

Gender Equality in Philanthropy in France

A study from The Coalition for Feminist Philanthropy (CPF) and Agence Phare

The study

When it comes to **gender equality**, i.e. the principle that women, men, and gender minorities should be treated equally and without discrimination, there is a gap between the importance and urgency of the issues and the scale of investment, **Philanthropy faces a paradox**: while women play a leading role in it, the fight for their rights remains insufficiently supported. **Globally, only 8% of philanthropic funding supports gender equality.**

How can we explain the persistent underfunding of gender equality?

To answer this question, **the Coalition for Feminist Philanthropy (CPF)**, a group of 13 donors created in 2021, commissioned “Agence Phare” to conduct a study on the place of gender equality in French philanthropy.

This study focuses on the philanthropic organizations based in France (investments in France and internationally) and international structures investing in France.

This summary presents some of the key findings of the study, as well as possible courses of action.

1 In France, gender equality has a marginal place in philanthropy

Among the **127 philanthropic organizations** that responded to the survey, **72% reported that do not fund projects promoting gender equality, or only fund them to a minor extent.**

Beyond declarations, if we look at the amounts disbursed in euros, it appears that **only 7% of the funds allocated by French philanthropy**, i.e. around 140 million euros, **target gender equality***.

The Coalition for Feminist Philanthropy: A Unifying Project

Created in 2021 by a group of donors committed to promoting women’s rights and equality, the Coalition for Feminist Philanthropy brings togetherinvites all French philanthropic organizations wishing to fully commit to gender equality to join forces. Its objectives are:

- To establish a progressive and feminist movement within French philanthropy in order to create a united front against the rise of anti-rights movements;
- To mobilize more resources in support of gender equality, in order to overcome the challenges;
- To provide tools to existing philanthropic organizations to help them increase their impact on reducing gender inequalities.

*Here we compare the overall estimate by the “Fondation de France’s Observatoire de la Philanthropie” (€2.1 billion annually for all distributive philanthropy in 2021, latest data available) with the amount of grants explicitly committed by philanthropic organizations (€134 million in 2023).

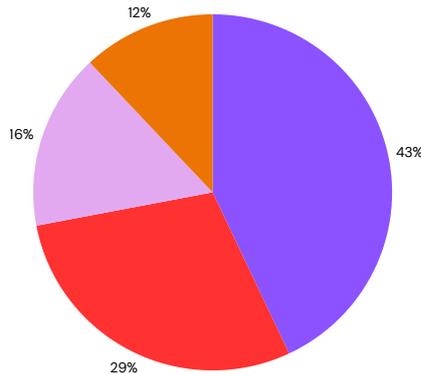
Place of gender equality (GE) in funded projects by the philanthropic organisations:

Do not Fund few projects focusing on GE

Fund few projects focusing on GE

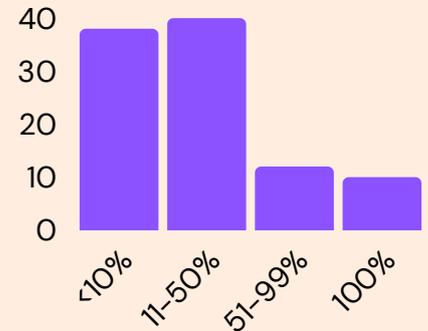
Fund a majority of projects focusing on GE

Do fund exclusively of projects focusing on GE



The figures above here concern only the organizations that report funding projects focusing on Gender Equality, whether marginally, primarily or exclusively. These organizations do not constitute a homogenous group as their profiles, practices and commitments vary widely and are very polarized. Among these organizations **38% allocate less than 10% of their funding to gender equality.**

Proportion of the funding allocated to projects focusing on gender equality



→ 38% of philanthropic organizations allocate less than 10% of their budget to fund gender equality.

2 Specific practices among the most committed organizations

Among the philanthropic organizations that report funding gender equality, the survey reveals highly diverse practices that hinge on the intensity of their financial, political and strategic commitments. **47 % of the organizations that fund gender equality consider themselves feminist or declare integrating gender into their strategy.** These organizations which are the most committed are characterized by the funding modalities they use, as well as by the commitments and topics they support.

