

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

Data for Decision Makers

Your Guide to Free Publicly Available Data Resources



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investing in You

Data Resources

Data when used properly can greatly improve informed decision making. The following outline is intended to provide you with resources that will help you collect and discuss key indicators.

COUNTY PROFILES which highlight key characteristics of the county can be found at any of the following websites:

Census Bureau Home Page: A-Z subject list of Census information. 2000 Census. State and County Quick Facts. And more.

<http://www.census.gov/>

Help Page: <http://www.census.gov/main/www/help.html>

State and County Quick Facts: State and County Quick Facts provides frequently requested Census Bureau information from the 2000 Census and other sources at the national, state, and county level. Be sure to use the **View more USA Quick Facts** link once you have found information about your county.

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/>

Help Page: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/faq.html>

American Fact finder: Social, demographic, housing, and economic data for varying geographic levels taken from various other Census products. American Fact finder is the main way to find 2000 Census data at the place or county level. 2010 Census data will become increasingly available in the near future.

<http://factfinder2.census.gov/>

Help Page: http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/using_factfinder.xhtml

USA Counties: County-level data on age, agriculture, ancestry, business, crime, education, local government, health, housing, labor, employment, income, poverty, vital statistics, journey to work. Also includes comparative data from 1970s & 1980s. Special feature of this particular Web version allows one to "compare" a particular line of data over all counties within a state.

<http://censtats.census.gov/usa/usa.shtml>

County & City Data Book 2007: County-level demographic, economic, and governmental data from both federal government and private agencies. Some overlap with USA Counties. This resource is also available in print in many libraries in the Government Publications section.

<http://www.census.gov/statab/www/ccdb.html>

Help Page: <http://censtats.census.gov/usa/usainfo.shtml>

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[Headwaters Economics](http://www.headwaterseconomics.org) is an independent, nonprofit research group whose mission is to improve community development and land management decisions in the West. However, they also offer access to the Economic Profile System – Human Dimension Toolkit, which allows users easily to produce free, detailed socioeconomic profiles for any county in the United States.

<http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/index.php>
<http://www.headwaterseconomics.org/eps/>

[STATS Indiana](http://www.stats.indiana.edu) is the statistical data utility for the State of Indiana, developed and maintained since 1985 by the Indiana Business Research Center at Indiana University's Kelley School of Business. While this site does have the majority of information specific to Indiana, there is a database that allows you to compare your county to another, perhaps in Illinois or anywhere.

http://www.stats.indiana.edu/uspr/a/us_profile_frame.html

EDUCATION INDICATORS look at the quantity, quality and distribution of education in your area. Many have said that investments in education are the new keys, along with investment in health to economic development. Demographic indicators include student drop out rates, educational attainment, basic requirement test scores in reading and math, student-teacher ratio, special student populations represented through free reduced price lunch, limited English proficiency, and special education. While much of the data will focus on K-12 education, communities will also want to explore learning opportunities presented throughout the life cycle.

[National Center for Educational Statistics](http://nces.ed.gov) This website has multiple purposes relating to the access and use of school district demographic information. This website provides access to information about school district demographic resources developed under the sponsorship of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education. The website enables users to directly access school district geographic and demographic data.

<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/>

[Illinois Interactive Report Card](http://iirc.niu.edu) Federal reforms under the No Child Left Behind Act focus on reading and math performance, but it's good to look at scores on all tests at your child's school. The database below features comprehensive data for each public school district in Illinois, including: test results, student and teacher demographics, funding information, salary information, and No Child Left Behind information.

<http://iirc.niu.edu/>

The [Illinois Standards Achievement Test](http://www.illinois.gov) is the main test given to Illinois elementary and middle school students, showing how well children are performing in five subjects. Students in Grades 3, 5 and 8 take reading, math and writing tests; students in Grades 4 and 7 take the science and social science ISAT.

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<http://www.isbe.net/assessment/isat.htm>

The **Prairie State Achievement Examination** is given to 11th-graders at Illinois high schools. It tests students in five subjects: reading, math, writing, science and social science.

<http://www.isbe.net/assessment/psae.htm>

The most important thing is to see what percentage of students met or exceeded standards on the tests. A 40 percent passing rate is required this year on state reading and math tests, or a school will be labeled as failing. The passing rate is the combination of test scores that met or exceeded standards.

Exceeding standards is the best rating. It means students have advanced knowledge and skills, allowing them to creatively solve problems and evaluate results. *Meeting standards* means a student is proficient in knowledge and skills in the subject tested, and can effectively apply those skills to solve problems.

