#1 of 10: Change in the Income Gap Between Arriving and Departing Households

Columbia leads SC in widening income gap

IRS data shows 2.5% rise in earnings gap between arrivals and leavers

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THE DATA

2.5%

Change in the Income Gap Between Arriving and Departing Households (2024)

Columbia’s gap between incoming and outgoing household incomes widened faster than any other South Carolina metro in 2023–24.

This 2.5% increase reflects a growing disparity between high-earning newcomers and lower-income residents leaving the region. It suggests that migration is not just adding population but reshaping the economic fabric of the Midlands, favoring wealthier households and accelerating residential stratification.



Photo: Childofwalrus · CC BY 4.0 · Wikimedia Commons

Source: U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Statistics of Income Migration Data, county-to-county inflows, 2022-23 and 2023-24 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-22-columbia-sc-mig-trend-agi

01

The market is filtering for affluence

Columbia’s rising income gap isn’t just a statistic—it’s a structural signal. The influx of higher-earning households, particularly from urban centers like Cook County, IL, and Maricopa County, AZ, is shifting demand toward premium housing, services, and amenities. This isn’t just population growth; it’s an economic reconfiguration where affordability becomes a secondary factor for new residents, even as existing communities face rising cost pressures.

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02

Migration is redefining local labor dynamics

The widening gap may reflect a dual trend: high-income professionals moving in while lower- and middle-income workers exit. This could strain local service sectors, where demand for housing and retail remains high but labor supply is constrained. If the city does not invest in workforce development and inclusive economic policies, this imbalance may trigger long-term gentrification and limit upward mobility for native residents.

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Diane Hart Alexander, MBA, MHA

Chair & CEO, ALEX Companies
Designated Broker, Alexander Tiffany Southwest, LLC dba ALEX.realestate, et.al.
Texas License #574877-B · Broker License #565194-BB

diane@alex.realestate · +1 713.591.9902

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