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OPINION

Visual Studio Code is Now Available as a Web App. Should You Care?

It's a huge disappointment for Python programmers and Data Scientists — Here's why



Dario Radečić · 2 days ago · 4 min read ★



Photo by [Wes Hicks](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Visual Studio Code is easily my favorite code editor for Python programming and data science. It's a Swiss Army knife for any data science workflow, as it supports Python files, notebooks, remote connections, and pretty much anything you can imagine. Also, it's entirely

free.

Microsoft decided to bring it to the web recently — a bold move, but I can see how developers could benefit from it. It's a completely different story for data scientists, as it's beyond useless in the current iteration.

Continue reading to find out why.

Don't feel like reading? Watch my video instead:

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How to get started with VSCode Web

Simply head over to vscode.dev. A familiar interface will appear immediately:

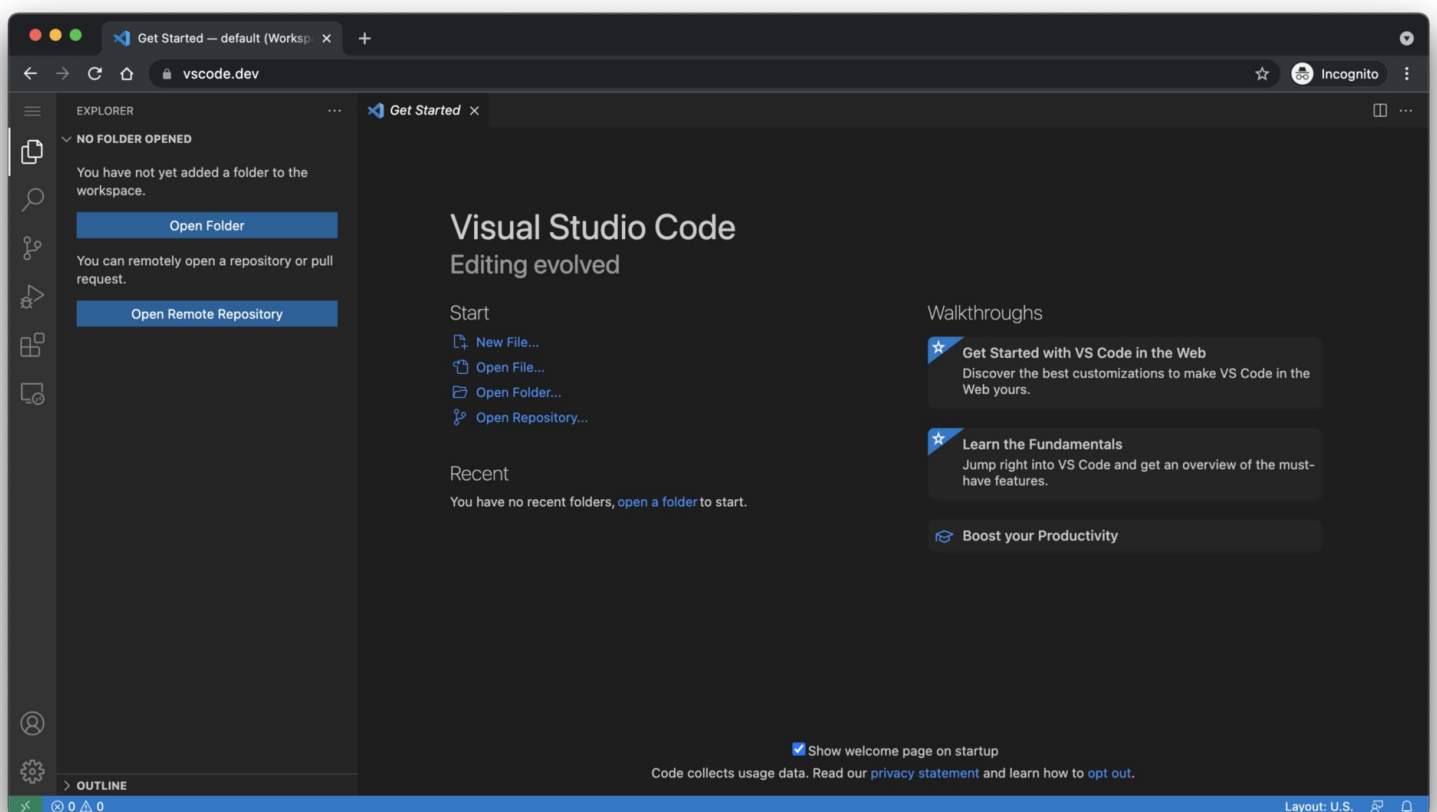


Image 1 — Visual Studio Code Web interface (image by author)

From here you can either open a folder from your machine or open a remote repository. I've created a dedicated `vscode_web` folder on the Desktop for this article, so I'll go with the first option.

