

Letter to Editor

Update of modified Kuppuswamy scale for the year 2024

Sir,

Socioeconomic status (SES) serves as a pivotal determinant influencing the health outcomes of individuals and families. This multifaceted indicator not only encapsulates an individual's occupational status and income but also encompasses their access to resources, education, and social support networks.¹ SES provides critical insights that help address disparities by allowing for the tailoring of development projects and government initiatives to meet the specific needs of diverse communities. This, in turn, promotes equitable growth and enhances access to quality education and healthcare. By leveraging socioeconomic data, policymakers can craft more inclusive economic and social policies, fostering a more just and balanced society.²

Introduced as a modification of the original Kuppuswamy scale which was originally formulated in the late 1970s, it considers factors such as education, occupation, and family income to classify households into different socioeconomic categories.³

The Kuppuswamy socioeconomic status (SES) scale is dynamic and is influenced by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures changes in prices for goods and services that households typically consume.⁴ CPI figures are widely utilized to gauge inflation rates. The Labour Bureau, under the Government of India, releases three CPIs: CPI for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) with a base year of 2001, CPI for Agricultural Laborers with a base

year of 1986-87, and CPI for Rural Laborers with a base year of 1984-85. Among these, CPI-IW is the most commonly used and relevant for updating socioeconomic classifications because it reflects the spending patterns of an average working-class family. In this article, we will use both 2012 and 2016 as the base years for calculating the income level of families to determine their SES, as per the revisions by the Labour Bureau.^{5,6}

For calculation of the inflation rate is $[(\text{CPI of current year} - \text{CPI of last year}) \div \text{CPI of last year}] \times 100$

For March 2024 the inflation rate is $[(183.6 - 176.3) \div 176.3] \times 100 = 4.14$

One of the primary strengths of the modified Kuppuswamy scale lies in its multidimensional approach to SES assessment. This holistic approach of incorporating variables such as education and occupation in addition to income acknowledges the complex interplay between various socioeconomic factors and provides a more nuanced picture of social and economic disparities. Despite its strengths, the modified Kuppuswamy scale is not without its shortcomings. Inflation exerts a profound influence on the purchasing power of the currency, thereby obfuscating the meaningful interpretation of income thresholds delineated by Kuppuswamy decades ago. As the value of the rupee fluctuates relative to the cost of goods and services it necessitates regular recalibration to maintain their relevance and accuracy in socioeconomic classification.

Table 1: Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic status scale, 2024 (Consumer price index - 183.6, March).

S. no.	Education of the head	Score
1.	Profession or honours	7
2.	Graduate	6
3.	Intermediate or diploma	5
4.	High school certificate	4
5.	Middle school certificate	3
6.	Primary school certificate	2
7.	Illiterate	1

Table 2: Occupation of the head.

S. no.	Occupation of the head	Score
1.	Legislators, senior officials and managers	10
2.	Professionals	9
3.	Technicians and associate professionals	8
4.	Clerks	7
5.	Skilled workers and shop and market sales workers	6
6.	Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	5
7.	Craft and related trade workers	4
8.	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	3
9.	Elementary occupation	2
10.	Unemployed	1

Table 3: Socio-economic class.

S. no.	Socioeconomic class	Score
1.	Upper (I)	26–29
2.	Upper Middle (II)	16–25
3.	Lower Middle (III)	11–15
4.	Upper Lower (IV)	5–10
5.	Lower (V)	<5

Table 4: Family monthly income.

S. No.	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2012)	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2024)	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2016)	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2024)	Score
1.	30,375 and above	1,25,753 and above	51,646 and above	2,13,814 and above	12
2.	15,188-30,374	62,875-1,25,752	25,811-51,645	1,06,850-2,13,813	10
3.	11,362-15,187	47,038-62,874	19,351-25,809	80,110-1,06,849	6
4.	7594-11,361	31,436-47,034	12,890-19,350	53,361-80,109	4
5.	4556-7593	18,859-31,435	7725-12,889	31,978-53,360	3
6.	1521-4555	6294-18,858	2586-7724	10,703-31,977	2
7.	≤1520	≤6293	≤2585	≤10,702	1

In light of these challenges, there is a pressing need to revisit and potentially revise the modified Kuppuswamy scale to ensure its continued utility and relevance in contemporary India. This could involve updating the CPI index base year to 2016 to better reflect the contemporary economic milieu. Furthermore, efforts should be made to enhance the accessibility and applicability of the modified Kuppuswamy scale across diverse populations and regions.

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