

The Impact of Framing and Elite Cues on Public Attitudes: The Case of Central Bank Digital Currencies

Anwar Sheluchin

CPSA 2025



Introduction

- A central bank digital currency (CBDC) is digital money issued by a country's central bank.

Background

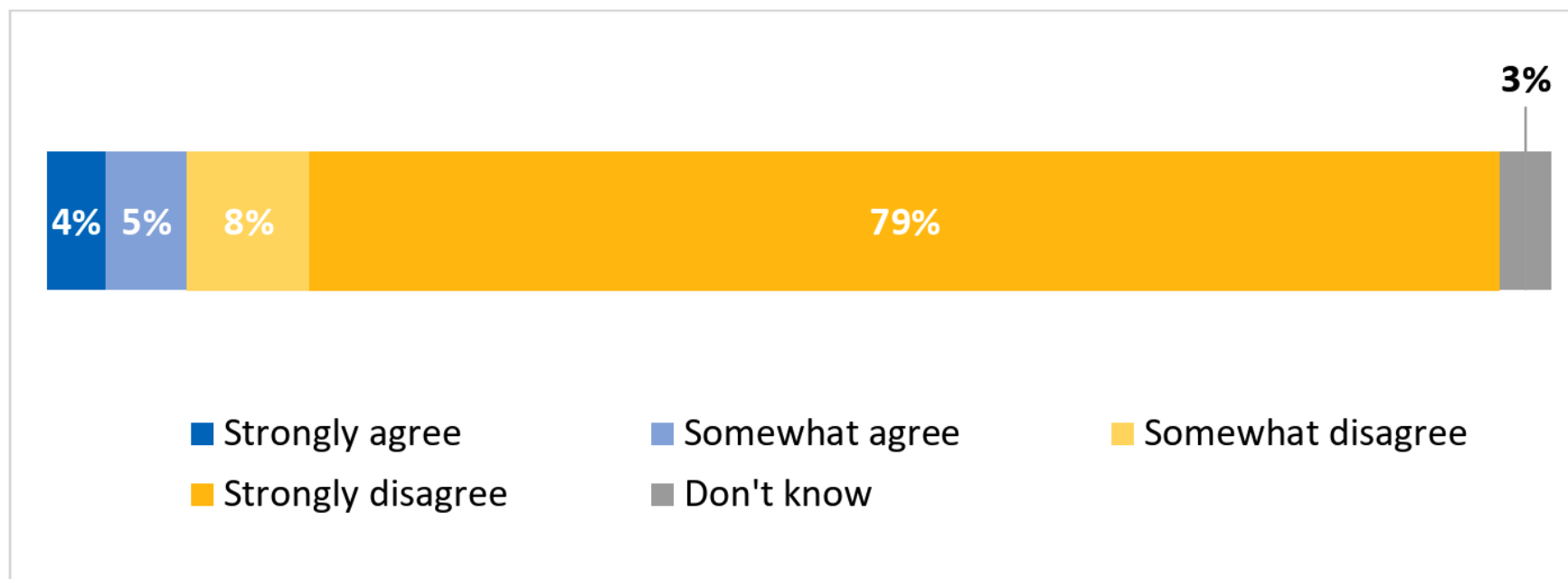
- Since 2016, the Bank of Canada (BoC) has conducted extensive research on CBDCs.
- Between 2020-2023, the BoC conducted consultations with financial institutions, civil society organizations and the public on a digital Canadian dollar.

Background

- The public consultation took the form of an online questionnaire open to all Canadians.
 - "Respondents to the public questionnaire were largely opposed to a digital dollar and to the Bank of Canada researching it. They were concerned about the impacts that a digital dollar could have on their rights" (Bank of Canada 2024).

Background

Figure 19. Distribution of respondents' trust in Bank of Canada to issue a secured digital Canadian dollar.



Q. How much do you agree with this statement? I trust the Bank of Canada to issue a digital Canadian dollar that is secure, meaning it is resistant to cyberattacks, can't be stolen or tampered with.

Number of completed surveys: 89,423

Asked to: All respondents

Background

- The findings from the BoC focus groups revealed that participants were unsure of the benefits of a CBDC.
- In contrast to Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, CBDCs were viewed as more secure, trustworthy and reliable.

