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Heat Stress Illness Outcomes and Annual Indices of Outdoor Heat at U.S. Army Installations --Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	<p>This study characterized associations between annually scaled thermal indices and annual heat stress illness (HSI) morbidity outcomes, including heat stroke and heat exhaustion, among active-duty soldiers at ten Continental U.S. (CONUS) Army installations from 1991 to 2018. We fit negative binomial models for 3 types of HSI morbidity outcomes and 104 annual indices, adjusting for installation-level effects and long-term trends with a block bootstrap approach. Ambulatory (out-patient) and reportable event HSI outcomes displayed positive association patterns with the assessed annual indices of heat in our models. For example, a one-degree Fahrenheit (°F) increase in mean temperature between May and September was associated with a 1.05 (95% confidence interval [CI]: 1.00, 1.11) times greater rate of ambulatory encounters. The annual-scaled rate ratios and their uncertainties may be applied to climate projections for a wide range of thermal indices to estimate future HSI burden and impacts to medical readiness.</p>
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Heat Stress Illness Outcomes and Annual Indices of Outdoor Heat at U.S. Army Installations

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20

21

22 **Abstract**

23 This study characterized associations between annually scaled thermal indices and annual
24 heat stress illness (HSI) morbidity outcomes, including heat stroke and heat exhaustion, among
25 active-duty soldiers at ten Continental U.S. (CONUS) Army installations from 1991 to 2018. We
26 fit negative binomial models for 3 types of HSI morbidity outcomes and 104 annual indices,
27 adjusting for installation-level effects and long-term trends with a block bootstrap approach.
28 Ambulatory (out-patient) and reportable event HSI outcomes displayed positive association
29 patterns with the assessed annual indices of heat in our models. For example, a one-degree
30 Fahrenheit (°F) increase in mean temperature between May and September was associated with a
31 1.05 (95% confidence interval [CI]: 1.00, 1.11) times greater rate of ambulatory encounters. The
32 annual-scaled rate ratios and their uncertainties may be applied to climate projections for a wide
33 range of thermal indices to estimate future HSI burden and impacts to medical readiness.

34 **Introduction**

35 Heat stress illnesses (HSIs) pose a preventable, potentially fatal, health threat with serious
36 impacts to military training and readiness [1,2]. HSIs occur when the effects of environmental
37 heat stress, combined with metabolic heat generated from physical activity, exceed
38 thermoregulatory and heat exchange capacities, resulting in elevated core temperature [3]. This
39 heat strain manifests as a continuum of outcomes, including heat stroke, heat exhaustion, edema,
40 cramps, and fainting. In the U.S. Army,  diagnosed cases of heat stroke and heat exhaustion have
41 increased in recent years as average annual temperatures and high temperature records continue
42 to rise [4,5]. Military service members who train in the Continental U.S. (CONUS) experience

43 elevated risks from heat exposure compared to similar age groups in the general population due
44 to increased time outdoors, high physical exertion levels, clothing burden, and equipment loads.

45 The environmental properties affecting heat exchange include air temperature, air
46 humidity, wind speed, and solar, sky, and ground radiation [3]. A wide range of methods and
47 indices exist to classify the thermal environment as it relates to thermal stress and physiological
48 effects [6]. The primary index used by the U.S. Army is the wet bulb globe temperature
49 (WBGT). The WBGT is a weighted average of natural wet-bulb temperature (weight, $w=70\%$),
50 globe thermometer temperature ($w=20\%$), and dry-bulb temperature ($w=10\%$) in outdoor, non-
51 shaded conditions [7]. Another commonly reported metric is the U.S. National Weather
52 Service's (NWS) heat index. The NWS heat index (HI) represents an apparent temperature
53 measure of thermal comfort based on air temperature and relative humidity and serves as a basis
54 for excessive heat warnings [8]. The U.S. Army Public Health Center also applies the NWS HI
55 as an indicator for heat risk days, defined as days with an HI greater than 90 degrees Fahrenheit
56 ($^{\circ}\text{F}$) for more than one hour [4]. Although the WBGT and HI are most often applied to short-
57 term (hourly, daily, heat wave event) exposures, averages or aggregates from these instruments
58 can also assist with characterization of long-term (seasonal, annual) heat and humidity risks.

59 The objective of this study was to characterize the association between indices of heat
60 and annual HSI morbidity outcomes among active-duty soldiers at ten CONUS Army
61 installations in the context of rising temperature and humidity conditions. Resulting estimates for
62 the sensitivity of health outcomes to changing environmental conditions can inform long-term
63 planning assumptions and provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of prevention
64 measures.

