What Brings You to the Party? Voter Preferences on Parties Through Policy and Valence Dynamics*

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Abstract

Recent studies of party politics suggest that non-policy attributes, or valence, of political parties play a critical role in voter decision-making. However, no research to date has established exactly what types of valence matter and how they interact with parties' policy platforms. This study therefore conducted a conjoint experiment in Japan and find that voters care more about party valence attributes with respect to presence, power, and legislative productivity, as well as the prevalence of scandals, compared to the level of continuity and experience. This pattern persists regardless of electoral system and partisanship. The results also imply that valence is not a substitute for policy and that the effects of valence and policy behave additively. These findings paint a picture of electoral competition centered on both a party's policy offerings and its ability to meaningfully engage in the legislature rather than its continuing existence or the prevalence of incumbent members.

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How Policy and Valence Drive Electoral Outcomes

The cornerstone of democracy, elections determine who has the power to make decisions that affect all aspects of society. At the national level, those that win power are almost always affiliated with one of several political parties, each with their own priorities and agenda for the future of the country. With how significant the consequences of elections can be, political scientists have continually sought to better understand how parties contest elections and what about them appeals to voters. The culmination of their efforts is a dichotomous taxonomy of electoral appeal with policy positioning on the one hand and valence attributes on the other (Stiers, 2022; Magyar, Wagner and Zur, 2023).

Policy is the more straightforward of these two broad categories, comprising the platform a party puts forward, what laws they will enact, and what types of programs they seek to implement. Political parties' policy appeals can range from unidimensional to multi-dimensional, involve big tent issues or niche positions, but ultimately the goal of a party's policy positioning is to try and win voters over based on the programmatic goods it promises to deliver. Scores of spatial models, survey experiments, and observational research have found that party elites strategically position themselves in ways to boost their electoral performance (Downs, 1957; Dragu and Fan, 2016; Öhberg and Naurin, 2016; Soontjens and Sevenans, 2022; Adams, 2012; Dassonneville et al., 2024).

Valance attributes are less concretely defined than policy appeal. The most general definition of party valance is that it is the complement of policy; thus, anything that appeals to voters that is not based on policy falls under valence (Green, 2007; Butler and Powell, 2014). The perceived competence of the party, its trustworthiness, how charismatic candidates or party leadership are, and even the financial resources at a party's disposal are just some of the possible elements of party valence (Evrenk, 2019). In some cases, valence is relatively balanced between the parties (e.g. the United States), but in most cases there is a varied distribution of valence across the parties. Regardless of which aspect of valence we wish to focus on, the key difference between valence and policy is that where policy is positional, with flexibility in where a party places itself and the ideal

position relative to the voting base, valence is more inelastic and universally desireable. Voters should want parties with more competence and more trustworthiness, not less.

To complicate things further, research suggests that political parties do not appeal to voters exclusively by policy or valence alone but through a mixture of the two. Indeed, the dynamics between policy and valence have become increasingly the focal point of analysis on electoral competition. For example, large parties that are valence advantaged relative to smaller parties are more likely to deemphasize their policy and focus on valence attributes in their campaigns (Adams and Somer-Topcu, 2009; Ashworth and Bueno de Mesquita, 2009; Abney et al., 2013). Meanwhile, parties that try to moderate policy without sufficient valence to back them up often find themselves crushed by higher valence parties with less moderate policy positioning (Zur, 2021).

Regardless of the balance between policy and valence across parties, political parties ultimately exist to seek votes and win seats. In order to be competitive, they must supply what voters demand. But what is it that voters demand exactly? For parties, identifying their policy positions and valence attributes is relatively straightforward. Most parties publicize their policy platform and, though valence is frequently ill-defined, there are ways to measure and verify the extent to which a political party is making a valence-based appeal. Not so with voters. Observing what a political party is openly campaigning on is much easier than observing what motivated a voter to ultimately choose that party. In other words, we may be able to see what parties are supplying, but we are often assuming that this is meeting voter demand.

At its core, the issue is that just as different parties can occupy different spaces on the spectrum of policy and have differing levels of valence appeal, some voters may be policy-motivated while others may care more about valence or even *specific* valence attributes. It is difficult to empirically ascribe a party's electoral performance to its superior valence or its positioning on policy after the fact. Ideally, we would be able to measure voters' individual proclivities for policy and valence appeals—the demand side of the equation–and then see if their party selection is consistent with those preferences. Policy-motivated voters should choose parties that have policies that match closely with the voter, and valence-motivated voters should choose parties that exhibit the valence

attributes that those voters cares about.

Some scholars have endeavored to tackle the issue through conjoint analysis, a method of survey experimentation that allows researchers to measure how much value respondents place the various attributes of options presented to them (Franchino and Zucchini, 2015; Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto, 2018; Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley, 2020). Research using this method has esatblished that voters do in fact choose parties based on valence and policy considerations (Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto, 2018; Eshima et al., 2023). However, valence in these experiements as well as in other research remains nebulous or reduced to a single variable, potentially obscuring the ways in which voters are influenced by policy-valence dynamics in their selection of political parties. Empirical research in this area simply does not have a wide enough range of valence measures to fully establish the ways and extent to which party valence sways voter choice.

This paper addresses the shortfall in current analyses of valence dynamics through a conjoint experiment during the 2022 Japan House of Councillors election, focusing not just on how much voters place value on party policy versus party valence, but also what *specific* aspects of valence voters care about the most. We find that in aggregate, voters do care about both party policy and party valence, though there is evidence that they care more about particular types of party valence than others. We also find that the effects of valence and policy behave additively, which implies that valence is not a substitute for policy.

Competition in the House of Councillors in Japan

While the need for more research into how policy and valence guide voter choices is clear, the question remains—why Japan? As it turns out, the Japan case is well-suited for precisely this type of inquiry. Given its unique set of legislative institutions, electoral system, and the current state of party competition within the country, Japan is a particularly relevant case for exploring the power of party valence in voter choice.

Starting with the legislative institutions, we conducted our voter survey just prior to Japan's

2022 House of Councillors (HoC) election to maximize the relevancy of electoral competition and vote choice in the minds of voters. The HoC is the upper house in Japan's legislature, the other chamber being the House of Representatives (HoR), with both houses collectively called The National Diet. Unlike the HoR, HoC members serve fixed six-year terms, with half of the seats contested every three years. While the HoC is the less powerful chamber, it still serves several important functions, most notably through the requirement to obtain a two-thirds approval from the chamber in order to amend the constitution. Several provisions in Japan's constitution are hotly debated, and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Japan's largest and most dominant political party, has amending the constitution as a staple of its policy platform. Even in the regular process of passing legislation, any bill passed in HoR must also be passed by a majority vote in the HoC. The HoR can only pass legislation without assent from the HoC if it can secure a two-thirds majority, making the HoC a significant instituitional player in the legislative process.

HoC representatives are elected through a combination of single nontransferable vote (SNTV), first-past-the-post (FPTP), and open list proportional representation (PR) in a nationwide district. While initially the electoral system may seem confusing, in practice the process is quite straightforward. Voters each have two votes—one for a candidate in either an SNTV or FPTP district and one for a candidate or party in the nationwide PR district. The total seats are divided between the two votes such that 75 seats are allocated to SNTV/FPTP districts and 50 seats are allocated to the open list PR district, in which the super majority (78%) of PR ballots was cast using only party names in 2022 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2022). In isolation, the HoC's electoral system splits its focus between candidate and party appeal since the majority of voters are casting ballots for both candidates and parties (Carey and Shugart, 1995).[1] While there is a consensus that the state of electoral competition in Japan is one that has become increasingly policy and party-focused (McElwain, 2012; Catalinac, 2016; Hamzawi, 2022), this mixed-system generates variations in how candidate- or party-centered the electoral competition is expected to

[1]Note that the HoC elections do not occur in a vacuum. Japan's other chamber, The HoR, often holds its elections concurrently or extremely close to the HoC. The HoR uses mixed-member majoritarian (MMM), a system that similarly gives voters two votes, though this time one is cast within exclusively FPTP districts and the other for closed list PR.

be.

Party competition in Japan currently involves the long-time dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), its coalition partner Komeito, and a collection of opposition parties. Policywise, the LDP takes center-right to right wing positions on most issues while the opposition parties take various positions on the rest of the policy spectrum. Despite the LDP securing control of government in almost every election, Japan scholars have found that voters generally prefer non-LDP policies (Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto, 2018). Additionally, voters in Japan have become increasingly unaffiliated with any one party (Kabashima and Steel, 2018). These floating voters may vote for a leftist party in one election and the LDP in another. The lack of strict partisanship opens the door for analysis into what exactly motivates these voters in their choice of party.

One major motivation for many voters' repeated choice of the LDP despite its less than popular policies could be its valence. Some reasearchers have found preliminary evidence that the valence advantage of the LDP relative to its rivals has kept it in power (e.g., Eshima et al., 2023). However, as with many other analyses that incorporate valence, there is no research that breaks down precisely what valence attributes puts the LDP above its competition. Voters clearly prefer the LDP over the other options and it does not seem to be driven by partisan attachment. The floating nature of Japan's voters, the numerous party options, and the lopsided distribution of valence between those options gives us the necessary variation to see not only how much policy motivates party choice relative to valence, but also what specific types of valence attributes matter most.

The combination of the electoral incentives of the HoC, the way in which voters engage with it, and the party system voters face presents an environment that has room for party policy and valence appeal to play a role in swaying voter choices. Furthermore, a conjoint experiment allows us to not only examine policy and valence dynamics but also take a peek at what aspects of valence pushes voters to one party over another. In other words, we can vary what parties are supplying and based on voter responses intuit what it is they are demanding.

Policy, Valence, and Expectations of Voter Preferences

Following the expectations of previous reserach on policy and valence, we can expect a few things from a conjoint experiement of voter preferences. First, as previously mentioned, valence is theoretically a "more-is-more" situation. Voters should, *ceteris paribus*, prefer the party with the higher valence. Though valence attributes can take a variety of forms (competence, credibility, charisma, etc), given two identical parties differentiated only by a single valence attribute, voters should prefer the party with higher valence every time:

> *H1A: The better a party's valence attributes, the more likely voters are to select that party.*

As will be detailed in the subsequent section, our conjoint survey uses multiple measures of valence in an effort to assess how responsive voters are to different valence attributes. Regardless of the type of valence, the theoretical expectation remains unchanged. Higher valence should always correspond with higher preference from voters.

On the policy side of the equation, research on policy preferences and voter choice shows that voters generally prefer parties that are closer to them on policy (Adams, Ezrow and Somer-Topcu, 2011; Seeberg, Slothuus and Stubager, 2017). Thus, voters in Japan should follow suit and choose parties that are more closely positioned to their own preferences:

> *H1B: The closer a party's policy is to their preferences, the more likely voters are to select that party.*[2]

As with valence, the conjoint experiment assesses voter policy preferences and party policy positions through multiple measures. We use several salient issues during the 2022 election with the expectation that the greater the matchup between voter policy preferences and party positioning, the more likely that voter chooses that party.

