

# A Brief Intro to QUEUEING THEORY



author

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## Kendall's Notation

Arrival  
Process

Service  
Process

Number  
of Servers

Capacity  
of System

*(omitted if  
infinity)*

M: Memoryless (Markovian)

$E_k$ : Erlang-k

D: Deterministic

GI: General Interarrival times (but i.i.d.)

G: General service times (but i.i.d.)

The "Memoryless" arrival process indicates a Poisson arrival process, in which the interarrival times have an *exponential* distribution.

Likewise, the "Memoryless" service process indicates that the service times have an *exponential* distribution.


## LITTLE's Queueing Formula

$$L = \lambda W$$

*average number  
in the queueing  
system*

*average  
arrival  
rate*

*average time  
in system per  
customer*

 applies to *any* queueing system having a steady state distribution

## LITTLE's Queueing Formula

$$L = \lambda W$$

Intuitive argument:

Suppose that you join a queue and spend  $W$  minutes before you have been served and leave.

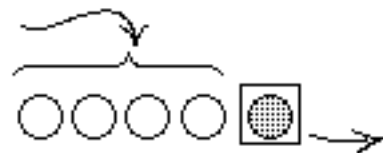
During those  $W$  minutes, customers have been arriving and joining the queue behind you at the average rate of  $\lambda$  per minute. Thus, when you are ready to leave, you should expect to see  $\lambda W$  customers remaining in the system behind you.

*you enter queue*




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*entered queue  
behind you*




*time W*

Most theoretical results have been obtained for the case in which both inter-arrival times and service times are *memoryless* (have *exponential* dist'n):


 M/M/1


 M/M/c (c > 1)

 M/M/1/N

 M/M/1/N/N

A case in which service time is not memoryless:

 M/G/1

 Exercises

**M/M/1**

Interarrival times and service times both have exponential distributions, with parameters  $\lambda$  &  $\mu$ , respectively.

That is, the "customers" arrive at the rate of  $\lambda$  per unit time, and are served at the rate  $\mu$  per unit of time.

It is assumed that the queue has infinite capacity, and that  $\mu > \lambda$  (so that the queue length does not tend to increase indefinitely.)

In this case, it is possible to derive the probability distribution of the number of customers in the queueing system. ↩

**M/M/1**

$\pi = (\pi_0, \pi_1, \pi_2, \dots)$  denotes the "steady-state" distribution of the number of customers in this M/M/1 queueing system, i.e., 1+number in queue. Equivalently,  $\pi_i$  is the probability (in steady state) that an arriving customer will find  $i$  customers already in the queueing system.

$$\pi_i = \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{\mu}\right) \left(\frac{\lambda}{\mu}\right)^i$$



**M/M/1**

Using this probability distribution, we can then derive the average number of customers in the system:

$$L = \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} i \pi_i = \sum_{i=0}^{\infty} i \left(1 - \frac{\lambda}{\mu}\right) \left(\frac{\lambda}{\mu}\right)^i$$

$$\Rightarrow \boxed{L = \frac{\frac{\lambda}{\mu}}{1 - \frac{\lambda}{\mu}}} = \frac{\rho}{1 - \rho}$$

where

$$\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} < 1$$

**M/M/1**

For the M/M/1 queueing system, Little's formula implies that

$$W = \frac{L}{\lambda} = \frac{\rho}{\lambda(1-\rho)}$$

$$\Rightarrow \boxed{W = \frac{1}{\mu - \lambda}}$$

**M/M/1**

For the M/M/1 queueing system, then

$$W_q = W - \frac{1}{\mu} \implies W_q = \frac{\lambda}{\mu(\mu - \lambda)}$$

$$L_q = \lambda W_q \implies L_q = \frac{\lambda^2}{\mu(\mu - \lambda)}$$

## Example

An average of 24 trucks per 8-hour day arrive to be unloaded &/or loaded, which requires an average of 15 minutes.

The loading dock can handle only a single truck at a time.

Assume that the arrival process is Poisson, and that the service times have exponential distribution.

This loading dock is modeled as an  $M/M/1$  queue.

