

# *MGNREGA in Odisha: A Mid-Year Analysis of Challenges and Opportunities (April–Sep 2024)*

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## ***About this report***

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the implementation status of MGNREGA in Odisha for the period April to September 2024. The data for this analysis was sourced from the official MGNREGA website (<https://nrega.nic.in/>) as of October 10, 2024. Our goal is to offer citizens and stakeholders valuable insights into the current state of the program, highlighting key trends and progress. We hope your engagement with this report will promote a deeper understanding of the dynamics of MGNREGA implementation across Odisha.

# 1. Key Highlights of the Report

- **Worker Deletions:** Odisha experienced a net deletion of 8.7 lakh workers in the first half of the current fiscal year, April to September 2024, continuing a concerning trend. The implementation of Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) has been a significant factor, with anecdotal evidence of wrongful deletions.
- **ABPS Ineligibility:** Around 6.7% of all MGNREGA workers and 3.3% of active workers in Odisha are ineligible for ABPS. Districts like Nayagarh and Bolangir have higher ineligibility rates, affecting access to timely wage payments and increasing the risk of work denial.
- **Employment Drop:** There has been a 48.4% decline in person-days generated in Odisha between April and September 2024 compared to the corresponding period in the previous fiscal year, indicating a reduced provision of work despite the high demand for MGNREGA employment.
- **District-Level Insights:** All districts recorded a decline in person-days, with significant drops in Jagatsinghapur (82%) and Ganjam (79%). The disparity in worker deletions and ABPS ineligibility is most pronounced in districts like Nayagarh and Bolangir.

In the following sections, we delve a little deeper into employment provisions of MGNREGA and its implementation across Odisha, to get insights and make policy recommendations accordingly.

## 2. Current Status of MGNREGA Jobcards and Active Workers

**Table 1:** MGNREGA Job Card and Worker Status in Odisha (as of October 10, 2024)

	As on 10th October 2024
Job Cards Issued (Lakhs)	56.7
Total Number of Active Jobcards (Lakhs)	44.2
Total Number of Active Workers (Lakhs)	67.5

As of October 2024, a substantial number of Odisha's rural residents are actively engaged in the MGNREGA program, with the majority of issued job cards currently active as illustrated in Table 1. This high level of

engagement reflects the importance of MGNREGA in providing sustained employment for rural workers across the state.

### 3. Worker deletions

Over the past few years, the deletion of workers under MGNREGA has been a growing concern at both state and national levels. As per LibTech India’s previous year’s [report](#), more than 8 crore workers in the country were removed from the MGNREGA registry during FY 2022-23 and 2023-24. This level of intensified deletions occurred due to the Ministry of Rural Development’s (MoRD) push for an Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS), which has reportedly led to the exclusion of many genuine workers.

While some new additions to the workforce have been made, they fall significantly short of offsetting the deletions. This section presents the trends in worker deletions during the current fiscal year (April–September 2024) and over the past three years, shedding light on the severity of the issue. The possible reasons for the deletions are discussed in **section 4**.

#### 3.1 Net Worker Deletions in 2024-25

- Net deletion of 8.7 lakh workers in this financial year

*Table 2: Status of worker deletions during April to September 2024*

Sno	Description	Number (In Lakhs)
1	No of Registered workers (Lakhs)	95
2	No. of workers deleted in current year (A)	10.1
3	No. of workers added in the current year (B)	1.3
4	Net Deleted workers (A-B)	8.8

In the first six months of the current fiscal year, a significant net 8.7 lakh workers were removed from the MGNREGA rolls. Due to this, Odisha became one of the top three states in the country with highest net deletions in the last six months of 2024-25. Although 1.3 lakh new workers were added, these additions are vastly outpaced by the 10.1 lakh deletions, resulting in a significant net decline.

