

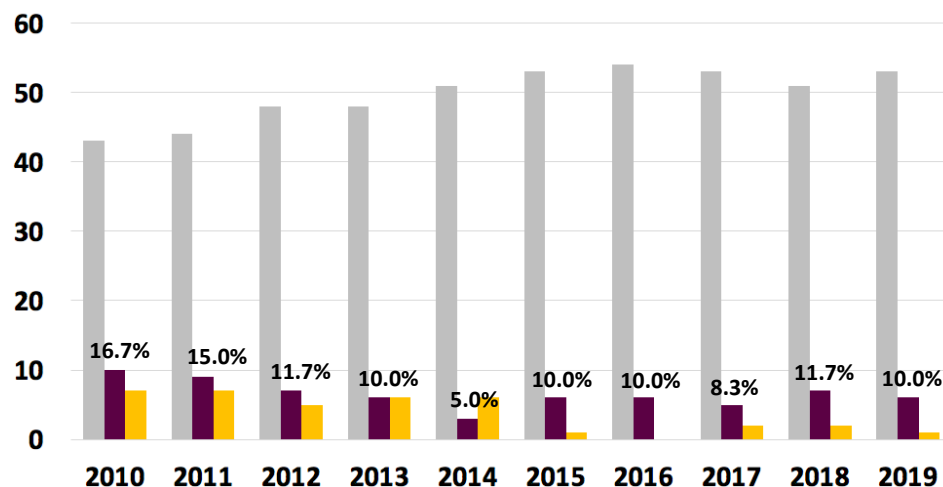
Gender Representation on *Billboard's* Yearend Country Airplay Charts from 2010-2019

JADA E. WATSON,  @data_jada

in partnership with CMT's Equal Play Campaign,  @CMT #CMTEqualPlay

WOMEN DISAPPEARING FROM YEAREND AIRPLAY CHARTS

Distribution of songs by men, women and male-female ensembles on *Billboard's* Yearend Airplay Charts (2010-2019)



118 unique artists
between 2010-2019

RATIO OF MEN TO WOMEN

5.2 : 1



*Male-female ensembles removed from ratio (7 groups)

Between 2010 and 2019, there has been a 40% decline in the number of songs by women on *Billboard's* Yearend Country Airplay charts. Despite being a year of increased awareness to issues of representation across the industry, only 6 songs by women had enough airplay throughout the calendar year to rank on the Yearend Chart in 2019.

FEW SONGS BY WOMEN OVERALL AND IN THE TOP POSITIONS

Number of songs by women out of the 586 unique songs on *Billboard's* Yearend Airplay Charts (2010-2019)



