



Changes in PLFS schedule and estimation procedure from January 2027 - inviting comments thereon

NSO to introduce changes in PLFS from January 2027

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The National Statistics Office (NSO), Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), has been conducting the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) since 2017. PLFS has evolved to meet the demand for more timely and disaggregated labour market statistics. The sampling design of PLFS was revamped from January 2025 to provide monthly, quarterly and annual estimates and to enable estimation of indicators at sub-state level. Education and skilling questions were added, and also information on digital platform workers, a subset of gig workers, has been collected on an experimental basis since January 2026.

The NSO proposes to introduce modification in the sampling design of the PLFS from January 2027, when fresh samples for the two-year period 2027-2028 (new Panel 6) will be drawn from an updated sampling frame. It also introduces certain changes in the survey schedule. A concept note giving the details has been prepared and is available at <https://www.mospi.gov.in/>.

Comments and suggestions are invited from the policymakers, researchers, academic and research institutions and members of the general public on the proposed modifications within 15 days from the date of publication of this press note.

Key changes in sampling design and estimation

- **Separate stratum for digital platform workers.** Experience from PLFS 2026 showed that the existing arrangement did not capture an adequate number of digital platform workers. A new Second Stage Stratum (SSS) based on digital platform work is being introduced, while the existing SSS structure and composition are retained. There will be four SSSs in rural areas and five in urban areas, with 14 households canvassed in each selected First Stage Unit (FSU). This revision in SSS formation is expected to improve the coverage of digital platform workers and facilitate more comprehensive data collection on this emerging segment of the labour market.

- **Updated sampling frame and refinements.** Fresh samples for the two-year period 2027-2028 (Panel 6) will be drawn from an updated frame reflecting the updated Urban Frame Survey, urbanisation and de-urbanisation, and the creation, splitting or merger of districts and other administrative units, along with follow-up updation of the rural Census 2011 frame. The updated sampling frame will ensure better representation of the current population, urban population in particular, by capturing changes in urbanisation, administrative boundaries and the emergence of new urban areas. It is expected to improve sample coverage and enhance the reliability and relevance of PLFS estimates.

Additionally, criteria for sample allocation and stratification have also been modified/ updated based on the experience of the previous two-year period (Panel 5). These revisions are expected to improve the efficiency of sample allocation and stratification and ensure better representation of population variations which in turn minimise operational difficulties during sample selection.

- **Transition in the first three months.** For the first three months from January 2027, the sample will comprise FSUs from both the Panel 5 frame and the updated Panel 6 frame. Pooled monthly estimates based on both frames will be presented in the monthly bulletins for these months. Relative Standard Error (RSE) estimates will not be presented for these three months. This approach will facilitate a smooth transition to the updated sampling frame while ensuring continuity in the release of monthly and quarterly labour market estimates.

Key changes in the PLFS schedule

- **Identifying digital platform workers.** An additional binary question has been introduced in Block 5 of Schedule 0.0PL, to identify households in which any member has ever engaged in digital platform work during the specified reference period. The questions will be canvassed in all urban as well as rural households to facilitate the identification of eligible households for formation of the new digital platform workers based SSS.
- **Measuring unpaid activities.** New questions have been added to Schedule 10.4 on own-use production of goods, unpaid household and caregiving activities, volunteer work and unpaid trainee work. These items will be canvassed in both rural and urban areas during the first visit only, for persons aged 15 years and above, thereby enabling annual reporting on these activities. The inclusion of these items will facilitate a more comprehensive assessment of different forms of work beyond conventional employment, improve the availability of data on unpaid and non-market activities and support a broader understanding of the contribution of individuals to household and community well-being.

The modified sampling design and estimation procedure and the modified Schedules 0.0PL and 10.4 form part of the concept note.

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