



CAMPBELL RESEARCH & CONSULTING

**2004/05  
Australia & New Zealand**

**Return To Work  
Monitor**

A report of a survey of 2,995 injured workers  
in  
Australian and New Zealand  
workers' compensation jurisdictions

prepared for

**The Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities**

**August 2005**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **The Return To Work Monitor**

This report is the eighth annual report of the Return to Work (RTW) Monitor conducted across Australian and New Zealand workers' compensation jurisdictions. It is prepared for the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities. The population surveyed is injured workers who have had ten days or more compensation paid. The survey is conducted in November and May each year<sup>1</sup>.

The RTW Monitor uses the injured worker as the unit of analysis rather than claim status which is the usual unit of analysis used to measure performance of workers' compensation systems. Analysing RTW outcomes by individual injured workers provides performance indicators that are independent of the type of compensation system.

The interviews are conducted just over six months (seven to nine months) after a claim has been lodged. The survey provides information about three key stages in the injured workers' claim experience:

- The time when the claim was lodged;
- The time of RTW (if RTW occurs); and
- The time of interview.

The survey instrument and sampling procedures have been designed to provide a rigorous measure of RTW outcomes and processes that are independent of claim status. That is, although workers' compensation jurisdictions are able to measure payments to, and (in some instances) the RTW status of, injured workers with active claims, measurement of outcomes for inactive or closed claims is seldom possible.

The RTW Monitor uses consistent sampling, consent, interviewing, coding and analysis procedures across each participating jurisdiction. Minor adjustments are made to account for the different structures of compensation or terminology used. The consistency of procedures from wave to wave provides a robust measure, which is sensitive to change over time.

This report analyses the results of the surveys conducted in November 2004 and May 2005. Results are reported as the RTW Monitor 2004/05. Comparisons are made between individual Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions and, for the Australian national results, with previous years of the RTW Monitor. Separate reports are prepared for individual jurisdictions. Those reports identify, for each jurisdiction, trends over time in outcome and process measures.

Injured workers employed by organisations which are self-insured are not included in this report.

This report identifies statistically significant differences between jurisdictions and national trends over time.

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<sup>1</sup> The Australian financial year (July to June) is the basis for reporting in line with other Comparative Performance Measures used by the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council.

## 2004/05 Results

### *Key findings*

RTW and durable RTW outcomes have been consolidated in the current period and are at pre 2000 levels. Employment as the main sources of income has been steadily increasing. A significant fall in the proportion of Australian injured workers reporting workers' compensation as an income source occurred in 2004/05.

The proportion of injured workers with a non-durable RTW or not returning to work at all remains substantial.

Northern Territory, Tasmania and Comcare had the highest RTW and durable RTW outcomes while South Australia and Seacare had lower durable RTW rates. South Australia stood out as having the highest proportion of injured workers still receiving workers' compensation payments.

The positive RTW outcomes have been accompanied by an increasing proportion of injured workers identifying employers having clear policies and procedures for RTW.

The proportion of injured workers with a previous lost time claim has increased raising concerns that the durability of RTW may not be sustainable over the longer term.

### *RTW outcomes and national Australian trends*

The key finding of the 2004/05 RTW Monitor is consolidation of the improved RTW and durable RTW rates from 2003/04. The RTW rate for 2004/05 was 85% (compared to 83% in 2002/03) and the durable<sup>2</sup> RTW rate was 76% (compared to 73% in 2002/03).

RTW and durable RTW outcomes have been consolidated in the current period and are at pre 2000 levels.

This improvement and consolidation was also reflected in the proportion of injured workers with employment as their main source of income - from 69% in 2001/02 to 74% in 2003/04 and 75% in 2004/05. In addition there has been a decrease in the proportion of injured workers receiving workers' compensation payments as their main source of income at the time of interview – from 16% in 2001/02 to 13% in 2004/05. The proportion of injured workers in Australia reporting social security payments as their main source of income has remained constant (at around 4%) since the first year of the Monitor.

When considering all sources of income at the time of interview, there was an increase from the previous year in the full RTW rate (income from only employment) and corresponding decline in the partial RTW rate (employment plus any other income source). The full RTW rate for 2004/05 was 63% compared to 59% in 2003/04, while the partial RTW rate for 2004/05 was 15% compared to 18% in 2003/04.

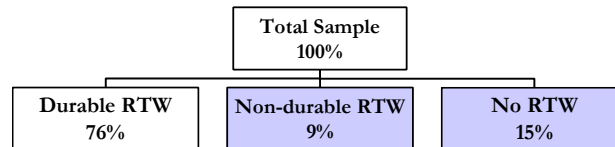
The time back at work, where RTW was durable, increased steadily to 2003/04 (indicating an earlier return to work) and remains comparable in 2004/05. In 2004/05 injured workers with a durable RTW had been back at work for an average of 22 weeks.

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<sup>2</sup> Durability is measured by the scope of the survey, that is, no more than nine months after the claim was submitted.

Where RTW was unsuccessful, the time injured workers stayed at work has remained substantial. In 2004/05, the length of non-durable RTW was over 11 weeks.

The proportion of unsuccessful (no RTW) outcomes remains considerable. One in four (24%) injured workers either had a non-durable RTW (9%) or had not returned to work at all (15%) by the time they were interviewed. Injury related issues were the primary reason for not working at the time of interview - "still injured" was mentioned by over half (54%), "aggravated injury" by more than one in ten (13%), while "new injury" accounted for one in ten (9%).



### Key differences between jurisdictions

RTW outcomes differed between jurisdictions. There was both higher RTW and durable RTW rates in the Northern Territory (93% and 86% respectively), Tasmania (90% and 81% respectively) and Comcare (91% and 85% respectively).

South Australia and Seacare had the lowest durable RTW rates (70% and 62% respectively) coinciding with an above average proportion of injured workers in those jurisdictions who were *not* deriving any income from employment at the time of the interview (non-durable RTW/no RTW) (33% and 35% respectively compared to 22% for the Australian national average). South Australia had the lowest proportion of injured workers who reported that they only obtained income from employment (47% compared to 63% for the Australian national average).

One in five (21%) injured workers reported that they were still receiving some form of weekly compensation payments at the time of interview, with higher rates in South Australia (42%) and Victoria (25%).

Injured workers covered by Comcare (75%) and Seacare (82%) who had returned to work were more likely to return to the same employer and carry out the same duties, particularly when compared to injured workers in South Australia (66%). Injured workers from South Australia (23%) and Victoria (20%) were more likely to return to the same employer and carry out *different* duties than the Australian average (15%). Injured workers in the Northern Territory (18%) and New Zealand (15%) were more likely to return to a different employer and different duties compared to the national Australian average (9%).

### Previous claim experience

The proportion of injured workers who reported previous claims remains substantial and has increased. Two in five (41%) injured workers who had a claim of ten days or more in duration reported having a previous claim. This national rate has increased from 32% in 2001/02 to 38% in 2002/03 and 2003/04, and 41% in 2004/05. Injured workers from the Northern Territory (53%), New Zealand (52%), South Australia (47%) and Queensland (46%) were more likely to indicate that they had a previous claim.

Nearly all (89%) injured workers who reported they had a previous claim had time off work as a result of that earlier claim. When based on all injured workers, under four in ten (37%) had a "lost time" claim. Injured workers in New Zealand (45%), the Northern Territory (46%) and Queensland (43%) were more likely to report a lost time claim. Lost time claims increased from 32% in 2003/04 to 37% in 2004/05.

### ***Workplace culture***

More positive overall RTW outcomes in the last two years may be explained, in part, by a significant change in the injured workers' perspective of the workplace culture. In particular, there has been a steady increase over four years in the proportion of injured workers who agreed that their employer has clear policies and procedures about returning injured workers to work – 49% agreed in 2001/02 (3.2 rating) to 64% in 2004/05 (3.5 rating).

Injured workers covered by Comcare (3.8) and Seacare (3.9) and those in Tasmania (3.7) were more likely to agree that their employer has clear policies and procedures about returning injured workers to work than those from Victoria (3.5).

Injured workers from New Zealand were more likely than those from Australia to agree that: they were valued at their workplace (4.0 and 3.9 respectively); thought management would do what was necessary to help them get back to work (3.8 and 3.6 respectively) and would spend time and money to make the workplace safe (3.7 and 3.4 respectively).

### ***RTW plans***

Since the commencement of the Monitor, the proportion of injured workers reporting RTW plans has steadily increased with half receiving a plan from 2002/03 (50% in 2004/05). Of these, eight in ten (79%) injured workers who received a RTW plan were involved in development of that plan. This has been stable since all jurisdictions have been asked this question (2001/02).

Three in four (76%) injured workers who received a RTW plan considered the plan helpful. Importantly, injured workers involved in the development of the RTW were more likely to rate the plan helpful (81%) than those who had no involvement (53%).

Wide variation between jurisdictions has been observed over the seven years of the Monitor in terms of RTW plans. RTW plans were most frequently reported among South Australians (77%) and Tasmanians (62%) and injured workers covered by Comcare (69%). The incidence of RTW plans was lower among those covered by Seacare (20%), and injured workers in New Zealand (33%) and Queensland (39%). Injured workers covered by Comcare (88%) and those from South Australia (89%) were more likely to be involved in the development of a RTW plan. And injured workers from Tasmania (84%) were more likely to report the RTW plan helpful particularly compared to those from South Australia (68%) and New Zealand (69%).

### ***Injured workers' perspective of the reasons for RTW***

Since the first year of the Monitor, “*recovered from injury*” (49%) has been the most frequently mentioned reason, without prompting, for returning to work followed by “*wanted to*” (28%) and “*economic need*” (27%). “*Bored at home*” (12%), “*told to by the doctor*” (11%) and “*changes in duties*” (11%) were mentioned by approximately one in ten injured workers as reasons for returning to work.

Of those injured workers who returned to work, four in five (78%) felt ready to do so. In the last two years, the proportion of injured workers who felt ready to return to work has increased after remaining stable for the four previous years.

### ***Different duties and partial RTW***

One in four (23%) injured workers returned to work on a partial basis at the time of return to work, that is, they were receiving workers' compensation payments in addition to wages when they returned to work. The partial RTW rate has been stable over the last four years of the Monitor.

Of those injured workers who returned to work (85%), over half (54%) returned to their previous hours. This rate has been stable over the last four years, although significantly lower than the peak of 60% in 1998/99. There was a higher rate of return to previous hours for injured workers covered by

Seacare (85%) and in New Zealand (69%), particularly when compared to workers covered by Comcare (37%) and in South Australia (37%).

***Customer service***

The proportion of injured workers who found it easy to get the information needed to make a claim (81%) and described it as a *simple* process (73%) has been stable for the last three years of the Monitor although representing an improvement from previous years. The national average rating of customer service provided by the insurer (based on eight measures) has improved steadily for each year of the Monitor (from 3.1 out of 5 in 1997/98, to 3.4 in 2004/05).

## How to Read the Report

The report identifies outcome measures (Section 1):

- return to work (RTW) rates;
- durability of RTW;
- compensation status;
- current sources of income reported; and
- continuity of employer and work duties.

Process measures (Section 2) include:

- the influence of workplace culture;
- claim experience;
- reasons given by injured workers for RTW;
- development of RTW plans;
- perception of the timeliness of RTW;
- suitable duties at RTW;
- partial RTW;
- perceptions of who were the most or least help in returning to work;
- communication with the insurer; and
- rating of insurer service by injured workers.

The report also identifies (Section 3):

- demographics of the injured workers;
- number of days compensation paid and claim cost;
- rehabilitation participation and cost; and
- employer's enterprise size.

### Statistical significance

The results of the aggregate survey are reported in the following pages. These results are analysed as the reported experience of injured workers across all participating jurisdictions. Only statistically significant results are discussed in the text of the report<sup>3</sup>.

### Time series comparisons

Comparisons have been made between participating jurisdictions as well as over time.

Direct time series comparisons are shown for each jurisdiction participating in the last eight financial years from 1997/98 through to 2004/05. The report also provides indicative national estimates based on an aggregation across jurisdictions appropriately weighted in accordance with the reported claim population for each participating jurisdiction.

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<sup>3</sup> Statistically significant results are reported at the 95% confidence level.

## Jurisdictions

This report summarises findings from the aggregate of the November 2004 and May 2005 waves of the National RTW Monitor. The sample consists of 2,995 injured workers who had made a workers' compensation claim in all of the following Australian jurisdictions:

Abbreviation	Jurisdiction	Sample size
NSW	New South Wales	600
VIC	Victoria	600
QLD	Queensland	600
SA	South Australia	400
TAS	Tasmania	373
NT	Northern Territory	120
COM	Comcare <sup>4</sup>	253
SEA	Seacare	49
<b>AUS</b>	<b>Total Australian National</b>	<b>2,995</b>
<b>NZ</b>	<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>600</b>

## Reading graphs and tables

### Reading the graphs

- Graphs have been used to:
  - demonstrate differences between each jurisdiction and the Australian average; and
  - demonstrate trends over time.
- The relevant survey questions are identified in the graph header.
- Angle brackets <> around a word or phrase in the survey question indicate where an expression specific to a jurisdiction is used.
- The Australian national average is shown as a horizontal line on bar charts.
- The base for the graphs refers to the total number of responses upon which the percentages have been calculated. This is identified under the left-hand corner of the graph.
- Each column is a percentage of the base.

### Reading the tables

- The relevant survey questions are identified in the table header.
- Angle brackets <> around a word or phrase in the survey question indicate where an expression specific to a jurisdiction is used.

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<sup>4</sup> Comcare is the body responsible for managing workers' compensation claims for all Commonwealth government agencies and Australian Capital Territory government agencies.

- The base for each table is identified under the left-hand corner of the table.
- The base for each column is identified in parentheses under the column header.
- A superscript capital letter in a column means that the survey estimate noted in that column is significantly different (at the 95% confidence level) to estimates shown in the column(s) noted. The corresponding capital letters for comparison may be found in the column header.
- “n/a” means that the particular cell is not applicable and no result can be reported.
- “-” means that there were no responses for the cell or the responses were too low to provide a percentage.
- Subtotals are bold and right justified.
- Proportions are rounded to the nearest whole percent.

## **Disclaimer**

Please note that, in accordance with our Company's policy, we are obliged to advise that neither the Company nor any member nor employee undertakes responsibility in any way whatsoever to any person or organisation (other than the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities) in respect of information set out in this report, including any errors or omissions therein, arising through negligence or otherwise however caused.

## Background to the RTW Monitor

Return to work (RTW) is a key outcome used to measure the performance of workers' compensation systems both in Australia and overseas. RTW reflects the successful outcome and resolution of claims from the point of view of all key stakeholders - the injured worker, the employer, the insurer and the Authority responsible for overseeing the workers' compensation Scheme.

RTW is measured in some form or other by all workers' compensation systems. However, most measures are internal in that they rely upon the information available to the insurer or Authority from claims. They do not provide information after the claim is closed and seldom provide reliable information about the durability of RTW.

In order to develop a more comprehensive measure of RTW, the Victorian WorkCover Authority commissioned a survey of injured workers to measure RTW in a consistent and reliable format. The survey provides, from the perspective of the injured worker, a measure of a number of aspects of RTW that would not otherwise be available. These include:

- Durability of RTW;
- Reasons for returning to work;
- The extent to which injured workers report suitable duties being provided to assist their RTW;
- The reasons for unsuccessful RTW;
- The extent to which key stakeholders (doctors, employers, insurers, etc.) are perceived to help or hinder RTW; and
- A rating of the services provided by insurers (or Schemes).

The survey has been conducted by the Victorian WorkCover Authority every six months since November 1993. In May and November 1996 comparative surveys were conducted for the South Australian WorkCover Corporation.

In May 1997, the Report of the Heads of Workers' Compensation Authorities "*Promoting Excellence: National Consistency in Australian Workers' Compensation*" recommended a nationally consistent approach to workers' compensation. To establish a nationally consistent framework for monitoring RTW outcomes the first RTW Monitor report was published in May 1998. Surveys were conducted for New South Wales, Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria. In November 1998, the Australian Capital Territory and Comcare joined the National RTW Monitor, and the Northern Territory suspended participation. Seacare joined the Monitor in May 2000.

The sixth wave of the National RTW Monitor was conducted in May 2000 and included all state jurisdictions (including Comcare and Seacare) except Western Australia. New Zealand joined the RTW Monitor in November 2000.

This report presents the Australian and New Zealand results for the 2004/05 financial year (i.e. the aggregate of the November 2004 and May 2005 waves).

The Monitor's objectives are to:

1. Maintain an Australian benchmark for measuring RTW outcomes and processes used to achieve those outcomes across workers' compensation jurisdictions; and
2. Monitor RTW outcomes and processes used to achieve those outcomes over time and across workers' compensation jurisdictions.

# 1. Return to Work Outcome Measures

## 1.1 RTW rate

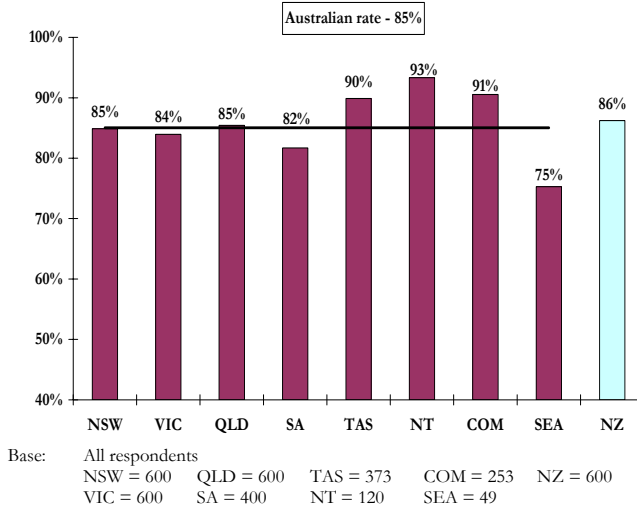
In 2004/05, just under nine in ten (85%)<sup>5</sup> injured workers had returned to work, for some period, within the first six months<sup>6</sup> of their claim (Figure 1).

The Northern Territory (93%), Tasmania (90%) and injured workers covered by Comcare (91%) had higher RTW rates than the Australian national average. All other jurisdictions compared with the national average.

In comparison to the New Zealand RTW rate (86%), fewer injured workers from South Australia (82%) and those covered by Seacare (75%) had returned to work for some period.

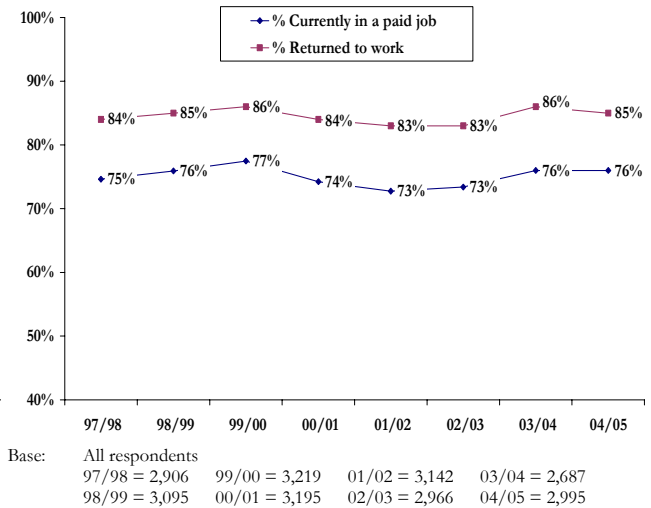
**Figure 1: RTW rate (Comparative)**

Q3. Would you please tell me whether you have returned to work at all since you put in your workers' compensation claim?



**Figure 2: RTW rate (Trend)**

Q3. Would you please tell me whether you have returned to work at all since you put in your workers' compensation claim?



The 2004/05 national RTW rate compares with the 2003/04 result and is significantly higher than the rate in 2002/03 and 2001/02 (Figure 2).

In 2004/05, just under nine in ten injured workers had returned to work. This rate is comparable with the previous year of the Monitor.

<sup>5</sup> All differences reported are significant at the 95% confidence interval unless otherwise stated.

<sup>6</sup> The sample is drawn from all injured workers with ten days or more compensation paid seven to eight months after submitting a claim. For the smaller states, the sample is drawn seven to nine months.



## 1.2 Durable RTW

The durable RTW rate is the proportion of injured workers who have returned to work and were still working at the time of interview.

The durable RTW rate follows a similar pattern to the RTW rate and has been approximately ten percentage points lower than the RTW rate.

In 2004/05, three in four (76%) Australian injured workers were still working at the time of interview (Figure 3).

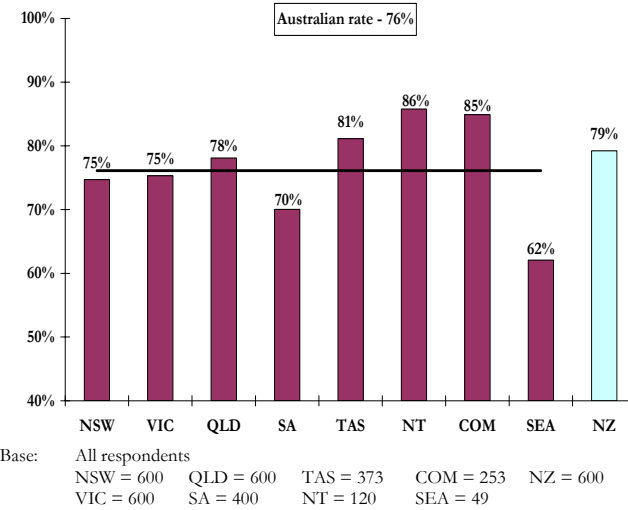
Similarly to the return to work rates, the Northern Territory (86%), Comcare (85%) and Tasmania (81%) durable RTW rates were higher than the Australian national average.

South Australia (70%) and injured workers covered by Seacare (62%) had a lower durable RTW rate than the Australian national average.

The Northern Territory, Comcare and Tasmania had higher RTW and durable RTW rates than the Australian national average. South Australia and Seacare had the lowest durable RTW rates.

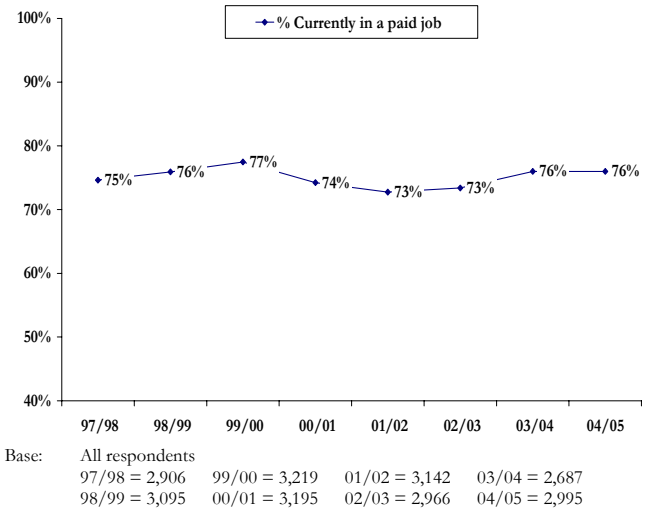
**Figure 3: Durable RTW rate (Comparative)**

Q8. Are you currently working in a paid job?



**Figure 4: Durable RTW rate (Trend)**

Q8. Are you currently working in a paid job?



The 2004/05 national Australian durable RTW rate is exactly the same as the previous year and higher than the previous two years of the Monitor (Figure 4).

One in four injured workers in Australia was not working at the time of interview.

### 1.3 Non-durable RTW

One in four (24%) Australian injured workers were not working at the time of interview (Figure 5). This comprised:

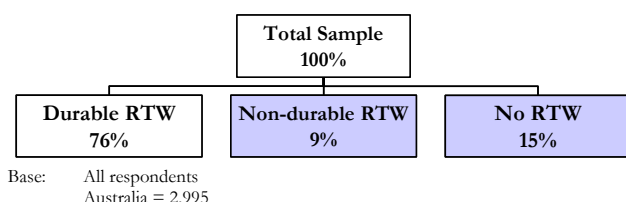
- 15% who had not returned to work; and
- 9% who had a non-durable RTW.

The distribution is not dissimilar in New Zealand, with one in five (21%) injured workers not working at the time of interview (Figure 6). This comprised:

- 14% who had not returned to work; and
- 7% who had a non-durable RTW.

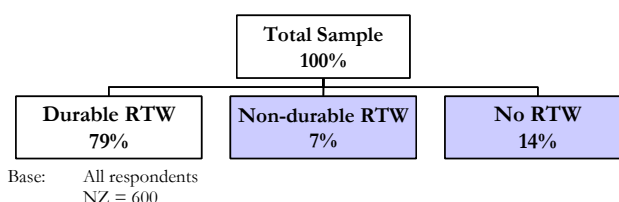
**Figure 5: RTW status at interview for Australia**

- Q3. *Would you please tell me whether you have returned to work at all since you put in your workers' compensation claim?*  
 Q8. *Are you currently working in a paid job?*



**Figure 6: RTW status at interview for NZ**

- Q3. *Would you please tell me whether you have returned to work at all since you put in your workers' compensation claim?*  
 Q8. *Are you currently working in a paid job?*



The Australian and New Zealand RTW rate, durable RTW rate and non-durable RTW are comparable.

