

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Seven Out Of Ten Heterosexuals Today Know Someone Gay

Half of Gays and Lesbians say that concern about being victim of hate crimes affects 'Coming Out'

New national survey by Harris Interactive and Witeck-Combs Communications examines attitudes about gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgender persons 'Coming Out'

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – October 10, 2006 – Seven out of ten (70%) heterosexual adults in the United States say that they know someone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT). More than half of those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (54%) say that concern about being the victim of a hate crime would be a reason for a person to not **come out**.¹ Other concerns that GLBT adults cite about why a person might not **come out** include rejection by their families (39%), rejection by their friends (32%) and losing their jobs (27%).

These are some of the highlights of a nationwide online survey of 2,932 U.S. adults (ages 18 and over) of whom 2,548 indicated they are heterosexual and 324 self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (this includes an over-sample of gays and lesbians). The survey was conducted between September 7 and 14, 2006, by Harris Interactive®, a worldwide 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.

Fully, 83 percent of those who self-identify as gay or lesbian consider themselves **out**. In general, when all GLBT respondents were asked if they considered themselves open about their sexual orientation, large majorities of them said they are **out** to their close friends (92%) and to their parents (78%). Many gays and lesbians also indicated they are **out** to other relatives such as grandparents or cousins (68%), acquaintances and to casual friends (68%) and to co-workers and colleagues (66%).²

“Though attitudes throughout American society toward gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people have changed tremendously over the past several decades, it’s not surprising to learn that there is still a widespread concern among gays and lesbians about becoming a victim of hate if they are open about their sexual orientation,” said Wes Combs, President of Witeck-Combs Communications. “But the results of this survey are encouraging about the numbers of people who choose to be open in spite of the risks.”

“If seven out of 10 heterosexuals know someone who is GLBT, then many gays and lesbians are making their identity apparent as a natural part of their lives — just like their age, height, hair color or personality,”

¹ ‘Come out,’ ‘coming out’ or ‘coming out of the closet’ refer to disclosing, by word or behavior, one’s true sexual orientation.

² Results in this paragraph derived from **total** sub-sample of gay/lesbian adults, not total sample of GLBT adults.

said Mark Shields, director of the Human Rights Campaign’s National Coming Out Project. “For most people, coming out or opening up to someone starts with a conversation. And for those interested in fostering strong, deep relationships with their friends and family, living openly often allows for closer relationships with the people they care about most.”

TABLE 1
KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS GAY, LESBIAN, BISEXUAL OR TRANSGENDER
“Do you know anyone who is gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?”
Summary of Yes Responses

Base: All U.S. Adults

	Total	GLBT	Gay/ Lesbian (Net)	Gay	Lesbian	Heterosexual
	(n=2,932)	(n=324)	(n=231)	(n=100)	(n=131)	(n=2,548)
	%	%	%	%	%	%
GLBT Familiar - Acquaintance (Net)	70	89	98	98	98	70
GLBT Familiar-Close Relationship (Net)	33	71	83	80	93	31
Yes, a family member	23	44	58	56	65	22
Yes, a close personal friend	17	61	77	72	90	14
Yes, a co-worker	19	32	47	45	52	18
Yes, a friend or acquaintance (not a co-worker)	39	63	72	71	75	38
Yes, another person not mentioned	20	55	71	74	63	18
No	21	4	-	-	-	22
Not sure	6	3	-	-	-	6

Notes:

1. Multiple-response question
2. Total base includes all heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents.
3. **GLBT Familiar-Acquaintance Net** includes those saying “YES”, ‘a family member’, ‘a close personal friend’, ‘a co-worker’, ‘a friend/acquaintance (not a co-worker)’ or ‘another person not mentioned’.
4. **GLBT Familiar-Close Relationship Net** includes those saying “YES”, ‘a family member’ or ‘a close personal friend only’.

(more)

TABLE 2
CONCERN ABOUT BEING VICTIM OF HATE CRIME

“Thinking about the various reasons why one may not come out, how concerned would you be about being the victim of a hate crime?”

Base: U.S. GLBT Adults

	GLBT (n=324)	Gay/ Lesbian (Net) (n=231)	Gay (n=100)	Lesbian (n=131)
	%	%	%	%
Top 3 Box (Net)	54	64	65	64
Top 2 Box (Net)	29	36	36	38
Extremely concerned	19	21	20	27
Very concerned	10	15	16	11
Concerned	25	28	29	26
Bottom 2 Box (Net)	47	36	36	35
Somewhat concerned	18	22	22	20
Not at all concerned	29	14	14	15

TABLE 3
CONCERN ABOUT REJECTION BY FAMILY

“Thinking about the various reasons why one may not come out, how concerned would you be about rejection by family?”

BASE: U.S. GLBT Adults

	GLBT (n=324)	Gay/ Lesbian (Net) (n=231)	Gay (n=100)	Lesbian (n=131)
	%	%	%	%
Top 3 Box (Net)	39	38	34	48
Top 2 Box (Net)	26	28	25	37
Extremely concerned	16	15	14	18
Very concerned	10	13	11	19
Concerned	13	10	9	11
Bottom 2 Box (Net)	61	62	66	53
Somewhat concerned	12	13	15	8
Not at all concerned	49	49	51	44

(more)

**TABLE 4
CONCERN ABOUT LOSING JOB**

“Thinking about the various reasons why one may not come out, how concerned would you be about losing your job?”

