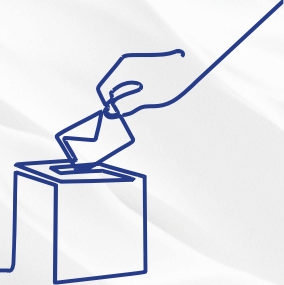




# FAQs on the Cruise Berthing Referendum Question

On 30 April 2025, you will be asked to vote on whether the Cayman Islands should develop cruise berthing infrastructure.

The following information is provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Ports Referendum Information and FAQ, to help you make an informed decision.



To help you make an informed decision, here are some key terms:

## Background Information

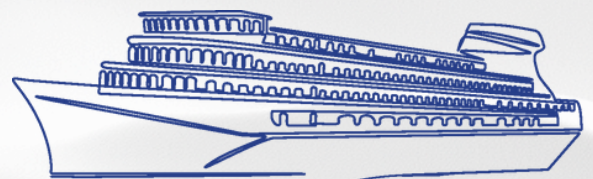
Cruise tourism in the Cayman Islands has experienced a decline in recent years, a trend that became particularly noticeable following the COVID-19 pandemic. Projections indicate that, under current conditions, cruise calls to Grand Cayman may continue to decrease, which could have economic implications.

The Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) of the Cayman Islands has reported that in 2018, **the cruise tourism sector contributed approximately \$350.1 million to the local economy**. However, by 2023, this figure had declined to an estimated \$261 million, with projections indicating a further decrease to \$253.4 million in 2024.

The report also forecasts that, aside from a temporary rise in cruise calls in 2025, cruise arrivals are projected to **decline by an average of 5.2% annually in the coming years**. This trend is influenced by multiple factors, including the transition of major cruise lines to larger-class ships that are not currently calling on Grand Cayman.

Understanding the long-term trajectory of cruise tourism is an important consideration for stakeholders as they evaluate the sector's future and its role in the Cayman Islands' broader tourism strategy.

## Cruise Tourism FAQ



### 1. What does your vote mean?

A **"Yes"** vote means you support developing cruise berthing infrastructure.

A **"No"** vote means you do not support the development of cruise berthing infrastructure.





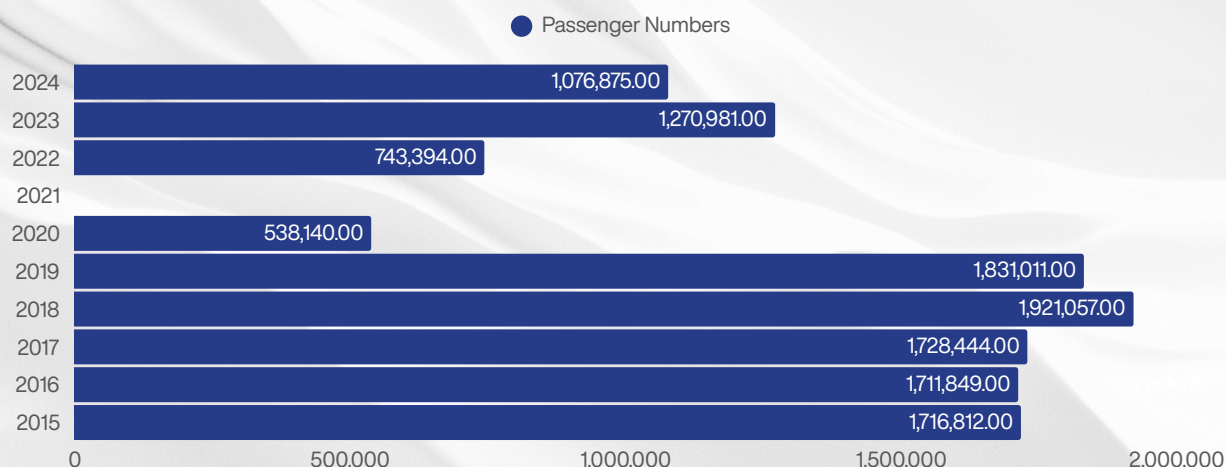
## 2. How have cruise passenger arrivals changed pre-pandemic versus post-pandemic?

