

FAMILY TODAY

A Study of U.S. Families

September 2012



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by
Lake Research Partners

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Research & Strategic Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

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At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, politicians debated the notion of family values, sociologists studied the apparent paradox of more single-headed households and more multigenerational ones, and economists focused on a declining economy. At the same time, based on values research that AARP conducted in 2010, family emerged as the most important priority of adults over the age of 50. AARP sought to understand more about the changing nature of families in the United States, the importance individuals place on them, and the various ways they provide comfort to individuals in these challenging times.

As Frances Goldscheider, a well-known demographer at Brown University, has pointed out, when both parents and children live longer—as is the recent pattern in the United States—they are more likely to spend the bulk of their years together as adults. This pattern has had profound effects on the nature of familial relationships, including those of parents and their adult children, those of adult children and their siblings, and those among extended family members.

One key question driving this investigation was how does the parent-child relationship change as the child becomes an adult with his/her own family responsibilities and the parent enters middle and old age. With families more spread out than ever, we were also interested in understanding how distance affects families and relationships. Our look at the “family connector,” which was first evidenced during the qualitative portion of this study, sheds light on how families often maintain contact, endure challenges, and adapt as family members age and as family becomes more and more spread out.

It is not just the traditional two-parent family that has undergone change. More individuals are remaining single throughout their lifetimes; others marry, divorce, and remarry, sometimes more than once; children leave the family nest for college but may “boomerang” back when under financial stress; more grandparents live with—and often raise—grandchildren; and more same-sex couples meet, have children, and—yes—even marry. Our aim in this study was to understand more about the challenges these individuals face as well as the commonalities and differences in their views on family.

And, finally, with increases in longevity and children living well into adulthood, it is clear that one’s relationships with one’s siblings are perhaps the most enduring of all relationships, lasting for a lifetime. Rand Conger (2004) investigated the critical role of sibling relationships and noted that when they are strong, they positively affect mental health, physical health, and emotional well-being.¹ We hoped to look more closely at this important relationship with the goal of better understanding its dynamics.

¹ The reference for Rand Conger is Rand Conger, Frederick O. Lorenz, and K.A.S. Wickrama (eds.), *Continuity and Change in Family Relations: Theory, Methods, and Empirical Findings*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

So, what have we learned from this study of U.S. families? We found that whatever form a family takes, the family as a social unit remains strong and resilient, supportive of its members as they face ever-growing societal pressures. We also found that while most family relationships seem strong, there is an eagerness to find ways to improve them and make them stronger.

OVERVIEW

This study of U.S. families was a two-phase project. The first phase consisted of qualitative research, including focus groups and “mini-ethnographies” (in-depth interviews in subjects’ homes) across the country in the fall of 2011. The insights gained from the qualitative phase of research informed the quantitative phase of research that followed. In this phase, a large national survey was conducted among the 50+ population in the U.S.

This report presents some of the key findings from the survey. A brief overview of these findings is below.

The Importance of Family

The 50+ view family as a very important part of their lives. The high importance placed on family is consistent across demographic groups. Likewise, it is high among people without spouses or children. While both men and women alike say family plays an important role in their lives, women seem to hold this view more strongly.

More Might Be Better

Most are satisfied with the size of their family, but among those who are not satisfied, the vast majority wishes their family were bigger. Additionally, a look at satisfaction in relationships suggests that having more family may lead to higher satisfaction in family relationships. This seems especially true when it comes to grandchildren: people with grandchildren are more satisfied with various relationships than those without.

The Role of “Connectors” in Families

Most families have a “connector,” most often a woman, who serves as the “glue” that keeps families together. Many of the 50+ report that they or their spouses serve as the connectors in their families. Having a connector in one’s family seems to make a difference, making people feel more connected to their family members. Additionally, people with connectors in their families tend to view family as more important and tend to be more satisfied with family relationships.

Making Families Stronger

Respondents were asked to name the one thing they would do if they could wave a magic wand and make their family stronger. The question is open-ended in format, and the responses are varied, touching on a number of themes. The three most common themes relate to wanting family members to live closer to one another, wanting to improve their own or a family member’s financial/employment situation, and wanting to improve family relationships.

Improving Family Relationships

When asked to name the family member with whom they would most like to improve their relationship, spouses/partners, children, and siblings top the list. Most people are generally satisfied with their relationships with these family members, but they want these relationships to be even better. The areas that could use the most improvement are their sex life with their spouses/partners, the frequency with which they see their children, and the frequency with which they see their siblings.

Distance & Families

The families of the 50+ are spread out with children, grandchildren, and siblings living far away. Most parents have a child living within an hour's drive of them, but more than one in four does not have any children living this close. Many have children living five or more hours away. There are similar patterns with grandchildren. When it comes to siblings, most do not have any siblings within an hour's drive. More than half have siblings living five or more hours away. One in three says distance has had a negative effect on relationships with family. Additionally, distance seems related to less satisfaction in family relationships. To close the gap that distance fosters in feeling close, Skype is equal to phone even though it is a relatively new medium.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey

The survey was conducted online from December 29, 2011 to January 24, 2012 with n=2,261 adults 50 years or older nationwide. Lake Research Partners led the design of the questionnaire and conducted the analysis presented in this report. Knowledge Networks led the sampling and data collection through its online panel. The survey was conducted in English and in Spanish, and it lasted about 24 minutes on average.

Sample

The base sample was drawn to be representative of the 50+ population in the U.S. Several subpopulation groups were oversampled, including non-Hispanic African Americans (n=372) and Latinos/Hispanics (n=384).

