

Letter to the Editor

Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic scale updated for the year 2025

Sir,

Socio economic status (SES) is one of the most crucial determinants of health outcomes. It is an intricate construct encompassing an individual's or family's economic and social standing relative to others in the society.¹ It is a composite indicator where matrices like income, education, occupation wealth (assets and capitals) and other related variables are mainly taken into consideration.^{2,3} It is pertinent to note that SES has profound influence on health, affordability and accessibility to healthcare and overall well-being of the individual and the family. It has been shown that people from poor socio-economic status have poor housing conditions, less education, limited job opportunities and consequent outcomes such as poor health conditions.⁴ On the contrary, people of higher socio-economic status enjoy the privilege of higher education, nutritious food, good housing, good job opportunities and better access to health care services leading to a long and healthy life.

India is considered to be a sub-continent with immense diversity not only in terms of demography, geography but also in terms of education, occupation, income, living standards, etc which directly or indirectly influences the SES of the individual citizens. Thus, the critical need of developing and applying a SES scale that is universally acceptable remains a huge challenge in India.

Table 1: Score of education of the head of family in the Kuppuswamy scale.⁸

Education of the head of family	Score
Profession or honours	7
Graduate	6
Intermediate or diploma	5
High school certificate	4
Middle school certificate	3
Primary school certificate	2
Illiterate	1

The Kuppuswamy scale developed by Kuppuswamy in the year 1976 is inarguably one of the most widely used SES scale in India for the urban population (Table 1).⁵ This simple-to-use composite scale takes into account three matrices into consideration viz., education of the head of the family, occupation of the head of the family (Table 2) and overall monthly income of the family (Table 3). Each matrix has a further sub-division which is assigned a score. The cumulative score of all the sub-

divisions assigned to a particular family places the family into one of the five socio-economic classes (Table 4).

Table 2: Score of occupation of the head of family in the Kuppuswamy scale.⁸

Occupation of the head of family	Score
Legislators, senior officials and managers	10
Professionals	9
Technicians and associate professionals	8
Clerks	7
Skilled workers and shop and market sales workers	6
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	5
Craft and related trade workers	4
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	3
Elementary occupation	2
Unemployed	1

Table 3: Modified overall monthly income of the family.

Updated monthly family income (2016) (in INR) ⁸	Updated monthly family income for May 2025. (in INR) (rounded to nearest whole number)	Score
40,430 and above	1,18,460 and above	12
20,210-40,430	59,216–1,18,459	10
15,160 -20,210	44,418–59,215	6
10,110-15,160	29,622–44,417	4
6060-10,110	17,756–29,621	3
2021-6060	5,922–17,755	2
<2021	<5,922	1

Table 4: Cumulative scores and the socioeconomic class status scale.⁸

Socioeconomic class	Cumulative Score
Upper (I)	26-29
Upper middle (II)	16-25
Lower middle (III)	11-15
Upper lower (IV)	5-10
Lower (V)	<5

Though easy to use and widely accepted to categorize the families into different classes, one of the shortcomings of the scale is that it needs periodic updation of the monthly

income of the family as per the new consumer price index of the industrial workers (CPI-IW) notified by the Government from time to time. The former two parameters have remained constant since its inception. The CPI-IW is a crucial economic indicator measuring the changes in retail prices every month of a fixed basket of goods and services consumed by industrial workers over 88 centers across the country.⁶ This article is an effort to update the Modified Kuppuswamy scale considering the CPI-IW for the month of May 2025, using the base year as 2016. The inflation rate is calculated using the formula. $\text{CPI-IW of current year} - \text{CPI-IW of last year} \div \text{CPI-IW of last year} \times 100$. The latest CPI-IW for May 2025 is 144.0 and, The CPI-IW for the last year May 2024 was 139.9.⁷ Thus, inflation rate for current year (2025) is $(144.0 - 139.9) / 139.9 \times 100 = 2.93$. Now, when this inflation rate of 2.93 is multiplied by the income values of 2016, we get the updated values for May 2025 as shown in Table 3.

Determining the SES of an individual or the family is a complex process as there are no universally accepted parameters that can be applied to all the individuals or the families in urban areas. Kuppuswamy SES is widely accepted scale and is easy to adapt for usage. However, it demands periodic update as the monthly income of the family has to be based on the current CPI-IW notifications. This article reviewed the current CPI-IW provided by the Labour Bureau of India in the month of May, 2025. This update scale can be used for the current year by researchers, economists, sociologists, students, policy makers.

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Cite this article as: Shah PP, Singh MM. Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic scale updated for the year 2025. *Int J Community Med Public Health* 2025;12:4249-50.