

The Women & Girls Index 2024:

MEASURING GIVING TO WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' ORGANIZATIONS

OCTOBER 2024

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 itself 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 2021—the most recent year for which finalized IRS data on charitable organizations are available. This update expands the picture of charitable giving to women and girls to a full decade, from 2012 to 2021. In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to disproportionately affect women, especially women of color and those in low-wage jobs.¹ Many women faced increasing caregiving responsibilities, economic instability, and job losses; this came to be known as the “she-cession.”² Also coined during this time, the “Great Resignation” was in full swing by the end of 2021, with women quitting their jobs at a faster pace than men.³ Women's labor force participation dropped to its lowest levels since the 1980s, with millions exiting the workforce during the pandemic due to childcare and caregiving demands.⁴ Efforts to address systemic barriers to gender equality gained momentum in 2021. Discussions about the gender pay gap centered around paid family leave and affordable childcare. Reproductive rights also came under heightened scrutiny in 2021 with the passing of restrictive laws in some states.⁵ These included Texas Senate Bill 8, which restricted access to abortions and set the stage for broader challenges to reproductive rights, ultimately culminating in the *Dobbs* decision in 2022.⁶

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 2021.



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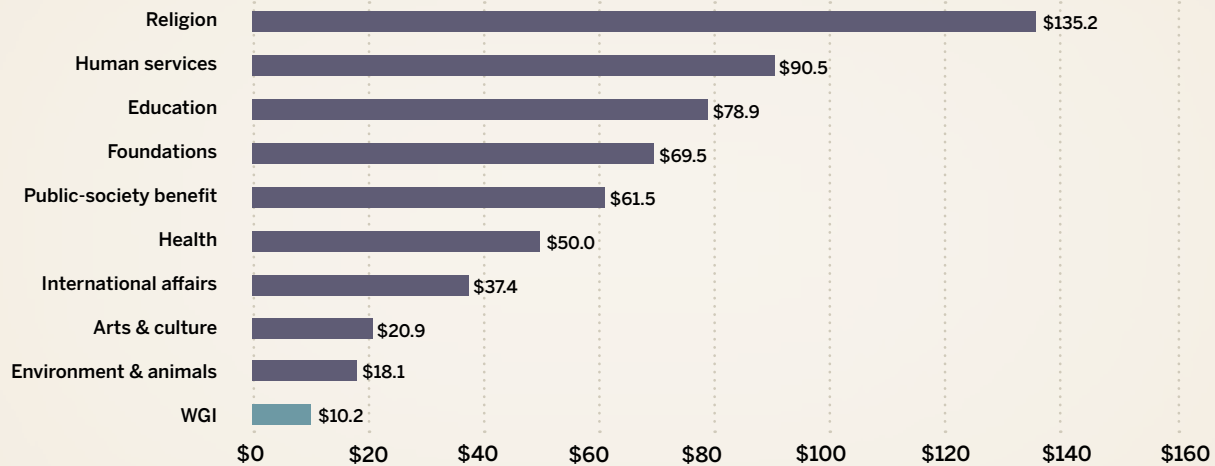
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FINDING 1

Surpassing the \$10 billion mark for the first time, women’s and girls’ organizations received \$10.2 billion in philanthropic support in 2021, representing 1.9% of overall charitable giving.

The updated WGI contains 54,588 charitable organizations, or 3.6% of total registered charitable organizations. These organizations received \$10.2 billion in philanthropic support in 2021. This was the first time giving to women’s and girls’ organizations reached the \$10 billion mark; however, this giving remains a fraction of that received by traditional nonprofit subsectors like human services and education, as shown in Figure 1.

