

Opinion: Second homeowners as villains

By The Economist

When owning one home seems like a struggle, resenting those with two comes easily. Second-home ownership is uncommon: in 2010 around 4 percent of houses in America were second homes; 1 percent of English homes are second properties of people living in England. But they still arouse passions.

Norway and Denmark limit second-home ownership, and in 2012 the Swiss voted to restrict second homes in places where they were most common. Australia has also clamped down on foreign purchases of residential property. Latest to the barricades is St Ives, a seaside town in south-west England, where a quarter of houses are second homes or holiday lets. Last year 83 percent of St Ives's voting residents decided that newly built homes should be off-limits to non-residents. It is unclear if the vote is enforceable. It is certainly wrong-headed.

In some cases antipathy to second-home ownership simply reflects an ugly dislike of outsiders; in others, the NIMBYism of second-home owners themselves, keen to preserve the exclusiveness of their holiday patch.

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