CONTEMPORARY BARBARISMS

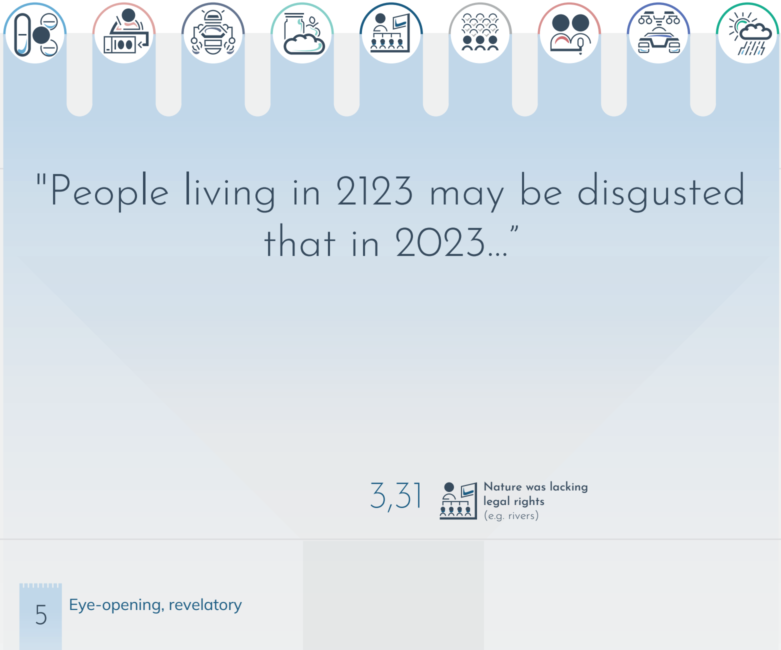
It would be short-sighted to assume that we, as humanity, have reached such a level of maturity that our descendants will not find some aspects of our – apparently civilised – everyday life repulsive and sad. So we asked 60 futurists from around the world:

"What will we disgust our descendants with?"

Many of the submitted ideas are already present in public discourse and confirm areas in which we need to change. But we were especially interested in novel barbarisms that humanity is still largely oblivious to.

That's why this infographic shows the futurists' answers grouped into **93 contemporary barbarisms ranked in a public vote according to how eye-opening they are.**

Health **Economy** **Technology** **Food** **Policy & Government** **Society** **News** **Security** **Environment**



"People living in 2123 may be disgusted that in 2023..."

3,31 **Nature was lacking legal rights** (e.g. rivers)

5 Eye-opening, revelatory

4

3 Highly surprising barbarisims

△

2

▼

1 Largely expected barbarisms

0 Not surprising at all or implausible

People needed to work to make a living

There was virtually no recognition for sophisticated non-human intelligence, sentience and its needs

3,0

There was no DNA-matching for couples before procreation

People were considering only one reality, thus ignoring our impact on the other ones

There were virtually no regulations limiting potential threats stemming from new technology, incl. AI

Nation states and their borders (limiting freedom of movement) still existed

People did not create anticipatory governance systems for artificial general intelligence

Robots were lacking
legal rights

Our image and concept of nature emphasised
pureness devoid of traces of human activity

People were working in the open
without proper protective gear
(e.g. UV protection, breathing filters)

Technology was seen
as a panacea to humanity's problems

Physicians used antibiotics to kill
minute living (and semi-living) beings

Most people were neither used to nor trained
to take feedback loops into consideration
in their everyday life decisions

Individualism was still
widespread in the world

A single worldview - whether scientific,
religious or any other - was sufficient
for many to explain everything

Cultural models had so many negative effects
(consumerism, short-termism, individualism, human supremacy
and identity, opinions overruling science, cancel culture, cultural idiocracy,
"time is money", loss of cultural variety, too little concern for the youth...)

People did not accompany their relatives
and friends in the process of dying
and reduced their corpses
to ashes as quickly as possible

Religious organisations were tax exempt
in many places around the world

2,5

Genetic modifications of babies
were neither allowed nor possible.

Economic gains
were amongst the main
motivators for people
around the world

Elderly care
was institutionalised

There was a sharp decline
in hand skills due to automation

Procreation
required sexual
intercourse

Futures literacy
was not an obligatory subject
in schools and universities

Physical interfaces
where needed
to interact with machines

Psychiatric treatment
was so primitive
and relied heavily
on mind-numbing drugs

Taxation
was omnipresent
and accepted
across the world

Big cities had so many
negative effects on humans
(e.g. poverty, inequalities, blight, filth,
inefficiencies, waste, and pollution)

Birth
was natural

Religion dictated norms
and human rights in some
countries in the world

People were ignoring the risk of infection
stemming from the use of physical money,
shaking hands, using public bathrooms
without previous sanitisation etc.

