

UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Report

UBC Food Services Revisited

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University of British Columbia

AGSC 450

April 3, 2002

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UBC FOOD SERVICES

Revisited



From the six corners of the world...

The multicultural Group 13:

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Just wanted to also remind you that our website is best viewed in Explorer (the formatting doesn't work in Netscape)

Abstract

The focus of our report is on UBC Food Services (UBCFS) and their current practices within the framework of the campus community. Although there are several issues facing UBCFS, we chose to focus on a few, partially due to time constraints and primarily because our value assumptions influenced what we deem to be important problems affecting the sustainability of the UBCFS. Thus, we concentrated our efforts towards the economical, ecological, and social concerns regarding UBCFS that we felt were important to address.

We investigated UBCFS from the UBCFS' current mission statement and five-year plan, verbal communication with the director of UBCFS and a food service supervisor at Totem Park kitchen, previous surveys, as well as a survey we developed. From this research, along with our values and beliefs, [REDACTED] we identified problems with the UBCFS and offered recommendations. We found that our proposed solutions, with great effort and extensive integration and collaboration among several parties, could feasibly be implemented.

Introduction

We feel that the current mission statement of UBC Food Services (UBCFS) does not reflect what we deem important to ensuring the viability of UBCFS in an economically, ecologically, and socially acceptable manner. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

UBCFS into the educational framework would mutually benefit both UBCFS and the academic community. [REDACTED]

Although food security, infrastructure issues, and labour costs warrant future research, time constraints prevented us from focusing on these issues. We hope that aspiring students will further explore these topics.

Value Assumptions

In our attempts to remodel the UBCFS mission statement, our values and beliefs predominantly drive both our identification of problems and the recommendations that we will offer [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We follow a community-based approach, whereby we view the UBCFS from a holistic perspective, rather than as a separate entity. Our hopes are to enrich the quality of life for students by connecting them with UBCFS during their education and linking them to the source of their food. In this way, students would have the opportunity to understand the economic, social and ecological implications of where their food comes from and how it is made. UBCFS would also benefit from students' innovative recommendations, while at the same time obtaining important services free of cost. Since environmental and social awareness are important values for us, we hope that they will be incorporated into the decision-making processes of students as well as UBCFS.

The actions UBCFS takes in the next five years will have direct consequences on students, the environment and the social setting of the entire university. However, UBCFS is currently operating on an isolated level by just viewing their choices in economic terms. We realize that financial constraints are ultimately what drive any business, but we also believe that UBCFS should not only operate as a business,

but as an advocator of education and well-being for students. In other words, UBCFS is part of the UBC community, not just a separate entity that operates within it.

Problems with UBCFS

Problem 1: Social Sustainability Issues

There are several problems that were identified from the mission statement. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] First of all,

several terms such as “good food” and “value” are quite subjective ([REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and vague. “Good food” could refer to taste,

appearance, or healthiness of a food, but it is difficult to ascertain which characteristic(s) is (are) actually

being addressed. With regard to “value,” one can assume that this refers to cost, which many students

consider too high for the food offered on campus.² Thus, the use of these terms creates ambiguity as well

as inconsistency between what is promised and what is offered.

Also, the term “strategically located so you can access good food, quality service in a pleasant environment whenever you want!”¹ is also subjective, since many students complain that most UBCFS establishments are always crowded, and that hours of operation do not cater to those students who remain on campus later in the day. In addition, few students enjoy the “pleasant environment” of Pacific Spirit Place, one of the larger and more central UBCFS outlets². These assumptions lead us to believe that UBCFS is not yet reacting to feedback from the campus community, and is providing services that only it considers satisfactory.

Another major social concern is the lack of a direct working relationship between UBCFS and the UBC community. The goals of Trek 2000 are to “offer students an intellectually challenging education that takes advantage of our unique social and cultural make-up, geographical location, and research environment, and that prepares them to become citizens of the twenty-first century through programs that

are international in scope, interactive in process, and interdisciplinary in content and approach.”³ Thus, it would be advantageous to have establishments on campus involved in the educational advancement of students. Currently, there are only a few initiatives in place that attempt to provide students with practical experience in their fields of study. UBCFS could play a pivotal role in establishing such a connection.

