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SECOND HOMES AND THE (RE)PRODUCTION OF CORNISH NATIONALISM

CONAN MILLEN and MARIN CVITANOVIĆ 

ABSTRACT. The growth of second-home ownership and short-term holiday lettings has intensified housing inequality in regions with high tourism pressure, prompting localized opposition and raising questions about identity, belonging, and economic justice. This study investigates how attitudes toward second homes and tourism intersect with ethnic identity in Cornwall, one of the poorest regions in Western Europe, characterized by high levels of second-home ownership and long-standing economic marginalization. An online survey conducted in 2023 ($n = 504$) gathered responses to 13 attitudinal items, alongside demographic data on age, income, ethnicity/identity, and employment type. Exploratory factor analysis with Promax rotation identified four underlying dimensions of opinion which explained 57.9 percent of the total variance, and Kruskal-Wallis tests assessed differences in factor scores across demographic groups. The analysis found that younger, lower-income, and Cornish-identifying respondents were more likely to express opposition to second-home ownership and short-term holiday lets, particularly in relation to issues about affordability, community cohesion, and local control. Older and more affluent British/English—identifying respondents expressed more positive views about tourism and second homes. Age and ethnicity had the strongest effect, indicating that attitudes are shaped by generational experiences of economic insecurity and by identity, signaling a broader, materially grounded form of regionalism embedded in wider structures of inequality and political exclusion. *Keywords* second homes, Cornwall, tourism, ethnicity, nationalism.

Second homes are typically defined as residential properties owned by individuals whose primary residence is located elsewhere, and are used irregularly, primarily for leisure or recreation (Åkerlund et al. 2015). This phenomenon is closely linked to broader shifts in mobility, tourism, and retirement migration patterns (Hall and Müller 2004; Williams and Hall 2010). As private vehicle ownership and lifestyle migration have increased, so too has the geographic reach of second-home markets, especially in coastal areas (Zoğal et al. 2022).

Reliable data on second-home numbers are limited, partly because temporary residences are not always recorded in censuses. This gap has been described as creating an “invisible population” (Back and Marjavaara 2017). However, available evidence suggests that second-home ownership is growing (Åkerlund et al. 2015; Hall 2014; Paris 2010). The rise in second-home ownership is often driven by the global process of financialization of housing, where housing is

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increasingly treated as an asset rather than a basic need (Forrest and Hirayama 2015; Byrne 2020). The resulting shift, often referred to as the rise of “generation rent,” has contributed to an increase in private renting across Europe (McKee 2012; Lennartz et al. 2016) with, for example, 20.3 percent of United Kingdom (U.K.) households renting privately in 2023, compared to around 10 percent in 2000 (ONS 2022). This decline in housing availability and stability has worsened inequality and insecurity (Gallent et al. 2017; Arundel and Ronald 2021).

Second-home tourism, especially in coastal areas, reinforces these trends. Often purchased as retirement properties, second homes drive local housing inequality, as seen in Spain’s Alicante province, where a disproportionate number of new homes are owned by British and German retirees (Mantecón et al. 2016). Wealthier second-home buyers inflate housing prices, pushing first-time buyers out of the market while increasing equity for local homeowners (Hall and Müller 2004; Gallent and Hamiduddin 2021). This dynamic has been intensified in the postpandemic context, where counterurbanization and remote working have further commodified rural living, leading to a rise in profiteering around the tourist rental markets (Zoğal et al. 2022; Willett 2023; Halfacree 2024).

International second-home ownership varies by region due to different regulations upon foreign citizens regarding purchasing properties (Åkerlund et al. 2015), with some countries promoting international investment in second homes such as Malaysia and Dubai (Paris 2010; Brida et al. 2011), and some enacting regulation on second-home purchases, such as China (Sun et al. 2017). These differences in government attitudes toward encouraging or limiting second-home ownership reflect the different effects these properties can have. Perceptions of second homes vary depending on local population dynamics, housing-market conditions, but also underlying beliefs about the appropriate character of rural areas (Gallent and Hamiduddin 2021) and personal values of what the rural “should be” (Müller 2002). Second-home development can boost economic activity, create jobs, and support local retail, which can strengthen the local economy (Åkerlund et al. 2015; Czarnecki 2018). At the same time, it can also lead to negative effects, such as the previously mentioned pressure on the housing market, as well as the weakening of traditional economies and increasing dependence on seasonal work and income (Hall and Müller 2004; Gallent and Hamiduddin 2021).

Political and social reactions to second homes are linked to wider housing inequality issues, with negative perceptions of second homes seen more proportionately in areas with higher second-home densities (Wallace et al. 2005; Gallent and Hamiduddin 2021). Administrative definitions of second homes can be used to exclude second-home owners from council services and amenities (Hall and Müller 2004), reducing their participation in local community in comparison to permanent residents. This administrative distinction between second-home owners and “real locals” may reinforce the perception that the former are

displacing the latter from the housing market (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones 2020). Nick Gallent (2007) discusses a hierarchy based on patterns of dwelling, suggesting that those who dwell with a greater immersion to a place are seen as separate to those who merely inhabit and are uninvolved. This symbolic hierarchy is reinforced by administrative distinctions and housing policy measures such as second-home taxes and initiatives that disproportionately favor assumed “authentic” locals (Hutton and Smith 1991; Gallent 2007).