Weighting

The results presented in this report reflect weighted data. The data were weighted to the demographic and geographic distributions for the 50+ population based on the most recent Current Population Survey (CPS). Weighting targets for Spanish language usage are based on the 2009 Pew Hispanic Center Survey, and targets for internet access are based on 2009 CPS supplemental survey data on this topic.

Margin of Error

Using the standard 95% level of confidence, the margin of error for proportions using the total sample (n=2,261) as their base is ± 2.9 percentage points.

Base Sizes

Because we are talking about family and aspects of specific family relationships, please note that the base sizes vary for the results discussed throughout this report. Base sizes are noted in all figures and tables. The base sizes reported reflect unweighted n sizes.

Knowledge Networks' Online Panel

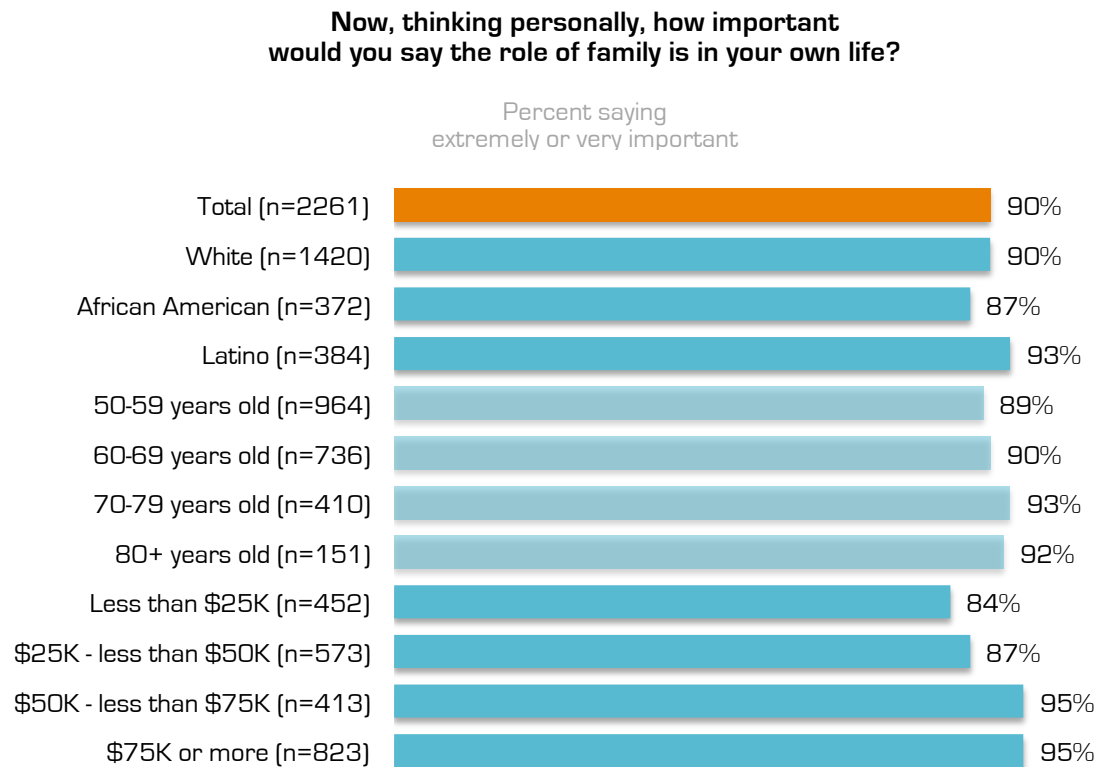
Part of KN's online panel was recruited through random digit dialing (RDD) sampling, which was Knowledge Networks' primary sampling technique before 2009. Since 2009, all additions to the panel have been recruited using address-based sampling (ABS), which is estimated to cover 97 percent of U.S. households. For those who do not have a computer or internet access at home, Knowledge Networks provides a laptop and internet access to allow them to participate in their panel. The resulting panel is a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S.

FINDINGS

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

The 50+ population views family as an important part of their lives.

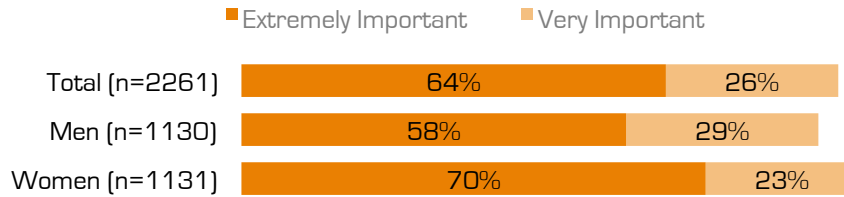
The vast majority of the 50+ say that family plays an important role in their lives. More specifically, 90% say family plays an extremely important (64%) or very important (26%) role in their lives. The importance of family is consistently high across racial/ethnic, age, and income groups.



It is important to note that the role of family is important to people regardless of their marital status or whether they have children. Among the 50+, the vast majority of those without a spouse (83%) say family plays an extremely important (55%) or a very important (28%) role in their lives. Similarly, three-quarters of those without children (75%) say that family plays an extremely important (37%) or very important (38%) role in their lives.

We see high proportions of both men (87%) and women (93%) saying that family plays an extremely important or very important role in their lives. Interestingly, however, there seems to be a gender “enthusiasm gap” on this front with women being more likely to say family is *extremely* important than men (70% vs. 58%).

Now, thinking personally, how important would you say the role of family is in your own life?



The aspects of family they value most are friendship and having one another's back.

When it comes to family, the 50+ value friendship and having one another's back. When asked how important various aspects of family are to them personally, "being able to count on one another" and "being friends" top the list. The aspect of family that receives the lowest ratings is "taking vacations together."

