



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Robert Chote,  
Chair – UK Statistics Authority  
Fry Building  
1st Floor, 2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

24 November 2023

Dear Sir Robert,

I am writing to raise concerns about the misrepresentation of official public finance statistics by the Prime Minister in Parliament and on social media.

At Prime Minister's Questions on 22nd November, Rishi Sunak told the House of Commons: "*we have indeed reduced debt.*"

However, the latest Public Sector Finances bulletin, published by the Office for National Statistics just the day before, shows that the public sector net debt has risen on every measure – whether in cash terms or as a proportion of GDP.

It shows that public sector net debt excluding public sector banks (PSND ex) rose to £2.64 trillion in October, the highest level on record. That is 97.8% of GDP, up from 96.4% in September and 95.5% a year ago.

Since the last General Election in December 2019, PSND ex has risen by £809 billion, and as a share of GDP it has risen by 13 percentage points.

Since Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister in October 2022, debt has risen on this measure by £190 billion, and as a share of GDP it has risen by 2.3 percentage points.

Furthermore, the Office for Budget Responsibility's latest forecast, published on 23rd November, has debt rising on this measure to £2.70 trillion, or 97.9% of GDP, at the end of March 2024. In other words, debt has risen and is continuing to rise.

The Prime Minister's false claim in Parliament repeats a very similar statement he made in a gov.uk-branded video posted on X (formerly Twitter) on 7th November: "*debt is falling.*"

In response to that video, Ben Zaranko, Senior Research Economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, said: "*It's not accurate to say that debt is falling. Public sector debt is currently rising in cash terms, real terms and (most importantly) as a per cent of national income.*"

So, it would appear that there is no justifiable basis for the Prime Minister to claim either that the Government has "reduced debt" or that "debt is falling".

I therefore ask that you investigate the Prime Minister's statements, both in Parliament and in his video on X, and offer your guidance on whether they are misleading.

I look forward to your response on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

*Sarah Olney*

**Sarah Olney MP**