

Return to Work Survey

2016 Summary Research Report (Australia and New Zealand)

August 2016



Social
Research
Centre

An ANU Enterprise business

Report prepared for:

Safe Work Australia
GPO Box 641 Canberra ACT 2061

Report prepared by:

The Social Research Centre
Level 9, 277 William Street
MELBOURNE VIC. 3000
Tel: (613) 9236 8500
Fax: (613) 9602 5422

www.srcentre.com.au

Version: 18 October 2016



This report was commissioned by Safe Work Australia.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this document can only assist you in the most general way. This document does not replace any statutory requirements under any relevant state and territory legislation. Safe Work Australia is not liable for any loss resulting from any action taken or reliance made by you on the information or material contained on this document. Before relying on the material, users should carefully make their own assessment as to its accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for their purposes, and should obtain any appropriate professional advice relevant to their particular circumstances. The views in this report should not be taken to represent the views of Safe Work Australia unless otherwise expressly stated.

Creative Commons



With the exception of the Safe Work Australia and the Social Research Centre logo this report is licensed by Safe Work Australia under a Creative Commons 3.0 Australia Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/deed.en>

Enquiries regarding the licence and any use of the report are welcome at:

Copyright Officer
Safe Work Australia
GPO Box 641 Canberra ACT 2601
Email: copyrightrequests@swa.gov.au

ISBN 978-1-76028-935-5 [PDF]

ISBN 978-1-76028-936-2 [DOCX]

Contents

List of figures	vi
List of tables	vii
Foreword	viii
Executive Summary	1
Scheme differences and reading this report	1
Summary profile of respondents	1
Key return to work outcome results.....	1
Comparisons by organisation type and country	2
1. Research findings	5
1.1. Scheme differences and reading this report	5
1.2. Sampling and time series comparisons	5
1.3. Summary profile of respondents	6
1.3.1. Composition of final sample	6
1.3.2. General Work and Claim Status	9
1.3.3. General Health Status	12
1.4. Return to Work Outcomes (historical measures)	15
1.4.1. Returned to Work Rate	15
1.4.2. Current Return to Work Rate	18
1.4.3. 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate (Historic Cohort)	21
1.5. Return to Work Outcomes (full sample)	23
1.5.1. Returned to Work Proportion	23
1.5.2. Current Return to Work Proportion	25
1.5.3. 3-month Stable Return to Work Proportion	27
1.6. Service quality / treatment experiences	29
1.6.1. Perceptions of service quality	29
1.6.2. Experience of workers' compensation	31
1.6.3. Experience of medical treatment / services	32
1.7. Workplace and the Employer	34
1.7.1. In the workplace	34
1.7.2. RTW status	38
1.7.3. Return to work support and rehabilitation	40
1.7.4. Workplace rehabilitation	45
1.7.5. Role of work, the employer and others	46
1.7.6. Experience of submitting a workers' compensation claim	50
2. Methodology	55
2.1. Research design and sample selection	55
2.2. Time series comparisons	56
2.3. Data collection	56
2.4. Presentation of results and significance testing	56
2.5. Participation rates	57
2.6. Weighting	57
2.7. Fieldwork procedures and monitoring	58
2.7.1. Field team briefing	58
2.7.2. Fieldwork quality control procedures	58

2.8.	Sample maximisation techniques	59
2.8.1.	Ethical considerations	59
2.8.2.	Informed consent.....	59
2.8.3.	1800 number operation	59

List of figures

Figure 1	Main activity of those not currently working by country (%)	9
Figure 2	Main reason not currently working by country (top 7 categories) (%)	10
Figure 3	Receipt of workers' compensation to replace lost income by country (% Yes)	11
Figure 4:	Leave taken in addition to workers' compensation by country (%)	12
Figure 5	Current general health status (%).....	12
Figure 6:	Extent of recovery from injury or illness by country (%)	13
Figure 7	Extent to which further recovery is likely (%)	13
Figure 8	Extent of final recovery by country (%)	14
Figure 9	Returned to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)	15
Figure 10	Returned to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)	16
Figure 11	Returned to Work Rate (jurisdiction trend over time) (%).....	17
Figure 12:	Current Return to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)	18
Figure 13	Current Return to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)	19
Figure 14	Current Return to Work Rate (jurisdiction trend over time) (%).....	20
Figure 15	3-month Stable Return to Work Rate by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)	21
Figure 16	3-month Stable Return to Work Rate by country (%)	22
Figure 17	Returned to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)	23
Figure 18	Returned to Work by country and organisation type (%)	24
Figure 19	Current Return to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)	25
Figure 20	Current Return to Work by country and organisation type (%).....	26
Figure 21	3-month Stable Return to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%).....	27
Figure 22	3-month Stable Return to Work by country and organisation type (%)	28
Figure 23	Perceived risk of someone else experiencing same injury or illness by organisation type (%)	37
Figure 24	Recovery impact of returning to work by country and organisation type (%)	38
Figure 25	Additional time off by country and organisation type (%)	39
Figure 26	Return to work plan by country and organisation type (% Yes)	40
Figure 27	Views considered during return to work by country and organisation type (%)	41
Figure 28	Involvement in development of return to work plan by country and organisation type (%).....	42
Figure 29	Helpfulness of return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)	43
Figure 30	Help required for return to work plan by country and organisation type (% Yes)	44
Figure 31	Receipt of rehabilitation services by organisation type (% Yes).....	45
Figure 32	Ongoing employer support by country and organisation type (%)	47
Figure 33	Contact with workplace about recovery by organisation type (% Yes).....	48
Figure 34	When injured worker was contacted by organisation type (%).....	49
Figure 35	Employer helped injured worker manage injury by organisation type (% Yes)	50
Figure 36	Employer discouraged injured worker from putting in a claim by organisation type (% Yes)	51
Figure 37	Differences of opinion between injured worker and employer by country and organisation type (% Yes).....	53
Figure 38	Assistance required to resolve difference of opinion by country and organisation type (% Yes)	54

List of tables

Table 1	Key return to work outcome measures	2
Table 2	Number of interviews by country, Australian jurisdiction and cohort	6
Table 3	Number of interviews by size of premium paying business	7
Table 4:	Sample characteristics (unweighted data)	8
Table 5	Perceptions of service from organisation handling claim by jurisdiction (% Total good)	29
Table 6	Perceptions of service from organisation handling claim by organisation type (% Total good)	30
Table 7	Experience of being on workers' compensation by country and jurisdiction (% Total agree)	31
Table 8	Experience of GP by jurisdiction (% Total agree)	32
Table 9	Experience of medical care / treatment by jurisdiction (% Total agree)	33
Table 10:	Perceptions of current work by organisation type (% Total agree)	34
Table 11	Experience with current work (roles and responsibilities) by organisation type (% Total agree)	35
Table 12	Perceptions of current workplace by organisation type (% Total agree)	36
Table 14	Perceptions of employer support by country and organisation type (% Total agree)	46
Table 15	Experience in putting in a claim by organisation type (% Total agree)	52
Table 16	Key project statistics	57

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 following a decision in 2014 to run it every second year. 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 report provides more detailed information compared to the *Headline Measures Report, Australia (2016)* published on Safe Work Australia's website in June.

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

Safe Work Australia

August 2016

Executive Summary

Scheme differences and reading this report

This report summarises the key findings of the 2015/16 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*. 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 1.

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. Eleven per cent of injured workers in Australia and 20% in New Zealand were currently receiving workers' compensation to replace their lost income and up to a quarter said that they had to take additional paid or unpaid leave.

In terms of general health, 16% of injured workers in Australia and 7% in New Zealand rated their general health to be excellent at the time of the survey while 21% in Australia and 25% in New Zealand considered it poor or fair. A significantly higher proportion of injured workers in Australia (39%) reported being fully recovered in comparison to New Zealand (20%). Despite these differences, future recovery expectations of those who believe that they will continue recovering were similar – 80% of Australian and 76% 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.

Table 1 **Key return to work outcome measures**

	Australia (%)			New Zealand (%)		
	2013	2014	2016	2013	2014	2016
Historic Cohort						
Returned to Work Rate	86	87	87	85	88	86
Current Return to Work Rate	77	77	77	78	77	79
New 3-month Stable Return to Work	58	61	58	63	61	63
Full Sample						
Returned to Work Proportion	89	94	93	89	91	82
Current Return to Work Proportion	77	83	83	84	85	74
3-month Stable Return to Proportion	61	69	69	56	53	54

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)
- 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:

- Agreement for “*Employees and management are generally supportive of each other*” was significantly higher for small organisations (85%) compared to large (79%) and medium (76%) organisations.
- Agreement for “*Your immediate supervisor or manager is committed to workplace safety*” was significantly higher for small organisations (91%) compared to medium organisations (86%).
- Being very involved in the development of their return to work plan was significantly higher among injured workers from small businesses (67%) compared to those from medium sized organisations (53%).

Returning to work

Injured workers in New Zealand (44%) were significantly more likely to state that returning to work when they did helped their recovery in comparison to those in Australia (33%). Key points to note are:

- A significantly greater proportion of injured workers in Australia (64%) stated that they had a return to work plan in comparison to New Zealand (55%) and around six in ten reported that they were very involved in the development of the plan.
- The presence of a plan has increased significantly from 2014 (Australia, 50% and New Zealand 48%). Involvement in the development of the plan was significantly higher among injured workers from small businesses (67%) compared to those from medium sized organisations (53%).

- Of those injured workers with a return to work plan, a smaller proportion in Australia (52%) and New Zealand (51%) felt that their views had been fully considered in comparison to 2014 (55% and 65% respectively). That said, more than three quarters of respondents in Australia (78%) and New Zealand (89%) considered their plan to be helpful or very helpful – which is similar to 2014 for Australia (78%) and higher within New Zealand (70%).
- The proportion of respondents employed at self-insured organisations who rated their plan as very helpful (39%) significantly increased by 17 percentage points in comparison to 2014
- 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

Engagement of a workplace rehabilitation provider is a key mechanism in workers' compensation schemes. Engagement was more commonly reported by injured workers of self-insured and large organisations (77% each) than medium (73%) and small (71%) businesses.

Fifty nine per cent of injured workers across Australia stated that their supervisor or someone else from work had contacted them about recovering from their injury or illness. Results were similar across organisational type and premium paying business size with injured workers from self-insuring organisations (57%) least likely to say someone had called while those from large businesses (61%) were most likely to say this. Respondents said contact was usually made within the first 3 days of the injury (83% across Australia).

Employer support

Injured workers from large premium paying businesses reported the highest levels of agreement to all aspects of employer support canvassed in the survey. Key points to note are:

- Injured workers of large businesses (85%) were significantly more likely to agree that their employer *"treated them fairly during the claims process"* in comparison to respondents in small (76%) or medium (75%) businesses.
- A significantly greater proportion of injured workers employed in large organisations (82%) agreed that their employer *"treated them fairly after the claims process"* in comparison to small businesses (76%).
- Injured workers from small and medium businesses (30% and 28% respectively) more commonly reported that their ongoing needs were not at all supported by their employer in comparison to those in large organisations (19%).
- A significantly smaller proportion of injured workers in New Zealand considered that their employer was supporting them to a great extent (25%) which has also decreased significantly from 2014 (32%).

Experience of being on workers' compensation

A higher proportion of respondents from 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."* This is in slight contrast to 2014 where agreement to all statements among small businesses was marginally higher than large organisations.

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 in Australia and were significantly lower than for New Zealand.

Experience in submitting a claim

Just over half (56%) of injured workers reported that their employer helped them to manage their condition before they lodged a workers' compensation claim. This finding was significantly more common among large (59%) than small organisations (51%).

More than one in ten (14%) injured workers across Australia reported that they felt their employer discouraged them from putting in a workers' compensation claim. A significantly smaller proportion of those from large organisations felt discouraged (11%) compared to those from small (19%) or medium organisations (15%).

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 up to eight percentage points higher among medium organisations in comparison to small and large organisations. Agreement levels were similar among injured workers in small and large businesses.

1. Research findings

1.1. Scheme differences and reading this report

This report summarises the key findings of the 2015/16 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*.

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 work and non-work related injuries. Direct comparisons therefore of New Zealand data with Australia can only be made for work related injuries. Full New Zealand data is reported separately on behalf of Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).
- 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.

In addition to differences in scheme design, other factors to consider when comparing jurisdictions and which may influence RTW include industry structure, occupation, remoteness, service accessibility and the economy.

The Institute for Safety, Compensation and Recovery Research (ISCRR) has established the Compensation Policy and Return to Work Effectiveness (ComPARE) project, which aims to identify the impact of policy and practice on return to work (RTW) outcomes. ISCRR is working closely with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and state and territory government compensation authorities throughout Australia, New Zealand and Canada to:

- compare RTW outcomes in specific cohorts of workers between Australian, Canadian and New Zealand workers' compensation jurisdiction;
- investigate the impact of specific policy settings on RTW outcomes; and
- identify policy settings that have a positive, negative or neutral impact on RTW outcomes, and the magnitude of this impact.

Reports from the ComPARE study are available on ISCRR's [website](#).

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 (August and September 2015) and 7 to 9 months of age in smaller jurisdictions (July, August and

September 2015). 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 (1 March 2014 to 31 January 2016) 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 mentioned in text where they exist, any other differences should be regarded as non-significant.

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 with a work related injury only to enable comparisons with Australian data.

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

	Historic Cohort	Balance Cohort			Total
	(Premium Payers only)	Premium Payers	Self-Insurers	Sub-total	
Australia	2,226	2,005	893	2,898	5,124
New South Wales (NSW)	444	246	122	368	812
Victoria (VIC)	400	377	48	425	825
Queensland (QLD)	450	343	34	377	827
South Australia (SA)	230	148	114	262	492
Western Australia (WA)	400	117	15	132	532
Tasmania (TAS)	145	241	15	256	401
Northern Territory (NT)	70	53	15	68	138
Comcare (COM)	85	383	530	913	998
Seacare (SEA)	2	97	0	97	99
New Zealand (NZ)	360	n/a	n/a	711	1,071
Work related injury	360	n/a	n/a	212	572
Non-work related injury	-	n/a	n/a	499	499

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)
- 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)
- large (\$20 million or more remuneration).

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

	Small	Medium	Large	Total
Australia	1,081	1,357	1,655	4,093
New South Wales (NSW)	279	267	142	688
Victoria (VIC)	188	260	329	777
Queensland (QLD)	214	281	298	793
South Australia (SA)	135	192	43	370
Western Australia (WA)	131	149	237	517
Tasmania (TAS)	132	178	76	386
Comcare (COM)	0	4	459	463
Seacare (SEA)	2	26	71	99

Note: Northern Territory organisation size not provided in 2016. Comcare organisation size based on 2016 data for Private Providers and 2015 data for Self-insurers.