There are some interesting gender differences in opinions around important aspects of family. Women, for example, rate all aspects as more important than men. The gender gap is smallest when it comes to the importance of "taking vacations together" with 37% of men and 43% of women rating this as personally important. The gender gap is widest when it comes to the importance of "staying up-to-date on important events" with 72% of men and 89% of women rating this as important.

Thinking about your family, how important is each of the following to you personally?

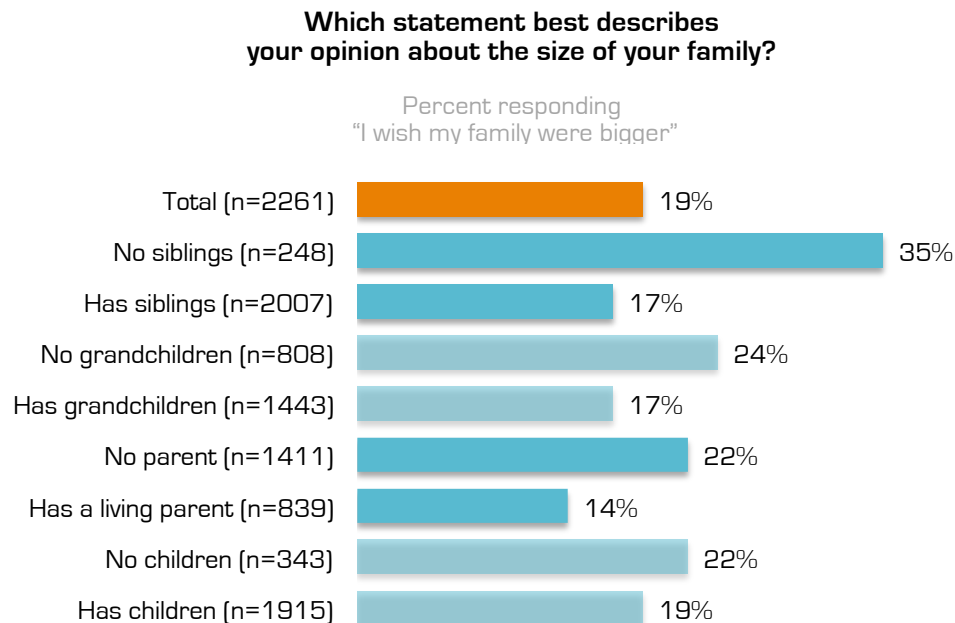
Percent giving 5-7 ratings
1=not at all important, 7=extremely important

	Total (n=2261)	Men (n=1130)	Women (n=1131)
Being able to count on one another when someone needs something	86%	78%	93%
Being friends	84%	78%	90%
Sharing memories and family history	83%	75%	90%
Communicating frequently	82%	75%	89%
Staying up-to-date on important events like weddings, deaths, graduations, births, etc.	81%	72%	89%
Having close personal relationships	81%	74%	87%
Spending holidays or special occasions together	79%	72%	85%
Spending time together on a regular basis	74%	68%	79%
Taking vacations together	40%	37%	43%

MORE MIGHT BE BETTER

Most are satisfied with the size of their family, but among those who are not satisfied, the vast majority wishes their family were bigger.

Most of the 50+ [78%] say their family is “just the right size.” While very few [2%] say they wish their family were smaller, about one in five [19%] says they wish their family were bigger. Those most likely to say they wish their family were bigger include people who do not have siblings [35%], people who do not have grandchildren [24%], and people who do not have a living parent [22%]. Interestingly, those who do not have children are not much more likely to wish their family were bigger than those who do have children [22% vs. 19%].



There are indications that having more family could have positive consequences for family relationships.

Among the 50+, people who have “extended family” (aunts, uncles, and cousins) and people who have children show signs of being more satisfied with family relationships than people who do not have these family members. For example, people who do not have extended family are more than twice as likely as those who do to be dissatisfied with their family relationships overall [19% vs. 8% dissatisfied]. Having children seems to make a difference as well; people who have children are more likely to be satisfied with family relationships overall than people without children [81% vs. 72% satisfied].

**In general, how satisfied are you
with your family relationships overall?**

Percent giving various satisfaction ratings
1=not at all satisfied, 7=extremely satisfied

	Satisfied (5-7)	Neutral (4)	Dissatisfied (1-3)
Total (n=2261)	79%	11%	9%
Has grandchildren (n=1443)	82%	10%	8%
No grandchildren (n=808)	75%	13%	12%
Has children (n=1915)	81%	10%	8%
No children (n=343)	72%	13%	14%
Has aunts, uncles, or cousins (n=2111)	80%	11%	8%
No aunts, uncles, or cousins (n=142)	72%	6%	19%
Has nieces/nephews (n=2091)	80%	11%	8%
No nieces/nephews (n=154)	74%	6%	18%

Additionally, people who have grandchildren are more satisfied with various relationships compared to people who do not have grandchildren. For example, they are more likely to be satisfied with their family relationships overall (82% vs. 75%), their relationship with their spouse or partner (90% vs. 81%), and their relationship with a child (86% vs. 78%). This may be related to a finding from a recent AARP study on happiness that showed that people tend to be least happy in their 50s, but tend to be happier and more satisfied with life as they move into their 60s and 70s. Interestingly, that study also found that one of the key drivers of people’s happiness was their relationships with others.²

Also interesting is a pattern we see among siblings: people who have multiple siblings are more likely to be satisfied with their relationships with individual siblings than people with only one sibling (75% vs. 65%).

² “Beyond Happiness: Thriving,” June 2012. Full report available at: www.aarp.org/happinessreport.

