

# History

On March 3, 2010, a bill declaring the Code of the West the official State Code of Ethics for Wyoming was signed into law at the state capitol. The original Code of the West was authored by Jim Owen, in 2004, as *Cowboy Ethics, What Wall Street can learn from the Code of the West*.

With the adoption of the Code of the West, many articles were written from two distinct and very different perspectives. On the one hand Wyoming was cheered as a state that aspired to simple and matter of fact principles as the basis for ethical living. On the other hand there were those who thought it made Wyomingites seem like “hicks” and that the simple nature of the Code of the West was too elementary and naive. Blogs on the internet facilitate great discussion. Parodies of the code were developed and much fun was made about the “real” cowboy principles which include “Don’t squat with your spurs on,” “Remove your guns before setting down to eat,” “Never borrow a man’s horse” and “Never shoot a woman.” There was also an observation that the cowboy, ranching, and farming was not really representative of Wyoming’s number one industry, and that the energy industry was ignored with this code. One publication cited coal as being the source of industry in Wyoming and the cowboy culture is not the driving factor in the State. It seemed there was a distinct divide within the Wyoming community.

Prior to the adoption of the Code by the State of Wyoming, a number of businesses, organizations and educational institutions took the Code of the West to heart. The early adopters of the Code of the West included Tri-Hydro, Mick McMurry, Jonah Bank, Daniels Fund and the University of Wyoming. The organizations incorporated the Code into their daily business dealings and imbedded the code in their materials. The Daniels Fund provided financial support to help publicize this code of ethics in Wyoming. A video of notable leaders in Wyoming was produced where each leader spoke about living the code and the meaning behind the principles. A grassroots effort had begun and additional entities took the challenge of the code to additional settings. Wyoming Medical Center, Dean Morgan Junior High (Casper), and the Boys and Girls Club of Central Wyoming embraced the Code and adopted it into their training and education programs.

The University of Wyoming, College of Business includes the Code of the West in the ethical foundation of the business education curriculum. “We use it as a framework to help our students think about how they would conduct themselves in the business world,” said Brent Hathaway, Dean of the UW College of Business. “It’s just become ingrained in our coursework and how we try to behave ourselves — it just made sense to kind of have that as an inspirational code that we want to live by.” (From State Installs the Code of the West by Jeremy Pelzer – Casper Star Tribune March 6, 2010)

There has been a mix of positive and negative reactions and heated debate by State residents as to whether or not this adoption of the Code is good for our State in terms of economic development or representation of our residents to outsiders.

The Code of the West and the 10 principles listed below speak to the way in which a person can choose to live out their life. Nine of the principles are straight forward but for those who do not understand *Ride for the Brand*, it is based in loyalty to that which you commit to in work or personal endeavors. The basic tenets of the code are simple and can be understood by everyone. The book written by Jim Owen and the video highlighting business leaders in Wyoming provide a fleshed out version, giving life to the concepts.

### *The CODE of the WEST*

- 1 *Live each day with courage*
- 2 *Take pride in your work*
- 3 *Always finish what you start*
- 4 *Do what has to be done*
- 5 *Be tough, but fair*
- 6 *When you make a promise, keep it*
- 7 *Ride for the Brand*
- 8 *Talk less, say more*
- 9 *Remember that some things are not for sale*
- 10 *Know where to draw the line*

# Thesis

*The focus of our study centered on economic development. We wanted to answer some fundamental questions:*

- A. Is the Code of the West positive or negative for economic development in Wyoming?
- B. Is the Wyoming Brand (Cowboy State) positive or negative for economic development in Wyoming?

