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THE WOMEN & GIRLS INDEX:
MEASURING GIVING TO
WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' CAUSES



IUPUI WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY INSTITUTE
LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY

RESEARCH THAT GROWS WOMEN'S PHILANTHROPY

WRITTEN & RESEARCHED BY

Women's Philanthropy Institute

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INTRODUCTION

From increased attention on incidents of sexual harassment and assault, to calls for equal pay and representation in leadership roles, to policies affecting reproductive rights, women's and girls' causes continue to capture society's interest. Issues of inequality, including gender disparities, have been further magnified by the public health and economic crises brought on by COVID-19, as well as increasingly urgent calls for racial justice following the killing of George Floyd and other Black Americans at the hand of law enforcement. Yet, the Women & Girls Index (WGI), first introduced by the Women's Philanthropy Institute (WPI) in 2019, revealed that philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls does not appear to be keeping pace with society's interest in these issues.

The WGI is the only systematically generated, comprehensive Index of charitable organizations dedicated to women and girls in the United States. WPI developed the Index to provide those who study and practice philanthropy, as well as policy makers and the general public, with a better understanding of the landscape of women's and girls' organizations, especially the levels of private contributions they receive. The inaugural 2019 WGI report provided a snapshot of this information for 2016, the most recent year for which finalized data were available. The current report builds on this groundbreaking research by adding data for five additional years: 2012 to 2015 and 2017. This expansion offers the first longitudinal look at how philanthropic support for these organizations has changed in recent years.

The new WGI data cover a period that includes events such as the 2016 presidential election and Women's March that brought increased attention to women's and girls' causes and spurred charitable giving to issues like reproductive rights and equal representation. However, philanthropic support motivated by the #MeToo and Time's Up movements largely occurred after 2017 and is therefore not reflected in the current report. The research findings also do not include charitable giving in response to current events like the COVID-19 pandemic and associated economic recession—which have had a disproportionate impact on women—nor the widespread racial justice protests that occurred in 2020. Rather, the findings serve as a starting point for understanding trends in philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls, and will be updated on an ongoing basis as the funding environment for these organizations continues to evolve.

Development professionals and leaders of women's and girls' organizations can apply the findings from this report in benchmarking their organization against others and setting future fundraising goals. Donors can use the research to identify gaps in resources and to inform strategies that align with the unique needs and characteristics of women's and girls' organizations. Additionally, as a publicly available resource, the WGI itself allows researchers to apply a gender lens to both existing studies and future research. Individuals and organizations can access the Index at <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/wgi2020> and use it to answer their own questions on a variety of topics related to women's and girls' organizations.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls increased by 36.4%—similar to the rate of growth in philanthropic support for other charitable organizations—from 2012 to 2017.** Growth in philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations was especially strong in 2017 (9.4%).
- 2. While philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations increased across the board from 2012 to 2017, particular types of organizations—such as those focused on reproductive health (85.2%) and family and gender-based violence (41.6%)—saw especially strong growth.**
- 3. Government grants to women's and girls' organizations increased by 34.4% from 2012 to 2017, significantly more than the 14.6% rate of growth in government grants to other charitable organizations.** Other financial measures like revenue, assets, and expenses grew more slowly for women's and girls' organizations during this time.
- 4. Philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations reached \$7.1 billion in 2017, but still represents a small share of overall charitable giving (1.6%).**
- 5. Although the composition of women's and girls' organizations based on nonprofit subsector and mission focus largely held steady in 2017, organizations dedicated to general and reproductive health received an increased share of philanthropic support.**



BACKGROUND

How is the funding environment for women’s and girls’ organizations changing? Specific events, funders, and causes have shaped charitable giving to these organizations in recent years. This section highlights some of these trends, providing helpful context for the findings presented in this report.

Evolving funder landscape

Organizations dedicated to women and girls have existed for centuries. Some funding sources, such as women’s funds and foundations and key individual donors, have provided consistent support for these organizations. Melinda Gates, for example, has long backed women’s and girls’ causes as co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and founder of investment and incubation company Pivotal Ventures. In 2019, Gates pledged \$1 billion over ten years to promote gender equality in the United States.¹ In 2020, MacKenzie Scott (formerly Bezos) teamed up with Gates on the Equality Can’t Wait Challenge, which will grant \$30 million to organizations with the best ideas for expanding women’s power and influence in the U.S. by 2030.² Since the fall of 2019, Scott has donated nearly \$1.7 billion to more than 100 nonprofits, with an emphasis on those committed to equity and those led by women, minorities, and LGBTQ individuals.³

Other funders have backed away from their commitment to women’s and girls’ causes in recent years. For instance, the NoVo Foundation—led by Warren Buffett’s son Peter and Peter’s wife Jennifer—announced in 2020 that it was ending two of its major grantmaking efforts that focused on women and girls. The foundation will eliminate its Ending Violence Against Girls and Women program and turn its Advancing Adolescent Girls’ Rights initiative into a stand-alone nonprofit, which it hopes other grantmakers will support. A drop in the value of Berkshire Hathaway shares (the foundation’s main funding source), as well as leadership changes and philosophical shifts, have been cited as reasons for the cuts.⁴ In terms of dollars, NoVo pledged \$90 million for women and girls of color in 2016, and granted \$80 million to end gender-based violence during that past 10 years.⁵

Philanthropic response to the 2016 election

While the aforementioned examples highlight patterns of consistency and change in philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations, they took place outside the 2012 to 2017 period on which this report's findings are based. Other significant events that occurred during this period are captured in the updated WGI data—including the 2016 presidential election. This election was significant because it resulted in Hillary Clinton—the first female nominee from a major political party—losing to Donald Trump, with one of the widest gender gaps in voting history.⁶ Following the election, unprecedented numbers of Americans joined social movements like the Women's March, which addressed gender equality and reproductive rights, among other values perceived to be under threat by the incoming administration.⁷

Americans also contributed to progressive organizations, including those dedicated to women's and girls' causes, in large numbers following the 2016 presidential election. For instance, Planned Parenthood received more than 300,000 donations—40 times its normal rate—in the six weeks following the election. A 2018 WPI study also found progressive nonprofits that engaged with key issues discussed during the presidential campaign saw a significant increase in donations immediately following the election.⁸ The study revealed this increase was primarily driven by female donors.⁹ While the progressive nonprofits examined in the 2018 study are not equivalent to women's and girls' organizations, there is some overlap, particularly with respect to those focused on reproductive health.

