

# Government communication during crises of collective behaviour

Nicholas Diamond



Impact Canada



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

# Behavioural science at Impact Canada

## Who we are

**Impact Canada**, within the Government of Canada's Privy Council Office, **is tasked with scaling up and mainstreaming “outcomes-based” policy/program methods**, such as the application of insights and methodologies from the behavioural sciences. Taken together these actions are focused on **bridging the gap between policy development and effective implementation**.

## Our Programs of Research

Since 2017, our team has used **insights and methods from behavioural science (BeSci) to promote better outcomes for Canadians**.

In 2020, we transitioned to a new model of applied behavioural science wherein we establish **large multi-year programs of research in partnership with federal departments who lead priority files**.

In partnership with these departments, **we conduct research to identify behavioural challenges, explore factors underlying them, and design and test – online and in the real world – interventions with potential for high impact**.

# Our evidence base

IU research draws on a range of data collection methods and embedded online experiments that it has led or co-led with a range of partners. This includes:



## **The COVID-19 Snapshot Monitoring Study (COSMO Canada)**

- Longitudinal nationally-representative survey measuring Canadians' pandemic-related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours
- April 2020 – May 2023; each wave includes ~2000 Canadians (sometimes including oversampled populations of interest)
- In partnership with Public Health Agency of Canada



## **Program of Applied Research on Climate Action (PARCA)**

- Longitudinal nationally-representative survey measuring Canadians' climate and environment-related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours.
- December 2021 – February 2023; each wave includes ~2000 Canadians
- In partnership with Environment and Climate Change Canada and Natural Resources Canada



## **The Trust, Information, and Digital Ecosystems Study (TIDES)**

- Cross-sectional, nationally-representative survey series to broaden and deepen understanding of trust and its cross-cutting impacts, in connection with related factors (misinformation, literacies, social cohesion, and confidence in democracy)
- Wave 1 fielded in November-December 2022; Wave 2 fielded in March 2023; each wave includes ~3400 Canadians
- In partnership with Public Health Agency of Canada