### 1.4 Length of time back at work

This section of the report examines the length of time for which injured workers returned to work. These measures are based upon periods of time reported by the injured worker. These periods can be contrasted with Scheme based data such as the number of days compensation paid and claim cost. The Scheme based data provide estimates of the period *away* from work. It should also be noted that the latter are different measures to those reported here.

Length of time is obtained as number of days, weeks or months reported by the respondent. Weeks and months are converted to days to report the estimate of "average" length of time.

Previous RTW reports used "median" days to report the length of time back at work. However after a review of the data, it was observed that the intervals for longer periods were large (reported in months and converted to days). The large interval resulted in a substantial increase in the indicator which did not reflect the "average" change. Consequently the mean has been used in this report.

When RTW is successful, the injured worker will be in paid employment at the time of interview (just over six months after their claim).

Length of time back at work indicates how substantive the RTW is. The RTW Monitor has found the period to be months, that is, the RTW attempts are substantive even when the outcome is not successful.

1.4.1 Length of durable RTW

Injured workers who had returned to work, and *were still working* at the time of the interview were asked to estimate how long they had been back at work. Reasons for returning to work are reported in Section 2.4.

A longer period at work indicates an earlier durable RTW.

The national mean length of time back at work for injured workers who were working at the time of interview was 154 days or 22 weeks (Figure 7). This had been increasing steadily over the three previous years and, while marginally lower in 2004/05, this is not significantly different to the 2003/04 result (Figure 8).

Although not statistically higher than the Australian national average, injured workers covered by Seacare had the highest mean length of durable RTW (193 days or 28 weeks). Injured workers from Tasmania and injured workers covered by Comcare (176 days each) had a higher duration compared to the national average, while Queensland (143 days) was below the Australian national average.

Figure 7: Length of time back at work for durable RTW (Comparative)

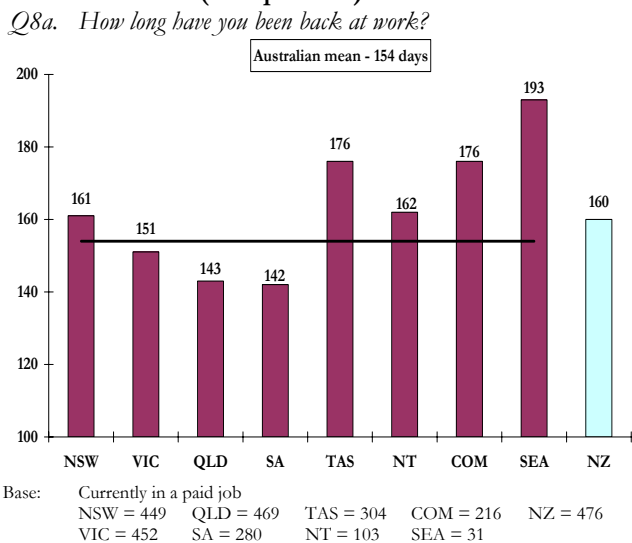
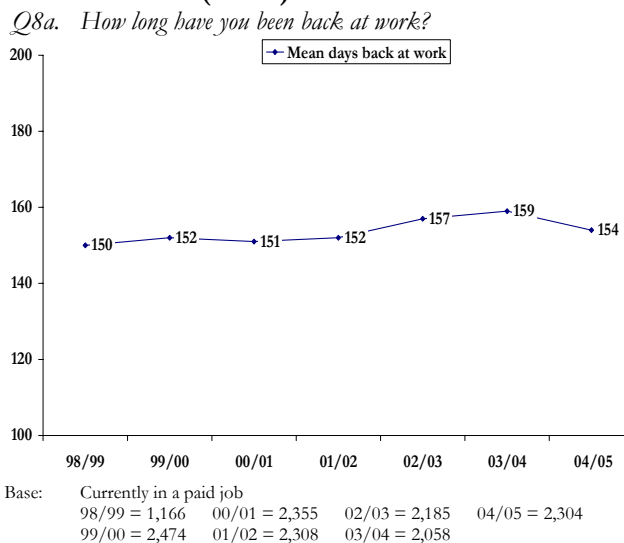


Figure 8: Length of time back at work for durable RTW (Trend)



The length of durable RTW had been increasing steadily to 2003/04, although remains comparable in 2004/05.

1.4.2 Length of non-durable RTW

Injured workers who had returned to work, but were no longer working at the time of the interview were asked to estimate how long they had been back at work before they stopped. Reasons for not working are reported in Section 2.4.1.

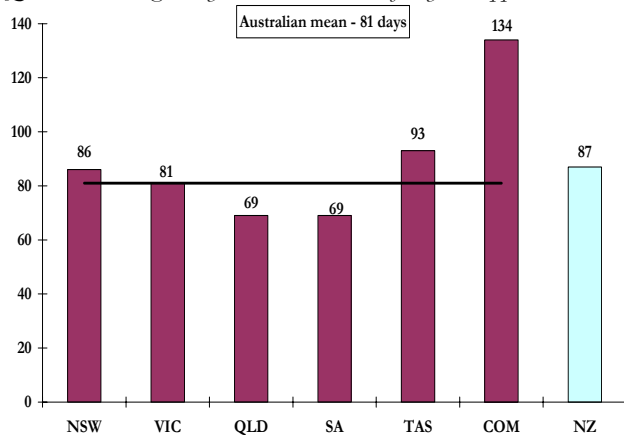
Unsuccessful attempts at RTW are substantive.

The mean estimated duration of non-durable RTW was 81 days or over 11 weeks (Figure 9). The mean length of time back at work for Australian injured workers with a non-durable RTW remains higher than the first two years of the Monitor (Figure 10).

There were no significant differences in the duration of non-durable RTW by jurisdiction.

Figure 9: Length of time back at work for non-durable RTW (Comparative)

Q10. How long were you back at work before you stopped?

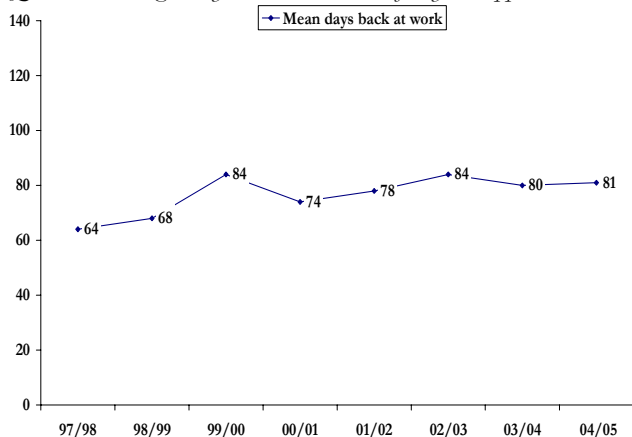


Base: Have returned to work but currently do not work  
 NSW = 61 QLD = 44 TAS = 32 COM = 14 NZ = 42  
 VIC = 52 SA = 47 NT = 9 SEA = 6

Note: Northern Territory and Seacare results are not included because of very small sample sizes.  
 Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

Figure 10: Length of time back at work for non-durable RTW (Trend)

Q10. How long were you back at work before you stopped?



Base: Have returned to work but currently do not work  
 97/98 = 311 99/00 = 314 01/02 = 319 03/04 = 254  
 98/99 = 312 00/01 = 339 02/03 = 301 04/05 = 265

The mean estimated duration of non-durable RTW was over 11 weeks.

## 1.5 Income sources

Measuring income sources identifies a number of dimensions of RTW outcomes. Reported compensation status can be identified, although not to the degree of precision that the jurisdictions can be using claim data. The RTW Monitor uniquely identifies income from employment, social security and instances where the injured worker no longer has any income at all.

Sources of income are identified at two points in time:

- at time of RTW, reported as a process measure (see Section 2.7); and
- at time of interview (reported below).

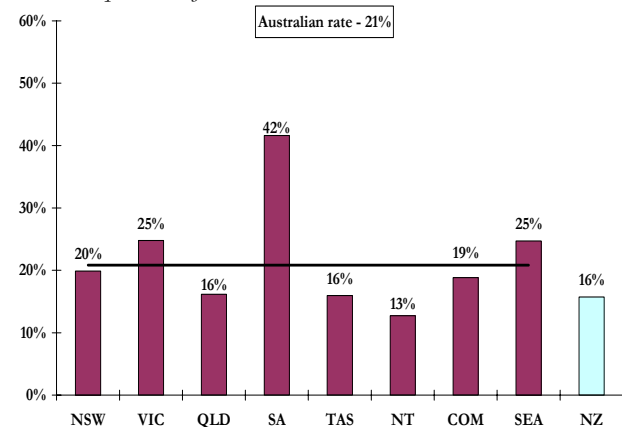
### 1.5.1 Current compensation status

In 2004/05, one in five (21%) injured workers reported they were still receiving some form of weekly compensation payments at the time of the interview (Figure 11).

The Northern Territory (13%), Queensland (16%), Tasmania (16%) and New Zealand (16%) had the lowest rates of injured workers receiving compensation at the time of interview when compared with the Australian national average. Highest rates of injured workers receiving compensation payments were in South Australia (42%) and Victoria (25%).

**Figure 11: Current compensation status (Comparative)**

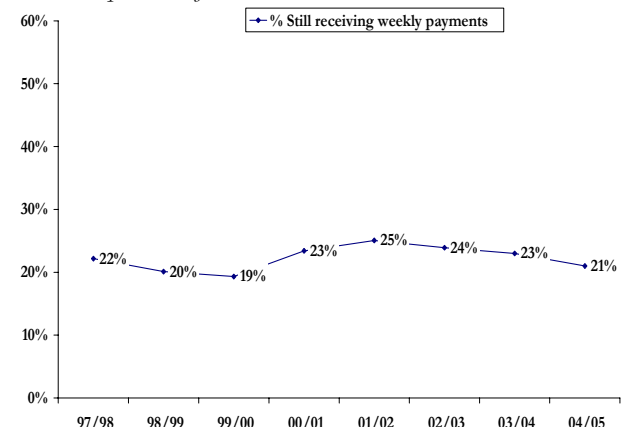
Q19. Are you still receiving weekly payments from <workers' compensation jurisdiction>?



Base: All respondents  
 NSW = 600 VIC = 600  
 QLD = 600 SA = 400  
 TAS = 373 NT = 120  
 COM = 253 SEA = 49  
 NZ = 600

**Figure 12: Current compensation status (Trend)**

Q19. Are you still receiving weekly payments from <workers' compensation jurisdiction>?



Base: All respondents  
 97/98 = 2,906 99/00 = 3,219 01/02 = 3,142 03/04 = 2,687  
 98/99 = 3,095 00/01 = 3,195 02/03 = 2,966 04/05 = 2,995

The proportion of injured workers receiving workers' compensation payments at the time of interview has gradually declined from a peak of 25% in 2001/02 to 21% in 2004/05 (Figure 12).

One in five injured workers reported they were still receiving workers' compensation payments six months after their claim (at the time of interview).

1.5.2 Main source of income at the time of interview

Three in four injured workers (75%) reported employment as their *main* source of income at the time of interview, while over one in ten (13%) reported workers' compensation payments as their *main* source of income (Table 2).

A smaller proportion of injured workers reported other *main* sources of income including:

- Social security (4%);
- Partner's income (3%); and
- No income at all (3%).

<i>Q20a. Would you please tell me what is your main source of income?</i>										
	<b>AUS (2,995) % A</b>	<b>NSW (600) % B</b>	<b>VIC (600) % C</b>	<b>QLD (600) % D</b>	<b>SA (400) % E</b>	<b>TAS (373) % F</b>	<b>NT (120) % G</b>	<b>COM (253) % H</b>	<b>SEA (49) % I</b>	<b>NZ (600) % J</b>
Employment	75 <sup>E</sup>	75 <sup>E</sup>	76 <sup>E</sup>	77 <sup>E</sup>	63	77 <sup>E</sup>	81 <sup>EI</sup>	86 <sup>ABCD EFIJ</sup>	65	76 <sup>E</sup>
Workers' compensation	13 <sup>FGH</sup>	13 <sup>H</sup>	15 <sup>FGH</sup>	12 <sup>H</sup>	25 <sup>ABCD FGHJ</sup>	9	7	7	22 <sup>BDF GHJ</sup>	12 <sup>H</sup>
Partner's income	3	3	2	2	6 <sup>ABCD H</sup>	5 <sup>ACD</sup>	2	2	2	5 <sup>ACD</sup>
Social security	4 <sup>J</sup>	2	3 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>ABEHJ</sup>	3 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>BEHJ</sup>	3	1	0	1
No income	3 <sup>H</sup>	4 <sup>EFHJ</sup>	3	2	2	1	4 <sup>H</sup>	-	2	2

Base: All respondents

Note: A superscript capital letter in a column means that the estimate shown in that column is significantly greater (at the 95% confidence level) than comparable estimates shown in the column(s) noted. The corresponding capital letters for comparison may be found in the column header.

Three in four injured workers nationally reported their main source of income at the time of interview was employment.

Injured workers covered by Comcare (86%) were more likely to report employment as their *main* source of income at the time of interview than the Australian national average, while South Australian injured workers (63%) were less likely to report employment as their *main* source of income.

Injured workers in South Australia (25%) and those covered by Seacare (22%) more often reported workers' compensation payments as their *main* income source at time of interview compared to other jurisdictions. In contrast, the incidence was lower among injured workers in Tasmania (9%), the Northern Territory (7%) and Comcare (7%).

Queensland and Tasmanian injured workers (6% each) were more likely to report social security as their *main* source of income compared to other jurisdictions. A partner's income was more common compared with the Australian national average for injured workers in South Australia (6%), Tasmania (5%) and New Zealand (5%).

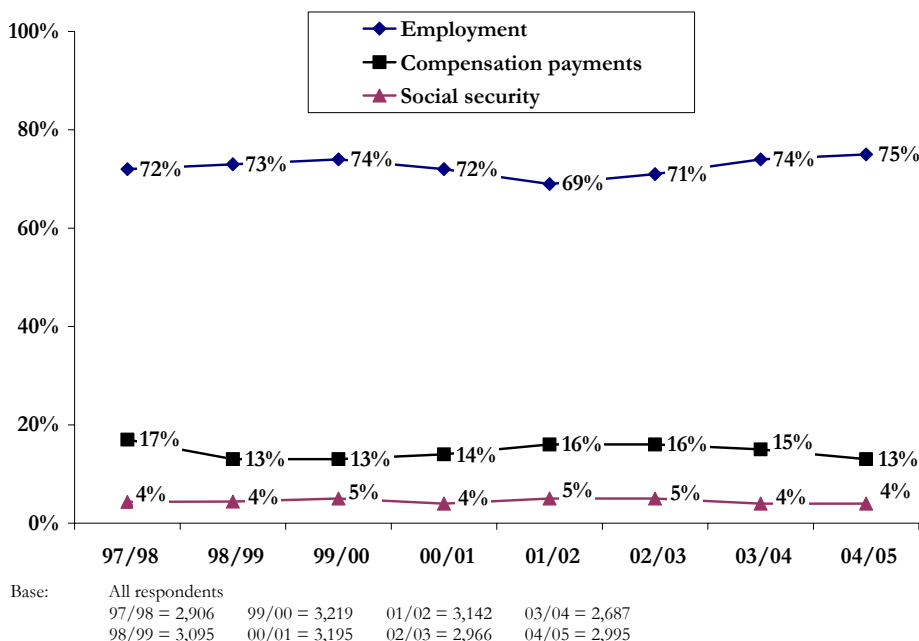
Injured workers covered by Comcare were more likely to report employment as their *main* income source at the time of the interview when compared to the Australian national average. South Australian injured workers and those covered by Seacare were more likely to report workers' compensation as their *main* source of income when compared to other jurisdictions.

The proportion of injured workers reporting employment as their *main* source of income in 2004/05 is comparable with the 2003/04 result and remains higher than the three previous years of the Monitor (Figure 13). The proportion reporting workers' compensation in 2004/05 is three percentage points lower than in 2001/02 and 2002/03 and represents a significant decline. The proportion reporting social security as their main source of income has remained stable since the commencement of the Monitor in 1997/98.

**Figure 13: Main source of income (Trend)**

Q20a.

Would you please tell me what is your main source of income?



Three in four injured workers nationally reported their *main* source of income at the time of interview was employment. This incidence has gradually increased since 2001/02. Correspondingly, workers' compensation payments have gradually declined since 2001/02.

### **1.5.3 Total sources of income at time of interview (including partial RTW)**

While the *main* source of income identifies the general outcome for the injured worker, *total* sources of income at the time of interview provides a more detailed perspective. In particular, identifying combinations of income can estimate full, partial and non-durable/no RTW outcomes.

Income sources have been categorised into three types:

- Employment;
- Workers' compensation; and
- Other sources (such as social security, partner's wages, etc).

An injured worker can have any combination of these types.

Different combinations of income sources have been used to identify RTW outcomes (Table 3):

- Full RTW (employment only);
- Partial RTW (employment and some other income); and
- No or non-durable RTW (income from any source except employment).

Partial and no/non-durable RTW have been further analysed by identifying workers' compensation as the only "other" income source (Table 4).

At the time of interview:

- Just over three in five (63%) injured workers nationally reported that they only obtained income from employment (had a full RTW);
- Under one in five (15%) had a partial RTW, that is, their income was derived from both employment and some other source; and
- One in five (22%) injured workers in Australia reported they were not deriving any income from employment at the time of interview (had either not returned to work or had a non-durable RTW).

<b>Table 3: RTW outcomes measured by income sources at interview (Comparative)</b>										
<i>Q20a. Would you please tell me what is your main source of income?</i>										
<i>Q20b. What other sources of income do you have?</i>										
	<b>AUS (2,995) % A</b>	<b>NSW (600) % B</b>	<b>VIC (600) % C</b>	<b>QLD (600) % D</b>	<b>SA (400) % E</b>	<b>TAS (373) % F</b>	<b>NT (120) % G</b>	<b>COM (253) % H</b>	<b>SEA (49) % I</b>	<b>NZ (600) % J</b>
Full RTW (income from employment only)	63 <sup>E</sup>	62 <sup>E</sup>	63 <sup>E</sup>	66 <sup>E</sup>	47	64 <sup>E</sup>	71 <sup>BE</sup>	68 <sup>E</sup>	56	66 <sup>E</sup>
Partial RTW (employment plus any other income source)	15 <sup>J</sup>	15	15	13	21 <sup>ABC DJ</sup>	17 <sup>J</sup>	13	20 <sup>ADJ</sup>	9	11
Non-durable RTW /No RTW (income from all sources except employment)	22 <sup>H</sup>	23 <sup>H</sup>	22 <sup>H</sup>	21 <sup>H</sup>	33 <sup>ABC DFGHJ</sup>	19 <sup>H</sup>	16	12	35 <sup>ACD FGHJ</sup>	22 <sup>H</sup>

Base: All respondents

At the time of interview, RTW outcomes as measured by income sources differed by jurisdiction. South Australia (47%) had the lowest proportion of injured workers who reported that they only obtained income from employment (Table 3).

South Australia (21%) and injured workers covered by Comcare (20%) had the highest proportions of injured workers who derived their income from both employment and some other source (partial RTW), particularly when compared to New Zealand (11%).

South Australia (33%) and injured workers covered by Seacare (35%) had the highest proportions of injured workers who reported that they were not deriving any income from employment at the time of interview, particularly when compared to Comcare (12%).

South Australia had the lowest proportion of injured workers who reported that they only obtained income from employment. And correspondingly the highest proportion of injured workers who derived their income from both employment and some other source and were not deriving any income from employment.

<b>Table 4: RTW outcomes involving workers' compensation payments (Comparative)</b>										
<i>Q20a. Would you please tell me what is your main source of income?</i>										
<i>Q20b. What other sources of income do you have?</i>										
	<b>AUS (2,995) % A</b>	<b>NSW (600) % B</b>	<b>VIC (600) % C</b>	<b>QLD (600) % D</b>	<b>SA (400) % E</b>	<b>TAS (373) % F</b>	<b>NT (120) % G</b>	<b>COM (253) % H</b>	<b>SEA (49) % I</b>	<b>NZ (600) % J</b>
Non-durable/no RTW (workers' compensation payments only)	10 <sup>FGH</sup>	9 <sup>GH</sup>	11 <sup>FGH</sup>	9 <sup>GH</sup>	19 <sup>ABC DFGHJ</sup>	6	3	5	22 <sup>ABC DFGHJ</sup>	9
Partial RTW (employment, workers' comp. and other)	5 <sup>DJ</sup>	5	6 <sup>DJ</sup>	3	9 <sup>ABDJ</sup>	5 <sup>DJ</sup>	5	6 <sup>DJ</sup>	0	2

Base: All respondents

One in ten (10%) injured workers in Australia (Table 4) reported workers' compensation payments as their only source of income. One in twenty (5%) had a partial RTW outcome where income was from both employment and workers' compensation payments.

South Australia had higher proportions of injured workers with "workers' compensation only" outcomes (19%) and higher partial RTW rates where weekly compensation and employment were the only sources of income (9%).

Tasmania (6%), Comcare (5%) and the Northern Territory (3%) had lower proportions of "workers' compensation only" outcomes.

Queensland (3%) and New Zealand (2%) had lower proportions of partial RTW where weekly compensation and employment were the only sources of income when compared to the Australian national average.

South Australia had higher proportions of injured workers with both "workers' compensation only" outcomes and partial RTW where weekly compensation and employment were the only sources of income.

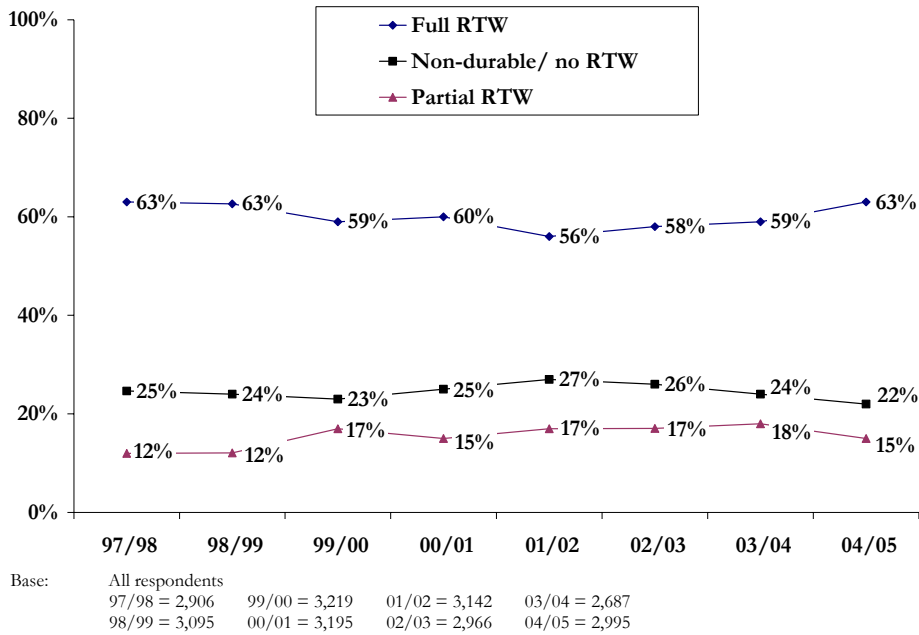
The full RTW rate (63%) is significantly higher than the last five years of the Monitor and has returned to the levels reported in 1997/98 and 1998/99 (Figure 14).

Conversely, the non-durable RTW rate (22%) has gradually declined from a peak in 2001/02 (27%) and the partial RTW rate (15%) is lower than last year (18%).

**Figure 14: RTW outcomes measured by income sources at interview (Trend)**

*Q20a. Would you please tell me what is your main source of income?*

*Q20b. What other sources of income do you have?*



The full RTW rate is significantly higher than the last five years of the Monitor and has returned to the levels reported in 1997/98 and 1998/99.



## 1.6 Employment and duties

An important factor in RTW is whether the injured worker can return to the same employer that they were working for (Section 1.6.1) or the same duties that they were doing when they were injured (Section 1.6.2) or whether they returned to a new employer.

This section of the report shows changed duties and changes to employer as outcome measures based on the status of the injured workers at the time of interview. (Changed duties at RTW are reported as a process measure in Section 2.6.4.)

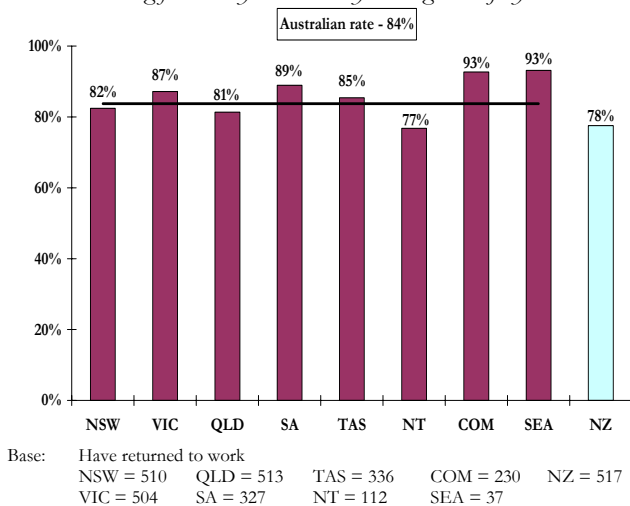
### 1.6.1 Employer at time of interview

More than four in five (84%) injured workers who returned to work, returned to work with the employer they were working for when they sustained their injury – the “same” employer (Figure 15).