63 SONGS
10.8% OVERALL



9 SONGS
4.5% TOP 20

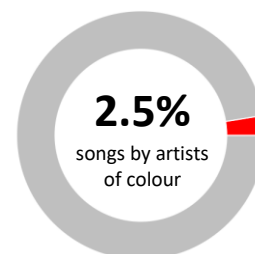


1 SONG
1% TOP 10



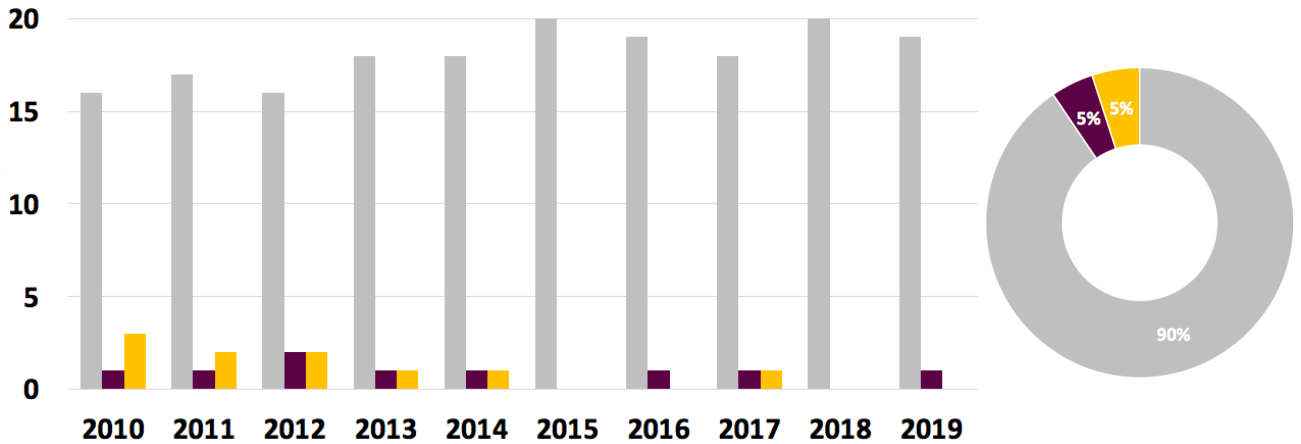
0 SONGS
0% NO. 1

Only 3 of the 118 artists – all men – that have made it on to the Yearend Airplay charts were artists of colour. These 3 men have been responsible for 15 of the 600 songs across this 10-year period, amounting to 2.5% of the songs on the Yearend Charts. Six of these songs peaked in the Top 20 of the chart (3 by Kane Brown and 3 by Darius Rucker), with 2 songs by Kane Brown peaking in the highest positions: “What Ifs” (featuring Lauren Alaina) at #7 in 2017 and “Heaven” at #1 in 2018. The highest percentages of songs by artists of colour charted between 2018 and 2019, at an average of 6% in these years.



9 SONGS BY WOMEN RANK IN TOP 20 OVER 10-YEAR PERIOD

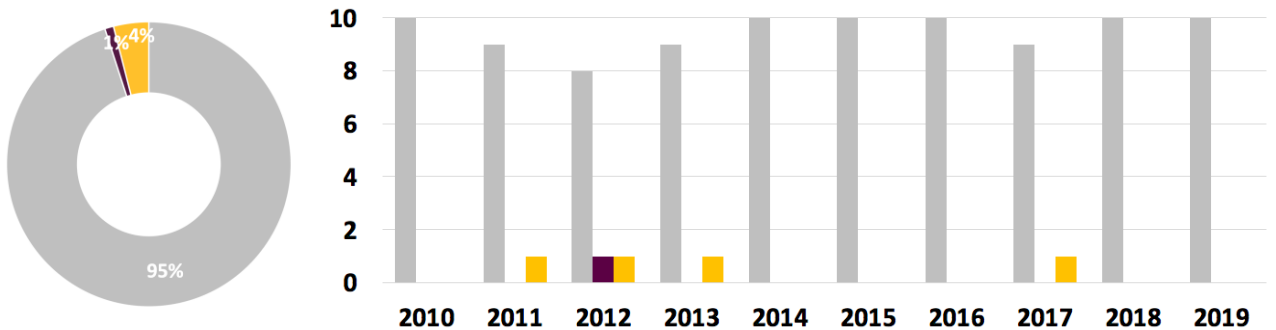
Distribution by songs entering the Top 20 across Billboard's Yearend Airplay Charts (2010-2019)



Across this 10-year period, just 65 songs by women landed on the YearendCharts, 9 of which peaked in the Top 20. These 9 songs include, "House that Built Me" (2010), "Heart Like Mine" (2011), "Over You" (2012), and "Automatic" (2014) by Miranda Lambert, "Why Ya Wanna" (2012) by Jana Kramer, "See You Again" (2013) by Carrie Underwood", "Every Little Thing" (2017) by Carly Pearce, and "Peter Pan" (2016) and "Miss Me More" (2019) by Kelsea Ballerini. Adding songs by male-female ensembles increases the count of songs including women on the Yearend Charts from 9 to 19 songs (totaling 6% of all Top 20 songs). Six of the 15 songs by artists of colour ranked within the Top 20 of the Yearend Charts, with 3 each for Darius Rucker and Kane Brown.

