PLFS 2026 to include Digital and Platform Workers

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance| Economy*

Why in News?

India's upcoming Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2026 is likely to collect data on digital and platform-based workers for the first time.

- This will help estimate the size and characteristics of India's rapidly expanding gig economy and improve labour-policy formulation.
- **Gig worker** – A person earning income through short-term, flexible or task-based work outside the traditional employer–employee relationship.
- **Platform worker** – A gig worker who obtains work through an online platform, such as ride-hailing, food delivery, e-commerce or home-service platforms.
    - **Examples** – Drivers, delivery partners, online freelancers and service providers.

PLFS 2026 – Significance

- **Better measurement** – Captures workers who may not fit traditional employment categories.
- **Evidence-based policy** – Helps estimate the actual size and nature of platform employment.
- **Social security** – Better identification can facilitate coverage under welfare and social-security measures.
- **Labour-market planning** – Provides data on employment patterns, skills and income.
- **Gender dimension** – Can help understand women's participation in platform work, which remains constrained by digital literacy, financial access and safety concerns

Gig economy in India

- The Economic Survey 2025-26 noted a 55% increase in gig workers between FY2021 and FY2025
- The gig economy is becoming an increasingly important source of employment amid digitalisation and changing work arrangements.
- NITI Aayog had earlier estimated 7.7 million gig workers in 2020-21, with the number projected to rise substantially by 2029-30.
- **Challenges of Platform Work –**
    - Lack of traditional employer–employee relationship
    - Limited access to social security
    - Income instability

    - Algorithmic management and rating-based work allocation
    - Limited collective bargaining
    - Difficulty in accurately measuring the workforce.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- It is India's official national survey used to track employment, unemployment, and labor market dynamics.
- **Conducted by** – National Statistical Office (NSO)
- **Nodal ministry** – Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
- It measures the LFPR (percentage working or looking for work), WPR (employed percentage of the population), and UR (unemployed percentage in the active labor force)

Reference

[The Times of India| PLFS 2026 to include Digital and Platform Workers]

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering