

# Inclusion and Diversity in the ACM Award History:

## A Study of Nominees and Winners, 2000-2019

DR. JADA E. WATSON,  @data\_jada

This report evaluates diversity of the nominees and winners over the last two decades of the Academy of Country Music Awards, focusing on gender and race/ethnicity of the annual ceremony's top music-centered (Single Record, Song, Album) and artist-centered awards (Entertainer, Top Male and Female Artist, New Male and Female Artist). The final section surveys representation in the Songwriter and Studio Recording categories. While several of these categories are not awarded at the annual ceremony, they were included to address more fully the reach of representational issues in the industry and the impact that decisions made in one area of the industry (radio, labels, publishers) has on other areas (awards).

### Summary of Findings

The findings of this report reveal that women are vastly underrepresented in the nominations for which both men and women are considered, including Single Record, Song, Album and Entertainer of the Year. Male artists received an average of 74.6% of the annual nominations in these 4 categories and won 60.5% of the time. While women and male-female ensembles have won a combined 30.5% of the awards, 12 of the 30 wins (40%) were for Miranda Lambert. The remaining 18 awards were won by just 5 women and 2 male-female ensembles. Lambert's accomplishments overshadow the inequality in nominations at the ACMs. The domination of one artist is a sign of larger issues within the industry – namely, the continued trend of limiting resources and opportunities to just a handful of women. The size of the pool of participants within the industry is directly related to the narrow outcome in nominations and wins for these awards. While there are repeat wins amongst male artists, to be sure, no single male artist stands apart to this degree: 46 awards were spread across 22 men.

What is perhaps most striking are the findings on diversity, which show that only 4 nominations in these four categories over a 20-year period were for an artist of color. Looking outside of these categories, to the artist-centered awards, there are just 4 nominations for an artist of color in the categories of New Male or Female Vocalist and 1 in Male Vocalist. None of these artists won their respective categories. As such, this study reveals that **all awards** over the last two decades were won only by white artists.

Digging deeper into the ACM award data, I found that artists of color are drastically underrepresented in the history of the organization. Despite several nominations for Charley Pride, Big Al Downing, Darius Rucker and Ray Charles, an artist of color has never won an artist-centered award – **or any other award** – with the ACM. This does not include special awards – like the Pioneer Award, The Home Depot Humanitarian Award, and the Gary Haber Lifting Lives Award, awarded to Charley Pride, Neal McCoy, and Darius Rucker (respectively). Women of color are nearly absent from this history: Mickey Guyton was the first – and only – woman to receive a nomination in the organization's 54 years.

### Discussion

Evaluating the results against the eligibility criteria for the awards reveals the crux of the issue in representation: using popularity charts to determining eligibility creates a barrier female artists (especially *new* artists) and artists of color. Over the last 20 years there has been a significant decline in airplay for songs by women, which has resulted in a decrease in the number of songs entering and climbing both Mediabase's Country Aircheck (see SongData

studies [2019a](#), [2019b](#), [2020](#)) and *Billboard's* Hot Country Songs charts (see Watson [2019](#)). The impact that this criteria has had on the nominations for the music-centered awards is clear, but its impact on the artist-centered results was surprising. In 7 of the last 20 years, there were not enough eligible women to award the New Female Artist of the Year category. This is not to say that there were no new female artists releasing new music in these years, but that their songs did not receive enough airplay to reach the Top 40 on the charts. It is thus time to consider new criteria for the New Artist awards to create more opportunity for women and artists of color.

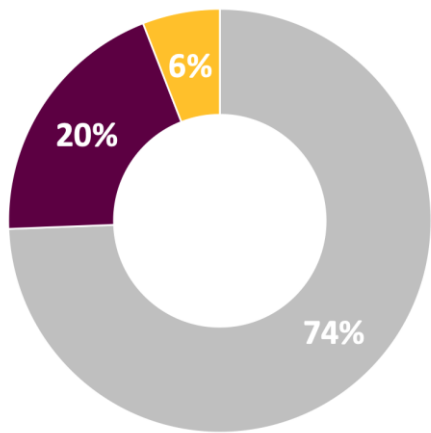
While airplay charts have historically been used to determine eligibility, the ACM began using *Billboard's* hybrid-method Hot Country Songs chart 3 years ago instead of its Airplay chart in an effort open up the eligibility criteria to include artists who were building strong consumption in streaming and sales. Kane Brown specifically was identified as an artist that could benefit from this change in criteria. Unfortunately, this chart has been problematic for women since *Billboard* changed the chart's method in October 2012. The hybrid-method that underpins this chart tabulates rankings by blending sales, streams and radio airplay across *all formats*. Songs by women have a hard-enough time breaking into *country* format radio, the addition of cross-format airplay renders this chart – and by extension, these awards – inaccessible to female artists who were nearly absent from the chart between 2013 and 2018 (see Watson [2019](#)). While the chart is problematic, the decision to change the chart to broaden eligibility criteria is an important sign of the ACM's desire to move toward more inclusive practices. It is time to re-evaluate this criteria to broaden the pool of applicants outside of the current charts.

The impact these charts have across all other industry awards may not be immediately apparent, but this same criteria also determines eligibility for the Songwriter, Producer, Audio Engineer and Musician awards but the bar is even higher in the latter three categories (Top 20 instead of Top 50). Not only do women in these roles tend to write for and support female artists, but many women musicians record mostly on demos (not masters) or work mainly as touring musicians. As a result, women in these roles are impacted by the same institutional barriers as solo female artists and ensembles. If songs by women receive little exposure and industry-wide support (with few songs reaching the Top 20), then the women that write, produce, engineer or play instruments on these songs have even fewer opportunities to be considered across any of the ACM's awards. Re-evaluating the criteria used to determine eligibility for these awards is necessary not just to diversity the pool of potential nominees, but also to recognize the integral role that they play in developing the sound and culture of country music from their position as touring musicians.

Nominations establish credibility for artists and play a role in career advancement in ways that cannot be ignored. Like chart activity, awards (and participation in red carpet events and on stage at ceremonies) are a crucial form of exposure for artists, which lead to new opportunities and access to resources within the industry. The criteria currently used to determine eligibility for awards, which would be valid in an industry and community in which all artists have equal opportunity, ensures that success remains attached to white male artists. Re-evaluating eligibility criteria is a necessary step in the ACM's continued efforts to build a more inclusive and diverse culture.