65 **Materials and Methods**


66 **Health Outcome Data**

67 We obtained HSI outcome counts and rates of hospitalization (in-patient), ambulatory
68 visits (out-patient), and reportable medical events from the Defense Medical Epidemiology
69 Database (DMED), which contains summarized, non-Privacy Act data from the Defense Medical
70 Surveillance System (DMSS) [9]. We queried primary diagnosis International Classification of
71 Diseases (ICD) codes for active-duty U.S. Army servicemembers. For ICD-9, used through
72 2015, we applied 992-series codes, categorized as “effects of heat and light” [10]. We used ICD-
73 10 series T67 codes for 2016 – 2018 data [11]. The counts and rates in this study aggregate all
74 conditions within these code groups, with heat stroke and heat exhaustion representing the
75 majority of cases across each of the three outcome types. Hospitalization data were available
76 from 1990 – 2018, ambulatory from 1997 – 2018, and reportable events from 1995 – 2018. We
77 excluded the initial years for hospitalizations and ambulatory encounters (1990 and 1997,
78 respectively) from analyses due to signs of incomplete reporting. Additionally, we queried
79 injuries and illnesses of all types to consider potential long-term trends due to changes in
80 reporting systems or access-to-care and to assess the relative burden of disease due to HSIs. We
81 selected ten U.S. Army CONUS installations based on previously reported *Medical Surveillance*
82 *Monthly Report (MSMR)* HSI rates and exploratory DMED findings [1]. The ten included
83 locations account for over 78% of all CONUS active-duty Army HSI cases for the examined
84 years. Fort Irwin, CA, the next highest location, reported less than half the HSI cases as the tenth

85 ranked site, Fort Bliss, TX, and features rotational training cycles at its National Training Center
86 that challenge exposure assumptions.

87 **Meteorology Data**

88 Meteorological estimates from the North American Land Data Assimilation System 2
89 (NLDAS-2) forcing dataset served as the primary source of weather and atmospheric data[12].
90 NLDAS is a National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) / National Oceanic and
91 Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-led multi-institution project that constructs gridded
92 surface meteorological datasets through the assimilation and merging of fields derived from
93 gauge-based and remotely-sensed observations and re-analyses, with validation from ground-
94 based observations [12]. NLDAS-2 data are available on a 1/8th-degree spatial scale at hourly
95 frequencies from 1979 to present. We selected NLDAS grid cells containing the centroid of each
96 installation based on shapefiles from the Department of Defense (DoD) Military Installations,
97 Ranges, and Training Areas (MIRTA) Dataset [13].

98 NLDAS fields include air temperature at 2 meters above the surface, specific humidity at
99 2 meters above the surface, surface pressure, wind speed, and bias-corrected surface downward
100 shortwave radiation. We calculated relative humidity from specific humidity, temperature, and
101 atmospheric pressure; heat index (HI) from temperature and relative humidity based on a US
102 National Weather Service algorithm[8]; and outdoor WBGT from air temperature, relative
103 humidity, solar irradiance, barometric pressure, and wind speed using the method of Liljegren *et*
104 *al.*, based on principles of heat and mass transfer [14,15]. We conducted sensitivity analyses
105 comparing NLDAS centroid estimates with eleven years of hourly data produced by the 14th
106 Weather Squadron from nearest weather station  and observed consistency in line with the
107 distance to the station.

108 We compiled 104 annual indices of heat through multiple aggregations of hourly
109 temperature, HI, and WBGT estimates in absolute and relative terms, averaged either over the
110 entire calendar year or the heat season, defined as 01 May through 30 September. We included
111 the former full-year average, as a prior evaluation assessed that approximately 17% of all HSI
112 cases occurred during non-summer months, variable by location [16]. Absolute measures
113 included annual mean temperatures and counts of heat risk days or hours above specified
114 thresholds based on heat category cut-offs for HI and WBGT. Mean values were calculated over
115 24-hour periods to capture minimum temperatures, which can impact recovery from heat
116 exposure. We calculated relative measures with reference to 1990 to 2019 climatologies for each
117 day of the year and each location. These relative indices included annual mean daily anomalies,
118 annual maximum daily anomalies, counts of days above daily 85th, 90th, and 95th
119 percentiles (mean and maximum values), and counts of days one or two standard deviations
120 above daily temperature climate norms for mean and maximum values.

121

122 **Statistical Analyses**

123 To evaluate time trends in our exposure metrics, we fit linear models regressing each
124 index of heat on time for each installation. We evaluated outcome measures in a similar manner,
125 with simple linear regressions for rates of each outcome type over time, by installation and with
126 combined rates ($\frac{\text{sum of counts}}{\text{sum of population}}$) for all ten installations.

