

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

WORKING IT OUT

THE ROLE OF THE WORKPLACE IN RETURN TO WORK

REPORT OF THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY SURVEY -
ELECTRONICS,
WINE & BRANDY, AND
MEAT & LIVESTOCK SECTORS

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AISR
Informing Decisions

Which sections are relevant to you?

This short guide is designed to help the reader locate the findings relevant to them from this investigation into workplace dynamics and return to work (RTW) in the South Australian manufacturing industry. In addition to the key findings presented in the executive summary, we encourage individuals in operational roles such **OHS managers; Rehabilitation and Return to Work (RRTW) Coordinators; health and safety representatives; injury managers; general company management** (including team leaders/supervisors) to delve further into the report. Topics of particular interest to individuals in each of these roles are highlighted in the table below.

The project team considers that **all sections would interest policy makers, worker representatives, employer groups and researchers.**

Section	Features	Who should read this	Pages
Workplace injury (overall)	Prevalence of injury and claims; reasons for not claiming; claim duration; useful things for RTW and barriers	RRTW Coordinators; injury mgr; OHS mgr; HSR rep	14-17
Across the indexes	Overall results and by employee type	Everybody	18-20
Index 1 Workplace Conditions	Temperature, noise, equipment	OHS mgr, HSR rep, general mgt	20-25
Index 2 Workplace Control	Level of control over aspects such as pace and type of work	RRTW Coordinators; injury mgr; OHS mgr; general mgt	26-30
Index 3 Workplace Culture	the level of communication, trust and support	RRTW Coordinators; injury mgr; general mgt	31-37
Index 4 Workplace Safety	promotion of safety cultures in these industries	OHS mgr, HSR rep, general mgt	38-46
Index 5 Workplace Injury	strategies to return an injured worker to the workplace	RRTW Coordinators; injury mgr; general mgt	47-54
Organisational strategies	RTW strategies by managers	RRTW Coordinators; injury mgr; general mgt	55-59

Project team

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KEY FINDINGS

Workplace Conditions

Employees in general have given positive ratings of their organisations' workplace conditions, with the least positive assessment relating to extremes of *workplace temperature being too hot or too cold*, followed by *excessive noise levels*. Hearing loss continues to be a work related disease despite years of targeted interventions. These conditions were most negatively rated in the meat and livestock processing sector, which also rated low on having *slippery floors and other fall inducing conditions*. The least dangerous working conditions are in the electronics sector while the most dangerous are in meat and livestock processing – this is reflected in the injury and workers' compensation claim statistics. However, all three sectors have received quite positive ratings on the other workplace conditions known to be associated with injury or illness.

Workplace Control

The *Workplace Control* ratings were consistently less positive, achieving the lowest overall score of the five Indexes. This index was the lowest in the meat and livestock processing sector where the *capacity to adapt working hours* received the lowest rating. The ability to *choose when to take a break* received the second lowest rating in the wine and brandy sector. Research findings are clear about the relationship between low levels of autonomy and control and the increased risk of injury or illness, but it is recognised that manufacturing work conditions are not easily designed to achieve higher levels of autonomy. It is possible that pilots which model alternative approaches could be established in higher claiming manufacturing sectors to identify ways of addressing this challenge.

Workplace Culture

Across the three sectors, lowest ratings were applied to the *trust between managers and other employees*, and the *effectiveness of communication between managers and staff*. By contrast *communication and levels of trust within work teams* achieved relatively higher ratings. On all dimensions of workplace culture, the meat and livestock sector received lower ratings than the other two sectors. The positive findings are that becoming ill or injured is likely to mean supportive response from colleagues and work teams. In addition, in the wine and brandy and electronics sectors, management are considered to be supportive, and employees feel they can raise concerns with them. These two sectors were also much less likely to identify workplace bullying as an issue. Again, the findings of previous research regarding positive workplace culture and more effective RTW mean that the meat and livestock sector in particular faces significant challenges, and across all three sectors, management and staff face the challenge of poor levels of trust and communication.

Workplace safety

There were high levels of agreement in the electronics, and wine and brandy sectors that issues related to workplace safety are being addressed while meat and livestock processing employees rated workplace safety as lower than the other two sectors on all fourteen items. Lowest endorsement for items in this Index was for *employee familiarity with processes*, *rights and obligations related to worker's compensation and making claims* are also of concern given that researchers have frequently identified RTW is significantly related to workers being informed about these issues.

Workplace response to injury

The three sectors were similar in their ratings of this dimension. All sectors rated *encouraging employees to notify supervisors as soon as possible*, *being given alternative duties or modified or restricted duties* at higher than 4.4 overall. Workers rated the *communication about treatment* lowest of the items on this scale indicating this could be an area to be targeted for improvement, and all three sectors applied a rating of '4' to the appointment of a RTW Coordinator, which is encouraging.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WorkCoverSA commissioned the Australian Institute for Social Research (AISR) at The University of Adelaide to undertake a research project designed to increase understanding of factors in the workplace that affect the achievement of positive return to work outcomes. This included the development of an Index to measure workplace capacity to achieve effective return to work (RTW), initially within one industry and subsequently applying this across various industry sectors. The survey instrument – The *Workplace Return to Work Index* – is designed to be repeated, in order to measure change over time within organisations and collectively in the sector, and to be applied to other industry sectors. As part of the current project, the survey has been tailored to meet the needs of the Manufacturing Industry, within which the wine and brandy, electronics and meat and livestock processing sectors operate.

The survey is structured around five sub-indexes, each comprised of questions relating to factors that are known to affect workplace injury rates and to affect return-to-work. Therefore, the *RTW Workplace Index* has these components:

- ⇒ Index 1: The **conditions** of the workplace
- ⇒ Index 2: The degree of **control** or autonomy workers have in relation to their work role and responsibilities and how these are undertaken
- ⇒ Index 3: The **culture** of the workplace – for example, supportiveness shown to injured or ill workers, the degree of trust, quality of communication
- ⇒ Index 4: **Safety** in the workplace and the prevention of injury and illness (and
- ⇒ Index 5: The way in which the workplace **responds** to injury or illness, including provision for return-to-work.

A total of **5511** manufacturing sector staff from 16 organisations were provided with paper or online versions of the survey and invited to participate, with responses received from **1191**. This represents a participation rate of **22.6%** of all potential respondents.

- The seven participating organisations from the **wine and brandy sector** had a **very good response rate of 36.7%**.
- Four organisations from the **electronics sector** agreed to participate with an **excellent response rate of 45.5%**.
- The participation rate from the five **meat and livestock processing** organisations **was low** with only **4.4%** of people invited returning a completed survey. *Given the low number of responses in the meat and livestock processing sector, results from this sector should be viewed cautiously, and considered indicative.*

1.1 FINDINGS ACROSS THE FIVE RETURN TO WORK INDEXES

Taking the five sub-Indexes together, the capacity of the workplace to support timely return to work is extremely sound in the **electronics sector**, whose ratings ranged between '3.7' and '4.3' out of a possible '5', and in the wine and brandy sector, with ratings between '3.8' and '4.3'. The meat and livestock processing sector had only one sub-Index that received a rating of '4' or better and this related to workplace response to injury or illness. Their ratings spanned a low of '3.0' to a high of '4.2'.

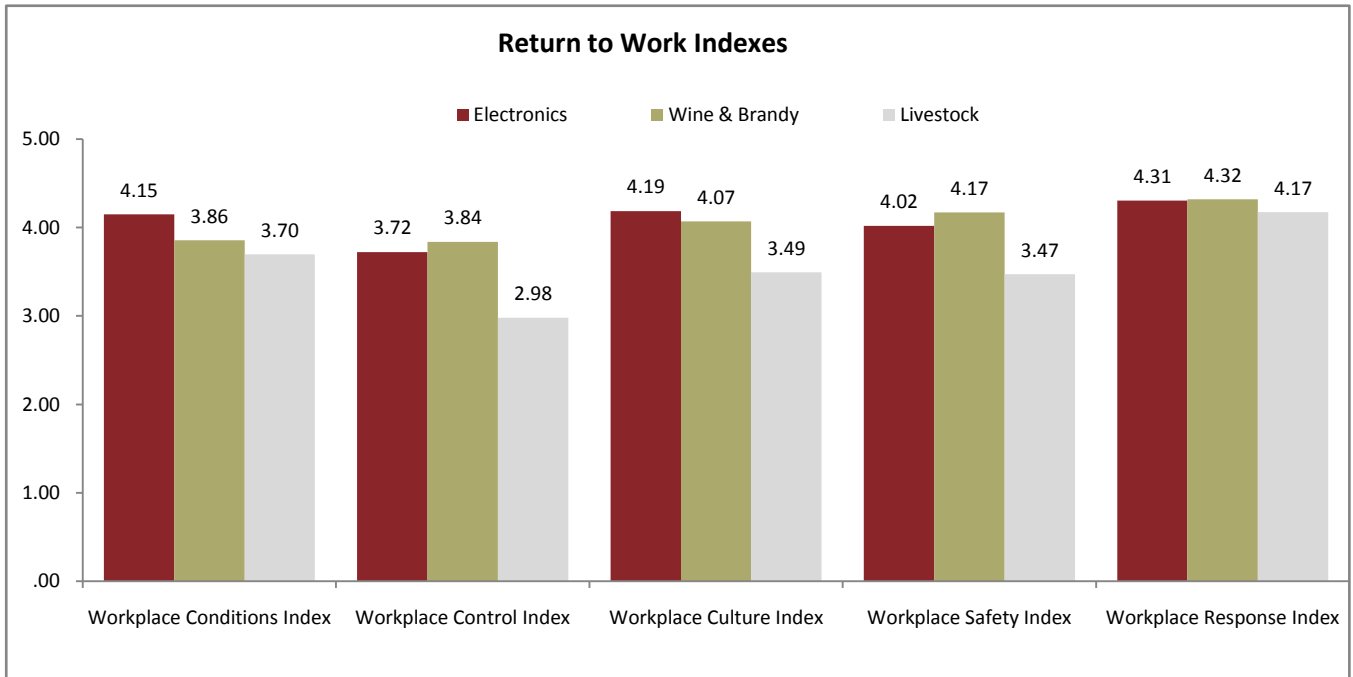
Overall, workers reported lowest agreements with statements about **control over their work** (see Section 2.4.3). Meat and livestock processing received lower scores on all indexes measured, particularly in the areas of workplace control, workplace culture and workplace safety.

While the first four indexes as a group measure the workplace environment and the features that affect the likelihood or otherwise of injury and illness, the fifth (Workplace Response) measures how well the workplace reacts when these occur. These first four Indexes can be seen as a measure of proactivity in relation to RTW – creating an environment that minimises risk because of working conditions, degree of autonomy and control over work tasks, workplace culture and

safety-related inputs. The meat and livestock processing sector scored highest on its reactivity, while the electronics sector scored highest of the three sectors on its proactivity, with wine and brandy a close second.

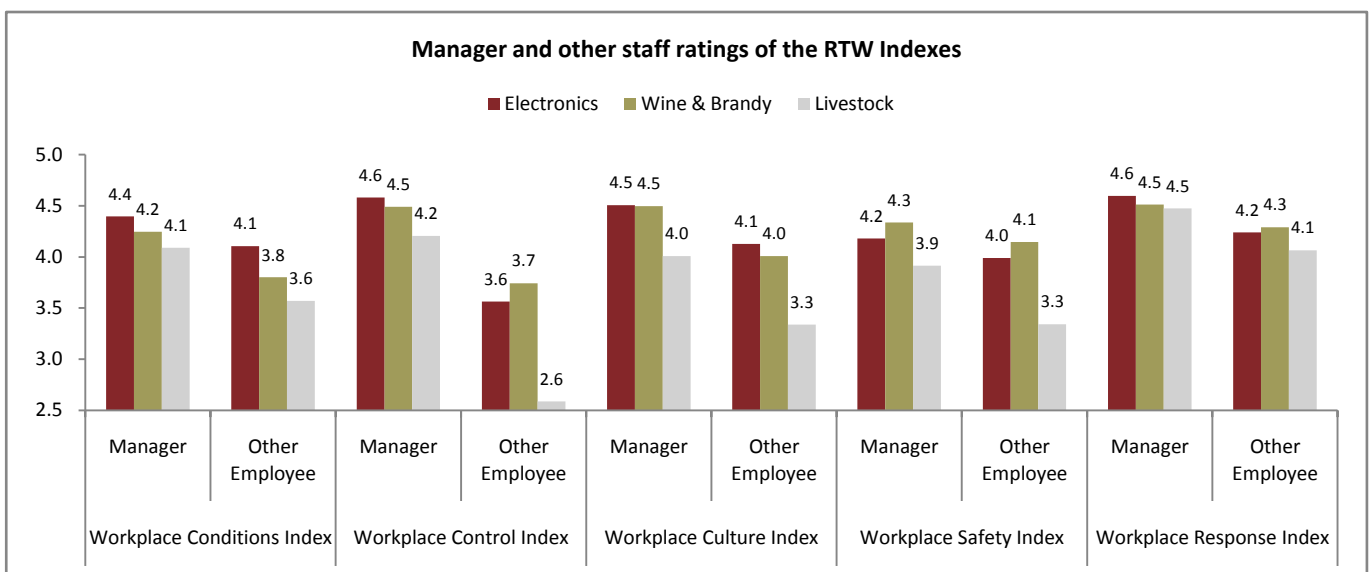
All three sectors scored high on their capacity to *react* positively to injury or illness in the workplace (as measured by the *Workplace Response Index*). This was also the Index with the least differentiation between the three sectors in relation to workplace response to injury, with the meat and livestock sector comparable to the other two sectors on many items.

Figure 1: Return to Work Indexes for the manufacturing sector



Ratings applied by Managers were compared with those provided by other employees (see Figure 2), with Managers across the three sectors being more positive about workplace conditions, workplace control and autonomy, workplace culture and workplace safety. On the fifth index, workplace response to injury or illness, the trend for lower ratings from non-management employees remained, but the difference between these groups was small.

Figure 2: Manager and other staff ratings of the 5 Return to Work Indexes

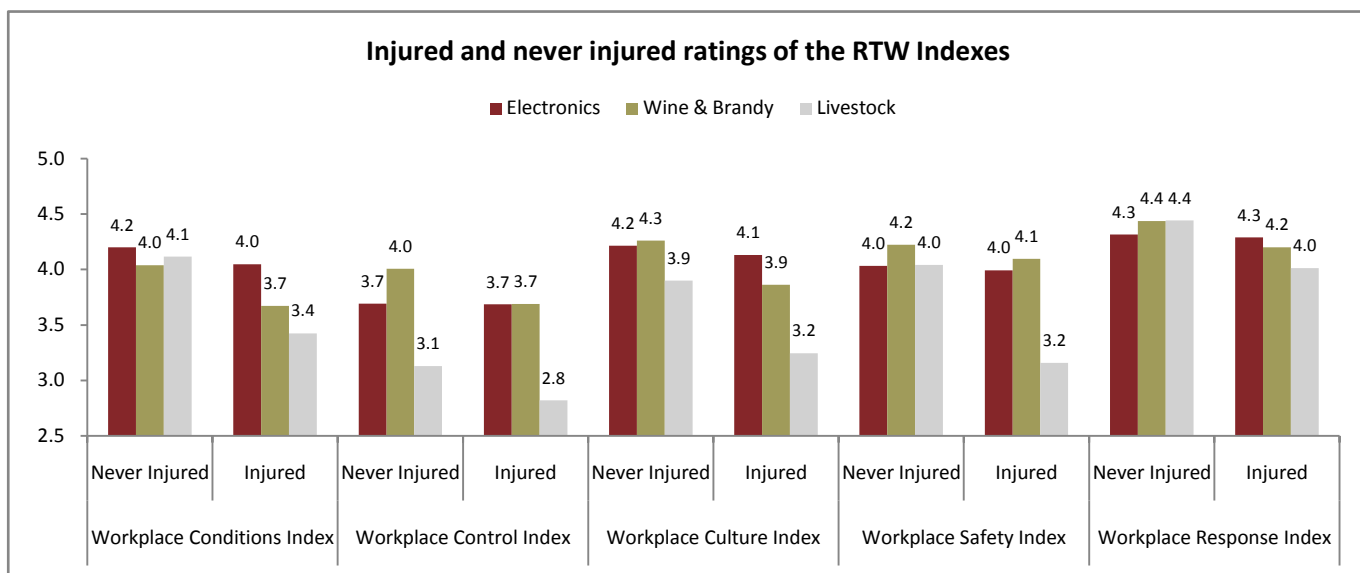


Findings were also analysed on the basis of those who had been injured and those who had never been injured. As Figure 3 indicates, there was a distinct trend for *those who had been injured* to rate their workplace more negatively in the meat and livestock processing and wine and brandy sectors, on all five sub-Indexes. In the electronics sector, ratings were similar regardless of injury or the absence of it, with the exception of *Workplace Conditions* which was rated more negatively by those who had experienced workplace injury.

Injured workers consistently reported that **effective treatment from health providers**, and **being given enough time off to recover** were the most useful things facilitating their return to work after injury (see Figure 8). Ongoing physical problems were identified as the greatest barriers to returning to work after an injury, particularly in the wine and brandy sector and meat and livestock processing sectors (see Figure 9).

The research literature identifies the importance of ‘timely’ as opposed to ‘premature’ return to work in order to sustain that return (Kenny: 1998). Although it is important for injured workers to return to work as soon as possible, it is equally important that they do not aggravate their injury by returning before they are ready.

Figure 3: Injured and never injured ratings of the 5 Return to Work Indexes



1.2 WORKPLACE CONDITIONS INDEX

Manufacturing staff consistently rated their workplace temperature more poorly than other items on the Workplace Conditions Index (ie their workplace was seen as too hot or too cold at least some of the time). This is most evident for the meat and livestock processing sector (see Figure 17). Respondents in the meat and livestock processing sector and, to a lesser extent, the wine and brandy sector also rated the noise levels too loud to communicate easily (see Figure 14). On a positive note over 40% of respondents from each sector reported they were never in skin contact with chemicals (see Figure 18), and more than 40% never experienced undue vibration from equipment (see Figure 16).

Ratings from the electronics sector on workplace conditions were more favourable than the wine and brandy sector, which in turn, were more favourable than responses from the meat and livestock processing sector. Results also indicated that managers tended to see workplace conditions more positively than other employees, and this finding was consistent for the three sectors.

Results were further analysed differentiating between respondents who have had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing). Those who had never been injured

rated their Workplace Conditions higher for all sectors, than did the injured cohort (see Figure 24). However, this differential was most marked for respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector.

Implications

Injury and workers' compensation claim statistics mirror the findings of this research in the correlation with low ratings on Workplace Conditions and other components of the *RTW Workplace Index*. The Meat and Livestock Processing sector emerges as the one of greatest concern, and specific attention appears to be warranted in relation to the prevention of falls.

It is recognised that the nature of work in the Wine and Brandy and Meat and Livestock Processing sectors presents significant challenges in relation to workplace temperature control, and therefore, much rests with how this is managed (eg providing air conditioned areas for workers who need to recover from working in extreme heat, training supervisors and staff in preventing heat stress). However, these interventions are outside of the scope of our research.

1.3 WORKPLACE CONTROL INDEX

Survey participants from all sectors indicated they had less control over their *ability to adapt their working hours* than most other items in this Index. The electronics and the wine and brandy sector scores were comparable on most workplace control items. However, responses from the wine and brandy sector indicated that they had more control over managing their own break times than the other two sectors (see Figure 31), with three quarters indicating this was under their control. *The meat and livestock processing sector achieved lower scores than the other sectors on all measures of workplace control.* Over half of the meat and livestock processing sector disagreed with the statements indicating they could decide when to take a break (see Figure 31), or they could adapt their working hours within limits (see Figure 32).

Researchers have identified that the degree of control by employees over their work (for example, in the ordering of tasks and timing of breaks) is critical to positive health outcomes and to managing injury or illness, with low levels of control being associated consistently with job strain and ill-health disease (Karasek & Theorell: 1990; Polanyi: 2004; Coats & Max: 2005). Researchers in Finland surveyed more than 25,000 full time employees and found that those with low control over their work took 40% more certified sick leave and 10% to 30% more uncertified sick leave than those with a high degree of control (Ala-Mursala *et al*: 2006). A detailed review of research identified ten characteristics of healthy organisational practices (Polanyi, 2004: 2–12), one of which relates to the degree of control by employees over their work and the ability to make decisions about ordering work tasks, taking breaks and so on.

Results achieved for the Workplace Control Index were analysed by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and management status (manager, other employees). Responses from the electronics sector were found to be comparable with those from the wine and brandy sector, however, responses from the meat and livestock processing sector indicated the reduced perception of control from these workers, particularly those in non-management positions. Further, results indicate that managers in the manufacturing industry tend to report higher levels of workplace control compared with other employees.

Results for the Workplace Control Index were further analysed differentiating between those who reported having had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing). Injured and non-injured respondents from the electronics sector provided similar ratings on the Workplace Control Index (see Figure 34). Injured workers from the wine and brandy, and from the meat and livestock processing sectors rated their Workplace Control less favourably than those who had never been injured, with respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector providing the lowest ratings overall.

Implications

Research findings are clear about the relationship between low levels of autonomy and control and the increased risk of injury or illness, but it is recognised that manufacturing work conditions are not easily designed to achieve higher levels of autonomy. It is possible that pilot projects which model alternative approaches could be established in higher claiming manufacturing sectors to identify ways of addressing this challenge.

1.4 WORKPLACE CULTURE INDEX

The wine and brandy, and electronics sectors were again reasonably comparable for each item, although a trend can be seen for the electronics sector to achieve the highest scores for workplace culture across all items, with responses from the meat and livestock processing sector considerably poorer than the other sectors. It is evident that there was more variation between the sectors on items measuring support from workplace colleagues.

A number of researchers have identified workplace culture as being critical to the management of successful return-to-work (Roberts-Yates: 2003, 2006; Franche *et al*: 2004; Australian Institute for Primary Care: 2006; Amick *et al*: 2000). Among the workplace culture factors affecting return-to-work are the support offered by supervisors and co-workers, overall organisational climate, and workplace conflict and stress. One of the ten characteristics of healthy organisational practices identified by Polanyi (2004: 2–12) is workplace social support - social support and positive relationships have long been identified by researchers as critical to positive health, and the workplace is one setting where this is significant.

Results were also analysed by sector and management status. As with the Workplace Control Index, responses from the electronics sector on Workplace Culture were comparable with the wine and brandy sector, however, responses from the meat and livestock processing sector indicated lower levels of endorsement for items in this Index. There was also a definite trend for managers in the manufacturing industry to rate workplace control higher than other employees.

Comparing responses of those who have had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector, produced similar findings to other Indexes, with responses for the meat and livestock processing sector lower for Workplace Culture for both the injured and non-injured cohorts (see Figure 46). Those who had never been injured, compared with those who had been injured, rated their Workplace Culture higher for the wine and brandy, and meat and livestock processing sectors.

Implications

A number of researchers have identified workplace culture as being critical to the management of successful return-to-work and the factors of particular importance are the support offered by supervisors and co-workers, overall organisational climate, and workplace conflict and stress.

This means that the Meat and Livestock sector in particular face significant challenges, and across all three sectors, management and staff face the challenge of poor levels of trust and communication.

However, trust and communication horizontally – within work teams – emerges positively. In addition, there is a reasonable level of support by management in the in the Wine and Brandy and Electronics sectors. This provides a useful foundation from which to address the issues of vertical trust and communication.

1.5 WORKPLACE SAFETY INDEX

There were high levels of agreement in the electronics, and wine and brandy sectors that issues related to workplace safety are being addressed. Meat and livestock processing employees rated workplace safety as lower than the other two sectors on all fourteen items. Lowest endorsement for items in this Index was for employee familiarity with processes (see Figure 60), rights and obligations (see Figure 61) related to worker's compensation and the process of making claims (see Figure 59). Scores on these items were significantly lower compared to the scores on other aspects of workplace safety. It is worth noting that researchers have frequently identified the need for injured workers to be informed about the compensation process and its associated rights and responsibilities (Franché *et al*, 2004) and that RTW is significantly related to positive perceptions of methods of information dissemination to workers about their rights and entitlements (Kenny: 1998).

Results were analysed by sector and management status (see . These are shown in). As previously indicated ratings from the electronics sector on workplace safety were slightly more favourable than the wine and brandy, with both more favourable than responses from the meat and livestock processing sectors. Results also indicated that managers tended to see workplace safety more positively than other employees, and this finding was consistent for the three sectors.

Results were further analysed differentiating between respondents who have had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing). There were no major differences in responses on the Workplace Safety Index between respondents who had, and who had never been injured in the electronics, and wine and brandy sectors (see Figure 63). However, while never injured respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector were comparable to those from the other sectors, injured workers (from meat and livestock processing) rated workplace safety considerably lower.

A safe organisational climate (reflected in workers' perceptions of the priority given to safety in their workplace) was identified by Polanyi (2004: 2–12) as one of the ten characteristics of healthy organisational practices. Australian research has found that return-to-work is significantly related to higher perceived standards of occupational health and safety characteristics of workplaces (Kenny: 1998). An extensive literature review undertaken by the Canadian Institute for Work and Health (Franché *et al*: 2004) identified that particular RTW interventions are effective in **reducing the duration** of the period in which a worker remains away from the workplace due to illness and in **reducing the costs** associated with their health care and wage replacement. Among the factors they identified were the education of supervisors and managers, particularly about ergonomic requirements, safety issues and work disability management.

A major study identified 11 organisational policies and practices in companies with the **lowest workers' compensation claims** across 29 industries (including manufacturing). Three of those involved:

- Systematic monitoring and correction of unsafe employee behaviours.
- Safety training provided as part of orientation for new and transferred employees.
- Company leaders model and pay attention to safe behaviours (Amick *et al*: 2000).

A well structured research study by Shaw *et al* (2006) in the US food processing industry found that when supervisors in the meat cutting and packing sector were trained appropriately, disability compensation claims were reduced by 47% and active lost-time claims by 18%. The study demonstrated the importance of supervisor training in reducing injury rates and enabling timely and effective return to work. It has application across industries but specific relevance to workplaces with high physical work demands – common in the manufacturing industry.

Implications

Researchers have frequently identified the need for injured workers to be informed about the compensation process and its associated rights and responsibilities and that RTW is significantly related to positive perceptions of methods of information dissemination to workers about their rights and entitlements. The findings from the AISR study point to the need for workplace OHS strategies designed to address this information need, and to find a way of presenting what is complex content in a way that workers of all education and literacy levels can comprehend.

The other area requiring attention concerns the training of supervisors, particularly in the Meat and Livestock Processing sector. International research has identified that education of supervisors and managers - particularly about ergonomic requirements, safety issues and work disability management - is effective in reducing the duration of the period in which a worker remains away from the workplace due to illness and in reducing the costs associated with their health care and wage replacement. Companies with the lowest workers' compensation claims undertake systematic monitoring and correction of unsafe employee behaviours; safety training as part of orientation for new and transferred employees; and company leaders model and pay attention to safe behaviours.

1.6 WORKPLACE RESPONSE INDEX

This Index showed the least differentiation between the three sectors of the manufacturing industry, with the meat and livestock sector comparable to the other two sectors on many items. Of note, all sectors rated *encouraging employees to notify supervisors as soon as possible* (seen in more detail in Figure 66), *being given alternative duties* (see Figure 73) or *modified or restricted duties* (see Figure 72) at higher than 4.4 overall. Workers rated the *communication about treatment* lowest of the items on this scale (see Figure 65), indicating this could be an area to be targeted for improvement.

Based on their comprehensive review of the research literature (Franche *et al*: 2004), the Canadian Institute for Work and Health (2007) compiled a set of seven *Principles for Successful Return to Work*, each with a justification based on the research evidence. Three of these are relevant to the workplace's responsiveness to injury or illness, and involve the appointment of a Return to Work Coordinator, effective communication between employers and medical and rehabilitation providers, and the offer of work accommodation to enable return to work. There is widespread agreement in the research literature that the presence of a *Return to Work Coordinator* is critical to facilitating RTW (Australian Institute for Primary Care: 2006; Franche *et al*: 2004) and this person also supports effective communication between the different groups involved in the RTW process.

Results were analysed by sector and management status (Figure 78) and while the trend for lower ratings from non-management employees remained, the difference between these groups was small. Moreover, responses from all three sectors were consistent, ranging from a low of 4.1, for non-managerial employees from the meat and livestock processing sectors, to a high of 4.6 for managers from the electronics sector.

Results were further analysed on the basis of previous workplace injury by sector and there was little difference across the three sectors. However, injured employees from the meat and livestock processing sector tended to rate workplace responsiveness less favourably than those who had not been injured (see Figure 79).

Implications

The findings on this sub-Index are the most positive and therefore, require the least attention. However, improving communication about treatment is one possible area requiring attention, and the design of specific processes to ensure that this occurs by design, rather than by chance.

Research findings reinforce the importance of the appointment of a Return to Work Coordinator, and effective communication between employers and medical and rehabilitation providers. The Return to Work Coordinator also facilitates effective communication between the different groups involved in the RTW process. Therefore, the design of appropriate processes to support communication about treatment could possibly be addressed in South Australia by the RTW Inspectorate and the RTW Coordinator network.

1.7 ORGANISATIONAL RTW STRATEGY

A total of 171 managers from the three sectors studied provided information about their organisation's return to work strategy (this represents 14.4% of all responses). Seventy-one percent of managers from the electronics sector, 90.4% from the wine and brandy sector, and 93.3% from the meat and livestock processing sector reported their organisation had a RTW strategy to help injured workers (see Figure 80).

Managers who reported their organisation had a RTW strategy also responded to questions on the specific contents of the strategy (see Figure 81), the usefulness of the strategy (Figure 82), and the significance of barriers to RTW (Figure 83). As a general rule, managers from the wine and brandy sector were more likely to report the incorporation of the listed RTW strategies, while managers from the meat and livestock processing sector reported using the strategies less frequently in their organisations. Managers were less likely to identify strategies directed at *workplace redesign to accommodate injuries*, or *contact with colleagues to encourage support*, within their organisations (regardless of their sector), than other RTW strategies. Managers from all sectors reported that the RTW strategies were quite to very useful in most instances.

Managers reported *negative attitudes on the part of the worker* and an *insufficient knowledge of injury or illness and how to manage it* as the most significant barriers to RTW.

Implications

The research literature identifies the importance of 'timely' as opposed to 'premature' return to work in order to sustain that return. Although it is important for injured workers to return to work as soon as possible, it is equally important that they do not aggravate their injury by returning before they are ready.

