

Seniority Project - September 30, 2020

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1 Important Notes

1.1 Data Sources

- Brookings' Vital Statistics on Congress
- Volden and Wiseman's Data on House and Senate Legislative Effectiveness
- FiveThirtyEight's Age of MC's over time data

1.2 Theory

Seniority does not necessarily imply that the particular MC is important for the success of the party in electoral and legislative outcomes. Other factors such as having an electoral-stronghold in their respective districts, legislative effectiveness, media coverage, etc. are all incentives for the parties to move away from the seniority rule (perhaps why it was done in the 1970's - some argue that it was to further help with the strengthening of parties in insitutions).

2 What I've found so far

2.1 MC's are somewhat Old. Senate is older, though.

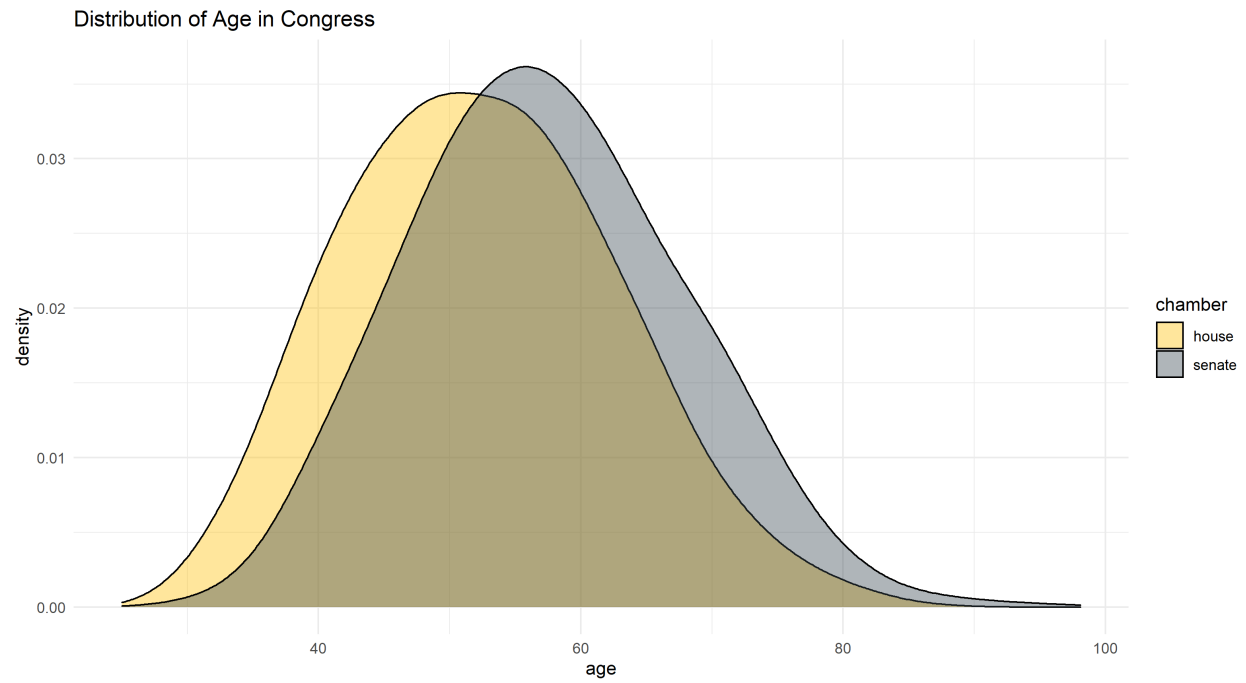
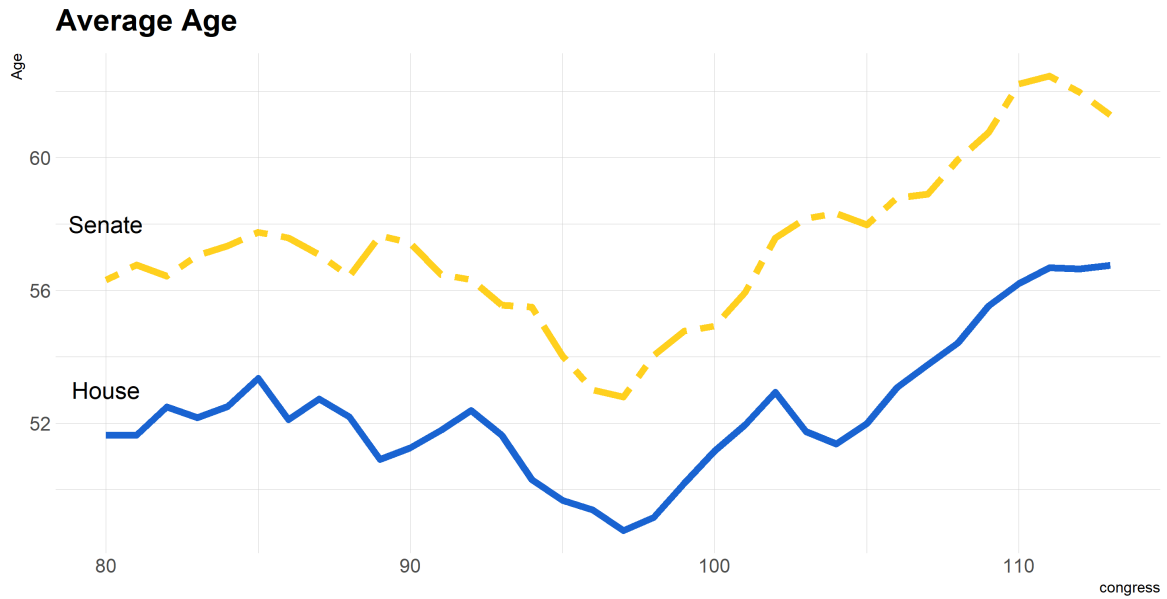


