



RENEWABLE ENERGY NARRATIVE TRENDS



JANUARY – DECEMBER 2019

BACKGROUND & KEY FINDINGS

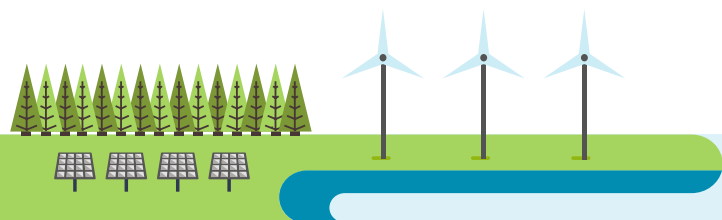
2019 was a big year for renewable energy. Dominating coverage were articles about the Green New Deal, which was reintroduced for public discourse back in 2018. From legislation introduced in Congress to debates among a wide variety of presidential candidates, people were exposed to a variety of messages about climate change and potential energy solutions. The Solutions Project also saw many new voices enter the national renewable energy conversation in 2019, and we continue our work to understand how the media hears and reflects those voices.

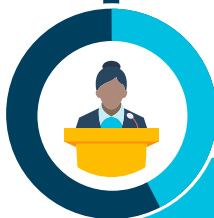
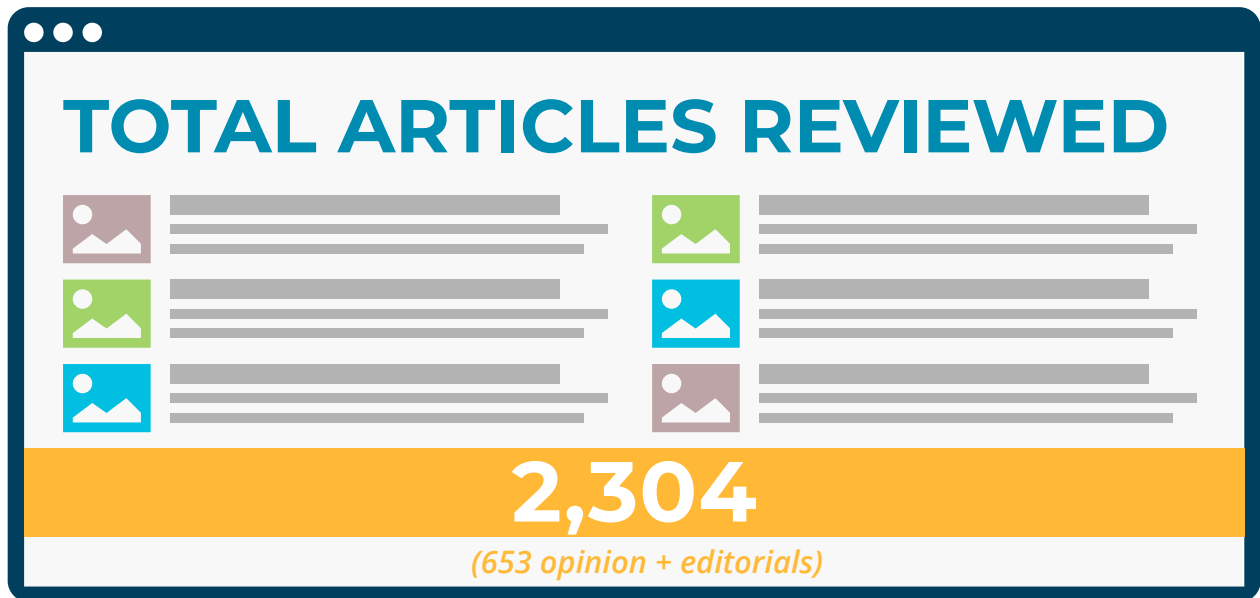
This is our second year tracking how the media covers renewable energy. We ended 2018 concluding that, while coverage of the sector is generally positive, discussion about issues of racial and gender equity was lacking. We also noted that the voices quoted in coverage did not reflect the diversity of the U.S as a whole. Much less reflected were poor and low-income communities and communities of color— those most affected by the climate crisis, and those with the most innovative solutions.

Yet, as we move into the new year, we can look back and appreciate incremental changes by

crediting the work of many notable women. The influence of both the Green New Deal and the 2020 Democratic primaries has pulled equity conversations further into the spotlight. Young activists spoke out about climate change and captivated an entire world. Communities also stood up and asked hard questions about what it really looks like to implement renewable energy projects.

As the pathway to 100% takes center stage, it's clear that advocates are turning the renewable energy conversation from “if” to “when.” The Solutions Project and our partners in both frontline communities and entertainment want to be sure we also talk about the “who” and “how”. Toward that end, we hope this report highlights how advocates' work inspires progress and where the opportunities are to shift conversations to include all those who are working for energy justice in their communities. 100% renewable energy is possible. It's happening. This past year, we heard numerous women's voices in this conversation. And with the work of The Solutions Project and its grantees, those with a vision for equity and justice will begin to see their messages take hold.