Feedback from injured workers has highlighted the importance of both effective treatment and being given sufficient time to recover as critical to an effective return to work. Managers' feedback, apart from identifying negative attitudes on the part of the worker as a key RTW barrier, also points to the importance of them having sufficient knowledge of injury or illness and how to manage this in the workplace. It is possible that workers will be given sufficient recovery time if managers are trained to better understand injury management, including recovery. Return to Work Coordinators also have a critical role to play in developing processes that support accurate and timely communication about treatment interventions, and which support communication between all RTW stakeholders. In other words, effective RTW rests on multiple strategies and collaboration with multiple stakeholders.

1.8 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The findings from the *Return-to-Work* project survey indicate the need for action in a number of areas, but also provides some encouraging results. These have been summarised in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: Encouraging results and areas needing attention

Encouraging results	Attention needed
⇒ All three sectors rated their workplace <i>responsiveness to injury or illness</i> positively.	In terms of preventive approaches to health and safety, and RTW, more attention should be paid to <i>Working Conditions</i> and <i>Workplace Control/Autonomy</i> .
⇒ The Electronics and Wine and Brandy sectors were positive in rating their capacity to achieve effective RTW	There is a need to pilot approaches to these 2 issues that also address manufacturing sector specific demands.
Workplace Conditions	
Workplace Conditions were rated positively overall, and for most of the components of this Index	The least positive assessment relates to <i>extremes of workplace temperature</i>
The Electronics sector was rated as having the safest Working Conditions	The Meat and Livestock Processing sector has been rated as having the least safe Working Conditions
Over 40% of respondents from each sector reported they were never in <i>skin contact with chemicals</i> and more than 40% never experienced <i>undue vibration from equipment</i> .	The Meat and Livestock Processing sector rated low on having <i>slippery floors and other fall inducing conditions</i> , as well as <i>extremes of workplace temperature and high noise levels</i> .
Workplace Control	
	Workplace Control & Autonomy received the lowest ratings across the 5 sub-Indexes
The Wine and Brandy sector was rated as having the <i>highest</i> level of Workplace Control	The Meat and Livestock Processing sector was rated as having the <i>lowest</i> level of Workplace Control
The Wine and Brandy sector had more <i>control over managing their own break times</i> than the other two sectors	The <i>capacity to adapt working hours, & to choose when to take a break</i> received very low ratings in the Meat and Livestock Processing sector
Workplace Culture	
	On all dimensions of workplace culture, the Meat and Livestock Processing sector received lower ratings than the other two sectors
Becoming ill or injured is likely to bring about a <i>supportive response from colleagues and work teams</i>	
<i>Communication and levels of trust within work teams</i> achieved relatively high ratings	Across the three sectors, <i>trust between managers and other employees, and the effectiveness of communication between managers and staff and the incidence of bullying</i> received lowest ratings
In the Wine and Brandy and Electronics sectors, <i>management are considered to be supportive</i> , and employees feel they can raise concerns with them when they become ill or injured	
In the Wine and Brandy and Electronics sectors, <i>workplace bullying</i> was less likely to be identified	<i>Workplace bullying</i> was more likely to be identified in the Meat and Livestock Processing sector
Workplace Safety	
There were high levels of agreement in the Electronics , and Wine and Brandy sectors that issues related to workplace safety are being addressed	Lowest ratings were given for <i>employee familiarity with processes, rights and obligations related to worker's compensation and making claims</i>
	Meat and Livestock Processing employees rated workplace safety lower on all items of this Index
Workplace Response to Injury or Illness	
The three sectors were similar in their ratings of this dimension.	
Very high ratings, across all 3 sectors, were given to <i>timely notification of supervisors, and being given alternative or modified duties</i>	Lowest ratings were given to <i>communication about treatment</i>
All 3 sectors rated the <i>appointment of a RTW Coordinator</i> at '4' which is very positive	

2.1 PROJECT PURPOSE AND AIMS

The return to work of an injured worker is influenced by a range of factors – some that relate to the worker, some to the environment outside of the workplace, some to the effectiveness of medical and rehabilitation interventions, and some to the workplace itself. *WorkCoverSA* commissioned the Australian Institute for Social Research (AISR) at The University of Adelaide to undertake a research project designed to increase understanding of factors in the workplace that affect the achievement of positive return to work outcomes and identify potential areas to influence and undertake interventions.

This included the development of an Index to measure workplace capacity to achieve effective return to work (RTW), initially within one industry and subsequently applying this across various industry sectors. The survey instrument developed – The *Workplace Return to Work Index* -is designed to be repeated in order to measure change over time within organisations and collectively in the sector, and to be applied to other industry sectors. The survey instrument used was originally developed and piloted within the South Australian aged care sector. As part of the current project, the survey has been tailored to meet the needs of the Manufacturing Industry, within which the wine and brandy, electronics and meat and livestock processing sectors operate. It is intended that the information obtained will assist *WorkCover SA* and employers to take a more proactive approach to enhancing workforce participation at all stages that include return-to-work, for the benefit of both employers and employees.

In 2006-07, the South Australian Manufacturing Industry employed approximately 85000 staff across a range of broad sectors (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2007, 2009). Within these sectors there is considerable diversity in terms of the nature of the work (which ranges from manual to ‘high tech’); the risk of injury and incidence of workers’ compensation claims; and the stability of the sector within the SA economy. To reflect this diversity, three sectors have been chosen to represent **high** (meat and livestock processing), **moderate** (wine and brandy) and **low** (electronics) risk of injury and claims and to enable identification of similarities and differences in workplace practice and culture across the Industry and between the sectors.

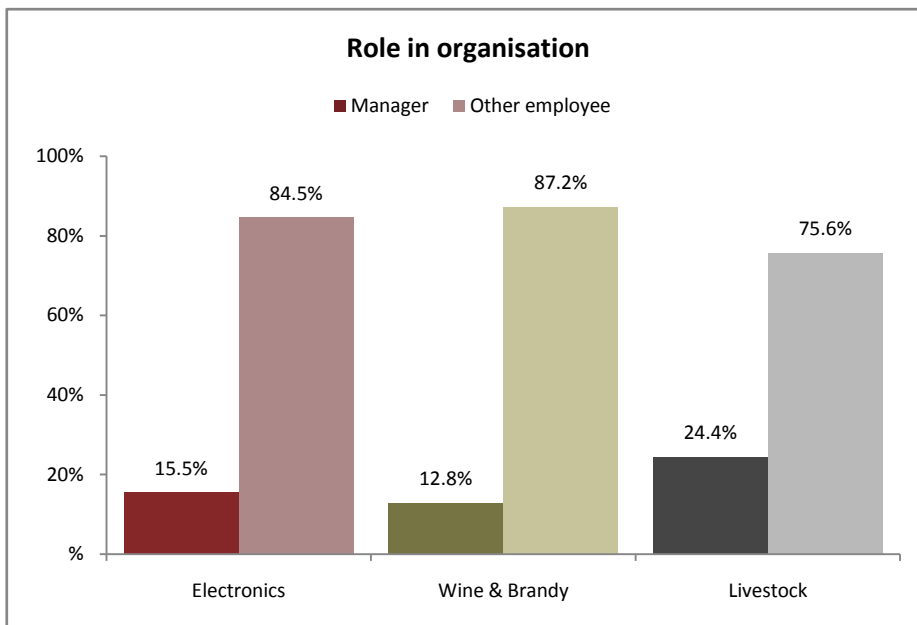
In this context, this report has been prepared to provide a summary of responses from the **1,191** contributors from the electronics, wine and brandy and meat and livestock processing sectors. The project methodology, survey design and process are detailed in Appendix A.

2.2 PARTICIPANTS

A total of **5,511** manufacturing sector staff from 16 organisations were provided with paper or online versions of the survey and invited to participate, with responses received from **1,191**. This represents a participation rate of **22.6%** of all potential respondents. The seven participating organisations from the **wine and brandy sector** had a **very good response rate of 36.7%**. Four organisations from the **electronics sector** agreed to participate with an **excellent response rate of 45.5%**. The participation rate from the five **meat and livestock processing** organisations **was low** with only **4.4%** of people invited returning a completed survey. *Given the low number of responses in the meat and livestock processing sector, results from this sector should be viewed cautiously, and considered indicative.*

The proportion of managers and other employees responding to the survey from each sector is shown in Figure 4, with respondents from the meat and livestock sector more likely to be managers than were respondents from the other two sectors. Within the electronics sector, most responses were from machine or assembly workers (25.4%) and technicians or technical assistants (17.7%), whereas administrative, finance or office staff (14.9%) and forepersons, supervisors, team leaders or line managers (13.9% each) were most common in the wine and brandy sector. Responses from the meat and livestock processing sector were most likely to have been provided by departmental managers (9.2%) and knife hands (8.4%).

Figure 4: Role in the organisation

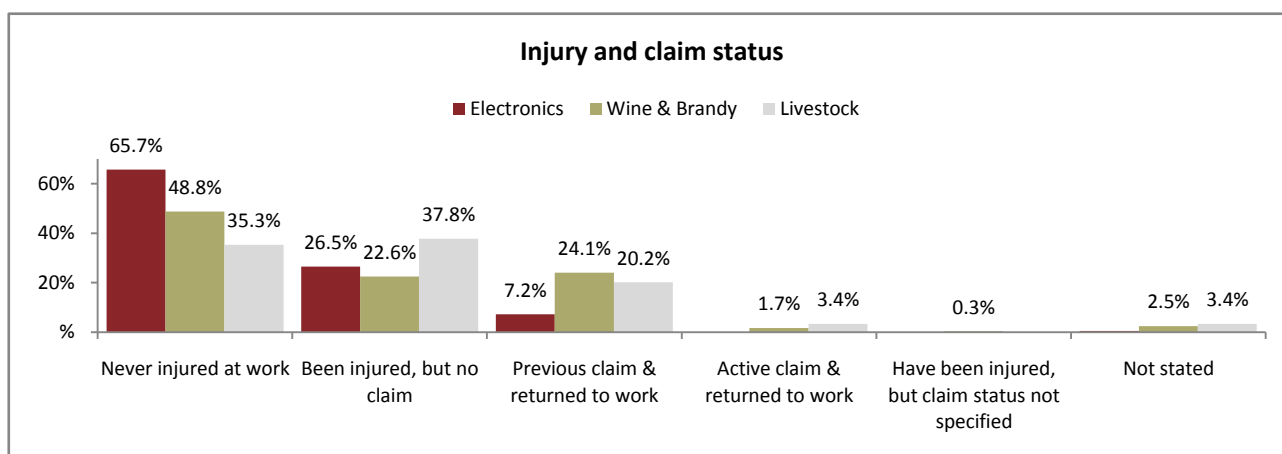


Further information about participants and their demographic characteristics are shown in Appendix B.

2.3 WORKPLACE INJURY

In line with broader industry trends, two-thirds of employees in the electronics sector and half in the wine and brandy sector reported that they had never been injured at work (see Figure 5). This contrasts to the meat and livestock processing sector, where only a third (35.3%) of respondents reported never having been injured, with a similar proportion having been injured without filing a claim. A lower proportion (around one quarter) of participants from the electronics and wine and brandy sector reported they had been injured at work but had not made a claim. Very few respondents had an active claim regardless of the sector they worked in. However, as the survey was distributed from the workplace, it is likely that employees who were on a claim (and not engaged in the workplace) did not receive the survey¹.

Figure 5: Workplace injury and claim status



How important is timely reporting?

The research literature confirms the need for workplace cultures that encourage timely reporting by promoting a climate of safety, trust and support and education of staff in injury prevention and management (Pransky *et al*: 1999; Aust Inst for Primary Care: 2006; Roberts-Yates: 2006; Franche: 2004; Daniels & Marlow: 2005). Under-reporting is linked to poor safety cultures and inadequate reporting systems and processes, a low level of commitment to safety by management and a lack of knowledge of reporting requirements, and under-developed workforce training and development processes. A review of the literature on reporting of workplace injury (Daniels & Marlow: 2005) identified a trend for work-related musculoskeletal disorders to be heavily under-reported, and for a poor safety culture with inadequate systems for reporting and insufficient management commitment to early reporting to be associated with under-reporting. Their review also identified fear of reprisal, not wishing to be labelled as a complainer, feeling that suffering from symptoms is a sign of weakness, and financial loss as factors influencing under-reporting.

A study focusing on a manufacturing plant in the US with 8,200 employees identified a significant level of under reporting, with only 5% of the 30% of workers with injuries requiring formal reporting having done so. Apart from an unrealistic goal set by the company's safety department regarding injury levels, workers also did not report injuries for fear of losing pay, overtime, respect, bonuses and promotion. However, as the researchers noted, not reporting injuries can prevent early identification and treatment, which can lead to greater disability and greater costs in the long term (Pransky *et al*: 1999).

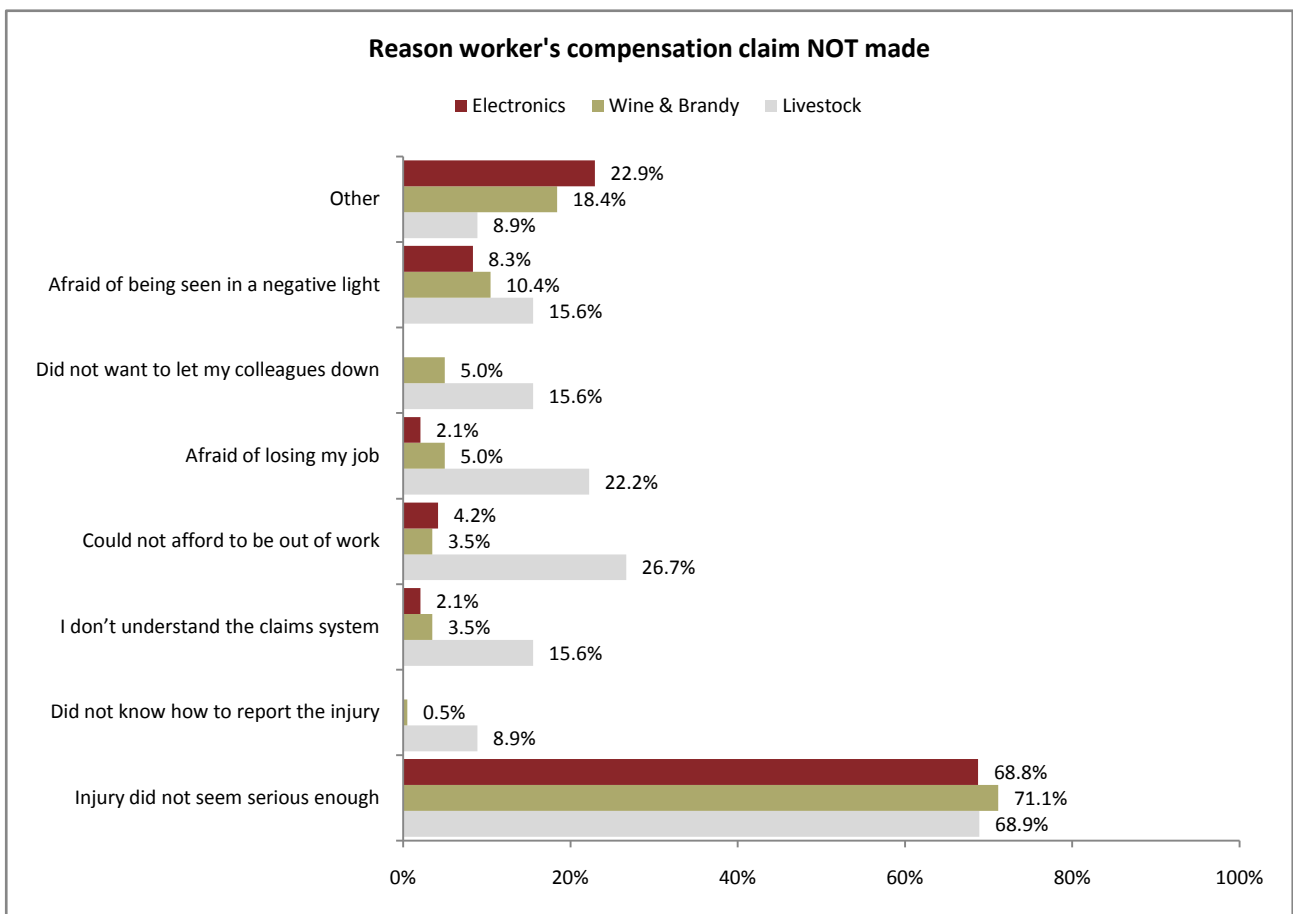
The majority of workers who did *not* make a claim reported this was because the injury did not seem serious enough (see Figure 6). Those working in meat and livestock processing responded more often that they did not know how to report a

¹ Although AISR did request that the survey be mailed to those on an active claim.

workplace injury, they did not understand the claims system, they were afraid of losing their job or that they could not afford to be out of work. There were also a higher proportion of respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector who reported they did not make a claim as they did not want to let down their colleagues.

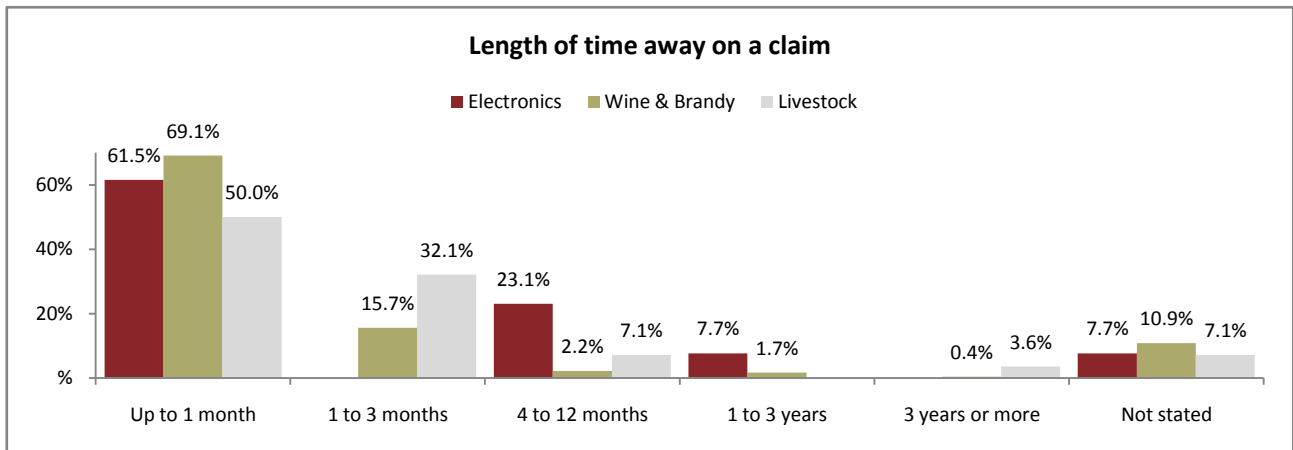
Of the 52 individuals who reported an 'other' reason (across the three sectors), most described minor complaints that were quickly and easily resolved with their organisation paying associated medical costs. A number of respondents were concerned about it affecting their future work opportunities, and others indicated the incident occurred a significant time ago and/or was in a different work place.

Figure 6: Reason claim NOT made for injury



In most cases injured workers returned to work within a month (see Figure 7), though individuals in the meat and livestock processing sector were less likely to return within this time period. A third of meat and livestock processing workers returned to work one to three months after the injury, which was much higher than the other sectors. Those working in electronics were more likely than workers in the other sectors to return to work four to 12 months after their injury, although with the low number of injured workers in this sector, this equated to only three workers.

Figure 7: Length of time injured workers were away on a claim



The research literature identifies the importance of ‘timely’ as opposed to ‘premature’ return to work in order to sustain that return (Kenny: 1998). Although it is important for injured workers to return to work as soon as possible, it is equally important that they do not aggravate their injury by returning before they are ready. Our study found that injured workers consistently reported that **effective treatment from health providers**, and **being given enough time off to recover** were the *most useful* things facilitating their return to work after injury (see Figure 8).

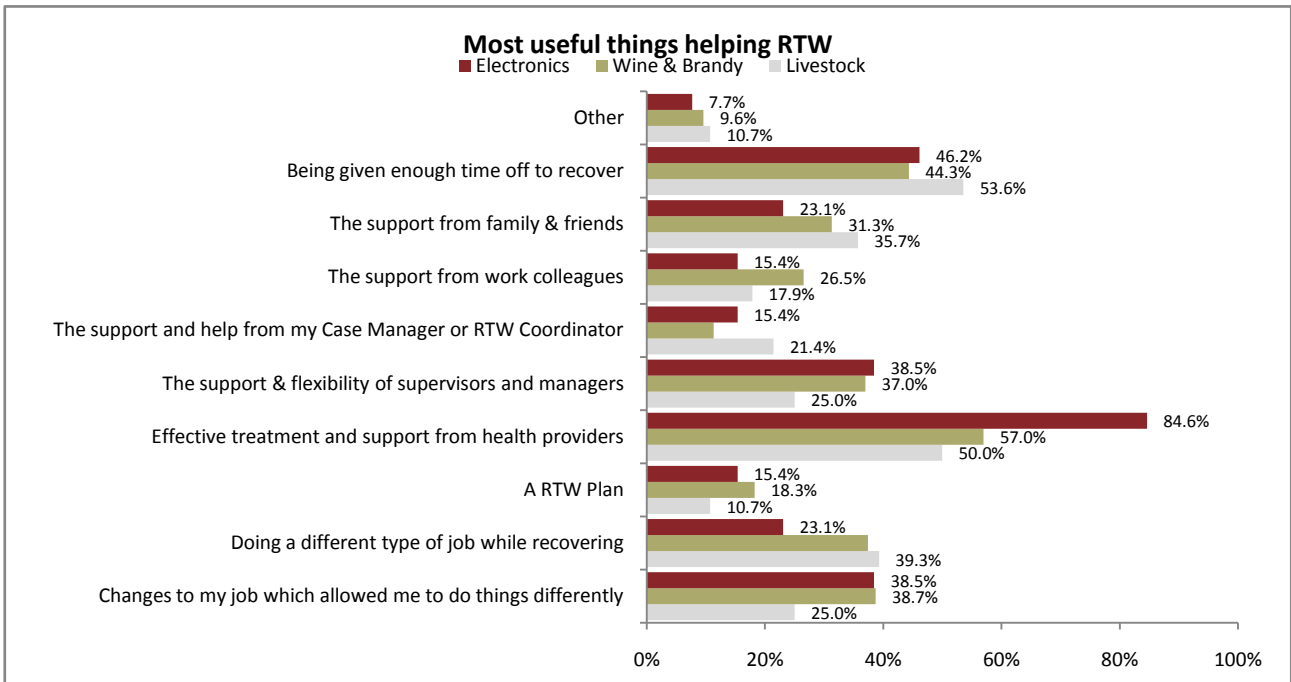
‘Management exerts pressure on the workers to return to work too soon; they insist when visiting the doctors the worker take a company form regarding what the company wants and expects to the point of expecting the doctor to comply as they are then led to believe the patient may be in agreement with this. I do not believe this to be a part of the Workcover system and is unethical. In general the system is tipped against the worker especially when long term injury is involved’.

Wine and Brandy sector

‘The key challenge is to ensure that the injured person is cared for through the process... Not knowing the treatment process or delays does nothing for the motivation of the employer or injured person’.

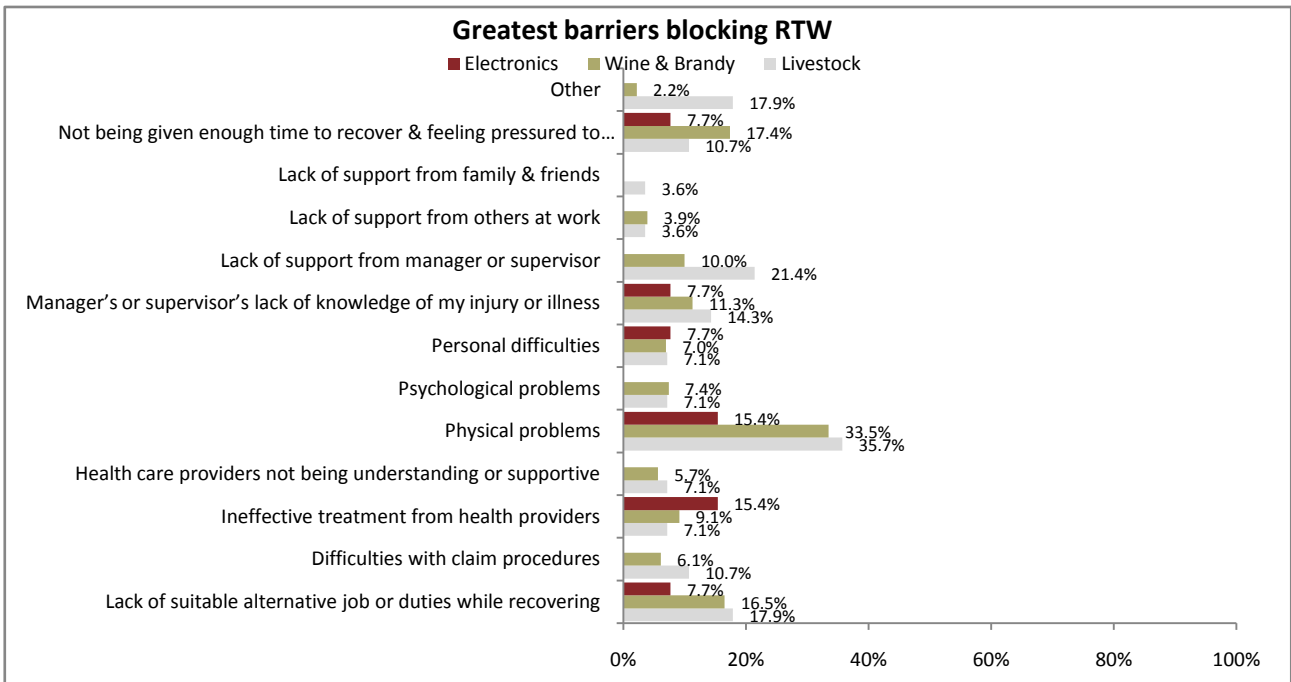
Wine and Brandy sector

Figure 8: Most useful things identified by injured workers as helping their return to work



Ongoing physical problems were identified as the greatest barrier to returning to work after an injury, particularly in the wine and brandy sector and meat and livestock processing sectors (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Greatest barriers, identified by injured workers, blocking RTW



2.4 RATING THE WORKPLACE – THE FIVE RETURN TO WORK INDEXES

2.4.1 OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS ACROSS THE INDEXES

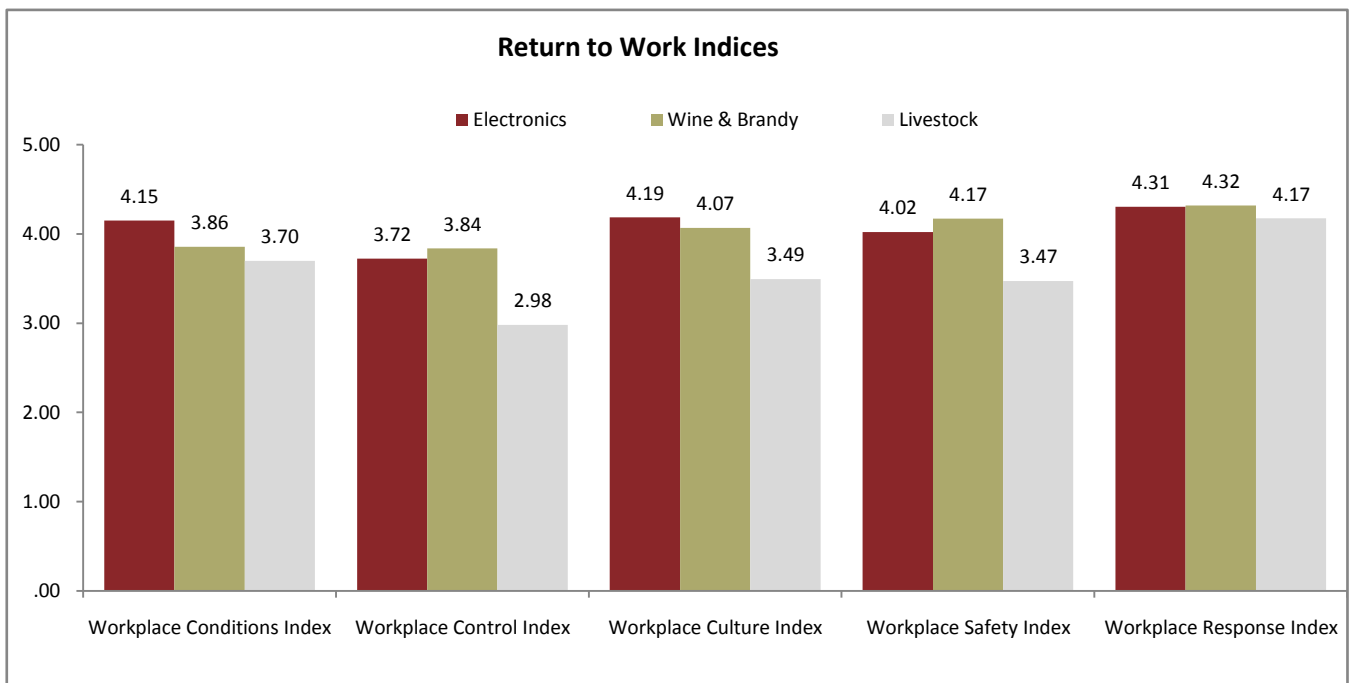
The ratings achieved on the *Return to Work Workplace Index* represent the employing organisations' capacity to design and operate the workplace to prevent or minimise work-related injury or illness and to achieve timely and effective return to work outcomes (as perceived by both the employees and managers).

A note on response rates

*Given the low number of responses (and participation rate) in the meat and livestock processing sector, we suggest that results from this sector should be viewed cautiously, and considered indicative. We have refrained from reporting statistical significance due to unequal variances between the three sectors and considerable variation in participation rates between the sectors. However, responses do appear to be consistent with expectations. There is a trend for the **low** risk electronics sector to rate their responses higher than the responses of workers in the **moderate** risk wine and brandy sector, which in turn had rated their responses more favourably than the **high** risk meat and livestock processing sector.*

Figure 10 compares the mean (average) results of the five Return to Work Indexes for each of the three sectors surveyed. **Overall, workers reported lowest agreements with statements about control over their work.** Meat and livestock processing received lower scores on all indexes measured, particularly in the areas of workplace control, culture and safety².

