

2025 ABS Community Based Interview Study
SOGI Respondent Interview Protocol

Spring/Summer 2024

This protocol is a guide – the questions here will not necessarily be asked exactly as worded in the protocol or in this order. Not all questions will be asked in every interview. As much information as possible about interview participants and enterprises/establishments should be obtained prior to the interview as possible. In some cases, probing may need to be adjusted based on the background research that has been conducted and/or in response to participants' insights.

These interviews will be guided by three research questions:

Research Question 1: What is the best approach to measuring the LGBTQ+ business owner community, as per the business owners themselves?

Research Question 2: What might be barriers to accurate counts of LGBTQ+ business owners and how might we avoid them?

Research Question 3: What specific dynamics does proxy reporting create and how should the ABS handle them?

Materials: Interview protocol, consent form

Method: We will conduct the interviews by phone, Microsoft Teams, or we will conduct the interviews in person, depending on availability and federal employee travel restrictions.

Expected length of interview: 1 hour (60 minutes) maximum for individual interviews, 1.5 hours (90 minutes) maximum for group interviews.

I. Introduction

If necessary: I sent you a consent form in an email today – did you get a chance to sign that? If not, please do so now, and then we'll get started.

Thank you so much for agreeing to talk with me today!

The Annual Business Survey (ABS) provides data on economic characteristics as well as demographics of businesses and owners. The survey asks a series of demographic questions about individuals who own 10% or more of the company including items like age, race, and veteran's status in addition to questions about a business' research and development (for businesses with one to nine employees), innovation, technology, intellectual property, and business owner characteristics, with additional rotating content that changes from year to year.

We have historically asked about sex, and we are testing the possibility of adding response options to include transgender and nonbinary business owners. We are interviewing you to get a sense of how we should approach asking questions about gender identity and sexual orientation to capture this population accurately and appropriately.

I am part of a group within the Census Bureau that makes sure that our surveys are performing as expected, and provides feedback to other parts of the Bureau about ways to improve the performance of our instruments. I'm talking with you today because you are a business owner who identifies as part of the LGBTQ+ community.

Remember, my job is to improve the surveys. Please be candid and frank in your responses. Our interview is being conducted under the authority of Title 13, which means that your responses are confidential, and neither your name nor the name or identifying information about your company will be included in any of our findings.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

I'd like to record our session today so that when I go to analyze the results of these interviews, I can use the recording to pick up on anything I may have missed in my notes. Do I have your permission to record our session today?

<<Turn on recorder>>

II. Background

1. What made you want to speak with us about sexual orientation and gender identity measures for business owners in the (ABS)?
2. What should we be thinking about when asking for demographic information like LGBTQ+ identities of business owners?
3. Are there considerations we should know about for approaching different groups within the community?
4. What other demographics are important for us to consider?
5. How do you usually identify, in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation?
6. How do you think about disclosing these identities in the workplace?
7. What is the culture around LGBTQ+ identities at your business?

III. Interaction with Instrument

1. What might be some barriers that could get in the way of someone answering our survey questions about this topic?
 - a. How can we address them?
2. Are there specific aspects of government reporting that we should be aware of for LGBTQ+ business owners?
3. How do you think about disclosing these identities to the Census Bureau in a business survey?
4. What do you think this data will be used for?
5. How should we explain to respondents what this data is used for?
 - a. What about privacy protections?

IV. Measurement

6. What do you think the ideal gender identity question(s) would look like?
7. What do you think the ideal sexual orientation question(s) would look like?

8. What information might be helpful to make people more comfortable answering about these topics on our survey?
9. How should we be thinking about proxy reporters (proxy reporters are people at the company who respond to the survey for the owner(s))?
 - a. Do you think someone would be able to answer this question on your behalf?
 - b. How do you feel about proxy reporting for this topic?
10. How can we make sure we represent the group(s) you identify with in our research?
11. What about other identities that represent who you are and where you live might be important for us to think about?
 - a. Is race, age, geographic location, or urban/rural residency important to consider?
12. How should we think about changing language/terms in this community?
13. I want to show you some measures we tested for this topic:

OWNER SEX

What is Owner X's sex?

Male

Female

OWNER GENDER IDENTITY

What is Owner X's gender? Select all that apply.

Man

Woman

Transgender

Nonbinary

They use a different term: (describe) _____

Don't Know

OWNER SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Which of the following does Owner X consider themselves to be? Select all that apply.

Straight or heterosexual

Gay or lesbian

Bisexual

They use a different term: (describe) _____

Don't Know

UNDERSERVED STATUS

Do you or your organization identify with any of the following groups that the federal government, in Executive Order 13985, has identified as underserved? Check all that apply.

Black, Latino, and Indigenous or Native American persons, Asian Americans, and Pacific Islanders, and other persons of color

Members of religious minorities

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons

Persons with disabilities

Persons who live in rural areas

Persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty

No, I do not identify with any of these groups

- a. What are your reactions to these questions?
- b. How can we improve them?

V. Wrap-up

- 14. Is there anything we should have asked you today?
- 15. Do you have any questions or comments about the research or the research team?

Thank you so much for your time today.