

1.13x Income Gap in Charleston Tri-County — ALEX Intelligence 2026

1.13x Income Gap: Charleston's Hidden Divide

Charleston's richest and poorest counties differ by 13% — ALEX Intelligence, 2026

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THE DATA

1.13x

Ratio of Highest to Lowest County Median Household Income in the Market (2024)

This ratio measures the disparity between Charleston County and Dorchester County, the two most distinct in the tri-county region.

The 1.13x gap is not just a number — it reflects a structural divide in economic access, infrastructure investment, and housing affordability. Charleston County's higher income levels correlate with greater demand for premium housing, while Dorchester County faces pressure from income stagnation despite rising property values. This internal imbalance shapes where development occurs and where public services are prioritized.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2024 • ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-10-charleston-sc-within-county-median-income>



01

Wealth Concentrates in the Core

Charleston County's \$88,494 median income — the highest in the tri-county — attracts capital, talent, and development. This concentration fuels a feedback loop: higher income attracts more investment, which increases property values and further raises the cost of living. As a result, affordability is increasingly strained in the core, pushing lower-income residents to the periphery — Dorchester County — where the median is \$78,198.



02

Dorchester's Growth Paradox

Dorchester County, with the lowest median income, is also seeing rising home values and development interest. Yet, without commensurate income growth, this trend risks deepening inequality. The 1.13x gap signals that growth is not shared — it's asymmetric. Without targeted policies to link wage growth with housing access, Dorchester may become a low-income enclave with high property prices, creating a new form of exclusion.

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