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# THE LGBTQ+ INDEX 2024:

## MEASURING GIVING TO LGBTQ+ ORGANIZATIONS

## WRITTEN & RESEARCHED BY

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### **Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy**

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## CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Key Findings .....	6
Background.....	7
COVID-19 Pandemic.....	7
Rise in Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation.....	8
Intersectionality and the Racial Justice Movement.....	8
Study Methods.....	9
Findings.....	10
<i>Donations to transgender-serving organizations</i> .....	18
<i>Comparing the LGBTQ+ Index and the Women &amp; Girls Index</i> .....	19
Discussion.....	21
Implications .....	24
References .....	26



## INTRODUCTION

In just half a century, the LGBTQ+ community has marked significant milestones in societal acceptance, legal acknowledgment, and visibility. These achievements, from the groundbreaking legalization of same-sex marriage to the cultural embracing of diverse gender identities, signify a profound societal transformation. However, this remarkable progress faces persistent challenges. Last year, a record-breaking surge in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, particularly targeting transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming youth, underscored the urgent need for continued advocacy and support.<sup>1</sup>

Although LGBTQ+ issues have heightened visibility and are increasingly incorporated into broader societal dialogue surrounding equality and inclusivity, there remains a notable scarcity of data pertaining to the organizations dedicated to addressing these causes.

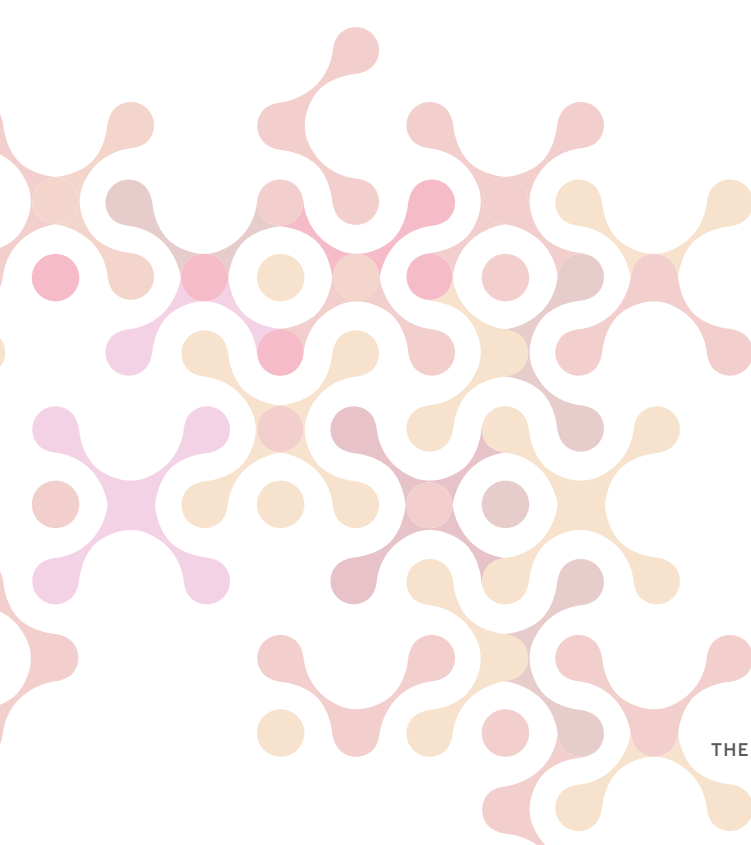
In the face of these challenges, nonprofits serving the LGBTQ+ community have played a pivotal role. These organizations provide essential support networks and amplify critical voices in both policy spheres and broader societal contexts. To highlight these efforts, the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy has developed the LGBTQ+ Index as part of the Equitable Giving Lab (EGL). Modeled after the Women & Girls Index by the school's Women's Philanthropy Institute, the LGBTQ+ Index creates a new baseline for understanding the philanthropic landscape of LGBTQ+ nonprofits. The LGBTQ+ Index provides data to address key questions about the nature and scale of support these organizations receive compared to other causes.

The 2024 edition of the LGBTQ+ Index incorporates fresh data from 2020 and 2021 to offer a decade-long perspective on the sector. This period marks a critical juncture, reflecting both the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic and significant shifts in public and private support for LGBTQ+ causes.

The primary aim of this Index is to provide philanthropy scholars, practitioners, policymakers, donors, and a wider audience with detailed insights into LGBTQ+ organizations, particularly focusing on the funding disparities they face and the unique challenges they navigate. This information is not only a valuable benchmark for nonprofit organizations within the sector, but also a resource for development officers and nonprofit leaders to forge meaningful connections and align their efforts. Moreover, donors and funders can leverage this research to identify gaps in existing resources and tailor their contributions to address the unique needs of LGBTQ+ organizations.

Building on the foundation established by the inaugural release of the LGBTQ+ Index in 2023, this report takes both a ten-year retrospective look at the development within the LGBTQ+ nonprofit sector, as well as an examination of the more recent growth in support for LGBTQ+ causes. Despite a common perception of slow change within the nonprofit sector, the organizations within the LGBTQ+ Index are witnessing rapid progress. However, the data also reveal that resources remain limited and recent growth is not universal. The Index also illustrates the resiliency and influence of LGBTQ+ organizations and tells the story of evolving priorities and needs within the LGBTQ+ population.

The LGBTQ+ Index dataset is accessible through a user-friendly website, [www.LGBTQIndex.org](http://www.LGBTQIndex.org), where visitors can download a complete list of LGBTQ+ organizations (as a file that includes name and Employer Identification Number), and search for organizations based on keyword, focus area, and geographic location. Along with additional resources available at [www.EquitableGivingLab.org/LGBTQIndex](http://www.EquitableGivingLab.org/LGBTQIndex), including case studies of LGBTQ+ nonprofits, these tools and insights can equip individuals and organizations with a starting point for making data-informed decisions that help address equity issues in philanthropy.