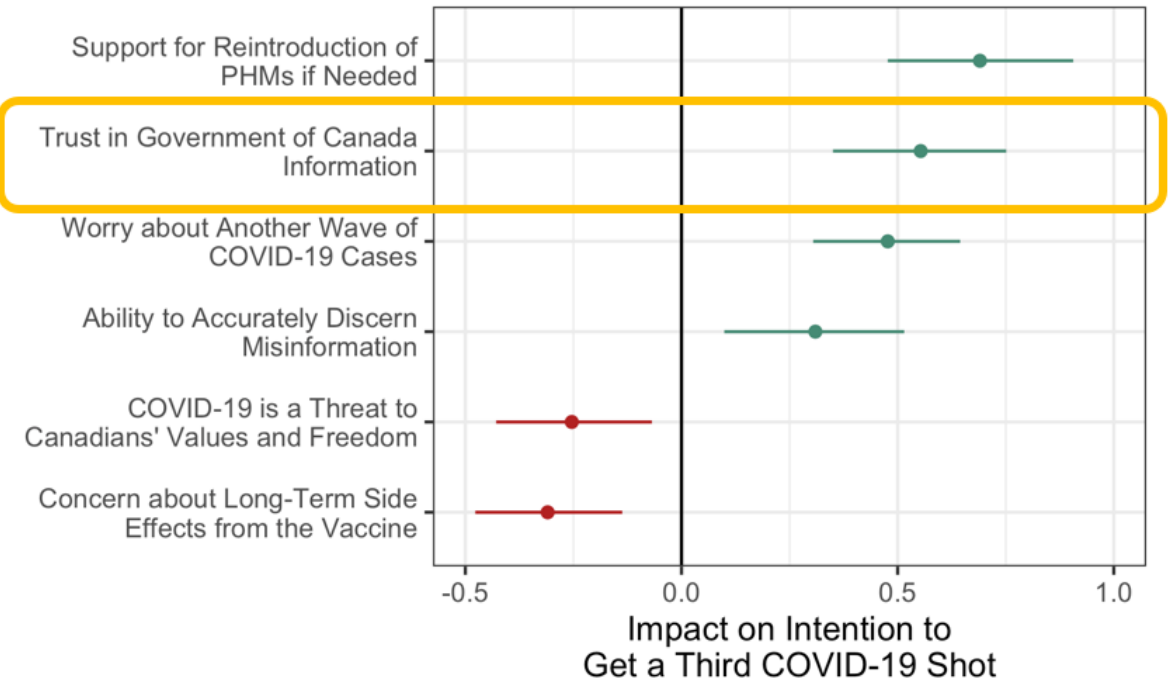
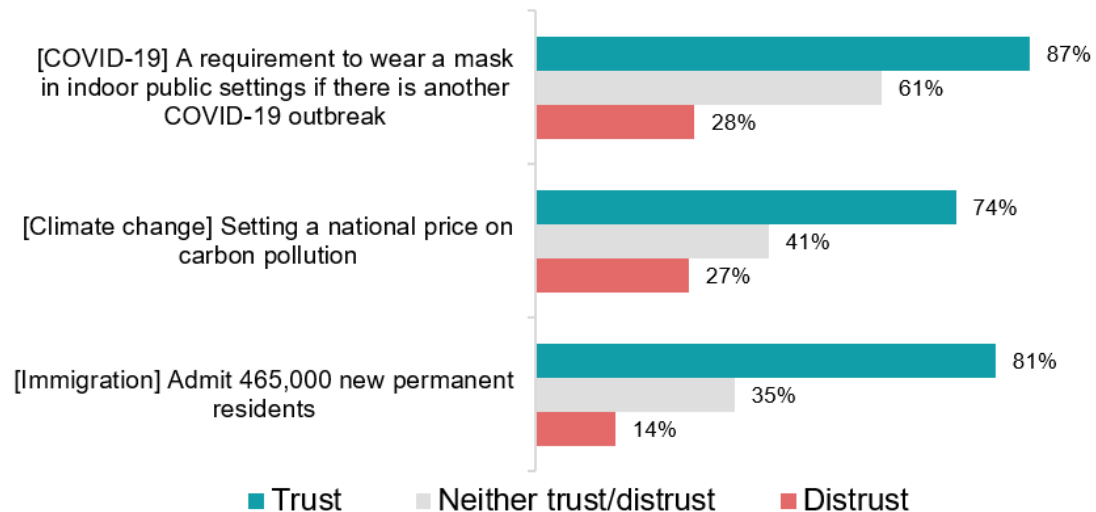
# Collective action problems

- Tension between collective good and individual incentives
  - E.g., COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, antimicrobial resistance...
- Difficult to navigate in the face of complex and changing realities
- Communication is key!