Other problems that we identified regarding UBCFS include the lack of opportunity for students to prepare their own food on campus. UBCFS offers mainly prepackaged, ready-to-eat products, and a limited choice of fruits and vegetables. Specifically, at residence mini-marts, mainly processed food is available for purchase. While convenient, these choices are not nutritious, as they tend to be high in sugar and/or salt as well as additives. Nor are they ecologically sound, as excessive packaging of these products generates substantial waste.

Finally, neither the mission statement nor the five-year plan of UBCFS mention the four A’s of food security: affordability, accessibility, availability and appropriateness, all of which contribute to a sustainable food system. Although this report will be unable to explore these issues due to time constraints, we nevertheless consider the absence of these concepts problematic.

Problem 2: Lack of Environmental Considerations

There is no mention of environmental considerations within the UBCFS mission statement. Since UBCFS is the largest food provider on campus, providing up to 7,000 full meals a day⁴, it produces considerable waste. Also, many food items that were previously prepared on site are now purchased prepackaged, which further contributes to waste. In addition, there is no incentive to use reusable containers, since disposable options are widely available. Since waste disposal and composting do not generate income but may even become an added cost when transportation methods are considered, it is no surprise that no waste management policies or programs are in place.

Finally, UBCFS is contractually obligated to large food suppliers, which prevents UBCFS from buying local food. Moreover, most large suppliers do not purchase from local markets. Although buying

from large suppliers is more convenient and reliable, supporting local food production reduces travel distance, fossil fuel use, enhances local economies, and provides fresher food.

Problem 3: Economic-Centred Focus

UBCFS currently operates as a business, whereby all choices are made primarily on an economic basis. This constrains UBCFS to make decisions that are less sustainable, such as buying organic or local produce, implementing waste management practices, and providing fair prices for students. Although UBCFS is currently operating independently without support from the government,⁴ and is therefore economically viable, this prosperity could be further increased if ecological and social sustainability were also a part of the equation.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

Research Methodology

In order to identify problems with UBCFS and develop recommendations, we investigated the UBCFS' current mission statement and five-year plan, verbal communication with the director of UBCFS and a food service supervisor at Totem Park kitchen, previous market research conducted by the Farrell Research Group on the UBCFS, as well as results from a survey that we developed. Because of the time constraints for this project, our survey was not extensive [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and a statistical analysis was not performed. However, it was used as a means to assess and understand the popular opinion of the UBC student body.

engineering students could be involved in designing new composting systems for waste disposal. In addition, nutrition students could be involved in menu development, food procurement, and food service operations, while students from the food sciences could gain direct experience in food quality control and product development. Also, commerce students could develop marketing strategies to promote UBCFS products, do the accounting, and implement organizational behaviour principles to enhance the productivity and quality of UBCFS operations. Furthermore, agroecology students could develop environmental and social awareness campaigns, and find ways to increase connections between UBCFS and local food production.

UBCFS director Andrew Parr⁴, and food service supervisor Josie Midha⁵ are both in favour of such integration, but this willingness should be more explicitly expressed in the UBCFS agenda and reflected in the mission statement. Currently, the mission statement stands separate from the ideas of employees, creating segregation between values and actions. Furthermore, several employees mentioned their interest in creating a more sustainable food system, but the focus on profit is a barrier to achieving this reality. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The benefits of education integration would include students' ability to determine the effectiveness of their actions by the responses from their own peers, breeding empowerment and motivation to improve campus life. Since students are important stakeholders in the UBC community, they can have a large impact on the viability of the UBCFS. Thus, the UBC community should be viewed as an open rather

than a closed system, whereby all components are integrated into producing a better quality of life for all of its members.

