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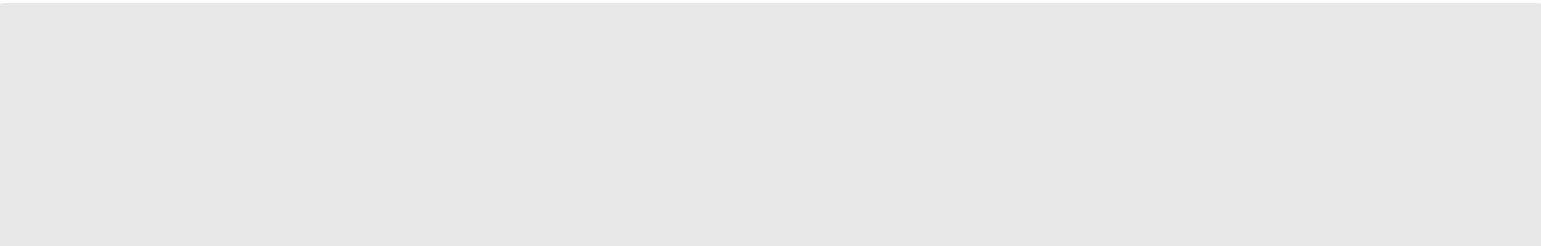
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Fact Checks

› Travel

Could U.S. Airlines Start Weighing Passengers?

"The scale readout should remain hidden from public view," reads an FAA document.

By

Jessica Lee

Published 19 May 2021

Image via [Getty Images](#)

Claim

U.S. airlines could start weighing passengers before boarding flights.

Rating

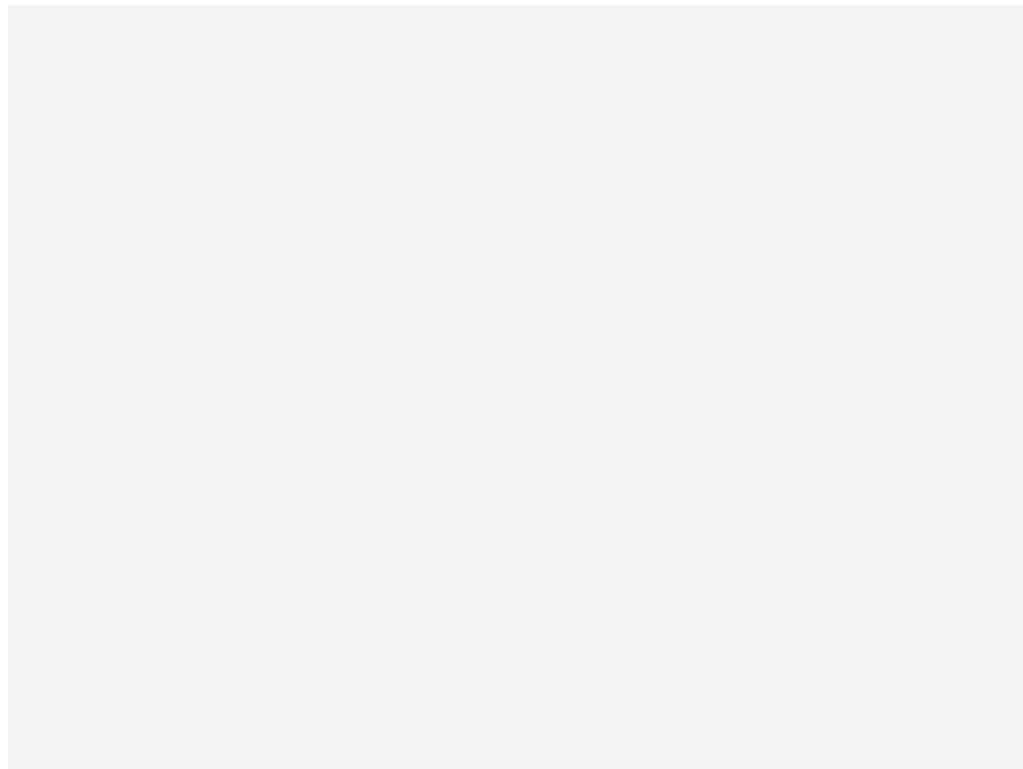


True

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Origin

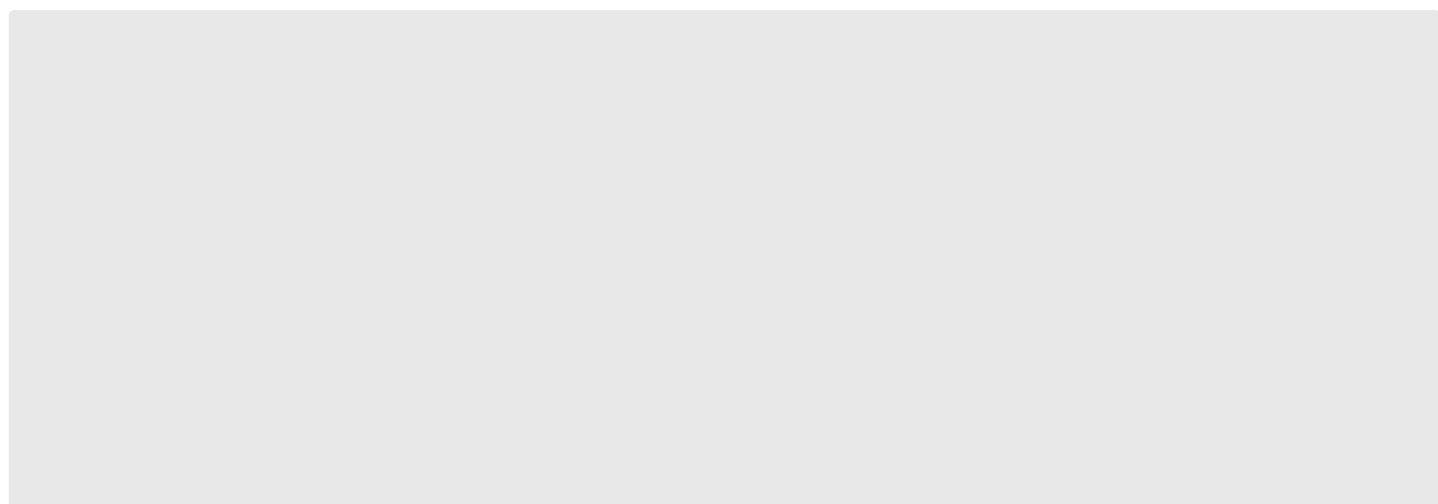
In spring 2021, Snopes became aware of [reports](#) alleging U.S. airlines could start weighing passengers before they board flights to ensure aircrafts maintain a safe weight in the sky.



The headlines were true. Roughly two years earlier, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) — the government agency that regulates all aviation travel in the U.S.— proposed new rules for airlines to calculate aircrafts' weight and balance, potentially replacing outdated numbers.

Snopes obtained the official 58-page advisory detailing the changes here.

In short, the proposal said airline companies previously considered flights' total mass — including the cabin, cockpit, passengers, crew, baggage, fuel, and all machinery — using average weights.



However, as obesity rates trended upward over the years (see statistics [here](#) by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases), the FAA said there was a higher risk of error between passengers' actual weight and the averages on file.

AirInsight, an airline media organization, described [the issue](#) like this:

“Airlines are in the business of making money from payloads. To date, payloads have been fudged and averaged. Even if people have grown larger/heavier, passengers have managed to squeeze into seats and put up with growing discomfort.

“We have something coming that has not been seen before. The past averages are too imprecise for the FAA and they want tighter [weight and balance] numbers.”

To do that, the advisory provided all airline operators, such as Delta or Frontier, a framework for changing their boarding and flight procedures to recalculate aircrafts' weight.

For instance, under the FAA proposal, operators could design a random survey of customers at a handful of airports to determine an updated “average” total for specific routes. According to the advisory:

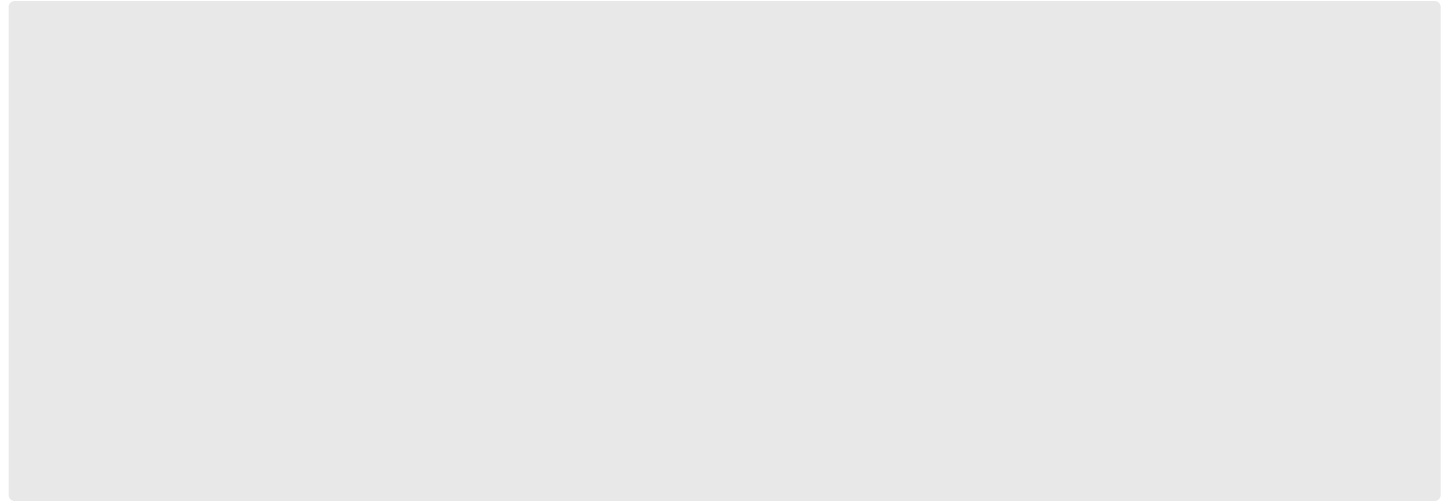
An operator should assign a sequential number to each item in a group (such as passengers waiting on a line or bag claim tickets). Then the operator randomly selects numbers and includes the item corresponding with the number in the sample. The operator repeats this process until it has obtained the minimum sample size. [...]

