

# General Paper Notes

## Paper 1: The Essay

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# Preface

General Paper, like many subjects, is winced at by some, but intriguing to others. Some get catapulted to the top with seemingly minimal effort, while others, despite pouring in painstaking efforts, find themselves only crawling their way up the ladder or worse. In my two years in junior college, I was at the 100th percentile for the subject a total of three times (and hung around 99th percentile for the other exams), and ultimately held the best record—in fact, on multiple occasions, I was the only one in the cohort of over 700 students to attain an ‘A’ grade due to the stringent internal marking. I was awarded the ‘Academic Award for H1 General Paper’ for the 14<sup>th</sup> College Day Awards Ceremony for ‘outstanding performance’, was a top-scorer in English back in my secondary school, and also an awardee at the Queen’s Commonwealth Essay Competition. I later went on to tutor hundreds of students, all of whom have seen their grades catapulted, even if they were originally failing the subject. I believe that with the right resources and guidance, General Paper is a subject anyone can surmount.

Due to a lack of GP resources available online for free, I have decided to type out some of my techniques, ideas and examples, as well as what has been imparted to me. Of course, we stand on shoulders of giants and this would not have been possible without my former English teacher, Mr Zulhilmi, who ignited my interest in English and argumentative writing, as well as the General Paper tutors who taught me in JC, namely Ms Huda, Mrs Varella and Ms Belinda Lin.

I am constantly updating resources at <https://GP.sg> and you can also follow [@generalpaper](https://www.instagram.com/generalpaper) on Instagram for more updates and content. If you need an extra hand, you head to our site to sign up for our tuition or crash course sessions. Even if you are of financial need, feel free to reach out, and we will see what we can do.

**Aalden Tnay**

# Format and Techniques (Paper 1)

## General Format

Introduction

OV1 (opposing view to your stand)

+ Rebuttal

OV2 (opposing view to your stand)

+ Rebuttal

SV1 (supporting view of your stand)

SV2 (supporting view of your stand)

SV3 (supporting view of your stand)

Conclusion

*Note: Opposing Views may come at the end instead of the start, and the need to rebut an 'opposing view' depends on your stand. Generally, you rebut so your 'opposing view' does not contradict your stand. More info under [rebuttal](#).*

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## For double-barrel questions

e.g. 'Consider the view that most work these days could, and should, be done from home.'

Such questions are often asking you two things at one go, as in this case, 'could' (ability) and 'should' (morally right). Your stand can be that work these days could and should/ could but should not/cannot and should not/cannot and should be done from home. You are free to mix and match.

If your stand is 'could but should not', you will have one or more SV on why it 'could', and one or more SV on why it 'should not'. There will also be OV's on why it 'cannot' or 'should'.

**Note:** Cambridge has never specified the number of points required, so there is no need to be overly worried about how many SVs/OVs are required especially for double-barreled questions. Most schools encourage about 4-5 body paragraphs.

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### How to write an introduction:

#### **[Hook] + [Link to topic] + Define (if needed) + [Stand]**

Start off with a hook to capture the marker's attention. This is something interesting. It may be slightly sensationalist, a major recent event, a historical anecdote, an apt quote by a renowned individual, or if you are adept at language, a well-written piece on today's state of affairs. Ultimately, aim to be unique and show you are at a tier above the rest. An example used for the introduction should not be rewritten in the body paragraphs.

## **Hook**

Types of hook (not extensive)

- Historical event/information
- Significant current event
- Hyperbolic (sensationalist writing)
- Quote
- Myths, books and films (e.g. starting off an 'arts' essay with the Greek myth of Orpheus, whose woeful singing following the death of Eurydice touched the gods—even Hades, to link to your stand on the importance of the arts)

How to write an example as your hook (and not overlap with examples in body paragraphs):

1. Use a historical example in your introduction; examples in your body paragraphs need to be current anyway, so there is no overlap.
2. Use a general example that's related to the theme, but not directly to the question. If the question is 'Discuss the view that most natural disasters are the result of human activity,' the theme is clearly 'environment'. You can thus start off your introduction with an example related to the environment (e.g. the landmark signing of the Paris Agreement, the United States withdrawal from it, or Trump's refusal to believe The National Climate Assessment Report).
3. Use an example that is not included in the question's scope. E.g. if the question specifies '*in your society*', use an example *outside* your society; if the question specifies 'developed countries', use one from one of the developing countries/ LDCs.
4. If you do have to repeat the example you used in your introduction (alongside fresh examples) for a point in your body paragraph, consider using the word 'aforementioned' to call back to it.

## **Link hook to topic**

(so that hook appears relevant to the topic): You need to transition from the hook to the actual question. At the most basic level, this could be done using a rhetorical question as follows. “(hook)...This takes us to a rather urgent question: has the Trump administration truly blindfolded themselves from the ramifications of human activity, or are their doubts in fact warranted? In this discourse, I shall expound on why I resolutely believe that natural disasters, despite being naturally occurring as its name suggests, is greatly exacerbated by man.”

**Define (only when needed):** You may want to state your own definition of *subjective/vague* words in the question. If they are already obvious then it is unnecessary to do so. E.g. ‘developed country’ may refer to those officially classified by a government and the UN as developed, or your own definition of ‘developed countries’ as simply those of high GDP per capita. [Singapore, for instance, classifies itself as a ‘developing country’](#), despite it often regarded as a ‘developed country’.

## **Stand**

A stand should be clear and well-qualified (if necessary). If the question is “is regulation of the press desirable?”, the stand may be that “regulation of the press is usually/not always undesirable/desirable”, or better put as “some regulation of the press is usually desirable, but there are times when it is excessive and objectionable”. It may also take the form of “X should be done unless Y”, where Y would actually encompass your ‘OV’ (no rebuttal required). Another form is “A should be done *only when/as long as* B”, where B would encompass your SVs. Your stand does not have to be binary: it does not have to be a full agreement or full disagreement; a middle-ground can be taken.

Even though a question may ask ‘Discuss the view that most natural disasters are the result of human activity,’ you are free to highlight that human activity does not necessarily cause these natural disasters, but do make them worse in terms of frequency, intensity and predictability. This is a qualified stand. A non-qualified stand may simply say ‘human activity causes most natural disasters’, which is technically

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incorrect since natural disasters occur even without humans. Note that the word 'most' alone does not automatically make it a qualified stand. There is no need to give blind 'yes' and 'no' answers especially when the question begins with 'Discuss'.

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## How to write body paragraphs

**[Point] + [Example + Explanation]x2 or 3 + [Link]**

### **Point**

There is a strong preference for the point to be a reason rather than an area, even for 'to what extent' and 'how far' questions. Even for questions that seem to be expository in nature, it is encouraged that you use reason-oriented points. Even essay questions like "In your society, how well are the demands of the economy and the environment balanced?" need points that are reasons to why the demands of the economy and environment are balanced/well-balanced. Notice how the 'how' in the question is addressed by your essay's stand, but your points are always reasons why your stand is as such. In many questions, candidates are marked down for giving area-driven points that are not reasons.

If the question specifies any condition, e.g. 'when government finances are limited', ensure this is taken into account in your point. In this case, all your points should be reasons related financial difficulty. E.g. "A country should still be allowed to host international sporting events when her finances are limited as it provides an opportunity to generate revenue it needs" or "A country should not be allowed to host international sporting events when her finances are limited as it may be unable to fund sufficient security for the event, making it a prime target of terrorist groups."

Note: Addressing 'How far is it' and 'To what extent' only needs to be done in the stand in your introduction (e.g. to a large extent); they do not need to be repeated in each topic sentence.

**Can/Possible:** reasons why there is *ability* to do so

**Should/Justified:** reasons—especially *moral* ones

**Adequate:** reasons why the situation is satisfactory at current level (if adequate)/not satisfactory at current level (if inadequate)

**Desirable:** reasons why having it is attractive/useful/necessary (reasons why we should have)

For **COMPARISON** questions ('than', 'more', 'less', 'should A, not B' etc.): for each point, give a reason why **A** more/less than **B** in a particular aspect.

E.g. Human actions should be based on scientific fact (**A**), not religious faith (**B**), for the former can be proven and eventually agreed upon, while the latter cannot and will remain controversial, sowing discord.

E.g. The arts should focus on local talents (**A**) who can strengthen our national identity, rather than foreign talent (**B**) which cannot do the same.

## Elaboration

More often than not, one sentence of your point does not sufficiently explain what you are saying. Add more details and explanations to strengthen your point.

## Examples

Examples do not need to be statistics; they can be events or circumstances that support your claim. If you want to show that Singapore has high quality healthcare, you do not need to memorise a bunch of specific UN or WHO statistics and reports. What you can write is something like this: *"Singapore's healthcare system and medical expertise stands proudly on the international stage; this is perhaps accentuated by foreign leaders, such as Robert Mugabe, who choose to receive medical treatment in Singapore. Singapore was also the destination of choice for treatment in several high profile emergencies, such as the 2012 Delhi gang rape that shook a nation."*

Examples should be as relevant to the point made as possible. Two to three examples are generally recommended per point. Similar examples may be grouped together for evaluation at one go. To aid in brainstorming of examples, you may consider the positive form and negative form. For the topic on the desirability of competition, examples for a point may be that presence of competition between Apple and Samsung led to constant progress in technological innovations, such as the advent of facial and fingerprint recognition, virtual assistants, and augmented reality; absence of competition between Internet Service Providers (ISPs) in the United States has caused the U.S. to fall behind in internet speed rankings despite her being its prime architect. For credibility, you may want to cite your sources. Sometimes, in an examination, if you are unsure and really want to take a gamble, just mention that the founder (*insert name here*) said it in an interview. In this case, we could go with Andy Rubin (founder of Android OS) [who did in fact talk about cycles of innovation shifting in a saturated market](#). While you may 'smoke' some news corporation as your source, do not over do this as it gets obvious. If you do, at least use credible and believable sources. One way is to use sources specialised in the area (e.g. [PISA](#) reports for questions related to education).

Examples should not be too broad; in the example above, one cannot stop at mentioning that competition between Apple and Samsung led to greater technological innovations—specific examples of these innovations should be mentioned.

When reading articles, try to link it to useful topics—one example can often be used for a multitude of themes, saving quite a bit of 'memory space'. Here's one we most of you may know of: **2018's incident where twelve young football boys and their coach were tapped in a cave in Thailand**. On the surface, it seems like there are barely any topics you can use this for—but if you try to mentally link this to possible topics, one example becomes many. Try doing that based on what you know about the incident, then flip to the next page to see how many you got!

- **Globalisation/Cooperation:** the rescue team consisted of thirteen international divers. The cave diving team included divers from U.K., Australia, Denmark and many more.
- **Businesses/Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Tesla chief Elon Musk notably ordered two engineers to design a kid-sized submarine to aid in rescue efforts (**Technology**), although this was rejected by the Thai government. Some called this a publicity stunt.
- **Media:** The ordeal captured the media's attention from around the world. Over a period of three weeks, articles relating to the incident dominated the top stories section at many major news publications and many followed the news closely via social media.
- **Nationhood:** Three of the boys and their coach were actually stateless, and highlighted the plight of many stateless people in Thailand who come from areas where national borders have changed, leaving their nationality in question. They were granted citizenship after the ordeal.
- **Sports:** Even while trapped in the cave, the boys were asking for World Cup updates, highlighting sports' role as an entertainment source. Football players and associations around the world voiced messages of support, such as FIFA, the Japanese men's national team, and Cristiano Ronaldo, proving that sports unites people without boundaries.
- **Religion:** Amid uncertainty, many of those concerned about the lives of those trapped were in prayer; religion has a role in giving at least temporary comfort. After the rescue, eleven members of the football team were ordained as Buddhist novices, a gesture to honour those who took part in their rescue. The boys' families had made the pledge to ordain the Wild Boars footballers to show thanks for the efforts that went towards saving them and also to pay respect to the Thai navy Seal, Saman Kunan, who died in the rescue operation.

A list of useful examples per theme can be found under the 'content' section.

## Link

The Cambridge Examiners' report (which can be found [at this online source](#)) stated that "the closing sentence should leave the Examiner firmly convinced of its logical development. Whilst many do this, others rely on a formulaic repetition of the wording of the question, irrespective of its link to what has gone before."

## Rebuttal (only for opposing view of sweeping stands)

A common mistake is to rebut the opposing view at times you should not.

If your essay's stand is already highly qualified or is a **middleground** (e.g. 'some', 'not always') such that your "opposing view" is already covered by your stand, then a rebuttal is not needed. In fact, doing so may lose you marks. This is because when you take a **stand** that is in the middle, you are saying that there's **truth to both sides** of the argument. By rebutting (i.e. rejecting) one of the two sides of an argument, you would be left with only one side you still support. This contradicts your stand which supports two sides. A concession (preferably with evaluation) can be made instead. If your stand is "some regulation of the press is desirable, but there are times when it is excessive and objectionable", you will have paragraphs showing its desirability, and paragraphs showing its undesirability (which you do not need to rebut).