In addition to traditional donations, Americans engaged in other methods of giving to women's and girls' organizations that have gained popularity in recent years. For example, the Women's March, drew on crowdfunding to support event expenses, raising more than \$2 million via GoFundMe.¹⁰ The surge in donations to progressive nonprofits following the 2016 presidential election also applied to giving from donor-advised funds (DAFs). Schwab Charitable, for instance, reported a 34% increase in donations to its sponsored DAFs from 2016 to 2017, and Planned Parenthood rose to the second spot on the organization's list of top DAF grant recipients.¹¹

However, DAF giving to women's and girls' causes appears to have been on the rise before the 2016 presidential election. The 2019 WGI report showed that during the four-year period from 2012 to 2015, organizations dedicated to women and girls received approximately 3.1% of DAF grant dollars included in the sample for a Giving USA Foundation study. This is almost double the 1.6% of total philanthropic support that women's and girls' organizations received in 2016. Additionally, the share of total DAF grant dollars going to women's and girls' organizations increased steadily during this period—from 2.7% in 2012 to 3.3% in 2015.¹²



Impact of the current crises on charitable giving

Although the findings from this report focus on 2012 to 2017, it is impossible to ignore the current funding environment for women's and girls' organizations, which has been shaped by multiple crises. Numerous reports indicate that women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding economic downturn. From comprising the majority of essential workers to accepting greater caretaking responsibilities for children and other relatives, women have been on the frontlines of the crisis at work and at home.¹³ Women have also experienced higher rates of job loss, poverty, and domestic abuse, while their access to important services like reproductive healthcare has been greatly diminished. Some national funders have dedicated resources to meeting the unique needs of women and girls resulting from the pandemic; community foundations, women's funds and foundations, and giving circles have also stepped up to respond at a local level.¹⁴

Demonstrations for racial justice following the killing of unarmed Black Americans, including women like Breonna Taylor, by white police officers have drawn increased attention to chronic underfunding for women and girls of color. A 2020 study found that grants to women and girls of color totaled \$356 million—about 0.5% of the \$66.9 billion contributed by foundations in 2017.¹⁵ To address the lack of resources dedicated to this population, a group of Black women leaders created the Black Girl Freedom Fund in 2020. Led by Grantmakers for Girls of Color and with collaborators including #MeToo founder Tamara Burke, the campaign seeks to direct \$1 billion over the next ten years to helping Black women and girls succeed.¹⁶

STUDY METHODS

This study builds on the original 2016 data presented in the 2019 WGI report in two key ways. First, the study adds historical data for the years 2012 through 2015. Second, it provides new data for 2017, the most recent year for which finalized Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data on nonprofit organizations is available. This expansion offers a first look at how the landscape of nonprofits dedicated to women and girls in the U.S. has evolved in recent years. For more information on the data sources and processes used in developing and updating the Index, please see the Methodology section at the end of this report. The list of names and Employer Identification Numbers of organizations included in the WGI is available upon request from <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/wgi2020>.

While the Index can be used to conduct a variety of analyses, the data do not allow women's and girls' organizations to be further broken down based on the sub-populations they serve (e.g., women and girls of color, LGBTQ+ women and girls, women and girls who are low income). To provide further insight on specific populations and how the funding environment impacted their work overall from 2012 to 2017, interviews were conducted with leaders of four women's and girls' organizations representing a variety of ages and focus areas. Table 1 summarizes key features of the interviewees and the organizations they represent.



Table 1: Interview sources

Name/role	Organization	Year founded	Primary focus areas	Mission
Alejandra Castillo, CEO	YWCA USA	1858	Human services, family and gender-based violence	YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. ¹⁷
Melissa Schwartz, Chief Development Officer	NARAL Pro-Choice America	1969	Advocacy, reproductive health	For over 50 years, NARAL Pro-Choice America and its network of state affiliates and chapters have fought to protect and advance reproductive freedom—including access to abortion, contraception, and paid family leave—for every body. NARAL is powered by its more than 2.5 million members from every state and congressional district in the country, representing the 7 in 10 Americans who believe every person should have the freedom to make the best decision for themselves about if, when, and how to raise a family. ¹⁸
Deborah Singer, Chief Marketing Officer	Girls Who Code	2012	Education (STEM), employment	Girls Who Code is an international non-profit organization working to close the gender gap in technology. Our programs educate, equip, and inspire girls with the computing skills they'll need to pursue 21st century opportunities. ¹⁹
Tammy Tibbetts, Co-founder and CEO	She's the First	2009	Education, international	She's the First fights for a world where every girl chooses her own future. We team up with local organizations to make sure girls are educated, respected, and heard. ²⁰

While the interview questions centered on what these organizations experienced between 2012 and 2017, interviewees were also asked about the unique circumstances of 2020. The interviews highlight important themes in the data, but reflect the experiences of particular organizations rather than all nonprofits serving women and girls.

FINDINGS

The findings included here illustrate how the characteristics of women's and girls' organizations changed from 2012 to 2017, with a particular focus on levels of philanthropic support. To offer context, they compare WGI organizations with non-WGI organizations, as well as charitable organizations overall and the traditional nonprofit subsectors.¹

