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Why the glass is half full

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It seems the news these days is nothing but bad. Through the media, we are told crime and violence rates are rising, rich cronies are getting richer and low-income earners are getting poorer, and war or rumors of war between countries across the globe run rampant.

But are things on Earth really getting worse than they were in the past, or do technologies such as the Internet just make it easier to learn about goings-on in far-flung parts of the world that would have occurred in the past without the common man knowing anything about them?

The answer, according to data collected by international organizations such as the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) may surprise some (if they get their news from politicians and the media.)

Objectively speaking, the human condition is getting better over time, not worse, thanks to the spread of free-market ideas across the world.

For example, data collected by HumanProgress.org, a project of the Cato Institute, suggests people on Earth have, on average, become more financially secure in just the past 10 years. According to figures from the OECD, the average amount of money any person could be expected to have saved after taxation rose by 40 percent from 2005 to 2015, jumping from \$21,950 to \$30,745.

Not only do people have more disposable income to save and spend as they please, they have more years in which they can use that money to enjoy life. Data from the World Bank show a baby boy born in 2014 has an average life expectancy of 69.1 years, while a boy born in 1960 had a life expectancy of only 51.9 years. Human medicine and technology have advanced so much in just the past 50 years that babies born today are expected to live almost 33 percent longer than their grandfathers.

Happiness and enjoyment of life's blessings can't be fully measured by economic or medical statistics. For example, what use would a long and prosperous life be if we didn't have music in our lives? It's a good thing, then, that there is more music to enjoy today than there was just 30 years ago.

According to MusicBrainz, an open-data online music encyclopedia, there have been more new albums and singles released in just 2015 than there were during the 14-year period spanning from 1980 to 1994.

If things are objectively getting better for people, then why do so many think things are getting worse?

Unfortunately, it's not in the interests of our media to talk about all of the ways in which life is improving. To quote a fictional news reporter from popular video game Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, "Officials say there are still no reported casualties, which is truly unfortunate, as it makes for incredibly boring news."

Lawmakers also have little use for reporting good news, because people may otherwise realize these improvements in human life occurred as a result of people freely conducting business with one another, without the help of government regulations and agencies. Instead, lawmakers and politicians focus on life's negatives and propose more policies and politics as the solutions to the world's problems, which are often caused by policies and politics.

Instead of believing the media and political spin that things are getting worse and government is the only answer, people need to research the facts and realize freedom has directly improved human happiness on Earth. It is quantifiable that wherever people are free, they have the means to be happy.