

Medicaid & Rural Health Toolkit

Medicaid is a critical source of affordable, high-quality health coverage for millions of Americans living in rural areas. Rural communities often experience health care access challenges and as a result face significant health disparities, [exacerbated by COVID-19](#). Medicaid helps fill this gap, enabling enrollees to access to primary care and other critical health services. The Modern Medicaid Alliance and our partners are amplifying Medicaid's critical role in these communities by developing and sharing educational resources about the program.

Key facts about Medicaid and rural health:

- Of the almost [60 million Americans](#) living in rural areas, [nearly one-quarter](#) of individuals under age 65 are covered by Medicaid.
- [45%](#) of children in rural areas are enrolled in Medicaid or Children's Health Insurance Program coverage, compared to 38% in metropolitan areas.
- Rural residents have [lower incomes and higher overall poverty rates](#) than urban residents.
- Individuals in rural communities are [more likely to be uninsured](#) than urban and suburban residents.
- In states that have adopted Medicaid expansion, rural areas have experienced [larger coverage gains](#) than rural areas in non-expansion states.
- Medicaid enrollees are [more likely](#) than uninsured individuals to say that their care was excellent or very good.

Resources Included

Advocacy Resources

3..... Template social media posts

Educational Resources

4..... [Medicaid Is A Vital Safety Net For Rural Communities \(published August 2022\)](#)

6..... [Uninsured Americans In Rural Communities and Medicaid \(published October 2018\)](#)

9..... [Medicaid In Rural Communities \(published August 2018\)](#)

10..... *Rural Policy Research Institute:* [Insurance Coverage Rates Summary](#)

11..... *Rural Policy Research Institute:* [Insurance Coverage Rates Summary: Pre- and Post-ACA](#)

12..... *Rural Policy Research Institute:* [Medicaid Coverage Rate by Region](#)

Template Social Media Posts

We encourage Modern Medicaid Alliance partners to utilize the sample social media posts below to amplify Medicaid's role in rural areas, tailoring as you see fit.

- #Medicaid provides high-quality, affordable health coverage to millions of Americans living in rural areas, helping address health disparities in these communities. Learn more about how Medicaid keeps rural Americans healthy: <https://bit.ly/3NgkkrK>
- Rural communities across the country rely on #Medicaid for critical health services. We need a strong, sustainable Medicaid program that continues to serve as a vital safety net for the most vulnerable. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3NgkkrK>
- #Medicaid expansion has driven significant health and wellness gains for rural America. In states that expanded Medicaid, rural areas experienced larger coverage gains than non-expansion states. For more on Medicaid's impact on rural America, visit: <https://bit.ly/3h8KB1O>
- Rural communities face significant health disparities, reporting poorer physical and mental health than urban residents. This Rural Health Day, we're highlighting the affordable, quality health coverage #Medicaid provides, which helps to improve health equity: <https://bit.ly/3h8KB1O>
- This Rural Health Day, we're recognizing the critical role of Medicaid in rural communities. #Medicaid keeps hospital doors open, preventing closures that would further restrict health care access for vulnerable Americans. Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3NgkkrK>
- #Medicaid provides high-quality health care services to millions of rural Americans. To learn more about the impact of Medicaid in your state, visit @ModernMedicaid's updated #MedicaidDashboard: <http://data.modernmedicaid.org/>

Medicaid Is A Vital Safety Net For Rural Communities

For the millions of Americans living in rural communities across the country, Medicaid provides an essential source of high-quality, affordable health coverage. [Nearly a quarter](#) of nonelderly individuals living in rural areas are covered by Medicaid, and these individuals rely on the program for access to primary care and other critical health services.

Rural Residents Face Significant Health Disparities

Rural residents often face significant barriers to care, exacerbating health disparities in these communities.

On average, rural residents have [lower incomes and higher overall poverty rates](#) than urban residents. Further, individuals in rural communities are [more likely to be uninsured](#) than urban and suburban residents.

Individuals living in rural areas report [poorer physical and mental health](#) and have higher rates of obesity than urban residents. Among the leading causes of death in the United States — heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, and stroke — mortality rates are [comparatively higher](#) in rural areas. Rural individuals are also more likely to die by [suicide or from a drug overdose](#).

