

**The National Return to Work Survey**  
**The Role of the Employer and Workplace**  
**Australia and New Zealand: 2013**

**Safe Work Australia**  
**2014**

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# Foreword

The National Return to Work (RTW) Survey was developed to measure return to work outcomes of injured workers receiving workers' compensation, to better understand the experience of injured workers and the factors that may have an influence on return to work outcomes. Safe Work Australia is analysing the National RTW Survey results to produce a series of reports examining various factors and their relationship to return to work. This report is the first in this series.

Respondents were asked a series of questions relating to their workplace at the time of the injury and their experiences following their injury. This report examines questions relating to:

- Perceptions of the workplace and work just before the injury occurred
- Employer support following the injury
- Experiences at the workplace when submitting a claim, and
- Experiences at work following a return to work.

Answers to the questions were examined against two return to work outcomes:

- Proportion of workers who were back at work at the time of the survey, and/or
- Proportion of workers who had been back at work continuously for three months at the time of the survey.

Statistical significance testing was undertaken where possible to identify whether these factors had a significant effect on the likelihood of returning to work.

## Methodology

The National RTW Survey was administered by Computer Aided Telephone Interviewing (CATI) from 1 May to 3 June 2013 to just under 4 698 injured workers in Australia and New Zealand. All Australian workers' compensation authorities took part except the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The response rate was 80%.

The survey drew a sample from the population of injured workers:

- Who had at least one day away from work
- Who submitted a claim in the two years prior to the interview period
- Whose claim had some payment-related activity within six months prior to the sample being drawn, and
- Who worked in either premium paying or self-insured organisation noting that New Zealand does not have self-insured organisations.

Details of the National RTW Survey methodology can be found in the [National RTW Survey Summary Report \(2013\)](#) published on the Safe Work Australia website.

Further information on the methodology for this analysis can be found in the Appendix.

# Main findings

## Introduction

One of the principal aims of workers' compensation schemes is to achieve the rehabilitation and return to work of injured workers as early as is suitable, taking into account the nature and severity of the injury, and a return to work that is sustainable.

Return to work that is timely, safe and sustainable has financial, social, psychological and physical benefits for workers as well as benefits for employers and the schemes themselves. Research has found a number of workplace and employer-related factors have an impact on return to work outcomes. In their review of the qualitative literature, MacEachen, Clarke, Franche and Irvin (2006) found that early contact with the worker soon after their injury had a positive influence on return to work outcomes. This study also found that supervisors are important in facilitating positive return to work outcomes because of their daily proximity to the worker as well as their capacity to act as an advocate for the worker.

A study by Butler, Johnson and Cote (2007) cited by the *Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (2010)* found that a worker's satisfaction with their employer was the single most important influence on employment stability in return to work following the onset of back problems.

The results of this investigation support the earlier research, clearly demonstrating the important role employers can play in supporting a worker to return to work following an injury. The study found that for the most part, the relationship between employers and workers in Australian workplaces is a good one. Most workers had positive perceptions of their workplace prior to their injury and most reported that they received support from their employer following their injury and when they returned to work.

The Australasian Faculty of Occupational Medicine position statement *Helping People Return to Work: Using Evidence for Better Outcomes (2010)* states that the employer's approach plays a significant role in return to work outcomes. The position statement cites a number of studies to support the statement that 'employees who are valued, treated with respect and have their concerns addressed quickly are significantly more likely to return to work (p 27).'

This study found that employer support at the time the worker was injured led to better return to work outcomes. Employer support during recovery and early contact with the worker significantly increased the likelihood of returning to work. Workers who felt supported by their employer to a great extent were substantially more likely to have returned to work at the time of the survey compared to those who felt they were not supported at all.

Returning to work was a positive experience for most workers. Most workers who had returned to work after their injury felt the amount and type of work and the hours they were working suited them. The large majority felt they were physically and emotionally capable of doing their job. Most workers also reported that they felt part of a community at work, that managers and workers were generally supportive of each other and that their supervisor was committed to work health and safety.

## The workplace at the time of the injury

One area that was explored was whether the worker's perception of their workplace and satisfaction with their job prior to the injury had an effect on return to work outcomes.

Workers who agreed with a series of statements related to job satisfaction, the value of their work to others, worker/management support and commitment to workplace safety were more likely to have returned to work than those who disagreed with the statements.

## Employer support following an injury

Workers whose claim was lodged within 6 months of the survey were asked a series of questions about the support they received from their employer following their injury.

Those who agreed with statements that their employer:

- Did what they could to support them
- Provided enough information on their rights and responsibilities
- Made an effort to find suitable employment
- Helped with their recovery, and
- Treated them fairly during and after the claims process

...were more likely to be back at work and to have been back at work for three months than those who disagreed with the statements.

For each of those statements, over 90% of workers who strongly agreed were back at work at the time of the survey and over 60% had been back at work for three months. By contrast, the proportion of injured workers who strongly disagreed with each of the statements and who had returned to work at the time of the survey was between 40 and 54 per cent and only between 20 and 30 per cent had been back at work for three months.

The biggest contrast was between those who strongly agreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that their employer made an effort to find them suitable employment, with 98% who strongly agreed back at work at the time of the survey and only 44% who strongly disagreed.

### **Continuing employer support**

Of those whose claim was lodged more than six months prior to the survey, 65% reported that their employer was providing them with continuing support. Of those workers not receiving support, some may have no longer required support. Those who reported that their employer was providing continuing support to a great extent were seven times more likely to be back at work at the time of the survey and three times more likely to be back at work for three consecutive months.

### **Experiences at the workplace when submitting a claim**

Worker concerns regarding the submission of a workers' compensation claim tended to lead to poorer return to work outcomes, while discouragement of claim lodgement by an employer and differences of opinion between the worker and their employer/ workers' compensation organisation decreased the likelihood of injured workers returning to work.

Workers who strongly agreed that they felt they would be treated differently at work if they lodged a claim tended to have poorer return to work outcomes than those who strongly disagreed, with 61% of these workers back at work at the time of the survey and 47% having been working for three months, compared to 85% of those who strongly disagreed being back at work at the time of the survey and 67% having been back at work for three months.

Differences of opinion had a significant negative impact on return to work outcomes, with workers significantly less likely to be at work at the time of the survey and significantly less likely to have been working for three months compared to those who did not experience a difference of opinion.

### **Experiences of workers who had returned to work**

Most workers who had returned to work after their injury had positive perceptions of the work and the workplace they had returned to after their injury. A large majority (over 80%) agreed with a series of statements related to the importance of work to them, their satisfaction with and enjoyment of work. A large majority (over 80% in each case) also agreed with a series of statements relating to the workplace and the community at work with 88% agreeing that their supervisor was committed to workplace safety.

Survey results also indicate that most employers are providing suitable work for those who have returned to work following an injury. A large majority (over 85% in each case) agreed that the amount and type of work and the hours they were working suited them and that they felt physically and emotionally capable of doing their job.

# How to interpret figures in this report

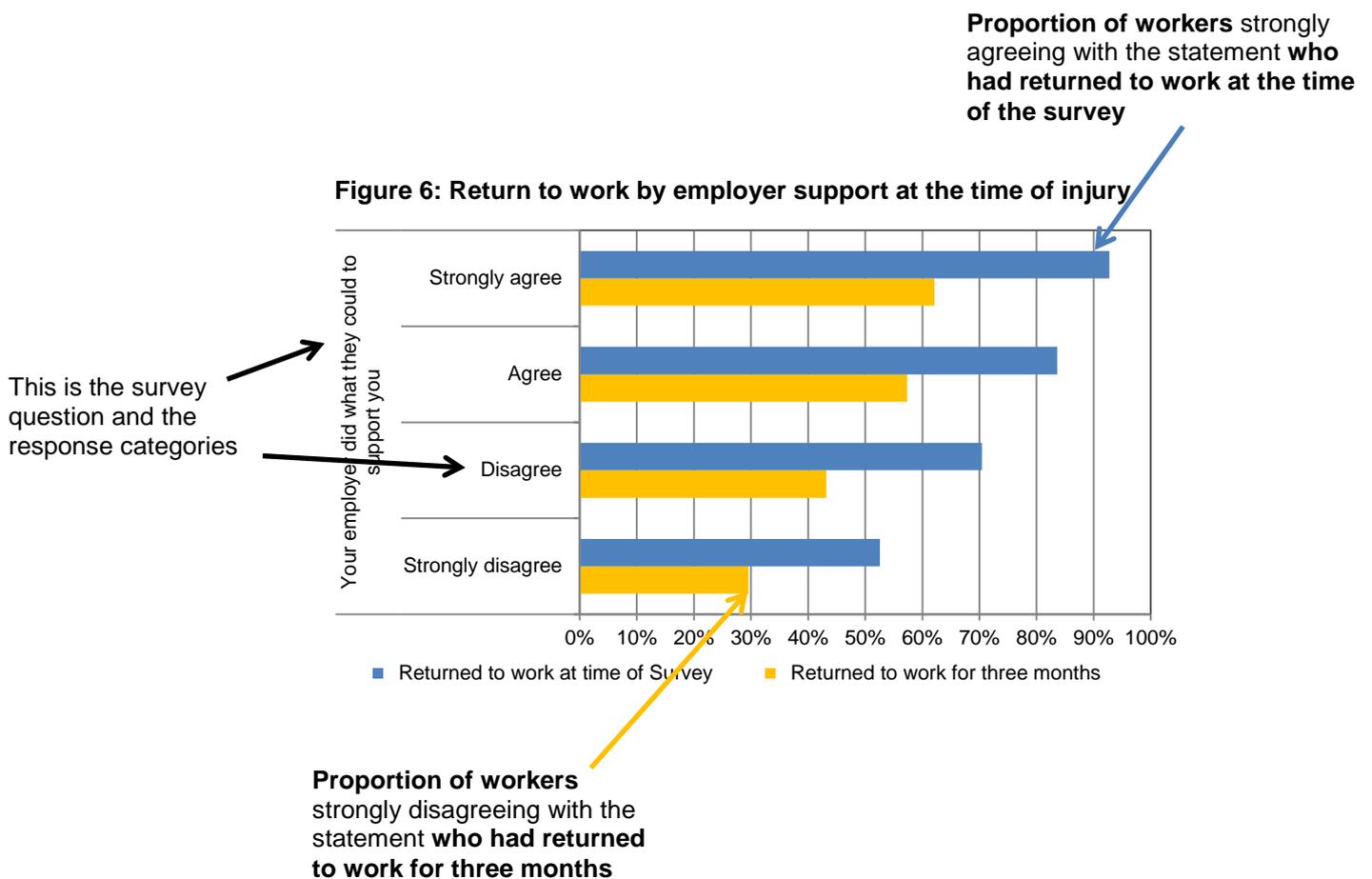
In this report the National RTW Survey data has been analysed to examine the relationship between the role of the employer and the workplace and two return to work outcomes. Each figure compares responses to questions with return to work outcomes.

