24 Facts About Imaginary Friends

ASK A WIZARD RESEARCH

Most kids have had one by age 7. A friend no one else could see. Every number below comes from a published study, a survey or a public record. Updated October 2026.

65% By age 7, 65% of kids in one study had had an imaginary friend at some point. Researchers followed the same 100 kids from age 3 or 4 until about age 7. *Taylor et al., 2004*

31% At about age 7, 31% of those same kids had an imaginary friend at the time they were asked. Three years earlier, at age 3 or 4, it was 28%. *Taylor et al., 2004*

17% In the UK, 17% of kids ages 3 to 10 had an imaginary friend at the time of the survey, their parents said. That's from 1,000 parents, each telling about one child. *Legal & General, 2018*

37% By age 10, a UK child has about a 37% chance of having had one at some point, the same survey works out. *Legal & General, 2018*

4 Age 4 is the most common age for a child to dream up an imaginary friend, the same UK parents said. *Legal & General, 2018*

2 Scientists sort them into 2 kinds: invisible friends, and toys a child treats as a friend, like a stuffed animal or a doll. In one study, moms of 78 preschoolers said invisible friends were mostly playmates. Toy friends were mostly cared for, like a baby. *Gleason et al., 2000*

67% At about age 7, 67% of kids' imaginary friends were invisible. At age 3 or 4, it was the other way: 52% of their imaginary friends were based on a toy or other object. *Taylor et al., 2004*

57% At about age 7, 57% of kids' imaginary friends were people and 41% were animals. *Taylor et al., 2004*

1 to 13 In the same study, kids told about anywhere from 1 to 13 imaginary friends each. *Taylor et al., 2004*

6 in 10 In the UK survey of kids ages 3 to 10, 6 in 10 imaginary friends were human. *Legal & General, 2018*

Unicorns In the same UK survey, imaginary unicorns were more common than imaginary cats. Only dogs beat them, by a little. Girls were 2.5 times as likely as boys to have a unicorn friend (10% vs. 4%). *Legal & General, 2018*

81% In the UK survey, 81% of boys' imaginary friends were boys. For girls, 58% of their imaginary friends were girls. *Legal & General, 2018*

6% In the UK survey, only 6% of imaginary friends stayed around for more than 3 years. *Legal & General, 2018*

27% At about age 7, 27% of the kids in the study told researchers about an imaginary friend their parents did not know about. *Taylor et al., 2004*

5 of 23 In a New Zealand study, 23 kids had an imaginary friend at age 5½. At 16, only 5 of them remembered it. 10 said they never had one at all. *McAnally et al., 2021*

1 in 3 Of 60 college students ages 18 to 23, 20 said they had an imaginary friend as a kid. *Firth et al., 2015*

11% Of 291 adults in China and the UK, 11% had an imaginary friend at the time of the study. *Davis et al., 2026*

55.7% In that same study, 55.7% of the British adults said they had an imaginary friend as a kid. For the Chinese adults, it was 39.5%. *Davis et al., 2026*

Higher In an online survey of 341 adults, people who remembered having an imaginary friend as a kid scored higher on seeing things from someone else's point of view. *Halliday et al., 2023*

Harvey A giant rabbit, 6 feet 3½ inches tall, that most people can't see. Mary Chase's play *Harvey* opened on Broadway in 1944 and won the 1945 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. *Pulitzer.org; Wikipedia*

Mr. Snuffleupagus On *Sesame Street* from 1971. For years only Big Bird could see him. The grown-ups finally met him in 1985. *Mental Floss*

Hobbes A stuffed tiger to everyone else. A real tiger to Calvin. Bill Watterson's comic strip ran from 1985 to 1995. *Wikipedia*

Bing Bong Riley's childhood imaginary friend in Pixar's *Inside Out* (2015). Part cat, part elephant, part dolphin. Made of pink cotton candy. He cries candy tears. *Wikipedia; Time*

0 We could not find a single ranked list of real imaginary friend names. The name lists we found online are ideas, not counts of real friends. Real names only show up here and there, in comments. *Ask a Wizard search, October 2026*

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