



751 West Fourth Street, Suite 200  
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## **Forward: Through a Gender Lens 2026**

Since its founding in 2006, The Women's Fund of Winston-Salem has been guided by a core belief: that advancing the economic security of women and girls strengthens families, communities, and our shared future. For two decades, this belief has shaped not only how we invest resources, but our commitment to learning—learning that helps our community better understand the conditions and lived realities that influence economic security for women and girls in Forsyth County.

The Women's Fund's *Through a Gender Lens: The Economic Security of Women and Girls in Forsyth County* research report has been a cornerstone of our learning commitment. Across four iterations, this work has helped make disparities more visible, surface patterns over time, and support shared understanding of how economic security is experienced across our community. Each report reflects a moment in time—shaped by the questions we were asking, the information available, and a growing sense of responsibility to better understand outcomes, as well as the broader context in which they occur.

The first report in 2010 emerged from a straightforward yet urgent question: *How are women and girls in Forsyth County faring—and what does that mean for how we invest and collectively create change?* Over time, that question has expanded. Today, the work invites deeper considerations not only of outcomes, but of the underlying factors and dynamics that shape them—and of how our role fits within that broader landscape.

This 2026 Gender Lens report represents both continuity and growth. It builds on prior research while reflecting how our understanding of equity, gender, and community wellbeing has continued to evolve. The research more intentionally names the intersections of race, gender, and class, and places greater emphasis on community voice and lived experience.

We recognize that research can either reinforce inequities or help disrupt them, depending on how it's framed, interpreted, and used. Through this evolution, we have



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come to better understand that data and research are not neutral—they shape narratives, inform decisions, and influence action.

Developed in partnership with [Action4Equity](#) and [Forsyth Futures](#), the 2026 Gender Lens report reflects a community-engaged approach that honors complexity and centers the perspectives of those most impacted by gender-based inequities. Through this process, the research offers insight into measurable conditions as well as the experiences and contexts that shape economic security across our community.

As an initiative of The Winston-Salem Foundation, The Women's Fund approaches this work with intention and humility. Our role is not to prescribe solutions, but to steward learning that supports shared understanding, informs how we show up as partners and funders, and strengthens accountability across institutions and sectors. We see this learning as foundational for transformational change—helping guide conversations, shift mental models, influence practice, and inform decision-making in ways that are more inclusive and responsive to lived realities.

This work reflects our ongoing commitment to learning what it means to live into our values—not only through what we fund or publish, but through how we steward narrative change and show up as a learning partner within the broader ecosystem shaping equity outcomes for women and girls in Forsyth County.

In that spirit, as we adopt a gender-expansive understanding of womanhood, we recognize this as an ongoing learning practice. We are committed to continuing this work with care—examining how our culture, language, research, grantmaking, and partnerships can either reinforce harm or help create conditions for greater equity and belonging.

Offered as a resource to community members, leaders, funders, policymakers, and partners, this work is an invitation to engage thoughtfully—to question assumptions, deepen understanding, and consider how learning can be translated into action with care.



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The Women's Fund of Winston-Salem shares this report in the spirit of shared responsibility. We remain committed to using this work intentionally—to support reflection, inform advocacy and investment, and guide decision-making that advances equity so women and girls in Forsyth County are better positioned to thrive.

In community and shared learning,

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