**M/M/1**

$\lambda$  = arrival rate = 3/hour

$\mu$  = service rate = 4/hour

*Utilization  
of the server*

$$\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} = 0.75$$

*Average number of  
trucks in system*

$$L = \frac{\rho}{1 - \rho} = \frac{0.75}{1 - 0.75} = 3$$

*Average time in  
system per truck*

$$W = \frac{L}{\lambda} = \frac{3}{3/\text{hr}} = 1 \text{ hr.}$$

*Steady-state Behavior*

**M/M/1** $\lambda$  = arrival rate = 3/hour $\mu$  = service rate = 4/hour

*Average time in  
the queue*

$$W_q = W - \frac{1}{\mu} = 1 \text{ hr.} - \frac{1}{4/\text{hr}} \\ = 0.75 \text{ hr.}$$

*Average length  
of the queue*

$$L_q = \lambda W_q = (3/\text{hr})(0.75\text{hr}) \\ = 2.25$$

**M/M/c**

- *Arrival & Service processes are Memoryless, i.e.,  
interarrival times have Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\lambda$   
service times have Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\mu$*
- *Number of servers is  $c$*
- *Capacity of queueing system is infinite*



**M/M/c** If the arrival rate  $\lambda$  is less than the combined rate  $c\mu$  at which the servers can work, then the system will have a *steadystate* distribution, given by:

$$\pi_0 = \frac{1}{\sum_{n=0}^{c-1} \frac{(c\rho)^n}{n!} + \frac{(c\rho)^c}{c!} \frac{1}{1-\rho}}$$

$$\pi_j = \frac{(c\rho)^j}{j!} \pi_0, \quad j=1,2,\dots,c$$

$$\pi_j = \frac{(c\rho)^j}{c!c^{j-c}} \pi_0, \quad j=c,c+1,\dots$$

where  $\rho = \frac{\lambda}{c\mu} < 1$



*Probability that all servers are busy:*

$$\sum_{j \geq c} \pi_j = \frac{(c\rho)^c}{c!(1-\rho)} \pi_0 \quad \text{where } \rho = \frac{\lambda}{c\mu} < 1$$

This, then, is the probability that an arriving customer will be required to wait for service!

**M/M/c**

## Average Length of Queue

*(not including those being served)*

$$L_q = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} j \pi_{c+j} = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} j \pi_0 \frac{(c\rho)^{c+j}}{c! c^j} = \pi_0 \frac{(c\rho)^c}{c!} \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} j \rho^j$$

$$\rho = \frac{\lambda}{c \mu}$$

**M/M/c**

## Average Length of Queue

*(not including those being served)*

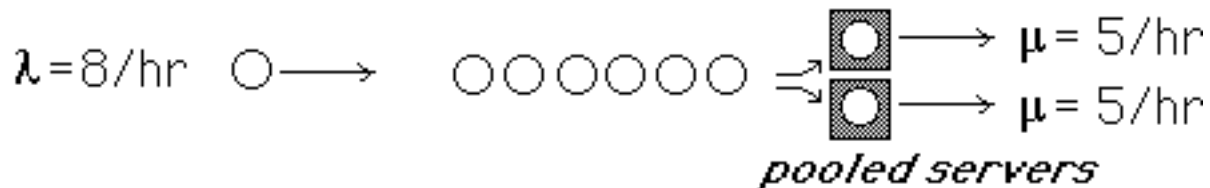
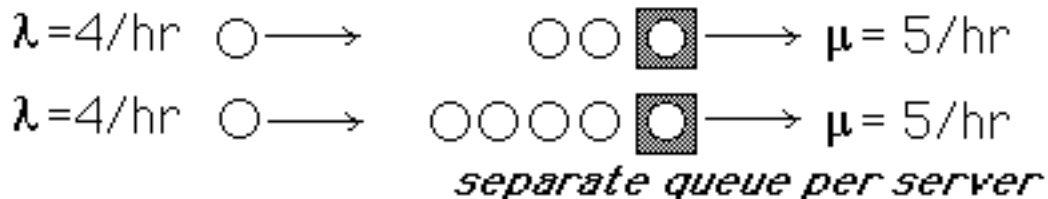
$$L_q = \frac{\rho (c\rho)^c}{c!} \pi_0 \left( \frac{1}{1-\rho} \right)^2$$

Once  $L_q$  is computed, then we can compute (using Little's formula)

$$W_q = \frac{L_q}{\lambda}, \quad W = W_q + \frac{1}{\mu}, \quad \& \quad L = \lambda W$$

## Example: Pooled vs. Separate Servers

Compare two queueing systems:



two M/M/1 queues

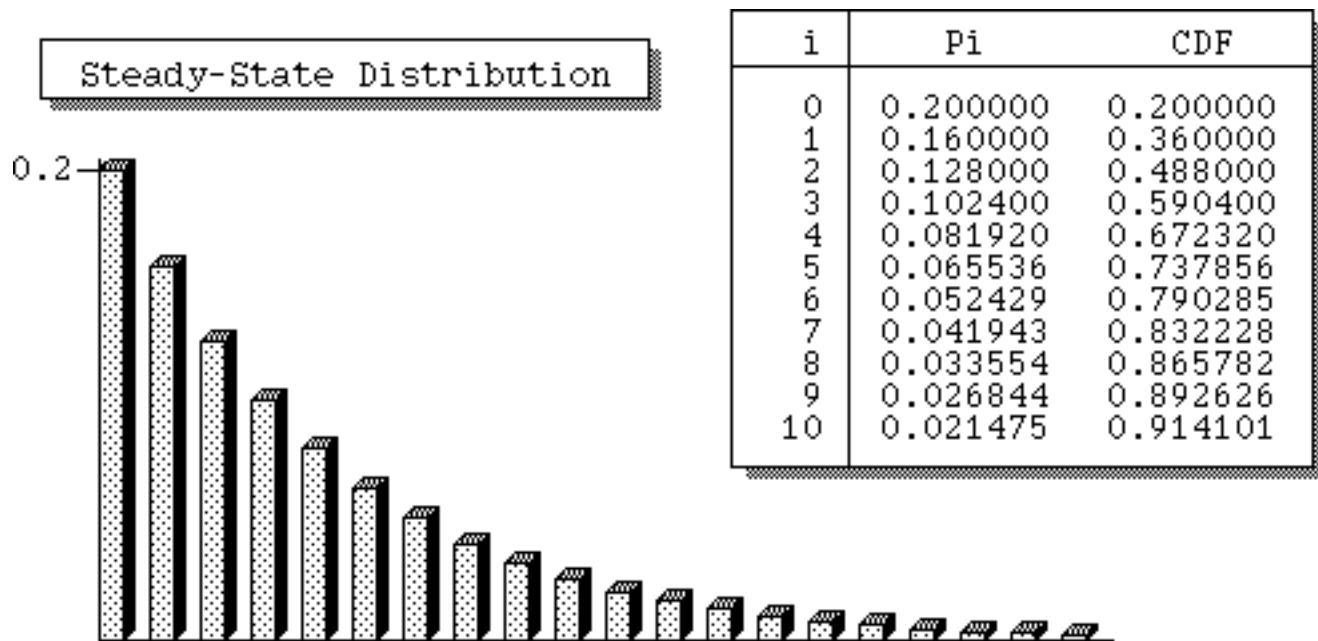
 $\lambda = 4/\text{hr}$  ○ →

 ○ ○ ○ →  $\mu = 5/\text{hr}$ 
 $\lambda = 4/\text{hr}$  ○ →

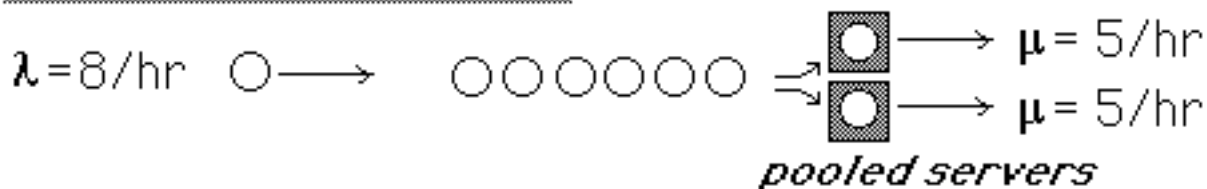
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ →  $\mu = 5/\text{hr}$ 
*separate queue per server*

Average waiting time:  $W_q = \frac{\lambda}{\mu(\mu - \lambda)}$

$$W_q = \frac{4/\text{hr}}{(5/\text{hr})(5-4)/\text{hr}} = 0.8 \text{ hr} \quad (48 \text{ minutes})$$



