

Technical Information

2018 Annual Business Survey (ABS): Characteristics of Businesses (CB) Dataset

Accessible via the Application Programming Interface (API)

Estimates are provided for firms (classifiable by sex, ethnicity, race and veteran status) of employer firms that responded to the characteristic(s) listed below. New for the ABS API, the characteristics have two variables; QDESC_LABEL (shown in the parenthesis below), which describes the question asked, and BUSCHAR_LABEL, which denotes the answer (see details starting on page 6).

- Number of owners in 2017 (OWNRNUM)
- Whether the business was family-owned in 2017 (FAMOWN)
- Whether the business was jointly-owned or operated by spouses in 2017 (SPOUSES)
- Sources of capital used to start or acquire the business (STRTSRCE)
- Total amount of capital used to start or acquire the business (ACQBUSCAP)
- Total amount of funding from government grants for 2017 (FUNDSRC_GRANT)
- Total amount of funding from family, friends, and employees for 2017 (FUNDSRC_INSIDER)
- Total amount of funding from other businesses and non-friend/family investors for 2017 (FUNDSRC_INVESTOR)
- Total amount of money borrowed from banks or other financial institutions for 2017 (FUNDSRC_OUTSIDER)
- Total amount of funding from the owner(s) for 2017 (FUNDSRC_OWNER)
- Reasons that the business avoided any needed additional financing during 2017 (AVOIDFINAN)
- Whether the business was profitable in 2017 (PROFIT)
- What factors had negative impacts on profitability for 2017 (NEGPROFIT)
- Types of customers of the business in 2017 (CUST)
- Types of workers used by the business in 2017 (WORKERS)
- Employee benefits that were totally or partly paid by the business in 2017 (BENEFITS)
- Reasons that the business ceased operations since 2017 (CEASEOPS)

Characteristic data are tabulated by:

- Geography (U.S., states, metro areas, counties, and economic places)
- 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.]
- Years in business (YIBSZFI)
- Sales and receipts (RCPSZFI)
- Number of employees (EMPSZFI)

The full list of variables can be found at <https://api.census.gov/data/2017/abscb/variables.html>

Technical Notes:

Detail may not add to the total or subgroup total because a Hispanic or Latino firm may be of any race, and because a firm could be tabulated in more than one racial group. For example, if a firm responded as both Chinese and Black majority-owned, the firm would be included in the detailed Asian and Black estimates, but would only be counted once toward the higher level estimates for all firms.

For all firms classifiable by sex, ethnicity, race, and veteran status, the details are counted based on the person(s) owning 51 percent or more of the stock or equity in the business. These estimates are both tabulated by single attribute (such as female-owned) and cross tabulated by double attributes (such as Hispanic, female-owned). Separate estimates are counted, tabulated, and cross tabulated for firms equally owned (50 percent / 50 percent).

Firms not classifiable by sex, ethnicity, race, and veteran status are counted and tabulated separately.

Percentages are based on total reporting within a sex, ethnicity, race, veteran status, and/or industry group, and are not recalculated when the dataset is resorted. Firms with more than one domestic establishment are counted in each industry in which they operate, but only once in the U.S. total for all sectors. 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:

- S** - Withheld because estimate did not meet publication standards
- 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 BUSCHAR valid values (listed below) require QDESC in the API call, and vice versa, or the returned data will be incomplete. Example call for SPOUSES:

https://api.census.gov/data/2017/absch?get=GEO_ID,NAME,NAICS2017,NAICS2017_LABEL,SEX,SEX_LABEL,ETH_GROUP,ETH_GROUP_LABEL,RACE_GROUP,RACE_GROUP_LABEL,VET_GROUP,VET_GROUP_LABEL,QDESC,QDESC_LABEL,BUSCHAR,BUSCHAR_LABEL,YEAR,FIRMPDEMP,FIRMPDEMP_F,FIRMPDEMP_PCT,FIRMPDEMP_PCT_F,RCPPDEMP,RCPPDEMP_F,RCPPDEMP_PCT,RCPPDEMP_PCT_F,EMP,EMP_F,EMP_PCT,EMP_PCT_F,PAYANN,PAYANN_F,PAYANN_PCT,PAYANN_PCT_F,FIRMPDEMP_S,FIRMPDEMP_S_F,FIRMPDEMP_PCT_S,FIRMPDEMP_PCT_S_F,RCPPDEMP_S,RCPPDEMP_S_F,RCPPDEMP_PCT_S,RCPPDEMP_PCT_S_F,EMP_S,EMP_S_F,EMP_PCT_S,EMP_PCT_S_F,PAYANN_S,PAYANN_S_F,PAYANN_PCT_S,PAYANN_PCT_S_F&for=us:&for=QDESC_LABEL=SPOUSES&key=YOUR_KEY_GOES_HERE*

Valid Data Values

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

EMPSZFI represents the employment size categories of firms.