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=)	5,124	572
Gender (where provided)		
Male	65	71
Female	35	29
Age (where provided)		
18 to 30	16	17
31 to 45	27	23
46 to 60	43	42
60+	13	18
Cohort		
Historic	43	63
Balance	57	37
Claim Type		
Premium paying	83	100
Self-insured	17	-

1.3.2. General Work and Claim Status

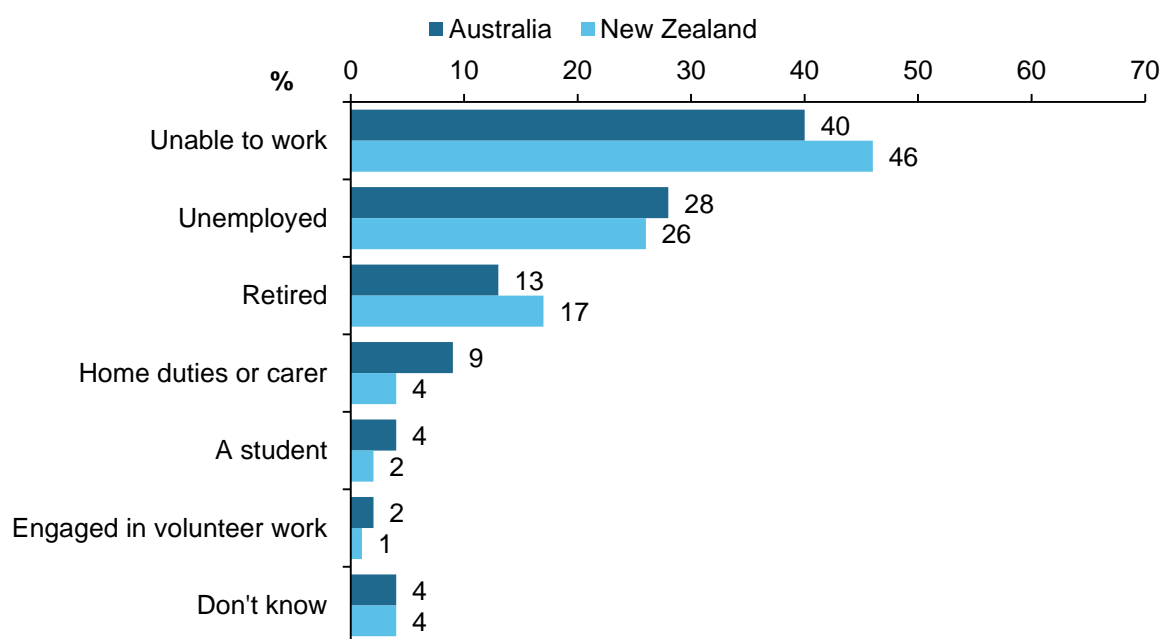
The research asked all respondents in Australia and New Zealand a series of questions about their general work and claim status. This section was designed to better understand the extent to which injured workers had returned to work, their employment status and if they had accessed workers' compensation.

Within Australia just over eight in ten (84%) injured workers reported that they were currently working in a paid job compared to 76% 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 three per cent of Australian injured workers and 82% 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).

Figure 1: Main activity of those not currently working by country (%)



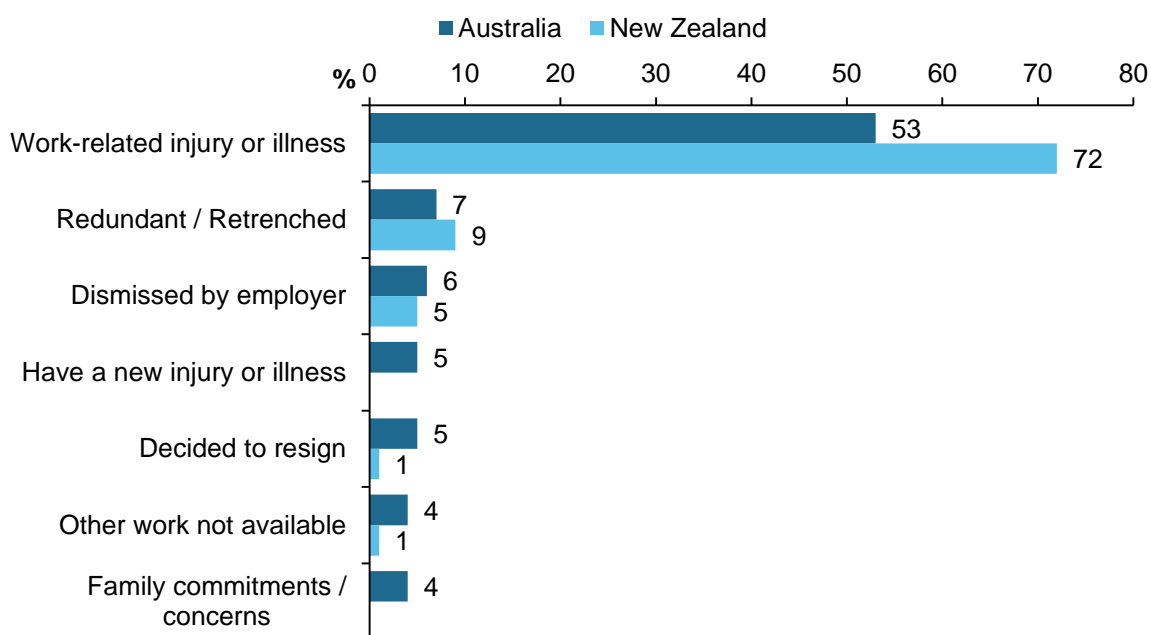
Base: Not currently working in a paid job - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=852; NZ=116).

C2. Which of these BEST describes your current MAIN activity? Are you...

Most injured workers in Australia (53%) and New Zealand (72%) reported that their work related injury or illness was the main reason that they were not currently working (Figure 2). This finding has increased significantly for Australia and New Zealand in comparison to 2014 (45% and 40% respectively).

One third (34%) of Australian and 68% of New Zealand injured workers who gave a reason other than their work related injury or illness for not currently working said that it was still associated with the injury or illness that they sustained at work.

Figure 2: Main reason not currently working by country (top 7 categories) (%)

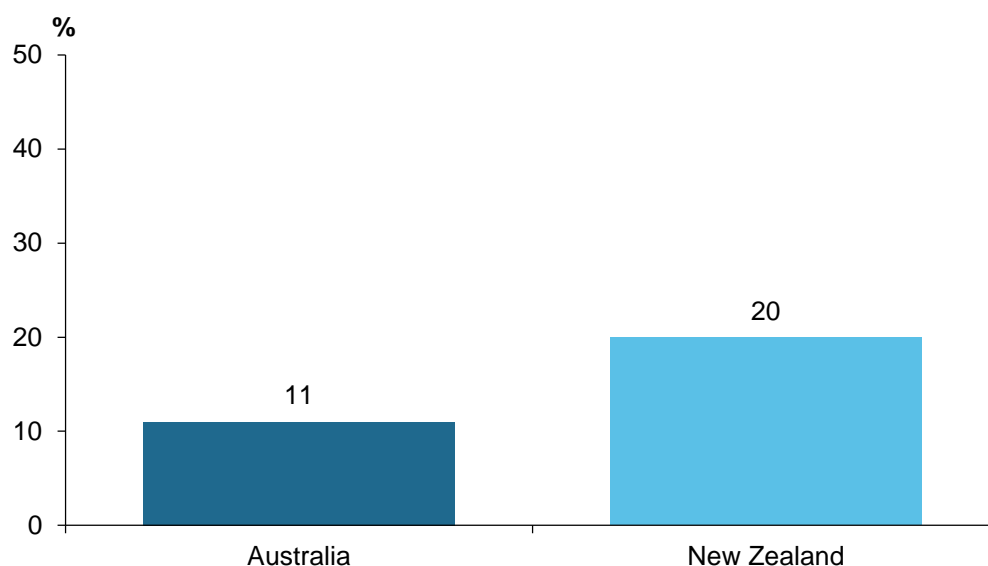


Base: Not currently working in a paid job including don't know and refused - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=945; NZ=114).

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

A significantly smaller proportion of injured workers in Australia (11%) than New Zealand (20%) reported that they were currently receiving workers' compensation payments to help replace lost income (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Receipt of workers' compensation to replace lost income by country (% Yes)



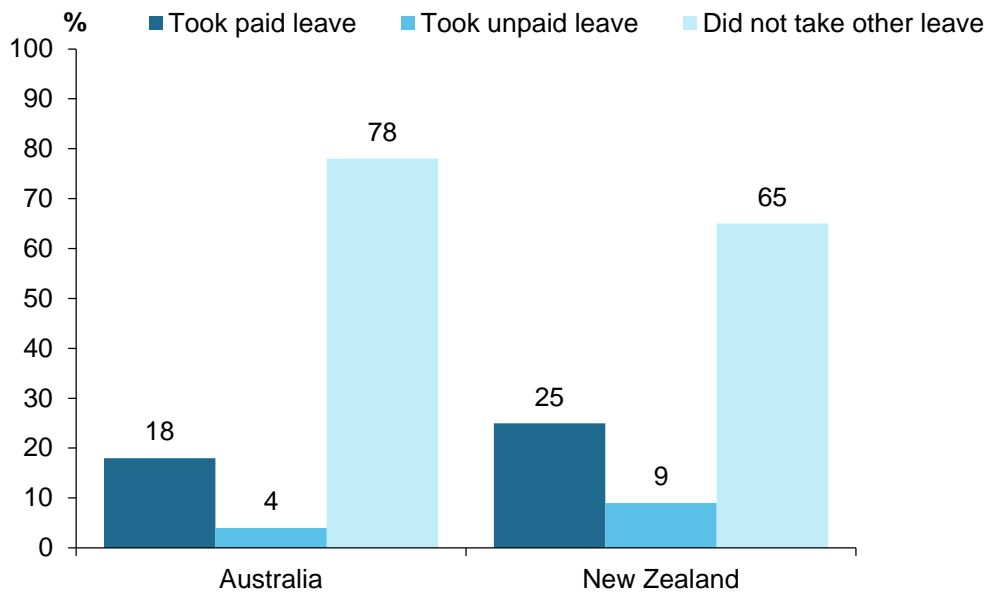
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in Comcare (AUS=4,126; NZ=572).

C10. Are you currently getting any workers' compensation payments to replace lost income?

Seven in ten Australian (70%) injured workers reported that the workers' compensation payments they received assisted them in meeting normal day-to-day living expenses. This question was not asked in New Zealand.

Similar proportions of injured workers in Australia (78%) and New Zealand (65%) stated that they had not taken paid or unpaid leave, in addition to receiving workers' compensation (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Leave taken in addition to workers' compensation by country (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in Comcare (AUS=4,126; NZ=572).
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, 78% in Australia and 75% in New Zealand reported their health to be good or better (Figure 5).

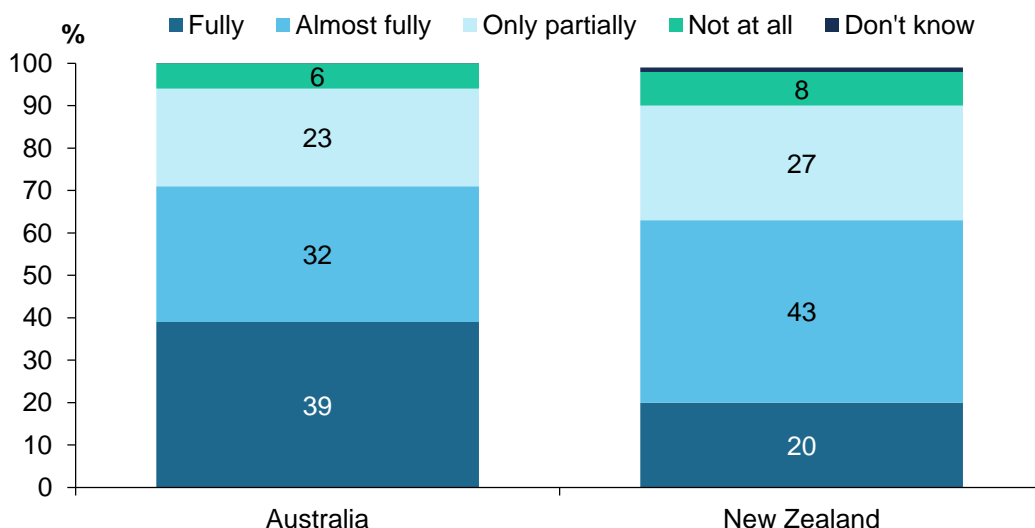
Figure 5: Current general health status (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=5,124; NZ=572). Don't know and refused excluded from base for analysis (AUS=5,084; NZ=568).
B1. In general would you say your health NOW is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Figure 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 Australia reported having recovered 'fully' (39%) than in New Zealand (20%). The New Zealand result decreased significantly from 32% in 2014.

Figure 6: Extent of recovery from injury or illness by country (%)



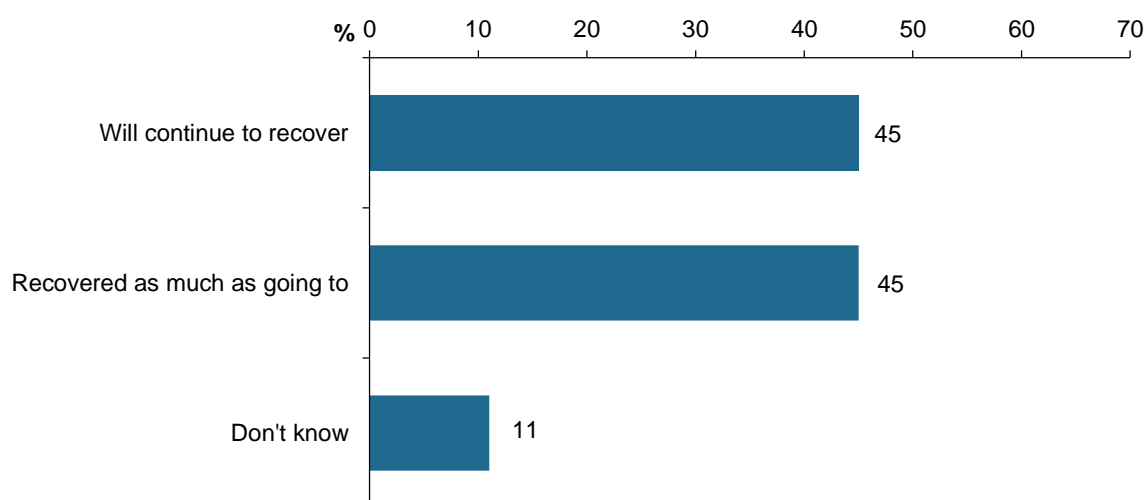
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=5,124; NZ=572).

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 7 shows that 45% of Australian injured workers expected that they would continue to recover from their workplace injury or illness, 45% felt they had recovered as much as they were going to. Eleven per cent of injured workers reported that they did not know if they would continue to recover. This question was not asked in New Zealand.

Figure 7: Extent to which further recovery is likely (%)



Base: Those not fully recovered - Historic and Balance Cohorts Cohort (AUS=2,863).

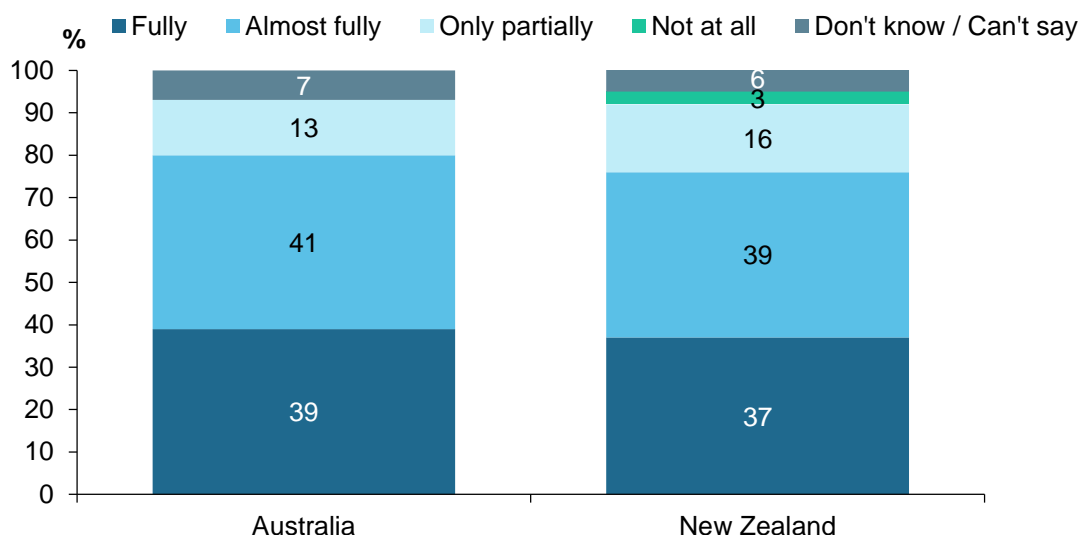
B3. Do you think you have recovered as much as you are going to or do you think you will continue to recover?

Those who indicated that they had not recovered as much as they were going to and would continue to recover were asked to what extent they expected to recover from their workplace injury or illness.

Figure 8 shows that of those injured workers who believed they will continue to recover, 39% from Australia and 37% from New Zealand expected to fully recover from their workplace injury or illness. Fewer than one in ten injured workers in Australia (7%) and New Zealand (6%) could not to predict the level of their future recovery.

These findings decreased in Australia and New Zealand since the 2014 study (42% and 43% respectively).

Figure 8: Extent of final recovery by country (%)



Base: Those not fully recovered but will continue to recover - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=2,105; NZ=420).

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 Monitor¹, 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 9 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.

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 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=2,226; NSW=444, VIC=400, QLD=450, SA=230, WA=400, TAS=145 NT=70, COM=85, NZ=360).

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

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.

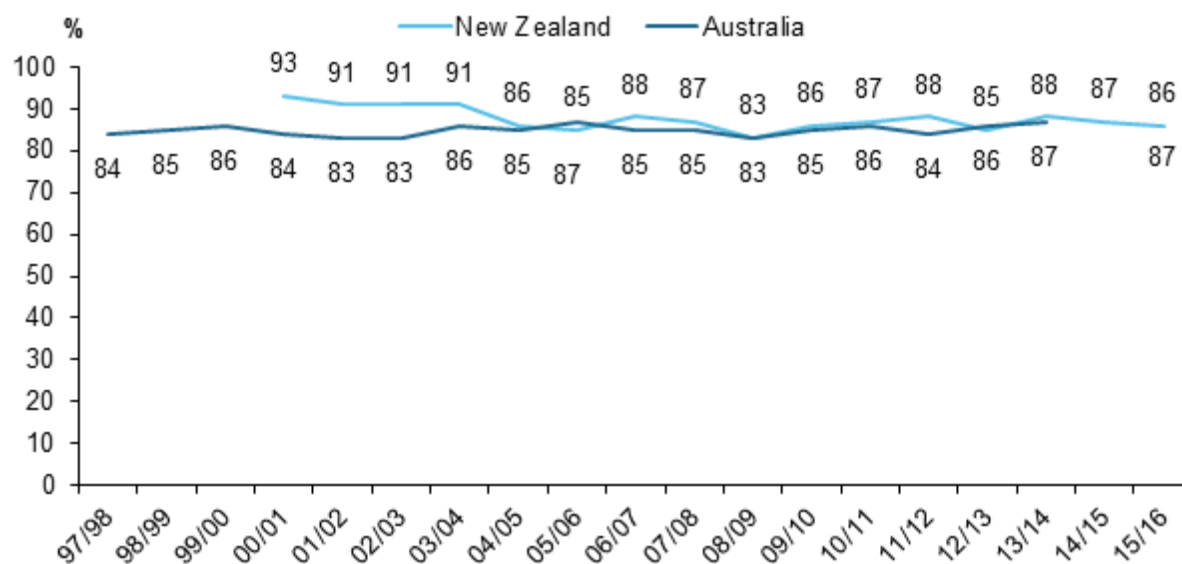
^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

¹ www.hwca.org.au

Figure 10 shows the national trends for Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2015/16 Returned to Work Rate is the same for Australia (87%) as the last iteration of this study in 2014. The New Zealand result (86%) is one percentage point lower than that recorded in 2015 and two percentage points lower in comparison to 2014. The decrease from 2015 for New Zealand is not significant.

Figure 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	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

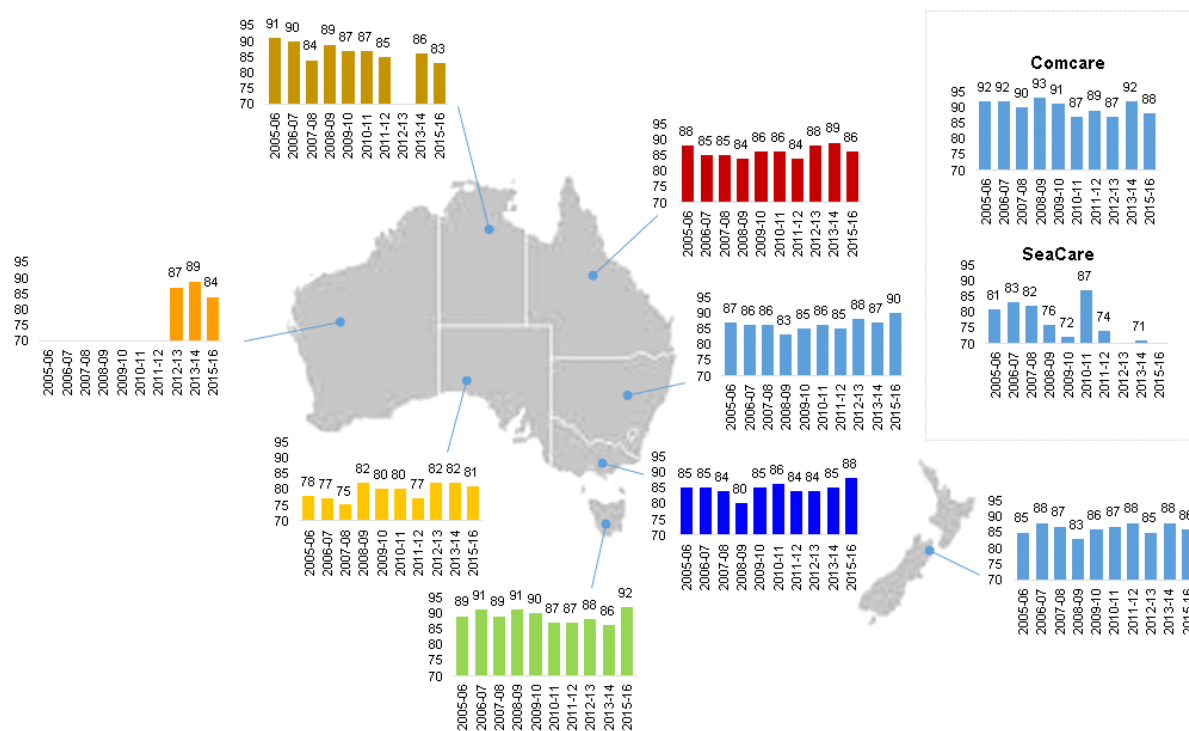
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

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

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

Figure 11 illustrates the Returned to Work Rate over time for each Jurisdiction in Australia. It should be noted, however, that not all jurisdictions participated in every iteration of this study or the previous Return to Work Monitor.

Figure 11: Returned to Work Rate (jurisdiction trend over time) (%)



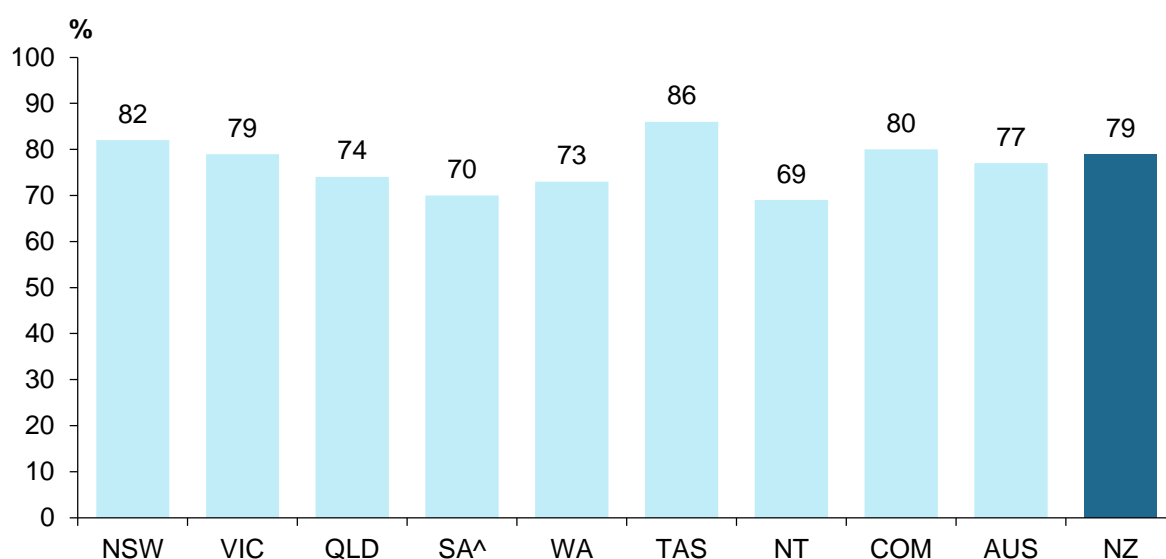
1.4.2. Current Return to Work Rate

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 12 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.

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 12: 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=2,226: NSW=444, VIC=400, QLD=450, SA=230, WA=400, TAS=145, NT=70, COM=85, NZ=360).

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

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?

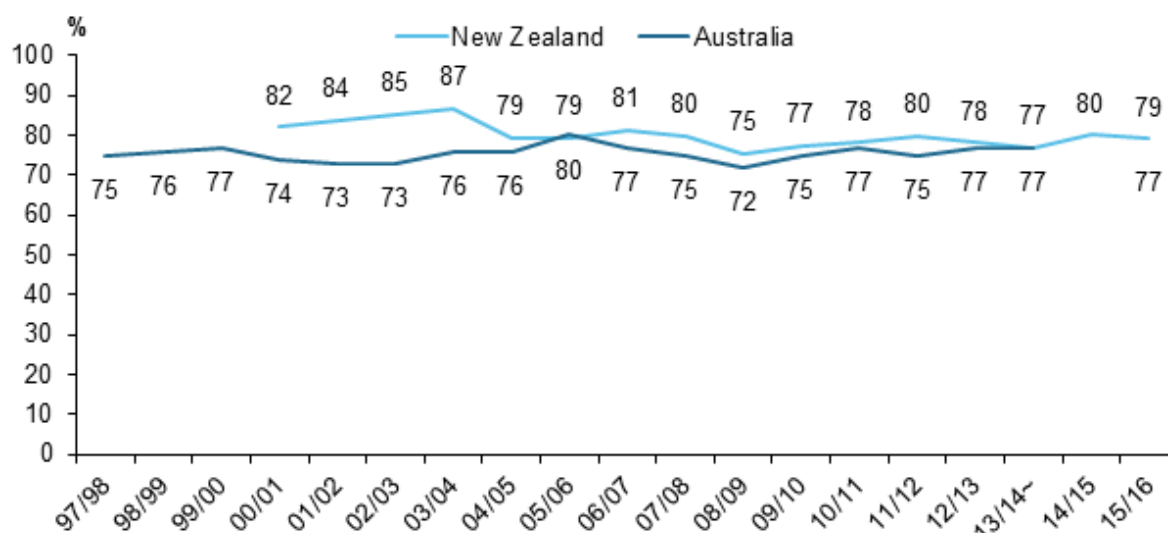
Note: Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.

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

Figure 13 shows the national trend for both Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2015/16 Current Return to Work Rate is the same for Australia (77%) as the last iteration of this study in 2014. The New Zealand result (79%) is one percentage point lower than that recorded in 2015 and two percentage points higher in comparison to 2014. The decrease from 2015 for New Zealand is not significant.

Figure 13: 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	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

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?

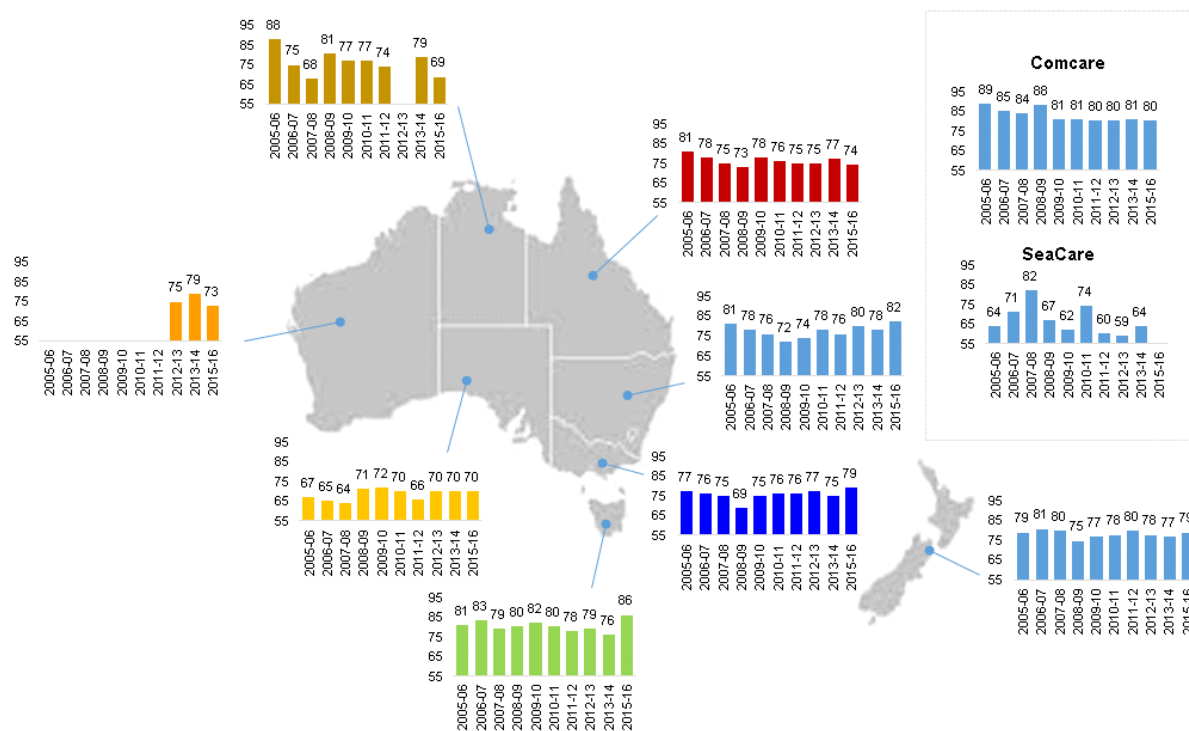
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

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

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

Figure 14 illustrates the Current Return to Work Rate over time for each Jurisdiction in Australia. It should be noted, however, that not all jurisdictions participated in every iteration of this study or the previous Return to Work Monitor.

Figure 14: Current Return to Work Rate (jurisdiction trend over time) (%)



1.4.3. 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate (Historic Cohort)

The change in 2012 to the Return to Work Survey and inclusion of the Balance Cohort provided an opportunity to explore new measures. One such measure 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 was the 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate. 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 15 shows that 58% of Australian and 63% 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.

The Historic Cohort quota for the Seacare jurisdiction was not obtained due to insufficient sample and is not reported given the small overall sample size.

Figure 15: 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=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.

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?

