

# Mariella's 2014 Christmas Survey\*

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## 1 Introduction

Christmas is a holiday that a lot of people celebrate. So I decided to create a survey that will show me what people like and dislike about Christmas. My online survey was distributed to my friends, my parents' friends and my family by email, Facebook and word of mouth. I used Qualtrics to design and distribute my survey. One hundred and sixty-six people responded to my survey. My survey included questions about how people celebrate christmas. It included questions about their least favourite and favourite christmas carol, foods and movie along with when they put up and take down their christmas tree, how many gifts they give and receive and other stuff. I also wanted to see how many people believe in Santa.

### 1.1 Who responded?

Forty-five percent of the respondents are boys and fifty-five percent are girls. The youngest person to respond is 5 years old and the oldest is 114 years but I don't think anyone is actually that old. The next oldest is 85 years and that seems more reasonable. Kids make up 15% of the respondents and 8% are over 70. The average age is 42 years old. The average number of people living in a household is 3. About half of people who took the survey were born and grew up in Canada. People from all over the world took my survey. Respondents come from five continents: Asia, Australia, Europe, North America and South America. I was hoping for all the continents but I got no béninois respondents. I had people from Micronesia, Mongolia, Jordan, Iraq, Israel, Singapore and Vanuato!

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\*Acknowledgements: Thank you to my mom for explaining market research to me. Thank you to my dad for research assistance. Thank you to my dad and Peter Loewen for letting me borrow their Qualtrics account. Guy Grossman read my report last Christmas and gave me ideas to improve it this year. Thank you to Betsy Levy Paluck for giving me the idea to do an experiment on naughtyness. Last but not least, thanks to all of you who answered my survey. Merry Christmas! Oh, MRMR stands for Mariella Rubenson Market Research, which isn't a real company. Yet.

## 2 Findings

Most people celebrate Christmas but 12% say that they don't. Figure 1 reports how many people believe in Santa. More than half of people who answered the question either sort of believe or fully believe in Santa Claus. Just under 30% don't believe at all and about 18% want to believe in Santa but don't.

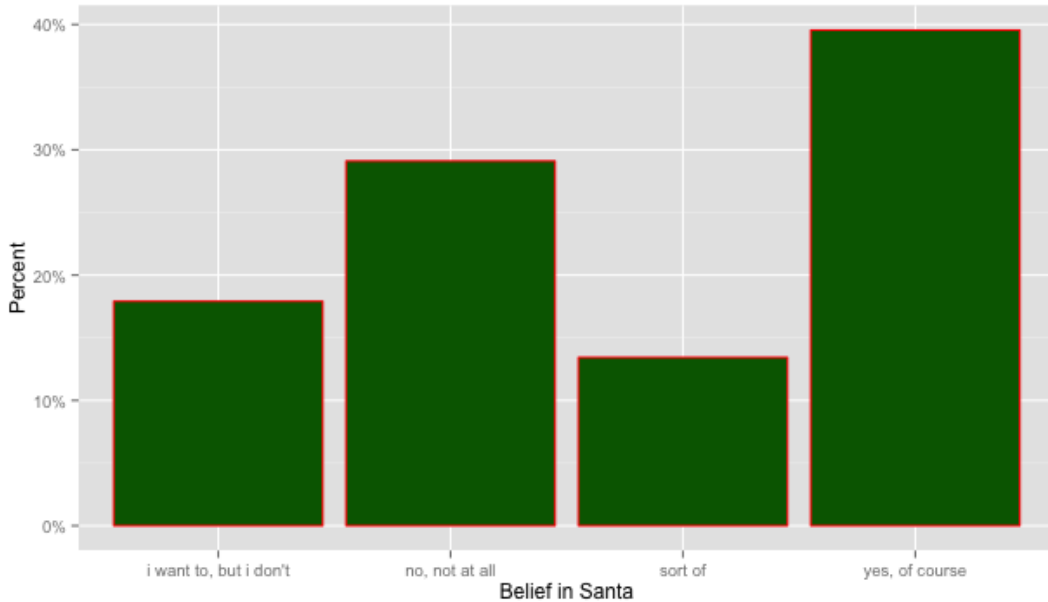


Figure 1: Do you believe in Santa?

