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# A new wave of hosiery brands is offering a fresh point of view on old-fashioned tights

A new wave of tights brands plan to dethrone hosiery incumbents by using innovative materials, championing sustainability, and designing with the consumer in mind. Here's how they compare with each other.



**Veena McCooles**

Contributing Writer · March 22, 2022



*Threads is a hosiery brand for women and men that are designed in Canada and made in Italy. (Photo: Bettina Bogar)*

## HONING HOSIERY

In the era of sweatpants and athleisure, it's hard to believe that tights were once the new frontier of comfort for women.

Since the invention of nylon in 1938, tights have accessorized any number of sartorial trends. From accompanying mod mini skirts, to the fishnets of 80's grunge, to modern office workwear, tights have remained a reliable mainstay of our dresser drawers, without much product innovation.

Today, a cast of emerging brands are seeking to reimagine tights by investing in new climate-conscious materials and implementing consumer feedback to create more empowering and ethical alternatives.

### The tights of today

Today's tights brands were built to fix a laundry list of problems consumers experienced in the category. Their cheap fabrics felt almost

disposable, often rolling down, chafing, and quickly ripping. That's why brands including [Heist](#), [Hêdoïne](#) and [Threads](#) have all turned to soft Italian yarn for their product lines.

Their previously too-tight seams in strange places created awkward silhouettes and left red marks on the skin. Today's brands offer seamless thicker waistbands, sometimes hand-sewn on, to hold you in without sagging or rolling.

The list of new-look features goes on: tights are now rip-resistant, sustainable by design, and made in an inclusive array of expanded nude skin tones. Heist claims to have worked with 100,000 women to engineer its seven representative shades for every skin tone.

Xenia Chen, founder of Toronto-based Threads, took a data-driven approach to design her line. "You almost get a visceral reaction when talking to female coworkers about tights," she says, describing tights' myriad pain points that she and her former colleagues in finance experienced. After receiving 200 responses to her consumer research survey, Chen began imagining her tights brand according to the feedback.

Hêdoïne, meanwhile, first launched its tights recycling program in the summer of 2021, and then debuted biodegradable tights in September. In 2022, Hêdoïne's focus is researching and developing styles using recycled yarns and rolling out biodegradable tights as existing SKUs sell out.

At Heist, recycled and recyclable materials account for half of the brand's tights inventory, and by fall 2023, all its tights will be made from them. Heist also recently launched satin underwear with recycled eco-lace made from plastic waste, and continues to drop new products every three weeks.

### **Selling the silhouette**

Brands are also rethinking marketing — and in some cases, product — to include their growing customer segment of men. Hêdoïne, which reports that 20-30% of customers are male, strives to encompass any and all gender identification in their marketing language. "For us, that persona we cater to is ultimately about an attitude and a way of living that resonates with men as well," says Anna Rauch, cofounder of London-based brand Hêdoïne.

In September 2021, Threads launched "Threads for Men" after ten months of development and interviewing 200 of its most active male customers. Threads for Men, which sold out within the first week of hitting shelves, features modifications on Threads' original tights including a fly, longer legs and more fabric in the brief area. "Our mission is to make people feel more comfortable, and for men to know they are welcome," says Chen.

Inclusive marketing efforts must reach beyond gender, as the market for tights differs from millennials and direct-to-consumer enthusiasts. "The true Threads fanatics are in the 45+ age group, who have lived through decades of problematic tights and are grateful for a solution that finally arrived," Chen says.

Read more: [Building for boomers? These brands are looking beyond Gen Z and millennials](#)

### **Tights in a post-COVID world**

Despite the post-pandemic shift to casualwear, none of the brands interviewed are particularly worried about the hosiery market. In fact, each of the three brands experienced a surge in sales after the first wave of the pandemic that surpassed pre-COVID sales.

Heist reported a huge shift in demand towards colors and patterns in the summer of 2020, when people were "rediscovering the joy of dressing up again," according to Natasja Giezen-Smith, CEO of Heist. Sartorially, tights can "unlock" the potential of your wardrobe, she adds: not only for older demographics, but for those looking to take their

outfits up a notch, particularly in winter.

