



Nova Scotia  
**Choral**  
Federation



**Choral Canada**  
Association of Canadian  
Choral Communities

**Canada Choral**  
Association des communautés  
chorales canadiennes

# ***Choral participation and activity in Nova Scotia***

## **Summary of findings from research for the Nova Scotia Choral Federation and Choral Canada in 2017**



This report summarizes the Nova Scotia findings from three major research projects completed in 2017 commissioned by 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*

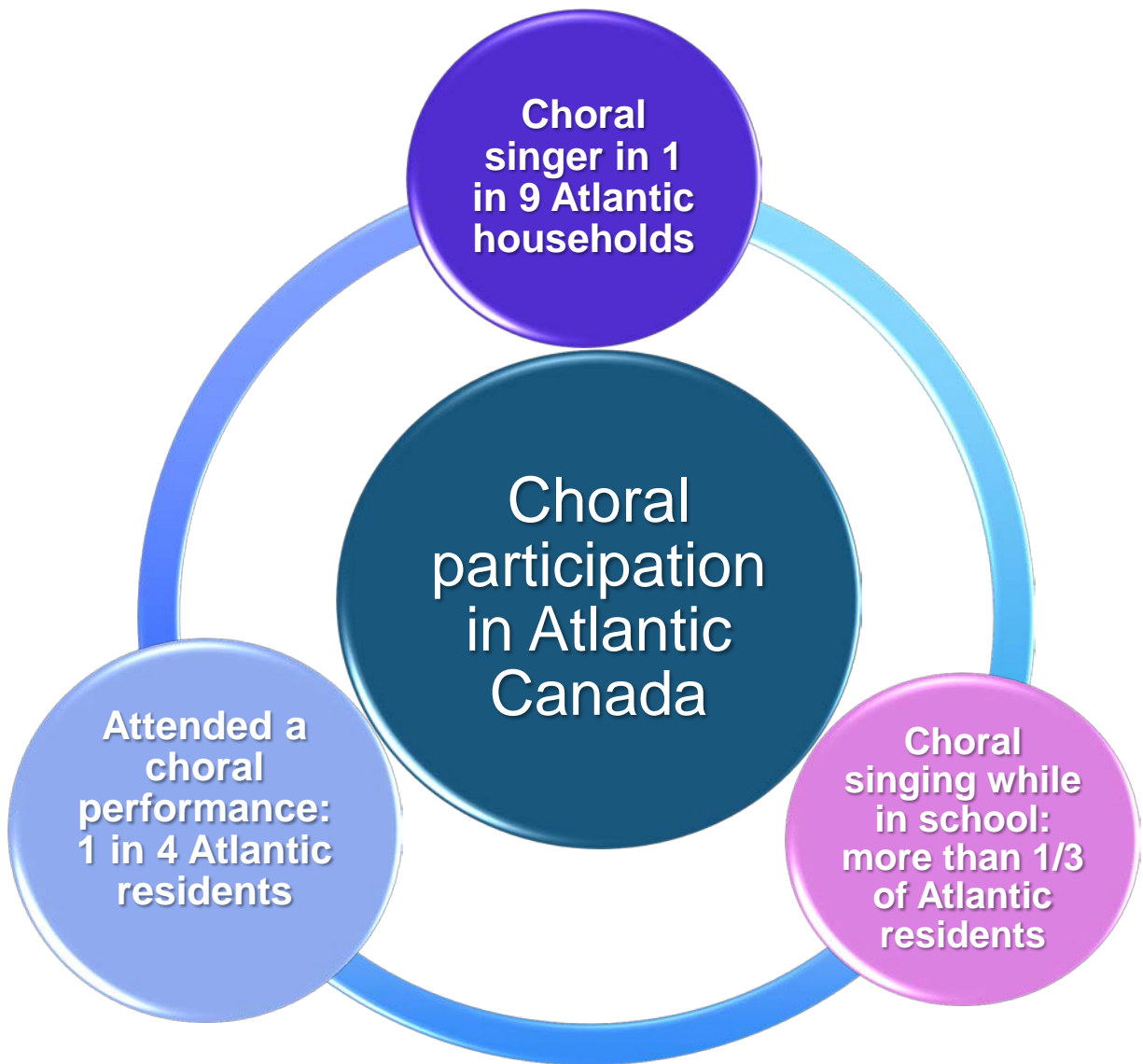


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## Choral singing and attendance in the Atlantic provinces

Key research findings about choral singing and attendance in the Atlantic provinces are highlighted in the graphic below, based on a public survey of 158 Atlantic residents.



