



# Green Certification in the Bay Area

## An Advanced Placement Environmental Science Project

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### Abstract

In this study, I surveyed the owners, founders, CEOs, presidents, ministers, and other administrators and staff of twelve Green Certified businesses, organizations, and companies occupying a broad range of sectors (from retail, to churches, to business services) within Alameda County. My goal was to determine why one wishes to become "Green Certified", what the benefits associated with the certification are, and whether or not the certification is simply a formality for those who are already practicing "Green" business. The survey was conducted in the format of a survey with twenty-six questions that could be answered on paper forms or an online survey. Approximately ninety-two percent of the participants opted for the online survey. The results of the survey can be seen in the following graphs and the Discussion / Conclusion section offers an analysis of the results.

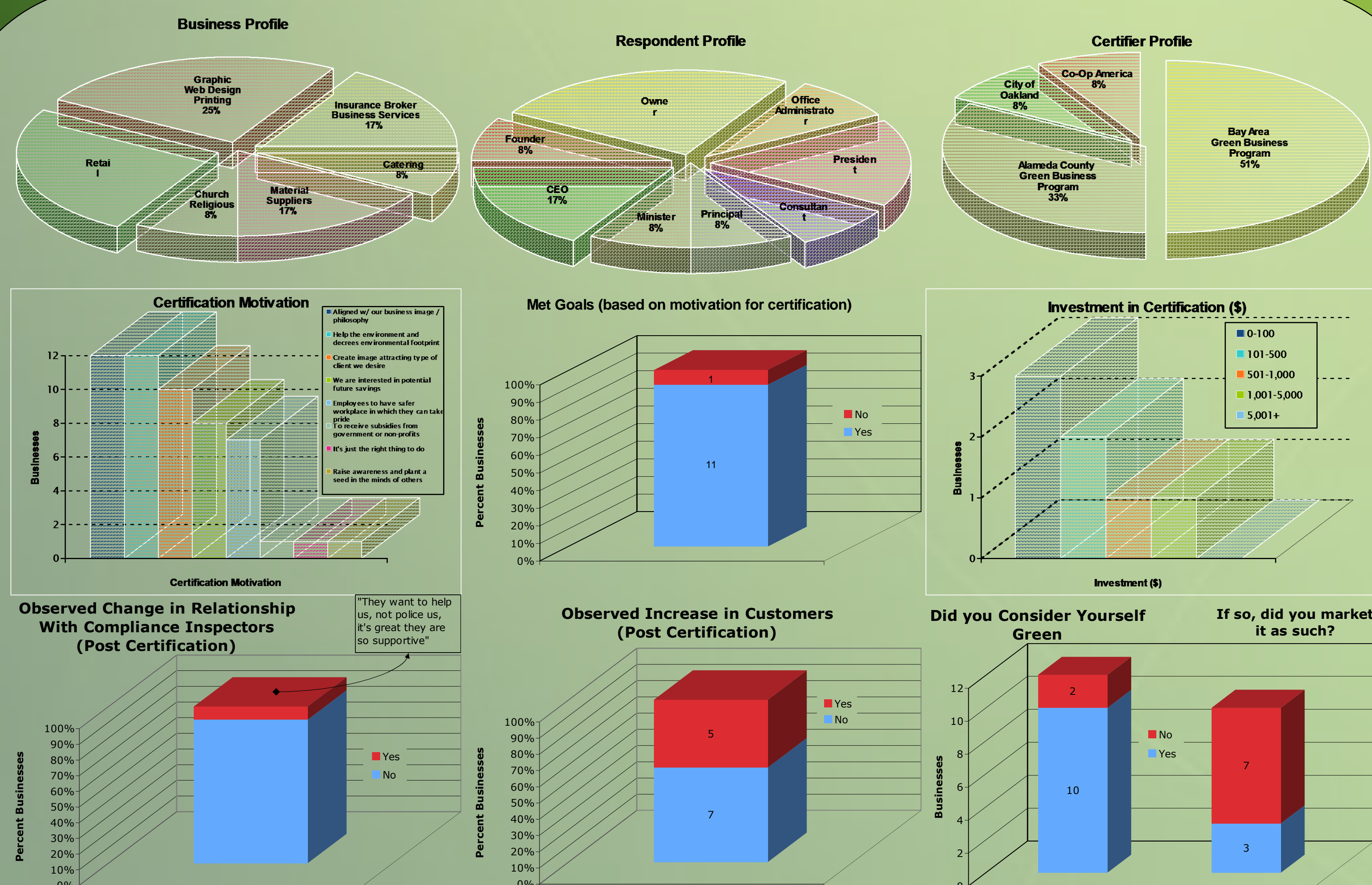
### Introduction

In our technology driven world, the effects of our way of life can lead to disastrous environmental impacts. Material resources are used and thrown out after a single use, filling our landfills and dumps. Energy is being piped into our homes and offices at hours when we are not there to utilize it, causing us to burn more coal to generate