Recommendation 2: Economic Viability

Achieving customer satisfaction is the primary means to maintaining economic viability. Since students are the major clientele of UBCFS, their feedback is central to providing food that is desirable and will therefore be purchased. If students are happy with the products offered, they will be more willing to maintain their loyalty to UBCFS.

The integration of education will also increase profit for UBCFS, since services that will be offered by students will not require financial compensation. Thus, a win-win situation will be created, whereby students can learn and UBCFS can save on labour costs.

Recommendation 3: Environmental Issues

Integrated education could provide innovative and feasible solutions to environmental problems. For example, engineering and environmental sciences students could develop a composting system to reduce waste. In addition, commerce students could work on marketing to promote the use of disposable containers.

Surplus food that is still food safe could be donated to local food banks, soup kitchens and community kitchens, with dietetics and nutritional sciences students serving as liaisons, to further reduce food waste. Although delivering this food may be an inconvenience for UBCFS, several establishments may be willing to make regular pick-ups of food. In fact, Shelley Wells, Executive Director of Quest Outreach Society, an organization that feeds hungry people in the lower mainland, stated that they would pick up food from UBC.⁶

We feel that UBCFS needs to state a clear position supporting local produce. Undoubtedly, current buying practices limit the ability of UBCFS to purchase local produce; however, it is possible for them to do so on a case-by-case basis. For example, offering a homemade soup at Agora that contains local ingredients or perhaps establishing a local produce section at the mini marts will help support the local

economy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

UBCFS needs to enshrine their goal of environmental sustainability in the mission statement. Otherwise, it will be difficult to prepare a comprehensive plan concerning waste management, composting, and resource recovery.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we hope that UBCFS will alter their mission statement to include students as their priority, address environmental concerns, and increase awareness of food accessibility, availability, appropriateness, and acceptability. We see the integration of education into the UBCFS as a pillar to making such changes. In turn, such changes serve as a stepping-stone toward a more sustainable campus.

At first, we found the task of identifying ways to make UBCFS more sustainable to be daunting. However, we discovered that while achieving sustainability can often seem overwhelming and unachievable, it is the small steps made on a continual basis that will make a great impact, not just in UBCFS, but also within the UBC community as a whole, and even in the rest of the world. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

