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# When the choice is made matters: voting in Japan's 2012 House of Representatives election

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**ABSTRACT**
What influences the timing of vote choices in mixed-member systems and to what extent does this influence split-ticketing voting? Although voters cast both ballots in effect simultaneously, they may make their decisions on which candidate and party to support sequentially. Using Japan's 2012 election as a case study, empirical analyses find that the district nominations influence the timing of one's district vote intention. Meanwhile the timing of vote choices corresponds with ticket-splitting, even after controlling for partisan and socio-economic factors.

**KEYWORDS**
Mixed-member systems; split-ticket voting; voting behaviour; Japan

## Introduction

What influences the timing of vote choices in mixed-member systems and to what extent does this influence split-ticketing voting, wherein voters choose to cast votes across party lines? Under two-vote mixed-member systems, voters cast a ballot for a district candidate in a single member district (SMD) and for the party list, using proportional representation (PR).[1] Yet few studies attempt to isolate when voters decide on whom to support with each ballot. A focus on timing helps us unpack the often poorly understood motivations for split-ticket voting, while knowing the timing of one's vote decision should also aid in predicting the frequency of ticket-splitting. Although the expectation remains that most voters will cast both ballots for the same party, the decision calculus for each vote may occur at different times during the campaign season and as such when voters make their decisions potentially influences rates of ticket-splitting.

Evidence from Japan's 2012 House of Representatives election allows for an analysis of the timing of the vote decision as a post-election survey from the University of Tokyo and the newspaper Asahi Shimbun specifically ask about the timing,[2] an aspect rarely included in surveys of elections held under the mixed format. A focus on timing attempts to add to the extensive literature on Japanese voting behaviour that emphasises the continued role of candidate-centred networks (*koenkai*) along with fraying social networks more broadly (e.g. Yamammura 2011) and classifying voters as strictly

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partisan (*koteihyo*), politically inclined but non-partisan (*mutohaso*), and uninterested in participation (*mukanshinzo*) (e.g. Koellner 2009), yet largely ignores the temporal effects on voting behaviour.

Japan's mixed-member system format in which the total distribution of seats need not be proportional to the PR list component incentivises a focus on district competition over the party list (e.g. Moser and Scheiner 2005; also see Reed 2003). Furthermore, despite dual listing, where candidates can run in both the district and party list simultaneously, the placement of higher party list positions based on district performance (see Hizen 2006; Jou 2009) further incentivises otherwise non-viable district candidates to exert greater effort in campaigning and for supporters to cast sincere district votes as well.[3] However, despite a sizable literature on strategic voting and ticket-splitting in Japan (e.g. Kohno 1997; Reed 1999; Kabashima and Reed 2001), and the effects of candidate nomination and quality on ticket-splitting (Burden 2009), timing remains largely overlooked. Therefore, our paper investigates whether the timing of voters' decision to split their votes, that is, when the voters decide to do so, has a discrete effect on their vote choice. By doing so, we shed light on a novel factor, partially contingent on parties' electoral strategies and timing of voters' choice, which affects the electoral behaviour of Japanese voters.

The 2012 election resulted in a landslide victory for the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), who captured 61.25% of seats, with an additional 6.46% of seats won by their traditional coalitional partner the Komeito (see Table 1). The election contrasted with the LDP's historic 2009 loss, winning only 24.79% of seats, and resulting in the first majority for the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), who captured 64.17% of seats.

This article suggests that for sizable segment of the voting population, vote intentions are not made simultaneously as voters not only consider their own partisan preferences, but interpret the electoral context, from the selective nomination of district candidates to interparty coordination. This article is divided as follows. First, we present extant research on mixed-member systems, tying this to ticket-splitting and the timing of the vote choice. The subsequent empirical analysis finds that voters in districts with a district candidate from their preferred party decided earlier, especially among LDP identifiers, with limited influence on the party list vote decision timing. Further analysis shows not only that the presence of a district candidate from the preferred party discourages ticket-splitting, but that the closer to the election that voters choose their party list vote matters, without evidence of a similar influence of their timing for the district vote. Meanwhile,

**Table 1.** Distribution of seats from the 2012 House of Representatives Election.

| | District seats | Party list seats |
|---|---|---|
| LDP | 237 | 57 |
| DPJ | 27 | 30 |
| JFP | 2 | 7 |
| Komeito | 9 | 22 |
| JRP | 14 | 40 |
| JCP | 0 | 8 |
| YP | 4 | 14 |
| SDP | 1 | 1 |
| Others | 6 | 1 |

voters making the two vote decisions at different times also positively correspond with ticket-splitting.

