



Deposited via The University of Sheffield.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/238522/>

Version: Published Version

Article:

Clark, T., Baker, J.O. and Bader, C.D. (2026) Mostly haunted: a socio-spatial analysis of ghost tourism in England and Wales. *Tourism Recreation Research*. ISSN: 0250-8281

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2025.2611765>

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Reuse

This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs (CC BY-NC-ND) licence. This licence only allows you to download this work and share it with others as long as you credit the authors, but you can't change the article in any way or use it commercially. More information and the full terms of the licence here: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

Mostly haunted: a socio-spatial analysis of ghost tourism in England and Wales

Tom Clark, Joseph O. Baker & Christopher D. Bader

To cite this article: Tom Clark, Joseph O. Baker & Christopher D. Bader (03 Mar 2026): Mostly haunted: a socio-spatial analysis of ghost tourism in England and Wales, Tourism Recreation Research, DOI: [10.1080/02508281.2025.2611765](https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2025.2611765)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2025.2611765>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 03 Mar 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Mostly haunted: a socio-spatial analysis of ghost tourism in England and Wales

Tom Clark ^a, Joseph O. Baker ^b and Christopher D. Bader^c

^aDepartment of Sociological Studies, The University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK; ^bDepartment of Sociology and Anthropology, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, USA; ^cInstitute for Religion, Economics and Society, Chapman University, Los Angeles, CA, USA

ABSTRACT

There is now a well-established literature on ghost tourism. However, much of this work examines aspects associated with the demand side of the industry, or the motivations and experiences of consumers. There are currently no studies that have sought to explore the supply of ghost tourism and the spatial, social, and economic relationships that exist between these places. Using Lower Tier Local Authorities (LTLAs) in England and Wales as the units of analysis, this study draws on a bespoke range of local government and Census data to examine the prevalence of ghost tourism and explore how these sites are differentiated across local contexts. We find that locations with higher levels of economic deprivation and connections to rurality are more likely to contain sustained ghost tourism. The study makes three key contributions to the literature. First, it provides a spatial analysis of the regional variations in the number of ghost hunts and ghost walks in England and Wales. Second, it identifies the spatial, social and economic circumstances associated with local variations in the provision of ghost tourism. Third, it outlines a localized and robust research method through which ghost tourism can be systematically studied.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 October 2025
Accepted 5 December 2025

KEYWORDS

Dark tourism; spectral geographies; paranormal; ghosts; spatial analysis; deprivation theory

Introduction

According to Stone and Sharpley (2008, p. 574), dark tourism is the '[t]ravel to and experience of places associated with death' (Ironsides, 2018; Isaac, 2022; Light, 2017). These are locations that are typically associated with murder, genocide, and war, or where catastrophes have taken place. They can also be sites associated with unfortunate accidents related to 'deathlore' (Montell, 1975), or more mundane criminal activity. While it might initially appear that an emphasis on darkness and death would be somewhat limiting (Becker, 1997), a great number of studies have outlined the benefits of dark tourism. Beyond the financial incentives, dark tourism can help revitalize local areas (Hanks, 2016), provide embodied educational experiences (Min et al., 2021), and even encourage collective identification (Weaver et al., 2018).

An emerging area of interest within the dark tourism literature relates to what is often termed 'ghost tourism' (Drinkwater et al., 2022; Hanks, 2016; Holloway, 2010; Houran et al., 2020; Inglis & Holmes, 2003; Pedreño-Peñalver et al., 2024). These are events and locations that aim to attract tourists by using localized narratives concerning the presence of spirits (Clark et al., 2026). Several studies have highlighted how any number of

pubs, hotels, heritage sites and city centre locations use such deathlore to attract customers and increase revenue (Hanks, 2016; Inglis & Holmes, 2003). Such locations use storytelling to promote both legends and business, engaging tourists in an interactive consumer experience (Ironsides, 2024; Skinner, 2025).

Broadly speaking, ghost tourism can be subdivided into two distinct activities: ghost walks and ghost hunts (Hanks, 2016). Ghost walks typically consist of a tour around a local area with a guide, who will narrate several ghostly tales associated with specific sites. Sometimes these tours will take place on a coach or a bus, while others might contain more interactive elements. This might involve costumed actors or some attempt to communicate with the dead, such as a séance. Ghost hunts, on the other hand, have a sustained focus on communicating with spirits, ghosts, and other entities. Usually based in a single location, hunts will typically make use of specialist equipment to detect and identify any spectral activity. These hunts constitute a modern form of spiritual practice, albeit refracted through a consumerist and technological lens (Eaton, 2020).

The growth of interest in ghost tourism is reflected in the wider psychological and sociological interest

CONTACT Tom Clark  t.clark@sheffield.ac.uk  Department of Sociological Studies, The University of Sheffield, The Wave, Whitham Road, Sheffield S10 2TH, UK

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

concerning the paranormal. While psychological research has tended to focus on the development of survey instruments (Dean et al., 2021; Thalbourne & Delin, 1993; Tobacyk, 2004), sociological research has primarily sought to determine the demographic characteristics most associated with paranormal belief and experience (Fox, 1992; Goode 2000), and the relationship between the paranormal and religion (Bader et al. 2012; Baker et al. 2016; Baker and Draper 2010).

However, one aspect of ghost tourism that has not been studied is the communal-level spatial, social, and economic arrangement of ghost tourism sites. Where do ghost hunts and ghost walks take place? What sorts of communal contexts make them more or less sustained? This includes the demographic composition of a particular region where ghost tourism is sustained, its economic activity, and its geographical proximity in relation to other locations of interest.

'Spectral geographies' provides an insightful framework for thinking about the types of places more or less likely to have a consistent supply of ghost tourism opportunities. Broadly understood, spectral geographies refer to spaces and places that are 'produced by something that is both there (present) but also not there (absent)', which includes 'the social and cultural geographies of ghosts, the paranormal, and those who enjoy or believe in the supernatural' (Holloway, 2024, p. 543). Stories and therefore related experiences of ghosts are more likely to occur in spaces that are socially liminal, either by the scars of death-related pasts (Martini et al., 2025), neglect and abandonment (Le Gallou, 2025), or by inverting the expectations of the ordinary into the 'uncanny' (Ironside & Smith, 2025). Spectral locations then serve to connect the living to the dead 'through dark narratives, supernatural legends, and participatory experiences' (Ironside, 2023, p. 586). A spectral geographies framework helps orient us toward which aspects of landscapes may be most likely to inspire and sustain dark tourism involving ghosts; however, while this literature has outlined the dynamics of *how* places become coded as haunted, systematic empirical research about *where* haunted spaces are most likely to occur and thrive remains lacking.

Accordingly, in this study, we conduct a spatial analysis of regions in England and Wales to examine the social and spatial patterns of contemporary ghost tourism. The aim is to identify and map the local characteristics of an area that are associated with sustained ghost hunts and walks. Using Lower Tier Local Authorities as the areal units of analysis, we reconcile local government and Census:2021 data with a bespoke dataset of tourist locations. In doing so, the study provides empirical evidence concerning the social and economic factors that

help to underpin the consumption of ghost tourism, while also developing a new and robust methodology for studying this growing area of dark tourism.

Literature review

Blain et al. (2007, p. 133) define ghost tourism as '[the] engagement with places and other worlds ... that range from the thrills of a ghost walk or a haunted house, to potentially transformative experiences sought through journeying to pertinent graves'. These activities often combine elements of 'commodification, rationalisation, conservation and sacredness', while offering the tourist a chance to engage with 'contested interpretations of place and experience'.

Of course, 'ghost tourism' is not a particularly recent phenomenon (Goldstein et al., 2007). Hunter (2005), for example, details how the seventeenth-century poltergeist, 'the drummer of Tedworth', attracted paying customers, while the Cock Lane ghost – also known as 'scratching fanny' – was also a popular attraction for some time after the cessation of any spectral activity (Davies et al., 2010). To these ends, Clarke (2012) makes the prescient point that the business of ghosts has always been intimately bound up with the *business* of ghosts.

