

HELPDESK

PROVIDING ON-DEMAND RESEARCH TO HELP FIGHT CORRUPTION

MEASURING THE VALUE OF BRIBES

QUERY

Has any country ever done a survey on the average value of bribes involved in transactions with government agencies from the perspective of companies and citizens? What methodologies were used?

PURPOSE

To collect data that will help the Vietnamese government to adjust fees, taxes and increase fairness.

CONTENT

1. Challenges involved in assessing the value of bribes
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SUMMARY

While most multi-country surveys do not attempt to estimate the value of bribes for a number of methodological reasons, a few measurement tools relating to experience of petty corruption include in their methodology an assessment of the average amount paid in bribes. There are three main approaches that can be undertaken to assess the value of bribes, including corruption surveys, exit surveys and online reporting.

Corruption surveys interview citizens, public officials and/or private firms regarding their experiences with petty corruption during a certain period of time. Exit surveys ask citizens about their experience of corruption shortly after they have accessed a public service at one of the government agencies. Finally, online reporting provide citizens with an online platform, where they can report their experiences of petty corruption almost immediately after they occur.



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1 CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN ASSESSING THE VALUE OF BRIBES

The concept of petty corruption, also known as administrative corruption, refers to small bribes paid to public officials by citizens or private companies to speed up bureaucratic processes, access services the payer is lawfully entitled to or obtain benefits they would not otherwise enjoy. While the average size of bribes is usually small (Transparency International 2011), in countries where corruption has been labelled as “endemic”, bribery directly affects citizens’ standards of living, especially the poor, as small payments to access public service they are entitled to ultimately represent a high percentage of their income. Bribery also undermines the quantity and quality of services, leading to poor quality services or inefficient projects, with little value for money. Petty bribery also has a corrosive effect on the overall governance environment and the efficiency of the state institutions, and ultimately undermines sustainable economic development and the rule of law.

There are a number of challenges associated with measuring the cost of corruption and the value of bribes:

- Firstly, measuring corruption faces challenges of definition and quantification. As corruption occurs behind closed doors and does not leave any paper trail, there is a lack of objective empirical data on incidences and the value of bribes. Therefore, corruption surveys tend to rely on citizens’ perceptions of corruption. Although this approach is the best possible solution in the absence of objective data, a gap is to be expected between perceptions and actual levels of corruption. Perceptions may be influenced by factors other than knowledge, experience or incidence of the various forms of corruption.
- When trying to assess the value of bribes, corruption surveys rely on behavioural questions and the respondents’ reports of experience of bribery in the past, whose accuracy can be compromised by a certain number of factors such as reluctance to admit bribing public officials, which is illegal in many countries and therefore may lead to court action. This can be exacerbated if people do not have confidence in the anonymity and confidentiality of the survey.
- Other difficulties include respondents having problems to remember precisely a bribery event that happened in the past or having only a vague memory of the actual amount paid. To address this challenge, a key question is to decide on an appropriate timeframe to ask respondents for their experience of corruption, for example, only in the last 12 months or less. Another challenge is whether to disaggregate data collected on the value of bribes by services accessed or ask for a cumulative amount of bribes paid over a certain period of time. Even if disaggregated per service, respondents may have made several informal payments to the same service, which may challenge the estimation of the average value of bribes for accessing a specific service.
- Furthermore, the reliability of the data can be compromised by false reporting that can be motivated by desire to punish or fear of being punished by someone, or not wanting to damage a firm or agency’s image, among many others (Georgian Opinion Research International 2009).
- In addition, the question is also what to capture when measuring the costs of corruption more broadly. Assessing the value of bribes paid is not enough to capture the hidden costs of corruption and its consequences. There are many indirect costs derived from corruption that are often not factored in, such as social, human or environmental costs, and the challenge is to identify what to measure and the nature of the corruption damage to account for the full cost of corruption. Such negative consequences are also extremely challenging to quantify. Therefore, while there are many figures and estimates circulating, the sources and methodologies backing them are either opaque or questionable and no institution so far has been able to provide a cost estimate or a methodology for measuring the cost of corruption in a reliable manner (Cobham 2013).

