

THE WEEKLY LEAF

THE DESTINATION FOR RELEVANT NEWS, ANALYSIS AND OPINION

ABOUT US

BUSINESS

COMMENTARY

ECONOMY

INTERNATIONAL

POLITICS

SOCIETY

OCTOBER 16, 2014

Good news trends the media misses—and why they matter

 September 30, 2014 by [stevenyoder](#)  [Leave a Comment](#)



National Transportation Safety Board accident photo. Photos courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Call it the Era of Bad Feeling. Americans' views about our leaders is famously dismal. In a CNN poll three weeks ago, 65 percent of people said that the current Congress is the worst ever. The President's approval rating hovers around 40 percent. All of 30 percent of those polled by Gallup this summer said they have confidence in the Supreme Court.

But it doesn't stop there. Only 23 percent of people have confidence in the criminal justice system, 22 percent in newspapers, 26 percent in public schools, 45 percent in the church or

organized religion, and 21 percent in big business, according to Gallup. Twenty-nine percent are satisfied with the direction of the country. Fifty-four percent expect life to get worse between now and 2050. And the percentage who said most people can be trusted dropped 20 points between 1960 and 2006.

FEATURED VIDEO

[IndieGogo Campaign](#)

Rising inequality could be playing a big role in our gloomy views—a 2012 [paper](#) from the Center for American Progress tracks a correlation between income disparities and pessimism since the 1960s.

But the “if it bleeds, it leads” focus of much of American press coverage surely has contributed. The relentless focus on tragedy goes back to coverage of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombings, Mary McNaughton-Cassill, a leading researcher on the link between media consumption and stress, told the *New York Times Magazine* in August. She identifies that event as the genesis of 24-hour news coverage and a relentless competition for eyeballs that has resulted in ever-more frightening and sensational stories.

And that’s why the long-term positive trends that get little press attention matter. Not reporting on them surely affects how Americans view ourselves.

It’s not just that violent crime has dropped a stunning 47 percent from 1991 to 2010. Here are five other areas where the country has seen significant improvement but that get almost no attention.

Transportation accidents. The [number and rate](#) of traffic fatalities in 2012 were only a tick above those in 2010, when they were at their lowest levels since 1949. And railway accidents [fell](#) by 63 percent from 1990 to 2013 even though the number of train miles increased by 23 percent; railway accident fatalities dropped by 43 percent in that period. Meanwhile, the [2012 accident rate](#) for Western-built jets was the lowest in aviation history, surpassing the previous mark set in 2011.

House fires. The number of house fires [dropped](#) by almost 60 percent from 1977 to 2013, and the number of deaths from home fires has been cut by 50 percent in that period.

Child abuse. The Adrian Peterson scandal and Jerry Sandusky’s crimes shouldn’t obscure the larger picture—physical and sexual abuse of children [dropped](#) dramatically from 1992 to 2010—almost 30 percent for physical abuse and about 50 percent for sexual abuse, according to the experts at the Crimes Against Children Resource Center.



The Weekly Leaf is an independent digital news platform that provides relevant and insightful reporting and

analysis, **without the sensationalism and hyper-partisanship** promoted by far too many media platforms.

Our financial support (and ability to deliver our product) comes from donations.

Please visit -> [IndieGogo](#) to contribute to our current CROWDFUNDING campaign. [There is 1 day left in the campaign.](#)

WE NEED YOUR HELP. THANK YOU!

Also “Follow” The Weekly Leaf to receive notifications of new articles by email.

FOLLOW THE WEEKLY LEAF

 [RSS - Posts](#)

Enter your email address to follow The Weekly Leaf and receive notifications of new articles by email.

[Follow](#)

Accidents involving kids. Death rates from unintentional injuries to children and youth fell by nearly 30 percent from 2000 to 2009. That meant there were more than 11,000 fewer deaths than if the rate had remained unchanged, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children's deaths in car accidents fell by 41 percent, drownings by 28 percent, and falls by 19 percent, for example.

Air pollution. The American Lung Association's 2013 [State of the Air Report](#) concluded that from 1970 to 2011, emissions of six common pollutants fell nationwide by 68 percent—this in a period when the economy expanded 212 percent and vehicle miles traveled 167 percent.

Those aren't isolated trends—there are more where they came from, buried in government and association reports. And they could offer some lessons on some of what works in improving quality of life over the long term.

First, good laws matter. Transportation accidents have fallen, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation, because of stronger traffic safety regulations and better enforcement. Child accident rates have improved in large part because of fewer car crashes involving teens—that's because many states now use graduated drivers licensing systems for teen drivers, according to the CDC. And cleaner air is largely attributable to passage of the 1963 Clean Air Act, according the American Lung Association.

Second, public education works. The National Fire Protection Association credits fire safety education and more use of smoke detectors and sprinkler systems with the drop in fire deaths. And more people knowing the critical importance of booster seats has significantly cut into child accident rates, according to the CDC. Expert David Finkelhor says educating children and the public on sexual abuse has meant more disclosure and reporting.

Third, new technology is as important as good behavior. More and cheaper fire-safe products have cut house fire deaths, according to the fire association. New safety technologies on cars, like lane departure warning systems, have reduced traffic accidents, says the DOT.