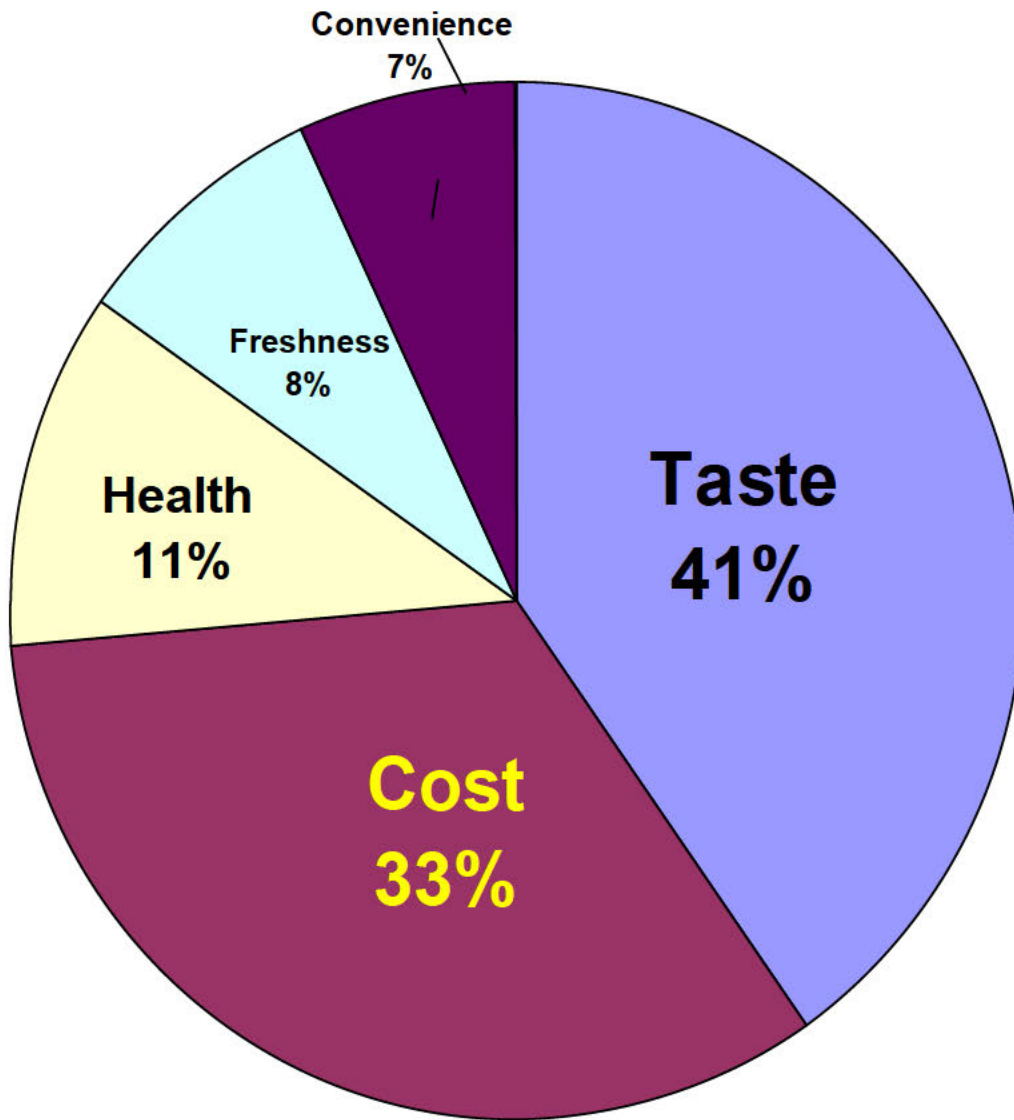
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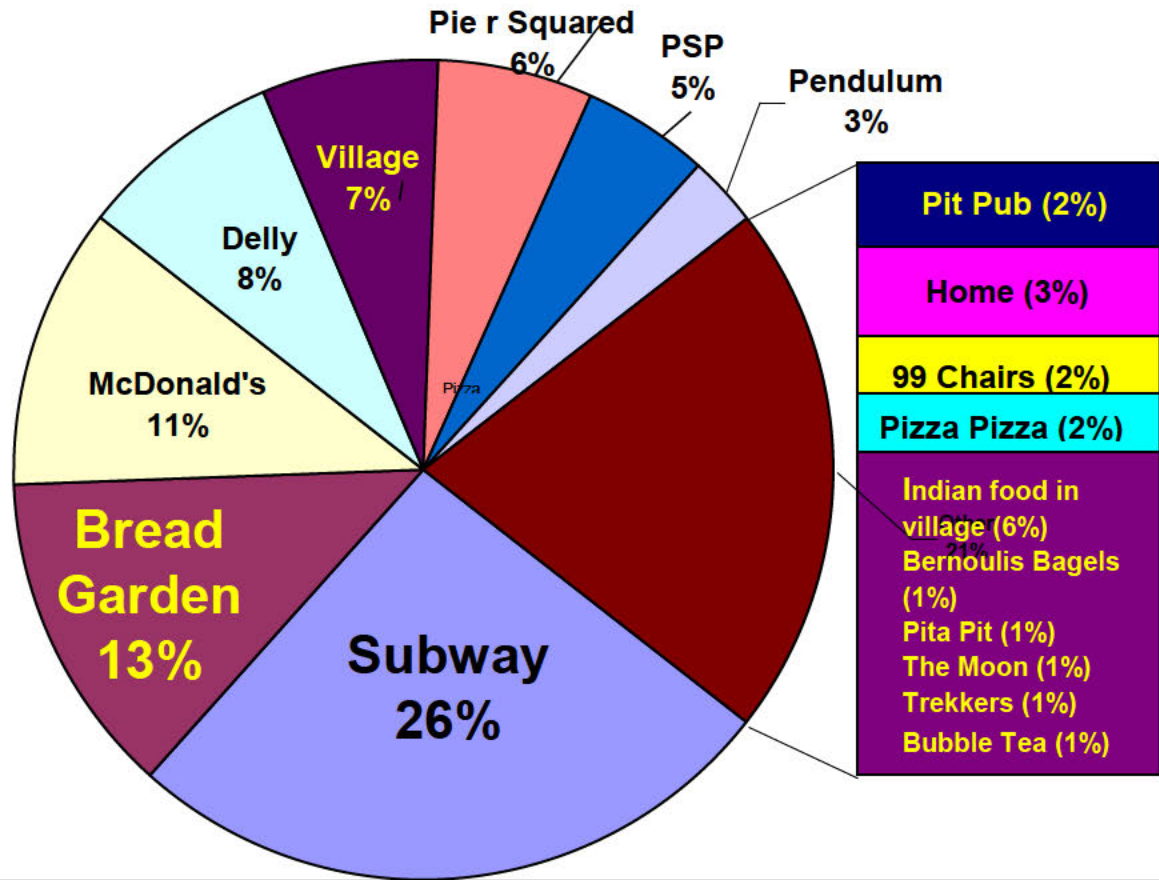