The *below standards* category means students have basic knowledge and skills in a subject, but they still have gaps in learning. The worst rating is *academic warning*, which means students have major gaps in learning and can't effectively apply knowledge and skills.

It's also helpful to look at the *previous years' passing rates* to see if your school's scores are improving or declining, and in which areas. You can also see how your school compares to overall *school district scores*, which incorporate performance from all schools in the district. *State averages* tell you how your school compares to schools across the state.

There's also a wealth of information available on other subjects, such as demographic information about students, average experience and salary levels of teachers at your school, and financial data on how much your school spends per pupil.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC INDICATORS describe the structure of employment in a region as developed by the government and amended by private research efforts and helps clarify basic questions as to what constitutes “employment” and “unemployment” and what it means when figures fluctuate over time.

Income indicators focus on changes in the standard of living as reflected in monetary measures of family income. The indicator examines and explains trends in the level and distribution of family income and wealth along with stagnant and unequal wage growth.

Economic Census 2007: establishment, sales, and payroll statistics for retail and wholesale trade, manufactures, service industry, transportation and communication, mineral and construction industries, and minority and women-owned businesses and non-employer statistics for varying geographic levels.

2007 Economic Census: <http://www.census.gov/econ/census07/>

2002 Economic Census: <http://www.census.gov/econ/census02/>

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[County Business Patterns -- Zip Code Business Patterns -- Metro Business Patterns](#): Annual employment, wage, & establishment data by county, state, nation, zip code, and metro area.

<http://censtats.census.gov/cbpnaic/cbpnaic.shtml>

Potentially helpful – Definition and list of Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas:

<http://www.census.gov/population/www/metroareas/metrodef.html>

[REIS](#): State, metropolitan area, and county economic profiles, estimates, & projections of personal earnings & per capita income by industry; 1969-2010.

<http://www.bea.gov/regional/>

[LMI Source: Your Source for Labor Market Information](#): Illinois county-level labor force, unemployment, wage statistics. This resource also includes county-level employment projections by occupation or industry.

<http://lmi.ides.state.il.us/>

[Illinois Community Profiles](#): Community-level information for participating communities such as major employers, economic development amenities, transportation, utilities, health and education facilities, employment.

<http://www.ildceo.net/dceo/Print/default.htm?uid=%7bA1936F78-DB62-43B3-8A20-664F4BC2EE73%7d>

[U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#): Provides a range of employment-related statistics, from unemployment rates, to the types of industries that people are employed in, to rates of occupational injury and illness.

<http://www.bls.gov/data/>

[U.S. Department of Agriculture - Economic Research Service](#): Economic data on food, agriculture, the rural economy, more.

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=DATA_STATISTICS&parent_nav=AGRICULTURE&navtype=RT

ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND RECREATION presenting information on the health of a local environment. Focus on quality of water, solid waste, and acres of open space offers data of primary interest to the general public.

[Water Resource Assessments](#) The Illinois EPA annually collects chemical, physical, biological, habitat and toxicity data on rivers and streams, inland lakes, Lake Michigan and groundwater to satisfy reporting requirements found in Section 305(b) of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA). The primary purpose of the Section 305(b) process is to provide for an assessment of the overall water quality conditions of Illinois waters. <http://www.epa.state.il.us/water/water-quality/index.html>

Water quality conditions are assessed in terms of the degree to which waters attain "beneficial uses," also called "designated uses." Pollution control programs are designed to protect designated individual uses, including aquatic life, swimming, drinking water, recreation,

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secondary contact and indigenous aquatic life and fish consumption. Each state has the responsibility to set water quality standards that protect and assess attainment of these beneficial uses. In Illinois, the Illinois Pollution Control Board is responsible for establishing water quality standards.

Results of these assessments made in recent years can be found in a comprehensive Illinois Water Quality Report and associated Illinois Water Quality Information Mapping Tool; summary Condition of Illinois Water Resources reports; and various Maps and Graphs.

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/water/water-quality/index.html>

[Annual Landfill Capacity Report](#) Since its inception in 1970, the Illinois EPA has overseen the development and operation of a productive system of modern sanitary landfills. The Agency continues to ensure that these facilities meet the strictest disposal standards in history, and that they are engineered to be fully protective of human health and the environment, especially where it concerns any possibility of groundwater contamination. This link includes annual reports from 1994 (Eighth Annual Report) until 2009 (Twenty-Third)

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/land/landfill-capacity/index.html>

The Prairie Research Institute (originally the Institute of Natural Resource Sustainability (INRS)) was created in July of 2008 to house four state scientific surveys — **[Illinois Natural History Survey](#)** (INHS), the **[Illinois State Geological Survey](#)** (ISGS), the **[Illinois State Water Survey](#)** (ISWS), and the **[Illinois Sustainable Technology Center](#)** (ISTC) -- as a group under the auspices of the **[University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#)**. Then in 2010, the Illinois Transportation Archaeological Research Program (ITARP) became the fifth division under the new name of the **[Illinois State Archaeological Survey](#)** (ISAS), further expanding the Institute's research and service capabilities. The Surveys provide data about the state's climate, water, geology, and natural history and support basic and applied research on its natural resources.

