

What is Clean Energy?

ENVIRONMENTAL
LAW INSTITUTE

CJP CLIMATE
JUDICIARY
PROJECT™

Fast Facts Series

Defining clean energy

Energy that's better for the climate

Clean energy sources do not directly emit greenhouse gases when they produce energy. As a result, they have a much lower climate impact than traditional energy sources like fossil fuels.

Is all clean energy renewable?

Not all clean energy is renewable

Energy is renewable if it comes from an unlimited source, like the sun, or from a source that naturally replenishes as quickly as it is used. However, not all clean energy is renewable. Nuclear energy, for example, runs on the limited source uranium.

Historic and Projected U.S. Electricity Generation Sources

Renewables are projected to increase from 23% in 2022 to 62% in 2050.

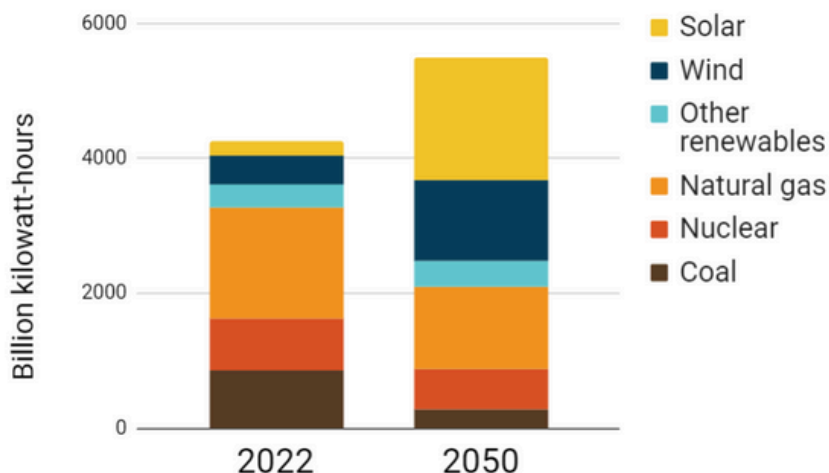
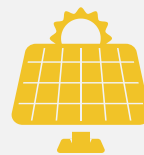


Figure adapted from the Fifth U.S. National Climate Assessment

Examples of Clean Energy Sources

Note that a clean energy source may still have an impact on the environment.

Renewable



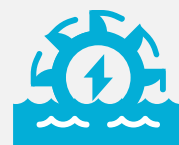
Solar



Wind



Geothermal



Hydropower

Non-renewable



Nuclear

SO Why should judges care ?

The acceleration of clean energy investments and projects will likely result in litigation.



cjp.eli.org

Providing judges with authoritative, objective, and trusted education on climate science and the law.

What is Clean Energy?

ENVIRONMENTAL
LAW INSTITUTE



Fast Facts Series

Sources

Craig D. Zamuda et. al., *Figure 5.7 in Chapter 5: Energy Supply, Delivery, & Demand*, Fifth National Climate Assessment (2023), <https://nca2023.globalchange.gov/chapter/5/#fig-5-7>.

Jennifer Morris & MIT Climate Writing Team, *What is “clean energy”? Is any kind of energy completely clean?*, Ask MIT Climate (May 7, 2024), <https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/what-clean-energy-any-kind-energy-completely-clean>.



cjp.eli.org

Providing judges with authoritative, objective, and trusted education on climate science and the law.