#1 of 3: Spread in County Unemployment Rate Across the Market, in Points (Septem



Charleston’s unemployment spread: 0.3 points

Berkeley vs. Charleston County, September 2026

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THE DATA

0.3

Spread in County Unemployment Rate Across the Market, in Points (September 2026)

The smallest gap in unemployment among the three counties in the Charleston tri-county metro is 0.3 percentage points.

This narrow spread belies a deeper structural divergence. Berkeley and Dorchester both report 3.3% unemployment, while Charleston County sits at 3.0%—a margin that, while small, marks a persistent advantage for Charleston in labor market stability. The difference is not in scale but in alignment: the city maintains tighter employment resilience despite regional economic pressures.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, September 2026 (county, seasonally unadjusted) · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-27-charleston-sc-within-county-unemployment

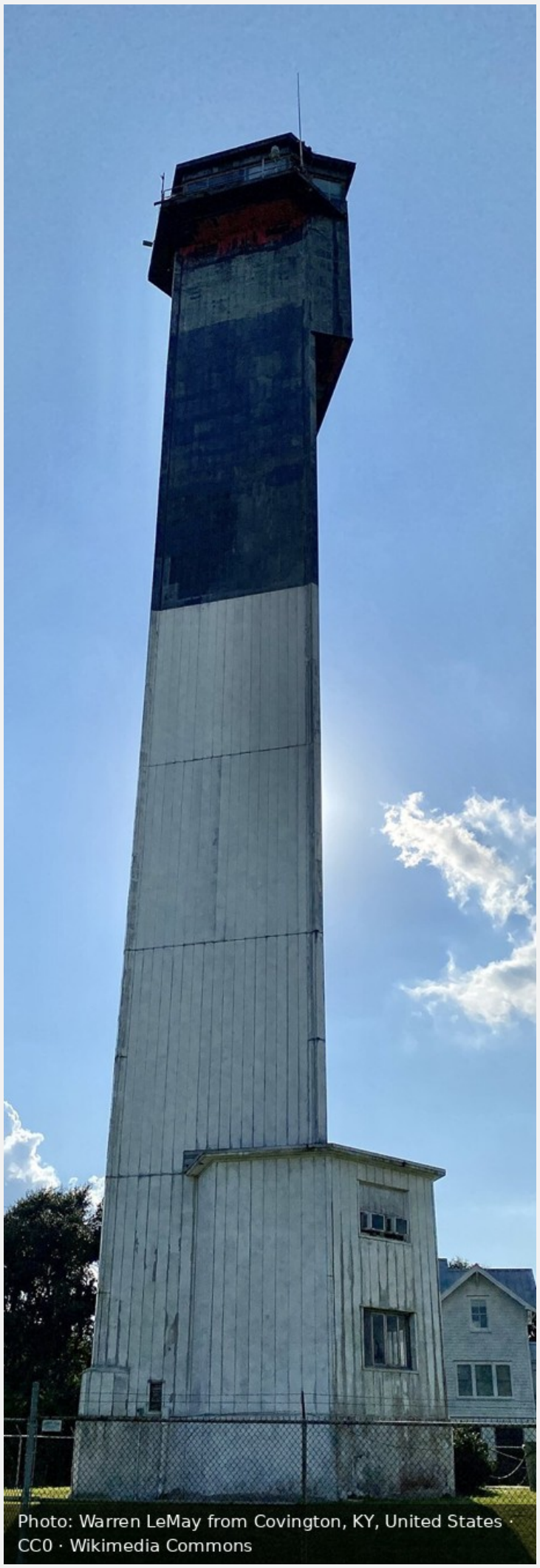


Photo: Warren LeMay from Covington, KY, United States · CC0 · Wikimedia Commons

01

Stability isn’t uniform

The 0.3-point gap between Berkeley/Dorchester and Charleston County is not a sign of cohesion but of divergence. While all three counties face similar macroeconomic headwinds—rising interest rates, wage stagnation—Charleston County’s lower unemployment reflects stronger job retention in service, tech, and public sectors. This suggests that the city’s urban core has developed a more resilient employment ecosystem, even as surrounding counties lag in industrial and hospitality recovery.

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02

The cost of proximity

The minimal gap in unemployment rates masks growing inequality in access to opportunity. With 3.3% unemployment in Berkeley and Dorchester—slightly above Charleston—residents in those counties face longer commutes and fewer local job openings. This creates a hidden labor drain: workers from outside Charleston must travel farther for work, increasing transportation costs and reducing disposable income, which in turn pressures housing affordability and consumption patterns across the region.

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