127 We applied negative binomial regression to model the over-dispersed count outcomes for
128 hospitalizations, ambulatory encounters, and reportable events [17]. The index of heat served as
129 the exposure of interest, in units of °F, number of days, or number of hours. We set indicator

130 variables for each installation to account for potentially confounding factors varying across
 131 installations and set the active-duty Army population of each installation for each year as an
 132 offset. Our resulting regression formula for the log of the rate predicted by the exposure and
 133 installation indicator variables is: $\log\left(\frac{\widehat{outcome\ count}_i}{\widehat{population}_i}\right) = \widehat{\beta}_0 + \widehat{\beta}_1 index\ value +$
 134 $\sum_{j=2}^{10} \widehat{\beta}_j I(\text{installation}_i = j)$, with Fort Bliss, TX set as the reference installation. We
 135 accounted for confounding by year, which is associated with long-term trends in both the
 136 exposure and outcome, by applying a block bootstrap approach that shuffles replicated selections
 137 of the data to reduce effects of serial correlation [18]. The time variable includes elements which
 138 we are limited in our ability to decompose, such as changes in access to care, admission
 139 protocols, coding practices, and reporting systems in addition to soldier demographics, fitness
 140 levels, and training intensities. We hypothesize that if we were to only include *year* as a term in a
 141 standard model without a blocked bootstrap approach, the trend would capture a portion of the
 142 outcome variability associated with the changes in heat we are investigating and bias estimates
 143 towards the null, while failure to adjust for trends through time in any manner would bias results
 144 away from the null.

145 To construct block bootstraps, we randomly selected two-year intervals with replacement
 146 and assembled these intervals into a new series with the approximate length of the base time
 147 series. We conducted 10,000 replications of this process on select indices for each model
 148 (represented in Fig 2), calculated beta coefficients for each iteration, and constructed
 149 nonparametric basic (empirical) bootstrap confidence intervals [19,20]. For the remainder of
 150 indices, we conducted 2,000 bootstrap replications. We assessed sensitivity by comparing non-
 151 bootstrap models (with and without a year term), original single observation bootstraps, and
 152 three-year block interval bootstraps. In the two-year block models, we also examined bias-

153 corrected and accelerated (BCa) bootstrap intervals, which incorporate parameters for the
 154 proportion of bootstrap estimates less than the observed statistic and for the skewness of the
 155 bootstrap distribution [21]. We conducted all statistical and spatial analyses using R Statistical
 156 Software (version 3.6.1) [22]. The R code is available at https://github.com/sal2222/annual_hsi.

157 Results

158 We found that CONUS active-duty Army HSI ambulatory and reportable event rates
 159 increased over the study period. Assessing outcome patterns for all types of injuries and
 160 illnesses, we observed that ambulatory rates sharply increased over time and hospitalization rates
 161 generally declined from 1991 to 1997 and then steadied. Reportable event rates displayed
 162 random variability but were the most stable outcome measure over time. The mean counts and
 163 rates for each installation are listed in Table 1, along with mean burden, representing the percent
 164 of all encounters or events attributed to HSIs. Fourteen installation-outcome type pairs exhibited
 165 a positive, linear trend for annual rate at $\alpha = 0.05$ over the included years and two had a negative
 166 trend. Fig 1 displays the positive trends of the combined HSI rates from the ten installations over
 167 time ($p < 0.001$ for ambulatory and reportable event regression slopes, $p = 0.12$ for
 168 hospitalizations).

169 **Table 1. Heat stress illness outcomes (all HSI types).**

Installation	Ambulatory (1998-2018)			Hospitalization (1991-2018)			Reportable Events (1995-2018)		
	Mean Count (SD)	Mean Rate (SD)	Mean Burden % (SD)	Mean Count (SD)	Mean Rate (SD)	Mean Burden % (SD)	Mean Count (SD)	Mean Rate (SD)	Mean Burden % (SD)
Fort Bliss, TX	28.33 (16.6)	1.57 (0.58) ^a	0.01 (0.00)	1.75 (1.88)	0.11 (0.12) ^b	0.10 (0.09)	3.50 (3.88)	0.22 (0.23)	0.63 (0.68)
Fort Benning, GA	535.48 (290.58)	26.51 (15.00) ^a	0.15 (0.05)	38.00 (20.14)	1.93 (0.96) ^a	2.52 (1.52)	67.38 (54.45)	3.42 (2.84) ^a	18.69 (11.43)
Fort Bragg, NC	702.52 (271.78)	15.51 (5.28) ^a	0.13 (0.05)	31.00 (13.01)	0.72 (0.31)	1.04 (0.53)	140.83 (60.03)	3.21 (1.41)	11.57 (5.51)