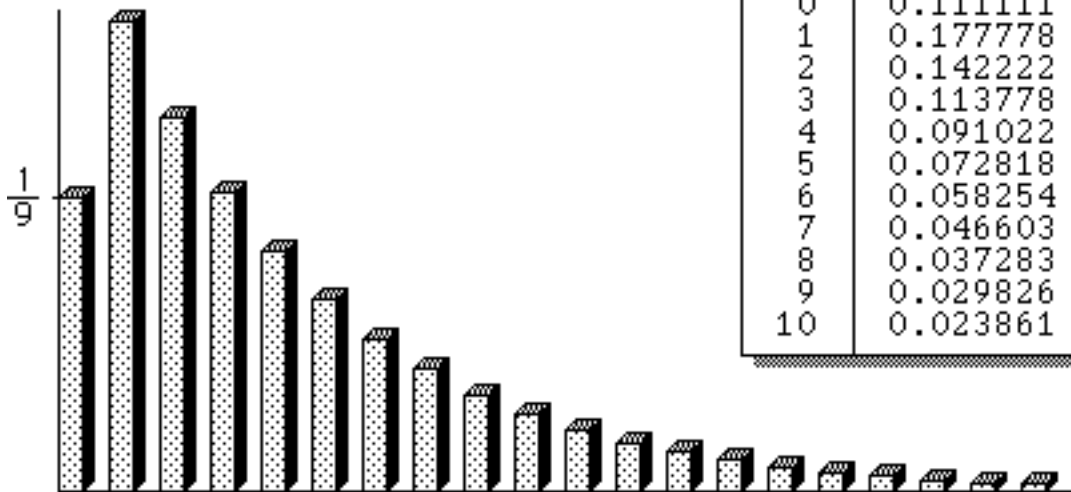
## single M/M/2 queue



Rather than maintaining a separate queue for each server, customers enter a common queue.

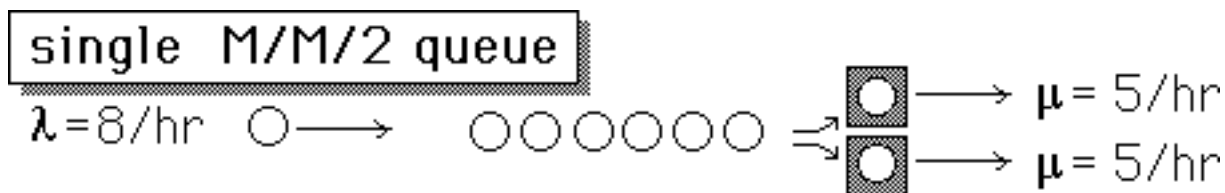
$$\rho = \frac{\lambda}{2\mu} = \frac{8/\text{hr}}{2 \times 5/\text{hr}} = 0.8 < 1 \quad \text{which implies that a steady state exists!}$$

## Steady-State Distribution



$i$	$P_i$	CDF
0	0.111111	0.111111
1	0.177778	0.288889
2	0.142222	0.431111
3	0.113778	0.544889
4	0.091022	0.635911
5	0.072818	0.708729
6	0.058254	0.766983
7	0.046603	0.813586
8	0.037283	0.850869
9	0.029826	0.880695
10	0.023861	0.904556

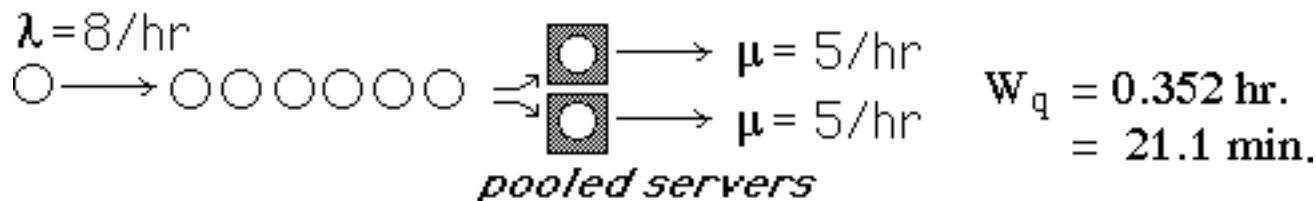
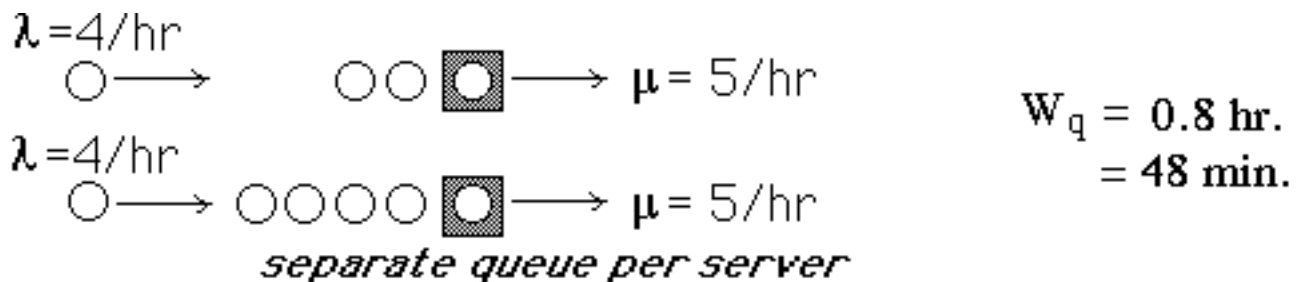




$$L_q = \frac{\rho}{1 - \rho} P\{\text{both servers busy}\}$$

$$= \frac{0.8}{0.2} (0.71111111) = 2.844444444$$

$$W_q = \frac{L_q}{\lambda} = 0.35156 \text{ hr.} = 21.1 \text{ minutes}$$



*By pooling the servers, the average waiting time per customer is reduced by approximately 56.%*