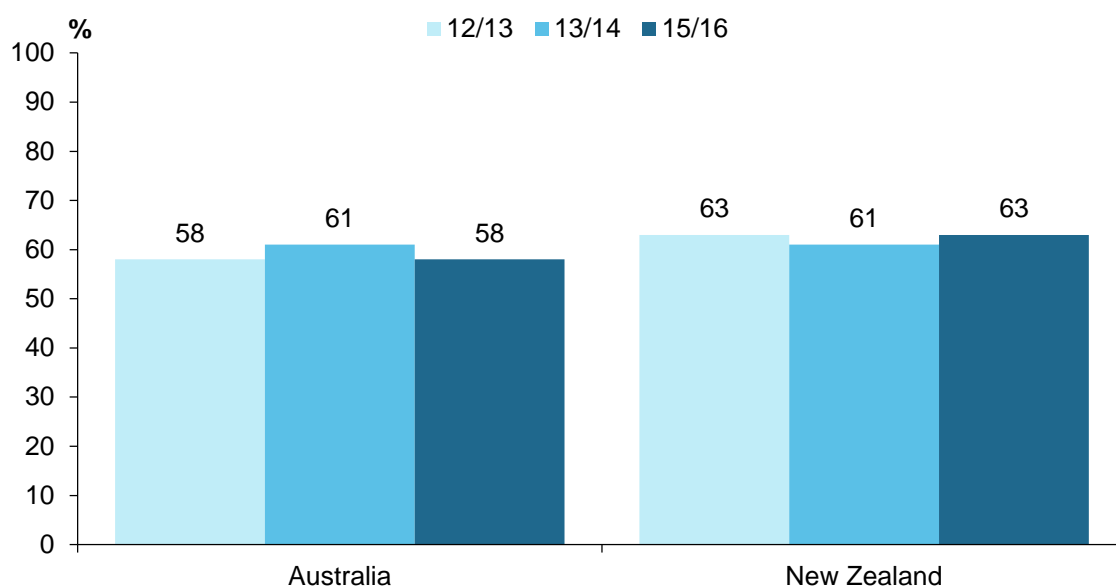
Note: Full sample weighted separately to individual jurisdiction population; within jurisdiction cohort, further post-stratified weighting by claim type, age of claim and days compensated was conducted to form an aggregate weight (RIM weighting).

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

Figure 16 shows the national trend for both Australia and New Zealand since 2012/13.

The 2015/16 3-month stable Return to Work Rate is three percentage points lower in Australia (58%) and two percentage points higher for New Zealand (63%) than last year.

Figure 16: 3-month Stable Return to Work Rate by country (%)



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

(12/13: AUS=3,279, NZ=452; 13/14: AUS=2397, NZ=345; 15/16: AUS=2,226, NZ=360).

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 Monitor²

² www.hwca.org.au

1.5. Return to Work Outcomes (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
- 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).

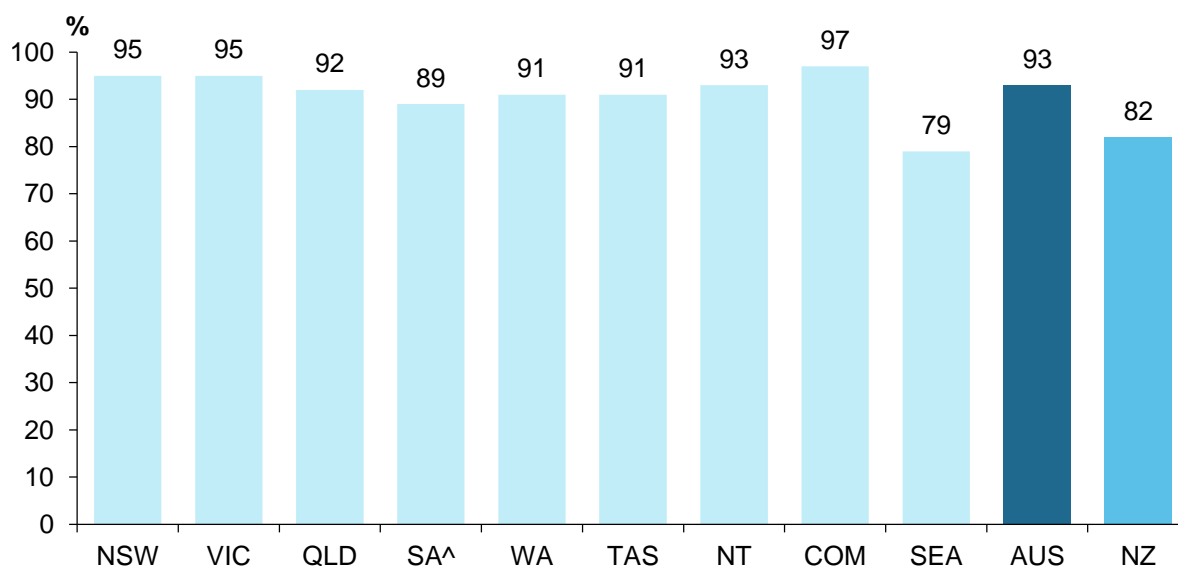
This provides an opportunity to examine return to work outcomes using the full sample and the following section of the report is based on all respondents from premium paying and self-insured organisations across the broader population.

1.5.1. Returned to Work Proportion

Figure 17 shows that 93% of Australian and 82% 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 six percentage point increase for Australia and four percentage point decrease for New Zealand in comparison to the Historic Cohort shown earlier in Figure 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 17: Returned to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts. (AUS=5,124: NSW=812, VIC=825, QLD=827, SA=492, WA=532, TAS=401, NT=138, COM=998, SEA=99*. NZ=572).

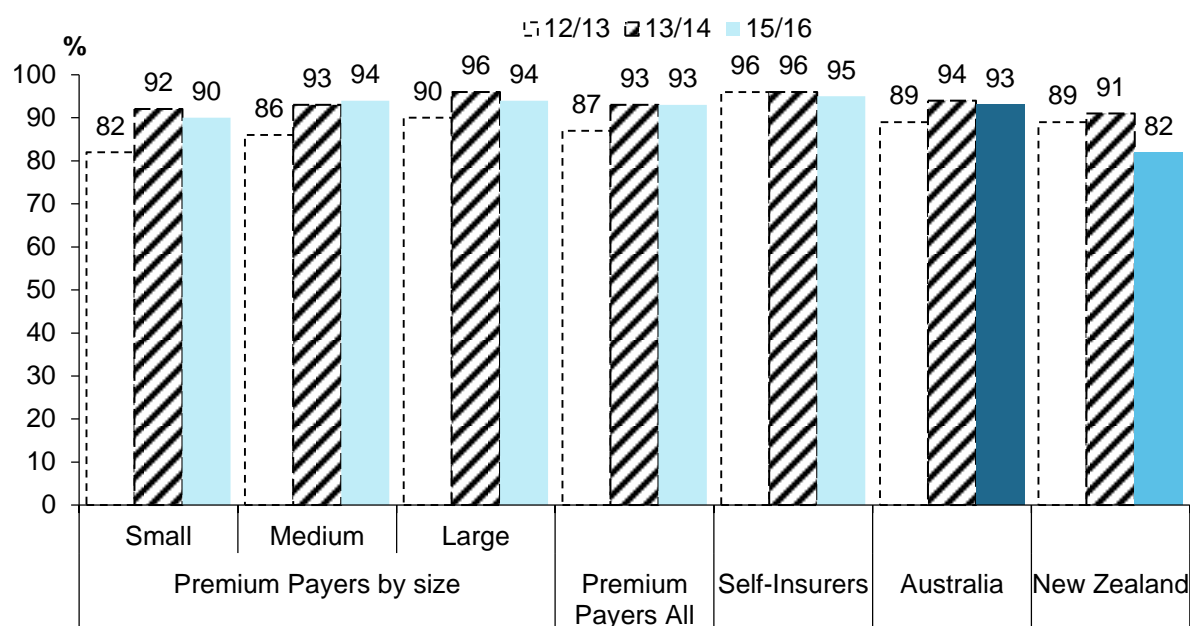
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

Figure 18 shows that 95% of injured workers from self-insured organisations were working in a paid job at the time of the interview. This proportion is two 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 (93%). The Australian proportion decreased one percentage point from 94% in 2014, while the New Zealand result decreased nine percentage points to 82% from 2015.

Within premium paying organisations, the Return to Work Proportion is equally high among medium and large (94%) businesses followed by small businesses (90%).

Figure 18: Returned to Work by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (12/13: AUS=4,698, NZ=564; 13/14: AUS=4,679, NZ=705; 15/16: 5,124, NZ=572).

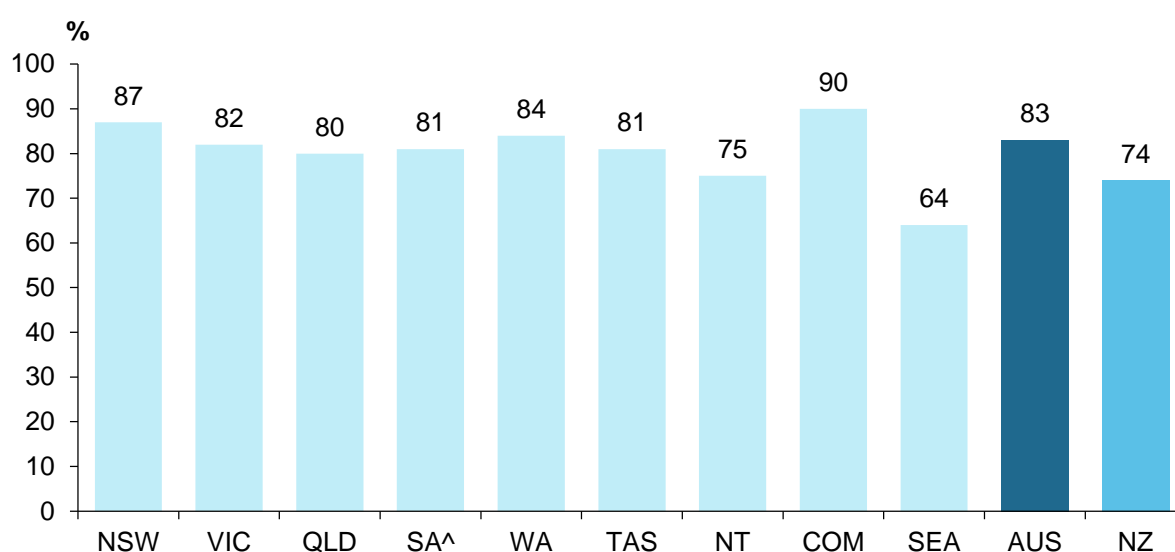
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

1.5.2. Current Return to Work Proportion

Figure 19 shows that 83% of Australian and 74% 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 a five point decrease for New Zealand in comparison to the Historic Cohort shown earlier in Figure 12. 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 19: Current Return to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts. (AUS=5,124: NSW=812, VIC=825, QLD=827, SA=492, WA=532, TAS=401, NT=138, COM=998, SEA=99. NZ=572).

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?

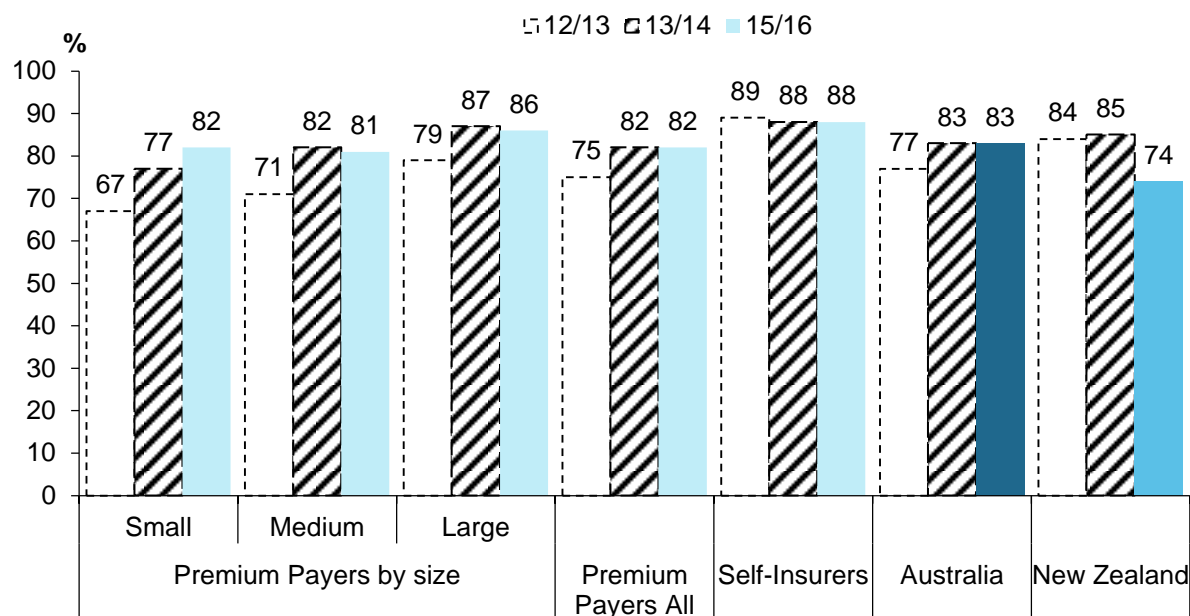
C7. Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?

Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

Figure 20 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 six percentage points higher than the rate for premium paying organisations (82%) and five percentage points higher than the national rate for all Australian businesses (83%). The Australian proportion remained stable with 2014 (83%) while the New Zealand result decreased 11 percentage points to 74% from 2015.

Within premium paying organisations, the Current Return to Work Proportion is highest among large (86%), followed by small (82%) and medium businesses (81%). Small organisations saw the greatest change since last year, increasing five percentage points.

Figure 20: Current Return to Work by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (12/13: AUS=4,698, NZ=564; 13/14: AUS=4679, NZ=444; 15/16: AUS=5,124, NZ=572).

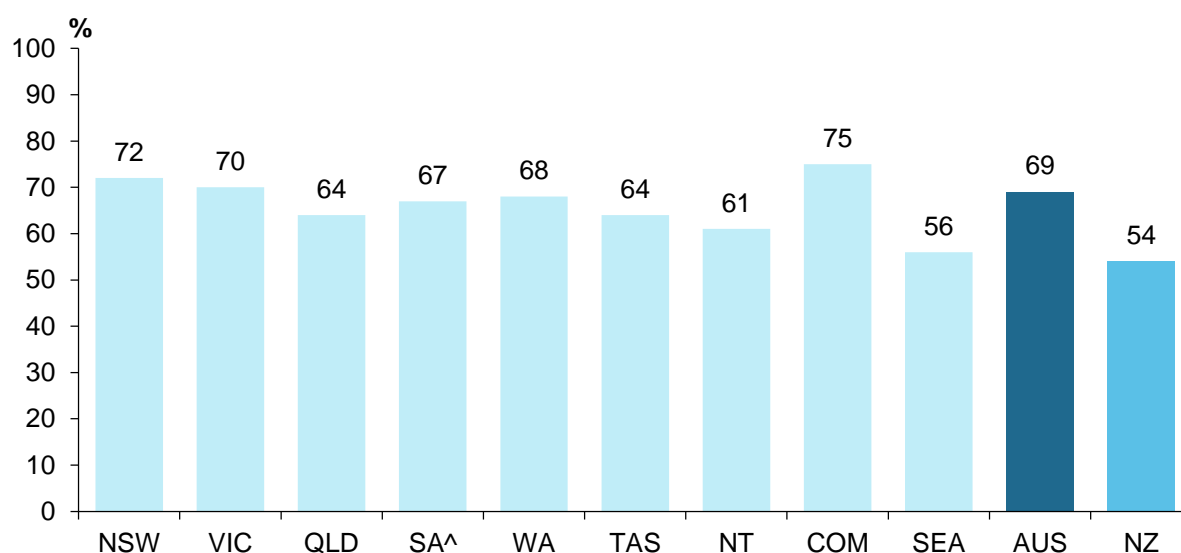
C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?

