



# Carl Vinson Institute of Government UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

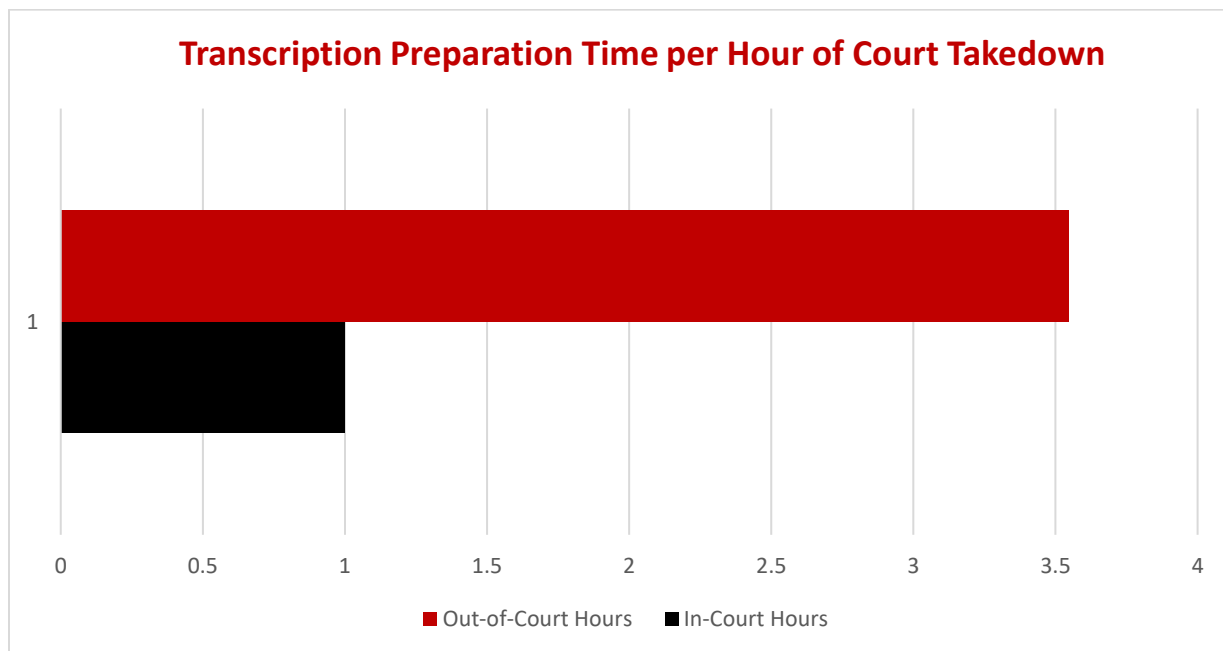
## COURT TRANSCRIPTION PREPARATION TIME STUDY

*Study conducted by Kris Sikes*

*September 2017*

### **Executive Summary**

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government received a request from the Administrative Office of the Courts for a study which analyzes the time required for Court Reporters in Georgia to prepare true, complete, and correct transcripts of court proceedings.<sup>1</sup> Based on the results of a time in motion survey completed by a subset of Court Reporters throughout the state of Georgia, the average amount of out-of-court time needed to prepare a transcript for each hour spent in court taking down testimony is 3.55 hours.<sup>2</sup>