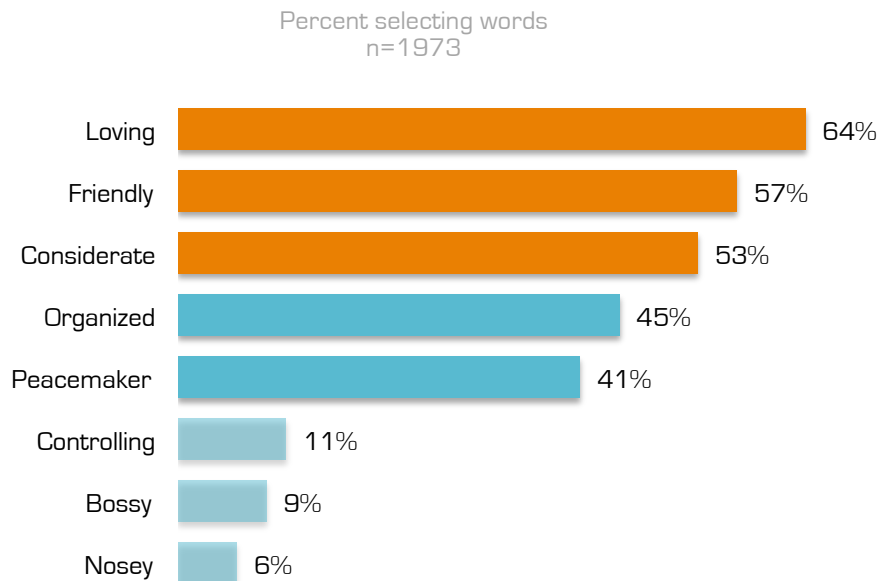
THE ROLE OF “CONNECTORS” IN FAMILIES

Most families have a “connector,” most often a woman, who serves as the “glue” that keeps families together.

Qualitative research revealed that many families have someone who plays a role that we have coined the “connector.” The connector is someone who keeps in touch with everyone in the family, who helps plan family gatherings, and who might be considered the “glue” of the family. When explored in the survey, the vast majority (88%) says there is someone in their family that fits the description of the connector. Among those who have a connector, about four in five (81%) say the connector is a woman.

Most (64%) say the word “loving” describes the connector in their family. “Friendly” and “considerate” are also common with 57% and 53%, respectively, saying they describe the connector in their family. Words with negative connotations do not seem to resonate with most as descriptors of the connectors in their families. Only about one in ten (11%) say the connector in their family is “controlling,” and even fewer say their connector is “bossy” (9%) or “nosey” (6%).

Do any of these words describe the “connector” in your family?



Many of the 50+ serve as the connectors in their families.

Nearly a third (31%) says they are the connectors in their families. Women are the most likely to self-identify as a connector (46% vs. 15% of men). Another 15% say the connector is their spouse or partner, including 29% of men. The other most common family members who play the connector role are siblings (15%) and children (11%). The 70+ are the most likely to have a child playing the connector role in their families (23% vs. 7% of those 50-69 years old).

Who would you say is the primary “connector” or “glue” in your family?

Percent selecting given family member

	Total (n=2261)	Among those with given family member (base size varies)
Self	31%	–
Spouse or partner (n=1652 have a spouse/partner)	15%	21%
Sibling (n=2007 have siblings)	15%	17%
Child (n=1915 have children)	11%	14%
Parent (n=839 have a living parent)	5%	13%
Other family members	10%	–
No primary connector	11%	–

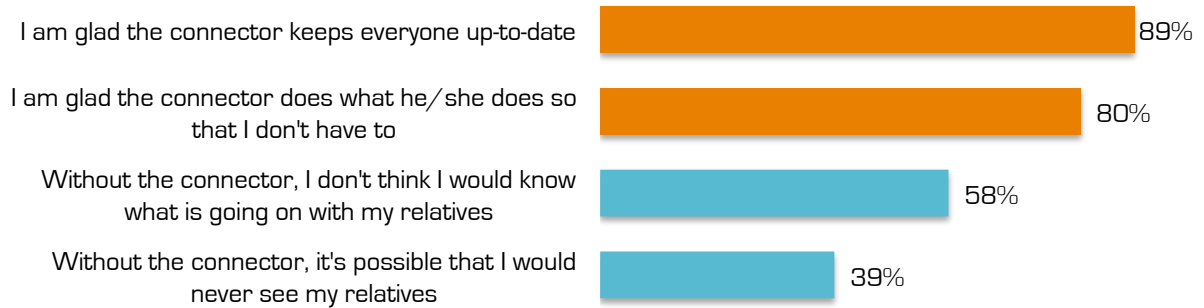
Having a connector in one’s family makes a difference.

The 50+ value the connector’s role. Among those who are not connectors themselves, the vast majority (89%) agree with the statement, “I am glad the connector keeps everyone up-to-date.” Most (80%) also agree with the statement, “I am glad the connector does what he/she does so that I don’t have to,” indicating a sense of relief and appreciation.

Many view the connector as instrumental to their ability to connect with family. For example, more than half (58%) agree with the statement, “Without the connector, I don’t think I would know what is going on with my relatives.” And nearly two in five (39%) agree with the statement, “Without the connector, it’s possible that I would never see my relatives.”

