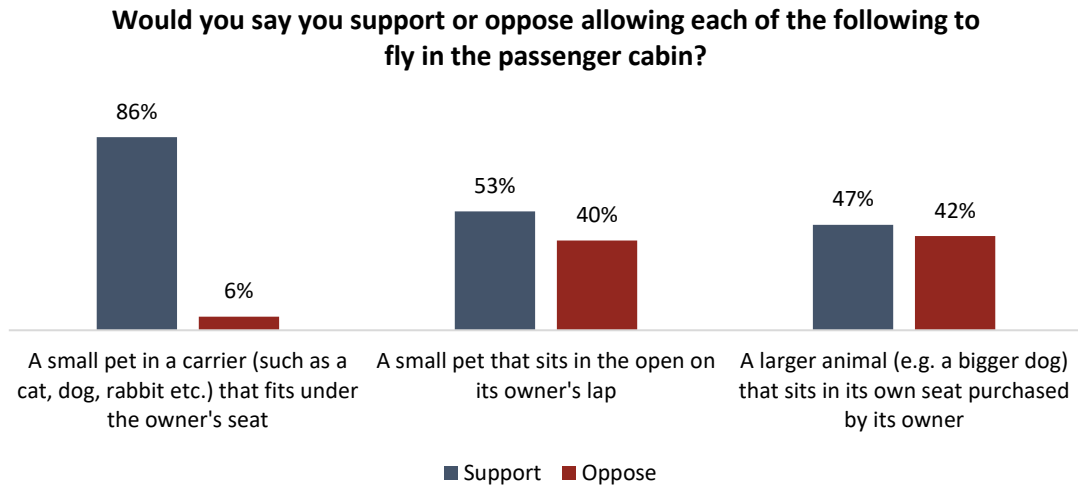
Less support for larger pets in cabin

While a significant number of Canadians appear happy to accommodate pet owners who wish to fly with their dogs, cats or rabbits, this group is not entirely laissez-faire on airline policy in this area. The Angus Reid Institute tested commitment to canines (and other animals) in the cabin by asking about two

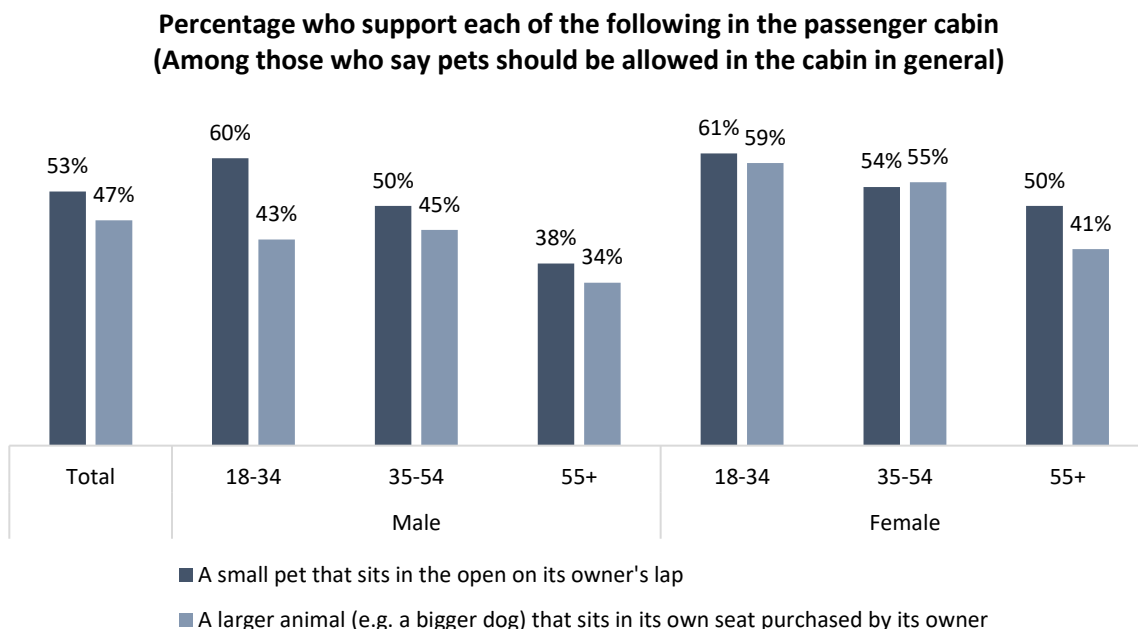
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situations, one in which a pet is on the lap of its owner, as opposed to under the seat, and one in which a bigger animal has a seat all to itself. On each of these measures, support is significantly lower than the initial example:



Millennial women remain the most strident advocates for these arrangements. In each case, six-in-ten say they support pet owners rights. However, much of the initial support for pets in cabins generally is lost among Canadians over 55:

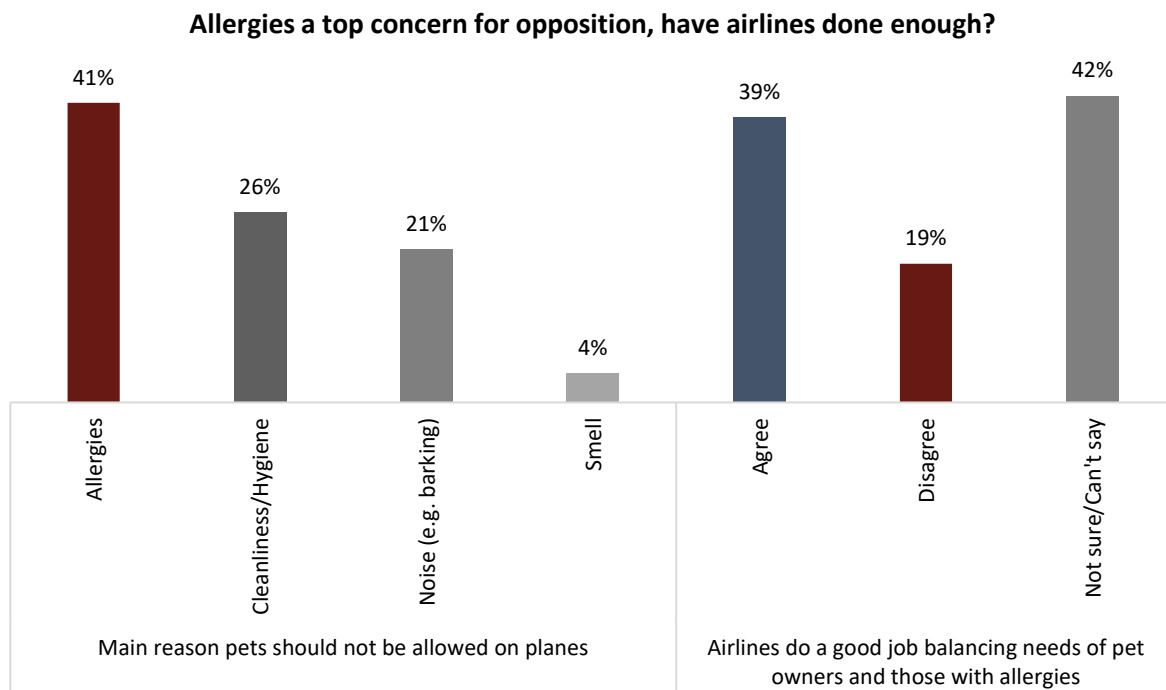


It should be noted, the latter situation is not currently an option available on either WestJet or Air Canada, and does not appear to have significant public support.

Allergies are top concern for those opposed

There are a number of reasons why Canadians say pets should not be allowed to share the cabin on their flights. The top concern by a considerable margin is allergies. This has become an increasing concern due to the number of service animals on planes, as they are not counted among the maximum number of pets that can be admitted by most airlines.