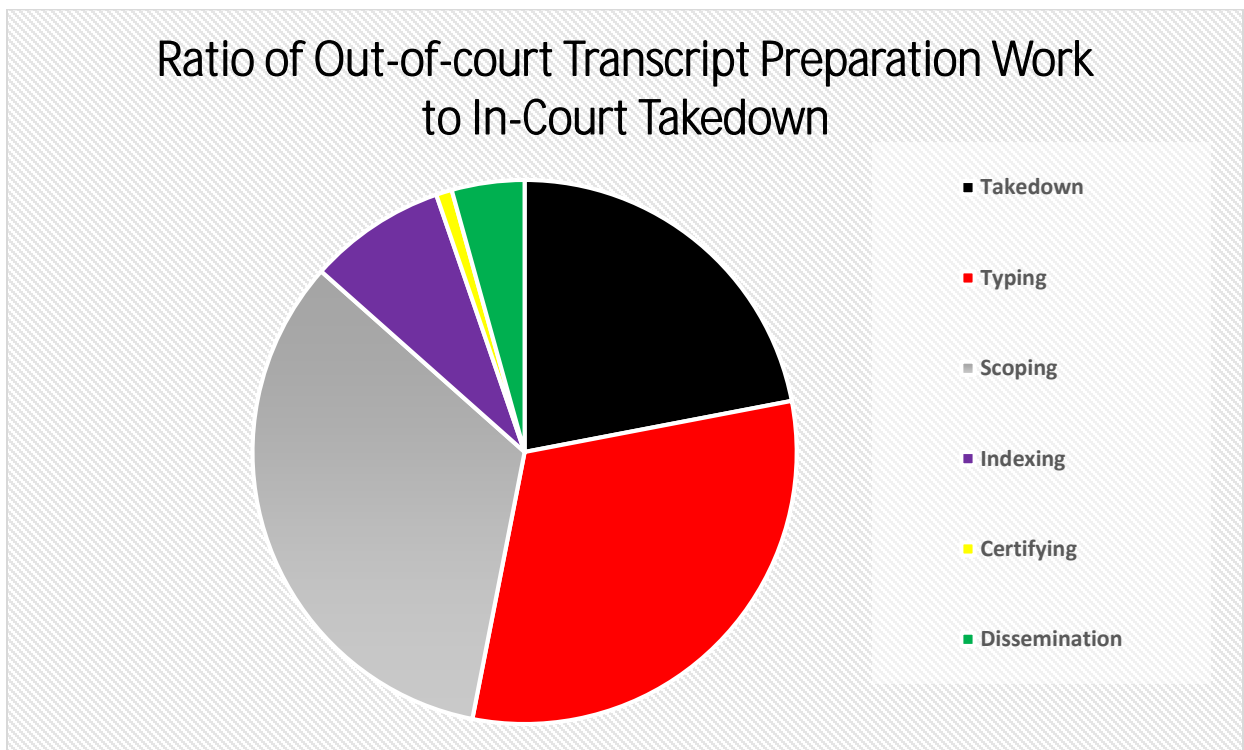


<sup>1</sup> O.C.G.A. § 15-14-5 (2017).

<sup>2</sup> The sample size of completed surveys was 18. The body of the report addresses the statistical significance of this sample size.

After takedown in court, a Court Reporter has several steps to complete before an accurate transcript of the proceedings can be produced. These include translating the notes into a rough translation of the text, scoping (editing the rough translation into a more finished transcript), proofreading the transcript and correcting any errors, indexing to insert the descriptions and page locations of each exhibit mentioned during the deposition in order to create the index page, creating title pages to include the caption of the case and the addresses of all the parties present, proofreading again to double check page numbers on index match the transcript, certifying the transcript, and then disseminating the final product.

The chart below depicts the relative amount of time spent on different tasks compared to the amount of time spent on in-court takedown.



The body of the report describes the demographic composition of the sample of Court Reporters who participated, the survey instrument, and the implications of this research.

## The Survey

The goal of this study was to analyze the time required to prepare transcripts where a verbatim record has been created by means of manual shorthand, machine shorthand, closed microphone voice dictation silencer, or by other means of personal verbatim reporting.<sup>3</sup> To achieve this goal, participation was needed from a cross-section of Court Reporters throughout Georgia.

In an effort to solicit participation, the following electronic news bulletin was sent to 1,300 licensed Court Reporters in Georgia as a part of the Board of Court Reporting's regular newsletter. This was also followed up by another e-newsletter to all "official" and "freelance and official" Court Reporters two weeks later.



Calling All Official Court Reporters, Current and Former

If you currently work or formerly worked as an Official Court Reporter, either as a court employee or a contractor, full-time or part-time, we need you to participate in a critical new study conducted by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute at the request of the Board of Court Reporting. The study is gathering data to determine how much time Official Court Reporters spend to take down a proceeding vs. how much time they need to prepare transcripts based on that take down.

To participate, please fill out [this short survey](#) and email it to the study leader, Kris Sikes, Ph.D., J.D., Public Service Assistant, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, University of Georgia, [krissike@uga.edu](mailto:krissike@uga.edu), 706-542-2857. You will be contacted with further details. Thank you!

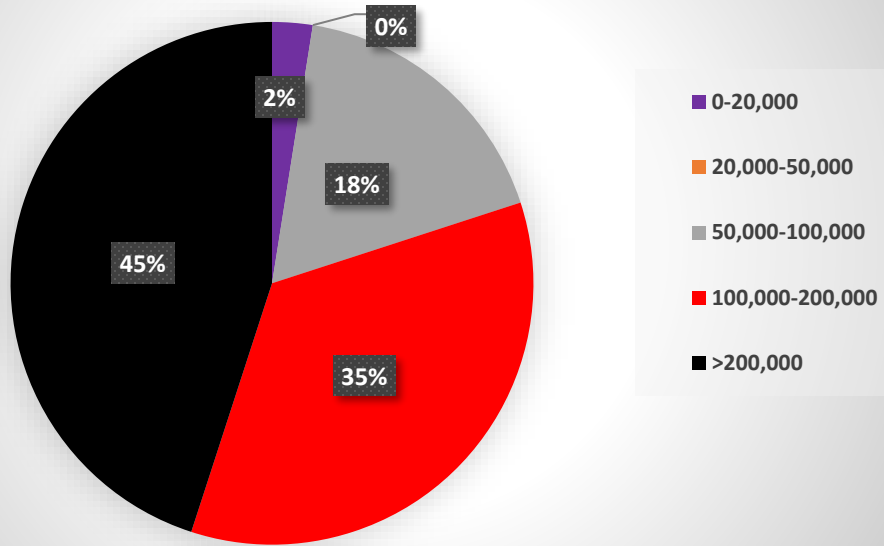
The initial solicitation included a short survey that requested information from interested Court Reporters including the population of the circuit in which they work, the levels of court they serve, their tenure as an Official Court Reporter, their tenure as a Certified Court Reporter, their method of Court Reporting, and their method of producing a transcript. This was to gauge whether there was enough interest to move forward with the actual time in motion study. We had 46 respondents to the initial survey and their characteristics are shown in the charts below.

