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Updated and Comparative Analysis of Modified B.G. Prasad and Kuppuswamy Socio-economic Scales Using CPI-IW for 2026

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ABSTRACT

Background: Socioeconomic status (SES) is a significant determinant of health/access to healthcare and disease distribution. Modified B.G. Prasad and Modified Kuppuswamy scales are commonly used for socioeconomic classification. Due to inflation, their income criteria require periodic revision to maintain accuracy. Therefore, this study aims to calculate the updated income limits for the Modified B.G. Prasad and Modified Kuppuswamy scales for January 2026.
Methods: This methodological study was performed using CPI-IW January 2026 data obtained from the Labour Bureau, Government of India. The CPI-IW base year was 2016 (index = 100), and the value for January 2026 was 148.6. A correction factor (1.486) was calculated and applied to the income limits of the Modified B.G. Prasad (2016) and the income component of the Modified Kuppuswamy scale to derive updated income thresholds for January 2026.
Results: Updated Modified B.G. Prasad scale for January 2026 showed revised per capita monthly income limits as follows (Class I ≥ ₹8,916; Class II ₹4,458–₹8,915; Class III ₹2,674–₹4,457; Class IV ₹1,337–₹2,673; Class V ≤ ₹1,336). Income categories of the Modified Kuppuswamy scale were updated, with the highest income category revised to ≥ ₹62,391 per month with education/occupation components of the Kuppuswamy scale remained unchanged.
Conclusion: The updated Modified B.G. Prasad and Modified Kuppuswamy scales for January 2026 provide revised income thresholds based on January 2026 CPI-IW values. This update helps health professionals accurately assess socioeconomic status in epidemiological studies/health planning.

Keywords: *Socioeconomic status; B.G. Prasad scale; Kuppuswamy scale; Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers; Socioeconomic classification; India*

INTRODUCTION

Socioeconomic status (SES) is extensively recognized as one of the most important determinants of health. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes that "health is not solely shaped by biological factors but also by social determinants that influence living and working conditions throughout life. Differences in access to money/power/education and resources contribute significantly to health inequities across community. Therefore, socioeconomic status is frequently used in epidemiological research, public health

studies, and policy planning to assess disparities in health and access to healthcare services[1].

In India, Modified B.G. Prasad scale and Kuppuswamy scale are the most widely used tools in community medicine and public health research. These scales help researchers/policymakers to stratify populations, socioeconomic groups wise disease distribution, and design targeted health interventions. However, due to continuous changes in economic conditions and inflation, the income criteria used in these scales become outdated over time. Therefore, periodic revisions are necessary to ensure that the classifications accurately reflect the current socioeconomic realities[2].

The B.G Prasad classification was first time launched in 1961 and later was revised in 1968 and 1970. it takes account of monthly per capita income of the family, and is used widely in India. The scale categorizes families into five socioeconomic categories based on monthly per capita income and is widely applied in rural as well as urban epidemiological studies in India[3]. Because the scale relies solely on income, its thresholds require regular updating to maintain their relevance in changing economic conditions.

These revisions are typically performed using the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW), which is published monthly by the Labour Bureau, of the Government of India. CPI-IW measures changes in the average price of a fixed basket of goods and services consumed by industrial workers and are commonly used as an indicator of inflation[4].

Similarly, the Kuppuswamy scale was introduced in the late 1970s, and is widely used to assess socio-economic status in urban and semi-urban settings. Unlike the B.G. Prasad scale, the Kuppuswamy scale includes three parameters i.e. education, occupation, and monthly family income of the head of the family. Though the educational and occupational components remain relatively stable over time, the income component needs periodic revision to account for inflation." Therefore, updating the income component using the latest CPI-IW January 2026 values is essential to maintain the validity/applicability of this scale in Medical research[5]. Therefore, the present study aims to revise and compare the Modified B.G. Prasad and Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic classification scales for January 2026 using the latest available CPI-IW values.

Objective: To calculate the updated income limits for the Modified B.G. Prasad and Modified Kuppuswamy scales for January 2026.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Study design

This study is a methodological update of two widely used socioeconomic classification systems in India, namely the Modified B.G. Prasad scale and the Modified Kuppuswamy scale.

Data source

The CPI-IW values were obtained from the official Labour Bureau website. The base year for CPI-IW was 2016 (index value = 100). The CPI-IW value for January 2026 was 148.6.[4]

Methodology

a) Updating of the Modified B.G. Prasad scale

B.G Prasad scale defines different socioeconomic classes based on the per capita monthly income. It is an easy and handy tool for estimating the socioeconomic class of family and is used in the epidemiological/community health studies. This scale has been periodically updated using the CPI-IW[5]. However, with changing economic conditions and rising inflation, income limits for different classes becomes impractical and needs constant updates[6].