As highlighted by Hanks (2016), contemporary ghost tourism tends to take two formats, and both are as much economic activities as they are spiritual ones. Whereas ghost walks typically consist of a paid guide who leads a group around historical locations while describing their haunted heritage, a ghost hunt involves a determined search for spectral activity and communication. Often taking place over the course of a night in a single location, any number of tools and techniques can be used to detect spiritual presence. This equipment is often presented as being either distinctly Victorian in design and approach, or more scientific in orientation. Borrowing heavily from spiritualist themes and ideas, Victorian-themed equipment includes planchettes, scrying mirrors, and talking boards, although it can also involve other divination activities such as the human pendulum or the use of dowsing rods. Scientific equipment, on the other hand, will typically be electronic in nature – such as the spirit box and the EMF metre – although computing software is also increasingly common (Baker & Bader 2014; Eaton, 2020). Whereas ghost walks will last for around an hour, it is not uncommon for a hunt to start in the evening and finish the next morning.

In the UK, a ghost walk may cost anywhere between £5 and £20, while a ghost hunt is likely to cost £50 and above. Hanks (2016) lists thirty cities across the UK that offer ghost walks, while any number of enterprising

individuals, groups, and businesses have sought to capitalize on what appears to be a substantial marketplace for ghost hunts. Companies such as Haunted Happenings, Haunted Places and even the Most Haunted Experience, provide regular, organized events across the country.

Many commentators have suggested that the recent resurgence in ghost tourism can be seen as a form of existential introspection. Ironside (2018, p. 95), for example, argues that ghosts are a collective avenue to confront 'complex and potentially troubling questions about life and death', while Hanks (2016, p. 425) contends that ghost walks provide an 'idealized understanding of the contemporary British nation as secular, tolerant, and, ultimately, scientific and rational'. However, Possamai (2012, p. 1) also makes the observation that the late secular society of the twenty-first century has seen a growth in what he terms 'hyper-real religion'. These are religious and spiritual motifs and ideas that are 'created out of, or in symbiosis with, popular culture, which provides inspiration for believers/consumers'. He goes on to argue that in a climate of consumerism, there is an elective affinity between religion, consumption, and capitalism (Coudert, 2023). This is particularly the case for the paranormal in general and ghosts specifically, as visual media such as ghost hunting television shows play a central role in the dissemination of ideas about ghosts, as well as the marking of which locations are socially coded as 'haunted' (Ironside, 2023).

From this perspective, the search for ghosts becomes a flexible form of quasi-spiritual syncretism that can be remodelled and restyled according to the needs of a distinctly media-driven neoliberal consumerism (Gauthier, 2019). That is to say, ghosts can be used to sell things to particular types of people. In the first instance, this is because ghost tourism is a part of the 'experience economy' – where money is exchanged for a particular type of experience-led service (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Secondly, ghost tourism takes its inspiration from any number of sources – historical, cultural, and religious – to reproduce individuated identities that are supported through the consumption of particular products.

Indeed, emerging literature explores the motivations of individuals who engage with ghost tourism. Motivating factors include seeking an authentic experience of the paranormal, having fun, exploring issues of mortality and spirituality, learning about past events and heritage or the darker side of history, and experiencing a negative emotional response in a relatively safe environment (Dancausa et al., 2023; Ironside, 2018; Ivanova & Light, 2018; Singleton, 2017; Thompson, 2008, 2010).

However, while these activities are clearly popular, participation in ghost tourism cannot be taken for granted. 'Believing in ghosts' is often seen to be unsophisticated, superstitious, and deviant (Goode, 2000), and there is a long-standing recognition that stronger social bonds tend to inhibit deviant behaviour (Hirschi & Stark, 1969). In other words, the more that an individual is integrated within society, the higher the risk there is in engaging with deviant beliefs and behaviours – and this includes the belief in ghosts and other paranormal phenomena. Rice (2003), for example, provides some evidence to suggest that where members of a society have increased levels of education, income, and status, they are less likely to seek out alternative belief systems. On the other hand, alternative beliefs are more likely for those who do not have access to these things. This is what is usually referred to as the marginalization hypothesis or deprivation theory: people who believe in the paranormal are more likely to have lower levels of education, income and status. This is because they have less to lose by believing in ideas that might otherwise be seen as deviant (Goode, 2000).

Extending this premise to religion, Stark and Bainbridge (1996) similarly argue that increased levels of interconnection within a society will decrease the attraction of alternative forms of religion and spirituality (see also Wuthnow 1978). If people feel as if they are part of a greater whole, there is little need to seek the benefits of membership elsewhere. This means that where there are increasing levels of diversity in belief, we might expect other forms of alternative beliefs to be more common. Indeed, Bainbridge (2004) highlights that conventional Christian denominations discourage participation with the supernatural and the occult. So, if a person is tightly bound to conventional beliefs, we should expect them to find paranormal beliefs risky and unattractive (Orenstein, 2002). This is precisely the pattern that has been identified with regard to religion, whereby participation in a religious organization – particularly if it is ideologically exclusivist – reduces interest, beliefs, and experiences of the paranormal. In contrast, supernatural religious beliefs and experiences that are untethered from organized religion increase paranormalism (Baker et al. 2016).

While deprivation/marginalization theory might predict a negative relationship between conventional Christian beliefs and paranormal ones, the evidence is mixed. Bader et al. (2017), for example, found negative relationships between education and belief in fortune-tellers, astrology, hauntings and Bigfoot, but no effect with respect to belief in UFOs, prophetic dreams or Atlantis. Silva and Woody (2022) also report negative effects of education on belief in extraterrestrial

visitations, hauntings, Bigfoot and Atlantis. In the context of the UK, Castro et al. (2014) also report that 37% of adults claim to have had at least one paranormal experience, with women, people in middle age, and those living in the south-west more likely to report an experience. They also provide evidence to suggest that a considerable minority of people continue to report paranormal experiences within the UK.

However, while previous research has outlined some of the individual-level social characteristics of interest in the paranormal in general, and ghosts specifically, there is currently no systematic assessment of the communal-level social and spatial dynamics that might support or inhibit the presence of sustained ghost tourism. This includes the spatial arrangement of ghost tourism and the social and economic factors that might support or inhibit it.

As an entry point into this problem, it is possible to assess the regional dynamics of ghost tourism in England and Wales using the boundaries associated with Lower Tier Local Authorities (LTLAs). LTLAs are administrative/council areas within the UK that provide local services. This includes education, social services, libraries, road maintenance, public transport, fire services, trading standards, waste disposal, and strategic planning. In 2023, there were 296 LTLAs in England and a further 22 in Wales ($n = 318$). In terms of population, the smallest authority in England is Rutland, with 41,381 people, and the largest Birmingham City, with a population of 1,142,494. Cardiff has the largest LTLA population in Wales, 317,000, and the smallest is Merthyr Tydfil, with a population of 55,000 (ONS 2022). The average LTLA contains 183,351 people, with 75% of LTLAs having an area of 551.7 sq kms or less. This is effectively an area measuring 23.5 kms squared.

There are several advantages of using these boundaries as areal units of analysis. LTLAs are designed with service delivery in mind and provide a reasonable assessment of what people might experience as 'local'. This is because they do reflect the administrative boundaries of local decision-making. Furthermore, as administrative units with 'real world' application, requirements of local government reporting mean that there is much alignment between these areas and the data provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). As a result, there are many opportunities for data synchronization and harmonization, with the LTLAs acting as a relatively stable unit of analysis for a wide range of data. The digital vector boundaries associated with LTLAs are freely available from the Office of National Statistics' 'open geography' portal, who also provide a range of economic, social and population statistics in relation to these units (ONS, 2023b).

Drawing on the digital vector boundaries of Lower Tier Local Authorities in England and Wales, this study presents spatial analysis of ghost tourism in England and Wales. Using a variety of local government and Census:2021 data as covariates, the study provides an empirical exploration of the factors that underpin the supply and consumption of ghost tourism.

Methods

Data

The data used for this study were compiled from four different sources. First, the geographical units for analysis are the digital vector boundaries that constituted the 318 Lower Tier Local Authorities in England and Wales as of November 2023. These vectors are freely available from the UK Government's Open Geography Portal (ONS 2023b). Second, the study draws upon a bespoke dataset relating to the presence or absence of a sustained ghost hunt or ghost walk within a Lower Tier Local Authority area. These data were manually compiled from the results of internet searches according to a pre-specified framework. Thirdly, data are also taken from the 'subnational indicators dataset for Sept 2023'. Released on a quarterly basis, the strategy provides official statistics on a variety of themes that are aggregated to the Lower Tier Local Authority level (ONS, 2023a). Fourthly, we also incorporate data taken from 'Census:2021' – the 23rd official census of the United Kingdom. Again, this data are aggregated to the Lower Tier Local Authority level (ONS, 2022).