# Considerations for effective communication

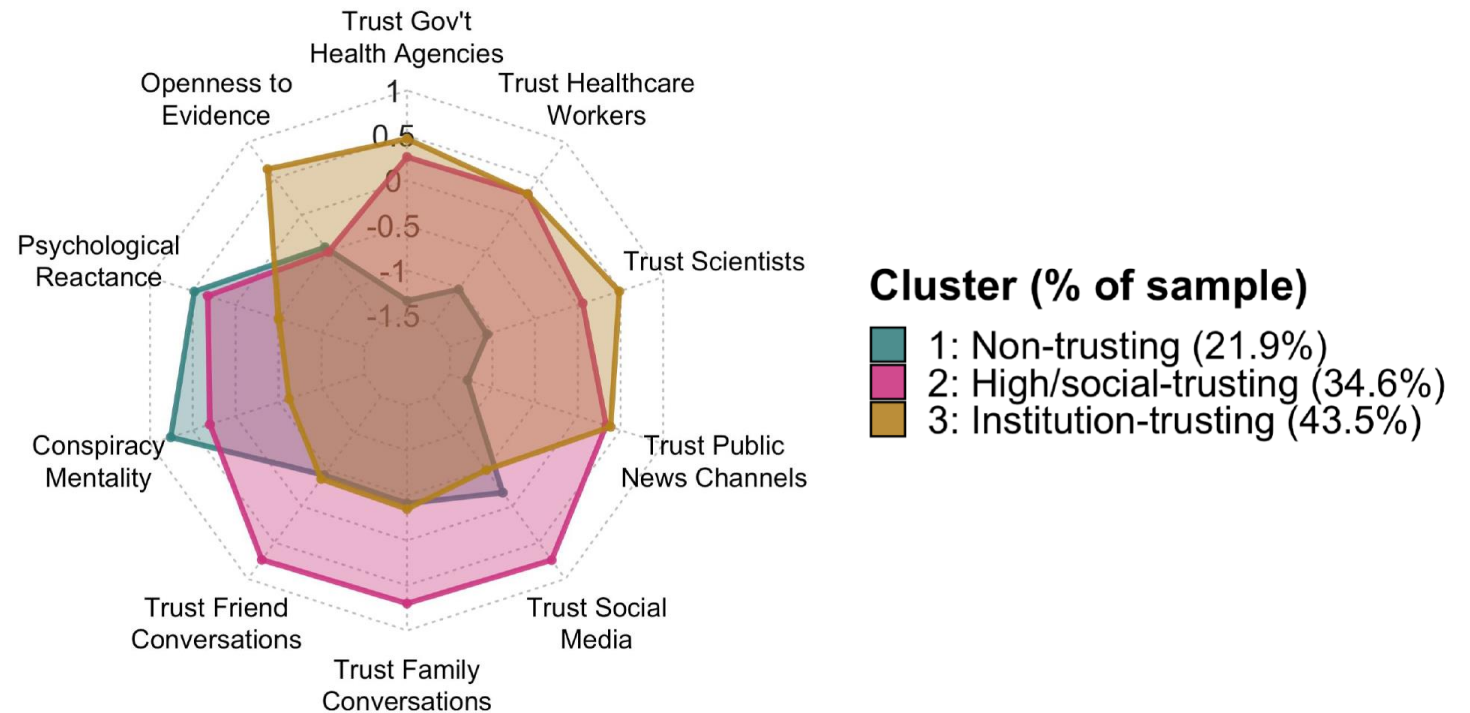
## 1. Trust shapes everything

How much do you support or oppose the following [health-related] [environmental] [immigration-related] policy?  
% = Canadians who strongly or somewhat support



# Considerations for effective communication

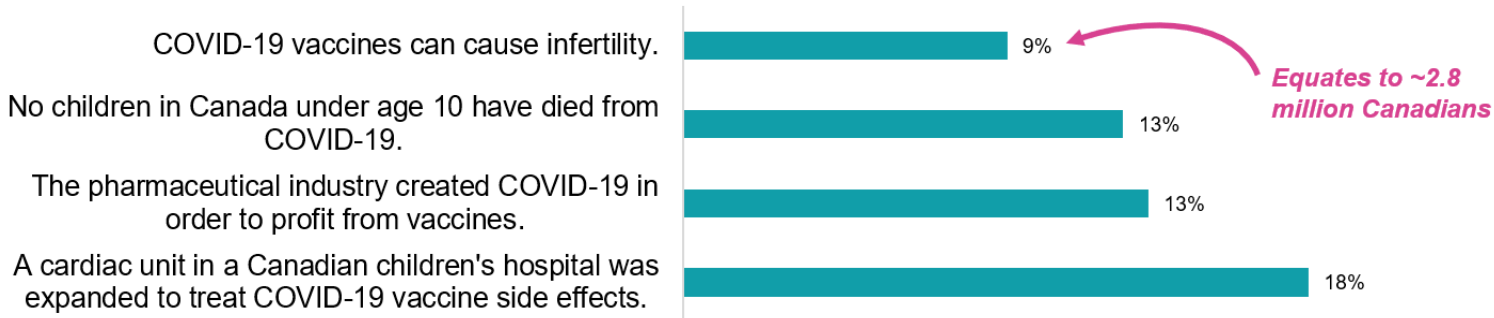
1. Trust shapes everything
2. We live in fragmented information ecosystems



