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ABSTRACT

Despite the nationalization of American elections, ticket-splitting still persists. The long-term decline in ticket-splitting, though, can make it more difficult to detect and harder to explain when it does occur. We examine ticket-splitting in five Georgia statewide contests in the 2022 midterm. With access to approximately 94% of marked Georgia ballots, we have a high degree of certainty of how tickets are split in each of the five pairings. However, a dearth of available contextual data associated with these cast vote records (CVRs) motivates us to analyze survey data to further understand what drives ticket-splitting in these elections. Controlling for demographic and political variables, we find notable variation in the likelihood of split ballots depending on the specific office pairing, including the Democratic U.S. Senate/Republican Governor, and Democratic U.S. Senate/Republican Secretary of State. These two variants of ticket-splitting warrant assessment because of the higher profile of the incumbent candidates and the consequential outcome of the U.S. Senate race. Our findings uncover several factors related to ticket-splitting that would have been speculative in the absence of empirical analysis, and we contend that ticket-splitting is more prevalent than scholars generally realize.

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Introduction

American politics is reflective of the wise adage by the Greek philosopher Heraclitus: “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.” These days, scholars tend to emphasize the nationalization of American politics (Carson, Sievert, and Williamson 2023; Hopkins 2018), driven in part by a rising ideological uniformity among co-partisans (Abramowitz 2022) and the deepening gulf between

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leaders of the major parties not seen since the late 1800s (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2006). One of the more salient behavioral manifestations of this nationalization pattern is a decline in ticket-splitting, perhaps most frequently noted in president/U.S. House pairings, as documented in the American National Election Studies (ANES). For instance, Jacobson (2015) draws a direct link to the declining incumbency advantage in congressional elections with the rise in straight ticket voting among the growing share of party affiliates in the American electorate (Bartels 2000; McKee 2024).

Interestingly, however, until very recently the lion's share of studies accounting for reduced rates of ticket-splitting are limited to the most high-profile federal contests for president and Congress, or governor at the state-level (Conevska et al. 2026). Collectively, we have spent most of our scholarly capital drawing conclusions about rates of ticket-splitting by narrowly training our eyes on the tip of the split-ballot iceberg. When scholars have explored below these most salient office pairings, however, they often discover that ticket-splitting can be markedly higher in state and local contests (Kuriwaki 2026), and, as should be expected, especially in down-ballot contests where the party label is absent (Conevska et al. 2026).

Despite this nationalized political milieu, it is likely that many political observers and pundits have overstated the separability and therefore degree of differentiation among the Democratic and Republican parties. A case in point is the ascendancy of Donald Trump, a Republican iconoclast whose political rise entailed several high-profile policy positions contrary to GOP orthodoxy (e.g. his vociferous opposition to the Iraq War in his 2016 presidential run and his vigorous economic protectionism via wide-ranging tariffs), leading to lasting coalitional changes that have greatly reduced partisan sorting along demographic lines.¹ Additionally, while the longer term realigning of the party coalitions on the education axis endures (Grossmann and Hopkins 2024), both parties continue to draw considerable support from voters on the lower and upper ends of the income scale, which tempers partisan polarization (Miller and Schofield 2008). Stated plainly, we have good reasons to anticipate considerable ticket-splitting despite nationalization.

In this study, we embrace a less common approach to analyzing ticket-splitting that: (1) highlights sub-presidential voting and (2) evaluates choices for statewide contests in a midterm cycle. Specifically, we assess ticket-splitting among

¹Remarking on Trump's lasting impact in altering America's Democratic and Republican parties, *New York Times* columnist Nate Cohn raises the dreaded "R" word of realignment in the conceptual prism of Petrucic (1981); stressing coalitional change rather than a restructuring of the partisan balance of electoral power. As noted by Cohn, "After three Trump elections, the partisan gap between white and nonwhite voters is now smaller than at any time since the enactment of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The partisan generation gap has fallen by two-thirds. Perhaps most strikingly, the old class divide between rich and poor and capital and labor has seemingly vanished." See "Trump's Re-election Defines a New Era of American Politics," *New York Times*, December 25, 2024, available <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/25/upshot/trump-era-republicans-democrats.html> (last accessed December 26, 2024).

Georgia voters in the top five statewide contests appearing on their ballots in the 2022 midterm: U.S. Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. With the use of cast vote records (CVRs) and survey data, we are able to determine the type of ticket-splitting in these contests and also several factors that influence this behavior. We proceed as follows. First, we discuss some of the extensive literature on ticket-splitting. We then turn to the 2022 General Election in Georgia and explain our research design. Next, we present our findings, starting with descriptive evidence on the rate of ticket-splitting according to the CVRs data. We then proceed with multivariate analyses of the survey data, assess ticket-splitting in the two notable instances of Democratic U.S. Senate/Republican Governor and Democratic U.S. Senate/Republican Secretary of State, and then conclude with some final thoughts.

Who splits their tickets?

There is a vast literature on ticket-splitting in the context of American politics. Scholars have sought to understand what motivates the decision to choose candidates of opposing parties for different offices. Some of the earliest examinations of this voting behavior were undertaken in the 1950s (Campbell and Miller 1957; Ogden Jr 1958). In the 1970s several scholars highlighted the notable degree of unreliability in aggregate- and individual-level estimates of the behavior (Cowart 1974; Feigert 1979; Gitelson 1978). In the era of dealignment (Abramson 1976; Beck 1977), there was scholarly consensus over heightened ticket-splitting, but the inadequacy of aggregate data to corroborate the reported behavior lessened the certainty regarding survey estimates. Survey data elicited debates about the demographic makeup of voters more prone to split their tickets. Were ticket splitters younger/older, male/female, more/less educated, minority/majority race or ethnicity (see Beck et al. 1992; De Vries and Tarrance 1972)?

Contextually, the frequent presence of divided government spawned the most contentious debate over whether ticket-splitters were intentional in this behavior (Fiorina 1992; Garand and Lichtl 2000; Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2004), as opposed to it being a byproduct of the specific candidates on their ballots (Born 2000; Burden and Kimball 1998). Given the focus on divided control of the federal government, these studies necessarily emphasized the president/Congress split in voting behavior, and incumbency consistently emerged as a factor leading to greater defections for a congressional representative opposite the party affiliation of one's preferred presidential nominee (Born 2000; Burden and Kimball 1998; Jacobson 1990).²

²Historically, spanning the multiple decades from the 1960s through the 1990s, the ticket split disproportionately took the form of a Republican president/Democratic House vote because of the split-level alignment prevailing in the American South (Black and Black 1987). In the aggregate, this manifested

As partisan sorting (Levendusky 2009) in response to elite polarization (Hetherington 2001) has fostered a new era of nationalized American politics, it naturally follows that voters should be less inclined to split their tickets (Jacobson 2015). For example, a quick look at the ANES data show that in 1972, ticket-splitting for president/Congress peaked at 29.5%, whereas in 2024, this type of ticket-splitting declined to a low of 4.7%.³ Nevertheless, as mentioned, the lion's share of studies are limited to president/Congress ticket-splitting, where this decline should be greatest in a nationalized political era (Hopkins 2018).⁴

More recent work has advanced our aggregate measurement of ticket-splitting, while skepticism over election results has led to the auspicious byproduct of greater access to marked ballots (Conevska et al. 2026). For example, Park, Hanmer, and Biggers (2014) gained access to marked ballots in ten Florida counties in the 2000 election, and demonstrated the remarkable accuracy of a logit estimator for inferring individual-level rates of straight- and split-ticket voting for president and U.S. Senate. Since this study, the availability of marked ballots has exploded, as seen in the work of Kuriwaki (2026) and his collaborators, who have compiled a database of 42.7 million voters in the 2020 election, with their CVRs or electronic images of their marked ballots, accessible for analysis.

Likewise, we make use of CVRs in the Georgia 2022 midterm to get accurate measures of ticket-splitting in five statewide contests. These data are excellent for attaining precise estimates of ticket-splitting, but they cannot take us very far with respect to answering the “why” behind splitting a ballot in a paired choice of elective offices (Kuriwaki 2026).⁵ Therefore, we supplement these CVRs with survey data on registered Georgia voters. More than any other factor, we expect partisanship to loom largest in conditioning ticket-splitting. Just as declining partisanship was the principal driver behind rising rates of ticket-splitting in past decades (Jacobson 2015; Maddox and Nimmo 1981), a voter's degree of partisan attachment should

in a plurality of split-result districts that were presidentially Republican and congressionally Democratic (Hood III and McKee 2022).

³Admittedly, the 1972 presidential election was a historic blowout (Democrat George McGovern only won Massachusetts and D.C.'s electoral votes), but it was still right around the moment of peak partisan dealignment in the American electorate (Nie, Verba, and Petrocik 1976).

⁴We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing us to the study by Soss and Canon (1995), who contend that ticket-splitting across federal and state offices is likely to be higher because of the different issues that matter to voters in these different political contexts. Indeed, the highest ticket split we find in Georgia in 2022 is that for the Democratic U.S. Senator and the Republican Secretary of State. However, this kind of ticket split was probably most prominent not only as per the claim by Soss and Canon (1995), but also because the Democratic Senator Raphael Warnock drew a particularly weak/unqualified Republican opponent in former football great Herschel Walker; while Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger garnered votes from Democrats because he stood up to Trump in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election.

⁵In some cases, CVRs can be linked to precincts, which allows for data at this level (e.g. demographic data on race/ethnicity, age, gender, the partisan division of the presidential vote) to inform the rate of ticket-splitting; but alas, this does not solve the ecological inference problem.

still deliver the greatest explanatory punch in this current time of greater political nationalization (Fiorina 2017).

Research design

We first look at ticket-splitting in the five statewide races (U.S. Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General) with descriptive CVRs data, which accounts for 94% of ballots cast in the 2022 Georgia midterm elections. We then evaluate ticket-splitting with multivariate analysis of survey data. We make use of four original pre-election surveys conducted by the SPIA Survey Research Center at the University of Georgia (UGA) during the following time periods in 2022: July 14–22, September 5–16, September 25–October 4, and October 16–27.⁶ The second survey did not query respondents about their vote for Attorney General. In addition to asking respondents who they planned to vote for in the five statewide contests appearing at the top of their ballots, they were presented with a common battery of standard political and demographic questions.⁷ Combining data from the four surveys yields a total of 3,815 likely general election voters.⁸

After presenting the descriptive findings on ticket-splitting with the CVRs data, we turn to the UGA survey data to run the following ten regressions with the dependent variable constituting vote choice in each possible office pairing (the contest pairing label in the table is displayed in parentheses): U.S. Senate/Governor ("Sen-Gov"), U.S. Senate/Lieutenant Governor ("Sen-LtGov"), U.S. Senate/Secretary of State ("Sen-SOS"), Governor/Lieutenant Governor ("Gov-LtGov"), Governor/Secretary of State ("Gov-SOS"), Lieutenant Governor/Secretary of State ("LtGov-SOS"), U.S. Senate/Attorney General ("Sen-AG"), Governor/Attorney General ("Gov-AG"), Lieutenant Governor/Attorney General ("LtGov-AG"), and Secretary of State/Attorney

⁶All four surveys were conducted over the phone using live interviewers. Targeted, registration-based sampling was used to construct sampling frames for each of the four surveys where inclusion was based on participation in previous elections. Respondents were asked about the likelihood of voting in the 2022 general election, with those reporting they were *definitely* or *probably* not voting being screened out.

