

# Who Serves in the U.S. Navy?

GRADES 5-12



## Overview

This activity is geared toward participants in grades 5-12. The estimated amount of time to deliver this lesson is 75 minutes.

U.S. Navy demographics have changed significantly over time, primarily dependent on fluctuating recruiting and enlistment policies. In this lesson, participants will explore who was serving in the Navy at two times in history: the World War II era and the 21st century.

Changing policies and loosened restrictions on who can serve in what roles have massively changed what the Navy looks like between these two time periods. Participants will draw conclusions about the Navy using demographic data of naval personnel and the broader United States, and discuss change over time by comparing the two data sets.



## Objective

Participants will be able to identify the change over time in the demographic makeup of the U.S. Navy between World War II and the 21st century.



## Materials

- Origin Stories* Oral History Compilation
  - Navy Demographics 1945, Census 1940
  - Navy Demographics 2020, Census 2019
  - Copies of Worksheet 1
  - Copies of Worksheet 2
- Optional:
- Copies of Navy Pie Chart Activity Sheet
  - Protractors



## Inquiry

Have participants consider the following discussion questions:

- Who do you believe serves in the Navy?
- Where do you think they may come from? What languages might they speak? What are their backgrounds?
- Do you believe that the types of people that serve in the Navy have always been the same over time?



## Investigation

Show participants the oral history compilation video *Origin Stories*. *Origin Stories* includes crew members from USS *Intrepid* and USS *Growler* discussing their backgrounds and hometowns. People serving in the Navy come from all corners of the United States and its territories. Watch the video and discuss the following questions:

- What stands out to you about the Navy personnel's origin stories?
- Who do you not see represented in this compilation?



## Activity

Compare and contrast the Navy and U.S. census demographic data from today and from World War II. You can have participants look at and discuss these data all together, in small groups, or individually.

Worksheet 1 - WWII & Today:

- What do these tables represent?
- What is the relationship between the two tables?
- What categories are used in the tables? Why are these categories used?
- Was the Navy representative of the broader U.S. at this time?

Worksheet 2 - WWII vs Today:

- What changed in the data from World War II to 2019?

- What is the difference between the categories used in the two time periods? Why might these categories have changed?
- In which time period is the Navy more representative of the broader United States?

*Suggested questions for grades 5-8:*

- What is the relationship between the population of men and women in the Navy today? What might explain this relationship?
- Is any group overrepresented in the Navy today? What could explain this?
- Is any group underrepresented in the Navy today? What could explain this?

*Suggested questions for grades 9-12:*

- Comparing the different categories of race identified in the two sets of demographic data, what changes do you notice? Why do you think these changes have been made?
- How does the change in categories alter your perception of who serves in the Navy? What questions would you ask to understand more about who serves in the Navy?

## **Navy Pie Chart (Suggested for grades 9-12):**

Create a pie chart to show the demographic data of either the U.S. Navy in WWII or in 2020.

1. Calculate the percentage of the total Navy represented by each racial category by dividing the number of sailors in each racial group by the total number of sailors.
2. Multiply each percent by  $360^\circ$  to calculate the degrees of each pie chart segment.
3. Place your protractor with its origin hole at the center of the circle on the Pie Chart Activity Sheet. Make a mark at the  $0^\circ$  line and at the degree line of your first angle. Draw lines through each of these points to the center of the circle. This is your first pie chart segment. Label this segment with the first group.
4. Adjust your protractor so that the  $0^\circ$  line is over the edge of the previous segment. Make a mark at the degree line of your second angle and draw a line through this mark to the center of the circle. Label your second segment.
5. Repeat this process until all of the segments are finished and labeled. You can label each segment with their percentages. If you want to get creative, color code each segment and create a key on your worksheet.
6. Respond to the following questions:
  - Does the pie chart give you any information that the table did not?
  - How does the pie chart enhance your understanding of who is serving in the Navy today?



## Lesson Connection

Learn more about the challenges faced by Black service members in our lesson: **Limits on Black Sailors in World War II.**



## Background

Navy admission policies and recruitment practices are constantly changing due to shifting attitudes and beliefs present in the United States. Women, for example, never served on *Intrepid* or *Growler*. Although women have been serving in the Navy in varying capacities since at least the Civil War, there were bans against women on combat ships until 1993. Women could not serve on submarines until 2010. The first major recruitment of women was not until World War II, when the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) were created. In 1948, women were permitted to serve in the peacetime military, but with restrictions.

From 1919 to 1939, Black Americans were banned from enlisting in the Navy. In 1939, when Black sailors were permitted to enlist, they could only enlist in the steward's branch. In 1942, Black Navy personnel could serve in roles outside of the steward's branch in shore positions, but not on combat ships. Throughout World War II, Black men in the Navy averaged about 5% of the total force. In 1948, the Navy, along with the rest of the armed forces, was integrated. The number of Black sailors grew, although their role in the Navy was slow to catch up to that of white sailors. While there was a women's reserve created in 1942, only about 77 of the 80,000 women who served in World War II were Black. Black women faced both restrictions on women's and Black service.

During World War II, there were very few distinctions made between races other than white and Black. Some forms listed the terms "oriental" or "indian," but these groups were largely lumped in with white sailors on population estimates. These groups were also permitted to access rates other than steward, which made them equivalent to the "white" group in status.