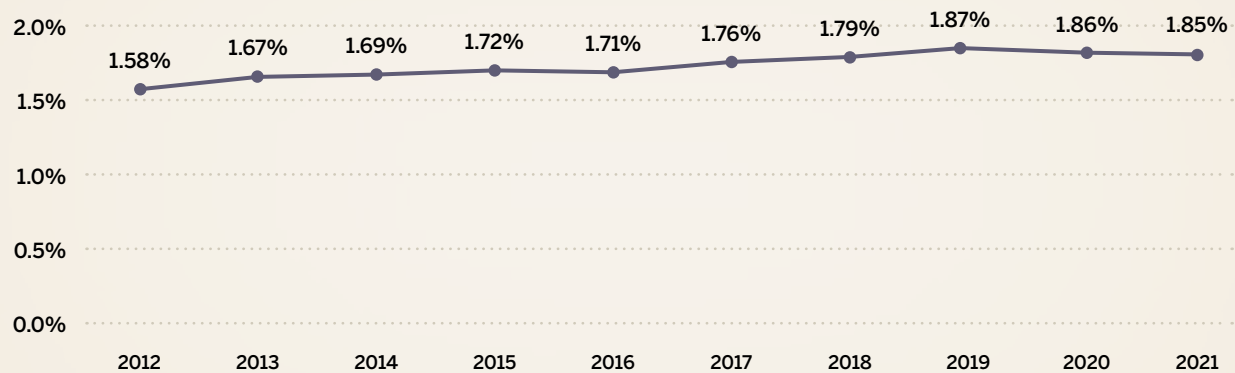
FIGURE 1. Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations compared with traditional nonprofit subsectors (2021, in billions)



Note: Subsector figures are 2021 values from *Giving USA 2024*.⁷ WGI organizations appear in all traditional nonprofit subsectors but are depicted as their own subsector for the sake of comparison.

The \$10.2 billion received by WGI organizations made up 1.9% of overall charitable giving in 2020.⁸ 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 plateaued beginning in 2019.

FIGURE 2. Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations as a percentage of overall charitable giving, 2012-2021



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).

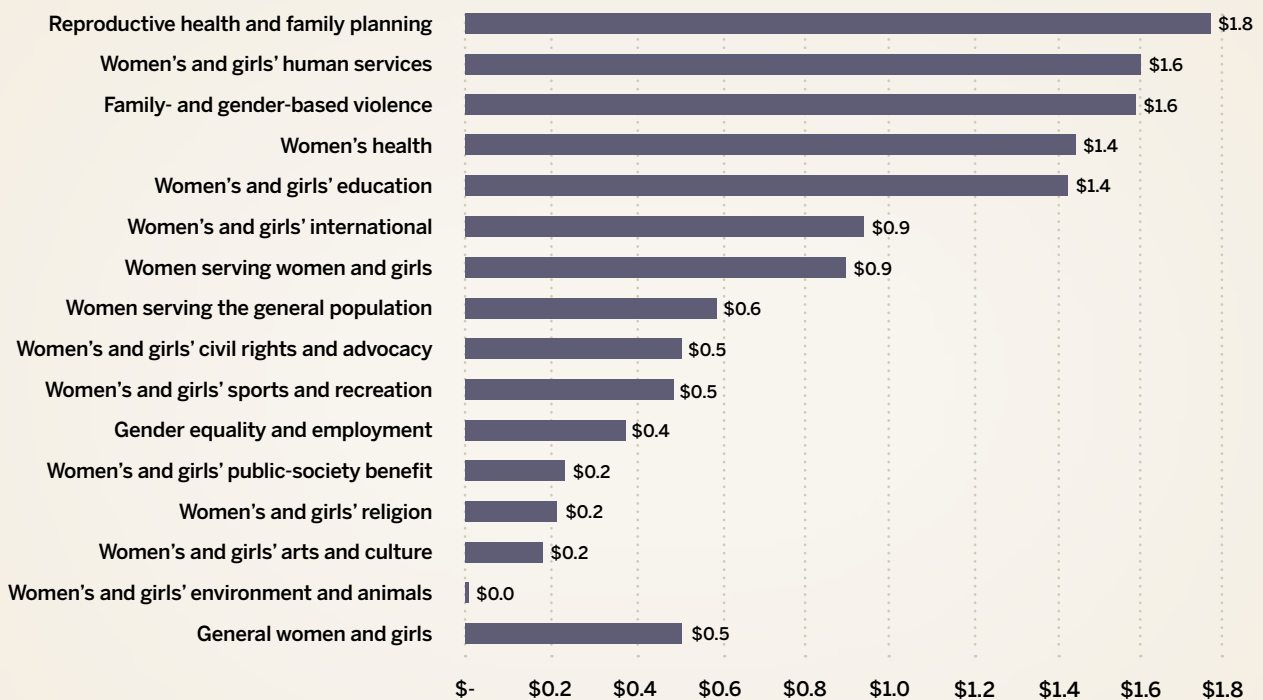
Despite the small portion of overall charitable giving dedicated to women’s and girls’ organizations, the \$10.2 billion received in 2021 represents an increase of 15.0% over 2020. However, this high growth rate was slightly lower than the growth in overall charitable giving in 2021 (15.4%).⁹

