

Return to Work

Barriers and facilitators

Honouring Gordon Waddell



Including an analysis of the Return to Work Survey Results

Safe Work Australia | Dr Mary Wyatt

Study 1 - RTW Survey

Survey of approx 9300 injured workers across Australia

Conducted for Safe Work Australia

Research analysis of workers' RTW results, and views on their RTW experiences

Psychological claims and physical claims

With Dr Tyler Lane of ISCRR (stats), and research review of psych by Dr Peter Cotton (clinical and org psychologist)

Summary report for employers to be published in next few months

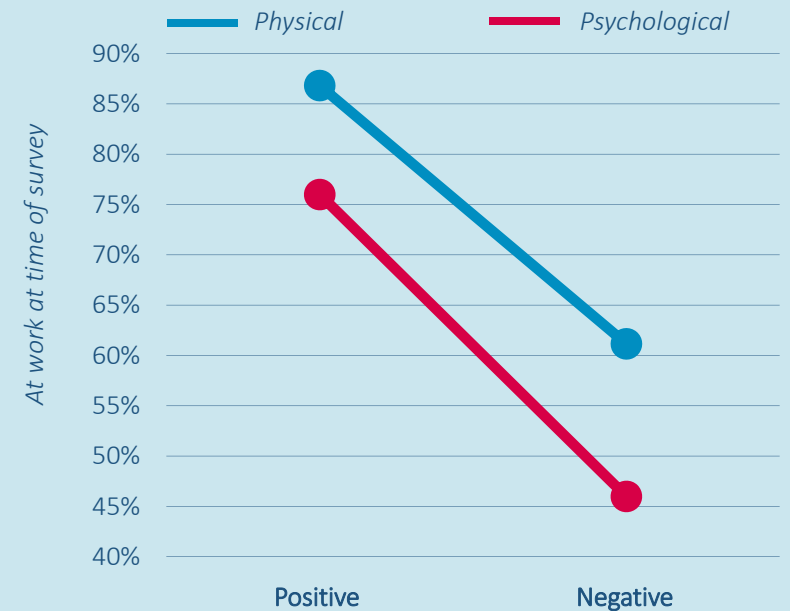
Employers play a key role

RTW by how employers respond to the injury

Positive response from employer, RTW is:

- **43%** higher in **physical** claims (87% versus 61%)
- **52%** higher in **psychological** claims (79% versus 52%)

RTW by Employer response to injury



Opportunities for employers

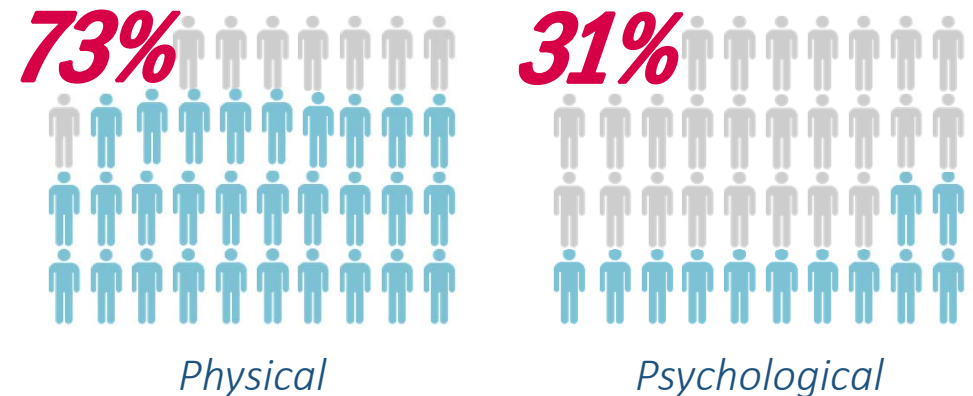
Psychological cases managed differently

Employees with **psychological** claims were about **half as likely** to report a positive response by their employer.