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

1.5.3. 3-month Stable Return to Work Proportion

Figure 21 shows that 69% of Australian and 54% 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 11 percentage point increase for Australia and nine percentage point decrease for New Zealand in comparison to the Historic Cohort shown earlier in Figure 15.

Figure 21: 3-month Stable Return to Work by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts. (AUS=5,124: NSW=812, VIC=825, QLD=827, SA=492, WA=532, TAS=401, NT=138, COM=998, SEA=99*. NZ=572).

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?

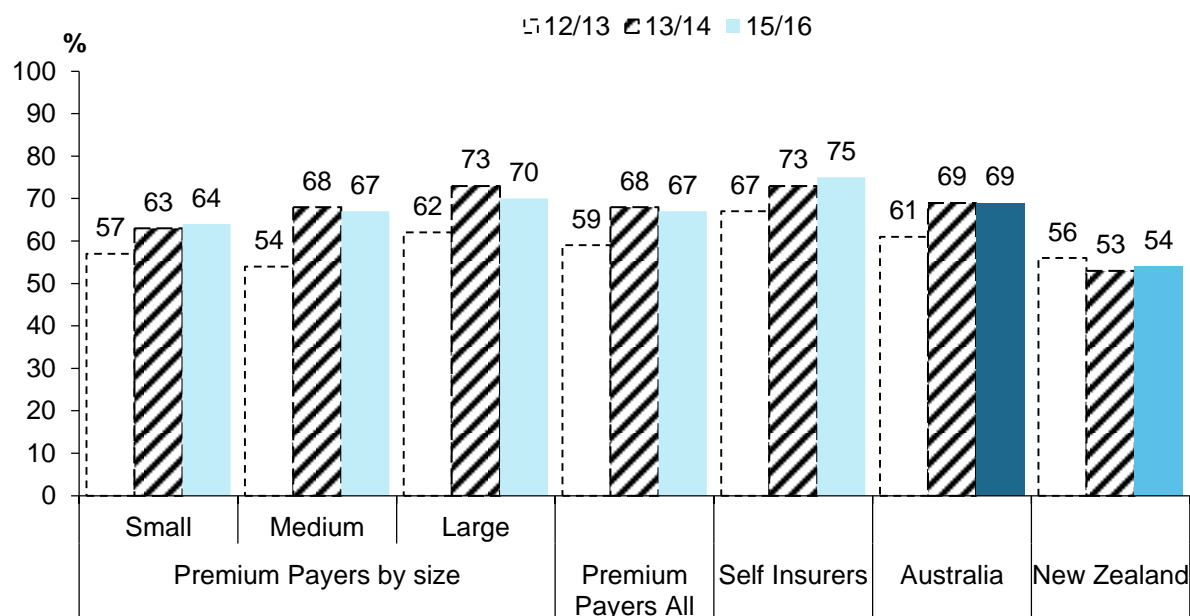
H30. So, how long have you been back at work (for since your last additional time off?

Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

Figure 22 shows that 75% of injured workers from self-insured organisations had returned to work and been back at work for at least 3 consecutive months at the time of the interview. This proportion is eight percentage points higher than the rate for premium paying organisations (67%) and six percentage points higher than the national rate for all Australian businesses (69%). The Australian proportion (69%) remained stable with 2014, while the New Zealand result increased one percentage point to 54% in comparison to 2015.

Within premium paying organisations, the 3-month Stable Return to Work Proportion is highest within large organisations (70%), followed by medium organisations (67%) and small organisations (64%). These results show little movement when compared to those recorded in 2014.

Figure 22: 3-month Stable Return to Work by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (12/13: AUS=4,698, NZ=564; 13/14: AUS=4,679, NZ=444; 15/16: AUS=5,124, NZ=572).

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?)

1.6. Service quality / treatment experiences

1.6.1. Perceptions of service quality

Just over half (51%) of Australian injured workers reported that they had contact with the organisation they deal with in relation to their workers' compensation claim in the six months to the end of January. These respondents were asked a series of questions about their experiences and satisfaction with the service that they received (Table 5).

At least seven in ten respondents nationally rated each of the service attributes as good or very good. The highest rated attribute was 'treating you with dignity and respect' (77%) while the least positively rated attributes were 'keeping you informed about your claim' and 'being able to get hold of the right person' (70% each). Queensland was the only jurisdiction in which each of the service attributes were rated more positively than the respective national averages.

Table 5: Perceptions of service from organisation handling claim by jurisdiction (% Total good)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA [^]	WA	TAS	NT	COM	SEA	AUS
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Treating you with dignity and respect	74	73	85	73	81	79	77	85	72	77
Providing a clear explanation to your queries	73	71	85	73	80	73	73	73	68	76
Keeping you informed about your claim	70	62	81	63	67	69	67	69	67	70
Being able to get hold of the right person	65	65	81	69	65	78	81	64	83	70

Base: Had direct dealings with organisation in relation to claim - Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in New Zealand (AUS=2,779). Don't know / not applicable and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=2,594 – 2,713 depending on statement).

P2. Thinking about the six months to the end of January, would you say <organisation> was good or poor in relation to...?

Note: [^] South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

Results were very consistent across organisation size and type (Table 6).

Injured workers from Premium Paying businesses rated the extent to which there were 'provided a clear explanation to their queries' four percentage points higher (77%) than their self-insured counterparts (73%). Medium sized businesses generally recorded the most positive performance ratings across all attributes.

Table 6: Perceptions of service from organisation handling claim by organisation type (% Total good)

	Premium Payers Small %	Premium Payers Medium %	Premium Payers Large %	Premium Payers All %	Self-Insurers %	Australia %
Treating you with dignity and respect	78	77	76	77	77	77
Providing a clear explanation to your queries	76	78	75	77	73	76
Keeping you informed about your claim	71	73	65	70	70	70
Being able to get hold of the right person	65	73	69	70	68	70

Base: Had direct dealings with organisation in relation to claim - Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in New Zealand (AUS=2,779). Don't know / not applicable and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=2,594 – 2,713 depending on statement).

P2. Thinking about the six months to the end of January, would you say <organisation> was good or poor in relation to...?

Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

1.6.2. Experience of workers' compensation

All respondents in Australian and New Zealand were asked as series of statements about their entire experience of being on workers' compensation (Table 8).

The proportion of injured workers who agreed with each of the statements was marginally higher for medium businesses compared to small and large organisations. This is in slight contrast to 2014 where agreement to all statements among small businesses was marginally higher than large organisations.

Consistent with data reported in 2014, 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 (75% each at a National level) across all businesses sizes in Australia.

Agreement was rated higher across all statements among New Zealand injured workers compared to Australia, with significant differences recorded for the following statements:

- *"The PROCESS was open and honest"* (91% compared to 84% in Australia)
- *"There seemed to be good communication between the various people and organisations I dealt with"* (84% compared to 75% in Australia)
- *"I felt like the system was working to protect my best interests"* (83% compared to 75% in Australia).

Table 7: Experience of being on workers' compensation by country and jurisdiction (% Total agree)

	NSW %	VIC %	QLD %	SA^ %	WA %	TAS %	NT %	COM %	SEA %	AUS %	NZ %
The PROCESS was open and honest	83	80	88	80	86	85	81	85	81	84	91
There seemed to be good communication between the various people and organisations I dealt with	72	70	81	74	77	76	77	68	78	75	84
I felt like the system was working to protect my best interests	75	73	78	71	75	73	73	69	73	75	83
I believe the system treated me fairly	81	80	83	78	80	81	78	78	81	81	85
I feel that the system helped me with my recovery	82	76	82	81	83	84	86	72	83	81	83

Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,563; NZ=572). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4,454 – 4,504 and NZ=558 – 569 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.

1.6.3. Experience of medical treatment / services

In preparation for the 2016 study Safe Work Australia commissioned the Social Research Centre to undertake cognitive testing of the Medical Care module of questions.

Table 8 presents the revised survey items administered to all respondents about the services that they may have received from a General Practitioner for their injury or illness. At least 68% of injured workers across Australia agreed to the various statements. The statements that recorded the highest levels of agreement in Australia were:

- “The GP showed respect for what you had to say” (95%).
- “You were able to easily get an appointment with a GP for your workplace injury or illness” (94%).
- “The GP provided access to all the medical services you needed to help you return to work” (92%).
- “You had confidence in the GP you were speaking with” (92%).
- “The GP issued medical certificates that stated when you could return to work” (92%).

A greater proportion of injured workers from New South Wales and Tasmania rated each aspect of service higher than the national average.

Table 8: Experience of GP by jurisdiction (% Total agree)

	NSW %	VIC %	QLD %	SA^ %	WA %	TAS %	NT %	SEA %	AUS %
You were able to easily get an appointment with a GP for your workplace injury or illness?	94	94	94	94	95	96	91	96	94
The GP showed respect for what you had to say?	96	95	94	96	93	96	96	96	95
The GP had contact, either verbally or in writing, with your employer about you returning to work	87	80	74	82	87	88	87	81	82
The GP provided access to all the medical services you needed to help you return to work	94	92	90	92	92	95	92	94	92
You had confidence in the GP you were speaking with.	94	92	90	93	88	92	91	90	92
The GP played/is playing an important role in you returning to work	90	81	82	84	81	89	84	84	85
The GP issued medical certificates that stated when you could return to work	96	89	90	94	91	96	90	89	92
The GP issued medical certificates that included information on what you can do at work	90	84	82	84	85	93	81	75	86
The GP explained to you the physical benefits of returning to work as soon as safely possible	81	79	73	77	80	84	69	72	78
The GP explained to you the psychological benefits of returning to work as soon as safely possible	70	68	65	66	68	72	54	59	68

Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,126). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=3,615 – 4,034 depending on statement).

N9. Firstly I would like to ask you about the services you may have received from a General Practitioner, or GP, who you would have seen for your injury or illness. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

All respondents were also asked about the broader medical treatment or services that they may have received which were paid for or reimbursed under their workers' compensation claim.

At least 89% of respondents agreed to some extent to each of the statements presented in Table 9. The statements that recorded the highest levels of agreement in Australia were:

- *"The medical treatment or services you received helped you to recover from your injury or illness" (91%).*
- *"You were able to easily access the medical treatment or services that you needed for your workplace" (90%).*

Table 9: Experience of medical care / treatment by jurisdiction (% Total agree)

	NSW %	VIC %	QLD %	SA^ %	WA %	TAS %	NT %	SEA %	AUS %
You were able to easily access the medical treatment or services that you needed for your workplace	91	90	92	90	88	91	82	91	90
The medical treatment or services you received helped you to recover from your injury or illness	93	92	90	90	89	91	90	86	91
The medical treatment or services you received helped you to actually get back to work	91	88	88	91	84	90	86	86	89

Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,126). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=3,928 – 4,054 depending on statement).

N10: Now I would like to ask you about all of the medical treatment or services you may have received which were paid for or reimbursed under your workers' compensation claim. Medical services include treatment you may have received from doctors, physiotherapists, psychologists, specialists etc.

Note: ^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).

Just over half (53%) of the respondents reported that they did not experience any difficulties in accessing treatment or services. Those who did experience difficulties most commonly explained that this was due to travel being difficult (11%), appointment scheduling difficulties (10%), insufficient quality of care (5%) or treatment not being approved or provided (5%)

1.7. Workplace and the Employer

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. 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 10, 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 (93% and one percentage point lower than 2014). The statement with the lowest level of agreement at the national level was "*You have a say in how you organise your work*" (75%).

With the exception of "*The work you are doing is important to you*", agreement was higher for all other statements among injured workers from small sized businesses than those from medium or large organisations.

Table 10: Perceptions of current work by organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers Small %	Premium Payers Medium %	Premium Payers Large %	Premium Payers All %	Self-Insurers %	Australia %
The work you are doing is important to you	91	94	93	93	93	93
The work you are doing satisfies you	87	86	86	86	87	87
You have a say in how you organise your work	79	73	75	75	71	75
Your opinions and suggestions are considered at work	84	81	79	82	74	80
The work you are doing is valued by others at work	92	91	90	91	89	91
You enjoy work	90	89	90	90	88	89

Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,668). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4498 – 4603 depending on statement).

G1. Thinking about the work you are doing NOW, do you agree or disagree that ...?

The survey administered in Australia asked respondents who were currently working how their work was going for them, given any limitations or restrictions they may have due to their workplace injury or illness. This question was previously also asked in New Zealand but discontinued in 2015.

At least 88% of injured workers across Australia agreed to the various statements shown in Table 11. The statements that recorded the highest levels of agreement were:

- “You feel emotionally capable of doing your job” (92%)
- “Given your recovery, your skills and abilities are used appropriately” (91%).

With the exception of “you feel emotionally capable of doing your job” (92%) injured workers in small sized businesses always reported equal or greater agreement in comparison to those from medium or large organisations.

Levels of agreement to all statements at the National level are two to three percentage points lower in comparison to 2014.

Table 11: Experience with current work (roles and responsibilities) by organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers Small (%)	Premium Payers Medium (%)	Premium Payers Large (%)	Premium Payers All (%)	Self-Insurers (%)	Australia (%)
The amount of work you are currently doing is reasonable	90	89	87	89	88	89
Given your recovery, your skills and abilities are used appropriately	93	90	89	91	91	91
Given your circumstances, the hours you are working are about right for you	88	88	87	87	89	88
You are physically capable of doing your job	92	88	89	89	94	90
You feel emotionally capable of doing your job	92	90	93	92	92	92

Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,668). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4,545-4,580 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 12 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 medium and large organisations. Agreement for "*Employees and management are generally supportive of each other*" was significantly higher for small organisations (85%) compared to large (79%) and medium (76%) organisations. Agreement for "*Your immediate supervisor or manager is committed to workplace safety*" was significantly higher for small organisations (91%) compared to medium organisations (86%).

Levels of agreement to all statements at the National level are lower in comparison to 2014 but only by one to three percentage points.

Table 12: Perceptions of current workplace by organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers Small %	Premium Payers Medium %	Premium Payers Large %	Premium Payers All %	Self-Insurers %	Australia %
You feel you are part of a community at work	90	86	89	88	88	88
Employees and management are generally supportive of each other	85	79	76	79	77	79
Your immediate supervisor or manager is committed to workplace safety	91	86	88	88	87	87
The other people you work with are committed to workplace safety	91	89	90	90	88	90

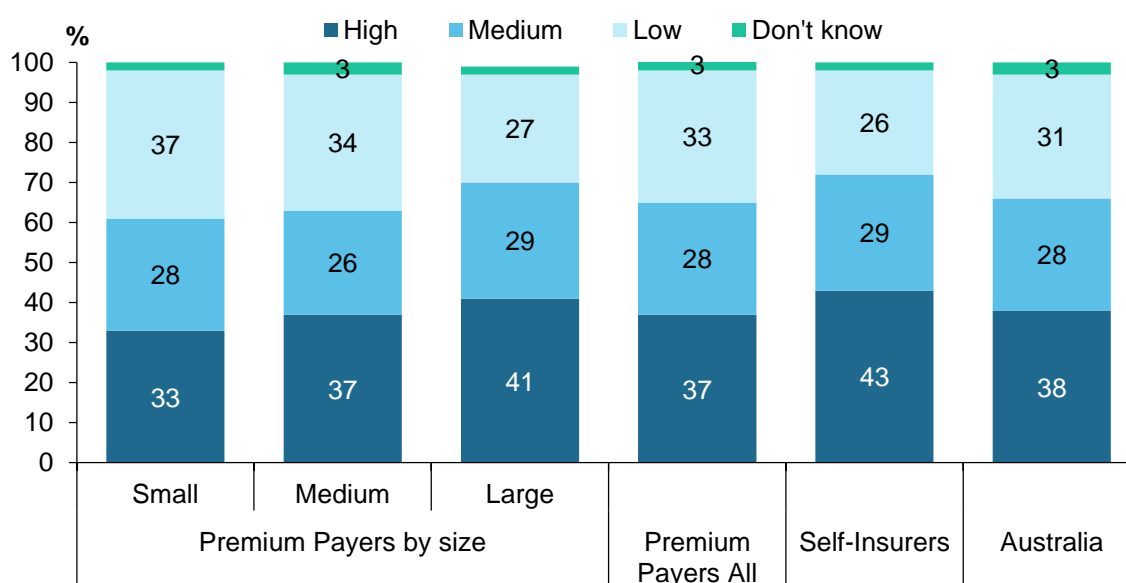
Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,668). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4,526 – 4,593 depending on statement).

