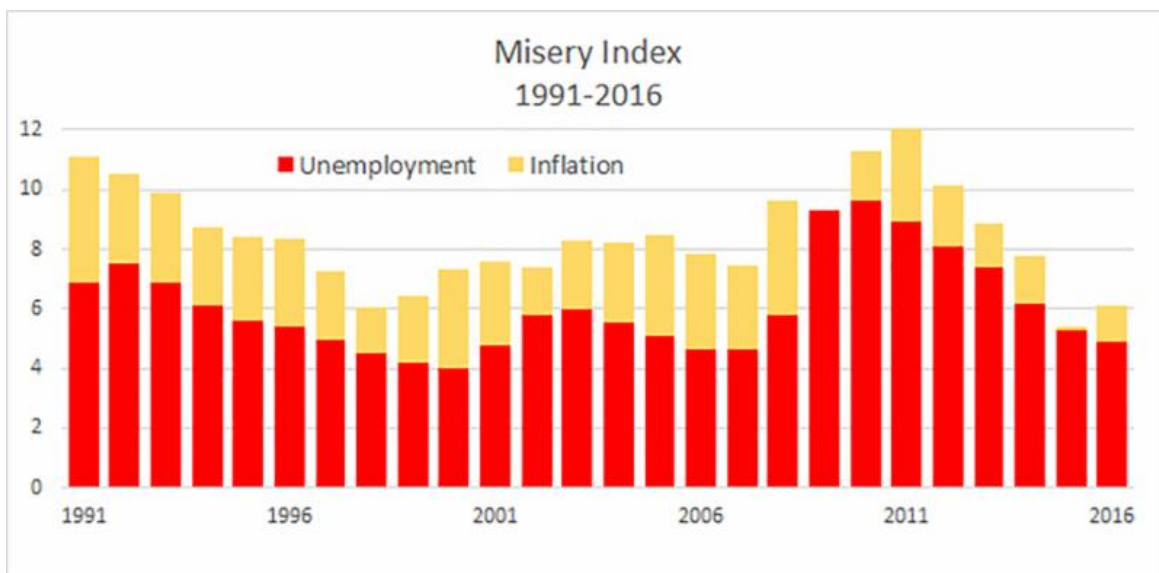




Checking the Facts

The headline was quite clear - THE MISERY INDEX IS ON THE RISE. The rest of the copy explained that increases in the misery index are followed by market downturns and that investors need to move now to position their assets safely. But was the message accurate?

Yes, there is a Misery Index. It's simply unemployment plus inflation. Is the index on the rise? Yes, but the rise is minor and the relationship is questionable as the graph below shows.



Thanks to the Internet, we have an incredible opportunity today to check the reality of facts that media, marketers and con artists throw at us each day. Before you panic, despair or bite on a dangling worm, take a moment to check the facts.

Political facts are the hardest to check in part because there are a growing number of online fact-checkers that are actually partisan platforms. Rather than relying on these sites, look for the source of the data. When checking whether a "fact" is truth, fiction or exaggeration, consider some of the following sites and don't hesitate to search the internet for sources of data. Just keep in mind the old saying about history being written by the winners.

- Snopes.com is one of the oldest and relatively bias-free fact-checking sites.
- TruthorFiction.com is an email reality checker. This is a good site to verify whether the latest pass-around email is actually true.
- HoaxSlayer.com aims to counteract criminal activity by publishing information about common types of Internet scams. They also include anti-spam tips, computer and email security information, articles about true email forwards, and much more.

- Data.gov is managed and hosted by the U.S. General Services Administration, Technology Transformation Service and offers access to a wide range of government based data.
- USA.gov/statistics provides U.S. Census Bureau information and other information
- bls.gov is the Bureau of Labor Statistics - the principal fact-finding agency for the Federal Government in the broad field of labor economics and statistics.

Twitter feeds are not always reliable or that informative, but a number of the U.S. government agencies maintain twitter feeds to announce the release of information. If there is a department you are particularly interested in, conduct an internet search for their twitter handles. [@FBI](#), [@FBIPressOffice](#), [@FBIRecordsVault](#) are some of the Twitter feeds of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, for example.

And always keep in mind a line popularized by Mark Twain, from British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli: "There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics."



Brian R. Carruthers, CFP®, CMT

Brian R. Carruthers & Associates
Your Conservative Advisory Firm Since 1990
301 Forest Avenue
Laguna Beach, California 92651-2115 USA

Telephone: 1-949-464-1900
www.gobcafunds.com
brian@gobcafunds.com