Figure 10: Return to Work Indexes for the manufacturing sector

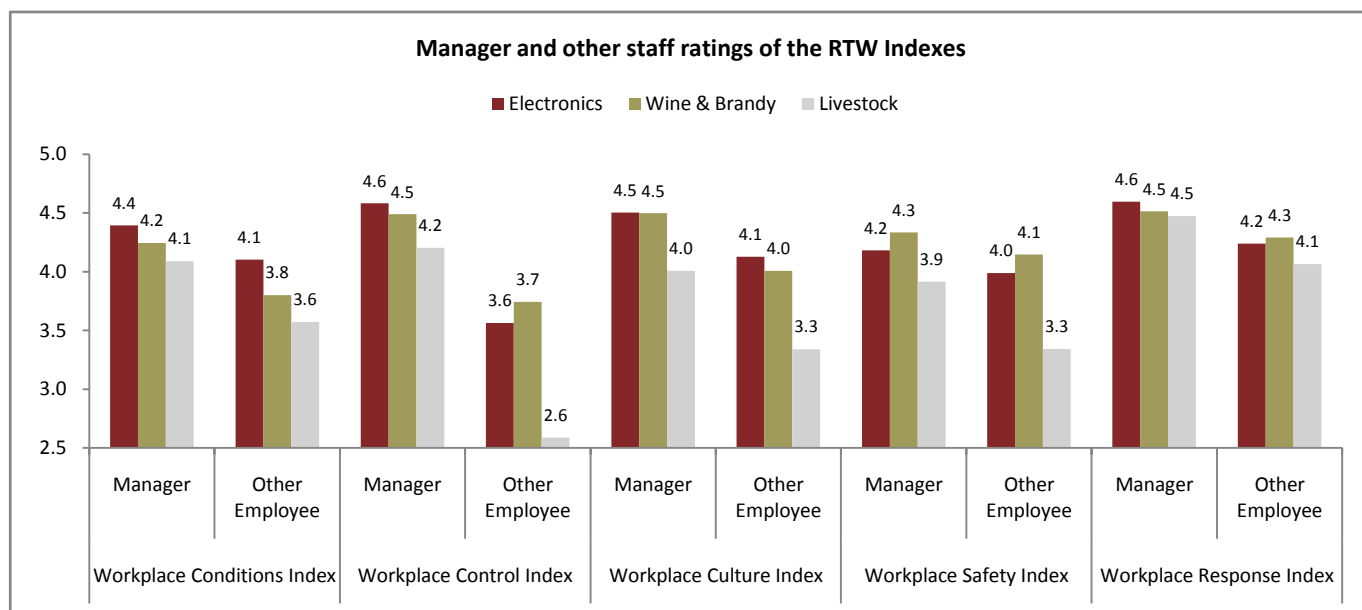


² Noting that given the low number of responses in the meat and livestock processing sector, results from this sector should be viewed cautiously, and considered indicative.

2.4.1.1 MANAGERS AND OTHER STAFF PERSPECTIVES

Ratings applied by Managers were compared with those provided by other employees (for a summary of results see Figure 11)³, with Managers across the three sectors being more positive about workplace conditions, workplace control and autonomy, workplace culture and workplace safety. On the fifth index, workplace response to injury or illness, the trend for lower ratings from non-management employees remained, but the difference between these groups was small.

Figure 11: Manager and other staff ratings of the 5 Return to Work Indexes

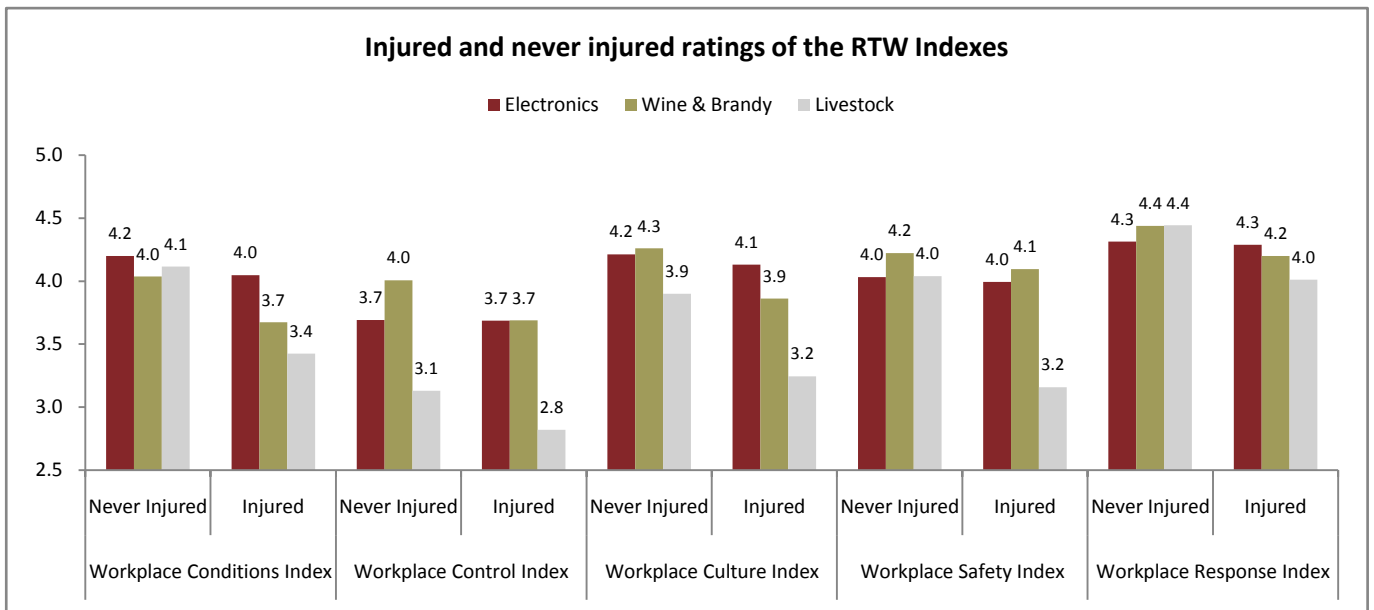


2.4.1.2 COMPARING INJURED AND NEVER INJURED WORKERS

Findings were also analysed on the basis of those who had been injured and those who had never been injured. As Figure 12 indicates, there was a distinct trend for those who had been injured to rate their workplace more negatively in the meat and livestock processing sector, on all five sub-Indexes. In the other two sectors, ratings were similar regardless of injury or the absence of it, with the exception of Workplace Conditions which was rated more negatively by those who had experienced workplace injury.

³ Further details are shown in the sections below.

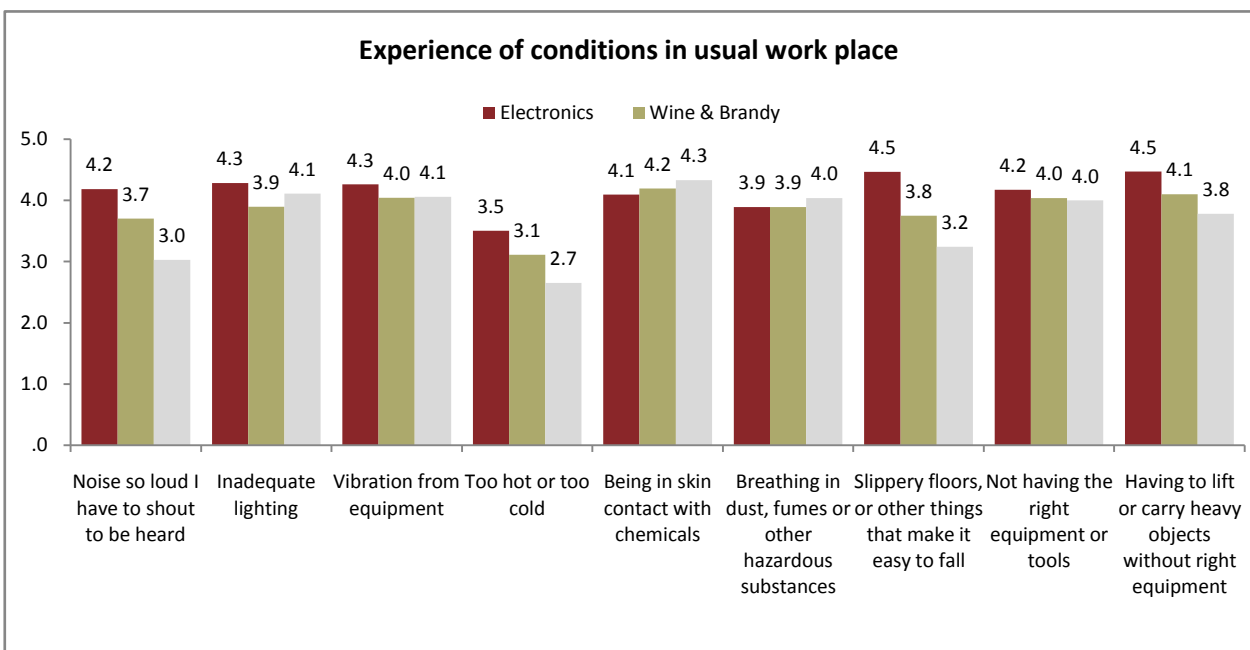
Figure 12: Injured and never injured ratings of the 5 Return to Work Indexes



2.4.2 THE WORKPLACE CONDITIONS INDEX

Nine items contributed toward the overall **Workplace Conditions Index** (see Figure 10). Mean scores for individual items contributing to the Workplace Conditions Index are shown in Figure 13, with item frequencies shown in the bar charts that follow. Respondents were asked to rate their level of exposure to a range of negatively worded questions which they rated from 1 (always experience) to 5 (never experience). Therefore a **high score on this scale indicates that the 'negative' experience is uncommon.**

Figure 13: Items contributing to the Workplace Conditions Index



Noise levels too loud to communicate easily were of particular concern for the meat and livestock processing sector; one third reported that situation as always or often; with ‘sometimes’ reported by a further 29 percent. That sector is dominated by moving machinery. To a lesser extent, the wine and brandy sector also rated the noise levels too loud to communicate easily (see Figure 14). These findings reinforce the ongoing need to reduce noise levels and provide protective equipment.

Figure 14: Responses to *noise so loud I have to shout* item for the manufacturing industry

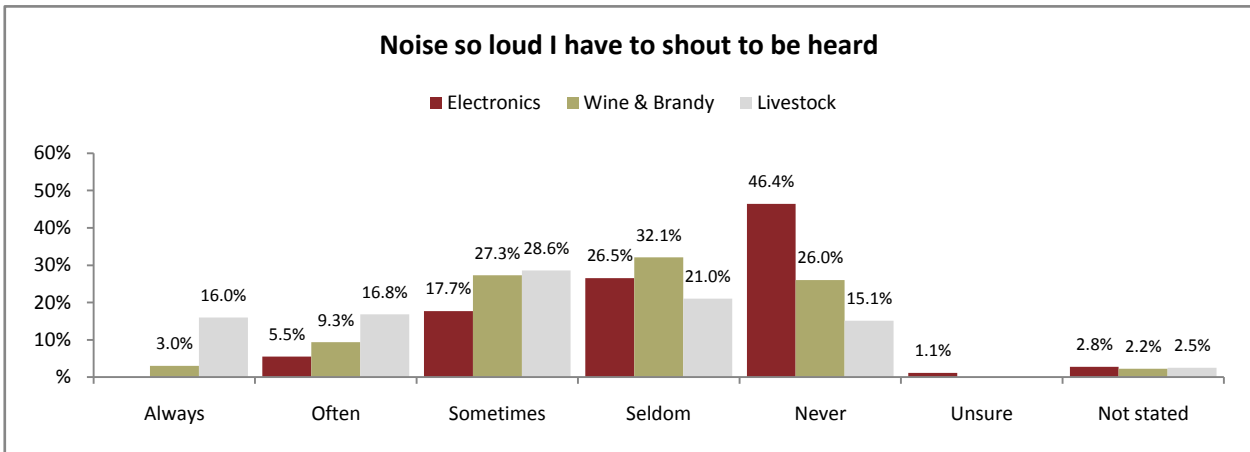
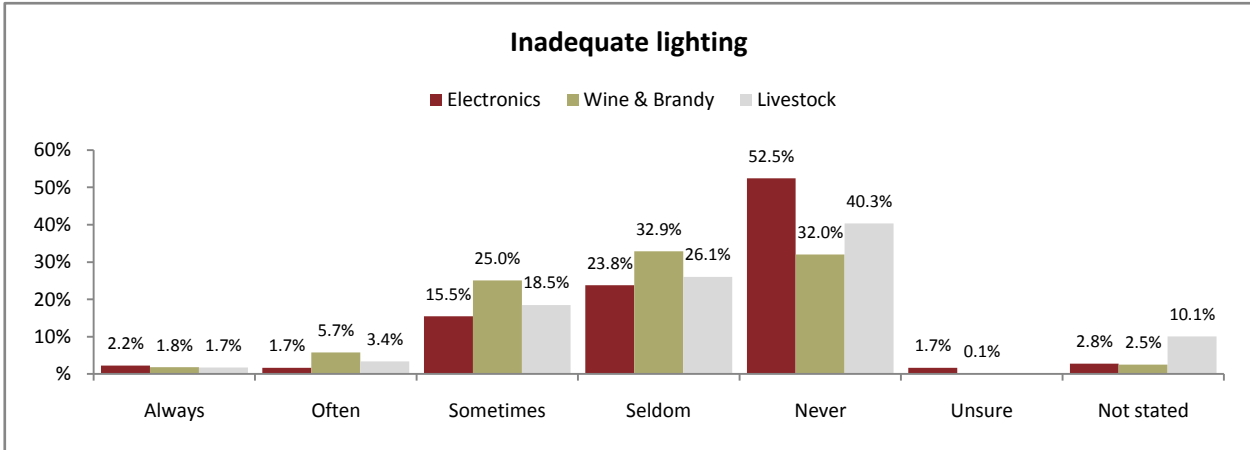
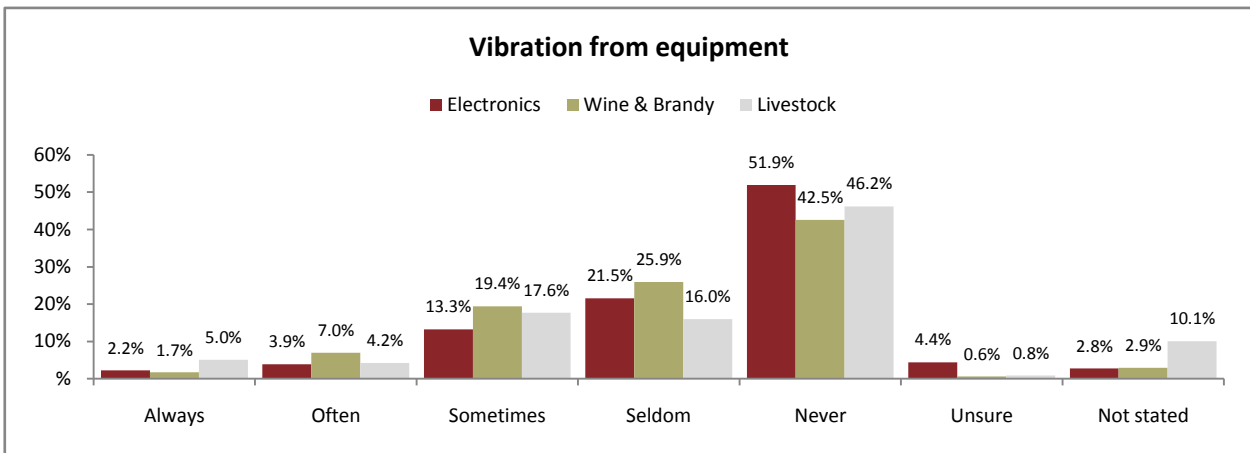


Figure 15: Responses to *inadequate lighting* item for the manufacturing industry



On a positive note, more than 40% never experienced undue vibration from equipment (see Figure 16) and over 40% of respondents from each sector reported they were never in skin contact with chemicals (see Figure 18).

Figure 16: Responses to vibration from equipment item for the manufacturing industry



Manufacturing staff consistently rated their workplace temperature more poorly than other items on the Workplace Conditions Index (ie their workplace was seen as too hot or too cold at least some of the time). This is most evident for the meat and livestock processing sector (see Figure 17) and is consistent with the large scale refrigeration required to maintain lower temperatures for processing and at the other extreme the hot water essential for hygiene.

Figure 17: Responses to too hot or too cold item for the manufacturing industry

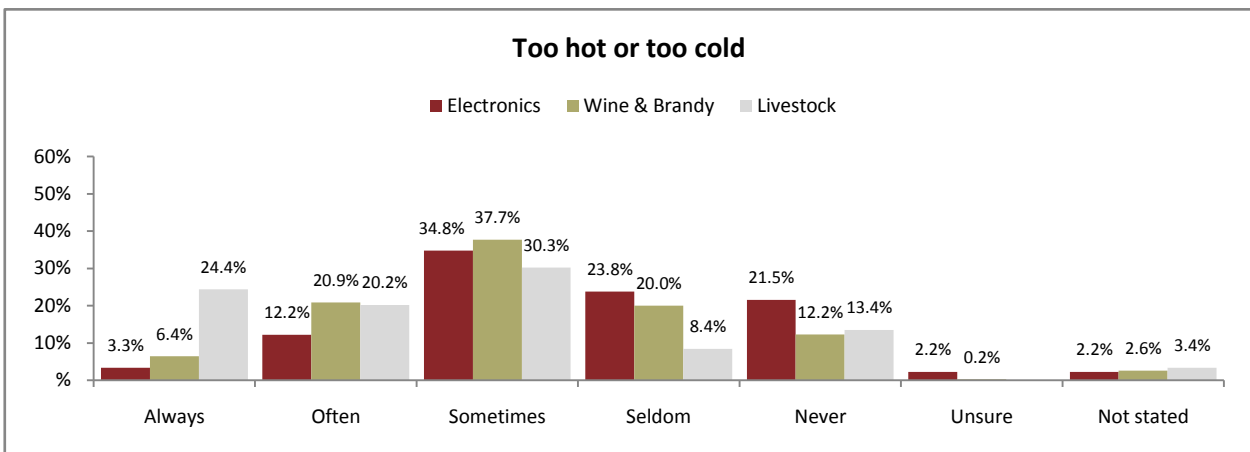


Figure 18: Responses to *being in skin contact with chemicals* item for the manufacturing industry

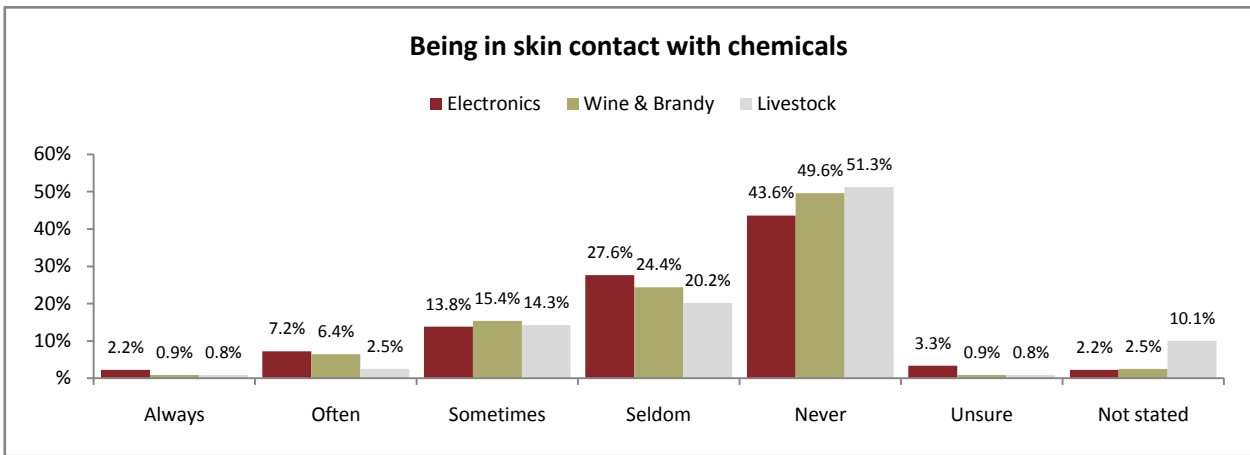
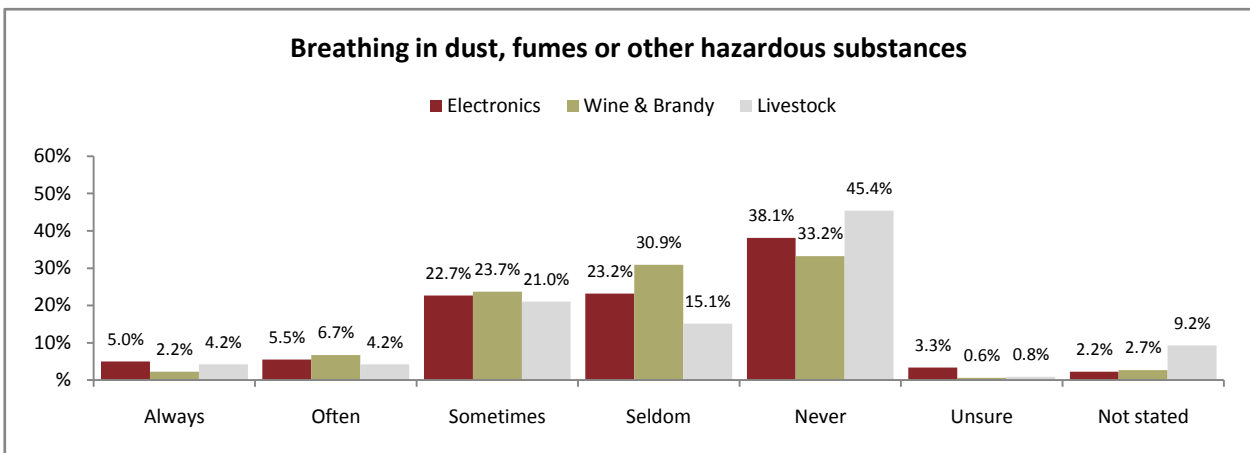


Figure 19: Responses to *breathing in dust, fumes, or other hazardous substances* item for the manufacturing industry



At least one worker from the wine and brandy sector had a range of complaints about workplace conditions, and the lack of organisational activity when complaints were made:

'...Inadequate lighting - constant requests for globe replacement goes unheeded. Workplace too hot or too cold - from -7 degC to +50 degC. Breathing in dust; fumes or other hazards.... Having to lift or carry heavy objects - not uncommon for the 15m lifts to be out of service for months... If employees raise issues about workplace safety; they are listened to - listened to but nothing done....'

Wine and Brandy sector

Figure 20: Responses to *slippery floors or other things that make it easy to fall* item for the manufacturing industry

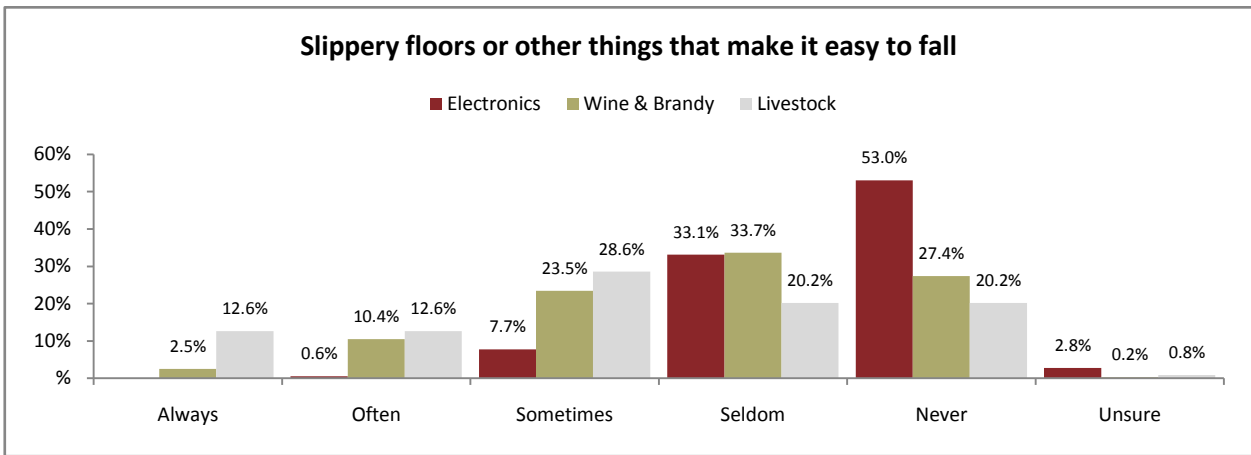


Figure 21: Responses to *not having the right tools or equipment* item for the manufacturing industry

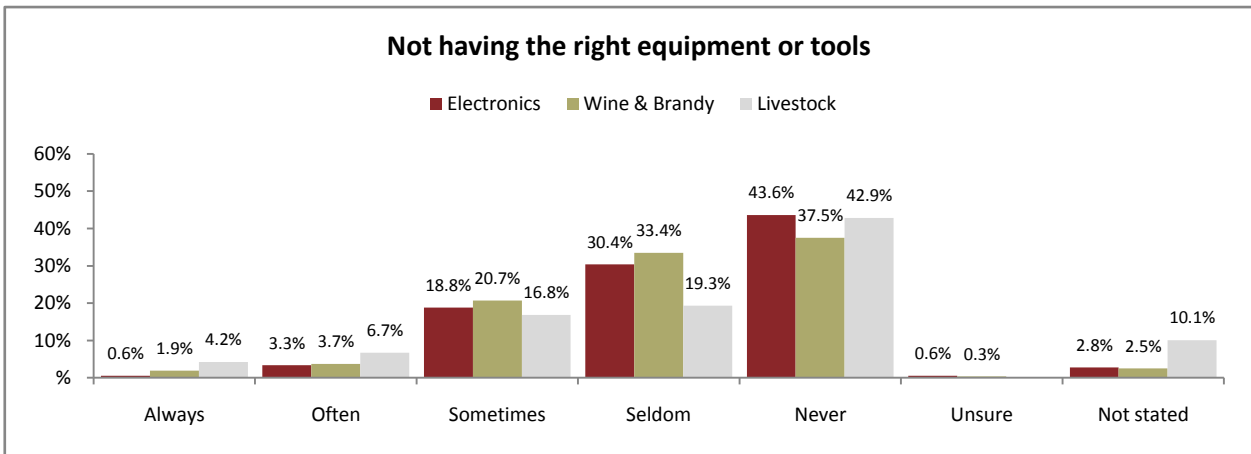
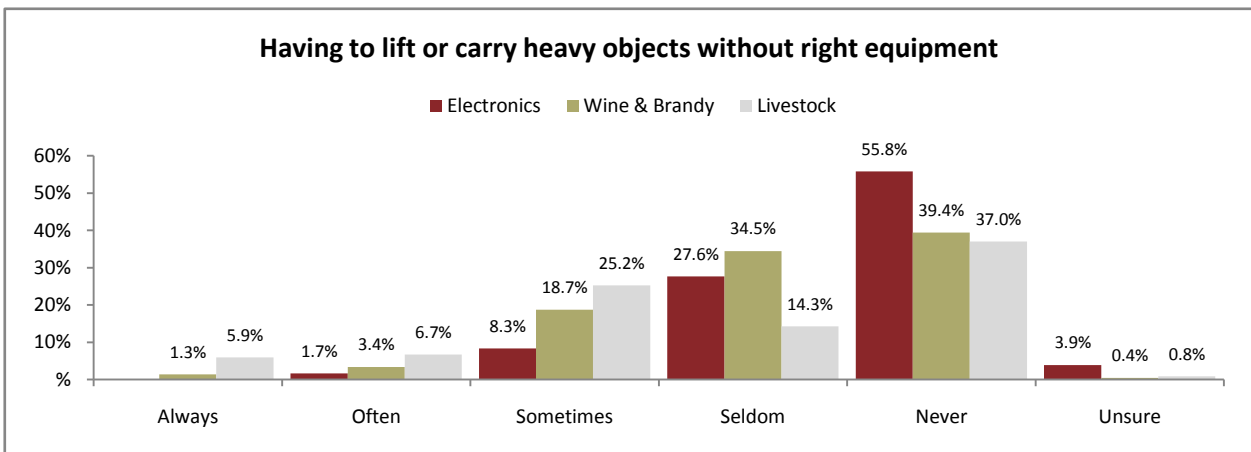


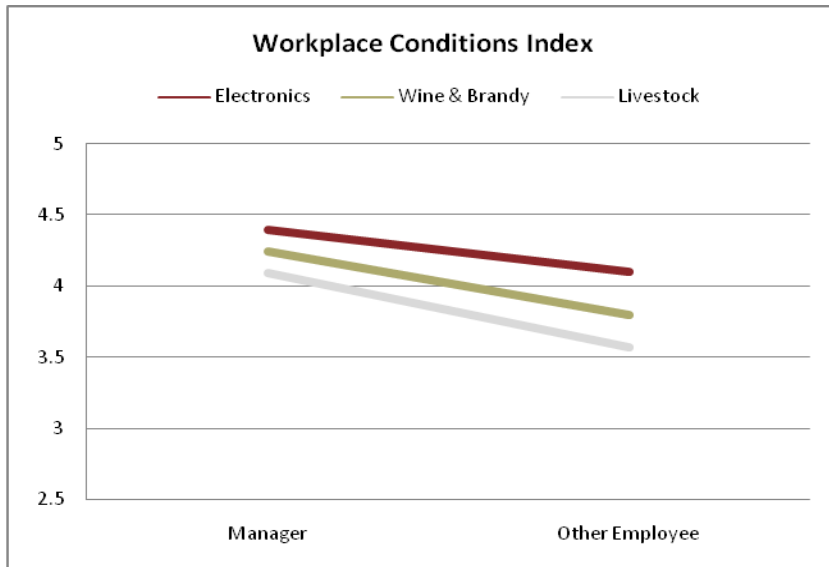
Figure 22: Responses to *having to lift or carry heavy objects without the right equipment* item for the manufacturing industry



2.4.2.1 WORKPLACE CONDITIONS INDEX - MANAGERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Further analysis by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and management status (manager, other employees) are shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23: Differences between sectors, and managerial vs other employees on average Workplace Conditions scores



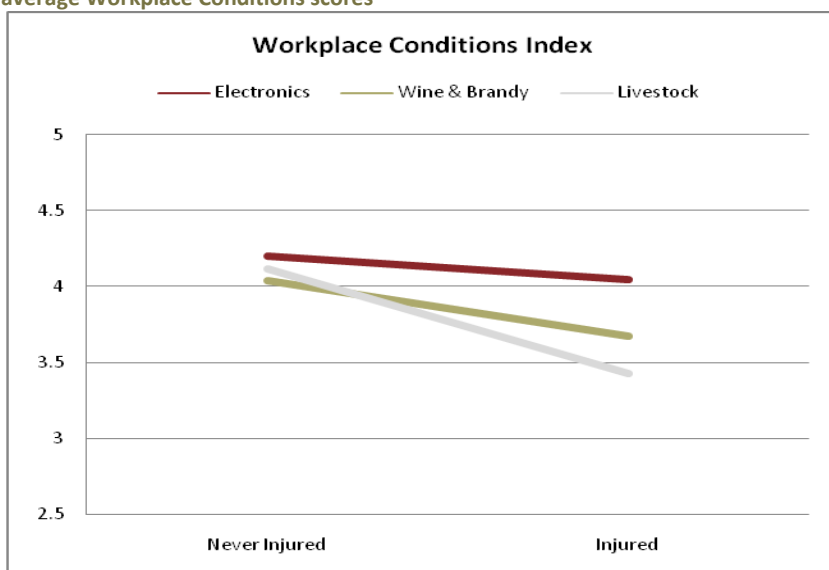
Results show:

- Workplace conditions were rated most favourably by electronics sector, then the wine and brandy sector, and then the meat and livestock processing sector.
- Managers across the three sectors tended to report workplace conditions more positively than other employees.