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

In 2016 a new question was included to collect injured worker ratings of the level of risk that someone else may experience the same injury or illness as they did. This question was not asked in the Comcare Return to Work Survey or New Zealand Return to Work Survey.

Figure 23 shows that at a National level almost four in ten (38%) injured workers rate the risk of someone else experiencing the same workplace injury or illness as 'high'. Perceptions of a 'high' level of risk are greater among injured workers from Self-insured organisations (43%) than Premium Paying businesses (37%). Within Premium Paying businesses, perceptions that a 'high' level of risk exists is significantly higher among injured workers of large organisations (41%) compared to small organisations (33%).

Figure 23: Perceived risk of someone else experiencing same injury or illness by organisation type (%)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts, not asked in Comcare or New Zealand (AUS=4,126).

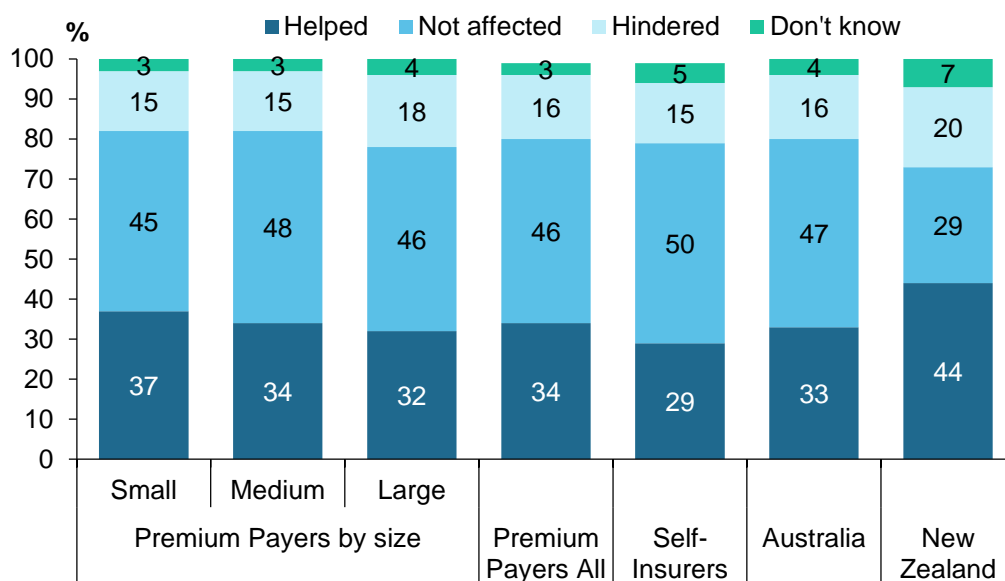
G4. Thinking about your workplace at the time of injury, would you say the risk of someone experiencing the same injury or illness you experienced is...?

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 24 a significantly greater proportion of injured workers in New Zealand (44%) stated that returning to work helped them to recover from their injury or illness compared to Australia (33%). While the Australian result is relatively consistent with 2014 (34%), the New Zealand outcome is significantly lower than that recorded in 2014 (51%)

Figure 24: Recovery impact of returning to work by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Has returned to work at some stage - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,596; NZ=487).

H26. In your opinion, has returning to work helped, hindered or not affected your recovery from your injury or illness?

Those respondents in Australia and New Zealand who felt that returning to work 'helped' or 'hindered' their recovery were asked why.

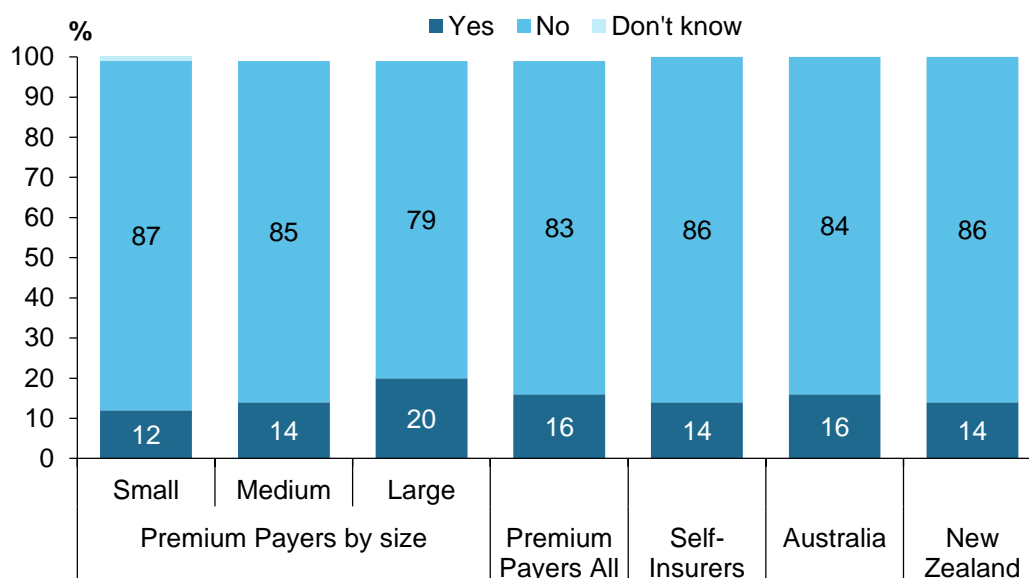
The most commonly reported reasons for why returning to work helped recovery related to an increase in mobility, strength and that it helped physically (33% and 61% in Australia and New Zealand respectively).

Within Australia, injured workers explained that returning to work hindered their recovery because of inappropriate duties (28%) and that they were still recovering (28%). New Zealand claimants with a work related injury most commonly explained that work hindered their recovery as they aggravated their existing injury (83%).

Sixteen percent of workers who had been injured and returned to work within Australia, and 14% in New Zealand stated that they took additional time off after first returning to work (Figure 25). Within Australia a marginally greater proportion of workers from premium paying businesses (16%) took additional time off compared to self-insured organisations (14%). Those from small organisations were least likely to take additional time off (12%), compared to 14% from medium organisations, and 20% from large organisations.

These results are largely comparable with those recorded 2014.

Figure 25: Additional time off by country and organisation type (%)



Base: Currently working and has returned to work at some time - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,102; NZ=447).

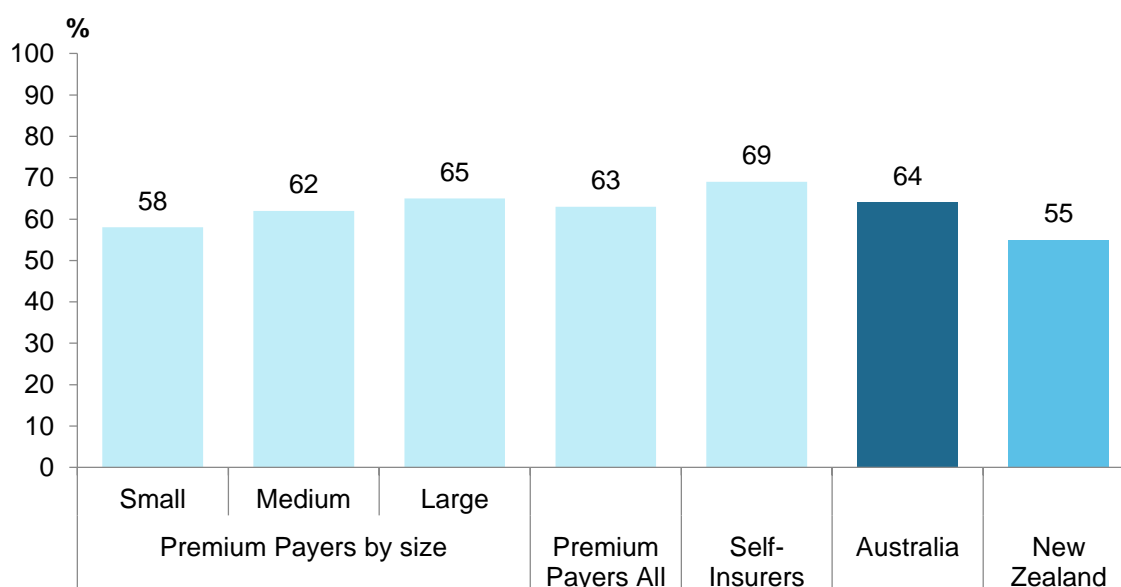
H29. Since you FIRST returned to work, have you had to have any additional time off because of your workplace injury or illness?

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 26, a significantly greater proportion of injured workers in Australia (64%) stated that they had a return to work plan in comparison to New Zealand (55%). The Australian and New Zealand results increased significantly from 2014 (50% and 48% respectively). Responses differed by self-insured organisation (69%) and size of premium paying business, with respondents from small businesses (58%) less likely to report having a return to work plan than those from medium (62%) or large businesses (65%). That said, fewer differences in organisation size now exist in comparison to 2014 in which 20 percentage points separated small (39%) and large (59%) premium paying businesses. While increased proportions of injured workers across all business sizes have reported having a return to work plan it is the significant increase among small (up 19 percentage points) and medium (up 12 percentage points) organisations that is most notable.

Figure 26: Return to work plan by country and organisation type (% Yes)

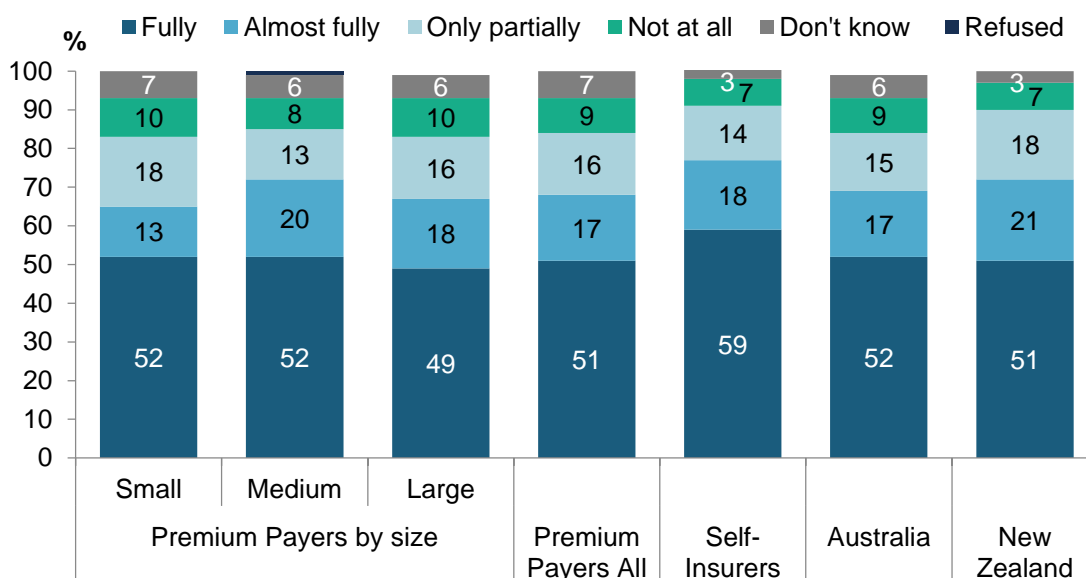


Base Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3,344; NZ=518).

J6. Did / Do you have to return to work plan?

Figure 27 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. The proportion of injured workers in Australia and New Zealand to state that their views had been fully considered decreased significantly when compared to 2014 (55% and 65% respectively).

Figure 27: Views considered during return to work by country and organisation type (%)



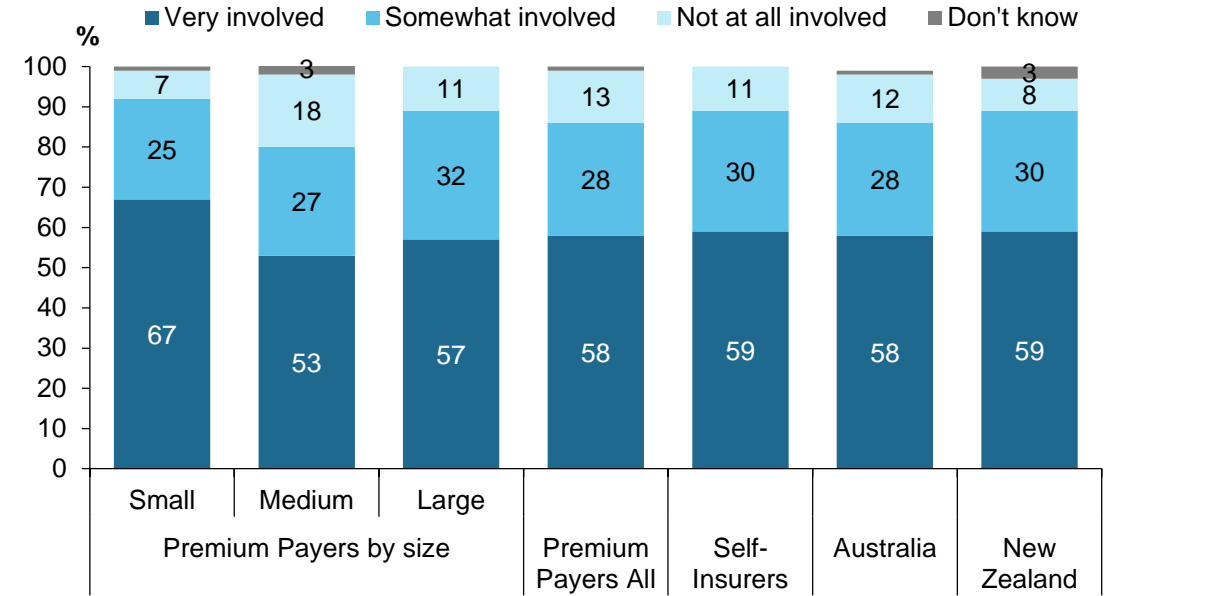
Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3,344; NZ=518).

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 organisation types and countries, almost six in ten injured workers reported that they were very involved in the development of their return to work plan (Figure 28). This figure was significantly higher among injured workers from small businesses (67%) compared to those from medium sized organisations (53%).

In comparison to 2014, there are significant increases in the proportion of injured workers reporting to be very involved in the development of their return to work plan for New Zealand (up 10 percentage points) and self-insured organisations in Australia (up 23 percentage points).

