


**NORDICOM**

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## TV viewing in the Nordic countries in 2020

The pandemic year 2020 slowed the ongoing downturn for linear television. For the first time in many years, total viewing time increased or stabilised, mainly explained by a sharp increase in the older age groups. In Finland, which has a higher TV consumption than its Nordic neighbours, children and their parents also spent more time in front of the TV screen.

This factsheet is about linear television viewing in the Nordic countries. It covers daily reach and viewing time and includes overviews of the largest TV channels and the main TV broadcasting companies. Comparisons are made mainly with 2019, but in a few cases with a longer time perspective.

The information is based on the television industry's official TV-viewing measurements in each country. Data are not completely comparable between the countries, for example, there are differences in the population base (universe): in Denmark and Norway, the surveys are based on the entire population, and in Finland, Iceland and Sweden, on people having access to a TV set (TV population); the age groups also vary. As for Iceland, note that only the two largest TV companies are included in the measurements. We therefore do not recommend using the statistics for detailed comparisons between countries, but to discern major features and overarching trends.

More information about the surveys is presented at the end of the factsheet, together with links to Nordicom's media statistics database and other sources presenting longer data series about TV viewing.

### More people watched TV news

After a peak around 2008–2012, in connection with the introduction of terrestrial digital television, linear TV viewing has steadily decreased, especially among younger people. Instead, the use of streaming services is growing.

However, the pandemic year 2020 became a special year for our media habits. A number of national surveys in the Nordic countries have shown increased media consumption. People have sought both entertainment (visible in strong growth for streaming services) and information (manifested in an increased interest in, above all, TV news and digital news sites). In spring 2020, TV viewing increased, especially on the national channels' frequent news reporting. This means that the pandemic stopped, or flattened out, the downturn for TV viewing which has been going on for the past ten years.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about media habits during the Covid-19 pandemic, see Ohlsson, J., Blach-Ørsten, M., & Willig, I. (2021). *Covid-19 och de nordiska nyhetsmedierna* [Covid-19 and the Nordic news media]. Nordicom, University of Gothenburg.  
<https://www.nordicom.gu.se/sv/publikationer/covid-19-och-de-nordiska-nyhetsmedierna>

## TV reach and time stabilised overall

In 2020, almost six of ten Nordic people watched TV on a daily basis, in line with 2019. Daily viewing time in 2020 also stayed at the same level as in 2019, and even increased in Finland. Despite the data for reach and viewing time not being fully comparable between countries, it is obvious that TV viewing in Finland is stronger than in the rest of the Nordic countries (see Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1.** TV daily reach in the Nordic countries, 2017–2020 (share of population, per cent)

Year	Denmark Age 3+	Finland Age 4+	Norway Age 10–79	Sweden Age 3+
2017	61	68	n.a.	62
2018	58	66	58	58
2019	58	66	56	56
2020	56	67	56	55

Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland and Sweden. Due to changes of methods, data for Norway in 2017 are not included. For Iceland, no reach data are available.

Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark, Finnpanel, Kantar TNS Norway, MMS.

**Table 2.** Daily TV viewing time, 2017–2020 (minutes per day)

Year	Denmark Age 3+	Finland Age 4+	Iceland Age 12–80	Norway Age 10–79	Sweden Age 3+
2017	150	168	n.a.	n.a.	140
2018	142	165	n.a.	127	133
2019	137	162	68	117	127
2020	135	167	68	118	129

Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland, Iceland and Sweden. Due to changes of methods, data for Norway in 2017 are not included. Data for Iceland are based on the two largest TV companies in the country in week 42, respective year (annual averages in the other countries).

Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark, Finnpanel, Gallup Iceland, Kantar TNS Norway, MMS.

## Sharply increased viewing among the elderly

Behind the large picture, there are differences between the age groups. Table 3 below, presenting the viewing time in different age groups, shows that those who increased their viewing in 2020 were people 55–60 years old and older. Among younger people, the decline continued, again with the exception of Finland where children aged 4–9 and people aged 35 and older also watched more television in 2020 compared with 2019.