**M/M/1/N**

- *Arrival & Service processes are **Memoryless**, i.e., interarrival times have Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\lambda$  service times have Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\mu$*
- *Single server*
- ***Capacity** of queueing system is **finite**: **N** (including customer currently being served)*
- *Arriving customers **balk** when queue is full.*



**M/M/1/N***Steadystate Distribution*

$$\pi_0 = \frac{1 - \rho}{1 - \rho^{N+1}}$$

$$\pi_j = \rho^j \pi_0 = \rho^j \left( \frac{1 - \rho}{1 - \rho^{N+1}} \right)$$

where  $\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} \neq 1$

*Note that  $\rho$  is not restricted to be less than 1 for steady state to exist!*

## *Average Number of Customers in System*

$$L = \sum_{j=0}^N j \pi_j$$

$$L = \frac{\rho [1 - (N+1)\rho^N + N\rho^{N+1}]}{(1 - \rho^{N+1})(1 - \rho)}$$

where  $\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} \neq 1$

$M/M/1/N$ 

*Special Case:*  $\lambda = \mu$ , i.e.,  $\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} = 1$

*Arrival rate = Service rate*

$$\pi_j = \frac{1}{N+1}$$

$$L = \frac{N}{2}$$

*All states are equally likely!*

*System is, on average, half-full!*

## *Average Time in System per Customer*

Little's Formula:  $L = \underline{\lambda} W$

↑  
*average arrival rate*

$$\underline{\lambda} = \sum_{j=0}^{N-1} \lambda \pi_j = \lambda \sum_{j=0}^{N-1} \pi_j = \lambda (1 - \pi_N) \quad \text{since arrival rate is zero when there are } N \text{ in system}$$

$$W = \frac{L}{\underline{\lambda}} = \frac{L}{\lambda (1 - \pi_N)}$$



M/M/1/N/N
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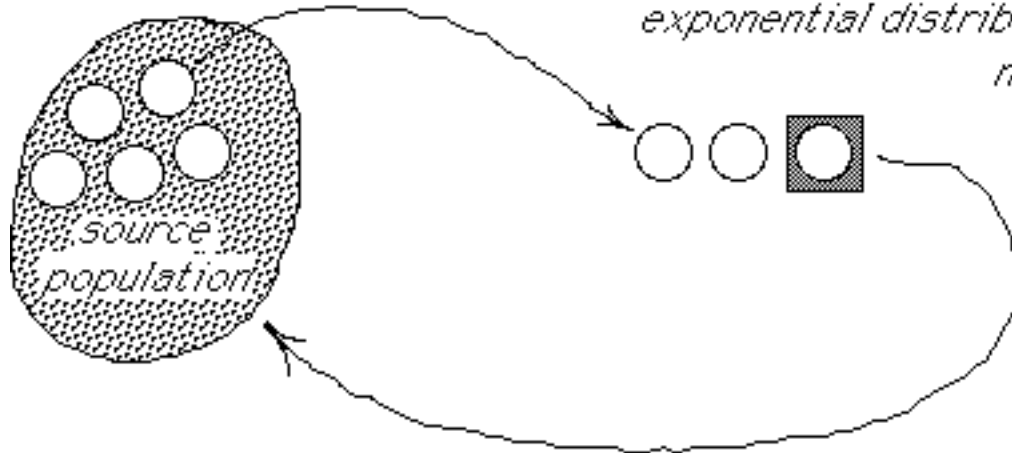
- *Single server*
- *Finite Source Population of size N*
- *Arrival & Service processes are **Memoryless**, i.e., service times have Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\mu$*
- *A departing customer returns to the queue after a time having an Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\lambda$*





M/M/1/N/N

*Each customer, after being served,  
returns to the source population  
for a length of time having  
exponential distribution with  
mean  $1/\lambda$*