Responses to the survey questions are in the form of scales of agreement, categories and yes/no responses.

The proportions shown in the figures in this report refer to the proportions of workers who had returned to work at the time of the survey (blue bar) or had been back at work for three months (yellow bar) from each respondent category. Therefore, the proportions shown by the two bars do not add to 100 per cent.

In the example below, 93 per cent of workers who strongly agreed with the statement 'Your employer did what they could to support you' had returned to work at the time of the survey compared to 53 per cent of workers who strongly disagreed with the statement.

In the same example, 62 per cent of workers who strongly agreed with the statement had been back at work for three months compared to only 30 per cent who strongly disagreed with the statement.



# The workplace prior to the injury

## Workplace safety attitudes and work satisfaction

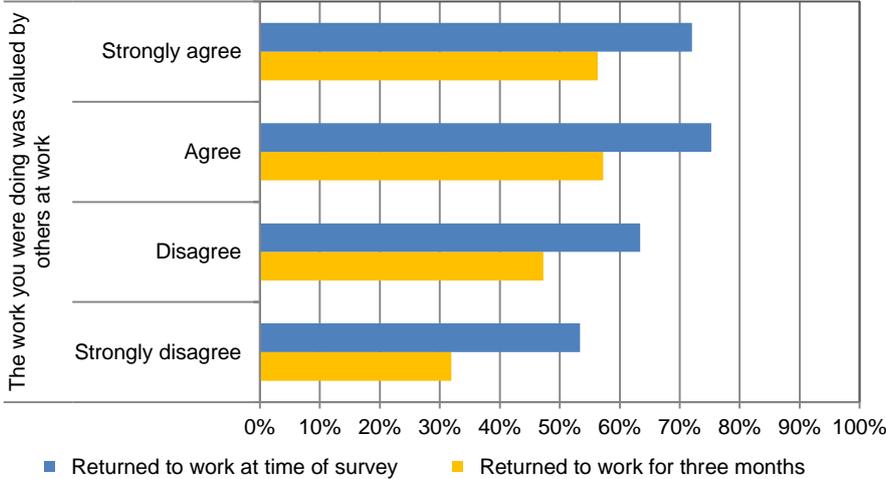
Workers with 10 days or more compensation (N = 3234) responded to a series of questions examining their satisfaction with the work they were doing prior to their injury and the attitudes of their supervisors and colleagues regarding workplace safety.

Almost all workers (95%) agreed that the work they were doing was important to them, with a slightly smaller proportion (88%) agreeing that the work they were doing was valued by others at work. A majority of workers (70%) agreed that workers and management were generally supportive of each other and most (90%) agreed that all things considered, they were satisfied with their job. Almost three quarters (73%) agreed that their immediate supervisor was committed to workplace safety and just over three quarters of workers (76%) agreed that their colleagues were committed to workplace safety.

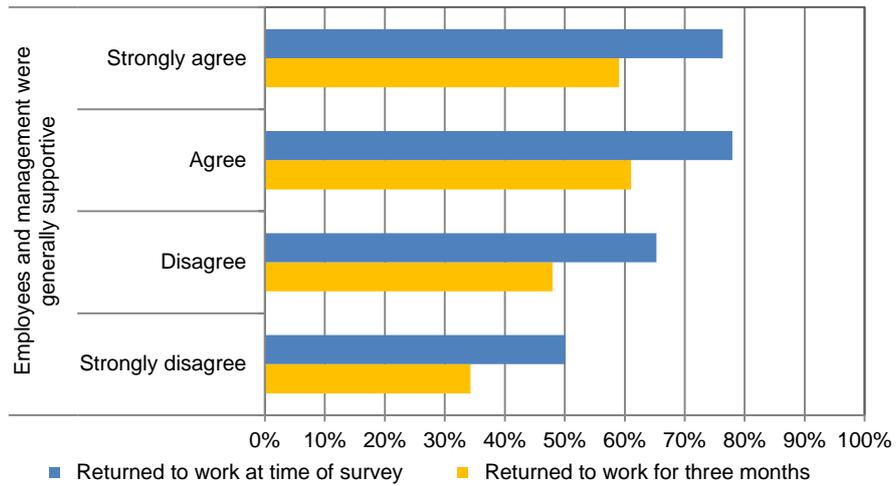
Overall, workers who agreed or strongly agreed with these statements tended to have better return to work outcomes, with the exception of the question regarding whether the work the employee was doing was important to them, which had little effect.

Figures 1 to 5 compare level of agreement to statements related to the work the worker was doing at the time of the injury and return to work outcomes. Overall, a higher proportion of workers who agreed with each statement were back at work at the time of the survey and had been back at work for three months compared to workers who disagreed with the statements.

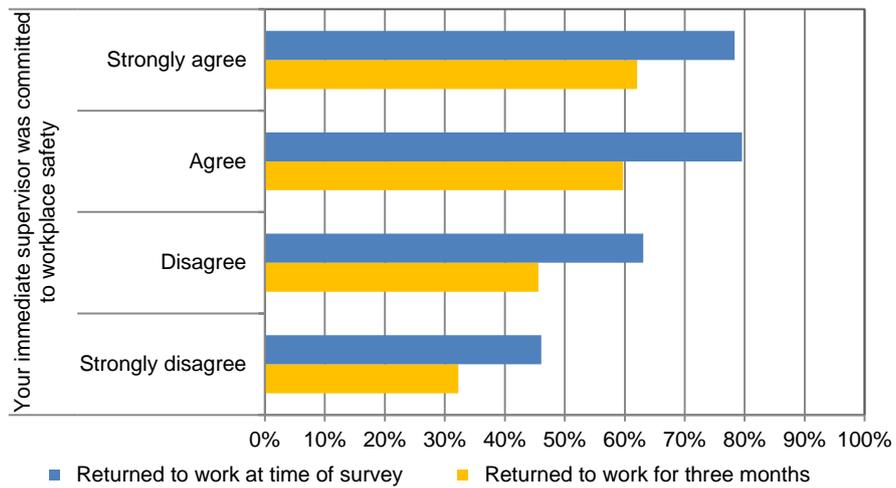
**Figure 1: Return to work by value of their work by others**



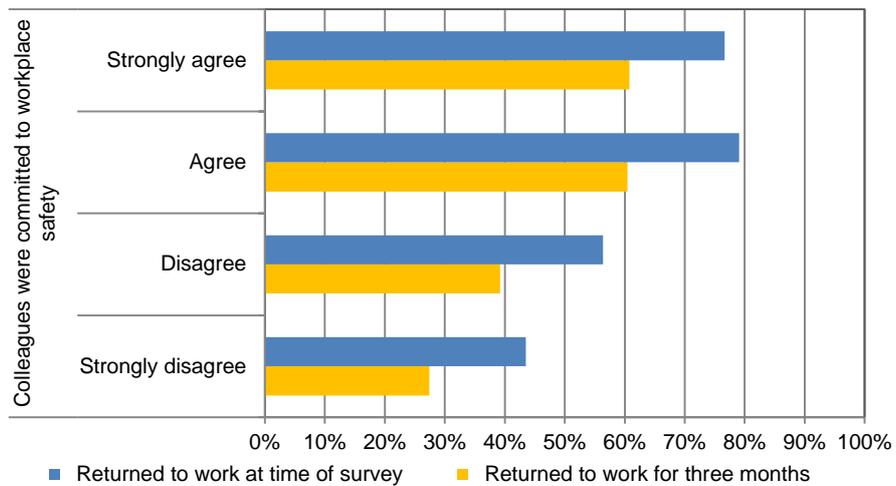
**Figure 2: Return to work by employee/management support**



