

**SONOMA COUNTY  
BASELINE ENERGY SURVEY**



Fall 2001

Prepared by

Business Environmental Alliance

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*The BEA is a project developed by the Economic Development Board  
EDB Staff: Erin Williams*

# **Business Environmental Alliance: Baseline Energy Survey**

## **Introduction**

While immediate threats of rolling blackouts have eased during recent months, energy availability and consumption continue to be major focus points for local businesses, governments, and communities.

The Business Environmental Alliance's Baseline Energy Survey was conducted during the spring of 2001, at the height of the power crisis, to make the following determinations: how the energy crisis has been affecting the "bottom line" for Sonoma County businesses and organizations, how they view the crisis, and how they are responding to it.

In the past few months, conservation efforts have clearly improved Sonoma County's Energy situation, however, the power crisis is not yet over. Thus, the results of this survey continue to be relevant, providing data on the perspectives and responses of organizations to the energy crisis. Its salience is further evidenced by the fact that while our lights are still on, the limitations of our present power grid have been manifested and need to be further addressed.

This Baseline Energy Survey was conducted among a representative cross section of approximately one hundred energy users in Sonoma County, California. It was sent to organizations believed to be major consumers of energy. Identification of the survey recipients was based upon factors such as sector and size. A total of twenty-nine respondents returned completed surveys, for a response rate of approximately 30%.

## **Overview and Action Opportunities:**

Analysis of survey data for this document revealed a number of key themes:

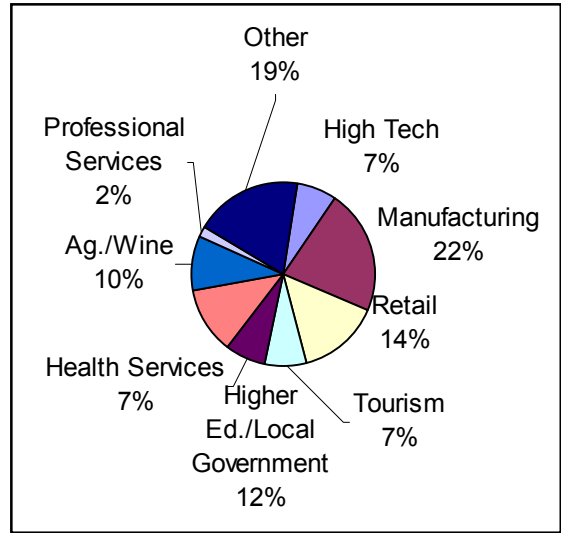
- Over 50% of respondents have no back-up generation capacity, nor do they have plans to increase generation capacity.
- Electricity is an important issue that can, and will, affect business expansion and relocation decisions.
- Sonoma County businesses are beginning to reduce electricity consumption, however many conservation opportunities remain.

As can be seen from this thematic overview, the California energy crisis has had a significant impact on the way that organizations in Sonoma County conduct business. Conservation has become a major topic, and businesses are taking into consideration power supply and transmission issues in their decision-making processes. While the urgency of the power crisis is waning, electricity is and will remain a topic of great importance in Sonoma County. In an effort to respond to California's continuing energy crisis, this information will be passed along to:

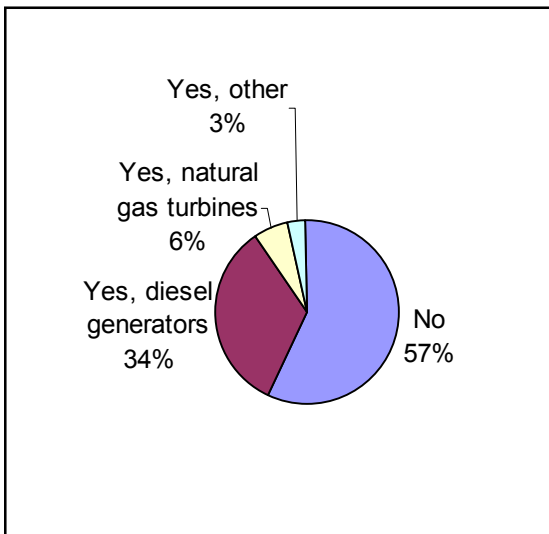
- Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E)
- Sonoma County Board of Supervisors
- County-wide Business Water and Energy Task Force to use as they begin their deliberations this fall regarding actions and local policy recommendations.