The Vital Role of Medicaid in Rural Areas

Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act has only reinforced Medicaid's vital role, driving major health and wellness gains for rural America. In states that have adopted Medicaid expansion, rural areas have experienced [larger coverage gains](#) than rural areas in non-expansion states. Additionally, Medicaid expansion has helped [stabilize](#) rural hospitals' finances, preventing hospital closures that would further restrict health care access for vulnerable Americans.

All told, nearly [16 million people](#) have gained health coverage through Medicaid expansion as of July 2020. Further, [studies](#) have found that increases in Medicaid coverage have not been offset by a decrease in private insurance, which means Medicaid is effectively reaching the previously uninsured. While these coverage gains are impressive, there is an opportunity to do more. If the states that have not yet expanded Medicaid were to do so, the Department of Health and Human Services estimates that an [additional 4 million people](#) would become eligible for Medicaid.

Further, expanding Medicaid coverage has been proven to stimulate state economies where it has been implemented. One study found that additional federal Medicaid spending during the Great Recession (2007-2009) [increased state employment](#) in many sectors, helping to offset the impact of the economic downturn.

Medicaid Provides Affordable, High-Quality Care

Medicaid provides more than just basic health care access. The program provides high-quality health coverage with a broad range of benefits.

People with Medicaid coverage have access to a regular health care provider at [rates comparable](#) to people with private coverage. Further, Medicaid enrollees are [more likely](#) than uninsured individuals to say that their care was excellent or very good. Medicaid enrollees are also [less likely](#) to have trouble paying for care or skip important services due to cost than uninsured individuals.

Medicaid is also leveraging telehealth to help further eliminate barriers to care for rural communities. By virtually connecting enrollees to their health care providers, telehealth is expanding access to vital services, including primary care, physical and occupational therapy, mental health support, and maternity care. Studies have shown that Medicaid enrollees in rural areas are up to [17 times more likely](#) to use telehealth compared to urban residents.

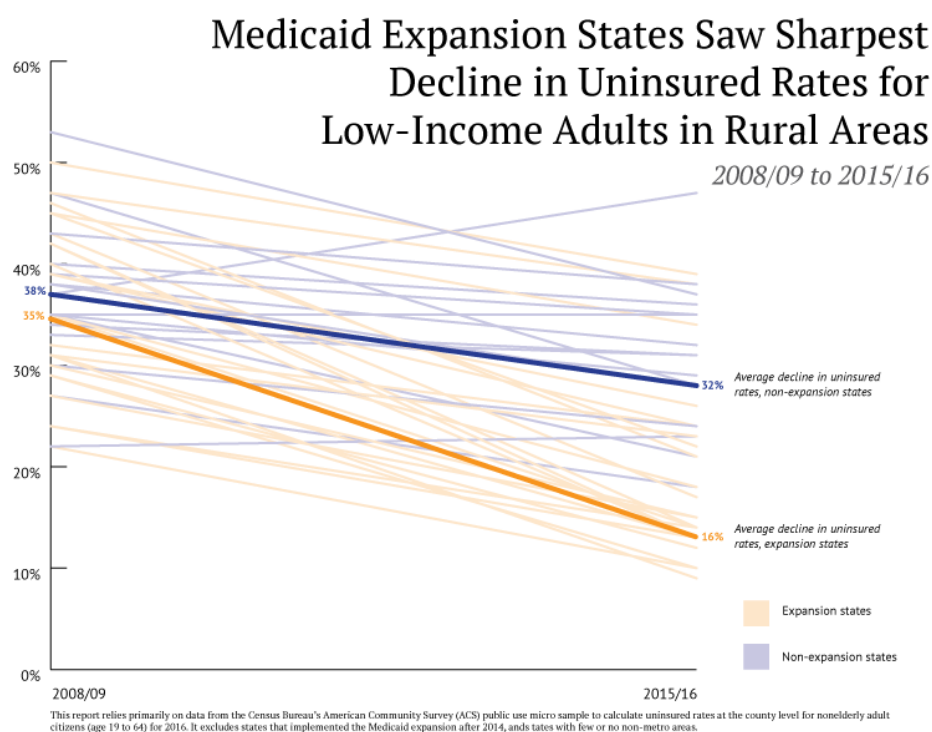
While COVID-19 has further stressed the rural health landscape, Medicaid continues to serve as a vital safety net and provide critical health services for the most vulnerable.