**When it comes to the connector in your family,
do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

Percent saying
strongly or somewhat agree
n=1245

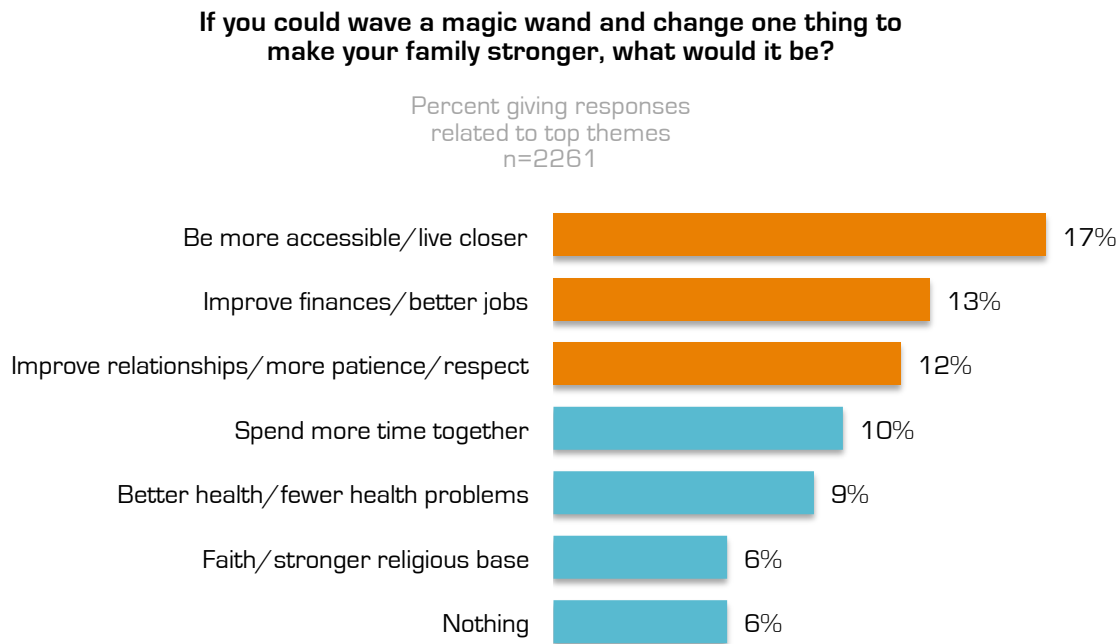


Additionally, people who have a connector in their family are more likely to say they are satisfied with family relationships overall compared to those without a connector (82% vs. 67%). People with connectors are also more likely to say that family plays an extremely or very important role in their lives (92% vs. 78%).

MAKING FAMILIES STRONGER

Many say having family members living closer to one another would be the one thing they would do to make their family stronger.

When asked an open-ended question about what they would do if they had a magic wand and could change one thing to make their families stronger, the top theme in responses relates to having family living closer. Seventeen percent give responses along these lines.



Many of these responses are general, indicating that they would generally like their family to all live close to one another or in the same city. Other responses are about specific family members, specifically saying they wish their child, sibling, or other family member lived closer.

"I have one brother who lives far away. I wish he lived nearer so we could see him more often."

"Bring us all into the same city ... we are scattered all over the country."

Improving finances and employment situations are also common ways the 50+ say they could make their families stronger.

Another top theme relates to improving financial or employment situations with 13% offering responses along these lines. Many of these comments relate to wishing their adult children could find a job or find a better job. Other comments relate to the respondent's own financial/employment situation, often in the spirit of being able to provide for their family, help other family members, and reduce stress.

"The ability to get a job. This no work thing is killing my family."

"I would make it so financially we were in a sounder place. That would alleviate the stress that comes from struggling to make ends meet; the same stress that filters down and creates tension within the family."

"That my sons could have full time jobs and gain their independence."

Another common theme in ways to make families stronger is around improving relationships.

Some (12%) give responses that relate to wanting to improve relationships. Many of these responses are about improving specific relationships like a relationship between the respondent and another family member or a relationship between two other family members. Many of these responses are also about particular ways that family relationships could be improved like having more patience with one another, being more grateful, showing more respect, and working together more as a team.

"Have a better relationship with my sister."

"My two daughters would get closer and put past problems behind them."

"Better awareness of feelings, conflict avoidance skills, and the ability to remain calm and being willing to forgive family members when conflicts or misunderstandings arise."

IMPROVING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Spouses/partners, children, and siblings top the list of family members with whom the 50+ would most like to improve their relationships.

When asked with which family member they would most like to improve their relationship, 32% percent of parents (or 26% of the total sample) say it would be a child. The second most common response is one's spouse or partner, with 30% of people who are married or have a partner (or 21% of the total sample) offering this response. The third most common response is a sibling. Nineteen percent of those with living siblings (or 17% of the total sample) say they would most like to improve their relationship with a sibling.

If you had to name the one family member with whom you would most like to improve your relationship, who would it be?

Percent selecting given family member

	Total (n=2261)	Among those with given family member (base size varies)
Child (n=1915 have children)	26%	32%
Spouse or partner (n=1652 have a spouse/partner)	21%	30%
Sibling (n=2007 have siblings)	17%	19%
Grandchild (n=1443 have grandchildren)	6%	10%
Niece or nephew (n=2091 have nieces/nephews)	5%	5%
Son-in-law or daughter-in-law (n=1299 have a child-in-law)	5%	8%
Other family members	14%	--
No one	3%	--

Most are satisfied with their relationships with spouses/partners and children, but they want these relationships to be even better.

While the vast majority (86%) of those who are married or have a partner are satisfied with their relationship with their spouse/partner overall, many indicate that they would like to improve it. For example, 50% say they would be extremely interested (22%) or very interested (28%) in improving this relationship. And, as discussed above, many (30%) say their spouse/partner is the person with whom they would *most* like to improve their relationship.

The 50+ report being satisfied with various aspects of their relationships with their spouse/partner. Sex life and intimacy, however, stands out as a potential area for improvement in couples' relationships. More than one in five (22%) are dissatisfied with this aspect of their relationship. Rates of dissatisfaction with sex life and intimacy do not differ much by gender; 23% of men and 20% of women are dissatisfied (difference is not statistically significant).

