



Choral Canada
Association of Canadian
Choral Communities

Canada Choral
Association des communautés
chorales canadiennes

3.5 million choral singers in Canada

And other key findings from research for Choral Canada in 2017



This report summarizes the findings from three major research projects completed in 2017 for Choral Canada:

- 1) a public survey of choral singing and attendance;
- 2) a count of choirs; and
- 3) a detailed survey of choirs.

Research methods are outlined further in each section of this report.

A “choir” was defined throughout the research as a “choir, chorus or singing group of 8 people or more”.

Researched and written by Kelly Hill



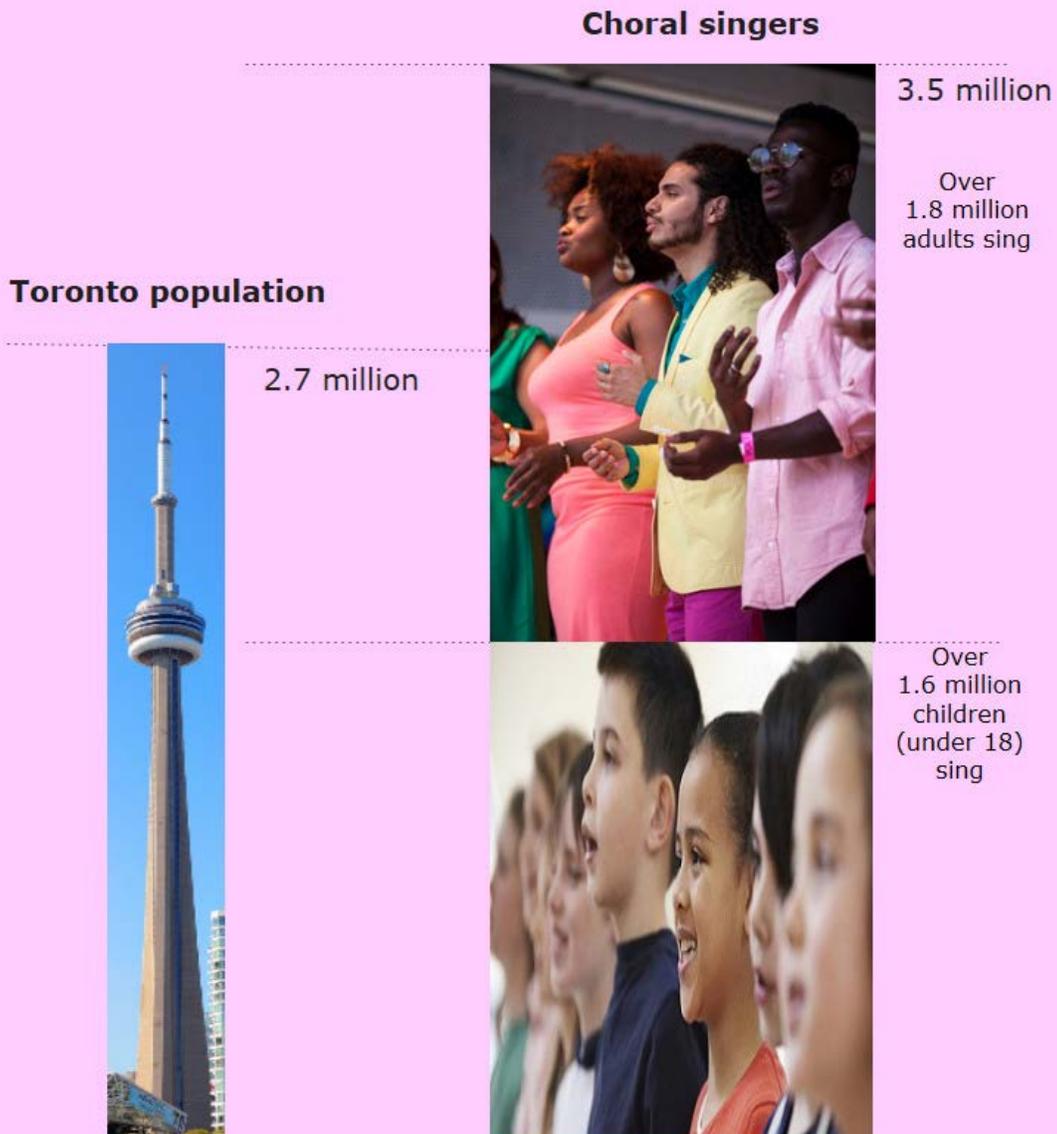
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July 2017