42%

QUOTE A WOMAN AS A SPOKESPERSON OR LAWMAKER

977 articles



6%

REFER TO EQUITY AND JUSTICE

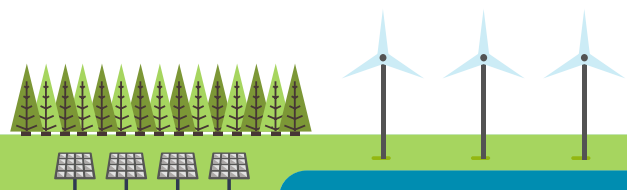
154 articles

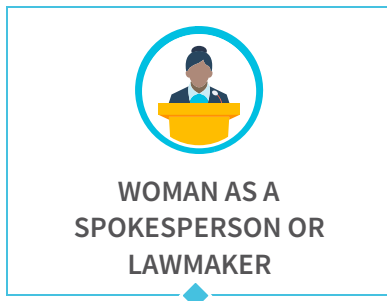


2%

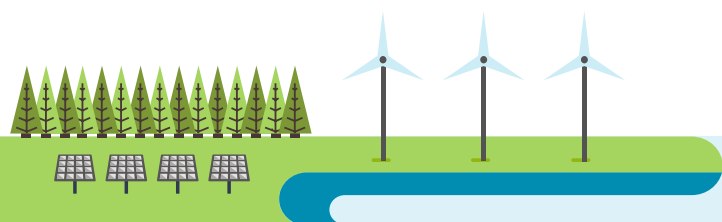
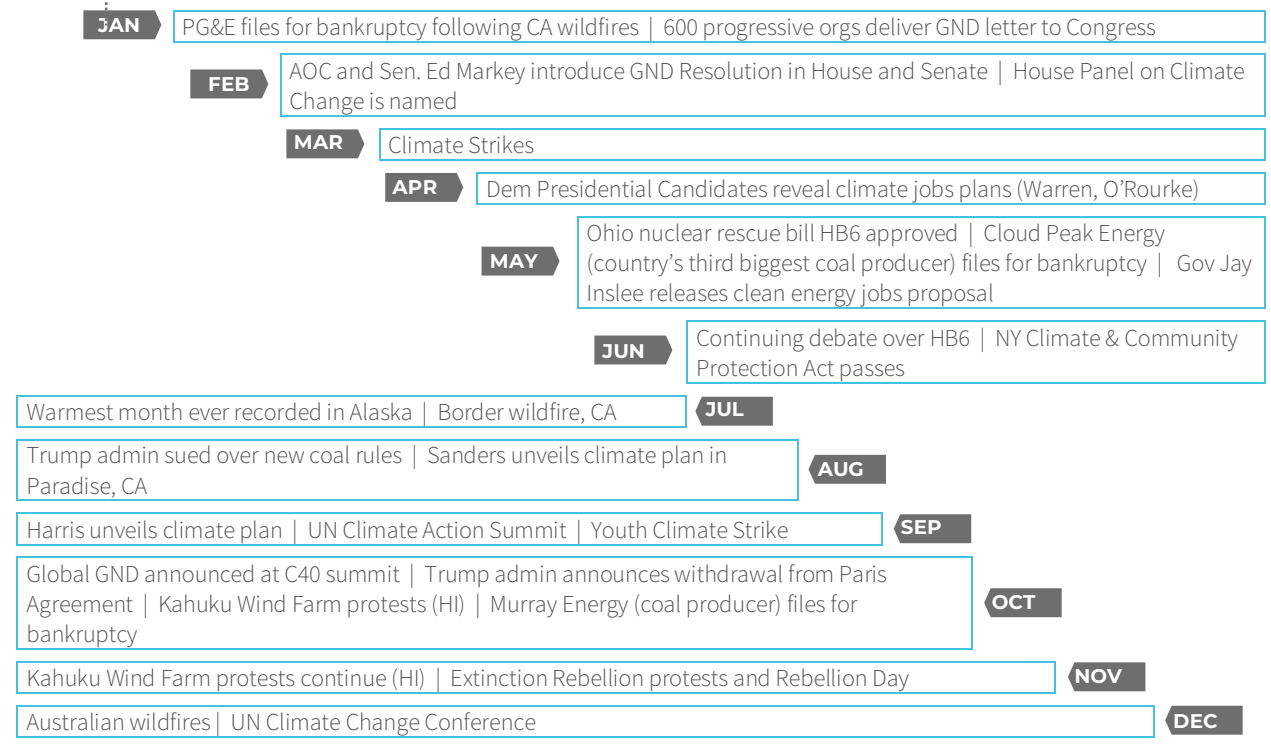
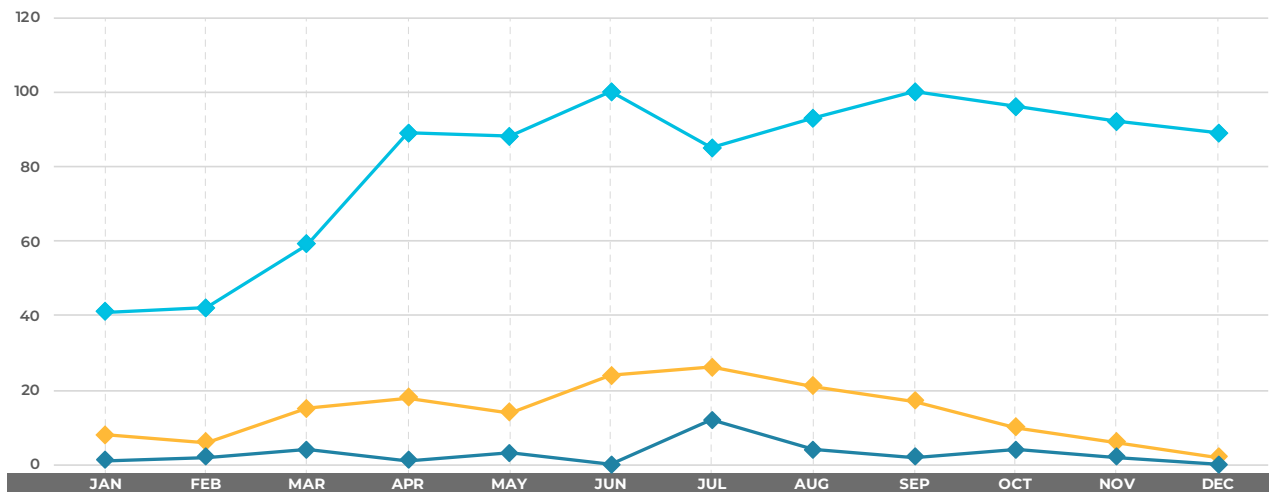
REFERENCE COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

38 articles





AVERAGE OF 192 ARTICLES REVIEWED PER MONTH



◆ 100% Commitments

3M – 100% by 2050 • Anthem – 100% by 2025 • Aurora Organic Dairy – 100% now • Crown Holdings – 100% by 2050 • Chicago, IL (buildings) – 100% by 2035 • Chicago, IL (bus fleet) – 100% by 2040 • Culver City – an ongoing commitment 100% • Dell Technologies – 100% by 2040 • District of Columbia – 100% by 2032 • Keurig Dr Pepper – 100% by 2025 • Maine – 100% by 2050 • New Balance – 100% by 2025 • Nevada – 100% by 2050 • New Mexico – 100% by 2045 • New York – 100% by 2040 • PNC Financial Services – 100% by 2035 • QTS – 100% by 2025 • Puerto Rico – 100% by 2050 • Target – 100% by 2030 • The Bozzuto Group – 100% by 2040 • The Wonderful Company – 100% by 2040 • Trane – 100% by 2040 • Washington – 100% by 2045 •



◆ Renewable Energy vs. All Other Energies



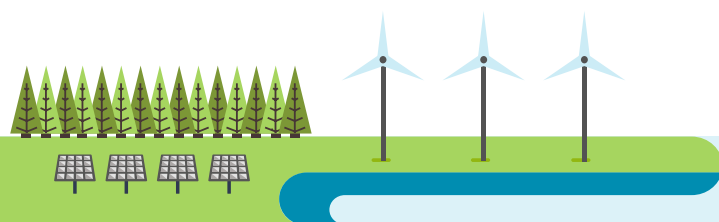
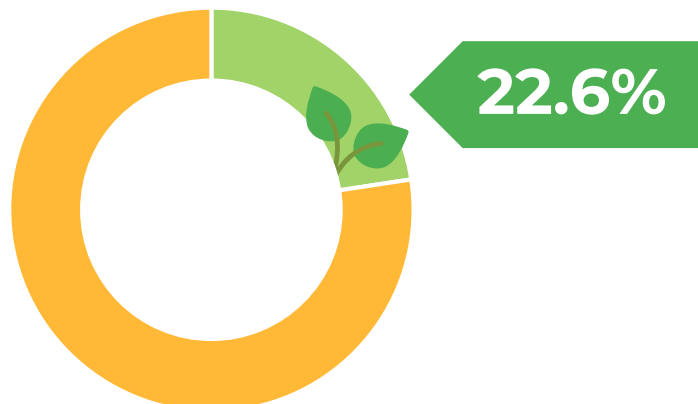
31,419

ARTICLES ABOUT ENERGY OF ALL TYPES



7,093

ARTICLES ABOUT RENEWABLE ENERGY



SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS

During 2019, we reviewed 2,304 news and opinion articles about renewable energy, and we found that 42% of the articles quoted women as spokespeople or lawmakers, 6% referred to issues of equity and justice, and 2% referenced communities of color.