Figure 1: Age Distributions by Chamber

2.2 Both chambers are getting older over time (?)



But this may be changing(?).

2.3 MC's Spend Less Time in the House

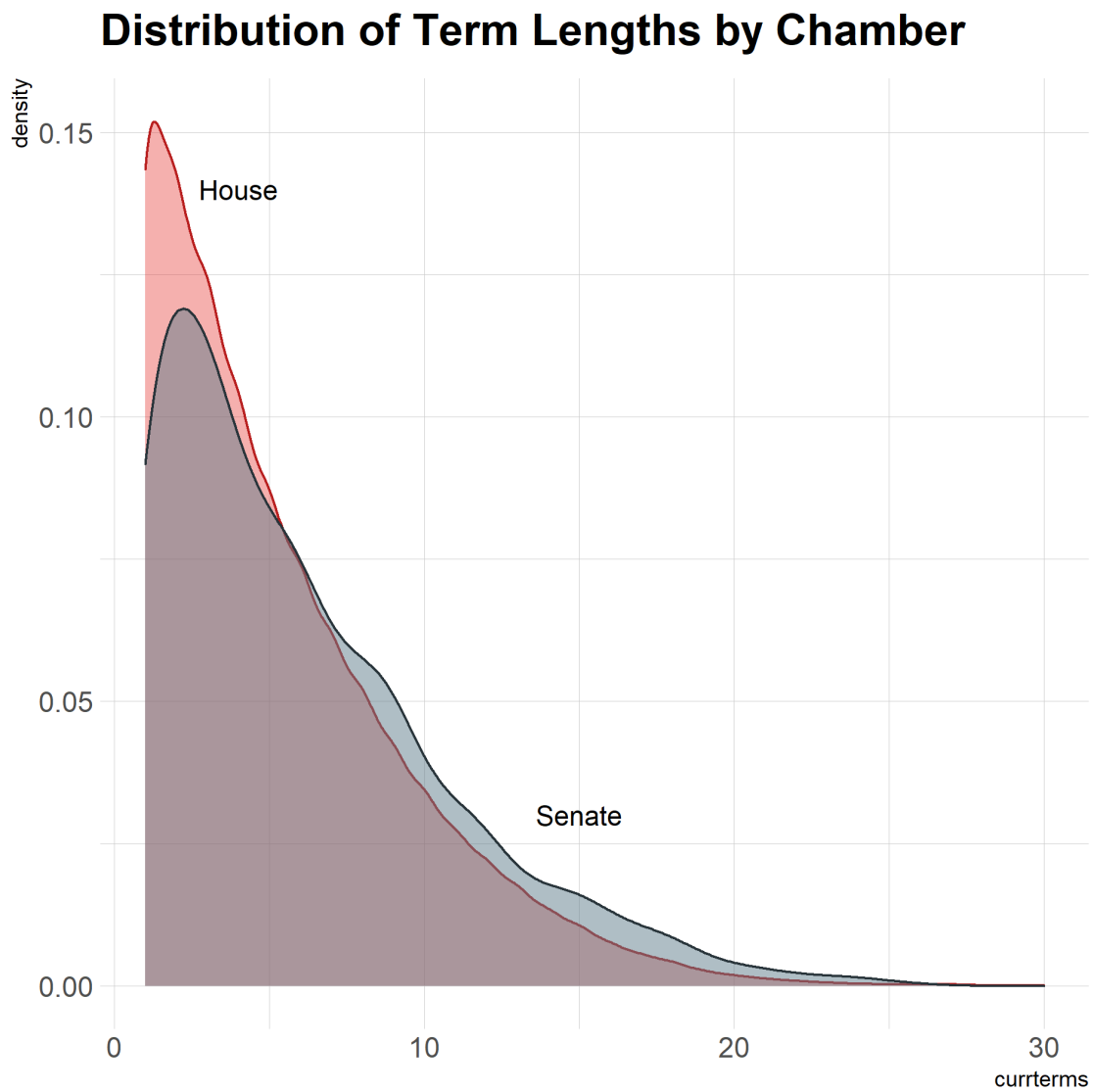


Figure 2: Term Length Distributions by Chamber

2.4 Volatile Term Lengths Over Time

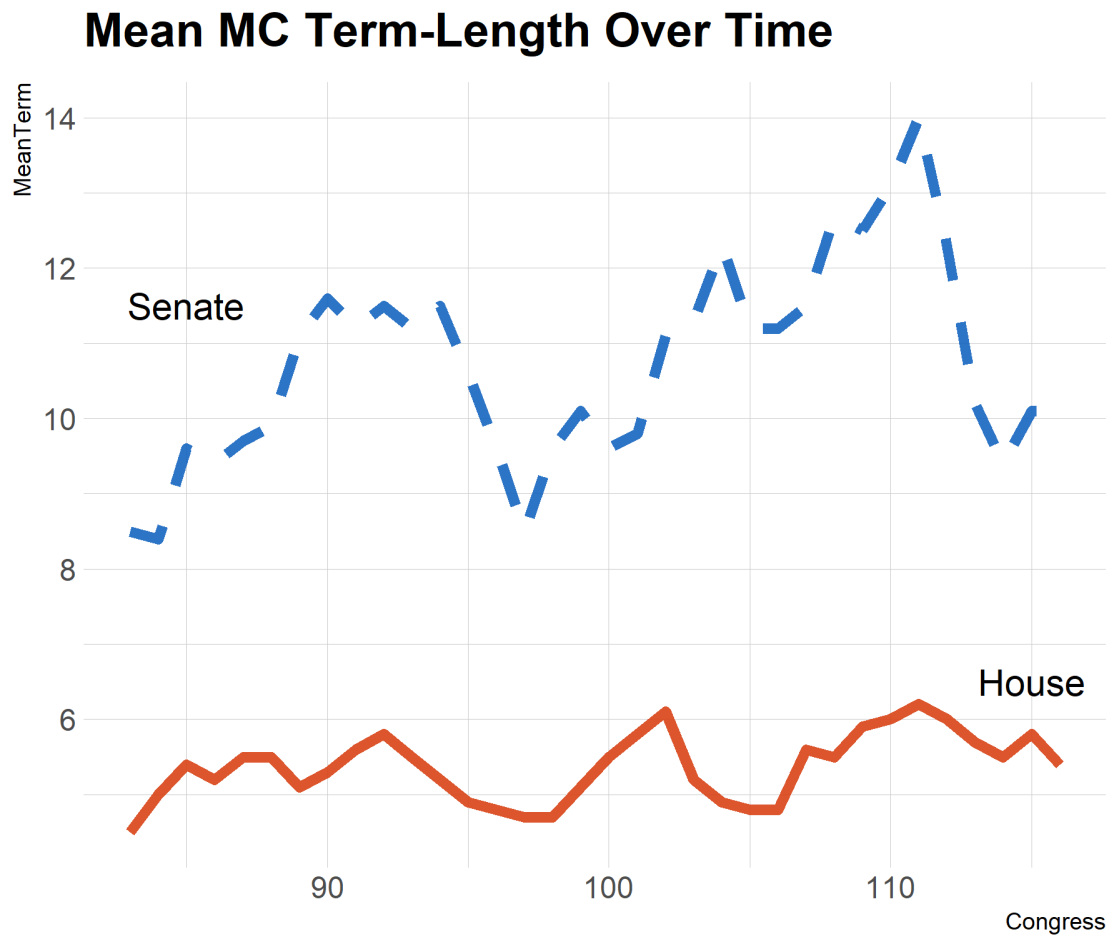


Figure 3: Term length Over Time by Chamber

2.5 Preliminary Analyses

My theory seeks to determine whether members of congress ascend to leadership positions due to their seniority. Therefore, my DV will be a composite measure (binary; 1 = held position, 0 = did not hold position) of whether an MC has had a leadership position or a committee/subcommittee chair position. My primary IV will be the length that the individual has served in congress, measured in years.

There are undoubtedly many other explanations that may better explain this relationship. I control for the partisanship of the member, whether they are a female, their Volden and Wiseman legislative effectiveness score and their vote share from their election giving them a seat in that congress.

I also use Congressional Session fixed effects to get a “within” comparison.

These preliminary results (**Table 1.**) show an interesting dynamic. Column 2 is the model for the senate and column 1 is the House of Representatives model. We see here that the term length of a Senator is not a statistically significant predictor for a leadership role whereas in the House it is! This is an interesting and I believe an important difference between the two institutions and may shed light into their calculus.

Fixed Effects of Term Lengths on Leadership		
	Dependent variable:	
	Leadership	
	House	Senate
# of Terms	0.036*** (0.001)	-0.003 (0.002)
Democrat	-0.007 (0.009)	0.018 (0.019)
Female	-0.030** (0.015)	-0.003 (0.035)
Legislative Effectiveness	0.066*** (0.003)	0.206*** (0.010)
District Voteshare	0.004*** (0.0003)	0.003*** (0.001)
Observations	9,900	2,298
Adjusted R ²	0.203	0.167
F Statistic	509.806*** (5; 9872)	(df = 97.444*** (5; 2270)
Note: Congress Fixed Effect Coefficients with corresponding standard errors		
* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01		

Figure 4: Table 1.