WOMEN EXCLUDED FROM TOP 10

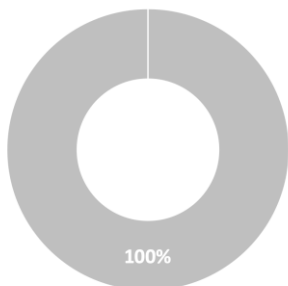
Distribution of songs peaking in the Top 10 of Billboard Yearend Airplay Charts (2010-2019)



With just 1 song by a female artist peaking in the Top 10 of the Yearend Airplay Charts over a 10-year period, women are essentially excluded from the very top of the chart. Including male-female ensembles to this count improves the picture only marginally. Joining Jana Kramer are The Band Perry ("You Lie" #5 in 2011 and "Done" #9 in 2013), Gloriana ("(Kissed You) Goodnight" #5 in 2012) and Lady Antebellum ("You Look Good" #3 in 2017), bringing the count from 1 to 5 out of 100 songs featuring a female singer peaking in the Top 10 over the last decade. Over the last decade, both Darius Rucker and Kane Brown each had 2 songs in the Top 10, including a #1 for Brown in 2018.

SHUTOUT! NO #1 SONGS WITH A FEMALE VOICE

Distribution of songs peaking at #1 on Billboard's Yearend Airplay Charts (2010-2019)



Over the last 10 years, not a single song by or including a female artist has ended the year with enough airplay to rank in the #1 position of the Yearend Airplay charts. This includes women in a male-female ensemble or as a featured artist.

A recurring joke is that there are more songs with "girl" in the title than there are women on the charts, and this is certainly true of the Yearend Airplay Charts. Of the 10 songs that ranked #1 on the Yearend Charts, 2 had girl in their title: "Crazy Girl" by Eli Young Band (2011) "Hey Girl" by Billy Currington (2013).

Shutting out women from the top position of the chart sends a message that women's voices and stories are not valued in the industry.

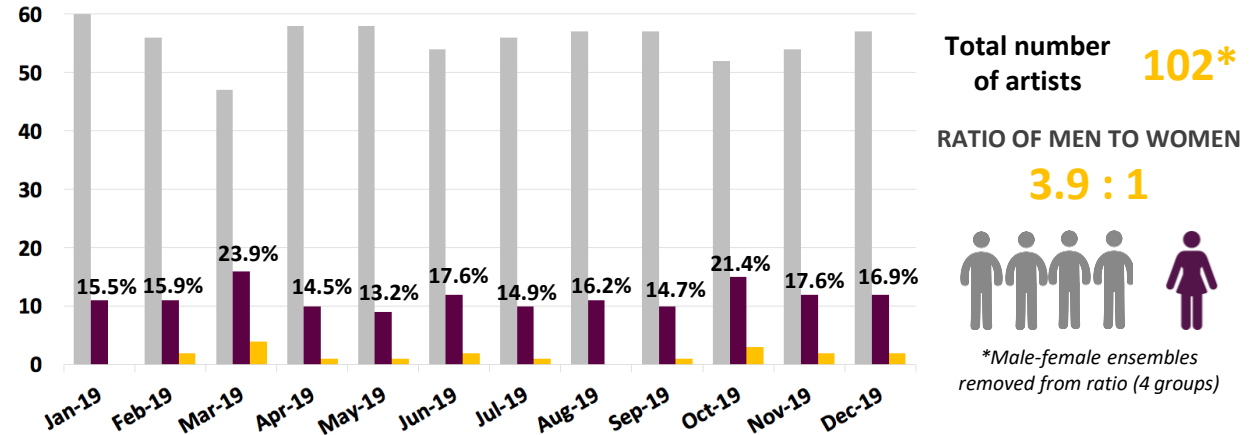
Gender Representation on *Billboard's* Weekly Country Airplay Charts in 2019

JADA E. WATSON, [@data_jada](#)

in partnership with CMT's Equal Play Campaign, [@CMT #CMTEqualPlay](#)