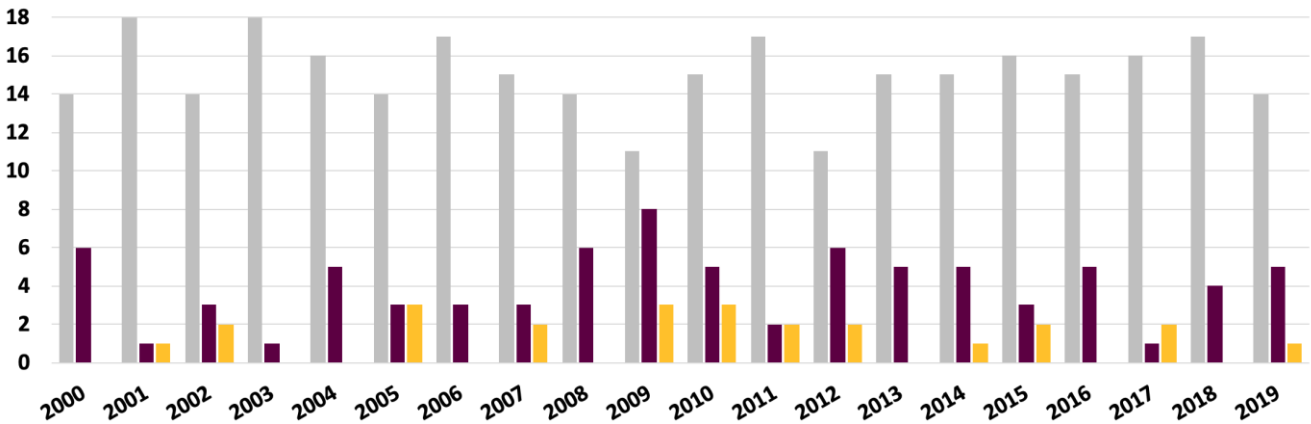
# REPRESENTATION OF NOMINEES

Representation of 406 nominations in the categories of Single Record, Song, Album and Entertainer of the Year.

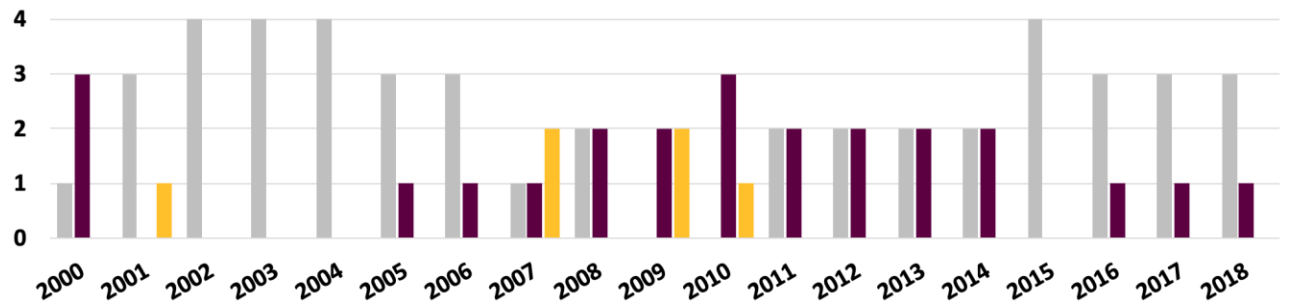


Between 2000 and 2018, there were 406 nominations in the music-centered categories of Single Record, Song and Album of the Year and in Entertainer of the Year. Male artists received 302 of the total nominations (74%), with 80 for women (20%) and 24 for male-female ensembles (6%). These percentages remain relatively similar when evaluating representation of the individual artists nominated for these awards, with 58 men (69.9%), 18 women (21.7%) and 7 male-female ensembles (8.4%).

Only 4 of the 406 nominations – 1% – were for an artist of color. This includes 1 nomination for Song (“Wagon Wheel” by Darius Rucker with Lady Antebellum), 2 for Single Record (“Wagon Wheel” and “Heaven” by Kane Brown) and 1 for *O Brother Where Art Thou?* in the Album of the Year category.



Graphing the distribution of the nominations for these four categories reveals that there is not a single year in this 2-decade period in which women had more or equal to the number of nominations to male artists. Women only have the same amount of nominations as men in 2009 when combined with nominations for Lady Antebellum that year. Male artists have a peak of 94.7% of the nominations in 2003, and average 76% of the nominations over the last 7 years of this period.

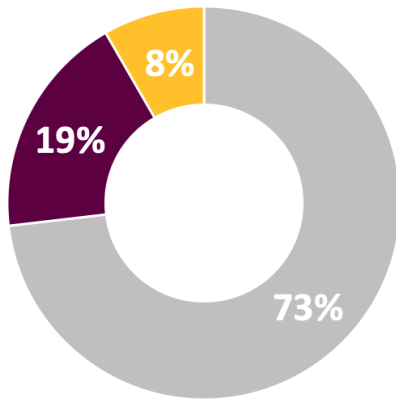


Despite having significantly fewer nominations than men over the last 20 years, female artists have strong representation in wins for these four categories in 8 years of this period. Overall, male artists won 60.5% of the awards in these categories (with 100% of the wins in 2002-2004 and 2015), while women won 30.6%, and male-female ensembles 7.9%. Women had most wins two times in this period (2000 and 2010) and had the same number of wins as men in 5 years (2008, 2001-2014). When combined with male-female ensembles, female artists register the most award wins in 2007 and 2009 as well. Despite these positive results, however, it is integral to note that half of the wins for female artists went to one woman – Miranda Lambert, who won 12 awards across these categories over 20 years. Except for the 2001 win for *O Brother Where Art Thou?*, an artist of color has not won an ACM award in this study period.

