

Seven

8,545 strangers were asked to pick a number from 1 to 10 with no way to talk to each other. 69 percent picked the same one.

THIS IS	PART OF	STATUS
PAPER 001 · A FINDING	THE GAME · ACT II, ROUND 6	FILED · V1 · 31 AUG 2026

SOURCE

6,479 4 May 2026

VOTES

DATES

IN PLAIN WORDS

On 4 May 2026 we posted one instruction to an Instagram audience: pick a number from 1 to 10 and comment it. There was no prize, no correct answer, and no way for people to coordinate. The only way to pass was for the crowd to agree without arranging it.

Of 6,479 valid votes, 4,480 were the number 7. That is 69 percent on a ten-way question where a coin-flip crowd would put 10 percent on each number. The runner-up, 5, got 6 percent.

The interesting part is not that people like 7. Psychologists have known that since 1976, when about 28 percent of people asked for a number picked it. The interesting part is what happened to that 28 percent when the votes were public. It became 69 percent. This paper is about the gap between those two numbers.

THE QUESTION WE ASKED

The round was posted with its hypothesis in the caption: **the collective either converges or it does not**. Nothing else was specified. No target number, no discussion channel, no second attempt planned.

The pass condition was agreement. Not agreement with us, since there was nothing to agree with. Agreement with each other, reached by people who could not talk to each other.

WHAT WE DID

- **Instruction:** “Pick a number. 1 to 10. Comment it.”
- **Where:** one Instagram reel, posted 4 May 2026 (AEST). The pass was announced in a second reel on

5 May.

- **Who:** anyone who saw it. The ordinary feed audience of the account, roughly 200,000 followers at the time, plus whoever the platform showed the reel to.
- **Coordination available:** none by design. Comments are visible to everyone, but there was no thread, group, or announcement suggesting a number.
- **How we counted:** every top-level comment on the reel. A comment counted as a valid vote if it was a bare number from 1 to 10. Replies to other comments were excluded, so a person arguing about a number was not counted twice. In the re-count below, numbers with words attached are separated out so both counts are visible.

WHAT HAPPENED

TABLE 1. The vote, re-counted from the archived comments.

NUMBER	VOTES	SHARE
1	117	1.8%
2	169	2.6%
3	254	3.9%
4	237	3.7%
5	411	6.4%
6	249	3.8%
7	4,476	69.2%
8	263	4.1%
9	212	3.3%
10	84	1.3%
Total bare-number votes	6,472	100%

TABLE 2. The shares that carry the paper, with 95 percent intervals.

MEASURE	COUNT	OF	SHARE	95% INTERVAL
Chose 7	4,476	6,472	69.2%	68.0% to 70.3%
Chose 5, the runner-up	411	6,472	6.4%	5.8% to 7.0%
Chose 10, the least chosen	84	6,472	1.3%	1.0% to 1.6%
Chose 7 in private, Kubovy and Psotka 1976	158	558	28.3%	24.7% to 32.2%

The interval is the range the share would land in 19 times out of 20 if the same count were taken on a fresh crowd of the same size. The 1976 study reports 28.4 percent of 558; 158 is the nearest whole count.

The original count at the time of the round recorded 6,479 valid votes with 4,480 on 7. The re-count from the archived comments lands within 7 votes of that on the total and within 4 on the winning number, and matches the runner-up (411) and the least chosen number (84) exactly. We report both so the reader can

