Unintended Consequences: Impact of Increased Promotion Requirements on Marine NCO
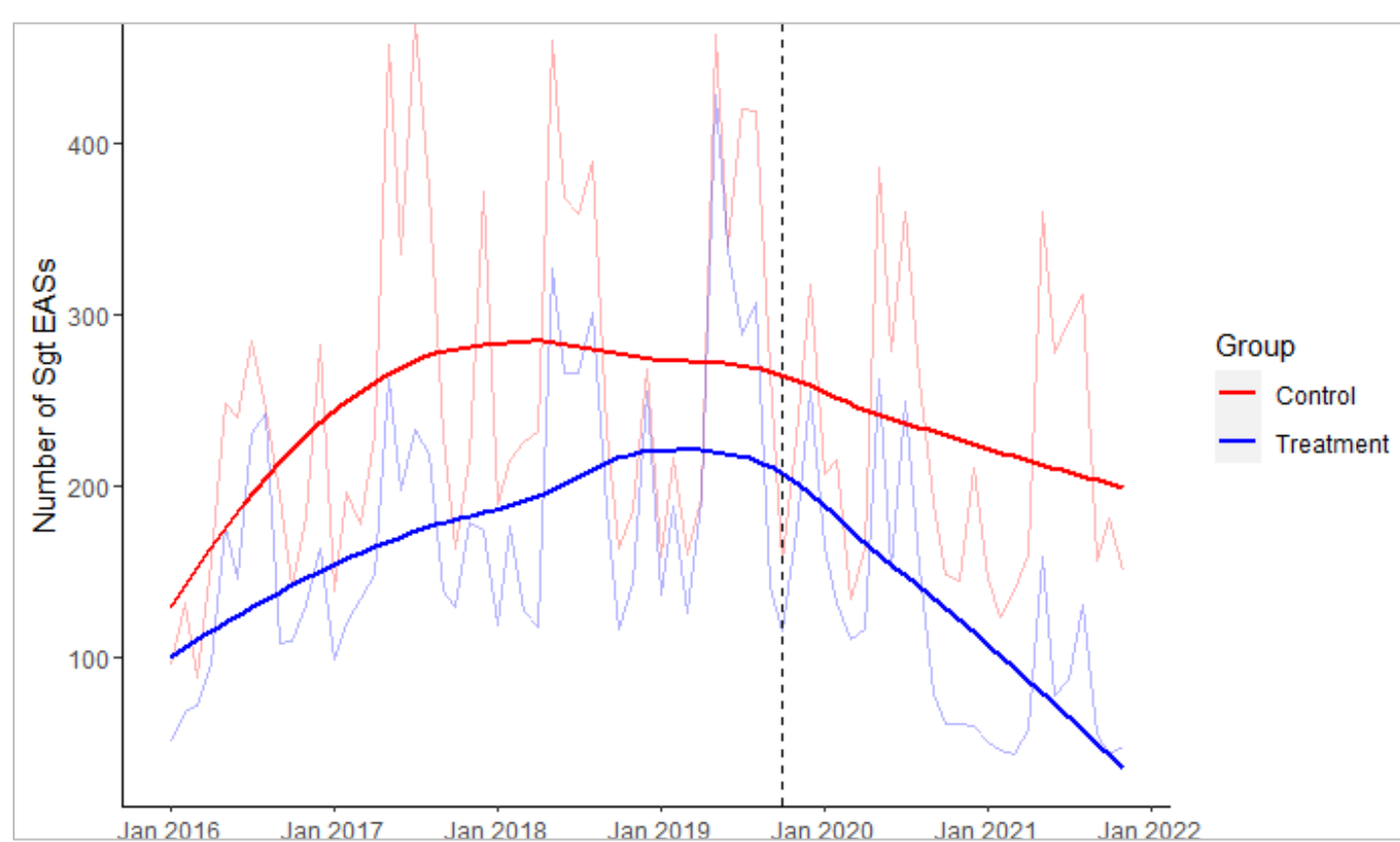
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Abstract