[2]We didn't offer H1B explicitly in the preregistration. On the other hand, preregistered hypothesis H2 implicitly assumes that H1B stands. Therefore, we offer H1B here to clarify theoretical logic.

While we have straightforward expectations about valence and policy, the literature is clear that they do not operate in isolation. What happens when a voter is faced with a choice between a party closely positioned to it with lower valence and a party that is further away on policy but has higher valence? While some voters may be highly policy-motivated, given the choice between a party that perfectly aligns with a voter's preferences and a party that has some policy divergence from that voter but with the capability to effectively govern, it seems more likely that a voter would prefer the party that can deliver on at least some policies over a party that is incapable of affecting policy. While valence should not completely supercede policy, it may moderate the influence of policy on voters' party choice. In Europe, there is evidence that the power of policy preferences to determine the support of moderate mainstream parties is somewhat weaker than that of smaller niche parties (Costello et al., 2021; Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015). Research on Japan corroborates these broader findings, with the LDP's continued electoral victories unlikely to be a function of the party's policy platforms (Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto, 2018). Therefore, we expect the following relationship between policy and valence:

> *H2: The better a party's valence attributes, the weaker the influence of a voter's policy proximity to a party with regard to party choice.*[3]

Finally, there is evidence that larger and governing parties are evaluated differently by voters, with special emphasis placed on the valence attributes of those parties (Green and Jennings, 2012; Abney et al., 2013). Parties in government have different expectations placed upon them. They have promises made on the campaign trail that voters expect to see fulfilled and actually have the ability to enact legislation. In the Japan case, the LDP is consistently the largest party and with vanishingly few exceptions, the party in government. Since our conjoint experiment assesses Japanese voters, we expect that valence considerations will be uniquely pronounced for the supporters of LDP:

[3]The preregistered hypothesis is worded as "*valence attributes will moderate the influence of a voter's policy proximity to a party with regard to party choice.*" We rephrased this hypothesis slightly to clarify the expected direction of moderation.

H3: Supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party will prioritize valence over policy compared with opposition supporters.[4]

Measuring Voter Preferences Through Conjoint Experiment

To examine the above theoretical expectations, we conducted an online survey conjoint experiment in Japan between July 1 and 3, 2022, on the eve of the HoC election occurred on July 10, 2022. Respondents are recruited through the online survey company *Rakuten Insight* and responses are collected through the survey platform *Qualtrics*.[5] In total, our dataset includes 1,866 valid respondents for the analysis.[6] In designing the experiment, we utilized the conjoint design to gauge the respondents' preferences toward party platforms (e.g., Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto, 2018). In each task within the experiment, respondents are forced to make a choice between two hypothetical political parties with randomly-generated valence and policy attributes. We then set this choice task in two different contexts of the HoC election to cover the breadth of the choice environments. The first five iterations asked about the choice of candidates affiliated with given parties in the context of single- or multi-member district election. The next five iterations instead asked about the choice of political parties in the context of proportional representation election. We flipped the electoral context ordering for a random half of the respondents. After excluding invalid cases, we have 18,136 cases for each of the member district and proportional representation contexts.[7]

Table 1 summarizes the party attributes and their levels that are randomly assigned in our

[4]The preregistered hypothesis use "the LDP/Komeito (the party in government)" instead of "Liberal Democratic Party." We made this change because previous literature suggests that policy agreements among Komeito supporters are exceptionally high (Huckfeldt, Ikeda and Pappi, 2005). As a result, we found our theoretical logic to be less applicable to Komeito. To be consistent with our preregistered hypothesis, Online Appendix D includes an extra analysis that bundles LDP and Komeito together as the "governing party," finding similar implications as our main results.

[5]We limit participants to those who are 18 years old or older. The sampling is made to match the distribution of gender (i.e., male, female) and age cohorts (i.e., 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s or over) with the Japanese census.

[6]The original survey had 2,445 respondents. However, due to technical errors related to internet connectivity issues, conjoint attributes were not assigned and thus not displayed to 579 respondents. We excluded those respondents from the final dataset.

[7]While experiments are forced-choice without explicit non-response options, implicit non-response (skipping) is allowed following the recommendation from the institutional ethics committee. The non-response rate is 2.8%.

Table 1: Conjoint attributes and levels

Attributes	Levels
VALENCE ATTRIBUTES	
1. Ministers affiliated with the party	yes; no
2. Parliamentary standing committee chairs affiliated with the party	22; 11; 6; 2; 1; 0
3. Members of Parliament (MPs) affiliated with the party	374; 128; 59; 32; 11; 4; 1; 0
4. Number of legislative bills submitted by MPs (in the past year)	64; 33; 16; 7; 1; 0
5. MPs affiliated with the party who are more than twice elected	all; about 3/4; about half; about 1/4; 0
6. Years since party formation	67 years; 48 years; 25 years; 13 years; 5 years; 2 years; less than 1 year
7. Electoral districts with candidates affiliated with the party	all districts; 80% of all districts; half of all districts; 20% of all districts; only a few districts
8. Percentage of party promises realized (since last election)	80%; 50%; 30%; 10%; 5%
9. Scandal coverage of the party's office holders and legislators by newspapers and weekly magazines (in the past year)	10 times; 5 times; 2 times; 1 time; 0 times
10. Length of tenure of current party leader	8 years; 5 years; 2 years; less than 1 year
11. Personality of current party leader	strong leadership; good coordination; good communication skills; responsible; friendly; thoughtful; experienced
POLICY ATTRIBUTES	
12. Party policy (separate surnames for married couples)	*a.* will introduce an optional dual-surname system; *b.* will not introduce an optional dual-surname system; *c.* position pending
13. Party policy (consumption tax)	*a.* maintain status quo; *b.* should be lowered to 8%; *c.* should be lowered to 5%; *d.* should be abolished; *e.* position pending
14. Party policy (constitutional reform)	*a.* advance constitutional reform, including Article 9; *b.* advance constitutional reform on items other than Article 9; *c.* defend the Peace Constitution; *d.* position pending

Note. To ensure the reality, the following cases are restricted. If no.1 is yes, no.3 is *not* 0; If no.1 is no, no.3 is *not* 374; If no.2 is 22 or no.4 is 65, no.3 *is* 374 or 128; If no.2 is 11 or no.4 is 33, no.3 *is* 374, 128, or 59; If no.2 is 6 or no.4 is 16, no.3 *is* 374, 128, 59, or 32; If no.2 is 2 or no.4 is 7, no.3 is *not* 4, 1, or 0; If no.2 is 1 or no.4 is 1 or no.5 is all, no.3 is *not* 374, 128, or 0; If no.2 is 0 or no.4 is 0, no.3 is *not* 374 or 128; If no.5 is about 3/4 or about half or bout 1/4, no.3 is *not* 1 or 0; If no.5 is 0, no.3 *is* 11, 4, 1, or 0; If no.10 is 8 years, no.6 is *not* 5 years, 2 years, or less than 1 year; If no.10 is 5 years, no.6 is *not* 2 years or less than 1 year; If no.10 is 2 years, no.6 is *not* less than 1 year.

conjoint experiment. The top eleven attributes are related to the party valence, and the last three are related to the policies (see detailed wording of experiment texts in Online Appendix A.1). We randomized the order of attributes while keeping the policy and valence attributes bundled together within each category. To ensure the reality, we restricted some combination of attributes from appearing together in one profile (see the note of Table 1).[8] For valence attributes, "yes"

[8]Almost all attribute levels appear more than 1,000 times. However, due to severe restrictions, it turns out that the

in attribute 1, larger numbers in attributes 2 through 8 and 10, and smaller numbers in attribute 9 theoretically represent higher valence. For attribute 11, i.e., party leader's personality, we don't have an explicit prior expectation regarding which personality is more popular than the others. Therefore, the analytical inquiry regarding this attribute is rather exploratory.

For policy attributes, raw levels of the policy position do not have a theoretical connection with the respondent's choice. Therefore, we create *policy proximity* scores to capture the proximity between the policy preferences of the respondents and the policy attributes of the parties. In the pretreatment questionnaire, we offer questions that gauge respondents' preferences on each policy included in the experiment (see Online Appendix A.2 for detailed texts). For the policy on separate surnames for married couples, we ask respondents to rate their support for the statement "introduce an optional dual-surname system" on a seven-point scale from -3 (against) to 3 (in favor). Denote an individual response to this question as $X_i \in \{-3,2,1,0,1,2,3\}$. Then, the policy proximity score is calculated by $X_i - 3$ if the attribute level is a (for introduction) and $-(X_i + 3)$ if it is b (against introduction). If the attribute level is c (position pending), we take the distance from the intermediate value, i.e., $-|X_i|$. The resultant policy proximity measure is on a seven-point scale from -6 (far) to 0 (close).[9]

For the topics of consumption tax and constitutional reform, we ask questions to rate the distance from each attribute level assigned in the experiment, on a four-point scale from distant (0), neither distant nor close (1), somewhat close (2), and very close (3).[10] Denote an individual response to the attribute level k as $X_i^k \in \{0,1,2,3\}$, and the maximum value of the responses regarding levels that are *not* k as $max(X_i^{-k}) \in \{0,1,2,3\}$. Then, the policy proximity score for k is calculated by combining closeness to k and the distance from the closest attribute level outside of k. $X_i^k - 3 - max(X_i^{-k})$, which ranges, again, from -6 (far) to 0 (close). Figure 1 presents the distributions of the policy proximity scores. While frequencies vary across policies and levels, we

profile with no member of the parliament affiliated with the party is only displayed 97 times. In the following analysis, we present their marginal means estimates without confidence intervals for the sake of interpretability and consider them as tentative results.

[9]Non-responses are recoded as 0. In preregistration, the score is calculated on a scale from 0 (close) to 6 (far), but we reversed and rescaled it for the sake of interpretability.

[10]Non-responses are recoded as 1.