Employer did what they could to support you:

- **75% physical** claims
- **27% psychological** claims

Percent who agreed with Employer response
individual questions



Making contact pays off

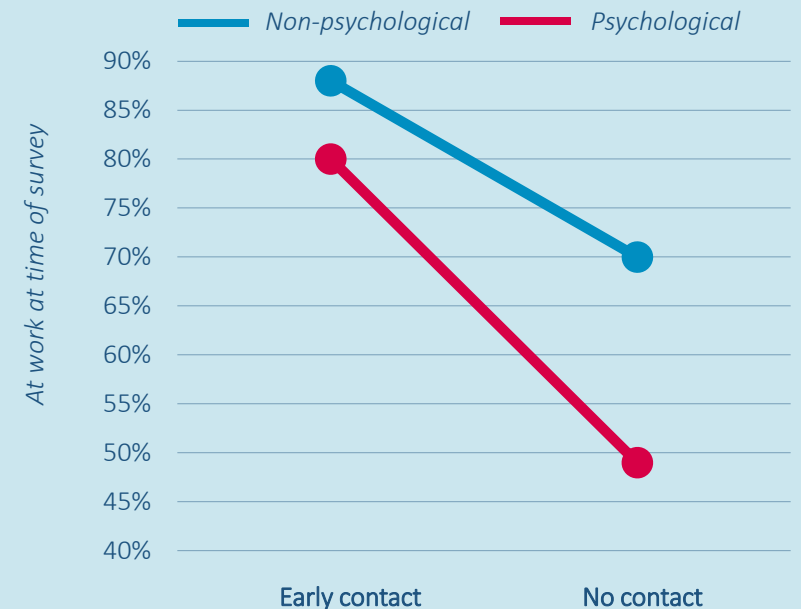
RTW by employee contact from the workplace

Employees who advise their workplace has made **contact** about their injury are more likely to be at work.

Early contact (within 3 days from claim lodgement) is associated with further increases in RTW:

- **26% higher physical claim** (88% vs 70%)
- **63% higher psychological claim** (80% vs 49%)

RTW by Early contact from workplace vs
No contact



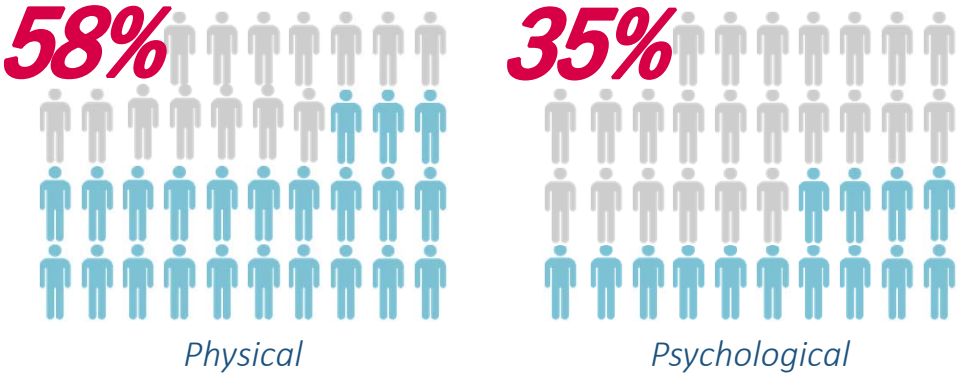
Early contact

Psychological claims associated with less employee contact



58% of employees with a **physical injury claim** say their **employer made contact** with them about their injury.

Only **35%** of employees with a **psychological claim** say their **employer made contact** about their injury.



Of those who say they heard from their employer:

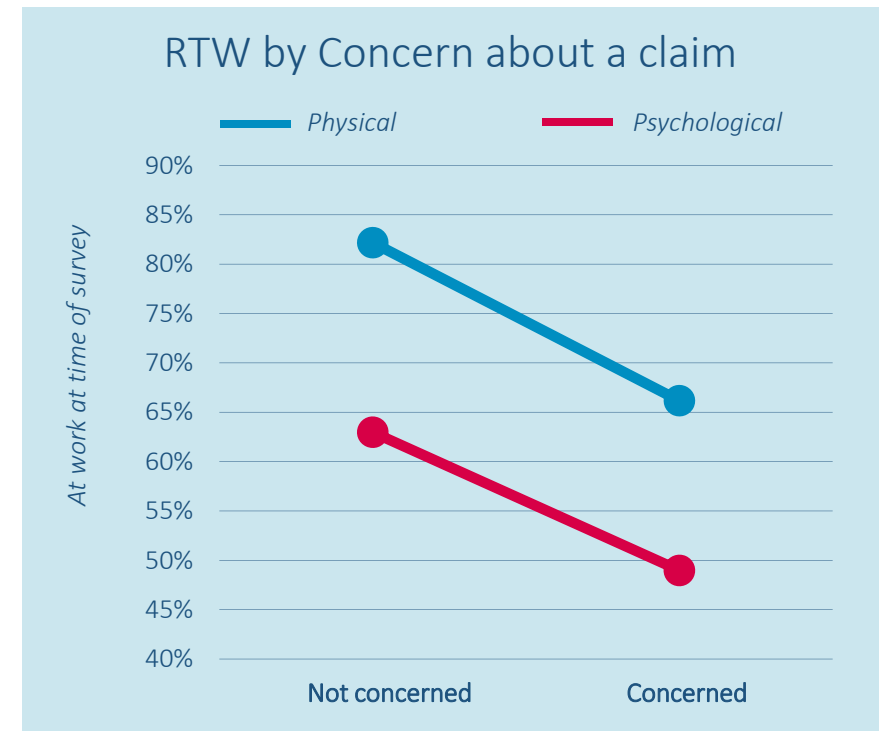
- **34% with a physical claim** had contact from their employer **within 3 days** of reporting their injury
- Only **11% of those with a psychological claim** heard from their employer **within 3 days**