## KEY FINDINGS

- 1. Over the decade 2012-2021, charitable giving to LGBTQ+ organizations more than doubled**, increasing from \$387 million in 2012 to \$823 million in 2021, with particularly strong growth in the last two years of the period (35% growth from 2019 to 2021). This growth outpaced the increase in overall charitable giving during the same period; as a result, giving to LGBTQ+ organizations rose from 0.10% of total charitable giving in 2012 to 0.16% in 2021. **However, this still amounts to less than \$1 out of every \$500 donated in 2021 going to support LGBTQ+ organizations.**
- 2. Certain subsectors of LGBTQ+ causes saw divergent growth trends over the past decade**, such as outsized growth for LGBTQ+ education organizations (254% increase from 2012 to 2021), and lower growth for organizations focused on HIV/AIDS in the LGBTQ+ community (7% increase from 2012 to 2021).
- 3. The distribution of giving within LGBTQ+ mission focus subsectors evolved between 2012 and 2021, revealing an expanding community focused on a broader range of issues than a decade ago.** The share of giving going to LGBTQ+ HIV/AIDS organizations decreased as a share of all LGBTQ+ philanthropic support, from 29% in 2012 to 15% in 2021; the shares of dollars going to youth (+6.8%), community centers (+3.6%), transgender-focused organizations (+3.5%), and education (+2.9%) have grown significantly. Civil rights organizations remain the largest single category at 53%.
- 4. LGBTQ+ organizations saw their assets grow 76% from 2019-2021—around double the size of their growth in donations.** Over the decade 2012 to 2021, assets among LGBTQ+ organizations have experienced remarkable growth of 257%. However, this growth was largely concentrated in the largest organizations, as was growth in other measurements related to professionalization like number of employees and payroll size.

## BACKGROUND

This section examines events between 2020 and 2021 that had a large-scale impact on giving to LGBTQ+ communities. While other notable events have taken place before and after those years, these events might have the greatest impact on the findings presented in this report.

### *COVID-19 Pandemic*

The COVID-19 pandemic marked an era of global upheaval from 2020 to 2021, profoundly affecting every aspect of life. Widespread job loss, social isolation, and barriers to healthcare and education had profound implications for people around the world. As the crisis unfolded, it became evident that the LGBTQ+ community shouldered a disproportionate risk of being impacted compared to the broader population. Recognizing this disparity, over 100 organizations issued an urgent call to health officials, asking them to consider the heightened vulnerability faced by LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>2</sup>

Recent research has revealed that many systemic inequalities were exacerbated during and in the aftermath of the pandemic. Sexual and gender minorities reported significant declines in their physical and mental health, greater financial instability, and increased difficulty in meeting basic needs compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers. For example, in a community survey, cisgender sexual minority individuals saw a greater decline in their physical health compared to their cisgender heterosexual counterparts. Gender minority individuals experienced an even greater toll, with declines across many facets, including “physical and mental health, financial stability, meeting basic needs, and social connections.”<sup>3</sup>

While sharing many of the same hardships of the general population, LGBTQ+ individuals confronted distinct challenges that further jeopardized their wellbeing. These hardships included reduced access to healthcare services such as gender-affirming care, discrimination in pursuit of medical treatment, and limited access to legal protections.<sup>4</sup> One study revealed that LGBTQ+ youth were among those experiencing immense strain, with more than 80% reporting that the COVID-19 had made their living situation more stressful.<sup>5</sup>



### ***Rise in Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation***

Amid economic turmoil and social stress during 2020 and 2021, these years also saw a significant increase in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and a surge in hate crimes targeting LGBTQ+ people. Seventeen anti-LGBTQ+ bills were enacted in state legislatures across the U.S. in 2021 alone, eclipsing the total from the three preceding years combined. This rise in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation is evidenced not only by the proliferation of bills but also by the increasing severity and extremity of these laws. One example is the unprecedented wave of transgender sports bans enacted in nine states, with all but one law passed in 2021.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, an analysis of FBI data reported that anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes more than doubled nationwide between 2015-2019 and 2021-2022. States with laws restricting LGBTQ+ student rights witnessed noticeably sharper increases in LGBTQ+ hate crimes, underscoring the tangible impacts of such legislation on community safety.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Intersectionality and the Racial Justice Movement***

The racial justice movement, reignited by the tragic murders of George Floyd and others in 2020, brought renewed attention to intersectional vulnerabilities. The LGBTQ+ community mourned devastating losses, including Tony McDade, Riah Milton, and Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, whose violent deaths highlighted the compounded risks faced by Black LGBTQ+ individuals.<sup>10</sup> Recent research shows that activism in response to these events was often driven by overlapping social justice goals beyond racial justice alone, including LGBTQ+ rights, women’s rights, and immigrant rights.<sup>11</sup> This intersectionality sparked vital national conversations and amplified the voices of Black LGBTQ+ individuals, contributing to a broader understanding of the unique challenges at the intersection of race and gender identity.



## STUDY METHODS

The LGBTQ+ Index includes 501(c)(3) public charities primarily dedicated to serving the LGBTQ+ community that were active from 2012 to 2021—the most recent year for which more than 99% of finalized IRS data on charitable organizations were available as of December 2023. The analyses in this report focus on this ten-year period from 2012 to 2021, while also highlighting changes from 2019 to 2021, the most recently added data. Analyses in this report illustrate key characteristics of LGBTQ+ organizations, including the amount of total philanthropic support they receive from individuals, foundations, and corporations. To offer context, the findings compare LGBTQ+ organizations with non-LGBTQ+ organizations and with the traditional nonprofit subsectors as defined by *Giving USA*.

Several data sources form the basis for the LGBTQ+ Index, the most important of which are e-file Internal Revenue Service (IRS) data available on Amazon Web Services and [irs.gov](https://irs.gov) that provide details for 410,716 501(c)(3) public charities filing IRS Forms 990 and 990-EZ electronically for circa fiscal year 2021. These data were supplemented with 900 digitized Form 990 paper returns provided by Candid (formerly GuideStar) and 19,636 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 619,921 charitable organizations filing Form 990-N and 454,527 “non-filing” registered charitable organizations were used to gather information on typically smaller and religious organizations, for a total population of 1,505,790 registered 501(c)(3) domestic charitable organizations for fiscal year 2021. 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 2021, most of which are religion-related charitable organizations exempt from annual 990 filing requirements. The final set of LGBTQ+ Index inclusion and exclusion rules was applied to the full population of 2,250,753 registered charitable organizations found in IRS Business Master Files (BMF) between 1989 and 2024.

For more information on the data sources and processes used in developing the Index, please visit [www.EquitableGivingLab.org/LGBTQIndex](http://www.EquitableGivingLab.org/LGBTQIndex).