It's lessons like those that can help America out of the doldrums. And getting us refocused on



Commentary:
Why don't women ask for raises? Ask Microsoft's CEO.

October 12,
2014 By

[joanoleck](#)

Back in the 1980s, when I was a young reporter at the capital-city newspaper in North Carolina, I was happily covering tobacco politics, the Klan, and other Southern exotica when one day someone showed me the latest issue of Money magazine. There in all its glory was a profile of a male colleague of mine [...]



Commentary:
US strategy toward the Islamic State – An (urgent) opportunity

for Congress to do its job

September 27, 2014 By [Patrick R. Romain](#)
The execution of U.S. foreign policy that has relied on the use of force and support provided to selected factions, whether in the volatile Middle East or in other hot

what's working makes a difference because pessimistic people are less apt to get involved.

Turnout in American elections is consistently lower than in other OECD countries, where it averages 70 percent. Participation in the 2012 U.S. election—58 percent—was the lowest since 2000.

And as McNaughton-Cassill told the *Times Magazine*, “When I’ve done studies and people watch coverage of, say, 9/11, they don’t then meet criteria for depression in the DSM. But if you ask them how they feel about the world, what they end up with is this malaise: ‘Everything’s kinda bad’ and ‘Why should I vote? It’s not gonna help’ and ‘I could donate money, but there’s just gonna be another kid who’s starving next week.’”

McNaughton-Cassill’s research isn’t a call for reporters to gloss over bad news, but to focus more often on what we’re doing right. Solution-focused stories may appear harder to sell, but they could be a key element in restoring a healthy democracy.

Share this:

[in Share](#) 2 [Tweet](#) 2 [Share](#) 0 [Email](#) [5](#)

FOLLOW THE WEEKLY LEAF ON TWITTER

My Tweets



The Weekly Leaf



133

Filed Under: [Latest From The Weekly Leaf](#), [Society](#) Tagged With: [accidents](#), [good news](#), [journalism](#), [kids](#), [media](#), [reporters](#)

spots, has been an abject failure. An astronomical cost has been paid with American and foreign lives and currency. The war against the Islamic State [...]



Commentary:
Australia's anti-terrorism laws encroaching on freedom of speech

September 23, 2014 By [Liz Fields](#)

Australia’s anti-terror campaign and new laws designed to quash the perceived rise of homegrown extremism and menace from the Islamic State terror group abroad is undeniably threatening the country’s values of liberty and democracy, rather than securing them. The government’s recent heightened security measures, including raising its terror threat level to “high” and conducting mass raids on [...]

PREVIOUS TOP STORIES

- ❖ [Will strife in Pakistan lead to an Egypt-like revolution](#)
- ❖ [Can states be pro-business while taking](#)

« [Race remains tight as Silva and Rousseff jostle for Brazil's top spot](#)

[Book recommendation:](#) »

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

[care of their most vulnerable](#)

» [The excessive time Millennials spend on cell phones](#)

» [NATO approves new force to counter future Russian aggression](#)

» [The cause of those horrific highway truck crashes](#)

» [When 'bad cops' get new jobs](#)

» [Scottish business leaders still divided on economics of independence](#)

» [Study identifies another approach to cutting gun deaths](#)

» [China executes eight for 'terrorist' attacks in latest crackdown on ethnic unrest in Xinjiang](#)

» [Pressure mounts for US to attack ISIS 'sanctuary' in Syria](#)

» [ADA lawsuits: A case study in lack of governance](#)

» [The fight against Boko Haram: Has the world forgotten "our girls"?](#)

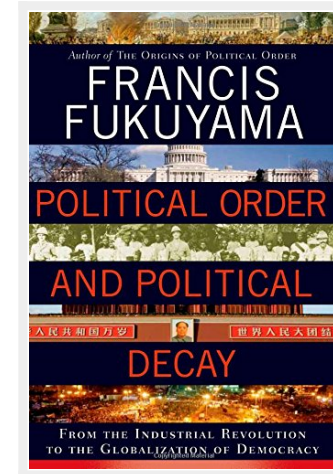
» [ISIS and mass female genital mutilation](#)

» [Hobby Lobby ruling prompts satanists to seek religious exemption](#)

» [The Eric Cantor loss – voting and not](#)

Book recommendation: Political Order and Political Decay

[Amazon](#)



Book recommendation:

[Amazon](#)



Terms of use – © Copyright, The Weekly Leaf 2014. All Rights Reserved

TERMS OF SERVICE Effective August 11, 2014 A. About Us. Welcome to the theweekleaf.com blog (the “Website”). The Weekly Leaf LLC (“TWL”, “us”, “we”, or “our”) is the owner and operator of the Website. The Website is an aggregator of news from TWL-owned resources and Third Party Content (defined below) as well as a [...]

[RETURN TO TOP OF PAGE](#)

BLOG AT WORDPRESS.COM. • THE MODERN NEWS THEME.

[+ Follow](#)

Follow “THE WEEKLY LEAF”

Get every new post delivered to your Inbox.

Join 318 other followers

[Sign me up](#)

Build a website with WordPress.com