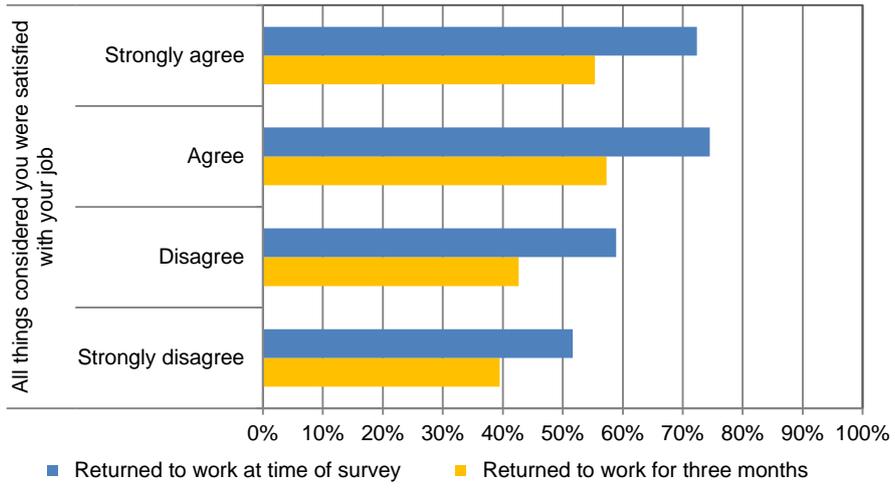
**Figure 3: Return to work by supervisor commitment to workplace safety**



**Figure 4: Return to work by colleagues' commitment to workplace safety**



**Figure 5: Return to work by job satisfaction**



# Employer support following the injury

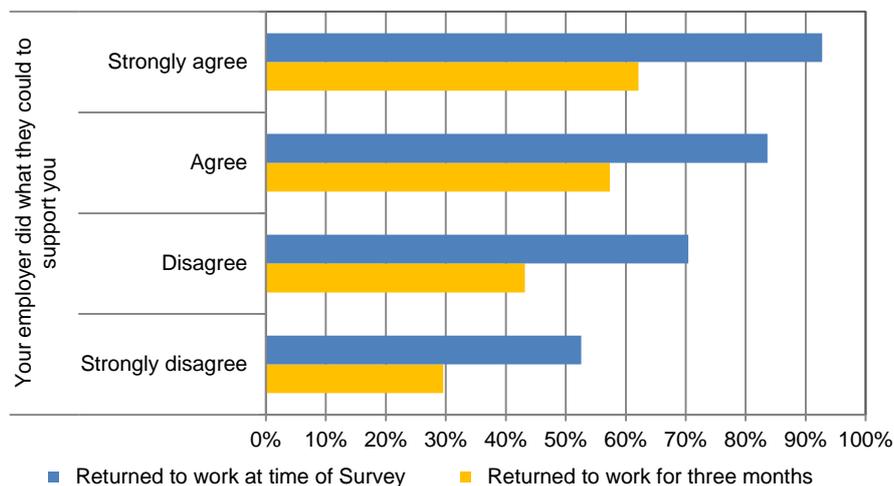
## Employer support at time of injury

Workers whose claim was lodged within six months of the survey (N = 1053) responded to six questions regarding whether or not their employer provided them with assistance and support at the time of injury. The majority of workers agreed that their employer:

- did what they could to support them (75%)
- provided enough information on their rights and responsibilities (67%)
- made an effort to find suitable employment (75%)
- helped with recovery from injury (68%), and
- treated the worker fairly during and after the claims process (81% each).

Figures 6 to 11 show agreement with these questions and return to work outcomes. A higher proportion of workers who agreed with each statement were back at work at the time of the survey and had been back at work for three months compared to workers who disagreed with the statements

**Figure 6: Return to work by employer support at the time of injury**



Of those workers who strongly agreed that their employer did what they could to support them, 93% were back at work compared to only 53% of those who strongly disagreed. Nearly two thirds of those who strongly agreed with the statement had been back at work for three months compared to less than one third who strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Figure 7: Return to work by provision of information on rights and responsibilities**

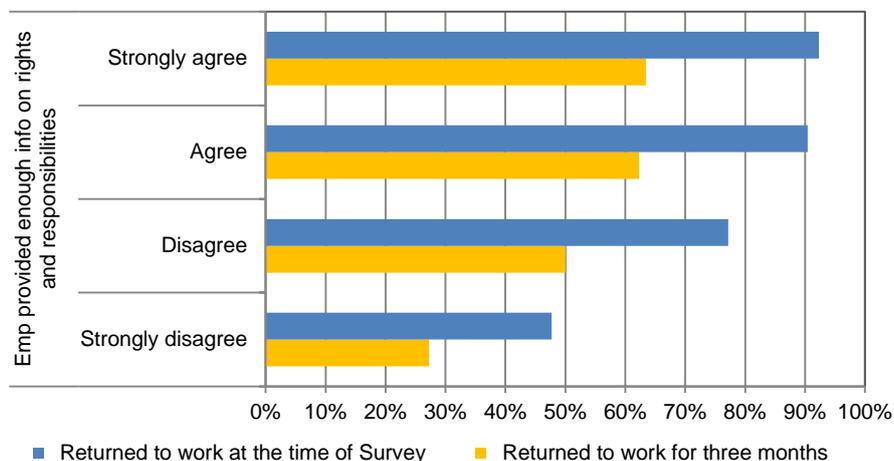
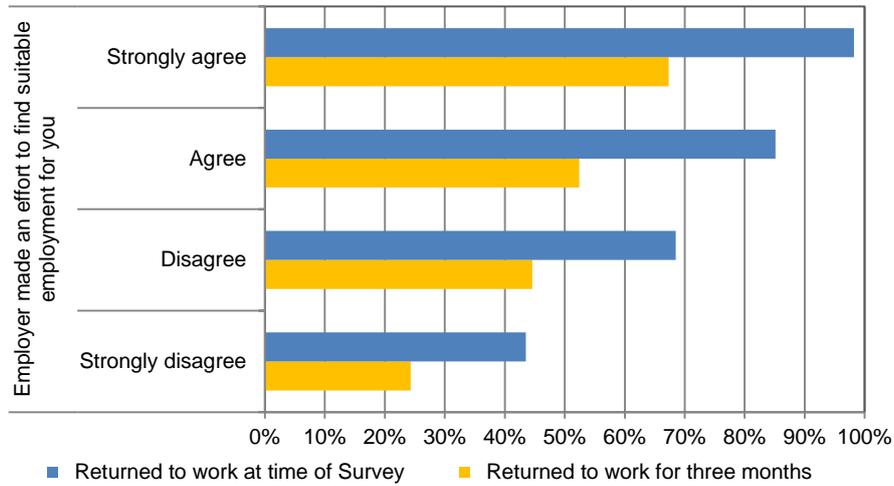


Figure 7 shows that 92% of workers who strongly agreed that their employer provided enough information on rights and responsibilities were at work at the time of the survey compared to 48% of workers who strongly disagreed.

**Figure 8: Return to work by employer effort to find suitable employment**



Almost all (98%) workers who strongly agreed that their employer made an effort to find suitable employment for them had returned to work at the time of the survey compared to only 44% of those who strongly disagreed. Only 24% of those who strongly disagreed had been back at work for three months compared to 67% who strongly agreed.

**Figure 9: Return to work by employer help with recovery**

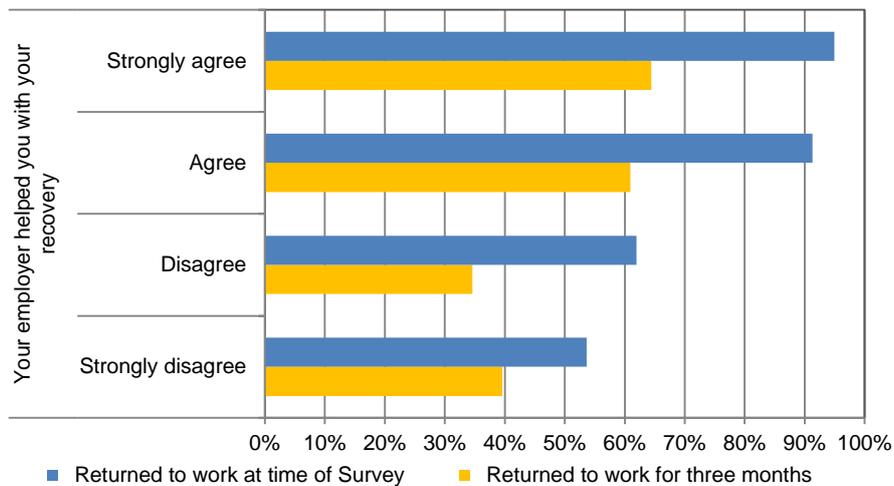
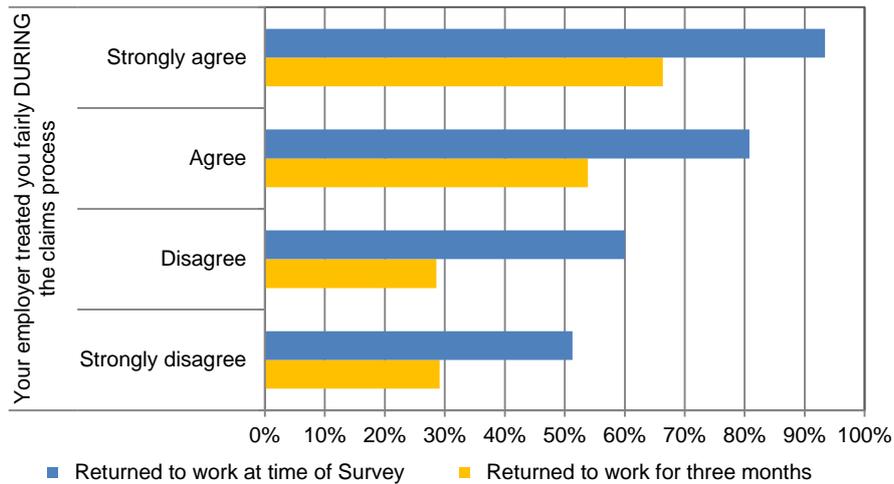