The resulting dataset consisted of a range of aggregated measures that can be used to assess the demographic, social, and economic characteristics of Lower Tier Local Authorities in relation to the supply of ghost tourism.

Measures

Dependent variables

We sought to construct a measure of ghost tourism that assessed the presence (or not) of a regular and sustained ghost hunt or ghost walk within the 318 digital vector boundaries of each Lower Tier Local Authority. To make this assessment, we designed a search strategy using the Google search engine. The strategy consisted of the search terms 'ghost walk', 'ghost hunt', and 'ghost tour', alongside the full title of the LTLA (also in parentheses). Results were then scrutinized for relevance. If a ghost hunt or ghost walk was located, then further examination of relevant websites and/or associated searches was made according to whether

the event was on-going and whether it occurred on a regular, and sustained, basis. By sustained, we mean tourism that is offered on a regular basis for paying customers.

In some cases, the judgement for inclusion as sustained was straightforward. 'Dr. Crank', for example, advertises his ghost walk in Whitby, North Yorkshire, for five days a week in each week of January – while also offering private walks. On the other hand, while Muncaster Castle advertises itself as one of Britain's most haunted castles, it only offers 'one or two scientific ghost vigils each year'. But no dates were available when we performed the search, so we did not consider it to be a sustained location.

However, in other instances, inclusion/exclusion was more of a qualitative judgement. Many haunted locations were used by different paranormal groups. 'Haunted Rooms', for example, advertised the 26th of January, 19th of April, 16th of August, and the 8th of November for 'an unforgettable night at Wortley Top Forge' (all in 2024). However, the same location was also utilized by 'Haunted Adventures,' who booked the site on the 5th of April, with 'Paranormal Eye UK' also holding an event there in October 2023, and the 'Seeking Spirits' group conducting a hunt in November of the same year. 'Haunted Happenings' also has a viewing page for the location, but did not show any dates at the time of our search. There was also evidence that organized ghost hunts had been taking place at the location since 2012. As a result, we considered Wortley Forge Top to be a sustained location.

If our initial searches using the title of the LTLA failed to discover any ghost hunts or walks, we would then search for events in the individual towns and villages contained within the LTLA. For example, our initial searches in Tendring failed to produce any certifiable events. But upon searching areas within Tendring, such as 'Manningtree ghost hunts', we found ghost hunts and 'interactive ghost walks' at the specified location – in this case, the former home of Witchfinder General, Matthew Hopkins. These events were run by 'Haunting Nights', alternating between hunts and walks on a monthly basis. However, each event was repeated either on the same day (walks) or the day after (hunts). This effectively meant that there were twelve ghost hunts and twelve ghost walks in the area over a 12-month period.

Specific searches within Tendring also located irregular hunts in Clacton-on-Sea at Martello Tower F and a new hunt at the 'Never say die' public house in Jaywick. While we did not consider the events at Clacton-on-Sea or Jaywick to be regular or sustained, the events at Manningtree were bookable four months in advance from an established company, and thus we

concluded that there is regular and ongoing ghost tourism in the Tendring area.

The fragmented and often independent nature of the ghost tourism industry means that a definitive census of all the ghost-related tourism within each LTLA was beyond the scope of this study. But an accumulative 'count' was not the purpose of the measure we designed. Instead, we sought to identify those LTLAs in which regular and sustained activity could be considered to take place within the digital vector boundaries, and to distinguish these areas from those where there was no sustained activity. Once we determined if an area had a ghost hunt or walk, we did not conduct further searches.

Independent variables

The independent variables consisted of a range of data that was aggregated to the level of Lower Tier Local Authority. Spatial data were constructed using the May 2023 Local Authority Districts Boundaries shapefile, currently available from the Open Geography Portal (ONS, 2023b). This provided the digital vector boundaries for all LTLAs in England and Wales and included recent changes for Cumberland, Westmoreland and Furness, North Yorkshire, and Somerset. These changes had amalgamated some smaller local authority districts into unitary authorities, which are now serving as LTLAs. All data associated with the independent variables referenced these obsolete districts, so we used a mean substitute taken from the areas that were amalgamated. More specifically, data for Cumberland were averaged from Allerdale, Carlisle, and Copeland; Westmoreland and Furness were averaged from Barrow, Eden, and South Lakeland; North Yorkshire were averaged from Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough, and Selby; and Somerset were averaged from Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton, and South Somerset.

Evidently, analysis of spatial clustering tends to require complete coverage of a given area. Therefore, independent variables were selected by their capacity to provide data for each and every LTLA in England and Wales. As a result, there are no missing data points.

To measure digital inclusion, life satisfaction, education, and employment, we used data taken from the Subnational Indicators Dataset for Sept 2023. This is provided by the Office of National Statistics (ONS, 2023a). Developed in association with 'the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities', these indicators were designed as metrics to monitor 'Levelling Up', a key policy of the UK Government (DLUHC, 2022). Digital inclusion was assessed by a percentage measure of premises within the LTLA with access to 125-megabyte broadband or greater – what is often

referred to as gigabyte capable broadband. Life satisfaction was derived from the question ‘Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?’ This item was originally included in the Annual Population Survey (APS) and summarized in the Subnational Indicator Dataset. On a scale of 1–10, data are an average measure of satisfaction that was aggregated to LTLA level.

Education is also taken from the Subnational Indicator Dataset and is again based on data taken from the Annual Population Survey. It is a proportional measure of the population aged 16–64 within an LTLA who hold level 3+ qualifications. These are typically those qualifications that are equivalent to A Level that are taken in further education contexts. Similarly, the measure for employment is also taken from the APS via the Subnational dataset. It uses data up to March 2023 to provide a proportion of the population who are considered to be employed. Gross median weekly pay is an averaged measure for the LTLA that is derived from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings via the Subnational dataset.

Measures for gender, median age, whiteness, households with children (aged 0–19), and population density were all taken directly from Census 2021 data (ONS, 2022). Gender was measured as a proportion of the females within the LTLA, with whiteness also a percentage measure of the white population within an area. Households with children were also a percentage measure aggregated to LTLA level. Population density was provided directly by Census:2021 and is a measure of population size per kilometre. Aggregated to LTLA level, median age is taken as the midpoint where 50% of the area is above the age, and 50% below.

Following the method outlined by Johnson and Grim (2013), we also used Census:2021 to derive a Herfindahl-Hirschman Index of religious diversity. This method uses the relative percentage scores for each LTLA with respect to the nine-fold religious affiliation typology (‘no religion’, ‘Christian’, ‘Buddhist’, ‘Hindu’, ‘Jewish’, ‘Muslim’, ‘Sikh’, ‘other religion’, and ‘Not answered’) to compute a diversity index on a scale of 1–10, where high scores indicate more religious diversity. Again, drawing on Census:2021 data, the scale of the entertainment and accommodation industries within an area was taken as a percentage measure of the relative size of the industry within a particular LTLA. Higher scores indicate a greater proportional share of the entertainment/accommodation industry.

The Rural Urban Local Authority Classification was used to assess rurality. This measure is provided by the UK government as an official assessment of the urban/rural nature of an LTLA. It provides a six-point classification

based on the proportion of the population that resides in rural areas (ONS 2023c). The six categories are: Mainly Rural (80% or more of the population resides in rural areas); Largely Rural (between 50% and 79% of the population resides in rural areas); Urban with Significant Rural (between 26% and 49% of the population resides in rural areas); Urban City and Town (under 26%, but in a sparse setting); Urban with Minor Conurbation (under 26% in a non-sparse setting); Urban with Major Conurbation (under 26% in a non-sparse setting with higher density). Due to small numbers in the minor category, we collapsed Urban with Minor conurbation and Urban with Major Conurbation into a single category (Urban), which we used as the reference category.

Wales does not use the Rural Urban Local Authority Classification. Instead, Welsh LTLAs are classified as: Rural (often described as ‘broadly rural’); Valleys (comprised of the heads of valley areas which have industrial areas within rural areas); Urban (the largest settlements in Wales); and, Other (large rural areas with some highly concentrated settlements). We used the following transposition: Urban (City and Town); Valleys (Urban with significant Rural); Other (Largely Rural); Rural (Mostly Rural). Although the transposition is imperfect, it is an acceptable compromise for comparison. Descriptive statistics for the independent variables are available in Table 1.

All continuous independent variables were standardized before entry into multivariate models to facilitate comparisons of magnitude.