In most cases, writing an opposing view contrary to an absolute stand (e.g. 'always', 'all') will require a rebuttal. An example of such a stand is '**all** countries have an **equal** responsibility to counter terrorism'. The SV would be reasons why countries have equal responsibility. The OV would be reasons why some countries have **more/less** responsibility than others. You must rebut this OV. If you do not rebut, your OV contradicts your stand and weakens your essay's argument (if you can't rebut, then you should take a different stand in the first place).

Tl;dr: absolute stand= OVs need rebut; qualified stand= OVs don't need rebut

## **Ways to write a rebuttal**

**Precisely (highest level):** Flip the OV argument; use it to show that precisely because of it, your stand is true.

OV: The media can no longer be trusted as outlets are concerned only about profits, and are willing to propagate mistruths if that gains them greater readership.

R: It is precisely because some media outlets are profit-oriented that they would stick to the truth; jeopardising their credibility could cause readers to turn to other sources, threatening their revenue.

**Untrue:** Consider that the OV is, simply false; there may be logical fallacies in place. It may also be incorrect simply because it fails to properly consider stakeholders or the context. It may have made a false assumption.

**Even if:** Consider that even if the OV is true, it does not actually change your stand (i.e. the OV is actually irrelevant to your stand). This could be because the OV puts forth a straw man argument, is an exaggeration, or only *weakens* your stand but does not ultimately change it

OV: There should not be regulation of scientific research in less developed countries as it is difficult to enforce.

R: Even if enforcement is challenging, some successful enforcement is better than none.

**Limitations/Applicability:** Consider the OV is only true for some areas.

However, if your stand is an absolute agreement, such as for questions with the word 'always', trying to rebut the OV by claiming it is an 'exception' is illogical (since any exception present makes it no longer an 'always').

## **How to write a conclusion:**

A restatement of your stand, a general overview of your points discussed, and ending off with an impactful statement (often a call to action) makes up a typical conclusion. Quotes may also be used if apt. Avoid bringing forth anything new that you did not validate in your body paragraphs.

## **How to write a high-level conclusion:**

Cambridge's markers' report has explicitly stated that they like conclusions that link back to the introduction. It stated that 'a number of candidates refer back to their introduction in a highly effective way, giving a sense of planning and organisation based on sustained clarity of thought and argument. This is a technique worth bearing in mind.'

A simple way to achieve this is to have an 'uncertainty' or rhetorical question in your introduction, that you finally close/give an answer to in your conclusion. The answer to an introduction's rhetorical question may even be used to start off a conclusion directly, sparing the need to use clichéd ways of doing so (e.g. 'in conclusion').

For example, an introduction that highlights the decisions made by the Trump administration may have a conclusion that condemns these particular decisions by the administration.

# Content (Paper 1)

## Global Affairs (politics, history, war, terrorism, foreign aid)

Useful concepts (for developing sophisticated arguments):

Foreign intervention and [Responsibility to Protect \(R2P\)](#) vs Sovereignty

*Should one country be allowed to intervene if another commits human rights abuses?*

Nationalism vs Globalism

*Should people serve their own countries' interests or that of the world at large?*

[Protectionism](#) vs Free Trade

*Should countries shield local businesses from foreign competition?*

[Thucydides Trap](#): when a rising power causes fear in an established power which escalates toward war.

Interdependence

Globalisation

Soft power vs hard power

Diplomacy

- International arbitration and conferences
- [Debt-trap diplomacy](#): one country is financially indebted to another and is compelled to support it
- [Public diplomacy](#) and the [role of social media](#)
- Economic diplomacy

Defense

Deterrence

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- [Mutually Assured Destruction](#) (nuclear weapons) and the [stability-instability paradox](#)

Realpolitik (pragmatism)

[Populism](#), [gerrymandering](#) and fake news as a threat to democracy

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#### Events in Recent Years:

- **Duterte** is elected Philippines President in 2016 and launches the '**War on Drugs**', involving extra-judicial killings of drug-users and peddlers. Duterte ignored and insulted the International Criminal Court and foreign detractors.
- **Brexit** referendum results in a 'leave' victory
- United States pulls out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (**TPP**) following **Trump's election**, as he deemed it as an unfair trade deal, disappointing partnering countries.
- **North Korea-US** become increasingly hostile following Trump's **threats** to attack and constant insults on Twitter
- **Catalonia** declared **independence** (from Spain) following a 2017 referendum, but this was **not recognised** by the international community; Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy dismissed Catalan President Carles Puigdemont and his cabinet, and in 2018, five Catalan ministers were jailed by the Spanish court.
- **Battle of Marawi** (in Philippines) occurred from May to October 2017 between government forces and ISIS-linked militants such as those in Abu Sayyaf and Maute. The city was restored.
- 2017 **Zimbabwe coup d'état**: Dictator Robert Mugabe was overthrown by the Zimbabwe Defence Force.
- **Dismissal of FBI director James Comey** who was investigating the Trump campaign's purported links to Russia; Robert Mueller later took over the role
- **Poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal** in the UK: a former Russian military officer and double-agent for the UK's intelligence services and his daughter were poisoned by a Novichok nerve agent, and Russia was accused of attempted murder. The US agreed with the UK assessment and put forth sanctions against Russia.

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- In late 2017, the Donald Trump announced recognition of **Jerusalem as Israel's capital**, shifting the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This sparked tensions and international criticism as Jerusalem is **disputed territory**: Palestine claims East Jerusalem, as Jerusalem's status is of significant importance in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Hopes of a two-state solution by the international community were diminished.
- In 2018, **Kim Jong Un** meets South Korea's Moon Jae-In, and later meets Donald Trump in Singapore, making significant strides **towards peace**. **No concrete agreement** was made with regard to denuclearisation, and peace is still fragile.
- **Canada-Saudi Arabia relations sour** after Canada's call for release of two human rights activists, prompting Saudi Arabia to expel Canada's ambassador, suspend new trade, froze flights to Canada, and cancelled scholarships of Saudi students studying in Canada.
- Ethiopia and Eritrea made peace following two decades of hostility, reopening borders and diplomatic relations.
- **U.S.-China Trade War**: Trump, believing China's trade practices to be unfair, put forth tariffs. In response, China did the same; this went on for several months. On December 1, 2018, planned increases in tariffs were postponed. The White House stated that both parties will "immediately begin negotiations on structural changes with respect to forced technology transfer, intellectual property protection, non-tariff barriers, cyber intrusions and cyber theft.
- 7,000 Central American migrants arrived at the **US-Mexico border** after crossing Mexico and parts of Central America. More than 5,000 troops are deployed to the border and a controversial tactic that limits how many people can seek asylum each day called metering is employed.
- **Democrats** win the House in the U.S.
- The **Yellow Vests movement** started in the later half of 2018; rising fuel prices, high cost of living, and claims that a disproportionate burden of the government's tax reforms were falling on the working and middle classes led to protests that have yet to end.

- **(2018) Canada arrests Huawei's Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Meng Wangzhou** at the U.S.'s request for violating sanctions on Iran; **in response, China detained several Canadians** without revealing the reason. **UPDATE: In 2021, the United States dropped a three-year-old request that Canada extradite a senior Huawei executive, prompting China to release two Canadian citizens it had arrested when the extradition warrant was first filed back in 2018**
- The Malaysian Attorney General's Chambers extends **Johor Bahru's port limits**, and several Malaysian vessels repeatedly intruded Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas. Singapore's Ministry of Transport stated that the extension was a serious violation of sovereignty and international law and uncondusive for good bilateral relations.
- **2019 Venezuelan presidential crisis**: thousands protest in favour of disputed interim President Juan Guaidó. Several people are killed, and President **Maduro** severs diplomatic ties with the United States.
- Hong Kong protests (2020 and onwards): China supposed to honour 'One Country, Two Systems' → however, Hong Kong (which has a pro-Beijing Cheif Executive) was going to pass an extradition bill which would allow transfer of people in Hong Kong to the mainland for be persecuted. This creates much possibility of abuse as e.g. anti-Communist Party individuals may be now brought to the mainland and trialled (there is a lot less trust). Looked like part of an escalating, continuous breach of One Country, Two Systems → protests demanded removal of extradition bill and greater democracy and autonomy for Hong Kong
  - National Security Law subsequently passed; protestors may face up to an entire lifetime of imprisonment
  - raids conducted at Apple Daily and many key activists were detained (including Joshua Wong)
- Joe Biden wins presidency in the U.S. (2020)
- U.S. Capitol attacks
  - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January\\_6\\_United\\_States\\_Capitol\\_attack](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/January_6_United_States_Capitol_attack) → Called to action by Donald Trump, thousands of his supporters gathered in

Washington D.C. to support the false claim that the 2020 was stolen by the Democrats.

- **Covid-19 pandemic:** Globalisation; The interconnectedness between countries accelerated the spread of the virus. Several countries and people around the world donated medical supplies to Wuhan when news of shortage first arose, highlighting the spirit of globalism. Nationalism was also apparent: The U.S. demanded manufacturing giant, 3M, to divert masks intended for foreign distribution to the U.S., sparking humanitarian concerns. Taiwan and several countries banned the export of masks to prioritise their own people. Vaccine nationalism was another instance.
- [Differences in handling: authoritarian countries versus less authoritarian ones](#)
- In 2020, China was notably assertive. 'Wolf-warrior' diplomacy became a popular term.
- Uighur minority discrimination and human rights abuses in Xinjiang come to light
- [Belarus protests](#) against newly elected president (claims of rigged election); European Union, UK and US join together to impose sanctions against Belarus, calling for new and fair elections
- Qasem Soleimani (an Iranian general) is [assassinated](#) by the United States by the use of a military drone. International analysts suggest US action was a breach of international law, and Iranians call for a vengeance against the U.S.. The U.S. claims this assassination was done to deter attacks. Online, memes spread about an upcoming 'World War III'. Previously, both Iran and US had agreed to what is known as the 'Iran nuclear deal', which would limit and prohibit nuclear proliferation. Incidents like this has made Iran respond by reducing its compliance to such agreements.
- OPEC limits oil production due to reduced demand for oil during the pandemic; this was done to prevent oil prices from falling (2020).
- George Floyd is killed in 2020, sparking the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement and demands for more action to be taken against police brutality. Derek Chauvin, the officer responsible, was eventually sentenced to 20 years imprisonment—contrary to previous expectations and the common

phenomenon of officers getting away unscathed. Similar cases included the killing of Breonna Taylor. In this case, officers entered the wrong home and did not clearly announcing their presence; this resulted in shots fired by Breonna Taylor's boyfriend who thought there were intruders, and officers responding instantly with over 10 shots supposedly in 'self-defence'.

- Protests in Delhi over India's new Citizenship Amendment Act [killed](#) at least fifty-three people. This Citizenship Amendment Act was seen as discriminating against Muslims, as while it made provisions to recognise the citizenship different groups who do not currently have official citizenship, it appeared to intentionally exclude Muslims.
- Putin critic Alexey Navalny was [poisoned](#) while on a flight to Moscow.
- In December 2020, the U.S. government [acknowledged](#) a [massive and sophisticated cyberattack](#), most likely conducted by Russian intelligence services, had penetrated the computer networks of a range of U.S. government agencies and corporations.
- GE2020: PAP, as usual, wins, but saw a drop in popularity. Certain Workers' Party candidates gained popularity, such as Jamus Lim (who appeared in a televised debate), winning Seng Kang. Pritam Singh is made 'Leader of the Opposition', a new position, seen as the government's way of responding to what appears to be the people's demand for more opposition voice in parliament. In this General Elections, certain figures like Ivan Lim saw his history of mistreatment of his peers and colleagues coming back to bite (he left the PAP team)—highlighting the importance of one's behaviour and character.
- In 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson jointly [announced](#) a new trilateral security partnership—AUKUS. The U.S. pledged to provide Australia with technology to build eight nuclear-powered (not nuclear-armed) submarines. This kindled enormous outrage from France since AUKUS terminated a \$37 billion agreement it struck with Australia in 2016 to build a dozen diesel-electric powered submarines. As a result, Paris [recalled](#) its ambassadors to Canberra and Washington. **[Diplomacy]** Overall, the purpose

of the security partnership was seen to be to counter China's influence, so this also caused the unhappiness of the Chinese government.