**Question 1: Classification of Business**

1.) Most of the respondents completing this survey self-identified themselves as members of the manufacturing industry, retail, or 'other', sectors.



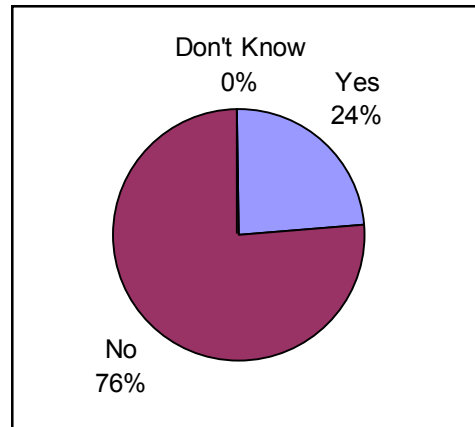
**Question 2: Does the organization have backup generation capacity?**



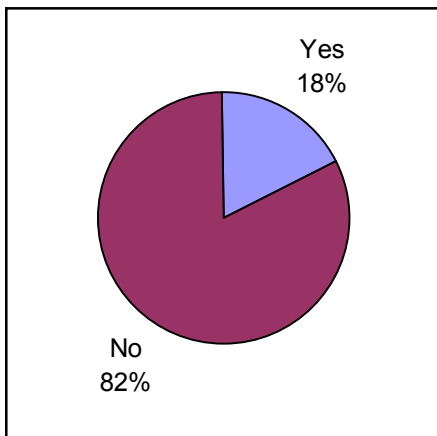
2.) To determine approximately how many organizations have some kind of back-up generation capacity on their site, as well as what type of back-up generation, we asked modified yes or no questions. It was found that the majority of organizations do not have back-up generation capacity. Those that do have back-up generation depend primarily upon diesel generators. This survey did not differentiate between generators that are used in emergencies only, and those used on a regular basis.

**Question 2a: Can the organization's back-up power sustain its electrical needs for the next two or three years?**

2a.) This question, a subset of #2, addresses the ability of organizations to sustain their electrical needs for the next two or three years. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of organizations do not have the capacity to sustain their electrical needs over a long-term period.



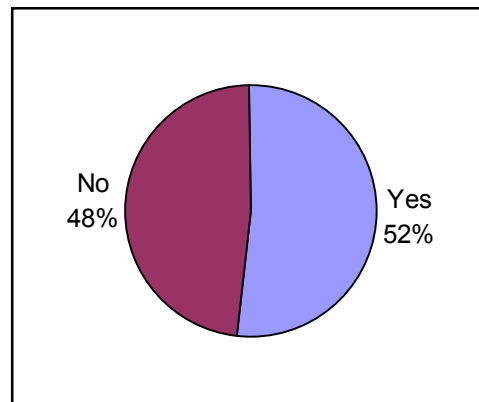
**Question 2b: Does the organization plan on installing additional back-up power?**



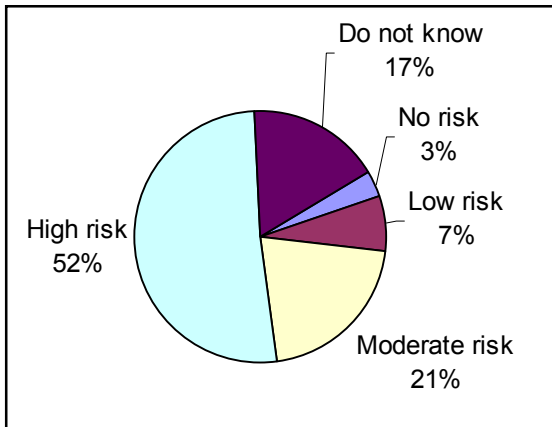
2b.) Another subset of #2 asked organizations if they have plans to install additional back-up power. According to the results of this survey, most organizations do not plan to add to the back-up power capabilities.

**Question 3: Did the organization lose power during the recent rotating blackouts?**

3.) During the recent rotating blackouts about half of all organizations surveyed reported losing power.