These housing issues often provoke reactionary responses, which can manifest as “housing nationalism” (Lauster and von Bergmann 2024), which refers to the mobilization of nationalist rhetoric in response to housing scarcity. While not all forms of opposition to second homes or migration can be described in these terms, as many campaigners frame their efforts around housing justice and community sustainability, the concept highlights how housing can sometimes become a site for exclusionary narratives. Second homes are a part of this discourse, challenging liberal ideas around multiculturalism, transnational ties, and immigrant incorporation, while advocating for the protection of economic opportunities for “real locals,” those with a stronger perceived sense of belonging, illustrating how housing can become a catalyst for “us vs. them” attitudes (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones 2020; Lauster and von Bergmann 2024). Although this discourse often assumes second homes are owned by immigrants (Mantecón et al. 2016; Lauster and von Bergmann 2024), this is not always the case. In regions with less international migration, the focus shifts to internal migration, which becomes the primary lens through which community identity and belonging are negotiated, raising similar challenges to liberal ideas. It has been claimed that the irregular occupation of homes, and the negative impact on services, can create seasonal “ghost towns” and villages (Simms et al. 2002; Huijbens 2012). A combination of economic and social change alters the pattern of social exchange, substituting closer socio-spatial bonds with “alien” patterns of middle-class sociability (Gallent 2014).

Cornwall (U.K.) presents a strong case for studying these dynamics in a context of tourism, internal migration, nationalism and housing crisis (Figure 1). It is the last Celtic territory in the U.K. without political devolution, yet it maintains a distinct cultural identity rooted in preintegration heritage (Fleet 2008; Bona i Fonoll et al. 2015). Cornish, a Brythonic Celtic language closely related to Breton and Welsh, declined as a spoken vernacular by the late eighteenth century, but has undergone a modern revival and was officially recognized as a U.K. minority language in 2003 (Payton 2006). The revival of Cornish traditions and their public display, particularly on St. Piran’s Day, demonstrates how cultural expression functions as a form of political visibility and belonging, while the region’s central role in the industrial revolution and the advancement of mining technologies remains a source of regional pride (Fleet 2008). This cultural distinctiveness has contributed to the recognition of Cornish

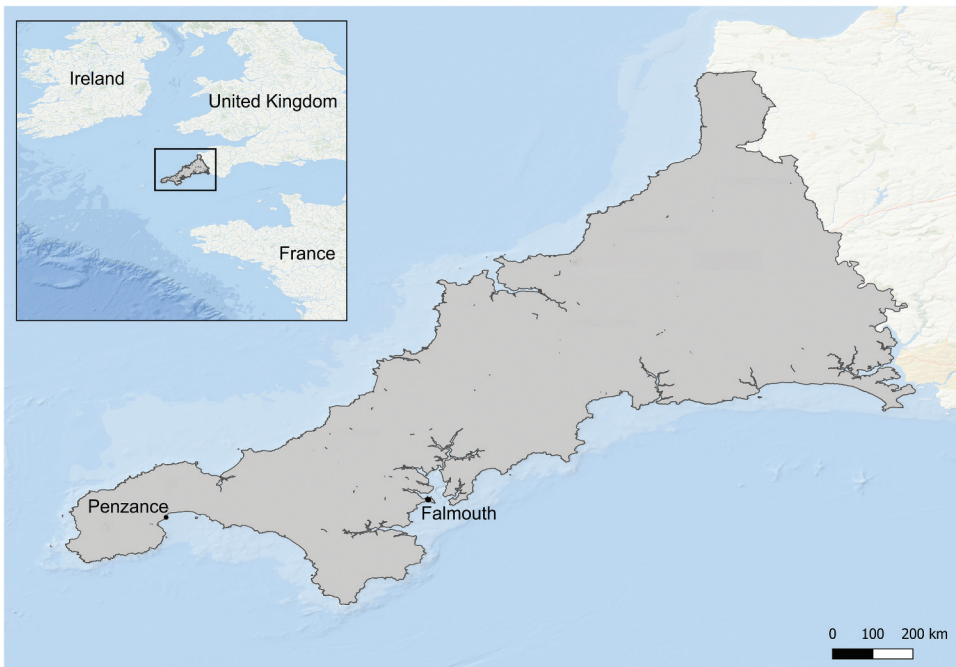


FIG 1.—The case study area of Cornwall.

people as a national minority, enabling formal identification among those who claim Cornish identity (Alexander and Williams 2014).

