



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Significant Majority of All Adult Americans Believe it is Unfair that Federal Law Allows Employers to Fire Someone Because They are Gay or Lesbian**

*Sixth Annual Out & Equal/Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Communications Survey Explores Workplace Attitudes toward GLBT People*

**SAN FRANCISCO, Calif., and ROCHESTER, N.Y. – September 10, 2007** – Nearly two-thirds of all American adults (64%) believe it is unfair that federal law currently allows for an employer to fire someone because they are gay or lesbian. A similar majority (60%) of heterosexual adults were not even aware that federal law does not provide protections for employees on the basis of sexual orientation. An overwhelming majority (79%) of heterosexuals also feel that how an employee does his or her job, and not their sexual orientation, should be the standard for judging an employee. When it comes to the issue of transgender employees in the work place, two thirds of heterosexuals (67%) also agree that employee performance should be the standard by which they are judged and not whether they are transgender.

These are some of the results from the latest national Out & Equal Workplace survey, conducted online by Harris Interactive® in conjunction with Out & Equal and Witeck-Combs Communications, among 2,868 U.S. adults, of whom 350 self-identified as, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT)<sup>1</sup>. The survey is an annual barometer of attitudes surrounding GLBT issues in the workplace and is the longest-running survey of its kind.

Within the next two weeks, the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to vote on the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), a proposed U.S. federal law that, if enacted, will prohibit discrimination against employees on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The current version of the bill was introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives in April 2007 and for the first time includes gender identity as a protected category in relation to job discrimination.

“This survey continues to demonstrate that clear majorities of American adults agree that discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is wrong,” says Out & Equal Executive Director Selisse Berry. “It is apparent that heterosexual co-workers are realizing that sexual orientation is not relevant to job performance.”

---

<sup>1</sup> The sample of 350 includes an oversample of GLBT adults.

In addition, more heterosexuals (88%) say they would feel indifferent or feel positively upon learning that a co-worker is gay or lesbian. About one-in-ten (12%) say they would feel negatively.

This positive response from co-workers is likely a contributing factor to the increase in the numbers of gays and lesbians who feel comfortable<sup>2</sup> about being open in the workplace about their sexual orientation.<sup>3</sup>

- In 2007, 54 percent of GLBT adults are comfortable having a photo of their spouse, partner or significant other on their desk, compared to only 34 percent in 2002 who felt this way.
- In 2007, 64 percent of GLBT adults are comfortable introducing their spouse, partner or significant other to their co-workers, compared to 50 percent in 2002 who said they would be comfortable doing this.

In addition, half (51%) of gay and lesbian employees say they hear anti-gay comments at work and 15 percent say they were harassed on the job by co-workers.

“It is critical to ensure that all employees feel safe in their jobs and that the policies are being evenly enforced. This will not only send a strong message to the workforce that discrimination will not be tolerated, but creating a discrimination-free workplace will be an attraction to future employees considering work for the company,” added Berry.

In fact, when GLBT adults were asked about making decisions about their own career, all other things being equal:

- Seventy-six percent of GLBT adults say it is extremely or very important that a company offer equal health insurance benefits to all employees.
- Sixty-seven percent of GLBT adults say it is extremely or very important that a company have a written non-discrimination policy that includes race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability.

In most categories of workplace benefits, majorities of heterosexuals believe that same-sex couples should receive the same benefits as heterosexual couples:

- Sixty-four percent of heterosexual adults feel that leave rights for family and medical emergencies as outlined in the Family and Medical Leave Act should be applicable to the family circumstances facing both heterosexual and gay and lesbian employees.

---

<sup>2</sup> Comfortable is the NET of top-3 responses: “Extremely Comfortable, Very Comfortable and Comfortable”

<sup>3</sup> The 2002 study was conducted online between August 26 and September 2, 2002, by Harris Interactive among 2,203 adults aged 18 and over in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. and Out & Equal Workplace Advocates.

