

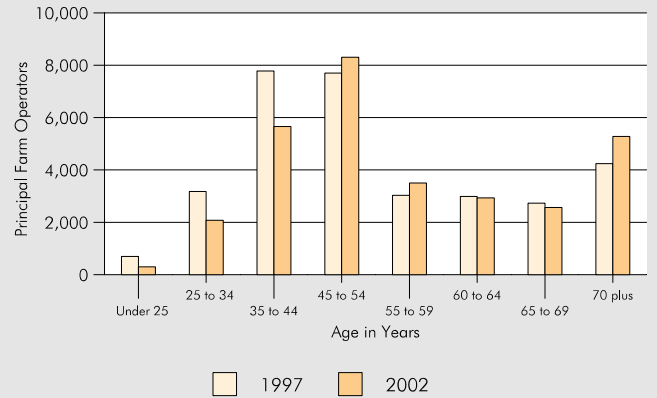
North Dakota Principal Farm Operators by Age: 2002

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, North Dakota farmers are getting older. The average age of a principal farm operator in North Dakota was 54.4 years in 2002, up from 51.4 in 1997.

Between 1997 and 2002, North Dakota saw the largest decline in farmers among those ages 35 to 44 years. The second largest loss was among those farmers ages 25 to 34 years (Figure 1). The largest increase was among farmers ages 70 or older, growing by 1,033 between 1997 and 2002. The number of farmers ages 45 to 54 grew by 608 and farmers ages 55 to 59 grew by 471.

Nelson County had the oldest farmers in the state, with principal farm operators averaging 59 years in 2002 (Table 1). Traill County reported the youngest farmers with an average of 50.4 years.

Figure 1. Principal Farm Operators by Age in North Dakota 1997 and 2002



Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), <<http://www.usda.gov/nass>>

Nationally, farmers reported an average age of 55.3 years in 2002. While 33 states reported older farmers, on average, than North Dakota, North Dakotan's have been farming the longest of any state - 25.3 years on average.

The 2002 Census of Agriculture contains the first census data set on a coverage-adjusted basis representing all farms to the county level. The 1997 Census of Agriculture files were reprocessed, using the new procedures, to provide comparable data for 1997 and 2002. For more information, go to <<http://www.usda.gov/nass/events/news/methodology.htm>>.

Figure 2. Average Age of Principal Farm Operators in North Dakota by County: 2002

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), <<http://www.usda.gov/nass>>

