



# Microsoft Healthy Computing Survey – U.S.

August 2013

# EMPLOYEE PAIN POINTS

American workers are uncomfortable at their desks, but they don't have the tools to address these physical problems.



A new survey from 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. Unfortunately, ergonomic accessories are absent from many workplaces. What's more, workers don't feel 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 Americans who work full-time or part-time and spend at least three hours on their computers for work each day.*

# PERSISTENT PAIN

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

1 **Regular pain.** More than four in five (85%) workers report that they experience discomfort at work. And more than one in 10 (12%) of these workers reveal that this happens to them for at least half of each day, if not more often.

- *Daily workplace discomfort is more common among 18–34-year-old employees than those who are 35+ (89% vs. 84%).*

**Thinking ahead.** Many of these sufferers are concerned about what this might mean for them in the long run. Almost six in 10 (55%) worry more about the impact of work-related aches and pains on their long-term health than simply having to deal with it on a daily basis.

2 **85% of workers are uncomfortable on the job.**



3

**Pointing to pain.** Workers cite the top two sources of their physical distress as spending numerous hours sitting at their desks (63%) and staring at computer screens (53%). Other culprits include typing for long periods of time (25%) and continually using an external mouse (14%).

- *Spending a lot of time behind a computer screen is more commonly seen as a cause of discomfort by women than men (57% vs. 49%), more 18–34-year-olds than those who are 35+ (63% vs. 49%), and more workers using laptops or tablets than those with desktops (57% vs. 51%).*

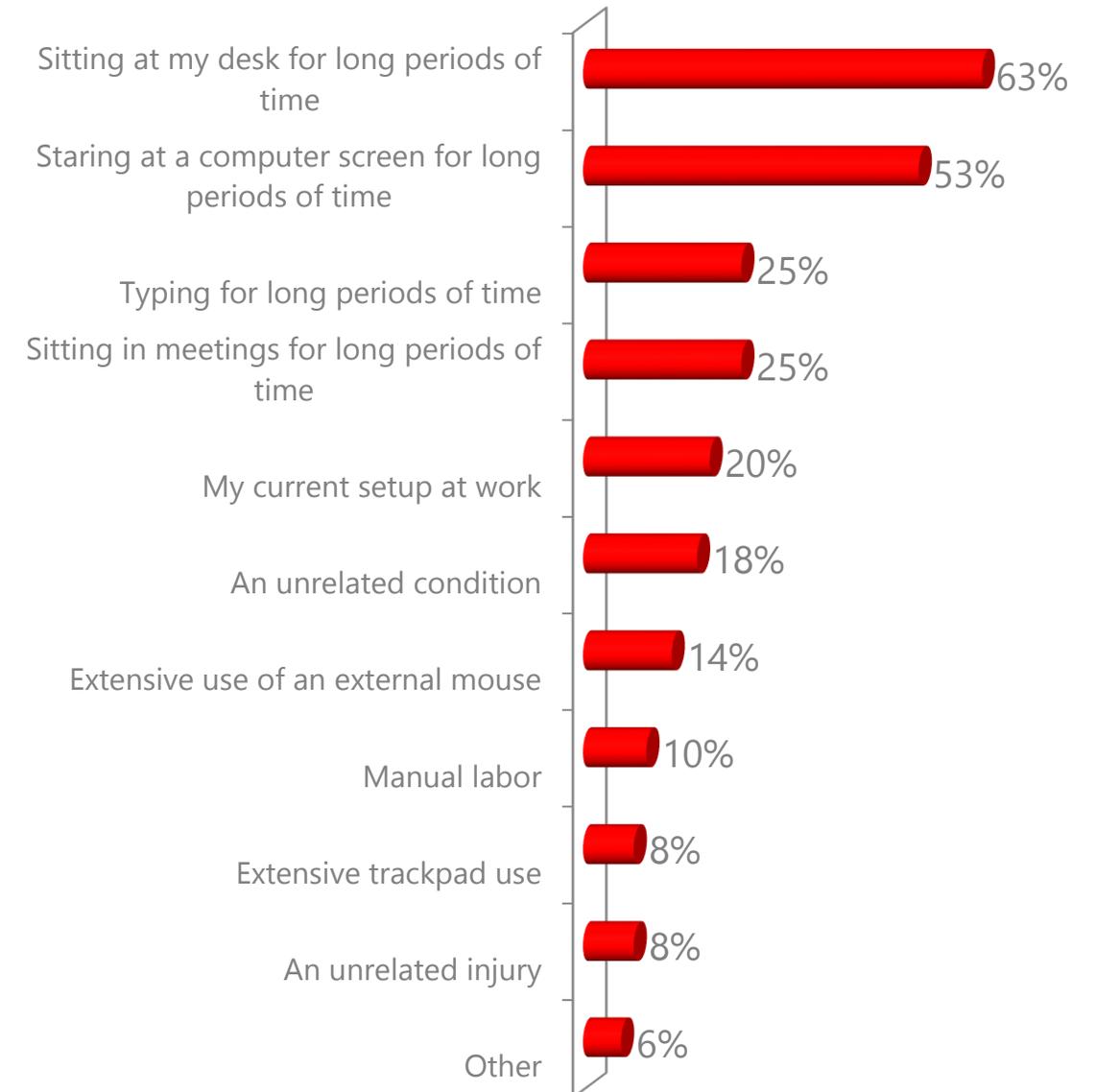
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**Setting themselves up for failure.** One in five (20%) workers who encounter this discomfort at work are apt to blame their current work setups, such as the accessories they use or how things are arranged on their desks.

