



Supporting the American Dream

The Economic Impact of the Housing Industry on South Carolina

Commissioned by the South Carolina REALTORS®



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April 2026



SOUTH CAROLINA REALTORS®

Executive Summary



South Carolina has emerged as one of the fastest growing U.S. states throughout the 2020s. This includes both employment growth that has encompassed most industrial sectors as well as population growth that currently ranks 1st in the nation. South Carolina also ranks highly on various quality of life measures, which makes it attractive to out-of-state residents for relocation and retirement.



These strong growth trends have generated a relatively high demand for housing in South Carolina in recent years. Although a strong and vibrant housing market is essential for the growth of a regional economy during any time period, these growth trends that South Carolina has experienced make a thriving housing industry even more important in helping to maintain the state's current economic momentum and to capitalize on the competitive advantages the state now enjoys.



The significance of the housing industry is sometimes underreported because of the primary focus that is often placed on residential construction activity. When examining the housing industry more broadly – incorporating the impacts of residential construction, the real estate sector, consumer expenditures associated with moving (also known as the “move-in effect”), and the numerous social benefits of homeownership – the estimated impacts of housing more than doubles.



The current annual economic impact of the housing industry on South Carolina totals approximately \$77.5 billion. This figure reflects the dollar value of all final goods and services produced across the Palmetto State that can be attributed (either directly or indirectly) to the housing industry. This \$77.5 billion in total economic activity supports 278,745 jobs and \$12.7 billion in labor income for South Carolinians.



Through facilitating the many thousands of housing transactions that occur each year, the real estate sector in South Carolina represents one of the central pillars of the state's housing industry – totaling nearly \$43 billion in economic output. Thus, **the real estate sector represents approximately 55 percent of the housing industry's total impact in South Carolina.**



Real estate agents are critical to the success of the housing industry, with approximately 88 percent of homebuyers currently using a real estate agent or broker when buying a home. Such a high percentage implies that **real estate agents remain one of the most relied-upon sources of information for buyers.** Moreover, approximately 91 percent of U.S. homeowners currently use a real estate agent when selling their home, which is the highest share ever recorded.

Section I – Introduction

The economic benefits of housing are among the most well known and widely cited of any industrial sector. The housing industry represents a sizable economic footprint as one of the largest U.S. industrial sectors, generating millions of jobs each year. In addition, individuals and families who live in stable housing environments experience numerous economic and social benefits. For example, homeownership provides a means to establish a credit history and to build wealth for the future. In the social realm, stable housing environments lead to better school performance among children, increased health and well being for families, and reduced neighborhood crime rates.

Yet even though the housing industry is well established as one of largest sectors of the state and national economy, its significance is often underreported because of the primary focus on the impact of new construction activity. Such an approach ignores over 50 percent of the housing industry's total impact because it does not take into account the specific contribution that the real estate industry makes to educate buyers and to facilitate and support the many thousands of housing transactions that occur in the Palmetto State each year. It also ignores all of the consumption expenditures associated with housing-related services that support a wide variety of professional service organizations as well as the many social benefits of homeownership that can be explicitly quantified.

The purpose of this research effort is to complete a comprehensive impact analysis documenting the total economic footprint of the housing industry on the state of South Carolina. This study will specifically document the contribution of each major component of the housing industry to the state of South Carolina – that is – how each component contributes to the ongoing growth of the industry and increases total economic activity for the state, with a primary focus on the contribution that the real estate industry makes in support of the housing industry. More generally, the impact of housing on South Carolina will be classified into four main categories: (a) residential construction, (b) the real estate sector, (c) consumer expenditures associated with moving – also known as the “move-in effect,” and (d) the numerous social benefits of homeownership.

This study begins with a brief review of South Carolina's strong economic and population growth trends over the past decade and how this growth has increased the importance of the state's housing markets. Section III then moves to a discussion of the methodology behind economic impact analysis. Next, Section IV estimates the specific economic impact of the housing industry on South Carolina, including a break down by region and by each subsector within the industry. The social benefits of housing are also summarized. Finally, Section V provides a brief conclusion.

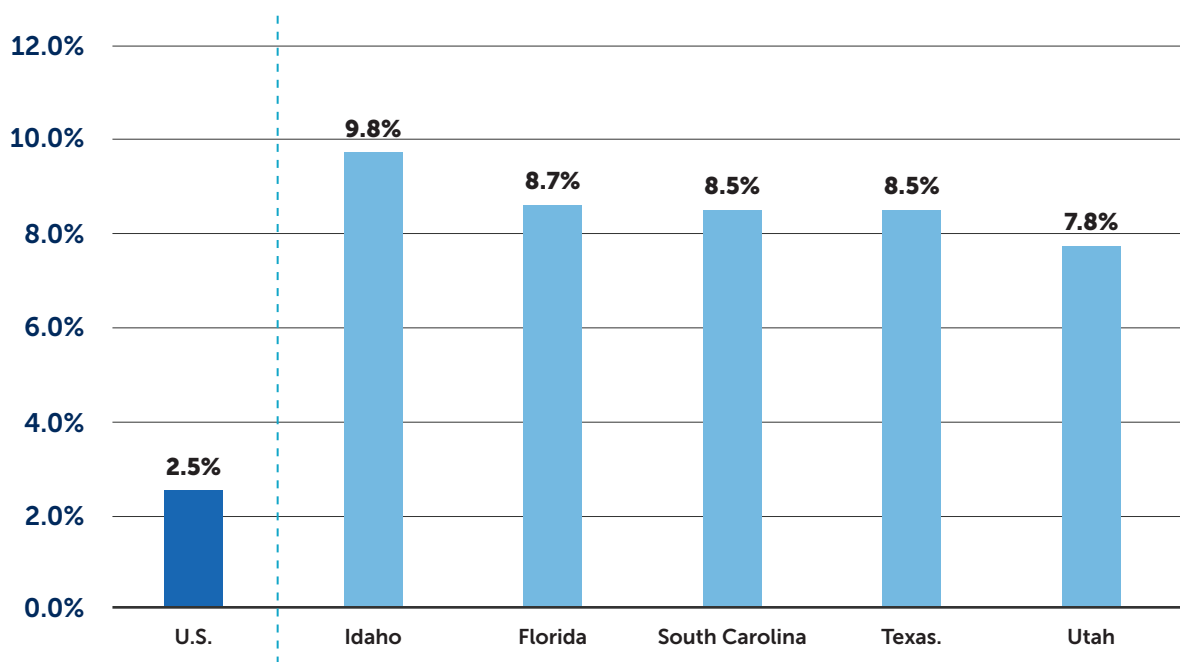
Section II – Housing Market Trends in South Carolina and the United States