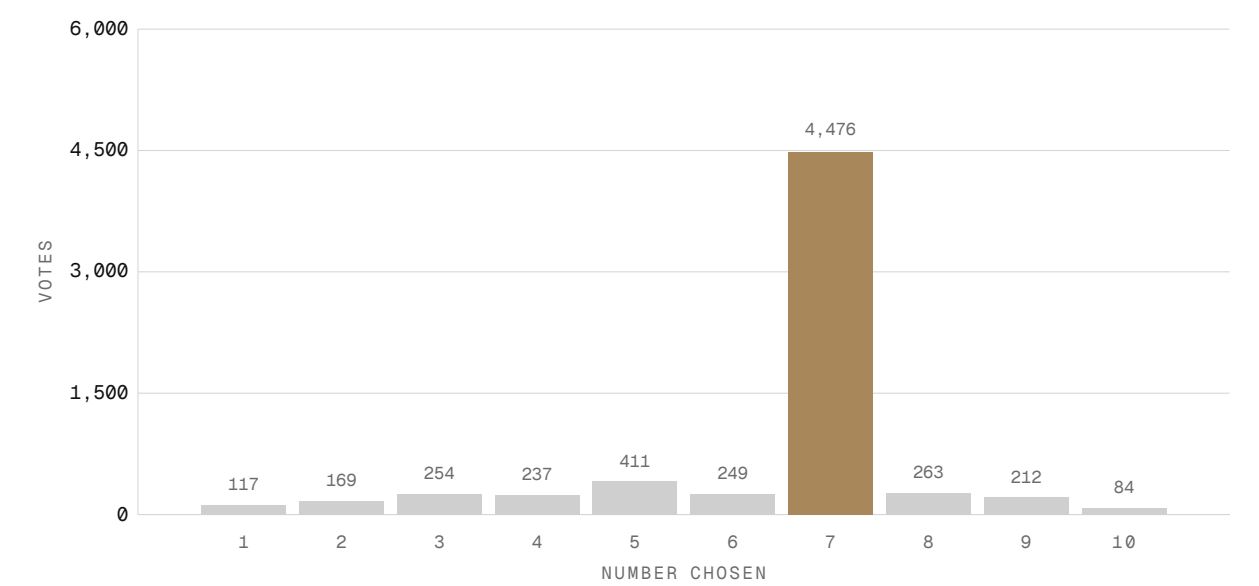


FIGURE 1. Votes by number. The dashed lines are the two baselines the result is measured against: pure chance, and the 1976 laboratory rate for choosing 7 in private.

see the archive and the ledger agree.

Beyond the bare votes, 166 people wrote a number with something attached, 190 wrote a comment with no number in it, and the reel gathered 8,545 comments in total once replies are included.

Three details from inside the thread:

- The most liked comment in the round is the single character 7, at 110 likes.
- The second most liked, at 86, reads 7 gang >. A number had become a side to be on.
- The only top comment that explains its choice says 7, The lucky number. The explanation is folklore, not reasoning. That turns out to matter.

TABLE 3. The post at platform scale, as of 31 August 2026.

REEL	VIEWS · REACH	COMMENTS TODAY
Round 6 · 4 May 2026	104,463 · 72,238 reach	16,710
Likes on the reel	6,163	

Platform numbers are from the Instagram API on 31 August 2026. Comment counts there include replies and everything written since the round, which is why they run above the counts this paper analyses; views and reach are the tallies the platform reports.

WHAT IT MEANS

When a crowd can see each other’s answers, a weak private preference becomes a strong public consensus, without anyone telling anyone what to pick.

Here is the baseline that makes the number meaningful. In 1976, Michael Kubovy and Joseph Psotka stopped 558 people on the Yale campus and asked for the first digit that came to mind. 28.4 percent said 7. They ran follow-ups: ask for a number between 6 and 15 and 7 drops to 17.3 percent; mention 7 yourself as an example and it drops to 16.6 percent. So the pull toward 7 is real, it is about a quarter to a third of people, and it is fragile.

Our crowd put 69 percent on 7. That is 2.4 times the lab rate. The gap is 40.8 points, and the 95 percent interval on that gap runs from 36.9 to 44.7 points, so the two results are not the same number measured twice. Something in the setting moved it.

The difference between the lab and the reel is that in the lab each person answered alone. On the reel, each person answered in front of everyone who had already answered. The first few hundred comments carried the private tilt toward 7 into public view. Everyone after that was no longer picking a number; they were deciding whether to join a number. Most joined.

There is a name for the destination. In 1960 the economist Thomas Schelling described focal points: answers that people converge on without communicating, because each expects the others to expect it. Ask two strangers to meet in New York without saying where and a large share pick Grand Central at noon. Seven is the Grand Central of the numbers 1 to 10. Kubovy and Psotka measured how strong that focal pull is in private. This round measured what a visible crowd does with it.

Why 7 and not something else is partly folklore and partly arithmetic. People asked for a “random” number avoid the ends (1 and 10 look like defaults), avoid the middle (5 looks like a hedge), and avoid even numbers (they look like patterns). What is left is 3 and 7, and 7 has the better story. The commenter who wrote “the lucky number” was reporting the mechanism from the inside.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT SHOW

- **It is not a clean measurement of private preference.** The votes were public and cumulative. That is the point of the paper, but it means the 69 percent is a property of the crowd plus the interface, not of individuals.
- **Order matters and we did not control it.** Instagram sorts comments by engagement, so later arrivals saw the most liked comments first, and the most liked comment was “7”. We cannot separate “saw 7 was winning” from “would have picked 7 anyway”.
- **One round, one audience.** This is the audience of one account in May 2026. We have not run it on a different audience or a different platform.
- **The archive undercounts replies.** Comment ingestion on our side is selective by design. The top-level re-count is complete enough to match the original ledger within seven votes; reply counts are not.

