

Age of Operator

Work Off Farm and Days Worked

Operators Reporting Residence Not on Farms Operated, 1940

AGE OF OPERATOR

One-fifth of the 1,090,424 farms with value of products sold, traded, or used by farm households of less than \$250 have operators 65 years of age and over, as compared with approximately 14 percent of all operators for all value groups. The comparable percentages of operators from this age group in the \$250 to \$399 and the \$400 to \$599 value groups are 16 and 14, respectively. The proportion is 10 percent for farms with value of products of \$2,000 to \$2,499, 8 percent for farms in the \$6,000 to \$9,999 class, and 10 percent for those with farm products valued at \$10,000 and over. The proportion of operators 65 years of age and over therefore, in general, decreases as the value of farm products increases, although the percentage tends to increase slightly where the value of farm products is \$10,000 and over. This proportion in the group having the highest value of products is only half of the proportion on farms on which the value of products is less than \$250. This same general pattern prevails in each of the geographic divisions.

The majority, although by no means all, of these aged operators on farms with a small value of farm products are retired or are doing very little farming. They probably are not able to increase their agricultural production to any extent because of their age and their limited resources. Many of those with limited resources also depend in part upon income from other sources, such as children, relatives, public assistance, etc., to meet their living expenses, and are therefore the concern of social-security and welfare programs. Those having sufficient income from investments or other sources to meet their living expenses are not dependent upon social-security programs, but may or may not be able to use their resources to increase agricultural production even if their age permits them to work a part or all of the time. No one value of products group is satisfactory as an indication of the extent to which farm operators 65 years of age and over have retired or are doing very little farming in their own right. But there is evidence to warrant the conclusion that the value group most appropriate would differ in the various divisions of the country, and particularly as between the North and the South.

Young farmers under 25 years of age, although they constitute less than 4 percent of all farmers, are found more frequently on farms where the value of products sold, traded, or used is less than \$600. This is partly because these operators have limited resources with which to work or because they are adding to their inventory rather than selling or consuming their products. The young operators on farms with large value of products usually have inherited their farm and equipment, are renting from their parents or relatives, or are operating the farms as paid managers.

A larger proportion of the farm operators in the United States and in all geographic divisions is found in the 45 to 54 year age group than in any other age group. The average age of

all operators is 48 years. In general, the concentration in the 45 to 54 year age group is less in the smaller value of products groups than in the larger value groups.

The average age of farm operators in each of the value groups is practically the same. However, the lower value groups include a larger proportion of young and old operators than do the higher value groups. The majority of the operators in the higher value groups, on the other hand, are concentrated in middle age. If only the average age is used these significant differences in age distribution are missed.

WORK OFF FARM AND DAYS WORKED

Two out of every 7 operators of farms in the United States on April 1, 1940—as reported by the Census—supplemented their income from farming in 1939 by working off their farms for pay or income. In some cases the supplemental income was small and came from odd or spare-time jobs; in other cases the operator's farming activities were only secondary, his off-farm work constituting his principal source of income. The average number of days worked off the farm by those reporting such work was 137 days. Of these, more than half, or better than 1 out of 7 operators, worked 100 or more days off the farm. These figures indicate that many individuals, reported by the Census of Agriculture as farm operators, depend on other than the operation of their farms for a considerable portion of their income. Many of these individuals do not consider themselves farmers; their occupation as reported on the Population Schedule was that of machinist, salesman, banker, merchant, teacher, carpenter, etc.

Twenty-nine percent of the operators working off the farm reported working on other farms, 75 percent reported work at nonfarm activities, and only 4 percent reported both work on other farms and nonfarm work. In other words, individuals working off the farm work either at nonfarm work or on other farms; they seldom do both types of work.

As most of the off-farm work reported by farm operators is nonagricultural, operators reporting such work are, in general, located near urban centers or in industrial and mining areas. New England, with 42 percent of all farm operators reporting off-farm work, has the highest percentage reported for any geographic group. The Pacific division is second with 39 percent. The smallest percentage, 25, is reported by the West North Central, although the 27 percent reported for both the East and the West South Central States is not much greater.

The average number of days worked off the farm reported by the operator varies according to the same geographic pattern. New England leads with an average of 180 days, whereas the West North Central, with an average of 103 days, has the smallest average.

Approximately 7 out of 10 operators in New England and the Pacific States who reported any work off the farm reported more

than 100 days work. This amount of work was least frequently reported in the West North Central division where only 4 out of 10 operators worked 100 days or more. About one-half of the operators in the East South Central, the West South Central, and the Mountain divisions reported this amount of work off the farm.