Keep in mind — you can't open a local folder in Safari, as it's not supported (yet). Make sure to have a more resource-hungry web browser installed. Let me know if you find another unsupported browser.

Assuming you're in a supported browser, you can open a local directory without issues:

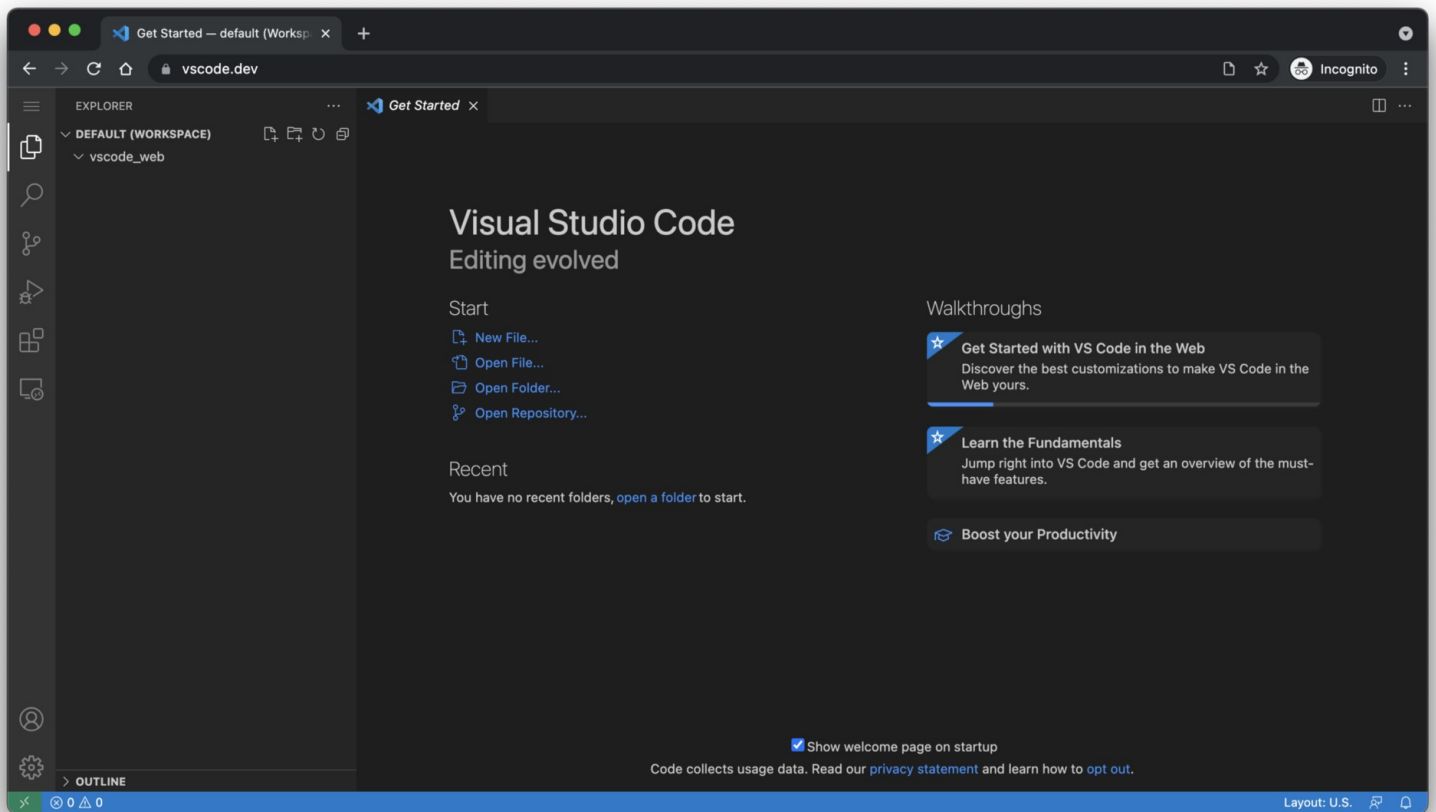
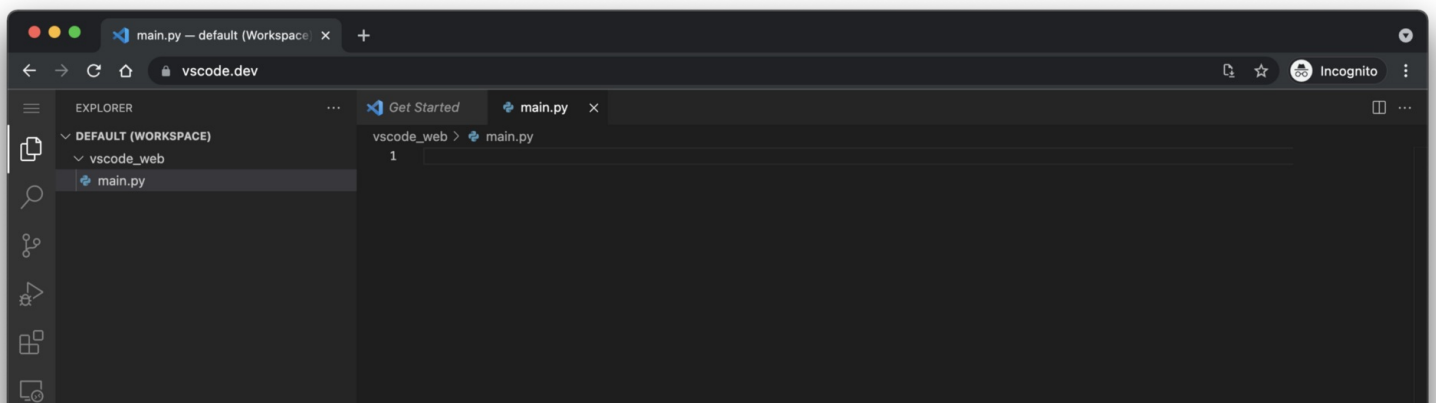


