



# Rent and the single girl

*Last Updated:* 11:32 PM, March 6, 2013

*Posted:* 11:16 PM, March 6, 2013

First came Helen Gurley Brown's "Sex and the Single Girl."

Then there was Carrie Bradshaw in "Sex and the City."

Now, we have Hannah Horvath on HBO's "Girls."

When will someone get around to what single women in New York really obsess about: a nice apartment in a decent neighborhood at an affordable price?

Today, more than 725,000 never-married women between the ages of 20 and 34 call Gotham home. Many have come here because they believe New York is the place to be. Especially for those just starting out, many quickly learn that life in the big city can mean sharing an East Bushwick apartment with three strangers because it's the only place you can afford.

If New York's high prices simply reflected the true market value, that would be one thing. After all, people have been finding roommates to split the rent for years. But the truth is that the young and unestablished are paying more than they should for their apartments, because the rental market and rental prices are being distorted by rent-control and rent-stabilization policies.

Rent-controlled or rent-stabilized apartments are a sweet deal for those who are in on it — mostly older and more established residents. So the wealthy retiree has every reason to cling to his rent-stabilized pad on Central Park South forever. Meanwhile, the young, the new arrivals and often the less-wealthy are out of luck.

These people pay in two ways: First, they have fewer apartments to choose from, because rent control and rent stabilization effectively take a million apartments off the market. According to the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy, that's nearly half the total rentals.

Second, the price of artificially lower rents in the regulated sector becomes artificially higher rents in the unregulated sector.

It's not just single New York women, of course. It's anyone looking for a place to live here. And so we have a familiar tale: laws promoted as helping average folk actually hurting them.

That's worth keeping in mind as mayoral candidate after mayoral candidate prattles on about "affordable housing." Almost always their answer is more of the same interference from government that has created this problem in the first place.

So as HBO gets ready for the Season 2 finale of "Girls," we're hoping someone might consider a series showing why, for so many women here, finding a decent, affordable apartment is more difficult than finding a faithful, self-supporting boyfriend.

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