

Data Users Conference on Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) highlights advances in High-Frequency Labour Market Data and Policy Applications

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The National Statistics Office (NSO), under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), organized a **Data User's Conference (DUC)** on the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)** on **28th August 2025** at **Kaushal Bhawan, New Delhi**. The conference aimed to strengthen dialogue between data producers and users, discuss innovations introduced in PLFS from January 2025, and deliberate on the use of high-frequency labour market indicators for evidence-based policymaking.

The event witnessed participation from over **200 participants**, including researchers, academicians, economists, research institutions, and policymakers, representatives from international organizations, enterprises, media, and members of the expert committees of NSS and National Statistical Commission (NSC).

The conference was **chaired by Dr. Saurabh Garg, IAS, Secretary, MoSPI** and graced by **Ms. Vandana Gurnani, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment (MoLE)**, and **Ms. Geeta Singh Rathore, Director General, National Sample Survey (NSS)**.

In her inaugural address, **Ms. Geeta Singh Rathore, Director General, NSS**, welcomed the dignitaries and participants and highlighted the critical role of PLFS in evidence-based policymaking. She informed that **quarterly bulletins and reports, including monthly estimates for rural and urban areas, are being regularly published**. Emphasizing the importance of holding the DUC in the **75th year of the National Sample Survey**, she urged participants to actively contribute to the technical deliberations.

Dr. Saurabh Garg, Secretary, MoSPI, underlined that the objective of the DUC is to deepen the understanding and use of PLFS data for better analysis of the Indian economy. He highlighted MoSPI's initiatives to **reduce the time lag in report publication**, the **introduction of additional parameters and variables in PLFS**, and efforts to **enhance the frequency and granularity of data through a larger sample size**. He emphasized making PLFS data **accessible in user-friendly formats** and invited **constructive feedback from all stakeholders**.

Ms. Vandana Gurnani, Secretary, MoLE, appreciated MoSPI for organizing the conference and emphasized the importance of **close interaction with stakeholders**. She highlighted the utility of PLFS data for policymaking, particularly in **new and emerging areas such as the gig economy, artificial intelligence, etc.** She underscored the need for **greater collaboration between MoSPI and the Labour Bureau** for detailed research, the relevance of **EPFO and other administrative data**, and referred to flagship initiatives like **PM Vishwakarma and PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana**.

These keynote speeches set the tone for the technical sessions, which began with the NSO presentation on **"Periodic Labour Force Survey: Overview, Changes and Results"**. The session covered **Conceptual framework of PLFS, Innovations introduced from January 2025, Release of Monthly and Quarterly PLFS Bulletins in 2025**, including estimates of **LFPR, WPR, and UR** for April–July 2025 and April–June 2025 quarterly results and **clarifications on concerns raised in the media**.

Following this, **MoLE** made a presentation on the **Occupation Shortage Index (OSI)**, developed using PLFS data, as a planning and guiding tool for workforce strategies. The OSI helps identify occupations with high or low demand relative to supply at the state–occupation level, based on parameters like **wage pressure, employment growth, hours worked, and share of under-qualified workers**. It was highlighted that OSI can serve as a resource for **jobseekers in career planning**, for **employers in talent hiring strategies**, for **educational institutions in designing training programmes**, and for **policy makers in framing job creation and skilling initiatives**.

MoSDE (Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship) in their presentation highlighted how PLFS serves as a vital source for understanding labour market dynamics, particularly for assessing education, vocational training, and employment trends. It emphasized that PLFS data is being used to guide skilling initiatives and monitor schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDUGKY), and the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS), while also helping address demand–supply mismatches in the workforce.

A panel discussion on “**Fast Data, Big Impact – How High-Frequency PLFS Will Serve the Needs of Stakeholders**” featured eminent experts including Prof. C. Veeramani (CDS), Ms. Anubhuti Sahay (Standard Chartered Bank), Mr. Peter Buwembo (ILO), and Dr. Aasheerwad Dwivedi (FICCI & FMS, University of Delhi). The discussion explored how monthly and quarterly labour market estimates can inform policy decisions and trigger short-term interventions, how frequent indicators help industries adjust strategies and map market opportunities, and the importance of aligning India’s high-frequency labour market statistics with global best practices. Panelists discussed the need for careful interpretation of fluctuations in headline indicators, leveraging short-term data alongside other macro indicators (CPI, IIP, GDP) for better economic outlook assessments, and enhancing user engagement in future PLFS methodology improvements. They also suggested ways to improve communication of survey findings and debated whether the current PLFS conceptual framework fully reflects India’s evolving labour market dynamics.

The open discussion enabled participants to raise queries and receive clarifications from the NSO and panelists. It was informed that the **latest PLFS now covers 770 districts**, making **district-level analysis possible** and strengthening the scope for localized policy interventions. On **sectoral-level data**, it was clarified that while NIC/NCO codes allow sectoral analysis, adding specific sectoral questions would lengthen the schedule, and such extensions may be explored in the future. A key modification highlighted was the **shift from NSS Region to District as the primary stratum**, making the PLFS more representative for district-level analysis. Concerns about **high standard errors in certain districts** were also addressed, with the assurance that the expanded sample size will significantly reduce such errors and improve robustness of estimates.

The conference reaffirmed that high-frequency PLFS data plays a crucial role in evidence-based policymaking, supports industry and labour market planning, and aligns India with international practices on labour statistics. Participants called for greater microdata access, standardized metadata, and enhanced collaboration between MoSPI, MoLE, MoSDE, and stakeholders to continuously improve survey design and dissemination.

The event concluded with reflections and key takeaways, underscoring MoSPI’s commitment to strengthening India’s statistical system and ensuring that **high-quality, accessible data remains central to policymaking**.

For more details on the survey reports and upcoming statistical releases, please visit the official MoSPI website: www.mospi.gov.in

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