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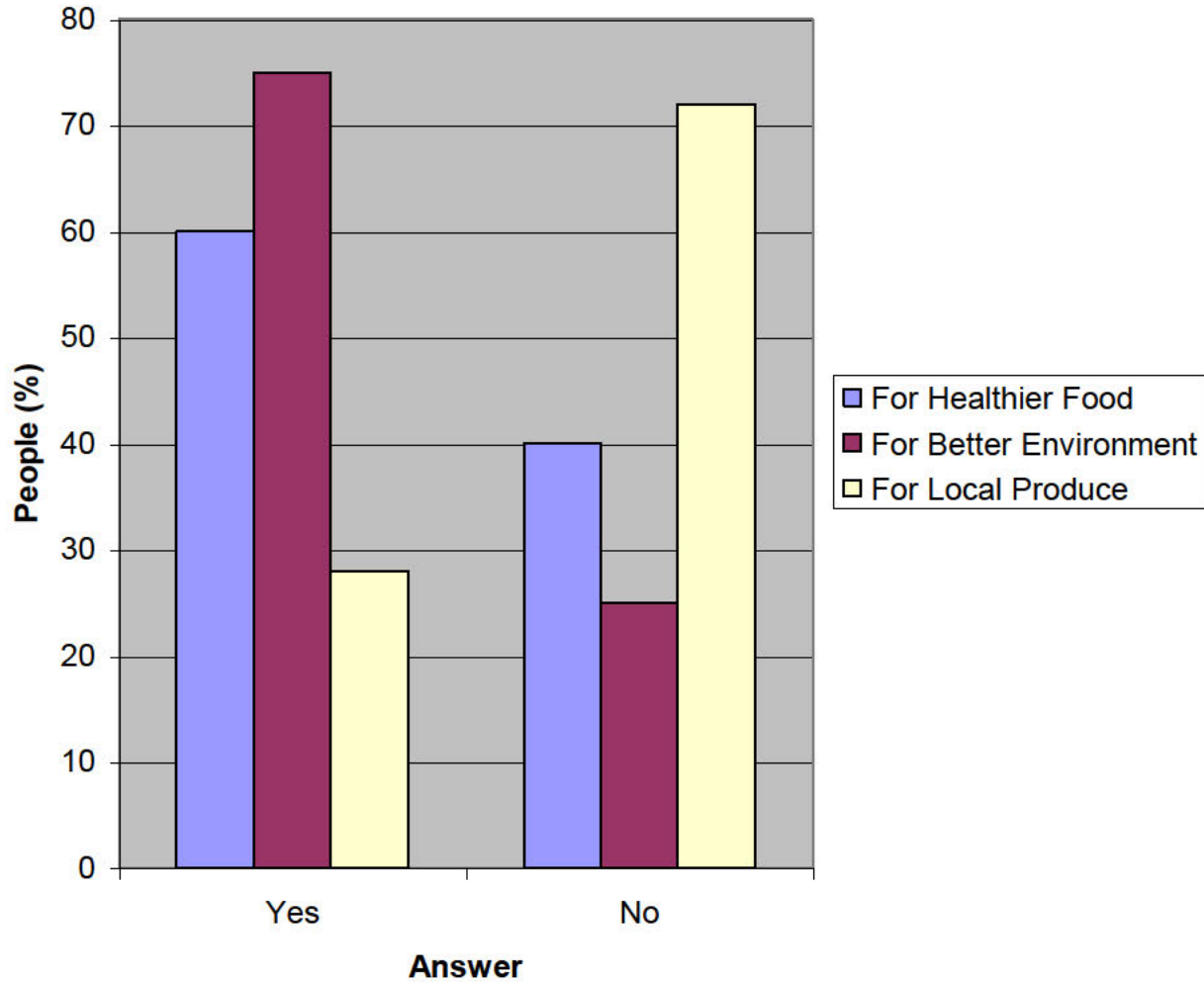
Appendix 1: Important Factors Respondents Consider in Buying Their Food