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
EMPSZFI	001	All firms
	611	Firms with no employees
	612	Firms with 1 to 4 employees
	620	Firms with 5 to 9 employees
	630	Firms with 10 to 19 employees
	641	Firms with 20 to 49 employees
	642	Firms with 50 to 99 employees
	651	Firms with 100 to 249 employees
	652	Firms with 250 to 499 employees
657	Firms with 500 employees or more	

RCPSZFI represents the sales/receipts/revenue size categories of firms.

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
RCPSZFI	001	All firms
	510	Firms with sales/receipts of less than \$10,000
	520	Firms with sales/receipts of \$10,000 to \$49,999
	522	Firms with sales/receipts of \$50,000 to \$99,999
	523	Firms with sales/receipts of \$100,000 to \$249,999
	525	Firms with sales/receipts of \$250,000 to \$499,999
	531	Firms with sales/receipts of \$500,000 to \$999,999
	532	Firms with sales/receipts of \$1,000,000 or more

YIBSZFI represents the number of years the firm has been in business.

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
YIBSZFI	001	All firms
	311	Firms with less than 2 years in business
	318	Firms with 2 to 3 years in business
	319	Firms with 4 to 5 years in business
	321	Firms with 6 to 10 years in business
	322	Firms with 11 to 15 years in business
	323	Firms with 16 or more years in business

If any one **person** owned 10 percent or more of the business in 2017, 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 2017. 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 2018 ABS-1 report 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
SEX	001	Total
	002	Female
	003	Male
	004	Equally male-/female
	096	Classifiable
	098	Unclassifiable

"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
VET_GROUP	001	Total
	002	Veteran
	003	Equally veteran/nonveteran
	004	Nonveteran
	096	Classifiable
	098	Unclassifiable

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

DATA FIELD	Valid codes	Meaning of code
ETH_GROUP	001	Total
	020	Hispanic
	021	Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
	022	Puerto Rican
	023	Cuban
	024	Other Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish
	028	Equally Hispanic/non-Hispanic
	029	Non-Hispanic
	096	Classifiable
	098	Unclassifiable

"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
RACE_GROUP	00	Total
	30	White
	40	Black or African American
	50	American Indian and Alaska Native
	60	Asian
	61	Asian Indian
	62	Chinese
	63	Filipino
	64	Japanese
	65	Korean
	66	Vietnamese
	70	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
	71	Native Hawaiian
	72	Guamanian or Chamorro
	73	Samoan
	74	Other Pacific Islander
	90	Minority
	91	Equally minority/nonminority
	92	Nonminority
	96	Classifiable
98	Unclassifiable	

Please refer to the following business questions and valid codes (listed alphabetically by QDESC_LABEL) for the business information collected on the 2018 ABS-1 questionnaire.

"For the owner(s) you reported, what was the total amount of capital used to start or initially acquire this business?
(Capital includes savings, other assets, and borrowed funds of owner(s).)"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B08 and ACQBUSCAP	A1	All firms
	GM	Less than \$5,000
	GN	\$5,000 to \$9,999
	GO	\$10,000 to \$24,999
	GP	\$25,000 to \$49,999
	GQ	\$50,000 to \$99,999
	GR	\$100,000 to \$249,999
	GS	\$250,000 to \$999,999
	GS01	\$1,000,000 to \$2,999,999
	GS02	\$3,000,000 or more
	GU	Don't know
	GV	Not applicable
	GW	Total reporting
	GX	Item not reported

"At any time during 2017, did this business need additional financing?"

"Why did this business choose not to apply for additional financing? Select all that apply."

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B11 and AVOIDFINAN	A1	All firms
	MUNA	None of the above
	MUP	Business needed additional financing and owner(s) did apply
	MUQ	Business needed additional financing and owner(s) chose not to apply
	MUR	Business needed additional financing and owner(s) chose not to apply
	MUR1	Did not think business would be approved by lender
	MUR2	Did not want to accrue debt
	MUR3	Decided the financing costs would be too high
	MUR4	Preferred to reinvest the business profits instead
	MUR5	Felt the loan search/application process would be too time consuming
	MUR7	Decided to wait until funding conditions improved
	MUR8	Decided to wait until the company hit milestones to be in stronger position to raise funds
	MUTR	Total reporting
	MUXX	Item not reported
MUXY	Reason why business avoided additional financing not reported	

"In 2017, which of the following employee benefits were paid totally or partly by this business?"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B21 and BENEFITS	A1	All firms
	KB	Health insurance
	KC	Contributions to retirement plans, including 401(k), Keogh, etc.
	KD	Profit sharing and/or stock options
	KE	Paid holidays, vacation, and/or sick leave
	KE01	Tuition assistance and/or reimbursement
	KF	None of the above
	KG	Total reporting
	KH	Item not reported

"Has this business ceased operations?"