Elective Passenger Participation. Regardless of the sampling method used, an operator has the option of surveying each passenger and bag aboard the aircraft and should give a passenger the right to decline to participate in any passenger or bag weight survey. [...]

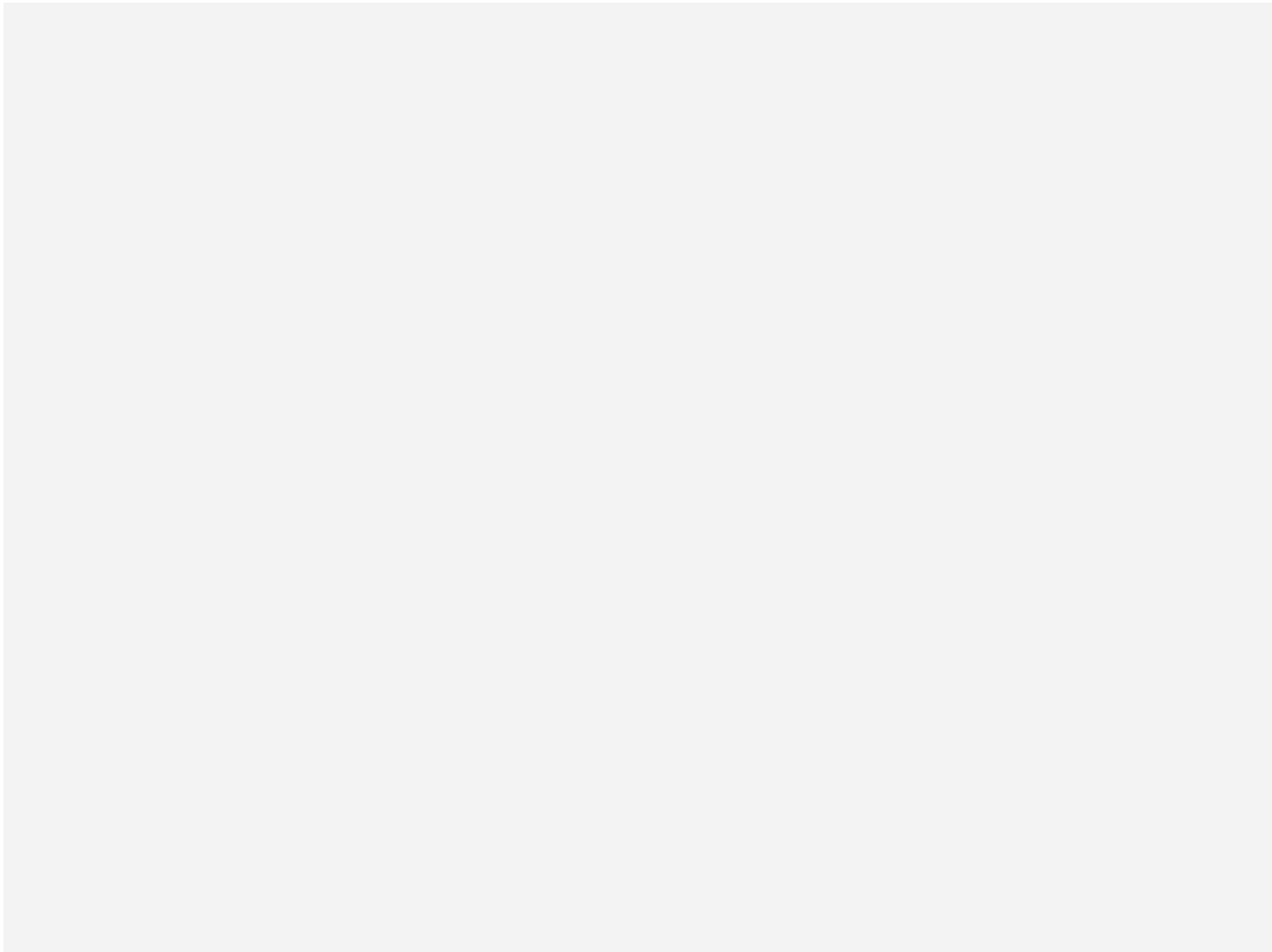
An operator that chooses to weigh passengers as part of a survey should take care to protect the privacy of passengers. The scale

readout should remain hidden from public view. An operator should ensure that any passenger weight data collected remains confidential.

In other words, passengers would have the right to decline stepping on a scale or sharing their weight if an airline worker asked them, and workers should attempt to keep people's weights private.



Besides a survey to gauge “average” weights, the FAA proposal also would allow operators to determine the actual weight of each flight by:



Considering that evidence, we rate this claim “True.”

According to a May 2021 report by [View From the Wing](#), a blog documenting airline trends, the FAA was preparing to finalize the new guidelines.

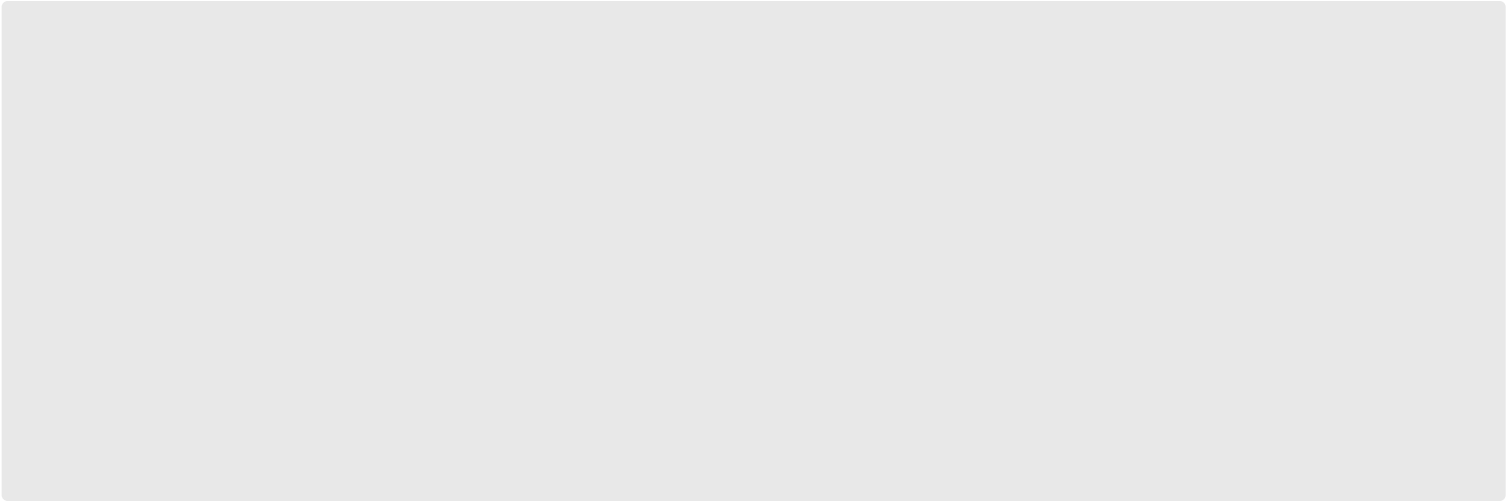
“While it’s foreign to the U.S., weighing passengers isn’t all that uncommon abroad,” author Gary Leff wrote. “I’ve even had to get on the scale myself. [...] On my first visit to the Maldives in 2012 I had to get on the scale at check-in. So did my wife, and – it appeared – every other foreigner.”

