
Determinants of Absence-Related and Presence-Pressure Behaviours in Remote Work

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Abstract:

Purpose: The study aims to identify factors shaping absence- and presence-related behaviours in remote work, and to examine how organisational practices influence employees' decisions to take sick leave or to perform work despite illness.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The analysis draws on CAWI survey data collected from 1,000 employees working remotely or in hybrid mode. Logistic regression models were used to estimate the effects of individual characteristics, organisational conditions and remote-work practices on multiple forms of sickness absence and presence, including working while on sick leave, foregoing sick-leave entitlements and experiencing social or managerial presence pressure.

Findings: Remote work reduces formal sickness absence but also normalises working despite illness. These behaviours are shaped by organisational conditions—particularly monitoring, online-presence expectations and team norms—as well as individual characteristics. Autonomy can support well-being, yet monitoring and strong presence norms heighten availability pressure and promote work during illness. Heightened managerial expectations of online presence in poor health indicate a shift of responsibility for work capacity from the organisation to the individual.

Practical Implications: Organisations should ensure clear absence policies, limit intrusive monitoring, and strengthen norms that protect employees' right to disconnect and to recover when ill.

Originality/value: The study offers the multidimensional, empirical examinations of sickness-related behaviours in remote work, capturing both absence and presence practices within a single analytical framework. By analysing five interrelated outcomes using logistic regression, it reveals hidden mechanisms of presence pressure.

Keywords: Remote work practices, sickness-related behaviours, presenteeism in remote work, organizational control, absence management.

JEL codes: J28, M54, M12.

Paper type: Research paper.

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1. Introduction

Organizational behaviours constitute a central area of inquiry in human resource management and organizational psychology, as they reflect how employees respond to work demands and shape overall functioning. They include behaviours that support effectiveness as well as forms of withdrawal such as absenteeism, turnover and reduced engagement (Johns, 2010).

A key mechanism underlying these behaviours are employees' attitudes, defined as relatively stable evaluations with cognitive, affective and intentional components (Ajzen, 2001; Judge, Weiss, Kammeyer-Mueller, and Hulin, 2017), which influence how individuals perceive their work environment and decide whether to engage or withdraw.

Absenteeism, an employee's absence when attendance is expected, is a prominent withdrawal behaviour. Contemporary perspectives emphasise its multifactorial nature, shaped not only by health status but also by individual, organisational, psychosocial and institutional influences (Johns, 2010; Markussen *et al.*, 2011; Miraglia and Johns, 2016). The rise of flexible work arrangements, especially remote and hybrid work, has further transformed traditional notions of presence and absence, creating new participation patterns and reshaping the mechanisms behind absenteeism-related decisions (Ruhle and Schmoll, 2021).

Remote work alters employee functioning because physical absence no longer directly implies an inability to work, and distinctions between being able or unable to perform duties become increasingly blurred. This ambiguity may foster hidden presence behaviours, including remote presenteeism or decisions to forgo formal sick leave. Prior research on absenteeism has focused mainly on on-site settings and has rarely addressed specific features of remote work, such as autonomy, blurred boundaries, digital monitoring or evolving social norms in dispersed teams. Recent literature reviews underscore the need for deeper examination of absence- and presence-related mechanisms in digital work contexts (Nowrouzi-Kia *et al.*, 2024; Ducas *et al.*, 2025).

2. Review of the Literature

Research on employee absence has a long tradition and encompasses a broad spectrum of individual, organizational and contextual factors. The literature emphasizes that absence is not a simple reaction to ill health but a complex behavioural outcome arising from the interaction of variables related both to the employee and to the institutional and social environment of work. Conventional models explaining absence focus primarily on the nature of the absence episode, its voluntariness and degree of planning, the social context and organizational conditions in which it occurs, as well as the economic and regulatory factors shaping the employee's decision to remain at work or withdraw from it (Noja *et al.*, 2024).

Within these determinants, individual characteristics play a particularly important role. Demographic research consistently shows differences in levels of absence between women and men, with women exhibiting higher rates in most studies—typically attributed to a greater share of family and caregiving responsibilities (e.g., Borgogni *et al.*, 2013; Lambert *et al.*, 2005; Väänänen *et al.*, 2000).

