



BRIGHTON  
FESTIVAL  
CHORUS

# MEMBERS SURVEY

SUMMER  
2023



**150**

**PEOPLE TOOK PART**

**83%**

**OF BFC MEMBERS**

**THANK YOU  
TO YOU ALL!**

**HERE'S WHAT YOU  
THOUGHT!**

“

**SINGING WITH  
BFC FILLS ME  
WITH JOY!**

”

“

**I FEEL PROUD TO BE PART  
OF SUCH A WONDERFUL  
CHORUS AND LOVE  
SINGING TOGETHER.**

”

“

**I CAN'T  
IMAGINE LIFE  
WITHOUT IT.**

”

“

**BFC ADDS  
IMMEASURABLY  
TO THE QUALITY  
OF MY LIFE.**

”

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# WE ASKED WHAT MATTERED MOST TO YOU ABOUT SINGING WITH BFC

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**FUN, NEW OPPORTUNITIES, PEOPLE I WOULD NOT NORMALLY MEET, MUSIC I WOULD NOT NORMALLY GET TO KNOW.**

*Doing something challenging and creative with people who enjoy what I enjoy is inspiring.*

*Singing to such a high standard is hugely rewarding, bringing emotional, intellectual, and physical demands.*

*There is no other area of my life where I can engage in an artistic endeavour like this and where the outcome is unquestionably of value.*

**THE MUSIC WE SING LIFTS MY SOUL AND IS GOOD FOR MY HEART.**

*Constant musical challenges and high standard of performance.*

*It is the only part of my life where I am surrounded by like minded people doing something I love, and something which is just for 'me' – not as a parent, colleague, partner, daughter etc.*

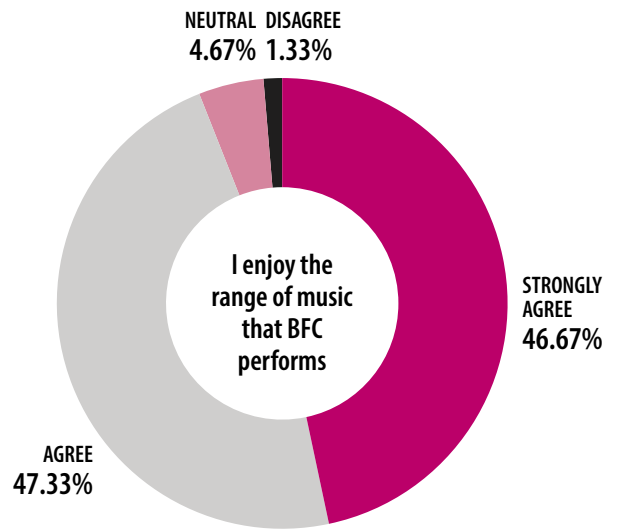
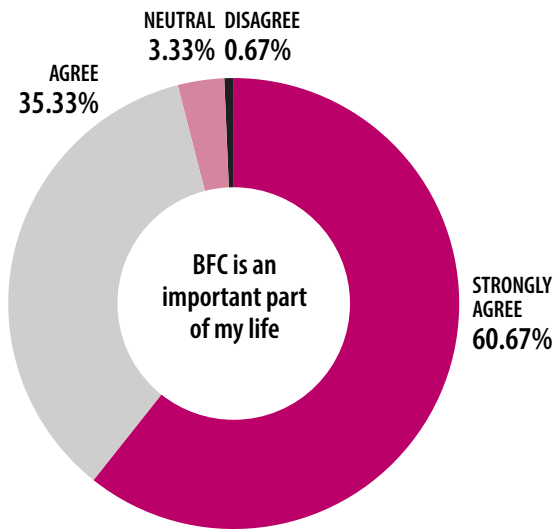
*High quality performances. Wide repertoire. Fabulous musical knowledge of MD. Interesting different types of gig.*