Despite these challenges, surveys of perception and experience of corruption are the most commonly used approach to measure the prevalence of corruption and the value of bribes paid, constituting the best – if not only – type of data that can be collected on corruption, (Huberts et al. 2008).

2 MAIN APPROACHES FOR MEASURING THE VALUE OF BRIBES

There are three main approaches when studying petty corruption. Corruption surveys ask respondents about their experiences of corruption over a certain period of time. Exit surveys collect feedback from citizens on their experiences of corruption immediately after having accessed a public service. Citizens can also self-report their experiences of petty corruption through various channels and complaints mechanisms (online or through hotlines, for example) which allows data to be collected on the value of bribes almost immediately after citizens experience corruption. Online platforms are common channels to report bribery.

Corruption surveys

Corruption surveys consist of interviewing respondents – citizens, public officials or private companies – on their experiences of bribery over a certain period of time. This approach may include an estimate of the amount paid in bribes (World Bank 2014). It is typically used to collect data on the likelihood of encountering corruption (Transparency International Kenya 2014), experiences (Special Eurobarometer 397 2013) and perceptions of corruption (Transparency International 2013).

The methodology used to assess the value of bribes consists of interviewing respondents on their personal experiences of bribery (Special Eurobarometer 397 2013). Surveys ask respondents to estimate the amount of illegal payments they made over a certain period of time (usually 12 months). Questionnaires can ask about bribes paid to public officials when accessing specific services, such as police, judiciary, health care, education, registration, and so on. They can also include questions regarding the percentage of monthly or yearly income spent on bribery. Other alternative approaches to determine the specific amount paid in bribes ask for the size of the last bribe paid, potentially omitting important data on other bribes that have been paid and could alter the final estimate of the average size of bribes. Corruption surveys also usually ask respondents about their experiences with bribery in the last year (Transparency International 2013). This could potentially affect the reliability of the data as respondents may not remember the details accurately or completely.

Questionnaires should be targeted to the population surveyed, whether they are citizens (households or individuals), public officials or private companies and tailored to the specific characteristics of the sample.

Regarding the sampling methodology, the approach varies depending on the purpose of the survey. If the objective of the survey is to assess the average size of bribes paid by the average citizen, data must be collected through representative random samples of the entire adult population of the country. As this approach usually collects data from a representative sample of the entire adult population, it is especially useful for assessing prevalence and perception of corruption in a country and the likelihood to encounter corruption (World Bank 2013; Georgian Opinion Research International 2009). This methodology is limited for assessing the average value of bribes because not all respondents experience bribery and cannot provide all data on the value of bribes (World Bank 2013). This can be a challenge when the total number of bribe payers in the sample is so small that the results may have a very high margin of error.

Another approach assesses the average size of bribes from the parts of society which has the highest levels of contact with public institutions, and therefore are more likely to have paid bribes. It is therefore often necessary for such an approach to conduct initial research to find out which specific part of society has higher levels of contact with public services, as this is presumably context specific.

Citizen surveys

Corruption in Service Sectors: National Households Survey Bangladesh 2012

<http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/files/HHSurvey-ExecSum-Eng-fin.pdf>

Carried by the Transparency International chapter in Bangladesh, the survey attempted to measure the proportion of randomly sampled householders who experienced bribery when trying to access public services from different sectors. Over a month and a half, more than 7000 householders were surveyed in rural and urban areas of Bangladesh with the same core questionnaire, modified to regional characteristics. It was not possible to access the questionnaire in English to analyse the wording of the questions, however, as stated by one of the members of TI-Bangladesh, the amount of bribes reported were

followed by further follow-up queries in each sector. This included, for example, questions on why bribes were paid, to whom and if it was coercive, extortion, and so on.

The survey shows *taka* (unauthorised money) paid in different service sectors such as to law enforcement agencies, judiciary, education, health and agriculture among others, and displays the rate of bribes compared with the total number of services requested, as well as the average bribe paid in each sector.

To maintain data quality, double-checks on almost one-third of the completed questionnaires were done through different mechanisms. These mechanisms included, among others, telephone calls to the original respondents to interview them again.

Special Eurobarometer 397 on Corruption
http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_397_en.pdf

Following the methodological guidelines for Eurobarometer of the Directorate-General for Communication of the European Commission (Special Eurobarometer 397 2013), the survey conducted more than 27,000 face-to-face interviews, an average of 1000 individual interviews in 27 member states in two weeks.

