



THE SOCIAL
RESEARCH CENTRE

National Return to Work Survey

2012/13 Headline Measures Report

July 2013

Prepared for:

Safe Work Australia
GPO Box 641
Canberra ACT 2601

Prepared by:

Health Outcomes and Service Experience Team
The Social Research Centre
Level 1, 262 Victoria Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051

Ph: (613) 9236 8500

Fax: (613) 9326 4060

www.srcentre.com.au

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 previously published by the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities. The New Zealand Accident Compensation Corporation 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.

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'.

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 with the addition of New Zealand data, additional outcome measures, a comparison of return to work experience and outcomes of injured workers of premium payers and self-insurers and an analysis of the relationship between a range of factors and return to work outcomes using the full sample.

Safe Work Australia

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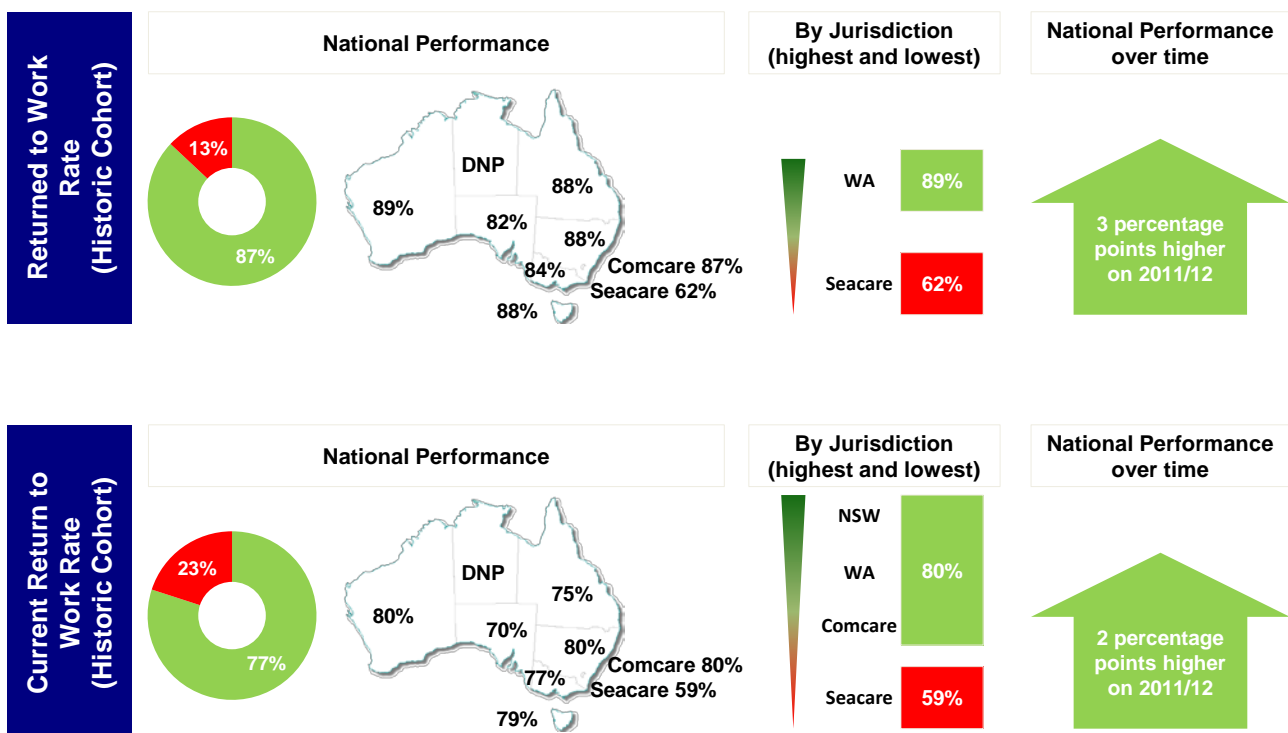
Summary Points

This report provides the Headline Measures for the 2012/13 National Return to Work (NRTW) Survey. The Headline Measures are the 'Returned to Work Rate' and the 'Current Return to Work Rate'.

A total of 4,441 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=2,302) 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.

The below graphic 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 Western Australia participated for the first time and the Northern Territory did not. This may have affected the overall rate for Australia.

