

Revision of Prasad's social classification and provision of an online tool for real-time updating

Dear Editor,

The socioeconomic status is widely recognized as one of the important factors affecting health condition of an individual or a family. Several studies done in health-related fields require assessment of the socioeconomic status (SES) of an individual/family and consider it during the data analysis. The Kuppuswamy's scale and Prasad's classification are two of the tools widely used for socioeconomic classification.^[1,2] The relative merits of the two classification schemes have been briefly discussed earlier and an update for Prasad's social classification was given for the year 1993 by Kumar.^[3]

Mishra and Singh have pointed out that an income classification usually has relevance only for the period under study.^[4] Due to inflation, there is fall in the value of rupee and economic criteria may lose their relevance. A revision of the Kuppuswamy's scale to bring it up-to-date has been made available earlier.^[5] An online tool to enable real-time update of the scale is also made available.^[6] There is a need for a similar revision of the Prasad's classification [Table 1] too, to maintain its validity of social classification.

The revised per capita income per month limits have been calculated as follows:

- Price index by old base (1960) for the original scale = 100
- Price index by new base (1982) for the year 1982 = 100
- Linking factor between 1960 and 1982 series = 4.63
- Price index by new base (2001) for the year 2001 = 100
- Linking factor between 1982 and 2001 series = 4.93

The linking factors have been obtained from the website www.labourbureau.nic.in.

For arriving at the corresponding family income cutoff values for the year 2001,

$$\text{New income value} = (\text{old value} \times 4.63 \times 4.93).$$

To calculate the values for real-time update, we have to look at the current All-India Average Consumer Price Index Numbers for Industrial Workers (Base 2001 = 100). The value of the index for March 2013 (latest available as of May 2013) is 224. The new values are calculated by further applying a multiplying factor:

$$\text{Multiplying factor} = \frac{\text{current index value} (=224)}{\text{Base index value in 2001} (=100)} = 2.24.$$

The updated values for the per capita monthly income (in Rs./month) for May 2013 are given in Table 2. They have been calculated as: New income value = 2.24 × (old value × 4.63 × 4.93).

Real-time update of the scale

As inflation is a dynamic ongoing process, there is a risk that the validity of any published update may soon outlive

Table 1: Prasad's social classification (1961)

Social class	Per capita monthly income limits
I	100 and above
II	50-99
III	30-49
IV	15-29
V	Below 15

(as reproduced in^[3])

Table 2: Revision of the Prasad's social classification for the year 2013

Social class	Original classification of the per capita income (in Rs./month)	Revised for 2013 (in Rs./month)
I	100 and above	5113 and above
II	50-99	2557-5112
III	30-49	1533-2556
IV	15-29	767-1532
V	Below 15	Below 767

its purpose. An online tool to enable real-time update of the Prasad's social classification has hence been made available.^[7] The online tool will retain its validity till the time the base year (2001 at present) for consumer price index for industrial workers (CPI-IW) is next changed.

The current exercise is a step towards increasing the validity of use of classification with relevance to the current price levels and enabling a real-time update for a considerable time in the near future.

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