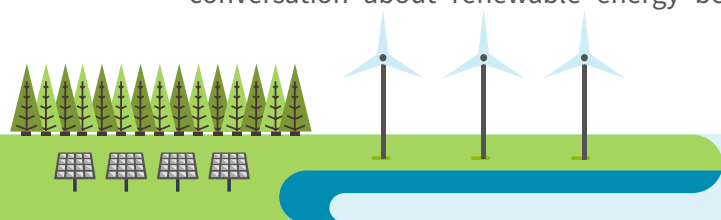
We have been tracking the conversation about renewable-energy viability since 2017, when media coverage focused on whether it was possible to achieve 100% renewable energy at scale. In 2018, we concluded that the media appeared much more interested in renewable energy's thriving present than in the still-unknown future. We predicted then that "the challenge ahead has largely moved from a question of viability to a question of implementation: renewable energy is happening now, so who gets it first, how, and on whose backs?" Indeed, coverage in 2019 has turned to this question of how renewable energy will be implemented and who stands to benefit.

As natural disasters and extreme high-profile activism push public opinion toward recognizing the reality of climate change, the public conversation about renewable energy became

more nuanced in 2019. We saw more widespread discussion about the role of nuclear power in implementing renewable energy policy, the environmental and social effects of ever-growing solar and wind power installations, and, most of all, the government policies that will dictate our renewable energy future.

In the context of a federal government that's antagonistic toward clean power, state and local governments are leading the way in renewable-energy growth. In 2019, these actors continued pushing for clean power legislation and began implementing the bold commitments they made in 2018. State and local support for clean energy was bolstered by high turnover of state legislatures and governorships to Democrats: 11 states either flipped the governor's seat from Republican to Democrat or saw Democrats take control over the legislature. As the AP reported, "all have passed or are weighing legislation that would expand renewables in their states," including many moves toward 100% renewable energy.

Two key 2019 events cast the renewable-energy movement firmly within the realm of Democratic

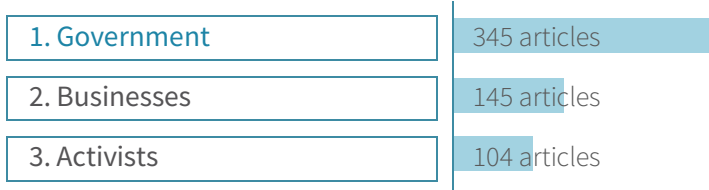


politics: the Green New Deal policy rollout and the 2020 Democratic primaries. Interestingly, the former seemed to kindle the latter, as would-be Democratic nominees were classified according to their Green New Deal attitudes as early as January 2019. Thanks to the work of activist organizations, especially the Sunrise Movement, each Democratic primary candidate's position on renewable energy has been scrutinized, making

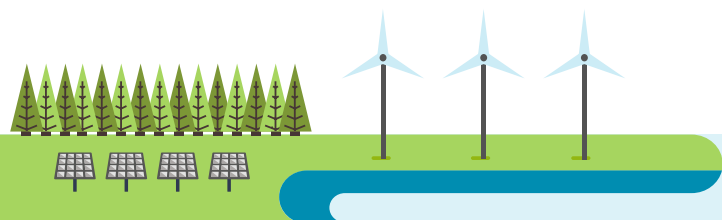
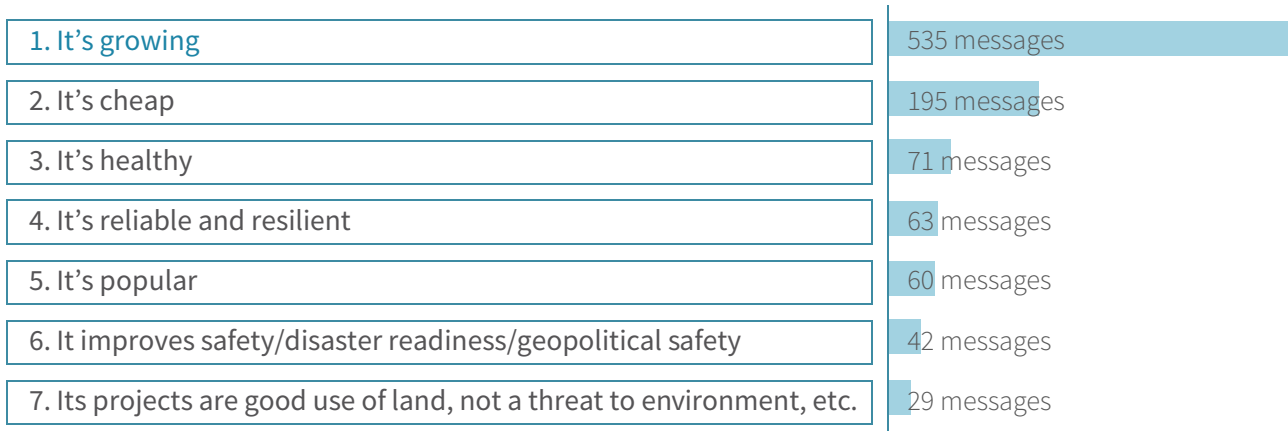
the public more aware of the nuances within a “pro-renewable energy” stance. As we saw last year, this scrutiny often took the form of questions about how candidates' stances aligned with or responded to the Green New Deal, which went a long way toward emphasizing equity and justice: we recorded 192 mentions of equity in 154 articles.

◆ Key Takeaways

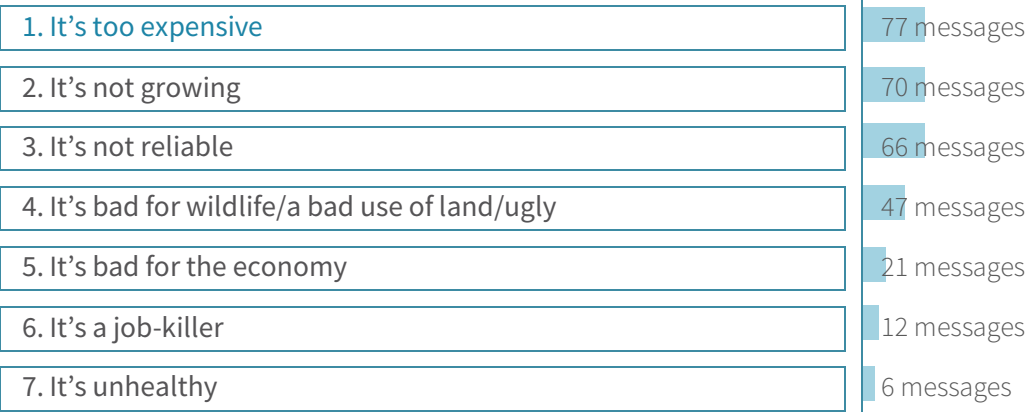
Who's leading on renewable energy?



Why should we like renewable energy? | 995 messages



Why should we dislike renewable energy? | 343 messages

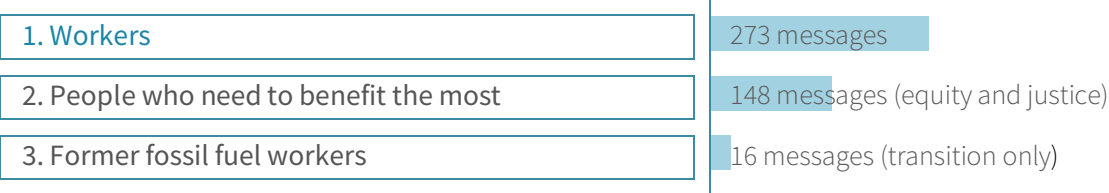


Why should we be cautious about renewable energy?

