

## Can you “choose your family”? Younger Canadians say yes, older ones say you get what you get

*Regardless of age, most are satisfied with the time they spend with family*

**February 15, 2016** – What is a family? Is it the people you're directly related to by blood or marriage? Or is it something more malleable – a collection of people you pick for yourself?

As Canadians in many parts of the country celebrate Family Day, a new poll from the Angus Reid Institute suggests they're split – largely along age lines – when it comes to these questions.

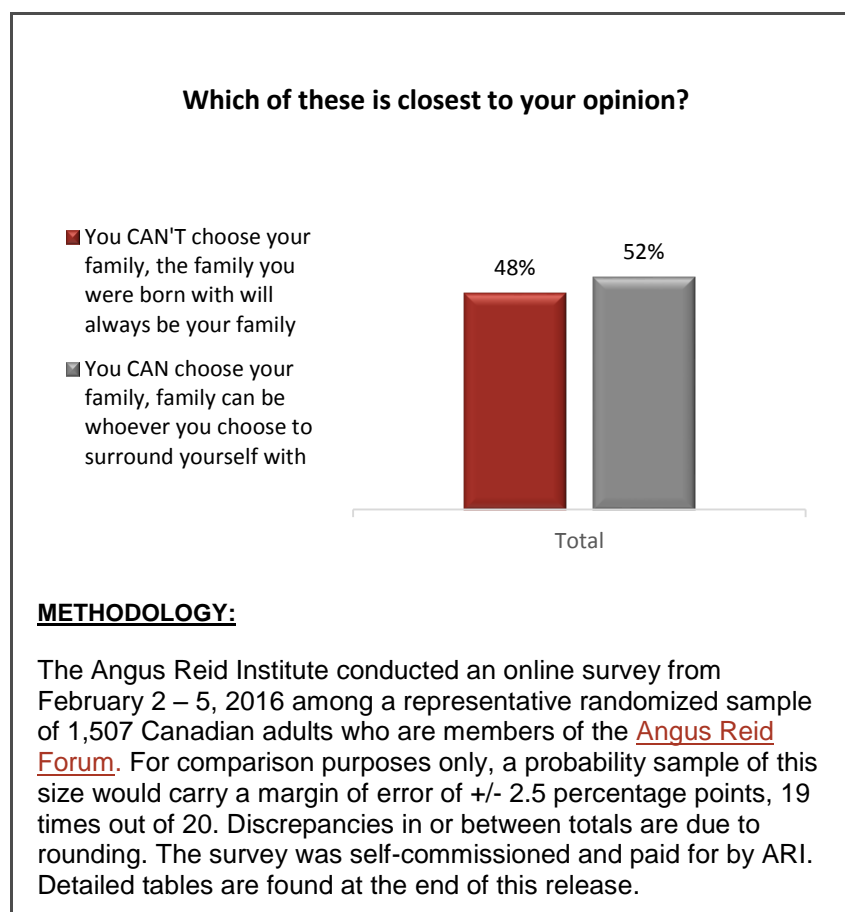
Moreover, while most Canadians say they spend the “right” amount of time with their kin, one-in-three say they don't spend enough.

### Key Findings:

- Canadians 55 and older are more likely to say family members aren't the people you choose, but are born to (61% do so).
- Younger Canadians (aged 18-34), have a different view of “family”. The majority (64%) are of the opinion that you can choose your family members

### Family time: are Canadians getting enough?

Regardless of how they define family, chances are Canadians are relishing any extra time they'll spend with their own over the Family Day long weekend.



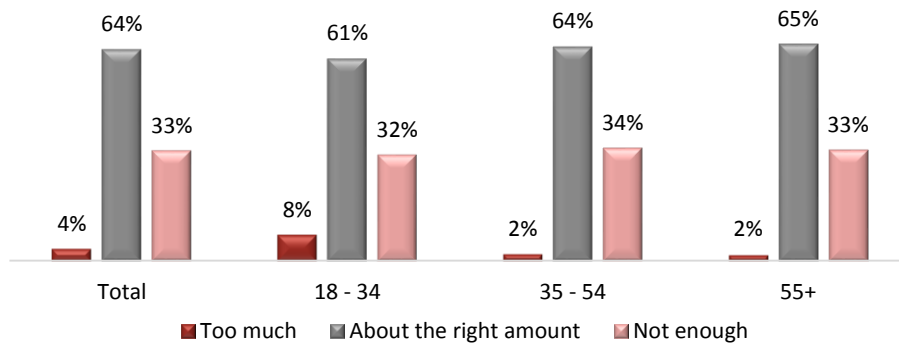
### MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

The vast majority either spends the right amount (64%) or not enough (33%). Just four per cent of Canadians say they spend too much time with their families.