Days from injury to claim	Non psychological	Psychological
Less than 7 days	34%	11%
7 - 13 days	22%	13%
14 - 20 days	12%	9%

Concern about lodging a claim

Low levels of concern about lodging a claim associated with higher RTW result for both groups

Difference greater for psychological claims

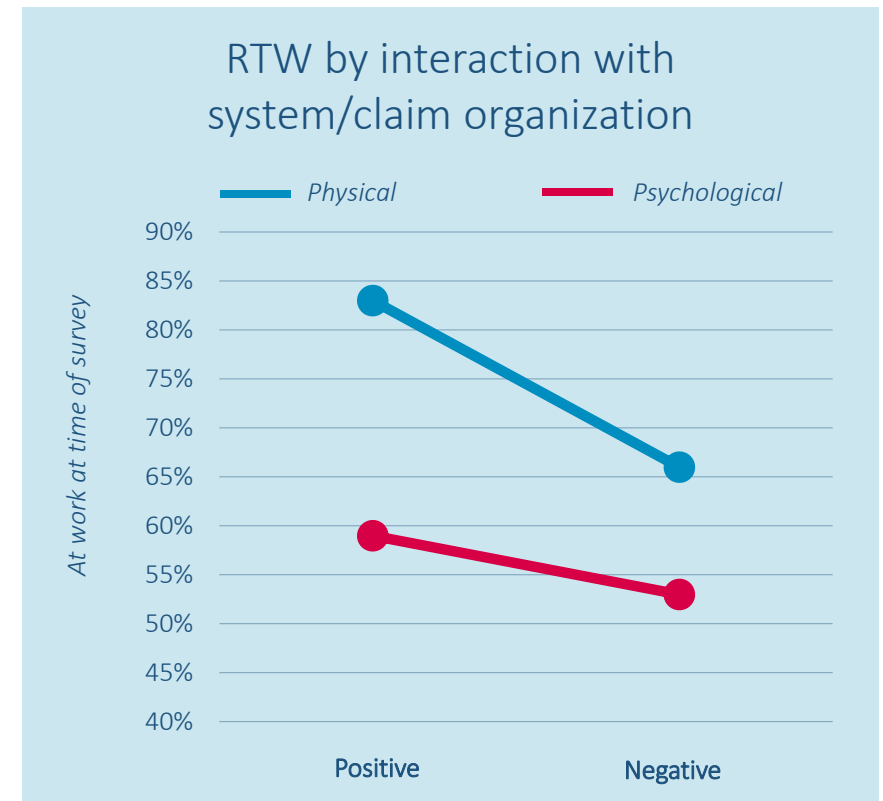


System / claim interaction

Quality of interaction between claims organisation/system and employee impacts RTW for both types of claims.

