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**Breaking News**

## Public speaking? I'd rather be dead

A new study on the fear of public speaking has given weight to US comedian Jerry Seinfeld's observation that people would rather be in the coffin than deliver the eulogy.

A Newspoll survey has found 23 per cent of Australians fear public speaking more than death, compared with 27 per cent of respondents who ranked death as their number one fear.

"This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy," Seinfeld once said of a similar study.

The online study, commissioned by Reasontospeak.com, was conducted among 1,206 adults aged 18 to 64 across the country in October 2008.

"Public speaking can be a huge problem for many people," the company's founder Paul Griffiths said in a statement.

"Our survey confirms that close to a quarter of Australian men and women is more concerned about the idea of speaking in front of an audience than dying.

"Interestingly, our study also revealed no gender differences for fear of public speaking."

Mr Griffiths said education was an important factor in building confidence for public speaking.

"Of those whose highest level of education completed was high school, 28 per cent indicated public speaking as their worst fear, whereas only 15 per cent of university degree holders harboured this as their number one fear."

The data showed 25 per cent of the 35 to 64-year-old age bracket feared public speaking more than death, compared with only 18 per cent of the 18 to 34 age group.

The survey also found death and public speaking were feared almost equally by regional respondents - at 25 and 24 per cent respectively - while city dwellers feared dying (29 per cent) more than public speaking (21).

AAP