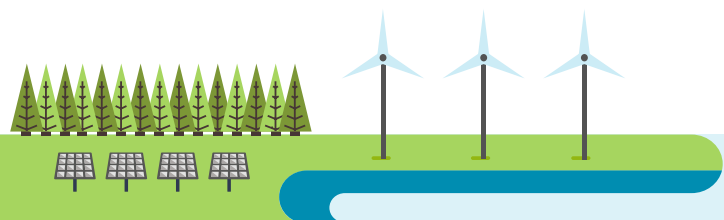


**Note: Message variants usually referred to objections about renewable energy implementation. For example, a new wind farm driven by business, without policies or considerations for how it will impact a vulnerable community nearby.*

Who benefits from renewable energy?



Do people like it?



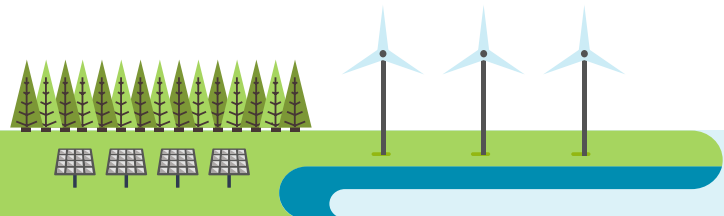
Is it partisan?



What about the Green New Deal?



Should nuclear count as renewable energy?



DOMINANT NARRATIVE TRENDS



Positive

The positive narrative is shaped by stories and messages that endorse one or more aspects of the renewable-energy movement's vision for the future: 100% is possible, 100% is happening, 100% is equitable.



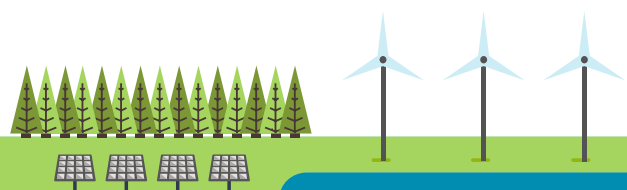
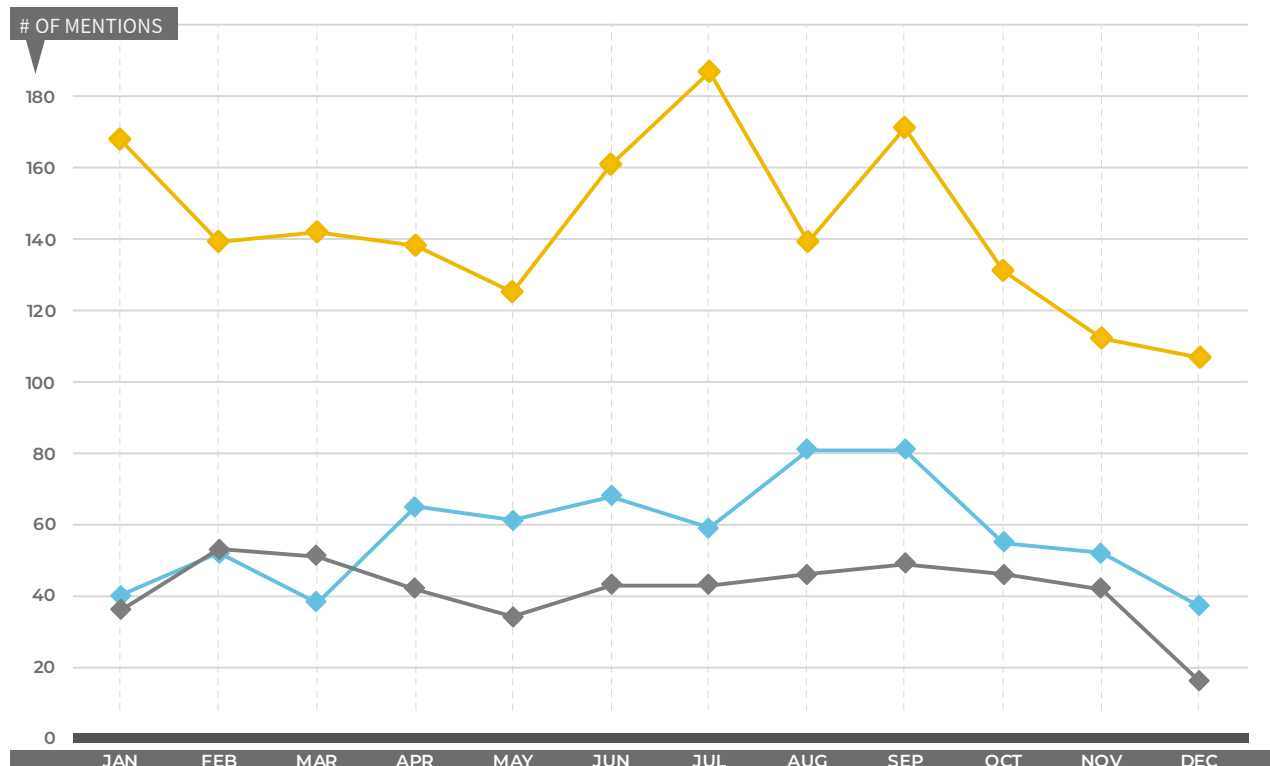
Neutral

The more neutral narrative contains messages that may support an aspect of the positive narrative but detract or could detract from another, e.g. corporate renewable energy commitments prove 100% is possible and happening, but may not always be equitable.



Competing

Competing message trends either oppose the positive, solutions-focused narrative or actively compete for attention and therefore distract from the narrative The Solutions Project is working to advance.



Distinct from the trends shown above, narrative trends measure the overall tone of the conversation and the performance of specific messages. They also offer nuance. For example, an article may mention a community of color but fail to use an equity lens. Or an article may quote a woman as a spokesperson in an article that is not positive or solutions focused.

We have broken down the renewable energy narrative into three major groups:



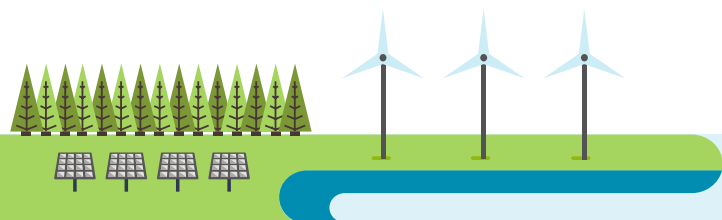
Positive

In a year that saw ballooning awareness of renewable energy and adoption of renewable energy policies into mainstream political rhetoric, the positive narrative dominated. We attribute this primarily to an overwhelming amount of coverage related to the Democratic primary and Green New Deal.

