

# Return to Work Survey, 2016,

*Headline Measures Report, Australia and New Zealand*

**July 2016**



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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. In 2014, Safe Work Australia agreed that the survey should be run biennially. This is the third time the revised Return to Work Survey has been run. ACC maintained annual data collection and this is the fourth time that the Survey has been administered in New Zealand.

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 2016. 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
- Current Return to Work Rate equivalent to the Return to Work Monitor's Durable Return to Work Rate.

Using the 2016 and previous years' survey data, Safe Work Australia will consider publishing additional topic reports examining the relationship between a range of factors and return to work outcomes

The more comprehensive *Summary Report* will be published on the Agency's website by August 2016.

Safe Work Australia

June 2016

# Summary Points

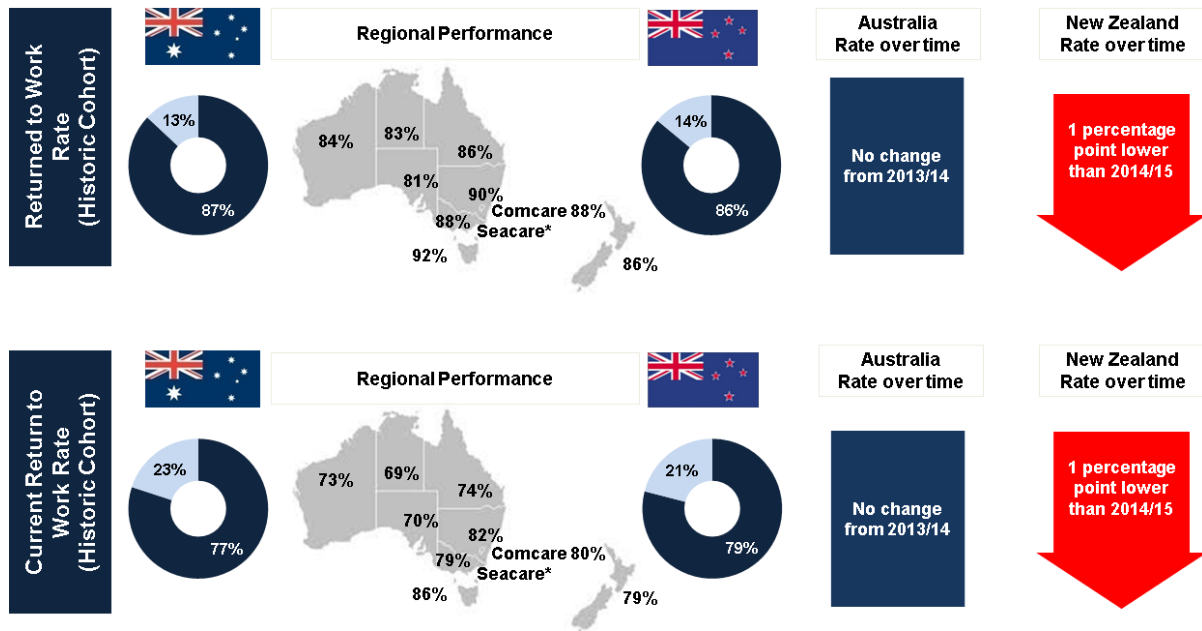
This report provides the Headline Measures for the 2016 Return to Work (RTW) Survey for Australia and New Zealand. The Headline Measures are the Returned to Work Rate and the Current Return to Work Rate.

Within Australia, a total of 5,214 telephone interviews were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date between 1 March 2014 and 31 January 2016 across two time-based Cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=2,226) refers to injured workers of premium payers who have had 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. Measures in this report are calculated using the Historic Cohort only.

Within New Zealand, a total of 1,071 telephone interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date of between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016 across two time-based cohorts with 360 in the Historic Cohort.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the key RTW measures.

**Figure 1: Key RTW Measures, 2016 (Australia and New Zealand)**



\*The Historic Cohort quota for the Seacare jurisdiction in Australia was not obtained due to insufficient sample and the Return to Work metrics are not reported given the small overall sample size.

# Returned to Work Rate

The Returned to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers with 10 or more days off work who returned to work for any period of time at some stage since they had their first day off work. Data are taken from injured workers of premium payers with 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. The measure is equivalent to the previous 'RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor. It is based on Question C7 'Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?' and reports the proportion of injured workers who state 'yes'.

