GEOGRAPHICAL VARIATION IN TELEHEALTH USAGE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE AMONG ACTIVE-DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS

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Research Objectives

This study addresses the geographical and temporal variations in telehealth usage for mental health care among active-duty service members in the direct and purchased care systems. By examining the variation across different regions and service branches, it highlights the potential for telehealth to improve access to mental health services, considering the dynamic nature associated with mental health care in ensuring service members' readiness and well-being.
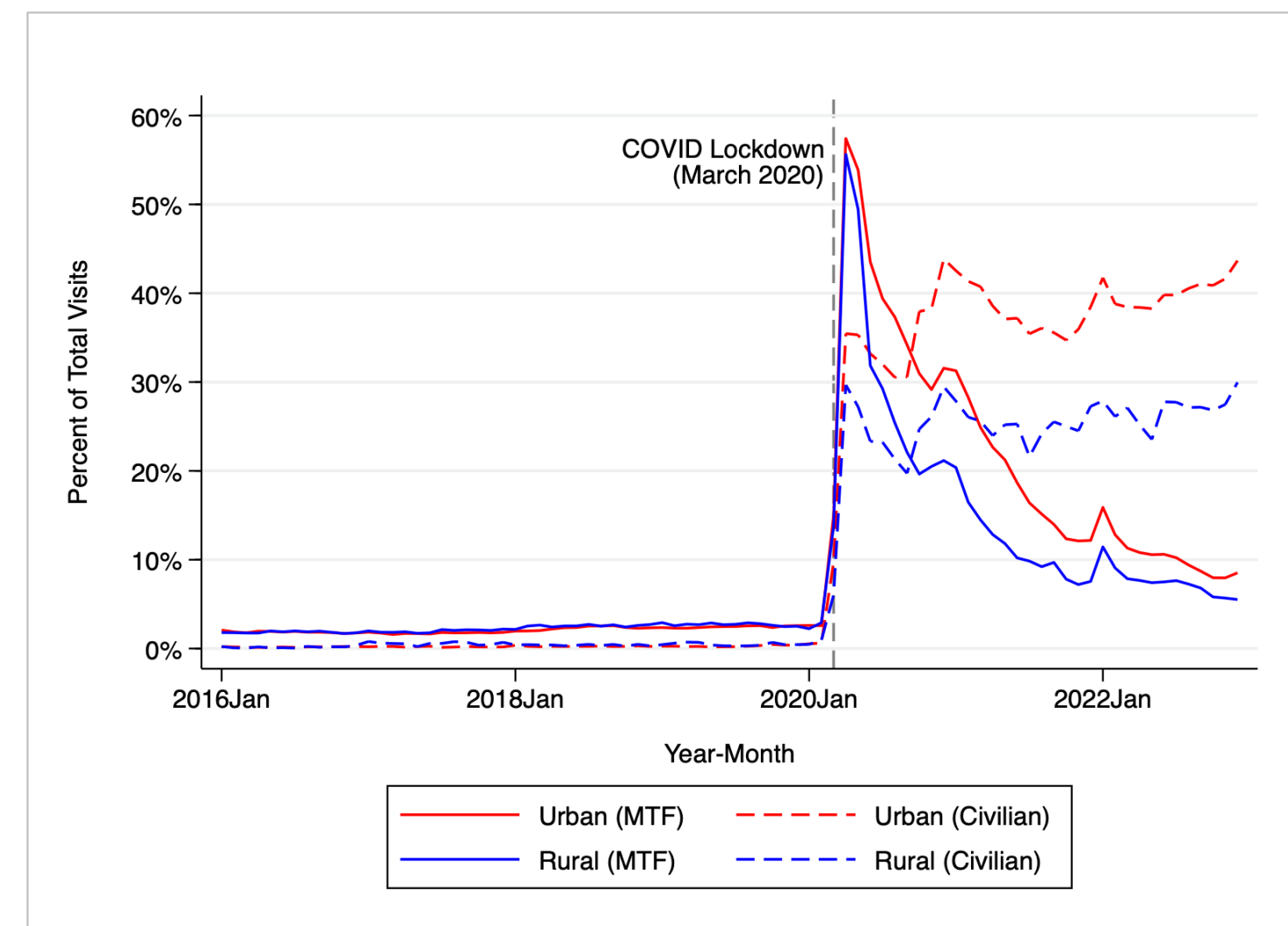
Share of Mental Health Care Visits that Were Teleconsult, by Rurality and Care Setting.