# Process

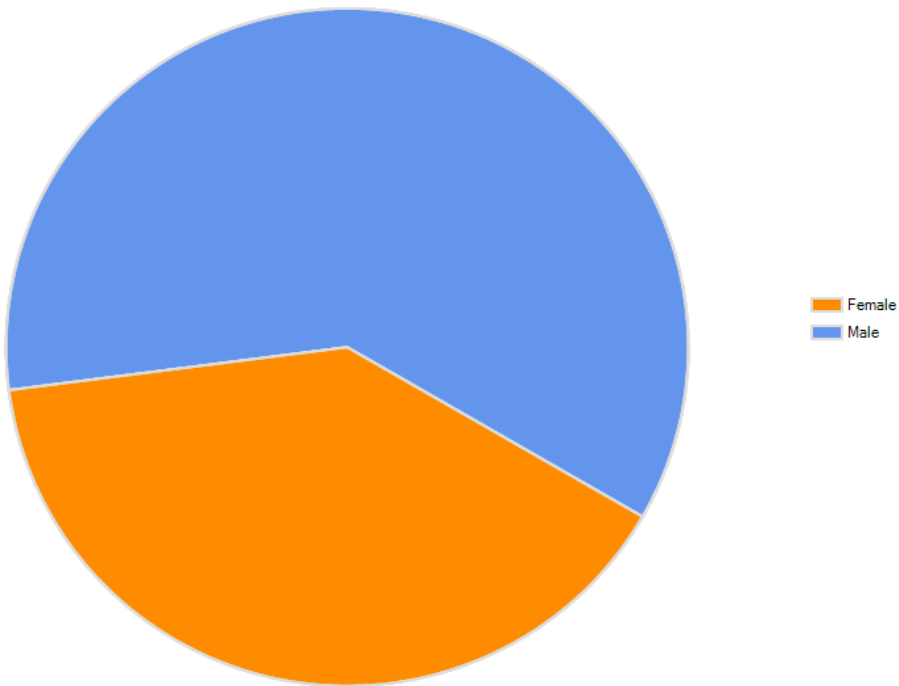
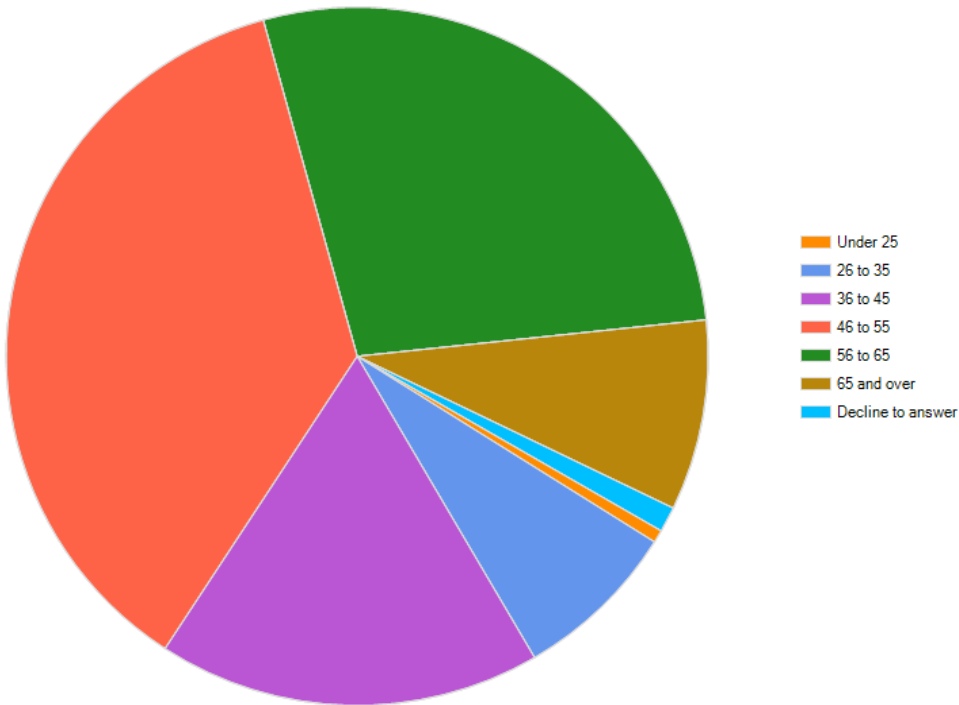
*Knowing we did not have enough time to send our questionnaire to every resident in the State, we focused on Economic Development Organizations, Government Officials, and the Best Leadership Wyoming Class of the Second Decade. These individuals were sent electronic requests via email, and also interviewed over the phone and face-to-face.*

