Definition: The average cost of processing a single case, by case type.

Purpose: Monitoring cost per case, from year to year, provides a practical means to evaluate existing case processing practices and to improve court operations. Cost per case forges a direct connection between how much is spent and what is accomplished. This measure can be used to assess return on investment in new technologies, reengineering of business practices, staff training, or the adoption of “best practices.” It also helps determine where court operations may be slack, including inefficient procedures or underutilized staff.

Method: A primary responsibility of courts is efficient processing of cases. Efficiency within the context of case resolution means to use resources in their most productive fashion to produce the most of what a court system values. Gauging efficiency, then, requires careful examination of how courts can best use their personnel, procedures, and technology to achieve desired outcomes such as access, fairness, and timeliness.

This measure provides important insight into the management of a court’s limited resources. Cost per case requires the following data for a given time period (e.g., a year):

- total court expenditures
- case dispositions (or filings) by major case type
- a complete inventory of all judicial officers and court staff

The court’s allocation of personnel across case types is used to distribute the court’s total expenses across case types. This method is used because the vast majority of court expenditures are personnel related, and courts generally allocate their judicial and staff resources rationally to accommodate their workload. Total costs by case type are then divided by the total number of cases in each relevant case type to obtain the cost of a single case.

The primary use of this measure is within a court, over time. The utility of cost per case increases when it can be linked directly to other elements of court performance (i.e., other CourTools measures) as it provides an important perspective for interpreting the relationship between cost and outcomes. Once a court determines how it is currently performing in different case type areas, court managers can make more informed decisions regarding the level of resources to devote to each case type.
Although assembling all expenditure data can be labor-intensive at first, once the initial classification copies and updates are completed, the data can be used for more detailed cost analysis. The primary responsibility of courts in efficiently classifying costs involves the careful consideration of how costs can be categorized and counted by case type.

- Facility expenses (e.g., rent, maintenance, insurance)
- Salaries and benefits (e.g., for staff and judicial officers)
- Other costs (e.g., for human resources, information technology)

For the purposes of this measure, all the court's costs can be categorized and counted by case type. This is achieved through the development of a classification scheme that links judicial officers and staff work in probate cases; thus, 9.4% of the total court expenditures will be allocated to the probate case type.

### Step 1: Sort Court Personnel by Case Type

First, identify the personnel (by type) who can be categorized by case type, but the actual sorting step will be based on cost jurisdiction. The goal is to manage the number of different important case types that require the general work of judicial officers and staff. Using information about work assignments and job responsibilities, classify all judicial officers and court staff. This helps to identify the total number of cases for each relevant case type. The distribution of personnel by case type will be used to allocate costs in subsequent steps.

### Step 2: Determine Total Court Expenditures

Expenditures are used (rather than charges) as the denominator because funds are actually spent on each case type. A complete list of court expenditures will include categories such as:
- Salaries and benefits
- Supplies and equipment
- Travel and other court-related expenses

No matter how the court classifies its costs, for the purposes of this measure all court costs can be categorized and counted by case type. For example, judicial officers and staff work in several different case types (e.g., General Civil, Criminal, Domestic). The court's total personnel are allocated, and the percentage of personnel can be calculated for each case type.

### Step 3: Allocate Total Court Expenditures

Allocate court expenditures by case type, ensuring that these expenditures are related to costs. This step is necessary to determine where court operations may be slack, including inefficient procedures or underutilized staff. The use of cost per case data can be linked directly to other elements of court performance (i.e., other CourTools measures) as a practical means for interpreting the relationship between costs and outcomes. Other than the initial classification, the steps required to perform the different case types are:

1. **Allocate** the court expenditures by case type, ensuring that these expenditures can be linked directly to other elements of court performance (i.e., other CourTools measures) as a practical means for interpreting the relationship between costs and outcomes.
Although assembling all expenditure data can be labor intensive at first, once the initial classification expenditures should be included. For example, personnel and expenditures related to administrative overhead, such as facility costs, are now included in court costs. For the purpose of this measure, cost per case will be based on court jurisdiction. The goal is to standardize the number of different important case types that serve the general public. No matter how the court classifies its expenses, for the purposes of this measure all the court’s expenditures will be included. For example, facility costs (e.g., rent, maintenance, insurance) and goods and services to run the courthouse (e.g., supplies and equipment) for single and multiple case types will be included.