**M/M/1/N/N***Steadystate Distribution*

$$\pi_0 = \frac{1}{\sum_{j=0}^N \frac{N!}{(N-j)!} \rho^j}$$

$$\pi_j = \frac{N!}{(N-j)!} \rho^j \pi_0$$

*First calculate the probability  $\pi_0$  that the server is idle.*

*Other probabilities are then multiples of  $\pi_0$*

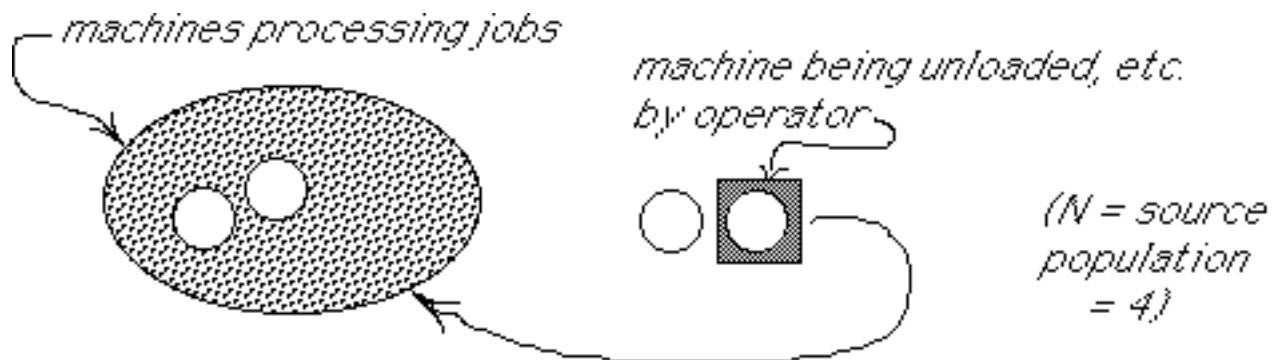
where  $\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu}$

## Example

An operator can be assigned to service (load, unload, adjust, etc.) several automatic machines in a factory

- Running time of each machine before it must be serviced has exponential distribution, with mean 120 minutes.
- Service time has an exponential distribution with mean 12 minutes.

To achieve a desired utilization of  $\geq 87.5\%$  for the machines, how many machines should be assigned to the operator?



This can be modeled as a M/M/1 queueing system with finite source population.

Machine operator = server

Machines = customers

$$\mu = 5/\text{hour}$$

$$\lambda = 0.5/\text{hour}$$

$$\frac{1}{\pi_0} = \sum_{j=0}^3 \frac{3!}{(3-j)!} (0.1)^j$$

Steadystate  
Distribution

$$= 1 + 0.3 + 0.06 + 0.006$$

$$= 1.366$$

$$\pi_0 = \frac{1}{1.366} = 0.732965$$

*i.e., operator will  
be idle about 73%  
of the time!*

$$\pi_1 = 0.3 \pi_0 = 0.2196$$

$$\pi_2 = 0.06 \pi_0 = 0.0439$$

$$\pi_3 = 0.006 \pi_0 = 0.0044$$

$$\pi_0 = 0.732965$$

$$\pi_1 = 0.2196$$

$$\pi_2 = 0.0439$$

$$\pi_3 = 0.0044$$

*If 0 machines are in system, then  
3 are busy processing jobs;*

*if 1 machine is in system, then 2  
are busy processing jobs, etc.*

Average utilization of the machines will be

$$\frac{3 \pi_0 + 2 \pi_1 + 1 \pi_2 + 0 \pi_3}{3} = 89.3\%$$

**M/G/1**

- *Arrival process is **Memoryless**, i.e., interarrival times have Exponential distribution with mean  $1/\lambda$*
- *Single server*
- *Service times are independent, identically-distributed, but not necessarily exponential. Mean service time is  $1/\mu$  with variance  $\sigma^2$*
- *Queue capacity is infinite*



M/G/1

Steadystate  
Characteristics

A steadystate distribution exists if  $\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} < 1$   
i.e., if service rate exceeds the arrival rate.

$$\pi_0 = 1 - \rho \quad = \textit{probability that server is idle}$$

$$1 - \pi_0 = \rho \quad = \textit{probability that server is busy}$$

*i.e., utilization of server*

There is no convenient formula for the probability  
of  $j$  customers in system when  $j > 0$ .



M/G/1

Steadystate  
Characteristics

$$L_q = \frac{\lambda^2 \sigma^2 + \rho^2}{2(1 - \rho)}$$

*average number of  
customers waiting*

After calculating  $L_q$ , Little's Formula allows us to compute:

$$W_q = \frac{L_q}{\lambda}, \quad W = W_q + \frac{1}{\mu},$$

$$\& \quad L = \lambda W = L_q + \rho$$

For the M/M/1 queue, the standard deviation equals the mean service time, i.e.,  $\sigma = 1/\mu$  and the coefficient of variation equals 1.0

Using these formulae for the M/G/1 queueing system with  $\sigma^2 = 1/\mu^2$  will give results consistent with the formulae for M/M/1.

$$L_q = \frac{\rho^2}{(1 - \rho)}$$

$$L_q = \frac{\lambda^2 \sigma^2 + \rho^2}{2(1 - \rho)}$$

Keeping the mean service time fixed, it is clear that the length of the queue is proportional to the variance of the service time.