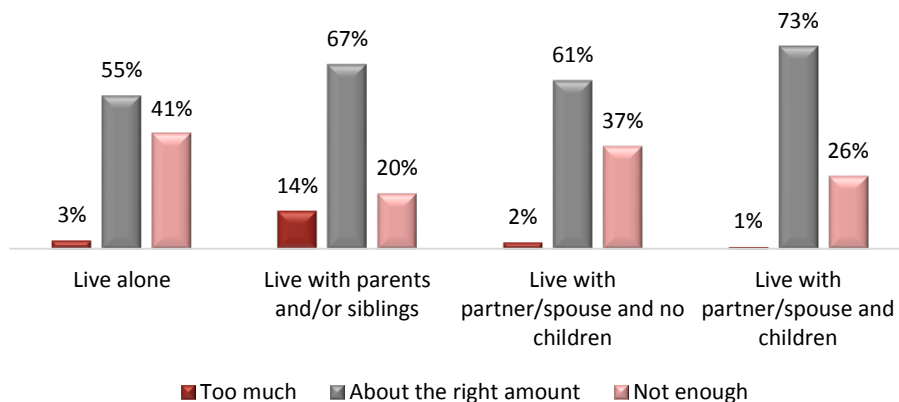
Younger Canadians are more likely to fall into the “too much” camp, but the number who do still amounts to fewer than one-in-ten (8%):

**Regardless of how you personally define family, how would you describe the amount of time you spend with yours? Is it:**



When it comes to the family units, couples living with their kids are least likely to say they’re spending too much face time with their kinfolk. For adult Canadians at home with mom and dad, or siblings, the feeling is quite the opposite. Members of this group (which includes many 18-34-year-old respondents) are especially likely to say they spend too much time with the clan; a reflection perhaps, of the desire to make a nest of their own:

**Regardless of how you personally define family, how would you describe the amount of time you spend with yours? Is it:**



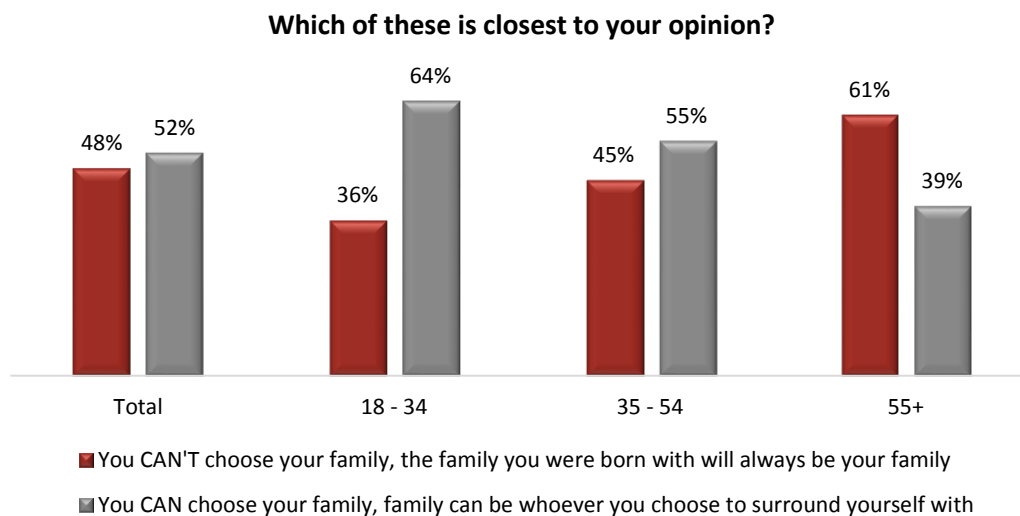
And while a constant part of the national debate on family and society centers on worries over increasing numbers of [Canadians living on their own](#), some comfort may be taken in the knowledge that those who do reside solo also pine for their nearest and – perhaps dearest – relations. As noted in the preceding graph – fully two-in-five say they don't spend enough time with their families.