In the second half of the twentieth century, Cornwall has experienced a sharp postindustrial shift from agriculture and fisheries to a tourism-led, low-wage economy (Andrew 1997; Williams 2003; Bosworth and Willett 2011). Seasonal visitors now almost double the population each summer, and the South West holds the U.K.'s highest share of second homes (18 percent) (Gallent et al. 2017). Together, tourism demand and in-migration since the 1950s (Hale 2001) have produced a severe housing crisis: a median-income Cornish couple can afford only a flat in 6 of 47 postcodes, while houses are entirely out of reach (Williams and Lawlor 2022), placing the county among the poorest regions in Western Europe (Willett 2023). Economic exclusion underpins what McEwen (2002) terms “state welfare nationalism,” a distrust of Westminster’s capacity to provide services that helps explain Cornwall’s strong Brexit-Leave vote as well (Willett et al. 2019). This economic regionalism offers a platform to contest the U.K. nation-state’s coherence (Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe 2016).

Attitudes toward tourism in Cornwall reflect a broader trend of antitourist sentiment seen in other hotspot areas like Barcelona, where recent protests have focused on housing rights, with tourism contributing to rising inequality

(Milano et al. 2024). Similarly, Cornwall has seen protests advocating for affordable housing and greater social justice for local residents (Weeks 2022). However, while protests in Barcelona often address the climate costs of tourism (González-Reverté and Guix 2024), Cornwall's protests focus on the impact of second homes and tourism on local amenities. The influx of tourists is perceived to have placed pressure on essential services like the National Health Service (NHS), further deepening inequality (BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] 2021).

Building on this theoretical framing, the study examines how residents in Cornwall perceive second-home ownership and how these perceptions relate to housing access, tourism, and identity. Rather than approaching Cornish nationalism as a fixed cultural trait, it considers how sentiments of local belonging and distinction emerge in response to present-day housing pressures. The analysis focuses on patterns in attitudes across demographic and (to a lesser extent) spatial variables, investigating how housing issues intersect with expressions of identity and community. The main objectives are to identify underlying dimensions of public attitudes toward second homes, tourism, and community identity using survey data, and to examine how housing concerns relate to expressions of Cornish nationalism across different demographics. Through spatial analysis using postcodes, the study also seeks to explore how these attitudes are distributed geographically and whether they align with second-home density and local housing market conditions.

METHODS

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Data for this study were collected using a structured online questionnaire through the JISC Online Surveys platform. The survey link was initially distributed via the authors' personal Facebook and Instagram accounts between 25 August and 31 October 2023, with a request for further sharing using a snowball sampling strategy (Goodman 1961). The questionnaire subsequently reached a wider audience after being reposted by several high-traffic local social media pages and outlets. This approach combines snowball and self-selected sampling, as participants both chose to take part and shared the survey within their own networks. Although it enables wide reach and access to dispersed groups, it may introduce bias through undercoverage and self-selection (Bethlehem 2010).

The survey consisted of 13 items designed and informed by prior studies (see Supplementary Material) and focused on issues related to second homes, tourism, housing, community identity, and Cornish nationalism.

The items were as follows:

- 1) People who move in from outside of Cornwall don't get involved in the community.
- 2) Tourism helps to sustain Cornwall's culture and heritage.
- 3) There are too many second homes in my local area.
- 4) Second-home owners encourage the growth and development of my local area.
- 5) There is enough affordable housing in Cornwall year round.
- 6) To what extent do you feel represented by national government?
- 7) To what extent do you feel represented by local authorities?
- 8) A local person buying a second home in the area is better than someone from outside of Cornwall.
- 9) I feel a sense of Cornish Unity and pride in resisting second homes.
- 10) Airbnbs and holiday lettings damage our sense of community.
- 11) Airbnbs and other rental companies are more responsible than second homes for raising house prices.
- 12) Second homes should face more restrictions in being used as holiday lettings or Airbnbs.
- 13) I feel that the shared history of Cornwall brings us together.

The survey also gathered demographic information, including ethnic/regional identity, age, income, postcode location, and employment status. Primarily closed-ended questions were used to improve response efficiency and reduce cognitive load on participants (Reja et al. 2003; Krosnick 2018). Open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to elaborate on their views and provide context (Schuman and Presser 1979). Rating scales were implemented consistently across relevant items to minimize confusion, using a 10-point-scale length based on best practice recommendations (Green and Rao 1970; Lehmann and Hulbert 1972; Krosnick 2018).

A pilot questionnaire was conducted to test the clarity and suitability of the survey items, with changes made based on respondent feedback (Van Teijlingen and Hundley 2001). Adjustments included refining age brackets, reordering questions, and rewording certain items. It was also decided to collect location data at the postal-district level rather than asking for specific towns or villages, as many respondents were reluctant to provide that information.

House price data from the Land Registry, accessed through the Open Government License v3.0 (His Majesty's Land Registry 2024), provided average sale prices by postal district. The most recent prices as of October 2023 were recorded to avoid seasonal variation.