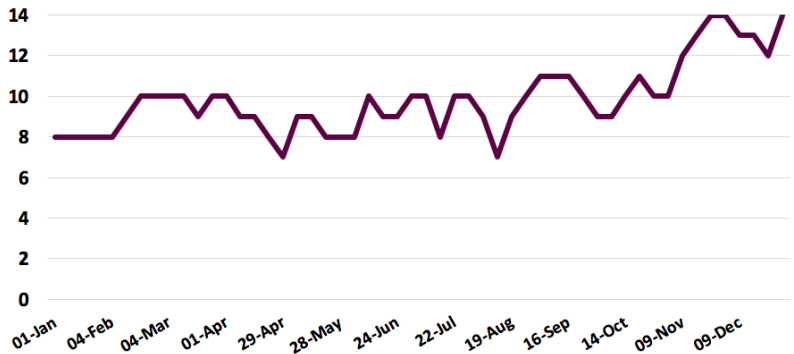
AVERAGE OF 10 SONGS BY FEMALE ARTISTS ON WEEKLY AIRPLAY CHART

Distribution of individual songs entering *Billboard's* Weekly Country Airplay Chart each month in 2019



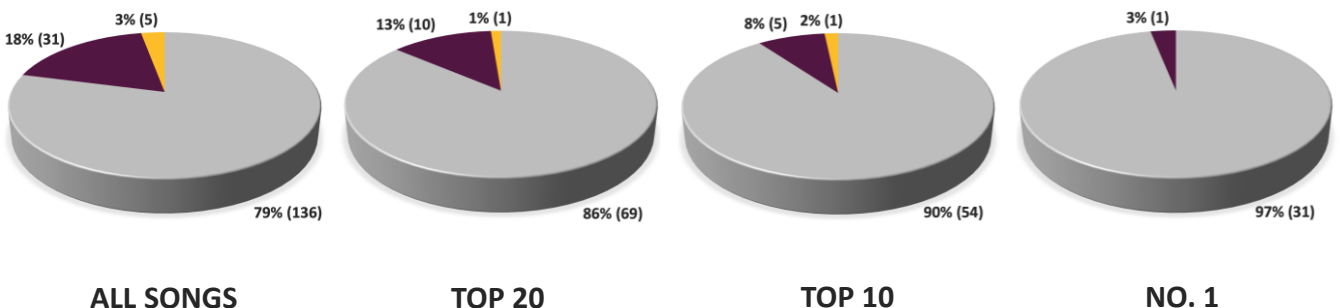
Although there remains an avg of 10 songs by women that entered the *Billboard* Country Airplay charts in 2019, there was an increase in the number of individual charting songs in the final four months of the calendar year. Following a strikingly low period of representation with an 8-month average of 6 songs per week 2018, this graph shows improvement with an 8-week average of 13 songs charting at the end of 2019. Like the Yearend Charts, black artists are underrepresented on *Billboard's* Weekly Airplay Charts, with just 9 of the 172 (5.2%) charting songs with a black male lead. No song by women of colour entered the Weekly Airplay Charts.

Drilling into the level of weekly movement on the chart reveals a 42.9% increase between 1 January and 28 December. Though not a steady increase, we see representation grow from 13.3% of the weekly songs in January to 15% in February. Following a period of fluctuation between 11% and 16% in May through October, the period ends with a rise to an average of 22.4% through November and December. While this is certainly not representative of parity on the charts, it suggests subtle changes that show greater support for women. Unfortunately, this has not yet translated to songs by women climbing into the chart's top positions.



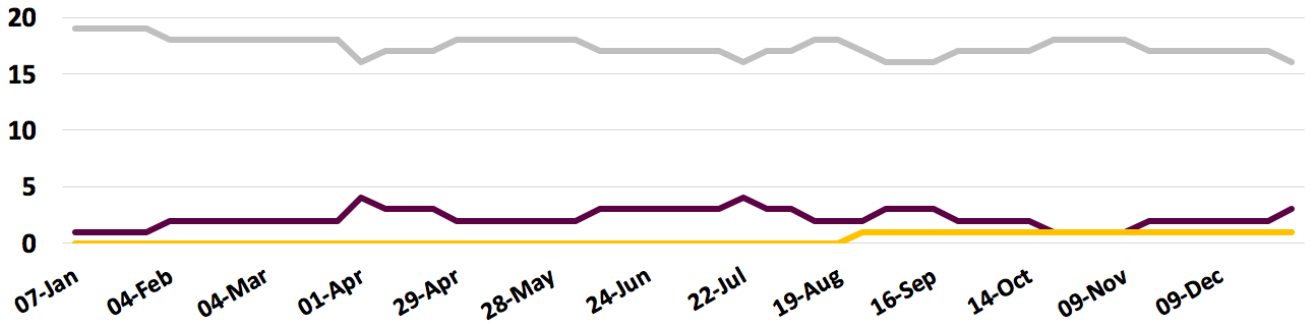
FEW SONGS BY WOMEN REACH THE TOP OF THE CHARTS