Methods

Utilizing trend analysis and linear probability regression models, the study analyzed data from the Military Health System Data Repository, alongside United States Census and other sources, focusing on telehealth visits for mental health care. It considered variables such as geographical location, service branch, and demographic factors to identify patterns and disparities in telehealth usage.
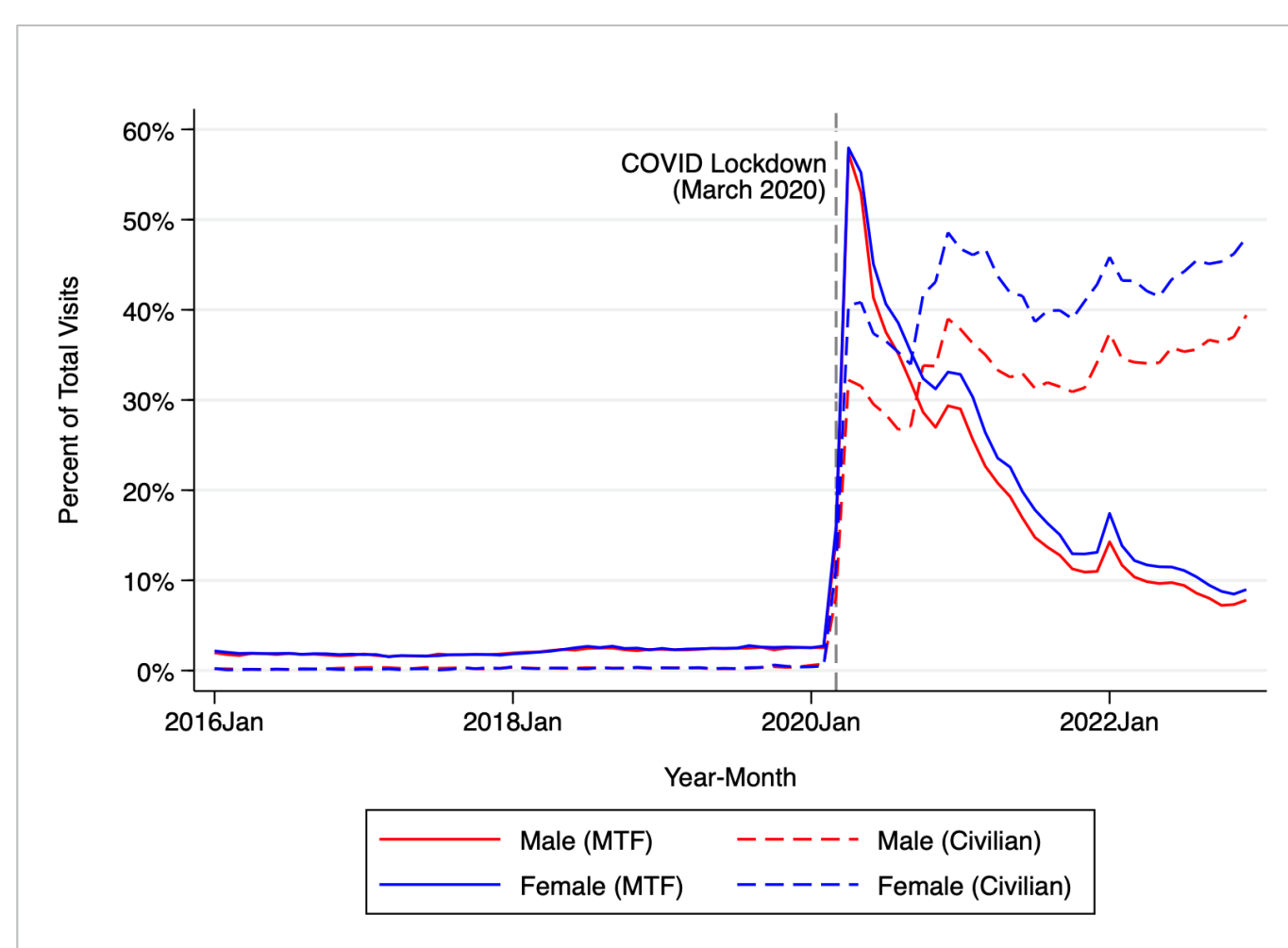

Share of Mental Health Care Visits that Were Teleconsult, by Sex and Care Setting.

