

Technical Information

2019 Annual Business Survey (ABS): Characteristics of Business Owners (CBO) Dataset

Accessible via the Application Programming Interface (API)

Estimates are provided for owners (classifiable by sex, ethnicity, race and veteran status) of employer firms that responded to the characteristic(s) listed below.

Note: The ABS API characteristics have two variables; QDESC_LABEL (shown in the parenthesis below), which describes the question asked, and BUSCHAR_LABEL, which denotes the answer (see page 4 and on for details).

- Year the owner acquired ownership of the business (YRACQBUS)
- Whether the business was the primary income source for owner (PRMINC)
- Owner's highest degree or level of school completed prior to establishing, purchasing, or acquiring the business (EDUC)
- Field of the owner's highest degree completed prior to establishing, purchasing, or acquiring the business (FLDEDUC)
- Owner's age as of December 31, 2018 (OWNRAGE)
- Whether the owner was born in the United States (USBORN)
- Whether the owner is a citizen of the United States (USCITIZEN)
- If the owner is disabled as a result of an incident occurring during military service (DISVETRAN)
- Owner's specific veteran characteristics (VETSPECIFIC)
- Owner's reasons for owning the business (REASONOWN)
- Status of the owner's most recently owned prior business (PRIORBUSTAT)

Data are tabulated by:

- Geography (U.S., states, and metro areas)
- Industry sector (2-digit 2017 North American Industry Classification System code (NAICS2017) and meaning of code (NAICS2017_LABEL)) [See <https://www.census.gov/eos/www/naics/> for detailed information.]

The full list of variables can be found at <https://api.census.gov/data/2018/absco/variables.html>

Technical Notes:

Detail may not add to total due to rounding or because a Hispanic owner may be of any race. Moreover, each owner had the option of selecting more than one race and therefore is included in each race selected.

The 2019 Annual Business Survey asked for information for up to four persons owning the largest percentage(s) of the business. Percentages are for owners of respondent firms with paid employees only and are not recalculated when users re-sort the datasets. Percentages are based on total reporting within a sex, ethnicity, race, veteran status, and/or industry group for the characteristics tabulated in this dataset. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see the Methodology section at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/abs/technical-documentation/methodology.html>

Abbreviations and Symbols:

Please note that symbols will show in the associated flag field for variables. The data value shown will be zero. The following abbreviations and symbols are used with these data:

- D** - Withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual companies; data are included in higher level totals.
- S** - Estimate does not meet publication standards because of high sampling variability, poor response quality, or other concerns about the estimate quality. Unpublished estimates derived from this table by subtraction are subject to these same limitations and should not be attributed to the U.S. Census Bureau. For a description of publication standards and the total quantity response rate, see link to program methodology [page](#).
- N** - Not available or not comparable
- X** - Not applicable

For the complete list of all economic programs symbols, see the Symbols Glossary at <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/economic-census/technical-documentation/data-dictionary.html>.

Additional Notes:

The OWNCHAR valid values (listed below) require QDESC in the API call, and vice versa, or the returned data will be incomplete. Example call for YRACQBUS :

```
https://api.census.gov/data/2018/absco?get=GEO_ID,NAME,NAICS2017,NAICS2017_LABEL,OWNER_SEX,OWNER_SEX_LABEL,OWNER_ETH,OWNER_ETH_LABEL,OWNER_RACE,OWNER_RACE_LABEL,OWNER_VET,OWNER_VET_LABEL,QDESC,QDESC_LABEL,OWNCHAR,OWNCHAR_LABEL,YEAR,OWNPDEMP,OWNPDEMP_F,OWNPDEMP_PCT,OWNPDEMP_PCT_F,OWNPDEMP_S,OWNPDEMP_S_F,OWNPDEMP_PCT_S,OWNPDEMP_PCT_S_F&for=us:*&for=QDESC_LABEL=YRACQBUS&key=YOUR_KEY_GOES_HERE
```

Valid Data Values

To build valid API queries, data users will need to refer to the following codes.

If any one **person** owned 10 percent or more of the business in 2018, the respondent was asked to provide the sex, ethnicity, race, and veteran status for up to four persons owning the largest percentage(s) of the business in 2018. Please refer to these questions and valid codes (listed by QDESC code and label in the order asked on the questionnaire) for a better understanding of the information collected on the 2019 ABS survey, which resulted in the classification of majority business ownership. Please note that only the race question instructed the respondent to "**Select all that apply.**"

"What is the sex of *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)?*"

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
OWNER_SEX	001	All owners of respondent firms
	002	Female
	003	Male

"Has *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* ever served in any branch of the U.S. military service, including the Coast Guard, the National Guard, or a Reserve component of any service branch?"

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
OWNER_VET	001	All owners of respondent firms
	002	Veteran
	004	Nonveteran

"Is *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?"

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
OWNER_ETH	001	All owners of respondent firms
	020	Hispanic
	029	Non-Hispanic

"What is *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)*'s race? **Select all that apply.** (For this survey, Hispanic origins are not races.)"

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
OWNER_RACE	00	All owners of respondent firms
	30	White
	40	Black or African American
	50	American Indian and Alaska Native
	60	Asian
	70	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
	90	Minority
	92	Nonminority

Please refer to the following business owner questions and valid codes (listed alphabetically by QDESC_LABEL) for the business owner information collected on the 2019 ABS questionnaire.

