



Where To From Here? Reviewing the Number of Psychologists in Canada by Province & Territory, 2017-2023

A Policy Primer | December 2025



About the CPA

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national voice for the science, practice and education of psychology in the service of the health and welfare of Canadians. The CPA is Canada's largest association for psychology and represents psychologists in public and private practice, university educators and researchers, as well as students. Psychologists are the country's largest group of regulated and specialized mental health providers, making our profession a key resource for the mental health treatment Canadians need.

Vision

The CPA envisions a society that values and applies psychological science for the benefit of persons, communities, organizations, and peoples.

Mission

We will serve the public and the CPA's membership by advancing psychological science, practice, and education through research, advocacy, and collaboration.

For more information, please visit our website at cpa.ca



Executive Summary

In January 2025, the Canadian Institute on Health Information (CIHI) released its count of 30 health care provider groups via its publication *Health Workforce in Canada: 2019 to 2023*. The data is drawn from CIHI's Health Workforce Database and includes all active members registered with a regulatory body who were eligible to practice in the given year (and includes those employed and those not employed at the time of registration). For additional information on their data collection methodology, please refer to CIHI's document *Health Workforce in Canada: 2019 to 2023 – Methodological Notes*. To extend the time series analysis, data from 2017-2018 has been included from CIHI's publication *Canada's Health Care Providers*.

Given the growing importance placed on access to mental health care services and the role of psychology, the report provides some aggregate (i.e., national) summary statistics, followed by more detailed provincial and territorial analyses (see Appendix A for statistical tables).

There are a number of high-level findings pertinent to psychology:

- Total number of psychologists in Canada (2023): **21,337**
- Number of psychologists per 100,000 population in Canada (2023): **53.3**
- Percentage of psychologists 60+ years of age in Canada (2023): **26.3%**
- Highest number of psychologists per 100,000 population, excluding the Territories (2023): **103.3 (Alberta)**
- Lowest number of psychologists per 100,000 population, excluding the Territories (2023): **21.7 (Manitoba)**
- Highest proportion of females, by province or territory, excluding the Territories (2023): **81.3% (Alberta)**

- Highest proportion of males, by province or territory, excluding the Territories (2023): **31.2% (PEI)**
- Highest percentage of psychologists 60+ years of age, excluding the Territories (2023): **39.2% (British Columbia)**
- Lowest percentage of psychologists under 30 years of age, excluding the Territories (2023): **0.1% (British Columbia)**

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The primary differences between psychologists and other mental health providers lie in their **scope of practice** and **expertise**

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Moving forward, there are - at least - two related steps that need to be considered, and of which the CPA is fully supportive:

1. We need better data to understand the current complement of psychologists in Canada and how we can ensure that Canadians have timely access to psychological services, when and where they need them. For example, how many work within the publicly funded health system, are school psychologists or work in private practice? The CPA is strongly supportive of working with the federal government, and other federal agencies like the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Workforce Canada, and Statistics Canada to develop and build more robust datasets that capture the current supply – and develop models that can predict the future supply – of psychologists needed by the people of Canada.
2. There are partnership opportunities between the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to invest in the infrastructure that is needed to train a growing cohort of psychologists via a *professional schools of psychology model*. As part of this process and fully recognizing that the delivery of publicly funded health care services is a provincial-territorial responsibility (outside of federally defined populations), it is critical that the provincial and territorial psychological associations and their respective regulatory bodies be fully engaged in these discussions.

Policy Context – Increasing the Supply of Psychologists to Meet Growing Demand

As governments place an increasing focus on investing and expanding publicly funded access to mental health care services which include psychological services, the conversation quickly turns to *what is the current capacity of psychologists to meet the growing demand for care, and how can we increase the supply of practising psychologists in Canada?*^{1,2} This is where the recent publication released by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) can provide a statistical foundation to build on.

