



Shortfalls in employment surveys

What is the issue?

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- There has been a lack of official unemployment estimates.

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- This undermines democratic accountability.

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What are the shortfalls in employment survey mechanisms?

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- **NSSO** - there has been a delay in mapping unemployment by the National sample survey office, where the last employment survey took place in 2011-12.

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- There is also no clear decision on upcoming employment surveys, whether it should stick to April-March cycle or shift to June-July cycle.

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- Shifting the cycle has its own complications like data becoming incomparable.

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- **CIME** - Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy is able to produce high-frequency unemployment data with a large sample size using innovative methods such as hand-held devices.

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- It has estimated that urban unemployment in the first full week of October was at its highest in 11 months.

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- But the estimates by these organisations are not taken into account by the government.

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- **Non-State actors** - Many non-state actors are also taking surveys which are many times biased or not reliable.
- It is puzzling to see the non-state actors taking up the task of conducting surveys using digital technology, while the government lags in its data collection mechanisms.

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What are impacts of lack of employment data?

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- Unavailability of unemployment data, comparability of overall growth estimates have made the economy opaque.
- The delays in survey during the turbulent times have become a major obstacle in framing suitable policies.
- This crisis can be clearly seen on the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which were affected by demonetisation and GST.
- They have been the engine of employment growth in India, given the constraints on hiring and firing by the larger companies.

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Way Forward

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- The government has failed to bring in this crucial aspect of governance-collection of employment data under the radar of its Digital India.
- To respond and realign the priorities with appropriate policies, government needs to update its data collection mechanisms.
- This will ensure confidence and transparency in the economy and also boost investments.

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Source: Business Standard

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