Among the elderly, the increase in viewing time was significant. In Norway, viewing time increased by almost half an hour among 65–79-year-olds, in Sweden by just over 20 minutes among people aged 60 and older, and in Finland by 16 minutes among people aged 65 and older. In Denmark, the increase was more modest, by only a few minutes in the oldest groups.

**Table 3.** Daily TV viewing time by age, 2020, and difference in viewing time, 2019–2020 (minutes per day)

Country	Age groups	Daily viewing time 2020 Minutes	Difference 2019– 2020 Minutes
<b>Denmark</b>	All 3+	135	-2
	3–11	37	-4
	12–18	25	-6
	19–34	55	-8
	35–54	123	-8
	55–70	236	6
	71+	283	5
<b>Finland</b>	All 4+	167	5
	4–9	53	5
	10–14	26	-4
	15–24	32	-5
	25–34	81	-8
	35–44	136	11
	45–64	210	4
	65+	324	16
<b>Norway</b>	All 10–79	118	1
	2–9	28	-3
	10–19	27	-5
	20–34	37	-11
	35–44	76	-6
	45–54	147	-3
	55–64	195	8
	65–79	268	28
<b>Sweden</b>	All 3+	129	2
	3–14	32	-8
	15–24	24	-13
	25–39	57	-6
	40–59	141	-8
	60+	277	22

Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland and Sweden. For Iceland, no data are available.

Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark/Danish Ministry of Culture, Finnpanel/Statistics Finland, Gallup Iceland, Kantar TNS Norway/medianorway, MMS.

## One or two major channels per country – public service on top

Which channels do the northerners watch? In all Nordic countries, one or two public service channels have the largest reach and the largest share of viewing time. In Denmark, these are TV 2 and DR1, in Finland YleTV1, in Iceland RÚV, in Norway NRK1 and in Sweden SVT1. In addition, one more public service channel – DR2, YleTV2, NRK2 and SVT2 – is among the five largest in their respective countries. In Norway, TV 2, in second place, also has public service obligations through an agreement with the state (the Norwegian TV 2 is owned by the Danish Egmont group and is financed by advertising).

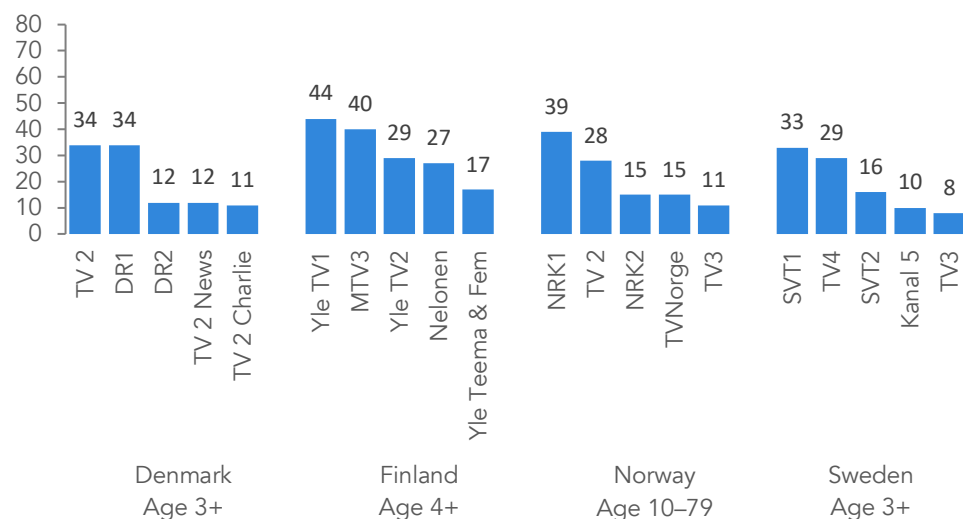
Another common feature is that in each country, one or two main TV channels take dominant positions. These channels have always been the largest and – even if they have lost viewers over the years – they remain at the top. For a long time, they reached 50–60 per cent of the population on a daily basis; today they reach around 30–40 per cent.

Still, the positions of the largest channels differ somewhat between the countries. In Denmark and Sweden, there are two dominating channels of the same size – TV 2 and DR1 in Denmark and SVT1 and TV4 (owned by Telia) in Sweden – while in Norway, one channel, NRK1, has a larger audience than the others, in both reach and share of viewing time.

