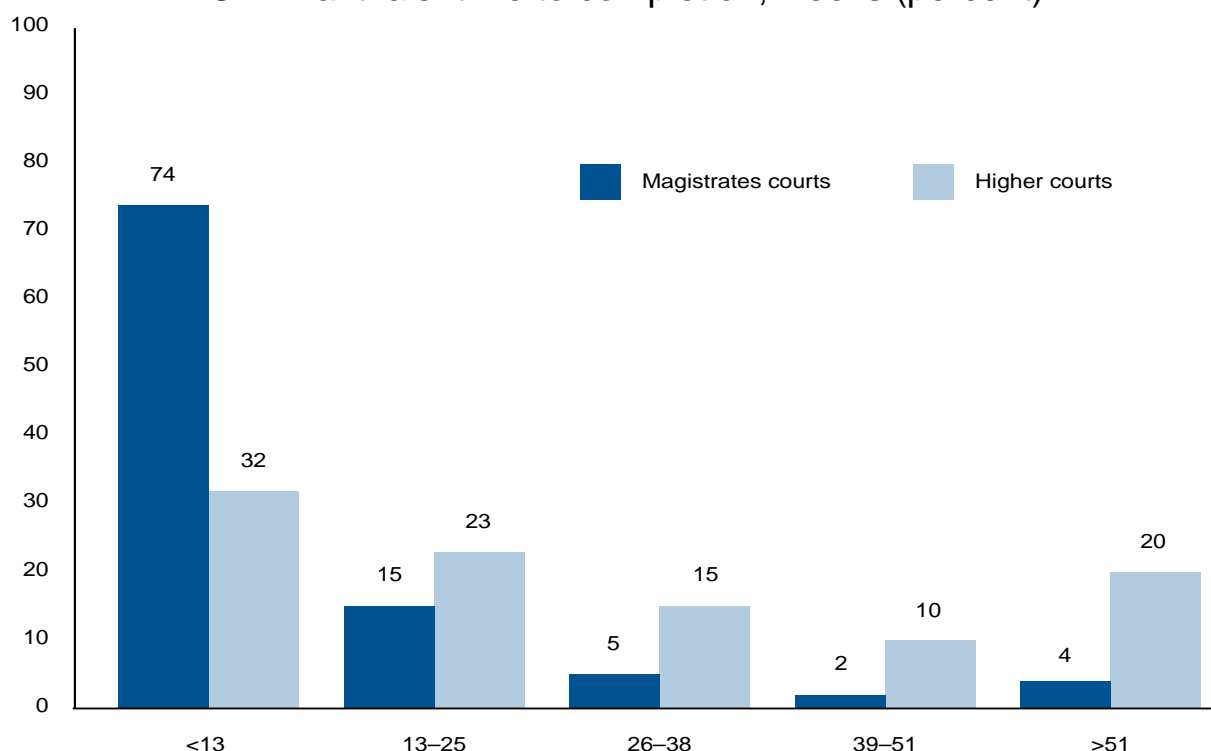


Criminal trials: time to completion

There is an Australian benchmark of 90% completion of cases in magistrates' courts within six months and in higher courts within 12 months (SCRGS 2007: Box 6.8). The figure below shows how Australian courts perform against this benchmark, using Australian Bureau of Statistics data (ABS 2007). Failure to proceed as scheduled on the day of listing can contribute considerably to the length of a trial and consume significant criminal justice resources through backlogs and delay, even where the failure to proceed occurs due to a late change in plea to guilty. The Australian Institute of Criminology recently released a report (Payne 2007) on reasons for such delays, which were found to occur in between 61 and 86 percent of all criminal trials. The report includes recommendations for improvements in processes to minimise the occurrence of delayed trial commencements and thus improve justice outcomes for victims and offenders.

Criminal trials: time to completion, weeks (percent)



Source: ABS 2007: tables 15 and 16

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2007. *Criminal courts, Australia 2005–06*. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/cat/4513.0>

Payne J 2007. *Criminal trial delays in Australia: trial listing outcomes*. Research and public policy series no. 74. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/74/>

Steering Committee on the Review of Government Services (SCRGS) 2007. *Report on government services 2007*. Melbourne: Productivity Commission. <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2007/index.html>