Qualifying Messages

- ◆ Activist-led (renewable energy change is led by activists)
- ◆ Equitable (renewable energy promotes equity and justice)
- ◆ Not equitable (we need more equitable energy policies)*
- ◆ Healthy (renewable energy is healthy)
- ◆ Growing (renewable energy is growing)
- ◆ Popular (renewable energy is popular)
- ◆ Just Transition (renewable energy could provide a just transition from fossil fuels)
- ◆ Green New Deal is good (pro-GND or policies included in GND)
- ◆ Reliable (renewable energy is resilient/reliable)
- ◆ Safe (renewable energy improves safety; e.g., fights cc-caused natural disasters)
- ◆ Cheap (renewable energy is cheap/affordable/declining in cost)
- ◆ Government-led (renewable energy growth is led by government policy)

**Note: We included “Not equitable” in the positive narrative, as it reflects conversations calling for better, more equitable policies around renewable energy implementation.*



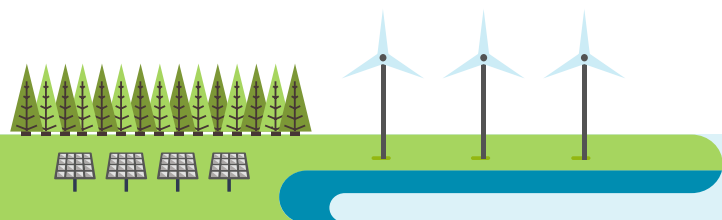
☞ RENEWABLE ENERGY IS ON PEOPLE'S MINDS

Young activists, in particular the Youth Climate Strike and other coordinated, multi-city school strikes inspired by young Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, drew attention to climate change and renewable energy during 2019. One organization helping to coordinate these strikes was the youth-led **Sunrise Movement, which was mentioned in more articles in Q1 than the Sierra Club.** As another wave of school strikes formed in September, reports focused on the scale of the activism and the pressure that young people were placing on elected officials. However, **some reports did take an “equity focus.”** Colorado’s *Westword* described the strike’s goal as “climate justice for everyone.” The *Kansas City Star* quoted Mayor Quinton Lucas on the strike, and he said his energy policy priority is ensuring “that low-income communities—which have been [disproportionately] affected by climate change—are not overlooked.”

Natural disasters are forcing more people to confront the reality of climate change. A University of Chicago/AP poll—conducted during the Camp and Woolsey fires in California—showed that “almost half of Americans are more convinced climate change is happening than they were five years ago.” The effects of this disaster-related urgency showed in Q1 coverage. We found 19 articles containing messages about renewable energy improving safety and disaster preparedness. All but three concerned post-disaster areas: California, Florida, and Texas.

☞ RENEWABLE ENERGY IS GROWING

Growth messaging stayed on top in 2019 with 344 overall mentions. State-level renewable energy commitments continued throughout the year, largely along partisan lines. **The 2018 elections saw big partisan control flips:** 11 states either flipped the governor’s seat from Republican to Democrat, or saw Democrats take control over legislatures, and, as the AP reported, **“all have passed or are weighing legislation that would expand renewables in their states.”** By the first month of Q2, 329 climate bills, a 75% increase from the 188 seen in 2018, were headed through legislatures. The Green New Deal’s role as a general framework for federal policy also inspired state and local lawmakers. As Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said, “now is... the beginning of the end of natural gas.... This is the Green New Deal. Not in concept, not in the future, but now.”

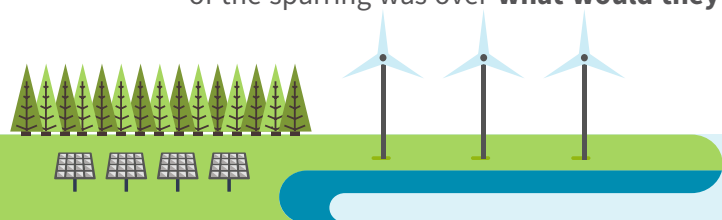


RENEWABLE ENERGY IS KEY POLITICAL ISSUE

The contest to be the 2020 Democratic presidential candidate has seriously advanced the renewable energy narrative. All in all, messages about government policy (including the Green New Deal) appeared 488 times. Rather than sparring about whether climate change is real or not, **candidates are in alignment that we need renewable energy implementation.** Now **they're arguing about how to do it, and equity is part of this conversation.** The call for 2020 Democratic candidates' stances on energy and the environment came early in 2019. In January, a Rhodium Group report concluded that U.S. greenhouse gas emissions had their second-largest annual increase in over 20 years. This kindled media coverage of how a Democratic president might react—Former Vice President Al Gore was quoted saying that **the 2020 Democratic presidential field would need someone with a "committed heart and soul" to combat climate change.**

In Q1, as the Green New Deal (GND) rollout occurred, news organizations were quick to publish Democratic candidate opinion lineups: the Huffington Post quoted Rep. Beto O'Rourke's support as early as Jan. 4. The Green New Deal dominated federal renewable energy coverage in Q1, with **somewhat equal pro/con messaging**, due primarily to “explainer-type” coverage. Explicitly positive coverage throughout Q2 and Q3 quoted multiple spokespeople, including prominent female politicians, such as Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Tulsi Gabbard, who both emphasized its inclusive nature and promise for low-income and other marginalized groups.

In Q2's Democratic debates, questions arose such as whether big dams in California count as renewable, or whether nuclear energy can be used to halt climate change (Sen. Cory Booker and candidate Andrew Yang both argued yes). **By June, it was clear that candidates were aligned on the destination, but divided on how to get there.** Karen Harbert, president of the American Gas Association, argued in the *New York Times* for the U.S. to use natural gas as a “bridge fuel” until renewable energy prices fall. Some candidates endorsed this idea. In August, Sen. Bernie Sanders announced his climate change plan during a visit to wildfire-ravaged Paradise, Calif. There was some controversy on issues such as fracking and nuclear power, seen by some as “bridge solutions.” These policy differences were publicly scrutinized in September, on a televised forum. As *Inside Climate News* put it, “there was none of the debate over science that has dominated U.S. political discussions and strangled action in recent years”, rather, “most of the sparring was over **what would they do to hold the fossil fuel industry accountable, how far**



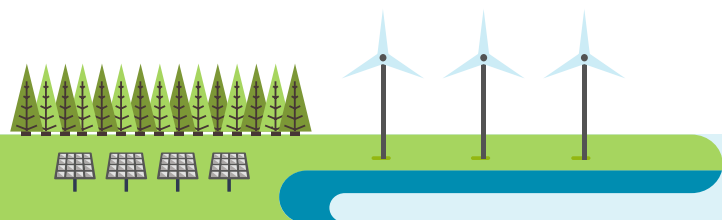
they would go to change American lifestyles, and how would they marshal the money and political support.” Most candidates engaged with the issue of equity and justice, e.g: Rep. Beto O’Rourke focused on climate refugees and migration, while Mayor Pete Buttigieg argued for the need to smooth the transition for fossil fuel workers.

However, Republican opposition is near-universal: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell called it “garden-variety 20th-century socialism,” while Utah’s Rep. Rob Bishop called it “tantamount to genocide” for rural America. However, make no mistake: GND is also divisive within the Democratic party. The traditionally-Democratic AFL-CIO opposes the legislation, saying it “will not stand by and allow threats to our members’ jobs and their families’ standard of living go unanswered.”

RENEWABLE ENERGY’S FUTURE SHOULD BE JUST AND EQUITABLE

Often, media **coverage about equity went hand in hand with coverage about jobs, de-emphasizing other equity issues**, for example, public health, climate migration, or energy affordability. We saw 148 articles in our sample that promoted renewable energy’s potential to underpin equity and justice in the power sector, while 273 touted renewable energy as a job creator or boon to the economy. Despite the labor and environmental alliance underpinning the Green New Deal and its promise of green jobs, unions and worker advocates were vocally upset as green policies closed nuclear, coal, and gas plants.