Positive employee views associated with higher RTW:

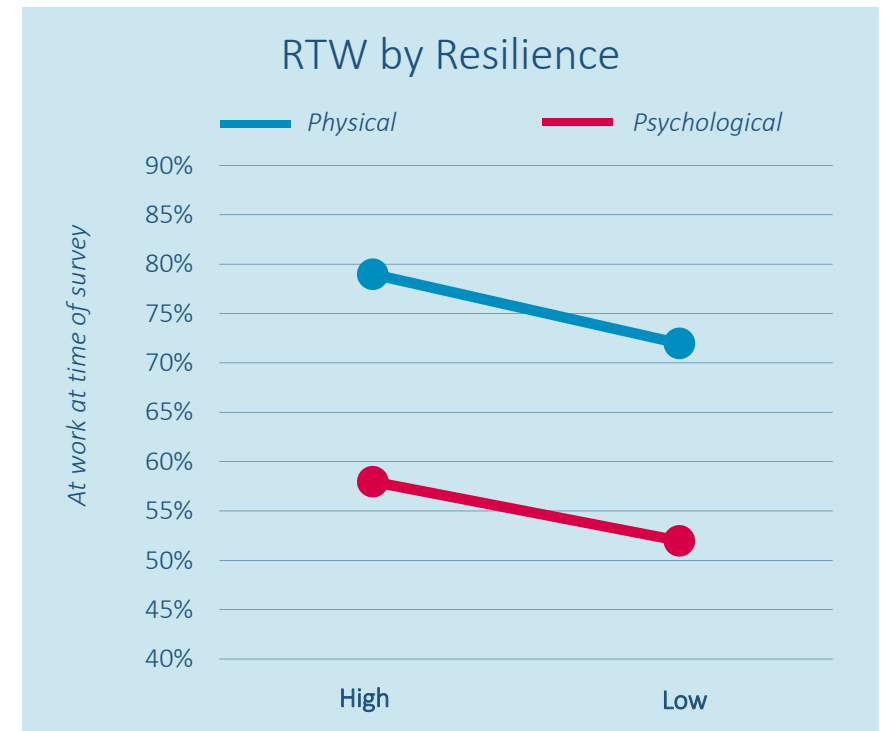
- **26%** higher for **physical** claims
- **11%** higher for **psychological** claims



Resilience

Higher resilience associated with higher RTW:

- **10%** higher **physical** claims (79% vs 72%)
- **12%** higher for **psychological** claims (58% vs 52%)

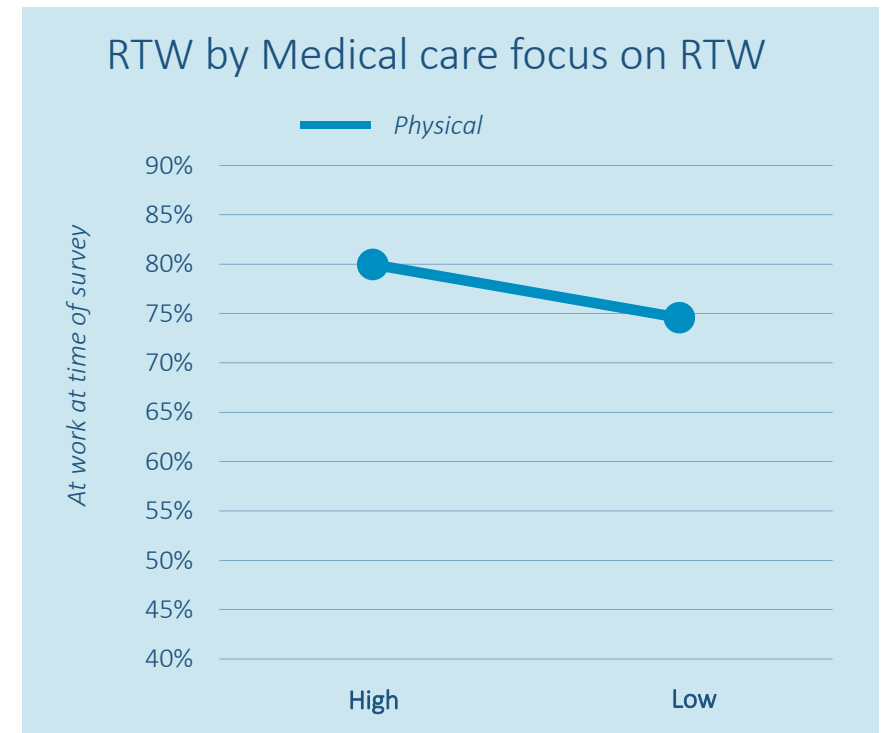


Medical care focus on RTW

Higher medical focus on RTW associated with 7% higher rate of RTW for physical claims