## Mixed-member systems and split-ticket voting

The rationales behind ticket-splitting in mixed-member systems are multifold, but most explanations focus on strategic incentives (e.g. Banducci, Donovan, and Karp 1999; Moser and Scheiner 2005, 2009; Park and Ryu 2009). Supporters of larger parties, able to viably compete in nearly every district, are seldom expected to vote strategically with either vote, whereas supporters of smaller parties would be expected in general to cast a sincere party list vote and a strategic district vote. However, according to the contamination thesis, voting incentives may be less distinct across seat types (e.g. Herron and Nishikawa 2001; Cox and Schoppa 2002; Ferrara, Herron, and Nishikawa 2005), whether due to party nomination decisions (e.g. Ferrara, Herron, and Nishikawa 2005; Hainmueller and Kern 2006), voter inability to understand the institutional mechanisms, or a coattail effect generated from support for the district candidate.

Wide variation in rates of ticket-splitting is commonplace, including from one election to the next within the same country (e.g. Kohno 1997; Pappi and Thurner 2002; Lee 2004; Gschwend 2007; Moser and Scheiner 2009; Han 2013). Part of the reason for such variation is the other incentives for why a voter would split their votes across two parties. Many partisans may not intend to ticket split, but have this decision essentially made for them by their preferred party not running district candidates (Hirano 2006; Burden 2009) as parties typically nominate candidates where they already draw comparatively strong support and not where they perform poorly or a coalitional partner performs better (Herron 2002; Maeda 2008).

In the 2012, no party in Japan ran candidates in all 300 single member districts, with only 4 parties running in a majority of districts: the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) (299), the LDP (288), the DPJ (264), and the Japan Restoration Party (JRP) (151). The JCP, with its ideologically committed supporters, historically fared poorly in districts, but commonly fielded many district candidates regardless of viability. However, for many voters, particularly those partial to small parties, voting a sincere straight ticket is not an option as their party failed to field district candidates.

Pre-election coordination of parties may similarly restrict a voter's options. In Japan, the LDP regularly coordinates with the Komeito due to its widely dispersed support, often as high as 20,000 votes in a district, which can benefit both parties in otherwise difficult to win districts. The two parties since 1999 frequently coordinate on a single district candidate while running separate lists. This coordination allowed the LDP to manufacture a majority despite declining support directly after the enactment of the mixed-member system. Those aware of the pre-election coordination would be expected to split tickets where appropriate whereas those unaware would still be expected to cast a split ballot due to the absence of a district candidate of their preferred party. More broadly, while the institutional mechanics of two-vote mixed-member systems may be poorly understood by voters, if the same parties routinely run in elections under the same electoral rules, voters should develop reasonable expectations (e.g. Karp et al. 2002). With 2012 as the sixth election under a mixed format, most

Japanese voters and parties should have a clear understanding of the basics of the electoral system, including incentives to cast a split ticket.

Ticket-splitting can occur for other reasons. Personal votes, especially for incumbents would be expected to encourage ticket-splitting (e.g. Born 1994), but could also encourage those with weak partisan identification to cast a coattail vote. Evidence from Japan suggests the continued importance of personal networks to cultivate a personal vote, despite the move to a mixed-member system that intended in part to reduce this influence (e.g. Fukui and Fukai 1996; Otake 1997; McKean and Scheiner 2000; Carlson 2006; Nemoto et al. 2008). Furthermore, Plescia (2017) finds that ticket-splitting in Japan is not limited to strategic balancing, but also contingent on preferences regarding individual district candidates and the party lists.

For voters uncertain about the electoral system (e.g. how votes translate to seats), ticket-splitting may be seen not as a strategic decision, but akin to those who split tickets across offices out of support for divided government or as a means of balancing (e.g. Fiorina 1992; Alesina and Rosenthal 1995). However, such desires are often temporary. For example, Yu, Huang, and Hsiao (2015) show in the Taiwanese case, support for divided government appeared conditional on whether one's preferred party was in power. Ticket-splitting may also be as a mean to avoid being an electoral loser, as numerous studies find losing corresponds with lower evaluations of the electoral system and democracy more broadly (e.g. Nadeau and Blais 1993; Anderson and Tverdova 2001; Blais and Gelineau 2007).