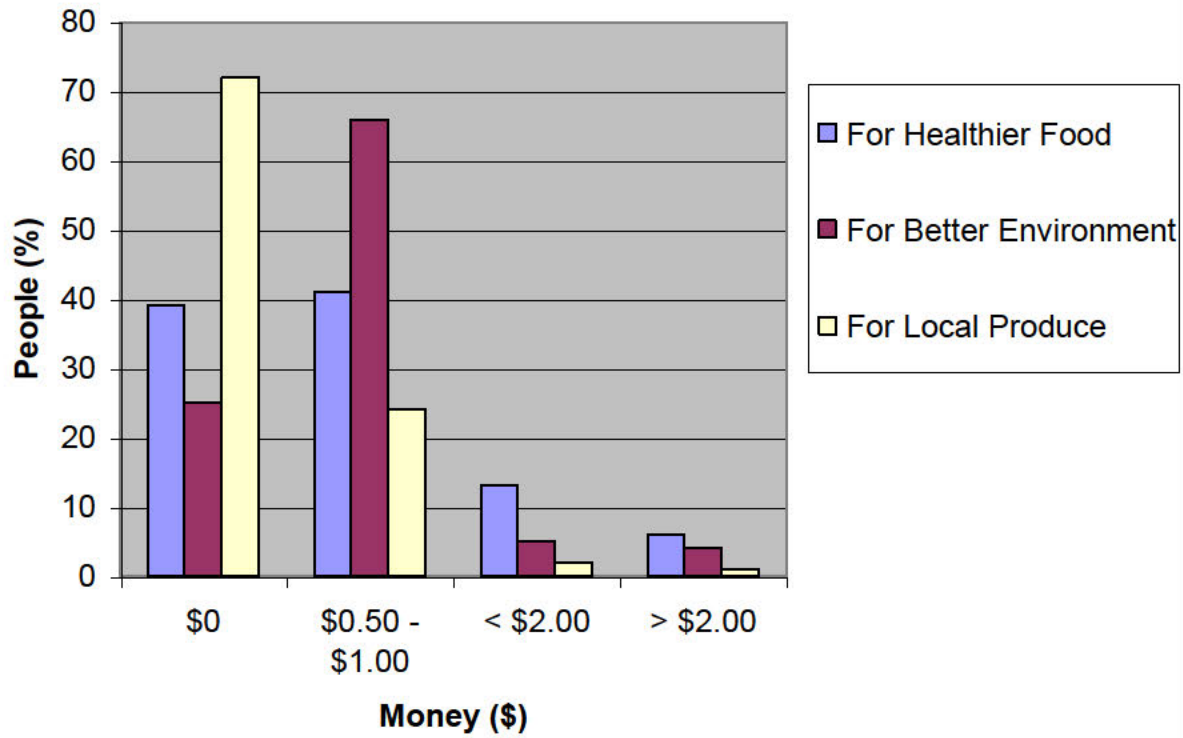
Appendix 2: Favourite Places to Eat on Campus



