A new survey by Microsoft finds that today’s employers shouldn’t just be worried about job satisfaction or employee turnover when they think about managing their staff. A startling majority of the computing workforce* is uncomfortable on at least a daily basis, with current desk setups and office accessories partly to blame. Comfort at the office is a top priority for workers, especially because it will make them better at their jobs and happier in their personal lives. But unfortunately, ergonomic accessories are absent from many workplaces. What’s more, workers don’t feel that their employers are invested enough in relieving their pain – but they’re not making strides of their own to get better either.

*Online survey of French who work full-time or part-time and spend at least three hours on their computer for work each day
PERSISTENT PAIN

Uncomfortable workplaces cause pain, and most workers’ desk setups are partly to blame.

Regular Pain. More than nine in ten (91%) workers report that they experience discomfort at work. And more than one in ten (13%) of these workers reveal that this happens to them for at least half of each day, if not more often.

Thinking Ahead. And many of these sufferers are concerned about what this might mean for them in the long run. Almost two in three (66%) worry more about the impact of these aches and pains on their long-term health than simply having to deal with it on a regular basis.

91% of workers are uncomfortable on the job.
Pointing to Pain. Workers cite the top two sources of this physical distress as spending numerous hours staring at computer screens (53%) and sitting at their desks (49%). Other culprits include typing for long periods of time (20%) and repeatedly using an external mouse (11%).

- Workers who are 35 and older are more apt than their 18-34-year-old counterparts to attribute their workplace discomfort to staring at a computer screen (57% vs. 45%) and sitting at their desks (50% vs. 45%) so often.

Setting Themselves Up for Failure. Almost one in four (24%) workers who encounter this physical distress at work are apt to blame their current setup at work, such the accessories they use or how things are arranged on their desks.

- This reason is more likely to resonate among women than men (31% vs. 21%).
Not About Time. Additionally, close to half (45%) say that their discomfort is far more likely to be caused by their current setup at work or the specific office accessories they use than the number of hours spent at the office.

Hurting All Over. This may be why many report that their discomfort has impacted the areas that tend to be most affected by a poorly set up desk area: the neck (35%), shoulders (24%), wrists (22%), upper back (34%) and hands (16%).

- Workers in the 18-34 age group are more apt than their 35+ colleagues to report work-related discomfort in their upper back (38% vs. 32%) and hands (21% vs. 14%).

Body parts affected by discomfort at work*

- Lower back (48%)
- Eyes (41%)
- Neck (35%)
- Upper back (34%)
- Shoulders (24%)
- Wrists (22%)
- Legs (20%)
- Hands (16%)
- Feet (8%)
- Other (4%)

*Among respondents who have experienced discomfort at work
SEEKING RELIEF

Most employees value comfort at work, and know that it would make them more productive and happier.

At work, is it more important that you are...?

- Comfortable: 58%
- Stress-free: 42%

High Priority. There’s one thing that French workers value more than peace of mind at the office. Almost six in ten (58%) employees – regardless of whether they encounter discomfort on the job now -- admit it’s more crucial for them to be comfortable than stress-free at work.
  - This sentiment is more common among male than female workers (60% vs. 51%) and laptop/tablet users than those with desktops (66% vs. 51%).

#1 Choice. In fact, more than eight in ten (83%) employees would place comfort as a top priority if they were in charge of selecting the office accessories where they work.
  - This sentiment is more common among male than female workers (60% vs. 51%) and laptop/tablet users than those with desktops (66% vs. 51%).

Easy Sacrifices. More than half (55%) of those who experience discomfort would be quick to give up their company holiday party to be comfortable all of the time. And 34 percent would choose comfort over free food at the office.
  - More 35+ workers than those ages 18-34 (59% vs. 47%) would place comfort at work over their annual holiday party.

Pain Relief Over Perks. What’s more, 14 percent of all workers would prefer comfort at work in place of an office with a window, with more 18-34-year-olds than those 35+ (21% vs. 11%) sharing this preference.
Building Better Employees. Many workers know that more comfort equals more productivity. Almost two in five (36%) employees believe they’d complete most tasks faster if they never felt any work-related pain. Another 17 percent say they would take fewer breaks.

Personal Profit. A more comfortable workspace is likely to yield some benefits outside of the office, too. Nearly half think they’d have more energy (47%) and feel better when the workday ends (44%). Thirty-nine percent might even sleep better.

Worth the Investment. This is likely why almost one in three (32%) workers would be willing to chip in some of their own money to ensure constant comfort at work if their employers weren’t willing to take care of them in this way. On average, this proactive group would spend $62 each month to make this happen – or more than $700 a year!

- More men than women (36% vs. 25%) and more laptop and tablet users than desktop users (36% vs. 29%) would be willing to dig into their own pockets for such a personal cause.
- To take comfort into their own hands at work, female employees would shell out more monthly money than their male counterparts ($81 vs. $56).

If workers were more comfortable on the job...

- 47% would have more energy
- 44% would feel better when they get home
- 39% would sleep better
- 36% would complete tasks faster than usual
MISSING PIECES

Even though discomfort repeatedly gets in the way of work, ergonomic accessories are being overlooked.

Undesirable Effects. Just as more comfort would bring productivity, discomfort is dealing a serious blow to job performance right now. Because they've been uncomfortable at work, more than four in ten workers admit they've felt like they weren’t doing their best at work (48%) and have been unable to focus (41%).
- More 35+ workers than those aged 18-34 confess they've felt their performance was subpar (50% vs. 44%) as a result of their discomfort.