Injured workers covered by Comcare (93%) and in South Australia (89%) were more likely to RTW with their original employer than the Australian national average, while those from New Zealand (78%) were the less likely to do so.

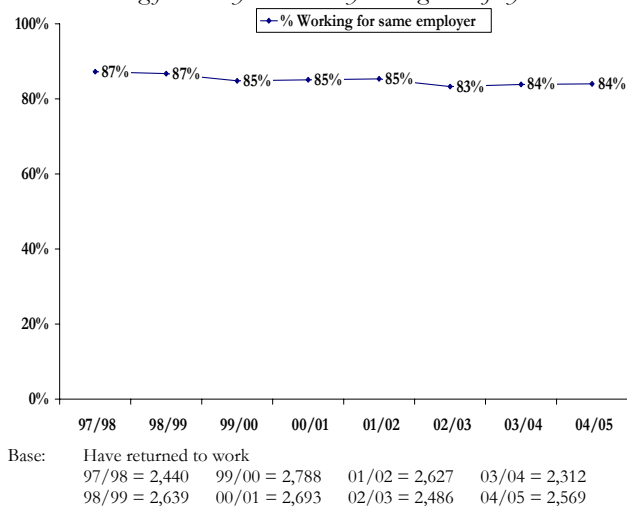
**Figure 15: Return to same employer (Comparative)**

Q11. [Are/Were] you working with the same employer you were working for when you incurred your original injury?



**Figure 16: Return to same employer (Trend)**

Q11. [Are/Were] you working with the same employer you were working for when you incurred your original injury?



The rate of RTW with the same employer has been comparable since 1999/00, although at a lower level than in 1997/98 and 1998/99 (Figure 16).

More than four in five injured workers who returned to work, returned to work with the employer they were working for when they sustained their injury.

1.6.2 Duties at time of interview

Three in four (76%) injured workers who had returned to work were doing the same duties at the time of interview (or when they stopped working) as they were doing before they were injured (Figure 17).

South Australian injured workers who had returned to work (69%) were less likely to have returned to the *same* duties than the Australian national average.

Figure 17: Return to same duties (Comparative)

Q12. [Are/Were] you doing the same sort of work or duties that you were doing when you incurred your original injury?

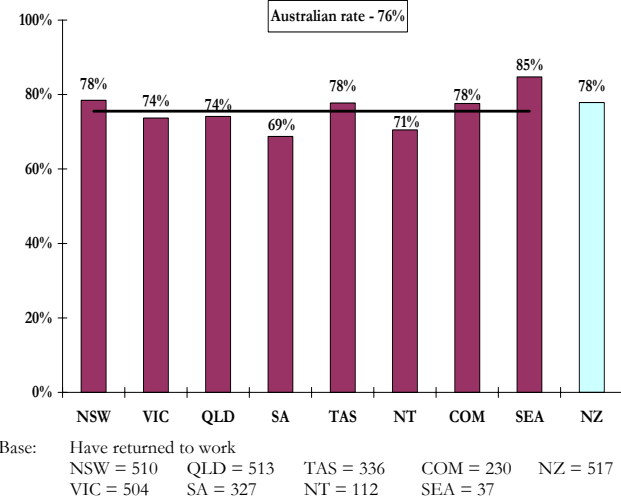
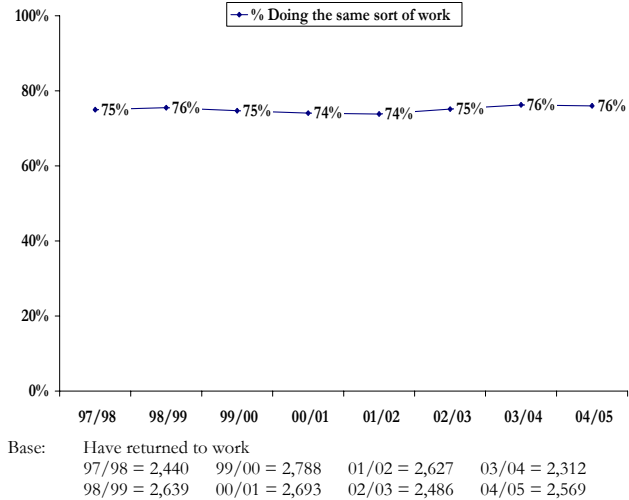


Figure 18: Return to same duties (Trend)

Q12. [Are/Were] you doing the same sort of work or duties that you were doing when you incurred your original injury?



The proportion of injured workers who had returned to the same duties has been stable since the commencement of the Monitor (Figure 18).

Three in four injured workers who had returned to work were doing the same duties at the time of interview (or when they stopped working) as they were doing before they were injured.

### 1.6.3 Continuity of employer and duties

Seven in ten (68%) injured workers nationally who had returned to work, returned to the same employer *and* carried out the same duties as prior to their injury (Table 5). However, injured workers covered by Comcare (75%) and Seacare (82%) more frequently returned to the *same employer* and carried out the *same duties*, particularly when compared to injured workers in South Australia (66%).

Injured workers from South Australia (23%) and Victoria (20%) who had returned to work were more likely to return to the *same employer* but given *different duties* compared to other Australian jurisdictions. Fewer injured workers from New Zealand (7%) returned to the *same employer* but *different duties*.

Injured workers in the Northern Territory (18%) and New Zealand (15%) who had returned to work were more likely to return to a different employer *and* different duties than the Australian national average. This incidence was lower in Victoria (6%).

Injured workers covered by Comcare who had returned to work were less likely to return to a different employer, either to the same duties (3%) or different duties (5%) when compared to the Australian national average.

	AUS (2,569) % A	NSW (510) % B	VIC (504) % C	QLD (513) % D	SA (327) % E	TAS (336) % F	NT (112) % G	COM (230) % H	SEA (37) % I	NZ (517) % J
Q11. [Are/Were] you working with the same employer you were working for when you incurred your original injury?										
Q12. [Are/Were] you doing the same sort of work or duties that you were doing when you incurred your original injury?										
Same employer/ Same duties	68	70	67	67	66	73 <sup>E</sup>	65	75 <sup>ACD</sup> E	82 <sup>E</sup>	70
Same employer/ Different duties	15 <sup>J</sup>	13 <sup>J</sup>	20 <sup>ABD</sup> FGJ	14 <sup>J</sup>	23 <sup>ABD</sup> FGJ	13 <sup>J</sup>	12	18 <sup>J</sup>	11	7
Different employer/ Same duties	7 <sup>EH</sup>	8 <sup>EH</sup>	6 <sup>EH</sup>	7 <sup>EH</sup>	3	5	5	3	2	7 <sup>EH</sup>
Different employer/ Different duties	9 <sup>CH</sup>	9	6	12 <sup>CH</sup>	8	10 <sup>H</sup>	18 <sup>ABC</sup> EFH	5	5	15 <sup>ABC</sup> EFH

Base: Have returned to work

Seven in ten injured workers nationally who had returned to work, returned to the same employer *and* carried out the same duties as prior to their injury.

## 2. Process Measures

The previous section identified a number of key outcomes measured by the RTW Monitor. Key process indicators are reported in this section.

The process measures include:

- The culture of the workplace where the injury occurred (identifying characteristics that are supportive of the RTW process)<sup>7</sup>;
- The process of lodging a claim;
- The RTW process, specifically:
  - The development of a RTW plan;
  - Assistance with RTW;
  - Changed duties;
  - Partial RTW;
  - The people who were the most help and least help; and
- Rating of insurance type services.

### 2.1 Workplace culture

In May 2000, a series of statements were introduced to the RTW Monitor to measure injured workers' perspective of workplace culture. Injured workers were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with six statements about the workplace where they sustained their injury. These were converted into a scale from one to five, where one was "strongly disagree" and five was "strongly agree". A score of three indicates "neither agree nor disagree". The average score for all respondents is reported.

The attributes of the workplace that were rated included:

- Work importance:  
*"The work that you do at your workplace is very important to you"*
- Work satisfaction:  
*"You are very satisfied with the work you do"*
- Valued at work:  
*"People at work really value what you do"*
- Management help with RTW:  
*"Generally, management at the place where you work will do what they can to help you get back to work"*
- OH&S spending:  
*"Your employer is prepared to spend the money and time required to make the workplace safe"*
- RTW policies and procedures:  
*"Your employer has clear policies and procedures about returning injured workers to work"*.

Overall, at least three in five, and up to nine in ten, injured workers agreed with the statements as reflected by the mean ratings ranging from 3.4 to 4.4 (Figure 19).

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<sup>7</sup> The impact of Workplace Culture on Return to Work, Comcare Australia paper presented to WorkCongress5, Adelaide 2001.

The importance of work (4.4 mean rating) and work satisfaction (4.2) had the highest levels of agreement among injured workers in the Australian jurisdictions with close to nine in ten in agreement (92% and 88% respectively). This was closely followed by being valued at their workplace (3.9) – three in four (77%) injured workers agreed.

Workplace attributes associated with returning to work and workplace safety had lower levels of agreement. Fewer injured workers in Australia agreed that:

- Management would help injured workers RTW (3.6) – 69% agreed;
- Their employer had clear policies and procedures about returning injured workers to work (3.5) – 64% agreed; and
- Management was prepared to spend time and money to make the workplace safe (3.4) – 61% agreed.

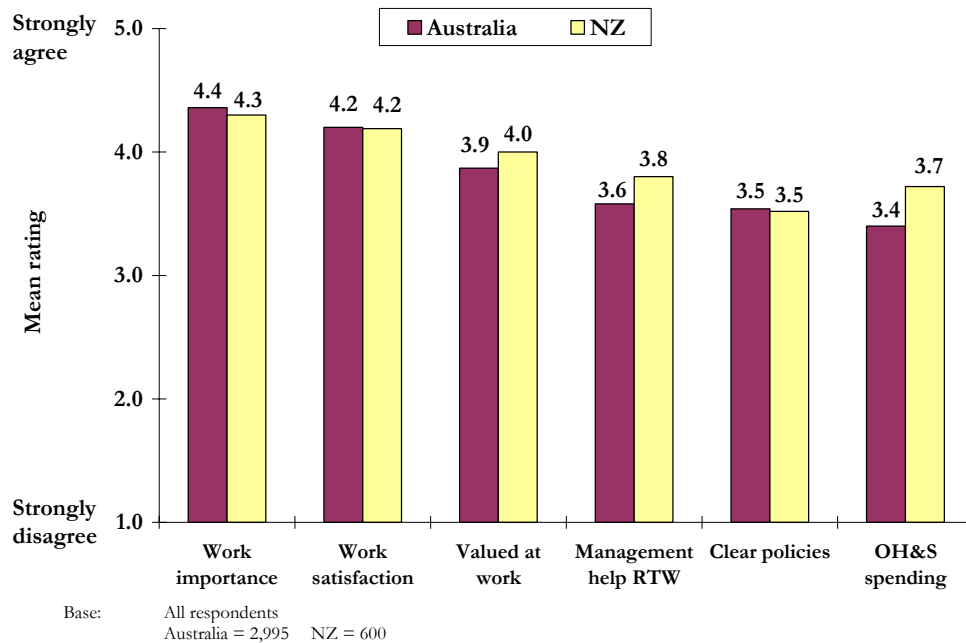
Injured workers from New Zealand were more likely than those from Australia to agree that:

- they were valued at their workplace (4.0 – 82% agreed);
- thought management would do what was necessary to help them get back to work (3.8 – 76% agreed); and
- would spend time and money to make the workplace safe (3.7 – 71% agreed).

**Figure 19: Rating level of agreement with attitude statements towards the workplace (Comparative)**

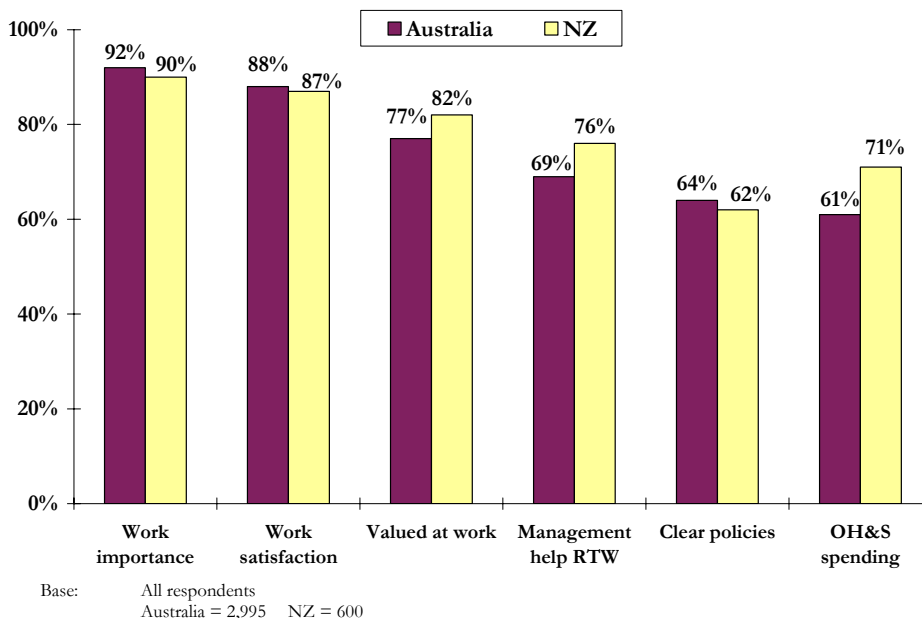
Q34.

*Level of agreement with statements*



**Figure 20: Rating level of agreement with attitude statements towards the workplace (Comparative)**

Q34. *Level of agreement with statements*



Injured workers generally feel their work is important and are satisfied with their work, with lower levels of agreement with attributes associated with returning to work and workplace safety.

There were a number of differences in attitudes towards the workplace by jurisdiction when compared to the Australian national average. Injured workers covered by Seacare were more likely to agree that their work is important to them (4.7), they are very satisfied with the work they do (4.5) and they are valued at work (4.2) (Table 6).

Injured workers from New Zealand were also more likely to agree that they are valued at work (4.0) than the Australian national average. In addition, New Zealand injured workers were more likely to agree that their employer would do what was necessary to help them get back to work (3.8) and that their employer is prepared to spend time and money on Occupational Health and Safety (3.7) when compared to the Australia national average.

Injured workers covered by Comcare (3.8) were more likely to agree that their employer has clear policies and procedures about returning injured workers to work than the Australian national average. However, they gave a lower rating for work satisfaction (4.1) when compared to many other jurisdictions, particularly Seacare (4.5).

Injured workers from South Australia recorded the lowest level of agreement for being valued for what they do at work (3.6).

Table 6: Mean rating level of agreement with attitude statements towards the workplace (Comparative)										
Q34. Level of agreement with statements										
	AUS (2,995) A	NSW (600) B	VIC (600) C	QLD (600) D	SA (400) E	TAS (373) F	NT (120) G	COM (253) H	SEA (49) I	NZ (600) J
Work importance	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.4 <sup>HJ</sup>	4.3	4.3	4.7 <sup>AB</sup> CDEFG HJ	4.3
Work satisfaction	4.2 <sup>H</sup>	4.2 <sup>H</sup>	4.1	4.2 <sup>H</sup>	4.2	4.3 <sup>H</sup>	4.2	4.1	4.5 <sup>AB</sup> CDEFG HJ	4.2 <sup>H</sup>
Valued at work	3.9 <sup>E</sup>	3.9 <sup>EH</sup>	3.9 <sup>E</sup>	3.8 <sup>E</sup>	3.6	4.0 <sup>EH</sup>	3.9	3.8	4.2 <sup>AC</sup> DEH	4.0 <sup>ACD</sup> EH
Management help RTW	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.7 <sup>D</sup>	3.6	3.7	3.8	3.8 <sup>ABC</sup> DE
OH&S spending	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.7 <sup>ABC</sup> DEFG
Clear RTW policies and procedures	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.7 <sup>C</sup>	3.5	3.8 <sup>AB</sup> CDEGJ	3.9 <sup>C</sup>	3.5

Base: All respondents

## 2.2 Making a claim

An important part of RTW includes access to, and complexity of, information needed to put in a claim. These results are examined in the following sections, together with the relationship between these aspects of claim experience and RTW.

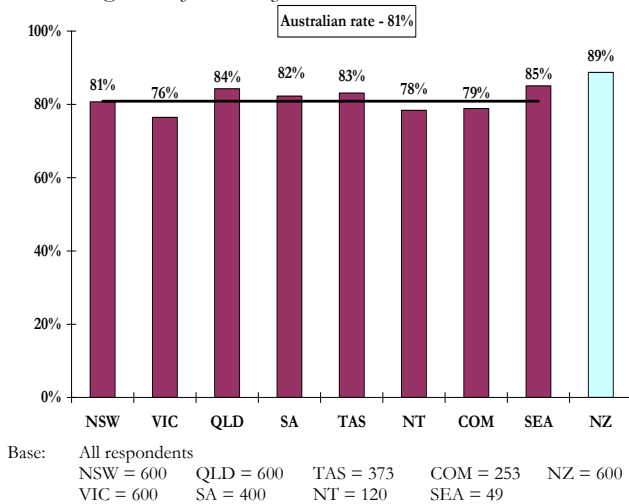
### 2.2.1 Information needed for putting in a claim

Eight in ten (81%) injured workers in Australia reported that it was easy to get the information they required for lodging a claim (Figure 21).

Injured workers from New Zealand (89%) were more likely to rate the access to information as easy, particularly when compared to injured workers in Victoria (76%).

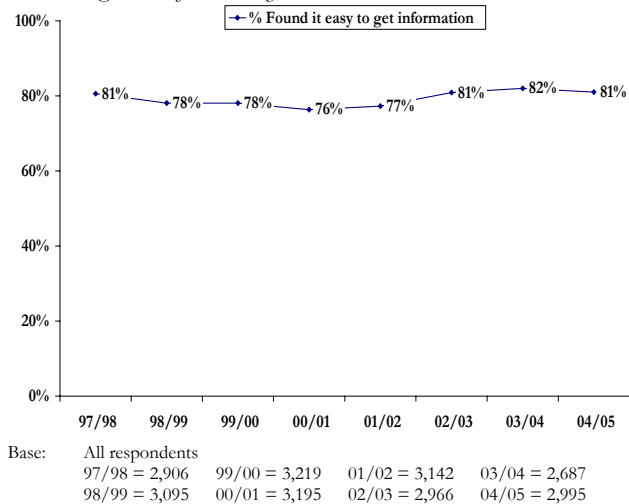
**Figure 21: Easy to get information for a claim (Comparative)**

Q1. When you put in your claim under <jurisdiction>, was it easy to get the information you needed to make a claim?



**Figure 22: Easy to get information for a claim (Trend)**

Q1. When you put in your claim under <jurisdiction>, was it easy to get the information you needed to make a claim?



The incidence of injured workers assessing access to information as easy has remained stable over the last three years of the Monitor. Importantly this is at a higher level when compared with the 1989/99 to 2001/02 period (Figure 22).

The vast majority of injured workers find it easy to get information needed to make a claim.

### 2.2.2 Complexity of putting in a claim

Three in four injured workers (73%) considered it *simple* to put in a claim, while one in five (20%) considered the process *complicated* (Table 7). A small minority (15%) believed it was *very simple*, while fewer (5%) considered the claim process *very complicated*. Seven percent could not say either way.

A higher proportion of injured workers in New South Wales (77%) and New Zealand (79%) rated the claim process as simple when compared to the Australian national average. In contrast, Comcare (41%) and Victoria (30%) were rated as having the most complicated claim process.

<b>Table 7: Ease of putting in a claim (Comparative)</b>										
<i>Q2a. Would you describe the process of putting in a claim as?</i>										
	<b>AUS (2,995) %</b>	<b>NSW (600) %</b>	<b>VIC (600) %</b>	<b>QLD (600) %</b>	<b>SA (400) %</b>	<b>TAS (373) %</b>	<b>NT (120) %</b>	<b>COM (253) %</b>	<b>SEA (49) %</b>	<b>NZ (600) %</b>
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>
Simple	58 <sup>CH</sup>	58 <sup>CH</sup>	52	61 <sup>CH</sup>	62 <sup>CH</sup>	56	57	50	70 <sup>CH</sup>	61 <sup>CH</sup>
Very simple	15 <sup>CH</sup>	19 <sup>ACD EH</sup>	12 <sup>H</sup>	13 <sup>H</sup>	14 <sup>H</sup>	21 <sup>ACD EGH</sup>	13	7	14	18 <sup>CDH</sup>
<b>Total simple</b>	<b>73<sup>CH</sup></b>	<b>77<sup>ACH</sup></b>	<b>64</b>	<b>73<sup>CH</sup></b>	<b>76<sup>CH</sup></b>	<b>77<sup>CH</sup></b>	<b>70<sup>H</sup></b>	<b>57</b>	<b>84<sup>CH</sup></b>	<b>79<sup>ACDGH</sup></b>
Complicated	15 <sup>B</sup>	10	23 <sup>ABD EFIJ</sup>	16 <sup>BJ</sup>	12	12	17 <sup>B</sup>	30 <sup>ABC DEFGIJ</sup>	8	12
Very complicated	5	4	7 <sup>ABDJ</sup>	4	5	4	7	10 <sup>ABD EFJ</sup>	4	3
<b>Total complicated</b>	<b>20<sup>BJ</sup></b>	<b>14</b>	<b>30<sup>ABD EFIJ</sup></b>	<b>20<sup>B</sup></b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23<sup>BJ</sup></b>	<b>41<sup>ABC DEFGIJ</sup></b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>
Can't Say	7 <sup>HJ</sup>	9	7	7	7	6	7	2	4	5

Base: All respondents

Over the last three years of the Monitor, one in five injured workers has rated the claim process as complicated. This represents a significant decline from the peak of 28% in 1998/99.

One in five injured workers considered it *complicated* to put in a claim.

## 2.3 Previous claim experience

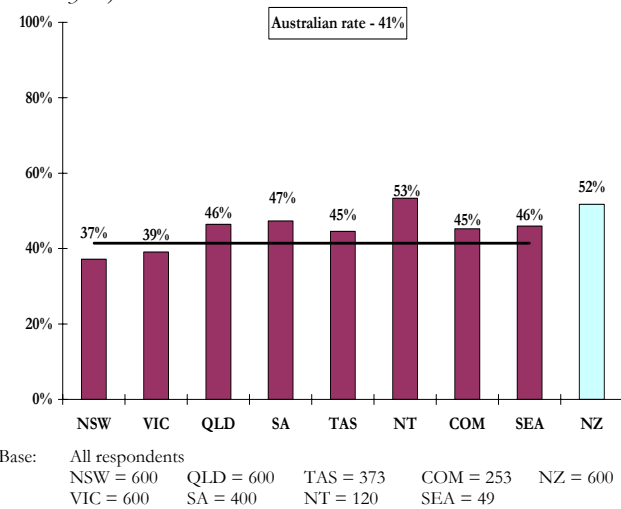
### 2.3.1 Previous claim

A question about previous claim experience was introduced to the Monitor for the first time in 2002.

Two in five (41%) injured workers who made a claim of ten days or more in duration reported having a previous workers' compensation claim (Figure 23). Injured workers in the Northern Territory (53%), New Zealand (52%), South Australia (47%) and Queensland (46%) were more likely to have had a previous claim when compared to the Australian national average.

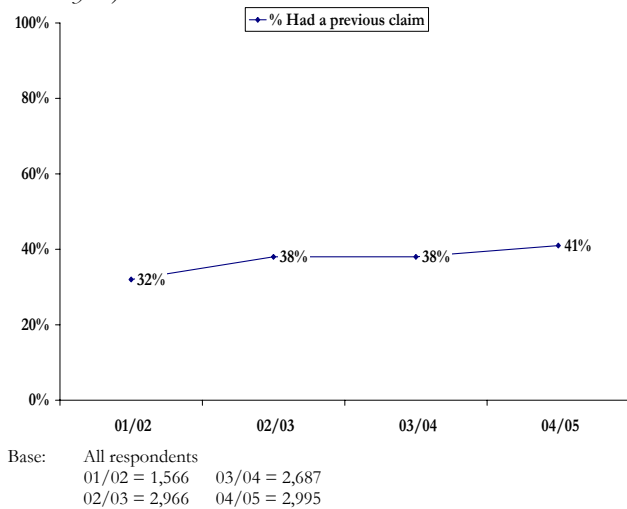
**Figure 23: Previous claim (Comparative)**

Q1a. Have you had any other workers' compensation claim BEFORE that claim (you made in September or October last year)?



**Figure 24: Previous claim (Trend)**

Q1a. Have you had any other workers' compensation claim BEFORE that claim (you made in September or October last year)?



The incidence of previous claims has continued to increase from 32% in 2001/02 to 41% in 2004/05 (Figure 24).

Two in five injured workers reported having a previous claim and this incidence has continued to increase since 2001/02.

2.3.2 Previous lost time claims

A question was introduced in 2003 asking injured workers who reported they had a previous claim, if they had any time off work because of those earlier claims.

