The 2010s

Rockets land, genes are edited, and machines learn.

Reusable rockets cut the cost of reaching orbit, CRISPR made gene editing cheap, and deep learning turned computers into seeing and speaking machines. Meanwhile births fell below replacement across the West and productivity growth stayed low.

What rose

2012. The Higgs boson is found at CERN's Large Hadron Collider. Source: Higgs boson

2012. Doudna and Charpentier publish CRISPR–Cas9 as a programmable gene-editing tool. Source: CRISPR gene editing

2012. AlexNet wins the ImageNet contest and starts the deep-learning era. Source: AlexNet

2015. LIGO detects gravitational waves, a century after Einstein predicted them. Source: First observation of gravitational waves

2015. A Falcon 9 first stage lands upright after an orbital launch. Source: Falcon 9

2019. The Event Horizon Telescope publishes the first image of a black hole. Source: Event Horizon Telescope

What fell or stalled

Total fertility fell below 1.6 in Europe and below 1.8 in the U.S. by 2019. Source: Our World in Data

U.S. life expectancy declined from 2014 to 2017, driven by drug overdoses. Source: Life expectancy in the United States

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ascentofthewest.com/years/2010s/