



Reasons to be happy on Earth Day

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April 22 of each year is now Earth Day. (I note that April 22 is also the birthday of Vladimir Lenin. Readers may draw their own conclusions.)

The internet and airwaves will teem with gloom 'n' doom, as warnings are heard of a coming calamity. Guilt-tripping will also peak, with scolds cursing us for using such demonic devices as automobiles, HVACs and electric blenders.

We're ruining the earth and our own future — or so we're told.

I'm here to cheer you up by offering reasons for optimism about the future of both the earth and our species.

According to the invaluable interactive website HumanProgress.org, in this young century alone:

- Global infant mortality fell from 39 per 1,000 live births to 24.
- Global life-expectancy rose from 68 to 72 years.
- The percentage of the global population that is undernourished fell from 15 to 11.
- The food supply per person, measured in calories, rose by 7 percent. Since 1961 it's up by 26 percent.

Here's more good news. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “Between 1970 and 2017, the combined emissions of the six common pollutants (PM2.5 and PM10, SO2, NOx, VOCs, CO and Pb) dropped by 73 percent.”

Also:

- Since 1980 indoor air pollution — mostly from home cooking and heating — has steadily fallen in every region of the planet, as have deaths from such pollution.
- Global deforestation is a myth: Since 1982, an additional 2.24 million square kilometers — over 7 percent — of the earth's surface is covered by trees.
- Worldwide since 1990, the portion of the population who die from cancer is down 8 percent, and in the U.S. it is down by almost 20 percent.
- The globe's proven reserves of petroleum continue to grow; in 2017 proven reserves were 58 percent higher than in 2000 and 165 percent higher than in 1982.

- Despite steadily increasing extraction of oil, since the 1970s the number of oil spills from tankers is down to a small fraction of what it was 40 years ago.
- Since 1961, world cereals production has nearly doubled.
- Between 1990 and 2015, the portion of the world's population with regular access to improved sources of drinkable water — such as pipes and protected dug wells — rose from 76 percent to 91 percent.
- Between 1992 and 2011, the percentage of the world's population living on \$2 dollars a day or less fell from 27 percent to 13 percent.
- Between 1992 and 2010, the percentage of the world's people aged 15 and older who are literate increased from 75 percent to 81 percent.

And then there's the happy news recently reported by Brigham Young University professor Gale Pooley and the Cato Institute's Marian Tupy. These researchers have constructed the "Simon Abundance Index," named after the late University of Maryland economist Julian Simon. Simon was the 20th century's greatest slayer of doomsday myths about the environment, population growth, and alleged dangers posed to humanity by economic progress.

The Simon Abundance Index is a tool for tracking changes over time in the abundance of a basket of 50 commodities, including copper, maize, natural gas, wool and zinc.

Using this index, Pooley and Tupy find that "our planet was 379.6 percent more abundant in resources in 2017 than it was in 1980. Put differently, resources were 4.796 times as plentiful in 2017 as they were in 1980."

Wow! Be happy on this Earth Day!