

Where the territory is

One post asked players for their city, their local time and one emoji. 2,890 answered from every hour of the clock. The emoji column is a weather report of a January night.

THIS IS	PART OF	STATUS
PAPER 011 · A FINDING	THE GAME · ACT I, LEVEL 4	FILED · V1 · 31 AUG 2026
	CHECK-IN 006	

SOURCE

2,890 22 Jan 2026

COMMENTS DATES

IN PLAIN WORDS

On 22 January 2026, in Level 4, a post asked for three things in one line: your city, your local time, and one emoji. The caption said only that players were distributed. 2,890 people answered.

This is the one post in the record where the audience described itself directly, so this paper is a census rather than an experiment. It reads the 2,890 lines for where people were, what time it was for them, and what they reached for when asked for a single symbol.

THE QUESTION WE ASKED

Where is the territory, and what time is it there? The feed shows the operation one number, a view count, with no geography attached. This post asked the geography to declare itself.

WHAT WE DID

- **Instruction:** Comment: City : Local Time : One Emoji.
- **Where:** one Instagram reel, 22 January 2026. 2,890 top-level comments in the archive.
- **Parsing the time:** a clock pattern (hour and minutes, with or without am or pm, or a bare hour with am or pm) was read from each line and converted to a 24-hour clock. 2,769 lines, 96 percent, yielded a readable local time.
- **Parsing the city:** the text before the time, with punctuation stripped. 2,658 lines yielded a city. Cities

were matched to countries with a hand-written list of about four hundred city and country names; 1,210 matched, 45 percent of the cities read, and the unmatched remainder is mostly smaller cities we did not list. Country shares are reported over matched lines and should be read as a floor on the spread, not a census.

- **The emoji:** the last emoji in the line, present in 2,219 lines.

WHAT HAPPENED

TABLE 1. Local time when people checked in, in four-hour bands.

LOCAL TIME	CHECK-INS	SHARE OF READABLE TIMES
00:00 to 04:00	336	12%
04:00 to 08:00	339	12%
08:00 to 12:00	631	23%
12:00 to 16:00	531	19%
16:00 to 20:00	458	17%
20:00 to 24:00	474	17%
Readable local times	2,769	of 2,890

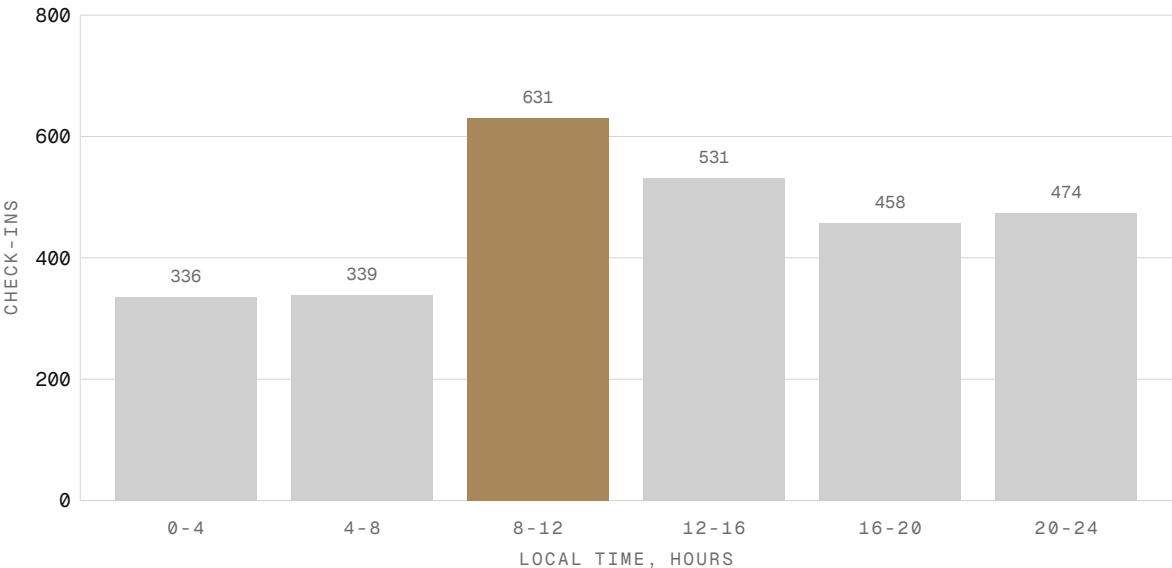


FIGURE 1. Check-ins by local time of day. The post went out at one moment in one time zone; the spread is the spread of the audience across the planet.

