Seniority Project - September 30, 2020

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Contents

1 Important Notes

1.1 Data Sources

- Brookings' Vital Statistics on Congress
- Volden and Woon'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).

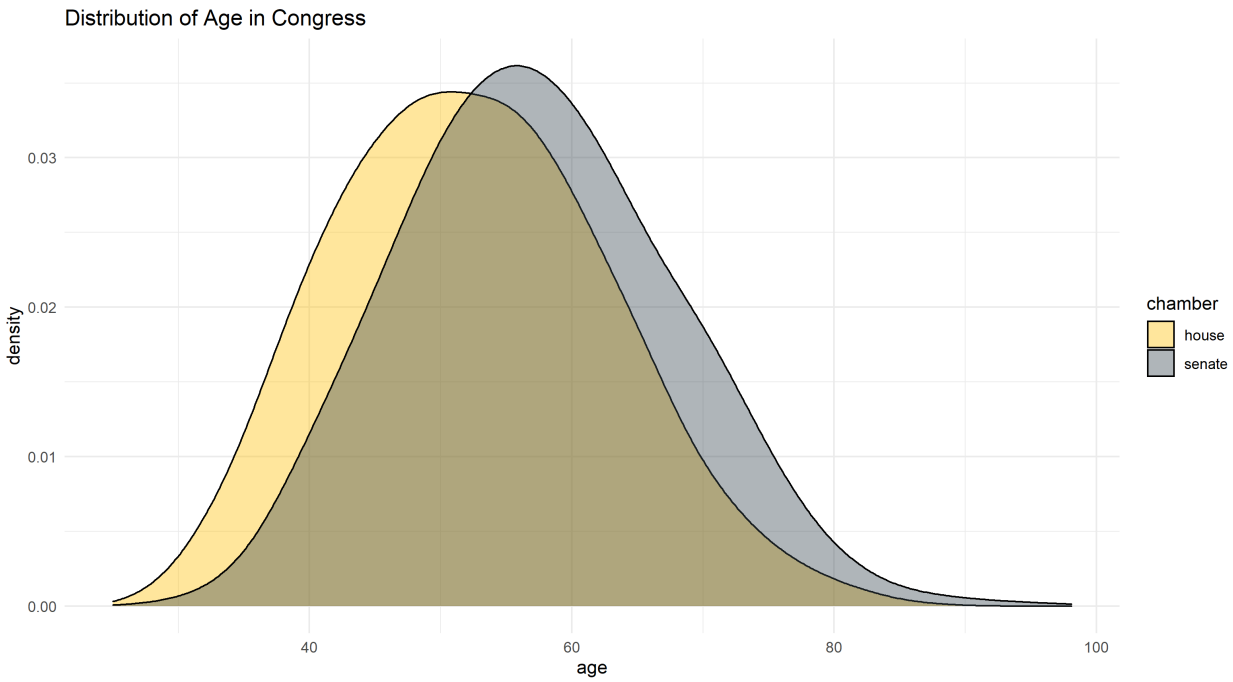
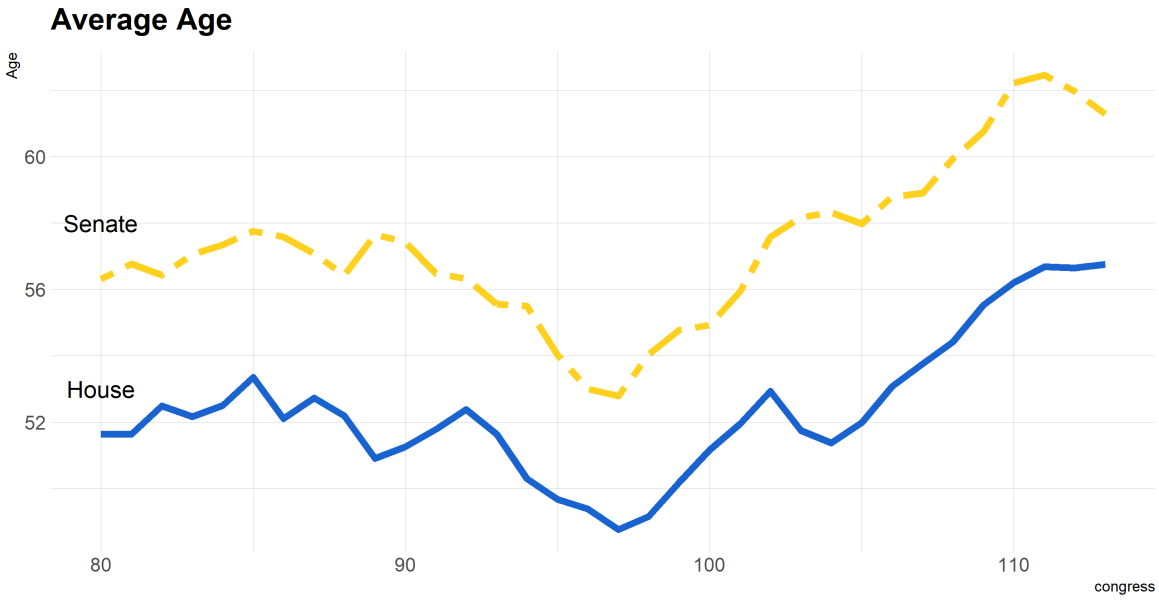