The number of psychological claims was too small to provide reliable results in the analysis

Percent who agreed with medical focus on RTW questions	Physical	Psychological
Medical treatment assisted you in RTW?	90%	87%
Clearly communicate options for staying/returning to work?	85%	89%
Work with others to assist your recovery	78%	85%
Explain the role that work could play in your recovery?	72%	80%
Medical certificates clearly stating capacity for work?*	96%	98%

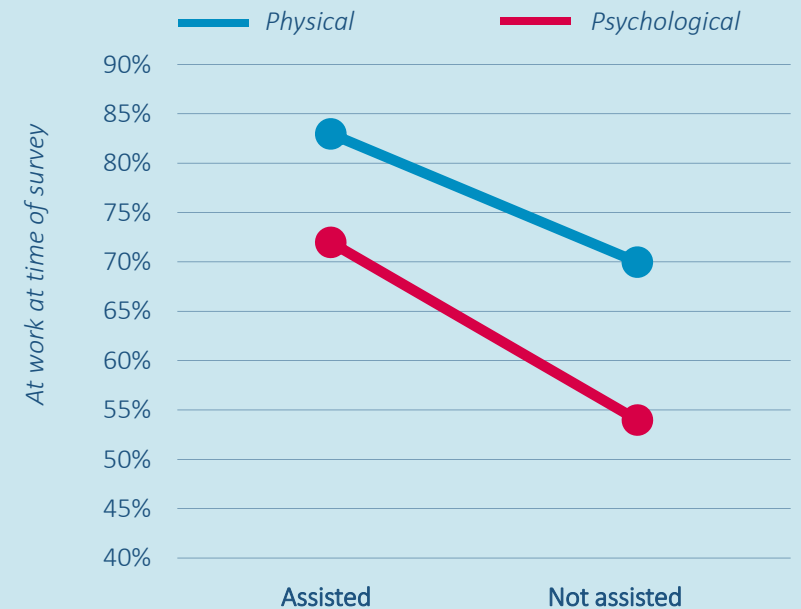


Early assistance is worthwhile

Pre claim assistance from employer associated with higher RTW for both groups:

- **19%** higher **physical** claims (83% vs 70%)
- **33%** higher **psychological** claims (72% vs 54%)

RTW by Employer pre claim assistance



Psych claimants less likely to receive assistance

Employees with a psychological claim are much less likely to receive assistance from their employer prior to claim lodgement

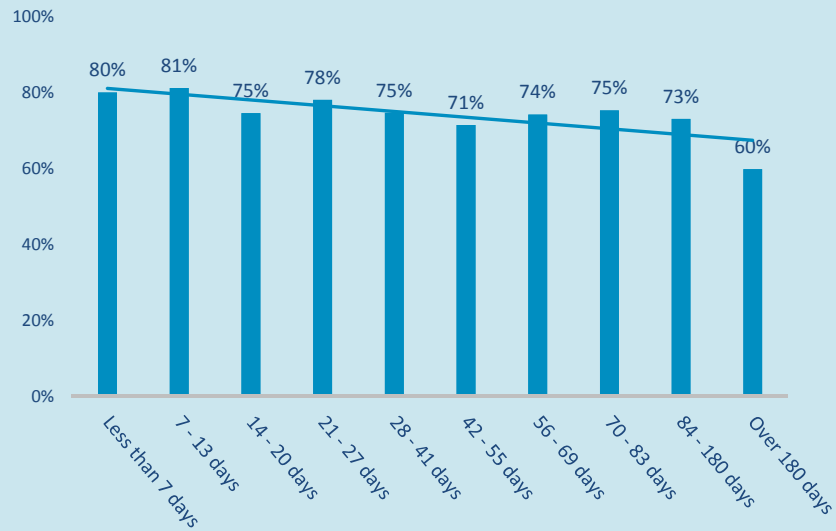
Percent who agreed Employer helped manage injury before lodged claim?



