



A study by IWG, the world's leading provider of flexible workspace, shows that – as more and more firms adopt the hybrid model – their employees feel inspired to dress differently.

# The evolution of workwear fashion in a hybrid world

**IWG** The Global  
Workspace  
Leader



# A new world of work(wear)

In the past three years, the world of work has fundamentally changed. The benefits of hybrid working have become clear to companies around the world, with 90% of organisations embracing the model, according to McKinsey.

Now, many workers split their time between a local flexible workspace, home, and the company HQ – and it's no wonder that firms have been quick to adopt this way of working. For employees, a reduced need for commuting comes with health and wellbeing benefits, while the hybrid model has advantages for firms keen to cut their carbon footprints. Just as important, however, are the productivity gains associated with hybrid working. Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford University economist and

the world's leading expert on the model, has conducted research that shows hybrid working can boost overall productivity by 3-4%.

As the outdated 9-5 routine has receded, so, too, have traditional expectations around business attire. The workplace has changed, so what we consider appropriate workwear has also evolved, with individual style and comfort more prominent considerations than ever before.



Individualism in the workplace is becoming bolder and more experimental.

# Exploring the evolution

IWG is the world's leading provider of flexible workspace, with around 4,000 locations in more than 120 countries and brands including Regus and Spaces.

From our position at the forefront of the hybrid working revolution, we set out to explore the fashion trends people are currently following, how their style has changed, and ask for their insight on what they will be wearing in future. In the process, we uncovered trends as diverse as 'quiet luxury', 'dopamine dressing', and 'preppy streetwear'.

We spoke to more than 1,000 US hybrid workers over the age of 18 in August 2023, and partnered with a well-known fashion expert to analyse the results.

## Introducing fashion expert Diana Tsui

Tsui is a stylist and creative consultant based in New York City. She has worked on celebrity shoots featuring stars including Ali Wong, Zoe Kazan, and Willem Dafoe. Formerly a senior market editor for New York magazine The Cut, she launched the 'In Her Shoes' wear-to-work column.

Now, Tsui has partnered with IWG to assess the way mass adoption of the hybrid model has affected fashion trends.



Research shows hybrid working can boost productivity by **3-4%**

Perhaps unsurprisingly, we found that the adoption of hybrid working has transformed the way most people dress for their jobs. Some 79% of the people we surveyed said they dress differently now as a result of their more flexible work schedule.

# Comfortable is the new black

Men are changing up their wardrobes the most, with 85% reporting that they've noticed a shift in their professional attire. This compares with 77% of women and 62% of non-binary or gender-fluid people.

"The pandemic made companies realize that workers felt their best when they were able to wear outfits that reflected their personal style," says Tsui. "Post-pandemic, we all want to have a little fun with our looks, and hybrid working allows for creativity and flexibility."

Comfort is the key driver of change, with 53% of hybrid workers choosing outfits that will allow them to toggle between professional and personal tasks in a flexible work setting, and 35% blending casual and formal elements of dressing. This might mean pairing jeans with a blazer, or a midi dress with trainers comfortable enough to run around town in.

Meanwhile, only 21% say their look is more 'dressed up' than it was before. Altogether, it seems the clothes we choose to wear in the new world of work reflect the reality that we might need to adopt several different modes in rapid succession: rushing from the school run to a client meeting, or from a personal appointment to join a video call.

"As attitudes towards what's considered appropriate workwear evolves, fashion trends that normally would be reserved for off-duty hours have found their way into weekday dressing," explains Tsui. This makes sense in a world where, increasingly, work fits into life for many of us – rather than life being wrapped around work.

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Workers also reported that they are blending their professional and personal wardrobes in new ways, leaning towards high-quality and adaptable pieces that can be worn in multiple combinations.

# Monday to Sunday style

This, argues Tsui, is only natural: “It doesn’t make sense to have a closet full of drab suits reserved for Monday through Friday and a closet of fun clothes for the weekend.”

The demise of designated work clothes has led to a slight uptick in people’s average spend on clothing. Pre-pandemic, 52% of people said they spent \$250 to \$1,500 annually, compared with 54% now.

Again, this makes perfect sense in the new world of work. Investing in stylish, well-made garments that can be mixed and matched throughout the week is surely more tempting than shelling out for items that adhere to someone else’s idea of appropriate.

