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2020 Ends With 429,000 Fewer Americans Employed in Clean Energy

- *For first time, clean energy sector ends year with fewer workers than when it began*
- *At current recovery rate, sector would not reach pre-COVID employment level until 2023*
- *Women and Hispanic workers lost jobs in December despite overall uptick in employment*

WASHINGTON (January 13, 2021) – Due to the hard-hitting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the clean energy industry finished 2020 with its fewest number of workers since 2015. It also marked the first year clean energy saw a decline in jobs compared to the previous year. About 16,900 jobs were added in December by U.S. clean energy businesses, leaving more than 429,000 (12% of the sector’s pre-COVID-19 workforce) still unemployed, according to [the latest analysis of federal unemployment filings](#) prepared for E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs), E4TheFuture and the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE) by BW Research Partnership.

Ten months after the nationwide unemployment crisis began, 70% of the jobs lost in the clean energy sector have yet to be recovered, [according to the monthly report](#). At the rate of recovery since June, it would take about two and a half years for the clean energy sector to reach pre-COVID employment levels. It would take an additional year to reach the levels of clean energy employment that had been [projected for 2020 before the pandemic struck](#).

Impacts of the pandemic-fueled job crisis continue to disproportionately impact women and Black and Hispanic workers. Women—particularly women of color—and Hispanic workers lost jobs overall in December despite total clean energy employment growing slightly, at a rate of 0.6%.

Bob Keefe, Executive Director of E2, said:

“The new year, a new administration and a new Congress bring new hope for federal action revitalizing our economy and our environment with a clean energy focused recovery.

“The need to act is clear: We just lived through the costliest year ever for climate disasters. And facing the largest economic downturn since 2009, we know we’ve only scratched the surface when it comes to jobs and other economic benefits that come with clean energy.

“Washington must go big, go fast and go now.”

Pat Stanton, Policy Director for E4TheFuture, said:

“What we witnessed in December was more like inertia than recovery for clean energy sector employment. We have a lot of work to do. The type of energy jobs that will help us to recover from losses endured in 2020 must be prioritized -- and that means focusing on workforce development and training in 2021.”

Gregory Wetstone, President and CEO of the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE), said:

“December’s clean energy employment numbers can only be described as anemic, with less than 2,800 renewable energy jobs recovered and fully 12 percent of the sector’s pre-COVID workforce remaining stubbornly unemployed. While the emergency relief provisions in the year-end spending package can help, we look forward to working with the incoming Biden administration and the new Congress to move past the endless cycle of temporary stopgap measures and finally enact the kind of comprehensive, long-term, scientifically-driven climate policy that puts millions to work building the clean energy future Americans want and deserve.”

Phil Jordan, Vice President at BW Research Partnership, said:

“Clean energy had been one of the nation's fastest growing sectors over the past five years, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to clawing back the jobs we lost in 2020, we need to help the sector return to growth mode and get back to creating economic opportunities for more Americans in 2021.”

Monthly Clean Energy Job Losses by Sector:

Sector	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
EE	-103,298	-309,584	-18,880	+71,786	+6,836	+8,116	+8,354	+16,806	+5,400	<u>+12,301</u>	-302,164
RE	-23,739	-71,705	-4,272	+17,287	+1,918	+2,571	+2,273	+3,965	+1,348	<u>+2,779</u>	-67,577
CV	-11,399	-35,070	-2,059	+10,335	+896	+2,182	+965	+1,615	+646	<u>+422</u>	-31,468
TDS	-6,517	-19,666	-1,166	+4,561	+428	+482	+510	+1,042	+336	<u>+752</u>	-19,238
FUELS	-2,186	-10,390	-657	+2,351	+296	+205	+378	+409	+150	<u>+634</u>	-8,811
TOTAL	-147,139	-446,416	-27,035	+106,320	+10,373	+13,556	+12,479	+23,838	+7,880	<u>+16,887</u>	-429,258

*EE (Energy Efficiency), RE (Renewable Energy), CV (Clean Vehicles), TDS (Clean Transportation, Distribution & Storage), FUELS (Clean Fuels)

State Clean Energy Unemployment by Total Losses:

State	Total Losses	Percent of Clean Energy Workforce	
California	71,615	13.0%	
Georgia	26,155	30.3%	
Florida	22,814	13.6%	
Michigan	21,946	16.5%	
Texas	<u>18,622</u>	7.6%	
North Carolina	17,044	14.9%	
Pennsylvania	16,735	17.2%	
Washington	16,580	18.6%	
Ohio	14,116	12.2%	
Massachusetts	12,088	10.6%	

For expanded state and county findings, download the full report [here](#).

State and Sector Impacts

No clean energy employment sector grew by more than 0.7% in December. Energy efficiency saw the strongest employment growth, adding 12,300 jobs. It was followed by renewable energy (2,700) and clean transmission, distribution and storage (750).

Thirty-eight states and the District of Columbia are still suffering double-digit unemployment in clean energy, with 12 states experiencing unemployment of 15% or more. Georgia continues to have the highest rate, with over 30% of its clean energy workforce still unemployed, followed by Kentucky at 27%. In December, Hawaii had the sector's highest growth rate at 1.2% while California again saw the largest total increase in jobs with 3,300 positions added (0.7%). Florida, Illinois, New York, North Carolina, and Texas all added more than 600 jobs, while 15 states added fewer than 100 each.

The data analyzed for this report did not include workers who had their work hours slashed and are now significantly underemployed.

For more information, including breakdowns by state, county and metro area, [click here](#). For interview requests, please contact Michael Timberlake (913-645-9103; mtimberlake@e2.org); Alex Frank (703-276-3264; afrank@hastingsgroup.com); or Alex Hobson (202-594-0706; hobson@acore.org)

Background

Before COVID-19, nearly 3.4 million Americans across all 50 states and the District of Columbia worked in clean energy occupations, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, grid modernization, clean vehicles and fuels. That's more people than work in real estate, banking or agriculture in the U.S., and three times the number of Americans that worked in fossil fuels, [according to E2's Clean Jobs America report](#).

Previous E2, E4TheFuture, ACORE Clean Energy Unemployment Reports

- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | November 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | October 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | September 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | August 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | July 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | June 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | May 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | April 2020 Impact Analysis](#)
- [Clean Energy & COVID-19 Economic Crisis | March 2020 Impact Analysis](#)

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[Environmental Entrepreneurs \(E2\)](#) is a national, nonpartisan group of business leaders, investors, and professionals from every sector of the economy who advocate for smart policies that are good for the economy and good for the environment. Our members have founded or funded more than 2,500 companies, created more than 600,000 jobs, and manage more than \$100 billion in venture and private equity capital. For more information, see www.e2.org or follow us on Twitter at [@e2org](https://twitter.com/e2org).

[E4TheFuture](#) works for clean, efficient and safe energy solutions. A nonprofit organization, we promote energy efficiency, renewables, demand management, energy storage and electric vehicles to advance climate protection and economic fairness. We work to achieve an energy economy that is sustainable,

lower cost, and resilient. Our “Faces of EE” initiative shines a light on energy efficiency professionals nationwide. Visit www.E4TheFuture.org or follow us on Twitter at @E4TheFuture and @FacesofEE.

Founded in 2001, the [American Council on Renewable Energy \(ACORE\)](http://www.acore.org) is the nation’s premier pan-renewable organization uniting finance, policy and technology to accelerate the transition to a renewable energy economy. For more information, please visit www.acore.org.