The updated income limits for January 2026 were calculated using the CPI-IW correction factor.

$$correction\ factor\ = \frac{(CPI - IW\ January\ 2026)}{(CPI - IW\ base\ year\ 2016)}$$

$$correction\ factor\ = 148.6\ /\ 100\ = 1.486$$

The income limits of the modified B.G. Prasad scale (2016) were multiplied by the correction factor to obtain the updated income thresholds for January 2026.

b) Updating of the Modified Kuppuswamy scale

This socioeconomic scale is commonly used to assess socioeconomic status in urban and semi-urban populations. "It is based on three parameters, the education of the head of the household, the occupation of the head of the household, and the monthly family income. The education and occupation scores remain unchanged over time. However, the income component requires periodic revision to account for inflation." The updated income limits for January 2026 were calculated using the same CPI-IW correction factor derived from the 2016 base year.

Ethical Considerations: This study uses only publicly available secondary data (CPI-IW and existing socio-economic scales) and does not involve human participants or identifiable personal data. Therefore, ethical approval was not required. The study adhered to standard research ethics, including accurate data use, transparency, and proper citation of sources. No conflicts of interest are declared.

RESULTS

I. Calculation of Modified B.G Prasad scale January 2026

Step 1: Finding the base value

B.G Prasad scale divides the socioeconomic status of the society in 5 classes which depends upon the per capita monthly income. Class I is considered the highest class and economically strong whereas class V is the lowest and economically weakest with limited access to healthcare. The first B.G Prasad scale was published in the year 1961 with different incomes range mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1: Income classification according to BG Prasad socioeconomic scale (1961)

Class	Income Range (1961) (INR)
I	≥ 100₹
II	50 – 99₹
III	30 – 49₹
IV	15 – 29₹
V	< 15₹

Step 2: Scope of adjustments

To update the scale for 2026 and calculate the current class incomes we will use 2016 CPI-IW as a base year CPI which was 100 INR.

- Current CPI-IW (January 2026) = 148.6
- Base CPI-IW for 2016 = 100 INR

Step 3: Using different values to update current income classes

The formula for the update is

$$Updated\ income\ values\ (for\ 2026) = Correction\ factor\ \times old\ income\ value\ of\ 2016\ (base\ year)$$

Since, $correction\ factor\ for$ January $2026\ =\ 1.486\ (from\ method\ section)$

Using the CPI-IW value of 148.6 for January 2026, the correction factor was calculated as 1.486. The income limits of the 2016 scale were multiplied by this factor to derive the updated income thresholds for 2026.

Table 2: Updated Modified B.G. Prasad socioeconomic classification for January 2026

Socioeconomic class	B.G. Prasad classification (2016) ₹/month	B.G. Prasad classification (2026) ₹/month
I - Upper	≥6000	8,916
II - Upper middle	3000-5999	4458-8915

III - Middle	1800-2999	2674-4457
IV- Lower middle	900-1799	1337-2673
V - Lower	≤900	≤1336

II. Updated income categories for Modified Kuppuswamy scale (January 2026)

The B.G. Prasad scale is dependent on the income of families of different classes, the modified Kuppuswamy scale takes count of educational and occupational status too. The head of the family's education has grades from 1 to 7, the occupation of the family's head has grades of 1 to 10, and the total income of the family has grades of 1 to 12. The final socioeconomic class is determined by summing the scores obtained from these three components. This scale takes care of multi-dimensions of social life of a family. With inflation the family income and its purchasing power change significantly. Education and occupation change less frequently than income and therefore usually do not require periodic revision[8].

Education

The Modified Kuppuswamy scale assigns scores based on the educational attainment of the head of the household. Higher educational qualifications are associated with higher scores, reflecting a higher socioeconomic position, while illiteracy receives the lowest score. The scoring pattern for educational status is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Educational status and corresponding scores in the Modified Kuppuswamy scale

Educational attainment of family head of household	Assigned score
Professional qualification	7
Graduate or Postgraduate degree	6
Intermediate / Diploma after higher secondary	5
Completed high school education	4
Completed middle school education	3
Completed primary education	2
Unable to read or write (Illiterate)	1

Occupation

The occupation of the head of the household is another important component of the Modified Kuppuswamy scale. Occupations requiring professional qualifications/specialized training are assigned higher scores, whereas unskilled/ unemployed categories receive lower scores. The occupational scoring pattern is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Occupational categories scores in the Modified Kuppuswamy scale

Occupation of head of household	Score assigned
Profession requiring specialized training (e.g., doctor, engineer, lawyer)	10
Semi-professional occupation	6
Clerical employee / Shop owner / Small business operator / Farmer	5
Skilled worker or technician	4
Semi-skilled worker	3
Unskilled laborer	2
Unemployed	1