3.5 million Canadians sing in choirs

- 3.5 million Canadians sang in a choir in 2016 (10% of the population).
- The 3.5 million choral singers would constitute the largest city in Canada, 27% larger than the population of Toronto in 2016 (2.7 million, according to the 2016 census).

Canada's choral singers -- 3.5 million strong -- would constitute the largest city in the country, 27% larger than Toronto



Sources: Toronto population from 2016 census; Choral singers: Survey of 2,000 Canadians by Hill Strategies Research for Choral Canada, 2017
Image credits (via 123RF.com): CN Tower: Songquan Deng; children's choir: Ian Allenden; Gospel choir: Melanie Lemahieu.

Children:

- 3 times more children under 18 sing in a choir than play hockey.
- About one in every 4 Canadian children sings in a choir (23%).
 - Choral singers: 1.6 million children under 18 years of age (23% of all children and 47% of all choral singers).
 - Hockey: 531,000 Canadians under 18 play organized hockey (7% of all children)



3 TIMES MORE
CHILDREN UNDER 18
SING IN A CHOIR
THAN PLAY HOCKEY.

Adults:

- There are about 50% more adult choral singers than hockey players in Canada.
 - Even with a broader age range for hockey players than choral singers.
 - Choral singers: 1.8 million (7% of all adults 18 or older and 53% of all choral singers). About one in every 15 adults sings in a choir (7%).
 - Hockey: 1.2 million Canadians 15 and older played hocked in 2010.

THERE ARE ABOUT 50%
MORE ADULT CHORAL
SINGERS THAN ADULT
HOCKEY PLAYERS.

Source (choral singing): Survey of 2,000 Canadians designed by Hill Strategies Research and conducted by Innovative Research for Choral Canada in January 2017.

Question: During the past 12 months, which members of your household, if any, sang in a choir, chorus or singing group of 8 people or more?

Source (hockey - children): Canadian Youth Sports Report, 2014, Solutions Research Group, <http://www.srgnet.com/2014/06/10/massive-competition-in-pursuit-of-the-5-7-billion-canadian-youth-sports-market/>, accessed May 31, 2017

Source (hockey - adults): Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 2010, as reported on the CBC website, <http://www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/sports-junior/>, accessed May 24, 2017

Almost 8 million Canadian adults attend choral performances

- 7.8 million Canadian adults (18 or older) attended a choral performance in 2016.
 - This equals 28% of the population 18 or older (more than 1 in 4 Canadians).