Early injury reporting

Claims that are lodged early are associated with higher RTW

RTW by Days from Injury to Claim - Physical



RTW by Days from Injury to Claim - Psych



Early injury reporting

Psychological claims are less likely to be lodged early:

- **34%** of employees with a **physical** claim lodge their claim within 7 days of injury
- Versus **11%** of employees with a **psychological** claim

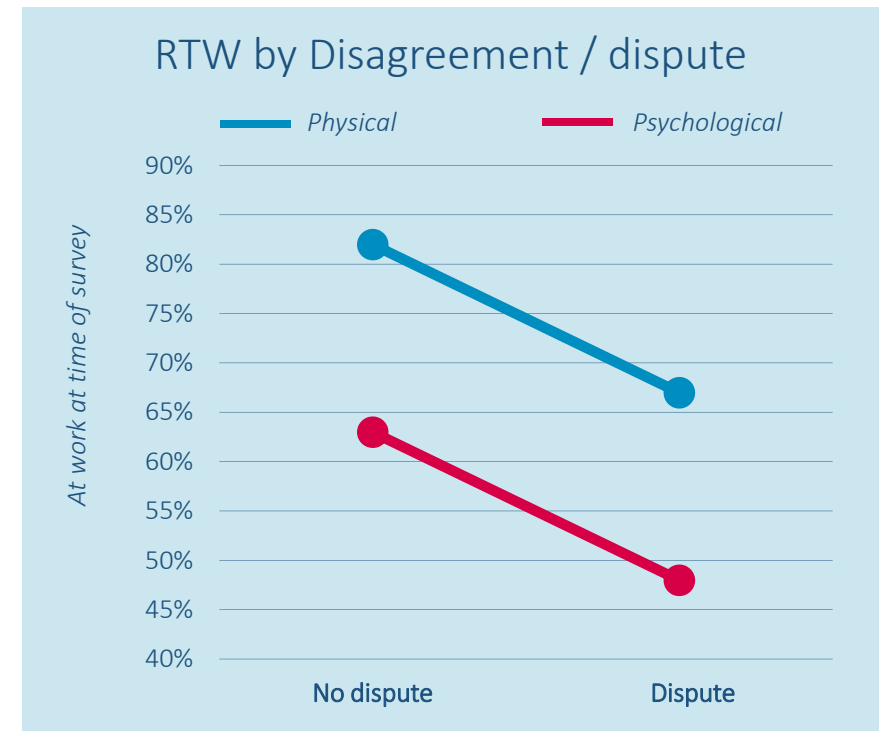
Percent - Days from injury to claim	Physical	Psychological
Less than 7 days	34%	11%
7 - 13 days	22%	13%
14 - 20 days	12%	9%
21 - 27 days	8%	7%
28 - 41 days	8%	14%
42 - 55 days	4%	8%
56 - 69 days	3%	5%
70 - 83 days	2%	4%
84 - 180 days	5%	17%
Over 180 days	3%	13%

Disputes

When a dispute was present, RTW less likely in both psychological and physical claims.

No dispute (versus a dispute) RTW:

- **22%** higher **physical** claims
- **31%** higher in **psychological** claims

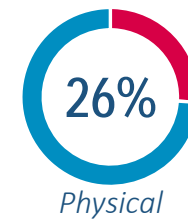


Disputes

- Disputes are twice as likely in psychological claims.

- Need for assistance to resolve dispute **38% more** likely in **psychological** claims (72% vs 45%)

Difference of opinions with employer / claim organization?

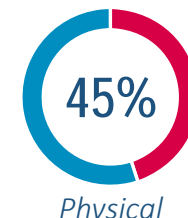


Physical

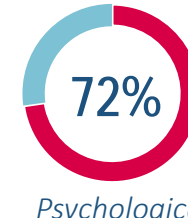


Psychological

Did you need assistance to resolve this?



Physical



Psychological

Study 2 - RTW Intervention

Workplace based intervention

Early proactive supportive approach

Avoidance of disputes

Supervisor involvement

Skilled 'RTW Coordinator' (case management)

Streamlined medical care (avoiding delays and aiding the treater)

IAIABC Journal Spring, 2013 Vol. 50, No. 1. Improving Return to Work Results: It Pays To Care

Iles RA, Wyatt M & Pransky G (2012). Multi-faceted case management: Reducing compensation costs of musculoskeletal work injuries in Australia. Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation, 22(4), 478–88.

