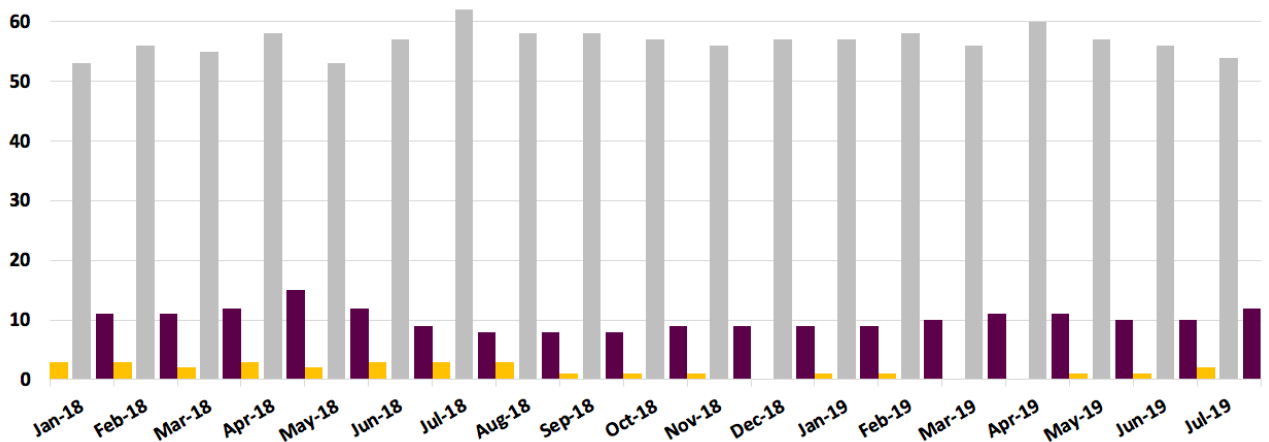# Gender Representation on *Billboard* Country Airplay Chart:
A Study of Weekly Charts from January 2018 to July 2019

JADA E. WATSON, 🐦 @data_jada

in consultation with
WOMAN Nashville 🐦 @women_want_more

AVERAGE OF 10 SONGS BY FEMALE ARTISTS ON AIRPLAY CHART
Distribution of individual songs entering Country Airplay chart each month between January 2018 to July 2019
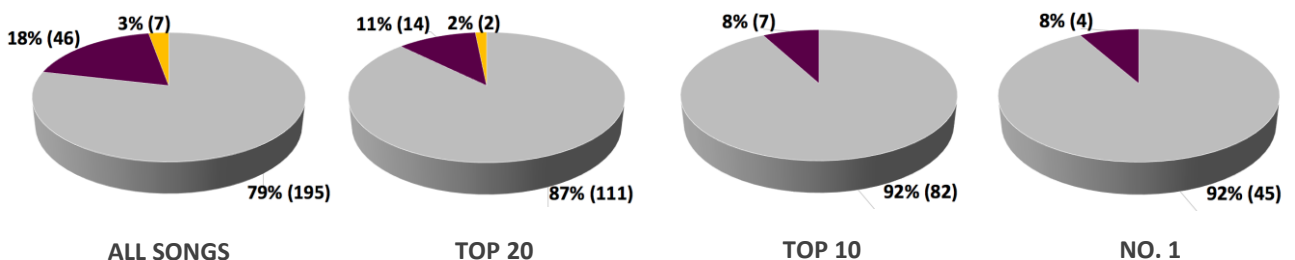

An avg. of 10 songs by women enter the *Billboard* Country Airplay charts each month in this period. Following a particularly strong month in April 2018, the number of songs by women declines 46.7% by June – dropping from 15 to 8 songs and maintains this 8 song-a-month avg. until January 2019. There has been an increase in songs charting in 2019, up to 10 by June and up to 12 by July 2019.