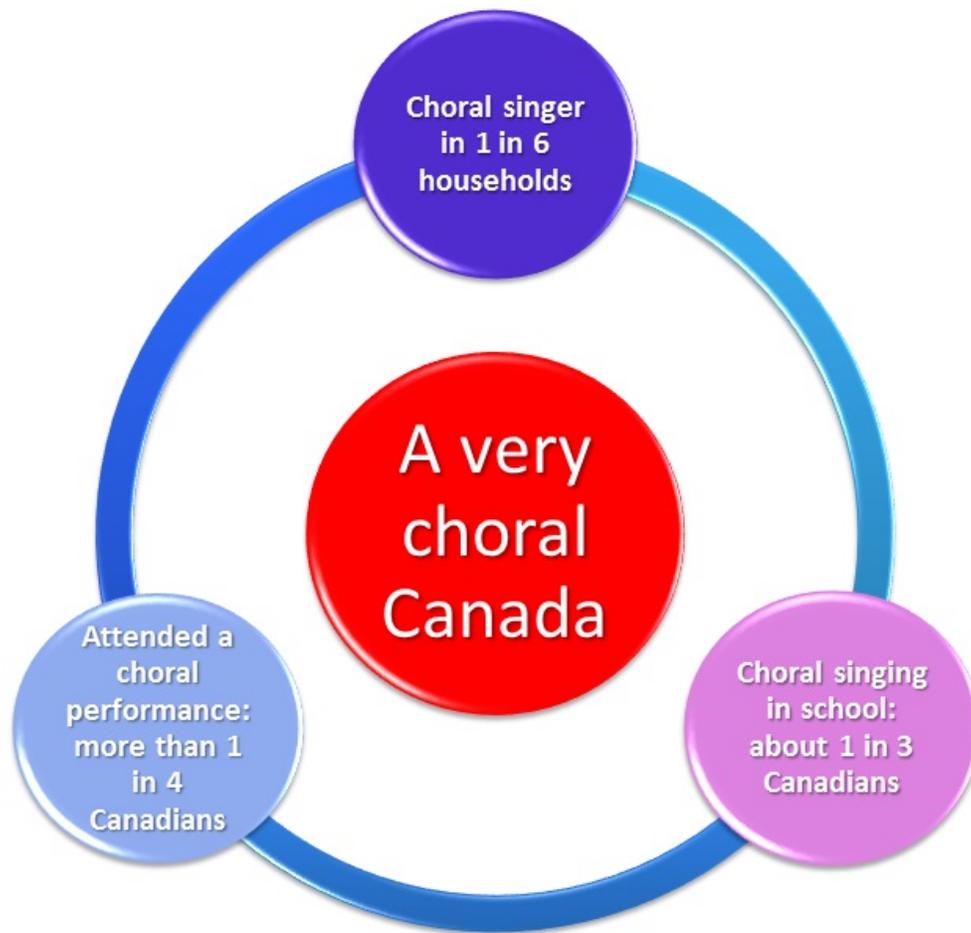
28% OF CANADIAN
ADULTS ATTENDED A
CHORAL PERFORMANCE
IN 2016.

Source: Survey of 2,000 Canadians designed by Hill Strategies Research and conducted by Innovative Research for Choral Canada in January 2017.

Question: During the past 12 months, did you attend a performance by a choir, chorus or singing group of 8 people or more?

A very choral Canada

Some key research findings about choral singing and attendance are highlighted in the infographic below. The infographic can be accessed on twitter at <https://twitter.com/hillstrategies/status/840222662119063552>.



Source: Survey of 2,000 Canadians designed by Hill Strategies Research and conducted by Innovative Research for Choral Canada in January 2017.

An infographic highlighting the importance of choral and other music education, released in conjunction with Music Monday, can be found at <https://twitter.com/hillstrategies/status/859108972858683392>.

About 28,000 choirs in Canada

Total # choirs	27,700	100%
Church choirs	17,500	63%
School choirs	7,700	28%
Community choirs	2,500	9%
Professional choirs	~10	0%

Sources: Random sample of churches and schools designed by Hill Strategies Research and implemented by volunteers in late 2016 and early 2017; Survey of 861 choral organizations in 2017.

The random sampling of churches and schools found that 53% of Christian churches and 40% of all schools (at the elementary, middle, or secondary levels) have at least one choir.

Note:

In the above table:

- Church = religious institutions within the Christian faith
- School = elementary, middle, and secondary schools
- Community = choirs (other than church and school) where almost no choristers are paid (includes religious organizations outside of the Christian faith and choirs in post-secondary institutions, as well as semi-professional choirs outside of churches)
- Professional = choirs where all choristers are paid

Detailed methods:

- Volunteers contacted a random sample of 864 schools and 977 churches in Canada.
- The total number of school and church choirs was estimated based on the information from these calls.
- Existing lists of choral organizations (outside of churches and schools) were collected, largely from provincial choral associations.
- A survey of Canadian choirs was also conducted (with 861 choral organizations responding).
- The choir lists and survey list were de-duplicated to estimate the number of community and professional choral organizations.
- Some choral organizations contain many choirs, and a multi-choir count was developed from the survey data.
- The above estimates were added to create the estimate of the total number of choirs.
- The random surveys of schools and churches should provide very reliable estimates of choirs in these institutions. The estimate of community choirs is likely low, as no estimate was made of the number of community choirs that did not respond to the survey of choral organizations.

