

Why Gen Z Must Continue to Increase their Support of Nuclear Energy

Explosions or extinction—what’s worse? Rejecting nuclear energy is killing the planet.

As a 20-year-old American, it’s clear that Gen Z have different priorities in regards to [Climate Change](#) than previous generations have had. The sweeping hurricanes, devastating droughts, and hellish hillsides have hurled this issue to the headlines. However, even in the face of this encroaching danger, Gen Zers remain slow to embrace nuclear power for what it is: a leading remedy for the planet’s degradation.

Last November’s [COP29 in Baku](#) spotlighted the urgency of the current climate disaster. The conference covered the [record high](#) in global temperatures of 2024, suppressing the [2015 Paris Agreement stipulations](#), and the [plummeting sea levels](#). Passing the buck or avoiding responsibility will no longer suffice to solve the worsening environmental calamity. Instead, efficacious and monumental implementations are urgently needed.

The best net-positive solution is clear: nuclear energy.

While seen for the past five decades as an existential risk to society, nuclear energy has [recently restyled itself](#) as the most viable solution. Each American generation has had their share of challenges; [Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials](#) were mostly affected by great power wars (e.g., WWII and the Cold War). Past chants like “[Make love, not war](#),” have shifted to today’s, “[There is no Planet B](#).” The antiquated undertones of war and bloodshed fostered generations brimmed with [psychological fears of nuclear energy](#). Events like Three Mile Island, the Cuban Missile Crisis, Chernobyl, and Fukushima all crystallized the anti-nuclear status quo, slamming the brakes on what could have been decades of flourishing energy development.

As nuclear power fears loomed large for older generations, [Gen Z has gradually begun to view this energy source with less trepidation](#). Pro-nuclear support has spiked to [recent highs](#), where [80% of young adults](#) prefer nuclear as their main supply of sustainable energy.

Through extensive and passionate research, I have learned that even though nuclear power may be [extremely costly and time-consuming](#), it is clear that this type of power, [especially new generational-models](#), presents the best solution to climate change. More specifically, implementing nuclear power addresses these three points-of-tension: rising energy demands, the need for superior sustainable energy methods, and securing U.S. global hegemonic control.

There has been an insurmountable [increase in energy demands](#) due to expanding AI data centers, electric vehicles, and crypto-mining. The vulnerability to energy demand has reached an

extent that if data centers were ever to lose power, that would amount to [\\$7,500 dollars in company losses per minute](#). Therefore, companies like [Microsoft, Amazon and Google](#) have begun projects that hedge potential future energy deficiencies. The [EFI Foundation](#) postulated that in the next five years, energy growth will double or even triple, framing nuclear power as the only feasible solution for a reality dominated by electrification and clean-manufacturing initiatives.

Nuclear is the superior method of energy production in comparison to other available options. Renewable solutions like wind and solar have an impractical dependence on niched ecosystems with [abundant sunlight or strong wind patterns](#), limiting their 24/7 capabilities. Additionally, traditional clean energy [batteries still require fossil fuels](#) for mining, production, and manufacturing, they [depend on massive plots of land](#), and they are unable to scale up to expected [future levels of U.S. energy demands](#). To produce only one unit of power, nuclear takes [17x less materials and 46x less land mass than solar](#). In addition, [NASA scientists](#) have found that nuclear power has saved approximately 1.8 million lives by reducing air pollution from fossil fuels, preventing respiratory diseases, strokes, and cardiovascular illnesses, and will continue to do so as long as it replaces more fossil fuels and unproductive renewable energy sources.

In comparison to nuclear, solar and wind cause [50%](#) more deaths per-terawatt-hour, while coal and oil result in an [83,000% and 61,000%](#) increases, respectively—demonstrating their unviability for long-term sustainable energy solutions.

While the U.S. hesitantly titters between the pros-and-cons of nuclear power, China does not. In fact, China has actively understood and expressed interest in nuclear energy, as outlined in their [2011 plan](#) to cut carbon emissions and [gain energy dominance](#). In the past year alone, China plans to construct [25 new nuclear plants](#) compared to the US's zero. These behaviors solidify a future dependence on Chinese energy output, thus continually presenting a national security risk to the U.S. and its allies.

Gen Z enthusiasts must continue to escalate their support for nuclear energy—specifically the development of novel generational modules and the use of more effective nuclear fuel like [thorium](#)—in order to combat our future's greatest threats: climate change, bottlenecking energy production, and global dependence. As former President Eisenhower best articulated in his [1953 UN General Assembly Speech](#), “The United States knows that peaceful power from atomic

energy is no dream of the future. The capability, already proved, is here today”. If it were true 70 years ago, then it is also definitely true today.

There is no more time for fear, hesitation, or ignorance. We know the answer, we know the solution, and now Gen Z has the responsibility to bring it to full fruition.

Ben Mizrahi is a third-year undergraduate dual degree student at Columbia University majoring in Economics & Political Science. He has a long-standing curiosity in the energy sector, specifically nuclear energy, as well as in the industrials sector. Ben is interested in breaking into finance for his post-graduation career, and is optimistically looking forward to integrating these interests into his future professional career.