



2022 Elder Index™ for Boston

CENTER FOR SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH ON AGING | February 2023

Highlights

- A Boston renter aged 65 or older and living alone can expect to spend more than \$41,000 annually for necessary living expenses.
- A Boston couple, both of whom are age 65 or older and living in a rented home, can expect to spend more than \$54,000 annually for necessary living expenses.
- The Elder Index for Boston renters is three times the federal poverty threshold.
- The Elder Index for Boston is higher than the Elder Index for Massachusetts and the United States as a whole.
- More than 7 out of 10 singles aged 65 or older who live alone in Boston, and 45% of older Boston couples, do not have sufficient income to cover necessary expenses.

The Elder Index™ measures of the cost of living independently for older adults aged 65 or older. The Elder Index allows us to identify older people with incomes “in the gap” between the Federal Poverty Line and what it takes to live with security. Older adults living “in the gap” have incomes too high to qualify for many means-tested public benefits programs, yet too low to achieve intermediate- or long-term economic stability.

Costs of living for older Bostonians age 65 and older in good health vary widely by housing scenario (**Table 1**). The Elder Index is lowest for older homeowners without a mortgage (\$28,380 for singles; \$41,100 for couples), and highest for older homeowners with a mortgage (\$46,956 for singles; \$59,676 for couples). The Elder Index for Boston renters is also very high, at \$41,424 for singles and \$54,144 for couples. This is important especially because over half of older Boston householders are renters. Notably, the Elder Index is far higher than the Federal Poverty Line, the threshold by which financial disadvantage is commonly measured. Indeed, the Elder Index for single renters in Boston is three times the FPL for older singles.

Table 1: The Elder Index for Boston, MA 2022

Monthly Expenses	Elder Living Alone			Two-person Household		
	Owner, no mortgage	Renter	Owner, with mortgage	Owner, no mortgage	Renter	Owner, with mortgage
Housing	\$899	\$1,986	\$2,447	\$899	\$1,986	\$2,447
Food	\$306	\$306	\$306	\$562	\$562	\$562
Transportation	\$298	\$298	\$298	\$459	\$459	\$459
Health Care (Good Health)	\$466	\$466	\$466	\$932	\$932	\$932
Miscellaneous	\$396	\$396	\$396	\$573	\$573	\$573
Elder Index Per Month	\$2,365	\$3,452	\$3,913	\$3,425	\$4,512	\$4,973
Elder Index Per Year	\$28,380	\$41,424	\$46,956	\$41,100	\$54,144	\$59,676

The Elder Index for Boston is higher than the Elder Index for Massachusetts and the United States (**Figure 1**). An older renter living alone in Boston needs \$41,424 annually to achieve economic security, compared to an average of \$37,308 in Massachusetts and \$28,920 in the United States. An older couple living in a rented home in Boston needs \$54,144 annually to achieve economic security, compared to \$51,276 in Massachusetts and \$41,340 in the United States. The cost of housing is the most significant factor accounting for the high cost of living in Boston.

