

# National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS

## Summary

Teens today are concerned about the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on the nation as a whole, for people their age, and themselves. Few have been tested and many would not know where to go to get tested. About one-third of 15–17 year olds surveyed reported that they have had sexual intercourse. While many of these teens are taking precautions to protect themselves, one out of three admit they do not use condoms “all of the time.”

Young people report learning about HIV/AIDS from many different sources. However, many—including both those who are sexually active and those who are not—still want to know more.

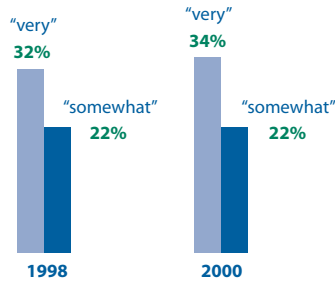
HIV/AIDS continues to have a significant impact on teenagers and young adults in the United States. People under 25 are estimated to make up half of all new HIV infections occurring in the U.S. and HIV remains a leading cause of death among young people. Many teens who are infected don't know it.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

Young women and minority teens have been particularly hard hit. Teen girls account for 58% of new AIDS cases reported among young people ages 13–19.<sup>4</sup> And, although African American and Latino teens each represent only about 15% of U.S. teenagers, they account for most of the new AIDS cases reported among teens. African American teens represent 60% of new AIDS cases reported among those ages 13–19; Latino teens represent 24% of these new cases.<sup>5</sup>

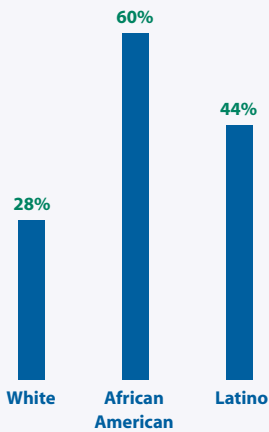
The Kaiser Family Foundation's National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS 2000, a nationally representative survey of 1,512 teens ages 12–17, is designed to assess attitudes and knowledge about the epidemic among a generation at risk. The survey documents teen perspectives about the impact of the epidemic on young people and their own personal concern about becoming infected. It also includes findings about where teens get their information about HIV/AIDS, their information needs, and attitudes toward HIV testing.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Personal Concern About Becoming Infected**

Percent who are "very" or "somewhat" concerned



Percent who are "very" concerned by Race/Ethnicity, 2000



Sources: Kaiser Family Foundation National Surveys of Teens on HIV/AIDS, 1998 and 2000.

### Teens Express High Levels of Personal Concern

HIV/AIDS has always been part of life for today's teens. The large majority of teens view AIDS as a serious problem for people their age and slightly more than half say they are personally concerned about becoming infected, a level of personal concern that remains unchanged from two years ago<sup>6</sup> (see Figure 1). African American and Latino teens report even higher levels of concern. African American teens are more than twice as likely as white teens to say they are "very concerned" about becoming infected. Latino teens are one and a half times as likely (see Figure 1). One in six teens say they know someone who has AIDS, has died from AIDS, or has tested positive for HIV; more than one in four African American teens and one in five Latino teens say they know someone.

### Teens Know the Basics But Still Want to Know More

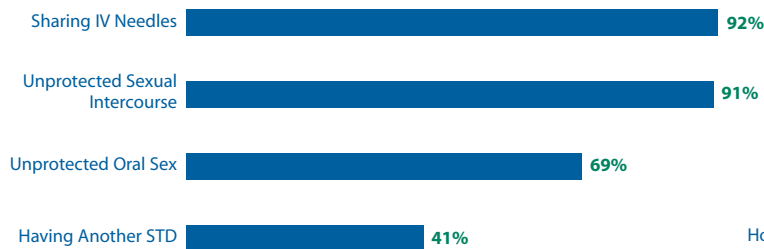
Most teens know that there is no cure for AIDS, although one in five is not sure or thinks there is a cure. Teens are aware of the risks of unprotected intercourse and sharing IV needles. Fewer know of the risks associated with unprotected oral sex or that having another sexually transmitted disease (STD) increases one's risk for HIV (see Figure 2).

Teens get information about HIV/AIDS from a lot of different sources. School is, by far, their primary source, followed by their parents. The media also play a role in providing information to teens about HIV/AIDS with half of teens reporting getting at least some information from TV or the movies and a third from magazines—especially girls and African American and Latino teens. In addition to relying on their schools for information about HIV/AIDS, nearly seven in ten older teens believe schools should provide them with condoms.

Though knowledge about the basics is high, many teens still want to know more about a range of topics related to HIV/AIDS (see Figure 3). Minority teens and girls are even more likely to say they want more information about HIV/AIDS. Teens are most interested in getting more information about how to protect themselves and where to go to get tested, but also want to learn more about how HIV is spread and how to talk with their parents and partners. Almost a third of sexually active teens, defined here as those who reported having had sexual intercourse, want to know more about the proper way to use condoms. All teens, regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity, or whether or not they are sexually active, want to know more.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Knowledge About Risk**

Percent of teens who are aware of the increased risk of infection for...



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS, 2000.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Teens Want to Know More**

Percent of teens who want to know more about...



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS, 2000.

## Few Teens Have Been Tested and Many Would Not Know Where to Go

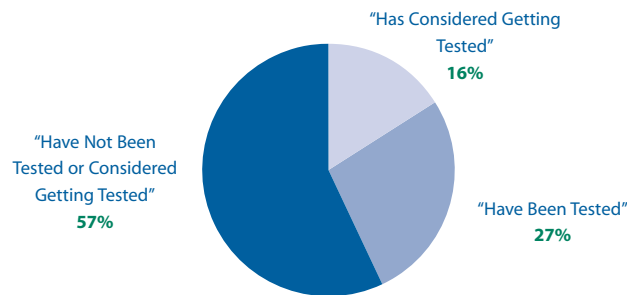
While teens are generally aware of the behaviors that put them at risk for HIV, many have never been tested. Fewer than one-third of teens who say they are sexually active have been tested, although another 16% say they have considered getting tested (see Figure 4). When asked why they have not been tested, 40% of sexually active teens say they don't think they have done anything that puts them at risk.

Even if they wanted to get tested, most teens may not know where to go. Over two thirds of teens ages 15–17 say they would not know for sure where to go for a test. A majority of those who are sexually active are also unsure (see Figure 5). Additionally, about half of all teens believe they need their parents' permission (which is often not the case) to get tested or think they might. Teens say that getting tested where "no one knows me" is important.

Those who have been tested are most likely to have gone to a general health clinic while a third received the test at a private doctor's office. At least some of those teens who said they had been tested may have been mistaken – nearly a quarter reported they were under the impression that their HIV test was a part of their routine exam.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Teens and HIV Testing**

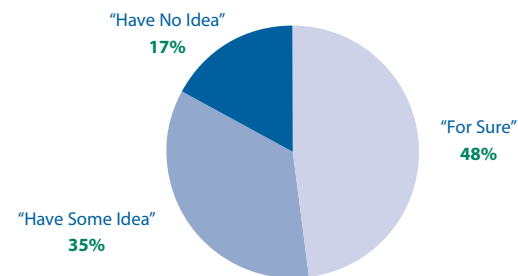
Percent of sexually active teens 15–17...



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS, 2000.

**FIGURE 5**  
**Knowledge About Risk**

Percent of sexually active teens 15–17 who would know where to go to get tested...



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS, 2000.

### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> White House Office of National AIDS Policy, *Youth and HIV/AIDS 2000: A New American Agenda*, 2000.  
<sup>2</sup> National Center for Health Statistics, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Vol. 48, No. 11, 2000.  
<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Young People at Risk: HIV/AIDS Among America's Youth*, August 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2000.  
<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance in Adolescents*, L265 Slide Series (through 1999), <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/graphics/adolesnt.htm>  
<sup>6</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation, *National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS*, 1998.

## Methodology

The Kaiser Family Foundation's National Survey of Teens on HIV/AIDS 2000 was a random-sample national survey of 1,512 teens ages 12–17. The survey was conducted by telephone by Princeton Survey Research Associates (PSRA) over 3 waves of the monthly teen Omnibus survey conducted by International Communications Research (ICR): June 7–11, July 6–10, August 2–6, 2000. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, questions on personal sexual experience were only asked of respondents between the ages of 15–17. The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 3% for the total sample and may be larger for certain subgroups presented in this analysis.

### Q1a. I'd like you to think about the way the problem of AIDS is affecting this country today. Do you think the problem of AIDS is About the Same, That the Country is Making Progress, or That the Country is Losing Ground? (Split sample with Q1b)

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active	
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No
About the same	17%	15%	19%	18%	15%	11%	17%
Making progress	35%	36%	33%	30%	40%	35%	41%
Losing ground	40%	41%	40%	41%	39%	50%	35%
n	753	374	379	375	378	115	257

### Q1b. I'd like you to think about the way the problem of AIDS is affecting this country today. Do you think AIDS is a More Urgent problem for the country than it was a few years ago, Less Urgent, or About as Urgent as it was? (Split sample with Q1a)

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active	
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No
About as urgent	24%	25%	22%	23%	25%	28%	24%
Less urgent	7%	8%	6%	7%	7%	10%	5%
More urgent	65%	62%	69%	65%	66%	60%	68%
n	759	385	374	379	380	134	238

### Q2. How serious a problem do you think AIDS is for People Your Age?

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
Very serious	46%	42%	51%	42%	51%	56%	49%	43%	63%	63%
Somewhat serious	35%	36%	33%	31%	38%	33%	40%	37%	24%	23%
Not too serious	14%	17%	11%	19%	10%	8%	10%	16%	8%	11%
Not at all serious	4%	4%	3%	6%	2%	2%	1%	4%	5%	4%
n	1512	759	753	754	758	249	495	1133	175	106

### Q3. We'd like to know more about the impact of HIV and AIDS in your own life. Keeping in mind the different ways people can be infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, how concerned are you personally about becoming infected with HIV?

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
Very concerned	34%	31%	36%	37%	31%	36%	29%	28%	60%	44%
Somewhat concerned	22%	23%	21%	23%	22%	22%	22%	23%	10%	32%
Not too concerned	22%	23%	21%	22%	22%	23%	20%	24%	18%	11%
Not at all concerned	21%	22%	21%	18%	25%	19%	28%	24%	11%	12%
n	1512	759	753	754	758	249	495	1133	175	106

### Q4. Do you personally know anyone who has AIDS, has died from AIDS, or has tested positive for HIV?

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
Yes	16%	13%	20%	11%	21%	32%	16%	14%	28%	20%
No	84%	87%	80%	88%	80%	68%	85%	86%	71%	81%
n	1512	759	753	754	758	249	495	1133	175	106

**Q5. Please tell me whether you think each of the following statements about AIDS is true or false—or if you don't know.**

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
<b>a. There are drugs available to treat HIV which can lengthen the life of a person infected with the virus.</b>										
True	51%	52%	50%	43%	59%	62%	58%	50%	51%	53%
False	28%	30%	25%	31%	24%	25%	24%	28%	28%	24%
Don't know	21%	18%	25%	26%	17%	14%	19%	22%	20%	23%
<b>b. There is no cure for AIDS</b>										
True	79%	78%	80%	73%	85%	86%	84%	81%	73%	76%
False	14%	16%	11%	18%	10%	10%	10%	13%	15%	15%
Don't know	7%	6%	9%	9%	5%	5%	6%	6%	12%	9%
<b>c. Young people under age 18 need their parents' permission to get an HIV test</b>										
True	27%	28%	27%	37%	18%	12%	21%	25%	39%	25%
False	53%	53%	53%	42%	64%	74%	60%	54%	48%	55%
Don't know	20%	19%	21%	21%	18%	14%	19%	21%	12%	20%
<b>d. Having another sexually transmitted disease like Gonorrhea or Herpes increases a person's risk of becoming infected with HIV</b>										
True	41%	41%	42%	44%	39%	36%	40%	39%	54%	40%
False	35%	40%	31%	31%	40%	44%	38%	36%	30%	32%
Don't know	23%	19%	27%	26%	21%	19%	22%	25%	16%	28%
<b>e. Having sexual intercourse without a condom increases a person's risk of becoming infected with HIV</b>										
True	91%	91%	91%	88%	93%	94%	93%	90%	94%	96%
False	6%	6%	5%	6%	5%	4%	5%	6%	4%	2%
Don't know	3%	4%	3%	5%	2%	1%	2%	4%	2%	2%
<b>f. Sharing intravenous needles increases a person's risk of becoming infected with HIV</b>										
True	92%	92%	93%	88%	96%	96%	96%	94%	89%	89%
False	4%	5%	3%	6%	2%	2%	2%	2%	8%	7%
Don't know	4%	3%	4%	6%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%	4%
<b>g. You can become infected with HIV by having unprotected oral sex</b>										
True	69%	68%	71%	69%	69%	59%	74%	67%	81%	72%
False	18%	20%	16%	18%	19%	26%	16%	19%	11%	20%
Don't know	12%	12%	13%	13%	12%	15%	10%	14%	7%	9%
n	1512	759	753	754	758	249	495	1133	175	106

**Q6. Teenagers get information about HIV and AIDS from many different sources. As I read each of the following, please tell me if you *Personally* have learned a lot, some, only a little, or nothing at all about HIV and AIDS from this source.**