## Additional Resources/References

Demographics of the U.S. Military: <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/demographics-us-military>



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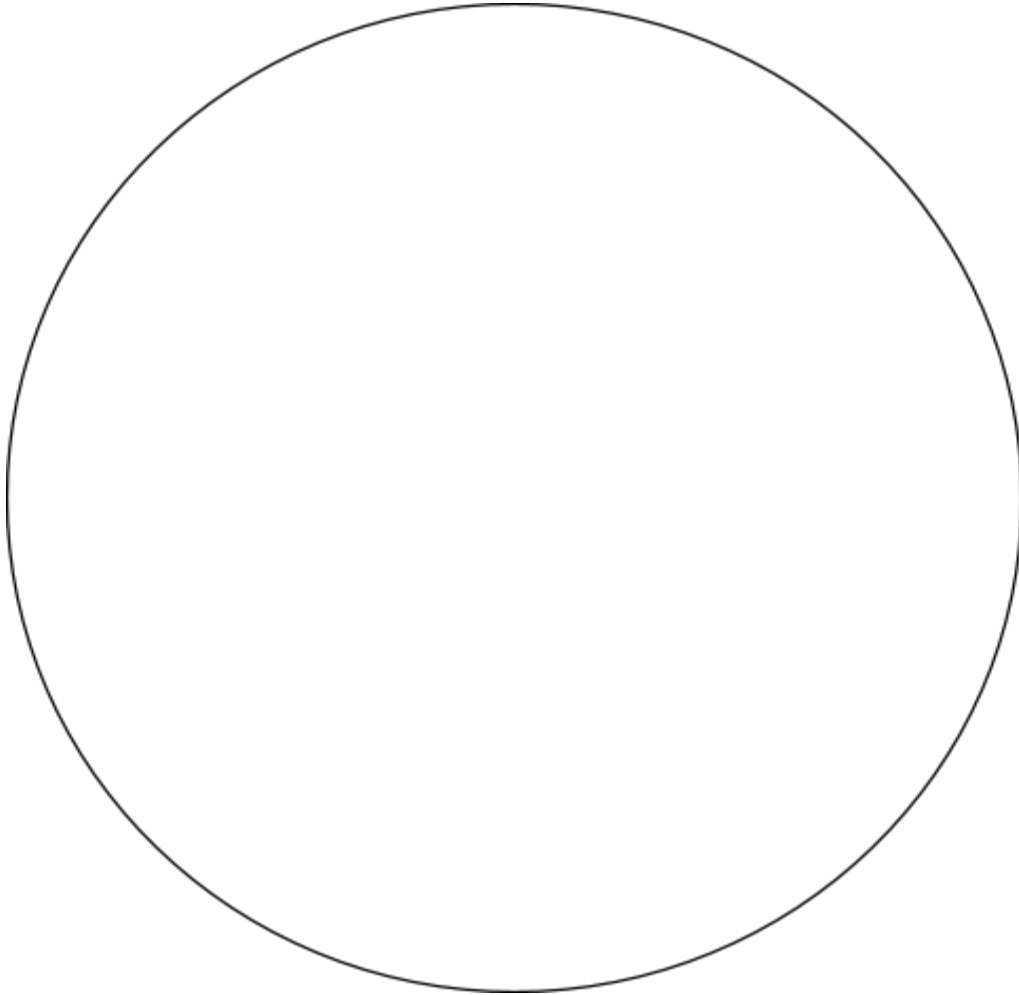
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## ACTIVITY: WORKSHEET 1

1. What do these tables represent?
2. What is the relationship between the two tables?
3. What categories are used in the tables? Why are these categories used?
4. Was the Navy representative of the broader United States at this time?



## ACTIVITY: NAVY PIE CHART





## Modern Demographic Data

### U.S. Navy Demographic Data as of 31 December 2020

		White	Black	Asian	AIAN*	NHPI*	Multiple Races	Decline to Answer	Total
Male	Officers	33715	2812	2269	415	1310	1909	194	42624
	Enlisted	141022	39388	13402	4835	10551	15127	2864	227189
	Total	174737	42200	15671	5250	11861	17036	3058	269613
Female	Officers	7592	1129	799	129	450	726	83	10908
	Enlisted	29436	16206	3363	1125	3067	4309	866	58372
	Total	37028	17335	4162	1254	3517	5035	949	69280
Total		211765	59535	19833	6504	15378	22071	4007	338893

Data from the United States Navy

### United States Demographic Data Estimate 2019

	White	Black	Asian	AIAN*	NHPI**	Total
Male	128,225,442	23,143,558	10,987,079	3,455,822	809,488	166,621,389
Female	130,421,046	25,077,581	11,874,906	3,489,730	802,936	171,666,199
Total	258,646,488	48,221,139	22,861,985	6,945,552	1,612,424	338,287,588

\*AIAN: American Indian or Alaskan Native

\*\*NHPI: Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Data from United States Census Bureau

## World War II Demographic Data

### U.S. Navy Demographic Data August 1945

	White	Negro	Total
Officers	335,989	53	336,042
Enlisted	2,837,499	166,897	3,004,396
Total	3,173,488	166,950	3,340,438

Data from the National Archives and Records Administration

### United States Demographic Data 1940 Census

	White	Negro	Other Races	Total
Men	59,448,548	6,269,038	344,006	66,061,592
Women	58,766,322	6,596,480	244,881	65,607,683
Total	118,214,870	12,865,518	588,887	131,669,275

Data from the National Archives and Records Administration