

The BBC is highly selective with figures

The IMF this week released a table of growth rates in GDP for the main economies of the world. It contained three years. The actual figures for 2022 and two forecast years, 2023 and 2024. The forecasts were changed from the previous forecasts for the same years, as they regularly do.

The BBC spent the day following the release running with the story that the UK is the poorest performing major economy according to the IMF. This was based on the IMF GDP forecasts for just 2023. It was usually presented as fact or news, rather than as one of many forecasts for the upcoming year which might or might not be right. So called experts were asked to comment on why we are the worst performing economy, not on the quality of the forecasts or why the forecasters thought that could happen. They were sometimes expressly asked if that was the result of Brexit.

The BBC could have led with the story that the IMF confirmed that the UK was the fastest growing economy in 2022 on the official figures, the only fact in the release. The UK's growth rate of 4% compared with China 3%, USA 2.1%, Germany 1.8%, France 2.6% and Japan 1.1%. No expert was dragged on to be asked if that outperformance "was due to Brexit".

They could have provided a more balanced account by saying the IMF's 3 year figures combining actuals and estimates show the UK ahead of France, Germany and Japan but behind the USA and Italy. They could have asked experts to comment on how we could be even closer to the US rate of growth and less like the German one.

The fact they did not choose to tells us the state of BBC economic commentary remains poor.