**STANDING IN A PACKED CONCERT HALL AS THE CONDUCTOR RAISES HIS BATON FOR THE FIRST NOTE; THE APPLAUSE OF THE AUDIENCE AS THE LAST NOTE FADES AWAY; AT A REHEARSAL WHEN AT LAST A COMPLICATED FUGUE COMES TOGETHER OR A DIFFICULT ENTRY IS CONQUERED.**

**LOOKING AT MY FELLOW SINGERS AND KNOWING WE SHARE A FEELING OF MUTUAL PRIDE IN OUR ACHIEVEMENT.**

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**WE ASKED SPECIFICALLY TO WHAT EXTENT YOU AGREED OR DISAGREED WITH THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CULTURE.**



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Given our mixed profile of own promotion and fee paying work we cover a range of different styles and genres which keeps us flexible and adaptable.

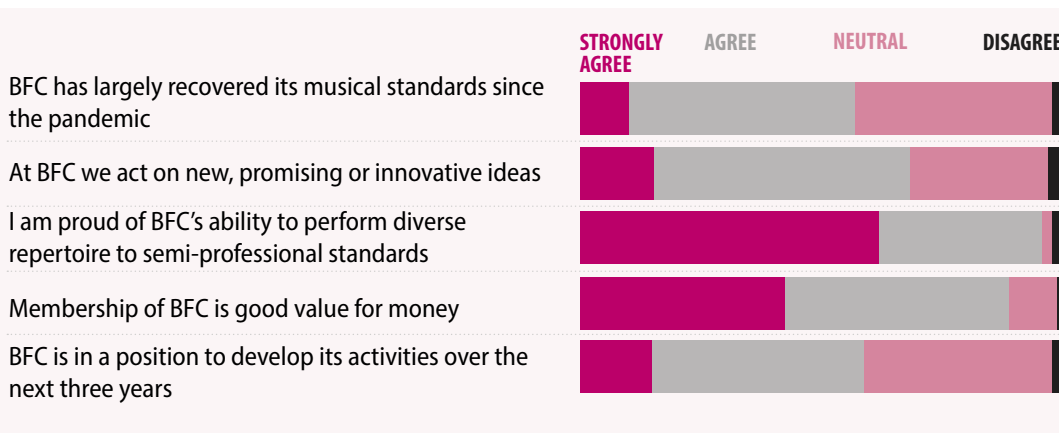
I thoroughly enjoy the challenge of the music. It is however steeped in that of western, classical and as such, white privilege. I think music could be chosen considering the Asian, African and West Indian diaspora with guest conductors and composers sought from our minority composers in Sussex.

Some of the Meador/Essenvalds/Dove OP works we do are outside of the usual cannon and feels more forward-thinking. Think we should do more premieres...strengthen the chorus's relationship with contemporary composers. Great to do a 'belter' once in a while too!

I love the range of music that BFC performs and the opportunity it provides for working with exceptional music professionals too. I found the challenge of learning Gerontius and War Requiem off book really scary, but THRILLING to perform and would like to have another chance to do this again. I'd like to do some more big classical choral works which I never get to do in the other, much smaller choir I sing with.

I love the fact that we sing a range of music dictated by what we are hired to do - most recently Bach followed 2 weeks later by music from the Lord of the Rings. With concerts which we promote ourselves James can programme music that stretches and challenges us with some great 20/21 Century pieces - always of course dictated by the funds available.

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The Music Staff, Trustees and Voice Reps demonstrate that members are important to the success of BFC.

**YES**  
99%

**NO**  
1%

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Can the vision of members and the committee be matched with the funding required?