electricity in environmentally unsound ways. Clean, potable water is brought long distances across borders where it is wasted and used in larger amounts than necessary. Our cars and factories dump pollutants into our air, causing medical problems for humans, and destroying the ozone layer. Individuals, businesses, companies, and organizations have the opportunity to limit their negative impacts on the environment, while receiving a number of other benefits. Organizations like "Bay Area Green Business" help those who wish to become environmentally and sustainable certified ("Green certified") to obtain that certification.

### Method / Materials

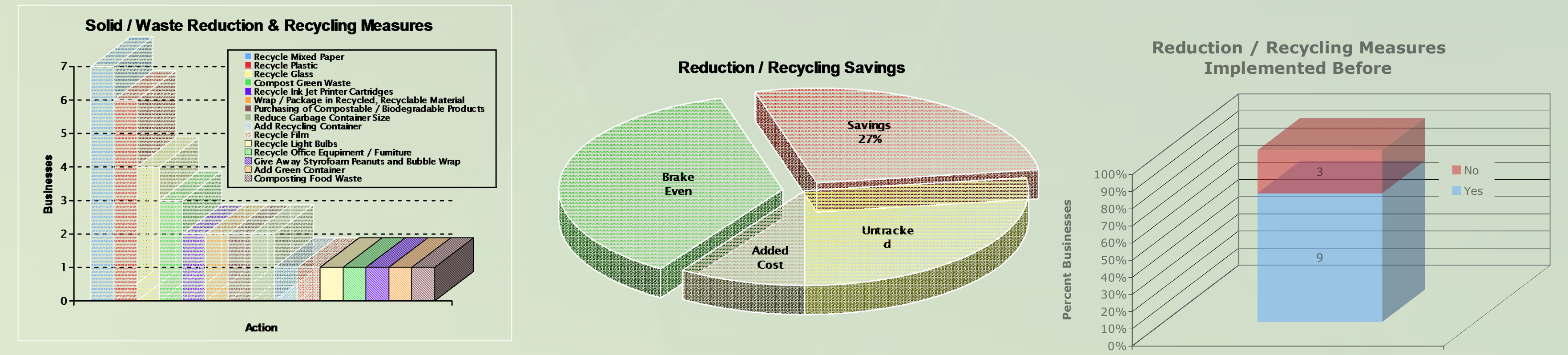
The Bay Area Green Business organization offers a listing of the businesses that they certified. This list contained the websites for a number of those businesses. From these websites, I harvested email addresses of those who would be my survey participants. I sent out an email to these addresses introducing myself, my school, and my project, and I requested that someone from their business fill out the survey. The survey was provided as a PDF file and as an online survey consisting of twenty-six questions. Survey participants could use a combination of checkboxes, radio select boxes, and text fields to input data into a database driven survey system. The data was then inputted into Microsoft Excel and compiled into graphs for analysis.

