

# The Economic Costs of Low Caloric Intake: Evidence from India<sup>\*</sup>

Heather Schofield  
Harvard University

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## Abstract

Many of the world's poor consume very few calories; one-seventh of the world's population remains below recommended intake levels. Yet, the impact of this nominally low caloric intake on productivity is unclear. This paper presents two analyses which find that changes in caloric intake result in substantial and broadly generalizable changes in productivity among malnourished adults in India. The first draws on a five-week randomized controlled trial among cycle-rickshaw drivers in Chennai, in which half of the participants received an additional 700 calories per day. Treated individuals showed significant improvements in both physical and cognitive tasks and increased labor supply and income by approximately 10 percent by the final week. The second study examines the impact of a 700 calorie per day decline in intake, caused by fasting during Ramadan, on agricultural production. This analysis leverages heterogeneity in cropping cycles between and within districts as well as the fact that Ramadan cycles throughout the calendar year to generate three sources of variation in the overlap between fasting and the labor intensive portions of the cropping cycle. Using a triple-difference approach, I find that overlap between Ramadan and the labor intensive portions of cropping cycles results in declines in production which correspond to a 20 to 40 percent decrease in productivity per fasting individual. Multiple sources of evidence suggest that production declines are driven primarily by reduced caloric intake rather than by other behavioral changes during Ramadan. The estimated return to investment in additional calories is positive, with point estimates of 75 percent over six months in the randomized trial and 225 percent over one month during Ramadan fasting. Given substantial evidence that traditionally hypothesized liquidity constraints do not meaningfully limit caloric consumption, the low caloric intake of the majority of Indian adults presents a puzzle in light of the high estimated returns. Responses from an incentivized survey suggest that inaccurate beliefs about both the returns to calories and the caloric content of foods may play a role in the low levels of caloric consumption.

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# 1 Introduction

Many of the world's poor consume very few calories.<sup>1</sup> One-seventh of the world's population remains below the level of caloric intake recommended by health professionals (FAO 2011). Of course, the poor consume less of any normal good. However, food differs from many goods in that it is both a consumption good, producing utility directly, and an input into production. A long line of theory literature has modeled intertemporal nutrition choices and their implications for labor productivity and the functioning of labor markets (e.g., Leibenstein 1957; Bliss and Stern 1978; Stiglitz 1976; Dasgupta and Ray 1986). Although theory in this area is extensive and well developed, given the inherent challenges posed by the endogeneity of caloric intake and the measurement of productivity, empirical work is less well developed.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, despite the fact that calories are a broadly available investment good and a basic economic choice made by all people, it remains an open question whether there is an economically significant calorie-productivity gradient at the levels of caloric intake observed among the world's poor today.

Theoretically, there are reasons to believe the answer is no. There is good evidence that liquidity is unlikely to constrain investment in calories.<sup>3</sup> Hence, a revealed preference argument suggests that despite the apparently low consumption, any productivity gains from additional caloric intake are likely to be relatively small. Specifically, with perfect markets and full information, the Euler equation implies that the return to calories must be less than the discount rate. Yet, there are both structural and behavioral reasons why the revealed preference argument may not hold. For example, principal-agent contracting may reduce consumption below its optimal level if consumption is not readily observable. Or, if individuals are not aware of the returns to calories or the nutritional content of foods, they may consume too little, potentially leaving large economic gains on the table even in the absence of liquidity constraints.

In this paper I study the relationship between caloric consumption and economic output using two distinct empirical methodologies. The first is a field experiment (with laboratory components) which

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper I use the word “calorie” (with a lower case “c”) in the commonly used sense of 1 kilocalorie rather than the technical definition in which 1 calorie is 1/1000 of one kilocalorie or 1/1000 of one Calorie.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, the existing empirical evidence is quite mixed. For example, Deolalikar (1988) and Immink and Viteri (1981) find no relationship between nutrition and productivity while Kraut and Muller (1946), Strauss (1986), and Wolgemuth et al. (1982) find evidence in favor of a such a relationship. A more detailed discussion of existing productivity and physiology literatures are provided in Appendix B.

<sup>3</sup> Even among extremely poor individuals, food rarely accounts for more than 40 to 70 percent of expenditures and the additional calories necessary to reach recommended caloric intake could typically be purchased for less than five percent of daily income. Alternatively, substitution to less expensive grains could increase caloric intake 20 percent at no additional cost (Subramanian and Deaton 1996; Banerjee and Duflo 2011). In addition, the elasticity of caloric intake with respect to income is remarkably low in many developing countries, with estimates commonly ranging from 0.1 to 0.5 (Subramanian and Deaton 1996; Behrman and Deolalikar 1987; Bouis and Haddad 1992).

examines the impact of increased caloric intake on the labor supply, earnings, and physical and cognitive performance of 211 cycle-rickshaw drivers in Chennai, India.<sup>4</sup> The second analysis, a natural experiment, draws on the quasi-random declines in caloric intake caused by fasting during Ramadan, a month-long Muslim holiday. This analysis utilizes a triple-difference approach to assess the impact of reduced caloric intake on agricultural production at the crop-district-year level. These two methodologies are complementary. While field experiments can provide strong causal identification, they often lack external validity. Conversely, natural experiments typically apply to broader populations, but may not establish causality as cleanly. In drawing on both methodologies, I aim to establish a casual mechanism in a controlled setting and to demonstrate that the mechanism has economically meaningful impacts on one of the largest sectors of the Indian economy.

In more detail, the 211 cycle-rickshaw drivers in the five-week randomized controlled trial (RCT) were randomly assigned to either a control group, receiving cash for their participation, or a treatment group receiving a mixture of cash and food of the same total value. The foods provided to treated participants were snacks with little nutritive value beyond 700 calories.<sup>5</sup> In order to minimize crowd out and generate a substantial and sustained increase in caloric intake, participants could choose from a variety of snacks which were consumed daily between meal times in the office.<sup>6</sup>

While only treated participants received food, participants in both experimental conditions visited the study office briefly each day to report their labor supply and earnings. The study also included a battery of physical and cognitive laboratory-based tasks, compensated according to performance, at both enrollment and in the final week of the study (“endline”). These tasks were designed to assess the underlying physical and cognitive skills relevant to labor supply in this population in the absence of the variable demand that is common in this labor market.<sup>7</sup> For example, physical tasks included cycling on an exercise bike in the office and cognitive tasks targeted skills such as persistence, motivation, and planning.

A number of features of cycle-rickshaw drivers made them an advantageous population for a study of this type. First, as full residual claimants on their labor and with flexible labor supply, this population faces strong incentives and has the ability to adjust labor supply and earnings over short time horizons. The

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<sup>4</sup> Cycle-rickshaw drivers drive large human-powered tricycles similar to “bicycle taxis” in the United States. The vehicle has a bench large enough for two passengers behind the driver.

<sup>5</sup> To determine the effect of calories rather than general “nutrition,” the snacks were chosen to contain minimal iron and few micronutrients. Specifically, snacks typically consisted of starches and fried foods like potato chips and samosas.

<sup>6</sup> Multiple outcomes, including weight measured at endline, confirm that despite the inframarginal amount of food provided, caloric intake increased among treated participants. See Section 2 for additional details of these measures.

<sup>7</sup> Day-to-day demand for rickshaw services varies substantially with the weather, train schedules, and other factors.

rickshaw drivers' mobility also allowed them to provide high frequency data via the daily visit to the study office while minimizing the likelihood of spillovers between conditions. Finally, the work habits, demographic characteristics, and low caloric intake of the cycle-rickshaw drivers studied are relatively representative of typical informal labor market participants.

Using an intent-to-treat estimation strategy, the results from this study suggest that increasing caloric intake increases both labor supply and earnings over time. Participants in the treatment group increase their labor supply relative to the control group by an average of eight percent over the entire study. Consistent with the cumulative effects found in the physiology literature, this increase follows a fairly linear pattern across the weeks of the study, rising from no significant difference in the first week to a net gain of roughly 12 percent in the final week (Keys et al. 1950). Income streams in this population are noisy and have relatively large standard errors; however, earnings show a similar linear trend and are roughly 9 percent higher among treated individuals in the final week of the study. Finally, treated participants also earn approximately 10 percent more on both physical and cognitive laboratory-based tasks at endline.

Although cognitive function has not traditionally been central in the economics literature on adult nutrition, the physiology and psychology literatures suggest that improvements in cognitive function are not only possible, but likely, with changes in caloric intake.<sup>8</sup> If these improvements occur, the returns to improved nutrition would not be limited to physical gains on the margin, but would also include gains from improving inframarginal choices as well as savings and consumption decisions. Hence, changes in earnings would provide a lower bound on the gains from higher caloric intake.<sup>9</sup>

To examine whether this relationship between calories and productivity extends to a broader population and has a similar impact at lower levels of caloric intake, I conducted a second study investigating the impact of fasting during Ramadan on one of the largest sectors in the Indian economy, agriculture.<sup>10</sup> This analysis begins by demonstrating that the average individual in rural Muslim households engaged in

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<sup>8</sup> Despite accounting for only 2 percent of body weight, the brain consumes roughly 20 percent of the energy used by the body; hence, limiting the total energy available is likely to constrain the brain's ability to function as it would any other organ requiring substantial energy inputs (Fonsec-Azevedo and Herculano-Houzel 2012). In addition, a number of diverse sources have demonstrated substantial changes in cognitive function and decision-making as a function of caloric intake (Gailliot et al. 2007; Danzinger et al. 2011; Baumeister and Vohs 2007; US Army 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the influence of low caloric intake could be much more broadly applicable and could remain relevant despite the global shifts towards cognitive rather than physical labor.

<sup>10</sup> Although the share of GDP generated from agriculture has declined over time, from 43 percent in 1960 to 17 percent at present, agriculture still accounts for 52 percent of employment in India (National Academy of Agricultural Sciences 2012; World Bank 2012).

agriculture consumes roughly 700 fewer calories per day during Ramadan.<sup>11</sup> To estimate the impact of this decline in calories on agricultural production, I exploit three sources of variation in the overlap between fasting and the labor intensive portions of cropping cycles (sowing and harvesting). The first, generated by the fact that Ramadan cycles throughout the calendar year, is variation for a given crop-district combination over time. The second, variation among crops within a district-year, is the result of natural variation in cropping cycles for different plants. Finally, different climatic patterns across space generate variation in cropping cycles between districts, resulting in spatial variation for a given crop within a year. Using a triple difference approach, this analysis finds that overlap between Ramadan and sowing/harvesting leads to economically meaningful declines in total agricultural production, both in weight and in value. The estimated decreases in output imply a decline in productivity of approximately 20 to 40 percent per Muslim individual.

This analysis also examines heterogeneity in the production declines arising from the uneven spatial distribution of Muslims in India. Reassuringly, in districts with very few Muslims there is no decline in production. However, districts with many Muslims experience substantial production declines when sowing or harvesting overlaps the fasting period. Finally, I discuss and assess three other potential behavioral changes during the holiday as possible channels for production declines: changes in labor supply due to religious or social obligations, sleep deprivation, and dehydration. As an omnibus test, I examine whether overlap between sowing/harvesting and the period following Ramadan also generates declines in production. Given the slow recovery from reduced caloric intake but rapid recovery from dehydration and sleep deprivation, the persistence of the effects observed in this test simultaneously provides evidence in favor of nutrition driving the declines and against these three other forces playing key roles.<sup>12</sup> Drawing on evidence from relevant literatures and additional direct empirical tests utilizing both agricultural production data and additional data sources, I also assess each of these potential channels individually. While it is difficult to fully rule out all possible alternative channels in any natural experiment, these analyses suggest that these three channels are unlikely to be significant drivers of the changes in production during Ramadan in India.

The studies of experimental variation in caloric intake for rickshaw-drivers and quasi-experimental variation in calories for agricultural workers both suggest that caloric intake substantially impacts economic

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<sup>11</sup> Although this study examines a decline in consumption, the observed levels of consumption are ones which are relevant to consider. Specifically, the declines during Ramadan result in an overall average consumption of roughly 1,500 to 1,600 calories per person per day (See Section 3 for details of this analysis). Yet, one-quarter of the Indian population consumes less than 1,625 calories per day on a regular basis (Deaton and Dreze 2009).

<sup>12</sup> While recovery from dehydration and sleep deprivation occurs in hours or days, recovery from low caloric intake often takes weeks (Drummond et al. 2006; Dinges et al. 1997; Sawka et al. 2007). Details of this test are provided in Section 3.

production for low-income individuals in India. Although there is greater uncertainty inherent in estimating the return on investment (ROI), the estimated return in both of these studies is relatively high: the 6-month return to additional calories in the RCT is approximately 75 percent and the 1-month return to higher caloric intake during fasting is roughly 225 percent.<sup>13</sup> Yet, one-third of the population remains underweight and caloric intake in India is both low and declining, generating a puzzle (WHO 2013; Deaton and Dreze 2009).

To explore this puzzle and the forces driving decisions about caloric intake, I briefly describe and assess possible reasons for low caloric intake in this population and conclude that incorrect beliefs about nutrition may play an important role in low intake levels. Evidence of these inaccurate beliefs was generated via an incentivized survey about the returns to increased caloric intake and the caloric densities (calories per unit cost) of foods. Responses to these surveys suggest strikingly wrong beliefs. For example, over three-quarters of the respondents believe that increasing caloric intake by the equivalent of one meal per day would either weakly decrease labor supply and earnings, or have no prior about the consequences of increasing caloric intake. And, in pairwise comparisons between commonly consumed foods, participants identify foods with higher caloric density at rates lower than those generated by guessing at random.<sup>14</sup> Because the existence of incorrect beliefs in equilibrium is unusual, supporting evidence for how these beliefs are developed and maintained is also provided.<sup>15</sup>

The remainder of this paper is divided into five parts. Section 2 describes the design of the randomized controlled trial among cycle-rickshaw drivers and estimates the labor supply and earnings changes resulting from increased caloric intake. The triple-difference approach examining the impact of decreased caloric intake during Ramadan on agricultural production is presented in Section 3. Section 4 provides calculations of the returns associated with the productivity changes estimated in Sections 2 and 3. Potential reasons for

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<sup>13</sup> Both of these ROI calculations use a common staple grain, rice, to determine the cost of investment. Due to the cumulative nature of changes in caloric intake and the corresponding linear increases in labor supply and earnings over the course of the five week RCT, I estimate a six-month ROI for this study to better gauge the likely “long-run” impact of higher intake. The expected gains in earnings beyond the end of the study are, however, capped at the value observed in the final week. A wide variety of alternative assumptions about the cost of calories and productivity changes, and the returns implied by these assumptions, are detailed in Section 4. Notably, although the estimated returns are high, given the low cost of investment, the absolute value of the gains is relatively small and accounts for only a modest fraction of income. This feature may make the high returns relatively difficult for individuals to detect in the context of highly variable income streams.

<sup>14</sup> Because calories per rupee would be a difficult metric for semi-numerate individuals, these questions are implemented by asking participants to select which of two food items with the same economic value has more energy. Food items were specifically selected to be commonly consumed and to have large caloric differences. The tradeoffs were presented as life-size photographs with verbal and written descriptions of the food accompanying them. More details on the exact implementation are provided in Section 5.

<sup>15</sup> Although unusual, there are other well-documented instances in which incorrect beliefs with significant economic consequences exist in equilibrium (e.g., Jensen 2010; Banerjee and Duflo 2011).

low caloric intake observed in the presence of high returns are discussed in Section 5. In addition, this section provides evidence that incorrect beliefs may play a role in the decision not to invest in greater caloric intake. Section 6 concludes and discusses implications of incorrect beliefs regarding caloric intake.

## **2 Experimental Variation in Caloric Intake**

There are a number of clear challenges inherent in assessing the productivity consequences associated with caloric intake. Use of a randomized controlled trial among cycle-rickshaw drivers provides solutions to two of the most difficult: 1) the endogeneity of caloric intake and 2) measurement of individual productivity in a context with strong incentives and minimal spillovers. The endogeneity of caloric intake was addressed through randomization and design features intended to minimize crowd out of other food consumption and generate substantial and sustained increases in caloric intake among treated individuals. Selection of a participant group with a variety of advantageous features, described below, aided in the measurement of individual productivity. In addition, the use of laboratory tasks allowed for the assessment of changes in both physical and cognitive ability under controlled conditions with clear and consistent incentives.

### **2.1 Experimental Design**

#### **2.1.1 Participants**

Participants were drawn from the population of cycle-rickshaw drivers in Chennai, India. Eligibility criteria included a BMI less than or equal to 20, age greater than 18 years, expected residence in the city for at least two months, and cycle-rickshaw driving as a primary occupation.<sup>16</sup> Basic demographic characteristics and labor supply information collected at enrollment are presented in Table 1 (a more extensive discussion of participants' baseline characteristic and habits is presented in Appendix B). This population was chosen because: 1) as full residual claimants on their labor, rickshaw drivers face strong incentives, 2) the work has flexible labor supply (both days and hours) and allows for direct measurement of individual labor supply and earnings, 3) the population is mobile allowing them to visit the study office each day while limiting the possibility of spillovers between treated participants and control participants, and 4) members typically have low caloric intake. In addition, these individuals were selected because they are similar to many other casual laborers in India, improving external validity.

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<sup>16</sup> BMI is a measure of weight for height calculated as weight in kilograms divided by height in meters squared. The WHO describes a BMI under 18.5 as “underweight,” 18.5 to 24.9 as “normal,” 25 to 29.9 as “overweight,” and over 30 as “obese” (WHO 2013). As a benchmark, an individual who is 5 foot 8 inches tall (1.73 m) would have a BMI of 20 at a weight of 131 pounds (59.4 kg).

### 2.1.2 Experimental Conditions

Participants were randomly assigned to either a control group, receiving only cash compensation with an average value of Rs. 75 per day, or a treatment condition, receiving a mixture of cash and 700 calories worth of food with the same total value. Treated participants were able to choose a variety of snacks from a varied selection each day to encourage consumption. However, the food provided was of little nutritive value beyond the caloric content.<sup>17</sup> Food was provided during periods between meals to minimize crowd out and treated participants consumed the food in the office to ensure that it was not given to others or thrown away.

### 2.1.3 Experimental Activities and Timing

Each participant was enrolled in the study for five weeks. During this time, each participant was asked to visit the study office each day (except Sunday) to complete a short survey about labor supply and earnings the previous day.<sup>18</sup> In addition, participants reported the number of meals consumed (as a measure of potential crowd out of food consumption) and their energy level on a scale of one to five during this survey. Participants in the treatment group were also provided with food at this time.

All participants also spent one day on the first day of the study (“enrollment”) and in the fifth week of the study (“endline”) in the study office to complete more extensive surveys and engage in a battery of physical and cognitive tasks. These experimental tasks, compensated according to performance and conducted in a controlled setting, were designed to provide a comprehensive picture of the impact of improved nutrition on both physical and cognitive function relevant to production. For example, cognitive tasks targeted areas such as motivation and planning, both skills relevant to work as a rickshaw driver. The tasks were a mixture of standardized tasks used in the economics and psychology literatures (e.g. crossing out symbols) and original tasks specific to the context (e.g. choices between various rickshaw job offers, cycling on an exercise cycle). Finally, anthropometric measurements were taken and participants completed a 24-hour dietary recall survey to permit calculation of changes in participants’ caloric intake. A list of tasks is included in Appendix A, Table A1.

## 2.2 Results of the Randomized Controlled Trial

### 2.2.1 Randomization

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<sup>17</sup> Options typically included foods such as potato chips, “mixture” (small bits of fried dough similar to Chex mix or Cheetos), vada (a fried spiced dough), or samosas (fried dough stuffed with potatoes, vegetables, and spices).

<sup>18</sup> Participants reported both Saturday and Sunday labor supply and earnings on Monday.



The baseline randomization was successful with no significant imbalances on enrollment covariates for either demographics or labor supply and earnings (Table 1).

### 2.2.2 Caloric Intake

Dietary recall surveys, daily reports of meals consumed, and an increase in BMI of treated individuals all provide evidence that the treatment was effective at increasing caloric intake. Results of these analyses are presented in Appendix A, Table A2 and discussed in Appendix B.

### 2.2.3 Attrition

Overall average attendance was 87 percent in the control group and 76 percent in the treatment group. These average figures shroud important variation in attrition patterns though. Treated individuals were significantly more likely to drop out during the first few days (Figure 1). However, conditional on attending more than four days in the first week, daily attendance was 93 percent among control individuals and 91 percent among treated individuals, a difference that is statistically indistinguishable (Table 2 and Figure 2,  $p = 0.51$ ).

Baseline covariates gathered at enrollment are useful in understanding the factors associated with attrition. At enrollment each individual was asked whether he had worked the day before, and if so, his earnings and hours. Of individuals who attrited, control participants reported a mean earnings of Rs. 125 while treated participants reported a mean earnings nearly twice as high, Rs. 237. Similarly, attriters in the control group reported lower labor supply.<sup>19</sup> These differences are statistically significant despite the large standard errors resulting from the small sample (Table 3). The direction of the selective attrition suggests that active and high earning individuals assigned to the treatment did not find the monetary compensation worthwhile, resulting in higher attrition rates.<sup>20</sup> The noisy nature of the baseline productivity measures limits the possibility of fully controlling for “type.” However, if treatment effects are relatively homogeneous, the differential attrition is likely to bias the results of the study towards the null by lowering the average labor provision and earnings of the treated individuals. Nonetheless, because there may also be selection on unobservable characteristics, I also construct bounded estimates below.

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<sup>19</sup> Attending fewer than 4 days in the first week is the measure of attrition used because of its strong predictive power for later attendance and for consistency with the figures above. However, results are similar in magnitude and direction if different measures of “attriter” (e.g. attending fewer than 10 percent of the days over the entire study) are used.

<sup>20</sup> Efforts were also made to contact attriters at their stand and inquire why they no longer wished to participate. It was not possible to locate all individuals who left the study. However, among those we were able to contact, insufficient compensation, driven by the lower value placed on the in-kind compensation, was the most commonly cited reason for leaving the study among treated individuals.

#### 2.2.4 Labor Supply and Net Earnings

Evidence from the literature on nutritional deprivation demonstrates that the process of recovery from low caloric intake is cumulative and often slow, taking weeks or even months in cases of extreme deprivation (Keys et al 1950). Given the cumulative nature of the recovery process, the impact at later points in the study is likely to better reflect the long-run changes associated with the increased caloric intake. Hence, I begin by dividing the study at the midpoint and assessing the differences between the treatment and control groups in both periods. However, both week by week effects and average treatment effects over the course of the study are also estimated to more specifically gauge the path of the changes as well as the net impact of the intervention during the study.

Equation (1) estimates the impact of increased caloric intake on average labor supply and earnings, including earnings on enrollment and endline days, in the first and second halves of the study. In this equation,  $l_{in}$  denotes a measure of average earnings or labor supply for individual  $i$  in period  $n$ ,  $T_i$  is an indicator for assignment to the treatment group,  $P_n$  is an indicator for the second half of the study, and  $X_i$  is a vector of controls for baseline work habits. The regression also includes fixed effects for stand location,  $\theta_d$ , and enrollment month,  $\gamma_m$ , because enrollment was conducted on a rolling basis.

$$(1) \quad l_{in} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 P_n + \beta_3 T_i * P_n + \alpha X_i + \theta_d + \gamma_m + \varepsilon_{in}$$

Results of these regressions are presented in Table 4. The first three columns examine labor supply outcomes. As can be seen in Column (1), there is an 8 percent increase in average number of days worked in the second half of the study among treated individuals relative to control individuals. Although the point estimate for hours conditional on working is positive for treated individuals in the second half of the study, it does not reach significance (Column (2)). The combined metric of total hours is presented in Column (3). Driven largely by the increase in days worked, there is an average increase of roughly one hour per day, or about 15 percent, for treated participants in the second half of the study. This substantial increase is particularly notable given the fairly long baseline work weeks of nearly 50 hours and the physical difficulty of the labor.

Although earnings are significantly noisier, the trends are similar. While only significant at the 10 percent level, Columns (4) and (5) show an increase in treated participants' average daily earnings of roughly 20 Rupees per day, or approximately 11 percent, in the second half of the study.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.2.5 Trends in Labor Supply and Earnings

In order to better understand the temporal trends and the forces driving the overall gains in earnings, I next examine the more finely grained temporal path of the changes and decompose the effect between earnings as a rickshaw driver and earnings in the laboratory.

To examine trends outside of the laboratory, I estimate Equation (2) which examines the week by week impact of treatment on labor supply and earnings as a rickshaw driver.<sup>22</sup> The dependent variables, measures of labor supply and earnings, are denoted by  $l_{it}$  and are measured at the level of the participant-day beginning the day after enrollment (which was spent in the study office).  $T_i$  is an indicator for assignment to the treatment group,  $\chi_w$  denotes the week in the study,  $X_i$  is a vector of controls for baseline work habits, and  $\omega_s$  and  $\theta_d$  are calendar week and stand location fixed effects, respectively.

$$(2) \quad l_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 T_i * \chi_w + \alpha X_i + \theta_d + \omega_s + \chi_w + \varepsilon_{it}$$

As can be seen in Table 5, Column (1), the increase in days worked among treated participants follows a fairly smooth trend over the course of the study, with an insignificant gain of 2 percent in the first week rising to a significant increase of 11 percent by the final week. Hours per day conditional on working rises more rapidly in the first few weeks of the study but then levels off with a slightly lower point estimate in the final week of the study (Column (2)). These two margins of adjustment are combined into a single metric of total hours per day, which takes the value zero if the participant did not work that day, in Column (3). This metric shows no significant change in the first week, but rises to a 12 percent net increase in total hours in fifth week relative to the control group. Figure 3 displays the change in days and total hours worked by treated individuals relative to control individuals by week in the study.

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<sup>21</sup> One potential concern about the gains among treated individuals relative to control individuals is that control participants could be decreasing labor supply because they have greater cash payments for coming to the study office each day. However, it is possible to test for reduced labor supply among controls by comparing baseline earnings reported at enrollment with earnings during the study in this group. These measures are not significantly different, suggesting that labor supply and earnings are not reduced among control individuals and that the estimated differences are indeed increases among the treated individuals.

<sup>22</sup> In addition to this non-parametric specification, I also estimate a simple linear trend by day. Results of these regressions are included in Appendix A, Table A3. Linear trends are significant at the 5 percent level for all outcomes presented in Table 5 except hours conditional on working, which is significant at the 10 percent level.

Earnings, once again, follow a similar pattern of increase, but begin with a slightly negative, although insignificant, point estimate. In fact, the initial negative point estimates drive a near zero impact on earnings over the duration of the study among treated individuals (See Appendix A, Table A4 for overall estimates). However, these initial negative point estimates may be caused by the differential attrition among high earning individuals in the treatment group during first week.<sup>23</sup> This supposition is supported by Table A5 in Appendix A, limiting the sample to individuals with at least 90 percent attendance (results are also presented graphically in Figure 4). Among these individuals, there is no impact of treatment in the first week and an increase by the fifth week (Rs. 20 per day) that is slightly larger than that found in the non-restricted sample.

Despite the negative point estimate in early portion of the study in the full sample, and consistent with the trend in labor supply, earnings follow an increasing and significant trend across the weeks of the study (Table 5, Column (4) and Table A3, Column (4)). Although earnings lag labor supply slightly in the middle portion of the study, the 95 percent confidence intervals for estimated earnings and earnings predicted according to labor supply changes overlap significantly (Figure 5). Even with very noisy income streams, all specifications show an increase in earnings significant at the 10 percent level by the fifth week.<sup>24</sup> Of note, the point estimate of a daily net gain of approximately Rs. 15 by week five corresponds to a 9 percent increase in average earnings, a figure similar to the increase in labor supply.<sup>25</sup>

#### 2.2.6 Enrollment and Endline Tasks

As described previously, in addition to reporting daily earnings and labor supply participants were asked to spend a full day in the study offices at enrollment and during the last week of their participation. The tasks completed at enrollment and endline were designed to be as directly related to potential productivity as possible. For example, physical tasks included choosing whether or not to take actual rickshaw journeys at different distances, weights, and payoffs. This design allows assessment of the productive ability of the

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, the difference in earnings for treated individuals in the first week is similar to the difference expected based on the differential earnings between control and treated attriters and the attrition rates. While the baseline controls would be expected to account for these differences, the baseline measures are only moderately correlated with average outcomes during the study ( $r = 0.1$  to  $r = 0.5$ ) and hence may not adequately control for differences.

<sup>24</sup> The differences in the point estimates in the regressions by week and by period (first and second half) of the study are driven by two effects: 1) the period regressions also include laboratory earnings while week regressions do not, 2) a compositional effect driven by the unit of observation (person-period averages in the period regressions which weight individuals equally, and person-day observations in the weekly regressions which implicitly weight by attendance). Given the higher attrition among the high-earning treated individuals, regressions using the person-day as the unit of observation will result in lower estimated effects if baseline controls cannot fully control for “type.”

<sup>25</sup> This estimate is less than the estimated coefficient in the log specification because that specification takes logs of earnings + 1 to account for extensive margin changes in labor supply.

participants in the absence of demand fluctuations and other sources of variability (e.g. measurement error). Task payments were a direct function of performance. Additional information regarding the tasks is provided in Appendix A, Table A1.