The timing in which one decides their two vote choices should provide insight into the likelihood of ticket-splitting. Deciding to split one's vote across two parties entails greater effort as it requires voters to consider separate motives within the same electoral context, from ideological interests to electoral viability and coalitional partnerships. Insights from voting behaviour in America's plurality elections for single member districts (Campbell et al. 1960; 78–80; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008; 71–72) and Germany's federal mixed-member electoral system (Schmitt-Beck and Müller 2012) suggest political knowledge negatively corresponds with timing, with late deciders less politically knowledgeable. Likewise, early deciders in Italy's PR system evaluated the traits of both incumbent and challenging candidates, while late voters only evaluated those of the incumbent, a trait accentuated by greater political knowledge (Catellani and Alberici 2012).

If different factors shape the voting calculus in district versus party list votes, then we should expect that many voters will not decide both votes at the same time. For example, a segment of the voting population would be expected to delay deciding until additional information gathered lowered their uncertainty in the electoral context. In particular, those waiting to see if their preferred party runs a district candidate and if that candidate is a viable challenger (e.g. Moser and Scheiner 2005; Gschwend 2007), as well as those cross-pressured and amenable to voting for more than one party would be expected to seek additional cues about the parties and candidates before deciding one if not both votes. Despite the potential influence of the timing on vote intentions on split-ticket voting, few studies tackle this directly. Rich (2012) finds that Korean voters in the 2008 National Assembly election that decided closer to the day of the election were more likely to split their vote, even after controlling for the lack of a district

candidate, but does not disaggregate when the vote choices were made, treating the two as simultaneous. Nor is it clear whether waiting to decide on the district versus the party list results in higher rates of ticket-splitting or if simply deciding at different times sufficient predicts splitting one's vote.

*H1: Voters whose preferred party run a district candidate in their district should decide their district vote sooner than those voters in which their preferred party does not.*

*H1(a): The presence of a district candidate from a voter's preferred party should have no effect on the timing of the party list vote.*

*H2: Voters who decide their votes closer to the election are more likely to split their votes.*

*H3: Voters who decide their district and party list vote at different times are more likely to split their votes.*

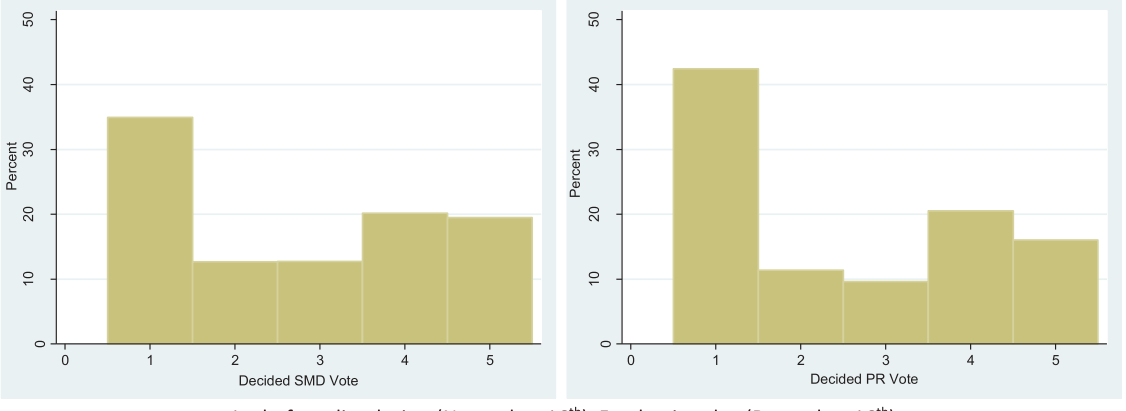
## Empirical analysis

The University of Tokyo/Asahi survey data includes a five-point scale on when voters decided their district and party list votes[4]:

(1) Before the House of Representatives had been dissolved (16 November),
(2) The date of dissolution to the public notice day (16 November – 3 December),
(3) The first half of the election period (4–9 December),
(4) The second half of the election period (10–15 December),
(5) The day of the election (16 December).