Over 1,500 choirs, choruses, and singing groups (and 60,000 singers) were represented in a national survey of choral organizations

The remainder of this report summarizes key statistics from a detailed survey of choirs. As noted below, responses should not be extrapolated to represent all Canadian choirs.

A total of 861 choral organizations representing 1,541 choirs, choruses, and singing groups (with over 60,000 singers) provided complete (or reasonably complete) responses to a detailed online survey in December 2016 and January 2017.

A range of choirs responded to the survey

As shown in the following table, many different types of choirs responded to the survey.

Total # choirs responding about their type	1,388	100%
Church choirs	130	9%
School choirs	483	35%
Community choirs	701	51%
Semi-professional choirs	63	5%
Professional choirs	11	1%

However, the responding choirs do not reflect the overall estimated percentage of each type in Canada. In particular, the survey results significantly under-represent church choirs (9% of the survey sample but an estimated 63% of all choirs in Canada) and significantly over-represent community choirs (51% of the survey sample but an estimated 9% of all choirs).

This is one reason why the **results from the detailed survey of choirs should not be extrapolated to represent all Canadian choirs.**

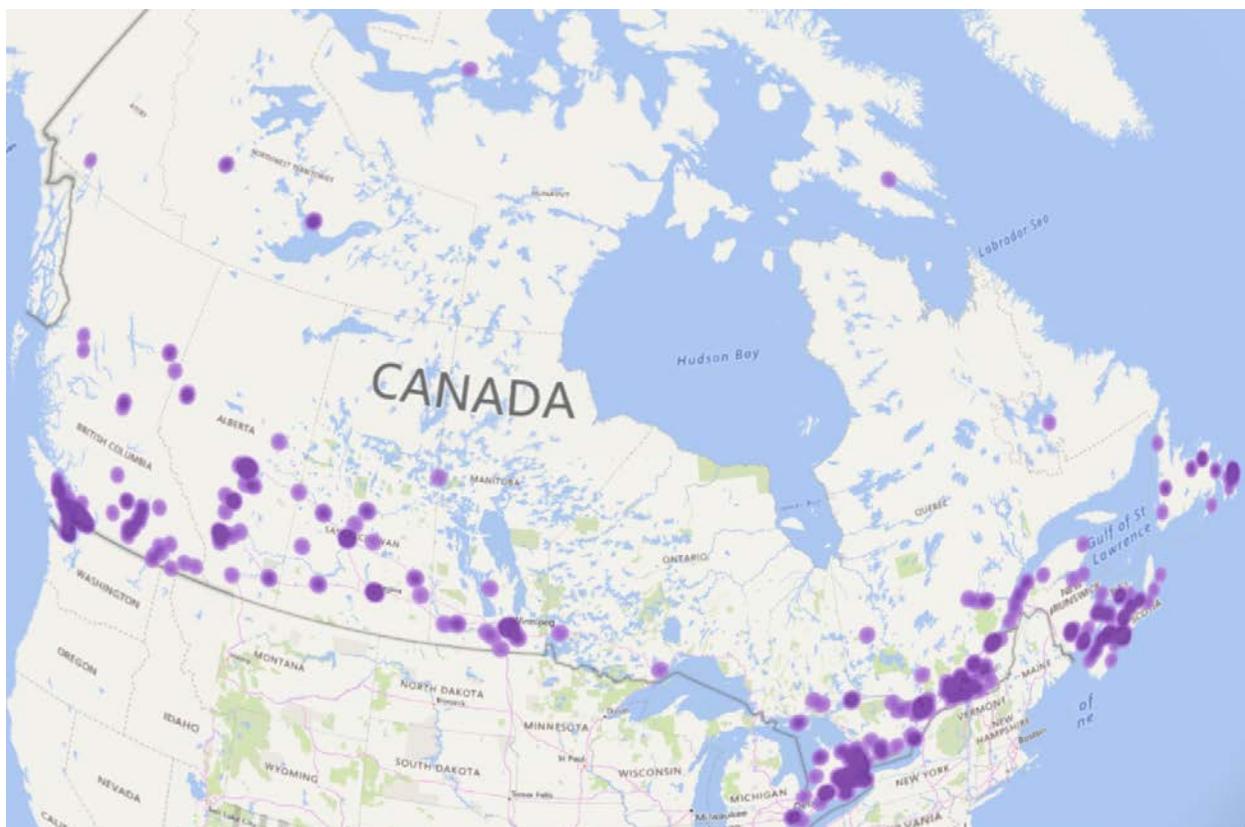
In the above table, school choirs are defined differently than in the count of choirs. Also, semi-professional choirs were not counted separately in the count of choirs:

- *Church = part of religious institutions (almost all within the Christian faith)*
- *School = part of educational institutions at any level (i.e., elementary, middle, and secondary schools PLUS colleges, CÉGEPs, and universities)*
- *Community = choirs (other than church and school) where almost no choristers are paid*
- *Semi-professional = choirs where some choristers are paid (typically section heads). This count includes some semi-professional church choirs and a handful of semi-professional choirs that are a part of schools or other larger organizations.*
- *Professional = choirs where all choristers are paid*

Survey respondents from over 300 communities

Choral organizations from over 300 communities responded to the survey, from *A Cappella Plus* in Nanaimo, B.C. to *You Gotta Sing! Chorus* in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and from *Voices of Cambridge Bay* in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut to *Aurora Choralis* in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

- The following map shows the locations of choral organizations responding to the survey (in purple). Darker purple areas have higher concentrations of respondents.
- The survey received responses from at least one choral organization in each of the 13 provinces and territories.
- The oldest choir that responded to the survey is 318 years old – more than twice as old as Canada. The Anglican Cathedral Choir in St. John's (NL) was established in 1699.
- Some brand-new choirs also reported to the survey, including one that was established in 2017 and 73 that were established in 2016.
- The average responding choir is about 26 years old (i.e., established in 1991).



Source: Choral Canada survey of 861 choral organizations, Hill Strategies Research, 2017

Choirs are involved in the social fabric of their communities. In their most recent completed year:

- 68% of responding choirs did community outreach (such as singing at hospitals, support facilities, other community events, etc.)
- 62% performed at charity concerts or singing engagements
- 62% performed at festivals, conferences, or ceremonial gatherings
- 61% had free concerts or singing engagements

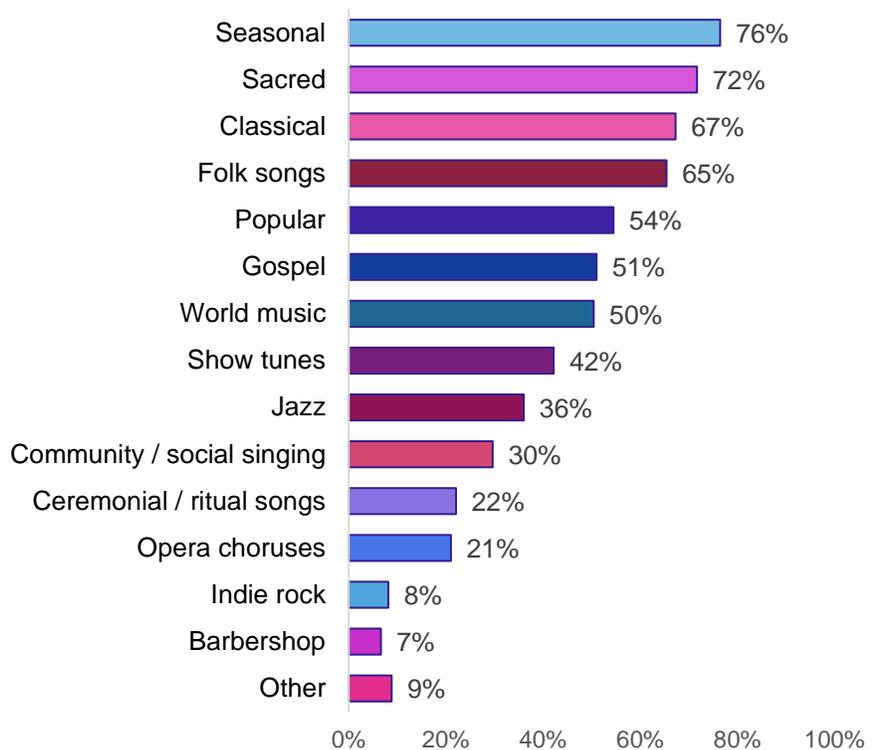
Choirs, choruses, and singing groups appeal to Canadians across all age groups. Among the responding choirs:

- 35% self-identify as an adult choir / chorus / singing group
- 26% self-identify as a children’s choir / chorus / singing group
- 23% self-identify as a youth choir / chorus / singing group
- 13% self-identify as a mixed ages / multigenerational choir / chorus / singing group
- 2% self-identify as a senior choir / chorus / singing group

Choral repertoire

Many different types of music are sung by choirs, choruses, and singing groups, as shown in the chart to the right.

What types of music are sung by your choir(s) / chorus(es) / singing group(s)?



Source: Choral Canada survey of 861 choral organizations, Hill Strategies Research, 2017

Commissions and Canadian content

This information helps identify how (and how much) choirs support the creation of new music, Canadian artists, and Canadian composers.

Canadian choral works are an important part of responding choirs' concerts and programs: 88% of choirs performed Canadian works in their last season. For most choirs (56% of respondents), Canadian works represent "less than half (i.e., around one-quarter or one-third)" of their programs. In another 23% of choirs, Canadian works represent "about one-half" of their programs. Smaller numbers of choirs program mostly (8%) or all (2%) Canadian works.

Over one-third of responding choirs have commissioned works during the past 3 years (36%), and almost all of these choirs have commissioned works from Canadian choirs (34% of all responding choirs).

Performances and attendance in choirs' most recent years

Survey questions about choral activities, revenues, and staffing related to the most recently completed year or season for respondents' choir(s), chorus(es) or singing group(s).

Please estimate the number of times that your choir(s) / chorus(es) / singing group(s) performed in your most recent year.

If you had multiple performances of the same concert / production, please include all performances.

- 816 choral organizations reported their performances
- Total of 10,200 performances
- Average of 12.6 performances per choral organization
- Median of 7 performances (indication of the "typical" number of performances)

In your most recent year, what was the total (audience) attendance for your performances?

- 685 choral organizations reported their yearly attendance
- Total attendance of 933,200
- Average yearly attendance of 1,360 per choral organization
- Median yearly attendance of 800 (indication of the "typical" attendance among choral organizations)

Choral organization revenues

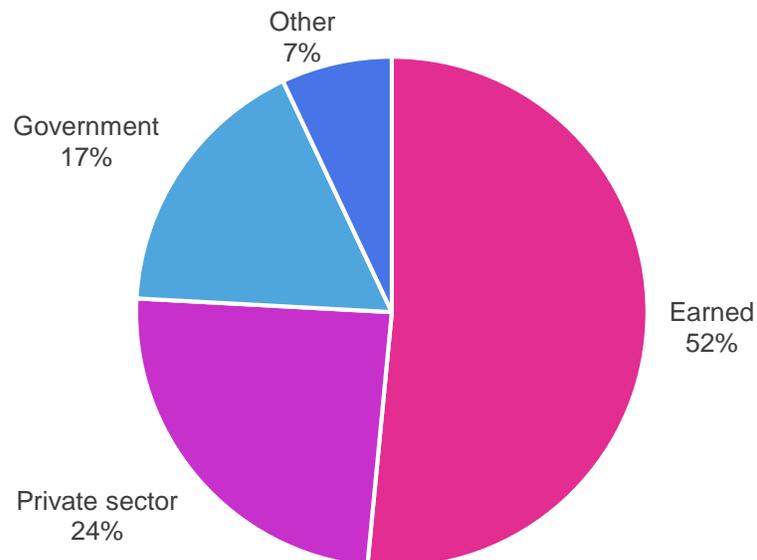
Choirs that are part of larger organizations, such as churches and schools, were not asked about their revenues if they could not easily separate their choir-related revenues from other organizational revenues. In the survey, 41% of the responding choral organizations (355 of 861) reported their organization's operating revenues (excluding any capital / building projects) for their last completed year.