Ethical approval was granted by Bournemouth University (ID code 52,120). A total of 504 respondents, all residing in Cornwall at the time of the study, completed the questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying dimensions of attitudes toward second homes, tourism, and community identity, as measured by 13 questionnaire items. EFA is a statistical method used to identify a smaller number of hidden factors that explain the patterns of relationships among a larger set of observed variables or items. These underlying factors represent unobserved characteristics or traits that cause the measured variables to be related. In social and behavioral sciences, factors are considered latent qualities of individuals that influence how they respond to different questionnaire items (Tucker and MacCallum 1997; Watkins 2018). Factor extraction was performed using Principal Component Analysis (PCA), which reduces the observed variables into components that can be interpreted as latent factors summarizing the patterns of variation shared by the items. The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy ($KMO = 0.772$) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($\chi^2(78) = 1103.66$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that factor analysis was appropriate. To improve interpretability and allow factors to correlate, Promax (oblique) rotation with Kaiser normalization was applied, which converged after six rotations. Using the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues > 1), four factors were retained, explaining 57.9 percent of the total variance. These factors were interpreted as core attitudinal dimensions underlying the observed responses. The four identified factors had a minimum of three salient pattern coefficients each and were theoretically meaningful, and therefore considered adequate for further analysis (Table 1). The statement that Airbnbs and other rental companies are more responsible than second homes for raising house prices loaded on both Factor 1 (0.863) and Factor 3 (0.537), reflecting its relevance to both concerns about holiday letting and broader localist preferences.

Following factor extraction, group comparisons by demographic variables were conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis H test, appropriate for nonnormally distributed factor scores and ordinal/categorical data. Where assumptions of equal variances or balanced group sizes were violated, a Welch-corrected version was applied. Effect sizes (ϵ^2) were calculated using $\epsilon^2 = (H - k + 1)/(n - k)$, with values interpreted as small (≤ 0.04), moderate (0.04–0.16), or large (> 0.16) (Kelley 1935; Tomczak and Tomczak 2014). Significant results ($p < 0.05$) were followed by Dunn's post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction; 95 percent confidence intervals were reported for pairwise differences where applicable.

For spatial analysis, postcodes provided by the respondents were aggregated to modified Ordnance Survey "Code-Point with Polygons" units, adjusted to postal district level. Differences in factor scores between coastal and inland respondents were tested using the Mann-Whitney U test. Associations between average house prices and factor scores were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation.

All analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics 28 and ArcMap 10.6.

TABLE 1—TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED WITH FOUR COMPONENTS REMAINING IN THE ANALYSIS

COMPONENT	TOTAL	INITIAL EIGENVALUES		EXTRACTION SUMS OF SQUARED LOADINGS			ROTATION SUMS OF SQUARED LOADINGS
		%	CUMULATIVE	%	CUMULATIVE		
		VARIANCE	%	TOTAL	VARIANCE	%	
1	3.342	25.708	25.708	3.342	25.708	25.708	2.896
2	1.891	14.547	40.255	1.891	14.547	40.255	2.072
3	1.198	9.15	49.405	1.189	9.15	49.405	1.943
4	1.099	8.45	57.856	1.099	8.45	57.856	2.071
5	0.883	6.793	64.648				
6	0.849	6.528	71.177				
7	0.704	5.417	76.594				
8	0.682	5.25	81.843				
9	0.609	4.685	86.529				
10	0.513	3.949	90.477				
11	0.475	3.652	94.129				
12	0.4	3.076	97.205				
13	0.363	2.795	100				

RESULTS

RESPONDENT DATA

The questionnaire received a total of 504 responses. Most respondents identified as Cornish (39.4 percent), followed by English (29.7 percent), British (25.6 percent), and other (5.3 percent). This is a higher proportion of Cornish-identifying respondents than reported in the Census, indicating possible overrepresentation in the sample (ONS Census 2021). Similarly, the sample was predominantly younger, with 27.7 percent in the 18–24 age group and 22.4 percent in the 25–34 age group; other age categories ranged from 11.5 percent to 12.8 percent. The income distribution shows that 12.7 percent earned up to £16,000, 31.0 percent earned between £16,000 and £30,000, 29.0 percent earned between £30,000 and £50,000, and 27.3 percent earned over £50,000, indicating a tendency toward higher earners in the sample. Most respondents were employed full time (52.7 percent), followed by part-time workers (20.7 percent), those working part-time seasonally (6.8 percent), full-time seasonal workers (4.6 percent), and those not employed or retired (15.2 percent).

Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed a statistically significant difference in age across ethnic identity groups ($H = 32.27$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.01$). Cornish respondents tended to be younger than those identifying as British, English, or other ($p < 0.01$). A Kruskal-Wallis H test also indicated a significant difference in income across ethnic identity groups ($H = 10.55$, $df = 3$, $p < 0.05$), with British respondents having the highest reported income. There were no statistically significant differences in the distribution of job types across ethnic identity groups.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

The factor loadings for each variable on the extracted factors are presented in the Pattern Matrix (Table 2), indicating the strength and direction of the relationship between each variable and the underlying factors.

The PCA revealed four distinct factors representing clusters of items that have strong associations with each other.

