



**The experiences and motivations of
people who sing in amateur choirs and
singing groups**

Summary for survey participants

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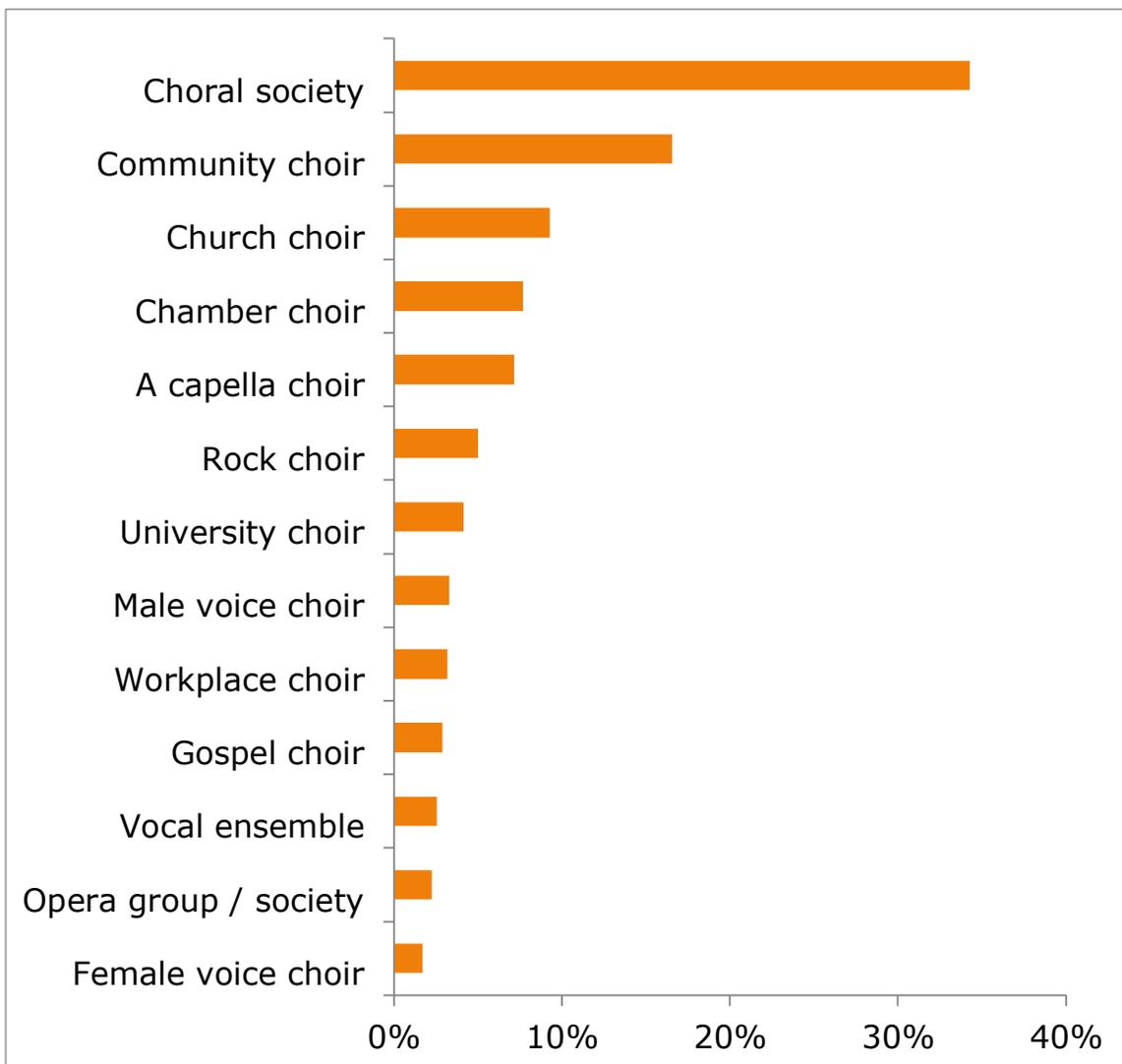
What was the research about?