(If Yes) "Why did this business cease operations? **Select all that apply.**"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B27 and CEASEOPS	A1	All firms
	LI	Business is currently operating
	LI00	Business operations have ceased
	LI01	Operations ceased because owner(s) military deployment
	LI02	Operations ceased because owner(s) illness or injury
	LJ	Operations ceased because owner(s) retired
	LK	Operations ceased because owner(s) died
	LL	Operations ceased because operated for a specific or one-time event
	LM	Operations ceased due to inadequate cash flow or sales
	LN	Operations ceased due to lack of business loans/credit
	LO	Operations ceased due to lack of personal loans/credit
	LP	Operations ceased because owner(s) started another business
	LQ	Operations ceased because owner(s) sold the business
	LR	Operations ceased for another reason
	LS	Total reporting
	LT	Operating status not reported
LU	Reason operations ceased not reported	

"In 2017, which of the following types of customers accounted for 10% or more of this business's total sales of goods and/or services? **Select all that apply.**"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B14 and CUST (see next page)	A1	All firms
	IB	Federal government
	IC	State and local government, including school districts, transportation authorities, etc.
	ID01	Other businesses, including distributors of your product
	ID02	Other organizations
	IE	Individuals

B14 and CUST (cont.)	IF	Total reporting
	IG	Item not reported

"In 2017, did **two or more members of one family own the majority** of this business? (*Family refers to spouses/unmarried partners, parents/guardians, children, siblings, or close relatives.*)"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B02 and FAMOWN	A1	All firms
	BM	Family-owned
	BN	Not family-owned
	BO	Total reporting
	BP	Item not reported
	NB	Not applicable

"For 2017, what was the total amount of money this business received from government grants (such as the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and/or Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) programs)?"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B09e and FUNDSRC_GRANT	A1	All firms
	BJF0	\$0 from government grants
	BJF1	\$1 to \$4,999 from government grants
	BJF2	\$5,000 to \$9,999 from government grants
	BJF3	\$10,000 to \$24,999 from government grants
	BJF4	\$25,000 to \$49,999 from government grants
	BJF5	\$50,000 to \$99,999 from government grants
	BJF6	\$100,000 to \$249,999 from government grants
	BJF7	\$250,000 or more from government grants
	BJF8	Firms with funding from government grants: Don't know
	BJTR	Firms with funding from government grants: Total reporting
	BJXX	Firms with funding from government grants: Item not reported

"For 2017, what was the total amount of money this business received from family, friends, and employees?"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B09b and FUNDSRC_INSIDER	A1	All firms
	BGF0	\$0 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF1	\$1 to \$4,999 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF2	\$5,000 to \$9,999 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF3	\$10,000 to \$24,999 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF4	\$25,000 to \$49,999 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF5	\$50,000 to \$99,999 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF6	\$100,000 to \$249,999 from family, friends, and employees
	BGF7	\$250,000 or more from family, friends, and employees
	BGF8	Firms with funding from family, friends, and employees: Don't know
	BGTR	Firms with funding from family, friends, and employees: Total reporting
	BGXX	Firms with funding from family, friends, and employees: Item not reported

"For 2017, what was the total amount of money this business received from angel investors, venture capitalists, or other businesses in return for a share of ownership in this business? (An "angel investor" is an affluent individual who provides capital for a business start-up, usually in exchange for convertible debt or ownership equity.)"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B09d and FUNDSRC_INVESTOR	A1	All firms
	BIF0	\$0 from outside investors
	BIF1	\$1 to \$4,999 from outside investors
	BIF2	\$5,000 to \$9,999 from outside investors
	BIF3	\$10,000 to \$24,999 from outside investors
	BIF4	\$25,000 to \$49,999 from outside investors
	BIF5	\$50,000 to \$99,999 from outside investors
	BIF6	\$100,000 to \$249,999 from outside investors
	BIF7	\$250,000 or more from outside investors
	BIF8	Firms with funding from outside investors: Don't know
	BITR	Firms with funding from outside investors: Total reporting
	BIXX	Firms with funding from outside investors: Item not reported

"For 2017, what was the total amount of money this business borrowed from a bank or other financial institution, including business loans, a business credit card carrying a balance, or a business line of credit? *Include all draws on business line of credit, even if paid off during the year.*"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B09c and FUNDSRC_OUTSIDER	A1	All firms
	BHF0	\$0 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF1	\$1 to \$4,999 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF2	\$5,000 to \$9,999 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF3	\$10,000 to \$24,999 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF4	\$25,000 to \$49,999 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF5	\$50,000 to \$99,999 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF6	\$100,000 to \$249,999 from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF7	\$250,000 or more from banks and other financial institutions
	BHF8	Firms with funding from banks and other financial institutions: Don't know
	BHTR	Firms with funding from banks and other financial institutions: Total reporting
	BHXX	Firms with funding from banks and other financial institutions: Item not reported

