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Return to Work Survey

2013/14 Summary Research Report (Australia and New Zealand)

November 2014

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Foreword

In 2012 a working group consisting of representatives of Australian and New Zealand workers' compensation authorities, unions and employer groups developed a survey instrument and sampling methodology to be used to measure return to work outcomes of injured workers receiving workers' compensation and to better understand the experience of those injured workers and the factors that may have an effect on their return to work. In June 2012 Safe Work Australia's Strategic Issues Group for Workers' Compensation agreed to the survey instrument and methodology developed by the working group and the Social Research Centre was contracted to run the survey. This is the second year of the revised Return to Work Survey.

The current survey replaces the Return to Work Monitor previously published by the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities. The New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and all Australian jurisdictions except for the Australian Capital Territory took part in the survey in 2014 including, for the first time since 2012, the Northern Territory. As well as a new survey instrument, the survey differs from the Return to Work Monitor by using a broader population from which the sample was drawn. The Return to Work Monitor surveyed injured workers of premium payers who had 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. The new survey drew a sample from the population of injured workers who:

- had at least one day away from work
- submitted a claim in the two years prior to the interview period
- had or did not have payment-related activity within 6 months prior to the sample being drawn, and
- worked in either premium paying (including own businesses) or self-insured organisations (note New Zealand does not have self-insured organisations).

In order to maintain the time series for two key measures reported in the Return to Work Monitor, a group with 10 or more days off and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey was purposefully sampled from within the broader population. This group is referred to as the Historic Cohort. The entire research sample is referred to as the Balance Cohort.

This Headline Measures Report includes only the two key measures (calculated using the Historic Cohort) previously reported in the Return to Work Monitor, the:

- *Returned to Work Rate* equivalent to the Return to Work Monitor's *Return to Work Rate,* and
- *Current Return to Work Rate* equivalent to the Return to Work Monitor's *Durable Return to Work Rate*.

Safe Work Australia will also publish a series of papers examining the relationship between a range of factors and return to work outcomes using the full sample.

Safe Work Australia

November 2014

Executive summary

Scheme differences and reading this report

This report summarises the key findings of the 2013/14 Return to Work Survey with historical comparisons where appropriate.

There are many differences in workers' compensation legislation across Australia and in New Zealand. For a comprehensive comparison please refer to the Safe Work Australia publication – *Comparison of workers compensation arrangements in Australia and New Zealand*[1]. For an outline of the key differences to be aware of when reading this current report and an outline of the time series comparisons refer to page 6.

Summary profile of respondents

Not being able to work has an impact on injured workers' earning ability and reliance on compensation as well as other leave entitlements. Ten per cent of injured workers in Australia and 14% in New Zealand were currently receiving workers' compensation to replace their lost income and around a quarter said that they had to take additional paid or unpaid leave.

In terms of general health, 18% of injured workers in Australia and 12% in New Zealand rated their general health to be excellent at the time of the survey while 15% in Australia and 23% in New Zealand considered it poor or fair. A notably higher proportion of injured workers in New Zealand (44%) rated their recovery as being almost full in comparison to Australia (32%). Despite these differences, future recovery expectations of those who believe that they will continue recovering were similar – 79% of Australian and 75% of New Zealand injured workers believed they would fully or almost fully recover from their injury or illness.

Key return to work outcome results

Table 1 shows the key return to work outcome measures for Australia and New Zealand using the Historic Cohort and new measures using the full sample, that is, the Historic and Balance Cohorts.

The *Returned to Work Rate* is the proportion of injured workers (Historic Cohort) who had returned to work for any period of time at some stage since their first day off work. This measure is the equivalent of the previous 'RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor.

The *Current Return to Work Rate* is the proportion of injured workers (Historic Cohort) who were working at the time of the survey. This measure is the equivalent of the previous 'Durable RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor.

The *3-month Stable Return to Work Rate* is the proportion of injured workers (Historic Cohort) who were working (either part-time or full-time) at the time of the survey and had been back at work for at least 3 consecutive months (13 weeks) on a regular basis.

The *Returned to Work, Current Return to work and 3-month Stable Return to Work* ***Proportions*** use the full sample, that is, the Historic **and** Balance Cohorts.

[1] http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/workers-compensation/comparisons

Table 1: Key return to work outcome measures

	Australia (%)		New Zealand (%)	
	2013	2014	2013	2014
Historic Measures (Historic Cohort)				
Returned to Work Rate	86	87	85	88
Current Return to Work Rate	77	77	78	77
New 3-month Stable Return to Work	58	61	63	61
New Measures (Full Sample: Historic + Balance Cohort)				
Returned to Work Proportion	89	94	89	91
Current Return to Work Proportion	77	83	84	85
3-month Stable Return to Proportion	61	69	56	53

Comparisons by organisation type and country

In the workplace

In the context of this report organisational size has been defined as follows:

- Small (less than $1 million total remuneration)
- Medium (between $1 million and less than $20 million remuneration), and
- Large ($20 million or more remuneration).

Comparisons of premium payers by size and self-insurers have only been examined for Australia as New Zealand does not allow for self-insurers. High level comparisons are made between Australia and New Zealand.

Across different sizes of premium paying businesses, injured workers of small and medium businesses were generally most positive in terms of their perceived level of autonomy and the extent to which they felt consulted and appreciated. The key points to note are:

- A significantly greater proportion of injured workers from small (82%) businesses agreed that they have a say in how their work is organised in comparison to large (75%) organisations.
- Notably more injured workers of small (89%) businesses agreed that their opinions and suggestions are considered at work than large (80%) businesses.
- Significantly more injured workers from small (89%) businesses also agreed that "*Their opinions and suggestions are considered at work*" in comparison to those from medium (83%) or large (80%) organisations.

Returning to work

Across Australia around seven in ten injured workers felt physically ready to return to work when they did. Other key points to note are:

- Perceived emotional and physical readiness was marginally higher among injured workers from small premium paying businesses than those from large organisations (77%). Physical readiness, however, was lowest among those from small businesses.
- A greater proportion of injured workers from New Zealand (51%) believed that returning to work when they did helped their recovery in comparison to Australian injured workers (34%).
- Of those injured workers with a return to work plan, 35% in Australia rated this plan as being very helpful in comparison to 32% in New Zealand. Injured workers of large sized premium paying businesses were the least likely (32%) to rate their return to work plan as 'very helpful'.

- Respondents from small businesses (39%) were significantly less likely to report having a return to work plan; however they were also less likely to take additional time off (10%).
- Involvement in development of a return to work plan was significantly lower among those from self-insuring organisations (36%) compared to those from premium paying businesses (59%); they were also significantly less likely to rate plan as very helpful and more likely to need help to do what was in the plan.
- Agreement with statements about current work experiences, roles and responsibilities, and the workplace was generally higher among small organisations compared to those from medium or large organisations.

Workplace rehabilitation

Rehabilitation services are services that are provided in workers compensation schemes to support the return to work process. Rehabilitation services were reported as being received by about a third of workers of large organisations (36%), medium organisations (32%) and self-insured organisations (31%). In contrast, a quarter of workers of small organisations (25%) reported as having received rehabilitation services.

Fifty eight per cent of injured workers across Australia stated that they had had contact with their work about recovering from their injury or illness. Injured workers from self-insuring organisations (54%) were least likely to say someone had called while those from medium and large businesses (60%) were most likely to say this. Respondents generally said it was the supervisor or manager who made this call; and it was usually made within the first 3 days of the injury (75% across Australia).

Employer support

Injured workers from large premium paying businesses reported the highest levels of employer support in terms of assistance to manage their injury or illness before submitting a claim, treating them fairly before and after submitting a claim and ongoing needs regarding their injury or illness. The key points to note are:

- Injured workers of large businesses (63%) were more likely to report that their employer helped them to manage their injury or illness than small (54%) or medium organisations (57%).
- Almost eight in ten injured workers from Australia stated their employer treated them fairly before (78%) and after (78%) the claims process. Injured workers of self-insurers also reported high levels of agreement to most aspects of employer support although slightly lower than those from large premium paying organisations.
- A greater proportion of injured workers from self-insured businesses (43%) reported that their ongoing needs were not at all supported by their employer in comparison to large (40%) organisations. Injured workers from New Zealand (32%) were more likely to state that their employer was supporting them to a great extent than those in Australia (25%).
- Those from self-insuring businesses were less likely to report being contacted by their work (54%) compared to those from premium paying organisations (58%).

Experience of being on workers' compensation

A higher proportion of respondents from small and medium businesses agreed with the statements "the process was open and honest", "I believe the system treated me fairly" and "I feel the system helped me with my recovery." The feeling that the system was working to protect injured workers' best interests and that there was good communication across all parties recorded the lowest levels of agreement across all types of Australian organisations and lower than for New Zealand.

Experience in submitting a claim

Most respondents who discussed their injury or illness with their employer felt that their employer helped them to manage their condition before they lodged a claim. This finding was significantly more common within large organisations than small organisations.

Injured worker perceptions of the claim submission process in terms of being treated differently, not being believed by people they work with or being fired was similar across type of organisation and size of premium paying business. Agreement was highest among medium organisations and lowest among small organisations for most statements.

1. Research findings

1.1 Scheme differences and reading this report

This report summarises the key findings of the 2013/14 Return to Work Survey with historical comparisons where appropriate.

There are many differences in workers' compensation legislation across Australia and in New Zealand. For a comprehensive comparison please refer to the Safe Work Australia publication – *Comparison of workers compensation arrangements in Australia and New Zealand*[2].

For the purposes of reading this report there are three main differences to be aware of, these are:

- The Australian scheme encompasses work related injuries and illnesses only, while the New Zealand scheme covers workers for work and non-work related injuries. Direct comparisons there-fore of New Zealand data with Australia can only be made for work related injuries. Full New Zealand data will be reported separately.
- Reflecting the above difference, the Australian scheme refers to 'workers' compensation' while in New Zealand 'weekly compensation' is used to refer to work and non-work related injuries. For simplicity and ease of reading in this Australian report the term 'workers' compensation' has been used to refer to both.
- New Zealand does not have self-insured organisations as part of their scheme. Comparisons between premium paying and self-insured organisations are relevant for Australian data only.

While the Australian and New Zealand questionnaires were similar, some questions were asked in Australia only and these are clearly identified in text, charts and tables.

1.2 Sampling and time series comparisons

For Australian jurisdictions, the sample was selected in two cohorts: Historic Return to Work (Historic) and Balance. The Historic Cohort refers to injured workers of premium paying organisations who had 10 or more days compensated, with claims ranging from 7 to 8 months of age in large jurisdictions and 7 to 9 months of age in smaller jurisdictions. Large jurisdictions were Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia. Small jurisdictions were Comcare, Seacare, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory.

The Balance Cohort refers to injured workers of premium payers or self-insured organisations from a 2 year period (April 2013 to February 2014) with at least one day compensated.

For New Zealand, Historic and Balance Cohorts were selected to match the Australian definitions for large jurisdictions. However, unlike Australian jurisdictions claims for non-work injuries were permitted in the Balance Cohort and Maori were oversampled. For other ethnicities, stratification ensured a representative sample of numbers of days compensated within both the Historic and Balance Cohorts. The New Zealand scheme does not allow for self-insured organisations.

Further detail on methodology and time series comparisons can be found at Section 2 Methodology.

Significant differences have been specifically mentioned in text where they exist but otherwise should be regarded as non-significant.

[2] http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/workers-compensation/comparisons

1.3 Summary profile of respondents

1.3.1 Composition of final sample

Table 2 presents the number of completed interviews by country, jurisdiction (within Australia) and cohort. Throughout this report data presented for New Zealand reflects those who were injured at work only for comparisons with Australian data.

Table 2: Number of interviews by country, Australian jurisdiction and cohort

	Historic Cohort	Balance Cohort			Total
	(Premium Payers only)	Premium	Self-Insurers	Sub-total	
Australia	2397	1770	512	2282	4679
New South Wales (NSW)	451	256	117	373	824
Victoria (VIC)	403	376	50	426	829
Queensland (QLD)	456	345	30	375	831
South Australia (SA)	245	163	119	282	527
Western Australia (WA)	400	127	15	142	542
Tasmania (TAS)	225	241	16	257	482
Northern Territory (NT)	78	55	15	70	148
Comcare (COM)	125	100	150	250	375
Seacare (SEA)	14	107	0	107	121
New Zealand (NZ)	345	360	n/a	360	705
Work related injury	345	99	n/a	99	444
Non-work related injury	n/a	261	n/a	261	261

Table 3 provides a breakdown of completed interviews by size of premium paying organisation. The Northern Territory could not provide organisation size for any record and is excluded from subgroup analyses. Organisation size was provided by all other Australian jurisdictions, however, it could not be provided for all sample records. This means that not all records can be included where comparisons are made between small, medium and large premium paying businesses and the total number of interviews may be less than the total number of interviews achieved.

Organisational size was defined as:

- Small (less than $1 million total remuneration)
- Medium (between $1 million and less than $20 million remuneration), and
- Large ($20 million or more remuneration).

It should be noted that in the 2013 survey organisational size was defined using different remuneration bands and means the 2013 and 2014 results for organisation size are not comparable:

- Small (less than $10 million total remuneration)
- Medium (between $10 million and less than $20 million remuneration), and
- Large ($20 million or more remuneration).

Table 3: Number of interviews by size of premium paying business

	Small	Medium	Large	Total
Australia	1,066	1,500	1,677	4,243
New South Wales (NSW)	237	318	151	706
Victoria (VIC)	164	250	403	817
Queensland (QLD)	224	295	312	831
South Australia (SA)	134	237	149	520
Western Australia (WA)	133	173	236	542
Tasmania (TAS)	174	203	105	482
Comcare (COM)	0	4	220	224
Seacare (SEA)	0	20	101	121

Table 4 illustrates the unweighted demographic profile of the completed interviews with Australian injured workers and New Zealand claimants with a work related injury.

Table 4: Sample characteristics (unweighted data) (%)

	Australia	New Zealand
Base (n=)	*4679*	*444*
Gender (where provided)		
Male	65	77
Female	35	23
Age (where provided)		
18 to 30	18	18
31 to 45	30	33
46 to 60	41	36
60+	10	12
Cohort		
Historic	51	80
Balance	49	20
Claim Type		
Premium paying	89	100
Self-insured	11	-

1.3.2 General Work and Claim Status

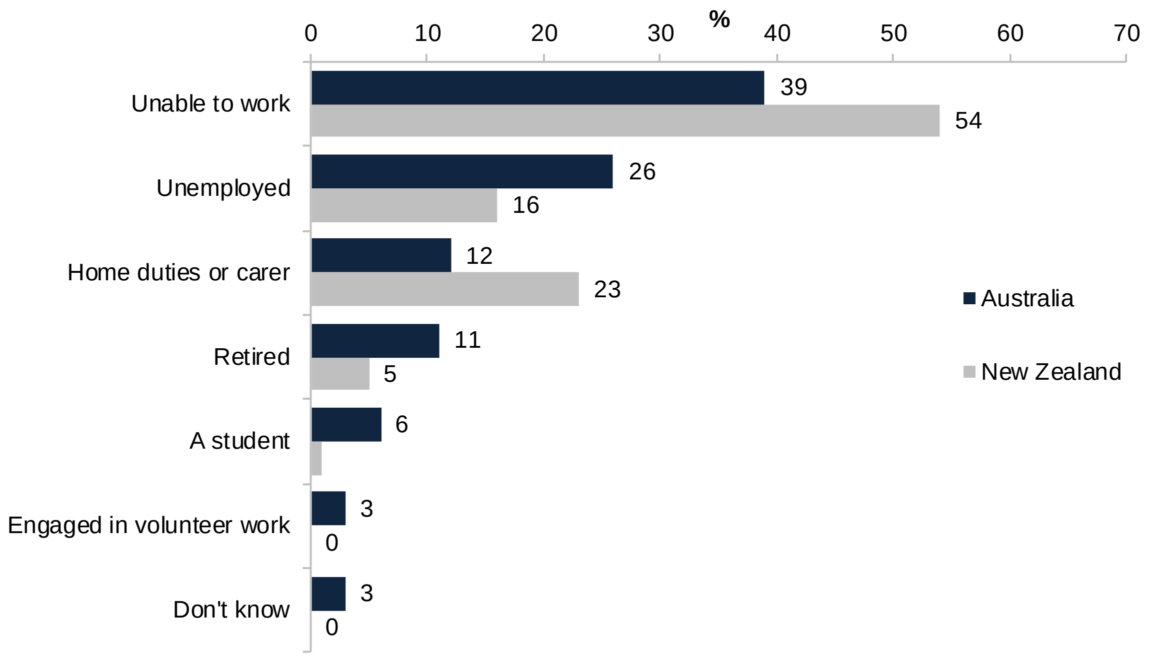
The research asked all respondents in Australia and New Zealand a series of questions about their general work and claim status. This section was designed to better understand the extent to which injured workers had returned to work, their employment status and if they had accessed workers' compensation.

Within Australia just over eight in ten (84%) injured workers reported that they were currently working in a paid job compared to 86% in New Zealand. It is important to note, however, that this is slightly different to the Current Return to Work Proportion which reports those who have returned to work and were working at the time of the interview.

All respondents, regardless of whether they reported that they were currently working in a paid job or not, were asked to confirm that they had returned to work since their injury or illness. Ninety four per cent of Australian injured workers and 91 percent of New Zealand injured workers confirmed that they had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness.

Of those injured workers in Australia and New Zealand not currently working, most indicated that this was due to being unable to work (Figure 1.1).

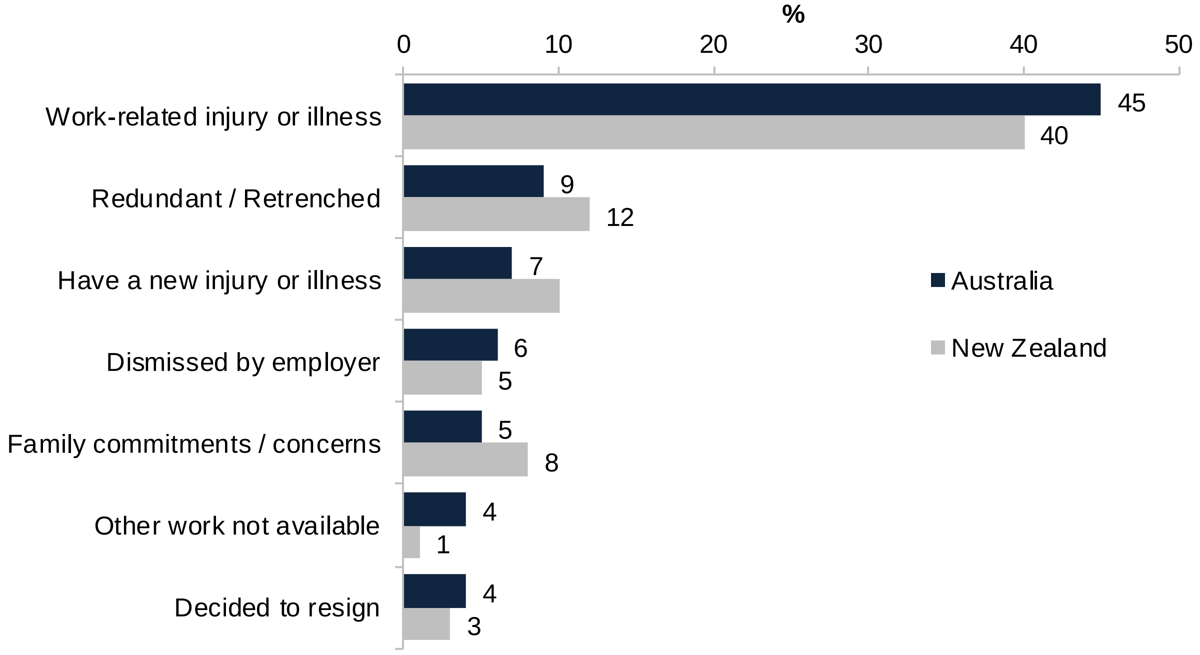
Figure 1.1: Main activity of those not currently working (%)



Base: Not currently working in a paid job - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=885; NZ=68).
C2. Which of these BEST describes your current MAIN activity? Are you...

Most injured workers in both Australia (45%) and New Zealand (40%) reported that their work related injury or illness was the main reason they were not currently working (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Main reason not currently working (top 7 categories) (%)

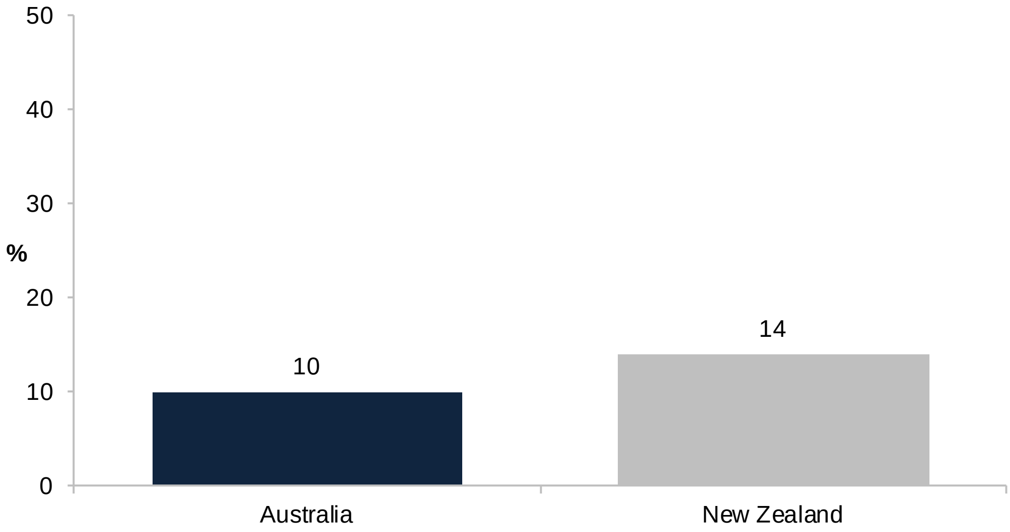


Base: Not currently working in a paid job including don't know and refused - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=929; NZ=69).

C8. What is the main reason you are not currently working?

Ten per cent of Australian and 14% of New Zealand injured workers reported that they were currently receiving workers' compensation payments to help replace lost income (Figure 1.3).

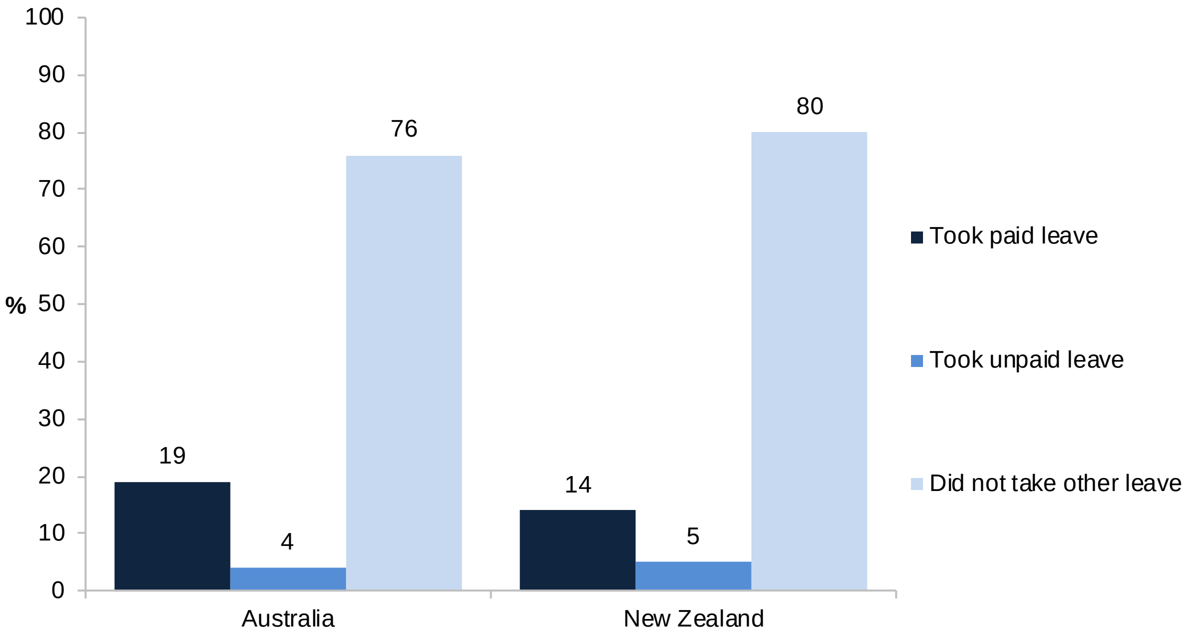
Figure 1.3: Receipt of workers' compensation to replace lost income (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in Comcare (AUS=4304; NZ=444).
C10. Are you currently getting any workers' compensation payments to replace lost income?

Similar proportions of injured workers in Australia (76%) and New Zealand (80%) stated that they had not taken paid or unpaid leave, in addition to receiving workers' compensation (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Leave taken in addition to workers' compensation (%)



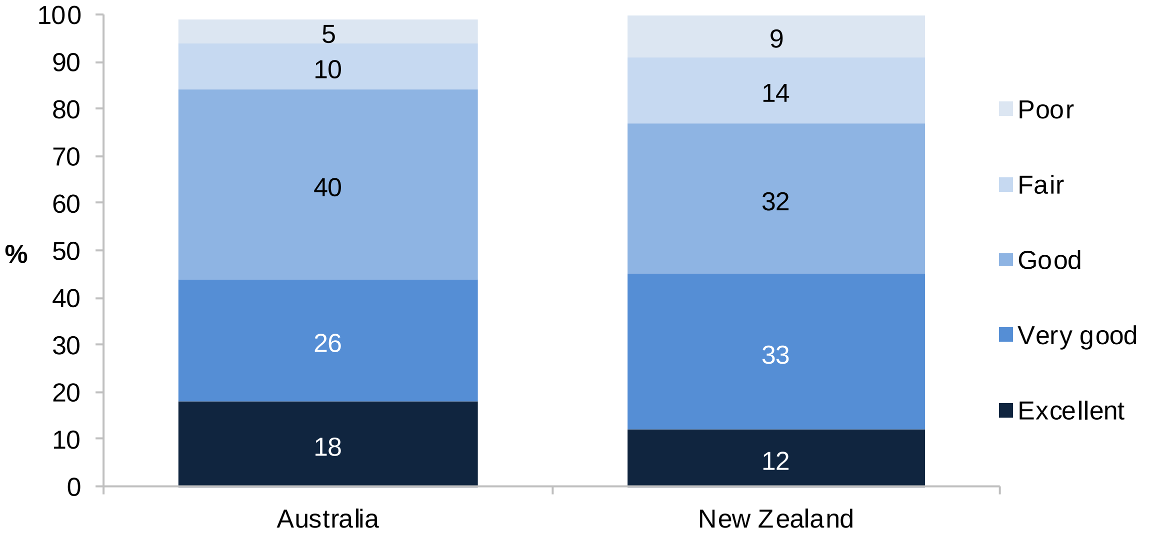
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in Comcare (AUS=4304; NZ=444).
C3. Can I just check, did you take any OTHER paid or unpaid leave in addition to workers' compensation? For example sick leave or annual leave.

1.3.3 General Health Status

All respondents in Australia and New Zealand were asked a series of questions as part of better understanding their general health status. This section addressed aspects such as respondents' perceptions of their overall level of health and recovery expectations.

Of those injured workers who felt able to rate their level of health at the time of the survey, 84% in Australia and 77% in New Zealand reported their health to be good or better (Figure 1.5).

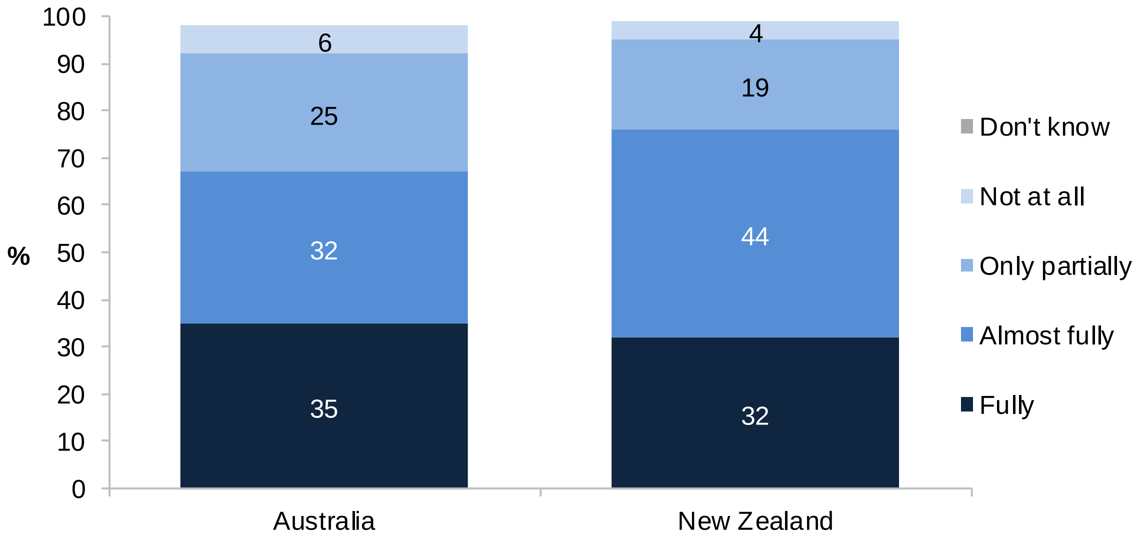
Figure 1.5: Current general health status (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4679; NZ=705). Don't know and refused excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4649; NZ=442).
B1. In general would you say your health NOW is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Figure 1.6 illustrates the extent to which respondents in Australia and New Zealand thought that they had recovered from their injury or illness. A significantly greater proportion of injured workers in New Zealand reported having recovered 'almost fully' (44%) than in Australia (32%).

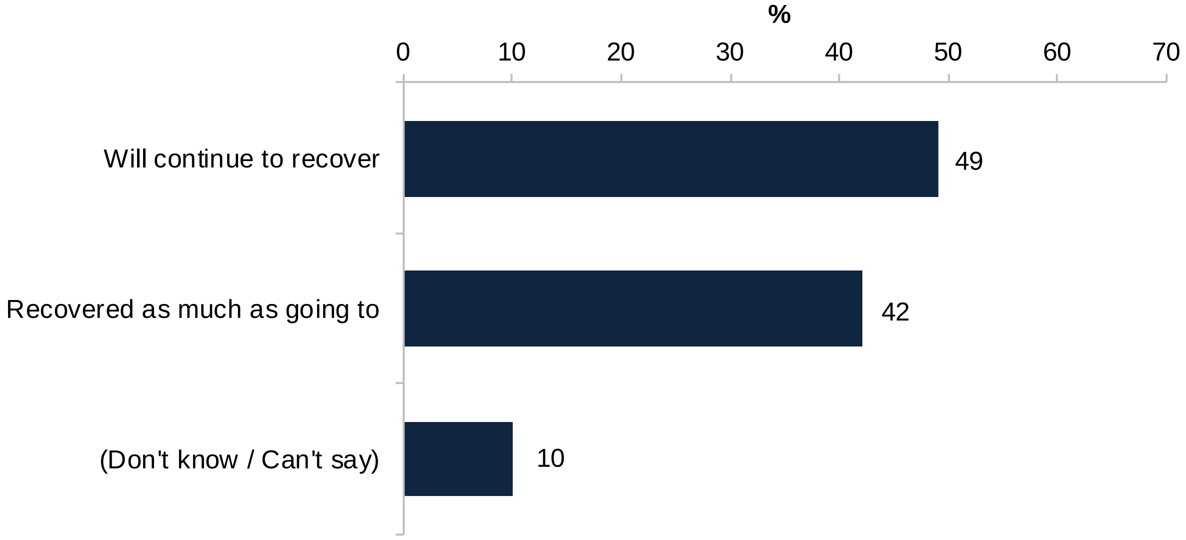
Figure 1.6: Extent of recovery from injury or illness (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4679; NZ=705).
B2. In your opinion, to what extent do you think you have recovered from your workplace injury or illness? Would you say…

The survey administered in Australia asked injured workers about their recovery expectations. Figure 1.7 shows that 49% of Australian injured workers expected that they would continue to recover from their workplace injury or illness, 42% felt they had recovered as much as they were going to. Ten per cent of injured workers reported that they did not know whether or not they had recovered as much as they were going to. This question was not asked in New Zealand.