Figure 2 shows that in 2015/16, 87% of Australian injured workers and 86% of New Zealand injured workers had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness.

Within Australia, the Returned to Work Rate was higher than the national rate for Victoria (88%); Comcare (88%); New South Wales (90%) and Tasmania (92%). The Returned to Work Rate was lower than the national rate for South Australia (81%); Western Australia (84%); Northern Territory (83%) and Queensland (86%). The Historic Cohort quota for the Seacare jurisdiction was not obtained due to insufficient sample and the Returned to Work Rate is not reported given the small overall sample size.

**Figure 2: Returned to Work Rate 2015/16 by Country and Australian jurisdiction (%)**

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



Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2,226: NSW=444, VIC=400, QLD=450, SA=230, WA=400, TAS=145, COM=85, SEA=2\*, NT=70, NZ=360). 'Don't Know' and 'Refused' responses are not excluded.

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).

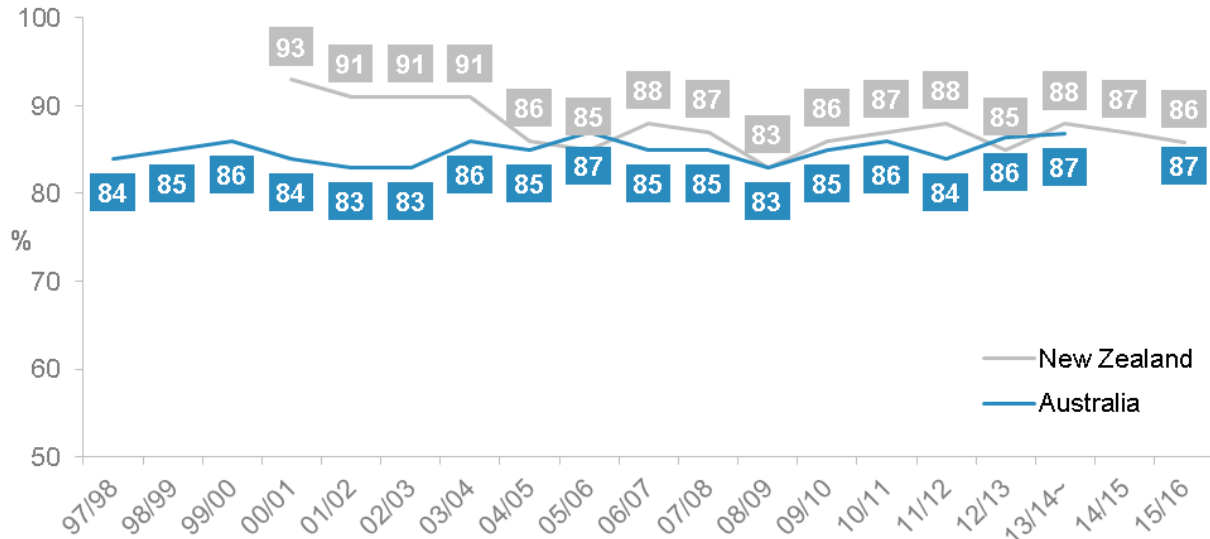
\* Seacare data is based off a small sample size (n=2) which prohibits reporting.

Figure 3 shows the national trends for Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2015/16 Returned to Work Rate is the same as last year for Australia (87%) and one percentage point lower for New Zealand (86%). The decrease for New Zealand is not significant.

**Figure 3: Returned to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)**

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



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	14/15	15/16
AUS	3,195	3,142	2,966	2,687	2,995	3,014	3,019	3,017	2,965	2,689	3,007	3,028	2,279	2,397	n/a	2,226
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	608	600	600	600	601	600	452	345	429	360

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

~ Note that in 2013/14 New Zealand data were also weighted by ethnicity and days compensated.