While the data included in this report is presented at a national, and provincial and territorial level, it can serve to inform where we currently stand in terms of the total number of psychologists, as well as their age and gender distribution. That said, additional analysis is required to allow for projections regarding the future domestic supply of psychologists and could be supported by the recent report released by Health Canada *Caring for Canadians: Canada's Future Health Workforce*.³ At the same time, there is an opportunity for the newly created health agency created within CIHI – Health Workforce Canada – to capture more detailed information on the supply, mix and distribution of psychologists across the country and the current number of existing public-sector job vacancies, which would strengthen overall workforce planning for the profession and the mental health systems across the country.

While the Canadian Psychological Association has not yet determined an appropriate number of psychologists per 100,000 population, we would note that there is a significant difference between where psychology currently is and where it needs to be in terms of the capacity of mental health experts to diagnose and treat mental health issues within the public health system.

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There are opportunities to think more innovatively as to how we can deploy the current supply of mental health professionals including psychologists, as well as increase their supply to improve timely access to mental health care within our publicly funded health system

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As background, it is estimated that roughly fifteen percent or 8.0 psychologists per 100,000 population provide mental health care within our publicly funded health system, with the remaining 85% being in private practice.⁴ In contrast, as of 2019 there are 13.1 psychiatrists per 100,000 population⁵; noting that the Canadian Psychiatric Association recommends there be 15.2 licensed psychiatrists and 11.9 clinical psychiatrists per 100,000 population.⁶

In the case of psychology, for illustrative purposes only, if Canada were to adopt a recommended rate of 16.7 psychologists per 100,000 population,⁷ we would need to roughly double the number of public-sector psychologists from 3,201 to 6,682 to meet current demand.

Further, issues of the supply, mix (e.g., area of specialization – child and youth, adult, geriatric, forensic, etc.) and distribution across the country (e.g., rural versus urban) would have to be properly accounted for in the context of need. The number of psychologists should also reflect Canada’s diverse population.

Two recent reports from Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island underscore the growing gap between the current supply and growing demand for access to practicing psychologists. In the former, 61% of current positions for practicing psychologists within the publicly funded health care system are vacant.⁸ In the latter, Prince Edward Island has identified the need to hire a range from ten to thirty-five full-time psychologists over the 2022/23 to 2031/32 period.⁹

These numbers are even more compelling when one considers there are approximately 6.5 million Canadians who do not have access to a family doctor,¹⁰ and there is currently a projected need for almost 23,000 family physicians (a 49% increase from current supply).¹¹ A recent physician survey tells us that 65% of primary care physicians think that better integration of primary care with hospitals, mental health services and community-based social services is the top priority in improving quality of care and patient access. The report notes that 62% of primary care physicians (ranging from 33% in PEI to 69% in Alberta) felt that they were well prepared in terms of having the skills and experience to manage care for patients with mental illness (e.g., anxiety or mild to moderate depression). For managing substance use, the national figure was 19%, ranging from 12% in Quebec to 28% in Saskatchewan.¹²

Based on the mental health needs of Canadians and the growing recognition by federal, provincial and territorial governments to do more, there are opportunities to think more innovatively as to how we can deploy the current supply of mental health professionals including psychology, as well

as increase their supply to improve timely access to mental health care within our publicly funded health system.

Specifically, there are a number of promising practices where psychology can play an important role in expanding access to evidence-based mental health care, including billing the public insurance plan on a fee-for-service basis, team-based models of (primary) care and a growing focus on access to virtual/digital care (e.g., Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, British Columbia).¹³ Furthermore, 88% of Canadians support or somewhat support improving access to psychologists through the publicly funded health care system, and eighty-three percent think it is a very good or good idea for psychologists to work collaboratively with other health professionals, like family physicians in primary care teams.¹⁴ More recently, there has been an accelerating national conversation about the importance of mutual recognition of credentials across provincial and territorial boundaries.^{15,16}

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It is time to re-imagine the structure in which we train and produce registered psychologists. Building professional Schools of Psychology – like Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Dentistry – can be of substantial benefit in accelerating the supply of psychologists to meet the public’s increasing demand for mental health care without sacrificing the breadth and depth of training required to become a psychologist

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The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) believes that many Canadians have complex needs that are most optimally met by the services of psychologists who have the expertise to conduct comprehensive assessments to determine a mental health diagnosis, provide evidence-based treatment for mental disorders, develop and evaluate treatment programs, and provide consultation or supervision services to other mental health providers on the team. Outside of physicians, psychologists are the only licensed mental health professionals that can *diagnose* and *treat* mental health conditions. For a direct comparison of scopes of these practitioners, see Table 1.