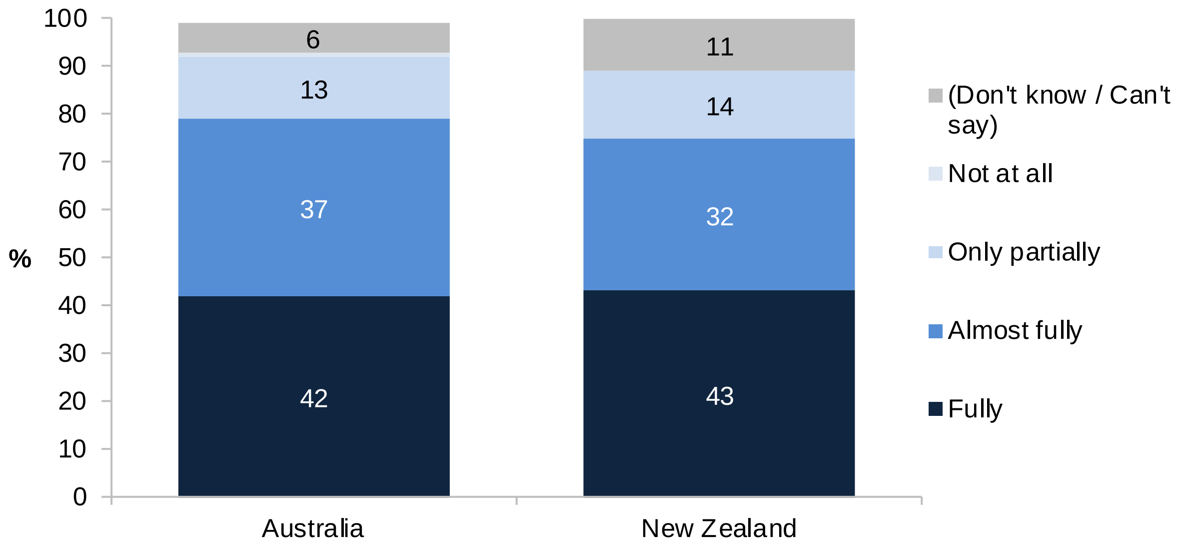
Figure 1.7: Extent to which further recovery is likely (%)



Base: Those not fully recovered - Historic and Balance Cohorts Cohort (AUS=3175).
B3. Do you think you have recovered as much as you are going to or do you think you will continue to recover?

Those who indicated that they had not fully recovered but would continue to recover were asked to what extent they expected to recover. Figure 1.8 shows that of those injured workers who had not yet fully recovered, 42% from Australia and 43% from New Zealand expected to fully recover from their injury. Almost one in ten injured workers in Australia (6%) and New Zealand (11%) were not able to predict the level of their future recovery.

Figure 1.8: Extent of final recovery (%)



Base: Those not fully recovered but will continue to recover - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1606; NZ=266).
B4. To what extent do you EXPECT to recover from your workplace injury or illness? Would you say…

1.4 Return to Work Outcomes (historical measures)

To enable a comparison with data collected through the Return to Work Monitor[3], a group of injured workers from premium paying organisations, with 10 or more days absence from work and who had submitted a claim 7 to 9 months prior to the survey was purposefully sampled. This section reports against the two historical return to work measures as reported in the Return to Work Monitor. The time series data has also been included.

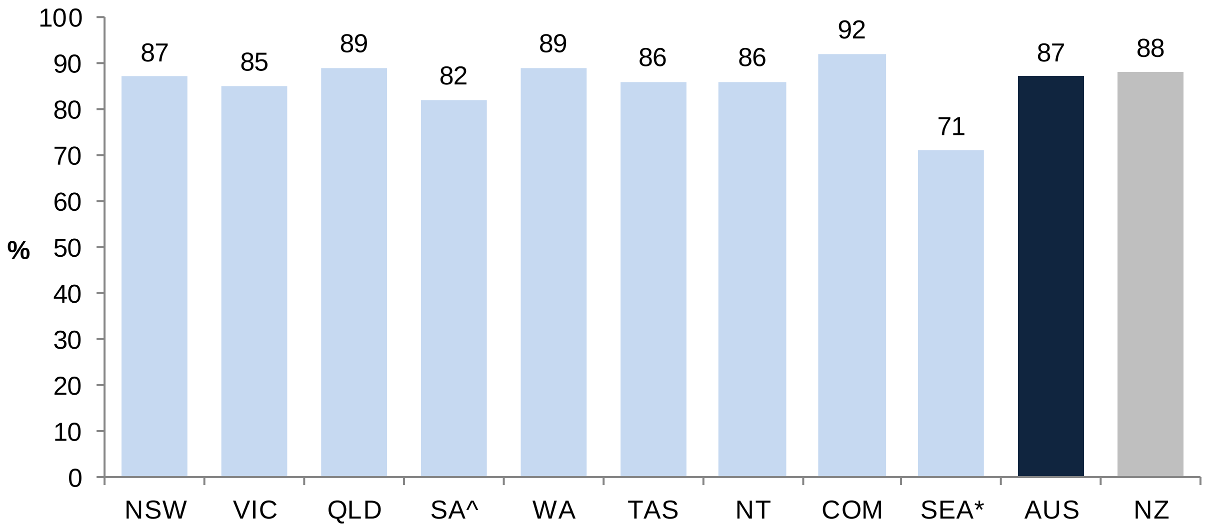
1.4.1 Returned to Work Rate

The Returned to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers who had returned to work for any period of time at some stage since their first day off work. This measure is the equivalent of the previous 'RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor.

Figure 1.9 shows that in 2013/14, 87% of Australian injured workers and 88% of New Zealand injured workers had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness.

The Returned to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.9: Returned to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction) (%)



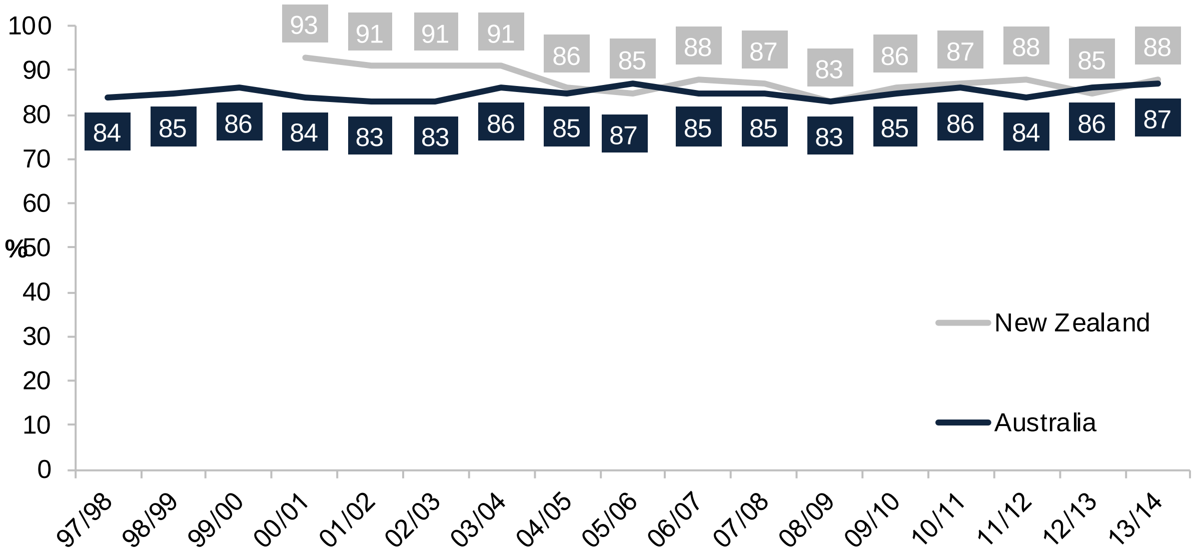
Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2397: NSW=451, VIC=403, QLD=456, SA=245, WA=400, TAS=225, NT=78, COM=125, SEA=15*. NZ=345).
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?
Note: Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.
^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).
* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

[3] http://www.hwca.org.au/reports_rtw.php

Figure 1.10 shows the national trends for Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2013/14 Returned to Work Rate is one percentage point higher than last year for Australia and three percentage points higher for New Zealand.

Figure 1.10: Returned to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)



Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey.

	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
AUS	3195	3142	2966	2687	2995	3014	3019	3017	2965	2689	3007	3028	2279	2397
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	600	608	600	600	601	600	452	345

C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

Note: Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor[4].

[4] http://www.hwca.org.au/reports_rtw.php

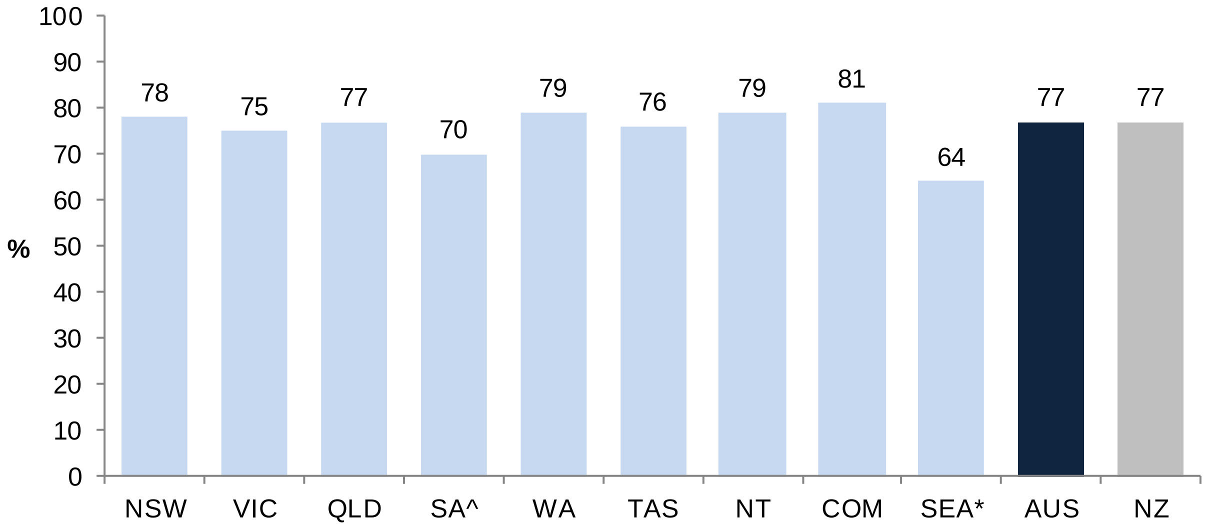
1.4.2 Current Return to Work Rate

The Current Return to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers who were working at the time of the survey and is the equivalent of the previous 'Durable RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor. This measure is based on Question C1 'Are you currently working in a paid job?' and Question C7 'Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?' It reports the proportion of injured workers who state 'yes' to both, comparable with the Return to Work Monitor.

Figure 1.11 shows that in 2013/14, 77% of both Australian and New Zealand injured workers were working in a paid job at the time of the interview.

The Current Return to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.11: Current Return to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

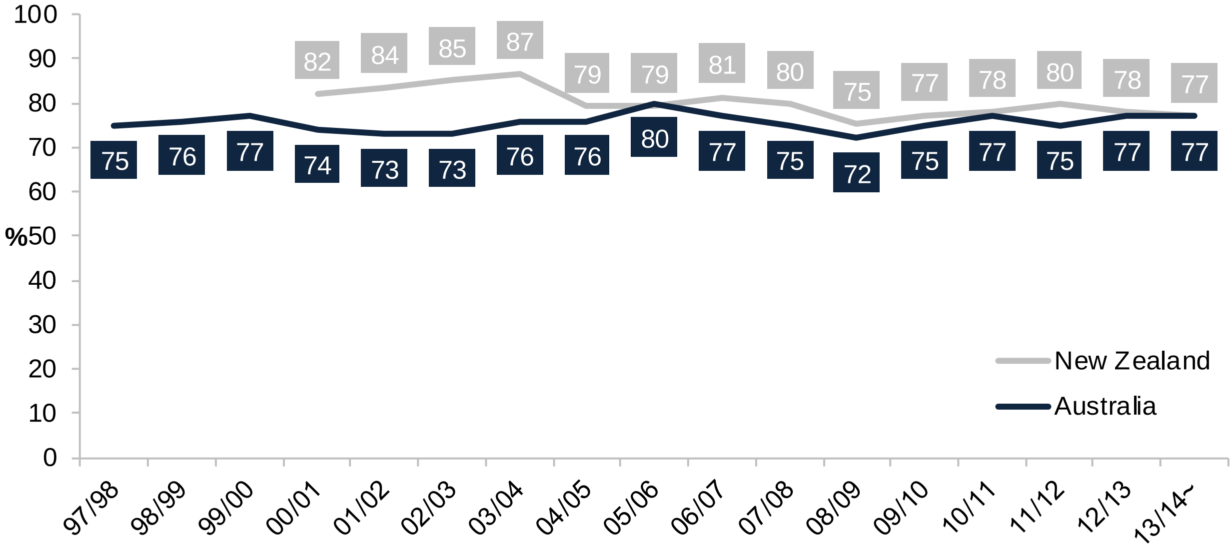


Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2397: NSW=451, VIC=403, QLD=456, SA=245, WA=400, TAS=225, NT=78, COM=125, SEA=14*. NZ=345).
C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?
Note: Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.
^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).
* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.12 shows the national trend for both Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2013/14 Current Return to Work Rate is unchanged Australia and one percentage point lower for New Zealand than last year.

Figure 1.12 Current Return to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)



Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey.

	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
AUS	3195	3142	2966	2687	2995	3014	3019	3017	2965	2689	3007	3028	2279	2397
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	600	608	600	600	601	600	452	345

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

Note: Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor[5].

[5] http://www.hwca.org.au/reports_rtw.php

1.5 New Return to Work Outcome Measure (new measure using Historic Cohort)

The Return to Work Survey represents a change in the data collection vehicle and sampling population. This change provides an opportunity to explore new measures.

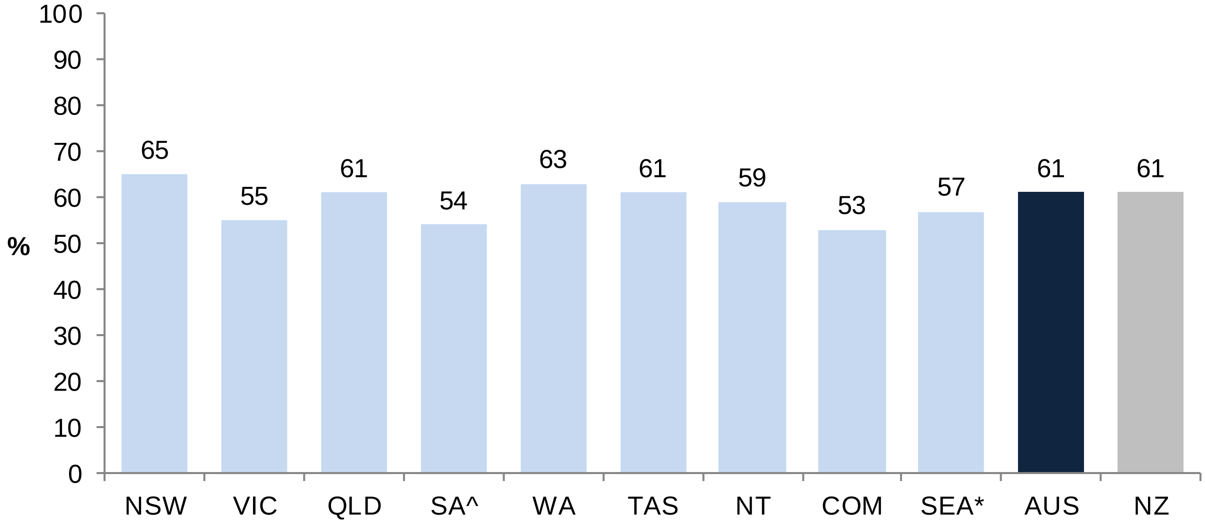
1.5.1 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate (Historic Cohort)

This new measure was developed by the Safe Work Australia Return to Work Temporary Advisory Group (TAG), and agreed to by the Strategic Issues Group (SIG) – Workers' Compensation at their July 2012 meeting. It is defined as the proportion of injured workers who were working (either part-time or full-time) at the time of the survey and had been back at work for at least 3 consecutive months (13 weeks) on a regular basis.

Figure 1.13 shows that 61% of both Australian and New Zealand injured workers had returned to work and been back at work for at least 3 consecutive months at the time of the interview.

The 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.13: 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)



Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2397: NSW=451, VIC=403, QLD=456, SA=245, WA=400, TAS=225, NT=78, COM=125, SEA=14*. NZ=345).
C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?
H30. So, how long have you been back at work (for since your last additional time off?
Note: Full sample weighted separately to individual jurisdiction population; within jurisdiction cohort, further post-stratified weighting by claim type, age of claim and days compensated was conducted to form an aggregate weight (RIM weighting).
^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).
* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.14 shows the national trend for both Australia and New Zealand since 2012/13.

The 2013/14 Current Return to Work Rate is three percentage points higher in Australia and two percentage points lower for New Zealand than last year.

Figure 1.14: 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

Base:	Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2397, NZ=345).
C1.	Are you currently working in a paid job?
H30.	So, how long have you been back at work (for since your last additional time off?
Note:	Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor[6].