Across 172 unique songs entering *Billboard's* Weekly Country Airplay Chart in 2019, percentage (and number) of songs



10% OF SONGS IN TOP 20 OF WEEKLY CHARTS BY WOMEN

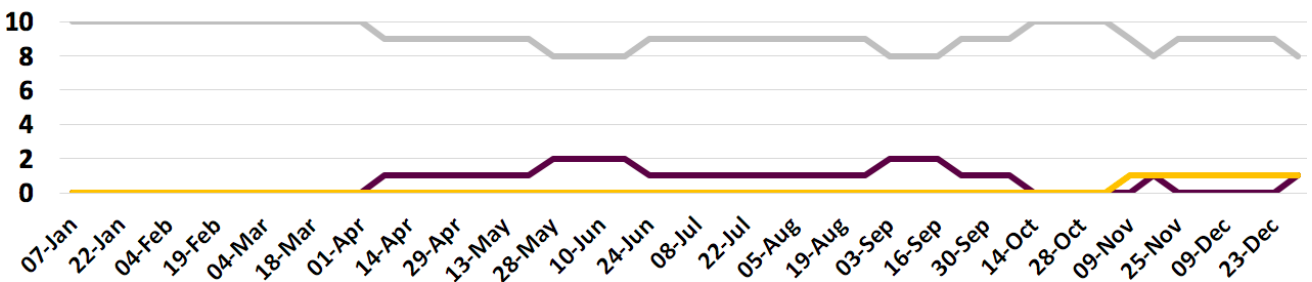
Distribution by songs entering the Top 20 on Billboard's Weekly Country Airplay Chart in 2019



An avg of 2 songs by women entered the Top 20 each week in 2019 – a total of 10 songs overall (by just 7 artists). Despite the alarming 87% gap between men and women, there are some moments worthy of isolating: the period between 1 April and 16 September saw a rise to an avg of 3 songs by women in the Top 20. While the number of songs by women in the Top 20 declines from this point back to two, this occurs against an overall decline of the number of songs by men in the Top 20 – declining from 95 in January to 80 by December. This also coincides with Lady Antebellum's "What If I Never Get Over You" climbing into the Top 20, bringing the avg number of songs including a female artist to 3 (an avg of 15%). Artists of colour are also underrepresented in the top positions of the charts, with just 5 of the 80 songs (6.2%) that peaked in the Top 20 in 2019.

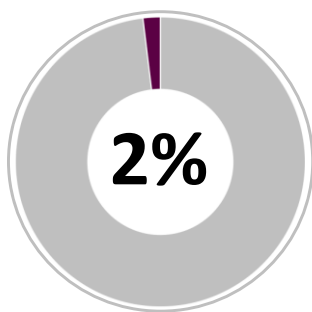
10% OF SONGS IN TOP 10 OF WEEKLY CHARTS BY WOMEN

Distribution by songs entering the Top 10 on Billboard's Weekly Country Airplay Chart in 2019



Given the low number of songs by women in the Top 20, it is not surprising to see that women are underrepresented in the Top 10 of the weekly chart. In fact, no songs by women entered the Top 10 for 23 weeks (or 44%) of the calendar year. For a 5-month period between 8 April and 7 October an avg of 1 song by a woman entered the Top 10, peaking at 2 songs in May and September. The 5 songs by women that enter the Top 10 are performed by 3 solo artists: 2 by Maren Morris, and 1 each by Kelsea Ballerini, and Carrie Underwood. Remarkably, Runaway June also peaked in the Top 10 – the first all-female ensemble to do so since SheDAISY in 2005. As with the Top 20, there is a significant deficit of songs by male-female ensembles entering the Top 10 – with just one entering the Top 10 the week of 9 November. Male artists are responsible for 54 of the 60 songs – 90% – that peak in the Top 10. Three of the 5 songs by artists of colour that peak in the Top 20, entered the Top 10 and 1 – "Good As You" by Kane Brown – reached #1 in May 2019.