"For 2017, what was the total amount of money that the owner(s) personally put into the business? *Your best estimate is fine.*

Include:

- Investments from personal savings
- Personal retirement accounts
- Home equity loans
- Personally borrowed funds"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B09a and FUNDSRC_OWNER	A1	All firms
	BFE0	Business does not have owners
	BFF0	\$0 from owner(s)
	BFF1	\$1 to \$4,999 from owner(s)
	BFF2	\$5,000 to \$9,999 from owner(s)
	BFF3	\$10,000 to \$24,999 from owner(s)
	BFF4	\$25,000 to \$49,999 from owner(s)
	BFF5	\$50,000 to \$99,999 from owner(s)
	BFF6	\$100,000 to \$249,999 from owner(s)
	BFF7	\$250,000 or more from owner(s)
	BFF8	Firms with funding from owner(s): Don't know
	BFTR	Firms with funding from owner(s): Total reporting
	BFXX	Firms with funding from owner(s): Item not reported

"For 2017, which of the following negatively impacted the profitability of this business? Only include responses that impacted profitability. **Select all that apply.**"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B13 and NEGPROFIT	A1	All firms
	OSH1	Negative impact from access to financial capital
	OTH1	Negative impact from cost of financial capital
	OUH1	Negative impact from finding qualified labor
	OVH1	Negative impact from taxes
	OWG1	Negative impact from government regulations
	OWH1	Negative impact from slow business or lost sales
	OXH1	Negative impact from late or nonpayment from customers
	OYH1	Negative impact from unpredictability of business conditions
	OZH1	Negative impact from changes or updates in technology
	PBH1	None of the above
	PBTR	Total reporting
	PBXX	Item not reported

"In 2017, how many people owned this business?"

- Do not combine two or more owners to create one owner.
- Count spouses and partners as separate owners."

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B01 and OWNRRUM (see next page)	A1	All firms
	BQ	1 person
	BQ01	2 to 4 people
	BQ02	5 to 10 people

B01 and OWNRNUM (cont.)	BQ03	11 or more people
	BX	Unknown number of owners
	BY	Total reporting
	BZ	Item not reported

"In 2017 did this business have profits, losses, or break even?"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B12 and PROFIT	A1	All firms
	EHP1	Business had profits
	EHP2	Business had losses
	EHP3	Business broke even
	EHTR	Total reporting
	EHXX	Item not reported

"In 2017, did **two or more members of one family own the majority** of this business? (*Family refers to spouses/unmarried partners, parents/guardians, children, siblings, or close relatives.*)"

(If two or more members of one family own the majority) "In 2017, did spouses/unmarried partners jointly own this business?"

(If two or more members of one family own the majority) "In 2017, was this business operated equally by both spouses/unmarried partners?"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B03 and SPOUSES	A1	All firms
	LZ	Jointly owned and equally operated by spouses
	MA	Jointly owned but primarily operated by male spouse
	MB	Jointly owned but primarily operated by female spouse
	MC	Not jointly owned by spouses
	MD	Total reporting
	ME	Item not reported
	MF	Not applicable

"For the owner(s) reported, what was the source(s) of capital used to start or acquire this business? **Select all that apply.**"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B07 and STRTSRCE (see next page)	A1	All firms
	FX	Personal/family savings of owner(s)
	FY	Personal/family assets other than savings of owner(s)
	FZ	Personal/family home equity loan
	GA01	Personal credit card(s) carrying balances
	GA02	Business credit card(s) carrying balances
	GB	Business loan from federal, state, or local government
	GC	Government-guaranteed business loan from a bank or
	GD	Business loan from a bank or financial institution
	GE	Business loan/investment from family/friends
	GF	Investment by venture capitalist(s)
	GG	Grants

B07 and STRTSRCE (cont.)	GH	Other source(s) of capital
	GI	Don't know
	GJ	None needed
	GK	Total reporting
	GL	Item not reported

"In 2017, which of the following types of workers were used by this business? **Select all that apply.**"

QDESC code and label	BUSCHAR valid codes	Meaning of BUSCHAR code
B20 and WORKERS	A1	All firms
	JT	Full-time paid employees
	JU	Part-time paid employees
	JV	Paid day laborers
	JW	Temporary staffing obtained from a temporary help service
	JX	Leased employees from leasing service or professional employer organization
	JY	Contractors, subcontractors, independent contractors, or outside consultants
	JY01	None of the above
	JZ	Total reporting
	KA	Item not reported