Income Gap Leader in SC — ALEX Intelligence 2026

43.4% Income Gap: Who’s Moving Into Charleston?

Top-ranked inbound income gap in SC — ALEX Intelligence, 2026

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THE DATA

43.4%

Income Gap Between Arriving and Departing Households (2023)

Charleston’s inbound migration is not just growing — it’s upgrading the region’s economic profile.

This 43.4% gap, derived from IRS migration data, reveals a clear shift: households relocating to the tri-county earn significantly more than those leaving. The top 10 sending counties include high-income hubs like New York and Massachusetts, suggesting a deliberate, wealth-driven migration pattern. This is not random movement — it’s strategic relocation by high-earning professionals and families.

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/2026-09-20-charleston-sc-mig-agi-gap

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Wealth Inflows Are Reshaping Demand

The influx of high-income households is driving demand for premium housing, lifestyle amenities, and exclusive neighborhoods. This isn't just about higher prices — it's about a fundamental shift in the market's composition. Properties that once catered to middle-income buyers are now being repositioned or replaced by luxury units, private clubs, and high-end services. This dynamic is creating a bifurcated market where affordability is increasingly a function of location, not income level.

02

The Hidden Infrastructure Toll

While income flows upward, infrastructure and public services are under strain. The 43.4% income gap masks a deeper imbalance: the cost of maintaining roads, schools, emergency services, and utilities is rising faster than tax base growth in some areas. The Ben Sawyer Bridge, for instance, remains a critical mobility artery, but aging infrastructure like this cannot scale indefinitely with population and income influx. The real estate market's success may soon be tested by the region's ability to deliver on the promise of quality of life — not just wealth, but resilience.

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