Funding modalities

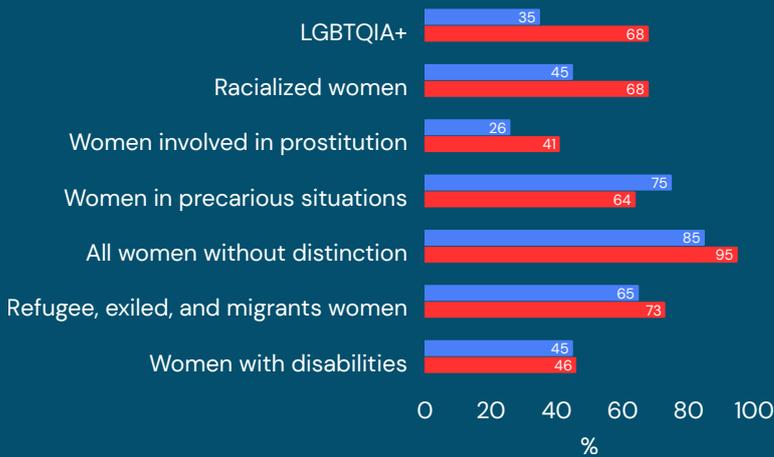
Among the philanthropic organizations that report funding gender equality issues, most of them provide action/ project-based funding and half of them provide core support and/or multi-year funding.

The organizations the most committed to gender equality, are making greater use of unrestricted funding rely and allocate higher grant amounts.

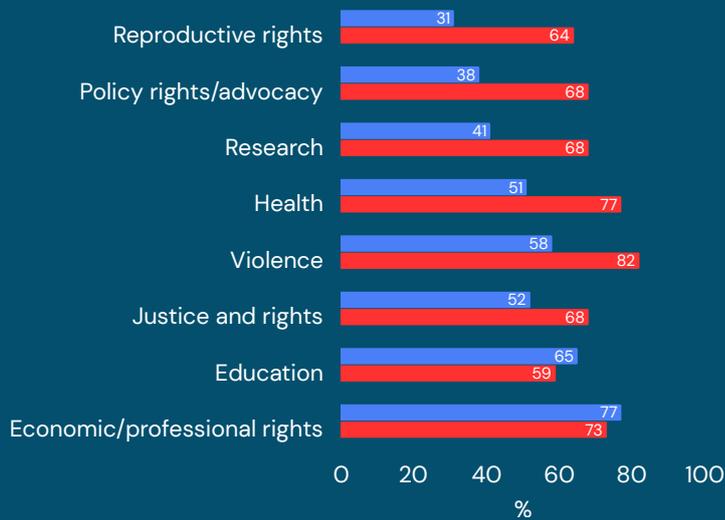
The different financing modalities used by the philanthropic organizations funding gender equality



Target groups funded by philanthropic organisations based on their commitment gender equality



Topic funded by philanthropic organisations based on their commitment gender equality



Target Groups

Regarding target groups, organizations that fund gender equality mainly support general initiatives aimed at all women or women in precarious situations and refugee, exiled, or migrant women.

Racialized women, or those affected by prostitution or trafficking, or LGBTQIA+ people are mostly supported by the most committed philanthropic organizations.

Thematic Areas

As for thematic areas, organizations that fund gender equality mainly support projects related to economic and professional rights, education and training as well as combating violence.

The most committed philanthropic organizations to gender equality are more focused on funding reproductive rights as well as and to political action and advocacy.

3 Why is the philanthropic commitment to gender equality is so weak?

The commitment of French philanthropy to gender equality remains insufficient and far from meeting the challenges at hand. Only a 1/3 reports funding a majority of projects focused on this issue. Moreover, when focusing on the amounts involved in euros, it becomes clear that the funds allocated to gender equality are extremely limited and merely represent 7% of philanthropic funding in France. This study identifies three main explanatory factors.

Who are the CPF members?

Focus 2030

Fondation BNP-Paribas

Fondation CHANEL

Fondation de France

Fondation des Femmes

Fondation Médecins du monde

Fondation RAJA-Danièle Marcovici

Fondation pour la Recherche sur l'Endométriose

Fonds L'Oréal pour les Femmes

Fonds pour les Femmes en Méditerranée

Kering Foundation

Mirova Foundation

A significant gap between rhetoric and practice

According to the study, **some organizations claim to support projects promoting gender equality but fund this issue only marginally**. This explains the discrepancy between the number of organizations that declare supporting gender equality and the limited funds actually allocated to the cause.

