

The Pronab Sen Committee: Is there a need to completely overhaul national surveys?

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Why in News?

- The Government of India recently appointed a panel under the chairmanship of Pronab Sen, former Chief Statistician of India to review the methodology of the National Statistical Organisation (NSO).

About the Pronab Sen Committee:

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has formed a new **Standing Committee on Statistics** (SCoS) to advise on official data generated by the National Statistical Office (NSO).
- This panel will replace the Standing Committee on Economic Statistics (SCES) that was formed in 2019 to advise on economic data.

SCoS vs SCES:

- **The SCES was mandated to review the framework for economic indicators** such as those pertaining to the industrial and services sectors, along with labour force statistics.
 - **Its focus was limited to reviewing high-frequency data** like the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI), apart from surveys and enumerations like the
 - Economic Census,
 - Annual Survey of Industries and
 - Periodic Labour Force Survey.
- **The SCoS has enhanced terms of reference** that enable it to advise the Ministry not just on all existing surveys and data sets, but also –
 - Identify areas where data gaps exist,
 - Suggest ways to fill them and carry out pilot surveys and
 - Studies to finetune new approaches for capturing better data.
- **The new committee** is also half the size of the 28-member panel that was reviewing economic data.

Why is there a Need to Review the Methodology of the NSO?

- **National level data is a key resource:** For research, policymaking and development planning, so it is of utmost importance to understand and analyse the data in the light of existing evidence.
- **Usage of outdated survey methodology by national surveys:** Such as the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), have systematically underestimated India's development.
 - **This archaic methodology** has failed to capture reality in the recent past as the Indian economy has been incredibly dynamic in the last 30 years.

Case of NFHS:

- Conducted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for the last 30 years with the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) as the nodal agency, **NFHS has rural bias in terms of representation.**

- The survey methodology, which depends heavily on the last Census data, **systematically overestimates the rural population** (when compared with WB data).
- **For example**, there is evidence that rural population overestimation seems to have taken place by NFHS-2 and NFHS-5. However, these errors seem random rather than systematic.

How can these Errors be Minimised?

- **If the sample weights are appropriately assigned**, after taking into account all possible sources of error, then over/ underrepresentation seems to get corrected to a large extent.
 - **The Pronab Sen Committee** needs to address these concerns to make the sample adequately representative rather than go for a complete overhaul of the survey methodology.
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Q1) What is the Consumer Price Index (CPI)?

A comprehensive measure used for estimation of price changes in a basket of goods and services representative of consumption expenditure in an economy is called consumer price index (CPI).

Q2) What is the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)?

Considering the importance of availability of labour force data at more frequent time intervals, National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) launched PLFS in 2017 to estimate the key employment and unemployment indicators.

Source: [Explained | Is there a rural bias in national surveys?](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/the-pronab-sen-committee-is-there-a-need-to-completely-overhaul-national-surveys/>

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