2.4.2.2 WORKPLACE CONDITIONS INDEX – INJURED AND NEVER INJURED

Further analysis on Workplace Conditions explored respondents who reported a previous workplace injury (the injured includes those that did and did not lodge a *WorkCover SA* claim) and by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and is shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24: Difference between sectors, and never injured vs injured workers on average Workplace Conditions scores



Results show:

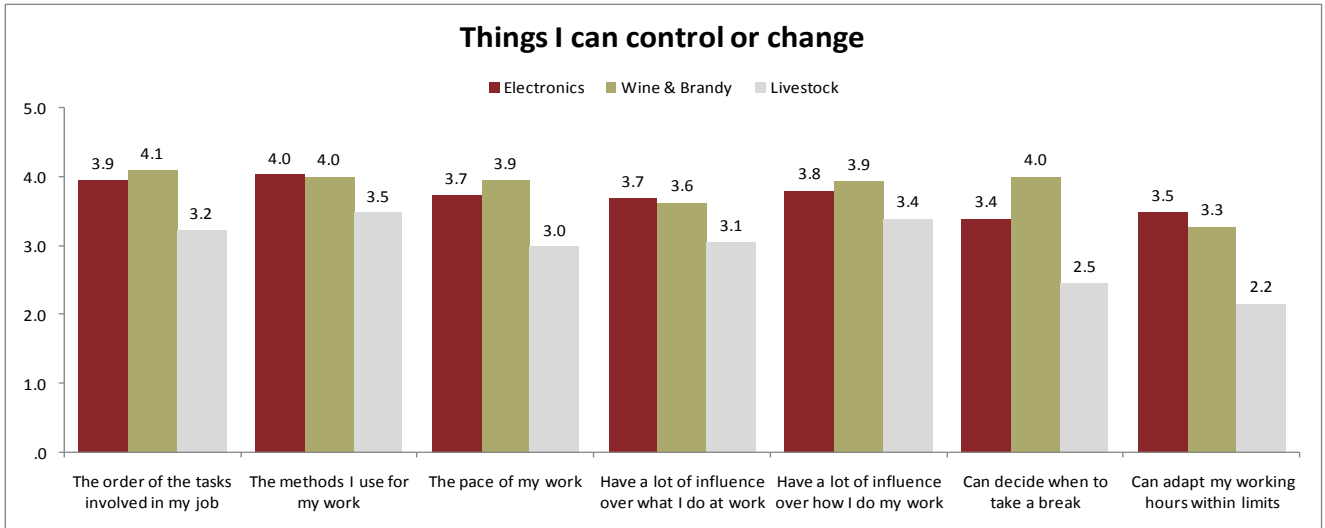
- The never injured rated their Workplace Conditions higher for all sectors, than did the injured cohort.
- The most marked difference was in the meat and livestock processing sector.

Note, the group considered as having incurred an injury in the workplace for this analysis included those did and did not lodge a *WorkCover SA* claim.

2.4.3 THE WORKPLACE CONTROL INDEX

Seven items contributed toward the overall **Workplace Control Index** (see Figure 10). Mean scores for individual Workplace Control items are shown in Figure 25, with item frequencies shown in the bar charts that follow.

Figure 25: Items contributing to the Workplace Control Index



The relationship between lack of workplace control and illness or injury was recognised by one worker in the following comment:

'....We were forced onto 8hr Rotating Shifts... I see serious mental and physical fatigue amongst my work colleagues. This has had a negative impact on illness and work related injuries."Safety First" is what we are taught by the company. Maybe it's time they lead by example.'

Wine and Brandy sector

Why is workplace control so important?

Researchers have identified that the degree of control by employees over their work (for example, in the ordering of tasks and timing of breaks) is critical to positive health outcomes and to managing injury or illness, with low levels of control being associated consistently with job strain and ill-health disease (Karasek & Theorell: 1990; Polanyi: 2004; Coats & Max: 2005). Researchers in Finland surveyed more than 25,000 full time employees and found that those with low control over their work took 40% more certified sick leave and 10% to 30% more uncertified sick leave than those with a high degree of control (Ala-Mursala *et al*: 2006). A detailed review of research by Polanyi (2004: 2-12) identified ten characteristics of healthy organisational practices one of which involves the degree of control by employees over their work and the ability to make decisions about ordering work tasks, taking breaks and so on.

Figure 26: Responses to *can control the order of tasks slippery floors or other things that make it easy to fall* item for the manufacturing industry

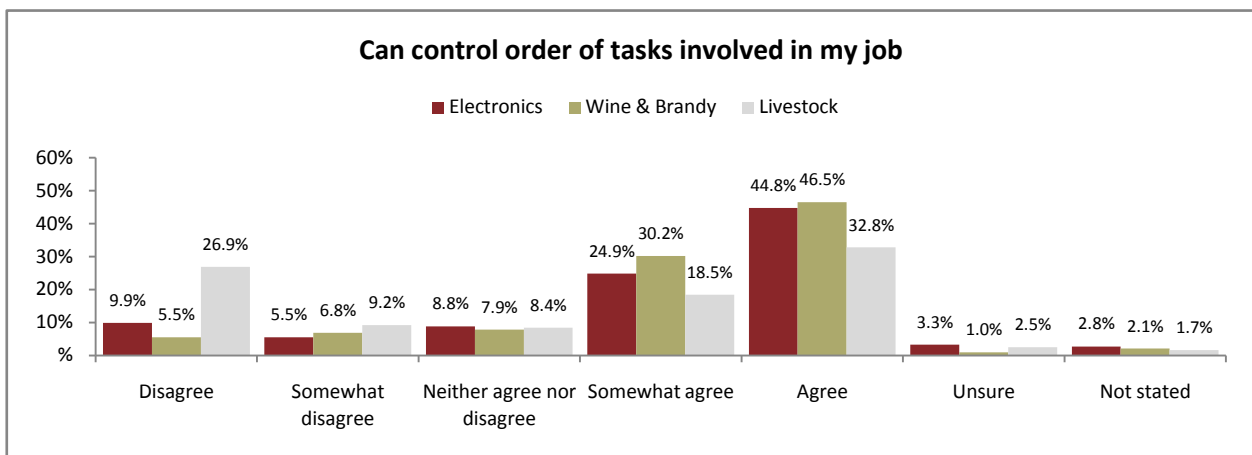


Figure 27: Responses to *can control my work methods* item for the manufacturing industry

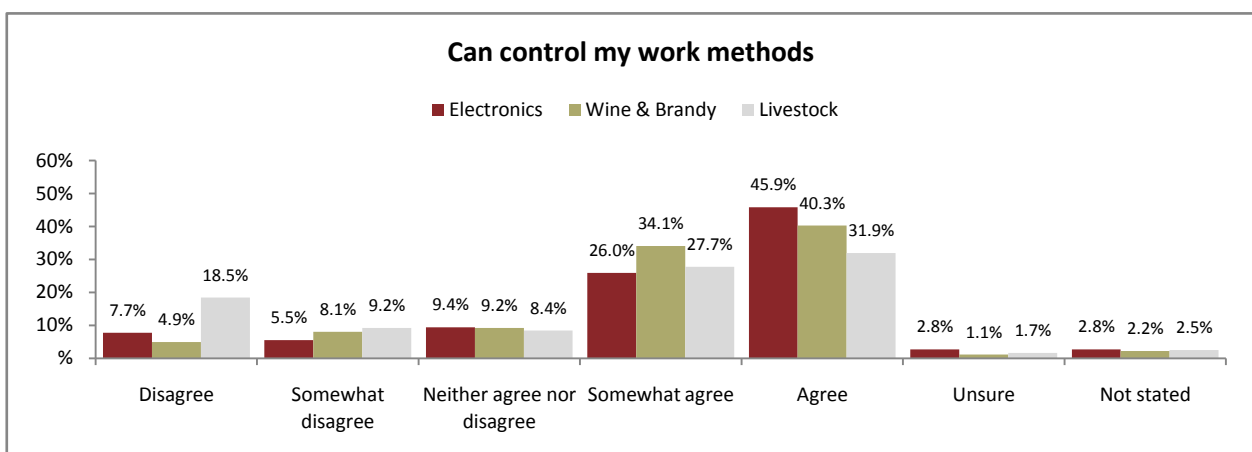


Figure 28: Responses to *can control the pace of my work* item for the manufacturing industry

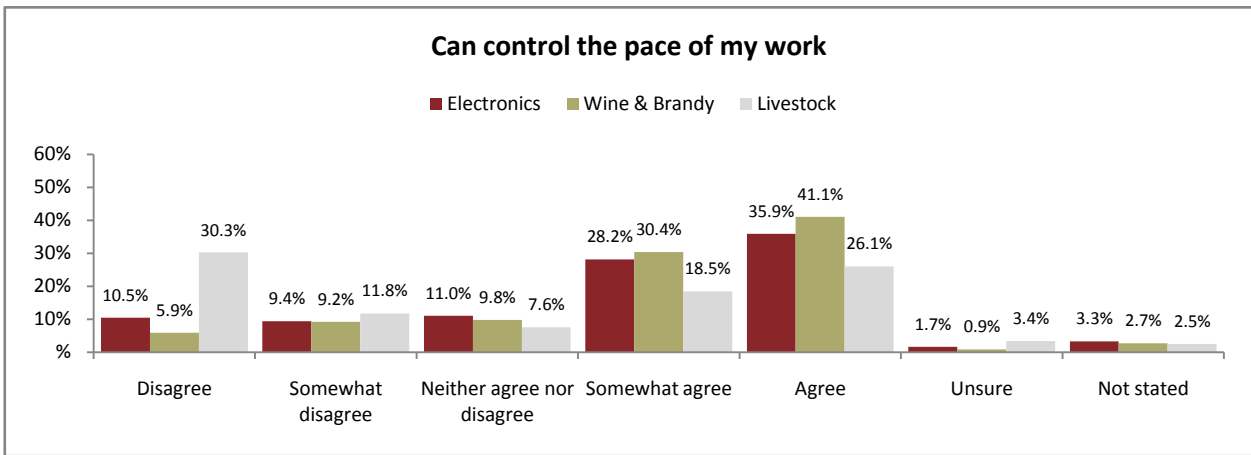


Figure 29: Responses to *have a lot of influence over what I do at work* item for the manufacturing industry

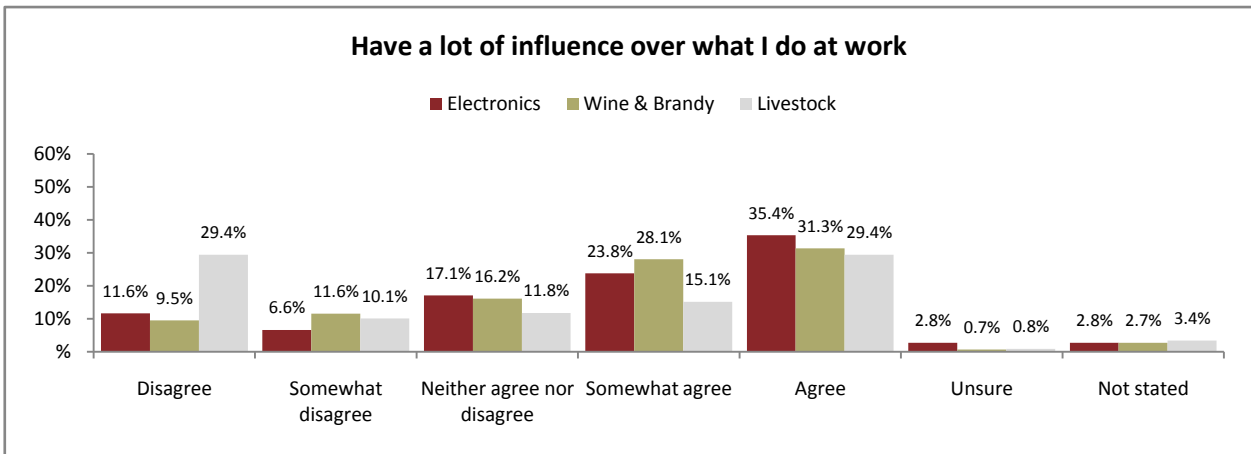
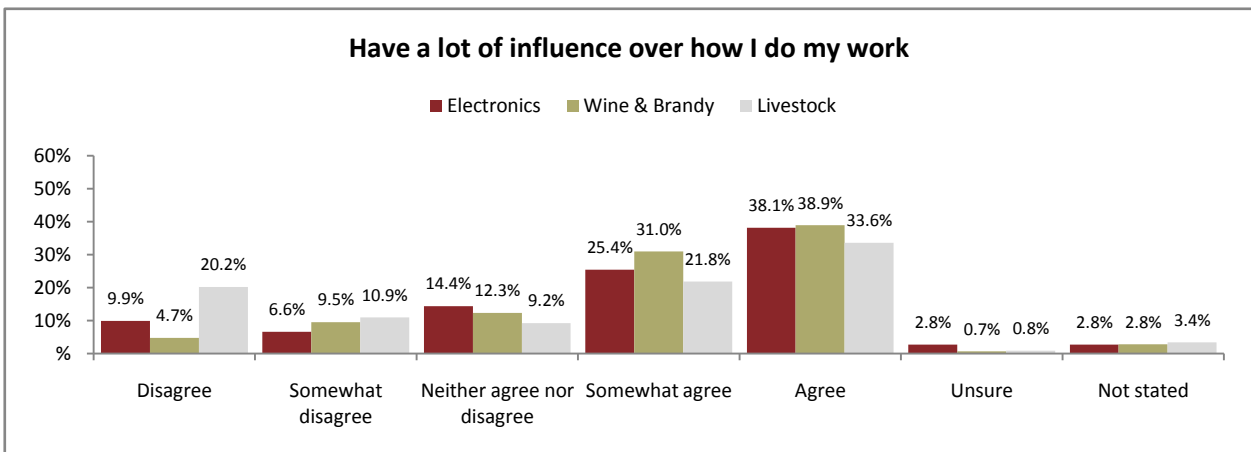


Figure 30: Responses to *have a lot of influence over how I do my work* item for the manufacturing industry



Survey participants from all sectors indicated they had less control over their *ability to adapt their working hours* than most other items in this Index. The electronics and the wine and brandy sector scores were comparable on most workplace control items. However, responses from the wine and brandy sector indicated that they had more control over managing their own break times than the other two sectors (see Figure 31), with three quarters indicating this was under their control. The meat and livestock processing sector achieved lower scores than the other sectors on all measures of workplace control. Over half of the meat and livestock processing sector disagreed with the statements indicating they could decide when to take a break (see Figure 31), or they could adapt their working hours within limits (see Figure 32).

Figure 31: Responses to *can decide when to take a break* item for the manufacturing industry

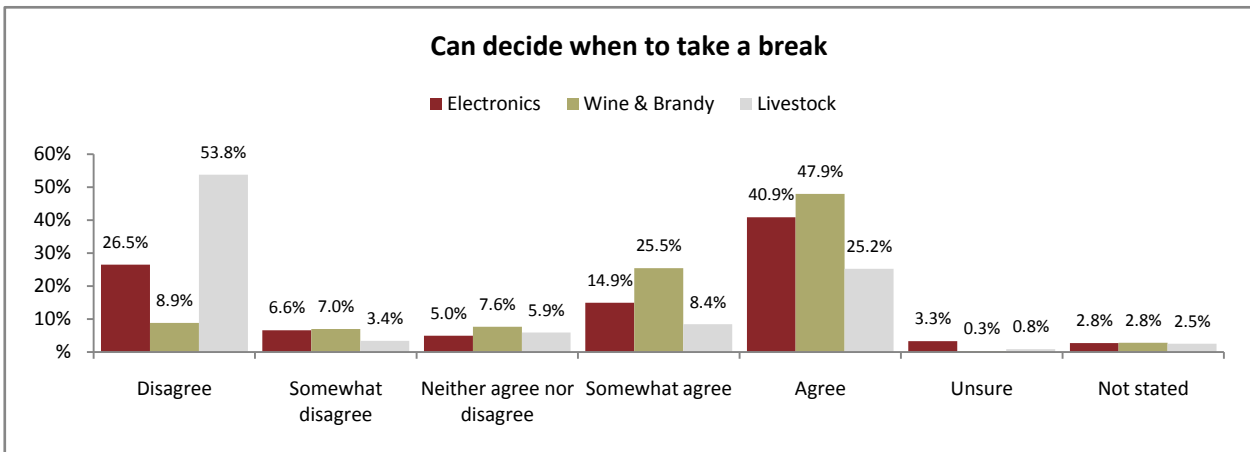
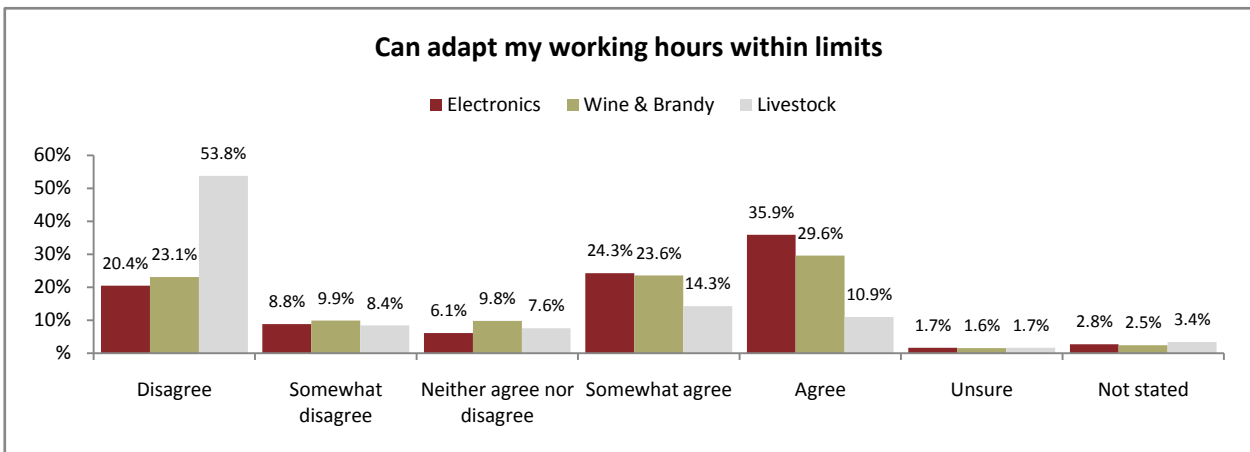


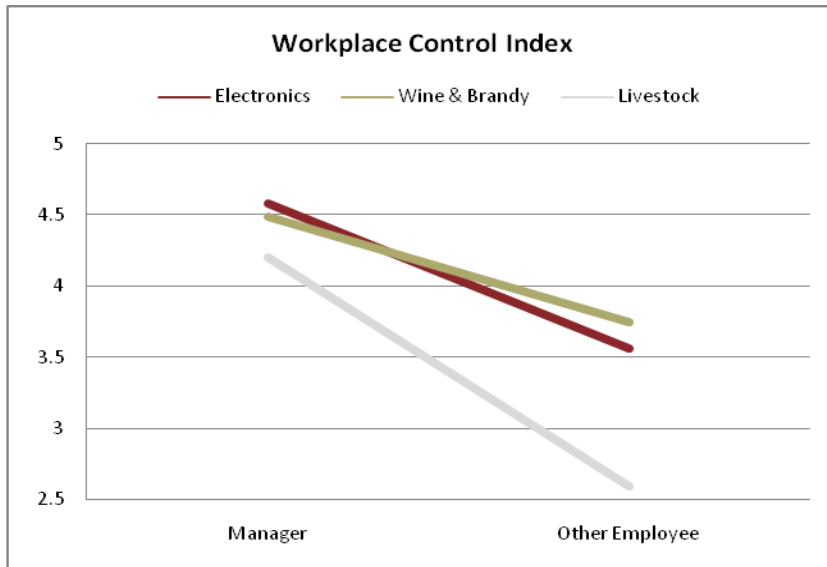
Figure 32: Responses to *can adapt my working hours within limits* item for the manufacturing industry



2.4.3.1 WORKPLACE CONTROL INDEX - MANAGERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Additional analysis for the Workplace Control Index was conducted by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and management status (manager, other employees). The differences are shown see Figure 33.

Figure 33: Differences between sectors, and managerial vs other employees on average Workplace Control scores



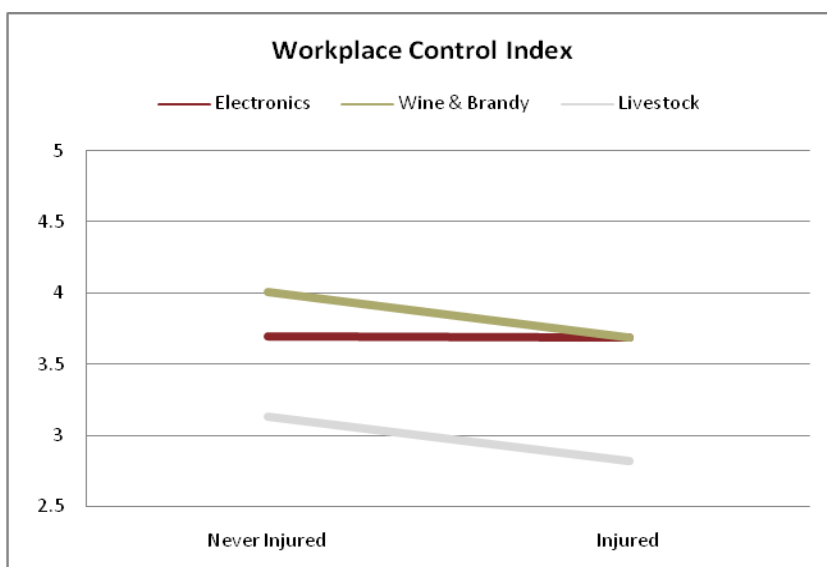
Results show:

- A reduced perception of control from the meat and livestock workers, particularly those in non-management positions.
- Responses from the electronics sector and the wine and brandy sector, were similar.
- Overall managers in the manufacturing industry tend to report higher levels of workplace control compared with other employees.

2.4.3.2 WORKPLACE CONTROL INDEX – INJURED AND NEVER INJURED

Analysis based on those who reported having had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) are shown in Figure 34.

Figure 34: Differences between sectors, and never injured vs injured workers on average Workplace Control scores



Results show:

- Injured and non-injured respondents in the electronics sector responded similarly.
- Injured workers from the wine and brandy, and meat and livestock processing sectors rated their Workplace Control less favourably than the never injured.
- Respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector providing the lowest ratings overall.

Note the injured group consists of those that had been injured who did and did not lodge a WorkCover SA claim

2.4.4 THE WORKPLACE CULTURE INDEX

Nine items contributed toward the overall **Workplace Culture Index** (see Figure 10), with mean scores for individual items contributing to the Index shown in Figure 35, and item frequencies shown in the bar charts that follow.

The wine and brandy, and electronics sectors are again reasonably comparable for each item with the electronics sector reporting the highest scores across all workplace culture items; the responses from the meat and livestock processing sector were lowest.

How does workplace culture affect RTW?

A number of researchers have identified workplace culture as being critical to the management of successful return-to-work (Roberts-Yates: 2003, 2006; Franche *et al*: 2004; Australian Institute for Primary Care: 2006; Amick *et al*: 2000). Among the workplace culture factors affecting return-to-work are the support offered by supervisors and co-workers, overall organisational climate, and workplace conflict and stress. One of the ten characteristics of healthy organisational practices identified by Polanyi (2004: 2–12) is workplace social support - social support and positive relationships have long been identified by researchers as critical to positive health, and the workplace is one setting where this is significant.

Trust between staff and management was rated poorly by all sectors, and is further evident in the following comments:

'...Lots of trust between staff and supervisors; buggar all between staff and executives....'

Electronics sector

'Lack of communication and understanding of an injury or illness is a major problem. Fear of reporting injury is also a problem.'

Meat and Livestock Processing sector

Figure 35: Items contributing to the Workplace Culture Index

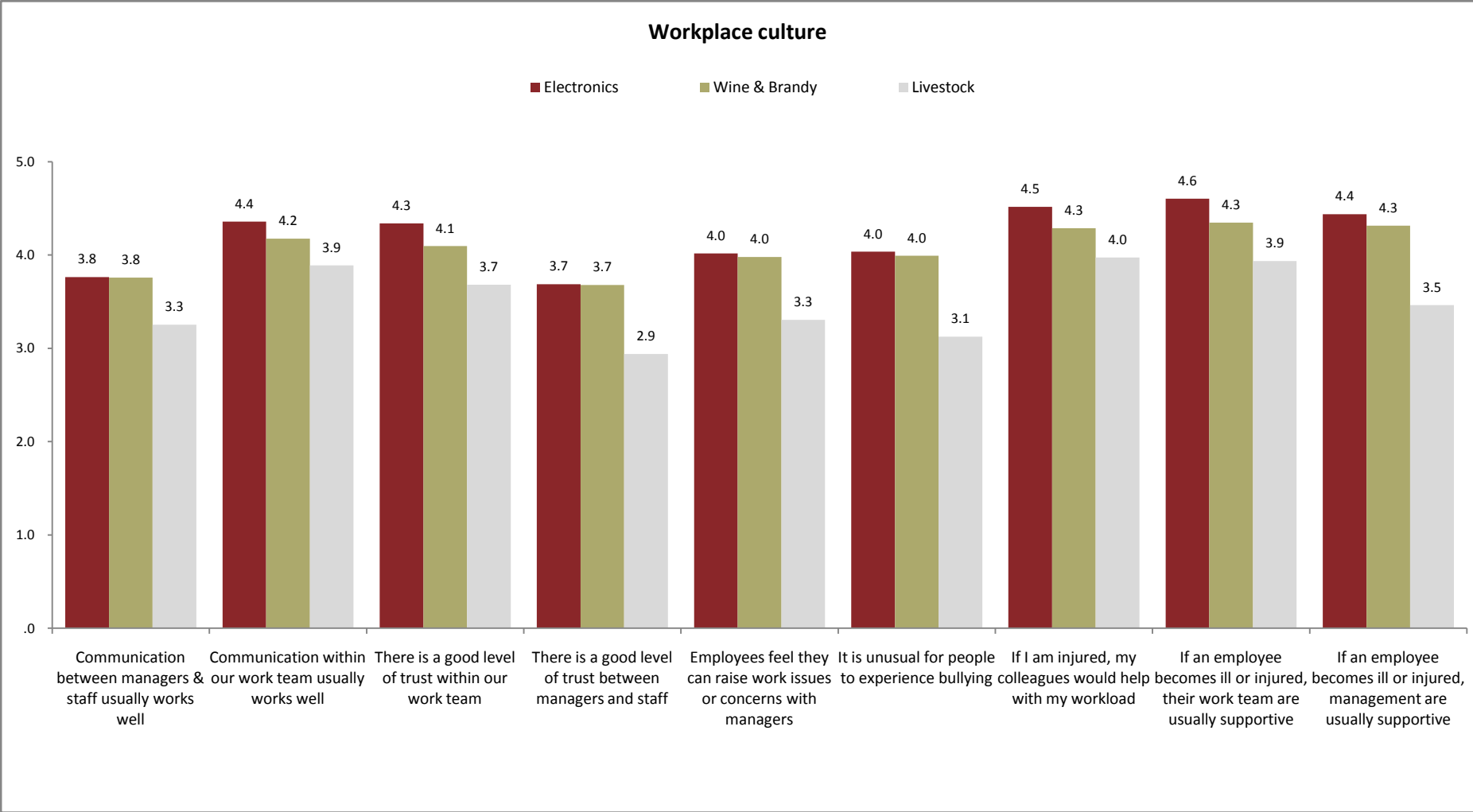


Figure 36. Responses to *communication between managers and staff works well* item for the manufacturing industry

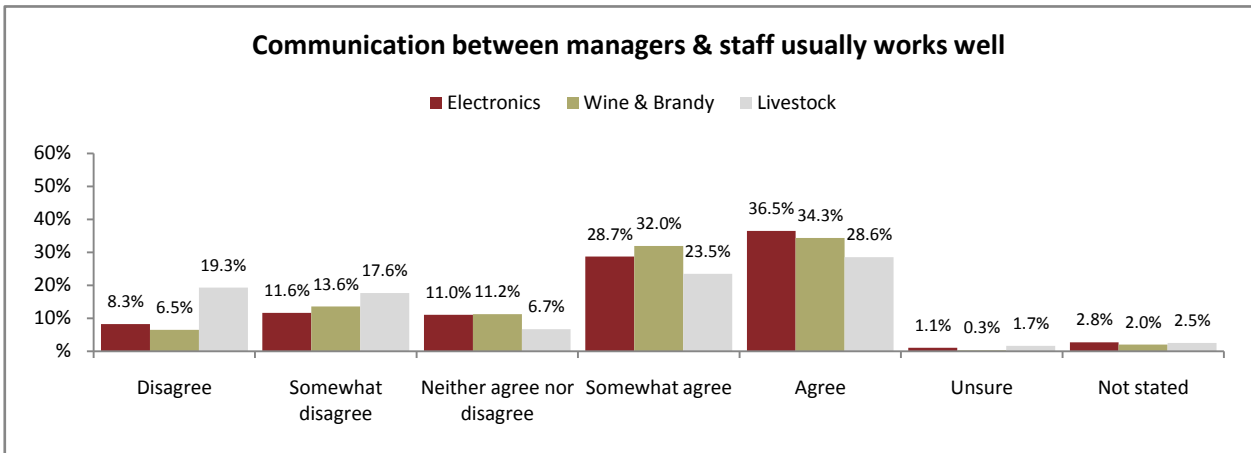


Figure 37: Responses to *communication within our work team usually works well* item for the manufacturing industry

