

# Employment Trajectories in the Aftermath of the Great Recession Their Implications for Health\*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The literature linking labor force participation to health has focused mainly on transitions into or out of employment. However, the employment paths that individuals take are more complex, sometimes involving multiple transitions and varying degrees of labor force attachment over short periods. We expand this research by using monthly labor force participation data from a representative sample of Southeastern Michigan residents to construct labor force trajectories that span the months between April 2010 and April 2013. We use sequence analysis to characterize meaningful trajectory groups, and examine associations between these trajectory groups and depression and self-rated health. Results show that those who were long-term unemployed or out of the labor force had worse self-rated health at follow-up, and those who were unstably employed were more likely to be classified as depressed at follow-up, even accounting for prior health. The findings highlight the heterogeneity of employment experiences found in the population in the aftermath of the Great Recession.