- The research aimed to explore the motivation and experiences of singers in amateur choirs/singing groups.
- It was done through an online survey which went out to singers all-round the UK.
- It had a particular focus on whether men and women have different motivations and experiences of singing in amateur choirs/singing groups.
- It hoped to identify ways to help choirs recruit more male singers by highlighting factors which would help to target potential singers.
- It's the largest study to have been conducted amongst singers in the UK.

Who took part?

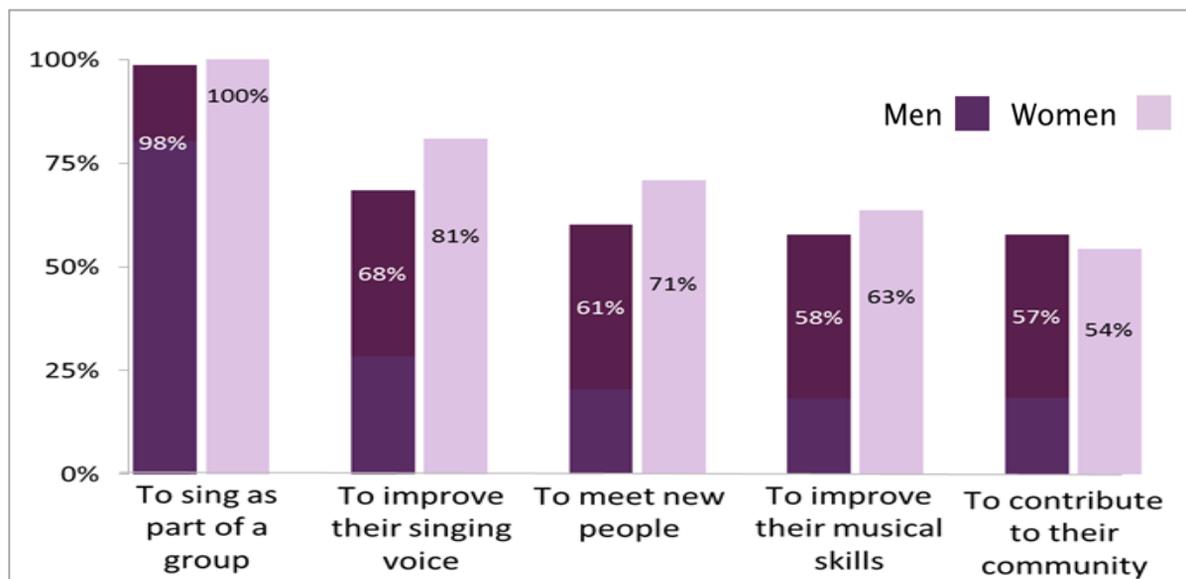
- 686 singers from all around the UK took part in the research.
- 66% were women; 33% were men.
- 72% were aged over 50.
- 96% were White
- 49% were working; 40% were retired
- Over three-quarters had a degree or higher degree.

Participants were singing in a wide range of choirs/ groups although the largest proportions sang in choral societies and community choirs .



Over a third were singing in more than one choir.

What did the research reveal about singers' motivations?



- Participants were particularly motivated by the desire to sing as part of a group.
- Over three-quarters said they had wanted to improve their singing voice.
- Over two-thirds said they had wanted to meet new people.
- There were no significant differences in men's and women's responses.

"I've always wanted to join a gospel choir."

"I used to have "a good voice" then I smoked for years and lost it - I wanted to be back there."

"I had a burning need to get involved with music again after a gap of nearly twenty years."

- Some participants also talked about joining a choir as a way of sharing an activity with family or friends – or to contribute to the life of their community.
- Many also talked about a desire to continue with or deepen their engagement with music.
- Joining a choir can also be a way of responding to life changes, personal challenges (such as ill health) or a need to have something 'for me'.

"I had moved into an area in which I knew no one... So joining a choir was a way of meeting local people who probably shared similar interests."

