

TEXTE

Less formal, more comfortable: pandemic transforms work outfit

Suits and shirts are out, sweatpants and pyjamas are in: teleworking is changing work clothes habits, and while vaccines may bring back some formality, old-school office outfit should emerge
5 from the pandemic far less strict than before.

"For the last year, everybody has just been dressed from the waist up, wearing a nice short for Zoom calls," said stylist Sascha Lilic.

Many workers who have already returned to offices notice a new relaxed vibe. "I saw someone wearing just their socks when they walked through to get something from another department,"
10 recalled Deanna Narveson, a journalist in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

"I think I've been dressing slightly more casual myself," added Narveson, who nevertheless makes sure she puts on "real clothes" when working from home.

According to employees at several companies, the casualness has happened by itself without management or HR teams intervening.

15 The relaxation of dress codes in the professional world was already under way long before the pandemic, with the tech sector and start-up generation leading the way.

It was even catching on at banks. "We have had a 'flexible' dress code policy for almost two years now, which encourages our people to use their own judgment for what is appropriate to wear for their work day," said a spokesperson for Goldman Sachs. "The pandemic has seen the
20 trend toward comfort accelerate, though. "Suits and ties were already going away in IT. The pandemic gave an excuse to let go,".

The trend has been catastrophic for formal menswear companies like Brooks Brothers and the parent company of Men's Wearhouse, which both declared bankruptcy last year.

New York designer David Hart, a specialist in luxury men's ready-to-wear items, has taken "a
25 step back" from tailoring from the time being to focus on knitwear, masks, sweaters and polo shirts.

The pandemic will have "lasting consequences" in the way people dress for work, particularly men, according to Lilic. "The outfit will become more casual. It will still be a suit, but there might be an elasticated waist," he said. "The open collar shirt is going to be great," he told AFP.

30 The shift is already visible among fashion brands, which are pushing more and more cotton and linen jackets as well as polo shirts and even simple sneakers.

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