Nine in ten (89%) injured workers who reported they had a previous claim had time off work as a result of that earlier claim.

When based on all injured workers, under four in ten (37%) reported that they had time of work because of an earlier claim, that is, they had a “lost time” claim (Figure 25). Injured workers in New Zealand (45%), the Northern Territory (46%) and Queensland (43%) were more likely to report a previous lost time claim when compared to the Australian national average. The differences by jurisdiction coincide with those noted for previous claims.

Figure 25: Previous lost time claims (Comparative)

Q1b. Did you have any time off work because of those earlier claims?

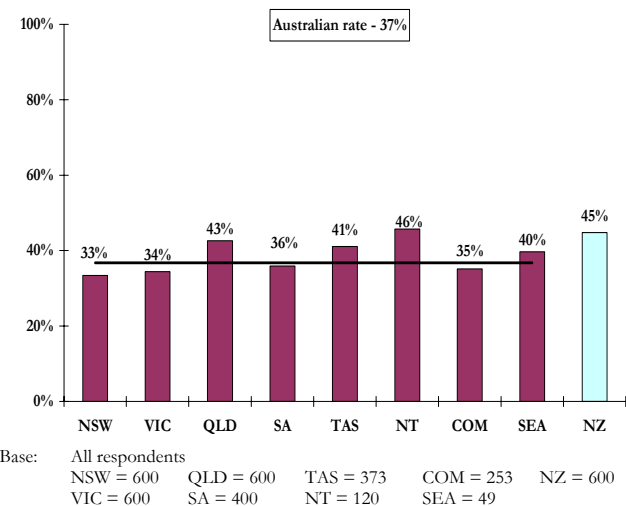
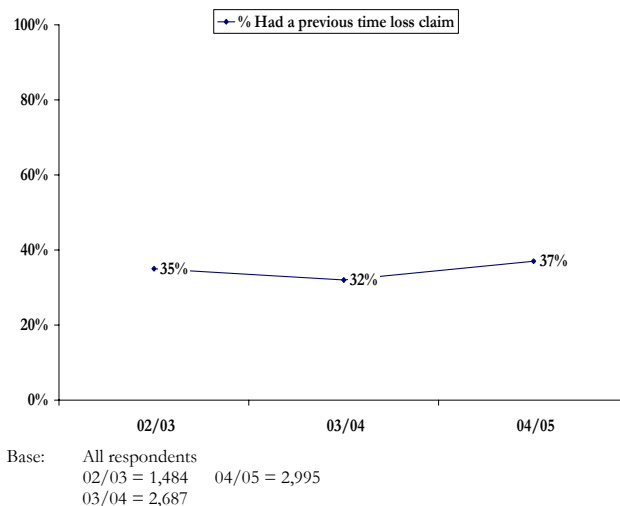


Figure 26: Previous lost time claims (Trend)

Q1b. Did you have any time off work because of those earlier claims?



The incidence of previous “lost time” claims has increased from 32% in 2003/04 to 37% in 2004/05 (Figure 26).

Just under two in five injured workers had time off work because of earlier claims and this incidence has increased since 2003/04.

## 2.4 Reasons for RTW

In total, 85% of Australian injured workers had returned to work. Of these, two in five (42%) injured workers stated (without prompting), that their *main* reason for returning to work was that they had “*recovered from injury*” (Table 8). Less than one in five workers mentioned that they returned because of “*economic need*” (16%) or because they “*wanted to RTW*” (13%).

When injured workers were probed for *any other reasons* for returning to work, “*recovered from injury*” was mentioned by half (49%). Three in ten workers (28%) mentioned that they returned because they “*wanted to RTW*”, while one in four (27%) mentioned “*economic need*”. Fewer injured workers mentioned they “*wanted to RTW*” in this period than 2003/04 (33%).

<b>Table 8: Reasons for RTW</b>		
<i>Q4a. What is the main reason you returned to work?</i>		
<i>Q4b. Were there any other reasons you returned to work?</i>		
	<b>National Main Reason (2,569) %</b>	<b>National Total Reasons (2,569) %</b>
Recovered from injury	42	49
Wanted to RTW	13	28
Economic need	16	27
Bored at home	6	12
Told by doctor	7	11
Changes in duties	7	11
Wanted to keep job	2	5
Pressured by employer	2	4
Pressured by compensation provider/ insurer	1	1
Now self employed	-	1
Offered part-time work	-	1
Benefits stopped	-	1

Base: Have returned to work

Note: Results may add up to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted.

Since the first year of the Monitor, “*recovered from injury*” has been the most frequently mentioned reason for returning to work followed at a distance by “*wanted to*” and “*economic need*”. One in ten injured workers mentioned “*changes in duties*”, “*bored at home*” and “*told to by the doctor*” as reasons for returning to work.

Although the relative order for return to work has been consistent since the start of the Monitor, there have been a number of trends observed in the *total* reasons given for RTW over that time:

- “*Recovered from injury*” declined over the first five years of the Monitor but has since increased from 2002/03 with half of all respondents spontaneously mentioning this reason;
- “*Economic need*” increased in the first three years to a peak of 30% in 1999/00. It has since fluctuated between one in four and three in ten injured workers;
- “*Told by doctor*” has been relatively stable since the first year of the Monitor ranging from 13% in 2001/02 to 9% in 2002/03 and 11% in the current year; and
- As in previous years, “*pressure from employer/insurer/WorkCover*” was rarely identified as a reason for RTW (combined net of 6% in 2004/05).

#### **2.4.1 Reasons for not working**

The National RTW Monitor identifies reasons reported by injured workers for currently not working. The objective of this measure is to identify the impact of non-injury related factors such as retrenchment, enterprises closing down and retirement. Responses to this question are unprompted.

Reasons for not working have been summarised as three main types (Figure 27):

1. **Injury related**, including:
  - still injured;
  - new injury; and
  - old injury got worse or aggravated.
2. **Left employment**, referring to those who indicated they had left the workforce on a permanent or temporary basis including:
  - retired;
  - resigned;
  - studying; or
  - no work available/seasonal.
3. **Retrenched/dismissed**, including:
  - retrenched;
  - dismissed by employer; and
  - employer closed down.

In total, 24% of Australian injured workers were not working at the time of interview. Of these, seven in ten (72%) mentioned injury related reasons as a reason for not working (Figure 27) – ‘still injured’ by over half (54%), ‘aggravated injury’ by more than one in ten (13%), while ‘new injury’ accounted for one in ten (9%). Injury related reasons were more often mentioned by injured workers in Victoria (91%), particularly when compared to Tasmania (59%) and Comcare (56%).

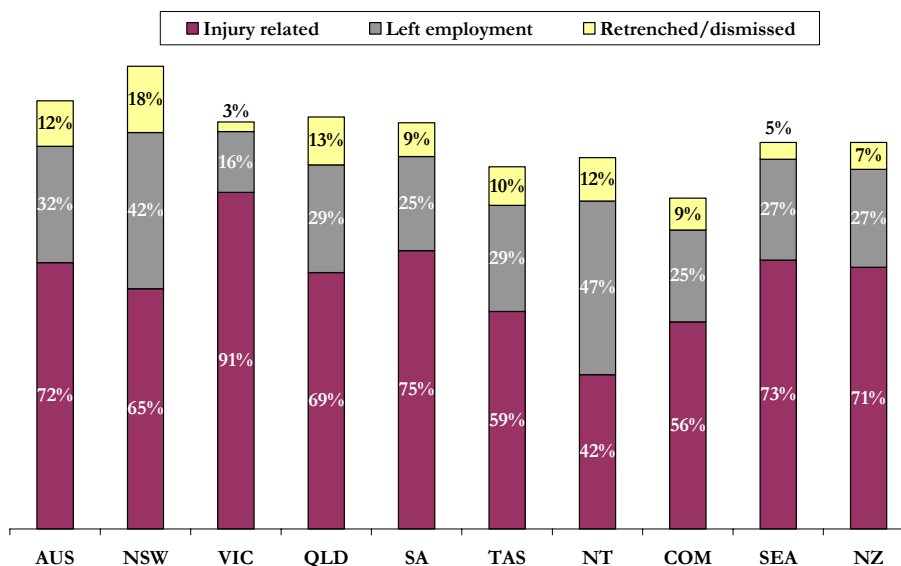
Three in ten (32%) injured workers indicated that they had left employment either on a permanent or temporary basis. This was more often cited as a reason for not working by those in New South Wales (42%) and less often by Victorian injured workers (16%).

One in eight (12%) injured workers indicated that they had been retrenched or dismissed by their employer. Fewer Victorian injured workers (3%) mentioned this as a reason for not working than the Australian national average.

**Figure 27: Select total reasons for not working (Comparative)**

Q9a. What is the main reason you are not working now?

Q9b. Are there any other reasons you are not working now?



Base: Total not working  
 AUS = 691      VIC = 148      SA = 120      NT = 17      SEA = 18  
 NSW = 151      QLD = 131      TAS = 69      COM = 37      NZ = 125

Note: Results may add up to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted.  
 Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

Injury related issues were the primary reason for not working at the time of interview.

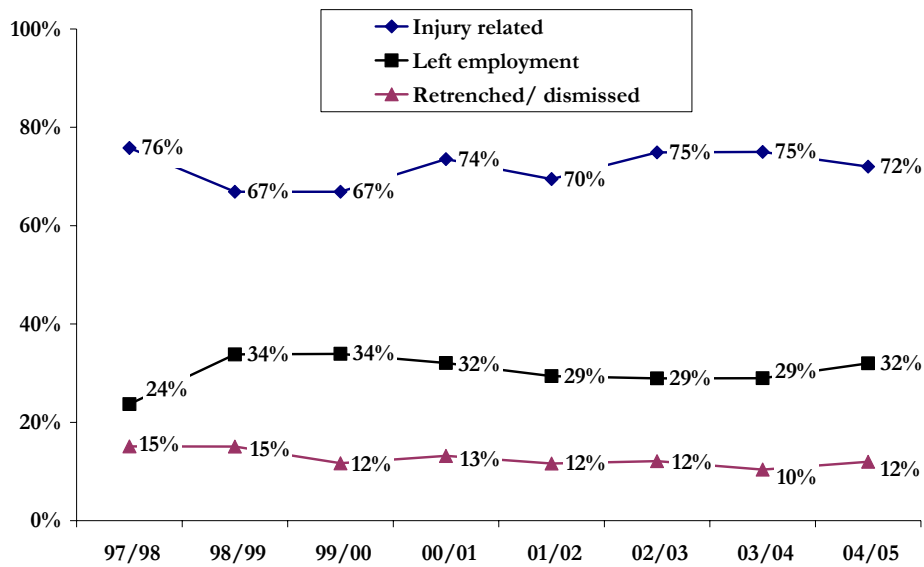
*Injury related* reasons have fluctuated over the seven years of the Monitor (Figure 28) from a high of 76% in 1997/98 to a low of 67% in 1998/99 and 1999/2000. The last three years have been stable – 72% in 2004/05.

The incidence of *leaving the workforce voluntarily* has remained stable since 1998/99 – 32% in 2004/05.

The incidence of injured workers being *retrenched or dismissed* decreased from 15% in the first two years of the Monitor and has since accounted for one in ten of those not currently working – 12% in 2004/05.

**Figure 28: Total reasons for *not* working (Trend)**

Q9a/b. All reasons for not working currently



Base: Total not working  
 97/98 = 777    99/00 = 745    01/02 = 834    03/04 = 629  
 98/99 = 768    00/01 = 841    02/03 = 781    04/05 = 691  
 Note: Results may add up to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted.

Labour market influences on RTW have remained relatively stable over the past seven years.



## 2.5 RTW plan

RTW plans are developed to assist injured workers achieve a RTW outcome. The Monitor measures:

- The injured workers' awareness of RTW plans;
- The extent to which the injured worker was involved in the RTW plan; and
- The helpfulness of the RTW plan from the perspective of the injured worker.

### 2.5.1 Development of and involvement in RTW plan

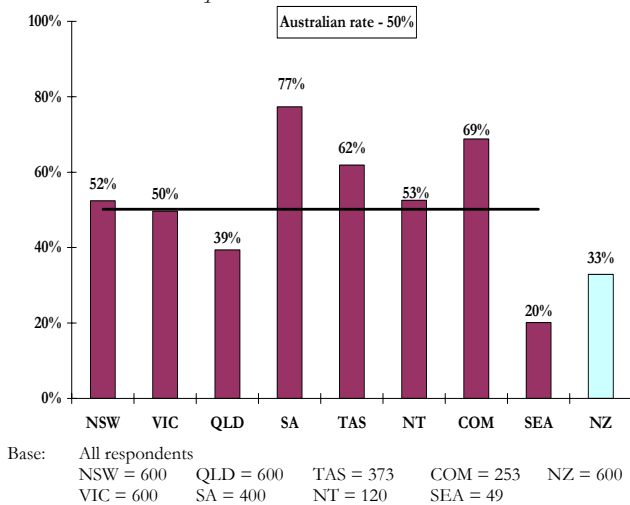
Half (50%) of injured workers nationally reported they had a RTW plan developed for them (Figure 29).

Wide variation between jurisdictions has been observed over the seven years of the Monitor.

RTW plans were more frequently reported among injured workers in South Australia (77%) and Tasmania (62%) and injured workers covered by Comcare (69%) than compared to the Australian national average. A below average incidence of RTW plans were prepared for those covered by Seacare (20%) and those in New Zealand<sup>8</sup> (33%) and Queensland (39%).

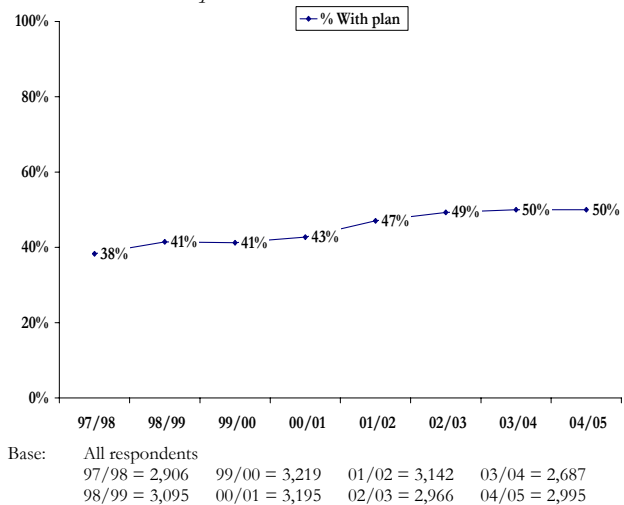
**Figure 29: Development of RTW plan (Comparative)**

Q13. Did anyone write a plan of action with you to help you to return to work? It could have been called a return to work plan or a rehabilitation plan. Either your employer or a rehabilitation provider would have been involved.



**Figure 30: Development of RTW plan (Trend)**

Q13. Did anyone write a plan of action with you to help you to return to work? It could have been called a return to work plan or a rehabilitation plan. Either your employer or a rehabilitation provider would have been involved.



Since the commencement of the Monitor, the proportion of injured workers reporting RTW plans has steadily increased, with half receiving a RTW plan since 2002/03.

One in two injured workers nationally reported they had a RTW plan developed for them.

<sup>8</sup> In New Zealand RTW plans are not a requirement for claims under 13 weeks. A comparative analysis of RTW plans has been undertaken as a separate report available to participating jurisdictions.

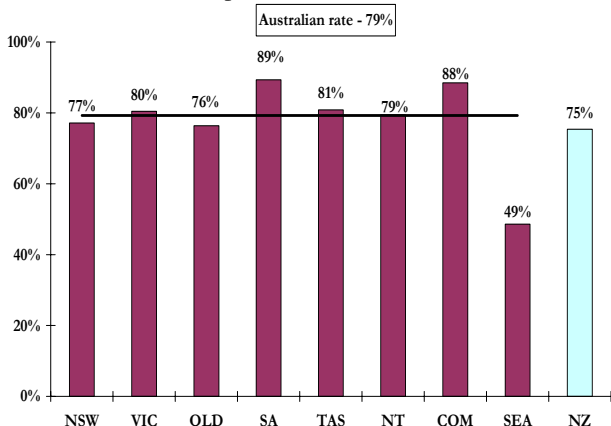
Injured workers with a RTW plan were also asked if they had been involved in the development of that plan.<sup>9</sup>

Eight in ten (79%) workers with a RTW plan were involved in development of that plan.

Injured workers from South Australia (89%) and those covered by Comcare (88%) were more likely to be involved in the development of a RTW plan than the Australian average (Figure 31).

**Figure 31: Involvement in RTW plan (Comparative)**

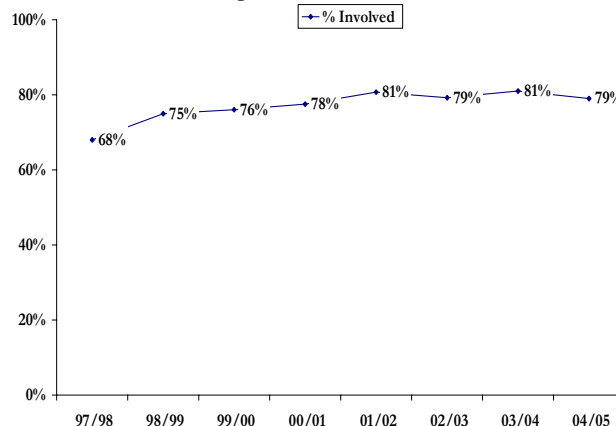
Q13a. Were you involved in development of the return to work plan or a rehabilitation plan?



Base: Received RTW/rehabilitation plan  
 NSW = 314 VIC = 297 QLD = 237 SA = 307 TAS = 231 NT = 63 COM = 174 SEA = 10 NZ = 198  
 Note: Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

**Figure 32: Involvement in RTW plan (Trend)**

Q13a. Were you involved in development of the return to work plan or a rehabilitation plan?



Base: Received RTW/rehabilitation plan  
 97/98 = 252 98/99 = 327 99/00 = 473 00/01 = 1,506 01/02 = 1,582 02/03 = 1,541 03/04 = 1,419 04/05 = 1,633

Since November 2001, all jurisdictions have been asked about injured worker involvement in RTW plans. From this time the incidence has been stable (Figure 32).

Eight in ten injured workers with a RTW plan were involved in the development of the plan. There was above average involvement in plan development in Comcare and South Australia.

<sup>9</sup> Prior to November 2001, this question was only asked in Victoria, ACT and Comcare.



2.5.2 Helpfulness of RTW plan

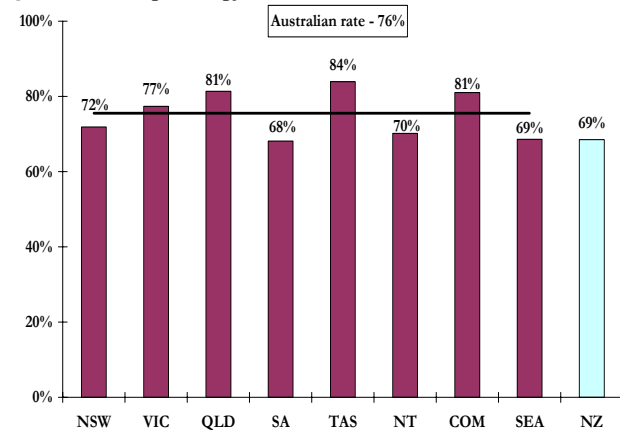
Three in four (76%) injured workers who received a RTW plan considered the plan to be helpful (Figure 33).

Injured workers in Tasmania (84%) were more likely to report the RTW plan helpful, particularly when compared to injured workers from South Australia (68%) and New Zealand (69%).

Importantly, injured workers involved in the development of the RTW plan were more likely to rate the plan helpful (81%) than those who had no involvement in the development of the plan (53%).

Figure 33: Helpfulness of RTW plan (Comparative)

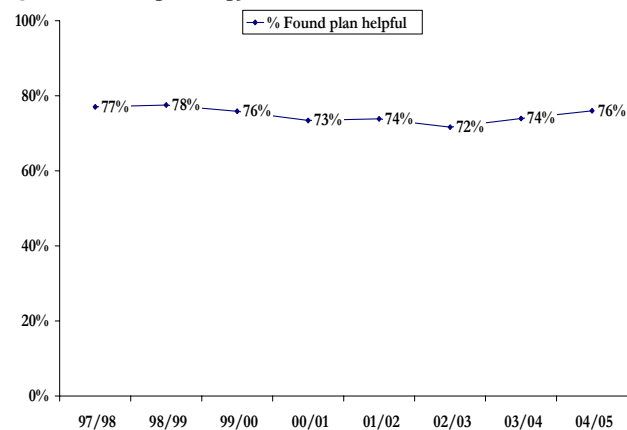
Q15. Was the plan helpful?



Base: Received RTW/rehabilitation plan  
 NSW = 314 VIC = 297 QLD = 237 SA = 307 TAS = 231 NT = 63 COM = 174 SEA = 10 NZ = 198  
 Note: Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

Figure 34: Helpfulness of RTW plan (Trend)

Q15. Was the plan helpful?



Base: Received RTW/rehabilitation plan  
 97/98 = 1,329 98/99 = 1,483 99/00 = 1,510 00/01 = 1,506 01/02 = 1,582 02/03 = 1,541 03/04 = 1,419 04/05 = 1,633

The declining trend from 1997/98 to 2002/03 in the proportion of injured workers who received RTW plans and agreed that they were helpful has been reversed in the current period (Figure 34). In 2002/03, 72% rated the RTW plan helpful. This is lower than in 2004/05 when 76% of those with a RTW plan rated it helpful.

Three in four injured workers who received a RTW plan considered it helpful. Tasmanian injured workers were more likely to report the RTW plan helpful, particularly when compared to those from South Australia and New Zealand.

**2.5.3 Given help to follow RTW plan**

Six in ten (59%) injured workers in Australia reported they were given help to do what was recommended in their RTW plan (Figure 35).

Injured workers in Queensland (67%) and Tasmania (67%) were more likely to report receiving assistance to follow their RTW plan compared to the Australian national average.

**Figure 35: Given assistance to follow RTW plan (Comparative)**

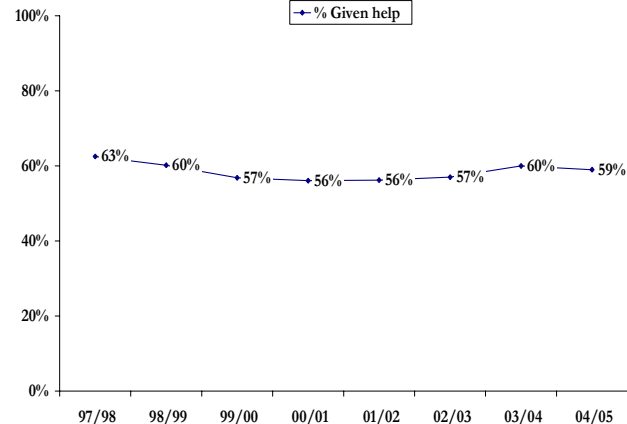
Q16. Were you given help to follow RTW plan?



Base: Received RTW/rehabilitation plan  
 NSW = 314 QLD = 237 TAS = 231 COM = 174 NZ = 198  
 VIC = 297 SA = 307 NT = 63 SEA = 10  
 Note: Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

**Figure 36: Given assistance to follow RTW plan (Trend)**

Q16. Were you given help to follow RTW plan?



Base: Received RTW/rehabilitation plan  
 97/98 = 1,329 99/00 = 1,510 01/02 = 1,582 03/04 = 1,419  
 98/99 = 1,483 00/01 = 1,506 02/03 = 1,541 04/05 = 1,633

The proportion of injured workers given help to do what was recommended in the RTW plan has remained stable since 1998/99 and lower than in 1997/98 where the rate was 63% (Figure 36).

Six in ten injured workers received assistance to follow their RTW plan, with the incidence higher among those in Queensland and Tasmania.

When asked *who helped* with the RTW plan (Table 9), in most cases it was someone within the workplace (33% net someone within the workplace). More specifically, the person at work who helped the injured worker was mainly either the employer (16%) or a workplace supervisor (14%), followed by the workplace rehabilitation coordinator (9%).

The employer was less likely to be mentioned by those from New Zealand (2%).

Injured workers covered by Comcare (22%) and injured workers from Victoria (20%) were more likely to report their main supervisor at work as the person who helped the most, while few in New Zealand (4%) and New South Wales (9%) reported their supervisor at work assisting.

The workplace rehabilitation coordinator was more likely to be mentioned by those covered by Comcare (17%) and from Queensland (15%), while few from New Zealand (0%), New South Wales (5%) and South Australia (5%) indicated they received help from the coordinator.

Help from outside the workplace generally came from the rehabilitation provider (16%). Injured workers in Tasmania (19%) and injured workers covered by Comcare (20%) more frequently mentioned rehabilitation providers as providing help with the RTW plan, particularly when compared to workers in New Zealand (9%) and Victoria (13%).

One in twenty (5%) injured workers received help from their insurer, with a higher incidence in New Zealand (12%) and among injured workers from Tasmania (7%) (in New Zealand the ACC is the equivalent of the insurer in Australian jurisdictions).

