



The World is getting better—Honest!

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Is the world getting worse or better? Given the constant barrage of bad news, it is easy to think things are going from bad to worse. You would be wrong, though.

“Ten Global Trends Every Smart Person Should Know (And Many Others You Will Find Interesting),” by Ronald Bailey and Marian L. Tupy, explains why. They show, using objective data, the different ways in which the world is improving.

They wrote the book because “You can’t fix what’s wrong in the world if you don’t know what is actually happening.” Using straightforward data and graphs they demonstrate why and how the world has improved, especially over the last 72 years.

The title’s ten trends are presented first. They include global enrichment, declining poverty, abundant resources, peak population, the end of famine, more land for nature, increasing urbanization, increasing democracy, world peace, and increased safety. Charts show the world is richer with fewer people in abject poverty than in any previous point in history. Famine is on the decline, with world population set to reach a peak in the 2070s and then decline. There are fewer interstate wars today than in the past, and the world has become a much safer place.

Additionally, there are more people living under representative governments and fewer under autocratic ones than in any time in the past.

Having delivered this good news, the authors drill down on trends in seven different areas: people, health, violence, work, natural resources, farm, and technology. They close with a section exploring trends in the United States. These reinforce the book’s theme: things are getting better.

The book has a simple format: a two-page presentation of each trend. The left page contains a discussion of the trend, the right page a graph presenting the trend graphically. This left-right combination provides a convincing argument for the authors’ conclusions. The sources are presented allowing readers to evaluate their validity.

This book demands a close reading, literally as well as figuratively. To provide over-generous white space, the text of the book is printed in a miniscule font forcing readers to read fine print. Readers with poor vision should consider getting an electronic version, where they can increase the font size.

This book is well worth reading. “Ten Global Trends,” offers an optimistic message, one bearing examination by a wide audience. We have problems, but “Ten Global Trends” identifies those we need not worry over.