

IMPACT REPORT

Youth Voice
2022 / 2023

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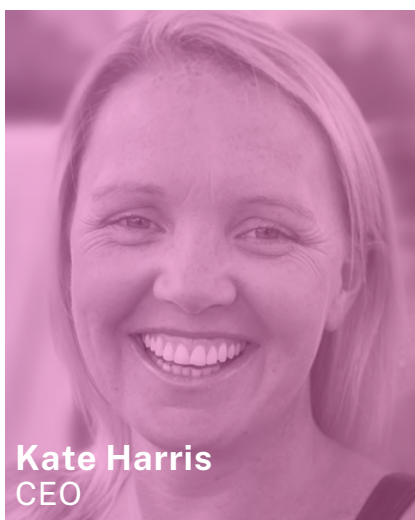
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INTRODUCTION

At VotesforSchools, we know children and young people want to discuss the key talking points of the day and share their thoughts in order to make a difference. That's why we are passionate about engaging with them and amplifying their voice. Our work with schools reaches hundreds of thousands of students each year, mainly through our weekly debate and voting programme. As a result, they become informed and curious about the issues that matter to them. Being heard is the crucial next step: our innovative voting platform allows them to cast their vote and leave comments. After all, why ask them to have a say and then not take their voice where it most needs to be shared?

The benefits of having people of influence listen and care about what young people think are mutual, and allows everyone to feel informed, curious and heard. This is vital in today's world, as it will empower future generations to use their voice and believe in the power that they have.

VotesforSchools began with this very mission in mind: becoming a powerful vehicle for young people's views to be listened to and acted upon. Thanks to our committed schools and students, this mission has become a reality. Our 2022-23 Report is here to guide you through some of the phenomenal work that has been achieved this year through our Data, Impact & Partnerships Team, as a direct result of the voice and views shared over the last 12 months.



I hope you enjoy reading all about the great work VotesforSchools does and the way we give agency to children and young people to have a say beyond their school gates.

We warmly welcome new partners, so please reach out if you want to be part of the movement. Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. Harris".

A young woman with long brown hair, wearing a light-colored jacket and sunglasses on her head, is shouting into a megaphone. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text is centered over the image.

— “ —

Children have a right to be
heard and to have a say in
decisions that affect their lives.

— ” —

(ARTICLE 12 OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE
RIGHTS OF THE CHILD)

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS



WITH THANKS TO THE MANY ORGANISATIONS WHO HAVE RESPONDED TO OUR CHILDREN'S VOTES AND COMMENTS:



OUR FOCUS ON

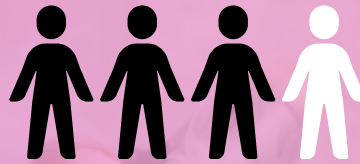
VAPING

DO WE KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT VAPING, AND SHOULD WE BE WORRIED ABOUT IT?




60%

SAID WE DO NOT
KNOW ENOUGH
ABOUT HOW VAPING
AFFECTS US



3 IN 4 SAID WE
SHOULD BE WORRIED
ABOUT VAPING



"THE WORRY IS ABOUT
THE MARKETING OF
VAPING TO YOUNG
KIDS WHO ARE
ATTRACTED BY THE
BRIGHT COLOURS AND
BUBBLEGUM FLAVOURS"

Voter Response

This year, research has shown that over 50% more children have tried vaping for the first time compared to last year. It was clear that young people's voice needed to be included in this quickly-growing issue in order to help guide decision-making on it.