### 2.1 Christmas Preferences

I asked people to rank what they like best about Christmas. Figure 2 shows the results. A majority of people like spending time with their family best. Fewer than 3% of people like decorating the tree more than anything else. And about 20% of respondents rank food number 1. Like most people, I like spending time with my family best.

I also asked questions about what carols, Christmas movies, foods and traditions people like.

What about Christmas movies? My favourite is Elf! I've probably seen it 20 times. Last time I saw it, it was on the big screen two days ago! Check out Figure 3 to see what others like.

I asked people to give their rating of different holiday carols on a scale of 0–100. The highest average was for silent night at 68/100. The lowest was for Adam Sandler's Chanukah song. It got 33/100 on average. Figure 4 shows the scores for the different Christmas carols I asked about.

People have many Christmas traditions such as caroling, making a gingerbread house, seeing the nutcracker, tobogganing (but not in Toronto this year) and of course responding

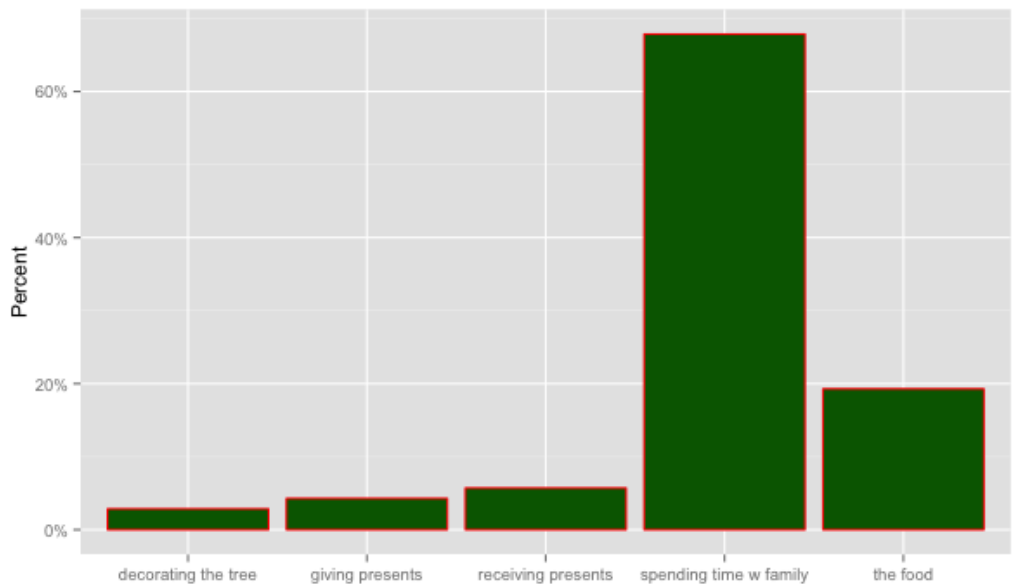


Figure 2: What do you like most about the Christmas season?