Prairie Research Institute: <http://www.prairie.illinois.edu/>

INHS: <http://www.inhs.illinois.edu/>

ISGS: <http://www.isgs.illinois.edu/>

ISWS: <http://www.isws.illinois.edu/>

ISTC: <http://www.istc.illinois.edu/>

ISAS: <http://www.isas.illinois.edu/>

To learn “where we are and whither we are tending,” **[the Critical Trends Assessment Program \(CTAP\)](#)** at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources developed the data collection tools and programs needed to monitor trends in Illinois ecosystems. Over the past several years, the CTAP team has completed an atlas of Illinois land cover, an inventory of resource rich areas, 30 regional watershed assessments, and several years of ecosystem monitoring. The team consists of staff from IDNR’s Office of Realty and Environmental Planning, the Illinois Natural History Survey, State Geological Survey, State Water Survey, Illinois State Museum, and Illinois Waste Management and Research Center. Also contributing to this effort are hundreds of Illinois citizen scientists working through the EcoWatch Network.

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<http://dnr.state.il.us/orep/ctap>

Energy Information Administration (EIA) provides a wide range of information and data products covering energy production, stocks, demand, imports, exports, and prices; and prepares analyses and special reports on topics of current interest. It is especially useful for information about energy use by households and specific industries, the environmental impact of energy (greenhouse gases, voluntary reporting, power plant emissions, etc), and for statistics about renewable energy.

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/>

Scorecard is a resource for information about pollution problems and toxic chemicals with data pulled from U.S. EPA and Census. Discussion of data sources is at <http://scorecard.org/about/txt/data.html>.

Envirofacts searches EPA data sets for environmental information for particular locations. Information about the data is at <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/facts/qmr.html>.

<http://www.epa.gov/enviro/>

GROWTH & HOUSING INDICATORS present information on average home values, percent of affordable housing, acres of agricultural land, taxable market value, and building permits issued.

The Census Bureau's American Housing Survey and **American Community Survey** offer a major source of documentation on housing units (such as year unit was built), tenure (whether the unit is owner-or renter-occupied), and vacancy.

<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFHousing?sse=on>

National Low Income Housing Coalition's Out of Reach 2011 pulls from a variety of sources to illuminate several dimensions of housing affordability for *renter households* in each county, metropolitan area, and the state

<http://www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2011/>

The **Illinois Agricultural Statistics Service** (IASS) is one of 45 State Statistical Offices within the USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). IASS is operated through a cooperative arrangement with the Illinois Department of Agriculture. The primary responsibilities of IASS are the development and issuance of statistics about Illinois Agriculture. The Service prepares and issues official USDA estimates that include acres of agricultural land.

http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Illinois/Publications/County_Estimates/index.asp

Data for All States: http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/index.asp

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[Illinois Tax Statistics](#) reports detail equalized assessed valuation (EAV), tax rates, extension, collections, Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) dollar reductions, and other information, either statewide or by county. Also contains information about income and sales tax receipts.

<http://www.revenue.state.il.us/AboutIdor/TaxStats/index.htm>

[Illinois Consolidated Housing Plan](#) identifies major priorities for affordable housing development and identification of underserved populations. As the number of Illinoisans with affordable housing needs continues to rise, the efficient use of housing dollars has become increasingly important. The Office of Housing Coordination Services (OHCS - pronounced Oaks) was created in 1991 to coordinate housing programs administered by Illinois state agencies and to act as an information and referral source for all housing programs throughout Illinois.

<http://www.ihda.org/ViewPage.aspx?PageID=31>

[Payments to Local Governments](#) provides detailed information about a variety of disbursement within each county and municipality, such as income tax, motor fuel tax, tax increment financing, home rule, and county public safety.

<http://tax.illinois.gov/LocalGovernment/index.htm>

Nonprofit organizations at various levels publish reports on housing issues in the U.S.

[Shelterforce](#) is the nation's oldest continually-published housing and community development magazine. The National Housing Institute, an independent nonprofit organization that examines the issues causing the crisis in housing and community in America, publishes shelter force.

