

# Fast facts about the jury system

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1. Juries have been around since the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BC in Ancient Greece (see Socrates case elsewhere in this pack) but the modern jury is generally thought to have emerged in 12<sup>th</sup> Century England.
  2. Criminal trials in Australian states and territories have 12 jurors and civil trials have 4 jurors; up to 3 reserve jurors may be chosen, particularly if the trial is likely to be lengthy.
  3. In Queensland, research has found that juries are representative of the general population.
  4. In Queensland, 15,000 people participate in jury service annually and around 7,600 are empanelled.
  5. In Queensland, an average trial in the District Court lasts for 3-4 days and in the Supreme Court, 5-7 days.
  6. Queensland is split up into 'jury districts' and jurors are selected from within these jury districts, usually covering an area of up to 20km around the courthouse.
  7. There are 4 stages to the jury service selection process:
    - I. A computer selects names at random from the electoral roll.
    - II. Jurors are sent a letter and must complete and return a questionnaire which will determine if they are eligible and able to serve on a jury during the time period for which they have been selected.
    - III. If they are eligible and have not been excused, their name will be put into a second ballot.
    - IV. If their name is selected in the second ballot they will be summonsed for jury service. This does not mean they will serve on a jury, but means they might have to attend court during their period of jury service to take part in the jury selection process known as empanelment.
  8. On the first day of empanelment—normally during the first break—jurors must choose a speaker (sometimes called a foreperson) who will speak for the jury in court, deliver the verdict and may talk to the Judge during the trial if necessary.
  9. Before every trial starts the Judge explains the role of the jury and how jurors should conduct themselves during the trial.
  10. Jurors do not have to decide on questions of law or what sentence a guilty person should receive, they only decide whether the person is guilty or not (or in civil cases, who is at fault) based on the evidence that they hear or see in court.
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