A primary responsibility of courts is efficient processing of cases. Efficiency within the context of case resolution means to consumers in their most productive families to produce the most efficient a court can. This measure of cost per case requires the identification of how courts can be staffed on personnel, procedures, and technology to achieve desired outcomes such as access, fairness, and timeliness. The effort to allocate personnel by case-type-specific assignments will be simplified if the court has a complete classification scheme in place. By assigning the court’s full-time equivalent (FTE) personnel, judicial officers and staff resources can be reassigned to accommodate workload. Courts can use case type assignments to be used to allocate costs in stepwise approaches.

The primary use of this measure is within a court, over time. The utility of cost per case increases when it can be linked directly to other elements of court performance (i.e., other CourTools). This measure provides important insight into the management of a court’s limited resources. Cost per case requires the following data for a given time period (e.g., a year):

1. Single assignment. Judicial officers and staff with formal case-type-specific assignments of cost per case increases when it can be linked directly to other elements of court performance (i.e., other CourTools).
2. Multiple assignments. When judicial officers and staff work across several case types on a regular basis, this measure provides important insight into the management of a court’s limited resources. Cost per case requires the following data for a given time period (e.g., a year):
3. Facility costs (e.g., rent, maintenance, insurance) and goods and services to run the courthouse (e.g., supplies and equipment) for single and multiple case types will be included.
4. No matter how the court classifies its expenses, for the purposes of this measure all the court’s expenditures will be included. For example, facility costs (e.g., rent, maintenance, insurance) and goods and services to run the courthouse (e.g., supplies and equipment) for single and multiple case types will be included.

A complete list of court expenditures will include categories such as:

- Facility costs (e.g., rent, maintenance, insurance)
- Goods and services to run the courthouse (e.g., supplies and equipment)
- Personnel and administrative overhead

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The cost per case measure can be a powerful stimulus and a practical tool for court improvements. It can measure current cost levels (baselines), show important trends over time, pinpoint problems, and support court improvements.

To compute costs over time, it makes sense to control for inflation by using an established economic measure (e.g., Consumer Price Index). Nominal costs per case can then be adjusted to reflect changes in the cost of living. This step enhances comparison by focusing on how the "real cost" of court services is changing over time.

The formula above shows how the Consumer Price Index (CPI) can be used to adjust and report a 1999 cost in 2004 dollars. For example, a General Civil cost per case of $704 in 1999 adjusted for inflation is equivalent to $798 in 2004.

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### Terms You Need To Know

- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**: Measures the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.
- **Nominal Cost**: The cost of goods and services expressed in current (actual) prices.
- **Cost in 2004 Dollars**: A measure of a job associated with a full-time position, used for budgeting or personnel management purposes.
- **Cost in 1999**: The cost of goods and services expressed in current (actual) prices.
- **CPI-Adjusted Dollars**: Nominal Cost used for budgeting or personnel management purposes.

### Analysis and Interpretation

Cost analysts are critically important for drawing here to allocate funds within the court and for understanding the link between costs and outcomes. The figure above left illustrates that the cost in General Civil cases, when adjusted for inflation, rose at an annual compounded growth rate of 2.3% over the five years shown. This figure on the right shows that as the cost doubled more resources in Dependency cases, the cost per case remained constant over time. This is probably because both courts have made significant efforts, such as increasing the use of technology, tightening timelines, and ensuring child safety and health. A higher cost per case would likely not mean the courts in multivariate to kid it may indicate that the courts are providing higher quality service than did before. Understanding the relationship between dollar spent and outcomes is critical. No strategy is defined “cost-effective,” it does not mean that the new strategy saves money; rather, it means that the strategy is a good value.