For the population of the circuit, the majority of respondents were Court Reporters in very large circuits with populations of greater than 100,000 people. There were no respondents from judicial circuits of 20,000 – 50,000 people.

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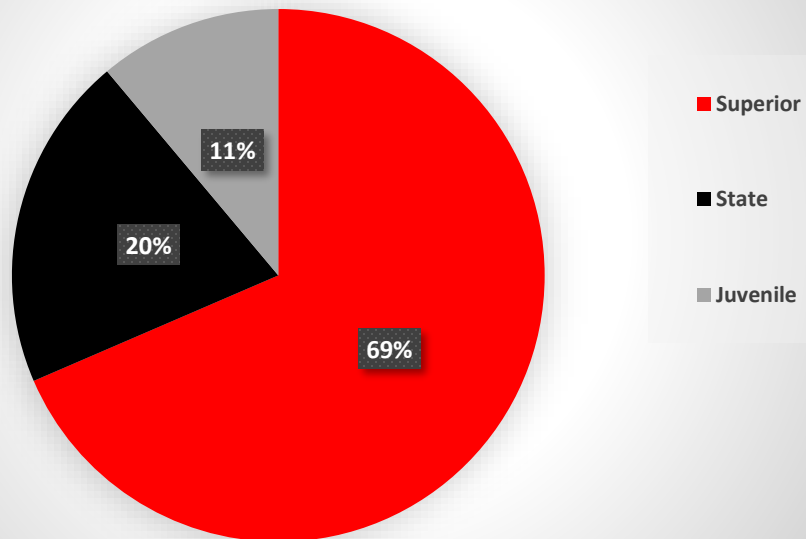
<sup>3</sup> O.C.G.A. §15-14-22 (2016).

## Population of Circuit

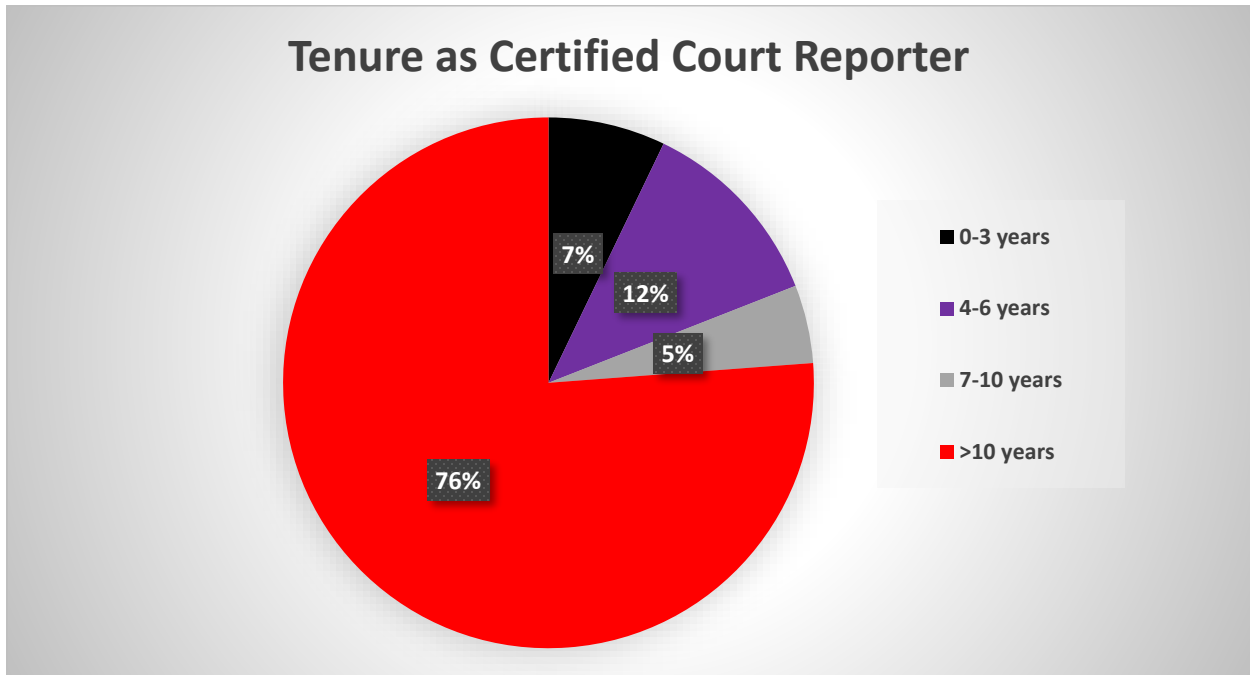


For the level of Court served, the majority of Court Reporters who responded work in Superior Courts.

## Level of Court Served



To estimate whether the out-of-court time reported was reflective of an “average” Court Reporter, we asked about their tenure as a Certified Court Reporter. To become certified as a Court Reporter in the state of Georgia, one must be at least 18, of good moral character, a high school or equivalent graduate, and successfully pass an examination in verbatim court reporting.<sup>4</sup> The respondents tended to have a great amount of experience in the field.