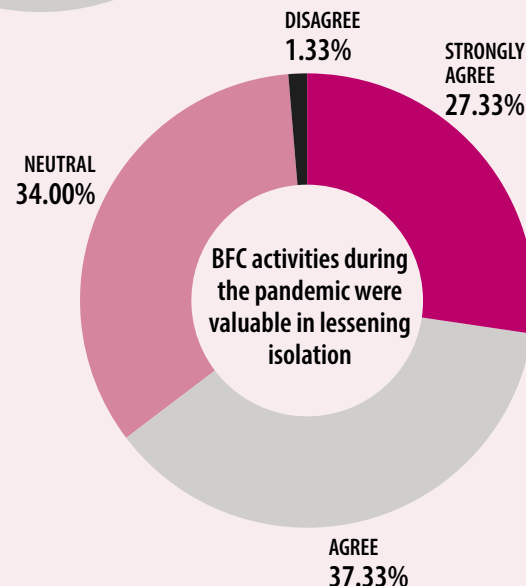
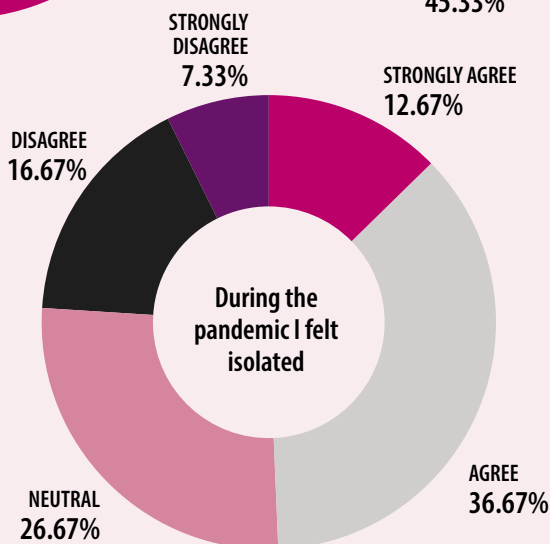
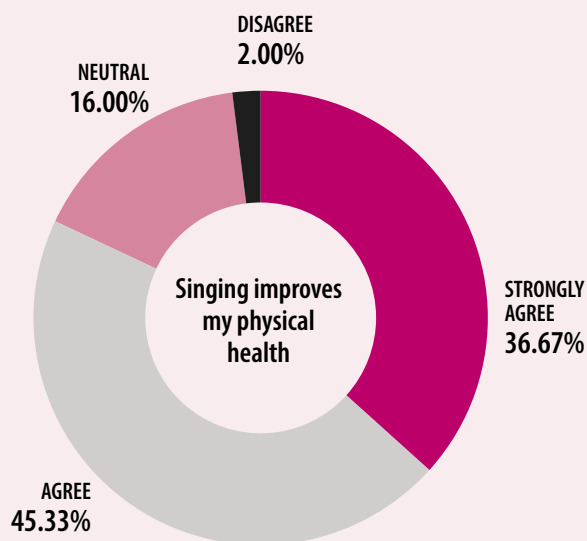
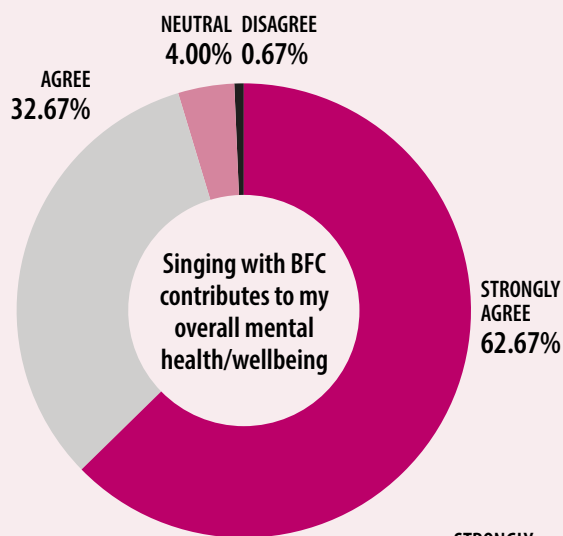
I think we are ambitious enough – but money to pay for that development may be an obstacle.

My Voice Rep is a great ambassador for the Chorus and really looks out for us all.

