

The Women & Girls Index 2023:

MEASURING GIVING TO WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' ORGANIZATIONS

OCTOBER 2023

Introduction

The Women & Girls Index (WGI) provides the only systematically generated, comprehensive data on charitable organizations dedicated to women and girls. The WGI tracks the landscape of women's and girls' organizations in the U.S., including the amount of philanthropic support they receive from individuals, foundations, and corporations.

The WGI is a cornerstone project of the Equitable Giving Lab (EGL), an initiative to better understand charitable giving to diverse communities and under-resourced groups. The Lab currently comprises research on giving to LGBTQ+ and to women's and girls' organizations, in addition to case studies of organizations serving these populations. The data are hosted at WomenAndGirlsIndex.org, including a searchable database of all WGI organizations, a downloadable copy of the full Index, and more detail about the Index and the methodology used to create and update the WGI.

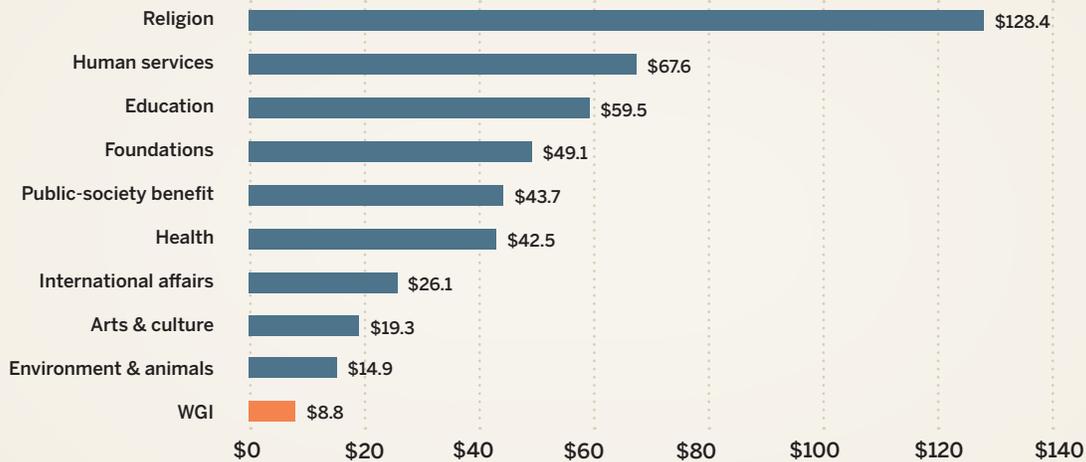
The updated WGI adds information from 2020—the most recent year for which finalized IRS data on charitable organizations is available. This update expands the picture of charitable giving to women and girls from 2012 to 2020. The year 2020 was marked by upheaval across all areas of life due to the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting economic woes, and a renewed racial justice movement in response to the murder of George Floyd—and philanthropy was no exception, especially philanthropy devoted to women and girls. The pandemic disproportionately impacted women in numerous ways, and charitable giving rose in response to the need generated by these unprecedented events.¹ Societal conversations inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement also raised questions about the dearth of funding for women and girls of color, along with other under-resourced groups.² The protests spurred donors to action, including MacKenzie Scott, who emphasized racial, gender, and LGBTQ+ equity in her 2020 giving.³ Forthcoming research from the Equitable Giving Lab will examine funding for BIPOC communities, as well as intersectional groups like LGBTQ+ women and girls, and women and girls of color. The newest WGI data provide an opportunity to understand how giving to women's and girls' organizations changed during the momentous events of 2020.

FINDING 1

Women’s and girls’ organizations received \$8.8 billion in philanthropic support in 2020—or 1.8% of overall charitable giving. This \$8.8 billion represents a 9.2% increase in philanthropic support over 2019.

The updated WGI contains 51,756 charitable organizations, or 3.6% of total registered charitable organizations. These organizations received \$8.8 billion in philanthropic support in 2020—a fraction of that received by traditional nonprofit subsectors like human services and education, as shown in Figure 1.

