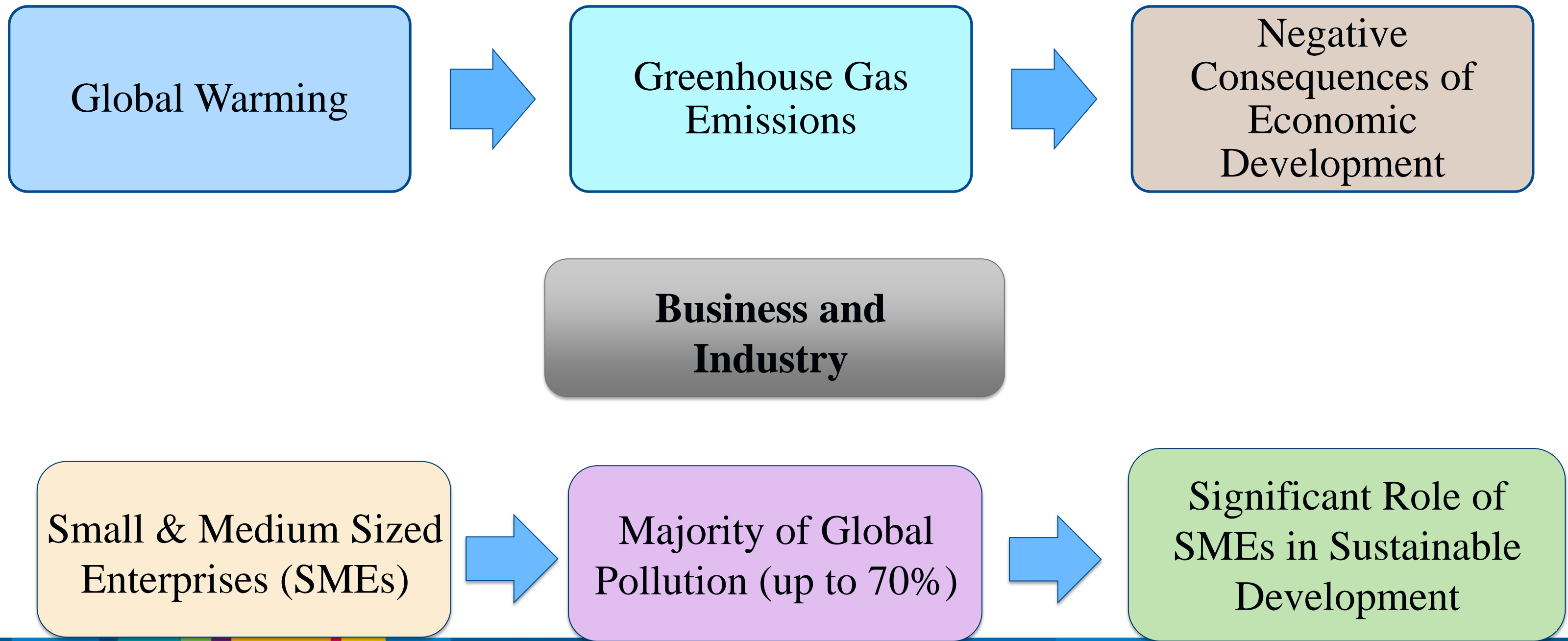


Social and environmental practices of SMEs in a regional city of Australia

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Introduction



Literature Review

Growth and development of **SMEs** is a significant part of a sustainable world (Trainer, 1998)

Close relationships with their customers
(Kerr, 2006; Aragon-Correa et al., 2008)

Easily respond to sustainability issues
(Hawken, 1993; Sinha & Akoorie, 2010)

Receive enough support and incentive
(Welford, 1997)

Low usage of non-renewable resources
(Jones & Welford, 1997)

Literature Review

Regional Australia refers to regions that are geographically not part of metropolitan capital cities and their immediate peripheral areas within Australia.