Figure 1: Age Distributions by Chamber

2 What I've found so far

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

2.2 Both chambers are getting older over time (?)



But this may be changing(?).

2.3 MC's Spend Less Time in the House

2.4 Volitile Term Lengths Over Time

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.

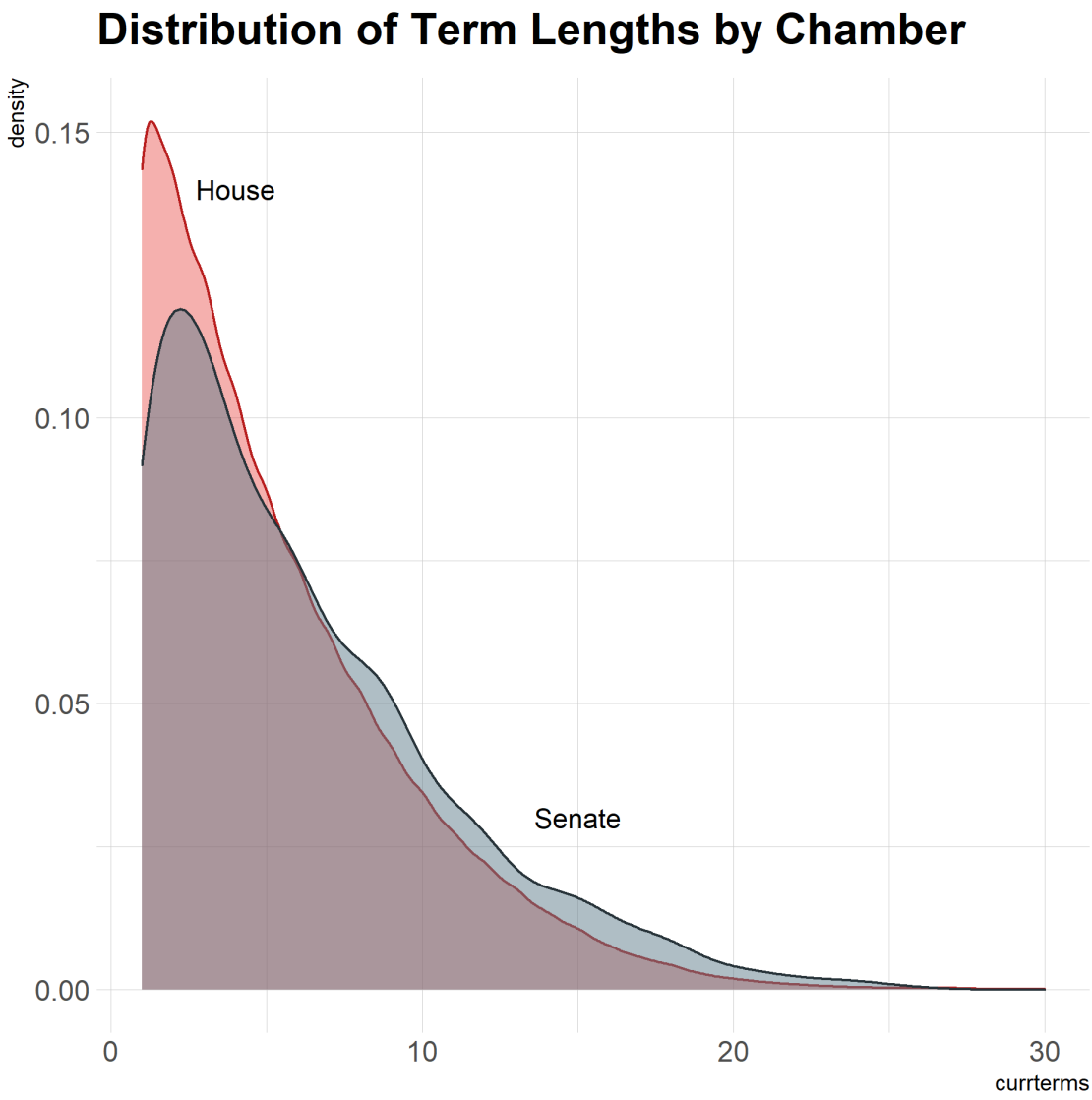


Figure 2: Term Length Distributions by Chamber

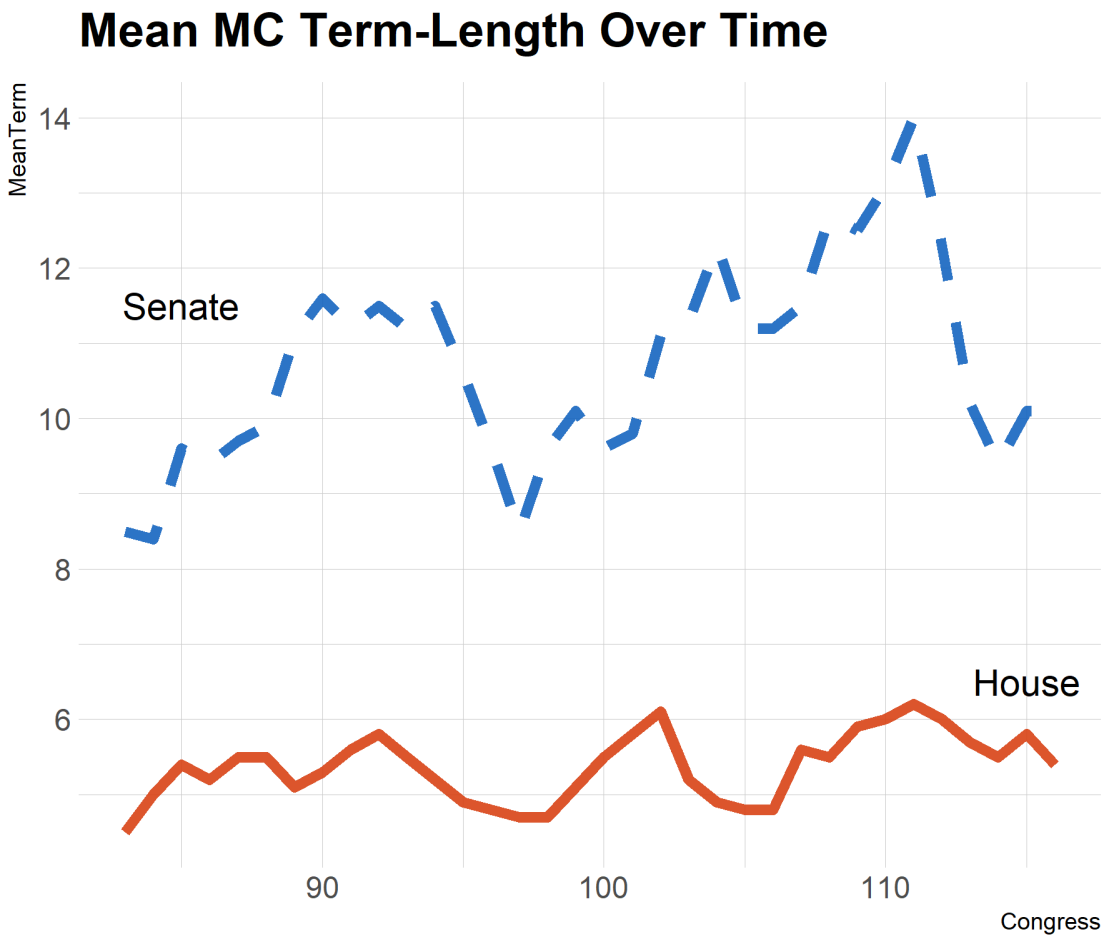


Figure 3: Term length Over Time by Chamber

Fixed Effects of Term Lengths on Leadership

	Dependent variable:	
	totallead	
	(1)	(2)
currterms	0.036***	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.002)
dem	-0.007	0.018
	(0.009)	(0.019)
female	-0.030**	-0.003
	(0.015)	(0.035)
legeffective	0.066***	
	(0.003)	
legeffictive		0.206***
		(0.010)
percent_vote	0.004***	0.003***
	(0.0003)	(0.001)
Observations	9,900	2,298
R^2	0.205	0.177
Adjusted R^2	0.203	0.167
F Statistic	509.806*** (df = 5; 9872)	97.444*** (df = 5; 2270)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

These preliminary results 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.