Figure 9 highlights that 95% of workers who strongly agreed that their employer helped with their recovery were back at work at the time of the survey while 64% had been back at work for three months.

**Figure 10: Return to work by fair treatment during the claims process**



A large majority (93%) of workers who strongly agreed that they were treated fairly during the claims process has returned to work at the time of the survey with 66% of workers having been back at work for three months.

**Figure 11: Return to work by fair treatment after the claims process**

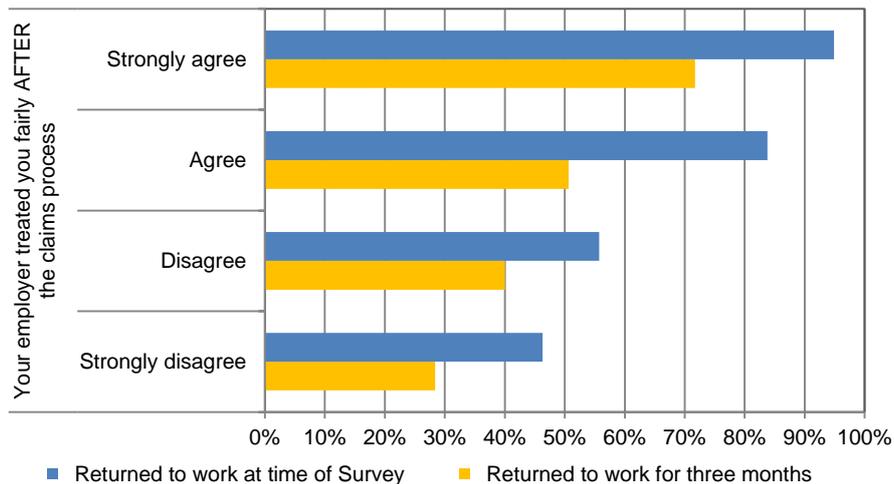


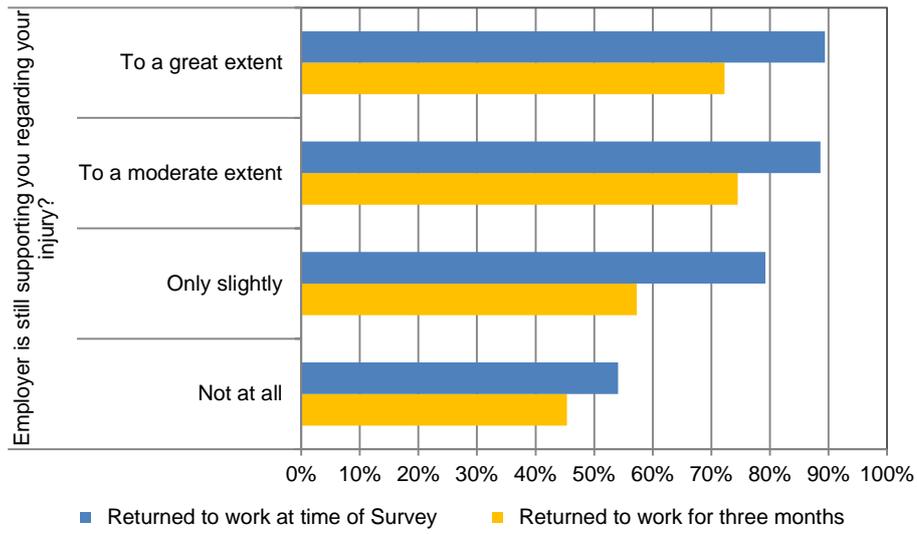
Figure 11 shows 95% of workers who strongly agreed that their employer treated them fairly after the claims process had returned to work at the time of the survey, with 72% of workers having been back at work for three months.

### Continuing employer support

One third (35%) of workers whose claim was lodged more than six months prior to the survey (N = 3883) indicated that their employer was not providing any continuing support following their injury. Some of those workers may no longer have required support.

Figure 12 shows that 89% of workers who perceived that they were still being supported by their employer regarding their injury to a great extent had returned to work at the time of the survey, while 72% of workers had been working for three consecutive months. When workers did not perceive any continued support just over half (54%) were at work at the time of the survey while 45% had been at work for three consecutive months.

**Figure 12: Return to work by continuing employer support**



Significance tests were conducted on this survey question. Compared to receiving no support, workers receiving continuing employer support to a great extent were:

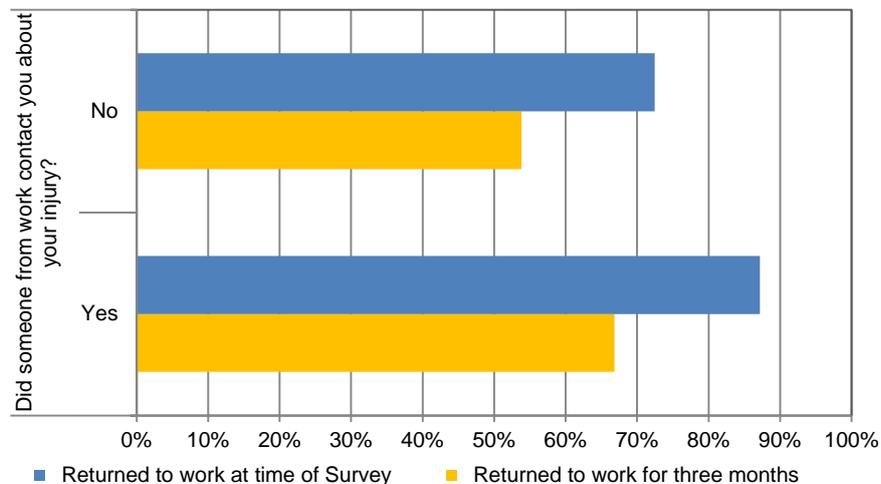
- seven times more likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- three times more likely to be working at the time of the survey and have been working for at least three consecutive months.

# Experience immediately following the injury and in submitting the claim

## Work contact

Just over one third (38%) of workers whose claim was lodged within 12 months prior to the survey (N = 3101) indicated that no one from their work contacted them about their injury. Workers who were contacted by their work tended to have better return to work outcomes, with 87% working at the time of the survey and 67% having been at work for three consecutive months. This is compared to 72% of workers that were not contacted by work being at work at the time of the survey and 54% having been at work for three months.

**Figure 13: Return to work by work contact**



Significance testing was conducted on this survey question. This found that workers who were contacted were:

- Two and a half times more likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- 1.7 times more likely to be working at the time of the survey and have been working for at least three consecutive months.

## Who contacted the worker?

Of the workers who were contacted half (51%) were contacted by the general manager, boss or business owner and just under one third (31%) were contacted by their supervisor or team leader. Contact by the boss or supervisor and return to work outcomes is shown in Figures 14 and 15.

