

# Individual dispositions that impact readiness, preparedness and confidence in returning to work / Return to work journey: an injured worker perspective

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**Background:** It is widely recognised that the type of injury sustained plays a role in an individual's ability to return to work (RTW). Employers are quick to point out, though, that the injury alone does not always impact an injured/unwell worker's RTW outcome.

**Objectives:** The objectives of this research were to provide Comcare with greater insights and a better understanding of the factors that influence RTW outcomes for workers in the Australian federal workers' compensation scheme.

**Methods:** A total of 47 in-depth interviews were conducted with injured workers from both premium paying and self-insured organisations in four Australian States and Territories. An independent research company conducted the interviews on behalf of Comcare between December 2012 and February 2013. A purposeful sampling approach was employed, however, this was influenced by the willingness of people to participate.

**Findings:** Personal situation, expectations of the organisation, relationship with the organisation and personality traits were identified as key factors influencing an individual's ability to return to work. The two driving characteristics of 'personal resilience' and 'trust in the employer' were used to identify four key types of claimants – Strivers, Temporarily Floored, Defensive & Entitled, and Victims.

**Discussion:** Although individuals were found to have a clear disposition towards one typology over another, it was apparent that they could move between these typologies depending on how their RTW journey was going. For example, a 'Temporarily Floored' individual encountering perceived 'unfair or harsh' judgement from their employer could develop a 'Victim' mindset.

**Conclusion:** Understanding that core individual dispositions impact a person's readiness, preparedness and confidence to RTW, has provided Comcare with the framework to further explore how we can identify and use these personal characteristics at the beginning of a claim to improve the recovery and RTW outcomes of our claimants.