At the same time, some authors note that occupying multiple social roles may serve a protective function, enhancing well-being and reducing the need for absence (Bartley *et al.*, 1999). Individual determinants also include personality traits such as neuroticism, extraversion and conscientiousness, which, according to the model proposed by Martocchio and Jimeno (2003), shape patterns of absence.

Individuals high in neuroticism are more prone to negative affective states that increase the likelihood of absence, whereas conscientious employees are less inclined to engage in unwarranted withdrawal from work. Equally important are physical health, self-efficacy, family-related strains and the history of prior absences, all repeatedly identified as significant predictors in conventional research (Hackett, 1989; Ivancevich, 1985).

Organizational factors constitute another key category of determinants shaping absence behaviours. Longstanding evidence points to the impact of workload, psychosocial demands, quality of interpersonal relations, organizational climate and perceived justice on employees' absence patterns (e.g., Elovainio, Kivimäki, and Vahtera, 2002). High stress levels, low control over work processes, role ambiguity and negative coworker relations have all been found to increase the likelihood of absence (Kivimäki *et al.*, 1997; Krantz and Östergren, 2000).

Group norms and workplace culture also play a substantial role. In line with conventional models, absence is socially learned: employees tend to imitate the absence behaviours of their coworkers, contributing to the emergence of informal standards regarding presence at work (Johns, 2010; Brummelhuis *et al.*, 2016). Gellatly and Luchak (1998) demonstrated that group norms shape both the propensity to be absent and the perceived acceptability of taking absence.

Taken together, these determinants of absence behaviours provide an essential foundation for analysing the changing patterns of presence and absence at work—particularly in light of new forms of work organization such as remote and hybrid work, which alter both the meaning and the function of traditional absence behaviours.

The increasing use of remote work arrangements requires extending conventional models of absence to include mechanisms specific to digitally mediated work. Recent literature reviews indicate that telework alters the structure of demands and resources and reshapes social expectations toward employees, generating new patterns of absence and presenteeism. Remote work operates both protectively and risk-enhancingly: on the one hand, it enables flexible adjustment of work to one's health

and reduces the need for formal sick leave; on the other, it reinforces availability pressures, increases digital overload and contributes to working while ill (Nowrouzi-Kia *et al.*, 2024; Nowrouzi-Kia *et al.*, 2025; Ducas *et al.*, 2025).

Studies also highlight inconsistencies in definitions and measurement approaches, which complicate comparisons across research. Moreover, telework changes the cost–benefit structure associated with absence: working from home reduces the effort required to “show up,” thereby increasing the likelihood of presenteeism, particularly under conditions of isolation, role ambiguity, productivity pressures and insufficient organizational support. It can also serve an adaptive function for employees with health problems by facilitating return-to-work processes, yet at the same time increases the risk of chronic presenteeism, which may undermine health and slow recovery.

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model provides a coherent explanation for these dynamics. Otsuka and colleagues (2024) show that teleworkers face specific digital job demands—including intensive online communication, the need for rapid responses and difficulties establishing time boundaries—which heighten the likelihood of working while ill.

Organizational resources such as flexibility, autonomy and clear availability rules mitigate this risk, though they may not fully offset increasing demands. Similar patterns were documented by Steidelmüller, Meyer and Müller (2020), who found that home-based telework systematically increases the probability of presenteeism, irrespective of job characteristics or stress levels.

Another central mechanism shaping absence behaviours in remote work is boundary blurring. According to boundary theory (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000), insufficient separation between work and non-work roles leads to extended working hours, off-hours task completion and reduced recovery opportunities. Review studies (Lyzwinski, 2024; Nowrouzi-Kia *et al.*, 2024) indicate that under such conditions employees often perceive mild illness as insufficient to justify absence and choose to work at a reduced pace instead.

Related to this is leaveism, understood as completing work during time designated for rest or substituting sick leave with paid vacation (Hesketh and Cooper, 2014). Remote work fosters its hidden forms by enabling unnoticed off-hours work and weakening signals that typically mark the end of the working day. Leaveism and presenteeism frequently co-occur and reinforce each other: employees use private time to catch up while simultaneously working through illness, which increases overload and deteriorates well-being.