South Carolina's Economic Boom and its Impact on Housing Demand

South Carolina has been one of the fastest growing states in the nation since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a cumulative population growth rate of 8.5 percent between 2020 and 2025. This rate of growth ranked third nationally behind only Idaho (9.8%) and Florida (8.7%). By 2025, South Carolina's annual population growth rate had risen to first in the nation at 1.5 percent, approximately three times faster than the growth rate for the United States as a whole.

Figure 1: Cumulative Population Growth, 2020-2025

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



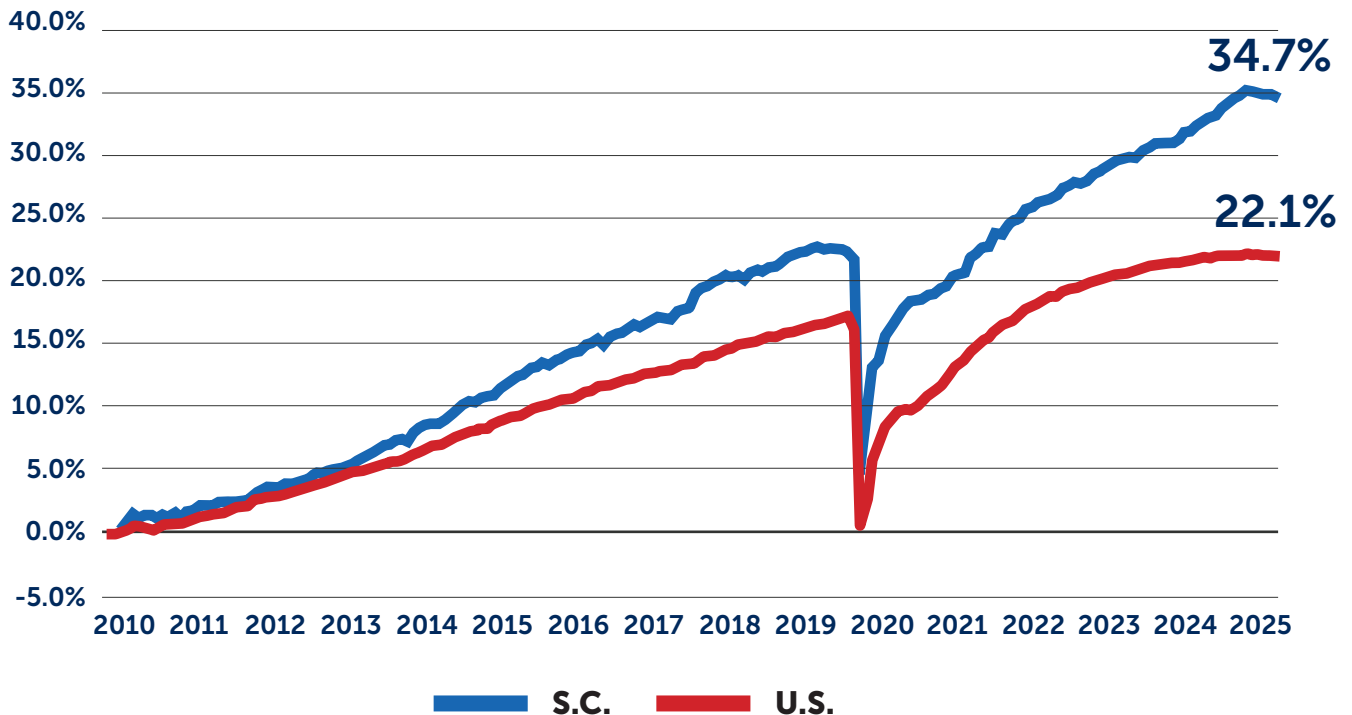
By 2025, South Carolina's annual population growth rate had risen to first in the nation at 1.5 percent, approximately three times faster than the growth rate for the United States as a whole.

There are two general categories of individuals that represent the source of this population growth. The first is job seekers – those individuals who are relocating to South Carolina in search of economic opportunity in a state that has maintained strong long-run economic growth trends. The second is retirees – those individuals who view South Carolina as having a relatively low cost of living and strong natural amenities (e.g., climate, beach access, mountain access, etc.) that make it an attractive retirement destination.

One way to observe South Carolina’s strong economic growth is through local labor market trends. Employment growth in South Carolina has consistently outpaced that of the U.S. for more than 15 years, reflecting the state’s strong momentum and broad-based job creation. More specifically, while job growth in the U.S. totaled approximately 22.1 percent between 2010 and 2025, South Carolina experienced employment growth of more than 37.4 percent over this same time period. These trends are illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2: Cumulative Employment Growth from 2010-2025 – U.S. vs. S.C.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics





A strong and vibrant housing market in South Carolina is more important than ever to maintain the economic momentum and to capitalize on the competitive advantages that the state now enjoys.

