

## Review Article

# Revised Kuppuswamy and Prasad scale 2026: new income categories

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### ABSTRACT

Socioeconomic Status (SES) is a fundamental determinant of health outcomes. In India, the B.G. Prasad and Kuppuswamy scales are widely utilized tools for SES classification. However, their income-based components are highly sensitive to inflation, requiring regular updates to prevent the misclassification of study populations. This study aims to provide the updated income categories for the Modified B.G. Prasad and Kuppuswamy scales for the year 2026, based on the latest Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW). The income categories were recalculated using the All-India CPI-IW for January 2026 (148.2) with the base year 2016=100. For the B.G. Prasad scale, linking factors for 1960, 1982, and 2001 were applied to determine the new per-capita income thresholds. The new income thresholds reflect the inflationary changes of 2026. For the B.G. Prasad scale, the Class I (Upper Class) threshold is now ₹9,741. For the Kuppuswamy scale, the highest income score (12) now requires a monthly family income of ₹1,65,420. Periodic updates of SES scales are essential for accurate epidemiological research and equitable health policy formulation. These revised 2026 indices provide researchers with standardized tools for current field-based studies.

**Keywords:** Socio-economic status, Kuppuswamy scale, BG Prasad scale, CPI-IW 2026, Inflation

### INTRODUCTION

The health of individuals and families is deeply influenced by their socioeconomic status (SES), which defines their place in the social hierarchy. This complex metric is measured by combining factors such as income, education, occupation, and the degree of access to essential community resources.<sup>1</sup> 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. Two distinct viewpoints explain the relation between SES and health. According to the social causation theory, health disparities are caused by lower SES, which also leads to worse health outcomes. On the other hand, according to the health selection theory, people who are in better health

have a higher chance of achieving or retaining a higher socioeconomic class. Nonetheless, data continuously shows that those in lower socioeconomic groups are disproportionately affected by illness and unfavourable health outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

A precise evaluation of SES is essential for epidemiological research, the development of health policies, and the creation of equitable treatments because of its widespread impact on health, illness distribution, and healthcare use. SES provides important information about current inequalities, allowing for the creation of government interventions and focused development initiatives that cater to the particular requirements of different demographic groups.<sup>3</sup> In India, two commonly used SES scales in community research are the BG Prasad

and the Kuppuswamy scales, as both are easy to understand, measure, and apply. Whereas the BG Prasad classification is based on family income, Kuppuswamy also measures education and occupation. Modified BG Prasad is used in both rural and urban areas. Despite being developed initially for urban regions, the Kuppuswamy scale is now used in both urban and rural settings

### BG PRASAD SOCIOECONOMIC SCALE

This scale was developed by Brahm Govind Prasad in 1961. It is based on only one domain, which is per capita income. Due to its simplicity and ease of understanding, it remains the most commonly used classification for early-stage researchers. It was developed considering the base of the consumer price index for industrial workers (CPI-IW) for 1960 as 100. CPI-IW is updated regularly by the government, and the last CPI-IW was published for January 2026.<sup>4</sup>

### CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

CPI-IW measures the changes in retail prices for a basket of goods and services consumed by industrial workers over time. It influences the pay and dearness allowance for millions of workers and is used for inflation measurement and government policy formulation.

The history of CPI-IW began during World War I due to increased product prices that negatively affected workers' economic conditions. In response, several provincial governments initiated family budget surveys and compilations of CPI IW. Following recommendations from the Rau Court of Enquiry, the central government started compiling and maintaining the CPI IW in 1941.<sup>5</sup>

In 1958, the Labour Bureau established a scientific method for compiling index numbers through family living surveys, which is regularly updated. The initial CPI-IW recognized 1960 as the base year (CPI IW=100). This base year has been updated multiple times, with a new base year of 1982 introduced in October 1988, followed by a base year of 2001 launched in March 2006.

The most recent change occurred in October 2020, setting the base year to 2016 (CPI=100). CPI-IW has expanded from focusing solely on workers in factories, mines, and plantations to include seven sectors: factories, plantations, mines, railways, public motor transport, electricity generation and distribution establishments, and ports and docks. It is compiled monthly using retail prices from 317 markets across 88 key industrial centres. The All-India CPI-IW for January 2026 was reported at 148.2.<sup>4</sup> The modified BG Prasad classification, which utilizes per capita income based on the CPI-IW, requires an update for 2026.