Putting in Fewer Hours. What’s more, close to half (49%) report that they take breaks from their work to deal with their discomfort in the moment; almost two in ten (18%) confess they take longer breaks due to their pain. And 18 percent are apt to leave work early to handle the discomfort that strikes them at the office.
- Taking a break to immediately address discomfort is more common among female than male employees (53% vs. 47%).

49% take breaks the moment they feel uncomfortable at work
18% take longer breaks because of discomfort at work
**Unfortunate Obstacle.** Clearly, a lot of time is wasted in the face of discomfort. Nearly eight in ten (77%) say they have difficulty doing their jobs at least once a month for this reason. On average, this lasts for **eight hours** in each month.

- **Lost time due to discomfort has happened in the last month to more laptop or tablet users than desktop users (82% vs. 73%).**

**No Support.** Yet, close to a quarter (24%) report that not a single ergonomic item can be found at their current workstations. And **34 percent** say that outside of their chairs, ergonomic accessories are not present where they work.

**Uncomfortable Items.** What’s more, few are able to say that their external keyboards (26%) or external mice (33%) are ergonomic, or designed to minimize discomfort or fatigue.

---

**Which office accessories of yours are ergonomic?**

- **53% Chair**
- **36% Monitor**
- **33% Mouse**
- **26% Keyboard**
- **22% Desk**
- **22% Computer**
- **24% Nothing**
ACHING ALONE

Many workers aren’t getting the support they expect from their employers.

Regular Pain. Perhaps because of the obvious impact of discomfort on efficiency, nine in ten (90%) workers believe that their company should be responsible for addressing this issue when it appears, and not the workers themselves.

Who is responsible for ensuring employee comfort?

- My company 90%
- Employees 10%
Not Enough Support. But unfortunately, fewer than three in ten workers feel that the company they work for truly cares about the health (28%) or comfort (26%) of its employees.
  o Fewer female than male employees believe that their employers are concerned about the health (21% vs. 31%) or comfort (21% vs. 27%) of most staffers.

Not Enough Support. And almost three in ten (28%) don’t think this would change even when they encounter discomfort. They believe instead that they’d be the ones to suggest more comfortable office accessories, rather than any of the powers that be – including human resources and IT – or their colleagues.

Unwilling to Ask. Yet, a minority of workers would actually feel assertive enough to request new office accessories from their employers, such as a new monitor (22%), mouse (19%), or keyboard (19%). In fact, more (27%) employees would have no problem requesting the ability to work remotely instead.

Not Consulted. Many employees probably feel this way because the current items they use were simply handed to them. Around half report that their keyboards (50%) and mice (43%) were selected for them without their input.

I would feel comfortable asking my employer for a new...

- Computer: 33%
- Chair: 30%
- Monitor: 22%
- Mouse: 19%
- Keyboard: 19%
An Issue Worth Watching. Whether it’s a normal occurrence or not, more than eight in ten (87%) workers who have experienced discomfort believe that it should be addressed. And 68 percent of this group sees workplace pain as a standard job hazard.

More 35+ workers than those who are in the 18-34 age group (89% vs. 81%) feel that discomfort on the job should be attended to.
A Reason to Speak Up. Almost one in two (47%) also claim that a bout of pain would motivate them to ask for more accommodating office accessories – this carries equal weight as a doctor’s recommendation (44%).

○ Feeling uncomfortable would push more female than male workers (51% vs. 45%) to put in a request for office accessories to alleviate their pain.

No Follow-Through. Yet, less than three in ten (25%) have requested new office accessories to address their long-term discomfort.

○ Fewer female than male employees (20% vs. 28%) have taken this simple but important step.

Lack of Faith. Many of these workers might not be taking the initiative because they don’t think their need will be fulfilled in a timely manner. Only 17 percent would describe their employers as a company that addresses employee requests quickly.

Actions taken to address long-term discomfort at work*

- Requested new office accessories: 25%
- Consulted a doctor: 23%
- Requested a new setup at work: 19%
- Spent less time at desk: 17%
- Brought office accessories from home: 9%
- Spent own money on office accessories: 8%
- Worked remotely more often: 6%
- Got a new job: 5%
- Moved to a new department: 2%
- Other: 1%
- Nothing: 28%

*Among respondents who have experienced discomfort at work
**Margin of Error** = +/- 4.2 Percent

**Sample** = 533 French Workers Ages 18 and Over Who Spend at Least 3 Hours a Day on Their Computers for Work

**About The Survey** The Microsoft PC Accessories Survey was conducted between 11 July and 22 July, 2013 among 533 French workers (full-time and part-time) ages 18 and over who spend at least 3 hours a day on their computers for work, using an email invitation and an online survey.

Results of any sample are subject to sampling variation. The magnitude of the variation is measurable and is affected by the number of interviews and the level of the percentages expressing the results.

In this particular study, the chances are 95 in 100 that a survey result does not vary, plus or minus, by more than 4.2 percentage points from the result that would be obtained if interviews had been conducted with all persons in the universe represented by the sample. The margin of error for any subgroups will be slightly higher.

**Kelton** is a leading global insights firm serving as a partner to more than 100 of the Fortune 500 and thousands of smaller companies and organizations. Utilizing a wide range of customized, innovative research techniques and staff expertise in marketing, branding, PR, media, and business strategy; Kelton helps drive our clients’ businesses forward.

For more information about **Kelton** please call 1.888.8.KELTON or visit [www.keltonglobal.com](http://www.keltonglobal.com).