By

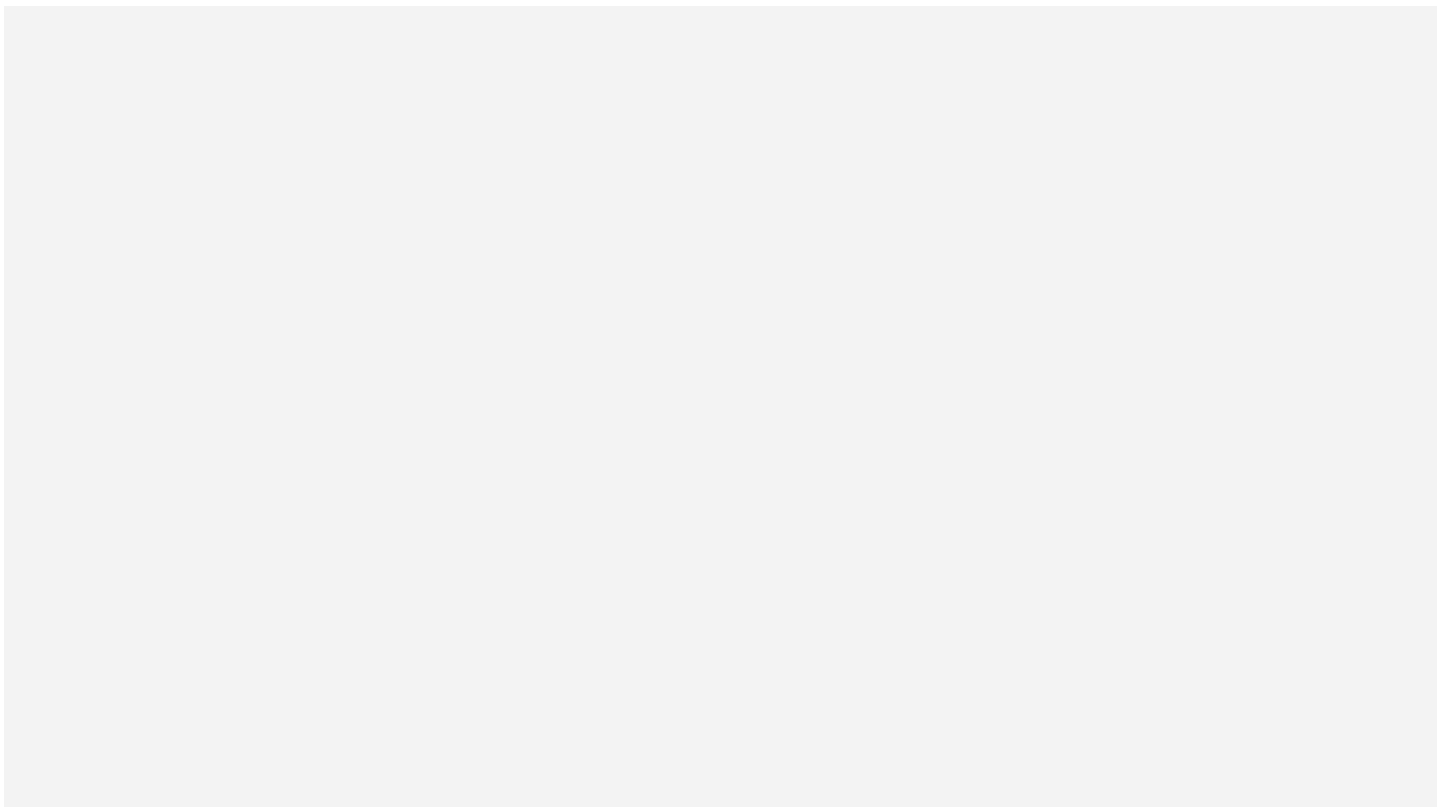
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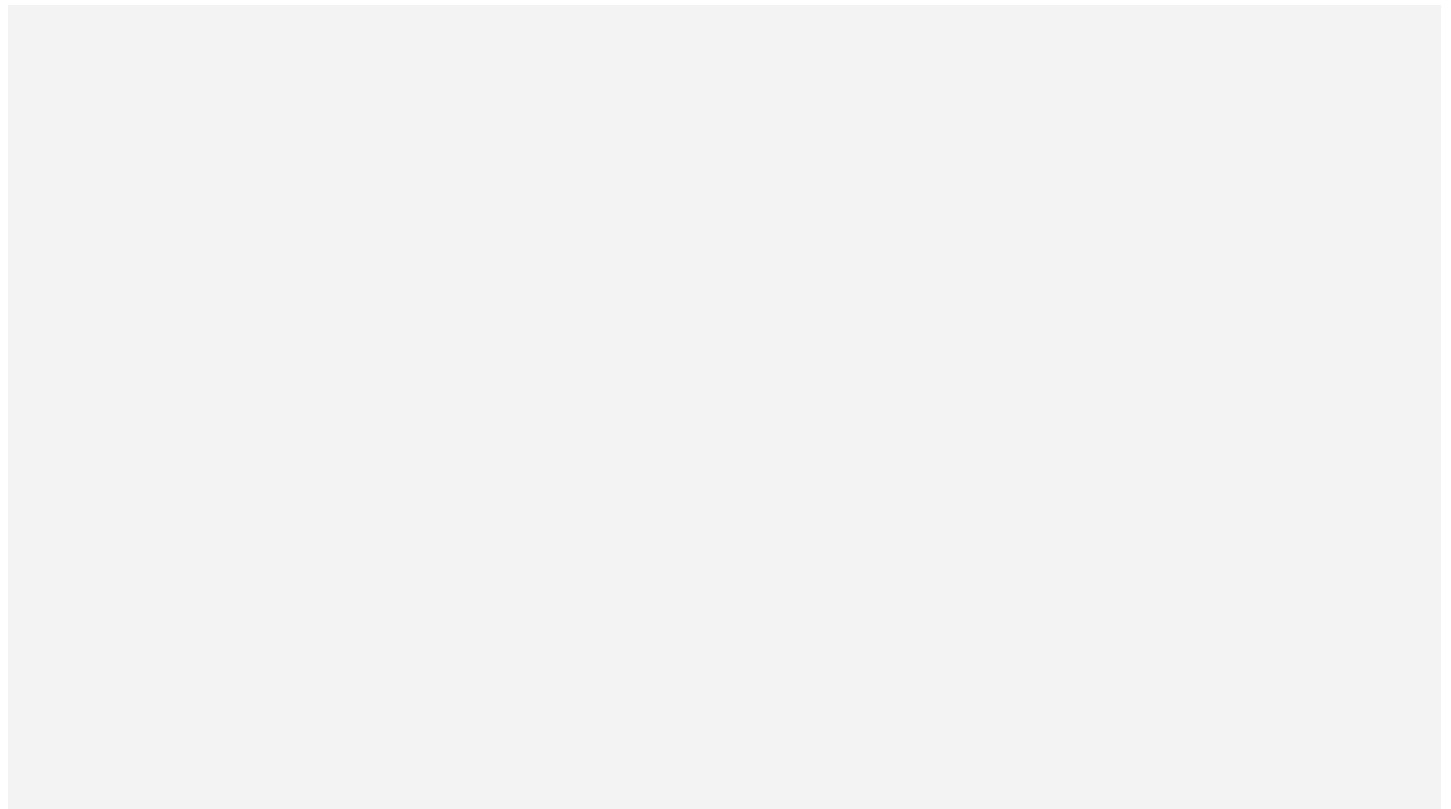
american airlines



