

World's Peace Gains of the Past Decade Concentrated in a Single Indicator, New Report Finds

The Positive Peace Report 2026 finds structural gains in connectivity and health were offset by declines in government transparency and press freedom, while Positive Peace continues to predict economic and social outcomes worldwide.

Sydney, 21 September 2026 – Global Positive Peace improved by 1.7 per cent over the decade to 2024, but the gain was driven almost entirely by a single indicator, according to the [Positive Peace Report 2026](#), released by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP).

Excluding the telecom infrastructure index, which improved by 36.8 per cent over the decade, the Positive Peace Index (PPI) would have deteriorated by 0.1 per cent, with 84 of the 163 countries in the Index recording declines compared with 79 that improved.

The largest deterioration recorded over the decade was in the Well-Functioning Government Pillar, which fell three per cent, driven by declines in government openness and transparency, rule of law, and government effectiveness. The steepest decline of any single indicator was freedom of the press, which fell 21.1 per cent, with declines in 141 of 163 countries. The rate of decline accelerated to more than five times its pre-pandemic pace after 2020.

The Positive Peace Index covers 163 countries and 99.7 per cent of the world's population, built from statistical analysis of more than 20,000 data points across 24 indicators grouped into eight Pillars of Positive Peace.

The report finds Positive Peace is a strong predictor of economic and social performance. Real GDP grew at twice the rate in countries that improved in Positive Peace compared with those that deteriorated between 2015 and 2024, while foreign direct investment grew at 8.5 per cent a year in improving countries against 3.5 per cent in deteriorating countries. Positive Peace also correlates closely with environmental performance, health outcomes, and subjective wellbeing.

Global Positive Peace deteriorated during the COVID-19 pandemic but recovered to exceed pre-pandemic levels by 2024. Countries in the top third for Positive Peace improved by 2.1 per cent on average between 2021 and 2024, against 0.6 per cent for the bottom third.

Among the world's major powers, the United States recorded the second-largest PPI deterioration of any country in the Index, worsening by 8.8 per cent since 2015. The decline was led by a 26.4 per cent fall in the Low Levels of Corruption Pillar, driven by a 54.6 per cent deterioration in the factionalised elites indicator, the largest such decline recorded by any country.

China and India each improved by around six per cent over the same period, although India's freedom of the press fell by 45.4 per cent. Russia deteriorated by 5.2 per cent, concentrated since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. All five leading powers rank substantially higher on the PPI than on IEP's Global Peace Index, indicating stronger socio-economic foundations than current levels of peacefulness would suggest.

The report also introduces the concept of a Positive Peace deficit, where a country's structural foundations for peace sit well below its current level of peacefulness. All 16 countries with the largest deficits recorded in 2009 went on to deteriorate in peacefulness by 2024, IEP found, demonstrating the model's predictive power.

Among mid-peace countries, which face the greatest risk of sliding backward, Well-Functioning Government and Low Levels of Corruption stand out as structural bottlenecks. Countries in this group that improved on these two Pillars recorded the largest average gains in both Positive Peace and internal peace, while those that deteriorated on the same Pillars saw substantially poorer outcomes.

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Notes to Editors

The full Positive Peace Report 2026 and interactive map are available at:
www.visionofhumanity.org and www.economicsandpeace.org

X: [@GlobPeaceIndex](https://twitter.com/GlobPeaceIndex)

Facebook: facebook.com/globalpeaceindex

About the Positive Peace Index

The Positive Peace Index (PPI) is produced by the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) and is the first statistically derived index measuring Positive Peace, defined as the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies. Built from a systems-based analysis of more than 20,000 data series, the PPI groups 24 indicators into eight Pillars of Positive Peace. The index spans 163 countries and 99.7 per cent of the world's population.

About the Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP)

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP) is the world's leading think tank dedicated to developing metrics to analyse peace and to quantify its economic value. It does this by developing global and national indices, including the annual Global Peace Index, calculating the economic cost of violence, and understanding Positive Peace — the attitudes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies.

For more information visit www.economicsandpeace.org.