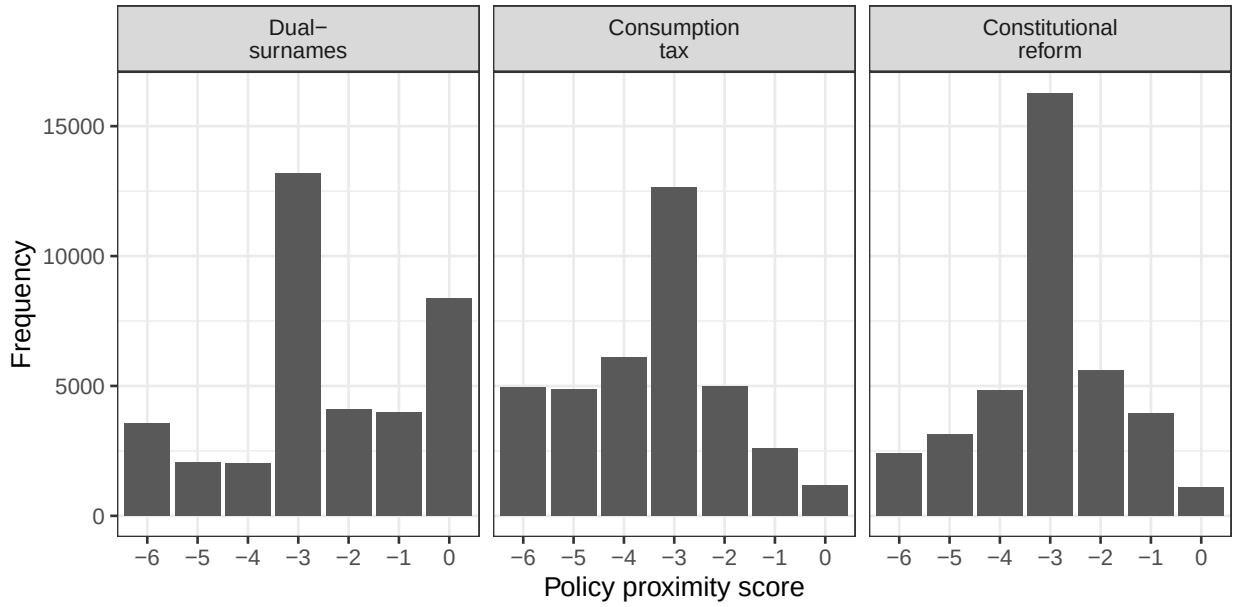


Figure 1: Distributions of policy proximity scores

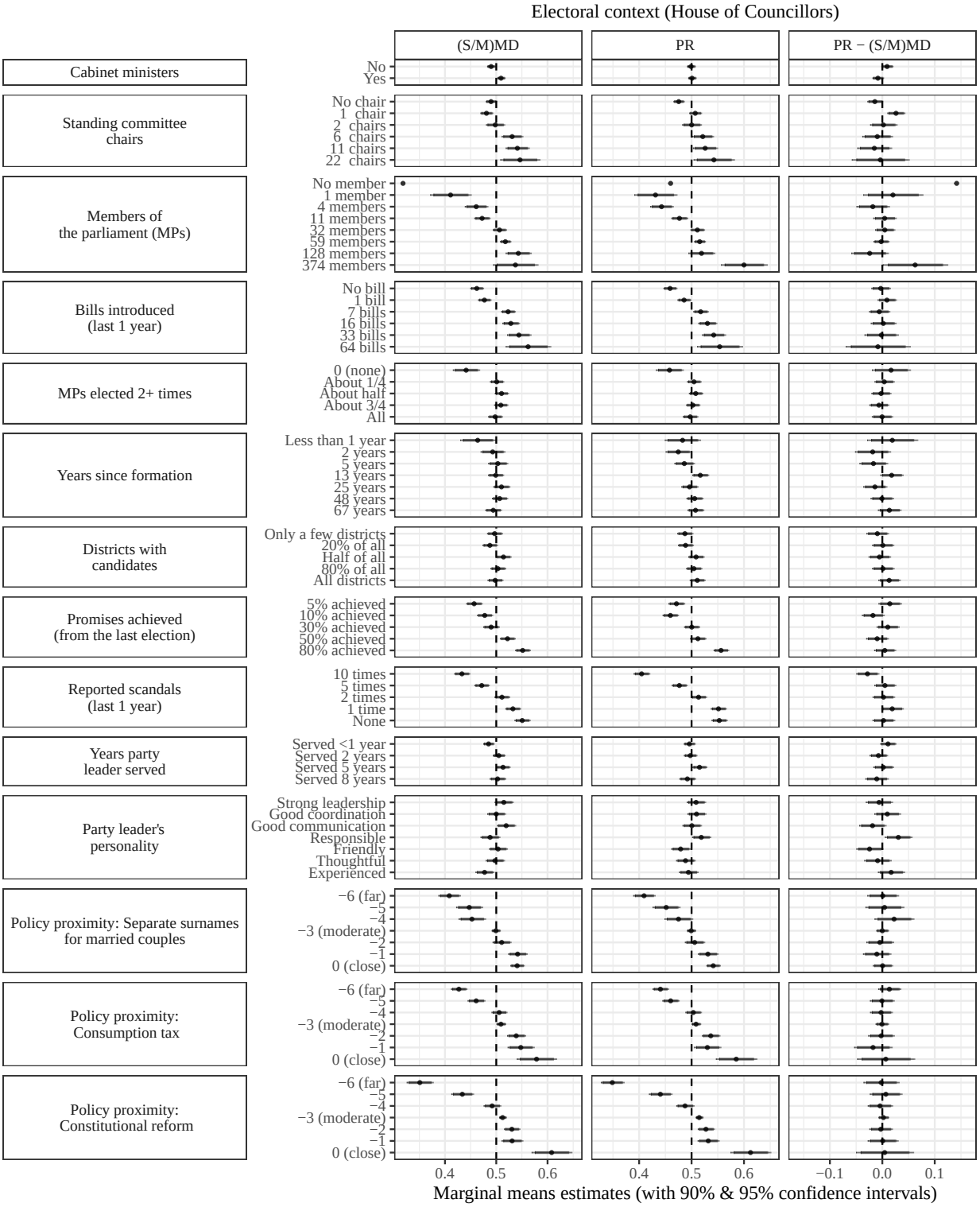
are able to assign at least 1,000 observations to every possible category.

Analysis: Which of the Valence and Policy Attributes Matters?

To examine the effect of each valence or policy attribute of political parties on electoral choice, we take advantage of marginal means (Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley, 2020). Independent of all other attributes, marginal means represent the probability respondents select party profiles with a specified attribute level.[11] Figure 2 presents our main results, separated by two electoral contexts we assigned. The left column reflects the hypothetical choice under HoC's single- or multi-member districts election, i.e., (S/M)MD, and the center column reflects the choice under HoC's proportional representation election, i.e., PR. The right column assesses the difference between two electoral contexts.

Overall, we see patterns that are generally consistent with H1A and H1B. Higher valence and

[11] All estimations use cluster-robust standard errors estimated with the `cj` function in the `cregg` package of the statistical software R (Leeper, Hobolt and Tilley, 2020). The preregistration texts proposed to use the average marginal component effects (AMCE), but we used marginal means instead in the current article, because AMCE may confuse our understanding of the results depending on the arbitral selection of reference levels.



Note: Confidence intervals for No MPs (9th row) omitted because they are exteremely wide due to insufficient observations.

Figure 2: Main results from conjoint experiment

closer policy proximity lead to a higher likelihood of a party being selected. Also, comparison between two electoral contexts reveals that party-based electoral choices in single- or multi-member districts and proportional representation are highly similar. We observe some differences that pass a conventional statistical significance threshold ($p < .05$), but the magnitudes of the differences are at best marginal and we are unable to find clear systematic patterns that deserve theoretical attention. This result implies that there are common underlying dynamics of party-based electoral choice in HoC elections, regardless of the influence of electoral systems.

Turn to the comparison across attributes, all policy proximity attributes have clear linear relationships with the choice of a party, which confirms the conventional logic proposed in the spatial voting literature (e.g., Downs, 1957; Adams, Merill and Grofman, 2005). Comparisons across different valence attributes, on the other hand, exhibit interesting variations that deserve theoretical discussion. To start, we see consistently linear relationships between valence and selection when valence attributes refer to the power, presence, and legislative productivity of a party in parliament. For the numbers of standing committee chairs, members of the parliament (MPs), and bills introduced, as well as the proportions of electoral promises achieved, an increase in valence almost always leads to the higher likelihood of selection. The same pattern also applies to the (lower) number of reported scandals. In contrast, if valence attributes are related to the experience and seniority of parties and party leaders, valence's effect is weak and potentially nonlinear. For the proportion of MPs with more than twice elected, years since party formation, and years that the current party leader has served, higher valence does not necessarily lead to higher likelihood of selection. Respondents do tend to penalize a party or a leader with almost no experience, i.e., no MPs elected more than twice, less than one year since party formation, or less than one year of experience as a party leader, but once it passes a minimum threshold, more experience no longer contributes to (or even lowers) the higher likelihood of selection. Finally, we observe weak and mixed results regarding valence attributes concerning the presence of cabinet ministers, the proportion of electoral districts with candidates, and the personalities of party leaders.

In Figure 3, we turn to the assessment of H2. This hypothesis suggests that higher valence

