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Life is good and getting better. Here is the proof

There is a pervasive sense of foreboding in the world today, perhaps we can blame the Mayans for convincing us the world is about to end? People by and large, seem to feel that 'things are bad' and getting worse, but what do we mean by 'things are bad'?

The 21st century has seen huge advancements in technology, the way we consume information and products in general, tends to be digital. Almost all of us carry a digital device everywhere, which keeps us up to date with social, environmental and political changes. We are 'informed' and so are our opinions, strange then that we seem to be so pessimistic when there is proof that not only is 'current year' the greatest time to be alive in all history, but it also shows signs of continuously getting better.

And here is how.

War. What is it good for?

Although it may feel there is perpetual conflict flooding our screens, it would appear that global conflict has actually dropped, massively. In this astounding [data collection by Max Roser](#) we can see that two of the world's largest powers have been at war with each other more than 50% of the time since around 1500. The 20th century may have started with two brutal conflicts in rapid succession, but it would seem the wounds inflicted upon society have left an impressionable scar. For the first time in history, there has been no war or conflict in Western Europe in about three generations. War isn't over, but we are giving peace a chance.

Poverty

Every day around 200,000 people are lifted above the US \$2 a day poverty line. Specifically, the extraordinary economic growth in the large populations of India and China has led to a decline from nearly 35% in 1987 to under 11% in 2013 and it continues to fall.

What's more, global income inequality has dropped, as shown below. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution, about half of the global population can be considered global middle class.

And GDP has accelerated in developed countries with technological leaders such as the US and Western Europe growing by about 2% on average per year, for the past 150 years. This means real income levels have roughly doubled every 36 years.

Famine

The Global Hunger Index measures undernutrition as measured by the International Food research Institute between 2000 and 2017. As this map demonstrates, there has been a marked decrease of 50% or more in countries with large populations such as China and up to 25% in India and parts of Africa. Of course, there is still more work to be done, but it would seem we are moving in the right direction.



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Population

A big concern for the pessimist is overpopulation, especially in light of famine. The graph below shows that despite deliberation over a population explosion, fertility rates have actually dropped around the globe. UN population estimates predict that the global population will stabilise at around 11 billion by the end of this century. What's more, many developing countries such as China, Brazil and some African nations have adopted a low-fertility regime. This is a transition that took hundreds of years in more advanced economies, but has been achieved in these places in just two to three decades.

Health

We are living for longer, as life expectancy continues to rise. Surprisingly, or not, this is a relatively recent phenomenon. Lifespans in Europe fell between 1850 and 1870, but have more than doubled the world over since. Female and male life expectancy both increased by more than six years between 1990 and 2016 and the rise was biggest in poor countries across Africa and Asia.

Guinea worm is a non-fatal but debilitating parasitic infection, and as recently as 1986, millions of people were affected annually. There is no vaccine or cure. Guinea worms grow in your body cavities, then work their way out often through your leg or foot. Once the worm's exposed, it needs to be gradually coaxed out of your body in a sterile environment. If, to relieve the pain, you place your foot in water with a worm exposed, the worm will burst and send millions of larvae into the water supply. If people drink the water later, then they're at risk of getting the worm. Luckily, this horrible little parasite has been almost completely eradicated.

Education

Again, there is still a lot of work to be done, but even in developing countries such as China and India we can see the average years at school rising.

This of course means that literacy is on the rise as well.

If society can maintain these trends, perhaps talk about them a little more, we could draw something from this data and use it to fuel further positive change then maybe, just maybe, we could face the future with some optimism. What's your outlook?