Working off farms is not confined to operators with small value of farm products or low-income farmers. In every value of farm products group, except the 2 highest, at least 1 out of every 6 operators reported working off the farm for pay or income in 1939 and even in these two high groups more than 1 out of every 8 operators reported work off the farm. Four out of every 9 (44 percent) of the 1,145,005 farm operators with value of products less than \$250 worked off the farm. This proportion decreased as the value of farm products increased. On farms with produce valued between \$600 and \$749, 26 percent reported working off the farm, as did 17 percent of the operators with value of products between \$2,000 and \$3,999. More than 1 out of every 8 operators in the \$10,000 and over group also reported work of this nature. This same pattern is found in all the geographic divisions.

Nonfarm work is more frequently reported by operators of farms in the lower value of products groups and by those with products valued at \$10,000 and over. Work on other farms is more frequently reported by operators from farms in the upper value of products groups. Operators of farms in the upper value of products group also seem to be more likely to do both types of work than those on farms that have a small value of products.

These figures on the number of operators working off the farm, however, do not indicate the extent to which the family income may have been supplemented by additional income. In many instances members of the farm family, other than the operator, work off the farm and pay for their board and room or make other contributions to the family income. Some of the family income may come from investments, legacies, pensions, public assistance, or the like.

The average number of days worked off the farm varied also with the value of farm products sold, traded, or used by the farm household. Farm operators with less than \$100 value of products averaged 185 days per year. On farms with produce valued at \$400 to \$599 the average number of days worked was 131; for values between \$2,000 and \$5,999 the average was about 87 days. Up to this point the average number of days work decreased with an increase in the value of products, but above \$6,000 the average number of days worked by the operator increased.

The percentage distribution of days worked off the farm by value groups, though not shown in the tables, is similar to the distribution of operators working off the farm.

Farm operators working at nonfarm work average two and one-half times as many days of work as operators working on other farms—159 and 61 respectively. The average number of days worked decreases for both kinds of work with an increase in the value of products but the proportionate decrease in the number of days worked is greater for work on other farms than for non-farm work. The number of days worked on other farms decreases from 103 where the value of products is less than \$100 to 31 or

32 for operators on farms with produce valued between \$2,000 and \$5,999. The average number of days worked at nonfarm work is also the largest, 198 days, for operators with produce valued at less than \$100. The smallest average number of days, 113, is found among operators on farms in the \$2,000 to \$3,999 value groups. On farms having a larger value of products, the operators average more days work at nonfarm activities, partly because many of these operators are professional or business men who spend the major portion of their time in their respective professions or businesses. Their farms are country residences, hobbies, or at least something less than full-time occupations.

Nine percent of all farm operators or about one-third of the operators reporting work off the farm spent less than 50 days at work on farms other than their own. On farms with less than \$100 value of products only about 1 out of 8 workers doing any kind of off-farm work for pay or income in 1939 reported under 50 days work off the farm. This proportion gradually increases until, on farms with \$1,000 or more farm produce, approximately one-half of the workers off the farm reported less than 50 days work.

On the other hand, the proportion of operators working off the farm and reporting more than 100 days work varies from about 3 out of 4 reporting this amount and living on farms with less than \$250 value of products to about 1 operator out of 3 on farms with produce valued between \$1,000 and \$9,999. Almost one-half of the operators on farms with \$10,000 or more products report this same amount of work off the farm.

Although the number of days operators work off the farm is important and indicates the close tie-up between farming and other occupations and industries, it should be remembered that 64 percent of all farm operators report that they did not do any work off the farm for pay or income. The proportion varies from 42 percent for operators on farms having less than \$100 value of products to approximately 75 percent for farms with products valued at \$1,500 and over.

OPERATORS REPORTING RESIDENCE NOT ON FARMS OPERATED, 1940

One out of every 20 operators reported that they did not reside on the farm they were operating in 1940. One-fourth of the operators of farms with no farm products sold, traded, or used by the farm household and one-sixth of those on unclassified farms made this statement.

For most value of products groups the proportion of non-resident operators is small and there is little variation among the value groups. The percentage of nonresident operators is slightly larger for farms with produce valued at less than \$100 but the most noticeable deviation is among operators of farms with value of products of \$10,000 and over. Many farms operated by city, town, and suitcase farmers are included in this group. Young operators living with their parents and operating a farm of their own, as well as older farmers living on their home farm and operating one or more additional farms in the same locality are also reported in this category.