

Data relating to year on present farm were secured on the basis of the inquiry:

221. When did you begin to operate this place?
Report month if you began to operate this place since January 1, 1958.

Month	Year
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The data obtained from this inquiry are presented under two headings, as follows: (a) Operators by number of years on present farm, and (b) operators by actual year began operation of present farm. When the data are presented in terms of the replies to the questionnaire inquiry, the term, "year of occupancy" or "month of occupancy" is used. For comparison with prior censuses, the data are expressed as "years on present farm." For the 1959 census, data are shown by four-month periods for those operators who began to operate their farms from January 1, 1959, through September 1959, or later.

Information for years on farm has been obtained for each census beginning with 1910. In the censuses of 1959, 1954, 1950, 1930, and 1925, the inquiry called for the month as well as the year of occupancy. For 1945, 1940, and 1935 the inquiry called for only the year of occupancy. The questionnaire for 1920 and 1910 asked for the number of years and months the operator had operated the farm occupied at the time of the census.

The data presented in this chapter on years on the present farm for 1959 are not fully comparable with those for other censuses. For each census, the data on years on farm have been summarized by groups of years-on-present-farm. The number of years or months comprising these groups of years-on-present-farm has not always been the same largely because of changes in the date of the census enumeration. Major groups of years-on-farm used for compiling the data are: Less than 5 years, 5 to 9 years, 10 to 14 years, and 15 or more years. The group "less than 5 years" has been subdivided into groups for single years in some cases. The grouping of farm operators in each years-on-farm group has generally been made on the basis of the calendar year in which the farm operator began to operate his present farm. However, the enumeration dates for the census enumerations have been January 1, April 1, April 15, and October and November for censuses taken since 1910. Thus, for the year in which the census was taken, the elapsed time from the beginning of the calendar year to the date of the census enumeration has been 0, 3, 3½, and 9 to 10 months for various censuses. Likewise, the elapsed time from the date of the census enumeration to the end of the calendar year varies from census to census. The differences in the elapsed time from the date of the census enumeration are shown in table 4 for each group of "years on farm," for each census since 1920. For each census year are shown: (a) The year of occupancy represented by each column, (b) the exact period included in the group, expressed as years and months from the census starting date, as well as an indication of how these periods relate to the calendar year; (c) the United States total for each group; and (d) the proportion of all farm operators in each group. The column in which each total is entered indicates the years-on-farm group in which this particular classification is shown in the tables.

The differences between censuses in elapsed time from the beginning of the calendar year to the date of the census enumeration affects the comparability of data much more for the years-on-farm groups under 5 years than for the years-on-farm groups of 5 to 9, 10 to 14, and 15 or more years.

For 1959, the average number of years on present farm for the United States was 15 years, as compared with an average of 14 years for the 1954 census. This average was calculated by dividing the sum of the years of occupancy for all farms reporting by the total number of operators reporting. The resulting quotients are shown as whole numbers. For 1959, the United States average of 1944 for the year began operation of present

farm was determined from the above calculation. The average was subtracted from 1959 to establish 15 as the average number of years on present farm for the United States. The average year of occupancy and average number of years on present farm have been obtained for each census beginning with 1940.

In 1959, although the inquiry asked the farm operator to report both the month and the year of occupancy if the farmer began farm operations since January 1, 1958, counts by month were made only for operators beginning in the year 1959. For 1959, 157,612 farm operators reported 1959 as the year of occupancy, but for 13,821, or 8.8 percent, of these the month in 1959 they began operation of their present farm was not reported. These 13,821 were apportioned by month on a percentage basis and added to the farms already reporting the month of occupancy in 1959 so that totals by month would be available for all operators beginning operation of their farm in 1959. A similar procedure was used in the 1954 Census of Agriculture.

The 23 percent decrease in the number of farms from 1954 to 1959 has caused significant changes in the total number and may have affected the changes in the proportion of farm operators reporting for the different years-on-farm groups.

PERCENT OF FARM OPERATORS ON PRESENT FARMS 1 YEAR OR LESS, BY TENURE: 1910 TO 1959

