

# Aging With Independence in MN Getting Harder

St. Paul, MN – A new tool to gauge the financial health of Minnesota seniors is being unveiled today -- and the *Minnesota Women's Consortium* predicts the data to be shared will be a "rude awakening" for many.

Pam Johnson, program director for the *Minnesota Community Action Partnership*, says the "**Elder Economic Security Initiative Index**" is a county-by-county breakdown of how well seniors are coping with essential living expenses -- and in a word, many are not.

"What we're showing is that the situation is particularly hard for 20 percent of Minnesota seniors whose sole source of income is Social Security, regardless of whether they're a renter or homeowner."

The bottom line, says Johnson, is that seniors statewide are trying to deal with cost-of-living hikes that far exceed their incomes. And, while seniors' financial burdens are similar to those of many Minnesotans who struggle to pay for housing and healthcare, seniors have few options to increase their income.

"I think we'd all agree that people in their 'golden years' shouldn't have to choose between turning on the heat or taking their medication, and that's really the choice that a lot of seniors are faced with these days."

The index indicates elderly women, many of whom raised families and don't have much in savings, often have problems paying for essentials.

Johnson believes the index can help the state define what Minnesota's elderly need to live independently and with dignity. The *Minnesota Women's Consortium* hopes policymakers will use the data to identify gaps in the senior financial safety net.

See the index at [www.wowonline.org](http://www.wowonline.org).