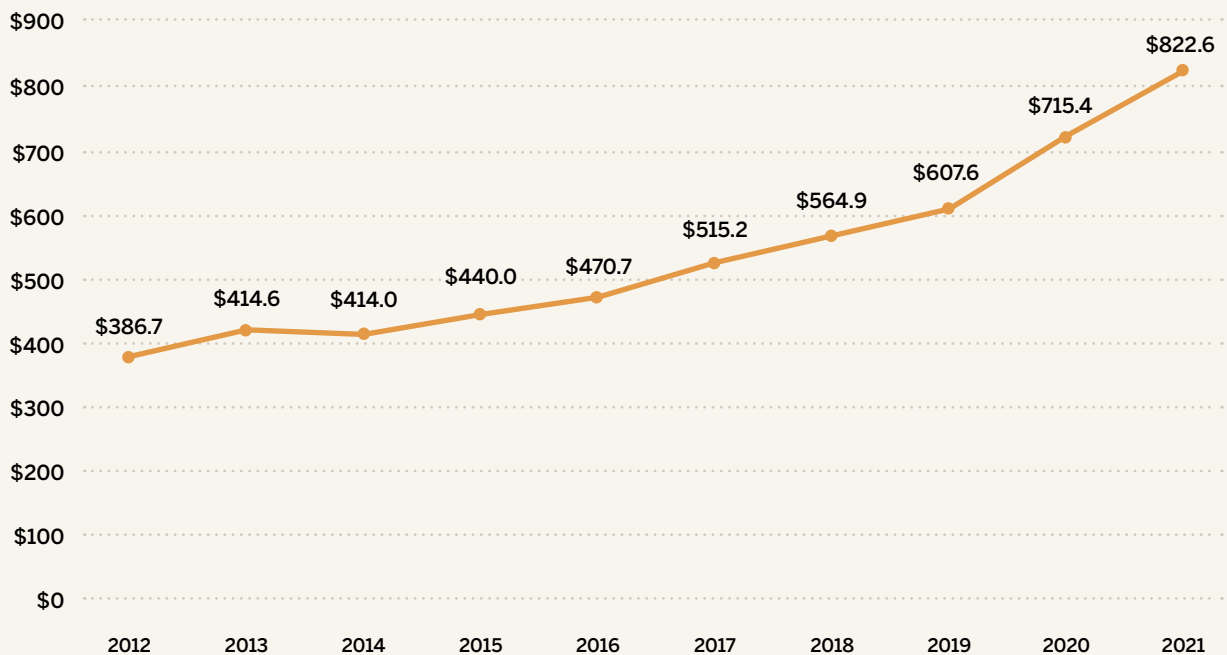


## FINDINGS

**Finding 1: Over the decade 2012-2021, charitable giving to LGBTQ+ organizations more than doubled, increasing from \$387 million in 2012 to \$823 million in 2021, with particularly strong growth in the last two years of the period (35% growth from 2019 to 2021). This growth outpaced the increase in overall charitable giving during the same period; as a result, giving to LGBTQ+ organizations rose from 0.10% of total charitable giving in 2012 to 0.16% in 2021. However, this still amounts to less than \$1 out of every \$500 donated in 2021 going to support LGBTQ+ organizations.**

Figure 1 illustrates the inflation-adjusted growth in charitable giving to LGBTQ+ organizations from \$387 million in 2012 to \$823 million in 2021.<sup>i</sup> While growth in real dollars took place in all but one year, this growth was especially strong in the last two years of the data, with 35% growth occurring from 2019 to 2021 alone.

**FIGURE 1: Philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations (2012-2021, in millions)**



Note: Dollars have been adjusted for inflation to 2021 dollars.

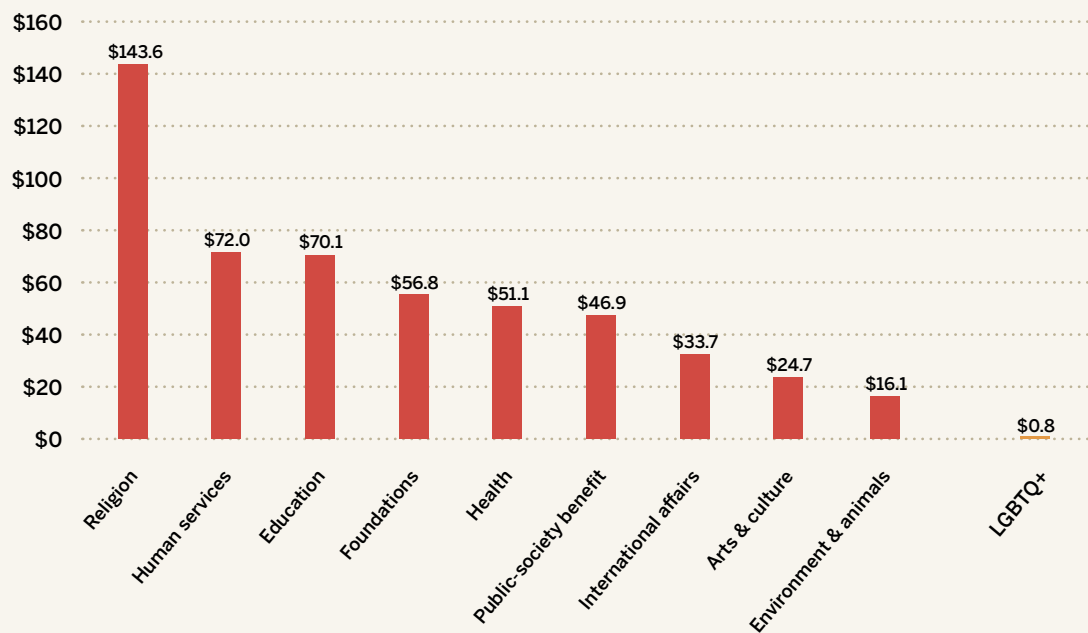
<sup>i</sup> Unless otherwise specified, all dollar amounts and growth rates in this report have been adjusted for inflation to 2021 dollars. Inflation-adjusted dollars are also referred to as “real dollars” in this report.

The decade-long rise in charitable contributions to LGBTQ+ causes can be attributed to many factors such as heightened societal awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and the dynamics of policy advancements and setbacks. The increased visibility of LGBTQ+ rights and the public’s response to legislative changes have likely spurred greater philanthropic engagement.

Particularly noteworthy is the rise in the share of overall charitable giving to LGBTQ+ organizations during this period, increasing from 0.10% in 2012 to 0.13% in 2019, and then to 0.16% of total charitable giving (\$517 billion) by 2021. However, even after a decade of growth, less than \$1 out of every \$500 given to charity goes to an LGBTQ+ organization, underscoring the need for continued advocacy and funding support to address the unique challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community.

