

Shifting Public Perceptions: Racial Privilege and Gender Disadvantage

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INTRODUCTION

Do the advantaged think about their levels of privilege differently over time?

- Past research explores **how lay people define privilege** and how the definition relates to **downstream support for equality** (Brown et al., 2026).
- **White Americans experience more racial privilege compared to racial minorities in the United States, on average** (Phillips & Lowery, 2018). However, not everyone recognizes this privilege (Knowles et al., 2014).
- **Men often distance from gender privilege** (Pratto & Stewart, 2012) –their advantage may be **experienced as natural/justified** (Van Laar et al., 2026).

OBJECTIVE

Examine how perceptions of privilege change over time for advantaged groups (white Americans and men)

METHOD

Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel

- Nationally representative, weighted dataset

WHITE ADVANTAGE:

N= 38,192 white Americans

How much, if at all, do white people benefit from advantages in society that black people do not have?

NOT AT ALL 1 2 3 4 A GREAT DEAL

GENDER DISADVANTAGE:

N= 21,291 men

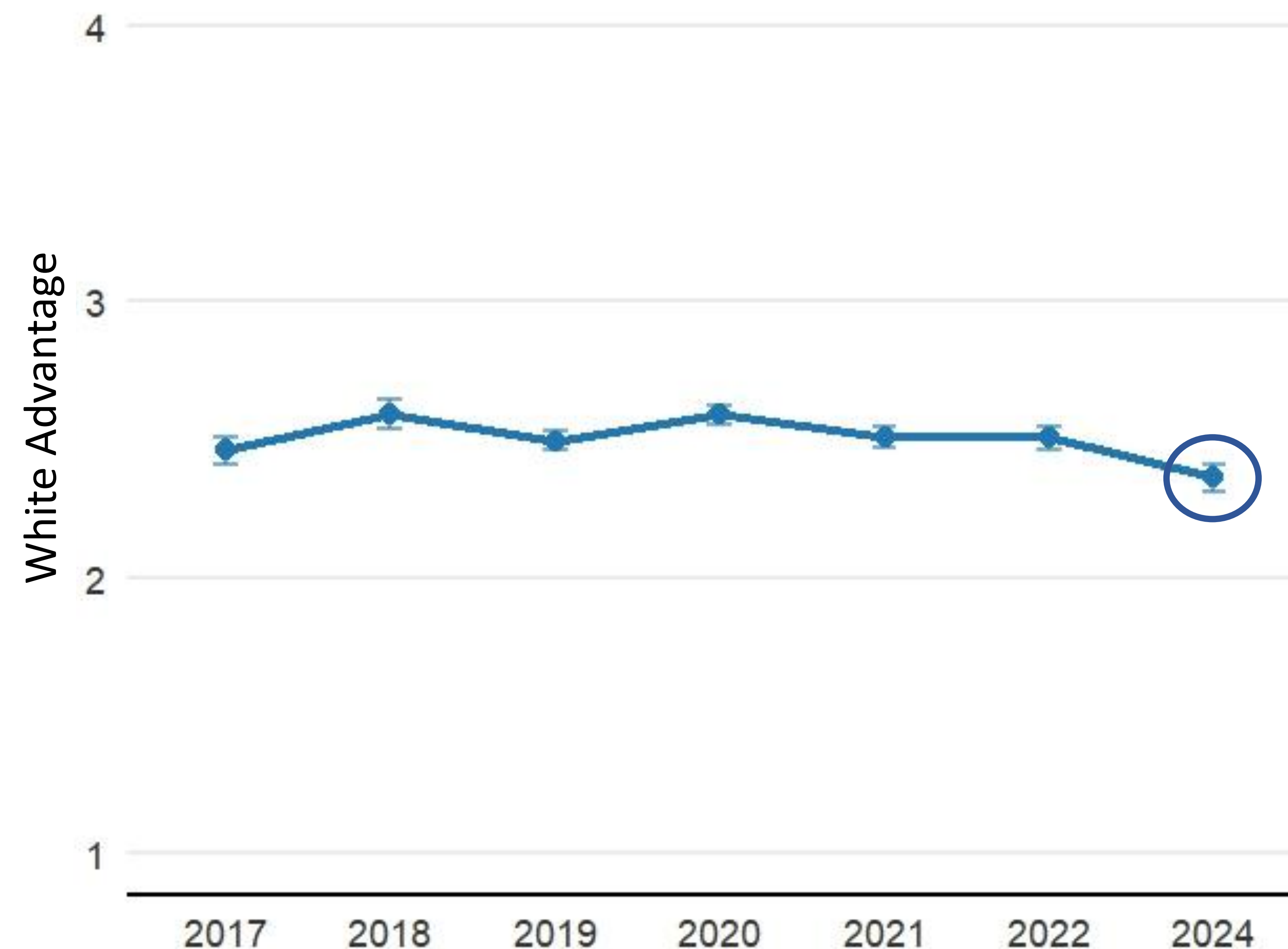
Which statement comes closer to your own views — even if neither is exactly right?