The ten most used emoji, in order: night sky (274), freezing face (256), sun (145), sunrise over mountains (83), wilted flower (73), fire (65), snowflake (57), sparkles (48), cloud (38), rain cloud (34). Six of the ten are weather or sky. It was 22 January.

The most liked comment on the post is the operation’s own, setting the format: **Melbourne : 3:32PM : coffee**. The most liked from a player is **Rome 9:19am** with a pizza, which is on the page.

TABLE 2. The fifteen most named countries among the 1,210 lines that matched the list.

COUNTRY	CHECK-INS	SHARE OF MATCHED
India	310	26%
Germany	90	7%
United States	69	6%
Poland	68	6%
Brazil	51	4%
Turkey	47	4%
Italy	41	3%
Spain	40	3%
France	35	3%
Australia	34	3%
Matched to a country	1,210	of 2,658 cities read

TABLE 3. The shares that carry the paper, with 95 percent intervals.

MEASURE	COUNT	OF	SHARE	95% INTERVAL
Checked in between midnight and 6am, local	454	2,769	16.4%	15.1% to 17.8%
Checked in between 6am and noon, local	852	2,769	30.8%	29.1% to 32.5%
India, share of matched countries	310	1,210	25.6%	23.2% to 28.2%
Line included an emoji	2,219	2,890	76.8%	75.2% to 78.3%

TABLE 4. The post at platform scale, as of 31 August 2026.

REEL	VIEWS · REACH	COMMENTS TODAY
Check-in 006 · 22 January 2026	48,008 · 26,214 reach	5,685
Likes on the reel	3,707	

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

The territory is not in one place or one time. At the moment of one post, one in six players was between midnight and six in the morning, and the largest single country held a quarter of those who could be placed. Asked for one symbol, the crowd described the sky over its head.

The time distribution is the useful number for anyone running a feed. Because the audience is spread around the clock, every post lands in somebody's morning and somebody's midnight at once. The morning band is the biggest, which fits a post that went out in the Australian afternoon and reached South Asia and Europe in their forenoon, but no band is empty and the night band is 16 percent. There is no hour at which the territory is asleep.

The emoji column was meant as a flourish and came back as data. Given a free symbol, most people did not describe themselves; they described the weather and the light. In the northern hemisphere in January, that meant cold and dark. The single most used symbol in a global check-in was the night sky.

India first, by a wide margin, then a band of European countries, then the Americas and Australia. That is the shape of an English-language feed reached through Instagram's recommendation system rather than through a following, and the shape the later rounds were run on.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT SHOW

- **The country list is a floor.** Fewer than half of the cities read matched the list. Smaller cities and non-Latin spellings are under-counted, and India in particular is likely larger than 26 percent, since many Indian cities were written in forms the list did not catch.
- **Self-reported, unverified.** City and time are what people typed. Jokes and fictional places are in the data; Zielona Góra with its translation in brackets is real, others may not be.
- **Who answered.** People who comment on a check-in post are not the whole audience. The distribution is of those who chose to declare, at that hour, on that day.
- **One post, one January.** The weather in the emoji column is the weather of that week.

WHAT WE WOULD RUN NEXT

The same three-part line in July. If the emoji column flips from night and cold to sun and heat, the column is a thermometer and the check-in can be run as one twice a year.

THE WHOLE ROUND

The transmission this paper reads is one post. Its numbers on the platform, and what the comment archive holds of it, are below.

POST	DATE	VIEWS	REACH	COMMENTS	ARCHIVED
Global Check-in 006	2026-01-22	48,008	26,214	5,685	4,648