Analysis

To estimate the spatial relationships between LTLAs with ghost tourism, we first implemented a Join Count Analysis. Used with binary data, this statistic is designed to assess the degree of clustering within a set of spatially adjacent polygons. If a given attribute occurs in an area, then the area will be assigned 1: if it does not, then it is assigned the category of 0. Where two neighbouring areas share a common boundary, they are conceptualized as joined. We used Queen contiguity to assess spatial adjacency. This method includes both edges and corners. It is unlike Rook contiguity which only considers common edges. While the difference is often only slight when working with irregular polygons like LTLAs, Queen contiguity is usually the default method of spatial analysis. Using the R package, ‘spdep’ version .06-15 (Bivand et al., 2008), we assess the spatial arrangement of four iterations of the ghost tourism variables: ‘ghost hunts only’, ‘ghost walks only’, ‘ghost hunts OR ghost walks’, and ‘ghost hunts AND ghost walks’. To visualize the results, we used the tmap package, (version 3.3-4) available in R (Tennekes et al., 2023).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for independent variables ($n = 318$).

Item	Mean	Std.Dev	Min	Median	Max
Accommodation Industry	0.76	0.79	0.10	0.50	9.70
Broadband	69.24	19.27	1.60	73.70	97.80
Education	60.29	9.02	37.80	60.15	85.70
Employment	76.20	5.36	62.30	76.15	90.20
Entertainment Industry	2.28	0.80	1.10	2.10	5.80
Ethnic Diversity	85.62	14.77	30.80	92.20	98.20
Gender(f)	0.51	0.01	0.44	0.51	0.53
Households with Children	0.23	0.02	0.09	0.23	0.31
Life Satisfaction	7.57	0.21	7.03	7.55	8.34
Median Age	41.84	4.83	30.00	42.00	54.00
Median Pay	541.81	68.16	407.40	526.80	833.10
Population Density	1,778.21	2,511.84	26.00	694.50	15,695.00
Religious Diversity	6.95	0.68	5.51	6.72	9.11

To implement the spatial regression, we used the R package ‘spmodel’, version 0.5.0 (Dumelle et al., 2023). The package provides a range of functions to enable the partitioning of a region (in this case, England and Wales) into a finite number of sub-regions (the LTLAs) that measure the dependent variables (ghost tourism). It is then possible to use the covariates (the independent variables) to fit a model that explicitly incorporates the spatial dependence among nearby observations. We provide the fit statistics for a series of binomial regressions relating to four measures: ghost hunts only; ghost walks only; ghost hunts OR ghost walks; and ghost hunts AND ghost walks. Each scenario has two models for comparison: a linear model with no spatial covariance; and a full spatial model including all predictors.

To compare the models, we make use of the *pseudo* – R^2 statistic, *AIC*, *AICc*, *BIC*, *Log-Likelihood*, and the leave-one-out cross validation method (*LOOCV*). *Pseudo* – R^2 is a generalization of the classical R^2 provided by the spmodel package, while *AIC* and *AICc* provide an assessment of model fit. Lower scores indicate better fit, although there is a penalty for the number of parameters estimated. The *AICc* is a correction to the *AIC* that is designed for smaller sample sizes. We report both statistics to aid transparency. In leave-one-out cross validation, a single observation is removed from the analysis, with the model then being refitted with a prediction for the removed observation. This procedure provides the basis for mean-squared-prediction error, which can be compared across models. A lower score indicates better fit. Lower scores also indicate better fit with respect to *BIC*, while scores closer to 0 are preferred for *Log-Likelihood*.

Results

Join count analysis

Table 2 demonstrates that ghost tourism is prevalent across LTLAs within England and Wales. Ghost hunts

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for dependent variables ($n = 318$).

Item	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Min	Max
Ghost Hunts	187	58.81	0.59	0	1
Ghost Walks	115	36.16	0.36	0	1
Hunts OR Walks	225	70.75	0.71	0	1
Hunts AND Walks	77	24.21	0.24	0	1

appear in more LTLAs than ghost walks, but both are more likely than not. From 318 LTLAs, there are three regions with no links (the Isles of Scilly, the Isle of Wight, and the Isle of Anglesey).

Figure 2 visualizes LTLAs with ghost hunts. The Join Count statistic suggests more joins for the 0 condition (no ghost hunt) than would be expected using Queen’s contiguity ($exp0 = 137.4$, $obs0 = 159$, $p = 0.019$). However, no significant difference is reported for the presence of ghost hunts ($exp1 = 280.62$, $obs1 = 293$, $p = 0.172$). These results are confirmed by Monte Carlo simulation, which demonstrates a significant difference between the observed statistic and what might otherwise be expected for the 0 condition ($0 = 159$, $sims = 1000$, $rank = 986$, $p = 0.014$). Again, no significant difference is reported for the presence of ghost hunts ($1 = 293$, $sims = 1000$, $rank = 911.5$, $p = 0.088$). Therefore, we can conclude there is negative autocorrelation with respect to LTLAs that have ghost hunt tourism. Effectively, there is some evidence of clustering in the no ghost hunts condition (Figure 1).

Again calculating the Join statistic with Queen’s contiguity, no significant effect is reported for the presence of ghost walks in either condition ($exp0 = 330.83$, $obs0 = 320$, $p = .250$; $exp1 = 105.77$, $obs1 = 108$, $p > .250$). This is confirmed by the Monte Carlo simulation in both cases ($0 = 320$, $sims = 1000$, $rank = 363.5$, $p > .250$; $1 = 108$, $sims = 1000$, $rank = 685.5$, $p > .250$). Figure 2 visualizes the prevalence of ghost walks in England and Wales.

Figure 3 provides a visualization of LTLAs with a ghost hunt OR ghost walk. Negative autocorrelation is reported for the hunts OR walks category ($exp0 =$

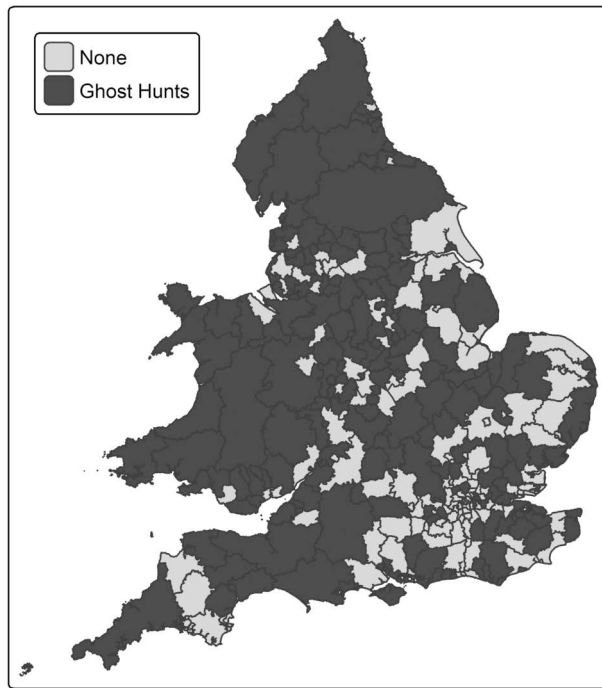


Figure 1. Ghost hunts.

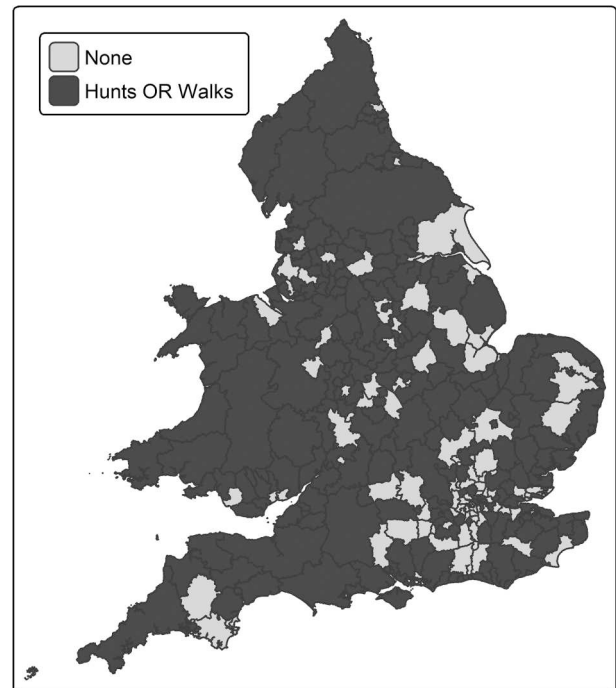


Figure 3. Ghost hunts OR ghost walks.