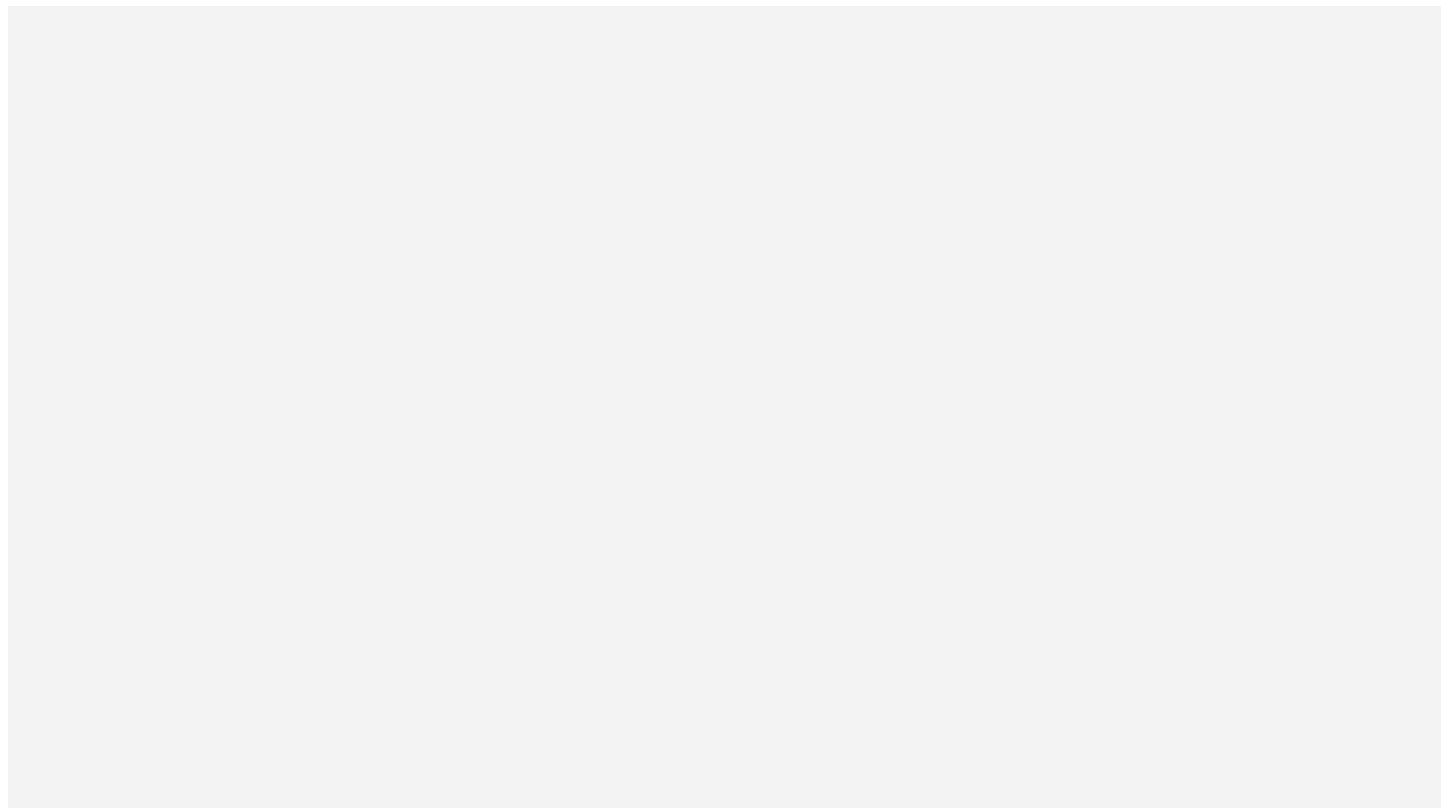
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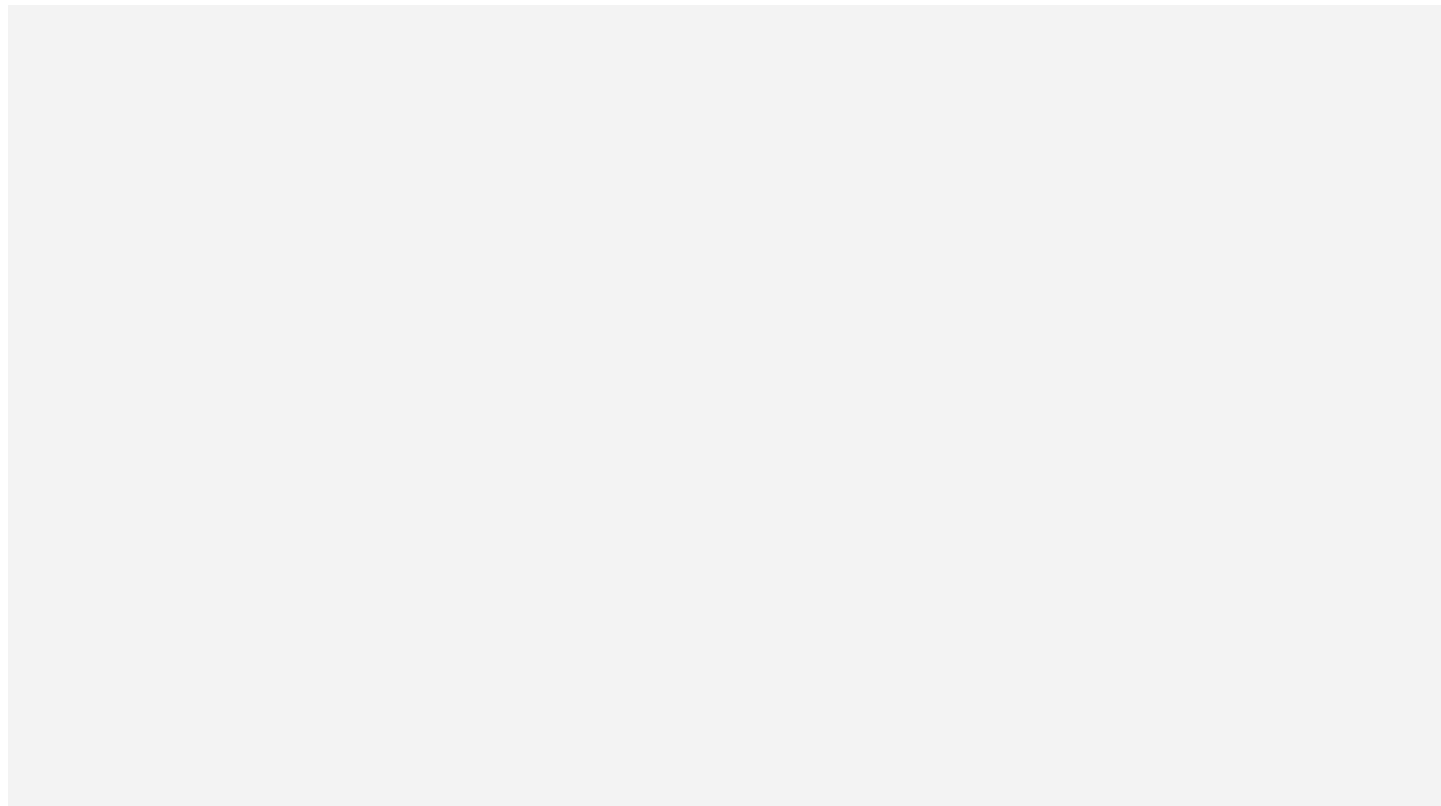
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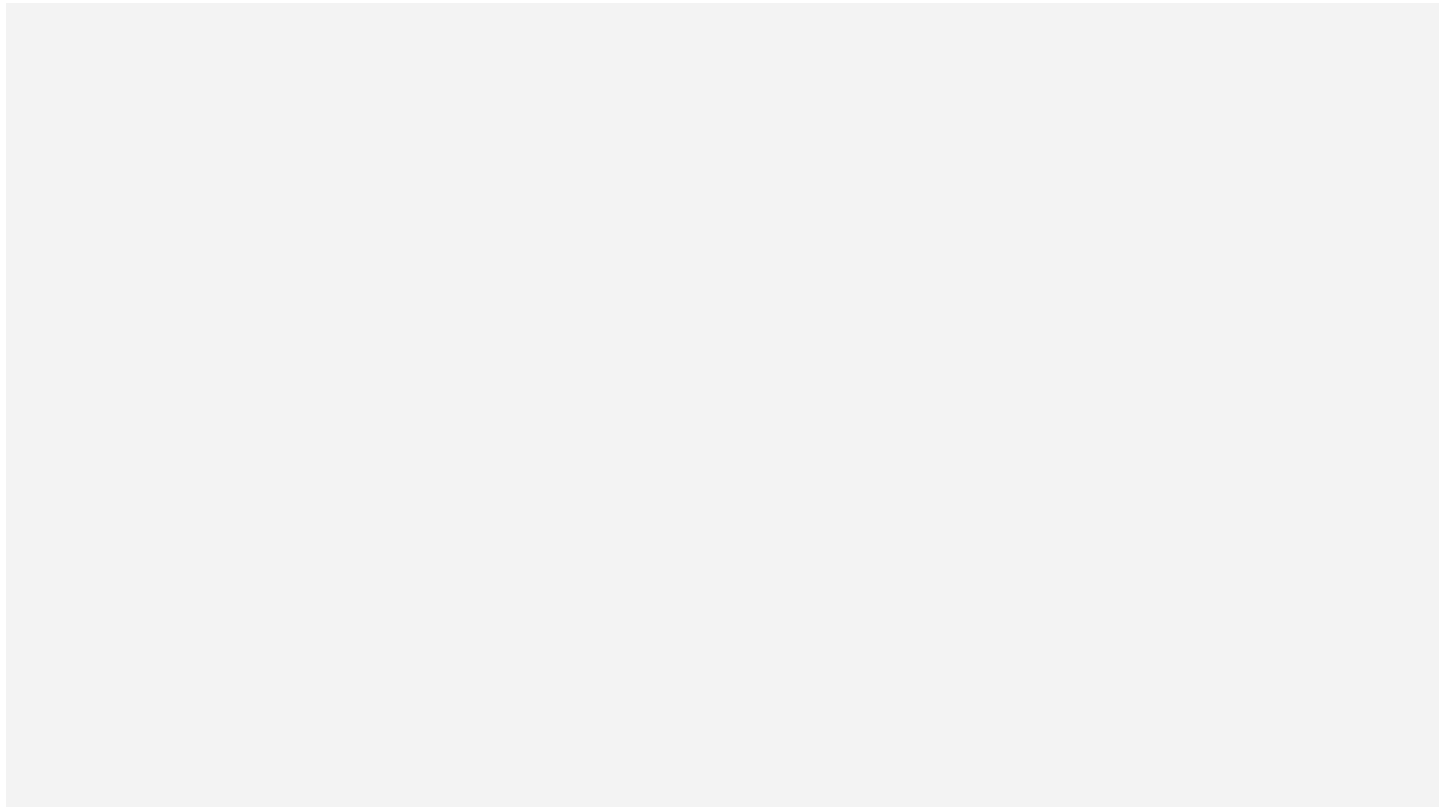
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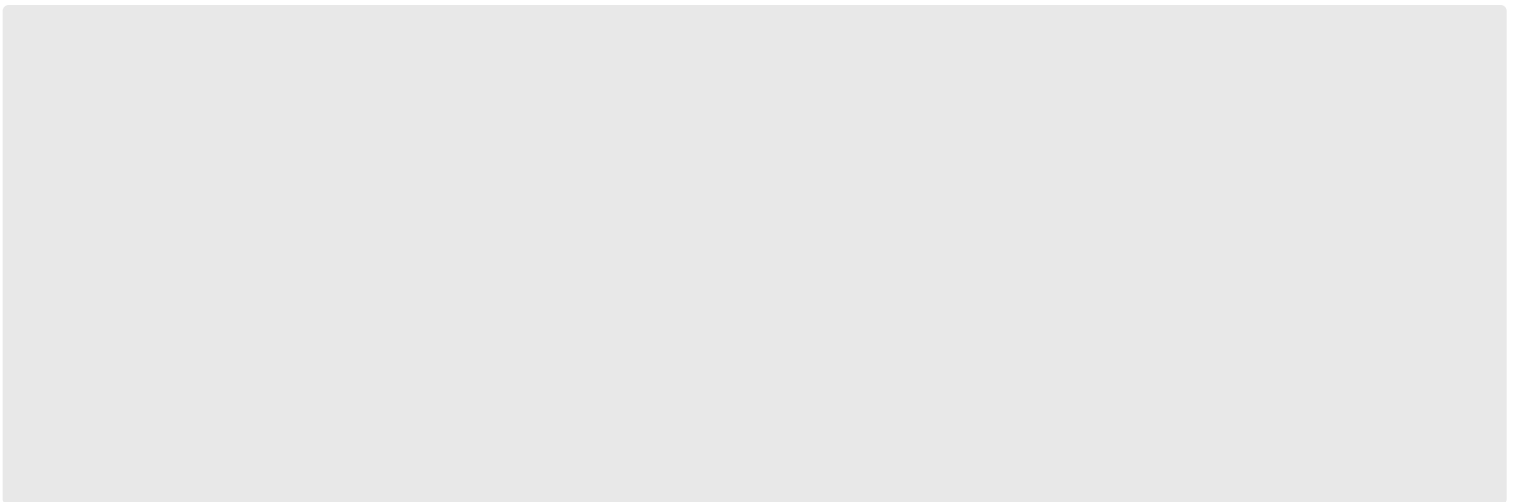


