

Inside Philanthropy



The State of
American Philanthropy

Giving for
Women and Girls

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ABOUT INSIDE PHILANTHROPY

Inside Philanthropy is a digital media site that covers the world of charitable giving. We report daily on foundations, major donors, and trends in philanthropy. Through our GrantFinder resource, we also profile and track thousands of funders working across key issue areas and geographic regions. Inside Philanthropy is supported by reader subscriptions and advertising. We do not receive funding from any other source. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com

ABOUT THE STATE OF AMERICAN PHILANTHROPY

The State of American Philanthropy is a series of background papers on important topics and trends in U.S. philanthropy. The papers draw on past research and reporting by IP writers, as well as new interviews, grantmaking data, and other sources. Learn more at insidephilanthropy.com/state-of-american-philanthropy.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There has been a slow and steady uptick in philanthropic support over recent years to advance gender equity and improve the lives of women and girls. An array of funders give in this area, including private foundations, community foundations, grantmaking intermediaries, individual donors, and corporations. This paper analyzes trends in giving for women and girls. Key takeaways include:

Who's Giving

- Private and family foundations are prominent in funding for nonprofits focused on issues specific to women and girls, especially in the area of reproductive healthcare and rights, the largest segment of the women and girls nonprofit space.
- Corporations are major supporters of women and girls nonprofits concentrating on programmatic concerns like STEM education and economic inclusion and entrepreneurship.
- Women's foundations, funds and giving circles play an essential role in supporting women and girls, especially at the local level.
- Major donors are highly active in supporting women and girls, including billionaires like MacKenzie Scott and Melinda Gates. Groups like the Women Donors Network and the Women Moving Millions play an important role in galvanizing giving for gender equity for ultra high-net-worth women.

Who's Getting

- Family planning and maternal and perinatal health organizations are the biggest recipients of philanthropic giving in this area, followed by women's rights, reproductive rights and women's services (including nonprofits concerned with domestic violence).
- Planned Parenthood has been the biggest recipient of institutional funding, followed by the National Abortion Federation (NAF) Hotline which took in \$105 million from 2014-2018, including \$30.46 million from the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation. The National Abortion Federation (NAF) Hotline Fund was third, followed by the Center for Reproductive Rights
- Women's services (a branch of human services) received about \$428 million domestically between 2014 and 2018, and women's rights and gender equality got about \$853 million. Women's services grantees include women's centers and groups that fight domestic violence as well as organizations that help women secure housing and practice self-care.

The Big Issues & Funding Trends

- Some of the biggest issues funders are focusing on include the high-profile push to fully address endemic sexual harassment and violence throughout our society, the effects of mass incarceration on women, the imperative to involve men and examine gender roles, and, perennially, women's rights and access to abortion.
- For many funders of women and girls, addressing gender-based harassment and assault in every corner of society is an urgent priority. Along with that priority, many are focusing more squarely on how gender-based issues often hit hardest on BIPOC communities.

- The most notable strategies funders are utilizing to increase their own effectiveness include impact investing (especially backing women in business), funding and disseminating research on women and girls issues, developing intersectional approaches that build support for women’s issues across other social justice movements, and deepening cross-sector collaborations to advance women and girls.

Equity in the Sector

- While observers of the sector continue to critique women and girls funders and many of their grantees for centering the concerns of privileged white women, leaders in this space are prominent and effective advocates for turning greater attention and resources to women and girls of color, LGBTQ+ populations, people with disabilities and other people who bear the brunt effects of inequality.
- Funders have launched many new endeavors in recent years to address this imbalance. Grantmakers for Girls of Color is one example. Many giving circles serve women and girls of color and of specific cultural backgrounds.
- More funders of women’s issues are starting to include transgender, nonbinary and broader LGBTQ+ communities in their grantmaking strategies and RFP’s. This is part of a larger societal discussion confronting gender norms and breaking down assumptions of gender categories.

Fundraising Now

- Depending on their focus on racial justice issues, prowess with online fundraising and other particular programmatic directions, some women and girls organizations are experiencing a windfall, while others are struggling to get by. In the past year, organizations focused on turning out women voters and advancing racial justice fared particularly well.
- Many charities that serve women and girls report that their fundraising returns from corporations declined over the past year. Many charities serving women and girls have been successful in maintaining or even increasing donations this year from individual donors and families who make large gifts. Even as they continue raising money from their existing donors, some organizations say it’s been harder this year to recruit new donors. Charities serving women and girls have seen mixed results in raising money by holding online events.

There are many opportunities and challenges for funders of women and girls. Centering people of color and nurturing their leadership within the movement, focusing on the impact of climate change on women and building their leadership in that movement, and growing public understanding and reconsideration of gender roles are the opportunities that hold particular promise for the field, according to IP’s analysis. Some experts singled out a severe under-resourcing of Latinx-led organizations. The strategies and underutilized mechanisms that hold particular promise for funders include the constellation of practices associated with “trust-based philanthropy.” Other strategies that hold promise include greater resourcing of advocacy and 501(c)(4)s, providing families Universal Basic Income, and even greater utilization of collaborative funds.

Introduction

#MeToo, #TimesUp, #SayHerName—in recent years, women’s movements have continued to grow and gain mainstream attention, particularly in response to the election of Donald Trump. But has funding for women and girls in the U.S. actually increased? Deep-dives into Candid data, relevant research, news and discussions with leaders in the field shed some light on this realm of giving, which indicates there has been a slow and steady uptick in philanthropic support, but nonprofits focused on women and girls remain generally underfunded relative to the size of the population.

We know that the pie appears to slice up differently depending on the lens and research approach. But—as in many spheres of human culture, whether at the global or domestic level (this report will focus on funders and their giving to women and girls issues in the United States), a persistent conclusion surfaces. Women and girls, who are generally half of the population, receive a disproportionately low amount of philanthropic support. Meanwhile, they bear sexism across virtually every sector, hold more front-line and vulnerable jobs, provide more caretaking, and experience more abuse. And intersectional discrimination abounds based on race, ability, age, immigration status or LGBTQ+ identity, and more.

“What we see in philanthropy today reflects the systemic oppression we have experienced throughout our history. We live in a society that was not created for women and girls, particularly those of color, and it is our job to point out this inequality within our own sector,” Ms. Foundation for Women President and CEO Teresa Younger previously [said](#) in response to a 2019 Women’s Philanthropy Institute report.

This brief focuses on U.S.-based funders and their domestic giving for women and girls. U.S. giving for women and girls, however, is one segment of global giving on these issues—and like all human rights work, should not be considered wholly apart from it. U.S. giving for women and girls should be considered within the larger context and giving priorities, even though this and other State of American Philanthropy briefs focus on domestic giving. Examining Candid data, combined domestic and global funding for women and girls in 2018 was around \$950 million of the total \$83 billion in total funding for that year. The Human Rights Funding Network reports that between 2011 and 2015, women and girls were the focus of [23% of the \\$9.4 billion](#) in global foundation funding specified for human rights. Over one-third of that amount went to groups in North America, which received about \$168 million in 2015.

In response to an August 2020 survey of IP readers and others in the nonprofit sector, one respondent who said they work in the women and girls space said, “The #MeToo movement has brought about a lot of interest in women’s issues and domestic violence. There is a greater dialogue being had and an interest in learning about domestic violence. Also, the conversation around toxic masculinity and how it relates to male victims of domestic violence will continue to grow interest in our field. Finally, a big issue that has come to the forefront globally, but also with a recent high-profile local case, is human sex trafficking.”

But as the data discussed throughout this brief highlights, much of the U.S. funding and focus in this field is still on reproductive health and economic opportunities for women and girls.

The Lay of the Land

Who's Giving

Funding for nonprofits focused on issues specific to women and girls is led most prominently by private and family foundations, especially in the area of reproductive healthcare and rights, the largest segment of the women and girls nonprofit space. Corporations shy away from that largest portion of the sector, but are major supporters of other women and girls nonprofits concentrating on programmatic concerns like economic inclusion and entrepreneurship. What makes the women and girls philanthropic space somewhat unusual is the proliferation, prominence and influence of this demographic group's own community foundations, funds and giving circles. No other demographic group, such as LGBTQ + people and people of color (which are smaller portions of the population), have as many foundations, funds and giving circles dedicated to their concerns and led by their people. Perhaps only Jewish-focused philanthropy comes close.