# SINGLE RECORD OF THE YEAR

*Awarded to the Artist, Producer, and Record Company/Label(s).*

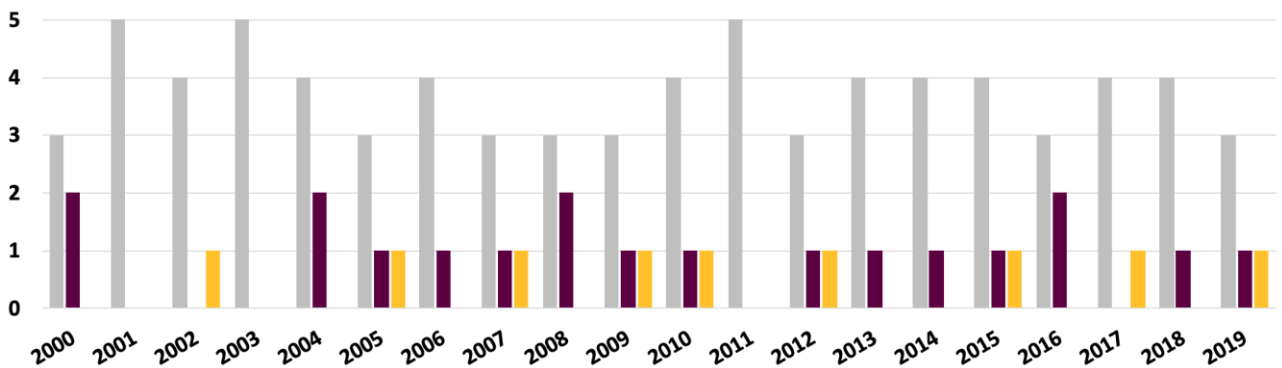
*Singles must have achieved a Top 20 position on Billboard's Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) chart.*



Between 2000 and 2019, 108 artists were nominated for Single Record of the Year (6 Singles were nominated in 2004, 2010, and 2015). Male artists had 79 nominations, while women had 20 and male-female ensembles had 9.

The 108 nominations have been attributed to 62 individual solo artists and ensembles – 23 of whom have had more than two nominations. Miranda Lambert tops this list, with 8 nominations since 2008. The percentage of men, women and male-female ensembles changes only slightly when looking at the number of unique individuals, to 74.2% male artists, 17.7% women, and 8.1% male-female ensembles.

Two of the 62 nominees (3.2%) in this 20-year period have been an artist of color – both men.



Between 2000 and 2019, there has not been a single year in which women had more or an equal number of nominations than male artists for Single Record of the Year. Four years – 2000, 2004, 2008, and 2016 – had a higher representation of nominated Singles by women, while there were 11 years with just 1 nominated Single and 5 years with no nominated Singles. Only two of the Singles nominated were performed by an artist of color (1.9% of the nominated songs) – Darius Rucker's collaboration with Lady Antebellum on "Wagon Wheel" in 2013 and Kane Brown's "Heaven" in 2018.

Five of the 19 songs (26.3%) that have won Single Record of the Year were performed by a female artist. Miranda Lambert won this award 3 times, with Carrie Underwood and Lee Ann Womack winning once each. Of the remaining 14 wins, 12 of them (63.2%) have been by a male artist and 2 (10.5%) by a male-female ensemble. Neither Rucker nor Brown won Single Record of the Year; as a result, all 19 winning Singles were performed by a white artist.

'00 '01 '02 '03 '04  
'05 '06 '07 '08 '09  
'10 '11 '12 '13 '14  
'15 '16 '17 '18

Over this 20-year period, 91 individuals produced the 108 songs nominated. Five of the songs included a woman on the production credits, amounting to 5.5% of the individual producers. All listed producers were lead singers on the nominated Single: Jennifer Nettles, Hillary Scott, Cam, Maren Morris, and Kacey Musgraves. None of the songs were produced by a woman on her own or included a female producer that was not also responsible for the performance of the song. Broadening the scope to evaluate representation of the 214 production credits across the 108 songs, decreases the representation of those 5 women to 2.3% of the nominated producers.

# SONG OF THE YEAR (Artist)

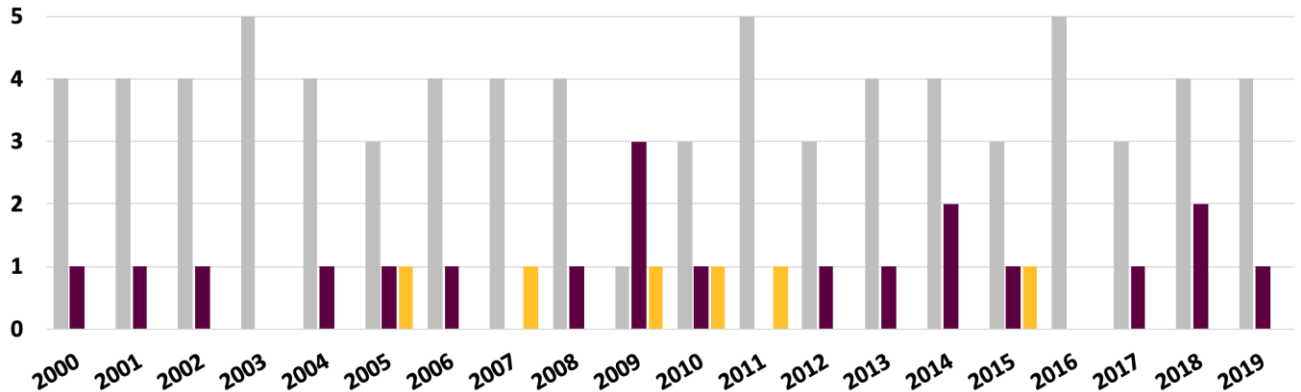
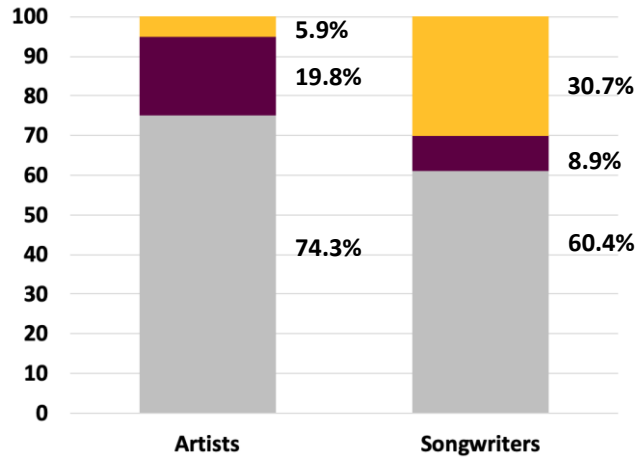
Awarded to the Songwriter(s), Publisher(s), and Artist(s).

Song must have achieved a Top 50 position on Billboard's Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) chart.

The category of Song of the Year acknowledges the Artist, Songwriter(s) and Publisher(s) responsible for the most popular songs in a given year. Over the last 20 years, 101 songs were nominated for Song of the Year.

