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## **Gay Households Cope with Falling Economy**

*New online study shows varied attitudes associated with gender and sexual orientation*

**Washington, DC – November 17, 2008** – While many American households cut spending and shift consumer priorities to cope with tough, new economic realities, a new national survey conducted online by Harris Interactive® shows marked differences in responses based on gender and sexual orientation, frequently with lesbian adults feeling more vulnerable when compared to other populations, while gay men appear less likely to cut back discretionary spending compared with their heterosexual counterparts.

A majority (55%) of all U.S. adults indicate that they will be impacted by the economic downturn. Among other groups the economic downturn is perceived to have more influence. For example, when asked to think about their own personal circumstances today, 3 out of 4 (75%) adult lesbians say they feel the impact of the severe economic downturn will affect individuals and households like theirs more than others. In contrast, this opinion was held by 60% of heterosexual women and 55% of gay men.

Not surprisingly therefore, when asked about spending for entertainment generally, over four out of 10 lesbians (44%) said they likely will reduce their spending, in contrast to fewer than a quarter (24%) of gay men. Similarly, when asked about plans to take a vacation from home lasting more than a week – a clear majority (56%) of heterosexual adults said they were not at all likely to do so within the next 6 months – compared to 42% of gay and lesbian adults who agreed. Looking only at gay men, 39% said they were not at all likely to take a vacation compared to more than half (52%) of heterosexual men.

The new nationwide survey of 2,449 U.S. adults, (ages 18 and over), of whom 232 self identified as gay or lesbian (which includes an oversample of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender adults), was conducted online between October 20 and 27, 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.

“In light of this historic, severe recession, very few Americans remain unscathed. All consumers must make tougher choices on spending, saving and investing – and our findings highlight some of these personal trade-offs,” said Bob Witeck, CEO of Witeck-Combs Communications.

Witeck added that, “Gay households are hardly immune, and demographic research confirms that GLBT consumers are not more affluent than others. However, we see lesbians once again showing more vulnerability than gay men, and while gay men also are scaling back in spending options, it is less so than heterosexual households. Not surprisingly, while more same-sex households, especially women are raising children,

proportionately more gay male households remain childless and therefore may feel somewhat freer to make choices in today's tight economy."

In one category that gay men report they plan to economize will be in purchasing gifts for this year's holiday season with 60% saying they will reduce spending compared to 1 of 2 (50%) heterosexual men. Again, with smaller households and fewer children, this trade-off may be logical for gay males. Interestingly, when it comes to dining at a restaurant, more than a quarter (28%) of lesbians say they are not at all likely to decrease spending on eating meals out within the next 6 months compared to only 16% of heterosexual women who say they do not expect to decrease spending on restaurant meals.

**TABLE 1**  
**IMPACT OF SEVERE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**

"Thinking about your own personal circumstances, do you feel that the impact of a severe economic downturn will ..."

Base: All Adults

|  | Total | Gay/<br>Lesbian | Gay       | Lesbian   | Hetero-<br>sexual | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Male | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Female |
|--|-------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Affect people like me and my household more  | 55    | 61              | <b>55</b> | <b>75</b> | 55                | 49                        | <b>60</b>                   |
| Cause no real change for me and my household | 17    | 13              | 16        | 8         | 17                | 21                        | 14                          |
| Affect people like me and my household less  | 9     | 6               | 8         | 3         | 9                 | 10                        | 8                           |
| I have no idea what its impact will be       | 19    | 20              | 22        | 14        | 19                | 20                        | 18                          |

**TABLE 2**  
**CHANGING FINANCIAL BEHAVIORS IN NEXT 6 MONTHS**

"Thinking of something else, how likely will you be to do the following within the next 6 months?"

Base: All Adults

***"Take a vacation away from home lasting longer than a week"***

|             | Total | Gay/<br>Lesbian | Gay | Lesbian | Hetero-<br>sexual | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Male | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Female |
|-------------|-------|-----------------|-----|---------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Likely NET) | 28    | 32              | 36  | 24      | 28                | 30                        | 25                          |
| Absolutely  | 9     | 9               | 10  | 6       | 9                 | 8                         | 9                           |
| Very        | 7     | 6               | 4   | 9       | 7                 | 8                         | 6                           |

|                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Likely          | 12 | 17 | 22 | 9  | 12 | 13 | 11 |
| Not Likely (NET | 72 | 68 | 64 | 76 | 72 | 70 | 75 |
| Somewhat        | 17 | 26 | 25 | 27 | 17 | 19 | 15 |
| Not at all      | 56 | 42 | 39 | 49 | 56 | 52 | 60 |

***“Reduce spending for gifts for this year’s holiday season”***

|                 | Total | Gay/<br>Lesbian | Gay | Lesbian | Hetero-<br>sexual | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Male | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Female |
|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-----|---------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Likely (NET)    | 56    | 60              | 60  | 60      | 56                | 50                        | 62                          |
| Absolutely      | 17    | 21              | 21  | 21      | 17                | 13                        | 21                          |
| Very            | 17    | 14              | 13  | 16      | 17                | 14                        | 20                          |
| Likely          | 22    | 25              | 26  | 24      | 22                | 24                        | 21                          |
| Not Likely (NET | 44    | 40              | 40  | 40      | 44                | 50                        | 38                          |
| Somewhat        | 23    | 24              | 23  | 25      | 23                | 25                        | 22                          |
| Not at all      | 20    | 16              | 17  | 15      | 20                | 25                        | 16                          |

***“Decrease spending on eating out at restaurants”***

|                 | Total | Gay/<br>Lesbian | Gay | Lesbian | Hetero-<br>sexual | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Male | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Female |
|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-----|---------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Likely (NET)    | 56    | 53              | 51  | 56      | 56                | 52                        | 60                          |
| Absolutely      | 17    | 14              | 14  | 14      | 17                | 14                        | 20                          |
| Very            | 18    | 16              | 14  | 19      | 18                | 16                        | 20                          |
| Likely          | 21    | 23              | 23  | 22      | 21                | 23                        | 20                          |
| Not Likely (NET | 44    | 47              | 49  | 44      | 44                | 48                        | 40                          |
| Somewhat        | 25    | 24              | 28  | 17      | 25                | 26                        | 24                          |
| Not at all      | 19    | 23              | 21  | 28      | 19                | 22                        | 16                          |

***“Reduce spending on entertainment”***

|              | Total | Gay/<br>Lesbian | Gay | Lesbian | Hetero-<br>sexual | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Male | Hetero-<br>sexual<br>Female |
|--------------|-------|-----------------|-----|---------|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Likely (NET) | 51    | 50              | 45  | 61      | 51                | 47                        | 55                          |
| Absolutely   | 14    | 16              | 16  | 17      | 14                | 11                        | 16                          |

|                 |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-----------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Very            | 16 | 14 | 8  | 27 | 16 | 15 | 17 |
| Likely          | 22 | 20 | 21 | 17 | 21 | 21 | 22 |
| Not Likely (NET | 49 | 50 | 55 | 39 | 49 | 53 | 45 |
| Somewhat        | 28 | 30 | 35 | 19 | 28 | 30 | 26 |
| Not at all      | 21 | 20 | 19 | 21 | 21 | 23 | 19 |

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## Methodology

Harris Interactive conducted the study online within the United States between October 20 and 27, 2008, among 2,449 adults (ages 18 and over), of whom 2,098 indicated they are heterosexual and 232 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](http://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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