Figure 2 compares philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations against traditional nonprofit subsectors in 2021, illustrating that despite their growth, contributions to LGBTQ+ causes still represent a small fraction of total philanthropy. Although LGBTQ+ organizations appear in all charitable subsectors, they are depicted as their own subsector in Figure 2 for the sake of comparison.

**FIGURE 2: Philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations compared with traditional nonprofit subsectors (2021, in billions)**



Note: Subsector amounts are 2021 values from *Giving USA 2023*. LGBTQ+ organizations appear in all traditional nonprofit subsectors but are depicted as their own subsector for the sake of comparison.



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***Finding 2: Certain subsectors of LGBTQ+ causes saw divergent growth trends over the past decade, such as outsized growth for LGBTQ+ education organizations (254% increase from 2012 to 2021), and lower growth for organizations focused on HIV/AIDS in the LGBTQ+ community (7% increase from 2012 to 2021).***

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The organizations in the LGBTQ+ Index are grouped into categories—called subsectors—based on their mission focus.<sup>ii</sup> Charitable giving to some subsectors of LGBTQ+ organizations grew dramatically from 2012 to 2021, as shown in Figures 3 and 4. Figure 3 shows the percentage change in philanthropic support over the decade in question, whereas Figure 4 illustrates the actual dollar amounts in 2012 and 2021, providing a clearer picture of the scale of growth across subsectors.

The highest growth during this decade included the following three subsectors:

- LGBTQ+ public-society benefit organizations increased 255% from 2012 to 2021; examples of these organizations include CenterLink, Inc. and Brave Space Alliance.
- LGBTQ+ education-focused organizations increased 254%; Point Foundation is an example of this type of LGBTQ+ organization.
- LGBTQ+ organizations focused on elders and aging increased 222%; SAGE (Advocacy & Services for LGBTQ+ Elders) and Openhouse San Francisco are examples of LGBTQ+ organizations focused on elders and aging.

Conversely, the lowest growth over the decade was seen in organizations focused on HIV/AIDS in the LGBTQ+ community (7%). Examples of these organizations include the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Gay Men’s Health Crisis Inc.

Exceptionally high growth was also observed among subsectors that started from much smaller funding levels. These subsectors include:

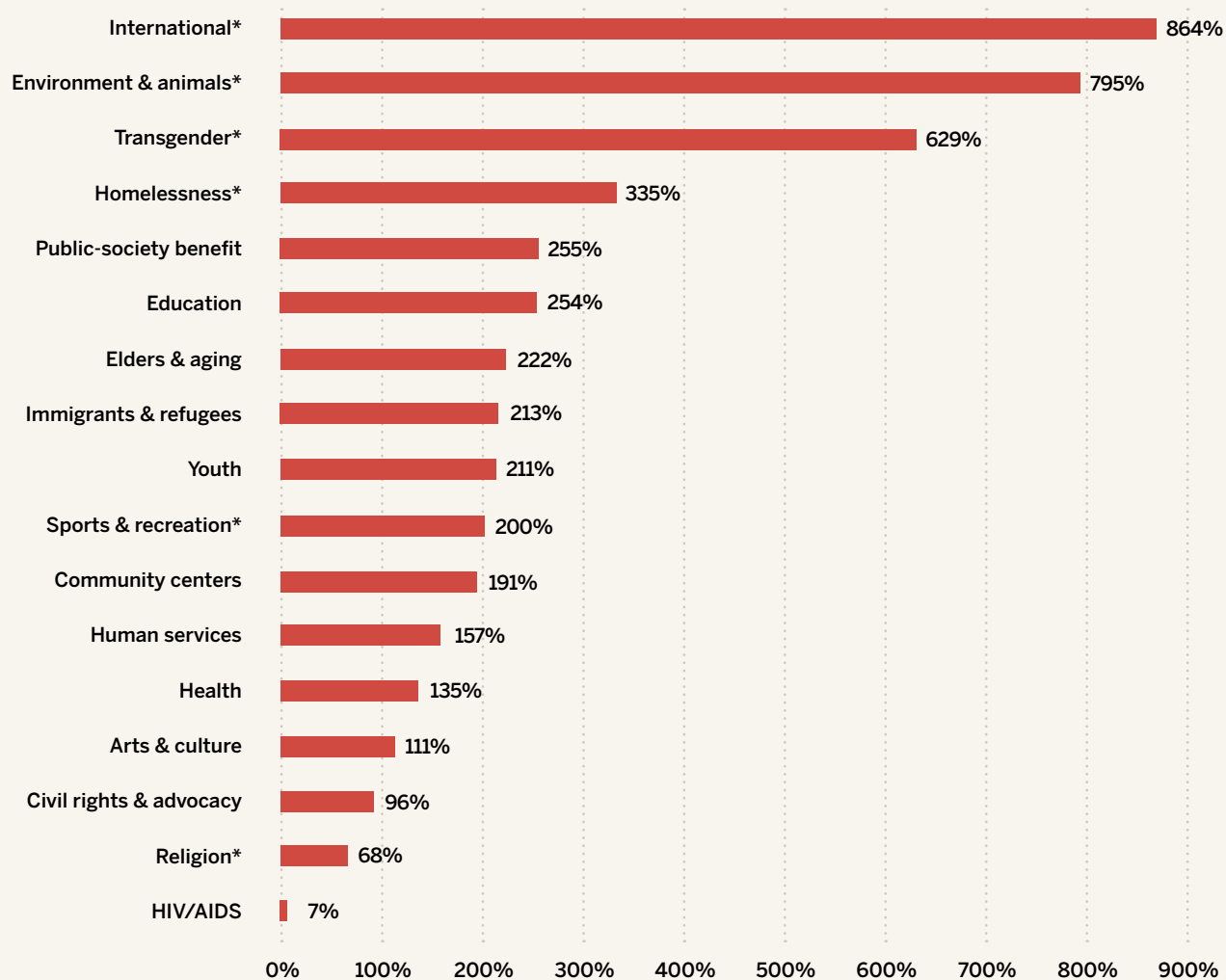
- International LGBTQ+ organizations grew 864% from 2012 to 2021; Outright International and Global Action for Trans Equality Inc. are examples of organizations in this subsector.
- LGBTQ+ environmental and animal organizations increased 795%; Pride Veterinary Community is an example of an LGBTQ+ animal organization.
- Transgender-serving organizations grew 629%; the Transgender Law Center and Trans Lifeline are examples of transgender-serving organizations.