Key workplace approaches

What can workplaces do

Key factors

Your employer did what they could to support you

Employer made an effort to find suitable employment for you

Your employer helped you with your recovery

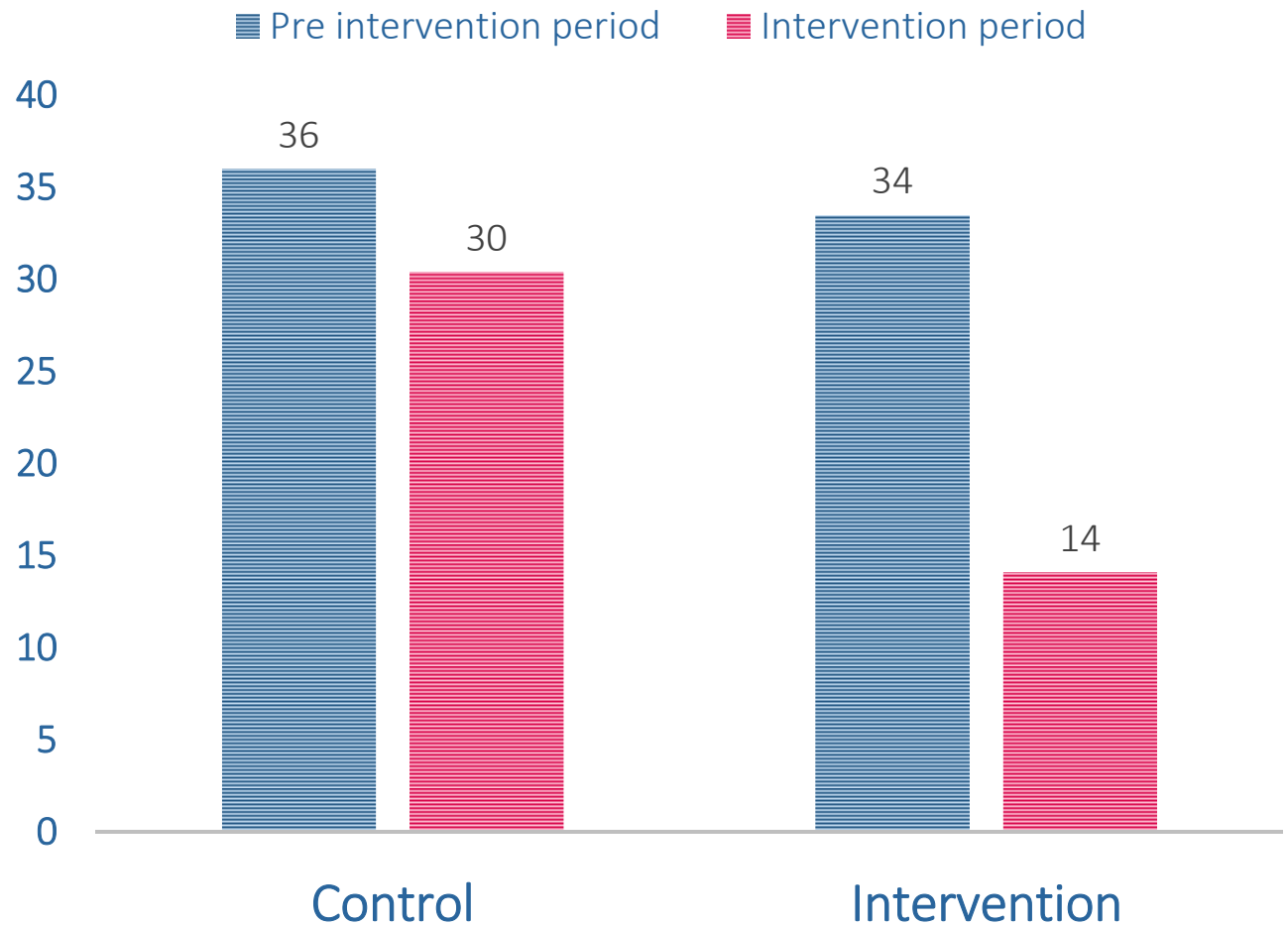
Employer provided enough information on rights and responsibilities