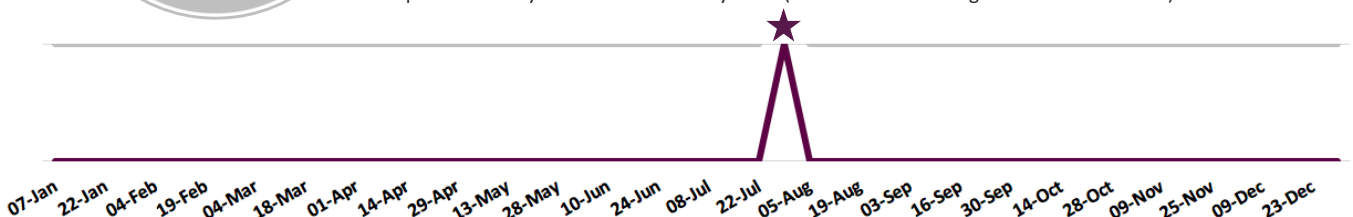
ONE #1 SONG BY A FEMALE ARTIST IN 2019



Male artists continue to have more #1 songs than female artists on the *Billboard* Airplay chart, holding the position for 98% of this period (51 out of 52 weeks). Female artists held the position for just 2% (1 week). No male-female ensembles reached the top of the chart in 2019.

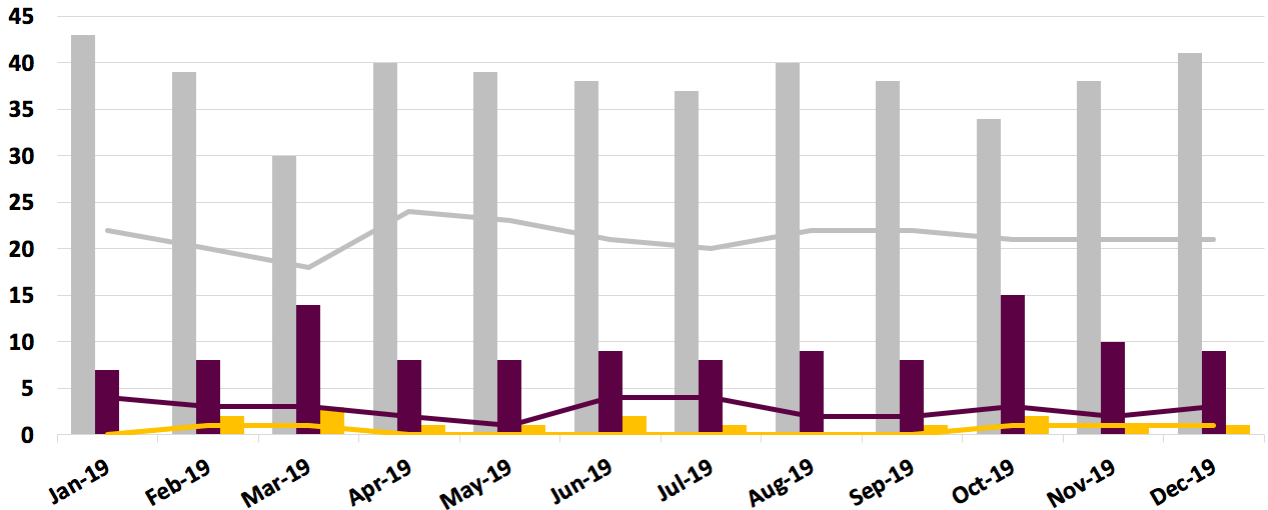
Drilling into the #1 data, 24 individual male artists released 31 songs that peaked at the top of the chart. Several male artists had multiple #1 songs in 2019, including Jason Aldean, Dan + Shay and Old Dominion with 2 songs each and Luke Combs and Thomas Rhett with 3 songs each. Combs dominated this period, with 13 weeks at #1 for 3 different songs – amounting to 25% of the year.