The more *regular* the service time distribution, i.e., the smaller the coefficient of variation, the *shorter* the queue.

$$L_q = \frac{\lambda^2 \sigma^2 + \rho^2}{2(1 - \rho)}$$

The average number in the queue will be *minimized* when the service time is *constant*, i.e.,  $\sigma^2 = 0$ . In this case, the average number in the queue will be exactly *half* of that for the exponential dist'n:

$$L_q = \frac{\rho^2}{2(1 - \rho)}$$



$$\rho = \frac{\lambda}{\mu} < 1$$

- The UI Dept. of Public Safety has 5 patrol cars.
- A patrol car breaks down and requires service once every 30 days.
- The dept. has 2 mechanics, each of whom takes an average of 3 days to repair a car.
- Time between breakdowns & repair times have exponential distribution.

What is...

the average # of patrol cars in good condition  
the average down time for a car that needs  
repair



A small bank is trying to determine how many tellers to employ.

- Total cost of employing a teller is \$100/day.
  - A teller can serve an average of 60 customers per day (i.e., 8 minutes/customer).
  - An average of 50 customers per day visit the bank.
  - Arrivals form a Poisson process & service times have exponential distribution.
- If delay cost per customer is \$100/day (i.e., about 21¢/minute), how many tellers should be employed?

An average of 40 cars/hr. are tempted to use the drive-in window at the Hot Dog King.

- If 5 cars (including the one at the window) are in line, no car will join the line.
- It takes an average of 4 minutes to serve each car (with time having exponential dist'n)

What is...

- ... average # of cars waiting in line?
- ... # cars per hour served?
- ... average waiting time per car?



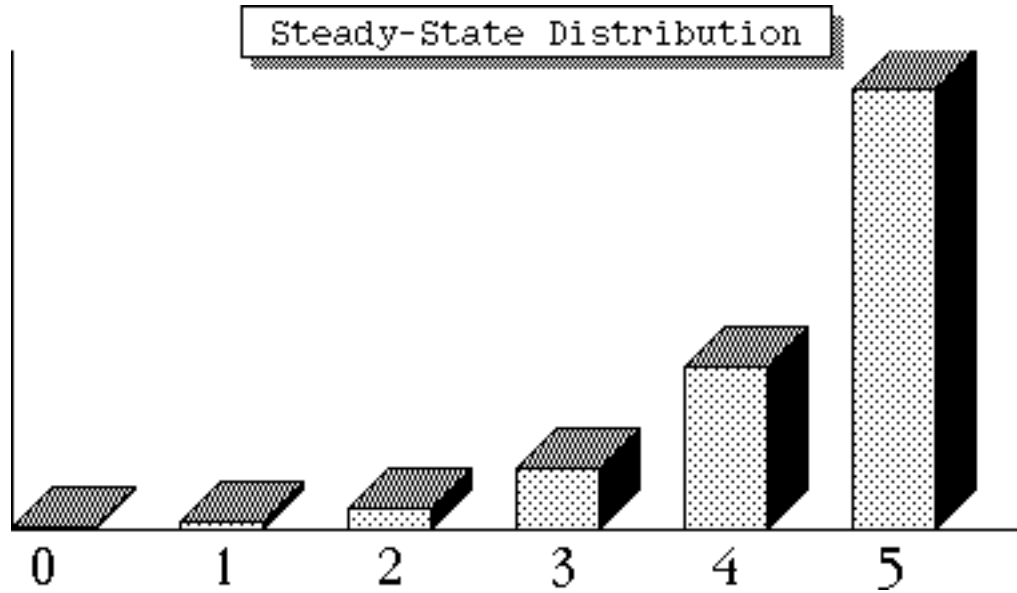
**Solution**

### Steady-State Distribution

$i$	$\rho$	$P_i$	CDF
0	2.666667	0.004648	0.004648
1	2.666667	0.012394	0.017042
2	2.666667	0.033051	0.050093
3	2.666667	0.088136	0.138228
4	2.666667	0.235029	0.373257
5	2.666667	0.626743	1.000000

The mean number of customers in the system (including the one being served) is 4.41673





- An average of 10 persons/hour arrive at the YMCA intending to swim laps.
- Each swimmer intends to swim an average of 30 minutes.
- The Y has 3 lanes open for lap swimming. Each lane can handle 2 swimmers.
- If all 3 lanes are occupied by 2 swimmers, a prospective swimmer becomes disgusted and goes running.



What fraction of the time will all 3 lanes be filled?

On the average, how many persons will be swimming?

How many lanes should be allocated to lap swimming to ensure that at most 5% of all prospective swimmers will be turned away?