Motivation

- If we know the public cares about CBDCs, but doesn't know much about them, how do we measure this – and why does it matter?

Research Questions

- How susceptible is public opinion to various arguments on CBDCs?
- To what extent do elite cues on CBDCs affect public trust in the Bank of Canada to issue one?

Theory

- Framing theory: how the presentation of information can shape public opinion
- Elite cues: signals or messages from political elites that help individuals form opinions on issues, especially when they lack deep prior knowledge

Hypotheses

- H1: Exposure to a positive frame will increase trust in the Bank of Canada's ability to issue a secure CBDC.
- H2: Exposure to a negative frame will decrease trust in the Bank of Canada's ability to issue a secure CBDC.
- H3: Exposure to elite cues will polarize trust evaluations along partisan lines.

Methods

- A pre-post survey experimental design.
- 7 questions into the module, all participants completed initial assessment measuring baseline level of trust in the BoC to issue a CBDC. Followed by 4 more questions.
- Participants were then randomly assigned to one of five conditions.
- Immediately after the treatment, participants were asked the DV question a second time.

Frames and cues

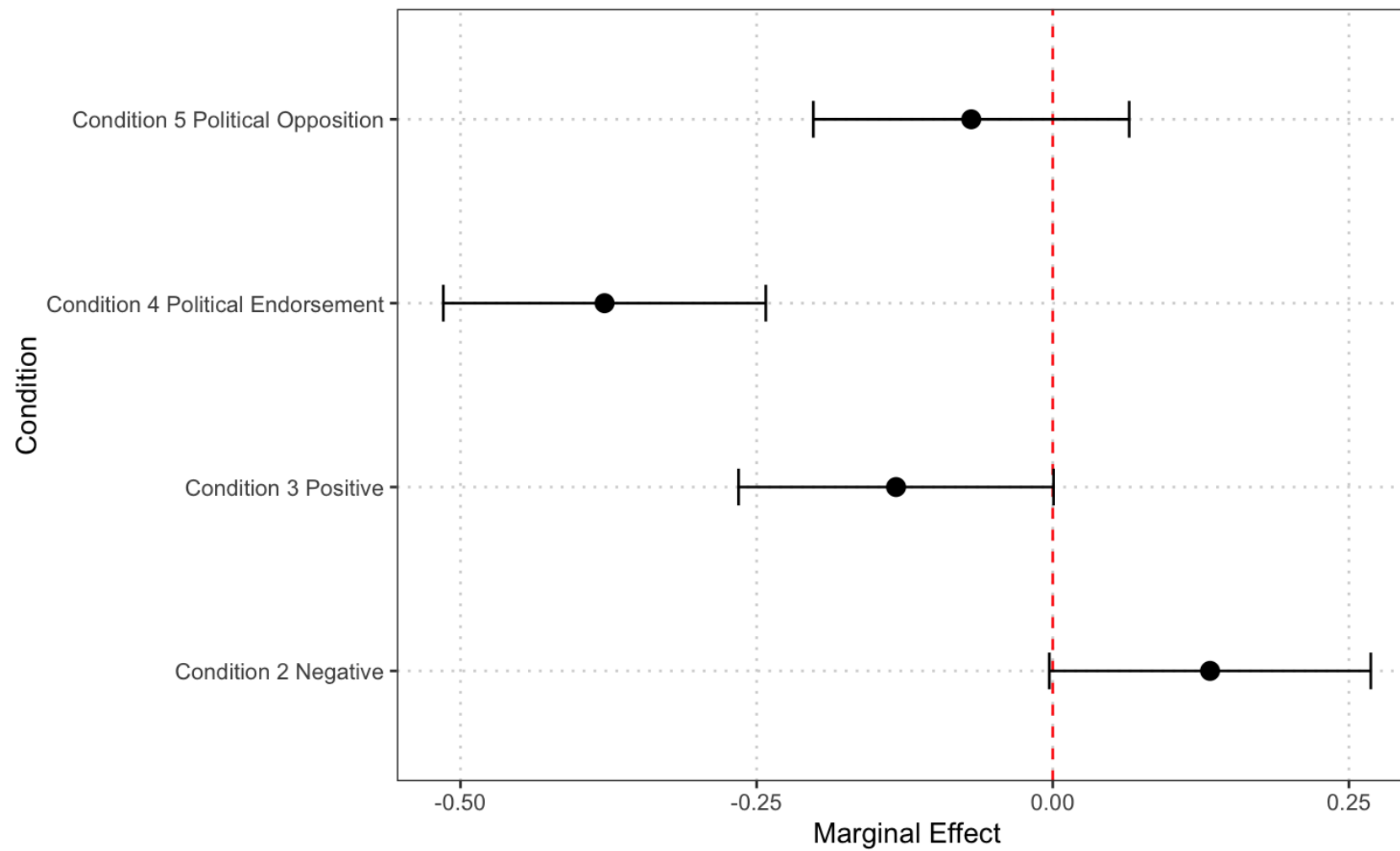
- **Neutral:** Experts are discussing the creation of a digital Canadian dollar.
- **Negative:** Many experts believe that the creation of a digital Canadian dollar could increase government surveillance of personal payments.
- **Positive:** Many experts believe that the creation of a digital Canadian dollar could decrease criminal activities such as fraud or money laundering.
- **Political opposition:** Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre has opposed the creation of a digital Canadian dollar.
- **Political endorsement:** Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre has endorsed the potential benefits of cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

