

The global rise of female property investors

In the world of real estate, women are emerging as a significant and influential demographic of property buyers and over the past decade, women have made substantial strides in various aspects, including their role in property ownership. And in this instance, South Africa is certainly not lagging behind or bucking the trend.



Source: Supplied.

“Finally, after decades, the gender gap in property ownership has been steadily closing in recent years, with women taking on more prominent roles in the global real-estate market and although South Africa is only now catching up, they have made significant inroads since 2012 when women accounted for 47% of bond applications,” says Yael Geffen, chief executive officer of Lew Geffen Sotheby’s International Realty.

“According to ooba the first-time buyer trend started to really shift in 2018, with women now accounting for 53.7% of buyers.”

These figures compare well globally when one considers that in the United States, a 2020 National Association of Realtors (NAR) report revealed that women make up 65% of all home buyers but in the UK, women accounted for approximately 37% of all residential property purchases in the same year. Interestingly, in South Africa, women are now also buying property sooner than their male counterparts.

“The previous average buying age of 34 has shifted up by three years for men but only by one year for women,” says

Geffen. “Another interesting fact is that until recently, around 60% of female first-time buyers were purchasing freestanding homes but this has begun to shift and more are now beginning to buy sectional-title units.”

This is partly due to affordability in times of high interest rates and a spiralling cost of living but it's also because sectional-title homes generally offer better security.

“And, as the gender gap in property ownership continues to shift, what's also becoming clear is that women are not just home buyers but also savvy investors who understand the long-term benefits of real estate as an asset class.”

Geffen says that there are several factors that are driving women's growing interest in property investment:

- **Financial Independence:** Women are increasingly focused on financial independence and security. Owning property is seen as a long-term investment that can provide financial stability and a sense of accomplishment.
- **Changing Social Norms:** Changing societal norms and a greater acceptance of diverse family structures have empowered women to take on a more active role in property ownership.
- **Investment Opportunities:** Real estate investment offers an opportunity for women to grow their wealth over time. Many see property investment as a more stable and profitable alternative to other investment vehicles.
- **Family Planning:** Owning property can be a significant factor in family planning. It provides a stable home environment for raising children and future financial security.
- **Creating generational wealth:** Women are beginning to take charge of long-term planning which includes the future financial wellbeing of their children.
- **Career advancement:** As women continue to make strides in their careers, property investment can be a smart financial move. It can serve as a means to generate additional income or diversify their investment portfolio.
- **Retirement planning:** Women are increasingly considering property investment as part of their retirement planning strategy. Owning property can provide rental income or the option to downsize and free up equity for retirement expenses.
- **Asset protection:** Property ownership can be a form of asset protection. It offers a tangible and valuable asset that can be passed down to future generations.

Concludes Geffen, “In the coming years, women are expected to have an even greater influence on the global real-estate market, shaping its dynamics and contributing to its growth and diversity.”

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