## 3.2 Annual Net Worker Deletions

Table 3: Worker Net deletions in Odisha between 2021-2024

Year	No. of workers deleted in current year(In Lakhs) (A)	No. of workers added in the current year(In Lakhs) (B)	Net Deleted workers (A-B)(In Lakhs)
2021-22	26	8.5	17.5
2022-23	78	6.9	71
2023-24	15	6	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>97.5</b>

The data from 2021–22 to 2023–24 highlights a consistent and troubling pattern of net worker deletions in Odisha as given in Table 3. Over three years, the total number of workers deleted (119 lakh) is more than the current registered MGNREGA workers in the state, which stands at 95 lakh. This is shocking, as it implies that if these deletions had not occurred, the workforce size would have been much higher.

This stark imbalance underscores the persistent challenge of workforce exclusions, with deletions far outpacing new additions. Aligning with the national trend, the most dramatic reduction occurred in 2022-23, further emphasizing the scale of the issue.

Many of these deletions have been linked to ABPS compliance issues, which often result in the wrongful removal of genuine workers. Field investigations in Koraput and Bolangir districts by the LibTech team reveal numerous cases where eligible workers were mistakenly deleted due to administrative lapses or technical mismatches.

## 4. ABPS Ineligibility

In January 2023, the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) mandated the nationwide implementation of the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) for MGNREGA. To be eligible for ABPS, workers must meet several conditions: their Aadhaar must be linked to their job card, the name on the Aadhaar must match the name on the job card, and their bank account must be Aadhaar-seeded and mapped with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

One of the key reasons for worker deletions appears to be compliance with ABPS requirements. A study conducted by LibTech India across several states, including Odisha, found that local officials, under pressure to meet ABPS eligibility targets, often resorted to deleting workers from the MGNREGA database when they could not fulfill the technical prerequisites for ABPS. This practice has been linked to various cases of wrongful deletions, leaving many genuine workers unable to access their rightful benefits. For example,

mismatches in names or incomplete Aadhaar seeding processes have resulted in workers being unfairly removed from the rolls, undermining their livelihoods.

Due to public outcry and pressure from civil society organizations, the deadline for ABPS implementation was extended multiple times. However, since January 1, 2024, ABPS has been made mandatory.

## 4.1 Statewide ABPS Ineligibility Overview

- 6.4 lakh workers across the state are not eligible for ABPS

*Table 4: ABPS ineligibility of all workers and active workers in the state of Odisha*

Category	Total No. of Workers (in lakhs)	Ineligible for ABPS (in lakhs)	% Ineligible for ABPS
All Workers	95.0	6.4	6.7
Active Workers	67.5	2.2	3.3

