

EXAGGERATED VACCINE PESSIMISM:

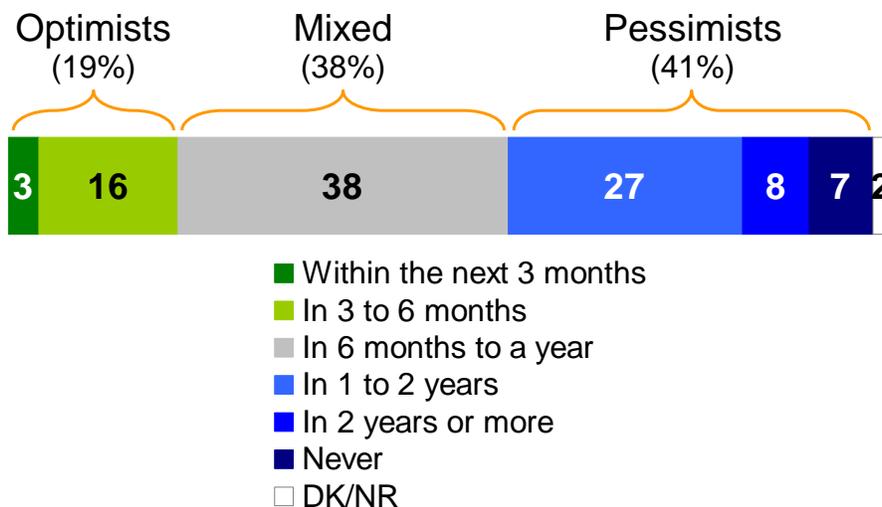
IS THIS PRODUCING CORROSIVE IMPACTS ON COMPLIANCE, ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, AND STRESS?

SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

Experts are divided on when a COVID-19 vaccine will be available. However, our latest data suggest that the public's views on the matter are unrealistically pessimistic. Four in ten think that a vaccine is at least a year away, including seven per cent who doubt a vaccine will ever be made available.

Anticipated timing of a vaccine

Q. Thinking of the COVID-19 pandemic, when do you think a vaccine will become available?



BASE: Canadians; August 26-September 1, 2020, n=2,646, MOE +/- 1.9%, 19 times out of 20

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We would hypothesize that vaccine pessimism may be unduly clouding public outlook and linked to compliance fatigue. Those with a more pessimistic outlook are a mixed group demographically but it seems, ironically, to be stronger among those with open outlooks.¹ In any case, understanding the impact of when people expect a vaccine (as well as their expectations regarding safety and efficacy) is crucial. Vaccine pessimism may be dampening economic outlook, increasing stress and despair, and eroding compliance/safe behaviour.

These findings are important and bear further investigation. If we can convince the public that a vaccine will arrive sooner rather than later, it may help on a number of fronts. While there are

¹ 'Open outlook' is characterized by an emphasis on openness, creativity, and evidence-based decision making, while ordered outlook' is characterized by an emphasis on order, good behaviour, and moral certainty



many intractable problems with public outlook on the pandemic, dispelling exaggerated pessimism may be a correctable problem which would produce tangible benefits. Given that pessimists are fairly evenly distributed across most demographic segments it is possible that a broad-based communications strategy could at the very least dispel an unnecessary source of stress and anxiety for a large segment of Canadian society and possibly produce higher consumer confidence while arresting some of the fraying compliance ethic we have witnessed in recent months.