With a volunteer led organisation it is vital to have a good balance between the 'management' and the 'workers'.

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## WE ASKED SPECIFICALLY TO WHAT EXTENT YOU AGREED OR DISAGREED WITH THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT HEALTH, WELLBEING AND EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC.



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*Whatever life throws at you, the Chorus is always there, it is a constant and has seen me through some very dark times.*

*The weekly sing is very important for my mental health. I have developed some very close friendships within this group – it is a vital part of my social life.*

*I forget everything when singing. I can express my deepest feelings through music.*

*Singing helps my breathing capacity and posture.*

*As a singer I have developed breathing techniques which have improved my physical health as well as my vocal ability. I am more aware of my breathing and the ways I can use it to relax and calm me.*

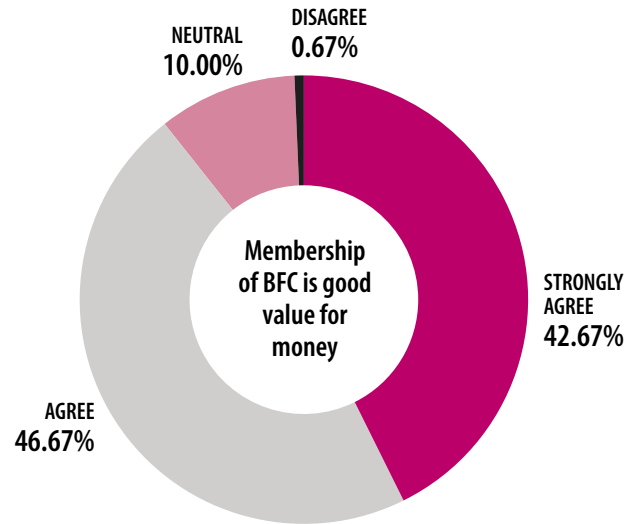
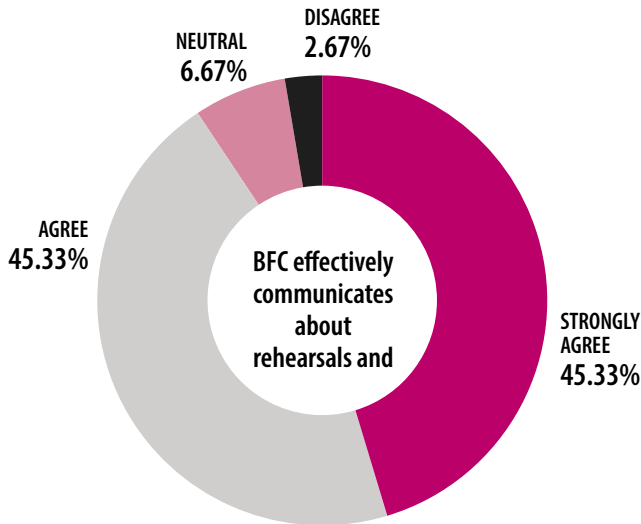
*The sheer joy of seeing friends on a tiny bit of screen all trying to sing in our spare rooms at our online rehearsals during lockdown was wonderful - and I will never forget learning the Bach Bmi Mass karaoke style.*

*The first summer of lockdown when we all went to a field and stood on a marked spot 3m apart and sang Shakespeare songs was a magical moment.*

*It was great to be able to maintain some element of routine and familiarity, if not normality (!) through BFC's activities during the pandemic. It made a big difference to be able to stay connected with the choir and continue singing, very therapeutic and singing took my mind off the worry and awfulness of covid.*

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**WE ASKED SPECIFICALLY TO WHAT EXTENT YOU AGREED OR DISAGREED WITH THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE CHORUS.**



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*Value for money? Of course - unarguable. £20 a month to sing with the best conductors and orchestras. £5 a rehearsal? No concert fees? Cheaper than a latte and a bun. Cheaper than a yoga class or a Zumba class or a pint. (Very glad we have the option for those who can't pay to join though).*

