

# TECH INSIDER

## China is the only country that's remotely optimistic about the future



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REUTERS/Damir Sagolj

Here's the good news: People around the world are committing **less crime**, there is **less inequality**, fewer infants are **dying**, and adults are **living longer**.

The bad news? No one seems to notice.

According to **recent data compiled by YouGov**, the only people who showed the slightest bit of optimism about the state of global prosperity were from China, where 41% of people believe the world is getting better.

The second most optimistic country was Indonesia, at 23%. After that, every other country was in the teens

or below.

As the psychologist [Tali Sharot has showed time and again](#), human brains succumb to a profound optimism bias. We tend to think our lives are getting better individually, but when asked to confront humanity's state of affairs, nothing seems to be going right.

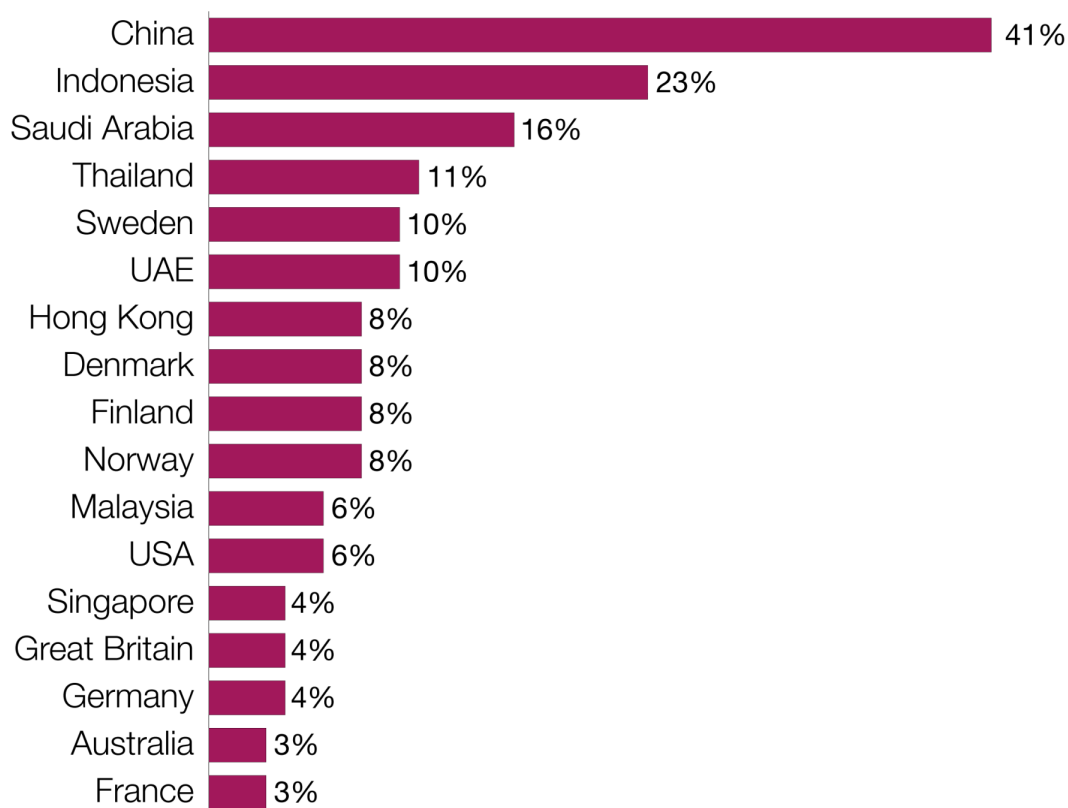
YouGov's data follows Sharot's logic — at least in industrialized countries, where the heaviest preference for pessimism exists.

In the US, for instance, only 6% of people said the world is getting better, beating out Great Britain (4%), Germany (4%), and France (3%). It seems that in places where there is consistent social and technological advancement, people quickly adapt and forget how bad things used to be.

## Share of the population who think the world is getting better

18,235 adults in the following countries were asked "All things considered, do you think the world is getting better or worse, or neither getting better nor worse?"

Our World  
in Data



Data source: Survey conducted and published by YouGov (2015)  
The is available at [OurWorldinData.org](#). There you find more visualizations on this topic.

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Max Roser/Our World in Data

Oxford economist Max Roser recently [gave a lecture at the Breakthrough Institute](#) in which he discussed how these pessimistic behaviors keep a country like the US, where people are mostly well-off, feeling generally worse than a country like China, where millions of people still live in third-world conditions.

Roser pointed out that in China, moderate economic gains have lifted more than 650 million people out of poverty. At least within the country's borders, that's a tangible sign that the world is getting better. In the US, meanwhile, news of racial conflict, mass shootings, and political dispute make things seem bleaker than what the statistics would suggest.

In sociology, the tendency to be influenced by television's negatively skewed depiction of the world is known as "[Mean World Syndrome](#)," and experts argue that outlook has given rise to trends like helicopter parenting and racial profiling.

If we were to go by the data instead of our own biases, however, we'd probably let our kids play unsupervised more often and stop being so fearful of people who are different.

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