Regarding district voting, respondents averaged a score of 2.8, compared to a party list mean of 2.6, consistent with a segment of the population waiting for additional cues on district nomination and viability. As expected, the two votes correlate strongly (.67; $p < .001$), weakest among Komeito identifiers (.49) and strongest among JCP identifiers (.92).[5] Disaggregating by party, the same general pattern emerges: party list votes on average were decided earlier than district votes, although this distinction is smallest among the two largest parties (LDP and DPJ) as well as the Your Party (YP).

Figure 1 shows the histogram for both vote choices. A plurality of voters in each component claimed to have made their choice early in the election, although rates were higher for the party list vote, consistent with less time necessary to consider viability in this component for most voters. In addition, 28.58% claimed to have made both vote decisions before dissolution. Meanwhile 16.05% of respondents claimed to have made their party list vote decision on election day, with similar rates regarding the district vote (19.5%) and 11.81% claiming to have made both decisions on election day. Furthermore, survey evidence shows that for most indicating a party preference in the survey (measured independently from vote choice), the absence of a district candidate led to a decision about the district vote choice closer to the date of the election, while district nomination appears to have minimal impact on the party list vote timing. The effect of district nomination on timing in the district vote is clearest among LDP and JFP identifiers with supporters in districts without a candidate averaging a point higher on the timing scale (see Table 2).




1 = before dissolution (November 16th) 5= election day (December 16th)

**Figure 1.** The timing of vote choice in the SMD and PR components.

1 = before dissolution (16 November) 5 = election day (16 December)

**Table 2.** Average timing of vote choice based on candidate nomination.

| | District vote | | Party list vote | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | with candidate | Without candidate | with candidate | Without candidate |
| LDP | 2.4 | 3.6 | 2.3 | 2.9 |
| DPJ | 2.5 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| JFP | 2.9 | 4.2 | 2.8 | 3.4 |
| Komeito | 1.6 | 2.4 | 1.7 | 1.7 |
| JRP | 2.8 | 3.1 | 2.6 | 2.6 |
| JCP | 2.1 | n/a | 1.9 | n/a |
| YP | 2.8 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 2.8 |
| SDP | 4.0 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 2.3 |

Overall, among those who identified parties by name in both components, 38.62% split their vote across two parties, higher than reported in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data for 1996 (30.24%). That most do not split their votes suggests a level of stickiness (Cox and Schoppa 2002). As expected, a majority of voters with a partisan preference split their tickets in the absence of a party district candidate, with far lower rates in the presence of a district candidate. For example, roughly a quarter of LDP identifiers (27.54%) and DPJ identifiers (25.5%) cast a split ticket in the presence of a party district candidate, with up to 60% and 62.5% in their absence. Meanwhile, 43.96% of those with no party preference split their tickets.

Due to the limited history of pre-election coordination, save the LDP and Komeito, assessing whether ticket-splitting remained rational in a coalition or ideological sense is unclear. However, a cursory analysis suggests wide variation. Of the 527 LDP identifiers in the survey, 328 voted a straight ticket (62.24%), 4 voted for Komeito district candidates, and 37 in the party list vote (totaling 7.78%). In other words, roughly 20% of LDP voters chose to split their vote for non-coalitional partners while, oddly, 9% voted a straight ticket for another party.

In contrast, among Komeito identifiers, 28.09% cast a straight ticket (28.09%) and 57.30% for the LDP if ticket-splitting. Among DPJ identifiers, 60.61% voted a straight ticket, but few DPJ voters split their votes between the DPJ and any parties within the DPJ-led 2009 coalition (2.42%). In fact, more voted for the LDP in one if not both components (9.09%). These findings suggest non-strategic factors influencing voting behaviour such as personal votes.

In terms of timing, 35.23% of voters claimed they decided on district and party list votes at different times. But to what extent does timing correspond with ticket-splitting? Using timing as a binary measure (same time/different times), a cross-tabulation with ticket-splitting suggests a relationship (Chi-square = 138.39, $p \leq .001$). Among those that decided the district level and party list votes at the same time, only 27.51% split their votes, compared to 59.47% that chose their votes at different times.