Table 1 - Summary of Scope of Practice, by Profession

Area of Practice or Competence	Psychiatrists	Psychologists	Counsellors, Psychotherapists & Social Workers
Formulate/communicate a diagnosis	Yes	Yes	No
Administer/interpret psychological tests	No	Yes	No
Provide psychotherapy	Yes/No	Yes	Yes/No
Provide counselling or other forms of mental health treatment	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prescribing authority	Yes	No	No
Program Evaluation	No	Yes	No
Develop treatment plans	Yes	Yes	Yes/No
Regulated profession	Yes	Yes	Yes/No

The primary differences between psychologists and other mental health providers lie in their scope of practice and expertise. Psychologists are not only trained in service delivery (e.g., psychotherapy, family therapy) but also in assessment, differential diagnosis, treatment planning and evaluation, consultation, supervision and research.

We also know that Canada's health workforce is currently facing growing challenges in the supply of health workers, including psychologists. The existing and anticipated mental health needs of the public – which remain above pre-COVID prevalence rates^{17,18} – and the growing consensus for governments to invest and grow the number of primary care teams should mean that Canada increases its supply of registered psychologists.¹⁹

Currently, university programs, which train up to 10 doctoral students in a practice specialty at once, will not have the desired effect of accelerating the number of licensed psychologists available to the public – particularly in a world where accredited Canadian doctoral training programs produce approximately 350 graduates annually.²⁰

In the CPA's view, it is time to re-imagine the structure in which we train and produce registered psychologists. Building professional Schools of Psychology – like Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Dentistry – built upon a professional Psychological Doctorate (or PsyD) model with larger class sizes and shorter time to graduation (5 years vs. 7 years post-baccalaureate), can be of substantial benefit in accelerating the supply of psychologists to meet the public's increasing demand for mental health care without sacrificing the breadth and depth of training required to become a psychologist. To this end, the CPA has developed a detailed proposal to accelerate the training of practicing psychologists in Canada.²¹

That is why the CPA has recommended *“that the federal government working collaboratively with the provinces and territories establish a time-limited Health Human Resource Infrastructure Fund to support the creation of Schools of Psychology within publicly funded universities”*.²² The federal government has previously invested in creating additional health training facilities (such as faculties of medicine, via its Health Resources Fund Act of 1966, and the Hospital Infrastructure Program of 1948) in addition to its recent investments in supporting the creation of Health Workforce Canada.

More recently, the CPA was very pleased to see that the federal government, as part of its 2025 election platform, committed \$4 billion to construct and renovate community health care infrastructure, in which mental health care services were explicitly identified as a priority. This funding could play an important role in expanding the supply of psychologists to provide better mental health care to the people of Canada. At the same time, the federal government also pledged to build new medical schools and increase residency spaces.²³ The CPA believes there is a significant opportunity for governments to play a leadership

role in accelerating the transformation of the health care system by supporting the infrastructure needed to train qualified psychologists. It is equally important that this training be accessible, especially to diverse and equity-deserving populations, whose access to graduate psychology training may be limited by systemic factors.

In the view of the CPA, there is a critical need to expand the training infrastructure that will significantly increase the number of practising psychologists within Canada's publicly funded health system.

