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Who Actually Took the GTA Sick Day: After Adjusting for Advertising and Trend, SickSlip Finds the Extra Demand Came Almost Entirely From Men Under 35

Total launch-week volume was within noise of expectation. Demand not bought with advertising ran 18 percent above trend. Bain's survey puts the GTA VI launch crowd at 59 percent men and 41 percent women; the sick-day crowd was close to all young men.

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif., November 20, 2026 — SickSlip, a physician-led telehealth practice that issues medical documentation following an online clinical evaluation, today released an adjusted analysis of the week of the Grand Theft Auto VI launch. On November 19 the practice reported raw week-over-week increases; today's analysis measures each group of patients against its own trend and day of week from September 1 to November 15, so that the practice's advertising growth and business scale cancel out.

MEN UNDER 35, ABOVE EXPECTED

+18%

684 requests against 581 expected, Nov 16 to 19. The only group outside its 95% band (p = 0.007).

ALL PATIENTS, ABOVE EXPECTED

+5%

1,805 against 1,724. Within noise. With paid clicks in the model: +3%.

DEMAND NOT BOUGHT WITH ADS

+18%

571 against 482 expected (p = 0.003). Men under 35: +34%.

> *"Four in ten of the people planning to play are women, according to Bain. Nearly every extra request we saw came from a man under 35. Flu doesn't choose young men. A game launch does."*
>
> Adam Z. Kawalek, MD · Founder, SickSlip · Board-certified internal medicine physician

What changed from the November 19 release

The earlier figures stand as week-over-week comparisons with their windows stated (advance requests covering launch day 93 against 51; total requests up 29 percent; men up 39 percent, women 13). Set against the trend each group was already on, most of that increase was the practice's own advertising growth (paid clicks up 50 percent, conversion per click falling) and a month of growth. The part that was not belongs to men under 35.

Each group against its own expectation

Group	Expected	Actual	Above or below
Men under 35	581	684	+18%
Women under 35	435	457	+5%
Men 35 and over	143	144	0%
Women 35 and over	119	100	−16%

Gender inferred from first name; about one request in four cannot be classified and is excluded from these rows. Launch Thursday alone: 461 requests against 458 expected.

The launch crowd and the sick-day crowd

Bain's Video Game Pulse survey of 800 US adult gamers, October to November 2026, published November 17, finds that among gamers planning to play GTA VI at launch, 59 percent are men and 41 percent women, and men under 35 are three in ten. SickSlip's above-trend demand came close to entirely from men under 35.

Flu season

In the CDC's most recent published week, ending November 7, outpatient visits for influenza-like illness rose 14 percent and influenza test positivity 24 percent; COVID-19 positivity fell. Influenza rises across every age and both sexes. The practice's above-trend demand was confined to one group. Reported symptoms are not used as evidence in either direction: every request names a symptom, and respiratory complaints are what people name.

Method

Paid, non-test SickSlip requests by the Eastern-time day placed, September 1 to November 19, 2026. For each group, a regression on daily counts from September 1 to November 15 with day of week and a time trend (negative binomial or quasi-Poisson, whichever fit) predicts November 16 to 19; the difference between actual and predicted is the excess, with a 95% prediction band from 20,000 simulations. A second model adds daily paid clicks from the Google and Microsoft Ads accounts. "Demand not bought with advertising" is requests attributed to organic search, direct, referral, email, social and AI assistants. Underlying tables and model output available to journalists on request.

About SickSlip. SickSlip is a physician-led telehealth practice founded in 2026 by Adam Z. Kawalek, MD, a board-certified internal medicine physician licensed in 46 states. Since March 2026 it has issued more than 21,000 pieces of medical documentation, counting only documents issued and not revoked, to patients in 44 states. Every request is screened against physician-written clinical criteria and issued under a licensed physician's authority, only when the reported symptoms support it. Trustpilot 4.8 of 5 (259 reviews); Google 5.0.

Media contact. Adam Z. Kawalek, MD, Founder, SickSlip, adam@sickslip.co. Available for interview by phone or video. Full analysis: sickslip.co/gta6. Media kit: sickslip.co/press. Grand Theft Auto and Rockstar Games are trademarks of their respective owners. SickSlip is not affiliated with or endorsed by Rockstar Games or Take-Two Interactive. ###