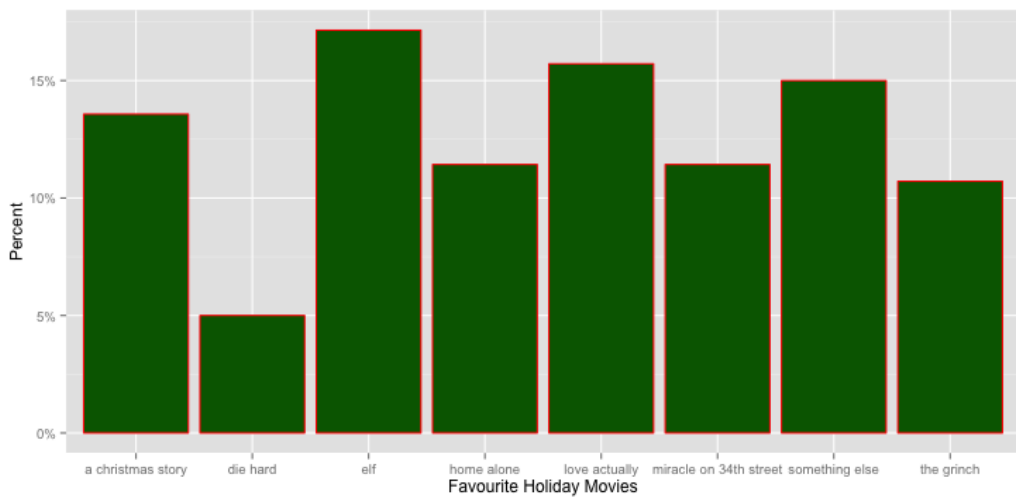


Figure 3: Favourite Movies

to this survey. Figure 5 has the results. About 18% of people who answered this question said they don't have any Christmas traditions. But I hope they start a new one by answering this survey next year. They would join the over 40% of people who already say they have this survey as a Christmas tradition!

There are a lot of different foods that people just can't live without on Christmas.