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12–17)	Male	Female	12–14	15–17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
<b>a. Your friends, brothers or sisters</b>										
A lot	16%	15%	18%	16%	17%	24%	15%	15%	26%	23%
Some	17%	17%	18%	17%	18%	19%	17%	16%	22%	27%
Only a little	27%	27%	27%	26%	27%	22%	30%	28%	21%	19%
Nothing at all	39%	40%	38%	40%	37%	35%	38%	41%	30%	31%
<b>b. Your parents</b>										
A lot	35%	32%	38%	39%	32%	36%	30%	32%	49%	45%
Some	23%	24%	22%	21%	25%	24%	26%	24%	22%	19%
Only a little	23%	23%	22%	20%	25%	18%	29%	24%	14%	21%
Nothing at all	19%	20%	17%	19%	19%	23%	16%	43%	27%	35%
<b>c. Teachers, school nurses, or classes at school</b>										
A lot	60%	60%	61%	60%	61%	58%	63%	59%	61%	66%
Some	18%	17%	18%	18%	17%	19%	17%	19%	16%	11%
Only a little	15%	14%	15%	13%	16%	15%	15%	15%	14%	16%
Nothing at all	7%	8%	6%	8%	6%	7%	5%	7%	8%	6%

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**Q6. Continues. Teenagers get information about HIV and AIDS from many different sources. As I read each of the following, please tell me if you *Personally* have learned a lot, some, only a little, or nothing at all about HIV and AIDS from this source.**

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12-17)	Male	Female	12-14	15-17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
<b>d. A doctor or other health care provider</b>										
A lot	24%	22%	27%	24%	24%	33%	20%	19%	47%	29%
Some	20%	21%	20%	20%	21%	21%	21%	21%	15%	23%
Only a little	26%	27%	24%	24%	27%	24%	29%	28%	16%	23%
Nothing at all	29%	30%	28%	31%	28%	23%	30%	31%	20%	25%
<b>e. Television shows or movies</b>										
A lot	25%	24%	25%	24%	25%	31%	23%	23%	32%	27%
Some	26%	24%	28%	24%	28%	31%	27%	26%	29%	31%
Only a little	30%	30%	31%	29%	32%	26%	34%	32%	25%	27%
Nothing at all	18%	21%	16%	21%	15%	12%	17%	19%	14%	15%
<b>f. Books or pamphlets</b>										
A lot	27%	26%	29%	24%	30%	35%	28%	24%	46%	32%
Some	24%	23%	25%	24%	25%	23%	25%	25%	17%	24%
Only a little	27%	26%	28%	27%	27%	24%	28%	28%	18%	27%
Nothing at all	21%	24%	19%	24%	19%	18%	19%	22%	18%	18%
<b>g. Magazines such as Seventeen or YM</b>										
A lot	15%	8%	22%	14%	16%	18%	15%	13%	26%	18%
Some	18%	9%	26%	15%	20%	20%	20%	17%	16%	29%
Only a little	23%	18%	27%	24%	21%	17%	22%	23%	21%	23%
Nothing at all	44%	61%	25%	45%	43%	43%	42%	45%	36%	29%
<b>h. The Internet</b>										
A lot	11%	11%	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%	10%	21%	14%
Some	10%	11%	9%	10%	11%	14%	9%	9%	10%	16%
Only a little	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	16%	17%	15%	14%
Nothing at all	61%	60%	62%	61%	61%	58%	63%	62%	52%	52%
n	1512	759	753	754	758	249	495	1133	175	106

**Q7. We're interested in the kinds of HIV and AIDS topics you personally want to know more about. As I read each of the following, please tell me if this is something you would like to have more information about, or not...**

	Overall	Sex		Age		Sexually Active		Race/Ethnicity		
	(12-17)	Male	Female	12-14	15-17	Yes	No	White	African American	Latino
<b>a. What AIDS is and how it is spread</b>										
Yes	48%	42%	55%	50%	47%	43%	49%	47%	59%	50%
No	51%	58%	44%	49%	53%	57%	51%	53%	39%	47%
<b>b. How to talk with your parents about HIV and AIDS</b>										
Yes	40%	36%	45%	44%	36%	34%	38%	37%	55%	45%
No	58%	63%	54%	55%	62%	64%	60%	62%	44%	50%
<b>c. How to talk with a partner about HIV and AIDS</b>										
Yes	46%	41%	52%	44%	49%	51%	49%	44%	60%	51%
No	53%	59%	47%	55%	51%	49%	51%	56%	40%	47%
<b>d. How to protect yourself from becoming infected with HIV</b>										
Yes	57%	50%	63%	58%	56%	58%	56%	53%	73%	68%
No	42%	48%	35%	41%	43%	42%	43%	45%	26%	28%
<b>e. Where to go to get tested for HIV</b>										
Yes	55%	49%	62%	56%	55%	52%	57%	53%	67%	66%
No	44%	50%	37%	43%	45%	48%	42%	47%	33%	32%
n	1512	759	753	754	758	249	495	1133	175	106
<b>f. (asked of 15-17 year olds only) The proper way to use condoms</b>										
Yes	36%	30%	43%	-	36%	28%	40%	35%	44%	43%
No	63%	71%	55%	-	63%	72%	59%	65%	55%	57%
n	758	382	376	-	758	249	495	583	83	49