- In 2021, migration crises continued. Joe Biden's administration continued much of Trump's anti-immigration policy or was at times required to by the Supreme Court.
- 2021's migration and refugee crises were fuelled by Covid-19, economic conditions and political instability. The EU had a 70 percent increase in illegal immigrant. Critics [argued](#) that the EU was failing its duty to help migrants. A surge in migrants crossing the English Channel from France triggered [a diplomatic row](#) between Paris and London.
- Belarus [encouraged](#) migrants to cross its territory to enter Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland in a bid to pressure the EU to end sanctions it imposed (*mentioned in previous page*) to protest the rigged 2020 Belarussian presidential election. **[key idea: normally, a country would want another country to have good economic conditions so that they do not have a surge of people leaving the country → this would mean more illegal immigrants trying to enter their country]**
- Ever Given [ran aground](#) in the Suez Canal, blocking one of the world's major waterways for a week and generating costs estimated to run [\\$9.6 billion a day](#). **[Globalisation / Problems of Interconnectedness]**
- In Trump's term, Trump had struck a deal with the Taliban which required the US to withdraw its troops. Biden, sticking to this, ordered the withdrawal of US troops (which had been supporting the Afghanistan Army against the Taliban) from Afghanistan. The ramifications were huge. The Afghanistan Army almost immediately began to collapse, and was over-run by the Taliban as US forces withdrew. The agreement had also been that the US would evacuate its forces and Afghans who assisted the US military by August 31st—however, the US failed to evacuate as many as 300,000 Afghans who assisted the US military by the deadline. Those left behind could be targets and face harm from the Taliban.
- The Taliban took over Afghanistan—concerns over human rights abuses resurged. <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/taliban-afghanistan>

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- Ethiopia-Tigray war (millions displaced and war crimes committed on both sides; international efforts to make peace have failed)
- Myanmar coup occurs: [2021 Myanmar coup d'état](#)  
Aung San Suu Kyi, democratically elected de facto leader of Myanmar is detained by the military which ousted the elected government. Many protested against the military and faced violence from the military—this was widely shared online.
- In January 2021, Saudi Arabia agreed to [reopen its border](#) with Qatar, ending a three-year-long diplomatic crisis. **[there have been questions on importance of borders at the GP A-Levels]**
- G7 leaders [agreed](#) to back a minimum global corporate tax rate of at least 15 percent.
- Lithuania [agreed](#) to allow Taiwan to open an embassy, causing China to [downgrade relations](#) with Lithuania **[Diplomacy]**
- U.S. attempts to waive intellectual property rights with regards to vaccine production; this is rejected by countries like Germany
- Price of chicken goes up in Singapore; questions arise on our reliance on Malaysia for food imports **[globalisation]**
- Raesaah Khan resigns from the Workers' Party after being drilled for lying in Parliament.
- Liz-Truss becomes Prime Minister briefly before resigning over poor economic management and lack of support. She was also seen as being highly inarticulate/uncharismatic. **[Governance]** and is replaced by Rishi Sunak. There were three PMs in just two months. **(food for thought: is this constant change in Prime Minister a reflection of good democracy or bad? Could be argued both ways → bad, in that democracy is so unstable that leadership is a revolving door; good, in that democracy is so effective and swift in enacting change, in that poor leaders can be quickly got rid of)**
- Russia invades Ukraine
- Mahsa Amini's killing at the hands of Iran's morality police lead to widespread protests by Iranians calling for more women rights. This also surfaced at the

FIFA World Cup in Qatar, and much of social media. The morality police is eventually disbanded, but nothing much else has changed.

- China's largest protests since Tiananmen: protestors demanded an end to the 'zero-covid' policy
- Qatar serves as a questionable host for the World Cup, with reports of human rights abuses in the building of stadiums, and controversy over its treatment of journalists
- Section 377A is repealed in Singapore. Some debate also occurs with regards to whether the party whip should or should not be lifted in such debates. Additionally, should members of parliament vote based on their own conscience, or based on their constituents? While most would argue for the latter, some suggested the former—Malay MPs, for instance, may be there by the GRC system to represent minority interests, which includes matters of faith.

**Five Eyes:** an umbrella agreement between US, UK, Australia, Canada and New Zealand allows free sharing of intelligence and information for the sake of each nation's security.

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (**NATO**): an international alliance of 29 countries which agree to come to each other's aid should one be attacked. This was also used after September 11 to declare a 'War on Terror'.

### **Financial aid: Altruism or Pragmatism?**

**Marshall Plan** : U.S. economic assistance (over \$12 billion/nearly \$100 billion in 2016 US dollars) to rebuild Western Europe post-WWII; financial aid was in the form of grants that did not have to be repaid. It also aimed to reduce communist influence in countries aided.

### **China's Debt-Trap Diplomacy:**

- Loan given to the Sri Lankan government by the Exim Bank of China to build the Hambantota Port: state-owned Chinese firms were hired to build the

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Hambantota Port. Due to Sri Lanka's inability to service the debt on the port, it was leased to the Chinese state-owned China Merchants Port Holdings Company Limited on a 99-year lease in 2017. This caused concern in the United States, Japan, and India that the port might be used as a Chinese naval base to [contain China's geopolitical rivals](#).

- US\$2.5 billion to state-owned South African electrical utility Eskom arranged during the Jacob Zuma government, and a R370 billion loan during the presidency of Cyril Ramaphosa.

**Belt and Road Initiative:** A development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving financing of infrastructural development in countries in Europe, Asia and Africa. It is seen by some as China's push for dominance in global affairs, and debt-trap diplomacy.

#### **World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF):**

Loans often have attached conditionalities based on what is termed the 'Washington Consensus', focusing on liberalisation—of trade, investment and the financial sector—, deregulation and privatisation of nationalised industries. A state may thus lose its authority to govern its own economy as national economic policies are predetermined under IMF packages. **[Aid vs Sovereignty]** World Bank and IMF policy decisions are made by leading industrialised countries—the G7—because they represent the largest donors, without much consultation with poor and developing countries.

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#### **Political Systems**

**Scandinavian and Nordic countries:** Ranked first in the Democracy Index, Norway comes in third place in the IMF per capita nominal GDP list. Among the top democracies, Iceland, New Zealand and Denmark rank highly too in terms of nominal GDP per capita. These countries often top rankings in many other areas as seen in the Human Development Index.

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**2016 US Presidential Election of Donald Trump:** The rise of the controversial Donald Trump who had a campaign driven by fear-mongering and the pushing of anti-Islam and anti-migrant views may to some, be a sign of democracy's perils. A large proportion of a population may not necessarily make the best decision, and fake news could influence votes. To others, it showed society's impatience with political correctness and the typical politician, and thus a desire for a change. Trump's withdrawal from agreements by earlier governments such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris Agreement also show that promises made by one government may be broken when another takes its place.

**2016 Brexit referendum:** The victory of the the 'Leave' camp despite academics warning of the economic ramifications and difficulty (Brexit has yet to occur) may be a sign that the majority cannot be trusted to make the best judgements. Brexit was driven largely by a desire for greater sovereignty and reduction of immigration, but seemed to ignore the fact that the European Union would throw up trade barriers against Britain and cause business uncertainty.

**US Government shutdowns:** The US government shutdowns in 2018/2019 over Congress's refusal to support and fund the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) immigration policy and the proposed US-Mexico border wall may be seen as an issue with the [separation of powers](#).

**Removal of GST in Malaysia:** The 2018 triumph of Mahathir's Pakatan Harapan over Najib's Barisan Nasional, while driven by frustration over Najib's government which was also marred with the 1MDB corruption scandal, involved an election promise by PH to scrape GST. The abolishment of Goods and Services Tax for a country in debt is seen by many as a populist move to garner votes and not ideal.

**Thailand:** When Thailand was a democracy under Yingluck Shinawatra (till 2014), a plan to buy rice from local farmers above market prices was launched to support

them. This is said to have cost Thailand billions of dollars, and is seen by some as a populist move: since rural Thailand made up the majority, they would be appeased maintaining Yingluck in power, despite opposition in the rest of Thailand. In 2014, the military overthrew her and Thailand is today under a military junta.

**Venezuela's collapse:** has been the [mismanagement of the economy](#), first by [Hugo Chávez](#), and then by [Nicolás Maduro](#). Both men also attacked and dismantled Venezuela's democratic institutions. Maduro [won reelection in May](#) 2018 in a rigged vote and shows no signs of retreating from policies that have brought Venezuela skyrocketing inflation, water and electrical shortages, and growing rates of malnutrition.

**China's ruling Communist Party under President Xi Jinping:** The Chinese State Council runs all ministries and the Central Bank, with President Xi given overwhelming authority. In 2018, China even rewrote its constitution to abolish term limits, which is seen as a sign Xi Jinping will remain in power for many more years to come. China's clear central leadership with extensive authority is credited for the country's stability and China's economic strides.

- **Human rights abuses and the lack of free speech:** Censorship of critics online (e.g. Weibo), [kidnapping of booksellers \(Causeway Bay Books\)](#), and infringement of human rights of Uyghers are just some instances. Before Xi Jinping's time, the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests (June Fourth incidents) involved the massacre of thousands of demonstrators. In 1999, the Communist Party initiated the persecution of Falun Gong, and there were reports of systematic torture, illegal imprisonment, forced labour and organ harvesting.

**Absolute monarchies:** Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have royalty in power: the West often paints them as countries that substantially limit freedoms. These countries are nonetheless wealthy nations with high GDP per capita; of course, this is more often credited to oil as their natural resource. Eswatini (Swaziland) is an absolute monarchy and among the poorest in the world.

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## Some older but notable events:

### Iraq War (2003-2011)

- The United States' original intent was to remove a regime it believed to possess weapons of mass destruction, harboured and supported terrorists, committed outrageous human rights abuses, and 'defied just demands of the UN and the world'. The U.S. led [a coalition](#) to oust Saddam Hussein.

**[International cooperation]** No evidence of possession of weapons of mass destruction were found, and supposed ties to Al-Qaeda were discredited, prompting criticism of the war. The main rationale of the war thus shifted to focus on Saddam Hussein's human rights record and promotion of democracy in Iraq. **[Foreign intervention]** United Nations Secretary-General Kofi-Annan said in a 2004 BBC interview that the war from their point of view and the Charter's was that the war was illegal. **[Lack of UN authority]** Once the [Ba'ath Party](#) was removed, no local figures were on hand to immediately assume the now-vacant ministerial posts. **[Power vacuum]** [Paul Bremer](#), head of the newly formed Coalition Provisional Authority, dissolved the entire Iraqi military and most civilian employees of the old government, and pledged to build a new military and government from scratch. This sparked rioting among former Iraqi soldiers who later allied with the surviving [Ba'ath](#) loyalists and formed guerrilla units, igniting an eight-year insurgency against Coalition forces. Religiously motivated Jihadists soon joined and grew in influence, such as Al-Qaeda. This also indirectly led to the formation of ISIS **[Unintended consequences]**.

### Arab Spring (Dec 2010-2012)

- The Arab Spring was a series of violent and non-violent anti-government uprisings that spread across the Middle East in late 2010 in response to oppressive regimes and a low standard of living. It first started in Tunisia. Social media has been heralded as the driving force behind the swift spread of revolution throughout the world, as new protests appeared in response to success stories shared from those taking place in other countries. **[Media]**

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Governments suppressed discussion in those forums through accusing content creators of unrelated crimes or shutting down communication on specific sites or groups, such as through Facebook. **[Censorship]** The effects of the Tunisian Revolution spread strongly to five other countries: Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. The early hopes that these popular movements would end corruption, increase political participation, and bring about greater economic equity quickly collapsed in the wake of the regional and international military interventions in Bahrain (which requested Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to help suppress the revolt) and Yemen, **[Foreign intervention]** and the destructive civil wars in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Only the uprising in Tunisia has resulted in a transition to constitutional democratic governance.

- Part of the Arab Spring was the Libyan Civil War which involved forces loyal to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and those seeking to oust his government. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 formed the legal basis for the 2011 military intervention of Libya demanding "an immediate ceasefire" and for the establishment of a [no-fly zone](#) and to use all means necessary short of foreign occupation to protect civilians. **[foreign intervention on humanitarian grounds/ [responsibility to protect](#)]** However, NATO and the West were accused of [imperialism](#), such as by Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme leader. In its aftermath, there was a power vacuum which gave way to proliferation of weapons, Islamic insurgencies, sectarian violence, and lawlessness till date.
- Likewise, in Syria, there was the Syrian Civil War. Dictator Bashar al-Assad ordered a crackdown on the Arab Spring protesters and committed several war crimes in the process. Some of the earlier discussed rebels from the Iraq War entered Syria to aid the resistance, and this group led to the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Syrian Civil War is still ongoing. In 2018, the Syrian government allegedly launched a chemical attack in Douma where rebel groups (Jund Al-Aqsa) are, implicating hundreds of civilians. In response, the United States, France and the United Kingdom carried out [a series of military strikes](#) against multiple government sites in Syria. **[International cooperation/intervention/responsibility to protect]**

## European Migrant Crisis (2015)

Wars such as the Syrian Civil War led to an increase in asylum seekers who fled to countries in the European Union. Though the refugee crisis is mostly discussed in Europe, the countries with the most refugees are actually Middle Eastern and African countries (Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Ethiopia). When countries such as Italy made a deal with Libya to allow her to turn back refugees, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2012 that Italy had violated the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) in doing so. The EU Refugee Relocation Scheme was launched, setting refugee quotas for various EU members to more fairly share responsibility since the bulk land on frontline states (Greece, Hungary, Italy). In the wake of [November 2015 Paris attacks](#), Poland's European affairs minister-designate Konrad Szymański stated that he saw no possibility of enacting the EU refugee relocation scheme without security assurances. German Chancellor Angela Merkel is notable for accepting large numbers of refugees.