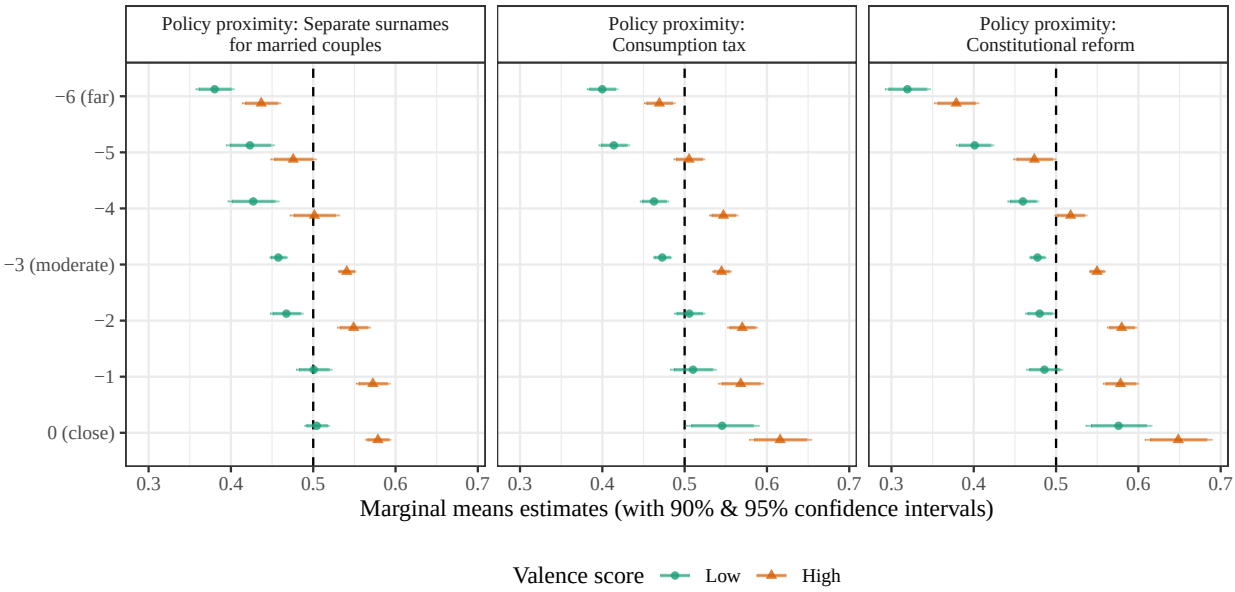
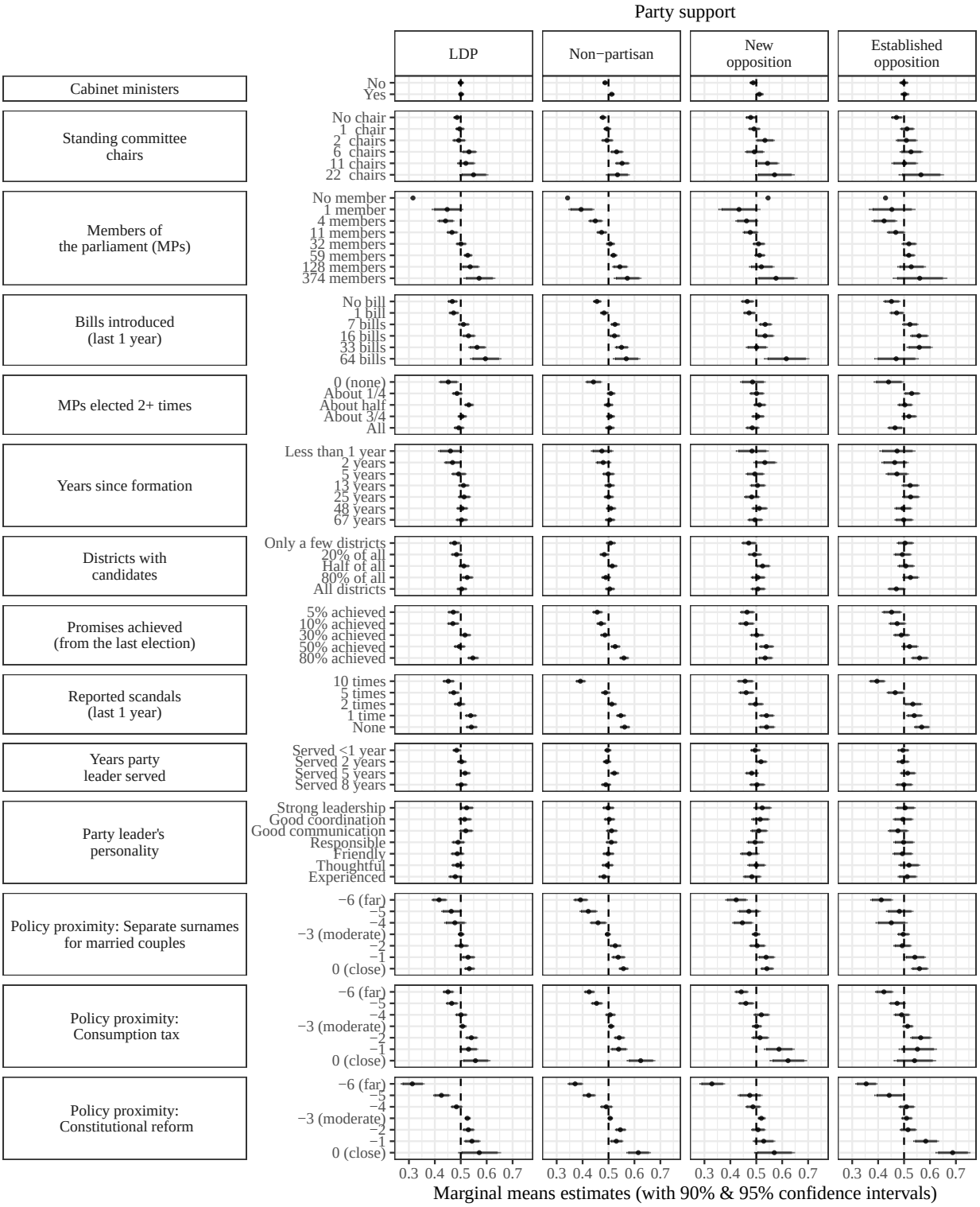


Figure 3: Policy proximity treatment effects moderated by valence treatment score

weakens the effect of policy proximity on party choice. To extract general implications for this thesis, we generate a unified *valence score* by scoring and aggregating the assigned valence attribute levels (except for the personalities of the party leaders). Specifically, we rescale the valence levels from 0 (lowest valence) to 1 (highest valence) for each attribute and calculate their average across all valence attributes. Figure 3 presents the marginal means of policy proximity by subgroups of low and high valence(split by the median valence score). The results show that party profiles with a higher valence score are more likely to be selected on average, but higher valence does not necessarily weaken the effect of policy proximity on party selection. Policy proximities are equally influential in low and high valence subgroups. We also see that valence is equally influential at any level of policy proximity (see Online Appendix B.1 for a graphical illustration). [12] This result does *not* provide support for H2, and implies that policy proximity and valence have independent additive influences on party choice.

For H3, we are interested in the differences between the subgroups between those who regularly

[12] In the preregistration, we proposed an analysis using continuous proximity score as a treatment and continuous valence score as a moderator. Such an analysis is presented in Online Appendix B.2. It generally produces implications similar to Figure 3, but that, for a constitutional reform topic, the higher valence *increases* the slope of linear relationship between policy proximity and party selection.



Note: Confidence intervals for No MPs (9th row) omitted because they are exteremely wide due to insufficient observations.

Figure 4: Moderation by supporting parties

support LDP (n=9,180) and those who do not regularly support LDP. To add nuance to the understanding of result, we divided non-LDP supporters into three groups: non-partisan (n=13,120), supporters of new opposition parties (n = 5,420) and supporters of established opposition parties (n=4,000). New opposition parties include young parties that do not belong to the traditional lineage of parties in Japan, i.e., the Nihon Ishin Party, Reiwa Shinsengumi and NHK Party. Established parties are defined as those that belong to the traditional lineage of Japanese political parties, including the Constitutional Democratic Party, Japanese Communist Party, Democratic Party for the People, and Social Democratic Party.[13] Figure 4 presents the results relevant to H3. The first column shows the marginal means for respondents who are LDP supporters, and the second to fourth columns display the marginal means for each non-LDP supporter group. Due to space limitation, the differences in marginal means between non-LDP supporter groups and LDP supporters are put in Online Appendix C.

The general takeaway from Figure 4 is that which party respondents support makes a little difference in how the respondents use the valence and policy attributes in selecting a party. Differences in marginal means between non-LDP supporter groups and LDP supporters are largely null, and even when there is any, its magnitude is small. Still, there are a couple of differences that deserve further discussion. First, see the attribute, "MPs elected 2+ times." LDP supporters exhibit a pattern that (1) the likelihood of choice is significantly lower than other conditions when there are no MPs affiliated with the party who are elected more than twice, and (2) the likelihood of choice is the highest when the proportion of experienced members is moderate, i.e., about half. In sum, LDP supporters care about the moderate number of experienced members in the party, but an excessive number of senior members is not so preferable. Compare this with non-LDP supporters. For non-partisans and established opposition supporters, pattern (1) persists, but pattern (2) does not. They still care about the minimum presence of experienced members, but do not seem to have an expectation for how many there should be. Supporters of new opposition parties do not

[13]Those who support Komeito and other smaller parties, as well as those who refuse to answer this question, are excluded from the analysis. The distinction between new and established parties is not made in the pre-registration; therefore, this line of inquiry is exploratory.

seem to care about the presence of experienced members at all. Another attribute to note is the number of reported scandals. Here, the magnitude of its effect is evidently larger for non-partisans and established opposition party supporters. They punish a party with a large number of reported scandals, i.e., 10 times, more than LDP supporters, and reward the absence or rare occasion of reported scandals (slightly) more than LDP supporters. On the other hand, the marginal means for new opposition party supporters look almost identical to those of LDP supporters. These results suggest, although tentative, that new opposition party supporters evaluate parties in somewhat different ways than other non-LDP supporters. They do not seem to care about the presence of experienced members compared to other voters, including LDP supporters. They also seem to care less about the scandals compared to other non-LDP supporters, a pattern that is similar to that of LDP voters.

Conclusion

In light of the increasing attention paid to the valence attributes of political parties both in and outside of Japan (Horiuchi, Smith and Yamamoto, 2018; Eshima et al., 2023), this article conducts a conjoint survey experiment that explores what type of party valence attributes matter for who and when and whether valence moderates the connection between policy and electoral choice. Our evidence confirms what other scholars have found that, in general, better party valence increases voter support for that party. But we took the analysis one step further, finding that some valence attributes have larger impacts than others. Specifically, the presence, power, and productivity of a party within the national diet, as well as the prevalence of scandals, sway voters more than the experience and party continuity. Moderation analysis suggests that a higher valence *does not* mitigate the effect of policy proximity on voter choice calculus, and also that valence consistently influences party choice regardless of policy proximity. We also find that valence effects persist similarly across electoral contexts, i.e. single- versus multi-member districts and proportional representation, though this institutional variation is nested within one electoral system. The findings

for Japan's party system indicate that supporters and non-supporters of the Liberal Democratic Party responded to valence dynamics similarly, while there is also tentative evidence that shows supporters of new opposition parties such as Nihon Ishin Party may care less about the presence of experienced MPs and incidences of scandals compared to other opposition party supporters or non-partisans.

Our results confirm what many others have found—that a combination of a party's policy positioning and its valence attributes influence voter choice. At the same time, our findings indicate that there is nuance as to *which* valence attributes matter most to voters. Some of the valence qualities like delivering on campaign promises or legislative productivity exhibit a strong influence on voters. For other measures, like the proportion of incumbents within the party and the organizational continuity, voters were less responsive. This may seem surprising given the wealth of evidence showing electoral advantages caused by incumbency and seniority, but there are a few key differences with how scholars have typically used these valence measures and how the conjoint experiment presented them to voters. Incumbency and seniority may benefit the individual candidate, which in aggregate can boost the party's electoral performance as a whole, but that does not mean that voters respond to incumbency and continuity at the party level. The implication here is that party valence and candidate valence may have separate influences on voter decision-making and that valence measures that are significant at the candidate level do not necessarily translate to the party level.

Another important implication of our results for subsequent valence analysis is a potential asymmetry in valence influence. For almost every measure of valence we used in the survey, voters were responsive to the lower end of its levels. Parties with no standing committee chairs, no current MPs, no bills, zero incumbents, no history, no candidates running in districts, minimal promises fulfilled, and excessive scandals all dissuaded voters from choosing them. However, on its higher end, not every valence attribute was able to sway voters. In particular, parties with an excessive number of incumbents, a very long history, and candidates running in every district were not the most popular parties in our experiment. Taken together, it seems that voters are more sensitive

to negative valence rather than positive valence, though future analysis is needed to establish this phenomenon more concretely.