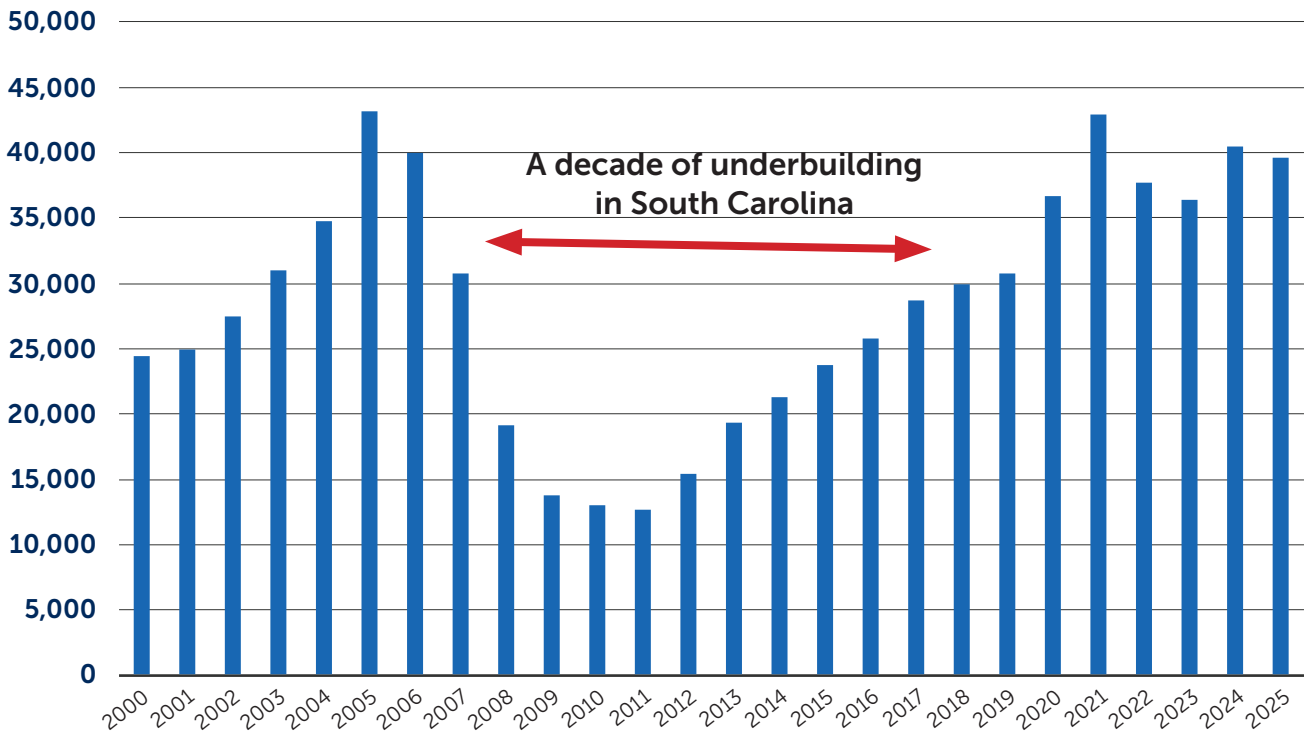
One of the primary results that has come about from these positive trends in economic and population growth is a strong demand for housing. This, in turn, implies that a strong and vibrant housing market in South Carolina is more important than ever to maintain the economic momentum and to capitalize on the competitive advantages that the state now enjoys.

An Ongoing Housing Shortage

Despite the strong employment and population growth trends that are generating high levels of housing demand, residential construction activity in South Carolina did not keep pace with this demand for much of the 2010s. Along with many regions across the United States, the pace of homebuilding in South Carolina slowed significantly in the aftermath of the Great Recession that took place from 2007 to 2009. As shown in **Figure 3**, single-family building permits in South Carolina remained well below their pre-recession levels for an extended period, contributing to a nearly decade-long stretch in which homebuilding activity lagged behind South Carolina’s growing housing needs.

