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Daily Mail editorial: Whether it is good or bad, keep news in context

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“This just in: The world has made spectacular progress in every single measure of human well-being, say economists. And even more shocking: Almost no one knows about it.”

That’s not the typical intro to a local or network newscast, nor is it the typical story news readers see in daily newspapers across the world.

But the biggest shocker — despite the mayhem and conflict you hear and read about in the news every day, the bad things that happen across the world on a daily basis, as terrible as they are, are dwarfed by the good.

Seriously. Would you rush out to get your morning newspaper before breakfast if the banner headline almost every day read something like this: “Most things A-OK in W.Va. yesterday.”

And if the lede of the story practically every day was, “Of the 94,500 people employed in the Charleston area, 86,825 went to work, performed their duties, and at the end of their shift left for home or activities with friends or family.

“Meanwhile, on West Virginia’s 38,770 miles of public roads, traffic ran relatively clear except for a few usual slowdowns and six reported accidents on sections of less than three miles of road.”

Chances are, you wouldn’t be a subscriber or news viewer long if everything was put into the overall context.

The saying “no news is good news” has a corollary of “good news is no news.”

The mainstream media fail to adequately examine the most important fact in modern history, wrote David Boaz in a blog for the Cato Institute, “the enormous and continuing increase in human longevity and living standards since the industrial revolution.”

Reading mainstream news, “you’ll be well informed about the news in general and about problems such as racism, sexism, and environmental disaster,” Boaz wrote. “But you won’t often be reminded that we are the richest, most comfortable, best-fed, longest-lived people in history.”

“Or as Indur Goklany put it in a book title, you won’t hear about *The Improving State of the World: Why We’re Living Longer, Healthier, More Comfortable Lives on a Cleaner Planet.*”

The headline and subhead above aren't made up. The data is based on information from the past 25 years reported in the "Great Fact" by Deirdre McCloskey.

Certainly, the bad news should be reported, and we use it to learn and improve. But news readers and viewers are cautioned to remember the context and consider each day's bad news in relation with all the unreported good.