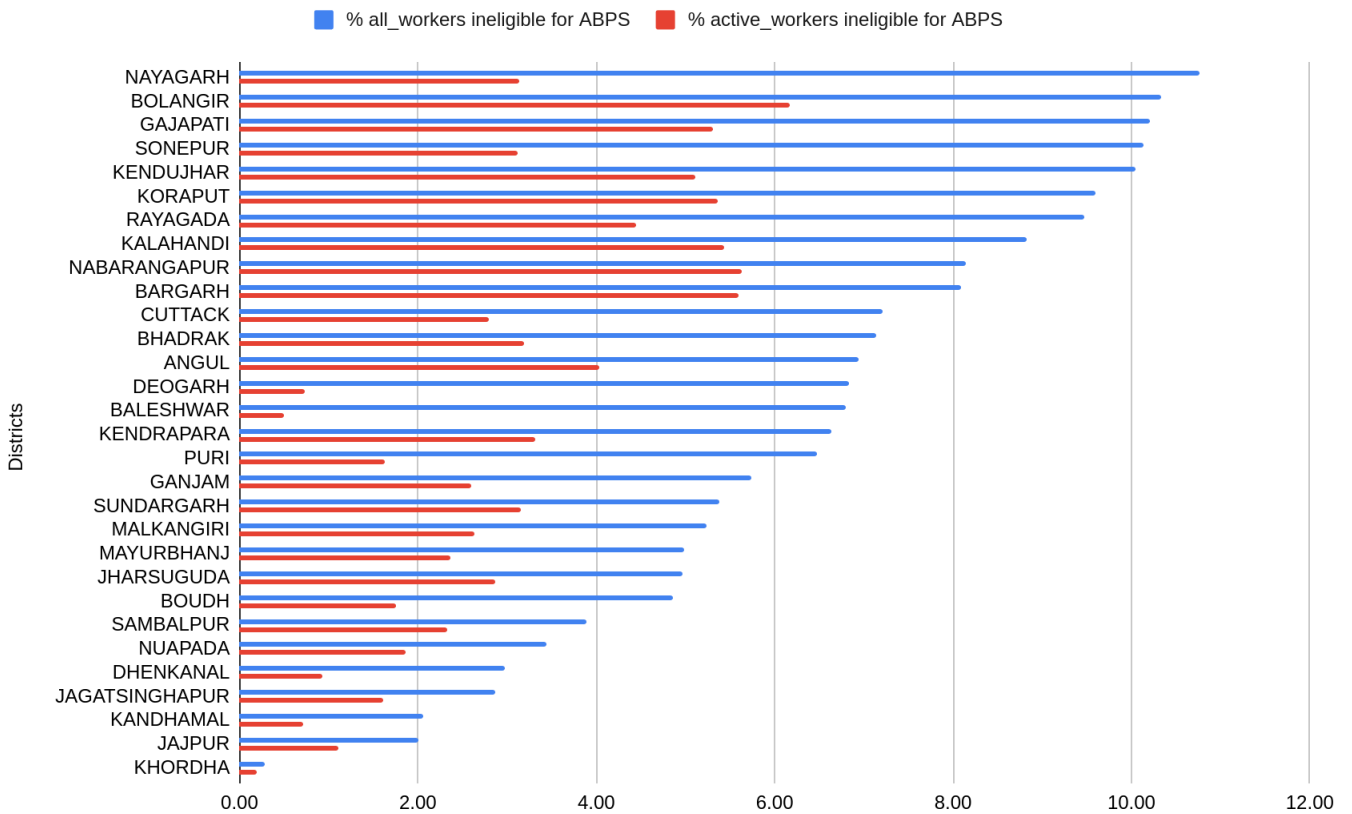
Regardless of extended deadlines in the past, 6.7% of all MGNREGA workers and 3.3% of active workers are currently ineligible for ABPS in the state of Odisha, as illustrated in Table 4. While the national level ineligibility stands at 27.4% in case of all workers and 4.3% in case of active workers as per the recent [report](#) by LibTech India. During our interviews, the MoRD officials mentioned that they have instructed the state officials to not deny work on account of ABPS ineligibility. However, we have come across 200 cases in 10 states where workers (those ineligible for ABPS) are being denied work by frontline officials fearing non-payment of wages.

## 4.2 District level Ineligibility

- 10.7% of all workers in Nayagarh and 6.2% of active workers in Bolangir are ineligible for ABPS

At the district level, ineligibility for Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) varies significantly. The districts with the highest ineligibility rates among all workers are Nayagarh, Bolangir, and Gajapati. On the other hand, Bolangir, Nabarangapur, and Bargarh exhibit the highest ineligibility rates among active workers, indicating better ABPS coverage for those currently engaged in work.

