



555 West Washington Ave, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703

www.wccf.org

☎ 608-284-0580

✉ 608-284-0583

For immediate release
September 19, 2013

Contact: Bob Jacobson, 608-284-0580, ext. 303

New Census Bureau Poverty Data Shows Economic Recovery Remains Agonizingly Slow for Vulnerable Families

Three years into the nation's recovery from recession, Wisconsin's working families remain considerably worse off than they were before the economic collapse of 2008. New data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau indicates that economic improvement remains elusive for vulnerable households, and it could be several more years before the state's median income and poverty rates return to their pre-recession levels.

According to data from the American Community Survey (ACS), nearly a quarter of a million (235,434) Wisconsin children were living below the poverty line last year. Wisconsin's child poverty rate was 18.2% in 2012, no change from the previous year and still well above the 13.4% rate in 2008.

Wisconsin's overall poverty rate also remained stable last year, after climbing significantly in the previous two years. The state's poverty rate in 2012 was 13.2% (a small, statistically insignificant increase from 2011), considerably higher than its pre-recession 2008 rate of 10.8%.

"Recession or no recession, recovery or no recovery, we simply can't accept a quarter of a million Wisconsin children living in poverty as the 'new normal,'" said Ken Taylor, executive director of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families. "These figures underscore the need for a comprehensive anti-poverty agenda that spans multiple generations and encompasses investments in a broad range of areas, including jobs, affordable housing, health care, and early education. No policy maker who claims to care about Wisconsin's future can justify ignoring poverty. We all suffer the consequences when so many children grow up poor."

Household income fell slightly in Wisconsin, following steep declines in recent years. Median household income among state residents was \$51,059 in 2012, \$389 below the previous year, and almost \$5,000 (9%) below the 2007 figure of \$56,010.

Wisconsin continues to experience extreme economic disparities based on race. The 2012 poverty rate among Wisconsin residents identifying themselves as Black or African American was 38.2%, compared to 9.8% among White non-Hispanic Wisconsinites. Black/African American households in the state earned about \$26,000 in 2012, less than half the \$53,900 earned by White non-Hispanic households. The Black child poverty rate (50.2% in 2012) was more than four times the rate for White non-Hispanic children.

(more)

ACS data on health insurance coverage shows that about 506,000 Wisconsinites, or 9.0%, were uninsured in 2012, a modest improvement from 2011. BadgerCare allowed Wisconsin to fare better than most states in covering its population during the recession, but the percentage of residents who receive coverage through their employer has declined sharply over the past decade.

“Wisconsin is in better shape than most states on covering its residents with health insurance, but the fact that more than half a million Wisconsinites were uninsured last year highlights the importance of getting it right on Affordable Care Act implementation, particularly the new health care marketplace that many low-wage workers will be relying on for buying affordable insurance,” said WCCF Research Director Jon Peacock. Peacock noted that the federal health care reform law has already helped prevent millions more people from going without insurance nationwide, including young adults who were covered by their parents’ policies thanks to the law.

WCCF recommends these measures in response to lingering high poverty rates and the continued erosion of employer-sponsored health insurance:

- Create a strong public/private partnership to help Wisconsinites get insurance through the Affordable Care Act and to help reach the Governor’s target of cutting the uninsured rate in half.
- Increase the minimum wage and then adjust it each year for inflation.
- Maintain funding for safety net programs such as food stamps and federal unemployment benefits that help lift families out of poverty and pump money into the still sluggish economy.
- Give businesses access to a well-trained workforce by providing schools and colleges the resources they need to prepare students for employment. And provide students with the financial aid they need to succeed in their educational efforts.

See data for selected counties in the tables below.

