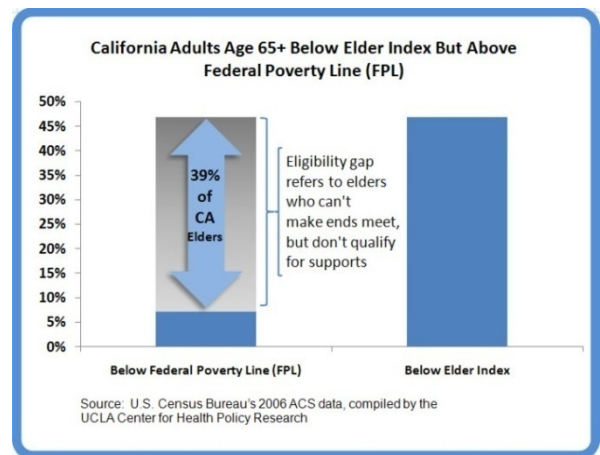


# California's Struggling Seniors: Overlooked & Underserved

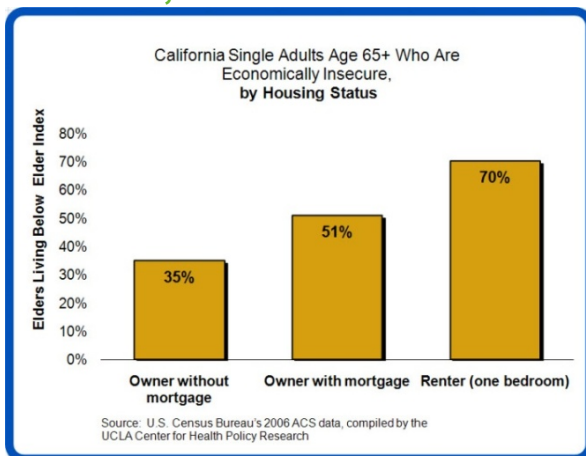
The California Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index) measures how much income is needed for a retired adult age 65 and older to adequately meet his or her basic needs – without public or private assistance. It is based on the costs elders face on a daily basis – housing, food, out-of-pocket medical expenses, transportation, and other necessary spending – and provides a complete picture of what it takes for elders to make ends meet. **In 2007, 864,000 of California's seniors fell below the Elder Index.**<sup>1</sup> Visit the *Insight Center for Community Economic Development's* website for detailed county-by-county data: [www.insightccd.org](http://www.insightccd.org).

## Inaccurate Measure Leaves Thousands in the Gap

Many public programs use the Federal Poverty Line (FPL), which is uniform across the United States, in their criteria for eligibility. Because of serious methodological shortcomings, and the high cost of living in California, FPL-based calculations leave many older Californians caught in an “**eligibility gap**,” with too much money to qualify for public programs, but not enough to cover their most basic needs. In 2007, the FPL for a individual was an unrealistic \$10,210 per year nationwide. According to the FPL, **only 8% of older Californians who lived alone were “poor” in 2007.** However, as measured by the Elder Index, the average minimum income needed to cover basic expenses for an older California renter living alone was \$21,011 per year. **47% of California elders have incomes that are below this amount. At 8%, the FPL overlooked the other 39% of elders whose incomes were too high to qualify for public support, but not high enough to afford their basic needs.** This discrepancy highlights how relying on the FPL makes it difficult for policymakers and others to accurately identify economically insecure older adults and target programs appropriately.



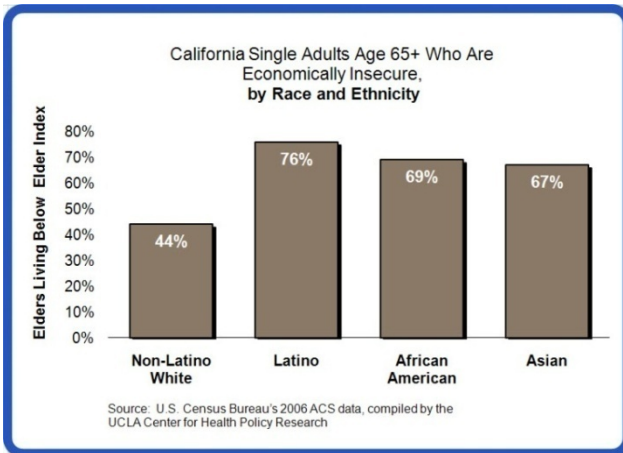
## Renters, Latinos & Women Are Among Most Vulnerable



### Renters Living Alone are the Most Economically Vulnerable

- Statewide, almost 3/4 of elder renters living alone are trying to survive on incomes below the Elder Index.
- While elders who live alone and own their own home outright are doing better, more than 1/3 of them are still unable to meet their basic needs.