## Ineligibility for ABPS



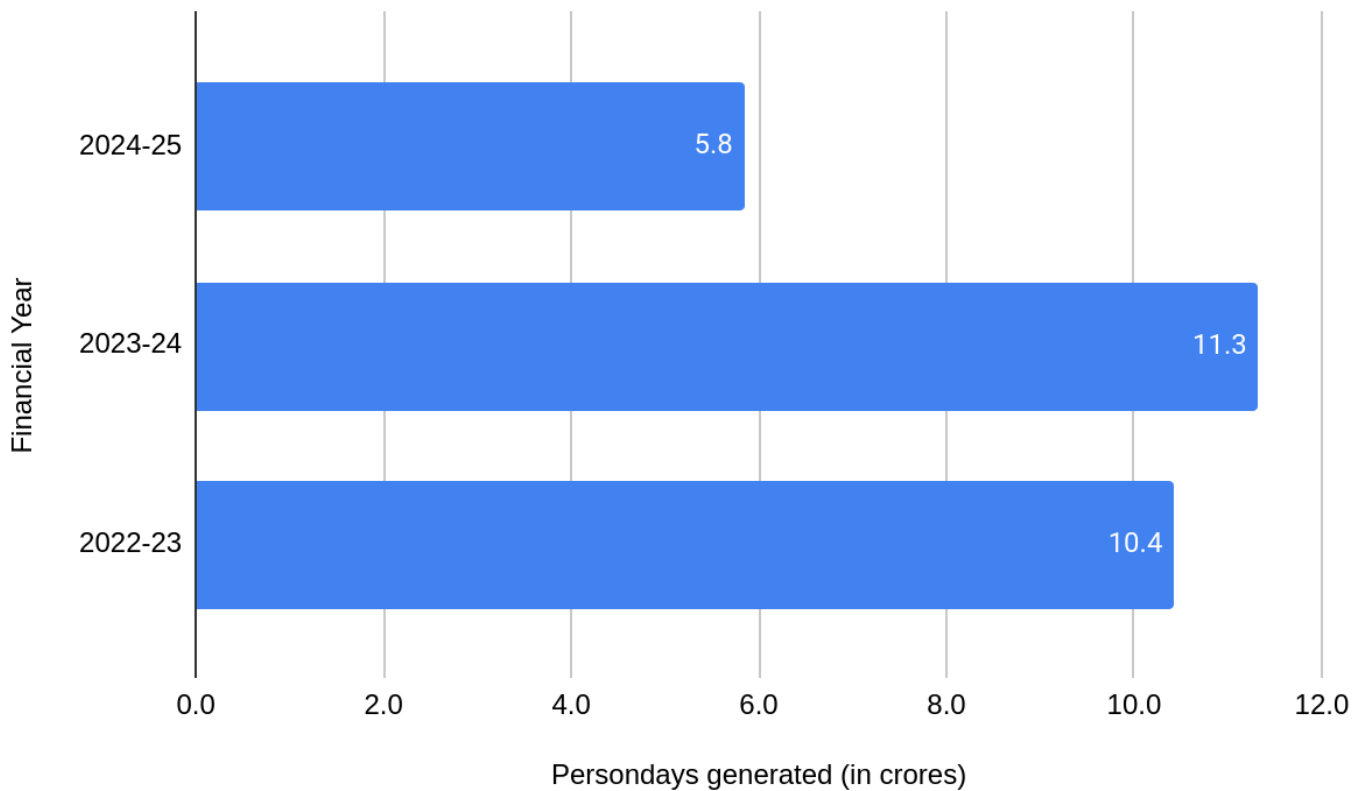
**Figure 1:** Percent of workers ineligible for ABPS among all workers and active workers across states

Figure 1 is an illustration of state wise ‘all workers’ and ‘active workers’ ineligibility for ABPS in the state. When considered active workers, Bolangir has the highest percentage of workers ineligible for ABPS while Khordha has the lowest percentage of ineligible workers as the district is close to universal ABPS eligibility. In case of all workers, Nayagarh has the highest ineligible percentage of workers while Khordha has the lowest percentage of ineligible workers.

Further, 15 districts have more than 6.7% (state average) of all workers ineligible for ABPS and 10 districts have more than 3.3% (state average for active workers) ineligibility of “active workers”. Please refer to **Annexure 1 and 2** for detailed district level data for ‘all workers’ and ‘active workers’ ABPS ineligibility.

# 5. Employment Provided

- 48.4% drop in persondays generated



**Figure 2:** Trend in persondays generated between April and September for 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25

Figure 2 illustrates the trend in employment generation from April to September across three financial years. After an increase in persondays generated from 10.4 crores in the financial year 2022-23 to 11.3 crores—a 8.6% rise—a significant decline is observed in the current financial year, with persondays dropping to 5.8 crores (a 48.4% decrease); a similar trend of decline in persondays in the current fiscal year was observed at the national level as well.