Image 2 — Opening a local directory in VSCode Web (image by author)

All right, we're good to go! Let's create a Python file before diving into extensions. I'll name mine `main.py`:



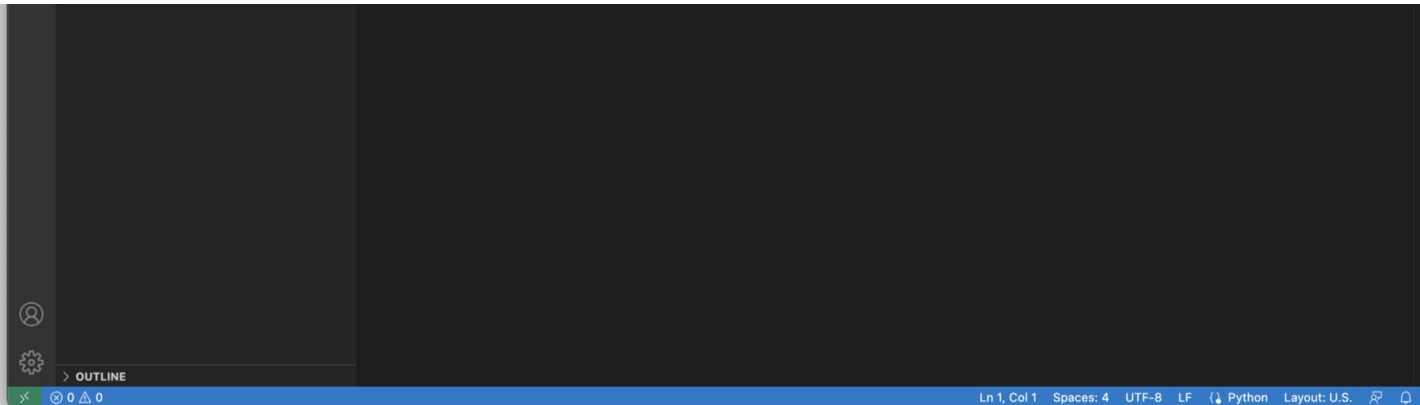


Image 3 — Creating a Python file in VSCode Web (image by author)

And that pretty much covers the good parts. Things go downhill from here for Python programmers and data scientists.

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VSCode Web Extensions for Python and Data Science

VSCode is as useful as Notepad without extensions. The number of available extensions for VSCode Web is quite disappointing at this point in time. You likely won't find what you're looking for as a data scientist.

