



THE SOCIAL
RESEARCH CENTRE

Return to Work Survey

2013/14 Headline Measures Report (Australia and New Zealand)

July 2014

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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. This is the second year of the revised Return to Work Survey.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Safe Work Australia

July 2014

Summary Points

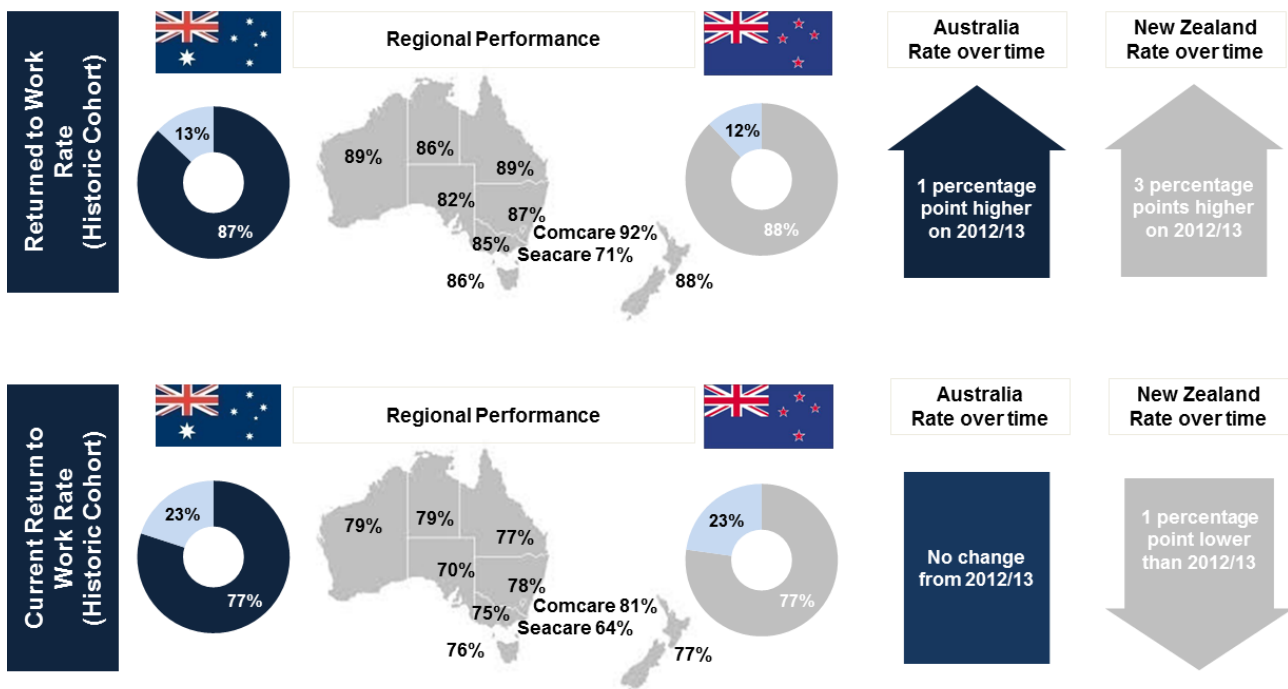
This report provides the Headline Measures for the 2013/14 Return to Work (RTW) Survey for Australia and New Zealand. The Headline Measures are the *Returned to Work Rate* and the *Current Return to Work Rate*.

Within Australia, a total of 4,679 telephone interviews were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date of between 1 April 2012 and 28 February 2014 across two time-based Cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=2,397) 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 705 telephone interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date of between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2014 across two time-based cohorts with 345 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