Between 2013 and 2019, cruise passenger arrivals to the Cayman Islands **grew at an average rate of 3.2% per year**, peaking in 2018 at just **over 1.92 million visitors**. During this period, the Cayman Islands ranked among the top cruise destinations in the region, alongside the Bahamas, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and Mexico.

Following the reopening of the cruise sector in 2022, passenger arrivals have remained below pre-pandemic levels. **In 2024, arrivals were 15.3% lower than in 2023**, representing 194,106 fewer passengers.

Projections from the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) report indicate that cruise passenger arrivals are expected to **decline by an average of 5.2% per year** in the coming years, based on current trends and industry shifts.

## 3. How many cruise passengers visited the Cayman Islands over the past 10 years?



## 4. How many jobs are supported by the cruise sector?

As of 2023, activities related to cruise tourism supported an estimated 1,622 jobs, representing 2.8% of total employment in the Cayman Islands. For further details, the full report can be accessed → [here](#).

## 5. What is the difference between tendering and a cruise pier?

**Tendering:** Cruise ships anchor offshore, and passengers are transported to and from the shore using small boats called tenders. This process can take additional time and may be affected by weather conditions.

**Cruise Pier:** A fixed docking structure that allows ships to moor directly at the port, enabling passengers to walk on and off the ship without using tenders.



## 6. What are the pros and cons of tendering?

### Pros of tendering

- Less Environmental Impact – Requires no dredging for pier construction.
- Cost Savings – Uses existing infrastructure at the Port.
- Passenger Experience – Tendering is unique to the Cayman Islands and can be enjoyable in good weather and calm seas.

### Cons of tendering

- Longer Disembarkation Process – The higher passenger volumes of newer ships makes tendering impractical and reduces the time passengers can spend onshore.
- Economic Impact – Less time on shore reduces the number, and types of activities passengers can participate in, impacting potential spend at local businesses and attractions.
- Weather-Dependent – The journey between ship and shore can either be smooth or choppy depending on the weather and sea conditions.
- Passenger Experience – Tendering can be challenging for the elderly or persons with mobility issues, in wheelchairs, or those travelling with small children.
- Environmental Impact – Requires ships to remain on anchor, using thrusters.

## 7. What are the pros and cons of a cruise pier?

### Pros of cruise pier

- Faster and easier disembarkation process– Passengers can walk directly on and off the ship, reducing wait times and allowing more time on shore.
- Passenger Experience – more convenient and easier for the elderly or persons with mobility issues, in wheelchairs, or those travelling with small children.
- Weather– Less impact from weather conditions such as choppy seas.
- Eliminates Monopoly Dependence – the country is reliant on one private sector business for the disembarkation process and has no other means for transferring passengers to/from the ship.

### Cons of cruise pier

- Construction Costs – Building a pier can be an expensive proposition for governments or private investors.
- Environmental Impact – Requires dredging and construction, which can disrupt marine life and ecosystems.
- Overcrowding – faster passenger flows could lead to congestion, but on the other hand, mitigation measures to avoid congestion are typically included as part of the berthing infrastructure design, as neither the cruise lines nor the destination wants congestion marring the passenger/resident experience.



### 8. How many cruise passengers and crew come on shore in Grand Cayman?

A 2017/18 survey conducted by Business Research and Economic Advisors (BREA) estimated that approximately **85% of cruise passengers disembark** at their destinations across the region. The same report estimated that **248,600 cruise ship crew members also disembarked** in Grand Cayman during the survey period. This equates to approximately 15% of the total number of passengers who came ashore.

### 9. How much does cruise tourism contribute to our Islands?

According to the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) report, cruise tourism contributed an **estimated gross output of CI\$350.1 million in 2018**. This includes revenue from passenger fees, passenger spending, and value-added services. By 2019, gross output **declined to CI\$327.9 million**. In the post-pandemic period, cruise spending was estimated at CI\$261.0 million in 2023 and was projected to generate CI\$253.4 million in 2024

