



Update to the Methodology for the Measurement Framework

Based on feedback from the Mid-term review of the *National Return to Work Strategy 2020–2030*

Also see the **Methodology for the Measurement Framework** which outlines the technical details and rationale for the indicators chosen to measure the success of the *National Return to Work Strategy 2020–2030*

Introduction

The [Measurement Framework](#) was published in June 2020 and outlines how Safe Work Australia will measure the success of the [National Return to Work Strategy 2020–2030](#) (the Strategy).

Measuring progress towards achieving the Strategy’s strategic outcomes provides signposts throughout its 10-year life and enables the efficient and effective targeting of resources to both monitor and improve return to work outcomes, including by informing national action under the Strategy.

The [Methodology for the Measurement Framework](#) was also published in June 2020 and provides the rationale and technical details underpinning the Measurement Framework.

This document provides an update to the methodology by describing refinements that have been made to enhance its usefulness to stakeholders. These changes have been made based on feedback from the Mid-term review of the National Return to Work Strategy 2020–2030.

These changes will be first implemented when reporting the Year 6 Key Outcomes and Scorecard report, which is expected to be published in the first half of 2026.

With one exception¹, all the indicators from the current Measurement Framework will be retained and will still serve as the primary measures of the Strategy’s success. The rationale for each of the original indicators is described in the [Methodology for the Measurement Framework](#). The appendix to this paper presents a number of supplementary indicators for inclusion in the Measurement Framework, and the rationale for their inclusion.

The changes described in this document provide more detail to this framework, as well as provide more commentary on the results and a summary of what they indicate.

Feedback from the Mid-term review

In 2024, the Agency conducted a mid-term review of the Strategy, including a review of the Measurement Framework. Stakeholders made several recommendations and suggestions for how the Measurement Framework could potentially be improved. These included:

- Due to limitations with the data currently available, stakeholders felt current progress reporting may not have represented the Strategy’s impact in its first five years. Stakeholders suggested considering diversifying data sources and incorporating supporting or partial indicators to help improve the currency of progress reporting.
- Stakeholders also highlighted that there may be evidence gaps in the existing Measurement Framework, particularly relating to the increasing proportion of psychological injury claims.

¹ Indicator d was removed from the survey during the 2022 redesign process. This indicator will not be updated with new data in future iterations of the scorecard.

- Stakeholders suggested considering how to better communicate the effectiveness of the Strategy in influencing, informing and guiding action, as well as the impact of those activities toward achieving the longer-term strategic outcomes.
- Stakeholders felt the scorecard could provide a clearer and simpler narrative.

Changes made to the Measurement Framework

Based on the findings of the mid-term review, changes to the Measurement Framework have been listed below.

Employer-based measures

Four new employer-based indicators have been added into the scorecard. All four will be based on data from the employer module of the 2024-25 National Return to Work Survey. These indicators will strengthen assessment against *Strategic Outcome 3: Increase in employers preparing for, effectively responding to and managing work-related injury and illness in the workplace*. Currently, indicators of this outcome are based on the workers' perception of their employer. Data from the employer module of the National Return To Work Survey will provide perspectives directly from employers while retaining the worker-based measures. The new indicators are shown in the table below.

Table 1: Employer-based complementary measures

Current worker-based indicator	Complementary employer-based indicator
k. Employer response The percentage of <u>workers</u> agreeing that their employer supported them following their injury.	The percentage of <u>employers</u> who said they supported their injured worker following their injury
l. Employer contact The percentage of <u>workers</u> contacted by their employers since their work-related injury or illness.	The percentage of <u>employers</u> who contacted the injured worker since their work-related injury or illness.
m. Return to work planning The percentage of <u>workers</u> who reported that they had a return-to-work plan.	The percentage of <u>employers</u> whose worker had a return-to-work plan.
n. Workplace accommodations The proportion of <u>workers</u> who had returned to work and reported that they returned with modified hours or modified duties.	The proportion of <u>employers</u> whose injured worker had returned to work with modified hours or modified duties.

Reporting by mental health and non-mental health injuries for selected measures

Results for selected indicators (e, f and j) will be reported by mental health and non-mental health injuries. This disaggregation was mentioned by stakeholders as one of interest, due to the rising number of mental health claims. This reporting will be incorporated into the discussion of the results, rather than in the Scorecard itself.

Summary table

This will include a table which summarises performance for each strategic outcome in a single sentence, based on the overall direction of the measures. This will provide an at-a-glance indication of progress towards the Strategy's vision of minimising the impact of work-related injury and illness and enabling workers to have a timely, safe and durable return to work, according to the most recent data.

Additional commentary

Each Scorecard report will include additional commentary on the results structured by the 3 strategic outcomes:

- **Strategic Outcome 1:** Increase in workers staying in or returning to good work following a work-related injury or illness.
- **Strategic Outcome 2:** Increase in positive return to work experiences for workers with a work-related injury or illness.
- **Strategic Outcome 3:** Increase in employers preparing for, effectively responding to and managing work-related injury and illness in the workplace.

