THE SOCIAL
RESEARCH CENTRE

Return to Work Survey

2012/13 Headline Measures Report (Australia and New Zealand)

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Forward

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.

The new survey replaces the Return to Work Monitor[1] previously published by the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities. The New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) and all Australian jurisdictions except for the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory took part in the survey. 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
- who submitted a claim in the two years prior to the interview period
- whose claim had some payment-related activity within 6 months prior to the sample being drawn, and
- who worked in either premium paying or self-insured organisations (note New Zealand does not have self-insured organisations).

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 broader sample is referred to as the Balance Cohort.

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

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

A full report will be published later in 2013. That report will contain the two key measures, additional outcome measures and a comparison of return to work experience and outcomes of injured workers of premium payers and self-insurers. Safe Work Australia will also publish a series of papers examining the relationship between a range of factors and return to work outcomes using the full sample.

Safe Work Australia

July 2013

[1] The Return to Work Monitor was produced by Campbell Research and Consulting from 1998 to 2012.

Summary Points

This report provides the Headline Measures for the 2012/13 Return to Work (RTW) Survey for Australia and New Zealand. The Headline Measures are the *Returned to Work Rate* and the *Current Return to Work Rate*.

Within Australia, a total of 4698 telephone interviews were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date of between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2013 across two time-based Cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=2279) refers to injured workers of premium payers who have had 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. Measures in this report are calculated using the Historic Cohort only.

Within New Zealand, a total of 828 telephone interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date of between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2013 across two time-based cohorts with 452 in the Historic Cohort.

The graphic below illustrates summary points for each measure by:

- national performance
- jurisdiction, and
- national performance over time.

Returned to Work Rate

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

It should be noted that in 2012/13 the Northern Territory did not participate in the survey and this may have affected the overall rate for Australia.

Figure 1 shows that in 2012/13, 86% of Australian injured workers and 85% of New Zealand injured workers had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness

Within Australia, the Returned to Work Rate was higher than the national rate for New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania (88% each); Western Australia and Comcare (87% each). The Returned to Work Rate was lower than the national rate for Victoria (84%), South Australia (82%) and Seacare (62%). The Returned to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is impacted by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1: Returned to Work Rate 2012/13 by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

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

Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2279: NSW=449, VIC=401, QLD=450, SA=267, WA=377, TAS=186, COM=120, SEA=29*. NZ=452).

Note: Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.
^ South Australian data refer to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost).
* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 2 shows the national trends for Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2012/13 Returned to Work Rate is two percentage points higher than last year for Australia and three percentage points lower for New Zealand.

Figure 2: Returned to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)

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

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

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

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

Current Return to Work Rate

The Current Return to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers with 10 or more days off work who were working at the time of the survey. Data are taken from injured workers of premium payers with 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. The measure is equivalent to the previous 'Durable RTW Rate' reported in the Return to Work Monitor and published annually in the Comparative Performance Monitoring report. This measure is based on Question C1 'Are you currently working in a paid job?' and Question C7 'Can I just confirm, have you returned to work at any time since your workplace injury or illness?' It reports the proportion of injured workers who state 'yes' to both, comparable with the Return to Work Monitor.

It should be noted that in 2012/13 the Northern Territory did not participate and this may have affected the overall rate for Australia.

Figure 3 shows that in 2012/13, 77% of Australian injured workers and 78% from New Zealand were working in a paid job at the time of the interview.

Within Australia, the Current Return to Work Rate was higher than the national rate for New South Wales and Comcare (80% each) and Tasmania (79%). The Current Return to Work Rate was lower than the national rate for Queensland and Western Australia (75% each), South Australia (70%) and Seacare (59%). The Current Return to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is impacted 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 3: Current Return to Work Rate 2012/13 by country and Australian jurisdiction (%)

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?

Base: Historic Cohort – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. (AUS=2279: NSW=449, VIC=401, QLD=450, SA=267, WA=377, TAS=186, COM=120, SEA=29*. NZ=452).

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

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

* Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 4 illustrates the national trends for Australia and New Zealand since 1997/98.

The 2012/13 Current Return to Work Rate is two percentage points higher than last year for Australia and two percentage points lower for New Zealand.

Figure 4: Current Return to Work Rate (national regional trend) (%)

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?

Base: Historical 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
AUS	3195	3142	2966	2687	2995	3014	3019	3017	2965	2689	3007	3028	2279
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	600	608	600	600	601	600	452

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

Methodological Overview

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

- **Australia: Total interviewed –** 4,698 telephone interviews were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2013 across two time-based cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=2279) refers to injured workers of premium payers who had 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. The Balance Cohort (n=2419) refers to injured workers of premium payers or self-insurers who had one or more days compensated, are not members of the Historic Cohort and had payment related activity on their claim in the last 6 months. Interviewing was conducted between 1 May and 2 June 2013. Note that additional Western Australia interviews were conducted during August to correct for an issue with the sampling in the main fieldwork.

  New Zealand: Total interviewed – 828 telephone interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date between 1 April 2011 and 31 March 2013 across two time-based cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=452) refers to people injured at work whose claim date fell within the 2 month submission period: 1 September 2012 to 31 October 2012 AND had received 5 or more days of weekly compensation. This is equivalent to 10 or more days off work for Australian jurisdictions, due to compensation not being paid for first 5 days for ACC workers. The Balance Cohort (n=376) refers to ACC claimants from the work account, earners account, or motor vehicle account AND for whom their claim falls within 2 years from the date of sample extraction AND who have received weekly compensation AND who have had some payment activity on their claim during the previous 6 months (from date of sample extraction). ACC clients whose injury was not work related are excluded from comparisons to Australia. The sample sizes for these comparisons are: Historic Cohort (n=452), Balance Cohort (n=112) and Total (n=564). Interviewing was conducted between 20 May and 9 June 2013.

Number of telephone interviews by state and territory and Cohort

	Historic Cohort	Balance Cohort			Total
	(Premium Payers only)	Premium	Self-Insurer	Sub-total	
Australia	2279	1909	510	2419	4698
New South Wales	449	308	69	377	826
Victoria	401	377	50	427	828
Queensland	450	316	61	377	827
South Australia	267	154	130	284	551
Western Australia	377	360	62	422	799
Tasmania	186	244	13	257	443
Comcare	120	82	125	207	327
Seacare	29	68	0	68	97
New Zealand	452	na	na	376	828

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

- **Survey length –** On average 22 minutes for Australia and 21.5 minutes for New Zealand.

- **Response rate** – 80% of injured workers successfully contacted and in scope in Australia and 88% of people injured at work successfully contacted and in scope in New Zealand.

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

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