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Coming Out Would Have Positive or No Impact on Nearly 9 out of 10 Heterosexuals

New online study also shows nearly 7 out of 10 heterosexuals said they prefer an individual be open and honest about being gay, rather than feel the need to hide their orientation

Washington, DC – October 10, 2008 – According to a new national survey, nearly nine out of 10 (87%) heterosexuals said that if someone were to come out to them as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, it would have a positive or no impact on how they would view gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. The survey also revealed that two out of three (67%) heterosexual adults agree that if someone they knew is gay or lesbian, they'd want that individual to be open and honest with them about it, rather than feel the need to hide who he or she really is.

The new nationwide survey of 2,455 U.S. adults, (ages 18 and over), of whom 287 self identified as gay or lesbian (which includes an oversample of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adults), was conducted online between September 15-22, 2008, by Harris Interactive, a global market research and consulting firm, in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc., a strategic public relations and marketing communications firm with special expertise in the GLBT market.

A large majority of gay and lesbian adults disclose that they are "out" and honest with others about their sexual orientation. The survey showed that four out of five (80%) gay and lesbian adults consider themselves "out" as a gay or lesbian person. In terms of their relationships, 95 percent of gay and lesbian adults consider themselves open about their sexual orientation to their close friends, compared to 79 percent of all GLBT respondents. Nearly eight out of 10 (79%) gay and lesbian adults consider themselves open about their sexual orientation with their acquaintances/casual friends, compared to 61 percent of all GLBT respondents.

When it comes to the workplace, a significant majority (67%) of gay and lesbian adults reported being open about their sexual orientation with their co-workers/colleagues, compared with 49 percent of all GLBT respondents. In terms of their purchasing decisions, nearly two-thirds (64%) of gay and lesbian adults reported that when selecting a product or service, all other considerations being equal, they will select the brand that has a reputation for being more gay friendly.

"The decision to come out is never an easy one, but the numbers today reflect a rapidly improving culture that is more accepting," said Wes Combs, President of Witeck-Combs Communications. "Much of corporate America has taken a leadership role in establishing a culture of acceptance and equality. In return, many gay and lesbian Americans are rewarding them and sustaining them with their customer loyalty – a valuable relationship during these very tough economic conditions."

This data is especially timely, as the nation is about to celebrate National Coming Out Day on October 11th. Every year, GLBT Americans are encouraged to be open and honest about who they are as a way of helping to break down negative stereotypes GLBT people. “The data helps to confirm what we have known for years – a majority of our friends and coworkers want us to be honest about who we are,” said Betsy Pursell, Human Rights Campaign VP of Education and Outreach. “GLBT people fear others will reject them and I hope that this data will give comfort and strength to those who are looking to take their next step in the coming out process.”

**TABLE 1
COMING OUT**

“If someone were to come out to you as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, what would be the level of impact that it would have on how you view gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people?”

Base: All heterosexual adults

	Heterosexuals
	%
POSITIVE/NO IMPACT (NET)	87
POSITIVE IMPACT (NET)	8
Very positive impact	5
Somewhat positive impact	3
No Impact	80
NEGATIVE IMPACT (NET)	13
Somewhat negative impact	8
Very negative impact	5

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 2
HONESTY AND COMING OUT**

“ Please rate your agreement with the following statement – If someone I know is gay or lesbian, I’d want that individual to be open and honest with me about it, rather than feel the need to hide who he or she really is.”

Base: All heterosexual adults

	Heterosexuals
	%
AGREE (NET)	67
Strongly agree	46
Somewhat agree	21
Neither agree nor disagree	19
DISAGREE (NET)	8
Somewhat disagree	3
Strongly disagree	5
Not sure	2
Decline to answer	3

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 3
CONSIDERING YOURSELF OUT**

“Do you consider yourself out as a gay, lesbian or bisexual person?”

Base: All gay and lesbian adults

	Gays and Lesbians
	%
Yes	80
No	16
Decline to answer	44

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 4
WHO GLBT ARE OUT TO**

“In general, do you consider yourself open about your sexual orientation with the following people?”

Base: All GLBT adults

	GLBT	Gays and Lesbians
	%	%
Close friends	79	95
Acquaintances/casual friends	61	79
Brothers or sisters	57	74
Parents	56	75
Other relatives (such as grandparents, cousins, etc.)	50	65
Co-workers/colleagues	49	67
Boss/manager	37	51
Church, synagogue, or other place of worship (if attend regularly)	28	20
Another person not mentioned	39	47
None	15	1

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 5
PURCHASE BEHAVIOR**

“Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement – When selecting a product or service, all things being equal, I will select the brand that has a reputation for being more gay friendly.”

Base: All gay and lesbian adults

	Gays and Lesbians
	%
AGREE (NET)	64
Strongly agree	35
Somewhat agree	29
Neither agree nor disagree	29
DISAGREE (NET)	8
Somewhat disagree	4
Strongly disagree	4

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted the study online within the United States between September 15 and 22, 2008, among 2,455 adults (ages 18 and over), of whom 2,112 indicated they are heterosexual and 287 self-identified as gay or lesbian (this includes an over-sample of GLBT adults). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. In addition, the results for the gay and lesbian sample were weighted separately based on profiles of the gay and lesbian population that Harris Interactive has compiled through many different online surveys. Propensity score weighting also was used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words "margin of error" as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. is the nation's premier marketing communications and consulting firm, specializing in developing and implementing effective strategies reaching the gay and lesbian consumer market. With 15 years experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications not only serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender consumers (GLBT), but also provides counsel to countless non-profit organizations that aim to educate the public on gay and lesbian issues or to better reach their GLBT membership.

In April 2003, American Demographics magazine identified Bob Witeck and Wes Combs as two of 25 experts over the last 25 years who have made significant contributions to the fields of demographics, market research, media and trendspotting for their path breaking work on the gay and lesbian market, and in 2006 Bob Witeck and Wes Combs co-authored *Business Inside Out: Capturing Millions of Brand Loyal Gay Consumers* (Kaplan Publishing), considered the first-ever book on marketing insights, practical tips and strategies targeting the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender market. They have appeared in worldwide media outlets including Fortune, CNBC, CNN, Reuters, Associated Press, Ad Age, New York Times and Washington Post. For more information visit www.witeckcombs.com.

About Harris Interactive

[Harris Interactive](http://www.harrisinteractive.com) is a global leader in custom market research. With a long and rich history in multimodal research, powered by our science and technology, we assist clients in achieving business results. Harris Interactive serves clients globally through our North American, European and Asian offices and a network of independent market research firms.

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