In Finland, the two top channels, YleTV1 and MTV3 (owned by Swedish Telia), have approximately the same daily reach. But again, Finland differs from its Nordic neighbours, as two more channels, YleTV2 and Nelonen (owned by Sanoma), also reach a large share of the population on a daily basis. However, measured in terms of viewing time shares, YleTV1 dominates, being almost twice as large as MTV3 in second place.

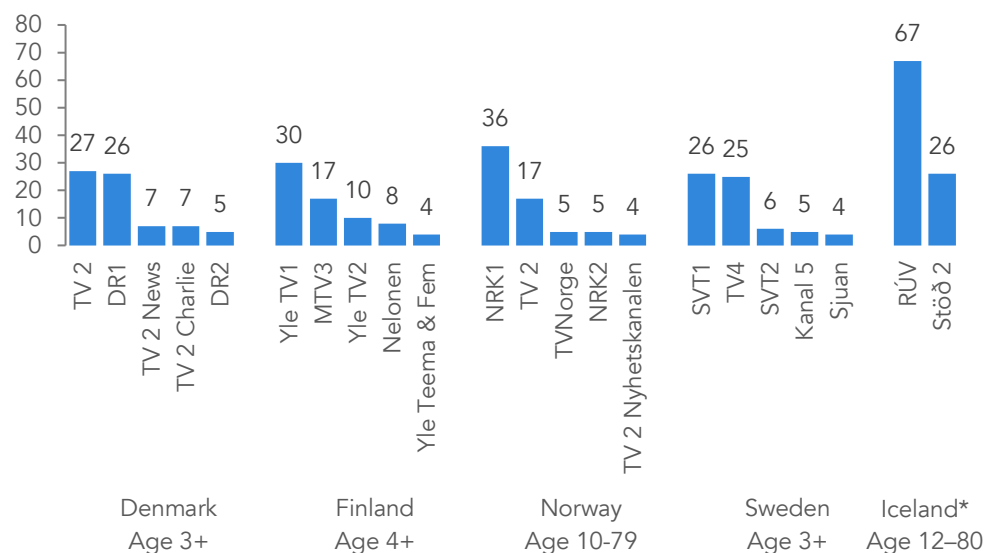
Icelandic data show a 67 per cent share of viewing time for RÚV-TV in 2020. This should be considered in the context that, since 2019, only RÚV-TV and Sýn's channels (Stöð 2 channels) are included in the measurement, after a third broadcaster, Sjóntvarp Simans, opted out. In comparison, in 2018, RÚV had 53 per cent, Stöð 2 (the main channel) 24 per cent, and Sjóntvarp Simans 9 per cent. (Sýn is Iceland's largest commercial media company, while Sjóntvarp Simans is owned by Síminn, the country's largest telecom company.)

**Figure 1.** The five largest TV channels per Nordic country by daily reach, 2020 (share of population, per cent)



Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland and Sweden. Daily reach in Denmark and Sweden is based on viewing during at least five consecutive minutes; in Finland and Norway on one minute's viewing. Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark/Danish Ministry of Culture, Finnpanel, Kantar TNS Norway/medianorway, MMS.

**Figure 2.** The five largest TV channels per Nordic country by share of viewing time, 2020 (per cent)



\*As of 2019, the audience shares in Iceland are based on RÚV-TV and the channels of Sýn (the Stöð 2 channels, of which the main channel has 26%). For comparison, in 2018, RÚV had 53 per cent, Stöð 2 had 24 per cent and Sjóvarp Simans (which has since opted out of the measurements) had 9 per cent. Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland and Sweden. Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark/Danish Ministry of Culture, Finnpanel, Gallup Iceland, Kantar TNS Norway/medianorway, MMS.