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# Media

Concepts:

Traditional media vs [new media](#)

- new media is more empowering (discussion/anyone can post), convenient, faster, has greater reach/accessibility(?), and is more engaging; these could be cons if under the wrong hands (falsehoods for political and commercial gain, or publicity). Of course, new and traditional media may be complementary.

Media freedom vs fake information (not just news; documentaries etc. too)

- [Yellow journalism](#) (exaggerated news stories)

Censorship (for national security, prevent obscenity and hate speech/to prevent opposition)

[Echo chamber](#): a situation in which people only hear opinions of one type, or opinions that are similar to their own.

Independent media (free of government influence or corporate interests)

Mainstream media and alternative media

[Citizen journalism](#): public citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information. This is supported by *new media* such as social networking and media-sharing sites.

Media as the [Fourth Estate](#)

- [Watchdog journalism](#): media's role in uncovering the truth (a contrast with media's role in spreading fake news)

Effects of the media

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## Media Examples/Events:

- In 2015, **China lifted** her 14-year **ban on gaming consoles**; the ban on their sale in 2000 had occurred amid fears games could have adverse effects on Chinese youth. It had been **ineffective**, with imported grey market consoles sold openly in China. **[regulation of the media and challenges]**

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- 2015 **Charlie Hebdo shooting**: 12 staff members were killed by two Al-Qaeda-affiliated brothers following Charlie Hebdo's controversial depiction of Prophet Muhammad. **[media freedom consequence]**
- In Singapore, Amos Yee was found guilty in May 2015; he was charged for the intention of wounding the religious feelings of Christians, obscenity and 'threatening, abusive or insulting communication'. **[media freedom]**
- "**Save The Day**" released a video before the 2016 U.S. presidential election, starring celebrities such as Robert Downey Jr., Scarlett Johansson, Julianne Moore, Don Cheadle and Mark Ruffalo, calling on viewers to vote. It was clear from the video they were pushing for voters to go for Hillary instead of Trump.
- The **Paradise Papers**, a set of 13.4 million confidential documents related to offshore investments were leaked to two German journalists who shared the information with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, a network of over three-hundred journalists. It revealed how many corporations such as Apple and Nike avoided or reduced taxes paid through shifting assets to tax havens or areas with large tax incentives. This was similar to the larger-scale Panama Papers released the year before. **[watchdog journalism]**
- In October 2017, **Panama Papers** journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was **murdered** in Malta; a bomb blew up the car she was in. She had earlier reported on Malta's political system being rife with corruption and bribery, and her belief that criminal interests had turned Malta into a mafia state. **[watchdog & independent journalism]['censorship' by opposition]**
- In 2018, the **Select Committee On Deliberate Online Falsehoods** was formed in Singapore to recommend strategies to deal with online falsehoods. Singaporean historian **Thum Ping Tjin** submitted a paper arguing that any legislation made would also apply to the government; Thum argued that Operation Coldstore and Operation Spectrum provided no evidence that detainees were part of a Marxist conspiracy, and such justifications for detaining were falsehoods by PAP politicians for political gain. Minister K. Shanmugam said Thum fell short of being an objective historian. Civil activists such as Terry Xu of The Online Citizen criticised the hearings for not being held in a 'open and consultative manner'.

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- Following China's Communist Party's removal of president term limits, several phrases for **discussion** such as 'proclaiming oneself emperor', 'constitution amendment' and 'Winnie the Pooh' (a somewhat derogatory reference to President Xi) were **censored** on **Sina Weibo**. **[censorship]**
- In 2018, **Cambridge Analytica** was revealed to have harvested over 50 million Facebook users' data since 2014 and assisted Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. This unauthorised access to data enabled the company to sway views of voters in a targeted manner. Cambridge Analytica also played a role in the Brexit referendum. **[privacy and data exploitation as a new media consequence]**
- **Facebook** was implicated in the Cambridge Analytica scandal, and privacy issues were raised; Mark Zuckerberg was made to testify before the US congress and the UK Parliament. Singapore, likewise, had a Facebook representative, Simon Milner, questioned for hours by the Select Committee on Deliberate Online Falsehoods, and pushed to agree to take down posts at request. **[media freedom]**
- Facebook Donated to 46 of 55 Members on Committee that Will Question Zuckerberg [usatoday.com/story/...](https://www.usatoday.com/story/...) **[Consider: political lobbying/attempts to influence politicians]**
- In June 2018, the **Capital Gazette shooting** occurred, killing five staff members, mainly journalists. The newspaper had previously published an article related to the shooter's harassment of a high school acquaintance; his motive was thus believed to be an act of vengeance. In seemingly resolute defiance, Capital Gazette's journalists insisted on putting out its next edition only hours after the shooting, knowing that the shooter had specifically targeted the newspaper and editing team.
- In 2018, **Tencent** announced that it will verify the identities of all its videogame players to sharply **restrict online playtime for youths** in China, including limiting children 12 and under to one hour of play daily.
- **Jamal Khashoggi**, a Saudi Arabian dissident and columnist for The Washington Post, was sharply critical of Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed Bin Salman. Khashoggi had entered the Saudi Arabia consulate in

Istanbul, Turkey and was assassinated there; he is said to have been dismembered. Jamal Khashoggi was made Time Person of the Year for 2018.

- In late 2018, two **Reuters journalists** who were **investigating the Rohingya massacres** were sentenced to seven years of **imprisonment** for 'breaching the official secrets act'; the journalists claim they were framed. **[watchdog journalism/censorship]**
- Blogger **Leong Sze Hian** shared an article which said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong had helped launder money from Malaysia's 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) state fund; in response, PM Lee filed a defamation suit. **[falsehoods]**
- In December 2018, Netflix dropped a Hasan Minhaj episode in Saudi Arabia at the government's request, due to the comedian's criticism of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman.
- The Netflix show "13 Reasons Why" was associated with a 28.9% increase in suicide rates among U.S. youth ages 10-17 in the month (April 2017) following the show's release, after accounting for ongoing trends in suicide rates, according to a study.  
[eurekaalert.org/pub\\_re...](http://eurekaalert.org/pub_re...)
- The Ministry of Finance, in 2018, partnered with local influencers to spread information of Singapore's Budget 2018—this sparked some public criticism and questioning on use of government funds (due to negative impression of 'influencers'). [An opinion piece can be found here.](#)

Local influencer stuff and controversies in Singapore:

- Dee Kosh. [CNA: The rise and fall of Dee Kosh: From celebrity YouTuber to convicted sex offender](#)
- "SgInstaBabes". [Mothership: Xiaxue calls out SgInstaBabes founder for exploiting teenage girls, innocent geoduck involved](#)
- Naomi Neo, and other influencers' behaviour of having children in viral videos seen as 'using' them—debate ensues on whether it is okay to use children for social media traction.  
<https://mothership.sg/2022/09/naomi-neo-prank-son-parody/>

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- Night Owl Cinematics (NOC) [scandal revealing abusive behaviour of employer, Sylvia Chan](#). Revelation of this was first made anonymously by a user named @sgcickenrice , highlighting the value of anonymity in bringing the truth to light on social media.
- 2022: Singaporean busker, Jeff Ng, who gained much fame, saw public opinion turn against him as social media posts exposed his abusive conduct. A [Facebook post by his ex-girlfriend](#) revealed past manipulation and this went viral on various social media platforms, including TikTok. Accusations also arise over [buying of followers](#), highlighting how 'fake' social media can be.
- Christchurch shooting (March 2019): [Ardern's](#) decision not to name the perpetrator of the attack offers a blueprint on how to deal with terrorists—by deflecting the attention from the perpetrators towards the victims. *“He sought many things from his act of terror, but one is notoriety.”*
- Advertising: Amazon's one-day delivery advertisement was banned as being 'misleading' in the UK, as many complaint they did not receive packages within a day
- Protection from Online Falsehoods and Misinformation Act (POFMA) is introduced in Singapore; there is much debate: should the government be empowered to determine what is 'true' or 'false'? Concerns arise over whether this would cause self-censorship by individuals and opposition parties. → many have had [correction orders under POFMA](#), including The Real Singapore, and some over false Covid-19 allegations. **[Censorship/freedom of the media]**
- Singapore government launches 'Factually', which discredits allegations it deems false: <https://www.gov.sg/factually>
- Hong Kong's new National Security Law, seen as a way to restrict anti-Beijing and pro-democracy activists, is rolled out. Apple Daily, a pro-democracy newspaper is raided and its founder, Jimmy Lai, is put behind bars. **[Censorship/freedom of the media]**
- **Facebook's** Mark Zuckerberg says he does not think social networks should be fact-checking what politicians post, while Twitter moved to fact-check

tweets (such as Trump’s tweet that mail-ballots would be substantially fraudulent)

- 2021 Facebook whistleblower: a former Facebook employee testified before a senate subcommittee and Facebook faces huge scrutiny.  
<https://www.npr.org/2021/10/05/1043377310/facebook-whistleblower-frances-haugen-congress> She claims the company prizes “growth and profits over combating hate speech, misinformation and other threats to the public.”
- **Weinstein** was convicted of sexual assault and rape, with much thanks to the #MeToo movement (2020).
- **TikTok** rises as popular social media platform, with over 1 billion users in 2022. Interestingly, this marks one of the few platforms popular in the West that is not founded in the U.S. (consider: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit)—founded instead in China. This also leads to a lot of concerns about ‘national security’ and ‘privacy’ as western governs are wary of Chinese surveillance.
- Noting some controversial or notable TikTok influencers may be helpful.
  - e.g. are there TikTok influencers who are too pretentious in trying to depict a certain lifestyle → harms of social media?
  - are there TikTok influencers who have a positive influence?
  - are there any which have a negative influence?
  - Andrew Tate, for instance, gained notoriety over his misogyny, making statements like “You can’t be responsible for a dog if it doesn’t obey you” in a reference to women. He is eventually [barred from the platform](#) but video clips of him and his statements are still frequently posted by users.
- GE2020: Singapore politicians make use of social media, including TikTok, to engage with the populus.
- Trump is banned from Twitter in January 2021, following the Capitol Hill Riot, (*discussed in ‘Politics’*) and moves on to start his own social network, Truth Social. While some applaud the move which is seen as preventing the incitement of violence and hate speech (which are against Twitter rules as

well), questions arise over whether social media corporations are too powerful since they are able to remove the online voice of politicians.

- Vanessa Bryant, widow of NBA legend Kobe Bryant who died in a helicopter crash, called on deputies who shared his crash photos to be identified publicly (she is suing the department; the lawsuit claims that county employees had 'showed off' the photos of the remains of Kobe and his daughter after the crash) → emotional distress and invasion of privacy → won lawsuit together with co-plaintiff → [\\$31 million in damages](#)
- Australia introduces law requiring Facebook to pay news outlets for news on its platform  
<https://www.reuters.com/technology/australia-says-law-making-facebook-go-ogle-pay-news-has-worked-2022-12-02/>
  - U.S. attempts to introduce similar law, and Meta threatens that it would remove US news content if it passes (December 2022)
- Naomi Osaka (famous tennis player) withdrew from the French Open after she was fined for leaving a press conference and avoiding the media. [She spoke of her mental health and anxiety speaking to the media](#). In her first interview since the French Open, a reporter was also criticised for the tone of questioning [used](#).
- J.K. Rowling, the *Harry Potter* author, shared her opinions which were labelled transphobic; she had argued amongst many other statements, the following: 'If sex isn't real, there's no same-sex attraction. If sex isn't real, the lived reality of women globally is erased. I know and love trans people, but erasing the concept of sex removes the ability of many to meaningfully discuss their lives. It isn't hate to speak the truth.' This made her 'cancelled' with many condemning her as being a transphobe on Twitter.
- NUS student writes opinion piece on why she does not want to 'be woke' and not to be 'cancelled' and faces much cyberbullying. She references J.K. Rowling to argue against today's 'cancel culture'.  
<https://mothership.sg/2021/03/dont-want-to-be-woke-commentary-summary/>