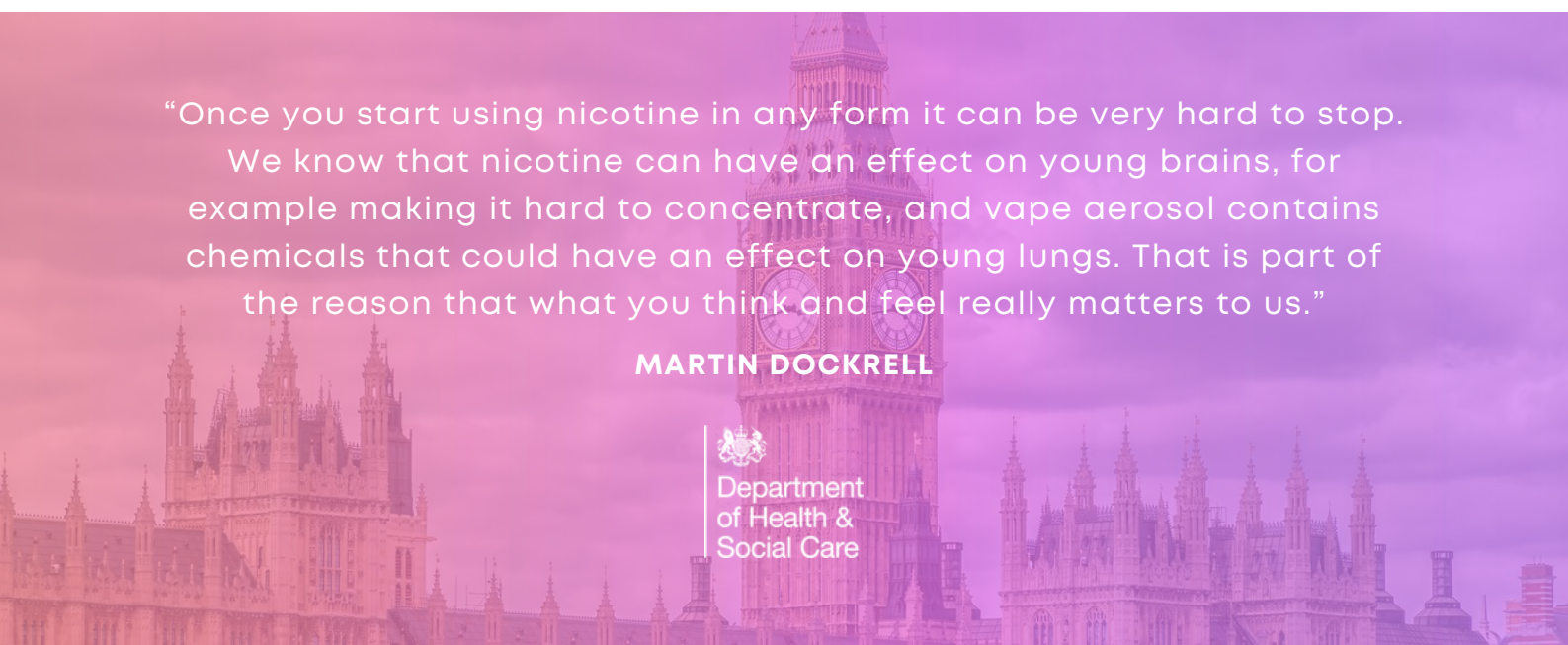


42,907

CHILDREN TOOK PART

High voting numbers on the topic showed that children and young people were keen to be involved in the conversation and wanted to make themselves heard. Notably, voters in the West Midlands were especially active in discussing this issue.

Given the clear pertinence of this issue to young people in this area of the country, an additional Data Report was produced that focused on the results in Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. We were then able to meet with these local councils and pass these region-specific results onto them directly.



“Once you start using nicotine in any form it can be very hard to stop. We know that nicotine can have an effect on young brains, for example making it hard to concentrate, and vape aerosol contains chemicals that could have an effect on young lungs. That is part of the reason that what you think and feel really matters to us.”

MARTIN DOCKRELL



The Cabinet Members and Directors of Health & Wellbeing from Birmingham, Dudley, and Solihull councils were particularly receptive, and were interested in engaging and hearing the voice of our voters on the subject of vaping.

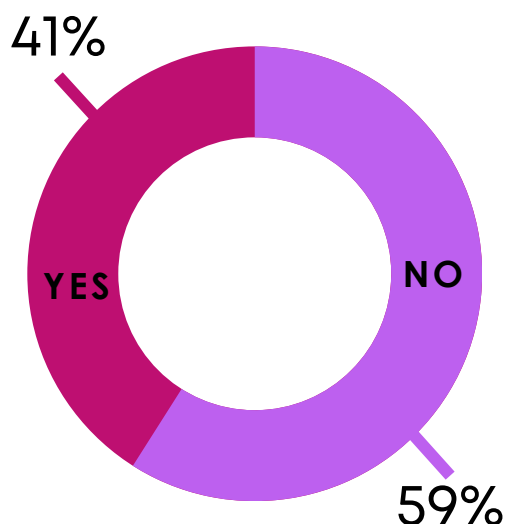
In response, they described the initiatives already in place in their areas, which included a Tobacco Control Board and work on different public health issues. Discussions were then centered on how they may use our data to inform their practice and policy going forward.