- *This reason is more likely to resonate among women than men (23% vs. 17%) and those with laptops or tablets versus workers who use desktops (25% vs. 18%).*

4

## Sources of discomfort at work\*



\* Among respondents who have experienced discomfort at work.

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**Not about time.** In addition, more than four in 10 (42%) say their discomfort is far more likely to be caused by their current setups at work or the specific office accessories they use than the number of hours spent at the office.



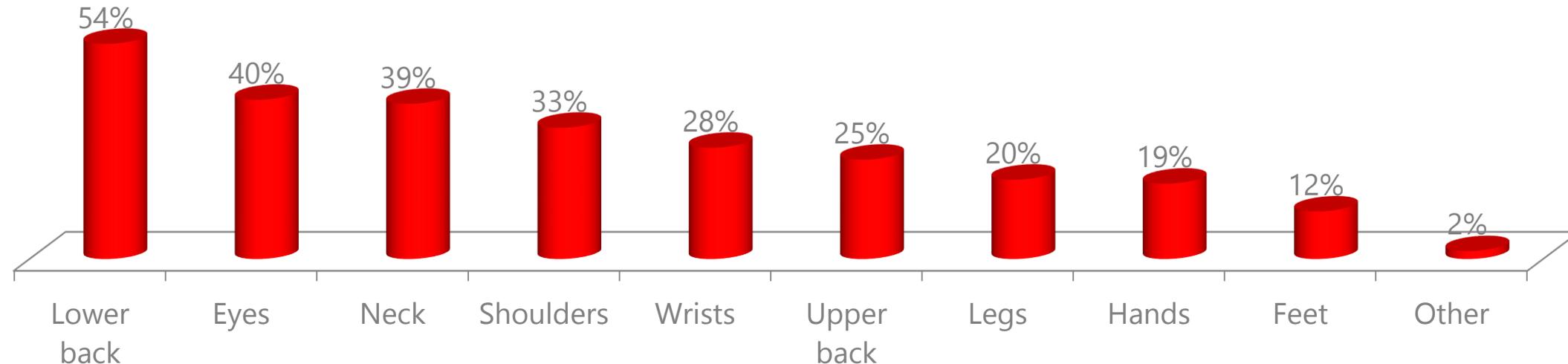
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**Hurting all over.** This may be why many report that their discomfort has impacted the areas that tend to be most affected by a poorly set up desk area: neck (39%), shoulders (33%), wrists (28%), upper back (25%) and hands (19%).

- Workers in the 18–34 age group are more apt than their 35+ elders to report that their work-related discomfort occurs in their wrists (34% vs. 25%), upper back (37% vs. 21%) and hands (23% vs. 18%).
- Laptop and tablet users are more likely than desktop users to encounter such pain in their shoulders (38% vs. 31%) and wrists (37% vs. 24%).

8

## Body parts affected by discomfort at work\*



\* Among respondents who have experienced discomfort at work.

# SEEKING RELIEF

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

1

**High priority.** There's one thing American workers value more than peace of mind at the office. Close to six in 10 (59%) 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.

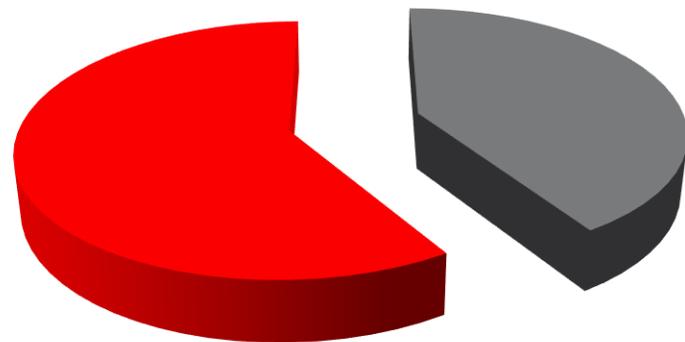
- *This sentiment is more common among men than women (62% vs. 55%) and 35+ workers than those who are 18–34 (61% vs. 52%).*

**#1 Choice.** In fact, eight in 10 (80%) employees would place comfort as a top priority if they were in charge of selecting the office accessories where they work.

2

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

Comfortable  
59%



Stress-free  
41%

3

**Easy sacrifices.** More than half (51%) of those who experience discomfort would be quick to give up their company holiday parties to be comfortable all the time. And 40 percent would choose constant comfort over free food at the office.

- *More women than men (55% vs. 48%) would place comfort at work over their annual holiday parties.*

**Pain relief over perks.** Almost a third (30%) of all workers would prefer comfort at work in place of an office with a window.

4

**Building better employees.** Many workers know that more comfort equals more productivity. Two in five (40%) employees believe they'd complete most tasks faster if they never felt any work-related pain. Another 22 percent say they would take fewer breaks.

**Personal profit.** A more comfortable workspace is likely to yield some benefits outside the office, too. More than half think they'd have more energy (51%) and feel better when the workday ends (57%). Thirty-seven percent might even sleep better.

5

**Worth the investment.** This is likely why almost half (44%) of workers would 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 \$43 each month to make this happen — which adds up to more than \$500 a year!

- *More laptop and tablet users than desktop users (52% vs. 40%) would dig into their own pockets for such a personal cause.*
- *To take comfort into their own hands at work, male employees would shell out more monthly money than women (\$54 vs. \$32).*

6

**If workers were more comfortable on the job...**



**57%** would feel better when they get home



**51%** would have more energy



**40%** would complete tasks faster than usual



**37%** would sleep better

# MISSING PIECES

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

1



**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 a third of workers admit they've been unable to focus (38%) and felt like they weren't doing their best at work (37%).

- *More 18–34-year-old workers than their 35+ colleagues own up to an inability to focus (45% vs. 35%) because of discomfort.*

2

**Putting in fewer hours.** Close to three in five (58%) report that they take breaks from their work to deal with their discomfort in the moment; nearly two in 10 (16%) confess they take longer breaks due to their pain. And 13 percent are apt to leave work early when discomfort strikes at the office.

- *Taking breaks to immediately address discomfort is more common among female than male employees (61% vs. 55%).*

3

58% take breaks the moment they feel uncomfortable at work

16% take longer breaks because of discomfort at work



4

**Unfortunate obstacle.** Clearly, a lot of time is wasted in the face of discomfort. More than half (54%) say they have difficulty doing their jobs at least once a month for this reason. On average, this lasts for **three hours** each month.