- Interestingly, Putin also made a similar reference to argue that Russia was being a victim of cancel culture during its invasion of Ukraine.
- Telegram’s encryption and possible anonymity makes it a key tool for protestors in Belarus against the government.
- Fake reviews on Amazon ([report](#))
- Singapore Press Holdings restructures to be ‘not-for-profit’ entity; SPH Media Holdings Pte Ltd (SPH Media) is formed. It claims this will create more editorial integrity as sources of funding will not hinge on advertisers.
- **‘Umbrage’**: When a reporter asked if the shift would mean the company "will now pivot to emphasise editorial integrity, for example, ahead of advertiser interests", there was an outburst by Singapore Press Holdings chief executive Ng Yat Chung, who said that “I will tell you first that the fact that you dare to question SPH titles for – in your words – 'conceding to advertisers', I take umbrage at that comment.” Internet memes of the word umbrage and the SPH chief executive ensued, with also online commentary questioning the management of The Straits Times.
- Pro-democracy activists called for a boycott of the ‘Mulan’ remake as the lead actress, Liu Yifei, made a post in support of the Hong Kong police.
- Debate ensues regarding OnlyFans creators, following the arrest of Titus Low and questions on double-standards based on gender arise.
- France passes law protecting child social media influencers—it ensures they have same protections as child actors and models, which includes having some of their earnings set aside for when they are adults, and regulations on duration spent working online. There is also a provision for the ‘right to be forgotten’ so platforms will have to remove videos of these children should they ever request for it. **[Consider link to earlier discussion in Singapore, where local influencers post their children—sometimes in pranks or sometimes in purely innocent moments—e.g. Naomi Neo and Jian Hao Tan. Are there any ethical limits?]**
- Facebook at a point marked posts claiming Covid-19 was man-made (by China, in laboratories), as misinformation—later, it backtracks, realising it was too quick to assume that these were definitely misinformation, and decides

not to do so. (useful for arguing that what is 'truth' and 'fact' can it fact be unclear)

- Facebook Fired An Employee Who Collected Evidence Of Right-Wing Pages Getting Preferential Treatment. [buzzfeednews.com/articl...](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/...)
- Kanye West is [banned from multiple social media platforms including Instagram and Twitter over his hate speech and anti-Semitism](https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/...), and brands including Adidas turn their backs on West and end deals (causing financial harm to West). This example highlights today's limitations on free speech and also the consequences of hate speech.
- **Elon Musk buys over Twitter**, claiming to be a free-speech 'absolutist'. Controversy arises over double-standards. He unbans Donald Trump and several other figures including the aforementioned Kanye West. However, he chooses to keep Alex Jones banned on the platform, stating the following: "My firstborn child died in my arms. I felt his last heartbeat," and that he has "no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame." Alex Jones is a conspiracy theorist who previously falsely claimed the 2012 Sandy Hook shooting was a hoax and that some children and parents were paid actors.
  - After dismissing a huge proportion of staff including those in the moderation team, various sources point out how [Twitter is no longer safe](https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/s...)
  - Allegations arise over Musk using the platform to target opponents and spread his own beliefs
  - A food for thought is how technology billionaires of today have such power over the media and censorship decisions, and whether that should be the case. A past year A-Level question was as follows:  
**"Consider the view that social media has more influence than politicians."**
- Ukraine dismantles 5 disinformation bot farms, seizes 10,000 SIM cards [bleepingcomputer.com/news/s...](https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/s...)

- Alexei Navalny calls for social media ‘information front’ against Russia. Jailed opposition leader urges west to support huge ad campaign in order to break through Kremlin Ukraine war propaganda  
[theguardian.com/world/...](https://theguardian.com/world/...)
- Meta is accused in a lawsuit of allowing posts that inflamed Ethiopia conflict; it is sued for over \$2 billion.
- YouTube blocks any and all content tied to Russian state media  
[mashable.com/articl...](https://mashable.com/articl...)
- India’s richest man, Adani, buys over NDTV—a key media platform in India—which was referred to by news outlets as a blow to independent media. NDTV had been one of the few outlets that take a critical view of Prime Minister Modi, whereas Adani has been an ally of Modi, causing fears over free speech.  
<https://time.com/6238075/india-ndtv-gautam-adani-narendramodi/>
- Additional examples on advertising:
  - Netflix confirms it is introducing advertisements. (2022)
  - Amazon’s overuse of advertisements in listings  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/interactive/2022/amazon-shopping-ads/>
- Scientists have found children who spent an above-average time playing video games increased their intelligence more than the average, while TV watching or social media had neither a positive nor a negative effect  
[news.ki.se/video-...](https://news.ki.se/video-...)
- Facebook users, randomized to deactivate their accounts for 4 weeks in exchange for \$102, freed up an average of 60 minutes a day, spent more time socializing offline, became less politically polarized, and reported improved subjective well-being relative to controls. [science.sciencemag.org/content...](https://science.sciencemag.org/content...)
- News avoidance during the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with better mental well-being [psypost.org/2021/1...](https://psypost.org/2021/1...) (**news fatigue**)

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Note that you can turn almost any event covered significantly by the media into a 'media example' where appropriate.

This also includes **viral trends** (especially for questions linking media and youth). These may include 2014's **Ice Bucket Challenge** to raise awareness on ALS, 2012's viral "**Kony 2012**" video which had over 100 million views within six days and its accompanying viral hashtag #Kony2012 which sought action against Joseph Kony who abducted and used thousands of children as soldiers or sex slaves. It also includes other viral hashtags such as **#BlackLivesMatter** calling for an end to police brutality, and 2017's **#MeToo** movement which involved victims of sexual harassments opening up and calling out perpetrators. On the other side of the coin, perilous trends emerged, such as 2018's "**Tide Pod Challenge**" which involved teenagers recording themselves chewing and gagging on pods and daring others to do so (Facebook and Youtube later removed these videos). Even for the seemingly positive trends, they may fall behind in effectiveness: they call for attention but may lack action. Some, such as the #MeToo movement, created the risk of false accusations and vigilante action.

Here are some other notable facts and examples:

- [The Great Firewall of China](#): blocks access to selected foreign websites and slows down cross-border traffic.
- [Laws against Holocaust denial](#) are present in sixteen European countries, but have been criticised by some in support of freedom of expression.
- Info-communications Media Development Authority ([IMDA](#)) blocks several piracy, pornography and gambling websites in Singapore and other illegal content.
- Singapore's government owns Temasek Holdings which owns Mediacorp and indirectly has a significant stake and influence over [SPH Media Trust](#). SPH owns much of Singapore's mainstream media.

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- [Sinclair Broadcast Group](#), the largest owner of local television stations in the U.S. forces stations to air “must-run” segments, which tend to promote conservative viewpoints.
- In 2013, [Edward Snowden](#) exposed the National Security Agency’s global surveillance activities to the public, which sparked a public debate on privacy.
- [Bobo doll experiment](#) shows children as prone to imitation (thus a need to regulate media exposure)
- Numerous films and documentaries have had historical inaccuracies: [First Man](#), a film about Neil Armstrong, excludes the planting of the American flag on the moon, which critics argued was a way to ‘play down America’s superiority’. [The Theory of Everything](#) was also said to have misrepresented Stephen Hawking’s marriage. There are plenty of other examples, so it’s best to find others on your own.
- False information may be spread by corporations; this could be in the form of falsified or biased scientific reports. The [tobacco industry](#), for instance, is infamous for false advertising before its link to cancer was public knowledge.
- As part of a [2006 ruling](#) which sought to punish cigarette manufacturers for decades of deceiving the public about the dangers of their product, the corporations were ordered to disseminate “corrective statements” centered on the health risks and addictive nature of smoking.

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# Environment

Concepts:

Climate change (and whether it is even meaningful to attempt to diminish it)

Energy

- Renewable energy as a solution (or not)
- [Energy security](#)

Pollution (air, water, land, noise, etc.)

- [Global waste trade](#): international trade of waste between countries for further treatment, disposal, or recycling. Toxic wastes are often exported from developed countries to developing countries.

Responsibility (everyone equally, only the wealthy nations, each to carry only one's own weight?)

[Tragedy of the Commons](#): acting in self-interest in damaging to all

Maintaining the environment vs financial interests

Consumerism

- The repercussions of growing consumerism may include increased wastage due to a "throw away" mentality and environmental damage in the process of manufacturing of products (e.g. obtaining natural resources or pollution).
- **Green marketing** of products presumed to be environmentally safe through product modification, changes to the production process, sustainable packaging, as well as modifying advertising. The appeal of environmentally-friendly products may attract consumers who are concerned about the environment. However, there may be false marketing of products to make them appear as environmentally friendly when they are not.

## Environment Examples:

- [Tesla](#) and [SolarCity](#), companies under Elon Musk that focus on clean energy. Clean alternatives remain generally pricier.

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- [Norway](#) plans to completely [ban the sale of petrol cars by 2025](#), and 37% of new vehicle sales are currently electric vehicles which are [exempt](#) from acquisition [tax](#) and from the 25% value-added tax (VAT) on car purchases. This, coupled with a large number of waivers on fees such as road tolls and ferries, continues to provide a favorable environment for electric car uptake. 98% of Norway's energy production is from renewable sources—hydropower being the main source.
- 95% of [Singapore's electricity](#) is derived from [natural gas](#), a nonrenewable source, thus the positive effect of using an electric vehicle instead of one with an internal combustion engine is less.
- The [Paris Agreement](#): each country must determine, plan, and regularly report on the contribution that it undertakes to mitigate global warming. A pair of studies in Nature have said that as of 2017, none of the major industrialized nations were implementing the policies they had envisioned and have not met their pledged emission reduction targets, and even if they had, the sum of all member pledges (as of 2016) would not keep global temperature rise "well below 2 °C". James Hansen, a former NASA scientist and a climate change expert, voiced anger that most of the agreement consists of "promises" or aims and not firm commitments; there is no binding enforcement mechanism.
- In August 2017, Trump announced the [U.S. withdrawal](#) from the Paris Agreement. **[UPDATE: Joe Biden was elected as president the subsequent term, bringing the U.S. back in 2021]**
- Trump's election rally had involved promises of bringing [coal-mining jobs](#) back and supporting the industry.
- In June 2018, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) announced that the U.K. Government would reject the €1.3 billion proposal to construct the [Tidal Lagoon Swansea Bay](#). It would have become the world's first tidal lagoon power plant. The main reason for rejection was financial: the cost per unit of electricity would be twice that of nuclear. Another reason is that the monthly variation in tides made energy generation unpredictable.

- Billionaire mining magnate, [Gina Rinehart](#), was revealed to be a key donor to Australian right wing think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs – a consistent promoter of climate science scepticism.
- In July 2018, the U.K. government announced the [closure of the feed-in tariff](#) (FIT) by April 2019. The FIT has encouraged more than 800,000 households to install solar panels since its launch in 2010. Anyone who generates excess unused power will no longer be paid for energy exported to the grid. A BEIS spokesman said it was only right to “protect consumers and adjust incentives as costs fall, with solar having fallen by 80%.” The decision to end the scheme was criticised by green groups and the renewables industry, such as RenewableUK and Greenpeace UK. Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, also urged the government to keep the subsidies for household solar power going.
- In September 2018, Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele spoke at the Lowy Institute, a think-tank based in Australia. He called on Australia’s leaders to do more to reduce their carbon footprint, and singled out the U.S., India and China as countries “responsible for all this disaster”. He referred to leaders who do not believe in climate change as “utterly stupid”, and that climate change is the [“single greatest threat to the livelihood, security and well-being” of peoples of the Pacific](#). Samoa and other Pacific islands are already feeling the effects of global warming, with several smaller [islands in the region recently swallowed up by rising sea levels](#).
- In September 2018, the world’s largest offshore windfarm, the Walney Extension, opened off the Cumbrian coast. This was amid warnings that Brexit could increase costs for future projects.
- [Maya Bay](#), one of the world’s most popular beaches, was temporarily closed from 1st June. While intended to be for only four months, it was announced that the closure was last at least a year due to the extent of destruction caused by thousands of day-trippers. Pollution from litter, sun cream and boats has destroyed over 80% of coral around Maya Bay.
- In October 2018, thousands in [Hong Kong protested](#) a plan to build new artificial islands that meant to tackle the city’s housing shortage.

Conservationists argued that the “[Lantau Tomorrow Vision](#)” project would destroy fisheries and marine habitats.

- In November 2018, UK renewable energy capacity surpassed fossil fuels for the first time. The growth of the former has tripled in the past five years.
- To prevent pollution, [China’s ban on importing foreign waste](#) came into force at the end of 2018. This policy is also known as China’s “National Sword”. Many countries that had been somewhat reliant on exporting waste to China responded by looking into other countries willing to import or boosted efforts to promote recycling. [The New South Wales government and the Environment Protection Authority, for instance, responded specifically to the move by introducing a \\$47 million package to support recycling.](#)
- However, in 2019, The New York Times reported that more U.S. cities have cut down on recycling in the midst of China ending collection of used plastic and paper.
- BlueSG is Singapore’s first electric car-sharing firm.
- In October 2018, The Guardian wrote an article on how China’s demand for the durian fruit has threatened endangered tigers. Forests in the region of Raub in Malaysia are burned and cleared to make way for plantations that grow the Musang King variety of durian.
- [New York sued Exxon](#) for misleading investors on climate change risk
- In October 2018, scientists in Canada [warned](#) that massive glaciers in the Yukon territory are shrinking even faster than would be expected from a warming climate.
- [Japan](#) faced international condemnation after confirming it will resume [commercial whaling](#) for the first time in more than 30 years. Japan confirmed in December that it would leave the International Whaling Commission and defy the 1986 global ban on commercial whaling. Supporters of eating whale meat say that it is an important part of Japanese heritage, and accuse western critics of cultural imperialism.
- According to the World Economic Forum, by 2050, oceans are expected to contain more plastics than fish.