However, drilling down to the level of individual songs per week for female artists offers a more detailed perspective on the place of women in the weekly Airplay chart. The April-to-July 2018 drop identified above is larger here – a drop of 53.8% from 13 to 6 songs by June 2018. The 8-months following saw an avg. of 6 (not 8) individual songs chart each week, increasing to 8 songs by February 2019, where the number of songs fluctuates between 8 and 10 per week as they enter and exit the charts.
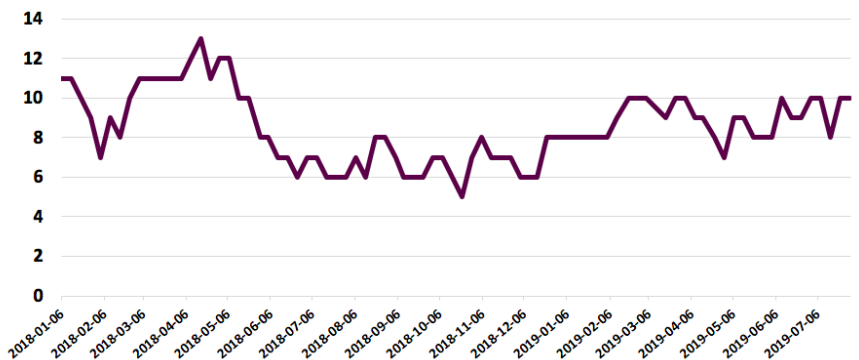

WOMEN ARE FILTERED OUT OF THE TOP POSITIONS
Across 248 unique songs entering the Airplay Chart, percentages (and number) of songs by men, women, and male-female ensembles

ALL SONGS	TOP 20	TOP 10	NO. 1
18% (46)	11% (14)	8% (7)	8% (4)
3% (7)	2% (2)		
79% (195)	87% (111)	92% (82)	92% (45)

WOMEN   MEN   MALE-FEMALE ENSEMBLES

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## NINETEEN-MONTH AVERAGE OF 2 SONGS BY WOMEN ENTERING THE TOP 20

Distribution by songs entering the Top 20 of the weekly Country Airplay charts (January 2018-July 2019)
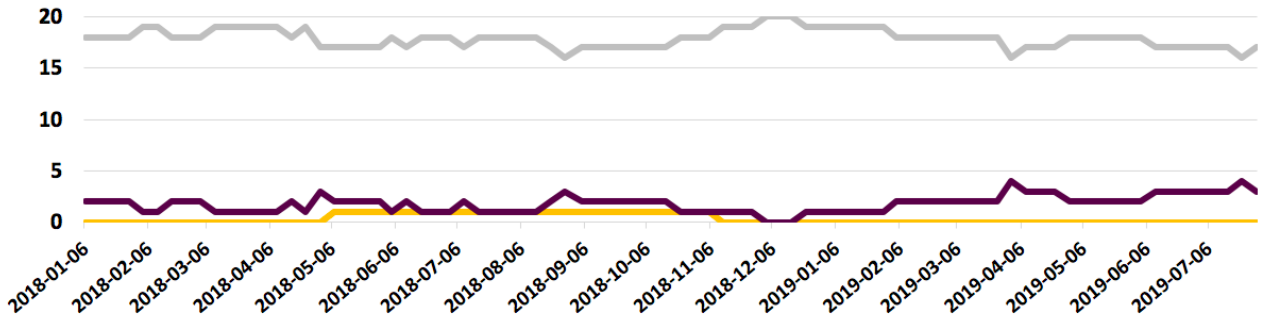
An avg. of 1.8 songs by women enter the Top 20 each week of this period – to a total of 14 songs (by just 9 artists), with an avg. 83% gap between men and women. The period between 22 October 2018 and 29 January 2019 are particularly troubling; this 14-week period saw an avg. of just 1 song enter the Top 20, with a 3-week period in December in which **no** songs by female artists broke through the Top 20. Since 1 April 2019 there has been an increase in songs entering the Top 20 to a peak of 4 songs the week of 22 July 2019 – the week in which Miranda Lambert peaked at #19 after a historic 112 adds for her new single "It All Comes Out in the Wash" (which dropped back to 28 in its second week on the chart). Only two male-female ensembles entered the Top 20, both between May and November 2018.

