



THE NEW JERSEY ELDER ECONOMIC SECURITY INITIATIVE™ PROGRAM FACT SHEET FOR MERCER COUNTY

The *New Jersey Elder Economic Security Initiative (Initiative)* offers concrete tools to shape public policies and programs to promote the economic well-being of elders. The Initiative uses the *Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index)* to expose the economic vulnerability of older adults on a county-by-county basis. ***The Elder Index will change the way we address the economic needs of New Jersey’s older adults.***

Mercer County Elder Indexes are Significantly Higher Than Common Income Benchmarks



New Jersey Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index Per Year					
Elder Person			Elder Couple		
Owner w/o Mortgage	Renter, one bedroom	Owner w/ mortgage	Owner w/o Mortgage	Renter, one bedroom	Owner w/ mortgage
\$22,670	\$25,090	\$31,830	\$33,617	\$36,037	\$42,777

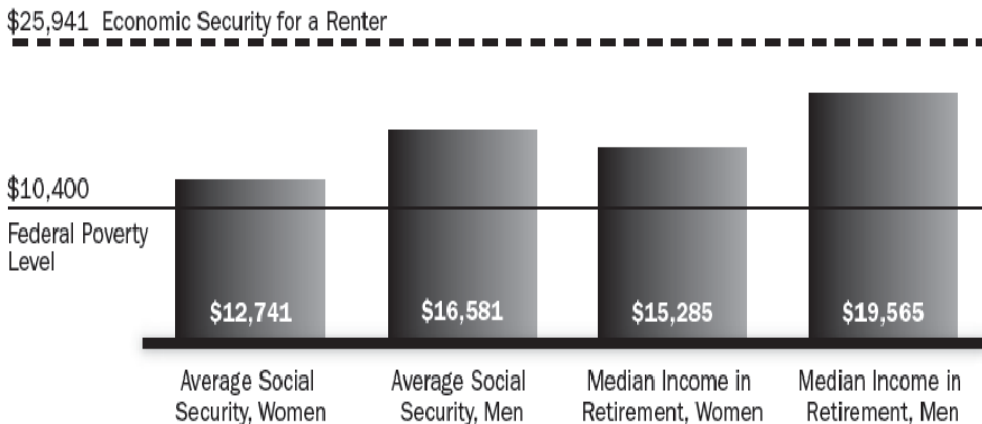
Federal Poverty Level (2008): **\$10,400 for an individual; \$14,000 for a couple (2008)**

Average Social Security Income: **\$14,285 for an individual; \$23,236 for a couple (2008)**

Source: Wider Opportunities for Women and the Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston, *Elder Economic Security Standard Index for New Jersey* (Washington, DC: Wider Opportunities for Women, 2009).

The Elder Economic Security Standard Index

Figure 2: The Elder Economic Security Standard Index vs. Benchmark Annual Incomes for Single Elders in New Jersey, 2008



Sources: US Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey PUMS data. Median income values inflated using BLS CPI inflator. Social Security Administration, *OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County, 2007*. Average Social Security values inflated using SSA COLAs. Note: Income in retirement includes all personal income, other than public supports, of those without earnings.

The Elder Index measures the income that New Jersey’s seniors need to maintain independence and meet basic living expenses. It varies based on household size, geographic area, housing arrangements and health status. The Elder Index uses an income measure that reflects the actual expenses for basic needs of older adults, in contrast to the outdated and outmoded federal poverty level, which is a measure of abject poverty and deprivation.

The New Jersey Initiative is a partnership between state and national organizations. The Gerontology Institute at the University of Massachusetts Boston and Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) developed the Elder Index. The New Jersey Foundation for Aging (NJFA) and dozens of other organizations are collaborating on the Initiative in New Jersey.

The Elder Index Exposes the Economic Vulnerability of Older Adults in New Jersey

The Elder Index's cost components include food, housing, transportation, health care, miscellaneous expenses and, when needed, home and community based long-term care services. **The Elder Index shows that many seniors who worked their entire lives (whose incomes are comprised of Social Security, pensions and interest from any savings) are unable to achieve economic security.** Elders living on Social Security alone must make sacrifices to make ends meet.

Policy Recommendations

Detailed information on these recommendations can be found in the policy brief, *Elders Living on the Edge: When Basic Needs Exceed Income in New Jersey*. www.njfoundationforaging.org

- Increase access to affordable housing.
- Support the provision of property tax and rebate supports.
- Increase to the state supplement for SSI for those seniors most in need.
- Protect and widen access to community based long-term care.
- Promote better access to food and nutritional support programs.
- Encourage the use of the Elder Index as a benchmark for eligibility.

For information on available services contact:

Mercer County Office on Aging 609-989-6661
NJ EASE at 1-877-222-3737
PAAD and Senior Gold at 1-800-792-9745
Property Tax Reimbursement Hotline at 1-800-882-6597
Lifeline/USF Hotline at: 1-866-240-1347
Mercer County Board of Social Services at 609-989-4320
Food Stamp Information Line at 1-800-687-9512
www.njhelps.org
<http://nj.gov/counties/mercerc/>

The Elder Economic Security Initiative:

- Provides important new information to illustrate the basic costs seniors face and how their financial security is affected when their life circumstances change.
- Offers educational tools for elders, family caregivers, baby boomers and younger workers.
- Provides a framework for analyzing the impact of local, state, and federal public policies and policy proposals in such areas as housing, retirement security, health, long-term care, and taxes.
- Offers a counseling tool for those working with elders in need of income supports and/or additional skill sets.
- Serves as a foundation for developing a state policy agenda and a platform for engaging in statewide advocacy.
- Offers a strategic planning tool for philanthropists, service delivery and advocacy organizations working to promote the economic security of elders.

To find out more or request a presentation on the Elder Economic Security Initiative in your community contact Melissa Chalker, Program Manager, New Jersey Foundation for Aging at: mchalker@njfoundationforaging.org or (609) 421-0206.

Become an advocate for economic security