Furthermore, the fact that a system with a mix of candidate and party-based voting shows a persistent party valence effect suggests that in most cases, party valence should influence voter choice. Still, while we can confidently say what valence elements matter to voters in *this* election, more research is needed to determine if voters are consistent in their valence preferences spatially and temporally. Though this conjoint survey has institutional variation as a result of the HoC's mix of single and multi-member districts and PR, there are radically different electoral institutions within and beyond Japan that could filter party valence differently. A purely closed list PR system with zero candidate voting may alter the sensitivity of voters to party valence and even what types of valence matter. On the reverse, intensively candidate-centered electoral systems could reduce the influence of party valence.

As for Japanese politics, our findings help drive a deeper understanding of what has kept the LDP in power despite electoral reform and changes to the party system over the years. We back up existing scholarship that posits the LDP's dominance is reinforced by party valence but add to that scholarship by demonstrating specific elements of valence that inform the LDP's advantages. Respondents in our conjoint experiment preferred larger, legislatively productive parties that are able to deliver on their promises. As brief periods of non-LDP coalition governments in 1993-1994 and 2009-2012 failed to demonstrate the ability of oppositions to become such a party, the LDP is seen as the only party that possesses these attributes. While it is possible that voters, when presented party profiles with these characteristics, are projecting the LDP onto the profile, the fact that these valence effects persist between LDP and non-LDP supporters suggests that voters prefer these valence attributes independent of party labels. Our findings also give us a peek at how Japan's opposition parties might be able to gain ground on the LDP. Even the regular LDP supporters in our experiment are not necessarily rewarding the LDP's excessive experience and continuity. This pattern is even more prevalent for nonpartisans, and securing nonpartisans' votes is crucial in winning a majority of seats in Japanese elections. Once LDP is seen as a counterproductive party

that does not deliver promises (and is covered with scandals), these voters may be quick to dismiss LDP and give a chance to another sufficiently large party (as the size still matters).

Overall, voters care about both the policy positions and valence attributes of political parties. Our results indicate that they behave consistently with logical expectations outlined by the policy and valence literature and that they likely care about valence attributes relating to the party's meaningful engagement in the current legislature more than those relating to the party's accumulated experience. Furthermore, valence does seem to moderate the influence of policy on voters. While it may be tempting to attribute these findings to the Japan case alone, there are many reasons to consider Japanese voters and their motivations for choosing political parties as generalizable to other democracies. Further research is needed to understand how sensitive voters are to different electoral contexts and explore other potential valence measures, but our research shows promise for subsequent scholarship into the nature of parties, voters, and what determines elections.

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Online Appendix

This is an online appendix for "What Brings You to the Party? Voter Preferences on Parties Through Policy and Valence Dynamics."

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A Survey Design

A.1 Conjoint Experiment Texts in Japanese

Common Primer (for each condition):

- (Member district condition) {次に; ありがとうございました。それでは最後に}、参議院議員選挙において、**どのような政党に所属する候補者が選挙区の投票先として好ましい**と思うかについてうかがいます。{これから; 再び、これから}数分間にわたって、複数の架空の政党に関するいろいろな情報をお見せします。これらの政党が、参議院議員選挙に候補者を立てていると仮にお考えの上で、質問にお答えください。なお、次の画面から、同じような表が続けて５回表示されますが、それぞれの表の内容は同じものではありません。１つ１つの表をよくご確認の上、ご回答お願いします。

- (Proportional representation condition) {次に; ありがとうございました。それでは最後に}、参議院議員選挙において、**どのような政党が比例区の投票先として好ましい**と思うかについてうかがいます。{これから; 再び、これから}数分間にわたって、複数の架空の政党に関するいろいろな情報をお見せします。これらの政党が、参議院議員選挙に候補者を立てていると仮にお考えの上で、質問にお答えください。なお、次の画面から、同じような表が続けて５回表示されますが、それぞれの表の内容は同じものではありません。１つ１つの表をよくご確認の上、ご回答お願いします。

Question (for each task):

- (Member district condition) 次の２つの架空の政党のうち、**どちらの政党に所属する候補者が選挙区の投票先としてより好ましい**と思いますか。もし、どちらが好ましいかはっきりとは言えない場合でも、どちらか一方、あえていえばより好ましいと思われる方を選んでください。 Choice: 政党１; 政党2

- (Proportional representation condition) 次の２つの架空の政党のうち、**どちらの政党に所属する候補者が比例区の投票先としてより好ましい**と思いますか。もし、どちらが好ましいかはっきりとは言えない場合でも、どちらか一方、あえていえばより好ましいと思われる方を選んでください。 Choice: 政党１; 政党2

Conjoint attributes:

Table A1: Experiment 1 attributes and levels in Japanese

Attribute	Levels
党所属の閣僚	いる; いない
党所属の国会常任委員長	22人; 11人; 6人; 2人; 1人; 0人
党所属の国会議員	374人; 128人; 59人; 32人; 11人; 4人; 1人; 0人
議員立法法案提出数（直近 1 年間）	64法案; 33法案; 16法案; 7法案; 1法案; 0法案
当選 2 回以上の党所属国会議員	全員; 約3/4; 約半数; 約1/4; 0人
党結成からの年数	67年; 48年; 25年; 13年; 5年; 2年; 1年未満
党所属候補者がいる選挙区	全ての選挙区; 全体の8割; 全体の半数; 全体の2割; 数選挙区のみ
党公約実現割合（前回選挙から）	80%; 50%; 30%; 10%; 5%
新聞や週刊誌による党役職者・議員のスキャンダル報道（直近 1 年間）	10回; 5回; 2回; 1回; 0回
現党首の在任年数	8年; 5年; 2年; 1年未満
現党首の人柄	強いリーダーシップがある; 調整力が高い; コミュニケーション力が高い; 責任感がある; 親しみやすい; 思慮が深い; 経験が豊富
党の政策（夫婦別姓）	選択的夫婦別姓を認めるべきである; 選択的夫婦別姓は認めるべきでない; 立場は保留
党の政策（消費税）	現状維持; 8%に引き下げるべき; 5%に引き下げるべき; 廃止するべき; 立場は保留
党の政策（憲法改正）	9条を含め改正を進める; 9条以外について改正を進める; 平和憲法を守り抜く; 立場は保留

A.2 Policy Preference Questions Texts

Separate surnames for married couples:

- 最近いわれているいくつかの意見について、あなたのお考えをお聞かせください。－３を反対、０をどちらともいえない、３を賛成として、－３から３までの数字でお答えください。「選択的夫婦別姓制度を導入する」(Tell us your thoughts on some opinions that have been expressed recently. Please answer from -3 to 3, where -3 is against, 0 is undecided, and 3 is in favor. ”Introduce an optional dual-surname system.”)

Consumption tax:

- 消費税の税率についておうかがいします。あなたの立場は次のそれぞれの意見にどれくらい近いですか、遠いですか。遠い、遠くも近くもない、やや近い、とても近いの中からお答えください。(We would like to ask you about the rate of consumption tax. How close or distant is your position from each of the following opinions?

Please choose one of the following options: Distant, neither distant nor close, somewhat close, or very close.)

a. 現状の消費税率を維持する (maintain status quo consumption tax rate)
b. 税率を８％に引き下げる (lower the tax rate to 8%)
c. 税率を５％に引き下げる (lower the tax rate to 5%)
d. 消費税を廃止する (abolish consumption tax)

- Responses recoded as Distant (0); Neither distant nor close (1); Somewhat close (2); Very close (3)

Constitutional reform:

- 日本国憲法の改正についておうかがいします。あなたの立場は次のそれぞれの意見にどれくらい近いですか、遠いですか。遠い、遠くも近くもない、やや近い、とても近いの中からお答えください。(We would like to ask you about the revision of the Constitution of Japan. How close or distant is your position from each of the following opinions? Please choose one of the following options: Distant, neither distant nor close, somewhat close, or very close.)

a. ９条を含め憲法改正を進める (advance constitutional reform, including Article 9)
b. ９条以外の項目について憲法改正を進める (advance constitutional reform on items other than Article 9)
c. 平和憲法を守り抜く (defend the Peace Constitution)

- Responses recoded as Distant (0); Neither distant nor close (1); Somewhat close (2); Very close (3)

B Policy Proximity Moderated by Valence Score

B.1 Categorical Policy Proximity × Binary Valence Score (Difference)

