

Solar Energy is Strengthening National Resilience by Reducing Reliance on Imported Fossil Fuels

Cassey Edward*

Department of Energy Science and Engineering, Stanford University, Stanford, California, USA

DESCRIPTION

Solar energy, harnessed from the sun's inexhaustible rays, stands as a beacon of hope in the global quest for sustainable power. As we navigate the complexities of climate change, energy security, and economic growth in 2025, solar power has evolved from a niche technology to a mainstream force reshaping the energy landscape. With geopolitical tensions, technological innovations, and policy shifts influencing the sector, solar's role is pivotal in achieving a pragmatic energy transition that balances affordability, reliability, and emission reductions. Far from being just an environmental imperative, solar energy represents an economic opportunity and a pathway to energy independence for nations worldwide.

Current status: A surge in deployment and innovation

In 2025, solar energy is experiencing unprecedented growth, driven by maturing technologies and escalating demand. Global installed capacity reached approximately 495 GWdc by the end of 2024, reflecting a 14% year-over-year increase. Projections for 2025 anticipate annual installations climbing to around 655 GW, with growth rates in the low double digits through 2029, potentially reaching 930 GW annually by the decade's end. According to IRENA estimates, solar is set to contribute a 698 GW increase in 2025, accounting for a significant portion of the 90% renewable share in global power expansion.

In the United States, solar has been a standout performer. Utility-scale solar capacity surged 88% in the first half of 2024 to 18.6 GW, making it the fourth-largest power source after wind, surpassing hydropower and nuclear. By year-end 2024, total U.S. solar capacity is expected to hit 128.2 GW, up 38.4 GW from the previous year. Globally, innovations like perovskite and tandem solar cells are pushing efficiencies beyond 25%, while

dual-use applications such as agrivoltaics integrating panels with agriculture and floatovoltaics on water bodies are expanding deployment options.

Manufacturing dynamics are shifting, with overcapacity in 2024 leading to record-low prices, but 2025 is poised for rationalization. Major producers like Trina, Longi, and Jinko are agreeing on minimum pricing to stabilize the market, potentially creating new hubs in regions supported by government incentives. This resurgence is amplified by rising power demand from data centers, AI, and electrification, where solar's modularity offers quick scalability. However, this boom is tempered by regional disparities; while Asia dominates with over 60% of global capacity, Europe and North America are catching up through policy-driven reshoring of supply chains.

Benefits: Environmental, economic and social dividends

Solar energy's appeal lies in its manifold benefits, starting with environmental gains. By displacing fossil fuels, solar reduces greenhouse gas emissions, with each gigawatt-hour of solar power avoiding about 700 tons of CO₂. In a world grappling with climate extremes, solar contributes to keeping global warming below 1.5°C, aligning with Paris Agreement goals, though current trajectories suggest emissions remain above targets.

Economically, solar drives job creation and cost savings. The sector employs millions, with solar accounting for two-thirds of U.S. renewable jobs. Socially, distributed solar empowers communities, particularly in rural or underserved areas, by providing reliable power. In developing countries, off-grid solar systems have electrified millions, improving education, health and economic opportunities. Moreover, innovations like building-integrated photovoltaics blend aesthetics with functionality, enhancing urban sustainability.

Correspondence to: Cassey Edward, Department of Energy Science and Engineering, Stanford University, Stanford, California, USA, E-mail: edwardc@gmail.com

Received: 03-Mar-2025, Manuscript No. JFRA-25-38874; **Editor assigned:** 05-Mar-2025, PreQC No. JFRA-25-38874 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 18-Mar-2025, QC No. JFRA-25-38874; **Revised:** 25-Mar-2025, Manuscript No. JFRA-25-38874 (R); **Published:** 01-Apr-2025, DOI: 10.35248/2090-4541-25.15.371

Citation: Edward C (2025). Solar Energy is Strengthening National Resilience by Reducing Reliance on Imported Fossil Fuels. J Fundam Renewable Energy Appl. 15:371.

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