[Negativity Bias Isn't Going Away](https://substack.com/app-link/post?publication_id=61579&post_id=153418841&utm_source=post-email-title&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=false&r=9xuk&token=eyJ1c2VyX2lkIjo0NjM3NzIsInBvc3RfaWQiOjE1MzQxODg0MSwiaWF0IjoxNzM1NTU2OTY1LCJleHAiOjE3MzgxNDg5NjUsImlzcyI6InB1Yi02MTU3OSIsInN1YiI6InBvc3QtcmVhY3Rpb24ifQ.IyqfP-xv1-STcKMyWEVDkrJXfWfnls1YxMIrA-OrlDQ)

But here’s the good news.

Andrew Xu, December 30 2024, *Persuasion*

[...]There is an old quip about mainstream journalism: “if it bleeds, it leads.” Negative news gets more traction than positive news [...]: human beings are attracted to the things that are bad for us because they are enticing in the heat of the moment.

In a [study conducted](https://substack.com/redirect/c95637ed-7b2a-4ae4-ab77-5fde2fb87ecc?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) by *Nature*, researchers found that “individuals are especially likely to consume political and economic news when it is negative.” We want to see the things that are upsetting to us even if they lead to a [systemic bias](https://substack.com/redirect/bdc8d7fe-f6dd-4cf5-8ae8-761716040c31?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) in information reporting, or if they cause us to become [more neurotic](https://substack.com/redirect/7c9c5d0b-42fc-4374-b28e-ee969a43b3da?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) because of the disproportionately negative light in which we view the world. [...]

Thanks to negativity bias, there have been plenty of times when unambiguously good news has not been presented as such by news organizations. Sometimes they aren’t covered as much as they should be (who knew that black incarceration rates have [fallen significantly](https://substack.com/redirect/5c99d71f-b302-4f35-9523-b19e102e4fbd?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) over the past few years?). Even worse, there are times when unambiguously good news is presented in a lukewarm, or even negative, light. In general, positive news is more likely to be presented with [caveats](https://substack.com/redirect/93494e1a-41dc-4d0f-a39a-e0800e31af86?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) and [trepidation](https://substack.com/redirect/4e3e8900-f46f-45f6-91cb-ca04aa26d5f4?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) than negative news.

Perhaps the biggest problem with negativity bias is that it makes fatalism far easier. If you follow a news diet that consistently presents you with tons of problems about the world, and rarely shows you when real improvements are made, it’s easy to feel a sense of unearned hopelessness about all that’s going on. But if we think back to the most successful political movements of the recent past—Obama’s campaign comes to mind—many of them were premised on a sense of hope that the world could get better. [....]

Nowadays, negativity bias is so bad that prominent journalists such as *Atlantic* writer Derek Thompson consider it to be the [greatest bias](https://substack.com/redirect/abfa1eb7-a73f-48e1-a75c-de68e0ccdc64?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) in journalism: more important than any bias towards the left or the right, or towards any other political ideology that’s currently in vogue.

With all that in mind, let’s close 2024 by spotlighting some of the good that has happened recently:

* Income inequality is [decreasing](https://substack.com/redirect/441859b1-c8ef-424e-ba40-e9bce64bb115?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) thanks to the pandemic, which, on net, led to an increase in wages for lower earners.
* Murder rates are going back [down](https://substack.com/redirect/3c7f8af5-86e7-4142-adb2-e23a7234f64c?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) after a pandemic bump.
* Traffic fatalities are also [down](https://substack.com/redirect/84666ec6-e091-4e51-90fe-f3920d3fc43a?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) for the second consecutive year.
* The overemphasis on identity politics that ran rampant throughout many left-coded institutions has started to [decline](https://substack.com/redirect/374ad0f6-e2a0-497e-ad06-56923bf08c5e?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8), leaving the American left in a much more reasonable position.
* Average college tuition costs are [beginning](https://substack.com/redirect/076abda7-adb4-4e79-80cc-114820df4de7?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) [to](https://substack.com/redirect/7e270464-9025-4a2f-89ef-134634d9df8d?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) decrease.
* The U.S. economy somehow managed to [avoid the recession](https://substack.com/redirect/25d20f26-3889-47a8-a6af-8407fa049322?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) it was bracing for since its bout of post-pandemic inflation (a recession that many economists had [been predicting](https://substack.com/redirect/9a738514-d7a6-43f5-b4b1-022cee249fb9?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) for a while).
* Global poverty rates have continued their [trend](https://substack.com/redirect/6059a6ef-d69f-4e02-8076-6398c728752c?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) of [decline](https://substack.com/redirect/70c1deeb-6eaf-4a4e-b98a-e854ad44e847?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) that’s been ongoing for years.
* This applies to the world’s [child mortality](https://substack.com/redirect/7da1b1b5-cebd-45e4-bc86-acbb21677a9f?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) rates as well.
* The worst-case scenarios regarding climate change are now much, much [less likely](https://substack.com/redirect/b44946ca-bd4b-44bd-ab02-2ae894479b78?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) than they were ten years ago. In fact, transitions in clean energy have done way more than many thought possible for mitigating some of the potential consequences of climate change. We’re not out of the woods just yet, but there is more [room for celebration](https://substack.com/redirect/fe6039f7-6faa-4b5f-af9c-57aba5400208?j=eyJ1IjoiOXh1ayJ9.sAer31kV_xc2iaeYF6ajid-PQCVyN-ALJ3l85GyW5H8) than many think.

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