

# The square root of bugger-all

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I noted [this comment from the Guardian](#) on this morning's GDP figures, announced at 7 am, with despair:

*Britain's economy unexpectedly grew in the final three months of last year, official figures show, easing pressure on the chancellor, Rachel Reeves.*

Figures from the [Office for National Statistics](#) show gross domestic product rose by 0.1% in the fourth quarter of 2024, beating the forecasts of City economists and the Bank of England for a decline of 0.1%.

The latest snapshot will provide a shot in the arm for Labour after the chancellor, Rachel Reeves, faced intense criticism for denting business and consumer confidence with her £40bn tax-raising October budget.

The pretence that growth of 0.1% is in any meaningful way different from a decline of 0.1% is utterly absurd. It is a difference of two thousandths. In the overall scheme of things, and given both the absurdity of the GDP measure and the vast number of estimates that go to make this up, that is very politely called a rounding a difference. Slightly less politely, it is referred to as the square root of bugger-all.

If political point scoring is this desperate, then it really has lost touch with reality. That is because nothing about this difference, or the failure against the targets that Labour has set for itself that it represents, will have any impact on the well-being of people who are in need in this country, who should be the epicentre of their concern.

I long for grown-up political debate in the UK. We very rarely get it. Instead, pettiness wins. No wonder we're in a mess.