

## Friends and foes: Most Canadians say Ottawa should approach China as a 'threat' or 'enemy'

*Views of U.S. warm from 2020 lows; three-in-five Canadians view America favourably*

**March 10, 2023** – In the aftermath of [a Chinese test of Canadian airspace](#), and, alleged attempts of interference in [the last two Canadian elections](#), there are few in this country willing to give the Chinese government in Beijing the benefit of the doubt when it comes to bilateral relations.

This, according to new data from the non-profit Angus Reid Institute, which finds a majority of Canadians say their federal government should approach the Beijing regime either as a threat to its interests (40%) or, worse, an enemy (22%).

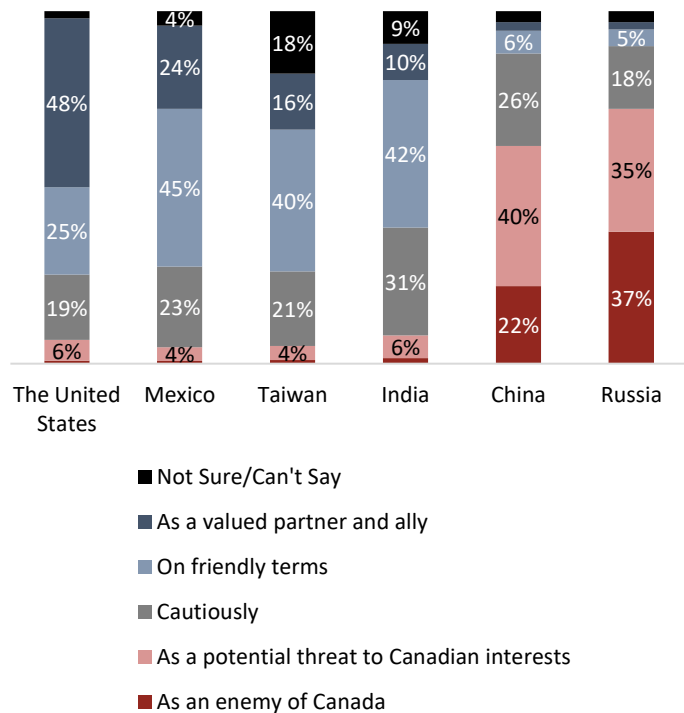
Among countries surveyed, only Russia generates a more hostile response. Three-quarters (72%) say that country should be viewed as a threat or enemy in the wake of its ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

It may be the case that the Russia-Ukraine war, alongside recent developments in the Canada-China relationship, have affected Canadians' worldview as they assess the international arena.

Indeed, as Canadians appraisal of China remains at near record low – 12 per cent say they view the country favourably – positivity towards the United States has rebounded. Three-in-five (58%) Canadians have a positive impression of the U.S., only the second time since 2016 that country's favourability has been that high. This is likely a feather in the cap of President Joe Biden, as he reportedly prepares for his first visit to Canada since a 2020 election victory.

And though two-in-five (39%) are more negative in their assessment of Canada's southern neighbour, the vast majority (73%) of Canadians believe the U.S. should be viewed at least as a friend (25%) if not as a valued ally (48%).

**From an overall point of view, how do you think the Canadian government should approach each of the following countries: (All respondents, n=1,622)**



### **METHODOLOGY:**

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from Feb. 23-25, 2023 among a representative randomized sample of 1,622 Canadian adults who are members of [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

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### More Key Findings:

- Three-in-five (60%) past CPC voters say they view China “very unfavourably.” Half (47%) of past Liberal voters, and approaching two-in-five past NDP (37%) and Bloc Québécois (36%) voters say the same.
- Three-in-five (62%) Canadians view Taiwan favourably, as the self-governing island continues to be a source of political tension for China.

### About ARI

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

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#### Part One: Assigning favour

##### **Majorities view Taiwan, U.S., Mexico favourably; China, Russia unfavourably**

The international landscape has shifted seismically in the last year. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has created a clear fracture line in international relations in what has increasingly become a world divided between [two superpowers, China and the United States](#).