The majority of the songs were both performed (74.3%) and composed (60.4%) by men. Women were responsible for performing 19.8% of the nominated songs and composing 8.9% of them, while male-female collaborations performed 5.9% of the songs and composed 30.7%.

One of the Songs was performed by a black artist ("Wagon Wheel" by Rucker) and none of the songs were written by an artist of color.



Songs performed by male artists dominated nominations ever year between 2000 and 2019, except for 2009 – the only year in which women had more songs nominated than men (Miranda Lambert's "White Liar", Taylor Swift's "You Belong to Me" and Carrie Underwood's "Cowboy Casanova"). Outside of this year, male artists have 80% of the nominations in 10 years and 100% of the nominations twice (2003, 2016). Given that the criteria for eligibility requires that a song achieve at least a Top 50 position on popularity charts, Songs by women and male-female ensembles – who receive declining and infrequent airplay, have limited opportunity to be nominated for this award.

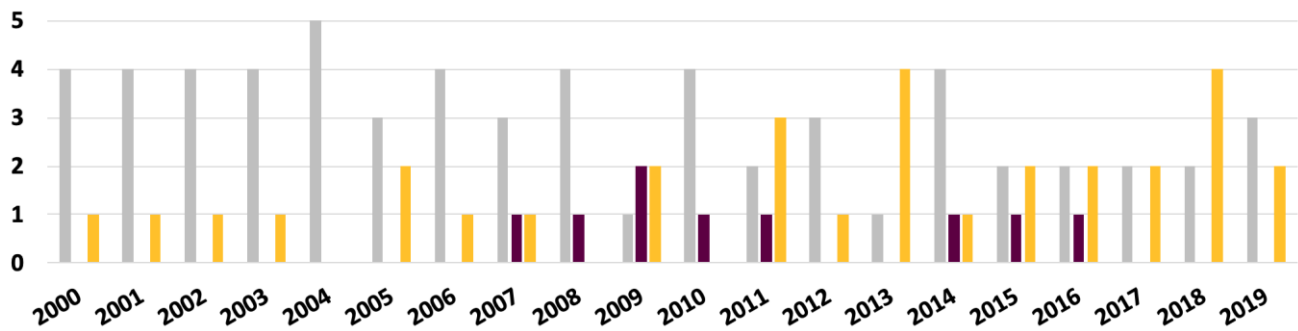
'00 '01 '02 '03  
'04 '05 '06 '07  
'08 '09 '10 '11  
'12 '13 '14 '15  
'16 '17 '18

While the nominations for Song of the Year have been heavily dominated by male artists, the results for this award have become more diverse over the last 13 years. Male artists have won Song of the Year 12 of the last 19 years (63.2%), including a 6-year stretch from 2001 to 2006. However, since 2007, there has been a rotation in wins for Songs with male and female leads with just one 2-year stretch with men winning back-to-back (2015, 2016). The 4 wins for a solo female artist in this period have all been for songs performed by Miranda Lambert (3 of which she co-wrote).

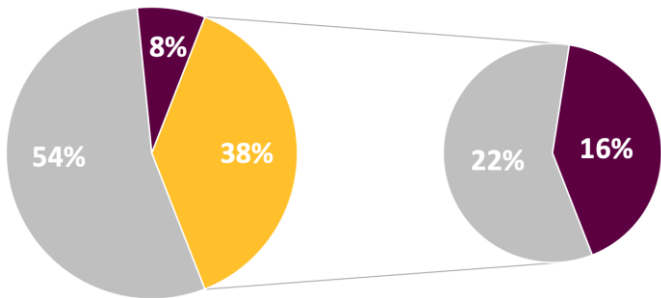
Miranda Lambert's "The House that Built Me" – Song of the Year in 2010 – was named ACM's "[Song of the Decade](#)" at the end of 2019. The song has been one of the most awarded and celebrated by the industry, winning Song, Single, and Video of the Year at the 46<sup>th</sup> ACMs, Song and Video at the 44<sup>th</sup> CMA ceremony, and Female Vocal performance at the 53<sup>rd</sup> Grammy Awards.

# SONG OF THE YEAR (Songwriter)

Awarded to the Songwriter(s), Publisher(s), and Artist(s).  
Song must have achieved a Top 50 position on Billboard’s Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) chart.



Despite the significant number of female songwriters in the country music industry, women are vastly underrepresented in the nominations for Song of the Year between 2000 and 2019. Just 9 of the songs nominated were by a solo female writer or all-female collaborations. Over the course of this 20-year period, there has been a shift from songs written predominantly to male songwriters to a rise of male-female collaborations.



Songs are often written through collaborative partnerships. Only 11 of the songs were written by a single Songwriter (8 by a man and 3 by a woman), while the remaining 90 songs were written by 2 to 5 writers. As such, evaluating the percentage of individual male and female songwriters offers an invaluable perspective on the identity of songwriters.

Between 2000 and 2019, 214 individuals were responsible for writing the Songs nominated for this award: 61 songs were written solely by male artists, 9 by female artists, and 31 by male-female collaborations.

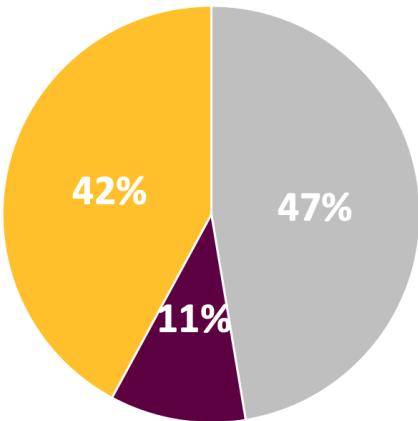
Drilling into the number of artists involved in the nominated Songs reveals that the 67 songs by all-male collaborations had 144 authors (54% of the nominations) and the 9 songs by all-female collaborations were written by just 20 women (7% of the nominations). Thirty-one of the nominated songs were written by male-female collaborations comprised of 101 individuals. Drilling into this data shows that 59 songwriters (22% overall) were men and 42 songwriters (16% overall) were women.

Overall, 203 (76.6%) of the songwriters nominated were men and 62 (23.4%) were women. While more work needs to be done to better understand representation in songwriter communities, these first results show considerable inequity in the writing room.

