



Coronavirus (COVID-19) attendance in educational and early years settings in England – summary of returns to 24 April 2020

Headline facts and figures

- The attendance rate amongst pupils in educational settings reached almost 2% mid last week, double the rate during what would have been the Easter break.
- Around 78% of settings were open on Friday 24 April, an increase from 61% the week before.
- The number of children attending in educational settings who are classed as vulnerable increased to 49,000 on Friday 24 April, around double the number from the Friday before.
- It was estimated that on 23 April, 74,000 children were attending early years childcare – about 5% of the number of children who usually attend childcare in term time.

Background

Following the announcement that all educational settings would close from Friday 20 March for all but those children of critical workers and vulnerable children, the Department for Education created a means by which educational settings in England could report daily on important information that would help understand the impacts of the decision including the number of students, teaching and non-teaching staff in attendance. Settings were asked to complete these for each day they remained open, and if closed let us know when they planned to reopen, if they knew this.

Additionally, the Department for Education has since created a means by which local authorities (LAs) could regularly report on similar information on available early years childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Additionally, from 6 April 2020 the Department for Education created a means by which local authorities (LAs) could regularly report on similar information on available childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The focus of this collection was narrowed to early years childcare only from 16 April.

This data release covers a summary of five weeks of the educational settings data up to 4pm on Friday 24 April 2020. It contains early years data collected up to 6pm on Thursday 23 April 2020. This data will continue to be published on a weekly basis every Tuesday.

Non-response adjustment

For the educational settings survey, the response rate has been between 52% and 76%, aside from the two bank holidays where response rate was lower, and now that the Easter period is over, the response rate has settled at around 70%. To take account of non-response during the first week (Monday 23 to Friday 27), analysts assumed that non-responding settings are as likely to be open as those that did provide a return to estimate the national picture. More details of how this was done is outlined in the [Methodology](#) section. This decision was taken because at the time there was little information to help refine the methodology, but after a full week of returns analysts were able to review return patterns and revise our understanding of what is happening in those settings that are not reporting. Figures from Monday 30 March onwards in this document are based on a new methodology that no longer makes this assumption

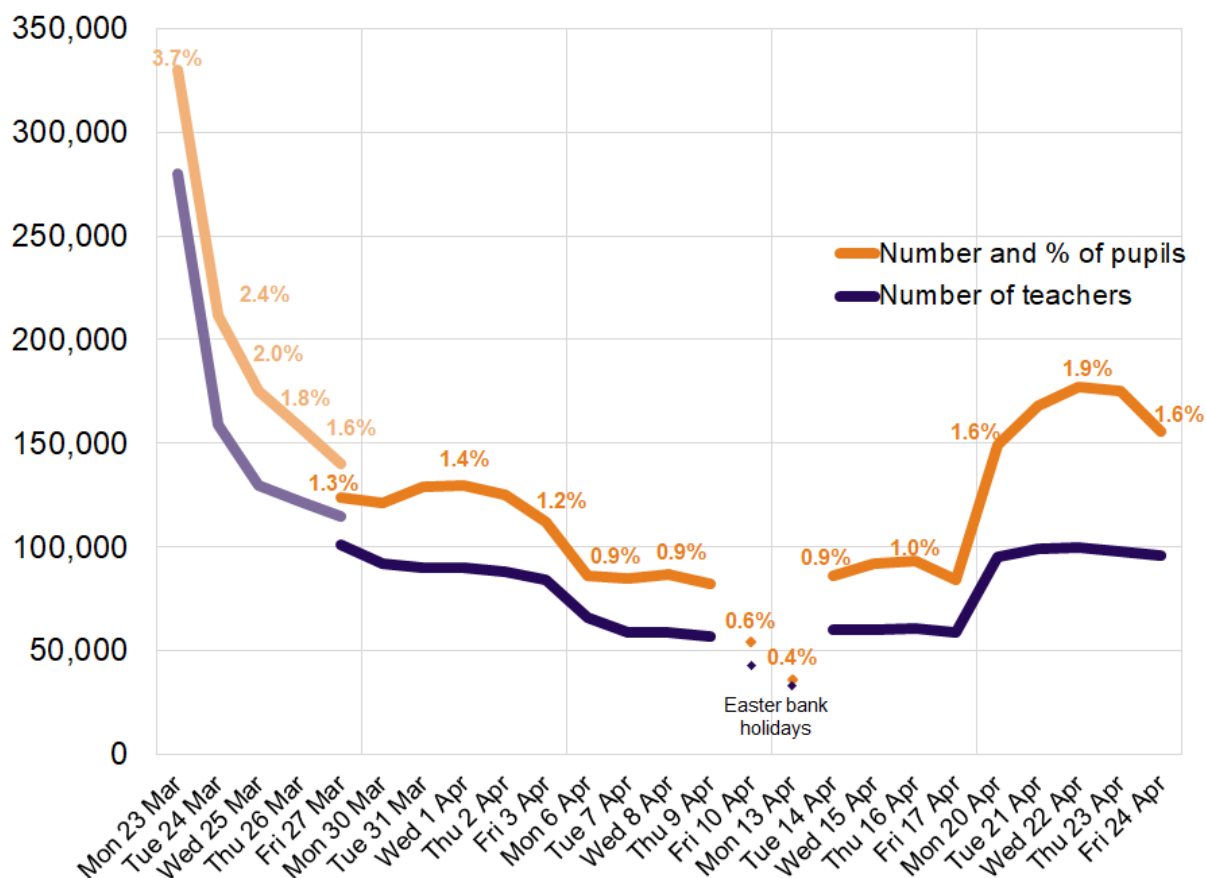
The main difference this revision made was to better understand the proportion of educational settings that were open. More granular information, such as attendance rates of pupils and teachers saw only minor changes. Figures for Friday 27 have been rerun to show the effect of this change and the uncertainty in the estimates (see the [Methodology](#) section).

