Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Inaccuracies in the 2020 Census Enumeration Could Create a Misalignment Between States' Needs

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As the most accurate reflection of the United States population, the US decennial census is vital to health policymakers and others at all levels of government. Competing priorities related to cost containment and the introduction of new reforms raise concerns about the resources available to the US Census Bureau to conduct an accurate population enumeration in 2020. We examined the state of the Census Bureau's preparations for the 2020 Census and how inaccuracies in the coming census enumeration could influence public health and health equity in the coming decade. The results of the 2020 Census will be used to allocate trillions of dollars in federal funding to states, including support for programs vital to public health such as Medicaid and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children. Inaccuracies in the census enumeration could create a misalignment between states' needs and allocation of federal resources. Also, a census miscount of the population could create challenges for public health surveillance and research activities that inform public health policies and interventions.

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Authors: Doug Strane, Heather Griffis