(more)

Wisconsin, Before and After Recession

County	Child Poverty			Poverty			Median Household Income	
	2008 Percent	2012 Percent	2012 Number	2008 Percent	2012 Percent	2012 Number	2008 Number	2012 Number
Brown	8.6%	16.0%*	9,799	8.8%	12.4%*	30,503	\$57,160	\$50,131*
Dane	11.2%	15.4%*	16,251	11.5%	13.1%*	64,396	\$66,089	\$59,792*
Dodge	6.5%	13.1%	2,463	6.5%	8.8%	7,305	\$56,644	\$50,781*
Eau Claire	11.8%	18.6%	3,689	11.8%	15.8%*	15,157	\$50,162	\$47,913
Fond du Lac	7.0%	11.2%	2,510	7.4%	8.7%	8,608	\$56,568	\$53,065
Jefferson	8.3%	11.3%	2,144	6.0%	10.4%*	8,424	\$60,643	\$53,675*
Kenosha	11.0%	18.6%*	7,714	8.3%	13.5%*	22,046	\$58,469	\$54,172
La Crosse	14.3%	11.6%	2,770	13.2%	14.5%	16,159	\$52,508	\$47,360*
Manitowoc	13.7%	15.5%	2,647	8.8%	9.8%	7,794	\$53,275	\$46,045*
Marathon	9.3%	16.0%*	4,933	7.8%	10.9%*	14,459	\$58,493	\$52,419*
Milwaukee	23.5%	32.4%*	75,760	17.1%	22.3%*	208,578	\$48,419	\$42,381*
Outagamie	11.2%	10.8%	4,687	7.3%	9.2%	16,182	\$56,500	\$48,419
Ozaukee	6.9%	6.2%	1,183	3.6%	5.5%	4,686	\$74,657	\$75,170
Portage	11.6%	14.7%	2,057	12.6%	16.4%*	10,940	\$52,854	\$45,215*
Racine	12.5%	20.9%*	9,837	9.4%	13.2%*	25,180	\$58,123	\$51,904*
Rock	15.1%	25.7%*	9,654	11.1%	15.5%*	24,314	\$54,759	\$45,989*
St. Croix	8.7%	8.3%	1,892	5.6%	7.0%	5,946	\$70,740	\$67,870
Sheboygan	6.8%	16.7%*	4,454	6.4%	11.5%*	12,895	\$54,519	\$51,899
Walworth	11.4%	20.1%	4,535	10.3%	14.3%*	14,235	\$56,677	\$48,940*
Washington	3.6%	7.7%	2,379	3.7%	6.1%*	7,991	\$68,700	\$64,221
Waukesha	4.6%	9.1%*	8,119	3.9%	5.9%*	22,981	\$79,762	\$72,364*
Winnebago	6.0%	11.6%*	3,920	7.4%	11.2%*	17,772	\$55,871	\$51,458*
Wood	3.5%	11.3%*	1,822	6.4%	9.3%*	6,794	\$48,032	\$44,568
Wisconsin	13.4%	18.2%*	235,434	10.4%	13.2%*	737,356	\$55,572	\$51,059*

* The change from 2008 to 2012 is statistically significant.

Health Insurance in Wisconsin, 2012

County	Children without Insurance		Total Population without Insurance	
	Percent	Number	Percent	Number
Brown	4.7%	2,930	9.1%	22,633
Dane	2.9%	3,091	6.6%	33,209
Dodge	2.7%	506	6.9%	5,735
Eau Claire	5.9%	1,221	8.5%	8,472
Fond du Lac	6.4%	1,442	9.1%	9,078
Jefferson	3.7%	726	6.9%	5,777
Kenosha	4.7%	1,960	10.6%	17,597
La Crosse	3.6%	876	6.5%	7,476
Manitowoc	2.8%	492	7.2%	5,757
Marathon	5.4%	1,734	9.7%	12,930
Milwaukee	4.5%	10,774	11.9%	112,472
Outagamie	2.3%	1,026	5.9%	10,399
Ozaukee	1.2%	234	3.8%	3,281
Portage	3.4%	482	7.1%	4,984
Racine	9.7%	4,635	12.2%	23,256
Rock	2.2%	848	9.1%	14,522
St. Croix	7.5%	1,729	8.8%	7,409
Sheboygan	4.8%	1,273	8.2%	9,210
Walworth	2.0%	452	10.4%	10,616
Washington	3.8%	1,201	6.1%	8,052
Waukesha	1.8%	1,612	5.1%	19,854
Winnebago	3.1%	1,114	8.6%	14,076
Wood	3.3%	548	7.3%	5,407
Wisconsin	4.7%	61,557	9.0%	505,998

###