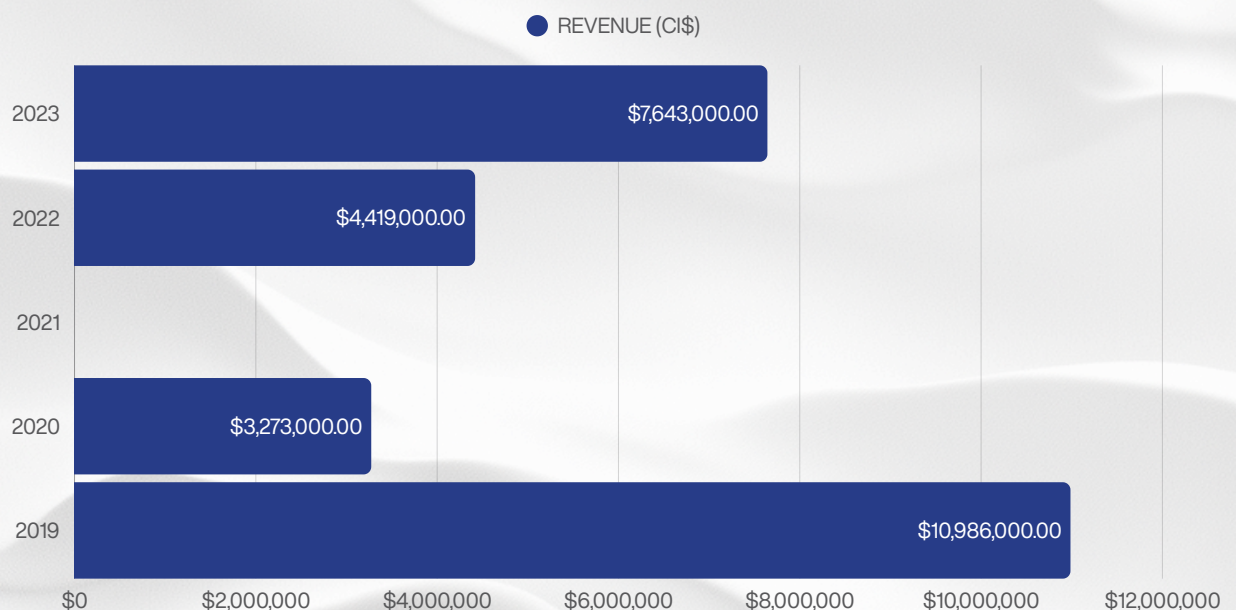
### 10. What are passenger fees and how much does the country receive annually?

Cruise lines pay a per-passenger fee to the Cayman Islands Government for every person aboard the ship, regardless of whether they disembark. These fees are included in the cost of a cruise ticket, similar to how taxes are incorporated into airline ticket prices.

The revenue from cruise passenger fees is allocated across four key areas:

- Port Authority of the Cayman Islands – Supports port operations and infrastructure.
- Environmental Protection Fund – Contributes to conservation efforts.
- Cayman Islands Government – Helps fund government services.
- Tender Boat Operators – Covers the cost of transporting passengers from ship to shore.

For details on the total amount collected annually, figures can be referenced below.





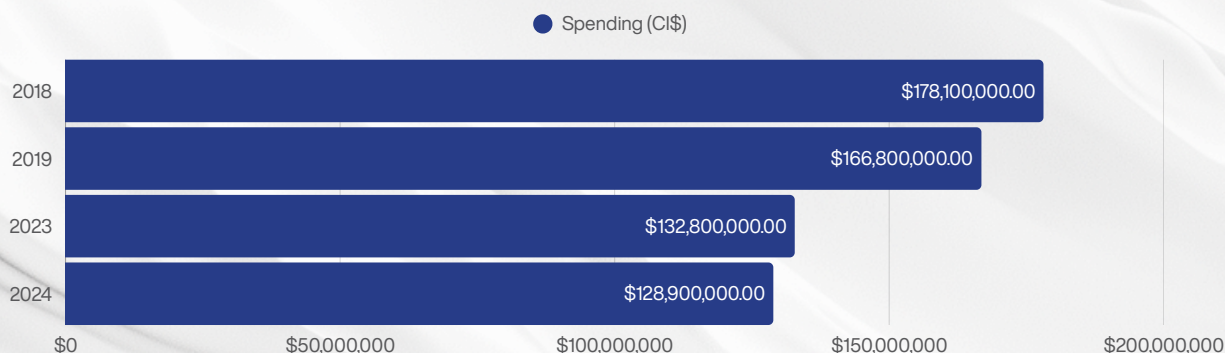
### 11. How much do cruise passengers and crew spend on shore in Grand Cayman?

