

# Fall 2020 Chorus Survey Response Summary



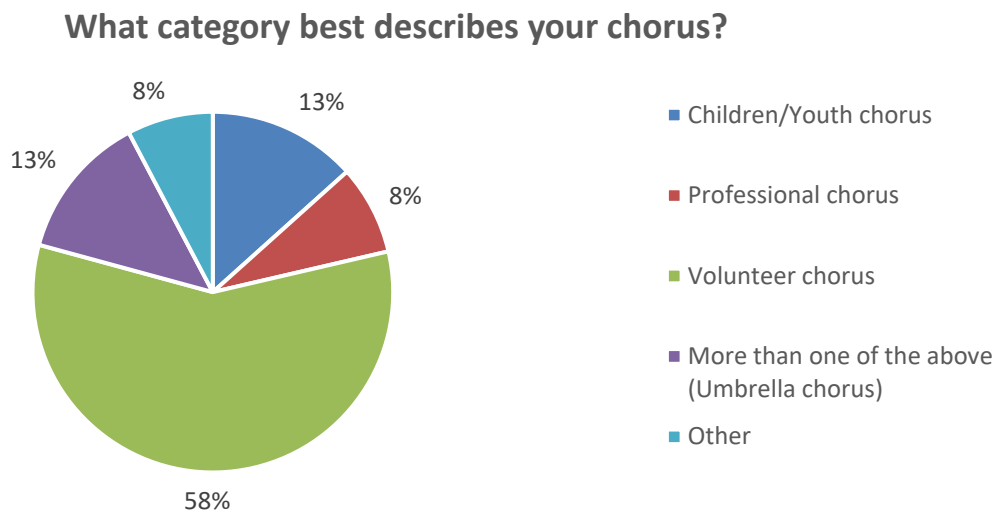
## Introduction

The Fall 2020 Chorus Survey collected data on the impact that COVID-19 continues to have on the choral field and how choruses are currently handling rehearsals and performances, planning for the spring, singer engagement, and more. This report summarizes the findings from that survey. Separate reports were made specifically for children/youth choruses, professional choruses, volunteer choruses with budgets below \$100,000, and volunteer choruses with budgets above \$100,000.

Data was collected between October 15 and November 1, 2020. Responses have been summarized and edited for clarity and to remove identifying information of responding organizations.

## Chorus Information

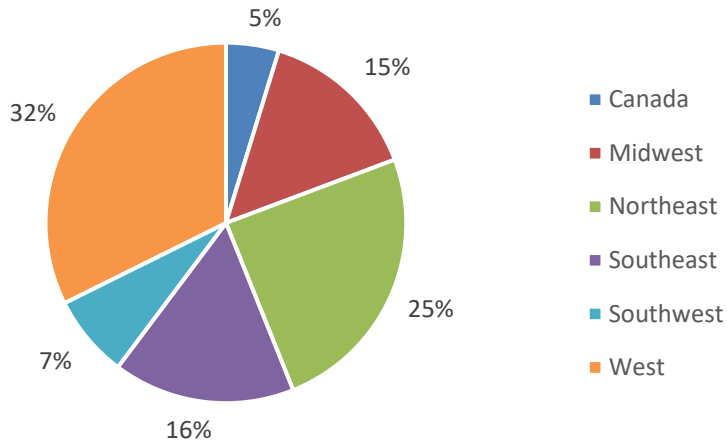
337 choruses from across the United States and Canada responded to the survey. The vast majority identified as volunteer choruses at 58%, followed by children/youth choruses at 13% and professional choruses at 8%. 13% identified as an umbrella chorus, in which they have more than one type of chorus within their entity, and 8% identified as other. The other category primarily included church choirs and ensembles affiliated with an academic institution.