<b>Table 9: Person that helped with RTW plan (Comparative)</b>										
<i>Q16b. Who gave you that help? Did anyone else help?</i>										
	AUS (1,633) % A	NSW (314) % B	VIC (297) % C	QLD (237) % D	SA (307) % E	TAS (231) % F	NT (63) % G	COM (174) % H	SEA (10) % I	NZ (198) % J
Rehab provider (outside work)	16 <sup>J</sup>	17 <sup>J</sup>	13	16 <sup>J</sup>	18 <sup>J</sup>	19 <sup>CJ</sup>	14	20 <sup>CJ</sup>	11	9
Employer	16 <sup>J</sup>	17 <sup>J</sup>	16 <sup>J</sup>	16 <sup>J</sup>	15 <sup>J</sup>	19 <sup>J</sup>	13 <sup>J</sup>	13 <sup>J</sup>	0	2
Main supervisor at work	14 <sup>BJ</sup>	9	20 <sup>ABJ</sup>	16 <sup>BJ</sup>	14 <sup>BJ</sup>	14 <sup>J</sup>	10	22 <sup>ABEF GJ</sup>	0	4
Workplace rehab coordinator (at work)	9 <sup>BEJ</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	11 <sup>BEJ</sup>	15 <sup>ABEJ</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	13 <sup>BEJ</sup>	9 <sup>J</sup>	17 <sup>ABCE J</sup>	0	0
Someone else	9 <sup>J</sup>	8	8 <sup>J</sup>	13 <sup>BJ</sup>	9 <sup>J</sup>	9 <sup>J</sup>	10 <sup>J</sup>	10 <sup>J</sup>	0	4
Doctor	7 <sup>J</sup>	8 <sup>J</sup>	8 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>J</sup>	2	4	17	2
Insurer	5	6	4	3	3	7 <sup>DEH</sup>	6	2	0	12 <sup>ABC DEH</sup>
Myself	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1

Base: Received RTW / rehabilitation plan

Note: Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

## 2.6 RTW timing and duties

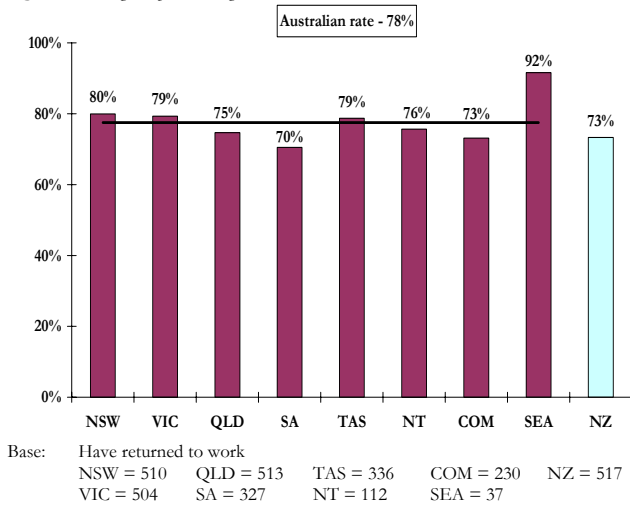
### 2.6.1 Readiness to RTW

In 2004/05, four in five (78%) Australian injured workers who returned to work felt ready to do so (Figure 37).

A higher proportion of injured workers covered by Seacare (92%) felt ready to RTW compared to those from New Zealand (73%) and South Australia (70%).

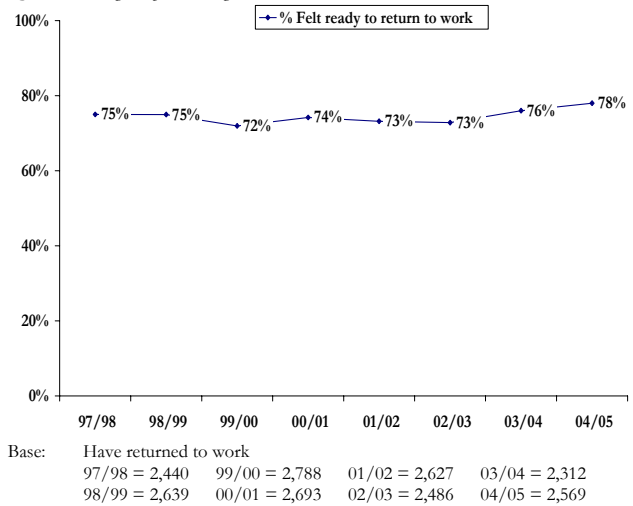
**Figure 37: Readiness to RTW (Comparative)**

Q7. Did you feel ready to return to work?



**Figure 38: Readiness to RTW (Trend)**

Q7. Did you feel ready to return to work?



In the last two years, the proportion of injured workers who returned to work and felt ready to do so has increased after remaining constant for the four previous years (Figure 38).

Four in five Australian injured workers who returned to work felt ready to do so.

### 2.6.2 Reasons for not feeling ready to RTW

Since 2003, all injured workers who returned to work but reported that they did not feel ready to RTW were asked why they did not feel ready. Multiple responses were accepted.

Four in five (79%) of these Australian injured workers reported the reason for not feeling ready to RTW was that they were “still injured” or “in pain”. One in eight reported that they were “pressured by their employer/insurer/doctor” (13%) or that the “duties or hours were not appropriate” (12%). Few reported that they were “mentally unprepared” (6%) or “felt RTW was necessary to aid their recovery” (2%).

Injured workers in New Zealand (90%) were more likely to indicate that they were “still injured/in pain”, particularly when compared to those covered by Comcare (66%). In contrast, injured workers covered by Comcare were more likely to mention that they were “mentally unprepared” (15%) or “felt RTW was necessary to aid their recovery” (7%) than the Australian national average.

Table 10: Reasons for not feeling ready to RTW (Comparative)									
Q7a. What was the reason you did not feel ready to return to work?									
	AUS (528) % A	NSW (92) % B	VIC (96) % C	QLD (112) % D	SA (82) % E	TAS (60) % F	NT (25) % G	COM (58) % H	NZ (127) % I
Still injured/ in pain	79 <sup>H</sup>	78	80 <sup>H</sup>	81 <sup>H</sup>	81 <sup>H</sup>	80	76	66	90 <sup>ABCH</sup>
Employer/ insurer/ doctor pressure	13 <sup>I</sup>	19 <sup>EI</sup>	11 <sup>I</sup>	9 <sup>I</sup>	5	11 <sup>I</sup>	16	11 <sup>I</sup>	2
Duties/ hours were not appropriate	12	15 <sup>I</sup>	9	10	11	13	4	18 <sup>I</sup>	6
Mentally unprepared	6	7	2	6	6	4	8	15 <sup>ACDI</sup>	2
Felt it was necessary to aid recovery	2	1	4	2	0	2	4	7 <sup>ABDE</sup>	2

Base: Total did not feel ready to RTW  
Note: Results may add up to more than 100% because multiple responses were accepted.  
Seacare results have been excluded due to very small sample size (n=3).

Four in five injured workers in Australia who had returned to work but did not feel ready reported that they were “still injured” or “in pain”.

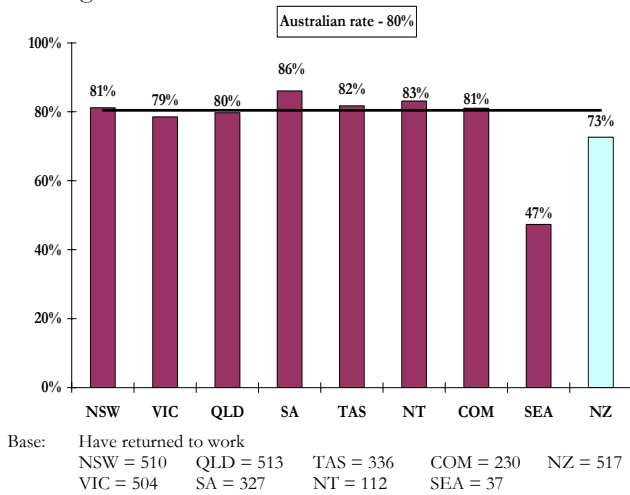
**2.6.3 Suitable duties at RTW**

Four in five (80%) Australian injured workers reported suitable duties at RTW (Figure 39). Conversely, one in five (19%) considered the duties they were given at RTW *not* suitable.

Injured workers covered by Seacare (47%) and injured workers from New Zealand (73%) were less likely than the Australian national average to report their duties at RTW were suitable and particularly when compared to those from South Australia (86%)(Figure 39). Over the eight years of the Monitor, the proportion reporting that their RTW duties were suitable has improved from seven in ten injured workers to eight in ten injured workers (Figure 40).

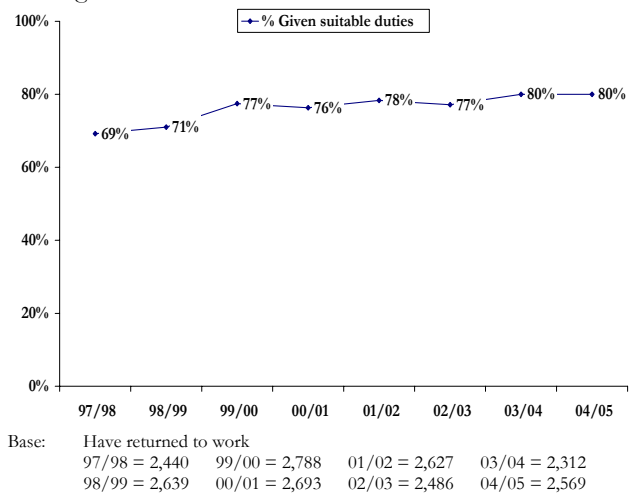
**Figure 39: Suitable duties at RTW (Comparative)**

Q5. *When you first returned to work after your injury, were you given suitable duties at work?*



**Figure 40: Suitable duties at RTW (Trend)**

Q5. *When you first returned to work after your injury, were you given suitable duties at work?*

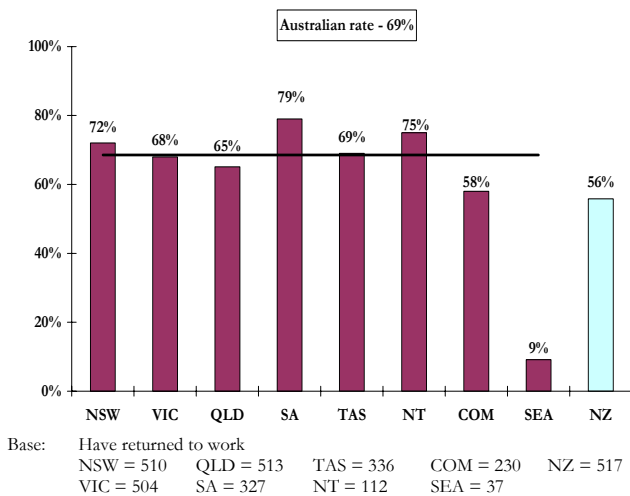


**2.6.4 Change in duties at RTW**

Injured workers were asked *“What was different about your duties when you returned to work?”* The objective of this question was to identify the extent of support provided in returning to work by their employers, and the nature of this support without prompting the injured worker. Subsequent questions identify partial RTW and reduced hours at RTW.

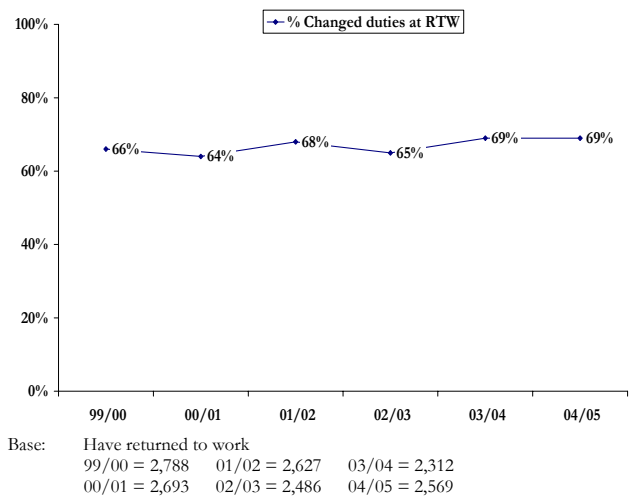
**Figure 41: Change in duties at RTW (Comparative)**

Q5a. *What was different about your duties when you returned to work?*



**Figure 42: Change in duties at RTW (Trend)**

Q5a. *What was different about your duties when you returned to work?*



Seven in ten (69%) Australian injured workers reported some change in their duties when they returned to work when compared to what they were doing when they were injured.

A change in duties was more common among those from South Australia (79%), while fewer injured workers covered by Comcare (58%) and in New Zealand (56%) reported a change in duties at RTW than the national average (Figure 41). A minority of injured workers covered by Seacare (9%) changed duties at RTW reflecting the requirement of seamen to be fully fit to work on ships at sea.

Seven in ten injured workers who returned to work reported some change in their duties. More injured workers in South Australia reported a change in duties at RTW than in Australia. Fewer injured workers in New Zealand and covered by Comcare and Seacare reported a change in duties at RTW.

Three in five (60%) Australian injured workers reported they were given lighter duties at RTW (Figure 43) including:

- Duties are flexible to meet needs;
- Being given equipment to make tasks easier; and
- Being given duties that would not strain the injury.

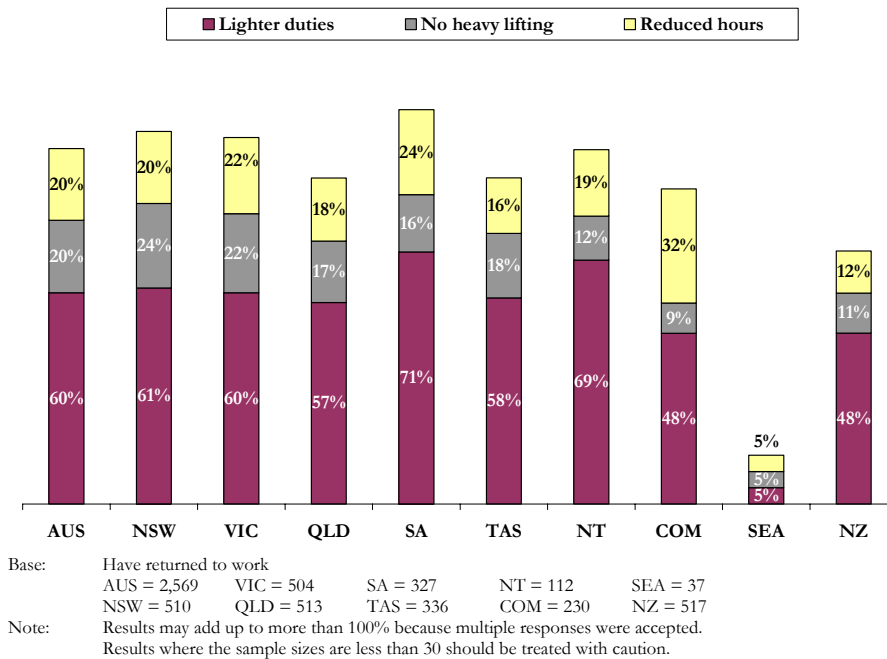
More injured workers in South Australia (71%) reported lighter duties than the national average. In contrast, injured workers in New Zealand (48%) and injured workers covered by Comcare (48%) and Seacare (5%) were less likely to report lighter duties coinciding with fewer reporting any change in duties.

One in five (20%) injured workers in Australia reported being given duties that did not require heavy lifting, with a lower incidence among Northern Territory (12%), New Zealand (11%) injured workers and those covered by Comcare (9%) and Seacare (11%).

“*Reduced hours*” was mentioned by one in five (20%) Australian injured workers, but by more of those covered by Comcare (32%) and less by those in New Zealand (12%).

Figure 43: Type of change in duties at RTW (Comparative)<sup>10</sup>

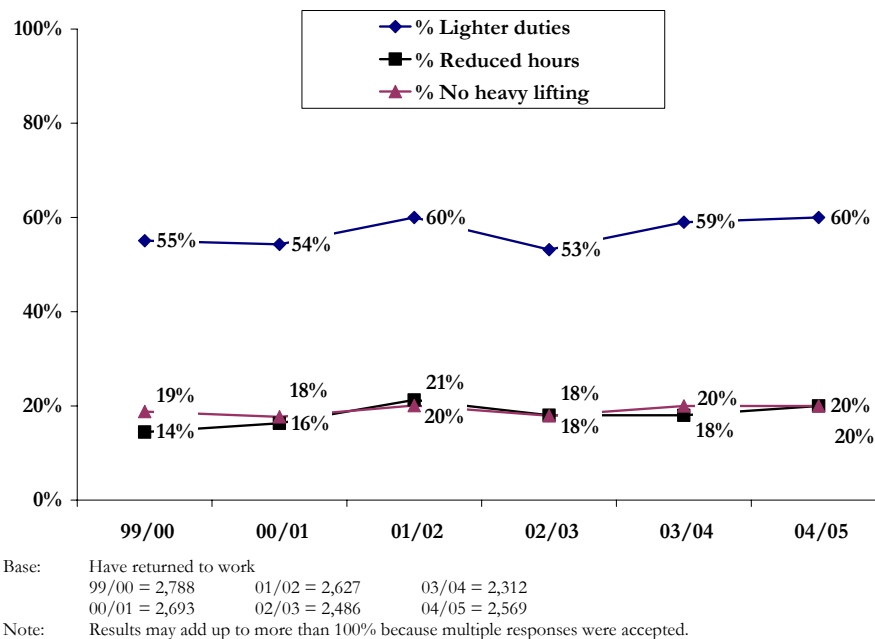
Q5a. What was different about your duties when you returned to work?



The proportion of injured workers reporting lighter duties has been stable for the last two years and higher than the incidence found in the first two years of the Monitor (Figure 44). The same pattern emerged for the incidence reporting reduced hours – stable for the last two years and at a higher level than the first two years of the Monitor. There has been slight variation in the proportion of injured workers reporting no heavy lifting, although in all periods this has been close to one in five injured workers.

Figure 44: Type of change in duties at RTW (Trend)

Q5a. What was different about your duties when you returned to work?



<sup>10</sup> This question was first introduced in May 1999.

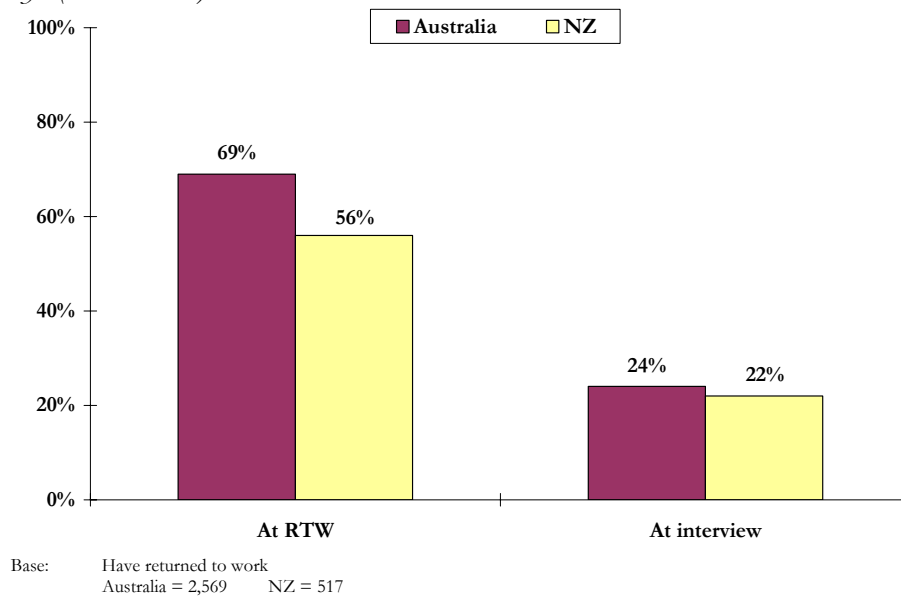


Changes in duties at RTW were generally temporary. Among Australian injured workers, seven in ten (69%) reported a change in duties at the time of RTW, however, at the time of interview (or leaving work for those with a non-durable RTW) this had declined to one in four (24%) (Figure 45). This relativity also applied to injured workers in New Zealand, with 56% reporting a change in duties at return to work and declining to 22% at the time of interview.

**Figure 45: Different duties at RTW and at interview (Comparative)**

Q5a. *What was different about your duties at RTW? (At RTW)*

Q12. *[Are/Were] you doing the same sort of work or duties that you were doing when you incurred your original injury? (At interview)*



## 2.7 Partial RTW

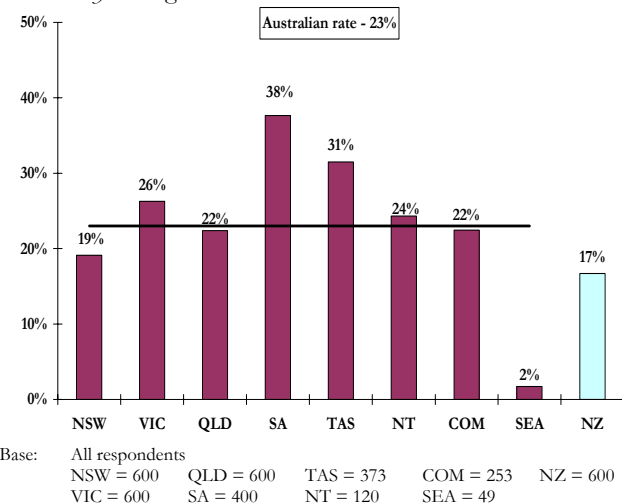
The terms “partial RTW” and “full RTW” are technical expressions not necessarily understood by injured workers. A “full RTW” does not necessarily mean return to full-time employment since the injured worker may have been working on a part-time basis at the time of injury. Rather, it means return to a level of paid employment equivalent to that at the time of injury. “Partial RTW” as an *outcome* has been estimated from the proportion of workers who have returned to work and are deriving their income from both employment and workers’ compensation payments (see page 67).

One in four (23%) injured workers returned to work on a partial basis at the time of RTW (Figure 46). Few (5%) injured workers were unsure whether they were receiving workers’ compensation payments.

The partial RTW rate was higher in South Australia (38%) and Tasmania (31%) and lower in New South Wales (19%) and New Zealand (17%), and for workers covered by Seacare (2%) when compared to the Australian national average.

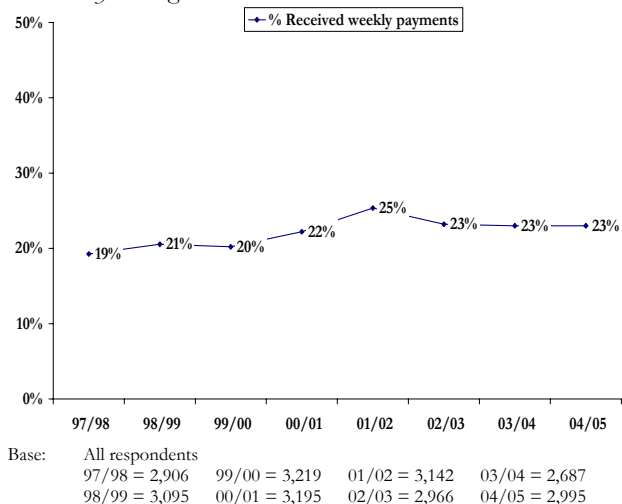
**Figure 46: Partial RTW rate at RTW (Comparative)<sup>11</sup>**

Q6. Still thinking about when you first returned to work, were you receiving any weekly payments from <Authority> in addition to your wages?



**Figure 47: Partial RTW rate at RTW (Trend)**

Q6. Still thinking about when you first returned to work, were you receiving any weekly payments from <Authority> in addition to your wages?



The partial RTW rate has been stable over the last four years of the Monitor, although at a higher rate than for the first three years (Figure 47).

One in four injured workers returned to work on a partial basis at the time of RTW, that is, they were still receiving workers’ compensation payments.

<sup>11</sup> Previously reported on the base of “have returned to work”.



2.7.1 Returned to previous hours

Another measure of partial RTW is the number of hours worked. Pre-injury hours may have included over-time which is unlikely to be part of post-injury RTW.

Of those Australian injured workers who returned to work, over half (54%) returned to their previous hours (Figure 48).

There was a higher rate of return to previous hours for injured workers covered by Seacare (85%) and in New Zealand (69%), particularly when compared to workers covered by Comcare (37%) and in South Australia (37%).

Figure 48: Returned to previous hours (Comparative)

Q6a. Still thinking about when you first returned to work, did you return to your previous hours?