In 2019, the Marine Corps announced the minimum required time-in-service and time-in-grade for promotion to sergeant and staff sergeant would increase. Since then, a 2,700-sergeant deficit has been identified. This study confirms that deficit is linked to the promotion policy change by estimating the impact of increased promotion requirements on the retention and job performance of corporals and sergeants. Employing a difference-in-differences framework, I compare Marines in jobs where the average time to promote increased the most against Marines in jobs where promotion timing stayed the same or changed minimally.
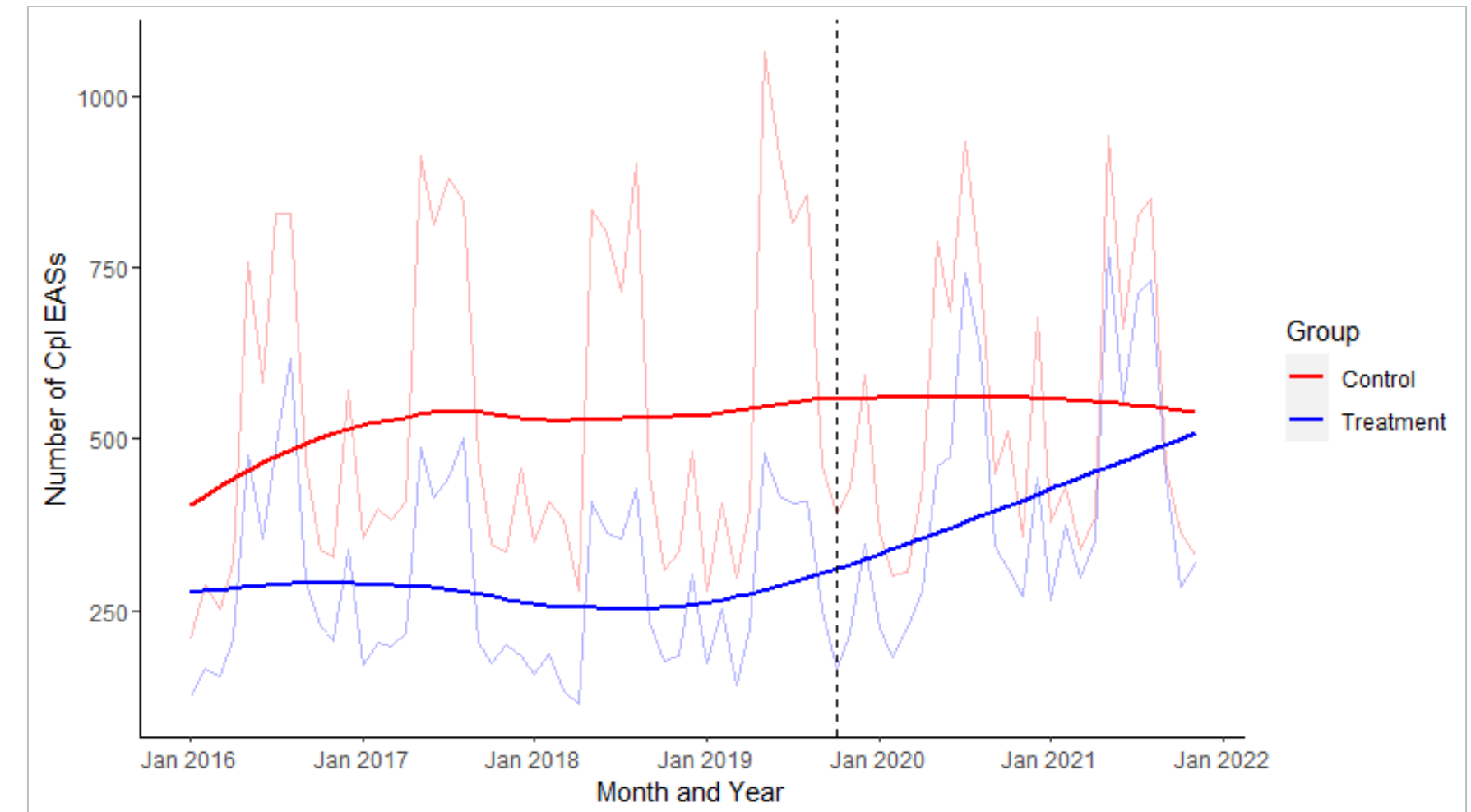
*Longer Time to Promote Increased Corporal Separations*

Methods: Difference-in-differences

- Cpl Treatment group: Marines in MOSs that saw an average increase of 6+ months in time-to-promote to Sgt after policy enacted
- Sgt Treatment group: Marines in MOSs that saw an average increase of 12+ months in time-to-promote to SSgt after policy enacted