A handful of private foundations are the biggest institutional givers for women and girls in the United States. Between 2014 and 2018, the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, NoVo Foundation and the Ford Foundation were the top givers for these groups, having together awarded nearly \$1.25 billion in grants. Major donor-advised funds (DAFs) such as Fidelity and Schwab Charitable, are active funders in this space on both the pro-choice and anti-abortion scene.

While not many corporations donate to reproductive health and rights, the biggest funding stream for women and girls, we do see a few players stepping into this space. Many

financial institutions support women through economic empowerment initiatives, while tech moguls often back STEM inclusion.

Women's foundations, funds and giving circles play an essential role in supporting women and girls, especially at the local level. Some of the largest and most influential women's foundations and funds include New York Women's Foundation, Ms. Foundation for Women and the Women's Foundation of California, to name just a few.

Major donors like Melinda Gates, MacKenzie Scott, Oprah Winfrey, Priscilla Chan, Susie Buffett, and Connie Ballmer give through private foundations that work on other issues besides women and girls, while other major donors in this area give directly from their own fortunes without foundations.

Top 10 Funders: Women and Girls 2014 - 2018¹

| Grantmaker | Dollar Value of Grants Awarded |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation | \$784.53M |
| Planned Parenthood Federation of America | \$208.15M |
| NoVo Foundation | \$142.99M |
| Ford Foundation | \$125.20M |
| David & Lucile Packard Foundation | \$101.32M |
| JPB Foundation | \$91.79M |
| William & Flora Hewlett Foundation | \$74.79M |
| W.K. Kellogg Foundation | \$71.35M |
| Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | \$57.62M |
| Essential Access Health | \$25.94M |

Source: Candid

Inside Philanthropy analysis of Candid data spanning from 2014 to 2018 indicates funding for women and girls is increasing overall. Candid’s data on women and girls includes nonprofits focusing on abortion, childbirth, family planning, maternal and perinatal health, women’s rights, reproductive right, and women’s services in the U.S. Funding for women and girls went from \$496 million in 2014 to \$1.39 billion in 2015. This significant increase in funding was due largely in part to a single grant that year of \$619 million for infant care from the Bristol-Myers Squibb Patient Assistance Foundation. From 2016 to 2018 funding increased from \$754 million to \$949 million. This general trend bodes well for women, girls and the nonprofits that serve them.

Funding for women and girls as a percentage of all domestic philanthropy remains low but is on an upward trajectory. In 2003, funding for women and girls in the U.S. made up 0.84% of domestic funding. By 2014, it increased to 1.16%, and in 2018 was 1.35%.

In IP’s August 2020 survey, the plurality of respondents working in the women and girls space said that philanthropic interest and funding levels for their field are increasing (about 40%), while much smaller portions said (in descending order) that it was about the same, decreasing because of the current COVID and racial justice priorities, or decreasing over a long-term trend.

Who’s Getting

Candid breaks out funding for women and girls into a few subcategories that are helpful to understanding the composition of the field, even though there is considerable overlap in the work, classifications. The largest subcategory is reproductive health and rights, followed by

women’s rights and gender equality, abortion priorities and programming related to these related issues, and family planning.

A 2019 Women’s Philanthropy Institute [report](#) the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy examined giving to women and girls up to 2016 (which predates some more prominent hashtag movements focused on women’s issues) and found groups focused on women and girls received a collective total of \$6.3 billion, or about 1.6% of donations that year (using Giving USA data). At the same time, WPI created an index of 45,000 groups centered on women and girls, including nonprofits that focus on serving and funding organizations that are led by them.

| Subject | Amount Funded |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Family Planning | \$1.48B |
| Maternal and Perinatal Health | \$1.34B |
| Women’s Rights | \$853.98M |
| Reproductive Rights | \$839.81M |
| Women’s Services | \$427.96M |

Source: Candid

IP’s analysis of Candid data indicates that the greatest amount of domestic funding for women and girls goes to family planning, with maternal and perinatal health, women’s rights receiving large portions of philanthropic resources. Family planning got \$1.48 billion, maternal and perinatal health received \$1.34 billion and Women’s rights got \$854 million. The numbers are made discrete by data analysts, but the day-to-day work on these issues is often interwoven.



Women and girls are often lumped together in grantmaking strategies, and girls are not isolated in most of the funding data referenced in this brief. This reflects a broader phenomenon of girls and teens being generically included in more generalized women’s or youth-centric nonprofit programming, which can blur their unique needs. NoVo once made a notable stand in this arena through its programs for adolescent girls and against abuse. There are many other funders who make grants to specifically focus on the specific needs of girls—for example, in STEM education funding.

Giving & Getting: Deeper Dive

Between 2014 and 2018, within all domestic funding for women and girls, Planned Parenthood Federation of America was the biggest grantee, receiving \$383 million. The NAF Hotline was a distant second, taking in around \$106 million in grants. The Center for Reproductive Rights was third with \$87 million, followed by the Guttmacher Institute (a major sexual and reproductive health and rights research and policy organization) Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, Society of Family Planning, the Planned Parenthood Action Fund, National Women’s Law Center, National Abortion Federation and Planned Parenthood Federation, International.

Women’s services (a branch of human services) received \$428 million in domestic funding dollars between 2014 and 2018, and women’s rights and gender equality got about \$853 million. Funding for women’s services supported grantees including women’s centers and groups that fight domestic violence, as well as organizations that help women secure housing and practice self-care. For example, the Chicago Community Trust, the biggest funder of women’s services during this time (\$16 million),

Top 10 Grant Recipients: Women and Girls 2014 - 2018²

| Recipient | Dollar Value of Grants Received |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Planned Parenthood Federation of America | \$382.68M |
| National Abortion Federation Hotline | \$105.74M |
| Center for Reproductive Rights | \$86.49M |
| Guttmacher Institute | \$82.62M |
| Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors | \$65.70M |
| Society of Family Planning | \$59.97M |
| Planned Parenthood Action Fund | \$55.91M |
| National Women's Law Center | \$53.21M |
| National Abortion Federation | \$51.79M |
| Planned Parenthood Federation International | \$45.28M |

Source: Candid

gave multiple grants to Sarah’s Circle, which serves homeless women, including \$14 million in 2018. NoVo gave \$13 million in this area to support healing justice programs for Indigenous women, various women’s centers and more. The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence gave about \$8 million to women’s services, including several six-figure grants to domestic violence shelters.

A few major girl-focused grantees include the Girl Scouts and, with lesser specificity, Boys and Girls Clubs across the country. Girls, Inc. is another nonprofit with local branches throughout the nation. A Foundation Center search for funding that benefits girls finds Boys and Girls Clubs of America and several of its individual arms as consistent grant recipients. Its central hub received \$119 million between 2014 and 2018. Girls, Inc. is

also in the top 10, having received about \$29 million during this time.

Some of the biggest leaders in women and girls philanthropy have also been directing large amounts of funding to new affinity groups focusing on girls of color, such as Grantmakers for Girls of Color and Southern Black Girls and Women’s Consortium (see Perspectives on Equity).

The Big Issues & Beyond

There are several preeminent issues that either cut across women and girls subcategories or are emerging as distinct concerns among many funders. They include the high-profile push to fully address endemic sexual harassment and violence throughout society, sex trafficking, the effects of mass incarceration on women, the imperative to involve men and examine gender roles, and, perennially, women’s rights and access to abortion.

Addressing gender-based harassment and assault is an urgent priority for many funders of women and girls. The #MeToo, #TimesUp and #SayHerName movements led to the launch of the [Fund for The Me Too Movement and Allies](#) from the New York Women's Foundation by celebrities, and other giving streams that address the widespread issues of sexual assault and harassment. Many core roots

and branches of these movements are led by and seek to center women and girls of color.

Along with the NYWF, other women’s funds are working to translate the energy of the #MeToo movement into larger changes in policies and institutions. They have made some major commitments to ending sex trafficking. As [Inside Philanthropy reported](#), the Women’s Foundation of California helped pass a bill that extended public benefits including health insurance and employment resources to victims of sex trafficking, domestic violence, and other crimes. In Minnesota, the Women’s Foundation launched a \$6 million campaign to end sex trafficking of girls in the state, and supported advocacy efforts that provided safe harbor for girls being trafficked. The Women’s Foundation of Minnesota also invested in the creation of the first-ever statewide comprehensive plan to end sex trafficking of minors.