… WITH EVEN FEWER SONGS REACHING THE TOP 10 EACH WEEK

Distribution by songs entering the Top 10 of the weekly Country Airplay charts (January 2018-July 2019)
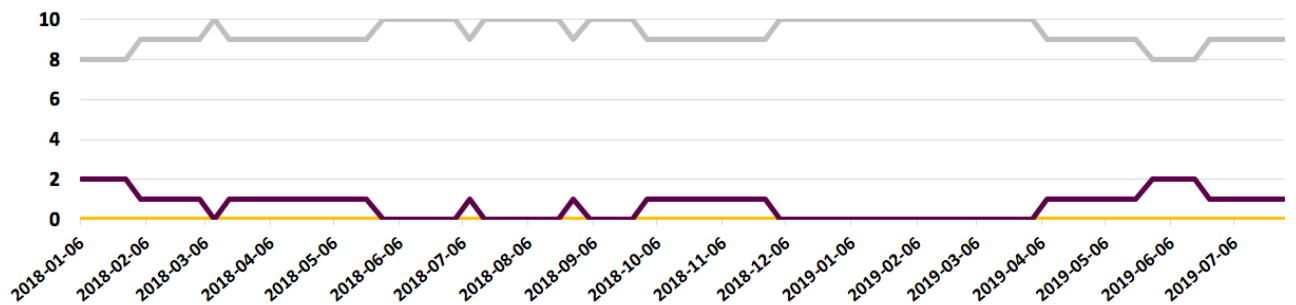
Between January 2018 and July 2019, there is a 19-month avg. of 0.7 songs (rounded up to 1 song) entering the Top 10 of the Airplay charts. Perhaps most alarmingly, there is a 32-week period between June and October 2018 and December 2018 and April 2019 in which **no** songs by women receive enough airplay to enter the Top 10. The 7 songs by female artists that enter the Top 10 are performed by only 4 artists: 3 by Maren Morris, 2 by Kelsea Ballerini and 1 each for Carrie Underwood and Bebe Rexha. As with the Top 20, there is a significant deficit of songs by male-female ensembles entering the Top 10 – no songs enter the Top 10 in this period. Male artists are responsible for 82 of the 89 songs – 92% – that peak in the Top 10.

FOUR #1 SONGS BY FEMALE ARTISTS IN A PERIOD OF 19 MONTHS

5%
(4/81 weeks)
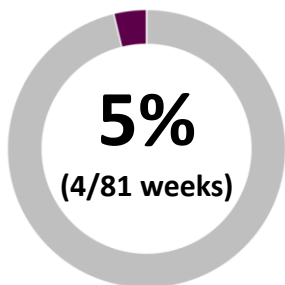
Men have more #1 songs than female artists during this period, holding the position for 95% of this period (77 out of 81 weeks). Female artists hold the position for just 5% (4 weeks).

Drilling into the #1 data, 27 individual male artists release 45 songs at the top of the chart, while the remaining 4 #1 songs are released by 3 individual women: Maren Morris with "I Could Use a Love Song" (20 Jan 2018), Kelsea Ballerini with "Legends" (24 Feb 2018), Bebe Rexha w/FGL on "Meant to Be" (23 April 2018), and Morris again with "Girl" (29 July 2019).