How satisfied are you with your and your spouse's/partner's sex life and intimacy ?

Percent dissatisfied (1-3 ratings)
1=not satisfied at all, 7=extremely satisfied



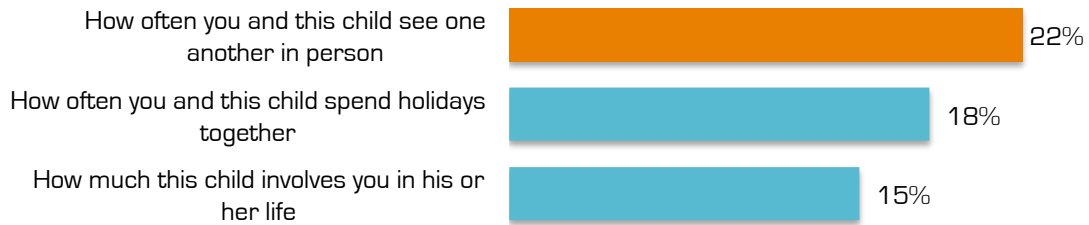
The survey asked parents to share more about their relationship with a specific child.³ Eighty-six percent say they are satisfied with their relationship with this child overall, but the majority would like it to be better. Indeed, 61% say they would be extremely or very interested in improving their relationship with this child. Again, as discussed above, many (32%) also name a child as the person with whom they would *most* like to improve their relationship.

Parents may be particularly interested in increasing the frequency with which they see their child, as nearly one in four (22%) says they are dissatisfied with this. Other potential areas for improvement are how often they spend holidays together (18% dissatisfied) and how involved they feel in their children's lives (15% dissatisfied).

³ If respondents had only one child, they answered these questions about that child. Half of the respondents with more than one child answered these questions with regard to the child that lives closest to them; the other half answered them with regard to child that lives farthest from them. Whether they answered with regard to the child closest to or farthest from them was randomly assigned.

Now, thinking only about this child, how satisfied are you with ... ?

Percent dissatisfied (1-3 ratings)
1=not satisfied at all, 7=extremely satisfied
n=1915



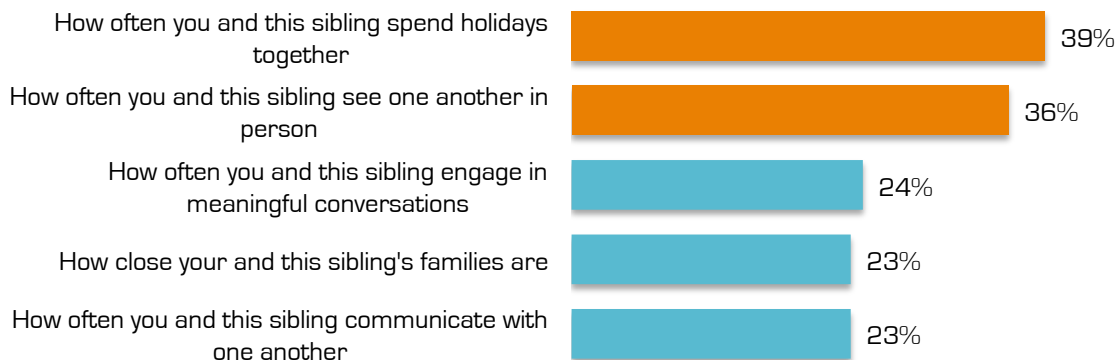
There is room for improvement in relationships with siblings.

Respondents with siblings answered a series of questions about their relationship with a specific sibling.⁴ Fewer than three-quarters (72%) say they are satisfied with their relationship with their sibling overall, and there are relatively high rates of dissatisfaction with various aspects of these sibling relationships.

For example, 36% are dissatisfied with how often they see their sibling, and 39% are dissatisfied with how often they spend holidays together. Additionally, nearly one in four is dissatisfied with how often they engage in meaningful conversations (24%); how often they communicate with one another (23%); and how close their families are with one another (23%).

Thinking only about this sibling, how satisfied are you with ... ?

Percent dissatisfied (1-3 ratings)
1=not at all satisfied, 7=extremely satisfied
n=2007



⁴ If respondents had only one sibling, they answered these questions about that sibling. Half of the respondents with more than one sibling answered these questions with regard to the sibling that lives closest to them; the other half answered them with regard to sibling that lives farthest from them. Whether they answered with regard to the sibling closest to or farthest from them was randomly assigned.

