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United States Department of Agriculture  
National Agricultural Statistics Service

# Beginning Farmers

Agricultural Outlook Forum

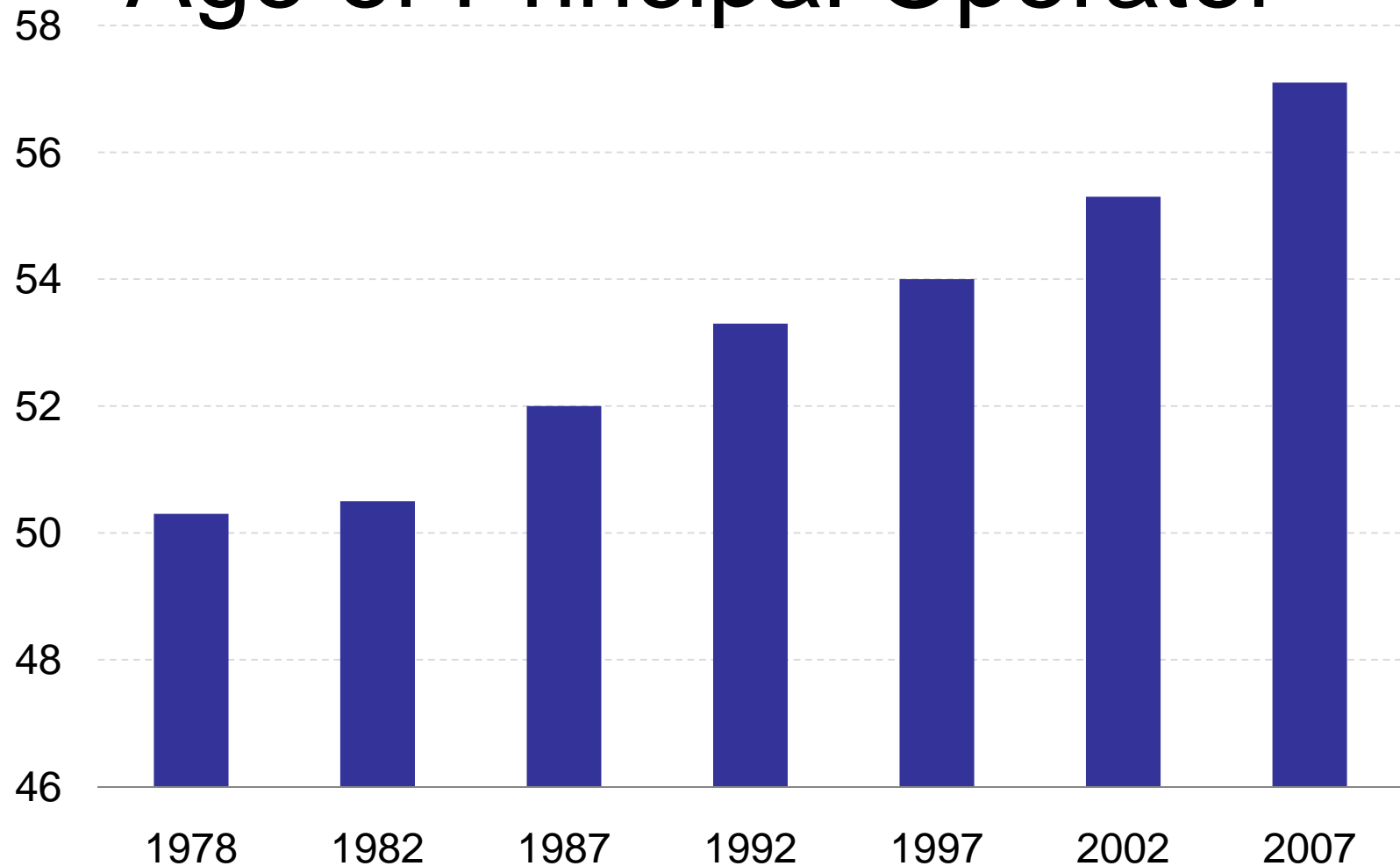
February 20, 2010

Virginia Harris



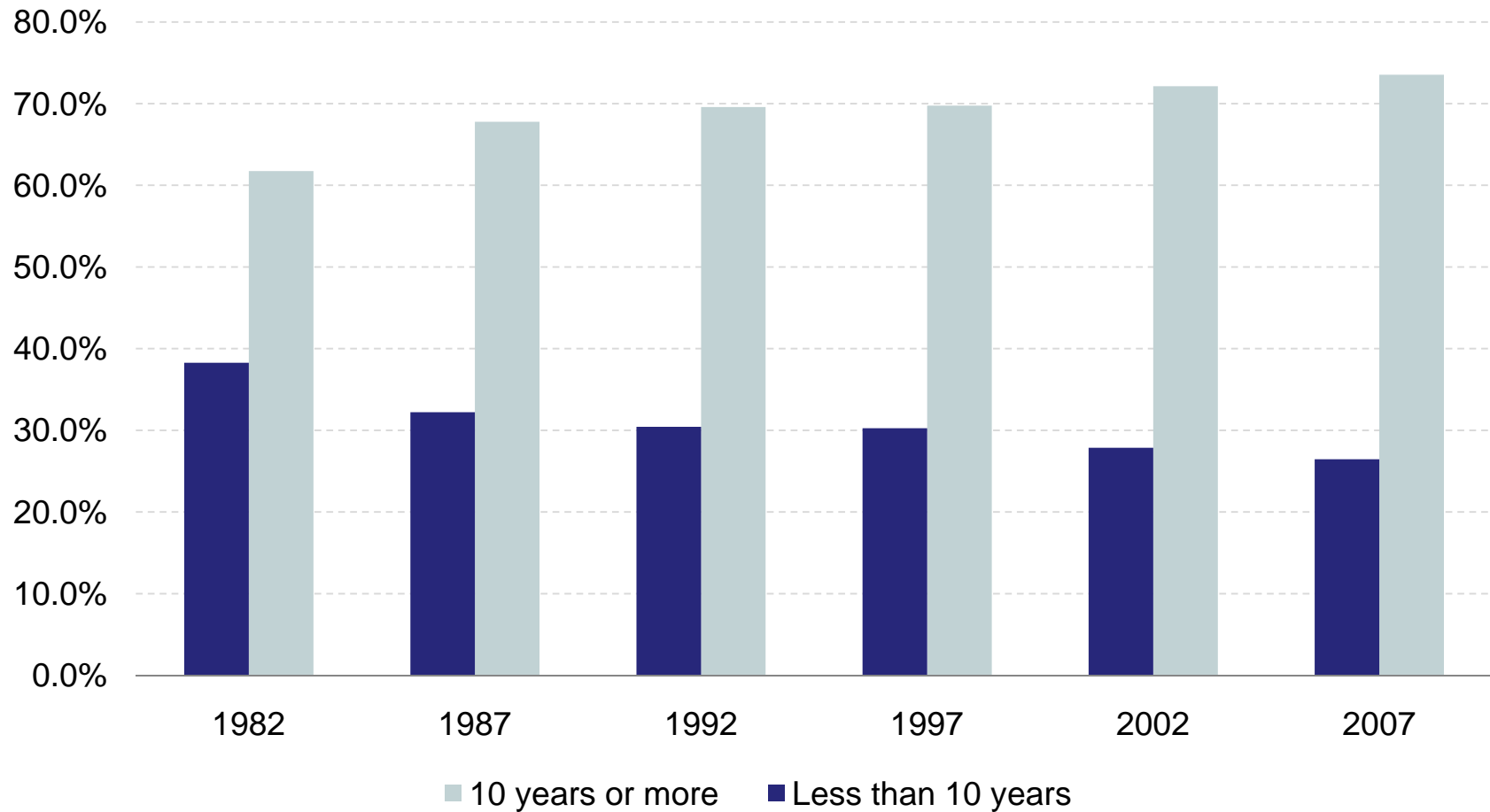
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# Age of Principal Operator