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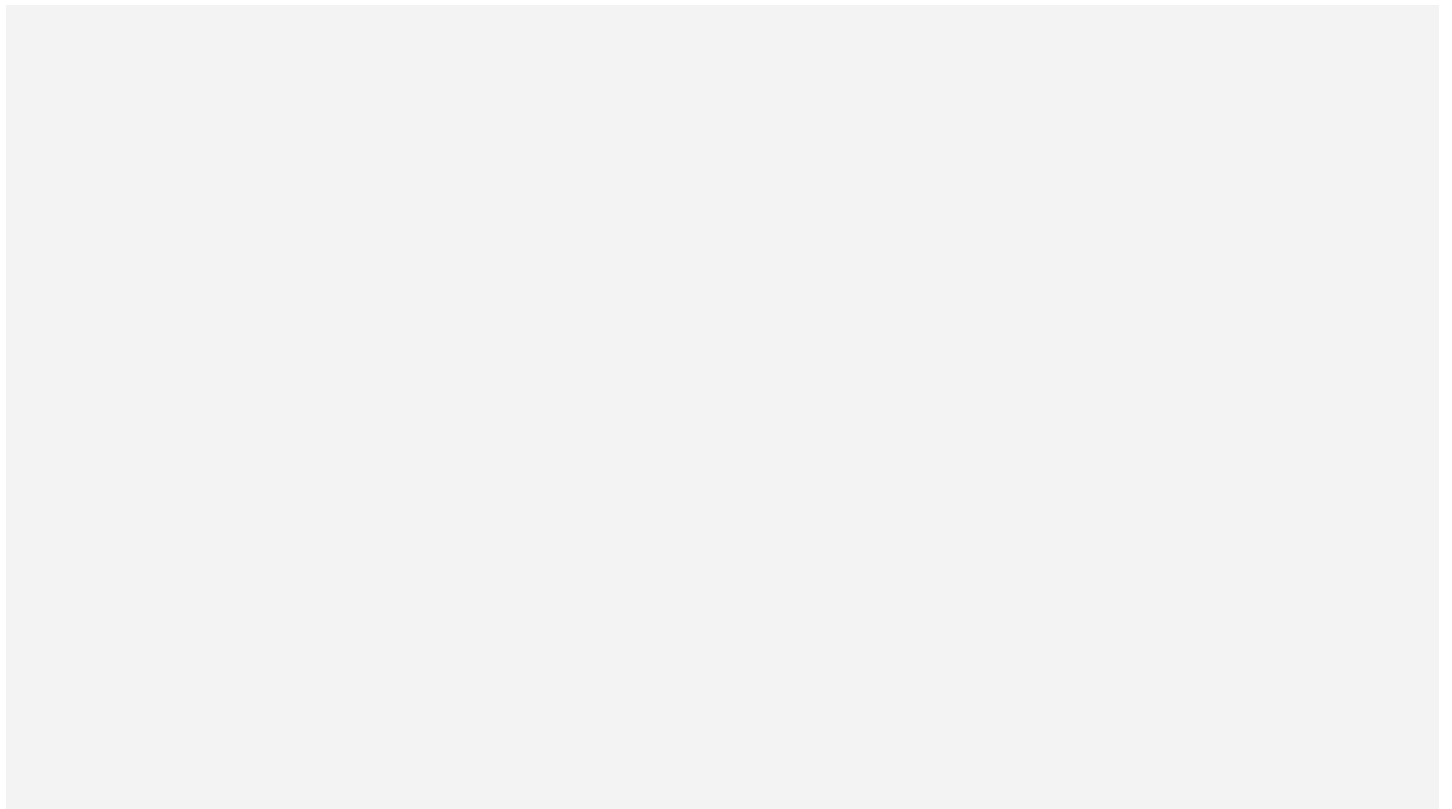