## STEPS TO UPDATE INCOME-BASED CLASSIFICATION FOR PRASAD CLASSIFICATION

### Step 1: Calculating the new income as per latest levels since the original base year 1960

$$\begin{aligned} \text{New Income} = & \text{Multiplication factor as per current CPI} \\ & \times \text{Income} \times \text{Linking factor for 1960} \\ & - 1982 \times \text{Linking factor for 1982} \\ & - 2001 \times \text{Linking factor for 2001} \\ & - 2016 \end{aligned}$$

### Step 2: Obtaining the linking factors from labour bureau of India

Linking factor for 1960-1982=4.63, linking factor for 1982-2001=4.93, and linking factor for 2001-2016=2.88.<sup>5</sup>

### Step 3: Calculating multiplication factor as per current CPI

$$\text{Multiplication factor} = \frac{\text{Current CPI of that month}}{\text{Base index value in 2016}}$$

Current CPI-IW for January 2026 is 148.2, and old per capita is 100 (base index).

### Step 4: Calculating new income based on formula

$$\begin{aligned} \text{New income} = & \frac{148.2}{100} \times 100 \times 4.63 \times 4.93 \times 2.88 \\ = & 9742.45 \end{aligned}$$

$$\text{Final multiplier (MF)} = 65.73 \times 1.482 = 97.41$$

### Step 5: Calculating the five classes of modified BG Prasad classification

It is described in Table 1.

**Table 1: Step 5 of modified BG Prasad classification.**

Social scale	Per-capita income in (₹) as per classification of 1961	Per-capita income in (₹) as per modified classification for 2026
I	≥100	≥9741
II	50-99	4871-9644
III	30-49	2922-4773
IV	15-29	1461-2825
V	<15	<1461

$$\begin{aligned} \text{New income} = & \text{Income as per 1961} \\ & \times \text{CPI of that month or year} \\ & \times 0.6574 \end{aligned}$$

This formula remains applicable until a new economic base year is established.

### MODIFIED KUPPUSWAMY SOCIOECONOMIC SCALE

The original Kuppuswamy scale was first developed in 1976 to evaluate a person's SES, using 1960 as the presumptive base year. With time, its use expanded to assess a family's SES as opposed to merely an individual's. The head of the household's educational background, occupation, and total monthly income are the three main factors that determine the scale's composite scoring system. These 3 domains add up to a total of 3-29 which further categorise the population into five socio-economic classes. education and occupation of the family head remain static. Since the income component of the scale is a dynamic instrument and is especially susceptible to inflationary trends, it is updated using CPI, which monitors changes in the prices of products and services that consumers commonly purchase.<sup>6</sup>

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. Therefore, there is a need for ongoing upgrading to account for the effects of the current economic situation. The purpose of this study is to update the modified Kuppuswamy scale through January 2026.

*Calculation of the inflation rate*  

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

According to the Labour Bureau, Ministry of Labour and Employment, the CPI-IW (base year 2016=100) for December 2025 (applicable for January 2026) was 148.2.<sup>4</sup> Comparing this with the January 2025 index of 143.2, the annual inflation rate is calculated as follows.

$$Inflation\ rate = \frac{148.2 - 143.2}{143.2} \times 100 = 3.49$$

Updated Kuppuswamy scale for 2026 is based on CPI-IW 148.2, January 2026, base year 2016=100.

**Table 2: Occupation and education of the head of the family and corresponding scores 2026 (consumer price index 148.2, January).**

S. no.	Variables	Score
<b>Education of head</b>		
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
<b>Occupation of the head</b>		
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 2026 (base year 2016=100) and corresponding scores.**

S. no.	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2016)	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2025)	Updated monthly family income in rupees (2026)	Score
1	₹51,646 and above	₹1,59,586 and above	₹1,65,420 and above	12
2	₹25,811-₹51,645	₹79,756-₹1,59,585	₹82,710-₹1,65,419	10
3	₹19,351-₹25,809	₹59,795-₹79,755	₹62,030-₹82,709	6
4	₹12,890-₹19,350	₹39,830-₹59,794	₹41,355-₹62,029	4
5	₹7725-₹12,889	₹23,870-₹39,829	₹24,813-₹41,354	3
6	₹2586-₹7724	₹7989-₹23,869	₹8,271-₹24,812	2
7	≤₹2585	≤₹7988	≤₹8,270	1

**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)

The income thresholds were updated using a multiplication factor of 3.49, derived from the ratio of CPI-IW Jan 2026 (148.2) to the base year 2016 (100).<sup>4</sup> This adjustment ensures socioeconomic classification remains inflation-adjusted and relevant to current economic conditions.

## CONCLUSION

A person's socioeconomic situation can be used to predict their health to a large extent. Inflation causes the nation's pricing for goods and services to fluctuate constantly. This implies that the socioeconomic scales based on income must be revised on a regular basis. In order to determine people's socioeconomic class, the BG Prasad and Kuppuswamy scale, which is frequently used in health studies, has been revised for the most recent CPI for 2026. It is still necessary to improve and modify these tools in light of India's changing socioeconomic environment in order to guarantee their continuous suitability in a variety of demographic contexts.

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