<http://www.shelterforce.org/>

[National Association of Home Builders](#) has information on housing starts and completions, employment and permit data, as well as homeownership rates. To learn more about the characteristics of new homes, multifamily buildings, and the price by location of a square foot of floor area search the Economic and Housing Data section of their website.

<http://www.nahb.org/page.aspx/category/sectionID=113>

HEALTH INDICATORS describe overall health state of health of the people by age, race and gender. Key issues for community health include prenatal care, timely childhood immunizations, teen use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs, adult use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs, and age adjusted death rates.

The **[Illinois Department of Public Health](#)** (IDPH) collects and evaluates thousands of health statistics to measure progress toward state and national health objectives. These numbers also provide the basis for developing and implementing public health strategies for disease prevention and health promotion. This site provides just some of the statistics gathered by IDPH.

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/health/statshome.htm>

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The [IPLAN website](#) offers a data system containing 102 health indicators, which are available at the county-level. Thirty-nine of these indicators are available at the community-level. Illinois data is included on all county-level and community-level reports. Data can be charted, sorted and saved by using the data manipulation tool.

<http://app.idph.state.il.us/>

County health offices are good sources for information on health and welfare in local areas. Local governmental and nongovernmental social service agencies can provide rich front-line data on the health and welfare of a community's population.

The [American Hospital Directory](#) provides online data for over 6,000 hospitals. Our database of information is built from Medicare claims data (Med PAR and OPSS), hospital cost reports, and other public use files obtained from the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

<http://www.ahd.com/freesearch.php>

[Medicare County Enrollment](#). . Data have been screened to protect the privacy of beneficiaries.

<https://www.cms.gov/MedicareEnrpts/>

[Nursing Home Compare](#) includes information only on nursing homes that are Medicare or Medicaid certified. These nursing homes provide skilled nursing care; however, there are many other types of facilities that provide various levels of health care and assistance with activities of daily living. Many of these facilities are licensed only at the state level. In addition, some nursing homes that provide a full range of care, including skilled nursing services, choose not to participate in Medicare or Medicaid.

<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/Include/DataSection/Questions/SearchCriteriaNEW.asp?version=default&browser=Firefox|3.6|WinXP&language=English&defaultstatus=0&pagelist=Home&CookiesEnabledStatus=True>

The [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) is the world's largest, on-going telephone health survey system, tracking health conditions and risk behaviors in the United States yearly since 1984. Currently, data are collected monthly in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam. The [Illinois Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) is a state-based program that gathers information on risk factors among Illinois adults 18 years of age and older through monthly telephone surveys. Established in 1984 as a collaboration between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state health departments, the BRFSS has grown to be the primary source of information on behaviors and conditions related to the leading causes of death for adults in the general population. The Illinois County Behavioral Risk Factor Surveys (ICBRFS) are conducted for individual counties employing the same procedures and questions as the BRFSS.

<http://app.idph.state.il.us/brfss/>

The [Illinois Youth Survey](#) collects information about youth substance abuse, sexual activity, tobacco use and bullying annually.

<http://iys.cprd.illinois.edu/>

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The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control - Wonder Database](#) provides data for a range of health issues and health conditions.

<http://wonder.cdc.gov/data2010/>

INFRASTRUCTURE INDICATORS explain the importance of the physical infrastructure to our economy and examines an area's commitment to investment in infrastructure. This includes systems of transportation, systems of communication, and public utilities.

State department of transportation is a good place to start in seeking transportation data. [Check latest traffic counts](#) Displays the current traffic and truck volumes on Illinois roadways. [Highway project](#) information can also be found at this same site.

<http://www.gettingaroundillinois.com/mapviewer.aspx?mt=aadt>

<http://www.dot.state.il.us/projects.html>

The [Illinois Broadband Map](#) created and maintained by the Partnership for Connected Illinois (PCI). PCI's mission is to increase broadband awareness and adoption in Illinois. As a part of this effort they have created the Illinois Broadband Map. The maps include data showing availability of broadband including both wired and wireless sources. Additional data includes the location of community anchor institutions, broadband adoption rates, computer ownership rates, and internet adoption rates.

<http://broadbandillinois.org/maps/index.html>

The [Annual Report on Telecommunications Markets in Illinois](#) published by the Illinois Commerce Commission provides a snapshot of local telephone service competition in three areas: *plain-old-telephone-service (POTS) lines in service; *broadband lines in service; *mobile-wireless-telephone subscribership.

<http://www.icc.illinois.gov/reports/results.aspx?t=3>

The [Annual Report on Electricity, Gas, Water and Sewer Utilities](#) provides a discussion and analysis of the state of each utility industry regulated by Illinois Commerce Commission, looking at significant changes, trends and developments, including the types of firms offering each utility service in different geographic areas of the state.