# Considerations for effective communication

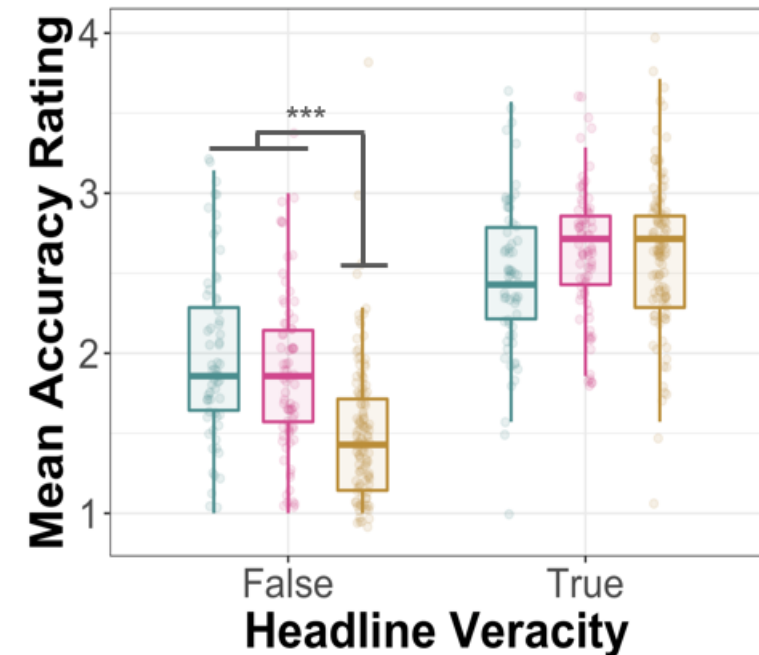
1. Trust shapes everything
2. We live in fragmented information ecosystems
3. **Misinformation is pervasive**

**% of inaccurate COVID-19 claims rated as accurate**



**Cluster (% of sample)**

- 1: Non-trusting (21.9%)
- 2: High/social-trusting (34.6%)
- 3: Institution-trusting (43.5%)



# An experiment to improve vaccine communications using *operational transparency*

- Disclosing the “behind-the-scenes” work an organization undertakes through its operating processes (Buell & Norton, 2011)
- We conducted an online experiment with **1554 unvaccinated Canadians** (in fall 2021)

**Active Control**      **End-to-End Process**      **Typical vs. 'Rapid' COVID Process**      **Success Funnel**      **Benefits outweigh Risks**

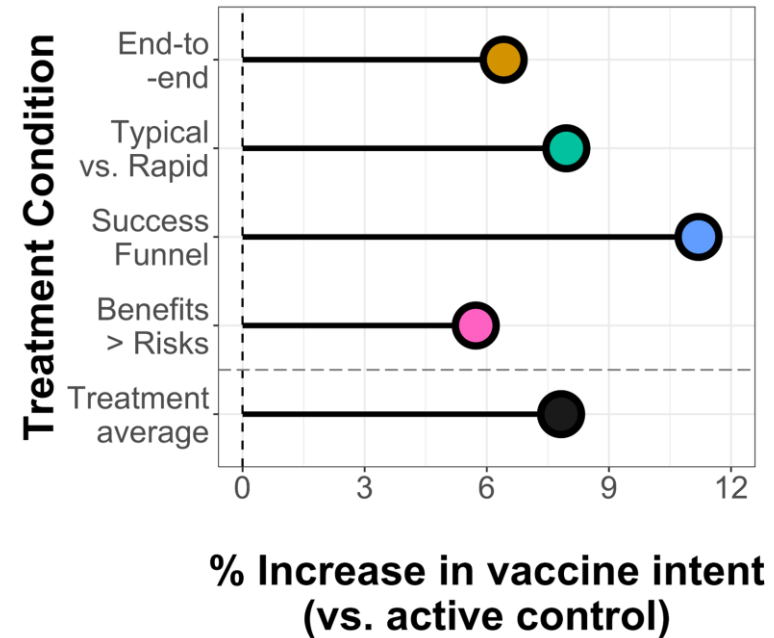
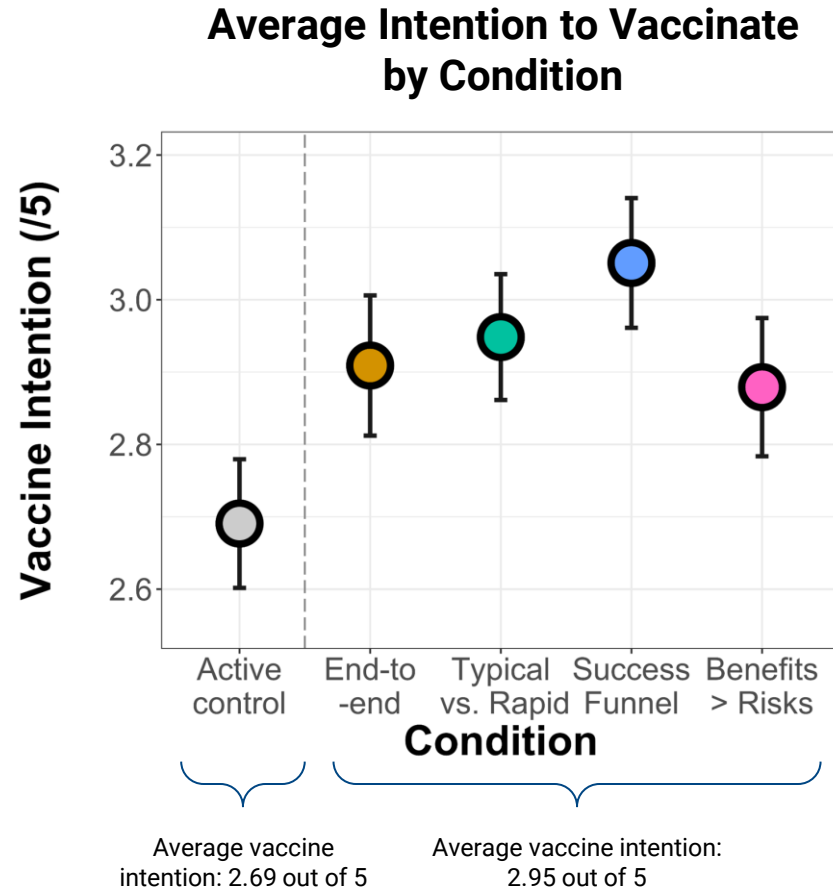
versus