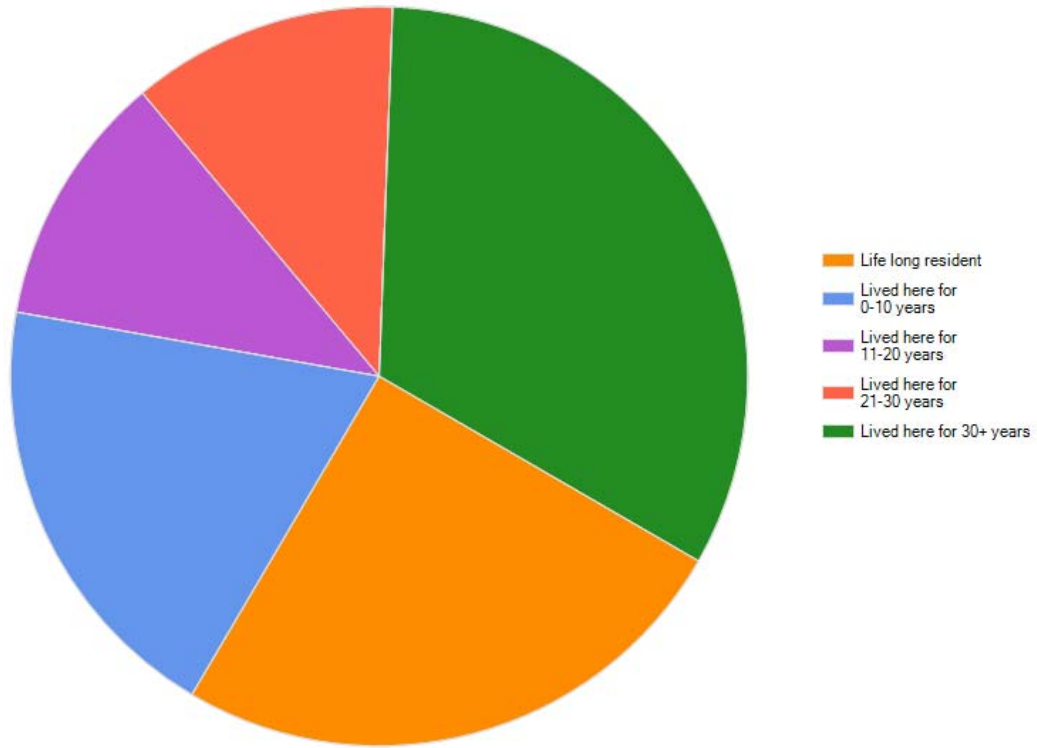
*Specific interviews were conducted with the businesses and schools that have adopted the Code of the West to get a sense for the purpose and use within the business and school environment.*

*We sent the questionnaire to 387 people utilizing the on-line software called "Survey Monkey." They were prompted to answer 23 questions that ranged from general information to answering directly whether or not they thought the Code was beneficial, detrimental, or if they used it in their business activities.*