[View the Modern Medicaid Alliance blog post here.](#)

Uninsured Americans In Rural Communities and Medicaid

Medicaid expands access to care and supports the use of preventive services – essential steps to improving long-term health. The program is especially crucial to Americans in small towns and rural communities, who often face major barriers to access quality health care services—lower incomes and limited transportation options.

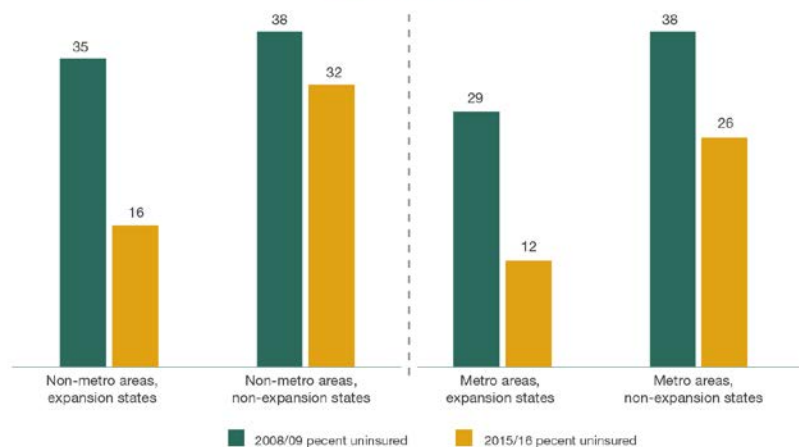
Fortunately, Medicaid has been able to better serve these communities by reducing the number of uninsured Americans. According to a new [study](#) from the [Georgetown University Center for Children and Families](#) and the [University of North Carolina Rural Health Research Program](#), **small towns and rural communities in Medicaid expansion states have seen the sharpest declines in uninsured rates.**



Here are some key findings on how Medicaid makes a difference:

- The **uninsured rate dropped from 35% to 16%** in rural communities and small towns in Medicaid expansion states. People in small town and rural communities are more likely to be uninsured, which is a major barrier to accessing quality care services.

Decline in uninsured rate for low-income citizen adults, by expansion status, 2008/09 to 2015/16



Note: States with few or no non-metro counties and "late expander" states are excluded. For a list of states in each category, see the methodology.

- The uninsured rate of low-income adults in states that expanded Medicaid was 13%, compared to 27% in states that did not expand Medicaid. This provided adults with more flexibility when it comes to receiving health care coverage.

Decline in uninsured rate for low-income citizen adults in all areas and in non-metro counties, by expansion status, 2009 to 2016 (percentage points)

Expansion Status of States	All Areas			Non-metro Areas			Metro Areas		
	Percent Uninsured, 2009	Percent Uninsured, 2016	Decline in Uninsured (pct. pts.)	Percent Uninsured, 2009	Percent Uninsured, 2016	Decline in Uninsured (pct. pts.)	Percent Uninsured, 2009	Percent Uninsured, 2016	Decline in Uninsured (pct. pts.)
Yes, by end of 2014	30	13	18	35	16	19	29	12	17
Late Expanders	37	23	13	41	30	11	35	22	14
No Expansion	38	27	11	38	32	5	38	26	13
All states	34	20	14	37	26	11	33	18	15

Note: States with few or no non-metro counties are excluded. States that expanded Medicaid effective in 2014 are categorized as "yes, by end of 2014." States that expanded Medicaid between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2016, are categorized as "Late Expanders." Two states that have made decisions to expand Medicaid but where enrollment has not begun (ME, VA) are categorized as "no expansion." For a list of states in each category, see the methodology. Differences may vary due to rounding.

- When parents have insurance coverage, their children benefit by having a more financially stable home. Notably, **one-quarter of uninsured low-income adults are parents, which improves the health and well-being of their children.** This improves household stability and financial security for parents and their children by providing protection from medical debt.