⁷On the 2022 Georgia ballot, which uses the office-block design, running from top-left and down this first column of offices, the order is U.S. Senate, Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and Attorney General. In all the proceeding analyses, the U.S. Senate and Governor pairings with other offices come first because of their order at the top of the ballot. In Section A in the Supplementary Material, we include the 2022 Georgia sample ballot for Fulton County. In Georgia, for every office, the Republican candidate is listed first, followed by the Democrat, then the Libertarian, and finally a space for voters to write-in a candidate if they so choose. Also, if the candidate is the current office-holder then the ballot designates they are the incumbent in parentheses.

⁸Data are weighted to the statewide voter file to ensure respondents are representative of the Georgia electorate in terms of sex, race, age, and education. Respondents who were undecided or who failed to report a preference are not included in the analysis. Using the CVRs data, we constructed weights for each dependent variable to ensure that the percentage of split-ticket voting present in the survey data matches the actual level.

General (“SOS-AG”). In these models, the dependent variable is coded 0 if the vote intention is a straight ticket: Democrat/Democrat (DD); Republican/Republican (RR); or Libertarian/Libertarian (LL). The dependent variable is coded 1 if the vote intention is split: Democrat/Republican (DR); Republican/Democrat (RD); Democrat/Libertarian (DL); Libertarian/Democrat (LD); Republican/Libertarian (RL); or Libertarian/Republican (LR). We characterize these models as gauging a more holistic, rather than specified type of straight- or split-ticket voting. In short, the purpose is to see what respondent characteristics covary with a general pattern of straight- versus split-ticket voting.

We then present two additional models that are more targeted in their assessment of ticket-splitting. We want to see which respondents show a greater propensity to split their tickets a certain way. Specifically, we want to know who split their tickets for the Democratic U.S. Senate incumbent Raphael Warnock while also voicing their intention to support the Republican incumbent Governor Brian Kemp (“Warnock–Kemp”). Ultimately (after a runoff in the U.S. Senate race), these two candidates won reelection and we are interested in whether they drew much support across partisan lines. Likewise, we also single out respondents reporting the decision to split their tickets for the Democratic U.S. Senate incumbent Raphael Warnock while backing the Republican incumbent Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger (“Warnock–Raffensperger”). This latter pairing is particularly intriguing since Raffensperger received an approval boost from Democrats after the 2020 presidential election, because of his vocal opposition to President Trump’s efforts to overturn the results in Georgia (Hood III and McKee 2023). In both models, the dependent variable is coded 1 for the aforementioned type of split (DR = “Warnock – Kemp” and DR = “Warnock – Raffensperger”), whereas it is coded 0 if the vote intention is either DD or RR (we eliminated from the analysis respondents who voiced support for the Libertarian candidates in these paired contests).

Our explanatory variables include *Age* (in years); *Education* (1 = High school or less, 2 = Some college or Associate’s degree, 3 = College degree, and 4 = Graduate degree); and *Female* (1 = Female, 0 = Male). We also control for race using binary indicators for *Black* respondents and *Other Race* respondents, with White respondents serving as the excluded comparison category. We also include a set of $n-1$ binary indicators to control for any effects present across the four surveys, with the first survey serving as the excluded comparison category. Percent *Rural/Small Town* is a variable measuring the degree of urbanization present in a respondent’s county of residence. A value of 1 indicates a county with population wholly located in rural/small town areas whereas a value of 0 represents a completely urbanized county. We also include a measure, *Ideology Folded* where the standard 7-point scale is recoded to the following: 0 = Moderate,

1 = slightly liberal or slightly conservative, 2 = liberal or conservative, and 3 = very liberal or very conservative. Lastly, we include the following binary indicators to measure partisanship: *Democrat*, *Republican*, *Democratic Leaner*, and *Republican Leaner*. These variables are compared to the omitted pure Independent category.

In Section C of the Supplementary Material, we show findings for similar multivariate estimates of ticket-splitting, based on the 2022 Cooperative Election Study (CES) subsample of Georgia respondents. We limit this analysis to validated voters. The CES did not ask about voting for Lieutenant Governor and thus there are six regressions instead of ten. The variables in the CES models are practically the same, the only difference is that we of course do not have dummy indicators for a specific survey and instead of the *Rural/Small Town* variable in the UGA models, the CES models include the variable *Rural* for those respondents who report living in a rural area.

Ticket-splitting patterns: cast vote records

We collected cast vote records (CVRs) from the 2022 General Election in Georgia through open records requests to each of its 159 counties. A total of 117 counties responded to our requests, yielding 3,719,841 CVRs, which account for approximately 94% of the 3,962,030 ballots cast statewide in the 2022 November election. Drawing on the processed CVRs, [Table 1](#) provides a count of the split-tickets cast by every voter for every combination of the five top-of-the-ticket races. For example, of the 3,684,804 voters who cast a vote for one of the three designated party candidates in *both* contests for U.S. Senate and for Governor, 224,519 (6.1%) voters split their tickets. The bulk (3.8%) of these split-ticket voters supported the Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate (Warnock), but then voted for the Republican candidate for Governor (Kemp). Another 0.3% of split-ticket voters supported the Republican nominee for U.S. Senate (Hershel Walker) and the Democratic nominee for Governor (Stacey Abrams). According to the CVRs, ticket-splitting was actually *higher* between the U.S. Senate and gubernatorial race (6.1%) than between the U.S. Senate and Lieutenant Governor race (5.6%), likely indicating the unease felt by many Republicans to cast their ballot for Walker.⁹ Split-ticket voting jumps when turning to the U.S. Senate and Secretary of State pairing, as over one-in-ten voters (371,126) cast their ballots for candidates