Data

- Survey experiment was included in an omnibus survey administered between 20 March and 3 April 2024. A sample of 2600 Canadian participants were recruited from the VPL opt-in online panel. Sample was stratified on key demographics. Participants did not receive monetary compensation. The questions were administered in both English and French.

- I trust the Bank of Canada to issue a digital Canadian dollar that is secure, meaning it is resistant to cyberattacks, can't be stolen or tampered with.
 - Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree

Results



Results

- To further examine the effect of the political endorsement condition we estimate a model that includes interaction terms between treatment assignment and party identification.
- Analysis was restricted to respondents identifying with the Liberals, Conservatives and NDP, who collectively comprised 82% of the sample.

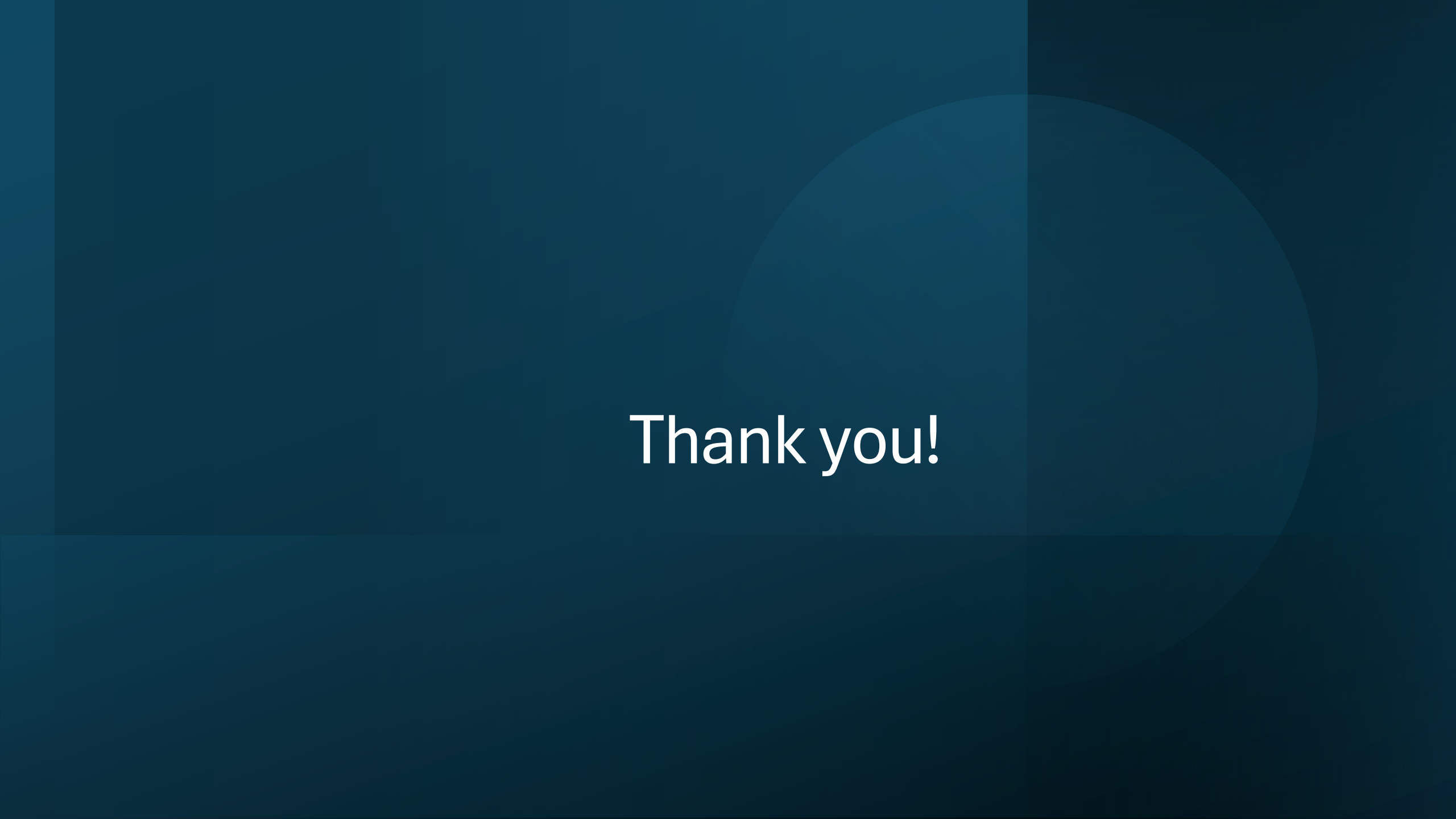
partyID	term	estimate	std.error	statistic	p.value	significance
Lib	(Intercept)	1.083	0.126	8.582	0.000	Significant
Lib	Condition 2 Negative	-0.109	0.106	-1.025	0.306	Not Significant
Lib	Condition 3 Positive	-0.158	0.105	-1.509	0.132	Not Significant
Lib	Condition 4 Political Endorsement	-0.747	0.113	-6.621	0.000	Significant
Lib	Condition 5 Political Opposition	-0.119	0.104	-1.151	0.250	Not Significant
Lib	trustBefore	0.673	0.027	24.774	0.000	Significant