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# Beginning Farmers



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# Definition of Beginning Farmer

- Census question:
  - In what year did the operator begin to operate any part of this operation?
- USDA definition, used for program administration
  - Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years



# New Farms

		Operator Started		
		2003-2007	1998-2002	Prior to 1998
Average size	418 acres	201 acres	285 acres	490 acres
Average sales	\$135,000	\$71,000	\$94,000	\$156,000
Average net cash income of operators	\$29,000	\$7,000	\$15,000	\$37,000
Expenses to sales ratio	0.81	0.93	0.86	0.80
Percent reporting positive net income	47%	33%	37%	52%



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# Beginning Farmer Demographics

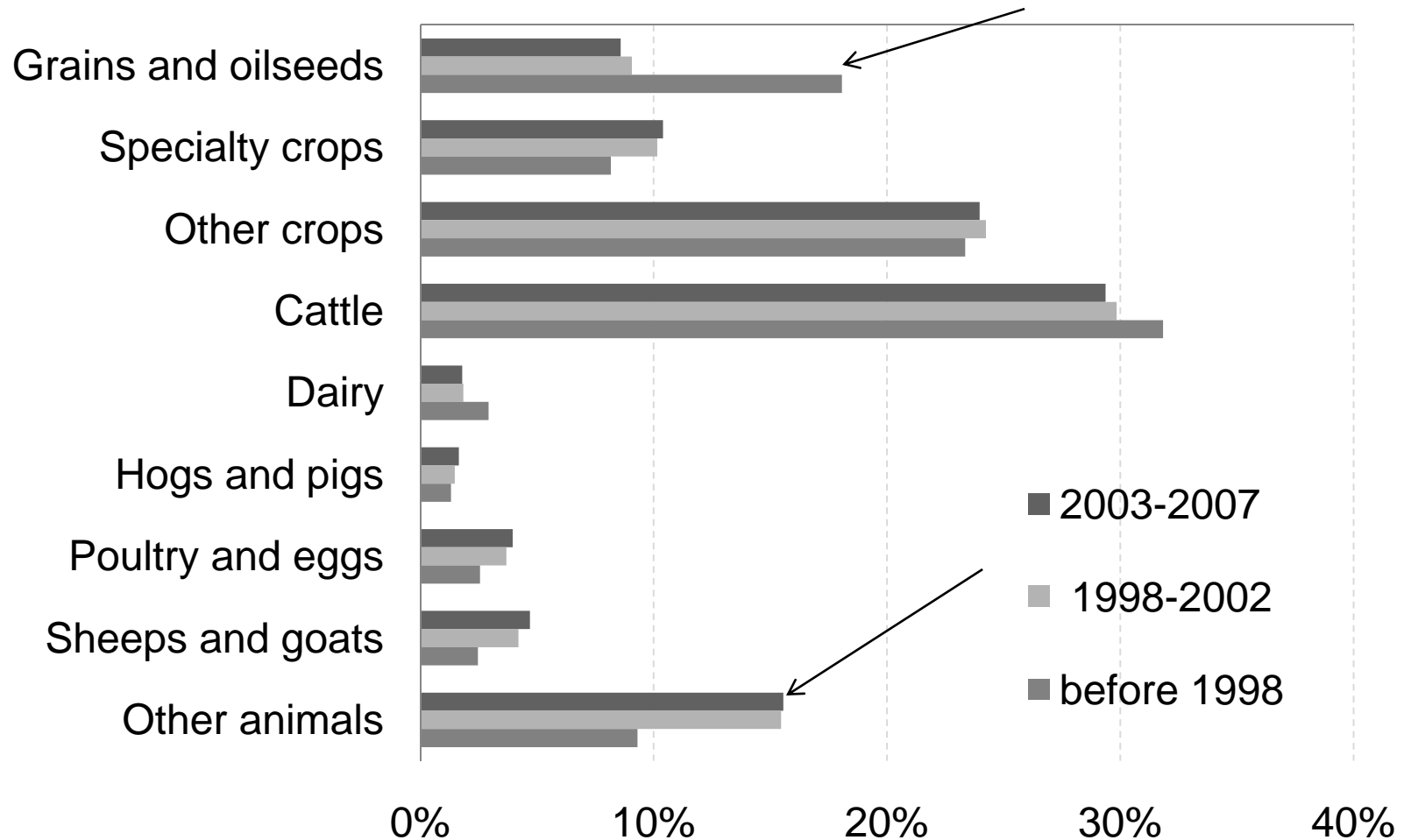
		Operator Started		
		2003-2007	1998-2002	Prior to 1998
Average age of operator	57	48	50	60
Farming as primary occupation	45%	33%	34%	50%
Work off farm	65%	79%	77%	59%
Female principal operator	14%	19%	17%	12%
Minority principal operator	7%	9%	8%	6%