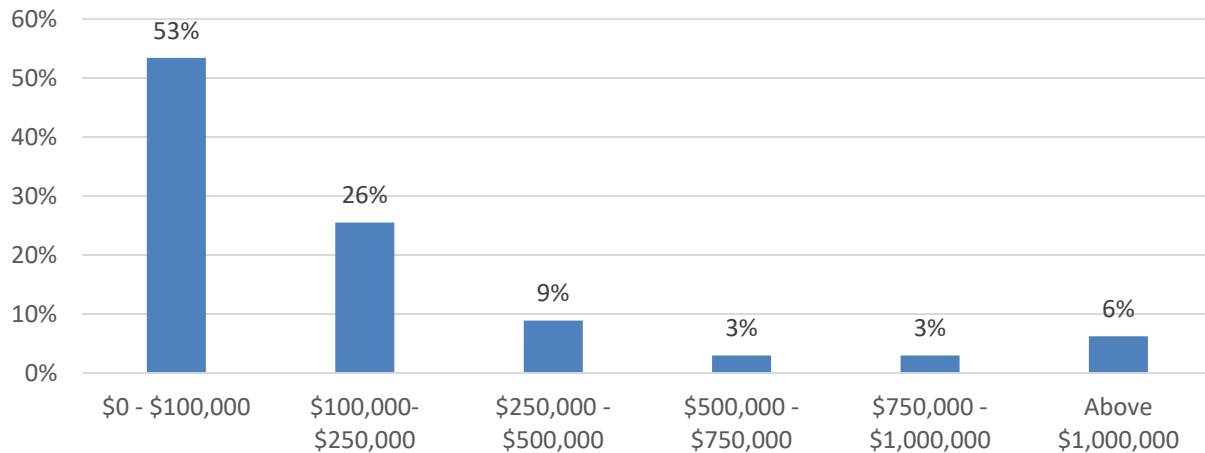
The choruses represented 38 states from across the U.S., the District of Columbia, and 6 Canadian provinces. The state with the highest representation was California at 17%, followed by New York at 8%.

### Chorus Location in North America



Over half of respondents reported that the budget of their most recently completed fiscal year was under \$100,000 and of this group, over 70% identified as volunteer choruses.

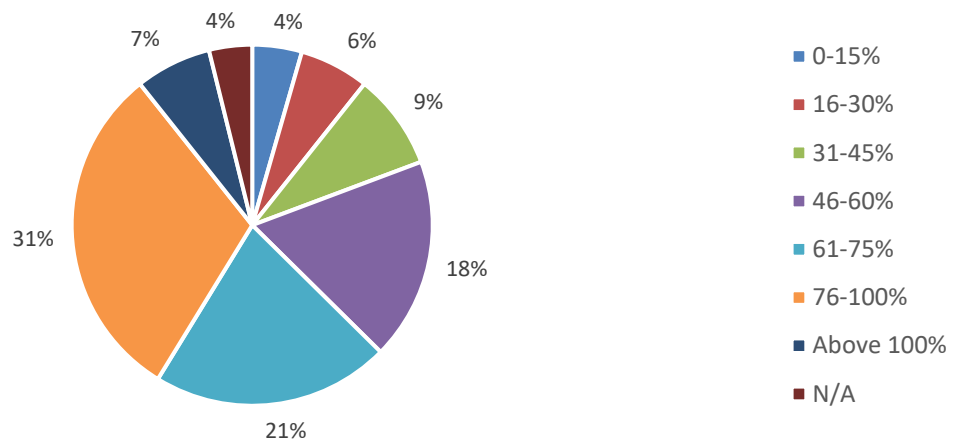
### Which category best describes your chorus’s budget from your most recently completed fiscal year?





The chart below shows how respondents' budgets changed from FY20 to FY21. Overall, most respondents reported a decrease in their budget. 4% reported that their FY21 budget was 0-15% of its FY20 budget, a drastic decrease. In some instances, these choruses reported a \$0 or negative-balance budget for FY21. At the other end of the spectrum, 7% of respondents saw their budgets grow between the two fiscal years showing their budget as above 100%. 4% of respondents are listed as N/A, not applicable, for a variety of reasons, including not knowing the organization's budget or the chorus being newly formed in FY21.