Factor 1: Holiday letting and second home opposition (variance explained: 25.7 percent)

This factor captures concerns about the impact of second homes and short-term holiday rentals (for example, an Airbnb) on local communities. High

TABLE 2—PATTERN MATRIX SHOWING FACTOR LOADINGS OF 13 QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS ONTO FOUR EXTRACTED FACTORS

	QUESTION	COMPONENT				ASSIGNED FACTOR
		1	2	3	4	
Q1	People that move from outside of Cornwall don't get involved in the community.	0.218	-0.094	0.667	0.154	3
Q2	Tourism helps to sustain Cornwall's culture and heritage.	-0.206	0.513	0.059	0.183	2
Q3	There are too many second homes in my local area.	0.507	-0.02	-0.043	-0.245	1
Q4	Second-home owners encourage the growth and development of my local area.	-0.185	0.218	0.069	0.589	4
Q5	There is enough affordable housing in Cornwall all year round.	0.055	-0.043	0.194	0.763	4
Q6	To what extent do you feel represented by national government?	-0.015	0.739	-0.046	0.214	2
Q7	To what extent do you feel represented by local authorities?	0.119	0.848	-0.149	-0.081	2
Q8	A local person buying a second home in the area is better than someone from outside of Cornwall.	-0.195	-0.024	0.919	0.22	3
Q9	I feel a sense of Cornish Unity and pride in resisting second homes.	0.333	0.029	0.451	-0.257	3
Q10	Airbnb and holiday lettings damage our sense of community.	0.776	0.033	0.001	-0.11	1
Q11	Airbnb and other rental companies are more responsible than second homes for raising house prices.	0.863	0.03	-0.087	0.537	1*
Q12	Second homes should face more restrictions in being used as holiday lettings or Airbnb.	0.758	0.004	0.045	-0.069	1
Q13	I feel that the shared history of Cornwall brings us together.	0.068	0.596	0.208	-0.332	2

*Loaded on Factor 1 and Factor 3.

scorers perceive these housing types as driving up prices and undermining community cohesion and believe there are too many second homes in their area. Strong loadings indicate particular concern over Airbnbs’ role in rising housing costs and damage to sense of community alongside support for greater restriction.

Factor 2: Political representation and shared history (variance explained: 14.5 percent)

This factor includes strong loadings on feeling represented by local authorities and national government, along with a sense of unity through Cornwall’s shared history. High scorers see tourism as a tool to help sustain Cornwall’s culture and heritage.

Factor 3: Localism and in-group preference (variance explained: 9.2 percent)

This factor captures a preference for local ownership of second homes and skepticism toward outsiders’ involvement in the community. It highlights a distinction between locals and outsiders, with an emphasis on protecting community identity and preserving local cohesion.

Factor 4: Positive views on second homes (variance explained: 8.5 percent)

This factor captures more positive views on local development linked to second homes, alongside perceptions that affordable housing is sufficient. High scorers tend to see second-home owners as contributors to economic growth, while expressing fewer concerns about housing accessibility.

The component correlation matrix shows the correlations between the four extracted factors (Table 3). People who express strong opposition to holiday letting and second homes (Factor 1) tended to also express localism and in-group preference (Factor 3; $r = 0.334$). In contrast, people who expressed opposition to holiday letting and second homes (Factor 1) tended not to hold positive views on second homes (Factor 4; $r = -0.350$). Similarly, those who expressed localism and in-group preference (Factor 3) tended not to express positive views on second homes (Factor 4; $r = -0.376$).

Attitudes related to political representation and a sense of shared history (Factor 2) appeared more independent from the other dimensions. However, people who felt politically represented and connected to a shared history (Factor 2) were somewhat more likely to express positive views on second

TABLE 3—COMPONENT CORRELATION MATRIX

COMPONENT	1	2	3	4
1	1	−0.157	0.334	−0.35
2	−0.157	1	0.029	0.167
3	0.334	0.029	1	−0.367
4	−0.35	0.167	−0.376	1

homes (Factor 4; $r = 0.167$), and somewhat less likely to express opposition to them (Factor 1; $r = -0.157$), although these correlations were relatively weak (Table 3).

GROUP DIFFERENCES IN FACTOR SCORES

Factor 1: Holiday letting and second home opposition

A Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed significant differences in Factor 1 scores across ethnic/national identity groups, $H(3) = 20.95$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.046$ ($N = 394$). Post hoc comparisons indicated that Cornish-identifying respondents were significantly more opposed to holiday lettings and second homes than both British and English respondents ($p < 0.01$); no other group differences were significant. Age was also associated with Factor 1, $H(5) = 15.28$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.026$ ($N = 395$), though post hoc differences between age groups were not significant after Bonferroni correction. Income categories showed a significant difference, $H(3) = 11.50$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.023$ ($N = 371$), with respondents earning up to £16,000 reporting significantly higher opposition than those earning over £50,000 ($p < 0.05$). Employment type (full-time vs. part-time) was not significantly associated with Factor 1 scores.

Factor 2: Political representation and shared history

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed a significant difference in Factor 2 scores across age groups, $H(5) = 13.16$, $p < 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.021$ ($N = 395$), with post hoc comparisons indicating that respondents aged 25–34 reported the lowest satisfaction with political representation. Income was also associated with Factor 2 scores, $H(3) = 9.14$, $p < 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.017$ ($N = 371$); those earning up to £16,000 expressed significantly lower satisfaction than those earning over £50,000 ($p < 0.05$). No significant differences were found by ethnic identity or employment type.