Songs by male songwriters won this category 9 times over the last 19 years, winning for six consecutive years between 2001 and 2006 (all Songs performed by men – see previous page). Male-female writing collaborations were responsible for 8 of the winning songs. Except for “I Drive Your Truck” (written by Jessi Alexander, Connie Harrington, and Jimmy Yeary), most male-female collaborations include just one female author.

Just two songs written by women have won Song of the Year: “Stay” (2007) written by Jennifer Nettles and “Automatic” (2014) written by Miranda Lambert, Nicole Galyon, and Natalie Hemby.

Given the eligibility criteria for Song of the Year, female songwriters who write with a woman’s voice in mind are at a disadvantage in this category. Some women have even [been told](#) that they would be more successful if they wrote fewer songs for women. As a result of the limited and infrequent airplay for songs by women on country format radio, fewer songs performed by women – and indeed written by women – are even eligible for consideration in this category.



# ALBUM OF THE YEAR

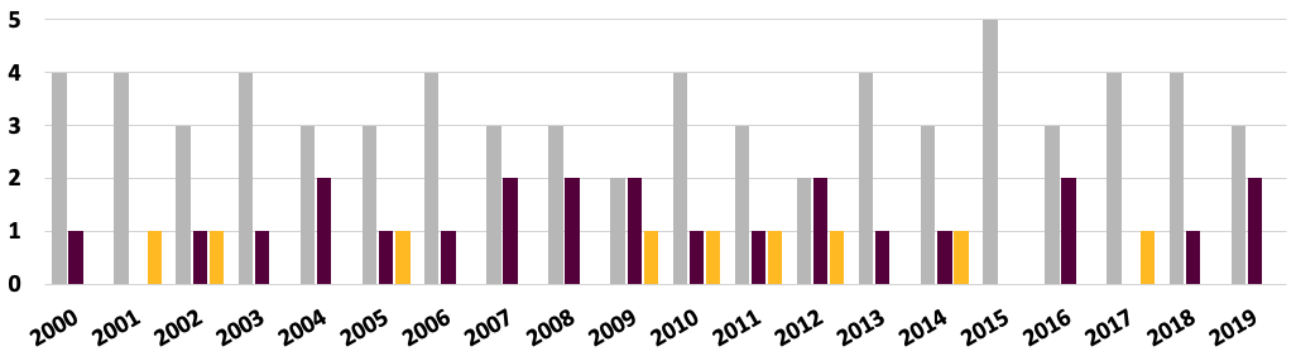
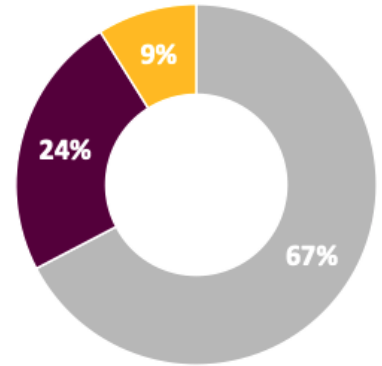
Awarded to the Artist(s), Producer(s), and Record Company.

Album must have achieved its highest charting position on Billboard's Top Country Albums Chart during eligibility period.

Between 2000 and 2019, there were 101 nominations for Album of the Year Award (6 albums were nominated in 2010), 67% by male artists, 24% by female artists and 9% by male-female ensembles.

The 101 nominations have been attributed to 47 individual solo artists and ensembles over the last 20 years – 26 of which had had nominations for two or more albums. The percentage of men, women and male-female ensembles remains relatively unchanged when evaluating the number of unique individuals nominated over this period.

With the exception artists included on the soundtrack for *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, none of the Albums nominated were by an artist of color. The 2001 win of this soundtrack makes it the only Album with songs performed by artists of color to win.



While male artists dominate Album of the Year overall, graphing the distribution of nominations shows that women have had more nominations in this category than in others. With the exception of one year (2015), female artists have been responsible for at least one Album nominated each year. Despite this improvement, there are no years in which women have more nominations than men, two years with equal nominations (2009 and 2012), and no years in which the category had nominations for only female artists. By contrast, male artists had 60% of the nominations in 10 years of this period, 80% in 7 years, and 100% of the nominated Albums in 1 year of this period. In both 2009 and 2013, combining female-only and male-female ensemble nominations makes the count of Albums including a lead female artist higher than those by men.

Women have been most successful in the Album of the Year category. Between 2000 and 2018, women won Album of the Year 9 times (47.4%), with male artists winning 8 times (42.1%) and male-female ensembles winning twice (10.5%) – this includes the win for *O Brother Where Art Thou?* Miranda Lambert is the most nominated artist with 6 Albums nominated for this award – and has so far won every year nominated. The September 2020 ceremony for the 2019 nomination period, which will determine the results of her sixth nomination.

The results on Album nominations and wins is particularly interesting given the the documented absence of women on radio. While songs by women have a harder time due to their lack of airplay, female artists have continually done well in Album sales. In fact, a 2014 article by [Grady Smith](#) revealed the genre's male artists leading at radio had record sales that paled in comparison to those by women. Shifting our focus to Album sales statistics might be a stronger indicator of audience interest in music by women.

'00 '01 '02 '03 '04  
'05 '06 '07 '08 '09  
'10 '11 '12 '13 '14  
'15 '16 '17 '18

Over this 20-year period, 120 individuals produced the 101 Albums nominated. Fifteen of the albums included a woman on the production credits, amounting to 10% of the individual producers. Fourteen of the Albums were produced by an artist on the album, including the Dixie Chicks, Sara Evans, Faith Hill, Martina McBride, Maren Morris, Kacey Musgraves, Hillary Scott, Taylor Swift, and Gretchen Wilson. Only one album included a female producer that was not also a performing artist – Victoria Shaw on Lady Antebellum's debut album, which she co-produced with Paul Worley. Broadening the scope to evaluate representation of the 240 production credits across the 101 songs decreases the representation of the 12 women to 7.1% of the nominated producers.

# NEW ARTIST CATEGORIES

*Awarded to the Artist, who must have released a single that reached the Top 40 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) charts.*

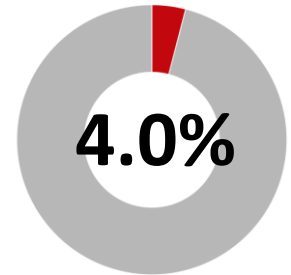
New Artist awards have long been a tradition within ACM history, but the award has a complicated history over the last 20 years. Between 2000 and 2019 the ACM has had a New Male, New Female and New Vocal Duo or Group award, but in years in which there were not enough eligible artists to be nominated for all three categories the nominees have been combined into one New Artist category. This is true of the nomination cycles for 2003-2004, 2009-2011, and 2013-2014, years in which there was no New Male or Female category awarded. All nominees in 2003 were men, while the nominees in 2004 included (winner) Gretchen Wilson, Julie Roberts and Big & Rich.