Figure 1 illustrates that in 2012/13, almost nine in ten (87%) Australian injured workers of premium paying organisations had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness.

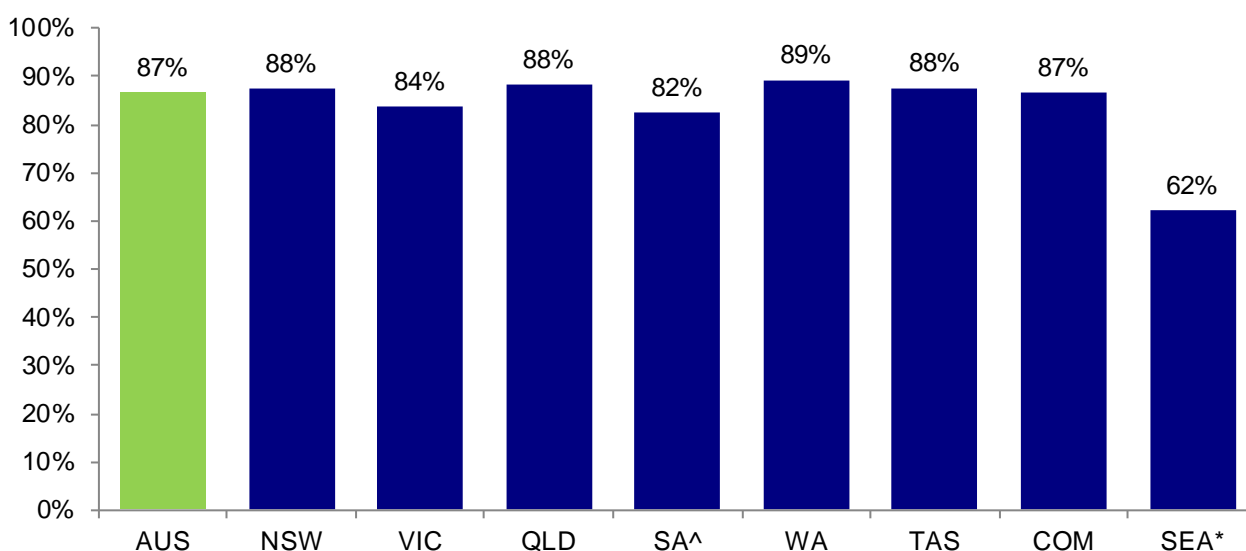
The Returned to Work Rate was higher than the national average for Western Australia (89%), New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania (88% each).

The Returned to Work rate was lower than the national average 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.

The relative performance of jurisdictions is broadly comparable with that of 2011/12.

Figure 1: Returned to Work Rate 2012/13 (by state and territory) (%)

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



Base: All Historical Cohort premium payers – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey (n=2,302) (NSW=449, VIC=401, QLD=450, SA=267, WA=400, TAS=186, COM=120, SEA=29*).

Note: This is an 'historical' measure and equivalent to the 'RTW Rate' as reported in the previous Return to Work Monitor. Weighted by jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor

[^] South Australian data refers to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost)

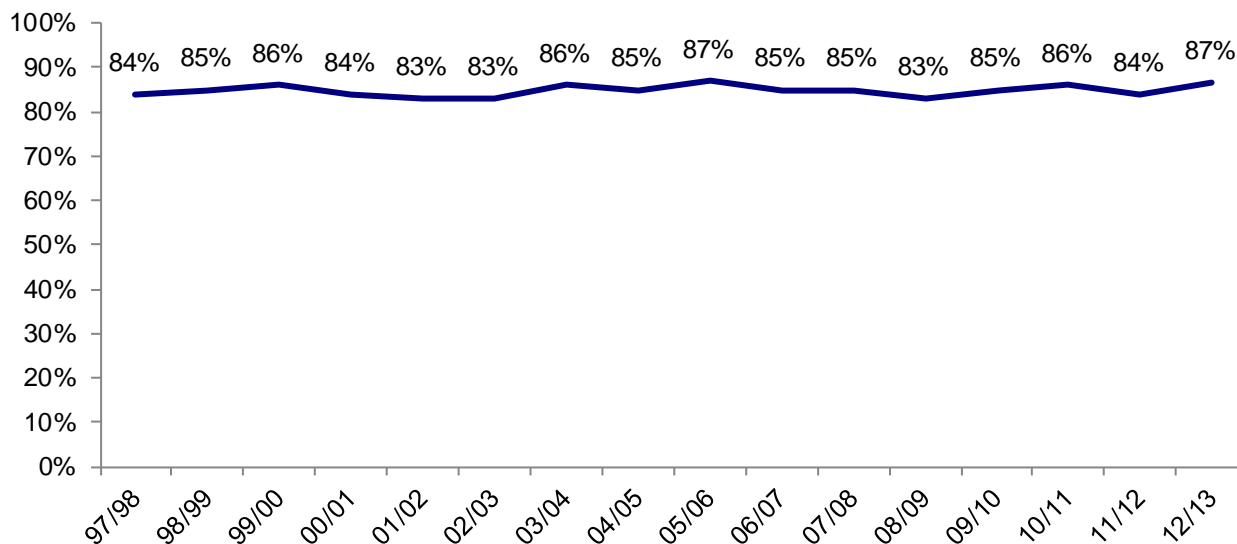
^{*} Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 2 illustrates the national trend since 1997/98.

