

1.5-Point Unemployment Gap in the Midlands — ALEX Intelligence 2026

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Fairfield vs. Saluda: A Hidden Divide in Regional Stability

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THE DATA

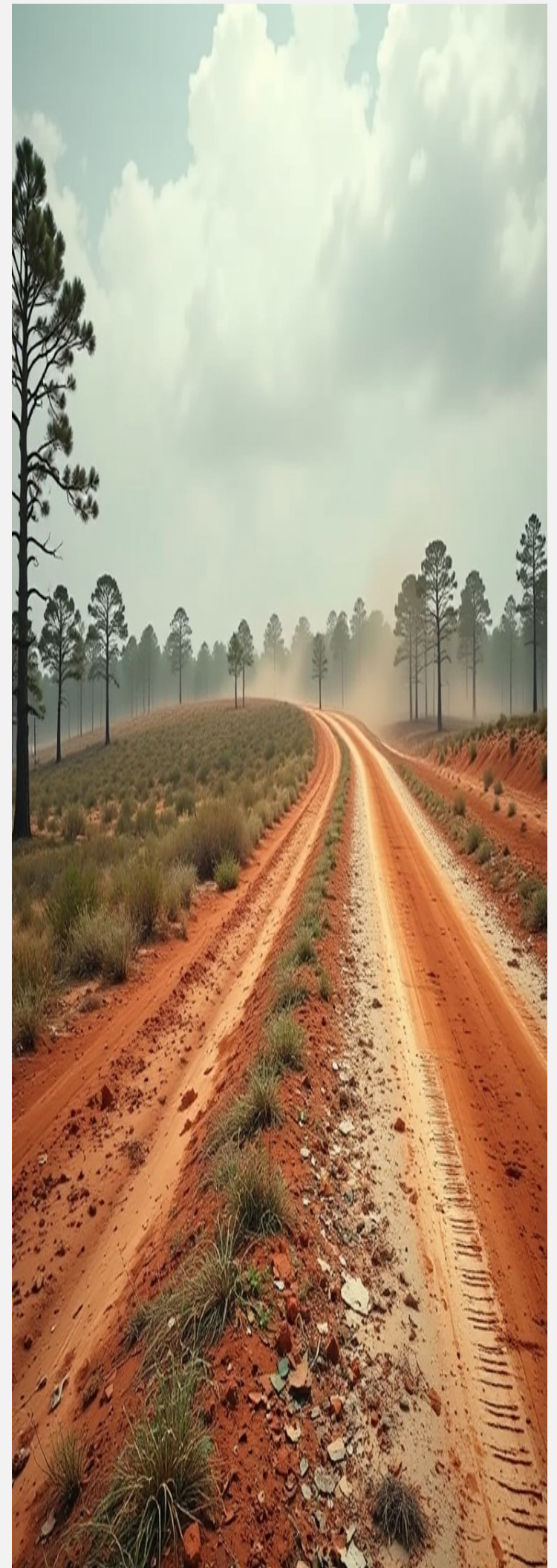
1.5

Spread in County Unemployment Rate Across the Market, in Points (July 2026)

The gap between Fairfield County's 4.9% unemployment rate and Saluda County's 3.4% reveals a stark internal divide within the Midlands.

This 1.5-point spread is not a statistical rounding error—it reflects real, structural disparities in economic opportunity across the region. While Richland and Lexington counties show relative stability, the gap underscores that 'regional resilience' is not uniformly distributed. The data suggests that investment and policy focus must target the lagging counties to prevent long-term divergence.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, July 2026
(county, seasonally unadjusted) • ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-10-columbia-sc-within-county-unemployment>



01

Stability Is Not Shared

This is not a cyclical fluctuation—it is a structural signal. The same Federal Reserve data showing improved subprime credit risk in the Fifth District (FRED Blog, 2026-09-10) reflects stronger performance in Richland and Lexington, but does not account for the lagging counties. Lending and development policies must adapt to this internal variance, or risk reinforcing existing divides.



02

The Cost of Ignoring the Gap

For real estate professionals, this is a strategic inflection point. Properties in high-unemployment counties may face longer holding periods and lower appreciation, even as the broader market appears stable. Meanwhile, investors who overlook this data risk mispricing risk in the Midlands. The future of equitable growth depends on recognizing that stability is not monolithic.

Real Estate Strategy & Intelligence Leader. Democratized Blue Ocean Strategist & Operator.

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