A detailed commentary in Colorado’s *Westword* expressed concern for the state’s 30,000 fossil fuel workers being left behind. In response, Deborah McNamara, campaign coordinator for 350 Colorado, said, “we’re all looking at how we can make this transition as just and equitable as possible, and make sure that the voices of workers are at the table.” Additionally, a Long Island public workers union estimated that divesting from fossil fuels would cost workers \$33.4 billion in pension funds. After the Trump administration formally served notice that it would withdraw from the Paris Agreement, Paul Krugman, writing in the *New York Times*, characterized Trump’s ambitions as “restoring the kind of economy we had a generation or two ago,” offering “mainly jobs for manly men,” that is, manufacturing, oil, gas, coal and other polluting industries—implying that the Paris Agreement withdrawal would tend to leave behind anybody who wasn’t a “manly man.”



Even as communities of color are at the center of political struggles surrounding the energy transition, they were not often quoted directly. Other groups and individuals, however, claimed to represent their interests. Two such examples: discussing a natural gas pipeline, an op-ed by Chris Tomlinson in the *Houston Chronicle* decried the white liberals who “want this pipeline to run through... the backyards of poor people of color.” Another piece quoted Jeff Allen, executive director of Forth, an electric vehicle advocacy group, who called for electric vehicle rebate implementation for low-income communities of color who, he argued, “often have stronger environmental values than suburban white communities.”



Neutral

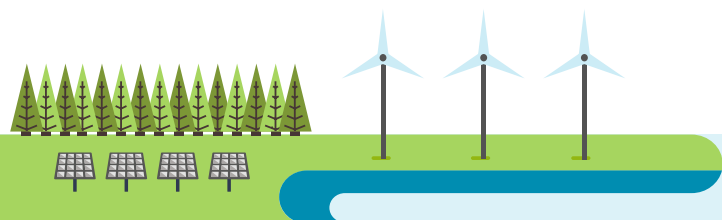
Where 2018 saw a reliable stream of coverage on renewable energy business investment boost the neutral narrative, 2019’s coverage on economic issues waned in favor of political coverage. A notable media conversation about the role of nuclear energy, however, bolstered numbers for this narrative.

Qualifying Messages

- ◆ Business-led (renewable Energy is led by business)
- ◆ Good for economy (renewable energy is economic boon; creates and grows jobs)
- ◆ Partisan (only Democrats/Greens like renewable energy)
- ◆ Bipartisan (GOP likes it too)

BUSINESSES CONTINUE INFLUENCE ON RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY, IMPLEMENTATION

In 2019, more businesses announced their intentions to help meet ambitious renewable energy targets. Interestingly, in Q1, billionaire philanthropist Michael Bloomberg was focused on his “American Cities Climate Challenge.” Perhaps Bloomberg understood that cities and states are the true engines of renewable energy policy adoption — and that **without investment from businesses, implementation can come with many roadblocks**. Arguably, some of the most consistent renewable energy implementation in the country could be said to come from Bloomberg’s pocket, because of this funding. Now, as Bloomberg vies for the Democratic nomination, **the “Climate Challenge” is somewhat tinged with ulterior motive**.



Later in the year, tech giants like Facebook and Google received some media attention for their ongoing green policies, but a few **surprising commitments got even more coverage**. In September, national outlets reported on the carbon capture hubs proposed by a consortium of oil and gas companies including Exxon Mobil, BP, and Royal Dutch Shell. In the same month, Amazon announced its pledge toward net-zero carbon operations. Even so, employees at Amazon, as well as at Microsoft and Google, staged a series of walkouts in protest at their employers' links to the oil and gas industry, and the protests were heavily reported. Overall, the message that business investment is a major driver of renewable energy growth appeared 145 times.

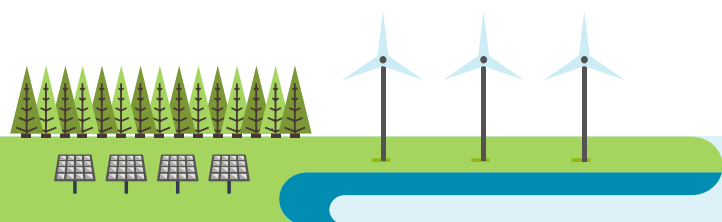


Competing

While less coverage in 2019 was devoted to anti-renewable energy rhetoric outright, the shift in overall media conversation from ideology to implementation provided more fertile ground for squabbles about how, when, why, and on whose dime renewable energy projects should happen.

Qualifying Messages

- ◆ Not growing
- ◆ Green New Deal is bad (anti-GND or specific policies in GND)
- ◆ Expensive (renewable energy is expensive/cost concerns)
- ◆ Unresilient (not reliable, unstable, no power without wind/sun)
- ◆ Bad for economy (renewable energy causes economic stagnation/bad effects)
- ◆ Bad for immediate environment (bad for wildlife, bad use of land, ugly)
- ◆ Unpopular (non-activists supporting anti-RE programs)
- ◆ Unhealthy (renewable energy is unhealthy)
- ◆ Job-taker (renewable energy takes away jobs)
- ◆ Renewable energy should compete in free market
- ◆ Carbon pricing is good
- ◆ Carbon pricing is bad
- ◆ Nuclear good (nuclear energy is renewable/beneficial/good)
- ◆ Nuclear bad (nuclear energy is not renewable/bad/dangerous)



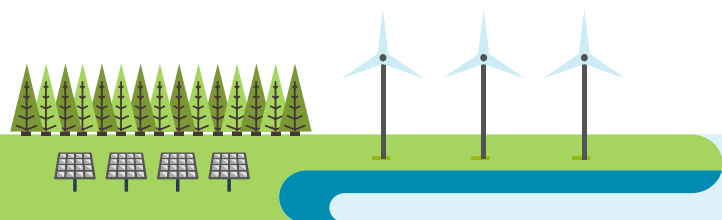
... CARBON PRICING

Twenty-plus editorial and op-ed pieces during Q3 and Q4 were the site of debates over carbon taxes and the role that they might play in addressing climate change, especially in the light of growing evidence that emissions reduction targets set for 2020 were likely to be missed. *The Washington Post* published its support for a carbon tax in October, spurring a flurry of letters arguing that the costs of adhering to the tax would merely be passed on to consumers. Pennsylvania's Gov. Tom Wolf announced that the state would be enrolled in a regional carbon pricing program, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* responded with similar questions about the impact on householders. A report from The Sierra Club and a coalition of partners indicated that the Pennsylvania program would raise the average electricity bill by 0.4%, but the report did not mention broader implications of even such a small increase on low-income communities. The carbon pricing argument is a competing message, as it distracts from the larger issues of renewable energy adoption, and because its implementation is rarely addressed through a lens of equity and justice.

... PUSHBACK ON IMPLEMENTATION

Coverage in 2018 often showed renewable energy advocates pushing back against local or state energy policies before they were implemented, suggesting that securing a 100% commitment is not the end of the story. Now, as renewable projects move from idea to reality, anti-renewable energy groups and even, at times, environmental organizations, are receiving increased coverage (124 mentions, including messaging on expenses) for **complaints about implementation**.