- Fifty-nine percent of heterosexual adults feel that regardless of sexual orientation, all employees are entitled to equal benefits on the job, such as health insurance for same-sex partners or spouses.
- Fifty-eight percent of heterosexual adults feel that health benefits extended by employers to both heterosexual spouses and partners of gay or lesbian employees should not be taxable.
- Fifty-six percent of heterosexuals feel that both heterosexual spouses and partners of gay or lesbian employees should be eligible to receive assistance with transfers to new locations when their spouse/partner has been transferred by their own employer.

The release of this study comes just two weeks before the start of the nation’s largest conference dedicated to addressing equality in the workplace for GLBT employees. The 17th annual Out & Equal Workplace Summit will be held September 27-29 at the Hilton Washington in Washington, D.C. More than 2,000 attendees will gather to share best practices on how to achieve workplace equality for LGBT employees. LGBT employees and straight allies, along with human resources and diversity professionals, representing some of the nation’s most prominent companies—a majority from the Fortune 500— are set to participate in this year’s summit.

“The Out & Equal Workplace Summit brings together employees and managers from all types of companies and organizations with a common goal – to understand how to make their workplace as free from discrimination of all kinds as possible,” affirms Out & Equal board president Tara Bunch.

For more information about the summit or to register, please visit [www.outandequal.org](http://www.outandequal.org).

**TABLE 1  
KNOWLEDGE OF FEDERAL LAW**

“Federal law – specifically Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – was adopted to prohibit employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin. The law does not include any protections for people on the basis of sexual orientation (gays and lesbians). Therefore, under federal law, it is legal for an employer to fire someone because they are gay or lesbian. Did you know this?”

Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	33	51	32
No	59	46	60
Not sure	8	3	9

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

**TABLE 2**  
**FAIRNESS OF FEDERAL LAW**  
 "Do you think that this is fair?"

Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	22	7	23
No	64	90	63
Not Sure	14	3	14

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

**TABLE 3**  
**EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

"How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: How an employee does his or her job should be the standard for judging an employee, not their sexual orientation?"

Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
<b>AGREE (NET)</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>79</b>
Strongly agree	66	88	65
Somewhat agree	13	5	14
Neither agree nor disagree	7	4	7
<b>DISAGREE (NET)</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5</b>
Somewhat disagree	2	-	3
Strongly disagree	2	-	3
Not Applicable	6	3	6
Decline to answer	3	-	3

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

Note: "-" means no response

**TABLE 4  
TRANSGENDER EMPLOYEES**

“Transgender is a broad term that applies to people who live all or much of their lives expressing a personal sense of gender that differs from their assigned birth sex. In other words, transgender people simply feel like their assigned sex fails to reflect their true gender identity. Or said another way, a person that is born female feels that they really should have been born a male and wishes to live openly as a man (or vice versa). How strongly do you agree or disagree that how an employee performs at their job should be the standard for judging an employee, not whether or not they are transgender?”  
Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
<b>AGREE (NET)</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>67</b>
Strongly agree	52	73	51
Somewhat agree	15	8	16
Neither agree nor disagree	12	5	12
<b>DISAGREE (NET)</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
Somewhat disagree	4	4	4
Strongly disagree	10	9	10
Not Applicable	2	-	2
Decline to answer	5	1	5

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.  
Note: “-“ means no response

**TABLE 5  
REACTIONS**

“If someone with whom I had been working with told me that he or she is gay or lesbian, my reaction would be....”

Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
Positive (“I have no problem with your telling me the truth and am glad you feel comfortable being honest with me.”)	37	76	34
Neutral (“It does not matter to me or make a difference one way or the other if you are open about this.”)	52	24	54
Negative (“I do not agree with homosexuality and knowing you are gay or lesbian is a problem for me.”)	11	-	12

Note: Percentages may not add up exactly to 100% due to rounding.  
Note: “-“ means no response.

**TABLE 6  
COMFORT LEVELS AT WORK**

“In your current or your most recent job, how comfortable are you or were you introducing your spouse, partner or significant other to your co-workers?”

Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
<b>COMFORTABLE (NET)</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>69</b>
Extremely Comfortable	33	26	33
Very Comfortable	19	19	20
Comfortable	17	19	16
<b>SOMEWHAT/NOT AT ALL COMFORTABLE (NET)</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>
Somewhat Comfortable	4	6	4
Not at all Comfortable	2	6	2
Not Applicable	25	24	25

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

**TABLE 7  
COMFORT LEVELS AT WORK**

“In your current or your most recent job, how comfortable are you or were you having a photo of your spouse or significant other on your desk or in your office?”

Base: All Adults

	<b>Total</b>	<b>GLBT</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	%	%	%
<b>COMFORTABLE (NET)</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>63</b>
Extremely Comfortable	33	25	33
Very Comfortable	15	18	15
Comfortable	15	11	15
<b>SOMEWHAT/NOT AT ALL COMFORTABLE (NET)</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>
Somewhat Comfortable	3	4	3
Not at all Comfortable	4	11	3
Not Applicable	31	30	31

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

**TABLE 8  
COMFORT LEVELS AT WORK– COMPARED TO 2002**

“In your current or your most recent job, how comfortable are you or were you...?”

Percentages of those saying “Extremely Comfortable/Very Comfortable/Comfortable

Base: All Adults

	<b>GLBT</b>	
	<b>2002</b>	<b>2007</b>
	%	%
Introducing your spouse, partner or significant other to your co-workers	50	64
Having a photo of your spouse, partner or a significant other on your desk or in your office	34	54

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

**TABLE 9  
DISCRIMINATIONS FACED**

“Have you ever faced any of these forms of discrimination in the workplace because of your sexual orientation or gender identity? Please select all that apply.”

Base: All Adults

	Total	Gay/Lesbian	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
I have never faced any form of discrimination in the workplace because of my sexual orientation or gender identity.	82	26	85
I was denied a promotion or job advance	2	10	2
Anti-gay comments	2	51	-
Closeted (can't freely talk like others, take dates to functions)	2	44	-
I was harassed on the job by co-workers	2	15	1
I was fired or dismissed unfairly	2	11	1
Partner not considered as such (for social functions, insurance)	2	34	-
I was pressured to quit my job because of harassment or hostility	1	8	1
Other form of discrimination	4	16	4
Decline to answer	7	2	7

Note: “-“ means no response

**TABLE 10  
MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT ONE'S CAREER**

“All other things being equal, when making decisions about your own career, how important is it for you to work for a company that offers equal health insurance benefits to all employees?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLBT	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
<b>EXTREMELY/VERY IMPORTANT (NET)</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>63</b>
Extremely Important	44	62	43
Very Important	20	14	21
Important	15	10	16
<b>SOMEWHAT/NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT (NET)</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>8</b>
Somewhat Important	5	2	5
Not at all Important	3	1	3
Not Applicable	13	11	13

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

**TABLE 11  
MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT ONE'S CAREER**

“All other things being equal, when making decisions about your own career, how important is it for you to work for a company that has a written non-discrimination policy that includes all of the following: race, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLBT	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
<b>EXTREMELY/VERY IMPORTANT (NET)</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>46</b>
Extremely Important	29	52	27
Very Important	18	15	19
Important	19	18	19
<b>SOMEWHAT/NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT (NET)</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>
Somewhat Important	9	2	10
Not at all Important	10	3	11
Not Applicable	14	10	15

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

**TABLE 12  
JUDGING AN EMPLOYEE**

“How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Regardless of their sexual orientation, all employees are entitled to equal benefits on the job, such as health insurance for their partners or spouses.”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLBT	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
<b>AGREE (NET)</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>59</b>
Strongly agree	46	81	44
Somewhat agree	15	9	15
Neither agree nor disagree	11	4	12
<b>DISAGREE (NET)</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>
Somewhat disagree	7	1	7
Strongly disagree	11	1	12
Not Applicable	6	3	7
Decline to answer	4	0	3

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

**TABLE 13  
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES AND PARTNERS**

“Employers sometimes offer different benefits to spouses or married heterosexual employees compared to committed partners of gay and lesbian employees. For the following employer benefits, who do you think should receive each – Untaxed health insurance benefits?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLBT	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
Spouses of married heterosexual employees only	29	2	31
Committed partners of gay and lesbian employees only	3	3	2
Both spouses and partners	60	87	58
Neither spouses nor partners	9	9	9