**Figure 14: Return to work by contact with the boss or business owner**

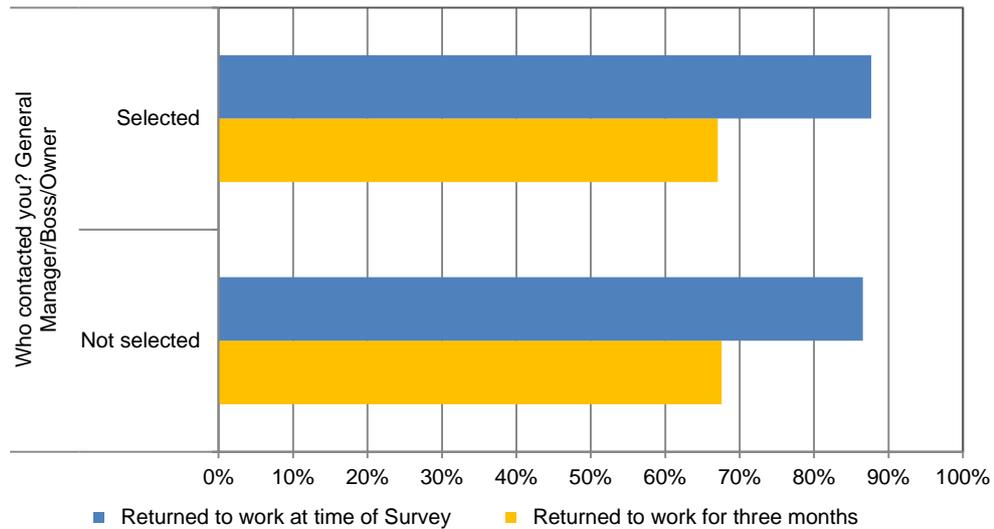
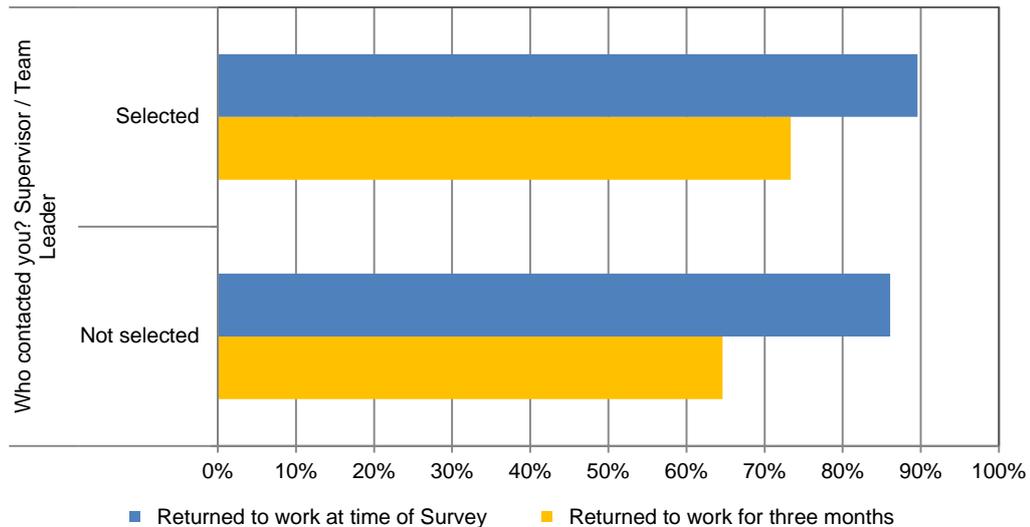


Figure 14 shows return to work outcomes were similar between those who were and were not contacted by their general manager, boss or business owner.

**Figure 15: Return to work by contact with supervisor/team leader**



When contacted by their supervisor or team leader return to work outcomes tended to be more positive, with 90% of these workers back at work at the time of the survey and 73% working for three months.

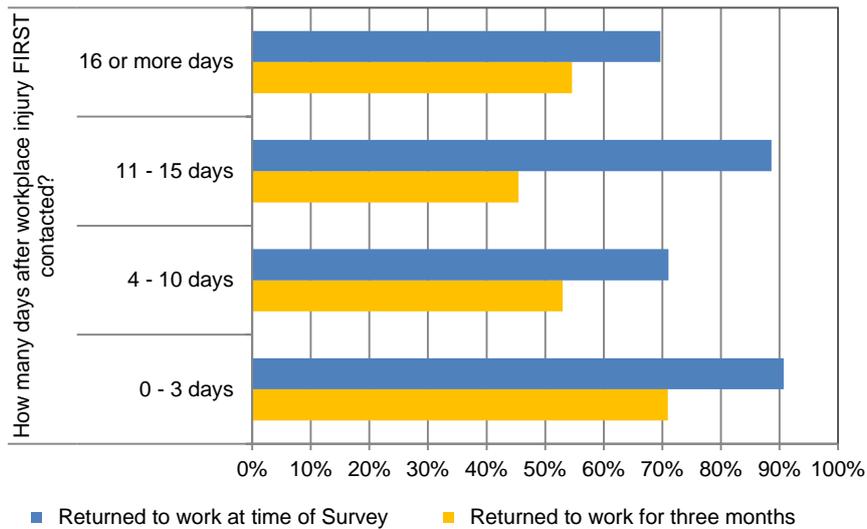
Significance testing was conducted on this survey question. Whether the worker was contacted by their general manager, boss or business owner had no effect on return to work outcomes. However, when a worker was contacted by their supervisor or team leader they were:

- 1.4 times more likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- 1.5 times more likely to be working at the time of the survey and have been working for three consecutive months.

### Length of time before contact was made following injury

The majority (81%) of workers who were contacted by their work were contacted within 3 days of the injury occurring. Figure 13 shows that early contact tended to lead to better return to work outcomes, with 91% of workers contacted within the first few days following their injury having returned to work at the time of the survey and 71% having been back at work for three months.

**Figure 16: Return to work by days to contact following injury**



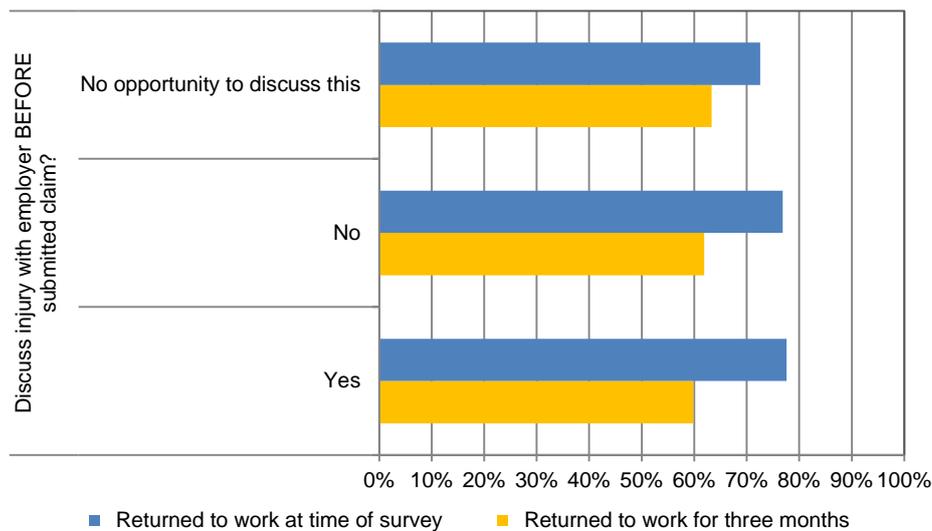
Significance testing was conducted on this survey question. Compared to 16 or more days, workers who were contacted within 0-3 days of their injury occurring were:

- Just over four times more likely to be working at the time of the survey,
- Twice as likely to be working at the time of the survey and have been working for three consecutive months.

### Injury discussed with employer

There was no significant impact of workers discussing their injury with their employer on the likelihood of being at work at the time of the survey or having been at work for three months. The majority (72%) of the full sample of workers discussed their injury with their employer before submitting a workers' compensation claim. Figure 17 shows worker discussion of their injury with their employer and return to work outcomes. Whether or not the worker discussed their injury with their employer before submitting a claim had no effect on return to work outcomes.

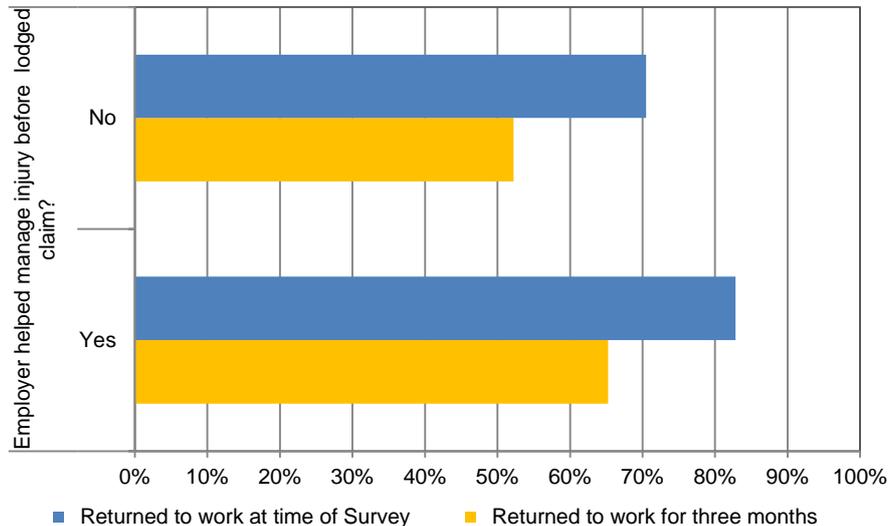
**Figure 17: Return to work by discussion with employer before submitting a workers' compensation claim**



## Assistance with managing injury before claim lodgement

Of the workers who discussed their injury with their employer over half (59%) indicated that their employer helped them to manage the injury before a claim was lodged.

**Figure 18: Return to work by employer assistance before claim lodgement**



As Figure 18 shows those who received assistance in managing their injury from their employer prior to submitting a workers' compensation claim tended to have better return to work outcomes than those who did not. The majority (83%) of these workers were back at work at the time of the survey and 65% had been back at work for three months.

Significance testing was conducted on this survey question. When assisted by their employer prior to the submission of a workers' compensation claim, workers were:

- twice as likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- around 1.7 times more likely to be working at the time of the survey and had been working for three consecutive months.