69.03, $obs0 = 85$, $p = 0.020$; $exp1 = 406.62$, $obs1 = 403$, $p > .250$). This result was confirmed by the Monte Carlo simulation ($0 = 85$, $sims =$, $rank = 982$, $p = 0.018$; $1 = 403$, $sims =$, $rank = 603.5$, $p > .250$).

However, this effect is not sustained in the ghost hunt AND ghost walk condition ($exp0 = 466.65$, $obs0 = 448$,

$p > .250$; $exp1 = 47.21$, $obs1 = 52$, $p = 0.232$). The lack of autocorrelation is confirmed by the Monte Carlo simulation ($0 = 448$, $sims = 1000$, $rank = 234.5$, $p > .250$; $1 = 52$, $sims = 1000$, $rank = 794$, $p = 0.206$). [Figure 4](#) visualizes the ghost hunt AND ghost walk category.

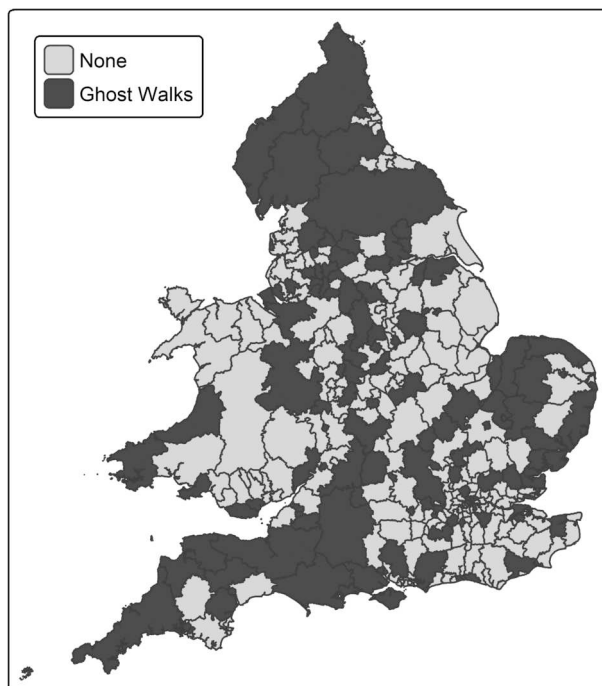


Figure 2. Ghost walks.

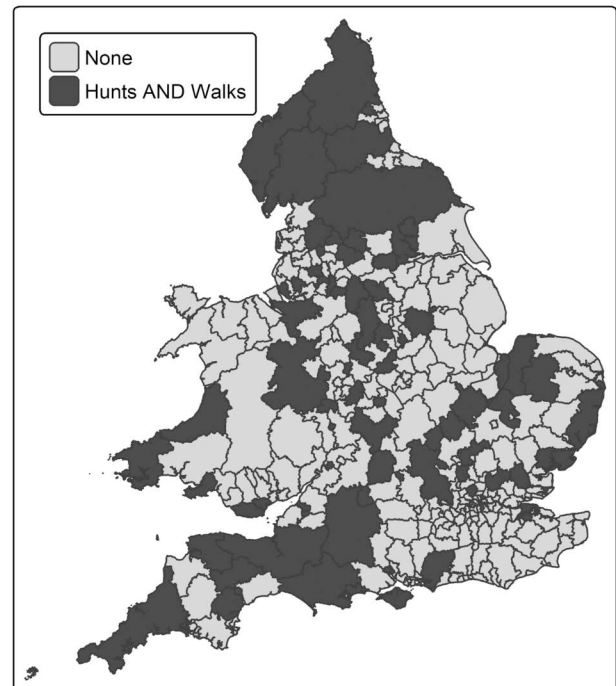


Figure 4. Ghost hunts AND ghost walks.

We can conclude, therefore, that there is some evidence of clustering for LTLAs with no ghost hunts, and that this effect is strong enough to be sustained when carried into the hunts OR walks condition. It is likely that this result can be explained, at least in part, by the relatively notable lack of ghost hunts within central city areas, and London in particular. For instance, there are 284 LTLAs outside of the London area. 178 of these areas have ghost hunts (62.7%). However, within the inner and outer areas of London – where there are 34 LTLAs – only 9 LTLAs have sustained ghost hunts (26.5%). Figure 5 provides a magnified visualization of the London LTLAs that have active ghost hunts.

Spatial analysis

Table 3 shows the fit statistics for each linear and spatial model. In terms of ghost hunts, the evidence for a spatial model is mixed. While there is an increase in $pseudo - R^2$ between the linear and spatial models, the difference in the leave-one-out cross validation (LOOCV) is negligible. However, the AIC , $AICc$, BIC and $Log-Likelihood$ scores increase with the complexity of the model. These results suggest that the spatial component is somewhat limited..

There is also little support for a spatial model with respect to ghost walks. While there is a small increase

in $pseudo - R^2$, the AIC , $AICc$, BIC , $Log - Likelihood$ and $LOOCV$ support acceptance for the linear model. Similarly, although there is a marginal rise in explanatory power in respect to the $pseudo - R^2$ score for the hunts OR walks category, the AIC , $LOOCV$ and $Log - Likelihood$ demonstrate little evidence for the spatial model over the linear one. This is also the case for hunts AND walks condition, where there is an increase in AIC , $AICc$, BIC and $Log - Likelihood$ scores between the linear and spatial models and a marginal difference between $LOOCV$. Therefore, while the $pseudo - R^2$ score might provide evidence to accept the spatial model above the linear one in the case of ghost hunts, this is not the case in the three other conditions. This means that it is likely that there are additional drivers for the differences between regions in respect to ghost tourism.

Table 4 shows the standardized coefficients for the spatial regression models and uses the aggregated sociodemographic measures as independent variables to predict the four conditions as outcomes. The results suggest some distinct, but not entirely unrelated, patterns between hunts and walks, and some more emergent themes for ghost tourism more generally.

In the first instance, ghost hunts appear to be driven by lower levels of employment ($\beta = -0.07$; $p=0.032$) and lower median pay ($\beta = -0.10$; $p=0.011$),

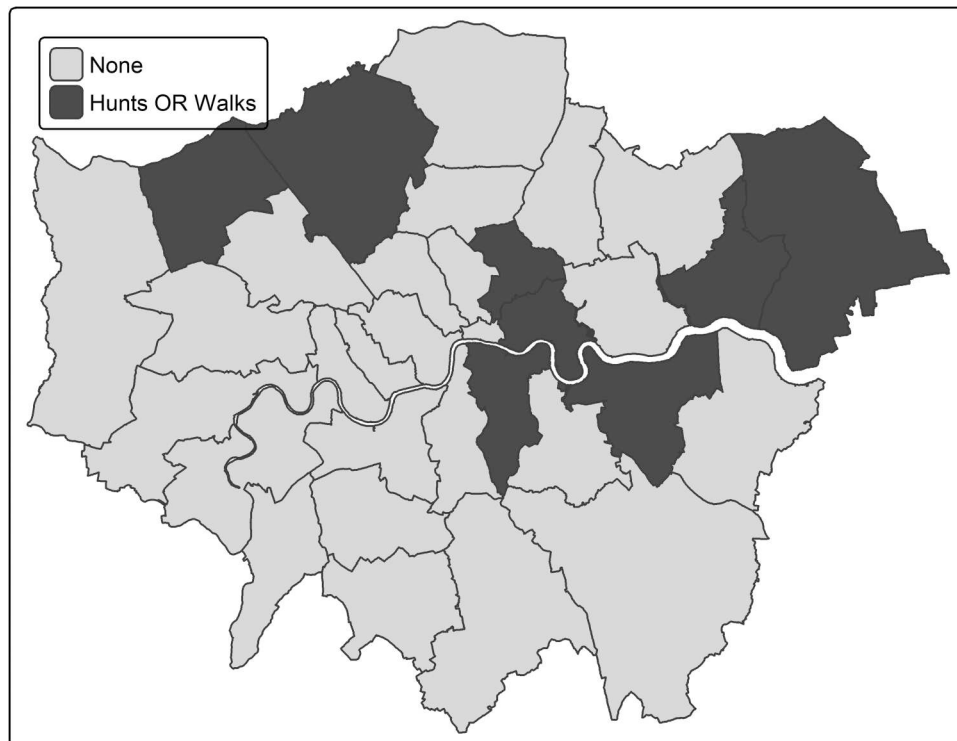


Figure 5. London LTLAs with hunts OR walks.