On a national scale, the UK Government put out a call for evidence for a study into Youth Vaping in April 2023. We were also able to contribute our data to this work.

OUR FOCUS ON

APPRENTICESHIPS

IS IT FAIR FOR APPRENTICES TO BE PAID A LOWER LIVING WAGE?



During this Vote Topic in April, children and young people learned more about apprenticeships and reflected on the wage that young apprentices receive alongside formal training.

24,279
CHILDREN TOOK PART

VotesforSchools' Content Team worked closely with the Co-op to design these resources, using the Co-op's expertise on this issue to help inform the activities and information featured. The question voters discussed was: "Is it fair for apprentices to be paid a lower living wage?"

WORKING WITH



We also were able to give some of our students from Kettering Buccleuch Academy the unique experience of visiting the House of Commons. They joined Alison Scowden, the Co-op's Head of Public Affairs, at a roundtable event during which they presented their findings to Robbie Moore MP.

The research was then featured in a report by Policy Exchange entitled "Reforming the Apprenticeship Levy".

Reforming the Apprenticeship Levy

Iain Mansfield and Toby Hirst
Foreword by David Blunkett



Read: Young people call for abolition of the apprenticeship rate

- New research from Co-op in partnership with VotesforSchools reveals over half (59%) of young people aged 7-16 years old believe apprentices should be paid the national living wage as cost of living drives interest in apprenticeships
- Co-op calls on other businesses to pay apprentices the national living wage to help expand the uptake of apprenticeships and the positives they can offer

New research from the Co-op and presented at a roundtable organised by The Purpose Coalition has revealed over half (59%)* of young people believe all apprentices should be paid the national living wage.

The results were also reported on by Fit for Purpose.



YOUNG VOTERS SHARING THEIR THOUGHTS IN PARLIAMENT, 2023

— “ —

Our partnership with VotesforSchools has enabled the Co-op to engage with nearly 25,000 students on a key public policy issue: apprenticeships. By working together we have been able to raise students' understanding of apprenticeships but also take their views directly to policymakers.

The highlight was a roundtable in Parliament where four students presented the vote results - calling for an end to the apprenticeship rate - to Robbie Moore MP, Parliamentary Private Secretary at the Department for Education. Robbie, in turn, has promised to raise the issue directly with Ministers at the Department for Education.

— ” —

HEAD OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, ALISON SCOWDEN



OUR FOCUS ON

WINDRUSH 75

SHOULD WE LEARN ABOUT THE WINDRUSH GENERATION AT SCHOOL?




77%

OF CHILDREN AGED 11-16
WANT TO LEARN ABOUT THE
WINDRUSH GENERATION AT
SCHOOL.

On 18th June 2023, the UK celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Empire Windrush arriving at Tilbury Docks in Essex, England.

In their lessons, our voters looked ahead to Windrush Day, learning more about the journey from the Caribbean to the UK before reflecting on some of the Windrush Generation's incredible contributions to British life and culture.



"We realised that very few people in the room knew what Windrush was, but that we had all had our lives influenced by the culture and other contributions made to our country by the people of Windrush. Everyone knew more after the session compared to before."

VOTER, AGED 16

The results were unanimous across all age groups. Our Primary voters (aged 5-11) said that we should all celebrate the Windrush generation more, while our Secondary voters (aged 11-16) called for there to be more about the Windrush Generation taught in schools. Additionally, more than half - 51% - of our College voters (aged 16-18) argued that we don't appreciate the contributions of the Windrush generation enough.

As part of our work on this topic, we engaged with the Windrush75 network, facilitated by British Future. We ensured that our resources chimed with the spirit of the event as well as providing insightful and impactful data. We also presented the findings to Windrush 75.