<http://www.icc.illinois.gov/reports/results.aspx?t=1>

All community water supplies are required to conduct periodic self-monitoring. Use of a certified laboratory to analyze for the presence of microorganisms and chemicals in the finished drinking water provides information to enable facilities to comply with established maximum contaminant levels. The information obtained by the self-monitoring program must be routinely reported to the Illinois EPA and is summarized in

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an annual [Consumer Confidence Report](#) that is made available to each water customer served by the water supply.

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/water/compliance/drinking-water/consumer-confidence-report.html>

PUBLIC SAFETY can be viewed using a number of different indicators such as violent crime rates; property crime rates, juvenile apprehension rate, motor vehicle accidents and reports of hate crimes.

The [Illinois State Police](#) website provides the following data reports:

CRIME DATA: Viewing of crime data allows for selection of a year and a crime data category. Selecting crime types (e.g., murders, robberies) will display an Illinois map representing available county-by-county data for the established selection criteria. County specific information can be viewed by clicking on the counties of the map.

TRAFFIC DATA: Viewing of traffic data allows for selection of an area (e.g., county, city) and establishment of search criteria (e.g., alcohol related, date), resulting in display of corresponding traffic fatalities. The fatalities are represented on a map where identification of points will display crash data.

<http://www.isp.state.il.us/crime/ucrhome.cfm>

[CJ DataNet](#), an Internet clearinghouse of criminal justice data for the State of Illinois. The Authority collects, maintains and updates a variety of criminal justice data to support its research and evaluation efforts. These data can be used to research broad issues facing the criminal justice system or to simply examine crime problems in a specific Illinois city, county or regional area.

<http://www.icjia.org/public/index.cfm?metasection=data>

At the local level, county and city police agencies collect crime data and may be willing to provide this information to interested citizens.

SOCIAL INDICATORS of quality of life within a region are no doubt numerous and may vary depending on size and ethnic makeup of a region. Some of the indicators you may want to examine include access to childcare, voter registration, use of library and community college system.

[Illinois Network for Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies](#) collects, maintains and reports statistical information related to childcare supply, demand and quality across the state.

<http://www.inccrra.org/overview.aspx?id=195>

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LOCAL INFORMATION SOURCES – each locality keeps records for both private and public purposes. While many of these records are technically open to the public, in practice they may be difficult to review because of the way in which they are kept and stored.

Tax and assessment records in the county assessors office provide data on ownership, size and type of building; property uses; assessed value; condition; recent improvements or additions; a record of recent sales; and sometime photographs of the property in question.

Building inspectors records are generally combined with tax and assessment records but may be more current, giving the characteristics and cost of recent improvements, results of any recent inspections, and possibly current information on occupancy characteristics of buildings.

Local real estate board generally maintains extensive files on properties recently put up for sale. Often, they can provide trend information on sales over the past several years. A local board may provide the most current housing vacancy rate for a community.

Police or sheriff's office usually maintains elaborate records of complaints and crimes by place of occurrence, residence of the offender and type of crime. Information in these records may provide useful indexes of problem areas for a community or region.

Fire departments and fire insurance records provide information about size, layout and condition of many buildings, especially larger commercial and residential structures. This data is often collected through periodic fire inspections.

Water and sewer departments have records of the number of meters installed and volume of water consumed. Individual household data may not be available, but aggregate data of usage by neighborhoods or community should be obtainable. Water usage is a stable and can give a good indication of the population for an area.

Chambers of Commerce collect and maintain files and datasets on local businesses.

Local newspapers, magazines and libraries maintain files on local events. These often include minutes of meetings, newsletters or correspondence that may be especially useful in public hearing and zoning reviews.

Economic development organizations generally have a great deal of local data. The information is generally organized for clear presentation. These offices can provide valuable assistance in organizing data for planning.

Regional planning organizations (also known as MPOs or Regional Councils) offer information related to economic development, housing, environmental conditions, transportation, and more.

State and local historical societies can offer a whole range of background information.

Reports from universities, newspapers/magazines, think tanks, associations, hospitals, community health centers, etc. Use the Internet to search for relevant reports and articles. For example, a January 2010 article in Medill Reports Chicago, from Northwestern University's journalism school, included an article entitled, "Illinois Lost More Than 50,000 Jobs in Manufacturing," that included lots of data. As another example, searching for "Illinois Manufacturing" brought up a report from the Illinois Workforce Investment Board, with

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findings and recommendations could be worth including for someone applying for a workforce development grant.

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