In other cases, funding for projects that reflect an essentialist and homogeneous view of women is presented as support for gender equality. **However, women are not targeted for their own sake but are perceived through the lens of their family or community roles, as a means to reach other target groups, in other words, as tools or vectors for philanthropy**. Too often, confusion persists between targeting women and acting to reduce the inequalities and discrimination they face.

This shows that the **cross-cutting and strategic approach to gender, necessary for advancing equality, remains too rare in French philanthropy**. Organizations that are committed financially (allocating more than half of their funding), politically (through a feminist stance), and strategically represent only 17% of the survey sample (22 organizations).

A significant gap between rhetoric and practice

The study showed that the **presence of women in leadership and managerial positions within philanthropic organizations is a key factor in their commitment to equality**. Organizations that fund gender equality more often have female directors (72%, versus 67% of those that do not fund this issue) and female presidents (47% versus 40%). Although women make up a large majority in philanthropy (representing 80% of employees and 52% of board members in the surveyed organizations), they remain underrepresented in top leadership roles (40% of presidents). Their minority status in strategic positions helps explain the limited attention given to gender equality in French philanthropy.

The rise of conservatism

Finally, in a context of reduced public funding and increasing conservatism, some actors in the philanthropic sector are reluctant to adopt explicitly progressive stances. Recently, the withdrawal of certain major European philanthropic funds that had previously supported gender equality has fueled this dynamic of marginalizing pro-equality movements and legitimizing anti-rights positions. In both media and philanthropic spheres, gender equality is currently facing a backlash described as “gender fatigue”: a weariness toward gender equality issues, perceived as already sufficiently—or even excessively—supported. However, our assessment of gender equality in French philanthropy shows that this weariness is not based on reality, as actual involvement remains very limited.

“Women are not targeted for their own sake but are perceived through the lens of their family or community roles, as a means to reach other target groups, in other words, as tools or vectors for philanthropy”

4 Taking action to better support gender equality

These findings confirm the importance of collective and structured action to ensure that gender is better integrated into philanthropy. Increasing funding for gender equality is essential, particularly in the context of rising conservatism and anti-rights movements. The Global Philanthropy Project estimates that between 2013 and 2017, anti-gender movements received nearly US\$ 4 billion¹.

Several actions are possible to make gender a cross-cutting issue across all philanthropy and to support and equip existing organizations:

- Inform all philanthropic male and female actors about the gender inequalities that shape the field;
- Advocate for gender to be treated as a cross-cutting issue, rather than just one theme among others;
- Encourage the production and dissemination of data for a better understanding of the place of gender 's place in philanthropy;
- Promote a clear progressive discourse in defense of women's and gender minorities' rights, equality, and the fight against discrimination;
- Provide tools to remove obstacles and promote good practices.

The Sample

The 127 organizations that completed the questionnaire represent approximately 3% of the active distributive philanthropic organizations in France. The sample is composed of:

- 26% endowment funds; 13.5% sheltered foundations; 16% public benefit foundations; 27 % corporate foundations; 2 % scientific cooperation/partnership/hospital/university foundations.

Compared to the national philanthropic landscape, public benefit foundations and corporate foundations are overrepresented in the sample.

66 responding organizations indicated their overall budget. These are distributed as follows:

- 20 % have a budget between €0 and €200k;
- 29 % have a budget between €201k and €900k;
- 21 % have a budget between €901k and €2,000k;
- 30 % have a budget above €2,001k

The Methodology

A questionnaire completed by 127 philanthropic organizations: circulated to all French distributive philanthropic organizations or those investing in France, this questionnaire on the place of gender equality in funded projects was completed at the end of 2024 by 127 organizations, 65 of which fund gender equality. Their total budget amounts to €380M.

A database of 2023 grants from 53 philanthropic organizations: We collected and analyzed the details of grants distributed in 2023 by 53 organizations that explicitly and primarily fund gender equality.

A qualitative survey of 20 philanthropic organizations: Conducted between November 2024 and February 2025 through sociological interviews with 20 philanthropy actors, representing as many organizations funding gender equality in varying proportions.