In sum, remote work does not eliminate conventional determinants of absence; rather, it transforms their modes of operation. Heightened digital demands, blurred boundaries, altered absence costs and intensified expectations of availability shape

decisions about presence and absence, often resulting in reduced formal sickness absence alongside increased presenteeism and hidden forms of working during illness or personal time. These developments underscore the need for quantitative research on absence behaviours in remote work environments, integrating both individual and organizational factors.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Aim, Research Questions and Methodology

The aim of this study was to identify factors shaping absence- and presence-related behaviours in remote work, and to examine how organisational practices influence employees' decisions to take sick leave or to perform work despite illness.

Particular attention was paid to behaviours such as working remotely despite holding a sick-leave certificate, foregoing the right to sick leave due to the possibility of working from home, reducing the number of sick-leave days, receiving negative comments from co-workers regarding remote absences, and encountering supervisors' expectations of online presence despite illness or family difficulties.

The study formed part of the broader project "Diversity versus remote work – problems and challenges" and employed a quantitative CAWI survey. The research was funded from the resources of HRM Department of the Faculty of Management at the University of Lodz.

Data were collected in the second quarter of 2022 by the research agency BIOSTAT Sp. z o.o. (Rybnik, Poland) from a sample of 1,000 employees who had worked remotely or in hybrid form during the preceding two years. The questionnaire included 84 closed-ended items and socio-demographic questions, covering changes in working conditions, remote-work practices, team relations and experiences related to absence and availability in remote work.

The study addressed two research questions:

RQ1: *What individual, team and organisational factors determine sickness-absence substitution and reduction behaviours in remote work?*

RQ2: *What individual, team and organisational factors determine social and supervisory presence-pressure behaviours in remote work?*

Absence-related behaviours served as outcome variables, including working remotely while formally on sick leave, giving up the right to sick leave, reducing the number of sick-leave days, receiving negative comments from colleagues, and facing supervisors' expectations of maintaining online presence despite health or family issues (Table 1). All outcomes were dichotomised. Explanatory variables captured individual characteristics (gender, age, education, hierarchical position), team and

organisational features (team size, behavioural formalisation, nature of work, organisational size) and remote-work conditions (extent of remote work, rigidity of remote-work hours, employer control, autonomy in organising tasks, and the possibility of reporting absence while working remotely).

Table 1. *Items used to measure absenteeism-related outcome behaviours among remote workers*

Item No.	Survey item
Q21	In the last two years, I have worked remotely despite having a sick leave certificate.
Q22	In the last two years, I have chosen not to use sick leave because remote work made it possible for me to continue working.
Q23	Remote work has reduced sickness absence in my workplace.
Q24	Absences during remote work are negatively commented on by other employees.
Q25	My immediate supervisor expects me to be online even if I am ill or facing family difficulties.

Source: *Author's own compilation.*

Determinants of these behaviours were examined using multivariate logistic regression, with each outcome analysed separately. A stepwise selection procedure was applied, retaining only predictors significantly associated with the probability of the behaviour. Odds ratios above 1 indicate increased likelihood, while values below 1 indicate decreased likelihood, *ceteris paribus*. Statistical significance was assessed using the Wald test ($p < 0.10$). Model fit was evaluated with the omnibus test of coefficients and the Nagelkerke pseudo- R^2 statistic, indicating the overall explanatory strength of each model.

3.2 Participants

The study involved 1,000 employees who had performed remote work during the two years preceding data collection, with substantial variation in remote-work intensity. Fully remote work (100% of working time) was reported by 14.2% of respondents; 17.1% worked remotely for 75–99% of their hours; 21.4% for 50–74%; 23.0% for 25–49%; and 24.3% for less than one quarter of their working time.

Women represented 65.5% of the sample. The largest age group comprised employees aged 31–40 (38.2%), followed by those under 30 (30.8%) and 41–50 (20.4%). Smaller shares were aged 51–60 (7.7%) and over 60 (2.9%). Tenure was varied, with the largest groups reporting 6–10 years (26.0%) and 1–5 years (25.1%) of service, followed by 11–15 years (17.0%) and more than 21 years (17.3%). Most respondents held higher-education degrees (59.9%), while 34.3% had secondary education.

