

2025 ABS Community Based Interview Study
Disability 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 four research questions:

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

Research Question 2: What might be barriers to accurate counts of disabled 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 disability and disability related to veteran status. We are asking you about refining these measures for disability and are interviewing you to get a sense of how we should approach asking questions about disabilities 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 disability 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 disability measures/survey questions for business owners in the (ABS)?
2. What should we be thinking about when asking for demographic information like disability with 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 your disability?
 - a. Note: [if participant does not use the term disability, use whatever term is most comfortable to them throughout the interview. Examples include condition, health, or specific health condition they may have].
6. How do you think about disclosing disability in the workplace?
7. What is the culture around disability at your business?

III. Interaction with Instrument

8. 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?
9. Are there specific aspects of reporting this information to the Census Bureau that we should be aware of for disabled business owners?
10. Are you familiar with the conversation about how the American Communities Survey may measure disability?
 - a. Note: [if no, skip].
 - b. How should we approach measurement in a business setting with that conversation in mind?
11. How do you think about disclosing disabilities to the Census Bureau in a business survey?

12. What do you think this data will be used for?
13. How should we explain to respondents what this data is used for?
 - a. What about privacy protections?

IV. Measurement

14. What do you think the ideal disability measure(s) would look like?
15. What information might be helpful to make people more comfortable answering about disabilities on our survey?
16. 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?
17. How should we signal that we are not asking if a business is ADA compliant?
18. How should we think about the complexities of identifying as disabled? (e.g., deaf individuals do not always identify with the disability community).
19. How can we make sure we represent the group you identify with in our research?
20. What about other identities in addition to disability are important for us to think about about?
 - a. Is race, age, geographic location, or urban/rural residency important to consider?
21. How should we think about changing language in this community?
22. I want to show you some questions we have drafted for this topic:

Option 1: Owner Disability

Does Owner 1 have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of their major life activities?

For this survey, major life activities can include both those in everyday and professional life.

Yes

No

Don't know

Option 2: Owner Disability

Does Owner 1 have a chronic physical or mental condition that they manage in everyday life?

Yes

No

Don't know

- a. What are your reactions to these questions?
- b. How would you answer them?
- c. How can we improve them?
- d. What do you think about the phrasing of disability as the title?
- e. How do you feel about the way conditions are described in the text of each question?
- f. How should we ask about different groups within the disability community?

V. Wrap-up

23. Is there anything we should have asked you today?

24. Do you have any questions or comments about the research or the research team?

Thank you so much for your time today.