Incarcerated women have also become the focus of more funders and donors concerned with justice reform. Women are the fastest-growing segment of incarcerated populations, and the [imprisonment rate](#) for Black women is twice that of white women. This trend makes the Justice Fund—a seven-year grantmaking and philanthropic mobilization effort from the NYWF in 2018—a timely endeavor.

| Year | Dollar Value of Grants | Total Number of Grantmakers | Total Grants Awarded | Total Number of Recipients |
|------|------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 2014 | \$496.24M | 5,761 | 14,114 | 2,955 |
| 2015 | \$1.39B | 7,042 | 23,321 | 3,578 |
| 2016 | \$754.74M | 7,426 | 28,584 | 3,876 |
| 2017 | \$941.16M | 7,290 | 17,912 | 3,630 |
| 2018 | \$949.78M | 7,887 | 18,542 | 4,025 |

Source: Candid



It aims to address mass incarceration and its effects on women, families, girls, and transgender and gender-nonconforming (TGNC) communities in New York City. [Black Mamas Bail Out](#) and National Bail Out started their Mother’s Day campaigns early in 2020 in response to the pandemic.

Some grantmakers are putting more resources into lifting up the role that men play in women’s individual and collective experiences and lives, and working to counteract patriarchal and sexist norms and practices. More nonprofits and funders are engaging men as central figures in promoting women’s equity and safety. IP has written about several of these initiatives, including [A Call to Men](#), which runs programs to help men develop healthy perspectives and behaviors toward women—NYWF and NoVo have backed this program. The Chicago Foundation for Women’s [Champions of Change](#) initiative for male leaders is another example.

Another issue funders of women and girls are focused on is increasing the representation and leadership of diverse women in STEM fields, in political office, and in the financial sector, as well as increasing economic security of women across all sectors of society. Funders are supporting women and girls as they learn new skills and launch new ventures, advocate for equal rights, receive health care, and more.

Recognizing the importance of intersectional identities and “cross-movement building” is also considered a “big issue” in women and girls funding, but this brief discusses them as distinct funding strategies (see next section).

Lastly, some experts advised IP to keep an eye out for issues related to self-care and “[healing justice](#).” The Astraea Lesbian Foundation For Justice is one foundation embracing this as a distinct funding concern—it held a Healing Justice Funder [Convening](#) in 2019.

Funding Trends & Strategies

Philanthropists have many more strategies at their disposal than just responding to donation requests, and funders of women and girls are pursuing both innovative and established strategies for advancing the field. The most noteworthy trends and strategies include impact investing (especially backing women in business), funding and disseminating research on women and girls issues, developing intersectional approaches that build support for women’s issues across other social justice movements, and deepening cross-sector collaborations to advance women and girls. Additionally, many experts in the field named public-private partnerships, “trust-based philanthropy,” participatory grantmaking and centering women and girls of color as important trends that are shaping funder strategies.



“Black women have been at the forefront of almost every single social justice movement in this country, and they were not doing it to seek reward, they were doing it to make an impact in our country. That is actually what saves democracy in this country. Black women are doing the work, are knocking on the doors, setting up the strategies, running for political office. But let’s be truthful, this country has yet to fully invest in and support women and girls of color, particularly Black women and girls.”

—Theresa C. Younger CEO, Ms. Foundation for Women

Gender-centric and feminist-based impact investing can pursue various perspectives and aims –it might involve supporting businesses that intend to benefit women through their services or goods, that are owned or run by women, or that apply a gender lens to their own investments, hiring strategies, culture, and more. This type of investing is one way to address the investment gap and other overlapping [economic gaps](#) women continue to face, including the wage, [debt](#), unpaid labor, and the “pink tax” consumer pricing gap.

Sarah Haacke Byrd, executive director of Women Moving Millions, names impact investing as an important and necessary strategy. “With less than 3% of investment capital going to women-led businesses, and less than 1% for women of color, we are seeing greater recognition that investing in women entrepreneurs is critical to get at the structural and systemic issues that are impeding economic mobility and equality.”


The [Women’s Foundation of Colorado](#) combines the practices of impact investing with giving circles through its Women’s Impact Investing Giving Circle, which funds women entrepreneurs. Members decide how to “support social ventures led by and benefiting women” with guidance from its partner, Impact Finance Center. And WFCO is aiming to allocate at least 51% of its invested assets to gender lens investments by 2022.

In 2020, the Texas Women’s Foundation made waves when it announced 100% of \$36 million in assets was invested in a gendered impact portfolio. This achievement inspired Lisa Simmons and her sister Serena Simmons Connelly, both leaders of the Harold Simmons Foundation, to open a \$10.5 million DAF at TWF. The Ms. Foundation, Women’s Foundation of California and Austin

Women’s Fund, among others, are also engaging in impact investing.

Many major finance industry givers, such as [Visa](#) and [Bank of America](#), have substantial women and girls impact investing programs.

FunderSpotlight



Many **wealthy women** made donations in response to the pandemic. Rihanna’s **Clara Lionel Foundation** provided \$5million to Direct Relief, Feeding America, Partners in Health, the WHO’s COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, the International Rescue Committee and others.

Rihanna also teamed up with Twitter co-founder Jack Dorsey to help domestic violence survivors in Los Angeles with a \$4.2 million joint grant.

Research is an important, established strategy for funders of women and girls. Grantees like the Guttmacher Institute and Texas Policy Evaluation Project have produced extensive research into various facets of reproductive healthcare and its social impacts and implications, some of which has directly impacted Supreme Court decisions like *Whole Woman’s Health V. Hellerstedt*, which was argued by the Center for Reproductive Rights with funding support from the Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation. The Gates Foundation has funded a wide range of gender studies, including examinations of the impact of rigid gender norms, which have been found to be harmful to people of all gender identities; the growth of women’s philanthropy and giving circles; and the gender-skewed results of its own science grants, among other research topics.



The interwoven trends of cross-movement building and integrating intersectionality into organizing, says Elizabeth Barajas-Román, president and CEO of WFN, are dots she sees the network’s members connecting across many issues, including child care, gender-based violence and voter protection. She says the current moment (referencing the pandemic and racial justice movement) “has opened opportunities to expand understanding and deepen their organizational cultures as truly anti-racist feminist institutions.” She sees more members integrating both racial and gender justice lenses into economic mobility strategies. Barajas-Román says WFN members also favor a “systems approach,” organizing around the belief that job training, child care, early education, peace advocacy, health, leadership advancement and other issues are all, in concert, key to achieving “lasting economic security” for women. (See deeper discussion of cross-movement building related to BIPOC, LGBTQ and other groups in Perspectives on Equity).

Public-private partnerships, which are gaining traction in the women and girls space, have long been a core and sometimes controversial tenet of philanthropy, building stronger conduits of funding for community needs while raising difficult questions of the role of private money in the public sphere. [Prosperity Together](#), a collaboration between the Obama White House, state-based women’s foundations and others to support women and girls of color with more than \$115 million, is a notable large-scale, cross-sector endeavor in this realm.

In another example of cross-sector collaboration, several women’s funding organizations worked for reforms relating to sexual assault and trafficking at the state level. A multisector team in Detroit was a

pivotal early player in the growing movement for [rape kit reform](#). And Paula Liang, board chair of Philanos (formerly the Women’s Collective Giving Grantmakers Network) says the co-presidents of the giving circle Impact 100 Sonoma were on their mayor’s COVID-response taskforce.

Participatory grantmaking as a strategy is exemplified by the work of [NYWF](#) and [Crown Family Philanthropies](#) in Chicago. G4GC (a project of the NoVo Foundation, Foundation for a Just Society, Ms. Foundation for Women, the New York Women’s Foundation, Communities for Just Schools Fund and other partners) plans to use a participatory approach and is convening a youth council for this purpose. Giving circles, which we explore later in this brief, often employ participatory grantmaking, directing funds back into members’ communities.

Strategy Spotlight

CRITERION INSTITUTE

The Criterion Institute continuously invigorates this field through its research and work as a convener. In 2016, it launched a Gender Lens Investing and Market Risks research endeavor, which is still ongoing, with sponsors including the Calvert Foundation, Caprock Group, Eileen Fisher Foundation, Fulcrum Capital, Grand Challenges Canada and others.