The 2012/13 Returned to Work Rate is three percentage points higher than last year.

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

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



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

	97/98	98/99	99/00	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
	2,906	3,095	3,219	3,195	3,142	2,966	2,687	2,995	3,014	3,019	3,017	2,965	2,689	3,007	3,028	2,302

Note: This is an 'historical' measure and equivalent to the 'RTW Rate' as reported in the previous Return to Work Monitor.
 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 Western Australia participated for the first time and the Northern Territory did not. This may have affected the overall rate for Australia.

Figure 3 illustrates that in 2012/13, over three quarters (77%) of Australian injured workers of premium paying organisations were working in a paid job at the time of the interview.

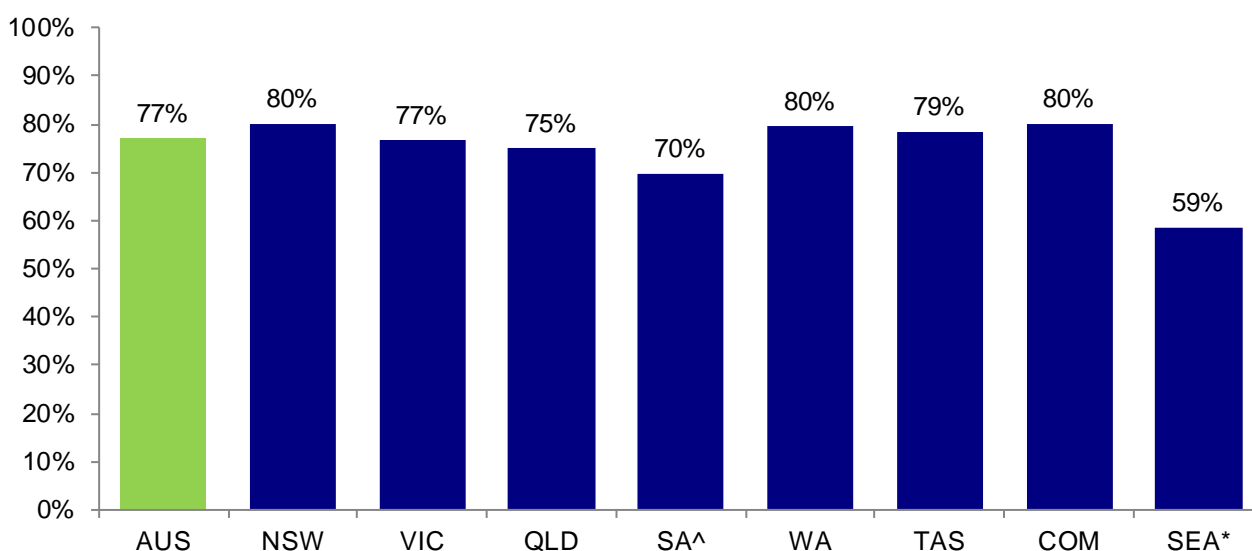
The Current Return to Work Rate was higher than the national average for New South Wales, Western Australia and Comcare (80% each) and Tasmania (79%).

The Current Return to Work Rate was lower than the national average for Queensland (75%), 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.

The relative performance of jurisdictions is broadly comparable with that of 2011/12.