For the local authority early years survey, figures for the number of settings open and closed and the number of children attending for those LAs which did not respond were estimated based on the proportions reported by LAs which did respond. The national estimate comprises reported figures from LAs which did respond combined with these estimates (see the [Methodology](#) section).

Summary of data

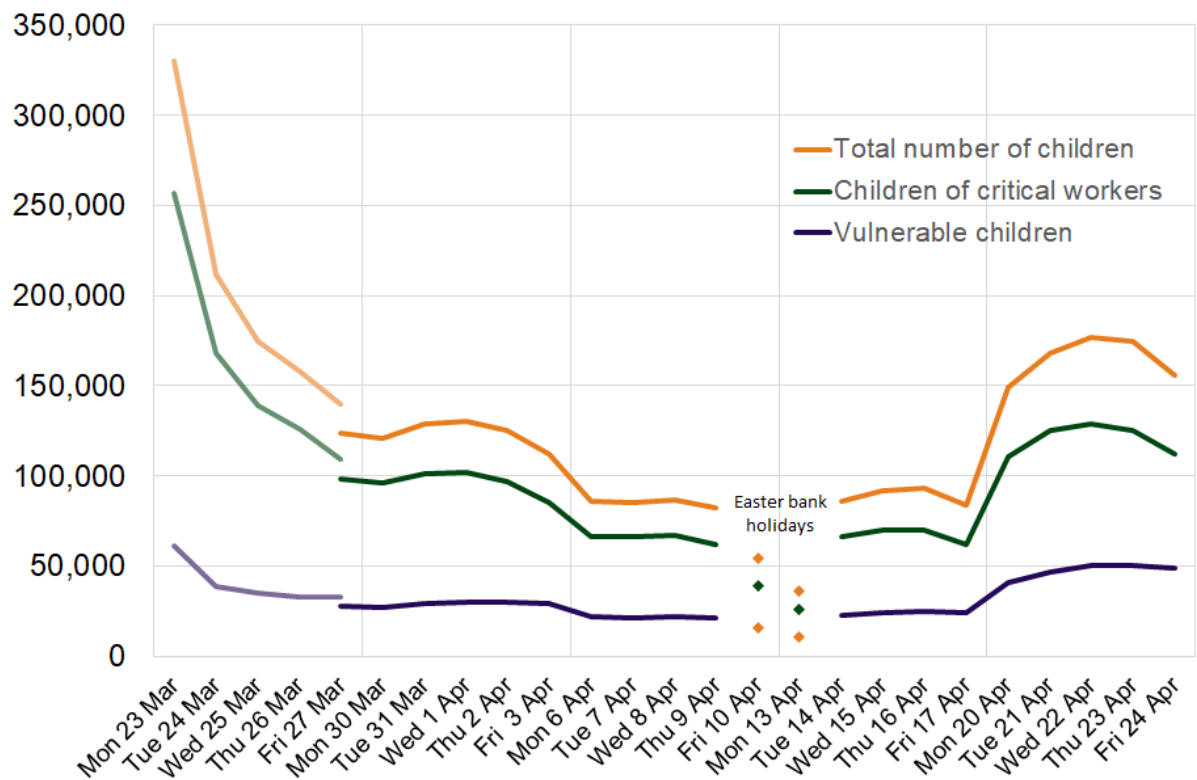
17,200 educational settings provided a response to the survey on Friday 24 April. This represents 70% of all settings. The following key findings are adjusted for non-response (see [Methodology](#)):