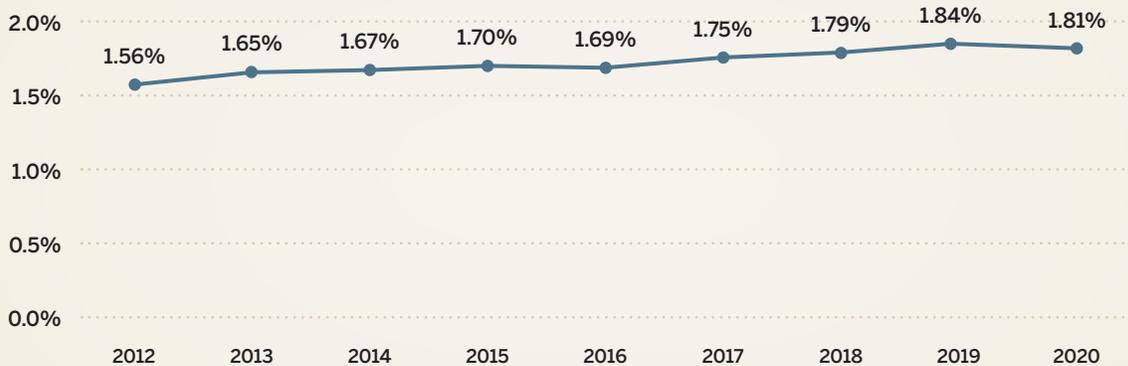
FIGURE 1. Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations compared with traditional nonprofit subsectors (2020, in billions)



Notes: Subsector figures are 2020 values from *Giving USA 2023*.⁴ WGI organizations appear in all traditional nonprofit subsectors but are depicted as their own subsector for the sake of comparison.

The \$8.8 billion received by WGI organizations made up 1.8% of overall charitable giving in 2020.⁵ This is a consistent trend in WGI data since 2012, as philanthropic support for these organizations has remained below 2% of overall giving since the creation of the Index. As shown in Figure 2, philanthropic support for WGI organizations has consistently stayed between 1.5% and 1.9% of overall charitable giving. While this increased slightly between 2016 and 2018, this figure has leveled off in more recent years.

FIGURE 2. Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations as a percentage of overall charitable giving, 2012-2020



Notes: Figures presented in previous WGI reports have been updated to reflect additional contribution detail and mission and program descriptions from Form 990 and 990-EZ returns reported in prior years (primarily through digitized paper filings provided by Candid).