## Over 70,000 Nova Scotians sing in choirs

- 71,000 Nova Scotia residents sang in a choir in 2016.
- This represents 8% of the total provincial population (924,000: 2016 census).
- The 71,000 choral singers would constitute the third largest city in the province, behind only Halifax and Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

### Children (under 18):

- There are about 40,000 Nova Scotia children who sing in choirs.
- One in every 4 Nova Scotia children sings in a choir (25%).

### Adults (18 or older):

- About 31,000 Nova Scotia adults sing in a choir.
- One in every 24 adults in the province sings in a choir (4% of all adults).

### National data:


- 10% of Canadians sang in a choir in 2016 (3.5 million people).
- Children: 23% of Canadians under 18 sang in a choir.
- Adults: 7% of all Canadian adults sang in a choir.

*Source: Survey of 158 Atlantic residents designed by Hill Strategies Research and conducted by Innovative Research for Choral Canada in January 2017 (part of a survey of 2,000 Canadians). The regional results of the survey and Nova Scotia population statistics were used to generate the provincial estimates.*

*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?*

## Almost 200,000 Nova Scotia adults attend choral performances

- 190,000 Nova Scotia residents 18 or older attended a choral performance in 2016.
  - This equals 25% of the adult population (i.e., 1 in 4 Nova Scotians).



25% OF ADULTS IN  
NOVA SCOTIA  
ATTENDED A CHORAL  
PERFORMANCE IN 2016.

### National data:

- 28% of Canadian adults attended a choral performance in 2016 (7.8 million people).

*Source: Survey of 158 Atlantic residents designed by Hill Strategies Research and conducted by Innovative Research for Choral Canada in January 2017 (part of a survey of 2,000 Canadians). The regional results of the survey and Nova Scotia population statistics were used to generate the provincial estimates.*

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

## More than one-third of Nova Scotians sang in a choir during their school days

- 281,000 Nova Scotians 18 or older sang in a choir or other singing group when in elementary or high school.
  - This equals 37% of the adult population (i.e., over 1/3 of Nova Scotians).

### National data:

- 35% of Canadian adults sang in a choir during their school days (9.7 million people).

*Source: Survey of 158 Atlantic residents designed by Hill Strategies Research and conducted by Innovative Research for Choral Canada in January 2017 (part of a survey of 2,000 Canadians). The regional results of the survey and Nova Scotia population statistics were used to generate the provincial estimates.*

*Question: When you were in elementary, middle/junior, or high school, did you participate in any of the following music activities? [Choir or other singing group]*

## Well over 1,000 choirs in Nova Scotia

Based on a random sampling of churches and schools as well as a custom survey of choral organizations, it is estimated that there are 1,300 choirs in Nova Scotia, almost two-thirds of which are church choirs (800).

Total # choirs	1,300	100%
Church choirs	800	62%
School choirs	200	15%
Community and other choirs	300	23%

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

The random sampling of churches and schools found that 63% of Christian churches and 51% of schools (at the elementary, middle, or secondary levels) in Nova Scotia have at least one choir.

Note: *In the above table:*

- *Church = religious institutions within the Christian faith*
- *School = elementary, middle, and secondary schools*
- *Community and other = choirs outside of churches and schools (includes choirs in religious organizations outside of the Christian faith and in post-secondary institutions, as well as any choirs where some or all choristers are paid)*

Detailed methods:

- *Volunteers contacted a random sample of 80 schools and 70 churches in Nova Scotia.*
- *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 99 Nova Scotia 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 150 Nova Scotia-based choirs, choruses, and singing groups  
(and over 6,000 singers) were represented  
in a national survey of choral organizations**

*The remainder of this report summarizes key statistics from a detailed survey of choirs. To protect respondent confidentiality, only those statistics with at least 5 choral organizations responding are presented below. (This was not a limiting factor for many Nova Scotia statistics.)*

