



## Sales Man In A Woman's World

October 27, 2008

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### Male Realtors Talk Minority Status, See More Men in the Ranks

Women often have to fight to carve out a niche in male-dominated professional fields, but residential real estate is a different animal: Energetic, pant-suited hordes of women have long held sway here, at least in terms of pure numbers.

Ladies in most professions, such as finance or accounting, are distinctly in the minority. But residential real estate is a different story. It's occurred to Springfield-based Realtor Kevin Sears, for example, that men are often outnumbered at the professional gatherings he attends.

The male-to-female agent ratio nationally falls roughly 40 percent to 60 percent, according to the National Association of Realtors' 2008 numbers. Female agents and brokers say they're happy to be in a profession so well-suited to women's strengths, but what's it like to be a man in the girls' club?

Men in the profession are more likely to be in leadership roles in the industry, and are in a sizable enough minority to keep a noticeable male presence – so, they mostly just shrug and say they either don't mind, or don't really notice.

While women are common in leadership roles in the profession, men are more likely to own real estate offices: nationally, only 40 percent of women are listed as brokers or owners.

Even outside leadership roles, men are much in evidence, filling in the ranks of many Massachusetts offices. Connecticut's male-to-female ratios are slightly more skewed, with men making up about one-third of the state's retail Realtors.

But Ken DelVecchio, Connecticut's association president, said those numbers don't give the full picture of day-to-day business. Many real estate agents work part time, and women – at least in his experience – tend to do so more than men. Full-time agents are very often more evenly split, he said.

DelVecchio and others say, however, that they're seeing more men and younger people enter the profession.

"I don't think it's just a women's business anymore," he said: Real estate has traditionally been a second career for many practitioners, or a way for women to work part time as part of a dual-income household with children.

But the profession has gotten more "professional" in the past few years – it requires more study, relies more heavily on technology and is more complicated, so it's now drawing more agents and brokers straight from college and into full-time work.

Bob Fiorito, who owns a Connecticut Coldwell Banker Premiere Realtors office, agrees: "You really can't just be a hobbyist anymore, you have to be committed to building a business."

### Forget Gender, What About Age?

Michael DiMella, a 29-year-old member of the Charlesgate Realty Group in Boston's Back Bay, is one of the newer crop of straight-from-college Realtors.

Homebuyers and sellers don't remark upon his gender so much as his age, he said – they usually expect someone older, and indeed, the average Realtor is in his or her 50s nationally.

The men tend to be more about the numbers, the mechanics of the sale, DiMella says; the women, on the other hand, focus on their relationship with the clients, and the psychology behind home buying and selling.

As for the women themselves, some say they were well-suited to become a force in the business because women have a much stronger sense of home as both an investment and, well, a home.

Dorcas Helfant-Browning, the first woman president of the national association back in 1992, said women could sell to families on a more personal level – they understood other women's concerns about spaces in the home, and knew buying or selling a home could be an emotional process.

"Women treated families with the same kind of courtesy they wanted to be treated with," she said.

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