



2026 Red Suit Survey Statistics

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Survey results compiled from responses of 400 Santas as part of a recent doctoral research project at the University of British Columbia in association with the International University of Santa Claus.

1. How Old are you?

66.09 YEARS

2. How many years have you been a Santa?

17.8 YEARS Youngest 24, Oldest 93

3. How much do you weigh?

238.3 POUNDS (108.09 kilos)

4. Is the "Bowl of Jelly" real or padding?

	Response
Real	80.0%
Padding	19.4%

5. Marital Status

	Response
Single	3.8%
Married	81.9%
Separated	1.1%
Divorced	5.7%
Other	7.6%

6. If Married, How Many Years? Please numbers only!

Almost 35 years - 34.96

7. How Many Children do you have? 86.7 Have Children

2.5 Children

8. How Many Grandchildren? 69.6 Have Grandchildren

3.44 Grandchildren

9. Where do you Live?

Southeast (NC, SC, GA, FL, TN, AL, MS)	23.4%
South Central (KS, MO, AR, OK, LA, TX)	18.0%
Mideast (WV, VA, MD, DC, OH, KY, MI, IN)	17.4%
Southwest (CA, AZ, NV, NM, CO, UT, HI)	12.9%
Northeast (ME, NH, VT, CT, MA, RI, NY, NJ, PA)	11.4%
North Central (WI, MN, ND, SD, NE, IA, IL)	8.4%
Northwest (WA, OR, ID, MT, WY, AK)	3.9%
Canada	3.0%
Europe	0.3%
Asia	0.3%
South Pacific	0.3%
South America	0.3%
Australia	0.3%

10. Are you a "Traditional Bearded" Santa or a "Real Bearded" Santa.

91.2% of Santas surveyed are Real Bearded

Response

Traditional Bearded (Wearing a Theatrical or temporary beard and wig set)	8.50%
Real Bearded (Naturally white)	62.2%
Real Beard (Visits a Salon or has an account at Sally's to whiten)	29.0%

11. What was your Beard Evolution?

Response

I have always worn a beard and wig set.	7.7%
I started with a beard and wig set and now have a real beard	23.1%
I have always been real-bearded	67.1%
I had a real beard but now I wear a theatrical beard and wig	0.1%

12. Why or What made you decide to be a Santa? (since it is one of the hardest jobs you do!)

Response

My Church asked me	4.40%
My Family (Wife, Daughter, Son) asked me to do it	22.9%
The Local School asked me	0.38%
My employer asked me	6.07%
My Service Club asked me	6.35%
My Friends / Neighbors asked me	17.1%
I have always wanted to be Santa	17.1%
I have the look or size and /or image of Santa	22.0%

13. When you first became Santa, did you readily accept the Red Suit? Or were you a reluctant Santa?

Response

I readily became Santa, even before meeting the children	43.4%
I readily became Santa.	30.3%
I was reluctant, but once I put on the suit, and saw the children's faces, I knew I could do this forever.	16.2%
I was reluctant, but have come to enjoy it	7.0%

14. If you are working this year, where will you be working?

	Response
Volunteer Santa	14.3%
In Business for myself - private parties, home visits. photo studio	81.2%
Doing Video Chats on my own with Skype or Zoom.	1.1%
Working for Cherry Hill	2.6%
Working for Amusematte	0.2%
Work at Bass Pro Shops/Cabela's	2.1%
Work for an independent Photo Co or Mall (No national photo company)	9.3%
Work Directly for a Mall or Department Store. no photo company	4.0%
Work for a Theme Park or Attraction or Stage Show	2.6%
I am not working this year.	3.8%

15. When are you starting work this year?

	Response
Prior to November 1	31.3%
November 6 or 7	20.5%
November 13 or 14	12.9%
November 20 or 21	11.0%
The day after Thanksgiving, November 27	14.7%
Other	9.5%

**16. If working in a mall, Bass Pro/Cabellas, or daily photo set, how many hours per day on the set?
Average 6.8 hours a day**