Women are vastly underrepresented at the top of the chart yet again in 2019, with just 1 song reaching the top in 2019: Maren Morris's "GIRL" (29 July 2019). A period of 17 months lies between "GIRL" and the previous #1 by a solo female country artist (Kelsea Ballerini's "Legends" on 24 Feb 2018).



MAJORITY OF SONGS BY WOMEN LINGER IN THE BOTTOM OF THE CHART

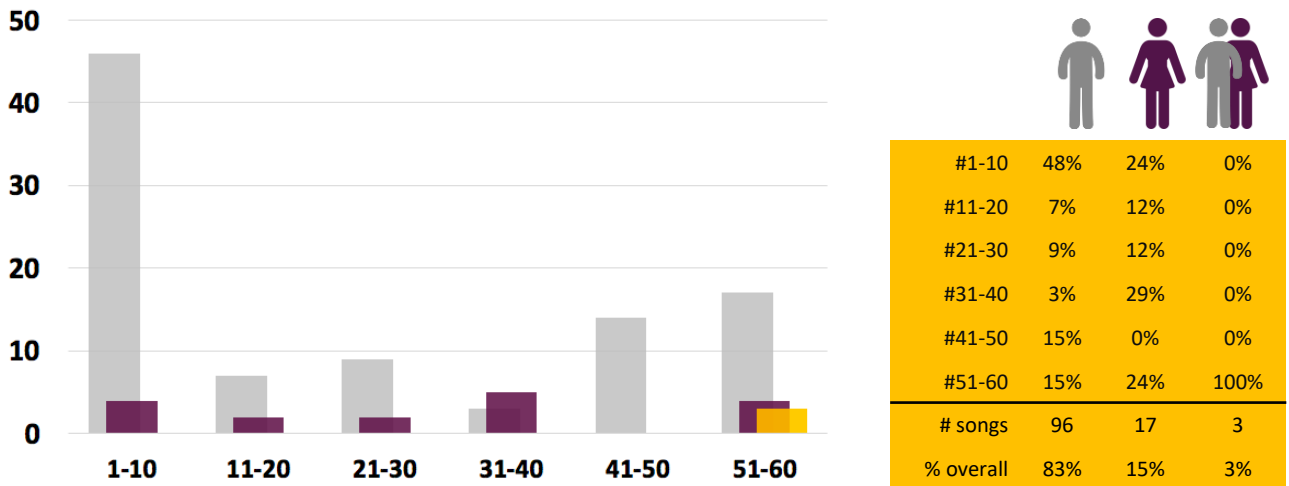
Distribution by songs entering Top 20 (lines) against those in bottom 40 positions (bars) of Billboard's Weekly Country Airplay Chart



As the previous graphs revealed, songs by women are filtered out of the top positions of the Weekly Airplay Charts. While the overall picture improves in the final 4 months of 2019, the majority of songs by women linger in the bottom 40 positions of the chart. Of the 32 songs by women that entered the chart, only 10 (31%) by 7 women enter the Top 20. The remaining 32 songs by women – 70% – linger outside of the Top 20. By comparison, 69 of the 136 (50.7%) songs by 45 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 1 song by a male-female ensemble peaked in the Top 20, the other 4 remain within the bottom positions of the chart. Given that top positioned songs receive more frequent exposure through airplay, the fact that the majority of songs by women linger in the bottom of the chart means that the majority of radio's listeners are not hearing women's voices throughout the day.

FREQUENCY AT PEAK POSITION

Frequency of songs by men and women at their peak position on Billboard's Weekly Country Airplay Chart in 2019



This histogram overlays songs by men and women according to their peak position for just the 116 songs completed their chart activity in 2019. This means that the 56 songs that were still on the chart in January 2020 were removed from the dataset. 83% of the 116 songs were by men, 15% by women and just 3% by male-female ensembles. Graphing the frequency of songs in this manner reveals that most songs by men (48%) peaked within the Top 10 positions. The same is true for women, too, with 24% of their songs in the Top 10 positions; however, 24% of songs by women is just 4 songs, 12 times less than the number of songs by men in the Top 10 positions. Not only do men have 11.5 times more songs (46 in total) in the Top 10, they have 3 times more songs in the Top 10 than women do overall. Perhaps more strikingly, 100% of the songs by male-female ensembles peaked in the bottom 10 of the chart in 2019.