Income

In the present study, the income categories of the Modified Kuppuswamy scale were updated for January 2026 using the Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPI-IW) with base year 2016. The CPI-IW value for January 2026 was 148.6, compared with 143.2 in January 2025.[4]for calculation of Inflation rate for year 2026;

$$\text{Inflation rate} = \frac{(CPI\ of\ 2026 - CPI\ of\ 2025)}{CPI\ of\ 2025} \times 100$$

$$\text{Inflation rate} = \frac{(148.6 - 143.2)}{143.2} \times 100 = 3.77$$

Although the year-on-year inflation rate between January 2025 and January 2026 was calculated to be approximately 3.77%, the revision of income categories was not based exclusively on annual inflation. Instead, a correction factor (i.e. 1.486) derived from the CPI-IW base year (2016) was used to account for cumulative inflation over time. Therefore, the income categories of the Kuppuswamy scale were multiplied by this correction factor to obtain the revised income thresholds for January 2026. The updated income limits for different years[5], including 2016, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026, along with their corresponding scores, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Updated income categories of the Modified Kuppuswamy scale using CPI-IW for January 2026

Family income per month in rupees (1976)	Income category (₹) – 2016	Revised income (₹) Jan 2023	Revised income (₹) Jan 2024	Revised income (₹) Jan 2025	Revised income (₹) Jan 2026	Scores assigned
≥2000	≥41,986	≥55,758	≥58,319	≥60,125	≥ 62,391	12
1000-1999	20,993-41,965	27,879-55,749	29,160-58,309	30,063-60,095	31,195-62,390	10
750-999	15,745-20,972	20,909-27,851	21,870-29,130	22,548-30,030	23,397-31,194	6
500-749	10,497-15,734	13,940-20,894	14,580-21,847	15,032-22,526	15,599-23,396	4
300-499	6,298-10,476	8,364-13,912	8,748-14,557	9,019-15,006	9,359-15,599	3
101-299	2,121-6,277	2,817-8,342	2,946-8,727	3,038-8,998	3,151-9,358	2
≤100	≤2,099	≤2,787	≤2,916	≤3,006	≤ 3150	1

Final Modified Kuppuswamy Socioeconomic Classification (2026)

The final socioeconomic class is determined by adding the scores obtained from education, occupation, and monthly family income of the head of the household. The total score corresponds to the socioeconomic category shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Final Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic classification

Total score range	Socioeconomic category
26–29	Upper class (I)
16–25	Upper middle class (II)
11–15	Lower middle class (III)
5–10	Upper lower class (IV)
<5	Lower class (V)

DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic status remains one of the most important determinants of public health[1]. Individuals belonging to lower socioeconomic groups often experience a higher burden of communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases, and poor health indicators[9].Therefore, stratifying the population on the basis of their socio-economic status becomes important, so targeted intervention could be used on vulnerable groups.

In India, the Modified B.G. Prasad and Kuppuswamy scales are extensively used tools for assessing socioeconomic status in community medicine research[3].However,

due to changing economic conditions and inflation, the income criteria of these scales require revision to maintain their relevance/accuracy. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of regularly updating these classifications using the CPI-IW [2,5,7].

In the present study, both Modified B.G. Prasad scale and the Modified Kuppuswamy scale were updated for the year 2026 by using the CPI-IW with base year 2016.Similar updates have been reported previously to reflect changing economic conditions.[5,8] The increase in income thresholds observed in the current update reflects the impact of inflation on household income and purchasing power over time. In Kuppuswamy scale the current update shows a consistent increase in income limits across all the classes. This further shows the importance of periodic updates. A person with an income of 42,000 would have been given a 12 score in 2016 but now belongs to the 10 score in the modified Kuppuswamy scale.[5,8]Another important observation is that the structure of socioeconomic classes is relatively stable despite the increase in income thresholds. While the absolute income values have increased over time due to inflation, the proportional distribution of income categories among different groups has remained stable. This shows that the objective of periodic updates is not to reinvent social hierarchy but is rather to sustain the previous socioeconomic classification in real economic terms. Numerous studies have demonstrated that there are strong associations between socioeconomic class and conditions such as malnutrition, tuberculosis, non-communicable diseases, and maternal health indicators.[7, 10] If the classification scale does not accurately reflect current economic conditions, it may distort the interpretation of disease burden across socioeconomic strata and can potentially affect the validity of public health research findings. Regular updates of these scales are therefore necessary to ensure accurate socioeconomic assessment in public health research and policy planning.

Limitation of the study: The study is based primarily on inflation-adjusted income and does not account for regional variations in cost of living/employment patterns/ household assets. The revision relies on CPI-IW data from the Labour Bureau, and any inaccuracies in these data may influence the calculated limits.

CONCLUSION

This study provides updated income thresholds for the Modified B.G. Prasad and Modified Kuppuswamy socioeconomic classification scales for January 2026. Periodic revision of these scales is essential to account for inflation and ensure accurate socioeconomic classification. This study will help researchers/public health professionals in accurately stratifying populations in epidemiological studies and health planning.

Declaration by Authors

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