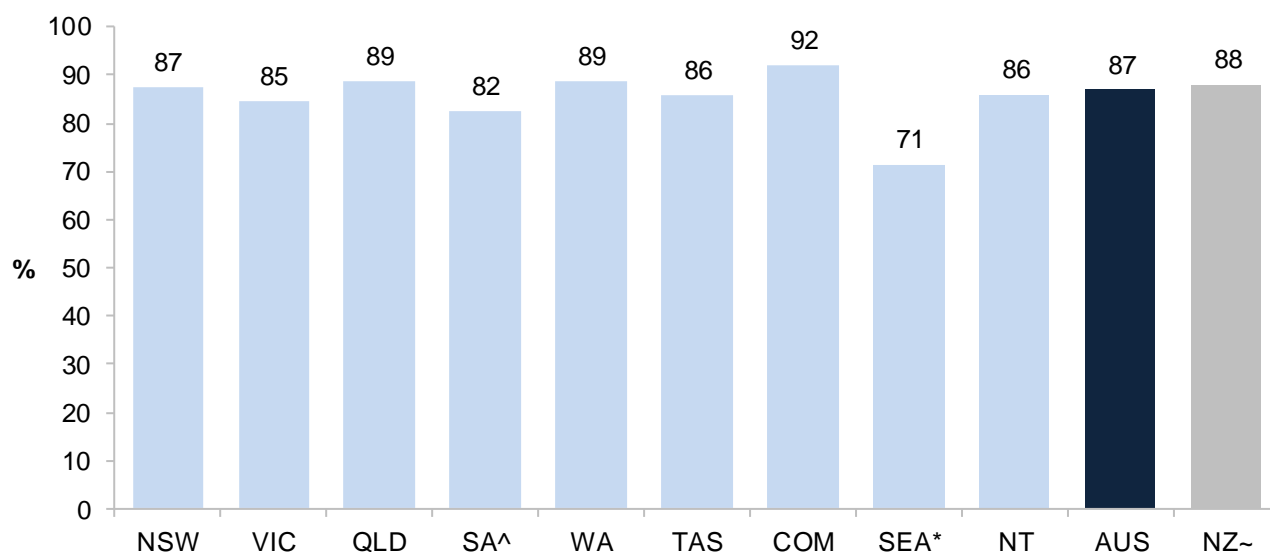
The Returned to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers with 10 or more days off work who returned to work for any period of time at some stage since they had their first day off work. Data are taken from injured workers of premium payers with 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 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'.

Figure 1 shows that in 2013/14, 87% of Australian injured workers and 88% of New Zealand injured workers had returned to work at some time since their injury or illness

Within Australia, the Returned to Work Rate was higher than the national rate for Comcare (92%); and Queensland and Western Australia (89% each). The Returned to Work Rate was lower than the national rate for Tasmania, the Northern Territory (86% each), Victoria (85%), South Australia (82%) and Seacare (71%). The Returned to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 1: Returned to Work Rate 2013/14 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=2397: NSW=451, VIC=403, QLD=456, SA=245, WA=400, TAS=225, COM=125, SEA=14*, NT=78. NZ=345).

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.

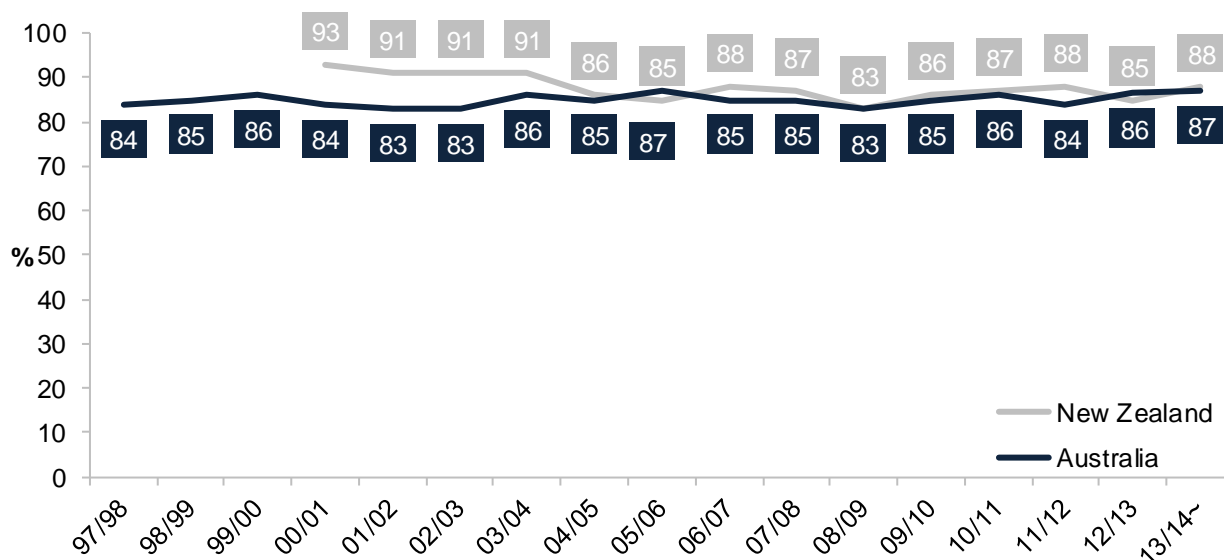
~ Note that 2013/14 New Zealand data were also weighted by ethnicity and days compensated.