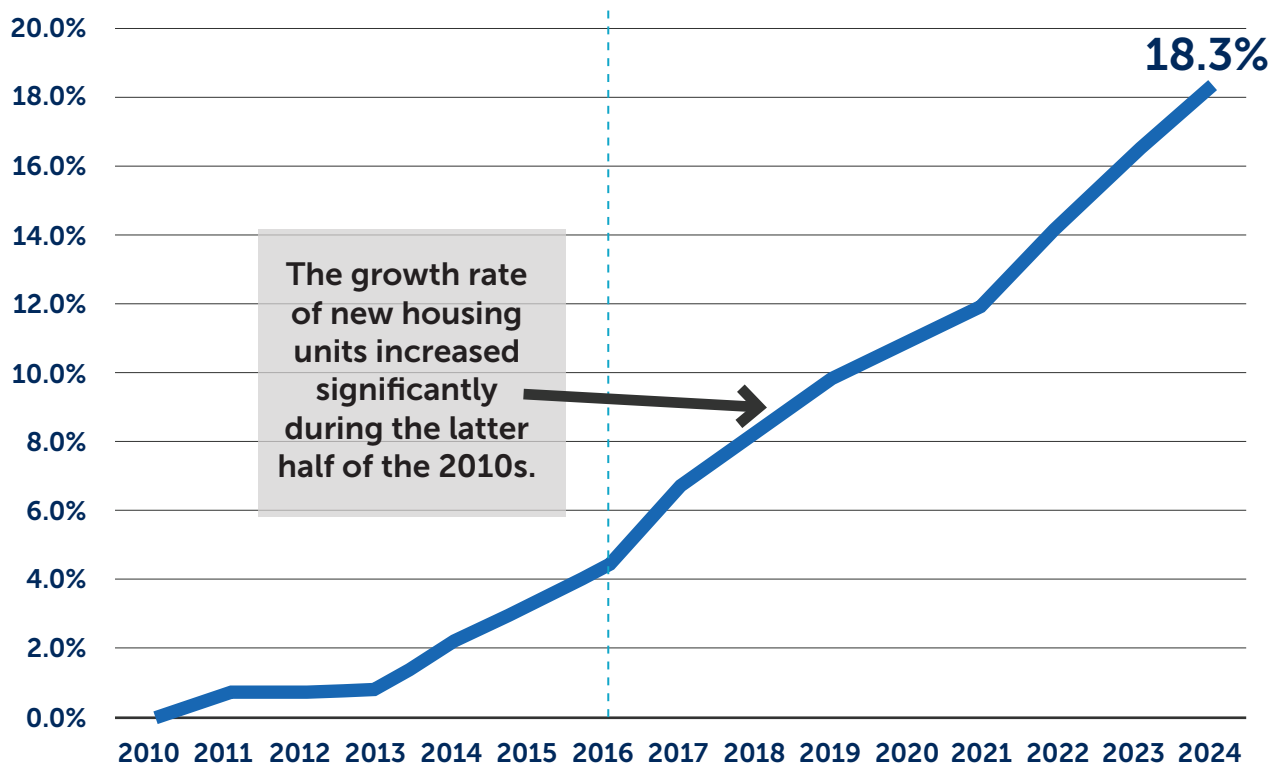
Figure 3: Single-Family Housing Permits, South Carolina

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



Beginning in the mid 2010s, however, the number of housing units in South Carolina began experiencing positive growth – increasing from approximately 2.16 million in 2013 to more than 2.53 million by 2024. Overall, South Carolina’s housing inventory grew by approximately 18.3 percent between 2010 and 2024, as shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4: Cumulative Growth in S.C. Housing Units, 2010-2024
Source: American Community Survey, 1-Year Estimates



This ongoing push to rebalance supply and demand in the state’s housing markets has further expanded the housing industry and its impact in South Carolina. This report now turns towards documenting the total economic impact of the housing industry and its central components on the Palmetto State and its local regions.

Section III – Economic Impact Methodology

The housing industry in South Carolina directly employs thousands of workers across the state and generates billions of dollars in economic activity every year. Yet these activities do not provide a complete picture of the impact of housing on South Carolina's economy. The expenditures that occur within the housing industry also lead to additional job creation and economic activity throughout South Carolina by way of the economic multiplier effect (or economic ripple effect).

Economic multiplier effects can be divided into direct, indirect, and induced impacts. The direct impact reflects all in-state purchases made by organizations within the housing industry. These include, for example, employee wages and benefits, equipment, building construction and remodeling, technology services, vendors, and other overhead or administrative costs. This spending activity increases demand and leads to the creation of new jobs and more income for employees and suppliers of companies within the industry.

The indirect impact reflects additional economic activity that results from inter-industry linkages between local firms in South Carolina. For example, if a builder were to purchase lumber from an in-state supplier, then this lumber supplier would experience an increase in demand. To satisfy this demand, the lumber supplier would purchase additional inputs from its own vendors – such as unprocessed timber or other material components. Suppliers of these inputs must then purchase additional supplies as well, and so on. These indirect effects ripple through the economy and affect many industrial sectors of South Carolina.

The induced impact reflects additional economic activity that results from increases in the spending of household income. For example, when the aforementioned lumber supplier purchases raw materials from one of its vendors and the overall demand for this vendor rises, some of the staff working for this vendor will see a rise in their income levels (or the vendor may hire new staff). Part of this income will then be spent locally on, for example, food, entertainment, or health care. These industries will then also see an increase in demand for their goods and services, which will lead to higher incomes for some of their employees, part of which will also be spent locally.





These successive rounds of indirect and induced spending do not go on forever, which is why we can calculate a value for each of them. In each round, money is “leaked out” for a variety of reasons. For example, firms will necessarily purchase some of their supplies from vendors located outside of the local region. In addition, employees will save part of their income or spend part of it with firms located outside of the region. In order to determine the total economic impact that will result from an initial direct impact, economic multipliers are used. An economic multiplier can be used to determine the total impact (direct, indirect, and induced) that results from an initial change in economic activity (the direct impact). Multipliers are different in each sector of the economy and are largely determined by the size of the local supplier network as well the particular region being examined. Economic multipliers are available to calculate not just the total economic impact of a cluster, but also the total employment and income levels associated with the total impact.

In this analysis, the direct economic impact of the housing industry in South Carolina will consist of all activities associated with residential construction, real estate, expenditures related to the move-in effect, and the numerous social benefits of homeownership. Employment data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics were used to approximate the direct impact of residential construction and real estate, while data from the National Association of REALTORS (NAR) were used to assess the move-in effect. The social benefits associated with housing are qualitative and are gathered from existing studies in the economics and housing literature.

All multiplier effects are calculated using input-output analysis, which is the industry-standard method for estimation that is widely implemented across the United States. This analysis uses customized input-output models of the state of South Carolina and its local regions, which contain specific information on economic linkages of over 500 different industries for each region. The IMPLAN software package was combined with these models to generate all estimates in this report.

