



Executive Summary of the Gender Analysis of the 2018 and 2023 General Parliamentary Elections

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One of the important steps in understanding the obstacles that women encounter in politics is the collection of gender-disaggregated data. This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of the lists of finalized candidates and Members of Parliament (MP) for the 2018 and 2023 General Elections in Türkiye and to present a detailed gender-disaggregated data set and analysis. In line with this purpose, detailed information on the finalized candidates and MPs in the 2018 and 2023 General Elections was collected and then analyzed with an interpretive approach using the statistics software IBM SPSS 23. This information included candidates' and MPs' political party, demographic characteristics (sex, age, education, occupation, marital status, number of children), political experience, and women's association/movement affiliation.

The scope of the research included the parties that participated in the General Elections on 24 June 2018 and 14 May 2023 by submitting a candidate list and that had an MP in the parliament as a result of the elections. Accordingly, in the 2018 General Election, data on candidates and MPs of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Republican People's Party (CHP), Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), İYİ Party, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and independents were used. As the result of the 2023 General Election, 15 political parties within the alliances were represented in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) and they were included in the research : AK Party, CHP, Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), Democrat Party (DP), Democratic Left Party (DSP), Labor Party (EMEP), Future Party (Future) , HDP, Free Cause Party (HÜDA PAR), İYİ Party, MHP, Felicity Party (Felicity), Workers' Party of Turkey (TİP), New Welfare Party (New Welfare) and The Greens and the Left for the Future Party (Green Left).

Key Findings

According to the 2018 General Election and the 2023 General Election results, the rate of female MPs was 17.6% (101 females) and 19.8% (119 females), respectively. These rates are the highest rates of female representation at the parliamentary level in Türkiye's history but still fall below the world average (26.5%) and the target of equal representation (50%). According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women's January 2023 "Women in politics" map, Türkiye ranks 131st out of 186 countries in terms of female representation in Parliament.

Table 1: Comparison of Candidate and Election Rates of the Parties in the 2018 General Elections

Political Party	Candidates and MPs of the Parties for the 2018 General Election										Election Rate of Female Candidates	Election Rate of Male Candidates
	Female Candidate		Female MP		Male Candidate		Male MP		Candidate Total	MP Total		
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Number		
AK Party	Y124	%20,7	54	%18,8	476	%79,3	233	%81,2	600	287	%43,6	%49
CHP	137	%23	17	%12,5	463	%77	119	%87,5	600	136	%12,3	%25,8
HDP	226	%37,7	23	%41,1	374	%62,3	33	%58,9	600	56	%10,2	%8,8
HÜDA PAR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
İyi Party	160	%26,8	2	%5,4	440	%73,2	35	%94,6	600	37	%1,2	%8
MHP	79	%13,2	4	%8,3	521	%86,8	44	%91,7	600	48	%5	%8,5
DP	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	%100	-	2	-	-
TİP	-	-	1	%25	-	-	3	%75	-	4	-	-
Independent	12	%17,6	0	%0	56	%82,4	5	%100	68	5	%0	%8,9
Total	738	%24	101	%17,6	2330	%76	474	%82,4	3068	575	-	-

*After the 2018 General Elections, some people passed away, lost their seats in the parliament, or relinquished their duties. For this reason, information on 575 MPs is available in the GNAT's 27th term list. Also, as some MPs changed parties after the election, TİP and DP are included in the MP list of the GNAT.

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³ According to the GNAT web page – the parties indicated by the MPs were used.

⁴ After the General Election on 14 May 2023, Felicity and Future Parties established an alliance on 6 July 2023, and the deputies have been representing under the name of the Felicity Party at the Parliament. Since the research took the results of the 2023 General Election into account, two parties had been evaluated separately.

⁵ The name of the party was changed to the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (HEDEP) at the 4th Ordinary Congress in October 2023.

⁶ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>

According to the data from Table 1, female MP rates of political parties in the 2018 General Elections were HDP (41.1%), AK Party (18.8%), CHP (12.5%), MHP (8.3%) and İYİ Party (5.4%), respectively.