"Is *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* disabled as the result of illness or injury incurred or aggravated during military service?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O13 and DISVETRN	FG	Service-disabled veteran
	FH	Not a service-disabled veteran
	FJ	Total reporting
	FK	Item not reported

"Prior to establishing, purchasing, or acquiring this business, what was the highest degree or level of school *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* completed?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O07 and EDUC	DM	Less than high school graduate
	DN	High school graduate - diploma or GED
	DO	Technical, trade, or vocational school
	DP	Some college, but no degree
	DQ	Associate degree
	DR	Bachelor's degree
	DS1	Master's degree
	DS2	Doctorate degree
	DS3	Professional degree beyond a bachelor's degree
	DT	Total reporting
DU	Item not reported	

"Prior to establishing, purchasing, or acquiring this business, what was the field of the highest degree completed for *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)*? **Select all that apply.**"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O08 and FLDEDUC (see next page)	FE2A	Biological, agricultural and environmental life sciences
	FE2B	Chemistry, except biochemistry
	FE2C	Computer and mathematical sciences and other technology
	FE2D	Earth, atmospheric and ocean sciences
	FE2E	Economics, political, psychology, sociology and other social sciences
	FE2F	Engineering
	FE2G	Health
	FE2H	Physics and astronomy
	FE2I	Science and mathematics teacher education
	FE2J	Other science and engineering related fields, not listed
	FE2K	Art and humanities fields
	FE2L	Education, except science and math teacher education
	FE2M	Management and administration fields
	FE2N	Sales and marketing fields
FE2O	Social service and related fields	

O08 and FLDEDUC (continued)	FE2P	Other non-science and non-engineering related fields, not listed above
	FETR	Total reporting
	FEXX	Item not reported
	FEXY	No Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate, or Professional Degree

"What was the age of *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* as of December 31, 2018?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O09 and OWNAGE (see next page)	DZ	Under 25
	EA	25 to 34
	EB	35 to 44
	EC	45 to 54
	ED	55 to 64
	EE	65 or over
	EF	Total reporting
	EG	Item not reported

"Not including this business, what is the status of the previous business *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* started most recently?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O15 and PRIORBUSTAT	D10	This is the owner's first business
	D11	Business is still operating, and the owner still owns it
	D12	Business is no longer in operation
	D13	Business was purchased by another company
	D14	Business was purchased by another individual
	D15	Other
	D1TR	Total reporting
	D1XX	Item not reported

"In 2018, did this business provide *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)*'s primary source of personal income?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O05 and PRMINC	DE	Business was the owner's primary source of personal income
	DF	Business was not the owner's primary source of personal
	DG	Total reporting
	DH	Item not reported

"How important to *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* are each of the following reasons for owning this business? **Select one for each row.**" [Not important, Somewhat important, or Very important]

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O10 and REASONOWN	OH1N	Wanted to be my own boss: Not important
	OH1S	Wanted to be my own boss: Somewhat important
	OH1V	Wanted to be my own boss: Very important
	OI1N	Flexible hours: Not important
	OI1S	Flexible hours: Somewhat important
	OI1V	Flexible hours: Very important
	OJ1N	Balance work and family: Not important
	OJ1S	Balance work and family: Somewhat important
	OJ1V	Balance work and family: Very important
	OK1N	Greater income: Not important
	OK1S	Greater income: Somewhat important
	OK1V	Greater income: Very important
	OL1N	Best avenue for ideas: Not important
	OL1S	Best avenue for ideas: Somewhat important
	OL1V	Best avenue for ideas: Very important
	OM1N	Couldn't find a job: Not important
	OM1S	Couldn't find a job: Somewhat important
	OM1V	Couldn't find a job: Very important
	ON1N	Work for self: Not important
	ON1S	Work for self: Somewhat important
	ON1V	Work for self: Very important
	OO1N	Start my own business: Not important
	OO1S	Start my own business: Somewhat important
	OO1V	Start my own business: Very important
	OP1N	Friend or family role model: Not important
	OP1S	Friend or family role model: Somewhat important
	OP1V	Friend or family role model: Very important
	OQ1N	Other: Not important
	OQ1S	Other: Somewhat important
	OQ1V	Other: Very important
	OR1N	Carry on family business: Not important
	OR1S	Carry on family business: Somewhat important
	OR1V	Carry on family business: Very important
	OS1N	Help my community: Not important
OS1S	Help my community: Somewhat important	
OS1V	Help my community: Very important	
ORTR	Total reporting	
ORXX	Item not reported	

"Was *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* born in the United States?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O11 and USBORN	EH	Owner was born in the U.S.
	EI	Owner was not born in the U.S.
	EJ	Total reporting
	EK	Item not reported

"Is *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* a citizen of the United States?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O12 and USCITIZEN	EL	Owner is a citizen of the U.S.
	EM	Owner is not a citizen of the U.S.
	EN	Total reporting
	EO	Item not reported

(Only asked if the owner answered "Yes" to having served in the U.S. Armed Forces) "Do any of the following characteristics describe *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)*'s military service?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O14 and VETSPECIFIC	ML	Served on active duty military service
	MN	Served on post-9/11 active duty military service
	MOSY	Served on active duty military service in reference year
	MPSY	Served in the National Guard or as a military reservist in
	MQ	None of the above
	MR	Total reporting
	MS	Item not reported by veterans

"In what year did *Owner 1 (2, 3, or 4)* initially acquire ownership of this business?"

QDESC code and label	OWNCHAR valid codes	Meaning of OWNCHAR code
O02 and YRACQBUS	CG	Before 1980
	CH	1980 to 1989
	CI	1990 to 1999
	CI01	2000 to 2007
	CI02	2008 to 2012
	CI03	2013 to 2017
	CM03	2018
	CN	Don't know
	CO	Total reporting
	CP	Item not reported