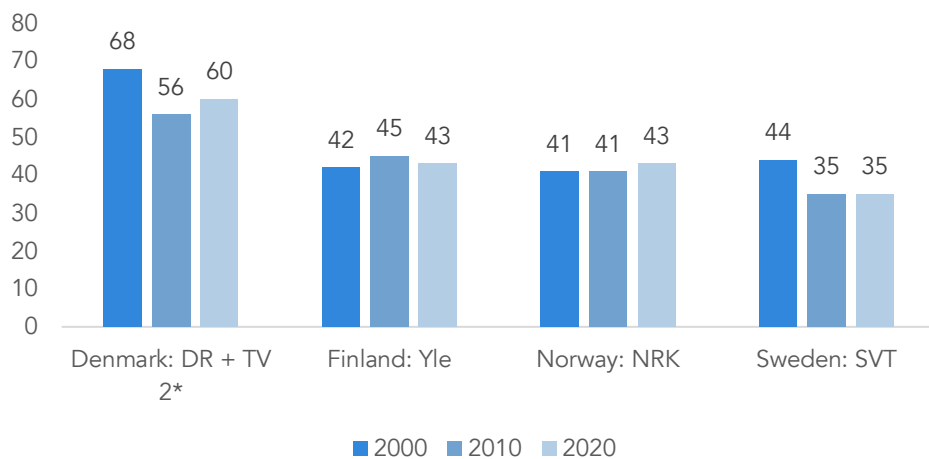
As mentioned earlier, it is also the major national channels that increased during the pandemic year 2020, partly due to more frequent news broadcasts and authorities' press conferences about the pandemic. Extended over the year, both daily reach and share of viewing time increased by 1–2 percentage points per channel (graphs of the largest TV channel changes are available in Nordicom's statistical database).

Another change from 2019 to 2020 concerns TV3's position among the five largest in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In the latter two, TV3 (owned by NENT Group) maintained its fifth place measured in daily reach during 2020, but for the first time, dropped out of list based on viewing time. Instead, fifth place was taken by TV2 Nyhetskanalen in Norway, and by Sjuan in Sweden. In Denmark, TV 2 Charlie outgrew TV3 in daily reach during 2020, pushing TV3 out of the top-five list. Since then, DR and the TV 2 group are behind Denmark's five largest TV channels, both in reach and viewing time share.

### Stable shares for public service TV over time

In relation to other broadcasting companies, the Nordic public service TV organisations have maintained approximately the same position over the years in their respective countries based on viewing time shares (see Figure 3). The highest share for public service is in Denmark, whose two public service organisations in 2020 together took 60 per cent (DR, 33% and TV 2's main channel, 27%) of the viewing time. Meanwhile, Sweden had the lowest share for public service, with SVT's 35 per cent. (Due to survey changes in Iceland in 2019, data are not included here.)

**Figure 3.** Public service TV shares of viewing time per Nordic country, 2000, 2010 and 2020 (per cent)



\*In Denmark, public service TV includes DR plus TV 2 Denmark's main channel TV 2 (other channels in the TV 2 Group have no public service obligations). Separate shares of viewing time in 2000: DR (32%), TV 2 (36%); in 2010: DR (28%), TV 2 (28%); and in 2020: DR (33%), TV 2 (27%). Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland and Sweden. Data on public service TV audience shares for all years 2000–2020 are available in Nordicom's media statistics database (including a time series for Iceland, not presented above due to survey changes in 2019). Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark/Danish Ministry of Culture, Finnpanel, Kantar TNS Norway/medianorway, MMS.

## Companies' audience shares changed in Denmark

There are four main linear TV players per Nordic country, with the exception of Iceland, which has two (see Figure 4). The players consist of national public service companies, national commercial television companies and television companies with operations in several Nordic countries.