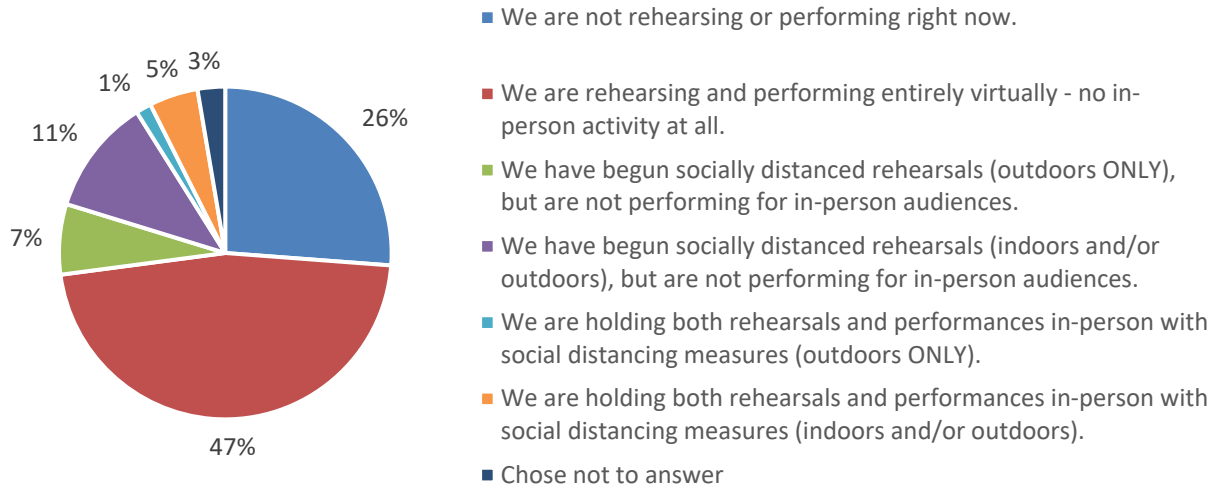
**What percent of your FY20 budget is your FY21 budget?**



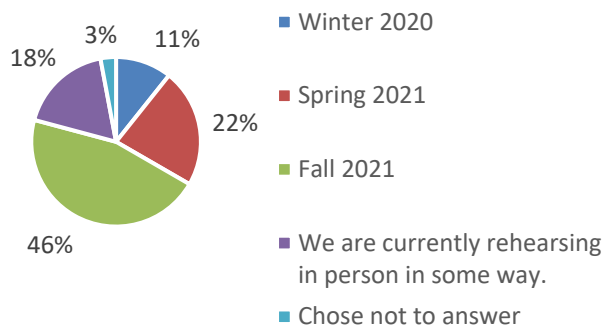
## Rehearsals and Performances

The series of charts below examines the level of rehearsing in person or performing for in-person audiences choruses are doing, and when choruses expect to resume rehearsing and performing in-person if they haven't already begun to do so. In-person activities include activities that only involve a small portion of the chorus or typical audience size. Notably, 73% of respondents are not currently doing any in-person activity at all, 18% are only rehearsing in person, while 6% are both rehearsing in-person and performing for live audiences. Most choruses expect to resume rehearsing and performing in-person in Fall 2021 or later.

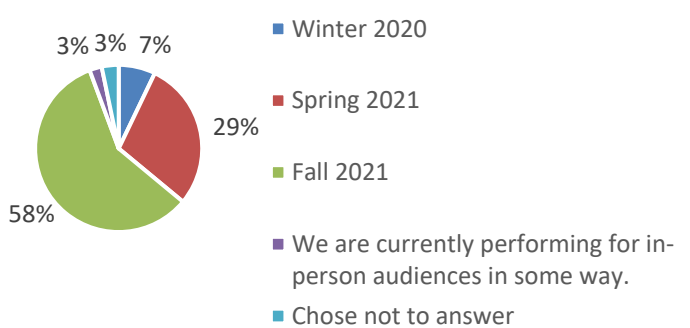
### Which statement best describes your chorus's current level of in-person operations for rehearsals and performances



### When does your chorus expect to resume rehearsing in person?



### When does your chorus expect to resume performing for in-person audiences?



Winter 2020 is defined as November 2020-February 2021.