Figure 28: Involvement in development of return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)



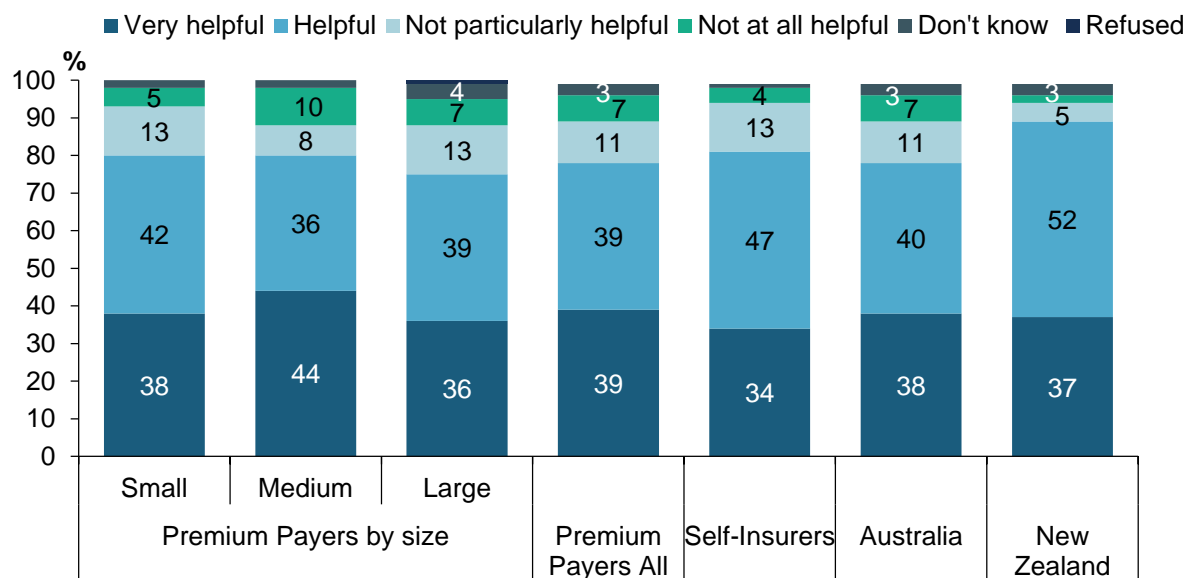
Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and have a RTW plan - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=2,265; NZ=273).

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 29, of those injured workers with a return to work plan more than three quarters of respondents in Australia (78%) and New Zealand (89%) considered their plan to be helpful or very helpful. While the Australian result remained steady with 2014, New Zealand increased 19 percentage points and is now significantly higher than Australia.

The proportion of injured workers employed at self-insured organisations who rated their plan as very helpful (39%) significantly increased by 17 percentage points in comparison to 2014

Figure 29: Helpfulness of return to work plan by country and organisation type (%)



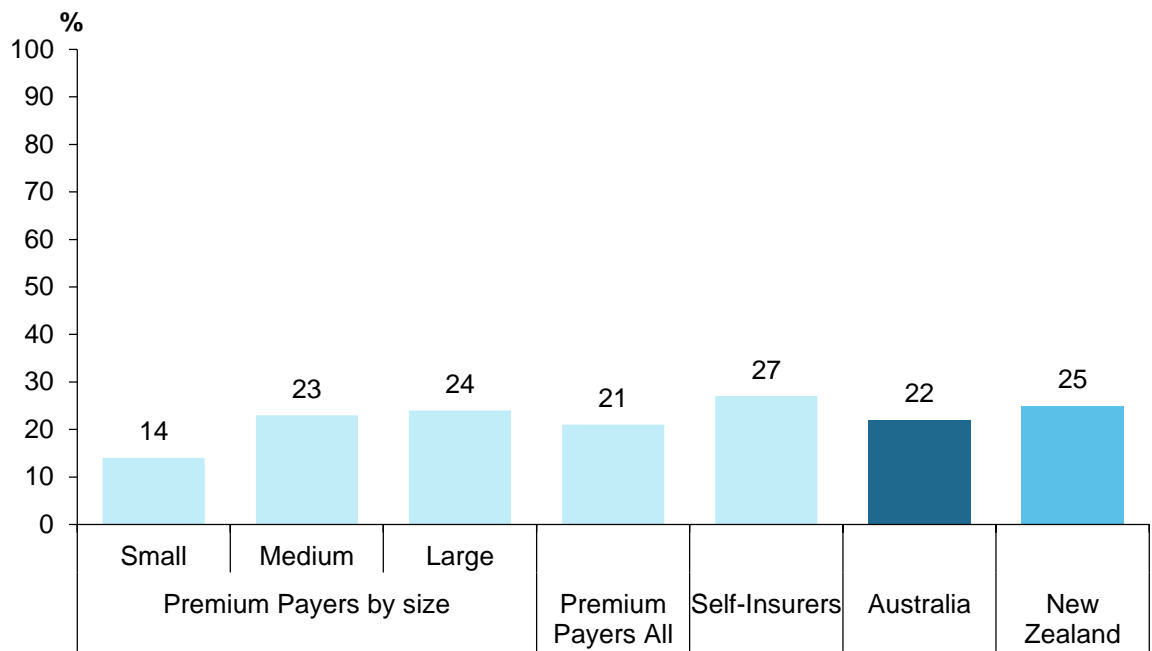
Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and have a RTW plan - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=2,265; NZ=273).

J13. How helpful was / is your return to work plan?

As shown in Figure 30, 22% of injured workers from Australia and 25% from New Zealand reported that they needed help to do what was in their return to work plan. Results for both countries were significantly greater in comparison to 2014 (Australia, 16% and New Zealand, 8%).

Though differences were non-significant, a greater proportion of injured workers from self-insured organisations (27%) reported that they needed help to do what was in their return to work plan, while those who returned to work in small sized businesses (14%) were least likely to say that they required assistance.

Figure 30: Help required for return to work plan by country and organisation type (% Yes)



Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months and have a RTW plan - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=2,265; NZ=273).

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 a workplace rehabilitation provider engaged to help you return to work.

While a similar question was asked in 2014 – ‘Did you receive any rehabilitation services in the last six months?’ it is not directly comparable. For example while 31% of injured workers reported in 2014 that they received rehabilitation services in the last six months, almost three quarters (74%) claim in 2016 that a workplace rehabilitation provider has been engaged to help them return to work.

Figure 31 reports receipt of rehabilitation services by jurisdiction in Australia and shows widespread differences.

Figure 31: Receipt of rehabilitation services by organisation type (% Yes)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts flagged in sample as receiving occ. rehab services (AUS=1,815).

K1. Was a workplace rehabilitation provider engaged to help you return to work?

1.7.5. Role of work, the employer and others

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 14 the most positive responses among injured workers from Australia were recorded for the statements “Your employer treated you fairly during (79%) and after (80%) the claims process”. In New Zealand, agreement was highest for the statement “Your employer treated you fairly after the claims process” (85%) following by “Your employer treated you fairly before the claims process” (84%).

In terms of premium paying business size, respondents from large businesses recorded the highest level of agreement for all aspects of employer support and were significantly higher in comparison to small and medium businesses for the following statements:

- “Your employer treated you fairly during the claims process” (85% in comparison to 76% for small and 75% for medium)
- “Your employer treated you fairly after the claims process” (82% in comparison to 76% for small)

Table 13: Perceptions of employer support by country and organisation type (% Total agree)

	Premium Payers Small %	Premium Payers Medium %	Premium Payers Large %	Premium Payers All %	Self-Insurers %	Australia %	New Zealand %
Your employer did what they could to support you	73	74	76	75	79	75	80
Your employer provided enough information on both your rights and responsibilities	64	65	70	66	71	67	73
Your employer made an effort to find suitable employment for you	70	71	75	72	72	72	72
Your employer helped you with your recovery	64	63	67	64	68	65	65
Your employer treated you fairly during the claims process	76	75	85	79	81	79	84
Your employer treated you fairly after the claims process	76	77	82	79	84	80	85

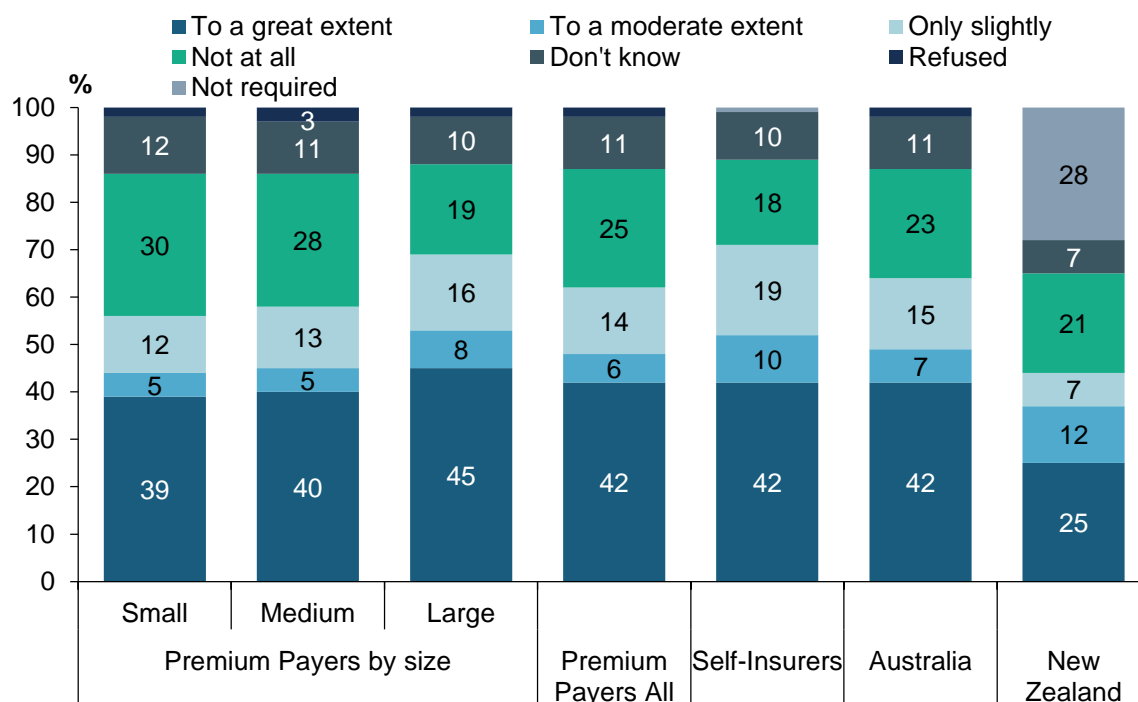
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,563; NZ=525). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4,245 – 4,486 and NZ=472 – 515 depending on statement).

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, 42% of injured workers reported that their employer was supporting them to a great extent (up 17 percentage points from 2014), while 23% reported that their employer wasn't supporting them at all (down 18 percentage points) in relation to the needs they have regarding their injury or illness (Figure 32). Both of these movements since 2014 are significant.

Results were largely consistent within Australia across sector and organisational types though perceived employer support was marginally higher among respondents from large organisations. In contrast, a significantly smaller proportion of injured workers in New Zealand considered that their employer was supporting them to a great extent (25%). The New Zealand result has also decreased significantly from 2014 (32%).

Figure 32: Ongoing employer support by country and organisation type (%)

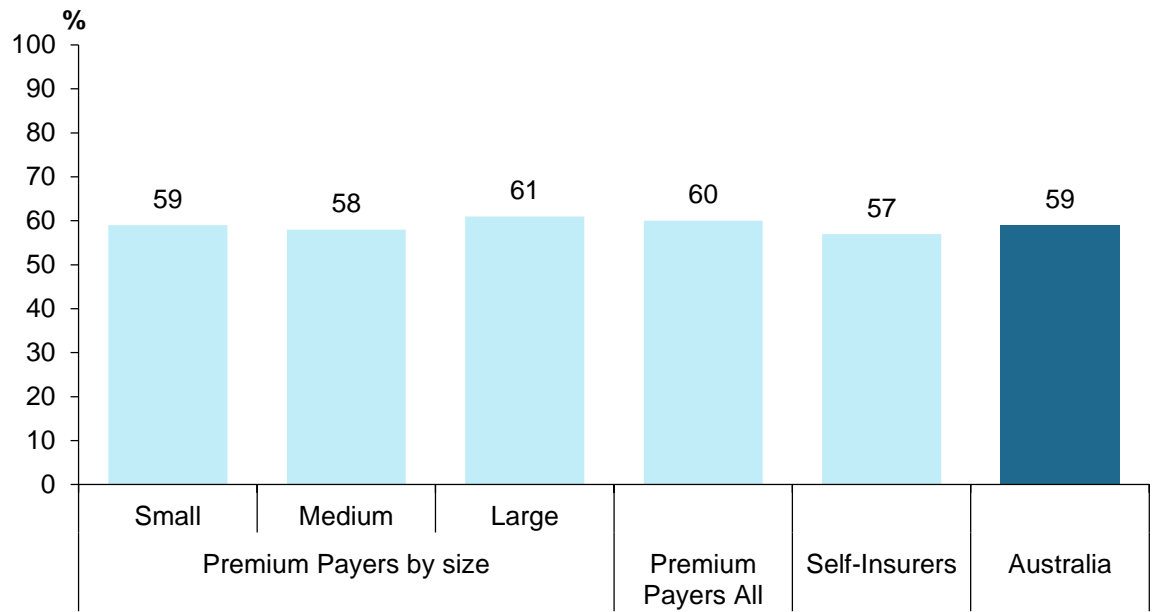


Base: Respondents whose claim is greater than or equal to 6 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3,976; NZ=413).

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 33 shows that 59% of injured workers in Australia stated that their supervisor or someone else from their work contacted them about recovering from their injury or illness. Reported contact is slightly lower among Self-insured organisations (57%) and one percentage point higher for all premium paying businesses (60%). This question was not asked in New Zealand.

Figure 33: Contact with workplace about recovery by organisation type (% Yes)

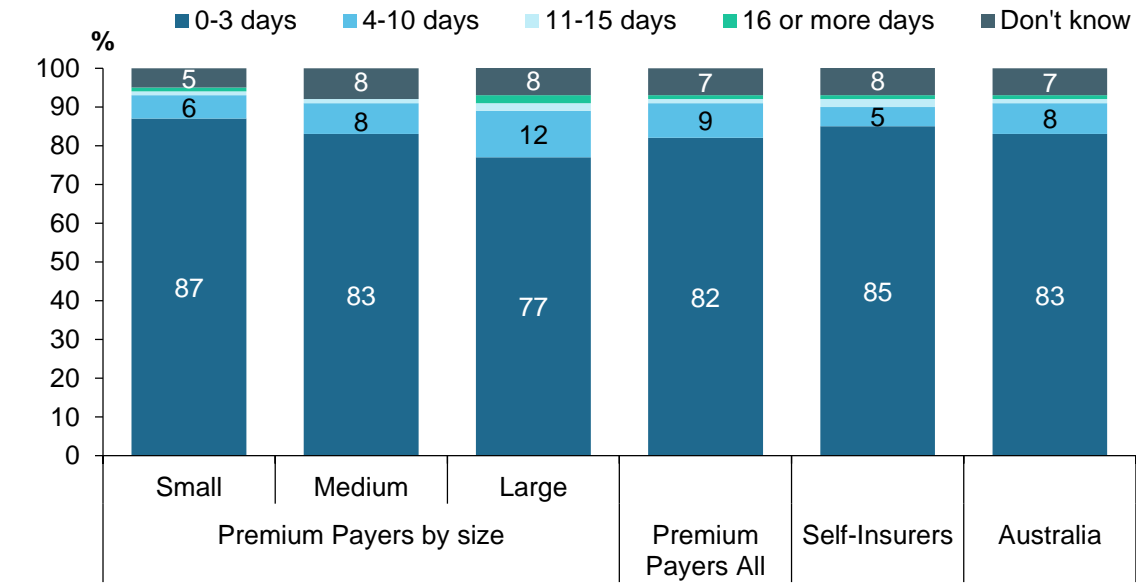


Base: Respondents whose claim is less than or equal to 12 months - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=3,344).

L5. Did your supervisor or someone else from work contact you about recovering from your workplace injury or illness?

As shown in Figure 34, 85% of all those injured workers in Australia were contacted by their employer within three days of their injury or illness (this represents an increase of eight percentage points since 2014). This figure was significantly higher among small business (87%) in comparison to large organisations (77%).

Figure 34: When injured worker was contacted 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=1,999).