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

**TABLE 14  
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES AND PARTNERS**

“Employers sometimes offer different benefits to spouses or married heterosexual employees compared to committed partners of gay and lesbian employees. For the following employer benefits, who do you think should receive each – Transfers for employees to new locations when their spouse/partner has been transferred by their own employer?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLBT	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
Spouses of married heterosexual employees only	25	3	26
Committed partners of gay and lesbian employees only	3	2	3
Both spouses and partners	58	86	56
Neither spouses nor partners	14	9	14

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

**TABLE 15  
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS FOR SPOUSES AND PARTNERS**

“Employers sometimes offer different benefits to spouses or married heterosexual employees compared to committed partners of gay and lesbian employees. For the following employer benefits, who do you think should receive each – Leave rights for family and medical emergencies as outlined in the Family and Medical Leave Act?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLBT	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
Spouses of married heterosexual employees only	27	2	29
Committed partners of gay and lesbian employees only	3	3	3
Both spouses and partners	65	91	64
Neither spouses nor partners	5	4	4

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

## **About the Out & Equal Workplace Summit**

The 2007 Out & Equal Workplace Summit is scheduled for September 27-29 at the Hilton Washington Hotel in Washington, DC. The Summit will bring together a record breaking 2,000 human resources professionals, LGBT workplace advocates, straight allies and other committed individuals from around the country to receive the latest updates on LGBT issues in the workplace. Keynote speakers include former NBA player John Amaechi, civil rights activists and musicians Bernice Johnson Reagon and Toshi Reagon, and MTV executive and LOGO president Brian Graden.

In addition to the annual Workplace Summit, Out & Equal offers: Building Bridges Diversity Training specific to LGBT workplace issues; a growing network of regional affiliates that includes New York City, Dallas/Fort Worth, San Francisco, Chicago, Rocky Mountain, Arizona, Washington, DC, and Southern California; provides support to LGBT employee resource groups; offers a free bi-monthly Town Call phone-in conference series; a national newsletter; and the Out & Equal Institute, an information-gathering program that allows researchers, executives and diversity professionals to discuss the state of LGBT workplace research and to identify necessary future collaborative resources.

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in San Francisco, California. Out & Equal™ Workplace Advocates champions safe and equitable workplaces for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The organization advocates building and strengthening successful organizations that value all employees, customers and communities.

**For more information, including how to register for the Summit, visit [www.outandequal.org](http://www.outandequal.org).**

### **Methodology**

Harris Interactive® conducted the study online within the United States between August 7 and 13, 2007, among 2,868 adults (ages 18 and over), of whom 2,518 indicated they are heterosexual and 350 self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender<sup>4</sup>. 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 was also 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. These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

---

<sup>4</sup>Includes an oversample of GLBT adults.

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

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. is the nation's premier strategic marketing communications firm, specializing in reaching the gay and lesbian consumer market. With over fourteen years experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay and lesbian consumers. 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](http://www.witeckcombs.com).

### **About Harris Interactive**

Harris Interactive is the 13th largest and one of the fastest-growing market research firms in the world. The company provides innovative research, 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 it believes to be the world's largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its North American, European and Asian offices, and through a global network of independent market research firms. More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at [www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com).

To become a member of the Harris Poll Online and be invited to participate in online surveys, register at [www.harrispollonline.com](http://www.harrispollonline.com).

### **Press Contacts:**

Nancy Wong  
Harris Interactive  
609-919-2426  
[nwong@harrisinteractive.com](mailto:nwong@harrisinteractive.com)

Jere Keys, Communications Manager  
Out & Equal Workplace Advocates  
415-694-6512  
[jkeys@outandequal.org](mailto:jkeys@outandequal.org)

Wesley Combs  
Witeck-Combs Communications  
202-887-0500 ext. 14  
[wcombs@witeckcombs.com](mailto:wcombs@witeckcombs.com)

Harris Interactive Inc. 09/07