Canada continues to be firmly aligned with the superpower to its south. Canadians as well show clear preferences for their country’s chief ally. Three-in-five (58%) view the United States favourably, in the wake of [the two countries’ co-operation](#) to down the various flying objects after the initial alarm over a [Chinese spy balloon](#), and in advance of U.S. President Joe Biden’s [first official visit to Canada](#).

Mexico, Canada’s other partner in the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), the successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is viewed favourably by three-in-five (57%) Canadians, too. Canadians are split in their view of India (44% favourable, 43% unfavourable), the largest home country for [recent immigrants](#) to Canada.

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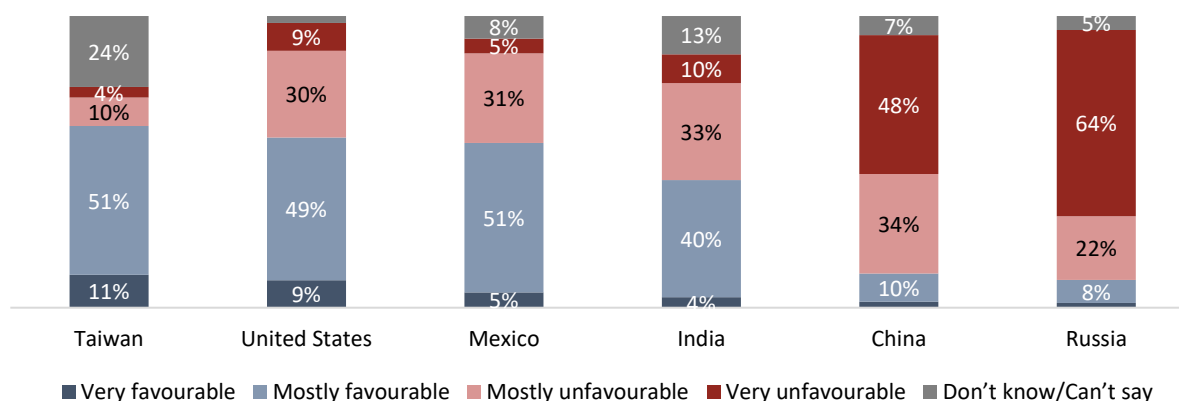
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At the other end of the spectrum are China and Russia, viewed favourably by one-in-eight (12%) and one-in-ten respectively (10%). Both countries are viewed very unfavourably by large portions of Canadians. In the case of China, half (48%) hold very negative views of the country. Two-thirds (64%) say the same of Russia, as that country's invasion of Ukraine continues into its second year.

Perhaps related to Canadians' negative views of China, Taiwan is held in high regard by a majority of Canadians. Three-in-five (62%) say they have favourable views of the self-governing island, which China claims as part of its territory and is the source of [much political tension](#).

**Overall, would you say you have a favourable or unfavourable view of each of the following countries?  
(All respondents, n=1,622)**



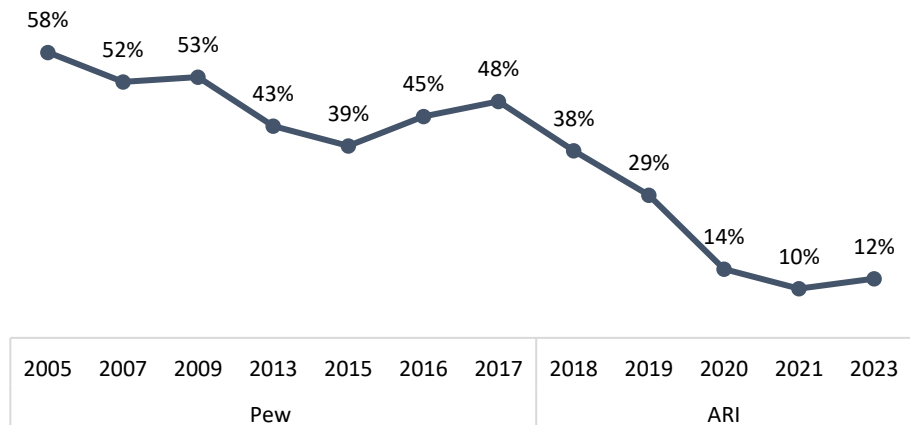
**Favourability of China stays near record low**