WHAT WE WOULD RUN NEXT

The same instruction, to the same audience, now that “7” is on the public record. A focal point that everyone knows they know is a different object from one nobody has noticed. Whether the crowd re-converges on 7, deliberately avoids it, or splits, and how fast, would tell us more than the original result. The round is drafted and has not been issued.

THE WHOLE ROUND

The round this paper reads is 2 posts, not one. Every post is below with the platform’s numbers and what the comment archive holds of each.

POST	DATE	VIEWS	REACH	COMMENTS	ARCHIVED
Attempt 1	2026-05-04	104,463	72,238	16,710	10,318
Pass declared	2026-05-05	24,883	18,052	288	286
THE ROUND		129,346	90,290	16,998	10,604

Views, reach and comments are the platform’s figures from the Instagram API, snapshot 2026-08-31, and keep growing. The reach total adds each post’s reach and overlaps between posts, so it is not a count of distinct people. Archived is the number of comments the archive holds for the post; ingestion is selective, so a gap between the two columns is expected and is stated wherever it changes a count in the paper.

IN THE RECORD

The round is filed in the Chronicle as THE NUMBER, ◇035. The count it produced entered the record as a law of the territory: a crowd does not need a channel to coordinate, it needs a shared prior.

THE POSTS, AS ISSUED

The instruction as it went out: the reel frame beside the caption, captured from the operation’s own signed-in account. What the paper counts is the answer to exactly this.



**kinggwuu_** 
Original audio

**kinggwuu_**  16w
ALGORITHM GAME — ACT II

LEVEL 2 // ROUND 3 // ATTEMPT 1

Pick a number. 1 to 10. Comment it.

The collective either converges or it doesn't

THE RECEIPTS

Native captures of the comments this paper leans on, taken from the operation’s own signed-in account on 31 Aug 2026. Handles and like counts are as they stood that day; the numbers in the paper are the round-time count.

**kinggwuu_** 
Original audio

**teymhatip 7**
16w 116 likes Reply

View replies (3)

**kinggwuu_** 
Original audio

**owen.w.knownedge 7 gang** —>
16w 233 likes Reply

View replies (4)

METHOD NOTE

- **Source of truth:** the round ledger (Act II, Round 6) and the archived top-level comments on the round reel, re-counted on 30 August 2026.
- **Valid vote:** a top-level comment whose trimmed text is exactly one of 1 to 10.
- **Chance baseline:** 10 percent per number under uniform random choice.
- **Lab baseline:** Kubovy, M., and Psotka, J. (1976). The predominance of seven and the apparent spontaneity of numerical choices. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, 2(2), 291 to 294.
- **Focal points:** Schelling, T. C. (1960). *The Strategy of Conflict*. Harvard University Press.

SOURCES, BY LINK

01 Attempt 1 · 2026-05-04 · <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DX6YfN9ppn-/>

02 Pass declared · 2026-05-05 · <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DX9V30Tpzu7/>

WHERE THE NUMBERS COME FROM

POST-LEVEL COUNTS

Views, reach, comments, likes, shares and saves per post come from the Instagram Graph API (Meta), read with the operation's own access token for its own business account. Each paper states the date of the snapshot it uses. These are the platform's counts of events, not of people: one person can view a reel twice and comment ten times, and the counts keep growing after a round closes.

COMMENT TEXT

The comment archive is the operation's own database of public comments on its own posts, pulled through the Instagram Graph API comments endpoint and stored with the comment id, username, text, like count, timestamp and whether it is a reply. Ingestion is selective: the most engaged posts were backfilled and recent posts are pulled daily, so some posts are held whole and others only in part. Every paper states how much of each post the archive holds. Every count that reads text (exact matches, categories, keyword themes) is run as a read-only script against this archive, and the scripts are in the repository beside the paper data.

THE ROUND LEDGER

For Act II rounds, the counts filed on The Game's round record at the time each round closed. Where a paper uses a ledger figure it says so, and where the archive re-count differs from the ledger both numbers are shown.

RECEIPTS

Every comment and post shown as evidence is a native capture from the operation's own signed-in Instagram session, taken by opening the exact permalink, with the source URL, a description, the rights

basis and a file hash recorded in a manifest that is checked on every build of the site. Nothing shown is recreated, retyped or edited beyond cropping to the post header and the comment.

STATISTICS

Shares carry Wilson 95 percent intervals: the range the share would land in 19 times out of 20 if the same count were taken on a fresh crowd of the same size. Differences between two shares carry a Wald interval. Where a study is cited as a baseline, its own reported figure and sample size are used.

WHAT NONE OF THIS CAN SEE

No demographics beyond what people typed. No view durations. No private messages. No comments that were deleted before the archive pulled them. No way to verify that a self-report is true. Every paper's limits section names the specific things its count cannot show.