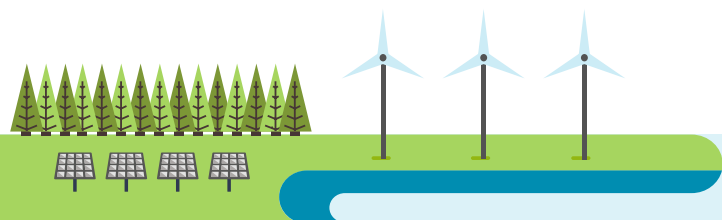
Examples include large-scale solar farms being restricted near San Bernardino, Calif., due to complaints about dust storms and destroying scenic highways, and complaints about wind farms in New York and Massachusetts. In October, the military voiced concerns that wind turbines could undermine security when placed in locations near nuclear missile arsenals. The same month, attention turned to Kahuku in Hawaii, where hundreds of protestors, who objected to a new wind farm's proximity to a school and potential to kill a native bat species, attempted to prevent the delivery of turbines. In Florida, a November article discussed safety problems associated with batteries in clean transportation devices like e-bikes. In Arizona, Native American tribes and environmentalists were reported to "have significant concerns" about proposals to dam a Colorado River tributary in northern Arizona for hydropower.



☞ DOES NUCLEAR COUNT?

Governments and climate and environmental organizations are struggling to define what constitutes renewable energy. Nuclear energy, in particular, resurged in media coverage in 2019, causing many to ask, “**does nuclear count as renewable?**” We qualified this as a “negative” narrative as it is a divisive issue among supporters of renewable energy. On the one hand, some pro-renewable spokespeople see nuclear as dangerous, having no place in a renewable portfolio. Other renewable energy advocates, including The Solutions Project, argue that nuclear energy has a poor environmental justice record, and its needs for uranium extraction and nuclear waste disposal have the potential to negatively affect indigenous people, communities of color, and poor communities. Overall, pro-nuclear energy messaging appeared 62 times over the sample, while anti-nuclear messaging appeared 50 times.

Nuclear advocates played up the role of **nuclear energy as a “stepping stone”** to get the U.S. to 100% renewable energy. Lindsey Walter, an energy policy adviser at the pro-nuclear think tank Third Way said, “nuclear... will play a crucial role in meeting future climate goals.” Further, Liam Denning and Mark Gongloff’s pro-nuclear energy op-ed in the *Houston Chronicle* was not the only one to point out that Green New Dealers seem to be “selling the promise of zero-carbon energy while actively closing zero-carbon plants.” Two regional examples saw this debate play out: Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont, in a statement about keeping a nuclear plant open, said, “the shutdown... would have exposed the New England region to a nearly 25 percent increase in carbon emissions, increased risk of rolling blackouts, billions of dollars in power replacement costs, and the loss of more than 1,500 well-paying jobs.” The *Boston Globe* praised the decision to keep the plant open. Additionally, Ohio House Bill 6 sparked a conversation about if nuclear power can be classified as ‘clean.’ Thomas Suddes, in the *Columbus Dispatch*, pointed out that two of the plants likely to be affected by the bill “produce huge amounts of electricity without polluting Ohio’s air.”



SPOKESPEOPLE TRENDS



Outlets

Outlets with highest number of renewable energy articles (based on our sample)

NEWS OUTLETS

1. Houston Chronicle
2. The New York Times
3. AP The Associated Press
4. The Columbus Dispatch
5. The Washington Post
6. San Diego Union-Tribune
7. The Boston Globe
8. Sacramento Bee
9. Buffalo News
10. San Francisco Chronicle

TRADE PUBLICATIONS

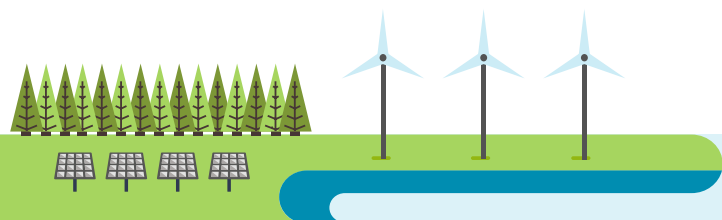
1. CleanTechnica
2. Utility DIVE
3. Greentech Media
4. Climatewire
5. E&E Daily
6. Green Biz
7. Inside Climate News
8. E&E News PM
9. Alternative Energy News
10. Energy Manager Today



Equity Messaging

Top outlets with articles containing “Renewable energy promotes equity and justice” messaging

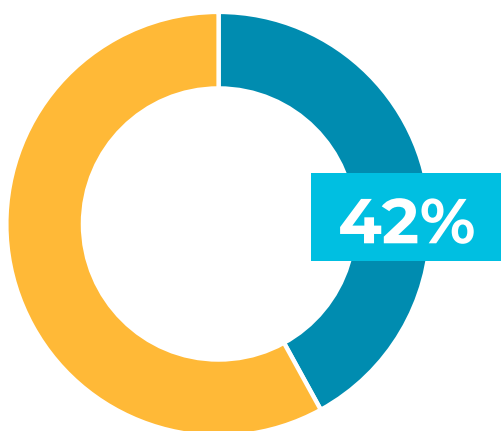
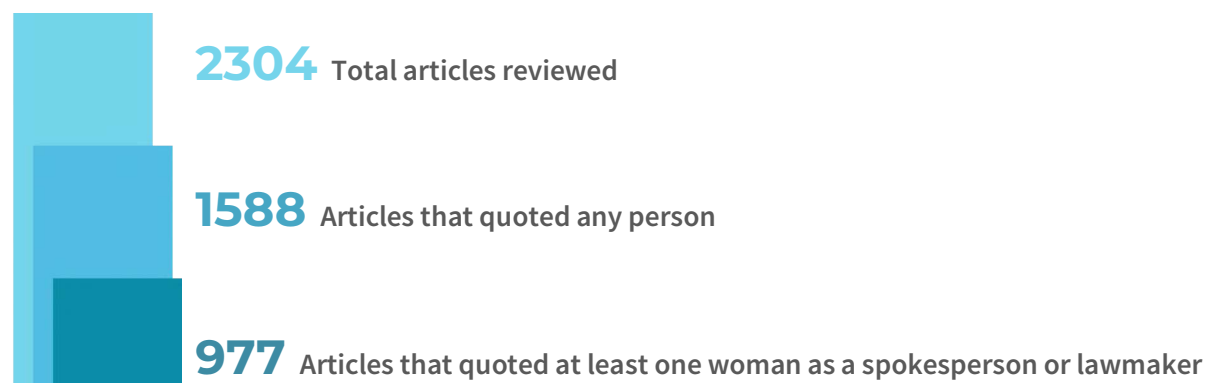
1. Clean Technica | 15
2. The New York Times | 15
3. CNN | 11



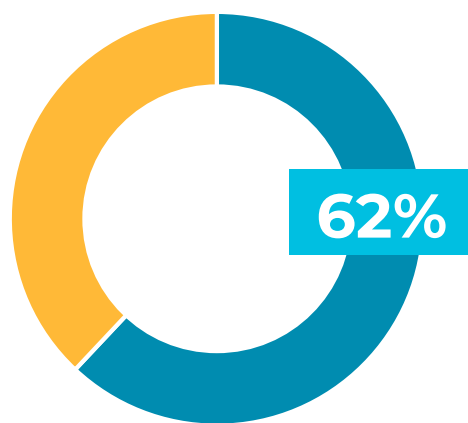


Women

Note: this analysis identifies 'women' as those identified with feminine pronouns in articles or otherwise self-evident online. In some cases, researchers made their best determination given the information available.