In 2017, Criterion, the Ms. Foundation, Global Fund for Women, with support from the Wallace Global Fund, published “A Blueprint for Women’s Funds Using Finance as a Tool for Social Change.” It was authored by Joy Anderson, Criterion president, Younger of Ms., and Elizabeth Schaffer, former Global Fund for Women COO.

Perspectives on Equity

Despite their commitment to equity for women, the funders and nonprofits comprising the women and girls field have a mixed history with regard to prioritizing other marginalized groups within its community. While the sector continues to be critiqued for centering the concerns of privileged white women, leading funders and nonprofits in the women and girls space have also been prominent and effective advocates for turning the sector's attention and resources to women and girls of color, LGBTQ+ populations, people with disabilities and other people who bear the brunt effects of inequality.

As in most areas of funding, organizations led by or focused on women and girls of color receive a small portion of philanthropic dollars compared to organizations led by white women and serving general populations of women and girls. In 2012, the [Unequal Lives](#) report from the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative found that of \$4.8 billion in philanthropic investments for the U.S. South, 5.4% went to programs focused on women and girls, and less than 1% focused on Black women and girls.

Many new funding endeavors have arisen in recent years to address this imbalance. [Grantmakers for Girls of Color \(G4GC\)](#), is one example. It became an independent nonprofit and started making grants in 2020. The first recipients include A Long Walk Home; EveryBlackGirl, Inc., the National Black Women's Justice Institute (NBWJI), Daughters Beyond Incarceration and many more.

NoVo also helped launch the Southern Black Girls and Women's Consortium (SBGWC). LaTosha Brown, co-anchor of SBGWC and co-founder of Black Voters Matter Fund, says that with its investment in girls of color, NoVo "catalyzed a

Giving Spotlight

TIME'S = UP

The TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund is a prominent example of glitzy feminism. It was started by women in Hollywood to show solidarity with survivors of sexual harassment, assault and retaliation. It also supports women of color and of lower-incomes seeking justice for these abuses in the workplace.

Meryl Streep, Reese Witherspoon, Jennifer Aniston, Shonda Rhimes, Taylor Swift, Oprah Winfrey, Steven Spielberg, Kate Capshaw, and J.J. Abrams, and Katie McGrath contributed. They collaborated with attorneys from the NWLC (where the fund is now housed). In late 2019, more than \$10 million had been committed to fund legal cases.

whole new field of work to be supported that had been largely ignored and underfunded. They were trendsetters, and so, for them **to not continue**, that is really disappointing." The SBGWC has also given COVID-related grants and will be launching a BlackGirl Dream Fund in 2020, which will devote millions to this population over 10 years.

In 2018, the Ms. Foundation released a [five-year strategic plan](#) that outlined a \$25 million commitment to invest in women and girls of color and gender equity. Other major funding efforts that have targeted girls of color in recent years include the cross-sector [Prosperity Together](#) project and NoVo's 2016 [\\$90 million commitment](#) to "support and deepen the movement for girls and young women of color" in the U.S.

Also, a nationwide network of women’s funds is addressing the needs of young women and girls of color through the Young Women’s Initiative. This [initiative](#), which was launched by the NYWF in 2016, engages both public and private sector funding and has branches at women’s foundations in Minnesota, Memphis, Washington, Birmingham, Massachusetts and other areas.

Many giving circles serve women and girls of color and those of specific cultural backgrounds. The Asian Women Giving Circle in New York is one example. The Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) has six [giving circles](#) and councils, including the South Side Giving Circle, which defines itself as a “fierce group of women paving a path of investment into women-of-color-led community initiatives.”

More funders of women’s issues are starting to include transgender, nonbinary and broader LGBTQ+ communities in their grantmaking strategies and RFP’s. “It’s been really heartening to see funders for women recognize the fluidity of gender and the need for intersectional gender justice funding that includes trans and gender-nonconforming people,” Third Wave codirector Kiyomi Fujikawa says. But she says, as with other intersectional work, “We’re, unfortunately, not seeing this at a high enough scale.” She points out that Funders for LGBTQ Issues estimates that only 0.03 cents of every \$100 of foundation funding goes “to trans work... inclusive language is only one piece of making funding truly accessible for trans- and gender-non-conforming-led gender justice organizations.”

Some of the other groups that center women, girls, and gender-nonconforming and/or LGBTQ+ communities are Astraea, Foundation for a Just

Society, and FRIDA: The Young Feminist Fund, among others. Ford, Groundswell and Borealis are the top funders of LGBTQ+ sexual and reproductive rights and justice.

Both Brown and Fujikawa mentioned that grantmakers for women and girls and for gender justice need to include people with differing abilities, and fund disability rights. In response to the pandemic, Women Enabled International, Disabled Women in Africa and others released a “Statement on Rights at the Intersection of Gender and Disability during COVID-19.” Women Enabled International’s funders include Fidelity Charitable, Ford and OSF. Along with support for institutional grantees, several major funders are backing intersectional grassroots movement-building in this field with a focus on diverse leadership including that of young people, Southerners, people of color and LGBTQ+ communities. For example, Packard focuses much of its state-based reproductive-centric philanthropy in the U.S. South, particularly in Louisiana and Mississippi.

youth vision and activism for gender justice

THIRD WAVE FUND

“It’s been really heartening to see funders for women recognize the fluidity of gender and the need for intersectional gender justice funding that includes trans and gender-nonconforming people. We’re, unfortunately, not seeing this at a high enough scale.”

—Kiyomi Fujikawa, Co-director, Third Wave Fund

A Closer Look at Funder Types

Private & Family Foundations

The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation was the biggest funder of women and girls nonprofits in recent years and gave about \$784 million in this area between 2014 and 2018. As IP has reported, STBF [awarded](#) about \$1.5 billion in total between 2003 and 2018 for U.S. reproductive health funding (reproductive health at the national and international level is its main focus).

Between 2014 and 2018 the Gates Foundation's U.S.-based giving only totaled \$58 million, however, Gates has recently backed a wide range of research into gender issues as well as work by women's foundations and giving circles. It supports the donor network [Women Moving Millions](#) (WMM) in running its Philanthropic Leadership Program. And in 2019, Melinda Gates called out meager giving for girls and women in announcing [a new pledge of \\$1 billion](#) from her company Pivotal Ventures to promote gender equality in the U.S. In 2020, the Gates Foundation brought on its first gender equality [president](#).

The next funders in the top 10 were the Planned Parenthood Federation (\$197 million), NoVo Foundation (\$143 million from another Buffett outfit, which recently announced a shift away from this vein of funding), the Ford Foundation (\$125 million), David and Lucile Packard Foundation (\$101 million), JPB Foundation (\$92 million), William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (\$75 million), W.K. Kellogg Foundation (\$71 million), Gates Foundation (\$58 million), and Essential Access Health (\$26 million). Many of these funders were prominent in IP's recent reporting

on funding for abortion rights. After STBF, Gates, Hewlett, Packard and Ford generally led the pack in funding reproductive health issues and rights between 2003 and 2018. The JPB foundation, Harold Simmons Foundation, Open Society Foundations and others have also given tens of millions for reproductive health.

NoVo is also one of the biggest funders of women's rights organizing. For example, during this period, it backed efforts to improve the quality of care and care-work jobs in the U.S. through the Caring Across Generations Campaign (with \$5 million) and the Rockefeller Family Fund's efforts to advocate for equitable employment policies (\$4.5 million). It also helped the Seventh Generation Fund for Indigenous Peoples in its abuse prevention efforts (here we see women's rights and services overlapping). This Indigenous-focused group is also backed by the Tides Foundation.

Ford supports women's rights by backing the Ms. Foundation for Women, NWLC and ACLU. Money channeled through Fidelity Charitable has also supported the NWLC along with the National Partnership for Women and Families. We see more DAF funding for women's rights flowing through the Tides Foundation to the Indigenous-focused group mentioned above as well as to the Working Families Organization, Institute for Women's Policy Research, and Job Opportunities Task Force.

A few health-focused private foundations and conversion foundations are also key players in funding women's health issues. Between 2003 and 2018, the California Wellness Foundation was the 10th-largest U.S. funder of reproductive health care at \$61 million. Other health grantmakers who

were heavily invested in this cause during this time include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (\$51 million) and California Endowment (\$20 million).

