Major types of renewable energy

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Whether it"s for your home, business, or community, there"s never been a better -- or cheaper -- time to switch to renewables for all your energy needs. The future habitability of the planet, brought about by the elimination of carbon emissions that renewables afford, is at stake.

For the first time, according to the International Energy Agency, (IEA), in its World Energy Outlook 2020 published in October 2020, renewable solar is the "new king," beating non-renewable coal at its own game.

In fact, solar has surpassed IEA"s predictions made last year by 20-50% (though the range varies with location). On- and offshore wind projects also enjoyed similarly large cost reductions from previous estimates, surprising the naysayers as well.

Solar and wind represent just two of several types of renewable energy. Here you"ll discover tons of clean energy facts and stats about all the major forms of green energy -- including how one or more fit into your home, business, or community.

Making the switch to renewables will not only save you money. It will reduce your carbon footprint. As our climate crisis intensifies, a clean energy transformation will help curb negative outcomes for people and the planet.

Renewable energy is a general term for all forms of energy that can be naturally replenished -- like sunlight, wind, waves, or the Earth"s own heat. They never run out.

Bioenergy derived from biomass is another type of renewable energy. However, it requires that people perform some additional work to extract the energy from plant or animal sources, usually by burning them.

All forms of renewable energy are also referred to as alternative energy. These clean (or green) types of energy have no significant undesirable consequences. They offer a choice compared to conventional, "dirty" forms of energy that are non-renewable.

Non-renewable fossil fuels (coal, crude oil, and fracked gas) supply people with about 80% of all energy consumed globally and in the United States. Their burning releases carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas that"s accelerating climate change.

Nuclear energy is a second type of non-renewable energy that makes up only 2% of global energy, but 8% in the U.S. It produces radioactive waste that remains hazardous for thousands of years.

By contrast, renewable energy consumption across all sectors (transportation, heating, electricity, etc.) is

approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity production alone, renewables in the U.S. stand at about 17%.

For this list, the breakdown of the 17% (mentioned in the preceding section) devoted to renewables used for electricity production in the U.S. (2019) is given by the most common to least.

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