*I agree that monthly membership represents good value, but the fees paid for professional engagements surely should represent good value for the chorus? For example: promoters to pay for BFC travel to London for example. By paying for travel we are subsidising these paid engagements and that doesn't really sit well with me.*

”

**I have confidence in the leadership of BFC**



**YES**  
99%

**NO**  
1%



**I would recommend BFC as a great choir to sing with**



**YES**  
99%

**NO**  
1%



**I DO SEE THAT A LOT OF COMPETENT PEOPLE ARE PUTTING A LOT OF EFFORT INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BFC**

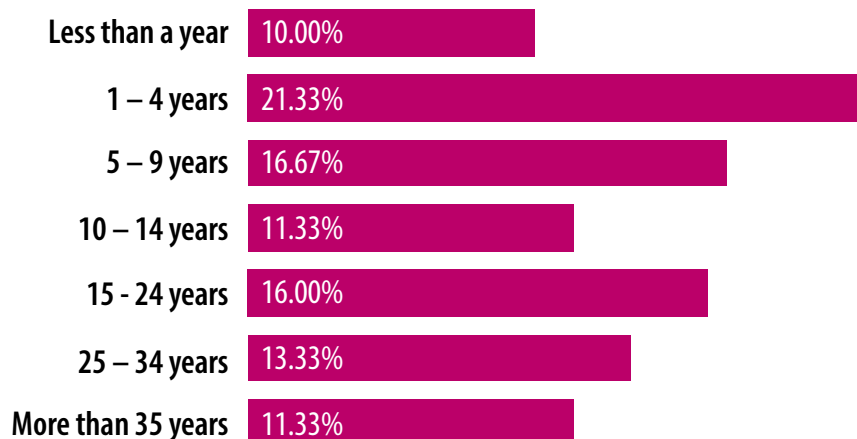
*Being financially stable is really important and the committee and James have a difficult balancing act to steer BFC in the direction we want to go to keep offering new and exciting initiatives alongside crowd-pullers, within a challenging financial framework. The administration team do a great job and I hope BFC will be able to develop its activities as hoped.*

*I would like to be made more aware of its plans for the future, and for there to be more 2 way communication between members and the leadership.*

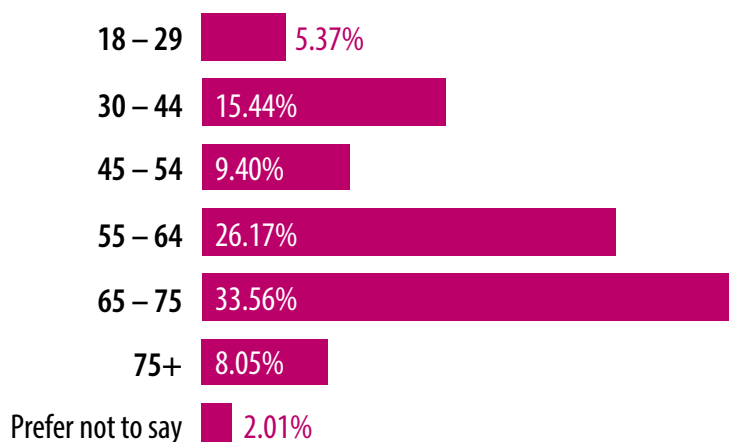
*YES I would recommend BFC – unless you just want to have a giggle and not put the time in.*

## WE ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT LONGEVITY OF MEMBERSHIP AND GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS.