The literature remains unsettled in regard to which demographic factors influence ticket-splitting. For example, existing research on the US is inconsistent as to whether education increases or decreases ticket-splitting (e.g. Campbell and Miller 1957; DeVries and Tarrance 1972). Choi's analysis of voter choice in Taiwan's mixed-member system reveals that the effects of voters' differential experiences of economic growth is mediated by their education because it allows voters to link government policies with their economic fortunes (Choi 2010). However, research in the Netherlands of PR

elections note that differences in education levels do not affect political participation and attitudes (Hakhverdian, van der Burg, and de Vries 2012).

Likewise, little research addresses the role of age on ticket-splitting, but assuming that partisan attachment solidifies over time, the expectation would be that older voters would be less likely to divide their ballots across parties. According to Goerres' (Herron 2002) study of Britain and Germany, older voters prefer established parties that have existed over many electoral cycles and been in power. Others analysing Austria's PR system argue that age interacts with gender in order to influence voter choice: specifically, although younger voters' preferences are shaped by sociocultural factors, young men vote for far-right parties and young women vote for the leftist Green parties based on their sociocultural views (Wagner and Kritzinger 2012).

Meanwhile, although gender frequently correlates with support for specific parties and some research suggests women are more likely to support female candidates, influence on ticket-splitting is unclear. The effect of gender on voting behaviour in post-industrial societies like Japan indicates that women, especially younger women, are more left-leaning than men; although the 'pattern of party-competition, the predominant issue agenda, and the strength of the organized women's movement' affects the extent of the ideological shift to the left (Inglehart and Norris 2000, 458). Recent studies on European countries support the findings on the gender gap, which are more apparent in the developed Western European countries than their post-Communist Eastern counterparts (Abendschön and Steinmetz 2014).

In addition to the above-mentioned causes, those more knowledgeable of politics should be more cognisant of the opportunities to cast a strategic vote, but whether this influences ticket-splitting more broadly is less certain. Karp (2006) finds that German voters' level of political knowledge about the 'primacy of the party list vote' does not affect split-ticket voting; but New Zealand voters' political knowledge positively correlates with split-ticket voting due to unviable district-level candidates. Gschwend (2007) also notes that German voters' knowledge of electoral rules interacts with their partisan preferences, specifically for bigger or smaller parties, to determine if they split-ticket vote and whether their vote is sincere at the SMD or PR level.

To address the timing of voting decisions, Table 3 presents separate ordinal logit models for the timing of the district (SMD) vote and the party list (PR) vote. Base models include a dummy variable for those who identified with one of the eight parties that won seats[6] and which their preferred party ran a district candidate (*Partisan with district candidate*).[7] Additional controls for gender (female), age,[8] education (a seven-point scale), and knowledge of politics (five-point scale) are included. Acknowledging the potentially salient difference between larger and smaller parties, the expanded models included separate dummy variables for LDP and DPJ supporters with a district candidate.

In the first district model, the partisan variable strongly corresponds with voters deciding on their district candidate earlier, consistent with expectations. However, this variable fails to reach significance with the inclusion of the controls for the larger parties. Here, LDP supporters with a co-partisan district candidate correspond with earlier vote decisions, significant at .05. Moving to the party list models, the presence of a district candidate, regardless of the size of the party, appears to have no effect on the timing of one's vote choice. More broadly, in all models, age and knowledge of politics correspond

**Table 3.** Ordinal logit models on vote decision timing.

| | SMD vote | | SMD vote | | PR vote | | PR vote | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE |
| Partisan with district candidate | −0.498**** | 0.125 | −0.272 | 0.175 | −0.049 | 0.126 | 0.036 | 0.176 |
| Female | 0.197* | 0.114 | 0.192* | 0.114 | 0.106 | 0.115 | 0.104 | 0.115 |
| Age | −0.211**** | 0.04 | −0.207**** | 0.04 | −0.151**** | 0.041 | −0.154**** | 0.041 |
| Education | 0.043 | 0.041 | 0.045 | 0.041 | 0.068* | 0.041 | 0.062 | 0.041 |
| Knowledge of politics | −0.428**** | 0.059 | −0.438**** | 0.06 | −0.355**** | 0.059 | −0.362**** | 0.060 |
| LDP ID with district candidate | | | −0.324** | 0.163 | | | −0.178 | 0.164 |
| DPJ ID with district candidate | | | −0.174 | 0.208 | | | 0.124 | 0.209 |
| Cut 1 | −2.769 | 0.292 | −2.78 | 0.293 | −1.603 | 0.287 | −1.646 | 0.289 |
| Cut 2 | −2.154 | 0.287 | −2.163 | 0.288 | −1.100 | 0.286 | −1.142 | 0.287 |
| Cut 3 | −1.525 | 0.284 | −1.532 | 0.285 | −0.627 | 0.284 | −0.668 | 0.286 |
| Cut 4 | −0.415 | 0.283 | −0.419 | 0.284 | 0.612 | 0.287 | 0.573 | 0.288 |
| N | 1119 | | 1119 | | 1124 | | 1124 | |
| Pseudo R2 | 0.043 | | 0.045 | | 0.026 | | 0.027 | |

