

Press Release

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Study: Tomorrow's and Today's Leaders Demand a Paradigm Shift

Call to Businesses: Turn Your Priorities Upside Down

Leaders of Tomorrow and today's leaders are urging businesses to turn their priorities upside down. This is a key finding from this year's edition of the study "Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow," conducted by the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions (NIM) in collaboration with the St. Gallen Symposium (SGS). For the study, 650 top talents from the international network of the SGS, the "Leaders of Tomorrow," and 250 senior executives from the world's highest-grossing companies were surveyed about their perspectives on the issue of scarcity of natural resources.

The conservation of natural resources is paramount for both leadership generations: 81 percent of the Leaders of Tomorrow, and 92 percent of senior executives agree, even if doing so may slow down economic growth in the short term. The majority of respondents from both generations demand that businesses prioritize social and environmental value over profits for their shareholders. The proposed hierarchy of priorities would upend the current conditions, which respondents perceive as being dominated by shareholder value.

Both leadership generations indicate that businesses, politicians, and consumers need to do much more for the sustainable management of scarce natural resources than is currently the case. However, they also see an opportunity for businesses: the scarcity of natural resources is already acting as a catalyst for sustainable transformation processes, as stated by 72 percent of the Leaders of Tomorrow and 69 percent of the senior executives.

Personal Responsibility, and Reliance on Technological Advancements

Current and future leaders show little agreement on specific measures for resource conservation. The consensus to prioritize sustainability in businesses ends abruptly when it comes to taking personal responsibility: While 63 percent of the Leaders of Tomorrow demand that manager bonuses should be more dependent on sustainability goals than on financial targets, only 32 percent of current leaders agree. When asked whether they believe that technological advancements will always find ways to overcome Earth's natural resource limitations, only 59 percent of Leaders of Tomorrow, but 87 percent of senior executives agree. This optimism gap may even suggest the younger generation's call for broader, systemic changes beyond mere technological advancements, advocating for comprehensive solutions, including stricter political regulations and a focus on sustainable consumption or sufficiency strategies.

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Kanon Christy Mori, 22, a Japanese-American study participant from the US, is a Product Manager Digital Health, and explains the reason for this by saying, that „[t]he younger generation may have a more pessimistic view of climate change and other scarcity-related challenges. [...] younger generations have grown up in an era where climate change has been a prominent issue in public discourse. They are often exposed to a wealth of information about the dire consequences of climate change and many young people recognize that they will inherit the consequences of current environmental degradation and climate change.“

Intergenerational Leadership as the Key to Sustainable Change

“The increasing scarcity of natural resources is a global megatrend that will pose significant challenges to the economy and society for the foreseeable future. In comparing the perspectives of today’s and tomorrow’s leaders, we see an opportunity to identify common visions and pathways for a sustainable future,” explains Dr. Fabian Buder, head of the “Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow” study at NIM.

Intergenerational collaboration in corporate leadership is a necessity for sustainable change. The study participants agree on this (81% of future and 77% of current leaders).

“Cross-generational dialogue will be key to finding sustainable solutions to the economic, political and social challenges related to the increasing scarcity of natural resources,” emphasizes Felix Rüdiger, head of Content and Research at the St. Gallen Symposium. The findings of the “Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow 2024” study show that a common basis for this exists.

About the “Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow” Study

For the “Voices of the Leaders of Tomorrow” study, young talents from the international network of the St. Gallen Symposium, as well as senior executives from the highest-grossing companies worldwide, are surveyed annually on their perspectives on the major issues of our time. The study is conducted by the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions in cooperation with the St. Gallen Symposium.

The study was targeted at the “Leaders of Tomorrow” up to 35 years of age – a carefully selected, global group of highly promising young talent invited to challenge, debate, and inspire at the St. Gallen Symposium. For this report, participants were recruited from the St. Gallen Global Essay Competition Participants and the St. Gallen Symposium Leaders of Tomorrow Community. For the purposes of this study, senior executives are defined as C-suite level and direct reports, aged 50 and older, working for the top 3,000 corporations with revenues of \$1.7B+ based on global rankings by revenue. They were recruited and interviewed by Beresford Research on behalf of the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions. For juxtaposition in the context of this report, we refer to this group as senior executives.

This survey is not representative in the sense of population sampling. However, we captured a broad and international group of participants that provides a unique snapshot of opinions of young top talent as well as current top managers around the world.

The surveys were conducted in February and March 2024. A total of 650 Leaders of Tomorrow participated online, and 250 senior executives were surveyed by phone with screen-sharing to facilitate answering rating questions and oversee lists of items.

More information at <https://to.nim.org/volot2024>.

About the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions e.V.

The Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions (NIM) is a non-profit research institute at the interface of academia and practice. NIM examines how consumer decisions change due to new technology, societal trends or the application of behavioral science, and what the resulting micro- and macroeconomic impacts are for the market and for society as a whole. A better understanding of consumer decisions and their impacts helps society, businesses, politics, and consumers make better decisions with regard to “prosperity for all” in the sense of the social-ecological market system.

The Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions is the founder of GfK. More information at <https://www.nim.org/en/>, on [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About the St. Gallen Symposium

The St. Gallen Symposium, for the world’s leading platform for cross-generational dialogue, began in 1969 as a student initiative at the University of St. Gallen. At its annual main symposium and through year-round initiatives, it brings together current and future leaders from politics, business, and academia to constructively discuss and jointly work on global economic and social challenges. A central element of the symposium is the inclusion of young talents, the "Leaders of Tomorrow," who enliven the exchange of knowledge and experience across age and cultural boundaries.

More information at <https://symposium.org/>, on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#).

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