# Current Return to Work Rate

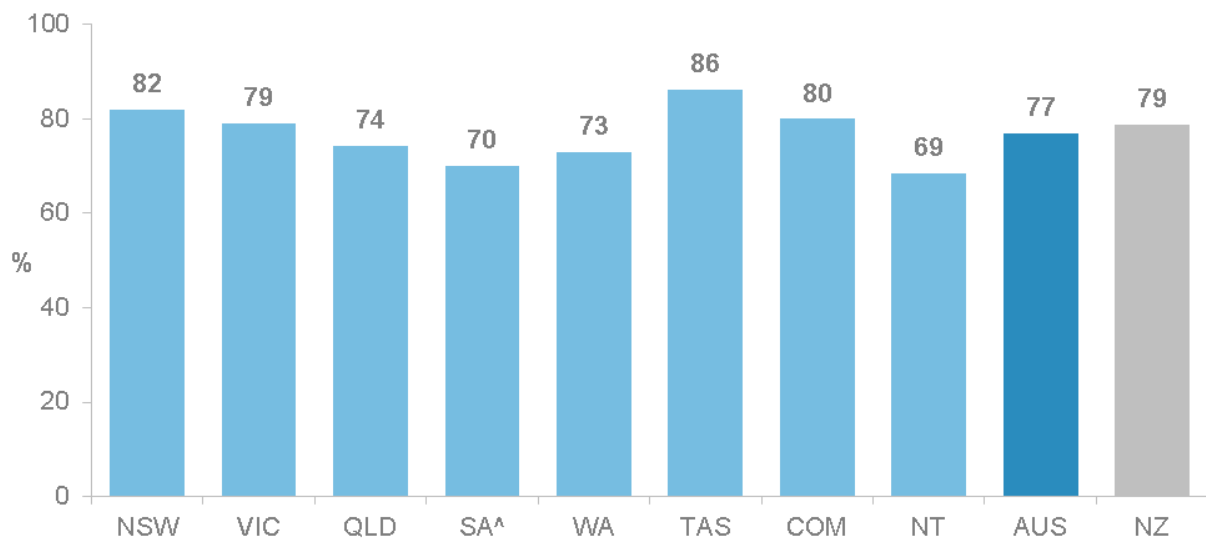
The Current Return to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers with 10 or more days off work who were working at the time of the survey. Data are taken from injured workers of premium payers with 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. The measure is equivalent to the previous 'Durable RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor and published annually in the Comparative Performance Monitoring report. 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 4 shows that in 2015/16, 77% of Australian injured workers and 79% from New Zealand were working in a paid job at the time of the interview.

Within Australia, the Current Return to Work Rate was higher than the national rate for Victoria (79%); Comcare (80%); New South Wales (82%); and Tasmania (86%). The Current Return to Work Rate was lower than the national rate for Northern Territory (69%); South Australia (70%); Western Australia (73%) and Queensland (74%). The Historic Cohort quota for the Seacare jurisdiction was not obtained due to insufficient sample and the Current Return to Work Rate is not reported given the small overall sample size.

**Figure 4: Current Return to Work Rate 2015/16 by Country and Australian jurisdiction (%)**

C1. *Are you currently working in a paid job?*



Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2,226; NSW=444, VIC=400, QLD=450, SA=230, WA=400, TAS=145, COM=85, SEA=2\*, NT=70, NZ=360).

'Don't Know' and 'Refused' responses are not excluded.

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

<sup>^</sup> South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

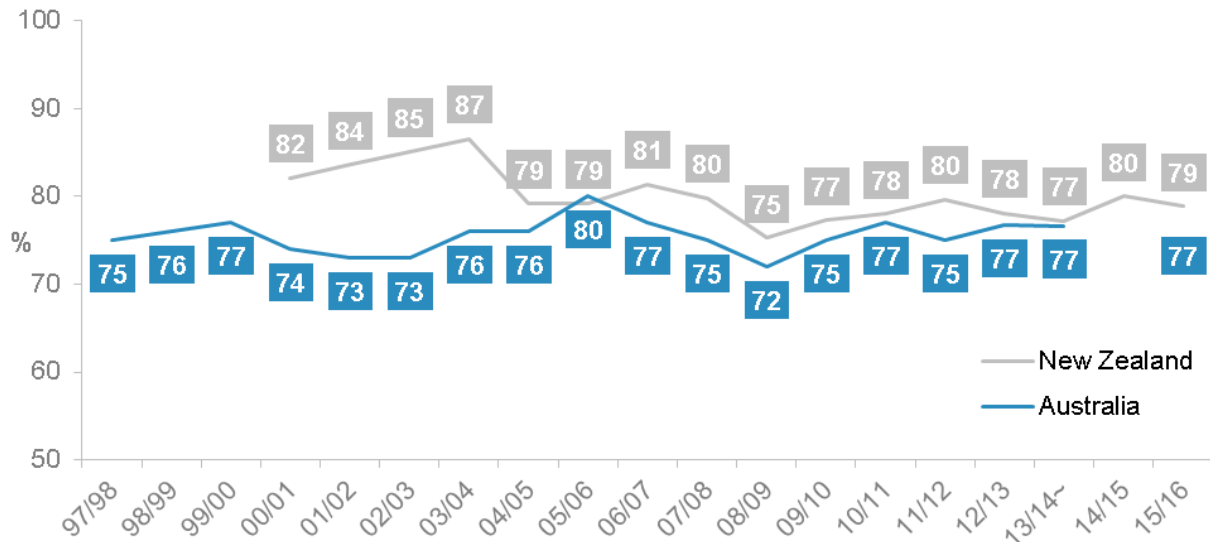
\* Seacare data is based off a small sample size (n=2) which prohibits reporting.