	Response
Ten hours per day	14.6%
Nine hours per day	0.6%
Eight hours per day	21.9%
Seven hours per day	9.7%
Six hours per day	18.2%
Five hours per day	17.0%
Four hours or less per day	14.6%

17. Have you ever been 'wet' on, or soiled, by a child or baby?

	Response
Yes	26.2%

18. Have you ever had someone pull on your beard to see if it was real?

	Response
Yes.	79.4%
Yes, mostly by questioning children	63.5%
Yes, mostly by inquisitive adults (especially little old ladies!)	15.9%

19. What Size Boot do you wear? The average boot size is 11.

	Response
8	.03%
8.5	.03%
9	.06%
9.5	.08%
10	.09%
10.5	.15%
11	.12%
11.5	.09%
12	.12%
12.5	.02%
13	.09%
13.5	.02%
14	.06%
15	.02%

25. How many times a day do children step on your boots? Over 64% of Santas report children step on their boot daily. Three percent say it is over twenty times a day.

	Response
1-5	40.4%
6-10	8.4%
11-15	2.4%
16-25	3.3%
Never Happens	35.8%

13. Do you feel like ever since you became Santa you've gotten a cold or flu more frequently?

	Response
Yes, I have gotten a cold or flu more often	20.8%
No, I have not gotten a cold or flu more often	72.3%

14. How many times a day do children sneeze or cough on you?

	Response
1-4 times a day	78.6%
5-8	17.5%
12-20	10.0%

15. When you work as Santa, please tell us what steps you take to help reduce the spread of colds and flu. These are the total percentage of the base number of 400 Santas

	Response
I have gotten or will be getting a flu shot	85.40%
I try to wash my hands often with soap	85.10%
This year I will be working behind Plexiglas	16.03%
I like to have a hand sanitizer disperser near where I work	15.70%
I have my Santa set and chair wiped down and sanitized throughout the day	17.59%
I carry a personal bottle of hand "Santatizer"	53.32%
I sanitize my gloves and change them when needed.	61.72%
I got a pneumonia shot	57.03%

16. Do you get any other shots or tests prior to the holiday Season? Pneumonia, TB, etc. These are the total percentage of the base number of 400 Santas

	Response
I got a pneumonia shot	457.03%
I get an annual TB Test	5.55%

17. What Percentage of Babies visiting you, Cry?

	Response
Less than 10%	58.8%
25%	26.7%

18. What month do you begin planning for Christmas?

	Response
January	31.5%
February	5.8%
March	4.9%
April	5.8%
May	4.0%
June	12.8%
July	10.1%
August	11.0%
September	8.0%
October	4.3%
November	1.8%

19. How do you find work?

	Response
I use every option, personal calls, agents, and internet agencies (Gig Salad)	35.6%
Yes, I use an agent to exclusively manage my bookings	2.2%
No, I oversee all my bookings personally	48.7%
No, I work directly for a mall or Photo Company	1.8%
I use Gig Salad, The Bash, or other Internet services.	7.3%
Other	4.4%

20. What is Santa's (your) favorite cookie? Or snack that the children leave out for you?

	Response
Chocolate Chip	52.7%
Gingerbread	3.00%
Oatmeal Raisin	14.0%
Oreo	2.10%
Peanut Butter	4.30%
Sugar Cookie	16.8%
Other	13.60%

21. What is Santa's (Your) preferred give-a-way?

	Response
Stickers	8.30%
Plastic Coins	16.20%
Candy Canes	31.50%
Trading Cards	3.40%
I do not give anything away	11.60%
Other	14.70%

22. What is Santa's (your) favorite Christmas Eve beverage?

	Response
Milk	33.4%
Hot Cocoa	27.1%
Egg Nog	13.4%
Coca-Cola	8.8%
Coffee	5.5%
Tea	3.3%
Other	8.5%

23. What is your favorite Christmas Song?

	Response
Santa Claus is Coming to Town	16.4%
Jingle Bells	11.9%
White Christmas	7.9%
All I want for Christmas is You	3.6%
Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer	12.8%
Silent Night	13.7%
Little Drummer Boy	4.3%
Twelve Days of Christmas	0.6%
Grandma Got Run over by a Reindeer	1.5%
Other	14.6%