- *Lost time due to discomfort has happened in the last month to more men than women (58% vs. 50%), more 18–34-year-olds than those who are 35+ (63% vs. 51%), and more laptop or tablet users than desktop users (58% vs. 53%).*

5

**No support.** Yet, close to four in 10 (37%) report that not a single ergonomic item can be found at their current workstations. And one in two (50%) say that outside of their chairs, ergonomic accessories are not present where they work.

**Uncomfortable items.** What's more, fewer than one in three say their external keyboards (24%) or external mice (29%) are ergonomic or designed to minimize discomfort or fatigue.

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## Which office accessories of yours are ergonomic?

**49% Chair**



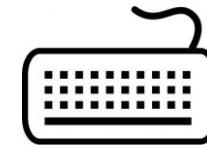
**29% Mouse**



**28% Monitor**



**24% Keyboard**



**18% Desk**



**17% Computer**



**37% Nothing**

# ACHING ALONE

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

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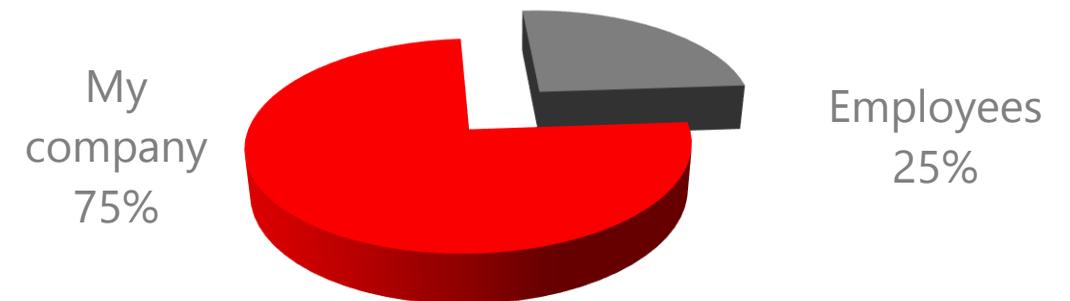
**Regular pain.** Perhaps because of the obvious impact of discomfort on efficiency, three in four (75%) workers believe their companies should be responsible for addressing this issue when it appears, not the workers themselves.

- *This belief is shared by more female than male workers (78% vs. 72%).*



2

## Who is responsible for ensuring employee comfort?



3

**Not enough support.** But unfortunately, fewer than half of workers feel the companies they work for truly care about the health (44%) or comfort (30%) of their employees.

- Fewer 35+ employees than 18-34-year-olds (28% vs. 35%) feel their employers worry about their comfort.

**Not enough support.** And almost one in two (48%) 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, not the powers that be — including human resources and IT — or their colleagues.

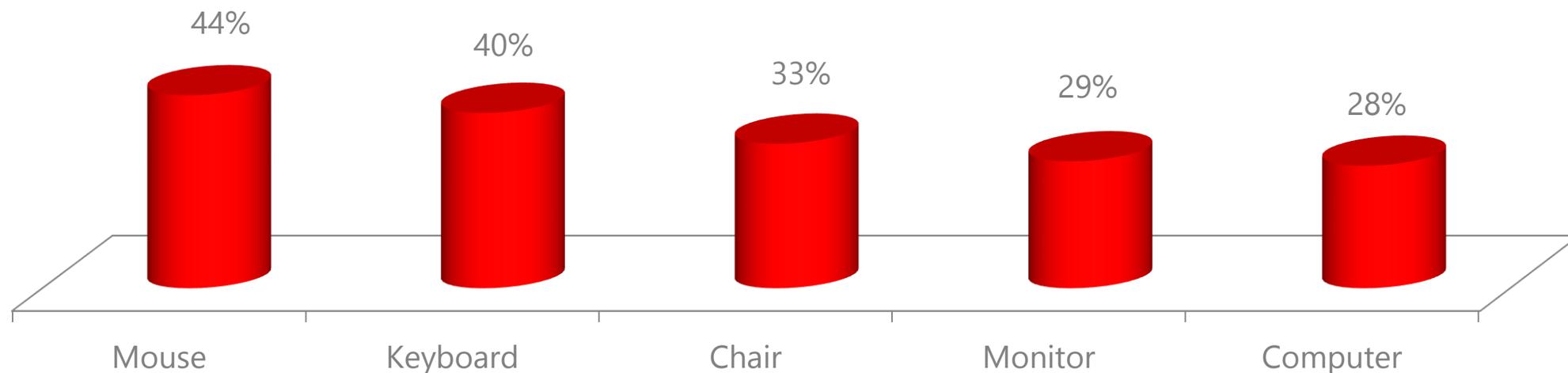
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**Unwilling to ask.** Yet, a minority of workers would actually feel assertive enough to request new office accessories from their employers, such as a new mouse (44%), keyboard (40%), chair (33%) or monitor (29%).

