

October 2013

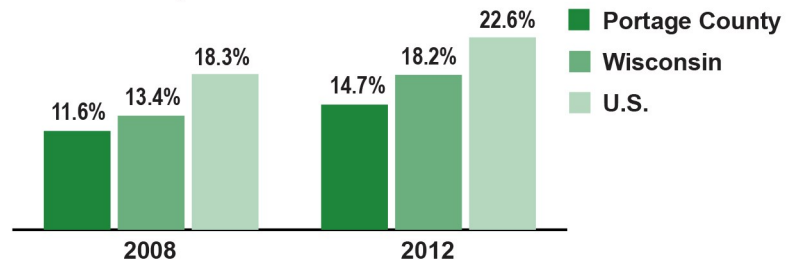
## Economic Recovery Slow for Portage County Families

### More People in Poverty, Fewer with Private Health Insurance

#### One out of Seven Children in Portage County Now Lives in Poverty

The child poverty rate in Portage County rose to 14.7% in 2012 from 11.6% in 2008. Portage County's child poverty rate is lower than the statewide average, which rose to 18.2% in 2012 from 13.4% in 2008. Nearly 400 additional children slipped into poverty in Portage County between 2008 and 2012.

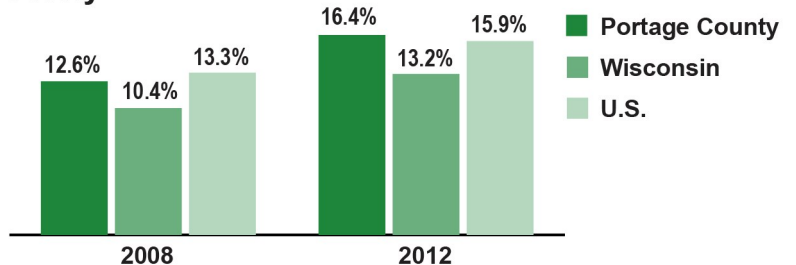
#### Child Poverty



#### Poverty in Portage County Has Increased

As a result of the recession, the total poverty rate in Portage County increased to 16.4% in 2012 from 12.6% in 2008. In 2012, Portage County's poverty rate was above the Wisconsin average, which rose to 13.2% in 2012 from 10.4% in 2008. The statewide poverty level was lower than the national average.

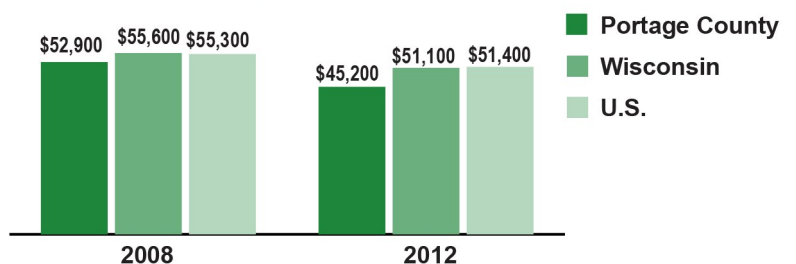
#### Poverty



#### Households in Portage County are Making Do with Less

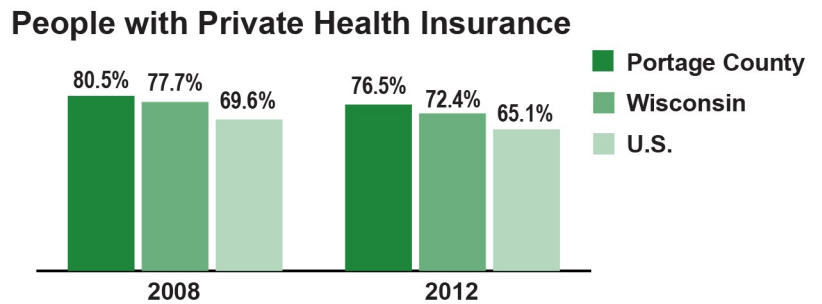
The typical household in Portage County earned \$7,700 less in 2012 than in 2008. Median household income dropped to \$45,200 in 2012 from \$52,900 in 2008. A typical household in Portage County earns roughly 11% less than the state and national average.

#### Median Household Income



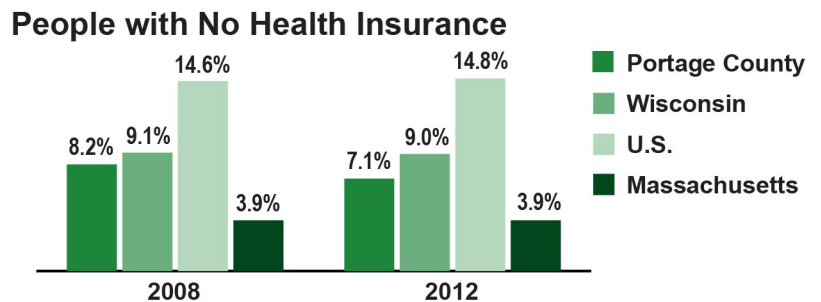
## Fewer People in Portage County Have Private Health Insurance

The percent of people in Portage County with private health insurance decreased to 76.5% in 2012 from 80.5% in 2008. The increase in the unemployment rate impacted health insurance coverage, since most families obtain insurance through their employers.



## Implementing Health Care Reform Could Significantly Improve Access to Insurance

The percent of Portage County residents lacking health insurance dropped to 7.1% in 2012 from 8.2% in 2008. Both Portage County and Wisconsin had a much smaller share of their population without health insurance than the national average, but far above the 3.9% rate in Massachusetts. That state implemented health care reforms in 2007 that served as the model for the Affordable Care Act.



## How to Help Portage County Families Affected by the Recession

Families in Portage County are still feeling the effects of the recession, when steep job loss pushed many residents into poverty and resulted in the loss of health care coverage. Portage County's economic situation is better in some respects than the national average, but far too many families are struggling to make ends meet or going without health insurance.

It is discouraging that three years into the recovery, poverty rates and income remain stubbornly low, and the uninsured rate remains high. But there are some basic steps we can take to help boost the local economy and help Portage County families pull themselves out of poverty, including:

- Increase the minimum wage and then adjust it each year for inflation.
- 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.

- Adjust the Homestead tax credit for inflation each year, like the rest of the tax code.
- 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.
- 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.
- Increase school readiness by improving children's early learning and development opportunities through high-quality child care, early education, home visiting, and parent engagement.