Percent of low-income citizen adults who are uninsured by expansion status, 2015/16

Expansion Status of States	Number of States	Uninsured Citizen Adults with Incomes to 138 Percent FPL		
		All Areas	Metro	Non-metro
Yes, by end of 2014	22	13%	12%	16%
Late Expanders	5	23%	22%	30%
No Expansion	19	27%	26%	32%
All states	46	20%	18%	26%

Note: States with few or no non-metro counties are excluded (DC, DE, MA, NJ, RI). States that expanded Medicaid effective in 2014 are categorized as "yes, by end of 2014." States that expanded Medicaid between January 1, 2015, and December 31, 2016, are categorized as "Late Expanders." Two states that have made decisions to expand Medicaid but where enrollment has not begun (ME, VA) are categorized as "no expansion." For a list of states in each category, see the methodology.

Millions of Americans in rural communities depend on Medicaid to help keep them healthy. Currently, **23 percent of adults and 47 percent of children in rural areas across the country are enrolled in the modern Medicaid program.** The Modern Medicaid Alliance has highlighted the importance of Medicaid to rural Americans through an [infographic](#) and an [insightful interview](#) with Diane Calmus of the National Rural Health Association, a Modern Medicaid Alliance member.

View the Modern Medicaid Alliance [blog post here](#).

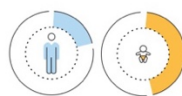
Fast Facts On Medicaid in Rural Communities

FAST FACTS ON Medicaid in Rural Communities

Americans living in rural communities face challenges that can make it difficult to access health care. Medicaid serves an important role by providing coverage for high-quality health services in rural areas. Below are some fast facts about the program's impact on rural communities from the Modern Medicaid Alliance (MMA).



Americans in rural areas face significant barriers to accessing care. Health care provider shortages, closures of rural hospitals, and long distances to health care sites make it difficult to access care.



Medicaid provides needed coverage for both adults and children. About 23 percent of adults and 47 percent of children in rural areas are enrolled in Medicaid.

Medicaid helps support jobs and generate income. Hospitals and employment supported by Medicaid account for as much as **20 percent** of local economies in rural America.



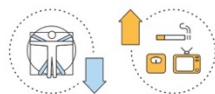
Medicaid reduces the number of uninsured Americans in rural areas. Between 2013-2015 rural areas saw coverage rates increase five percent greatly reducing the number of uninsured Americans.



Medicaid beneficiaries in rural areas experience less medical debt. Beneficiaries are less likely to have trouble paying for care and delay needed treatment because Medicaid does not generally charge premiums or deductibles.



Medicaid delivers high-quality care. Medicaid beneficiaries in rural areas are more likely to report satisfaction with their coverage than the uninsured or those who have private coverage.

