anions are more common than cations. Anionic radii decrease across each period for the elements in Groups 15–18. The reasons for this trend are the same as the reasons that cationic radii decrease from left to right across a period.

Group Trends

As they are in atoms, the outer electrons in both cations and anions are in higher energy levels as one reads down a group. Therefore, just as there is a gradual increase of atomic radii down a group, there is also a gradual increase of ionic radii.

Valence Electrons

Chemical compounds form because electrons are lost, gained, or shared between atoms. The electrons that interact in this manner are those in the highest energy levels. These are the electrons most subject to the influence of nearby atoms or ions. *The electrons available to be lost, gained, or shared in the formation of chemical compounds are referred to as* **valence electrons.** Valence electrons are often located in incompletely filled main-energy levels. For example, the electron lost from the 3*s* sublevel of Na to form Na^+ is a valence electron.

For main-group elements, the valence electrons are the electrons in the outermost *s* and *p* sublevels. The inner electrons are in filled energy levels and are held too tightly by the nucleus to be involved in compound formation. The Group 1 and Group 2 elements have one and two valence electrons, respectively, as shown in **Table 4.** The elements of Groups 13–18 have a number of valence electrons equal to the group number minus 10. In some cases, both the *s* and *p* sublevel valence electrons of the *p*-block elements are involved in compound formation. In other cases, only the electrons from the *p* sublevel are involved.

TABLE 4 ***Valence Electrons in Main-Group Elements***

Group number	Group configuration	Number of valence electrons
1	ns^1	1
2	ns^2	2
13	ns^2p^1	3
14	ns^2p^2	4
15	ns^2p^3	5
16	ns^2p^4	6
17	ns^2p^5	7
18	ns^2p^6	8