Most participants (73.5%) worked in non-managerial roles. Over half were employed in small teams of up to ten members (55.0%), including 26.8% in teams of fewer than five. Larger teams were less common: 11–20 members (15.5%), 21–30 (11.4%) and

more than 31 employees (18.1%). Organisational size varied: 31.1% worked in medium-sized enterprises (50–249 employees), 27.9% in large organisations (250+), 23.7% in small firms (10–49) and 17.3% in micro-enterprises (fewer than nine employees).

4. Results

In this study, five logistic regression models were estimated, each addressing a key absenteeism-related behaviour among remote workers. The relationships between the variables are presented in the full regression outputs shown in the tables Determinants of sickness-absence substitution and reduction behaviours in remote work (Table 2) and Determinants of social and supervisory presence-pressure behaviours in remote work (Table 2).

Table 2. Determinants of sickness-absence substitution and reduction behaviours in remote work (Items 21–23). Logistic regression results

Specification	Model 1 (y = Q21)		Model 2 (y = Q22)		Model 3 (y = Q23)	
	OR	p	OR	p	OR	p
Organization size (number of employees) ^a		0,095*				
mikro	1,550	0,060				
small	1,485	0,053				
medium-sized	1,066	0,736				
Nature of team members' work (individual/teamwork) ¹			1,249	0,006***		
Degree of formalization of employee behaviours within the team ¹			1,140	0,096*	1,250	0,020**
Extent of remote work (last two years) ^b				0,001***		<0,001***
25-49%			1,189	0,445	1,945	0,017
50-74%			1,639	0,039	2,517	0,003
74-99%			2,403	0,001	3,905	<0,001
100%			2,635	0,001	3,363	0,001
Fixed remote-working hours ²			1,692	0,008***	1,632	0,046**
Employer monitors online work ²	2,476	<0,001***	1,883	<0,001***	1,935	0,004***
Autonomy in organizing work ²	1,852	0,002***	1,771	0,007***	3,207	<0,001***
Acceptability of reporting absence ²			1,826	0,004***	1,678	0,044**

Education ^c		0,038**			0,004***
vocational or lower	1,594	0,180			1,611 0,332
secondary	1,475	0,017**			2,307 0,001
Age ^d				0,033**	
31-40 years			0,921	0,690	
41-50 years			0,636	0,057	
over 50 years			0,493	0,013	
Job role ^e	1,605	0,007***	1,717	0,008***	
Constant	0,123	<0,001***	0,125	<0,001***	0,133 <0,001***
Omnibus test of model coefficients	$\chi^2 (9) = 113,2$; $p < 0,001***$		$\chi^2 (14) = 124,5$; $p < 0,001***$		$\chi^2 (11) = 104,5$; $p < 0,001***$
Nagelkerke R ²	0,166		0,196		0,219
Classification quality for y=1	72,7		68,9		78,1
Count R ²	65,2		67,3		75,1
n	857		844		736

Note: Reference groups: a = large organizations; b = less than 25% remote work; c = higher education; d = up to 30 years old; e = non-managerial roles.

1 = quasi-continuous variable (values range from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates the lowest rating and 5 the highest); 2 = binary variable (1 = yes, 0 = otherwise). OR – odds ratio, p – probability in: the Wald test/omnibus test of model coefficient, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

Source: Author's calculations.

Table 3. Determinants of social and supervisory presence-pressure behaviours in remote work - Logistic regression results.

Specification	Model 4 (y = Q24)		Model 5 (y = Q25)	
	OR	p	OR	p
Team size ^a				0,016**
6-10			1,293	0,272
11-20			1,932	0,020
21-30			1,324	0,352
more than 30			2,416	0,002
Organization size (number of employees) ^b				<0,001***
Mikro			2,911	<0,001
small			2,334	<0,001
medium-sized			1,494	0,060
Nature of team members' work (individual/teamwork) ¹	1,231	0,010**	1,223	0,008***
Employer monitors online work ²	1,616	0,032**	4,582	<0,001***
Autonomy in organizing work ²	4,719	<0,001***		

