

Return to work and the path to recovery after serious injury in Black men

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Sara F. Jacoby, MPH, MSN, PhD, Assistant Professor of Nursing. Credit: Penn Nursing

After a traumatic injury, returning to work (RTW) can be a strong indication of healing and rehabilitation and may play a pivotal role in promoting physical and functional recovery. But how does RTW after a traumatic injury affect mental health recovery, particularly in individuals who experience social and economic marginalization?

In a new study from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing (Penn Nursing), researchers investigated the ways that RTW after an injury predict mental health outcomes in Black men living and recovering in Philadelphia. The study found that men who did not RTW after a serious [traumatic injury](#) had almost three times the odds of poor mental health when compared to men who did RTW. The study also found that younger age,

lack of insurance or public insurance, and experiences of racism within and beyond the workplace were concurrently strong predictors of poor mental health outcomes.

This is the first study to identify the unique contributions of RTW after injury on [mental health outcomes](#) in Black men who recover in the context of urban environments where there are stark and persistent racial disparities in labor force opportunity and unemployment. Results of the research appear in the journal *Injury*. The article "The Relationship Between Work and Mental Health Outcomes in Black Men After Serious Injury," is available online.

"This study identifies the importance of considering RTW, not just as a marker of trauma recovery, but also as an important influence on [mental health](#) and recovery after hospitalization," says Sara F. Jacoby, MPH, MSN, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Nursing and senior author of the article.

"Interventions that support RTW for those who seek job opportunities in ways that attend to post-injury realities, can be situated within or in addition to strategies that enhance engagement with [mental health services](#), especially for patients who meet screening criteria for depression and PTSD."

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

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