

Sharp Fall in Worker Rolls During the Transition from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G

What changed in registered and active worker counts in the fortnight surrounding the 1 July 2026 transition.

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FOR MEDIA CIRCULATION

IN BRIEF

- Between 29 June and 14 July 2026, the registered-worker count fell from 27.00 crore to 26.33 crore — a net reduction of about 67.6 lakh (2.50%) in just 15 days.
- Over the same period, the active-worker count fell from 10.84 crore to 10.57 crore — a net reduction of about 26.3 lakh (2.43%). Because active workers had worked in recent years, the contraction cannot be dismissed as being confined to wholly dormant records.
- The decline was highly concentrated. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana together accounted for about 75% of the net fall in registered workers; Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Bihar accounted for about 81% of the net fall in active workers.
- This is the latest in a series of major episodes in which the introduction or tightening of a mandatory digital requirement has coincided with a sharp fall in worker numbers — following Aadhaar-based payments (2022–23), e-KYC (2025) and the later addition of facial-recognition verification to e-KYC (2026).
- These figures are net changes between two MIS stock snapshots, not transaction-level deletion logs. They establish the scale and timing of the contraction, but not the administrative reason recorded for every worker who was no longer counted in the second snapshot.

1 From MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G

On 1 July 2026, the Viksit Bharat — Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 — VB-G RAM G — came into force, replacing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, which had guaranteed 100 days of wage work to rural households for two decades. [1][2]

The new law raises the guarantee to 125 days and introduces state-wise normative allocations. Costs are shared 60:40 for most states and 90:10 for specified North-Eastern and Himalayan states and Jammu & Kashmir; Union Territories without legislatures are fully funded by the Centre. States must bear expenditure beyond the approved allocation. The Act also expands technology-enabled governance through biometric authentication, geospatial planning, GPS- or mobile-based worksite monitoring, MIS dashboards and AI-enabled planning, audits and fraud-risk mitigation. [1][2][3]

The concern set out here is not opposition to database verification itself, but a recurring operational pattern: large declines in worker counts have repeatedly coincided with successive digital-compliance drives, with the greatest risk borne by workers facing technical, connectivity, mobility, documentation or frontline-support barriers.

2 A recurring pattern during digital-compliance drives

2.1 Aadhaar-based payments (ABPS), 2022–23

As Aadhaar linking of job cards was pushed to operationalise the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS), worker deletions surged. LibTech India's analysis found that roughly 9 crore workers were removed over three financial years during the introduction of ABPS. Figures subsequently placed before Parliament show that annual removals rose from 1.49 crore in 2021–22 to 5.53 crore in 2022–23 — an increase of about 271%. [4][5]

Analyses at the time found that many of these deletions were recorded under reasons such as “not willing to work” without the Gram Sabha hearing required by law, indicating that compliance deadlines, rather than genuine verification alone, were shaping the process. [5]

2.2 e-KYC, October–November 2025

During the 2025 e-KYC drive, LibTech India's field teams found that workers whose e-KYC remained incomplete were, in practice, denied work in some locations. Over the same period, LibTech India's analysis found about 27 lakh gross deletions between 10 October and 14 November 2025, against roughly 10.5 lakh additions. The result was a net reduction of about 16.5 lakh workers in roughly five weeks; around 6 lakh of the net reduction involved active workers. Andhra Pradesh alone accounted for 15.92 lakh gross deletions. [6]

2.3 Facial-recognition verification within e-KYC, early 2026

Facial-recognition verification was not part of the initial e-KYC process; it was added subsequently as an additional step within e-KYC. LibTech India's field observations found that workers who could not complete either e-KYC or facial-recognition verification were denied work in some locations. Completion depended on functioning devices, connectivity, successful image capture and the availability of trained frontline personnel. Workers temporarily away from their villages, including those who had migrated for work, could also miss verification drives. In such circumstances, non-completion may reflect an administrative or technical barrier rather than ineligibility. [6]

2.4 The VB-G RAM G transition, 2026

Official transition guidance stated that e-KYC-verified MGNREGA job cards would remain valid until new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards were issued, that workers should not be denied employment merely because e-KYC was pending, and that facilitation would continue. LibTech India's field observations from the earlier e-KYC and facial-recognition drives, however, documented cases in which workers with incomplete verification were denied work. The publicly available transition framework did not explain in comparable operational detail how such workers would be carried over, how omissions would be identified, or how prompt restoration would work. [1][3][6]

The scale and timing of the contraction between 29 June and 14 July therefore require urgent investigation. Technical failures, weak connectivity, limited frontline support and workers' temporary absence from their villages are plausible explanations, but the available stock reports do not establish the cause of each individual change.