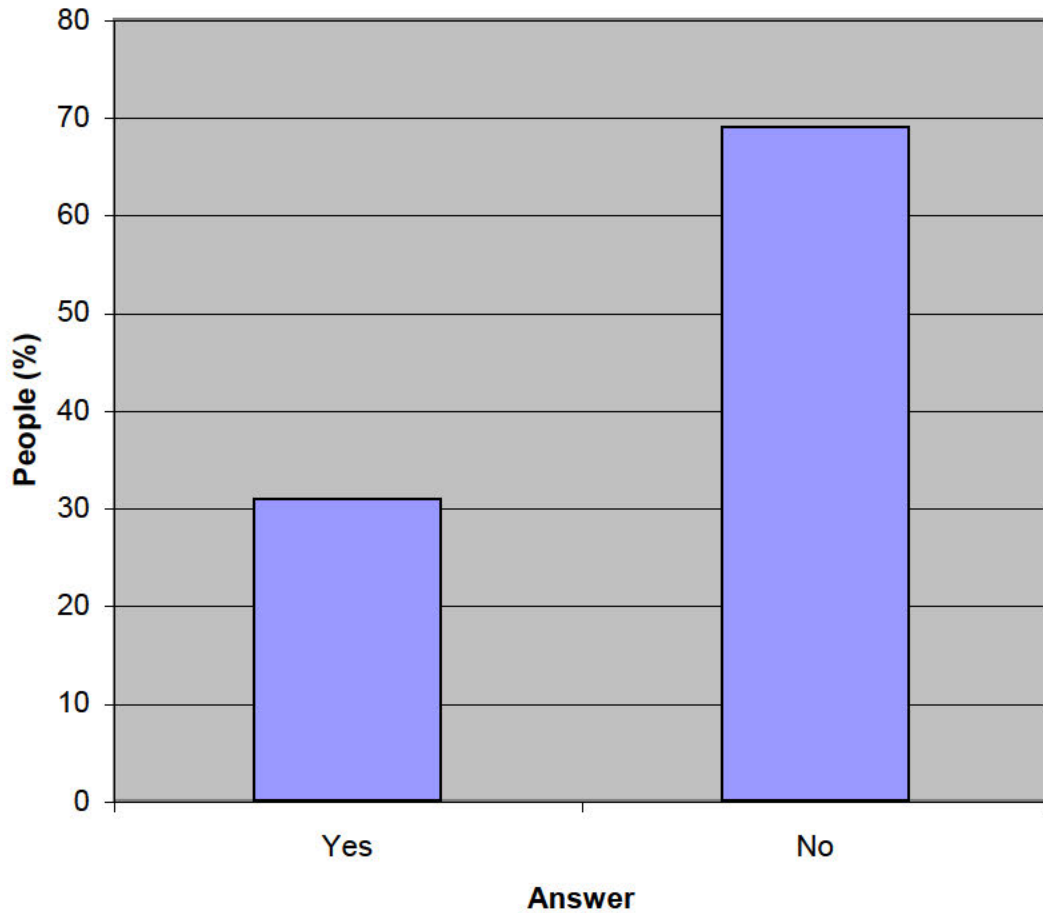
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Appendix 6: Amount of Respondents Who Support Extensive Recycling Programs at UBC