## Discouragement of claim lodgement by employer

Of the workers who discussed their injury with their employer just under one fifth (18%) felt that their employer discouraged them from putting in a claim for workers' compensation.

**Figure 19: Return to work by whether the employer discouraged lodgement of a workers' compensation claim**

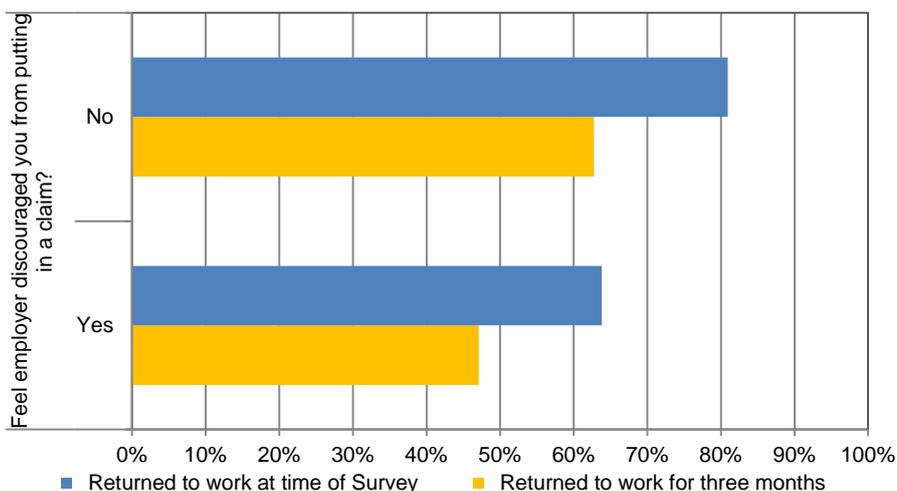


Figure 19 shows that workers who did not feel discouraged tended to have better return to work outcomes, with 81% of workers back at work at the time of the survey compared to 64% who reported their employer discouraged them from lodging a claim. Similarly, a greater proportion of workers who did not feel discouraged were back at work for three consecutive months compared to those who reported feeling discouraged (63% and 47%, respectively).

Significance testing was conducted on this survey question. When discouraged to lodge a workers' compensation claim by their employer workers were just over:

- 0.4 times less likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- 0.5 times less likely to be working at the time of the survey and have worked for three consecutive months.

## Concerns regarding the submission of a workers' compensation claim

The majority of workers disagreed that they:

- felt they would be treated differently at work (74%),
- felt their supervisor thought they were exaggerating their injury (60%), and
- would be fired if they were to lodge a workers' compensation claim (78%).

Workers who agreed with these statements tended to have poorer return to work outcomes.

**Figure 20: Return to work by perception of being treated differently by people at work**

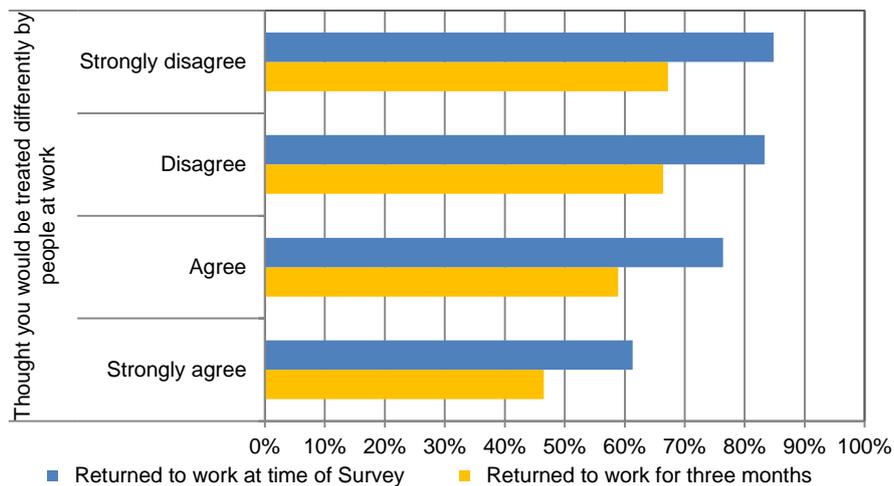


Figure 20 shows that 85% of workers who strongly disagreed that they felt they would be treated differently at work had returned to work at the time of the survey compared to 61% of those who strongly agreed to this statement. Similarly, a higher proportion of workers who strongly disagreed that they felt they would be differently treated at work had been back at work for three months compared to those who strongly agreed (67% and 47%, respectively).

**Figure 21: Return to work by perception supervisor thought they were exaggerating their injury**

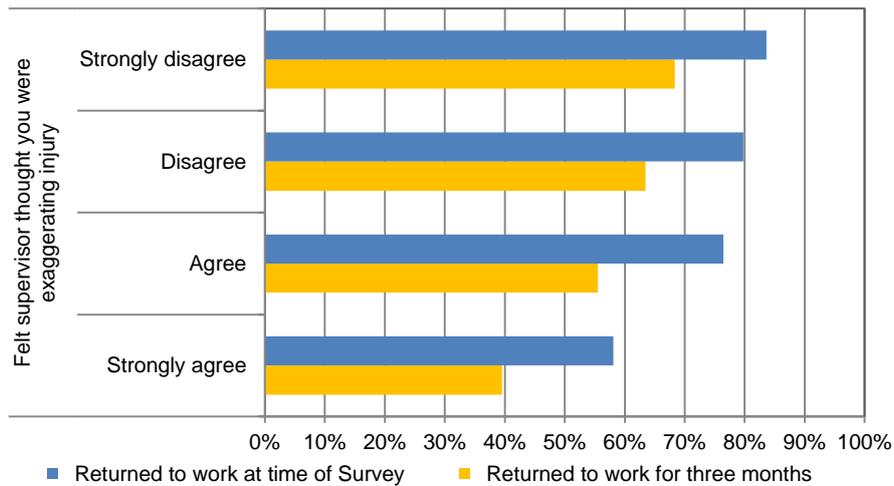
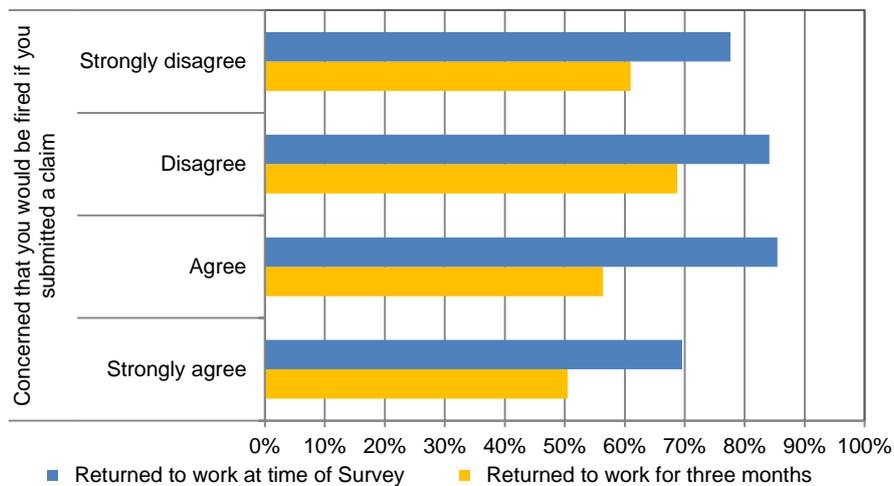


Figure 21 shows that 84% of workers who strongly disagreed that they felt their supervisor thought they were exaggerating their injury were back at work at the time of the survey compared to 58% who strongly agreed to this statement. A higher proportion of workers who strongly disagreed with this statement had been back at work for three months compared to those who strongly agreed (68% and 40%, respectively).

**Figure 22: Return to work by perception they would be fired if they lodged a workers' compensation claim**

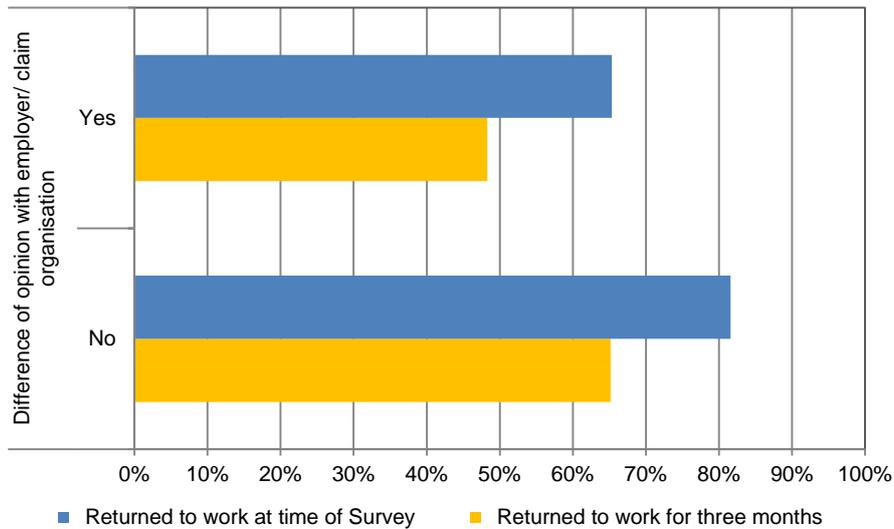


There were mixed results for level of agreement with feeling concerned about being fired if the worker lodged a workers' compensation claim. Workers who agreed with this statement constituted the highest proportion at work at the time of the survey (85%). On the other hand, workers who disagreed constituted the highest proportion of those back at work for three months (69%).