- 78% of settings were open - around 19,200 settings. This is an increase on Friday 17 April, when 15,100 settings were open, representing 61% of settings.
- The most recent data suggests around 156,000 children attended an educational setting on Friday 24 April, representing 1.6% of pupils who normally attend. In general, attendance rates increase mid-week and during week commencing 20 April the attendance rate reached 1.9%. Attendance through the week was higher than during the preceding three weeks, following the end of the Easter break for most schools.

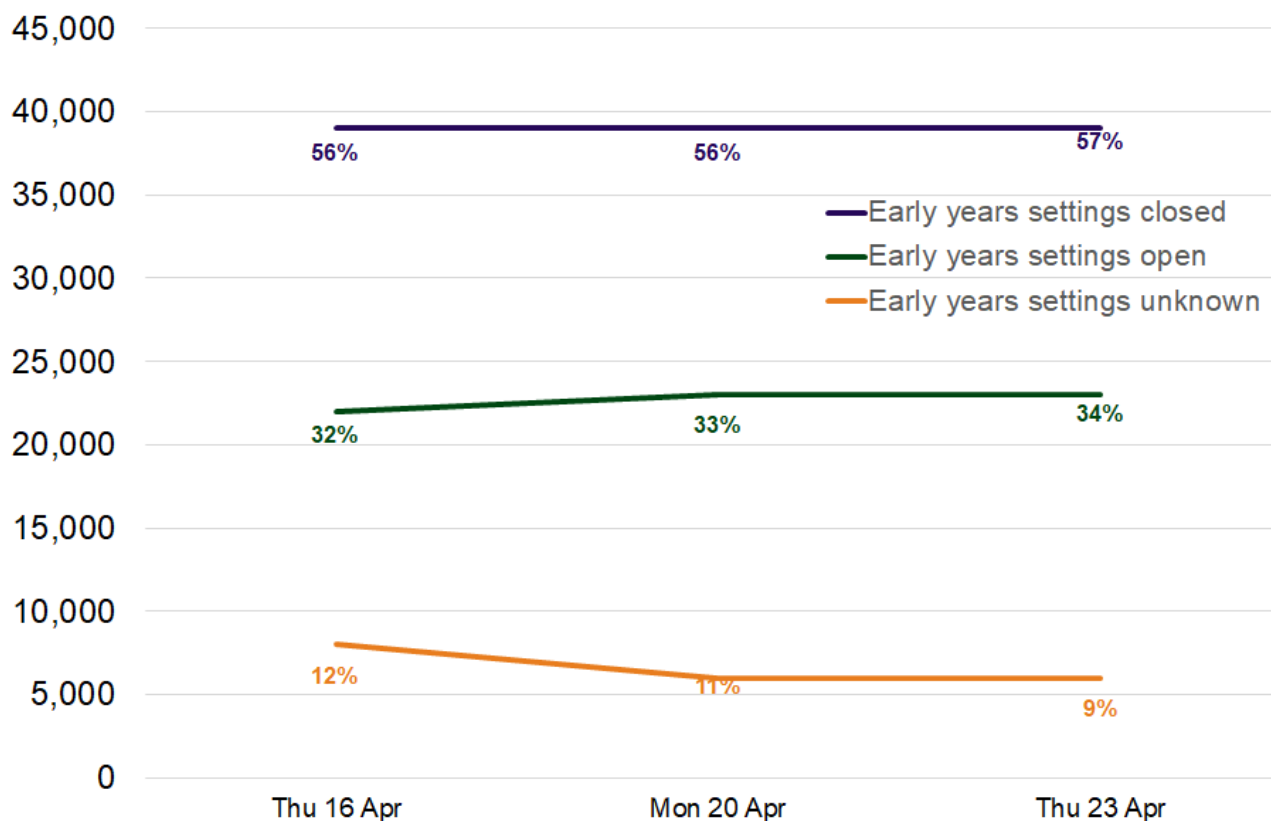


- 49,000 of the children in attendance on Friday 24 April were classed by schools as vulnerable, up from 24,000 on Friday 17 April. We estimate this represents around 10% of all children and young people classified as ‘Children in Need’ or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan,¹ up from 5% on 17 April.
- 112,000 of the children in attendance on Friday 24 April were classed by schools as children of critical workers, up from 62,000 on Friday 17 April. We estimate that this represents around 4% of all children of critical workers, up from around 2% on 17 April.
- These were cared for by 96,000 teaching staff and 70,000 non-teaching staff. The number of teachers in attendance has increased compared to Friday 17 April when 59,000 teaching staff were in attendance.

¹ This is an estimate based on the 2019 Children in Need census and January 2019 school census and we are working with educational providers and local authorities to improve our understanding of the total number of vulnerable children for whom continued attendance at educational settings would be beneficial and