*$p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; ****$p < .001$

with earlier vote decisions, suggesting that they either identify the electoral context earlier or that their partisan identification is more deeply entrenched.

Moving to the broader effect of timing, Table 4 presents a series of logit models on ticket-splitting. The first two models use the same independent variables as the previous models. The third includes separate variables for the timing of the district and party list vote, the independent variables of the earlier models.[9] The fourth model includes a dummy variable for whether vote choices were decided at different times, whereas the fifth includes the absolute difference in timing between the votes.

In the base model, as expected, the presence of a partisan district candidate negatively corresponds with ticket-splitting, significant at .001, a pattern that endures in later models. Furthermore, the predicted probability of ticket-splitting in the presence of a co-partisan district candidate was .26 compared to .70 in their absence.[10] The inclusion of controls for LDP and DPJ supporters with district candidates finds that only the former and only in the second and third models reaches significance, positively corresponding with ticket-splitting and consistent with the party's coordination with the Komeito. To put in perspective, the predicted probability of ticket-splitting was marginally higher among LDP identifiers with a co-partisan candidate (.28), compared to the DPJ (.25) and other partisans with a local candidate (.21).

Moving to the later models, only the timing of the party list vote positively correlates with ticket-splitting. For example, predicted probabilities of ticket-splitting in the absence of a district candidate increases from .68 to .86 altering the timing of the PR vote decision from before dissolution versus the day of the election and from .17 to .39 among those with a district candidate. That the timing of the PR vote corresponds with ticket-splitting is suggestive of strategic incentives rather than necessarily a sincere party vote. Furthermore, both measures of whether respondents made their vote choices at different times positively correspond with ticket-splitting, significant at .001. For example, the predicted probability of ticket-splitting more than doubles if vote choices were decided at different times (model 4: .56 vs. .25), or if the absolute time difference is large (model 5: .39 at same time vs. .83 at the extremes).

**Table 4.** Logit models on ticket-splitting.

| | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE | Coeff | SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partisan with district candidate | −1.896**** | 0.154 | −2.174**** | 0.230 | −2.282**** | 0.238 | −2.156**** | 0.245 | −2.167**** | 0.241 |
| Female | −0.084 | 0.142 | −0.079 | 0.142 | −0.119 | 0.147 | −0.093 | 0.153 | −0.115 | 0.151 |
| Age | −0.066 | 0.050 | −0.071 | 0.050 | −0.021 | 0.052 | −0.025 | 0.055 | −0.012 | 0.054 |
| Education | 0.013 | 0.050 | 0.012 | 0.051 | −0.011 | 0.052 | −0.024 | 0.055 | −0.016 | 0.054 |
| Knowledge of politics | 0.041 | 0.072 | 0.049 | 0.072 | 0.182** | 0.077 | 0.192** | 0.080 | 0.170** | 0.079 |
| LDP ID with district candidate | | | 0.377* | 0.214 | 0.460** | 0.220 | 0.294 | 0.228 | 0.281 | 0.226 |
| DPJ ID with district candidate | | | 0.236 | 0.270 | 0.202 | 0.278 | 0.195 | 0.288 | 0.160 | 0.285 |
| Timing of SMD vote choice | | | | | 0.101 | 0.061 | 0.008 | 0.063 | −0.020 | 0.067 |
| Timing of PR vote choice | | | | | 0.279**** | 0.061 | 0.341**** | 0.061 | 0.369**** | 0.065 |
| Chose votes at different times | | | | | | | 1.346**** | 0.152 | | |
| Absolute difference in vote times | | | | | | | | | 0.500**** | 0.070 |
| Constant | 1.032*** | 0.344 | 1.026*** | 0.346 | −0.383 | 0.414 | −0.828 | 0.432 | −0.634 | 0.426 |
| N | 1095 | | 1095 | | 1091 | | 1091 | | 1091 | |
| Pseudo R2 | 0.120 | | 0.123 | | 0.16 | | 0.217 | | 0.199 | |