### Preliminary Data

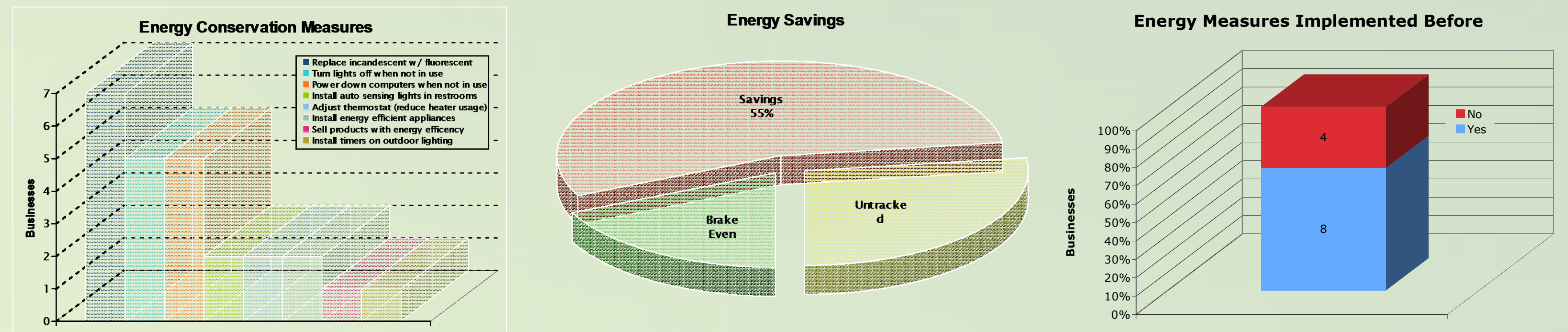


### Results

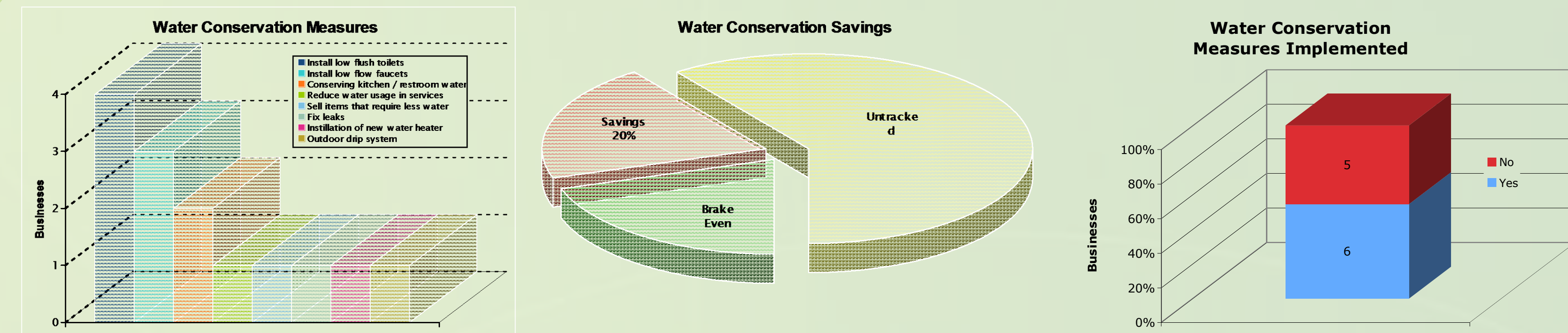
#### Reduction / Recycling



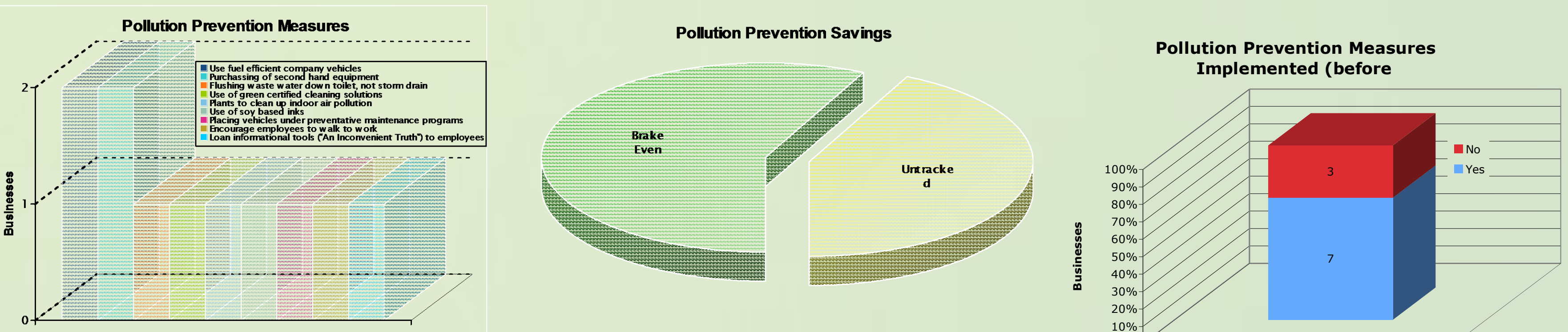
#### Energy Conservation



#### Water Conservation



#### Pollution Prevention



### Conclusion / Discussion

The results demonstrated that the majority of the participants became certified either because it was aligned with their business philosophy or because they wanted to help the environment. The initial investments put into their certification tended to be very low if not at all costly. While the majority of participants considered their businesses to be "Green" prior to their certification, most did not market themselves as "Green." This causes me to believe that the certification process for most was simply a formality to achieve increased recognition with in the community. While savings did result from most of the actions taken, they did not seem to be the primary goal of becoming certified. Recycling and reduction measures tended to provide the broadest area for change, where as measures for energy efficiency tended to produce the greatest savings.