Corporate Funders

Corporate Funders generally steer clear of reproductive healthcare (with some notable exceptions below) and instead focus their giving on women and girls programs on STEM education, women in the economy and entrepreneurship, and, to a lesser extent, trafficking and abuse.

In STEM education philanthropy, focusing on the inclusion of women and girls is a major priority among corporate givers. Boosting diversity in general within these fields, which are dominated by straight white men, remains a popular cause. Back in 2014, Google launched Made with Code, a \$50 million initiative that brought Girls, Inc., the Girl Scouts, MIT Media Lab, Mozilla Webmaker, Sew Electric, and Shapeways together to benefit Black Girls Code, Code.org, Girls Who Code, the National Center for Women and IT, and more. Other tech funders like [Apple](#), [Salesforce](#), VEX Robotics, Akamai Technologies, Intel, VMWare, Cognizant, and the Motorola Mobility Foundation also back education, training and mentoring for girls and women in the areas of science, technology, engineering and math.

Girls Who Code is a major grantee in this realm, having received support from the Prudential, Verizon, GM and Adobe foundations, among others. It's hard to find a major tech company that hasn't put some money toward STEM equity.

Women's economic development is a major focus for banks and other financial institutions. For example, IP explored how Visa backs women's

financial empowerment and entrepreneurship. Along with spending hundreds of millions on international programs to provide more women access to banking, Visa backs women's advancement in business in the U.S. and abroad, as noted in this brief's examination of impact investing (see Trends & Strategies section). And it also funds women in sports. Similarly, [Bank of America](#) invests in women in business. Wells-Fargo has supported the Girl Scouts and the Girl Talk Foundation.

Inside Philanthropy August 2020 Survey

"Women's rights, despite the significant populations it impacts and issues covered by this general term, gets a very small fraction of funding which is generally declining."

—Fundraiser, New York, New York

The [Coca-Cola Foundation](#) makes gender equity grants for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, backing the Atlanta Women's Foundation's Pathway to Success Program, and Covenant House Georgia for its Safe Start for Women outreach programs. In response to the pandemic, Spanx and the Spanx by Sara Blakely Foundation donated \$5 million and teamed up with GlobalGiving to create the Red Backpack Fund for U.S. female entrepreneurs. [Caress](#), a global Unilever beauty brand, announced a \$1 million investment in the summer of 2020 to support women of color entrepreneurs in partnership with IFundWomen of Color.

Human trafficking has received a smaller, but significant portion of corporate funding attention. For example, the UBS Optimus Foundation recently brought together two dozen funders to back the San Diego Trafficking Prevention Collective

(SDTPC), a \$3 million collaborative effort over three years between public and private sectors to address this devastating issue by educating teachers and youth, with \$3 million over three years.

Collaboration Spotlight



Launched in 2019, the Philanthropy Together initiative received \$2 million in anchor support from Gates for its five-year giving circle infrastructure design project. Here, we see a major institutional funder backing the evolution of grassroots philanthropy. In 2020, its Launchpad leadership training program brought together 50 people from around the world, who launched 40 new giving circles.

Executive director Sara Lomelin says there “are more than 100,000 women donors engaging in this powerful collaborative funding model. Because of the, ‘for us, by us,’ nature of giving circles, a top priority for these groups are causes that help women and girls.” Philanthropy Together works to help circles “embed racial equity into their culture, grantmaking and community,” Lomelin says.

A significant number of corporations—some of which have deeply problematic histories with sexual harassment and gender inequality in the workplace—are taking on these issues with their grantmaking. In 2018, CBS announced 18 organizations would receive \$20 million to address sexual harassment, including the Time’s Up Legal Defense Fund, NYWF, Women’s Media Center and NWLC. This funding was tied to CBS’s separation from its former CEO Les Moonves, who resigned following numerous abuse allegations, and was

deducted from his severance pay. The NFL, which has been criticized for not addressing sexual assault allegations adequately, helped to launch the organization Raliance, which works to end sexual violence, with a \$10 million seed investment in 2016.

It is true that many corporations end up on lists of top givers to nonprofits focused on reproductive rights. However, they often end up on both sides of the issue because their giving is associated with employee matching gift funds. For example, BOA has given more than \$1 million for reproductive health care. A few other corporate funders that gave less than a million to this cause include the GE, Pfizer, Prudential, Amazon Smile and Liberty Mutual Foundations, among others. As [IP explored](#) in its article on anti-abortion funders, the giving programs of multiple corporate foundations included donations to anti-abortion groups, including, again, Pfizer and GE, Amazon Smile and others.

Community Foundations

The community foundation model of philanthropy may be more prominent for women and girls than any other program area, with deep engagement of place-based community foundations that support all kinds of women’s funds and giving circles, as well as a multitude of women’s foundations that are organized in the community foundation model.

Women’s Philanthropy Institute research [released in 2019](#) sheds light on the grantmaking priorities of women’s foundations and funds. It created and analyzed a database of 209 U.S.-based women’s grantmaking organizations that specifically give to women. Of those, 63% of women’s “foundations” and funds are housed within larger community

foundations or other organizations, which makes their giving very hard to suss out through IRS data and the platforms that rely on them. But, WPI was able to explore the priorities of the groups that are independent. Most of these women’s foundations and funds focus on local community grantmaking. The most popular issues were women’s education, economic empowerment, security and self-sufficiency (as one category), and health.

About 52% of these grantmakers (WPI study) identified “women and girls (general)” as a priority population. Women and children, women and girls of color, low-income women, Jewish women and girls, and LGBTQI women and girls were identified by between 7 and 15%. Girls and young women, refugees, immigrants, single mothers, and women who are incarcerated, live in rural areas, or have disabilities were only named as priorities by either 1 or 2% of these groups. In the paper, several leaders who were interviewed called for a greater focus on intersectionality and equity in feminist funding.

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation, a DAF powerhouse and the largest community foundation in the world, is a top reproductive health and rights funder, having given close to \$3 million. The Philadelphia Foundation, Foundation for the Carolinas, Greater Kansas City Community Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, Women’s Fund of Greater Omaha and Coastal Community Foundation of South Carolina,

along with others, have each given tens of millions to reproductive health causes. The New York Community Trust has given more than \$10 million for reproductive health care, including consistent support for Planned Parenthood of New York City.

Many community foundations across the country also end up supporting anti-abortion nonprofits, including the Greater New Orleans Foundation, Greater Houston Community Foundation, Tulsa Community Foundation, California Community Foundation and San Diego Foundation. In 2017, the NYCT also gave a grant of \$25,000 to Americans United for Life (AUL), an anti-abortion advocacy group with a legal focus, through its DAF portfolio.

When it comes to backing young women, specifically, the Jewish Communal Fund in New York City is a notable donor—it has given millions to the Young Women’s Leadership Network.

Especially relevant to funding for women and girls, the giving circle movement is growing. A [2016 study](#) found the number of these circles had tripled since 2007 to more than 1,500; and had granted up to \$1.29 billion; 70% of their members identify as women, and over 600 of them are women-led. Men were present in about 66% of groups surveyed. About 84% reported being formed around a shared identity. Circles may align around [LGBTQ+ communities, religion, race and/or gender](#), or other identities.



“Since the beginning of time, women have come together in circles to make magic, support our communities and heal one another. Giving circles are our modern day solution to the challenges all women are experiencing today in our communities—isolation, a feeling of helplessness and a lack of opportunity to lead and voice our own visions. When we come together, we are unstoppable.”

—Marcia Quinones, East Bay Latina Giving Circle

Major Donors

In 2016, IP wrote about the most powerful [women in philanthropy](#), and these women—many wives and inheritors, but also a few women who made their own fortunes, and still more who rose up through the ranks of institutional philanthropy—wield enormous clout and privilege as individual donors and/ or as key navigators of major foundations. Melinda Gates remains at the forefront, particularly since her big \$1 billion announcement and the launch of her empowerment-focused incubation company, Pivotal Ventures.

"Melinda [has] branched out and set up other ways to give, including to entrepreneurs and female founders," Kiersten Marek, LICSW, founder of Philanthropy Women, says. One of Pivotal's key early ventures is the [Ascend Fund](#), which seeks to get more women elected to office. And she teamed up with MacKenzie Scott to launch [Equality Can't Wait](#), a \$30 million grant challenge through Lever for Change, an affiliate nonprofit of the MacArthur Foundation.