Let's start with the official Python extension by Microsoft. You can install it, but it immediately warns you that the extension has limited functionality in VSCode Web:

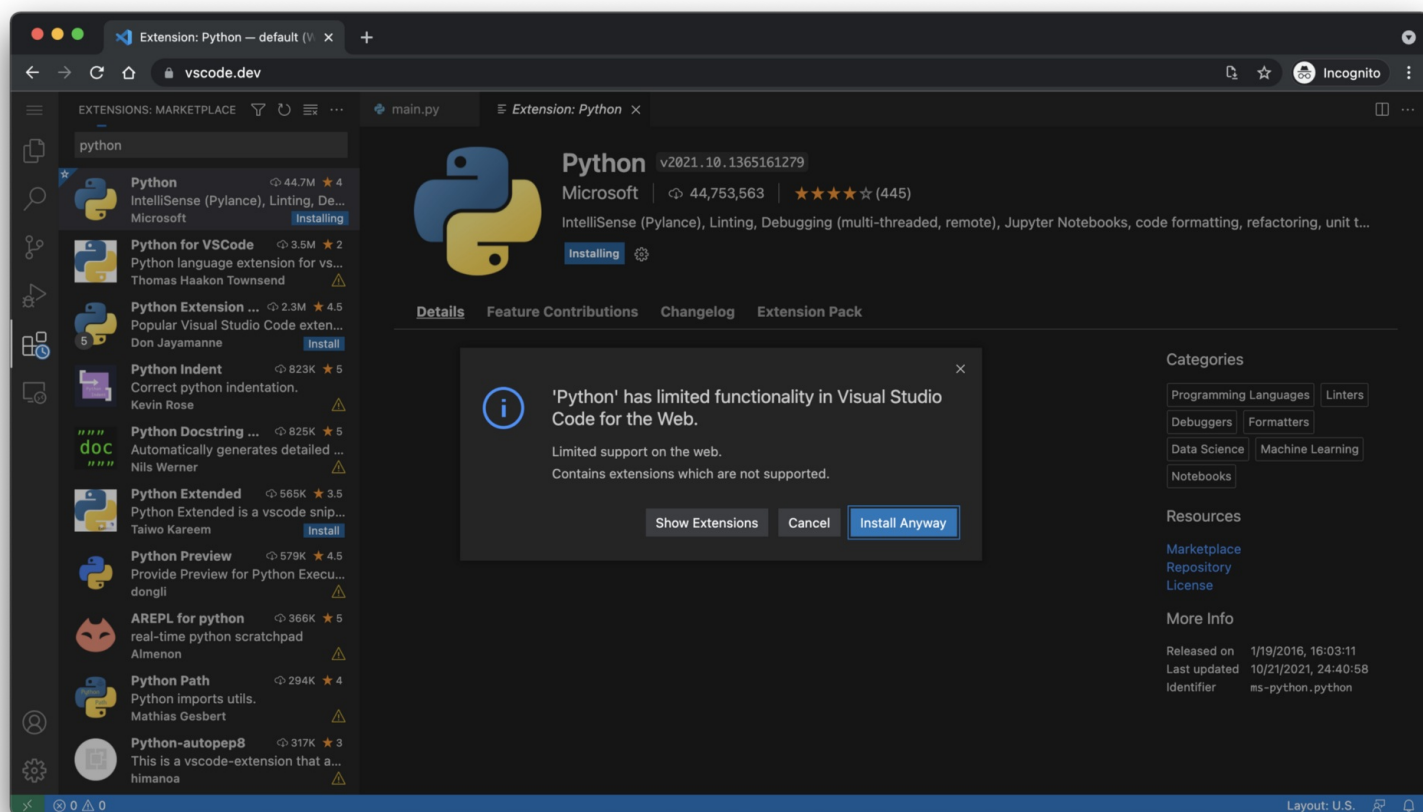


Image 4 — Python extension for VSCode (image by author)

Nevertheless, you can install it without any issues. It adds IntelliSense, linting, code formatting, and anything else you'd expect to the web app.

Writing Python code makes no sense if you can't run it. **Visual Studio Code Web doesn't pack a Terminal support.** It's not easy to digest but is understandable. Adding a Terminal to web applications isn't easy, for obvious reasons.

