

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

Contributed by Harris Interactive
Monday, 27 October 2008
Last Updated Sunday, 04 January 2009

October 10th 2008 - Washington, DC

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

According to a new national survey, nearly nine out of 10 (87%) of 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 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."

Â