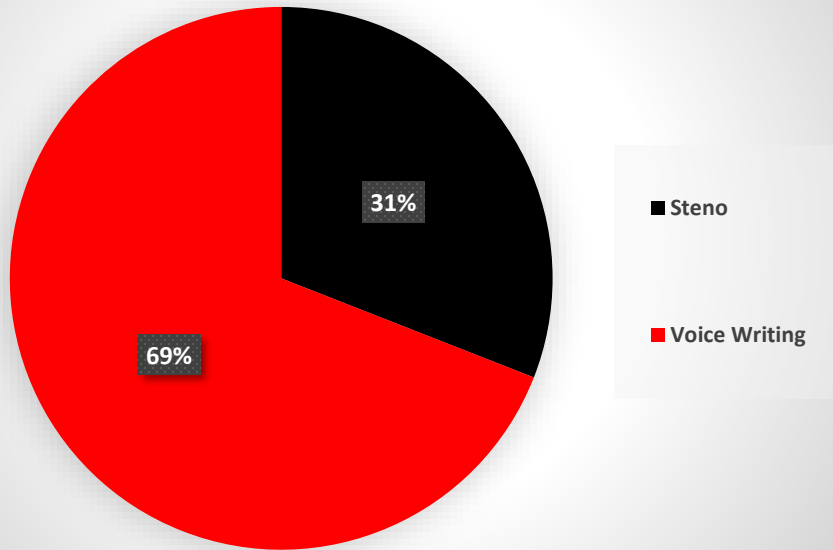


Finally, to get a sense of the methods used for both takedown and producing a transcript, we asked the respondents to identify their method of takedown and transcript production. For takedown, the respondents were given the choice to identify as either someone who does takedown by steno (stenograph) or voice writing. They were also asked to identify their transcription production method as either dictation typing, voice recognition software, or transcription software with scoping. Due to the low response rate to the survey, it was not possible to determine if method of takedown impacts the time it takes to create a transcript. Similarly, no conclusion could be drawn as to whether the method of production impacts the time it takes to create a transcript. The breakdown of responses is shown below.

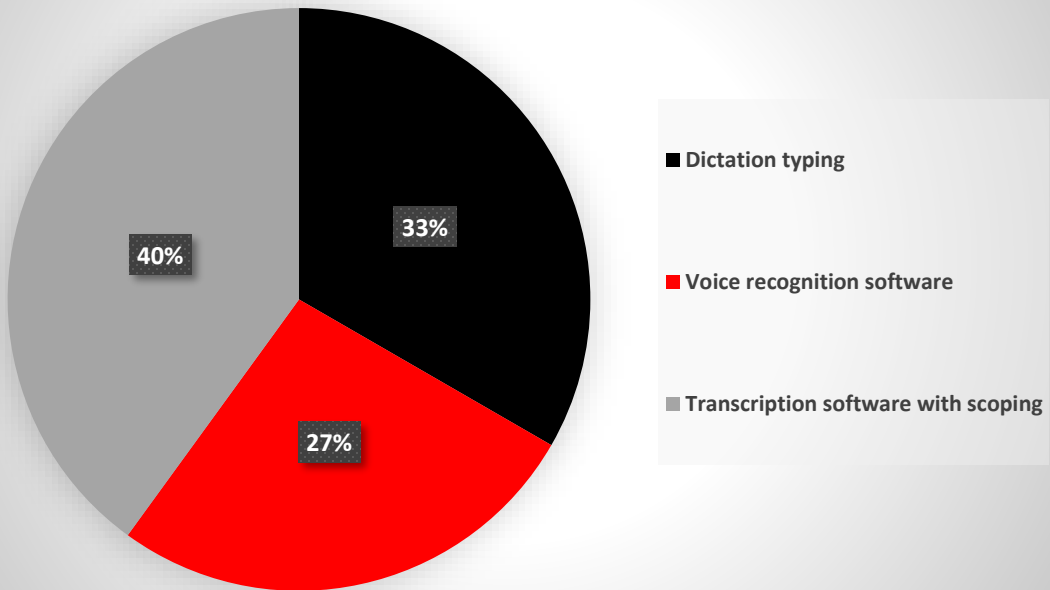
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<sup>4</sup> O.C.G.A. § 15-14-29 (2017)