Four-in-ten Canadians (41%) who say animals should be prohibited in the cabin say that allergies are a concern. A significant number of all Canadians also say they are unaware if airlines are doing enough for people whose allergies may be a concern:



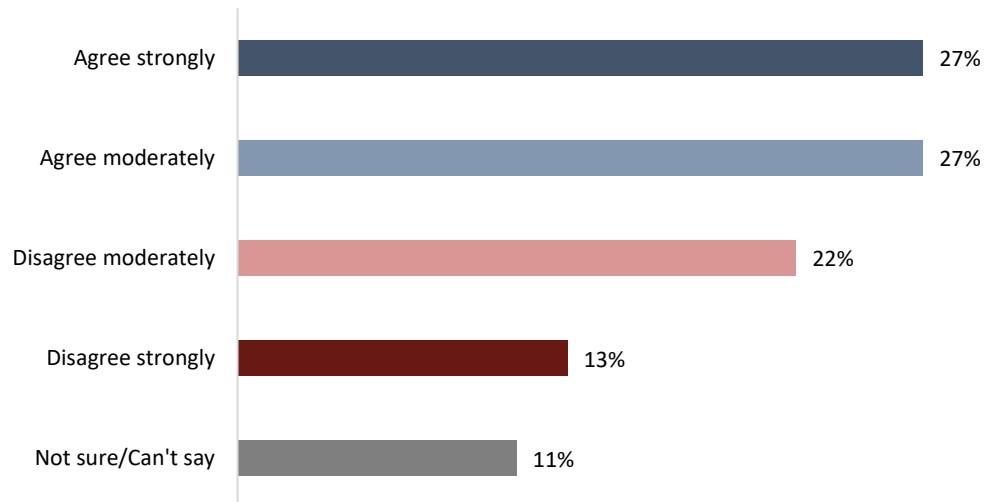
Most airlines will accommodate passengers who say they suffer from allergies by reseating them as far from any animals as possible.

Ultimately, while many Canadians are fine with accommodating furry friends, most would rather just avoid this entirely. Just over half of Canadians say that it's a better idea for travellers who want to take their pets on vacation to pick a destination that is within driving distance:

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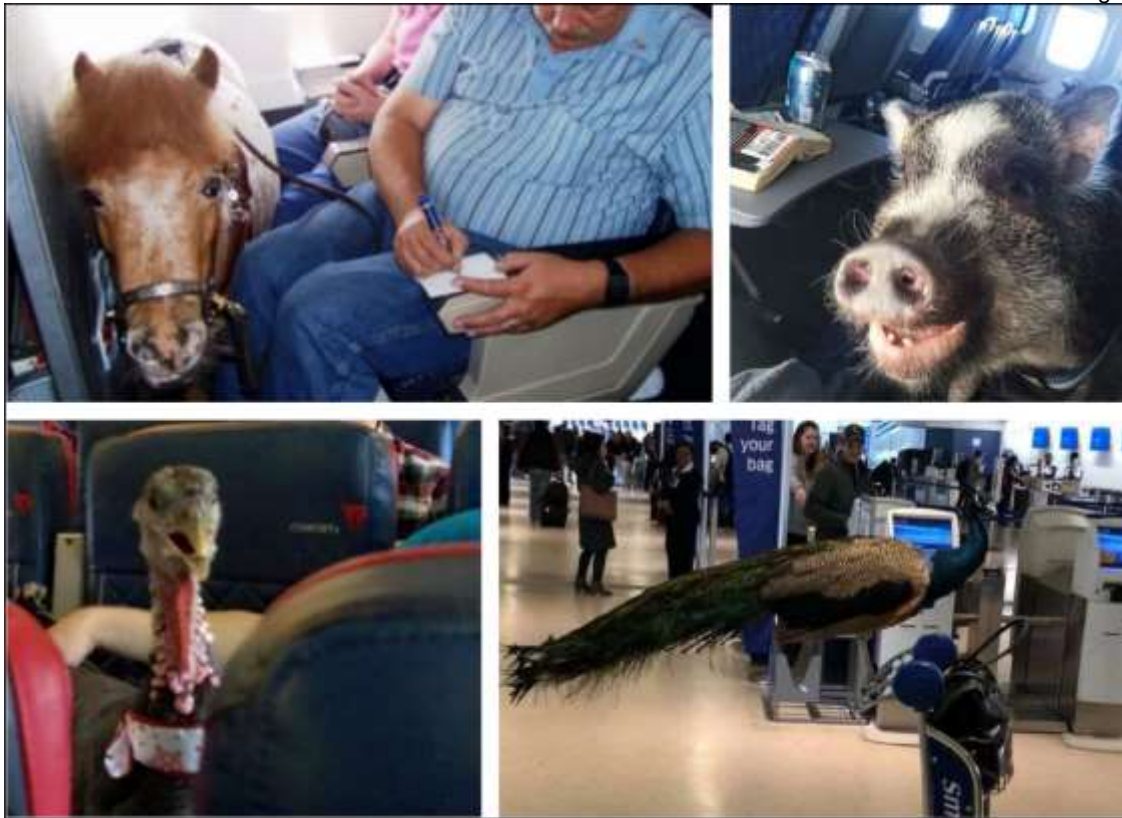
People who want to take their pets on vacation should pick destinations within driving distance