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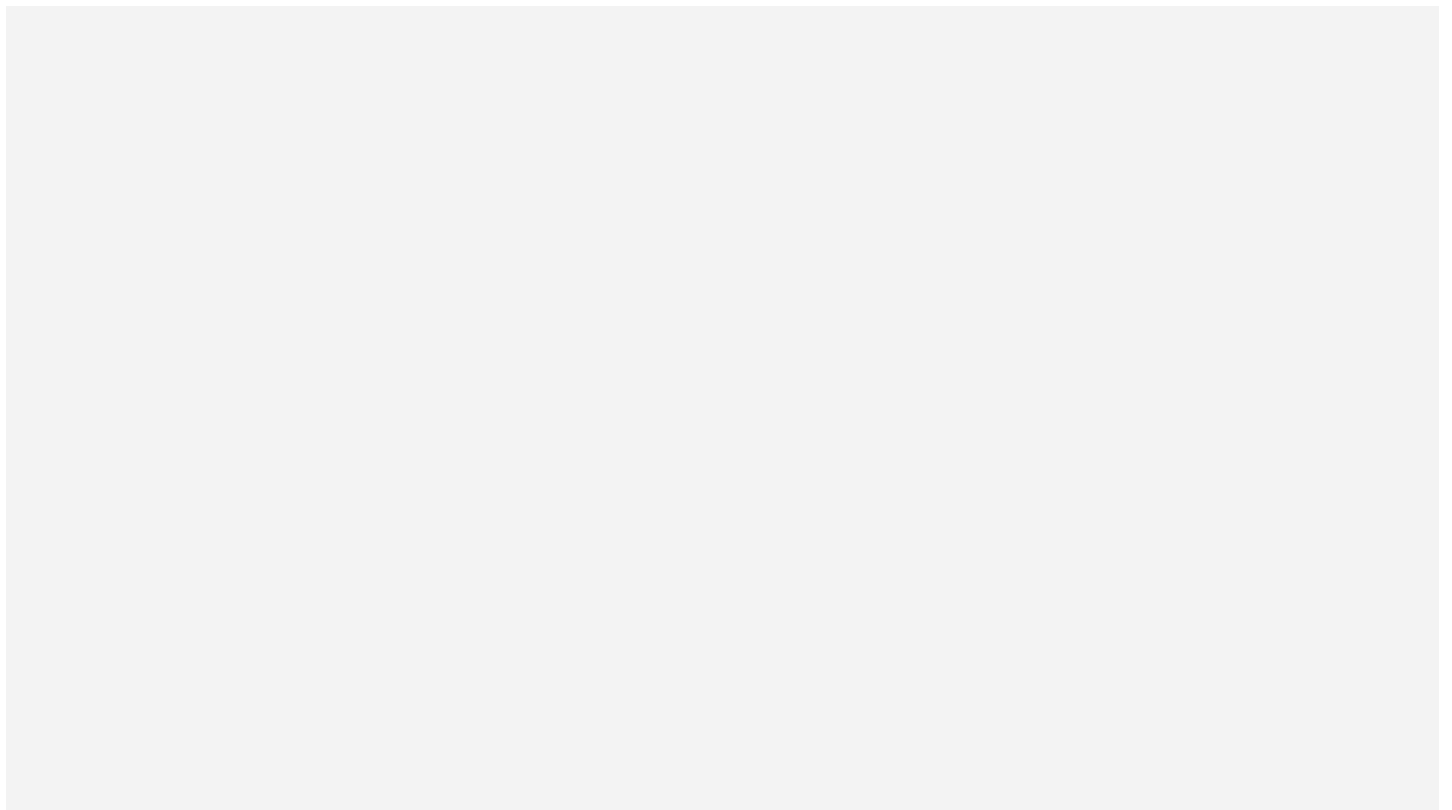
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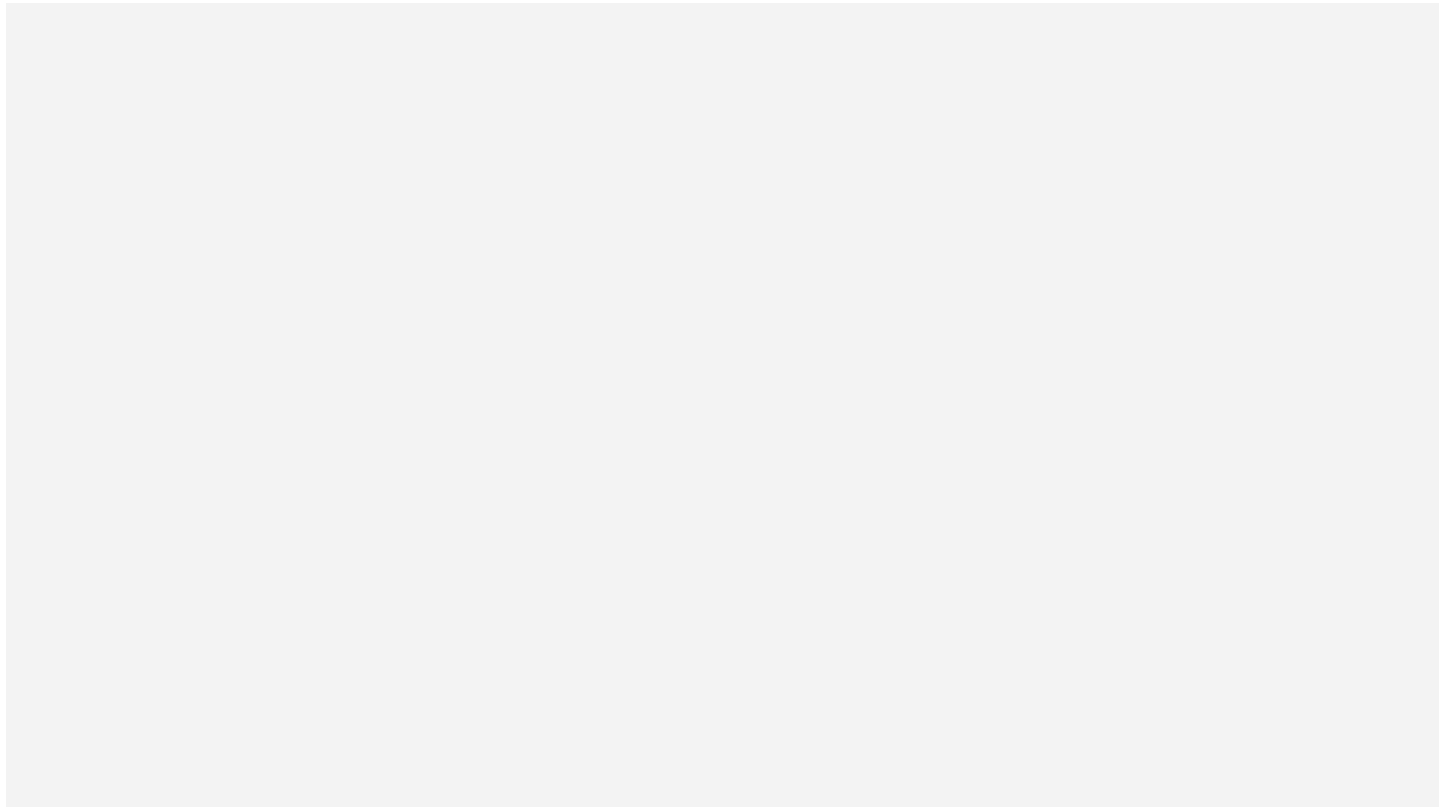
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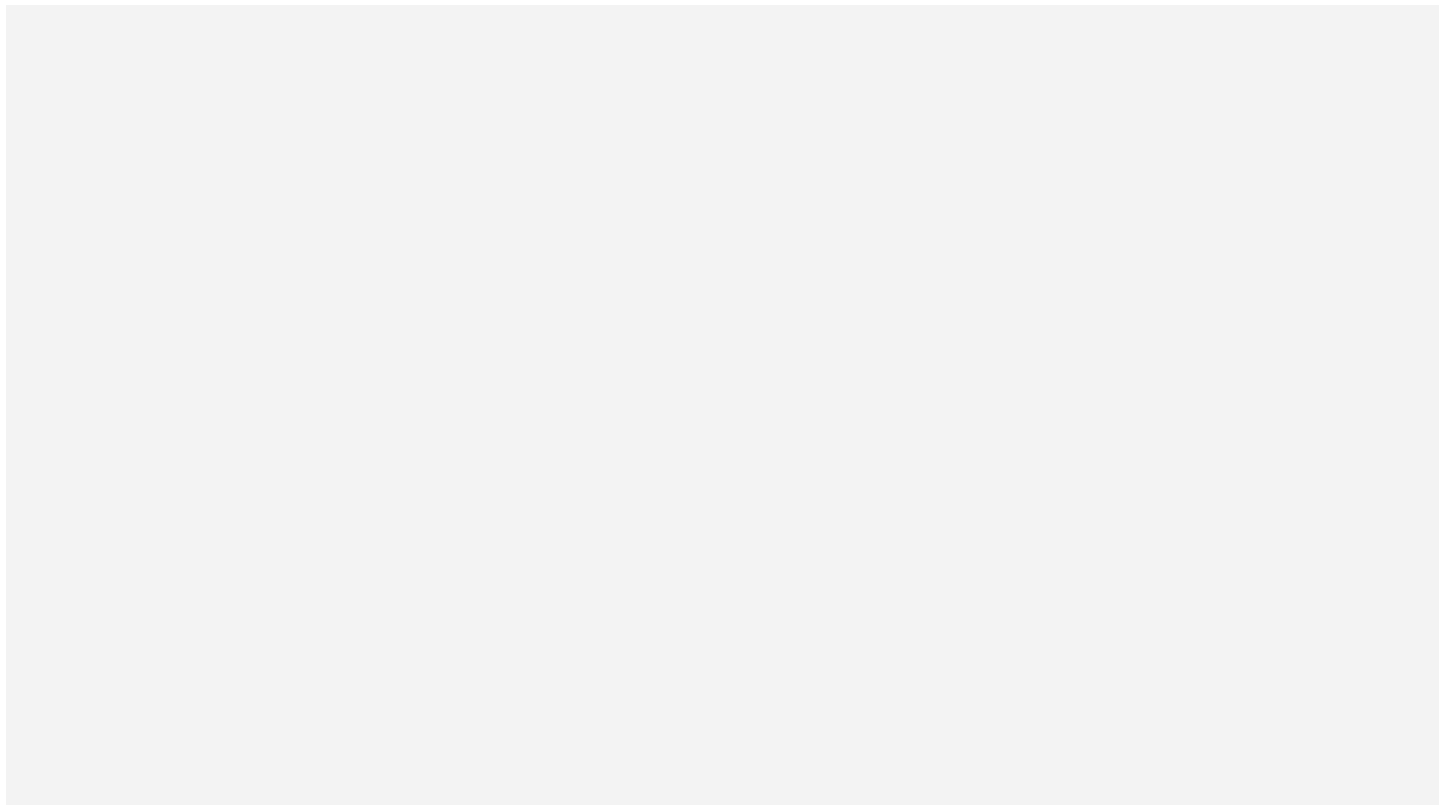
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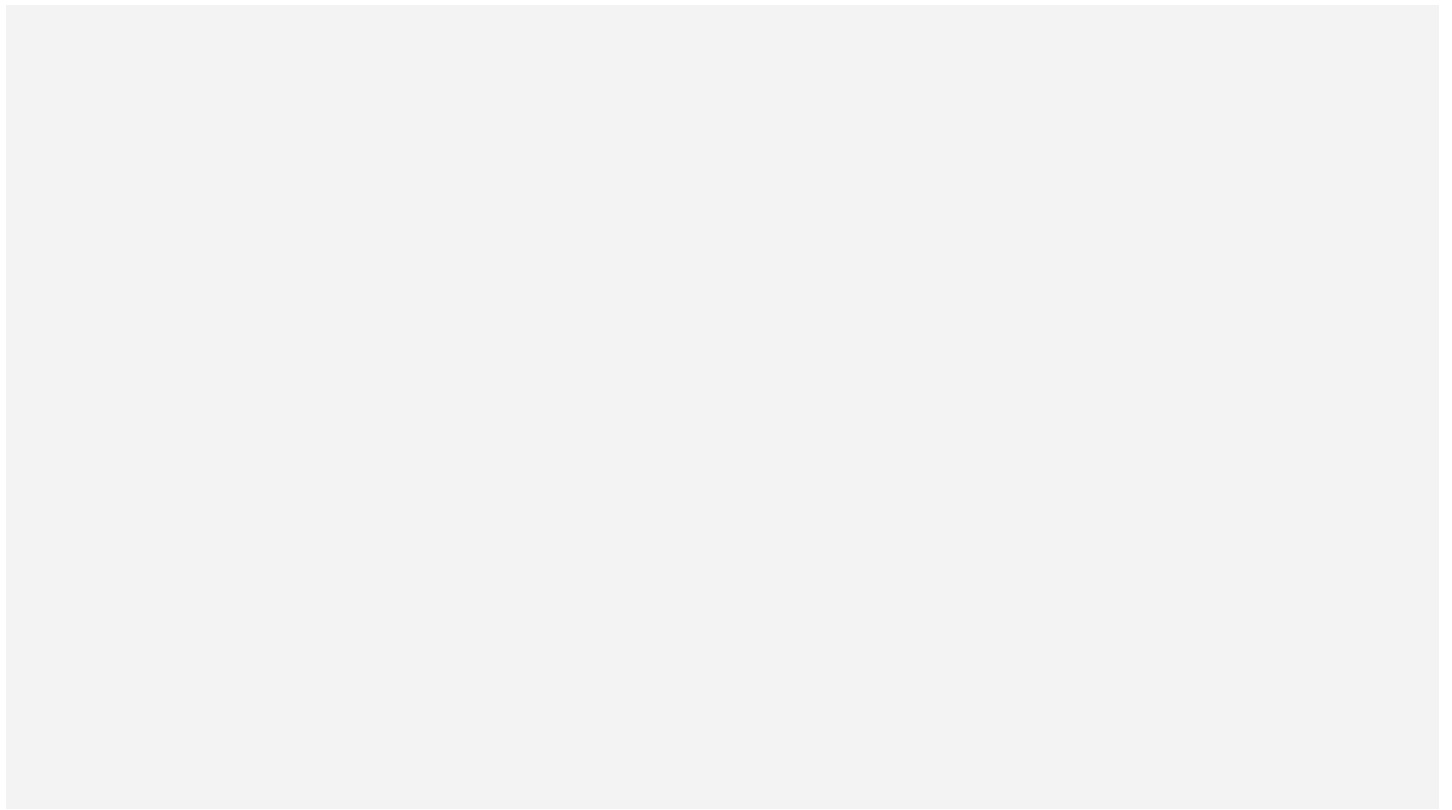
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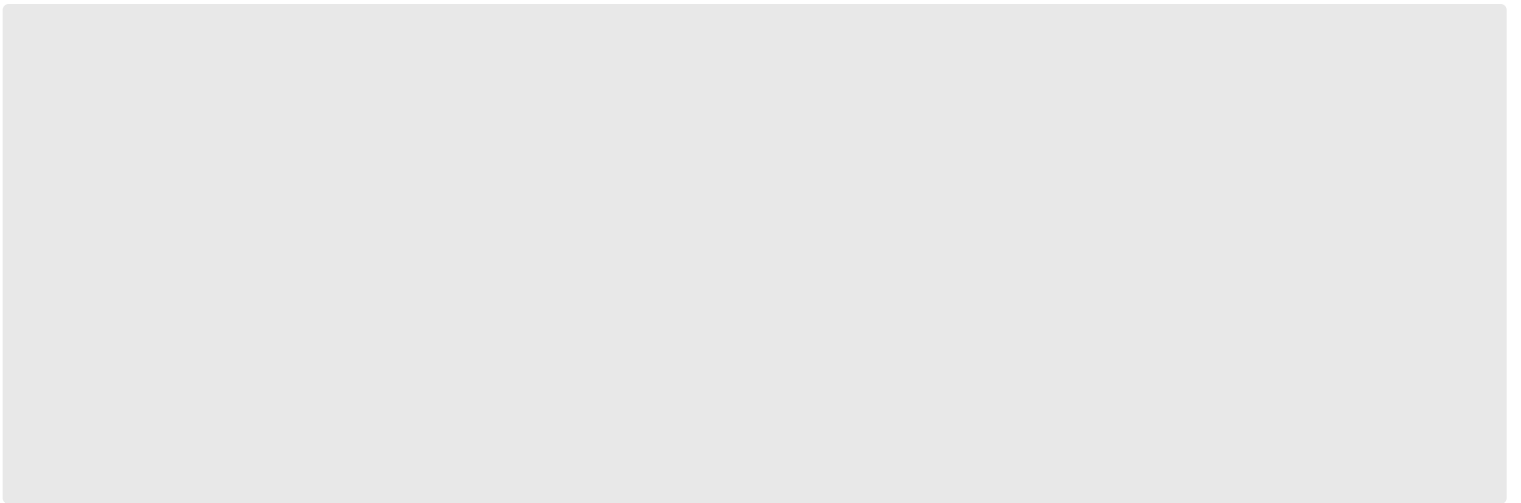