Knowledge of the court’s cost structure allows managers to allocate resources more efficiently and to identify areas where cost reductions can be achieved, resulting in savings that can be reinvested in other areas of the court system. 

### Tracking Changes in CPI-Adjusted costs over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Consumer Price Index (CPI)</th>
<th>CPI-Adjusted Cost of Goods and Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>166.6</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>168.9</td>
<td>$1,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>173.1</td>
<td>$1,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>179.5</td>
<td>$1,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>184.9</td>
<td>$1,289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The table above compares CPI-adjusted costs to measure the real cost of goods and services over time. Using the results of Step 1 and Step 2, compute the percentage of total expenditures for each of the major case types by applying the percentage of court personnel by case type to the total court expenditures. This distribution reflects an important simplifying assumption that all overhead costs accounted for in court operations are case-type specific. The next point at which the quantitative data collected in Measure 10 can be combined with the other information known to the court to begin interpreting the meaning of these numbers. For example, the cost for traffic court may have dropped due to fewer invent appearance because the court shifted resources to a new community building and program. Each bank was then compared to the criminal stratum, the next item that some costs vary the CPI-Adjusted dollars to support a new initiative to provide more accurate access to shared and confidential data, and their formula. Tracking cost per case provides evidence of the technical consequences of data strata.
Cost analyses are critically important for deciding how to allocate funds within the court and for understanding the link between costs and outcomes. The figure above left illustrates that the cost in General Civil, Limited Civil, and Criminal increased significantly from 1999 to 2004. For example, a General Civil cost per case of $704 in 1999 adjusted for inflation is equivalent to $798 in 2004.

Knowledge of the court’s cost structure allows a manager to allocate scarce resources more effectively to where they are most needed—and to justify those decisions to funding bodies. Measuring cost per case builds the court’s capacity to measure effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of court operations.

### Terms You Need to Know

**Consumer Price Index (CPI):** Measures the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.

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**Full-Time Equivalent (FTE):** A measure of a job associated with a full-time position, used for budgeting or personnel management purposes.

**Nominal Cost:** The cost of goods and services expressed in current (actual) prices.

The table above compares CPI-adjusted changes in cost per case from 1999 to 2004, with all costs expressed in 2004 dollars. Note that without adjusting for inflation, the court might wrongly conclude that costs per case rose in all case types except Traffic. However, in adjusted dollars, cost per case changed very little or even declined slightly in General Civil, Limited Civil, Criminal, Dependency, Domestic, and Traffic.

The table above shows how the Consumer Price Index (CPI) can be used to adjust and report a 1999 cost in 2004 dollars. For example, a General Civil cost per case of $704 in 1999 adjusted for inflation is equivalent to $798 in 2004.

Cost analyses are critically important for deciding how to allocate funds within the court and for understanding the link between costs and outcomes. The figure above left illustrates that the cost in General Civil cases, when adjusted for inflation, has remained almost constant over time. The figure on the right shows that the cost-related changes are more pronounced in Dependency cases, cost per case significantly increased over time and it is expected that the cost of living will rise in the future.

### CPI-Adjusted dollars take inflation into account...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Type</th>
<th>1999 Cost per Case</th>
<th>CPI-Adjusted Dollars in 2004</th>
<th>Nominal Cost in 2004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Civil</td>
<td>$704</td>
<td>$798</td>
<td>$809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Civil</td>
<td>$310</td>
<td>$310</td>
<td>$310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>$525</td>
<td>$625</td>
<td>$625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>$428</td>
<td>$485</td>
<td>$485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>$2,418</td>
<td>$2,742</td>
<td>$2,742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>$55</td>
<td>$62</td>
<td>$62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency</td>
<td>$4,069</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>$796</td>
<td>$903</td>
<td>$903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>$2,789</td>
<td>$2,789</td>
<td>$2,789</td>
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<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td>$848</td>
<td>$962</td>
<td>$962</td>
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