A period of 15 months lies between the pop-country collaboration of Rexha and FGL and Morris's recent #1. That period is 2 months longer when calculating the distance between the last two #1 songs by solo female country artists.
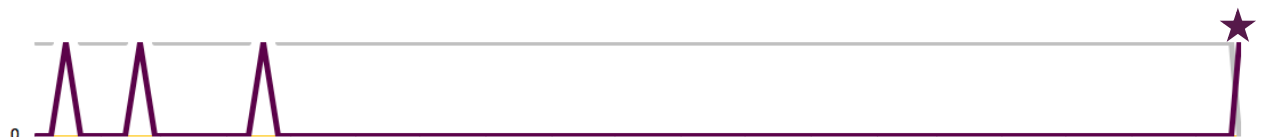
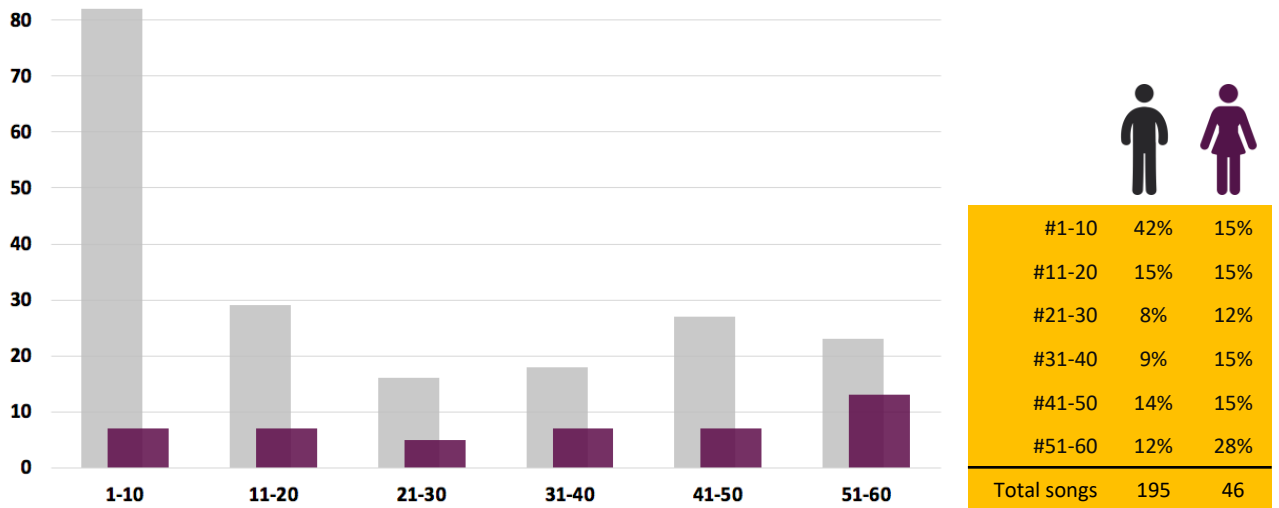# MAJORITY OF SONGS BY WOMEN LINGER IN THE BOTTOM OF THE CHART

Distribution by songs entering the Top 20 (lines) against those in the bottom 40 positions (bars) of the weekly Country Airplay charts
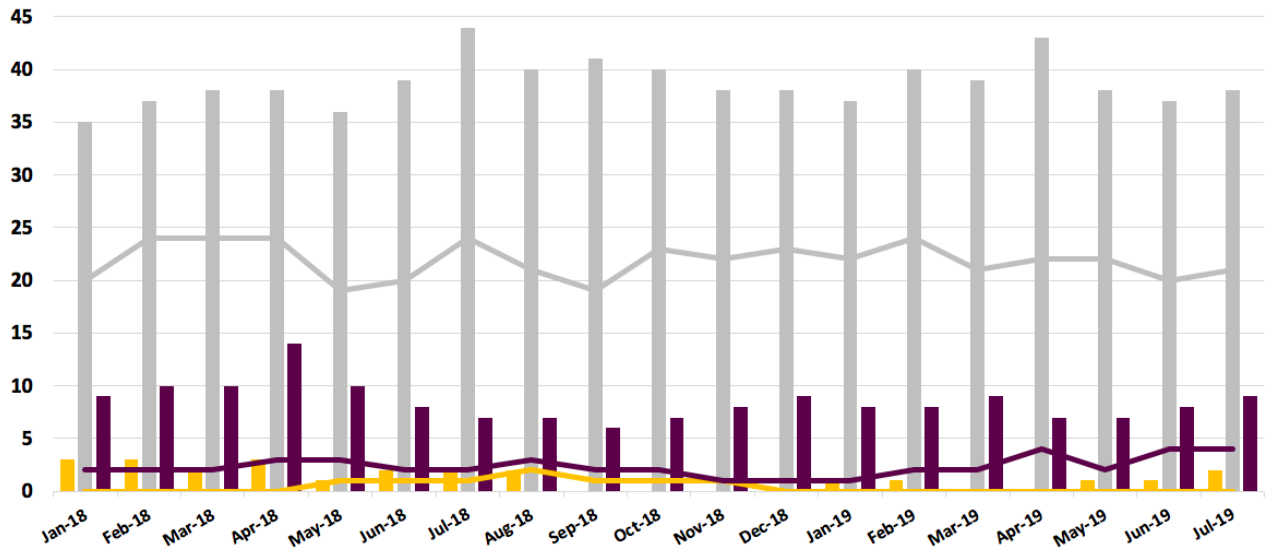
The majority of songs by female artists do not receive enough airplay to propel them to the top positions of the chart. Of the 46 songs by women that enter the chart, only 14 (30%) by 9 women enter the Top 20. The remaining 32 songs by women – 70% – linger outside of the Top 20. By comparison, 111 of the 195 (57%) songs by 56 male artists enter the Top 20. The number of songs by male artists that peak in the Top 20 is *more than double* the number of songs by women overall. The number of songs by men that peak in the bottom 40 positions of the chart is *nearly double* the number of songs by women. Only 2 songs by male-female artists peak in the Top 20, the other 5 remain within the bottom positions of the chart. The number of individual men that chart is 3.2 times greater than the number of women – and 24 times greater than the number of male-female ensembles. Viewed from this perspective, the chart's culture is incredibly imbalanced.