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<sup>ii</sup> The subsectors (also called subgroups, sub-categories, or mission focus areas) in the LGBTQ+ Index are defined by interest areas especially relevant to the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., elder care, HIV/AIDS) and by the categories used in *Giving USA* (e.g., public-society benefit, education). Unlike in *Giving USA*, these subsector categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive; for example, an organization can be focused on both civil rights and HIV/AIDS.

It is important to contextualize that these categories started from relatively small dollar amounts, each receiving under \$5 million in philanthropic support in 2012. While these growth rates are impressive, they represent expansion from a very small base, which can amplify percentage changes. This finding highlights not only the areas where LGBTQ+ organizations are gaining increasing support but also those that may require more focus and resources to effectively address ongoing needs.

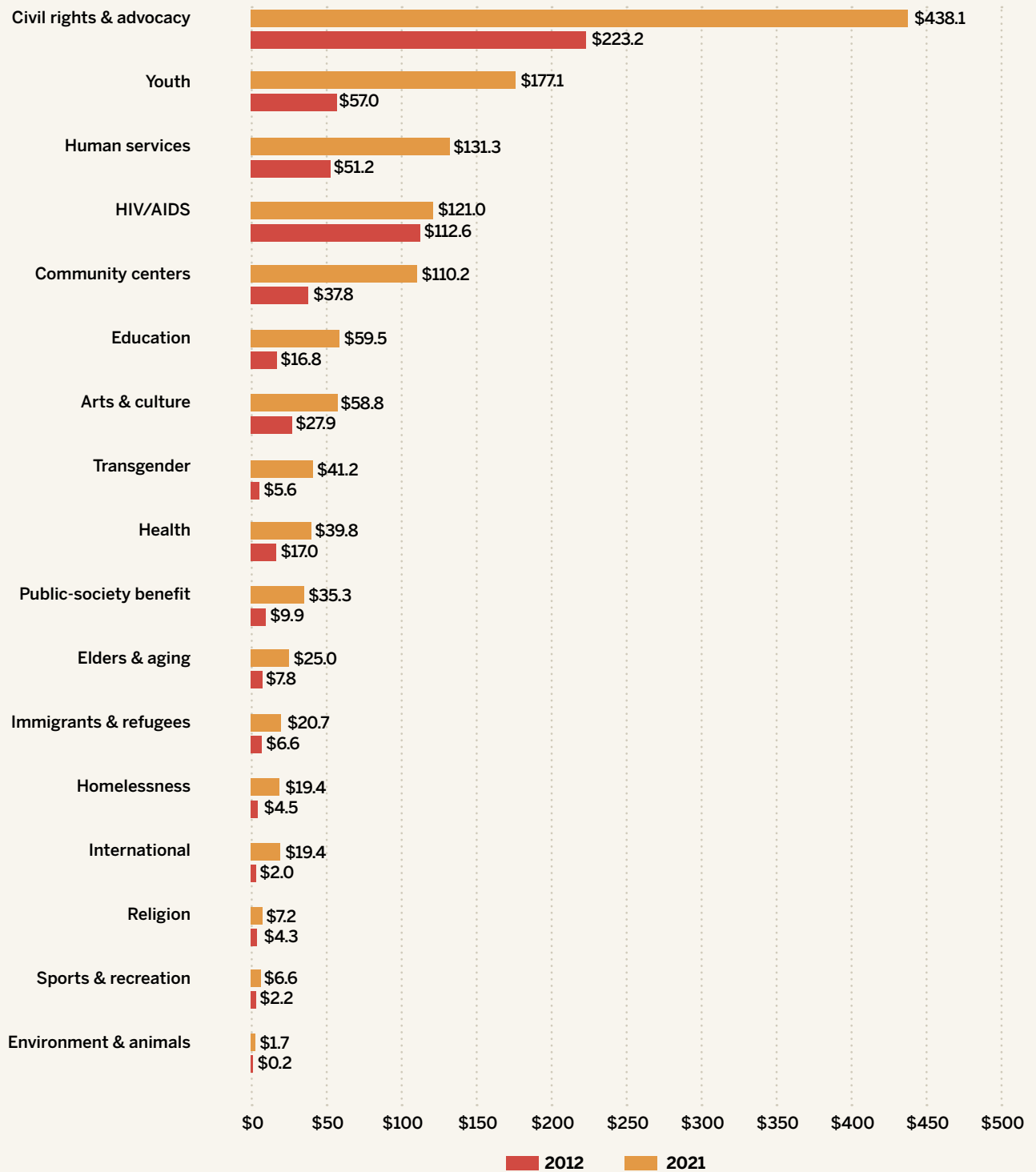
**FIGURE 3: Change in philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations by mission focus subsector (2012-2021)**



Note: \*Indicates subsector received <\$5 million in charitable contributions in 2012.



**FIGURE 4: Philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations by mission focus subsector (2012 and 2021, in millions)**



Note: Dollars have been adjusted for inflation to 2021 dollars.

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***Finding 3: The distribution of giving within LGBTQ+ mission focus subsectors evolved between 2012 and 2021, revealing an expanding community focused on a broader range of issues than a decade ago. The share of giving going to LGBTQ+ HIV/AIDS organizations decreased as a share of all LGBTQ+ philanthropic support, from 29% in 2012 to 15% in 2021; the shares of dollars going to youth (+6.8%), community centers (+3.6%), transgender-focused organizations (+3.5%), and education (+2.9%) have grown significantly. Civil rights organizations remain the largest single category at 53%.***

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From 2012 to 2021, the distribution of philanthropic support across LGBTQ+ mission focus subsectors shifted significantly, reflecting an increasingly diverse range of issues gaining attention and funding within the community. The first key change to note is a decrease in the proportion of philanthropy directed toward LGBTQ+ HIV/AIDS organizations, which dropped from 29% in 2012 to 15% in 2021. This reflects a broader shift in public health priorities and possibly the success of existing treatments and prevention strategies.

The second notable change is growth in specific mission focus subsectors of LGBTQ+ organizations between 2012 and 2021. These subsectors include:

- LGBTQ+ youth organizations saw their share of overall LGBTQ+ organization funding increase 6.8% from 2012 to 2021. The Trevor Project Inc. is one example of an LGBTQ+ youth organization.
- LGBTQ+ community centers increased 3.6% as a share of overall LGBTQ+ organization funding over the same period. One example of such an organization is the Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center.
- Transgender-focused organizations saw their share of overall LGBTQ+ organization funding increase 3.5% over the decade; notably, the share of dollars going to these organizations more than tripled over this period. The National Center for Transgender Equality is one example of these organizations.
- LGBTQ+ education organizations increased 2.9% as a share of overall LGBTQ+ organization funding over the same period; Point Foundation is an example of these organizations.



Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the changes in funding distribution among various subsectors from 2012 to 2021, highlighting the dynamic nature of philanthropic priorities within the LGBTQ+ community. These data reflect a narrative of evolving awareness of needs within the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, as transgender and nonbinary individuals gain greater societal visibility, they have garnered both support and faced a surge of challenges, including the rise of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation specifically targeting this demographic. This heightened awareness, among other factors, is evident in the LGBTQ+ Index, which indicates that transgender-specific organizations are significantly younger than LGBTQ+ organizations overall.

**TABLE 1: Mission focus subsector distribution of philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations (2012 and 2021)**

Mission focus subsector	Percentage of total support to LGBTQ+ organizations in 2012	Percentage of total support to LGBTQ+ organizations in 2021	Change in percentage from 2012 to 2021
Civil rights & advocacy	57.7%	53.3%	-4.5%
Youth	14.7%	21.5%	6.8%
Human services	13.2%	16.0%	2.7%
HIV/AIDS	29.1%	14.7%	-14.4%
Community centers	9.8%	13.4%	3.6%
Education	4.3%	7.2%	2.9%
Arts & culture	7.2%	7.2%	-0.1%
Transgender	1.5%	5.0%	3.5%
Health	4.4%	4.8%	0.5%
Public-society benefit	2.6%	4.3%	1.7%
Elders & aging	2.0%	3.0%	1.0%
Immigrants & refugees	1.7%	2.5%	0.8%
International	0.5%	2.4%	1.8%
Homelessness	1.2%	2.4%	1.2%
Religion	1.1%	0.9%	-0.2%
Sports & recreation	0.6%	0.8%	0.2%
Environment & animals	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%

Note: Mission focus categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive; therefore, the sum of the percentages in this figure exceeds 100%.



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***Finding 4: LGBTQ+ organizations saw their assets grow 76% from 2019-2021—around double the size of their growth in donations. Over the decade 2012 to 2021, assets among LGBTQ+ organizations have experienced remarkable growth of 257%. However, this growth was largely concentrated in the largest organizations, as was growth in other measurements related to professionalization like number of employees and payroll size.***

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From 2019 to 2021, assets of LGBTQ+ organizations grew by 76%, around double the rate of their 35% increase in donations. Figure 5 illustrates the percentage growth in financials between 2012 and 2021, comparing LGBTQ+ organizations to non-LGBTQ+ organizations on an average basis, highlighting the divergent growth paths and professionalization trends within the sector. As seen in the figure, over the longer span from 2012 to 2021, assets increased dramatically by 257%, with this growth predominantly occurring in the sector's largest organizations.

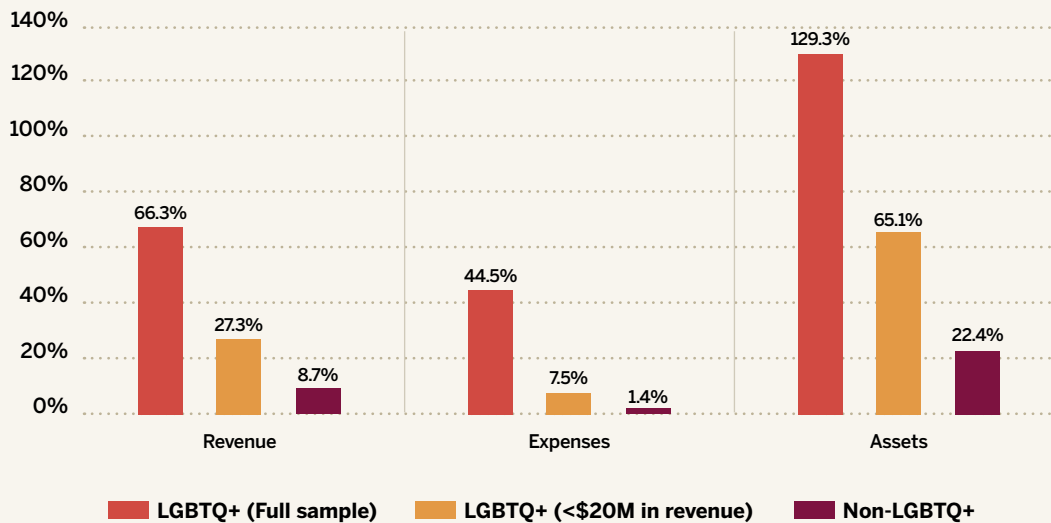
The growth of LGBTQ+ organizations' assets may point to a growing professionalization within a subset of the largest organizations in the sector. Other financial indicators support this point: over the past decade, LGBTQ+ organizations with at least \$20 million in revenue not only saw substantial asset growth but also experienced a 22% increase in average payroll per organization, contrasting with a 7% decline in similarly sized non-LGBTQ+ organizations. Further, the average staff size (number of paid employees) shows a similar growth pattern. This suggests a strategic enhancement in organizational capabilities and resources.

Despite these gains at the top, smaller LGBTQ+ organizations (less than \$20 million in revenue) did not see the same staggering levels of growth. Their assets grew at half the pace of the larger LGBTQ+ organizations, and they saw declines in the number of employees and in payroll, indicating persistent challenges in reaching financial stability and growth.

The growth and professionalization of these largest LGBTQ+ organizations enhance their capacity to serve the community; these increases also reflect increased donor confidence and strategic organizational management. At the same time, their experience is not mirrored among smaller LGBTQ+ organizations. The challenges faced by smaller organizations emphasize the need for targeted support to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources across the sector.



**FIGURE 5: Growth in financial measurements of LGBTQ+ organizations compared to non-LGBTQ+ organizations (2012-2021)**



Note: LGBTQ+ organizations with less than \$20 million in revenues manually excludes one exception. This organization, which temporarily ceased operations during 2020-2021, reported negligible revenues and expenses but still possessed considerable assets. It has been excluded from this data to prevent its atypical financial situation from skewing the overall trends.

## DONATIONS TO TRANSGENDER-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

Over the past decade, while philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ organizations overall has increased, donations to transgender-serving organizations have seen disproportionate growth. Nonprofits serving the transgender community have experienced remarkable growth of 629% in real dollars between 2012 and 2021. This increase speaks to the community’s response to both political and social dynamics affecting transgender individuals.