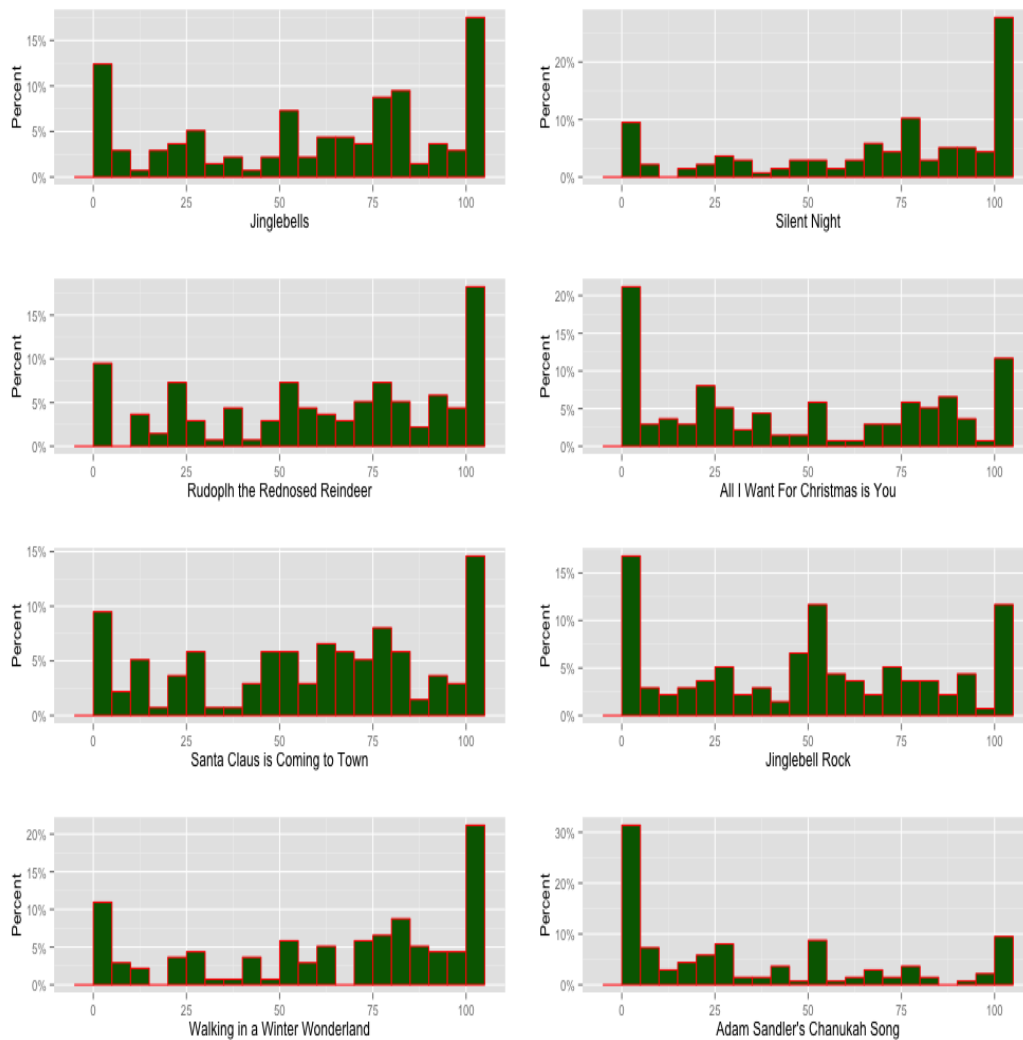


Figure 4: Christmas Carol Ratings

Twenty percent said they can't live without roast meat. My little sister even asked Santa for meat! More than 15% can't live without egg nog. I still don't understand this. Many people wrote in their own answers. One person said that Brussel sprouts are "essential." I disagree. Pickled herring, turkey, bacon, mince pies and spanakopita (my mom says she wants to go that person's christmas dinner) are a few of the other foods that people can't live without. My little sister says she has to have meringues but unfortunately she had to live without them this year. All the weird pickled herring eaters are Swedes like my dad. To them I say *god jul!*

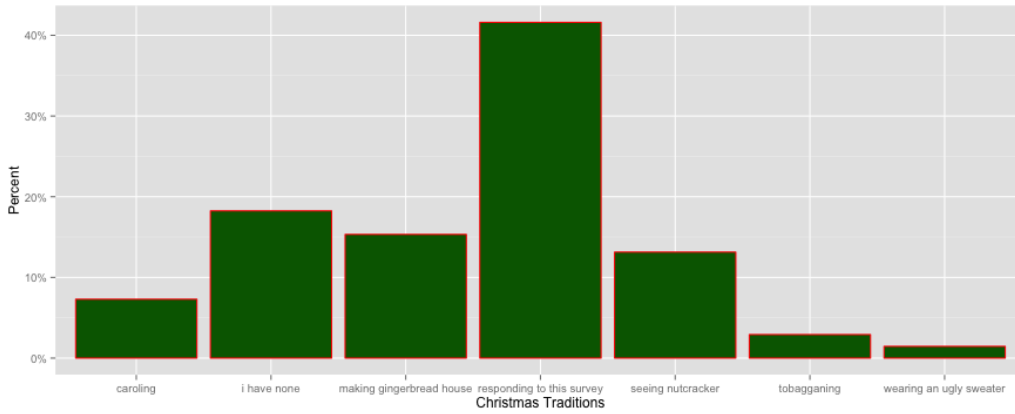


Figure 5: Christmas Traditions

## 2.2 Christmas Behaviour

Merry Christmas! How do you greet during the holiday season? Do you say “Merry Christmas”, “happy holidays”, “happy Christmas”, “season’s greetings” or something else? Almost 60% say “Merry Christmas.” The next most popular is “happy holidays” which 28% of you use. Three of you (out of 166) say “happy Festivus.”

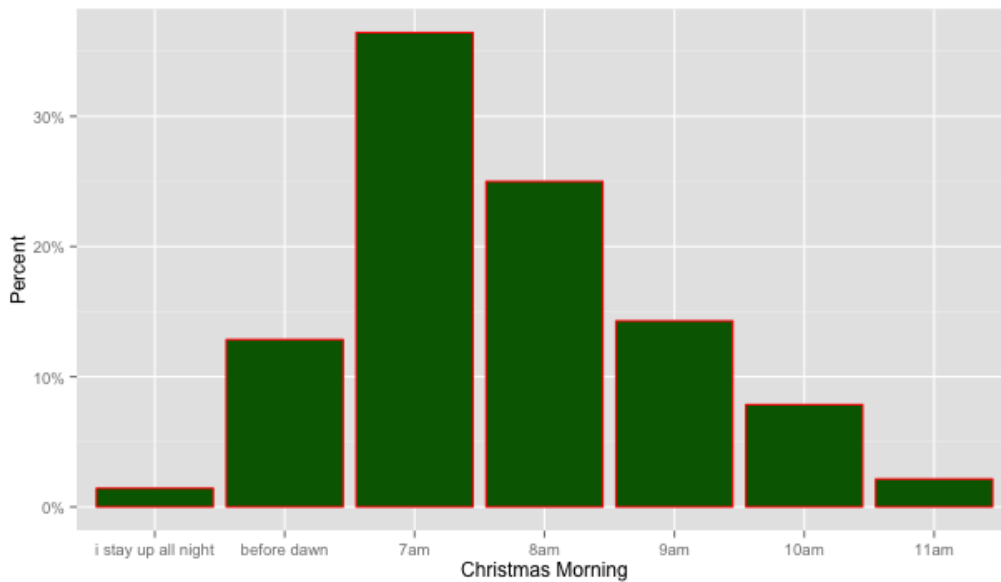


Figure 6: Waking up on Christmas morning

A plurality of people wake up at 7am on Christmas morning—see Figure 6. Two people say that they stay up all night. Ten percent say that they wake up at 10am or later. I