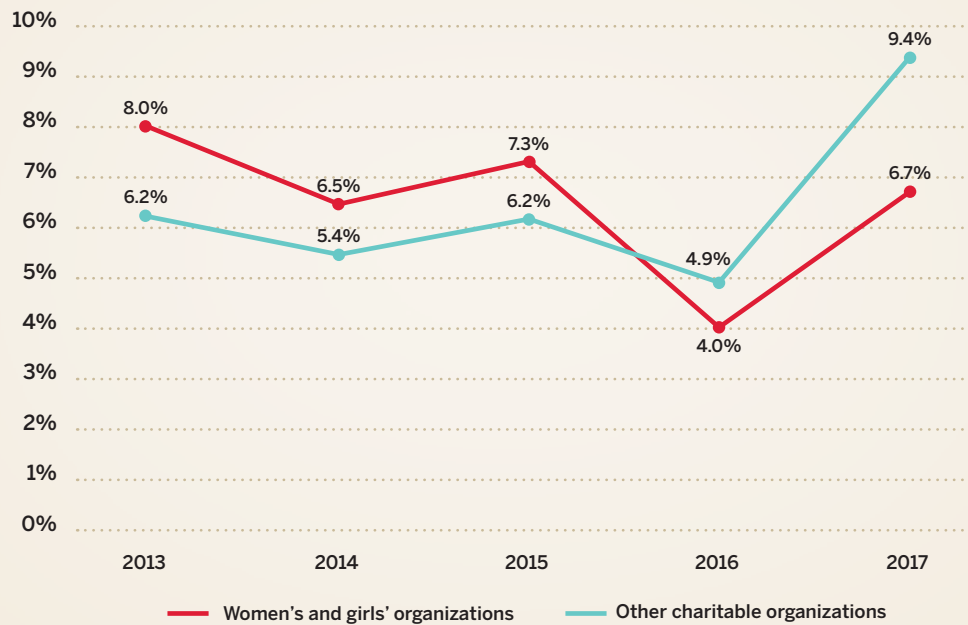
Finding 1: Philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls increased by 36.4%—similar to the rate of growth in philanthropic support for other charitable organizations—from 2012 to 2017. Growth in philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations was especially strong in 2017 (9.4%).

Organizations dedicated to women and girls saw a steady increase in philanthropic support from 2012 to 2017. Total growth in philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations (36.4%) was very similar to total growth in philanthropic support for non-WGI organizations (36.9%) during this time.

¹Throughout this report, "WGI organizations" is used interchangeably with "organizations dedicated to women and girls" and "women's and girls' organizations" to refer to organizations included in the WGI.



Figure 1: Growth in philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations compared with other charitable organizations (2012-2017)



Note: Year-over-year growth rates are not cumulatively additive, so the sum of the values in Figure 1 does not equal the total growth rates mentioned in the text.

As seen in Figure 1, year-over-year growth in philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls followed a pattern similar to that of other charitable organizations from 2012 to 2017. However, women's and girls' organizations experienced an especially strong increase in philanthropic support in 2017 (9.4% compared with 6.7% for non-WGI organizations).

Growth in philanthropic support for the women's and girls' organizations interviewed varied from relatively flat to very strong during the 2012-2017 period based on their areas of focus, main funding sources, and other factors. Girls Who Code, which is primarily supported by corporations, saw very strong growth from 2012 to 2017. Chief Marketing Officer Deborah Singer attributed this growth to the organization developing new programs and priorities during this time: "We expanded our programming, which helped us tap into new funding sources and grow our donor base. We also launched...more advocacy and culture change initiatives as well beyond direct services."

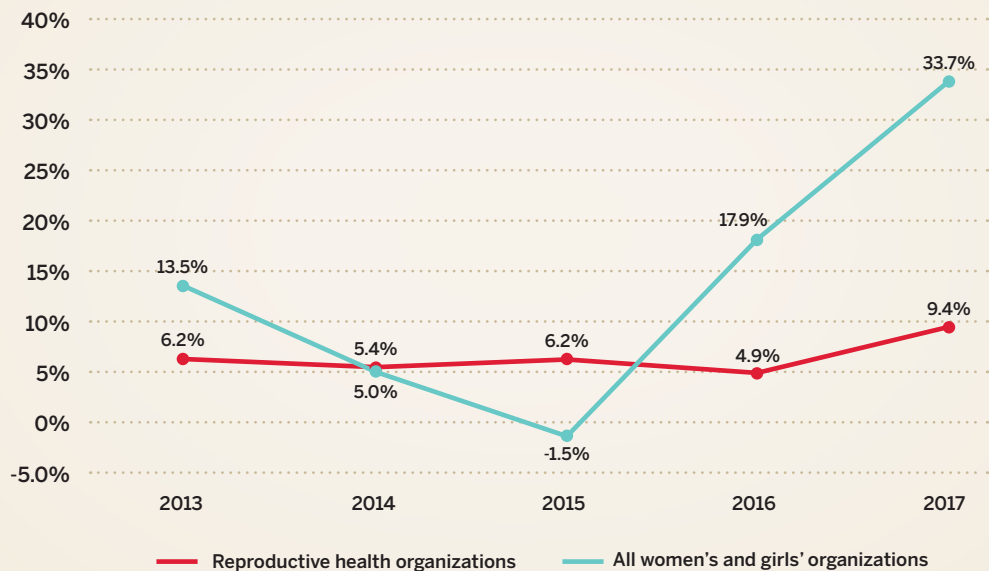
She's the First experienced a steady increase in philanthropic support from 2012 to 2017. As a smaller, more grassroots organization, Co-founder and CEO Tammy Tibbetts cited donor stewardship and an engaging social media presence as key factors in its growth: "We are very good at relationship management and do so in a personal way that our donors...keep coming back. And how we tell stories and present our impact in girls' voices...we're kind of on the leading edge of that."

Finding 2: While philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations increased across the board from 2012 to 2017, particular types of organizations—such as those focused on reproductive health (85.2%) and family and gender-based violence (41.6%)—saw especially strong growth.

Organizations dedicated to women and girls focus on a variety of areas—from health and human services to education and the arts. According to the WGI data, all types of women’s and girls’ organizations saw steady growth in philanthropic support from 2012 to 2017. Nonetheless, increases in philanthropic support for certain kinds of organizations are especially notable due to their magnitude and because they represent higher dollar amounts.

For example, reproductive health organizations experienced a tremendous increase in philanthropic support from 2012 to 2017. At 85.2%, total growth in philanthropic support for these organizations far surpassed that of women’s and girls’ organizations overall during this time.

