

Income Gap: Arriving vs. Departing Households — ALEX Intelligence 2026

Houston's Income Gap: 10.6%

Arriving households earn less than those leaving — a structural shift shaping the MSA

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THE DATA

10.6%

Income Gap Between Arriving and Departing Households (2023)

This is the net difference in median household income between those moving into and those leaving the Houston metro.

The 10.6% income gap reveals a fundamental demographic trend: Houston is attracting lower-income households while losing higher-income ones. This is not a transient blip but a sustained pattern rooted in migration flows from high-cost, high-income counties across the U.S.

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/2026-09-24-houston-msa-mig-agi-gap>



01

Houston's Resilience Is Built on Inequality

This income gap is not a flaw — it's a feature of Houston's economic model. The city's affordability and job growth in energy, healthcare, and logistics attract those priced out of coastal metros. Yet this influx of lower-income households creates long-term pressure on public services, housing quality, and wage stagnation in lower tiers of the labor market.

02

The Real Estate Market Is a Proxy for Inequality

As lower-income households move in, they drive demand for entry-level housing, but not for high-end property. This creates a bifurcated market: strong rental demand and price stability in lower-tier segments, but stagnant or declining appreciation in luxury segments. The result is a resilient but deeply unequal real estate ecosystem — one that benefits from scale but risks social fragmentation.



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