Section IV – Primary Results

Economic Impact of the Housing Industry: State-Level Results

The primary impact of South Carolina’s housing industry derives from the residential construction and real estate sectors. As of 2025, there were a combined total of approximately 182,853 employees working across these two industrial sectors, which supports roughly \$57.5 billion in annual direct economic activity for South Carolina’s economy.¹ In addition, the NAR estimates that the direct expenditures by consumers associated with the relocation/moving efforts that are facilitated by this construction and real estate activity generates another 5.0 percent in direct economic activity.² For South Carolina, this dollar volume is estimated to be \$3.0 billion, which is associated with another 9,624 jobs.

As outlined above, these direct impacts also generate significant multiplier effects that make the total impact of the housing industry in South Carolina far larger. The structural input-output models used in this analysis estimate impacts in terms of three specific measures: economic output, employment, and labor income. Economic output simply reflects the dollar value of all final goods and services that can be attributed (directly or indirectly) to the housing industry in South Carolina. It can also be thought of as an aggregate measure of total spending activity that results from an initial direct expenditure. Because it includes all spending by consumers and businesses on both goods and services, it is an all-inclusive measure of the impact on total economic activity. Employment measures the total number of full-time equivalent positions associated with total economic output. Labor income reflects all employee compensation associated with total employment estimates, including wages, salaries, and benefits. **Table 1** below highlights these estimates.

Table 1: Economic Impact of the Housing Industry on South Carolina

	Economic Output	Employment	Labor Income
Direct Impact	\$60,487,754,531	192,477	\$7,788,259,191
Indirect Impact	\$9,389,268,488	46,254	\$2,743,765,382
Induced Impact	\$7,658,546,942	40,014	\$2,138,680,017
Total Impact	\$77,535,569,961	278,745	\$12,670,704,590

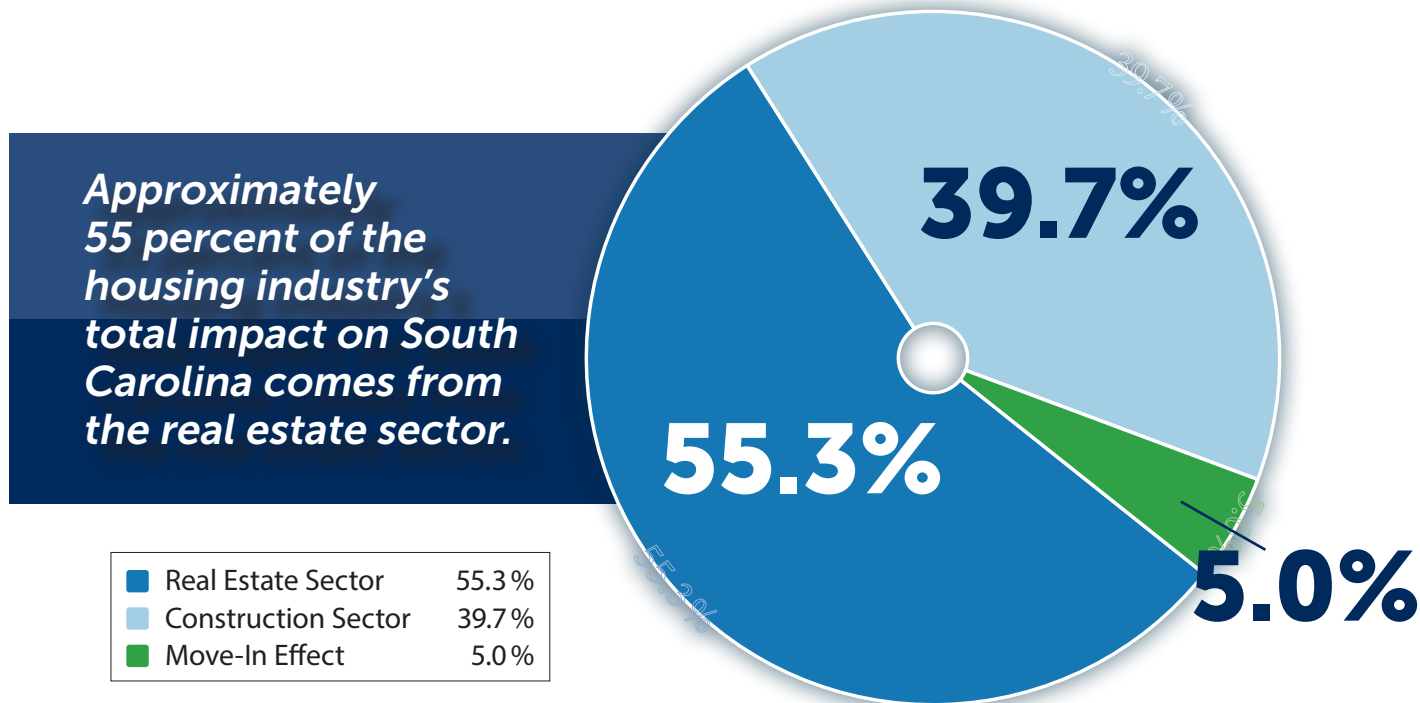
¹ The definition of these two sectors include NAICS code 236100, the subset of all residential remodeling employment found within the broader NAICS code 238000, and NAICS codes 531110, 531210, 531311, 531320, and 531390.

² Source: The Economic Impact of a Typical Home Sale (2024); National Association of REALTORS

The 192,477 employees that are directly supported by the housing industry generate a total of \$60.5 billion in total economic output annually. This level of direct economic activity leads to indirect effects totaling approximately \$9.4 billion in economic output and 46,254 jobs. These estimates reflect increased demand for goods and services of in-state suppliers resulting from in-state expenditures on the part of the housing industry. The direct economic activity also leads to induced effects totaling \$7.7 billion in economic output and 40,014 jobs. This is a reflection of economic activity in South Carolina generated across all industries that is the result of increased household spending. The combination of the direct, indirect, and induced effects leads to a total economic impact of approximately \$77.5 billion, which is associated with 278,745 jobs across South Carolina.