## Method of Court Reporting



## Method of Producing Transcript



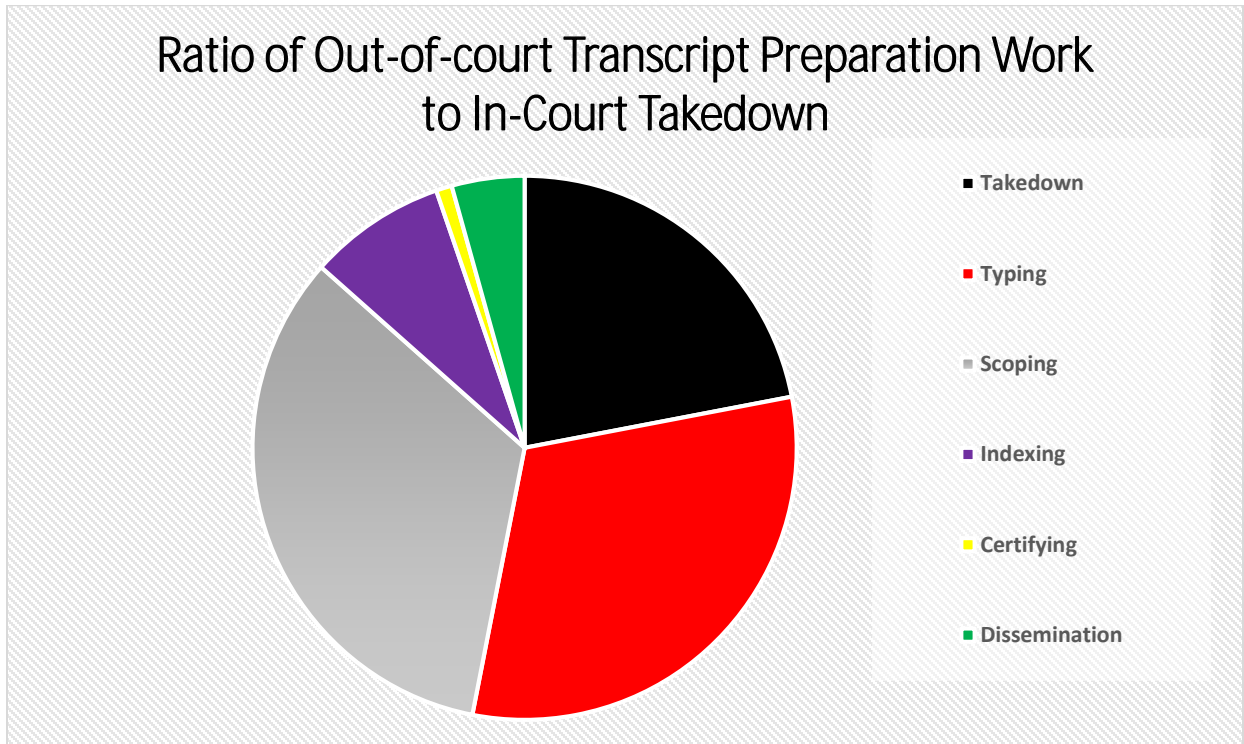
## The Results

Out of the 46 respondents to the initial survey, the actual time in motion survey was completed and returned by only 18 Court Reporters. Unfortunately the response rate of 18 participants suggests that the information gleaned from the survey is merely illustrative and does not rise to the level of providing statistically significant data.

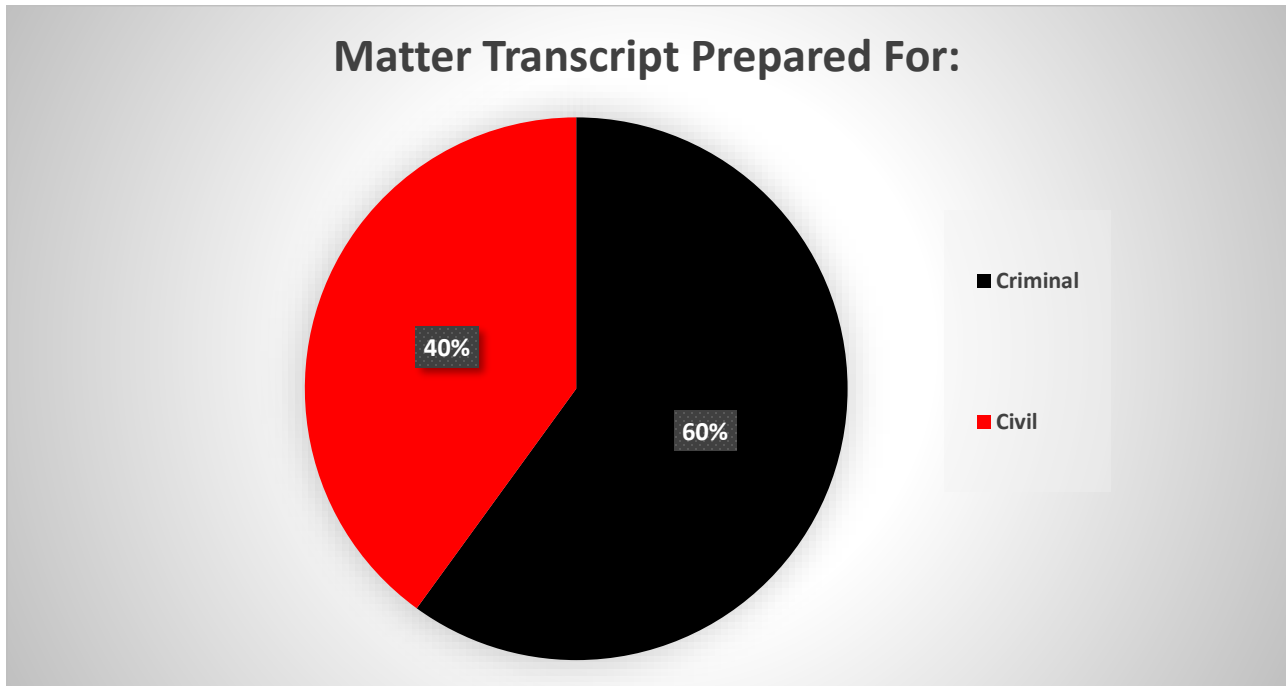
For any transcripts Court Reporters selected to use in our study, the time in motion questionnaire requested that each Court Reporter tell us the amount of time spent **in-court** on takedown and then to document the time it took **out-of-court** to complete each of the phases below. They were requested to record actual start and stop times for each phase. The phases were classified as Typing, Scoping or Proofing (including corrections), Indexing, Certifying, and Dissemination/Production.

