

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Interviewers: Tips for Obtaining Industry and Occupation Information

Understanding the Difference Between Industry and Occupation

- **Industry:** The kind of activity at someone's place of work (e.g., *hospital, law office, retail sales, foundry, dairy farm*). Industries are classified into activities such as goods production and services provided. A person's industry is the answer to the question, "What does your company do?"
- **Occupation:** The kind of work someone does (e.g., *registered nurse, janitor, cashier, auto mechanic, barber, civil engineer*). Occupation applies to the individual worker. Worksites can have one or many occupations.

Improving the Quality of Industry and Occupation Text Entries

- A text entry may not be usable if it is too vague, such as "office worker."
 - Probe to get more specific information, such as "What is your job title?"
- Avoid complete sentences. **Most** entries only require 2 or 3 words.
- Try to spell responses correctly.
- Do not enter a company name as the industry. Ask, "What does the business do or make?"
- Record only **one** industry and **one** occupation.
 - If the respondent has more than one job, ask "What is your main job?" Their main job is where they work the most hours.
- "Self-employed" is **not** an industry or occupation.
 - For industry, ask, "What type of business are you self-employed in?"
 - For occupation, ask, "What type of work do you do?"
- If the respondent answers "employed" for employment status, but answers "retired" for industry or occupation, ask, "Are you currently or recently working?"
 - If yes, record their current or recent industry and occupation (do not enter "retired").
 - If no, change their employment status (if possible) or enter "retired" for **both** industry and occupation.
- If the respondent does not give their industry or occupation, enter "99" for refused.
 - Do not leave the field blank or enter "77" or "don't know."

How to Handle Government and Military Work

If the respondent says they work for the government:

- For industry, ask "Which government agency or department?" (examples: state family services department, city police department, county health department, U.S. State Department)
- For occupation, ask "What is your job title?" (examples: police officer, children's services worker, environmental health specialist, foreign affairs officer)

If the respondent says they work for the military:

- Ask, "Are you uniformed or civilian?" (Uniformed = active duty military)
- For uniformed/active duty military:
 - For industry, enter the branch of the military (example: U.S. Army)
 - For occupation, enter "military personnel"
 - Note: For those in the Marine Corps, please enter "U.S. Marine Corps" in the industry – **not** "Marines"
- For civilian military:
 - For industry, enter the agency name (example: Department of Defense)
 - For occupation, enter their specific occupation (example: aerospace engineer)

Example Probes: How to Get Industry and Occupation Responses that are More Specific

Industry

Non-specific industry entry	Follow-up question	Examples of specific industry entries
Wholesale [or retail]	What type of wholesale [retail] company?	wholesale grain, wholesale furniture, retail clothing, florist, shoe store
Office	What type of company?	insurance, advertising, law firm
Manufacturing	What does your company make?	automobile manufacturing, cosmetics manufacturing, paper manufacturing

Occupation

Non-specific occupation entry	Follow-up question	Examples of specific occupation entries
Technician	What is your job title?	laboratory technician, cable technician, computer repair technician
Healthcare provider	What is your job title?	registered nurse, doctor, dental hygienist, physical therapist, pharmacist
Engineer	What type of engineer?	mechanical engineer, civil engineer, aerospace engineer, engineering technician, drafter

Do Not Enter an Industry in the Occupation Field

A common problem is for a respondent to give an industry instead of an occupation. Recognize when an industry is given for an occupation, and then probe for the actual occupation by asking "What is your job title?"

These are industries, not occupations	Examples of acceptable occupation entries
Administration	office manager, administrative assistant, file clerk, shipping clerk
Banking	bank teller, loan officer, database administrator, accountant
Business	chief executive, market research specialist, purchasing agent
Computers	computer programmer, web developer, computer scientist
Construction	construction laborer, carpenter, roofer, sheet metal worker, electrician
Education	elementary school teacher, school principal, secretary, counselor
Finance	certified public accountant, bookkeeper, financial analyst, loan officer
Insurance	insurance sales agent, claims adjuster, insurance underwriter
Manufacturing	industrial production manager, budget analyst, shipping clerk
Retail	salesperson, stocker, manager, cashier, product demonstrator
Transportation	flight attendant, bus driver, taxi driver, pilot, ship engineer, sailor
Warehouse	hand packer, forklift operator, hoist operator, laborer, supervisor