This was one of Scott's first major publicized independent funding moves since her divorce from Jeff Bezos. In the summer of 2020, publishing on [Medium](#), she shared a major update on her philanthropy, listing 116 organizations to which she donated about [\\$1.7 billion](#) since the fall of 2019. About \$133 million was devoted to gender equity among other causes. She provided unrestricted grants to Astraea, G4GC, Black Girls Code, Educate Girls, GirlTrek, Groundswell, NWLC and more.

There are several networks that convene wealthy women donors, including Women Moving Millions and the [Women Donors Network \(WDN\)](#). WDN is a powerful collective of progressive women donors. Between 2014 and 2018, it gave away about \$4.7 million. WDN is a core supporter of the [Emergent Fund](#), which launched after the 2016 election to help communities "that were and continue to be under attack by federal policies and priorities – immigrants, women, Muslim and Arab-American communities, Black people, Indigenous communities, LGBTQ communities, and all people of color."

Major Donor Spotlight: Pandemic Responses

Billionaire New Orleans Pelicans owner Gayle Benson covered the wages of Pelicans employees and has donated \$1 million to a fund that will be distributed to local residents via the Greater New Orleans Foundation. Women athletes also contributed during this time, including Simone Biles, who joined the [Athletes for Relief](#) effort. Other [women athletes](#) giving back included Julie Ertz, Megan Rapinoe and Kealia Ohai.

In the tradition of Live Aid, the legendary mid-1980s concert broadcast around the globe to a viewing audience of 1.9 billion, Lady Gaga and a crew of other stars created, "One World: Together At Home," in partnership with Global Citizen, which raised almost \$128 million in COVID-19-relief aid. Reese Witherspoon, Kylie Jenner, Angelina Jolie, Beyoncé, Dolly Parton and many other famous women also stepped up (see our coverage of [celebrity responses](#)).

WMM is another cohort of wealthy women, though each gives independently, in this case. It was launched by Helen LaKelly Hunt; her sister, Ambassador Swanee Hunt; and Chris Grumm, then CEO of WFN, in 2007. Its founding campaign raised more than \$180 million for women’s funds. Every member has made or will make a gift of \$1 million or more “for the advancement of women and girls.” It has more than 330 members who have now granted more than \$700 million.

Celebrities are increasingly high-profile influencers of the agenda for women and girls, even if the philanthropic resources they command are smaller. Queen Latifah partnered with Tribeca Studios and Marc Pritchard, Procter and Gamble’s chief brand officer, to launch the [Queen Collective \(TQC\)](#) with a goal of “accelerating gender and racial equality behind the camera.” Two inaugural documentaries backed by TQC premiered in 2019 at the Tribeca Film Festival. Ava DuVernay and her foundation Array Alliance created a \$250,000 [Array Grants](#) program in response to COVID-19 to back organizations and individuals “dedicated to narrative change of women and people of color.”

Digital giving is on the rise, in general, and it is particularly central to giving for women and girls. WPI’s report, “[Women Give 2020—New Forms of Giving in a Digital Age: Powered by Technology, Creating Community](#),” found women are, overall, giving more donations and money than men online, across four major online giving platforms.

Previous [WPI research](#) found women are more likely to give than men and tend to spread their giving across more organizations, often with many smaller gifts to smaller groups, while men give larger amounts to fewer groups. These patterns appear to hold true within online philanthropy.

A key theme of the report is that women give more gifts and dollars than men online, at nearly two-thirds of gifts across platforms, and 53% to 61% of overall dollars. The new study also [aligns with evidence](#) that women have used social media more than men in the past decade.

Grantee Spotlight



NWLC carries out legislative and advocacy-related work with Congress and in federal and state courts. It works across issues including economic and workplace justice, reproductive rights, gender, racial and LGBTQ+ equity; and sexual harassment. It is home to the Time’s Up Legal Defense Fund.

In 2019, NWLC’s revenue was \$30 million. Grants were its largest source of revenue, at \$12 million. It also reported \$7.5 million in unrealized contribution pledges and close to \$7 million in donated goods and services. This is another grantee serving women and girls that is heavily dependent on private backing.

Associations & Intermediaries

Associations and intermediaries play a large role in women and girls funding. Yet unlike grantmakers associations for issues like education and health, where there is a single funder association recognized as the entity through which to convene with philanthropists organizing around that issue, this pace for women and girls is considerably more populous—some might say fractured.

Women’s Funding Network is the most prominent convener in the field of women’s

women and girls.” The 2019 WPI report on U.S. women’s foundations and funds reported that the more than 100 members of WFN gave away approximately \$410 million in 2015. However, there are many other groups for funders of women and girls outside of the network, and some of the largest private foundations and major donors discussed in this brief operate outside of WFN, which primarily comprises formal women’s foundations and women’s funds.

But private foundations do contribute to the work of WFN. In 2020, WFN received more than \$1.5 million from the Gates Foundation to launch its Economic Mobility Hub Cohort. This project spans nine states; seeks to advance women’s economic opportunity, especially in response to the pandemic’s fallout; and is driven by women’s foundations. WFN CEO Elizabeth Barajas-Román says members of WFN employ “trademark” principles, which include listening to those most impacted by economic challenges, carrying out research, supporting organizing and policy advocacy, cross-sector collaboration, culture-change and media efforts, and making long-term community investments and commitments.

There are many intermediaries playing central roles in the women and girls space. As noted previously, WMM and WDN are major conveners for wealth-holding women. For example, the New Ventures Fund is where Ford channels a large amount of funding for All Above All, a reproductive justice coalition and advocacy campaign co-launched by the National Network of Abortion Funds and the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health. Ford has invested in Borealis Philanthropy’s Transforming Movements Fund, which works to strengthen the social justice leadership of LGBTQ+ youth and young women and girls.

The Tides Foundation moves money to groups working to protect the rights of LGBTQ+ communities, women and others. Tides’ WE LEAD (Women’s Environmental Leadership) fund works to support women’s grassroots leadership in the U.S. climate movement. WE LEAD is an affiliate partner to the Hive Fund, the relatively new cooperative funding group centering the leadership of southern women of color in the climate movement.

Funder Spotlight

THIRD WAVE FUND

Third Wave runs a Sex Workers Giving Circle, a unique participatory grantmaking collaborative. *Inside Philanthropy* explored funding for **sex workers** in 2019, discussing other prominent supporters like Mama Cash, Ford, Open Society Foundations (OSF) and American Jewish World Service.

Funders who want to employ a racial equity and/or justice lens to their gender justice philanthropy can turn to groups like ABFE (formerly Association of Black Foundation Executives), Native Americans in Philanthropy, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, Funders for LGBTQ, Funders for Justice, and the Solidaire Network, among others.

Many other streams of funding exist for advancing women and girls in specific program areas. Women in the Arts & Media Coalition is important to some donors and organizations. [Anonymous Was a Woman](#) provides unrestricted grants of \$25,000 to 10 female artists over age 40 annually. It has awarded over \$5 million since 1996. The [International Women’s Media Foundation \(IWMF\)](#) supports female journalists working in all media formats including photography, filmmaking and television.

Fundraising Now

In our own time of great disruption, fundraising for women and girls charities has been “the best of times, and the worst of times,” to quote Dickens. In 2020, a pandemic, political anxiety and a historic protest movement for racial justice are pulling donors’ attention in different directions. That dynamic, combined with related economic uncertainty, has meant that some organizations are experiencing a windfall, while others are struggling to get by, depending on their funding sources and niche within the arena.

For the League of Women Voters of the United States, 2020 is shaping up to be a banner fundraising year. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, the league has been holding a “Women Power the Vote” campaign to encourage people to cast ballots in the upcoming presidential election. The organization’s tax-exempt charitable arm, the League of Women Voters Education Fund, raised \$5.5 million by the close of its fiscal year on June 30, up from \$3.3 million in 2019. The dollar amount of foundation grants grew by more than 80% between September 2018 and the same month in 2020. And thanks to [Vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org), a website designed to provide nonpartisan information to voters in every state, the League of Women Voters has attracted new corporate donors.

“We have developed a lot of partnerships with companies concerned about democracy,” says Cecilia Calvo, the league’s chief development officer. With [Vote411.org](https://www.vote411.org), she adds, the league “offered corporations a chance to co-brand [with the League of Women Voters], and they have taken to this readily for both their employees and customers.”