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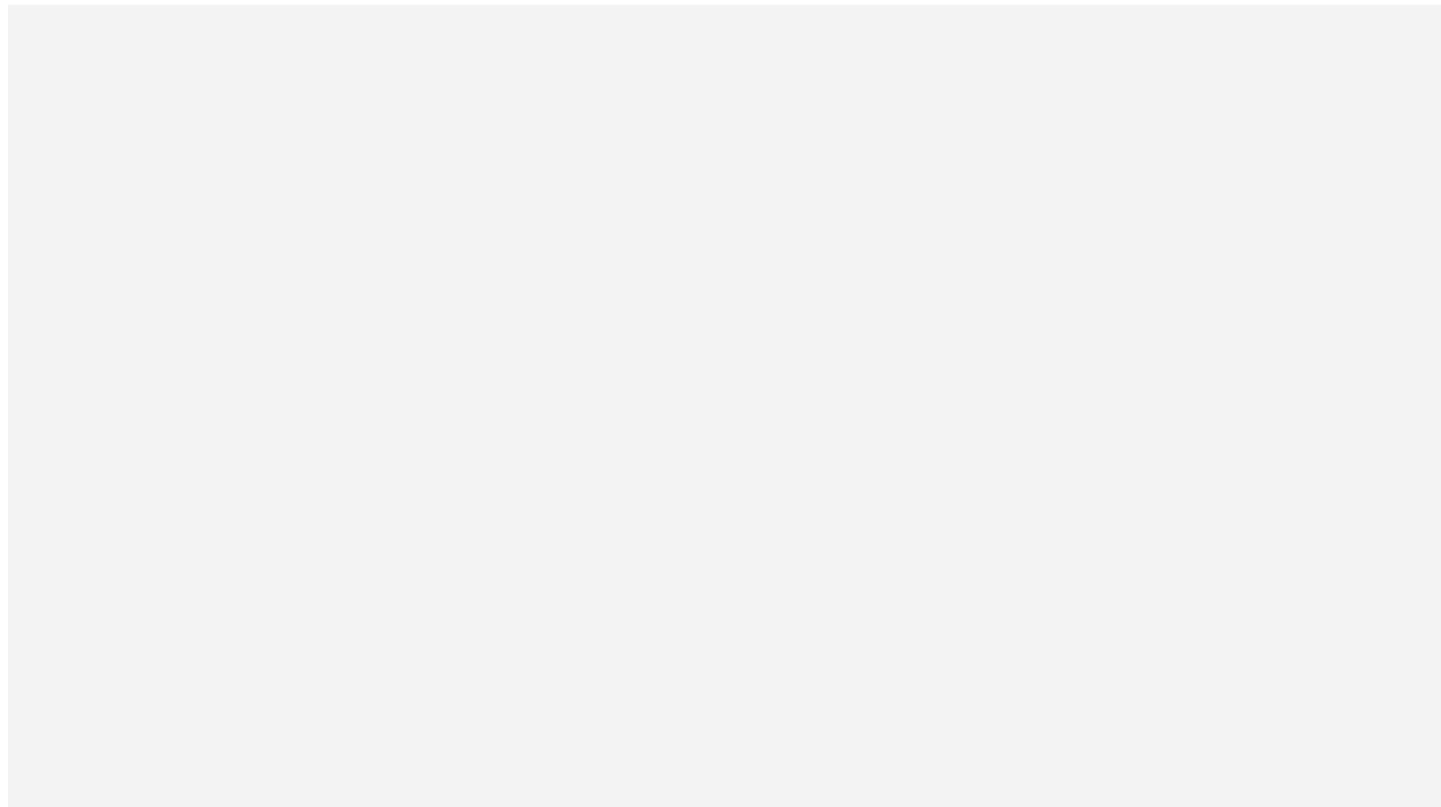


