

Why you opened the feed

3,419 people were caught re-entering Instagram and asked for the real reason. The most common answer was boredom. The most liked answers were about not sleeping.

THIS IS	PART OF	STATUS
PAPER 014 · A FINDING	THE GAME · ACT I, SIDE QUEST	FILED · V1 · 31 AUG 2026
	01	

SOURCE

3,436 26 Oct 2025

COMMENTS

DATES

IN PLAIN WORDS

On 26 October 2025, four days into the Game, a post told the viewer they had been detected re-entering the feed less than five minutes after leaving it, and set a task: type the real reason you opened Instagram right now. The caption ended: you did not open the feed, the feed opened you.

3,419 people answered. Sorted by how often a reason appears, boredom comes first, then curiosity about what was new, then wanting to stay awake or put off sleep. Sorted by how many likes each reason drew, the order flips: delaying sleep first, the low moments second, and boredom near the bottom with fifteen likes across 579 comments.

This paper reads both orders. One is what people say. The other is what the room recognises itself in.

THE QUESTION WE ASKED

Asked for the real reason, what do people say they open the feed for, and which reasons does the crowd endorse? The post could not check anyone’s honesty. It could only count what was said and what was liked.

WHAT WE DID

- **Instruction:** Your task: type the real reason you opened Instagram right now.
- **Where:** one Instagram reel, 26 October 2025. 3,436 top-level comments in the archive, 3,429 with

text, from 3,419 people.

- **Categories:** each comment was placed in the first matching category from a fixed list, in this order: a low moment (numb, escape, distract, cope, stress, sad, lonely); sleep (sleep, bed, awake, tired, night); boredom; a notification or someone sending something; work or school being avoided; habit or no reason; curiosity or the feed itself; the toilet; waiting or in transit; eating. The order matters: a comment that says bored and sad counts as a low moment.
- **Other:** the third of comments that matched none of these. Reading a sample, they are mostly memes, single words, and reasons phrased in ways the list did not catch.
- **Likes:** summed per category, as archived.

WHAT HAPPENED

TABLE 1. Reasons, by how often they were given and by how many likes they drew.

REASON	COMMENTS	LIKES RECEIVED
Boredom	579	15
Curiosity, or to see the feed	432	193
A low moment: escape, numbing, distraction	282	195
To delay sleep or stay awake	224	290
A notification, or someone sent something	172	25
Habit, reflex, no reason	165	5
Waiting or in transit	140	6
Work or school being avoided	130	1
The toilet	122	7
Eating	31	0
Other	1,152	102
Comments with text	3,429	839 likes

TABLE 2. Shares with 95 percent intervals.

MEASURE	COUNT	OF	SHARE	95% INTERVAL
Boredom, share of comments	579	3,429	16.9%	15.7% to 18.2%
A low moment, share of comments	282	3,429	8.2%	7.4% to 9.2%
Delaying sleep, share of comments	224	3,429	6.5%	5.8% to 7.4%
Delaying sleep, share of all likes	290	839	34.6%	31.4% to 37.8%
Boredom, share of all likes	15	839	1.8%	1.1% to 2.9%

The most liked answer, at 149 likes, is three words: **Opened it to stay awake**. The second, at 125: **Delaying sleep**. Below them are the low moments, written plainly by people who wanted to be counted and did not