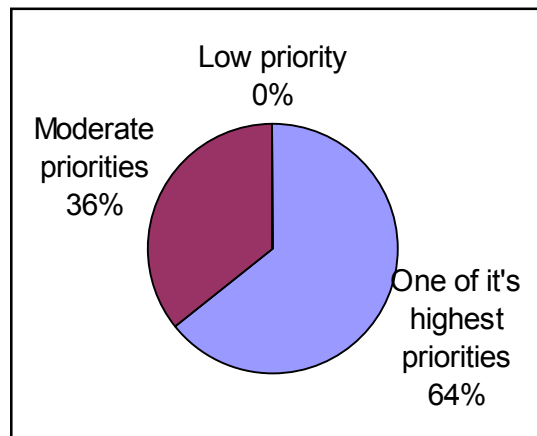
**Question 4: How likely do you think the organization is to experience blackouts during the summer of 2001?**



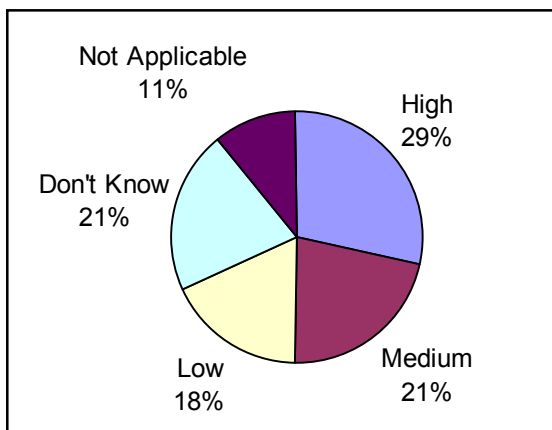
4.) Given official predictions of continuing blackouts, 69% of organizations reported feeling that they were at moderate to high risk of losing electricity.

**Question 5: Compared to the other costs of doing business, does the organization believe the cost of electricity is one of its highest priorities?**

5.) All of the organizations surveyed identified the cost of electricity as being of moderate to highest priority.



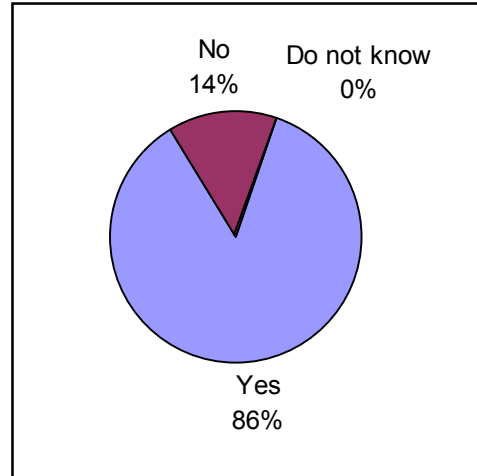
**Question 6: If the organization were to consider expanding in Sonoma County, or relocating elsewhere, how important a factor would the power supply and transmission issues in Sonoma County be in that decision?**



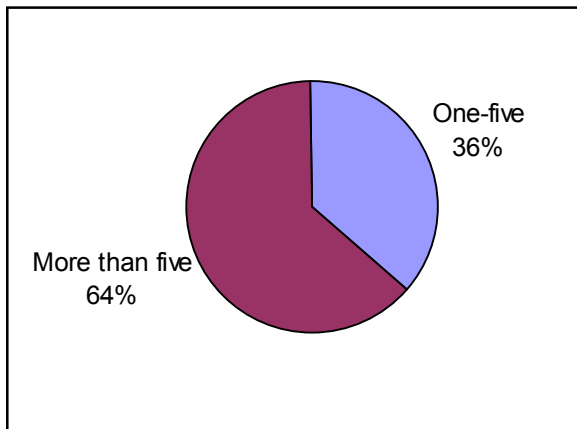
6.) When considering expansion or relocation, half of the organizations surveyed consider power supply and transmission issues to be a factor of medium to high salience in their decision making process.

**Question 7: Has the organization voluntarily curtailed its power use in the last year?**

7.) Eighty-six percent of the respondents surveyed reported voluntarily curtailing their power use in the last year.