The primary specification to examine the impact of treatment on task earnings is shown in Equation (3) where  $e_{it}$  is earnings on for individual  $i$  at time  $t$  (where  $t = \{\text{enrollment, endline}\}$ ),  $T_i$  is a binary variable indicating treatment status, and  $\text{End}_t$  indicates whether the measurement was taken at Endline.

$$(3) \quad e_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 \text{End}_t + \beta_3 T_i * \text{End}_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

As can be seen in Figure 6a and Table 6, Column (1), treated participants earn roughly 9 percent (Rs. 25) more than control participants on the tasks at endline. Overall earnings are divided into cognitive and physical tasks in Columns (2) and (3) and Figure 6b. Cognitive tasks show a virtually immediate benefit of the increased consumption with 12 percent higher earnings at enrollment among the treated individuals (who received an additional 700 calories on the enrollment day as well as throughout the study) relative to control individuals.<sup>26</sup> This immediate change in cognitive function is consistent with evidence from a variety of other sources.<sup>27</sup> The improvement in cognitive outcomes is maintained at approximately the same level at endline. In contrast, gains in physical performance associated with increased caloric intake accrue over time with no significant effect at enrollment but a positive and significant gain of over 10 percent at endline relative to the control group. These results correspond well with both basic physiology and the results of experiments measuring changes in physical performance as a function of caloric intake over longer time horizons (e.g. Keys et al. 1950).

Although all participants have a BMI under 20, treatment may have differential effects for particularly low BMI individuals. To examine possible heterogeneity in the treatment effect, I estimate Equation (4) in which an indicator for low BMI, denoted by  $L_i$ , is interacted with the previous specification.<sup>28</sup>

$$(4) \quad e_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 T_i + \beta_2 \text{End}_t + \beta_3 L_i + \beta_4 L_i * T_i + \beta_5 L_i * \text{End}_t + \beta_6 T_i * \text{End}_t + \beta_7 L_i * T_i * \text{End}_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

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<sup>26</sup> On the enrollment and endline days all participants were provided with a lunch. In addition, treated participants received snacks amounting to 700 calories shortly after enrolling. The snacks could all be consumed immediately or eaten incrementally throughout the day.

<sup>27</sup> For example, in a double blind experiment, Gailliot et al. (2007) demonstrate that higher blood glucose levels increase self-control over the course of just a few hours and Danziger et al. (2011) provide evidence that judges produce much lighter sentences when they have eaten recently.

<sup>28</sup> “Low BMI” is defined as a BMI under 18.5, the WHO cutoff for “underweight,” at enrollment. Sixty-five percent of participants are under this threshold. The distribution of participants’ BMIs is provided in Figure 7.

These results suggest that while most of the physical benefits appear to accrue to the lower-BMI individuals, the cognitive benefits apply equally to all treated participants.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.2.7 Bounded Estimates

The estimated effects are relatively large and show consistent trends across labor supply, earnings on the job, and earnings in the laboratory. However, to address concerns that the above treatment effects may be driven by the attrition patterns described previously, I also construct bounded estimates of labor supply and earnings both as a rickshaw driver and in the laboratory which account for the differential attrition. The bounding process follows the method proposed and described by Lee (2003), with minor adjustments to account for the structure of the data. This method relies on the trimming of extreme observations in the condition with lower attrition to bound the estimated treatment effect. Specifically, after calculating the relative difference in attrition to determine the extent of the trimming necessary, the individuals with the highest (lowest) average values of the outcome are removed from the dataset and the treatment effect is estimated on the trimmed dataset. Additional details about this procedure are included in Appendix B.

The observed labor supply increases are relatively robust (Table 7a, Columns (1) to (4) and Figure 8). Regardless of the extent or type of trimming, the fraction of days worked is higher among treated individuals at the end of the study. Although the most extreme lower bound does not result in a statistically significant net effect in the fifth week, the point estimate is positive and still shows a marginally significant increase from the first week. In addition, the more moderate lower bound does estimate a significant net gain in the fifth week and at 5 to 10 percent these lower bound increases in labor supply are economically significant.

Earnings estimates have much wider bounds. These regressions also show significant gains in the fifth week relative to the first among treated individuals. However, although there are gains among treated individuals over time, as discussed previously, the initial point estimates in week one are negative in some specifications. Given these negative initial point estimates, I cannot not rule out the possibility that there are no net gains in cycle-rickshaw driver earnings in week five in the bounded specifications.

Finally, Table 7b presents bounded estimates for laboratory task payments. Bounds on these estimates are relatively wide and cannot rule out no net effect of treatment at endline, but are still generally supportive of a positive impact of treatment on laboratory earnings. In Column (1), the lower bound has a negative point estimate for treated individuals at enrollment given the censoring of high earning control individuals.

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<sup>29</sup> Labor supply and earnings follow a pattern more closely matched to the physical tasks. Despite this similarity, the heterogeneity by BMI does not reach statistical significance for these outcomes (See Appendix A, Table A6).

However, the interaction between treatment and endline remains positive and significant. The upper bound estimates a significant treatment effect of Rs. 24 at enrollment and an additional, although non-significant, gain of Rs. 9 at endline for treated individuals (Column (2)).

### **2.3 Summary of RCT Results**

Increased caloric intake among treated individuals resulted in gains in both laboratory tasks designed to measure ability in domains relevant to their work as well as direct measures of labor supply. Earnings present a somewhat more mixed picture due to high variance in daily earnings and the initial negative point estimates early in study which may be driven by selected attrition, with high earning treated individuals being more likely to leave the study in the first few days. However, consistent with evidence from the physiology literature, effects of increased intake do appear to be cumulative with clear trends in both labor supply and earnings over time that do not appear to plateau within the five week period studied. These trends result in significant and economically meaningful net increases in labor supply and earnings (in both laboratory tasks and as a rickshaw driver) among treated individuals of approximately 10 percent by the fifth and final week.

## **3 Agricultural Production During Ramadan Fasting**

The randomized trial above provides internally valid evidence that the labor supply, earnings, and physical and cognitive function of cycle-rickshaw drivers improve with increased caloric intake. Although cycle-rickshaw drivers were selected as a study population in part due to their similarity to many individuals in the informal labor market (e.g. flexible labor supply, low caloric intake), this group is still specific. In order to address potential concerns about the external validity of the RCT as well as to examine the impact of changes in caloric intake at lower levels of intake, I conducted a second analysis. This analysis examines the impact of the reduced caloric intake generated by fasting during Ramadan on agricultural production, an industry which accounts for 52 percent of employment in India.

Following background information about the holiday and the context of the study, the analysis begins by estimating the caloric decline among Muslims during Ramadan in India via the consumer expenditure portion of the National Sample Survey (NSS). The estimated decline in caloric intake is roughly 700 calories per person per day for Muslim households. Next, I estimate the changes in production associated with overlap between Ramadan and the labor intensive portions of the cropping cycle, sowing and harvesting. This analysis leverages heterogeneity in cropping cycles between and within districts as well as the fact that Ramadan cycles throughout the calendar year to generate three sources of variation and identify the impact

of fasting at the crop-district-year level. I then demonstrate heterogeneity in the effect of overlap with the production declines being driven by districts with a larger concentration of Muslims.<sup>30</sup> This heterogeneous effect supports the conclusion that Ramadan, rather than other factors, drives the production declines.

Finally, I turn to an analysis of behavioral changes during the holiday to assess whether features of the holiday in addition to the decline in caloric intake underlie the declines in production. This line of inquiry begins with an omnibus test related to the persistence of the effects which provides support for the declines being driven by changes in nutrition while simultaneously providing evidence against three of the primary alternative channels: time spent on religious or social activities reducing labor supply, sleep deprivation, and dehydration. I also assess the impact of each of these potential channels individually through reviews of the relevant literatures and direct empirical tests. These empirical tests draw on both the agricultural data and additional data sources such as the employment portion of the National Sample Survey and the ICRISAT village level studies survey. Each of these sources of evidence and the data analyses are consistent with an effect on production driven primarily by changes in caloric consumption rather than other behavioral shifts.

### **3.1 Background**

#### *Ramadan*

Ramadan is a month-long Muslim holiday observed primarily through fasting during daylight hours. Fasting includes abstinence from both food and liquids and is obligatory for practicing Muslims with the exception of children, the elderly, individuals who are ill, infirm, or traveling, and women who are pregnant or breast feeding. Muslims are also expected to abstain from smoking, sexual relations, and swearing during daylight hours throughout the holiday. In addition, there is an added emphasis on prayer, reading the Koran, and charity during this time (Blackwell 2009; Ahmad et al. 2012).

The holiday is lunar, shifting by roughly eleven days per year, and cycling through the calendar year approximately once every 30 years. Ramadan is followed by Eid, a holiday marking the end of Ramadan.<sup>31</sup> During Eid, Muslims are not allowed to fast, and typically engage in a special prayer in a communal area and visit family and friends. Eid is a minimum of one day but can last up to three days (Blackwell 2009).

#### *Caloric Intake and Body Mass Index in India*

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<sup>30</sup> The fraction of the population which is Muslim varies substantially across districts, ranging from less than 0.1 percent to over 40 percent (Census of India 1961).

<sup>31</sup> There are two holidays in the Muslim calendar referred to as Eid: Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. However, this paper will always reference Eid al-Fitr, which follows Ramadan, when referring to Eid.



The Indian Planning Commission's recommended caloric intake has typically been 2,100 calories per adult in urban areas and 2,400 calories per adult in rural areas (Sharma 1999). Caloric intake in India has, however, remained significantly below these levels for many years and, of note, has been declining over time despite strong economic growth (Deaton and Dreze 2009). In addition, the distribution of calories in India is quite skewed such that mean caloric intakes are substantially higher than median caloric intakes. The low caloric intakes lead to correspondingly low body mass indices (BMI), with over half of the population below the WHO cutoff for underweight (BMI < 18.5) in 1971, the median year in this study.<sup>32</sup> Roughly one-third of the population remains underweight at present (Deaton and Dreze 2009; WHO 2013).

### *Agriculture in India*

Agriculture is a critical sector in the Indian economy. Although the share of GDP generated from agriculture has declined from 43 percent in 1960 to 17 percent at present, agriculture still accounts for 52 percent of employment (National Academy of Agricultural Sciences 2012; World Bank 2012). Driven in part by technology improvements during the Green Revolution, growth in this sector has been relatively rapid with a four-fold increase in real value over the same period (FAO 2013; Evenson and Gollin 2003). India's primary crops are food grains such as rice, wheat, and millet as well as cash crops such as sugarcane, oilseeds, and peanuts. Section 3.3.1 provides additional details about the agricultural data used in this analysis.

## **3.2 Caloric Consumption During Ramadan**

Although Muslims fast during daylight hours during Ramadan, it is possible that there could be substitution of food consumption across time to the evenings and mornings, limiting or eliminating declines in caloric intake. Hence, I directly estimate the change in caloric intake in order to confirm that caloric consumption does indeed decline as well as to estimate the magnitude of the change.

### **3.2.1 Data**

This analysis utilizes the consumer expenditure portion of the 60<sup>th</sup>, 62<sup>nd</sup>, and 64<sup>th</sup> rounds of India's National Sample Survey (NSS, Schedule 1).<sup>33</sup> The dataset provides monthly household level consumption data for nearly 150 food items allowing the calculation of each of the 36,000 households' per capita caloric intake.

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<sup>32</sup> As a benchmark, a person who is 5 foot 8 inches tall (1.73 m) would have a BMI of 18.5 at 122 pounds (55.3 kg).

<sup>33</sup> Additional information about the NSS can be found on the Indian Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOPSI) website: <http://mospi.nic.in>. While it would be preferable to include NSS rounds during the period covered by the agricultural production data, earlier rounds of the NSS do not include the survey date and hence

### 3.2.2 Results - Changes in Caloric Intake

I estimate caloric declines among Muslim households during Ramadan according to the following equation:

$$(5) \quad C_{idt} = \beta_0 + \beta_{1r}R_i + \beta_2F_{it} + \beta_{3r}R_i * F_{it} + \beta_2E_{it} + \alpha_r R_i * E_{it} + \Theta_{dt} + \lambda_m + \varepsilon_{idt}$$

$C_{idt}$  is calories per capita per day in household  $i$ , in district  $d$ , in year  $t$ .  $R_i$  is a vector of binary variables for the household's religion.  $F_{it}$  is an indicator variable denoting full overlap of the survey period and Ramadan.  $E_{it}$  is an indicator for overlap between the survey period and Eid, and  $\Theta_{dt}$  and  $\lambda_m$  are district-year and month of survey fixed effects, respectively. The primary sample is limited to rural households whose primary occupation is agricultural work and which have either no overlap or complete (29 day) overlap between the survey period and Ramadan.

The results demonstrate a fairly substantial and significant decline in caloric intake among rural Muslim households during Ramadan (See Table 8). Although standard errors are large, the decline appears to be approximately 700 calories per person per day, an estimate consistent with not eating a midday meal.<sup>34</sup> This decline is substantial relative to total caloric consumption, which is approximately 2200 calories per capita per day despite the fact that most individuals in this population engage in heavy physical labor. Results are robust to a variety of methods of topcoding used to address implausibly high consumption levels (See Appendix A, Table A7).

## 3.3 Estimating Changes in Agricultural Production

### 3.3.1 Data and Estimation Strategy

In order to examine the impact of Ramadan fasting on agricultural production this analysis draws on four main sources of data. First, data on agricultural production was obtained from the World Bank India Agriculture and Climate dataset compiled by Apurva Sanghi, Kavi Kumar, and James McKinsey. This dataset contains production and price information for 20 crops between 1956 and 1987 in 271 Indian districts covering 85 percent of the land area of India and all of the major agricultural areas with the exception of

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do not permit a calculation of the extent of the overlap between the survey period and Ramadan. The 60<sup>th</sup> round was conducted in 2004, the 62<sup>nd</sup> in 2005 and 2006, and the 64<sup>th</sup> in 2007 and 2008.

<sup>34</sup> The marginal increase in caloric intake during Ramadan for non-Muslims may be due to the fact that during these rounds of the NSS Ramadan fell between September and November, the season when the many of holidays and festivals for other religions occur (e.g. Diwali, Dussehra, Navaratri, Ganesh Chaturhi, Krishna Janmashtami). However, as noted in the previous footnote, it is not possible to use earlier NSS rounds due to omission of the survey dates in those rounds. Of note, the decline in intake among Muslim households does not appear to substantially alter the proportional macronutrient (i.e. carbohydrate, fat, protein) content of the consumption.

Kerala and Assam.<sup>35</sup> Second, data on agricultural production cycles was generously provided by Dave Donaldson who compiled it from the 1967 Indian Crop Calendar published by the Indian Directorate of Economics and Statistics (Donaldson 2013). This dataset includes the typical sowing and harvesting periods for 18 of the crops included in the agricultural production data at the district level. Table A8 in Appendix A provides additional information about the 18 crops and their cropping cycles. Third, data on the fraction of individuals in each district who are Muslim was gathered from the 1961 Indian census. Finally, rainfall and temperature data were obtained from the University of Delaware monthly rainfall and temperature series.

### 3.3.2 Overview of Sources of Variation and Estimation Strategy

As demonstrated previously, Ramadan generates a month-long quasi-exogenous shift in caloric intake of roughly 700 calories per day among Muslims. However, in order to assess the impact of this change in calories on economic productivity it is also necessary to measure output as related to “exposure” to fasting that is independent of spatial or temporal confounds. In addition, in order to increase external validity, this variation should occur in an economically important industry in which production is well measured at the same “level” as the variation in the exposure to fasting.

Agricultural production offers a number of advantages in this respect. Although many industries are relatively stable across the year (i.e. manufacturing), agricultural production has significant seasonality, both for given crops and in different locations. Specifically, crops are produced at different times of the year in different locations. For example, rice may be grown in February in one district and in June in another. This variation is significant in India, with an average standard deviation of approximately 1.5 months in the timing of agricultural cycles for any given crop (See Table A8 in Appendix A). In addition, different crops are produced at different times in the same location. For example, a district may grow rice in May and wheat in September. A typical district has a standard deviation of approximately 2.5 months and a range of roughly 9 months for the timing of crop cycles within the district (See Table A9 in Appendix A). This seasonality provides useful variation in “exposure” to Ramadan fasting both within and between districts. In addition to the variation related to heterogeneous cropping cycles, the fact that Ramadan is a lunar holiday and cycles throughout the calendar year can be exploited to provide temporal variation in exposure to Ramadan fasting for each crop-district combination.

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<sup>35</sup> A district in India, similar to a county in the United States, is the administrative unit immediately below the state. The average district in this sample had roughly three million people, of which over 80 percent lived in rural areas in 1961.

In short, because the same crop is planted following different cycles in different climatic zones, various crops are planted at different times within a district, and the holiday cycles throughout the year, the overlap between the period of low caloric intake and the labor intensive portions of the crop cycle varies across districts, crops, and years. These sources of variation allow a triple-difference approach to identifying the impact of Ramadan at the district ( $N = 271$ ), crop ( $N = 18$ ), year ( $N = 32$ ) level.

### 3.3.3 Results - Agricultural Production During Ramadan

I begin by estimating Equation (6) regressing the production of crop  $c$  produced in year  $t$  in district  $d$  ( $q_{cdt}$ ), on the fraction of Ramadan covered by each of the labor intensive portions of the agricultural cycle for that crop-district-year ( $S_{cdt}$  to indicate overlap with sowing and  $H_{cdt}$  to indicate overlap with harvest), as well as district-crop ( $\theta_{cd}$ ), district-year ( $\pi_{dt}$ ), and crop-year ( $\alpha_{ct}$ ) fixed effects and a vector of time varying controls for rainfall and temperature relative to the cropping cycle ( $X_{cdt}$ ).<sup>36</sup> Details of the calculation of the fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing and harvesting are included in Appendix B and example calculations are provided in Figure 9. The extent of the “overlap” between Ramadan and the sowing (harvesting) seasons is measured as a fraction of Ramadan to provide a constant denominator and clearer interpretation of the coefficients of interest.<sup>37</sup> Specifically,  $\beta_1$  ( $\beta_2$ ) multiplied by 100 corresponds to the percentage decline in total production for complete overlap between Ramadan and sowing (harvesting).<sup>38</sup> Table A10 in Appendix A displays the distribution of overlap between Ramadan and sowing and harvesting.

$$(6) \quad q_{cdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_{cdt} + \beta_2 H_{cdt} + \theta_{cd} + \pi_{dt} + \alpha_{ct} + \lambda X_{cdt} + \varepsilon_{cdt}$$

As can be seen in Table 9, Column (1) total agricultural production in log metric tons declines significantly with increased overlap between Ramadan and sowing or harvesting. Although the estimated coefficients are relatively small, they do correspond to meaningful production declines. Specifically, complete overlap between Ramadan and a sowing (harvest) period would result in an overall decline in

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix B for a more detailed description of the rainfall and temperature controls.

<sup>37</sup> Results are qualitatively similar, although more difficult to interpret in terms of magnitude, when measuring overlap as a fraction of the season rather than as a fraction of Ramadan. See Appendix A, Table A11 for regressions using the fraction of the season rather than the fraction of Ramadan as the measure of overlap.

<sup>38</sup> This continuous measure of overlap with Ramadan is in contrast to the binary measure used in the analysis of caloric intake. The difference in the choice of right hand side variables is driven primarily by technical details about survey administration in the NSS in which some respondents were surveyed about consumption in the previous month and others about consumption the previous week, which would artificially censor the extent of overlap for these households. In addition, food purchases are likely to be lumpy. Hence, continuous measures of overlap are likely to have significant noise, biasing estimates down. Thus, a discrete measure of overlap is used in the analysis of caloric changes while a continuous measure is used here to improve precision.

production of 1.7 (2.5) percent. However, because only 10 percent of the population is Muslim, these overall declines in output correspond to a decline in productivity of roughly 17 (25) percent per fasting individual when the sowing (harvesting) season fully overlaps the holiday.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to examining the impact of overlap on net production by weight across all crops, Table 9 displays estimates of changes in the value of production in Column (2) and the production of rice (the primary staple grain and the crop of greatest total economic value in India) in Column (3) as a function of the fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing and harvest seasons. These estimates are similar although somewhat larger than the percentage declines in production for all crops, indicating that the declines are observed among economically meaningful crops and are not simply driven by marginal ones.

Although the net declines are relatively small, making it unlikely that farmers would substitute between crops, I confirm that declines are robust to aggregation at the district-year level. These results are presented in Table 10. The point estimates for aggregate declines are generally somewhat larger, but statistically indistinguishable from, the declines estimated using the crop level data. These results suggest that substitution between crops is unlikely to be driving these effects and biasing the crop level estimates.

### 3.3.4 Heterogeneity in Production Declines

Despite the relatively low overall fraction of Muslims in the population, there is substantial heterogeneity in the fraction of Muslims in each district, ranging from less than 0.1 percent Muslim to over 40 percent Muslim (Figures 10a and 10b and Table A12 provide distributional information on the fraction of the rural population that is Muslim.<sup>40</sup> The sample is restricted to those districts included in the agricultural dataset). This heterogeneity provides an additional test to confirm that the decline in production is driven by Ramadan rather than other unobserved factors. If the declines are indeed driven by Ramadan, then they should only be observed in areas in which individuals observe the holiday, or in other words, areas in which a reasonably large portion of the population is Muslim. Equation (7) tests this prediction by augmenting the previous regression with an interaction terms between the overlap variables and variable(s) for the fraction of Muslims in a district ( $M_d^n$ ).

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<sup>39</sup> The percent of the population that is Muslim is calculated as a population weighted average across the rural portions of the 271 districts included in the agricultural data. Data are drawn from the 1961 Indian Census. It is possible that Muslims are more or less likely than the average rural resident to be involved in agriculture, resulting in biased productivity estimates. However, in the employment/unemployment portion (Schedule 10) of the National Sample Survey, Muslims are marginally less likely to be primarily employed in agriculture than the average rural resident, suggesting that this estimate is likely to be a lower bound.

<sup>40</sup> The religious affiliation of individuals in a district is often substantially different between urban and rural areas. Hence, I rely on the fraction of Muslims in rural areas rather than in the overall population of a district.

$$(7) \quad q_{cdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_{cdt} + \beta_2 H_{cdt} + \beta_n^S S_{cdt} * M_d^n + \beta_n^H H_{cdt} * M_d^n + \theta_{cd} + \pi_{dt} + \alpha_{ct} + \lambda X_{cdt} + \varepsilon_{cdt}$$

In accordance with this prediction, in below median fraction Muslim districts there is no measurable impact of overlap on production. But, there is a strongly negative and statistically significant impact of overlap in above median fraction Muslim districts (Table 11, Columns (1) and (3)). In Columns (2) and (4), I also estimate the net decline in production as a function of the percentage of Muslims in the district using both linear and quadratic interaction terms. These regression results are presented graphically in Figure 11.

This heterogeneity provides additional evidence that the observed productivity declines are driven by Ramadan rather than other unobserved causes. In addition, these estimates suggest that these declines may be somewhat larger than those estimated in the non-interacted specification in Table 9. Taking a population weighted sum of the average decline at each fraction Muslim and averaging over the four measures (sowing and harvesting for both production by weight and by value), the average decline in productivity per Muslim with full overlap is 39.1 percent. Figure 12 plots the average decline in productivity by the fraction of Muslims in the district.

Although this decline is substantial, the magnitude is consistent with a back of the envelope calibration of the “expected decline” given basal metabolic rates (BMR), the estimated declines in caloric intake, and the energy requirements of farm labor (see Appendix B for details of this calculation). This calibration of “available labor energy” predicts productivity declines of roughly 50 percent as a result of the reduced in caloric intake if no energy were mobilized from fat stores. This rough calibration does not provide evidence for or against alternative explanations for the decline. However, it does suggest the observed magnitudes are consistent with expectations for productivity changes driven by fasting.

### 3.3.5 Summary of Results - Production Declines

These results demonstrate that: 1) overlap between Ramadan and sowing/harvesting has a substantial negative impact on total agricultural production both in terms of quantity and value, 2) consistent with Ramadan driving the declines, the impact is larger for districts with a greater percentage of Muslims, and 3) the magnitude of the productivity decline is consistent with the estimated change in caloric intake. However, it is possible that features of the holiday other than the caloric decline associated with fasting are also influencing production. As described previously, there are three main behavioral changes beyond reduced caloric intake which could potentially decrease production: time spent on religious or social activities leading to reduced labor supply, changing sleep patterns or reduced time sleeping, and dehydration. Section 3.4

below examines each of these possibilities, and concludes that they are unlikely to be key channels for the documented productivity declines.

### **3.4 Evidence Regarding the Forces Driving Production Declines**

This section examines whether caloric intake or other behavioral changes are driving the observed declines in productivity during Ramadan. The empirical tests are broken into two sections. First, an omnibus test provides evidence which supports the role of caloric decline in reduced production during Ramadan while simultaneously providing evidence that the declines are unlikely to be driven by the three other notable behavioral changes during the holiday. Following this analysis, I also individually examine whether the declines could be driven by the impact of religious or social obligations on labor supply, by sleep changes, or by dehydration via both relevant literature and additional direct empirical tests.<sup>41</sup>

#### **3.4.1 Omnibus Test - Persistence of Production Declines Following Ramadan**

A distinctive feature of low caloric intake is that recovery from this state takes time, often requiring weeks or even months to fully regain physical performance in extreme cases of deprivation (e.g., Keys et al. 1950). This lag between increased caloric intake and improved physical performance suggests that the reduced caloric intake during the holiday would be expected to have an impact beyond Ramadan itself.

In contrast, recovery from sleep deficits and dehydration is rapid. As discussed in greater detail below, sleep deficits primarily influence cognitive rather than physical function.<sup>42</sup> However, a number of researchers have documented that a single night of greater than eight hours of sleep reverses cognitive deficits from extended (24-48 hours) periods of total sleep deprivation (Drummond et al. 2006; Kendall et al. 2006; Brendel et al. 1990). Similarly, Belenky et al. (2003) cannot distinguish measures of attention and reaction time between groups which had either five, seven, or nine hours of sleep per night for one week after a three day recovery period with eight hours of sleep per night. Dinges et al. (1997) also demonstrate that two nights of ten hours of sleep is sufficient to overcome deficits accumulated over seven nights with five or fewer hours of sleep. Similarly, for recovery from dehydration, Sawka et al. (2007) survey a variety of sources and

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<sup>41</sup> One additional concern beyond these behavioral changes is that the timing of caloric intake throughout the day may also influence productivity. For clear reasons, it is not possible to disentangle the effect of timing of intake and of levels of intake in this analysis. However, the RCT does not have this concern and provides similar results. In addition, given the fixed costs of preparing food, many individuals who consume very few calories will do so by consuming fewer meals, generating a similar temporal pattern of consumption to that observed during Ramadan.

<sup>42</sup> To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies examining physical recovery after extended sleep deprivation. This is likely driven by the fact that except in cases of fairly extreme sleep deprivation, studies do not often find physical declines associated with sleep deprivation. Hence, there is no recovery period to measure.

note that normal body water and performance can typically be restored within 8 to 24 hours even after fairly extensive dehydration.

These rapid recovery periods from sleep deprivation and dehydration suggest that if reduced production during Ramadan were due to sleep deprivation, dehydration, or changes in labor supply related to religious obligations that these deficits should disappear within a few days after the conclusion of the holiday. In contrast, if the reduced production is the result of lower caloric intake during the month, there should continue to be residual effects which reduce production following the holiday. Hence, examining the impact of overlap between the sowing and harvesting seasons and the weeks following Eid (a short holiday immediately following Ramadan) serves as a useful test to distinguish between nutritional deficits and other behavioral changes during the holiday as likely causes of the reduced production.

This test is conducted using an empirical approach similar to the previous analyses, in which the fraction of Ramadan covered by the sowing and harvesting seasons is replaced with the fraction of the weeks following the holiday covered by the sowing and harvesting seasons. However, because the Eid holiday could potentially confound the results and there is a short recovery period for dehydration and sleep deprivation, I calculate overlap with the first and second week following Eid rather than following Ramadan.<sup>43</sup> The estimating equation, Equation (8), is displayed below.  $P_{cdt}^{XN}$  denotes the overlap between season X (where X = {S for sowing, H for harvesting}) and week N (where N = {1,2}). All other variables are as defined previously.

$$(8) \quad q_{cdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_{XN} P_{cdt}^{XN} + \theta_{cd} + \pi_{dt} + \alpha_{ct} + \lambda X_{cdt} + \varepsilon_{cdt}$$

Although the standard errors are larger, the results of overlap for the first week post-Eid are quite similar to the results during the holiday itself for both sowing and harvest (Table 12). This effect is relatively robust to longer (4 day) specifications for Eid (Columns (2) and (4)). While the point estimates remain similar for the second week post-Eid for sowing, the effects begin to attenuate by the second week following Eid for harvest, as might be expected given the relatively short period of deprivation. In short, these results are consistent with recovery from a short period of reduced caloric intake but inconsistent with dehydration, sleep deficits, or time spent on religious activities driving the reduced production.

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<sup>43</sup> The holiday is lunar so the exact day of Eid will depend on the sighting of the crescent moon, which varies across locations. I build in a one day buffer to account for the uncertainty in sighting the moon. In addition, while the official holiday is only one day, some individuals continue to celebrate for up to three days. Hence, to span the possible durations of the holiday, I examine periods following both a two-day and a four-day lag for the Eid holiday.



### 3.4.2 Time Spent on Religious and Social Activities

#### *Literature - Time Spent on Religious and Social Activities*

Time spent on religious and social activities during the Ramadan holiday is likely to vary substantially across both individuals and locations, and little information specific to India is available given the relatively low concentration of Muslims in the country. However, the literature does provide general information about the types of behavior changes that Muslim individuals are likely to engage in during the holiday. The primary religious behavioral changes expected during Ramadan are an increase the number of prayers offered, abstinence from smoking, sexual relations, and swearing during the day, and an increase in charity. While a general guideline to increase prayers and reading and recitation of the Koran exists, no specific rules are provided regarding the amount or timing of the prayer that should be completed beyond the standard prayers observed throughout the year five times daily. Similarly, there are no specific guidelines for the amount of charity to be provided during this time. In addition to these changes in religious practice, Muslims often spend time in social gatherings in the evenings during Ramadan. The most common set of activities following sunset is to break the fast with a small snack, to complete the fourth set of daily prayers, and then to gather with friends or family for a large evening meal (Blackwell 2009; Ahmad et al. 2012). So, although there is an increase in religious and social activity during this time, much of the increase occurs in the evenings when individuals would not typically be working. In addition, because the prescribed changes in behavior are general and flexible, these behavior changes are less likely to interfere with work requirements than observance of many other holidays. Finally, although some heavily Muslim counties see shifts in working hours during Ramadan, the low fraction of Muslims in India make these types of labor market changes unlikely to occur in this context.

