



Energy Efficiency and the COVID-19 Pandemic

Energy efficiency can be defined as using technology that requires less energy to achieve the same utility level and eliminate energy waste. Eliminating energy waste is paramount to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, reducing demand for energy imports, and lowering our costs on a household and economy-wide level. Energy efficiency plays an essential role in accelerating clean energy transitions and achieving global climate and sustainability goals. The sustainable development goal, SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy, focuses on a concerted global effort to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all by 2030. According to the International Energy Agency, energy efficiency progress has faced further setbacks from the COVID-19 pandemic. Global improvements in energy efficiency, as measured by primary energy intensity, have been declining since 2015. The progress achieved in 2020 was at its lowest rates, with 0.8 percent energy intensity improvements recorded. The pandemic also pushed governments to reduce public funding available for energy efficiency programs. With the reduction in energy prices, households and businesses used less energy; hence energy efficiency became a lower priority. Governments must support initiatives that are targeted at improving energy efficiency to reduce the adverse impacts of the global economic crisis on global energy inefficiencies.

How Governments can shift to more efficient energy systems:

- Considering that the health crisis is forcing changes to workplaces and travel patterns in most parts of the world, it is a good time for governments to invest in active transport infrastructures such as well-developed mass transit systems in populated communities or cities. This can reinforce an energy-efficient community and practice, leading to permanent change.
- Renewable sources of energy, particularly solar power, have remained resilient during the pandemic. Owing to fewer commutes during the lockdowns across the world, there was increased power from solar panels as more sunlight reached the solar panels. India and Germany benefited greatly from this development during the early days of the pandemic.
- The pandemic has shown that it is possible to collaborate on a global scale to improve healthcare capacity. Such collaboration is essential for distributing energy systems where power can be stored and generated at or near consumption points. This will enhance efficiency and transparency and make energy infrastructure more robust.
- Governments can gain from socio-economic benefits that directly contribute to economic recoveries, such as job creation and industrial productivity. Energy-efficient economies are not only more productive; they are also more resilient in times of crisis hence, making our communities more habitable.

Countries that are planning Energy Efficiency Recovery:

- South Korea plans to build 230,000 energy-saving homes and public buildings amidst COVID-19. ([Learn more](#))
- The United Kingdom is investing in decarbonising public buildings to help cover the cost of energy retrofits for homeowners and landlords. ([Learn more](#))
- How France is decarbonising its transportation industry. ([Learn more](#))