Medicine and healing were heavily
biassed, predicated on white males

Unhealthy food
was produced
and consumed

People believed
theywould stay
only on Earth

Mass media was driven
by profit instead of truth
and accuracy in reporting

Education systems were not effectively preparing youth
for contemporary or future needs and challenges

People were using
resources to grow
lawns instead
of food

People
were prejudiced
against mystics
and spirituality

Gun
ownership
was still
allowed

Pressure systems
for desalination
were not used

Unethical behaviour
justified by a so-called
greater good
was widely accepted

People were
performing jobs
that could (even then)
be automatised

People did not appreciate
Timothy Leary's future SMILE
(Space Migration, Intelligence
Increasing, and Life Extension)

Lots of food
was wasted

There was widespread reluctance for solving
some of humanity's crucial problems
(e.g. diseases & genetic disorders)
in a top priority, emergency mode

Physical travel
was common

Sustainability
was not an imperative

Many people were dying
of age and illnesses
already preventable in 2022

Profit from unethical
business was considered
success

People had poor work-life balance
due to 40+ working weeks

People were lying to each other
and believed so many lies

Mass media had huge control
over large social groups

Mass media was used
for misinformation

Life expectancy was low, and (to make matters worse) highly determined by income

Urban design favoured car owners

The economic system was flawed, with too much power in the hands of large corporations

Children's school promotion was not adjusted to their needs, interests and capabilities

People did not do enough for vulnerable populations

Technological conservatism was widespread

Batteries were still used

So-called "tax havens" existed

Most people consumed meat harvested in brutal, unsustainable conditions

Family values were at a low point

Violence and crime were widespread (including mass killings, domestic violence, human trafficking, various forms of abuse and harrasment, cybercrime)

The clean energy challenge was still unsolved

Babies were born with severe disabilities or acute genetic illnesses

Governing was plagued by short-termism, corruption, manipulation, nepotism, outdated mindsets and systems, etc

Education inequality due to economic differences and birth place was common

Mass incarceration and state-managed execution were still used as punishment for behaviours that violate social rules and norms

... and before, people were causing collective trauma with their wars, genocide and other atrocities, still affecting people living even a hundred years later

Waste management was poor and inadequate

Fatalities in road accidents and in the workplace were fairly common

Functional illiteracy was fairly common around the world

Discrimination based on colour, class, gender, sexuality etc. was common around the world

Poverty and its consequences (hunger, housing, energy etc.) were common, despite available resources to prevent them

There were still wars (and consequences thereof, incl. war refugees, civilian fatalities, threats from nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, poor support for invaded countries)

2,0

largely expected barbarisms

Countries were using power over other states for economic benefit

The world was full of huge wealth inequalities

Healthcare systems were highly inefficient and with limited access

Gender inequalities (i.a. in terms of human rights, wages and leadership of various communities, institutions and companies) were widespread around the globe

The destruction of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity were commonplace

Actions meant to stop and reverse
climate change were inadequate

Abortion was used as a prevention
of birth, instead of simple and harmless,
easily available medical means

Air and water were extremely polluted
as a result of the use of fossil fuels,
plastics and other human behaviour

Martial arts were performed
without adequate protective gear

There were many autocracies and democracy
was flawed, with populism thriving

Child labour was still used
in many places around the word

Many people
still smoked
tobacco

Digitalisation
was not equally widespread
around the globe

Privileged individuals and groups
(either from birth or because of wealth/power)
were abusing their position

The advancement of space exploration
was mainly driven by the arms race in space

Abortion was used for birth prevention
instead of simple and harmless,
easily available medical means

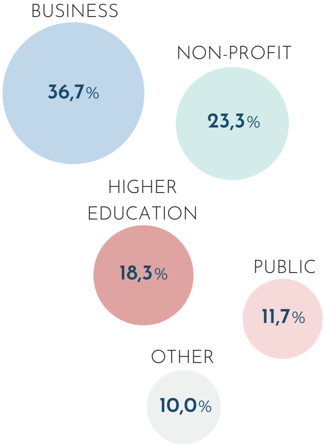
Many of the items are issues that humanity needs to tackle without delay. There are also quite a few that definitely need further thought. But above all - the list is clearly non-exhaustive, so let's keep looking! What other surprising contemporary barbarisms can you think of?

Let's question the assumptions underlying our contemporary ways, let's imagine better alternatives, so that instead of unwittingly persisting in barbarism we can be the ones to initiate the change.

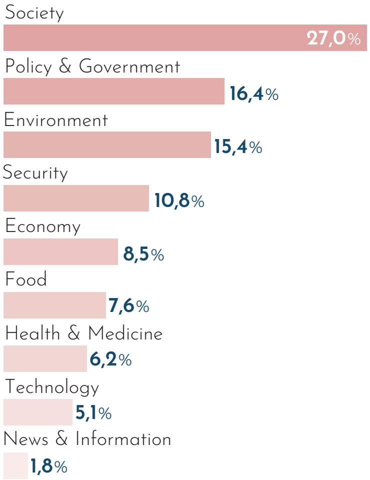
The sooner we realise our contemporary barbarisms, the sooner we can become a better, more mature humanity!

60 FUTURISTS SUBMITTED 434 IDEAS GROUPED INTO 93 BARBARISMS IN 9 CATEGORIES

Futurists by sector



Barbarisms by category



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