## • **New Male & Female Vocalist**

Over the last 20 years the New Male and New Female Vocalist of the Year has only been awarded 13 times. Thirty-four women received the 45 nominations for the New Female Vocalist award over the last 20 years. Just one of the 34 nominees (2.9%) was a woman of color. Mickey Guyton was nominated for the award in 2015. This marks the only nominations for a woman of color in the history of the ACM awards.

In that same period, there were 49 nominations in the category of New Male Vocalist. Two of the 39 men nominated (5.1%) were artists of color. Kane Brown was nominated in both 2016 and 2017, and Jimmie Allen was nominated in 2018.

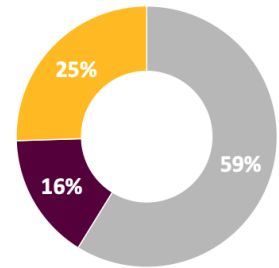
Combining all nominations in the New solo artist categories over the last two decades, just 4 of the 100 nominations have been for an artist of color.



## • **New Vocal Duo or Group**

New Vocal Duo or Group was awarded 14 times over the last 20 years. There were not enough eligible ensembles in 2003-2004, 2011 and 2013-2014 to award this category. There were 51 nominations in this period, 30 all-male ensembles (59%), 8 all-female ensembles (16%), and 13 male-female ensembles (25%).

Male ensembles have won the award eight times, with the remaining 6 wins by male-female ensembles. None of the nominees in this category have been an artist of color.

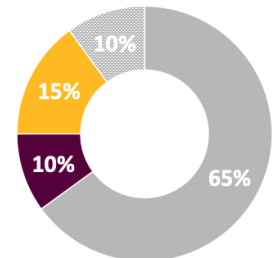


## • **Top New Artist (2008-2014)**

*Fan-voted award, nominees determined based on results of the New Artist categories.*

Between 2008 and 2014, the ACM had a fan-voted Top New Artist award whose nominees were determined based on the results of the New Male, New Female and New Duo or Group awards. Because there were no female nominees in 2009-2011 and 2013-2014 or Duos/Groups in 2011 and 2013-2014, 13 of the 20 nominees (65%) for the fan-voted award were solo male artists, 3 were male-female ensembles (25%) and 2 were women (10%) or an all-male Duo/Group.

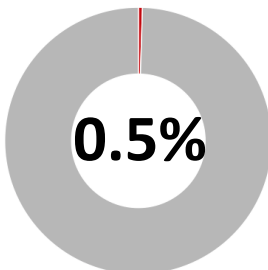
The inaugural winner of this award was Julianne Hough in 2008. The remaining awards were won by 4 men and 2 ensembles (The Band Perry, 2010) and Florida Georgia Line (2012). None of the nominees for this fan-voted award were artists of color.



*Grey shaded area represents all-male ensembles.*

# TOP MALE AND FEMALE VOCALIST THE YEAR

*Awarded to the Artist, based on criteria that includes success at radio, consumption, success in digital media, live concert ticket sales and vocal performance.*

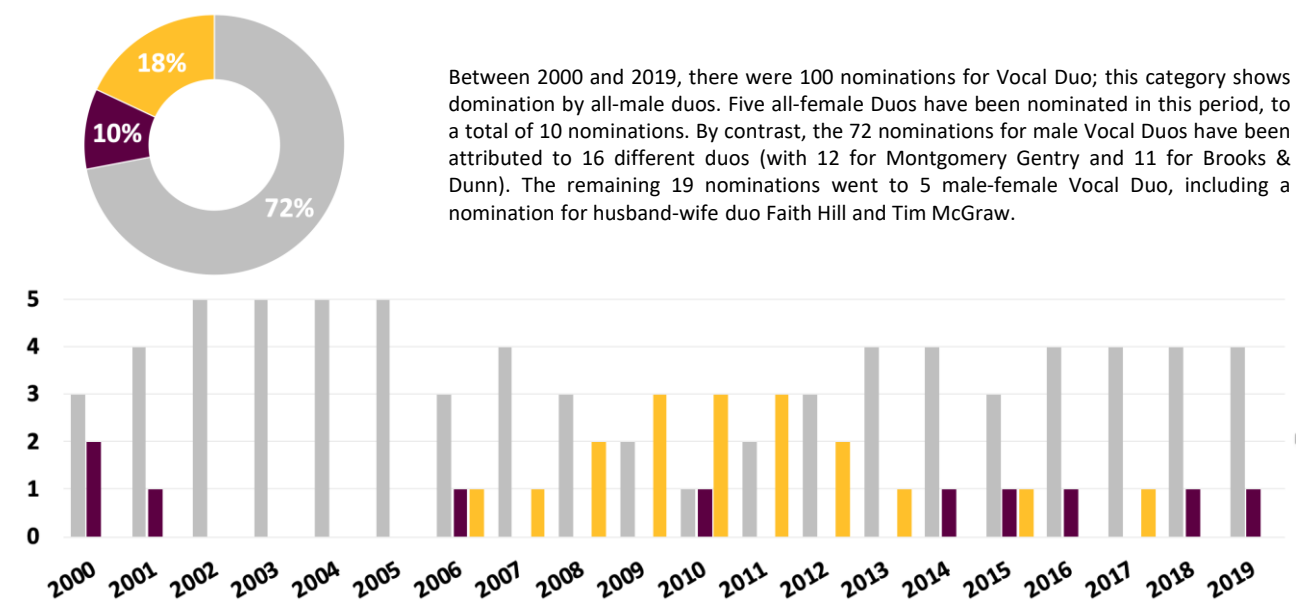


Over the last 20 years, 21 men and 23 women have been nominated for the Male and Female Vocalist of the Year Awards. Keith Urban and Carrie Underwood have had the most nominations (with 13 and 15 nominations, respectively), but Brad Paisley and Miranda Lambert have won the award the most times, with 5 and 9 wins.