#### *Empirical Evidence - No Change in Labor Supply or Earnings During Ramadan*

I also examine labor supply changes among Muslims in India during Ramadan directly using two sources of data; the second-generation ICRISAT village level studies survey and the National Sample Survey (NSS).

#### **Data**

ICRISAT is a panel dataset containing monthly measures of employment and earnings. The sample is drawn from six villages chosen to be representative of the major agro-climatic zones in the semi-arid tropics of

India.<sup>44</sup> Households were sampled across four categories of landholdings (landless, small farmers, medium farmers, and large farmers).

In addition to the consumer expenditure survey described previously, the National Sample Survey Organization fields a large, nationally representative, repeated cross-sectional survey about employment. The employment/unemployment rounds (Schedule 10) provide information on respondents' labor supply and wages during the seven days preceding the interview as well as their religious affiliation.<sup>45</sup> Households are sampled on a rolling basis such that the sample is temporally spaced within each district.

### Empirical Strategy and Results

In the ICRISAT data, labor supply (or earnings) of individual  $i$ , in survey round  $s$ , and year-month  $t$  are regressed on the number of days of overlap between survey period and Ramadan ( $R_{ist}$ ), an interaction between that variable and an indicator for whether the individual is Muslim ( $M_i$ ), a variable for the number of days between interviews ( $D_{ist}$ ), and fixed effects for individuals ( $\theta_i$ ) and the year-month in which the survey occurred (Equation 9).<sup>46</sup> "Labor days" is defined as the number of days of labor, including both paid and unpaid labor but excluding domestic work, in the past month. The wages variable is calculated as the sum of cash and in-kind wages during the month. The number of hours worked is only reported for paid labor. If the participant reports more than one paid job during the survey period, the average hours worked per day is calculated as a weighted average across all jobs reported.

$$(9) \quad l_{ist} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 R_{ist} + \beta_2 R_{ist} * M_i + \beta_3 D_{ist} + \theta_i + \omega_t + \varepsilon_{ist}$$

A similar specification is used in the NSS data. However, I adjust for the fact that the data consists of multiple cross sections rather than a panel. As can be seen in Equation (10), labor supply (or earnings) of individual  $I$ , in district  $d$ , at time  $t$  ( $l_{idt}$ ), is regressed on the days of overlap between the survey period and Ramadan ( $R_{idt}$ ), whether the individual is Muslim ( $M_i$ ), the interaction of these two variables, district-year fixed effects ( $\theta_{dt}$ ), and month fixed effects ( $\omega_m$ ). "Labor days" is the combination of days engaged in labor for wages and own-labor (e.g. working on one's own farm) excluding domestic work. Earnings are the total

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<sup>44</sup> The villages are located in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. These states are major agricultural producers, and are included in the agricultural production data used in the primary analysis presented above.

<sup>45</sup> Although it would be ideal to utilize data overlapping the time period covered by the agricultural production data, only rounds 60 (conducted in 2004) onward contain survey dates, permitting calculation of overlap between the survey period and Ramadan. Hence, I rely on rounds 60, 61, 62, 64, and 66.

<sup>46</sup> In order to maximize the sample size given the smaller number of individuals surveyed in the ICRISAT data, the number of days of overlap is used rather than restricting the sample to complete or no overlap and using a binary indicator of overlap, as was done in the analysis of changes in caloric intake.

(cash plus in-kind) earnings received during the survey period. Earnings are considered in both levels and logs to account for unemployment and unpaid labor.

$$(10) \quad l_{idt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 R_{idt} + \beta_2 M_i + \beta_3 R_{idt} * M_i + \theta_{dt} + \omega_m + \varepsilon_{idt}$$

Table 13 provides the results of these regressions. In both datasets, Muslims' labor supply and earnings during the holiday are fairly precisely estimated (a change in labor supply of less than one percent per day of overlap can be detected). Earnings remain unchanged for Muslims during Ramadan. However, interestingly, labor supply appears to either remain constant or increase slightly. The increased labor supply could be caused by an attempt to compensate for reduced productivity and/or to accrue funds for charity, which Muslims are expected to provide during Ramadan.<sup>47</sup>

These results suggest that changes in labor supply driven by religious or social obligations are unlikely to cause the observed declines in production when Ramadan overlaps with important parts of the agricultural cycle and may actually work against such declines.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.4.3 Sleep

#### *Literature -The Impact of Sleep on Cognitive and Physical Function*

A limited literature on the impact of Ramadan on sleep habits does exist. However, it focuses on countries such as Saudi Arabia which are nearly exclusively Muslim (Bahamman 2006 provides a review). Because the holiday is celebrated so widely in these countries, the habits of the country as a whole often shift during the month of Ramadan. For example, stores often both open and close later than usual. However, because the median district in this study is only seven percent Muslim, these equilibrium shifts are unlikely to occur in India. In addition, within this literature, changes in sleep patterns appear to vary widely across countries (Bahamman 2006). Hence, the direct literature on changes in sleep patterns during Ramadan is unlikely to aid in understanding the likely impact of possible changes in sleep patterns on agricultural production in India. Instead, I focus on the more extensive and relevant literature surrounding the physiological relationship between chronic partial sleep deprivation, defined as 2 to 7 hours of sleep per night for periods

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<sup>47</sup> Although employers are likely to be less willing to hire a less productive employee, many workers do have long-term relationships with employees which may mitigate this effect. Further, as is discussed in greater detail below, many individuals appear to be unaware of the relationship between caloric intake and productivity.

<sup>48</sup> As an additional robustness check, I estimate the same equations in samples limited to the high labor demand seasons and in alternative samples (e.g. rural casual laborers) (See Appendix A, Tables A13a and A13b). The smaller sample sizes result in less precise estimates; however, the patterns are very similar and neither wages nor labor supply shows any significant change for Muslims during Ramadan.

of days to months, and physical and cognitive performance to understand the likely effect of changes in sleep patterns during the holiday.<sup>49</sup>

The effects of sleep deprivation on performance appear to be heavily cognitive and occur primarily when sleep drops below six to seven hours per night (Goel et al. 2009; Durmer and Dinges 2005). When sleep drops below this level, the largest and most consistent effects of sleep deprivation center on changes in mood with increased sleepiness and negative affect (Alhola and Polo-Kantola 2007; Durmer and Dinges 2005). In addition, chronic sleep deprivation of less than 6 hours per night is likely to lead to reduced vigilance, poorer memory consolidation, and slowed reaction time and learning (Blagrove et al. 1995; Rogers et al. 2003; Ferrara and De Gennaro 2001; Van Dongen et al. 2003). These effects on mood and cognitive function typically tend to have a relatively linear relationship with the cumulative deprivation in the early stages and then often level off over a longer time horizon (multiple weeks) as individuals acclimatize to the new regimen (Ferrara and De Gennaro 2001).

Despite cognitive declines associated with less than six hours of sleep per night, reduced sleep has little if any impact on physical performance until the deprivation becomes relatively extreme (e.g. Sinnerton and Reilly 1992; Guezennec et al. 1994). As VanHelder and Radomski note, “Sleep deprivation of 30 to 72 hours does not affect cardiovascular and respiratory response to exercise of varying intensity, or the aerobic and anaerobic performance capability of individuals” (1989). Some studies do show declines in time to exhaustion after extended periods of sleep deprivation (Reilly and Piercy 1994; VanHelder and Radomski 1989; Vardar et al. 2007). However, results in this domain are mixed and the conditions of deprivation much greater than those likely to be experienced during Ramadan.

In short, the literature relating sleep to cognitive and physical outcomes suggests that changes in sleep patterns during Ramadan are unlikely to be a significant driver of changes in production in this context. Physical capabilities are quite resistant to decreased sleep, even when the physical requirements are substantial as in military combat training. And while extended sleep deprivation is clearly associated with declines in specific areas of cognitive function, the sleep deprivation in these studies tends to be both more extreme than is likely to be experienced during Ramadan and to be limited to specific domains of cognitive function (e.g. memory, reaction time) that are unlikely to be strongly related to agricultural production.

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<sup>49</sup> The majority of the sleep deprivation literature focuses on total sleep deprivation (i.e. no sleep at all for at least 24 to 72 hours). However, I focus more heavily on the subset of the literature on “partial sleep deprivation” because this pattern of sleep deprivation is more likely to reflect changes that Muslims experience during Ramadan. Results from both literatures show similar patterns, with more extreme outcomes under total sleep deprivation.

### *Empirical Evidence – No Change in Hours Worked*

In addition to the evidence from the weeks following Eid suggesting that sleep deprivation does not drive productivity declines during Ramadan, it is possible to examine whether changes to sleep patterns crowd out labor supply through naps or returning to sleep after rising early in the morning for prayers. This test is conducted with the ICRISAT data described previously. Respondents who work in paid agricultural labor report the number of hours worked per day for each job. If the participant reports more than one paid job, average hours worked per day is calculated as a weighted average across jobs. As shown in Table 13, average hours worked by Muslims during Ramadan do not change and the lack of change is precisely estimated. While this finding does not rule out changes in the quality of work, it does suggest that naps or other changes to sleep patterns which could influence labor supply on the intensive margin are unlikely to be a significant factor in production declines.

#### 3.4.4 Dehydration

##### *Literature - The Impact of Dehydration on Cognitive and Physical Function*

Dehydration typically begins to negatively impact measures of aerobic performance once two percent of body weight has been lost.<sup>50</sup> These declines become more consistent around three to four percent loss in body weight; however, even at these levels results are mixed (Sawka et al. 2007; Casa et al. 2005). There is generally no detectable impact of dehydration on strength and anaerobic performance until at least five percent of body weight is lost from water loss (Sawka et al. 2007; Casa 1999a; Greiwe et al. 1998). There is also more limited evidence that dehydration beyond two percent of body weight may cause declines in cognitive function in areas such as short term memory consolidation (Grandjean and Grandjean 2007).

Given these findings, it is necessary to estimate the expected body weight losses due to dehydration for fasting farmers in India to determine whether dehydration is likely to impact agricultural production during Ramadan. While, to the best of my knowledge, no direct evidence on body water loss rates among farmers in India exists, it is possible to benchmark expected losses relative to sports activities in which sweat rates have been measured based on caloric requirements and environmental factors. This calibration, outlined in Appendix B, finds that expected water losses by the end of the day are around the two percent threshold at which aerobic effects become detectable. Given that these losses are cumulative throughout the day, even if

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<sup>50</sup> The technical definitions of aerobic and anaerobic exercise rely on the types of muscular contractions and the energy generating process used. But, a simple delineation based on whether the activity requires breathing hard (i.e. jogging and cycling at a moderate pace are aerobic exercises) or not (e.g. weight lifting and sprinting very short distances are anaerobic exercises) serves as a useful heuristic for differentiating between the types of exercise.

this threshold is reached by the end of the day, the majority of the labor supply is likely to be unaffected and the overall impact is likely to be correspondingly small.

#### *Empirical Evidence – No Decrease in Production with Higher Perspiration Rates*

I also examine the impact of dehydration empirically via an additional test utilizing data on evaporative potential (PET), a measure of the propensity of water to evaporate into the atmosphere.<sup>51</sup> If dehydration were a significant factor in production, then as evaporative potential increased, body water loss would also increase, and production would decline. However, evaporative potential is also likely to influence agricultural production directly. Hence, this test augments the previous specification not only with a main effect for the average PET over the sowing and harvesting seasons, but also with interactions between PET and overlap between the seasons and Ramadan (Equation 11).

$$(11) \quad q_{cdt} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_{cdt} + \beta_2 PET_{cdt}^S + \beta_3 S_{cdt} * PET_{cdt}^S + \beta_4 H_{cdt} + \beta_5 PET_{cdt}^H + \beta_6 H_{cdt} * PET_{cdt}^H + \theta_{cd} + \pi_{dt} + \alpha_{ct} + \lambda X_{cdt} + \epsilon_{cdt}$$

The results of these regressions provide further evidence that dehydration is not driving production declines (Table 14). In contrast to what would be expected if dehydration were reducing output, the interaction between mean evaporative potential and sowing (harvesting) overlap are positive. Further, the addition of these terms does not eliminate the negative effect of overlap between sowing/harvesting and Ramadan observed in the earlier regressions as would be expected if dehydration were the key factor in production declines. Rather, these terms remain negative and significant.

### **3.5 Summary of Results – Ramadan Fasting**

Ramadan fasting, which causes a decline of roughly 700 calories per person per day, is associated with substantial declines in agricultural production. The overall declines are economically significant with a roughly 2 to 4 percent decline in production/value for complete overlap of Ramadan by sowing or harvesting. The extent of the decline shows significant heterogeneity, with larger declines in areas with a higher fraction of Muslims in the population. However, because the proportion of Muslims in the population in India is

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<sup>51</sup> The measure used is technically referred to as “Potential evapotranspiration” (PET). PET reflects the potential for evaporation from the surface into the atmosphere and is calculated based on three measures of temperature (min, max, mean), vapor pressure, and cloud cover. The calculation to generate the PET from these variables is done by the British Atmospheric Data Center, the source of the data, following a method recommended by the FAO. More information about this measure is available at the BADC website (<http://badc.nerc.ac.uk>). Because PET data were not available for all districts, missing values were imputed when possible. The imputation procedure is described in Appendix B.

relatively low overall, these declines in production imply substantially larger declines in productivity per Muslim individual. Specifically, with a range of approximately 20 to 40 percent, the magnitude of the productivity declines is larger than is observed in the RCT. Given that the RCT increases caloric intake, while fasting during Ramadan decreases caloric intake, this may be a function of decreasing marginal returns to caloric intake over this range of intake.<sup>52</sup>

Although it is also possible that factors other than changes in caloric intake influence production during Ramadan, the evidence from the literature as well as direct empirical tests suggests that three of the leading potential causes of decline -- reduced labor supply due to religious or social obligations, sleep deprivation, and dehydration -- do not appear to play a significant role in productivity in this context. In addition, the omnibus test examining the persistence of declines is consistent with the effect being driven by declines in caloric intake rather than these other potential causes.

## **4 Returns to Caloric Intake**

The estimated changes in productivity in both the RCT and the analysis of fasting during Ramadan suggest that changes in caloric intake cause widespread and economically meaningful changes in productivity. Although these changes are of interest in and of themselves given the importance of labor productivity in development, they do raise the additional question of whether these changes in productivity simply “subsidize” food consumption, or whether they not only pay for themselves but also generate positive returns. Hence, I next provide calculations of the return on investment for each of the studies presented previously.

### **4.1 Randomized Controlled Trial Return on Investment**

Seven hundred calories of a staple grain such as rice or wheat can be purchased for approximately 6.5 Rupees.<sup>53</sup> Accounting for the initial negative point estimates in the early weeks and capping the gains at Rs. 14.4 per day (the estimated net treatment effect on rickshaw driver earnings in the fifth week), a rickshaw driver would expect to break even after approximately two months of increased consumption. Over a six

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<sup>52</sup> A production function with decreasing marginal returns over this range of caloric intake is consistent with estimates by Strauss (1986).

<sup>53</sup> The food provided as a part of the study cost roughly Rs. 20 per person per day. This figure is substantially higher than the Rs. 6.5 for staple grains because the study provided snack foods to minimize the likelihood of crowding out other food consumption. Although it is not possible to exclude the possibility that the consumption of grains could produce different results, neither grains nor snack foods contain substantial nutritive value beyond calories and both consist primarily of basic starches, minimizing the chance of such a difference.

month horizon, the estimated return on investment is approximately 75 percent.<sup>54</sup> Because there is greater inherent uncertainty in these estimates than in the estimates of changes in productivity, additional estimates of the ROI are included in Table 15 varying assumptions about both the cost of calories and earnings over time. While the bounds are large, the average estimated 6-month ROI is 134 percent, excluding any gains from improved cognitive function that are not captured in earnings or labor supply as a rickshaw driver.

## **4.2 Ramadan Fasting Return on Investment**

Given the estimated changes in caloric consumption in the NSS and in agricultural production for Muslims during Ramadan, it is possible to calculate the estimated returns on investment for caloric intake in the analysis of Ramadan fasting as well. Again, the exact returns depend on a variety of assumptions regarding the foods consumed and the consistency of the returns to higher caloric intake. Yet, all of the estimated returns are positive and even with relatively conservative assumptions, the one month return on investment to greater caloric intake appears likely to be over 200 percent. Details of these calculations are provided in Table 16. However, one sample calculation based on data from the Indian Agriculture and Climate data used in the analysis is described below.

One kilo of rice contains approximately 3300 calories (Gopalan et al. 1989; NSS calorie conversion database). The average cost of a kilo of rice in 1971 (the median year in the analysis) was Rs. 1.28 per kilo. Hence, an increase of 700 calories (Table 8, Column (2)) would require 210g of rice at a total cost of Rs. 0.27 per day. The average daily agricultural wage in 1971 was Rs. 4.45. Using the estimates of a 20 percent change in productivity per fasting individual during harvest (Table 9, Column (1), averaged over sowing and harvesting and scaled by 0.10, the overall fraction of Muslims in the districts in the analysis), the associated increase in earnings would be Rs. 0.89 per day, implying a return over 228 percent in a single month. This high ROI is relatively robust to purchasing foods which are much more expensive per calorie or to high consumption throughout the year even if some periods have much lower returns to caloric intake.

## **5 Why Does Caloric Intake Remain Low Despite High Returns?**

Despite the greater uncertainty relative to the estimates for productivity changes, the estimated return on investment in these studies, between 75 percent and 225 percent over a horizon of only a few months, is

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<sup>54</sup> One potential concern about these calculations is that basal metabolic rates could adjust, requiring greater caloric inputs to maintain the same benefits. However, calories are sufficiently inexpensive that even with changes larger than would be expected given the results of the Minnesota semi-starvation experiment, the return on investment would still be positive and relatively large (Keys et al. 1950).



relatively high. In addition, at roughly four percent of income in both studies, the cost of investment in an additional 700 calories is low. Given this low cost and high return, it is puzzling that investment in sufficient caloric intake remains low, with over half of the population of India consuming less than 1900 calories per day and one quarter consuming less than 1625 calories per day (Deaton and Dreze 2009). I discuss and briefly evaluate five possible reasons for low investment below. Evidence regarding these potential factors influencing food consumption is drawn from a variety of sources including relevant literature, experimental tasks, and surveys of hundreds of individuals from diverse geographic and demographic backgrounds designed specifically for this purpose. The general design of the surveys is described briefly below and additional details are provided in each of the relevant sections.

#### *Reasons for Low Caloric Intake - Surveys*

This survey was conducted to investigate food habits and potential reasons for low caloric intake among individuals similar to the populations in the analyses examining the returns to increased caloric intake. To accomplish this, participants were drawn from both urban and rural areas in India, and were screened to be at least 18 years old, have a BMI under 20, and be an active participant in the labor market. Demographic characteristics of the 222 survey respondents are presented in Appendix A, Table A14. Participants were paid a flat fee for completing the survey. However, to ensure that participants considered their responses carefully and that the elicitation was incentive compatible, respondents were also eligible to earn additional compensation for correct responses to a subset of factual questions regarding the caloric density of foods and the returns to increased caloric intake.

### **5.1 Credit**

In canonical examples of nutrition-based poverty traps income (or credit) is the constraint limiting investment (e.g., Leibenstein 1957; Bliss and Stern 1978; Dasgupta and Ray 1986). However, there is strong evidence that neither income nor credit is likely to be a binding constraint faced by individuals in India today when making investment decisions about caloric consumption. Even the poorest typically do not spend more than 40 to 70 percent of their income on food, could consume approximately 20 percent more calories at the same cost by purchasing less expensive staple grains, and have a relatively low elasticity of calories with respect to income (Subramanian and Deaton 1996; Banerjee and Duflo 2011; Behrman and Deolalikar 1987). Further, specific to the context of the studies presented in this paper, an increase of roughly 700 calories per day would come at a cost of less than 5 percent of income and could be repaid over a short horizon. Finally,

when survey respondents were asked to list all factors influencing their level of food consumption, fewer than 10 percent included lack of money as a limiting factor. In short, liquidity does not appear to be a binding constraint restricting investment in higher caloric intake for many malnourished individuals in India.

## **5.2 Structural Features of the Economy**

There are a number of structural features common to developing economies which could potentially limit investment in calories. For example, principal-agent contracting with unobserved caloric intake or strong complementarities in production could reduce intake below optimal levels. However, there are a number of reasons to believe that these features are not likely to be driving the low caloric consumption. First and foremost, while caloric intake is not directly observable, observable characteristics such as weight (BMI) would allow individuals to clearly signal potential productivity. In addition, low caloric intake is quite prevalent among individuals who are the residual claimant on their labor and for whom no complementarities in production with others exist. For example, 65 percent of the cycle-rickshaw drivers in Chennai have a BMI under 20.<sup>55</sup> In addition, the median farmer is likely to be the residual claimant for approximately half of his labor supply, and given the seasonality of labor requirements in agriculture, possibly more (See Appendix B for sources and calculations). These facts suggest that the reasons for low investment are likely to lie elsewhere.

## **5.3 Utility Returns**

Although the monetary returns to additional caloric intake are high in the populations studied in this paper, it is possible that the utility returns are not. The decision faced for each individual considering an investment in food is between the status quo and a bundle including additional food, (potentially) additional work, and additional income. Hence, there are two possible ways in which utility returns could be lower than monetary returns. First, people could potentially experience disutility from consuming additional food. Although this is possible, it seems quite unlikely given the low level of consumption, the positive income elasticities found in other research, and the ready acceptance of additional food by participants in the RCT (Subramanian and Deaton 1996; Behrman and Deolalikar 1987; Bouis and Haddad 1992).

The second and more plausible concern is that higher caloric intake could increase labor supply, which comes with a utility cost. However, there are three reasons to believe labor disutility is not a factor limiting

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<sup>55</sup> This figure is the result of randomly sampling 100 cycle-rickshaw drivers in a 2.5 square kilometer area where the vast majority of rickshaws operate in Chennai.

investment in calories. First, it is not clear that net utility costs of labor will increase given the lack of change in labor supply in the agricultural analysis and the fact that increased consumption may improve energy and reduce the inframarginal disutility of labor, a topic explored further below. In addition, if this disutility were substantial, then one would expect the participants of the RCT to have maintained both their original food consumption (by crowding out consumption outside of the lab) and their original labor supply. Yet, this was not the observed result. Finally, in addition to the direct revealed preference argument, it is possible to provide a rough calibration of the tradeoff observed in the RCT to assess the likelihood that labor disutility is driving low caloric consumption among the rickshaw drivers. This calibration, detailed in Appendix B, relies on four sources of data: 1) changes in earnings and labor supply in the RCT, 2) an experimental task in the RCT which elicited willingness to accept values for marginal trips in an incentive compatible manner, 3) additional measures of willingness to accept trips generated from 150 actual offered rickshaw trips with randomly assigned offered fares, 4) purchases of staple grains to determine their cost on the open market.

This calibration suggests that even ignoring any direct utility from food consumption there would be positive utility returns to higher caloric intake for roughly 85 percent of drivers. Further, the calibration is conservative in that it ignores the fact that increased caloric intake may decrease the disutility of inframarginal labor by improving energy levels and making physical exertion less aversive. Although far from conclusive, there are two pieces of suggestive evidence from the RCT that support the hypothesis that the utility cost of inframarginal labor may decline with higher caloric intake. First, treated individuals reported significantly higher energy levels than control participants on the daily surveys (Table 17, Column (1)). Second, one of the experimental tasks during enrollment and endline days was comprised of decisions about whether or not to take actual rickshaw journeys. Participants were offered six different tradeoffs of this sort and one of the choices was randomly selected and the participant's choice carried out. In this task, treated participants were significantly more likely to accept the offered trips (Column (2)). In addition, treated participants increased their willingness to take journeys from 86 percent at enrollment to 93 percent at endline. Both the higher level and the trend suggest the cost of labor provision may be decreasing with higher caloric intake. Hence, although these facts do not provide sufficient information about the specific shape of the cost curve for labor supply to provide conclusive evidence, they do suggest that the overall disutility of labor could remain constant or decline rather than increase with additional caloric intake.

## **5.4 High Discount Rates**

Even if an individual does not face liquidity constraints in obtaining sufficient caloric intake, he may choose to purchase better tasting foods that provide fewer calories per rupee or other non-food items if he has a very high discount rate or time inconsistent preferences. Although I cannot rule out these possibilities with the evidence currently available, survey evidence suggests that time inconsistent preferences are unlikely to be a primary reason for the low investment in calories. For example, over 70 percent of survey respondents reported that they did not wish to make any changes, including amount, timing, or type, to their current food consumption. In addition, the discount rates implied by the rate of return to the investment calculated from the RCT and assessment of productivity impacts from Ramadan fasting would be extremely high. Finally, it is possible that high discount rates would increase rather than decrease caloric intake given that many foods which are typically considered “tempting” are also high calorie per rupee foods (e.g. oils, sugar) (Banerjee and Mullainthan 2010).

## **5.5 Lack of Knowledge**

Knowledge has considerable scope to influence caloric intake. In particular, there are two critical pieces of knowledge that individuals need to make optimal caloric intake decisions: 1) knowledge of the returns to caloric intake, and 2) knowledge of which foods are calorically dense (i.e. provide a large number of calories per Rupee). Despite being important, knowledge in these domains is likely to be difficult to acquire for a number of reasons. First, income streams among the poor are typically very volatile, making it difficult to learn about the returns to an investment. This is particularly true for investments like caloric intake in which, despite high returns, the absolute changes are small relative to the variance in income. In addition, the returns to increased caloric intake grow over time, so relatively long periods of experimentation may be required to learn about the returns available. Finally, as will be discussed in greater detail below, the short run and long-run effects of increased consumption may work in opposite directions; it is common to feel sleepy or tired right after a large meal. But, over a longer time horizon of days or weeks, baseline energy levels increase.

If learning about the returns to higher caloric intake were not challenging enough by itself, learning about the caloric density of food is also quite difficult. While the human body has developed mechanisms to regulate intake, these mechanisms evolved during a time period when food was relatively more expensive such that appetite regulation may not be well-calibrated to the current environment. In addition, the mechanisms to regulate intake are imperfect because feelings of satiety are often not representative of the caloric content of the food. For example, foods which contain large amounts of fiber or that have high water

content are quite filling, yet provide less usable energy because fiber cannot be digested and water does not contain calories (Gerstein et al. 2004; Samra and Anderson 2007).

In short, there are many difficulties inherent in this learning process which make knowledge a potentially important factor limiting caloric intake. I explore this possibility via the survey described previously because, to the best of my knowledge, no pre-existing data are available on beliefs about returns to caloric intake or the nutritive properties of foods in a relevant population.

### 5.5.1 Survey Evidence – Knowledge of Returns to Increased Caloric Intake

To gather data about respondents' beliefs regarding the productivity consequences of increased caloric intake, respondents were asked whether consuming additional food would increase, not change, or decrease their productivity. Participants responded to a multiple variants of this question considering different types of foods (an additional meal or the equivalent energy/calories in snacks) and different outcomes (labor supply or earnings) to explore the consistency of the beliefs. To ensure that questions were considered carefully, participants were paid Rs. 2 for each correct response to these questions.

There were two particularly striking features of these results (Table 18). First, nearly one-third of respondents report being uncertain about the returns to increased caloric intake. Second, only a relatively small fraction of individuals, typically about 20 percent, believe that increased caloric consumption leads to increased labor supply or earnings.<sup>56</sup> In addition, among those individuals who responded that increasing food consumption would increase labor supply and earnings, beliefs about the labor supply margins that would change were highly variable and not well aligned with the results of the RCT or the analysis of fasting during Ramadan.<sup>57</sup> For example, despite being asked to indicate all changes they thought would occur, only 7 percent of respondents listed an increase in the number of days worked – the margin with the largest change in the RCT.

Although the existence of incorrect beliefs with substantial economic consequences in equilibrium is unusual, it is not without precedent.<sup>58</sup> In addition, the surveys combined with data from the RCT provide preliminary but suggestive evidence for how incorrect beliefs are developed and maintained. First, with 57

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<sup>56</sup> Note that although the sample for the survey was demographically diverse, respondents were selected to be similar to the rickshaw drivers in that they were active in the labor market in a job with a substantial physical component, some flexibility in labor supply, and had a BMI under 20.

<sup>57</sup> The list of options for ways in which productivity might change included: fewer/shorter breaks, working more days, working longer hours, working faster/harder, looking for better jobs, and “other.”

<sup>58</sup> For example, Jensen (2010) provides evidence of incorrect beliefs regarding the returns to education. In addition, widespread misperceptions about health ranging from the appropriate care of children with diarrheal disease to the safety of vaccinations have also been documented (Banerjee and Duflo 2011).

percent of survey respondents reporting a decline or no change in energy and/or desire to work immediately after eating, survey evidence suggests that the immediate impact of increased food consumption is neutral or even in direct opposition to the long-run impact on energy levels found among treated participants in the RCT (Table 17, Column (1)).<sup>59</sup> These higher energy levels in the long-run are, however, difficult for individuals to link to caloric consumption given the time lag and large number of other intervening factors.

Second, changes in labor supply are difficult to track over long horizons in populations with irregular and flexible work schedules. As evidence of this difficulty even over short time horizons, I compare data on the number of days worked per week collected in two different ways; day by day collection during the RCT and a single response to the question “how many days did you work last week” in the endline survey. Limiting the sample to participants with full attendance in the week leading up to their endline day to ensure complete data, only 40 percent of respondents provide a weekly total that matches the daily responses and the mean difference is 1.4 days. Finally, low caloric intake itself may hamper learning given the observed decrements in cognitive function associated with low caloric intake.