A total of 99 Nova Scotia-based choral organizations representing 153 choirs, choruses, and singing groups (with 6,100 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*

Choral organizations from 38 Nova Scotia communities responded to the survey, including:

- |                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Amherst         | Liverpool        |
| Annapolis Royal | Lower Sackville  |
| Antigonish      | Middle Sackville |
| Aylesford       | Middleton        |
| Bedford         | New Glasgow      |
| Berwick         | New Minas        |
| Bible Hill      | Newport          |
| Bridgetown      | Pictou County    |
| Brookfield      | Port Williams    |
| Burlington      | Porters Lake     |
| Chester         | Springhill       |
| Coldbrook       | St. Peter's      |
| Dartmouth       | Truro            |
| Digby           | Upper Tantallon  |
| Glace Bay       | Wellington       |
| Greenwood       | Weymouth         |
| Guysborough     | Windsor          |
| Halifax         | Wolfville        |
| Kentville       |                  |
| Kingston        |                  |

As shown in the following table, many different types of choirs responded to the survey, but they do not match the estimates of the number of choirs in total (reported above, based on the random survey). **Because the responding choirs do not reflect the overall estimated percentage of each type in Nova Scotia, responses should not be extrapolated to represent all Nova Scotia choirs.** Respondents are more reflective of community and school choirs than other types.

Total # of choirs responding to the survey	153	100%
Church choirs	29	19%
School choirs	54	35%
Community choirs	61	40%
Semi-professional or professional choirs	4	3%
Did not report type of choir	5	3%

*In the above table, school choirs are defined differently than in the count of choirs (based on the random survey). Also, semi-professional or 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 or professional = choirs where some or all choristers are paid, including (if applicable) choirs within churches or other community organizations.*

The average responding choir is 25 years old (i.e., established in 1992).

### ***Choirs are engaged in their communities***

Choirs are involved in the social fabric of their communities. In their most recently completed years:

- 66% of responding choirs did community outreach (such as singing at hospitals, support facilities, other community events, etc.)
- 74% performed at charity concerts or singing engagements
- 64% performed at festivals, conferences, or ceremonial gatherings
- 67% had free concerts or singing engagements

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

- 37% self-identify as a children's choir / chorus / singing group
- 27% self-identify as an adult choir / chorus / singing group
- 19% self-identify as a mixed ages / multigenerational choir / chorus / singing group
- 15% self-identify as a youth choir / chorus / singing group

### *Performances and attendance in choirs' most recent years*

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

In their most recent years:

- 92 Nova Scotia choral organizations reported their performances
- Total of 1,559 performances (including all performances in cases with multiple performances of the same concert / production)
- Average of 17 performances per choral organization
- Median of 8 performances (indication of the "typical" number of performances)

Regarding attendance, for their most recent years:

- 71 Nova Scotia choral organizations reported their attendance
- Total (audience) attendance of 84,200
- Average yearly attendance of 1,200 per choral organization
- Median yearly attendance of 600 (indication of the "typical" attendance among choral organizations)

### *Volunteers*

Many choral organizations in Nova Scotia have substantial volunteer support. The survey found that 489 volunteers were reported by 61 Nova Scotia choral organizations (an average of 8 volunteers per reporting organization).

The survey also found that 27% of responding choral organizations in Nova Scotia 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.*



