
The Ubermotive Guide to Media Influence

Posted on 14/10/2012 by [admin](#)

Last week, News Corporation ran a [story](#) ([mirror](#)) about the shock results of an online poll that indicated over 90% of the 16,000 respondents wanted to see a raise in speed limits, despite the poll being paired with an article asking motorists to slow down in consideration for elderly drivers.



News ▾ Business ▾ Sport ▾ Entertainment ▾ Lifestyle ▾ Travel ▾ Realstate ▾ Money ▾ Tech ▾

SPEED UP: Drivers vote to increase speed limits after report recommends limit be lowered

- Almost 16,000 votes cast for a rise in speed limits.
- Less than 1 per cent want speed limits lowered.
- If you can't drive at the speed limit, then you don't deserve to have a license."

news.com.au
October 08, 2012
3:17PM

 278 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

 0



Regular driving tests could give older drivers more confidence on the road. *SOURCE: Supplied*

AUSTRALIANS should be allowed to drive faster, not forced to take the slow lane with older motorists.

Related Coverage

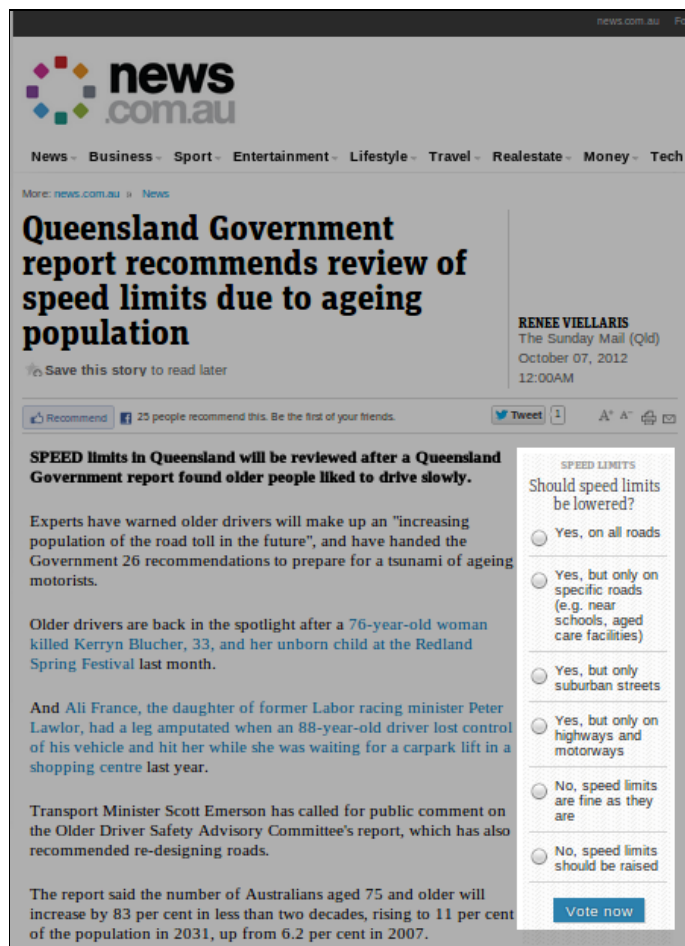
[» Speed change as older drivers hit road](#)

[» RACV backs options to](#)

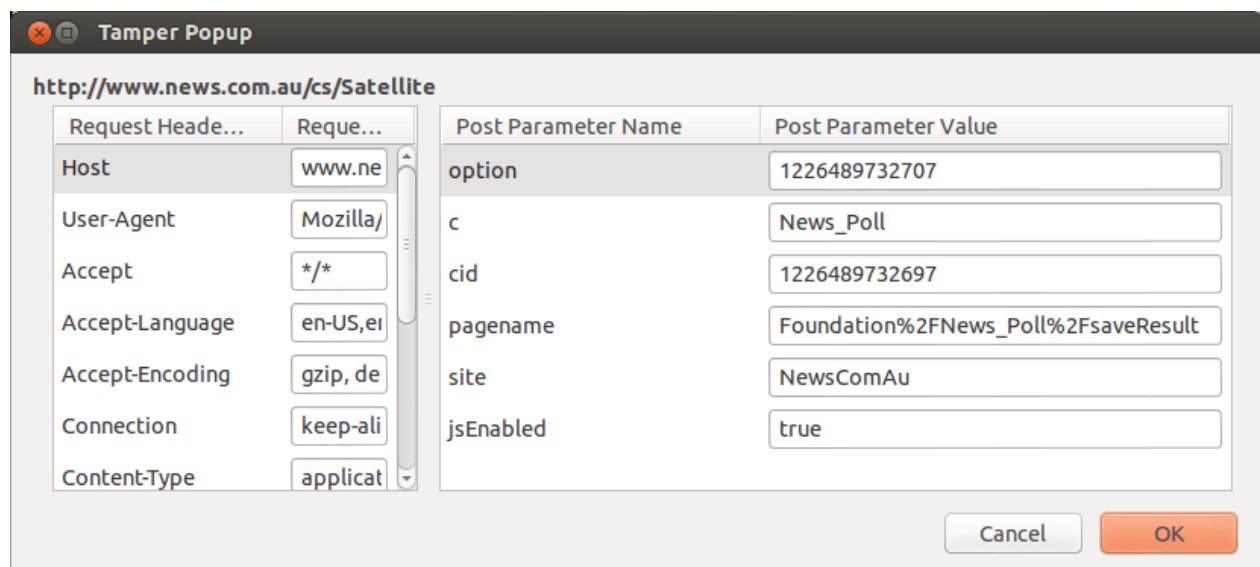
Well, I have some news for you: **Over 15,000 of those votes were mine.**

