

Best In South Carolina Real Estate™: Columbia — ALEX Intelligence 2026

Columbia Leads SC in Migration Income Gap

5.3% gap in household income between arrivals and departures — ALEX
Intelligence 2026

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THE DATA

5.3%

Income Gap Between Arriving and Departing Households (2023)

Columbia's migration pattern shows a growing income disparity between those moving in and those leaving.

This 5.3% gap means households relocating to the Midlands earn less on average than those departing — a rare dynamic in a market where inflows typically come from higher-income areas. The data suggests that Columbia is attracting cost-sensitive, mobile workers rather than high-earning professionals, which may be driving demand for affordable housing and rental units.

Source: U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Statistics of Income Migration Data, county-to-county inflows, 2022-23 • ALEX Intelligence computation
<https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-09-18-columbia-sc-mig-agi-gap>

01

Affordability Is the Real Magnet

Columbia's ability to attract lower-income households while maintaining stable prices reflects a unique affordability advantage. This is not just about low prices — it's about a structural shift where the city's economic model rewards mobility and lower entry barriers. The influx of lower-earning households is sustaining demand even as median incomes rise, creating a resilient market that resists typical cyclical downturns.



02

In-Migration Is Reshaping the Market

The income gap reveals a counterintuitive dynamic: Columbia is not attracting the highest earners, but rather those seeking better value. This shift is redefining the city's housing mix — favoring smaller homes, rentals, and multifamily units. Over time, this could lead to a more inclusive housing market, where affordability and access become core competitive advantages, not just temporary trends.

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

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