**Not consulted.** Many employees probably feel this way because the current items they use were simply handed to them. More than half report that their keyboards (58%) and mice (54%) were selected for them without their input.

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



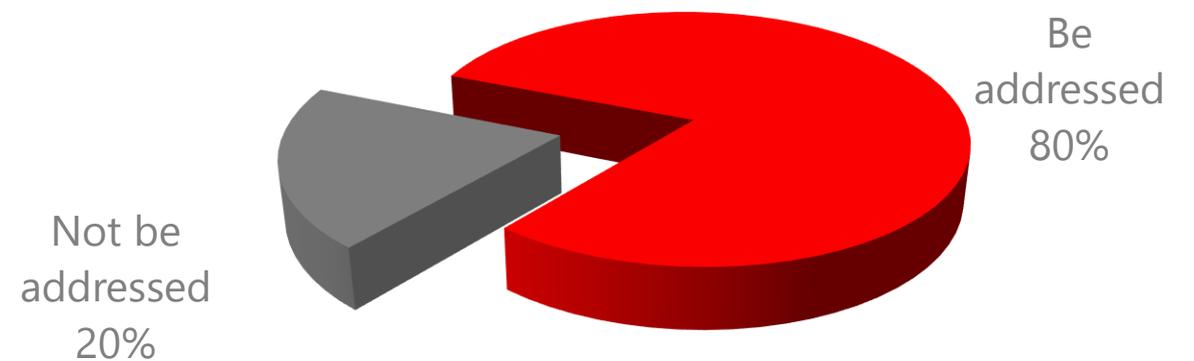
# SLOW TO ACT

Although they're not always getting the care they want from the powers that be, few employees have taken their comfort into their own hands.

**1** **An issue worth watching.** Whether it's a normal occurrence or not, eight in 10 (80%) workers who have experienced discomfort believe it should be addressed. And 65 percent of this group sees workplace pain as a standard job hazard.

- *More men than women feel that pain in the office is to be expected (73% vs. 68%). Similarly, men are more apt than women to believe it needs to be addressed (82% vs. 77%).*

**2** **Discomfort at work should...\***



\* Among respondents who have experienced discomfort at work.