Scorecard commentary will also include references to supplementary indicators (see below) and consider the actions of the Agency and jurisdictions in striving towards the vision of the Strategy.

Supplementary indicators

The Scorecard will be accompanied by a table of supplementary indicators from data sources such as the ABS Work-related Injuries Survey and the ABS Health Survey, as well as further results from the National Return to Work Survey. These indicators have been chosen because they support or complement current measures in the Scorecard. Some measure other factors which influence return to work, such as those identified in Monash University's [Barriers and Enablers to Return to Work: Literature review](#), which was funded by Safe Work Australia.

Results from these indicators will be incorporated into discussion of the Scorecard results to provide context and supporting information.

See the Appendix on the following page for the table of supplementary indicators.

Appendix: Supplementary indicators

Table 2. Supplementary indicators

Measure and Source	Source	Rationale
Proportion of injured or ill workers who had time off work for more than 10 days	ABS Work related injuries survey	<p>This is an alternative measure of return to work. This statistic can be looked at for those who received workers' compensation, and those who didn't. Data points are available for 2013-14, 2017-18 and 2021-22.</p> <p>As with return-to-work rates, we want to see this indicator decrease over time.</p>
Proportion of people who didn't take time off work, but say they needed to.	ACTU Work Shouldn't Hurt survey	<p>The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) says good work is characterised by safe and healthy work practices. This indicator shows the proportion of people who say they need to take time off work, but didn't, which is not a safe and healthy work practice. Data points are available, split by secure and insecure workers.</p> <p>We want to see this decrease over time.</p>
Disability-Adjusted Life Years lost	AIHW Burden of disease study	<p>Contextual information on health/life impact of work-related injuries and illnesses.</p> <p>Expressed as a rate, we want to see this decrease over time.</p>
Productivity loss due to work-related injuries and illnesses	Safer, healthier, wealthier: The economic value of reducing work-related injuries and illnesses (SWA)	Shows the economic cost of injury and illnesses, therefore highlighting the importance of getting people returning to good work sooner. This is based on a one-off study and not something that can be tracked over time currently.
Proportion of workers who believed returning to work either had a positive effect or no effect on their recovery (i.e. didn't hinder their recovery)	National Return to Work Survey (SWA)	Indicates whether injured workers are staying in 'good' work. Good work is characterised by safe and healthy work practices, and should not hinder a person's recovery. Data points are available for 2018 and 2021.
Proportion of workers who self-rate their health as good to excellent.	ABS National Health Survey	Indicates the health of the population of employed people – with health issues not necessarily being related to work. This provides context for indicator c) General health.

Proportion of people with a chronic condition	ABS National Health Survey	Indicates the health of the general population, to provide context for indicator c) General health.
Proportion of claimants aged 55 years and over	National dataset for compensation-based statistics (SWA)	Older workers have worse RTW outcomes than younger workers. Monitoring the age distribution of injured workers over time provides an indication of whether declining RTW rates may be influenced by an ageing population of injured workers.
Proportion of injured workers who were concerned they'd be fired if they made a claim	National Return to Work Survey (SWA)	Evidence shows that injured workers who are concerned about making a claim have worse RTW outcomes. Concern about making a claim is directly measured in the NRTW Survey.
Job satisfaction for those who spent any time away from work on workers' compensation in the last 12 months.	Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey	An indicator of 'good' work for people who have had a workers' compensation claim. We want to see this increase over time.
Jurisdiction-based injured worker surveys - customer satisfaction	Jurisdictional WHS regulator annual reports	Supporting information for Strategic Outcome 2, 'Increase in positive return to work experiences'. Good customer service from the insurers is part of having a positive experience. We want to see increases in customer satisfaction over time.
Proportion of workers reporting that they experienced pain which interferes with normal work	ABS National Health Survey	Pain interfering with normal work may indicate that the work is interfering with their injury or illness, and may be exacerbating it or hinder recovery. We want to see this decrease over time.
Disputation rate (national average)	Comparative performance monitoring report (SWA)	<p>Evidence shows that negative interaction with an insurer has a negative impact on RTW outcomes. This could be measured through disputation rates.</p> <p>A dispute is an appeal to a formal mechanism, such as a review officer, conciliation or mediation service, against an insurer's decision or decisions relating to compensation. The rate of disputes is reported in the Comparative Performance Monitoring Report, produced by Safe Work Australia.</p> <p>The rate of disputes also supports measure g) Perceived fairness.</p>
Proportion of injured workers who had a difference of opinion with their claims organisation.	National Return to Work Survey (SWA)	Evidence shows that negative interaction with an insurer has a negative impact on RTW outcomes. This could be measured through the proportion of workers who had a difference of opinion with their claims organisation.

Proportion of injured workers who agreed that greater understanding / communication from their workplace could have assisted them in their return to work.

National Return to Work Survey (SWA)

There is strong evidence that low workplace / co-worker support has a negative impact on RTW outcomes. 2025 will be the first data point for this indicator.

Proportion of claimants with a RTW coordinator, and whether interactions were stressful.

National Return to Work Survey (SWA)

Evidence shows that RTW is better when the process is planned and coordinated.