Drilling into the dataset for these 116 songs reveals that the 17 songs by women were on the chart for a combined 299 weeks, while those by men charted for 1,682 weeks, and male-female ensembles for just 13 weeks. The chart's Recurrent Rules (explained in the [Appendix](#)) determine when songs are eliminated from the chart. Of the songs that exited the chart by 28 December, 3 (of the 7) songs by women in the bottom 10 positions charted for less than 10 weeks, and just 1 lingered in the backend for 17 weeks. These Rules 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.

GENDER CODING (YEAREND AIRPLAY CHARTS, 2010-2019)

CODE	ARTIST/ENSEMBLE TYPE	# IND. SONGS	% IND. SONGS	# SONGS OVERALL	% OF SONGS BY WEEK
MALE	Male solo artist	373	63.5%	380	63.6%
	All-male ensemble	73	12.4%	76	12.7%
	Male solo, feat. male solo	6	1.0%	6	1.0%
	Male solo, feat. male ensemble	5	0.9%	5	0.8%
	Male solo, feat. female solo	22	3.7%	22	3.7%
	Male solo, feat. all-female ensemble	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
	Male ensemble, feat. male solo	5	0.9%	5	0.8%
	Male ensemble, feat. male ensemble	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
	Male ensemble, feat. female solo	1	0.2%	2	0.3%
FEMALE	Female solo artist	58	9.9%	60	10.0%
	All-female ensemble	3	0.5%	3	0.5%
	Female solo, feat. female solo	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
	Female solo, feat. male ensemble	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
MALE-FEMALE ENS.	Male-female ensemble	36	6.1%	36	6.0%
	Male-female ensemble, feat. female solo	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Total songs		587	100.0%	600	100.0%

CODE	ARTIST/ENSEMBLE TYPE	# IND. ARTISTS	% IND. ARTISTS
MALE	Male solo artist	76	64.5%
	All-male ensemble	17	14.4
FEMALE	Female solo artist	16	13.6%
	All-female ensemble	2	1.7%
MALE-FEMALE ENS.	Male-female ensemble	7	5.9%
Total songs		118	100%

* Billboard's chart year runs from the first week of December to the last week of November, and their Yearend Charts are typically published at the start of December. This allows them to release yearend chart in time for their final print issue of the year.

GENDER CODING (2019 WEEKLY AIRPLAY CHARTS)

CODE	ARTIST/ENSEMBLE TYPE	# IND. SONGS	% IND. SONGS	# SONGS BY WEEK	% OF SONGS BY WEEK
MALE	Male solo artist	108	63%	1,983	64%
	All-male ensemble	21	12%	406	13%
	Male solo, feat. male solo	2	1%	52	2%
	Male solo, feat. male ensemble	1	1%	5	0%
	Male solo, feat. female solo	2	1%	61	2%
	Male solo, feat. male-female ensemble	1	1%	19	1%
	Male ensemble, feat. male solo	1	1%	13	0%
FEMALE	Female solo artist	23	13%	402	13%
	All-female ensemble	5	3%	77	2%
	Female solo, feat. female solo	1	1%	12	0%
	Female solo, feat. male solo	2	1%	20	1%
MALE-FEMALE ENS.	Male-female ensemble	5	3%	70	2%
Total songs		172	100%	3,120	100%

CODE	ARTIST/ENSEMBLE TYPE	# IND. ARTISTS	% IND. ARTISTS
MALE	Male solo artist	67	72%
	All-male ensemble	1	1%
FEMALE	Female solo artist	18	19%
	All-female ensemble	3	3%
MALE-FEMALE ENS.	Male-female ensemble	4	4%
Total songs		93	100%

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](#)