

# BRFSS Interviewers: Tips for Obtaining Good Industry and Occupation Information

## NIOSH BRFSS I&O Project

### Understand 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, library*).
- **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.

### How Are Your Industry and Occupation Text Entries Coded?

Industry and occupation (I&O) text entries are coded to numbers called Census codes. To do this, the words you enter in the text field are run through a computer program that assigns codes automatically. Sometimes, the I&O text does not autocode. When this happens, it is manually coded by a trained coder. Responses that are too vague may not be codable, so the responses may be coded "missing data" and will not be analyzable or useful to the states, BRFSS, or other users.

### Tip: How to Improve Coding of Industry and Occupation Text Entries

- A text entry cannot be coded if it is too vague, such as "office worker." If the response is vague, ask probing questions to get more specific information, such as "what is your job title?" or "what type of office worker?"
- Industry and occupation can be obtained in just 2–3 words. Most of the time, more words do not improve coding.
- Do not enter company names in the industry field unless you cannot figure out what the correct industry is.
- It is very important to spell correctly. It is hard to code misspelled words. Misspelling contributes to "missing" BRFSS industry and occupation data.
- If the respondent has more than one job, ask "What is your main job?"
- Everyone knows what their job is. If they do not respond to the questions, probe for their industry and occupation. If they do not give them, enter "99" for refused. Do not leave the field blank or enter "77" or "don't know."

### Tip: Probe for Responses that are Specific

The Census codes are specific, so try to enter specific information. Here are some examples.

#### 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

### Tip: Do Not Enter an Industry in the Occupation Field

A common problem is for a respondent to give an industry instead of an occupation. This might lead to coding errors. 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
advertising	designer, salesperson, editor, public relations specialist, photographer
agriculture	ranch manager, agricultural worker, animal breeder, fisherman, logger
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
government	human resources manager, budget analyst, biologist, civil engineer
insurance	insurance sales agent, claims adjuster, insurance underwriter
manufacturing	industrial production manager, budget analyst, shipping clerk
medical	medical assistant, dentist, lab technician, psychologist, phlebotomist
restaurant	cook, chef, waiter, host, bartender, dishwasher, supervisor
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