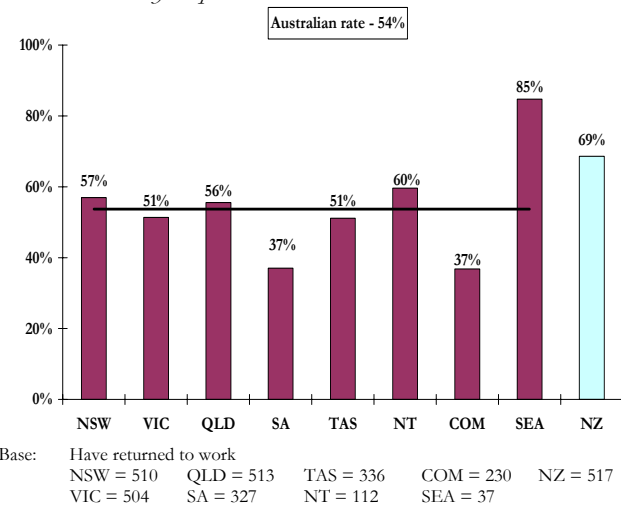
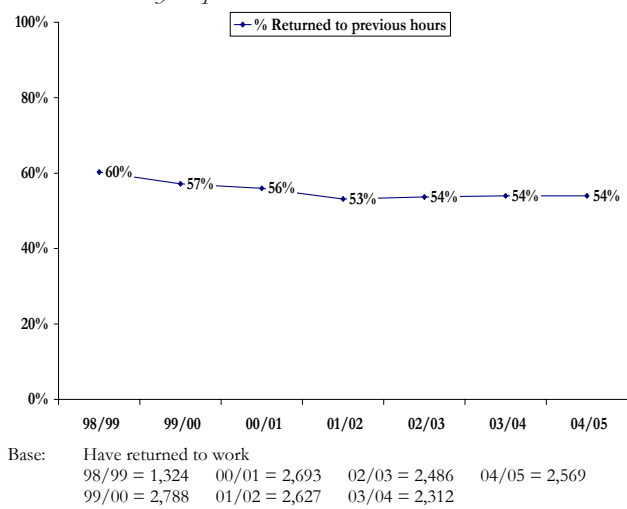


Figure 49: Returned to previous hours (Trend)

Q6a. Still thinking about when you first returned to work, did you return to your previous hours?



The proportion of injured workers returning to their pre-injury hours has been stable over the last four years of the Monitor. However, this is at a lower incidence than the first two years for which this question had been asked (Figure 49).

The proportion of injured workers returning to pre-injury hours has been stable over the last four years.

## 2.8 Sources of assistance with RTW

Assistance to RTW is measured in a number of ways:

- Injured workers are asked, *without prompting*, who helped the most and who helped the least to RTW.
- Injured workers are then asked to rate the helpfulness of key persons – the doctor, rehabilitation provider, workplace rehabilitation coordinator, employer, insurer or compensation provider and, where applicable, the case manager.

The findings are discussed in the following section.

Assistance is measured on four criteria. These identified:

- Who assisted with the initial claim;
- The person who was the *most* help;
- The person who was the *least* help; and
- Helpfulness of each key stakeholder.

### 2.8.1 Who helped injured workers RTW the most?

As well as rating the helpfulness of persons with putting in the initial claim, injured workers were asked who helped them RTW the most (Figure 50).

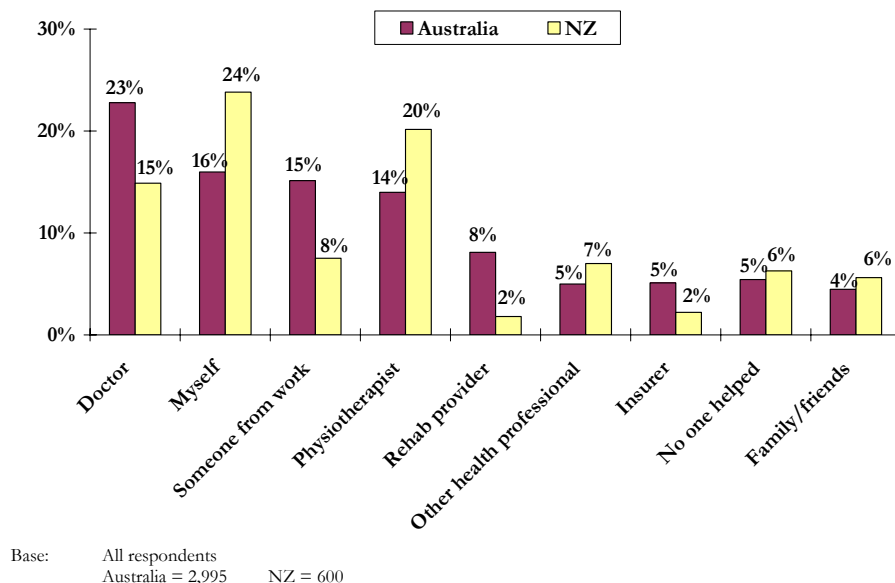
Doctors were most frequently mentioned by Australian injured workers with one in four injured workers (23%) indicating they “helped the most”. This incidence was lowest in Queensland (17%).

In New Zealand, of the professionals, physiotherapists (20%) were most frequently identified as the most help, and more so than for Australian injured workers (14%), particularly those from Tasmania (10%) and those covered by Comcare (9%). Doctors followed (15%) but at a lower incidence than for Australian injured workers (23%).

The high proportion of injured workers identifying doctors as the person who was the most help in getting them back to work is in contrast to the proportion identifying doctors assisting with RTW plans (Section 2.5.3).

**Figure 50: People who were the most help to RTW (Comparative)**

Q28. Thinking of all the people who helped you to get back to work, who helped you the MOST?



Under one in five (16%) Australian injured workers identified *themselves* as the person who was most helpful in the RTW process. Injured workers in New Zealand (24%) were more likely to consider themselves to be the person who helped the most to RTW.

A substantial minority relied on themselves to RTW.

Under one in five (15%) Australian injured workers reported *someone from work* as helping the most. Injured workers from New Zealand (8%) less often identified someone from work as helping them RTW.

Less than one in ten (8%) Australian injured workers identified *rehabilitation providers* as being the most help. South Australian (17%) and Tasmanian (12%) injured workers were more likely to mention rehabilitation providers. Few Victorian (5%) and New Zealand (2%) injured workers mentioned rehabilitation providers.

A minority (5%) indicated some *other health professional* as being the most help and another 5% of injured workers reported their *insurer* or the Workers' Compensation Scheme as being the most help. This was higher in Queensland where one in ten (9%) identified Q-COMP and lower in New South Wales (3%) and New Zealand (2%).

<b>Table 11: People who were the most help (Comparative)</b>										
<i>Q28. Thinking of all the people who helped you to get back to work, who helped you the MOST?</i>										
	<b>AUS (2,995) % A</b>	<b>NSW (600) % B</b>	<b>VIC (600) % C</b>	<b>QLD (600) % D</b>	<b>SA (400) % E</b>	<b>TAS (373) % F</b>	<b>NT (120) % G</b>	<b>COM (235) % H</b>	<b>SEA (49) % I</b>	<b>NZ (600) % J</b>
Doctor	23 <sup>DJ</sup>	26 <sup>DEJ</sup>	26 <sup>DEJ</sup>	17	19	24 <sup>DJ</sup>	24 <sup>J</sup>	22 <sup>J</sup>	23	15
Myself	16	16	15	16	17	18	19	16	22	24 <sup>ABCD</sup> EH
Someone from work	15 <sup>J</sup>	13 <sup>J</sup>	17 <sup>J</sup>	16 <sup>J</sup>	15 <sup>J</sup>	19 <sup>BJ</sup>	14 <sup>J</sup>	16 <sup>J</sup>	14	8
Physiotherapist	14 <sup>FH</sup>	14	13	17 <sup>CEFH</sup>	11	10	15	9	18	20 <sup>ABCE</sup> FH
Rehabilitation provider	8 <sup>CJ</sup>	9 <sup>CJ</sup>	5 <sup>J</sup>	6 <sup>J</sup>	17 <sup>ABCD</sup> GJ	12 <sup>ACDJ</sup>	7 <sup>J</sup>	11 <sup>CDJ</sup>	9 <sup>J</sup>	2
Other Health Professional	5	4	7 <sup>BDE</sup>	4	4	5	5	6	0	7 <sup>BDE</sup>
Insurer	5 <sup>BJ</sup>	3	4	9 <sup>ABCEF</sup> GJ	4 <sup>J</sup>	4 <sup>J</sup>	3	6 <sup>J</sup>	0	2
No one	5 <sup>F</sup>	6 <sup>F</sup>	5 <sup>F</sup>	6 <sup>F</sup>	3	2	6 <sup>F</sup>	5 <sup>F</sup>	7 <sup>F</sup>	6 <sup>F</sup>

Base: All respondents



**2.8.2 Who helped the most to RTW? – someone from work**

When injured workers reported someone from the workplace as the most helpful to RTW they were then asked “Who was that person from work?”

Of those who mentioned someone from work (15%), under four in ten (37%) identified their supervisor. The employer was the next most frequently mentioned person (34%) followed by the OH&S officer (10%) and a workmate (7%).

**2.8.3 Who helped injured workers RTW the least?**

Injured workers have difficulty in identifying a person as being the least helpful. When asked who was the least help, close to half the injured workers – 48% in Australia and 55% in New Zealand - could not identify anybody (Figure 51). When they did identify a person as least helpful, the person was most likely to be someone from work or the insurer.

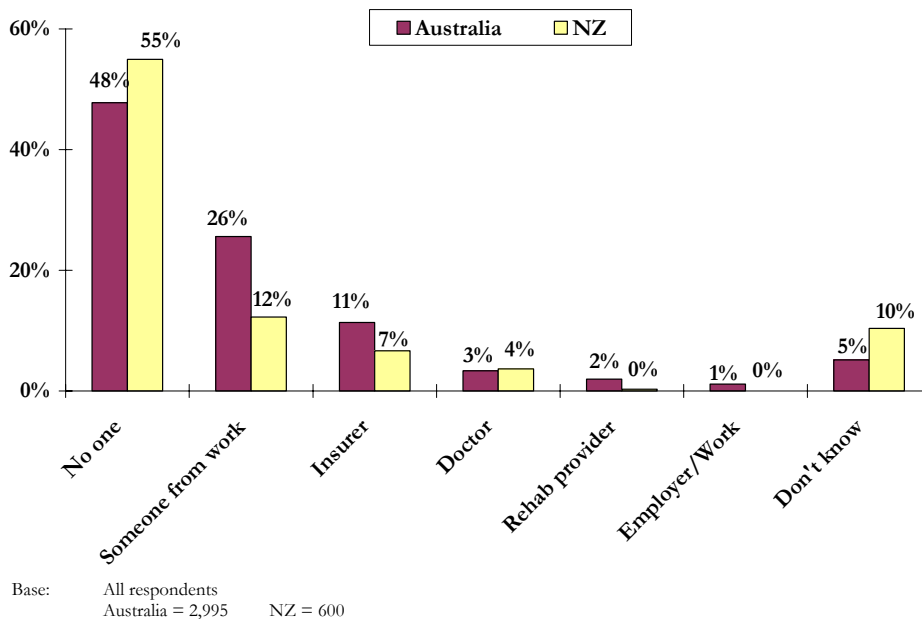
One in four (26%) Australian injured workers identified someone from work as being the least help and a significantly higher proportion than in New Zealand (12%). Identification of someone from work as the *least* helpful person has remained stable for the last five years of the Monitor.

One in ten injured workers (11%) reported their insurer/Scheme/WorkCover as the least helpful to RTW. This was highest for Comcare (16%) and lowest for New Zealand (7%).

**Figure 51: People who were the least help to RTW (Comparative)**

Q29.

*And who helped you the least?*



Someone from work was more likely to be identified as helping the least than helping the most.

**2.8.4 Who helped the least to RTW? – someone from work**

When injured workers reported someone from the workplace as *least* helpful to RTW they were asked “Who was that person from work?”

Of those who mentioned someone from work (26%), six in ten (63%) identified their employer. Supervisors were the next most frequently mentioned person (24%). A workmate (3%) and the OH&S officer (4%) were seldom mentioned.

Injured workers covered by Comcare who mentioned someone from work were equally as likely to mention their supervisor (40%) and their employer (38%).

**2.8.5 Rating of helpfulness of those involved in RTW process**

The person who helped the most or least provides an unprompted identification of those who helped or hindered the RTW process. Prompted ratings of those who were involved in the RTW process provide a comparative evaluation across the population.

To obtain the prompted rating, injured workers were asked to rate a range of different people who may have helped or hindered getting them back to work. The ratings are reported on a scale of one to five where one is “made it a lot harder” and five is “helped a lot”. A score of three indicates “neither helpful nor unhelpful”.

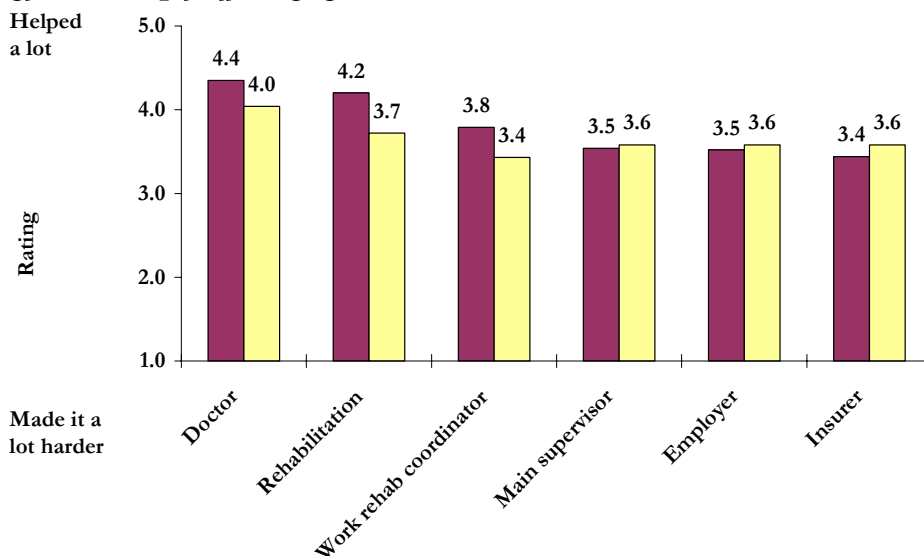
On average, all categories of persons were rated as helpful by injured workers (Figure 52). Doctors (4.4 mean rating), rehabilitation providers (4.2) and work rehabilitation coordinators (3.8) were rated the most helpful. Work supervisors (3.5), employers (3.5) and insurers (3.4) were rated as less helpful.

Compared to Australian injured workers, New Zealanders gave a lower rating to doctors (4.0), rehabilitation providers (3.7) and RTW coordinators (3.4), but were more favourable in their rating of insurers (3.6).

**Figure 52: Rating of helpfulness to RTW**

Q21.

*Helpfulness rating of different people*



Base: All respondents  
 Australia = 2,995      NZ = 600



When compared to the national average, Tasmanian injured workers gave a higher rating to all the different people who may have helped them RTW, with the exception of the insurer. Injured workers covered by Seacare gave a lower rating for the helpfulness of their employer (2.6) and insurer (3.0) in the RTW process. There were a number of other differences by jurisdiction (Table 12).

<i>Q21a-f. Helpfulness rating of different people</i>										
	<b>AUS (2,995) A</b>	<b>NSW (600) B</b>	<b>VIC (600) C</b>	<b>QLD (600) D</b>	<b>SA (400) E</b>	<b>TAS (373) F</b>	<b>NT (120) G</b>	<b>COM (253) H</b>	<b>SEA (49) I</b>	<b>NZ (600) J</b>
Doctor	4.4 <sup>GJ</sup>	4.3 <sup>I</sup>	4.4 <sup>DGJ</sup>	4.3 <sup>I</sup>	4.5 <sup>ABD GJ</sup>	4.5 <sup>ABD GJ</sup>	4.2	4.5 <sup>ABD GJ</sup>	4.1	4.0
Rehab provider	4.2 <sup>DJ</sup>	4.3 <sup>CDJ</sup>	4.2 <sup>J</sup>	4.1 <sup>J</sup>	4.2 <sup>J</sup>	4.3 <sup>ACD J</sup>	4.2 <sup>J</sup>	4.3 <sup>DJ</sup>	3.7	3.7
Work rehab coordinator	3.8 <sup>I</sup>	3.7 <sup>J</sup>	3.9 <sup>BJ</sup>	3.8 <sup>I</sup>	4.0 <sup>ABJ</sup>	4.1 <sup>ABC DJ</sup>	4.1 <sup>BJ</sup>	3.9 <sup>BJ</sup>	3.3	3.4
Main supervisor	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.7 <sup>DI</sup>	3.8 <sup>ABC DGJ</sup>	3.5	3.9 <sup>ABC DGJ</sup>	3.1	3.6 <sup>I</sup>
Employer	3.5 <sup>I</sup>	3.5 <sup>I</sup>	3.5 <sup>I</sup>	3.5 <sup>I</sup>	3.6 <sup>I</sup>	3.8 <sup>ABC DIJ</sup>	3.8 <sup>ABC DI</sup>	3.7 <sup>I</sup>	2.6	3.6 <sup>I</sup>
Insurer	3.4 <sup>CI</sup>	3.4 <sup>CI</sup>	3.2	3.6 <sup>ABC HI</sup>	3.6 <sup>CI</sup>	3.5 <sup>CI</sup>	3.4 <sup>I</sup>	3.4 <sup>I</sup>	3.0	3.6 <sup>ABC HI</sup>

Base: All respondents

New Zealander injured workers gave a lower rating to doctors, rehabilitation providers and RTW coordinators than their Australian counterparts, but a higher rating for the insurer regarding their helpfulness in the RTW process.

**2.8.6 Rating of helpfulness of compensation provider involved in RTW process**

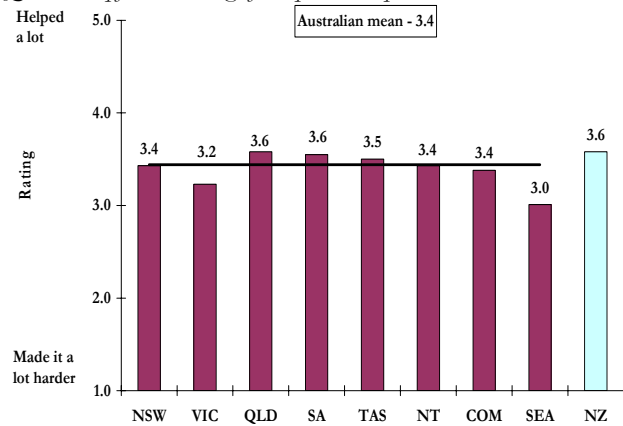
The following section of the report provides a more detailed analysis of injured workers' satisfaction with the services provided by the compensation provider.

In South Australia and Victoria this was the insurance companies who are Claims Agents, in Queensland this was contact with Q-COMP and in New Zealand the Accident Compensation Corporation.

Injured workers in Queensland (3.6) and New Zealand (3.6) gave higher ratings to the helpfulness of their compensation provider compared to the Australian national average. Victorians (3.2) and Seacare (3.0) covered injured workers rated their compensation provider below the national average (Figure 53).

**Figure 53: Rating of compensation provider helpfulness (Comparative)**

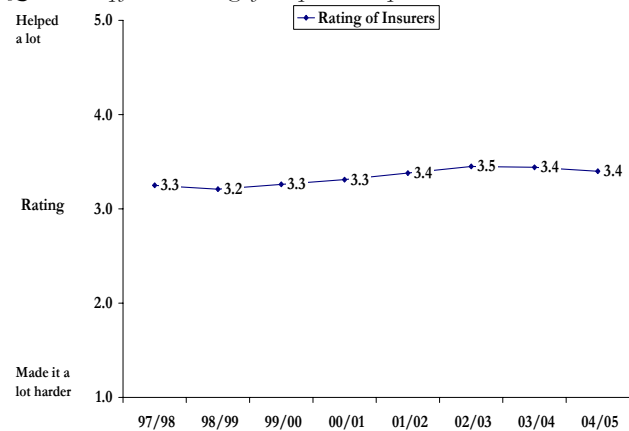
Q21c. Helpfulness rating of compensation provider



Base: All respondents  
 NSW = 600 VIC = 600  
 QLD = 600 SA = 400  
 TAS = 373 NT = 120  
 COM = 253 SEA = 49  
 NZ = 600

**Figure 54: Rating of compensation provider helpfulness (Trend)**

Q21c. Helpfulness rating of compensation provider



Base: All respondents  
 97/98 = 2,906 99/00 = 3,219 01/02 = 3,142 03/04 = 2,687  
 98/99 = 3,095 00/01 = 3,195 02/03 = 2,966 04/05 = 2,995

The helpfulness of Australian compensation providers has improved over the course of the Monitor.

## 2.9 Rating of customer service by insurer/ Scheme

### 2.9.1 Communication with insurer

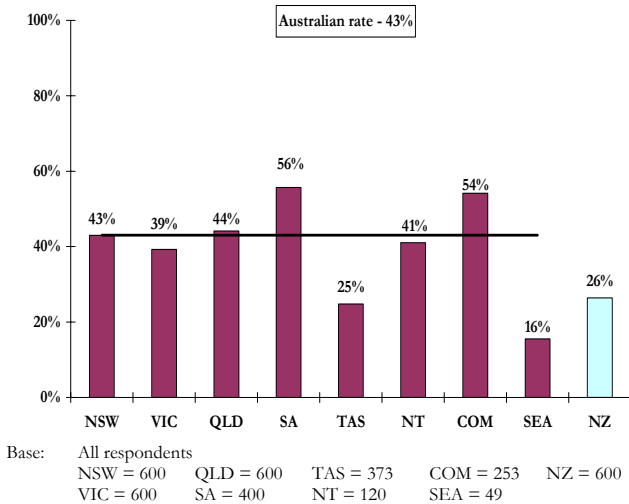
Over four in ten injured workers (43%) had contact with their insurer in the three months prior to the interview (Figure 55). Contact about the RTW Monitor was specifically excluded.

In South Australia and Victoria this was the insurance companies who are Claims Agents, in Queensland this was contact with Q-COMP and in New Zealand the Accident Compensation Corporation.

Contact with the insurer was more likely for injured workers in South Australia (56%) and covered by Comcare (54%). Conversely, injured workers covered by Seacare (16%) and those in Tasmania (25%) and New Zealand (26%) were far *less* likely to have contact with their insurer than all other Australian jurisdictions.

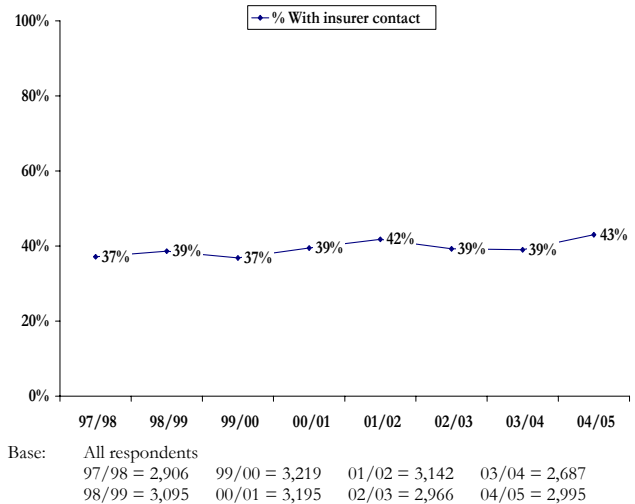
**Figure 55: Contact with insurer in last three months (Comparative)**

Q26. Have you had any contact with <jurisdiction insurer> in the last three months?



**Figure 56: Contact with insurer in last three months (Trend)**

Q26. Have you had any contact with <jurisdiction insurer> in the last three months?



Contact with the insurer peaked in this period (43%) and is significantly higher than the two preceding years (Figure 56).

Contact with the insurer peaked in this period and is significantly higher than the two preceding years.

2.9.2 Rating of customer service

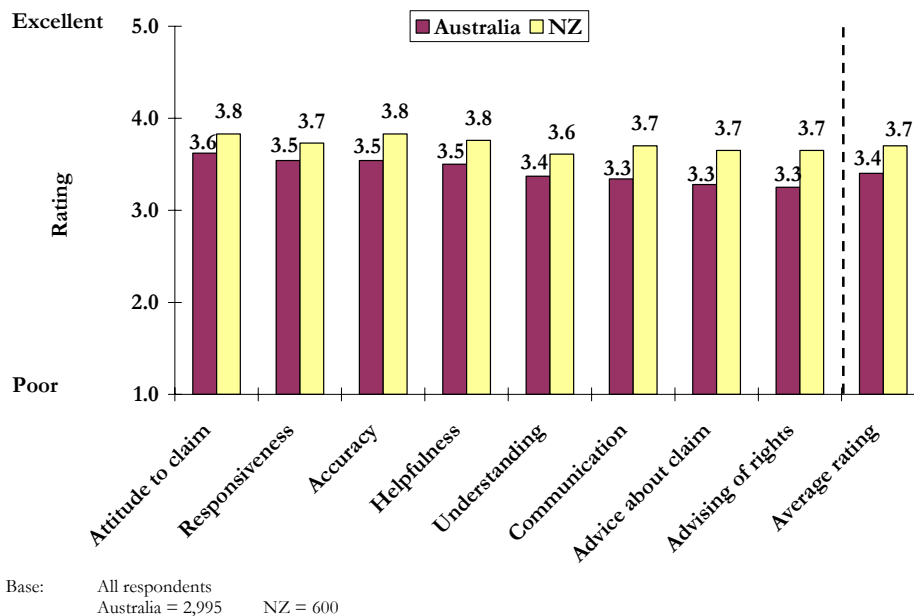
Injured workers were asked to rate the performance of the agency providing insurance type services on a number of aspects relating to the way in which the insurer handled the injured worker's claim. The performance of the insurer was rated on a one to five point scale where one was "poor" and five was "excellent". The insurers were rated on:

- Attitude of the insurer to claim;
- The way in which the insurer responded to enquiries;
- Providing accurate information;
- Helpfulness;
- Understanding the worker's situation;
- Communicating with worker;
- Giving advice about claim; and
- Giving advice about rights.