appropriate. This is in recognition of the fact that attendance may not be appropriate for some children, including because of health considerations and risks, and that many children with EHC plans may be able to have their needs met safely in the home environment. Full guidance on the definition of vulnerable children and options for continued attendance can be found [here](#)



- The response rate to the local authority survey on early year settings was 87%, with 131 out of 151 LAs submitting data by 6pm on Thursday 23 April.
- An estimated 23,000 settings are open. This represents 34% of all settings, with 57% closed and 9% unknown.
- The volume and proportions of early years childcare settings open, closed and those with an unknown status has remained broadly stable between Thursday 16 April and Thursday 23 April.



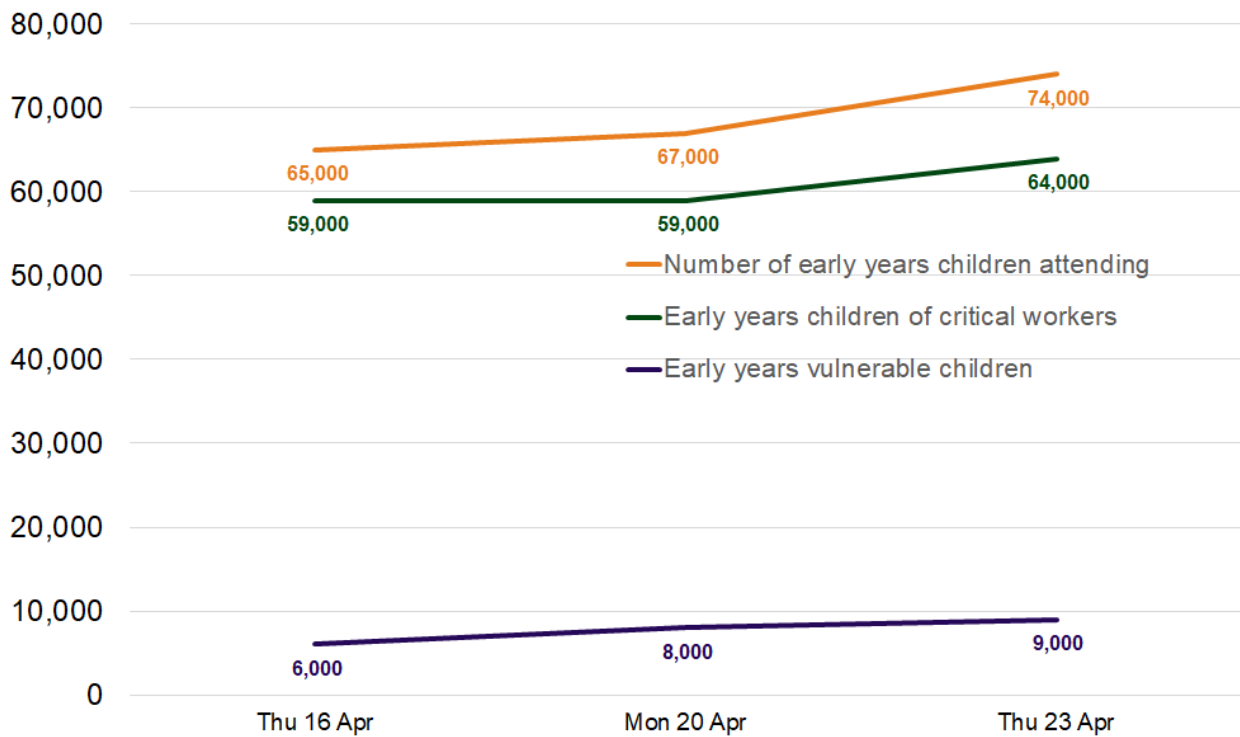
- We estimate 74,000 children are currently attending early years childcare settings – about 5% of the number of children who usually attend childcare in term time.²
- This consists of an estimated 64,000 children of critical workers and 9,000 vulnerable children.³ We estimate this represents approximately 6% of children of critical workers⁴ aged 0 to 4 years-old, and 10% of 0 to 4 year-olds classified as ‘Children in Need’ or who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.⁵
- The number of children, both children of critical workers and vulnerable children, attending an early years childcare setting increased between Thursday 16 April and Thursday 23 April. This may have been a result of the Easter holidays meaning demand for childcare was lower, but we do not have figures on EY settings for before 16 April to test this.