The study focused on general perceptions of corruption and personal experiences of bribery when contacting specific institutions. Moreover, the study also looked at corruption in business, the impact of petty bribery on health care, as well as the issue of reporting corruption (whether it was reported or not, awareness of where to report it, reasons for not reporting it, and so on).

The survey also examined the average value of bribes requested by public and private services, politicians and political parties.

To obtain the data, the questionnaire included questions such as, “Apart from official fees, did you have to give an extra payment or a valuable gift to a nurse or a doctor, or make a donation to the hospital?”, “How much of a bribe was asked for or expected by your contact in tax authorities?” and “How much of a bribe was asked for or expected by your contact in political parties?” (Special Eurobarometer 397 2013). The questionnaire provided the opportunity for respondents to introduce the exact amount paid in

bribes, and included options such as “don’t remember”, “refusal” or “don’t know”. However, the study did not publish the exact value of the paid or expected bribes, but rather gave the amounts in blocks of €50.

East African Bribery Index 2014
<http://www.tikenya.org/index.php/the-east-african-bribery-index>

This survey was conducted by Transparency International’s chapters in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, and Concern for Development Initiatives in Africa (ForDIA) in Tanzania. It attempted to map bribery experiences and the likelihood of facing a bribe request by a public official. Moreover, the index aimed to state the average prevalence of bribery in each country and each service, as well as the average size and the impact of petty bribery, specifically the number of people who did not receive a public service for not having enough money to pay a bribe.

The index included five countries (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) and more than 10,000 respondents randomly sampled based on the population sizes in rural and urban areas, as well as age, education, gender, employment and income.

The questionnaire included specific questions on bribery, such as, “Please tell me the total amount you paid in the last 12 months to each institution”, taking into account each institution (educational, judiciary, health care, police, and so on), the number of times a bribe was payed and the total amount of bribes paid in 12 months (Transparency International Kenya 2014). Respondents were also asked for the reasons to pay a bribe (need to expedite service delivery or only way to obtain that service, for example). Finally, the report focused on the perception of corruption. In brief, it is a useful tool when looking for the likelihood, size, experience and perception of bribery (Transparency International Kenya 2014).

Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) 2009
http://issuu.com/transparencyinternational/docs/global_corruption_barometer_2009_web?e=2496456/2192681

The GCB focuses on citizen’s perception and experiences of corruption in 69 different countries, where generally around 1,000 people in each country are interviewed. The research aims to be nationally

representative and makes distinctions between urban and rural areas.

The questionnaire included the question “What was the approximate total amount of money paid overall in bribes by your household in the past 12 months?” (Transparency International 2010). The questionnaire did not include a section for specific values of bribes for individual services, it only asked the respondents to place the size of bribes in pre-determined blocks: under \$30, \$30 to \$99, \$100 to \$499, \$500 to \$999 or more than \$1000.

Surveys of public officials

Perception of Corruption in Georgia: Survey of Public Officials

<http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/cooperation/economiccrime/corruption/projects/gepac/779-Georgia%20Public%20official%20survey-2009.pdf>

Conducted over a month and a half in 2009, within the framework of the project on Support to the Anti-Corruption Strategy of Georgia, the 75-question survey studied the perception of corruption of more than 800 Georgian public officials.

The survey focused both on the likelihood of public officials requesting, demanding or insinuating that a bribe should be paid and the likelihood of local and foreign firms offering a bribe. When specifically studying petty corruption, the research asked public officials, “In many countries of the world it is known that some civil servants supplement their official salaries with additional unauthorised payments or benefits that they receive during the course of performing their duties. In your organisation, what would you say is the average percentage of total income these payments and benefits represent?” (Georgian Opinion Research International 2009, 89) The possible answers ranged from small proportion to more than two-thirds, and included options for no payments/benefits paid or don't know/refuse to answer.