3 The transition fortnight: what the rolls show

The figures below are compiled from the programme’s state-wise Aadhaar-status (“R1.1.9”) reports dated 29 June and 14 July 2026. Two measures are tracked separately: all registered workers, and active workers — those recorded as having worked during the current or preceding three financial years. [7]

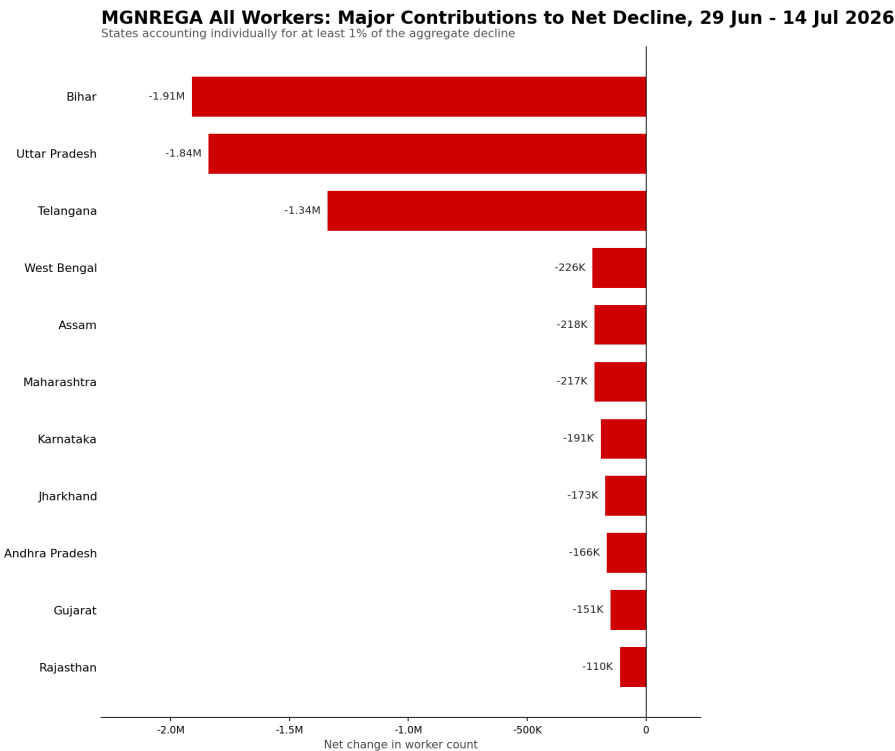
3.1 Headline movement

Measure	29 Jun 2026	14 Jul 2026	Net change	% change
All (registered) workers	27,00,33,543	26,32,75,422	-67.6 lakh	-2.50%
Active workers	10,83,51,483	10,57,16,749	-26.3 lakh	-2.43%

Source: programme Aadhaar-status reports; LibTech India analysis.

In only 15 days, both registered and active worker counts fell by roughly 2.5%. The decline among active workers is particularly important because it reaches people who had participated in the programme in recent years, not only old or entirely dormant records.

3.2 All (registered) workers, by state

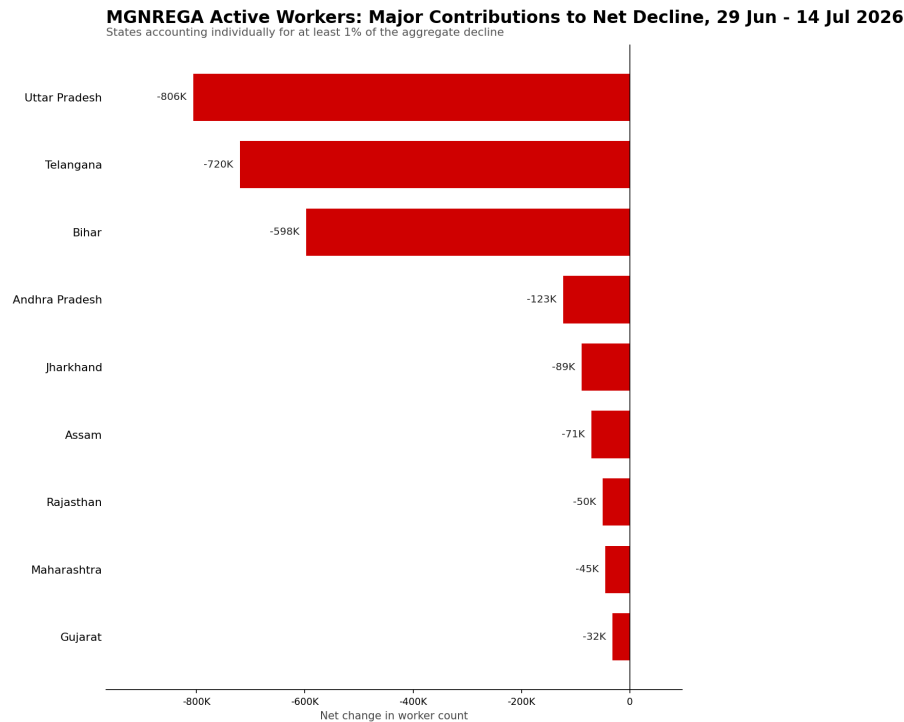


Source: Public MIS snapshots compiled by LibTech India. Major contributors only; full state series in Appendix A.