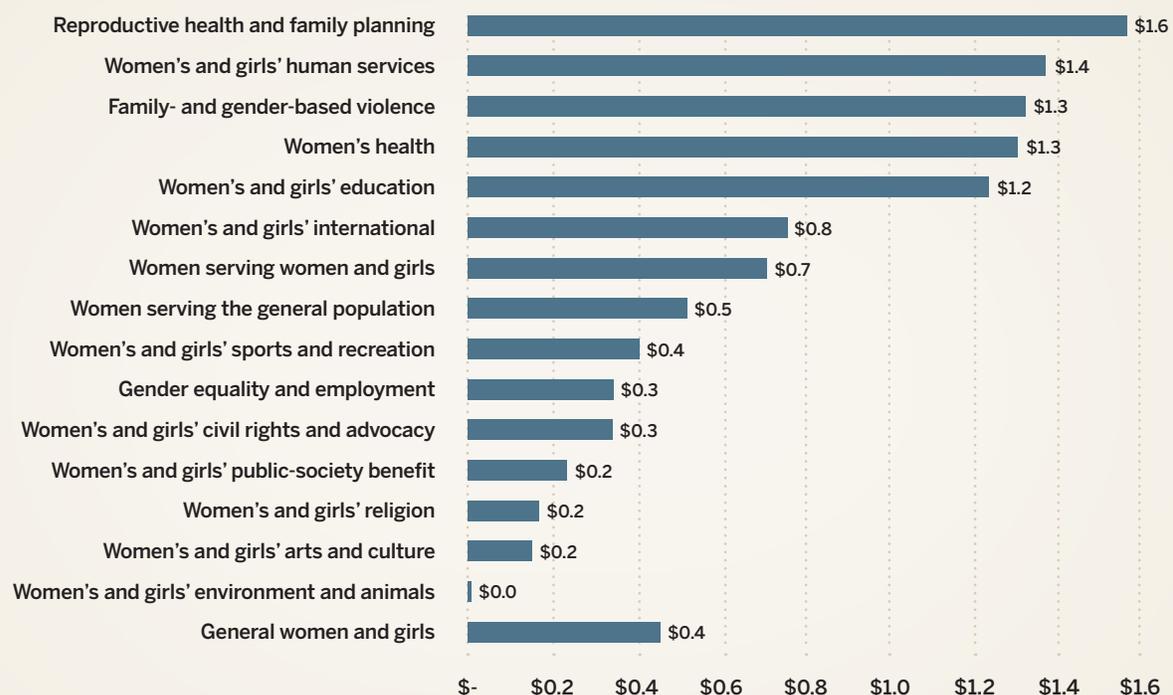
Despite the small portion of overall charitable giving dedicated to women’s and girls’ organizations, the \$8.8 billion received in 2020 represents an increase of 9.2% over 2019. However, this relatively high growth rate was still lower than the growth in overall charitable giving in 2020 (11.3%).⁶

FINDING 2

Reproductive health and family planning organizations received the greatest amount of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in 2020, a consistent trend over time. However, other types of women’s and girls’ organizations experienced changes likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as an increase in contributions to women’s and girls’ human services organizations, and a decrease in contributions to women’s and girls’ sports and recreation.

Women’s and girls’ organizations can be found in all traditional nonprofit subsectors and further categorized based on mission focus. As shown in Figure 3, reproductive health and family planning organizations (e.g., Planned Parenthood, Center for Reproductive Rights) received the greatest amount of philanthropic support for WGI organizations in 2020, at \$1.6 billion.

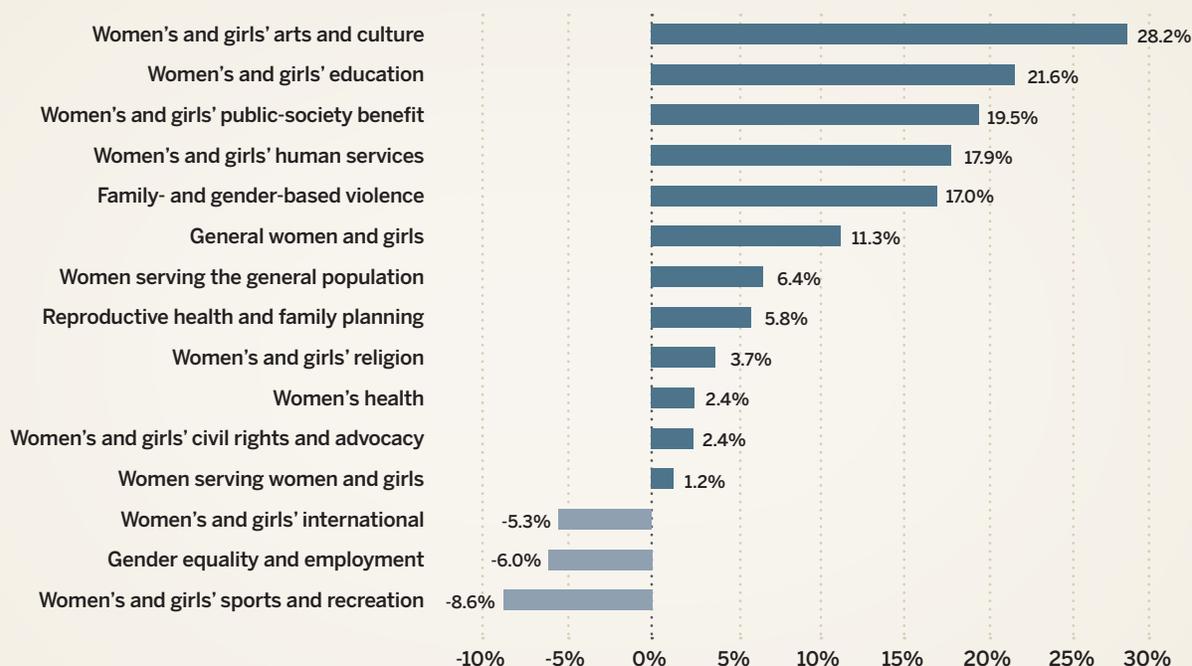
FIGURE 3. Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations by mission focus (2020, in billions)



Notes: Mission focus categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, therefore, adding up the dollars in this figure exceeds the \$8.8 billion total of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in 2020. Dollar amounts are rounded to one decimal place for ease of reading, but the ordering and length of the bars are based on exact values. Women’s and girls’ organizations focused on the environment and animals received \$11.0 million in 2020; this appears as \$0.0 in the figure due to rounding.

While reproductive health as the top WGI mission focus area is consistent with previous years’ data, Figure 4 shows that this giving grew 5.8%—a relatively small rate compared with other types of WGI organizations. Certain types of WGI organizations saw significant upheaval during 2020, reflecting the unique challenges posed to these nonprofit organizations by the pandemic.⁷ For example, women’s and girls’ human services organizations (e.g., YWCA) received the second-largest amount of philanthropic support for WGI organizations in 2020, at \$1.4 billion—a 17.9% increase from 2019, which reflects the increased demand for services during the pandemic. Conversely, women’s and girls’ sports and recreation organizations saw an 8.6% decrease in philanthropic support from 2019 to 2020, likely due to the curtailing of in-person gatherings during the early stages of the pandemic. While these changes constituted dramatic shifts throughout a volatile year, many fall in line with overall trends to these cause areas as described in *Giving USA 2021*.⁸

FIGURE 4. Change in philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations by mission focus, 2019-2020



Notes: This figure omits women’s and girls’ environment and animals organizations. As noted in Figure 3, these organizations received \$11.0 million in 2020, making this mission focus area around 5% of the size of the next-smallest area, and too small to consistently track differences over time in a meaningful way.

FINDING 3

Some subsectors received a disproportionate boost in charitable giving from 2019 to 2020, including women’s and girls’ arts and culture, and women’s and girls’ education. This growth can be explained in part by the influence of a few large donations on relatively small areas of philanthropy.

While the 2020 increase in giving to women’s and girls’ human services and public-society benefit causes makes sense in the broader context of the pandemic’s impact on charitable giving, two cause areas stand out that buck this trend. These mission focus areas of note include women’s and girls’ arts and culture organizations, which saw an increase in philanthropic support of 28.2% from 2019 to 2020; and women’s and girls’ education, which grew 21.6% during that period. These two focus areas showed significant growth during a year when the education and arts and culture subsectors shrank overall.

While this report does not seek to fully explain these changes, it does appear that women’s and girls’ education organizations were more likely to receive large gifts in 2020 compared to other women’s and girls’ organizations. A number of these education organizations saw increases of \$10 million or more in their philanthropic support during 2020, and this often represented at least a doubling of their 2019 support.