### Related or selected: Who's in your family?

This Angus Reid Institute survey asked Canadians to choose between two broad, opposing ideas about family. On one side was the argument that those you're related to by blood or marriage are the people you must try to build relationships with – in other words, "you can't choose your family."

On the other side was the argument that the relationships one builds with friends can be more important than with blood relations – in other words, "you can choose your family."

Given the choice, a narrow majority (52%) choose the latter. As previously mentioned, responses vary significantly across age groups:



When it comes to choosing your family versus accepting what you have, men and women are living in different spheres. Men are more likely to say "you can't choose your family," while women are more likely to say family membership can come via invitation. Formal education experience is a factor too. Those with high school or less tend to say family membership isn't a choice. Those who've gone to university or have a technical school education tend to say it is. ([See comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

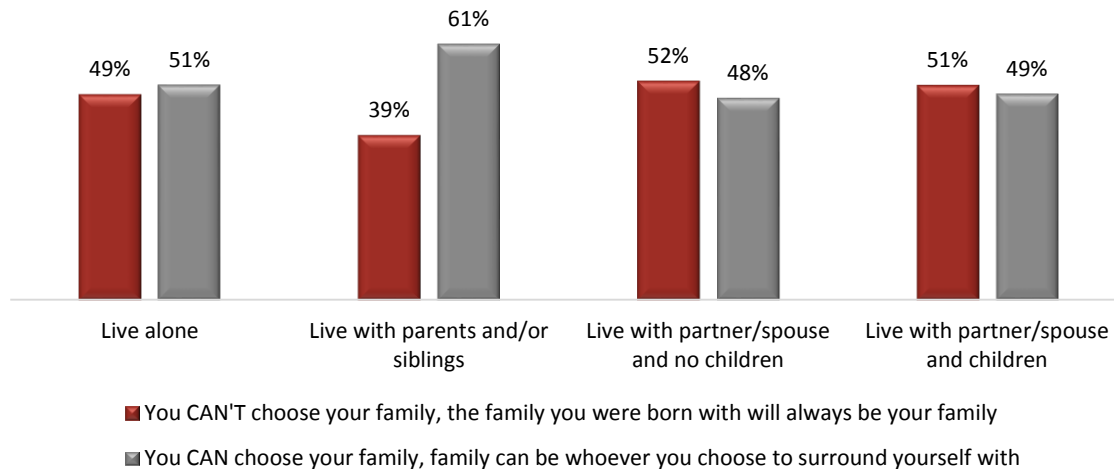
As seen in the following graph, living arrangements aren't a significant driver of opinion on this issue. Regardless of the family unit in which people live – most are evenly split – with one exception: adults living with their parents or siblings:

---

#### MEDIA CONTACT:

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl

## Which of these is closest to your view?



*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 organization 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.*

**Summary tables follow. For comprehensive results by region, age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).**

Some people say you can't choose your family, the people that you're related to by blood and marriage are people you must try to build relationships with. Other people say you can choose your family, the relationships you build with friends can be more important than those you build with people you're related to by blood or marriage. Which of these is closest to your opinion?

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1507)	Living arrangement						
		Alone (324)	With roommate (s) (74*)	With parents and/or siblings (192)	With partner/spouse, no children (500)	With partner/spouse and children (345)	With children and no partner/spouse (44*)	Multi-generation household (29*)
You CAN'T choose your family, the family you were born with will always be your family	48%	49%	31%	39%	52%	51%	39%	57%
You CAN choose your family, family can be whoever you choose to surround yourself with	52%	51%	69%	61%	48%	49%	61%	43%

Regardless of how you personally define family, how would you describe the amount of time you spend with yours? Is it:

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1507)	Living arrangement						
		Alone (324)	With roommate (s) (74*)	With parents and/or siblings (192)	With partner/spouse, no children (500)	With partner/spouse and children (345)	With children and no partner/spouse (44*)	Multi-generation household (29*)
Too much	4%	3%	0%	14%	2%	1%	6%	0%
About the right amount	64%	55%	63%	67%	61%	73%	52%	82%
Not enough	33%	41%	37%	20%	37%	26%	42%	18%

*\*small sample size*

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Shachi Kurl, Executive Director: 604.908.1693 [shachi.kurl@angusreid.org](mailto:shachi.kurl@angusreid.org) @shachikurl