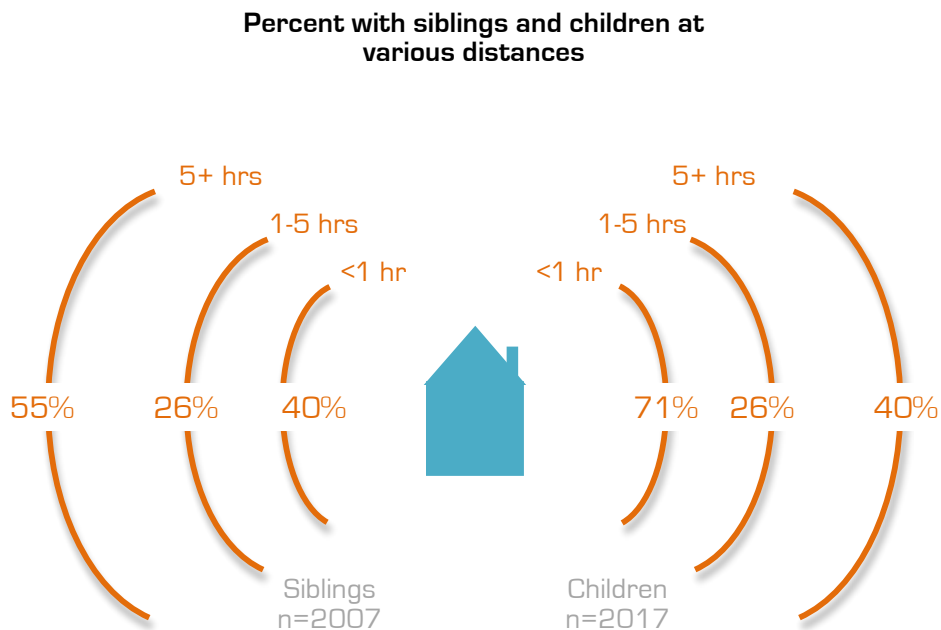
DISTANCE & FAMILIES

Families of the 50+ are spread out.

Most 50+ parents (71%) have children living within an hour's driving distance of them, but for 28% of parents, their closest child lives at least an hour away.⁵ About one in four (26%) has children living more than one hour but less than five hours away, and a full 40% have children living more than five hours' driving distance from them.

Not surprisingly, there are similar patterns when it comes to the distance of grandchildren: 67% of grandparents have grandchildren within an hour; 26% have grandchildren living one to five hours away; and 44% have grandchildren living more than five hours away.

Siblings seem to be even more spread out. Only two in five (40%) of those with siblings have siblings who live within an hour. Twenty-six percent have siblings living one to five hours away. More than half (55%) have siblings living more than five hours away.

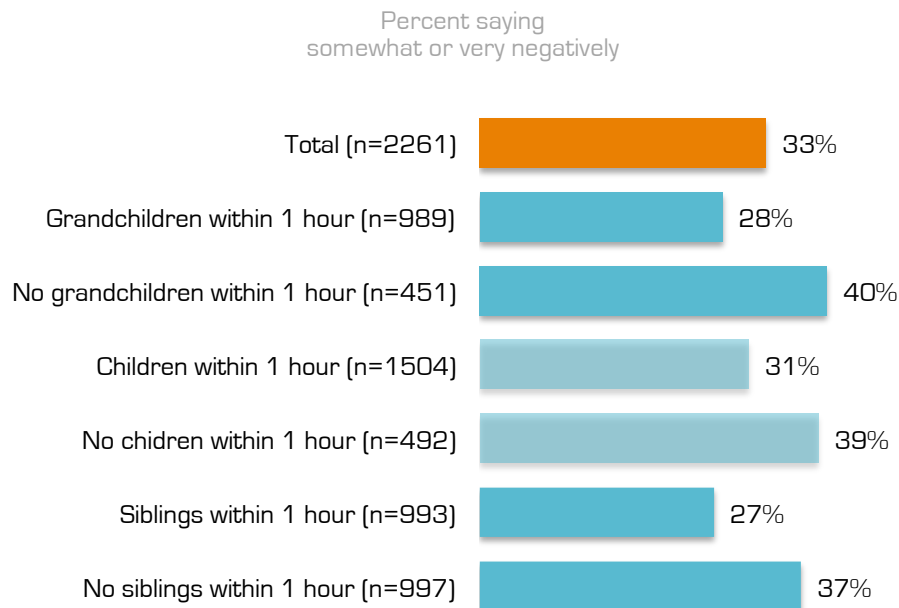


⁵ Note that "children" in this discussion includes both children and stepchildren.

Some say distance has had a negative effect on relationships with family.

While about half (52%) say distance has had no effect on their relationships with family who live far away, nearly one in three (33%) says it has negatively affected these relationships. Those most likely to say distance has had a negative effect include the following: parents with no children within one hour (39%); grandparents with no grandchildren within one hour (40%); and people who have siblings but none who live within one hour (37%).

In general, how – if at all – has distance affected your relationships with family members who live far away?



Distance is related to less satisfaction in family relationships.

When looking at patterns of satisfaction in relationships with family members, distance seems to matter. For example, grandparents who have grandchildren within an hour are more likely to be satisfied with their relationships with grandchildren than those who have no grandchildren within an hour (87% vs. 70%). Likewise, among people with aunts, uncles, or cousins, those who have these family members living within an hour's drive are more likely to be satisfied with their relationships with them than those whose aunts, uncles, and cousins live farther away (66% vs. 55%).

**In general, how satisfied are you when it comes to your relationships with ...
your grandchildren? your aunts, uncles, and cousins?**

Percent giving various satisfaction ratings
1=not at all satisfied, 7=extremely satisfied