Combining all nominations for Male and Female vocalist, there have been 201 nominations over the last 20 years. Just 1 of the nominations (0.5%) went to a black artist – Darius Rucker – in 2010, who did not win the award.

# DUO OF THE YEAR

Awarded to the Artist, who must have released a single that reached the Top 40 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) charts.



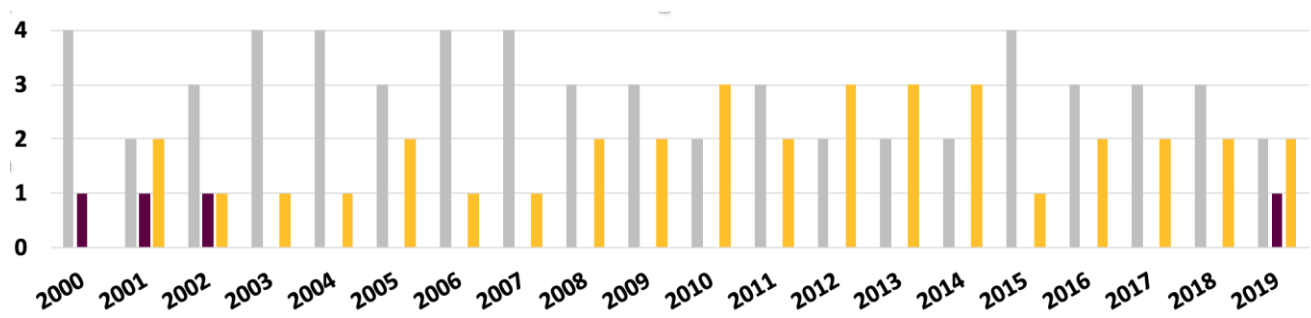
Female duos have been underrepresented in the Vocal Duo of the Year category. The period began with nominations for The Judds (2000) and The Kinleys (2000, 2001), followed nominations for The Wreckers (2006), The JaneDear Girls (2010) and 5 nominations for Maddie & Tae (2014-2016, 2018-2019). Male duos dominated nominations in the first 8 years of this period with 100% of the nominations from 2002 to 2005. Despite a short period between 2009-2013 in which male-female Vocal Duos received equal or more nominations than male duos, the period ended, as it began, with all-male Vocal Duos receiving 60-80% of the annual nominations. A female duo has not won this category in the last two decades. Male duos won 15 times and male-female ensembles 4 times (21%) between 2008-2012.

# GROUP OF THE YEAR

Awarded to the Artist, who must have released a single that reached the Top 40 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) charts.

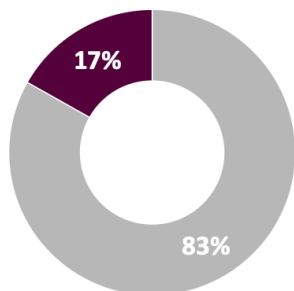
Between 2000 and 2019, there were 100 nominations in the Vocal Group of the Year category. The majority of the nominations have been for all-male ensembles (60%), while 36% have been for male-female ensembles and just 5% for female ensembles. The 4 nominations identified in the graph below for an all-female ensemble were by two ensembles: the Dixie Chicks (2000-2002) and The Highwomen (2019). The 36 nominations for a male-female ensemble were granted to 7 ensembles, and the remaining 60 nominations were granted to 15 male ensembles.

While all-male ensembles have won the most Group of the Year Awards (52.6%), male-female ensembles won the award every year between 2008 and 2016 (42.1%). An all-female ensemble has not won since the Dixie Chicks in 2000.



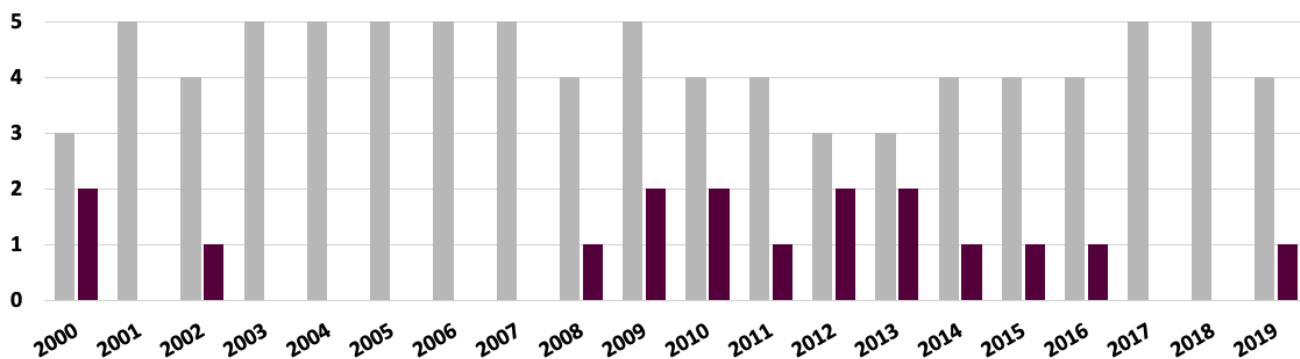
# ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

*Awarded to the Artist, based on criteria that includes success at radio and consumption, vocal performance, live concert ticket sales, artistic merit, television and film appearances, songwriting, success in digital media and contributions to the industry.*



Entertainer of the Year is the most coveted award of the ACM ceremony. Over the last 20 years, 17 of the 104 nominees have been women, with the remaining 84 nominations for men. The 104 nominations over this 20-year period have gone to 24 artists – with 10 nominations for Keith Urban, 9 for Kenny Chesney, 8 for Toby Keith, Jason Aldean and Luke Bryan, and 7 for Brooks & Dunn. The only women to have multiple nominations include Miranda Lambert and Taylor Swift (with 5 each), Carrie Underwood (with 4), and the Dixie Chicks (with 2).

None of the artists nominated for Entertainer of the Year have been artists of color. Yet another critical category dominated by white artists.



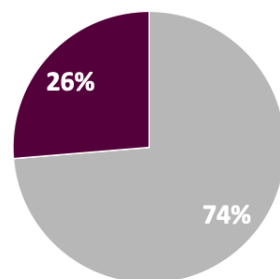
Women have fared better as nominees for the ACM Entertainer of the Year than the [CMA's award](#) of the same name (which had just 12 nominations for women overall and only one year with two women nominated). With the exception of nominations for the Dixie Chicks (2000, 2002) and Faith Hill (2000), the remaining nominations were received by Underwood, Swift, and Lambert. Women are completely absent from nominations from 2003 to 2007 and in 2017 and 2018 (as they were for the CMA award).