Figure 2: Growth in philanthropic support for reproductive health organizations compared with all women’s and girls’ organizations (2012-2017)



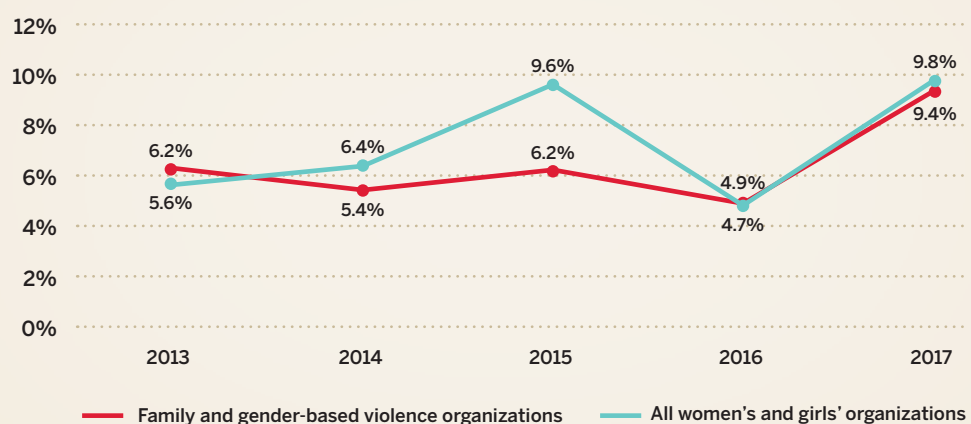
Note: Year-over-year growth rates are not cumulatively additive, so the sum of the values in Figure 2 does not equal the total growth rates mentioned in the text.

As seen in Figure 2, philanthropic support for reproductive health organizations increased by 33.7% in 2017 alone. This growth rate is more than three times that of women’s and girls’ organizations overall (9.4%) during the same year.



NARAL Pro-Choice America, which is primarily funded by individual contributions, experienced a sharp increase in philanthropic support in 2017. Chief Development Officer Melissa Schwartz stated that this spike can be completely traced to fear of restrictions on reproductive health services following the 2016 presidential election. Schwartz explained that responding to the influx of donations during and since this time has required the organization to scale up its fundraising and organizing resources: “We needed more capacity to not just...do the solicitation, but also steward those folks... Then, because we are an advocacy organization, to expand our non-fundraising organizing capacity, so communicating with our members on actions they can take.”

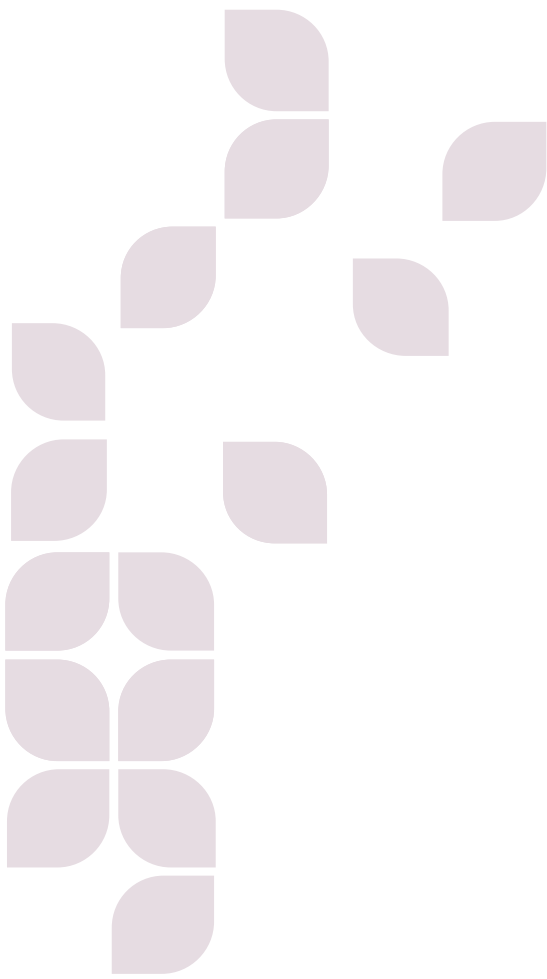
Figure 3: Growth in philanthropic support for family and gender-based violence organizations compared with all women’s and girls’ organizations (2012-2017)



Note: Year-over-year growth rates are not cumulatively additive, so the sum of the values in Figure 3 does not equal the total growth rates mentioned in the text.

Organizations focused on family and gender-based violence (which includes domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and related issues) also saw greater total growth in philanthropic support (41.6%) than women’s and girls’ organizations overall (36.4%) from 2012 to 2017. However, Figure 3 shows that compared with reproductive health organizations, year-over-year growth in philanthropic support for family and gender-based violence organizations tracked more closely with women’s and girls’ organizations overall during this time.

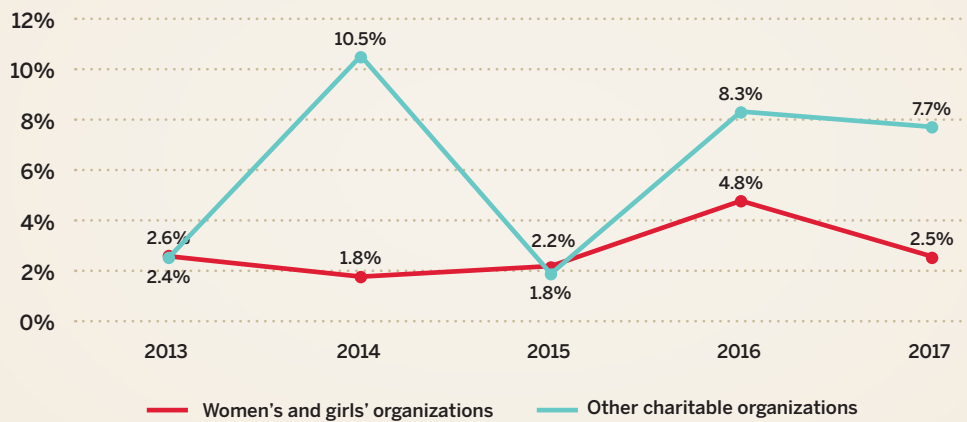
Alejandra Castillo, CEO of YWCA USA, described how fundraising for domestic violence and sexual assault can be a challenge because, like many issues related to women and girls, these topics are still considered taboo. She observed that while the organization experienced momentum for greater policy advocacy and network activation in 2017, it did not see a major spike in contributions: “I think what we saw was definitely a resurgence of women as the anchor of more attention, particularly after the Women’s March, and dollars that were not necessarily long term. They were more episodic and they were responding to the times.”



Finding 3: Government grants to women’s and girls’ organizations increased by 34.4% from 2012 to 2017, significantly more than the 14.6% rate of growth in government grants to other charitable organizations. Other financial measures like revenue, assets, and expenses grew more slowly for women’s and girls’ organizations during this time.

