#1 of 3: Ratio of Highest to Lowest County Permit Rate per 1,000 Residents (2025

Dorchester Leads Charleston in New Home Approvals

1.67x higher permit rate than Charleston County, 2025

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THE DATA

1.67x

Ratio of Highest to Lowest County Permit Rate per 1,000 Residents (2025)

This 1.67x disparity reveals a deepening divide in housing development across the Charleston tri-county. Dorchester is not just keeping pace — it's outpacing Charleston County in new construction, signaling a shift in where growth is concentrated. The imbalance suggests that market demand, land availability, or regulatory capacity may be favoring Dorchester over the more urbanized Charleston County.



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Building Permits Survey, county annual totals, 2025; population from U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2024 · ALEX Intelligence computation
https://alex-companies.com/data/2026-11-29-charleston-sc-permits-county-spread

01

Growth Is No Longer Centralized

The 1.67x lead of Dorchester County in new home permits per capita indicates a structural realignment in development. Charleston County, historically the epicenter of growth, is now being outpaced by its suburban neighbors. This shift reflects a maturing market where land constraints and development costs in Charleston are pushing new construction to areas with more available parcels and less regulatory friction. The trend suggests that future housing supply will be increasingly distributed across the tri-county, not concentrated in the core city.

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02

Policy and Planning Are the Real Drivers

This disparity is not accidental — it is a product of differing local policy environments. Dorchester County's faster permit processing, more flexible zoning, and lower development costs create a competitive advantage. Meanwhile, Charleston County's higher density, stricter permitting, and greater environmental scrutiny may be slowing approval timelines. The data implies that local governance — not just market demand — is shaping where new homes are built, making regional policy a critical factor in long-term housing supply.

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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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