Figure 1. Major state contributions to the net reduction in registered workers, 29 June–14 July 2026. States shown individually account for at least 1% of the national net reduction; complete figures are in Appendix A.

The registered-worker decline was highly concentrated. Bihar (–19.1 lakh), Uttar Pradesh (–18.4 lakh) and Telangana (–13.4 lakh) together accounted for about 50.9 lakh — roughly 75% of the national net reduction. West Bengal, Assam, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan made smaller but still material contributions.

3.3 Active workers, by state



Source: Public MIS snapshots compiled by LibTech India. Major contributors only; full state series in Appendix B.

Figure 2. Major state contributions to the net reduction in active workers, 29 June–14 July 2026. States shown individually account for at least 1% of the national net reduction; complete figures are in Appendix B.

The active-worker decline was even more concentrated. Uttar Pradesh (–8.1 lakh), Telangana (–7.2 lakh) and Bihar (–6.0 lakh) together accounted for about 21.3 lakh — roughly 81% of the national net reduction. Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Assam, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat were the other major contributors.

4 About the data and its limits

- **Source.** State-wise Aadhaar-status reports for the rural employment programme dated 29 June and 14 July 2026, compiled and analysed by LibTech India. Historical figures in Section 2 are drawn from LibTech India’s tracking across earlier technology-compliance drives and the cited public record.
- **Interpretation.** These are stock counts at two dates, not transaction-level deletion logs. A fall therefore represents a net reduction after accounting for additions and removals; it should not be read mechanically as the number of deletions.
- **Scope and comparability.** This briefing deliberately confines its 2026 state-level analysis to 29 June–14 July. The same dates are applied to every State and Union Territory and bracket a single nationally applicable transition date.

5 Immediate safeguards and recommendations

Pending full disclosure and verification, the transition should be governed by a presumption in favour of continuity for genuine workers:

- No worker should lose a job card or access to employment solely because e-KYC or facial-recognition verification is pending or could not be completed.

- Deletions should be paused until notice, field verification, Gram Sabha scrutiny and a time-bound appeal process are operational.
- Genuine workers omitted during the transition should be restored promptly, without being required to register afresh.
- Offline and assisted verification must remain available at Gram Panchayats and worksites, with repeated opportunities for migrants and workers temporarily away from their villages.
- The Union and State governments should publish regular deletion-and-restoration dashboards and permit an independent audit of the transition.

References

- [1] Ministry of Rural Development, PIB, “Historic Commencement of Viksit Bharat – G RAM G Act Across Rural India from July 1st 2026” (11 May 2026).
- [2] The Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025, and the notification commencing the Act from 1 July 2026.
- [3] Ministry of Rural Development, “Viksit Bharat – G RAM G Act, 2025: Frequently Asked Questions” and Detailed Explainer (11 May 2026).
- [4] Ministry of Rural Development, replies in the Lok Sabha on job-card deletion and worker-removal figures, Winter Session 2023.
- [5] LibTech India analysis of worker removals during the ABPS rollout, including removals over three financial years and the sharp increase between 2021–22 and 2022–23.
- [6] LibTech India analysis of worker-count changes during the 2025 e-KYC drive and field observations on denial of work associated with incomplete e-KYC or facial-recognition verification, 2025–26.
- [7] Programme R1.1.9 Aadhaar-status report snapshots dated 29 June and 14 July 2026, compiled by LibTech India.

ABOUT LIBTECH INDIA

LibTech India is a team of engineers, social workers, and social scientists committed to improving public service delivery in India. As a team, we work across multiple states, while several of our members have been engaged with these issues individually for many years.

Over the years, LibTech India has regularly published reports and analyses on the implementation of MGNREGA, both at the national level and in individual states.

REPORT TEAM

Venkateswarlu Kuruva | Chakradhar Buddha | Diwakar Mantri | Shyam Mahipala | Abinav Yamki

CONTACT

contactus@libtech.in | +91 9121180496



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Appendix Full state-wise figures (all 34 States / UTs)

Complete counts underlying the transition-period analysis, with all 34 States and Union Territories retained. Changes are 14 July minus 29 June; a minus sign denotes a net fall.