Fort Campbell, KY	191.76 (12.63)	6.81 (4.08) ^a	0.05 (0.02)	10.00 (5.48)	0.38 (0.19)	0.54 (0.31)	45.08 (37.7)	1.59 (1.35) ^a	6.77 (6.04)
Fort Hood, TX	110.81 (36.94)	2.68 (1.03) ^a	0.02 (0.01)	7.71 (4.09)	0.19 (0.11) ^a	0.24 (0.15)	27.46 (25.12)	0.64 (0.56)	1.33 (0.90)
Fort Jackson, SC	265.29 (202.53)	27.84 (22.31) ^a	0.13 (0.09)	3.25 (2.88)	0.34 (0.32)	0.38 (0.38)	52.92 (83.18)	5.63 (9.09) ^a	13.22 (17.25)
Fort Leonard Wood, MO	59.86 (51.3)	6.24 (5.50)	0.03 (0.02)	3.21 (2.56)	0.36 (0.29)	0.39 (0.38)	7.00 (5.79)	0.76 (0.65)	3.70 (4.12)
Fort Polk, LA	74.67 (49.06)	9.21 (6.24) ^a	0.06 (0.03)	4.64 (3.01)	0.53 (0.38)	0.72 (0.63)	22.00 (23.8)	2.77 (3.09) ^a	8.35 (7.98)
Fort Riley, KS	42.67 (27.28)	2.89 (1.54)	0.02 (0.01)	1.71 (1.65)	0.12 (0.11) ^a	0.17 (0.16)	8.96 (5.74)	0.67 (0.42)	2.60 (1.94)
Fort Stewart, GA	69.57 (40.98)	4.22 (2.44) ^a	0.03 (0.01)	7.86 (15.67)	0.58 (1.38) ^b	0.57 (0.93)	18.71 (17.68)	1.14 (1.08)	2.88 (2.12)

170 Rates are per 1,000 persons per year. Burden is calculated as the percentage of HSI encounters
 171 compared to the total of all documented injuries and illnesses.

172 ^a Positive linear regression slope for HSI rate over year at $\alpha = 0.05$.

173 ^b Negative linear regression slope for HSI rate over year at $\alpha = 0.05$.

174 **Fig 1. Combined HSI outcome rates for ten CONUS Army installations.** The line represents
 175 a linear model and the shaded area models 95% confidence levels. Note that the scales vary by
 176 outcome category by orders of magnitude.

177 We also detected positive long term (decadal) trends among many indices of heat,
 178 compiled over the entire calendar year or restricted to heat season months, across a majority of
 179 major CONUS Army installations. Table 2 displays summary statistics for a focused selection of
 180 indices and highlights indices with significant positive linear time trends at $\alpha = 0.05$. Among 104
 181 reviewed indices, representing 1,040 index-installation pairs, 599 pairs had significant positive
 182 slopes between 1991 – 2018 (57.6%). Note that three of the indices (30 pairs) reflect daily
 183 standard deviations and, thus, reflect temperature variability rather than mean temperature. Four
 184 index-installation pairs displayed negative slopes: minimum daily indices over the full year at
 185 Fort Riley, KS (temperature, WBGT, HI) and Fort Stewart, GA (WBGT).