Injured workers rated their insurers above average (3.0 mean rating) on all dimensions (Figure 57) and were most favourable regarding their attitude to the claim (3.6). The average rating has increased for six of the eight attributes since last year – attitude to the claim and understanding the worker's situation were the exceptions.

Figure 57: Rating of insurer type services (Comparative)

Q27. Now I am going to read out a list of different statements about the insurer handling your claim. For each statement how would you rate the insurer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent.



The Accident Compensation Corporation in New Zealand (3.7) and Q-COMP in Queensland (3.6) were rated higher than all other jurisdictions across the range of customer service measures (Table 13). Insurers in Victoria (3.1) received consistently lower ratings for insurer customer services. Injured workers covered by Comcare gave their insurer a lower rating for four customer service attributes (and one higher than the national average) and those covered by Seacare for three attributes.

**Table 13: Mean rating of insurer type services (Comparative)**

*Q27. Now I am going to read out a list of different statements about the insurer handling your claim. For each statement how would you rate the insurer on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent*

	AUS (2,995) A	NSW (600) B	VIC (600) C	QLD (600) D	SA (400) E	TAS (373) F	NT (120) G	COM (253) H	SEA (49) I	NZ (600) J
Attitude to claim	3.6 <sup>C</sup>	3.7 <sup>C</sup>	3.3	3.8 <sup>ACEF</sup> GHI	3.6 <sup>C</sup>	3.6 <sup>C</sup>	3.5	3.5	3.3	3.8 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI
Response to enquiries	3.5 <sup>C</sup>	3.5 <sup>C</sup>	3.2	3.8 <sup>ABCF</sup> HI	3.6 <sup>C</sup>	3.6 <sup>C</sup>	3.6 <sup>C</sup>	3.4	3.2	3.7 <sup>ABC</sup> HI
Provision of accurate info	3.5 <sup>CI</sup>	3.6 <sup>CI</sup>	3.2	3.7 <sup>ABCF</sup> GI	3.6 <sup>CI</sup>	3.5 <sup>CI</sup>	3.4	3.6 <sup>CI</sup>	3.1	3.8 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI
Helpfulness	3.5 <sup>CHI</sup>	3.6 <sup>CHI</sup>	3.2	3.7 <sup>ACE</sup> GHI	3.5 <sup>CHI</sup>	3.5 <sup>CHI</sup>	3.4	3.3	3.1	3.8 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI
Understanding situation	3.4 <sup>CH</sup>	3.4 <sup>CH</sup>	3.1	3.5 <sup>ACH</sup>	3.4 <sup>CH</sup>	3.5 <sup>CH</sup>	3.3	3.1	3.2	3.6 <sup>ABC</sup> EGHI
Communication	3.3 <sup>CH</sup>	3.3 <sup>CH</sup>	3.0	3.6 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI	3.3 <sup>CH</sup>	3.3 <sup>C</sup>	3.3	3.0	3.1	3.7 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI
Advice about claim	3.3 <sup>CHI</sup>	3.2 <sup>C</sup>	3.0	3.6 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI	3.3 <sup>CI</sup>	3.4 <sup>CHI</sup>	3.2	3.1	2.8	3.7 <sup>ABC</sup> EFGHI
Advice about rights	3.3 <sup>C</sup>	3.2 <sup>C</sup>	3.0	3.4 <sup>ABCI</sup>	3.4 <sup>ABCI</sup>	3.3 <sup>C</sup>	3.2	3.5 <sup>ABCI</sup>	2.9	3.7 <sup>ABC</sup> DEFGI
<b>Average customer service rating</b>	<b>3.4<sup>C</sup></b>	<b>3.4<sup>C</sup></b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.6<sup>ABC</sup></b> EFGHI	<b>3.5<sup>C</sup></b>	<b>3.5<sup>C</sup></b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.7<sup>ABC</sup></b> EFGHI

Base: All respondents

ACC and Q-COMP were rated higher and Victoria lower than other jurisdictions on customer service provided by the insurer/ Scheme.



A customer service rating has been derived for insurers based on the average of the eight aspects relating to the way in which the insurer handled the injured worker's claim. Nationally, the average rating of customer service has improved steadily for each year of the Monitor, from 3.1 in 1997/98 to 3.4 in 2004/05 (Figure 59).

Figure 58: Average service rating for insurer type services (Comparative)

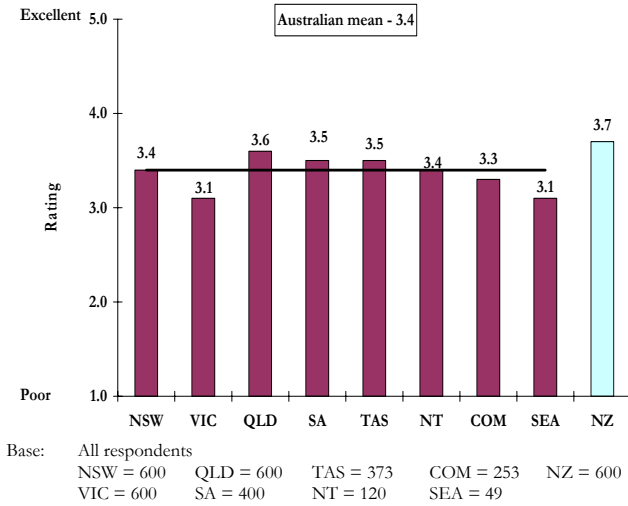
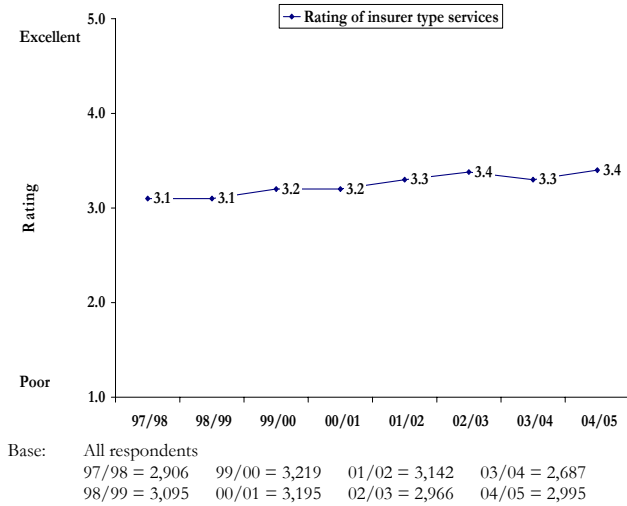


Figure 59: Average service rating for insurer type services (Trend)



At the national level, insurer services have been improving steadily since 1997/98.

### 3. Demographic and Claim Characteristics

Additional information on injured workers was provided by individual jurisdictions. Only those injured workers who consented to be interviewed were included in this analysis. Injured workers with a language other than English (Section 3.1.3) were identified in the survey. Scheme based data is restricted to that available at the end of the quarter preceding each survey wave.

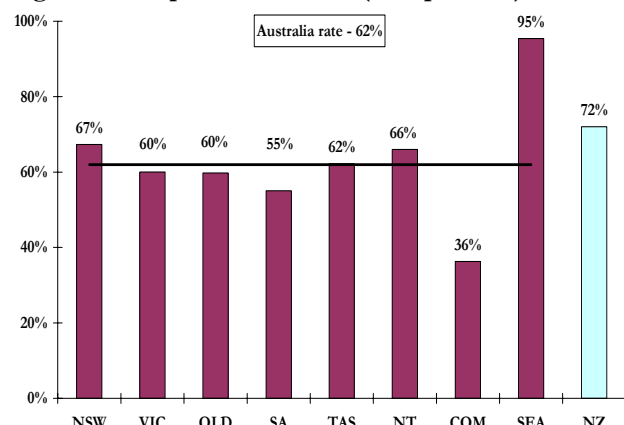
#### 3.1 Demographics

##### 3.1.1 Gender

Two in three (62%) injured workers in Australia were male (Figure 60). There has been a decrease in the proportion of injured male workers from a peak of 71% in 1999/00 to a low of 62% in 2004/05 (Figure 61).

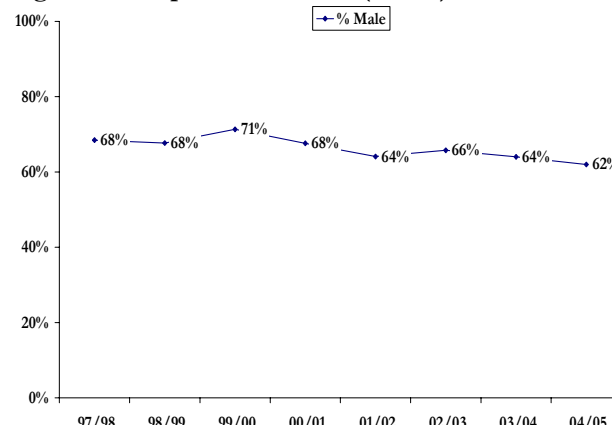
Nearly all (97%) injured workers covered by Seacare were male. There was also an above average incidence of injured male workers in New Zealand (72%) and New South Wales (67%) and below average incidence in South Australia (55%) and among injured workers covered by Comcare (36%).

Figure 60: Proportion of males (Comparative)



Base: All respondents  
 NSW = 600 VIC = 600  
 QLD = 600 SA = 400  
 TAS = 373 NT = 120  
 COM = 253 SEA = 49  
 NZ = 600

Figure 61: Proportion of males (Trend)



Base: All respondents  
 97/98 = 2,906 98/99 = 3,095  
 99/00 = 3,219 00/01 = 3,195  
 01/02 = 3,142 02/03 = 2,966  
 03/04 = 2,687 04/05 = 2,995

### 3.1.2 Age

In 2004/05, the average age of injured workers was 42 years of age (Figure 62). On average, injured workers covered by Comcare were older (44 years of age) and injured workers from Tasmania were younger (40 years).

The average age of injured workers has been steady over time (Figure 63).

Figure 62: Mean age of injured workers (Comparative)

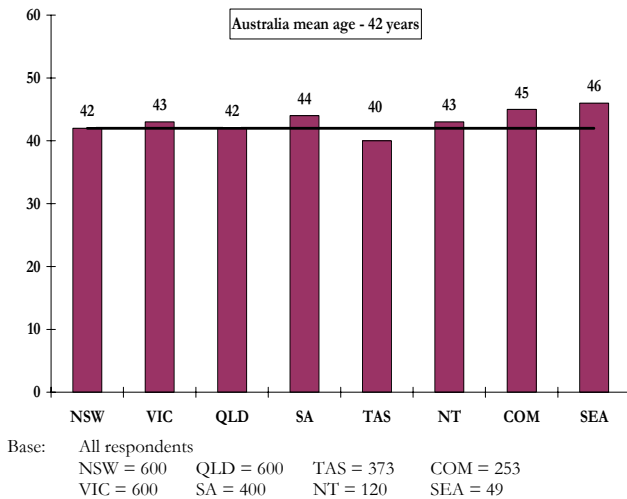
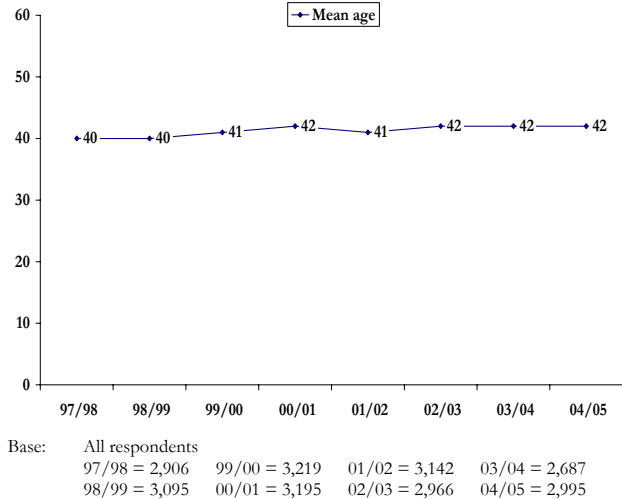


Figure 63: Mean age of injured workers (Trend)



### 3.1.3 Language spoken at home

Less than one in ten (7%) Australian injured workers spoke a language other than English (LOTE) at home. The most common (3%) language, other than English, spoken at home was a European language (eg Italian, Serbian, Greek and Croatian), followed by an Asian language (2%).

Victoria (11%) and New South Wales (11%) had the highest proportion of injured workers who spoke a language other than English, while it was lower in all other Australian jurisdictions. Only one in ten (9%) Victorians who spoke a language other than English needed the assistance from an interpreter when putting in their claim (7% national rate).

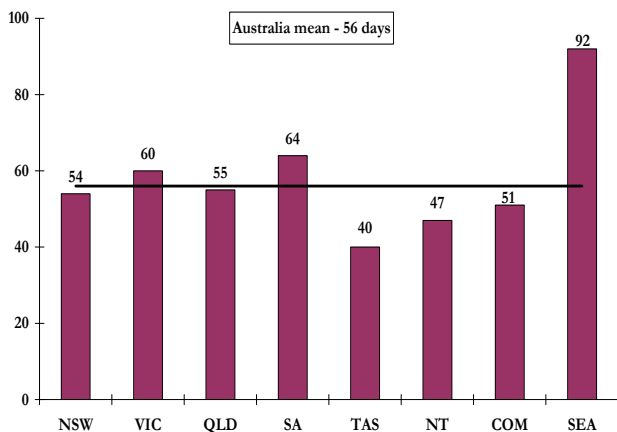
### 3.2 Days compensation paid and claim cost

Days compensation paid is the number of days compensation paid up to the end of quarter before the interview (September for the November wave and March for the May wave). In 2004/05, an average of 56 days compensation was paid to injured workers (Figure 64).

Injured workers covered by Seacare (92 days) followed by injured workers in South Australia (64) and Victoria (60) had the highest average number of paid compensation days.

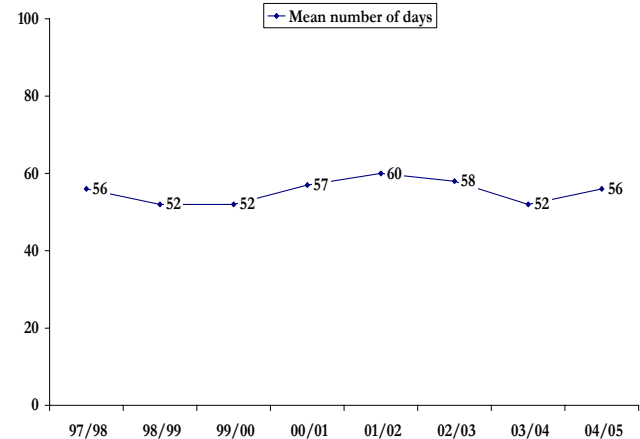
The national average number of days compensation paid has varied over the seven years of the Monitor. The change from 2003/04 (52) to 2004/05 represents a significant increase (Figure 65).

**Figure 64: Mean number of days compensation paid (Comparative)**



Base: All respondents  
 NSW = 600 VIC = 600  
 QLD = 600 SA = 400  
 TAS = 373 NT = 120  
 COM = 253 SEA = 49

**Figure 65: Mean number of days compensation paid (Trend)**



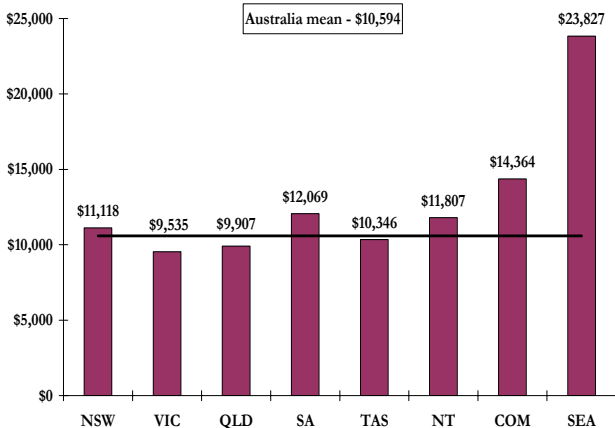
Base: All respondents  
 97/98 = 2,906 98/99 = 3,095  
 99/00 = 3,219 00/01 = 3,195  
 01/02 = 3,142 02/03 = 2,966  
 03/04 = 2,687 04/05 = 2,995

In 2004/05 the average claim cost paid for Australian injured workers for the first six to eight months of their claim was \$10,594 (Figure 66).

The average claim cost was higher than the national average for injured workers covered by Seacare (\$23,827) and in South Australia (\$12,069) and lower in Victoria (\$9,535).

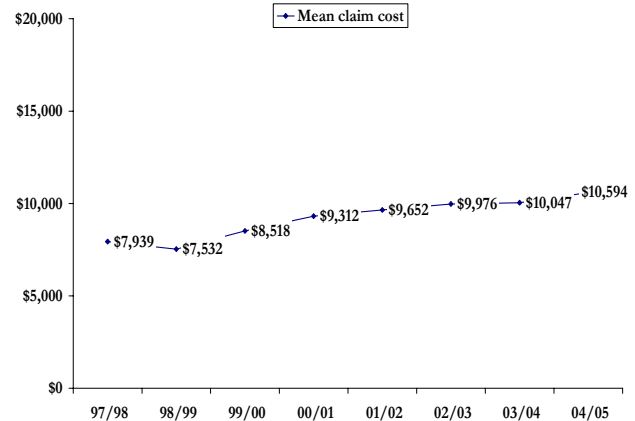
The average claim cost has continued to increase since the start of the Monitor (Figure 67).

**Figure 66: Mean claim cost (Comparative)**



Base: All respondents  
 NSW = 600 VIC = 600  
 QLD = 600 SA = 400  
 TAS = 373 NT = 120  
 COM = 253 SEA = 49

**Figure 67: Mean claim cost (Trend)**



Base: All respondents  
 97/98 = 2,906 98/99 = 3,095  
 99/00 = 3,219 00/01 = 3,195  
 01/02 = 3,142 02/03 = 2,966  
 03/04 = 2,687 04/05 = 2,995

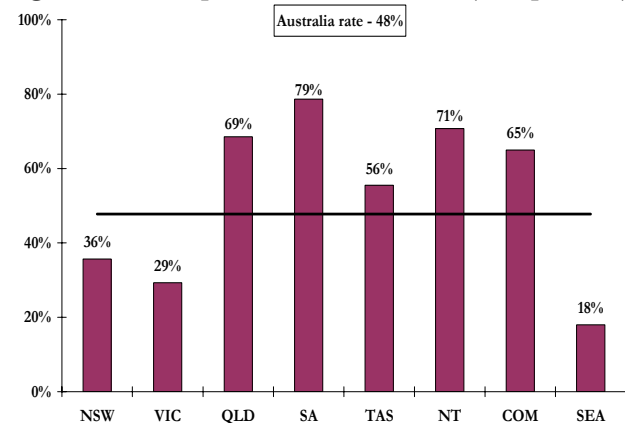
### 3.3 Rehabilitation participation and cost

Participation in rehabilitation was measured by some rehabilitation expenditure being recorded as part of the claim cost. It should be noted that rehabilitation costs may be incurred directly by the employer and not included in these data. In 2004/05, half (48%) of injured workers participated in rehabilitation.

There were substantial differences in the rate of rehabilitation participation between jurisdictions (Figure 68). Highest rates of rehabilitation participation were in South Australia (79%), the Northern Territory (71%), Queensland (69%), Tasmania (56%) and Comcare (65%). The lowest rates of rehabilitation participation were in Seacare (18%), Victoria (29%) and New South Wales (36%).

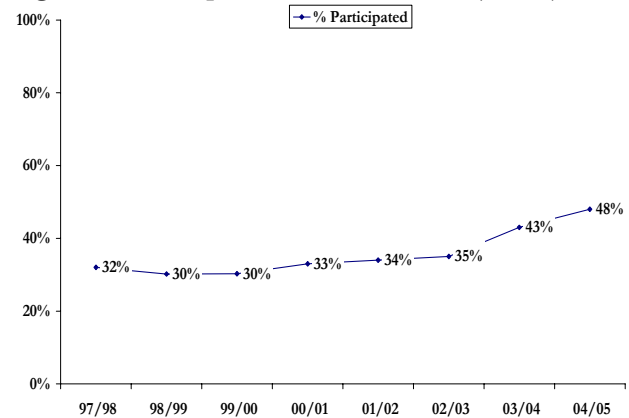
There has been a steady increase in rehabilitation participation since 1999/00 with the most recent year recording a significant increase (Figure 69).

**Figure 68: Participation in rehabilitation (Comparative)**



Base: All respondents  
 NSW = 600 VIC = 600  
 QLD = 600 SA = 400  
 TAS = 373 NT = 120  
 COM = 253 SEA = 49

**Figure 69: Participation in rehabilitation (Trend)**



Base: All respondents  
 97/98 = 2,906 99/00 = 3,219 01/02 = 3,142 03/04 = 2,687  
 98/99 = 3,095 00/01 = 3,195 02/03 = 2,966 04/05 = 2,995

The average cost of rehabilitation<sup>12</sup> in 2004/05 was \$1,586 – 47% reported a rehabilitation cost. Across jurisdictions there is great variation in the average cost of rehabilitation. The highest costs were in New South Wales (\$2,442), Comcare (\$2,414), the Northern Territory (\$2,337) and Tasmania (\$2,053).

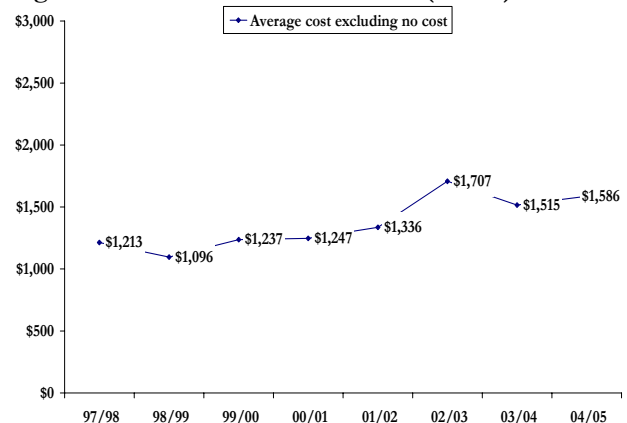
In the last three years, the average cost of rehabilitation has risen above all preceding years (Figure 71).

**Figure 70: Mean rehabilitation costs (Comparative)**



Base: Participated in rehabilitation  
 NSW = 199 QLD = 411 TAS = 206 COM = 164  
 VIC = 175 SA = 315 NT = 85 SEA = 4  
 Note: Results where the sample sizes are less than 30 should be treated with caution.

**Figure 71: Mean rehabilitation costs (Trend)**



Base: Participated in rehabilitation  
 97/98 = 1,161 99/00 = 1,270 01/02 = 1,385 03/04 = 1,313  
 98/99 = 1,220 00/01 = 1,329 02/03 = 1,264 04/05 = 1,559

<sup>12</sup> This measure is calculated only from cases where there was a rehabilitation cost claim.

### 3.4 Enterprise size

Three in five (58%) Australian injured workers were employed in larger enterprises (where remuneration was over \$2,000,000). This proportion is higher than the seven preceding years of the Monitor. One in four (24%) were employed in medium enterprises (\$350,000 to \$2,000,000 remuneration) and one in five (18%) were employed in smaller enterprises (less than \$350,000 remuneration).

Enterprise size	AUS (2,421) % A	NSW (533) % B	VIC (561) % C	QLD (557) % D	SA (397) % E	TAS (373) % F	NT (120) % G	COM (253) % H	SEA (49) % I	NZ (473) % J
Small (less than \$350,000 remuneration)	18	18	15	18	20 <sup>C</sup>	26 <sup>ABC</sup> D	*	*	*	29 <sup>ABC</sup> DE
Medium (\$350,000 - \$2,000,000 remuneration)	24	25	21	23	27 <sup>C</sup>	28 <sup>C</sup>	*	*	*	39 <sup>ABC</sup> DEF
Large (over \$2,000,000 remuneration)	58 <sup>FJ</sup>	57 <sup>FJ</sup>	64 <sup>ABE</sup> FJ	59 <sup>FJ</sup>	53 <sup>J</sup>	46 <sup>J</sup>	*	*	*	32

Base: Information supplied  
 \* Information not supplied

A higher proportion of injured workers in New Zealand (29%) and Tasmania (28%) came from smaller enterprises. New Zealand was also overrepresented among medium sized enterprises when compared to the national incidence (39% and 24% respectively). And a higher proportion of injured workers in Victoria (64%) came from large enterprises.

<sup>13</sup> Data on employer size was not supplied by the Northern Territory, Seacare and Comcare.

## 4. Summary of Differences

The following table summarises the national Australian results and identifies jurisdictions that have results that are statistically different to the national Australian results. Statistically significant differences with the Australian national results for 2003/04 are included.

More detailed descriptions of trends over the course of the Monitor are included in the main body of the report.