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- The use of plastic bags was banned in Rwanda in 2008 in response to plastic pollution. It is today renowned for her clean streets.
- Japan is well-known for its recycling system. There is a recycling rate of 77%, around double that of the U.K. and much greater than the U.S. figure of 20%.
- In March 2019, the South Korean National Assembly declared pollution to be a 'social disaster' and created a \$2.65 billion fund to address record levels of fine dust in much of the country.
- [Canada banning single-use plastics to combat pollution and climate change](#)
- Twitter [ban](#) on advertisements which go against climate science
- Energy exports from Russia are limited as Russia invades Ukraine: lessons on energy security?
  - US oil giants lobby against Joe Biden's climate agenda using the war as an excuse  
<https://www.ecowatch.com/us-oil-lobby-ukraine-biden-climate-agenda.html>
- [U.S. Senator Joe Manchin, opposes Democrats' climate agenda](#)—he is found to have links to the coal industry. His vote is critical for Joe Biden's domestic policies due to an evenly divided 50-50 Senate at the time (2021). He founded Enersystems before entering politics and has a stake in another firm run by his son, Farmington Resources Inc which provides "support activity" for coal and metal mining as well as drilling oil and gas wells. He made between \$4.9 million and \$5.1 million from coal-related enterprises in the span of approximately a decade. **[CONFLICT OF INTEREST / Politics vs Enviroment / Lobbying]**
- [Microplastic pollution detected in human blood with scientists finding the tiny particles in almost 80% of the people tested.](#)
- Decrease in CO2 emissions during pandemic shutdown (working from home etc.) shows it is possible to reach Paris Agreement goals. [Researchers found a drop of 6.3% in 2020, largest of modern times, and big enough to meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal if sustained.](#)
- California achieves 100% renewable energy sources (2022)

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- Bill Nye says the main thing you can do about climate change isn't recycling—it's voting. [cnn.com/2022/01/12/bill-nye-climate-change/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/12/bill-nye-climate-change/index.html) **[Politics and Environment]**
- Patagonia Founder gives away his company so that future profits will go towards climate change. Patagonia has been known for its efforts towards being sustainable. [nytimes.com/2022/01/13/business/patagonia-founder.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/13/business/patagonia-founder.html) **[Business and Environment]**
- Samsung Austin Spilled 763,000 Gallons of Acid Waste Into Local Ecosystem [tomshardware.com/news/s...](https://www.tomshardware.com/news/samsung-austin-spilled-acid-waste) **[Business and Environment]**
- For its fifth year, Coca-Cola is named the world's worst plastic polluter
- Ben & Jerry's Is Putting Their Cows on a Low Methane Emissions Diet [ecowatch.com/ben-je...](https://www.ecowatch.com/ben-jerry-011322.html)
- 'This S\*\*t Is Going To Kill Us': Harrison Ford Calls Out Leaders Who Deny Climate Change [huffpost.com/entry/...](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/harrison-ford-climate-change) **[Celebrities' Role]**
- Heinz tomato ketchup will soon come in paper bottles to help the environment [metro.co.uk/2022/01/13/heinz-tomato-ketchup-will-soon-come-in-paper-bottles-to-help-the-environment/](https://www.metro.co.uk/2022/01/13/heinz-tomato-ketchup-will-soon-come-in-paper-bottles-to-help-the-environment/) **[Businesses]**
- Single Billionaire Produces a Million Times More Emissions Than Average Person: Oxfam [commondreams.org/news/2...](https://www.commondreams.org/news/2022/01/13/single-billionaire-produces-a-million-times-more-emissions-than-average-person-oxfam) **[Environment and Inequality]**
- Article: The world's biggest carbon-removal plant just opened. In a year, it'll negate just 3 seconds' worth of global emissions. [businessinsider.com/carbon...](https://www.businessinsider.com/carbon-removal-plant-2022-1) **(the futility of some technological 'solutions' to climate change)**
- Crops under solar panels can be a win-win, and in dry places, photovoltaic shade can even reduce water use, suggests new study in journal Nature Sustainability. For example, cherry tomatoes saw a 65% increase in CO<sub>2</sub> uptake, a 65% increase in water-use efficiency, and produced twice as much fruit.  
Greta Thunberg effect evident among Norwegian youth. Norwegian youth from all over the country and across social affiliations cite teen activist Greta Thunberg as a role model and source of inspiration for climate engagement [eurekalert.org/news-r...](https://www.eurekalert.org/news-r...)

● [MORE UPDATED NOTES ON ENVIRONMENT FOUND HERE](#)

[Click here! :D](#)

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# Diversity, Inclusion, Equality

Concepts:

Equality vs equity /equality of outcome vs equal opportunities

Equality of treatment

[Affirmative action](#): policy of promoting the education and employment of members of groups that are known to have previously suffered from discrimination. E.g. quota systems

[Tokenism](#): practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to be inclusive to members of minority groups, especially by recruiting a small number of people from underrepresented groups in order to give the appearance of racial or sexual equality within a workforce.

Diversity

- Ensuring diversity via affirmative action may conflict with equity
- [Melting pot](#) vs [salad bowl arguments](#)

Economic inequality

- Capitalism and the free-market vs government intervention and socialist policies
- Progressive tax: the wealthier are taxed more than those of lower income
- Education as a solution; flaws and strengths of meritocracy, and rise of elitism

Gender inequality

- In the workplace, education, etc.
- Also includes victimisation in cases involving sexual harassment
- Also includes transgenders (unless argued otherwise)

Ageism and discrimination based on race, religion, political views

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## Equal rights

- Universal suffrage (equal right to vote)
- LGBT rights to e.g. marriage
- Right practice religion may conflict with the above

Eugenics: a set of beliefs and practices that aims at improving the genetic quality of a human population by excluding certain genetic groups judged to be less desirable and promoting other genetic groups judged to be superior.

Technology as a solution: to enable the disabled, and to remove to counter general differences in physical strength between male and females.

NOTE: It is extremely important to not make sweeping statements for inequality questions, especially when you touch on gender. Do not make statements like “some jobs are more suited for males because they are stronger” or “some jobs are more suited for females because they have better sensitivity”. Clearly state that you are generalising and back these up.

## **Examples:**

- In 2017, it was announced that Singapore’s Presidential Election would be reserved for those of the Malay community, a minority group which has not had an elected president before. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said this was in support of multiracialism, and admitted that Singaporeans were not truly ‘colour-blind’ and a candidate of a minority group was unlikely to stand and win in an open election.
- The Time’s Up movement was founded at the start of 2018 by Hollywood celebrities. It created a legal fund for lower-income women seeking justice for assault or sexual harassment, advocated legislation punishing companies that tolerated workplace sexual harassment, and pushed for greater gender parity in studio and talent agencies.

- In 2018, Tokyo Medical University—one of Japan’s most prestigious schools—admitted deliberately altering entrance exam scores for more than a decade to restrict the number of female students and ensure more men become doctors. It vowed to prevent it from happening again.
- In September 2018, Thailand’s Royal Police Cadet Academy (RPCA) announced that from 2019, it will only admit men, sparking outcry from female-rights groups.
- Upon the release of the film Crazy Rich Asians, the BBC wrote an article focussing on the region’s inequality.
- According to a 2016 Oxfam report, the wealth of the poorest 95% dropped by 38% between 2010 and 2015, despite an increase in the global population of 400 million. In the same period, the wealth of the richest 62 people between the World’s Billionaires increased by \$500bn (£350bn) to \$1.76tn.
- Oxfam claimed that in 2017, the world’s richest 1% own as much wealth as the bottom 82%.
- In August 2018, the Trump administration accused Harvard of ‘outright racial balancing’ and sided with Asian-American students who alleged the school discriminated against; it is contended that Harvard artificially capped the number of qualified Asian-Americans from attending the school to advance less qualified students of other races, and subjective methods such as a ‘personal rating’ could have involved racial bias.
- In September 2018, India’s Supreme Court ruled that gay sexual intercourse is not longer a criminal offence, overturning a 2013 judgement that upheld section 377.
- This event sparked public debate in Singapore over her own Section 377A, with notable figures such as Professor Tommy Koh calling for the law to be questioned in court. The government later announced that this would be an issue to be dealt with in Parliament. There were petitions from those in support and those against repeal, in which the latter held a majority. Prime

Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that Section 377A would not be repealed so as to reflect the values of Singapore's mostly conservative society.

- In the later part of September 2018, India's supreme court ruled against the ban on females of menstruating age from entering the Sabarimala temple, a highly prominent Hindu temple in Kerala. The temple's authorities argued that the ban was essential to the rites of its chief deity, Ayyapan, who is considered eternally celibate and is part of tradition.
- In October 2018, California became the first state to require at least one woman on corporate boards.
- The Boy Scouts of America decided to drop "boy" from its name, after its board of directors voted unanimously to open the programme to all children, regardless of gender. Following this, the Girl Scouts of the United States of America chose to sue the Boy Scouts of America, saying the change could erode their brand—it stated that "only GSUSA has the right to use the Girl Scouts and Scouts trademarks with leadership development services for girls".
- In October 2018, Professor Alessandro Strumia was suspended from working with the European nuclear research centre, CERN. In a presentation, he rejected the idea that physics suffers from gender bias against women and claimed that it was in fact male scientists who were victims of discrimination; this sparked outrage from other scientists and feminist groups. Strumia cited previous research which points to observations that countries that score higher on measures of gender equality have a lower proportion of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM) fields. Physicist Sabine Hossenfelder provided an alternative analysis, arguing that after accounting for [disproportionately higher rates of women leaving the field](#), the sex differences Strumia claims to have found become negligible.

- Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong proposed that employers could perhaps be offered double the tax deduction on salaries of workers with disabilities.
- In 2018, the candidates in the U.S. midterm elections were the most diverse in history; two states elected the first Native American women, Debra Haaland and Sharice Davids to Congress. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib became the first Muslim women elected. Massachusetts and Connecticut also got their first African-American women in Congress, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Latina, became the youngest woman to ever get elected to Congress. Seventeen black women in Texas were elected judges in Harris County.
- An estimated 1.2 million Florida residents who served time in prison regained the right to vote, due to a new state constitutional amendment which previously took away voting rights from ex-convicts.
- Representation: “Black Panther” broke box-office records, and “Coco,” a Pixar film set in Mexico with an almost entirely Latino voice cast, won two Academy Awards. **[MEDIA]**
- Naomi Osaka captured the U.S. Open title, becoming the first Japanese-born tennis player to win a Grand Slam championship. With a Haitian father and Japanese mother, she has helped challenge Japan’s cultural preference for racial purity.
- Teo You Yenn’s *This Is What Inequality Looks Like* is published and analyses inequality in Singapore.
- In 2018, unemployment rate for black Americans hit its lowest point on record, but their *joblessness* was still twice the rate for whites.
- SG Enable is an organisation set up by the Ministry of Social and Family Development that supports the disabled, such as by integrating them into the workforce.

