

Cost category Costs in response to crime

Cost item Cost of courts

Definition Court time spent on processing cases involving a particular offence type: includes costs of employing judges and other court staff and also cost of providing courtroom and holding facilities, video links etc.

Theoretical discussion link to

Preferred estimation methodology Identify the amount of time taken by the court on average to process a case involving a particular offence type. Identify total costs of running courts and the total amount of time spent hearing cases. Multiply the average hourly cost of a court by the number of hours an average case takes to process to get an average cost per case heard. Multiply this by the number of cases of this type being processed annually to get the aggregate cost for the offence type. Divide by an estimate of the number of offences of this type committed annually (from crime survey data) to get the court cost per offence.

Comments Countries usually have a hierarchy of courts with higher courts hearing more serious cases. For offence types which can be heard at more than one level it is important to include costs from the different levels. In some countries including England & Wales courts are also responsible for administering financial penalties. If so, the best thing is to treat these enforcement costs as a separate item.

Usage widely included in cost of crime estimates

Offences normally included since virtually all offence types may result in a court hearing, include all offence types

Formula
$$\text{average court time (hours) per case involving offence type } j * \text{average (hourly) cost of running a court} * \text{number of cases of type } j \text{ heard per annum} / \text{number of offences of type } j \text{ committed per year as estimated from survey data}$$

Data sources Organisations responsible for courts generally produce an annual report listing the total budget for courts and the total number of cases processed, staff employed etc. These may need to be used in conjunction with sentencing statistics to identify the number of offenders dealt with and the sanctions imposed on them. There are good sources of data on the costs of administering courts in the EU available from the CEPEJ report.

Example (hypothetical example)

£	50,000,000	Total budget of organisation administering courts
	5%	proportion of court time spent on offence j
£	2,500,000	total cost of court time for offence j
	50,000	estimated number of offences of type j
£	50	average cost per offence