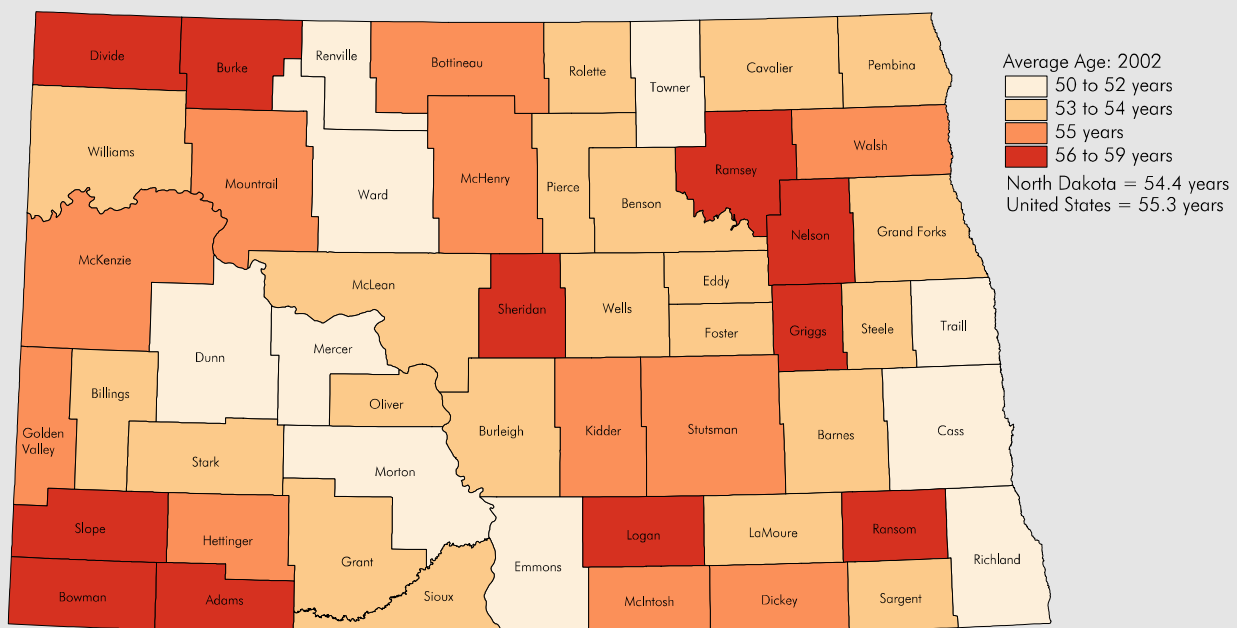


Table 1. Principal Farm Operators by Age in North Dakota by County: 2002

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), <<http://www.usda.gov/nass>>

Area	Total Principal Farm Operators	Percent Distribution by Age								Average Age in Years
		Under 25 years	25 to 34 years	35 to 44 years	45 to 54 years	55 to 59 years	60 to 64 years	65 to 69 years	70 years plus	
North Dakota	30,619	1.0	6.8	18.5	27.1	11.4	9.6	8.4	17.2	54.4
Adams	394	0.0	7.1	15.7	22.8	13.5	9.4	9.4	22.1	56.2
Barnes	838	2.0	8.5	17.3	23.6	14.0	9.2	7.6	17.8	54.3
Benson	567	0.9	6.9	16.2	28.6	12.9	12.0	6.9	15.7	54.1
Billings	238	0.0	5.9	17.2	32.4	13.0	10.1	6.3	15.1	54.2
Bottineau	879	1.3	6.0	15.7	28.2	10.4	11.1	8.0	19.3	55.6
Bowman	360	1.1	4.2	16.9	26.9	13.3	7.2	7.5	22.8	56.5
Burke	455	0.9	5.9	13.8	21.8	12.5	11.0	9.5	24.6	57.4
Burleigh	946	0.5	6.7	18.7	28.3	11.8	10.5	9.9	13.5	54.1
Cass	961	1.1	8.0	21.9	31.8	12.2	7.7	6.6	10.7	51.4
Cavalier	607	1.0	7.9	18.9	23.2	13.2	9.9	10.9	15.0	54.1
Dickey	533	1.3	8.1	17.4	24.2	11.1	9.2	8.6	20.1	55.0
Divide	532	0.8	2.8	19.7	22.9	12.4	10.5	8.6	22.2	57.1
Dunn	582	0.9	5.2	23.9	31.6	8.8	5.8	11.3	12.5	52.8
Eddy	325	1.2	2.8	21.2	25.8	12.0	11.1	8.6	17.2	54.9
Emmons	699	0.3	7.4	24.5	25.0	11.3	8.6	9.4	13.4	52.9
Foster	309	3.6	6.8	18.1	22.0	12.9	6.5	11.0	19.1	54.7
Golden Valley	231	1.7	8.2	12.6	26.0	9.1	14.3	7.8	20.3	55.8
Grand Forks	863	2.3	8.9	14.4	29.9	10.1	7.9	7.5	19.0	54.0
Grant	548	0.2	8.9	19.9	25.0	9.3	10.9	8.0	17.7	54.0
Griggs	423	0.2	4.5	13.5	24.3	15.6	8.7	7.1	26.0	58.4
Hettinger	489	1.2	6.7	16.4	28.6	9.2	9.8	8.8	19.2	55.2
Kidder	584	0.7	4.8	19.0	26.4	9.9	8.9	5.1	25.2	55.8
LaMoure	621	1.1	7.2	17.6	28.0	9.5	9.7	6.0	20.9	54.6
Logan	445	0.9	5.6	14.8	23.4	8.5	9.4	13.9	23.4	56.9
McHenry	901	0.9	6.8	16.1	27.9	13.0	9.1	8.5	17.8	55.0
McIntosh	526	0.8	9.5	18.4	19.8	10.5	9.1	9.7	22.2	55.5
McKenzie	632	0.3	3.6	18.8	28.2	12.8	11.4	9.2	15.7	55.1
McLean	918	1.2	8.3	17.5	30.0	12.4	7.6	7.8	15.1	53.2
Mercer	456	0.0	6.8	27.6	26.3	9.0	8.6	7.0	14.7	52.1
Morton	855	0.8	5.8	25.6	30.5	9.7	8.0	8.2	11.3	51.7
Mountrail	682	0.7	7.0	13.9	26.8	17.0	9.5	6.9	18.0	55.3
Nelson	598	1.2	4.5	11.0	22.9	10.9	11.7	10.0	27.8	59.0
Oliver	307	2.0	4.9	21.5	29.6	10.7	12.1	6.2	13.0	53.3
Pembina	524	2.1	7.8	18.9	29.6	8.0	10.1	5.5	17.9	53.5
Pierce	487	0.2	10.1	18.3	23.2	11.5	9.4	9.0	18.3	54.4
Ramsey	554	1.4	3.6	16.6	25.1	9.9	14.8	7.8	20.8	56.6
Ransom	528	0.9	6.6	14.8	22.3	11.6	13.6	11.0	19.1	56.2
Renville	353	0.8	11.6	24.4	25.5	8.2	7.4	9.6	12.5	51.6
Richland	813	0.9	7.0	24.2	33.3	10.0	7.1	6.8	10.7	51.3
Rolette	523	0.4	6.5	18.5	26.8	14.3	10.9	6.1	16.4	54.4
Sargent	469	1.9	9.6	19.4	22.8	11.5	10.7	9.6	14.5	53.2
Sheridan	393	0.8	4.8	14.2	25.4	13.7	9.2	12.5	19.3	56.8
Sioux	179	0.6	6.7	16.2	30.2	9.5	13.4	9.5	14.0	54.2
Slope	259	0.4	4.6	13.9	33.6	10.8	6.9	12.0	17.8	56.0
Stark	774	1.3	5.9	20.7	28.6	10.2	10.5	9.3	13.6	53.3
Steele	318	0.3	7.9	18.2	27.0	16.0	7.2	8.2	15.1	53.6
Stutsman	988	0.6	5.2	18.9	29.4	9.6	7.1	8.5	20.7	55.4
Towner	418	1.0	7.9	18.4	28.9	15.6	7.7	7.2	13.4	52.9
Traill	427	2.1	9.4	23.7	27.2	13.6	9.1	6.8	8.2	50.4
Walsh	905	1.0	6.4	17.5	22.7	11.6	9.8	9.7	21.3	55.9
Ward	966	0.7	7.6	20.9	30.1	11.4	10.9	7.0	11.4	52.4
Wells	579	0.3	8.5	17.8	27.1	8.6	10.5	10.4	16.8	54.6
Williams	858	0.8	6.5	16.9	31.2	10.6	11.0	6.5	16.4	54.2



