

AGE AND RESIDENCE OF FARM OPERATORS

Average age of farm operators.—The average age of farm operators in 1954 was 49.6 years. The high percentages of older farmers were in areas where the rate of tenancy was low and where there were relatively large numbers of residential farms (gross value of sales of farm products under \$250). The average age of farm operators increased by 1.6 years from 1940 to 1954. In the South, the average age increased by 3.4 years during this period.

Tenants averaged considerably younger than owners. Many tenant-operators become owners, thus reducing the number of older operators among tenants and increasing the number of older operators among owners.

Part owners average older than tenants but younger than full owners. Operators who rent land from others to supplement land owned are generally persons who have accumulated sufficient capital and equipment to operate additional land but are young enough to have the stamina and ambition to handle the additional

acreage. After passing their prime they may curtail their operations by giving up their rented land. In this instance they pass into the ranks of full owners, thus reducing the number of older operators among part owners.

A high proportion of the older farm operators are full owners. Most farm operators who are successful in achieving farm ownership, either through inheritance or purchase, do so before middle age. Also, many older owner operators remain on the farm in semiretirement. Added to these semiretired farmers are older persons retired from nonfarm employment who acquire farms and semiretire on the land.

Tenants averaged 42.2 years of age as compared with an average of 53.4 for full owners, 47.8 for part owners, and 45.3 for managers. Among the several classes of tenants, livestock-share tenants were the youngest (with an average of 38.5 years) and cash and other and unspecified tenants were the oldest (average age of 44.5 years for cash tenants and 45.1 years for other and unspecified tenants).

PERCENT DISTRIBUTION OF FARM OPERATORS IN EACH TENURE GROUP, BY AGE, FOR THE UNITED STATES AND REGIONS: 1954

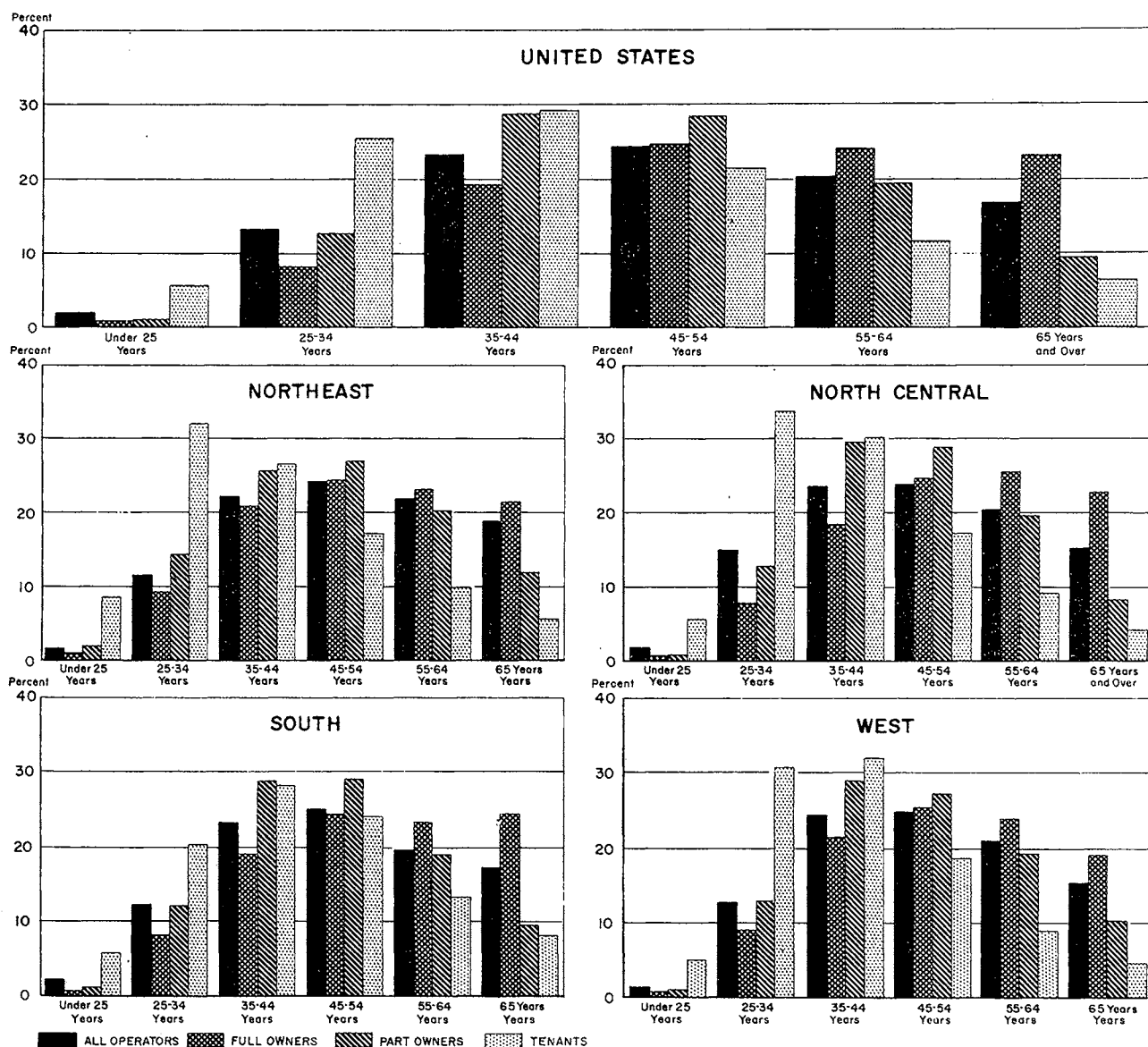


Figure 54.