Con	(Intercept)	0.791	0.115	6.897	0.000	Significant
Con	Condition 2 Negative	0.422	0.126	3.341	0.001	Significant
Con	Condition 3 Positive	-0.139	0.123	-1.132	0.258	Not Significant
Con	Condition 4 Political Endorsement	0.043	0.121	0.354	0.723	Not Significant
Con	Condition 5 Political Opposition	-0.047	0.125	-0.378	0.706	Not Significant
Con	trustBefore	0.655	0.026	25.021	0.000	Significant
NDP	(Intercept)	0.918	0.145	6.344	0.000	Significant
NDP	Condition 2 Negative	0.155	0.129	1.206	0.228	Not Significant
NDP	Condition 3 Positive	-0.075	0.127	-0.593	0.553	Not Significant
NDP	Condition 4 Political Endorsement	-0.328	0.124	-2.637	0.009	Significant
NDP	Condition 5 Political Opposition	-0.012	0.126	-0.094	0.925	Not Significant
NDP	trustBefore	0.692	0.032	21.718	0.000	Significant

Findings

- Mixed support for the study's hypotheses. Certain frames failed to produce the anticipated effects.
 - The political opposition condition did not produce a statistically significant effect on trust in the BoC to issue a CBDC.
 - The political endorsement (of Bitcoin) produced a statistically significant decline in trust in the BoC to issue a CBDC. This effect was not uniform across partisan groups.

Limitations and next steps

- Counterintuitive results
- The least relevant treatment was the one with the biggest effect.
- Subgroup analysis (familiarity, knowledge of CBDs).
- Another experiment?



Thank you!