

Number of poor in U.S. on the rise, census says

The Associated Press

SUITLAND, Md. — The number of poor Americans grew by 1.2 million in 1992, the government said Monday in a report that paints a portrait of an underclass that is disproportionately young and without health insurance. Analysts blamed stubborn unemployment and declining social services in the aftermath of the recession. The Census Bureau said there were

36.9 million poor Americans last year, accounting for 14.5 percent of the population. That was up three-tenths of a point from 1991 and the highest poverty rate since 15.2 percent in 1983. The 1992 poverty line for a family of four was \$14,335. For someone living alone, it was \$7,143. The number of poor people was the most since 38.6 million were counted in 1962. Because of population growth, last year's poverty rate remained well below the 21 percent figure of John F. Kennedy's days. The government said 37.4 million Americans, or 14.7 percent of the population, lacked health insurance in 1992, an increase of 2 million. "Obviously the administration is saddened but not surprised by those figures," White House deputy press secretary Lorraine Voles said. "It underscores the need for health care reform in our country." Forty percent of the poor were children under 18, even though they com-

prised only 26 percent of the U.S. population. Their 1992 poverty rate, 21.9 percent, was higher than for any other age group. Those numbers rang true for Carol Wynn, foster care director for Ada S. McKinley Community Services in Chicago, a government-funded center that provides care for 400 children. In the past year, the center has been overwhelmed by walk-ins, mostly parents who need drug treatment, food, medicine or an escape from an abusive home.



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