

THE NORTH "POLL" – 2004

British Columbians Have Their Say About Santa Claus



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Vancouver, BC – Do you believe in Santa Claus? If so, you’re not alone in British Columbia. A new Ipsos-Reid survey reveals four-in-ten (40%) adult British Columbians believe in the man in the big red suit.

Some British Columbians are more likely than others to believe in Santa Claus.

- Nearly half of women (46%) believe in Santa Claus, compared to only one-third of men (34%).
- Vancouver/Burnaby/New Westminster residents (31% believe) are much more skeptical than residents in the rest of the Lower Mainland (43%) or the rest of BC (43%).
- Belief in Santa Claus is higher among residents with household incomes over \$100,000 (49% vs. 38% <\$30K, 38% \$30-\$60K, 36% \$60-\$100K) and residents without a high school education or less (45% vs. 39% some post-secondary, 36% university degree).

Santa Claus continues to enjoy an enviable reputation among BC residents, although his approval rating has dipped a statistically insignificant two points from 2003. Currently, eight-in-ten (77%, down 2 points from 2003) British Columbians approve of the overall performance of Santa over the last year. This includes half (48%) who “strongly” approve and three-in-ten (29%) who “somewhat” approve of Santa’s performance.

Despite the slight dip in Santa’s approval rating, he still far exceeds British Columbians’ views of Paul Martin (64% approval), Carole James (52%), and Gordon Campbell (40%).

Meanwhile, slightly more than one-in-ten (13%, unchanged from 2003) residents disapprove of Saint Nick’s performance, including 6% who “strongly” disapprove and 7% who “somewhat” disapprove.

“Given Santa’s reign over Christmas the past few hundred years or so, I’m sure he’s not too worried about his skeptics and opponents,” says Steve Mossop, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of the Western Region. “However, I’m also sure Santa’s taking notes on those who disapprove, and will have something to say to these folks come Christmas morning.”

Santa's approval rating is consistent across most regional and demographic groups, with the only noticeable difference occurring based on household income. Approval of Santa's performance rises with income and peaks at 83% among those with household incomes over \$100,000 (83% vs. 74% <\$30K, 77% \$30-\$60K, 78% \$60-\$100K).

Reasons for Approving of Santa Claus

"We were pleasantly surprised with the response we received to this poll," says Mossop. "The range of interesting and humorous responses to an open-ended question on Santa's approval rating shows that the spirit of Christmas is alive and well in British Columbia."

We asked British Columbians to tell us why they approve of Santa Claus. Here are some of the more colourful and interesting responses.

- *Santa is a mixed blessing. He remains a symbol of kindness and generosity where few exist. Having achieved this despite being the focal target of commercialism is a commendable feat and demonstrates an astounding resilience. "Yes Virginia..." now seems prophetic after 100 odd years. (48 year old Surrey man)*
- *Gets more done in a day than most people do all year. Is a grand example of global free trade in action, as he seems to deliver gifts effortlessly across national borders and different cultures. (35 year old Burnaby woman)*
- *He must have been very good as he hasn't made the 6 o'clock news once this year! (62 year old Vancouver woman)*
- *Hey...Santa is a cool dude. He has a ton of elves working for him and gets to kick back and only work one night of the year. Can't beat that! (37 year old Vancouver Island woman)*
- *His whole attitude is positive and upbeat, and he has an amazing work ethic! His grooming is impeccable! He's kind and generous as an employer and is very respectful of Mrs. Claus. He values the work she does in being a "stay-at-home" caregiver to the elves. (56 year old Prince George woman)*
- *I love Santa for many reasons, the first being that he hasn't jumped on the stupid Atkins bandwagon. He loves and protects his animals, and he doesn't eat them either. He provides his elves with good working conditions that other employers should try to emulate. He loves and adores his wife and, except for December 24, always puts her above all others. He is a very grand fellow! (52 year old Victoria woman)*
- *I really understand now why Santa does what he does... this year we (anonymously) put together a Christmas Hamper for a family in our community and I had the best time ever buying things for people that I will never know nor will they ever know me. I really*

enjoyed it and found that I had to make myself stop. Santa must love it as much as I did. I know that I will continue to give gifts anonymously every year. (40 year old North Vancouver woman)

- *Just look in the eyes of a three year old when they see Santa. (63 year old Nanaimo man)*
- *Santa finally came through for me this year. Divorce was finalized, got a good settlement, received some inheritance money, got a fulltime job and found a really nice place to live in. So yes, I do believe in Santa. (52 year old Vancouver woman)*
- *Santa has provided us a way to spoil our granddaughter rotten and blame it on him. I love it! (54 year old Northern woman)*

Reasons for Disapproving of Santa Claus

These are a few of the most vivid reasons for disapproving of Santa's performance.

- *He costs me lots of money and takes all my credit. (19 year old Vancouver man)*
- *He's trying hard, but still needs to do something about that naughty boy in the White House. (33 year old Vancouver man)*
- *He is a shameless corporate shill, animal rights violator, overindulgent eater, sweatshop operator, and employee abuser. Ever wonder how those little elves got those pointy ears? The sadistic S.O.B.! And what an example of sartorial splendor; send in the fashion police, I mean the guy hasn't changed his clothes in like, centuries. What an example for the kids, sneaks in your house in the middle of the night, steals your snacks and may or may not pay in third world manufactured war toys if he feels like it. Or, if he decides that you don't meet his random criteria, he leaves you a chunk of pollution-causing fossil fuel. Like that will improve child behavior. The guy needs a visit from social services and child protection. (57 year old Vancouver man)*
- *He hasn't done much about the true values Christmas ought to be about. I have asked him for world peace and harmony every year and he hasn't done well at all. (54 year old Vancouver man)*
- *I didn't get my Porsche last year and this year isn't looking all that promising, either. I don't care about his problems with "sleigh size", maximum gross weight issues, strength of toy sack...These are his problems, not mine. Nowhere in the Santa contract does it say anything about limits to sleigh carry on baggage. I WANT MY PORSCHE!! (52 year old Port Coquitlam man)*
- *I strongly disapprove of any man who works only one day a year! (58 year old North Vancouver man)*
- *Santa is a bad thing for the progress of women in this century. The current image is one of his wife staying at home, cooking, cleaning, and mending his outfit while Mr. Claus lords over his minions (the elves-child labour?). If our children follow in his footsteps,*

what kind of future will we have? I bet he drinks hot mulled wine out of a paper bag while sitting on his back porch shooting Arctic Foxes. (24 year old Vancouver man)

- *His lifestyle is quite unhealthy, and therefore he is not a good role model for the young. He needs to get out of his chair at the mall, exercise more, and cut down on the eggnog. (51 year old Coquitlam woman)*
- *Santa mostly does a good job, but his boots left a hole in our roof. (37 year old Port Coquitlam man)*
- *Well, I really wanted socks last year. And underwear. And instead he brought me DVD's and books, and expensive figurines...what's a girl to do? (25 year old Port Moody woman)*

These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid telephone poll conducted December 7th to 14th, 2004 with a randomly selected sample of 800 adult British Columbia residents. The results are considered accurate to within ± 3.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire BC adult population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual BC population according to the 2001 Census.

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