

# Kuppuswamy's Socio-Economic Status Scale – A Revision of Income Parameter For 2014

Gururaj<sup>1\*</sup>, Maheshwaran<sup>2</sup>

{<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, <sup>2</sup>Professor and HOD} Department of Community Medicine, Sapthagiri Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre, Bangalore, Karnataka, INDIA.

\* Corresponding Address:

[drgurums@gmail.com](mailto:drgurums@gmail.com)

## Letter to Editor

### Introduction

Socioeconomic status (SES) refers to an individual's position within a hierarchical social structure, which is one of the important determinants of health status. Composite scales are generally used to measure the SES, which has a combination of social and economic variables. Several studies namely hospital and community based require assessment of socio-economic status of an individual / family. This reflects the affordability of health services, necessities and purchasing power of the same. Several methods or scales have been proposed for classifying different populations by socioeconomic status: Rahudkar scale 1960, Udai Parikh scale 1964, Jalota Scale 1970, Kulshrestha scale 1972, Kuppuswamy scale 1976, Shrivastava scale 1978, Bharadwaj scale 2001.<sup>1-7</sup> However, social transformation and fast growing economy have rendered these scales ineffective in measuring the SES over the years. The Kuppuswamy scale proposed in 1976, measures the SES of an individual based on three variables namely, education and occupation of the head of the household and income of the family.<sup>5</sup> Of the three variables, education and occupation of the head of the household do not change frequently with time. However, the steady inflation and the resultant devaluation of the rupee necessitate periodic revisions of the income variable. The previous revisions of the scale were done in the years 1998 and 2007.<sup>8,9</sup>

### Need for Revision

Realizing the value of this important tool we need to keep this updated as the price index is increasing (as this scale is consumer price index based). If it is not revised it will lose its utility. Mishra, undertook the important task of revision of family income per month for 1998 using base year 1982=100.3 Presently the base year has been changed from 1982 to current base year 2001[2]. The changes in the income scale are proportional to the change in the Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers—CPI (IW). The CPI values are interpreted with reference to a particular base year. The previous base years were 1960, 1982 and 2001. The latest

CPI-(IW) available for January 2014 has been calculated taking 2001 as the base year. We have attempted updating the income scale for January 2014 using the corresponding CPI-(IW) value. To begin with we calculated the income scale for the selected years 1982 and 2001 which coincides with change in base year for calculation of CPI by applying the appropriate conversion factors on the original scale (Table 1).

We have presented the values for the current base year 2001, which facilitates the easier updating of the income scale every year or even every month based on the CPI revisions. The researcher has to calculate the multiplication factor for the period of research by dividing the CPI value for the period by 100 (base value at 2001).<sup>10</sup> All India Average Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers (Base 2001=100) shows general index as 237 on January 2014 (<http://labourbureau.nic.in/indexes.htm> – Labour Bureau Government of India, as per survey done in 1999-2000).<sup>11</sup> The income scale of 2001 is then multiplied by the multiplication factor to update the scale for the desired period. For example, the CPI value as on January 2014 is 237. So the multiplication factor for January 2014 is  $237/100=2.37$ . Multiplying the income scale of 2001 by 2.37 updates the scale for January 2014 (Table 1). It is the responsibility of the researchers to take note of the periodic revisions in the CPI values before attempting socioeconomic classification of their study population. This method makes it easy for the researcher to update the income scale to the latest available CPI values.

### Limitation and Utility

There is an overemphasis on income (no scale is ever complete in assessing actual SES and they are only at the best surrogates and generate uniformity in spite of limitations) rather than educational and occupational factors, but nevertheless income commensurate with education and occupation. This speaks about the utility of Kuppuswamy scale; the revision enables and equips community related scientists in their quest for socioeconomic status.

## Proposed updation of Kuppuswamy classification of socioeconomic status—January 2014

**Table 1: Education**

Sr. No.	Education of the Head	Score
1	Profession or Honours	7
2	Graduate or post graduate	6
3	Intermediate or post high school dip	5
4	High school certificate	4
5	Middle school certificate	3
6	Primary school certificate	2
7	Illiterate	1

**Table 2: Occupation**

Sr. No.	Occupation of the Head	Score
1	Profession	10
2	Semi-Profession	6
3	Clerical, Shop-owner	5
4	Skilled worker	4
5	Semi-skilled worker	3
6	Unskilled worker	2
7	Unemployed	1

**Table 3: Income**

Sr. No.	Family Income Per Months in Rs (1976)	Family Income Per Months in Rs (1982)	Family Income Per Months in Rs (2001)	Family Income Per Months in Rs (2014)	Family Income Per Months Score
1	≥2000	≥3319	≥15197	≥36017	12
2	1000–199	1659–3318	7595–15196	18000–36016	1
3	750–999	1244–1658	5694–7594	13495–17999	6
4	500–749	829–1243	3793–5693	8989–13494	4
5	300–499	497–828	2273–3792	5387–8988	3
6	101–299	167–496	761–2272	1803–5386	2
7	≤100	≤166	≤760	≤1802	1

**Table 4: Total Score**

Sr. 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)

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