

The Charts: Measuring Success [B1]

Dopo la Seconda Guerra Mondiale, la musica popolare prese il sopravvento sulla radio, spinta dall'emergere di un nuovo gruppo demografico e di consumatori: gli adolescenti. Le classifiche si trasformarono in rivelazioni di superstar.

[Topping](#) the [charts](#) is the [holy grail](#) for most recording artists, an indication of their popularity with the music-buying public. The first music chart appeared in 1913 in the US entertainment magazine Variety. At a time when recorded music was not yet available for sale and even radios were [scarce](#), this weekly chart was based on sales of [sheet music](#) in New York City. That same year, [Billboard](#) magazine published its own similar chart, and in 1936 it [released](#) the first pop chart based on record sales.

SCANDAL

Early [Billboard charts](#) also incorporated radio [airplay](#) as data. However, some corrupt record label executives [bribed](#) radio DJs to play their songs! This practice became known as a 'payola' — a [portmanteau](#) of 'pay' and Vitrola, the name of a popular record player. It was [outlawed](#) following an FBI investigation in the late 1950s.

DIAMOND DISC

The UK did not release its own chart until 1952, when the editor of music magazine [NME](#) telephoned a few record shops to ask what songs were popular that week. The result, the UK's Official Charts, was a massive success. As pop music boomed, the record industry also began to recognise their artists' [achievements](#) with a system of certification. The first Gold Disc was presented in the US in 1958 to Perry Como for half-a-million sales of Catch A Falling Star. A UK Gold Disc is [awarded](#) for a hundred thousand sales. Higher sales qualify for a Platinum or even a Diamond Disc.

EVOLUTION

Pop Music Chart Day is now celebrated every 4 January, and the USA's [Billboard](#) Hot 100 (singles) and [Billboard](#) 200 (albums) remain the music industry's best-known [charts](#). With the evolution of technology and the decline of physical sales, however, the [charts](#) have changed. Now largely based on downloads and streaming, some songs [linger](#) for over a year, and old songs [strangle](#) the [charts](#) at

Christmas time! Ed Sheeran's Perfect spent 191 weeks on the UK chart, and both Mariah Carey's and Wham!'s Christmas tracks hit number one decades after their release.

FAIR PLAY

This means that some artists [miss out](#) on being listed on the [charts](#), despite being popular. As a result, some countries are imposing new [rules](#), including [banning](#) songs more than eighteen months old from the [charts](#). In 2017, after an Ed Sheeran album release [placed](#) nine of his tracks in the top ten singles chart, the UK changed its [rules](#), allowing only three songs by an artist in the Top 100.

CHART RECORDS

US singer Elvis Presley holds the record in the UK [charts](#) with twenty-one #1 hits, while The Beatles achieved nineteen in the US. Whitney Houston holds the record for the most consecutive US chart toppers, with seven, while Mariah Carey has spent ninety-one weeks in the top spot. Drake's 431 weeks on the Hot 100 is by far the longest of any artist.

DEFINING SONG

A 2019 viral social media post [claimed](#) that the song that was No.1 on your 14th birthday defines your entire life. Is this true for you?

Glossary

- **claimed** = affermare
- **Billboard** = manifesto, cartello
- **airplay** = trasmissione via radio
- **portmanteau** = parola composta
- **outlawed** = dichiarare fuori legge
- **miss out** = non riuscirci
- **rules** = nome
- **Topping** = essere in cima
- **charts** = classifica
- **bribed** = corrompere
- **achievements** = successi
- **linger** = restare
- **strangle** = strozzare
- **banning** = proibire
- **scarce** = scarse
- **sheet music** = spartiti
- **NME** = New Musical Express
- **placed** = collocarsi
- **holy grail** = sacro graal
- **released** = pubblicare
- **awarded** = conferire