Are flyers abusing definition of service animal?

Most flyers have seen service animals out and about during their travels. In most cases, well-trained dogs help the visually impaired or others with disabilities, and mostly do not disrupt other travellers. In recent years however, “emotional support animals” have become more common. These pets do not need to be trained as official service animals, and are companions to help flyers with anxiety and general comfort in their travels.

Some travelers have faced allegations of abusing the service animal rule. One woman was stopped at Newark Liberty International Airport last year for attempting to board with an emotional support [peacock](#). One Delta passenger posted a picture on Reddit of an emotional support [turkey](#) on their flight.

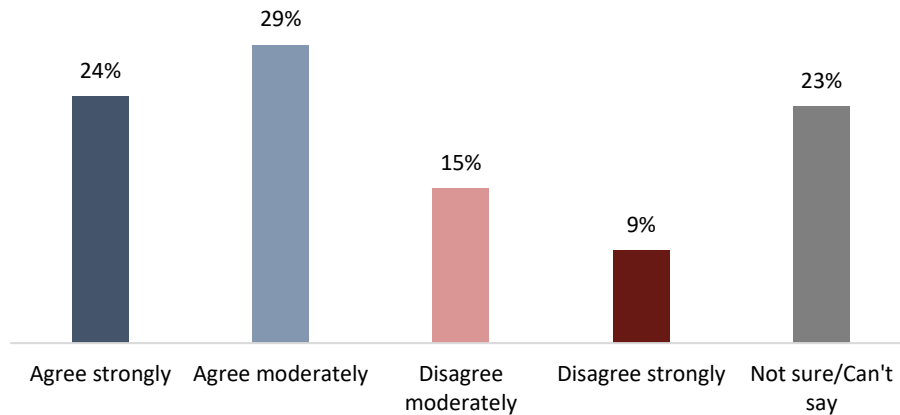


Various 'emotional support' animals on planes, in airports

More common are issues with untrained dogs who have shown aggression to passengers or to certified services dog. Air Canada and WestJet both have regulations in place to accommodate emotional support animals, however, Air Canada accepts only dogs, while West Jet accepts pigs, miniature horses, and monkeys among other animals. Passengers need to produce documentation from a licenced mental health professional to show that they indeed are in need of support, but the animals do not undergo any training.