186 **Table 2. Summary of select annual indices of heat (1991-2018).**

Installation	Full Year			Heat Season (May - September)		
	Temperature (°F) Mean (SD)	Heat Index (°F) Mean (SD)	WBGT (°F) Mean (SD)	Temperature (°F) Mean (SD)	Heat Index (°F) Mean (SD)	WBGT (°F) Mean (SD)
Fort Bliss, TX	49.97 (1.26) ^a	49.59 (1.29) a	48.49 (1.16) a	66.14 (1.33) ^a	66.29 (1.52) a	64.63 (1.27) a
Fort Benning, GA	66.30 (1.08) ^a	67.02 (1.18) a	63.43 (1.00) a	79.64 (1.39) ^a	82.53 (1.69) a	76.15 (0.95) a
Fort Bragg, NC	59.02 (1.31) ^a	59.36 (1.39) a	56.89 (1.13)	74.82 (1.60) ^a	76.84 (1.94) a	72.35 (1.26)
Fort Campbell, KY	62.98 (0.91) ^a	60.75 (0.87) a	54.31 (0.80)	75.67 (1.16)	73.98 (1.02)	64.92 (0.74)
Fort Hood, TX	64.92 (1.21) ^a	65.42 (1.26) a	62.21 (1.02) a	78.89 (1.54) ^a	81.29 (1.71) a	75.44 (0.98) a
Fort Jackson, SC	55.93 (1.82) ^a	55.59 (1.70) a	52.39 (1.28)	74.84 (2.27) ^a	75.49 (2.11) a	69.86 (1.22)
Fort Leonard Wood, MO	54.58 (1.08) ^a	52.73 (0.97) a	47.98 (0.76)	71.12 (1.48)	69.35 (1.31)	62.42 (0.84)
Fort Polk, LA	66.77 (1.08) ^a	63.84 (1.03) a	55.49 (0.76)	82.45 (1.43) ^a	79.29 (1.30) a	66.33 (0.91)
Fort Riley, KS	51.50 (1.23)	50.64 (1.23)	50.65 (1.13)	60.93 (1.32)	60.47 (1.44)	60.28 (1.19)
Fort Stewart, GA	63.31 (1.49) ^a	62.75 (1.31) a	58.13 (0.96)	80.53 (2.35) ^a	81.05 (1.94) a	73.04 (0.90)

187 ^a Positive linear regression slope at $\alpha = 0.05$, i.e. a warming trend.

188

189 In our focused analysis of temperature, HI, and WBGT annual means (Fig 2), we found
190 positive associations with ambulatory visits (rate ratio; RR > 1) at $\alpha = 0.05$ for heat-season
191 temperature and HI, positive associations with hospitalizations for heat-season WBGT, and
192 positive associations with reportable event for full-year temperature and heat-season WBGT.
193 Quantifying our main results, we found that a 1°F increase in mean temperature between May
194 and September is associated with a 1.05 (95% CI: 1.00, 1.11) times greater rate of ambulatory
195 encounters among active-duty Army soldiers at CONUS locations, controlling for installation-
196 specific effects. The same temperature increase was associated with an increase in

197 hospitalization rates by a factor of 1.14 (95% CI: 1.06, 1.21) and a marginal increase in
 198 reportable event rates by a factor of 1.10 (95% CI: 0.98, 1.23).

199 **Fig 2. Rate ratios for full-year and heat season indices of heat and HSI encounters at 10**
 200 **CONUS U.S. Army installations.** RRs per 1 degree increase in annual index of heat (mean of
 201 daily means) from 2-year block bootstrap negative binomial models with basic (empirical)
 202 confidence intervals based on 10,000 replicates, controlling for installation-level effects. Solid
 203 points reflect the mean of bootstrap estimates and unfilled points reflect the original sample
 204 (non-bootstrap) estimate.

205 Out of 312 assessed index-outcome pairs, 142 exhibited positive associations after
 206 controlling for installation-level effects and time trends (Table 3). WBGT and HI indices were
 207 more likely to indicate a positive association than temperature-only indices. Indices averaged
 208 over the full calendar year displayed a higher proportion of positive associations than those
 209 averaged over heat season months. Indices based on hourly counts above threshold values were
 210 more likely to show positive associations than indices based on counts of days above thresholds.
 211 We observed similar associations between anomaly based (relative) and non-anomaly based
 212 (absolute) indices.

213 **Table 3. Annual scale index-HSI outcome rate ratio 95% confidence interval positions from**
 214 **2-year block bootstrap negative binomial models.**

	Positive RR >1 (N=142)	Null RR = 1 (N=148)	Negative RR < 1 (N=22)	Total (N=312)
Outcome Type				
Ambulatory	66 (63.5%)	37 (35.6%)	1 (1.0%)	104

Hospitalizations	22 (21.2%)	64 (61.5%)	18 (17.3%)	104
Reportable Events	54 (51.9%)	47 (45.2%)	3 (2.9%)	104
Index Type				
Temperature	29 (37.2%)	44 (56.4%)	5 (6.4%)	78
Heat Index	55 (48.2%)	48 (42.1%)	11 (9.6%)	114
WBGT	58 (48.3%)	56 (46.7%)	6 (5.0%)	120
Timeframe				
Full Year	83 (50.3%)	73 (44.2%)	9 (5.5%)	165
May-Sep	59 (40.1%)	75 (51.0%)	13 (8.8%)	147
Exposure Measure				
Degree-based	38 (42.2%)	45 (50.0%)	7 (7.8%)	90
Day-based	81 (45.0%)	87 (48.3%)	12 (6.7%)	180
Hour-based	23 (54.8%)	16 (38.1%)	3 (7.1%)	42
Anomaly-Based				
No	60 (46.5%)	60 (46.5%)	9 (7.0%)	129
Yes	82 (44.8%)	88 (48.1%)	13 (7.1%)	183