## Generations of style

According to IWG’s research, **Millennials** are the quickest to embrace new attitudes to style, with **86% revamping their clothing choices**. Just behind is **Gen X** at 77% and **Gen Z** at 74%.

**Boomers**, on the other hand, are split, with **only 51% noticing a difference in how they dress** since the adoption of hybrid working.

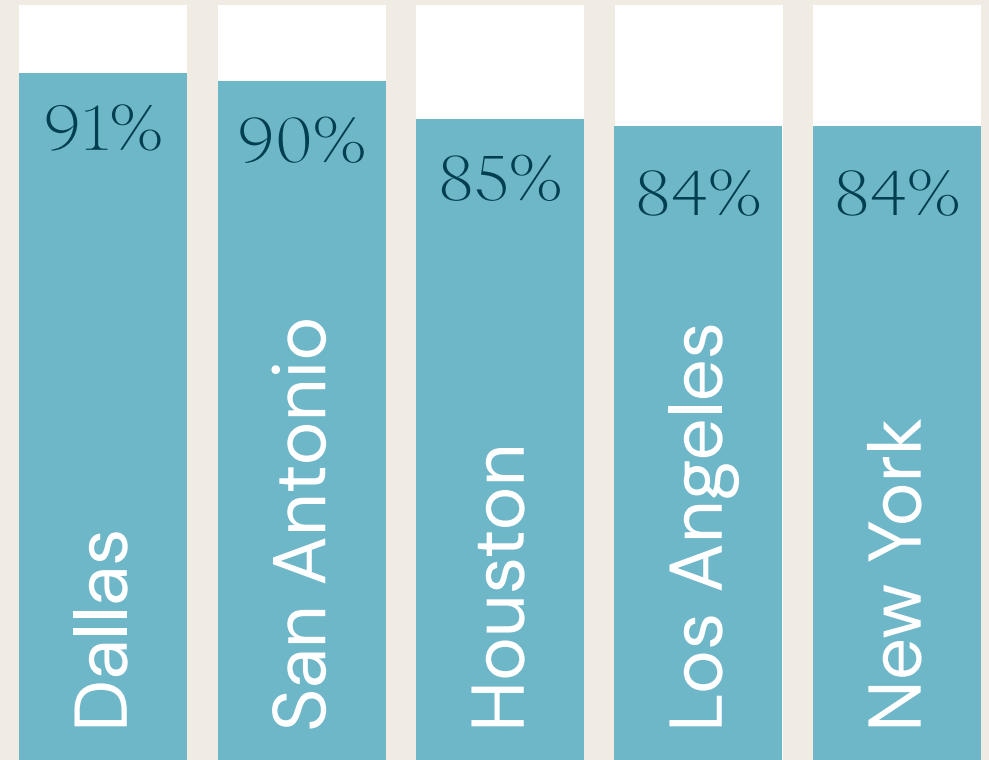


# Different rates of change



Our survey also highlighted that where you live affects how you dress, with Texans seeing the biggest changes to their work attire.

Respondents in these cities say their work style had changed the most since going hybrid:



Meanwhile, at the other end of the scale, only 60% of respondents in Memphis and 57% in Boston said they had adapted the way they dress since the adoption of the hybrid model.

# Four top trends

We asked hybrid workers which styles they currently wear, or would consider wearing, for work this year. Employees favoured fashion trends including Quiet Luxury, Dopamine Dressing, Preppy Streetwear, and Individualism as reflections of their preferred style, and of how they wish to be seen by colleagues and industry peers.



## 47% Quiet luxury

“Perhaps no trend is better for hybrid working than our current social media obsession with quiet luxury,” says Tsui. Represented by sleek clothes and accessories, and with a less-is-more approach that places value on design, fabrication, and wearability, this is business casual reimagined for 2023. “No matter if you identify as Gen-Z, Millennial, Gen-X, or Boomer, this is a universally stylish way to approach getting dressed for work,” Tsui adds.

## 38% Dopamine dressing

“Featuring bold colors and rich textures, dopamine dressing reflects an optimistic, post-pandemic attitude towards joyful dressing both in and out of the office,” explains Tsui. For those hybrid workers who have embraced their newfound freedoms in self-expression, this trend can easily be interpreted through a work-appropriate lens. “A bright sweater or statement earrings can be professional and playful, especially on a Zoom screen,” Tsui adds. An added bonus: dopamine dressing is called that for a reason – it’s an instant mood booster that can uplift morale.