The concentration of nominations for these three women over the last 12 years speaks to the growing inequality within all facets of the genre. While radio and sales are not the only determining factor, the absence of female artists on radio playlists and weekly charts certainly impacts eligibility for consideration – not to mention the potential for receiving the award. With increasing fewer women participating in the mainstream of the industry over the last 20 years, female artists have fewer opportunities for exposure, leadership and broader contributory acts throughout the calendar year.

'00 '01 '02 '03 '04 '05 '06 '07 '08 '09  
'10 '11 '12 '13 '14 '15 '16 '17 '18

With so little opportunity for exposure, women have had significantly fewer wins. Over this 20-years period, only three women have won Entertainer of the Year a total of five times: Dixie Chicks in 2000, Carrie Underwood in 2008 and 2009, and Taylor Swift in 2010 and 2011. Again, the results here are better than the results of the [CMA award](#). The remaining 14 years have been won by male artists – with 2 wins for Luke Bryan and Toby Keith, 3 wins for Jason Aldean, and 4 for Kenny Chesney.

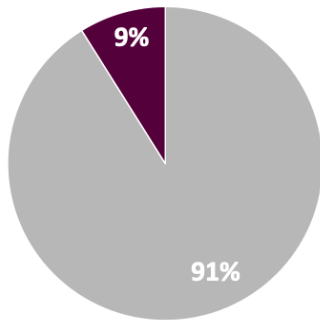
Artists that have received multiple Entertainer of the Year trophies have won their awards back-to-back except for Luke Bryan whose 2012 and 2014 wins were split up by a 2013 win for George Strait. The distribution of the awards in this manner creates a lack of diversity amongst the winning artists and contributes to the oversaturation of one voice within the industry



While women are underrepresented across the ACM nominations, one female artist has done particularly well. Miranda Lambert has the most nominations and wins overall in the last 20 years. Lambert has had 42 nominations in the categories evaluated throughout this study, and 22 wins – she even surpasses Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton who have 41 and 36 wins (respectively) in the same categories. She also has 15 nominations and 5 wins in the categories of Video and Vocal Event and was awarded the 50th Anniversary Milestone Award (2014), the Merle Haggard Spirit Award (2015), and the Gene Weed Milestone Award (2018). Despite being the most decorated artist in recent ACM history, Lambert has yet to win Entertainer of the Year.

# SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

*Awarded to a Songwriter, who must have written a commercially released song that achieved its highest position in the Top 50 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) charts during the eligibility period.*



Songwriter of the year has been awarded since 2011. In the 9 years of this award's history, a female writer has been nominated just 4 times (9%). Three of these 4 nominations went to Hillary Lindsey, with the fourth nomination for Lori McKenna. The remaining 41 nominations have been divided between 14 men, with the bulk of the nominations going to Shane McAnally and Ashley Gorley (7 each), Luke Laird and Josh Osborne (5 each) and Rodney Clawson. Here, as in most other categories, none of the nominated songwriters has been an artist of color.

Lori McKenna was nominated and won Songwriter of the year in 2016. She is the only woman to have won the award.

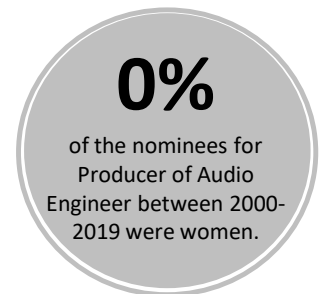
# PRODUCER & AUDIO ENGINEER OF THE YEAR

*Awarded to a Producer and an Audio Engineer who must have been credited on a commercially released single or album that achieved Top 20 or better on Billboard's Hot Country Songs, Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) charts.*

A woman has never been nominated for the Producer or Audio Engineer Award. This profession within the industry and broader popular music industry has been heavily male-dominated with little opportunity for women to work with lead artists. Acknowledging this gap and working with labels and artists to develop opportunities and safe work spaces for women and people of color in production would be an important step forward for the industry.

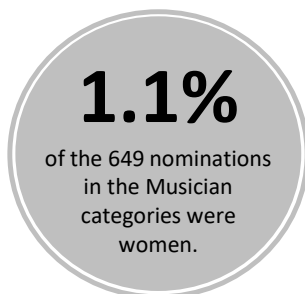
The nominations and results for these two awards are rather homogenous, showing little diversity – not just in gender and race, but also in terms of the number of individuals celebrated.

- Just 24 individuals received the 77 Producer nominations, with 57% of them for just 7 men. Jay Joyce has won this award the most, with 4 wins in the last 7 years.
- Similarly, 25 men received the 78 nominations for Audio Engineer of the Year – again, with 57% for just 6 men. The results for this award were far less diverse than for Producer of the Year; 12 of the last 17 awards went to two men: Justin Niebank (7 times), and Chuch Ainlay (5 times).



# MUSICIAN AWARDS

*Awarded to a Musician a commercially released single or album embodying the musician's performance that achieved Top 20 or better on Billboard's Hot Country Songs, Top Country Albums or Country Aircheck (Mediabase) charts.*



The ACM awards musicians for their contributions to the developing sound of country music. Trophies are awarded to Bass Players, Drummers, Fiddlers, Guitar Players, Steel Guitar Players and Keyboard Players, and musicians in a Specialty instrument category.

Despite the increased presence of female musicians within the industry, especially working with the genre's female musicians, only 3 women been nominated in these 7 categories over the last 20 years – comprising 1.9% of the 156 individual musicians recognized. Bassist Alison Prestwood received 4 nominations (2002, 2004, 2006, 2007), and Fiddlers Kristen Wilkinson (2006) and Jenee Fleenor (2018, 2019) have been nominated a combined 3 times in the Specialty Instrument category. Together, they musicians received 7 out of 649 total nominations (1.1%) overall, and none of them won the award.

Female musicians – like producers, engineers and songwriters – are in a precarious position within the industry. Not only are there fewer opportunities for women to record masters in studio with the industry's leading musicians, those that do often work with female artists who face barriers to success. Many women musicians record mostly on demos or work mainly as touring musicians. Their contributions to sound of country music and the culture of the industry are thus critical, but as a result of the criteria (which requires participation in a Top 20 charting song), women musicians have fewer opportunities to be eligible for an award.