The image displays five smartphone screens, each showing a tweet from Health Canada and PHAC (@GovCanHealth) at 12:29. A vertical dashed line labeled "versus" separates the first screen from the others.

- Active Control:** Tweet (1/5) Fact: Only vaccines that are proven to be safe, effective, and of high quality are authorized for use in Canada. When your turn comes, roll up your sleeve and get the #CovidVaccine. More info: [ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb](https://ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb). Includes a graphic titled "The vaccines are safe." and 30 Retweets, 175 Likes.
- End-to-End Process:** Tweet (1/5) Any #COVID-19 vaccines approved in Canada must pass a rigorous assessment and approval process. View this thread to learn about each step. You can also click here for more information: [ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb](https://ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb) #SleevesUp. Includes a graphic titled "How are vaccines developed and approved?" and 30 Retweets, 175 Likes.
- Typical vs. 'Rapid' COVID Process:** Tweet (1/5) A global effort, large investments in research and manufacturing, and new approaches paved the way for the speedy development of #COVID19 vaccines without compromising safety. View this thread to learn about each step or click here for more information: [ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb](https://ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb) #SleevesUp. Includes a graphic titled "How are vaccines developed and approved?" and 30 Retweets, 175 Likes.
- Success Funnel:** Tweet (1/5) Any #COVID-19 vaccines approved in Canada must pass a rigorous assessment and approval process. View this thread to learn about each step. You can also click here for more information: [ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb](https://ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb) #SleevesUp. Includes a graphic titled "A Rigorous Path to Approval" with a funnel chart showing 4, 32, 39, and 53 stages. Includes 30 Retweets, 175 Likes.
- Benefits outweigh Risks:** Tweet (1/5) For all COVID-19 vaccines used in Canada, the benefits of the vaccine must outweigh the risks. But what type of "benefits" and "risks" are we talking about when making these decisions? View this thread or click here for more information: [ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb](https://ow.ly/TRWH50Eqvzb) #SleevesUp. Includes a graphic titled "Benefits must always outweigh the risks" with a scale of justice icon. Includes 30 Retweets, 175 Likes.