These results can also be broken down by sector contribution. Specifically, **Figure 5** summarizes each sector's contribution to this \$77.5 billion annual impact. Note the disproportionately large size of the real estate sector. Approximately 55 percent of the housing industry's total impact on South Carolina comes from the real estate sector. This is a key finding of this study. Through facilitating the many thousands of housing transactions that occur each year, the real estate sector in South Carolina represents one of the central pillars of the state's housing industry – totaling nearly \$43 billion in economic output.

Figure 5: Contribution to South Carolina's Housing Industry by Sector



Economic Impact of the Housing Industry: County-Level and Regional Break Downs

The \$77.5 billion annual economic impact that the housing industry supports in South Carolina is not uniformly distributed across the state. A majority of the impacts come from the state's major metropolitan regions where the bulk of the state's population increases are occurring and where much of the state's economic activity is centered. **Figures 6-7** show the complete county-level and congressional district-level distribution of the \$77.5 billion economic impact, with **Tables 2 and 3** providing a more detailed breakdown of those regions with the highest impacts.

Figure 6: The Economic Impact of the Housing Industry by County

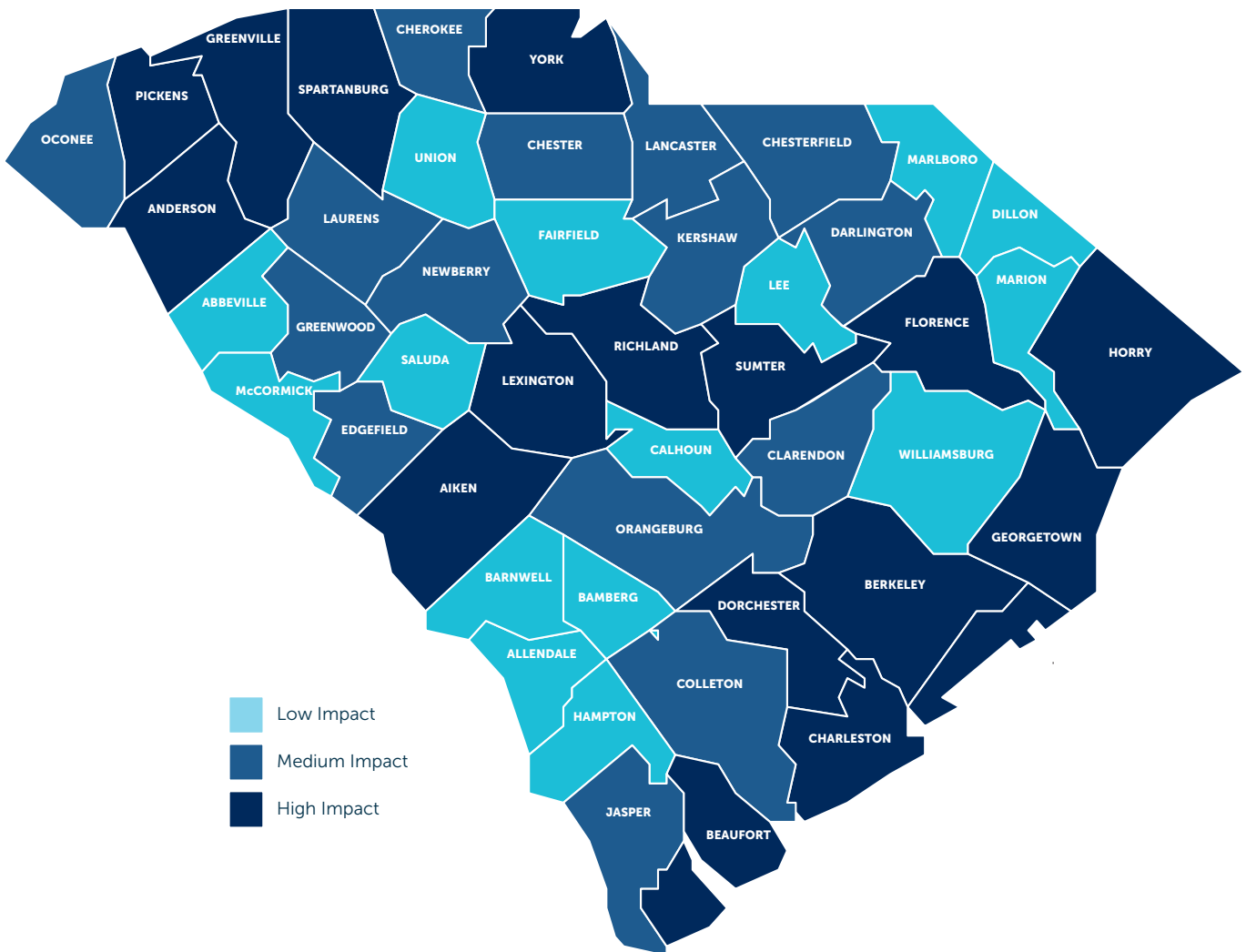


Figure 7: The Economic Impact of the Housing Industry by U.S. Congressional District