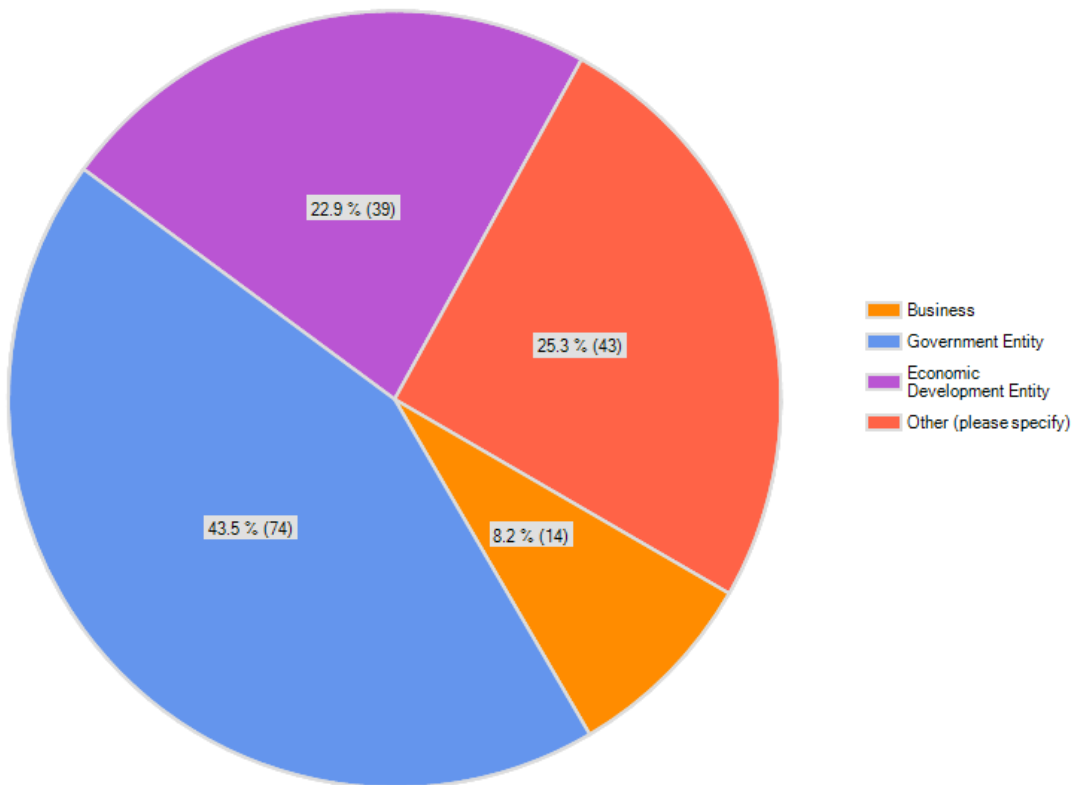
# Results

170 people responded to our survey. Fifteen (15) were interviewed in person and/or over the phone. The profiles of our respondents were:



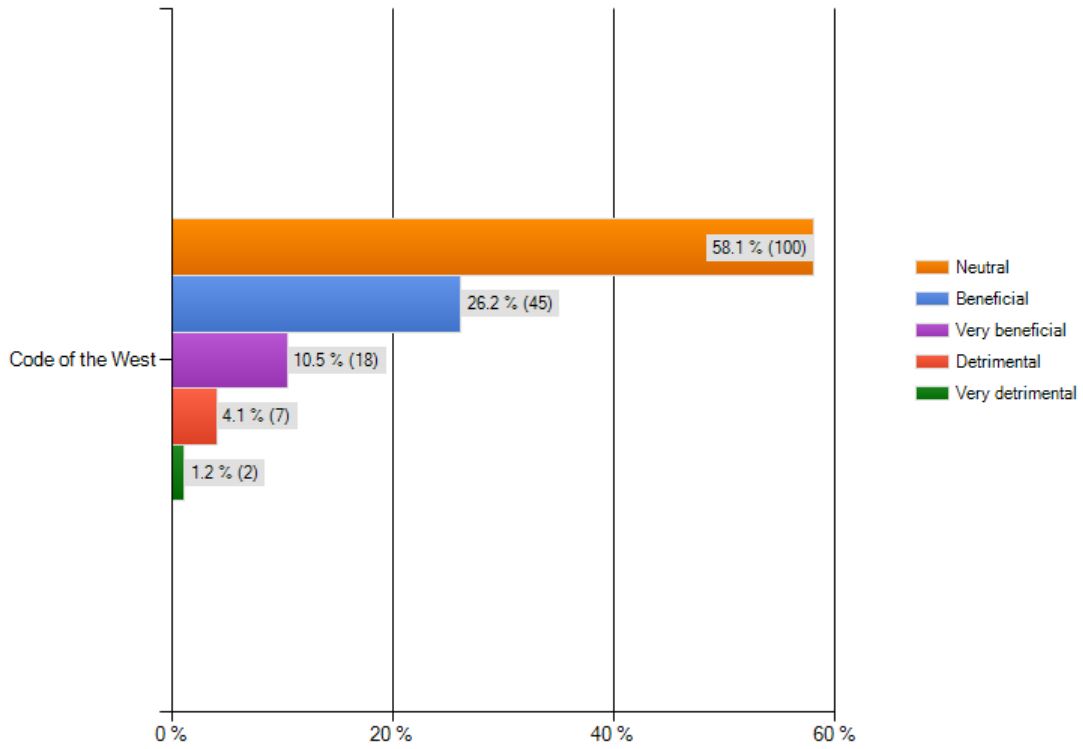


**What is the nature of your organization?**

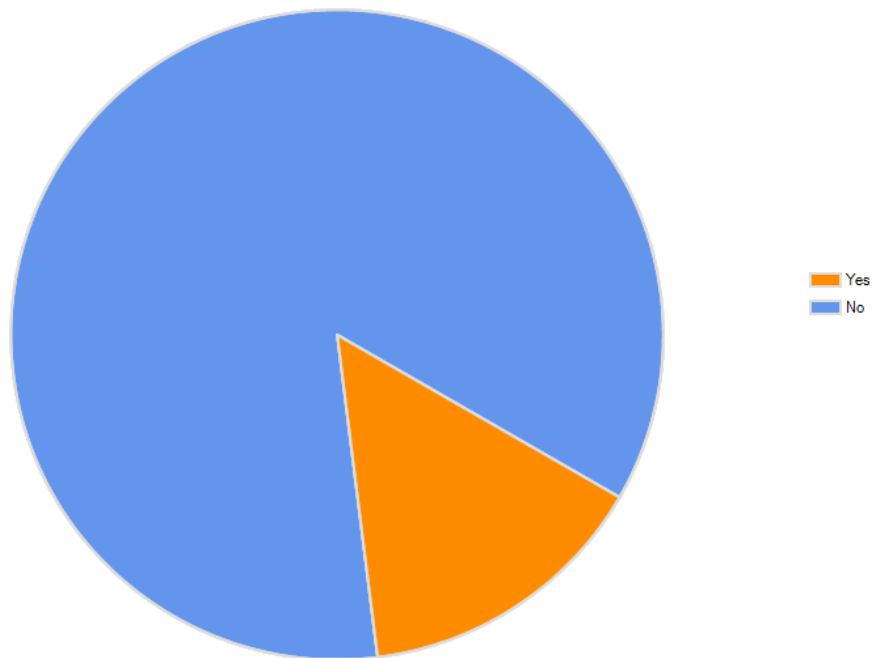


The results of the electronic survey about the Code of the West:

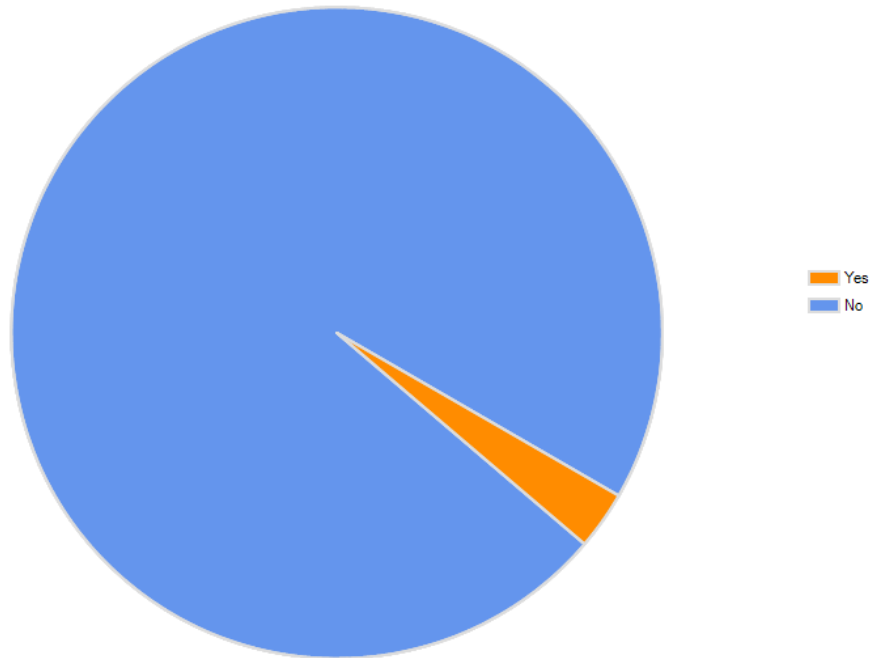
**Is the “The Code of the West” beneficial to economic development for Wyoming?**



**Has the “Code of the West” specifically contributed to a business deciding to locate in Wyoming?**



Was the “Code of the West” a factor in a decision by a business not to locate to Wyoming?