Decreased Sergeant Separations

Results & Their Impact

- Relative to the control group, Cpls in the treated group were 3.6pp*** (6.3%) more likely to EAS after the policy was enacted.
- Relative to the control group, Sgts in the treated group were 4.4pp*** (9.8%) less likely to EAS after the policy was enacted.
- Relative to the control group, Cpls in the treated group were 2.9pp*** (72.5%) more likely to be meritoriously promoted to sergeant after the policy was enacted.
- No statistically significant effect on Cpl job performance.
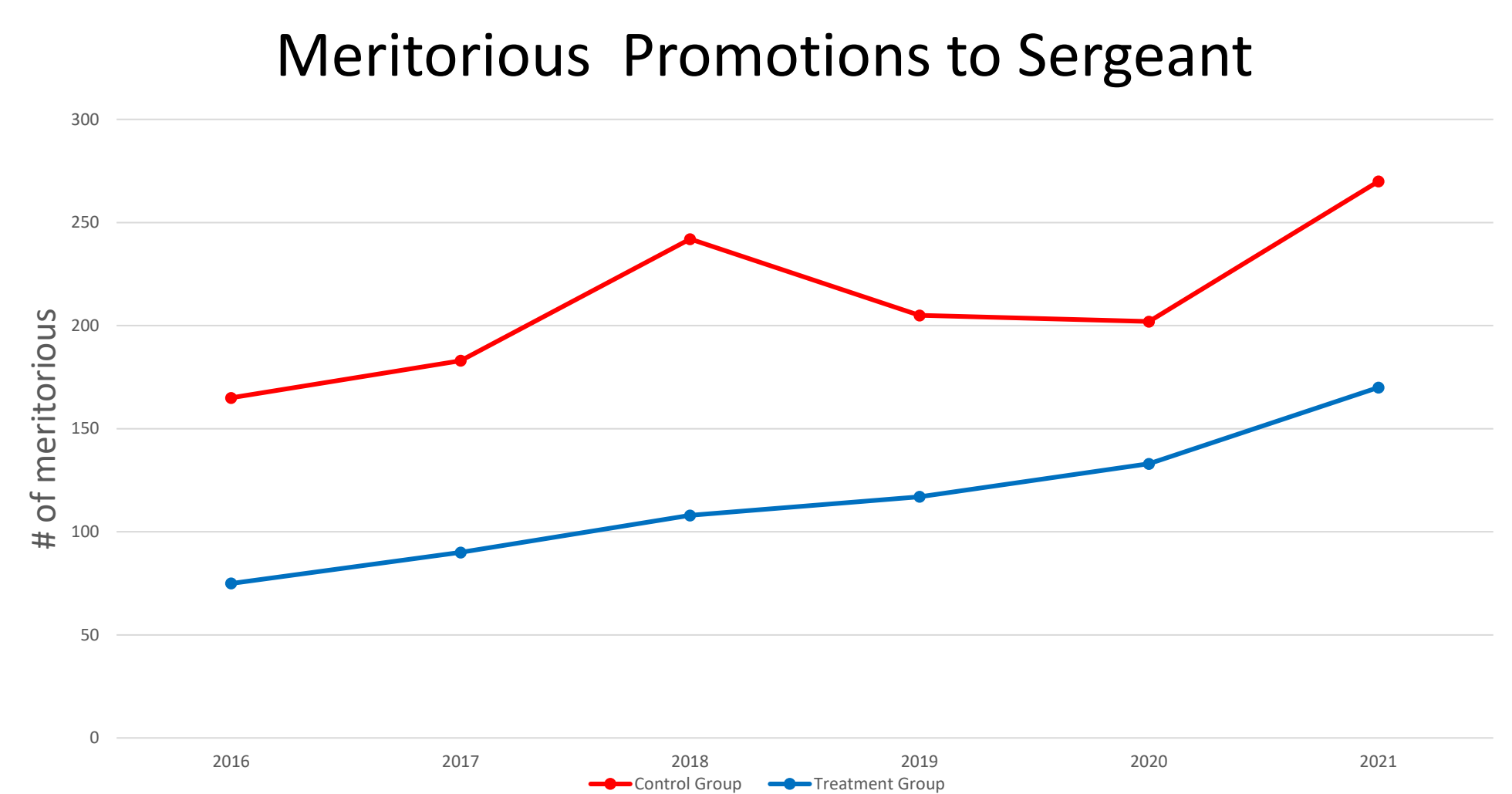
Increased Meritorious Promotions

Recommendations

- Evaluate management of meritorious promotions
- Targeted retention strategies on affected MOSs
- Increased focus on lateral entry to reverse deficit
- Further research on sergeant and staff sergeant performance and address study limitations

Department of Defense Management

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