Factor 3: Localism and in-group preference

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed significant differences in Factor 3 scores across ethnic/national identity groups, $H(3) = 34.36$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.08$ ($N = 394$), with Cornish-identifying respondents scoring significantly higher than all other groups ($p < 0.05$), indicating stronger preferences for local ownership and more critical views of outsiders and second-home ownership. Age was also significantly associated with Factor 3 scores, $H(5) = 78.85$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.19$ ($N = 395$). Respondents aged up to 34 scored significantly higher than older groups ($p < 0.05$), particularly those aged 45 or above, suggesting greater support for localism and in-group identity among younger individuals. Income was not a significant factor, but employment type was, $H(4) = 20.24$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.045$ ($N = 365$), with seasonal workers scoring significantly higher than those in full-time permanent roles ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 4—DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP DIFFERENCES IN FACTOR SCORES AND ALL ASSOCIATED EFFECT SIZES
RANKED BY MAGNITUDE

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLE - FACTOR ASSOCIATION	SAMPLE SIZE (N)	EPSILON SQUARED (ϵ^2)	EFFECT SIZE INTERPRETATION
Age → Factor 3	395	0.190	Large
Ethnicity → Factor 4	394	0.085	Moderate
Ethnicity → Factor 3	394	0.080	Moderate
Ethnicity → Factor 1	394	0.046	Small-to-Moderate
Employment Type → Factor 3	365	0.045	Small-to-Moderate
Age → Factor 1	395	0.026	Small
Income → Factor 1	371	0.023	Small
Age → Factor 2	395	0.021	Small
Age → Factor 4	395	0.019	Small
Income → Factor 2	371	0.017	Small

Factor 4: Positive views on second homes

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed significant differences in Factor 4 scores across ethnic/national identity groups, $H(3) = 35.99$, $p < 0.01$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.085$ ($N = 394$). British and English respondents scored significantly higher than Cornish-identifying respondents (both $p < 0.01$), indicating greater support for second-home tourism and fewer concerns about housing issues. Age was also a significant factor, $H(5) = 12.22$, $p < 0.05$, $\epsilon^2 = 0.019$ ($N = 395$), with those aged 35–44 expressing the strongest support for tourism-related economic benefits and significantly lower support observed among the youngest group ($p < 0.05$) [Table 4](#).

The Mann-Whitney U test revealed no statistically significant differences in factor scores between coastal and inland respondents' locations. Spearman's rank correlation showed significant, but weak positive correlations between average house prices and Factor 1 ($\rho = 0.103$, $p < 0.05$) and Factor 3 ($\rho = 0.156$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that respondents from postcodes with higher average house prices tended to score more strongly on these factors. No significant correlations were found between house prices and Factor 2 or Factor 4.

DISCUSSION

Our analysis identified four underlying dimensions that capture the attitudes of people in Cornwall toward issues of affordability and second-home ownership, as well as broader topics of community change and political representation.

Factor 1 captured widespread concern over the social and economic impacts of short-term holiday rentals and second homes, with strong loadings on items about Airbnbs, rising prices, loss of community, and support for tighter regulation. These concerns were more prevalent in postcodes with higher housing prices.

Such findings reflect growing global debates on how short-term rental platforms like Airbnbs treat housing as a commodity and make it easier for landlords to switch to more profitable, flexible tourist rentals (Gurran and Phibbs 2017; Nieuwland and van Melik 2018). This reduces the supply of long-term housing, drives up prices, and leads to housing insecurity and community disruption by displacing local tenants (Wachsmuth and Weisler 2018; Sigler and Wachsmuth 2020). By facilitating buy-to-let gentrification, platforms like Airbnbs externalize social costs to local communities while enabling private profit, ultimately contributing to forms of social injustice (Wachsmuth and Weisler 2018; Cocola-Gant and Gago 2021).

While much of research has focused on urban areas such as e.g. Barcelona (Garcia-López et al. 2020), Boston (Horn and Merante 2017) or Lisbon (Cocola-Gant and Gago 2021), similar dynamics are seen in rural areas in the U.K (Gallent et al. 2023). Areas like Cornwall are particularly vulnerable, with land protections limiting new development and putting additional pressure on an already scarce housing stock (Gallent 2019). It is estimated that Cornwall has over 13,000 second homes, 11,000 people on the social housing waiting list, and a median house price 8.85 times higher than the average annual income, reflecting the depth of Cornwall's housing crisis (Willett 2016; Lawlor et al. 2020; Cornwall Council 2021). Average earnings in Cornwall are 84 percent of the U.K. average, yet it ranks as the twenty-first most expensive part of Britain when housing costs are measured relative to income (Economic Observatory 2021). Post-COVID-19 shifts in tourism and rising second-home ownership are expected to further accelerate housing commodification and profit-driven tourist rentals, particularly in rural and coastal areas such as Cornwall (Zoğal et al. 2022).

