

For Immediate Release

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December: Vacation-heavy Month Light on Attendance

New Survey Reveals Many Employees Taking Time Off during the Holiday Season

CHELMSFORD, Mass. Dec. 13, 2007 — In a month filled with several major holidays including Kwanzaa, Hanukah, Christmas, and New Year's Eve, the halls of offices everywhere are not only decked, but very, very quiet. According to "December: Vacation-heavy Month Light on Attendance", a new survey conducted online by [Harris Interactive®](#) and sponsored by [The Workforce Institute™](#) at [Kronos® Incorporated](#), more than half of all full-time employees surveyed plan to take time off in December.

"Perhaps more than any other month, December is recognized as one where many people take vacation and even while in the office, are often times focused on non-work related events," said Joyce Maroney, director of the Workforce Institute. "From holiday parties and 'Yankee swaps' to team lunches and dinners – the festivities of the month definitely carry over into the workplace."

Holiday greetings and no Monday meetings

This year in particular, with both Christmas Eve, Dec. 24 and New Year's Eve, Dec. 31, falling on Mondays, many of those who are employed full-time are planning to make long weekends out of both. Sixty-three percent of employed full-time survey respondents plan to take the day off on Dec. 24, with 49 percent of these having the day off as a holiday and the rest (14 percent) planning to take it off using paid or unpaid leave. Slightly less — 53 percent — are planning to take the day off on New Year's Eve day, with 36 percent of these having the day off as a holiday and the rest (16 percent) taking the day off using paid or unpaid leave.

It's the busiest season of all

With such high levels of planned absenteeism, some employers have taken to giving employees the week off between Christmas and New Year's. Eighteen percent of survey respondents work for employers who close during the entire time between Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Regardless of whether or not their places of work close down, 32 percent of respondents said they typically take the entire time off between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. The reasons for which those employed full-time typically take time off during December are not surprising. The most frequent reason cited is to spend time with family (52 percent), followed by preparing for the holidays (31 percent), and shopping (21 percent).

No time for wasting

Among those whose employers offer paid time off, 27 percent are not allowed to carry over any paid time off from one year to the next. Twenty-five percent of respondents said they typically take time off in December to use their allotted days off before year's end, a practice sometimes referred to as "Use it or lose it."

"For many organizations, difficulties arise when there are large numbers of unplanned absences that occur," said Maroney. "Employers who don't allow employees to carry paid time off into the new year should expect significant absences in December. They should look for ways to deal with it earlier in the year — whether by bringing on additional seasonal help, or encouraging employees to schedule time off throughout the year."

Calming the chaos

Among adults employed full-time, only 20 percent said they use an automated system or software to submit time-off requests, meaning that the vast majority are submitting their requests for time off in some other way (e.g. verbally or in writing).

"It was surprising to see such a small percentage of respondents use an automated system for time-off requests," said Maroney. "Automating this process can help organizations to plan better, reducing human error and confusion when it comes to scheduling absences and giving organizations a better handle on what their absenteeism looks like — not just in December — but over the course of the whole year."

Survey Methodology

This holiday work schedule survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of Kronos, Incorporated between November 29 and December 3, 2007 among 2,949 U.S. adults aged 18 and over among whom 972 were employed full-time. Results were weighted as needed for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income. 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 U.S. adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to be invited to participate in the Harris Interactive online research panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Harris Interactive

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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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Note to Editors:

Cite survey findings as: “December: Vacation-heavy Month Light on Attendance” survey conducted by Harris Interactive and commissioned by The Workforce Institute at Kronos Incorporated.

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