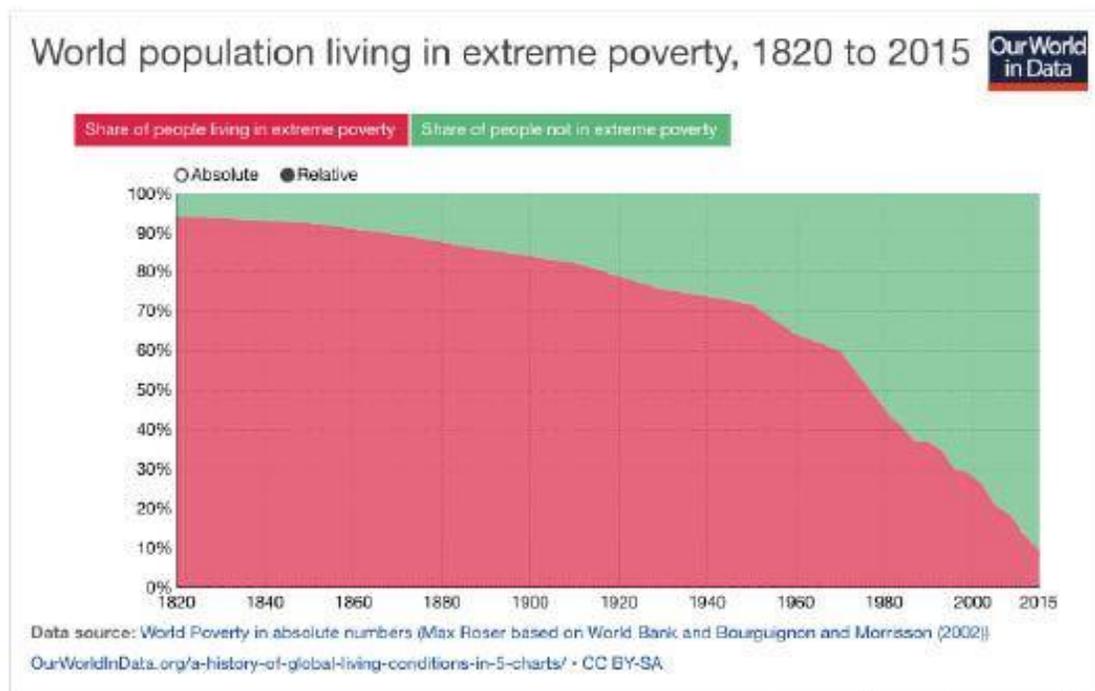


The Uptrends We Never See

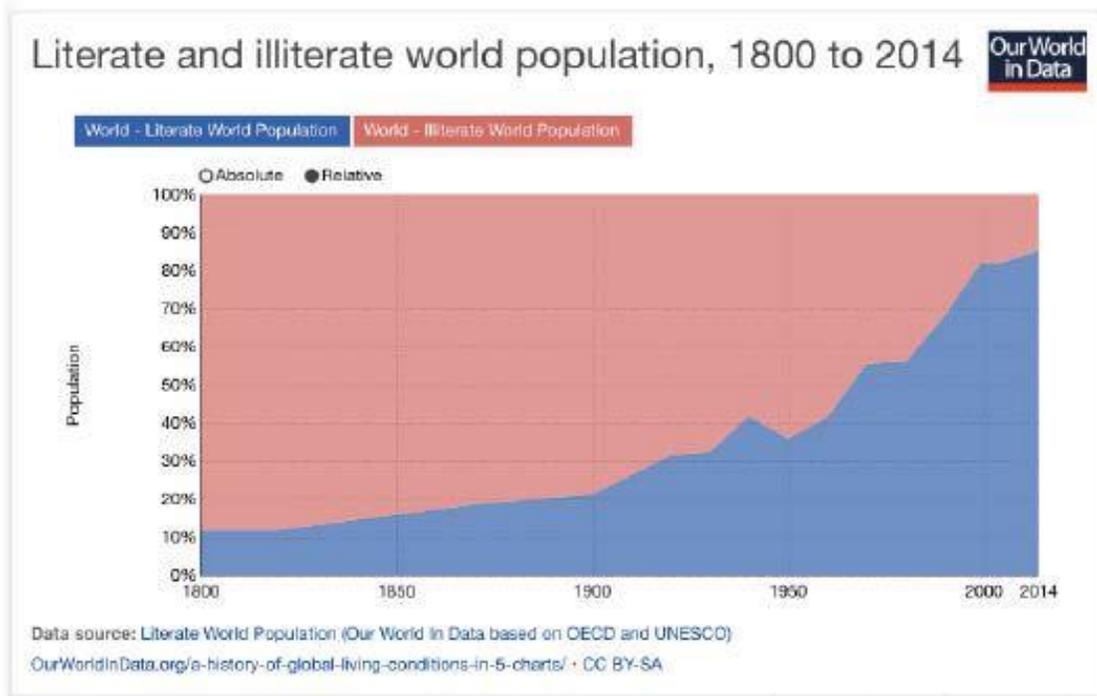
Most of us suspect that the world is going to hell in a handbasket-or at least getting worse over the long term. In the U.S., only 4% of respondents will tell you that our world living conditions are improving.