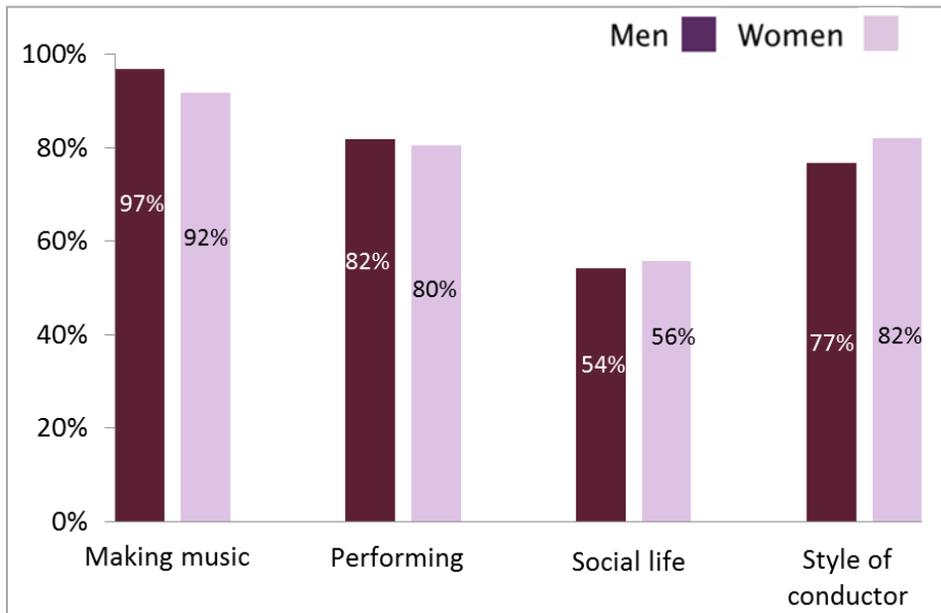
"Now I am not working, although I am busy, it's important to have some timetabled events in the week."

Many people talked about the influence of learning music as a child as a motivating factor in their decision to join a choir; most had engaged in a considerable amount of musical activity as children.

"It's just something I've always done."

What did the research reveal about singers' experiences?

Participants were getting a lot of pleasure out of all aspects of being in a choir.



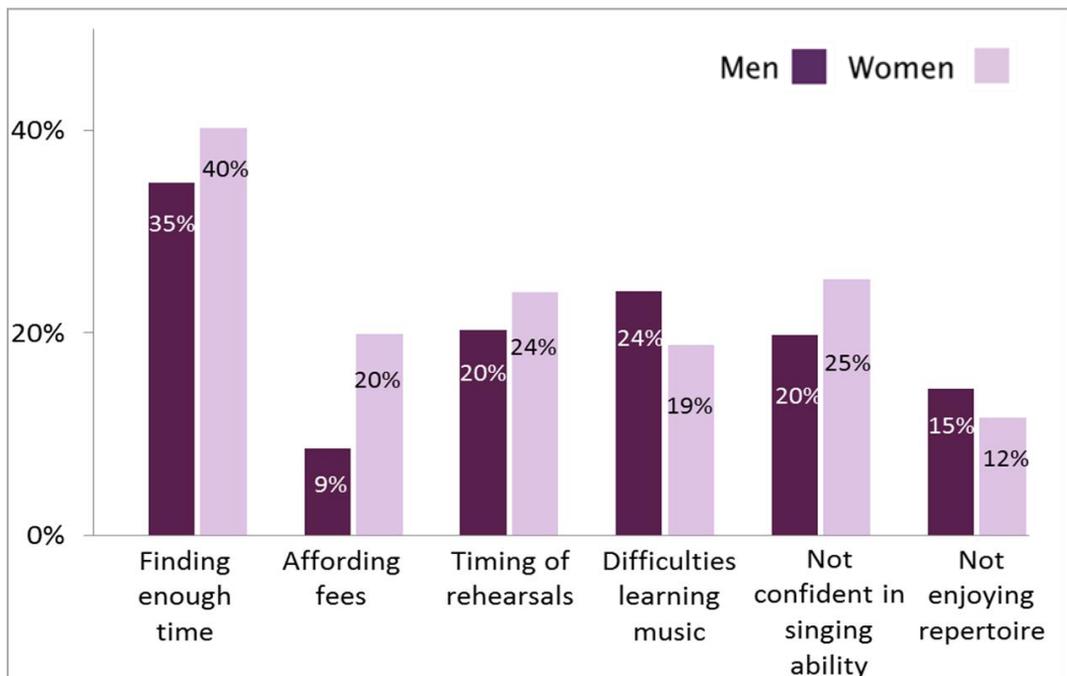
Again, there were no significant differences in men's and women's responses.