## *Choral organization revenues*

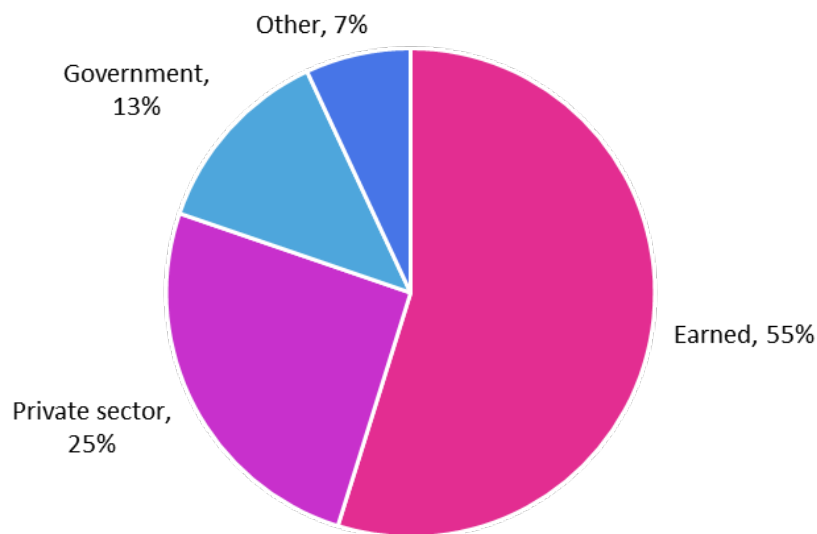
Choirs that are part of larger organizations, such as churches and schools, were not asked about their revenues if they could not easily separate their choir-related revenues from other organizational revenues. Of the 99 Nova Scotia choral organizations responding to the survey, 38 (or 38%) reported their organization's operating revenues (excluding any capital / building projects) for their last completed year.

For the 38 Nova Scotia choral organizations that reported their revenues, total operating revenues were \$886,000.

The typical Nova Scotia choral organization responding to the survey has annual operating revenues of just \$8,000 (i.e., median revenues)

The breakdown of revenues is provided in the chart below (for the 38 Nova Scotia choral organizations reporting their operating finances).

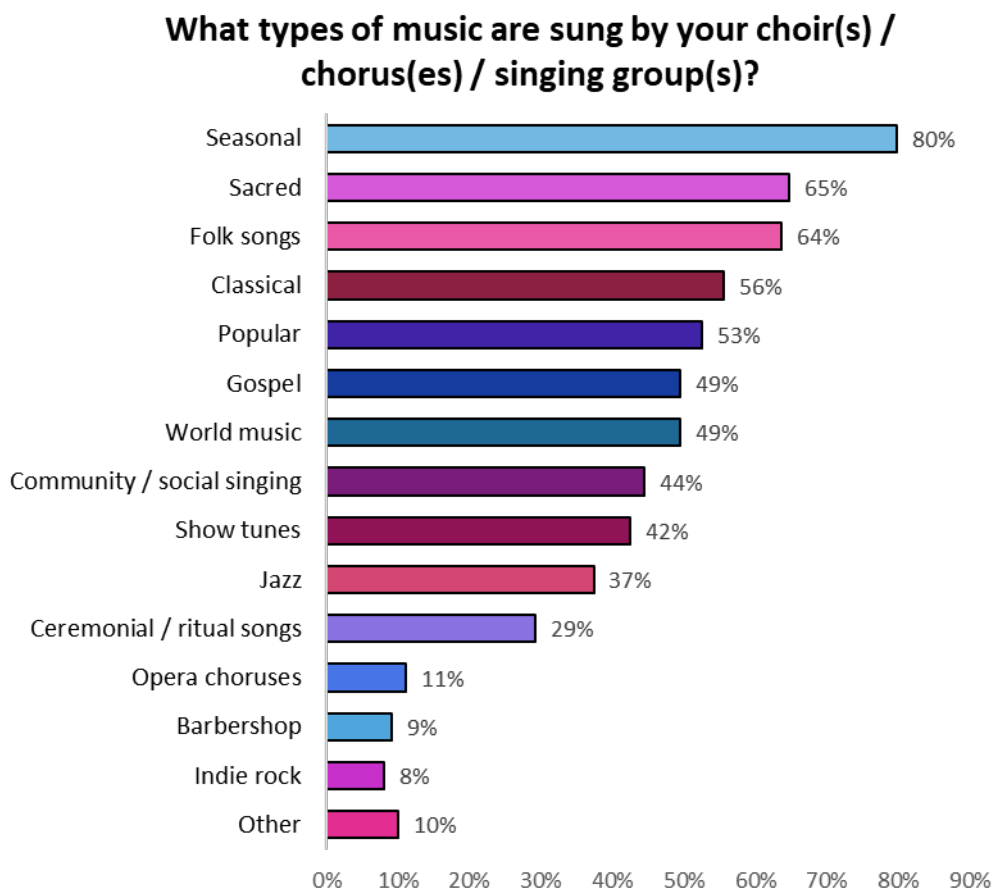
### **Choral organization operating revenues (38 Nova Scotia organizations reported revenues)**