FINDING 2

Reproductive health and family planning organizations received the greatest amount of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in 2021, a consistent trend over time. WGI organizations serving women’s and girls’ civil rights and advocacy saw the largest growth (60.9%) from 2020 to 2021.

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 2021, at \$1.8 billion. This was followed by women’s and girls’ human services organizations (e.g., YWCA) and family and gender-based violence organizations (e.g., National Network to End Domestic Violence), each receiving \$1.6 billion in 2021.

FIGURE 3. Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations by mission focus (2021, in billions)

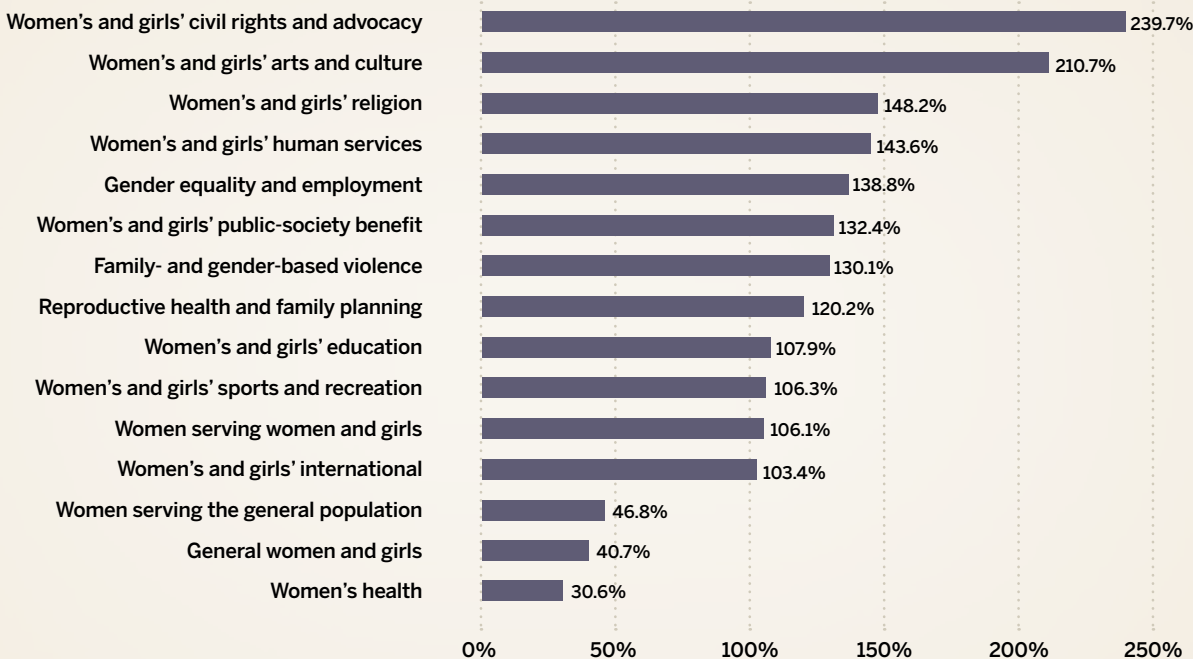


Note: Mission focus categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, therefore, adding up the dollars in this figure exceeds the \$10.2 billion total of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in 2021. Dollar amounts are rounded to one decimal place for ease of reading, but the ordering and length of the bars are based on exact values. Women’s and girls’ organizations focused on the environment and animals received \$15.0 million in 2021; this appears as \$0.0 in the figure due to rounding.