**Q8. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only) Do you think high schools *Should* or *Should Not* provide students with condoms if they ask for them?**

	Overall	Sex		Sexually Active	
	(15–17)	Male	Female	Yes	No
Should	69%	66%	73%	85%	62%
Should not	28%	31%	25%	14%	35%
n	758	382	376	249	495

**Q9. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only) Next I have some questions about HIV and AIDS testing. Keep in mind that all of your answers are private. First, have you ever considered getting tested for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS? (includes those who have been tested)**

	Overall	Sex		Sexually Active	
	(15–17)	Male	Female	Yes	No
Yes	18%	16%	21%	38%	9%
No	81%	84%	79%	62%	90%
n	758	382	376	249	495

**Q10. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only) If you wanted to get tested for HIV do you...**

	Overall	Sex		Sexually Active	
	(15–17)	Male	Female	Yes	No
Know FOR SURE where to go to get tested	30%	30%	30%	48%	22%
Have SOME IDEA where to go	43%	42%	44%	35%	46%
Have NO IDEA where to go	26%	28%	25%	17%	31%
n	758	382	376	249	495

**Q11. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only) Would you be more comfortable getting an HIV test someplace where people *Know You*, such as your family doctor or a school doctor or nurse, or someplace where *No One Knows You*, such as a clinic or a doctor far from your home?**

	Overall	Sex		Sexually Active	
	(15–17)	Male	Female	Yes	No
Where people know me	33%	34%	31%	33%	33%
Where no one knows me	65%	63%	66%	66%	65%
n	758	382	376	249	495

**Q12. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only) Have you ever been tested for HIV?**

	Overall	Sex		Sexually Active	
	(15–17)	Male	Female	Yes	No
Yes	10%	7%	15%	27%	3%
No	89%	93%	85%	73%	97%
n	758	382	376	249	495

**Q13. (Asked of 15–17 year olds who have been tested) Where did you go to get tested?**

	Have Been Tested (15–17)
An HIV clinic	9%
A general health clinic	50%
A private doctor's office	31%
Someplace else	8%
Part of a blood drive or donation (VOL)	1%
n	79

**Q14. (Based on 15–17 year olds only who have been tested) How did you know you were tested for HIV at the time?**

	Have Been Tested (15–17)
Asked to be tested	62%
Doctor/nurse told me	13%
Under the impression it was a routine part of the exam	24%
n	79

**Q15. (Based on 15–17 year olds who have never been tested) As I read each of the following, please tell me if this is a reason why you have *Not* been tested for HIV**

	Never Tested (15–17)	Sex		Sexually Active	
		Male	Female	Yes	No
<b>a. You haven't done anything that puts you at risk</b>					
Major reason	64%	62%	66%	24%	77%
Minor reason	9%	10%	8%	16%	7%
Not a reason	27%	28%	25%	60%	15%
<b>b. You're afraid your parents will find out</b>					
Major reason	5%	4%	7%	6%	5%
Minor reason	10%	7%	14%	10%	10%
Not a reason	84%	89%	78%	83%	84%
<b>c. You're afraid you'll test positive</b>					
Major reason	6%	7%	5%	5%	6%
Minor reason	9%	7%	11%	10%	9%
Not a reason	85%	87%	82%	85%	84%
n	677	354	323	183	482

**Q16. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only) Now I just have a few questions about your sexual health and behavior. Again, keep in mind that all of your answers are private.**

	Overall (15–17)	Sex	
		Male	Female
<b>a. Ever been kissed</b>	88%	89%	87%
<b>b. Ever been French kissed</b>	77%	77%	77%
<b>c. Been with a partner when you're touching or fondling each other in a sexual way</b>	56%	60%	52%
<b>d. Ever had sexual intercourse</b>	32%	32%	32%
n	758	382	376

**Q17. (Asked of 15–17 year olds only who have had sexual intercourse) In general, when you have sexual intercourse, how often do you use condoms?**

	Overall (15–17)	Sex	
		Male	Female
All of the time	65%	72%	57%
Most of the time	15%	13%	17%
Only sometimes	14%	10%	19%
Never	6%	5%	7%
n	249	125	124

**The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation**

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