215 Counts (row-wise percentage) from basic (empirical) confidence intervals, controlled for
216 location-level effects.

217 In our sensitivity analyses of various models, non-bootstrap negative binomial models
218 adjusted for year returned RR estimates closer to the null than 2-year block bootstrap models.
219 Results from standard bootstrap models (single year replacement) approximated negative
220 binomial models without adjustment for year. 3-year block bootstrap models returned wider CIs
221 than 2-year block models, with mean estimates shifted in both directions.

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225 Discussion

226 In this study, we identified positive decadal trends among indices of heat and humidity
227 and among HSI outcomes at active-duty CONUS Army installations. We found overall positive
228 association patterns for ambulatory and reportable event outcomes with temperature, HI, and
229 WBGT indices in absolute and relative measures. The largely null finding for hospitalization
230 associations may be due to the low number of annual HSI admissions at many locations. Five of
231 the ten CONUS installations averaged fewer than five HSI hospitalizations per year (Table 1).
232 Considering the relative rarity of diagnosed HSI hospitalizations, the availability of ambulatory
233 encounter and reportable event data adds substantial value for the characterization of HSI
234 morbidity.

235 We evaluated multiple combinations of heat and humidity index characteristics (104
236 indices, 312 total index-outcome pairs) in our negative binomial association model and classified
237 the resulting RRs as positive, null, or negative. These findings do not necessarily indicate that
238 sets of indices are more correct than others; rather, they may be more sensitive to detecting
239 associations at an annual scale in support of our hypotheses that heat indices and HSI outcomes
240 are related. There is no mechanism for a negative association and we recognize that some
241 associations in either direction may be due to chance. Overall, the finding that WBGT and HI
242 indices “outperformed” ambient temperature indices was expected because they capture the
243 effect of humidity. It was unexpected, however, that indices averaged over the full year would
244 display a positive association rate greater than those averaged over a defined heat season. This
245 result furthers evidence for expanding the boundaries of the traditional heat season and
246 incorporating prevention efforts throughout the year. Among exposure measure types, indices

247 based on counts of hours were more sensitive to a positive association than day-based or degree-
248 based indices, reflecting a strength of the high-resolution NLDAS-2 dataset.

249 In these analyses, we assumed that the frequencies and intensities of outdoor training
250 events remained consistent over time for each location and that population-level risk factors did
251 not fluctuate. We made these assumptions considering that the major unit compositions and
252 Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Forces Command (FORSCOM) mission sets
253 at the selected sites remained mostly stable over the evaluated timeframe. Challenges to this
254 assumption could occur from installation population changes due to extended large unit overseas
255 deployments and organizational changes, such as the movement of the Armor School from Fort
256 Knox, KY to Fort Benning, GA in 2011. Likewise, demographics of age, sex, and ethnicity
257 among the base population active duty soldiers have not markedly changed, although
258 generational change in overall fitness levels and body composition represent a risk factor of
259 concern [23–25]. Additionally, we assumed that HSI prevention measures, including annual
260 safety training requirements and monitoring of WBGT heat categories with associated work-rest
261 cycle and hydration recommendations, had not meaningfully varied over the study time-course
262 [3]. The block bootstrap process to adjust for time trends, along with the inclusion of installation
263 indicator variables, mitigate these potential changes within and between installations over time.

264 There is also a need to consider whether other time-varying trends account for changes in
265 reported HSI rates. Changes in access to care, case definitions, and reporting systems and
266 procedures can all contribute to long-term trends in the outcomes we studied. We observed
267 impacts from such changes when comparing the rates of all ICD-coded illnesses and injuries
268 over time, especially for ambulatory rates. The block bootstrap method also controls for this
269 serial correlation in outcomes. Another limitation with our annually aggregated health outcome

270 counts is that we were unable to discern incident cases from follow-up encounters. The
271 ambulatory counts and rates are therefore elevated above incidence-based case definition levels;
272 however, in this aspect they provide representation of the overall burden on the healthcare
273 system from HSIs.

274 This study assesses the long-term impacts of environmental changes on direct heat-
275 related morbidity; however, it lacks the within-year temporal resolution needed to inform day-to-
276 day or operational level decisions. Important short-term exposure parameters include the
277 intensity, duration, and timing in season of extreme heat events [26]. Further study of HSI
278 morbidity among physically active populations with outdoor environmental exposures could
279 examine the short-term exposure-response relationship between heat and humidity indices and
280 daily outcomes, considering lagged and non-linear effects and controlling for individual-level
281 risk factors.