Housing crisis tends to disproportionately affect younger people who often lack the financial security and property ownership of older cohorts (Green 2017). This generational inequality contributes to "generation rent" (Robbins 2019), where younger people face ongoing housing precarity and insecurity, leading them to prioritize housing access over wider economic growth narratives, particularly in areas with high numbers of first-time buyers and private renters (Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones 2001). Our findings show that concerns about the impact of second homes and short-term holiday rentals on local communities were most strongly associated with younger respondents, those with lower incomes, and those identifying as Cornish. Notably, younger people were more likely to express a Cornish national identity when discussing housing issues, indicating that economic pressures are linked to a regionalized political identity among younger respondents. Gallent and Tewdwr-Jones (2020) and Willett and Tredinnick-Rowe (2016) similarly found that younger people, facing housing insecurity due to an unfavorable housing market and nonlocal second home ownership exhibit stronger economic regionalism and national identity. Growing dissatisfaction with neoliberal capitalism and rising inequality has also been shown to be more prevalent among younger people (Kajta 2021),

who also face the greatest barriers to entering the housing market (Gallent 2019). The presence of second homes and tourist lettings exacerbates this sense of exclusion by intensifying competition for housing and enabling capital accumulation by those already on the property ladder (Hall and Müller 2004; Gallent and Hamiduddin 2021).

Factor 1 was positively correlated with Factor 3, which captures strong localist sentiments and in-group preferences, further highlighting the distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders” in relation to second homes and community belonging. While people identifying as Cornish were aligned with such “us vs. them” views, concerns about outsiders were not solely identity-based, but were also linked to the material consequences of second-home ownership. Our results show that younger adults and part-time workers (groups more likely to experience housing and employment precarity) were associated with Factor 3, with age showing the largest effect size. Again, such concerns were more prevalent in postcodes with higher housing prices.

These individual-level patterns point to broader structural concerns about the social and economic impacts of second-home ownership on rural communities. Research has shown that the irregular occupation of housing associated with second homes and holiday can reduce access to year-round services, such as schools, public transport, and healthcare (Gallent et al. 2002; Wallace et al. 2005). While tourism can bring employment opportunities, these are often seasonal, low-paid, and disconnected from longer-term economic sustainability (Wallace et al. 2005; Rye 2011). This can contribute to the displacement of local labor and enterprise and limit opportunities for younger households. The result is often demographic change, where younger residents leave and are replaced by older, more affluent, seasonal or retirement migrants. Such shifts may undermine local cohesion and participation, leading to concerns about “ghost villages” and the erosion of community life (Simms et al. 2002; Huijbens 2012; Gallent 2014).

In this context, second homes and holiday lettings are not only material symbols of inequality but also focal points in wider narratives of exclusion and resistance. Opposition to these forms of property use are a response to housing pressures, but also as a way in which regional identity and economic concerns are expressed and maintained. This resistance represents a form of economic regionalism or protectionism, where identity is mobilized in response to uneven development and diminished local control over resources (Keating 1988; Nairn 2003). Cornwall’s national consciousness has long been shaped by experiences of economic marginalization and perceived neglect by central government (Willett 2013; Tredinnick-Rowe 2015; Willett et al. 2019). Rather than being solely cultural or ethnic, it is also materially driven by low wages, housing insecurity, and tourism-related inequalities (Deacon et al. 2003; Willett 2013). As such, it constitutes a strategic or instrumental form of nationalism aimed at addressing local disadvantage (Deacon 2007; Brubaker 2017). Additionally, second-home tourism

creates unique stressors and controversies in host communities. In Sweden, for instance, German second-home owners have been shown to actively preserve what they perceive as the rural idyll, both to meet their expectations of the countryside and to protect their property investment (Müller 2002). This pursuit can lead to a disconnect from the local community, creating a parallel society where second-home owners isolate themselves from the realities and challenges faced by locals. This separation can deepen socioeconomic tensions, as their nostalgic ideals clash with the everyday experiences of the local population, turning the landscape into a curated version of rural life that doesn't reflect its true realities (Müller 2002). Those that are able to afford to pursue the idealized rural lifestyle are more often middle class, a pattern that is true both in the U.K. and in Europe (Willett 2023).

Factor 2, by contrast, captures a more positive and integrative attitude toward Cornwall's shared history, governance, and tourism's role in sustaining local culture. It is characterized by strong loadings on items related to feeling represented by local and national government, as well as agreement with the idea that tourism helps sustain Cornwall's cultural heritage. This perspective is associated with higher-income respondents, but not with ethnic identities, showing some socioeconomic differentiation in how Cornish identity and external influences are experienced. Again, younger age group (24–35) is negatively correlated, suggesting that these groups feel especially disconnected from political power or neglected by government policies.

Factor 2 showed a weak but positive correlation with Factor 4, which loaded strongly on support for second-home ownership and tourism as drivers of local infrastructure and growth. However, while Factor 4 was characterized by a generally positive view of second homes and was associated with the belief that affordable housing remains sufficient all through the year in Cornwall, it also loaded negatively on attitudes toward holiday lettings, highlighting a distinction in how different forms of tourism-related housing are perceived. These findings align with existing literature that identifies a range of perceived benefits associated with second homes. These include increased local spending and support for local services through tourism-related activities (Rye 2011). Socially, second-home owners may contribute to community resilience by extending social networks and introducing new ideas (Hall and Müller 2004). Oxley et al. (2008) and Rye (2011) also suggest that these connections can enhance bridging social capital, rather than simply replacing or eroding local ties (Putnam et al. 1993).

