

Changes in Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) from 2025

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National Statistics Office (NSO), MOSPI continues its endeavour to enhance the scope, relevance and coverage of the surveys conducted by NSS. Key labour force indicators from PLFS at the all-India level will now be released on monthly basis and the PLFS quarterly results will now be brought out for rural, urban and rural and urban areas combined.

National Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MOSPI) is making continuous efforts to bring significant improvements in the surveys conducted by NSS through enhancement of the frequency, scope, relevance of the surveys along with reduction in the timeline for dissemination of survey findings and provisioning easy access to the survey data. NSO, MOSPI has conducted the back-to-back surveys of Household Consumption Expenditure (HCES) during 2022-23 and 2023-24, has completed the second pan-India Time Use Survey (TUS) undertaken during 2024 and is in the process of undertaking the Domestic Tourism Expenditure Survey (DTES) and first ever pan-India National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) from July 2025.

As a part of this continuous endeavour aimed at enhancing the surveys of NSS, the sampling design of PLFS has been revamped from January 2025 to address the requirement of high frequency labour market indicators with enhanced coverage from PLFS. The revamped PLFS is envisaged to address the following objectives.

- to estimate the key employment and unemployment indicators (*viz.* Labour Force Participation Rate, Worker Population Ratio, Unemployment Rate) on a monthly basis for rural and urban areas at all-India level in the Current Weekly Status (CWS)
- to extend the coverage of the Quarterly results of PLFS to rural areas and thereby producing quarterly estimates at the country level and for major States in the Current Weekly Status (CWS)
- to estimate important employment and unemployment indicators in both usual status (ps+ss) and CWS in both rural and urban areas annually

Usual Status (ps+ss) and Current Weekly Status (CWS) refers to frameworks for determining activity status of person surveyed based on reference periods of last 365 days and last seven days preceding the date of survey, respectively.

PLFS was launched in 2017 essentially to address the requirement of generating estimate of the key employment and unemployment indicators quarterly for the urban areas only in the Current Weekly Status (CWS) and providing important employment and unemployment indicators in both usual status (ps+ss) and CWS in both rural and urban areas annually.

The quarterly results of PLFS have been brought out in the form of Quarterly Bulletins. Till 2024, twenty-five Quarterly Bulletins of PLFS corresponding to the quarter ending December 2018 to quarter ending December 2024 have been released.

The annual results of PLFS have been released in form of PLFS Annual Report covering the survey period July of a specific year to the month of June of the following year along with the unit level survey data. Seven such Annual Reports covering both rural and urban areas and giving estimates of all important parameters of employment and unemployment in both usual status (ps+ss) and current weekly status (CWS) have been released spanning the period July 2017 to June 2024.

The revamped PLFS sample design from January 2025 will result in the following updation in the PLFS

dissemination:

a. Availability of monthly estimates of key labour market indicators at the country level:

The revamped PLFS sample design will enable generation of the monthly estimates of key labour market indicators viz. Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), Worker Population Ratio (WPR) and Unemployment Rate (UR) at the all-India level following the Current Weekly Status (CWS) approach. The monthly estimates will help in timely policy interventions. **The first monthly bulletin of PLFS for the month April, 2025 is scheduled to be released in May, 2025.**

b. Extending quarterly estimates to rural areas:

At present PLFS provides quarterly labour market indicators for the urban areas only. With the updation in the PLFS sample design quarterly estimates of employment unemployment indicators will be available for both rural and urban areas and hence for the entire country. **The first quarterly bulletin of PLFS covering both rural and urban areas for the quarter April-June, 2025 is slated to be released in August 2025.**

c. Moving to the approach of calendar year reporting

From the year 2025, the annual PLFS results will be brought out based on the calendar year i.e. survey period of January – December of a specific year (e.g. January 2025 – December 2025). This change in disseminating the PLFS annual results and unit level data will facilitate comprehensive analysis of labour market performance through review of key employment unemployment indicators and also assist in timely updation of India's labour market statistics in the databases maintained by the international agencies.

The sampling methodology encompassing various aspects of the PLFS sampling design has been revamped to realise the objective of releasing the high frequency labour force indicators from PLFS. Salient aspects of the revamped sample design are mentioned below.

• Enhanced sample size

The revamped PLFS sample design is a multistage stratified design. List of census 2011 villages / urban Frame Survey (UFS) blocks / sub-units (for those villages or UFS blocks where sub-units are formed within) together formed the sampling frame for selection of the First Stage Units (FSUs). In the revamped PLFS sample design, a total sample size of 22,692 FSUs is planned to be surveyed (12,504 FSUs in the rural areas and 10,188 in the urban areas) in each year of the two-year panel with first visit schedule as compared to 12,800 FSUs surveyed in PLFS upto December, 2024.

A total of 12 households will be surveyed from each of the selected FSUs which implies an overall sample size of around $(22,692 \times 12) = 2,72,304$ households. This marks a 2.65 time increase in sample households to be covered in PLFS as compared to the number of sample households covered upto December, 2024 (which was around 1,02,400). The enhanced sample size is expected to provide reliable estimates of labour market indicators with improved precision.

• Representation of districts in PLFS sample

In the revamped PLFS sample design, district has been made the primary geographical unit, called basic stratum within a state/UT separately for rural and urban sectors for selecting FSUs for most part of the geography covered. In the remaining parts, NSS region has been made the basic stratum. This will ensure presence of sample observations from most of the districts in the PLFS sample, which will improve the representativeness of the estimates generated.

For rural areas provision for stratification has been made within district / NSS region (as the case may be) based on distance of the villages within 5 Kms from the district headquarter or from a city/town with more than 5 lakh population. In case of urban areas million plus cities within district / NSS region has been formed as stratum. This will also improve the reliability of the estimates by incorporating sample observations from spatial segments having different nature of labour market dynamics.

Comparability of monthly estimates with previously released estimates of PLFS

The sample design of the Periodic Labour Survey (PLFS) has been revamped from January 2025. As part of revamping of the sample, design monthly rotational panel scheme has been implemented for both rural and urban areas wherein each selected household is visited four times in four consecutive months – one with first visit schedule and other three with the revisit schedule in the following three months. The aspects related to the multistage stratified design followed in PLFS like the choice of First stage Units (FSU) to be surveyed, the primary geographical unit (i.e. basic stratum) from which FSUs are selected, stratification rules applied to

FSUs and sampling selection method for selecting FSUs have been changed. The number of households to be surveyed within a selected FSU has been increased from 8 to 12 households.

In addition, some changes have also been incorporated in the structure of the Schedule of inquiry. The details of the revamped PLFS sample design and changes made in the Schedule of inquiry have been provided in this report titled PLFS: Changes in 2025. Users of PLFS results need to consider the changes implemented in PLFS from January 2025 while comparing PLFS results with estimates released through PLFS publications up to December, 2024. The results of the PLFS post January 2025 thus need to be understood and used in the context with which the sample selection methodology of PLFS has been designed.

The changes in the PLFS sample design adopted from January 2025 in detail and the modifications made in PLFS schedule of enquiry from January 2025 are given in the PLFS release titled *PLFS: Changes in 2025*. The same is available at the website of the Ministry (<https://mospi.gov.in>).

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