Operating revenues for these organizations totaled \$20 million.

A typical Canadian choral organization has annual operating revenues of just \$14,000 (i.e., median revenues)

The breakdown of revenues is provided in the chart below (for the 355 choral organizations reporting their operating finances).

Choral organization operating revenues (355 organizations reported revenues)



Source: Choral Canada survey of 861 choral organizations, Hill Strategies Research, 2017

Volunteers

31% of responding choral organizations are completely volunteer run.

- *Volunteer run = no paid staff or regular contractors. In other words, no one who regularly works within the organization is paid, with the possible exception of contractors who only do occasional work for the organization.*

Many other organizations also have a substantial number of volunteers. In total, the survey found that 7,700 volunteers were reported by 458 choral organizations (an average of 17 per reporting organization).

Important considerations in the future development of choirs in Canada

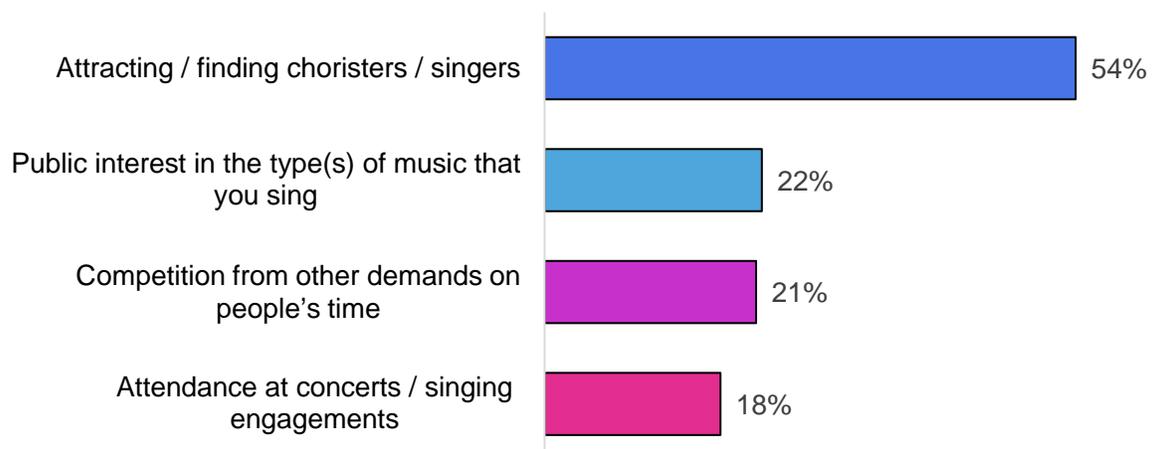
Respondents were asked to select three of 19 items that would be **most important** in the development of their choral organization over the next five years.

Typically, the results of this type of question focus on financial health, but this was not the case among the choral organizations.

By far, the most commonly selected item is “attracting / finding choristers / singers” (selected by 54% of choral organizations). Other important considerations are public interest in the type(s) of music that they sing (22%), competition from other demands on people’s time (21%), and attendance at concerts / singing engagements (18%).

Important considerations in the future development of choirs in Canada

(% of respondents indicating item will be among the three most important in the next five years)



Source: Choral Canada survey of 861 choral organizations, Hill Strategies Research, 2017