



Shoes such as flip-flops, loafers and Martin boots have become increasingly popular among women in recent times. — IC



Sporty feel brought out by leggings and sneakers has become a global fashion trend. — IC

“Wearing high heels for long periods of time will harm both toes and various joints, from ankles to knees and even hips,” said Wang Jian, a bone and joint surgeon with Nanfang Hospital affiliated to Southern Medical University. “When wearing high heels, women are forced to stand or walk on their tiptoes and their weight is pushed forward, exerting great pressure on joints and toes.”

Some fashion experts say the COVID pandemic was the final gasp for high heels in China.

“I think the trend away from heels may have started even earlier than that, when sports and fitness became popular and brands like Lululemon

entered the public eye,” said Sissi Gao, general manager of FRAME China, a Los Angeles fashion brand. “We have to admit that shoes with heels higher than 5 centimeters don’t really fit in with daily life, no matter if we are talking about work, leisure or the dating scene.”

Gao told Shanghai Daily that fashion aesthetics always change with time. High heels were associated with feminine beauty, slim bodies and graceful postures, but women nowadays are more interested in health and comfort.

“Our customers,” she said, “will undoubtedly prioritize comfort, and that will also be reflected in shoe styles.”

But will the era of high heels ever return? Maybe. Fashion dictates have a way of reappearing after a long absence.

Yuan Weiying, 79, loved high heels when she was younger.

“I still remember the 1980s, when high heels became popular after they entered the Chinese market during the period of opening up the economy,” said the retired civil servant.

“Women back then favored dresses and high heels because they were in stark contrast with what they had been wearing. The newfound beauty was so stunning that the sweet memory stays with me even today. But I seldom wore high heels after I turned 60. They really aren’t safe for seniors.”



Portrait of French King Louis XIV (1638-1715) in a pair of high heels — a fashion style first embraced by noblemen.



Flat shoes enjoy the best sales in almost every shoe brand on Taobao.