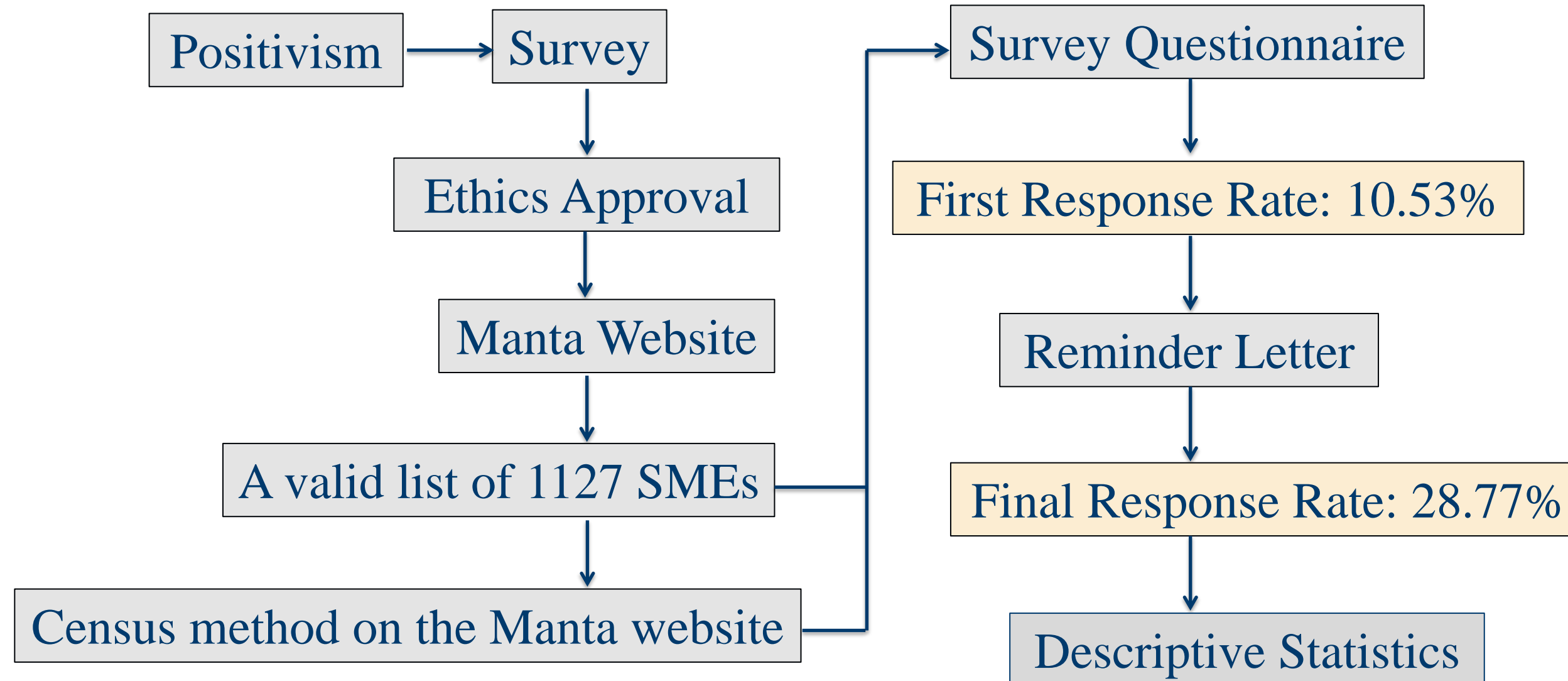
A gap in the Regional Australian literature about the experiences of regional SMEs in dealing with sustainability (Moyeen & Courvisanos, 2012).

Confidentiality or nondisclosure of SMEs financial statements and absence of sustainability reports in Regional Australia (Lucas et al., 2009).

Regional SMEs are usually unaware of the advantages gained from sustainability adoption (O'Laire & Welford, 1996).

Data Collection and Methodology

Ballarat is a good representative of a major regional city in Australia which has an economy with a large SME business population.