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

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

Figure 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	13/14
AUS	3195	3142	2966	2687	2995	3014	3019	3017	2965	2689	3007	3028	2279	2397
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	600	608	600	600	601	600	452	345

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

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

Current Return to Work Rate

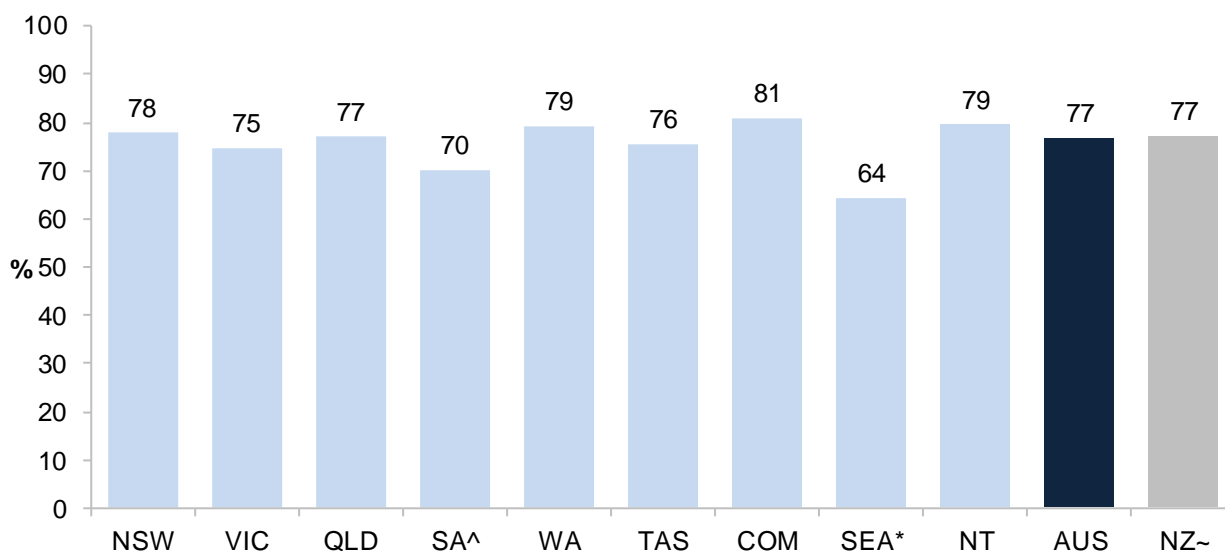
The Current Return to Work Rate is the proportion of injured workers with 10 or more days off work who were working at the time of the survey. Data are taken from injured workers of premium payers with 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. The measure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

Figure 3 shows that in 2013/14, 77% of Australian injured workers and 77% 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 Comcare (81%), Western Australia and the Northern Territory (79% each), and New South Wales (78%). The Current Return to Work Rate was lower than the national rate for Tasmania (76%), Victoria (75%), South Australia (70%) and Seacare (64%). The Current Return to Work Rate in the Seacare jurisdiction is affected by legislation which requires a person to be certified medically fit to perform the normal on-board work tasks and duties of a seafarer.

Figure 3: Current Return to Work Rate 2013/14 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=2397: NSW=451, VIC=403, QLD=456, SA=245, WA=400, TAS=225, COM=125, SEA=14*, NT=78. NZ=345).

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.

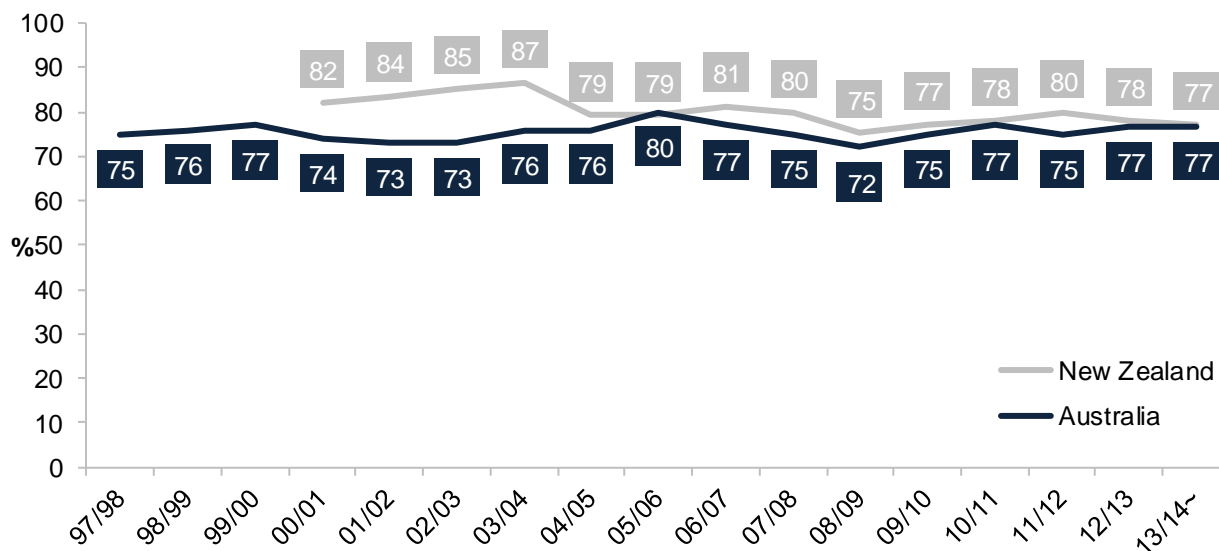
~ Note that 2013/14 New Zealand data were also weighted by ethnicity and days compensated.