282 **Conclusion**

283 U.S. Army CONUS installations have broadly experienced rising temperature conditions
284 and increased rates of HSI morbidity over the past two to three decades. In this study, we
285 determine that temperature, HI, and WBGT indices are positively associated with rates of
286 ambulatory encounters and reportable events, controlling for installation-levels effects and
287 accounting for potential confounding by long-term trends in the outcomes and exposures. The
288 annual-scaled rate ratios and their uncertainties can be applied to climate projections for a wide
289 range of thermal indices to estimate future HSI burden and impacts to medical readiness. As an
290 example, we obtained a RR of 1.05 for ambulatory HSI rates for each °F increase in mean
291 temperature between May and September. In 2018, the active-duty population of approximately

292 204,291 at the included ten CONUS installations reported 3,612 ambulatory HSI encounters.
 293 Applying our effect estimate, with a 1 °F increase in the heat season mean temperature, we
 294 project an increase to 3,793 HSI ambulatory encounters (+181 cases) in the absence of additional
 295 adaptations or control measures.

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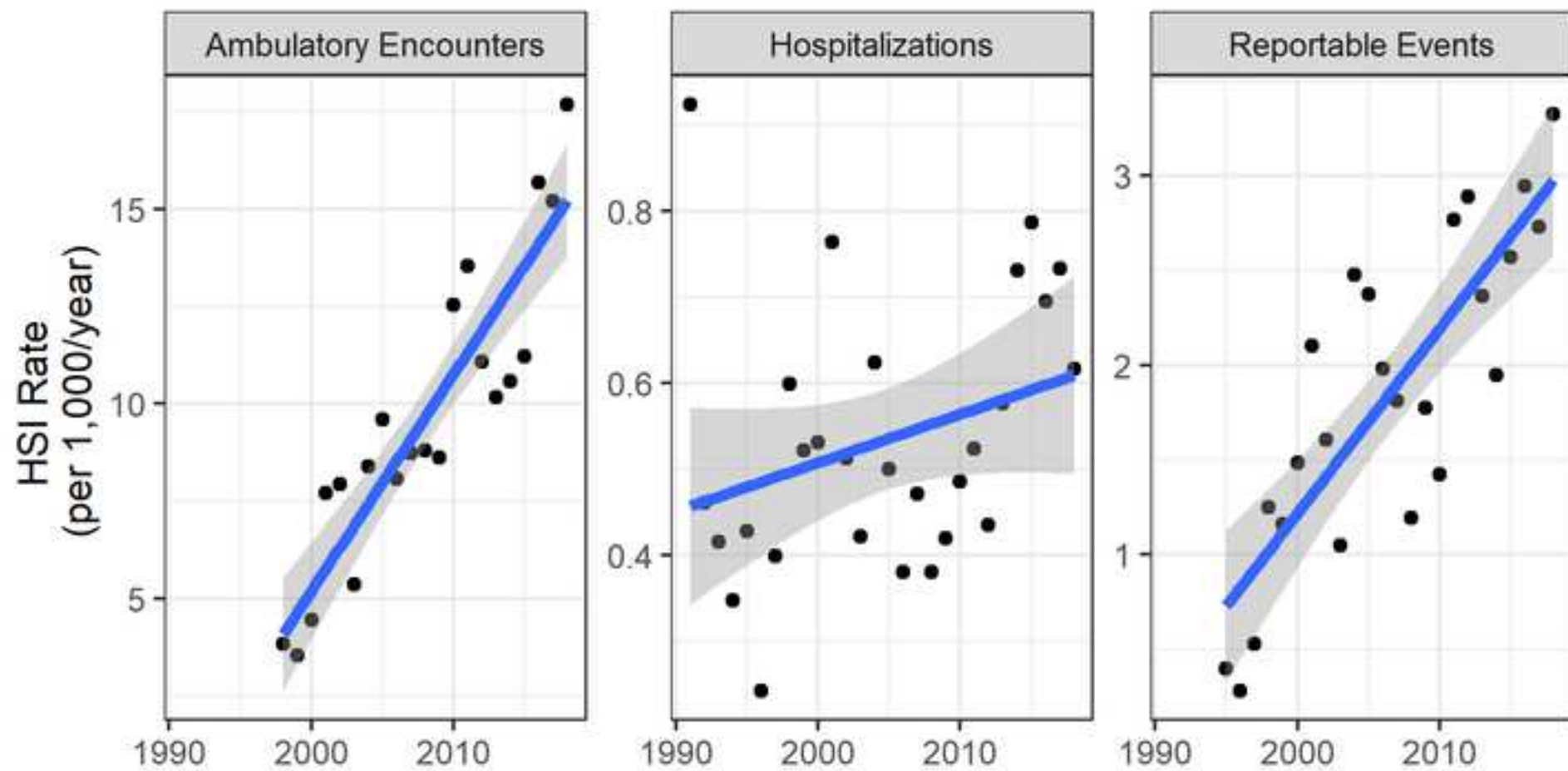
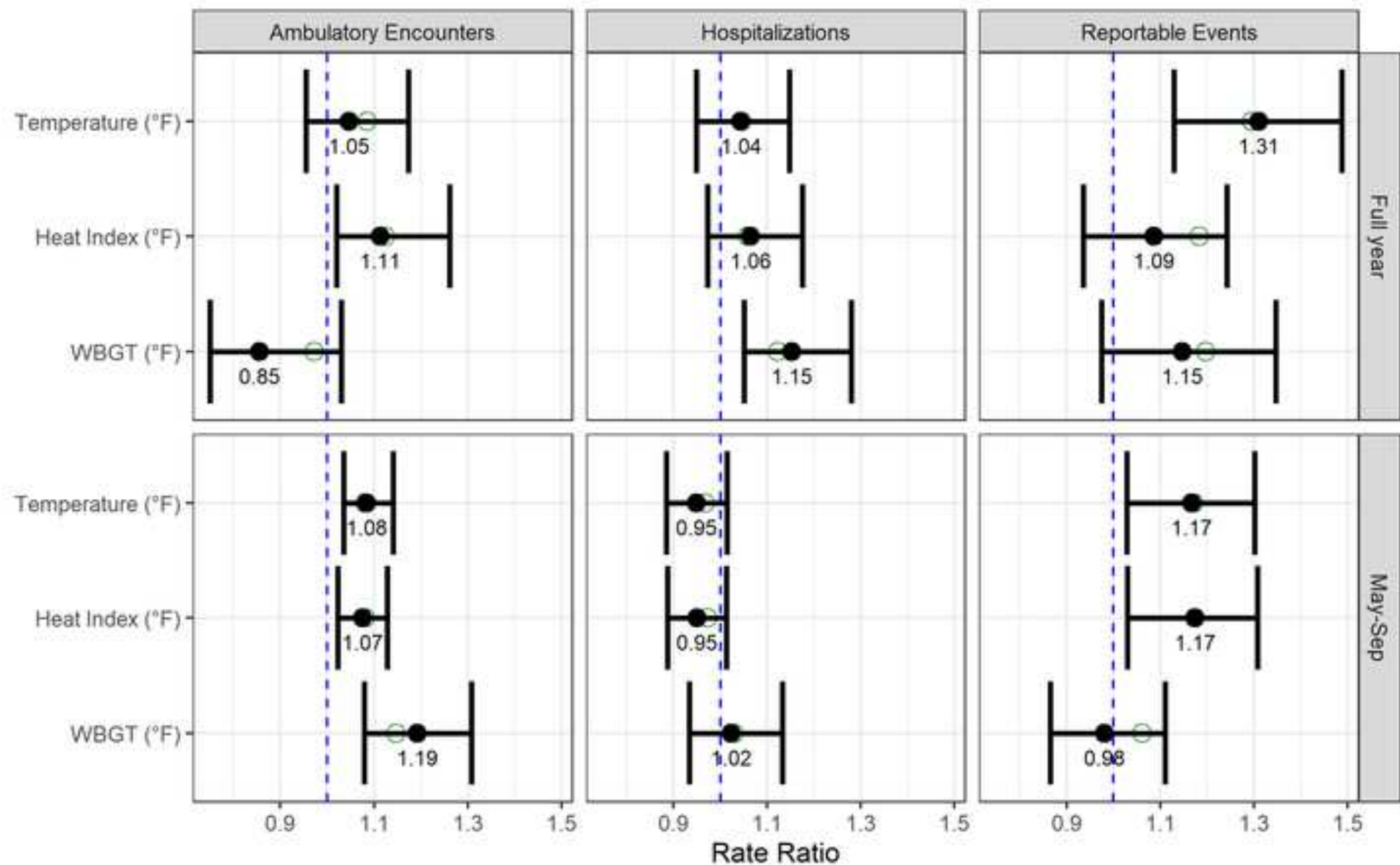


Fig 2





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