The data from Table 2 indicate that the female MP rates of political parties in the 2023 General Elections were as follows: HDP (50%), Green Left (47.4%), DEVA (26.7%), TİP (25%), Future (20%), AK Party (19%), CHP (18.5%), İYİ Party (11.4%) and MHP (8%), respectively. No female MPs were elected from the New Welfare Party, DSP, DP, HÜDA PAR, or the Felicity Party.

Table 2: Comparison of Candidate and Election Rates of Parties in the 2023 General Elections

Political Party	Candidates and MPs of the Parties for the 2023 General Election										Election Rate of Female Candidates	Election Rate of Male Candidates
	Female Candidate		Female MP		Male Candidate		Male MP		Candidate Total	MP Total		
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate		
AK Party	115	%19,2	50	%19	485	%80,8	213	%80,8	600	263	%43,5	%47,6
CHP	157	%27	24	%18,5	424	%73	106	%81,5	581	130	%15,3	%25
Yeşil Sol	258	%43	27	%47,4	342	%57	30	%52,6	600	57	%10,5	%8,8
MHP	93	%15,5	4	%8	507	%84,5	46	%92	600	50	%4,3	%9,1
İyi Party	148	%26,2	5	%11,4	417	%73,8	39	%88,6	565	44	%3,4	%9,4
DEVA*	-	-	4	%26,7	-	-	11	%73,3	-	15	-	-
Saadet *	-	-	0	%0	-	-	10	%100	-	10	-	-
Gelecek*	-	-	2	%20	-	-	8	%80	-	10	-	-
Yeniden Refah	50	%8,3	0	%0	550	%91,7	5	%100	600	5	%0	%0,9
TİP	168	%42,2	1	%25	230	%57,8	3	%75	398	4	%0,6	%1,3
HÜDA PAR*	-	-	0	%0	-	-	4	%100	-	4	-	-
DP	-	-	0	%0	-	-	3	%100	-	3	-	-
EMEK*	-	-	1	%50	-	-	1	%50	-	2	-	-
HDP*	-	-	1	%50	-	-	1	%50	-	2	-	-
DSP*	-	-	0	%0	-	-	1	%100	-	1	-	-
Independent	-	-	0	%0	-	-	0	%0	-	0	-	-
Total	989	%25,1	119	%19,8	2955	%74,9	481	%80,2	3944	600	-	-

*Parties that took part in the alliances during the general election process in 2023 but did not have a candidate with the party name on the candidate list and yet were later represented in the parliament.

The rate of female candidates (24–25%) is higher than the rate of elected female MPs (17–19%) in both election terms. In the 2018 General Elections, a total of 3,068 candidates were nominated from among five parties and the independents. The number of female candidates was 738 (24%) and the ranking in terms of female candidate rates was HDP (37.7%), İYİ Party (26.8%), CHP (23%), AK Party (20.7%) and MHP (13.2%). In the 2023 General Elections, only 989 (25.1%) women candidates were nominated out of a total of 3,944 candidates from seven parties. The ranking in terms of the rate of female candidates in this election was as follows: Green Left Party (43%), TİP (42.2%), CHP (27%), İYİ Party (26.2%), AK Party (19.2%), MHP (15.5%) and New Welfare Party (8.3%).

A detailed analysis of the impact of parties' quota implementation on the rate of female MPs in the two elections reveals that the HDP and the Green Left Party effectively implemented quotas in Türkiye with the aim of equal representation. On the other hand, the İYİ Party, CHP, TİP and DEVA failed to reflect the quota rates specified in their party statutes in the election results.

Table 3: Political Parties and Temporary Special Measures for 2018 and 2023 General Elections

Quota implementation	Candidacy application/file fee exemption
<p>Quotas are included in the statutes of CHP (33%), DEVA (35%), HDP (50%), İYİ Party (25%), Green Left (50%) and TİP (40%).</p> <p>AK Party, DP, DSP, EMEP, Future, HÜDA PAR, MHP, Felicity, and New Welfare did not adopt the quota application.</p>	<p>One of the most common temporary special measures other than quotas is the reduction of application/file fees charged during the nomination process.</p> <p>In Türkiye, only the İYİ Party's statute had the arrangement that included fee exemption for women. However, other parties, except MHP, implement this special measure voluntarily.</p>

Gender Assessment of Candidate List Ranking and Electoral District

In Türkiye, the female and male candidates' possibility of getting elected is mostly determined by the candidate list rankings and the electoral district/province of candidates. At this juncture, gender of the candidates becomes a significant variable.