They were encouraged to include commentary as they completed the questionnaire in order to help us better understand the results. For example: if the particular transcript they were working on for this survey differed in any way from a “normal” transcript preparation for any phase, they were encouraged to notate that and still record the actual time spent on the transcript they were preparing.

Again the ratio of time spent on each out-of-court task to the in-court takedown is shown below.



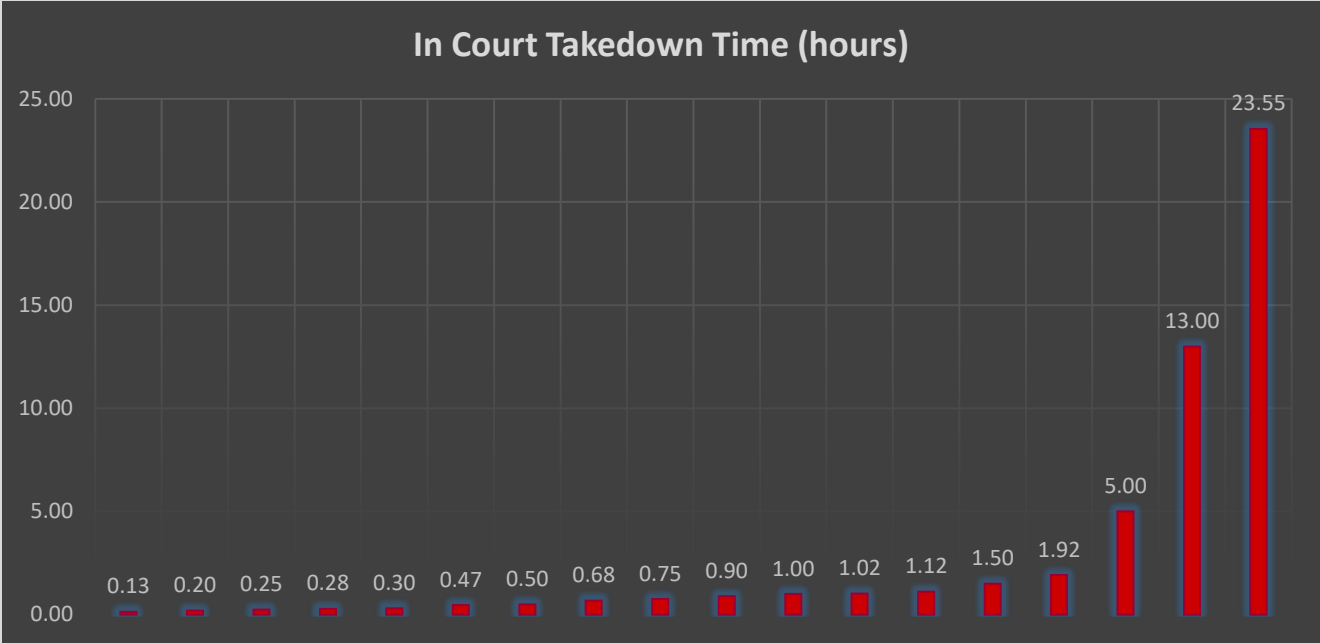
Each Court Reporter was given the opportunity to submit their time sheets for any transcript they happened to be preparing during the survey period. Of those who identified the type of case for which they were preparing a transcript, criminal matters were more frequently the underlying case with 9 criminal cases and 6 civil cases.