⁹As journalist Greg Bluestein noted at the time, “polls all year have indicated that a small but significant number of Republicans who back Kemp and other GOP candidates are withholding their support from Walker.” See “Split tickets and the Biden effect: What to watch in Georgia’s election,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, November 8, 2022, available <https://www.ajc.com/politics/split-tickets-and-the-biden-effect-what-to-watch-in-georgias-election/2DU3VNXUS5CYFGDQSHFB652FLM/> (last accessed January 2, 2025).

Table 1. Cast vote records: percent ticket-splitting in five statewide Georgia contests, 2022 midterm election.

Office	Governor	Lt. Governor	Sec. of State	Att. Gen.
U.S. Senate	6.1 (224,519/ 3,684,804) 3.8 D,R 0.3 R,D 0.2 D,L 0.1 R,L 0.3 L,D 1.5 L,R	5.6 (206,157/ 3,650,253) 2.3 D,R 0.4 R,D 1.0 D,L 0.5 R,L 0.3 L,D 1.2 L,R	10.2 (371,126/ 3,648,691) 5.8 D,R 0.5 R,D 0.5 D,L 1.8 R,L 0.3 L,D 1.3 L,R	6.1 (222,880/ 3,656,480) 5.8 D,R 0.5 R,D 0.5 D,L 1.8 R,L 0.3 L,D 1.3 L,R
Governor		4.9 (179,371/ 3,664,057) 0.7 D,R 2.1 R,D 0.8 D,L 1.0 R,L 0.1 L,D 0.2 L,R	7.1 (260,059/ 3,665,202) 3.0 D,R 1.3 R,D 0.4 D,L 1.9 R,L 0.2 L,D 0.2 L,R	4.6 (169,508/ 3,671,622) 1.0 D,R 2.1 R,D 0.5 D,L 0.7 R,L 0.2 L,D 0.2 L,R
Lt. Governor			8.0 (291,767/ 3,647,931) 3.8 D,R 0.8 R,D 0.3 D,L 1.7 R,L 0.6 L,D 0.8 L,R	4.4 (161,574/ 3,652,854) 1.3 D,R 1.0 R,D 0.3 D,L 0.4 R,L 0.7 L,D 0.6 L,R
Sec. of State				7.4 (269,401/ 3,649,545) 0.9 D,R 3.7 R,D 0.4 D,L 0.4 R,L 0.4 L,D 1.6 L,R

Notes: Data drawn from CVRs. Within each set of parentheses are counts of the total number of voters who cast votes for each pair of offices (denominator) and the number of those voters who split their ticket (numerator) for that pair of offices. Each cell has the percentage of voters, by party, who split their tickets for each office. For these elections, voters had three choices: Democratic (D), Republican (R), or Libertarian (L). The pairing starts with the column on the far left and hence D, R is Democratic for U.S. Senate and Republican for Governor, whereas R, D is Republican for U.S. Senate and Democratic for Governor.

from different parties. Most of these split ballots (5.8%) had voters supporting the Democratic candidate (Warnock) for U.S. Senate and the Republican candidate for Secretary of State (Raffensperger).

From Table 1 we can also see the split-ticket voting between various candidates for state office. Perhaps surprisingly, nearly one-in-twenty (4.9%) of the 3.66 million voters who marked their ballots for the top two state

offices (Governor and Lieutenant Governor) did not support candidates from the same party. Nearly three-fifths of these split-ticket votes (2.8% of the 4.9%) were for the Republican nominee for Governor and the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor (2.1%), or vice-versa (0.7%). There were notably higher rates of split-ticket voting on the actual ballots cast by voters, as Table 1 shows, in the paired races for Governor and Secretary of State (7.1%), Secretary of State and Attorney General (7.4%), and Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State (8.0%); though these matchups fall short of the impressive 10.2% split-ticket rate registered in the aforementioned U.S. Senate and Secretary of State elections.

In Figure B1 in Section B of the Supplementary Material, we re-aggregate by precinct the CVRs to get a split-ticket percentage for each precinct within each county in our dataset to create ten maps of Georgia. Using darker shades of blue to represent precincts with greater magnitudes of ticket-splitting, Figure B1 reveals the geographic variation across the 117 counties for which we have CVR data and across each of the ten combinations of statewide contests. In Table B1 in Section B of the Supplementary Material, we provide the distribution of total split-tickets (out of the 10 possible splits) by individual voters; 13.5% of all the CVRs had at least one split ticket.

Ticket-splitting patterns: survey data

Multivariate analyses

In order to better understand who is more likely to split their ticket, we specify a set of logit models where the dependent variables represent each of the ten possible office pairings. Again, a split-ticket voter includes any of the following: Democrat/Republican (DR), Republican/Democrat (RD), Democrat/Libertarian (DL), Republican/Libertarian (RL), Libertarian/Democrat (LD), or Libertarian/Republican (LR); whereas a straight-ticket voter includes the following combinations: Democrat/Democrat (DD), Republican/Republican (RR), or Libertarian/Libertarian (LL). For these permutations, a value of 1 represents a split-ticket voter and a value of 0 a straight-ticket voter. All models include the explanatory variables previously outlined above.

Table 2 displays the results of the logit models based on the UGA survey data. In comparison to Independents, both Democratic and Republican identifiers are less likely to split their tickets across *all* ten office combinations. Partisan leaners also show a greater propensity to vote for the same party, although not to the same degree as partisans. Republican leaners are less likely to split their ticket in three of the paired elections, and likewise for Democratic leaners in five office combinations. We find less evidence that

**Table 2.** Logit models (UGA): ticket-splitting in 2022 midterm election.

	Dependent variable: Ticket-Splitting Pair									
	Sen-Gov	Sen-LtGov	Sen-SOS	Gov-LtGov	Gov-SOS	LtGov-SOS	Sen-AG	Gov-AG	LtGov-AG	SOS-AG
Democratic Leaner	-0.414 (0.417)	-0.784* (0.340)	-0.752** (0.266)	-0.845* (0.395)	-0.492 (0.290)	-0.455 (0.276)	-0.876* (0.425)	-0.648 (0.459)	-0.742* (0.363)	-0.330 (0.337)
Democrat	-1.357*** (0.352)	-1.880*** (0.303)	-1.951*** (0.227)	-1.973*** (0.344)	-1.499*** (0.248)	-1.464*** (0.248)	-2.016*** (0.324)	-1.893*** (0.431)	-1.693*** (0.293)	-1.322*** (0.293)
Republican Leaner	-0.401 (0.403)	-0.934** (0.352)	-0.964*** (0.285)	-0.635 (0.392)	-0.717* (0.321)	-0.512 (0.295)	-0.705 (0.380)	-0.201 (0.473)	-0.668 (0.373)	-0.305 (0.348)
Republican	-0.969** (0.331)	-1.637*** (0.299)	-1.691*** (0.233)	-2.313*** (0.363)	-1.655*** (0.255)	-1.545*** (0.249)	-1.567*** (0.351)	-1.941*** (0.506)	-2.401*** (0.387)	-1.402*** (0.339)
Ideology Folded	-0.298* (0.120)	-0.083 (0.109)	-0.038 (0.077)	-0.207 (0.149)	-0.102 (0.093)	-0.049 (0.085)	-0.168 (0.092)	-0.207 (0.141)	-0.040 (0.135)	0.067 (0.097)
Age	-0.017* (0.007)	-0.014* (0.006)	-0.006 (0.005)	-0.028*** (0.007)	-0.012* (0.005)	-0.006 (0.005)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.026*** (0.008)	-0.011 (0.007)	-0.009 (0.006)
Black	0.104 (0.364)	0.005 (0.265)	0.079 (0.195)	0.991** (0.331)	0.393 (0.224)	0.289 (0.223)	-0.017 (0.290)	0.919 (0.545)	0.233 (0.293)	0.356 (0.306)
Other Race	-0.651* (0.305)	-0.143 (0.271)	-0.289 (0.217)	-0.051 (0.330)	-0.037 (0.237)	0.016 (0.225)	0.065 (0.312)	0.133 (0.400)	0.320 (0.312)	0.288 (0.265)
Female	-0.135 (0.221)	-0.253 (0.201)	-0.096 (0.145)	0.012 (0.242)	0.001 (0.166)	-0.164 (0.170)	-0.272 (0.212)	-0.070 (0.261)	-0.156 (0.256)	-0.315 (0.200)
Education	-0.128 (0.120)	-0.110 (0.097)	-0.044 (0.074)	-0.263* (0.133)	-0.049 (0.091)	0.121 (0.078)	0.032 (0.115)	-0.096 (0.149)	0.004 (0.117)	0.029 (0.096)
Rural/Small Town	0.244 (0.392)	-0.051 (0.296)	-0.232 (0.197)	0.615 (0.414)	-0.015 (0.298)	-0.038 (0.253)	-0.083 (0.276)	0.287 (0.518)	0.093 (0.419)	-0.627* (0.293)
Survey2	0.785* (0.336)	0.185 (0.266)	0.295 (0.203)	0.046 (0.340)	0.044 (0.223)	0.004 (0.229)	-	-	-	-
Survey3	0.704* (0.336)	-0.256 (0.273)	-0.044 (0.189)	-0.220 (0.334)	-0.072 (0.231)	-0.234 (0.207)	0.094 (0.260)	0.250 (0.342)	0.076 (0.261)	-0.281 (0.227)
Survey4	0.595 (0.305)	0.093 (0.278)	-0.377 (0.206)	-0.382 (0.324)	-0.598** (0.228)	-0.459* (0.217)	-0.243 (0.273)	-0.641 (0.366)	0.015 (0.280)	-0.694** (0.240)
Constant	-0.499 (0.744)	0.047 (0.626)	0.012 (0.441)	0.530 (0.705)	-0.375 (0.481)	-0.917* (0.433)	-0.027 (0.811)	0.006 (0.824)	-0.929 (0.679)	-0.432 (0.534)
Observations	3145	2961	3012	2960	3006	2869	2328	2326	2258	2269
Pseudo R ²	0.068	0.068	0.067	0.148	0.065	0.058	0.078	0.144	0.094	0.071

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

ideology is associated with the probability of splitting one's ticket. In fact, only for the U.S. Senate/Governor combination does *Ideology Folded* exhibit a statistically significant relationship with split-ticket voting, with more ideological respondents being more likely to mark a straight ballot across these two contests.