In the 2018 General Election candidate list, 9.2% of the 435 candidates running for first rank were female (40 persons), and 90.8% of them (395 persons) were male candidates. Similarly, **in the 2023 General Election candidate list**, 16.3% of 560 candidates running for first rank were female (91 persons) and 83.8% of them (469 persons) were male candidates. Tables 4 and 5 below show the rank of candidates and MPs in the candidate list by gender.

Table 4: Ranking of Candidates in Party Lists of Candidates and Gender Comparison of 2018 and 2023 General Election Candidates⁷

Election Term	Rank Rates of Female Candidates in the Party Lists of Candidates	Rank Rates of Male Candidates in the Party Lists of Candidates
2018 General Elections	<p>Out of 119 female candidates:</p> <p>5.51% (40 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>12.67% (92 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>13.3% (97 persons) for the third rank</p>	<p>Out of 2,274 male candidates:</p> <p>17.37% (395 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>15.08% (343 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>12% (273 persons) for the third rank</p>
2023 General Elections	<p>Out of 989 female candidates:</p> <p>9.2% (91 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>12.1% (121 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>11.7% (116 persons) for the third rank</p>	<p>Out of 2,955 male candidates:</p> <p>15.9% (469 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>14.5% (427 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>12.3% (363 persons) for third rank</p>

In both election periods, the ranks in which female candidates were nominated more than male candidates were 4th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th, 12th, and the following ranks.

Table 5: Ranking of Members of Parliament in Party Lists of Candidates and Gender Comparison of 2018 and 2023 General Election Members of Parliament⁸

Election Term	Rank Rates of Female MPs in the Party Lists of Candidates	Rank Rates of Male MPs in the Party Lists of Candidates
2018 General Elections	<p>Out of 101 female MPs:</p> <p>17.8% (18 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>25.7% (26 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>20.8% (21 persons) for the third rank</p>	<p>Out of 469 male MPs:</p> <p>44.3% (208 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>21.1% (99 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>11.7% (55 persons) for the third rank</p>
2023 General Elections	<p>Out of 119 female MPs:</p> <p>26.1% (31 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>26.9% (32 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>19.3% (50 persons) for the third rank</p>	<p>Out of 481 male MPs:</p> <p>48.6% (234 persons) for the first rank</p> <p>18.7% (90 persons) for the second rank</p> <p>10.4% (50 persons) for the third rank</p>

⁷Independent candidates in the 2018 General Elections were excluded from these analyses.

⁸Five male MPs elected as independent candidates in the 2018 General Elections were excluded from these analyses.

In other words, according to Table 5, while 56.5% of female MPs in the 2018 General Elections were selected as candidates from the third ranking or lower, only 34.6% of male MPs were selected as candidates from the third ranking or lower. In the 2023 General Elections, while 47% of female MPs were able to be selected as candidates from the third ranking or lower, only 32.7% of male MPs were selected as candidates from the third ranking or lower. These rates reveal that women are less likely to be nominated and less likely to be elected than men in the first ranks.

Provinces with the highest number of women candidates in 87 electoral districts across Türkiye in the 2018 and 2023 General Elections, respectively, are as follows: Adana (27 women/3.66%, 29 women/2.9%); Ankara (51 women/6.91%, 75 women/7.6%); Antalya (25 women/3.39%, 37 women/3.7%); Bursa: (23 women/ 3.7%, 34 women/3.4%); Mersin (19 women/2.57%, 22 women/2.2%); İstanbul (151 women/20.46%, 199 women/20.1%); and İzmir (37 women/5.01%, 47 women/4.8%). In the 2023 General Election, Kocaeli (23 women/2.3%) and Konya (26 women/2.6%) were added to these provinces.

