

Proof of progress by Bill Gates

There are reasons to be hopeful about the future, if you know where to look.

Sometimes when I tell people I'm optimistic about the future, they look at me like I'm crazy. How could I say that when there's so much violence in the world, the international order seems to be collapsing, and AI may end up doing more harm than good?

I see all these problems too, and I'm deeply concerned about them. (I am working on a long memo about the risks and benefits of AI that I plan to publish later this month.)

But through my work with the Gates Foundation and other organizations, I also get to see signs of progress that help me stay optimistic.

To me, being hopeful about the future doesn't mean you ignore the bad news. It's actually the opposite: You look directly at it and then search for people who are doing something about it. In most cases, you'll find them. And then you will start to see the broader trend of progress they are contributing to.

Here are some of my favorite signs of progress.

IN THE PAST:

- We've **cut the number of children who die** every year by **more than half**, from more than 9 million in 2000 to fewer than 5 million now.
- For the first time, we have a **blood test for Alzheimer's** and **drugs** that may slow its progress.

- Electric vehicles now make up about one in four new cars sold worldwide, with sales topping 20 million in 2025.
- There are 1.5 billion fewer people living in extreme poverty today than in 1990, even though the population has risen 50 percent since then.
- Nearly 95 million girls have been fully immunized with HPV vaccine, so they're much less likely to develop cervical cancer later in life.
- More than **86 percent** of the world's adults can read and write, up from about 68 percent in 1979.

IN THE PIPELINE:

- The newest obesity drug in trials produces nearly 30 percent weight loss, almost as good as what surgery achieves. The same class of drugs is expanding fast into related conditions, including sleep apnea, fatty liver disease, and hopefully, osteoarthritis.
- Scientists are developing a single-shot cure for sickle cell disorders, which kill tens of thousands of people every year, and it could be available within five years. The underlying technology is also being used to develop a single-shot HIV cure.
- We're close to eradicating polio, which is endemic in only two countries. We're nearly done with Guinea worm disease as well, cutting it from 3.5 million cases in 1986 to just ten last year.
- The mRNA technology behind some COVID vaccines is now being used for cancer vaccines, with nearly 100 in clinical trials for melanoma, lung, pancreatic, and other cancers.
- A new tuberculosis vaccine is in final-stage trials. If it works, it will be the first new TB vaccine in more than a century and could prevent tens of millions of cases over the next 25 years.

I find that trying to keep a positive attitude is valuable in itself. It keeps me grounded so I don't swing toward one political extreme or another. I think the world might be less polarized if more people had a sense of the positive things that are going on in addition to the problems we need to solve.

You can find some of my favorite videos about this progress [here](#). If you see one that strikes a chord for you, I'd encourage you to share it.