- The economists Thomas Piketty and Emmanuel Saez wrote that decreased progressiveness in US tax policy in the post World War II era has increased income inequality by enabling the wealthy greater access to capital.
- Sheryl Sandberg is Chief Operating Officer of Facebook
- Medalists of the Paralympic Games receive less cash awards from the Singapore Government than their counterparts of the Olympic Games. In 2016, this sparked debate when Yip Pin Xiu was awarded around \$200,000, approximately a fifth of Joseph Schooling's \$1 million prize.
- India's reservation system tries to benefit those of lower castes who had been discriminated in the past (and arguably still are by some), by using a quota system. A 16% Maratha caste reservation was allowed for educational institutions and government jobs in Maharashtra in November 2018.
- Bumiputra policies in Malaysia lead to Malays receiving special treatment, such as a 7% discount on houses or property, including luxurious units, quotas in favour for admission into educational institutions, and companies listed on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange must have 30% bumiputra ownership of equity.
- In 2019, Captain Marvel is released, providing female representation. Negative reviews were dismissed as 'trolls' who were anti-feminist.
- There is a common practice of racial discrimination by tenants renting out their houses in Singapore
- Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates pledge to give away most of their wealth in their lifetime. Some are critical and skeptical of this news, especially towards Bezos: comments include that such charity would not be needed in the first place if they paid better wages, or that this 'giving away' may be to organisations and trust funds that do not really contribute to society's poor.
- Between 1996 and 2018, the minimum wage in Brazil increased by 128%. This contributed to a massive reduction in income inequality with little adverse

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effects on employment and economic output. [aeaweb.org/articl...](#) [**Support for minimum wage**]

- Poorest Americans drink a lot more sugary drinks than the richest – which is why soda taxes could help reduce gaping health inequalities [binsider.bond/poores...](#)
- South Korea abolishes gender equality ministry (which supports women and victims of sexual assault) under newly-elected President Yoon Suk-yeol who has capitalised on anti-feminism backlash. Despite stark gender inequality in South Korea, hostility to feminism is growing [nbcnews.com/news/w...](#)
  - <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-63905490>
  - The new president considers structural sexism already "a thing of the past". He assumed power with support of the country's young men who claim attempts to reduce inequality mean they have become victims of reverse discrimination. He also scrapped government gender quotas, declaring people would be hired on merit, not sex. Additionally, only three women are appointed in his 19-member cabinet.
- Study: Automation drives income inequality [news.mit.edu/2022/a...](#) [**Science & Tech**]
- New research shows as children observe inequalities in the world around them, those who endorse myths about intrinsic differences between racial groups in turn develop beliefs that reinforce racial biases [eurekalert.org/news-r...](#)
- Joe Biden pushes for 'student debt' forgiveness
- **Tax cuts and political lobbying.** How four decades of tax cuts fueled inequality: As average people struggle, the wealthy and big businesses benefit. [publicintegrity.org/inequa...](#)
- [Amazon's treatment](#) of workers is criticised
- Covid-19:
  - the treatment of foreign labourers in Singapore enter the limelight, especially with regards to living quarters

- Home-based learning: differences in conduciveness of different students' homes for learning become more prominent an issue
- Study shows that [Blacks get less sleep \(2021\)](#)
- [Study by SUSS, Mendaki finds strong link between PSLE grades and socio-economic status](#)
- [Debate](#) on pricing of public housing (HDBs) in Singapore ensues in 2022: clash between keeping it affordable for new home buyers (the intent of public housing) and the need to keep prices up so that value maintains for current owners of HDBs, with some seeing it as a 'nest-egg'
- 'Universal Basic Income' is an idea often put forward, with some suggesting it is what we should strive towards for a more equal society and it is more important if automation takes over jobs in future:
  - One experiment found no reduction in productivity  
<https://basicincometoday.com/providing-workers-with-ubi-did-not-reduce-the-amount-of-effort-they-put-into-their-work-according-to-a-lab-experiment-conducted-by-spanish-economists/>
  - The most famous trial was in Finland. Two thousand people aged 25-58 years who received an unemployment benefit from Kela, the Finnish Social Security Institution, were selected as the treatment group for a Randomised Control Trial. They received a partial basic income of €560 per month, the equivalent to the basic unemployment allowance and the labour market subsidy usually provided in Finland
- Singapore had several race-based incidents: Little India's riots in 2013 was one instance, but more recent albeit smaller ones may include the case of ['Beow Tan'](#) who made elitist and racist remarks, as well as a former Ngee Ann Polytechnic lecturer's racist comments towards an Indian.
  - Cases of passing the death sentence on Malays who were convicted of drug offences stirred international commentary that suggested racial motivations. This includes Richard Branson, who in his opinion piece calling for abolishment of the death sentence in Singapore, also noted

that most executions of these traffickers are “mostly members of poor, disadvantaged minorities”.

- [Workers Party's Sylvia Lim called for an open review of race-based policies](#) including the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Other (CMIO) model and the Housing Board's Ethnic Integration Policy (EIP). Additionally, she asked for the release of information on the racial composition of those in jail. The government did not release this. Most may believe the majority would be made up of minority groups.
  
- As mentioned also under our section on '*politics*', Mahsa Amini's killing at the hands of Iran's morality police lead to widespread protests by Iranians calling for more women rights.
- Rich students who have poor classmates become (i) more prosocial, generous, and egalitarian; and (ii) less likely to discriminate against poor students, and more willing to socialize with them. These effects are driven by personal interactions between rich and poor students.  
[aeaweb.org/articl...](#)
- Springing people from the poverty trap. Research suggests poverty is not principally the product of people's capabilities or attitudes. Rather, the very poor are usually mired in a poverty trap, in which an initial lack of resources prevents them from improving their circumstances  
[news.mit.edu/2022/p...](#)
- A 2018 study finds that young people who get financial support from their parents have greater professional success, highlighting one way social inequality is transmitted from one generation to the next.  
[news.ncsu.edu/2018/0...](#)

- Job applications from men are discriminated against when they apply for female-dominated occupations, such as nursing, childcare and house cleaning. However, in male-dominated occupations such as mechanics, truck drivers and IT, a new study found no discrimination against women. [liu.se/en/new...](https://liu.se/en/new...)
- It may be better to be born rich than gifted - The least-gifted children of high-income parents graduate from college at higher rates than the most-gifted children of low-income parents, finds a new study in Nature Genetics. [washingtonpost.com/busine...](https://washingtonpost.com/busine...)

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# Arts

Concepts:

Critic of government and society; test boundaries of society

Build national identity

Revenue (tourists, patrons)

Develops creative thinking: transferable to other fields in the economy such as design and entrepreneurship

Entertainment

Self-expression

Helps us to think through our moral values

Preserve heritage and culture

## Arts examples:

- 1984 by George Orwell: Lessons on privacy, manipulation of language and the media, tyranny and truth. The book is commonly referenced by opposition when political actions are reminiscent of the dystopian world.
- The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood: Lessons on gender equality, particularly women's rights. [Women's rights protestors wore the famous red cloak and white bonnet in Argentina](#) and so did [pro-choice \(the right to have an abortion\) activists in Northern Ireland](#).
- To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee provides lessons on racism
- The World Set Free by H.G. Wells: The 1913 novel is based on a prediction of a weapon more destructive and uncontrollable than ever before; using some knowledge of atomic physics, he called it the atomic bomb. [The fantasy author is said to be the first to think of the atom bomb](#).
- Atlas Shrugged by Ayn Rand: Atlas Shrugged depicts a dystopian US where irrational government officials work with greedy socialist corporate heads to

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impose draconian regulations and taxes on those who have achieved success through hard work and natural talent. Her brand of free-market fundamentalism and advocacy of a philosophy she called "[the virtue of selfishness](#)" has garnered support from many conservatives. As Republican speaker of the US House of Representatives, Paul Ryan was known to give every new member of his staff a copy of Rand's gargantuan novel

- Ai Weiwei: A contemporary artist and activist who has been highly critical of the Chinese Government's stance on human rights and democracy. More on his usage of art to send a political message can be found [here](#).
- Banksy: an anonymous England-based street artist, vandal, political activist, and film director. His satirical street art and subversive epigrams combine dark humour with stencil graffiti. His [works](#) of political and social commentary have been featured on streets, walls, and bridges of cities throughout the world. For instance, to confront the growing public opinion that accepting migrants is a drain on a country's resource, his graffiti, *The Son of a Migrant from Syria*, depicts Steve Jobs as a migrant.
- Banky was the painter behind "Girl with Balloon", which just upon being auction for \$1.4 million, [shredded itself in front of everyone—there was, apparently, a shredder hidden in the painting frame that was set into motion when the piece was auctioned out to the highest bidder](#). Some saw this as a commentary on the commercialisation of the arts.
- Petr Pavlensky: Pavlensky first became known for sewing his mouth shut in political protest against the incarceration of members of the Russian punk group Pussy Riot. On July 23, 2012, Pavlensky appeared at Kazan Cathedral, St. Petersburg with his lips sewn up holding a banner that stated, "Action of Pussy Riot was a replica of the famous action of Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:12–13)".
- Pussy Riot: a Russian feminist protest punk rock group based in Moscow. The group staged unauthorized provocative guerrilla performances in public

places, performances that were filmed as music videos and posted on the Internet. The collective's lyrical themes included feminism, LGBT rights, and opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin, whom the group considered to be a dictator.

- **Dying to Survive:** The film is based on the real-life story of Lu Yong, a Chinese leukemia patient who smuggled cheap but unproven cancer medicine from India for 1,000 Chinese cancer sufferers in 2004. The film sparked debate about the cost of medical care among Chinese people. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang cited the film in an appeal to regulators to "speed up price cuts for cancer drugs" and "reduce the burden on families"
- **Rafiki:** A film about a lesbian relationship was banned in Kenya, but the ban was lifted temporarily so the movie could be submitted for the Oscars.
- **The Korean Wave:** refers to the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy exporting pop culture, entertainment, music, TV dramas and movies. This is also said to have improved South Korea's public diplomacy.
- The singer, Rihanna, was appointed as ambassador by her home country, Barbados. The role involves promotion of education, tourism and investment.
- "We Shall Overcome" is a gospel song which became a protest song and a key anthem of the Civil Rights Movement.
- In 2017, the BBC [reported](#) on how Russian authorities use pop music on YouTube to ridicule young protestors. A music video uploaded by singer Alisa Vox this week features her posing as a schoolteacher and lecturing a teenager for going to a rally with a placard with "no fewer than four spelling mistakes".
- In Singapore, songs such as "Home" by Kit Chan evoke a sense of patriotism, and successes by Singaporean singers abroad such as JJ Lin and Stefanie Sun are often referenced. The deaths of those conscripted into National Service (NS), such as the most recent case of Aloysius Pang, often spark

public outrage and the spread of poems regarding the matter. One example is "[Singaporean Son](#)" by Low Kian Seh.

- Several instances of "art" or creative work were dismissed as vandalism. One instance is Miss Priyageetha Dia who turned the staircase on the 20th storey of her Housing Development Board (HDB) block in Jalan Rajah from grey to gold using foil. An older example from 2012 involved a Samantha Lo, who added amusing stickers to traffic light buttons, labelled with phrases like "Press until shiok", "Press to time travel", and "Press to teleport". She also painted the words "My Grandfather Road" on Robinson Road and Maxwell Road
- The Art to Charlie Chan Hock Chye by Sonny Liew had its grant of \$8000 from the National Arts Council (NAC) revoked as they deemed that it 'potentially undermines the authority of the Government'. One could consider how this could cause **self-censorship** among other artists who do not want to lose government grants.
- Singapore's first arts university, formed by NAFA and LASALLE alliance, to welcome students from 2024
- Yale-NUS closes. Additionally, Yale-NUS successor NUS College will not feature liberal arts subjects in core curriculum [straitstimes.com/singap...](https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/yale-nus-college)
- A short film exploring a mother's struggle to accept her daughter's sexuality, in the Singaporean context is shared: [youtu.be/X2wjYo...](https://youtu.be/X2wjYo...)
- In *The Straits Times*, an *infographic* ranked 'artists' first place as the job seen as least essential. This sparks outrage online among artists, while some found irony in that it took an artist to make an infographic. As this was released during the pandemic, some went to highlight how the works of artists was extremely helpful especially during such times when people had to stay indoors, as people turned to Netflix, Spotify and more to spend their time.

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- Banksy went to Ukraine during the Russia invasion, and his graffiti was spotted on walls and amongst ruins. Some are light-hearted, while others, including one showing Putin being thrown by a child in a judo match are political. Some commentators saw it as inspirational and a morale boost in Ukraine, highlighting the value of art.

<https://theconversation.com/banksy-in-ukraine-how-his-defiant-new-works-offer-hope-194952>

- The rise of non-fungible tokens, NFTs, in 2022 is notable—for some artists, it meant that their art could be more money-making. Nonetheless, NFTs were marred by some who converted work that was not their own into NFTs, and also skepticism over the point of NFTs.
- Damien Hirst, the richest living artist in the United States, notably destroyed his artworks when he turned them into NFTs, believing that doing so would truly complete the conversion.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-63218704>

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# Science and Technology

Concepts:

Ethics: ends justify the means (Utilitarianism) vs ends do not justify the means

- Utilitarianism: the doctrine that actions are right if they are useful or for the benefit of a majority.
- This typically covers areas such as human testing of medicine, use of human embryos in stem cell research and genetic editing (CRISPR).

Commercialisation: when science and technology are developed for financial gain, ethics are more likely to be undermined, and availability may be only for those who are wealthier. Patenting may also prevent further development by other parties.

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Regulation: common questions tend to involve asking whether there should be regulation. This is often for ethical purposes, to counter commercial interests, or to reduce possible dangers (e.g. Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) development, as well as technology for warfare).

- Laissez-faire: an economic system in which transactions between private parties are *free from government intervention* such as regulation, privileges, tariffs and subsidies.

Security: a decrease or an increase? Consider the incidents of data breaches, hacking, and the technology falling under the wrong hands, and not only the positives.

Sharing economy: sharing of underutilised assets or services in ways that improve efficiency, often by means of the internet. (e.g. Airbnb, oBike, GrabShare)

Other impacts on society: convenience, quality of life (for the better or worse?), equity.