“Windrush is a really important topic because it helped rebuild our country and the more we learn, the more we understand.”

VOTER, AGED 10



EXCLUSIVE: Over three-quarters of UK pupils call for Windrush Generation to be included in national curriculum

The findings of a survey of 35,000 schoolchildren has renewed calls by education campaigners and community groups for Black British history to be a mandatory part of the national curriculum



POLL: Over 77 percent of pupils aged 11 to 16 years-old who took part in a national survey of 35,000 schoolchildren said they wanted to learn more about the Windrush Generation



The data was featured in The Voice newspaper, in which Windrush Day was extensively covered.



— “

The Windrush story helps explain why our multi-ethnic society looks as it does today, so it's something that every child should be taught about. VotesforSchools' work engaged thousands of students with this pivotal moment in our history, which is great in itself. That we also got to find out their opinions about Windrush was even better, as we could demonstrate to politicians and opinion-formers that this is a topic young people care about.

” —

CAMERON PANNELL-RAE, BRITISH FUTURE

British
Future...

OUR FOCUS ON

MISOGYNY

ARE YOUNG PEOPLE COMFORTABLE CALLING OUT MISOGYNISTIC BEHAVIOUR?

With the issue of misogyny rising exponentially this academic year, we saw the need for children to be informed and heard on it.

In March, voters took a closer look at misogynistic attitudes in action, and considered the potential barriers to calling out friends or peers exhibiting this behaviour.



**3 IN 5 FELT UNCOMFORTABLE CALLING OUT
MISOGYNISTIC BEHAVIOUR**

In June 2022, VotesforSchools explored the topic: “Does the internet normalise toxic behaviour?”, which focused on the rise of incel culture. Based on extensive research and insights from Prevent experts and parents of teenage boys, former Content Team member and current Head of Student Programmes, Aisling O’Donnell, wrote [a blog outlining how teachers might tackle conversations around misogyny and Andrew Tate.](#)

SHARED WITH

**GLOBAL
EQUALITY
COLLECTIVE**

**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's**

 **family
lives**
We listen, support and never judge



"It can be difficult to call out misogynistic behavior as it can be very uncomfortable and at times dangerous - however, there should be more activism and more calling out of this behaviour. It needs to be addressed early on, in schools and as children. Women's Rights are Human Rights!"

VOTER, AGED 17

The blog was released in December 2022 - two weeks before Andrew Tate was arrested in Romania - just as the conversation around misogyny in schools hit its peak. We had previously heard from teachers that the “ignore it” approach was no longer feasible, but tackling the topic head-on also seemed to push vulnerable boys the wrong way. In light of this, our blog encouraged teachers and parents to listen, empathise, avoid judgement, and to try to see the bigger issues at play here.

This message clearly resonated as in the coming months, the blog received over 7,000 views worldwide. Aisling continued to talk to experts from Groundswell and Prevent about the issue, and also appeared on a panel about misogyny run by Global Equality Collective.

Our voters' views also garnered feedback from representatives at Barnardo's and Family Lives.

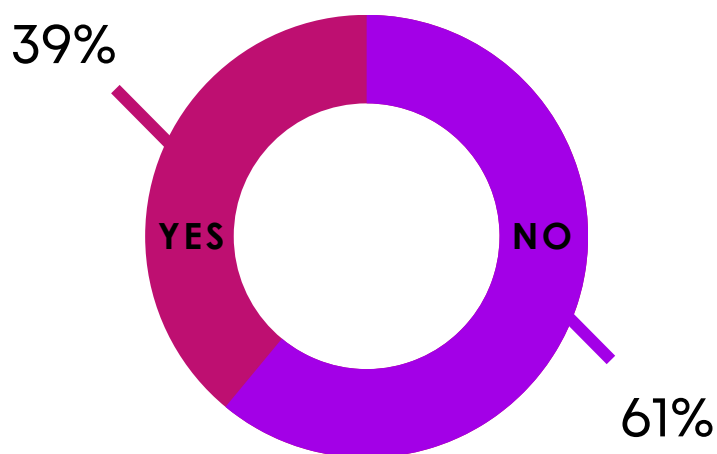


OUR FOCUS ON

FOOD WASTE

ARE UK SUPERMARKETS DOING ENOUGH TO TACKLE FOOD WASTE?