Figure 5 shows the national trends for Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2015/16 Current Return to Work Rate is the same as last year for Australia (77%) and one percentage point lower for New Zealand (79%). The decrease for New Zealand is not significant.

**Figure 5** Current Return to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?



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	14/15	15/16
AUS	3,195	3,142	2,966	2,687	2,995	3,014	3,019	3,017	2,965	2,689	3,007	3,028	2,279	2,397	n/a	2,226
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	600	608	600	600	601	600	452	345	429	360

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

~ Note that in 2013/14 New Zealand data were also weighted by ethnicity and days compensated.

## Methodological Overview

**Sampling** – The sampling strata were derived from the eligible population cases / counts provided by each jurisdiction. Within strata, respondents were randomly selected to participate.

Within Australia, it should be noted that for the Comcare sample, the majority of previously eligible Australian Taxation Office and Department of Human Services sample members are excluded from the 2015/16 Comcare results as they are participating in a separate Pilot activity.

**Australia: Total interviewed** – 5,124 telephone interviews were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date between 1 March 2014 and 31 January 2016 across two time-based cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=2,226) refers to 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. This refers to a 2-month submission period for large jurisdictions (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia): August and September 2015; and 3-month submission period for small jurisdictions (Comcare, Seacare, the Northern Territory and Tasmania): July, August and September 2015. The Balance Cohort (n=2,898) refers to injured workers of premium payers or self-insurers who had one or more days compensated and are not members of the Historic Cohort. Interviewing was conducted between 6 April and 4 May 2016.

**New Zealand: Total interviewed** – 1,071 telephone interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date of between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2016 across two time-based Cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=360) refers to people injured at work whose claim date fell within the 2 month submission period: 1 September 2015 to 31 October 2015 AND had received 5 or more days of weekly compensation. The Balance Cohort (n=711) refers to ACC claimants from the work account, earners' account, or motor vehicle account AND for whom their claim falls within 2 years from the date of sample extraction AND who have received weekly compensation AND who have had some payment activity on their claim during the previous 6 months (from date of sample extraction). Interviewing was conducted between 16 May and 8 June 2016.

	Historic Cohort	Balance Cohort			Total
	(Premium Payers only)	Premium Payer	Self-Insurer	Sub-total	
Australia	2,226	2,005	893	2,898	5,124
New South Wales	444	246	122	368	812
Victoria	400	377	48	425	825
Queensland	450	343	34	377	827
South Australia	230	148	114	262	492
Western Australia	400	117	15	132	532
Tasmania	145	241	15	256	401
Comcare	85	383	530	913	998
Seacare	2	97	0	97	99
Northern Territory	70	53	15	68	138
New Zealand	360	na	na	711	1,071

### **Headline measures**

- Returned to Work Rate (equivalent to the previous 'RTW Rate')
- Current Return to Work Rate (equivalent to the previous 'Durable RTW Rate' and published annually in the Comparative Performance Monitoring report).

**Survey length** – On average 20.9 minutes for Australia and 24.9 minutes for New Zealand.

**Response rate** – 81.6% of injured workers who were successfully contacted and in scope in Australia and 81.3% of those contacted and in scope in New Zealand completed an interview.

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

### **Weighting**

- Historic cohort weighted to jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.