Moving Forward – Next Steps

Moving forward, there are, at least, two related steps that need to be considered, and of which the CPA is fully supportive of:

1. We need better data to understand the current complement of psychologists in Canada and how we can ensure that Canadians have timely access to psychological services, when and where they need them. For example, how many work within the publicly funded health system, are school psychologists or work in private practice? The CPA is strongly supportive of working with the federal government, and other federal agencies like the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Health Workforce Canada, and Statistics Canada to develop and build more robust datasets that capture the current supply – and develop models that can predict the future supply – of psychologists needed by the people of Canada.
2. There are partnership opportunities between the federal, and provincial and territorial governments to invest in the infrastructure that is needed to train a growing cohort of psychologists via a professional schools of psychology model. As part of this process and fully recognizing that the delivery of publicly funded health care services is a provincial-territorial responsibility, it is critical that the provincial and territorial psychological associations and their respective regulatory bodies be fully engaged in these discussions.

Appendix A²⁴

Table 1
Number of Psychologists
By Canada, Province & Territory
2017 – 2023

Year	Nfld	PEI	NS	NB	Que	Ont	Man	Sask	Alta	BC	Yk ²⁵	NWT	Nun	Canada
2017	250	43	562	362	7,749	3,845	262	501	3,587	1,223	-	71	24	18,749
2018	254	48	601	356	7,760	3,945	264	506	3,725	1,247	-	65	23	18,794
2019	281	55	624	364	7,728	4,001	266	515	3,928	1,252	1	63	26	19,103
2020	244	55	650	364	7,895	4,107	288	511	4,143	1,261	1	-	30	19,548
2021	242	58	688	399	7,895	4,242	280	-	4,348	1,303	1	88	-	19,543
2022	272	70	701	399	7,979	4,266	290	543	4,584	1,453	2	88	36	20,681
2023	237	77	731	379	8,098	4,455	316	565	4,849	1,493	1	102	35	21,337

Table 2
Number of Psychologists per 100,000 Population
By Canada, Province & Territory
2017 – 2023

Year	Nfld	PEI	NS	NB	Que	Ont	Man	Sask	Alta	BC	Yk	NWT	Nun	Canada
2017	47.3	28.6	59.1	47.2	93.4	27.3	19.6	43.5	84.5	25.1	-	158.0	63.9	50.5
2018	48.3	31.3	62.6	46.2	92.5	27.5	19.5	43.5	86.5	25.0	-	145.9	59.9	50.7
2019	53.3	35.3	63.9	46.8	91.1	27.5	19.4	44.2	90.2	24.5	2.4	141.8	66.9	50.8
2020	46.3	34.5	65.7	46.5	92.3	27.8	20.9	43.8	94.0	24.4	2.4	-	76.0	51.4
2021	45.9	35.8	68.8	50.5	92.1	28.6	20.1	-	98.1	24.9	2.3	197.4	-	50.9
2022	51.2	41.9	68.4	49.3	92.0	28.2	20.5	46.1	101.6	27.1	4.6	196.9	88.9	53.1
2023	44.0	44.3	69.0	45.4	91.2	28.5	21.7	46.7	103.3	27.1	2.2	226.8	86.1	53.3

Table 3
% of Female Psychologists
By Canada, Province & Territory
2017 – 2023

Year	Nfld	PEI	NS	NB	Que	Ont	Man	Sask	Alta	BC	Yk ²⁵	NWT	Nun	Canada
2017	73.6	65.1	79.5	-	76.5	72.1	-	74.5	77.8	65.3	-	-	37.3	-
2018	74.8	64.6	79.2	-	76.9	73.1	62.9	75.7	78.6	66.2	-	-	-	-
2019	75.8	65.5	80.3	-	77.5	73.8	65.4	75.9	79.1	67.0	-	-	-	-
2020	76.6	69.1	78.6	-	78.4	74.8	66.3	76.5	79.8	69.0	-	-	-	-
2021	76.9	65.5	80.2	-	78.4	75.7	66.8	-	80.2	69.9	-	68.2	-	-
2022	76.8	70.0	80.6	72.9	79.0	76.1	67.9	78.1	80.8	70.4	-	64.8	55.6	-
2023	78.1	68.8	80.7	-	79.5	76.5	72.8	77.5	81.3	70.9	-	70.6	57.1	-

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The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) believes that many Canadians have complex needs that are most optimally met by the services of psychologists who have the expertise to **conduct comprehensive assessments** to determine a mental health diagnosis, **provide evidence-based treatment** for mental disorders, **develop and evaluate treatment programs**, and **provide consultation or supervision services** to other mental health providers on the team