"I love the whole sense of magic when many voices blend in harmony."

"I enjoy the buzz of performing."

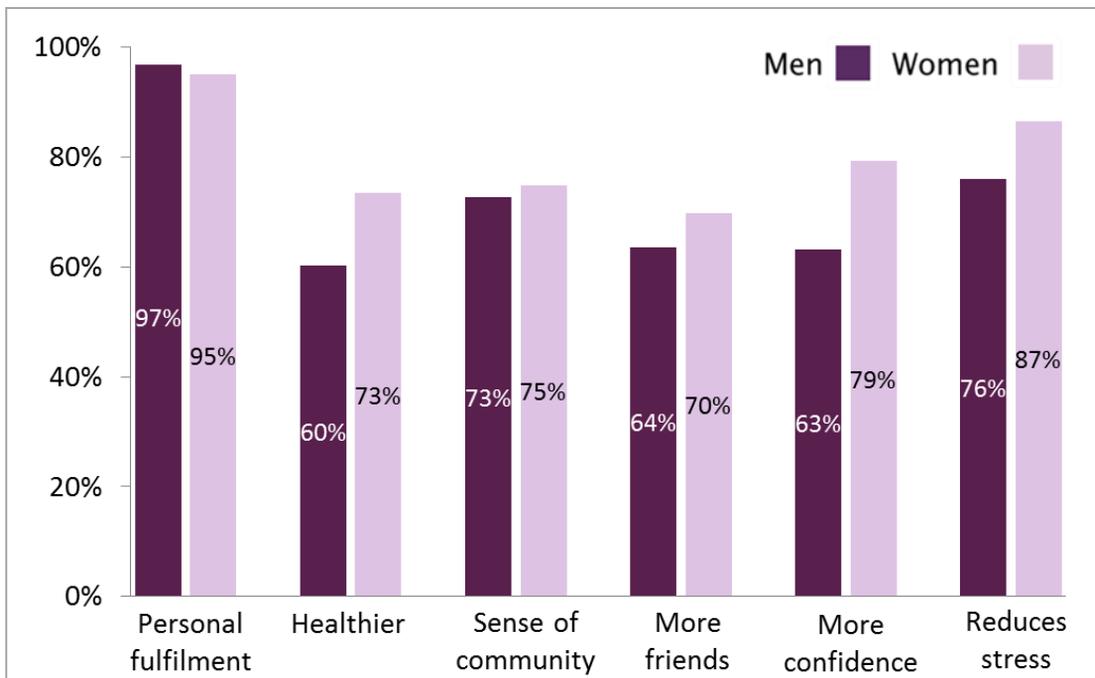
"For me, it's a sense of belonging and being appreciated."

Participants also said they found some aspects of singing in a choir challenging:



- Over a third of participants were struggling with finding enough time, and nearly a quarter lacked confidence in their own singing ability.
- Similarly, many struggled with the timing of rehearsals and difficulties learning the music.
- Difficulties affording the fees or financial costs affected less than a fifth of participants but were particularly significant for female participants.
- Some people commented on the difficulties that can be presented when the conductor's style does not suit the choir. Others commented on the challenge presented by a lack of tenors or basses.

However, the survey also showed that participants derived considerable benefits from singing in a choir/group, particularly in terms of personal fulfilment and reducing stress.



- Female participants were significantly more likely to identify benefits in terms of how singing helps to:
 - reduce stress levels
 - increase their self-confidence
 - improve their health.
- Many participants described how singing had given them new experiences and opportunities.
- Many participants also described the way in which singing lifted their spirits and helped them to feel more positive.

"It allows me to leave behind the stresses and strains of the day."

- Some participants identified health benefits from singing, particularly in terms of helping with respiratory problems and providing mental stimulation.

"It's a totally uplifting experience."