<sup>1</sup> The Elder Standard Index for California was developed as part of the National Elder Economic Security Initiative program at Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), and tabulated for the Insight Center for Community Economic Development by the Center for Health Policy Research at UCLA. It is based on the national methodology developed by WOW and the Institute of Gerontology at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. For more information visit [www.insightccd.org](http://www.insightccd.org).



## Race Makes a Difference

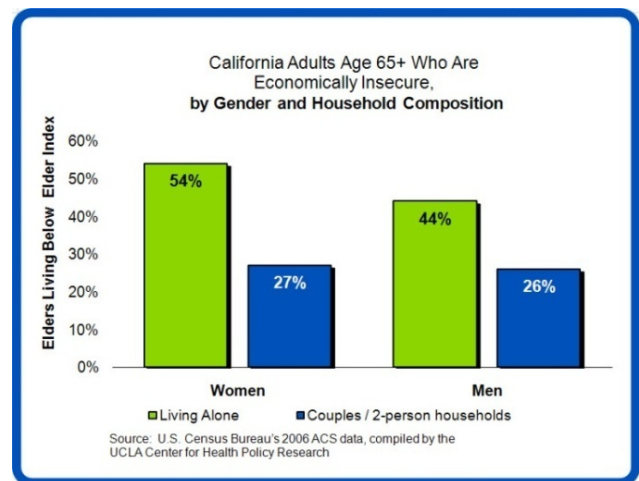
Elders of color, who typically earned less than whites throughout their working lives and who often don't have pensions and 401Ks to supplement their Social Security Income, are struggling the most:

- **Over 7 out of 10 Latinos**
- **Nearly 7 out of 10 African Americans**
- **Over 6 out of 10 of Asian elders**

...living alone in California are struggling to make ends meet with incomes below the Elder Index.

## Women More Vulnerable Than Men

Due to lifetime wage discrepancies, today, women still earn an average of 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, which reduces their retirement incomes. It's no wonder that retired women living alone are particularly vulnerable. Without a partner to share expenses, and in the face of increasing costs and fixed incomes, **more than half (54%) can't make ends meet in California.**



## How the Elder Index is Used

Led by the *Insight Center for Community Economic Development*, the *California Elder Economic Security Initiative* (Cal-EESI) uses the Elder Index to help ensure that older Californians can age with dignity and economic well-being. Many people already use the Elder Index to improve programs and policies for older Californians.

- **Service providers** use the Elder Index to help them accurately evaluate the needs of seniors and seek additional funding to increase their capacity.
- **Advocates** use the Elder Index to more effectively make the case for policy change and to fight budget cuts.
- **Policymakers** use the Elder Index to more accurately measure which programs and policies are most effective in helping elders reach economic security. California legislators, for example, used the Elder Index to analyze the Supplemental Security Income program in 2008 and advocate against cuts to the program.
- **Public Agency leaders** use the Elder Index to plan programs and allocate resources for seniors and aging baby boomers in their local communities.
- **Adults of any age** use the Elder Index to make informed decisions about when and where they retire, how much they need to save, and whether they will need to continue working even after they formally "retire."

**"I can share stories about struggling seniors until I'm blue in the face and have little impact. The *Elder Index* gives me an empirical way to demonstrate to foundations, policymakers, donors, and public agencies the impact of their dollars"** Paul Downey, Senior Community Centers of San Diego

**For more information on *Cal-EESI* or the *Elder Index* go to [www.insightccd.org](http://www.insightccd.org) or contact Susie Smith by phone 510.251.2600 x108 or email at [ssmith@insightccd.org](mailto:ssmith@insightccd.org).**