

Determinants of Entry and Exit of Workers in Long-Term Care

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Background: In the past decade, the US health care industry, and long-term care (LTC) in particular, saw substantial job growth. In anticipation of growing demand for LTC due to an aging demographic, employment opportunities in LTC is expected to surpass that of other U.S. sectors. Workforce planners are concerned about ensuring an adequate pipeline of appropriately-trained workers for LTC jobs.

Objective: The goal of the study is to identify the demographics and socioeconomic status characteristics associated with job mobility and turnover of LTC workers, and the pathways to LTC jobs these workers utilize.

Methods: We pooled data from 2003 to 2013 of the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (“March Supplement”) of the Current Population Survey. We defined LTC using Census industry and occupation codes. We compared the different characteristics between four worker categories based on the changes in these workers’ employment sectors reported between the current and prior year: entrants, stayers, leavers, and never entered. We used a probit model to estimate from which industry LTC workers were more likely to enter controlling for gender, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, presence of young children, education, and disability status. We also used a probit model to estimate from which sector within the LTC industry workers have a higher likelihood of leaving controlling for gender, age, race/ethnicity, marital status, presence of young children, education, disability status and poverty status.

Emerging Findings: From our descriptive analysis, we find that LTC employed a high share of low-skilled workers, but many jobs in LTC were not associated with direct health care. LTC entrants and leavers were generally younger than those who stayed in LTC. Nursing care facilities tended to draw workers from hospitals, while individual and family services tended to draw workers from leisure and hospitality. A large share of LTC entrants were not in the labor force in the prior year; a dominant share of these were previously in school or taking care of the home or family. Most LTC leavers—especially those with lower skill levels—found themselves unemployed or out of the labor force, and these LTC leavers tended to report higher rates of work disability and to have higher rates of poverty. Further regression analysis will be completed by the time of presentation.

Conclusion: Future studies need to address the high rate of poverty and lack of upward mobility of many LTC workers.