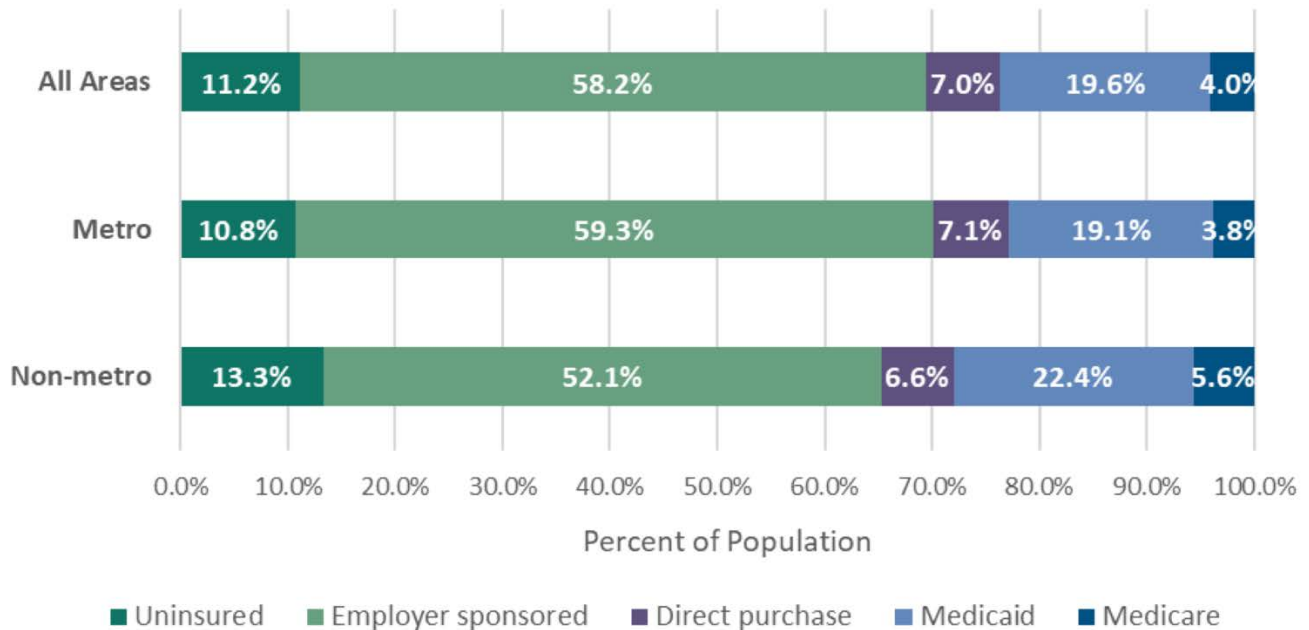


Medicaid helps rural residents, who are more likely to report poorer physical and mental health conditions. People in rural areas have higher rates of cigarette smoking, obesity, and physical inactivity than urban residents.