Outside of partisan identification and ideology, there are a few findings of note in Table 2. In the Governor/Lieutenant Governor pairing, Black respondents are more likely to split their tickets (versus Whites), while those with higher education levels are more likely to vote a straight-party ticket (also the case among older respondents in five office pairings: U.S. Senate/Governor, U.S. Senate/Lieutenant Governor, Governor/Lieutenant Governor, Governor/Secretary of State, and Governor/Attorney General). Also, respondents of some other minority racial category were less likely to split their tickets (versus Whites) in the U.S. Senate/Governor pairing. Finally, four of the office pairings exhibit more/less ticket-splitting depending on the survey number (2, 3, or 4, versus 1), but there is no consistency to these findings.

Turning to the CES model results found in Table C1 in Section C of the Supplementary Material, there are some important similarities and differences versus our findings in Table 2. In contrast to the UGA models, which have both Democratic and Republican leaners significantly less likely to split their ballots in multiple contest pairings, only among Democratic leaners in one pairing (Gov-SOS), is this the case in the CES analysis. However, in the case of partisans, Democrats and Republicans, these voters are significantly less likely to split their tickets in every contest pairing except for Secretary of State and Attorney General. Hence, we again find consistency in partisans being the group least likely to waver from a straight ticket vote. Finally, what really stands out with the CES models, is ideology. Whereas, more ideological respondents are less likely to split their tickets in only one office pairing (Sen-Gov) in the UGA analysis, in every CES model we see that more ideological voters are less likely to stray from a straight-ticket vote. Although it is only once that this result manifests in the UGA models, the consistent finding in the CES models is intuitive: voters harboring more ideological views should be more discerning of the opposing political philosophies of the major parties (Converse 1964), and therefore stick with the party better aligned with their views.

In Table 3 we present additional logit models that make use of two directional split-ticket office pairings of interest. One examines voters who split their ticket between Democratic U.S. Senator Warnock and Republican Governor Kemp (DR), and a second where voters split their ticket between Democratic U.S. Senator Warnock and Republican Secretary of State Raffensperger (DR). For these indicators, a voter splitting their ticket in the specified manner is coded 1, while straight-party voters (Democrat/Democrat or Republican/

Table 3. Logit models (UGA): ticket-splitting in 2022 midterm election, Warnock–Kemp and Warnock–Raffensperger.

Variable	Warnock–Kemp	Warnock–Raffensperger
Democratic Leaner	–0.429 (0.536)	–0.814** (0.308)
Democrat	–1.519** (0.489)	–1.910*** (0.267)
Republican Leaner	–0.410 (0.594)	–1.338*** (0.377)
Republican	–1.164* (0.464)	–1.874*** (0.306)
Ideology Folded	–0.424** (0.163)	–0.302** (0.095)
Age	–0.010 (0.012)	0.008 (0.007)
Black	0.289 (0.548)	0.218 (0.215)
Other Race	–0.707 (0.434)	0.177 (0.261)
Female	0.159 (0.331)	–0.314 (0.177)
Education	–0.108 (0.193)	0.159 (0.095)
Rural/Small Town	0.860 (0.594)	–0.080 (0.243)
Survey2	1.108** (0.379)	0.363 (0.226)
Survey3	1.010* (0.405)	–0.256 (0.227)
Survey4	0.726 (0.409)	–0.747** (0.274)
Constant	–1.978 (1.014)	–0.750 (0.661)
N	2989	2708
Pseudo R ²	0.092	0.108

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

Republican) are coded 0.¹⁰ The predictor variables are the same as those used for the previous multivariate models.¹¹

Looking at the results for Warnock–Kemp voters in Table 3, we see that Democratic and Republican identifiers are significantly less likely to split their tickets across these contests. Partisan leaners, however, are no different from Independents in terms of ticket-splitting propensity. The only other substantive variable of note is the relationship between ideology

¹⁰For these variables, Libertarian combinations are removed as are respondents who indicated they were voting Democratic for Governor and Republican for U.S. Senate, and Republican for U.S. Senate and Democratic for Secretary of State.

¹¹The significance of partisanship as a driving factor in these models is on full display because respondents’ demographic characteristics render no effect on the likelihood of ticket-splitting. This is an interesting null finding because of the racial diversity in the U.S. Senate/Governor pairing and the U.S. Senate/Secretary of State pairing. The major party nominees for U.S. Senate were both Black men; the race for Governor pitted a Republican White man against a Democratic Black woman; and the Secretary of State contest included a Republican White man against a Democratic Asian American woman.

and ticket-splitting. Similar to the generic ticket-splitting finding for U.S. Senate/Governor, more ideological respondents are more likely to vote a straight-party ticket in these contests. Outside of the survey controls (Survey 2 and 3 respondents are more likely to split their ballots versus Survey 1 respondents), no other respondent characteristics influence Warnock–Kemp ticket-splitting. Column 3 of Table 3 examines Warnock–Raffensperger voters versus straight-ticket voters. In addition to partisans, Democratic and Republican leaners are also less likely to split their tickets compared to Independents. In line with the Warnock–Kemp model, more ideological voters are less likely to split their tickets in the Warnock/Raffensperger pairing. The only other variable of significance is that Survey 4 respondents were less likely to split their ballots for Warnock and Raffensperger versus Survey 1 respondents.

In Figures 1 and 2 we translate the logit coefficients into probabilities based on the five party identification categories. Figure 1 plots the probability that a survey respondent votes Warnock–Kemp. What immediately catches the eye is the symmetrical distribution of ticket-splitting, with a peak among pure Independents and then a uniform decline from partisan leaners to partisans. The probability of a Warnock–Kemp ticket split for Independents is .09. For Democratic and Republican leaners the Warnock–Kemp probability decreases to .06. Finally, for self-identified Democrats the probability decreases to .02 and for Republicans it is .03.