The survey explored experiences, perception and likelihood of petty corruption by asking other questions such as, “In many countries, it is common for enterprises to provide additional gratification (unauthorised payments or benefits) in order to win a procurement contract. How often do public procurement contracts in your organisation involve any such additional payments or benefits?” and, “How

significant is the amount of income received from bribes when compared to total income for: your colleagues superiors, co-workers and subordinates of your colleagues” (Georgian Opinion Research International 2009)

However, the methodology has its limitations, as public officials may be reluctant to provide reliable information about bribery patterns for fear of damaging the institution's reputation or admitting corrupt behaviour and may provide false reports (Georgian Opinion Research International 2009). The research also faced obstacles such as the lack of transparency as certain agencies refused to allow their members to respond the survey (Georgian Opinion Research International 2009).

Surveys of private companies

World Bank Enterprise Survey

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

The World Bank's Enterprise Surveys are surveys carried out on businesses since the 1990s. The surveys involve face-to-face interviews with business owners and top managers from 119 economies around the world on the characteristics of their respective country's business environment, with 10 per cent of the questions dedicated to the obstacles for growth faced by the company and its performance, including corruption. The surveys include a question providing an estimate of the percentage of the contract value typically paid for accessing a government contract.

Because the amount paid in bribes is usually a certain percentage of the total value of the contract (CSIS 2014 21), and because the size of the contracts vary drastically, the surveys do not primarily focus on the average value of bribes. They collect valuable data on corruption and bribery including the number of times a firm is asked/expected to pay a bribe when soliciting public services or licences, when meeting with tax inspectors to secure a contract or obtain a construction permit. The survey includes questions regarding the average amount of bribes, estimated as a percentage of the value of a contract or annual sales. “It is said that establishments are sometimes required to make gifts or informal payments to public officials to ‘get things done’ with regard to customs, taxes, licences, regulations, services, etc. On average, what percentage of total annual sales, or estimated total

annual value, do establishments like this one pay in informal payments or gifts to public officials for this purpose?”

Exit surveys

These surveys collect citizens' feedback on experiences of bribery immediately or recently after accessing a public service. Exit surveys are particularly useful when assessing the average size of a bribe as the data collected can be considered reliable by recording immediate experience of corruption. It also allows the collection of institution specific data.

Exit surveys can be conducted outside of public agencies, such as police stations, courts, schools, hospitals, and so on. The government can also create a feedback mechanism in which citizens requesting a service must provide contact details that can be used by government agents to interview citizens at a later stage on their experience of corruption when accessing public services (Government of the Punjab 2015). This approach includes a questionnaire on whether a bribe was paid when requesting the service, and if so, what was its amount (Gullapalli 2012b, 3).

While other corruption surveys randomly sample the population of a region, it is not representative of the institutions that provide the public services as not all of them are used in the same proportion by citizens (World Bank 2013). This is achieved through interviewing citizens who requested a public service, rather than the interview of a representative sample of citizens.

As exit surveys focus on the access to public services, they usually tend to target citizens. This approach does not necessarily aim to be representative of the region where the survey is conducted, but of the service users. As such, exit surveys constitute a useful way to assess the average value of bribes because robust sample sizes are obtained from a population that has direct experience of the public services (Government of the Punjab 2015), and therefore more prone to encounter petty corruption. Moreover, unlike other corruption surveys, there are no memory challenges as the respondents do not have to remember their experiences on petty corruption over a number of months, but can rather report them immediately.

An important challenge that may have an impact on the reliability of the data collected is that in such

approaches the anonymity of respondents is not guaranteed (Government of the Punjab 2015), which can lead to false reporting by respondents, whether they are citizens or private firms. Research design must create control mechanisms to address this, for example by explaining to potential respondents that their identity is protected in the first place so answers are not biased (Andvig et al. 2000).

Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program

<http://www.cfmp.punjab.gov.pk/>

The Citizen Feedback Monitoring Program (CFMP) was created in Pakistan as a way to fight petty corruption and study the performance of public officials in fulfilling their mandate. The programme developed an automated monitoring mechanism where public officials, when required to provide a public service by a citizen, must record that citizen's phone number and transactional details. Then, an automatic call with the recorded voice of the chief minister of the Punjab is made to that phone number, requesting feedback on the quality of the service provided, which will be later followed by an SMS. More data is collected through call centre agents, who randomly select citizens and request detailed information. In 2013, between 25,000 and 30,000 automated calls were made each day. However, it was not possible to access the questionnaire, so specific wording of the questions on the assessment of bribe values could not be collected for this answer.