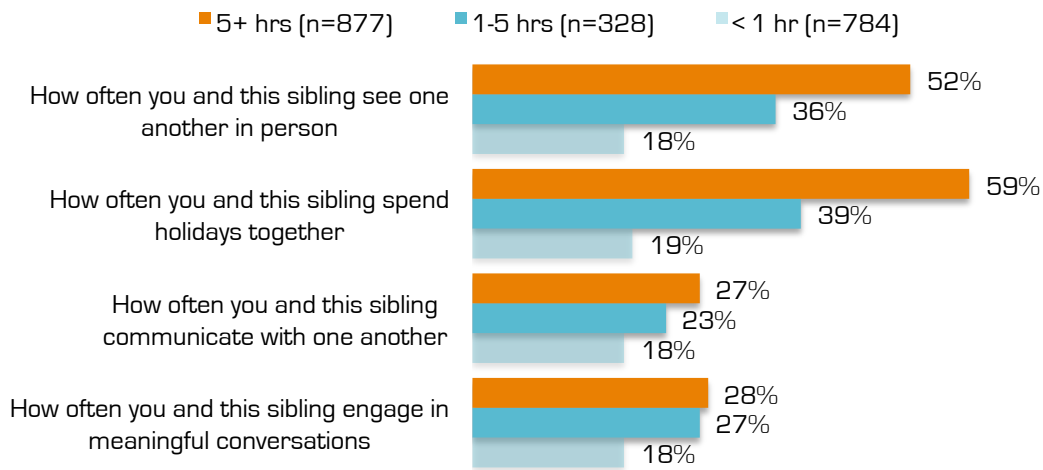
	Satisfied (5-7)	Neutral (4)	Dissatisfied (1-3)
Relationship with grandchildren			
All grandparents (n=1443)	82%	9%	9%
Grandchildren within 1 hour (n=989)	87%	7%	5%
No grandchildren within 1 hour (n=451)	70%	12%	17%
Relationship with aunts, uncles, and cousins			
All who have aunts, uncles, or cousins (n=2111)	59%	20%	19%
Aunts, uncles, or cousins within 1 hour (n=888)	66%	19%	13%
No aunts, uncles, or cousins within 1 hour (n=1355)	55%	21%	23%

When it comes to the areas in which the 50+ are most dissatisfied in their relationships with children and siblings, dissatisfaction increases with distance. As the figures below show, rates of dissatisfaction with the frequency of seeing one another in person and the frequency of spending holidays together are highest among those whose sibling or child lives five or more hours away.

Additionally, if one's sibling or child lives more than an hour away, they are more likely to be dissatisfied with various aspects of their communication with their sibling or child. More specifically, they are more likely to be dissatisfied with how often they communicate and how often they engage in meaningful conversations (see the figures below).

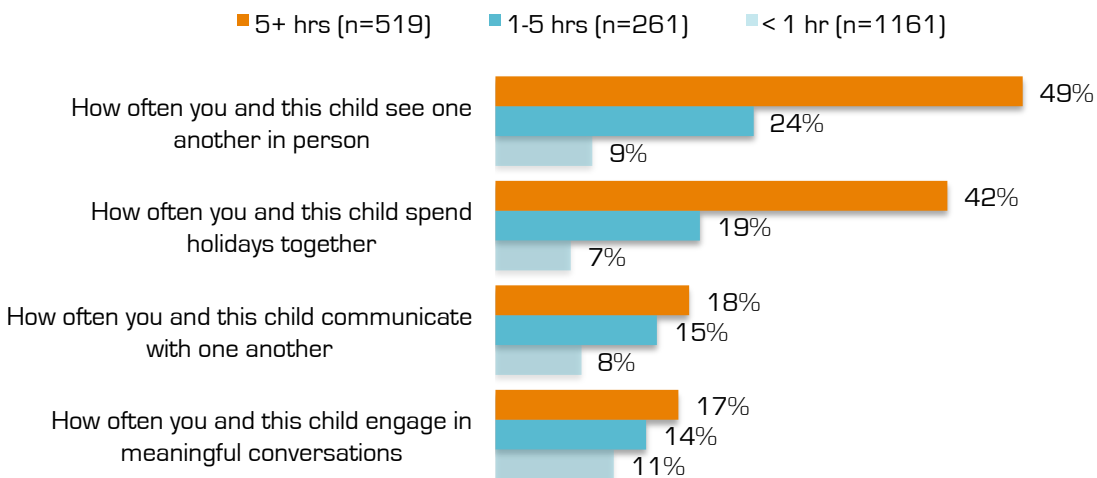
Thinking only about this sibling, how satisfied are you with ... ?

Percent dissatisfied (1-3 ratings) by sibling distance
1=not at all satisfied, 7=extremely satisfied



Thinking only about this child, how satisfied are you with ... ?

Percent dissatisfied (1-3 ratings) by child distance
1=not at all satisfied, 7=extremely satisfied



CONCLUSION

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These survey findings suggest two main conclusions about the U.S. family today. First, families appear to be strong and resilient despite the challenges they are facing. Second, there seems to be a desire to make families as a whole even stronger and to improve relationships with individual family members as well.

Families in the U.S. today face many challenges. Some challenges may be temporary like the financial pressure and stress many are experiencing in the wake of the recent economic recession. The realness of economic difficulty is evident in the responses to the “magic wand” question that asked what they would do to make their families stronger. Improving their economic situation is a priority for many families, a priority that was echoed in qualitative research as well.

Other challenges facing families—like distance—are more permanent and will pose difficulty for families for generations to come. Families are spread out these days. Most respondents report having children, grandchildren, siblings, or extended family members living more than an hour away and often more than five hours away. This distance seems to have consequences on satisfaction in family relationships.

Despite these and other challenges, the U.S. family today appears strong and continues to play a central role in people’s lives. The vast majority of respondents say family plays an extremely or very important role in their lives. Additionally, they are generally satisfied with most of their family relationships overall. Family members playing the “connector” role are an important part of families’ ability to remain strong and stick together.

As everyone knows, being strong and resilient to challenges does not mean that family is perfect or that there is not room for improvement. Indeed, respondents to this survey indicate a hunger for improving family relationships—including relationships in which there seem to be relatively high levels of satisfaction. Related to the challenge of distance in family, there seems to be a particular interest in increasing the frequency with which family members see one another in person.

As private, public, and non-profit sectors look ahead to new products, policies, and innovations on the horizon, they must keep the U.S. family—regardless of what form it takes—in mind. How can we help families continue to support one another through challenging times? How can we help families maintain connections and closeness despite physical distance? How can we facilitate family members’ hunger to improve their relationships? These are important issues to the U.S. family today, and we should explore avenues to innovate and address them.