24. What is Santa's (your) favorite greeting?

	Response
Merry Christmas	94.2%
Happy Holidays	1.8%
Season's Greetings	0.6%
Other	3.3%

25. What is Santa's (your) favorite movie?

	Response
Miracle on 34th Street (1948) Edmund Gwenn	37.5%
Santa Clause (Tim Allen)	15.2%
A Christmas Story (Ralphie, BB Gun, 50th Anniversary this year)	6.1%
Christmas Chronicles (Kurt Russell)	8.5%
Scrooge/A Christmas Carol (1951 with Alistair Sim)	3.40%
Miracle on 34 th Street (1997) (Richard Attenboro)	5.2%
White Christmas (Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Rosemary Clooney, Vera- Ellen	4.9%
Elf (Wil Farrell)	4.0%
Santa Claus - the Movie (David Huddleston, Dudley Moore)	1.8%
It's a Wonderful Life (Jimmy Stewart)	6.4%
Nightmare Before Christmas (Tim Burton)	.3%
Other	10.1%

26. What does Santa (That's you) want for Christmas?

	Response
New Phone	2.5%
Electronics; Computers, etc.	3.4%
Sporting Goods / Recreation / Outdoors etc.	1.5%
Entertainment/ Big Screen TV / Audio Components etc.	1.5%
New Vehicle	4.0%
Power Tools etc.-	3.7%
New Santa Suit / Accessories	16.9%
Travel / Vacation	41.7%
Other	24.8%

27. What is the longest distance you have traveled for a regular Santa Visit? (Not a commercial or movie, etc.)

	Response
I keep it under 50 miles (100-mile roundtrip)	35.0%
I keep it under 100 miles (200 roundtrip)	26.7%
I have traveled up to 150 miles (300 roundtrip)	13.8%
I have traveled up to 200 miles (400 roundtrip)	5.5.%
I have traveled over 250 miles to make a visit (500 roundtrip)	14.1%

28. If you could upgrade Santa's Sleigh (your vehicle), what would you add?

	Response
Heated Seats	7.8%
Blue Tooth for Phone	3.4%
Ice Chest (for bottled water & snacks)	14.7%
Personal Driver / Navigator / Assistant	33.5%
Sun/Moon Roof	4.1%
Other	36.4%

29. Do you ride a motorcycle?

	Response
I own and ride a Harley Davidson	5.2%
I own and ride a Gold Wing	0.6%
I ride a Can-Am Spyder	0.9%
I like to ride but do not own a motorcycle	11.3%
I do not ride a bike	60.1%
Mrs. Claus won't let me!	9.2%
Other	12.6%

30. Do you appear in a community parade? Are you paid or a volunteer?

	Response
No, I do not appear in any parade	60.3%
Yes, I volunteer to appear in a parade	18.6%
Yes, I am paid to appear in a parade	21.1%

31. Do you appear or preside over any Tree Lighting Ceremonies? Do you get paid to appear?

	Response
No, I do not appear at any tree lighting	52.6%
Yes, I volunteer to appear at a tree lighting ceremony	13.5%
Yes, I get paid to appear at a tree lighting ceremony	33.9%

32. Of those Santa working at a mall, or daily photo set, they report their hourly rate is:

	Response
\$15 or \$20 an hour	.05%
\$21 to \$30 an hour	10.7%
\$31 to \$38 an hour	16.0%
\$39 to \$49 an hour	16.0%
Over \$50 an hour	51.7%

33. As an independent Santa, how many total hours will you work during the entire holiday season? Do not include time for driving, dressing, or preparing.

	Response
10 hours or less	5.9%
10 to 20 hours	5.5%
21 to 30 hours	8.4%
31 to 40 hours	9.2%
41 to 50 hours	9.5%
51 to 60 hours	7.7%
61 to 70 hours	7.0%
71 to 80 hours	7.3%
81 to 90 hours	5.5%
91 to 100 hours	5.5%
Over 100 hours	3.3%
Other	2.6%

34. As an independent Santa, what do you charge per hour? The overall average rate for this question was \$181.50. Prices vary depending on the area of the country and its economy. Very rural areas are lower and metropolitan areas are higher.