And no, I didn't cleverly infiltrate their systems and edit the poll by hand. That would have been rather illegal. The fact of the matter is, you can tweak any poll with relative ease without breaking any laws*. All you need to do it capitalise on the fact that **there is nothing on their servers that will limit how many times or how often you vote.**

I present to you, [Exhibit A](#):



It's one of many simple polls from the that appear from time to time on news.com.au. Vote once, and you can see the poll results. If you were wondering how much they put in place to stop you from voting again, clear your cookies and you'll soon find that it's essentially nothing. You could vote all day, but manual labour is for suckers. Install the "Tamper Data" Firefox plugin, and take a peek at the HTTP POST data that's being sent to the server each time you vote:



Can you see where we're going with this? Bash and Curl are your friends:

```
#!/bin/bash
while [ true ]; do
    curl --data "option=1226489732707&c=News_Poll&cid=1226489732697&pagename=Foundation%2FNews_Poll%2F"
done
```

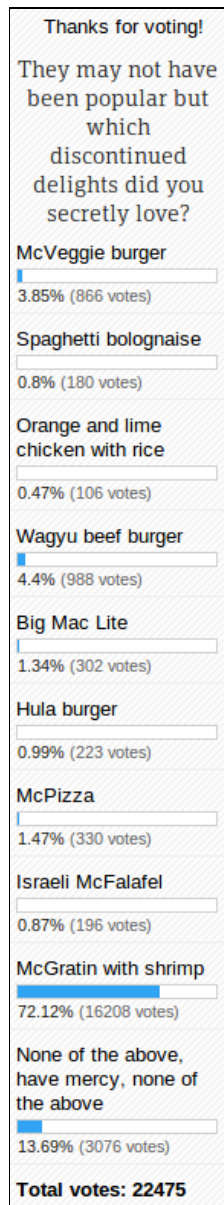
You could watch it run all day, or you can leave it ticking away while you sleep:

```
% Total    % Received % Xferd  Average Speed   Time    Time       Time  Current
100    2903    100    2778    100     125     9985     449  --:--:--  --:--:--  --:--:--  19158
<p class="total-votes">Total votes: 17201</p>
% Total    % Received % Xferd  Average Speed   Time    Time       Time  Current
100    2903    100    2778    100     125     4906     220  --:--:--  --:--:--  --:--:--  5692
<p class="total-votes">Total votes: 17202</p>
% Total    % Received % Xferd  Average Speed   Time    Time       Time  Current
100    2903    100    2778    100     125    13629     613  --:--:--  --:--:--  --:--:--  21874
<p class="total-votes">Total votes: 17203</p>
% Total    % Received % Xferd  Average Speed   Time    Time       Time  Current
100    2903    100    2778    100     125    10980     494  --:--:--  --:--:--  --:--:--  15965
<p class="total-votes">Total votes: 17204</p>
% Total    % Received % Xferd  Average Speed   Time    Time       Time  Current
100    2903    100    2778    100     125     6259     281  --:--:--  --:--:--  --:--:--  7631
<p class="total-votes">Total votes: 17205</p>
```

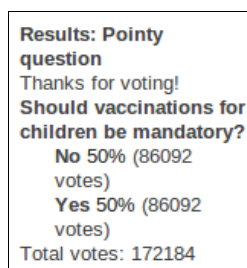
So there you have it. You can achieve a greater media influence in three lines of *bash* than Gina Rinehart could with an [18.7% share in Fairfax](#).