In large part, the order of mission focus areas within the Women & Girls Index remained largely the same in 2021 as in 2020, except for WGI organizations focused on civil rights and advocacy, which grew 60.9% from 2020 to 2021. Other changes fall in line with overall trends to these cause areas as described in *Giving USA 2022*.¹⁰

This report benefits from having a decade of data available about women’s and girls’ organizations from 2012 to 2021; this allows for a longer-term examination of trends in philanthropic support for these causes. Over that decade, WGI organizations overall grew their philanthropic support 94.9%, meaning that most categories of these organizations at least doubled their philanthropic support. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4. Change in philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations by mission focus, 2012-2021



Notes: This figure omits women’s and girls’ environment and animals organizations. As noted in Figure 3, these organizations received \$15.0 million in 2021, making this mission focus area around 8% of the size of the next-smallest area, and too small to consistently track differences over time in a meaningful way.

As seen in Figure 4, most mission focus categories of WGI organizations at least doubled their philanthropic support over the decade. There are some exceptions: general women’s health (which does not include reproductive health) grew only 30.6% over the decade; general women and girls, a catch-all sub-category, grew 40.7%; and women’s organizations serving the general population grew 46.8%.

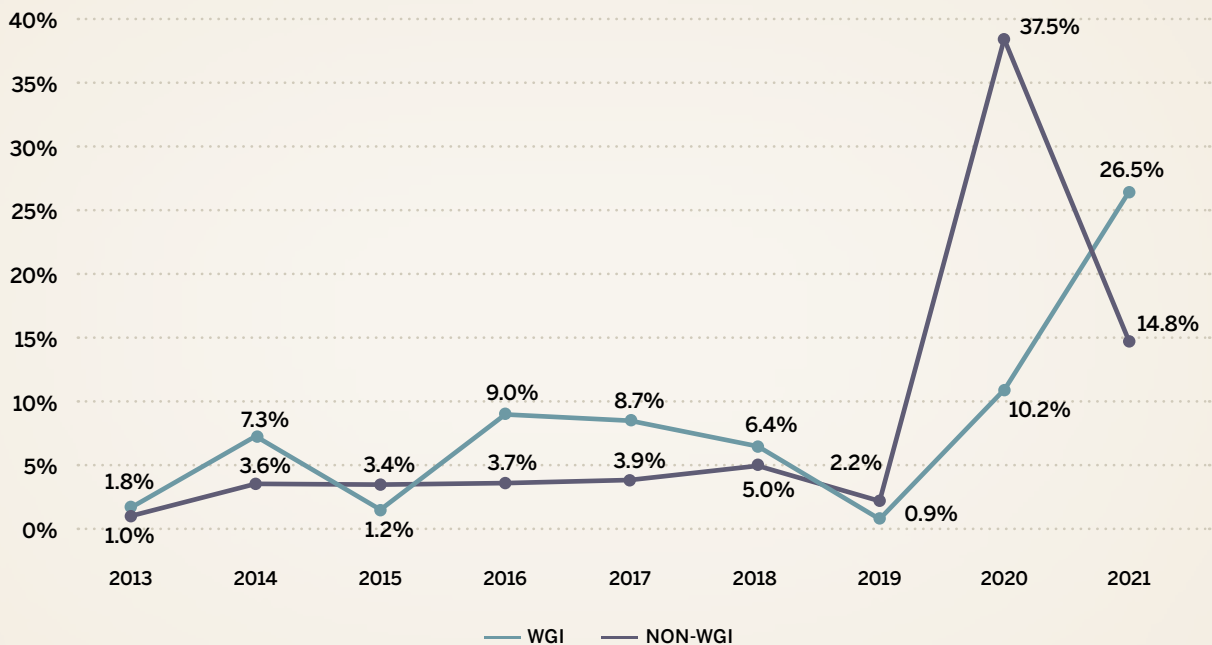
Figure 4 also highlights WGI sub-categories that experienced significant growth from 2012-2021, including women’s and girls’ civil rights and advocacy. In addition to growing the most from 2020 to 2021, this group of organizations more than doubled their philanthropic support over the decade.