An analysis of the provinces with the highest and lowest rates of female candidates at the provincial level reveals that Balıkesir nominated 18 female candidates (39.1%) among 46 candidates and Kırklareli nominated 6 female candidates (37.5%) among 16 candidates in the 2018 General Elections. No female candidates were nominated from Amasya, Bayburt and Gümüşhane. In the **2023 General Elections**, Tunceli had four women candidates (66.7%) among six candidates and Düzce had 10 women candidates (55.6%) among 18 candidates. No female candidates were nominated from Bayburt.

The provinces with the largest total number of female MPs **in both election terms** were Adana (4–4.2%); Ankara (7.9–8.4%); İstanbul (20.8–21%); İzmir (4–5%); Bursa (4–2.5%); and Diyarbakır (4–4.2%), while Konya (3%) can be included in the 2018 General Election. With the exception of Diyarbakır, **these provinces also have the most female candidates on their candidate lists.** 32 out of 81 provinces did not elect any female MPs in the 2023 General Elections, and 34 provinces did not elect any female MPs in the 2018 General Elections. As can be seen in Table 6, 25 of these provinces are the same.

Table 6: Provinces With No Female MPs in 2018 and 2023 General Elections

Provinces With No Female MPs in 2018 General Elections	Provinces With No Female MPs in 2023 General Elections
Adıyaman, Amasya, Ardahan, Artvin, Aydın, Bayburt, Bilecik, Bingöl, Bitlis, Burdur, Çankırı, Çorum, Erzincan, Giresun, Gümüşhane, Iğdır, Karabük, Karaman, Kars, Kastamonu, Kırkkale, Kırklareli, Kırşehir, Kilis, Nevşehir, Niğde, Ordu, Osmaniye, Rize, Sinop, Tunceli, Uşak, Yozgat, and Zonguldak	Adıyaman, Aksaray, Amasya, Ardahan, Artvin, Bayburt, Bilecik, Bingöl, Bolu, Burdur, Çanakkale, Çorum, Elazığ, Erzincan, Gümüşhane, Iğdır, Isparta, Karabük, Karaman, Kırkkale, Kırklareli, Kırşehir, Kilis, Kütahya, Niğde, Ordu, Rize, Sinop, Tokat, Uşak, Yozgat, and Zonguldak

Political Experience and Demographic Profile of Candidates and MPs

Sociocultural attributes that determine women’s social position, such as education, occupation, age, marital status, childcare responsibilities, and access to political resources such as political experience, determine women’s suitability for politics on the one hand, and their capacity to participate in politics on the other. Traditionally, women who entered politics had high-status professions, were educated, married, and middle-aged, and therefore had fewer caregiving responsibilities because their children had already grown up.

Political Experience: In the 27th term, 88.1% of female MPs and 88.8% of the male MPs had political experience, and in the 28th term, 89.1% of the female MPs and 84.8% of the male MPs had political experience. In the 27th term, 51.7% of the female MPs (46 women) and 57.2% of the male MPs were incumbent deputies and in the 28th term 37.7% of female MPs (40 women) and 54.3% of the male MPs were incumbent deputies. In the 28th term, 20 of the 119 elected women had local political experience, and 72 had political party experience. 42.6% of female MPs in the 27th term and 29.4% of female MPs in the 28th term had associated with the party **through women’s branches/organs** Additionally, 20.8% and 17.6% of women MPs in the 27th and 28th terms, respectively, stated in their CVs that they had a **relationship with women’s associations or movements.** A detailed analysis illustrates that Female MP’s engagement with women’s branches/organization and movements/associations differs across parties.

Education Status: The level of higher education is above 92.1% among both female and male MPs in the 27th and 28th terms, so it cannot be said that there is an expectation of higher education only for female MPs. Regarding the educational level of the candidates in the two general elections, 72–73% had higher education and above, 22–24% had secondary-level education, and 4–5% had primary-level education. In other words, in the nomination process, women and men with different educational experiences, especially those with a secondary level of education, want to engage in politics; however, it is understood that candidates with a higher level of education can be selected among them and that parties predominantly prefer well-educated women and men candidates in the ranks and regions where they have a chance to be elected. In this regard, there is no numerical gender-based difference.

