

Report

Gambling related harm statistics

“There were no deaths in the past four years involving gambling registered in England and Wales,” the government confirms

The UK Statistics Authority last week confirmed that there were no **gambling related deaths** recorded in England and Wales during 2022. It's a far cry from the narrative swirling around during the Gambling Review debate - and indeed the all-important consultation period. So how will this one vital statistic change the narrative of politicians, campaigning groups and stakeholders over the coming weeks?

Figures currently being quoted by charities, politicians, campaigning groups and the Gambling Commission on gambling related deaths, including suicides, have been confirmed as incorrect - and, worryingly, by some significant number.

Following a question from the Bishop of St Albans to the Cabinet Office asking “how many deaths that occurred in England and Wales in the past four years mentioned gambling anywhere on the death certificate,” the government decided to instruct the UK Statistics Authority to investigate the figures.

The government's response was delivered in a letter to the Bishop from Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, and posted on the official parliamentarians TheyWorkForYou website.

And it was not the answer the cleric would have hoped for, and certainly not a figure within the range being widely quoted in public discussions by stakeholders throughout the Gambling Review.

The National Statistician



wrote: “Dear Lord Bishop, as National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, I am responding to your Parliamentary Questions asking how many deaths occurred in England and Wales in (1) 2019, (2) 2020, (3) 2021 and (4) 2022... There were no deaths in the past four years involving gambling ICD-10 codes registered in England

and Wales. While these codes exist, they are likely to be used only in the case of medically diagnosed gambling addiction.”

The silence around the cloisters of St Albans Cathedral would have been deafening.

The National Statistician continued: “To identify some deaths involving gambling, we can also use the

coroner's text report from deaths registered involving suicide (ICD codes X60 to X84, Y10 to Y34). It is possible that more suicides were related to gambling, but this cannot be definitively stated, as not all the circumstances are necessarily known or reported in the death registration by the coroner.”

It was clearly not the

information the Bishop, nor his allies, had wanted to hear. Neither, presumably, was the table Professor Diamond referred the Bishop to as an aide memoire showing the number of deaths where gambling was mentioned in the coroner's text, from 2019 to 2022, and registered by 31 December 2022 [2] in England and Wales. Those statistics were:

Year	Deaths Involving gambling
2019	4
2020	4
2021	1
2022	0

Only recently, one of the Bishop's House of Lords colleagues, Lord Foster, made reference in a parliamentary debate to circa 400 gambling related suicides in the UK every year - and that statistic remains widely used in the public discourse despite being discredited long before the UK Statistics Authority confirmed the zero figure a fortnight ago.

Something is not adding up Bishop - and that something is unlikely to be the National Statistician.

When statistics won't support the narrative

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Time for the stakeholders to check the facts urges Hannibal

One of the main critics of the misinterpretation of gambling harm statistics, Peter Hannibal, CEO of the Gambling Business Group, believes the National Statistician's answer to the Bishop of St Albans will likely do little to change the false narrative. He said: “The Bishop of St Albans has been given a categorical answer to his question, it's only disappointing that the Peers for Gambling Reform didn't think to ask for these ‘facts’ before they produced their submission to the



‘Review of the Gambling Act 2005 Call for Evidence’.

“We must watch to see whether the Bishop, and his fellow campaigners, now re-adjust their arguments and interpretation of facts to recognise the official government statistics.”

He added: “What it does highlight, however, is the desperate need for a formal check against the flagrant use of false facts. We urgently need to move away from having to challenge false narratives and the deliberate misuse of

Facts must be checked

Peter Hannibal said...
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facts, and enable decisions that shape the activities of the gambling sector and harm protections to be based on clear and accurate evidence.

“We are fast coming to the conclusion that this can only be achieved by an independent fact-checking process. We also believe that the Gambling Commission should be involved as it is they who have to advise policy and make regulatory decisions, and they should do so based on reliable and accurate facts and information.”