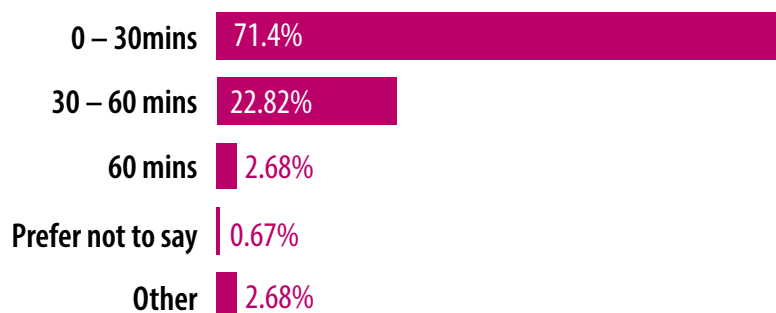
### Longevity of membership



### Age



### Travel Time to rehearsal



### What sector best describes your employment

(if retired or not working tick previous sector)

Education and training	32.21%
Health Services	15.44%
Creative arts, design, media music	13.42%
Community and Social	5.37%
Financial Services	4.70%
Government or civil service	4.03%
Legal	4.03%
Management	3.36%
Engineering and technical services	3.36%
Communications	2.01%
Sales	1.34%
Hospitality	0.00%
Other	8.05%
Prefer not to say	2.68%

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## WHAT YOU ASKED FOR...

### CONTINUALLY IMPROVING OUR SINGING, MUSICALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

**You wanted more regular warm-ups** so we've passed on this request to James.

**You wanted specific vocal training workshops** so we are looking to holding a couple during the year led by experienced practitioners.

**You wanted specific homework each week** so we suggest that if there aren't specific bits of homework given – listen to as many recordings as possible to familiarise and consider signing up for online rehearsal aids such as John Fletcher rehearsal tapes [www.johnfletchermusic.org](http://www.johnfletchermusic.org)

**You felt we needed better discipline on stage** so more defined guidelines have been introduced and we will continue to monitor and review these.

**You'd like more feedback from auditions** so will ensure that a brief e-mail is sent out by Voice Reps following each audition – no more 'no news is good news'.

**You'd like us to do more work 'off book'** so we will continue to explore how we can build this into our yearly planning, discussing with James suitable works to perform.

### DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC PLAN

**You felt that we needed a succession plan and a 5-year plan.** These are continually in our thoughts and we will be working on both during the coming year. This exercise of continuous feedback will help to inform our plans and thinking, and one we plan to repeat.

**You wanted to hear more from the Trustees** about the work that's going on in the background. This feedback sheet is part of this endeavour, and we will continue to communicate as much as possible, as early as possible, through the weekly e-mail.

**You wanted the opportunity to discuss future plans** and speak to the Trustees outside of the AGM. We're introducing 'Drinks with the Trustees' three times a year in The Swan Inn after rehearsals

### BROADENING OUR HORIZONS

**You asked for foreign tours.** These were previously financed by the EU and European orchestras and international festivals, many of which are state-funded. We continue to explore all possibilities, but it is likely that accommodation and travel for future tours would need to be financed by members.

**You'd like us to do more recording work** so we will continue to promote ourselves for work in this area, aware that previous recordings have been for the record label who have hired us. We will assess whether a self-funded recording would be economically viable.

**You'd like to see more social media** presence so we are planning to produce more high-quality short video clips of our work to showcase on social media.

**You'd like us to do more large-scale concerts and oratorios.** We completely agree and share your passion/enthusiasm for this. The question is...how do we find the funding for these concerts which, as you know, will never cover their own costs from ticket sales? So we need to explore funding - from corporates, from grants and trusts, from more income from hired work and perhaps from a pledge fund from members. All of these are being explored - and the trustees would welcome support from anyone in the Chorus who feels they have something to bring to this effort.

### ENHANCING THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF THE CHORUS

**You want to see more social events** so we will continue to have an informal summer social event at the end of each season. We will encourage others to join the diverse group of members who go to The Swan Inn in Falmer following Tuesday evening rehearsals each week. We're reinstating 'Drinks for New Members' where the Chorus buys each new member a drink at The Swan early on in their time with the Chorus.

**You wanted an easier way to get to know members** so we're working on developments to the website to enhance the 'List of Members' to include space for a brief 50 - 100-word biography as well as a photograph.