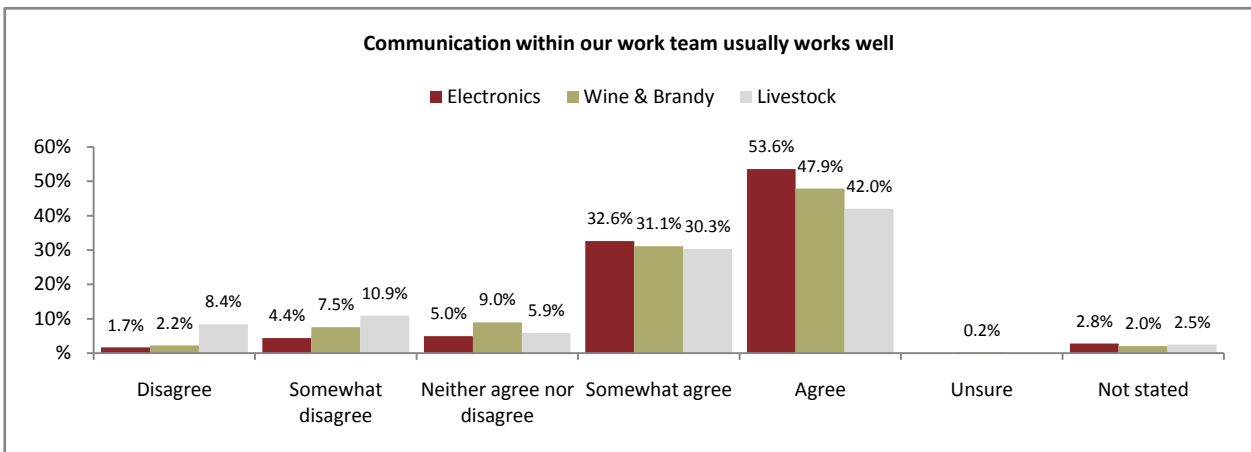


Figure 38: Responses to *there is a good level of trust within our work team* item for the manufacturing industry

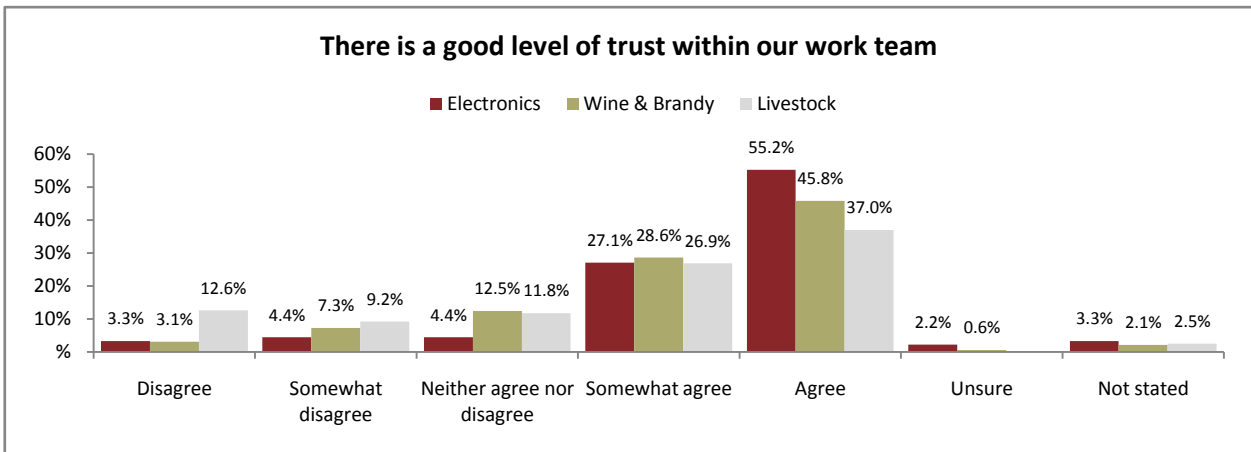


Figure 39: Responses to *there is a good level of trust between managers and staff* item for the manufacturing industry

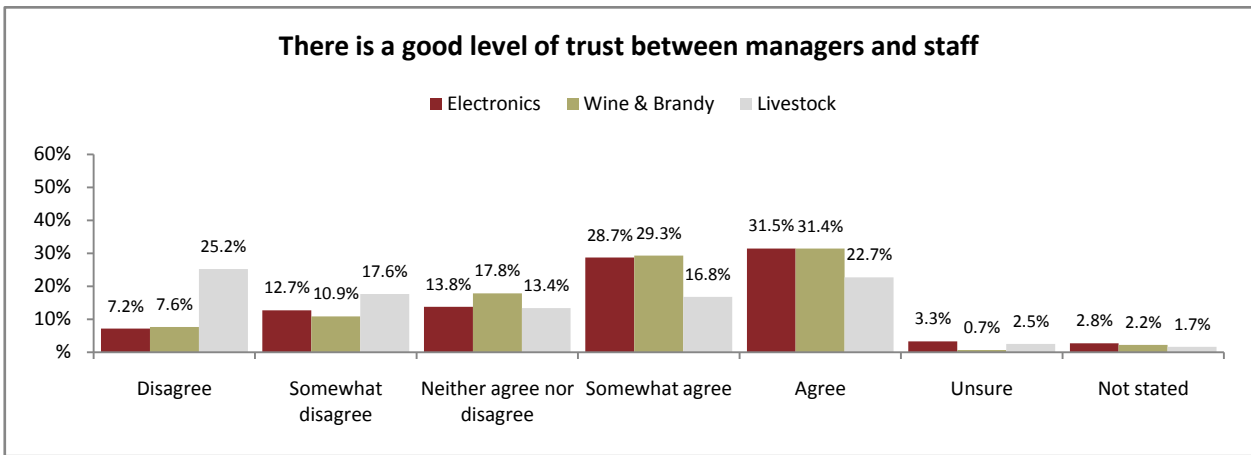


Figure 40: Responses to *employees feel they can raise work issues or concerns with managers* item for the manufacturing industry

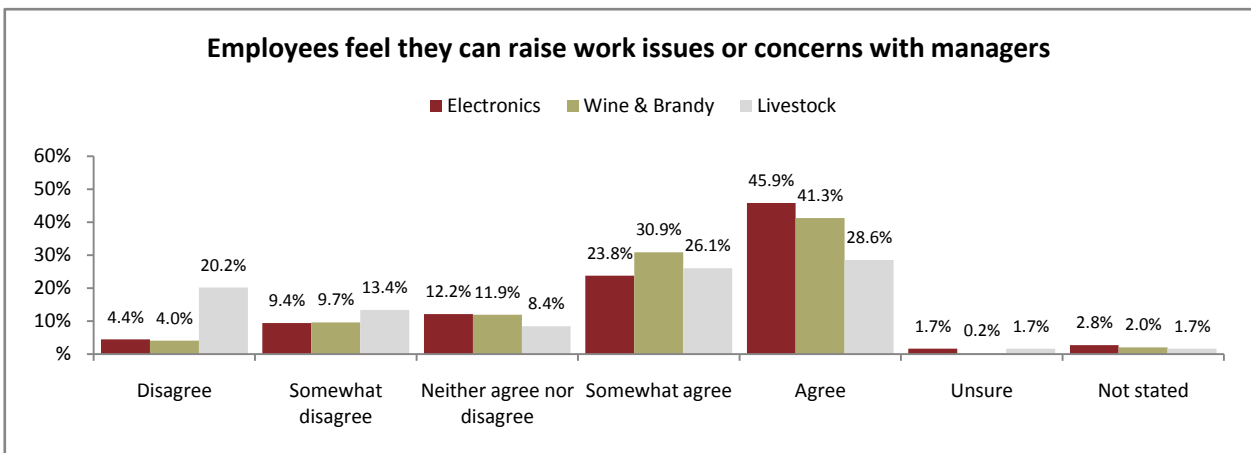
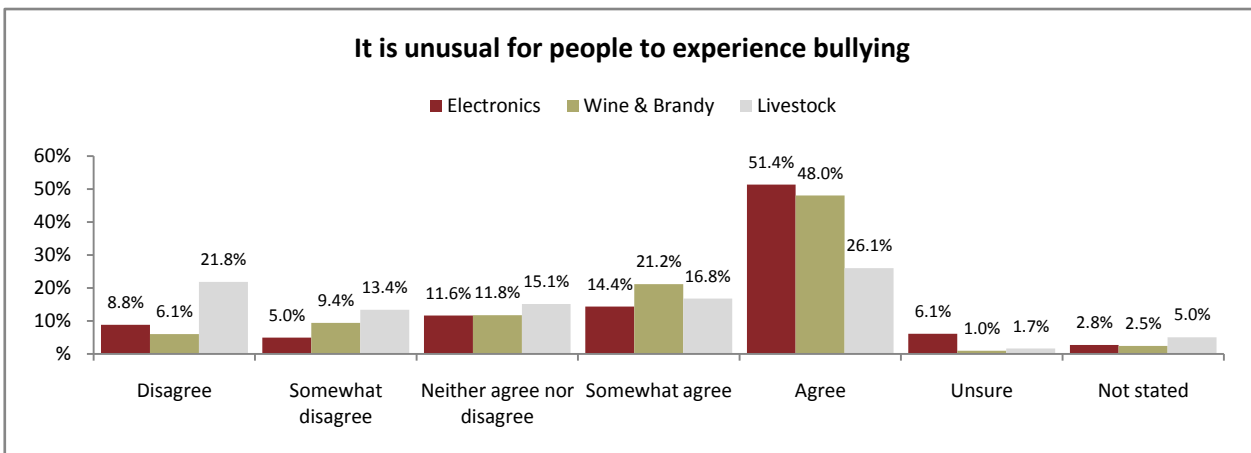


Figure 41: Responses to *it is unusual for people to experience bullying* item for the manufacturing industry



The scores from items measuring support from colleagues in the workplace show some variability between sectors. For example Figure 42 reveals a 20 percentage point difference between the sectors on agreement that *colleagues would help with an injured person's workload* and that *work teams are usually supportive if an employee becomes ill or injured* (see Figure 43). Respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector were less likely to endorse these statements. Although it is noteworthy that respondents from the meat and livestock sector were more likely to agree with these two statements than all other statements.

Figure 42: Responses to *if I am injured, my colleague would help me with my workload* item for the manufacturing industry

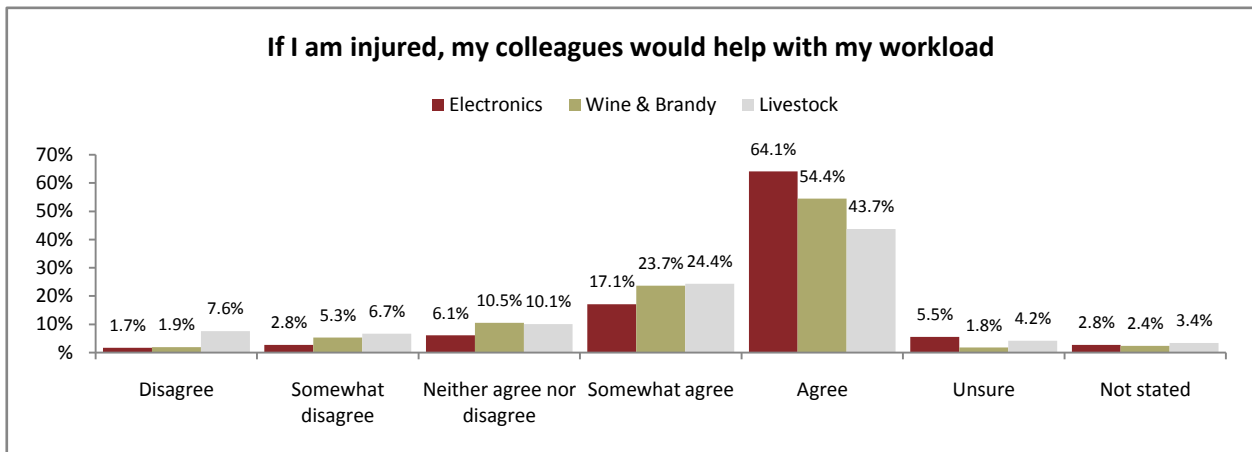
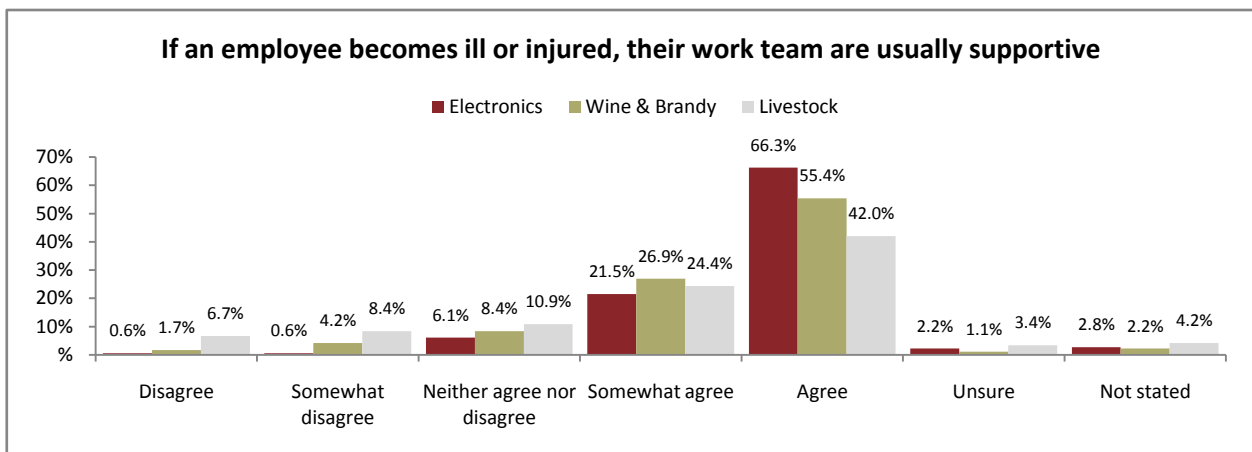


Figure 43: Responses to *if an employee becomes ill or injured, their work team are usually supportive* item for the manufacturing industry

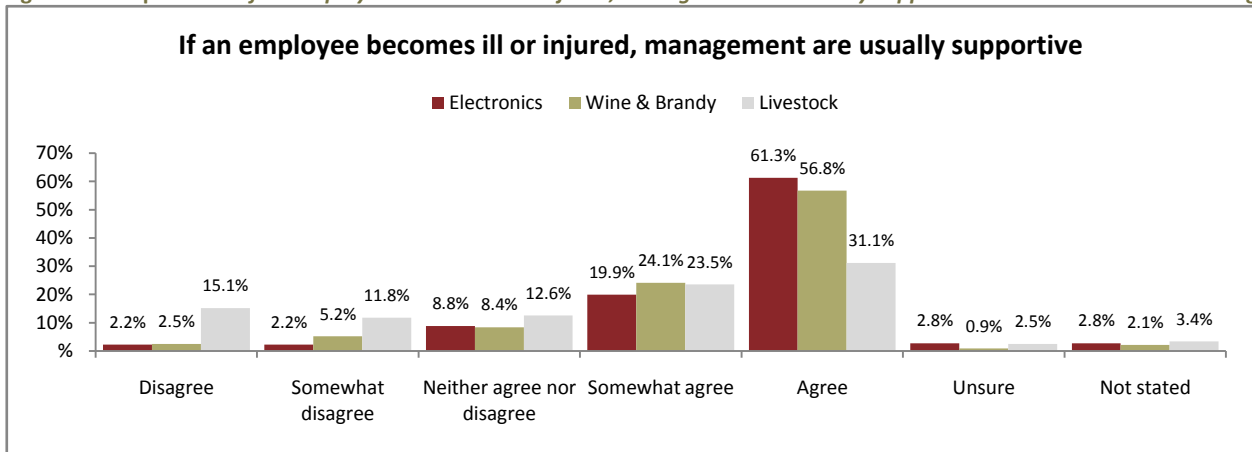


Although not always the case, it is encouraging that one worker from the wine and brandy sector reported very favourably about organisational support:

‘The Company has a very good ‘policy’ for employees who require time off for sick leave and extend support and compassion at all times; this I can attest to through recovering from major surgery and having to convalesce... before being able to return to work fit for duties.’

Wine and Brandy sector

Figure 44: Responses to *if an employee becomes ill or injured, management are usually supportive* item for the manufacturing industry



A few workers in the meat and livestock processing sector indicated that supervisors and management were more concerned with production than workplace safety:

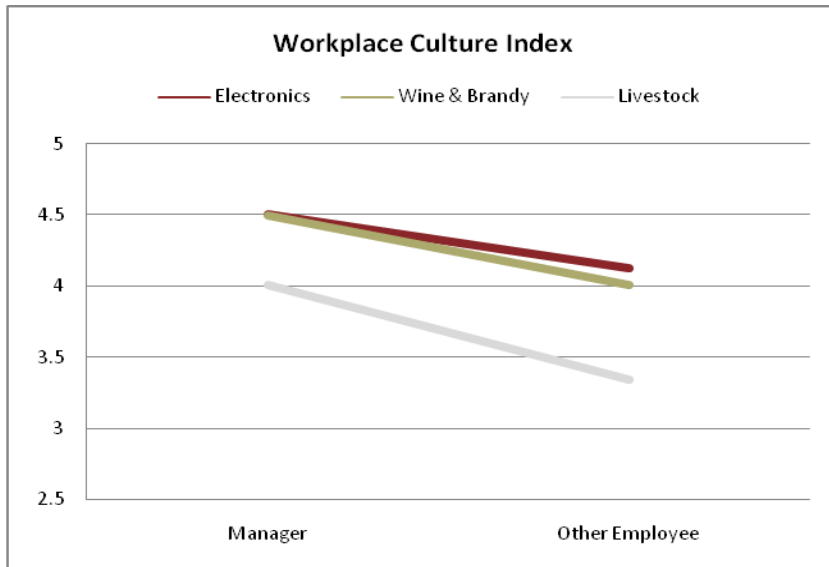
‘General feeling is company is more concerned with making money + production than its workforce.’

Meat and Livestock Processing sector

2.4.4.1 WORKPLACE CULTURE INDEX - MANAGERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Results for the analysis by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and management status (manager, other employees) are shown in Figure 45.

Figure 45: Differences between sectors, and managerial vs other employees on average Workplace Culture scores



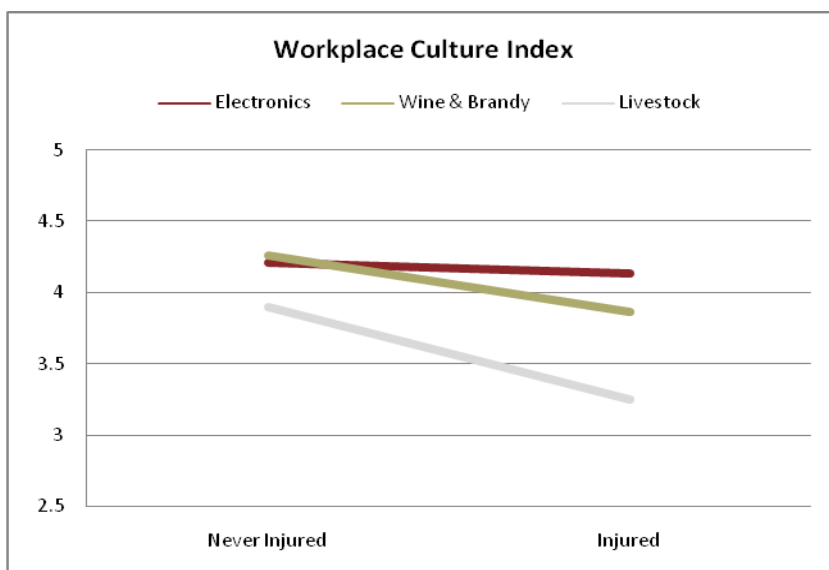
Results show:

- Similar trends to the Workplace Control Index.
- Electronics sector responses were comparable with the wine and brandy sector.
- Meat and livestock processing sector had lower levels of endorsement for items in this Index.
- Managers rated workplace control higher than other employees; not unexpected given the nature of the management role.

2.4.4.2 WORKPLACE CULTURE INDEX – INJURED AND NEVER INJURED

Further analysis based on those respondents who have had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) shows in Figure 46:

Figure 46: Difference between sectors, and non-injured vs injured workers on average Workplace Culture scores



Results show:

- Responses for the meat and livestock processing sector were lower for both the injured and non-injured cohorts (as with the other Indexes).
- The never injured rated their Workplace Culture higher for the wine and brandy, and meat and livestock processing sectors.
- There was no apparent difference for those from the electronics sector.

Note the injured group consists of those that had been injured who did and did not lodge a WorkCover SA claim.

2.4.5 THE WORKPLACE SAFETY INDEX

Fourteen items contributed toward the overall **Workplace Safety Index** (see Figure 10). Mean scores for individual items in this Index are shown in Figure 47, with item frequencies shown in the bar charts that follow.

There were high levels of agreement in the electronics, and wine and brandy sectors that issues related to workplace safety are addressed, for example:

'Our workplace is strongly committed to the health and safety and welfare of its employees, and endeavour to be proactive in maintaining a safe work environment. They actually do care for their employees welfare/wellbeing.'

Wine and Brandy sector

Some of the organisations within the meat and livestock processing sector received more favourable ratings on the Workplace Safety dimension, as the comment below illustrates. However, as a group, meat and livestock processing employees rated workplace safety lower than the other two sectors on all fourteen items.

'Employer is very supportive of elimination of workplace injuries and has spent a lot of money improving workplace equipment; guarding etc. Work place injuries are very uncommon in our area.'

Meat and Livestock Processing sector

Some safety areas of concern in the meat and livestock process sector are:

- Figure 50 and 51 reveal higher proportions of employees in the meat and livestock sector that disagree or somewhat disagree they have had sufficient training in OHS issues and injury prevention.
- Similarly about 20 percent of managers and supervisors in that sector disagree or only somewhat agree that they receive enough training in OH&S issues and injury prevention.
- Regarding a common mechanism of injury, heavy lifting, only a quarter of the meat and livestock respondents agree they are trained enough in lifting to prevent injury and provided equipment to prevent injury from heavy lifting (Figure 54 and 55).

'My workplace is an example of poor planning. There's a lot of factors that contribute to workplace injuries are commonly working their jobs without even noticing the risk of getting injured. I think it's time for the safety reps to open their eyes.'

Meat and Livestock Processing sector

Figure 47: Items contributing to the Workplace Safety Index

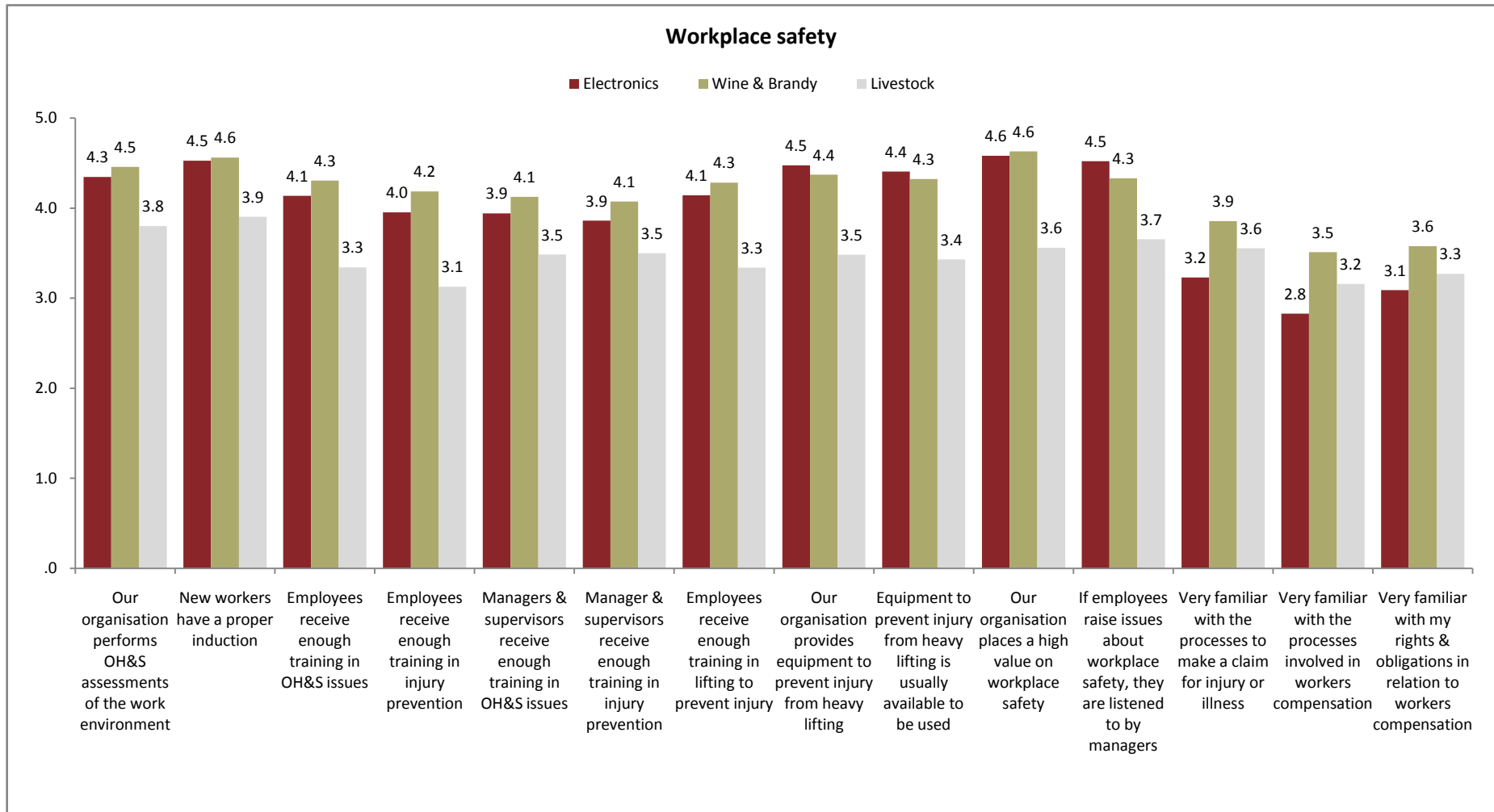


Figure 48: Responses to *our organisation performs OH&S assessments of the work environment* item for the manufacturing industry

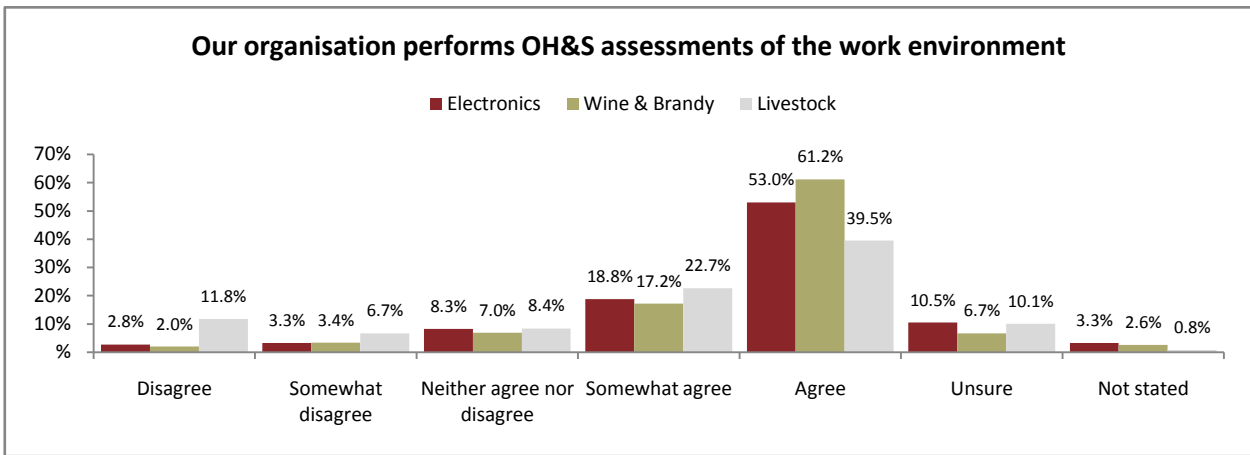


Figure 49: Responses to *new workers have a proper induction* item for the manufacturing industry

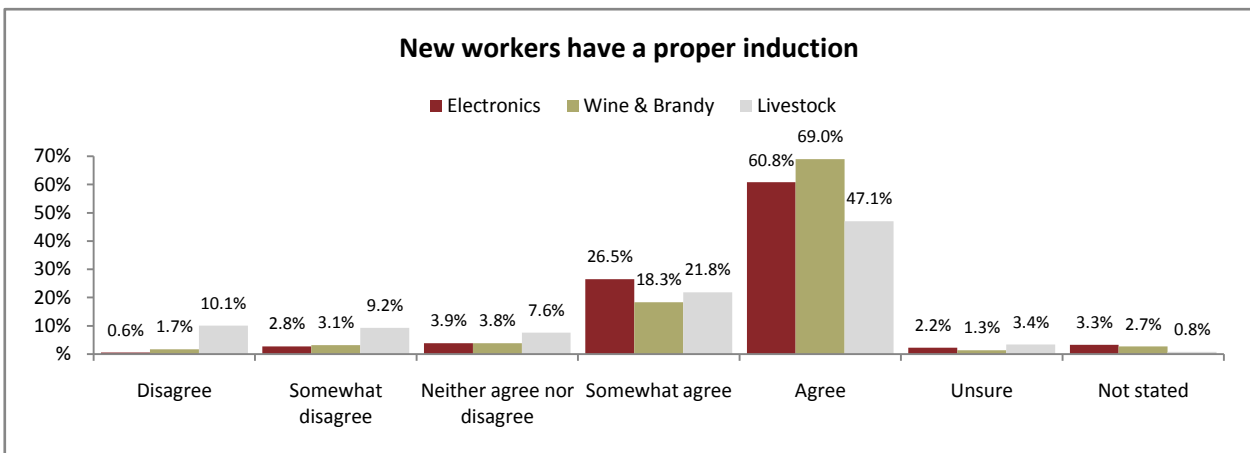


Figure 50: Responses to *employees receive enough training in OH&S issues* item for the manufacturing industry