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North Dakota Farmers Continue to Grow Older

According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, North Dakota farmers are getting older. Fewer young farmers are entering the industry and older farmers are continuing to farm past their 70s.

This month's "Population Bulletin," a monthly publication from the North Dakota State Data Center at North Dakota State University, focuses on recently released farm data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service, <<http://www.usda.gov/nass>>. The average age of a principal farm operator in North Dakota was 54.4 years in 2002, up from 51.4 in 1997. Between 1997 and 2002, North Dakota saw the largest decline in farmers among those ages 35 to 44 years. The second largest loss was among those farmers ages 25 to 34. The largest increase was among farmers ages 70 or older, growing by 1,033 between 1997 and 2002. "We now have a situation in our state where 15 of 53 counties have more than 1 in 5 farmers over the age of 70. As we continue to lose younger farmers, the critical question will be, "Who will take over the farms of our growing senior population?" said Richard Rathge, director of the State Data Center. The number of farmers ages 45 to 54 grew by 608 and farmers ages 55 to 59 grew by 471.

Nelson County had the oldest farmers in the state, with principal farm operators averaging 59 years in 2002. Traill County reported the youngest farmers with an average of 50.4 years.

Nationally, farmers reported an average age of 55.3 years in 2002. While 33 states reported older farmers on average than North Dakota, North Dakotan's have been farming the longest of any state - 25.3 years on average.

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