### 5.5.2 Survey Evidence - Caloric Density of Commonly Consumed Foods

Although the number of calories per unit cost provided by different foods (i.e. “caloric density”) is important knowledge to make effective investments in caloric intake, it is a difficult concept. Hence, survey questions were designed specifically to minimize the difficulty of the assessment and avoid confounding the results due to low numeracy in this population. Specifically, participants’ knowledge of the caloric density of foods was tested in two different ways. First, participants were provided with a set of ten photographs of different food items of the same cost (Rs. 10, or roughly \$0.25).<sup>60</sup> Food items were specifically chosen to be types of foods which are commonly consumed and adjustments to the tradeoffs were made across survey locations to ensure participants would be familiar with the food items and that costs were consistent given local prices. In addition, food items were chosen to have a wide range in caloric density. For example, in Orissa, foods ranged from 5 calories per Rupee to 134 calories per Rupee.

Each photograph was printed to scale and labeled with a description including the name, any relevant descriptors (e.g. “boiled rice”), and quantity of the food. The written label was also communicated verbally.

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<sup>59</sup> Participants were asked to rate their energy on a scale of 1 to 5 during their daily visit to the study office.

<sup>60</sup> To determine the cost of the food, field staff visited local shops and bargained to actually purchase the food items. The costs were averaged across a minimum of five purchases per food item. Caloric information was determined from a publication listing the caloric content of various commonly consumed Indian foods produced by the Indian Government (Gopalan et al. 1989). For the few food items which were not included in this publication, nutrition information was determined from large online calorie databases such as the USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference.

Participants were then asked to indicate which three photographed foods they believed had the “most energy” and which three had the “least energy,” accounting for both the type and amount of food in the photographs.<sup>61</sup> This arrangement allowed participants to assess a relatively simple metric (e.g. “most energy”) while still providing information about their knowledge of the more complicated concept of calories per unit cost. Participants were paid a fee for each correct answer. If all responses to this question were correct, the earnings would amount to over 15 percent of the daily income for the average respondent, providing a strong incentive to consider responses carefully.

The ten food items are listed in Table 19 with the corresponding fractions of participants indicating the item was among the three highest or lowest caloric density items. This data is also displayed graphically in Figures 13a and 13b. Participants’ beliefs about the caloric density of foods are not well correlated with the true values. In fact, on average, respondents were roughly equally likely to indicate that any given incorrect option was correct as they were to indicate that a correct option was indeed correct. For example, in Tamil Nadu, both the three actual highest energy foods and the remaining seven lower energy foods were identified, on average, by roughly 30 percent of the participants as being “high energy.”

Not only are the responses frequently incorrect, the magnitude of the errors is large. As a metric of the magnitude of the error I calculate the calories in the most (least) calorically dense foods and compare them to the total calories selected by participants in each of these categories. There are actually 3088 calories in the three most calorically dense foods. Yet, participants, on average choose three foods totaling only 1472 calories as those with the most energy; or, less than half of the possible calories. Similarly, the three foods with the fewest calories contain 378 calories, but, on average, participants choose three foods with 1052 calories as those with the least energy.<sup>62</sup>

As a second and even simpler test of knowledge, participants were also presented with ten pairwise tradeoffs, each between two food items with the same cost, and were asked to indicate which of the two foods provided more energy. For example, participants were asked to compare one coconut to six bananas. These tradeoffs were again presented via photographs as well as written and verbal descriptions and participants were compensated according to the accuracy of their responses. Two example tradeoffs are presented in Figure 14. As in the first test of knowledge, foods were selected to be commonly consumed and to have large differences in the number (and ratio) of calories in each comparison.

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<sup>61</sup> The term “energy” was used rather than calories because respondents are unfamiliar with the concept of calories.

<sup>62</sup> These figures were calculated using averages weighted across locations by the number of participants in each location.

Table 20 lists these tradeoffs, the correct responses, and percentage of participants providing the correct response to each tradeoff. On average, participants chose the correct option in 41 percent of the comparisons, significantly fewer than the number expected based on purely random guessing ( $p < 0.01$ ). And, given that the average ratio of calories (difference in calories) in each comparison was 3.7 (283 calories), the magnitude of the errors was, once again, substantial.

## **5.6 Summary of Reasons for Low Investment**

There are a wide variety of possible reasons for low investment in the face of apparently high returns. However, neither liquidity, structural features of the economy, nor the disutility of labor appear to be constraints limiting caloric investment for many individuals with low caloric intake. Although it is possible that high discount rates play a role in low investment, the implied discount rates would be exceptionally high and the effect of discount rates could easily work in the opposite direction given that food is a consumption good which many people enjoy. The incentivized surveys described above do, however, provide evidence that beliefs and knowledge have the potential to play a role in low caloric intake. Only one-fifth of the respondents have correct beliefs about the returns to caloric intake. In addition, responses from both sets of incentivized survey questions provides strong evidence that respondents' beliefs regarding the caloric density of commonly consumed foods are frequently and substantially incorrect. Given the demographic diversity of the respondents, this evidence also demonstrates that these incorrect beliefs are not limited to a small sub-segment of the population. While this evidence is far from conclusive given that there are other factors (e.g. habit formation) which may limit change even if beliefs are accurate, the presence and extent of the incorrect beliefs does open the possibility that knowledge could play an important role in the low caloric consumption observed in the presence of high returns.

## **6 Conclusion**

Over 800 million people still consume fewer calories than are recommended to maintain a healthy weight and most of these individuals are among the worlds' poorest (FAO 2011). While proof for or against the existence of nutrition-based poverty traps is beyond the scope of this paper, the studies presented here suggest that low levels of adult nutrition may play an important role in productivity and economic development. Specifically, this paper reports the results of two studies with different methodologies, study populations, and levels of caloric intake which demonstrate that changes in caloric intake result in substantial and broadly generalizable changes in productivity among malnourished adults in India.



The first study, a randomized controlled trial among cycle-rickshaw drivers in which treated individuals were provided with an additional 700 calories per day, provides evidence of increases in labor supply and earnings of approximately 10 percent in five weeks. In addition, the cognitive improvements observed in the randomized controlled trial suggest that the estimated gains may be a lower bound for the benefits associated with higher caloric consumption and that malnourishment may remain central to productivity despite a shift toward cognitive labor rather than physical labor in many developing countries.

The second study of productivity gains examines declines in caloric intake via fasting during Ramadan in a much broader population of agricultural laborers, a sector of the economy accounting for half of all employment in India. This analysis takes a triple-difference approach utilizing variation in the timing of both cropping cycles and Ramadan. I find declines in total agricultural production between 2 and 4 percent when Ramadan and labor intensive parts of the agricultural cycle fully coincide. Although the overall declines are relatively small, they correspond to much greater declines in productivity, of roughly 20 to 40 percent per Muslim individual, given the low fraction of Muslims in the population.

These relatively large changes in productivity driven by changes in caloric intake generate correspondingly high estimated returns on investment. Although there is greater uncertainty in these estimates due to the greater number of assumptions required, the returns appear to be roughly 75 percent over six months in the RCT and 225 percent over one month in the study of agricultural production.

The high returns to caloric intake which accrue over short time horizons in the absence of binding liquidity constraints make the continued low caloric intake in India a puzzle. This paper provides suggestive evidence generated via an incentivized surveys of hundreds of participants similar to those in the studies of returns that this apparent contradiction may be related to incorrect beliefs which limit investment in nutrition. Specifically, beliefs about the returns to increased caloric intake were highly variable and substantially inaccurate, with only 20 percent of respondents holding the belief that higher caloric intake will increase productivity. In addition, beliefs regarding the caloric densities of foods are often substantially wrong; in pairwise comparisons between commonly consumed foods with compensation for correct responses, respondents were unable to identify which foods contained greater numbers of calories per unit cost even at the rate expected by chance.

If incorrect beliefs about the returns to increased caloric intake and the caloric density of foods beliefs are indeed driving low investment, there would be a number of implications for both economics and for food policy. For example, India spends nearly one percent of GDP on food subsidies (Kumar and Soumya 2010).

Although many of these subsidies do target calorically dense foods such as grains, a variety of subsidies also apply to foods which provide few calories per rupee, such as dairy products. With poor knowledge about nutrition, these subsidies may actually negatively impact caloric intake (and productivity) rather than raise it. For example, if the price of milk declines, individuals may substitute dairy products for more calorically dense foods such as grains rather than supplement their previous consumption.

The evidence of incorrect beliefs reported here also suggests a number of new avenues of research exploring the consequences of these beliefs. For example, nutrition-based poverty trap models make strong predictions about who in society will be in high income/food or low income/food equilibria. Specifically, these models predict that the landed (or more broadly those with productive assets) will be hired first and attain the high equilibrium because their additional income allows them to consume more food and provide more effective labor at a lower wage. However, incorrect beliefs would break this linkage; individuals would not consume food to maximize their productivity. Instead, in a world in which individuals have incorrect beliefs about the returns to caloric intake, individual heterogeneity in preferences for food or features of the local diet (e.g. variety, food taboos, the caloric density of the staple grain) will drive which individuals consume sufficient calories and which individuals do not.

## 7 References

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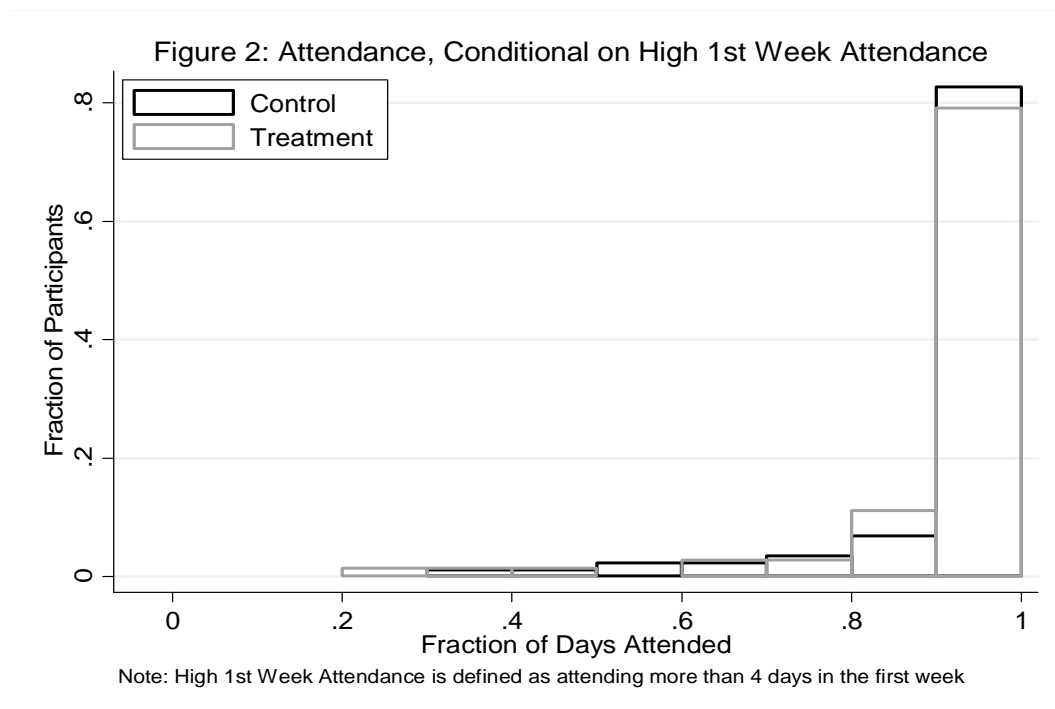
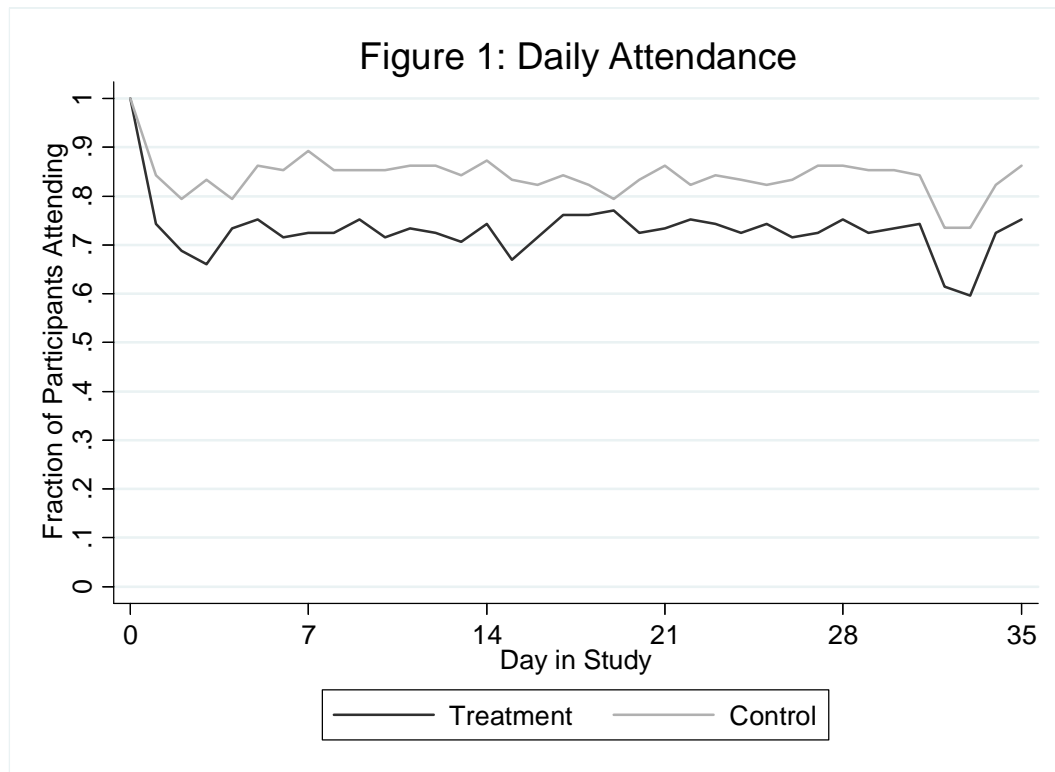
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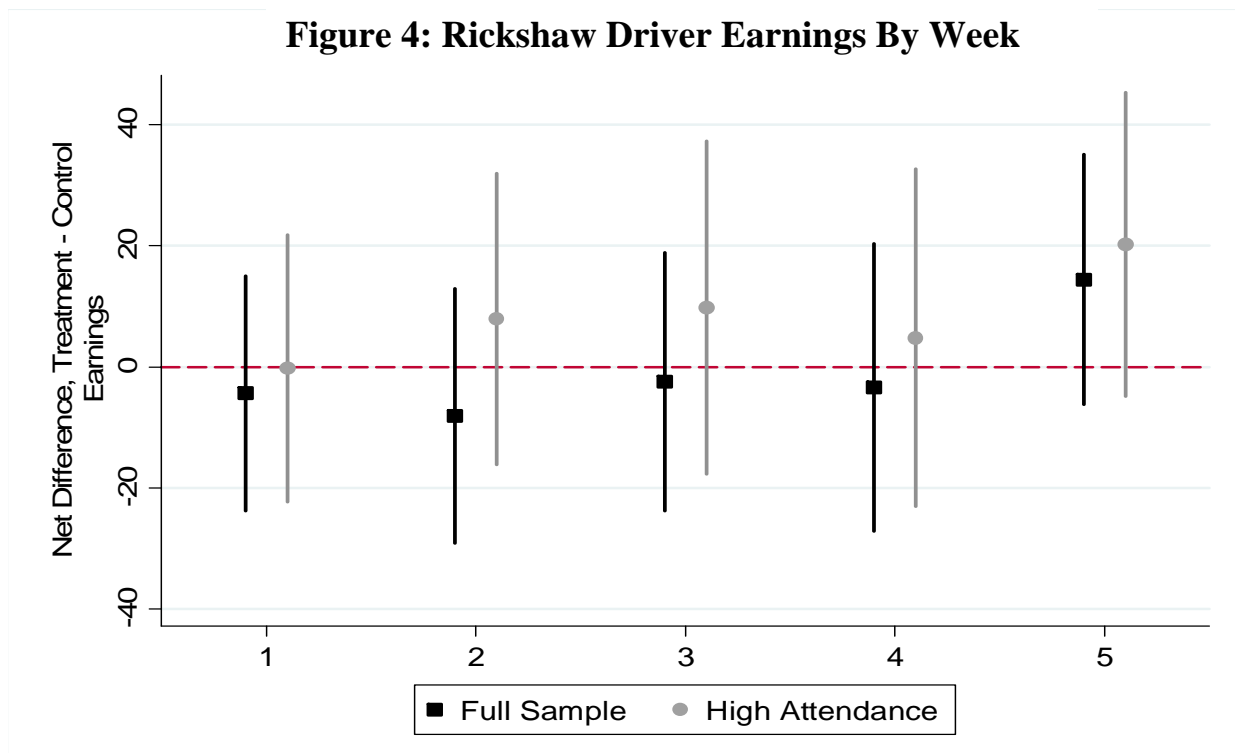
## 8 Figures





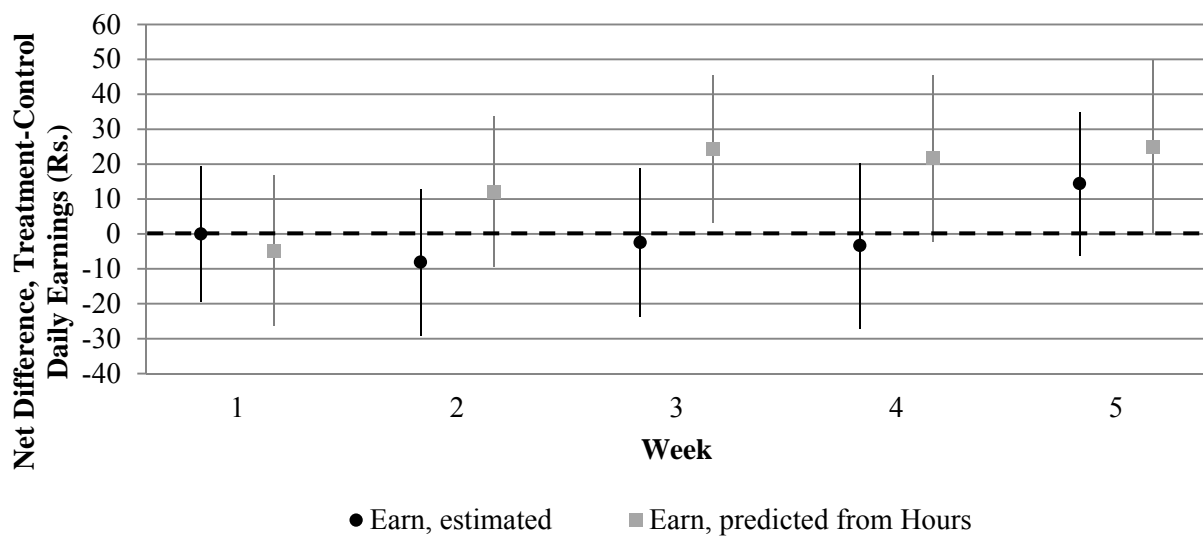


Notes: This figure is drawn from the results in Table 5, Columns (1) and (3). “Days Worked” measures the fraction of days worked. “Total Hours” is the number of hours worked per day. If an individual does not work, this variable takes the value zero. Error bars measure 95 percent confidence intervals.



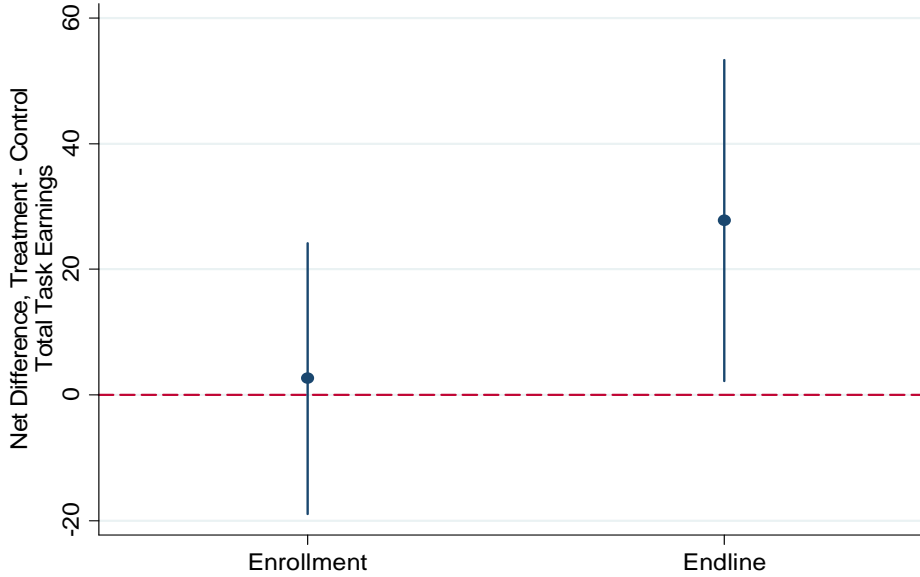
Notes: This figure is drawn from the results in Table 5, Column (4) and Appendix A, Table A5, Column (2). High attendance is defined as attending at least 90 percent of the days in the study. Error bars measure 95 percent confidence intervals.

**Figure 5: Predicted and Estimated Earnings by Week**



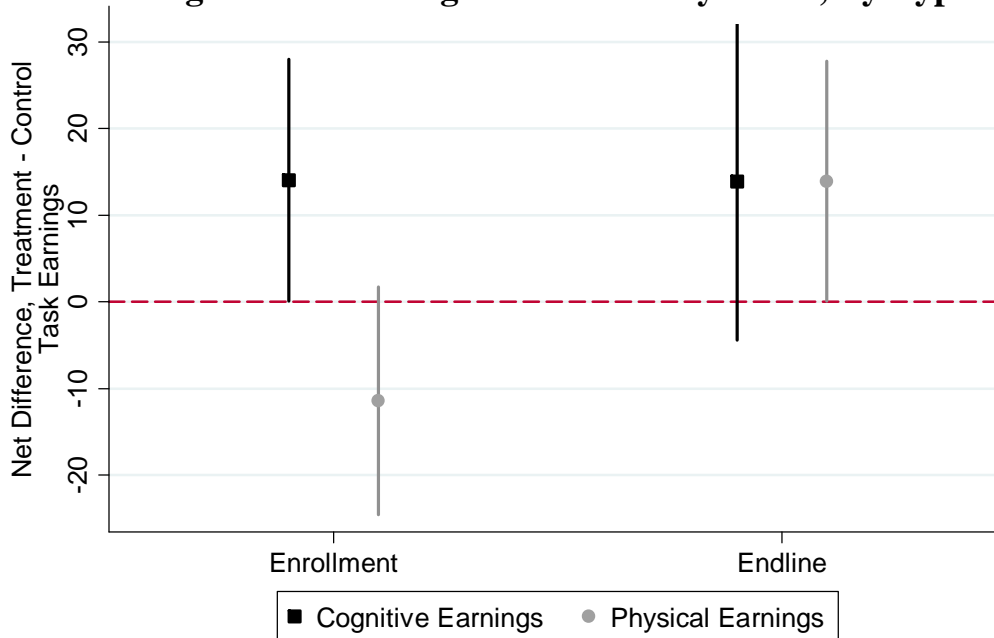
Notes: Estimated changes in earnings are in Rupees and are based on Equation (2). Results of this regression are displayed in Table 5, Column (4). Predicted earnings are generated by multiplying estimated changes in total hours (Table 5, Column (3)) among treated individuals by average hourly earnings in the control group. Error bars measure 95 percent confidence intervals.

**Figure 6a: Earnings on Laboratory Tasks**



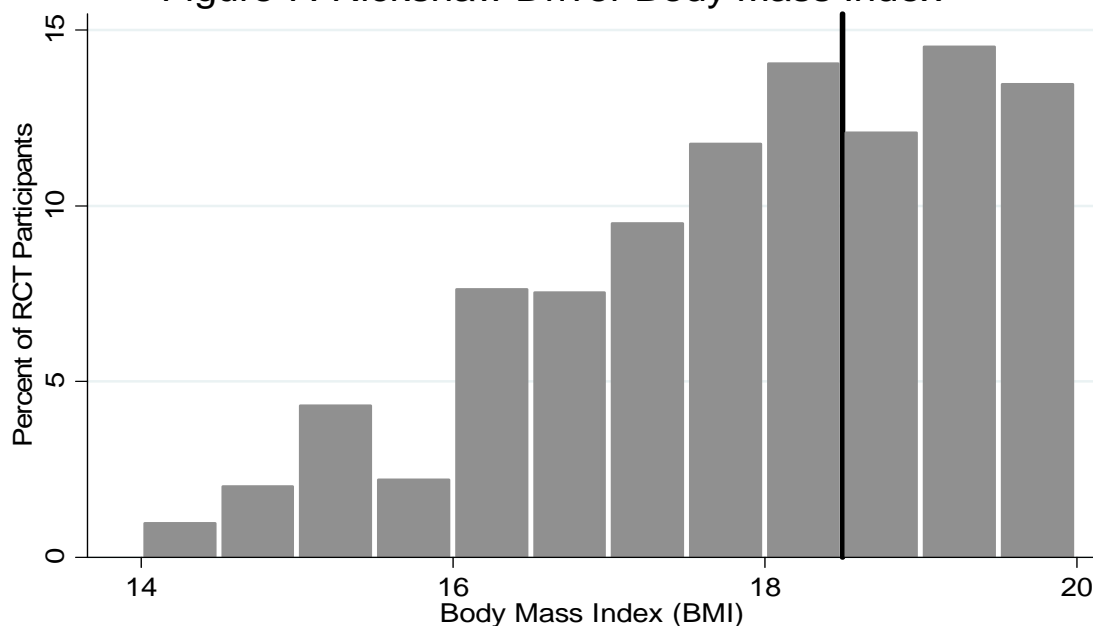
Notes: Earnings (in Rupees) are aggregated across all laboratory tasks. Tasks were compensated according to performance. The figure is based on the regression results displayed in Table 6, Column (1). Control participants earned an average of Rs. 279 at enrollment. Error bars measure 95 percent

**Figure 6b: Earnings on Laboratory Tasks, By Type**



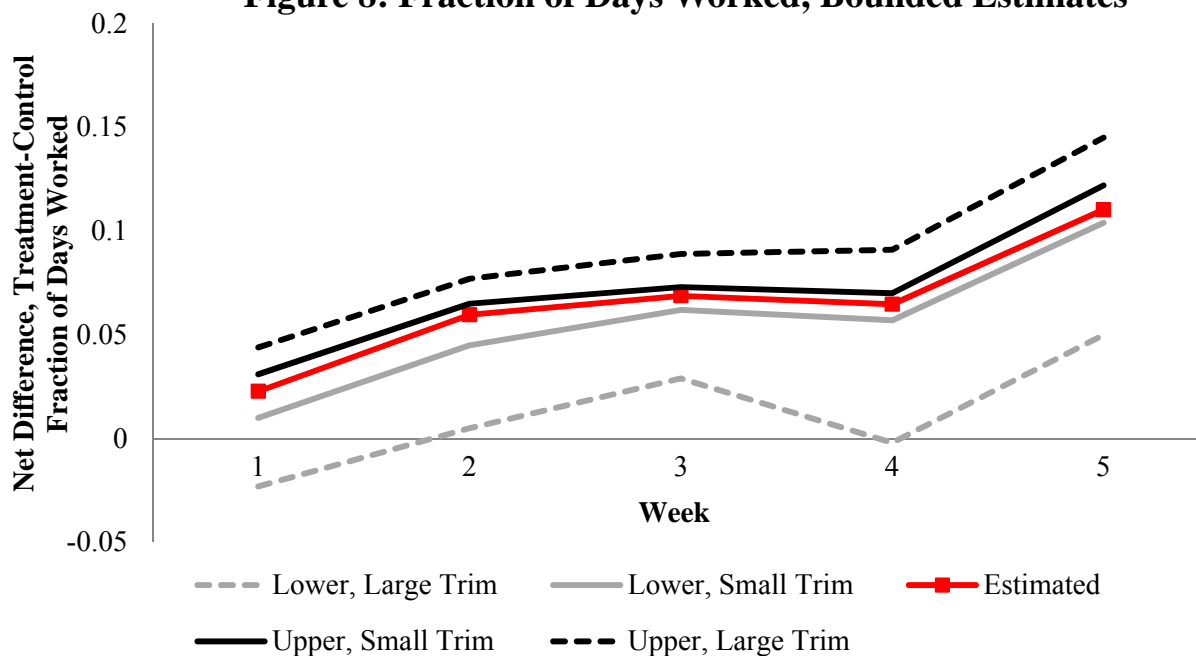
Notes: Earnings (in Rupees) are disaggregated into two categories: 1) earnings on physical laboratory tasks, 2) earnings on cognitive laboratory tasks. Tasks were compensated according to performance. The figure is based on the regression results displayed in Table 6, Columns (2) and (3). Control participants earned an average of Rs. 113 on cognitive tasks and Rs. 166 on physical tasks at enrollment. Error bars measure 95 percent confidence intervals.

**Figure 7: Rickshaw Driver Body Mass Index**



Note: Figure is based on measurements taken at enrollment.

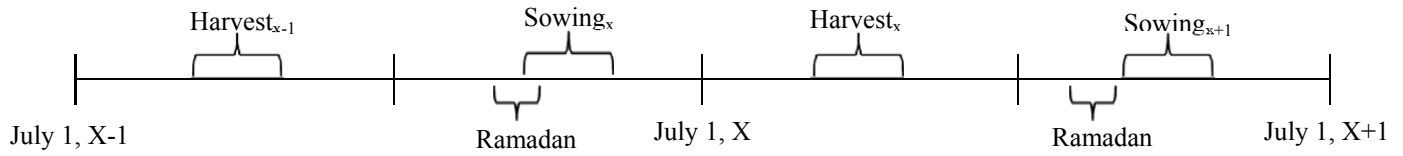
**Figure 8: Fraction of Days Worked, Bounded Estimates**



Notes: This figure is drawn from the results in Table 5, Column (1), which provides the point estimates of the changes in days worked without any corrections for attrition (“Estimated”) and Table 7a, Columns (1) thru (4) which provides the bounded estimates of the changes in days worked (the “Trimmed” estimates).