If you're in the majority, the website "Our World in Data" (<https://ourworldindata.org/a-history-of-global-living-conditions-in-5-charts/>) has posted some charts that might change your mind. Looking back over the long-term, it finds that we're living at the very peak of world living conditions, and the trend still seems to be upward.

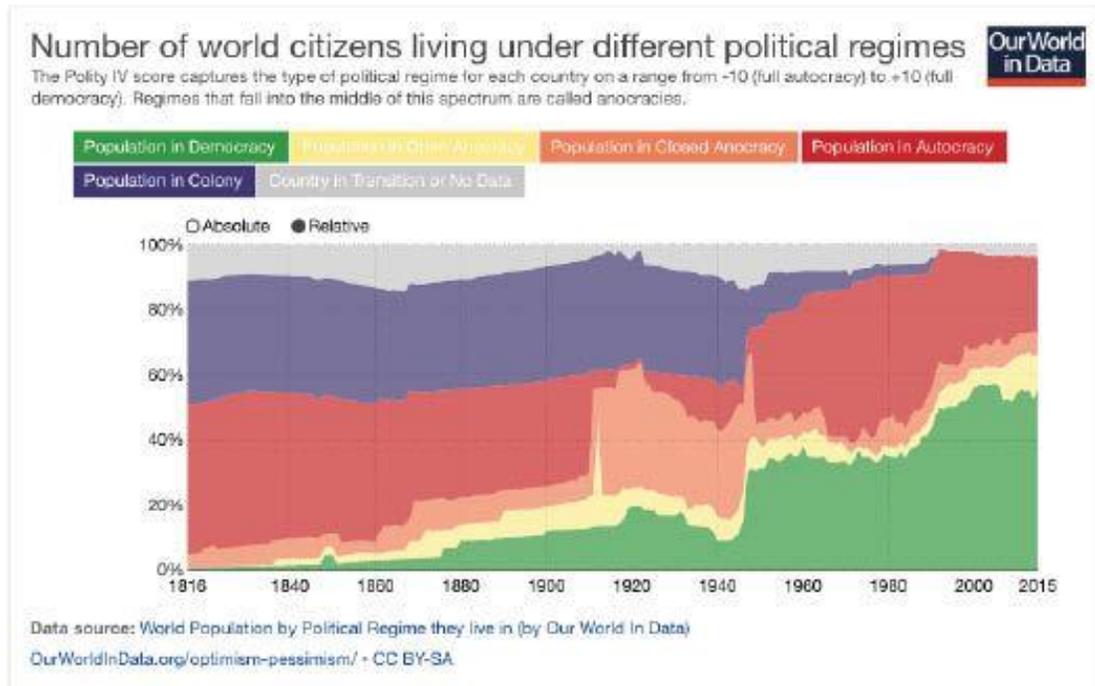
Consider global poverty. The accompanying chart shows the share of the world population living in extreme poverty-and you can see that this was a very high percentage in 1820 when the dataset begins. Since then, the share of extremely poor people has fallen dramatically and steadily, as more world regions have embraced industrialization, created social safety nets and slowly built a middle class. Today only about 10% of the world's citizens live in extreme poverty.



Take another example: literacy. In 1800, only around 10% of the human population could read. Today, as you can see from the chart, the number hovers around 80%. If you believe that science, technology and political freedom are important to solving the world's problems, then it helps if more people can read and write and therefore participate.



Finally, there have been dramatic changes in the percentage of people around the world who live in a democratically free vs. closed totalitarian society. The accompanying chart shows that virtually no people live in colonies any more and closed autocracies are becoming scarce. Meanwhile, the green-shaded area shows the percentage growth of individuals who now live in a democratic society-more than half currently, up from nearly zero in 1816.



What does all this mean? If we take a longer-term perspective than, say the recent presidential election cycle or last quarter's earnings reports, we begin to see that all the time and energy and labor that all of us are putting in every day to improve the world are actually paying off with substantial-if sometimes incremental-results. Other charts show that we're healthier, better-educated and better off than our ancestors.

Let's hope we can keep it up. The trends say we will.