Organizations dedicated to women and girls also saw a substantial increase in government grants from 2012 to 2017. During this period, total growth in government grants to women’s and girls’ organizations (34.4%) exceeded total growth in government grants to non-WGI organizations (14.6%) by a wide margin.

Figure 4: Growth in government grants to women’s and girls’ organizations compared with other charitable organizations (2012-2017)



Note: Year-over-year growth rates are not cumulatively additive, so the sum of the values in Figure 4 does not equal the total growth rates mentioned in the text.

Figure 4 indicates that compared with levels of philanthropic support, year-over-year growth in government grants to women’s and girls’ organizations and other charitable organizations followed more divergent trends from 2012 to 2017. However, it is worth noting that organizations dedicated to women and girls receive a small amount of government grants in terms of dollars (\$3.9 billion in 2017), which can make fluctuations in this funding source appear more pronounced.

Castillo explained that there was a greater flow of government grants to women's and girls' organizations during the Obama administration, particularly under the Violence Against Women Act, which supports survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. These appropriations provided a stable source of funding for organizations like YWCAs that provide housing for survivors: "The amount of money is very important, but the other thing is the predictability of the money... We're a supplier of services...so if the money is not flowing, if there is an interruption, it has a devastating effect."

Beyond philanthropic support and government grants, other financial measures grew more slowly for organizations dedicated to women and girls than other charitable organizations from 2012 to 2017. For example, total revenue increased by 25.0% for women's and girls' organizations compared with 31.3% for non-WGI organizations; total assets rose by 22.6% for women's and girls' organizations compared with 35.5% for non-WGI organizations; and total expenses grew by 21.2% for women's and girls' organizations compared with 30.0% for non-WGI organizations.

In addition to analyzing changes in philanthropic support and other financial measures over time, the new WGI data offer an updated picture of key characteristics of women's and girls' organizations in 2017, the most recent year for which data are available. The final two findings (4 and 5) provide an overview of the landscape of organizations dedicated to women and girls during 2017.



Finding 4: Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations reached \$71 billion in 2017, but still represents a small share of overall charitable giving (1.6%).

The updated WGI contains nearly 47,000 charitable organizations that received more than \$7 billion in philanthropic support in 2017. As seen in Table 2, this represents a sizeable, but relatively small, share of total charitable organizations and overall charitable giving. Women’s and girls’ organizations made up 3.4% of total charitable organizations and accounted for 1.6% of overall charitable giving in 2017.ⁱⁱ These percentages have remained consistent with those for the previous years included in the Index (2012-2016).

Table 2: Summary statistics of women’s and girls’ organizations (2017)

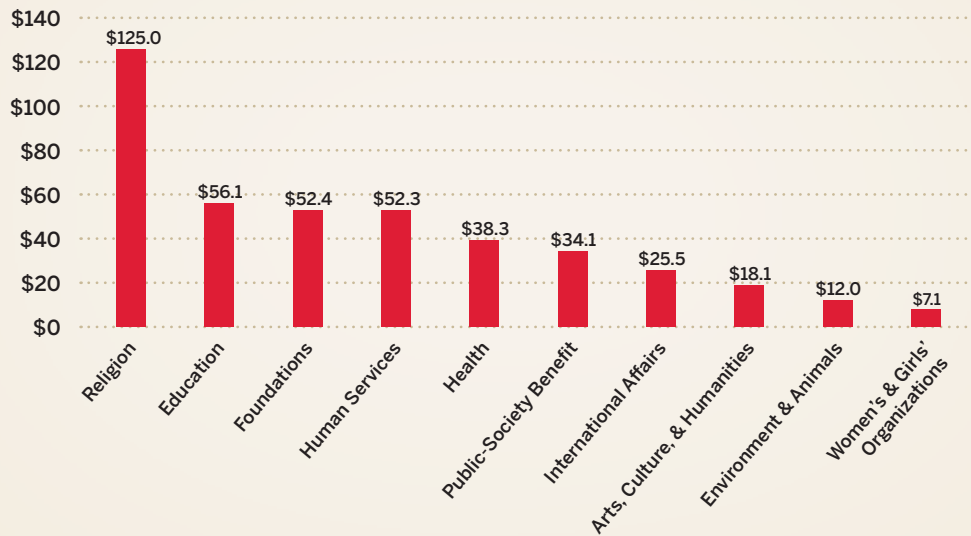
	WGI organizations	Total charitable organizations	WGI organizations as a % of total charitable organizations
Number of organizations	46,907	1,392,569	3.4%
Philanthropic support, <i>Giving USA</i>	\$71 billion	\$432.1 billion	1.6%
Government grants	\$3.9 billion	\$181.5 billion	2.2%
Revenue	\$22.3 billion	\$2.3 trillion	1.0%
Expenses	\$20.9 billion	\$2.1 trillion	1.0%
Assets	\$46.9 billion	\$4.4 trillion	1.1%

Note: To provide a more accurate estimate of the entire scope of charitable giving, the 2017 total giving figure from *Giving USA 2020*, which includes donations to religious organizations and private foundations, was used to generate this percentage. Other figures in the table (number of organizations, government grants, revenue, expenses, and assets) were calculated using available data from all 501(c)(3) organizations filing with the IRS.

Compared with philanthropic support (1.6%) and government grants (2.2%), organizations dedicated to women and girls continue to make up a smaller share of total charitable organizations based on other financial measures like revenue, expenses, and assets (1.0-1.1%).

ⁱⁱ *Giving USA 2020* estimates that charitable organizations in the U.S. received \$432.1 billion in 2017. Using this estimate, which includes donations to religious organizations and private foundations, WGI organizations received 1.6% of total charitable giving that year. Charitable giving estimates for 2017 were initially presented in *Giving USA 2018*, but the *Giving USA 2020* figure is used because these estimates are typically revised in subsequent years as finalized IRS data become available.

Figure 5: Philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations compared with traditional nonprofit subsectors (2017, in billions)



Note: Subsector figures are 2017 values from *Giving USA 2020*. Charitable giving estimates for 2017 were initially presented in *Giving USA 2018*, but the *Giving USA 2020* figures are used because these estimates are typically revised in subsequent years as finalized IRS data become available.

