



THE EXETER SANTA SURVEY

My name is Dr. Chris Boyle and I am an Associate Professor in Psychology at the University of Exeter in the UK. Through this survey I am attempting to get to know a bit more about believing in Santa and the collective societal myth which we portray.



[The Exeter Santa Survey](#) is a world first in that it is an international study aimed at trying to answer those questions such as 'what is the average age when children stop believing in Santa?' and does it vary by country, between regions, and by religious affiliation.

The survey idea comes from a Lancet Psychiatry essay, ['A Wonderful Lie'](#) which was I had published last Christmas. This short essay considered whether telling a lie about Santa was a good approach or not - especially considering that eventually the truth would come out. The issue was around trust and whether there was a breach or not.

When I wrote the essay, I was overwhelmed by people emailing me to say that they had been affected by finding out about Santa. It seemed to be more about the issue of trust, rather than about Santa not being real. I want to try to find out whether there was a sense of anger and question marks over other information given to children by parents. Many adults will remember how they found out and who told them.

This study will attempt to bring that information together and understand a bit more about children and their belief in Santa Claus.

I am interested in understanding what it felt like when you found out, as a child, that Santa did not exist. For example, what age were you when you found out? Was Christmas different after that? This is meant to be a light-hearted exploration of the Santa Claus phenomenon and I hope that you will be able to participate.

For more information I can be contacted at c.boyle2@exeter.ac.uk

I hope that you will be able to find the time to participate in the project and pass on the survey to as many people as you can.

Dr. Chris Boyle

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