Furthermore, frequent tights-wearers such as lawyers, bankers, and flight attendants still have the same dress codes as they did pre-pandemic. Such loyalists benefit from subscription services now offered by most tights brands, who must balance the benefit of collecting subscription revenue with standing by the claims that tights are high-quality and long-lasting enough to not need frequent replacing. “We’re focusing on comfort and quality, and making tights that last you all season,” says Giezen-Smith. “All tights eventually deteriorate in some way, but we don’t want customers to buy tights too often.”

Capitalizing on the blurring lines between loungewear, hosiery and shapewear, brands are also diversifying into new product categories. Heist recently launched footless tights, and received customer feedback from people who wore them around the house as leggings. Hêdoïne pulled forward several launches, including biker shorts and the “charmer,” a see-through, patterned version of an athletic legging. Similarly, Chen recently launched thigh-high stockings and says she is looking to expand Threads into other overlooked wardrobe “back office” items like bodysuits, base layers, and nipple covers.

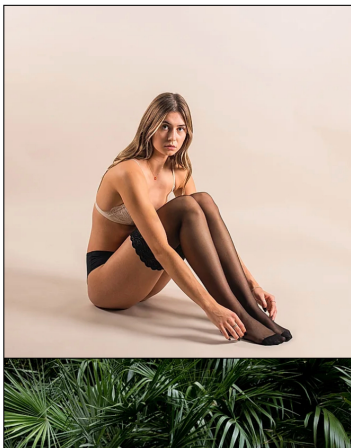
#### Sewing it up

As is characteristic among direct-to-consumer startups, tights brands are embracing new market entrants — [From Rachel, Swedish Stockings](#) and [Billi London](#) are examples — and fostering a spirit of collaboration over competition. “The more players in the industry, the faster innovation happens and the more we can all push forward,” says Rauch. “If we want to be more sustainable, we need all hands on deck.”

Ultimately, what unites these brands is a focus on the whole lifecycle of a pair of tights: the consumer’s shopping experience and ability to subscribe to a wardrobe staple, the improved technology and flattering fit, and the environmentally-conscious afterlife of biodegradable materials.

Giezen-Smith, CEO of Heist, cites the friend who, many years ago, introduced her to the brand she now helms. “She said to me, ‘I have better things to do than think about the fact that I’m wearing tights. Now, I focus on what I want to wear rather than thinking about tights. The tights are important, but at the end of the day, it’s not about the tights.’”

## 7 modern hosiery brands



### Threads

●●●●● 5 · 5 Ratings

Threads creates high-quality and comfortable hosiery for women and men that are designed in Canada and made in Italy.

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### Hedoïne



●●●●● 4.1 Rating

Heroine makes high-quality tights and leggings designed to last for empowered women.

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## Heist

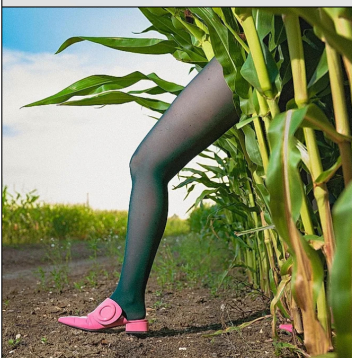
●●●●● 5.1 Rating

Heist makes tights, shapewear, and other foundationwear designed with comfort, style, and performance in mind.

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## Swedish Stockings

●●●●● 5.1 Rating

Swedish Stockings makes eco-friendly tights out of recycled yarn.

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## Sheertex

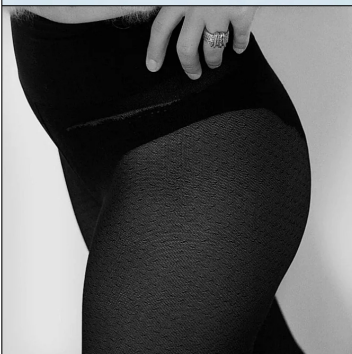
●●●●● 4.9 Ratings

Sheertex designs superior strength, lightweight, and breathable tights, stockings, and socks.

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## Billi London

Billi London claims to make durable and comfortable biodegradable tights, socks, and leggings.

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[Tested](#)



## From Rachel

From Rachel makes stylish and sustainable tights along with other fashion essentials.

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