But not all organizations in this space are faring so well. YWCA USA is having one of its worst years. It started an emergency fundraising campaign in April to raise \$25 million to help its 204 local YWCAs, many of which are struggling to stay afloat, says senior development director Katie Brennan. “A lot of their revenue comes from providing services like childcare, and they rely on state funding, also,” she says. “As these resources have dried up, a lot of locals have closed or scaled back. They are basically experiencing a crisis.”

The Women’s Funding Network, which represents some 120 women’s funds and foundations, started an emergency campaign to stabilize its financially threatened members. The Response, Recovery, and Resilience Collaborative Fund, created with a \$1 million initial gift from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and other donors, is working toward a goal of raising \$5 million in the next few months, says Elizabeth Barajas-Román, the network’s chief executive.

Fundraising by and for charities that serve women and girls has been growing since the 1970s, but there are also signs of financial fragility among these organizations, according to the Women’s Philanthropy Institute (cited previously in this brief). The research showed that nonprofits serving women and girls are substantially smaller than other charities, with fewer employees. They also spend less on pay and benefits.

Some women’s organizations that focus on racial equity have received more resources this year because of the shift among grantmakers toward more funding for racial justice. “There are new foundations coming into the women and girls space because we deal with racial and gender equity,” says Ruth McFarlane, vice president of advancement at

the Ms. Foundation for Women. “We have raised more than \$4 million in contributions, nearly half of our goal for the year, and we just finished the first quarter.”

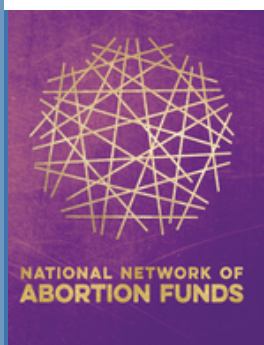
Many charities that serve women and girls report that their fundraising returns from corporations have declined this year. Mothers Against Drunk Driving is one example: “MADD pre-COVID was on a trajectory to have the best sponsorship revenues in a decade” from companies, says Chief Executive Adam Vanek. “Then COVID happened, and companies couldn’t commit.” Starting last month, he says, “companies could see where they were and began to call me back about 2021. Almost all have come back to renew their partnership or even upgrade for 2021.”

“There has definitely been a slowdown in corporate support,” says Barajas-Román at the Women’s Funding Network. Some network members “tell us they have been able to keep support from corporations, but at a reduced level,” she says. “Or there was a rolling back of corporate pledges.”

Barajas-Román says that some women’s organizations may be able to take advantage of virtual events, many of which have attracted new and larger audiences, including some people from other countries. “They can tell corporations that a global network is tuning in,” she says. “That gives you extra leverage for corporate support.”

Many charities serving women and girls have been successful in maintaining or even increasing donations this year from individual donors and families who make large gifts. The Ms. Foundation was the recipient of a summer contribution of \$3 million from Jack Dorsey, Twitter’s chief executive, who has been on a giving spree this year. “He attached very few strings to the gift,” says fundraiser McFarlane. “His interest is around women of color and the COVID crisis.” At MADD, Vanek is pleased by donations this year from affluent supporters who give \$10,000 or more. “We have seen unshakeable commitment to still cut the checks,” he says. “Major donors rose to the occasion, some made their donation early. They have been very generous.” As for more modest gifts to MADD

Collaboration Spotlight



The National Network of Abortion Funds is a coalition of about 70 funds that remove barriers to abortion access, and it has received backing from STBF, Packard, Ford and Hewlett. Abortion funds, much like giving circles or bail funds, allow groups of people to pool resources to assist specific communities and causes and build political clout. They can shift money and power to populations that experience greater barriers to wellness and/or justice in the U.S., including in the realm of sexual and reproductive health.

NNAF development director Debasri Ghosh says the funds use private philanthropy to “weave together a compassionate, community-led and values-driven social safety net,” which she says is necessary because the government does not provide adequate services to the nearly 1 million women who have abortions each year. She says the funds rely primarily on individual donations and grassroots campaigns like an annual Bowl-a-Thon, through which raised \$2.4 million in 2018.

made through direct mail or online, Vanek is relieved that those have held up, for the most part, this year. “There has been no decline in direct mail, though we were worried about this,” he says. “Online giving is maintaining—we are only about 5% behind, there.”

Probably because it’s an election year, the League of Women Voters is beating its own fundraising projections for both direct mail and online gifts. Online donations alone have increased by 77% since 2018. “Regular mail is doing well also, says Rose Simmons, the league’s direct marketing director. “We didn’t see any falloff.”

Even as they continue raising money from their existing donors, some organizations for women and girls say it’s been harder this year to recruit new donors. “Our long-term donors are stepping up, but fewer new donors are coming in,” says Janelle Cavanagh, vice president of strategic partnerships at the Global Fund for Women, a San Francisco charity that supports women’s rights initiatives around the world. The fund raised \$29.5 million this fiscal year, which ended June 30, up from \$18.9 million in 2019.

When it comes to raising money by holding events, charities serving women and girls have seen mixed results. Some organizations like MADD have tried to switch from live fundraising events to virtual formats, only to see returns drop. Returns from the charity’s Walk Like MADD online event are down 40% from last year’s in-person walkathon.

The Ms. Foundation had a better experience when it replaced its sit-down May gala, which typically lasts about four hours, with a virtual one-hour “Feminist Block Party.” The online event drew

2,000 people and hundreds of new donors,” says McFarlane. The virtual party, she adds, “netted more than the live event. We will hold this again, regardless of whether we go back to a live gala.” Another benefit: The virtual party “got lots and lots of attention from women under 50, which has been really exciting at a time when the foundation has been challenged to recruit younger donors,” McFarlane says.

Inside Philanthropy

August 2020 Survey

What do you think are the programmatic issues that the philanthropic sector is neglecting that should receive more funding?

“Again, gender equity and policy around equal pay, health care, adequate and subsidized child care. We are in the middle of a ‘Shecession.’”

—Major donor, Brattleboro, Vermont

“[The] giving bias and lack of trust or respect for Black women leading nonprofit/community work. They go underfunded compared to White elite educated with a “new” “big” idea instead of honoring the ancestral knowledge of our Black and Indigenous leaders.”

—Foundation Professional, Ennis, Texas

An Analysis of Opportunities & Challenges

Philanthropists are engaging in many issue areas and underutilized funding strategies that might have a much larger impact if more funders of women and girls embraced them. Among these promising programmatic focus areas are centering people of color and nurturing their leadership within the movement, focusing on the impact of climate change on women and building their leadership in that movement, and growing public understanding and reconsideration of gender roles. The strategies and underused mechanisms that hold particular promise for funders of women and girls include the constellation of practices associated with “trust-based philanthropy,” investing more into advocacy and 501(c)(4)s, experiments providing families universal basic income, and greater use of collaborative funds.

Women and girls of color are overlooked by funders, despite leading many powerful social movements. “Almost every single social justice movement in this country has been led by women, particularly women or girls of color, and women and girls of color are still significantly underfunded and not funded with the long-term arc of support that is needed,” Ms. Foundation's Younger says. She references Ms. Foundation's [“Pocket Change” report](#).

“There is still a severe underinvestment in Latina-led grassroots nonprofits in the nation,” says Masha Chernyak, vice president of programs and policy at the Latino Community Foundation. She specifically points to the need to support Latina entrepreneurship, economic empowerment, and access to culturally relevant mental health services and arts.

Southern Black Girls and Women’s Consortium’s LaTosha Brown says Black, Indigenous, immigrant and disabled girls “are severely underfunded,” along with girls who are battling mental issues and “have been in the system; in detention centers, in children’s homes—that kind of thing.”

Women’s leadership in the climate justice movement is substantial, but undersupported. Around the world, poor women and those of color who already face marginalization are [more likely](#) to be impacted and displaced by climate change—a trend that can be seen playing out in the U.S. South. The Institute for Women’s Policy Research found that [83%](#) of low-income, single mothers did not return to their New Orleans homes after Katrina.