Ahead of Food Waste Action Week (6th-12th March), voters considered the actions being taken by UK supermarkets to tackle this ever-growing problem. In the lessons, they explored what is being done and how – if at all – this might be improved.



It was vital that the results reached the key players in the food industry, so we worked with the Felix Project and the Co-op to ensure just that.

What do kids make of supermarket progress in addressing food waste?

By Bethan Grylls

21-Mar-2023 - Last updated on 21-Mar-2023 at 12:06 GMT

Fortunately, their voice was taken into account and the results were featured in the trade press Food Manufacturer.





In January 2023, VotesforSchools also worked with Future Food Movement to set up a Youth Advisory Board. Its aim? To discuss how the food industry is contributing to climate change and what young people feel food companies should be doing to limit their impact on the environment.

We enlisted 18 students from schools across the UK to join the Board. Since then, they have discussed issues such as greenwashing, packaging, food waste, accessible nutrition and sustainable diets. They have had the chance to grill food bosses from companies such as Compleat Food Group and Quorn on their environmental policies, and engage in dialogues about how to move forward. The Board will continue until June 2023, after which Future Food Movement will release a report highlighting the core outcomes. Find out more about them here:

<https://futurefoodmovement.com/youth-advisory-board/>

OUR FOCUS ON

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change and the environment always rank highly in what our voters want to talk about. In the past year, we have covered a range of different topics with the environment at their heart, such as fast fashion, food waste, and waterways & seas pollution.



In addition to our weekly VoteTopics, Waltham Forest held The Big Climate Conversation with VotesforSchools in November 2022. The Youth Summit was an opportunity for young people in the area to talk about their own impact on climate change and consider what the people and leaders in their Borough could be (and are) doing to help the environment. Waltham Forest ran interactive sessions with students using resources created by VotesforSchools, which included survey questions to gather insights from the students involved. This was supported by additional posters and a promotional video to engage students and schools, as the lessons and survey were also extended to teachers in the classroom who could not make the event itself.

STUDENT VOICE AWARDS



This year, we opened up our annual Student Voice Awards to all schools in the UK. The new-look National Student Voice Awards celebrated schools and individuals who are blazing a trail when it comes to championing youth voice.

Working with our partner, PiXL, the National Student Voice Awards celebrated how schools and students across the country are working hard to make sure that youth voice is heard: both in their communities and more widely.

We were thrilled to have such a great line-up of judges from across a range of sectors, all of whom are champions of youth voice.



**KIM
LEADBEATER**

Member of
Parliament



**VANESSA
HARRISS**

Editor, The
Week
Junior



**RICO THAI
RICHARDS**

I Have a
Voice CIC



**HELEN
CAROLL**

The Co-op
Group



OLA

Save the
Children
YAB

We were blown away by the quality of submissions and the passion all the nominees exhibited for using their voice to effect change. Our judges declared the following students our winners:

“THIS PERSON REALLY IS A MASSIVE GAMECHANGER TO OUR COUNTRY, HONESTLY.”

SVA Judge



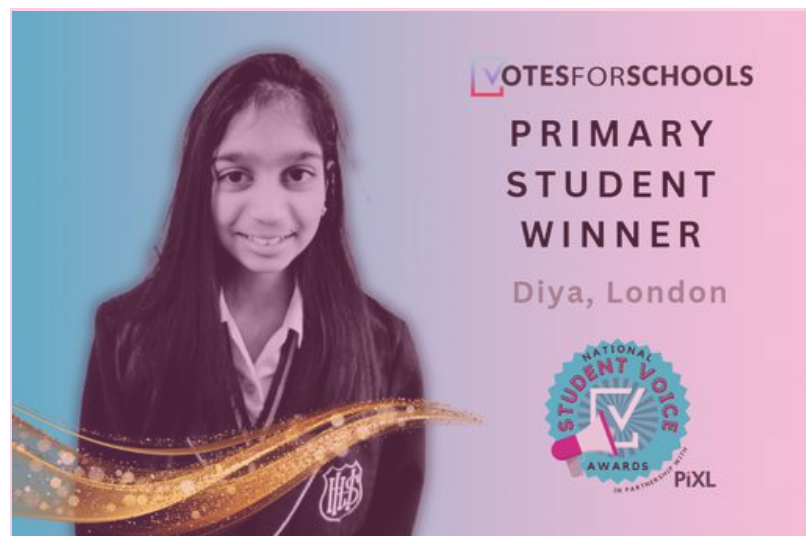
Cozzie’s application stood out to our judges immediately. She has worked hard, both in and out of school, to raise awareness for neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ issues, environmental causes, and women in STEM. Her work on each of these projects is impressive on its