checked and the people who wake up at 10am or later tend to get less gifts. I wonder if they get up late because they know they aren't going to get any presents or if they don't get any presents because they're not around for the gift opening. An interesting question for future research.

Almost everyone in the study has a tree. But when do you put up your Christmas tree? And when do you take it down? In Figure 7 I show the results. More people put up their tree early than late. In fact, the trend just goes down the later in December it gets. Some people are *really* early! Seven people put their tree up in November or earlier. My guess is that these people know what “ber months” means.<sup>1</sup>

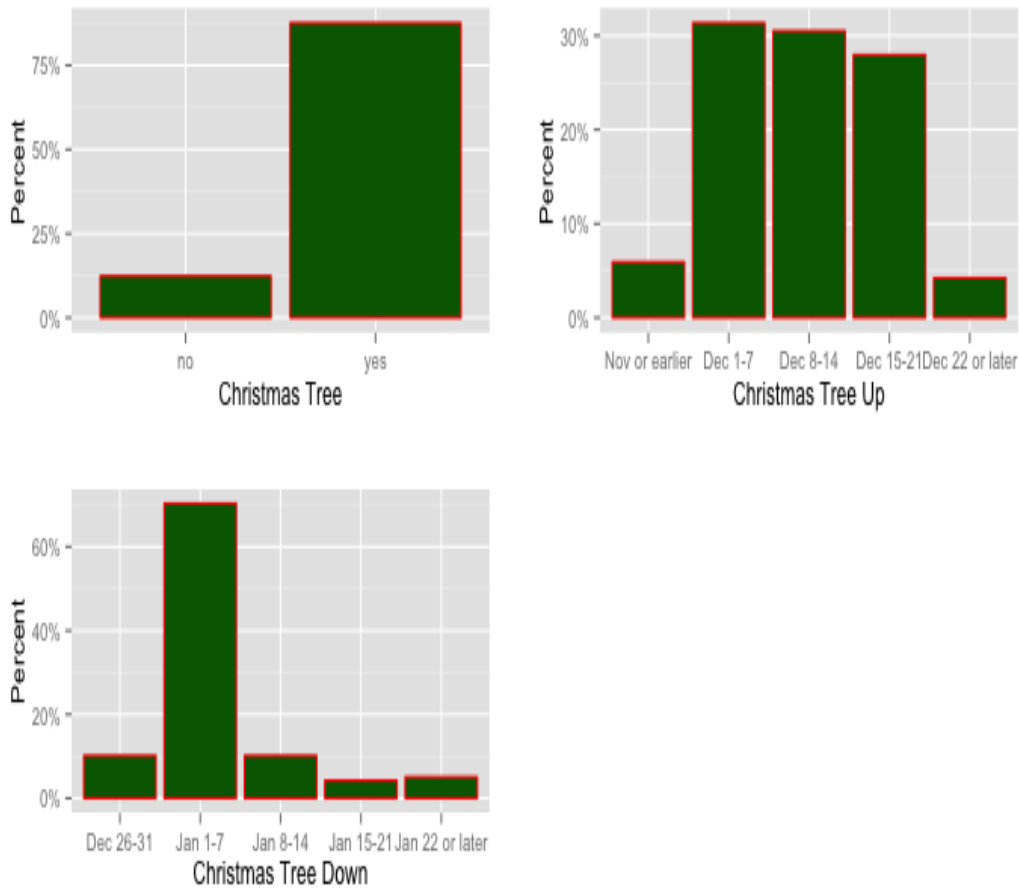


Figure 7: Christmas Tree Behaviour

A asked a number of questions concerning presents. I asked how many gifts you give and how many you receive. And I also asked about where you get the presents that you give (if you buy them, make them etc.). Figure 8 shows how many presents people say they give

<sup>1</sup>In the Philippines the Christmas season is celebrated during the “ber” months. These are September, October, November and December.

and receive. As you can almost 40% say they give 15 or more gifts. The number of presents that people get is quite evenly distributed but hardly anyone gives 13 presents—maybe that would be unlucky!

