



# Elder Economic Security Standard Index

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# California Elder Economic Security Initiative

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## Frequently Asked Questions

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**Q: What is the *Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index)*?**

A: The *Elder Index* is a county-specific measure of the minimum income necessary to cover *all* of a senior's basic expenses—housing, food, medical care, and transportation. It is the *only* elder-specific financial measure of its kind and is available for elders living alone and in a couple, and for elders raising a grandchild or grandchildren and elders with adult children who live with them.

**Q: How is the *Elder Index* calculated?**

The *Elder Index* methodology was developed by WOW and the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, and applied by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research in California. The *Elder Index* methodology uses widely accepted and credible national and state data sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Geographically relevant data is used for each county in California, reflecting local market rates for housing, food, health care, and transportation.

**Q: How is the *Elder Index* different from the Federal Poverty Guidelines?**

A: The *Elder Index* is based on *all* of the costs older adults face and it is specific to an individual's housing situation, age, health status, and county of residence.

The FPL, which is often used to determine eligibility for public programs and state and local funding levels, was developed in the 1960s and is the same dollar amount across the country: \$11,490 in 2013 for a one-person household. The FPL is so low because it is based *only* on the cost of a bare-bones diet—failing to account for local housing, transportation and, most importantly, medical costs, which can be particularly debilitating for the elderly.

**Q: What is the *California Elder Economic Security Initiative (Cal-EESI)*?**

A: *Cal-EESI* is a statewide, research-driven initiative at the forefront of a national movement to ensure that older Californians have opportunities to live with dignity and economic well-being. The initiative is guided by a broad-based coalition of policymakers, service providers, philanthropic foundations, public agencies, and other elder advocates and led by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development, a national research, consulting, and legal organization dedicated to building economic health and opportunity in vulnerable communities.

**Q: What can we do about the economic problems elders face in our communities?**

A: Urge policymakers, advocates, foundations, public agencies, and direct service providers to adopt the *Elder Index* to measure and address the economic needs of older adults, so that *all* older Californians can live with dignity and economic well-being.

Click [here](#) to look-up the *Elder Index* for your county and to join the *Cal-EESI* coalition