This upward trajectory of support experienced an unanticipated shift in 2021, when donations declined by 13%—marking the first downturn in the subsector since these measurements began. While this decline could be a cause for concern, it is important to note that transgender-specific organizations still experienced robust two-year growth of 31% from 2019 to 2021 due to an extremely strong 2020. LGBTQ+ homelessness organizations experienced a similar phenomenon, seeing donations drop 11.2% in 2021.

The 13% decline in support for transgender-specific organizations in 2021 coincided with an alarming wave of transphobic legislation. While transphobia is a plausible explanation for the decline in giving, this may simply represent a slight natural regression following a particularly robust year of giving in 2020.

In 2021, giving to transgender-serving organizations totaled \$41 million, accounting for just 5% of all philanthropic support for LGBTQ+ causes. While these figures underscore a significant step forward in supporting the needs of the transgender community, they also sound a cautionary reminder of the ongoing need for targeted support to address the unique challenges faced by the transgender community.

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## COMPARING THE LGBTQ+ INDEX AND THE WOMEN & GIRLS INDEX

The Equitable Giving Lab (EGL) comprises the Women & Girls Index (WGI) and the LGBTQ+ Index, with additional indices forthcoming. Examining the indices together provides a framework for understanding intersectional philanthropy and observing trends across the indices. This comparative approach offers valuable insights into the allocation of resources and the giving mechanisms through which underrepresented groups receive support, including government grants and donor-advised funds (DAFs).

### *Government Grant Trends*

LGBTQ+ organizations have historically received a higher proportion of contributions from government grants compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts. However, from 2019 to 2021, LGBTQ+ nonprofits experienced a slower real growth in the amount of government grants received (39%), compared to non-LGBTQ+ nonprofits (58%). LGBTQ+ organizations now rely on government grants for support to a similar extent as non-LGBTQ+ organizations, representing approximately 40% of all contributions in both sets of organizations.

In a similar trend, government grants to women's and girls' organizations historically outpaced those grants to non-WGI organizations. However, from 2019 to 2020, government grants to women's and girls' organizations increased by 10.1%--which significantly trailed the growth in government grants for non-WGI organizations, mirroring the shifts seen in LGBTQ+ organizations. One hypothesis for this trend, noted in the Women & Girls Index 2023 report, might reflect organizational capacity.<sup>12</sup> Government grants during 2020 involved unprecedented programs like the Paycheck Protection Program; changes in grant receipts may reflect organizations' preparation for and capacity to apply for and manage this type of funding.<sup>13</sup>



### ***Donor-Advised Fund Impact***

The Women & Girls Index and the LGBTQ+ Index also demonstrate a similar pattern of overrepresentation in receiving funds from DAFs. DAFs have emerged as a popular giving mechanism for individual donors, particularly for those with considerable resources. In 2022, there was a 9% increase in grants from DAFs, reaching a total of \$52.16 billion compared to the previous year.<sup>14</sup>

From 2012 to 2015, WGI organizations received approximately 3.1% of DAF funding included in the sample. This percentage is almost double the share of total philanthropic support WGI organizations received in 2016 (1.7%).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, support for LGBTQ+ organizations from national DAFs in 2021 was 0.37%. While a very small percentage, this is still more than double the 0.16% of overall charitable giving going to LGBTQ+ organizations.

These trends suggest that DAFs play a crucial role in supporting causes that benefit underserved populations. DAFs empower donors to engage in strategic charitable giving, often directing their contributions towards causes that align with their personal values and experiences. The significant support from DAFs to LGBTQ+ and women's and girls' causes highlights the potential for this targeted philanthropy to impact societal issues deeply. As both sectors face unique challenges, understanding these funding dynamics can help tailor future philanthropic strategies to better support these causes.



## DISCUSSION

Since its inaugural release in 2023, the updated LGBTQ+ Index has deepened understanding of the dynamic landscape of LGBTQ+ philanthropy. This decade-long retrospective offers insights into both the progress made and the persistent challenges that remain.

The LGBTQ+ community has faced many unprecedented adversities in recent years, including the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This global crisis has exacerbated pre-existing disparities and injustices, particularly for those living with HIV and those requiring gender-affirming care. This has led to heightened economic ramifications and barriers to essential healthcare services.<sup>16</sup> In response, foundations created rapid response and emergency funds to provide grants to LGBTQ+ nonprofits and grassroots organizations, both regionally and locally. Many grassroots funds were mobilized through innovative giving approaches, such as crowdfunding and giving circles.<sup>17</sup>

The United Nations recognized the crucial role of LGBTQ+ organizations during the pandemic, stating that these civil society organizations “have been frantically working to fill in the gaps left by States.” Organizations delivering services to the LGBTQ+ community adapted by transitioning services to virtual and socially distanced programming. For instance, SAGE, a nonprofit dedicated to advocacy and services for LGBTQ+ elders, provided home-delivered meals to local elders. SAGE also introduced SAGEConnect, to match elders across the nation with volunteers to alleviate isolation and offer companionship and resources. Throughout the country, SAGE centers remotely “provided approximately 100 different programs on a weekly basis.”<sup>18</sup>

Set against the backdrop of the pandemic, the murder of George Floyd sparked a powerful resurgence in the movement for racial justice. Throughout this tumultuous year, the Black Lives Matter movement, founded by three Black women, two of whom identify as queer, inspired critical conversations around support for under-resourced groups, including LGBTQ+ communities.<sup>19</sup> This societal awakening galvanized donors into action, leading to significant contributions such as MacKenzie Scott’s donations of over \$163 million to 28 LGBTQ+ organizations.<sup>20</sup> Scott’s unrestricted funds have provided significant benefits to these nonprofits, empowering them to pursue new opportunities, expand their personnel and operations and broaden their organizational capacity.<sup>21</sup>



The recent proliferation of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation has also undoubtedly posed new hurdles for the LGBTQ+ community, but may have also garnered new public support and driven an influx of donations to certain LGBTQ+ organizations.<sup>22</sup> For instance, when the country's focus turned to Arkansas' ban on gender-affirming health care for transgender youths, Intransitive, a small local nonprofit, experienced a surge in donations. The support boosted the nonprofit's budget from a modest \$20,000 at the beginning of the year to \$258,000. However, amidst this apparent wave of support, caution is warranted as there are indications within the data suggesting that this transphobic legislation could also lead funders and donors to withdraw their prior backing.