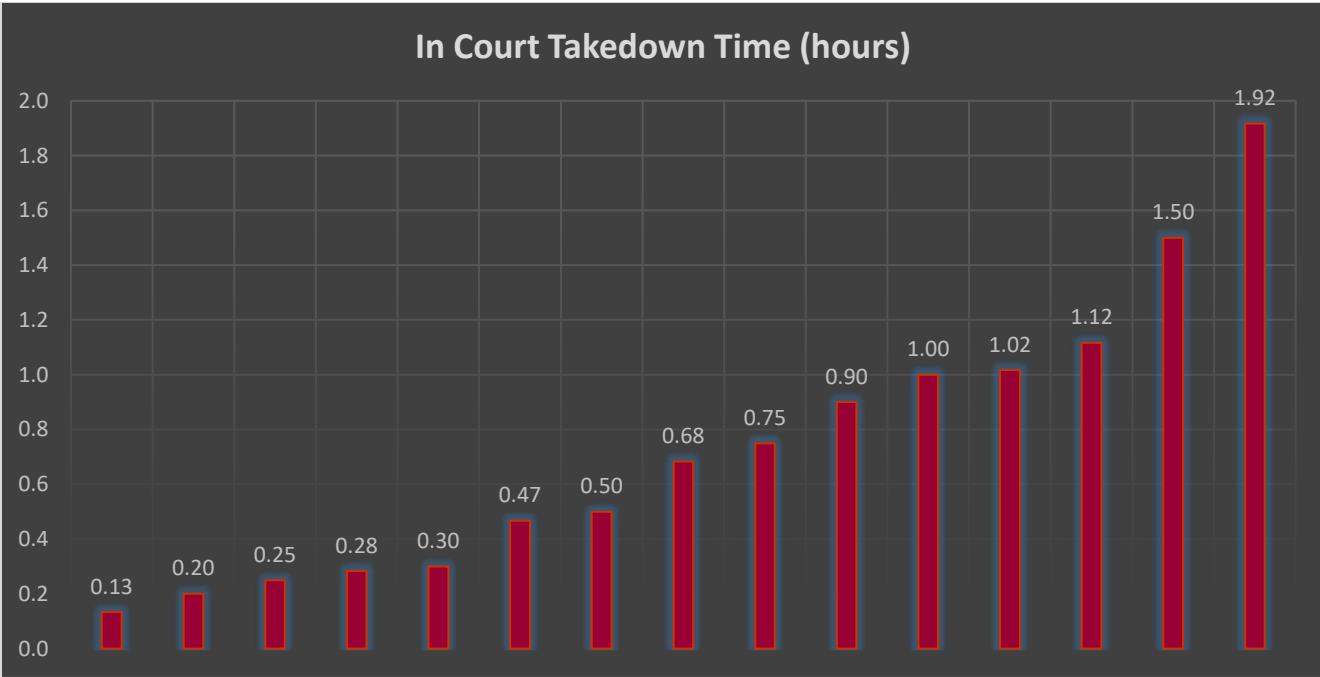
Regarding transcripts prepared for and used in this survey, for criminal matters the types of cases include one criminal jury trial, a couple of guilty pleas and probation revocations, a motion for a new trial, and a few Habeas Corpus hearings. On the civil side, there were a couple of petitions for modification of custody, petitions for legitimation, a divorce settlement, a property dispute, and a medical malpractice case.

The amount of time spent in court for the transcripts prepared for and used in this survey ranged from 8 minutes for a Guilty Plea to 23 hours and 33 minutes for the medical malpractice case. Most of the matters before the Court lasted less than 2 hours. There were 3 outliers with one matter taking 5 hours (the Criminal jury trial), one matter taking 13 hours (a Civil property dispute), and the medical malpractice case taking 23 hours and 33 minutes, as mentioned. The distribution of time spent in court on takedown is shown below.