### Difference of opinion with employer/ claim organisation

Just over one quarter (27%) of the full sample of workers indicated that they had a difference of opinion with their employer or claim organisation following the lodgement of their claim.

**Figure 23: Return to work by difference of opinion with employer/ claim organisation**



Workers who did not experience a difference of opinion tended to have better return to work outcomes than those who did, with 82% having returned to work at the time of the survey and 65% having been back at work for three months.

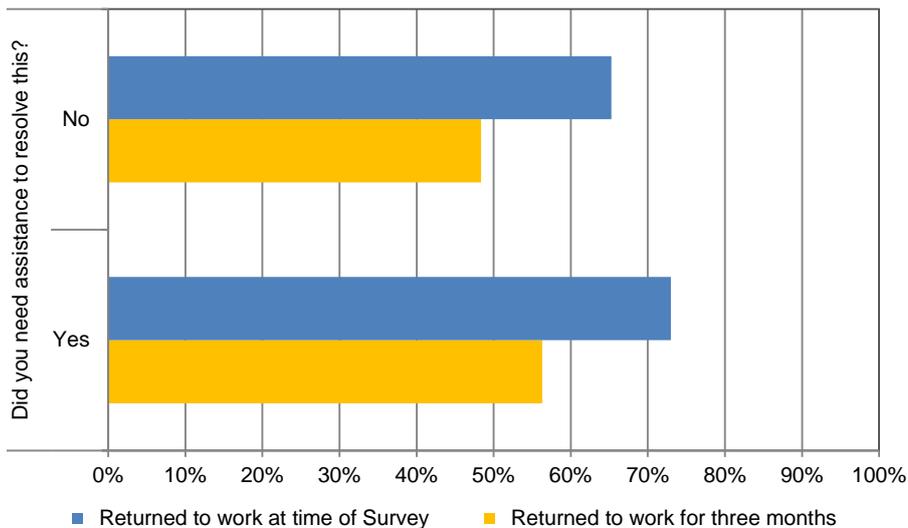
Significance testing was conducted on this question. Workers who experienced a difference of opinion were:

- Just over 0.4 times less likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- 0.5 times less likely to be working at the time of the survey and have been working for three consecutive months.

### Assistance required resolving difference of opinion with employer/ claiming organisation

Of those workers who experienced a difference of opinion with their employer/ organisation just over half (53%) indicated that they required assistance to resolve the issue.

**Figure 24: Return to work by assistance to resolve the difference of opinion**



Significance testing was conducted on this question. Workers that required assistance to resolve a difference of opinion were just over:

- 0.5 times less likely to be working at the time of the survey, and
- 0.5 times less likely to have been working for three consecutive months.

# Back at work

Workers whose claim was lodged more than six months prior to the survey (N = 2942) and who had returned to work at the time of the survey responded to a series of questions examining how they felt about the work they were doing, how work was going for them and how they felt about their workplace. This section examines the pattern of responses against whether the worker had been back at work for three consecutive months.

## Personal well-being and perceptions of work

Most workers who had returned to work following their injury had positive perceptions of their work. Most (91%) agreed that the work they were doing was important to them with 84% agreeing that the work they were doing satisfied them. Just over 71% of workers agreed that they had a say in how they organised their work. Most (81%) workers agreed that their opinions and suggestions were considered at work and nearly 90% agreed that the work they were doing was valued by others at work. Finally, a large majority of workers (89%) agreed that they enjoyed work.

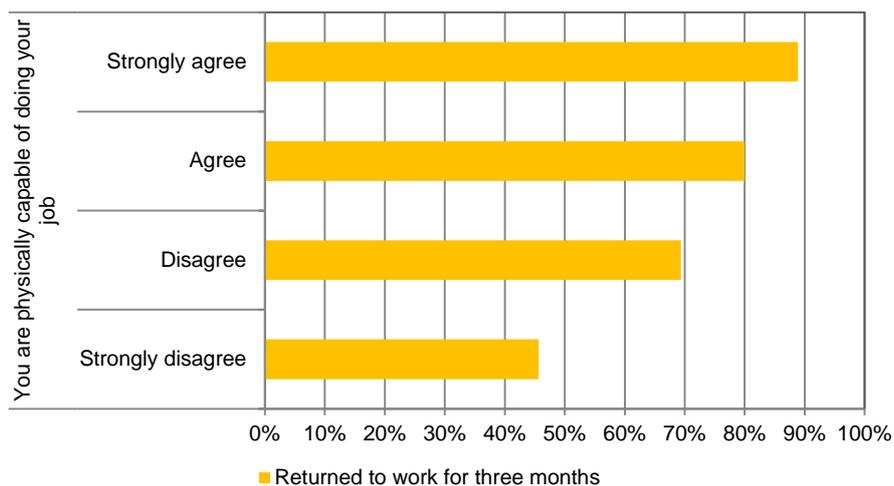
Workers who agreed and strongly agreed with these questions tended to have slightly better return to work outcomes.

## Functional capacity

Most workers who had returned to work felt the amount and type of work and the hours they were working suited them and most felt they were physically and emotionally capable of doing their job. Most workers (89%) agreed that the amount of work they were doing was reasonable and 91% agreed that their skills and abilities were used appropriately. Most workers (87%) agreed that the hours they were working were right for them. Most (88%) also agreed that they were physically capable of doing their job and 92% agreed that they felt emotionally capable of doing their job.

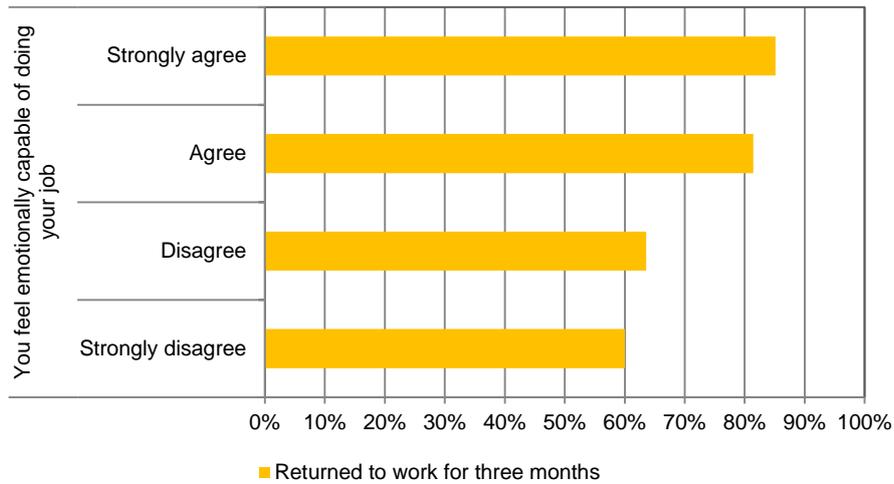
Overall, agreement with these questions was related to having been back at work for three months. This was particularly so for questions addressing whether the worker felt physically and emotionally capable of doing their job.

**Figure 25: 3-month stable return to work by physical capability**



Workers who strongly agreed that they felt physically capable of doing their job were much more likely to have been back at work for three months compared to those who strongly disagreed (89% and 46%, respectively).

**Figure 26: 3-month stable return to work by emotional capability**



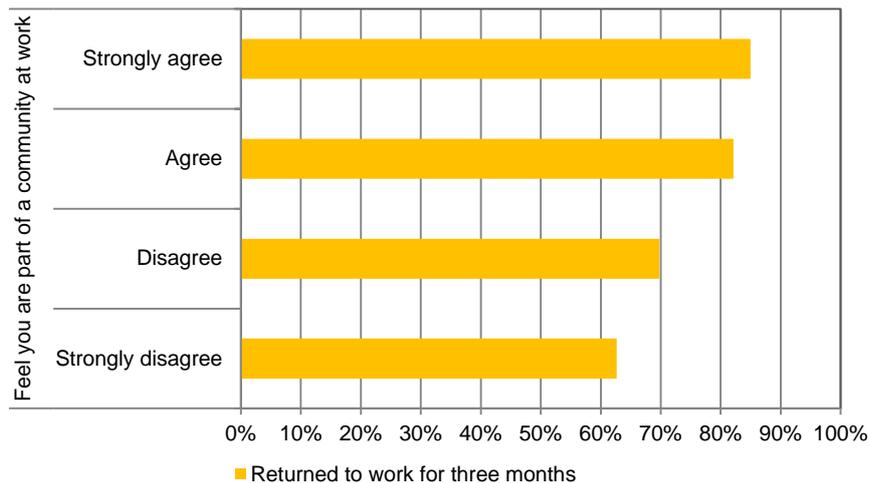
Workers who strongly agreed that they felt emotionally capable of doing their job were more likely to have been back at work for three months than those who strongly disagreed (85% and 60%, respectively).