As recently as 2017, half (48%) of Canadians held favourable views of China. China's detention of Canadian citizens [Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig](#) in December 2018 preceded a period of steep decline in Canadian positivity towards China. Though that matter resolved with the [two Michaels' release](#) after more than 1,000 days in Chinese prison, recent events have apparently done little to elevate Canadian opinion:

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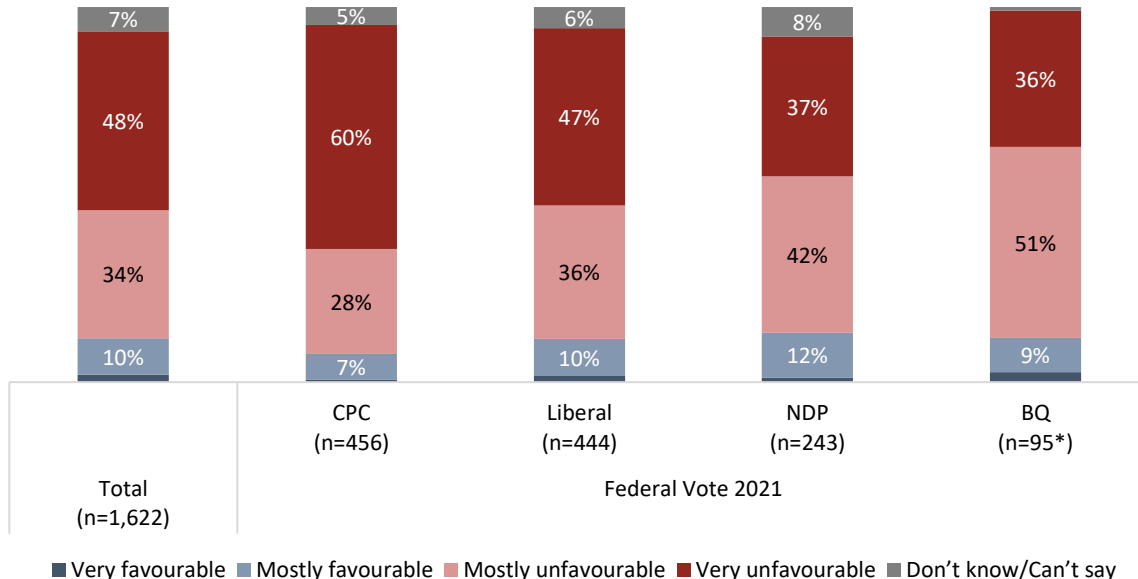
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**Percentage of Canadians who hold a favourable view of China**



As more details emerge in [allegations of potential election interference](#) which potentially harmed their party in the last two elections, three-in-five (60%) past Conservative voters hold very negative views of China. However, majorities of all groups of past voters view China mostly or very unfavourably:

**Overall, would you say you have a favourable or unfavourable view of China?**



*\*Smaller sample size, interpret with caution*

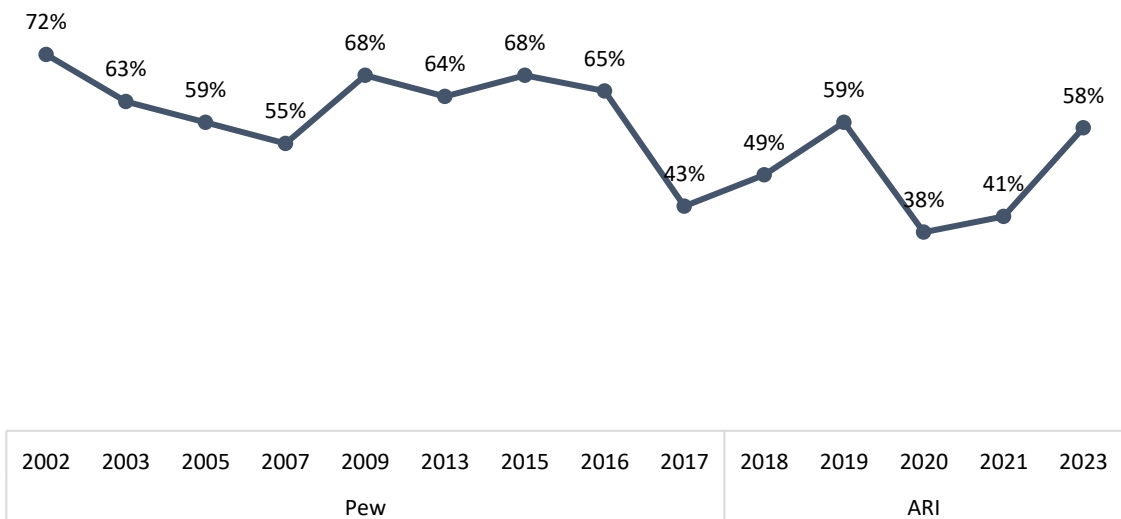
**U.S. favourability rebounds**

The United States has been a perpetual ally to Canada, but in recent years, Canadians' appraisal of the superpower to the south has varied. After the election of former U.S. President Donald Trump in 2016,

less than a majority of Canadians had a favourable view of the United States for the first time this century in 2017.

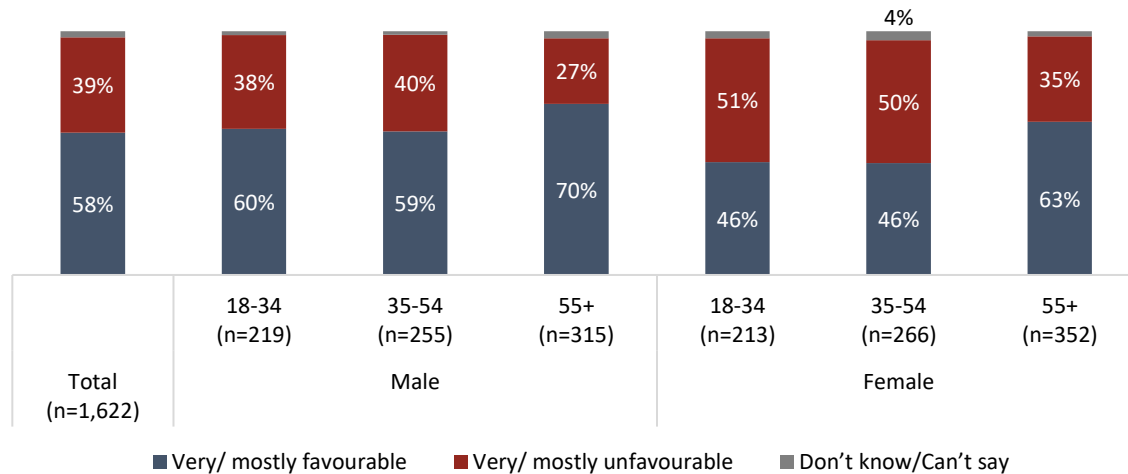
Favourable views grew in 2019, as [progress was made towards the USMCA](#), which was eventually ratified in 2020, and congress began walking the path towards [the first impeachment of Trump](#). However, views trended negative again during the pandemic, as the U.S. [struggled to contain COVID-19](#). With the virus on the backburner, and the shared threat of Russia and China simmering away in front, a majority of Canadians once again view their close military ally positively:

**Percentage of Canadians who hold a favourable view of the United States**



Women of all ages are more likely to have a negative impression of the United States than men. For women under the age of 55, more say they view the U.S. unfavourably than favourably:

Overall, would you say you have a favourable or unfavourable view of the United States?