*$p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; ***$p < .01$; ****$p < .001$

Robustness tests included a measure of the winner's margin as a proxy for district competitiveness, with the assumption that voters could form reasonable projections based on polling data, partisanship of the candidates, and previous election results. However, this inclusion failed to reach statistical significance, perhaps in part due to the contaminating effect of dual listing. Similarly, adding political efficacy and trust in government measures failed to alter the key findings or reach significance. In sum, the findings show that when one determines their district vote is influenced by whether their preferred party runs a district candidate, but that district nomination has no direct influence on the timing of the party list vote. Furthermore, the timing of both voting decisions appears to influence ticket-splitting, with later deciders more likely to vote for two parties.

## Conclusion

Straight-ticket voting, despite the presence of two separate ballots, remains the norm for most voters in a mixed-member system. Making such a decision after all takes less effort and is strongly encouraged, especially by larger parties in most cases. Yet, those that presumably deliberate longer before choosing are more likely to split their votes. The findings also suggest that for a non-negligible group of voters, the decision in each component is not made simultaneously. While a contamination effect between the two seat types appears to exist, for voters of most small parties, we see evidence suggestive that the electoral context of each component in part shape electoral behaviour. For those open to ticket-splitting, the delay in making a decision, especially for the district vote, suggests voters search for cues to viability in a complex multiparty environment. More broadly, the results suggest that knowing the timing of one's vote choice in a mixed-member system can aid in predicting the rates of ticket-splitting.

Admittedly this analysis cannot measure all of the factors which influence voting decisions in a mixed election, strategic or otherwise. The results from the Japan case, where the official campaigning is limited to 12 days before the election, may also have limited application to countries with a longer campaigning period. Directly measuring when viability is perceived in both the district and party list races also remains elusive. Nor is it clear to what extent strategic split-ticketing, other than perhaps within the LDP–Komeito coordination, influenced seat allocations or if voters are largely aware of other pre-election coordination. In other words, with pre-election polls indicating an LDP landslide and cursory analysis suggesting many voters split across traditional coalitional boundaries, such efforts likely had marginal influence at best. Furthermore, the apparent irrationality of some ticket-splitters perhaps should be read as a combination of dissatisfaction with existing parties and a means to stave off backing losing parties in both the districts and party list. More broadly, greater attention should be placed on unpacking the rationales that promote split-ticket voting, both in terms of institutional and nomination constraints as well as socio-economic factors.

## Notes

1. Under the less common one-vote mixed-member system, voters cast a district ballot and these votes are aggregated to the regional or national level to determine party list seats. See Ferrara (2006).
2. A mail survey sent the day prior to the 16 December election was collected through the end of January. Data used in this article can be acquired at: http://www.masaki.j.u-tokyo.ac.jp/utas/utasv.html .
3. McKean and Scheiner (2000) contend that dual listing, by incentivising party list candidates to build local roots for district competition reduces the number of viable district entrants, although Rich and Banerjee (2016) find that districts with more than two dual-listed candidates corresponded with a higher number of effective parties.
4. See Q010300 (for party list) and Q010500 (district vote) in the Asahi survey codebook.
5. Party identification measures here and later in the paper come from Q013700, which asks about long-term party identification.
6. The parties were (the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Japan Future Party (JFP), Komeito, Japan Restoration Party (JRP), Japanese Communist Party (JCP), Your Party (YP), and the Social Democratic Party (SDP).
7. This variable was created by matching the prefecture and district data in the survey with Asahi election coverage on the election results and the number of candidates in each district.
8. Age was measured in six cohort ranges (20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s and older).
9. We recognise the limits in interpretation of these ordinal measures as if they were integers as the distance between measurements are not fixed.
10. Unless otherwise stated, all predicted probabilities hold the additional independent variables at their means.

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