### **Science and technology examples:**

- **Net neutrality:** the principle that Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should treat all data equally and not discriminate or charge differently based on user, content, website, platform etc. When net neutrality is required, ISPs may not intentionally block, slow down, or charge money for specific online content, such as Netflix. Net neutrality laws were **repealed in the U.S.** in 2018, following opposition by broadband companies like Comcast, AT&T, Verizon and FCC commissioner Ajit Pai. Meanwhile, in July 2018, **India** decided to put **net neutrality into effect**; any form of data discrimination is banned and violators have licenses cancelled.
- **China's facial recognition A.I.** is used for surveillance.

- **Cashless payments:** the rise of e-payment methods has brought greater convenience and security (prevents theft and robberies). **WeChat** and **Alipay** are highly adopted in China, replacing cash in many areas. Digital payments are much more easier to track, preventing crimes like tax evasion.
- Technological **vulnerabilities:** Chips made by Intel, AMD and ARM were found to have serious security flaws at the start of 2018. These vulnerabilities were called **Spectre** and **Meltdown**. These would allow hackers to read memory and potentially access information such as passwords or encryption keys. Firms such as Microsoft and Google which use such chips rolled out security updates and details on what should be done.
- In March 2018, information that **Google** was working with the **Defense Department** on **Project Maven** which involves [analysing drone footage](#) using “artificial intelligence” techniques emerged, causing unhappiness among employees who saw that the technology could plausibly help target people for death. More than 3,000 employees signed a letter to CEO Sundar Pichai, demanding that the company scrap the deal. In June, Google announced that it would not renew its partnership in 2019, and released a new set of ethical guidelines for its artificial intelligence.
- **Amazon’s** Chief Executive Officer Jeff Bezos said his company would continue to support the U.S. Defense Department, unlike Google, saying that if U.S. is a great country that needs to be defended.
- In July 2018, personal information of 1.5 million **SingHealth** patients were stolen in a **cyber attack**. The National Electronic Health Record underwent ‘rigorous security checks’ following this.
- In 2018, the US and UK governments called for **mandatory backdoors** in encrypted chats, with the intention of countering terrorist threats and crime. This was a call by the Five Eyes, and sparked privacy concerns.

- **Monsanto** was ordered to pay \$289 million as the jury ruled that its weedkiller caused a man's cancer. The jury was convinced that Monsanto was aware or should have known of that the product was dangerous.
- Brazil's new President, Bolsonaro, vowed to **relax gun laws** in a bid to combat a homicide epidemic that claimed nearly 64,000 lives the year before.
- Seoul got its [first ever deaf taxi drivers](#) thanks to new **software** launched to help reduce the stigma of **hiring hearing-impaired people**. This includes voice-to-text conversion.
- In September 2018, France **banned** all children under fifteen years old from using their **phones in school**, including mealtimes. This is due to concern over students becoming too dependent on and distracted by phones.
- In September, some clinics across Singapore were hit by a computer glitch that changed prescription units on labels. About 400 patients received wrongly labelled medicine.
- Apple Inc banned the Infowars app from the App Store, belonging to popular U.S. conspiracy theorist Alex Jone, after finding that it had 'defamatory, discriminatory, or mean-spirited content about religion, race, sexual orientations, gender, ethnic origin, or other groups'.
- **Gene editing:** Professor He Jiankui, reportedly under house arrest, claimed to have altered twin girls' genes so they could not get HIV. He was fired by the Southern University of Science and Technology in Shenzhen. Xi Nanping, vice minister of the Ministry of Science and Technology denounced He's work as "extremely abominable".
- Mylan, a pharmaceuticals company that owns the **EpiPen**, increased the price of the product by over 400%. The base price of an EpiPen two-pack was raised from \$100 in 2009 to more than \$600 in 2016. As a patented life-saving device, this sparked tremendous outrage; another reason for the lack of

alternative products is said to be the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) slow and tight regulatory processes for new products to be allowed.

- In 2016, Facebook had a plan to provide rural India free Internet access, known as 'Free Basics'. However, it would only limit access to a suite of platforms, such as Facebook. The lack of neutrality caused India's regulators to reject it.
- In March 2017, **SpaceX**, a private corporation, became the first to successfully re-launch and land the first stage of an orbital rocket. The aim would be to reduce the cost of space travel. Elon Musk is also noted for his ambition to colonise Mars.
- British firm, Xeros, started selling specially designed washing machines under the name of Hydrofinity, which uses nylon polymers to replace most water in a laundry cycle. It is said to reduce water usage by up to 80%.
- In May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (**GDPR**), an EU law on data protection and privacy for individuals, came into force. It gives individuals control over their personal data. Some international websites such as the Chicago Tribune and Los Angeles Times blocked EU users entirely on the effective date so as to avoid liabilities. It had been argued that smaller businesses and start-ups might not have financial resources to adequately comply with GDPR, unlike large firms like Facebook and Google.
- In October 2018, Roger Kneebone, a professor of surgical education at Imperial College London, [said](#) that the decline in hands-on creative subjects at school and practical hobbies at home means students often lack basic understanding of the physical world, and that hours in virtual worlds are no substitute for real-world experiences. He stated that medical students and trainee surgeons are often not so comfortable with doing things with their hands than they used to five to ten years ago.
- Donald Trump's administration pushed allies to block **Huawei** from fifth-generation wireless networks, citing fears that China could use its

equipment for spying. In August 2018, the Australian government said companies "who are likely to be subject to extrajudicial directions from a foreign government" would no longer be allowed to provide 5G technology, which was clearly directed at the Chinese telecom company. Other countries are till date, still considering similar action.

- Massachusetts on the verge of becoming first state to ban police use of facial recognition [theverge.com/2020/1...](https://theverge.com/2020/1...)
- Ukraine Creates IT Army of Volunteer Hackers and Orders Cyber Attacks on Russian Websites [gizmodo.com/ukrain...](https://gizmodo.com/ukrain...)
- Russia moves to declare Meta an 'extremist' organization, which would lead to all its services being cut off in Russia [businessinsider.com/russia...](https://businessinsider.com/russia...)
- The UK is about to introduce a 'cyberflashing' law that makes unsolicited sexual pictures a crime [businessinsider.com/uk-exp...](https://businessinsider.com/uk-exp...) (**how laws need to keep up with tech**)
- Brazil will fine Apple a second time for not including a charger with iPhone 13 [appleinsider.com/articl...](https://appleinsider.com/articl...) (**regulation of businesses**)
- Teen Who Tracked Elon Musk's Jet Is Now Chasing Russian Tycoons [bloomberg.com/news/a...](https://bloomberg.com/news/a...)
- Scientists can now grow wood in a lab without cutting a single tree [interestingengineering.com/lab-gr...](https://interestingengineering.com/lab-gr...) [**Tech/Environment**]
- Ukraine's small combat drone "The Punisher" destroys Russian supply lines | The re-deployable drone has a wingspan of 7.5 feet. [interestingengineering.com/ukrain...](https://interestingengineering.com/ukrain...) [**Tech/Warfare**]
- California is ready to pull the plug on gas vehicles [apnews.com/articl...](https://apnews.com/articl...) [**Tech/Environment**]
- 'Treating us like robots': Amazon workers seek union [apnews.com/articl...](https://apnews.com/articl...)
- Bosses think workers do less from home, says Microsoft, according to a survey it conducted. In late 2020, Microsoft announced that its employees could permanently work from home. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-62980639>
  - However, on the same topic, a San Francisco tech startup implemented 4-day workweek and says business is better than ever [foxbusiness.com/lifest...](https://foxbusiness.com/lifest...)

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- Starlink by Elon Musk, which provides internet connection where it is absent, is brought to Ukraine during the war, providing people with access.
- Teenager Invented a Low-Cost Tool to Spot Elephant Poachers in Real Time  
[smithsonianmag.com/innova...](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/teenager-invented-a-low-cost-tool-to-spot-elephant-poachers-in-real-time-180973729/)
- Artists say AI image generators are copying their style to make thousands of new images – and it's completely out of their control  
[businessinsider.com/ai-ima...](https://www.businessinsider.com/ai-image-generators-copying-artists-2021-11/)
- French Town to Light its Streets With Bacteria Luminescence That Needs No Electricity [bbc.com/future...](https://www.bbc.com/future/2021/09/french-town-bacteria-luminescence)
- 65% of U.S. workers are looking for a new job [fortune.com/2021/0...](https://www.fortune.com/2021/09/21/65-percent-of-us-workers-are-looking-for-a-new-job/)
- US cities roll out 'cool pavements' to fight dangerous heatwaves  
[independent.co.uk/climat...](https://www.independent.co.uk/climate-change/news/us-cities-roll-out-cool-pavements-to-fight-dangerous-heatwaves-b1028881.html)
- 'Hey Siri, I'm getting pulled over' shortcut makes it easy to record police  
[theverge.com/2020/6...](https://www.theverge.com/2020/6/18/21311111/hey-siri-i-m-getting-pulled-over-shortcut)
- Outrage over police brutality has finally convinced Amazon, Microsoft, and IBM to rule out selling facial recognition tech to law enforcement.  
[businessinsider.com/amazon...](https://www.businessinsider.com/amazon-microsoft-ibm-facial-recognition-tech-2020-10/)
- The Average Electric Car Now Costs \$54,000  
[jalopnik.com/the-av...](https://www.jalopnik.com/the-average-electric-car-now-costs-54000-1311111111/) **(unlike e.g. solar panels which have seen cost decreases over time, electric cars have [actually seen price increases](#))**
- Ukraine asks ICANN to revoke Russian domains and shut down DNS root servers | Expert: Cutting DNS links would harm Russian people but have little impact on gov't. **(similar to how sanctions against Russia were argued to harm innocent civilians instead of politicians and military leaders. Additionally, one may ponder: even if we could cut access to Russian state-backed media, is that what we really want to do, or would that cause one to feel that it is us who are conducting censorship/restricting freedom of information?)**  
[arstechnica.com/tech-p...](https://www.arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/02/22/ukraine-asks-icann-to-revoke-russian-domains-and-shut-down-dns-root-servers/)
- Google will start auto-deleting abortion clinic visits from user location history **(following the ban on abortions by some States / the loss of the 'right to an**

abortion' → consider: **A-Level General Paper essay question: To what extent should the State involve itself in the world of business?**)

[theverge.com/2022/7...](https://theverge.com/2022/7...)

- Mercedes locks faster acceleration behind a \$1,200 annual paywall  
[theverge.com/2022/1...](https://theverge.com/2022/1...) (**commercialisation being unproductive**)
- Article: The world's biggest carbon-removal plant just opened. In a year, it'll negate just 3 seconds' worth of global emissions.  
[businessinsider.com/carbon...](https://businessinsider.com/carbon...) (**the futility of some technological 'solutions' to climate change**)
- Billionaire space race (Elon Musk, Richard Branson, and Jeff Bezos race to be first in 'commercial space flight' for their respective space companies) → criticism over spending on space when such money could go towards improving lives of people
- Regulation of smartphone companies: The EU wants to limit which apps Apple and Google pre-install on your phone [businessinsider.com/us-tec...](https://businessinsider.com/us-tec...)
  - Additional: "[Apple moves to open up App Store as tough EU laws loom](https://businessinsider.com/us-tec...) [Digital Markets Act represents biggest threat to tech company's control over its operating system in 15 years](https://businessinsider.com/us-tec...)" (2022) → Apple cannot have its own App Store as the only platform to download apps; this is seen as anti-competitive. Complaints had been made by developers who find it unfair that Apple gets a cut of all in-app purchases.
- A new study in The Lancet by a team of Yale epidemiologists finds that Medicare for All would save more than 68,000 lives annually as well as \$450 billion in cost [sciencedirect.com/scienc...](https://sciencedirect.com/scienc...)
- Researchers say if parents want to successfully cut back on their child's screen-time, they must first cut back on screen-time themselves  
[thriveworks.com/blog/p...](https://thriveworks.com/blog/p...)
- Octopuses, the most neurologically complex invertebrates, both feel pain and remember it, responding with sophisticated behaviors, demonstrating that the octopus brain is sophisticated enough to experience pain on a physical and dispositional level, the first time this has been shown in cephalopods.  
[academictimes.com/octopu...](https://academictimes.com/octopu...)

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(relevance to discussion on using animals for scientific research/testing)

- Man paralysed from waist down since 2013 makes history by walking again using mind-controlled implant to power his legs. Doctors implanted a remote-controlled electrode in his back to stimulate surviving nerves in the patient's spinal cord, as reported in Nature Medicine.

[independent.co.uk/news/s...](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/s...) [helpful for showing how much science and tech has advanced]

- Gig economy companies like Uber, Lyft and Doordash rely on a model that resembles anti-labor practices employed decades before by the U.S. construction industry, and could lead to similar erosion in earnings for workers, finds a new study. [academictimes.com/gig-ec...](https://www.academictimes.com/gig-ec...) [Tech / Inequality]

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