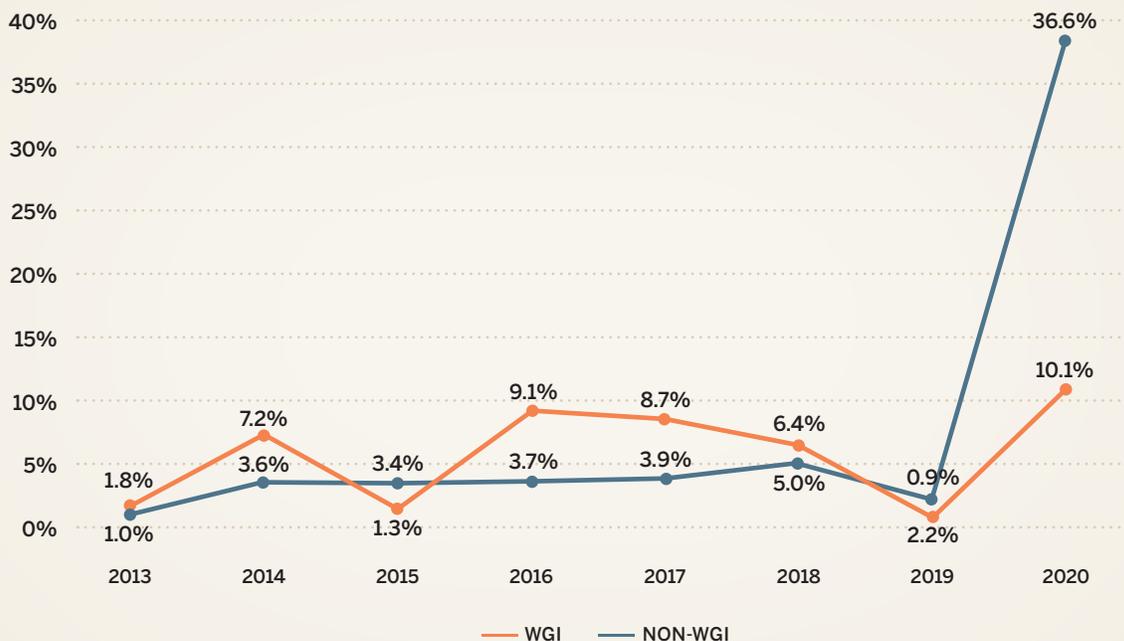
The dramatic growth in giving to women’s and girls’ arts and culture organizations in 2020 was driven primarily by a spike in giving to one institution—the National Museum of Women in the Arts. While this does not fully explain the increase, the NMWA was in the midst of a leadership gift campaign in 2020 to go toward the museum’s complete renovation.⁹ While these hypotheses do not fully explain these changes, they do offer context to these noteworthy increases in giving.

FINDING 4

Support for women’s and girls’ organizations from government grants increased 10.1% from 2019 to 2020, but substantially lagged the 36.6% growth for other charitable organizations.

Organizations dedicated to women and girls saw an increase of 10.1% in government grants from 2019 to 2020. However, this growth lagged that of government grants for non-WGI organizations by a wide margin. From 2012 to 2019, government grants to WGI organizations grew 41%, compared to 25% growth for government grants to non-WGI organizations. In 2020, this pattern flipped; the growth in government grants to non-WGI organizations was so drastic that it reversed the entire arc of the 2012-2019 trend. From 2019 to 2020, WGI government grants grew 55%, compared to 71% for government grants to non-WGI organizations. This trend is shown in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5. Growth in grants to women’s and girls’ organizations compared with other charitable organizations, 2012-2020



Notes: Year-over-year growth rates are not cumulatively additive, so the sum of the values in Figure 5 does not equal the total growth rates mentioned in the text.

Looking at government grants by WGI mission focus area does not yield particularly intuitive results. For example, family- and gender-based violence saw a 16.2% growth in government grants and women’s and girls’ human services organizations experienced 4.3% growth in government grants from 2019 to 2020—which is less than might be expected considering these two focus areas were key to the pandemic response. Rather than reflecting the demand for services, government grants during a pandemic year marked by unprecedented programs like the Paycheck Protection Program may instead reflect organizational capacity to apply for and manage such funding.¹⁰

Implications

Issues affecting women and girls (e.g., the gender pay gap, sexual harassment and assault) have received increased attention in recent years, but charitable giving to organizations addressing these issues lags behind. WGI resources can provide actionable support for donors, fundraisers, and others dedicated to women's and girls' causes.