## Figure 9: Overlap Between Ramadan and Cropping Cycles , Calculation Examples

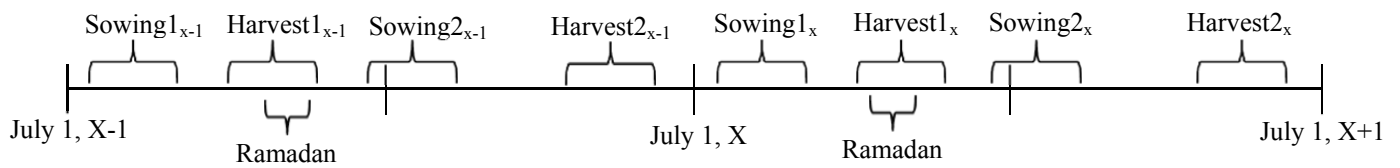
### Example 1



Overlap fraction Sowing, Year X = 0.4

Overlap fraction Harvest, Year X = 0

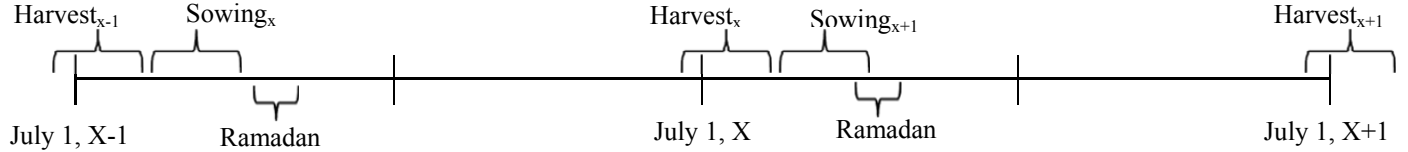
### Example 2



Overlap fraction Sowing, Year X = 0

Overlap fraction Harvest, Year X = 1

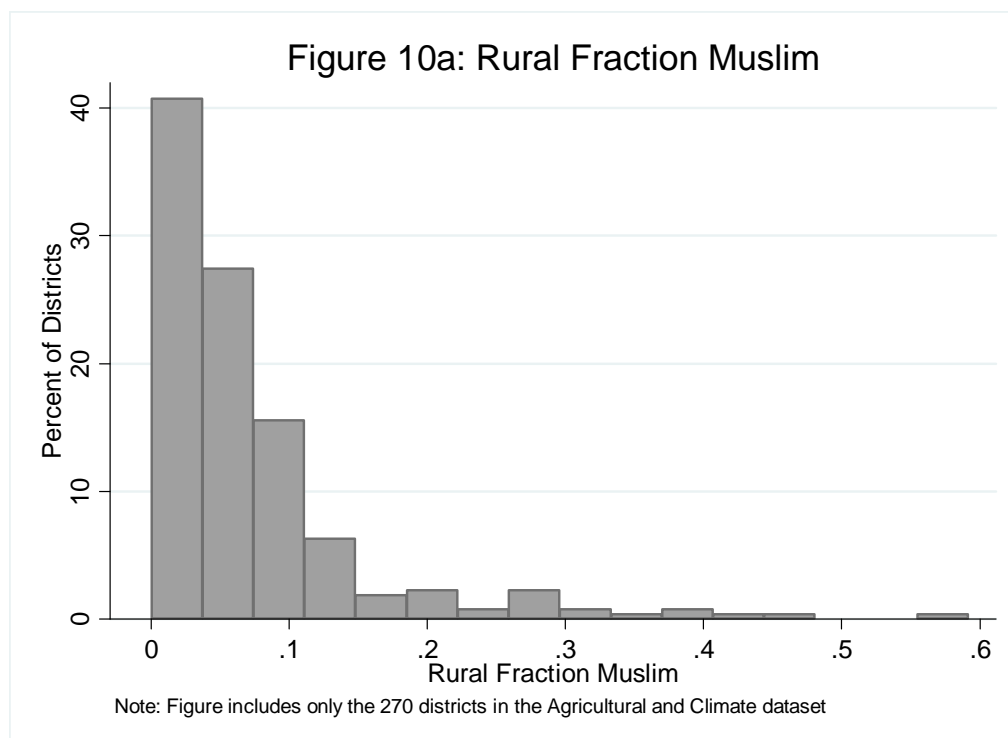
### Example 3



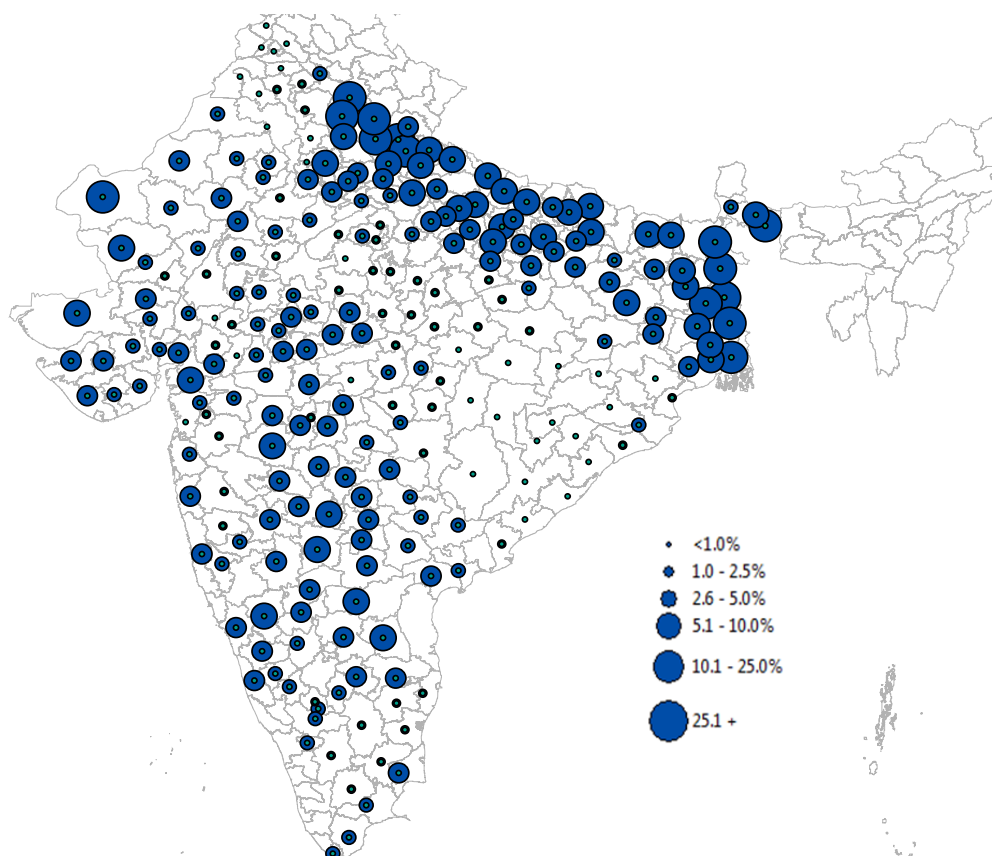
Overlap fraction Sowing, Year X = 0

Overlap fraction Harvest, Year X = 0

Notes: Agricultural years run from July 1 to June 30. A description of the overlap calculation procedure is provided in Appendix B.

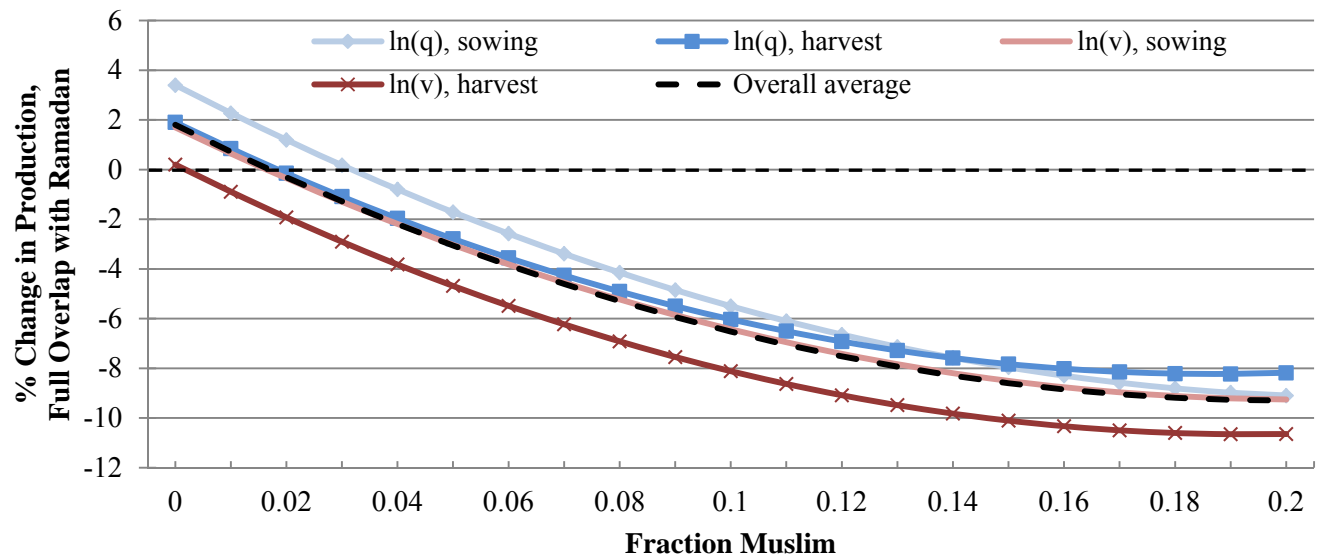


**Figure 10b: Geographic Distribution of Muslims in India**

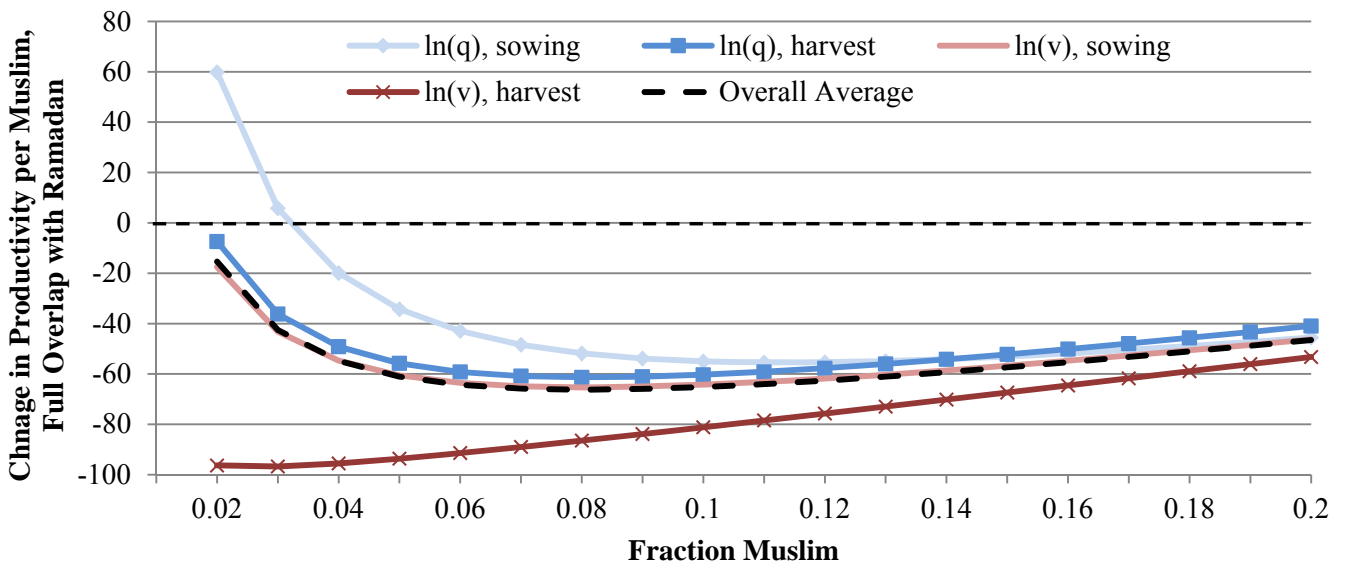


Note: Includes only the 270 districts included in the Indian Agriculture and Climate Dataset

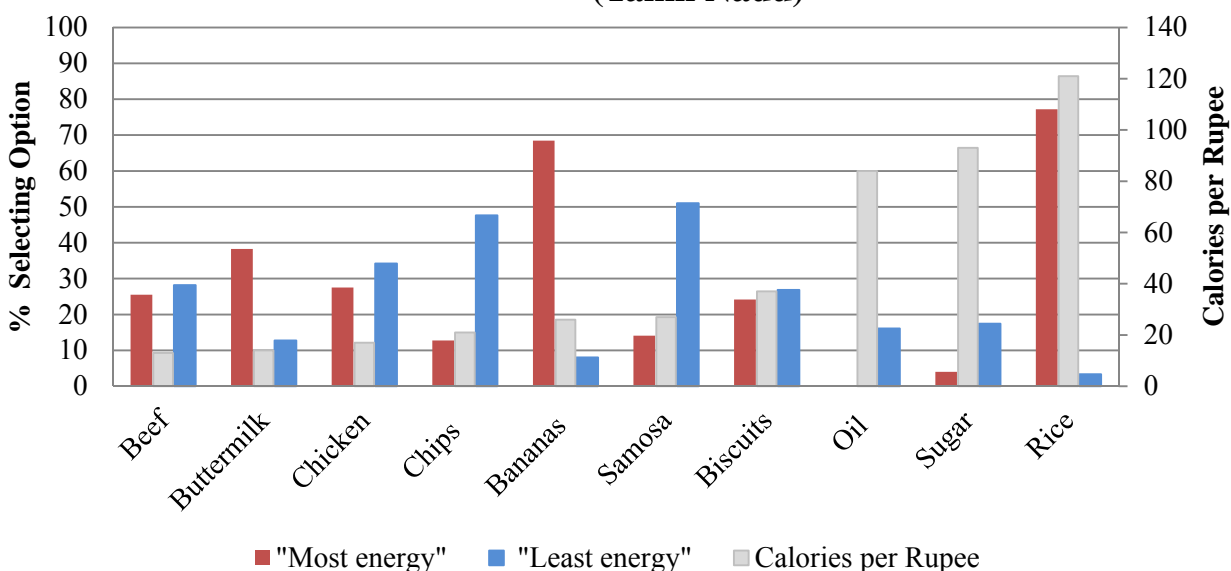
**Figure 11: Production Declines by Fraction Muslim**



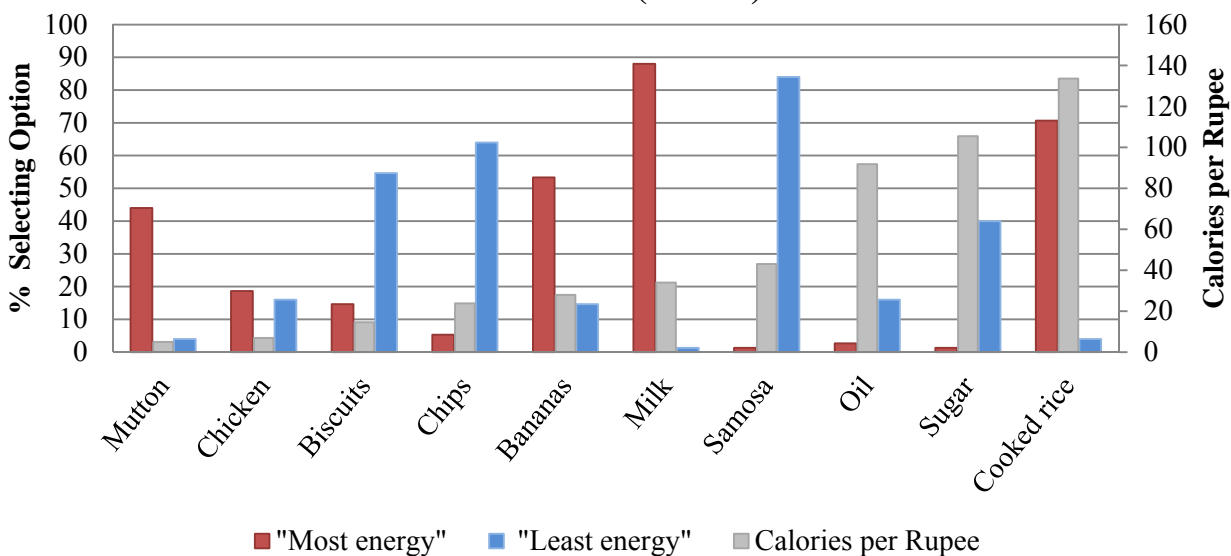
**Figure 12: Change in Productivity per Muslim Individual**



**Figure 13a: Participants' Knowledge of Caloric Density  
(Tamil Nadu)**



**Figure 13b: Participants' Knowledge of Caloric Density  
(Orissa)**



Notes: All food photographs used were printed to scale for participants. In addition, the descriptive labels, including amounts which are not displayed here, were read aloud to each participant. Participants were paid a small fee for each correct response. Demographics of survey respondents are included in Table A14, Column (1).



**Figure 14: Examples of Pairwise Comparison to Identify High Caloric Density Foods**



**A. Raw tomato (200g)**



**B. Raw onion (100g)**



**A. 18 Butter biscuits (Medium round, 148g)**



**B. 1 Plate pongal (256g)**

Notes: All food photographs were printed to scale for participants. In addition, the descriptive labels were read aloud to each participant. Participants were paid a small fee for each correct response. Demographics of survey respondents are included in Table A14, Column (1).

## 9 Tables

**Table 1: Characteristics of RCT Participants at Enrollment**

| Experimental Condition                  | (1)<br>Control     | (2)<br>Treatment   | (3)<br>Difference |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| BMI                                     | 17.87<br>[1.41]    | 17.73<br>[1.39]    | -0.14<br>[0.19]   |
| Age                                     | 45.63<br>[10.94]   | 46.26<br>[9.37]    | 0.63<br>[1.40]    |
| Number of household members             | 3.42<br>[2.32]     | 3.40<br>[2.28]     | -0.02<br>[0.32]   |
| Migrant (binary)                        | 0.29<br>[0.46]     | 0.22<br>[0.42]     | -0.07<br>[0.06]   |
| Rooms in house                          | 1.41<br>[0.96]     | 1.44<br>[1.07]     | 0.03<br>[0.14]    |
| Number of small appliances              | 3.77<br>[2.16]     | 4.08<br>[2.54]     | 0.31<br>[0.33]    |
| Ration card (binary)                    | 0.74<br>[0.44]     | 0.69<br>[0.47]     | -0.05<br>[0.06]   |
| Years as rickshaw driver                | 20.09<br>[11.53]   | 20.64<br>[11.84]   | 0.55<br>[1.61]    |
| Rent rickshaw (binary)                  | 0.77<br>[0.42]     | 0.76<br>[0.43]     | -0.01<br>[0.06]   |
| Earned yesterday                        | 183.28<br>[145.52] | 193.53<br>[160.59] | 10.25<br>[21.15]  |
| Work yesterday                          | 0.77<br>[0.42]     | 0.82<br>[0.39]     | 0.04<br>[0.06]    |
| Hours, conditional on working yesterday | 9.80<br>[3.61]     | 9.81<br>[3.40]     | 0.01<br>[0.56]    |
| Observations                            | 102                | 109                | 211               |

Notes:

1. In Columns (1) and (2), results are presented as mean [standard deviation]. Column (3) is presented as mean [standard error].
2. The hours conditional on working figures are based on smaller sample sizes of N = 74 for Control and N = 82 for Treatment.
3. Rickshaws are typically rented on a weekly or monthly basis.
4. No significant imbalances on baseline covariates were found between participants in each experimental condition.

**Table 2: Attendance Levels By Experimental Condition**

| Experimental Condition  | (1)     | (2)       |
|---|---------|-----------|
|   | Control | Treatment |
| Average fraction of days attended   | 0.87    | 0.76      |
| Fraction who ever return after enrollment   | 0.94    | 0.89      |
| Fraction who attend > 25% of days   | 0.94    | 0.83      |
| Fraction who attend > 50% of days   | 0.89    | 0.8       |
| Fraction who attend > 75% of days   | 0.82    | 0.69      |
| Attend endline  | 0.9     | 0.81      |
| Average fraction of days attended conditional on attending more than 4 days in the first week | 0.93    | 0.91      |

Notes:

1. See Figure 1 for a graphical representation of attendance over time

**Table 3: Baseline Characteristics of Attriters**

| Dependent Variable         | (1)                 | (2)              | (3)            | (4)            |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
|                            | Earn                | Work             | Hours if > 0   | BMI            |
| Treatment                  | 111.96**<br>[52.48] | 0.33**<br>[0.13] | 2.27<br>[1.66] | 0.43<br>[0.56] |
| Mean of dependent variable | 125.00              | 0.60             | 8.00           | 17.07          |
| Observations               | 38                  | 38               | 30             | 37             |
| R-squared                  | 0.11                | 0.16             | 0.06           | 0.02           |

Notes:

1. Attrition is defined as attending fewer than 4 days in the first week as attendance is high (greater than 90% in both conditions) and relatively stable for those who attend at least four days in the first week. However, results are qualitatively similar if other definitions of attrition are used.
2. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Hours if > 0" is the total number of hours worked, conditional on working. Each of these variables was collected at enrollment referencing the day prior to enrollment. "BMI" is body mass index, a measure of weight for height.
3. Robust standard errors are in brackets.
4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 4: Average Labor Supply and Earnings By Study Period**

| Dependent variable              | (1)<br>Average days<br>worked | (2)<br>Average<br>hours if > 0 | (3)<br>Average<br>hours | (4)<br>Average<br>earnings | (5)<br>ln(Average<br>earnings) |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Treatment (first half of study) | 0.02<br>[0.03]                | -0.38<br>[0.48]                | -0.13<br>[0.36]         | -1.92<br>[9.16]            | 0.01<br>[0.06]                 |
| Second half of study            | 0.02<br>[0.02]                | -0.49<br>[0.47]                | 0.09<br>[0.23]          | 3.61<br>[6.63]             | 0.00<br>[0.05]                 |
| Treatment*Second half of study  | 0.08***<br>[0.03]             | 0.81<br>[0.63]                 | 1.07***<br>[0.33]       | 19.61*<br>[10.88]          | 0.11*<br>[0.06]                |
| Mean of dependent variable      | 0.77                          | 8.73                           | 6.81                    | 179.78                     | 5.10                           |
| Observations                    | 370                           | 200                            | 370                     | 383                        | 383                            |
| R-squared                       | 0.14                          | 0.23                           | 0.19                    | 0.15                       | 0.15                           |

Notes:

1. This table provides the results of regressions testing for changes in labor supply and earnings, including enrollment and endline day earnings, among treated participants. The unit of observation is the participant-period (first or second half of the study). Outcome variables are averaged over all observations the period for each participant. "Work" captures the average fraction of days worked in that period. "Hours if >0" is the average number of hours worked, conditional on working. "Total hours" is the number of hours worked per day where hours are zero if the participant did not work. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver summed with enrollment or endline earnings, as applicable to the period, in Indian Rupees. This variable takes the value zero if the participant reported not working. The exchange rate is roughly 45 Rupees to 1 US Dollar. "ln(Average earnings)" is the log of average earnings where earnings is defined as previously described.

2. All regressions include stand location and enrollment month fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits as detailed in Appendix B. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar if these controls are omitted.

3. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 5: Rickshaw Driver Labor Supply and Earnings by Week**

| <b>Dependent Variable</b>  | (1)<br>Work      | (2)<br>Hours if >0 | (3)<br>Total hours | (4)<br>Earn       | (5)<br>ln(earn+1) | (6)<br>IHS(earn) |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Treated (Week 1)           | 0.02<br>[0.03]   | -0.54<br>[0.33]    | -0.18<br>[0.40]    | -4.37<br>[9.88]   | 0.08<br>[0.16]    | 0.10<br>[0.18]   |
| Treated*Week 2             | 0.04<br>[0.03]   | 0.30<br>[0.28]     | 0.61*<br>[0.37]    | -3.71<br>[9.77]   | 0.13<br>[0.17]    | 0.16<br>[0.19]   |
| Treated*Week 3             | 0.05<br>[0.04]   | 0.82**<br>[0.32]   | 1.05**<br>[0.41]   | 1.93<br>[10.53]   | 0.21<br>[0.19]    | 0.24<br>[0.21]   |
| Treated*Week 4             | 0.04<br>[0.03]   | 0.78**<br>[0.38]   | 0.96**<br>[0.41]   | 1.03<br>[10.58]   | 0.19<br>[0.18]    | 0.22<br>[0.20]   |
| Treated*Week 5             | 0.09**<br>[0.04] | 0.41<br>[0.38]     | 1.08**<br>[0.45]   | 18.80*<br>[11.11] | 0.43**<br>[0.21]  | 0.49**<br>[0.24] |
| Mean of dependent variable | 0.81             | 8.88               | 7.21               | 163.57            | 4.21              | 4.77             |
| Observations               | 5,675            | 4,604              | 5,669              | 5,675             | 5,675             | 5,675            |
| R-squared                  | 0.05             | 0.13               | 0.09               | 0.08              | 0.05              | 0.05             |

Notes:

1. This table provides the results of regressions testing for changes in labor supply and earnings as a rickshaw driver among treated participants. The participant-day is the unit of observation. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Hours if >0" is the total number of hours worked, conditional on working. "Total hours" is the number of hours worked per day where hours are zero if the participant did not work. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees. This variable takes the value zero if the participant did not work. The exchange rate is roughly 45 Rupees to 1 US Dollar. "ln(earn+1)" is the log of earnings + 1 where earnings is defined as previously described. "IHS(earn)" is the inverse hyperbolic sine of earnings.

2. All regressions include stand location, calendar week, and study week fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits which are detailed in Appendix B. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar if these controls are omitted.

3. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 6: Earnings From Enrollment and Endline Tasks**

| <b>Dependent Variable</b>  | (1)<br>Total Pay   | (2)<br>Cognitive<br>pay | (3)<br>Physical<br>pay | (4)<br>Total Pay   | (5)<br>Cognitive<br>pay | (6)<br>Physical<br>pay |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Treatment (Enrollment)     | 0.29<br>[11.62]    | 13.72*<br>[7.03]        | -13.43<br>[8.19]       | 21.04<br>[17.49]   | 21.20*<br>[10.97]       | -0.16<br>[11.84]       |
| Endline                    | 12.64<br>[9.39]    | 30.18***<br>[4.45]      | -17.45**<br>[8.22]     | 33.68**<br>[14.60] | 31.73***<br>[7.26]      | 2.15<br>[12.50]        |
| Low BMI                    |                    |                         |                        | 15.90<br>[17.47]   | 1.33<br>[9.82]          | 14.57<br>[13.18]       |
| Treatment*Endline          | 24.95**<br>[11.68] | -0.67<br>[6.49]         | 25.53**<br>[9.90]      | -0.74<br>[17.95]   | 2.76<br>[9.82]          | -3.70<br>[14.81]       |
| Low BMI*Treatment          |                    |                         |                        | -33.42<br>[23.44]  | -11.75<br>[14.35]       | -21.67<br>[16.28]      |
| Low BMI*Endline            |                    |                         |                        | -35.54*<br>[18.84] | -2.62<br>[9.20]         | -33.12**<br>[16.32]    |
| Low BMI*Treatment*Endline  |                    |                         |                        | 41.25*<br>[23.46]  | -5.17<br>[12.99]        | 46.62**<br>[19.57]     |
| Mean of dependent variable | 278.6              | 112.88                  | 165.72                 | 269                | 112.07                  | 156.93                 |
| Observations               | 389                | 390                     | 389                    | 387                | 388                     | 387                    |
| R-squared                  | 0.03               | 0.08                    | 0.02                   | 0.04               | 0.08                    | 0.03                   |

Notes:

1. This table presents results of regressions of participant earnings on laboratory tasks as a function of time in the study (enrollment or endline day) and treatment status. Tasks were compensated according to performance. "Total Pay" is the total earned payment from participation in the enrollment (endline) tasks in Indian Rupees. "Cognitive pay" is the total earned payment from participation in the subset of tasks during enrollment (endline) which were cognitive. Similarly, "Physical pay" is the earned payment on physical tasks. The exchange rate is roughly 45 Rupees to 1 US Dollar. The tasks and their designation as Cognitive or Physical is included in Appendix A, Table A1. The participant day is the unit of observation.

2. "Low BMI" is defined as BMI < 18.5, the WHO cutoff for "underweight."

3. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 7a: Bounds, Rickshaw Driver Labor Supply and Earnings**

|                            | (1)                | (2)    | (3)    | (4)    | (5)         | (6)     | (7)     | (8)     |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|---------|---------|---------|
| <b>Dependent Variable</b>  | <b>Days Worked</b> |        |        |        | <b>Earn</b> |         |         |         |
| <b>Bound</b>               | Lower              | Lower  | Upper  | Upper  | Lower       | Lower   | Upper   | Upper   |
| <b>Trimming percentage</b> | 15.9               | 5.3    | 5.3    | 15.9   | 15.9        | 5.3     | 5.3     | 15.9    |
| Treated (Week 1)           | -0.02              | 0.01   | 0.03   | 0.04   | -19.03**    | -10.25  | -0.98   | 8.14    |
|                            | [0.03]             | [0.03] | [0.03] | [0.03] | [9.52]      | [9.65]  | [9.19]  | [9.02]  |
| Treated*Week 2             | 0.03               | 0.04   | 0.03   | 0.03   | -2.90       | -3.72   | 2.48    | 4.65    |
|                            | [0.03]             | [0.03] | [0.03] | [0.04] | [9.87]      | [9.67]  | [9.49]  | [9.29]  |
| Treated*Week 3             | 0.05               | 0.05   | 0.04   | 0.05   | 4.81        | 3.90    | 6.22    | 7.33    |
|                            | [0.03]             | [0.04] | [0.04] | [0.04] | [10.64]     | [10.41] | [9.99]  | [10.32] |
| Treated*Week 4             | 0.02               | 0.05   | 0.04   | 0.05   | -0.90       | 2.20    | 9.29    | 10.94   |
|                            | [0.03]             | [0.03] | [0.04] | [0.04] | [10.75]     | [10.53] | [9.94]  | [10.22] |
| Treated*Week 5             | 0.07*              | 0.09** | 0.09** | 0.10** | 20.08*      | 20.61*  | 20.02*  | 22.41** |
|                            | [0.04]             | [0.04] | [0.04] | [0.04] | [11.35]     | [10.94] | [10.88] | [11.17] |
| Mean of dependent variable | 0.80               | 0.81   | 0.82   | 0.84   | 151.01      | 157.32  | 165.36  | 170.96  |
| Observations               | 5,291              | 5,602  | 5,501  | 5,199  | 5,294       | 5,602   | 5,523   | 5,196   |
| R-squared                  | 0.05               | 0.05   | 0.05   | 0.05   | 0.10        | 0.09    | 0.07    | 0.07    |

Notes:

1. This table provides the bounded estimates of changes in labor supply and earnings for treated participants over time. The participant-day is the unit of observation. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees.
2. Attrition was greater in the treated condition, hence observations were trimmed from the Control condition. Trimming percentages were calculated in according with Lee (2003). Because attrition can be measured in multiple ways given the panel nature of the data, five measures of attrition (never return after the first day, do not attend endline, and attend less than X% of the days where X is 25, 50, or 75) were created and the smallest and largest trimming percentages (5.3% and 15.9%) were used as outer bounds.
3. "Bound" indicates whether observations were removed from the top of the control distribution, resulting in an upper bound on the treatment effect ("Upper"), or bottom of the control distribution, leading to a lower bound on the treatment effect ("Lower").
4. The metric used for the distribution of outcomes was the average days worked (earnings) over all observations for an individual. All individuals have at least one observation because all participants provided labor supply information at enrollment.
5. All regressions include stand location, calendar week, and study week fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar if these controls are omitted.
6. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.
7. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table 7b: Bounds, Earnings From Enrollment and Endline Tasks**

| <b>Dependent Variable</b>  | (1)                | (2)                |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                            | Total Pay          |                    |
| <b>Bound</b>               | Lower              | Upper              |
| Treatment                  | -19.30*<br>[11.22] | 23.79**<br>[10.34] |
| Endline                    | 6.51<br>[10.16]    | 28.22***<br>[8.64] |
| Treatment*Endline          | 31.09**<br>[12.30] | 9.38<br>[11.08]    |
| Mean of dependent variable | 298.19             | 255.1              |
| Observations               | 363                | 365                |
| R-squared                  | 0.03               | 0.07               |

Notes:

1. This table provides the bounded estimates of changes in earnings in laboratory tasks by treatment status and day in the study (enrollment or endline). Tasks were compensated according to performance. "Total Pay" is the total earned payment from participation in the enrollment (endline) tasks in Indian Rupees.

2. Attrition was greater in the treated condition, hence observations were trimmed from the Control condition. Trimming percentages were calculated in according with Lee (2003) with attrition in each experimental condition calculated as the percentage of individuals not attending endline.

3. "Bound" indicates whether observations were removed from the top of the control distribution, resulting in an upper bound on the treatment effect ("Upper"), or bottom of the control distribution, leading to a lower bound on the treatment effect ("Lower").

4. The metric used for the distribution of outcomes was the total earnings on all enrollment tasks for an individual.

5. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

6. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$



**Table 8: Daily Calories per Capita in Rural Agricultural Households**

| <b>Dependent variable</b>                   | (1)                                   | (2)                  |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
|   | Daily Per Capita Calorie Availability |                      |
| <b>Topcoding Method</b>                     | No topcoding                          | At 99th percentile   |
| Muslim                                      | -107.5***<br>[41.54]                  | -92.46***<br>[28.86] |
| Full survey period overlaps Ramadan         | 455.1*<br>[259.1]                     | 427.2<br>[271.5]     |
| Muslim*Full survey period overlaps Ramandan | -612.6<br>[384.8]                     | -725.5**<br>[368.9]  |
| Mean of Dependent Variable                  | 2263.49                               | 2200.51              |
| Observations                                | 36,618                                | 36,618               |
| R-squared                                   | 0.1                                   | 0.21                 |

Notes:

1. This table tests for changes in caloric consumption during Ramadan in Muslim households. The dependent variable is per capita daily caloric availability. Column (1) makes no adjustments to reported values. Column (2) reassigns values above the 99th percentile, conditional on having positive consumption of the food item, to the 99th percentile of consumption conditional on having positive consumption. Topcoding is done by food item before aggregating across the food items.
2. The sample is drawn from the Indian National Sample Survey, Schedule 1 (consumption), rounds 60, 62, and 64 and is limited to households with survey periods with no overlap or full (29 day) overlap between the survey period and Ramadan. These rounds are included because they contain survey dates while earlier rounds do not.
3. All regressions include district-year fixed effects and month of interview fixed effects. In addition, indicator variables for other major religions and their interaction terms with overlap between the survey period and Ramadan as well as overlap between the survey period and Eid (to address the fact that food purchases are lumpy and made in advance) and the interaction between this variable and the religion indicators are included in the regressions but omitted from the table for simplicity.
4. NSS sampling weights are used and are reweighted to weight each round of the survey equally.
5. Results are similar using other methods of topcoding and winsorizing. See table Appendix A, Table A7 for additional robustness checks.
6. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.
7. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table 9: Effect of Overlap Between Ramadan and Cropping Cycles on Output**

|  | (1)                  | (2)                  | (3)                  |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Crop(s)</b>                         | All                  | All                  | Rice only            |
| <b>Dependent Variable</b>              | ln(q)                | ln(value)            | ln(q)                |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing  | -0.017*<br>[0.01]    | -0.028***<br>[0.01]  | -0.058***<br>[0.016] |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest | -0.025***<br>[0.009] | -0.044***<br>[0.009] | -0.041***<br>[0.015] |
| Mean of dependent variable             | 1.517                | 1.837                | 3.91                 |
| Observations                           | 103,104              | 103,088              | 7,741                |

Notes:

1. This table tests for changes in agricultural output in each district-crop-year as a function of overlap between Ramadan and the sowing and harvesting season for that crop-district-year. Overlap is defined as the fraction of Ramadan covered by the sowing (harvesting) season such that multiplying coefficients by 100 produces the decline associated with complete overlap between Ramadan and the season. A more detailed description of calculation of the overlap variables is included in Appendix B.
2. The dependent variables are: Columns (1) and (3), log production in thousands of tons, and Column (2), log value of production (in 1,000,000 Rs deflated to 1973). Columns (1) and (2) include all 18 crops while Column (3) is limited to rice only. Rice is both the most commonly consumed staple grain and the most economically important crop in India.
3. Columns (1) and (2) include district-crop, district-year, and crop-year fixed effects. Column (3) includes fixed effects for district and year. In addition, all regressions include time varying controls for average rainfall and temperature during the sowing and harvesting seasons, two month leads to each season, and a two month lag following the sowing season are included.
4. The agricultural data are from the India Agriculture and Climate data set. Crop cycles are from Donaldson (2013). Weather data are from the University of Delaware monthly rainfall and temperature series taken for the centroid of each district.
5. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.
6. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table 10: Effect of Overlap Between Ramadan and Cropping Cycles on Output, District-Year Aggregation**

| <b>Dependent Variable</b>              | (1)<br>ln(q)         | (2)<br>ln(value)     |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing  | -0.060***<br>[0.013] | -0.035**<br>[0.014]  |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest | -0.039***<br>[0.014] | -0.066***<br>[0.016] |
| Mean of dependent variable             | 5.807                | 5.96                 |
| Observations                           | 8,636                | 8,636                |

Notes:

1. This table tests for changes in agricultural output in each district-year as a function of overlap between Ramadan and the sowing and harvesting seasons for that district-year. Overlap at the district-year level is defined as weighted sum of the overlap between Ramadan and each of the 18 crops where the weights are the average fraction of production that crop accounts for in all years excluding the current year. A more detailed description of calculation of the overlap variables for each crop is included in Appendix B.

2. The dependent variables are log production in thousands of tons in Column (1) and log value of production (in 1,000,000 Rs deflated to 1973) in Column (2).

3. Regressions include district and year fixed effects as well as vector of time-varying controls for monthly rainfall and temperature during both the current and leading agricultural year (to account for long crop cycles).

4. The agricultural data are from the India Agriculture and Climate data set. Crop cycles are from Donaldson (2013). Weather data are from the University of Delaware monthly rainfall and temperature series taken for the centroid of each district.

5. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**Table 11: Heterogeneity in Production Declines by Fraction Muslim**

| Dependent Variable  | (1)<br>ln(q)        | (2)<br>ln(q)         | (3)<br>ln(value)    | (4)<br>ln(value)     |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing                               | 0.023<br>[0.029]    | 0.034**<br>[0.015]   | 0.009<br>[0.029]    | 0.017<br>[0.015]     |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing*Above 50th percentile Muslim  | -0.078**<br>[0.034] |                      | -0.072**<br>[0.036] |                      |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing*Fraction Muslim               |                     | -1.155***<br>[0.203] |                     | -1.078***<br>[0.207] |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing*Fraction Muslim squared       |                     | 2.65***<br>[0.429]   |                     | 2.651***<br>[0.439]  |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest                              | 0.002<br>[0.018]    | 0.019<br>[0.013]     | -0.012<br>[0.019]   | 0.002<br>[0.013]     |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest*Above 50th percentage Muslim | -0.052**<br>[0.025] |                      | -0.062**<br>[0.026] |                      |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest*Fraction Muslim              |                     | -1.082***<br>[0.192] |                     | -1.121***<br>[0.198] |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest*Fraction Muslim squared      |                     | 2.889***<br>[0.432]  |                     | 2.893***<br>[0.46]   |
| Mean of dependent variable  | 1.517               | 1.517                | 1.837               | 1.837                |
| Observations  | 103,104             | 103,104              | 103,088             | 103,088              |

Notes:

1. This table tests for changes in agricultural production in each district-crop-year as a function of the fraction of Ramadan covered by the sowing (harvesting) season and the interaction of that variable with various indicators for the fraction of Muslims in the district. Columns (1) and (3) interact the overlap variable with an indicator for the district having an above median fraction of Muslims. Columns (2) and (4) interact the overlap variable with a continuous variable for the fraction Muslim as well as the square of this variable. A more detailed description of calculation of the overlap variables is included in Appendix B.
2. Quantities (Columns (1) and (2)) are in log thousands of tons and values (Columns (3) and (4)) are in log 1,000,000 Rs deflated to 1973.
3. The net decline in production and in productivity per Muslim at each fraction Muslim based in the estimates in Columns (2) and (4) are plotted in Figures 11 and 12, respectively.
4. All fraction Muslim variables are based on the fraction of Muslims in rural portions of each district in 1961. The median district is roughly 5 percent Muslim. Further distributional information is provided in Figures 10a and 10b and Appendix A, Table A12.
5. All regressions include district-crop, district-year, and crop-year fixed effects. In addition, time varying controls for average rainfall and temperature during the sowing and harvesting seasons, two month leads to each season, and a two month lag following the sowing season are included.
6. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.
7. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table 12: Persistence of Declines in Output Following Ramadan (and Eid)**

|   | (1)                | (2)               | (3)                  | (4)                 |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Eid length</b>                             | Short (2 day) Eid  | Long (4 day) Eid  | Short (2 day) Eid    | Long (4 day) Eid    |
| <b>Dependent Variable</b>                     | ln(q)              | ln(q)             | ln(v)                | ln(v)               |
| Fraction 1st week post Eid covered by sowing  | -0.016<br>[0.017]  | -0.014<br>[0.017] | -0.022<br>[0.017]    | -0.023<br>[0.017]   |
| Fraction 2nd week post Eid covered by sowing  | -0.016<br>[0.017]  | -0.018<br>[0.017] | -0.026<br>[0.018]    | -0.025<br>[0.017]   |
| Fraction 1st week post Eid covered by harvest | -0.023*<br>[0.014] | -0.004<br>[0.013] | -0.043***<br>[0.014] | -0.027**<br>[0.014] |
| Fraction 2nd week post Eid covered by harvest | 0.011<br>[0.014]   | -0.006<br>[0.013] | 0.024*<br>[0.014]    | 0.011<br>[0.013]    |
| Mean of dependent variable                    | 1.517              | 1.517             | 1.837                | 1.837               |
| Observations                                  | 103,104            | 103,104           | 103,088              | 103,088             |

Notes:

1. This table provides a test of whether declines in production during Ramadan are due to low caloric intake, which causes longer lasting decreases in productivity, or other potential confounds including dehydration or sleep deprivation, from which recovery is rapid, or time spent on religious activities during the holiday. To accomplish this, this table examines changes in agricultural production (in log thousands of tons) in each district-crop-year as a function of the overlap between the first and second week following Eid (the holiday following Ramadan) and the sowing (harvesting) season for that crop-district-year.

2. Eid is defined as a two day period in Columns (1) and (3) a four day period in Columns (2) and (4). These formulations are used because the holiday is lunar so the exact day of Eid will depend on the sighting of the crescent moon, which varies across locations. I build in a one day buffer to account for the uncertainty in sighting the moon. In addition, while the official holiday is only one day, some individuals continue to celebrate for up to three days. Hence, to span the possible durations of the holiday, I examine periods following both a two day and a four day lag for the Eid holiday.

3. All regressions include district-crop, district-year, and crop-year fixed effects. In addition, time varying controls for average rainfall and temperature during the sowing and harvesting seasons, two month leads to each season, and a two month lag following the sowing season are included.

4. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.

5. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$ .

**Table 13: Labor Supply and Earnings as a Test of Religious Obligations Driving Production Declines**

| Sample<br>Dependent variable                          | (1)                           | (2)                | (3)                  | (4)                       | (5)               | (6)                 |
|---|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
|   | ICRISAT Agricultural Laborers |                    |                      | NSS Agricultural Laborers |                   |                     |
|   | Labor days                    | Average work hours | ln(Total earnings)   | Labor days                | Total earnings    | Ln(Total earnings)  |
| Days overlap between survey period and Ramadan        | -0.039<br>[0.035]             | -0.002<br>[0.001]  | -0.004***<br>[0.001] | -0.004<br>[0.047]         | -0.689<br>[2.798] | 0.039***<br>[0.015] |
| Muslim  |                               |                    |                      | -0.025<br>[0.051]         | -1.775<br>[4.551] | 0.013<br>[0.025]    |
| Muslim*Days overlap between survey period and Ramadan | 0.155*<br>[0.089]             | -0.003<br>[0.011]  | 0.002<br>[0.006]     | 0.077***<br>[0.024]       | -1.775<br>[1.730] | 0.01<br>[0.017]     |
| Mean of dependent variable                            | 21.752                        | 21.874             | 17.921               | 5.852                     | 103.391           | 5.521               |
| Number of individuals in sample                       | 1,146                         | 910                | 914                  | 121,400                   | 121,408           | 35,721              |
| Observations  | 31,432                        | 19,417             | 19,287               | 121,400                   | 121,408           | 35,721              |
| R-squared   | 0.699                         | 0.775              | 0.659                | 0.127                     | 0.062             | 0.314               |

Notes:

1. This table provides a test of whether time spent on religious or social activities causes reduced production during Ramadan by reducing the labor supply of Muslim individuals. Given the somewhat coarse nature of the labor supply variable in the NSS, the table also examines wages.
2. Columns (1)-(3) utilize data from the second generation ICRISAT village level studies survey. The sample includes only individuals who indicate that agricultural work is their primary occupation.
3. ICRISAT surveys participants approximately once per month and elicits information on labor supply, hours, and wages of the respondent during the month preceding the survey date. The number of days of overlap between Ramadan and the survey period is calculated as the number of days of Ramadan falling within the 30 days preceding the survey date. Labor supply is defined as the number of days of labor including both paid and unpaid labor but excluding domestic work in the past month. Wages are calculated as the sum of cash and in-kind wages during the month. Average hours worked is only reported for paid labor. If the participant reports more than one paid job, average hours worked is calculated as a weighted average across jobs. Religion is captured via the caste variable, which contains a category for Muslim individuals, because it is not directly reported.
4. Regressions in Columns (1)-(3) include individual fixed effects, a control for the number of days between surveys, and year-month of interview fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.
5. Results are similar in samples restricted to high labor demand periods, defined as responses for which the interview period had at least 15 days of overlap with a "high labor demand" period defined as the sowing or harvesting seasons for the crop with the greatest acreage by state, and for the full (including non-agricultural worker) sample. Results of these regressions are included in Appendix A, Table A13a.
6. Columns (4)-(6) utilize data from the Indian National Sample Survey (NSS), Schedule 10 (Employment), rounds 60, 61, 62, 64, and 66. These rounds are selected because they contain survey dates while earlier rounds do not. The sample includes individuals for whom agricultural work is their primary or secondary occupation.
7. The NSS Schedule 10 provides data on labor supply (to the half day) and wages of the respondent during the week preceding the survey date. Labor supply is calculated as the number of days of labor excluding domestic work in the past week.
8. Columns (4)-(6) include district-year fixed effects and month fixed effects. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.
9. Results are similar in samples restricting the survey periods to high labor demand periods, defined by the sowing or harvesting seasons for the crop with the greatest acreage by state. Results are also similar in samples of rural casual laborers. See Appendix A, Table A13b for these additional results.
10. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table 14: Test of Dehydration Driving Production Declines**

| Dependent variable  | (1)<br>ln(q)         | (2)<br>ln(v)         |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing   | -0.257***<br>[0.085] | -0.216**<br>[0.087]  |
| Average evaporative potential during sowing   | 0.001<br>[0.016]     | 0.003<br>[0.017]     |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by sowing*Average evaporative potential during sowing   | 0.016***<br>[0.006]  | 0.013**<br>[0.006]   |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest  | -0.242***<br>[0.059] | -0.203***<br>[0.061] |
| Average evaporative potential during harvest  | -0.006<br>[0.013]    | 0.002<br>[0.013]     |
| Fraction of Ramadan covered by harvest*Average evaporative potential during harvest | 0.012***<br>[0.004]  | 0.009**<br>[0.004]   |
| Mean of dependent variable  | 1.474                | 1.786                |
| Observations  | 58,443               | 58,443               |

Notes:

1. This table provides a test of whether declines in production during Ramadan are due dehydration. To accomplish this, this table examines changes in agricultural production (in log thousands of tons) in each district-crop-year as a function of the fraction of Ramadan covered by the sowing (harvesting) season for that crop-district-year fully interacted with a measure of weather features which impact dehydration (evaporative potential).
2. Evaporative potential (technically referred to as "Potential evapotranspiration" or PET) is a measure of the propensity of water to evaporate into the atmosphere. It is calculated based on three measures of temperature (min, max, mean), vapor pressure, and cloud cover following a method recommended by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). Because PET measures are not available for all districts in all years, PET is imputed for missing observations in states with at least one observation. The imputation procedure is described in Appendix B. If dehydration plays an important role in production declines the interaction between mean evaporative potential and overlap is expected to be significantly negative because greater evaporation should increase dehydration and decrease production.
3. The regression includes district-crop, district-year, and crop-year fixed effects. In addition, time varying controls for average rainfall and temperature during the sowing and harvesting seasons, two month leads to each season, and a two month lag following the sowing season are included.
4. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.
5. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table 15: Return on Investment for Increased Caloric Consumption Among Rickshaw Drivers**

| Sample               |                 | Earnings during study      | Earnings after study  | 6-month ROI |            |           |
|----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------|-----------|
| Cost of 700 calories |                 |                            |                       | 3.75        | 6.5        | 8.82      |
| (1)                  | full            | average                    | average               | -122        | -112       | -109      |
| (2)                  | full            | by period (with lab tasks) | 2nd period            | 321         | 143        | 79        |
| (3)                  | full            | weekly                     | 5th week              | 207         | 77         | 30        |
| (4)                  | high attendance | average                    | average               | 125         | 30         | -4        |
| (5)                  | high attendance | weekly                     | 5th week              | 380         | 177        | 104       |
| (6)                  | full            | average labor supply       | average labor supply  | 320         | 142        | 78        |
| (7)                  | full            | weekly labor supply        | 5th week labor supply | 515         | 255        | 161       |
| <b>Average</b>       |                 |                            |                       | <b>250</b>  | <b>102</b> | <b>49</b> |

Notes:

1) Earnings values are based on results in Tables 4 (by period estimates), 5 (weekly estimates) and A4 (average estimates). Values generated from changes in labor supply multiply changes in total hours found in the same tables by the average hourly wage in the control group.

2) Three cost estimates are used. The least expensive, 3.75 Rs. per calorie, assumes consumption of subsidized grains through the Public Distribution System (PDS). The medium cost, 6.5 Rs. per calorie, was assessed by visiting local shops and bargaining to purchase rice, a local staple grain, at prevailing market prices. There are less expensive staple grains. However, rice was used as a baseline because the other grains are less commonly consumed. The third estimate, 8.82 Rs. per calorie, was obtained by calculating the average price of a calorie in the National Sample Survey (NSS) Round 64 and adjusting the price for inflation using the consumer price index.

3) Returns are calculated as the sum of the earnings during the study period and from the end of the study period to 6 months minus the cost of 700 calories per day throughout the six month period, all divided by the same cost. No discounting is used because of the relatively short time horizons.

4) Given the cumulative nature of the response to increased intake, the preferred specification uses the direct earnings results as estimated each week and the intermediate cost of calories (6.5 Rs). This specification is located in Row (3).



**Table 16: Return on Investment to Caloric Intake in Agricultural Production**

| Year | Grain | Cost for 700 calories | Daily wage | Productivity gain | One Month ROI | Minimum ROI |
|------|-------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1956 | bajra | 0.18                  | 4.09       | 0.2               | 348           | 47          |
| 1971 | bajra | 0.17                  | 4.45       | 0.2               | 418           | 70          |
| 1986 | bajra | 0.14                  | 6.03       | 0.2               | 761           | 183         |
| 1956 | bajra | 0.18                  | 4.09       | 0.4               | 797           | 195         |
| 1971 | bajra | 0.17                  | 4.45       | 0.4               | 936           | 241         |
| 1986 | bajra | 0.14                  | 6.03       | 0.4               | 1623          | 466         |
| 1956 | rice  | 0.25                  | 4.09       | 0.2               | 232           | 9           |
| 1971 | rice  | 0.27                  | 4.45       | 0.2               | 228           | 8           |
| 1986 | rice  | 0.18                  | 6.03       | 0.2               | 577           | 123         |
| 1956 | rice  | 0.25                  | 4.09       | 0.4               | 565           | 119         |
| 1971 | rice  | 0.27                  | 4.45       | 0.4               | 556           | 116         |
| 1986 | rice  | 0.18                  | 6.03       | 0.4               | 1254          | 345         |

Notes:

- 1) This table calculates the expected return on investment to caloric intake based on the triple-difference estimates of changes in agricultural output.
- 2) Prices are obtained from the Indian Agricultural and Climate data and are deflated to 1973 Rupees.
- 3) Estimates of the caloric content of rice and bajra range from 3000 to 3600 calories per kilo depending on the specific variety of the grain and the source used (Gopalan et al 1989; NSS calorie conversion database). An average value of 3300 calories per kilo of grain is used in all calculations.
- 4) Rice is the commonly consumed grain and also the most expensive. Bajra (pearl millet) is a lower priced grain with similar nutritive properties commonly consumed by lower income individuals.
- 5) The lower productivity gain, 20 percent, is the expected change in productivity per Muslim individual based on overall changes in log output averaged across the point estimates for sowing and harvesting seasons in Table 9. The upper bound productivity gain is based on the specification examining heterogeneity in Table 11. Calculations for these changes in productivity are described in the text of the paper.
- 6) The Minimum ROI is calculated assuming that the individual consumes an additional 700 calories of grain per day throughout the year, but only experiences gains in productivity during the sowing and harvesting seasons. Sowing and harvesting seasons typically last approximately two months each, resulting in a total of 120 days. The "One Month ROI" is calculated assuming that the individual consumes an additional 700 calories per day and is more productive only during the sowing and harvesting seasons (or correspondingly, that he consumes more and earns more throughout the year). No discounting is used given the relatively short time horizons.

**Table 17: Rickshaw Drivers' Disutility of Labor**

| <b>Dependent Variable</b>  | <b>(1)<br/>Energy</b> | <b>(2)<br/>Number of Trips<br/>Accepted</b> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|
| Treated                    | 0.07*<br>[0.04]       | 0.39*<br>[0.20]                             |
| Mean of dependent variable | 3.24                  | 5.18  |
| Observations               | 5,945                 | 391   |
| R-squared                  | 0.05                  | 0.36  |

Notes:

1. This table reports the effect of treatment on participants' self-reported energy levels and willingness to accept offered rickshaw journeys to provide suggestive evidence for the impact of caloric consumption on the utility cost of labor supply.
2. "Energy" is the participants' self-reported daily energy levels on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). However, there was very low variability in reported energy levels with 3 and 4 accounting for 89 percent of responses. "Number of Trips Accepted" sums the number of cases in which a participant opted to take a trip of the six different types of trips offered during as an experimental task at enrollment and endline. One of the offers was randomly selected and the participants' choices were carried out.
3. Both regressions include controls for the week in the study. In addition, Column (1) controls for a baseline measure of energy, the participants self-assessment of whether low energy had been a problem for them in the week preceding enrollment.
4. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.
5. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Table 18: Knowledge of Returns to Higher Caloric Intake**

Question type 1: Do you think that if a person similar to you (i.e those in a similar profession, and with the same height and weight) ate [*Food type*] every day for the next [*Timeframe*] they would [*Labor outcome*] less, the same, or more [*Timeframe*] from now?

|     | Timeframe      | Food type | Labor Outcome | Less | Same | More | Unsure |
|-----|----------------|-----------|---------------|------|------|------|--------|
| (1) | "consistently" | n/a       | work          | 25.5 | 35.6 | 13.4 | 25.5   |
| (2) | 1 month        | meal      | work          | 12.8 | 26.8 | 27.5 | 32.9   |
| (3) | 1 month        | snacks    | work          | 10.7 | 31.5 | 23.5 | 34.2   |
| (4) | 1 month        | meal      | earn          | 3.4  | 40.3 | 20.8 | 35.6   |
| (5) | 1 month        | snacks    | earn          | 3.4  | 43.0 | 18.1 | 35.6   |
|     |                | Average   |               | 11.1 | 35.4 | 20.7 | 32.8   |

Question 2: In which, if any, of the following ways would eating more help you or others like you to work more?

|                             | Take fewer or shorter breaks | Work more days | Work longer hours | Work faster/harder | Look more for better jobs | Unsure or other |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| (6) percent of participants | 16.8                         | 7.4            | 46.3              | 22.2               | 0.7                       | 3.3             |

Notes:

1. Data are from a survey of 149 respondents with a BMI less than 20 who are active in the labor market. Demographic information for respondents is presented in Appendix A, Table A14, Column (2).

2. Participants were asked multiple variants of Question type 1 (provided at the top of the table) where items in brackets were completed with options from the lists below:

Food type: "an extra meal," "the equivalent of an extra meal in another form such as snacks like biscuits or nuts"

Time frame: "in one month," "consistently"

Labor outcome: "work," "earn"

3. Participants were paid Rs. 5 for each correct response ("more") according to the RCT results.

4. Only participants who had responded "more" to any of the variants of Question type 1 were asked Question 2. Respondents were paid Rs. 2 each for "work more days" and "work long hours."

**Table 19: Knowledge of Caloric Density of Common Food Items, Selection From a List**

| Food                           | Calories per<br>Rupee | "Most energy" | "Least energy" |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Panel A: Tamil Nadu (N = 147)  |                       |               |                |
| Beef (56g cooked, no sauce)    | 13                    | 25.5          | 28.2           |
| Buttermilk (400ml)             | 14                    | 38.3          | 12.8           |
| Chicken (76g cooked, no sauce) | 17                    | 27.5          | 34.2           |
| Chips (38g)                    | 21                    | 12.8          | 47.7           |
| Bananas (2 regular, 250 g)     | 26                    | 68.5          | 8.1            |
| Samosa (1 large, 83g)          | 27                    | 14.1          | 51.0           |
| Butter biscuits (10, 84g)      | 37                    | 24.2          | 26.8           |
| Sunflower oil (100ml)          | 84                    | 0.0           | 16.1           |
| Sugar (234g)                   | 93                    | 4.0           | 17.4           |
| Rice (908g cooked)             | 121                   | 77.2          | 3.4            |
| Panel B: Orissa (N = 75)       |                       |               |                |
| Mutton (19g)                   | 5                     | 44.0          | 4.0            |
| Chicken (32 g)                 | 7                     | 18.7          | 16.0           |
| Badam biscuits (73 g)          | 15                    | 14.7          | 54.7           |
| Chips (43 g)                   | 24                    | 5.3           | 64.0           |
| Bananas (274 g)                | 28                    | 53.3          | 14.7           |
| Milk (400 ml)                  | 34                    | 88.0          | 1.3            |
| Samosa (134 g)                 | 43                    | 1.3           | 84.0           |
| Sunflower oil (110ml)          | 92                    | 2.7           | 16.0           |
| Sugar (265 g)                  | 105                   | 1.3           | 40.0           |
| Rice (1005 g cooked)           | 134                   | 70.7          | 4.0            |

**Notes:**

1. Data are from a survey of 222 respondents with a BMI less than 20 who are active in the labor market. Demographic information for respondents is presented in Appendix A, Table A14, Column (1).
2. Participants were presented with a set of 10 photographs of the food items listed above. Each photo was printed to scale and labeled with a description including the name and quantity of the food. The written descriptions were also read to each participant. Each of the photographed items had the same cost (Rs. 10). Participants were asked to indicate which three items they believed had the "most energy" and which three items had the "least energy." Column (2) reports the percentage of respondents including the food item among the set of three with the "most energy" and Column (3) the percentage of respondents including the food item among the set of three with the "least energy."
3. Participants were paid Rs. 3 for each correct response to these questions.