A potential solution is to install the *Code Runner* extension. It adds a button to Python (and other) files that allows you to run the code. Here's the problem — the extension isn't supported:

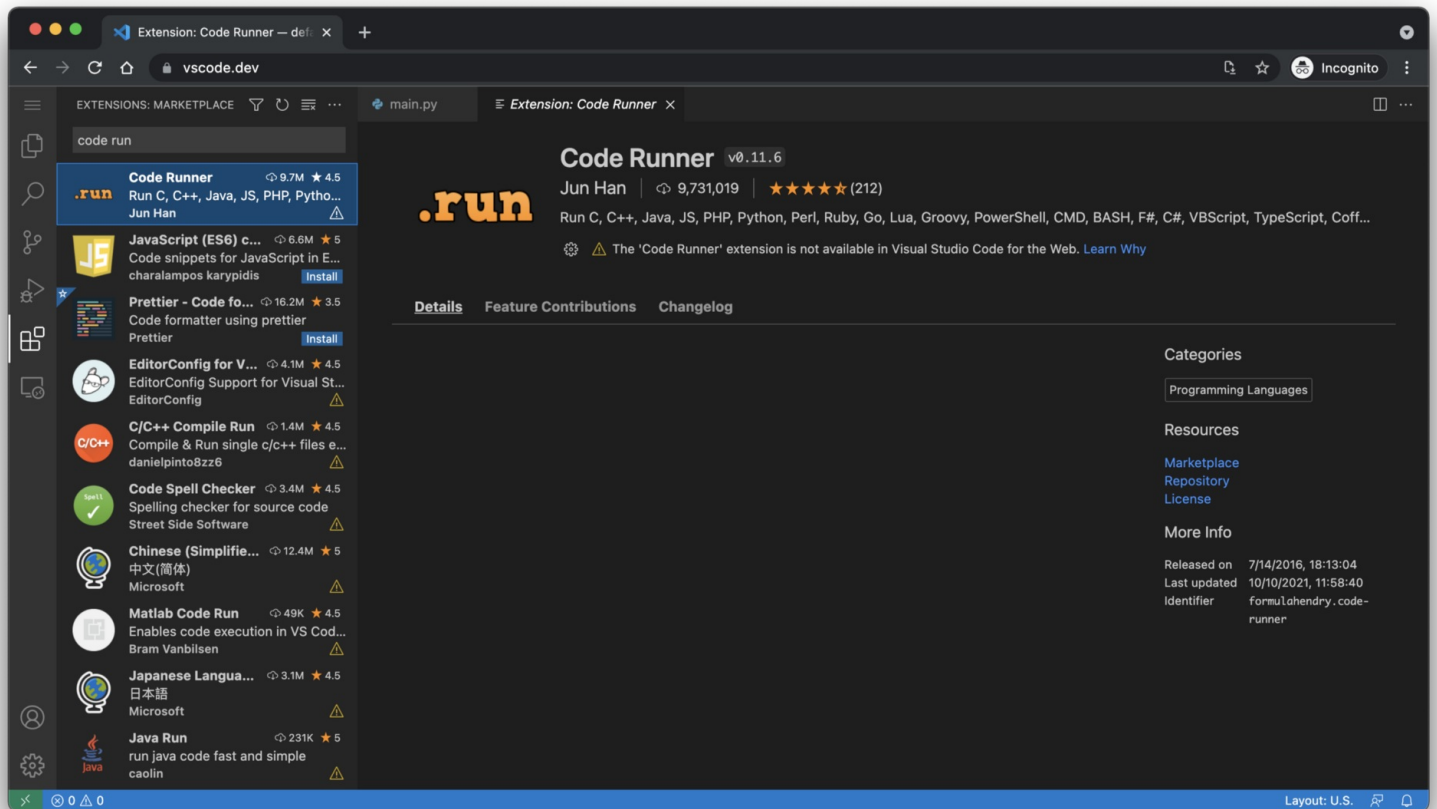
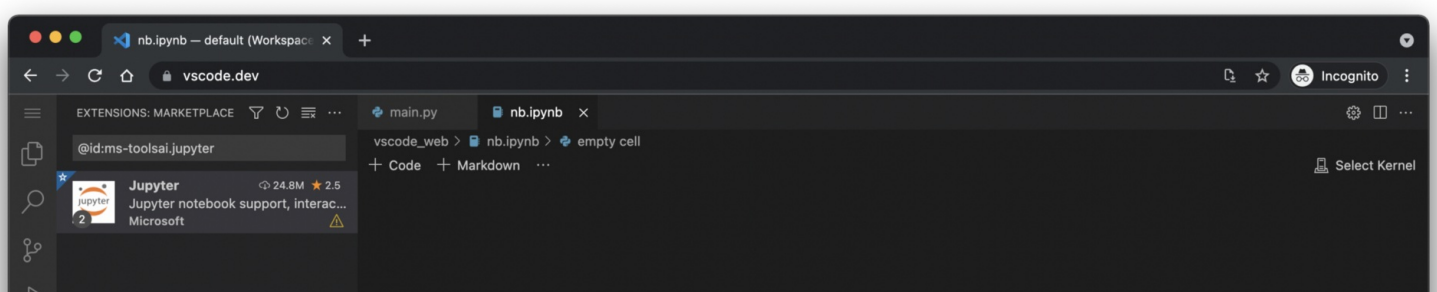


Image 5 — Unsupported extension (image by author)

This means you're stuck with a Python file you can't run. You can create Python files and edit them however you want, but that's pretty much it.