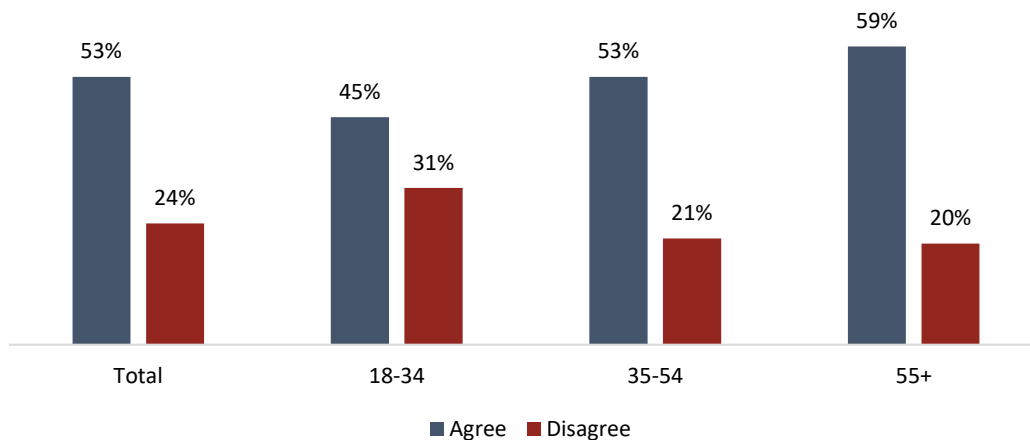
More than half of Canadians say they agree that people are abusing the definition of service animal to get larger animals into the cabin.

People abuse the definition of a 'service animal' these days, in order to get larger animals into the passenger cabin



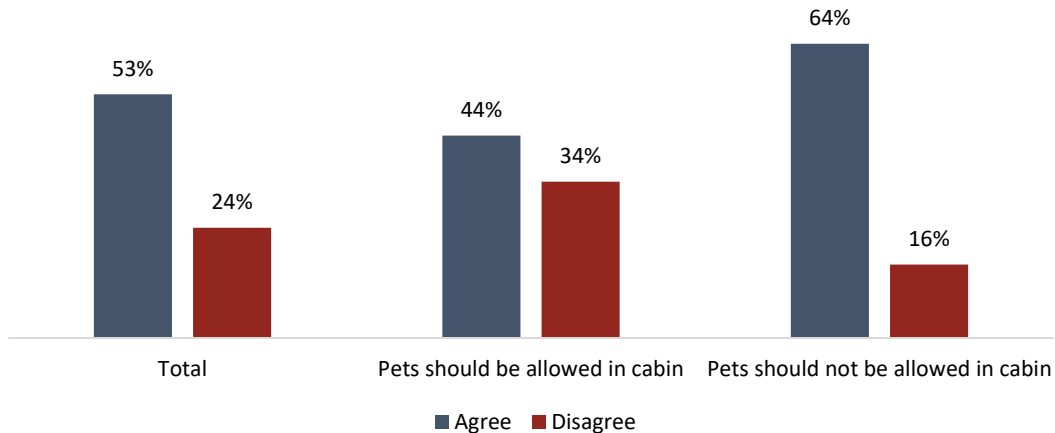
All age groups lean toward this conclusion, that abuse is indeed happening, though those over 55 report this at the highest degree:

People abuse the definition of a 'service animal' these days, in order to get larger animals into the passenger cabin



Frequency of flight does not appear to play a role in this opinion ([see comprehensive tables](#)), however one's view of whether pets should be allowed in the cabin at all is a factor. Among those who say this practice should be banned, 64 per cent say the 'service animal' label is being abused, while just 16 per cent disagree. Within the group who say they support pets in the cabin, a much closer split is reported. Four-in-ten (44%) say they are concerned about abuse while one-in-three (34%) disagree:

People abuse the definition of a 'service animal' these days, in order to get larger animals into the passenger cabin



*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).
For detailed results by flight frequency and support for pets in the cabin, [click here](#).*