**Table 20: Knowledge of Caloric Density of Common Food Items, Pairwise Comparisons**

| Food A                          | Food B                     | Correct response | Percent of Participants Correct | Difference in Calories | Ratio of Calories (larger/smaller) |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Panel A: Tamil Nadu (N = 149)   |                            |                  |                                 |                        |                                    |
| 1 banana (large, 168 g)         | one bun (medium, 36g)      | A                | 78.5                            | 71                     | 1.7                                |
| 1 tender coconut                | 6 bananas (1034g)          | B                | 23.5                            | 923                    | 8.0                                |
| butter biscuits (18, 150g)      | 1 plate pongal (256g)      | A                | 48.3                            | 308                    | 1.9                                |
| 1 cup of tea (83ml)             | 1 vada (medium, 42g)       | B                | 36.9                            | 95                     | 4.0                                |
| one bun (medium, 36g)           | 1 glass buttermilk (200ml) | A                | 28.9                            | 28                     | 1.4                                |
| tomato (100g)                   | onion (100g)               | B                | 42.3                            | 35                     | 2.8                                |
| gram flour (100g)               | 2 eggs (boiled, 96g)       | A                | 8.1                             | 224                    | 2.9                                |
| chicken (100g cooked, no sauce) | fried peanuts (100g)       | B                | 68.5                            | 368                    | 2.7                                |
| curd (100ml)                    | ghee (30ml)                | B                | 36.9                            | 207                    | 4.3                                |
| sambar (230ml)                  | kurma (165ml)              | B                | 20.8                            | 150                    | 2.2                                |
| Average, Tamil Nadu             |                            |                  | 39.3                            | 241                    | 3.2                                |
| Panel B: Orissa (N = 75)        |                            |                  |                                 |                        |                                    |
| 1 banana (medium, 59g)          | 1 bun (59g)                | B                | 45.3                            | 104                    | 2.7                                |
| 6 bananas (medium, 385g)        | 1 tender coconut           | A                | 53.3                            | 261                    | 3.0                                |
| curd (90g)                      | 2 buns (103g)              | B                | 34.7                            | 233                    | 5.3                                |
| 1 cup of tea (61ml)             | 2 vada (medium, 88.4g)     | B                | 66.7                            | 242                    | 11.6                               |
| 2 buns (103g)                   | 1 glass milk (145 mL)      | A                | 16.0                            | 163                    | 2.3                                |
| tomato (200g)                   | onion (100g)               | B                | 36.0                            | 15                     | 1.4                                |
| gram flour (165 g)              | 2 eggs (boiled, 86g)       | A                | 20.0                            | 457                    | 5.4                                |
| chicken (158g cooked)           | fried peanuts (340g)       | B                | 48.0                            | 1648                   | 5.8                                |
| curd (90g)                      | ghee (30g)                 | B                | 86.7                            | 209                    | 4.9                                |
| dali (260ml)                    | mixed vegetables (303g)    | B                | 42.7                            | 339                    | 5.0                                |
| Average, Orissa                 |                            |                  | 44.9                            | 367                    | 4.7                                |
| Average, Overall                |                            |                  | 41.2                            | 283.1                  | 3.7                                |

**Notes:**

1. Data is from a survey of 222 respondents with a BMI less than 20 who are active in the labor market. Demographic information for respondents is presented in Appendix A, Table A14, Column (1). The "Difference in Calories" column takes the absolute value of the difference in calories between Food A and Food B. "Ratio of Calories" divides the calories in the higher calorie item by the calories in the lower calorie item.
2. Participants were presented with the ten pairwise tradeoffs listed above and were asked to indicate which of the two foods in each comparison provided more energy. These tradeoffs were presented via life-size photographs as well as written and verbal descriptions. Foods in each pairwise comparison have the same cost.
3. Participants were paid Rs. 1 for each correct response.

## Appendix A

**Table A1: Experimental Tasks at Enrollment and Endline of RCT**

| Task Name             | Task Type | Task Description  | Notes   |
|-----------------------|-----------|---|---|
| Exercise cycle, short | Physical  | Participants cycled as far as possible in 2 minutes on an exercise cycle in the office. Payment was a function of distance covered.   | The proper use of the exercise cycle was demonstrated to each participant before they began.  |
| Exercise cycle, long  | Physical  | Participants were given 60 minutes to cycle as much or little as they would like. However, payment was a function of distance covered.  | The proper use of the exercise cycle was demonstrated to each participant before they began. Participants were provided with clean drinking water and a place to rest when not cycling. |
| Trip choices          | Physical  | Participants were first asked to make six choices between different sets of job opportunities using their cycle-rickshaws. A number was then drawn from a bowl to determine which of the choices is actually carried through. If a respondent selected a response that involved taking a load on that day, they completed that task immediately. If he selected a task that involves taking a load (or receiving a payment) in the future, that decision was noted in their record and he took the load (or was paid) on the appropriate day. | Each choice set contained an option to not take a trip. The participant did not receive a payment if he chose this option.  |
| Crossing out symbols  | Cognitive | Participants were given a workbook in which they were asked to locate and cross out specific symbols in a large matrix of randomly ordered symbols. This activity lasted 60 minutes. Participants could take breaks during this time but were paid as a positive function of the number of symbols correctly crossed out and a negative function of the number of symbols incorrectly crossed out.  | Symbol sheets were printed in large font to mitigate concerns about eyesight impacting performance.   |
| Job planning          | Cognitive | Participants were presented with a hypothetical set of six possible jobs of varying durations and monetary values. They were asked to identify which jobs they would select if they had one hour available to complete the jobs and wanted to maximize the amount earned. Payment was a direct function of the value of the jobs selected.  | If the sum of the duration of the jobs selected was greater than one hour, only those jobs which fit within an hour were included (and compensated).                                    |

**Table A1 (continued): Experimental Tasks at Enrollment and Endline of RCT**

| Task Name                        | Task Type | Task Description  | Notes  |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---|--|
| Dietary Recall                   | Survey    | <p>Dietary recall surveys elicited information on the food that the participant ate in a 24 hour period on the previous day. The survey followed a five step procedure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ask the participant to list of the foods and beverages consumed the previous day.</li> <li>2) Collect the time at which the foods and beverages were consumed.</li> <li>3) Probe for additional foods that might have been forgotten (e.g. snacks, side dishes, condiments).</li> <li>4) Gather a detailed description of the amount and specific types of the foods and beverages consumed.</li> <li>5) Final review of the information and probe for forgotten foods or details.</li> </ol> | <p>Step 4 is the most complex step. Participants were provided with a set of example containers for each type of food to help them estimate the amount consumed. For example, if a participant listed tea he was provided with a set of cups of varying sizes and asked to identify which was the closest to the amount consumed and to identify how full the cup was filled.</p> <p>The data on foods and beverages consumed was entered into a database which was run through a conversion program to translate the foods consumed into a total nutrient intake for the day.</p> |
| Enrollment/<br>Endline<br>Survey | Survey    | This survey elicited basic demographic information (e.g. age, household size, household assets), baseline work habits (e.g. whether the participant had any regular customers), risk preferences, anthropometric measures, general health and wellbeing, and alcohol and tobacco consumption.   |  |
| Daily Survey                     | Survey    | The survey elicited information about labor supply (whether the individual worked, and if so the hours worked and the number of trips taken) and earnings the previous day. In addition, participants were asked to rate their energy on a scale of 1 to 5 and to indicate the number of meals eaten the previous day. Because participants were not asked to visit the study office on Sunday, information about both Saturday and Sunday was reported on Monday.  |  |

**Table A2: Change in Caloric Intake During RCT**

| Dependent Variable         | (1)<br>Change in Calories<br>(Endline-Enrollment) | (2)<br>Meals      | (3)<br>Change in BMI<br>(Endline-Enrollment) |
|----------------------------|---|-------------------|--|
| Treated                    | 178.35<br>[235.16]                                | 0.15***<br>[0.04] | 0.20*<br>[0.12]                              |
| Mean of dependent variable | 158.48  | 2.73              | 0.05   |
| Observations               | 152   | 5,600             | 168  |
| R-squared                  | 0.00  | 0.02              | 0.02   |

Notes:

1. This table provides three measures of the effectiveness of the treatment at increasing caloric intake.

2. "Change in Calories" is the number of calories consumed in the 24-hour period before endline minus the number of calories consumed in the 24-hour period before enrollment. "Meals" is the number of meals eaten per day as reported daily by participants. "Change in BMI" is defined as a participant's BMI at endline (in the fifth week) minus their BMI at Enrollment.

3. Columns (1) and (3) have one observation per participant while in Column (2) the participant-day is the unit of observation. Standard errors are clustered by participant in Column (2).

4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table A3: Linear Trends in Cycle-rickshaw Driver Labor Supply and Earnings**

| Dependent variable         | (1)<br>Work         | (2)<br>Hours<br>if > 0 | (3)<br>Total<br>hours | (4)<br>Earn         | (5)<br>ln(earn+1)  | (6)<br>IHS(earn)   |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Treatment                  | 0.019<br>[0.021]    | -0.353*<br>[0.206]     | -0.086<br>[0.244]     | -11.722*<br>[6.282] | 0.034<br>[0.110]   | 0.047<br>[0.124]   |
| Treatment*Day in study     | 0.003***<br>[0.001] | 0.016*<br>[0.010]      | 0.036***<br>[0.012]   | 0.611**<br>[0.303]  | 0.013**<br>[0.005] | 0.015**<br>[0.006] |
| Mean of dependent variable | 0.81                | 8.88                   | 7.21                  | 163.57              | 4.21               | 4.77               |
| Observations               | 5,675               | 4,604                  | 5,669                 | 5,675               | 5,675              | 5,675              |
| R-squared                  | 0.081               | 0.144                  | 0.119                 | 0.112               | 0.086              | 0.086              |

Notes:

1. This table provides the results of regressions examining changes in labor supply and earnings among treated participants across time. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Hours if >0" is the total number of hours worked, conditional on working. "Total hours" is the number of hours worked per day where hours are zero if the participant did not work. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees. This variable takes the value zero if the participant did not work. "ln(earn+1)" is the log of earnings + 1 where earnings is defined as previously described. "IHS(earn)" is the inverse hyperbolic sine of earnings. "Day in study" indicates the number of days from enrollment for that participant. The participant-day is the unit of observation.

2. Regressions include stand location, calendar week, and study day fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits which are detailed in Appendix B. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar if these controls are omitted.

3. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1



**Table A4: Cycle-rickshaw Driver Labor Supply and Earnings**

| Dependent Variable         | (1)<br>Work       | (2)<br>Hours if >0 | (3)<br>Total hours | (4)<br>Earn     | (5)<br>ln(earn+1) | (6)<br>IHS(earn) |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Treatment                  | 0.07***<br>[0.02] | -0.07<br>[0.29]    | 0.57*<br>[0.34]    | -0.81<br>[8.92] | 0.27**<br>[0.12]  | 0.32**<br>[0.13] |
| Mean of dependent variable | 0.81              | 8.88               | 7.21               | 163.57          | 4.21              | 4.77             |
| Observations               | 5,675             | 4,604              | 5,669              | 5,675           | 5,675             | 5,675            |
| R-squared                  | 0.05              | 0.13               | 0.09               | 0.08            | 0.05              | 0.05             |

Notes:

1. This table provides the results of regressions testing for changes in labor supply and earnings among treated participants aggregating across the five weeks of the study. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Hours if >0" is the total number of hours worked, conditional on working. "Total hours" is the number of hours worked per day where hours are zero if the participant did not work. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees. This variable takes the value zero if the participant did not work. "ln(earn+1)" is the log of earnings + 1 where earnings is defined as previously described. "IHS(earn)" is the inverse hyperbolic sine of earnings. The participant-day is the unit of observation.

2. Regressions include stand location, calendar week, and study week fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits which are detailed in Appendix B. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar, if these controls are omitted.

3. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

4. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table A5: Cycle-rickshaw Driver Daily Earnings (High Attendance)**

| Dependent Variable         | (1)<br>Work     | (2)<br>Earn      |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Treated (Week 1)           | 0.02<br>[0.03]  | -0.26<br>[11.25] |
| Treated*Week 2             | 0.06*<br>[0.03] | 8.16<br>[10.26]  |
| Treated*Week 3             | 0.06<br>[0.04]  | 10.06<br>[11.42] |
| Treated*Week 4             | 0.05<br>[0.03]  | 5.06<br>[12.00]  |
| Treated*Week 5             | 0.09*<br>[0.05] | 20.53<br>[13.33] |
| Mean of dependent variable | 0.83            | 170.58           |
| Observations               | 3,883           | 3,883            |
| R-squared                  | 0.05            | 0.11             |

Notes:

1. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees. This variable takes the value zero if the participant did not work. The participant-day is the unit of observation.

2. The sample is limited to participants who had at least 90 percent attendance.

3. Regressions include stand location, calendar week, and study week fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar if these controls are omitted.

4. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.

5. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

**Table A6: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects by BMI**

|                            | (1)               | (2)                |
|----------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Dependent Variable</b>  | <b>Work</b>       | <b>Earn</b>        |
| Treatment                  | 0.03<br>[0.03]    | -5.65<br>[15.30]   |
| Low BMI                    | -0.07**<br>[0.03] | -26.76*<br>[15.67] |
| Low BMI*Treatment          | 0.07<br>[0.04]    | 9.20<br>[19.14]    |
| Mean of Dependent Variable | 0.81              | 163.34             |
| Observations               | 5,648             | 5,648              |
| R-squared                  | 0.05              | 0.09               |

Notes:

1. This table presents results of regressions of participants' labor supply and earnings as a function of treatment status and BMI.
2. "Work" is a binary variable indicating whether the participant worked that day. "Earn" is the total daily earnings as a rickshaw driver in Indian Rupees. This variable takes the value zero if the participant did not work. "Low BMI" is defined as a BMI under 18.5, the World Health Organization cutoff for being "underweight," at enrollment.
3. Regressions include stand location, calendar week, and study week fixed effects as well as controls for baseline work habits. Results are less precisely estimated, but qualitatively similar if these controls are omitted.
4. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.
5. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Table A7: Daily Calories per Capita in Rural Agricultural Households**

| <b>Dependent variable<br/>Topcoding Method</b> | (1)                  | (2)                  | (3)                                   | (4)  | (5)   | (6)                      |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------|
|  | No topcoding         | Above p99 to mean    | Daily Per Capita Calorie Availability |  |   | Winsorized at p1 and p99 |
|  |                      |                      | Above p99 to p99                      | Above p99 to mean, conditional on positive consumption | Above p99 to p99, conditional on positive consumption |                          |
| Muslim   | -107.5***<br>[41.54] | -96.84***<br>[28.13] | -89.49***<br>[27.49]                  | -106.7***<br>[28.88]                                   | -92.46***<br>[28.86]                                  | -82.57***<br>[27.34]     |
| Full survey period overlaps Ramadan            | 455.1*<br>[259.1]    | 279.8<br>[274.7]     | 395.8<br>[274.7]                      | 405.6<br>[303.0]                                       | 427.2<br>[271.5]                                      | 432.07*<br>[256.77]      |
| Muslim*Full survey period overlaps Ramadan     | -612.6<br>[384.8]    | -601.3*<br>[340.3]   | -620.2*<br>[336.9]                    | -880.2**<br>[400.6]                                    | -725.5**<br>[368.9]                                   | -545.35<br>[356.5]       |
| Mean of dependent variable                     | 2263.49              | 2026.52              | 2138.46                               | 2148.34  | 2200.51   | 2203.35                  |
| Observations                                   | 36,618               | 36,618               | 36,618                                | 36,618   | 36,618  | 36,618                   |
| R-squared                                      | 0.095                | 0.188                | 0.213                                 | 0.174  | 0.211   | 0.236                    |

Notes:

1. This table tests for changes in caloric consumption during Ramadan in Muslim households. The dependent variables are per capita daily caloric intake with six different methods of topcoding. All topcoding is done by food item before aggregating across the food items. Column (1) makes no adjustments to reported values. Column (2) reassigns values above the 99th percentile to the mean. Column (3) reassigns values above the 99th percentile to the 99th percentile. Column (4) reassigns values above the 99th percentile, conditional on having positive consumption of the food item, to the mean consumption conditional on having positive consumption. Column (5) is the same as Column (4) except the reassignment is to the 99th percentile, conditional on positive consumption. Column (6) is winsorized at the 1st and 99th percentiles.

2. The sample is drawn from the Indian National Sample Survey, Schedule 1 (consumption), rounds 60, 62, and 64 and is limited to households with survey periods with no overlap or full (29 day) overlap between the survey period and Ramadan. These rounds are included because they contain survey dates while earlier rounds do not.

3. All regressions include district-year fixed effects and month of interview fixed effects. In addition, indicator variables for other major religions and their interaction terms with overlap between the survey period and Ramadan as well as overlap between the survey period and Eid and the interaction between this variable and the religion indicators are included in the regressions but omitted from the table for simplicity.

4. NSS sampling weights are used and are reweighted to weight each round of the survey equally.

5. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.

6. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table A8: Summary Statistics for Crops in the Agricultural Analysis**

| Crop Name                   | (1)<br>Mean<br>production<br>by district | (2)<br>Mean value<br>by district | (3)<br>Percent of<br>districts with<br>positive<br>production | (4)<br>Sowing<br>start, SD | (5)<br>Sowing<br>end, SD | (6)<br>Harvest<br>start, SD | (7)<br>Harvest<br>end, SD |
|-----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bajra (pearl millet)        | 17.29                                    | 15.37                            | 79.70   | 24.26                      | 35.34                    | 28.47                       | 30.76                     |
| Barley                      | 9.02                                     | 8.00                             | 69.74   | 15.27                      | 19.26                    | 18.83                       | 17.57                     |
| Cotton                      | 3.74                                     | 9.38                             | 73.06   | 41.95                      | 45.38                    | 57.05                       | 59.64                     |
| Groundnut (peanut)          | 20.06                                    | 36.86                            | 92.99   | 32.54                      | 38.20                    | 31.64                       | 35.49                     |
| Gram (lentils, chickpeas)   | 18.19                                    | 23.62                            | 99.26   | 13.73                      | 18.93                    | 22.44                       | 21.54                     |
| Jowar (sorghum)             | 35.15                                    | 32.05                            | 87.45   | 50.28                      | 57.05                    | 52.80                       | 54.62                     |
| Jute                        | 2.93                                     | 5.06                             | 32.47   | 60.58                      | 49.09                    | 50.49                       | 43.00                     |
| Maize                       | 17.80                                    | 15.04                            | 98.52   | 31.46                      | 33.32                    | 34.96                       | 33.70                     |
| Other pulses                | 8.40                                     | 12.40                            | 78.97   | 41.56                      | 48.28                    | 45.57                       | 53.12                     |
| Potato                      | 20.14                                    | 11.33                            | 85.98   | 62.43                      | 62.22                    | 58.49                       | 58.56                     |
| Ragi (finger millet)        | 0.88                                     | 0.78                             | 11.07   | 41.87                      | 50.75                    | 40.67                       | 56.26                     |
| Rice                        | 134.61                                   | 162.93                           | 97.79   | 99.86                      | 88.17                    | 81.54                       | 82.70                     |
| Rapeseed and Mustard (oils) | 2.72                                     | 6.04                             | 87.08   | 17.80                      | 19.73                    | 24.71                       | 23.47                     |
| Sesamum (sesame)            | 1.21                                     | 3.33                             | 93.73   | 50.95                      | 54.10                    | 46.92                       | 52.71                     |
| Sugar                       | 46.87                                    | 62.98                            | 98.52   | 88.36                      | 102.80                   | 65.04                       | 67.13                     |
| Tobacco                     | 1.31                                     | 6.16                             | 90.77   | 60.04                      | 76.01                    | 60.00                       | 69.12                     |
| Tur (pigeon pea)            | 8.68                                     | 12.75                            | 89.30   | 27.29                      | 25.45                    | 48.01                       | 39.47                     |
| Wheat                       | 82.94                                    | 84.93                            | 95.94   | 10.57                      | 16.05                    | 19.95                       | 21.34                     |
| Average                     | 24.00                                    | 28.28                            | 81.24   | 42.82                      | 46.67                    | 43.75                       | 45.57                     |

Notes:

1) Production, Column (1), is in metric tons. Value, Column (2), is in 1,000,000 Rs deflated to 1973.

2) Columns (4) thru (7) provide the standard deviation of sowing and harvesting start and end dates to demonstrate the variation in the timing of cropping seasons.

**Table A9: Within District Variation in Cropping Cycles**

|                            | (1)<br>Sowing start | (2)<br>Sowing end | (3)<br>Harvest start | (4)<br>Harvest end |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| Average Standard Deviation | 74                  | 73                | 74                   | 75                 |
| Average Range              | 261                 | 258               | 233                  | 245                |

Notes:

1. This table displays measures of the variation of timing of cropping cycles for different crops within a district.

2. The "Average Standard Deviation" is calculated as the standard deviation of the element of the cropping cycle listed at the top of the column within each district averaged across all districts. Similarly, the "Average Range" is the range in the timing of that element of the cropping cycle within a district, averaged across districts.

3. Roughly 7 percent of crop-district combinations have more than one cropping cycle per year. All cycles are included in these figures (as well as all analyses).

**Table A10: Distribution of Fraction of Ramadan Covered by Sowing and Harvesting Seasons**

| Percentile | Fraction of Ramadan covered by Sowing | Fraction of Ramadan covered by Harvest |
|------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 50         | 0                                     | 0                                      |
| 75         | 0                                     | 0.03                                   |
| 90         | 0.86                                  | 0.93                                   |
| 95         | 1                                     | 1                                      |
| 99         | 1                                     | 1                                      |
| mean       | 0.17                                  | 0.17                                   |
| N          | 103,104                               | 103,104                                |

Notes:

1) This table provides distributional information for the primary independent variable of interest; the fraction of Ramadan covered by the labor intensive portions of the cropping season, sowing and harvesting.

2) The sample utilized for this table matches that of the primary specification listed in Table 9, Column (1).

**Table A11: Effect of Overlap Between Ramadan and Cropping Cycles (As a Fraction of the Season) on Output**

| Dependent Variable   | (1)<br>ln(q)        | (2)<br>ln(value)     | (3)<br>ln(q)         | (4)<br>ln(value)     |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Fraction of sowing covered by Ramadan                                  | 0.000<br>[0.019]    | -0.024<br>[0.02]     | 0.061***<br>[0.023]  | 0.034<br>[0.024]     |
| Fraction of sowing covered by<br>Ramadan*Above median fraction Muslim  |                     |                      | -0.13***<br>[0.029]  | -0.125***<br>[0.03]  |
| Fraction of harvest covered by Ramadan                                 | -0.041**<br>[0.016] | -0.069***<br>[0.017] | -0.002<br>[0.02]     | -0.016<br>[0.02]     |
| Fraction of harvest covered by<br>Ramadan*Above median fraction Muslim |                     |                      | -0.083***<br>[0.026] | -0.113***<br>[0.026] |
| Mean of dependent variable   | 1.517               | 1.837                | 1.517                | 1.837                |
| Observations   | 103,104             | 103,088              | 103,104              | 103,088              |

Notes:

1. This table tests for changes in agricultural output in each district-crop-year as a function of overlap between Ramadan and the sowing and harvesting seasons for that district-crop-year. Overlap is measured as the fraction of the total season(s) covered by Ramadan rather than the fraction of Ramadan covered by the season as in the primary specification. The dependent variables are: Columns (1) and (3), log production in thousands of tons; and Columns (2) and (4), log value of production (in 1,000,000 Rs deflated to 1973).

2. Regressions include district-crop, district-year, and crop-year fixed effects. In addition, time varying controls for average rainfall and temperature during the sowing and harvesting seasons, two month leads to each season, and a two month lag following the sowing season are included.

3. The agricultural data are from the India Agriculture and Climate data set. Crop cycles are from Donaldson (2013). Weather data are from the University of Delaware monthly rainfall and temperature series taken for the centroid of each district.

4. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.

5. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table A12: Distribution of Muslims in Rural Areas**

| Percentile                 | Percent of the population that is Muslim |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1                          | 0.1                                      |
| 5                          | 0.2                                      |
| 10                         | 0.5                                      |
| 25                         | 1.8                                      |
| 50                         | 4.8                                      |
| 75                         | 9.9                                      |
| 90                         | 18.6                                     |
| 95                         | 28.2                                     |
| 99                         | 42.1                                     |
| mean (district weighted)   | 0.076                                    |
| mean (population weighted) | 0.099                                    |

Notes:

- 1) Data in the table are drawn from the 1961 Indian Census and based on the 270 districts in the Indian Agricultural and Climate Dataset.
- 2) The census disaggregates the district into rural and urban areas. Given that the analysis examines agricultural production, the data here are drawn from rural areas only.

**Table A13a: Labor Supply and Earnings as a Test of Religious Obligations Driving Production Declines (Icrisat)**

| Dependent Variable                                    | (1)<br>Labor Days     | (2)<br>Average<br>work hours | (3)<br>ln(Total<br>earnings) | (4)<br>Labor Days                  | (5)<br>Average<br>work hours | (6)<br>ln(total<br>earnings) | (7)<br>Labor<br>Days | (8)<br>Average<br>work hours | (9)<br>ln(Total<br>earnings) |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Sample  | Agricultural Laborers |                              |                              | Agricultural Laborers, High Season |                              |                              | Full                 |                              |                              |
| Days overlap between survey period and Ramadan        | -0.039<br>[0.035]     | -0.002<br>[0.001]            | -0.004***<br>[0.001]         | -0.024<br>[0.038]                  | -0.002<br>[0.002]            | -0.006***<br>[0.001]         | -0.016<br>[0.022]    | 0.001<br>[0.001]             | -0.002**<br>[0.001]          |
| Muslim*Days overlap between survey period and Ramadan | 0.155*<br>[0.089]     | -0.003<br>[0.011]            | 0.002<br>[0.006]             | 0.142<br>[0.142]                   | -0.008<br>[0.019]            | -0.007<br>[0.008]            | 0.180***<br>[0.068]  | -0.001<br>[0.006]            | 0.002<br>[0.003]             |
| Mean of dependent variable                            | 21.752                | 7.131                        | 6.816                        | 21.874                             | 7.212                        | 6.778                        | 17.921               | 7.182                        | 7.014                        |
| Number of individuals                                 | 1,146                 | 910                          | 914                          | 1,139                              | 890                          | 891                          | 2,953                | 1,753                        | 1,747                        |
| Observations  | 31,432                | 19,417                       | 19,287                       | 19,481                             | 12,641                       | 12,520                       | 72,048               | 34,267                       | 33,977                       |
| R-squared   | 0.699                 | 0.775                        | 0.659                        | 0.754                              | 0.820                        | 0.670                        | 0.631                | 0.780                        | 0.760                        |

Notes:

1. This table provides a test of whether time spent on religious activities causes reduced production during Ramadan by reducing the labor supply of Muslims during that period.
2. Samples are drawn from the second generation ICRISAT village level studies survey. "Agricultural Laborers" samples include only individuals who indicate that agricultural work is their primary occupation. "Agricultural Laborers, High Season" samples include observations from individuals in the "Agricultural Laborers" sample for which the interview period had at least 15 days of overlap with a "high labor demand" period defined as the sowing or harvesting seasons for the crop with the greatest acreage by state. The "Full" sample includes all individuals in the sample.
3. ICRISAT surveys participants approximately once per month and elicits information on labor supply, hours, and wages of the respondent during the month preceding the survey date. The number of days of overlap between Ramadan and the survey period is calculated as the number of days of Ramadan falling within the 30 days preceding the survey date. Labor supply is defined as the number of days of labor including both paid and unpaid labor but excluding domestic work in the past month. The wages variable is calculated as the sum of cash and in-kind wages during the month. Average hours worked is only reported for paid labor. If the participant reports more than one paid job, average hours worked is calculated as a weighted average across jobs. Religion is captured via the caste variable, which contains a category for Muslim individuals, because it is not directly reported.
4. All regressions include individual fixed effects, a control for the number of days between surveys, and year-month of interview fixed effects.
5. Robust standard errors clustered by individual are in brackets.
6. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.