[6] http://www.hwca.org.au/reports_rtw.php

1.6 Return to Work Outcomes (new measures using full sample)

In 2012/13 the National Return to Work Survey expanded the population of injured workers from which the sample was drawn. The new 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 6 months prior to the sample being drawn, and
- who worked in either premium paying or self-insured organisations (note New Zealand does not have self-insured organisations).

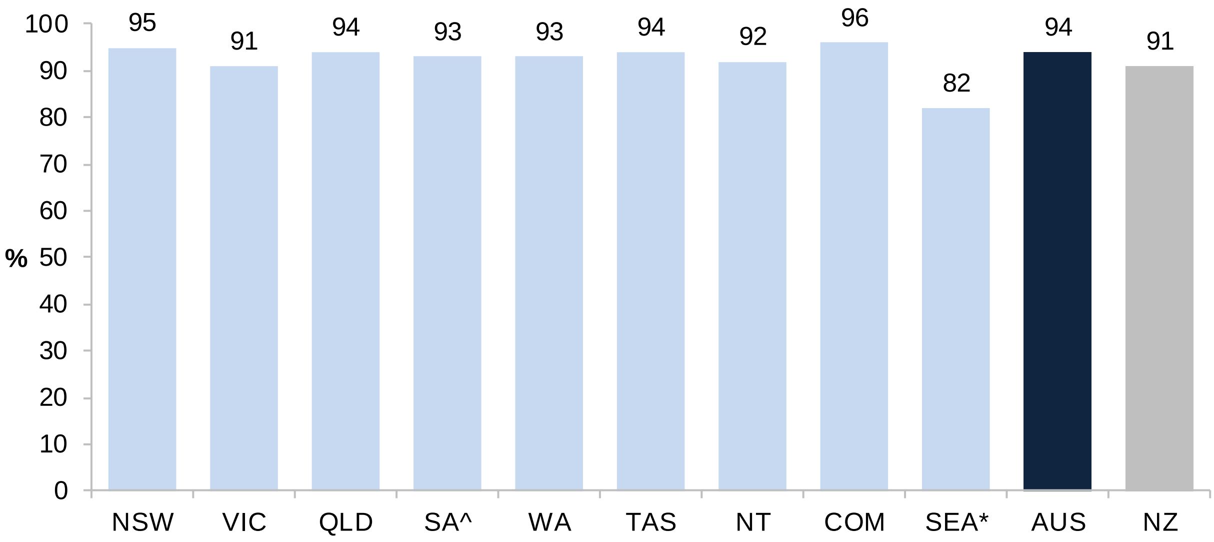
This provides an opportunity to examine return to work outcomes using the full sample and the following section of the report is based on all respondents from premium paying and self-insured organisations across the broader population.

1.6.1 Returned to Work Proportion

Figure 1.15 shows that 94% of Australian and 91% of New Zealand injured workers had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness. Reference to the full sample resulted in a seven percentage point increase for Australia and five percentage point increase for New Zealand in comparison to the Historic Cohort shown earlier in Figure 1.9.

The Returned to Work Proportion in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.15: Returned to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

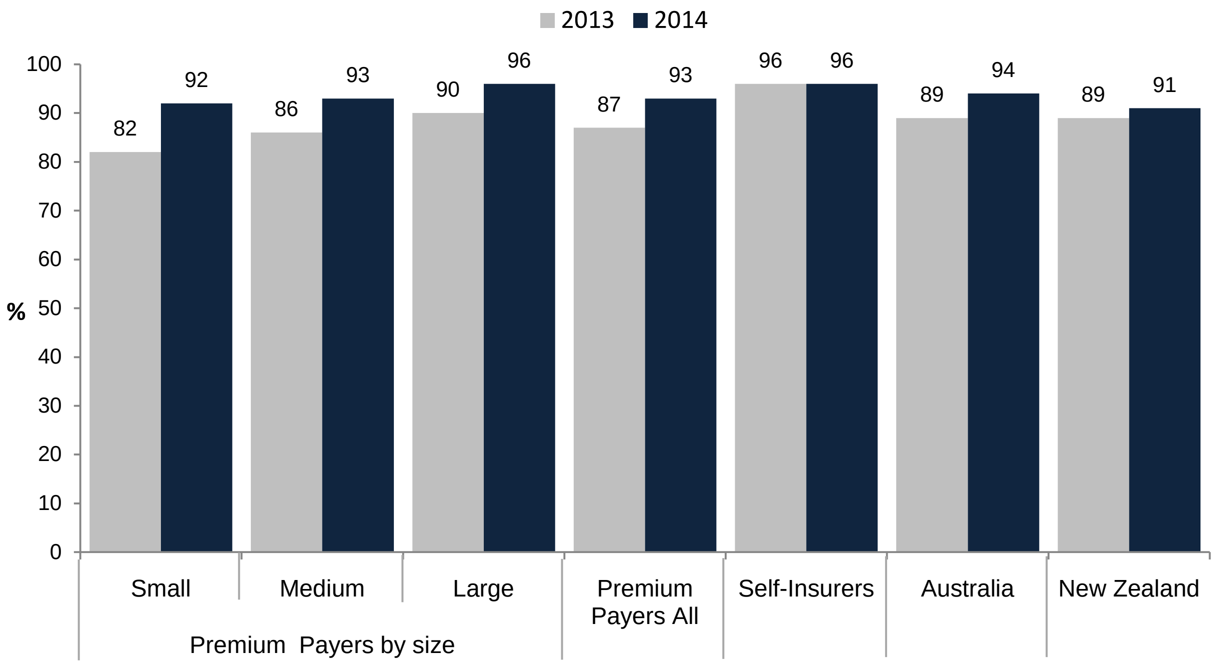


Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts. (AUS=4679: NSW=824, VIC=829, QLD=831, SA=527, WA=542, TAS=482, NT=148, COM=375, SEA=121*. NZ=705).
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?
Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).
* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.16 shows that 96% of injured workers from self-insured organisations were working in a paid job at the time of the interview. This proportion is three percentage points higher than for injured workers from premium paying organisations (93%) and two percentage points higher than the national rate for all Australian businesses (94%). The Australian proportion in 2014 increased significantly from 89% in 2013.

Within premium paying organisations, the Return to Work Proportion is highest among large (96%) businesses, this is significantly higher than medium (93%) and small organisations (92%). Small organisations experienced the greatest increase from 82% in 2013 to 92% in 2014.

Figure 1.16: Returned to Work by country and organisation type (%)



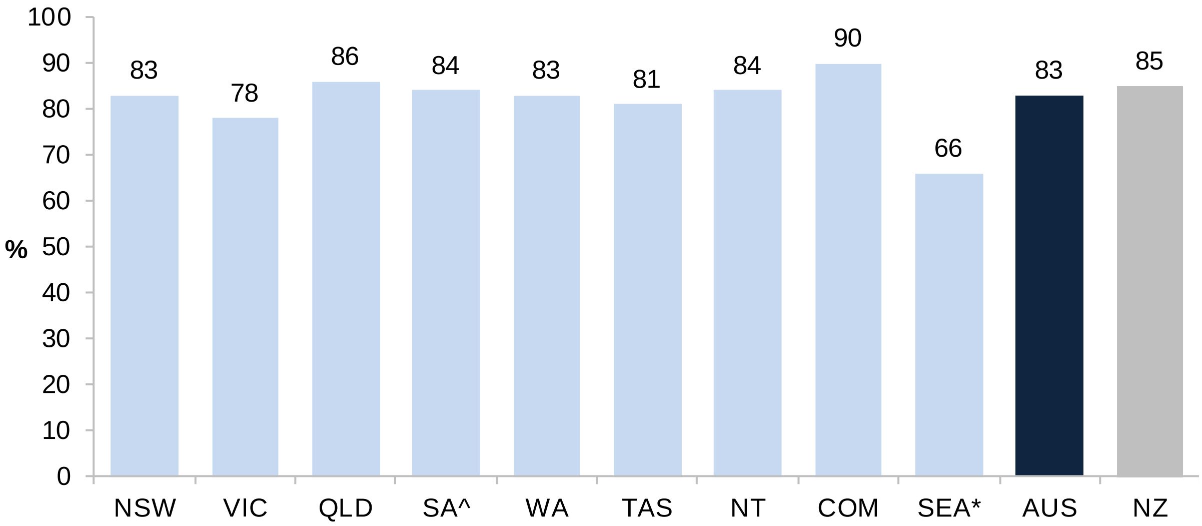
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4679; NZ=705).
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?
Note: The 2013 survey data were recalculated to meet the revised definition for organisational size (see section 1.3.1). As a result the 2013 data for 'premium payers by size' is different to the equivalent data published in the 2012-13 report.

1.6.2 Current Return to Work Proportion

Figure 1.17 shows that 83% of Australian and 85% of New Zealand injured workers from premium paying and self-insured organisations had returned to work and were working in a paid job at the time of the interview. Through reference to the full sample there was a six percentage point increase for Australia and an eight point increase for New Zealand in comparison to the Historic Cohort shown earlier in Figure 1.11. This measure is based on Question C1 'Are you currently working in a paid job?' and Question C7 'Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?' It reports the proportion of injured workers who state 'yes' to both, comparable with the Return to Work Monitor.

The Current Return to Work Proportion in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.17: Current Return to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

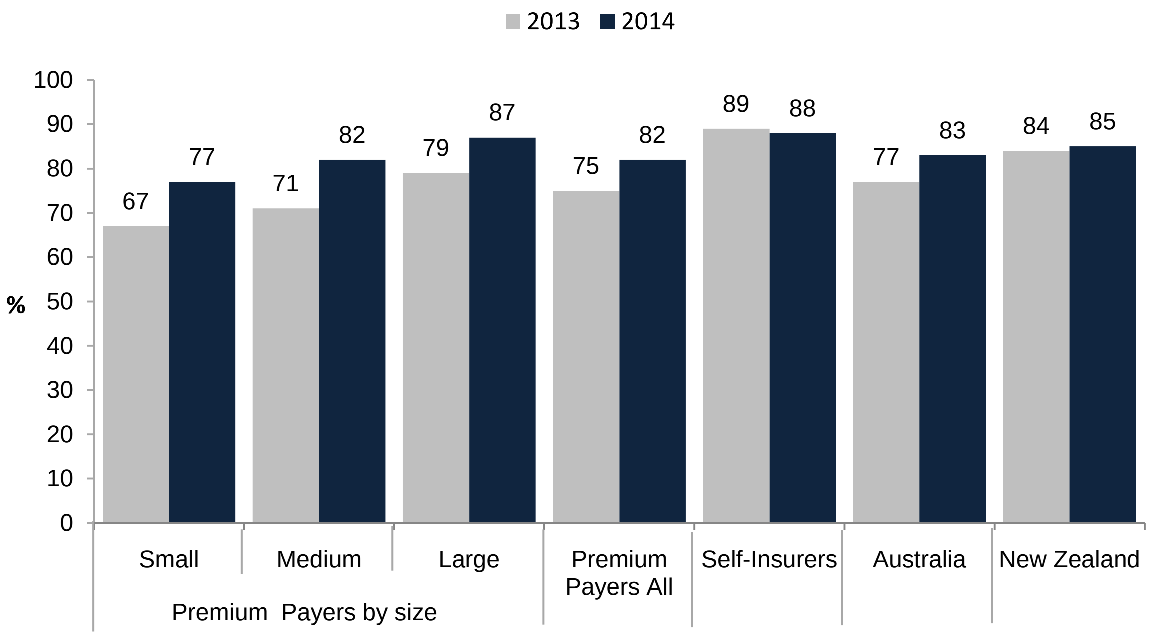


Base:	Historic and Balance Cohorts. (AUS=4679: NSW=824, VIC=829, QLD=831, SA=527, WA=542, TAS=482, NT=148, COM=375, SEA=121*. NZ=705).
C1.	Are you currently working in a paid job?
C7.	Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?
Note:	^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost). * Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.18 shows that 88% of injured workers from self-insured organisations had returned to work and were working in a paid job at the time of the interview. This proportion is 6 percentage points higher than the rate for premium paying organisations (82%) and 5 percentage points higher than the national rate for all Australian businesses (83%). The Australian proportion in 2014 increased significantly from 77% in 2013.

Within premium paying organisations, the Current Return to Work Proportion is highest among large (87%), this is significantly higher than medium (82%) and small businesses (77%). Small organisations saw the greatest increase since last year, increasing 10 percentage points.

Figure 1.18: Current Return to Work by country and organisation type (%)

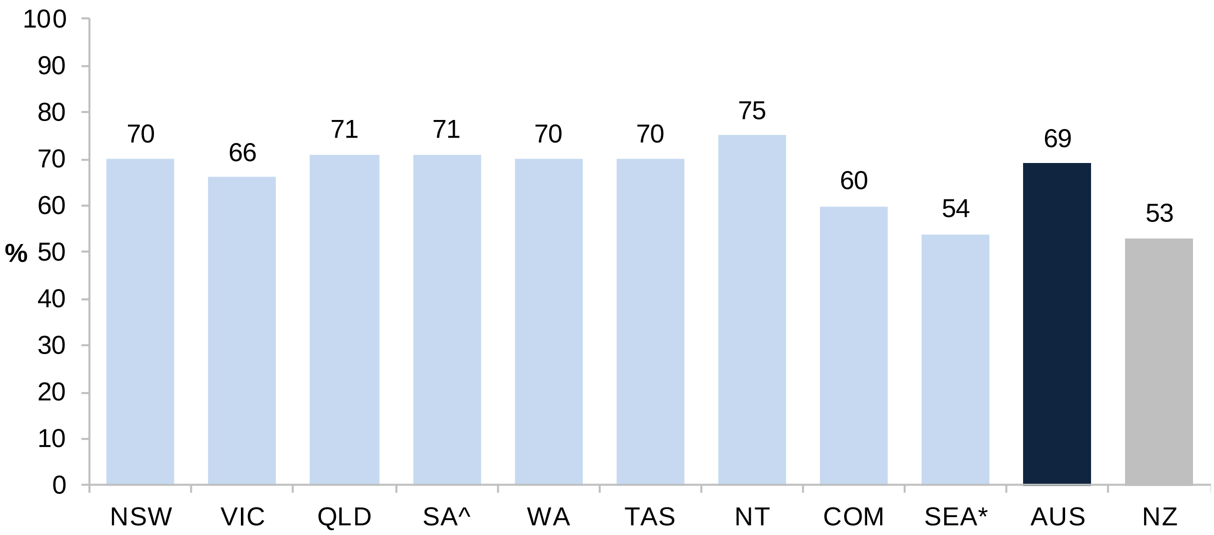


Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4679; NZ=705).
C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?
The 2013 survey data were recalculated to meet the revised definition for organisational size (see section 1.3.1). As a result the 2013 data for 'premium payers by size' is different to the equivalent data published in the 2012-13 report.

1.6.3 3-month Stable Return to Work Proportion

Figure 1.19 shows that 69% of Australian and 53% of New Zealand injured workers had returned to work and been back at work for at least 3 consecutive months at the time of the Interview. Reference to the full sample resulted in an eight percentage point increase for Australia and eight percentage point decrease for New Zealand in comparison to the Historic Cohort shown earlier in Figure 1.13.