By contrast, ticket-splitting of the Warnock–Raffensperger variety was decidedly more prevalent. Also the partisan distribution of ticket-splitting for Warnock–Raffensperger is not symmetrical, with more split ballots

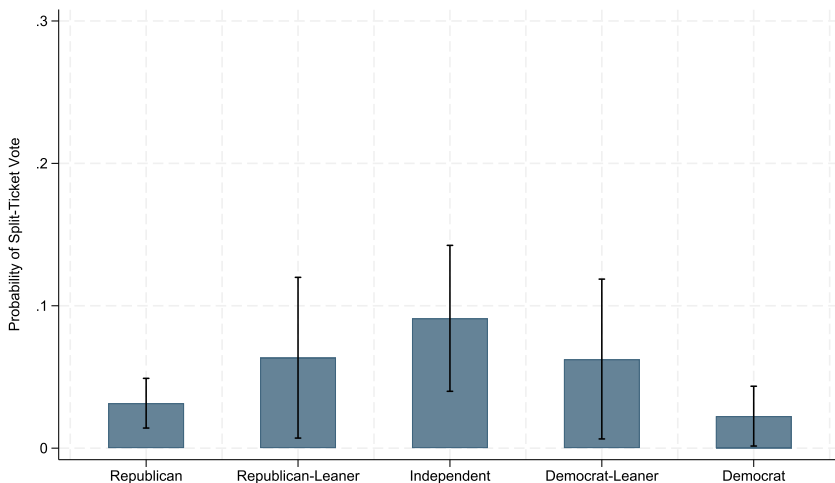


Figure 1. Ticket-splitters (UGA): Warnock–Kemp voters.

Note: Data from Table 3, Warnock–Kemp model.

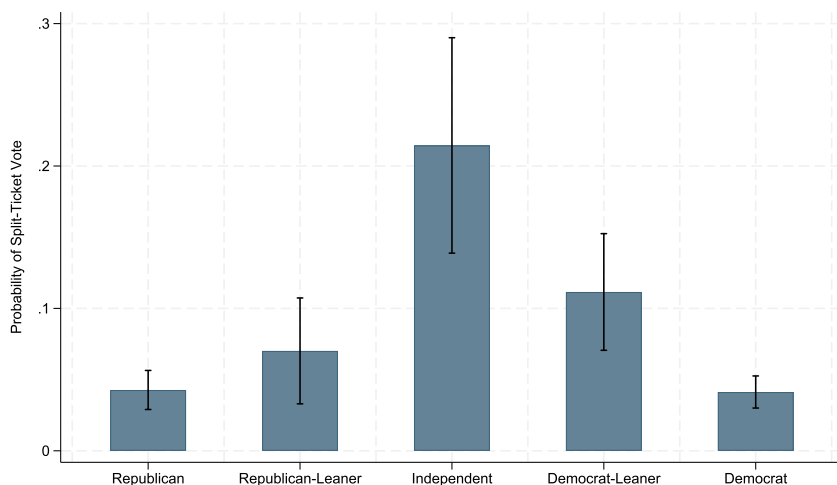


Figure 2. Ticket-splitters (UGA): Warnock–Raffensperger voters.

Note: Data from Table 3, Warnock–Raffensperger model.

found among Democratic-inclined respondents. Still, the greatest propensity to vote Warnock–Raffensperger is found among Independents, with over a 20% chance of voting this way. Also, given what we know about Raffensperger gaining good will among Democrats in the post-2020 presidential election imbroglio (Hood III and McKee 2023), the probability of a Democratic leaner casting a Warnock–Raffensperger ballot was .11, compared to .07 for a Republican leaner. Once again, outright partisans showed very little proclivity to claim support for Warnock and Raffensperger, with Democrats and Republicans each having a .04 probability of marking a Warnock–Raffensperger ballot.

Finally, the cognate CES models found in Table C2 in Section C of the Supplementary Material vary from the findings in Table 3 with regard to partisanship.¹² Compared to Independents, Democrats and Republicans are significantly less likely to split their tickets for Warnock and Kemp in the UGA model, but this is only true of Democrats in the CES analysis. In the UGA model for a Warnock–Raffensperger preference, all leaners and partisans are less likely to split their ballots versus Independents, but this is only the case among Republicans in the CES analysis.¹³ However, with respect to ideology, in both the UGA and CES analysis, a more ideological respondent is less likely to split a ballot for Warnock–Kemp and for Warnock–Raffensperger. To

¹²Also, we should note that running the analysis of the CES Warnock–Kemp model in Stata resulted in the *Other Race* variable being dropped.

¹³In other words, the CES models indicate that in the Warnock–Kemp pairing, only Democrats are significantly more likely to vote a straight ticket, and likewise, only Republicans are more likely to vote a straight ticket in the Warnock–Raffensperger pairing.

highlight splitting a ticket in the above-mentioned fashion, in Section D in the Supplementary Material we include figures showing this likelihood according to ideology, for Warnock–Kemp from the UGA and CES models, respectively. We then show these ticket-splitting probabilities for Warnock–Raffensperger based on ideology, from the UGA and CES models, respectively. Clearly, compared to very conservative/liberal voters, ideological moderates are notably more likely to split their tickets in these two election pairings.

Conclusion

An emphasis on nationalization has likely diverted scholars' attention from considering the extent to which Americans continue to split their tickets. In this study, we undertake a detailed examination of ticket-splitting among Georgia voters in the top-five statewide elections appearing on their ballots in the 2022 midterm. In the absence of such an analysis, we might have expected much lower rates of split ballots. But we find that the variation in ticket-splitting is notable, with the CVRs revealing a low of 4.4% in the Governor/Attorney General pairing versus a high of 10.2% in the U.S. Senate/Secretary of State choice set. Our logit models drawing on original UGA survey data reveal that compared to both Democratic and Republican identifiers, Independents tend to split their tickets at a greater clip. We also analyzed two specific types of ticket-splitting: voting for Democratic Senator Raphael Warnock and Republican Governor Brian Kemp, and likewise splitting a ballot for Democratic Senator Raphael Warnock and Republican Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger. In both instances, we again find that partisans are less likely to diverge from a straight ticket vote and this is also true of more ideological respondents.