**Table A13b: Labor Supply and Earnings as a Test of Religious Obligations Driving Production Declines (NSS)**

|  | (1)                   | (2)               | (3)                 | (4)                       | (5)               | (6)                | (7)                   | (8)               | (9)                | (10)                      | (11)               | (12)               |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Dependent variable</b>                        | Labor days            | Total earnings    | Ln(Total Earnings)  | Labor days                | Total earnings    | Ln(Total Earnings) | Labor days            | Total earnings    | Ln(Total earnings) | Labor days                | Total earnings     | Ln(Total earnings) |
| <b>Sample</b>                                    | Agricultural Laborers |                   |                     | Agricultural Laborers     |                   |                    | Rural Casual Laborers |                   |                    | Rural Casual Laborers     |                    |                    |
| <b>Timing</b>                                    | Full Year             |                   |                     | High Labor Demand Seasons |                   |                    | Full Year             |                   |                    | High Labor Demand Seasons |                    |                    |
| Days overlap between survey period and Ramadan   | -0.004<br>[0.047]     | -0.689<br>[2.798] | 0.039***<br>[0.015] | -0.035<br>[0.043]         | 4.168<br>[3.751]  | 0.040*<br>[0.022]  | -0.022<br>[0.015]     | -1.175<br>[1.267] | -0.003<br>[0.004]  | -0.006<br>[0.026]         | 0.293<br>[2.075]   | 0.005<br>[0.007]   |
| Muslim   | -0.025<br>[0.051]     | -1.775<br>[4.551] | 0.013<br>[0.025]    | 0.044<br>[0.08]           | 2.143<br>[8.176]  | 0.005<br>[0.045]   | -0.039<br>[0.067]     | 2.436<br>[6.845]  | 0.032*<br>[0.018]  | 0.095<br>[0.101]          | -6.211<br>[16.354] | 0.018<br>[0.027]   |
| Muslim*Overlap between survey period and Ramadan | 0.077***<br>[0.024]   | -1.775<br>[1.730] | 0.01<br>[0.017]     | 0.05<br>[0.04]            | -4.375<br>[2.787] | -0.006<br>[0.021]  | 0.021<br>[0.038]      | -0.597<br>[2.965] | 0.002<br>[0.009]   | -0.018<br>[0.032]         | -1.726<br>[3.958]  | -0.007<br>[0.010]  |
| Mean of dependent variable                       | 5.852                 | 103.391           | 5.521               | 5.808                     | 105.968           | 5.397              | 4.811                 | 278.428           | 5.657              | 4.895                     | 266.677            | 5.581              |
| Observations                                     | 121400                | 121408            | 35721               | 37882                     | 37885             | 13825              | 105397                | 105397            | 83930              | 41593                     | 41593              | 34625              |
| R-squared  | 0.127                 | 0.062             | 0.314               | 0.141                     | 0.094             | 0.297              | 0.171                 | 0.145             | 0.363              | 0.182                     | 0.174              | 0.324              |

Notes:

1. This table provides a test of whether time spent on religious or social activities causes reduced production during Ramadan by reducing the labor supply of Muslims during this time. Given the somewhat coarse nature of the labor supply variable, the table also examines wages.

2. Samples are drawn from the Indian National Sample Survey, Schedule 10 (Employment), rounds 60, 61, 62, 64, and 66. These rounds are selected because they contain survey dates while earlier rounds do not. "Agricultural laborer" samples include only individuals who indicate that agricultural work is their primary or secondary occupation. The "Rural casual laborers" sample includes individuals living in rural areas who indicate that they participate in the casual labor market. "Full year" samples include the full survey periods. "High Labor Demand" additionally restricts the samples to surveys conducted during the sowing or harvesting seasons for the crop with the greatest acreage by state.

3. The NSS Schedule 10 provides data on labor supply (to the half day) and wages of the respondent during the week preceding the survey date. Labor supply is calculated as the number of days of labor excluding domestic work in the past week. The wages variable is calculated as the sum of cash and in-kind wages during the week.

4. All regressions include district-year fixed effects and month fixed effects.

5. Robust standard errors clustered by district-year are in brackets.

6. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1.



**Table A14: Demographics of Survey Respondents**

| Question types                      | (1)  | (2)                  |
|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
|                                     | Caloric Density, Food Habits and Preferences | Returns              |
| Age                                 | 41.37<br>[12.48]                             | 39.88<br>[12.46]     |
| People in household                 | 4.72<br>[2.04]                               | 4.16<br>[1.74]       |
| Monthly household expenditures (Rs) | 5430.77<br>[2808.23]                         | 5552.74<br>[3135.65] |
| Body Mass Index (BMI)               | 18.13<br>[1.51]                              | 18.21<br>[1.63]      |
| Male                                | 0.68<br>[0.47]                               | 0.55<br>[0.5]        |
| Married                             | 0.89<br>[0.32]                               | 0.89<br>[0.32]       |
| Years of education                  | 4.52<br>[3.96]                               | 4.72<br>[4.16]       |
| Urban                               | 0.44<br>[0.5]                                | 0.66<br>[0.47]       |
| Meals per day                       | 2.78<br>[0.47]                               | 2.77<br>[0.47]       |
| Hungry in typical day               |  |                      |
| "No"                                | 4.02 %                                       | 6.04 %               |
| "< 1 hour/day"                      | 38.84 %                                      | 38.93 %              |
| "1-2 hours/day"                     | 20.09 %                                      | 10.74 %              |
| "2-5 hours/day"                     | 33.93 %                                      | 43.62 %              |
| ">5 hours/day"                      | 3.13 %                                       | 0.67 %               |
| Religion                            |  |                      |
| Hindu                               | 85.71 %                                      | 93.29 %              |
| Muslim                              | 12.05 %                                      | 4.03 %               |
| Other                               | 1.79 %                                       | 2.68 %               |
| Years in current profession         | 15.74<br>[11.92]                             | 12.59<br>[11.01]     |
| N                                   | 222  | 149                  |

Notes:

1. Statistics are presented mean [standard deviation].
2. Common professions of respondents include: agricultural labor, construction, casual laborer, load carrier/porter, auto driver, housekeeper/sweeper, textile workers, food services, and vendors.
3. "Urban," "Male," and "Married" are binary variables.

## Appendix B

### *Literature – The Impact of Caloric Intake on Economic Productivity*

There has been significant interest in the effect of caloric intake on productivity and labor market outcomes for many years. Yet, despite many and varied approaches to studying the changes in productivity associated with caloric intake, the conflicting results and difficulties inherent in isolating the casual effect of increased caloric consumption on production have made it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the existence of this relationship and its strength.

The earliest of these studies, relying on quasi-exogenous changes in caloric intake among men working at various tasks (e.g. coal mining, embankment construction) during war time, found that caloric availability was positively correlated with output (Kraut and Muller 1946). Strauss (1986) improved on these correlational studies by utilizing a vector of food prices, farm assets, and household demographic characteristics to instrument for average caloric intake per adult equivalent to estimate a farm production function in Sierra Leone. The estimated production function showed a strong positive relationship between caloric consumption and farm production, with higher returns at lower levels of consumption. Yet, given the relatively high price of calories and the levels of caloric intake in Sierra Leone, the increased productivity did not account fully for the cost of the additional calories for the median individual. Using panel data from southern India to estimate both wage equations and farm production functions with individual fixed effects, Deolalikar (1988) found no significant impact of caloric intake on wages or farm output once stature (weight for height) was accounted for.

Two studies have also examined the impact of adult caloric supplementation on productivity through experimental methods in an effort to address the endogeneity of caloric consumption. Immink and Viteri (1981) find no significant change in production when treated participants were provided with an additional 350 calories per day. However, due to logistical constraints, this experiment relied on two villages randomized at the level of the village. In addition, laborers in this study worked in groups of four and were paid one quarter of the group's total production, potentially weakening individual incentives. Wolgemuth et al. (1982) were able to randomize at the level of the individual and provided the treated individuals with an additional 800 calories per day relative to the control group. However, because participants in this study were construction workers, productivity was estimated by visual inspection of the quantity of earth moved and required adjustments of productivity measures to account of differences in output across types of tasks.<sup>63</sup> Although production per day showed a small marginally significant increase in the intention to treat estimate, the number of days worked on the roads project declined significantly among treated individuals making an overall assessment of economic productivity changes difficult.

### *Literature – The Impact of Caloric Intake on Physical and Cognitive Function*

In contrast to the generally inconclusive results regarding the impact of caloric intake on economic productivity, there is substantial evidence from the physiology literature that low caloric intake, even over short durations such as a week, is associated with declines in a variety of indicators of physical performance. Of note, declines appear to become more pronounced as body weight drops further (Bender and Martin 1986; Taylor et al. 1956; Friedlander et al. 2005; Committee on Military Nutrition 1986). For clear reasons, there are a limited number of controlled trials studying low caloric intake over extended time periods.

However, one well designed within-subjects trial, the Minnesota Semi-Starvation Study, does exist. Participants, all young males, were volunteers drawn from a pool of conscientious objectors. The study lasted 56 weeks with a 12 week baseline, a 24 week “starvation” period restricted to 1,560 calories per day, and 20 weeks of varying “recovery” diets. Participants lived at the study site and underwent regular and extensive physiological testing in addition to maintaining a fairly extensive exercise regimen. The study provides strong evidence of substantial declines in physical performance including maximal performance capacity as

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<sup>63</sup> The specific compensation method for workers is not explicitly stated in the paper. Wages are mentioned, however, the structure of the wages is not. Given that the labor provided was for a public works project, it is likely that there was simply a flat days wage for work on the project such that workers most likely faced relatively weak incentives.

measured by a treadmill test (50-70 percent decrease in time to exhaustion and overall fitness score) and strength (30-40 percent decrease on each measure) during the starvation period (Keys et al. 1950).<sup>64</sup> Although this study differs from the context of long-run deprivation that many of the world's malnourished suffer from childhood, the continued decline throughout the starvation period suggests that the participants were unable to fully compensate for low caloric intake and maintain performance over fairly long horizons.<sup>65</sup>

In addition to declines in physical performance, participants in the Minnesota study complained of decreased alertness, lack of self-control, and general apathy. A number of other studies in psychology and other disciplines have found similar cognitive changes related to nutrition even over just a few hours (e.g. Baumeister and Vohs 2007; Danziger et al. 2011; Gailliot et al. 2007). Although many studies find that cognitive ability (maximal performance) is maintained, persistence and motivation for cognitive work and thought decline substantially. For example, the US Army found that soldiers consuming 2,000 calories per day maintained their tested cognitive ability but completed just over half as many cognitive exercises as soldiers consuming 2,700 calories/day (US Army 1987). Although perhaps initially surprising, these changes likely reflect the fact that despite accounting for only 2 percent of body weight the brain consumes roughly 20 percent of the energy used by the body; hence, as with any organ requiring substantial energy inputs, limiting the total energy available is likely to constrain the brain's ability to function (Fonsec-Azevedo and Herculano-Houzel 2012).

#### *Characteristics of Cycle-Rickshaw Drivers in the Randomized Controlled Trial in Chennai, India*

Chennai is a city of approximately 4.7 million people in the state of Tamil Nadu, located on the eastern coast in the south of India (Census of India 2011). Participants for the RCT were drawn from the population of cycle-rickshaw drivers, an all-male profession. Members of this profession drive large three wheeled vehicles to transport passengers, and occasionally, luggage or goods. The vehicles are large enough to comfortably fit two adults in addition to the driver, although can be used for loads up to a few hundred kilos. In Chennai, cycle-rickshaws are primarily used in a 2.5 square kilometer area in the center city due to the narrow streets which make travel by larger vehicles difficult there.

Although Tamil Nadu is a relatively wealthy state, rickshaw drivers are in lower socio-economic brackets. The median participant has 3 years of education and can write numbers but cannot write the letters of the alphabet. In addition, 90 percent of the participants are in historically disadvantaged castes and 70 percent have ration cards which entitle them to subsidized foods and cooking gas.<sup>66</sup> The median participant has a family size of 4, lives in a one room house with electricity but without a bathroom, and has four small appliances (e.g., rice cooker or fan). However, 25 percent of the participants are migrants who typically sleep in their rickshaw while they are working in the city. The average weekly household income of Rs. 1,523 results in a per capita income of \$1.10 per day for study participants and their families.<sup>67</sup> Although not much information is available on consumption, of the average daily earnings of Rs. 165 (Rs. 200 conditional on working) rickshaw drivers report spending an average of Rs. 14 per day on tobacco and Rs. 68 per day on

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<sup>64</sup> Participants were not monetarily incentivized during these physical tests. However, given that the study population consisted of conscientious objectors willing to live at the study site for an extended period, it is likely that participants were highly internally motivated to provide maximal effort. Study administrators also reported high levels of effort by participants during these tests, reporting that "runs were terminated at a state of actual or near collapse" in the later periods of the study.

<sup>65</sup> Participants did experience a decline in their basal metabolic rate (the energy used in basic bodily processes such as respiration, excluding energy for digestion) from 1570 calories per day to 960 calories per day throughout the starvation period. This increased "efficiency" is one mechanism the body can use to limit weight loss despite low caloric intake. However, this decline had tapered substantially by week 24 due to basic physiological limits (Keys et al. 1950).

<sup>66</sup> "Historically disadvantaged castes" are defined as belonging to a schedule caste, scheduled tribe, or "other backward class."

<sup>67</sup> The average exchange rate during the study was roughly 45Rs to 1 USD.

alcohol.<sup>68</sup> Among households with similar per capita daily expenditure in the greater Chennai area, 34 percent of overall household expenditures were dedicated to food.<sup>69</sup>

Participants are typically in their 40s and 50s (mean age 46) and have a small physical stature with an average height of 161cm (5 feet, 3 inches) and an average weight of 46 kilos (101 pounds) (the BMI distribution of participants is presented in Figure 7. Based on a random sample of drivers in the city, roughly two-thirds of rickshaw drivers have a BMI under 20). While only 14 percent of participants rate their general health as being “somewhat unhealthy” or “unhealthy,” the average participant also reports missing 1 day of work every two weeks due to ill health.

With an average experience of 20 years, participants had generally worked in the profession for most or all of their working lives. A typical work week is 5.7 days per week and 9 hours per day, conditional on working. Three-quarters of the population rents their rickshaw, typically on a weekly or monthly basis for roughly Rs. 190 per week.

#### *Caloric Intake in the Randomized Controlled Trial*

A number of steps were taken to maximize the increase in caloric intake among treated individuals. First, participants were asked to visit the office during non-meal hours (i.e. between 10am and 12:30pm and from 3pm to 6:30pm). In addition, participants were provided with “snack” foods (e.g. potato chips, biscuits, fried dough) rather than foods that typically constitute a meal. Finally, participants were provided with an additional 700 calories per day such that even if some crowd out did occur, there was likely to be a net increase. It is also worth noting that if some crowd out did occur, the expected ROI would be higher in that the changes in labor supply and earnings would then have occurred with less than 700 calorie supplementation of the treatment participants’ daily caloric intake.

Three different measures were taken to proxy changes in caloric intake between treated and control individuals during the study: 1) caloric intake as reported in a 24-hour dietary recall survey at enrollment and endline, 2) number of meals consumed reported daily, and 3) BMI (or weight) as measured at enrollment and endline.

All three measures suggest an increase in caloric intake in the treatment group. Although the standard errors are quite large, such that it is difficult to calibrate the magnitude of the difference, the estimated coefficient on treatment is positive when comparing changes in caloric intake in the dietary recall surveys. In addition, the coefficient on the number of meals consumed each day is positive and significant, suggesting that the treatment did not crowd out consumption of other food.<sup>70</sup> Finally, while control participants do not change BMI over time, treated participants have a marginally statistically significant ( $p = 0.09$ ) increase of 0.2 in BMI, corresponding to a weight gain of roughly 0.5 kg (or approximately 1.1 pounds) (Appendix A, Table A2).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Most rickshaw drivers spend money on food, alcohol, and tobacco during the day as they see fit and then give the remainder of their earnings to their wives to allocate to other needs. Because wives are typically responsible for the decisions on how to spend that money, very few men are able to provide information on the allocation of those funds.

<sup>69</sup> This figure was calculated from the 64<sup>th</sup> round of the NSS (2007-2008). The sample is limited to households in the greater Chennai region to match the RCT population as closely as possible while still maintaining a reasonable sample size. In addition, I restrict the sample to households with a per capita daily expenditure of Rs. 23 to Rs 43 (The average per capita earnings for the RCT participants was Rs 49 in 2012 rupees, which corresponds to Rs. 33 in 2008 rupees. The sample is based on a Rs. 10 per day band around this figure.) Using the NSS sampling weights, the average daily expenditure on food in these households is Rs. 10.7 per person while the average total expenditure is Rs. 31.

<sup>70</sup> Snacking is relatively uncommon and meals purchased at street stalls are of fairly uniform size, such that the number of meals per day is likely to correlate highly with caloric intake in this population.

<sup>71</sup> One pound of weight corresponds to 3500 calories. Hence, 700 calories per day over five weeks with no changes in behavior of basal metabolic rate would increase weight roughly 5 pounds. However, given that treated participants increase labor supply substantially and may experience some increase in BMR, this smaller gain is not surprising.

### *Controls Used in Labor Supply and Earnings Regressions*

At enrollment, participants reported the number of days worked, the average number of hours per day conditional on working, and earnings conditional on working for the previous week. These variables are included as baseline controls in all regressions of labor supply and earnings.

### *Bounding Treatment Effects in the Randomized Controlled Trial*

The bounding process follows the method proposed and described by Lee (2003), with minor adjustments to account for the structure of the data. This method relies on the trimming of extreme observations in the condition with lower attrition to bound the estimated treatment effect. Specifically, the process begins by calculating the fraction of observations that must be censored from the data by differencing the fraction of non-attriters between the groups and dividing by the fraction of non-attriters in the group with lower attrition.<sup>72</sup> Due to the panel nature of the data in this study, there are many possible measures of attrition. Hence, I generate five different measures of attrition and use the smallest and the largest to create a liberal and a conservative bound on the estimated treatment effect. The measures of attrition used are: 1) never return after enrollment, 2) do not attend endline, and 3) thru 5) attendance less than 25 percent, 50 percent, and 75 percent, respectively. The smallest trimming fraction, 5.3%, is a result attrition measure (1), while the largest, 15.9 percent is a result of measure (5). After calculating the trimming fraction, the individuals with the highest (lowest) values of the outcome, where the outcome is the average value of the dependent variable over all observations, are removed from the dataset and the treatment effect is estimated on the trimmed dataset. The results of this bounding procedure for labor supply and earnings outcomes are reported in Table 7a and Figure 8.

A similar procedure was used to bound the estimated treatment effect on the enrollment and endline payments. However, in this case, the trimming fraction was calculated using the fraction of individuals in each condition who did not attend endline and payment on the enrollment tasks were used to determine which observations to censor. The results of this bounding procedure for earnings on laboratory tasks are reported in Table 7b.

### *Calculating the Fraction of Ramadan Covered by Agricultural Seasons*

Data in the India Agricultural and Climate dataset is organized by the agricultural year running from July 1 of year X to June 30 of year X+1. To calculate the overlap with between the sowing and harvesting seasons and Ramadan, I first organize the crop calendar relative to the agricultural year such that an agricultural cycle for agricultural year X is defined by the seasons leading up to a harvest which occurs in agricultural year X.<sup>73</sup> This calendar is then overlaid with the Ramadan dates during the agricultural year of interest as well as the preceding year to account for extended agricultural cycles and harvests which occur early in the agricultural year. For example, the cropping cycle for sugar cane is typically between one and two years such that for a harvest occurring in agricultural year X, the sowing season typically occurs in year X-1. Similarly, if a harvest were to occur in July of agricultural year X, the sowing season would typically occur in year X-1. However, the overlap between these sowing seasons and the previous year's Ramadan would be assigned to the year in which the harvest occurred to coincide with the production data in the India Agricultural and Climate data.

In addition, because certain crops (e.g. rice, potatoes) frequently have more than one agricultural cycle per year, I calculate the days of overlap between each season (i.e. sowing, harvesting) and Ramadan for each cycle and then sum across the cycles ending in the same agricultural year. Finally, this total number of days

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<sup>72</sup> Although attrition is generally greater in control groups, the results of Lee (2003) hold regardless of whether attrition is higher in the treatment or control. This analysis calls for trimming from the control group (because attrition is lower in that condition). Hence, I use the fraction of non-attriters in the control as the denominator in calculating the trimming fraction.

<sup>73</sup> For harvest seasons which overlap two agricultural years I assign the crop cycle to the year in which the majority of the harvest falls. Because some crops such as sugar cane have very long growing cycles, production accrued in year X can begin with a sowing season up to roughly 1.5 years earlier.

of overlap is divided by 29, the number of days in Ramadan.<sup>74</sup> Figure 9 provides example overlap calculations and Table A10 provides the distribution of overlap between Ramadan and each of the agricultural seasons.

#### *Calculating Rainfall and Average Temperature Controls*

Although the Indian Agricultural and Climate dataset contains information on rainfall and temperature, the values are averages across all years. Hence, I use the University of Delaware data to provide time varying controls for rainfall and temperature. Because each crop is likely to be impacted differently by rainfall and temperature in a given month, instead of using weather controls by calendar month I create rainfall and temperature relative to the sowing and harvesting seasons for each crop. Specifically, the regressions control for the total rainfall and average temperature over the two months preceding each season, during the season itself, and for the two months following the sowing season at the centroid of each district. Because the rainfall and temperature data is provided as a monthly series, these variable are calculated as weighted averages created by summing of the number of days in each month for the relevant period (e.g. sowing season) multiplied by the monthly value and dividing the total by the total number of days. Missing values are replaced with imputed values generated from a regression of existing values on district-crop and year fixed effects.

#### *Calibrating Declines in Agricultural Productivity: “Free Energy” Available for Work*

Adjustments to basal metabolic rates and energy use outside of work limit the precision of “free energy” calibrations. However, it is possible to calculate a measure of expected “possible” production based on caloric availability in order to determine whether the observed declines in productivity are roughly congruent with expectations based on energy availability. Rural residents in India were consuming roughly 2240 calories per day in 1983 (Deaton and Dreze 2009). Researchers have measured the basal metabolic rates (BMR) of rural populations in southern India and have determined that typical basal metabolic rates for low BMI individuals require approximately 1,100 and 1,400 calories per day depending on size and gender (Ferro-Luzzi et al. 1997).

Taking the lowest BMR estimates, the strong assumption that all calories not used in basal metabolism are used productively, and the estimated decline in caloric intake for Muslims during Ramadan, individuals have 1140 calories available for work when not fasting and 440 available calories for work when fasting.

Passmore and Durnin (1955) review a variety of sources across five countries detailing energy expenditures in different agricultural activities and find that sowing season activities such as clearing brush, digging ridges, and ploughing typically require 4 to 9 calories per minute while harvesting activities such as bundling and threshing typically require 3 to 7 calories per minute. Hence, farm work is likely to burn roughly 180 to 540 calories per hour. Taking an estimate from the middle of this range of roughly 350 calories per hours, a typical farmer would be able to complete roughly 4 hours of active labor when not fasting and 2 hours of active labor when fasting. Accounting for the fact that some energy can be mobilized from fat reserves, these estimates suggest the observed 20 to 40 percent decline in productivity per Muslim individual is consistent with the free energy available.

#### *Calibrating Expected Water Losses During Ramadan*

Perspiration rates depend on a number of factors, key among which are the intensity of the physical activity and factors which influence evaporation rates (i.e., temperature, vapor pressure). The intensity of physical activity can be approximated via the rate at which calories are burned in the activity and the weather variables can be measured directly.

A 50 kg individual would be expected to burn approximately 1200 calories in a day of hard farm work during the active labor seasons (Fluck 1992; Nag et al. 1980). In order to benchmark the expected

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<sup>74</sup> The exact dates of Ramadan depend on the sighting of the crescent moon. However, data is not available on when the moon is sighted in each district. Hence, I use a consistent start date for the holiday across all of India for each year and limit the duration of the holiday to 29 days (rather than the possible 30) to generate conservative estimates and ensure that I do not measure overlap with Eid, the holiday following Ramadan.

perspiration rates, I compare this energy usage to the energy consumed by running, one of the most commonly studied activities in which perspiration rates are measured, in similar weather conditions. Rehrer (1996) reviews the literature and finds that accounting for water intake, running a marathon typically results in a loss of approximately three percent of body weight. Although predicted rather than measured, Sawka et al. (2007) estimate that in temperatures similar to those likely to be experienced by farmers in India running a marathon would result in a loss of four to five percent of body weight.<sup>75</sup> However, running a marathon requires roughly 2500 calories for a 50 kg individual, twice the energy required for a day of intensive farm labor. Hence, one would expect roughly half the water losses for farming as well, suggesting an overall loss of roughly 1.5 to 2.5 percent in body weight.

However, two additional factors are likely to reduce sweat rates relative to this benchmark. First, the lower rate of caloric burn for farming will reduce sweat production due to greater passive cooling and less “wasted” sweat lost to dripping (Candas 1979; Shapiro et al. 1982). Second, a higher surface area to mass ratio (negatively correlated with BMI), lower overall weight, low body fat percentage, and acclimatization to heat all improve core body temperature management and substantially reduce sweat rates in hot humid climates (Havenith, Luttikhof, and Vrijlkotte 1995; Havenith 2001; Casa 1999b). This suggests that Indian farmers are likely to have relatively low sweat rates relative to many individuals in the studies cited previously due to their small size, very low body fat percentage, and acclimatization to hot temperatures. Hence, it is unlikely that the two percent of body weight threshold at which decrements in performance begin to be observed is likely to be surpassed for a significant number of farmers during Ramadan.

#### *Evaporative Potential (PET) and Maximum Temperature Calculations*

To calculate the average evaporative potential and maximum temperature during the sowing and harvesting seasons I draw on data from the Climatic Unit Research Database at the British Atmospheric Data Center (BADC). BADC calculates a daily PET based on three measures of temperature (min, max, mean), vapor pressure, and cloud cover following a method recommended by the FAO. More information about the details of this measure are available on the BADC website: <http://badc.nerc.ac.uk>.

Although the data are detailed, there is a significant amount of missing data. Hence, in order to calculate the average weather measure for a season, I begin by averaging the weather measure for all points within a district-month. That average is then assigned to the centroid so that, contingent on any readings being taken within a district-month, each district has one value. The average value at the centroid for each district month is regressed on district-month fixed effects and year fixed effects and missing values are assigned the predicted values from this regression. However, because some states do not have any data over the relevant time period and fitted values are unlikely to be representative in those areas, I limit the sample to states in which some data are available. This limitation drives the lower sample size in these regressions. Average evaporative potential over a season is calculated from the district-month values as the sum of the number of days in each month within the relevant season multiplied by the average evaporative potential in that month divided by the total length of the season.

#### *Agricultural Labor Supply on Own Land*

The National Sample Survey (NSS), Round 43, can be used to calculate typical land ownership in 1987, at the end of the period covered by the Indian Agricultural and Climate data. Restricting the sample to rural households listing their primary occupation as agricultural labor, the median farming household owned (or leased) one hectare of land (the average farming household owns 2.14 hectares).

One hectare of rice, the most commonly produced crop in India, requires an average of 944 man-hours of labor to cultivate. Data for this calculation are drawn from the “Comprehensive Scheme for Studying the Cost of Cultivation of Principal Crops in India” series published by the government of India which lists the

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<sup>75</sup> This prediction is based on an ambient temperature of 28C, or approximately 82F. The overall mean temperature in the districts included in this study during sowing and harvesting periods was 27 and 24 degrees Celsius respectively (University of Delaware Air Temperature and Precipitation data, authors calculations). Although based on a more limited sample, the mean daily maximum temperature over the sowing and harvesting periods was 31 and 29 degrees C, respectively (Climatic Unit Research Database at the British Atmospheric Data Center, author’s calculations).

number of man-hours required to farm one acre of a given crop. Estimates are produced annually by state; however, there are significant missing data. The value is generated by averaging over the 96 available estimates during the period covered by the Indian Agricultural and Climate dataset.

Assuming a 40 hour work week, the 944 man-hours would account for approximately six months of full time work for the median agricultural household. With only one prime age (15 to 60 year old) male in the median household in the same NSS data used above, this labor requirement would account for nearly half of his labor supply (the average farming household has 1.5 males).

### *Calibrating the Disutility of Labor*

By the end of the five-week RCT, these individuals face a choice between their current activities and a bundle that includes spending an additional Rs. 6 for food, working 12 percent more, and earning Rs. 19 more each day (Table 5). Hence, participants must be willing to increase labor supply 12 percent for an additional Rs. 13 per day. The median number of trips per day reported by participants is 6. Hence a 12 percent increase in labor supply would be roughly 0.7 trips per day.<sup>76</sup> Because fractional trips are not possible, I scale both the earnings and trips by 1.4, resulting in a tradeoff of one trip for Rs. 21.

I use two sources data to assess willingness to accept at this rate. The first source is one of the experimental tasks in which RCT participants were offered additional paid fares. Specifically, participants were asked to make a series of choices between taking or not taking paid trips with varied rates, loads, and time horizons and one of their choices was randomly selected and carried out to ensure the choices were incentive compatible. One of the choices offered to participants was between not taking a trip and not earning any additional money, taking a 1 km journey with a 100 kg load (in addition to the cycle and driver) for Rs. 20, or taking a 1 km journey with a 150 kg load for Rs. 30.<sup>77</sup> The 1 km journey with a 100 kg load is representative of a fairly typical journey given that most rickshaws will carry 1 to 2 passengers (each weighing roughly 50 kgs) and typically travel short distances.

The second dataset was generated from 150 actual offered rickshaw trips around the city. Research staff were randomly assigned a commonly traveled route (e.g. the bus station to the train station) and a price and were told to offer no more than that price and determine whether the driver would accept. If the driver accepted, the trip was taken and the fare paid. If the driver declined, the staff member moved to the next route and price combination.

In the RCT task, 85 percent of participants opted to take one of the two trips offered. This is consistent with the willingness to accept found in the 150 additional offered rickshaw trips in which 83 percent of participants were willing to accept a trip for Rs. 21.

In short, roughly 85 percent rickshaw drivers are willing to take fares at the rate implied by the labor supply and net earnings changes observed in the RCT. Hence, even if there is no utility provided by the consumption of additional food, there appear to be positive utility returns to increased consumption for the vast majority of rickshaw drivers.

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<sup>76</sup> This approach abstracts from disutility from simply waiting for fares. This is done because it is impractical to offer entire days of work that can be monitored by research staff to ensure compliance. However, given the physical difficulty of the task, waiting is likely to be significantly less taxing than actual labor. In addition, this calibration also ignores the positive utility from additional food consumption which would work in the opposite direction.

<sup>77</sup> A staff member would accompany the driver on the trip to ensure that the driver completed the full distance required.