Figure 5 shows that in terms of dollars, philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations still makes up a fraction of that received by organizations in traditional nonprofit subsectors like education, health, and the arts. In 2017, organizations dedicated to women and girls received around 60% of the philanthropic support received by the smallest nonprofit subsector (environment) and around 6% of the philanthropic support received by the largest nonprofit subsector (religion).ⁱⁱⁱ

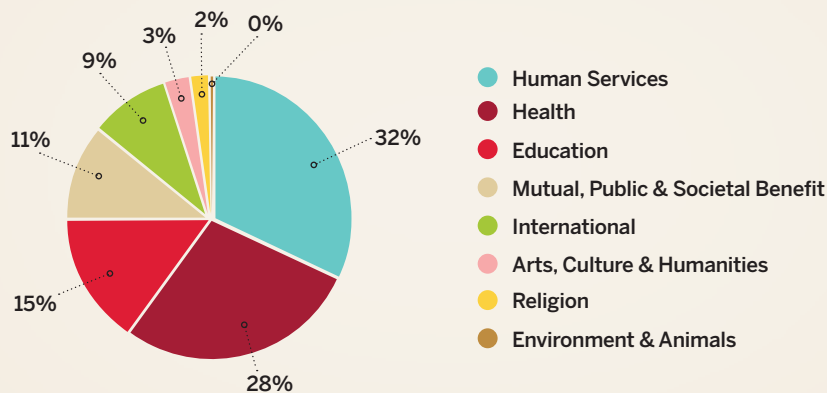
ⁱⁱⁱ As reported in *Giving USA*, excluding giving to individuals.



Finding 5: Although the composition of women’s and girls’ organizations based on nonprofit subsector and mission focus largely held steady in 2017, organizations dedicated to general and reproductive health received an increased share of philanthropic support.

Organizations dedicated to women and girls focus on a variety of areas and can be found in all nonprofit subsectors. While the subsector composition of women’s and girls’ organizations remained relatively consistent based on levels of philanthropic support from 2016 to 2017, there were some shifts.

Figure 6: Subsector distribution of women’s and girls’ organizations by philanthropic support (2017)

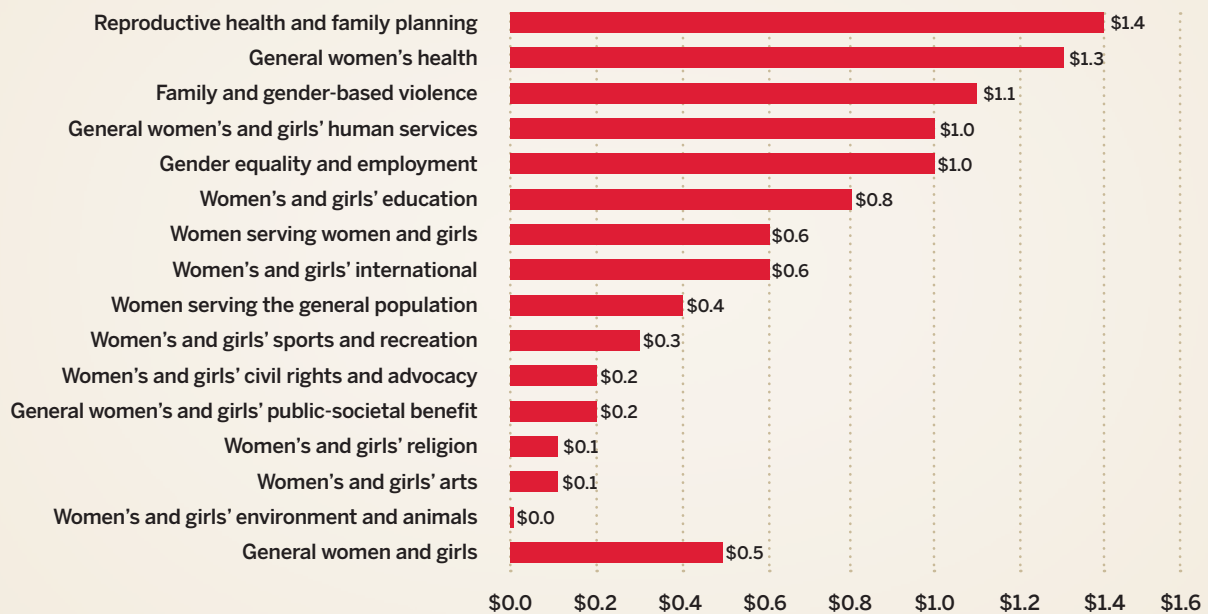


Note: Subsector classifications are based on IRS data from 2017. The amount of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in each subsector is included in parentheses. Women’s and girls’ organizations in the environment and animals subsector received \$20.5 million in 2017; this appears as \$0.0 billion in the figure due to rounding.

Figure 6 indicates that the human services subsector continues to receive the greatest share of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations, at 32% in both 2016 and 2017. YWCA is an example of a women’s and girls’ organization in this subsector. Nonprofits in the health subsector (Planned Parenthood, for example) made up a larger portion of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in 2017 (28%) than in 2016 (25%). Meanwhile, the share of philanthropic support received by women’s and girls’ organizations in the education subsector, like Smith College, decreased from 17% in 2016 to 15% in 2017.

Figure 7 offers a more nuanced breakdown of philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls based on mission focus.^{iv} Although organizations often have multiple focus areas and these categories are not always mutually exclusive, examining the missions of women’s and girls’ organizations provides more detail than just nonprofit subsector.^v

Figure 7: Mission focus of women’s and girls’ organizations by philanthropic support (2017, in billions)



Note: Mission focus categories are based on IRS data from 2017 and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Therefore, adding up the dollars in this figure exceeds the \$7.1 billion total of philanthropic support for women’s and girls’ organizations in 2017. 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 \$20.7 million in 2017; this appears as \$0.0 in the figure due to rounding.

^{iv} See the Methodology section at the end of this report for more information on how these categories were developed.

^v General women’s health includes women’s and girls’ organizations in the health subsector that do not focus on reproductive health and family planning. General women’s and girls’ human services includes women’s and girls’ organizations in the human services subsector that do not focus on family and gender-based violence. General women’s and girls’ public and societal benefit includes women’s and girls’ organizations in the public and societal benefit subsector that do not focus on gender equality and employment or civil rights and advocacy. Otherwise, the mission focus categories are not mutually exclusive.