² The number of children in term time was estimated by using outputs from the [Childcare and early years survey of parents: 2019](#) and [ONS National Population Projections: 2018 based](#)

³ 0 to 4-year olds excluding those in Reception classes. See footnote 1 and methodology section regarding vulnerable children.

⁴ Based on DfE analysis of Labour Force Survey data

⁵ 0 to 4 year olds excluding those in Reception classes. See footnote 1 and methodology section regarding vulnerable children.



Methodology

Educational settings survey

Details of the data requested and how it is collected is available at the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for educational settings](#) webpage. The following educational settings were asked to complete the form:

- academies (including free schools and studio schools)
- local authority maintained schools
- local authority nursery schools
- independent schools
- non-maintained special schools
- pupil referral units
- university technical colleges
- FE colleges and sixth form colleges
- special post-16 institutions or specialist colleges

There are currently no automatic validations on the data submitted by educational settings. However, checks are carried out to ensure that no setting is double counted (if they submit data more than once per day the latest submission is used). Manual checks are applied to the data during data processing. Comparisons are made to other reported data and information obtained by discussions with schools and local authorities to provide reassurance that the data is a fair reflection of the national picture.

The response rate to this survey has been between 52% to 76%, except on the two bank holidays where response rate was closer to 20%. In order to get a full national picture, a

grossing methodology was devised. During the first week (Monday 23 to Friday 27), it was assumed that non-responding settings are as likely to be open or closed as those that provided a return. After a full week of returns, we have been able to analyse return patterns and have developed our methodology which is now as follows:

- Any setting reporting to be open or closed on the day of collection is recorded as such.
- Settings also report whether they plan to be open the next day. If they have not provided a return on the day of collection, we consider their most recent return:
 - If these settings had reported that they planned to close, they are assumed to be closed.
 - If these settings' most recent return was the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed they have remained open.
 - If these settings' most recent return was prior to the previous day and they reported that they planned to open, it is assumed that 50% have remained open.
- For settings that have never responded, it is assumed 50% have remained open.
- Attendance rates are calculated for each individual setting type and use 2019/20 census returns to calculate proportions of all pupils on roll. This is likely to over-estimate attendance in cases where settings are caring for pupils from other settings. This practice may have increased during Easter break. Analysis of returns suggested the likely effect of this was less than 0.1%.
- When calculating attendance rates for non-responding settings that are assumed open, similar rates are assumed as responding open settings.

The assumption of 50% having remained open was arrived at by choosing a random sample of 50 settings and determining that approximately half had closed via school websites and local authority announcements. Adjusting this assumption by +/-10% changes the estimated open settings by around 1%, whilst it has a negligible effect on the low attendance rate.