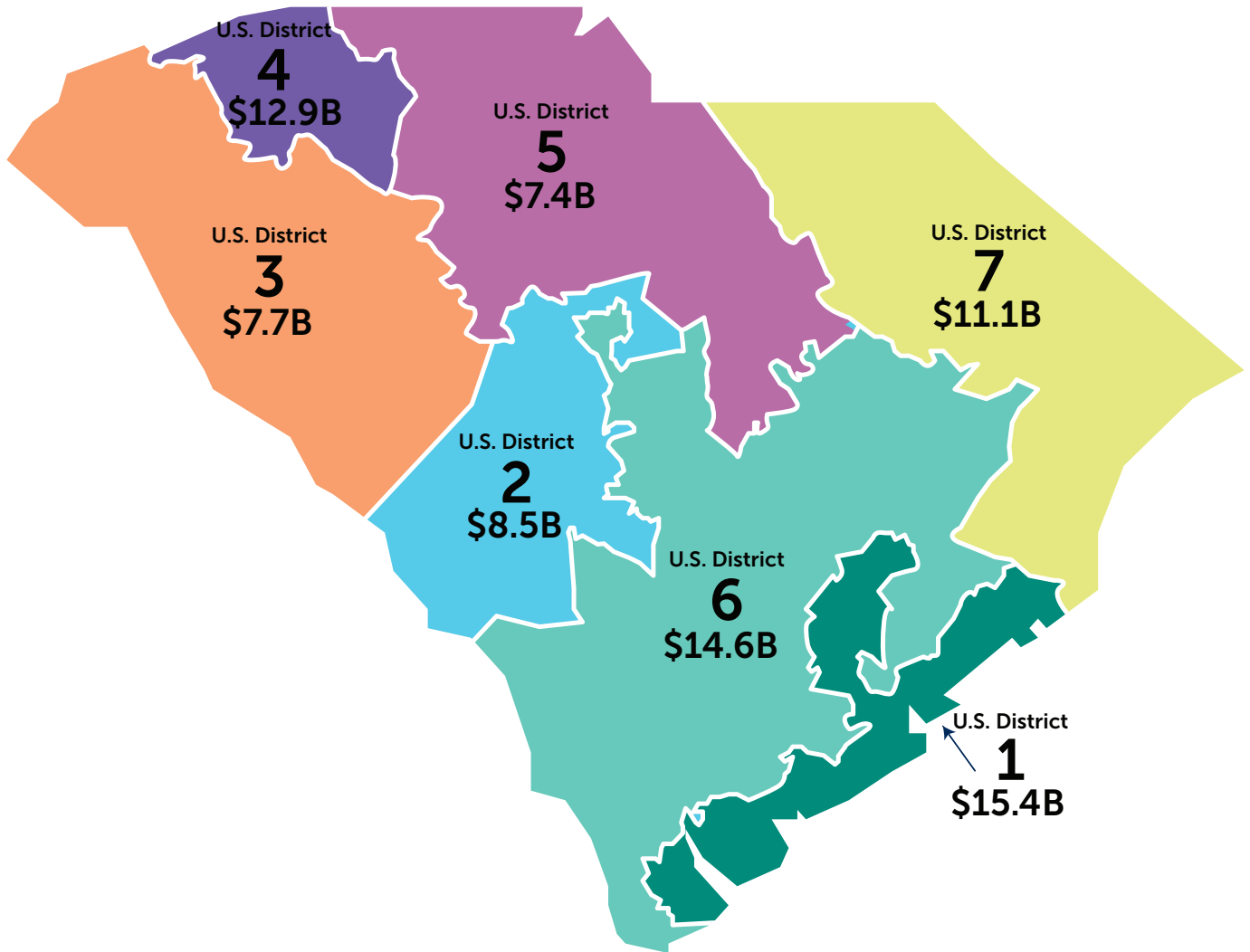


Table 2: Economic Impact of the Housing Industry by County

County	Total Economic Output	Total Employment	Total Labor Income
Abbeville	\$46,584,569	167	\$7,612,755
Aiken	\$1,976,110,304	7,104	\$322,931,913
Allendale	\$57,964,006	208	\$9,472,359
Anderson	\$1,928,814,520	6,934	\$315,202,932
Bamberg	\$28,448,592	102	\$4,649,011
Barnwell	\$128,018,663	460	\$20,920,549
Beaufort	\$4,651,700,357	16,723	\$760,171,378
Berkeley	\$2,976,433,911	10,700	\$486,402,755
Calhoun	\$141,176,137	508	\$23,070,716
Charleston	\$13,324,253,548	47,901	\$2,177,422,320
Cherokee	\$332,137,309	1,194	\$54,277,201
Chester	\$222,965,838	802	\$36,436,622
Chesterfield	\$182,070,987	655	\$29,753,669
Clarendon	\$226,877,519	816	\$37,075,861
Colleton	\$325,025,161	1,168	\$53,114,948
Darlington	\$491,449,422	1,767	\$80,311,662
Dillon	\$93,169,138	335	\$15,225,510
Dorchester	\$1,709,049,149	6,144	\$279,289,324
Edgefield	\$208,385,934	749	\$34,054,004
Fairfield	\$149,710,714	538	\$24,465,419
Florence	\$1,332,460,916	4,790	\$217,748,043
Georgetown	\$1,505,641,718	5,413	\$246,048,896
Greenville	\$11,078,237,230	39,827	\$1,810,382,917
Greenwood	\$635,470,418	2,285	\$103,847,279
Hampton	\$137,620,063	495	\$22,489,590
Horry	\$7,634,890,808	27,448	\$1,247,678,273
Jasper	\$457,666,720	1,645	\$74,790,961
Kershaw	\$677,432,091	2,435	\$110,704,570
Lancaster	\$921,378,765	3,312	\$150,569,837
Laurens	\$150,569,837	1,673	\$76,069,439
Lee	\$49,785,036	179	\$8,135,769
Lexington	\$4,148,160,283	14,913	\$677,883,887
Marion	\$153,978,003	554	\$25,162,771
Marlboro	\$61,520,080	221	\$10,053,486
McCormick	\$94,947,175	341	\$15,516,074
Newberry	\$335,693,383	1,207	\$54,858,327
Oconee	\$921,734,372	3,314	\$150,627,950
Orangeburg	\$637,604,062	2,292	\$104,195,954
Pickens	\$1,343,484,745	4,830	\$219,549,535
Richland	\$6,735,204,094	24,213	\$1,100,653,306
Saluda	\$71,121,479	256	\$11,622,527
Spartanburg	\$4,218,214,940	15,165	\$689,332,076
Sumter	\$994,278,281	3,574	\$162,482,927
Union	\$93,169,138	335	\$15,225,510
Williamsburg	\$109,882,686	395	\$17,956,804
York	\$3,507,355,754	12,609	\$573,164,919

