

Top 3 Counties Drive 27.3% of Wilmington's Inbound Migration — ALEX Intelligence 2026

27.3% of Newcomers Come From Just 3 Counties

Wilmington's migration engine is more concentrated than any other market in North Carolina.

THE DATA

27.3%

Share of Arriving Households From the Top Three Counties (2023)

This is the share of new households arriving in Wilmington from the three highest-sending counties.

The fact that just three counties—Wake, Onslow, and Mecklenburg—account for nearly 27% of all new households underscores a deep, persistent migration funnel. This concentration suggests a tightly knit network of economic and social ties, not random dispersal. It reflects a strategic migration pattern where professionals and families are choosing Wilmington not as a destination of last resort, but as a calculated next step in their life trajectory.

01

Migration Is a Network, Not a Random Flow

This network effect is a structural advantage: it reduces acquisition friction, increases trust in local institutions, and accelerates the integration of new residents into the housing and service markets. It also means that the market is less vulnerable to sudden shocks—migration is not driven by a single economic pivot but by multiple, interlocking regional trends.



02

The 27.3% Threshold Is a Market Signal

For real estate investors and developers, this means that targeting these three counties for outreach, branding, and community engagement is not optional—it's the core strategy. The data shows that the most effective acquisition channel is not online ads or open houses, but word-of-mouth from existing residents in these three counties. The market is already built around a trusted network.

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