Figure 3: Current Return to Work Rate 2012/13 (by state and territory) (%)

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?



Base: All Historical Cohort premium payers – those with 10+ days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey (n=2,302) (NSW=449, VIC=401, QLD=450, SA=267, WA=400, TAS=186, COM=120, SEA=29*).

Note: This is an 'historical' measure and equivalent to the 'Durable RTW Rate' as reported in the previous Return to Work Monitor and published annually in the Comparative Performance Monitoring report.

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

[^] South Australian data refers to claims with more than 10 days lost (as opposed to 10 or more days lost)

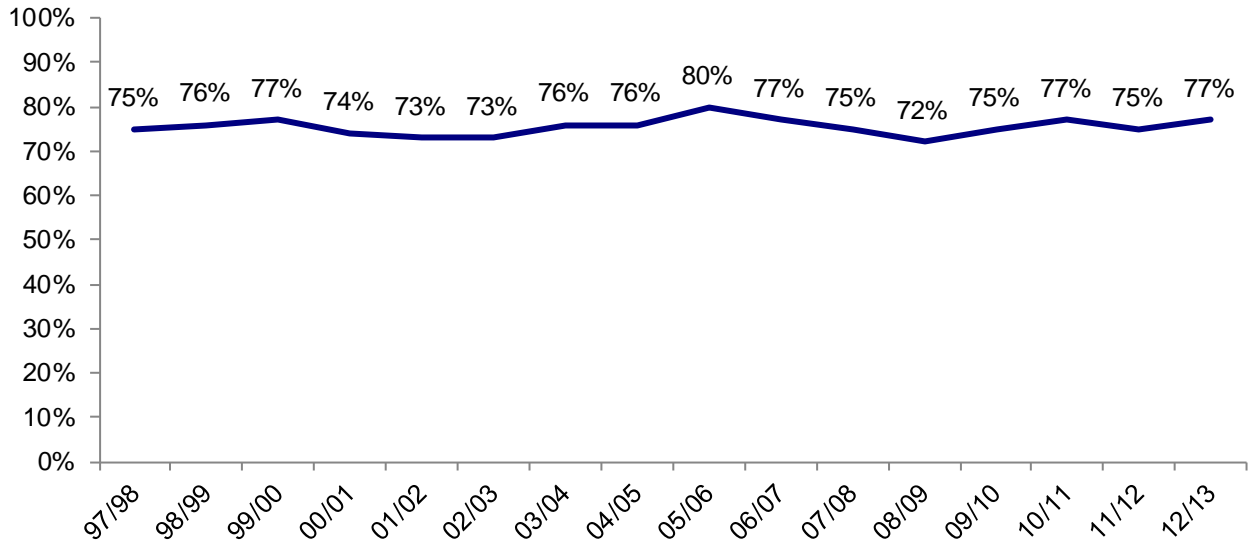
^{*} Caution should be exercised in interpretation due to small sample size and the requirement to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 4 illustrates the national trend since 1997/98.

The 2012/13 Current Return to Work Rate is two percentage points higher than last year.

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

C1. Are you currently working in a paid job?



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

	97/98	98/99	99/00	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
	2,906	3,095	3,219	3,195	3,142	2,966	2,687	2,995	3,014	3,019	3,017	2,965	2,689	3,007	3,028	2,302

Note: This is an 'historical' measure and equivalent to the 'Durable RTW Rate' as reported in the previous Return to Work Monitor and published annually in the Comparative Performance Monitoring report, that is, 'have returned to work at some time' and 'currently working in a paid job'.

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

Methodological Overview

- **Total interviewed** – 4,441 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=2,302) 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=2,139) 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.

Number of telephone interviews by state and territory and Cohort

	Historic Cohort	Balance Cohort		Sub-total	Total
	(Premium Payers only)	Premium	Self-Insurer		
Australia	2,302	1,678	461	2,139	4,441
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	400	129	13	142	542
Tasmania	186	244	13	257	443
Comcare	120	82	125	207	327
Seacare	29	68	0	68	97

- **Headline measures**
 - Returned to Work Rate (equivalent to the previous ‘RTW Rate’), and
 - 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.
- **Response rate** – 79% of injured workers successfully contacted.

$$\text{Response rate} = \text{Number of interviews} \div (\text{Number of interviews} + \text{Number of refusals})$$

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