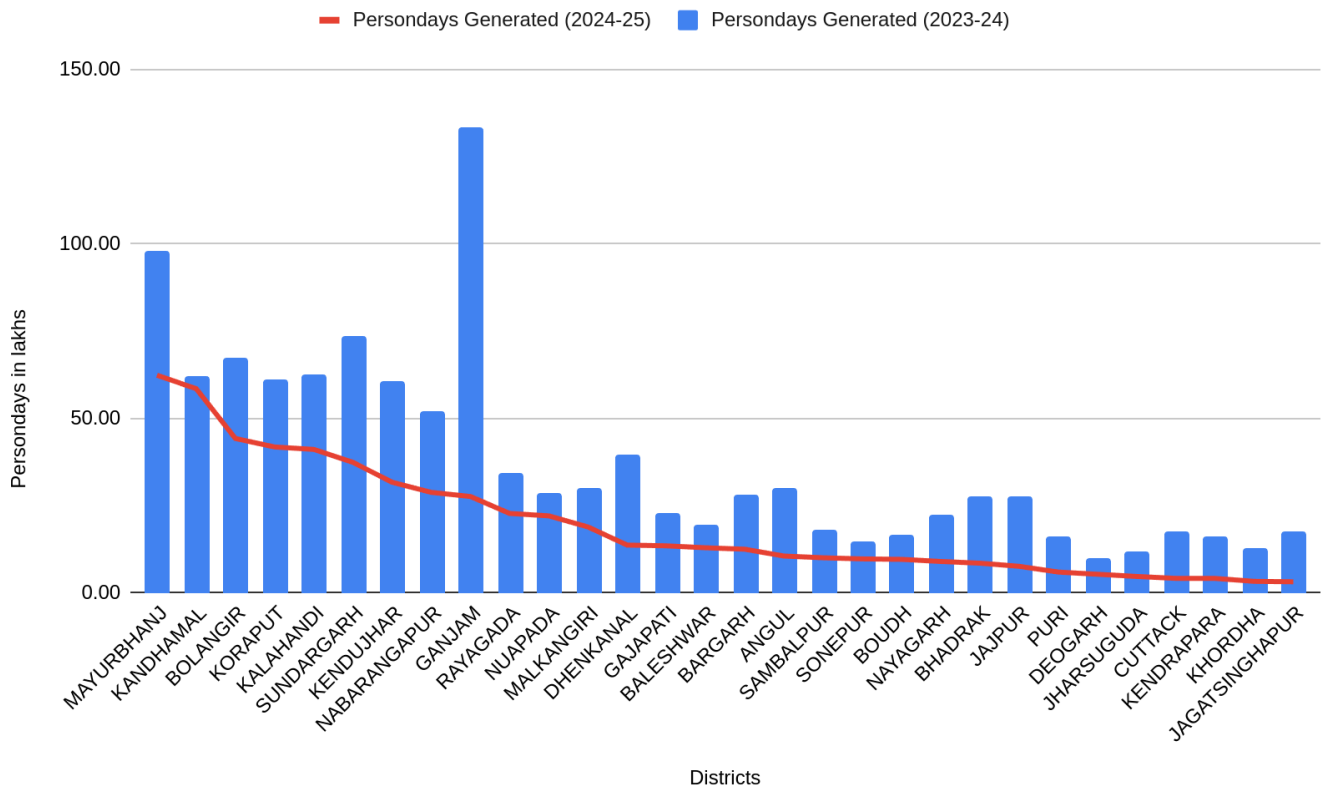
It is reasonable to infer that the number of persondays generated would have been even higher if the wrongly deleted workers had been reinstated, highlighting the substantial reliance of workers on MGNREGA. This observation emphasizes the consistently high and growing demand for employment opportunities under the scheme.

## 5.1 District level data

- Persondays of work decreased in all districts

In comparison to April-September 2023-24, all districts show a decline in the number of persondays of work created. Figure 3 illustrates trends by district.





