

# Treasury percentages prove almost nothing

Published: January 15, 2026, 11:46 am

---

[Samuel Brittan has written this in the FT this morning:](#)

*One of the better permanent secretaries of HM Treasury, the late Douglas Allen, used to respond to requests for more official data by saying that such vast amounts of data should be published that commentators would drown in them and cry for help.*

*His desire has been granted in spades, judging by the many dozen (if not hundreds) of tables and charts in the recent so-called Autumn Statement, published last week, and the accompanying new report of the Office for Budget Responsibility. But I would add that there are far too many percentages and rates of change in them, and not nearly enough absolute numbers.*

Can I reiterate his last point? Far, far too many of the statistics published by the Treasury are utter mumbo jumbo expressed as a percentage change on previous data without giving any clue whatsoever what the base data is.

If the Treasury is intent on imparting useful information this is not it.

But then, maybe they're not intent on imparting useful information.