

# How can SC/ST scholarships be expanded? | Explained

What is the current parental income limit for students who come from marginalised communities availing of pre-matric and post-matric scholarships? What did the Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of OBCs recommend? What is the eligibility criteria of these scholarships?

**Published** - August 14, 2025 08:30 am IST

ABHINAY LAKSHMAN



Students inside the classroom of a Gondi school in Mohagaon in Gadchiroli in March. | Photo Credit: EMMANUAL YOGINI

The story so far:

Ahead of the upcoming financial cycle spanning FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31, the Union government is considering revising the parental income limit for eligibility in availing post and pre-matric scholarships administered to students from marginalised castes and tribes.

What will be the new limit?

These scholarships require eligible candidates to have parental annual income below ₹2.5 lakh. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is looking to raise parental income limit to ₹4.5 lakh for post and pre-matric ST scholarships, and the Social Justice Ministry is discussing revising the limits for post and pre-matric scholarships for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Other Backward Castes (OBCs), and Denotified Tribes (DNTs). In addition, discussions are also on to raise the parental income limit of college and school scholarships for OBCs, and DNTs.

What are these scholarships?

The post and pre-matric scholarships for SCs, Scheduled Tribes (STs), and OBCs, are run as central sponsored schemes by the government. This means that it is funded by both the Union and State governments on a 60:40 ratio (Union:States), except for in northeast States where the ratio is 90:10.

The post-matric scholarships for SCs, STs, and OBCs, require the student to be an Indian national, studying at the post-matric stage, that is, after 10th grade. Pre-matric scholarships are mostly available to students of grades IX and X, but for SCs pre-matric scholarships are available from grades 1 to X, if their parent or guardian is involved in a “unclean or hazardous” occupation. Both post and pre-matric scholarships require students’ annual parental income to be below ₹2.5 lakh to become eligible.

In the ongoing fiscal year’s budget estimates, centrally sponsored scholarship schemes for SCs, OBCs, Extremely Backward Classes (EBCs), and DNTs accounted for 66.7% of the Social Justice Department’s ₹13,611 crore allocation.

In the Tribal Affairs Ministry, centrally sponsored scholarship schemes for ST students accounted for about 18.6% of the department’s ₹14,925.81 crore allocation for FY 2025-26.

How many avail of the scholarships?

According to available government data, tabled in Parliament and submitted before House panels, the number of beneficiaries for post and pre-matric scholarships across socio-economic groups has been falling. This showed that from 2020-21 to 2024-25, there was a 30.63% drop in the number of beneficiaries for pre-matric scholarships for SCs. In the same time period, beneficiaries for SC post-matric scholarships dropped by 4.22%, according to data tabled in Parliament this week.

Data from earlier this year further showed that for pre-matric scholarships for OBCs, EBCs, and DNTs, the beneficiaries dropped from 58.62 lakh in 2021-22 to a little over 20.25 lakh in 2023-24. A similar drop was seen in post-matric scholarships for these sections in the same time period, reducing from 43.34 lakh beneficiaries to 38.42 lakh. For STs, there was a drop of 4.63 lakh beneficiaries in this time period for pre-matric scholarships, and a drop of 3.52 lakh beneficiaries for post-matric scholarships.

What have House panels said about these scholarships as well as eligibility criteria?

In a report on schemes for OBCs run by the Social Justice Ministry, the Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of OBCs earlier this year recommended a “suitable rise” in the income limit from ₹2.5 lakh that is currently set for scholarships for OBC students. While the panel asked the government to double the income limit for beneficiaries of pre and post-matric scholarships for OBCs, it has asked for “suitable rise” in the income limits for beneficiaries of top-class scholarships for school and college education.

The panel also said it was puzzling why the pre-matric scholarship for OBCs was only being offered for Class IX and X, recommending that the scholarship start covering students from Class V onwards.

A separate House panel, which was set up to oversee the working of the Tribal Affairs and Social Justice ministries this March, noted the same about post and pre-matric scholarships for ST students, recommending that the parental income limits be revised for these schemes.

These House panels have stressed the importance of these scholarships, and observed that the existing parental income limit was too low, adding that this was preventing many families who need the scholarships from getting access to it. They have suggested that the parental income limit be raised for these scholarships so that the coverage can be extended to as many beneficiaries that need it.

**Published** – August 14, 2025 08:30 am IST