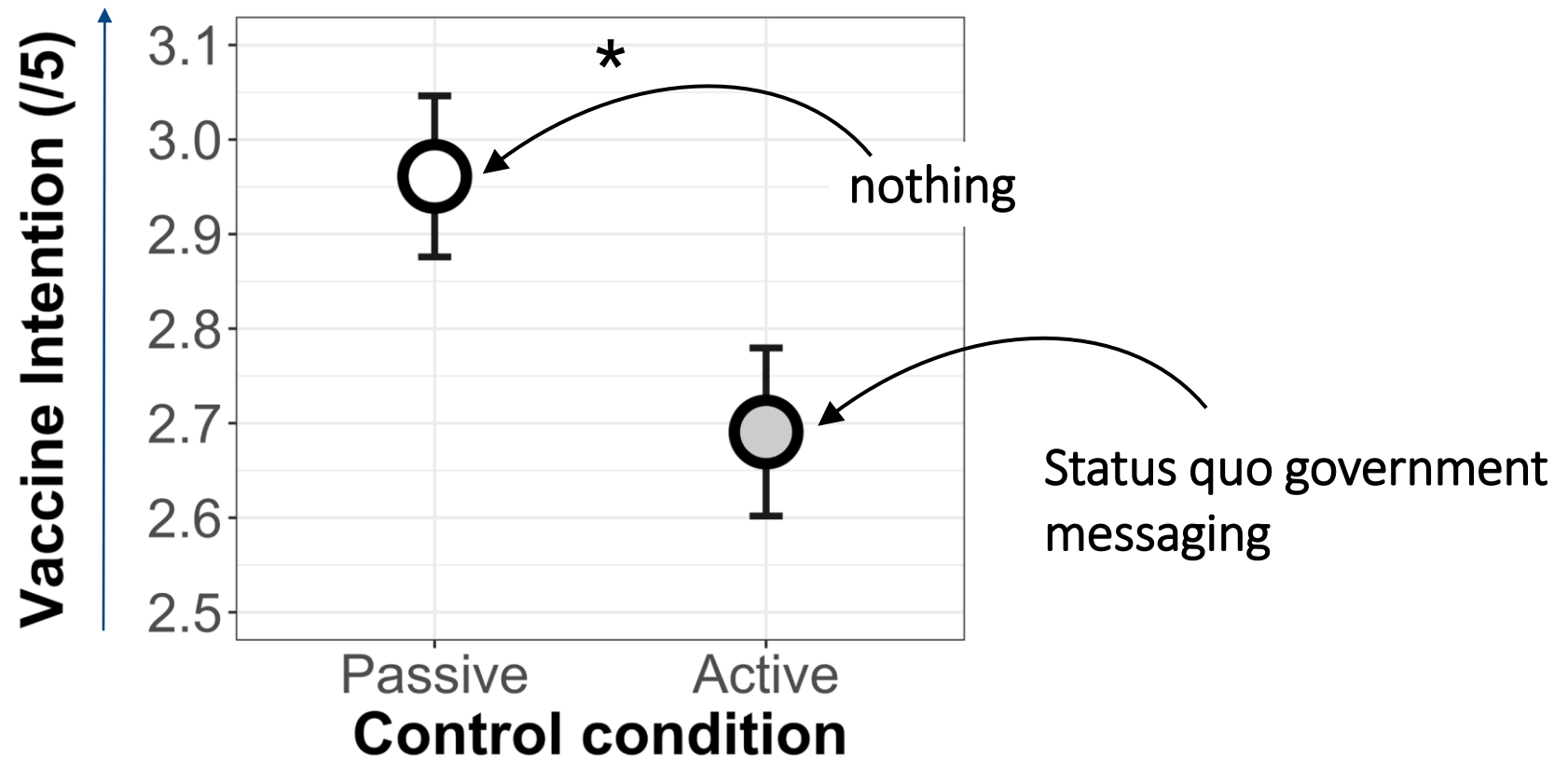


# Operationally transparent communications increase vaccine intentions



...but

Average Intention to Vaccinate across Active vs. Passive Controls



# Tips for communicating during/about collective action problems

- **Know the challenges**
  - Earn trust, and leverage trusted messengers
  - Tailor your messages to your multiple audiences - there is no 'average'
  - Anticipate misinformation (or competing communications)
- **Operational transparency can be an effective way to earn trust and bring about collective behaviour change**

# Thank you!

To learn more about Impact Canada and connect with us at

<https://impact.canada.ca>

## For more information:

Nicholas Diamond

Senior Behavioural Scientist

[nicholas.diamond@pco-bcp.gc.ca](mailto:nicholas.diamond@pco-bcp.gc.ca)

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