Acceptability of reporting absence ²²	0,609	0,032**		
Education ^c		<0,001***		0,001***
vocational or lower	3,871	0,001	2,382	0,015
Secondary	1,827	0,001	1,828	0,001
Age ^d		0,066**		0,022**
31-40 years	0,675	0,058	0,745	0,139
41-50 years	0,526	0,011	0,472	0,002
over 50 years	0,666	0,203	0,786	0,423
Sex ^e	1,845	0,001***	1,662	0,004***
Job role ^f			1,403	0,086*
Stała	0,189	<0,001***	0,117	<0,001***
Omnibus test of model coefficients	χ^2 (11) = 172,1; p < 0,001***		χ^2 (13) = 515,0; p < 0,001***	
Nagelkerke R ²	0,287		0,112	
Classification quality for y=1	76,9		65,7	
Count R ²	71,3		65,2	
N	710		774	

Note: Reference groups: a = up to 5 team members; b = large organizations; c = higher education; d = up to 30 years old; e = women; f = non-managerial roles.

1 = quasi-continuous variable (values range from 1 to 5, where 1 indicates the lowest rating and 5 the highest); 2 = binary variable (1 = yes, 0 = otherwise).

OR – odds ratio, p – probability in: the Wald test/omnibus test of model coefficient, *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.10

Source: Author's calculations.

Across the substitution and reduction behaviours, the most widespread response concerned the perception that remote work had reduced the number of sickness-absence days, endorsed by 82.5% of respondents. Model 2 shows that this view was shaped entirely by organisational factors: higher formalisation, a greater share of remote work, rigid schedules, digital monitoring, task autonomy and the freedom to report absence all increased the likelihood of perceiving reduced absence.

This perception was closely connected to a more direct substitution mechanism—giving up the right to sick leave because work could be continued from home (reported by 71.2%). The determinants mirrored those in the previous model: teamwork, extensive remote-work participation, rigid hours, monitoring, autonomy and freedom to report absence all raised the probability of substituting sick leave with remote work. This configuration reflects the autonomy paradox: flexibility may create an implicit obligation to remain available. Younger age and managerial roles further increased the likelihood of foregoing sick leave, indicating stronger norms of commitment and heightened performance pressure.

Working remotely while formally on sick leave (54.7%) also displayed a strong organisational imprint (Model 1). Employer control over remote-work time and greater task autonomy increased this behaviour, while managers were more likely to engage in it, consistent with elevated expectations of responsibility and availability.

Higher education was the only factor reducing its likelihood, suggesting greater health awareness or stronger boundary-setting capacity. The model highlights the tension between autonomy and control: autonomy facilitates working at a reduced pace, whereas digital monitoring reinforces norms of constant availability—both mechanisms converging to increase remote presenteeism.

Taken together, the three models show that organisational conditions, rather than individual characteristics, play the decisive role in shaping sickness-absence substitution and reduction behaviours. Remote work shifts the logic of absence from physical presence to digital availability, embedding these behaviours in organisational norms and control practices.

Attention then turned to presence-pressure behaviours. More than half of respondents (52.4%) reported negative comments from co-workers about remote absences. Model 4 shows that such experiences were more common in highly interdependent teams, under employer monitoring, and where employees had greater task autonomy, creating a context of heightened visibility and informal norms of continuous presence. Higher education, female gender and greater freedom to report absences reduced the likelihood of such comments.

Supervisory pressure to remain online despite illness or family difficulties was reported by 48.6% of respondents. This pressure was more prevalent in larger organisations and teams, in interdependent work environments and under digital monitoring. It was also more likely among higher-educated employees, consistent with expectations of availability in more cognitively demanding roles.

Conversely, younger workers and women reported such expectations less frequently, suggesting greater flexibility in negotiating availability or more accommodative managerial norms. Taken together, models 4 and 5 show that both social and supervisory presence-pressure behaviours are strongly shaped by organisational contexts.

Negative comments from co-workers were more common in settings with close monitoring, high collaboration and greater task autonomy, and less common among employees with higher education, women and those with more freedom to report absences. Supervisory expectations of online presence were more frequent in larger teams and organisations, in environments characterised by team interdependence and digital monitoring, and among higher-educated employees, while younger respondents and women reported them less often.

