

**For Immediate Release**

## **Fewer than Half Of All Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Adults Surveyed Say They have Disclosed Their Sexual Orientation to Their Health Care Provider**

*New Witeck-Combs Communications/Harris Interactive survey also shows GLBT Americans are less likely to have health insurance than their heterosexual counterparts*

**Rochester, NY— December 17, 2002—** Fewer than half of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) adults disclose their sexual orientation to their health provider, according to new survey results released by Witeck-Combs Communications and Harris Interactive®. In addition, the survey showed that GLBT respondents are also less likely to have health insurance than their non-gay counterparts.

"We are dismayed to learn how the 'closet' puts gays and lesbians at risk in speaking honestly with their doctor or primary health care provider," said Darin Johnson, Vice President of Witeck-Combs Communications. "Stigma and the potential for discrimination has, for years, been a major obstacle for lesbians and gays seeking appropriate health care."

### **Some key findings from the survey include:**

- Overall, 49% of GLBT respondents said they had discussed their sexual orientation with their health care provider.
- Only 23% of those self-identifying as bisexual had disclosed their sexual orientation to their doctor or health care provider while 55% of lesbians and 67% of gay men had discussed their sexual orientation.
- GLBT adults have visited a health care professional with almost the same frequency as their non-gay counterparts in the last 12 months (84% GLBT versus 83% heterosexual).

"This survey is an important wake-up call for the medical establishment," said Kathleen DeBold, executive director of the Mautner Project, the national lesbian health organization. "We all know that disclosing your sexual orientation to your health care provider is extremely important to obtaining the best medical advice, but the majority of GLBT people are not going to do that unless we feel safe and respected in the health care environment. This survey shows that if doctors and nurses are truly committed to providing the best care to all their patients, they need to increase their awareness of and sensitivity to the needs and concerns of their GLBT clients."

### **Less health insurance coverage among GLBT community**

When respondents were asked if they have health insurance, only 70% of GLBT adults said they currently have coverage, compared to 86% of non-gay adults. According to a May 2002 report from the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, the uninsured receive less preventive care, are diagnosed at more advanced disease stages, tend to receive less therapeutic care (drugs and surgical interventions) once diagnosed; and, if they did have health insurance, the Commission reports that mortality rates for the uninsured would be reduced by 10 to 15 percent.

Of those who reported that they have insurance, 63% of GLBT adults are covered through their employer compared to 59% of non-gay adults. The survey also illustrates a difference between opposite-sex and same-sex couple health insurance benefits. Of the GLBT respondents, only three percent said they receive health insurance through a same-sex partner while a greater number (14%) of non-gay adults stated they are covered by a partner's insurance.

### **Notes on reading tables**

GLBT refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents. The percentage of respondents has been included for each item. An asterisk (\*) signifies a value of less than one-half percent. A dash represents a value of zero. Percentages may not always add up to 100% because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents answering that question.

**TABLE 1**  
**VISIT TO DOCTOR OR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL IN LAST 12 MONTHS**

"Have you been to a doctor or other health care professional in the last 12 months?"

Base: All Respondents

	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%
Yes	84	83
No	16	17

**TABLE 2**  
**WHETHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IS AWARE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

"Is your health care provider aware of your sexual orientation?"

Base: GLBT

	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Lesbian</b>	<b>Gay</b>	<b>Bisexual</b>
	%	%	%	%
Yes	49	55	67	23
No	51	45	33	77

Note: Transgender statistics too low to report individually, but they are included in calculation of the overall GLBT statistic.

**TABLE 3**  
**WHETHER HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE**

"Do you currently have health insurance?"

Base: All Respondents

	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%
Yes	70	86
No	30	14

**TABLE 4**  
**HEALTH INSURANCE SOURCES**

"Is your health insurance through your...?"

Base: Have Health Insurance

	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%
Employer	63	59
Self-employment plan	10	2
Medicare	7	17
Medicaid	*	4
Partner	3	14
Purchased as an individual	12	8
Other	13	13

### **Methodology**

This survey was conducted online within the United States between November 22 and December 2, 2002, among a nationwide cross section of 2,221 adults. Of those adults surveyed, 159 (approximately 7%) self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT). Figures for age, sex, race, education and number of adults in the household were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. "Propensity score" weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus two percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, interviewer bias, weighting by demographic control data and screening (e.g., for likely voters). It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. And this online survey is not a probability sample.

***These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.***

### **About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.**

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. ([www.witeckcombs.com](http://www.witeckcombs.com)) is the nation's premier strategic marketing communications firm, specializing in reaching the gay and lesbian consumer market. With over nine years experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications has developed respected relationships throughout the community and serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay and lesbian consumers. The Gay Financial Network ([gfn.com](http://gfn.com)) has twice identified Bob Witeck and Wesley Combs as two of the nation's twenty-five most influential openly gay business executives.

### **About Harris Interactive®**

**Harris Interactive** ([www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com)) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm best known for **The Harris Poll®**, and for pioneering the Internet method to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Headquartered in Rochester, New York, U.S.A., Harris Interactive combines proprietary methodologies and technology with expertise in predictive, custom and strategic research. The Company conducts international research through wholly owned subsidiaries—London-based **HI Europe** ([www.hieurope.com](http://www.hieurope.com)) and Tokyo-based Harris Interactive Japan—as well as through the Harris Interactive Global Network of local market-and opinion-research firms, and various U.S. offices. **EOE M/F/D/V**

To become a member of the Harris Poll Online<sup>SM</sup> and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit [www.harrispollonline.com](http://www.harrispollonline.com).

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