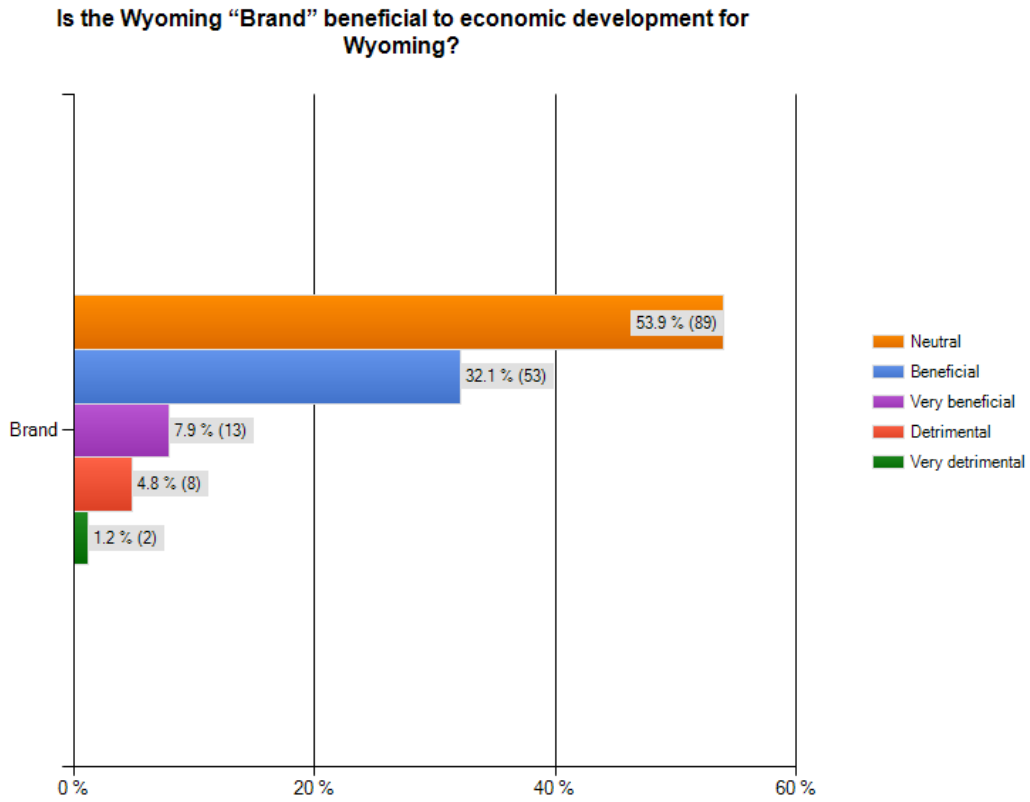
Respondents were able to add comments to their answers. Most of these comments were from individuals that responded “neutral” to these questions. Of these comments, many felt that the Code of the West had little or no effect on bringing businesses to Wyoming, or discouraging them. Many economic developers said they focus on other strengths the State possesses, such as low taxes, friendly business climate, and cost to do business.

When we interviewed individuals about the Code of the West and Economic Development, most were positive or neutral, and only one individual had a documented case of a company not coming to Wyoming because of the Code of the West and Cowboy image. The majority of respondents felt The Code of the West was not a factor in bringing businesses to Wyoming.

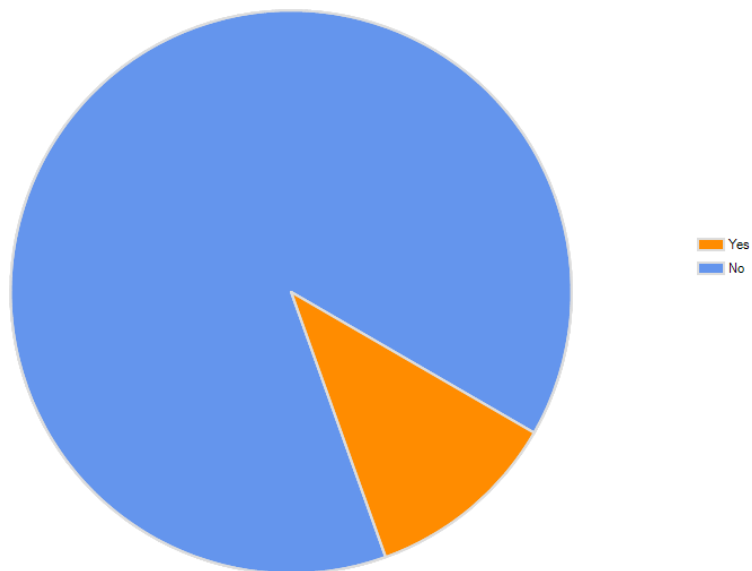
*“Are you kidding?? Really?? Business will locate where its business needs can best be met. Having a “Code of the West” has no bearing on that one way or another. And the image it calls up probably eliminates people from even taking a look at whether or not Wyoming can meet their fundamental business needs. It could be argued, in fact, that it furthers the mis-perception that Wyoming is a 21<sup>st</sup> Century place to do business.”*

