

The changing fabric of Britain's Christmas stockings

Average stocking shrinks over last decade while computer games replace books

Watford, 20 December 2010: Research released today by parcel service CollectPlus reveals that the average number of presents in a child's Christmas stocking has fallen over the last decade¹. Shedding light on the modern family Christmas, CollectPlus, which allows shoppers to collect and deliver parcels from their local corner shop, has found that children today receive an average of 12 presents in their Christmas stocking compared with a high of 17 presents a decade ago. However, stockings are still double the size they were fifty years ago.

Over the last half century, puzzles and chocolate have remained perennially popular choices for Santa to stuff stockings with. However, books, traditionally a top three present, have been overtaken by clothing and electronic toys in recent years. This Christmas, after edible items, children are most likely to be pulling DVDs and video games from their stockings.

The research also reveals how the search for the must-have gift has become less stressful thanks to the impact of online shopping and a wider choice on the high street. In contrast to their experience as a child, when over half (57%) of adults recall missing out on the 'must have gift', today's parents believe online shopping is the top factor in making present buying less stressful, closely followed by a wider choice on the high street and simpler returns processes.

Mark Lewis, CEO of CollectPlus (the joint venture between PayPoint and Yodel), comments:

"Even though times are tight and high streets slippery with ice, home shopping via the internet and catalogues means more children than ever will find Santa has delivered a stocking packed with surprises this Christmas. The internet makes it easier for everyone, from elves to elderly relatives, to find the perfect present for a loved one, whilst innovative delivery services and effective returns ensure fewer tears on Christmas morning than ever before."

Stocking contents and size, compared to 50 years ago:

Ranking	1960 – six presents per stocking	Sample top toys in category	2010 – 12 presents per stocking	Sample top toys in category
1	Edible items	Cadbury's Skippy bar	Games and puzzles	Lego City fire station
2	Games and puzzles	Spirograph	Edible items	Ben Ten chocolate bar variety pack

3	Books	Pinky and Perky picture book	DVDs and video games	Toy Story 3
4	Essentials (e.g. clothing)	Denim jeans	Arts and crafts	Moon Dough Barn
5	Dolls and action figures	Barbie	Educational toys	Real Construction Deluxe Workshop

¹ Figures taken from research carried out by Populus on behalf of CollectPlus. 2000 consumers were polled in November 2010

Secret Santa

The survey finds that almost two thirds of presents (61%) are stashed away from children's prying in a cupboard, and around a quarter (24%) in the loft. A dedicated fifth (22%) go so far as to store gifts in inventive places such as a neighbour's house or a shed to prevent children from discovering the loot. This is especially true in Wales and the South West, where a neighbour's house is the hiding place of choice for secretive parents. This compares to three-quarters of respondents in Scotland who like to keep the presents out of a reach in a cupboard.

The slimmest stockings this Christmas are to be found in the Midlands with an average two fewer gifts than children from the North of England, who can expect to receive 14 presents in their stocking this year. However, it is Scottish parents who are most likely to remember the bitter sting of tears from missing out on the 'must have gift', such as this year's Buzz Lightyear, when they were younger because it was too expensive.

Dan Rubel, Woolworths.co.uk Marketing Director, said:

"There's been a huge rise in electronic toys over the past decade but traditional favourites such as Lego remain ever popular. This Christmas, at Woolworths.co.uk, we are anticipating that out of the thousands of toys we have available online, Buzz Lightyear will be the most popular gift for children. Finding the 'must have gift' can be stressful for parents, but our online superstore is currently offering speedy deliveries and free returns on online orders, hopefully making Christmas shopping easier than ever."

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For more information or to set up a personal briefing with Mark Lewis, please contact the CollectPlus PR team at the Red Consultancy:

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About CollectPlus

CollectPlus is a delivery and returns service giving online shoppers greater freedom and flexibility

with the choice of collecting and dropping off parcels at local convenience stores.

With 98% of CollectPlus outlets open seven days a week and, normally, early in the morning until late at night, the service offers online shoppers the option to pick up or drop off purchases at a time and place convenient to them. 82% of the UK population lives within a mile of a CollectPlus store in urban areas, and 83% within five miles in rural areas.

CollectPlus is a joint venture between PayPoint, the leading retail payment network, and the UK's leading parcel delivery company, Yodel.