Similar to our findings, in Barnett's (2013) study of North Devon, respondents who viewed second homes positively were typically higher earners, less engaged in local community activities, but still expressed broadly positive sentiments about the community. They were also more likely to own additional properties. More negative views toward second homes in Devon were typically

held by long-term residents with lower income, stronger social ties in the parish, and greater engagement in local life. Barnett (2013) highlights that multiple communities coexist within and across spaces, a point particularly relevant to our findings. Factor 2, associated with favorable views of tourism and local political representation was not significantly linked to ethnic identity. This suggests that positive attitudes toward tourism can emerge regardless of local origin or ethnic identity. Factors 2 and 4 both express support for tourism and second-home ownership and are associated with higher income, suggesting that those who feel politically represented may also be more accepting of second-home ownership and tourism-related economic change. This implies a link between political inclusion and socioeconomic status, in line with existing evidence that socioeconomically privileged groups tend to have an interest in maintaining their positions and are more likely to believe that society is meritocratic and fair (Li and Hu 2021).

Together, these four factors reveal important social and spatial divisions in how second homes, tourism, and political representation are viewed in Cornwall. Factors 1 and 3 represent a localist, exclusionary stance rooted in Cornish identity, socioeconomic vulnerability, and concerns over housing and community cohesion. In contrast, Factors 2 and 4 suggest a more politically integrated and economically optimistic outlook. This perspective is more common among British/English-identifying respondents in Factor 4 but not in Factor 2. Attitudes toward second homes and tourism, therefore, extend beyond cultural identity and are shaped by exclusion from housing markets and political structures. These findings suggest a socioeconomic and ethnic continuum, rather than a strict divide between Cornish and other (primarily British/English) identities. Cornish nationalist sentiment, in this context, appears to reflect socioeconomic marginalization as much as symbolic or cultural boundaries.

Notably, age emerged as the most influential factor in the analysis, highlighting the significance of generational experience. Those in seasonal work and on lower income also expressed greater support for localist views and opposition to second homes and tourist lettings, indicating that labor market vulnerability may strengthen attachment to place and preference for more locally controlled development. Despite a substantial sample, the survey was self-selected, with higher proportions of Cornish-identifying and younger respondents than in the general population. This may have influenced the factor structure and the prominence of certain perspectives, and findings should be interpreted with this limitation in mind.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how residents of Cornwall perceive second-home ownership, housing affordability, tourism, and political representation, revealing four underlying attitudinal dimensions shaped by identity, age, and income.

Factors 1 and 3 focused on issues of housing commodification and tourism-driven inequality. Opposition to short-term rentals and second homes, especially among younger, lower-income, and Cornish-identifying respondents, appeared to be linked to rising costs, community displacement, and exclusion from housing markets. These issues are not only cultural but are deeply material, tied to regional economic precarity, insecure work, and limited political representation, echoing broader patterns of economic regionalism in contexts of (perceived) neglect.

In contrast, Factors 2 and 4 reflect more optimistic views of second homes and tourism, particularly among higher-income respondents. These groups expressed greater political inclusion and economic confidence, often perceiving tourism as beneficial for Cornwall's culture and infrastructure. The support for second homes in this case was not always linked to ethnicity but was more closely aligned with economic benefits. However, even among supporters of second homes, there is ambivalence about short-term holiday lettings, suggesting a distinction in how different forms of tourism-related housing are experienced.

Overall, the findings point to a socioeconomic gradient in attitudes toward second homes and tourism, rather than a simple binary between Cornish people and "outsiders" (mostly English/British). While cultural identity and heritage shape some of these views, they are mediated by generational and class-based inequalities, with age emerging as a particularly strong predictor.

As Cornwall continues to confront housing pressure, tourist-led development, and uneven political representation, these tensions are likely to persist or intensify. Future policy responses must therefore go beyond housing regulation and supply, addressing the deeper structural inequalities that shape who benefits and who is excluded from the ongoing commodification of place. Evidence from rural Scotland suggests that efforts to control the number of second homes and holiday lettings may be less effective than strategies that prioritize the development of affordable housing (Wallace et al. 2005). Dorling (2014) argues that fairer housing access requires a more equitable distribution of existing housing resources, which in turn depends on reducing incentives for excessive housing consumption. Current consumption patterns are supported by favorable tax policies and the availability of mortgage credit for second homes and buy-to-let properties; thus, adjustments to taxation and lending practices are necessary. Ultimately, reshaping housing outcomes in Cornwall and other rural areas in the U.K. will require addressing broader economic issues that enable wealth accumulation through land-property ownership. However, such decisions, if they are made, will likely occur far from the communities they affect and by actors whom these communities currently do not feel politically represented by.

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