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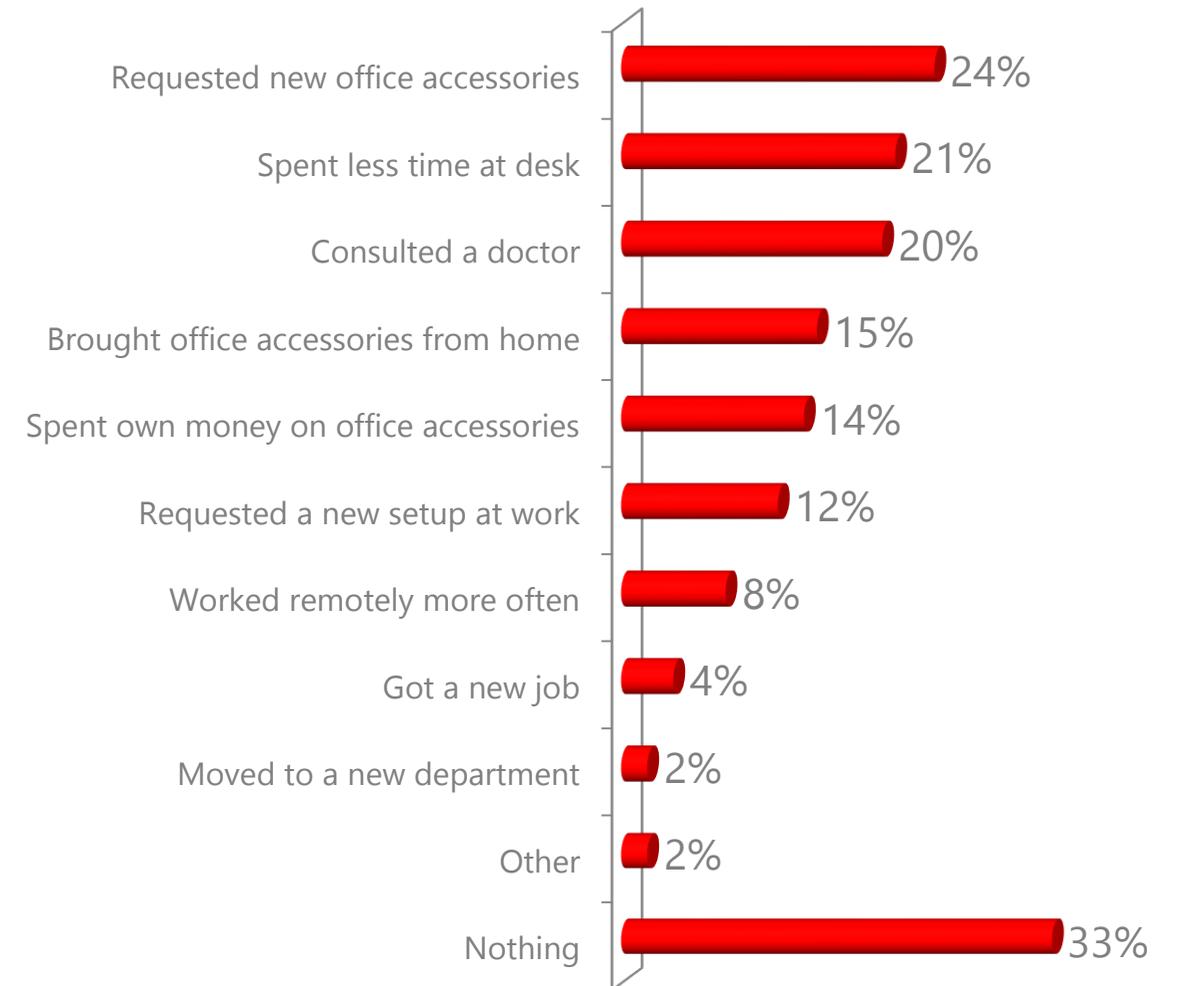
**A reason to take action.** More than one in two (54%) also claim that a moment of pain would motivate them to ask for more accommodating office accessories — more so than even a doctor’s recommendation (48%).

- *Feeling uncomfortable would push more women than men (57% vs. 50%) to put in a request for office accessories to alleviate their pain.*



4

## Actions taken to address long-term discomfort at work\*



\* Among respondents who have experienced discomfort at work.

5

**No follow-through.** Yet, less than a quarter (24%) have requested new office accessories to address their long-term discomfort.

- *Fewer men than women (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 one in four (25%) would describe their employers as a company that addresses employee requests quickly.

**Margin of Error** = +/- 4.3 Percent

**Sample** = 530 American Workers Ages 18 and Older Who Spend at Least Three Hours a Day on Their Computers for Work

**About The Survey** The Microsoft PC Accessories Survey was conducted between July 11–22, 2013, among 530 American workers (full-time and part-time) ages 18 and older who spend at least three 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 4.3 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.

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