Table 3: Economic Impact of the Housing Industry by South Carolina U.S. Congressional District

U.S. Congressional District	Total Economic Output	Total Employment	Total Labor Income
U.S. District 1	\$15,401,711,960	55,370	\$2,516,916,333
U.S. District 2	\$8,484,436,879	30,502	\$1,386,509,358
U.S. District 3	\$7,660,850,148	27,541	\$1,251,920,495
U.S. District 4	\$12,944,820,456	46,537	\$2,115,416,138
U.S. District 5	\$7,360,717,505	26,462	\$1,202,873,431
U.S. District 6	\$14,610,485,502	52,526	\$2,387,615,720
U.S. District 7	\$11,073,258,727	39,809	\$1,809,569,340

Although it is dispersed throughout South Carolina, the majority (56.0%) of the housing industry’s economic impact is contained within Charleston, Greenville, Horry, Richland, and Beaufort counties. Further, **Figure 6** illustrates that the “high impact” counties largely represent the major metropolitan regions of South Carolina as well as the primary coastal regions.

Economic Impact of the Housing Industry: The Contribution of Real Estate Professionals

As previously outlined, approximately 55 percent of the housing industry’s \$77.5 billion total annual economic impact in South Carolina arises from the real estate sector. This impact primarily derives from all of the activities associated with buying, selling, and managing real estate, which are largely facilitated by real estate professionals. In 2026, real estate professionals continue to be a critical factor in the home buying and selling process, with approximately 88 percent of U.S. buyers working with an agent or broker.³

Such a high percentage implies that real estate agents remain one of the most relied-upon sources of information for buyers. Buyers rely on agents for help in identifying suitable homes, negotiating terms, managing paperwork, and identifying property features or problems that the buyer may have overlooked. Furthermore, on the seller side, approximately 91 percent of U.S. homeowners currently use a real estate agent, which is the highest share ever recorded. Sellers hire agents to market their home, price it competitively, and help ensure a timely sale.

In South Carolina, approximately 91,281 home sales were facilitated by a REALTOR in 2025. This generated more than \$42.8 billion in total economic activity and supported 154,145 jobs. More generally, the housing industry represents approximately 17 percent of the South Carolina economy, with just over half of this impact (9%) attributable to the real estate sector.

³ National Association of REALTORS, November 2025



*The housing industry is one of South Carolina's largest industries, representing **17 percent** of the state's economy*

*Real estate agents are critical to the success of the state's housing industry, with approximately **88 percent** of homebuyers using a real estate agent or broker when buying a home*





Economic Impact of the Housing Industry: The Social Benefits of Homeownership

In addition to comprising a sizable portion of the state’s economy and helping to maintain South Carolina’s economic competitiveness, the housing industry also provides many social benefits. In particular, there are strong links between homeownership and positive financial stability as well as homeownership and social capital.

Homeownership is a primary source of wealth for many Americans and is an important part of accumulating personal financial assets over time. The primary residence comprises approximately 25 percent of all assets held by the average household in the United States – surpassing other financial assets, business interests, and retirement accounts.⁴ Additionally, owning a home generally remains more financially advantageous than renting.⁵

Homeownership also generates positive social capital through its contribution to residential stability. There is a sizable literature that documents the fact that stable housing environments are typically associated with higher educational achievement, higher civic participation, better health outcomes, and lower crime rates. Roughly 63.7 percent of all U.S. households who own their home are estimated to experience these benefits.⁶

⁴Source: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, *2022 Survey of Consumer Finances*

⁵Source: Goodman and Mayer, "Homeownership and the American Dream," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 32, no. 1 (Winter 2018): 31-58.

⁶For a detailed review on each of these benefits, see *Social Benefits of Homeownership and Stable Housing* by Lawrence Yun and Nadia Evangelou; Research Division, National Association of REALTORS

Section V – Conclusion

South Carolina's population growth rate is currently ranked first in the nation. These significant gains have resulted mostly from individuals relocating in search of either (1) job opportunities in a state with a strong economy or (2) a retirement destination in a state with a low cost-of-living and a large number of natural amenities. South Carolina is fortunate to have a competitive advantage in both of these factors, and the strong and thriving housing market that the state maintains has been a critical element of the state's success in capitalizing on these advantages.

Because of the large focus on residential construction, the significance of the housing industry is often underreported. The purpose of this study has been to provide a comprehensive assessment of the total economic impact of housing on South Carolina, which includes residential construction, the real estate sector, consumer expenditures associated with moving (also known as the "move-in effect"), and the numerous social benefits of homeownership. The annual economic impact of the housing industry on South Carolina is estimated to total approximately \$77.5 billion in total output, which is associated with 278,745 jobs and \$12.7 billion in labor income for South Carolinians. Roughly 55 percent of this total impact is represented by the real estate sector alone.

The importance that a strong housing market has for supporting South Carolina's long-run economic growth cannot be overstated. The housing market, in turn, depends upon a strong real estate sector to facilitate the thousands of housing transactions that occur each year and to ensure that housing market transactions operate smoothly and consistently. The housing industry – and the real estate sector in particular – continues to help ensure that South Carolinians are able to achieve the "American Dream" of homeownership.



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