The most recent available data on passenger and crew spending comes from pre-pandemic sources:

According to the Department of Tourism's 2019 Destination Snapshot Report, the average spend per cruise passenger was **CI\$113.40 for an average stay of 4 hours**.

According to the 2018 Business Research and Economic Advisors (BREA) Report, the **average spend per crew member was CI\$58.58**. These figures reflect spending on shopping, excursions, food and beverage, and other onshore activities.

**Estimated total spending from cruise passengers and crew:**



### 12. What do cruise passengers spend money on when in the Cayman Islands?

According to the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) report, the majority of cruise passenger spending goes towards:

- Shopping and excursions – Accounting for more than 86% of total spending.
- Food, beverages, and other recreational activities – Making up the remainder of expenditures.

The spending primarily supports the wholesale and retail industry, followed by other service sectors. Caymanians represent:

**43%** of employed persons in the wholesale and retail sector.

**46%** of employed persons in other services.

### 13. What have cruise lines said about future cruise calls if a pier is not built?

Major cruise lines serving the Cayman Islands have indicated that future calls may decline if a pier is not built. This is due to an industry-wide shift toward larger ships, which accommodate more passengers but are less likely to visit destinations that require tendering for disembarkation.

Cruise lines have generally favored ports with direct docking facilities to improve passenger experience and streamline operations. As newer and larger vessels enter service, their itineraries may prioritize destinations with piers, potentially impacting the number of calls to Grand Cayman under the current tendering system.



#### **14. How much cruise business is the cruise sector forecast to lose without the piers?**

The Cayman Islands has experienced a decline in cruise passenger arrivals over the years, partly due to the introduction of larger cruise ships that require direct docking. Since 2009, when Royal Caribbean launched its Oasis-class ships, these vessels have bypassed Grand Cayman on a regular basis due to the absence of a pier.

Between 2017 and 2024, **cruise arrivals have decreased by approximately 40%**, from 1.7 million passengers in 2017 to around 1 million in 2024.

Future projections indicate that cruise calls may continue to decline, as more cruise lines introduce larger ships that do not tender and prioritize destinations with docking infrastructure.

#### **15. Which other destinations in the Caribbean do not have a cruise pier?**

The Cayman Islands is among the few major Caribbean cruise destinations that do not have a dedicated cruise pier, relying solely on tendering to transport passengers between ship and shore. This means that cruise ships anchor offshore, and passengers are ferried to land using smaller boats.

#### **16. If a pier is built how can we be sure cruise ships will come?**

Major cruise lines have indicated a preference for ports with docking facilities, as newer, larger ships are designed for direct disembarkation rather than tendering. Cruise lines have also stated that they would like to send larger ships to the Cayman Islands, but their ability to do so is limited by the absence of a pier.

Industry trends show that newer ships prioritize efficiency and accessibility, and ports with piers generally see higher passenger volumes due to quicker and easier disembarkation. However, while a pier may increase the likelihood of attracting larger vessels, final itinerary decisions are made by cruise lines based on multiple factors, including passenger demand, operational costs, and overall destination appeal.

Currently, the absence of a pier has contributed to a decline in passenger arrivals, as many newer, larger ships are not including Grand Cayman on their itineraries.

#### **17. Can the government force the cruise lines to tender if the pier is not built?**

No, the Cayman Islands Government cannot mandate that cruise lines tender their passengers ashore. Cruise lines independently determine their itineraries and operational logistics based on factors such as passenger capacity, efficiency, and safety.

Cruise lines have stated that tendering is impractical for newer, larger ships, which accommodate higher passenger volumes. As a result, many of these ships do not include Grand Cayman in their itineraries due to the time and logistical constraints associated with tendering.



**18. George Town is already congested on cruise ship days. How will we manage with bigger ships carrying more passengers?**

Several possible measures could help mitigate congestion, including:

- Improved pedestrian flow management to ease movement in key areas.
- Transportation logistics adjustments, such as designated shuttle routes to distribute visitors beyond the downtown area.
- Road network improvements, some of which have already been undertaken by the National Roads Authority (NRA) to improve traffic flow, with additional elements still in progress.

