



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 18, 2007

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NEW SURVEY REVEALS LESBIANS FEEL MORE STRESS AROUND HOLIDAYS THAN THEIR HETEROSEXUAL COUNTERPARTS

WASHINGTON – When it comes to stress or depression during the holiday season, lesbians tend to feel both at higher levels than their heterosexual counterparts. In a new survey conducted by Harris Interactive, four out of five (80%) of lesbian adults say they tend to feel more stressed around the holidays while 64% of the heterosexual women surveyed said they tend to feel more stressed. Additionally, while half (51%) of lesbians said they tend to feel depressed around the holidays, only 36% of heterosexual women said they did.

"Estrangement from family, marginalization within and isolation from society, separation from children (sometimes due to custody battles), and inadequate access to culturally sensitive health care practitioners are all factors that can adversely affect mood during a season so identified with 'family' activities and 'belonging,'" said Dr. Linda Spooner, Chair of The Mautner Project's Board of Directors and a practicing physician in Washington, D.C.

"Stress and depression have major impacts on quality of life, workplace productivity and leisure activity, as well as on development and management of such conditions as hypertension and other cardiovascular disease," continued Spooner. "In addition, sleep disorders, asthma, anxiety, treatments for cancer, recovery from surgery and perhaps the development of illnesses such as diabetes are also impacted."

"More research and more funding for lesbian health initiatives would enable the community to gauge where lesbians are found on the health issues continuum, and further advance health and wellness for this population," said Spooner. "As the national lesbian health organization, The Mautner Project is once again calling on mental health and medical researchers to do more to include lesbians in their studies so that our community as well as lesbians individually can understand how to do more to take care of themselves and prevent disease."

“For lesbians, the baseline levels of stress and depressive feelings are often higher even before the holidays begin and the causes of those stress levels should be more specifically identified and addressed,” said Colleen Dermody, Vice President of Witeck-Combs Communications. “We know from past polls that isolation, stigma and the potential for discrimination have been major obstacles for lesbians and gays seeking appropriate health care across the country.”

Smoking: A Health Factor for Lesbians Too, Survey Finds

In addition to stress and depression the survey also asked several questions about smoking habits. When asked if they smoked, 25% of lesbians said they were smokers compared to 19% of heterosexual women who said they were smokers. When asked how likely it is that they would try to quit smoking in the next 12 months, only 23% of lesbians said they were vs. 50% of heterosexual women.

“The smoking rates among the lesbian population in this country are abysmal,” said Dr. Spooner. “We have not done enough to help lesbians quit. Nearly all of the studies on smoking have been conducted only among the heterosexual population so we do not really know why the lesbian smoking rate is greater or why lesbians are so much less likely to consider quitting.”

“The National Institutes of Health and the federal agencies charged with protecting the nation’s health must include lesbians in all future health studies and surveys if we are ever going to combat the high smoking rates among lesbian adults,” concluded Spooner.

The survey of 2,625 U.S. adults aged 18 or older was conducted online between November 7 and 13, 2007 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.

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**TABLE 1
HOLIDAY STRESS**

“Thinking now of the upcoming holidays, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement – I tend to feel more stressed around the holidays.”

Base: All adults

	Total	Lesbian	Heterosexual women
	%	%	%
AGREE (NET)	56	80	64
Strongly agree	18	21	23
Somewhat agree	37	60	41
DISAGREE (NET)	43	20	36
Somewhat disagree	23	11	18
Strongly disagree	20	9	18
Not sure	1	-	*

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

“-“ = no response

“*” = less than 0.5%

**TABLE 2
HOLIDAY DEPRESSION**

“Thinking now of the upcoming holidays, please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statement – I tend to feel depressed around the holidays.”

Base: All adults

	Total	Lesbian	Heterosexual women
	%	%	%
AGREE (NET)	31	51	36
Strongly agree	9	13	10
Somewhat agree	22	37	26
DISAGREE (NET)	67	49	63
Somewhat disagree	24	22	22
Strongly disagree	43	27	41
Not sure	2	-	1

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

“-“ = no response

**TABLE 3
SMOKING LEVELS**

“Are you a cigarette smoker?”

Base: All adults

	Total	Lesbian	Heterosexual women
	%	%	%
Yes	18	25	19
No	81	75	81
Decline to answer	1	-	1

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

“-“ = no response

TABLE 4
LIKELIHOOD OF QUITTING SMOKING

“How likely is it that you will try to quit smoking in the next 12 months?”

Base: All adults

	Total	Lesbian	Heterosexual women
	%	%	%
LIKELY (NET)	52	23	50
Very likely	27	20	26
Somewhat likely	24	3	24
Neither likely nor unlikely	13	2	15
UNLIKELY (NET)	31	49	31
Somewhat unlikely	10	16	9
Very unlikely	21	33	21
Not sure	4	26	4

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

Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted the study online within the United States between November 7 and 13, 2007, among 2,625 adults (ages 18 and over), of whom 2,251 indicated they are heterosexual and 326 self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, with 111 self-identifying as lesbian. 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.

About the Mautner Project

The Mautner Project’s mission is to improve the health and wellness of lesbians and women who partner with women through research, advocacy, education and direct services. To learn more, visit www.mautnerproject.org.

About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. is the nation’s premier marketing communications and public relations firm, specializing in developing and implementing effective strategies 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. For more information please visit 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. To become a member of the Harris Poll Online and be invited to participate in online surveys, register at www.harrispollonline.com.

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