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Table 4
% Age Distribution of Psychologists
By Canada, Province & Territory
2017 – 2023

Year	Nfld	PEI	NS	NB	Que	Ont	Man	Sask	Alta	BC	Yk ²⁵	NWT	Nun	Canada
2017														
< 30	-	0	4.8	-	2.1	0.2	-	2.5	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
30-59	-	72.1	78.6	-	74.8	67.9	-	71.4	-	60.7	-	-	-	-
60+	-	27.9	16.5	-	23.1	31.9	-	26.1	-	39.2	-	-	-	-
2018														
<30	-	2.1	4.0	-	3.3	0.4	-	3.9	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
30-59	-	70.8	77.1	-	75.4	68.2	-	72.5	-	61.8	-	-	-	-
60+	-	27.1	18.9	-	21.3	31.4	-	23.6	-	38.0	-	-	-	-
2019														
< 30	-	1.8	3.5	-	5.2	0.5	-	2.2	-	0.2	-	-	-	-
30-59	-	74.5	78.3	-	75.6	69.0	-	73.8	-	62.1	-	-	-	-
60+	-	23.6	18.1	-	19.2	30.5	-	23.9	-	37.6	-	-	-	-
2020														
< 30	-	3.6	3.9	-	2.6	0.3	0.0	1.8	-	0.1	-	-	-	-
30-59	-	70.9	76.6	-	74.3	69.1	72.8	73.7	-	61.7	-	-	-	-
60+	-	25.5	19.5	-	23.1	30.5	27.2	24.5	-	38.2	-	-	-	-
2021														
< 30	-	1.7	3.8	-	2.6	0.4	0.0	-	-	0.2	-	1.1	-	-
30-59	-	70.7	76.6	-	74.3	69.8	72.8	-	-	62.2	-	67.8	-	-
60+	-	27.6	19.6	-	23.1	29.8	27.2	-	-	37.7	-	31.0	-	-
2022														
< 30	-	1.4	4.2	2.9	2.6	0.3	0.7	2.3	7.4	0.1	-	0.0	-	-
30-59	-	75.7	77.9	73.9	75.2	71.1	74.5	74.5	77.4	57.5	-	72.7	-	-
60+	-	22.9	17.9	23.2	22.3	28.6	24.8	23.2	15.2	42.4	-	27.3	-	-
2023														
< 30	-	1.3	2.8	1.9	2.8	0.3	1.6	1.8	7.5	0.1	-	3.9	-	-
30-59	-	74.0	79.5	73.7	75.4	71.4	74.5	75.3	78.9	60.6	-	66.7	-	-
60+	-	24.7	17.7	24.4	21.7	28.3	23.9	22.9	13.6	39.2	-	29.4	-	-

References

- ¹ These policy issues were initially addressed by the Canadian Psychological Association's Task Force on the Supply of Psychologists in Canada (2010) which included a final report with nine recommendations. While the policy context has evolved over time, many of the same policy questions remain unanswered.
- ² Canadian Psychological Association. *CPA Task Force on the Future of Publicly Funded Psychology Services in Canada*. 2013.
- ³ The report took stock of Canada's capacity to produce a domestic supply of key health professionals (i.e., family physicians, pharmacists, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed practical nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists), to leverage current pan-Canadian data and tools to project future supply and demand for the health workforce and find a way forward in bridging the gap. Of note, psychology was not included.
- ⁴ Canadian Psychological Association. Every Number Tells a Story – 2023 Public Policy Survey Results. February 2024. 15% of survey respondents indicated that they worked in a hospital (9%), primary health care setting (3%) or Community-Based organization (3%).
- ⁵ Canadian Medical Association. *Psychiatry Profile*. Updated December 2019.
- ⁶ Canadian Psychiatric Association. *Position Paper on Psychiatric Human Resources Planning in Canada* (under review). March 2010. The Ontario Psychiatric Association states that the province currently has a shortage of 200 psychiatrists Ontario (source: OPA, Ontario needs psychiatrists – Chronic psychiatry shortage contributing to Canada's mental health crisis).
- ⁷ Noting that other countries have determined that a ratio one 1 psychologist per 5,000-6,000 population (or 16.7 to 20 per 100,000 population) is warranted. Source: The Irish Psychologist. *How many psychologists do we need?* March 2021, Volume 38, Issue 5. The population of Canada in 2023 was 40.1 million (Statistics Canada).
- ⁸ Deloitte. Health Human Resources Plan. *Department of Health and Community Services Comprehensive Final Interim Report*. May 2025.
- ⁹ Health Intelligenceinc and Associates. *Provincial Clinical and Preventive Services Planning for Prince Edward Island*. February 2023.
- ¹⁰ Canadian Medical Association Journal. *National Survey Highlights Worsening Primary Care Access*. April 2023.
- ¹¹ Health Canada. *Caring for Canadians: Canada's Future Health Workforce – The Canadian Health Workforce Education, Training and Distribution Study*. January 2025, pages 8-9.
- ¹² Canadian Institute for Health Information. *How Canada Compares – Results from the Commonwealth Fund's 2019 International Health Policy Survey of Primary Care Physicians*. January 2020.

- ¹³ Canadian Psychological Association and the Council of Professional Association of Psychologists. *New Federal Investments in Mental Health: Accelerating the Integration of Psychological Services in Primary Care*. February 2022. See also *Innovations in Primary Care: Integrating mental health services in primary care*. College of Family Physicians of Canada, Canadian Psychological Association, Canadian Psychiatric Association. November 2020
- ¹⁴ Canadian Psychological Association and the Council of Professional Associations of Psychologists. *Strong majority of Canadians want improved access to psychologists*. November 2020.
- ¹⁵ In their Communique of January 30, 2025, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Health noted “Significant progress has been made on commitments Ministers made toward enhancing health workforce retention of internationally educated health professionals; and breaking down barriers that prevent labour mobility.”
- ¹⁶ More recently, at their October 17, 2025 meeting, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Health declared: “Ministers committed to urgently advancing solutions and removing barriers, such as engaging with respective immigration counterparts to improve pathways for internationally educated health professionals, accelerating foreign credential recognition, and working with Canadian regulators to adopt mutual licence-recognition models to enhance labour mobility for physicians, nurses, and health professionals across Canada.”
- ¹⁷ 27% of Canadians have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder up from 18% before COVID-19, similarly 28% were diagnosed with depression up from 21% prior to COVID-19. Source: Mental Health Research Canada. *Understanding the Mental Health of Canadians Through COVID-19 and Beyond: Poll #23*. March 2025, Page 9.
- ¹⁸ From 2012 to 2022, the number of Canadians over the past year with: a general anxiety disorder doubled from 2.6% to 5.2%; a major depressive episode increased from 4.7% to 7.6%; and a bi-polar disorder from 1.5% to 2.1%. Source: Statistics Canada. *Mental disorders and access to mental health care*. September 22, 2023. All differences are statistically significant.
- ¹⁹ A registered psychologist is one who has regulatory authority to practice psychology.
- ²⁰ Canadian Psychological Association. Office of Accreditation. With additional funding to university programs (like the University of Manitoba, University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina) these numbers are beginning to increase.
- ²¹ Canadian Psychological Association, *If We Build It – They Will Practice...Establishing Schools of Psychology in Canada*. A Position Paper (forthcoming).
- ²² Canadian Psychological Association. 2025 Pre-Budget submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. August 2024.
- ²³ Liberal Party of Canada. *Canada Strong – Mark Carney’s Plan, Unite, Secure, Protect, Build*. April 2025, pages 22-24.
- ²⁴ Canadian Institute for Health Information. *Workforce in Canada: 2019 to 2023, and Canada’s Health Care Providers (2017-2018)*. (-) indicates data was not available.
- ²⁵ Yukon does now regulate psychologists, however, data for 2017-23 is not available.



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