Base: U.S. GLBT Adults

	GLBT	Gay/ Lesbian (Net)	Gay	Lesbian
	(n=324)	(n=231)	(n=100)	(n=131)
	%	%	%	%
Top 3 Box (Net)	27	29	24	40
Top 2 Box (Net)	16	16	11	29
Extremely concerned	7	6	3	13
Very concerned	9	10	8	16
Concerned	11	13	13	11
Bottom 2 Box (Net)	73	71	75	60
Somewhat concerned	13	16	14	21
Not at all concerned	60	55	61	39

**TABLE 5
CONCERNED ABOUT REJECTION BY FRIENDS WHEN CONSIDERING TO COME ‘OUT’**

“Thinking about the various reasons why one may not come out, how concerned would you be about rejection by friends?”

Base: U.S. GLBT Adults

	GLBT	Gay/ Lesbian (Net)	Gay	Lesbian
	(n=324)	(n=231)	(n=100)	(n=131)
	%	%	%	%
Top 3 Box (Net)	32	33	31	38
Top 2 Box (Net)	18	23	23	24
Extremely concerned	11	12	12	11
Very concerned	7	11	11	13
Concerned	14	10	8	14
Bottom 2 Box (Net)	68	67	69	62
Somewhat concerned	19	18	19	15
Not at all concerned	49	49	49	47

(more)

TABLE 6
CONSIDER YOURSELF 'OUT' AS A GAY, LESBIAN OR BISEXUAL PERSON?

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

Base: U.S. GLBT Adults

	GLBT	Gay/ Lesbian (Net)	Gay	Lesbian
	(n=324)	(n=231)	(n=100)	(n=131)
	%	%	%	%
Yes	70	83	83	85
No	29	16	17	13

TABLE 7
OPENNESS ABOUT SEXUAL ORIENTATION

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

Summary of Yes Responses

Base: U.S. GLBT Adults

	GLBT	Gay/ Lesbian (Net)	Gay	Lesbian
	(n=324)	(n=231)	(n=100)	(n=131)
	%	%	%	%
Parents	59	78	77	82
Brothers or sisters	53	73	70	82
Other relatives (such as grandparents, cousins, etc.)	49	68	67	71
Close friends	78	92	90	96
Co-workers/Colleagues	47	66	65	70
Boss/Manager	31	45	43	50
Acquaintances/Casual friends	55	68	68	68
Church, synagogue or other place of worship (if attended regularly)	19	28	31	21
Another person not mentioned	34	40	39	45
None	13	2	3	1

Note: Respondents were not screened as to their friend, family or religious affiliations prior to responding to this question.

Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted the study online within the United States between September 7 and 14, 2006, among 2,932 adults (ages 18 and over), of whom 2,548 indicated they are heterosexual and 324 self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (this includes an over-sample of gays and lesbians). 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 populations that Harris Interactive has compiled through many different online surveys. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

All surveys are subject to several sources of error. These include: sampling error (because only a sample of a population is interviewed); measurement error due to question wording and/or question order, deliberately or unintentionally inaccurate responses, nonresponse (including refusals), interviewer effects (when live interviewers are used) and weighting.

With one exception (sampling error) the magnitude of the errors that result cannot be estimated. There is, therefore, no way to calculate a finite "margin of error" for any survey and the use of these words should be avoided.

With pure probability samples, with 100 percent response rates, it is possible to calculate the probability that the sampling error (but not other sources of error) is not greater than some number. With a pure probability sample of 2,932 one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/-2 percentage points. Sampling error for the sub-sample of heterosexuals would be +/-2 percentage points, and for the sub-sample of gays and lesbians +/-5 percentage points. Sampling error for results from sub-samples would be higher and would vary. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

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) 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. 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 trend-spotting for their path-breaking work on the gay and lesbian market. Combs and Witeck are also the authors of "***Business Inside Out: Tapping Millions of Brand-Loyal Gay Consumers***" (Kaplan Publishing, September 2006).

About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive is the 12th largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world. The company provides research-driven insights and strategic advice to help its clients make more confident decisions which lead to measurable and enduring improvements in performance. Harris Interactive is widely known for *The Harris Poll*, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls and for pioneering online market research methods. The company has built what could conceivably be the world's largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its United States, Europe and Asia offices, its wholly-owned subsidiary Novatris in France and through a global network of independent market research firms. The service bureau, HISB, provides its market research industry clients with mixed-mode data collection, panel development services as well as syndicated and tracking research consultation. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com.

To become a member of the Harris Poll Online and be invited to participate in online surveys, register at <http://go.hpolsurveys.com/PR>.

About the Human Rights Campaign's National Coming Out Project

The Human Rights Campaign's Coming Out Project encourages and empowers gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and straight supportive Americans to live openly and honestly about their lives. For more information on the Coming Out Project please visit www.hrc.org/comingout. "Talk About It" is the 2006 theme of National Coming Out day, October 11, 2006. It is an online public art project to help celebrate the day and all Americans who live openly and honestly. To learn more about this project, and its participants including pop superstar Pink, Rev. Gene Robinson, and other open Americans visit: www.hrc.org/snapshot

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