Interestingly, the platform is considered a great success in prevention of false reports. The April-June 2015 bulletin shows how only 1 per cent of all the submitted reports were false allegations. This is achieved through the questionnaire performed during the call, which allows centre agents to determine whether the individual is an impostor or not. One person can lie about a particular office, but it is unlikely that many people give false reports that show similar trends. Fake data on reports are largely avoided too (only 1 per cent of almost the 8 million collected were not authentic), this is achieved through data analysis and citizen awareness of the process, as they would gain nothing providing fake reports.

In general, CFMP is a valuable mechanism that allows examination of both petty corruption and performance of public services. It shows a successful strategy: the response rate is growing yearly, and 146,000 citizens reported corruption only in the first semester of 2015.

The platform also has effective mechanisms to prevent false reports: questionnaires are designed to verify the identity of the respondents and request their phone numbers. However, the disadvantage is that the anonymity of citizens who report is not guaranteed, although the official website states that “the government intends to empower citizens to speak freely with a significant degree of anonymity” (CFMP 2015).

Shudhify

<http://www.youthmovements.org/initiatives/shudhify>

Although no longer available online since 2014, this Indian citizen-led project was highly regarded in anti-corruption circles due to its process for gathering, analysing and disseminating data. The two founders funders, were then 18-year-old citizens from Bangalore, India.

Before its end, the team behind Shudhify had conducted more than 3,200 exit surveys in different government offices in Bangalore, regarding different public services, such as transport offices and police stations. The questionnaire included nine questions (Gullapalli 2012b, 3) regarding the quality of service provision, level of efficiency and corruption, such as the value of bribes, if applicable. The data was then processed by a rating algorithm, which aggregated it and generated a data map of the selected government offices with their individual rates of petty corruption. The data for this project was also collected from the *lokayukta* (the state ombudsman), IPaidABribe and investigations for disproportionate assets. Data was then disseminated through the press, academic journals, the internet and weekly “dares” initiatives: groups of people in partnership with Shudhify would present the data through different activities (Gullapalli 2012a), such as singing the Indian national anthem in the most corrupt/least efficient regional transport office (RTO) in Bangalore and leaving leaflets with the ratings of that office.

The initiative successfully identified those government offices in Bangalore where petty corruption occurred through the collection of data of 40 police stations, 9 RTOs and offices of other civic agencies.

In general, the approach exhibits a particular strength regarding data dissemination, as the project devotes similar efforts to gather data and to share the results.

TII-CMS India Corruption Study 2007

http://www.karmayog.org/anticorruption/upload/16337/India_corruption_Study2007_Key_Highlights.pdf

In 2007, the India Corruption Study used new data collection methods, including household surveys and exit interviews at service delivery outlets. Despite the fact that this mixed methodology was abandoned in the following 2010 study, this approach constitutes a relevant example of how to use mixed methodology as the data was collected through exit surveys and household surveys. With almost 28,000 surveys conducted, the study included household level sample survey, discussions with service providers and observations on display of information at the service delivery points (TII-CMS 2007, 10) and the already mentioned exit interviews.

Dividing the public services into basic services (public distribution system, hospitals, education, electricity and water supply) and need-based services (national rural employment guarantee scheme, land records/registration, forestry, housing, banking and police), the study states that the total bribe amount for all the services was Rs8,830 million (US\$222 million), providing information on the overall value of bribes for each service in each section.

Online reporting

This approach allows citizens to directly report their experience of petty bribery immediately after experiencing it on different online platforms. This approach is used to obtain testimonies of experiences of bribes. It provides data and anecdotal evidence on the amount of the illegal payments made by citizens when accessing public services.

The data collected can be controlled, for example, by grouping reported bribes from the same public agency in the same location to estimate the average size of bribes and identify variations. Moreover, the platform can be designed to automate the reporting (only giving the user options to choose) or manually (via a blank space where the reporters can introduce all the text they want). Automatic reports facilitate and hasten the data analysis.

This approach does not aim to be representative of a region or a population as there is no sampling and individuals can send reports as many times as they want. It does not necessarily focus on specific sectors

of society more prone to petty bribery or that request more public services than others. However, data collected can help identify broad trends and patterns of corruption.