Your employer treated you fairly DURING and AFTER the claims process

Contact, especially early contact

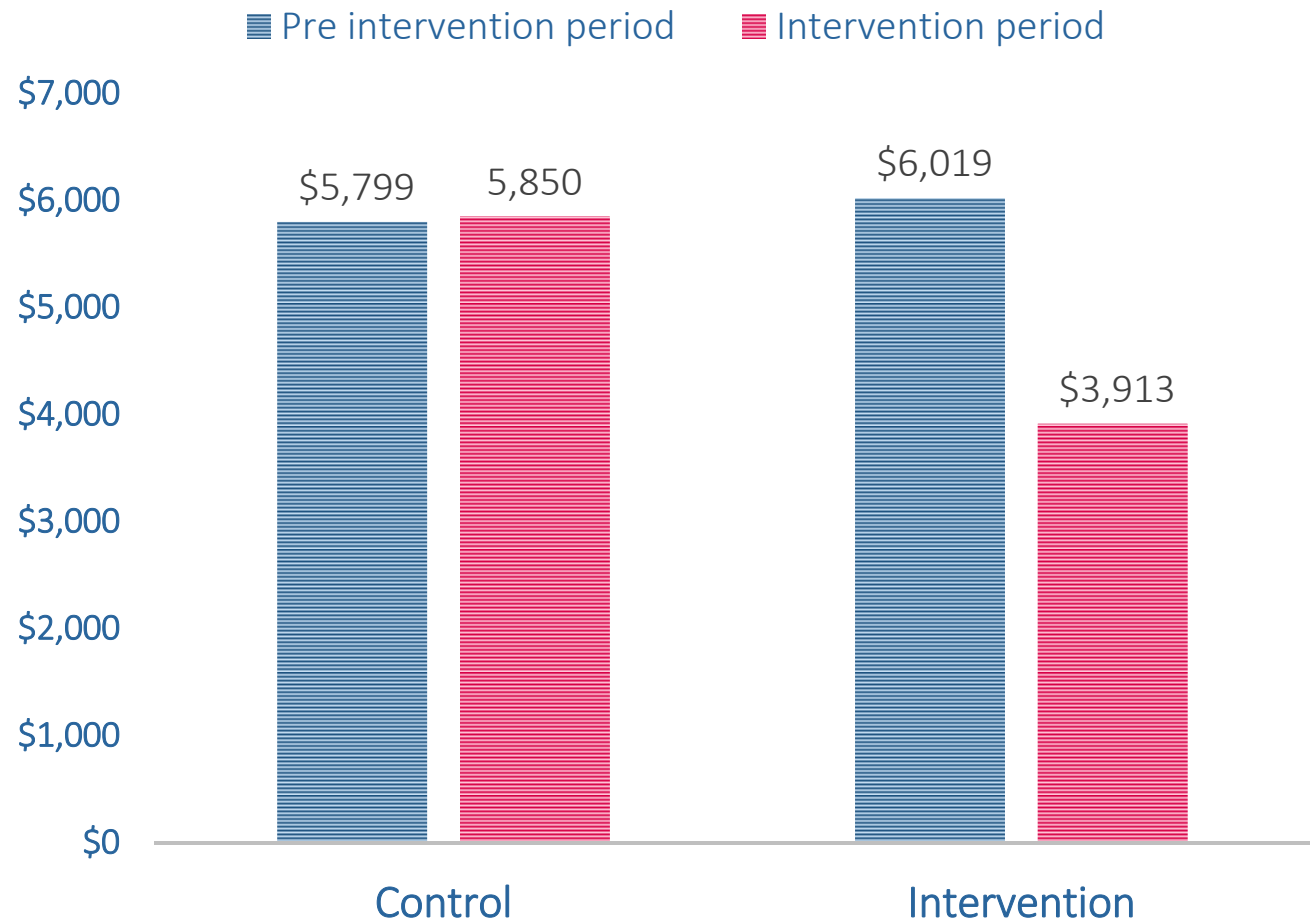
Workplace intervention

Days lost from work



Workplace intervention

Average claims costs



Putting it all together

KEY INFLUENCING FACTORS	Physical	Psychological
Employer response to injury	42%	65%
Early contact from workplace versus no workplace contact	26%	63%
Interaction with system / claims organisation	25%	11%
Workplace culture prior to injury	25%	2%
Concern about lodging a claim	24%	29%
Disagreement / dispute	22%	31%
Employer pre-claim assistance	18%	33%
Resilience	10%	12%
Medical care focused on RTW	8%	*

Implications for Occ Physicians

- **Individual cases** – greater emphasis on workplace involvement
- **Workplace advice** – setting up good systems, early report, early helpful communication
- **Policymakers** –
 - Health benefits of work – message has largely been taken up by doctors, greater focus on influencing the workplace to respond positively
 - Support further training of RTW Coordinators