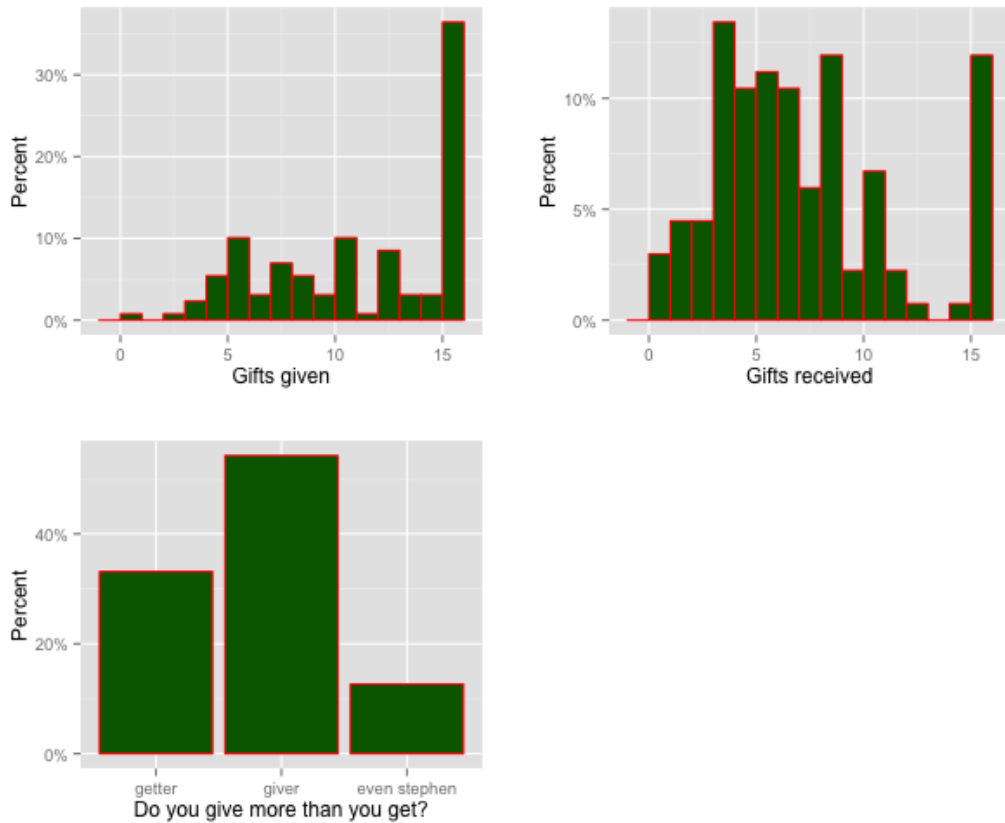


Figure 8: Giving and Receiving Presents

I also wanted to know if people give more presents than they get. And it turns out that they do. More than half of respondents say that they give more presents than they get. About 12% give and get exactly the same amount of presents.

Where do people get the presents that they give? Well, 77% of all gifts given are bought. Just 15% of presents are made at home and about 3% of your presents are someone else's that have been re-gifted! Other people say that they give cash or donations to charities.

### 3 A Naughty Experiment

I was interested in finding out why some people say they get more presents than others. So I decided to do an experiment to find out if people who are reminded about their naughtiness think they get fewer presents. The plan was to randomize so that a third of the respondents would get a question asking how many times they'd been naughty that year, a third would get questions about how many times they'd been really nice and a third would get a question

about some unrelated thing like being caught in the rain. I got this idea from Betsy Levy Paluck who is a social psychologist.

Unfortunately the experiment wasn't programmed properly. So a third of the people got the naughty question but the other two questions weren't asked. Oh well, this is a good idea for next year.

## 4 Conclusions and Next Steps

Next year I want my experiments to succeed! Thank you for completing my survey.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!