

Canada's Families on the Farm



Canada was home to more than 193,000 **farms** in 2016, down from nearly 206,000 in 2011 (-5.9%).¹

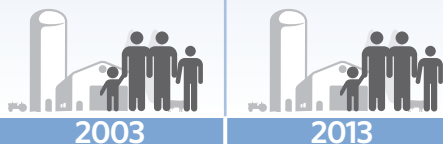
193,000



There were nearly 102,000 **farm families** in Canada in 2013, down from more than 135,000 in 2003. The number of farm families has decreased every year during this decade (-25%).²

135,000

102,000



Over the past several decades, the share of **smaller farm families has increased**, while **larger families have been on the decline** - trends also observed across all families across Canada.³

51% of farm families consisted of **two family members** in 2013, up from 43% in 2003.

43%

51%



2003

2013

14% of farm families consisted of **five or more family members** in 2013, down from 19% in 2003.

19%

14%



2003

2013

In 2016, there were nearly 272,000 **farm operators** (people who make management decisions for the farm) in Canada, down from nearly 294,000 in 2011 (-7.5%).⁴

272,000



In 2016, 28.7% of all farm operators in Canada were **women** (nearly 78,000), up from 27.4% in 2011. Women were most prevalent among the 35-54 age group (30.7%).⁵

28.7%



As with the overall population in Canada, **farm operators are getting older**, with the average age increasing from 47.5 years in 1991 to 55 years in 2016.^{6,7} Those aged 55 and over were the fastest-growing age group between 2011 and 2016 (+4.5%).

47.5 years



1991

55 years



2016

Despite the aging of farm operators as a whole, the number of farm operators under age 35 grew by 3%, with this age group experiencing **its first absolute increase** since 1991.⁸

	2011	2016	Change (%)
Under 35 years	24,120 8.2%	24,850 9.1%	+3.0
35 to 54 years	127,895 43.5%	98,840 36.3%	-22.7%
55 years and over	141,920 48.3%	148,250 54.5%	+4.5%
TOTAL	293,925	271,935	-7.5%

Most surveyed farmers in Canada reported that their **spouse participates** in farm *management* (84%) and *ownership* (76%).⁹

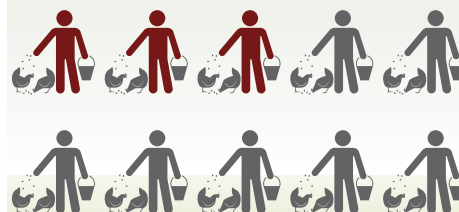
84%
Management

76%
Ownership



Nearly 3 in 10 (28%) of the 280,000 *employees* who worked on farms in 2016 were also **family members**.¹⁰

3 in 10



In 2016, 8.4% of all farms across Canada reported having a **written succession plan**. In 96% of these farms, a family member was identified as the successor.^{11,12}

8.4%



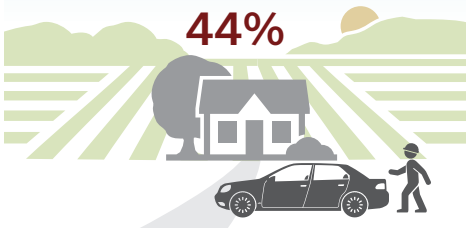
In 2013, **8.3%** of farm families in Canada were living on **low-income farms**.^{13, 14}

8.3%



In 2016, 44% of all farm operators reported that they **engaged in some off-farm work** (usually done as a means of supplementing household income).¹⁵

44%



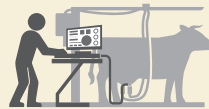
In 2016, more than 3 in 10 farm operators reported that they **worked an average 30 hours a week or more off the farm**.¹⁶

3 in 10



Farm families are **increasingly using technology** to facilitate their work – particularly among younger generations. In 2015, 57% of operators aged 60 and over were on farms that reported the use of technology, compared with 81% for those under the age of 40.¹⁷

57%



60+ years

81%



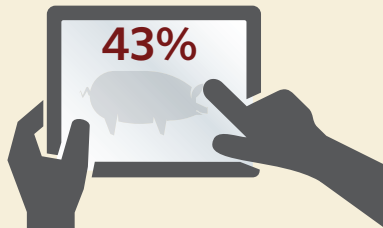
Under 40 years

56% of farms reported using **computers or laptops** for farm management.