**Part Two: Friends or foes?**

**Two-in-five say Canada should view China as potential threat; one-in-five as an enemy**

Whether or not Canadians view a country unfavourably does not necessarily mean they believe Canada should approach them in a hostile manner. Case in point – the United States. Two-in-five (39%) Canadians as noted above view that country unfavourably. But few (7%) say Canada should approach its southern neighbour as an enemy or potential threat. Instead, most say relations should be friendly, including half (48%) who say Canada should view the U.S. as a valued partner.

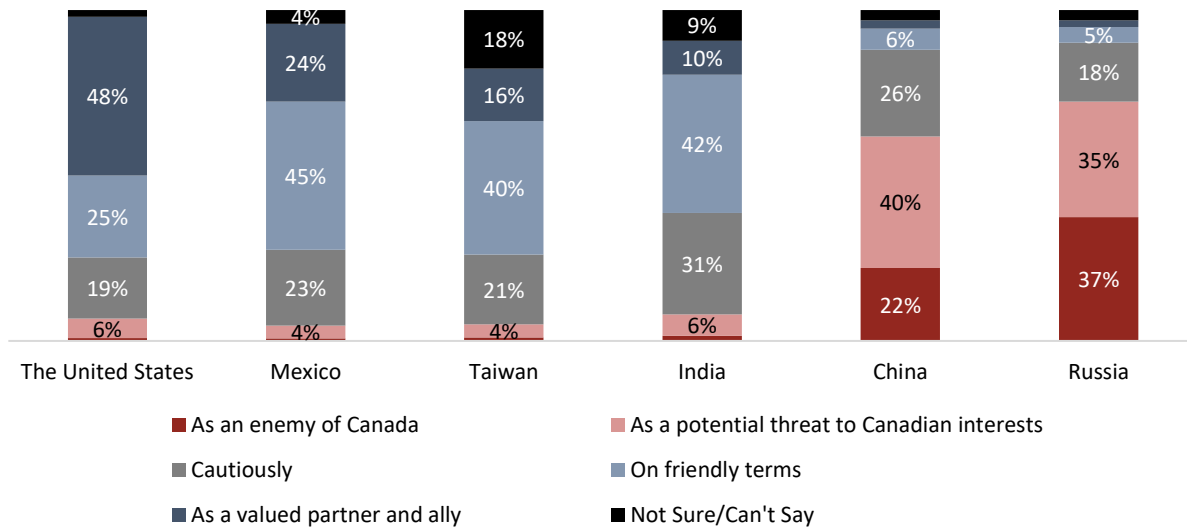
Canadians have less enthusiasm for Mexico and Taiwan, but majorities (68%, 56% respectively) believe those countries should be approached on friendly terms. Half (52%) say the same of India.

Few Canadians show affection in this way to China and Russia. A plurality (40%) say Canada should consider China a threat to its interests. One-in-five (22%) go further and say Canada should consider China its enemy. More (37%) say Canada should view Russia as a foe:

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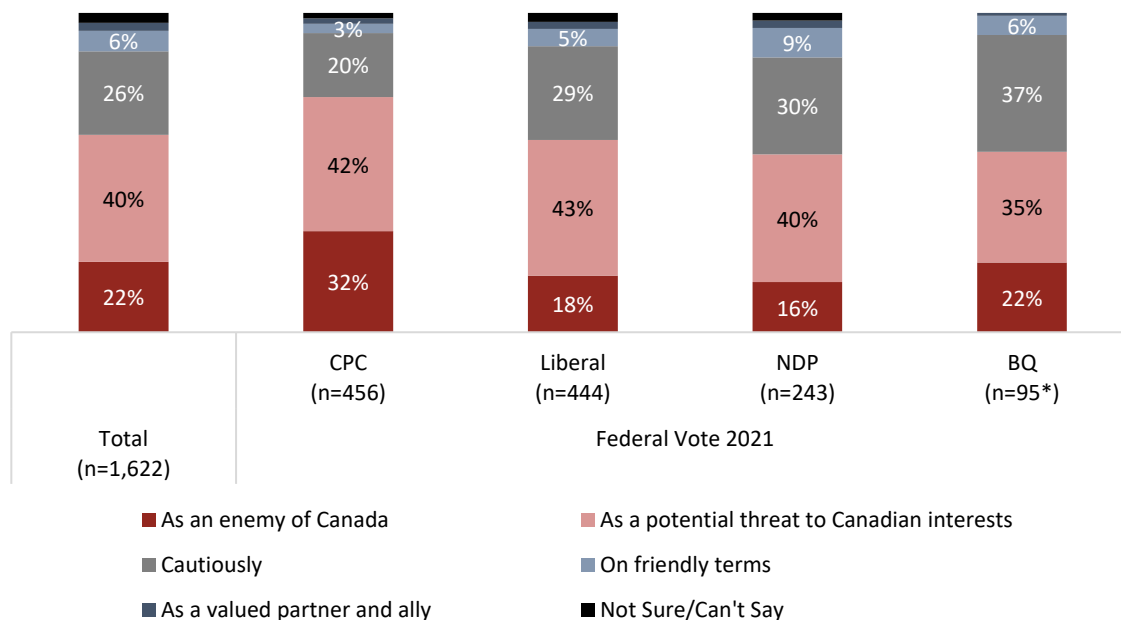
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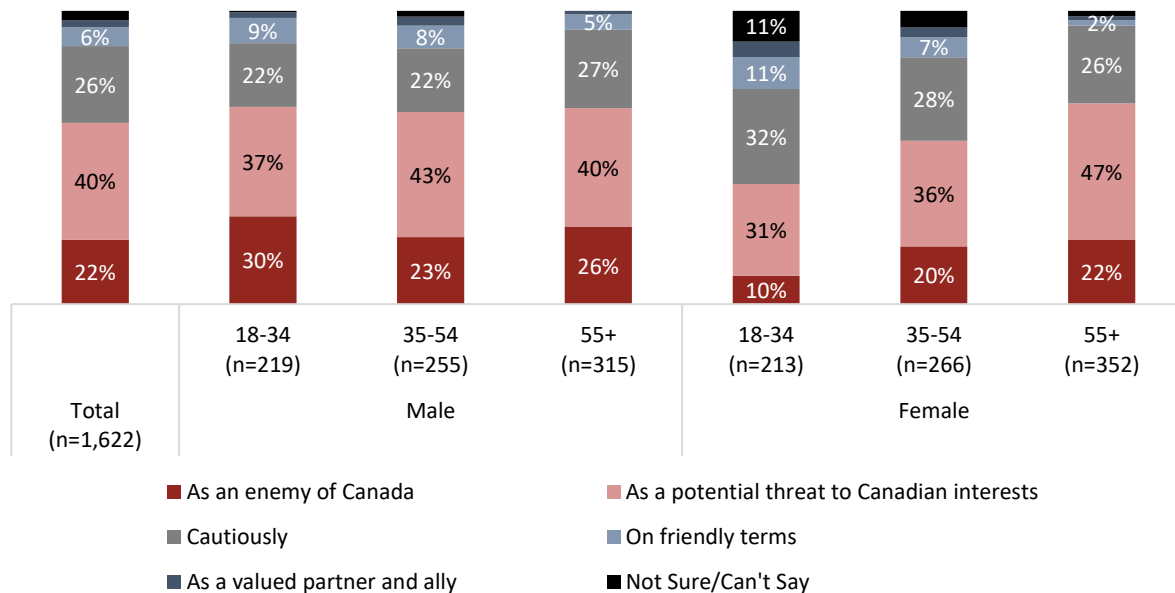
Majorities of political supporters of all stripes believe Canada should approach China as a threat or worse. But it is past Conservative voters who are most likely to say China should be viewed as an enemy:

**From an overall point of view, how do you think the Canadian government should approach China**



For all age and gender demographics, those who believe China should be approached as a threat or an enemy outnumber those who would approach with caution or amicably, except women aged 18- to 34-years-old:

**From an overall point of view, how do you think the Canadian government should approach China**



*For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).*

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