

Why the 2030 Census Matters for Health

Every community deserves access to quality healthcare. Every child deserves a healthy start. Every family deserves the resources to thrive. Accurate census data is foundational to health equity, healthcare, and public health. From Medicaid to children's health insurance, from maternal health programs to rural health services, census data helps direct over \$800 billion in annual federal health funding, and shapes health research and public health responses. It's also how we map the social determinants of health—the housing, income, education, and neighborhood conditions that drive whether families thrive. This factsheet outlines how funders who care about health and healthcare can help ensure we have fair and accurate census data.



What's the Census?

Every ten years, the U.S. Census Bureau counts every person living in the United States—a constitutional requirement that shapes our democracy and public spending for the next decade. The census determines political representation, but it also serves as the statistical backbone for funding decisions in every policy arena, including health. **Each year, census data, together with the American Community Survey, is used to direct over \$2 trillion in federal spending and helps ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.** Alongside the decennial census, the annual American Community Survey provides ongoing demographic data that health departments, hospitals, researchers, and funders rely on to make decisions that guide billions of dollars in health funding.

Why It Matters for Health

It's hard to overstate the significance of the census in guiding how public funds are spent on health. Health doesn't happen in a vacuum—where people live, their income, race, housing conditions, and access to transportation all shape health outcomes. Census data captures precisely these factors, making it indispensable for understanding *why* health disparities exist and where to intervene. The census:

Determines Federal Health Funding

Census data guides the distribution of more than \$800 billion in annual federal health funding. Medicaid serves over 66 million Americans across every state and demographic group. An accurate census ensures that every community—rural and urban, across all racial and ethnic backgrounds—receives its fair share of this critical funding. The federal government reimburses states for Medicaid costs based partly on population counts—a state undercount leads to reduced funding that restricts access to family planning, mental health care, cancer screenings, and disability services.

Accurate Census Data:



**Directs over
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**Ensures maternal
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Ensures Maternal and Child Health Programs Reach Those Who Need Them

Young children are the most undercounted age group, and the problem is getting worse. The State Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) covers nearly 9 million children, ensuring that kids from working families who earn too much for Medicaid but can't afford private insurance still get the care they need. Nineteen states also provide CHIP coverage to pregnant women. Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grants use census population data to allocate funding that reached 56 million pregnant women, infants, and children in recent years. The census also provides birth rates and child poverty rates, which help plan prenatal care programs, nutrition programs for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Head Start, and many other programs. When young children and women are undercounted, these critical programs are underfunded.

Supports Rural Health Services

Federal Rural Health Programs use census data to define non-urbanized areas eligible for enhanced Medicare support. Accurate rural population counts ensure that isolated communities maintain access to healthcare providers and facilities. Census data is used to designate Health Professional Shortage Areas and Medically Underserved Areas, designations that drive more healthcare resources to the communities that need it most. Title X Family Planning grants distribute resources regionally based on census population counts, providing reproductive health services to over 4 million people annually, with particular importance for rural and underserved areas.

Enables Smarter Health Philanthropy

The census is fundamental to everything health funders do. Accurate census data enables foundations to effectively research community health needs, evaluate program impact, and target investments to the families and communities that need support most. Population health data, health insurance coverage estimates, and social determinants of health all depend on accurate census counts. The American Community Survey is the only source of reliable, comparable community-level data for analyzing health disparities and access, providing detailed population demographics for racial and ethnic groups with little representation in other data sources. Additionally, investing in the census strengthens the same local organizations that many funders need to lead other efforts like maternal health outreach, vaccine education, or chronic disease prevention.



Accurate census data reveals health disparities and guides investments to reduce them.

Advances Health Equity

Census data reveals and helps address health disparities. If we don't know how many people of color and low-income residents live in a community, we can't measure whether they experience higher rates of disease, mortality, or inadequate care. The Department of Health and Human Services uses census-derived data to measure uninsured rates and Medicaid/Medicare coverage, track disability types and related health outcomes, and ensure equitable access to healthcare across all communities. Census accuracy is particularly critical because young Black and Hispanic children have undercount rates of approximately 6.5 percent—roughly twice the rate for young white children. Without accurate counts of communities of color, we cannot effectively address the health inequities they face.

Our Path to a Complete 2030 Count

The 2030 Census is being planned right now: how the Census Bureau will reach undercounted populations, what resources will be available, and how data will be collected.

The federal government will not provide the resources for comprehensive community outreach. That's where philanthropy comes in. We have a proven model from 2020, when foundations came together through the Census Funder Collaborative to raise more than \$120 million for the national effort and an additional \$75 million for state-based activities.

Philanthropic investment made a measurable difference: "Civil society saved the 2020 Census." That's the conclusion drawn by one evaluation. The infrastructure built for 2020 continues working today—supporting maternal health outreach, vaccine education, and other community health campaigns. Everyone counts, and together we showed we can make sure everyone is counted.



Join Us!

The Census Funder Collaborative is actively welcoming new health funders.

You can:

- ▶ **Provide funding directly** to trusted community organizations doing census outreach
- ▶ **Leverage your convening power** to bring together stakeholders for 2030 planning
- ▶ **Help your colleagues understand** the importance of census data to your work
- ▶ **Contribute to CFC's pooled fund** to support coordinated national and state efforts

When we count every person, we strengthen health outcomes for all communities.

Ready to Learn More?

Contact the Census Funder Collaborative at info@censusfunders.org to explore how your foundation can support a fair and accurate 2030 Census.