Figure 1: Elder Index for Boston, Massachusetts, and the United States

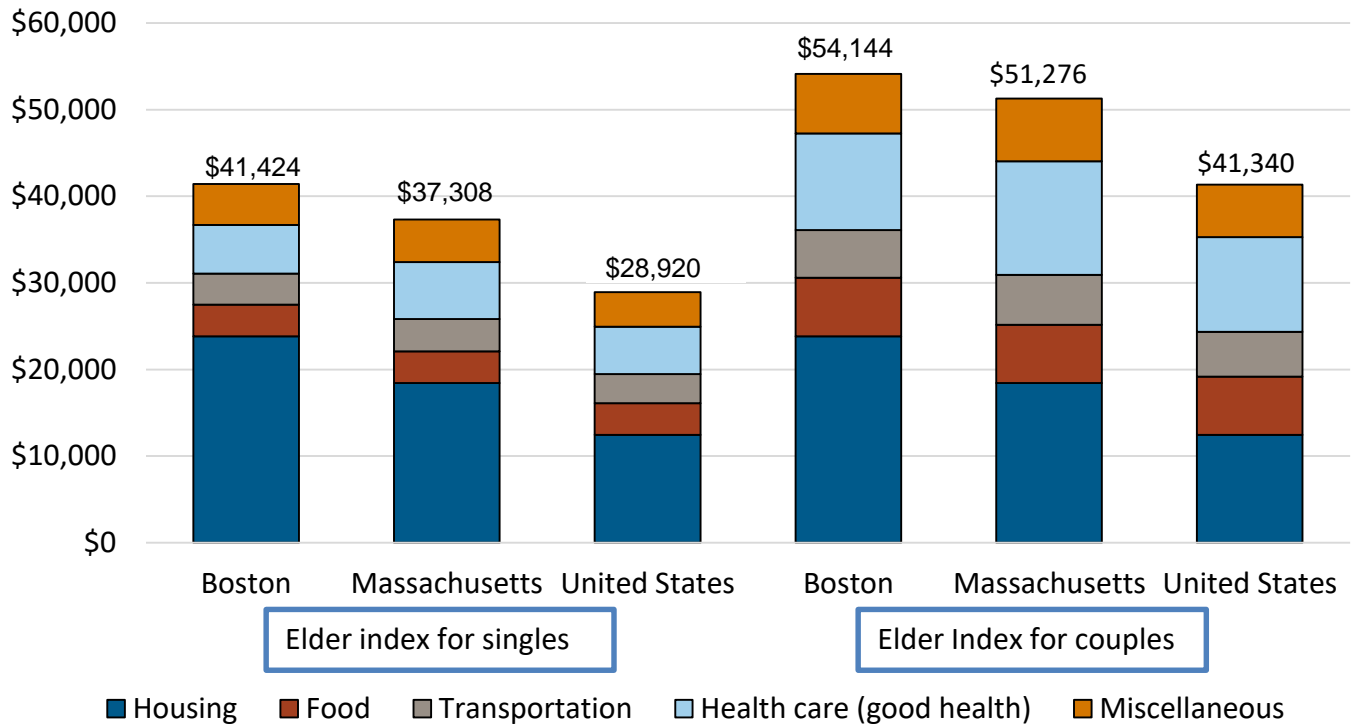
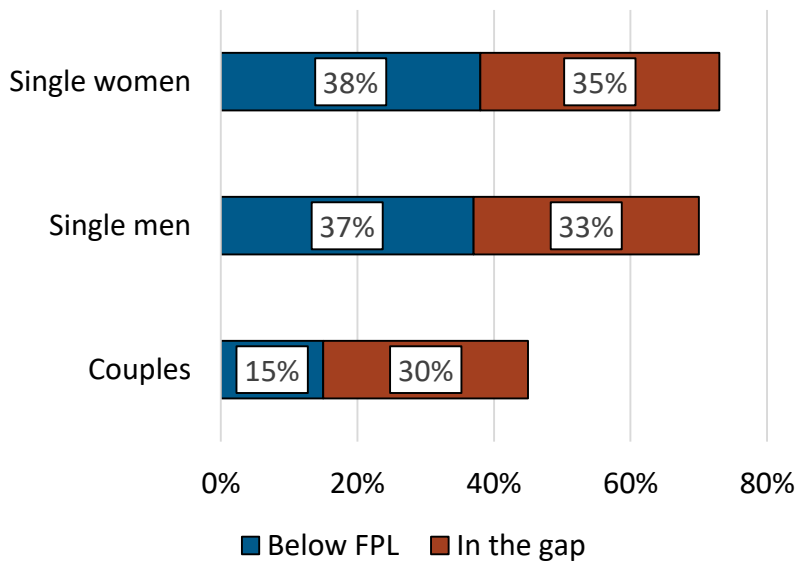


Figure 2: Percent of Boston Older Adults Living Below the Elder Index (2022)



Comparing income to the cost of necessary expenses in Boston reveals that many older Boston residents lack sufficient resources to get by, including an estimated 73% of single women and 70% of single men (Figure 2). A greater proportion of older adults living alone have incomes below the Elder Index relative to older couples, due in part to economies of scale realized in two-person households.

Note: calculation is based on older adults in good health who live alone and those who live in a 2-person older household.