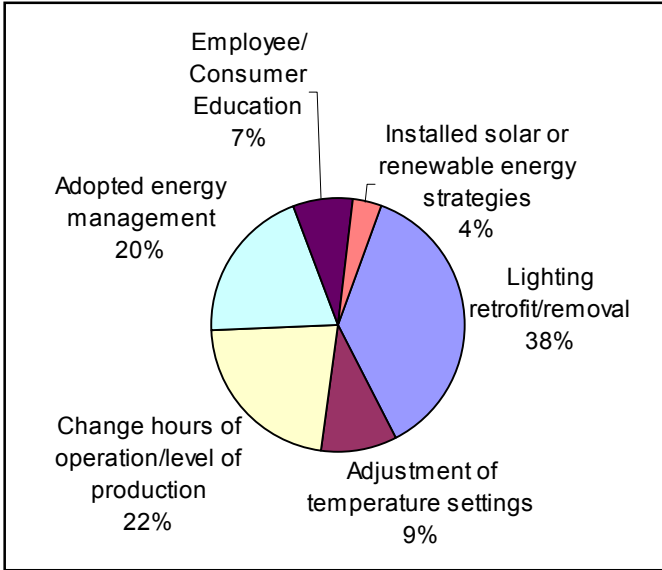


**Question 7a: If yes, how many times did the organization curtail power in the last year?**



7a.) Of the organizations who had voluntarily curtailed power during the last year, 61% of total respondents had curtailed power on more than five occasions.

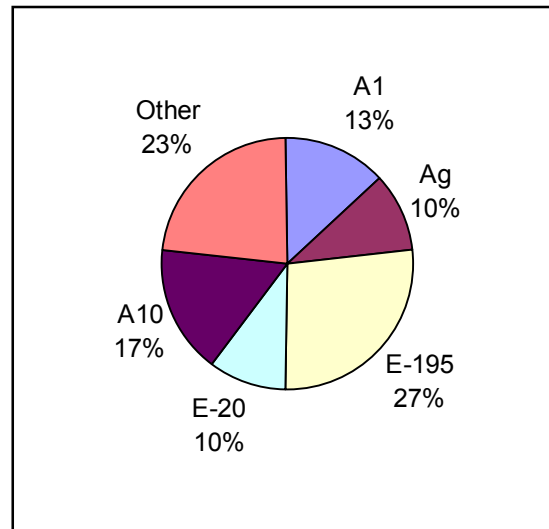
**Question 8: Are there innovative ways your organization is conserving energy?  
If so, please list.**



8.) Survey respondents identified different ways that their organizations are conserving energy. Many are adopting a variety of strategies, most of which can be categorized under the following general headings as shown.

**Question 9: What is your PG&E rate schedule?**

9.) Survey respondents reported their PG&E rate schedules. Some of them are on multiple rate schedules, 27% are subscribed to some form of the E-195 rate schedule.



## **Acknowledgments**

Many people contributed their valuable time and ideas to this project. Without the help of these individuals, this study would have been impossible to complete.

Thanks are due to the organizations that took the time to complete this survey; without their cooperation this would not have been possible. Approximately 30% of those organizations contacted completed the survey in a timely manner.

Past energy documents and surveys from PG&E and the Silicon Valley Manufacturers Group all provided solid background information and ideas for the production of this report.

Special thanks also Arianne Sperry, Jasmin Nguyen, Erin Williams, and Erin Fredrick, staff members of the Business Environmental Alliance and the Economic Development Board, for conducting the survey and preparing the bulk of the document



6. If the organization were to consider expanding in Sonoma County, or relocating elsewhere, how important a factor would the power supply and transmission issues in Sonoma County be in that decision?

\_\_\_\_\_ HIGH                      \_\_\_\_\_ MED                      \_\_\_\_\_ LOW                      \_\_\_\_\_ Do not know

7. Has the organization voluntarily curtailed its power use in the past year?

\_\_\_\_\_ YES                      \_\_\_\_\_ NO                      \_\_\_\_\_ Do not know

7a. If yes, how many times did the organization curtail power in the last year?

\_\_\_\_\_ 1-5                                      \_\_\_\_\_ more than 5

8. Are there innovative ways your organization is conserving energy? If so, please list.

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9. What is your PG&E electric rate schedule? (This information can be found on the left-hand side of your PG&E bills. Examples of commercial rate schedules are: A1, A6, A10, E19, or E20. Agricultural rate schedules will begin with the letters AG.)

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10. Other comments:

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Thank you! Please return by **June 30, 2001** as follows:

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E-mail: [edb@sonoma-county.org](mailto:edb@sonoma-county.org)