The only option I see now is to create a **Jupyter Notebook** and execute the code interactively. I've named mine `nb.ipynb`. It's yet another disappointment, as you can't create a new *code* cell or change the Python kernel. Guess why — **Jupyter extension isn't supported**:



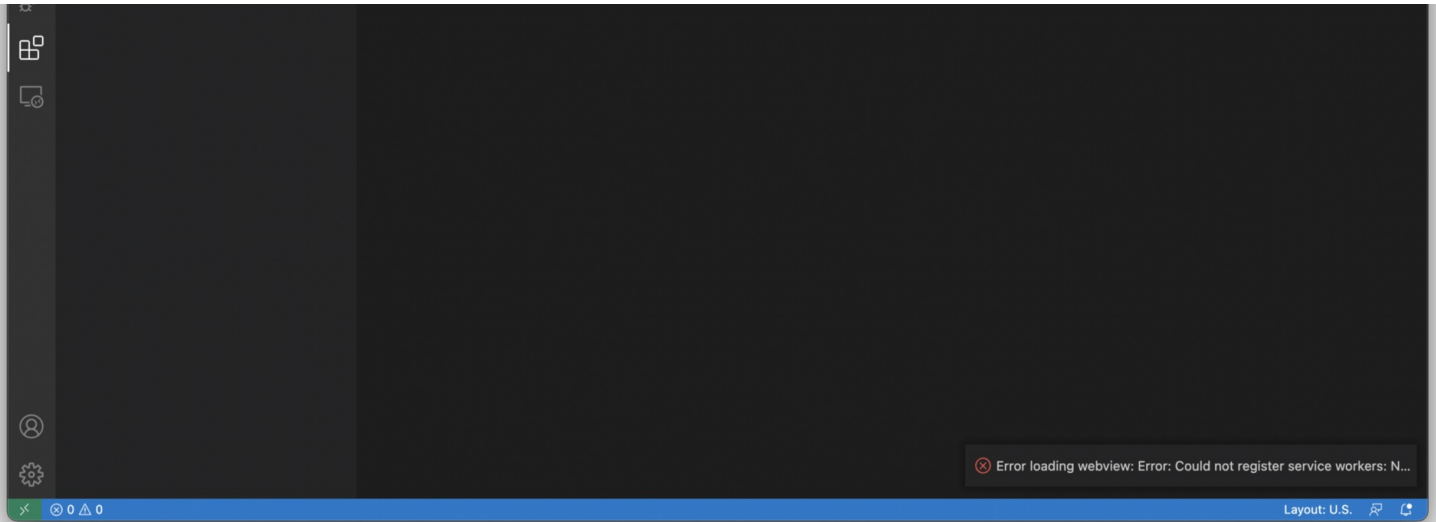


Image 6 — No Jupyter support (image by author)

To summarize, there's not much you can do. I just can't find any upside worth talking about at this point. Maybe things will change in the future, but there's no guarantee.

We could spend more time testing connections to remote machines and whatnot, but what's the point if even the basics aren't working?

. . .

Conclusion

If you're looking to use Visual Studio Code Web as a Python programmer or as a data scientist, you don't have many options. You can create Python files and enjoy in proper IntelliSense and linting, but that pretty much sums up your options. You can't manage virtual environments, debug code, run Python files through extensions or the Terminal, or even run code in Jupyter Notebooks.

In short, just install VSCode locally, there's no point in using the web version currently. Maybe the future releases will expand the functionality and add support for additional extensions, but who can tell. It sure would be a welcoming change.

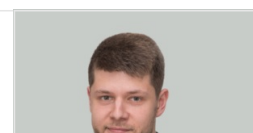
Have you tried VSCode Web as a Python programmer or as a data scientist? What are your thoughts? Make sure to share in the comment section below.

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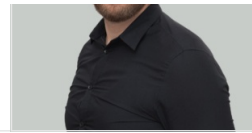
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