The main difference this methodology change made was to better understand the proportion of settings that were open. We also improved the denominator used for further education colleges, this has driven the majority of the decrease in attendance rate. More granular information, such as attendance rates of pupils and teachers saw only minor changes (see table below).

	Friday 27 March - previous methodology	Friday 27 March - revised methodology
Number of open settings	23,700	20,000
Proportion of open settings	96%	81%
Number of pupils attending	140,000	124,000
Proportion of pupils attending	1.6%	1.3%
Teaching staff	115,000	101,000
Support staff	92,000	80,000

Schools are asked to provide a count of the number of critical workers and the number of vulnerable children. Schools are also asked to provide a breakdown of both these figures for pupils with an EHC Plan and those with a social worker. Some schools have been providing a count of critical workers with either EHC Plans or a social worker but not including these in their respective counts for vulnerable children. Therefore, our estimate of the number of vulnerable children may be an undercount. The data suggests the effect of this is c5%.

The proportion of vulnerable children in attendance is based on an estimate of the total number of pupils who are either classed as Children in Need or have an education, health and care plan. This is derived from the Children in Need and School Censuses. This is an estimate and we are working with local authorities and schools to improve our understanding of vulnerable children attending educational settings in recognition that attendance may not be appropriate for some children, including because of health considerations and risks.

The proportion of children of critical workers in attendance is based on an estimate of the number of pupils who have a critical worker parent derived from the Labour Force Survey.

Early years survey

LAs are asked to complete an online survey from the DfE on provision in EY settings twice weekly (by 6pm on a Monday and Thursday). Each data point represents the most recent data submitted by a LA up until 6pm on any given day. Where no data has been submitted by an LA since Thursday 16 April then an estimate is produced. Checks were carried out to ensure that no LA was double-counted. Comparisons were made to other reported data to provide reassurance that the data is a fair reflection of the national picture.

The response rate by LAs to the survey on Thursday 23 April at 6pm was 87%. The data returned was then “grossed up” based on either data previously submitted or data the Department for Education already holds to estimate the total numbers of open settings and children attending those settings:

- The total national numbers of settings, vulnerable children and children of critical workers were estimated from a combination of data including Ofsted data and DfE data, and then broken down to LA level. For LAs which have responded previously we carry forward their data submitted up to one week previously. For LAs never responding, or not responding in the past week, we estimate proxy figures for the number of settings open and closed and the number of children attending. These estimates are based on the proportions of settings open and closed and children attending reported by LAs who did respond. A national estimate is arrived by combining the reported and estimated figures.
- Where the LA reported on fewer providers than in the DfE estimate, the providers for which no information was submitted have been assumed to be in the ‘unknown’ category.

- The take-up percentages are calculated using estimates of the number of providers in an LA and the estimated number of children in a childcare place in term time.
- This approach assumes no non-response bias from LAs not submitting data.
- The sum of the estimates for open and closed providers is not the total number of providers nationally, as the status of some providers is unknown.
- The estimation methodology will be refined as more data is collected.

Because the LA survey covered school-based early years providers, there is likely to be a degree of overlap between the early years data collection and the schools attendance data which includes school-based nurseries. We do not have enough detailed data to assess the size of this overlap during the current Covid-19 outbreak, but for context, around a third of children who were in a funded childcare place in January 2019 were taking their place at a school-based provider. Children currently attending school-based early providers will be counted in both collections.

Following the publication on 21 April, DfE has improved its methodology for estimating the total national number of EY providers in England. This has resulted in fewer settings overall with unknown status, which has in turn decreased the percentage of settings with 'unknown' status. As a result, the percentage of open and closed settings have both increased compared with using the previous methodology. Using the previous approach, 26% settings were estimated to be open, 45% were closed and 30% unknown on 16 April. The new methodology changes these figures to 32%, 56% and 12% respectively. The number of providers estimated to be open is unaffected by this methodological change. The time series has been created using the new methodology only.

Useful links

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): attendance recording for educational settings](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on vulnerable children and young people](#)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): early years and childcare closures](#)
- The [Prime Minister's speech](#) regarding closing educational settings
- Latest published information on [school and pupil numbers](#)

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