Meet The High-Net Worth Female Philanthropist

For our latest study at the Women’s Philanthropy Institute, we spoke with 23 high-net-worth women who give $1 million or more to causes that benefit women and girls. Here’s what we learned.

**SHE LEARNED PHILANTHROPY YOUNG.**

The majority of our participants did not grow up wealthy, but most had early experiences with philanthropy - and were “taught to give what they could,” often by parents and religious institutions.

**SHE BELIEVES WEALTH COMES WITH RESPONSIBILITY.**

The participants who came into wealth later in life described a common sense of responsibility to share their financial resources with others. One said: “My first step in coming to terms with my inheritance and working with it was through philanthropy.”

**SHE EDUCATES HERSELF.**

Participants believe it’s critical to thoroughly educate themselves before making funding decisions. Education comes in the form of conversations with other women donors, research, joining women’s funding groups and more.

**SHE TAKES RISKS.**

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the women we spoke with expressed a willingness to take risks with their philanthropy, funding experimental initiatives rather than just known solutions. Many of these women have also started their own business or enterprise.

**SHE’S ALL ABOUT ROI.**

Participants give to women and girls because they know it’s a smart investment. One described funding for women as a “nexus” for many other issues, including poverty, climate change and wealth inequality.

**SHE INVESTS IN SYSTEMS-LEVEL CHANGE.**

When giving to women and girls, many of the participants expressed a preference for investing in organizations focused on systemic change rather than direct service. One participant said: “I was really interested in funding organizations that went upstream and try to address the root of the problem.”

**SHE’S EMPATHETIC.**

When it comes to supporting women and girls, participants were motivated in part by their own gender-based experiences with discrimination, inequality, reproductive health and education. One said: “I have stayed in this field because I understand it.”

---

IUPUI WOMEN’S PHILANTHROPY INSTITUTE  
LILLY FAMILY SCHOOL OF PHILANTHROPY

@WPlnsights  
#womensphilanthropy  
https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/GenderGiving

This infographic is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Findings and conclusions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect official positions or policies of the funders.