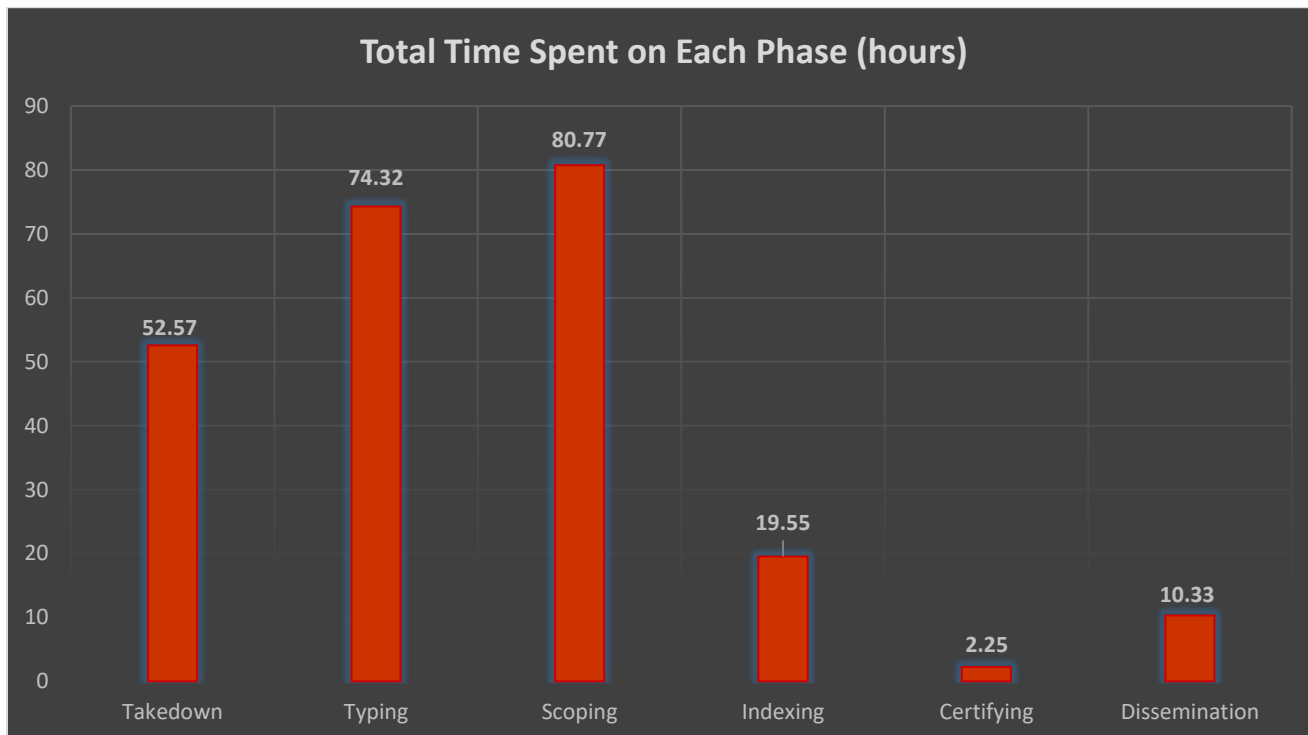




The chart below illustrates the time spent on the majority of the reported matters before the Court. As is evident in the chart, there are many matters a Court hears that do not appear to be time-intensive if one is only evaluating the time a Court Reporter spends in Court.



The total takedown time reported in the survey was 52 hours and 34 minutes. The corresponding total amount spent out-of-court on transcript preparation was 187 hours and 13 minutes. The total number of hours spent on each phase as reported is shown below.



As is clear from the chart above, the most time-intensive phase of transcript preparation include Typing and Scoping. These phases are very time-consuming due to the necessity of being completely accurate in the translation from court notes to actual transcript. In general, the Court Reporter will either read through the entire transcript herself or she will hire a scopist to read through the transcript. The purpose of this is to correct any untranslates (words that didn't translate), add punctuation, and to check spellings of proper names.<sup>5</sup>

Most of the court matters used as the basis for the transcripts in this study tend to have few exhibits which indicates that the Indexing time captured in the survey may be understated. The prevalence of e-filing has made the Dissemination phase of the transcription production process relatively simple.

As mentioned previously, the response rate of 18 participants means that the information gleaned from the survey is merely illustrative and does not rise to the level of providing statistically significant data.

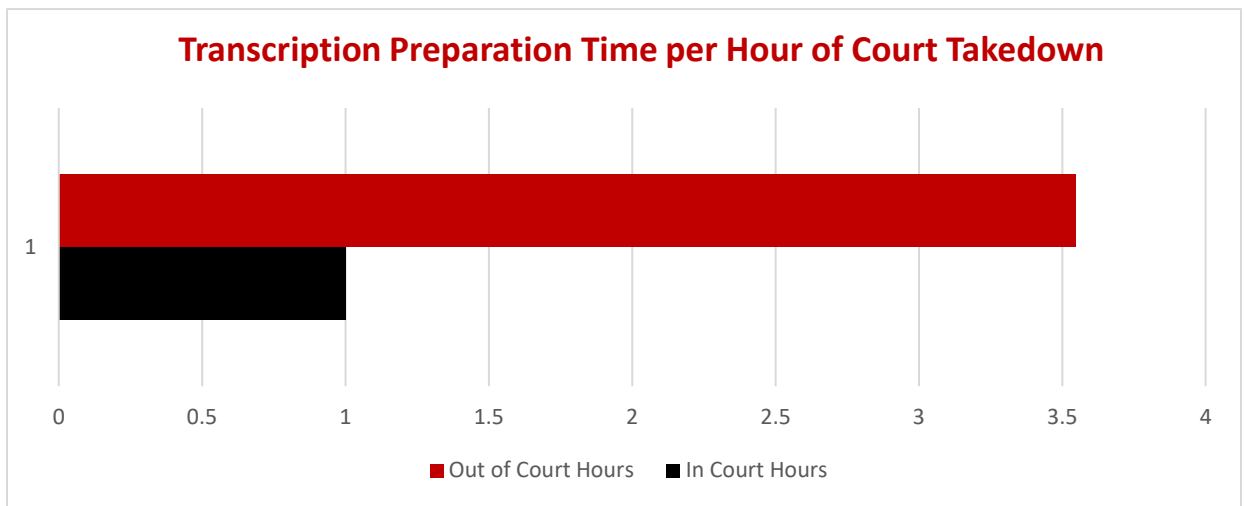
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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.prioio.com/steps-court-reporter-takes-prepare-transcript-production/>

## Conclusions and Takeaways

The job of Court Reporting can require a great amount of out-of-court time to fulfill their statutory duties. “It shall be the duty of each court reporter to transcribe the evidence and other proceedings of which he has taken notes as provided by law whenever requested so to do by counsel for any party to such case and upon being paid the legal fees for such transcripts. The reporter, upon delivering the transcript to such counsel, shall affix thereto a certificate signed by him reciting that the transcript is true, complete, and correct. Subject only to the right of the trial judge to change or require the correction of the transcript, the transcript so certified shall be presumed to be true, complete, and correct.”<sup>6</sup>

This study evaluates the responses of 18 Court Reporters located across the state of Georgia. While not statistically significant, the responses indicate that, on average, a Court Reporter can expect to spend an additional 3 1/2 hours preparing a transcript for each hour of in-court testimony they record.



It is believed that this study can help start a conversation between decision-makers and Court Reporters as to the total magnitude of court reporting duties. Future research should aim to build off these results and attempt to illicit greater participation from the Court Reporting community.

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<sup>6</sup> O.C.G.A. § 15-14-5 (2017).