Women's and girls' causes overlap with every other charitable subsector. This means donors can adjust their existing charitable giving to address women's and girls' causes, and fundraisers can use the WGI to make their case for support. Prospective donors are likely aware of gender equity issues, but may not have translated this awareness into actual giving to women's and girls' organizations. Donors should consider how their values align with their current giving, and whether WGI organizations should play a more prominent role in their giving portfolio. While the state of funding for women and girls is dismal, this also means that individual donors can make a big difference for WGI organizations. For example, MacKenzie Scott's philanthropy in 2020 amounts to around 2% of all WGI giving, and this is a low estimate due to the lack of publicly available information around her giving.¹¹

Women and girls were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and those needs are ongoing, even though charitable giving to WGI organizations increased from 2019 to 2020. This research provides a first look at charitable giving to women's and girls' organizations during the pandemic. Research has shown the pandemic reversed progress on gender equity, which inspired greater giving to these organizations, but also generated more need. Fundraisers and nonprofit leaders should communicate that donors' support remains urgent, since women and girls will need additional resources to continue to make gains coming out of the pandemic. Donors and potential donors may seek to understand how these organizations are faring in the wake of the pandemic and how they can best support them moving forward. Women's and girls' organizations tend to be smaller than other nonprofits, both in terms of finances and human resources. As a result, the pandemic may have posed more obstacles to these organizations, such as making it more challenging to apply for and receive Paycheck Protection Program funding.

The pandemic's impact on philanthropic support for WGI organizations demonstrates how current events and policies may affect women's and girls' causes. This will continue to be true moving forward as more data is available, for example data on giving to WGI organizations serving women and girls with intersectional identities. In particular, while this WGI update cannot speak to the *Dobbs* Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*, this public debate and policy shift will likely have repercussions for WGI organizations, since reproductive health is consistently a top recipient of charitable dollars.

The Women & Girls Index was born from the belief that data is a necessary—but not sufficient—step toward gender equity. The *2023 Bank of America Study of Affluent Philanthropy*, conducted by the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, lends support to that belief.¹² Of those households who gave to women's and girls' causes, 8.2% indicated they were motivated to do so by hearing that women's and girls' causes receive less than 2% of all charitable giving.

The WGI exists to help donors and fundraisers better support and serve women and girls. The resources on [GiveToWomenAndGirls.Day](#) and [WomenAndGirlsIndex.org](#) can assist in raising funds for women's and girls' organizations and researching these organizations. Case studies of organizations that illustrate these research findings are available at [EquitableGivingLab.org/WGI](#). Fundraisers and nonprofit leaders should visit [GiveToWomenAndGirls.Day](#) to find user-friendly tools and messaging to encourage giving to their organizations on International Day of the Girl (October 11, 2023)—and every day. Current and prospective donors should visit [WomenAndGirlsIndex.org](#) to find a women's and/or girl's organization that aligns with their interests—you can search by keyword, category, and geographic location. Additionally, researchers can download the full WGI dataset at [WomenAndGirlsIndex.org](#) to incorporate into their own research on nonprofits and philanthropy.