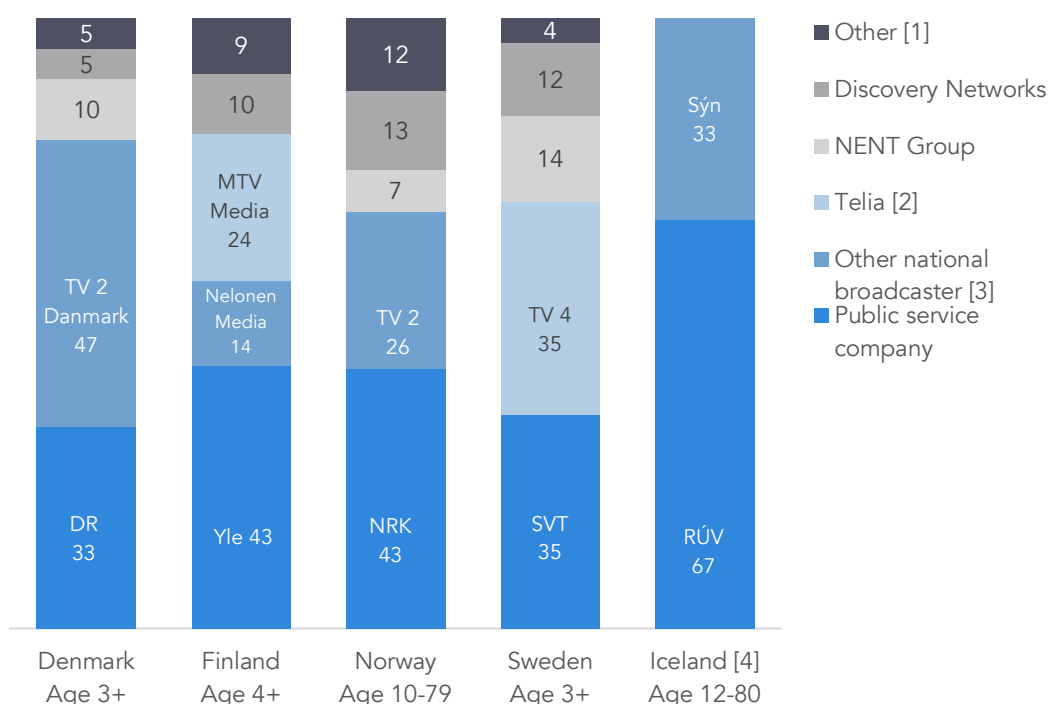
The ownership picture is Nordic. This means that not only do the domestic public service companies have domestic or Nordic owners, so do the largest commercial TV companies: TV 2 Denmark (whose channels, with the exception of the main channel, are commercial operations) is owned by the Danish state; MTV3 in Finland by the Swedish telecom company Telia; Nelonen in Finland by the country's largest media company Sanoma; TV 2 in Norway by the Danish media company Egmont; and finally, TV4 in Sweden, which is also owned by Telia. Two TV companies are present in three or more of the Nordic countries: the Swedish NENT Group and the American Discovery Networks.

The largest domestic television ownership is found in Sweden and Denmark. In Sweden, the public service company SVT, together with the commercial TV companies TV4 and NENT Group, takes around 85 per cent of the viewing time, while DR and TV 2 Denmark, both owned by the Danish state, take around 80 per cent of the viewing time in Denmark.

Over time, the positions between the players have remained largely stable, but in 2020, some major channel changes in Denmark affected audience shares. From 2019 to 2020, DR reduced its share of viewing time from 36 to 33 per cent and Discovery Networks from 9 to 5 per cent, while TV 2 Denmark increased its share significantly from 40 to 47 per cent, almost half of the Danes' total viewing time. Only NENT Group remained at the same share as the year before (10%).

Behind the shift are closures and rerouting of channels as well as a conflict over distribution. As for DR, on 1 January 2020, three of the company's linear TV channels were closed, following a political saving plan for the company. The channel DR K was merged with DR2, while DR3 and DR Ultra became pure digital channels, which resulted in a reduced viewership share for DR overall. Behind Discovery Networks' almost-halved viewing time share in Denmark is a disagreement between Discovery Networks and YouSee, Denmark's largest TV distributor – a conflict which led to, since early 2020, Kanal 5 and the rest of Discovery's linear TV channels no longer being distributed in YouSee's TV packages.

**Figure 4.** TV broadcasting companies' shares of viewing time in each Nordic country, 2020 (per cent)



1 Other = Channels outside the major Nordic TV or media groups.

2 Telia's TV operations include the holdings of TV4 Group in Sweden, MTV Media in Finland, and C More (pay-TV and streaming service).

3 National broadcasters refer to separate companies with TV interests in one Nordic country only: TV 2 Denmark, whose main channel TV 2 (audience share 27%) has public service status (owned by the Danish state), TV 2 in Norway (owned by the Egmont Group), Nelonen Media in Finland (owned by Sanoma) and Sýn hf. in Iceland.