A. All (registered) workers

State / UT	29 Jun 2026	14 Jul 2026	Net change
Andhra Pradesh	1,15,63,285	1,13,97,193	-1,66,092
Arunachal Pradesh	4,86,950	4,66,449	-20,501
Assam	1,19,99,586	1,17,81,256	-2,18,330
Bihar	2,74,34,002	2,55,20,580	-19,13,422
Chhattisgarh	78,31,107	78,30,434	-673
Goa	52,503	49,789	-2,714
Gujarat	98,69,451	97,18,236	-1,51,215
Haryana	25,95,542	25,76,111	-19,431
Himachal Pradesh	26,91,749	26,77,364	-14,385
Jammu & Kashmir	20,90,775	20,83,830	-6,945
Jharkhand	1,05,85,681	1,04,12,442	-1,73,239
Karnataka	1,44,27,025	1,42,35,796	-1,91,229
Kerala	58,17,254	58,25,625	8,371
Ladakh	48,091	48,299	208
Madhya Pradesh	1,78,90,223	1,78,60,433	-29,790
Maharashtra	3,30,18,748	3,28,02,158	-2,16,590
Manipur	9,31,421	9,26,672	-4,749
Meghalaya	12,74,310	12,65,071	-9,239
Mizoram	2,44,108	2,42,233	-1,875
Nagaland	6,08,550	5,97,792	-10,758
Odisha	98,55,826	98,40,417	-15,409
Punjab	26,05,701	25,55,809	-49,892
Rajasthan	2,26,17,278	2,25,07,120	-1,10,158
Sikkim	1,21,390	1,21,335	-55
Tamil Nadu	1,03,42,238	1,03,29,675	-12,563
Telangana	1,01,77,268	88,41,236	-13,36,032
Tripura	11,73,565	11,72,836	-729
Uttar Pradesh	2,45,94,627	2,27,57,531	-18,37,096
Uttarakhand	13,66,045	13,57,250	-8,795
West Bengal	2,54,84,158	2,52,58,479	-2,25,679
Andaman & Nicobar	53,010	45,395	-7,615
DNH & DD	50,574	50,625	51
Lakshadweep	16,454	16,455	1
Puducherry	1,15,048	1,03,496	-11,552
TOTAL	27,00,33,543	26,32,75,422	-67,58,121

Table A. Registered workers by State / UT, 29 June–14 July 2026.

B. Active workers

State / UT	29 Jun 2026	14 Jul 2026	Net change
Andhra Pradesh	90,84,047	89,60,614	-1,23,433

State / UT	29 Jun 2026	14 Jul 2026	Net change
Arunachal Pradesh	3,73,217	3,58,579	-14,638
Assam	48,32,368	47,61,357	-71,011
Bihar	89,98,243	84,00,575	-5,97,668
Chhattisgarh	59,70,504	59,70,226	-278
Goa	5,233	5,055	-178
Gujarat	20,48,976	20,17,346	-31,630
Haryana	6,95,007	6,91,447	-3,560
Himachal Pradesh	12,00,935	11,93,005	-7,930
Jammu & Kashmir	14,20,569	14,16,592	-3,977
Jharkhand	35,67,279	34,78,525	-88,754
Karnataka	63,51,869	63,46,565	-5,304
Kerala	20,41,950	20,45,006	3,056
Ladakh	42,817	42,828	11
Madhya Pradesh	88,94,272	88,89,148	-5,124
Maharashtra	86,72,736	86,27,883	-44,853
Manipur	6,97,879	6,95,975	-1,904
Meghalaya	7,81,050	7,76,086	-4,964
Mizoram	2,13,933	2,14,630	697
Nagaland	4,22,465	4,15,291	-7,174
Odisha	52,18,254	52,08,857	-9,397
Punjab	11,89,332	11,68,134	-21,198
Rajasthan	1,02,97,006	1,02,47,275	-49,731
Sikkim	79,278	79,234	-44
Tamil Nadu	79,98,298	79,90,084	-8,214
Telangana	51,48,525	44,28,967	-7,19,558
Tripura	9,58,843	9,59,059	216
Uttar Pradesh	1,02,81,763	94,75,277	-8,06,486
Uttarakhand	7,58,181	7,52,643	-5,538
West Bengal	10,816	12,672	1,856
Andaman & Nicobar	7,306	6,659	-647
DNH & DD	21,843	22,025	182
Lakshadweep	76	76	0
Puducherry	66,613	59,054	-7,559
TOTAL	10,83,51,483	10,57,16,749	-26,34,734

Table B. Active workers by State / UT, 29 June–14 July 2026.