References

- ¹ Bateman, N. & Ross, M. (2020, October). *Why has COVID-19 been especially harmful for working women?* Brookings Institution. <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/>; Giovetti, O. (2022, February 8). *Seven reasons why COVID-19 is having a tougher impact on women and girls.* Concern Worldwide. <https://www.concern.net/news/impact-of-covid-19-on-women-and-girls>; Madgavkar, A., White, O., Krishnan, M., Mahajan, D., & Azcue, X. (2020, July 15). *COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects.* McKinsey Global Institute. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>; United Nations. (2020, April 9). *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women.* <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>
- ² Howe, E. E., & Frazer, S. (2020, June). *Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less: A Call to Action.* The Ms. Foundation for Women: New York, NY. <https://forwomen.org/resources/pocket-change-report/>
- ³ Scott, M. (2020, July 28). *116 Organizations Driving Change.* Medium. <https://mackenzie-scott.medium.com/116-organizations-driving-change-67354c6d733d>
- ⁴ *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 2022* (2023). Chicago: Giving USA Foundation.
- ⁵ *Giving USA 2023* estimates that charitable organizations in the U.S. received \$486.26 billion in 2020. Using this estimate, which includes donations to religious organizations and private foundations, WGI organizations received 1.8% of total charitable giving that year. Charitable giving estimates for 2020 were initially presented in *Giving USA 2021*, but the *Giving USA 2023* figure is used because these estimates are typically revised in subsequent years as finalized IRS data become available.
- ⁶ *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 2022* (2023). Chicago: Giving USA Foundation.
- ⁷ Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (2021, June 15). *Giving USA 2021: In a year of unprecedented events and challenges, charitable giving reached a record \$471.44 billion in 2020.* [https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/giving-usa-2021:-in-a-year-of-unprecedented-events-and-challenges,-charitable-giving-reached-a-record-\\$471.44-billion-in-2020.html?id=361](https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/news-events/news-item/giving-usa-2021:-in-a-year-of-unprecedented-events-and-challenges,-charitable-giving-reached-a-record-$471.44-billion-in-2020.html?id=361)
- ⁸ *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2020* (2021). Chicago: Giving USA Foundation.
- ⁹ Campaign Project Timeline. (2023). National Museum of Women in the Arts. <https://nmwa.org/support/nmwa-campaign/project-timeline/>
- ¹⁰ Karol, S., & Mayo, J. (2023, April). *Short-run effects of Covid-19 on the nonprofit sector.* SSRN. <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4417861>
- ¹¹ Data comes from Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy research that identified public announcements of charitable gifts by MacKenzie Scott during 2020. Of those organizations, 66 are found in the WGI. Of those 66, 28 organizations have gift amount information available, and the remaining 38 do not. Of those 28, the total amount of giving totals \$161 million—or 1.8% of the \$8.8 billion in philanthropic support going to WGI organizations in 2020.
- ¹² Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy (2023). *2023 Bank of America Study of Philanthropy: Charitable Giving By Affluent Households.* <https://hdl.handle.net/1805/35951>

WRITTEN & RESEARCHED BY

Women's Philanthropy Institute

The Women's Philanthropy Institute (WPI) is part of the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. WPI increases understanding of women's philanthropy through rigorous research and education, interpreting and sharing these insights broadly to improve philanthropy. Learn more at <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/wpi>.

Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy

The Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy is dedicated to improving philanthropy to improve the world by training and empowering students and professionals to be innovators and leaders who create positive and lasting change. The school offers a comprehensive approach to philanthropy through its academic, research and international programs, and through The Fund Raising School, Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, Mays Family Institute on Diverse Philanthropy, and Women's Philanthropy Institute. Learn more at <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/>.

INDIANA UNIVERSITY LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY PROJECT TEAM

PRIMARY AUTHOR

Jacqueline Ackerman, MPA

Associate Director, Women's Philanthropy Institute

PRIMARY ANALYST

Jon Bergdoll, MS

Applied Statistician

Una Osili, PhD

*Associate Dean for Research and International Programs
and Professor of Economics and Philanthropic Studies*

Tessa Skidmore, MPA

Research Associate, Women's Philanthropy Institute

Jeannie Sager, MA

Director, Women's Philanthropy Institute

Special thanks to Jon Durnford of DataLake Nonprofit Research for his expertise and collaboration in creating and updating the Women & Girls Index alongside WPI.

The Women & Girls Index was created in 2019 with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This research brief was completed with funding from Google.org, as part of the Equitable Giving Lab. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official positions or policies of funders.



IUPUI WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY INSTITUTE

LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY

RESEARCH THAT GROWS WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY

301 University Boulevard, Suite 3000

Indianapolis, IN 46202-3272

317-278-8990 / wpiinfo@iupui.edu