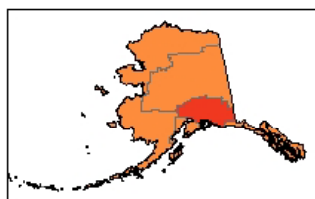
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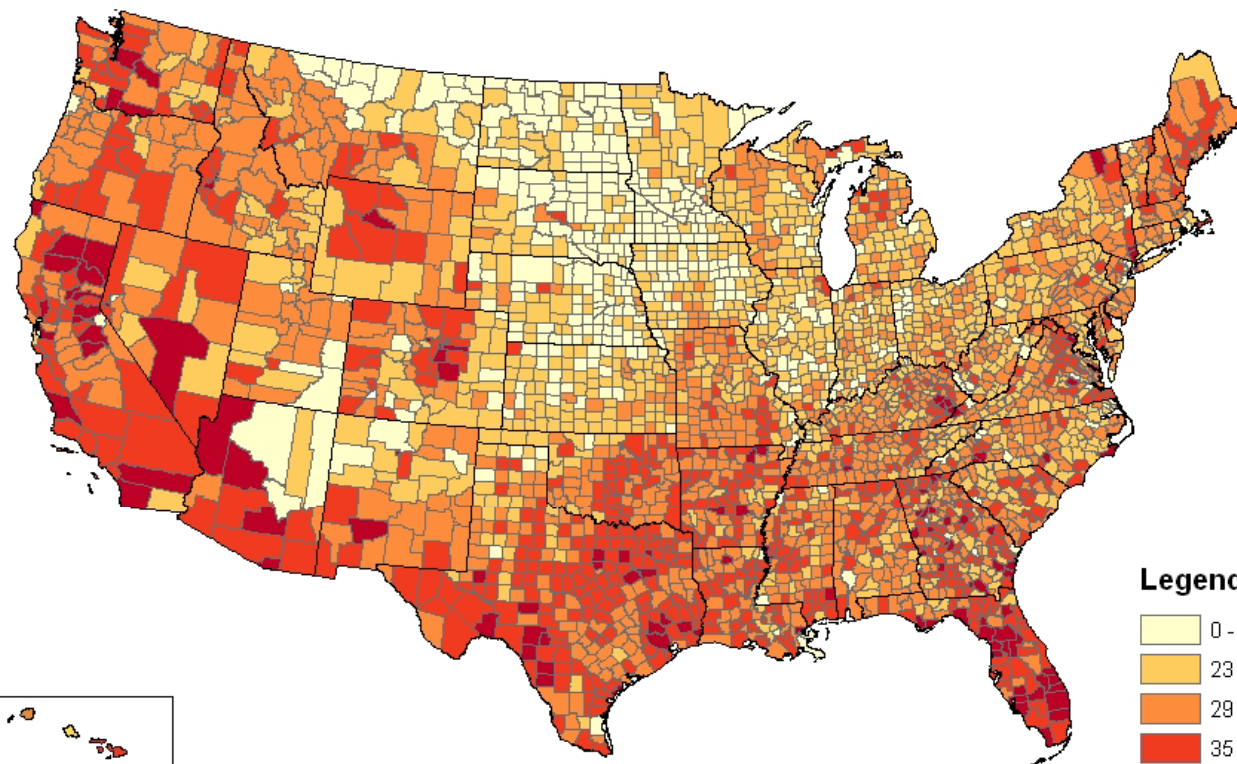
# Beginning Farmers and Type of Production