own – combined, it is truly awe-inspiring.

“THEY’VE USED THEIR VOICE IN AN IMPACTFUL WAY THAT IS NOT ONLY BENEFICIAL FOR THEMSELVES BUT FOR OTHERS.”

SVA Judge

Diya’s caring and generous nature really came out in her application. From her efforts in the school council to her commitment to supporting local food banks and donating to charities, Diya is using her voice to positively impact the world around her!



As well as the following schools:

“STUDENT VOICE IS REALLY PART OF THE FABRIC OF THE SCHOOL. [...] THE SCHOOL IS MAKING A SAFE, SUPPORTIVE PLACE FOR STUDENTS TO SPEAK UP.”

SVA Judge



Kettering Buccleuch have worked hard to make sure student voice is heard in all areas of their school and celebrate both staff and students who are helping to make this happen. Their students clearly see that their voice can and does make a difference.

“LOVE THEIR EMPHASIS ON RELAYING QUIETER VOICES UP THE CHAIN, SO THEY ARE HEARD AT THE HIGHER LEVEL. THE BENEFITS TO STUDENT CONFIDENCE ARE CLEAR.”

SVA Judge

The Godolphin Junior Academy's dedication to gathering pupil feedback shows how powerful student voice can be when accessible to everyone. Their hard work to embed and celebrate student voice in their school has profoundly impacted their pupils' confidence and oracy skills, both inside and outside the classroom.



THE YEAR AHEAD

NATIONAL IMPACT

In 2023-2024, there are some key issues on which we believe all children need to have their voice heard. We will be making our resources and voting platform free to any school that would like to be involved, and have some key partners lined up who are eager to hear and act upon the results.



BULLYING



INTERNET SAFETY



MENTAL HEALTH

To mark Anti-Bullying Week in November 2023, we will be working with the Anti-Bullying Alliance, the Co-op and the Peer Action Collective on the issue of bullying and how schools handle it.

In February, we will be working with Childnet ahead of Safer Internet Day and looking at adults' involvement in keeping children safe online. We also plan to get the views of teachers and parents for a 360 look at this.

We will also be working with Co-op and Mind to look at mental health in young people ahead of Time to Talk Day.



IMPACT IN SCHOOLS

And the 2023-24 changes don't stop there: for the first time, we will be looking at the efficacy of VotesforSchools in developing key skills, attributes, and attitudes in young people. In doing so, schools will be more confident in how VotesforSchools positively impacts their students, equipping them with crucial tools for life beyond the classroom.

In a project designed in partnership with ImpactEd, we will be surveying a select group of newly-subscribed schools to assess the impact on individual students, teachers, and senior leaders.

Each group will be surveyed on how VotesforSchools has impacted their lives. For students, it will mainly focus on skills and attributes, and for teachers and senior leaders it will cover wellbeing and workload.

To get involved, please contact Penny, our Head of Partnerships & Impact, at penny@votesforschools.com.



ImpactEd

We work alongside some amazing organisations. Thank you to some of our friends who have helped us this year.

**EMPATHY
WEEK**



British
Future...



**COUNTER
TERRORISM
POLICING**



**educate.against.
~~hate~~**



/together



n|g|a | National
Governance
Association

**GREATER
LONDON
AUTHORITY**

PiXL



UK YOUTH

tootoot)))



**The Linking
Network**



**UK
Parliament**



**THE POLITICS
PROJECT**

**GLOBAL
EQUALITY
COLLECTIVE**



**For more information about this report, or to
support our work around youth voice, please
contact:**

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