Spring 2021 is defined as March 2021-June 2021.

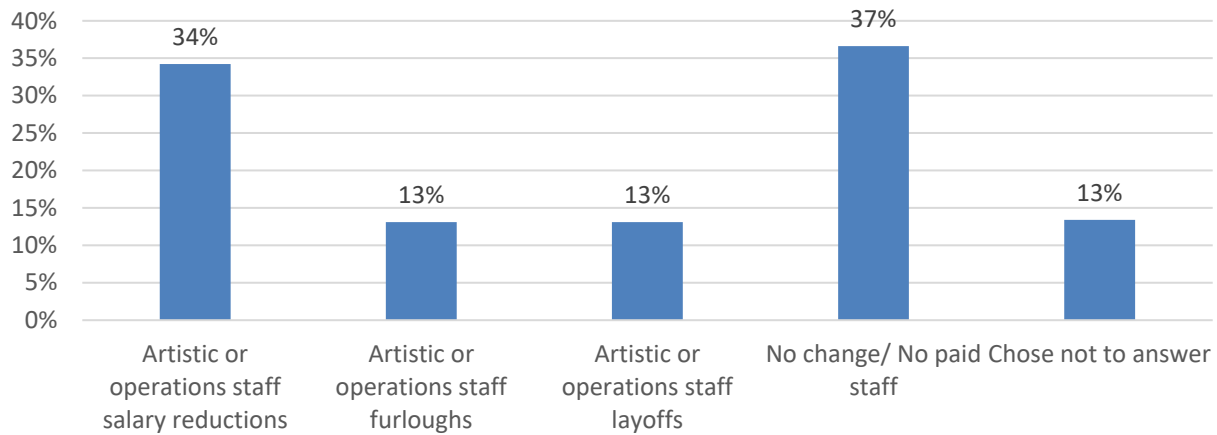
Fall 2021 is defined as July 2021 and later.



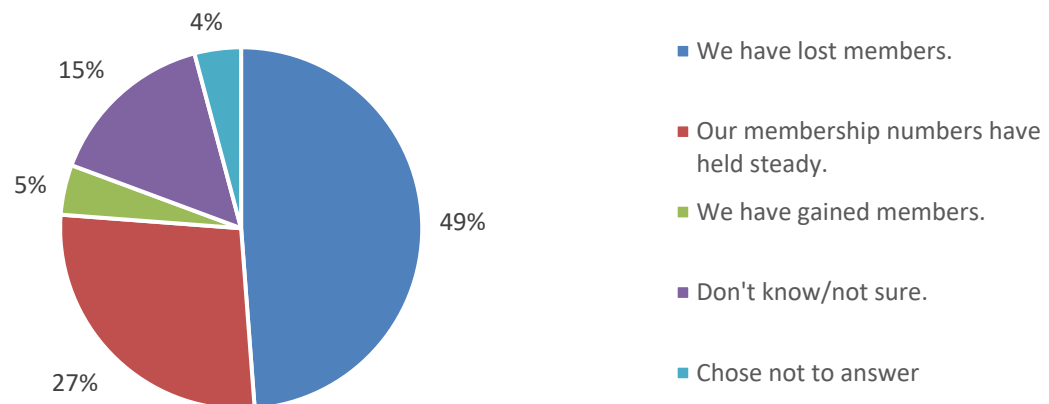
## Staff and Singer Engagement

The pandemic has had a notable human impact on choruses, in terms of staffing and in terms of membership. 50% of respondents reported some type of reduction to staff, either through a salary reduction, staff furloughs, or staff layoffs, and often some combination of the three. Almost half of respondents, 49%, reported a loss in membership, though 5% reported that their membership numbers had increased.