## 25% Preppy streetwear

Preppy streetwear epitomises the notion of a ‘hybrid hustle’, where style meets functionality. With its fusion of refined elements and urban casual aesthetics, the trend symbolises a departure from rigid conventions – whether in traditional office settings or fashion norms – and celebrates the melding of diverse influences to create a distinct, contemporary identity. “You only need to look to the runway as proof that streetwear has been the major driving force in men’s fashion over the last few years,” says Tsui. “Tailoring paired with sporty comfort is an easy, approachable way to elevate and modernize your office wardrobe.”

## 22% Individualism

Breaking stereotypes and boundaries leads to innovation – the kind of creative thinking that’s often fostered by a flexible work arrangement. Now, more of us than ever have the freedom to choose how and where we work, as well as the power to express ourselves through what we wear. Just as hybrid work breaks down the barriers of traditional offices, individualist fashion smashes the cookie cutter mould of fashion norms. “Especially with younger Millennials and Gen-Z, self-expression that challenges outdated expectations is reflected in their choice of office wear,” says Tsui. “Their style is the most inspiring by far.”

### Also spotted...

According to our survey, workers were also fans of these social media influencer trends:

Tailoring	42%
Coastal grandmother	36%
Tomato girl/boy	29%

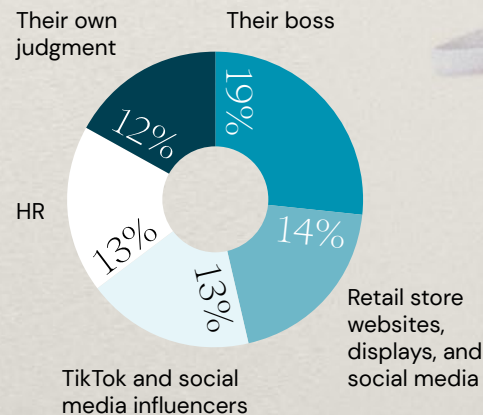
# Declining dress codes?

While most companies still have clearly defined dress codes, 10% of workers aged 18-24 don't know whether their employers offer guidelines on appropriate office attire. In a hybrid world, it seems the line between workwear and casualwear has blurred so much that some less experienced workers are not sure which side they should be on – or even who to ask.

Our researchers found that 57% of hybrid workers' companies have a dress code. Roughly 80% believe these are 'strictly enforced', while 58% say gym clothes are deemed inappropriate. Also frowned upon are mini-skirts (56%) and crop tops (54%).

Conversely, 79% of workers said their employers allow jeans. Trainers (78%), sheer details (56%), shorts (54%), baseball caps (49%), and flip-flops (47%) are also considered acceptable.

When in doubt, employees told us they refer to the following sources for help:





# Still dressing to impress

Fortunately for the fashion conscious, it's clear that the rise of hybrid working hasn't signalled the end of dressing to impress. Of the hybrid workers we spoke to, 69% still believe that what you wear to work reflects your title and level of role within a hybrid work organisation. It's clear that people still want to inspire confidence in their colleagues – and they know that their choice of attire can affect how they're viewed.

Within a blended, hybrid work wardrobe, some items will still be worn more frequently at the office than at home, as our findings show:



	In the office	At home
T-shirts	66%	81%
Hoodies	50%	73%
Sweatpants or leggings	51%	74%
Shorts	49%	76%
Sheer details	44%	56%
Crop tops (bare midriffs)	37%	58%
Distressed or ripped jeans	42%	63%
No pants (trend)	31%	44%
Suits	79%	69%
Blazers	75%	67%

Overall, it's clear that in-office attire remains slightly more formal than what people might wear at home, or when working from a local flexspace.

# A fashionable future



Arguably, the change in how we dress for work is best summed up by the new hybrid work essentials: suits (19%) and trainers (16%).

These can work separately or together, but feeling the need to own both is emblematic of the wide range of outfit options – as well as the freedom and flexibility – that hybrid workers have available to them.

“The demand for hybrid work continues to increase dramatically. And this evolution impacts everything from real estate to fashion. Companies are seeing the benefits of hybrid work, from cost savings to employee satisfaction and morale to environmental impacts – and workers are dressing more comfortably and changing their styles to match.”

**Mark Dixon**  
IWG Founder and CEO

**We help more than eight million people work the hybrid way in thousands of locations worldwide. Find out more about what we do today at [iwgplc.com](https://www.iwgplc.com).**