*“I do know of one business. The fellow was raised on a MT ranch, relocated to California for several years and decided to start his business in WY due to the favorable business climate here. I do not want to reveal his name without asking him first.”*

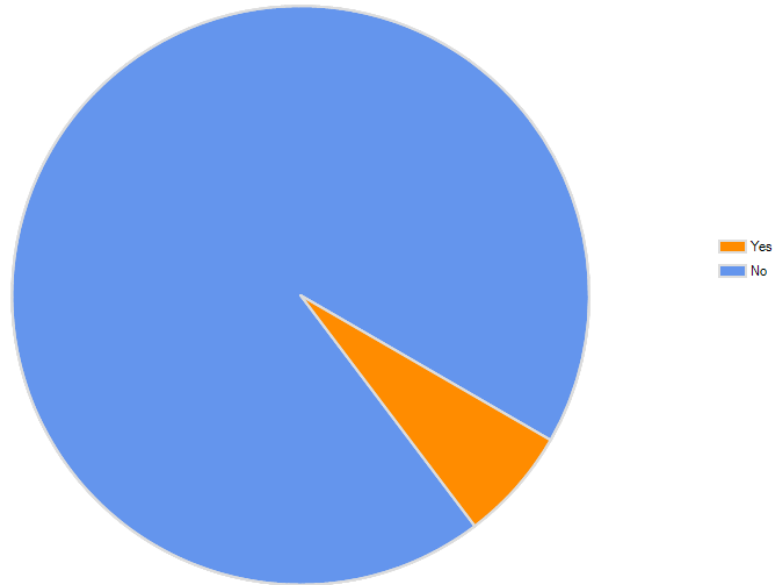
The results of the electronic survey about the Brand:



**Has the Wyoming "Brand" specifically contributed to a business deciding to locate in Wyoming?**



Was the Wyoming “Brand” a factor in a decision by a business not to locate to Wyoming?



Respondents that added comments were also mostly individuals that responded “neutral” to this question. Of the comments, many felt that the Brand had little or no effect on bringing or discouraging businesses to move to Wyoming. The majority felt it was not applicable to economic development, and that it applied more to tourism and not the State as a whole since minerals are really our economic driver. Many economic developers restated their strategy of focusing on other positive things like low taxes, friendly business climate, and low cost to do business when trying to bring businesses to the State.

It is interesting to note that the Cowboy Brand had more negative comments about it than the Code of the West. The people with negative comments shared the opinion that the Cowboy Brand does not reflect Wyoming well.

*“I feel very strongly that there is no better representation of who we are than the cowboy state brand and our bucking horse logo that is known worldwide. There is not another state in the nation that has such accurate and strong symbolism of its people.”*

*“It’s a very contrived statement of what the west is about based on movies. It’s too individual and no sense of community. It’s a small part of WY economy and is not what we need to base our future on.”*

## Conclusions

After reviewing the results and notes from interviews and comments, we have concluded the following:

- A. Neither the Code of the West nor the Wyoming Brand (Cowboy State) has any significant influence on economic development in Wyoming at this time.
- B. We are too early in the life cycle of The Code of the West to get a clear reading on its impact on economic development.
- C. There are different places around the state that seem to have embraced the Code of the West more than others.
  - ~Casper: Jonah Bank; Schools; etc.
  - ~Laramie: TriHydro; UW School of Business
- D. The Wyoming Brand is an important factor to tourism.
- E. Economic Development Professionals are not as positive about the Code of the West as the rest of the population surveyed.

Limitations of Study and Recommendations for Future Inquiry:

- A. Better representation from all areas of the state; most respondents were from Cheyenne (29%)
- B. Tap into businesses outside of the state who are or have considered relocating to WY and if the Code of the West or the Brand is a positive or negative attribute;
- C. Interview businesses that recently relocated about factors that influenced their decision.
- D. Restructure survey and send it to more people across the state once the Code of the West has been established and utilized for a longer period of time.