**Has your chorus had to take any of the following staffing measures since the beginning of the pandemic?**



**Which statement best describes your chorus's membership numbers since the pandemic hit?**





***Which strategies have been most effective in keeping your chorus's singers engaged?***

- Innovative ways of bringing singers together online. Exploring solo voice. Creating virtual events like singer and family sing-alongs; coffee houses, a spotlight concert featuring each of our high school seniors, virtual concerts, featuring participation of 200 singers
- Timely music education content around social justice and world cultures/languages, and vigorous attention to creating/maintaining community.
- We attempted to keep the flow of our season going with Zoom rehearsals in the spring, outdoor award's ceremony, and outdoor summer camp. We started our season a month early to take advantage of nicer weather and get into our routine before schools started and other stresses set in for our families.
- We started an "Academy," which employs our professional singers in teaching "tricks of the trade" to choral singers in community choruses.
- We have a group check-in about every six weeks. I also have personally reached out as the artistic director to each singer and either had a Zoom meeting or a socially-distanced coffee with them. We also ordered masks with our name and logo and sent one to each member as a surprise.
- Online choral rehearsal units (50% of our 2019-20 season singers) and Zoom social times (80% of our 2019-20 season singers). About 20% of our singers are not participating in our online activities; we keep them updated via email as needed.
- Weekly Zoom rehearsals with social component including breakout rooms and visits from soloists we've worked with (e.g. Kelli O'Hara, Victoria Clark, etc.); Eblasts to chorus soliciting requests from those in need of help, uplifting clips, music etc.; Active exchanges on social pages (public and group).
- We have a COVID Response committee separate from the board, who generate ideas for the "idea basket." Lots of different points of connection keep people engaged where they are.
- Virtual rehearsals and producing virtual choir videos have engaged about half of our singers. We recently held a "Watch Party" virtually to watch our latest Virtual Choir video the night before we released it via e-blast to our patrons. this engaged a number of members who haven't been singing virtually and it was great to 'see' them and talk!
- Robust and very organized online rehearsal process, outside conductors and educators visit once a month on zoom, a 'tech posse' help people learn the process for videotaping for virtual choir
- Emailing a question and then sharing responses with everyone. Such as "what has been your favorite performance experience as a singer?"



## COVID-19 Continued Impact

### *What is your greatest concern for your chorus in FY21?*

- How to get income, with so many of our income streams lost while compounded with increased staff time to implement the creative rewriting of the COVID semester.
- We are very concerned about the loss of numbers in our younger choirs, since they represent the future members of our advanced choirs. The loss of revenue from registrations will also have a negative effect on the annual budget. Artistically, our greatest concern is that the pandemic may take many months to wane. We must continue to find new and creative ways to teach singing through online platforms - the children miss singing together and they also miss being with their friends and enjoying social times together. It takes far more work and energy to prepare and give online rehearsal sessions than it is to rehearse in-person. We all greatly miss working together towards our season concerts as well.
- We would like to build back our numbers. Recruiting is hard when we cannot be out in the schools performing.
- How do we regain what we've lost? We're hanging in there, but how do we get back out of this hole we're in?
- Since our operations are funded largely by patron donations and free-will offerings, we are concerned that reduced audiences will mean less income. At least 50% of our regular patrons self-identify as seniors, and many of those people may not be comfortable attending concerts even after a COVID vaccine is widely available and singers are able to safely perform together without social distancing or masks.
- We may lose talented singers to other job professions due to lack of work that we can offer now.
- I am concerned that we will be unable to maintain our level of engagement among both singers and donors/patrons through 2021. Everyone is excited about our exploration into new technology for our December performances, but I don't expect that to continue as the months drag on. We most miss our sense of family and connection, and that's so difficult to replicate on a screen.
- We are fortunate to have a stable outlook for FY21 (through 6/30/21). I am more concerned about FY22: progress of vaccine, potential for live rehearsal and performance, comfort level of audience and members with live gathering.
- I think we can manage this season, and stay engaged, with adapted rehearsals and no concerts. I fear for us if it extends much beyond the season. Many choirs in our area have gone on hiatus, and I think they underestimate how hard it will be to re-start.
- Maintaining and increasing membership. Our members have financial hardship from loss of income and are stressed from being online all day. The last thing they want to do is be in a virtual rehearsal.
- How to safely rehearse with our mature members, and when/where we will be able to present a program to our community audience that is mostly of advanced age.
- Will venues allow for activities post-COVID or will they continue to be closed to all outside rentals and activities?