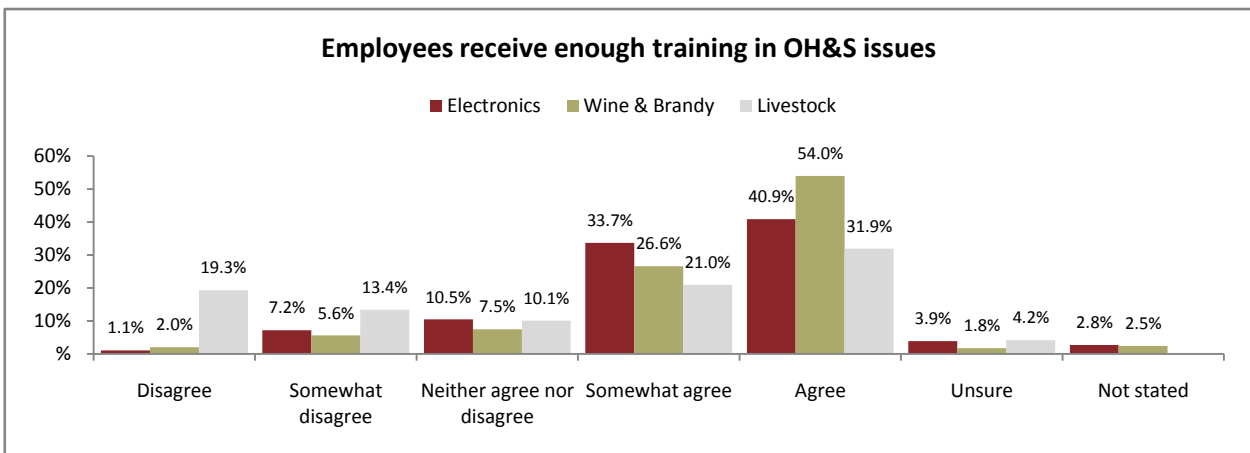


Figure 51: Responses to *employees receive enough training in injury prevention* item for the manufacturing industry

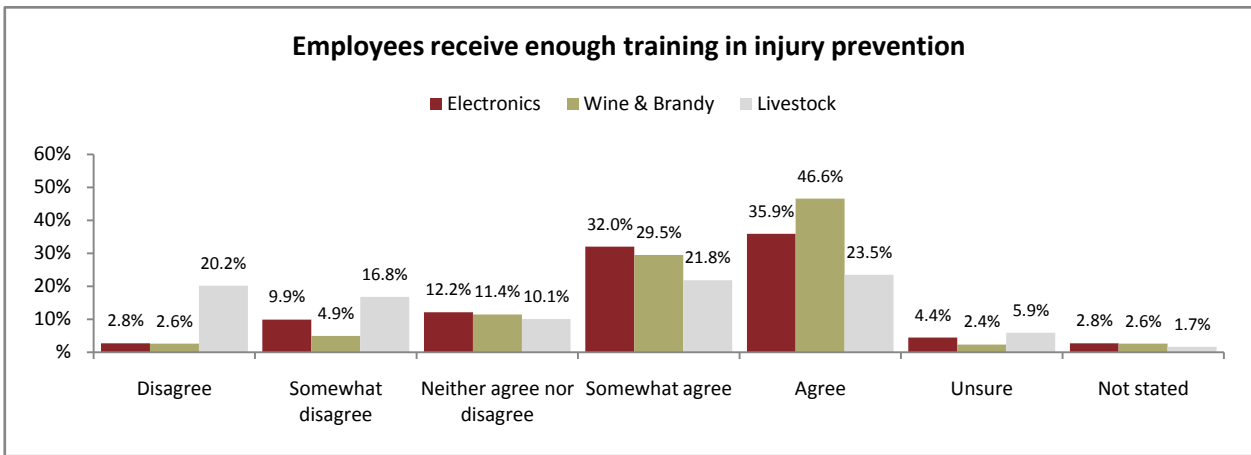


Figure 52: Responses to *managers and supervisors receive enough training in OH&S issues* item for the manufacturing industry

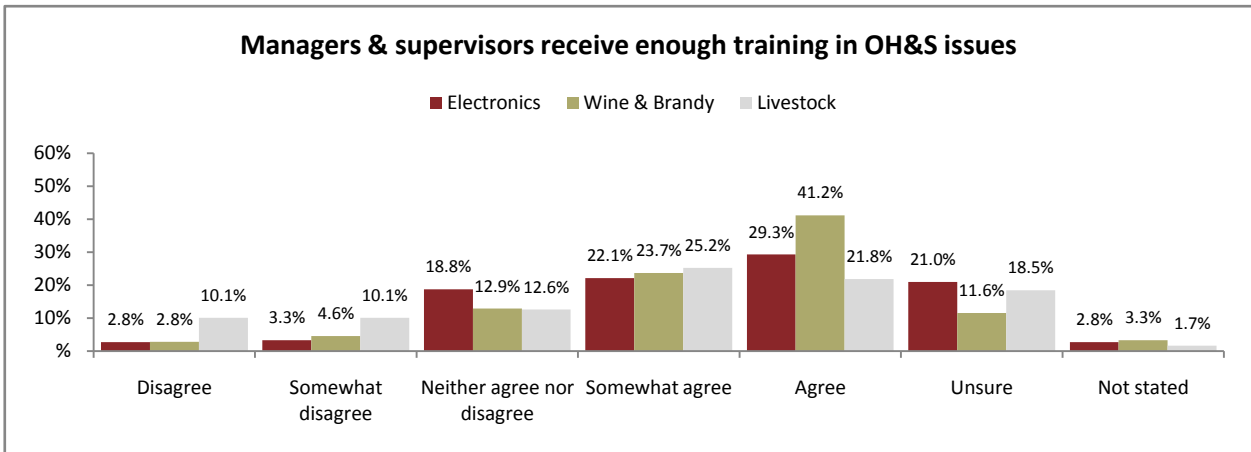


Figure 53: Responses to *managers and supervisors receive enough training in injury prevention* item for the manufacturing industry

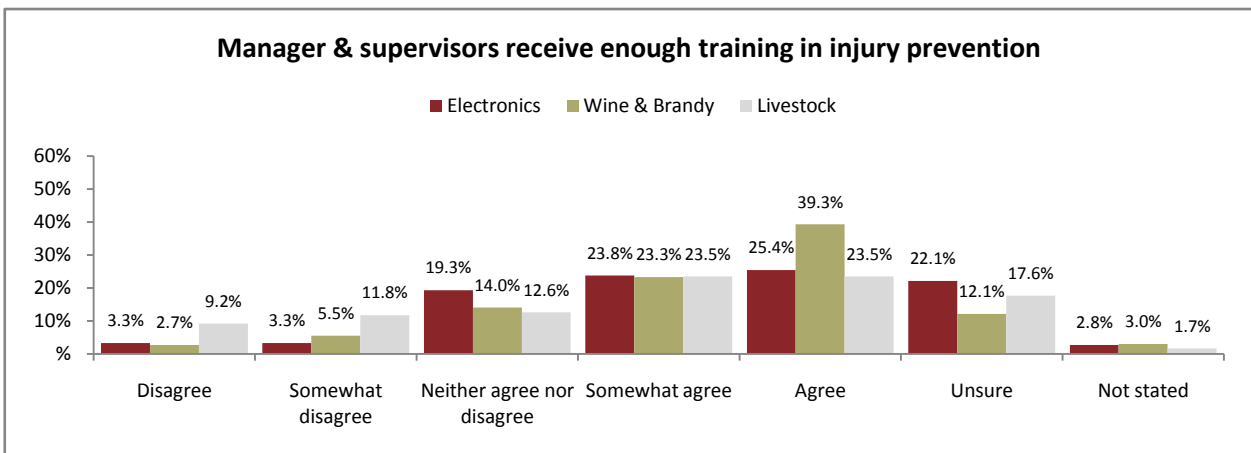


Figure 54: Responses to *employees receive enough training in lifting to prevent injury* item for the manufacturing industry

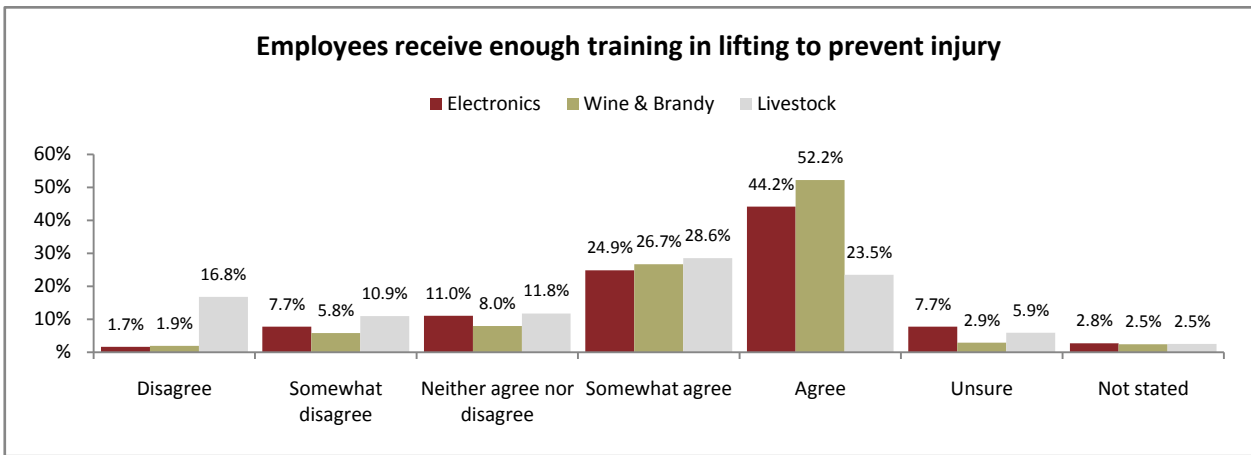


Figure 55: Responses to *our organisation provides equipment to prevent injury from heavy lifting* item for the manufacturing industry

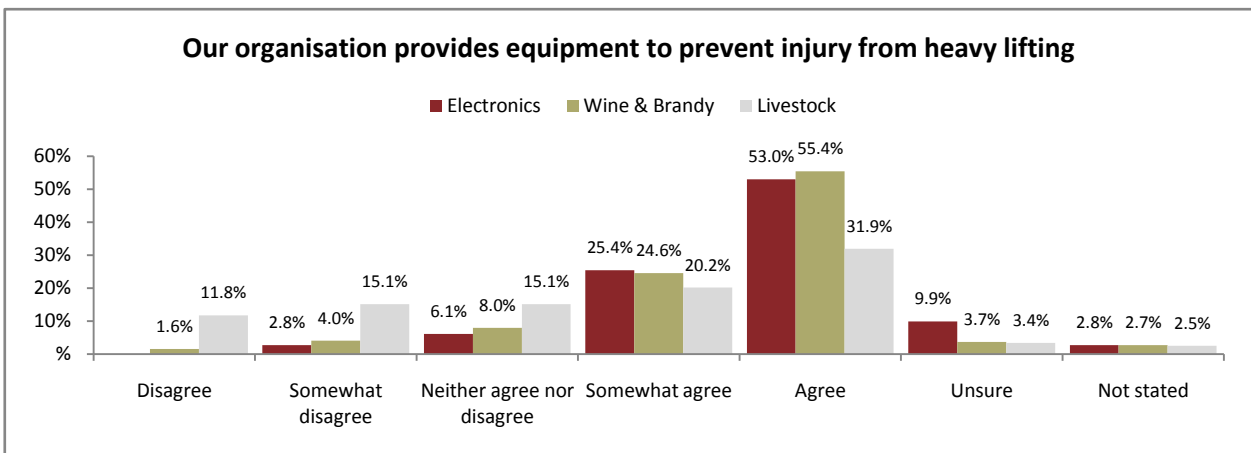


Figure 56: Responses to *equipment to prevent injury from heavy lifting is usually available to be used* item for the manufacturing industry

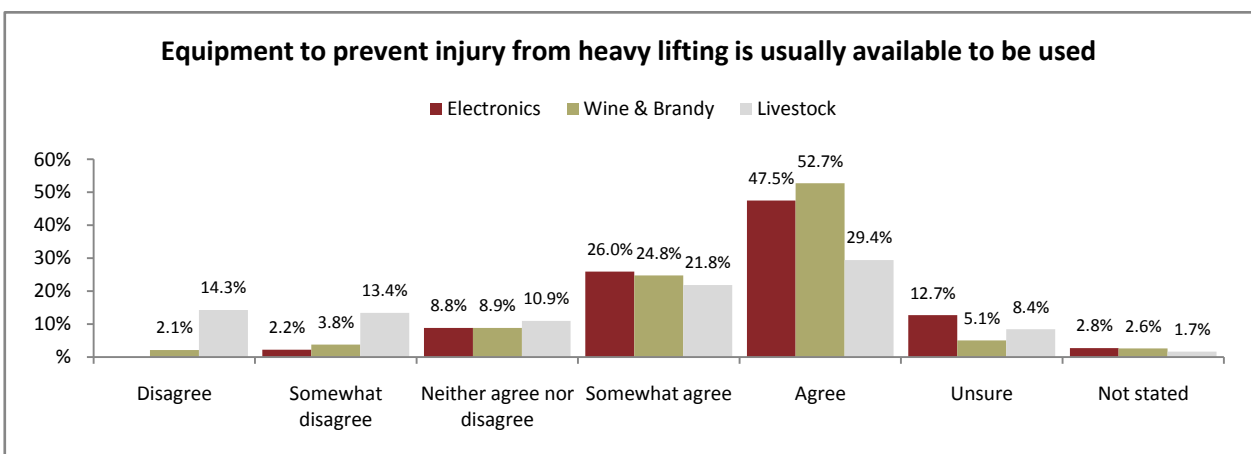


Figure 57: Responses to *our organisation places a high value on workplace safety* item for the manufacturing industry

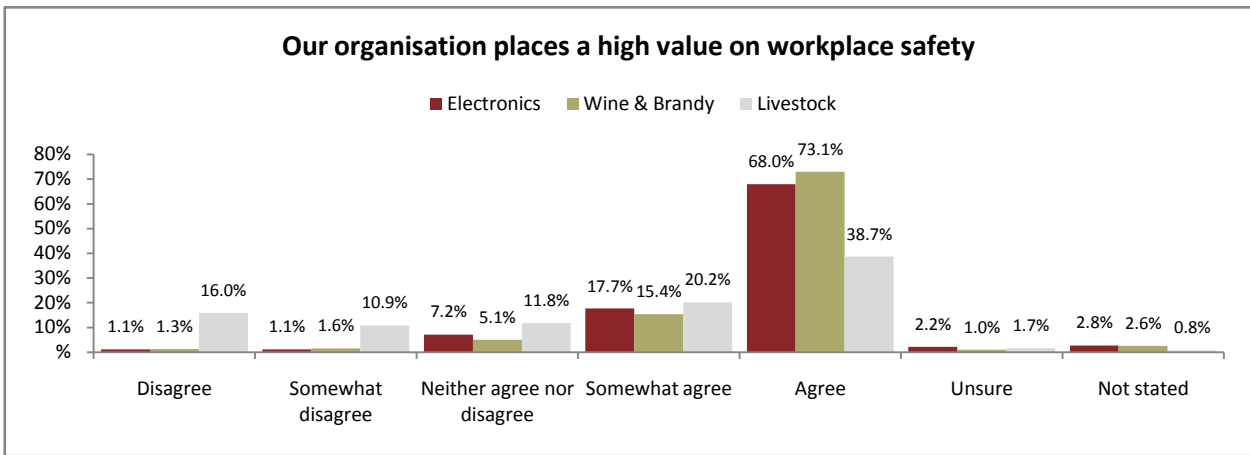
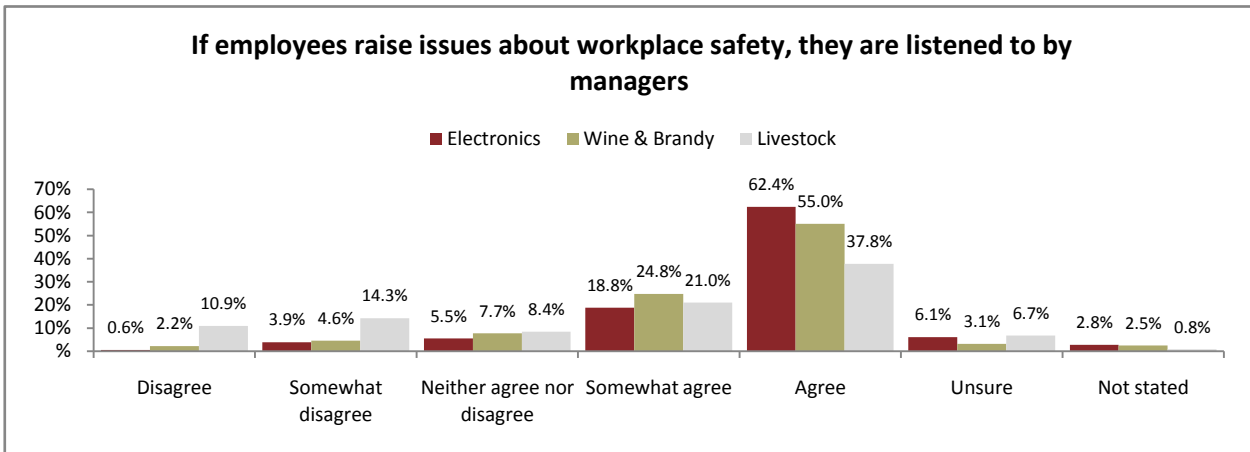


Figure 58: Responses to *if employees raise issues about workplace safety, they are listened to by managers* item for the manufacturing industry



Lowest endorsement for items in the Workplace Safety Index was for employee familiarity with processes (see Figure 60), rights and obligations (see Figure 61) related to worker’s compensation and the process of making claims (see Figure 59). Scores on these items were significantly lower compared to the scores on other aspects of workplace safety. It is worth noting that researchers have frequently identified the need for injured workers to be informed about the compensation process and its associated rights and responsibilities (Franché *et al*, 2004) and that RTW is significantly related to positive perception of methods of information dissemination to workers about their rights and entitlements (Kenny: 1998).

Figure 59: Responses to *very familiar with the processes to make a claim for injury or illness* item for the manufacturing industry

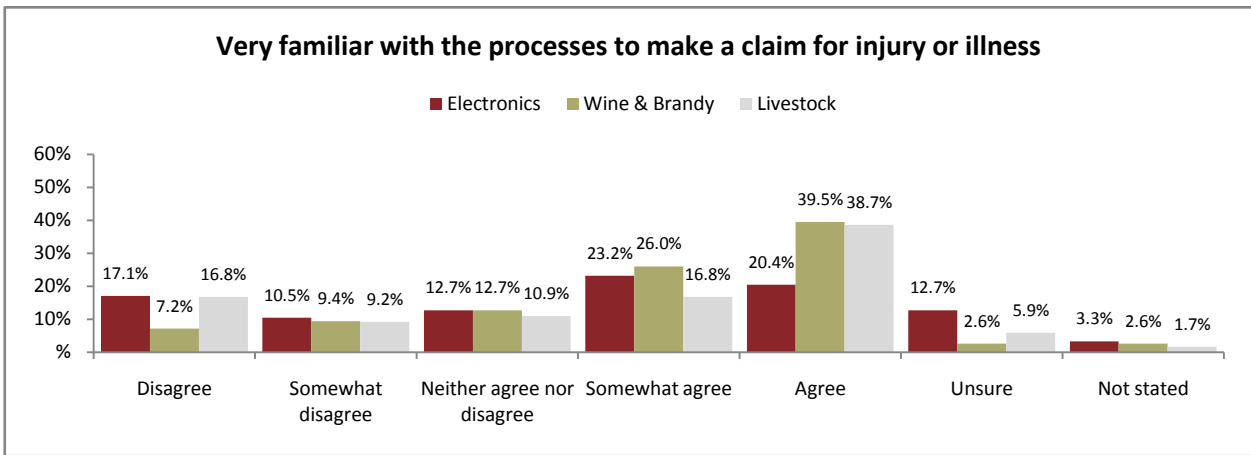


Figure 60: Responses to *very familiar with the processes involved in workers compensation* item for the manufacturing industry

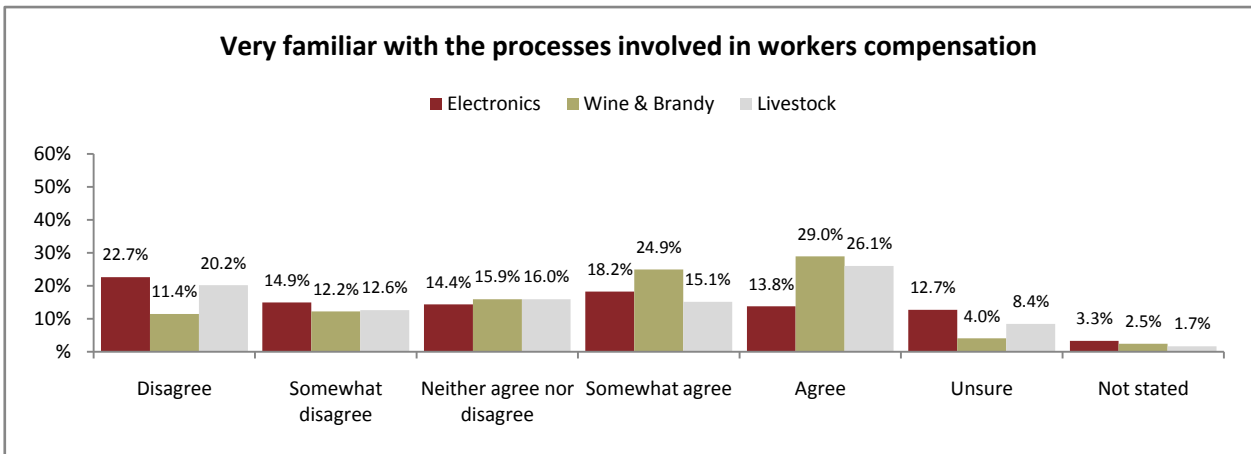
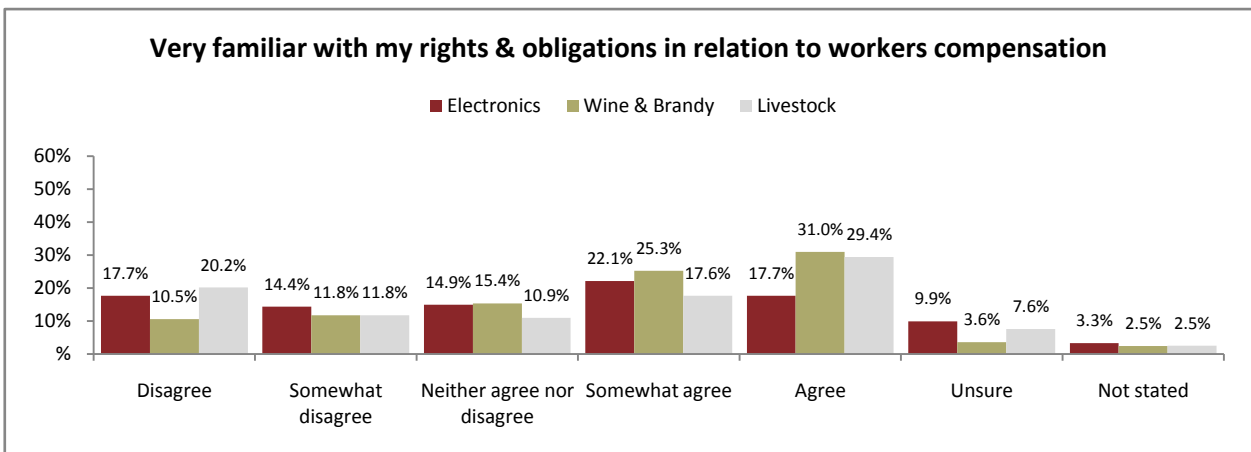


Figure 61: Responses to *very familiar with my rights and obligations in relation to workers compensation* item for the manufacturing industry



2.4.5.1 WORKPLACE SAFETY INDEX - MANAGERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Analysis by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and management status (manager, other employees) was undertaken with the differences presented on the Workplace Safety Index scores. These are shown in Figure 62.

Figure 62: Differences between sectors, and managerial vs other employees on average Workplace Safety scores. These are shown in



Results show:

- The electronics sector responded to items on safety slightly more favourably than the wine and brandy sector.
- Both these sectors were more favourable than responses from the meat and livestock processing sector.
- Managers across the sectors scored workplace safety higher than other employees.

2.4.5.2 WORKPLACE SAFETY INDEX – INJURED AND NEVER INJURED

Further analysis assessed the difference between respondents who have had a previous workplace injury and those who had not, by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing), and is shown in Figure 63.

Figure 63: Differences between sectors, and non-injured vs injured workers on Workplace Safety scores



Results show:

- There were no major differences in responses on the Workplace Safety Index between respondents who had, and who had never been injured in the electronics, and wine and brandy sectors.
- The never injured respondents from the meat and livestock processing sector scored similarly to the other sectors.
- However, injured workers (from meat and livestock processing) rated workplace safety considerably lower.

Note the injured group consists of those that had been injured who did and did not lodge a WorkCover SA claim.

What contributes to a safe and healthy organisation?

A safe organisational climate (reflected in workers' perceptions of the priority given to safety in their workplace) was identified by Polanyi (2004: 2–12) as one of the ten characteristics of healthy organisational practices. Australian research has found that return-to-work is significantly related to higher perceived standards of occupational health and safety characteristics of workplaces (Kenny: 1998). An extensive literature review undertaken by the Canadian Institute for Work and Health (Franche *et al*: 2004) identified that particular RTW interventions are effective in **reducing the duration** of the period in which a worker remains away from the workplace due to illness and in **reducing the costs** associated with their health care and wage replacement. Among the factors they identified were the education of supervisors and managers, particularly about ergonomic requirements, safety issues and work disability management.

A major study identified 11 organisational policies and practices in companies with the **lowest workers' compensation claims** across 29 industries (including manufacturing). Three of those involved:

- Systematic monitoring and correction of unsafe employee behaviours.
- Safety training provided as part of orientation for new and transferred employees.
- Company leaders model and pay attention to safe behaviours (Amick *et al*: 2000).

A well structured research study by Shaw *et al* (2006) in the US food processing industry found that when supervisors in the meat cutting and packing sector were trained appropriately, disability compensation claims were reduced by 47% and active lost-time claims by 18%. The study demonstrated the importance of supervisor training in reducing injury rates and enabling timely and effective return to work. It has application across industries but specific relevance to workplaces with high physical work demands – common in the manufacturing industry.

2.4.6 THE WORKPLACE RESPONSE INDEX

Thirteen items contributed toward the overall **Workplace Response Index** (see Figure 10). Mean scores for individual items on this scale are shown in Figure 64, with item frequencies shown in the bar charts that follow. This Index showed the least differentiation between the three sectors of the manufacturing industry, with the meat and livestock sector comparable to the other two sectors on many items.

Of note, all sectors rated *encouraging employees to notify supervisors as soon as possible* (seen in more detail in Figure 66), *being given alternative duties* (see Figure 73) or *modified or restricted duties* (see Figure 72) at higher than 4.4 overall.

Workers rated the *communication about treatment* lowest of the items on this scale (see Figure 65), indicating this could be an area to be targeted for improvement. However, the fact that a large proportion of respondents to this and a number of other items in this Index, responded they were 'unsure' about what rating to attribute, suggests that these workers could be better informed about how their organisation responds to injury.

'I was very disappointed with the company and how it handled my workplace injury. I found there was a lack of communication, and I was basically left to manage my own case.'

Wine and Brandy sector

Based on their comprehensive review of the research literature (Franché *et al*: 2004), the Canadian Institute for Work and Health (2007) compiled a set of seven *Principles for Successful Return to Work*, each with a justification based on the research evidence. Three of these are relevant to the workplace's responsiveness to injury or illness, and involve the appointment of a Return to Work Coordinator, effective communication between employers and medical and rehabilitation providers, and the offer of work accommodation to enable return to work. There is widespread agreement in the research literature that the presence of a *Return to Work Coordinator* is critical to facilitating RTW (Australian Institute for Primary Care: 2006; Franché *et al*: 2004), and this person also supports effective communication between the different groups involved in the RTW process.