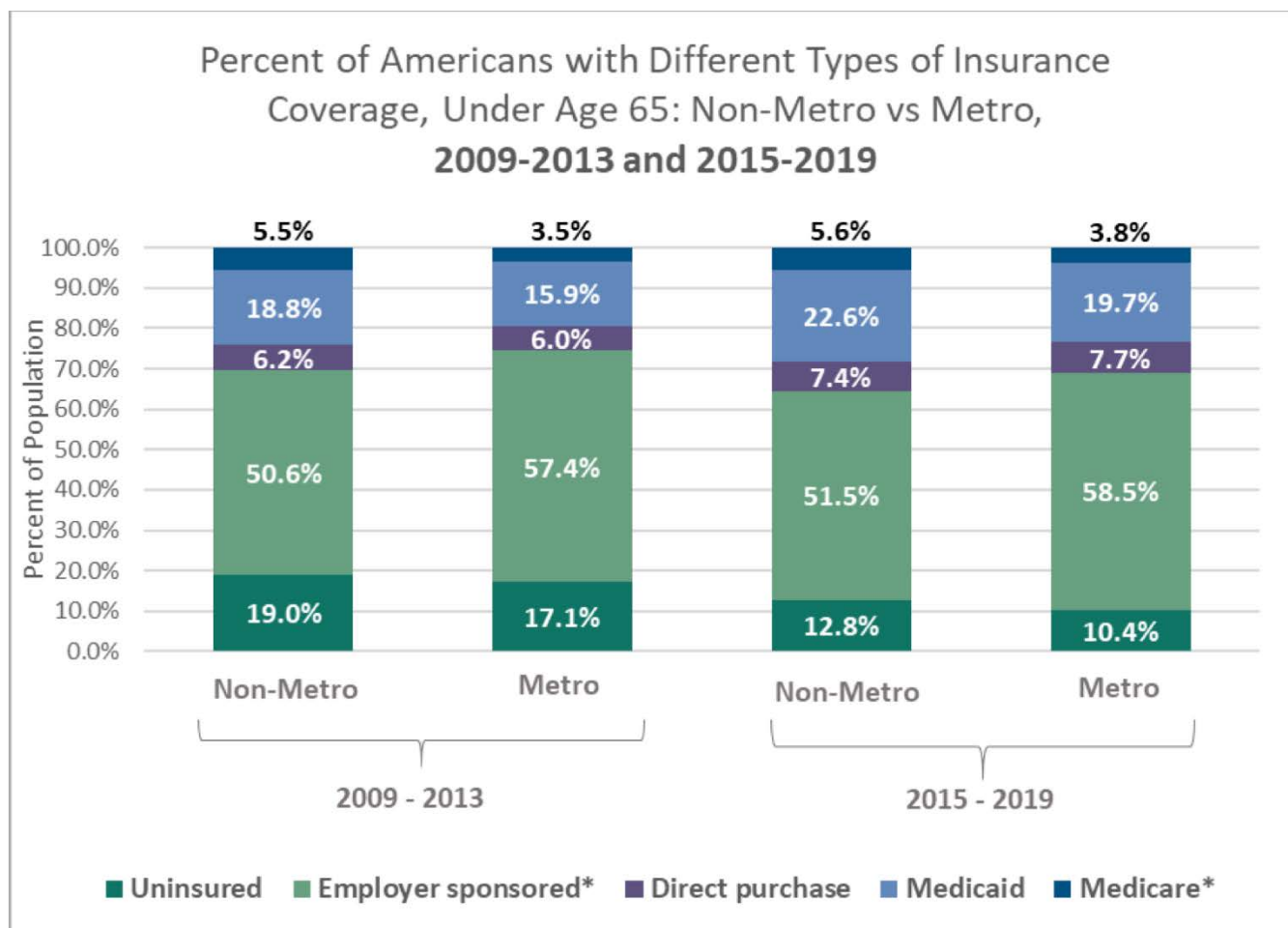


Medicaid helps finance rural hospitals and health care services. Medicaid and Medicare account for more than half of rural hospital revenues. Medicaid alone supports nearly half of publicly provided mental health services.

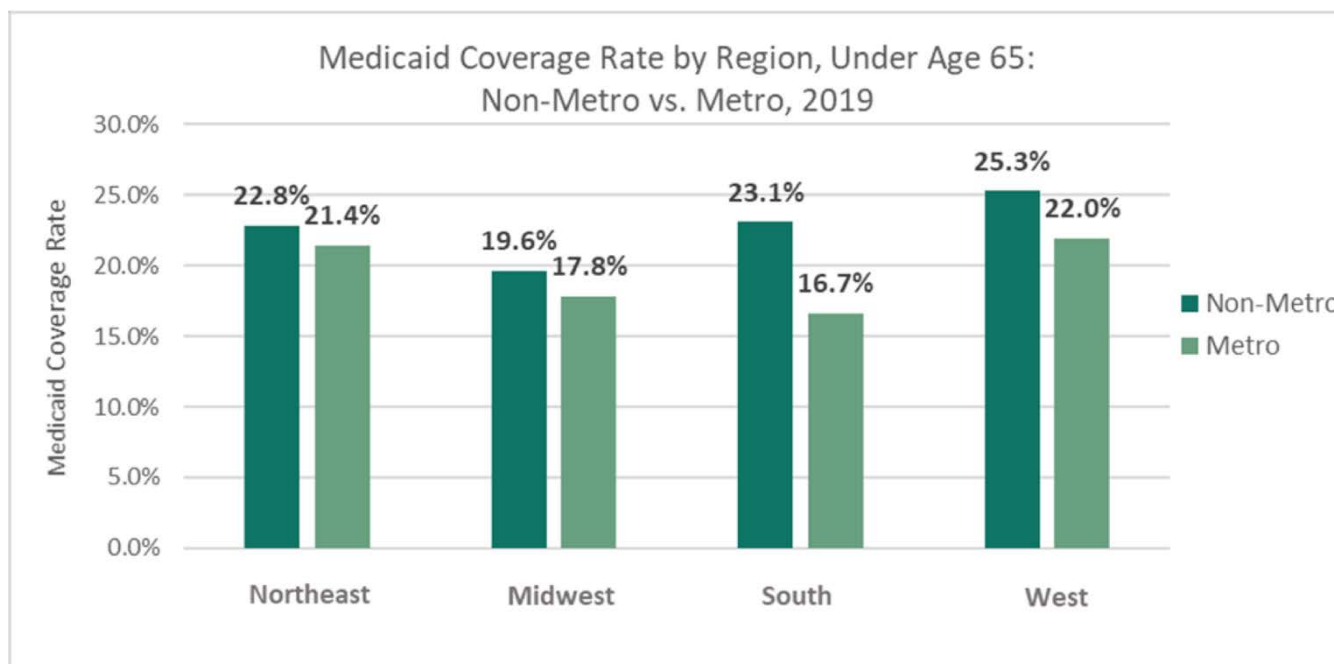
Percent of Americans with Different Types of Insurance Coverage, Under Age 65: Non-Metro, Metro and All Areas - 2019



Download the Rural Policy Research Institute report [here](#).



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