** I am not a lawyer. This is not legal advice.*

UPDATE: Despite alerting NewsCorp to this, nobody seems to be listening. It appears that poll hacking is now my part-time hobby indefinitely.




An attempt to bring back the McGratin.



It was fun watching the anti-vaxxers and the skeptics argue over this poll result. In the end I called it a draw. One day later, a [response](#) article was written:

The great vaccination debate: are you for or against?




BY LUCY KIPPIST
[news.com.au](#)
 November 29, 2012
 12:48PM

Save this story to read later

- [Court orders eight-year-old to be vaccinated](#)
- [The anti-vaccination lobby is wrong, says research biologist](#)
- [Deadly out breaks feared as immunisation rates drop](#)

Recommend 164 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

Tweet 4



A young girl being immunised against measles.

PARENTS are confused about whether to vaccinate their children due to a lack of information, support and open communication with doctors, the Australian Medical Association (AMA) has said.

Dr Rod Pearce, an AMA immunisation spokesman, said misinformation was the most common reason parents choose not to vaccinate.

The issue of whether to vaccinate created heated debate earlier this week after figures were released showing a soaring rate of parents refusing to vaccinate.

A poll, [run on news.com.au on Monday](#), asking whether vaccination for children should be mandatory, received more than 170,000 votes. Of those who voted, 50 per cent agreed.

RELATED

- [Doctors urge parents to immunise kids](#)
- [Science is clear - vaccinate children](#)
- [Vaccination the best bet](#)
- [Babies at risk as vaccines slide](#)
- [Anti-vaxxers take us back](#)

I wonder when they'll realise they've been had.

UPDATE 14/12/2012: There's more.

Two stories hit the front page side-by-side today, both referencing my manipulated poll results. The first mentioned two polls which I had deadlocked. I didn't notice (and balance) the middle poll until after an article had been written on it. However, at the time *this* article was published, all of the polls were in deadlock:

By Monday, the story was creating headlines from the UK to the US after news the presenters were "shattered" over Mrs Saldanha's death.

Yet a [news.com.au](#) poll, asking whether the presenters should be blamed for the death, was deadlocked at 50-50.

Another [News Limited](#) poll suggested that Australians believed the presenters were not at fault, with two thirds of the 11,000 votes saying they were not to blame.

"Suicide is a tragedy but it is a mental health issue and let's not lost (sic) focus of this in this media frenzy," @Peter_Lombard tweeted us.

"As a professional media trainer I think the DJs took too long to speak," Grahame Kelly [commented](#).

"They needed to come out immediately the nurse took her life and say they were sorry for such a tragic, unintended consequence of their actions."

Another [news.com.au](#) poll, asking whether radio pranks should be banned was also almost deadlocked, with 50.3 per cent of [news.com.au](#) voters for the ban.

Now, with more details emerging over the suicide, along with death threats to Austereo 2DayFM staff, fever pitch is yet to settle.

Opinion is still rife and there are no clear answers, but no doubt with the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) [investigation on its way](#), answers could be on their way sooner, rather than later.

The second article didn't only reference the poll, it formed the entire premise of the article. It has since been removed (19/12/2012) [mirror](#).



The screenshot shows a news article from news.com.au. The title is "Divided Nation: Maybe we should call it 'foccer'". Below the title, it says "35 comments". There are three bullet points: "Yesterday, we ran a story about Del Piero calling football 'soccer'", "Our poll found readers are evenly split", and "2006 votes for 'football', 2006 for 'soccer'". The author is Anthony Sharwood, dated December 14, 2012, 1:33PM. There are social media sharing buttons for Recommend, Facebook, and Twitter. Below the article text, there is a poll titled "Results: Settle the debate" with the question "What term do you think should be used for the round-ball game?". The poll shows two bars: "Football" at 50% (2006 votes) and "Soccer" at 50% (2006 votes). The total votes are 4012. A note at the bottom says "For those into numbers, 2006 was also the year when Del Piero's Italian side won the FIFA World Cup. Source: news.com.au".

Divided Nation: Maybe we should call it 'foccer'

35 comments

- Yesterday, we ran a story about Del Piero calling football "soccer"
- Our poll found readers are evenly split
- 2006 votes for "football", 2006 for "soccer"

By Anthony Sharwood
news.com.au
December 14, 2012
1:33PM

Recommend 41 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.