In terms of dollars, reproductive health and family planning organizations surpassed general women's health organizations as the top recipient of philanthropic support for WGI organizations in 2017. Philanthropic support for reproductive health and family planning organizations increased from \$1.0 billion in 2016 to \$1.4 billion in 2017, while philanthropic support for general women's health organizations rose from \$1.2 billion to \$1.3 billion during the same period. Organizations focused on family and gender-based violence continued to receive the third-highest levels of philanthropic support, increasing from \$1.0 billion in 2016 to \$1.1 billion in 2017.



DISCUSSION

The 2019 WGI report revealed that while women's and girls' causes have captured increased public attention, philanthropic support for these organizations in 2016 did not necessarily reflect this consciousness. The updated WGI data presented in the current report allow this trend to be examined over a multi-year period. The data show that although women's and girls' organizations have seen a steady increase in philanthropic support from 2012 to 2017, private contributions to these organizations continue to comprise a relatively small share of overall charitable giving.

Philanthropic support for organizations dedicated to women and girls surpassed \$7 billion in 2017, but still only makes up 1.6% percent of total charitable dollars. Nonetheless, especially strong growth in giving to WGI organizations in 2017—and to particular types of organizations like those focused on reproductive health—could indicate that a shift is underway as women's and girls' causes have remained in the spotlight during recent years.

There was also strong growth in government grants to women's and girls' organizations from 2012 to 2017, which provide an important source of revenue for some of these organizations in addition to philanthropic support. Yet, the interviews conducted for this report reveal that public funding can fluctuate depending on the priorities of the current administration. Government grants can also involve burdensome requirements, particularly for smaller nonprofits—which those dedicated to women and girls tend to be. The updated WGI data show that women's and girls' organizations continue to trail non-WGI organizations based on other financial measures such as revenue, assets, and expenses. Indeed, interviews with organizations dedicated to women and girls show that these nonprofits face ongoing challenges associated with their capacity to fundraise and respond to the tremendous need for the services they provide.

The WGI data indicate that women's and girls' organizations in the human services subsector continue to receive the greatest portion of philanthropic support, although those in the health subsector received an increased share of private contributions in 2017. In terms of mission, WGI organizations focused on reproductive health surpassed general women's health as the top recipient of philanthropic support in 2017. These patterns indicate that providing direct services remains a primary way that nonprofits support women and girls. However, interviews reveal that, in recent years, women's and girls' organizations have begun to place a greater emphasis on other approaches as well. In addition to programming, leaders of WGI organizations called for more institutional investment in infrastructure, policy, and advocacy to create change for women and girls moving forward.



IMPLICATIONS

Although the findings discussed above are based on the updated WGI data from 2012 to 2017, philanthropy practitioners, including funders and leaders of women's and girls' organizations, can apply key insights in responding to the challenges and opportunities of the present environment. The current crises have illuminated the extent to which women's and girls' organizations address the intersectionality of race, gender, and other areas of inequality. Deborah Singer noted that Girls Who Code has seen the disproportionate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the population it serves. She explained that women and girls, especially those of color, have been infected by the virus at higher rates, are being pushed out of the workforce, and are being left behind by the education system: "I think the opportunity is to tell that story and to help people see who is being impacted, and understand that when they want to...provide emergency relief for COVID, they need to think about funding women's and girls' organizations."

Alejandra Castillo stated that YWCA USA is well positioned to address intersectional issues, but will require ongoing support to ensure sustainability beyond the current crises:

We stand at the intersection of race and gender. So the confluence of crises... whether it's COVID-19, the recession, the national reckoning on racial justice, really puts us at the center of everything that's happening... We've been doing this work out of our own conviction without any external funding, but it's very nice to see that we are now getting some funding. The cautionary note is how long will the attention stay on these issues?

Castillo implored funders to apply a gender lens in allocating resources for racial justice in particular: "On the racial justice side, you've seen many of the male-led organizations receiving a lot of the dollars... When you do a further analysis of the women-led organizations, particularly the women of color-led organizations, how many of those dollars have reached us? Not that many."

Leaders of the women's and girls' organizations interviewed for this report stressed the importance of funders exercising flexibility and trust in their grantmaking during the current crises and beyond. While these organizations' experiences with funders varied, the interviewees agreed that it is critical for funders to provide the ability for grantees to pivot to address the challenges of the moment. This includes offering more unrestricted funding that allows organizations to spend dollars as they see fit and loosening reporting requirements. The interviewees also encouraged foundations and corporations to provide more opportunities for matching individual donations to encourage giving and further the impact of contributions.

The women's and girls' organization leaders interviewed also emphasized the role of small gifts—at any time, but especially in the present environment. Tammy Tibbetts of She's the First shared: "I have continued to be blown away by the generosity of everyday people and just how people who have so many other demands on their lives right now still are showing up for...girls around the world." Interviewees also noted the value of engaging supporters in non-monetary activities, especially for advocacy organizations like NARAL Pro-Choice America. Melissa Schwartz stated that involving donors in tasks like phone banking and sending postcards has helped ingrain them more deeply into the organization's mission.

Beyond informing the practice of philanthropy, the WGI makes a significant contribution to scholarship on giving to women and girls. The Index itself is an innovative and accessible tool that scholars can use to apply a gender lens to existing studies. The updated WGI includes multiple years of data, which provide a basis for examining trends over time. The Index also facilitates the exploration of new research topics. Individuals and organizations can access this publicly available resource at <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/wgi2020> and use it to answer their own questions in a variety of areas related to women's and girls' organizations.

WPI will continue to update the WGI at regular intervals, with the goal of tracking changes in philanthropic support for women's and girls' organizations, along with other key characteristics. Future research using updated data from the Index will offer insight on how more recent events like the #MeToo and Time's Up movements, COVID-19 pandemic and accompanying economic recession, and national reckoning on racial justice have shaped patterns of charitable giving to these organizations. These data are critical to further understanding the role of philanthropy in advancing gender equality during a time when equity issues have become increasingly visible in society.



