

Data bite: Americans in poverty

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The percentage of Americans in poverty and without health insurance grew in 2003 for the third straight year—to 35.9 million people (one out of every eight) in poverty and 45 million (15.6 percent) without health insurance, reports the U.S. Census Bureau. The poverty threshold is \$18,660 for a family of four. Those numbers do not tell the whole story, said Joseph C. Hough, president of Union Theological Seminary in New York. Of all Americans 55 years of age and older, 61 percent have lived in or near poverty at some time in their lives, and 68 percent of Americans 65 years of age and older “need public help at some time,” he said, according to the National Council of Churches.