**Figure 3:** State-wise persondays for April-September for 2023-24 and 2024-25

As shown in figure 3, the biggest drop of about 82% and 79% is observed in both Jagatsinghapur and Ganjam districts, respectively.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings highlight an urgent need for remedial actions to address the persistent worker deletions and a notable ABPS ineligibility that are impairing MGNREGA's reach and effectiveness in Odisha. The significant reduction in person-days generated this fiscal year reflects operational constraints that, if left unchecked, could further weaken MGNREGA's role as a social safety net. Immediate state-level interventions, such as reviewing deletion protocols and enhancing ABPS accessibility, are crucial to restore access to work and prevent further disenfranchisement of genuine workers from the program.

# About LibTech

We are a team of engineers, social workers and social scientists who are interested in improving public service delivery in India. We have been working as a team in multiple states of the country including Andhra Pradesh for the last 10 years, though individually some of us have been involved for more than a decade.

## **Team Behind This Report:**

Chakradhar Buddha | Shamala Kittane

# Annexure 1

## District wise ABPS ineligibility for all workers

Districts	Total Workers	Ineligible for ABPS	ABPS ineligibility percentage for all workers
NAYAGARH	317529	34150	10.8
BOLANGIR	519640	53653	10.3
GAJAPATI	196043	20002	10.2
SONEPUR	194618	19716	10.1
KENDUJHAR	533828	53669	10.1
KORAPUT	386258	37101	9.6
RAYAGADA	240400	22785	9.5
KALAHANDI	469193	41393	8.8
NABARANGAPUR	330772	26923	8.1
BARGARH	332098	26848	8.1
CUTTACK	368004	26550	7.2
BHADRAK	285765	20422	7.1
ANGUL	293125	20320	6.9
DEOGARH	115536	7904	6.8
BALESHWAR	404677	27492	6.8
KENDRAPARA	322212	21384	6.6
PURI	369892	23964	6.5
GANJAM	621458	35646	5.7
SUNDARGARH	372143	20043	5.4
MALKANGIRI	178269	9324	5.2
MAYURBHANJ	690083	34360	5.0
JHARSUGUDA	115978	5758	5.0
BOUDH	163685	7959	4.9
SAMBALPUR	198464	7706	3.9
NUAPADA	211561	7271	3.4
DHENKANAL	334221	9966	3.0
JAGATSINGHAPUR	198592	5677	2.9
KANDHAMAL	253362	5237	2.1
JAJPUR	301419	6049	2.0
KHORDHA	189752	550	0.3

# Annexure 2

## District wise ABPS ineligibility for active workers

Districts	Total Workers	Ineligible for ABPS	ABPS ineligibility percentage for active workers
BOLANGIR	403803	24946	6.2
NABARANGAPUR	241192	13564	5.6
BARGARH	222951	12492	5.6
KALAHANDI	354645	19263	5.4
KORAPUT	307461	16505	5.4
GAJAPATI	146340	7761	5.3
KENDUJHAR	395187	20205	5.1
RAYAGADA	182181	8094	4.4
ANGUL	214002	8618	4.0
KENDRAPARA	190300	6309	3.3
BHADRAK	186913	5976	3.2
SUNDARGARH	315765	9987	3.2
NAYAGARH	186027	5829	3.1
SONEPUR	117785	3680	3.1
JHARSUGUDA	82121	2354	2.9
CUTTACK	194589	5455	2.8
MALKANGIRI	139575	3675	2.6
GANJAM	526289	13700	2.6
MAYURBHANJ	508228	12018	2.4
SAMBALPUR	141638	3304	2.3
NUAPADA	177067	3302	1.9
BOUDH	117926	2072	1.8
PURI	202793	3307	1.6
JAGATSINGHAPUR	126456	2033	1.6
JAJPUR	195620	2184	1.1
DHENKANAL	237675	2201	0.9
DEOGARH	78414	573	0.7
KANDHAMAL	238101	1700	0.7
BALESHWAR	228296	1138	0.5
KHORDHA	100661	191	0.2