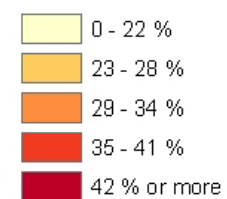
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## Percent of Beginning Farmers by County



### Legend



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# What we know, and what we don't

- We know:
  - Newer farmers work off the farm more, are not as likely to report farming as their primary occupation, and rely less on the farm for household income
- We don't know:
  - Reasons for working off the farm, or future intention for farm



# Farm Operators

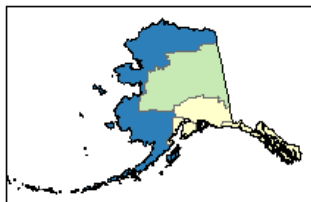
- 3,337,450 operators on farms
  - An operator is a person making day to day decisions for the operation
- Principal operators- number is equal to the number of farms (2,204,792)
- Census collects detailed characteristics for up to 3 operators per farm



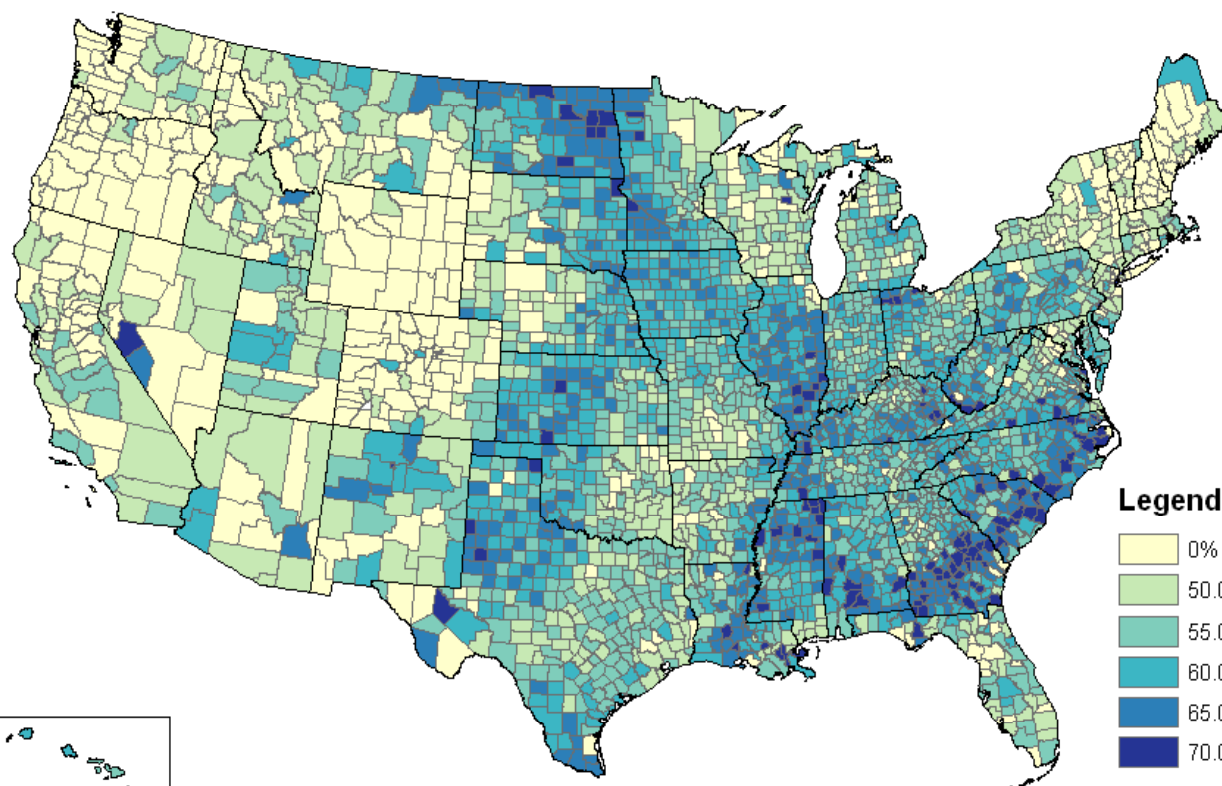
# Multiple Operators on Farms

Farms with	2007	2002
Only 1 operator	57.7%	62.3%
2 operators	35.7%	32.0%
3 operators	5.1%	4.0%
4 operators	1.0%	1.2%
5 operators	0.5%	0.6%

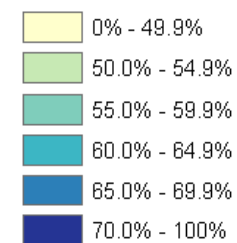




## Only One Operator on the Farm



### Legend



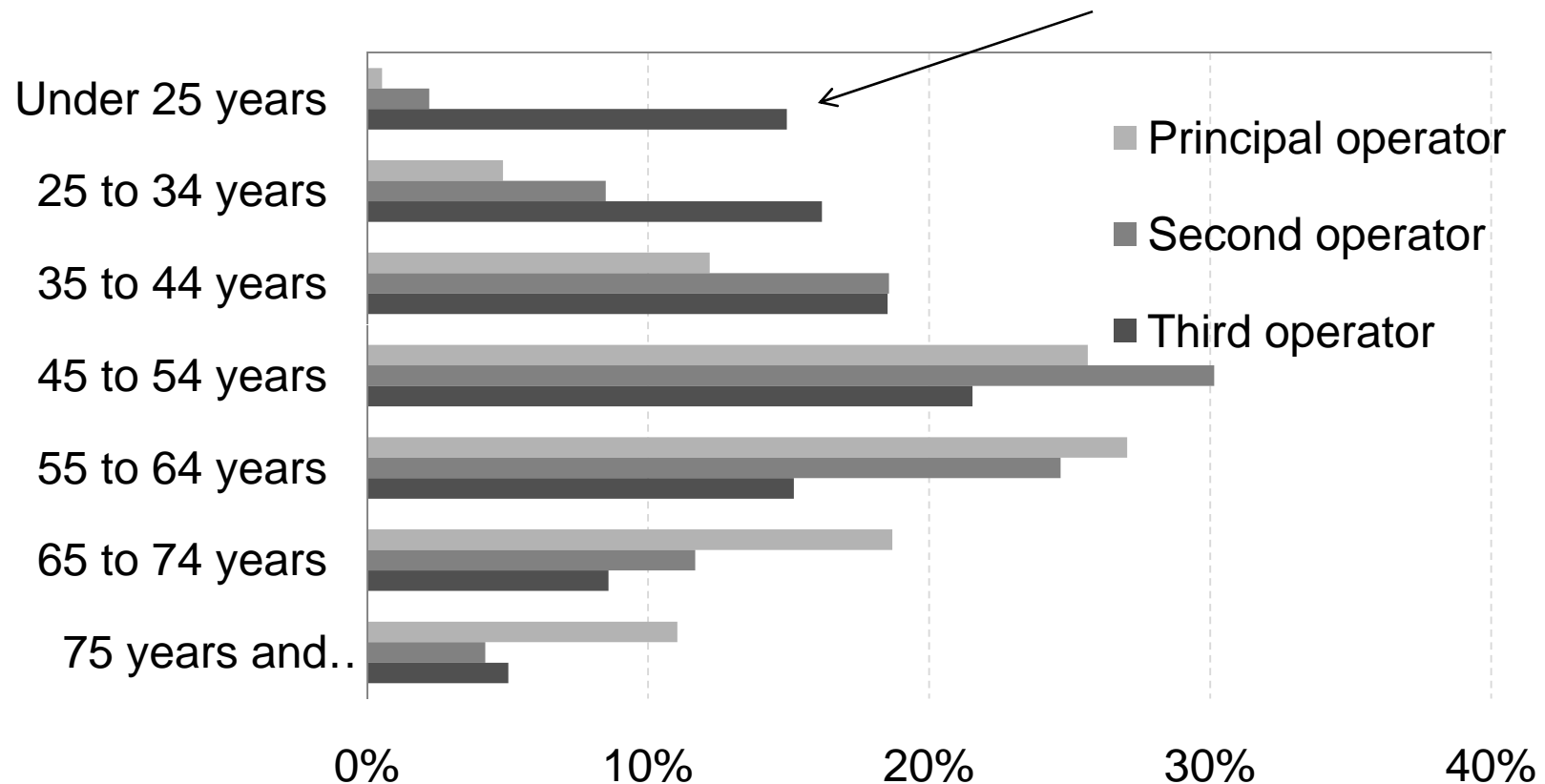
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# Beginning Farmers – another look