43% of operators used **smartphones or tablets** for farm management.

43%



According to research from the Conference Board of Canada, **family farms have unique advantages** that other businesses often seek to replicate,¹⁸ including (but not limited to):

High levels of commitment among family farmers due to the *direct impact* of the farm's success on their family

A higher **willingness to engage in unpaid work** than their counterparts on non-family farms



Low or non-existent turnover rate of family farm operators, which helps avoid recruitment and training costs



¹ Statistics Canada, "A Portrait of a 21st Century Agricultural Operation," *Farm and Farm Operator Data*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 95-640-X (May 17, 2017). [Link: http://bit.ly/2r8njfR](http://bit.ly/2r8njfR).

² Statistics Canada, *Distribution of Farm Families by Income Group and Family Size, Unincorporated Sector* (CANSIM Table 002-0031), page last updated January 14, 2016. [Link: http://bit.ly/2qvlqu5](http://bit.ly/2qvlqu5).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Statistics Canada, *Census of Agriculture, Number of Farm Operators per Farm by Sex* (CANSIM Table 004-0238). [Link: http://bit.ly/2qwZAHy](http://bit.ly/2qwZAHy).

⁵ Statistics Canada, "2016 Census of Agriculture," *The Daily* (May 10, 2017). [Link: http://bit.ly/2q3hv70](http://bit.ly/2q3hv70).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Martin S. Beaulieu, "Demographic Changes in Canadian Agriculture," *Canadian Agriculture at a Glance*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 96-325-XWE (2014). [Link: http://bit.ly/1AVE5IP](http://bit.ly/1AVE5IP).

⁸ Statistics Canada, *Census of Agriculture, Number of Farm Operators per Farm by Age* (CANSIM Table 004-0239), page last updated May 9, 2017. [Link: http://bit.ly/2fHRdEz](http://bit.ly/2fHRdEz).

⁹ Darrell Toma, *The Knowledge Guide: Best Management Practices of Leading Farmers "Learning from Leaders"*, Edmonton: D. M. Toma International Management, 2005.

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, *Census of Agriculture, Paid Agricultural Work in the Year Prior to the Census* (CANSIM Table 004-0236), page last updated May 9, 2017. [Link: http://bit.ly/2vAh3Qe](http://bit.ly/2vAh3Qe).

¹¹ Statistics Canada, *2016 Census of Agriculture*.

¹² Statistics Canada, *Census of Agriculture, Farms Reporting a Written Succession Plan for the Operation* (CANSIM Table 004-0245), page last updated May 9, 2017. [Link: http://bit.ly/2vYlUfQ](http://bit.ly/2vYlUfQ).

¹³ **Statistics Canada** defines low-income farms as those with gross farm revenues between \$10,000 and \$249,999 that are operated by families with a total family income below Statistics Canada's low-income measure. [Link: http://bit.ly/2wMG7BZ](http://bit.ly/2wMG7BZ).

¹⁴ Statistics Canada, *Distribution of Farm Families and Average Total Income by Typology Group, Unincorporated Sector* (CANSIM Table 002-0029), page last updated January 14, 2017. [Link: http://bit.ly/2wMG7BZ](http://bit.ly/2wMG7BZ).

¹⁵ Statistics Canada, *2016 Census of Agriculture*.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, "Growing Opportunity Through Innovation in Agriculture," *Farm and Farm Operator Data*, Statistics Canada catalogue no. 95-640-X (June 21, 2017). [Link: http://bit.ly/2w7a0A3](http://bit.ly/2w7a0A3).

¹⁸ Conference Board of Canada, *Seeds for Success: Enhancing Canada's Farming Enterprises* (June 2013), accessed September 4, 2014. [Link: http://bit.ly/1p04atX](http://bit.ly/1p04atX).