Although online reporting might initially look like the most adequate tool to assess the value of bribes as it only receives data on bribery, there are several factors that must be considered. Firstly, reports can be faked and there few mechanisms that could prevent this. IPaidABribe suggests that anonymity and refusal to publish the name of the public officer or third parties involved is a way to prevents fake reports (Janaagraha 2015). Non-coherent values can also be discarded at the data analysis stage of the process.

However, even if it is used only to assess the value of bribes, online reporting is not representative of the citizens who encountered a petty corruption situation, and therefore the actual size of bribes in the region may vary greatly compared with that stated on the platform.

I Paid a Bribe

www.ipaidabribe.com

Self-described as “the largest online crowd-sourced anti-corruption platform in the world today”, IPaidABribe provides citizens of different cities in India with a platform to report their own experiences of corruption. The website allows users to post anonymous reports on whether or not they paid bribes, or if they met an honest officer. Reports can include the nature, number, pattern, types, location, frequencies and value of those bribes.

Five years after its release, the site counts with more than 50,000 reports from 805 cities in India. Each report has been made by one citizen (who can report as many times as he or she wants). The report is designed to be automatic (this is, it includes sections requesting specific data). Each bribe report includes questions on the type of government service where the bribe was paid (the citizen cannot write the answer, but select one of the 35 services, such as airports, municipal service or income tax). Depending on the answer, the next question, “Why were you asked for the bribe?” allows the reporter to select specific reasons for each service. Afterwards, it requests the city, date and exact value of the bribe in Indian rupees. The report then allows the citizen to manually introduce secondary data in a text box, such as name of the officer, the office where the incident took place and the designation of the officer.

The word box is initially filled by an automatic help text that reads: “by entering more relevant details in your bribe report, you are increasing the chances of action being taken against the bribe taker”.

Regarding control mechanisms for data collection, the organisation does not allow names of complainers, public officials or third-party actors to be published in the reports, arguing that this eliminates any motivation to submit false reports, and thus allow the project to work from the assumption that nobody would gain anything reporting false statements.

IPaidABribe published its last report on 2013, where eight indexes for each main city in India shows aggregated results for the number of bribe reports and the total value in rupees covering each public service, such as police, education, health and family welfare. However, as stated in the report, the research is more focused on general trends of bribery rather than in absolute values as it proactively seeks to be part of a change in the Indian society.

In conclusion, IPaidABribe is a valuable tool when researching the average amount paid in bribes from direct experiences of corruption. However, as the sample is self-selected, it cannot be considered to be representative. In addition, only people who know about the platform and have access to the internet can make reports. Furthermore, there are only two control mechanisms to prevent fake reports (anonymity of the report and not allowing the name of officers or third parties involved to be reported), which may not be sufficient. The report can be accessed here:

https://www.scribd.com/doc/274075740/CRBI?secret_password=ss9Vdv1oFCEbbVoeFzYQ

Bribe Market

<https://www.piatadespaga.ro/>

Similar to IPaidABribe, the Romania-based platform *Piața de Șpagă* (Bribe Market) allows citizens to report their experiences of corruption. Exposing corruption is not necessarily the main objective of the platform, but to show citizens where bribes are cheaper or do not take place, so they can access public services in those places instead of having to pay more money than they would have had to at their usual public office. This unconventional tactic has boosted the participation rate and the reports submitted to Bribe Market were higher than to IPaidABribe, which has been online for two more years than the Romanian platform. However, the

main difference with IPaidABribe is that the Romanian site does not attempt to “conduct any kind of advocacy” (The Engine Room 2012) and does not attempt to be seen as a political site but rather a citizen service to obtain cheaper public services.

In general, Bribe Market shares the same assumptions as IPaidABribe in terms of data control: large numbers of false statements are expected to be prevented through anonymity of reports and public officials and third parties involved.

While there are no reports published based on the data gathered by Bribe Market, an aggregated value of all reported bribes can be founded on the website, where the bribes are divided regarding the public service (education, police, health services, and so on). Because the main aim of the website is to map the reports rather than being indexed, the actual value of bribes are displayed individually in each report and on the map.

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