Table 3. Fit statistics for linear and spatial models ($n = 318$).

Tourism	Model	AIC	AICc	BIC	LogLik	PseudoR ²	LOOCV
Ghost Hunts	Linear	497.32	497.33	501.08	−247.66	0.14	0.24
	Spatial	514.99	515.07	526.28	−254.49	0.16	0.24
Ghost Walks	Linear	482.47	482.49	486.24	−240.24	0.14	0.23
	Spatial	511.87	511.95	523.16	−252.94	0.14	0.23
Hunts OR Ghosts	Linear	449.77	449.78	453.53	−223.88	0.14	0.20
	Spatial	475.98	476.06	487.27	−234.99	0.16	0.20
Hunts AND Walks	Linear	420.75	420.76	424.51	−209.37	0.12	0.18
	Spatial	458.14	458.21	469.42	−226.07	0.11	0.18

Table 4. Standardized coefficients for the spatial regression models ($n = 318$).

Item	Hunts	Walks	Hunts OR Walks	Hunts AND Walks
Intercept	0.46[0.07]***	0.32[0.07]***	0.58[0.07]***	0.19[0.06]***
Broadband	0.02[0.04]	−0.02[0.04]	0.03[0.04]	−0.03[0.04]
Education	0.03[0.04]	0.03[0.04]	0.02[0.04]	0.05[0.04]
Employment	−0.07[0.03]*	−0.01[0.03]	−0.08[0.03]*	0[0.03]
Entertainment Industry	−0.04[0.05]	0.17[0.05]***	0.08[0.04]	0.05[0.04]
Ethnic Diversity	0.12[0.07]	−0.02[0.07]	0.10[0.06]	0[0.06]
Gender(f)	−0.04[0.04]	0.02[0.04]	−0.04[0.03]	0.02[0.03]
Accommodation Industry	0[0.03]	−0.02[0.04]	−0.04[0.03]	0.01[0.04]
Households with Children	0.03[0.06]	−0.07[0.06]	0[0.06]	−0.03[0.06]
Life Satisfaction	0.02[0.03]	0.05[0.03]	0.03[0.03]	0.04[0.03]
Median Age	−0.02[0.08]	−0.20[0.08]*	−0.04[0.07]	−0.19[0.07]*
Median Pay	−0.10[0.04]*	−0.14[0.04]***	−0.11[0.04]***	−0.13[0.04]***
Population Density	0.08[0.07]	−0.14[0.07]*	0.02[0.07]	−0.07[0.06]
Religious Diversity	0.03[0.03]	0.04[0.03]	0.06[0.03]*	0.02[0.03]
Rural: Urban (reference)				
Rural: Mostly Rural	0.17[0.14]	0.12[0.13]	0.19[0.13]	0.11[0.12]
Rural: Largely Rural	0.28[0.12]*	0.17[0.12]	0.20[0.11]	0.26[0.11]*
Rural: Urban with some rural	0.30[0.11]*	−0.03[0.1]	0.23[0.1]*	0.03[0.1]
Rural: City and Towns	0.07[0.09]	0.02[0.09]	0.08[0.09]	0[0.08]

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

with largely rural ($\beta = 0.28$; $p < 0.05$) and urban with some rural areas ($\beta = 0.30$; $p < 0.01$) also demonstrating significance above urban areas. Higher levels of whiteness (ethnic diversity) are also marginal ($\beta = 0.12$; $p = 0.072$).

On the other hand, ghost walks have significant associations with higher levels of entertainment industry ($\beta = 0.17$; $p < .001$), lower median age ($\beta = -0.20$; $p < 0.01$), lower median pay ($\beta = -0.14$; $p < .001$), and lower population density ($\beta = -0.14$; $p < 0.05$).

The primary drivers for the presence of any form of any sustained ghost tourism (ghost hunts OR ghost walks) are lower levels of employment ($\beta = -0.08$; $p < 0.05$), lower levels of median pay ($\beta = -0.11$; $p < 0.01$), and higher levels of religious diversity ($\beta = 0.06$; $p < 0.05$). Urban with some rural is also significant over the reference category ($\beta = 0.23$; $p < 0.05$), while 'largely rural' ($\beta = 0.20$; $p = 0.070$) and higher levels of entertainment are marginal ($\beta = 0.08$; $p = 0.075$).

For areas with both sustained hunts AND walks, lower median age ($\beta = -0.19$; $p < 0.05$) and lower median pay ($\beta = -0.13$; $p < 0.001$) are significant, with largely rural areas also achieving significance over the reference category ($\beta = 0.26$; $p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

This study provides the first exploration of the spatial and communal characteristics associated with ghost tourism in England and Wales. Using the digital vector boundaries of Lower Tier Local Authorities as the unit of analysis, we found evidence of negative spatial autocorrelation for ghost hunts. This means that there is more spatial clustering where ghost tourism is not readily available. This effect is strong enough to continue to also report an effect for the hunt OR walk condition, but it does not extend to the hunt AND walk condition. It is likely that this is due to the comparative absence of ghost hunts that are situated within suburban city LTLAs, and particularly those in London. However, the lack of autocorrelation elsewhere suggests that the spatial distribution of ghost tourism across the local authority areas of England and Wales is relatively even. That is to say that the evidence for localized clustering of ghost tourism overall is limited. However, this is largely because ghost tourism is so prevalent, with over 70% of LTLAs having at least one sort of sustained activity within its borders; ghost hunts occur in nearly 60% of areas, and ghost walks in over 35%.

The primary drivers for the presence of sustained ghost tourism (ghost hunts OR ghost walks) are lower levels of employment, lower levels of median pay, and higher levels of religious diversity. While any type of rurality is more predictive of ghost tourism than urban locations, areas that combine both urban and rural features are the most likely to sustain ghost tourism. Higher levels of entertainment as a proportion of local industry is also approaching significance, as are higher levels of whiteness. For areas with both sustained hunts AND walks, lower median pay, and lower median age are significant, with higher levels of accommodation as a proportion of industry also of marginal interest. Higher entertainment industry, lower median age, lower median pay, and lower population density are significant predictors of ghost walks, while lower pay, lower employment, largely rural and urban with some rural are predictive of ghost hunts only.

Of course, the underlying assumption of any binomial regression is typically associative rather than causal. This means that characteristics that demonstrate a significant relationship with the dependent variables are instructive rather than directive. We also do not consider those areas that manage to sustain more than one ghost hunt or ghost walk, and we do not attempt to assess other confounding variables associated with these activities. This might, for example, include assessing levels of paranormal belief that exist within particular LTLAs.

However, the study is exhaustive of all LTLAs within England and Wales and, from that perspective, the results can be considered authoritative with respect to the variables of interest. Indeed, the sources of data we have drawn upon to construct the independent variables are both robust and timely, and together they offer a spatially granular description of the social and communal characteristics of local areas within England and Wales.

The question, then, is how to account for the findings. In respect to ghost hunts, there is evidence at the communal level supporting the marginalization hypothesis (Rice, 2003). There is a communal deprivation effect, whereby ghost hunts are more likely to be sustained in areas with lower levels of income and employment. Similarly, there is evidence to support the notion of spatial liminality, with mixed urban/rural areas being more predictive of ghost hunts than those that are mostly urban or those that are mostly rural. It would seem that while ghosts need people to sustain them, too many people, or not enough, may inhibit any tourism centred on them.

These communal patterns of ghost tourism are in line with theoretical perspectives highlighting how ghosts

violate several social boundaries: past/present, presence/absence, human/inhuman, and the material/etereal (Maddern & Adey, 2008). This is something that is often tacitly supported by the notion of a 'haunted' place (see Avery 2008; Hudson 2017). As Van Wagenen (2004, pp. 288–289) explains: 'Investigating a haunting is a matter of following the figure of the ghost, between the past and present, the excluded and included and the visible and invisible to that dense site where history and subjectivity make social life'. The marginality associated with economic stagnation (lower income and lower employment) also supports the idea that degrees of *social* liminality are important in the hunt for ghosts. These areas are not marked by total economic exclusion, but are also seemingly unable to offer full participation with late-modern economies that might otherwise be associated with highly urbanized, upscale life. So, a potential emphasis on paranormal and spiritual matters provides an economically viable, and meaningful, connection with something greater.