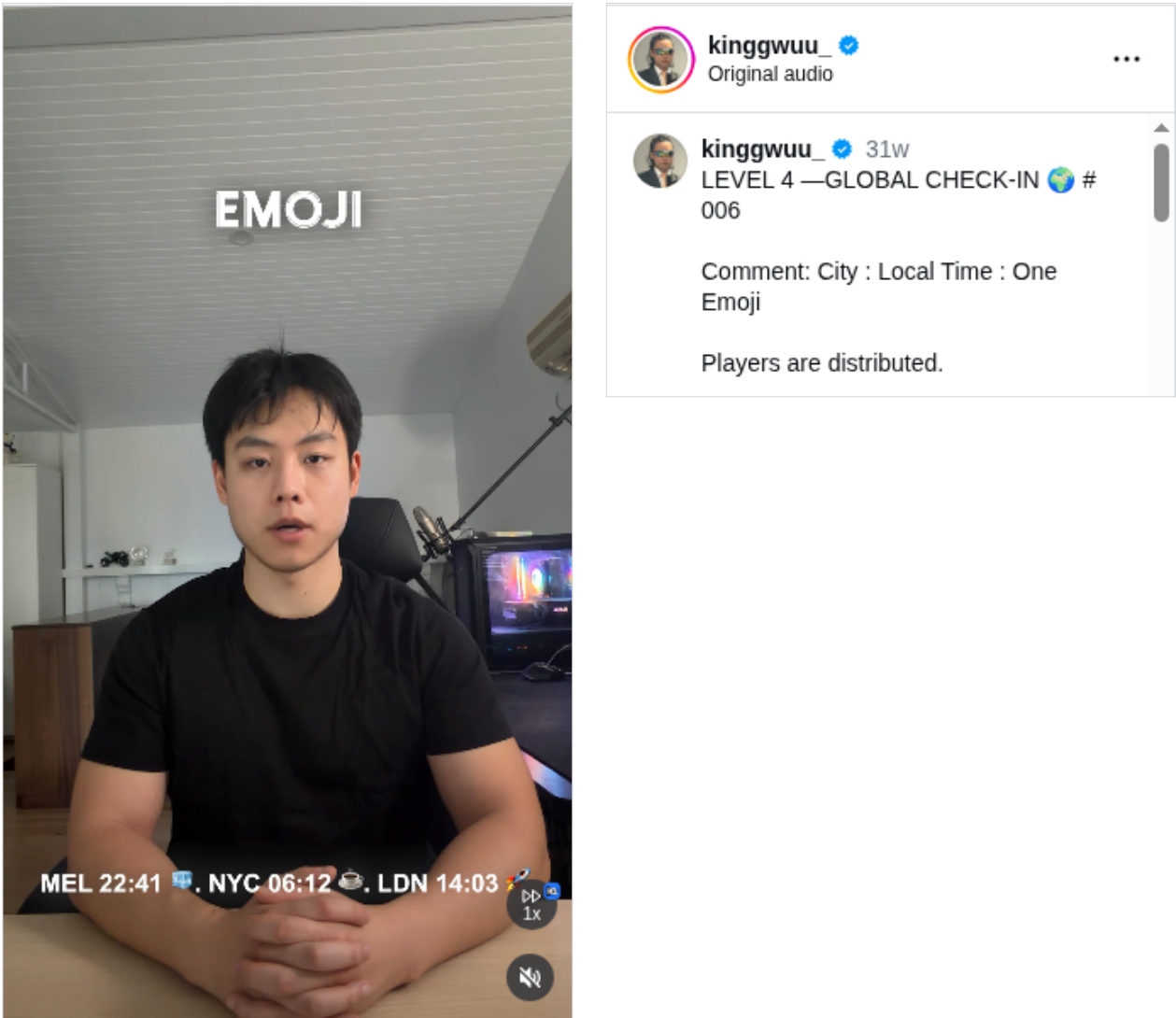
Views, reach and comments are the platform's figures from the Instagram API, snapshot 2026-08-31, and keep growing. The reach total adds each post's reach and overlaps between posts, so it is not a count of distinct people. Archived is the number of comments the archive holds for the post; ingestion 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

Level 4 is filed in the Chronicle as THE BASEMENT LOBBY, ◇025, and THE PUBLIC LOBBY, ◇026. The check-in itself has no entry of its own.

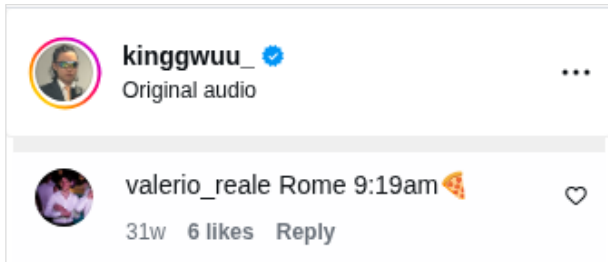
THE POSTS, AS ISSUED

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.



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.



METHOD NOTE

- **Source of truth:** the comment archive, top-level comments on the post, parsed on 31 August 2026. No round ledger exists for Act I.
- **Parsing:** clock pattern and city-before-time rule as described in the method; country list of about four hundred names written for this paper. The parse rules and the list are in the repository beside the paper data.

SOURCES, BY LINK

01 Global Check-in 006 · 2026-01-22 · <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DTy78eRCe6h/>

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.