FREQUENCY AT PEAK POSITION

Frequency of songs by men and women at their peak position on Country Airplay charts

	♂	♀
#1-10	42%	15%
#11-20	15%	15%
#21-30	8%	12%
#31-40	9%	15%
#41-50	14%	15%
#51-60	12%	28%
Total songs	**195**	**46**

This histogram overlays songs by men and women according to their peak position between January 2018 and July 2019. Graphing the frequency of songs in this manner reveals that the majority of songs by men (42%) peak within the Top 10 positions, while the majority of songs by women (70%) peak within the lowest chart positions (between #21-60), with the largest percentage (28%) in the bottom 10 positions. The chart's Recurrent Rules (explained in the Appendix) determine when songs are eliminated from the chart. Of the songs that have already exited the chart, 5 (of the 12) songs by women in the bottom 10 positions charted for less than 5 weeks. Three other songs lingered for more than 10 weeks between #51-60 before being eliminated from the chart. These Rules keep the chart cycle moving, which is an important role within popular music culture. But they ultimately disadvantage artists that receive limited and infrequent airplay. This is not about the songs that don't test well with audiences, but the songs of an entire *group* of artists who are not offered the same opportunities and access to radio airplay. Artists that are *already* marginalized within country music culture as a result of programming practices, then, are *further* disadvantaged by chart rules that work to keep the chart cycle in motion.

GENDER CODING

CODE	ARTIST/ENSEMBLE TYPE	# IND. SONGS	% IND. SONGS	# SONGS BY WEEK	% OF SONGS BY WEEK
MALE	Male solo artist	150	60.5%	3,085	64.5%
	All-Male ensemble	31	12.5%	658	13.5%
	Male solo, feat. male solo	5	2.0%	73	1.5%
	Male solo, feat. male ensemble	2	0.8%	58	1.2%
	Male solo, feat. female solo	6	2.4%	131	2.7%
	Male solo, feat. male-female ensemble	1	0.4%	55	1.1%
FEMALE	Female solo artist	37	14.9%	560	11.5%
	All-Female ensemble	5	2.0%	93	1.9%
	Female solo, feat. female solo	1	0.4%	7	0.1%
	Female solo, feat. male solo	2	0.8%	9	0.2%
	Female solo, feat. male ensemble	1	0.4%	21	0.4%
MALE-FEMALE ENS.	Male-female ensemble	7	2.4%	81	1.7%
	Male-female ensemble, feat. solo female	1	0.4%	29	0.6%
	Total songs	**248**	**100%**	**4,860**	**100%**

CODE	ARTIST/ENSEMBLE TYPE	# IND. ARTISTS	% IND. ARTISTS
MALE	Male solo artist	79	60.8%
	All-male ensemble	17	13.1%
FEMALE	Female solo artist	27	20.8%
	All-female ensemble	3	2.3%
MALE-FEMALE ENS.	Male-female ensemble	4	3.1%
	Total songs	**130**	**100%**

CURRENT COUNTRY AIRPLAY CHART RULES

The Country Airplay chart tabulates the Top 60 current singles by radio airplay on 149 reporting stations. The current chart uses *Billboard's* audience-impression method, which cross-references Nielsen data with audience information compiled by the Arbitron ratings system to determine approximate size of audience. In this way, a song played at peak hours and in a larger market will have greater influence than one played in a smaller market.

Recurrent Rules
Billboard's Recurrent Rules determine when a song is eliminated from a chart. Descending songs are removed from the Country Airplay chart after 20 weeks under one of two conditions: (1) if they rank below No. 10 in detections or audience – so long as they are not still gaining enough audience points to bullet; or (2) if they rank below No. 10 and post a third consecutive week of audience decline, regardless of total chart weeks.

See Billboard Charts Legend