Evidently, this is not to suggest that 'haunted houses' need to be situated within immediately liminal environments, as conventional environments can be subverted into 'uncanny' locations through narrative framing (Ironside & Smith, 2025). Indeed, it appears that regular exposure to the *contrast* between urban and rural spaces within the local environment helps to sustain potential interest in the presence of ghosts. The same is also true of economic inclusion/exclusion. On the other hand, too much exposure to the material realities associated with urban environments or the predominantly rural appears to suppress that collective interest.

Elsewhere, ghost walks appear less related to the urban/rural distinction. Instead, these are locations that are again associated with lower pay and not densely populated, but also remain attractive to younger people. It is likely that this is descriptive of the 'entertainment' driven economies associated with coastal locations and (regional) town and city centres, where ghost walks are part of a more or less vibrant nightlife.

So, there is evidence in this study to suggest that ghost tourism is composed of two relatively distinct forms of activity, which have their own facilitative environmental conditions. This contrast between hunts and walks might be indicative of the symbiotic relationships that exist between the paranormal and the existential on one hand, and the paranormal and the commercial on the other (Gauthier, 2019). The popularity of paranormal tourism in the UK draws on the increasing and overlapping trends of secularization, individualization, mediatization, and the experience economy (Clark et al., 2026).

There is widespread recognition that organized religion is in a state of decline, and religion more broadly is in a state of transition, with some authors noting a subjective turn that gives primacy to inner experience rather than external obligation (Heelas, 1998). At the same time, other commentators have noted how paranormal beliefs – those rejected by both organized religion and science – are also growing more commonplace within Western contexts (Bader et al., 2017; Baker & Bader, 2014). The receding of organized religion has opened up increased amounts of cultural (and physical) space for paranormal beliefs and experiences (Clark et al., 2025). Far from disenchanting the world, secularization has opened up the space for paranormalists, such as ghost investigators, to experience a connection with the unknown while maintaining, or at least expressing, skepticism; a space that is not quite religion, and not quite science (cf. Hanks, 2025).

Freed from the conformity of religious attendance and observance, the issue then becomes how to find, experience, and interpret the demands of any existential identity, whether it is spiritual or paranormal. This apparent demand for subjectivized, spiritual, and paranormal experience has been met by any number of specific, commodified marketplaces where existential interests collide with commercial ones. The supply of ghost tourism that has emerged within the context of England and Wales is part of this commodified landscape, with both ghost hunts and ghost walks indicative of the continuing affinity that exists between religion, neoliberalism, and popular culture (Possamai, 2017).

In this respect, the topography of England and Wales is well suited to such an affinity. Both are littered with long, complex and relatively well-documented histories, as well as any number of ghostly tales and traditions associated with particular locations (Underwood, 1993). As spectral geography perspectives have rightly emphasized, liminality and histories of death are key features of the distribution of a haunted landscape (Ironside, 2023). Further, the mediatization of haunted locations is an integral feature of which places become dark tourism destinations, particularly with regard to ghosts (Clark et al., 2026; Smith & Ironside, 2022). The comparatively small size of England and Wales, combined with the relatively large number of people living there, also means that these locations are within reach of audiences that are large enough to ensure that such activities are economically viable, particularly where the communal conditions outlined in this study are met.

Of course, the extent to which these particular findings are reflected elsewhere in the world remains

to be seen. However, this study offers a robust and replicable methodology through which the aggregated determinants of ghost tourism might be articulated and compared. By incorporating aspects of official data with secondary sources, and directing these aggregates toward a distinctly spatial analysis, these findings represent a significant extension to the literature on spectral geographies and ghost tourism. With spectral tourism expanding and thriving in post-modernity, understanding the social and spatial conditions that facilitate or hinder experiential dark tourism stands as an important area for further research and interpretation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

A fully reproducible version of the paper including the code used to produce the analysis and accompanying data can be downloaded from the Open Science Framework: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/3MJXY>.

Notes on contributors

Tom Clark is a Lecturer in Research Methods at the University of Sheffield. He is interested in all aspects of research methods and methodology and is the first-named author of the textbook 'Bryman's Social Research Methods'. His other interests have variously focused on the sociology of evil, the sociology of higher education and soccer fandom.

Joseph O. Baker is a Professor in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at East Tennessee State University, and a former editor of *Sociology of Religion*. His current research interests include Christian nationalism, xenophobia and deviant belief systems. He is the author of *American Secularism* (NYU Press), *Paranormal America* (NYU Press), *Deviance Management* (University of California Press) and *Fear Itself* (NYU Press).

Christopher D. Bader is a Professor of Sociology at Chapman University and Campbell Professor of Behavioural Sciences. He is affiliated with the Institute for Religion, Economics, and Society (IRES) and is co-director of the annual Chapman University Survey of American Fears. He is an associate director of the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA), funded by the Templeton Foundation and Lilly Foundation. Christopher is the author of five books and over 50 articles and chapters in the fields of sociology, deviance, criminology, the sociology of religion and education.

ORCID

Tom Clark  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6871-629X>

Joseph O. Baker  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8378-1679>

References

- Avery, A. F. (2008). *Ghostly matters: Haunting and the sociological imagination*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Bader, C. D., Baker, J. O., & Mencken, F. C. (2017). *Paranormal America: Ghost encounters, UFO sightings, bigfoot hunts, and other curiosities in religion and culture*. (2nd ed) New York University Press.
- Bader, C. D., Baker, J. O., & Molle, A. (2012). Countervailing forces: Religiosity and paranormal belief in Italy. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 51(4), 705–720. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2012.01674.x>
- Bainbridge, W. S. (2004). After the new age. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 43(3), 381–394. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2004.00241.x>
- Baker, J. O., & Bader, C. D. (2014). A social anthropology of ghosts in twenty-first-century America. *Social Compass*, 61(4), 569–593. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768614547337>
- Baker, J. O., Bader, C. D., & Mencken, F. C. (2016). A bounded affinity theory of religion and the paranormal. *Sociology of Religion*, 77(4), 334–358. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srw040>
- Baker, J. O., & Draper, S. (2010). Diverse supernatural portfolios: Certitude, exclusivity, and the curvilinear relationship between religiosity and paranormal beliefs. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(3), 413–424. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2010.01519.x>
- Becker, E. (1997). *The denial of death*. Simon and Schuster.
- Bivand, R., Altman, M., Anselin, L., Assunção, R., Bera, A., Berke, O., Blanchet, F. G., Carvalho, M., Christensen, B., Chun, Y., Dormann, C., Dray, S., Dunnington, D., Gómez-Rubio, V., Koley, M., Kossowski, T., Krainski, E., Legendre, P., Lewin-Koh, N., ... Yu, D. (2008). Spdep: Spatial dependence: Weighting schemes. *Statistics and Models. R Package Version 0.4-17*.
- Blain, J., Hallam, S., & Cornish, H. (2007). Sacred landscapes, esoteric journeys: Challenges of tourism, anthropology and spirituality in European and British contexts. *Association of Social Anthropologists Annual Conference*. London: Routledge.
- Castro, M., Burrows, R., & Wooffitt, R. (2014). The paranormal is (still) normal: The sociological implications of a survey of paranormal experiences in Great Britain. *Sociological Research Online*, 19(3), 30–44. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.3355>
- Clark, T., Bader, C. D., & Baker, J. O. (2026). *Paranormal Britain: Belief in the uncanny in England, Scotland, and Wales*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Clark, T., Baker, J. O., & Bader, C. D. (2025). Marginalized, secularized, and popularized? The prevalence and patterns of paranormal belief in the United Kingdom. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 66(3), 612–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2025.2461298>
- Clarke, R. (2012). *A natural history of ghosts: 500 years of hunting for proof*. Penguin UK.
- Coudert, A. P. (2023). The religion of consumer capitalism and the construction of corporate sacred spaces. *Religions*, 14(6), 750. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060750>
- Dancausa, G., Hernández, R. D., & Pérez, L. M. (2023). Motivations and constraints for the ghost tourism: A case study in Spain. *Leisure Sciences*, 45(2), 156–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2020.1805655>
- Davies, O. (Ed.) (2010). *Ghosts: A social history*. Pickering and Chatto.
- Dean, C., Akhtar, S., Gale, T., Irvine, K., Wiseman, R., & Laws, K. (2021). Development of the paranormal and supernatural beliefs scale using classical and modern test theory. *BMC Psychology*, 9(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-021-00600-y>
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). (2022). *Levelling up the United Kingdom*. HM Government (HMG).
- Drinkwater, K., Massullo, B., Dagnall, N., Laythe, B., Boone, J., & Houran, J. (2022). Understanding consumer enchantment via paranormal tourism: Part I—conceptual review. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 63(2), 195–215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965520967920>
- Dumelle, M., Higham, M., & Ver Hoef, J. M. (2023). Spmodel: Spatial statistical modeling and prediction in R. *PLoS One*, 18(3), e0282524. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0282524>
- Eaton, M. A. (2020). *Sensing spirits: Paranormal investigation and the social construction of ghosts*. Routledge.
- Fox, J. (1992). The structure, stability, and social antecedents of reported paranormal experiences. *Sociological Analysis*, 53(4), 417–431. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3711436>
- Gauthier, F. (2019). *Religion, modernity, globalisation: Nation-state to market*. Routledge.
- Goldstein, D., Grider, S., & Thomas, J. B. (2007). *Haunting experiences: Ghosts in contemporary folklore*. University Press of Colorado.
- Goode, E. (2000). *Paranormal beliefs: A sociological introduction*. Waveland Press.
- Hanks, M. (2016). *Haunted heritage: The cultural politics of ghost tourism, populism, and the past*. Routledge.
- Hanks, M. (2025). *Doubting ghosts: Paranormal investigation and the paradoxes of belief*. Routledge.
- Heelas, P. (ed.) (1998). *Religion, modernity and postmodernity*. Blackwell.
- Hirschi, T., & Stark, R. (1969). Hellfire and delinquency. *Social Problems*, 17(2), 202–213. <https://doi.org/10.2307/799866>
- Holloway, J. (2010). Legend-Tripping in spooky spaces: Ghost tourism and infrastructures of enchantment. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28(4), 618–637. <https://doi.org/10.1068/d9909>
- Holloway, J. (2024). Spectral geographies. In K. Domrbofski, M. Goodwin, J. Qian, A. Williams, & P. Cloke (Eds.), *Introducing human geographies* (pp. 541–557). Routledge.
- Houran, J., Hill, S. A., Haynes, E. D., & Bielski, U. A. (2020). Paranormal tourism: Market study of a novel and interactive approach to space activation and monetization. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 61(3), 287–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965520909094>
- Hudson, M. (2017). *Ghosts, landscapes and social memory*. Routledge.
- Hunter, M. (2005). New light on the 'Drummer of tedworth': Conflicting narratives of witchcraft in restoration England*. *Historical Research*, 78(201), 311–353. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2281.2005.00226.x>
- Inglis, D., & Holmes, M. (2003). Highland and other haunts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(1), 50–63. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(02\)00031-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(02)00031-2)
- Ironside, R. (2018). *The allure of dark tourism: Legend tripping and ghost seeking in dark places*. Temple University Press.