Figure 64: Items contributing to the Workplace Response Index

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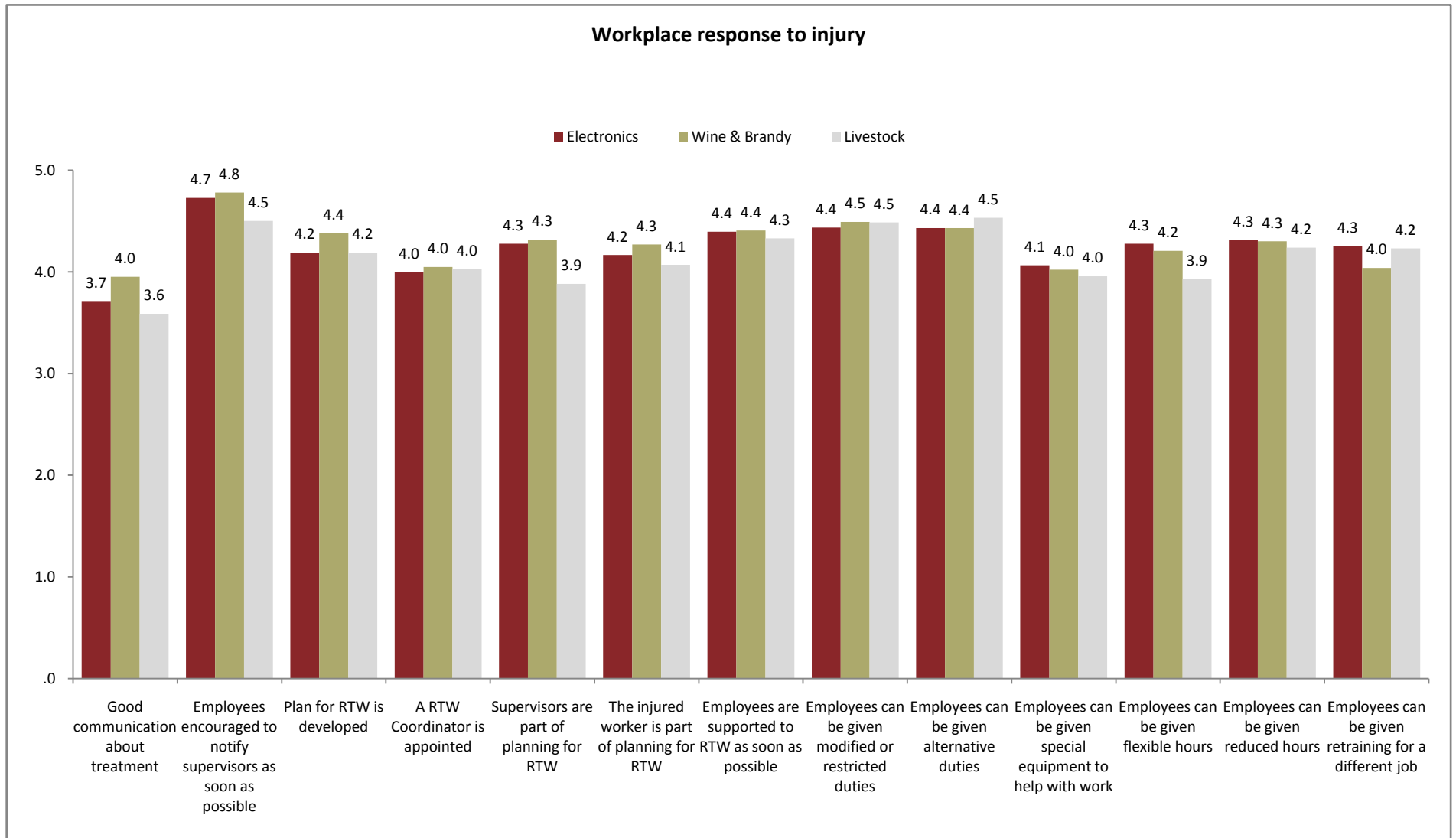


Figure 65: Response to *good communication about treatment* item for the manufacturing industry

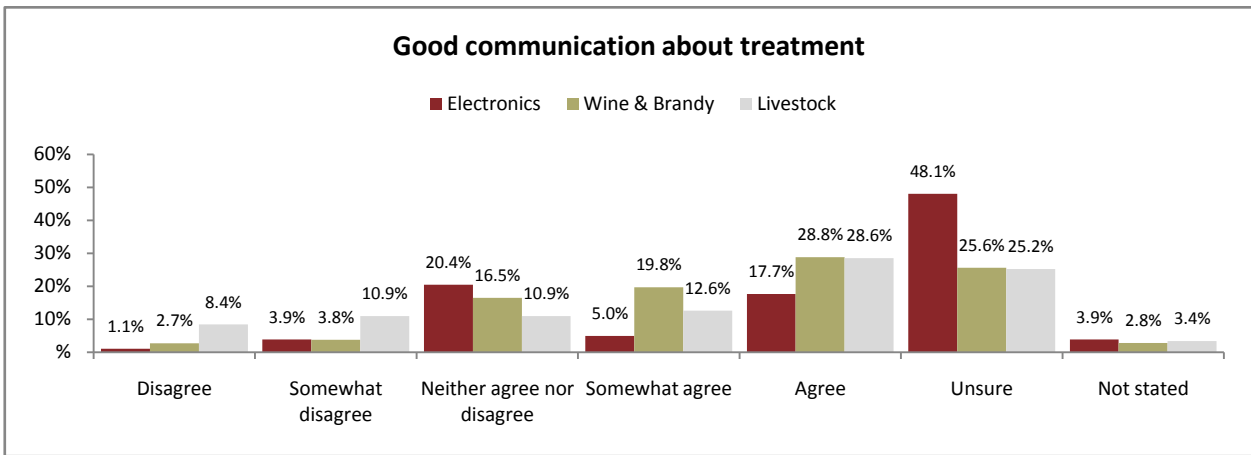


Figure 66: Response to *employees are encouraged to notify supervisors as soon as possible* item for the manufacturing industry

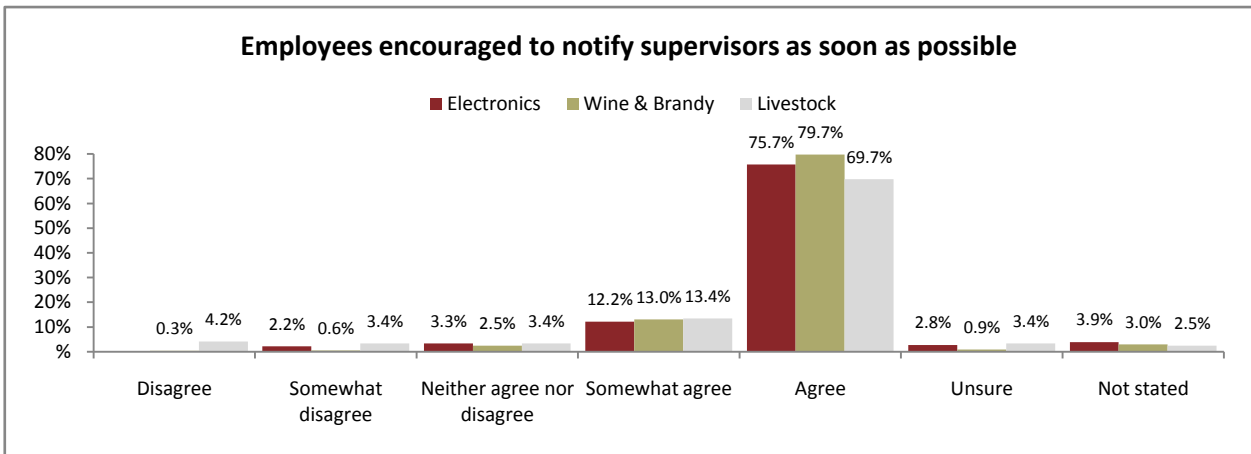


Figure 67: Response to *workplace response to injury: Plan for RTW is developed* item for the manufacturing industry

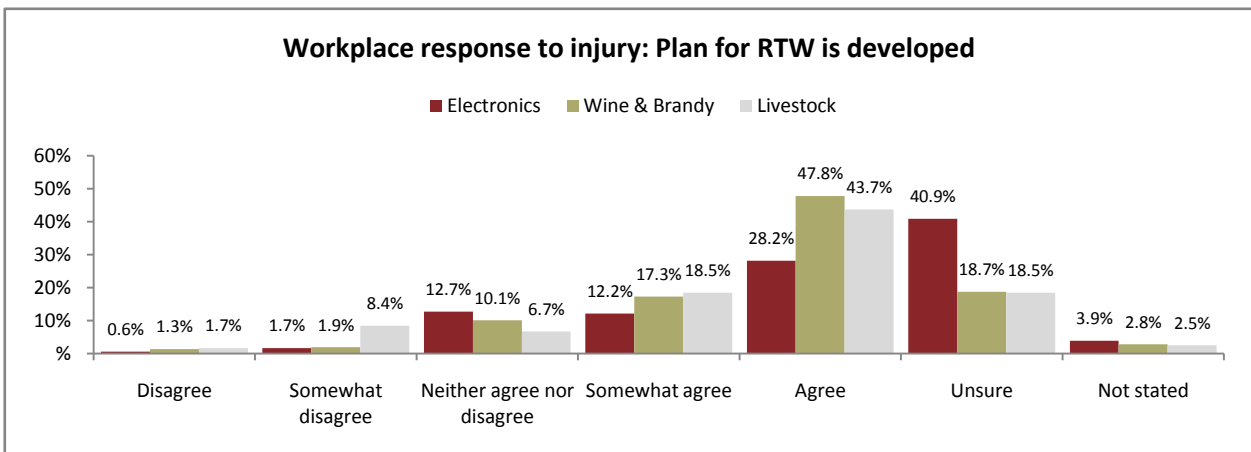


Figure 68: Response to *a RTW coordinator is appointed* item for the manufacturing industry

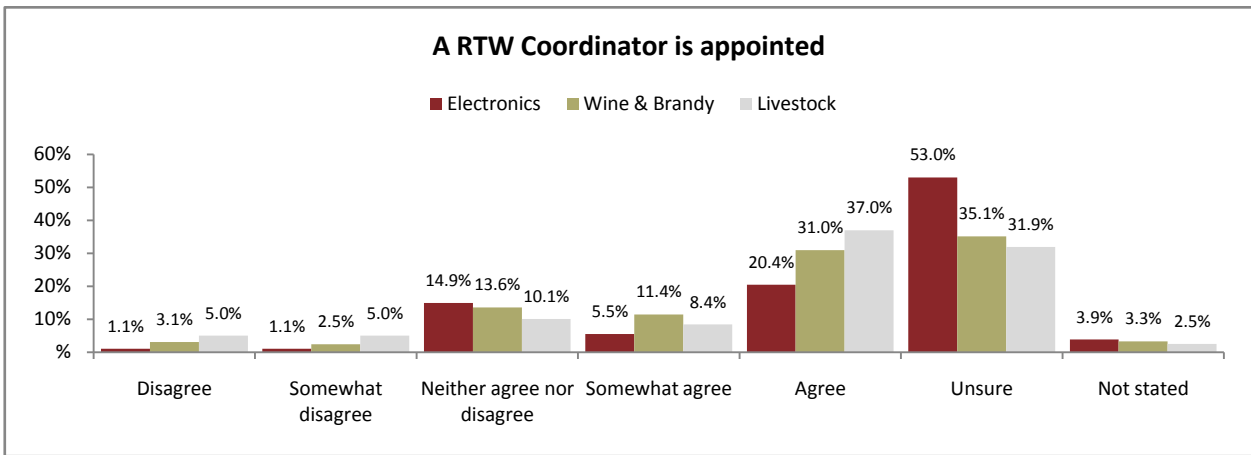


Figure 69: Response to *supervisors are part of planning for RTW* item for the manufacturing industry

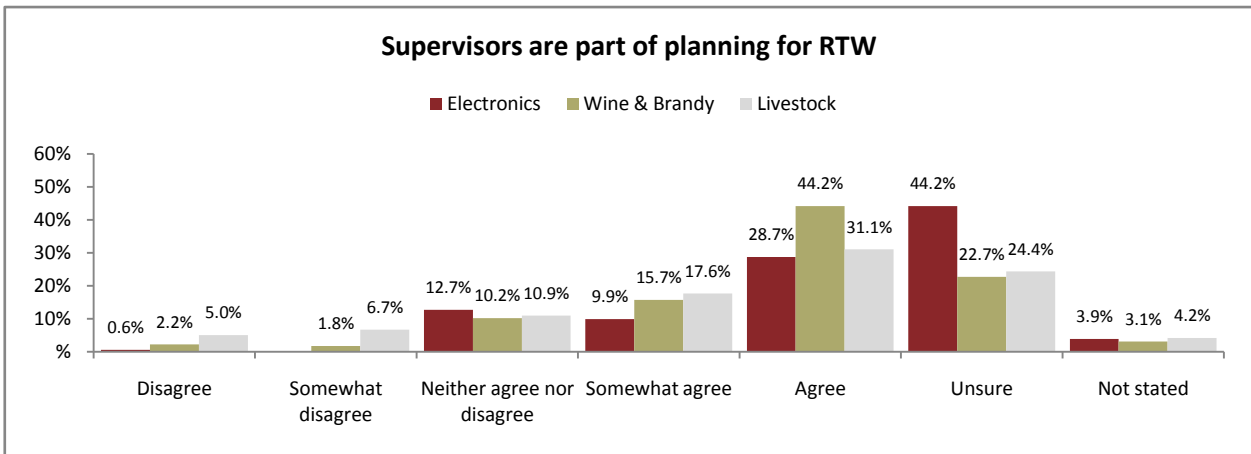


Figure 70: Response to *the injured worker is part of planning for RTW* item for the manufacturing industry

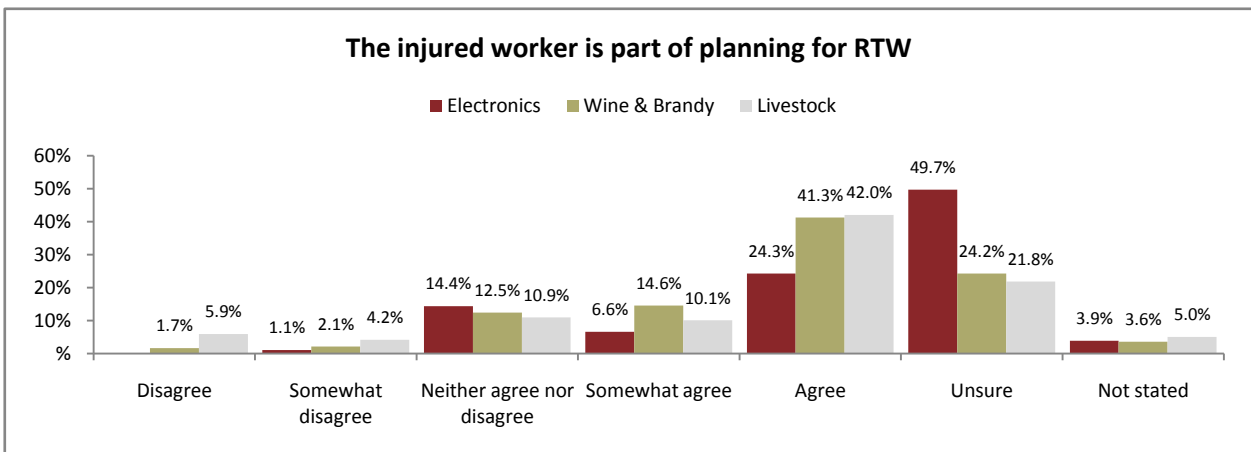


Figure 71: Response to *employees are supported to RTW as soon as possible* item for the manufacturing industry

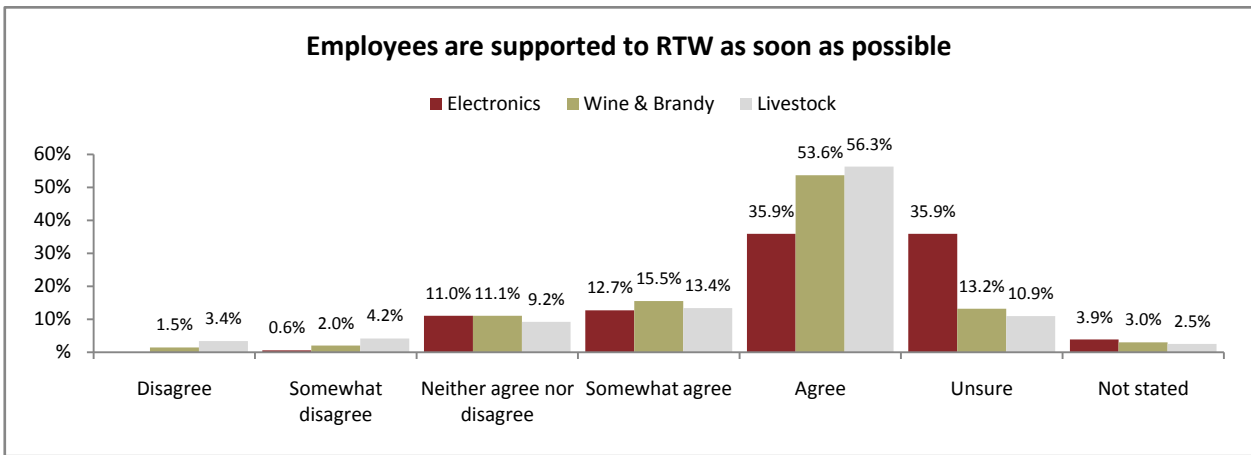


Figure 72: Response to *employees can be given restricted or modified duties* item for the manufacturing industry

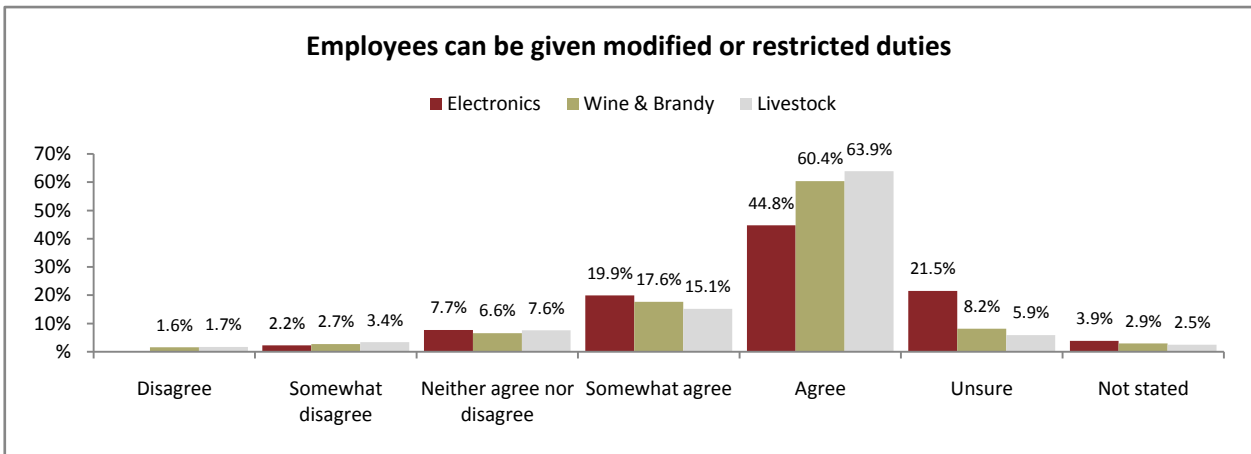


Figure 73: Response to *employees can be given alternative duties* item for the manufacturing industry

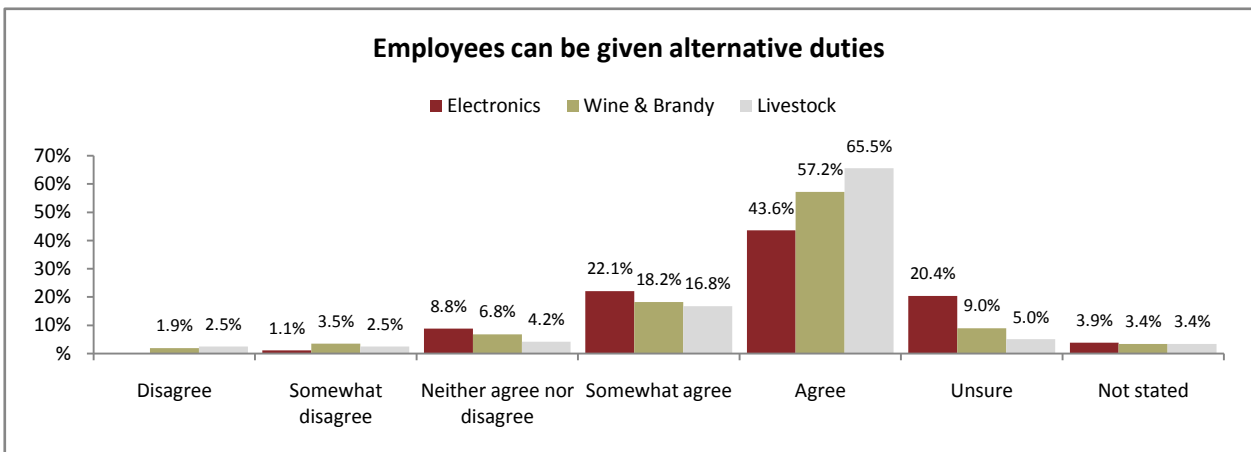


Figure 74: Response to *employees can be given special equipment to help with work* item for the manufacturing industry

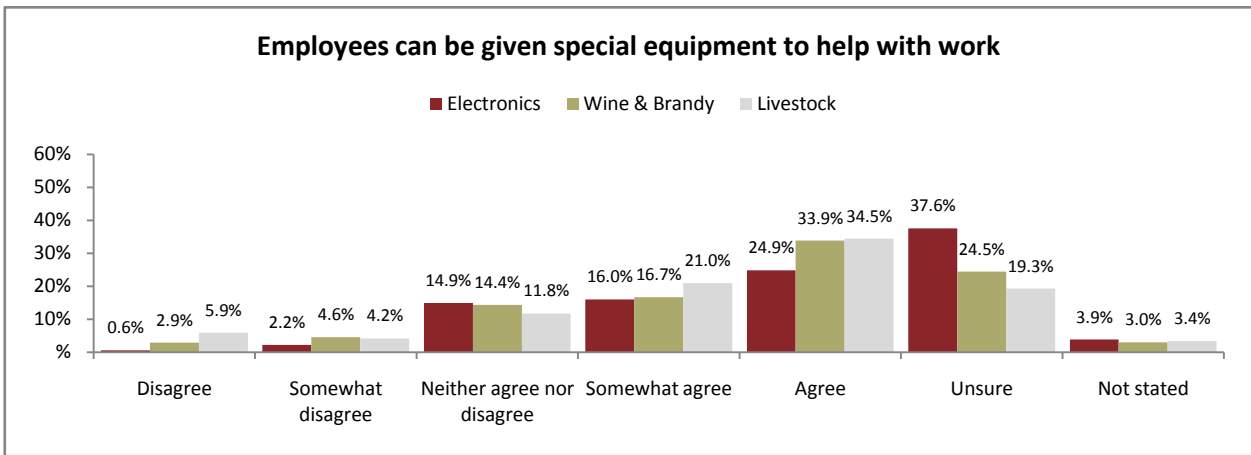


Figure 75: Response to *employees can be given flexible hours* item for the manufacturing industry

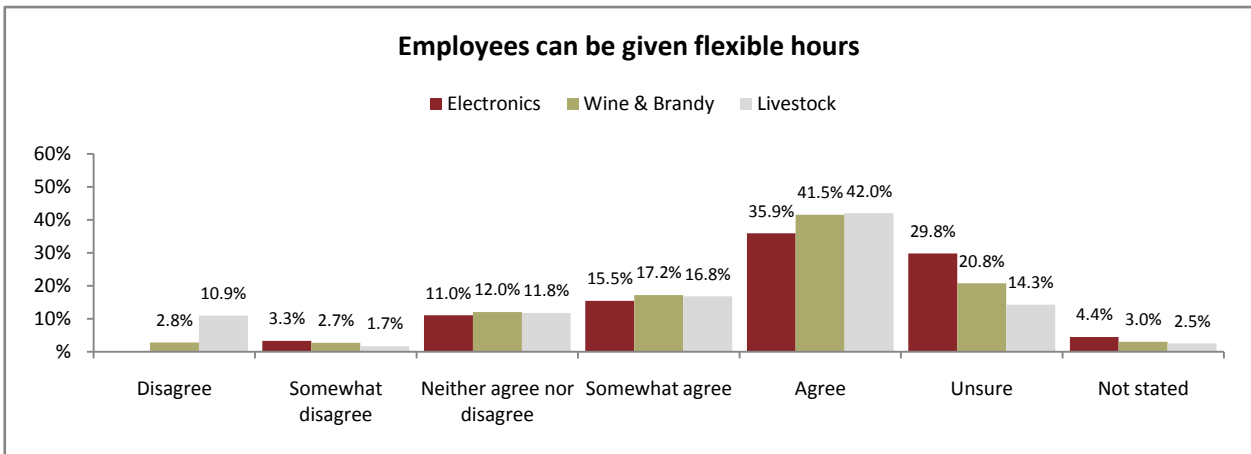


Figure 76: Response to *employees can be given reduced hours* item for the manufacturing industry

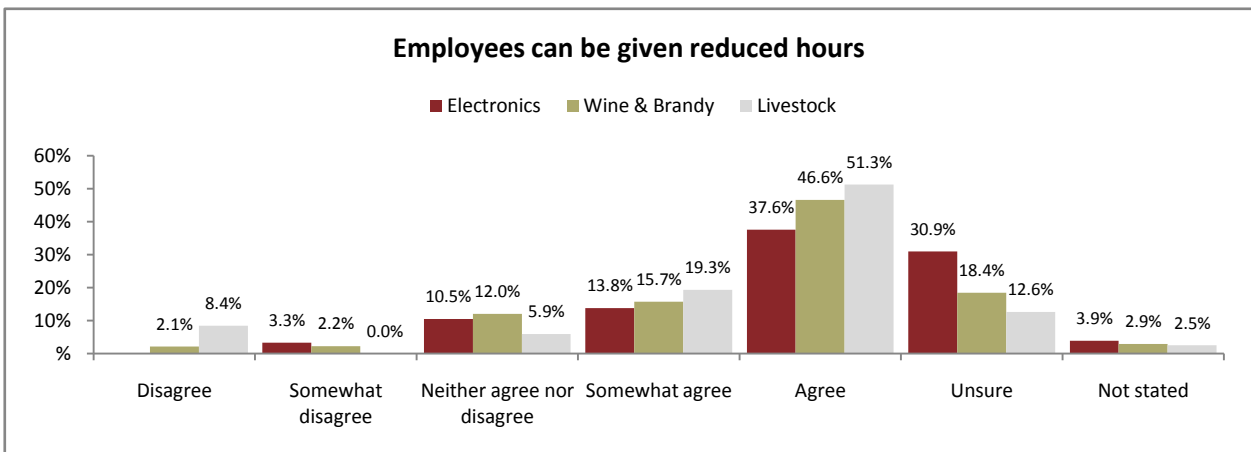
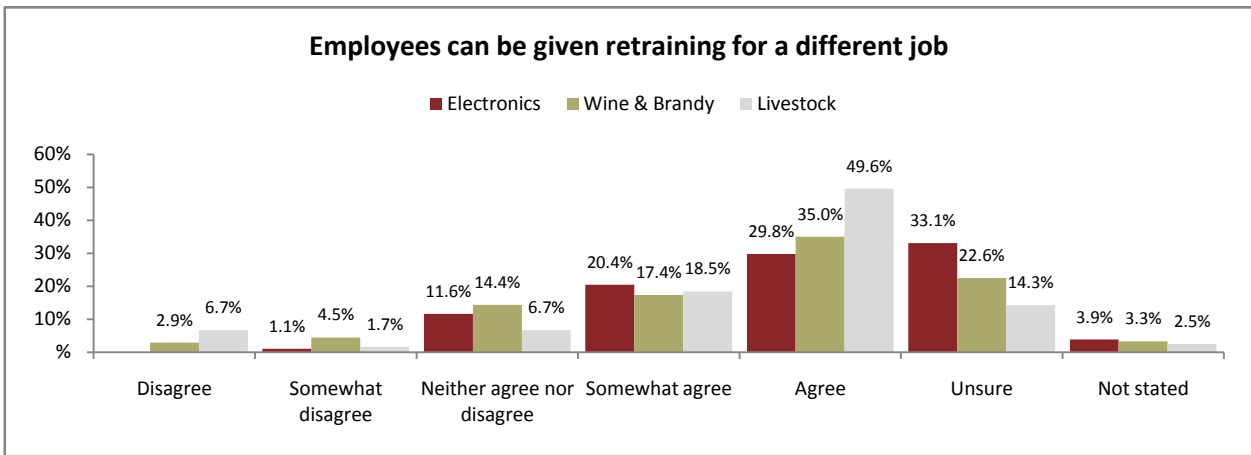


Figure 77: Response to *employees can be given retraining for a different job* item for the manufacturing industry



Organisational responsiveness was rated favourably by most respondents who were able to answer:

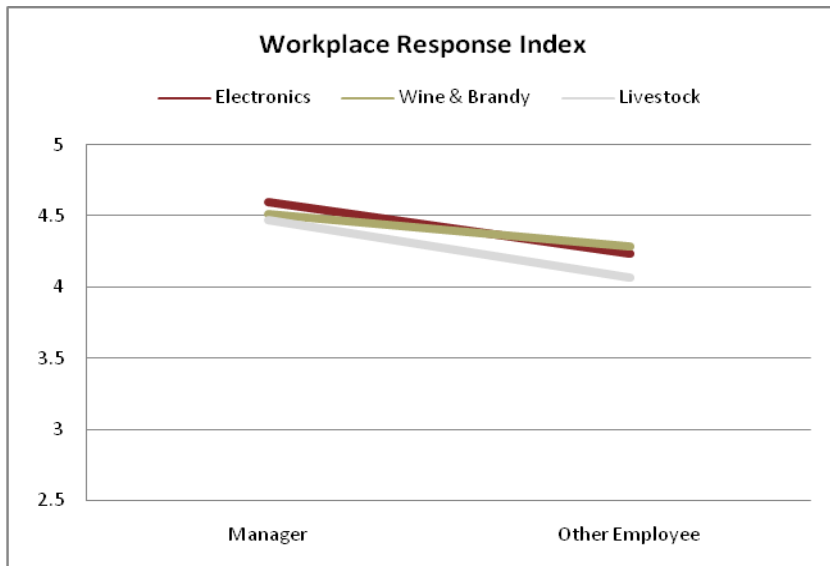
'I think on balance the system works reasonably well albeit that there is a real need for counselling and motivation and confidence building than another specialist or tablets.... there are significant factors beyond the injury that need to be considered.'

Wine and Brandy sector

2.4.6.1 WORKPLACE RESPONSE INDEX - MANAGERS AND OTHER EMPLOYEES

Results were also analysed by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing) and management status (manager, other employees) and are shown in Figure 78.

Figure 78: Differences between sectors, and managerial vs other employees on average Workplace Response scores



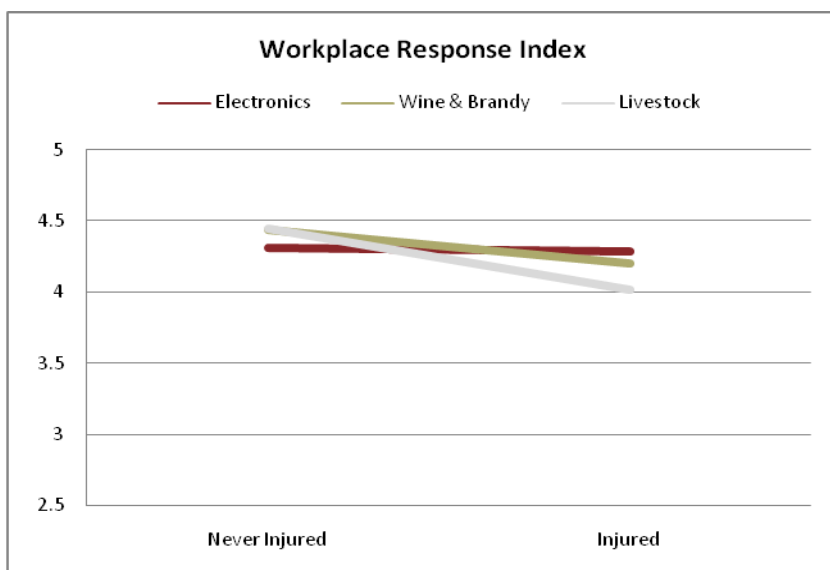
Results show:

- Whilst the trend for lower ratings from non-management employees remained, the difference between them and managers was small.
- Responses from all three sectors were consistent, ranging from a low of 4.1, for non-managerial employees from the meat and livestock processing sectors, to a high of 4.6 for managers from the electronics sector

2.4.6.2 WORKPLACE RESPONSE INDEX – INJURED AND NEVER INJURED

As with the other indexes, further analysis was done on those with a previous workplace injury and those who had not and by sector (electronics, wine and brandy, meat and livestock processing). The results are shown in Figure 79.