- Beginning farmers may not be looking to start a new farm on their own, but take over an existing family farm, or apprentice on a farm
- Second and third operators are more likely to be beginning farmers than principal operators



# All Operators by Age



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# Second Operators

- 40% of second operators are beginning farmers, compared to 29% of principal operators
- 2 out of 3 second operators are women (probably mostly spouses)
- Slightly younger than principal operator (54.4 years compared to 57.1)
- 1 out of 3 in different household from principal operator



# Second Operators

	Male Second Operator	Female Second Operator
Male Principal Operator	21%	65%
Female Principal Operator	12%	2%



# Second Operators

	Second Operator established farmer	Second Operator beginning farmer
Principal Operator established farmer	56%	10%
Principal Operator beginning farmer	3%	31%



# Third Operators

- 53% of third operators are beginning farmers, compared to 29% of principal operators
- 60% are male
- Much younger than principal operator (44.6 years compared to 57.1)
- 61% are in separate households from the principal operator



# Third Operators

	Male Second Operator	Female Second Operator
Male Principal Operator	50%	35%
Female Principal Operator	10%	5%



# Third Operators

	Third Operator established farmer	Third Operator beginning farmer
Principal Operator established farmer	44%	28%
Principal Operator beginning farmer	4%	25%



# Generations on Farms

- Definition
  - A farm is considered to have operators of different generations if any two operators differed in age by twenty or more years.
  - Difference could be between op1 and op2, op1 and op3, or op2 and op3