Figure 1.19: 3-month Stable Return to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

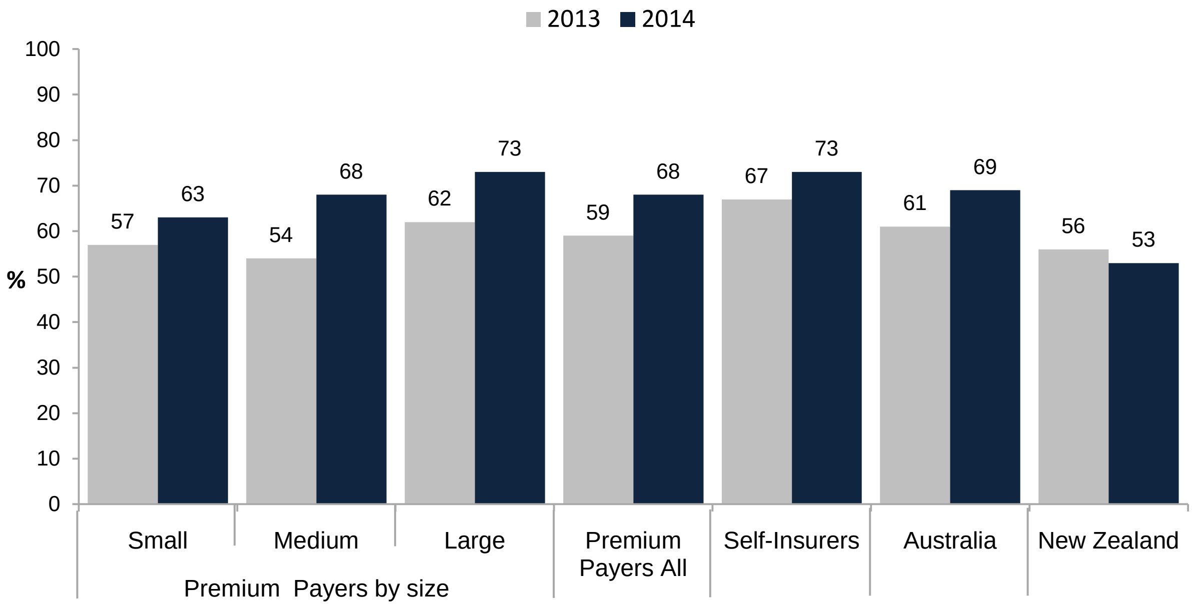


Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts. (AUS=4679: NSW=824, VIC=829, QLD=831, SA=527, WA=542, TAS=482, NT=148, COM=375, SEA=121*. NZ=705).
C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?
H30. So, how long have you been back at work (for since your last additional time off?
Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).
* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1.20 shows that 73% of injured workers from self-insured organisations had returned to work and been back at work for at least 3 months at the time of the interview. This proportion is five percentage points higher than the rate for premium paying organisations (68%) and four percentage points higher than the national rate for all Australian businesses (69%). The Australian proportion in 2014 increased significantly from 61% in 2013.

Within premium paying organisations, the 3-month Stable Return to Work Proportion is significantly higher within large organisations (73%), compared to small organisations (63%). Medium organisations experienced the greatest increase since last year, increasing 14 percentage points since 2013.

Figure 1.20: 3-month Stable Return to Work by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4679; NZ=705).
C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?
H30. So, how long have you been back at work (for since your last additional time off?
Note: The 2013 survey data were recalculated to meet the revised definition for organisational size (see section 1.3.1). As a result the 2013 data for ‘premium payers by size’ is different to the equivalent data published in the 2012-13 report.

1.7 Comparisons by organisation type and country

This section provides a comparative analysis of premium paying and self-insured organisations in Australia on a range of questions about respondents' experiences in their workplace and with the workers' compensation process. High level comparisons with New Zealand respondents with a work related injury have also been made where appropriate.

1.7.1 In the workplace

Those respondents who were working at the time of the interview were asked a series of questions to better understand their attitudes, perceptions and experiences with their work, as well as their level of personal wellbeing. These questions were not asked in New Zealand.

As shown in Table 5, there were generally high levels of agreement to all statements, with the statement "*The work you are doing is important to you*" recording the highest level of agreement (94%). The statement with the lowest level of agreement at the national level was "*Your opinions and suggestions are considered at work*" (78%).

Agreement was higher for all other statements among injured workers from small sized businesses than those from medium or large organisations. A significantly greater proportion of injured workers from small (82%) businesses agreed that they "*Have a say in how their work is organised*" in comparison to large (75%) organisations. Significantly more injured workers from small (89%) businesses also agreed that "*Their opinions and suggestions are considered at work*" in comparison to those from medium (83%) or large (80%) organisations.

Table 5: Perceptions of current work by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia
	Small	Medium	Large			
The work you are doing is important to you	96	95	94	95	93	94
The work you are doing satisfies you	89	88	86	88	87	88
You have a say in how you organise your work	82	79	75	78	76	78
Your opinions and suggestions are considered at work	89	83	80	84	74	82
The work you are doing is valued by others at work	94	93	92	93	90	93
You enjoy work	94	89	90	91	87	90

Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3692). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=3585 –3665 depending on statement).
G1. Thinking about the work you are doing NOW, do you agree or disagree that …?

The surveys administered in Australia and New Zealand asked respondents who were currently working about how their work was going for them, given any limitations or restrictions they may have due to their workplace injury or illness.

It should be noted that the New Zealand survey did not ask respondents whether the '*amount of work they are currently doing is reasonable*' or if *'they felt emotionally capable of doing their job'*.

At least 90% of injured workers across Australia and New Zealand agreed to the various statements shown in Table 6. The statements that recorded the highest levels of agreement in Australia were:

- *"You feel emotionally capable of doing your job"* (95%), and
- "*You are physically capable of doing your job*" (93%).

Injured workers in small sized businesses always reported equal or greater agreement in comparison to those from medium or large organisations. It is also worth noting that a significantly greater proportion of injured workers from small businesses (95%) agreed that their "*skills and abilities were being used appropriately*" given their recovery than injured workers in large (90%) organisations.

Table 6: Experience with current work (roles and responsibilities) by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia	New Zealand
	Small	Medium	Large				
The amount of work you are currently doing is reasonable	94	92	90	92	90	92	-
Given your recovery, your skills and abilities are used appropriately	95	92	90	92	89	92	94
Given your circumstances, the hours you are working are about right for you	92	90	88	89	90	90	95
You are physically capable of doing your job	94	94	93	94	92	93	93
You feel emotionally capable of doing your job	95	94	95	95	92	95	-

Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3692; NZ=371). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=3622-3641 and NZ= 360 – 365 depending on statement).

G2. Next a few questions about how work is going for you. (PAUSE) Bearing in mind any limits or restrictions you may be encountering due to your workplace injury or illness, do you agree or disagree that?

Table 7 illustrates the level of agreement to a range of statements that were designed to better understand respondents' perceptions of their work environment.

Respondents from small businesses reported higher levels of agreement to all statements in comparison to large organisations; with the exception of "*Your immediate supervisor or manager is committed to workplace safety*" which was two percentage points higher in large organisations. Agreement for "*Employees and management are generally supportive of each other*" was significantly higher for small organisations (88%) compared to medium (82%) and large (79%) organisations.

Table 7: Perceptions of current workplace by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia	New Zealand
	Small	Medium	Large				
You feel you are part of a community at work	93	88	89	90	87	90	93
Employees and management are generally supportive of each other	88	82	79	83	73	81	88
Your immediate supervisor or manager is committed to workplace safety	90	89	92	91	89	90	92
The other people you work with are committed to workplace safety	93	89	92	91	91	91	96

Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3692; NZ=371). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=3594 – 3625 and NZ= 358 – 361 depending on statement).

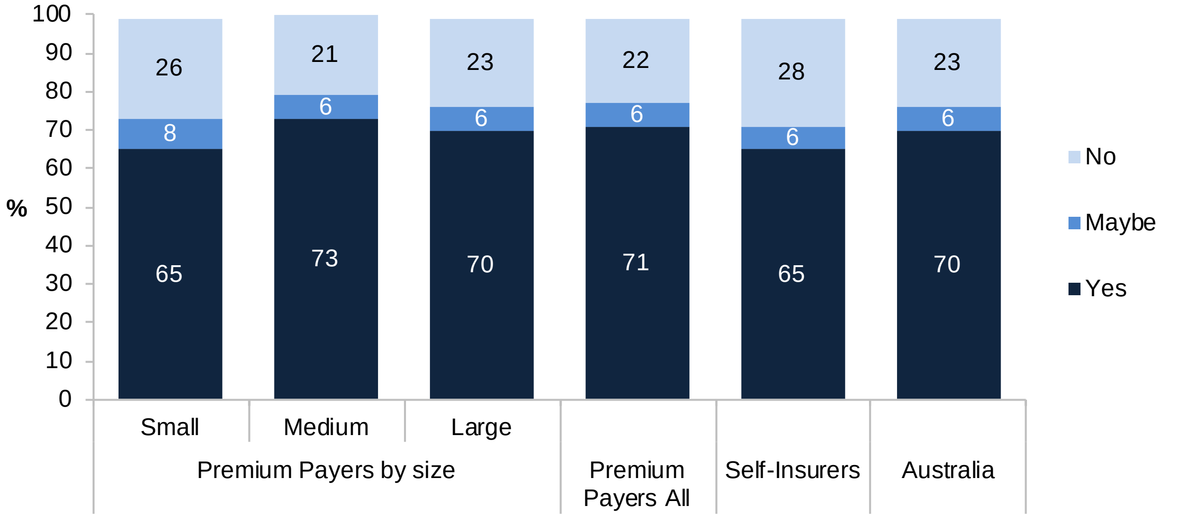
G3. Next some questions about your workplace. Do you agree or disagree that …?

1.7.2 RTW status

Injured workers who had returned to work were asked a series of questions concerning their physical and emotional readiness to return to work, as well as their perceptions of the role returning to work played in their recovery.

As shown in Figure 1.21, injured workers from premium paying business of different sizes, as well as those from self-insured organisations, generally reported similar levels of physical readiness to return to work. In Australia, 70% of workers who had been injured and returned to work felt that they were physically ready to go back. The result was highest among medium premium paying businesses (73%) and lowest among small businesses (65%). This difference was statistically significant.

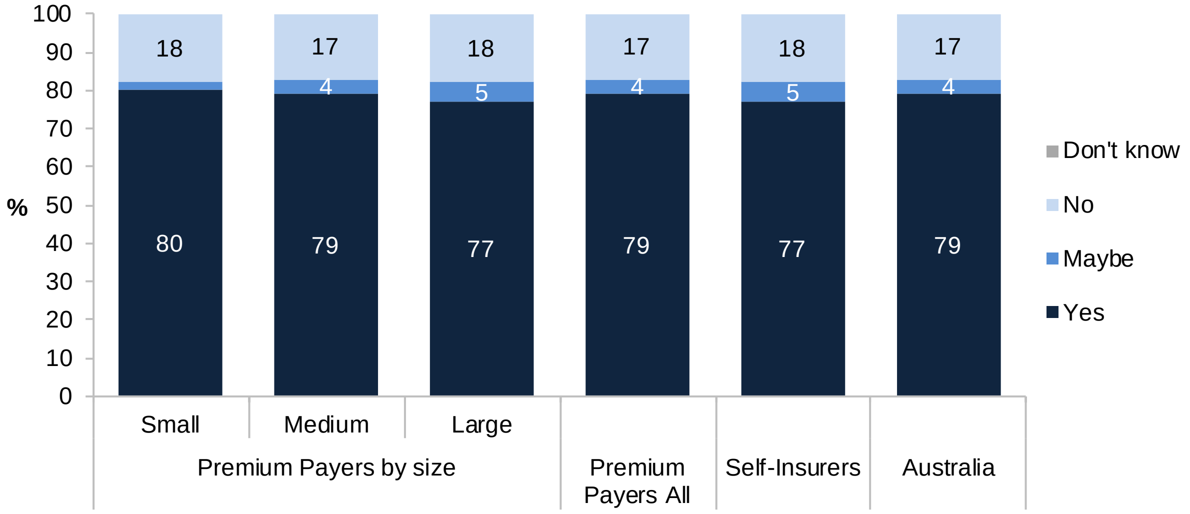
Figure 1.21: Was physically ready to return to work by organisation type (%)



Base: Has returned to work at some stage - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4062).
H23. Did you feel PHYSICALLY ready to return to work at that time?

As shown in Figure 1.22, 79% of workers in Australia who had been injured and returned to work felt that they were emotionally ready to return when they did. Perceived emotional readiness was marginally higher among injured workers from small (80%) premium paying businesses than those from large organisations (77%).

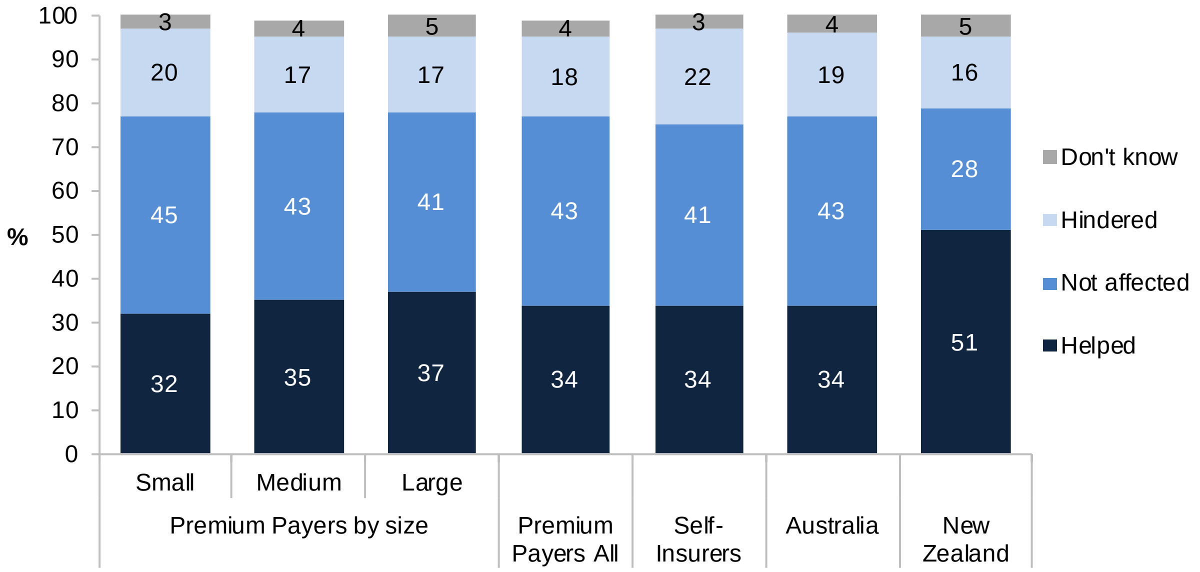
Figure 1.22: Was emotionally ready to return to work by organisation type (%)



Base: Has returned to work at some stage - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4062).
H24. Did you feel EMOTIONALLY ready to return to work at that time?

As shown in Figure 1.23, a significantly greater proportion of injured workers in New Zealand (51%) stated that returning to work helped them to recover from their injury or illness compared to Australia (34%). In comparison, 43% in Australia and only 28% in New Zealand felt that returning to work did not help or hinder their recovery.

Figure 1.23: Recovery impact of returning to work by country and organisation type (%)

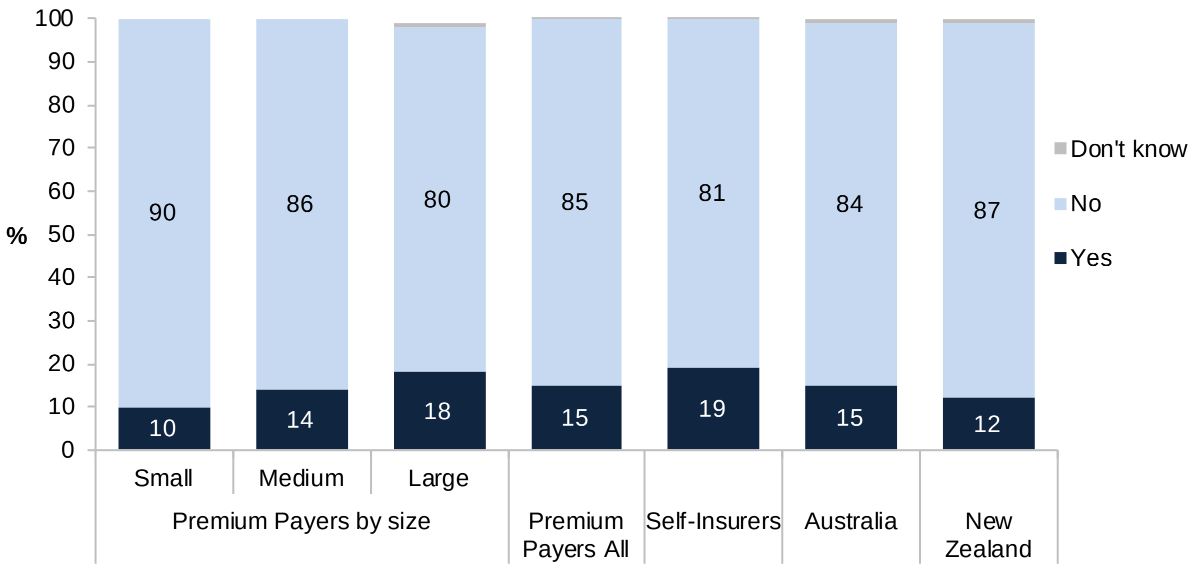


Base: Has returned to work at some stage - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4146; NZ=415).
H26. In your opinion, has returning to work helped, hindered or not affected your recovery from your injury or illness?

Fifteen percent of workers who had been injured and returned to work within Australia, and 12% in New Zealand stated that they took additional time off after first returning to work (Figure 1.24). Within Australia a marginally greater proportion of workers from self-insured organisations (19%) took additional time off compared to premium paying businesses (15%).

Those from small organisations were least likely to take additional time off (10%), compared to 14% from medium organisations, and 18% from large organisations.