We supplemented these findings with models estimated from the 2022 CES subsample of Georgia validated voters. The 2022 CES is a valuable data source because it enables a broader look at ticket-splitting across the American states. Although our focus is on the Georgia electorate, the propensity of these voters to split their tickets in 2022 is not atypical. For example, based on the descriptive 2022 CES data, among Georgia voters, 5.9% split their tickets for U.S. Senate and Governor; 8.1% split their ballots in the contests for Governor and Secretary of State; and 11.1% varied their partisan choices for U.S. Senate and Secretary of State. By comparison, nationally the 2022 CES data show 6.6% of voters splitting their tickets for U.S. Senate and Governor, a 7.7% ticket-split for Governor and Secretary of State, and 9.7% of voters splitting their tickets for U.S. Senate and Secretary of State.¹⁴

¹⁴We are indebted to an anonymous reviewer who took the time to calculate and report these numbers to us.

Also, we should emphasize again that, contrary to most of the UGA models, which do not validate voting—with these surveys conducted months/weeks in advance of Election Day, the CES data always show that more ideological voters are less inclined to split their tickets. Thus, marshaling the UGA and CES findings that repeatedly show partisans are the least likely to split their ballots, and that among validated voters in the CES this is also the case among the most ideological, makes it clear that it is indeed the most political among us who stick with voting for the same party across multiple offices. Nevertheless, the candidate still matters. Although ticket-splitting has declined among a more nationalized and calcified contemporary American electorate (Jacobson 2025), we have shown in a more limited type of ticket-splitting, that a candidate can still elicit nontrivial support across the partisan aisle (Democratic Senator Warnock with Republicans and Republican Secretary of State Raffensperger with Democrats).

The 2022 midterm elections were a surprise to most political observers because the partisan needle moved only ever so slightly for control of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House. The House flipped back to Republicans with a Democrat in the White House, a typical dynamic (Carson and Jacobson 2023), but GOP gains were modest. Indeed, so few seats changed partisan hands that it once again was interpreted as the partisan rigidity of the American voter—even when short-term conditions generally advantaged Republicans.¹⁵

While the U.S. House went Republican, Democrats actually netted a seat in the U.S. Senate, providing them with just a little more breathing room to control the upper chamber. A major reason for Democratic success was the presence of several Trump-endorsed GOP Senate nominees who went down to defeat, including football legend Herschel Walker in Georgia. The questionable quality of Trump-endorsed Senate nominees prompted interest in whether a substantial number of Republican voters would defect in favor of the Democratic option.¹⁶ The most prominent ticket-split in the U.S. Senate/Governor pairing in Georgia was a Democratic vote in the former contest and a Republican vote in the latter. Likewise, the most frequent ticket-split we find among all the office pairings in Georgia is a Democratic U.S. Senate vote and a Republican vote for Secretary of State. This jibes with political reality because in the U.S. Senate contest the Republican challenger Herschel Walker was an exceptionally unqualified candidate, whereas in the Secretary of State election, the Republican incumbent Brad Raffensperger pushed back against Trump's claims of a stolen 2020 presidential election

¹⁵The Supreme Court's Summer 2022 abortion ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson* did prove a net electoral advantage for Democrats; see Jacobson (2023).

¹⁶See "Could an old-school approach to voting decide the midterms?" VOX, November 8, 2022, available <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23414915/split-ticket-voting-Governor-senate-midterm> (last accessed January 2, 2025).

– gaining goodwill (and votes) from voters affiliated with the Democratic Party.

To be sure, we are not making a judgment as to whether these rates of ticket-splitting are somehow objectively high or low. However, in thinking about ticket-splitting for president and Congress, in historical context, and particularly in a southern state like Georgia, we are certain these contemporary rates of ticket-splitting are very low because of the nationalization taking place since the days of a split-level alignment in which Republicans only demonstrated electoral dominance in presidential elections (Black and Black 1987). Still, these lower modern rates of ticket-splitting can be enough to determine winners and losers. Ultimately, the 2022 Georgia U.S. Senate election between the Democratic incumbent Raphael Warnock and Republican challenger Herschel Walker, went to a runoff and Warnock prevailed with a 2.8-point margin; a difference so close that these current rates of ticket-splitting can easily decide the outcome.

It is admittedly hackneyed to call for more research at the end of a study, but we believe it is imperative with respect to understanding ticket-splitting in contemporary American politics—and likely even more so for research on non-federal contests. Yes, it seems by all accounts that nationalization has tempered ticket-splitting because there is an increasing share of partisans in the American electorate. Yet despite this, ticket-splitting arguably warrants even greater attention these days, because at the margins it has prevented several less palatable/qualified candidates from winning office (e.g. Walker in 2022 for U.S. Senate in Georgia, Doug Mastriano in 2022 for Pennsylvania Governor; Kari Lake in 2022 for Governor and then in 2024 for U.S. Senate in Arizona). Because of the decline in party-line defections, though, more of the burden for screening candidates is shouldered by ideological moderates, and political Independents, who show a greater propensity to split their ballots in an age when partisans are increasingly likely to stomach a co-partisan candidate because of partisan compatibility.

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Data availability statement

Data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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