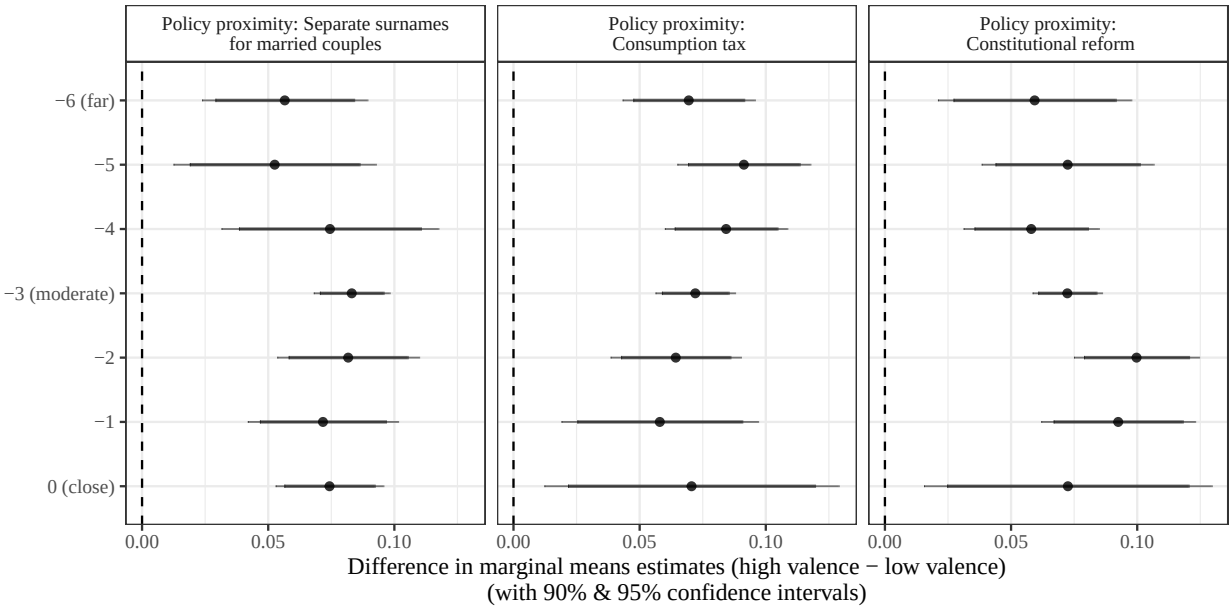


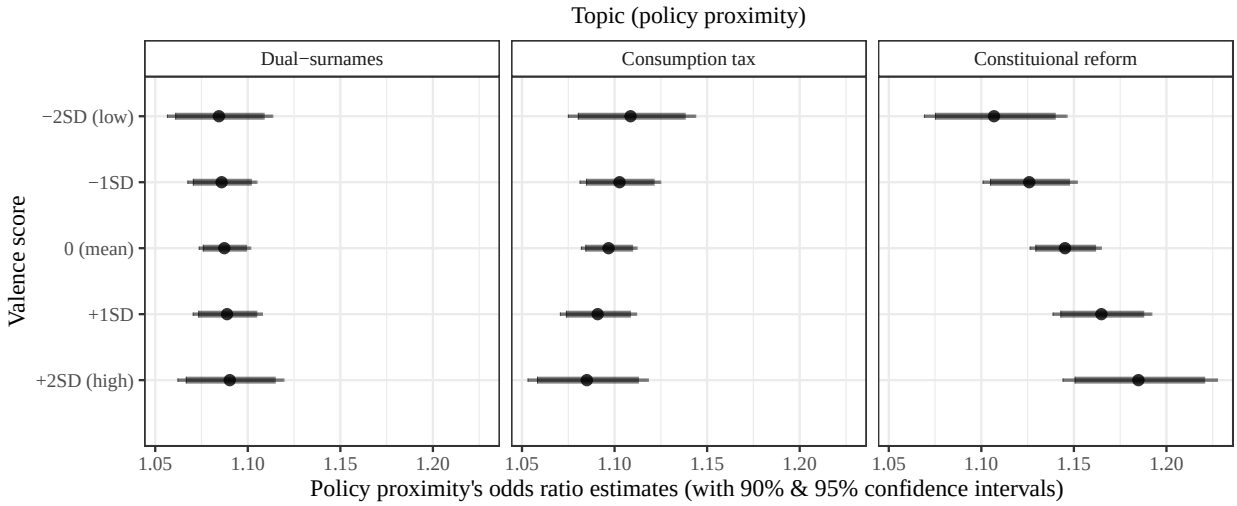
Figure A1: Difference in marginal means based on categorical policy proximity (high valence − low valence)

B.2 Continuous Valance Score × Continuous Valence Score

Table A2: The effect of policy proximity moderated by valence score.

	Dual-surnames	Consumption tax	Constituional reform
(Intercept)	0.207***	0.320***	0.415***
	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.027)
Policy proximity score	0.084***	0.092***	0.136***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.009)
Valence score	0.197***	0.174***	0.247***
	(0.019)	(0.027)	(0.027)
Policy proximity * valence	0.001	−0.005	0.017*
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.008)
Deviance	49739.635	49771.494	49638.869
Dispersion	1.000	1.000	1.000
Num. obs.	36272	36272	36272

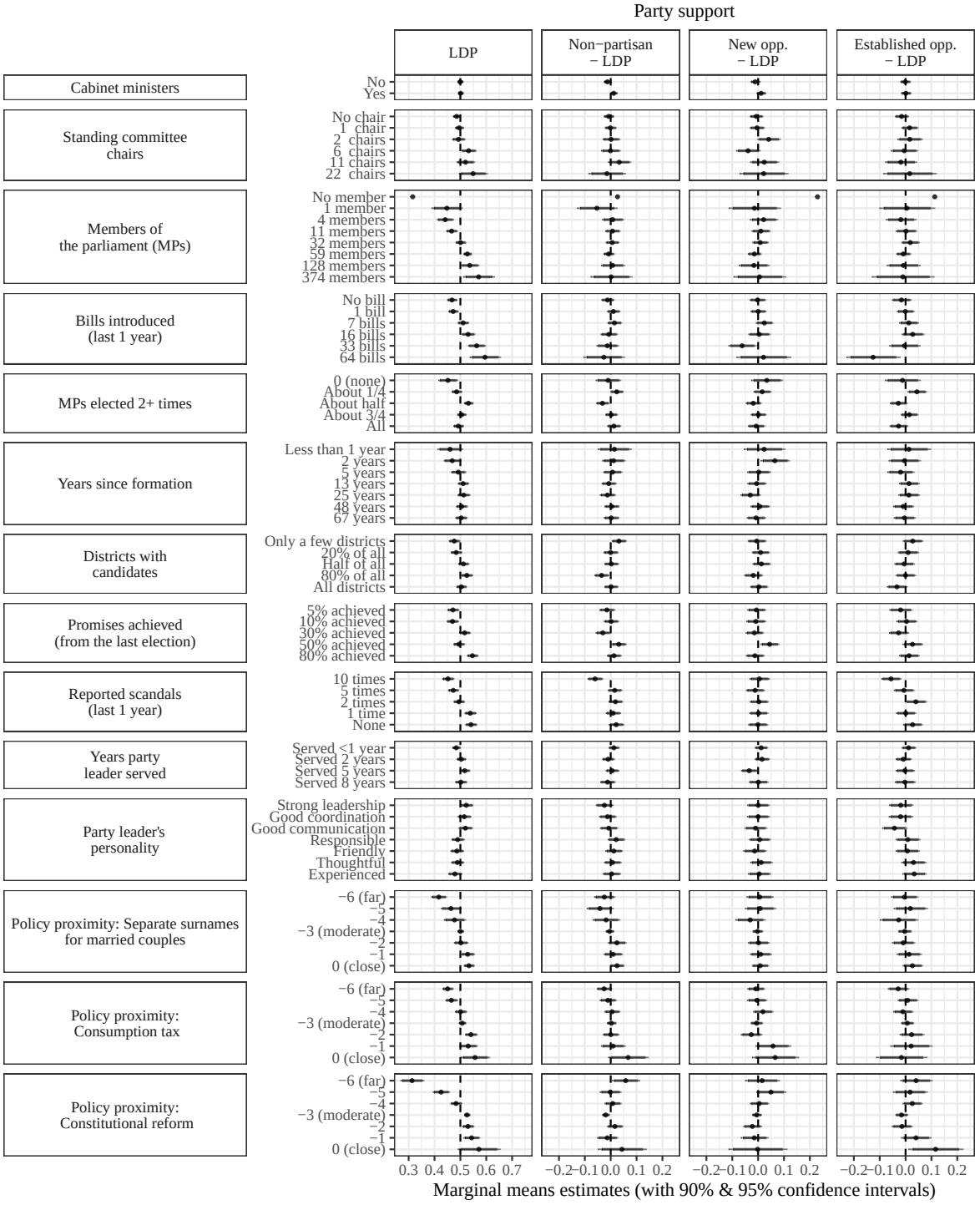
*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; ^{dagger} $p < 0.1$. Logit with robust standard errors clustered by respondents.



Note: Logit with robust standard errors clustered by respondents.

Figure A2: Continuous policy proximity effects moderated by continuous valence treatment score

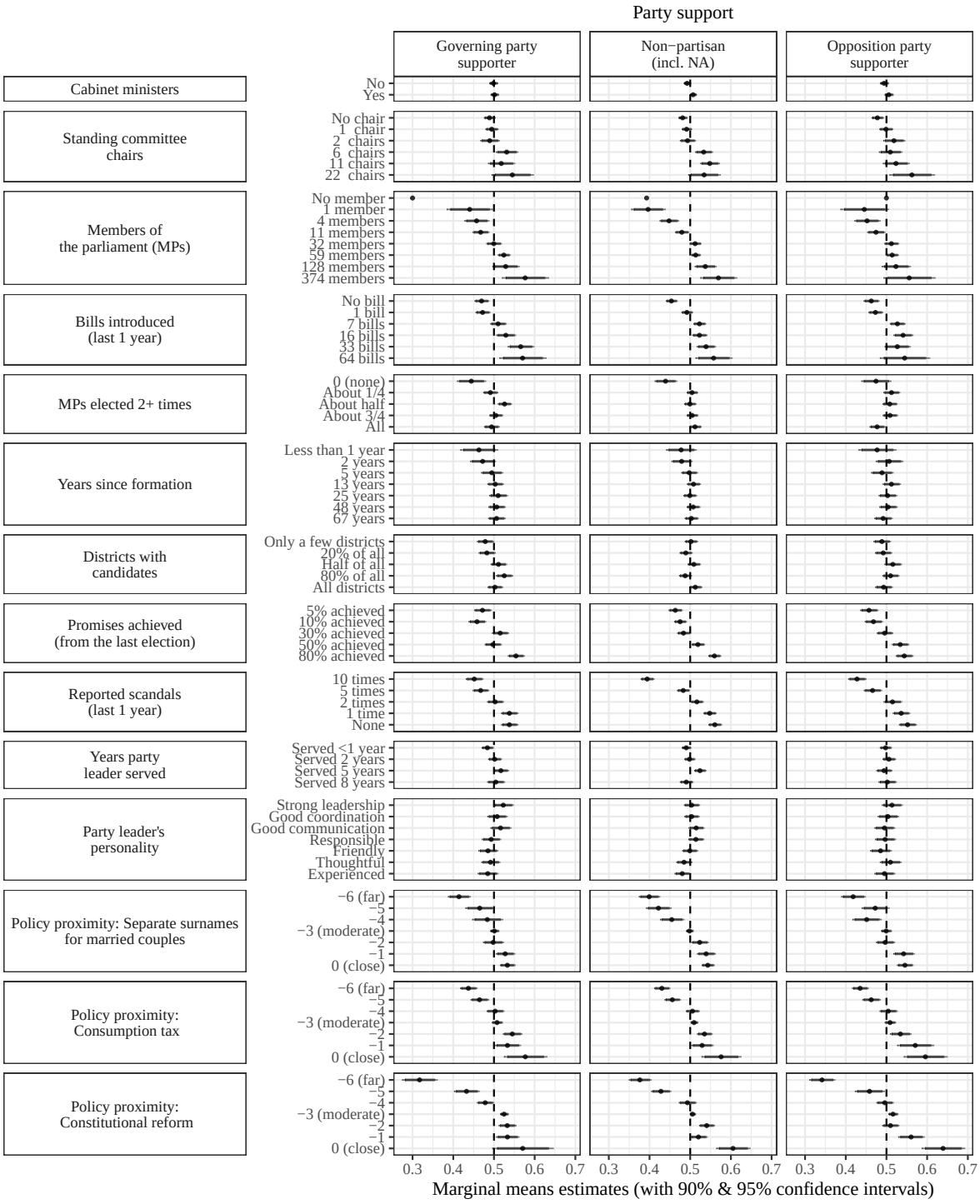
C Moderation by Supporting Party (Four Categories)



Note: Confidence intervals for No MPs (9th row) omitted because they are exteremely wide due to insufficient observations.