- The manager of an office must decide whether to rent a second copier.
- The cost of a machine is \$40 per 8-hour day, whether used or not.
- An average of 4 workers/hour need to use the copier, and each uses it for an average of 10 minutes.
- Interarrival times & copying times are exponentially distributed.
- Employees are paid \$8/hour, which is assumed to be the cost to the firm of a worker waiting in line for the copier.

How many copiers should be rented?



Solution

Steady  
State  
Dist'n

# servers = 1

i	$\rho$	$P_i$	CDF
0	0.666667	0.333333	0.333333
1	0.666667	0.222222	0.555556
2	0.666667	0.148148	0.703704
3	0.666667	0.098765	0.802469
4	0.666667	0.065844	0.868313
5	0.666667	0.043896	0.912209
6	0.666667	0.029264	0.941472
7	0.666667	0.019509	0.960982
8	0.666667	0.013006	0.973988
9	0.666667	0.008671	0.982658
10	0.666667	0.005781	0.988439
11	0.666667	0.003854	0.992293
12	0.666667	0.002569	0.994862
13	0.666667	0.001713	0.996575
14	0.666667	0.001142	0.997716
15	0.666667	0.000761	0.998478

**# servers = 1**

Mean Queue Length (L) = 1.3333

Mean # Servers Busy = 0.66667

P{# idle servers > 1} = 0.3333

Steady  
State  
Dist'n

# servers = 2

i	$\rho$	$P_i$	CDF
0	0.400000	0.666667	0.666667
1	0.400000	0.266667	0.933333
2	0.400000	0.053333	0.986667
3	0.400000	0.010667	0.997333
4	0.400000	0.002133	0.999467
5	0.400000	0.000427	0.999893
6	0.400000	0.000085	0.999979
7	0.400000	0.000017	0.999996
8	0.400000	0.000003	0.999999
9	0.400000	0.000001	1.000000
10	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
11	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
12	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
13	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
14	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
15	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000

# servers = 2

Mean Queue Length (L) = 0.016667

Mean # Servers Busy = 0.4

P{ # idle servers > 1 } = 0.93333



Steady  
State  
Dist'n

# servers = 3

i	$\rho$	$P_i$	CDF
0	0.400000	0.670103	0.670103
1	0.400000	0.268041	0.938144
2	0.400000	0.053608	0.991753
3	0.400000	0.007148	0.998900
4	0.400000	0.000953	0.999853
5	0.400000	0.000127	0.999980
6	0.400000	0.000017	0.999997
7	0.400000	0.000002	1.000000
8	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
9	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
10	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
11	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
12	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
13	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
14	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000
15	0.400000	0.000000	1.000000

# servers = 3

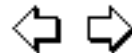
Mean Queue Length (L) = 0.0012688

Mean # Servers Busy = 0.4

$P\{\# \text{ idle servers} > 1\} = 0.99175$

- An automated car wash will wash a car in 10 minutes.
- Arrivals occur an average of 15 minutes apart (exponentially distributed).
- On the average, how many cars are waiting in line for the car wash?

*If the car wash could be speeded up, what wash time would reduce the average wait to 5 minutes?*



Solution

Steady  
State  
Dist'n

i	Pi	CDF
0	0.333333	0.333333
1	0.222222	0.555556
2	0.148148	0.703704
3	0.098765	0.802469
4	0.065844	0.868313
5	0.043896	0.912209
6	0.029264	0.941472
7	0.019509	0.960982
8	0.013006	0.973988
9	0.008671	0.982658
10	0.005781	0.988439
11	0.003854	0.992293
12	0.002569	0.994862

Mean Queue Length  $\langle L \rangle = 1.3333$

Mean number of servers busy = 0.66667

Probability that at least one server is idle = 0.33333

- Each airline passenger & his/her luggage must be checked to prevent weapons carried onto the plane.
- At the local airport, 10 passengers/minute arrive at the checkpoint.
- A checkpoint can check 12 passengers/minute (with exponential distribution).

*What is the probability that an arriving passenger must wait to be checked?  
What is the average time that a passenger spends at the checkpoint?*



Solution

Steady  
State  
Dist'n

i	Pi	CDF
0	0.166667	0.166667
1	0.138889	0.305556
2	0.115741	0.421296
3	0.096451	0.517747
4	0.080376	0.598122
5	0.066980	0.665102
6	0.055816	0.720918
7	0.046514	0.767432
8	0.038761	0.806193
9	0.032301	0.838494
10	0.026918	0.865412
11	0.022431	0.887843
12	0.018693	0.906536
13	0.015577	0.922113
14	0.012981	0.935095
15	0.010818	0.945912

Mean Queue Length  $\langle L \rangle = 4.1667$