- Ironside, R. (2023). Death, ghosts, and spiritual tourism: Conceptualizing a dark spiritual experience spectrum for the paranormal market. *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, 37(4), 586–601. <https://doi.org/10.31275/20233227>
- Ironside, R. (2024). Ghost hunting events and storytelling. *Event Management*, 28(4), 649–654. <https://doi.org/10.3727/152599524X17077053867629>
- Ironside, R., & Smith, F. (2025). Destabilising the home: Place making, dark tourism and the spectral. *Tourism Geographies*, 27(1), 68–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2024.2412547>
- Isaac, R. K. (2022). *Dark tourism studies*. Routledge.
- Ivanova, P., & Light, D. (2018). 'It's not that we like death or anything': Exploring the motivations and experiences of visitors to a lighter dark tourism attraction. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 13(4), 356–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2017.1371181>
- Johnson, T. M., & Grim, B. J. (2013). *The world's religions in figures: An introduction to international religious demography*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Le Gallou, A. (2025). Ruins and the politics of disappearance: Racial and social invisibilities in Detroit's abandonment tourism. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2025.2564642>
- Light, D. (2017). Progress in dark tourism and thanatourism research: An uneasy relationship with heritage tourism. *Tourism Management*, 61, 275–301. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.01.011>
- Maddern, J. F., & Adey, P. (2008). *Spectro-geographies* (3; Vol. 15, pp. 291–295). Sage Publications.
- Martini, A., Sharma, N., & Timothy, D. J. (2025). Dark tourism and spectral geographies: Ghosts, memories, and the rupturing of absence and presence. *Tourism Geographies*, 27(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2025.2502997>
- Min, J., Yang, K., & Thapa-Magar, A. (2021). Dark tourism segmentation by tourists' motivations for visiting earthquake sites in Nepal: Implications for dark tourism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 26(8), 866–878. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2021.1925315>
- Montell, W. L. (1975). *Ghosts along the Cumberland: Deathlore in the Kentucky foothills*. Univ. of Tennessee Press.
- Office of National Statistics. (2022). *Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021, unrounded data*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwales/census2021unroundeddata>
- Office of National Statistics (ONS). (2023a). *Subnational indicators dataset for Sept 2023*. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/subnationalindicatorsdataset>
- Office of National Statistics (ONS). (2023b). *Local authority districts (December 2023) Boundaries UK BFC*. <https://geoportal.statistics.gov.uk/datasets/local-authority-districts-may-2023-boundaries-uk-bgc/about>
- Office of National Statistics (ONS) (2023c). 2011 rural urban classification lookup tables for all geographies. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/2011-rural-urban-classification-lookup-tables-for-all-geographies>
- Orenstein, A. (2002). Religion and paranormal belief. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41(2), 301–311. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00118>
- Pedreño-Peñalver, C., Huertas-Valdivia, I., & Orea-Giner, A. (2024). An exploratory study of the future paranormal tourist experience on ghost tours. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 10(3), 524–538. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JTF-04-2023-0097>
- Pine, B. J., & Gilmore, J. H. (2011). *The experience economy*. Harvard Business Press.
- Possamai, A. (2012). *Handbook of hyper-real religions* (Vol. 5). Brill.
- Possamai, A. (2017). *The i-zation of society, religion, and neoliberal post-secularism*. Springer.
- Rice, T. (2003). Believe it or not: Religious and other paranormal beliefs in the United States. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(1), 95–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00163>
- Silva, T., & Woody, A. (2022). Supernatural sociology: Americans' beliefs by race/ethnicity, gender, and education. *Socius*, 8, Jan – Dec.
- Singleton, A. (2017). The summer of the spirits: Spiritual tourism to America's foremost village of spirit mediums. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 67, 48–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.08.002>
- Skinner, J. (2025). Haunted by Horace? Twilight tours, guides and the revival of the gothic. *Tourism Geographies*, 27(1), 120–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2025.2462780>
- Smith, F., & Ironside, R. (2022). The uncanny place: A critical appraisal of popular paranormal TV shows. *Journal of Popular Television*, 10(1), 95–108. https://doi.org/10.1386/jptv_00072_1
- Stark, R. & Bainbridge, W. S. (1996). *A theory of religion*. Rutgers University Press.
- Stone, P., & Sharpley, R. (2008). Consuming dark tourism: A thanatological perspective. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(2), 574–595. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2008.02.003>
- Tennekes, M., Nowosad, J., Gombin, J., Jeworutzki, S., Russell, K., Zijedman, R., Clouse, J., Lovelace, R., & Muenchow, J. (2023). Package "tmap". The Comprehensive R Archive Network.
- Thalbourne, M., & Delin, P. (1993). A new instrument for measuring the sheep-goat variable: Its psychometric properties and factor structure. *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research*, 59(832), 172–186.
- Thompson, R. C. (2008). *Entertaining ghosts: Gettysburg ghost tours and the performance of belief*. University of Maryland.
- Thompson, R. C. (2010). "Am I going to see a ghost tonight?": Gettysburg ghost tours and the performance of belief. *The Journal of American Culture*, 33(2), 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-734X.2010.00735.x>
- Tobacyk, J. (2004). A revised paranormal belief scale. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 23(1), 94–98. <https://doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2004.23.1.94>
- Underwood, P. (1993). *This haunted isle*. Barnes & Noble.
- Van Wagenen, A. (2004). An epistemology of haunting: A review essay. *Critical Sociology*, 30(2), 287–298. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916304323072116>
- Weaver, D., Tang, C., Shi, F., Huang, M.-F., Burns, K., & Sheng, A. (2018). Dark tourism, emotions, and postexperience visitor effects in a sensitive geopolitical context: A Chinese case study. *Journal of Travel Research*, 57(6), 824–838. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287517720119>
- Wuthnow, R. (1978). *Experimentation in American religion*. University of California Press.