Results & Their Impact

- Female has higher probability of using telehealth, but the gap between sexes in direct care usage of telehealth is narrowing
- Significant variations in telehealth use across service branches
- Significant variation across Census regions, and rural residence is less likely to use telehealth compared to urban residence

Operational Impact: These findings highlight the importance of tailored telehealth policies to address the unique needs of service members, potentially enhancing operational readiness through improved access to mental health services.
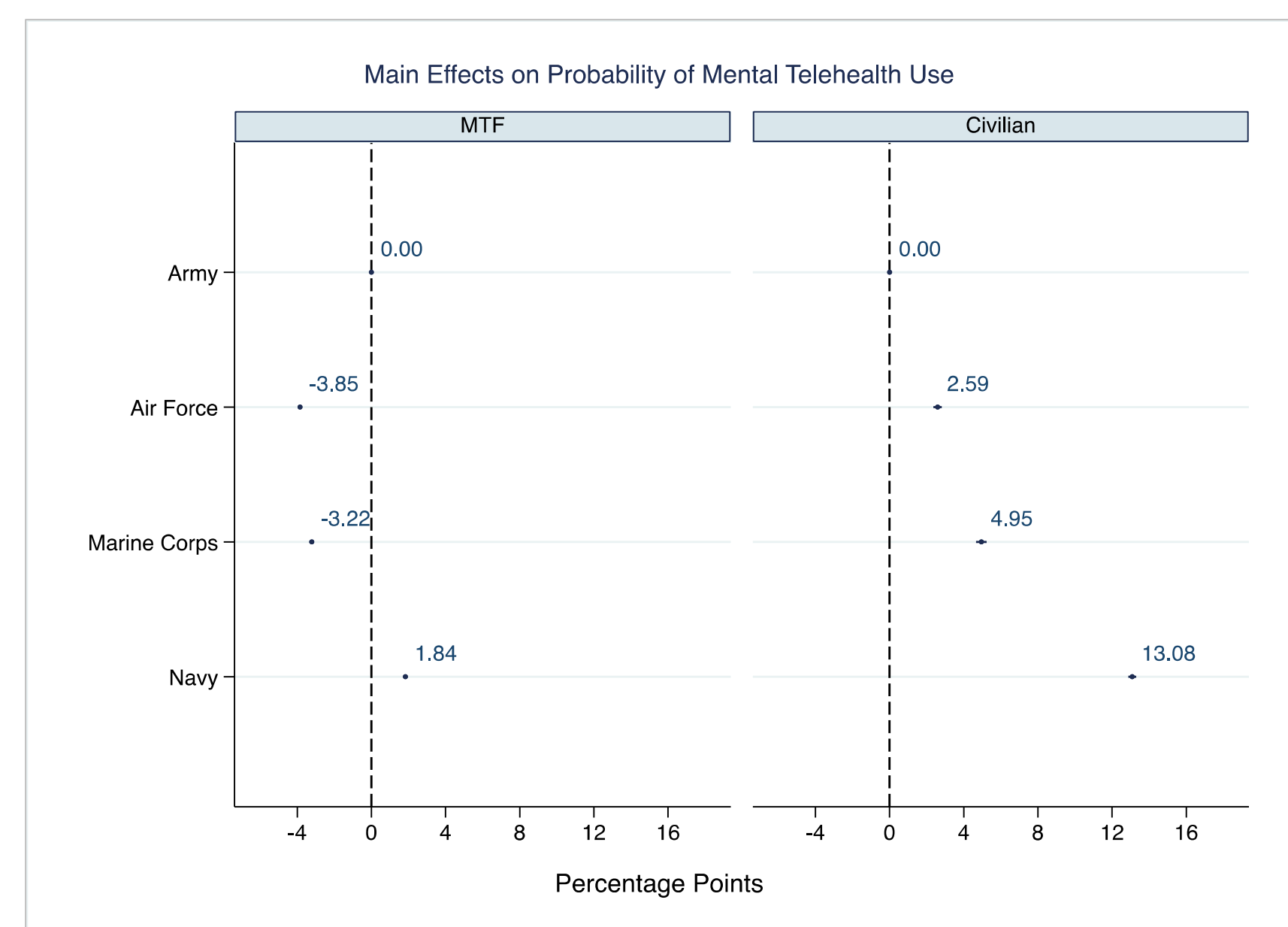
Difference in the Probability of Telehealth Use by Branch of Service, Based on Multivariate Regression Models

Recommendations

Future research should delve into the long-term effects of telehealth on military readiness and the mental well-being of service members.

Policymakers and military health leaders are encouraged to consider these findings in designing equitable and effective telehealth services, ensuring that mental health support is accessible regardless of geographical location or service branch.

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