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

The 2013/14 Current Return to Work Rate is unchanged since last year for Australia and one percentage point 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	13/14
AUS	3195	3142	2966	2687	2995	3014	3019	3017	2965	2689	3007	3028	2279	2397
NZ	536	581	570	595	600	600	600	608	600	600	601	600	452	345

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

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

Methodological Overview

- **Sampling** – The sampling strata were derived from the eligible population cases / counts provided by each jurisdiction. Within strata, respondents were randomly selected to participate.
- **Australia: Total interviewed** – 4,679 telephone interviews were undertaken with injured workers with a claim date between 1 April 2012 and 28 February 2014 across two time-based cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=2,397) refers to injured workers of premium payers who had 10 or more days off work and whose claim was submitted 7-9 months prior to the survey. This refers to a 2-month submission period for large jurisdictions (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, and Western Australia): September and October 2013; and 3-month submission period for small jurisdictions (Comcare, Seacare, the Northern Territory and Tasmania): August, September and October 2013. The Balance Cohort (n=2,282) refers to injured workers of premium payers or self-insurers who had one or more days compensated and are not members of the Historic Cohort. Interviewing was conducted between 28 April and 26 May 2014.

New Zealand: Total interviewed – 705 telephone interviews were undertaken with ACC clients with a claim date between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2014 across two time-based cohorts. The Historic Cohort (n=345) refers to people injured at work whose claim date fell within the 2 month submission period: 1 September 2013 to 31 October 2013 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=360) 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=345) and Balance Cohort (n=98). Interviewing was conducted between 20 May and 12 June 2014.

Number of telephone interviews by state and territory and Cohort

	Historic Cohort (Premium Payers only)	Balance Cohort			Total
		Premium	Self-Insurer	Sub-total	
Australia	2397	1770	512	2282	4679
New South Wales	450	257	117	374	824
Victoria	401	378	50	428	829
Queensland	450	350	30	380	831
South Australia	245	163	119	282	527
Western Australia	400	127	15	142	542
Tasmania	225	241	16	257	482
Comcare	125	100	150	250	375
Seacare	14	107	-	107	121
Northern Territory	78	55	15	70	148
New Zealand	345	na	na	360	705

- **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 21.7 minutes for Australia and 25.3 minutes for New Zealand.
- **Response rate** – 79.8% of injured workers who were successfully contacted and in scope in Australia and 88.0% of those contacted and in scope in New Zealand completed an interview.

$$\text{Response rate} = \frac{\text{Number of interviews}}{\text{Number of interviews} + \text{Number of refusals}}$$

- **AAPOR Response Rate**¹ – an estimated² 50.0% of eligible injured workers completed an interview in Australia and an estimated 63.2% of eligible participants completed an interview in New Zealand.
- **Weighting**
 - Historic cohort weighted to jurisdiction population, consistent with the Return to Work Monitor.
 - 2013/14 New Zealand data were also weighted by ethnicity and days compensated.

The sample available for the 2013/14 ACC Return to Work survey was significantly reduced following a large corporate survey which drew upon almost half of the otherwise available sample. Sample exclusions were greatest among those with 50+ days compensated leading to an under-representation of these claimants in the final completed interviews. To address this issue weighting by ethnicity and days compensated was conducted.

¹ AAPOR, 2011.

² The AAPOR Response Rate relies on estimating the proportion of cases of unknown eligibility that may have been eligible for the survey and including this estimate in the denominator for the calculation of the survey response rate. For more information about AAPOR response rate see <http://www.aapor.org/Resources.htm>.