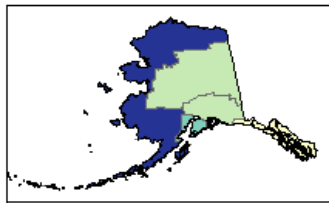


# Generations on Farms

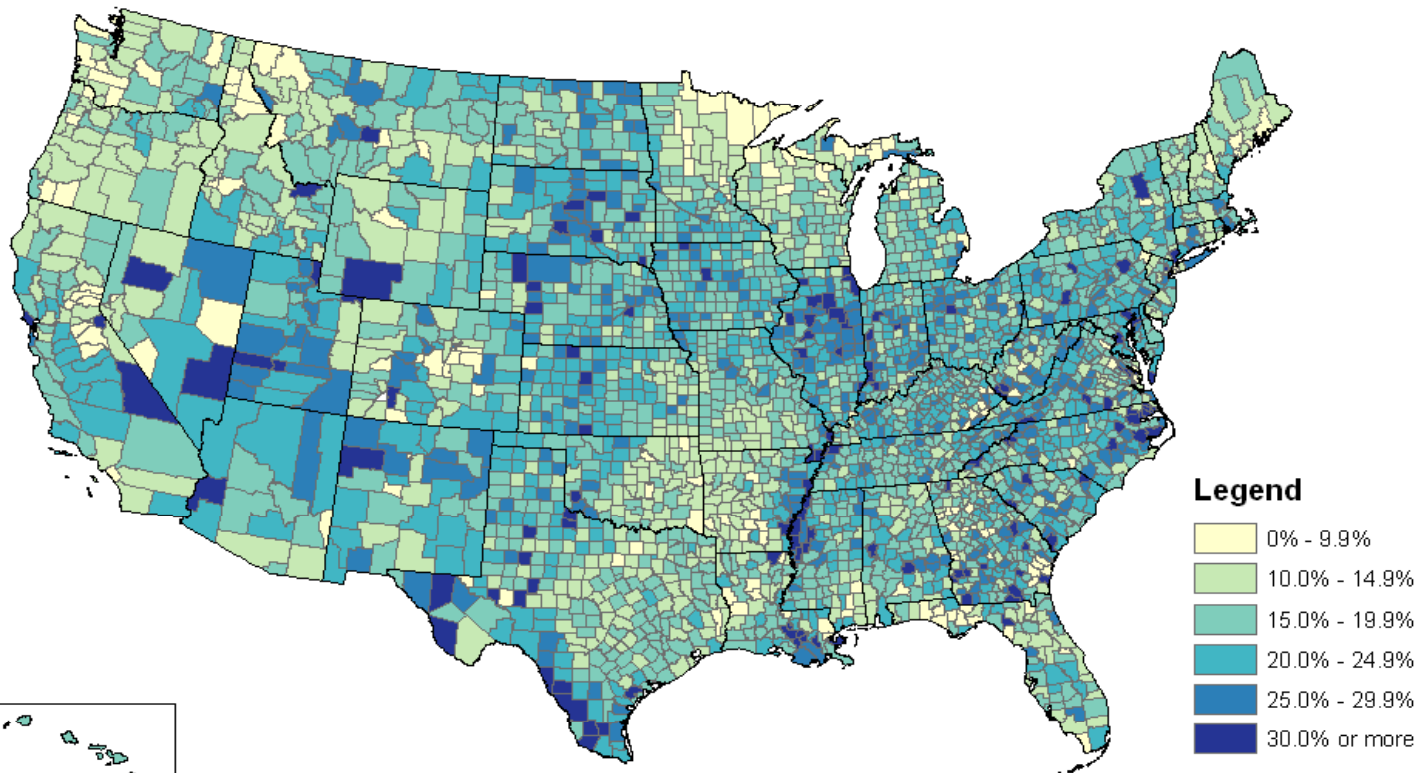
- 7.6 percent of all farms have more than one generation of operators on the farm
- If only multiple operator farms are considered, 18.0 percent of farms have more than one generation on the farm







## Multiple Generations on Farms



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# Multiple Generations, by Sales

	Percent with multiple operators	Percent with different generations	
		Farms with multiple operators	All farms
All farms	42.3	18.0	7.6
Farms with \$250,000 or more of sales	51.5	29.4	15.1
\$100,000 - \$249,999 in sales	41.6	27.3	11.4
Less than \$100,000 in sales	41.3	15.6	6.4



	Percent with multiple operators	Percent with different generations	
		All Farms with multiple operators	Farms with multiple operators and sales of \$100,000 or more
Grains and oilseeds	35.3%	27.4%	29.4%
Vegetables	48.1%	18.7%	31.2%
Fruits and nuts	45.1%	16.3%	29.1%
Nursery/Greenhouse	48.7%	15.7%	22.8%
Beef cattle	41.8%	19.1%	30.9%
Dairy	55.7%	28.2%	30.4%
Hogs and pigs	48.6%	18.2%	26.4%
Poultry	55.9%	12.1%	17.2%



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	Percent with multiple operators	Multiple Operator Farms	
		Same Generation	Different Generation
Less than 25 years	40.2%	53.0%	47.0%
25 to 34 years	46.9%	81.7%	18.3%
35 to 44 years	48.5%	88.3%	11.7%
45 to 54 years	45.8%	89.2%	10.8%
55 to 64 years	42.9%	85.7%	14.3%
65 to 74 years	37.4%	75.4%	24.6%
75 years or more	31.9%	50.5%	49.5%



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