FINDING 3

Support for women’s and girls’ organizations from government grants increased 26.5% from 2020 to 2021, which was more than the 14.8% growth in government grants to non-WGI organizations. However, over the decade 2012-2021, government grants to WGI organizations and to non-WGI organizations grew at nearly the same overall rate.

Government grants can be an important source of income for many charitable organizations, including those serving women and girls. From 2020 to 2021, government grants to WGI organizations increased 26.5%, far outpacing the growth in government grants to non-WGI organizations (14.8%). Figure 5 shows that despite year-to-year fluctuations, these variations roughly offset each other when considered across an entire decade.

FIGURE 5. Growth in grants to women’s and girls’ organizations compared with other charitable organizations, 2012-2021



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.

For the decade 2012-2021, government grants to WGI organizations grew at about the same rate as government grants to non-WGI organizations (96.4% and 97.4%, respectively). As Figure 5 shows, over that ten-year period there are many fluctuations. In the early years, government grants to WGI organizations typically grew faster than those to non-WGI organizations. In 2020, that trend was reversed so dramatically that it negated the other years in the decade. While WGI government grants have grown significantly from 2020 to 2021, the decade of data now shows a different picture of how WGI organizations compare to non-WGI organizations in this area.

Government grants are just one of the many indicators by which WGI organizations can be measured and tracked. Since the first WGI research was published, many of these indicators (revenue, expenses, philanthropic support, government grants, etc.) have outpaced those of non-WGI organizations in particular years—which is needed to grow giving to women’s and girls’ organizations beyond its current 1.9% of total philanthropy. However, looking at the decade of data from 2012-2021, there is now no single category of the data series tracked in these research reports for which WGI organizations have outpaced growth for non-WGI organizations over the last decade.

Implications

The Women & Girls Index (WGI) provides invaluable insights into the philanthropic support directed toward organizations serving women and girls. Although awareness of gender equity issues such as the gender pay gap and reproductive rights has grown, charitable giving to address these issues remains disproportionately small. The WGI can help fundraisers, donors, and researchers better understand this funding gap and work to close it.

In 2021, philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations reached \$10.2 billion, reflecting a 15.0% increase over 2020, but constituting just 1.9% of total charitable giving. While this growth is encouraging, it underscores the ongoing need for increased attention and resources for these causes. Research on organizations serving women and girls with intersectional identities—such as LGBTQ+ women and women of color—is in early stages but preliminary results indicate that these organizations face even greater funding disparities.

The decade-long dataset provided by the WGI allows for an examination of long-term trends, offering a broader context for understanding how giving to women’s and girls’ organizations has evolved. As societal challenges persist and new issues arise around gender equality, the WGI will remain a critical resource for informing donors and fundraisers about where their efforts can have the most impact.

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)—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—users 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.



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- ⁶ Texas State Law Library. (2024). *What does Senate Bill 8 say about abortions?* <https://www.sll.texas.gov/faqs/abortion-senate-bill-8/>
- ⁷ *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 2023* (2024). Chicago: Giving USA Foundation.
- ⁸ *Giving USA 2024* estimates that charitable organizations in the U.S. received \$552.21 billion in 2021. Using this estimate, which includes donations to religious organizations and private foundations, WGI organizations received 1.9% of total charitable giving that year. Charitable giving estimates for 2021 were initially presented in *Giving USA 2022*, but the *Giving USA 2024* figure is used because these estimates are typically revised in subsequent years as finalized IRS data become available.
- ⁹ *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 2023* (2024). Chicago: Giving USA Foundation.
- ¹⁰ *Giving USA: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the year 2021* (2022). Chicago: Giving USA Foundation.

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