

## Manitoba Update - Spring 2022 AWCBC Committee Meeting

**Have there been any recent significant legislation or policy changes? Or any coming up this year?**

- underwent legislative changes effective January 1/22.
- these changes were a result of a public consultation occurring in 2016. Commitment is to engage in a public consultation process every 10 years.
- key claim related changes related to re-instituting a maximum assessable earnings and maximum wage loss benefits cap at \$150,000 (last legislative change in 2006 removed the maximum); through Act changes, greater powers are now bestowed on our Compliance services area for instituting fines and penalties if an employer or worker does not meet their legislative obligations; the creation of an Employer Advisor Office; there is a change to our Accident definition; and other minor changes related to payment of other benefits (Group Life Insurance, Payment under special circumstances).

**What are the current challenges your organization is experiencing?**

- Morale issues (pockets throughout organization)
- A significant number of unexpected extended sick leaves creating workload concerns for those remaining at work
- Recruitment challenges for our adjudication and case management areas
- Collective bargaining is underway - current 4 year contract technically ended March 2021

**Are there any new initiatives your jurisdiction is undertaking?**

Recently launched the Worker and Employer Return to Work Awareness initiative. This ties to our strategic priority of Enabling Successful Return to Work. The awareness initiative provides just in time materials/RTW video to workers and small/medium sized employers when a claim is reported. Distributed via email. Certain claims are excluded (such as a serious injury).

Work is underway to be more coordinated in our Prevention Services and Return to Work Program Services consulting efforts, targeting work with identified critical employer accounts having a significant impact on the system (average days lost, average costs/claim). Early stages of developing our approach.

## COVID-19 update: volume, claim management, impact on RTW, treatment, other challenges?

The following is our initial adjudication claim activity.



Of the claims accepted, majority have resolved within 8-12 weeks of date of illness. Since March 2020, we've had approx. 170 total claims transfer to our Case Mgt area. As of end of February, 61 remain active and are a mix of long covid and more serious complications from covid. Most of the active claims are from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> waves. Most from the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave (Fall 2021) and the 4<sup>th</sup> wave (Omicron wave) resolved and did not require case management services.

### What are the current claim volumes in your jurisdiction? Have there been changes in recent years/ what do you attribute this to?

Prepandemic we were already trending down in our claims volumes accepted. Anecdotally this relates to prevention and return to work program efforts made by the WCB and key employers having an impact to the system.

The pandemic created even more of a downward swing related to economic impacts of public health orders/closures/lay offs. As of early 2022, we are trending back to pre-pandemic claim levels (2019).

Statistics	Board Notified Year				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Psychological Injuries	194	252	256	355	349
All Other Injuries and Illnesses	28,940	28,199	27,824	27,300	22,410
Total Accepted Injuries and Illnesses	29,134	28,451	28,080	27,655	22,759

## Psychological injury update: volume, claim management, impact on RTW, treatment, other challenges?

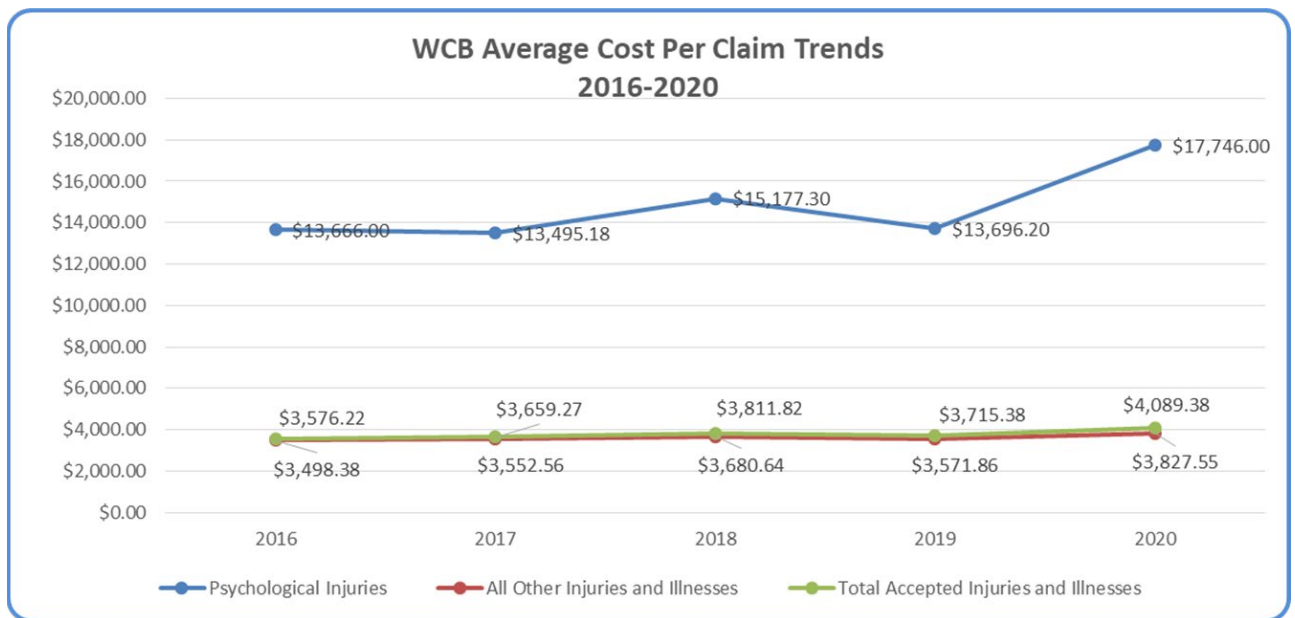
### WCB Trends 2016-2020

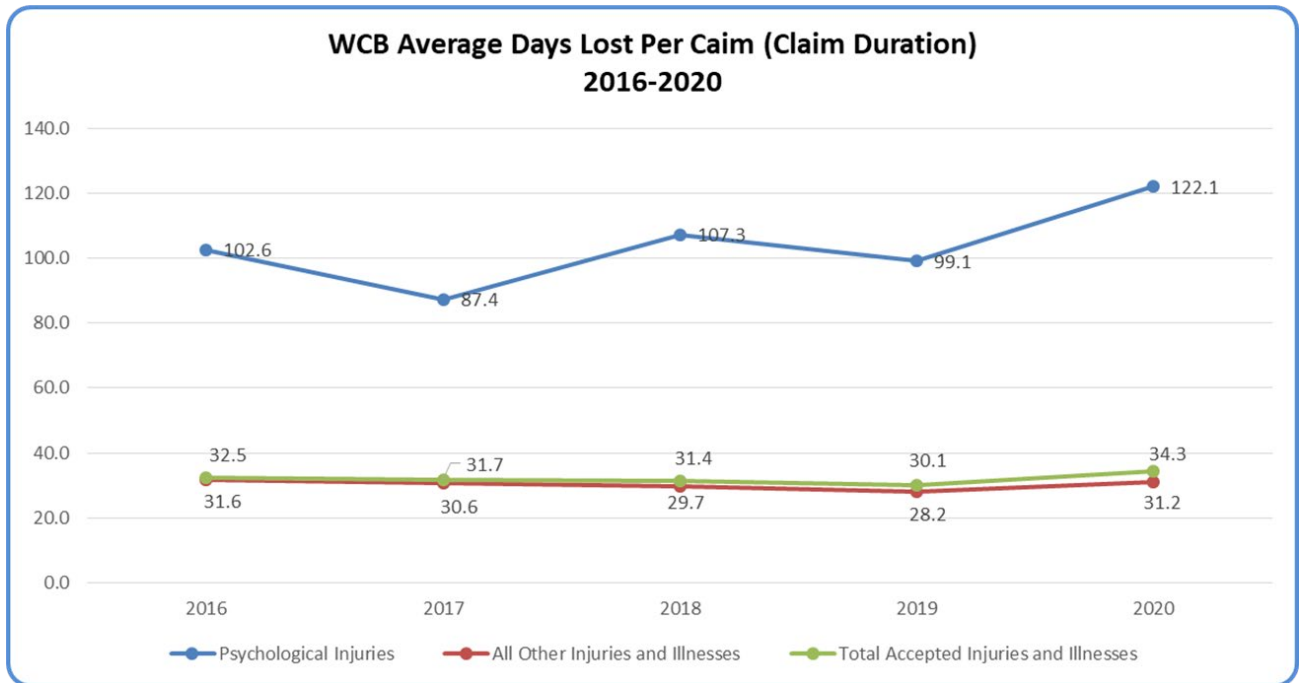
- Psychological injury claims accepted by the WCB have increased by 80% in claim count volume since 2016
- All other WCB injuries and illnesses have decreased by 23% in claim count volume

Impacts to treatment and claim duration are anecdotal and include:

- Various lockdowns have impacted in person service for psychological claims,
- Sometimes lack of access to virtual treatment options,
- Some barriers to doing exposure therapy when physical distancing is required and Employer/claim owner lack of understanding/inexperience with psychological injuries and identifying timely/suitable RTW accommodations.

We have also had a number of psychological claims overturned at our final level of appeal resulting large retroactive payments and days paid which influences the claim trends noted below. (No time limit for appeal in MB).





**Working from home: are you continuing to WFH? What is your jurisdiction’s short term/long term plans?**

- We've had several attempts at a return to office, with the last one being in the Fall 2021. By January 1, the community spread of Omicron had us send 95% of our staff to work from home full time as a temporary measure.
- All staff are returning to pre-pandemic in office schedules on April 4 - some operational areas already had hybrid work from home options in place prior to the pandemic and these will continue.
- Tied to the return to office, is a return to in person service
- A WFH policy is being worked on and is a key collective bargaining issue for the organization more broadly. It is anticipated that work from home will be offered more broadly to other areas/roles that did not have this option before but were it is deemed as suitable. Some areas are likely still determined to be not operationally feasible to have work from home (such as our call centres or records clerks).