

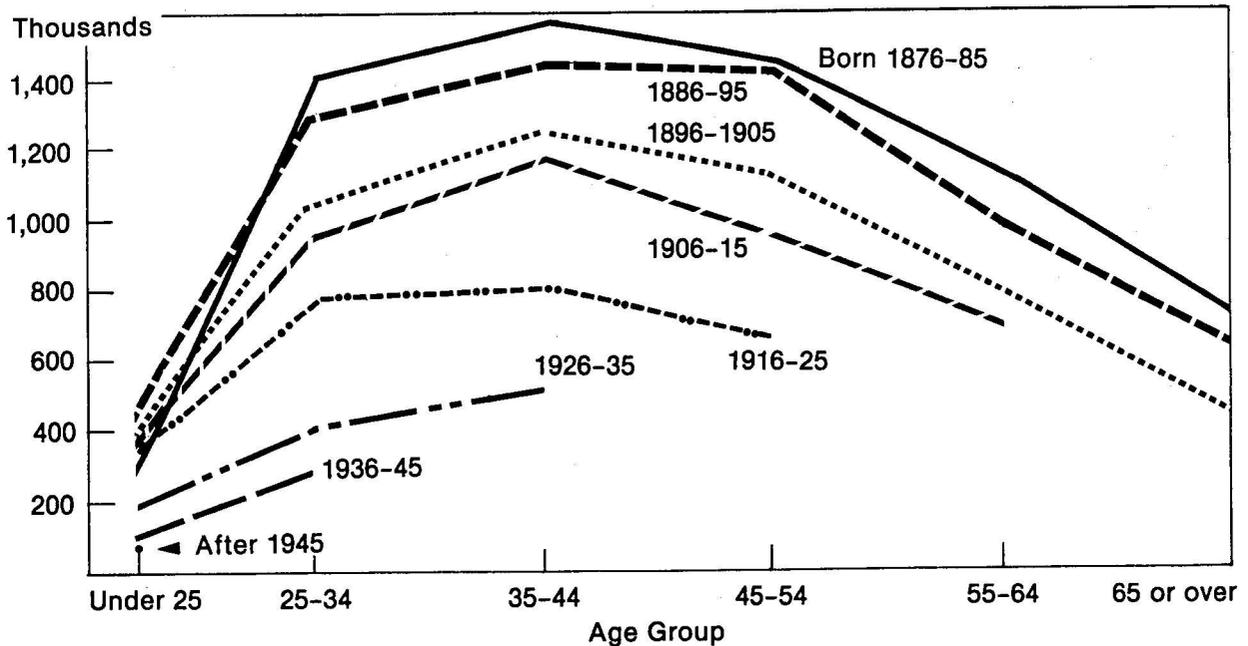
Kanel found that most of the adjustments occur as the older operators leave farms (14). Using Kanel's age cohort framework, Tolley stratified farm operators by size of farm and further examined mobility (22). He found considerable variation in entry and exit rates by age group and sales class.

Age cohort analysis centers on identifying the common pattern of entry and exit related to operator age. From census of agriculture data, the same cohort group of farm operators with common birthdates can be identified in successive censuses and the changes in net entry and exits for each age group can be estimated (figure 9). For example, for the cohort born from 1876 to 1885, some 1.4 million were farm operators when they reached the ages of 25 to 34 (in the 1910 Census). The number increased in the next decade to 1.6 million (1920) and declined slightly by 1930, by which time the cohort was 45 to 54 years old. This cohort declined to 1 million farm operators by 1940 (ages 55 to 64) and to 745,000 to 1950 (ages 65 to 75). All are assumed to have exited by 1960 as they reached 75 years of age. A few of these older operators may have continued farming, but beyond this point the Census does not provide data.

A similar pattern for other cohorts is shown in figure 9. The number of farmers in each group expands to a peak at 35 to 44 years and then declines through death or retirement. Some differences in slopes are revealed for individual cohorts. For example, the cohort born in 1916-25 was disrupted by World War II, and a new pattern seems to have emerged. Younger operators entered farming at previous rates, but a large number left farming after 35 years of age--10 years younger than previous age groups began to leave farming.

Figure 9

Farm Operator Age Cohort Movements, 1910-69



Source: (25).