

2015: A good year for the average human being

By Charles Kenny, Atlantic

From Paris to Syria through San Bernardino to Afghanistan, the world witnessed obscene and unsufferable tragedy in 2015. That was on top of the ongoing misery of hundreds of millions who are literally stunted by poverty, living lives shortened by preventable disease and malnutrition. But for all of that, 2015 also saw continued progress toward better quality of life for the considerable majority of the planet, alongside technological breakthroughs and political agreements that suggest the good news might continue next year and beyond.

Tragedy and misery are rarer than they were before 2015—and there is every reason to hope they will be even less prevalent in 2016.

To start with acts of violence in America, despite its epidemic of mass-shooting events, the country is still far safer than it was in the past. The latest FBI statistics, reported this September, suggested that the trend toward lower rates of violent crime in the United States that began in the early 1990s continued at least through 2014: There were nearly 3,000 fewer violent crimes that year than the year before and more than 600,000 fewer than in 1995—that's a 35 percent decline over the period.

The latest data from the UN suggests that this is part of a global trend—to take one category of violent crime, homicide rates have dropped by an estimated 6 percent in the countries for which data was available between 2000 and 2012.

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