

Cost-Benefit in Justice Policy

Criminal Justice

How an intervention is costed against the harm it is claimed to prevent.

Every stage embeds an assumption worth naming out loud.

1

Set the counterfactual

What would have happened without the intervention?

2

Count the costs

Delivery, staffing, and costs falling on other agencies.

3

Value the outcomes

Crimes avoided, valued using published unit cost estimates.

4

Discount over time

Convert future costs and benefits to present value.

5

Test the assumptions

Vary key numbers and see whether the conclusion survives.

Educational reference. Unit cost of crime estimates embed contested valuations, especially for harm that is not financial.