**19. If the decision is yes to cruise berthing infrastructure, would it be included as part of the cargo port expansion project?**

The government has not made any policy decisions regarding whether cruise berthing infrastructure would be included as part of the cargo port expansion project. Any such decision would require further discussion, assessments, and stakeholder consultations.

**20. A previous government received over a dozen reports and studies the last time the piers were being considered. Where are all of those reports?**

All of the reports and studies conducted under the 2017-2021 administration were released to the public and can be reviewed → [here](#).

They include:

- Strategic Outline Case (SOC) prepared by the Ministry of Tourism (DAT&T)
- Outline Business case prepared by PwC
- Addendum to the Outline Business Case (PwC)
- EIA Terms of Reference (Mott MacDonald)
- Environmental Impact Assessment (BAIRD)
- Environmental Statement Non-Technical Summary (BAIRD)
- Preliminary Scoping of Possible Mitigation Measures (BAIRD)
- EAB Review of the Consultation Draft Environmental Statement, Technical Appendices & Non-Technical Summary (EAB)
- Benthic Habitat Characterization study (CSA)
- Business Research and Economic Advisors Report Sept 2015 (BREA Report)

**21. What percentage of government income do cruise and stayover fees represent?**

The tables in Questions 10 and 11 specify the annual revenue (CI\$ '000s) derived from fees from the cruise and stayover sectors respectively. The Ministry of Tourism & Ports is not able to confirm what percentage of overall government income these represent.



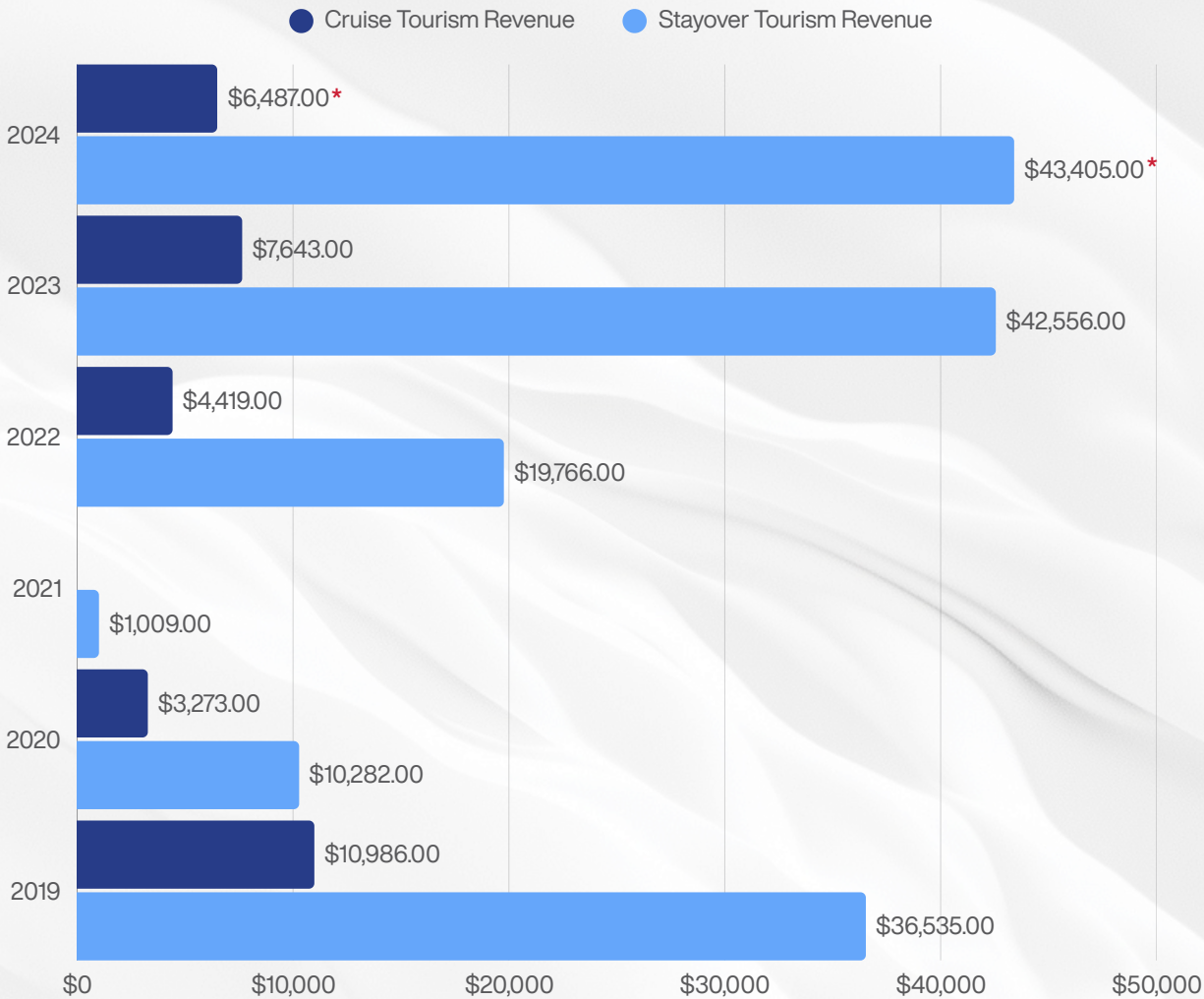
**22. What percentage of GDP does cruise tourism represent, and how does that compare to stayover tourism?**

