



State of humanity is excellent — and improving

Donald J. Boudreaux

November 14, 2019

To encounter the news today is to encounter an America verging on destruction. Global warming will soon incinerate us, but not before income inequalities turn ordinary Americans into the slaves of oligarchs. And as these ghastly fates unfold, those of us who somehow escape being raped, robbed and cheated out of employment by immigrants — and who aren't murdered by gun-wielding maniacs — will be impoverished by demonic mandarins in Beijing who've arranged for their own slaves to drown us in floods of underpriced goods.

The only hope of avoiding existential calamity, of course, is to turn over goo-gobs more power and money to your favorite tribe of politicians. Being superheroes, these politicians — and only they — can save us from Armageddon.

Pause. Breathe deeply. And consult two indispensable websites to get a truer, and much happier, picture of the state of humanity in general and of America in particular.

One of these sites is Max Roser's [Our World in Data](#).

[Life expectancy](#) — in the United States and globally — is at an all-time high. Today in the U.S. it's 78.9 years, which is 16% higher than in 1950 and 43% higher than it was a century ago. One reason (but by no means the only one) for this happy trend is the [rise in cancer survival rates](#).

And although global life expectancy is lower than in the U.S., it, too, is at an all-time high and continues to rise.

Also high and rising is [GDP per person](#).

The other website is [HumanProgress.org](#), a project lead by the Cato Institute's Marian Tupy. Smile at these encouraging trends:

- The [homicide rate from firearms](#) in the U.S. is today about 25% lower than it was in 1990.
- The [real value of the U.S. capital stock](#) — the value of the machines and other tools that help us to be so productive — is today 700% greater than it was in 1950 and 60% greater than it was in 2001, the year China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- To [produce each dollar of GDP](#), we Americans today use only about one-third the amount of energy we used in 1950, and only 63% of what we used in 1990.
- [Per-person CO2 emissions in the U.S.](#) hit its peak in 1973. Compared to then, each American today, on average, emits 27% fewer such emissions.

- The post-Great Depression year in which we Americans spent the largest share of our disposable personal income on food was 1947, when we used 23.5% of this income to buy food. Today we spend on food less than 10% of our disposable personal income.
- And the reason we spend less on food is that the prices of agricultural outputs today are less than half of what they were in 1947. The typical American today — compared to the past — gets more calories from vegetables, and he or she eats more protein. Our overall consumption of calories is very high.
- We are today much better fed in part because cereal yields, per hectare, are so much higher than in the past — as are yields of other agricultural products, including vegetables.

The above is only a tiny sample of the vast amount of informative data that are available from these two remarkable websites. Visit them yourself whenever you get discouraged about the state of the world.