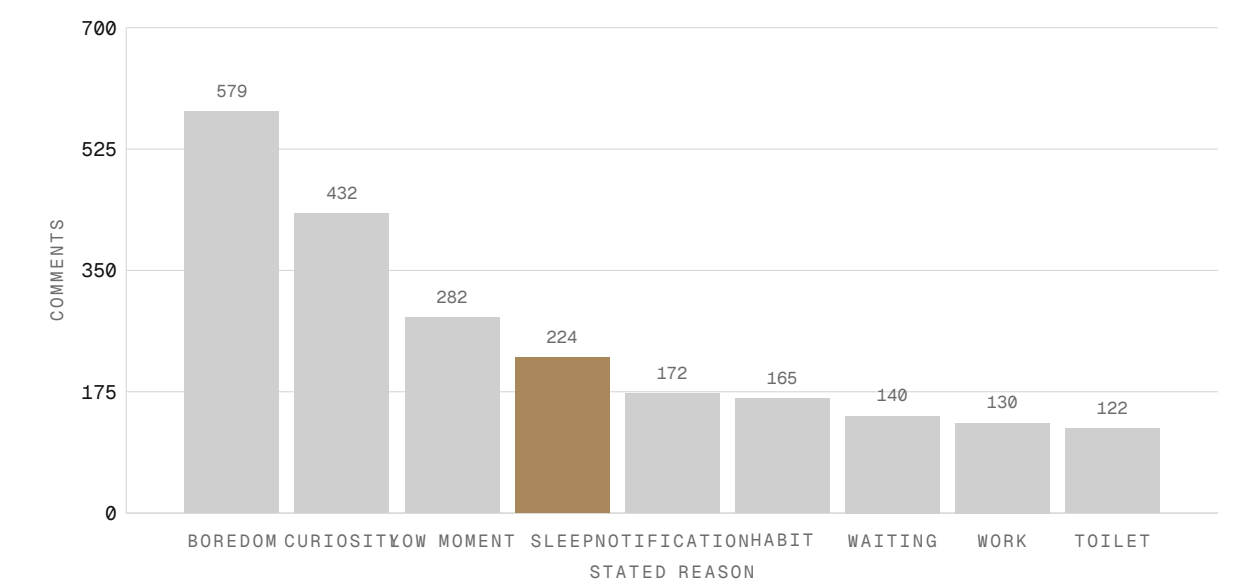


FIGURE 1. Comments per reason. The accented bar is the reason the room liked most, which is fourth by count.

ask for anything. We do not quote those here; the archive holds them and the paper reports the number.

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

REEL	VIEWS · REACH	COMMENTS TODAY
Side Quest 01 · 26 October 2025	82,517 · 51,786 reach	3,556
Likes on the reel	5,099	

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

Asked for the real reason, most people give an ordinary one. The crowd does not reward the ordinary one. It gives its likes to the answers that admit something, and the thing most often admitted is that the feed is where people go instead of sleep.

Boredom is the honest majority answer and it is nearly invisible in the likes: 579 comments, 15 likes between them. Nobody sees themselves in bored. Delaying sleep has fewer than half as many comments and nineteen times the likes, because a reader at 1am recognises it and taps. The like column is a mirror the comment column is not.

The low moments are 8 percent of the answers and a quarter of the likes. A comment section reached through the recommendation feed, at night, is where people say the quiet thing, and the room answers by agreeing rather than replying. That is a real function of the medium and worth naming without dressing it up.

For the Game, the post was proof of a premise: the feed does open you. Four days in, 3,419 people told a stranger why, and the reasons were sleep, boredom, and wanting to feel something else for a minute. Every later round was run on that audience at that hour.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT SHOW

- **A third of answers are uncategorised.** The list catches the common phrasings. Memes, single words and indirect answers fell into other, and the true share of every category is higher than shown.
- **Categories are one-per-comment by priority.** A comment that names sleep and boredom counts as sleep. A different order would move a few hundred comments between the first four rows without changing the shape.
- **Likes follow position.** Early comments are shown first and collect likes. The sleep answers were early; part of their like share is the platform, not the room.
- **Self-report at the moment of the impulse.** People wrote what they were willing to say right then. The honest reason and the written reason are not guaranteed to match.

WHAT WE WOULD RUN NEXT

The same question at a fixed local hour, using the check-in data to post when most of the territory is in its morning. If boredom stays first and sleep drops out of the likes, the night is the variable. If the shape holds, the reasons are the audience and not the hour.

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
Side Quest 01, the Impulse Test	2025-10-26	82,517	51,786	3,556	3,511

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 post has no Chronicle entry of its own. It sits in the first week, between THE INTRUSION, ◇012, and THE COMPLETED, ◇013.

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, counted on 31 August 2026. No round ledger exists for Act I.
- **Counting rules:** as described in the method; the script is in the repository beside the paper data.

SOURCES, BY LINK

01 Side Quest 01, the Impulse Test · 2025-10-26 · <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DQSm88cEyNZ/>

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.