*Source: Survey of 99 Nova Scotia choral organizations for Choral Canada, Hill Strategies Research, 2017*

## Choral repertoire

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



Source: Survey of 99 Nova Scotia choral organizations for Choral Canada, Hill Strategies Research, 2017

## Commissions and Canadian content

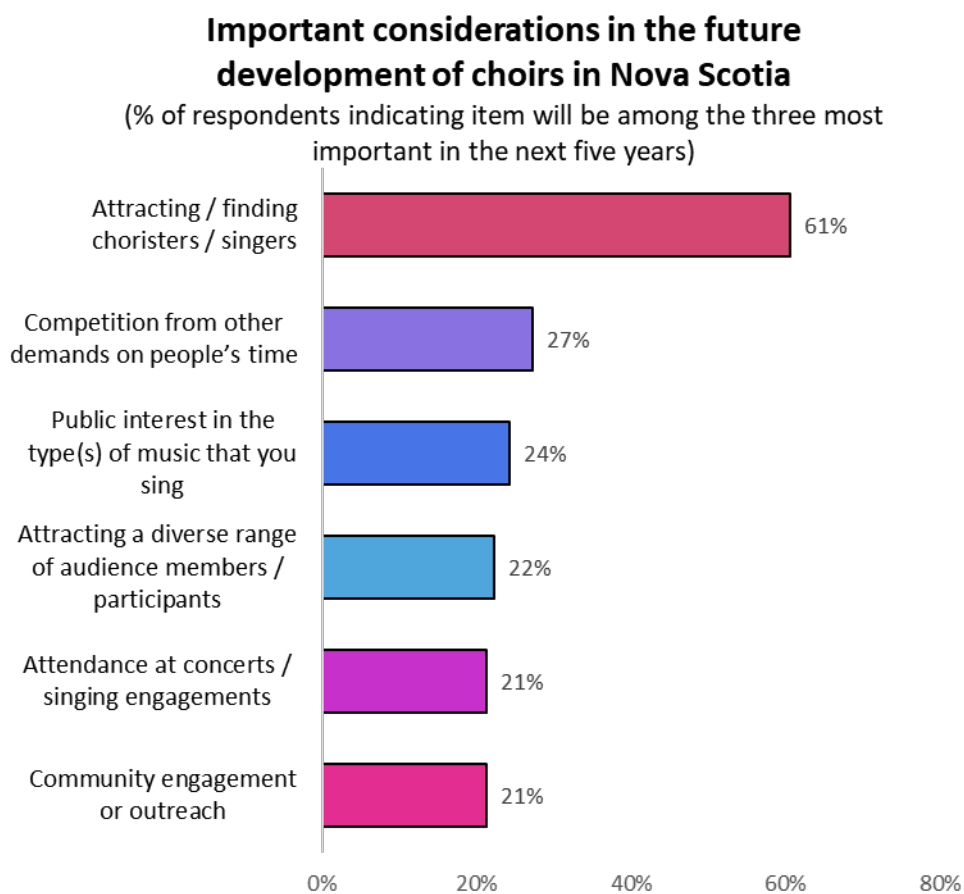
Canadian choral works are an important part of responding choirs' concerts and programs: 89% of responding choirs performed Canadian works in their last season. In 31% of Nova Scotia choirs, Canadian works represent "about one half" or more of their programs.

About one-quarter of responding choirs have commissioned works during the past 3 years (26%), and almost all of these choirs have recently commissioned works from Canadian composers (25% of all Nova Scotia choirs).

## *Important considerations in the future development of choirs in Nova Scotia*

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, responses to this type of question focus on financial health, but this was not the case among the choral respondents.

In Nova Scotia, as shown in the chart below, the most commonly selected item is “attracting / finding choristers / singers” (selected by 61% of Nova Scotia choral organizations). Other important considerations are competition from other demands on people’s time (27%), public interest in the types of music that they sing (24%), attracting a diverse range of audience members or participants (22%), attendance at concerts and singing engagements (21%), and community engagement or outreach (also 21%).



Source: Survey of 99 Nova Scotia choral organizations for Choral Canada, Hill Strategies Research, 2017