Pakistan embarked on digital transformation eight years back when Pakistan Bureau of Statistics started using tablets for data collection for major surveys like SLM, LFS etc. The next natural thing was to develop portals which could share the information with stakeholders in tabular and infographics.

In 2019, world was hit by Covid-19 and Pakistan was no exception. Pakistan is a densely populated country, however, despite huge and dense population and less preparedness in epidemic surveillance system, death due to Covid-19 was much then other countries. How it was done? The system was designed and powered by PBS.

PBS used to get georeferenced data of Covid infected cases in late evening from National Covid Command & Control Center (NCOC), who used to get data in turn from provincial health departments. This data was layered on sociodemographic information, from census 2017 and major surveys, like population density, number of rooms in household, number of people per room, age-cohorts, availability of WASH, and economic characteristics. The analysis helped in applying micro lock down and its gradual easing after seeing improvement in number of infected cases. This information was processed and shared with NCOC same night to take decision of scale of lockdown.

During 2020, PBS completed the Mouza (Village) census across Pakistan to develop sampling frame for conduct of agriculture and livestock census. Using village census as sampling frame, PBS wanted to continue with conduct of agriculture & livestock census in 2021 but in beginning 2022, PBS as directed to do seventh housing & population digitally within 18 months. It was very huge and challenging task but PBS worked tirelessly and completed all tasks to start field enumeration in March 2023, which continued till May 2023. Census results were approved on 5th August 2023. In this census, beside the usual census forms, PBS included a module on collecting information on economic nature of structure while using ISIC two digit codes. This paved the way of economic frame and economic censes.

Alongside census, in beginning 2022, the ongoing GDP rebasing exercise was completed which moved GDP base from 2005-06 to 2015-16. The results were approved by Governing council in January 2022 thus completing the rebasing process; however, while approving this, Governing Council directed PBS to Do the rebasing again and move base from 2015-16 to 2025-26. To do this, PBS is doing seven major national surveys in two years. In current year, agriculture & livestock census, household integrated economic survey, and labor force survey are in field and for coming year census of manufacturing industries, small household manufacturing industries, and family budget survey are in pipeline. Beside these major surveys around 50 studies and small surveys are also planned for two years for GDP rebasing. Alongside GDP rebasing, PBS is also doing spade work to develop Producer Price Index (PPI) and also working on International Comparison of Prices (ICP). The former will complete the price value chain starting from PPI to WPI and CPI.

In the same years, 2022, PBS sought help from World Bank and embarked on quarterization of GDP in the beginning 2022. PBS worked with bank for whole 2023 through zoom and bank

resource person visited PBS few times and quarterly GDP was published first time on 30th November, 2023.

Realizing the potential of georeferenced data from census in augmenting public and private sector stakeholder to take informed decision, PBS did Data Fest on 21, 22 October 2024. The fest comprised of two streams. First stream was on six thematic areas in which participants deliberated on “Use” & “Business” from either one data source or by integrating two or more data sources. The participants included public sector, private sector, academia, and startups in each thematic area. Second stream comprised of major data producers from public and private sectors, ministries & departments, academia, startups, and IT professionals and they showcased their data products and services.

For coming three years, PBS plans to complete rebasing exercise, develop data exchange system between PBS, federal ministries, regulators, and provincial departments for smooth and efficient data and information sharing. Moreover, PBS is also engaging with private sector, especially NADRA, Security & Exchange Commission, regulators, Telco, retailers, starts ups, and academia to know their specific data needs.