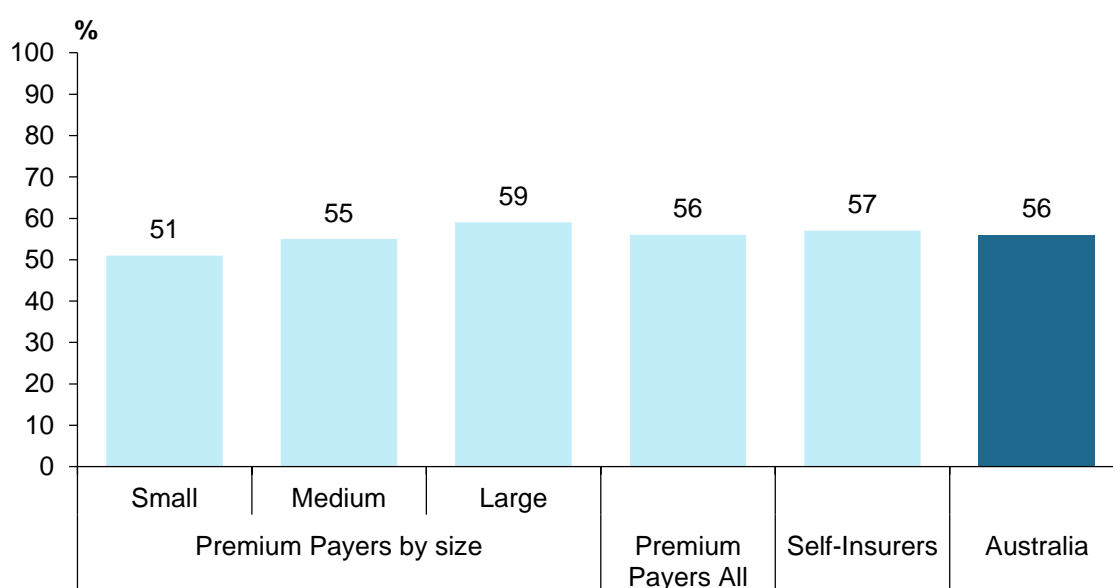
L6. How many days after your workplace injury / illness occurred were you FIRST contacted?

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 the items administered in Australia only one was common to New Zealand with ACC crafting a bespoke set of questions.

Of those respondents who discussed their injury or illness with their employer, 56% reported that their employer helped them to manage their condition before they lodged a workers' compensation claim (Figure 35), a decrease of three percentage points from 2014. This finding was significantly more common among large organisations (59%) than small organisations (51%). These results are otherwise largely consistent with those reported in 2014, albeit small decreases across sector and organisation types and at the National level.

Figure 35: Employer helped injured worker manage injury by organisation type (% Yes)



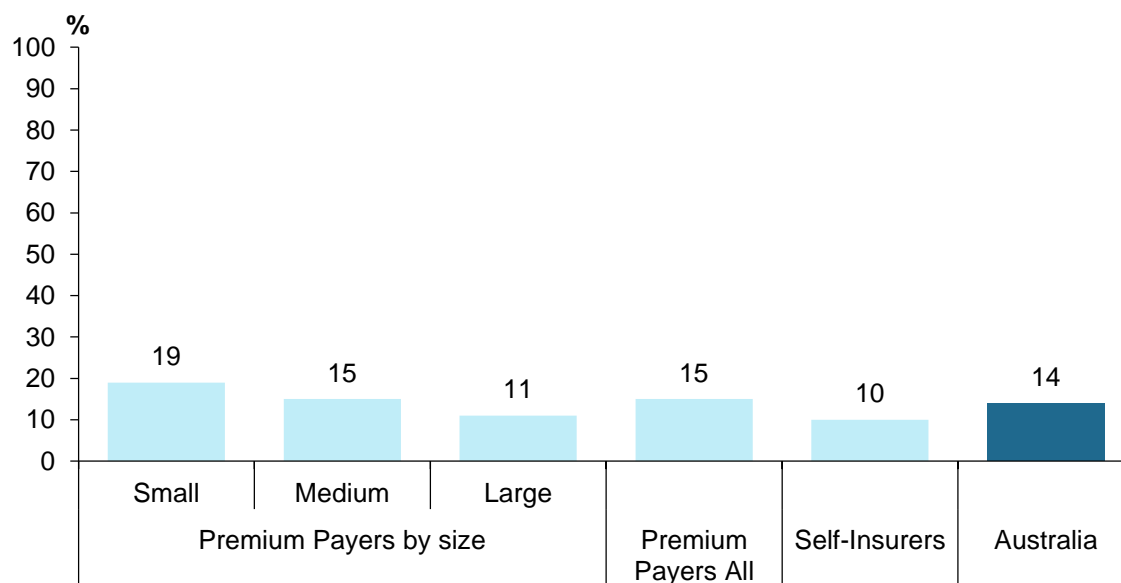
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,563).

M2. Did your employer help you manage your injury or illness before you lodged your workers' compensation claim?

As shown in Figure 36, 14% of injured workers across Australia reported that they felt their employer discouraged them from putting in a workers' compensation claim. A significantly smaller proportion of those from large organisations felt discouraged (11%) compared to those from small (19%) or medium organisations (15%). In comparison to 2014, reported employer discouragement increased three percentage points among injured workers from small businesses and decreased two percentage points among those from large organisations.

A significantly smaller proportion of injured workers from self-insured organisations stated that they felt their employer discouraged them to put in a claim in comparison to 2014 (16%).

Figure 36: Employer discouraged injured worker from putting in a claim by organisation type (% Yes)



Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,563).

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 15, 32% 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 up to eight percentage points higher among medium organisations for all statements in comparison to small and large organisations.

Relative to the other statements asked nationally, a comparatively small proportion (19%) of injured workers were concerned that they would be fired if they submitted a workers' compensation claim. This finding was significantly higher among respondents from premium paying businesses (20%) in comparison to those from self-insured organisations (13%).

Table 14: Experience in putting in a claim by organisation type (% Total agree)

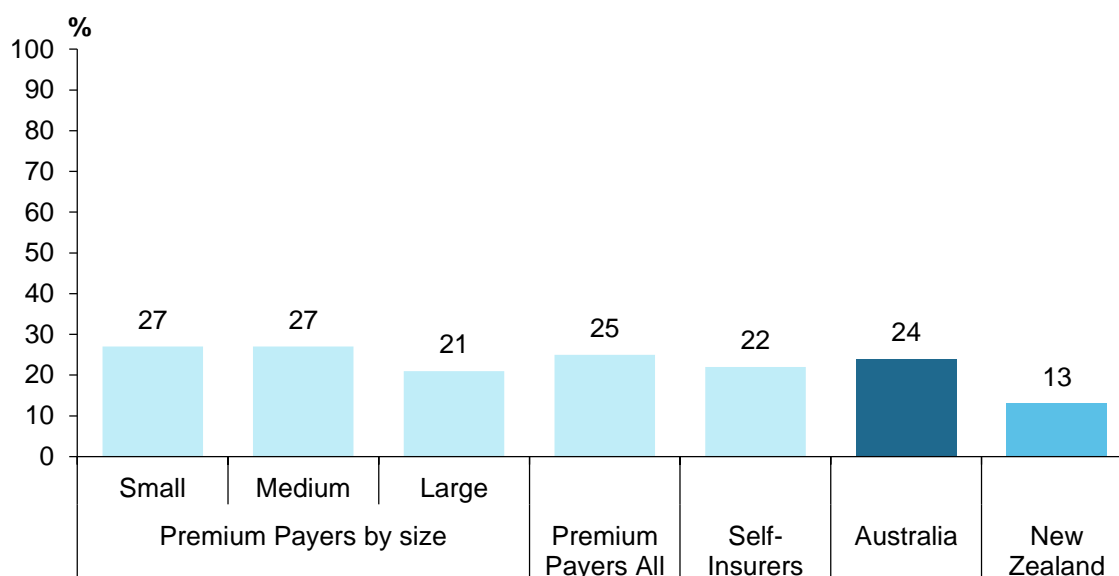
	Premium Payers Small %	Premium Payers Medium %	Premium Payers Large %	Premium Payers All %	Self-Insurers %	Australia %
You thought you would be treated differently by people at work	29	37	32	33	30	32
You felt your supervisor thought you were exaggerating or faking your injury	20	27	20	23	18	22
You were concerned that you would be fired if you submitted a claim	19	23	16	20	13	19

Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,563). Don't know and refused responses excluded from base for analysis (AUS=4377 – 4439 depending on statement).

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

Figure 37 shows that a significantly higher proportion of injured workers in Australia (24%) compared to New Zealand (13%), reported having a difference of opinion with their employer after their workers' compensation claim was accepted. Within Australia, this proportion was significantly higher among injured workers from small and medium businesses (27% each) in comparison to those from large organisations (21%). Findings are largely consistent with 2014 notwithstanding a significant five percentage point decrease in injured workers from large organisations to report a difference of opinion with their employer.

Figure 37: Differences of opinion between injured worker and employer by country and organisation type (% Yes)



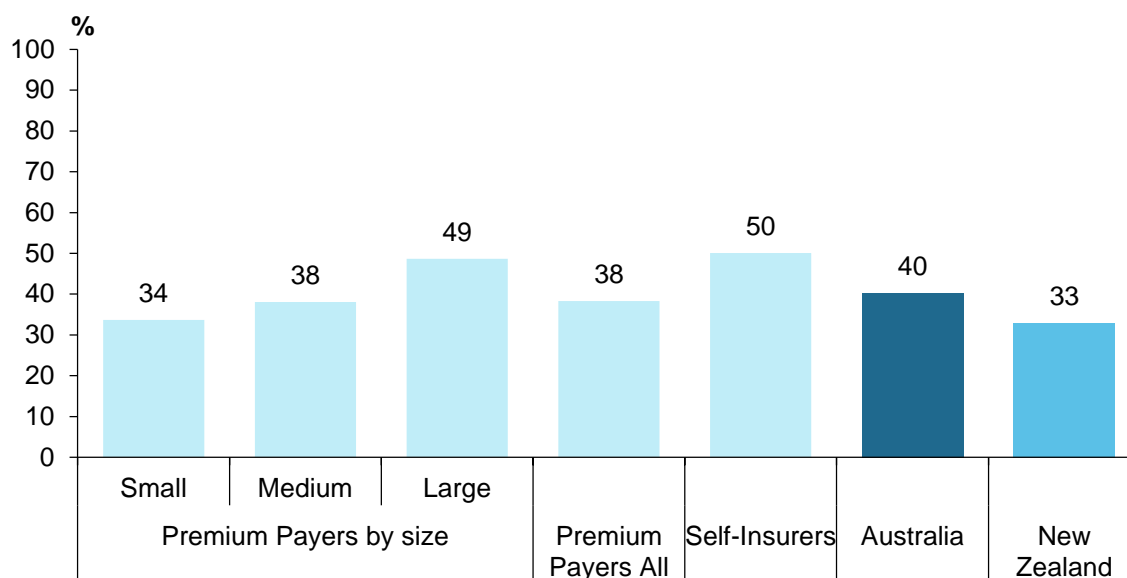
Base: Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=4,563; NZ=525)

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?

Many of those injured workers who had a difference of opinion needed some assistance to resolve their issues (Figure 38). The proportion of injured workers requiring assistance to resolve issues in New Zealand (33%) was much lower than in Australia (40%) – though both countries have reported decreased levels of assistance being required since 2014 (37% and 44% respectively).

Organisational size changes are also evident with fewer injured workers from small businesses (34%) requiring assistance in comparison to 2014 (42%) while the opposite was found for those from large organisations (49% as compared to 45% in 2014).

Figure 38: Assistance required to resolve difference of opinion by country and organisation type (% Yes)



Base: Had difference of opinion - Historic and Balance Cohorts (AUS=1,105; NZ=64).

M7. Did you need assistance to resolve this?

2. Methodology

A standalone methodological report has also been produced to provide a comprehensive documentation of the research methodology and survey administration; and analysis of non-response. Selected components only are provided here by way of providing key details and context to this Summary Report.

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:

- 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 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 entire research sample is referred to as the Balance 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 (August and September 2015) and 7 to 9 months of age in smaller jurisdictions (July, August and September 2015). 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 (1 March 2014 to 31 January 2016) 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 Māori were oversampled. For other ethnicities, stratification ensured a representative sample of numbers of days compensated within both the Historic and Balance Cohorts. There was an increased focus on ethnicity in the 2015/16 study with increased quotas set for Māori, Asian and Pacific audiences. The composition of the final sample provided, however, consisted largely of New Zealand European – following consultation with ACC it was agreed to pursue additional interviews with New Zealand European Markets to compensate for the short fall of other ethnicity types.

2.2. Time series comparisons

A number of steps were undertaken to ensure parity with the Return to Work Monitor³.

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

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. Interviewing was conducted between 6 April and 4 May 2016.

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. 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. Of these, 572 interviews were conducted with clients with a work related injury and provide a comparison point with Australia: Historic Cohort (n=360), Balance Cohort (n=212). The total New Zealand sample is made up of: Historic Cohort (n=360) and Balance Cohort (n=711). Interviewing was conducted between 16 May and 8 June 2016.

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.

³ www.hwca.org.au

2.5. Participation rates

Table 12 provides a summary of key project statistics. 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)

Table 15: Key project statistics

	Historic Cohort	Balance Cohort				Participation Rate (%)	Average interview length (mins)
	(Premium Payers only)	Premium Payer	Self-Insurer	Sub-total	Total		
Australia	2,226	2,005	893	2,898	5,124	81.6	20.9
New South Wales	444	246	122	368	812	75.7	21.4
Victoria	400	377	48	425	825	82.9	21.0
Queensland	450	343	34	377	827	83.5	20.1
South Australia	230	148	114	262	492	84.2	21.0
Western Australia	400	117	15	132	532	82.5	21.5
Tasmania	145	241	15	256	401	80.5	19.9
Comcare*	85	383	530	913	998	85.0	19.6
Seacare	2	97	0	97	99	79.8	22.6
Northern Territory	70	53	15	68	138	75.7	21.4
New Zealand*	360	na	na	711	1,071	81.3	24.9

* The Comcare and ACC data is provided via separately commissioned surveys and reported in standalone reports.

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)
- 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 to 12 months, 13 to 18 months, 19 to 24 months)
- Ethnicity (Māori, Pacific Islander, other)
- Injury (work related, non-work related)
- 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
- practice interviewing.

2.7.2. Fieldwork quality control procedures

The Social Research Centre is accredited under the ISO 20252 scheme (certification number MSR 20015, first issued by SAI Global, on 11 December 2007). All aspects of this consultancy will be undertaken in accordance with the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) code of practice, ISO 20252 standards, the Australian Privacy Principles and the Privacy (Market and Social Research) Code. All senior staff are full members of the Australian Market and Social Research Society and the Social Research Centre is also a member of the Association of Market and Social Research Organisations (AMSRO). All sensitive or personally identifiable information such as sample and data was transferred using our Secure File Exchange.

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
- 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:

- ensuring informed consent (via use of a Primary Approach Letter, provision of a 1800 number to opt out of the research)
- undertaking “soft” recruitment procedures that did not place any pressure on injured workers to participate i.e. ensuring that the worker is comfortable with participating in the survey and adopting gentle persuasion techniques to encourage response
- ensuring the voluntary nature of participation was clearly conveyed and understood by respondents
- protecting the privacy and confidentiality of respondent information. This includes reassuring respondents that participation will not affect their claim in any way.
- 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
- ensuring that interviews did not take place at inappropriate times of the day / evening.

Safeguards regarding the above were covered by the Social Research Centre’s contract with Safe Work Australia, participating jurisdictions and by the appropriate privacy laws including the Privacy Act (1988) and the Australian privacy Principles. 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.).