

## Gambling's costs on society

In the October 3, 2024 issue of the Caymanian Compass, Kenneth Bryan, the tourism minister, is quoted as saying (in Parliament), “One of the most compelling arguments for a national lottery is the potential for increasing revenues. “In most countries, national lotteries are used to fund programmes in sports, as well as projects in community development.”

Referendum question: [Do you support the introduction of a National Lottery in the islands?]

Comment from a Breakpoint article: **It is “not the government’s job to incentivise risky behaviours for financial gain.”**

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

As with the issue of possession of “small amounts” of ganja, my first observation is that the issue of gambling has been **treated as a neutral matter** by those who believe that all issues around it can be settled by a referendum.

Government has not done the responsible, due-diligence actions of providing the electors (and public in general) with research-based data on the social dangers (or benefits) of gambling. **RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT GAMBLING LEVIES A HIGH COST ON SOCIETY.**

Below are facts, based on research, regarding the dangers of gambling. These findings are not only related to the U.S.A., but from other countries.

1. Gambling has the distinction of being the addiction with the highest suicide rate. (GD= “gambling disorder”). “Eight studies from USA reported that those with GD had the highest suicide rate of any addiction disorder with one in five GD patients having attempted suicide. Similar findings were reported from the UK where those with GD were six times more likely to have suicidal thoughts and 15 times more likely to make a suicidal attempt. (Lancet Public Health, 2021). [GD is a valid diagnosable mental disorder under both the International Classification of Disorders and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.]
2. The financial burden associated with (gambling) state lotteries fell disproportionately on the poor (Clotfelter and Cook, 1991)
3. Gambling related cases (of suicide) in Nevada was approximately nine times greater than the overall (U.S.) sample—4% vs 0.44% (M. van Der Maas, R. Di Meglio, L. Nower).
4. Studies in Sweden and France both found that the social costs of gambling outweighed the tax revenues it generated (M. Van der Maas et al).

5. A recent meta analysis of studies of suicide behaviours among people with gambling disorders found prevalence rates of 31% for suicide ideation, 17% for plans to die by suicide and 16% for attempts to die by suicide. Rates for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts have been found to be even higher among individuals in treatment for Gambling Disorder: as high as 81.4% for suicide ideation and 30.2% for suicide attempts in the past 12 months (van der Maas et al).
6. In America, “there are 11 states in which lottery revenues exceeded state corporate income tax (Reuters). Critics argue that the tax burden is being shifted from wealthy corporations to poor individuals who buy lottery tickets (Smartasset, Aug. 25, 2023).
7. **It is “not the government’s job to incentivise risky behaviours for financial gain.”**