	Response
\$10 to \$50 per hour	2.9%
\$50 to 100 per hour	11.4%
\$125 per hour	8.0%
\$150 per hour	17.0%
\$175 per hour	7.0%
\$200 to \$225 per hour	17.0%
\$250 per hour	11.4%
\$275 to \$300 per hour	4.4%
\$325 to \$400 per hour	2.2%
\$500 per hour	1.4%
It's private.	16.2%

35. Besides the basic tasks or work as Santa, what else do you do when visiting children and families or making public appearances? You may check more than one.

	Response
I am a basic Santa, talk to children, pose for photos and hand out presents.	73.70%
I read a book or tell stories	72.0%
I can sing songs	36.60%
I can perform a little magic	15.0%
I play a musical instrument (explain below)	3.0%
I work with puppets (explain below)	2.80%
Other	3.90%
31 Comment(s)	

36. As Santa, for private or company parties, how many children do you visit with daily?

	Response
50 children or less	33.1%
50 to 100 children per day	37.9%
100 to 200	11.5%
200 to 300	5.2%
300 to 400	3.7%
400 to 500	2.6%
Other	5.9%

37. What is the average length of a child's visit with you?

	Response
30 seconds	1.9%
one minute	17.0%
90 seconds	14.1%
two minutes	26.3%
more than two minutes	40.7%

38. It is a known fact, "Santa's Magic is Toys." But what difficult requests, wishes, or experiences has Santa heard from children?

	Response
Children worried Santa won't find them on Christmas Eve	20.8%
Children worried because a loved one recently died or is dying.	20.5%
Children wishing for help to reverse a Divorce or Sepan	12.8%
Children worried about a family member that is seriously ill	11.9%
Children worried about a parent deployed overseas	5.4%
Child has been hurt and/or abused	.038%
Children worried that a parent is unemployed	2.2%
Children worried they are homeless	.06%
Children worried about the economy	.06%

39. Many Santas are active year-round and sometimes perform or appear as someone other than Santa. So, other than Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, Pere Noel, Sinter Klaus, etc., have you portrayed other characters or famous persons? (Select all that apply)

	Response
I only appear as Santa Claus/St. Nicholas, etc.	73.5%
I have appeared as a cowboy or pirate	2.9%
I have been a wizard (Harry Potter or Lord of the Rings)	1.9%
I enjoy civil war re-enactment	0.80%
I sometimes portray Hemingway or someone from "Duck Dynasty"	0.3%
I have dressed up as a Rock Star (ZZ Top or Jerry Garcia)	0.60%
I have participated in local pioneer/western days	3.40%
Other	20.4%

40. If you volunteer as Santa for a special cause, which ones do you volunteer for? Some Santas checked more than one.

	Response
Marines Toys for Tots Foundation	59.3%
Make a Wish	16.2%
Military Units, VA Hospitals, Wounded Warriors	20.9%
Ronald McDonald House, Starlight Foundation	0.8%
Autism Society	12.7%
Senior Centers	5.90%
Children's Hospital	27.9%
Other	22.0%

41. Did you Serve in the Military? If so, please select your Branch of Service.

	Response
No Military Service	63.50%
Air Force	.084%
Army	.127%
Coast Guard	0.65%
Marines	.046%
Navy	.106%

42. Education. Please select the highest level of School you completed. These are degrees from accredited Schools or Universities (Unfortunately not Santa School)

	Response
High School	10.6%
AA Degree	17.0%
BA or BS Degree	27.6%
MA or MS Degree	13.8%
Some College	23.0%
PhD or Doctoral Degree (Accredited College or University, Not Santa School)	5.1%
GED	1.4%

43. Do you belong to any Santa Association?

	Response
Yes, I belong to a Santa Association	75.0%
NO, I do not belong to any organization	25.0%