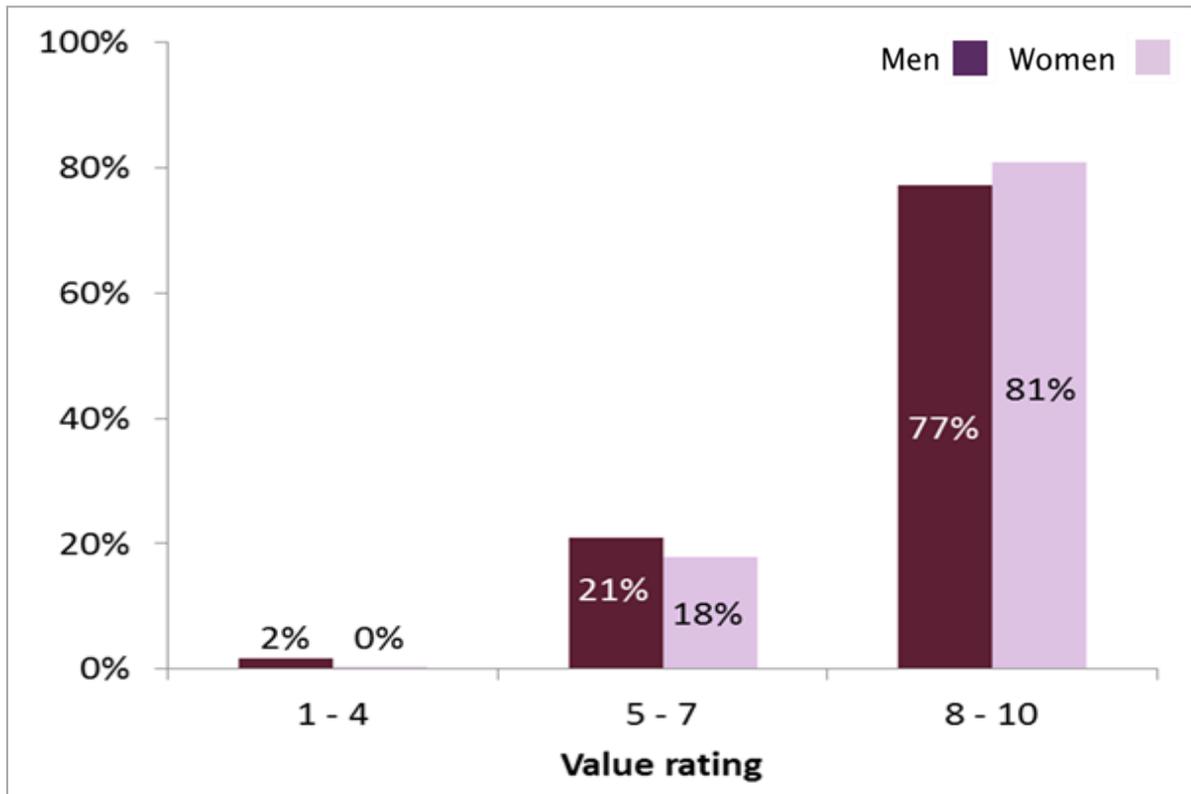
- Many particularly appreciated the on-going process of learning and improving their musical skills and knowledge
- For a number of participants, singing had provided a way to cope with personal challenges such as bereavement or depression.

"After my husband died, it kept me sane and gave me the strength to cope."

- Singing in choir/group also enabled people to feel more connected to others, both in terms of sharing an activity with people around them but also in connecting to the wider community through activities and performances.

"Belonging to a choir gives a feeling of fellowship and a sense of belonging to something valuable."

Singing in a choir clearly fulfils an extremely important role in many people's lives. On a scale of 1 – 10 (where 1 was low and 10 was high), over 90% of participants rated its overall importance to them at 8 or above. Once again, there were no significant differences in men's and women's responses.



"I need to sing; it's part of who I am."

"It adds something special to the quality of my life."

"Singing in a choir soothes the soul like nothing else can."

Conclusion

The research highlights the fact that many more women than men sing in choirs and singing groups. However, for the men and women who do take part, it seems that their motivations and experiences are not greatly affected by gender:

- Men and women are motivated by similar reasons to take part.
- They derive great pleasure and benefit from participating.
- The vast majority feel that singing plays a vital role in their lives.

Whilst the findings do not offer any quick-fix solutions for recruiting more men to sing, the fact that most singers had a considerable amount of musical experience as children reinforces the importance of ensuring that children sing – and enjoy singing – as the key to recruiting singers in the future.

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