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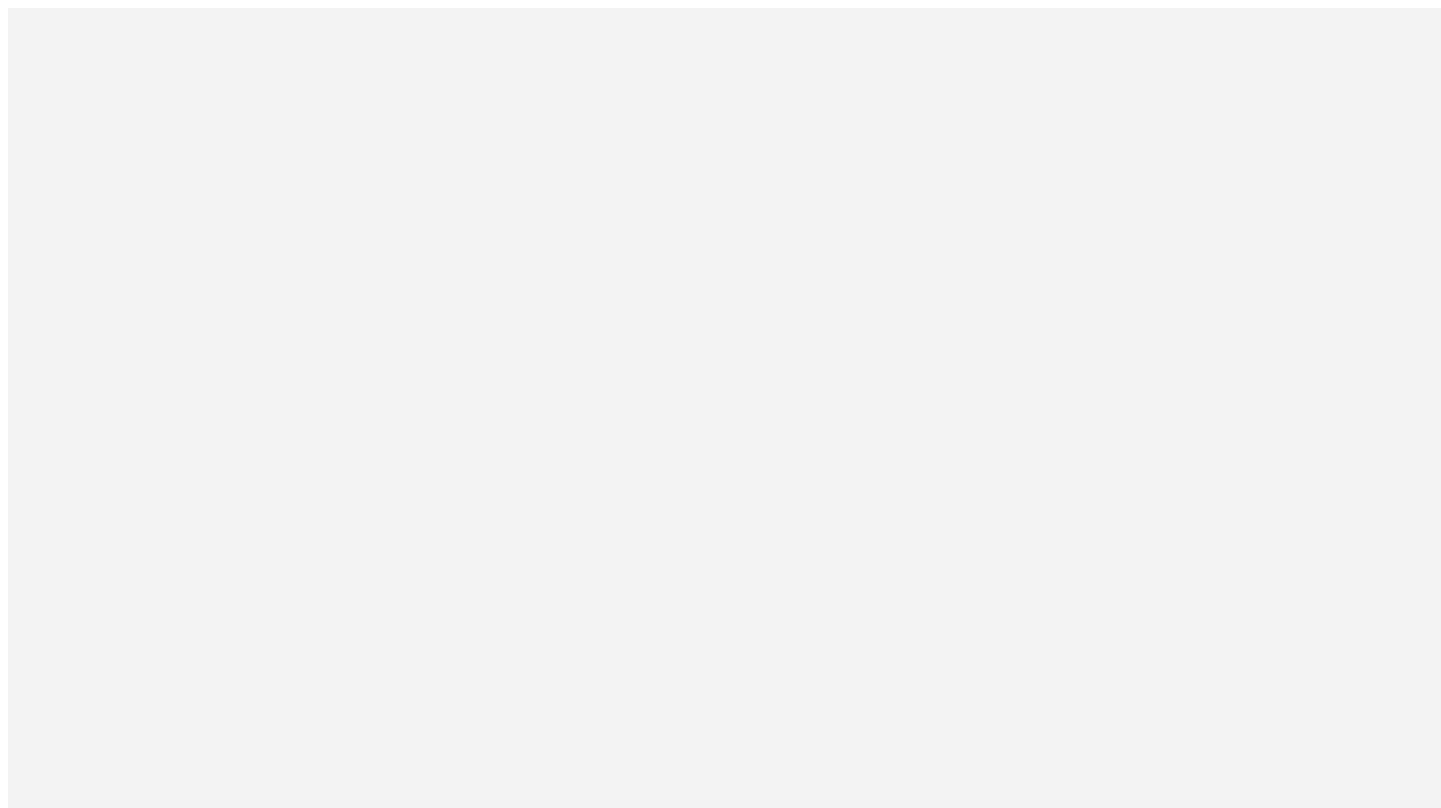
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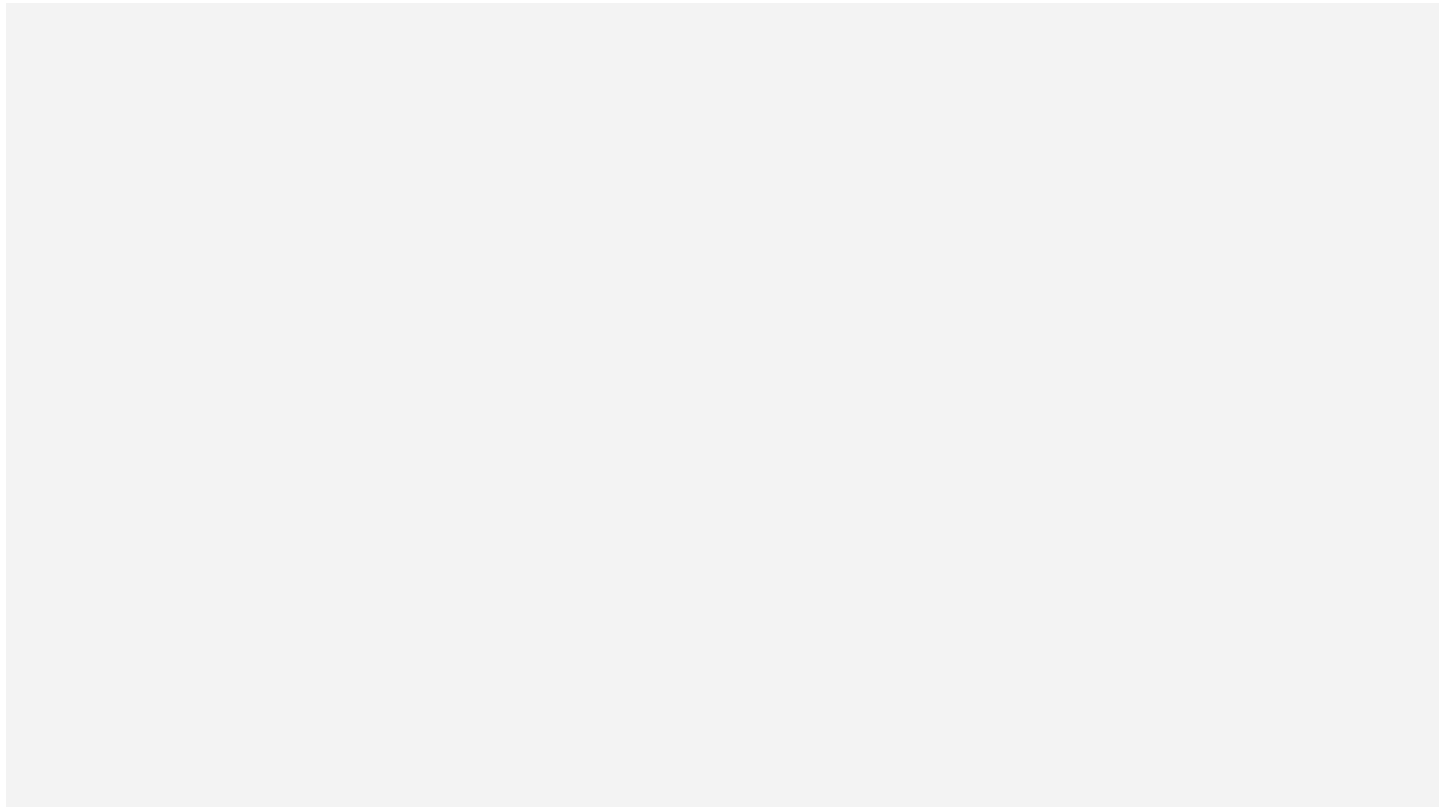
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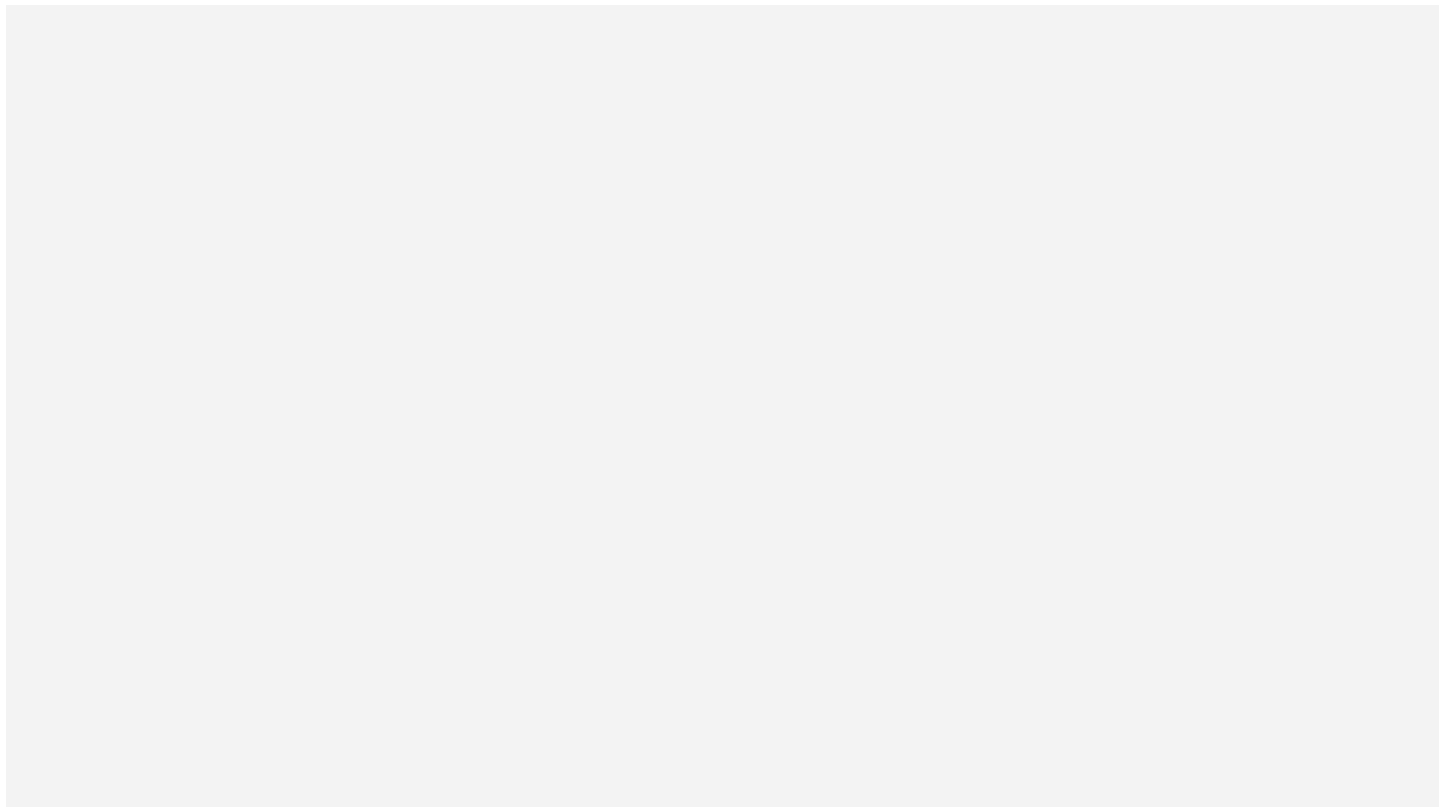
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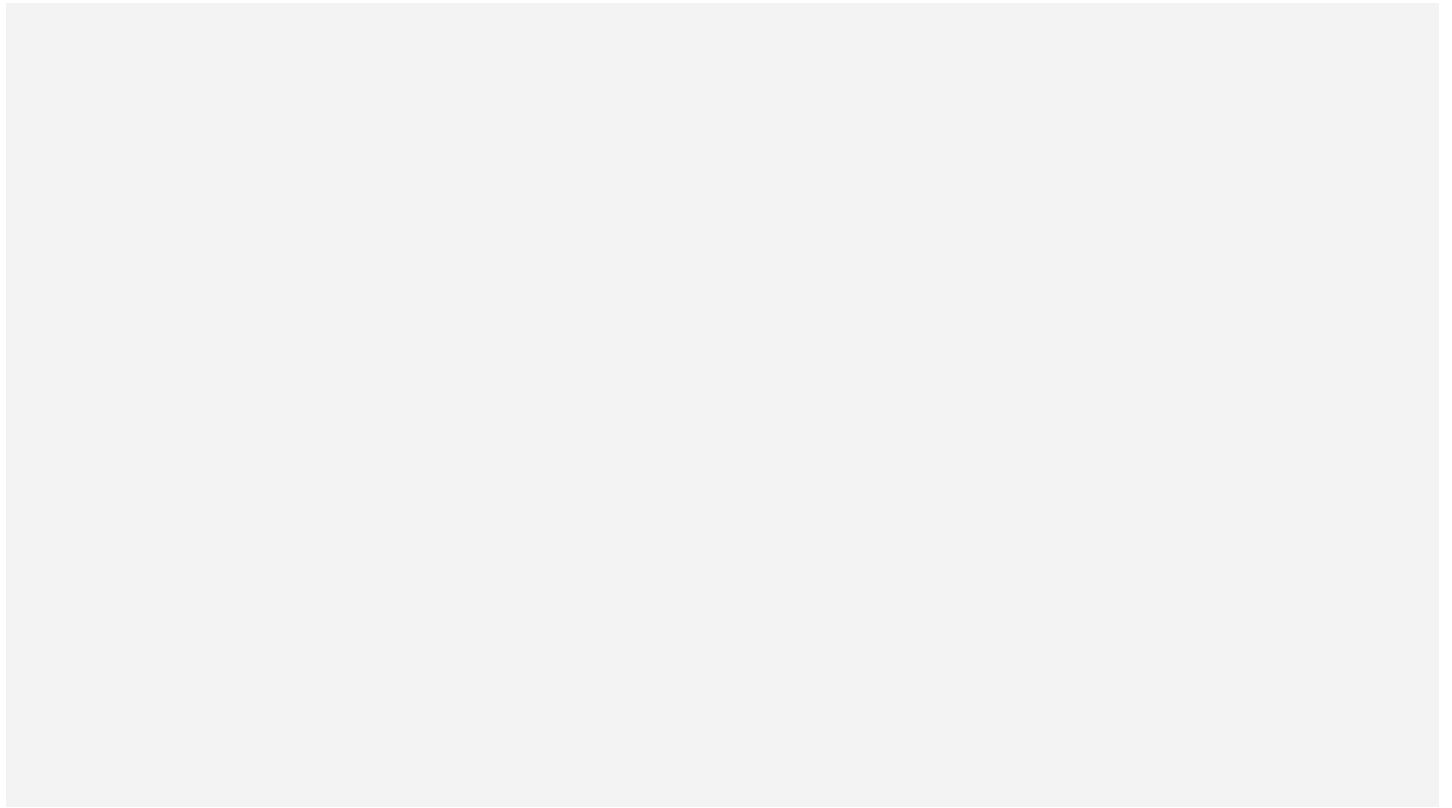


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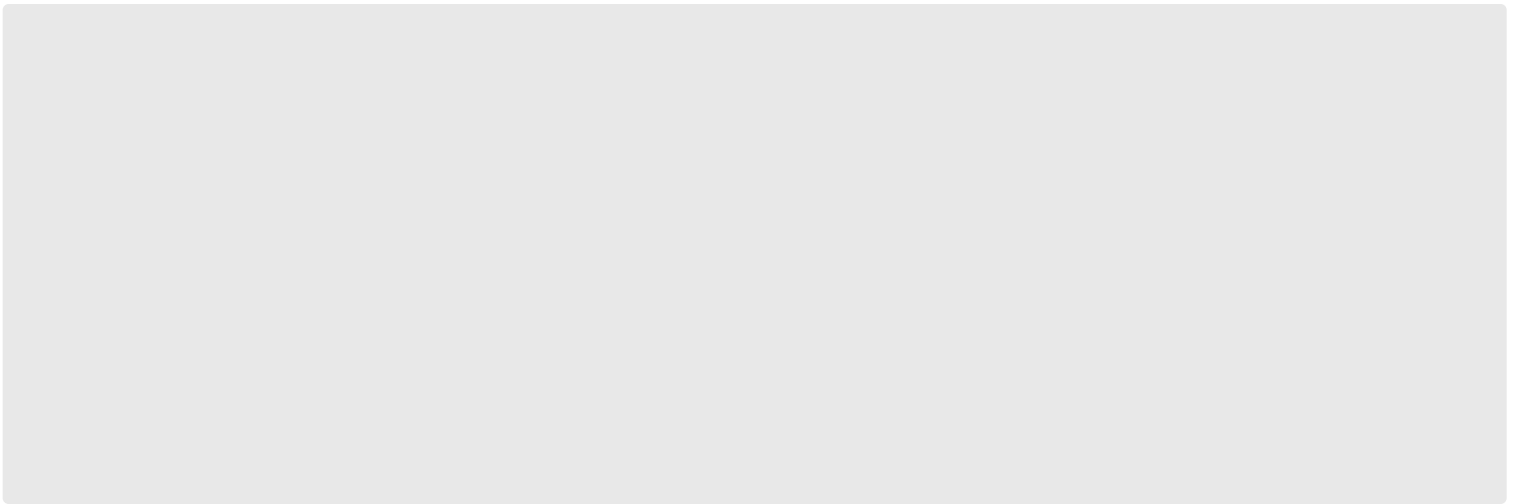


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