Occupational Status: It is a well-known fact that throughout Türkiye’s political history, MP and politician profiles included occupational groups with high social status. In line with this, female MPs in the 27th and 28th terms were predominantly from the health (the rate of female MPs 12%; the rate of male MPs 8%) and law professions (the rate of female MPs 28–22%, the rate of male MPs 17–21%). In contrast, the number of male MPs was higher than female MPs in the field of engineering (the rate of female MPs 5–8%, the rate of male MPs 12%) as well as in the category of business people (the rate of female MPs 1–3%, the rate of male MPs 9–11%). There is no proportional difference between female and male MPs in occupational groups such as academics, economists/finance professionals, managers, and journalists. In the 2023 General Elections, the number of male MPs defining their occupation as bureaucrats (governor/mayor, police chief, diplomat, civil servant, etc.) and theologians was increased. There are no female MPs in these occupations. The occupational distributions of candidates in the 2018 and 2023 General Elections are also in line with the occupations summarized above.

Age: The ages of 27th and 28th term female MPs are generally in the range of 46–55 years (43.6% and 34.5%, respectively), followed by 36–45 years (37.6% and 30.3%, respectively). This is followed by the age group 56 and above, and lastly, the age group 35 and below. Studies explain this breakdown due to the fact that women usually get into politics after their care and household burdens are reduced and they have reached to an age that is respected. However, men also have a concentrated distribution in the range of 46 years of age and above; in fact, the percentage of male MPs aged 56 and above is the highest. Therefore, age should not only be considered as a variable that has an impact on gender relations, but also be deemed as a factor of political reputation and power.

In fact, it is interesting to note that young women outnumbered young men in both terms, despite the overall low number of MPs under 35. In the 27th term, 7.9% of the female and 5% of the male MPs were 35 years old and below; in the 28th term, 10% of the female and 1.9% of the male MPs were 35 and below. Moreover, the gender and age distribution of the 2018 candidate lists shows that young women demanded to participate in politics, but far fewer young women were elected as MPs than the proportion of young female candidates. According to the 2018 General Election Data of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), 286 (26.7%) of 1,002 female candidates were below 35 years old, 284 (28.3%) were between 35 and 44 years old, 285 (28.4%) were between 45 and 55 years old, and 165 (16.5%) were above 55 years old.

Marital Status and Children: Being “married” and “having children” are an important part of social status for politicians in the world and Türkiye. In line with this, 91.5% of the female MPs in the 27th term and 85.5% of female MPs in the 28th term were married, and 87.5% and 82.5%, respectively, had children. Nevertheless, the percentage of single female MPs is higher than that of male MPs. Accordingly, the rate of female MPs with children is much lower than that of male MPs. In the 27th term, 76.2% of female MPs (77 women) were married, 23.8% (24 women) were single and 30.7% had no children. Among male MPs, 94.7% were married, while only 4.9% (23 men) were single and 7.8% (37 men) had no children. In the 28th term, 67.2% of female MPs (80 women) were married, 19.3% (23 women) were single and 27.7% (33 women) had no children. Among male MPs, 90% were married (433 men), 1.9% (9 men) were single and only 3.5% (17 men) had no children. Moreover, the number of single women in candidacy is even higher. Of the 1,002 female candidates in the 2018 General Elections, 298 (30%) were single and 547 (54.5%) were married, while 81.4% of the 3,845 male candidates were married. Based on these data, marital status affects female candidates more than male candidates in the election process, and the possibility of election is higher for married female candidates.

Owing to the unequal distribution of care responsibilities, **the number of children** also affects women’s capacity to engage in politics. **In the 27th term**, while 25.2% of female MPs had more than three children, among male MPs this rate was 42.2%. **In the 28th term**, while 11.8% of female MPs had more than three children, among male MPs this rate was 38.2%. Moreover, there is also a marked difference in the rate of one child among female and male MPs. While 24.3% (in the 27th term) and 28.9% (in the 28th term) of female MPs had only one child, this rate was 14.3% and 19.1% for male MPs, therefore gender and the number of children are correlated in politics.