Figure 1.24: Additional time off by country and organisation type (%)



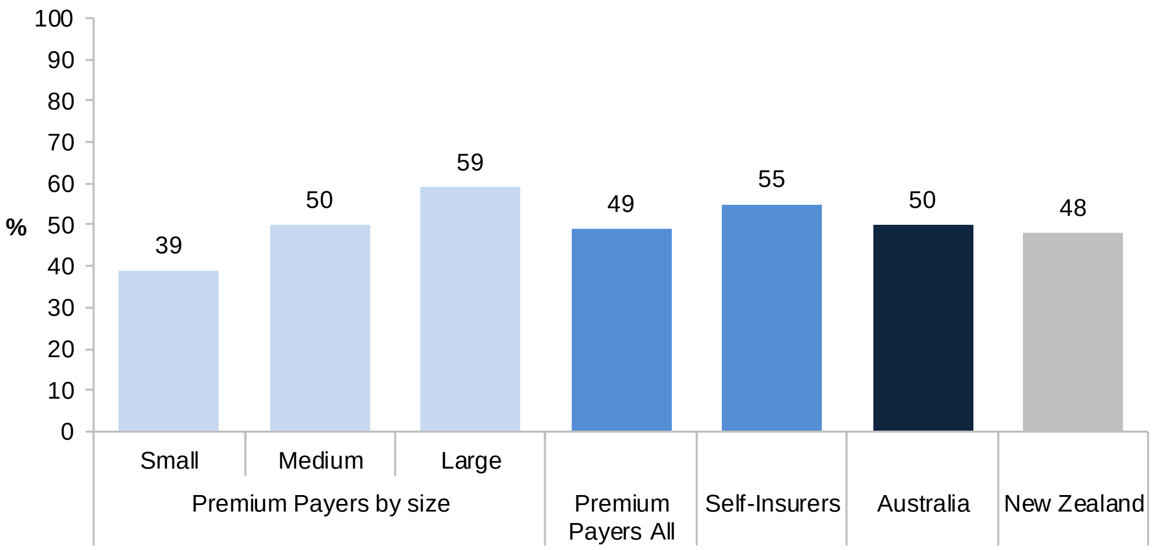
Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3653; NZ=371).
H29. Since you FIRST returned to work, have you had to have any additional time off because of your workplace injury or illness?

1.7.3 Return to work support and rehabilitation

Respondents whose claim was less than 12 months old were asked about their experiences in returning to work and rehabilitation for their injury. Specifically, these questions addressed whether they had a return to work plan, their level of involvement in its development and the extent to which it was helpful in their recovery.

As shown in Figure 1.25, 50% of injured workers from Australia and 48% from New Zealand stated that they had a return to work plan. Responses differed by self-insured organisation (55%) and size of premium paying business, with respondents from small businesses (39%) significantly less likely to report having a return to work plan than those from medium (50%) or large businesses (59%).

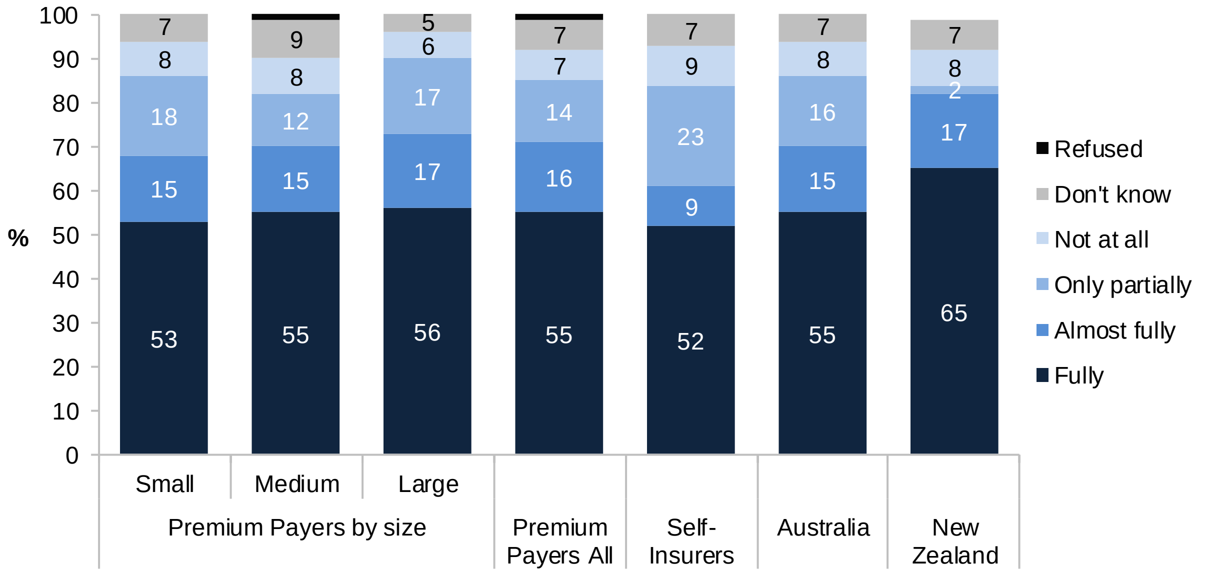
Figure 1.25: Return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)



Base Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3146; NZ=424).
J6. Did / Do you have to return to work plan?

Figure 1.26 highlights that of those respondents who reported having a return to work plan, the majority felt that their views were considered at least partially, while around half felt their views were fully considered. A significantly greater proportion of injured workers from Australia (16%) than New Zealand (2%) reported that their views were only partially considered in the process of returning to work. Similarly, a significantly greater proportion of those from self-insuring organisations (23%) felt their views were only partially considered compared to those from premium paying organisations (14%).

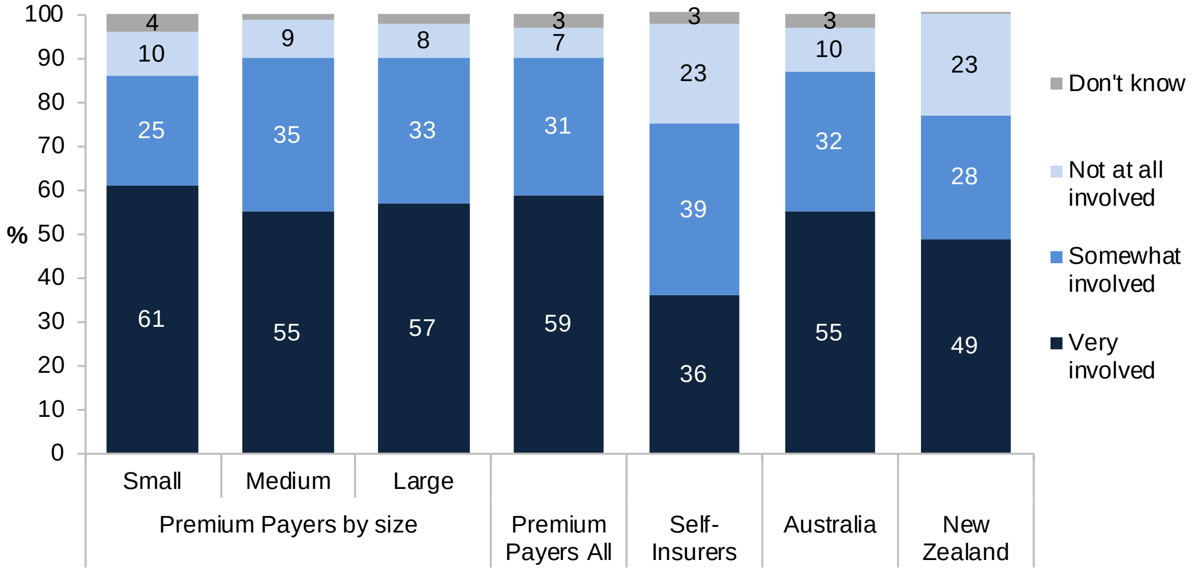
Figure 1.26: Views considered during return to work by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3146; NZ=424).
J8 In your opinion, to what extent do you think your views were considered during the process of (returning to work / preparing to return to work)? Would you say…

Across all sectors and both countries, around half of injured workers were involved to some extent in the development of their return to work plan (Figure 1.27). This figure was significantly lower among those from self-insuring organisations (36%) compared to those from premium payers (59%).

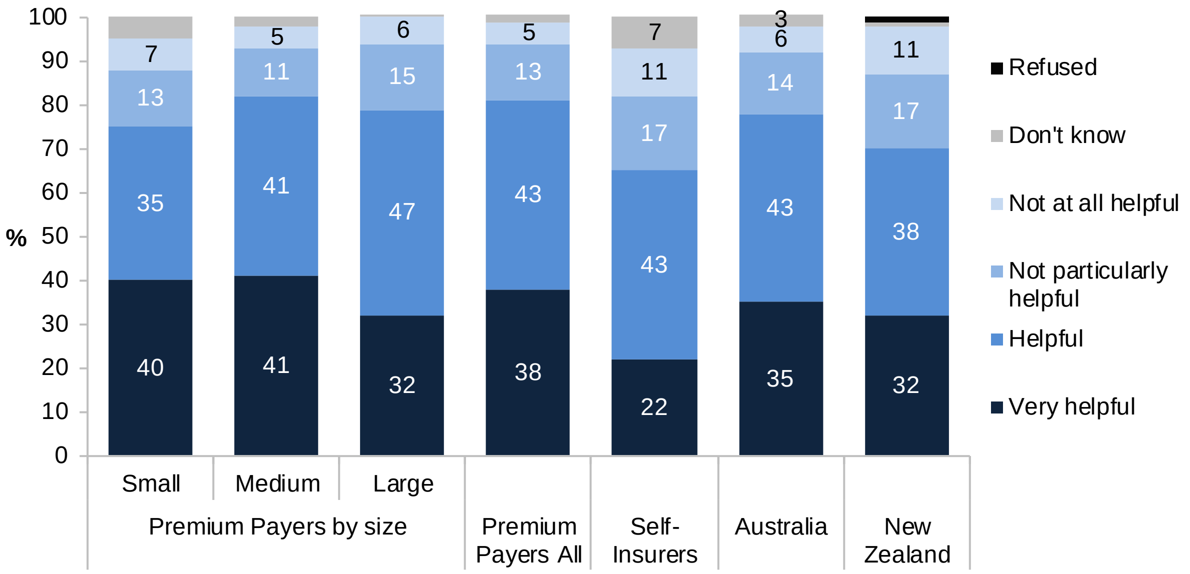
Figure 1.27: Involvement in development of return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and have a RTW plan - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1781; NZ=180).
J7. How involved were you in the development of this plan? Would you say that you were very involved, somewhat involved or not at all involved?

As shown in Figure 1.28, of those injured workers with a return to work plan more than three quarters of respondents in Australia (78%) and New Zealand (70%) considered their plan helpful or very helpful. The proportion of injured workers from self-insuring businesses who rated their plan as very helpful (22%) was significantly lower than the proportion from premium paying businesses (38%).

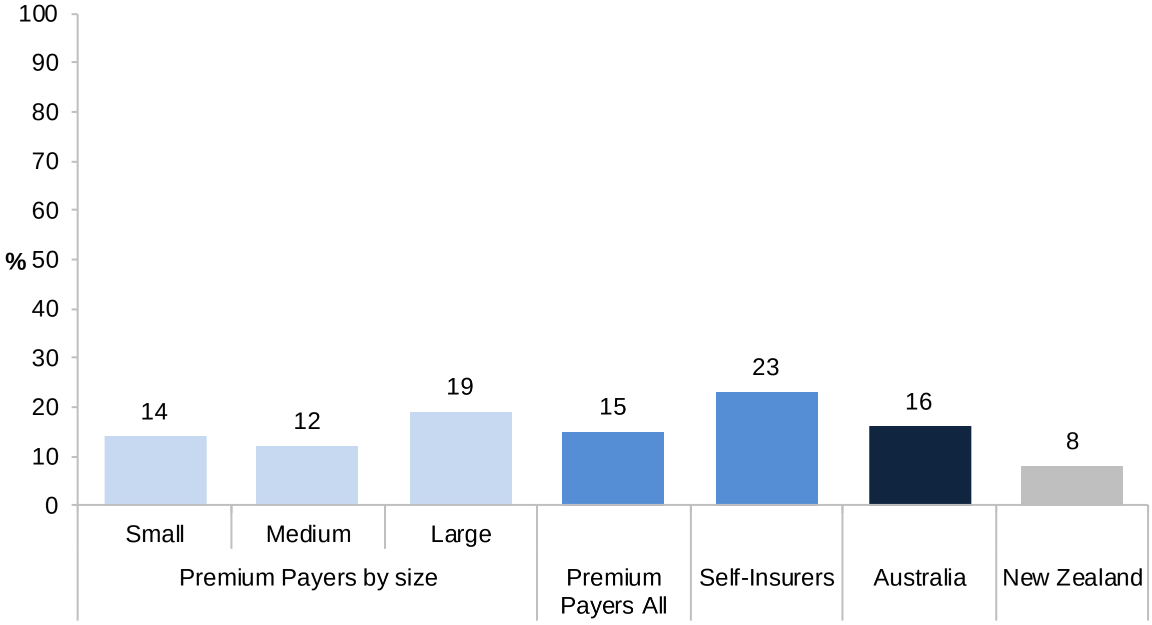
Figure 1.28: Helpfulness of return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and have a RTW plan - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1781; NZ=180).
J13. How helpful was / is your return to work plan?

As shown in Figure 1.29, 16% of injured workers from Australia and 8% from New Zealand reported that they needed help to do what was in their return to work plan. Though differences were non-significant, injured workers from self-insured organisations (23%) were most likely to report that they needed help, while those who returned to work in medium sized businesses (12%) were least likely to report that they required help.

Figure 1.29: Help required for return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and have a RTW plan - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1781; NZ=180).

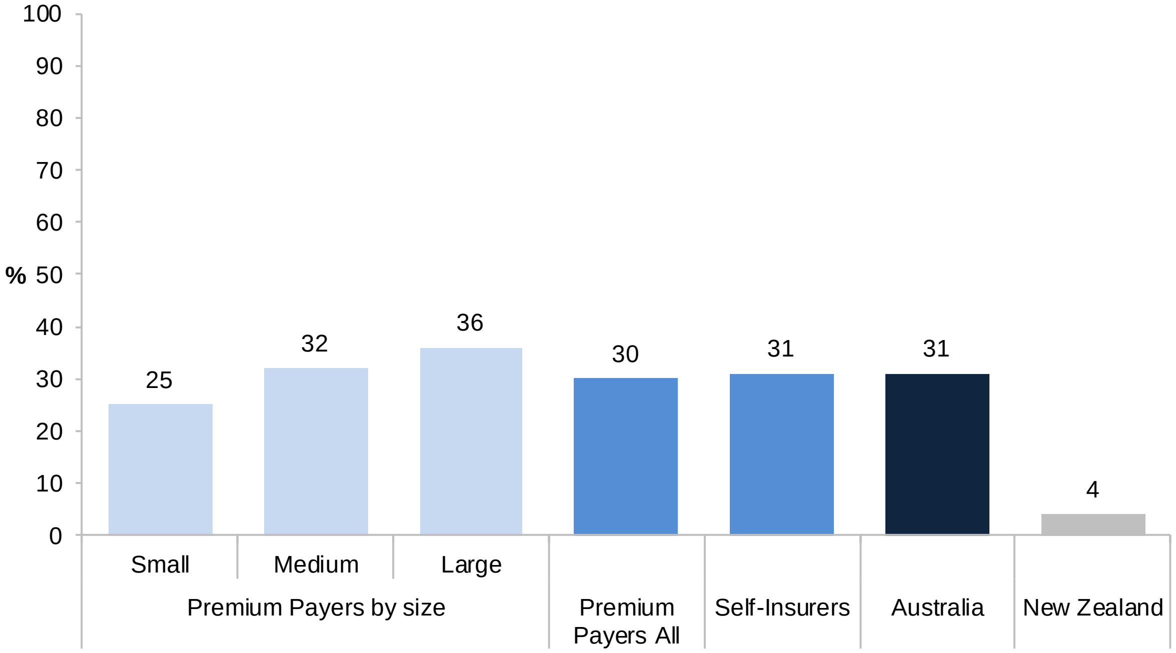
J16. (Do you / Did you) need any help to do what (is / was) recommended in your plan?

1.7.4 Workplace rehabilitation

All Australian respondents who were identified on the sample database as having received occupational rehabilitation services in the 6 months prior to the survey were asked if they remembered receiving this service. In New Zealand all respondents were simply asked if they had received rehabilitation services in the last 6 months.

