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Clean energy jobs are paying more, reinforcing the industry's economic value

Washington, D.C. — A new report from the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program finds that the persistent momentum of the clean energy economy transition can bring significant labor market benefits alongside environmental benefits. While 3.6 million workers are employed in traditional energy jobs, the new report, [Advancing inclusion through clean energy jobs](#), shows that this is just one small slice of the millions of jobs implicated in the long-run clean energy transition. This first-of-its-kind research reveals that although the clean energy transition will bring high-paying jobs, especially to those with lower educational attainment, those labor benefits are not guaranteed to be extended to every demographic group.

Even with “green jobs” at the center of the Green New Deal’s vision, inadequate attention has been paid to understanding the promising characteristics of the jobs involved in the massive shift to reduce carbon emissions. This new report from Mark Muro, Adie Tomer, Ranjitha Shivaram, and Joseph Kane shows that workers in clean energy jobs earn **higher and more equitable wages** when compared to all workers nationally, with **mean hourly wages for clean energy jobs exceeding national averages by 8 to 19 percent**. Clean energy jobs also provide ample opportunities for low-income workers to raise their pay levels: While nearly one-third of all occupations nationally pay an average wage of less than \$15 per hour, less than 4 percent of all clean energy economy occupations pay under \$15 per hour.

Assessments of the clean energy economy have historically focused on the size of the sector, while less attention has been paid to the **nature of work and occupations necessary to deliver a functional clean energy economy moving forward**. This report explores the 320 unique occupations of the future clean energy workforce that will offer inclusive pathways to economic opportunity, spread across three major industrial sectors: 1) Clean energy production; 2) Energy efficiency; and 3) Environmental management.

These occupations represent a range of workplace responsibilities, from jobs unique to the energy sector to support services found throughout the broader economy. This new report highlights how continued expansion of clean energy sectors will have significant implications for the nation’s labor market, education, and training institutions. It also emphasizes the need to locate more durable, family-supporting jobs with limited barriers to entry at a time of widening income inequality and a shrinking middle class.

Even with higher pay, many occupations within the clean energy economy tend to have lower educational requirements. This is especially true for occupations like electricians, carpenters, and plumbers. Roughly 50 percent of workers in the clean energy economy attain no more than a high school diploma yet earn higher wages than similarly-educated peers in other industries.

However, there is still room for demographic improvement within the clean energy workforce: The analysis finds that the sector is currently older, dominated by male workers, and lacks racial diversity when compared to all occupations nationally. Fewer than 20 percent of workers in the clean energy production and energy efficiency sectors are women, while black workers fill less than 10 percent of these sectors' jobs.

Mark Muro, lead author and Brookings senior fellow said, "Clean energy occupations are varied, accessible to workers without a bachelor's degree, and good paying, but they are not yet as inclusive as they should be. To deliver on the sectors' full promise for economic inclusion, more work needs to be done in front-line communities to ensure under-represented communities and women are more widely included."

The report also touches on policy implications by proposing a **clean energy workforce playbook**, which industries and policymakers can focus on to eliminate the obstacles that are preventing many workers from accessing these low-barrier-to-entry jobs. The three primary policy areas include: modernizing and emphasizing energy science curricula, improving the alignment of education and training offerings, and reaching underrepresented workers and students.

Overall, this analysis reveals how clean energy occupations can offer pathways to economic opportunity for people of all walks of life by providing policymakers who are focused on achieving a more sustainable future with more forceful economic arguments.

The report's webpage and full PDF can be viewed here: <https://brook.gs/2X5jghC>.

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