

Marlyn Glen

Dundee's Misery Index is over 10 per cent

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There is such a thing as The Misery Index.

It's the sum of the rate of unemployment plus the rate of inflation, and added together they give an indication of the financial misery that accompanies unemployment, under-employment and the fear of an uncertain future for individuals and their families.

Strictly speaking, the Misery Index applies only to countries.

However, taking some degree of licence to make a point, the Misery Index for Dundee would be 10.6 per cent just now (5.0 per cent rate of inflation last month plus the 5.6 per cent rate for unemployment in the city)

The overall rate of unemployment in Dundee masks its most troubling tale - the age 16-24 age group in the city has an 8 per cent unemployment rate, and in the past three and a half years, the number of unemployed in that important age group of future Dundonians, has risen from 945 to 1,605.

There are dire forecasts of more misery to come , in the day-to-day running of family budgets hit by rising food prices, higher energy and fuel costs, and particularly for women.

Many of them are now the breadwinner in the family, whether it be in full-time or in part-time work, and they face the horrendous odds.

That's why the latest figures for those who are "economically inactive" in Dundee (those) show that 3,600 such women in Dundee want a job.

The corresponding figure for men is less, at 3,200.

People who are "economically inactive" are generally speaking those are beyond retiral age, and those who cannot work for reasons such as illness, disability, or those who remain at home to look after family.

Family responsibilities are the most common reason given for women being economically inactive.

The increase in the number of women in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance in Dundee since last June is greater than in men, 365 to 312, probably reflecting in part changes in the Lone Parent Obligation.

Women make up the majority of employees in the public sector, such as the NHS, education, local councils, and it is this sector that is being targeted and shredded in this recession.

Women's working skills are needed now as much as they were in the past.

The number of nursing and midwifery staff in NHS Tayside is now the lowest in 5 years .

The number of school teachers in secondary schools in Dundee is now at its lowest since 2005, almost two-thirds of whom are women

The number of school teachers in primary schools in Dundee is now at its lowest since 2005, 90 per cent of whom are women.

It doesn't have to be like this.

A view from America (current Misery Index of 13) - an editorial in the "New York Times" - "Britain's self-inflicted Misery" - lays the blame forcibly and truly where it belongs :

"Austerity was a deliberate ideological choice by Prime Minister David Cameron's ruling coalition of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, elected 17 months ago. It has failed and can be expected to keep failing. But neither party is yet prepared to acknowledge that reality and change course.

Britain's economy has barely grown since the budget cuts began taking effect late last year. The most recent quarterly figures showed the economy flat-lining, with growth at 0.1 percent. New figures reported Britain's highest jobless numbers in more than 15 years. Independent analysts expect unemployment — now 8.1 percent — to keep rising in the months ahead. The government has kept its promise to slash public-sector jobs — more than 100,000 have been lost in recent months. But its deficit-reduction policies have failed to revive the business confidence that was supposed to spur private-sector hiring.

Drastic public spending cuts were the wrong deficit-reduction strategy for the weakened British economy a year ago. ... Britain's unhappy experience is further evidence that radical reductions in spending will do little but stifle economic recovery.

Slashing government spending in an already stalled economy weakens anemic demand, leading to lost output and lost tax revenues. As revenues fall, deficit reduction requires longer, deeper spending cuts. Cut too far, too fast, and the result is not a balanced budget but a lost decade of no growth. That could now happen in Britain. .

Austerity is a political ideology masquerading as an economic policy. It rests on a myth, impervious to facts, that portrays all government spending as wasteful and harmful, and unnecessary to the recovery. The real world is a lot more complicated. America has no need to repeat Mr. Cameron's failed experiment. "

One of the band of economists who predicted the banking crash and the extent of the present recession ,and an ex-member of the Bank of England's interest rate committee was by David Blanchflower, who has studied the long -term effects of unemployment on young people.

He looked at data from the National Child Development Study, which examined the lives of children born in one particular week in 1958.

He found that while those in their early 20s who had lost their jobs in the late 1970s and early 1980s managed to make good again, the psychological mark of being without a job in the earlier years remained with many of them, in some cases into their mid-forties.

They were more likely to be earning less than those with uninterrupted employment and they were less likely to be healthy and happy with their work.

Below are some figures for levels of unemployment in Dundee across all age groups in that same period :

If David Blanchflower's argument is correct, the question arises, how many amongst them of them born in the late 1950s who lost their jobs in the 1970s and 80s felt the effect of its misery into their middle aged years, and still feel it even today?

Year	Average Number unemployed in Dundee
1979	8,668
1980	10,861
1981	14,723
1982	15,611
1983	15,943
1984	16,423