Overall, the models indicate that presence pressure in remote work—whether stemming from co-worker dynamics or managerial authority—arises primarily from organisational and structural conditions rather than individual traits. They show that absence-related behaviours are co-produced by social norms of availability and managerial expectations of continuous presence, underscoring the central role of collective and institutional forces in shaping everyday decisions about online availability.

5. Discussion and Findings

The findings of this study confirm that remote work significantly reshapes traditional patterns of sickness absence, reducing the number of formal absence days while simultaneously intensifying presenteeism and more implicit forms of presence pressure. The intensity of remote work emerged as a key predictor of foregoing sick-leave entitlements, which aligns with earlier literature reviews indicating that illness is increasingly interpreted as a state compatible with performing work duties from home (Nowrouzi-Kia *et al.*, 2024; Nowrouzi-Kia *et al.*, 2025; Ducas *et al.*, 2025).

This shift corresponds with the JD–R model, according to which remote work both elevates job demands (availability pressure, digital overload) and introduces apparent resources (autonomy, flexibility) that may in practice function as risk factors fostering self-endangering behaviours.

Monitoring practices constituted a particularly strong driver of working while on sick leave. This result echoes the findings of Otsuki *et al.* (2024) and Steidelmüller, Meyer and Müller (2020), who show that surveillance technologies in remote work settings reinforce a climate of informal accountability and norms of constant connectivity. The effect was especially pronounced among managers, who more frequently engaged in working while on sick leave, reflecting their stronger internalisation of responsibility norms, expectations of continuous availability, and the need to maintain team functioning.

Autonomy also played a significant role. In line with boundary-blurring theory (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000; Lyzwinski, 2024), higher autonomy in organising tasks and schedules was associated with increased presenteeism. This supports the concept of the autonomy paradox, whereby greater flexibility transforms into internalised pressure to remain available, making it harder to exercise the right to rest (Steidelmüller, Meyer and Müller, 2020; Otsuka *et al.*, 2024).

Normative mechanisms were further evident at team and organisational levels. Larger teams and smaller organisations more frequently generated presence pressure, consistent with research on leaveism and boundary theory (Hesketh and Cooper, 2014; Ruhle and Schmoll, 2021; Johns, 2010). Negative comments from colleagues and expectations from supervisors highlight the social dimension of absence-related decisions, with sickness absence during remote work appearing less legitimate or

socially acceptable than on-site absence. Women reported more frequent experiences of presence pressure, while higher education reduced the likelihood of working while on sick leave, possibly reflecting greater health awareness or stronger boundary-setting capacities.

These findings highlight the coexistence of two opposing mechanisms shaping absence-related behaviours in remote work settings. On the one hand, autonomy in organising work, along with temporal and spatial flexibility, may reduce the need to rely on sick-leave entitlements and support employee well-being. On the other hand, monitoring practices, rigid working hours and a strong culture of presence amplify availability pressure and normalise working while unwell.

Particularly concerning are situations in which control and expectations of online presence persist despite deteriorating health, signalling an erosion of basic norms of worker protection.

As a result, remote work — though often portrayed as an employee-friendly solution — may in practice shift the responsibility for work capacity entirely onto the individual, weakening institutional safeguards related to health protection.

6. Limitations

Although the study provides important and original insights into absence-related behaviours in remote work settings, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, its cross-sectional design does not allow for causal inference; the identified associations may be influenced by unobserved mediating factors. Second, the data rely on self-reports, which may be affected by recall bias, social desirability and limited precision in reporting sickness absence or working while on sick leave.

A further limitation concerns the sample, which included only employees working remotely or in hybrid form in the two years preceding the survey. The findings may therefore reflect the transitional post-pandemic context rather than fully stabilised remote work arrangements.

Moreover, the study does not differentiate between sectors, although norms of presence and organisational capacities vary significantly across industries and could shape absence-related behaviours.

Finally, despite a broad set of explanatory variables, important psychosocial factors — such as psychological safety climate, trust in supervisors or individual coping strategies — were not included.

These limitations call for cautious interpretation of the results and highlight the need for longitudinal, sector-specific and qualitative studies to deepen understanding of the mechanisms underlying sickness absence and presenteeism in remote work.

7. Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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