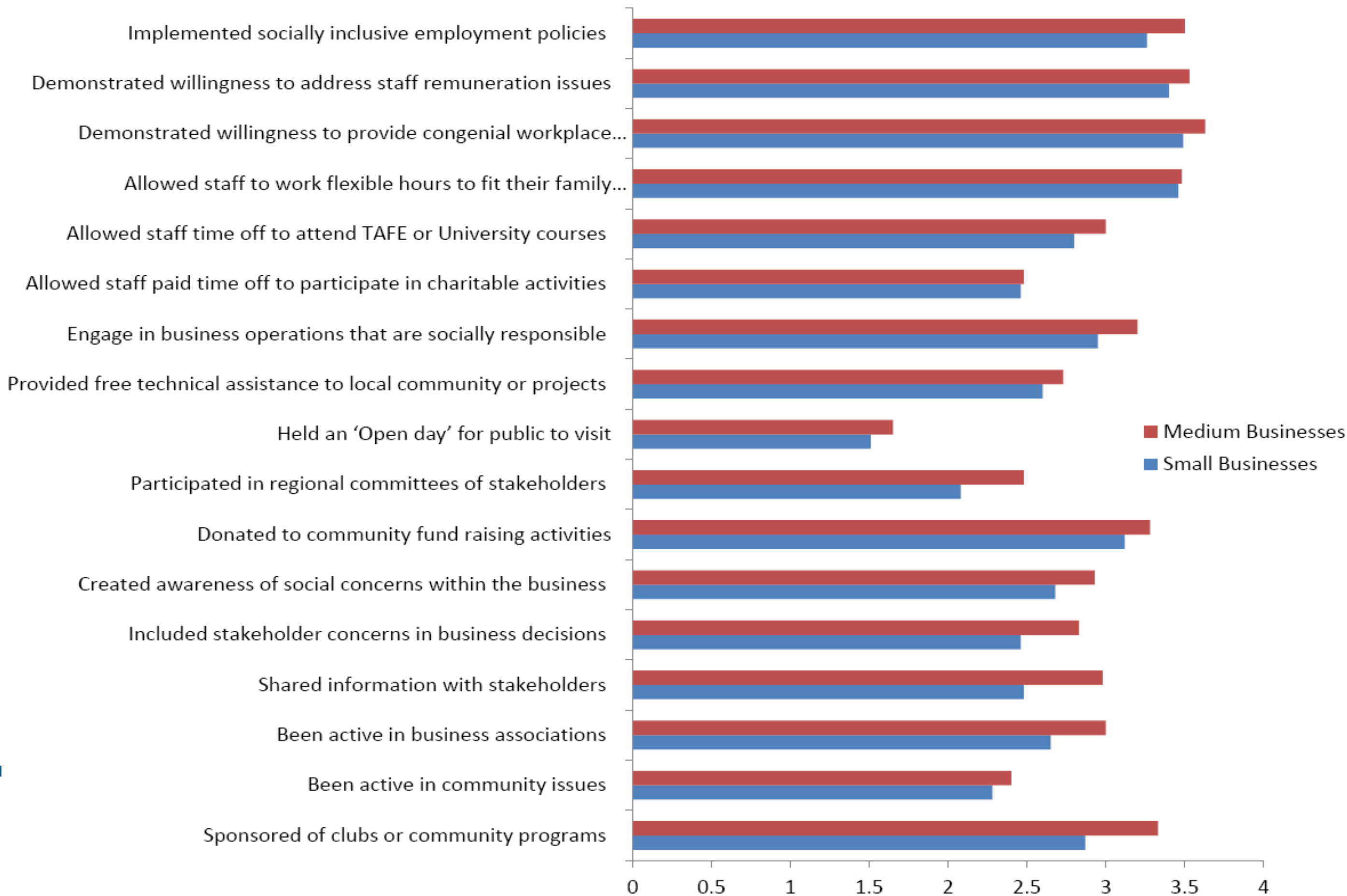
Findings:

Descriptive Statistics

Distribution of educational level of respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
Elementary Education	79	33.9
Undergraduate Education	114	48.9
Postgraduate Education	40	17.2
Total	233	100

