

Letter to the Editor

Modified Kuppuswamy scale updated for the year 2025

Sir,

Socioeconomic status (SES) is widely recognized as a fundamental determinant of health outcomes, reflecting the relative social and economic position of individuals or households within a stratified society. It is a multi-dimensional construct encompassing income, educational attainment, occupational status, and access to material and social resources.¹

SES can be assessed through a variety of social indicators. At the individual level, these include variables such as caste, gender, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, household income, occupational status, and indicators of social support or discrimination. At the community or aggregate level, SES may be evaluated through markers like socioeconomic deprivation, residential segregation, income inequality, and the strength of social capital.

SES not only shapes health behaviors and access to healthcare services but also influences living conditions, environmental exposures, and psychosocial stressors that contribute to health disparities. Historically, societies have classified populations based on differential access to goods, prestige, and power, with SES serving as a proxy indicator for such inequalities. The relationship between SES and health is underpinned by two principal theoretical frameworks. The social causation theory argues that lower SES contributes to poorer health outcomes, thus driving health inequalities. In contrast, the health selection theory suggests that individuals with better health are more likely to attain or maintain higher socioeconomic status. Nevertheless, evidence consistently demonstrates that those in lower socioeconomic strata bear a disproportionate burden of disease and adverse health conditions.²

Given its pervasive influence on health, disease distribution, and healthcare utilization, accurate assessment of SES is crucial for epidemiological research, health policy formulation, and the design of equitable interventions.

The influence of SES extends broadly across multiple facets of human life, significantly shaping both physical and mental health outcomes. Consequently, integrating SES into health research has become essential, as it informs evidence-based policy formulation, ensures more equitable distribution of resources, and supports efforts to reduce social and health inequities. SES offers valuable insights into existing disparities, enabling the design of targeted development programs and government

interventions that address the unique needs of various population groups. This strategic application fosters inclusive growth, improves access to essential services such as education and healthcare, and ultimately contributes to the advancement of a more equitable and socially just society.³

The original Kuppuswamy scale, introduced in 1976, was initially formulated to assess the SES of an individual, with 1960 as its assumed base year. Over time, its application evolved to evaluate the SES of a family unit rather than just an individual. The scale employs a composite scoring system based on three key parameters: the educational attainment of the head of the family, their occupational status, and the total monthly income of the household.⁴

However, much like its predecessor, the modified Kuppuswamy scale is in need of updates and revisions to better reflect the contemporary socioeconomic landscape of India.

Despite its widespread use, the modified Kuppuswamy scale, like its original version, requires periodic revisions to remain aligned with the evolving socioeconomic realities of India. As a dynamic tool, the scale's income component is particularly sensitive to inflationary trends and is therefore updated using the consumer price index (CPI), which tracks fluctuations in the cost of goods and services typically consumed by households. In India, the Labour Bureau under the Ministry of Labour and Employment publishes three CPI variants: the consumer price index for industrial workers (CPI-IW) with a base year of 2001 (updated to 2016 in recent revisions), the consumer price index for agricultural labourers (CPI-AL) with a base year of 1986–87, and the consumer price index for rural labourers (CPI-RL) with a base year of 1984–85. Among these, the CPI-IW is considered the most relevant for socioeconomic classification, as it accurately reflects the consumption patterns of the working-class population. Accordingly, in this article, the CPI-IW with a base year of 2016 has been utilized to update the income thresholds for determining socioeconomic status.^{5,6}

Calculation of the inflation rate

$$= \frac{\text{CPI of current year} - \text{CPI of last year}}{\text{CPI of last year}} \times 100$$

For January 2025 the inflation rate was calculated as follows.

$$\text{Inflation rate} = \frac{143.2 - 138.9}{138.9} \times 100 = 3.09$$

Updated Kuppuswamy scale for 2025 is based on CPI-IW 143.2, January 2025, base year 2016=100.

Table 1: Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic status scale, 2025 (consumer price index - 143.2, January).

S. no.	Education of the head	Score
1	Profession or honors	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 of the family and corresponding scores.

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: Updated monthly family income thresholds based on CPI-IW January 2025 (Base Year 2016=100) and corresponding scores.

S. no.	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2016)	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2025)	Score
1	₹51,646 and above	₹1,59,586 and above	12
2	₹25,811-51,645	₹79,756-₹1,59,585	10
3	₹19,351-25,809	₹59,795-₹79,755	6
4	₹12,890-19,350	₹39,830-₹59,794	4
5	₹7725-12,889	₹23,870-₹39,829	3
6	₹2586-7724	₹7989-₹23,869	2
7	≤₹2585	≤₹7988 or	1

The income thresholds were updated using a multiplication factor of 3.09, derived from the ratio of CPI-IW Jan 2025 (143.2) to the base year 2016 (100).⁶ This adjustment

ensures socioeconomic classification remains inflation-adjusted and relevant to current economic conditions.

Table 4: Classification of socio economic class based on total score.

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

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, periodic updating of income thresholds is essential to preserve the validity and relevance of widely used modified Kuppuswamy scale. The revised income categories not only enhance the precision of SES assessment but also enable researchers to utilize these classifications more flexibly—such as applying total scores to define quartiles for analytical purposes in health research. Given the evolving socioeconomic landscape in India, there remains an ongoing need to refine and adapt these tools to ensure their continued applicability across diverse demographic settings.

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