In a nutshell, the majority of women MPs are between the ages of 35 and 55, are married, have one or two children, are highly educated and have a profession, which aligns with the studies in the literature. However, the profile of male MPs is similar as well. Male MPs are 46 years old and above, married, have two or more children, are highly educated, and have a profession. In this respect, the explanations expressed in previous studies that women are expected to be better equipped in terms of education, profession, and mature age in politics are partially insufficient. These characteristics are actually expected of male politicians on the national political level as well. However, due to existing gender inequalities, women are less able than men to access opportunities for education, employment, labor, and political experience. This situation consolidates the inequalities between female and male politicians and among different women in Türkiye. Also, it should be emphasized that the most significant difference between female and male MPs is the marital status, the number of children, and the ages of the MPs – the rate of single female MPs is higher than male MPs, female MPs have fewer children and are younger. In this respect, firstly, women’s care burdens and inequality in time use patterns should be taken into account as an important obstacle to women’s entry into national politics. Secondly, young women desire to participate in politics, but this is not reflected in Parliament.

Policy Recommendations

Based on 2018 and 2023 General Election analyses, below are the noteworthy issues for understanding the problems and barriers women face at national-level politics:

- The lack/weakness of women’s networks in political parties influencing candidate lists;
- The low number of female candidates both in the first ranks and electoral districts that have a high probability of winning;
- The low number of winning female candidates in the result of elections and the ineffective application of voluntary quota;
- The elimination of young and undereducated women candidates in the election process;
- Lack of female visibility and role models in constituencies;
- The unequal distribution of caring responsibilities between women and men;
- Inequalities in women’s capacity to access resources in education, acquiring a profession, employment, and political experience.

The policy strategies to combat the aforementioned obstacles can be listed as follows:

- Effective implementation of a gender quota, one of the most effective temporary special measures, is primarily necessary. For this purpose, firstly, constitutional/legal quotas should be adopted instead of voluntary quotas. Secondly, the quota rate should be adopted at a minimum level of 33% as the critical threshold, or at parity (50% equal representation), which is common throughout the world. Reserved seat or zipper systems should be used to achieve the goal of equal representation in the results. Thirdly, the target of equal representation should be adopted as a principle in all organs, commissions, and boards of Parliament, as well as internal party organizations.
- Political parties must develop their participation mechanisms on the basis of inclusiveness, and the institutional positions of women’s branches/organs within the party and in the election process must be strengthened. Monitoring the candidate selection processes of the parties and creating civil pressure over the parties to increase the number of female candidates should also be added to these strategies.
- Since the burden of care is one of the most important structural barriers to women’s participation in politics, it is crucial **to expand free and high-quality daycare/care services** throughout Türkiye and to **adopt the policy approach of parental leave** to empower women at the grassroots level. In addition, political parties, Parliament, and municipalities should be encouraged to adopt a spatial and institutional approach that takes children and those in need of care into account.
- Since higher education, professional, and work experience are significant to be elected, **empowering women** in these areas across Türkiye is essential. First and foremost, it is necessary to combat the lack of schooling for girls and early forced marriages. On the other hand, the preference for highly educated, married, middle-aged female

MPs who come from certain professional fields also reveals that political representation cannot spread based on differences and does not allow for a diversified female representation. It, therefore, reminds the need for a new understanding of politics based on the principles of inclusiveness and diversity to ensure the political representation of different women and their excluded voices.

- To reinforce **grassroots empowerment strategies** for women, it is vital to encourage women in local politics, political parties, and NGOs and to develop **multi-stakeholder capacity-building programmes** providing a fertile ground for women to gain political experience. Besides, as part of the on-site empowerment strategy, small-scale capacity-building programmes targetting local women should be offered, such as political schools for pilot provinces.
- **Awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes aimed at young women's leadership** should be developed to reveal the potential of young and single women in politics. Moreover, political parties should encourage these women to participate in politics.

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