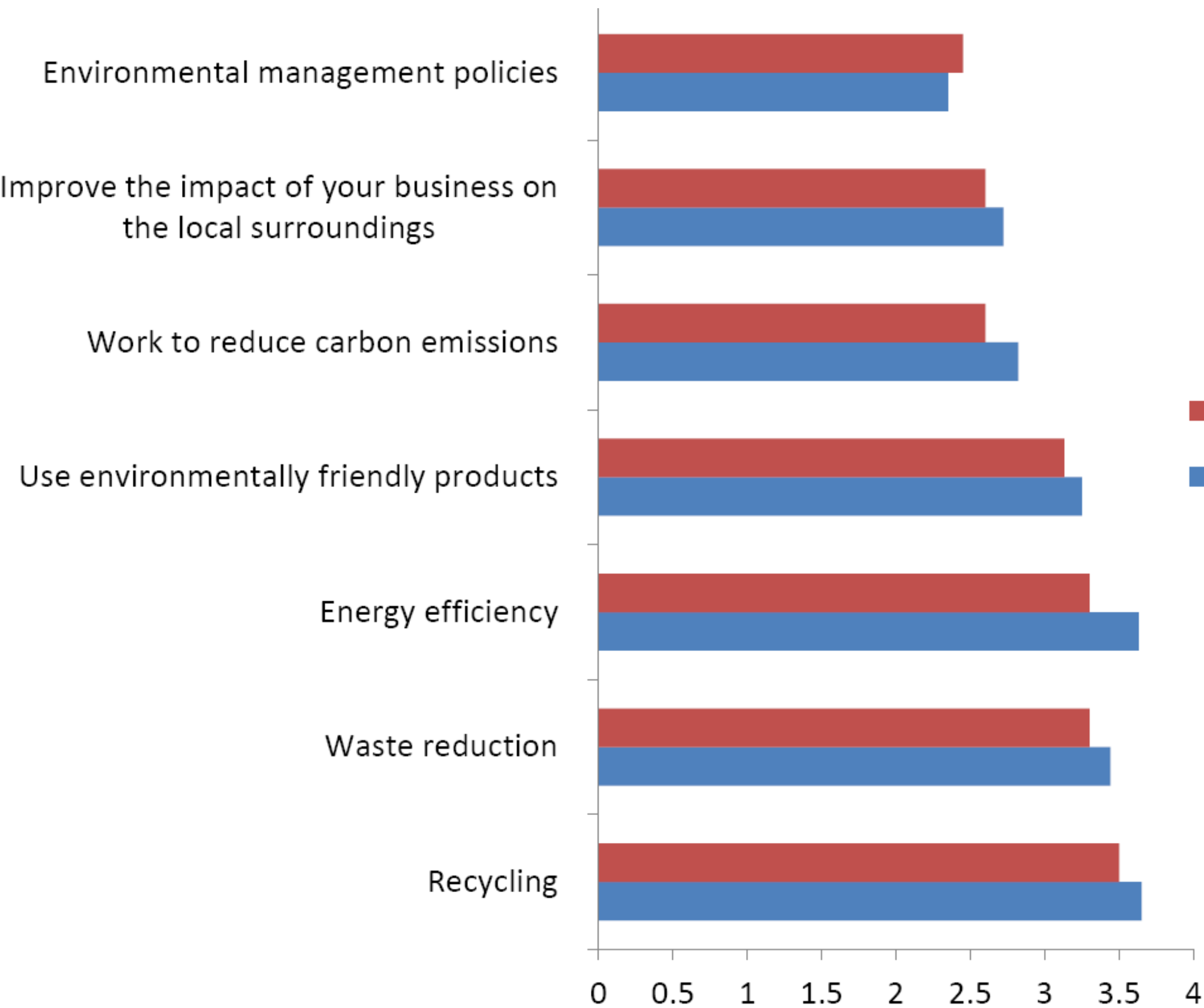
Social Practices



Hypothesis Testing of Social Practices between Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Hypothesis	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig	Rejection/Acceptance
There is no significant difference in allowing staff time off to attend TAFE or University courses between small and medium-sized businesses	-1.059	219	.291	Accept
There is no significant difference in allowing staff to work flexible hours to fit their family circumstances between small and medium-sized businesses	-.121	219	.904	Accept
There is no significant difference in demonstrating willingness to provide congenial workplace conditions between small and medium-sized businesses	-.992	219	.322	Accept
There is no significant difference in demonstrating willingness to address staff remuneration issues between small and medium-sized businesses	-.970	219	.333	Accept
There is no significant difference in implementing socially inclusive employment policies between small and medium-sized businesses	-1.549	219	.123	Accept

Environmental Practices



Hypothesis Testing of Environmental Practices between Small and Medium-sized Businesses

Hypothesis	t-test for Equality of Means			
	t	df	Sig	Rejection or Acceptance
There is no significant difference in doing recycling programs between small and medium-sized businesses	1.326	231	.186	Accept
There is no significant difference in doing waste reduction programs between small and medium-sized businesses	1.015	231	.311	Accept
There is no significant difference in doing energy efficiency programs between small and medium-sized businesses	2.859	231	.005	Reject
There is no significant difference in using environmentally friendly products between small and medium-sized businesses	.849	231	.397	Accept
There is no significant difference in working to reduce carbon emissions between small and medium-sized businesses	1.265	231	.207	Accept
There is no significant difference in improving the impact of business on the local surroundings between small and medium-sized businesses	.630	231	.529	Accept
There is no significant difference in adopting environmental management policies between small and medium-sized businesses	-.511	231	.670	Accept

Discussion

The strongest practices by SME businesses in this study were employee and local community-based social activities.

The significance of these findings is that SMEs in a regional setting do appreciate the many advantages, both in better competitive advantage and as good commercial citizens, but without a clear framework around which to build strategically these social activities.

The findings in environmental practices reveal that recycling programs were frequently adopted by the respondents. They often recycled paper, donated computers, and avoided disposable goods.

Limitations & Conclusions

Any generalisations are limited to the population of Ballarat's SMEs.

Findings are limited by the extent to which the respondents were honest, careful, and without bias in responding to the survey instrument.

The implications of this study are that for the Ballarat region's SMEs, they can and do engage in several socially and environmentally friendly practices. SMEs in Ballarat are actively engaged in employee support and social inclusiveness with staff. Although Ballarat's SMEs are not involved in some community issues such as homelessness regularly, they tend to be close to the local community, as they donate to community fund raising charities, buy and recruit locally.