Figure 79: Difference between sectors, and non-injured vs injured workers on Workplace Response scores



Results show:

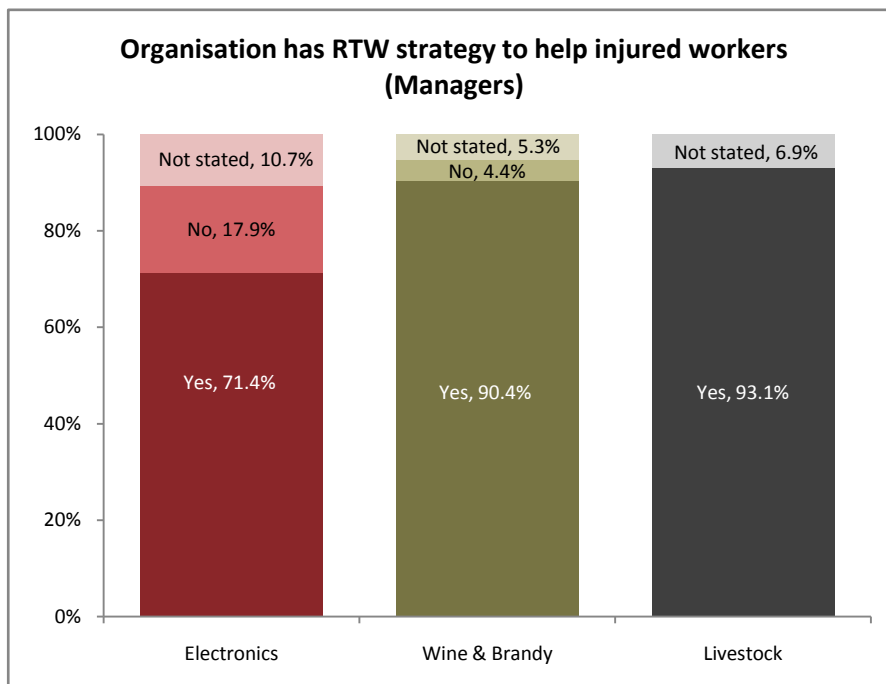
- Sectors did not differ on overall workplace response to injury.
- Injured employees from the meat and livestock processing sector tended to rate workplace responsiveness less favourably than those who had not been injured.

Note the injured group consists of those that had been injured who did and did not lodge a WorkCover SA claim.

2.5 ORGANISATIONAL RETURN TO WORK STRATEGY

A total of 171 managers responded from the three sectors of the manufacturing industry, this represents 14.4% of all responses. Managers were also asked to provide information about their organisation's return to work strategy. Seventy-one percent of managers from the electronics sector, 90.4% from the wine and brandy sector, and 93.3% from the meat and livestock processing sector reported their organisation had a RTW strategy to help injured workers (see Figure 80).

Figure 80: Proportion of managers reporting their organisation has a return to work strategy



Managers who reported their organisation had a RTW strategy also responded to questions on the specific contents of the strategy (see Figure 81), the usefulness of the strategy (Figure 82), and the significance of barriers to RTW (Figure 83). As a general rule, managers from the wine and brandy sector were more likely to report the incorporation of the listed RTW strategies, while managers from the meat and livestock processing sector reported fewer strategies in their organisations. Managers were less likely to identify strategies directed at *workplace redesign to accommodate injuries*, or *contact with colleagues to encourage support*, within their organisations (regardless of their sector), than other RTW strategies. Managers from all sectors reported that the RTW strategies were quite to very useful in most instances.

Managers reported *negative attitudes on the part of the worker* and an *insufficient knowledge of injury or illness and how to manage it* as the most significant barriers to RTW. Although this perception may be as much about the management as the worker:

'... I'm not a bludger, and I think there may be a perception that some people do milk the system for as much as they can get, and this behaviour makes some supervisors in the manufacturing area a bit tense....'

Electronics sector

Figure 81: Proportion of organisations with specified RTW processes

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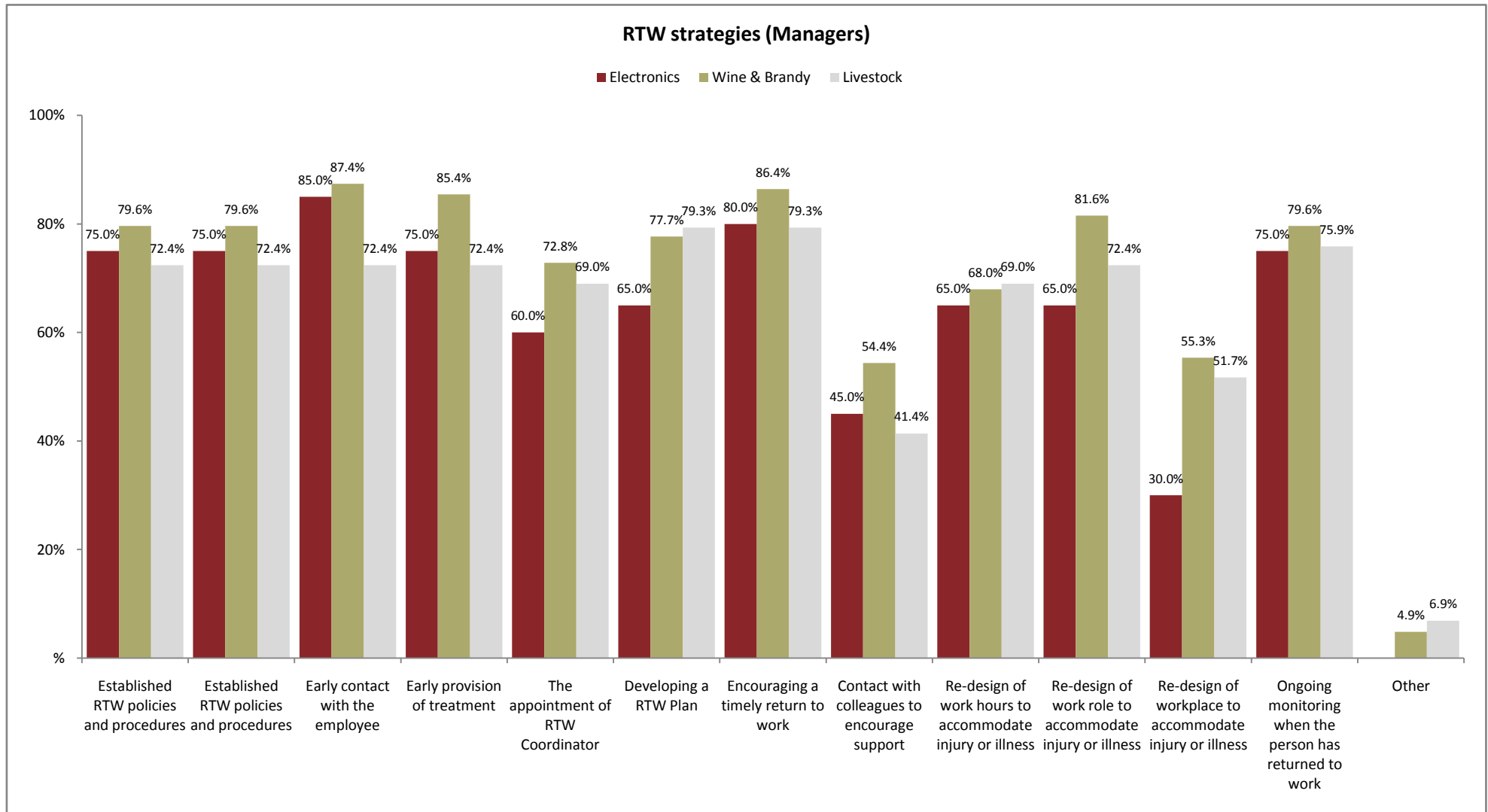


Figure 82: Manager rating of usefulness of strategies in helping employee RTW

AISR (2010) Getting it right: The role of the workplace in return to work.

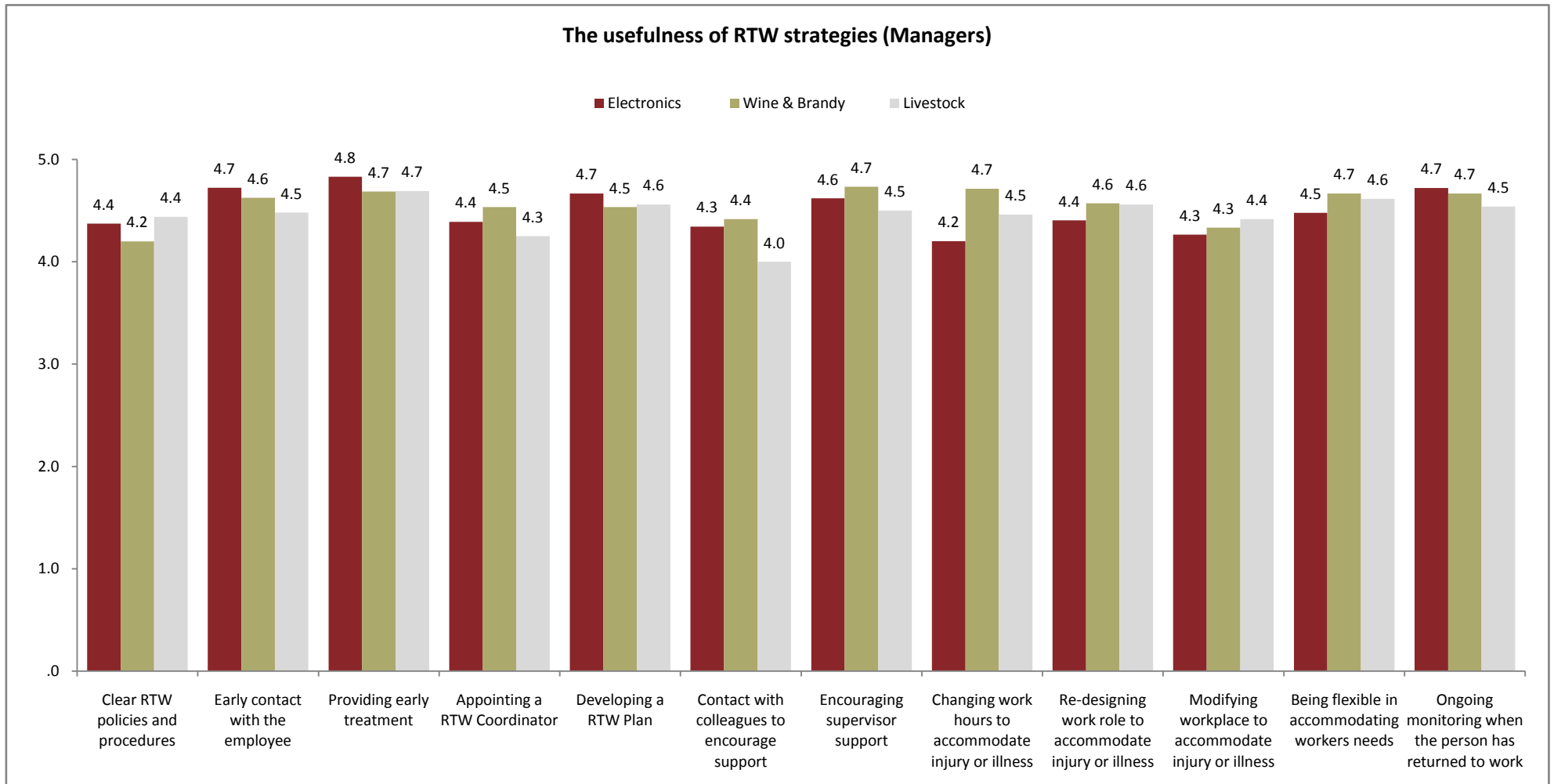
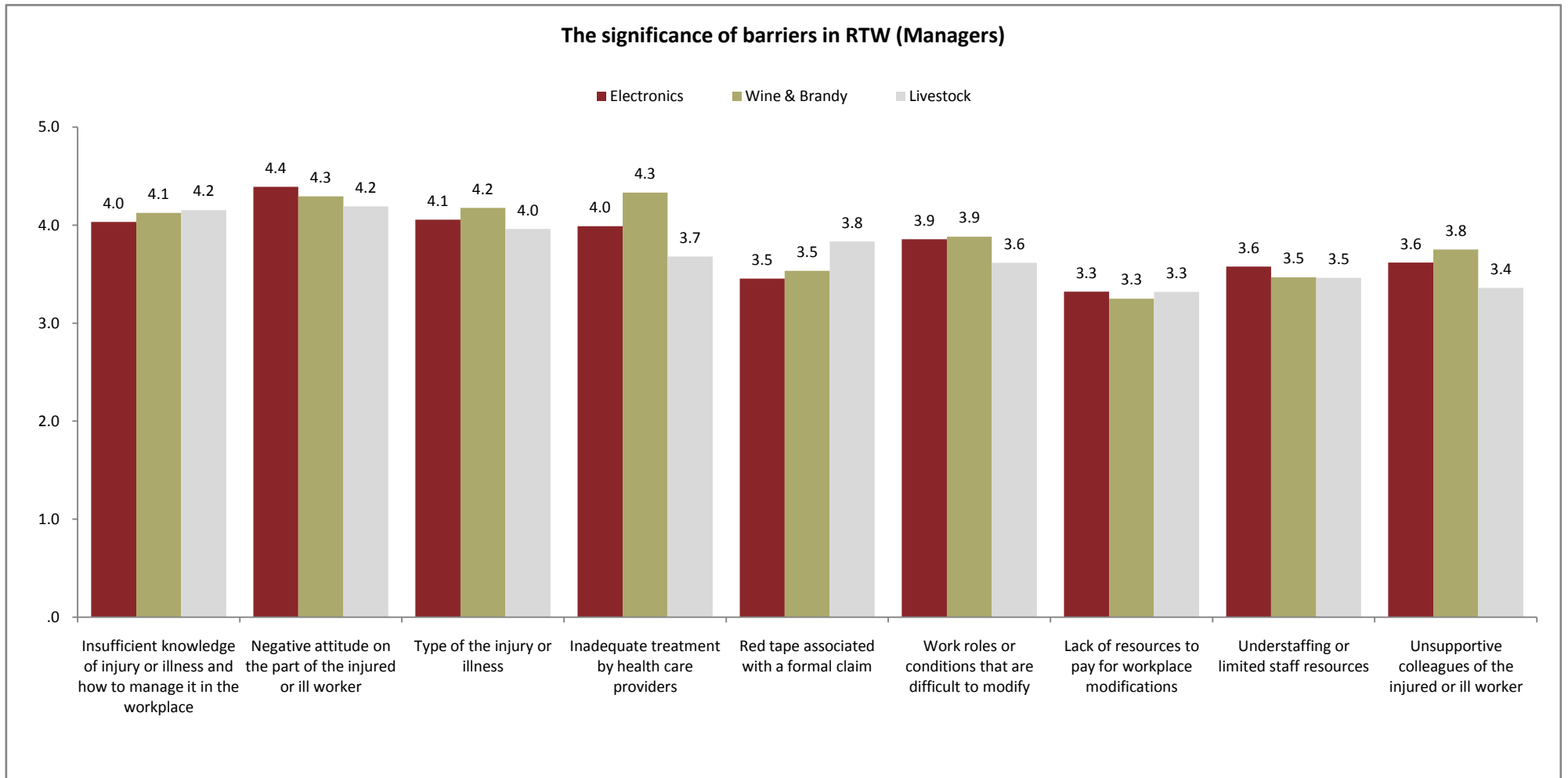


Figure 83: Manager rating of significance of barriers in employee RTW

ASIR (2010) Getting it right: The role of the workplace in return to work.



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PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The project has been undertaken using a mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The main components are:

- o A review of the research literature, focused on workplace factors that affect injury and illness rates, and effective return-to-work following injury or illness.⁴
- o Analysis of unit record data of *WorkCover SA* claims.
- o The survey contents were developed through structured interviews with key stakeholders in *WorkCover SA*, and manufacturing industry sector representatives.
- o Contents were then reassessed and revised in consultation with representatives from each sector.
- o The survey instrument was piloted prior to its release. Each survey was active for approximately two and a half months. The electronics and wine and brandy sector surveys both ran from mid 2009 and closed in September 2009. The meat and livestock processing sector survey closed at the end of May 2010.
- o Reporting includes the following deliverables – an updated review of the literature, tailored (that is, providing survey findings for individual participating organisations) reports, and an Industry Report of overall project findings for *WorkCover SA*.

SURVEY DESIGN – RATING THE WORKPLACE

The *Return to Work Workplace Index* survey instrument (the *RTW Workplace Index*) was designed to be –

- a) Repeated to measure change over time within organisations and in the sector; and
- b) Applied to other industry sectors.

In designing the survey (see Appendix 1), the AISR originally drew together findings from a literature review and from scoping interviews and focus groups with industry representatives, researchers specialising in return-to-work, *WorkCover SA*, *SafeWorkSA* and Employers Mutual staff. In applying the *RTW Workplace Index* to the manufacturing industry, questions were reviewed and comments from the wine and brandy, electronics, and meat and livestock processing sectors led to minor modifications for this survey within the manufacturing industry.

Survey items clustered into five themes which are reflected in the subsequent construction of five sub-indexes, each designed to measure key factors that influence effective return to work. Therefore, the *RTW Workplace Index* has these components:

- ⇒ Index 1: The **conditions** of the workplace (see Section 2.4.2);
- ⇒ Index 2: The degree of **control** or autonomy workers have in relation to their work role and responsibilities and how these are undertaken (see Section 2.4.3);
- ⇒ Index 3: The **culture** of the workplace – for example, supportiveness shown to injured or ill workers, the degree of trust, quality of communication (see Section 2.4.4);
- ⇒ Index 4: **Safety** in the workplace and the prevention of injury and illness (see Section 2.4.5); and
- ⇒ Index 5: The way in which the workplace **responds** to injury or illness, including provision for return-to-work (see Section 0).

⁴ The Discussion Paper arising from this literature review is available on the WorkCover SA website and the AISR website.

Each index is comprised of questions relating to factors that are known to affect workplace injury rates and to affect return-to-work. Using a five point Likert scale, ranging from '1' (which represented the least favourable rating) to '5' (representing the most positive rating), survey participants are asked to their workplace on a number of features. **Low scores on each of these five indexes will be associated with a reduced likelihood of timely return to work.**

The five Indexes can be used as a –

- ⇒ measure of both achievement and challenges that need to be addressed;
- ⇒ risk management tool through early identification and management of problems; and as a
- ⇒ baseline to assess the impact of interventions designed to enhance the role of the workplace in the return to work.

SURVEY PROCESS

Mindful of the time and resource pressures faced by the sectors, the AISR research team designed a process, tailored to each participating organisation, which would complement organisational processes and minimise disruption to staff. To guide the process, we identified the following four objectives -

- *Objective 1: Determine the most suitable process for obtaining survey participation from each organisation.*
- *Objective 2: Ensure an effective communication process between the organisations and the research team.*
- *Objective 3: Identify key contact points to maximise survey participation.*
- *Objective 4: Establish a process that is tailored to individual organisation need and captures important background information for the survey.*

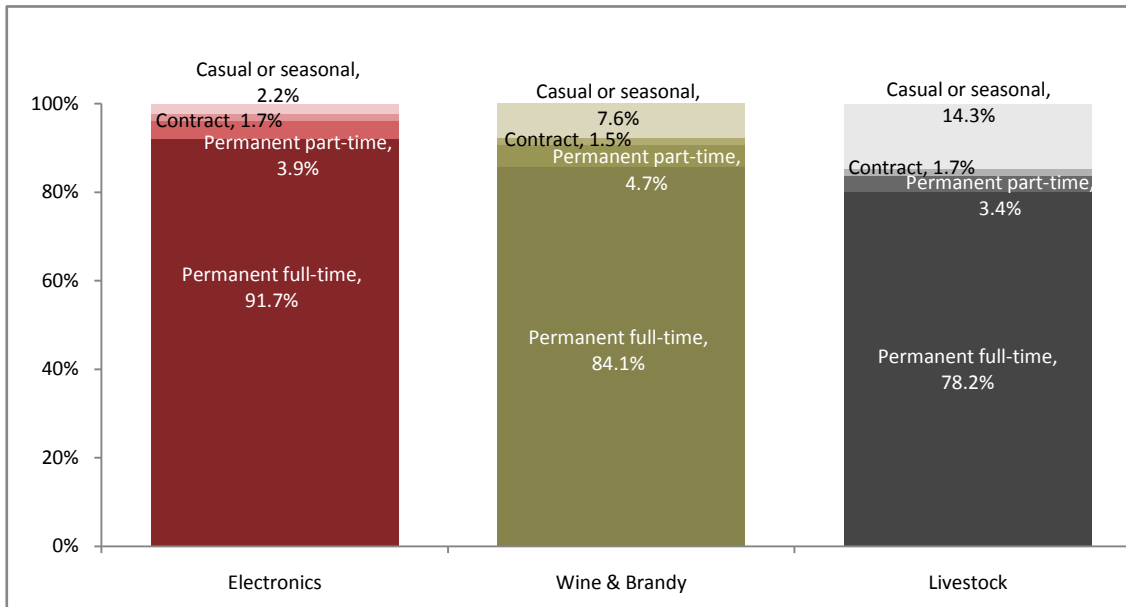
The process adopted had these elements –

- 1 A single point of contact, or 'liaison', was identified for each organisation (eg HR Manager) and that person became the direct link with the research team. For organisations with multiple sites, the liaison person was encouraged to appoint an individual at each site to ensure that the survey was distributed to all staff and to encourage participation.
- 2 Similarly, a member of the AISR project team was nominated as 'principal contact', someone to whom survey-related questions could be directed, should participants need clarification or further information.
- 3 The research team contacted the liaison person to discuss the research process and to:
 - a) Provide an explanation of the project and its purpose (focusing on the benefits to employers that were expected to be generated by the findings). This included a discussion of the sample sought – that is those (1) on leave with an existing *WorkCover* claim; (2) returned from leave for a *WorkCover* claim, and (3) a 'control' group who had not been involved in a claim.
 - b) Understand the process by which injury/illness claims and return to work are managed by the organisation (focusing on the workplace itself).
 - c) Clarify the organisation's structure and workforce.
 - d) Discuss the appropriate format of response to the survey (hard copy or online) for different staff and management groups, and identify the need for translation for workers not fluent in English.
 - e) Discuss the most appropriate timeframe for the organisation from initial distribution of the survey to completion, to optimise responses which were especially relevant for industries with definite seasonal activities.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Most employees responding to the survey were employed **fulltime** (see Figure 84). However, there are decreasing numbers of permanent full-time staff from the low (electronics), through to medium (wine and brandy) and finally high (meat and livestock processing) claims sectors. Correspondingly, an increased proportion of respondents in the higher claims sectors reported employment on a casual or seasonal basis with 2.2% of those from the electronics sector, 7.6% from the wine and brandy sector⁵, and 14.3% from the meat and livestock processing respondents reporting employment on this basis.

Figure 84: Type of employment contract



The following figures show the socio-demographic profiles of respondents from the three sectors. The gender distribution of respondents across the sectors is shown in Figure 85 with no significant differences. Of note, respondents from:

- The **meat and livestock processing sector**:
 - ⇒ Were more likely to be **aged 24 years and younger** (see Figure 86).
- The **wine and brandy sector**:
 - ⇒ Were more likely to have an **apprenticeship, traineeship or certificate qualification** (see Figure 87);
 - ⇒ Were more likely to have been **born in Australia** (see Figure 88); and
 - ⇒ Were more likely to **speak English as a first language** (see Figure 89).
- The **electronics sector** (relative to the other sectors):
 - ⇒ Were more likely to have a **University degree** (see Figure 87).

⁵ Note the survey was not conducted during the vintage season (on advice from sector representatives) when this type of contract would be more prevalent in the wine and brandy sector.

Figure 85: Gender profile

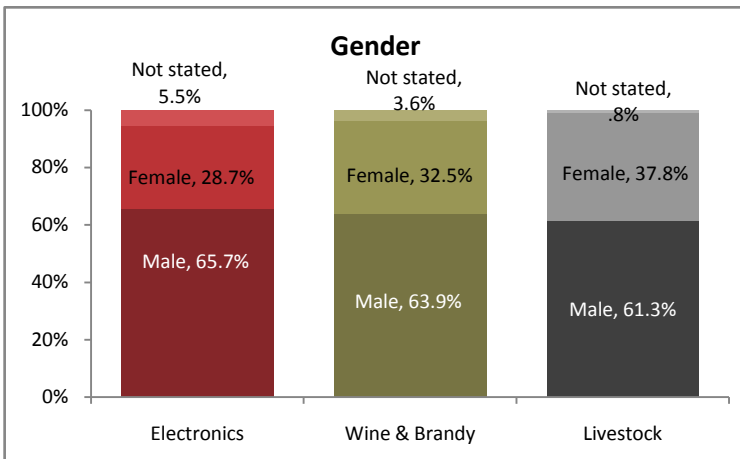


Figure 86: Age profile

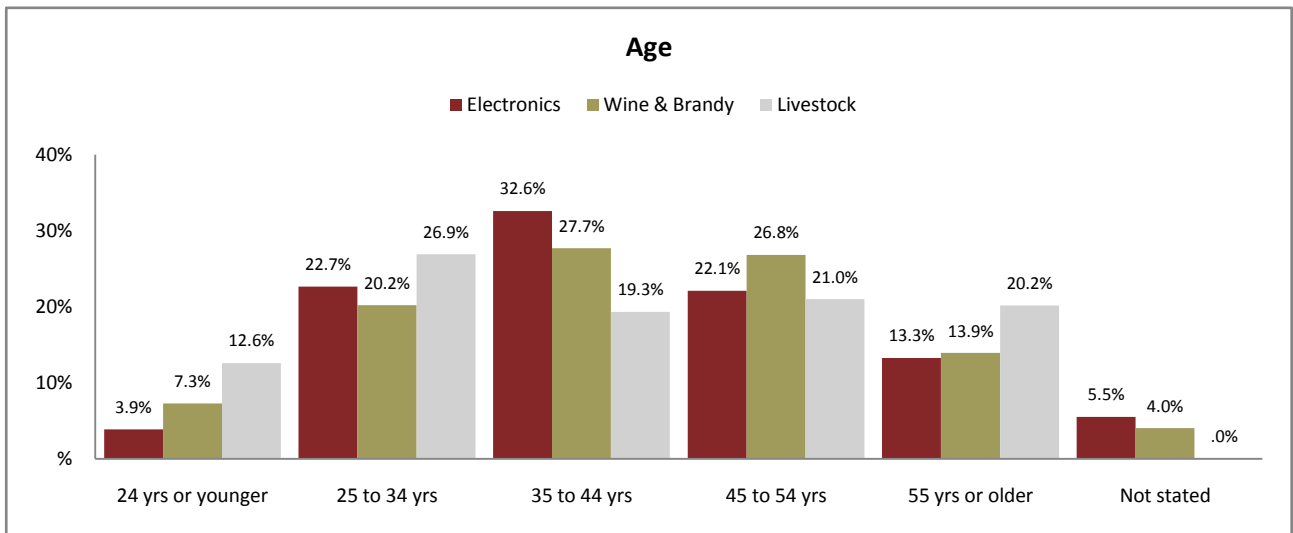


Figure 87: Highest education level

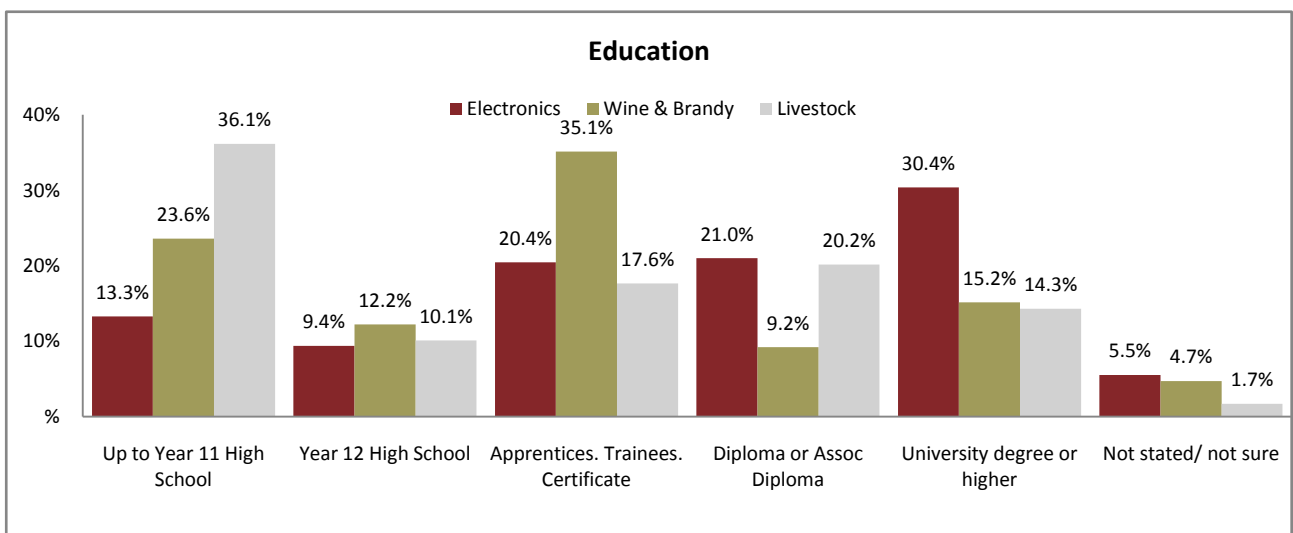


Figure 88: Country of birth

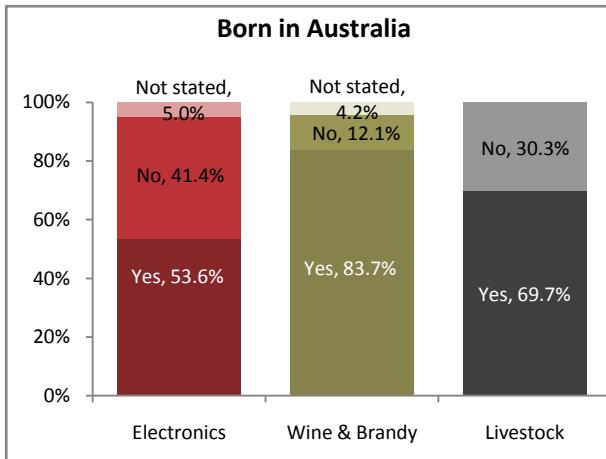


Figure 89: English as a first language