Of injured workers in Australia 31%, compared to 4% in New Zealand, recalled that they had received these services in the 6 months prior to the survey (Figure 1.30). While not significant, respondents from large organisations were more likely to receive rehabilitation services (36%) compared to those from small organisations (25%).

Figure 1.30: Receipt of rehabilitation services by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts flagged in sample as receiving occ. rehab services (AUS=1061; NZ=444).
K1. Did you receive any rehabilitation services in the last six months?

1.7.5 Role of work, the employer and others

The proportion of injured workers who agreed with each of the statements was marginally higher for small businesses compared to large organisations (Table 8). The proportion of respondents from large organisations who agreed with the statement "*I felt like the system was working to protect my best interests*" was significantly lower (70%) than those from small (77%) and medium (80%) premium paying businesses.

The statements "*I feel like the system was working to protect my interests*" and "*there seemed to be good communication between the various people and organisations I dealt with*" recorded the lowest levels of agreement across all businesses sizes in Australia.

Agreement was rated higher across all statements among New Zealand injured workers compared to Australia by at least four percentage points.

Table 8: Experience of being on workers' compensation by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia	New Zealand
	Small	Medium	Large				
The PROCESS was open and honest	83	84	81	83	78	82	89
There seemed to be good communication between the various people and organisations I dealt with	77	78	73	76	70	75	80
I felt like the system was working to protect my best interests	77	80	70	76	63	74	83
I believe the system treated me fairly	78	83	78	81	71	79	86
I feel that the system helped me with my recovery	80	82	78	80	75	79	83

Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4612; NZ=444). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4511 – 4532 and NZ= 433 – 440 depending on statement).

L1. Thinking about your ENTIRE experience of being on workers' compensation, I'd like you to tell me whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Respondents in both Australia and New Zealand were asked about the role their employer played following their workplace injury or illness.

As shown in Table 9, the most positive responses among injured workers from Australia were associated with the statements "*Your employer treated you fairly during* (78%) *and after* (78%) *the claims process*". In New Zealand, agreement was highest for the statement "*Your employer treated you fairly during the claims process (89%)"*.

In terms of premium paying business size, respondents from large businesses recorded the highest level of agreement for all aspects of employer support.

Table 9: Perceptions of employer support by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia	New Zealand*
	Small	Medium	Large				
Your employer did what they could to support you	74	73	76	74	72	74	86
Your employer provided enough information on both your rights and responsibilities	66	67	75	69	69	69	85
Your employer made an effort to find suitable employment for you	69	71	74	71	72	71	77
Your employer helped you with your recovery	67	68	70	68	66	68	65
Your employer treated you fairly during the claims process	77	77	82	79	75	78	89
Your employer treated you fairly after the claims process	77	78	82	79	75	78	87

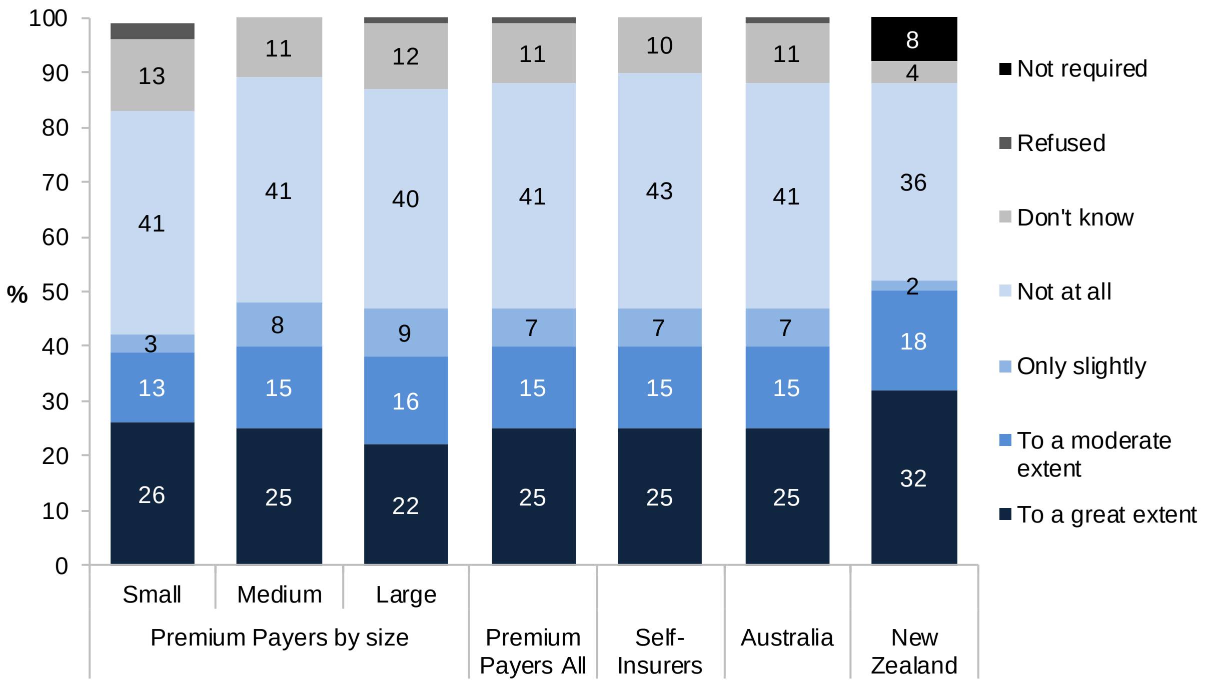
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4504; NZ=444). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4043 – 4425 and NZ= 404 – 429 depending on statement).

Notes: * Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size.

L3. Thinking about the role of your employer <IF CHANGED EMPLOYER H15=2 OR RETIRED C1DUM=3: at the time of > <ALL OTHERS: following> your workplace injury or illness, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Within Australia, 25% of injured workers reported that their employer was supporting them to a great extent, while 41% reported that their employer wasn't supporting them at all in relation to the needs they have regarding their injury or illness (Figure 1.31). Across business sizes in Australia a similar proportion of respondents felt their employer was supporting them 'to a great extent' (25%). While not significant, in comparison 32% felt they were supported 'to a great extent' in New Zealand.

Figure 1.31: Ongoing employer support by country and organisation type (%)

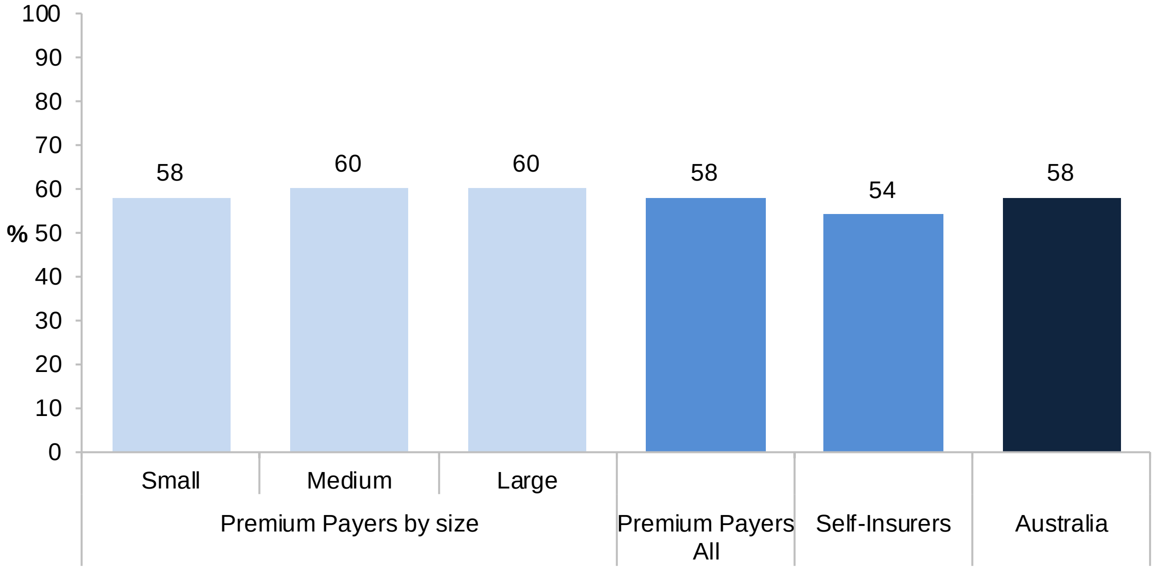


Base: Respondents whose claim is greater than or equal to 6 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3633; NZ=359).

L4. 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?

Figure 1.32 shows that 54% of injured workers from self-insured organisations stated that their supervisor or someone else from their work contacted them about recovering from their injury or illness. This result is four percentage points lower than the Australian national proportion and all premium paying businesses. This question was not asked in New Zealand.

Figure 1.32: Contact with workplace about recovery by organisation type (%)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3170).
L5. Did your supervisor or someone else from work contact you about recovering from your workplace injury or illness?

Of those injured workers who were contacted by someone from work about how they were recovering, it was generally their boss (51%) or team leader (28%) who got in touch with them (Table 10). Being contacted by the general manager or boss was more common among small organisations (75%) compared to larger organisations (39%).

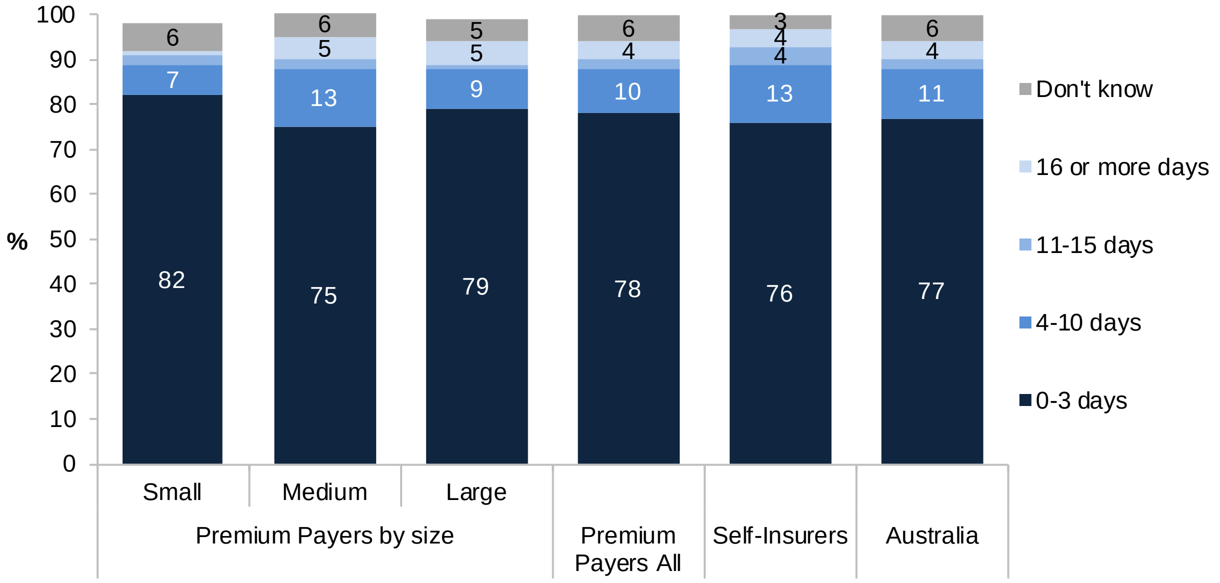
Table 10: Employer representative who contacted injured workers by organisation type (% top 4 response categories)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia
	Small	Medium	Large			
General Manager/Boss/Owner	75	52	39	52	46	51
Supervisor / Team Leader	13	26	38	27	34	28
Human Resources	2	19	12	13	9	13
OHS/WHY coordinator	1	5	8	5	5	5

Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and contacted by work for RTW - Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in Comcare (AUS=1798). Note responses may sum to greater than 100% due to the question allowing multiple responses.
L5a Who contacted you?

As shown in Figure 1.33, 77% of all those injured workers in Australia were contacted by their employer within three days of their injury or illness. While not significant, this figure was highest among small business (82%).

Figure 1.33: When injured worker was contacted by employer by organisation type (%)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and contacted by work for RTW - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1798).
L6. How many days after your workplace injury / illness occurred were you FIRST contacted?

Injured Australian workers who had received 10 days or more compensation were asked about their workplace and the work that they did just before their injury or illness. This question was not asked in New Zealand.

Agreement was relatively high, and consistent between premium paying business size or self-insured status (Table 11). The highest levels of agreement were recorded for:

- *"The work you were doing was important to you"* (95%),
- *"All things considered you were satisfied with your job"* (91%), and
- *"The work you were doing was valued by others at work"* (91%).

Respondents agreed least with the statement "*Employees and management were generally supportive of each* other" (75%).

Table 11: Experience with workplace before injury or illness by organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia
	Small	Medium	Large			
The work you were doing was important to you	96	93	96	95	95	95
The work you were doing was valued by others at work	94	90	91	92	90	91
Employees and management were generally supportive of each other	82	72	74	75	75	75
Your immediate supervisor or manager was committed to workplace safety	77	76	79	77	77	77
The people you worked with were committed to workplace safety	83	79	82	81	85	82
All things considered you were satisfied with your job	94	90	91	91	90	91

Base: Respondents whose days compensated is 10 days or more - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3543). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=3430–3511).

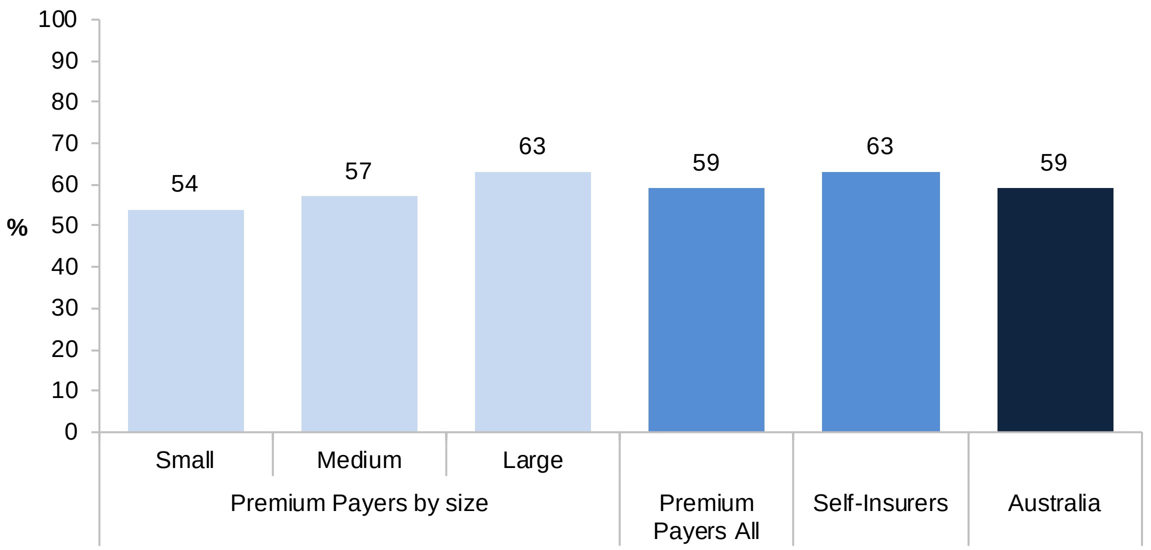
L7. I would now like you to think about your workplace and the work you did just before your workplace injury or illness. Do you agree or disagree that …

1.7.6 Experience of submitting a workers' compensation claim

A series of questions were asked in Australia and New Zealand to better understand the experiences of injured workers in submitting a workers' compensation claim.

Of those respondents who discussed their injury or illness with their employer, 59% reported that their employer helped them to manage their condition before they lodged a workers' compensation claim (Figure 1.34). This finding was significantly more common within large organisations (63%) than small organisations (54%).