### Work environment

Most workers (87%) agreed that they felt like part of a community at work and 86% agreed that workers and management were generally supportive of each other. Most (88%) agreed that their supervisor was committed to workplace safety with 87% agreeing that their colleagues were committed to workplace safety.

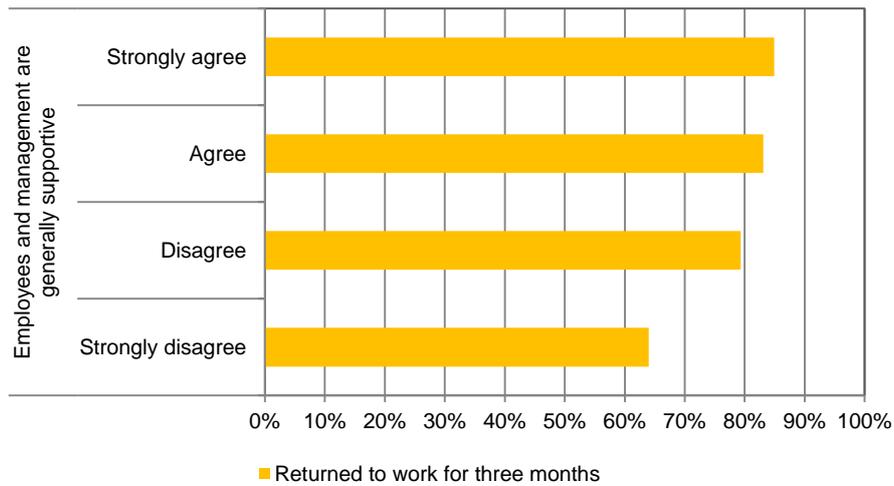
Overall, agreement with these statements tended to result in better return to work outcomes, particularly for questions addressing whether the employee felt like they were part of a community at work, whether workers and management were generally supportive of each other and whether their supervisor was committed to workplace safety.

**Figure 27: 3-month stable return to work by feeling part of a community at work**



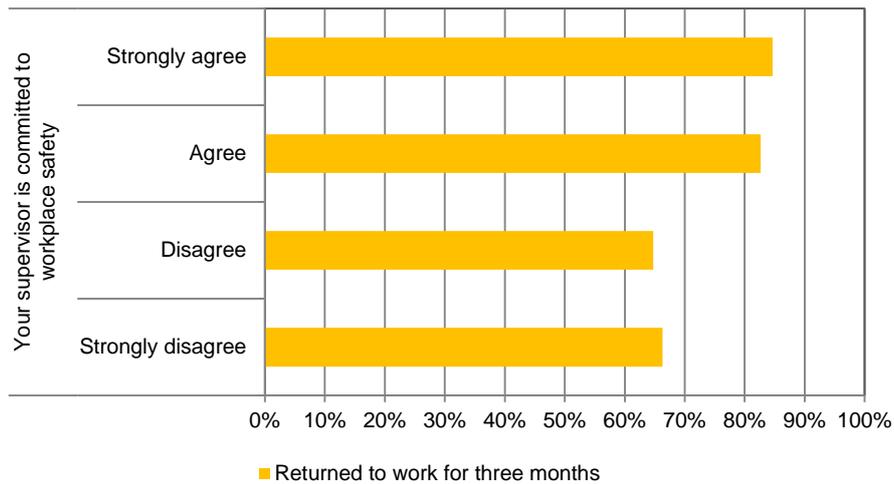
Workers who strongly agreed that they felt like they were part of a community at work were more likely to have been back at work for three months compared to those who strongly disagreed (85% and 63%, respectively).

**Figure 28: 3-month stable return to work by employee and management support of each other**



Workers who strongly agreed that workers and managers were generally supportive of each other were more likely to have been back at work for three months than those who strongly disagreed (85% and 64%, respectively).

**Figure 29: 3-month stable return to work by supervisor commitment to workplace safety**



Workers who strongly agreed that their supervisor was committed to workplace safety were more likely to have been back at work for three months than those who disagreed (85% and 65%, respectively).

# Appendices

## Appendix A - Methodology

### Measures

#### Return to work outcome measures

Two outcome measures are included in this report:

- Returned to work at the time of the Survey: the proportion of injured employees who were working at the time of the survey. 77% of injured employees surveyed were at work at the time of the Survey.
- Returned to work for three months: the proportion of injured employees who were working (full-time or part-time) at the time of the survey and had been back at work for at least three consecutive months (13 weeks) on a regular basis. 61% of injured employees surveyed had returned to work for three months.

#### Survey items used in analysis: Employer and workplace factors

- Workplace safety attitudes and work satisfaction: 'a) The work you were doing was important to you; b) The work you were doing was valued by others at work; c) Employees and management were generally supportive of each other; d) Your immediate supervisor or manager was committed to workplace safety; e) The people you worked with were committed to workplace safety; f) All things considered you were satisfied with your job.' Measured on a 5 point likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.
- Employer/ organisation communication: 'b) There seemed to be good communication between the various people and organisations I dealt with.' Measured on a 5 point likert scale from 1 – strongly agree to 5 – strongly disagree.
- Employer support at the time of injury: 'a) Your employer did what they could to support you; b) Your employer provided enough information on both your rights and responsibilities; c) Your employer made an effort to find suitable employment for you; d) Your employer helped you with your recovery; e) Your employer treated you fairly during the claims process; f) Your employer treated you fairly after the claims process.' Measured on a 5 point scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.
- Continuing employer support: 'Thinking of your employer at the time of your workplace injury or illness, to what extent do you think your employer is still supporting you in relation to any needs you may have regarding your injury or illness?' Measured on a 4 point categorical scale from 1 – to a great extent to 4 – not at all.
- Work contact: 'Did your supervisor or someone else from work contact you about recovering from your workplace injury or illness?' Measured by dichotomous yes/ no response.
- Who contacted the injured worker?: '1. General Manager / Boss / Owner; 2. Supervisor/ Team Leader; 3. Team Member(s); 4. Human Resources; 6. Rehabilitation Provider; 7. Other (Specify).' Multiple responses accepted.
- Length of time contact was made after injury?: 'How many days after your workplace injury / illness occurred were you FIRST contacted?' Measured on a categorical scale from 1 – 0-3 days to 4 – 16 or more days.
- Injury discussed with employer: 'Did you discuss your illness or injury with your employer before you submitted a workers' compensation claim?' Measured by dichotomous yes/ no response with the added option of 'no opportunity to discuss this'.
- Assistance with managing injury before claim lodgement: 'Did your employer help you manage your injury or illness before you lodged your workers' compensation claim?' Measured by dichotomous yes/ no response.
- Discouragement of claim lodgement by employer: 'Did you feel your employer discouraged you from putting in a claim?' Measured by dichotomous yes/ no response.
- Concerns regarding the submission of a workers' compensation claim: 'a) You thought you would be treated differently by people at work; b) You felt your supervisor thought you were exaggerating or faking your injury; c) You were concerned that you would be fired if you submitted a claim.' Measured on a 5 point likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.

- Difference of opinion with employer/ claim organisation: 'While you were putting in your workers compensation claim or during the period after your claim was accepted, did you ever have a difference of opinion with either your employer or the organisation who you dealt with for your claim?' Measured by dichotomous yes/ no response.
- Assistance required resolving difference of opinion with employer/ claim organisation: 'Did you need assistance to resolve this dispute?' Measured by dichotomous yes/ no response.
- Personal well-being: 'a) The work you are doing is important to you; b) The work you are doing satisfies you; c) You have a say in how you organise your work; d) Your opinions and suggestions are considered at work; e) The work you are doing is valued by others at work; f) You enjoy work'. Measured on a 5 point likert scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree.
- Functional capacity: 'a) The amount of work you are currently doing is reasonable; b) Given your recovery, your skills and abilities are used appropriately; c) Given your circumstances, the hours you are working are about right for you; d) You are physically capable of doing your job; e) You feel emotionally capable of doing your job.' Measured on a 5 point likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.
- Work environment: 'a) You feel you are part of a community at work; b) Employees and management are generally supportive of each other; c) Your immediate supervisor or manager is committed to workplace safety; d) The other people you work with are committed to workplace safety.' Measured on a 5 point likert scale from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree.

### Analytical approach

This investigation involved examining the proportions of workers who achieved positive return to work outcomes for each of the survey questions outlined in the Measures section. Statistical significance testing was undertaken where possible to identify whether these factors had a significant effect on the likelihood of achieving positive return to work outcomes. Significance testing used was Chi Square analysis. For survey items with scales of agreement/ disagreement significance testing was not conducted due to violation of the assumption of normality. Alternatively, proportions of workers who did and did not return to work for each level of agreement was examined. Survey items with scales of agreement/ disagreement have had the 'neither/ nor' option removed from analysis due to small numbers of respondents and for ease of interpretation.

## References

MacEachen, E., Clarke, J., Franche, R-L. & Irvin, E. (2006). Systematic review of the qualitative literature on return to work after injury. *Scandinavian Journal of Work Environment Health*, 32(4), pp 257-269.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians, Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Position Statement on Helping People to Return to Work: Using evidence for better outcomes, Sydney 2010.