1. The **obstacles** that once made it harder for women than men to get ahead are now **largely gone**

2. There are **still significant obstacles** that make it harder for women to get ahead than men

White Participants' Views on White Advantage Over Time

White Americans only, adjusted for age, ideology, and gender



Predicted % Saying Gender Obstacles Still Exist

Men only, adjusted for age, ideology, and race/ethnicity



RESULTS

Exploratory evidence of **how perceptions of privilege change over time** from the perspective of the advantaged group

WHITE ADVANTAGE--WEIGHTED LINEAR REGRESSION

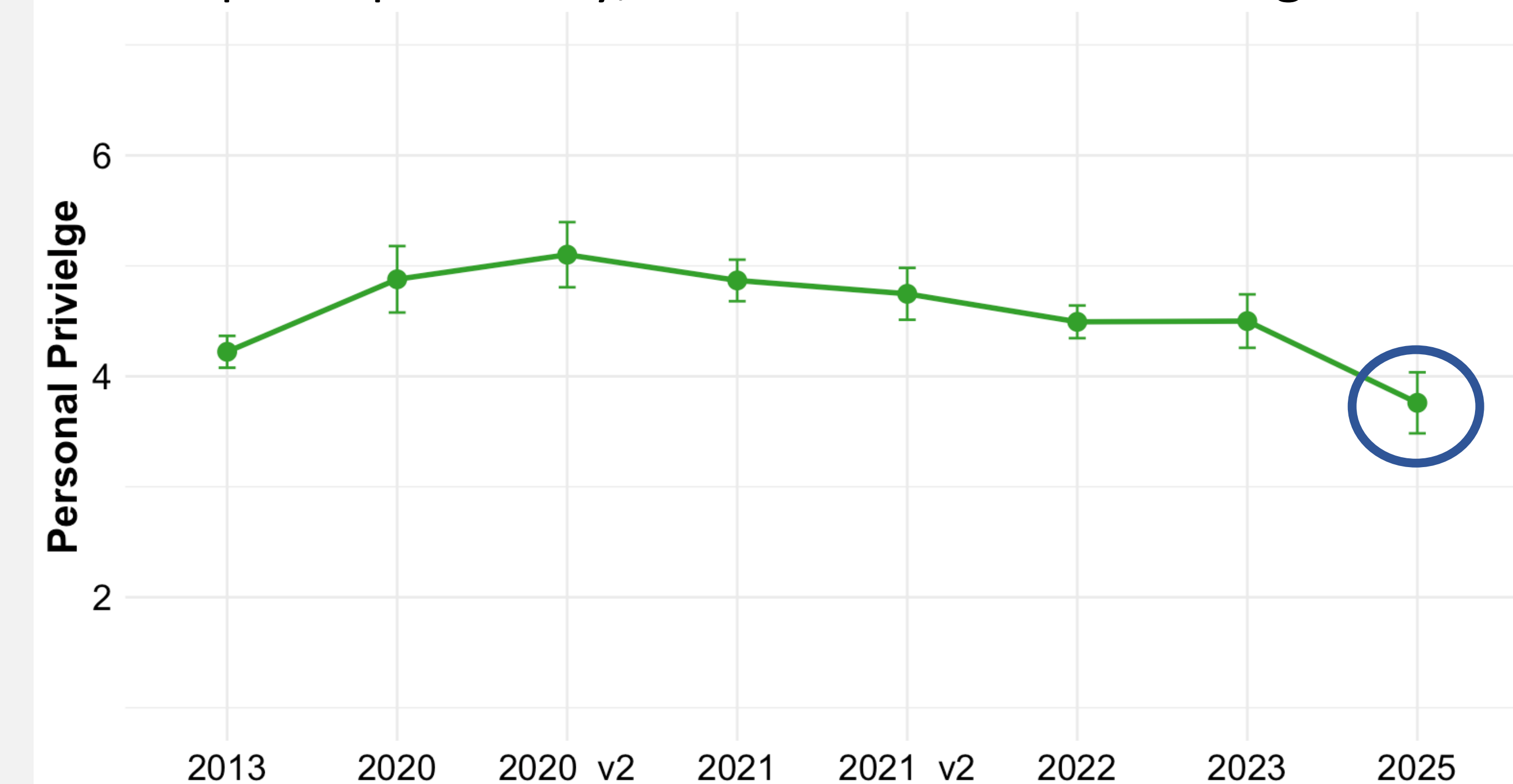
- **Significant decrease in perceived racial privilege among White Americans in 2024 ($M = 2.45$) compared to all other years, $bs > 0.10$ $ps < 0.005$**

GENDER DISADVANTAGE--WEIGHTED LOGISTIC REGRESSION

- **Persistent decrease in men supporting the claim that gender obstacles still exist for women since 2021**
- **Comparing 2024 to 2018, 2019, 2020 $bs > 0.14$ $ps < 0.02$**
- **Comparing 2024 to 2021 & 2022, results are not statistically significant**

Previously Collected Lab Data

White participants only, Perceived Personal Privilege



DISCUSSION and IMPLICATIONS

- Future research: **Explore what factors drive decline in perceived privilege**
- **Impact of social movements (Black Lives Matter, MeToo)**
- **Current events (decrease in DEI-policies & affirmative action)**

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