About half of climate funding currently goes to about 20 national organizations, which are overwhelmingly led by white men. Grassroots southern groups led by women of color already have experience fighting for equity and adapting to a changing climate, yet are still sidestepped by mainstream philanthropy. The Hive Fund for Climate and Gender Justice seeks to shift this paradigm and catalyze a deeply rooted climate response in the South by centering the leadership of Black, Indigenous and other women of color. The Solutions Project, which calls for 100% clean energy, committed to investing 95% of its resources in frontline leadership by people of color, with at least 80% for women-led groups. Rachel’s Network, a community of eco-minded women funders, runs a Catalyst Award to celebrate “women of color who are building a healthier, safer, and more just world.” Individually, its members give tens of millions annually “for the benefit of our planet,” and have given \$1.7 million through network co-funding.

The focus on gender norms is another growing and pivotal branch in this space. As [Riki Wilchins](#) of the nonprofit True Child previously told IP, “Decades of studies have now established that challenging harmful gender norms [is] key to improving outcomes in underserved communities.” She said CARE, PEPFAR, UNAIDS, UNFPA, USAID, WHO and the World Bank have implemented “gender transformative” initiatives that challenge rigid gender norms, and found them effective. She said the Simmons Foundation (Houston, Texas), Applied Materials Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation and Women’s Foundation of Minnesota have all integrated gender norms awareness into aspects of their work.



“There’s a very short margin, there’s very little breaking space given to Black-led organizations to be able to experiment and try new things and fail, and to learn from that failure.”

—LaTosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter Fund

Fujikawa of Third Wave says that, given all the current global challenges and changes underway, funders need to provide essential gender justice groups with strong racial, disability, and economic justice practices with “long-term, trust-based, general operating support, as well as responsive and flexible rapid-response support.”

Younger of Ms. Foundation says she is excited to see more funders using trust-based philanthropy and supports this strategy, including through the

provision of general operating and long-term support. Byrd of WMM also upholds trust-based practices like multiyear, unrestricted funding and “shifting power to those who are in the best position to lead community-based efforts.”

In general, more funders are embracing 501c4 funding. Ms. Foundation has its own (c)(4) and Younger encourages others to use that mechanism. She says that “movement-building has become so politicized that philanthropy is willing to fund into those political spaces for the change to happen.” It is important for funders to be willing to make this leap, she says, “particularly for women and girls, because our bodies become politicized the closer we get to an election cycle. Our existence becomes politicized, if you’re a woman of color.”

[Universal basic income \(UBI\)](#), a practice that seeks to regularize and institutionalize unrestricted cash support for individuals, could potentially help many women overcome systemic economic barriers and gaps, and it is a strategy that more funders are considering. Leaders in the [Economic Security Project \(ESP\)](#), a network focused on the feasibility of basic income, told Inside Philanthropy that economic insecurity cannot be discussed in isolation from race and gender disparities, including wage gaps and the devaluation of care work. “There’s an incredible feminist argument for guaranteed income,” ESP co-chair Natalie Foster said.

Collaborative funds, giving circles and the like have long been prominent in the women and girls field, but key leaders say they have even more promise in the future. Marek of Philanthropy Women says one important strategy “that many feminist givers take is participating in networks [like] Rachel’s Network, WMM, [WFN] and the [WDN].” She says, “These

networks serve as essential strategy hubs and provide the time and space for relationship-building in the gender equality giving sector.”

We’ve explored some of WFN’s work as a hub and energizer for women’s funds, Philanthropy Together’s role in connecting and building the giving circle movement, and how WMM, Rachel’s Network and WDN convene wealthy women givers. Byrd of WMM speaks of the importance of cooperation among philanthropists. She says collaborative funds “have the capacity to be more nimble than foundations, foster innovation, and allow funders to make bigger bets and take greater risks than they might be able to individually.”

As we’ve seen, funders are uniting to support women through the Young Women’s Initiative, Economic Mobility Hubs and more. Another notable funding collaborative is the Culture Change Fund, which aims to spark a societal shift toward greater gender justice in the U.S. This \$10 million fund, [launched in 2019](#), is backed by the California Gender Justice Funders Network, which includes the Women’s Foundation of California, Blue Shield of California Foundation, California Endowment, Fondation CHANEL, Philanthropy California and other philanthropic partners. Additional Culture Change funders include the Ford, Hewlett, Compton, and General Service foundations, as well as the Lefkofsky Family Foundation, among others.

We’ve also seen women-and-girl-centric funders team up to fight [child marriage](#), support the infrastructure development of [women’s funds](#), and provide rapid-response grants for [youth-led groups](#) during the pandemic. G4GC, the Fund for The Me Too Movement and Allies, and the Collective Future Fund are other examples of gender-focused partnerships.

Spotlight: A Giver and a Getter



Planned Parenthood has numerous local branches, a global division and an Action Fund (PPAF), its 501(c)(4) political advocacy arm. In 2018 it **reported** that medical services make up 61% of its expenses, while abortions make up about 3%. STI testing and treatment accounts for about 49% of its work, and contraception, other women’s health issues, and cancer screenings and prevention each account for more of its work than abortion.

In 2018, its total revenue was about \$1.7 billion. It’s national and affiliate arms received 38% of their revenue from private contributions and bequests, 34% from government reimbursements and grants, and 22% from non-government health services revenue (such as abortion fees). Here, we see the outsized power private donors have over the nation’s largest provider of abortion services and over many women’s access to essential health care.

Resources for Women & Girls Funding

Reports & Data Sets:

Reports:

“The Women & Girls Index: Measuring giving to women’s and girls’ causes,” by the Women’s Philanthropy Institute

“Accelerating Change for Women and Girls: The Role Of Women’s Funds,” by Candid and the Women’s Funding Network“

Women’s Foundations And Funds: A Landscape Study,” by the Women’s Philanthropy Institute

“A Blueprint for Women’s Funds Using Finance as a Tool for Social Change,” by Criterion, the Ms. Foundation and Global Fund for Women

“The Landscape Of Giving Circles/ Collective Giving Groups In The U.S.,” by the Collective Giving Research Group

“Giving Circle Membership: How Collective Giving Impacts Donors,” by the Collective Giving Research Group

“Unequal Lives: The State of Black Women and Families in the Rural South,” by the Southern Rural Black Women’s Initiative

“Start from the Ground Up: Increasing Support for Girls of Color,” by Grantmakers for Girls of Color

“Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less,” by the Ms. Foundation

“2018 Tracking Report,” by Funders for LGBTQ Issues

Women Give 2020—New Forms of Giving in a Digital Age: Powered by Technology, Creating Community,” by the Women’s Philanthropy Institute

“How and Why Women Give,” by the Women’s Philanthropy Institute

“2018 Annual Report,” Planned Parenthood “Consolidated Financial Statements 2019,” National Women’s Law Center and Affiliates

Foundation Funding For Women & Girls, by the Human Rights Funding Network

Incarcerated Women and Girls, by The Sentencing Project Social Media Fact Sheet, by the Pew Research Center

Top Donors, 2020 Cycle, Planned Parenthood, Opensecrets.org

Websites & Individual Pages with Key Information:

“What We Do - Gender Equality - Strategy Overview,” Gates Foundation

“WFN Announces Regional Women’s Economic Mobility Hub Cohort,” Women’s Funding Network

“Statement on Rights at the Intersection of Gender and Disability During COVID-19 Women,” Women Enabled International

“Inclusive Philanthropy, RespectAbility

“Join Our Community,” Women Moving Millions

“The Solutions Project Announces Groundbreaking Pledge,” The Solutions Project

“116 Organizations Driving Change,” Mackenzie Scott on Medium

“Melinda Gates: Here’s Why I’m Committing \$1 Billion to Promote Gender Equality,” Time Magazine

“NoVo Fund, Led by a Buffett Son, Criticized for Staff and Program Cuts,” The Chronicle of Philanthropy

“Money Is Not Just for Men” Sallie Krawcheck interview, New York Times

“Majority Of Americans Don’t Want Roe v. Wade Overturned,” NPR “CBS Corporation to Donate \$20 Million to Time’s Up and 17 Other Groups,” Yahoo Entertainment

“Climate change ‘impacts women more than men,’” BBC

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¹Based on available grantmaker data from Candid. Excludes federal funding, funding by higher education institutions and major donor advised funds (DAFs.)

²Based on available grant recipient data from Candid. Excludes government organizations and higher education institutions.

Feedback?

The State of American Philanthropy is an ongoing project, each SAP brief will be updated periodically to integrate new information, additional data and evolving perspectives. This has not yet been updated. If you have comments or information you'd like to share with us, please email us at managingeditor@insidephilanthropy.org.