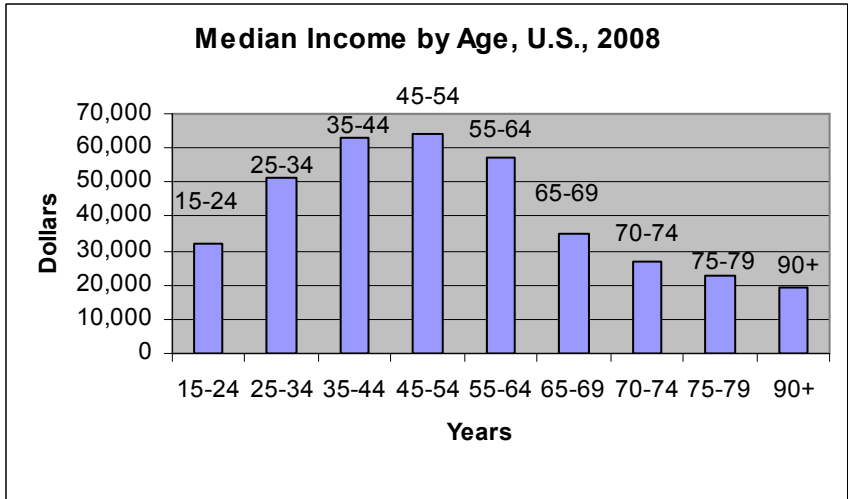


# Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (EESI)—Illinois

More and more Illinois seniors are finding it difficult to make ends meet as they retire. Living expenses are rising while critical income sources like Social Security are often falling short of providing economic security. We need to protect older Americans who have worked hard all their lives so that they can have a secure retirement.

- The Elder Economic Security Initiative (EESI), led by Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW), promotes the economic well-being of elders by **recognizing the true cost of living for seniors** so they can maintain independence and meet their daily expenses.
  - With support from the Retirement Research Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies, WOW collaborates with 17 states on the EESI Initiative.
- EESI uses the Elder Index to calculate the cost of food, housing, transportation, health care, miscellaneous expenses and when appropriate, home and community-based long-term care services, and it takes into account household size, geographic area and life circumstances.
- The Initiative combines advocacy, organizing and research to promote seniors' ability to age in place.
- The Elder Index has many uses:
  - Provides more accurate information on elders' financial lives than does the federal poverty level
  - Can let elders know that they are not alone in having difficulty making ends meet
  - Serves as an educational tool for seniors and their adult children for financial planning; and for “boomers” and younger adults as well
  - Offers a foundation for developing state policy on elder economic security and a platform for engaging in statewide advocacy
  - Serves as a counseling tool for those working with elders in need of income support

- Income decreases with age, older adult's economic security is at risk (see chart to the right)
  - Elders earn 53% less at ages 65-69 than they did at peak earnings
  - At ages 75-79, elders earn 64% less than peak earnings
  - For elders at ages 90+, earnings are 69% less than they were at their peak



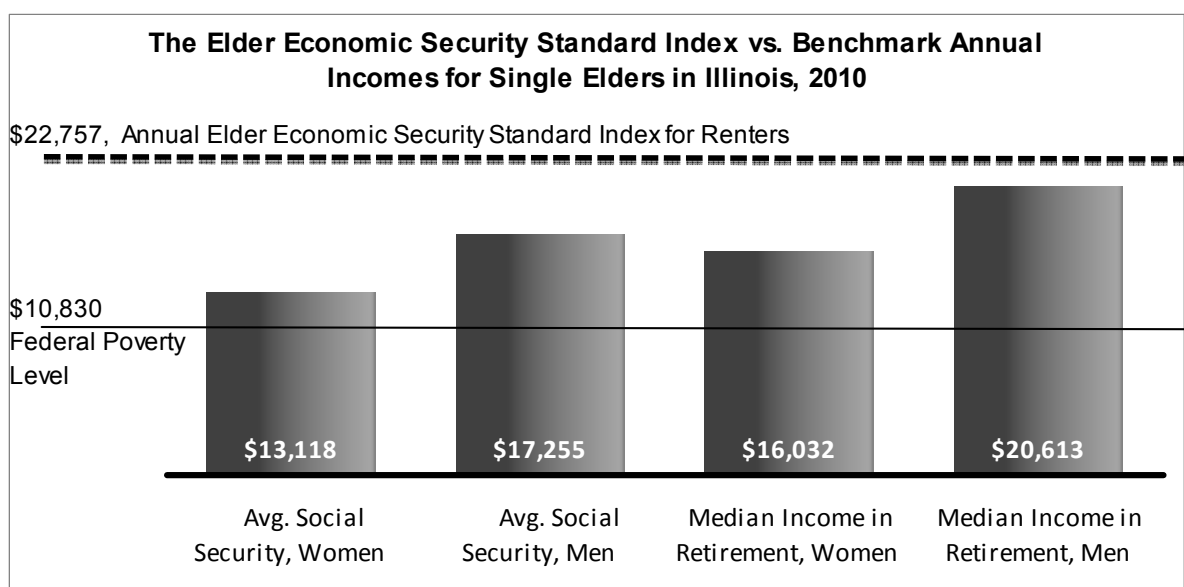
Source, Median Income: US Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, *Consumer Income*, 2008, and Social Security Administration, *Income of the Aged*, 2008.

- When it comes to economic security, women and minorities are the most at risk:
  - Older women are 50% more likely than older men to live below the poverty line
  - Older people of color are 50% more likely to be living in poverty (16.8%) than older white people (8.5%)
  - Changing circumstances can greatly increase the cost of living—home and community-based long-term care, the death of a spouse and change in health status can all significantly increase expenses

# Elder Economic Security Initiative™ (EESI)—Illinois

## Illinois

- **Health & Medicine Policy Research Group** is the official state partner of the EESI project in Illinois.
- In Illinois, the Elder Index shows **there is a gap between the cost of living and income for many seniors**. One in 5 seniors relies solely on Social Security income, but the payments cover only a fraction of living expenses:
  - Basic living costs for older adults in Illinois range from \$17,364 to \$33,200. **However**, average Social Security payments are only \$13,118 for women and \$17,255 for men.
- In Illinois, there is a clear gap between the cost of living in the community (the Elder Index) and the federal poverty line, average Social Security benefits, and median income in retirement (see graph below).
- The EESI Coalition in Illinois is publicizing this discrepancy to public policy officials, older adults, advocacy groups, legislators and others in order to promote a stronger safety net for older Illinoisans.



**\*Note:** Income in retirement includes all personal income, other than public supports, of those without earnings.

**Sources:** US Census Bureau, 2008 American Community Survey PUMS data. Median income values inflated using BLS CPI inflator. Social Security Administration, OASDI Beneficiaries by State and County, 2008. Average Social Security values inflated using SSA COLAs.

## The EESI Coalition in Illinois

EESI is endorsed by dozens of allies and stakeholders in Illinois, including:

- AARP
- Access Living
- Age Options
- Alliance for Retired
- Anna Rappaport Consulting
- East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging
- Family Service-Senior Resource Center (Champaign, IL)
- Fay Lomax Cook, Director, Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University
- Health and Disability Advocates
- Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights
- Homecare Physicians
- Housing Action Illinois
- Illinois Adult Day Service Association
- Illinois Department on Aging
- Illinois Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- Lincolnland AAA
- National Center on Poverty Law
- Shawnee Alliance for Seniors
- Western Illinois AAA

3/25/11