



September 16, 2025

Satya Nadella
Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052
United States

Dear Satya Nadella,

Consumer Reports is concerned about Microsoft's decision to end free ongoing support for Windows 10 next month. This decision will strand millions of consumers who have computers that are incompatible with Windows 11, and force them to pay \$30 for a one-year extension of support, spend hundreds on a new Windows 11-capable computer, or do nothing and see the security and functionality of their computer degrade over time. This latter option is particularly problematic as it risks harming the consumer as well as co-opting the machine to perpetuate attacks against other entities, risking national security.

Four years ago when Microsoft released Windows 11, it announced that support for Windows 10, which was released in 2015, would end on October 14, 2025. Microsoft also said that because of the hardware requirements of Windows 11 — namely a Trusted Platform Module 2.0 and a 64-bit processor— that some consumers would need to upgrade their computers since their current machines would not be capable of running Windows 11. Despite this announcement in 2021, computers incapable of running Windows 11 were still available for sale in 2022 and 2023.

Even if Microsoft partners and retailers stopped selling machines that were not able to be updated to Windows 11 at the time of the launch, our research shows that many consumers would still be trying to use the incompatible machines today. Based on a Consumer Reports member survey of 100,606 laptop and desktop computer owners (Jan-Mar 2025), over 95% of all laptop and desktop computers purchased since the beginning of 2019 and owned for no more than 5 years were still in use when members were surveyed.

Moreover, 20% of our members who owned a Microsoft laptop reported owning them for at least 4 years, compared to just 13% of our members who owned any other brand of laptop for that length of time. We see similar trends when looking at all Windows OS-compatible computer brands in our sample (Acer, ASUS, Dell, HP, Lenovo, Samsung, and Intel), as 15% of our members who own a Windows OS-compatible laptop or desktop brand have owned them for at least 4 years, compared to just 12% of our members who own a laptop or desktop brand that is

typically not Windows OS-compatible. Based on these findings, we posit that our members who have purchased Windows OS-compatible computers, on average, tend to keep them for longer lengths of time than owners of other computers. Thus, it's clear that consumers purchased machines before Microsoft announced the hardware needs for Windows 11 expecting to be able to operate them through the next Microsoft OS transition.

The decision to make Windows 11 incompatible with existing hardware, and to do so with only four years notice is incompatible with consumer expectations and Microsoft's own history. Microsoft has long focused on backwards compatibility for Windows, ensuring it can run on older hardware. This means that consumers could expect to be able to run the latest version of Windows for at least a dozen years and maybe more. If you bought a PC with Windows 7 preinstalled in 2010, you were able to upgrade it to Windows 8 in 2012 and then Windows 10 in 2015, and many of those devices can still run Windows 10 in 2025.¹

During the Windows 11 launch, and in subsequent announcements, Microsoft argued that the hardware requirements would boost the cybersecurity of Windows machines. Microsoft claims that "Windows 11 is the most secure operating system we've ever built," and noted that a 2024 report commissioned by Microsoft showed that new Windows 11 PCs have seen a 62% drop in security incidents and a 3x reported reduction in firmware attacks². This is laudable, except there are still a large number of Windows 10 users, and a large number of existing machines that are physically unable to be upgraded to Windows 11 because of the hardware-based security features.

As of August, 46.2% of people worldwide are still using Windows 10³, which is about 646.8 million people based on Microsoft's own estimates of 1.4 billion people using Windows as an operating system⁴. There are also an estimated 200 million to 400 million PCs worldwide that cannot be upgraded to Windows 11. This is an incredibly high number of stranded Windows 10 machines. Microsoft in its own blog post warns that, "While these devices will continue to function, they will no longer receive regular security updates, making them more vulnerable to cyber threats, such as malware and viruses."⁵

Arguing that Windows 11 is an essential upgrade to boost cybersecurity while also leaving hundreds of millions of machines more vulnerable to cyber attacks is hypocritical, especially while charging consumers \$30 for a mere one-year extension to preserve their machine's security. Microsoft has touted a free support option for consumers, but to obtain that support consumers must choose to use Microsoft products such as Bing search or Xbox gaming to earn

¹<https://www.zdnet.com/article/windows-11-should-have-been-an-easy-upgrade-microsoft-chose-to-unleash-chaos-on-us-instead/>

²<https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2025/06/24/stay-secure-with-windows-11-copilot-pcs-and-windows-365-before-support-ends-for-windows-10/>

³ <https://gs.statcounter.com/windows-version-market-share/desktop/worldwide/#monthly-202408-202508>

⁴<https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2025/06/24/stay-secure-with-windows-11-copilot-pcs-and-windows-365-before-support-ends-for-windows-10/>

⁵<https://blogs.windows.com/windowsexperience/2025/06/24/stay-secure-with-windows-11-copilot-pcs-and-windows-365-before-support-ends-for-windows-10/>

the 1,000 Microsoft Rewards points⁶ necessary to access free support. Tying free support to unrelated Microsoft products forces consumers to jump through unnecessary hoops just so Microsoft can eke out a bit of market share over competitors.

Consumer Reports asks Microsoft to extend security updates for free to all users who are unable to update their machine while also working to entice more people to get off Windows 10. When more consumers upgrade to Windows 11 through software updates or because they have now purchased a new machine capable of running the software, we also ask that Microsoft create a partnership to provide recycling of those machines to consumers abandoning their hardware.

For the last quarter century Microsoft has been up front about the 10-year lifecycle of its operating systems, but as it made the move from Windows 10 to Windows 11 it broke the backwards compatibility that so many consumers have depended upon as they shopped for their computers. When Microsoft announced in late 2021 that it would require specific hardware components that hundreds of millions of PCs on the market would not have, it left consumers who had recently made a purchase of incompatible hardware behind. Consumer Reports calls on Microsoft to extend support for Windows 10 to allow those consumers to catch up.

Sincerely,

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Consumer Reports

Justin Brookman
Director of Technology Policy
Consumer Reports

⁶ <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/rewards/about>