4 As of 2019, only RÚV-TV and the channels of Sýn (the Stöð2 channels) are included in the measurements. Of their total viewing time, RÚV-TV has 67 per cent and Sýn 33 per cent. For comparison, in 2018, RÚV-TV had 55 per cent, Sýn 36 per cent, and "other TV" 9 per cent. ("Other TV" was mainly from the TV group Sjónvarp Simans, owned by Iceland's largest telecom company Síminn, which has since opted out of the measurements.)

Comment: Universe = population in Denmark and Norway, TV population in Finland, Iceland and Sweden. All main channels are included, but the number of channels is not the total for every group (channels not included are mainly pan-territorial channels with small audience shares). Annual averages 2020, except for Iceland with data for week 42.

Sources: Kantar Gallup Denmark/Danish Ministry of Culture, Finnpanel, Gallup Iceland/Statistics Iceland, Kantar TNS Norway/medianorway, MMS.



## About the statistics

Nordicom's compilations for linear TV in the Nordic countries are based on the television industry's official TV viewing measurements in each country. The measurements cover watching TV "live" both linear and online, including time-shift 0–7 days. (Foreign streaming services are not included.) Differences in methods impairs comparability between countries.

**In Finland and Sweden**, TV viewing measurements are based on TV meter (People Meter) data. The survey is based on the TV population, that is, people living in households with access to a TV.

- [Finnpanel: TV audience measurement in Finland \(in English\)](#)
- [MMS: Så mäts tv-tittandet \(in Swedish, some documents in English\)](#)

**In Iceland**, TV viewing is also measured via TV meter (People Meter) surveys, based on the TV population. As annual average data are not openly available in Iceland, data for a specific week (week 42 in October) is used, the results therefore being more sensitive to individual television events. Since 2019, only the two largest TV companies in Iceland are part of the measurements.

- [Gallup: Sjónvarpsmælingar \(Iceland\)](#)

**In Denmark and Norway**, new measurements were introduced in 2017 and 2018, respectively, when the countries' TV meter measurements were supplemented with increased opportunities to capture digital viewing. Since then, the surveys' universe is extended to cover the whole population, not only those with a TV.

- [Kantar Gallup Denmark: The Danish Viewer Survey \(information in English at the end of the page\)](#)
- [The Danish Ministry of Culture: Mediernes udvikling 2020. Metoder \(in Danish\)](#)
- [medianorway: Metodebeskrivelse for TV-kanalenes seertall per år \(in Norwegian\)](#)

## Find more TV statistics

Below is a collection of databases and reports offering TV data based on the industry's official TV measurements in the Nordic countries. Data available in English if not stated otherwise.

### Nordic

- [Nordicom's media statistics database](#)

### Denmark

- [Danish Ministry of Culture's annual Reports on media development in Denmark](#)
- [The DR Audience Research Department's annual report on the use of electronic media in Denmark: Media Development](#)

### **Finland**

- [Statistics Finland's mass media statistics' table service](#)
- [Finnpanel's website](#)

### **Iceland**

- [Gallup Iceland's database \(in Icelandic\)](#)

### **Norway**

- [medianorway's statistical database](#)

### **Sweden**

- [MMS årsrapporter \(annual reports in Swedish\)](#)

In Norway and Sweden, annual Media Barometer surveys generating data on people's media habits over time are conducted, based on questionnaires (telephone and web surveys). Reports and statistics are openly available via the links below.

### **Norway**

- [Statistics Norway: The Norwegian Media Barometer](#)
- [medianorway's statistical database](#)

### **Sweden**

- [Nordicom's Media Barometer Survey \(basic data in English\)](#)
- [Nordicom's publication \*MedieSverige 2021\* \(in Swedish\)](#)

Eva Harrie

E-mail: [eva.harrie@nordicom.gu.se](mailto:eva.harrie@nordicom.gu.se)

Data collection is done in cooperation with the organisations in Nordicom's statistical network: Danish Ministry of Culture's Report on media development in Denmark, Statistics Finland, Statistics Iceland, and medianorway.

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