In contrast to research in other philanthropic sectors, such as with the Women & Girls Index, where shifts are less pronounced, the LGBTQ+ sector demonstrates agility as its community has shifted. This adaptability is evidenced by the broader set of issues that are now receiving support beyond traditional concentrations such as advocacy and civil rights. Over the past decade, the shares of charitable contributions going to youth, community centers, transgender-focused organizations, elder care, and education have grown significantly. Heightened media exposure has played a role in driving these shifts by bringing attention to existing gaps in services and highlighting the most pressing needs of the LGBTQ+ community. Issues such as homelessness among LGBTQ+ youth and lack of adequate support for LGBTQ+ seniors have received increased visibility, prompting a collective call to action from LGBTQ+ organizations and individual donors, volunteers, and funders alike.

Despite heightened attention to LGBTQ+ issues, charitable giving to LGBTQ+ organizations remains disproportionately low compared to overall philanthropic contributions. Moreover, the landscape of foundation funding to LGBTQ+ causes continues to be influenced by a select few key funders. In 2020, the top 10 funders to LGBTQ+ communities represented 60% of the total reported funding.<sup>23</sup> Disparities in foundation funding are particularly evident for those in the U.S. territories and the Mountain and Midwest regions, compared to mainland coastal areas.<sup>24</sup>

According to the *2023 Bank of America Study of Affluent Philanthropy*, conducted by the IU Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, only 5.5% of affluent donors selected LGBTQ+ rights as one of three issues that matter most to them. In 2022, just 7.1% of these donors gave to LGBTQ+ causes and organizations.<sup>25</sup> In 2021, the percentage of U.S. adults identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or another non-heterosexual identity reached 7.1%, doubling the figures reported in 2012.<sup>26</sup> While there is a substantial presence of LGBTQ+ individuals in the broader population, financial support for LGBTQ+ organizations appears to be insufficient relative to the community's size and needs.

There is some reason for optimism as LGBTQ+ organizations are experiencing significant growth over the span of a decade, evident across financial health indicators such as philanthropic support and assets. Although typically smaller compared to non-LGBTQ+ nonprofits, LGBTQ+ organizations are experiencing a faster rate of growth relative to their counterparts. As highlighted in the 2023 LGBTQ+ Index, nonprofits heavily reliant on individual donations tend to be more vulnerable to economic downturns. The substantial increase in assets among LGBTQ+ organizations, doubling that of donation growth, may suggest a potential pivotal moment in their financial trajectory.<sup>27</sup> By broadening their financial foundation, LGBTQ+ organizations will be better equipped to weather economic volatility and ensure the sustainability of their operations.



## IMPLICATIONS

The LGBTQ+ Index exists to provide practitioners, researchers, funders, and donors with insights into the characteristics of LGBTQ+ organizations and their evolution over the past decade. From advocating for equality and inclusion to the provision of essential resources and support networks, the efforts of LGBTQ+ organizations play a crucial role in society. Their presence has become increasingly visible in recent years, reflecting a growing awareness of LGBTQ+ issues. However, despite this progress, characterized by heightened visibility and organizational growth in assets and charitable contributions, there remains a pressing need for further action.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the LGBTQ+ community, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and amplifying the need for ongoing support. This research presents an initial examination of charitable giving directed towards LGBTQ+ organizations amidst the pandemic. Equipped with this analysis, fundraisers and nonprofit leaders should emphasize that donor support remains urgent, as LGBTQ+ individuals may require additional resources in the aftermath of the pandemic. Furthermore, donors and funders can use the research to identify gaps in existing resources, enabling them to tailor their giving based on distinct features and trends related to LGBTQ+ organizations. Funders should consider providing capacity-building, unrestricted donations to LGBTQ+ organizations, allowing them the freedom to allocate funds in response to evolving challenges and needs. The LGBTQ+ Index makes an important contribution to researchers by providing a free, publicly accessible dataset.

While this report presents a broad overview of LGBTQ+ organizations, with a particular focus on philanthropic support, scholars can utilize the data to examine other research questions about these organizations. The dataset is accessible to individuals inside and outside the scholarly community at [www.LGBTQIndex.org](http://www.LGBTQIndex.org). This user-friendly website allows visitors to download the full list of LGBTQ+ organizations (as a file that includes name and Employer Identification Number). Visitors can also use the website to search the Index based on keyword, focus area, and geographic location, allowing individual donors and institutional funders to identify LGBTQ+ organizations that align with their personal interests and funding priorities. Along with additional resources available at [www.EquitableGivingLab.org/LGBTQIndex](http://www.EquitableGivingLab.org/LGBTQIndex), including case studies of LGBTQ+ nonprofits, these tools and insights can equip individuals and organizations with a starting point for making data-informed decisions that help address equity issues in philanthropy.



The LGBTQ+ Index will be updated annually to track future trends as the social, political, and economic environment for charitable giving to LGBTQ+ nonprofits continues to evolve. The data in this report go through 2021, which predates events like the 2022 mass shooting at Club Q in Colorado Springs and more recent anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

The LGBTQ+ Index expands knowledge on philanthropic support for 501(c)(3) public charities focused on serving the LGBTQ+ community. However, the findings in this report should be considered alongside research on other types of giving that supports this community, including donations to 501(c)(4) nonprofits and political campaigns, and direct contributions to individuals and businesses. Research on non-financial support, such as volunteering and political advocacy, should also be considered to more fully understand the various ways individuals and organizations support the LGBTQ+ community. Studies on non-financial measures such as staffing would offer additional insight on the organizational capacity of LGBTQ+ organizations and how they may use resources differently than non-LGBTQ+ organizations.

The LGBTQ+ Index was born from the belief that gathering data is a necessary but not sufficient step toward equity. Equity requires more than understanding the data and acknowledging disparities. It necessitates proactive efforts to confront and dismantle systematic barriers and policies that perpetuate marginalization. Nonprofit leaders and funders must foster a culture of genuine inclusion where the voices and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals are not only heard, but actively responded to. Donors and prospective donors also can take action by prioritizing support for LGBTQ+ led and focused organizations. Donors should consider how their values align with their current giving, and whether LGBTQ+ organizations can play a more prominent role in their giving.

Finally, the LGBTQ+ Index lays the groundwork for future research to examine charitable giving and nonprofit organizations through an intersectional lens. The Equitable Giving Lab includes the existing Women & Girls Index and the LGBTQ+ Index. Over the next two years, the Lab will create two additional indices that measure philanthropic support for organizations focused on communities of color and military veterans, respectively. These indices can be analyzed together to expand knowledge on intersectional philanthropy—for example, giving to organizations serving LGBTQ+ communities of color and women military veterans. However, additional research will be necessary to obtain a more nuanced understanding of these organizations.



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