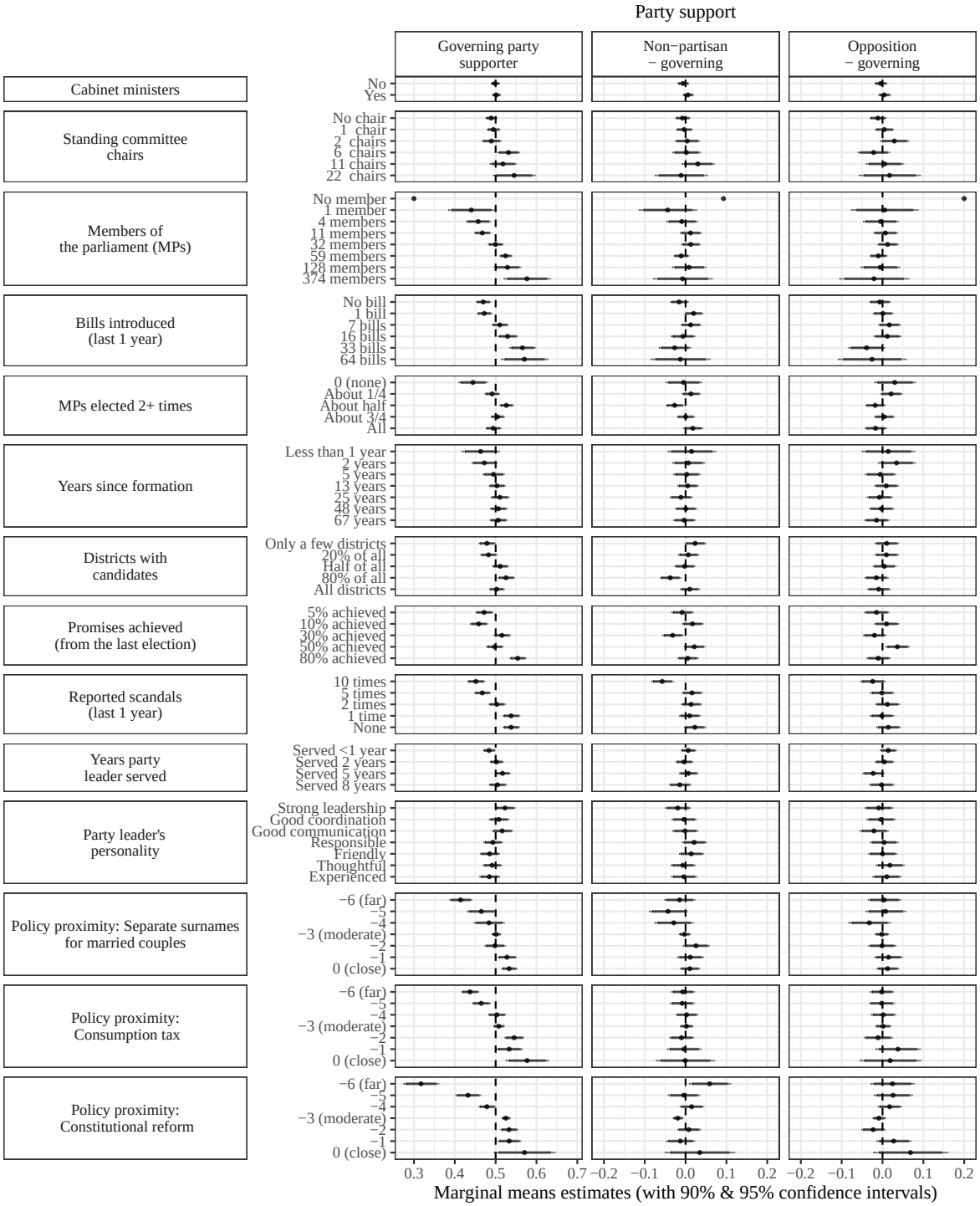
Figure A3: Marginal means for valence and policy attributes moderated by supporting party (LDP, non-partisan, new opposition, and established opposition), taking differences

D Moderation by Supporting Party (Three Categories)



Note: Confidence intervals for No MPs (9th row) omitted because they are exteremely wide due to insufficient observations.

Figure A4: Marginal means for valence and policy attributes moderated by supporting party (governing, non-partisan (including NAs), and opposition)



Note: Confidence intervals for No MPs (9th row) omitted because they are exteremely wide due to insufficient observations.

Figure A5: Marginal means for valence and policy attributes moderated by supporting party (governing, non-partisan (including NAs), and opposition), taking differences

E Pre-registration

Study Information

Hypotheses

H1: The better a party's valence attributes, the more likely voters are to select that party.

H2: Valence attributes will moderate the influence of a voter's policy proximity to a party with regard to party choice.

H3: Supporters of the LDP/Komeito (the party in government) will prioritize valence over policy compared with opposition supporters.

Design Plan

Study type

Experiment - A researcher randomly assigns treatments to study subjects, this includes field or lab experiments. This is also known as an intervention experiment and includes randomized controlled trials.

Blinding

For studies that involve human subjects, they will not know the treatment group to which they have been assigned.

Is there any additional blinding in this study?

N/A

Study design

We design a conjoint experiment in which participants will be asked to make a choice about their preferred political party. To ensure realism, the context was set to the House of Councillors election, and the task of selecting the preferred party between two options was repeated about 10 times. Half of the tasks ask respondents to choose the candidate affiliated with the party in the electoral district (Task Type A), and the other half ask them to choose the party in the proportional district (Task Type B). Each respondent is randomized as to which task type is assigned first. See manipulated variables section for the detailed conjoint experiment attributes and levels assigned.

Randomization

To avoid learning effects, we randomize the order in which subjects are asked to make two types of decisions (member district 選挙区 and proportional representation 比例区). See the study design section.

We also randomize attribute levels across conjoint tasks and also attribute orders across respondents. Attributes order are randomized within ”valence attributes” and ”policy attributes” groups, and the order of valence and policy attributes blocks is also randomized. See the section on ”Variables” for constraints on how attribute levels are randomized.

In any conjoint task within the same respondent, we maintain the same order of the attributes, but the order is randomized across respondents to avoid ordering effects.

Sampling Plan

Existing Data

Registration prior to creation of data

Explanation of existing data

N/A

Data collection procedures

Participants will be recruited from the monitor pool of the online survey company, Rakuten Insight, with the criteria that they are 18 or older. The entire experiment will be conducted in Japanese.

Sample size

n=2400

Sample size rationale

According to Orme 2019 (https://sawtoothsoftware.com/resources/technical-papers/sample-size-issues-for-conjoint-analysis-studies), the minimum required N for a conjoint experiment is calculated by $(n*t*a)/c \geq 500$ where n is the number of respondents, t is the number of tasks, a is the number of alternatives per task (not including the none alternative), and c is equal to the largest number of levels for any one attribute (p.64). In our experiment, n is 2400, t is 5, a is 2, and c is 8 (see Variable section) and thus $(n*t*a)/c = (2400*5*2)/8 = 3000 > 500$, and satisfying this minimal sample size.

Stopping rule

N/A

Variables

Manipulated variables

A. Choice context: 選挙区 Member district / 比例区 Proportional representation

B. Manipulated variables in the conjoint experiment:

B.1. Valence attributes:

1. 党所属の閣僚：いる、いない (Ministers affiliated with the party: yes; no)
2. 党所属の国会常任委員長: 22人; 11人; 6人; 2人; 1人; 0人 (Parliamentary standing committee chairs affiliated with the party: 22; 11; 6; 2; 1; 0)
3. 党所属の国会議員: 374人、128人、59人、32人、11人、4人、1人、0人 (Members of Parliament affiliated with the party: 374; 128; 59; 32; 11; 4; 1; 0)
4. 議員立法法案提出数（直近１年間）: 64法案、33法案、16法案、7法案、1法案、0法案 (Number of legislative bills submitted by MPs (in the past year): 64; 33; 16; 7; 1; 0)
5. 当選回数２回以上の党所属国会議員：全員、約３／４、約半数、約１／４、０人 (Members of parliament affiliated with the party who are more than twice elected: all, about 3/4, about half, about 1/4, 0)
6. 党結成からの年数：67年、48年、25年、13年、5年、2年、1年未満 (Years since party formation: 67 years, 48 years, 25 years, 13 years, 5 years, 2 years, less than 1 year)
7. 党所属候補者がいる選挙区：全ての選挙区、全体の８割、全体の半数、全体の２割、数選挙区のみ (Constituencies with candidates affiliated with the party: all constituencies, 80% of all constituencies, half of all constituencies, 20% of all constituencies, only a few constituencies)
8. 党公約実現割合（前回選挙から）: 5%; 10%; 30%; 50%; 80% (Percentage of party promises realized (since last election): 5%; 10%; 30%; 50%; 80%)
9. 新聞や週刊誌による党の役職者・議員のスキャンダル報道（直近１年間）: 10回、5回、2回、1回、0回 (Scandal coverage of the party's office holders and legislators by newspapers and weekly magazines (in the past year): 10; 5; 2; 1; 0)
10. 現党首の在任年数：8年、5年、2年、1年、1年未満 (Length of tenure of current party leader: 8 years; 5 years; 2 years; 1 year; less than 1 year)
11. 現党首の人柄：強いリーダーシップがある、調整力が高い、コミュニケーション力が高い、責任感がある、親しみやすい、思慮が深い、経験が豊富 (Personality of current party leader: strong leadership, good coordination, good communication skills, responsible, friendly, thoughtful, experienced)

B.2. Policy attributes:

12. 党の政策（夫婦別姓）：選択的夫婦別姓制度を導入する；選択的夫婦別姓制度は導入しない、立場は保留 (Party policy (separate surnames for married couples): will introduce an optional dual-surname system; will not introduce an optional dual-surname system, position pending)

13. 党の政策（消費税）：現状維持、８％に引き下げるべき、５％に引き下げるべき、廃止するべき、立場は保留 (Party policy (consumption tax): maintain status quo; should be lowered to 8%; should be lowered to 5%; should be abolished; position pending)

14. 党の政策（憲法改正）：9条を含め憲法改正を進める、9条以外の項目について憲法改正を進める、平和憲法を守り抜く、立場は保留 (Party policy (constitutional reform): advance constitutional reform, including Article 9; advance constitutional reform on items other than Article 9; defend the Peace Constitution; position pending)

B.3. Restrictons on conjoint attributes orders:

Orders of valence group attributes (1-11) and policy group attributes (12-14) are randomized within each group. We then randomize the order of showing which group first. Within valence attributes, the following attributes are bundled together (in this order) when displayed:

- No. 1, 2, and 3
- No. 10 and 11

B.4. Restrictions on the conjoint attribute level pairs:

The following pairs of attribute levels are restricted and not shown in the experiment due to the lack or reality:

- No. 1 = Yes & No. 3 = 0
- No. 1 = No & No. 3 = 374
- No. 2 = 22 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4 or 11 or 32 or 59
- No. 2 = 11 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4 or 11 or 32
- No. 2 = 6 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4 or 11
- No. 2 = 2 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4
- No. 2 = 1 & No. 3 = 0 or 128 or 374
- No. 2 = 0 & No. 3 = 128 or 374
- No. 4 = 65 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4 or 11 or 32 or 59
- No. 4 = 33 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4 or 11 or 32
- No. 4 = 16 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4 or 11
- No. 4 = 7 & No. 3 = 0 or 1 or 4
- No. 4 = 1 & No. 3 = 0 or 128 or 374

- No. 4 = 0 & No. 3 = 128 or 374
- No. 5 = All & No. 3 = 0 or 128 or 374
- No. 5 = About 3/4 & No. 3 = 0 or 1
- No. 5 = About half & No. 3 = 0 or 1
- No. 5 = About 1/4 & No. 3 = 0 or 1
- No. 5 = 0 & No. 3 = 32 or 59 or 128 or 374
- No.10 = 8 years & No. 6 = less than 1 year or 2 years or 5 years
- No.10 = 5 years & No. 6 = less than 1 year or 2 years
- No.10 = 2 years & No. 6 = less than 1 year

Measured variables

1. Outcome variable:

(Under member district context) 次の２つの架空の政党のうち、どちらの政党に所属する候補者が選挙区の投票先としてより好ましいと思いますか。(Of the following two fictitious political parties, which party's candidate would you prefer to vote for in an electoral district?)
Choice: Party 1, Party 2

(Under proportional representation context) 次の２つの架空の政党のうち、どちらの政党が比例区の投票先としてより好ましいと思いますか。(Of the following two fictitious political parties, which party would you prefer to vote for in a proportional representation block?)
Choice: Party 1, Party 2

2. Independent variable:

2.1. Policy Proximity

2.1.1. Separate surnames for married couples:

最近いわれているいくつかの意見について、あなたのお考えをお聞かせください。－３を反対、０をどちらともいえない、３を賛成として、－３から３までの数字でお答えください。「選択的夫婦別姓制度を導入する」(Tell us your thoughts on some opinions that have been expressed recently. Please answer from -3 to 3, where -3 is against, 0 is undecided, and 3 is in favor. "Introduce an optional dual-surname system.")

2.1.2. Consumption tax:

消費税の税率についておうかがいします。あなたの立場は次のそれぞれの意見にどれくらい近いですか、遠いですか。遠い、遠くも近くもない、やや近い、とても近いの中からお答えください。(We would like to ask you about the rate of consumption tax. How close or distant is your position from each of the following opinions? Please choose one of the following options: Distant, neither distant nor close, somewhat close, or very close.)

a. 現状の消費税率を維持する (maintain status quo consumption tax rate)
b. 税率を８％に引き下げる (lower the tax rate to 8
c. 税率を５％に引き下げる (lower the tax rate to 5
d. 消費税を廃止する (abolish consumption tax)

Response values: Distant (0); Neither distant nor close (1); Somewhat close (2); Very close (3)

2.1.3. Constitutional reform:

日本国憲法の改正についておうかがいします。あなたの立場は次のそれぞれの意見にどれくらい近いですか、遠いですか。遠い、遠くも近くもない、やや近い、とても近いの中からお答えください。(We would like to ask you about the revision of the Constitution of Japan. How close or distant is your position from each of the following opinions? Please choose one of the following options: Distant, neither distant nor close, somewhat close, or very close.)

a. ９条を含め憲法改正を進める (advance constitutional reform, including Article 9)
b. ９条以外の項目について憲法改正を進める (advance constitutional reform on items other than Article 9)
c. 平和憲法を守り抜く (defend the Peace Constitution)

Response values: Distant (0); Neither distant nor close (1); Somewhat close (2); Very close (3)

3. Moderators

3.1. Party support

3.1.1. Party Support

選挙でどの政党に投票するかは別にして、ふだんあなたは何党を支持していますか。(Apart from which party you vote for in elections, what party do you usually support?)

- 自民党 (1) Liberal Democratic Party
- 立憲民主党 (2) Constitutional Democratic Party
- 公明党 (3) Komeito
- 日本維新の会 (4) Japan Innovation Party/ Nihon Ishin Party
- 共産党 (5) Japanese Communist Party
- 国民民主党 (6) Democratic Party for the People
- 社民党 (7) Social Democratic Party
- れいわ新選組 (8) Reiwa Shinsengumi
- NHK党 (9) NHK Party
- その他の党 (10) Other Party
- どの政党も支持していない (11) Not Supporting Any Party
- 答えたくない (99) Don't Want to Answer

3.1.2. Party Feeling Thermometer

ここにあげる政党に対するあなたの気持ち（好感度）を温度にたとえて数字でお答えください。最も温かい気持ちは１００度、最も冷たい気持ちは０度とし、温かくも冷たくもない中立の場合を５０度とすると、 あなたの気持ちは何度でしょうか。０から１００までの数字からお答えください。(Please indicate your feelings (favorability) toward the parties listed here by comparing them to a temperature. The warmest feeling is 100 degrees, the coldest is 0 degrees, and the neutral (neither warm nor cold) is 50 degrees. Please choose a number from 0 to 100.)

a. 自民党 Liberal Democratic Party
b. 立憲民主党 Constitutional Democratic Party
c. 公明党 Komeito
d. 日本維新の会 Japan Innovation Party/ Nihon Ishin Party
e. 共産党 Japanese Communist Party
f. 国民民主党 Democratic Party for the People

Indices

1. Outcome variable:

We stack the conjoint experiment outcomes and create a party-respondent level, long-format dataset. Then, for the outcome measure, we convert the questions described in section 1 of the "Measured variables" section into a binary variable of 1 = the target party is selected by a respondent, 0 = the target party is not selected by a respondent.

2. Independent variable:

2.1. Policy proximity:

2.1.1. Separate family names for married couples:

Define the response recorded by the question described in section 2.1.1 of the "Measured variables" section as X. Then, create the variable as follows:

- If the party's attribute level is "will introduce an optional dual-surname system": $-(X-3)$
- If the party's attribute level is "will not introduce an optional dual-surname system": $X+3$
- If the party's attribute level is "position pending": $|X|$

2.1.2. Consumption tax:

Define the response recorded by the question described in section 2.1.2 of the "Measured variables" section as Xa, Xb, Xc, and Xd. Then, create the variable as follows:

- If the party's attribute level is "maintain status quo": $-(Xa-3)+max(Xb,Xc,Xd)$
- If the party's attribute level is "should be lowered to 8%": $-(Xb-3)+max(Xa,Xc,Xd)$
- If the party's attribute level is " should be lowered to 5%": $-(Xc-3)+max(Xa,Xb,Xd)$
- If the party's attribute level is "should be abolished": $-(Xd-3)+max(Xa,Xb,Xc)$
- If the party's attribute level is "position pending": $max(Xa,Xb,Xc,Xd)$

2.1.2. Constitutional reform:

Define the response recorded by the question described in section 2.1.3 of the "Measured variables" section as Xa, Xb, and Xc. Then, create the variable as follows:

- If the party's attribute level is "advance constitutional reform, including Article 9": $-(Xa-3)+max(Xb,Xc)$
- If the party's attribute level is "advance constitutional reform on items other than Article 9": $-(Xb-3)+max(Xa,Xb)$
- If the party's attribute level is "defend the Peace Constitution": $-(Xc-3)+max(Xa,Xb)$
- If the party's attribute level is "position pending": $max(Xa,Xb,Xc)$

3. Moderators

3.1. Party support

3.1.1.a. LDP support:

Use the response recorded by the question described in section 3.1.1 of the ”Measured variable” section, and recode the values as follows: 1 if Liberal Democratic Party (1), 0 otherwise.

3.1.1.b Governing Party support:

Use the response recorded by the question described in section 3.1.1 of the ”Measured variable” section, and recode the values as follows:

- ”Governing” if Liberal Democratic Party & Komeito (1 and 3).
- ”Opposition” if other parties (2 & 4 through 10)
- ”None” if supporting no party (11)

3.1.2.a. LDP Feeling Thermometer:

Use the responses recorded by the questions described in section 3.1.2, for the Liberal Democratic Party.

3.1.2.b. Governing Party Feeling Thermometer:

Use the responses recorded by the questions described in section 3.1.2, take an average of Liberal Democratic Party & Komeito.

3.1.2.c. Opposition Party Feeling Thermometer:

Use the responses recorded by the questions described in section 3.1.2, take an average of parties other than the Liberal Democratic Party & Komeito.

3.2. Valence score

Valence-advantaged values for each conjoint attribute are:

- Larger numerical values for attributes 2 through 8 and 10.
- Smaller numerical values for the attribute 9.
- ”Yes” for attribute 1.

Then, rescale all the variables into the 0-1 range where 0 indicates the lowest valence and 1 indicates the highest valence. Take an average of valence attributes 1 through 10 to create a valence score, having a value between 0 and 1.

Analysis Plan

Statistical models

For H1, we estimate the average marginal component effect (AMCE) of each attribute on the probability that the candidate will be chosen as the preferred candidate as well as the more likely to win candidate, where the average is taken over all possible combinations of the other candidate attributes. We run the analysis by separating and pooling for member districts and proportional representation contexts.

In testing the hypothesis, valence-advantaged values for each conjoint attribute are:

- Larger numerical values for attributes 2 through 8 and 10.
- Smaller numerical values for the attribute 9.
- "Yes" for attribute 1.

For H2, add policy proximity variables and valence score into the model formed in H1. Then, we interact the policy proximity for each policy with the valence score and re-estimate the model. If H2 is to be supported, we should see a moderation pattern that the magnitude of policy proximity's effect is weaker for those parties with higher valence scores.

For H3, back to the model used in H2, but without interaction. Then, interact party support variables with each of the policy proximity variables and valence score variables and re-estimate the model. If H3 is to be supported, we should see that LDP/Governing party supporters have larger coefficients for the valence score and smaller coefficients for policy proximity variables.

Transformations

See indices section for detailed transformation of variables.

Inference criteria

Alpha = .05 and .10; two-tailed.

Data exclusion

Cases who take too long or too short time (3SD above/below the mean) to complete each conjoint task are excluded.

Missing data

If respondents do not complete all conjoint tasks, we retain the choices they did make.

Exploratory analysis

For the valence conjoint attribute 11, we are not sure which personality attributes are considered to be advantaged. In the exploratory analysis, we will discuss which attributes tend to be evaluated highly.