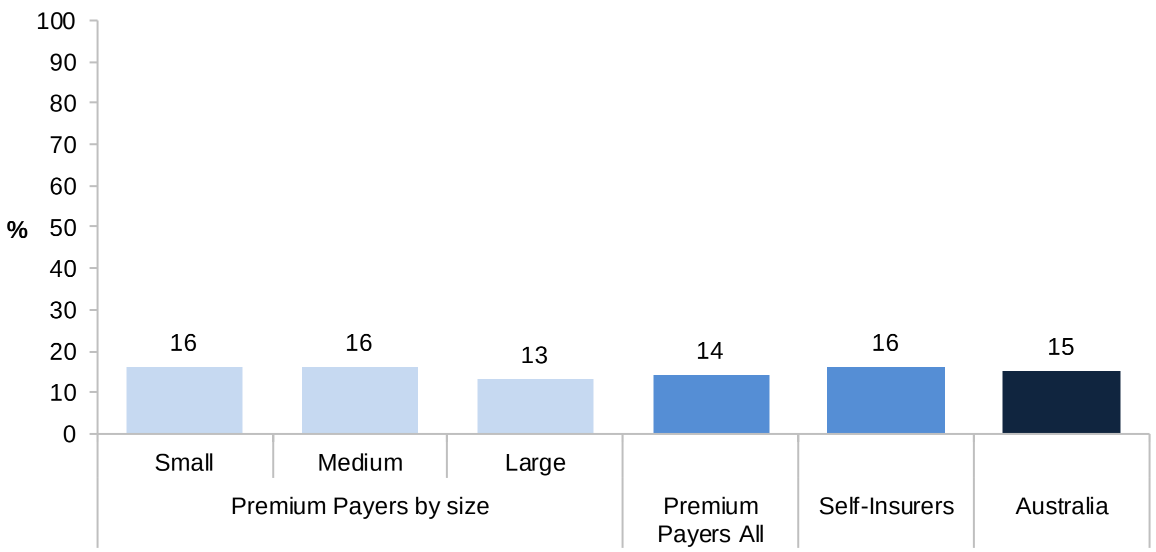
Figure 1.34: Employer helped injured worker manage injury by organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4466).
M2. Did your employer help you manage your injury or illness before you lodged your workers' compensation claim?

As shown in Figure 1.35, 15% of injured workers across Australia reported that they felt their employer discouraged them from putting in a workers' compensation claim. While not significant, a marginally smaller proportion of those from large organisations felt discourages (13%) compared to those from small or medium organisations (16%).

Figure 1.35: Employer discouraged injured worker from putting in a claim by organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4466).

M3. Did you feel your employer discouraged you from putting in a claim?

All respondents in Australia were asked about their experiences and perceptions of workers' compensation when they were considering putting in a claim. As seen in Table 12, 33% of injured workers across Australia agreed that they thought they would be treated differently by people at work if they put in a workers' compensation claim. Agreement was highest among medium organisations and lowest among small organisations for most statements.

A comparatively smaller proportion (18%) of injured workers were concerned that they would be fired if they submitted a claim, with a significantly lower proportion of respondents from self-insured organisations (12%) reporting that they were concerned that they would be fired.

Table 12: Experience in putting in a claim by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

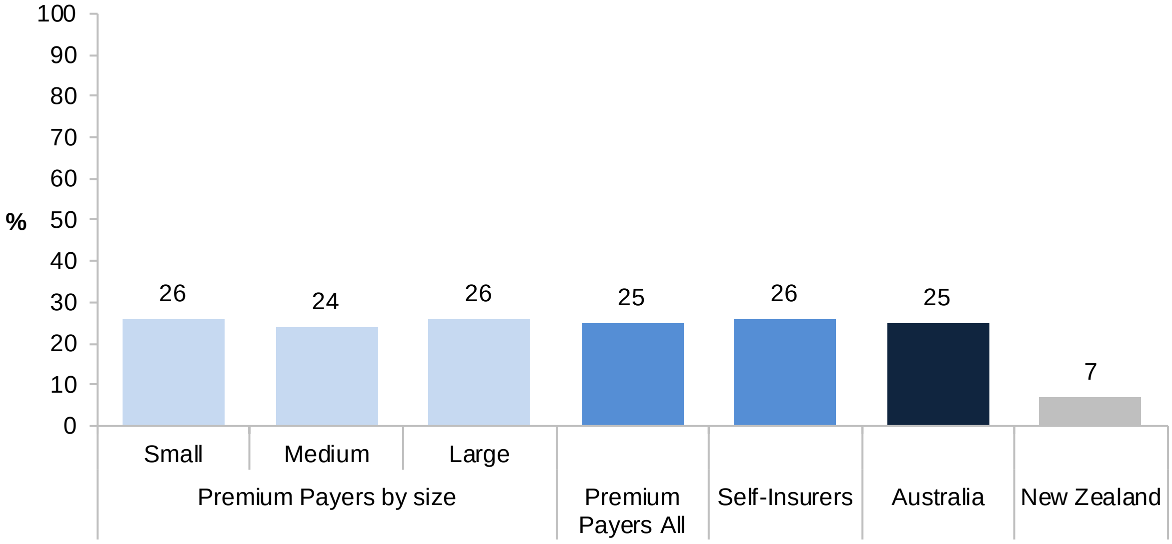
	Premium Payers by size			Premium Payers All	Self-Insurers	Australia
	Small	Medium	Large			
You thought you would be treated differently by people at work	27	36	35	33	35	33
You felt your supervisor thought you were exaggerating or faking your injury	21	25	23	23	23	23
You were concerned that you would be fired if you submitted a claim	21	21	15	19	12	18

Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4512). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4326 – 4407 depending on statement).

M5. Thinking back to when you were considering putting in a workers' compensation claim, would you agree or disagree that…

Figure 1.36 shows that a significantly higher proportion of injured workers in Australia (25%) compared to New Zealand (7%), reported having a difference of opinion with their employer after their workers' compensation claim was accepted. Within Australia, this proportion was relatively consistent within different sized businesses.

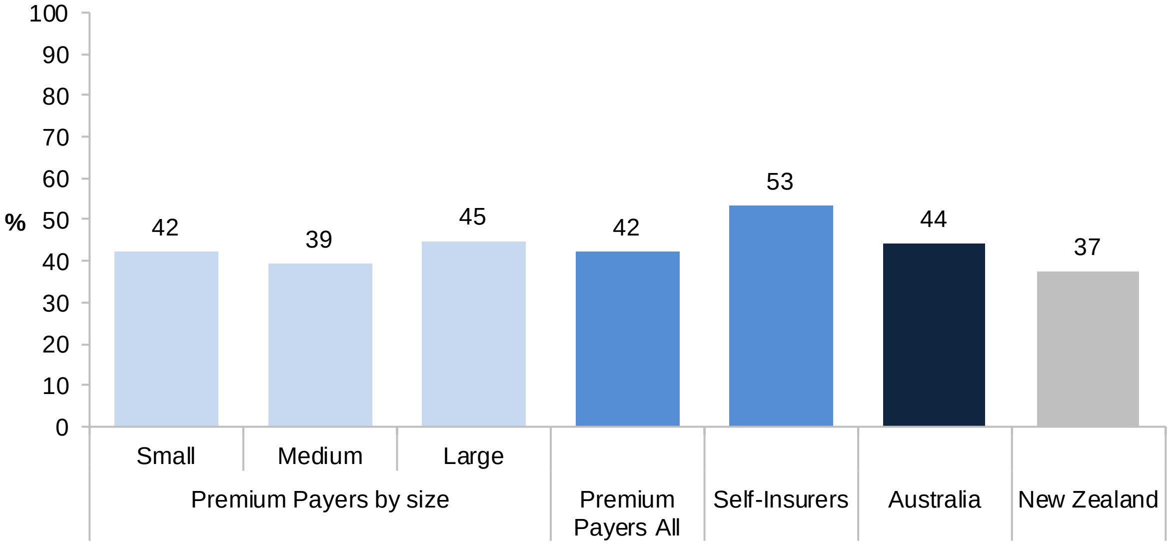
Figure 1.36: Differences of opinion between injured worker and employer by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4504; NZ=444)
M6. 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?

Most of those injured workers who had a difference of opinion needed some assistance to resolve their issues (Figure 1.37). The proportion of injured workers requiring assistance to resolve issues in New Zealand (37%) was much lower than in Australia (44%).

Figure 1.37: Assistance required to resolve difference of opinion by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Had difference of opinion - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1190; NZ=55).
M7. Did you need assistance to resolve this?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research design and sample selection

The ‘National Return to Work Survey’ differs from the previous ‘Return to Work Monitor’ by using a broader population from which the sample is drawn. The Return to Work Monitor surveyed injured workers of premium payers who had 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7 to 9 months prior to the survey. The new 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 6 months prior to the sample being drawn (2012/13 only), and
- who worked in either premium paying or self-insured organisations (note New Zealand does not have self-insured organisations).

In order to maintain the time series for the two key measures reported in the Return to Work Monitor, a group with 10 or more days off and whose claim was submitted 7 to 9 months prior to the survey was purposefully sampled from within the broader population. This group is referred to as the Historic Cohort. The sampling strata were derived from the eligible population cases / counts provided by each jurisdiction. Within strata, respondents were randomly selected to participate.

For Australian jurisdictions, the sample was selected in two cohorts: Historic Return to Work (Historic) and Balance. The Historic Cohort refers to injured workers of premium paying organisations who had 10 or more days compensated, with claims ranging from 7 to 8 months of age in large jurisdictions and 7 to 9 months of age in smaller jurisdictions. Large jurisdictions were Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, and South Australia. Small jurisdictions were Comcare, Seacare, the Northern Territory, and Tasmania.

The Balance Cohort refers to injured workers of premium payers or self-insured organisations from a 2 year period (April 2012 to March 2014) with at least one day compensated. Since almost all cases eligible for the Historic Cohort were also eligible for the Balance Cohort, Historic-eligible cases were excluded from a chance of selection in the Balance Cohort, but are included in the Balance Cohort for the purposes of analysis.

Since the Historic population forms only a small proportion of the Balance population, records in this cohort were oversampled to ensure adequate numbers were present for historical comparisons. Smaller jurisdictions were also oversampled relative to larger jurisdictions to ensure accuracy of jurisdiction-based estimates. Aside from this oversampling, the sample was recruited to achieve equal representation of different strata groups within each cohort for each jurisdiction (except Seacare where a census of eligible respondents was attempted). These groups were defined by, numbers permitting, insurer type, age of claim (in the Balance Cohort only), and numbers of days compensated. It should be noted that in 2013/14 the Northern Territory participated for the first time since 2012 and this may have affected the overall rate for Australia based on historic time series data referring to the Historic Cohort.

For New Zealand, Historic and Balance Cohorts were selected to match the Australian definitions for large jurisdictions. However, unlike Australian jurisdictions claims for non-work injuries were permitted in the Balance Cohort and Maori were oversampled. For other ethnicities, stratification ensured a representative sample of numbers of days compensated within both the Historic and Balance Cohorts. The New Zealand scheme does not allow for self-insured organisations.

2.2 Time series comparisons

A number of steps were undertaken to ensure parity with the Return to Work Monitor[7].

Within this report, time series comparisons are made only with respect to the key return to work outcome measures – the Returned to Work and the Current Return to Work Rates. These are the equivalent of the previous 'RTW Rate' and 'Durable RTW Rate' respectively reported in the Return to Work Monitor.

In order to maintain the time series for these key measures a group with 10 or more days off and whose claim was submitted 7 to 9 months prior to the survey was purposefully sampled from within the broader population. This group is referred to as the Historic Cohort. The full sample is referred to as the Balance Cohort. Cases in the Historic Cohort were weighted by jurisdiction to a 6 month population total consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.

2.3 Data collection

In Australia a total of 4679 computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date between 1 April 2012 to 28 February 2014 across the Historic Cohort (n=2397) and Balance Cohort (n=2282). Interviewing was conducted between 28 April and 27 May 2014.

ACC provides no-fault personal injury cover for all New Zealand residents and visitors to New Zealand for work and non-work related injuries. ACC clients whose injury was not work related are excluded from comparisons to Australia.

In New Zealand a total of 705 interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2014. Of these, 444 interviews were conducted with clients with a work related injury and provide a comparison point with Australia: Historic Cohort (n=345), Balance Cohort (n=99). The total New Zealand sample is made up of: Historic Cohort (n=345) and Balance Cohort (n=360). Interviewing was conducted between 20 May and 12 June 2014.

2.4 Presentation of results and significance testing

Generally, labels for values smaller than 3% have been suppressed in charts due to space.

Significance testing has been conducted at the 95% confidence interval using the effective base sizes. This means that when a difference is described as being 'significant' one can be 95% confident that the difference is real and not due to random sampling variation. The effective base is designed to reduce the likelihood of the statistical tests producing significant results because of the adjustments made by weighting; the effective base takes these adjustments into account.

[7] http://www.hwca.org.au/reports_rtw.php

2.5 Response rates

For the purpose of this report, response rate is defined as the total number of interviews as a proportion of the total number of interviews plus all refusals. The formula used to calculate the response rate is as follows:

Response rate = Number of interviews ÷ (Number of interviews + Number of refusals)

The final overall response rates were as follows:

	Response rate
Australia	80.1%
New South Wales (NSW)	78.6%
Victoria (VIC)	77.0%
Queensland (QLD)	80.0%
South Australia (SA)	80.3%
Western Australia (WA)	80.2%
Tasmania (TAS)	85.5%
Northern Territory (NT)	88.1%
Seacare (SEA)	84.6%
Comcare (COM)	n/a
New Zealand (NZ)	88.0%

* The Comcare data is provided via a separate survey and technical details such as response rate have not been considered within the context of this report.

2.6 Weighting

For the Australian National Return to Work Survey, two weights were calculated: one for the Historic Cohort and the other for all cases.

Cases in the Historic Cohort were weighted by jurisdiction to a 6 month population total. For smaller jurisdictions, where 3 months of claims were eligible for the study, this meant multiplying the total number of eligible claims by two. For larger jurisdictions, and New Zealand, where 2 months of claims were eligible for selection, the total number of eligible cases was multiplied by three. Using the 6 month population allows correct proportional weighting between the jurisdictions who are selecting sample from a 3 month claim period to those who are selecting from a 2 month claim period.

For the purposes of calculating the all-cases weight for the Australian survey, the sample was split into nine analysis groups, representing premium paying organisations from the eight jurisdictions plus a final group of self-insured organisations from across Australia. Benchmarks were created for:

- Cohort;
- Days compensated (1 to 9 days, 10 to 19 days, 20 to 64 days, 65 to 129 days, 130 to 259 days and 260 days plus); and
- Jurisdiction (to allow the weighting of the self-insured group).

In New Zealand, benchmarks were created for the following variables:

- Age of claim (0 to 6 months, 7 to12 months, 13 to18 months, 19 to 24 months);
- Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific Islander, other);
- Injury (work related, non-work related); and
- Days compensated (6 to 9 days, 10 to 49 days, 50 to 99 days, 100 days or more).

The weight for the full sample was calculated by rim weighting. This procedure uses separate benchmarks for each variable. This means that a greater number of variables can be weighted for; although this strategy will not be as precise at a cross classified level (e.g. the percentage of Historic Cohort respondents with 10 to 19 days compensated will show a minor level of discrepancy when compared to the population figure).

2.7 Fieldwork procedures and monitoring

2.7.1 Field team briefing

A pre-interview briefing was conducted with all interviewers and supervisors in the field team. This briefing was led by researchers and supervisors from the Social Research Centre and attended by a representative from Safe Work Australia. The briefing session covered:

- Project background, objectives and procedures
- Review of all questions and scales
- All aspects of administering the survey questionnaire, including privacy and specific data quality issues
- Overview of respondent liaison issues, and
- Practice interviewing.

2.7.2 Fieldwork monitoring procedures

The in-field quality monitoring techniques applied during this research included:

- Listening-in validations were conducted in accordance with the existing ISO 20252 procedures
- Field team de-briefing after the first shift, and thereafter, whenever there was important information to impart to the field team in relation to data quality, consistency of interview administration, appointment making conventions or project performance
- Maintenance of an “interviewer handout” document addressing respondent liaison issues
- Examination of verbatim responses to “other specify” questions, and
- Monitoring (listening in) by the Social Research Centre project manager and supervisory staff.

2.8 Sample maximisation techniques

2.8.1 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations for the survey included:

- Compliance with the Australian Privacy Principles
- Ensuring informed consent
- Undertaking “soft” recruitment procedures that did not place any pressure on injured workers to participate
- Ensuring the voluntary nature of participation was clearly understood
- Protecting the privacy and confidentiality of respondent information
- Ensuring that questions to be asked through the survey were relevant to Safe Work Australia, Australian jurisdictions and ACC
- Ensuring that all questions in the survey were asked in the most efficient means possible, minimising time and inconvenience for the respondent, and
- Ensuring that interviews did not take place at inappropriate times of the day / evening.

In addition, the Social Research Centre is bound to adhere to ASMRO Privacy Principles and the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour.

2.8.2 Informed consent

Recruitment for the survey took place by way of a primary approach letter (PAL) sent out on jurisdiction letterhead, approximately 2 weeks prior to the commencement of fieldwork. The PAL introduced the purpose of the study, and informed clients that they may be called and invited to participate in the coming weeks. The PAL also informed clients that they were in no way obligated to participate if they did not wish to.

2.8.3 1800 number operation

The Social Research Centre operated a 1800 number throughout the study period to establish survey bona fides and handle any sundry survey participation issues (including setting an appointment time, answering frequently asked questions, removing the names of respondents from contact lists who did not want to participate, etc.).