Refer to the Economics and Statistics Office (ESO) Annual Economic Report, pages 14 and 15, which contain information on tourism’s percentage contribution to GDP broken down by year, as well as its contribution to government revenue.

The estimated gross output figures referred to in Point 9 include revenue from passenger fees, passenger spend, and value-added services. The Ministry does not have information pertaining to the stayover sector compiled in the same way to enable an apples-to-apples comparison.

However, revenue from stayover tourism taxes and fees has been included below for the years 2019 through 2024, to enable a fees-based comparison between the two sectors:

**Cruise Tourism vs Stayover Tourism Fees Collected (Ct\$ '000s):**



\*Figures for 2024 are preliminary unaudited results as of 12 March 2025.

Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

### 23. Is the cruise passenger spend of \$113.40 quoted in CI\$ or US\$?

The ESO report states:

- “The average spending by cruise passengers in 2019 was \$113.40, while crew members, on average, spent \$58.586 in 2018” (Source: ESO Report, page 12)

Additionally, a footnote in the report confirms that:

- “All expenditures are quoted in the local currency (CI\$). Where necessary, the official exchange rate of US\$1.2 to CI\$1.0 is used for conversions.”
- This means the **\$113.40** is quoted in CI dollars, and the crew spend taken from the BREA report was converted from USD to **CI\$58.58**.

### 24. What about the environmental impact and operational concerns during a potential build?

There is no mention of how the port would operate during a build or of any damage that might be caused to the environment in the current FAQs. These are major considerations for such a large infrastructure project.

Any interruption to the ability to host cruise visitors carries a cost, as does any damage to the harbour environment. The coral reefs around the harbour are a major tourist attraction and if these are damaged in any way, this could harm one of the main reasons visitors come to Grand Cayman.

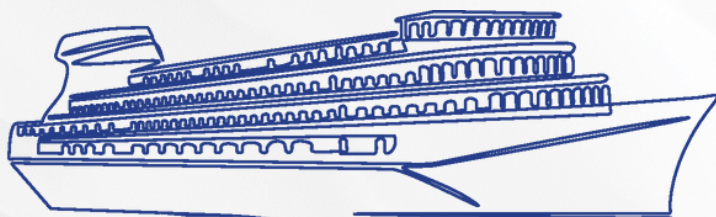
The questioner may find the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) undertaken for the 2018 proposed cruise berthing project helpful in providing guidance on the types of mitigation measures that could be used.

However, it should be noted that any mitigation measures would be specific to a particular project, and since there is no cruise berthing project under consideration at this time, the Ministry is unable to provide a more definitive response.

The EIA and associated reports are available at: [www.gov.ky/referendum](http://www.gov.ky/referendum)

### 25. Which other Caribbean destinations do not have a cruise pier?

The Cayman Islands is the only major cruise destination in the Caribbean that currently does not have a dedicated cruise pier and relies solely on tendering to transport passengers between ship and shore.



For more details, visit  
[gov.ky/referendum](http://gov.ky/referendum)