<b>Table 15: Summary of differences</b>				
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>AUS results in 2004/05</b>	<b>Above AUS National rate</b>	<b>Below AUS National rate</b>	<b>Comparison with 2003/04</b>
<b>RTW Outcomes</b>				
Q3. RTW rate	85%	TAS, NT, COM	-	-
Q3/8. Durable RTW	76%	TAS, NT, COM	SA, SEA	-
Q3/8. Non-durable RTW	9%	-	-	-
Q8a. Mean length of durable RTW	154 days	TAS, COM	QLD	-
Q10. Mean length of non-durable RTW	81 days	-	-	-
Q19. Compensation payment status at time of interview	21%	VIC, SA	QLD, TAS, NT, NZ	-
Q20a/b. Full RTW (employment as the only source of income at time of interview)	63%	-	SA	Increase
Q20a/b. Partial RTW (employment plus any other source of income at time of interview)	15%	SA, COM	NZ	Decrease
Q20a/b. Non-durable RTW / no RTW (income from all sources except employment)	22%	SA, SEA	COM	-
Q11. Continuity of employer	84%	SA, COM	NZ	-
Q12. Returning to same duties at time of interview	76%	-	SA	-
<b>RTW Process Measures</b>				
<b>Workplace Culture</b>				
Q34c. Work importance (mean rating)	4.4	SEA	-	-
Q34d. Work satisfaction (mean rating)	4.2	SEA	COM	-
Q34e. Valued at work (mean rating)	3.9	SEA, NZ	SA	-
Q34a. Management help RTW (mean rating)	3.6	NZ	-	-
Q34f. Clear RTW policies and procedures (mean rating)	3.5	COM	-	-

<b>Table 15: Summary of differences</b>				
Indicator	AUS results in 2004/05	Above AUS National rate	Below AUS National rate	Comparison with 2003/04
Q34b. OH&S spending (mean rating)	3.4	NZ	-	-
<b>Making a claim</b>				
Q1. Ease of getting information to put in a claim	81%	NZ	VIC	-
Q2a. Ease of putting in a claim	73%	NSW, NZ	VIC, COM	-
Q1a. Previous claim experience	41%	QLD, SA, NT, NZ	-	Increase
Q1b. Previous lost time claim	37%	QLD, NT, NZ	-	Increase
<b>Reasons for RTW &amp; not working</b>				
Q4a/b. Total reasons for RTW: Recovered from injury	49%	SEA	-	-
Q4a/b. Total reasons for RTW: Wanted to RTW	28%	VIC, COM	NSW, SEA	Decrease
Q4a/b. Total reasons for RTW: Net economic need	27%	QLD, NZ	SA, COM	-
Q4a/b. Total reasons for RTW: Net assisted by RTW process	13%	SA	NZ	Increase
Q4a/b. Total reasons for RTW: Net health provider influence	11%	SA	NZ	-
Q4a/b. Total reasons for RTW: Net WorkCover/employer pressure	6%	-	-	-
Q9a/b. Total reasons for not working: Net injury related	72%	VIC	TAS, COM	-
Q9a/b. Total reasons for not working: Net left employment	32%	NSW	VIC	-
Q9a/b. Total reasons for not working: Net retrenched/dismissed	12%	-	VIC	-
<b>RTW plan</b>				
Q13. Development of a RTW plan	50%	SA, TAS, COM	QLD, SEA, NZ	-
Q13a. Involvement in the development of RTW plan	79%	SA, COM	-	-
Q15. Helpfulness of the RTW plan	76%	TAS	SA, NZ	-
Q16. Assistance given to follow the RTW plan	59%	QLD, TAS	-	-

<b>Table 15: Summary of differences</b>					
<b>Indicator</b>		<b>AUS results in 2004/05</b>	<b>Above AUS National rate</b>	<b>Below AUS National rate</b>	<b>Comparison with 2003/04</b>
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Rehab provider	16%	-	NZ	-
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Employer	16%	-	NZ	-
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Main supervisor	14%	VIC, COM	NSW, NZ	-
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Workplace rehab coordinator	9%	QLD, COM	NSW, SA, NZ	-
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Someone else	9%	-	NZ	-
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Doctor	7%	-	NZ	-
Q16b.	Who helped to follow RTW plan: Insurer	5%	NZ	-	-
<b>RTW</b>					
Q7.	Readiness to RTW	78%	SEA	SA, NZ	-
Q5.	Suitable duties at RTW	80%	SA	SEA, NZ	-
Q5a.	Changes in duties at RTW: Lighter duties	60%	SA	COM, SEA, NZ	-
Q5a.	Changes in duties at RTW: Reduced hours	20%	COM	SEA, NZ	-
Q5a.	Changes in duties at RTW: No heavy lifting	20%	-	NT, COM, SEA, NZ	-
Q5a.	Changes in duties at RTW: No change	25%	SEA, NZ	SA	-
Q5a.	Change in duties at RTW	69%	SA	COM, SEA, NZ	-
Q6.	Partial RTW at RTW	23%	SA, TAS	NSW, SEA, NZ	-
Q6a.	Return to previous hours	54%	SEA, NZ	SA, COM	-
<b>Rating of help to RTW</b>					
Q28.	Most assistance: Doctor	23%	-	QLD, NZ	-
Q28.	Most assistance: Myself	16%	NZ	-	-
Q28.	Most assistance: Someone from work	15%	-	NZ	-
Q28.	Most assistance: Physiotherapist	14%	NZ	TAS, COM	-
Q28.	Most assistance: Rehab provider	8%	SA, TAS	VIC, NZ	-
Q28.	Most assistance: No one	5%	-	TAS	-
Q28.	Most assistance: Insurer	5%	QLD	NSW, NZ	-

<b>Table 15: Summary of differences</b>					
<b>Indicator</b>		<b>AUS results in 2004/05</b>	<b>Above AUS National rate</b>	<b>Below AUS National rate</b>	<b>Comparison with 2003/04</b>
Q29.	Least assistance: No one	48%	NSW, NZ	-	-
Q29.	Least assistance: Someone from work	26%	-	NZ	-
Q29.	Least assistance: Insurer	11%	COM	NZ	-
Q29.	Least assistance: Doctor	3%	NT	-	-
Q29.	Least assistance: Rehab provider	2%	SA	NZ	-
<b>Rating of helpfulness of people in RTW</b>					
Q21.	Doctor (mean rating)	4.4	SA, TAS, COM	NT, NZ	-
Q21.	Rehabilitation provider (mean rating)	4.2	TAS	QLD, NZ	-
Q21.	Work rehabilitation coordinator (mean rating)	3.8	TAS	NZ	-
Q21.	Main supervisor (mean rating)	3.5	TAS, COM	-	-
Q21.	Employer (mean rating)	3.5	TAS, NT	SEA	-
Q21.	Insurer (mean rating)	3.4	QLD, NZ	VIC, SEA	-
<b>Rating of insurer's customer service</b>					
Q26.	Contact with insurer in the last three months	43%	SA, COM	TAS, SEA, NZ	Increase
Q27.	Attitude to claim (mean rating)	3.6	QLD, NZ	VIC	-
Q27.	Accuracy of information (mean rating)	3.5	QLD, NZ	VIC, SEA	Increase
Q27.	Response to enquiries (mean rating)	3.5	QLD, NZ	VIC	Increase
Q27.	Helpfulness (mean rating)	3.5	QLD, NZ	VIC, COM, SEA	Increase
Q27.	Understanding of worker's situation (mean rating)	3.4	QLD, NZ	VIC, COM	-
Q27.	Communicating with worker (mean rating)	3.3	QLD, NZ	VIC, COM	Increase
Q27.	Giving advice about claim (mean rating)	3.3	QLD, NZ	VIC, COM, SEA	Increase
Q27.	Giving advice about rights (mean rating)	3.3	QLD, SA, COM, NZ	VIC	Increase

<b>Table 15: Summary of differences</b>				
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>AUS results in 2004/05</b>	<b>Above AUS National rate</b>	<b>Below AUS National rate</b>	<b>Comparison with 2003/04</b>
<b>Demographics</b>				
Gender: proportion of males	62%	NSW, SEA, NZ	SA, COM	-
Mean age	42 years	COM	TAS	-
Language other than English spoken at home	7%	NSW, VIC	QLD, SA, TAS, NT, COM	-
Mean number of days compensation paid	56 days	VIC, SA, SEA	TAS	Increase
Mean claim cost	\$10,594	SA, SEA	VIC	-
Participation in rehabilitation	48%	QLD, SA, TAS, NT, COM	NSW, VIC, SEA	Increase
Mean cost of rehabilitation (excluding no cost)	\$1,586	NSW, TAS, NT, COM	VIC, QLD, SA	-

## **Appendix A: Methodology**

Two waves of telephone interviews were conducted each year of the Monitor. The interviews were carried out using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) facility. The same interviewers conducted the interviews across all jurisdictions. Differences cannot be attributed to different interviewing procedures. Results were analysed using the Quantum data analysis package.

### **Sample**

The sample base of prospective injured workers for the aggregate survey was drawn by each jurisdiction from their claim database. The original criteria for inclusion were:

- Had submitted a claim between March and April 2004 (February and April 2004 for Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Comcare and Seacare) for the November 2004 survey wave;
- Had submitted a claim between September and October 2004 (August and October 2004 for Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Comcare and Seacare) for the May 2005 survey wave;
- The injured worker's name had not been used for another workers' compensation survey in the previous 12 months; and
- The injured worker had 10 days or more compensation (including any excess) paid.

Due to the size of the Seacare Authority compared to other jurisdictions, the annual population of Seacare Authority injured workers are invited to be interviewed over four rounds, rather than two samples in three-month periods as in other jurisdictions.

Seacare interviews are conducted in August, November and February and May each year.

### **Consent and privacy**

A passive consent process is used for all jurisdictions. The passive consent entails:

- A letter being sent to injured workers before contact is made for the interview advising them about the nature of the interview, the voluntary nature of participation, the anonymity and confidentiality of responses and providing a contact within the workers' compensation jurisdiction to allow the injured worker to withdraw from the interview or update their contact details.
- Interviewers are trained under Interview Quality Control Australia (IQCA) Standards ensuring they are familiar with privacy and confidentiality procedures.
- A special briefing is given to interviewers for each wave of the survey stressing that injured workers should not be coerced into taking part and emphasising that injured workers can cease to give their consent at any point during the interview and their interview results will be expunged.

Interview responses are kept in a separate file to contact details. On completion of each annual report, contact details of the injured worker are destroyed, except where explicit permission has been given otherwise.

Campbell Research & Consulting do not provide any information that will identify individual injured workers to any third party.

## Weighting

The Australian national results are weighted by the relative population from which the samples have been drawn. In the current report the weighting for the Australian national result has been adjusted to account for the different time periods.

Smaller jurisdictions are recruited over a three-month period and larger jurisdictions over a two-month period. An adjustment has been made to account for the different time periods. Both time periods have been adjusted to an equivalent of six months (by multiplying the two-month population by three and the three-month populations by two). The basis for calculating weights is outlined in Table 16.

This adjustment was reviewed by A/Prof. Ian Gordon, Head of the Statistical Consulting Centre at Melbourne University who agreed that this adjusted approach to weighting was appropriate for the Australian national results.

	<b>Sample Population</b>	<b>Data collection period (months)</b>	<b>Estimated population over a 6 month period</b>	<b>Interview Sample size</b>	<b>Recommended weights</b>
NSW	4,183	2	12,549	300	41.83
VIC	2,026	2	6,078	300	20.26
QLD	3,064	2	9,192	300	30.64
SA	529	2	1,587	200	7.94
TAS	389	3	778	200	3.89
NT	225	3	450	60	7.50
COM	432	3	864	133	6.50
SEA	41	6	41	22	1.86
NZ	1,668	2	5,004	300	16.68

## Sampling error

As only a sample of all eligible injured workers are surveyed, the statistics produced have sampling error associated with them. That is, estimates from the survey may differ from the numbers that would have been produced if all eligible injured workers had been surveyed. The statistical estimate of sampling error is the standard error.

The standard error provides a basis for measuring the precision to which the sample estimate can estimate the population value. There is about a 5% chance that the true value lies outside a range of two standard errors either side of the sample estimate. Such a range defines a 95% confidence interval (CI) for that estimate.

Table 17 provides confidence intervals for sample estimates of 80% and 50%.

For example, if 50% of the 2004/05 sample of 2,995 gave a particular response, we can be 95% certain that between 48.2% and 51.8% of the entire population from which the sample was drawn (injured workers with more than two weeks compensation paid) would give this response. If the estimate was 80% we can be 95% certain that between 78.6% and 81.4% would give that response.

	Survey estimate of 50%			Survey estimate of 80%		
Sample size	Confidence interval	Lower band	Upper band	Confidence interval	Lower band	Upper band
2,995	± 1.8%	48.2%	51.8 %	± 1.4%	78.6%	81.4%

## Time series comparisons

The report provides indicative national estimates based on an aggregation across Australian jurisdictions appropriately weighted in accordance with the reported claim population for each participating jurisdiction.

Direct time series comparisons are shown for the last eight years: 1997/98 through to 2004/05. The national time series is based on Australian jurisdictions but does not include self-insurers. There have been some variations in the national jurisdictions because of different jurisdictions participating. Comcare and ACT jurisdictions did not participate until November 1998, while the Northern Territory jurisdiction did not participate in 1998/99 and 2000/01, 2001/02 and 2002/03, and the ACT did not participate in 2003/04 and 2004/05.

New Zealand has not been included in the national Australian figures.

Trends in time series have been reported where there is a trend over at least three years, even if not statistically significant between each wave.

## Population characteristics

Each jurisdiction provided statistics for key characteristics of the population from which the sample was drawn for each survey wave.

Selected characteristics of the populations from which the November 2004 and May 2005 wave samples were drawn for each of the jurisdictions are included in Table 19 and Table 18.

	<b>NSW (3,863) Mean</b>	<b>VIC (2,410) Mean</b>	<b>QLD (2,918) Mean</b>	<b>SA (626) Mean</b>	<b>TAS (410) Mean</b>	<b>NT (209) Mean</b>	<b>COM (467) Mean</b>	<b>SEA (67) Mean</b>	<b>NZ (1,928) Mean</b>
Age	40	41	40	40	38	40	44	44	40
Days compensation	53	58	51	66	39	45	54	77	46
Cost per claim	\$10,829	\$9,071	\$8,715	\$12,143	\$10,051	\$11,219	\$14,769	\$18,233	\$5,513
Rehab. Cost	\$2,446*	\$1,325*	\$554	\$954	\$2,032*	\$2,192*	\$2,352*	\$2,313*	\$994*

\* Excludes no cost

	<b>NSW (4,183) Mean</b>	<b>VIC (2,026) Mean</b>	<b>QLD (3,064) Mean</b>	<b>SA (529) Mean</b>	<b>TAS (389) Mean</b>	<b>NT (225) Mean</b>	<b>COM (432) Mean</b>	<b>SEA (41) Mean</b>	<b>NZ (1,668) Mean</b>
Age	39	42	39	41	39	39	44	47	40
Days compensation	49	58	50	64	37	44	47	106	47
Cost per claim	\$10,492	\$9,090	\$8,924	\$11,866	\$9,496	\$12,720	\$13,230	\$21,215	\$6,003
Rehab. Cost	\$2,369*	\$1,299*	\$643	\$867	\$1,833*	\$1,923*	\$2,233*	0	\$1,196*

\* Excludes no cost

## Appendix B: Field Report (May 2005)<sup>14</sup>

Interviews were conducted by telephone outside business hours from the Melbourne office of the Wallis Group.

A high level of response has been achieved for the survey (Table 20). The response rate where contacts were made was 86%.

	AUS (1,867) %	NSW (367) %	VIC (395) %	QLD (354) %	SA (241) %	TAS (235) %	NT (79) %	COM (172) %	SEA (24) %	NZ (343) %
Response rates	81	82	76	85	83	85	76	77	92	87

Base: Total contacts made

The response rate for the total sample was 45% (Table 21). The main reason for non-response was inactive or invalid telephone numbers (21%). One in five (18%) injured workers were not interviewed because the quotas were filled (that is, the target number of interviews for the jurisdiction was reached). One in ten (11%) of the total sample refused to participate in the interview.

In the total sample the non-contact due to invalid (“inactive”) telephone numbers exceeded the refusal rate.

	n	%
Interviews	1,515	45
Refusals	352	11
<b>Total contacts made</b>	<b>1,867</b>	<b>56</b>
Remaining “active” telephone numbers	610	18
Unused telephone numbers	153	5
“Inactive” telephone numbers	760	21
<b>Total sample provided</b>	<b>3,336</b>	

Base: Total sample provided

Note: “Active” numbers include engaged, no answer, answering machine or interviewer asked to call back at another time.  
 “Inactive” numbers include person not on number, invalid (fax, modem, etc), disconnected/Telstra message or language barrier (indicates that the interviewer could not establish a language other than English for the interview to be conducted in).

<sup>14</sup> The field report for November 2004 is included in the mid (financial) year report to jurisdictions.

Table 22: Field report for May 2005 (Comparative)									
	NSW (598) %	VIC (595) %	QLD (695) %	SA (500) %	TAS (322) %	NT (159) %	COM (406) %	SEA (61) %	NZ (708) %
Interviews	50	50	43	40	62	38	33	36	42
Refusals	11	16	8	8	11	12	10	3	6
<b>Total contacts made</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>
Remaining "active" numbers	8	11	31	5	11	4	47	39	22
Unused numbers	0	0	0	31	0	0	0	0	9
"Inactive" numbers	31	23	18	16	16	47	11	21	21

Base: Total sample provided

## Appendix C: Terms and Definitions

<b>Table 23: Terms used in this report</b>	
<b>Injured worker</b>	A worker who made a workers' compensation claim and had 10 days or more compensation paid (including any excess).
<b>Return to work (RTW)</b>	An injured worker who reported returning to work between the time of the claim and the time of the interview.
<b>Durable RTW</b>	An injured worker who returned to work and was still working at the time of the survey, seven to nine months after their claim. Durable RTW is measured by the injured worker reporting their work status, sources of income and compensation status.
<b>Full RTW</b>	An injured worker who returns to work to their former level of paid employment and is not receiving workers' compensation payments.
<b>Partial RTW</b>	An injured worker who returns to work, or is working at the time of interview, while still receiving workers' compensation payments for lost income.
<b>No/Non-Durable RTW</b>	An injured worker not working and not deriving income from employment. Non-durable RTW refers to workers who returned to work for a period of time but were not deriving income from employment at the time of the interview.
<b>RTW plan</b>	Return to work plan, or in some jurisdictions this is called a rehabilitation plan. This is a formal structured plan designed to enhance the achievement of a durable RTW within the limitation of the injured workers' functional capacity.
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Refers to the compensation authority that has legal jurisdiction over a population of injured workers. It generally refers to individual states and territories.  In Australia, workers' compensation is the responsibility of individual states and territories. Two entities, Comcare and Seacare have responsibility for Commonwealth agencies and seafarers respectively.
<b>Financial year</b>	The Australian financial year is from 1 July to 30 June the following year.
<b>Australian national rate</b>	The combined results for the financial year for all participating jurisdictions. In 2004/05 this included New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Comcare and Seacare.  Western Australia has not participated in the RTW Monitor.  Northern Territory has participated in 1997/98, 1999/00, 2003/04 and 2004/05.  The Australian Capital Territory did not participate in 2003/04 and 2004/05.

<b>Compensation Provider</b>	Is used to refer to the provider of workers' compensation payment and insurer type services. In most jurisdictions this is the insurer or claims agent. In Queensland it is Q-COMP and in New Zealand it is the Accident Compensation Corporation. For self-insurers it is the employer.
<b>Comcare</b>	Comcare is the body responsible for managing workers' compensation for all Commonwealth government agencies. Comcare is also responsible for managing workers' compensation for the Australian Capital Territory government agencies.
<b>LOTE</b>	A language other than English is spoken at the home of the injured worker.
<b>Remuneration</b>	Comprises both salary and non-salary payments to employees. It may include superannuation and salary sacrifice payments.
<b>Significant result</b>	All results discussed in the text of this report are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

### ***Durability of RTW***

There are three principal ways to measure durability of RTW. These are:

#### **1. Durable RTW (returned to work and still employed)**

The durable RTW rate is the proportion of injured workers who have returned to work and were still working at the time of interview. The question that obtains this measure is:

*“Are you still working in a paid job?”* (Question 8, Section 1.2).

This measure is supplemented by questions identifying the reasons why injured workers are not working (Section 2.4.1) to identify the extent of non-injury related factors such as retrenchment, enterprises closing down or workers reaching retirement age. By asking injured workers their current work status, a measure of durability that is independent of claim status or the relationship with the original, or any other, employer is obtained.

#### **2. Compensation status**

Compensation status is the proportion of injured workers still receiving weekly workers' compensation payments for income lost as a result of a work related injury. Injured workers were asked:

*“Are you still receiving weekly payments from <workers' compensation jurisdiction>?”* (Question 19, Section 1.5.1).

It is a cruder measure of RTW, or RTW not fully achieved or a non-durable RTW.

This measure reflects the limits of workers' compensation data as a measure of durability of RTW.

#### **3. Source of income**

Detailed information about income sources at the time of interview provides a further measure of durability. The survey identifies the injured workers' *main* source of income in Question 20a:

*“Would you please tell me what is your main source of income?”* (Section 1.5.2)

as well as *all other* sources of income in Question 20b:

*“What other sources of income do you have?”*

Combining main and other sources gives *total sources of income* (Section 1.5.3).

Analysis of total sources of income provides a measure of:

- Full RTW (income from employment only);
- Partial RTW (income from employment plus any other income source); and
- Non-durable or no RTW (income from all sources except employment).

The National RTW Monitor measures durability of RTW independently of claim or employment status.

### ***Changes in duties “at RTW” and “at interview”***

There are five questions that identify “changes in duties” or “suitability of duties” for injured workers who have returned to work. Because of the different terminology used in different jurisdictions the term used in this report is “changed duties”<sup>15</sup>.

Four questions refer to the duties undertaken at time of RTW and one question identifies workers’ duties at the time of interview.

- As part of **reasons for returning to work**, injured workers were asked: *“What is the main reason you returned to work?”* (Question 4a) and *“Were there any other reasons you returned to work?”* (Questions Q4b, Section 2.4).
  - This question is unprompted, meaning no fixed choice responses were offered to the respondent. The workers’ initial response was coded into general categories as their “main reason for RTW”. Interviewers probed to identify if there were any other reasons for returning to work (Question 4b). These were also coded into broad categories and combined with the main reason for RTW to become “total reasons for RTW”.
  - For example, a worker may report that their main reason for RTW was that the employer changed their duties so that they could manage the job until fully recovered from their injury. These responses were coded into a category labelled “offered changed duties”.
  - If they also mentioned “economic need” when prompted for “other reasons” their total reason would include **both** “offered changed duties” **and** “economic need”.
- Injured worker’s **perception of suitability of duties at time of RTW** was identified in Question 5: *“When you first returned to work after your injury, were you given suitable duties at work?”* (Section 2.6.3).
  - Responses to this question were a simple “yes” or “no”.
- Injured workers were also asked whether there were any **changes in duties when they returned to work**. Question 5a asked: *“What was different about your duties when you returned to work? (compared to what you were doing when you were injured?)”* (Section 2.6.4).
  - Responses to this question were coded into three broad categories including “lighter duties”, “no heavy lifting” or “reduced hours”.

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<sup>15</sup> In previous reports the wording “*alternative duties*” has been used.

- “Nothing – did the same type of duties” identifies workers who returned to their original duties.
- Change in the **number of hours worked** at the time a worker first returned to work was further explored in Question 6a: “*Still thinking about when you first returned to work, did you return to your previous hours?*” (Section 2.7.1).
  - Responses to this question were a simple “yes” or “no”.
- **“Same or different” duties at the time of the interview** compared with the time of injury is explored in Question 12 (Section 1.6.2). This section identifies whether employees were undertaking the same duties or different duties and how the continuity of duties influenced levels of RTW. Question 12 is asked differently depending on whether the respondent was working at the time of interview or not. For example:
  - Those who were working at the time of interview (durable RTW) were asked, “*Are you doing the same sort of work or duties that you were doing when you incurred your original injury?*”
  - Those who were not working at the time of interview (non-durable RTW) were asked, “*Were you doing the same sort of work or duties that you were doing when you incurred your original injury?*”
- **“Same or different” employer at the time of the interview** compared with the time of injury was also explored in Question 11 (Section 1.6.1). The relevant wording and analysis of that question was similar to that as discussed in Question 12 immediately above.

### ***Interpretation of results for the Seacare Authority***

Seacare Authority injured workers are unique in the problems faced when attempting to RTW. Results in this report must be interpreted in light of the differences as summarised here.

- The majority of Seacare Authority injured workers are stationed on ships at sea and are away at sea for 4-6 weeks at a time.
- An injured seafarer ready to RTW must have access to a supernumerary position on a ship for a graduated return to seafarer duties or must be passed medically fit by an Australian Maritime Safety Authority approved medical practitioner in accordance with fitness for duty regulations if able to return to full pre-injury seafarer duties. There are few supernumerary positions on ships. As ships are often away from port for 4-6 weeks, the option for graduated RTW under such conditions is limited.
- Additionally, many seafarers live in different locations to the employer’s offices, making access to shore based duties as part of a graduated RTW program difficult to arrange.

## Appendix D: CATI Questionnaire (Flow Chart)