METHODOLOGY

Data sources

Several data sources formed the basis of the WGI, the most important of which were e-file Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data available on Amazon Web Services, which provided details for 306,545 charitable organizations filing IRS Forms 990 and 990-EZ electronically circa fiscal year 2017. These data were supplemented with 93,673 digitized Form 990 paper returns provided by Candid (formerly GuideStar), and 17,581 Form 990 and 990-EZ returns from IRS Return Transaction Files (RTF). For organizations not filing an IRS Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, a combination of 527,487 charitable organizations filing Form 990-N and 447,283 “non-filing”^{vi} registered charitable organizations were used to gather further information on typically smaller and religious organizations, for a total population of 1,392,569 registered 501(c)(3) domestic charitable organizations.

Inclusion criteria

The researchers originally determined which types of organizations should be defined as women’s and girls’ organizations for the inaugural Index in 2019. This same determination was used for the updated WGI. To be included in the Index, organizations had to meet one of the following criteria:

- The organization is *dedicated to serving primarily women and girls* (for example, Planned Parenthood and Girls Inc.).
- The organization is a *collective of women and girls that serves general philanthropic purposes* (for example, Junior Leagues and women’s auxiliaries).

These criteria may seem straightforward, but measuring giving to women and girls is quite challenging since many charitable organizations have multiple programs that serve different populations. As such, the researchers exercised a certain degree of judgment in creating the WGI. For example, organizations that mainly serve survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault are included in the Index. While men, boys, and non-binary individuals are also impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault, the vast majority of those who receive services from organizations dedicated to these issues are women and girls. On the other hand, organizations that serve a relatively equal number of women and men or girls and boys were not included in the WGI. Boys & Girls Clubs and Big Brothers Big Sisters, for instance, were excluded because the majority of their programming is designed for children of all genders.

^{vi} Non-filing organizations are defined as registered tax-exempt organizations that did not file any type of Form 990 between the fiscal years ending in 2015 and 2017, most of which are religion-related charitable organizations exempt from annual 990 filing requirements.

Rule development

Informed by a review of the relevant literature and published organization listings, the researchers developed initial sets of inclusionary words and phrases (key words), exclusionary words and phrases (stop words), and other selection criteria to establish logical “rule” conditions to identify potential women’s and girls’ organizations for the Index in 2019. Generating the final set of nearly 100 individual rules for the WGI was an iterative process. Initial sets of rules were first applied to organizations’ names, mission statements, and other identifiers. Manual verification of a random sample of the results led to modification of the initial rules and the creation of new rules. For most rules in the final set, a minimum of 100 organizations were hand-checked to confirm the accuracy of at least 80% of the organizations captured through each unique combination of key words, stop words, and other criteria.

Following the verification process from 2019, the final set of rules were applied to the full population of charitable organizations for multiple years, resulting in an expanded set of 56,083 WGI organizations in 2020 (compared with 45,008 in 2019). The added organizations represent those for which there were no available data for the 2017 filing year. In total, more than 9,000 possible organizations were hand-checked in 2019, including verification of more than 90% of total WGI revenue and assets. In addition to the 9,000+ organizations hand-checked for the 2019 Index, 786 more organizations were hand-checked for the updated 2020 Index, with priority given to those organizations with larger contributions, revenue, expenses, or assets.

The final set of WGI rules and their sequencing are available upon request. The rules generally break down into the following 16 categories (exclusionary rules not shown here):

- General women’s health
- Reproductive health and family planning
- Family and gender-based violence
- Women’s and girls’ education
- Women’s and girls’ human services
- Gender equality and employment
- Women serving women and girls
- Women’s and girls’ international
- Women serving the general population
- Women’s and girls’ sports and recreation
- Women’s and girls’ civil rights and advocacy
- Women’s and girls’ public-societal benefit
- Women’s and girls’ religion
- Women’s and girls’ arts
- Women’s and girls’ environment and animals
- General women and girls



To measure philanthropic support for WGI organizations, the direct support value was used for charitable organizations filing IRS Forms 990 (Part VIII, Lines 1b, 1c and 1f). Total contributions, gifts, and grants was used for organizations filing Form 990-EZ (Part I, Line 1). A direct contribution per organization estimate for each filing was used for those filing Forms 990-N (based on the average direct support value among Form 990 and Form 990-EZ filing organizations with less than \$50,000 in revenue for the same filing year). No direct support estimate was used for non-filers.

For the 2020 Index, the researchers worked with Candid to determine the number of organizations and total amount of dollars granted from private foundations that virtually only support WGI organizations—defined as granting 80%+ of identified dollars to WGI organizations over a three-year period. This investigation into private foundation funding was undertaken to verify that the Index was not excluding private foundations that primarily support women’s and girls’ organizations. This work identified very few foundations; the foundations identified were typically small and primarily supported women’s colleges. These organizations are not included in the WGI, but are available upon request.

The list of names and Employer Identification Numbers of WGI organizations is available on request from <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/wgi>. Researchers only ask that the following citation accompany any use of the WGI: Women’s Philanthropy Institute, Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy & DataLake Nonprofit Research. (2020). *Women & Girls Index* [Data file]. <https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/wgi>.

At the time of publication, the most recent year of WGI data was primarily based on registered 501(c)(3) domestic charitable organizations filing IRS Forms 990 for the fiscal year ending in 2017 as of August 2020. Previous or subsequent fiscal year information was used when 2017 data was unavailable. However, the WGI is a trailhead for new paths of research and is intended to be expanded and updated to provide further insight on past and future charitable activity.

Limitations

Despite extensive effort, there are certain caveats to this research due to the subjective nature of identifying and classifying organizations dedicated to women and girls, as well as information and resource limitations. While more than 90% of total revenues represented in the Index were manually verified, the majority of WGI organizations were selected and categorized by rules alone, and therefore subject to rule error rates. Additionally, organizations were only hand-checked for inclusion in the WGI, not for alignment with the specific rule categories through which they were pulled. The researchers expect error rates to be minimal, but these factors could potentially affect the accuracy of dollar estimates for the Index and the rule categories.

The datasets used to generate the WGI do not include financial data on religious congregations or any data on private foundations, although work was done in 2020 to verify that private foundations primarily supporting women's and girls' organizations are limited. The Index tracks total philanthropic support for WGI organizations; the data cannot be disaggregated by funding source (e.g., individuals, foundations, corporations). Finally, only organization names and EINs are available for download. Future updates to the Index are currently under consideration by WPI.



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