Twitter 1

IT'S OFFICIAL. Australia is completely split down the middle on the issue of whether to call the world's most popular sport "soccer" or "football".

A News.com.au reader poll which has attracted 4,012 votes at the latest count reveals that exactly 2006 people voted for football, and 2006 for soccer.

The poll mirrors the response of you, our readers, who argued in the comments section for both terms with equal passion in a [story we ran yesterday](#).

Results: Settle the debate

Thanks for voting!

What term do you think should be used for the round-ball game?

Term	Percentage	Votes
Football	50%	2006 votes
Soccer	50%	2006 votes

Total votes: 4012

For those into numbers, 2006 was also the year when Del Piero's Italian side won the FIFA World Cup. Source: news.com.au

THEY'VE MADE CONTACT!

Today, a colleague emailed one of the authors of one of the articles to ask if they were curious as to why their poll result was deadlocked... and we actually got a response! This was collectively our fourth attempt at contacting them, and we have again provided all of the details to date. As usual, after spilling the beans, we don't get a response. However, two days later, the first Facebook poll appears. This may be a stop-gap measure while they fix their own system, or perhaps they've switched permanently who knows.

In the meantime, let's summarise my work to date with a montage:

26th Nov 2012
to
16th Dec 2012

RESULTS: BIG BANKS
Thanks for voting!

Should the big banks immediately hand over interest rate cuts?

Yes 50% (9549 votes)
No 50% (9549 votes)
Total votes: 19098

Results: Pointy question
Thanks for voting!

Should vaccinations for children be mandatory?

No 50% (86527 votes)
Yes 50% (86527 votes)
Total votes: 173054

RESULTS: RADIO PRANK CALL
Thanks for voting!

Did they go too far?

Yes. I am not amused 50% (7253 votes)
No. Lighten up people 50% (7253 votes)
Total votes: 14506

Results: Health rebates
Thanks for voting!

Will this rebate encourage you to live healthily?

Yes 50% (2377 votes)
No 50% (2377 votes)
Total votes: 4754

Results: Free ambulance

Thanks for voting!

Should ambulance be free to all Australians?

Yes 33.33% (766 votes)
No 33.33% (766 votes)
Unsure 33.33% (766 votes)
Total votes: 2298

Results: Driver's licence

Thanks for voting!

Do you feel ripped off by the looming \$70 fee hike to renew your driver's licence?

Yes 50% (787 votes)
No 50% (787 votes)
Total votes: 1574

Results: Today's poll

Thanks for voting!

Should 2DayFM radio presenters Mei Greig and Michael Christian be blamed for the death of nurse Jacintha Saldanha?

Yes 50% (26721 votes)
No 50% (26721 votes)
Total votes: 53442

RESULTS: TODAY'S POLL

Thanks for voting!

Is arresting a goat on a leash in the Sydney CBD bureaucracy gone mad?

Yes 50% (5408 votes)
No 50% (5408 votes)
Total votes: 10816

POLL RESULTS: CARLTON CAPTAIN

Thanks for voting!

Who should captain Carlton in 2013?

Not known 25%
Marc Murphy 25%
Not known 25%
Andrew Carrazzo 25%
Not known 25%
Kade Simpson 25%
Not known 25%
Michael Jamison 25%
Total votes: 65584

RESULTS: UP TO PUP

Thanks for voting!

Should Michael Clarke ask Shane Warne to make a comeback?

Yes 50% (7947 votes)
No 50% (7947 votes)
Total votes: 15894

RESULTS: VOTE NOW

Thanks for voting!

Is Phil Hughes the answer as Australia's No.3 in the batting order?

Yes 50% (551 votes)
No 50% (551 votes)
Total votes: 1102

On 17th Dec 2012, news.com.au starts using Facebook to host their polls.

Search for people, places and things

Should the US limit access to guns?

Yes. They should ban guns altogether.

Yes. They should only allow one handgun per household.

No. Guns are not the problem.

No. There should be more guns to protect people.

Asked By news.com.au on Sunday · 474

ubermotive.com

It really shows my OCD side, doesn't it?

UPDATE [19/12/2012]: Well, that escalated quickly ([reddit](#) helped). It appears that all references to polls (including the polls themselves) in the aforementioned articles have been removed. The articles which were based entirely on a poll result have been expunged entirely. I've put up mirrors for anyone who wants to see the originals. Still no word from NewsCorp. I'm just speculating here, but it looks like they're sweeping the whole thing under the rug. Looking out my front window, there are no sightings of a party van.