44. Have you taken the Santa Claus Oath?

	Response
No, I have not had the opportunity to take the Santa Claus Oath	13.8%
Yes, I have taken the Santa Claus Oath.	86.2%

45. Have you attended a Santa School? Santas could select one or more training programs or none.

	Response
Charles W. Howard	19.6%
School4Santas - International University of Santa Claus	56.9%
SATBOBS - Santa and the Business of Being Santa	.10%
Santa True - Storytelling & Presentation workshops	17.6%
Northern Lights	8.1%
Professional Santa Claus School – Susan Mesco	9.9%
The Brothers Claus - Leon McBride & Stephen Gilliam	12.2%
IUSC/School4Santas Home Study Course	13.8%
Santa Claus Conservatory – Ed Taylor	18.1%
No, I have never attended any Santa Training	12.8%
Other	28.0%

46. How many Santa Suits or outfits do you own?	
	Response
1	7.8%
2	18.8%
3	24.1%
4	21.3%
5	7.8%
More than five	18.2%
I do not own a suit.	1.9%

47. Where did you obtain your Santa Suit?	
	Response
My wife or a family friend made it for me	7.60%
I had a local tailor/seamstress make it for me	13.10%
I had someone from a theater company make it for me	2.40%
I bought it on the internet from a costume shop	17.0%
I bought it from a professional Santa Suit company (Adele, Sam Mitello, etc.)	43.30%
I bought it from a local costume store	6.10%
Other	9.80%

48. How do you keep cool when working as Santa? Select one or more answers.	
	Response
I have a fan nearby, giving me a slight breeze.	43.5%
I wear a Commercial Cooling Vest	19.4%
I do not use anything to keep cool	26.3%
I keep plenty of bottled water nearby.	59.6%
Other	.03%

49. In your previous life (Before Santa) what was your main occupation?	
	Response
Arts - Painter/Sculptor/Writer etc.	0.09%
Public Service/Law Enforcement/Fire	0.96%
Government Employee/Federal, State or Local	0.305%
General Construction / Building Trades - Carpenter/Electrician/Plumber/ etc.	14.1%
Heavy Construction / Roads/ Sewers / Iron Worker	0.02%
Engineer/IT/Computers	0.10%
Doctor- Medical/Dental etc.	.009%
Finance/ Banking/ Loans/ Investments (St. Nicholas is your Patron Saint)	0.03%
Sales / Marketing / Advertising	14.0%
Education - Administrator or Teacher	0.06%
Entertainer / Entertainment Industry	0.02%
Culinary/ Restaurant Owner/ Cook/ etc.	.009%
Lawyer (St. Nicholas is your Patron Saint, too!)	.009%
Health Professional / Nurse / Lab Technician	0.02%
Aviation	.006%
Career Military (Retired)	.001%
General Business/Administration	0.04%
Clergy	0.1%
Other	.02%

50. And finally, what are Santa's Plans (Your plans) after this Holiday Season? Multiple answers	
	Response
I plan on taking a well-deserved vacation	10.4%
I plan on attending a Santa Convention / Event	34.7%
Go Shopping at After Christmas Sales	14.1%
Visit relatives and friends	31.2%
I must return to my regular job	23.9%
Other	17.9%

THIS SURVEY WAS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN TIMOTHY CONNAGHAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SANTA CLAUS (IUSC) AND COLTER USCOLA, A DOCTORAL RESEARCHER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA. EXACTLY 400 SANTAS PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY BETWEEN JULY 15, 2026, AND AUGUST 29, 2026.

THE "RED SUIT SURVEY" IS A 20+ YEAR TRADITION STARTED BY CONNAGHAN THROUGH HIS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SANTA CLAUS. RESPONSES CAME FROM ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND OVERSEAS INCLUDING EUROPE, ASIA, AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC, TO COMPILE A COLLECTION OF UNIQUE STATISTICS ABOUT THE AVERAGE SANTA CLAUS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS REGARDING THESE SURVEYS, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT SANTA TIM CONNAGHAN AT: SANTA@NATIONALSANTA.COM OR PHONE/TEXT: 631-871-4901