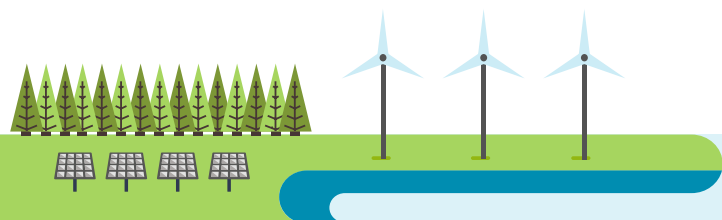


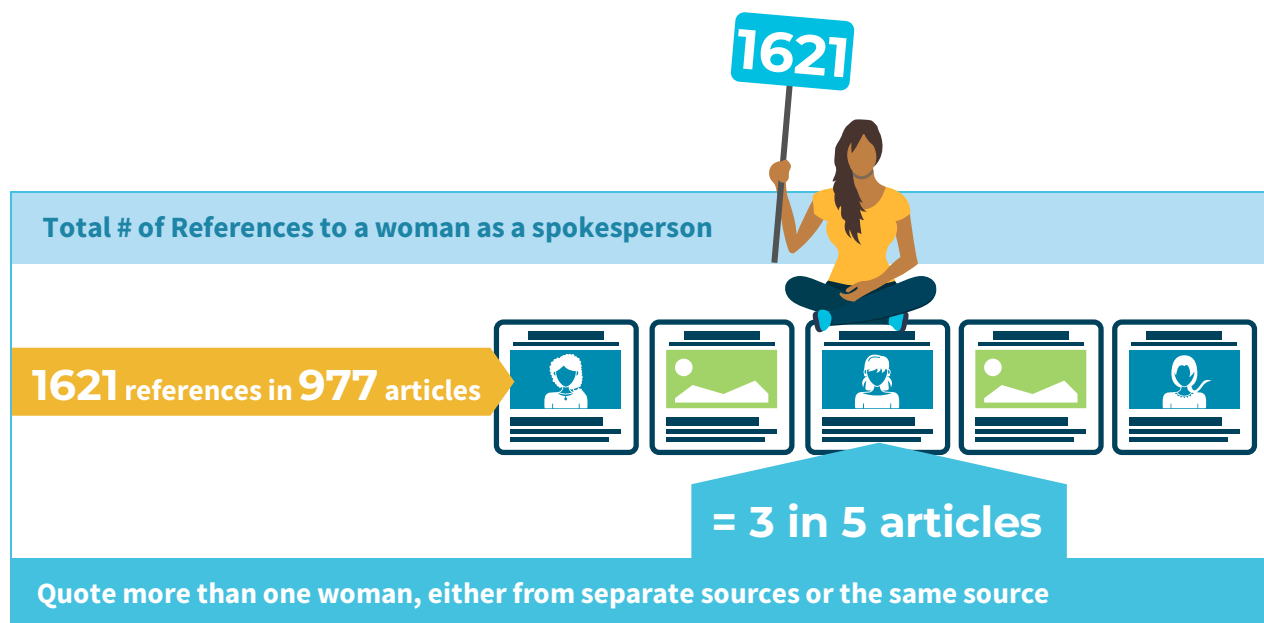
Articles quoting women
as percent of all articles



Articles quoting women
as percent of articles with quotes*

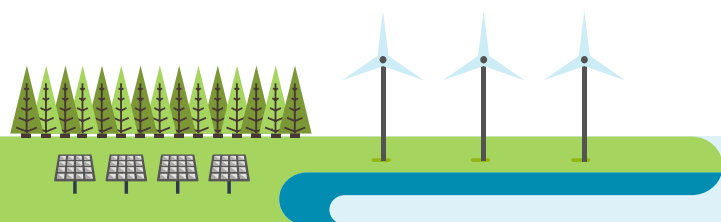
**As not all articles include quotations or references to people, we calculated an additional data point based on articles that included a quotation from any person.*





Top 10 Most-Quoted Women

1. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Representative (D-NY), U.S. House of Representatives	72
2. Elizabeth Warren, Senator (D-MA), U.S. Senate	53
3. Kamala Harris, Senator (D-CA), U.S. Senate	22
4. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House (D-CA), U.S. House of Representatives	21
5. Kathy Castor, Representative (D-FL), U.S. House of Representatives	17
6. Lisa Murkowski, Senator (R-AK), U.S. Senate	17
7. Amy Klobuchar, Senator (D-MN), U.S. Senate	17
8. Kirsten Gillibrand Senator (D-NY), U.S. Senate	16
9. Abigail Ross Hopper, President and CEO, Solar Energy Industries Association	14
10. Bernadette Del Chiaro, Executive Director, California Solar & Storage Association	14



Organizations with Most Mentions

1. The Sierra Club	92
2. Solar Energy Industries Association	63
3. The Natural Resources Defense Council	53
4. Wood Mackenzie Power & Renewables	49
5. National Renewable Energy Laboratory	42
6. Sunrise Movement	41
7. American Wind Energy Association	33
8. Union of Concerned Scientists	25
9. Southern Alliance for Clean Energy	23
10. Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC)	20

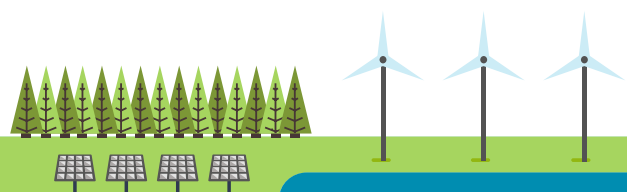
Key Observation: Of the 414 total times these top 10 organizations were mentioned, 92 mentions included a quotation by a woman as a spokesperson—or 22%. This means that women as spokespeople of environmental organizations are quoted at a less-frequent rate than women overall in this study.

Organization Coverage By Region

Organizations with the most mentions in coverage, ranked by state or regional affiliation

1. National	233	6. Washington DC	40
2. California	121	7. Colorado	36
3. New York	62	8. Pennsylvania	36
4. Regional	53	9. Massachusetts	32
5. Texas	47	10. Minnesota	26

Key Observation: In 2018, we concluded that California is renewable energy's standard-bearer, and this has not changed. But organizations in traditionally conservative Texas topped Massachusetts and Colorado, areas associated with renewable energy activism.



SOCIAL LISTENING

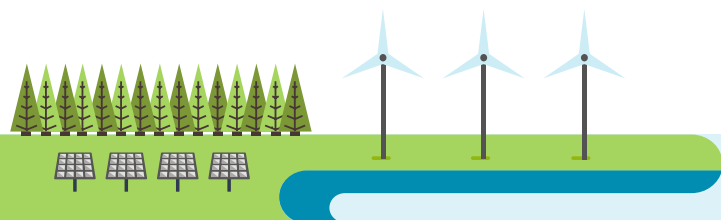
435
TOTAL POSTS
RECORDED

February through December 2019

In addition to tracking the renewable energy narrative in online and print media, we sought to understand how this narrative is playing out in social media, where an increasing number of people get their news. This section highlights top posts, users, and hashtags from 2019 related to renewable energy.

Top Posts

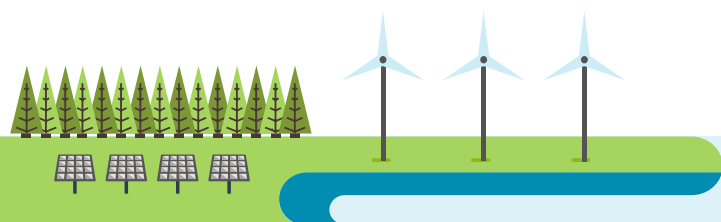
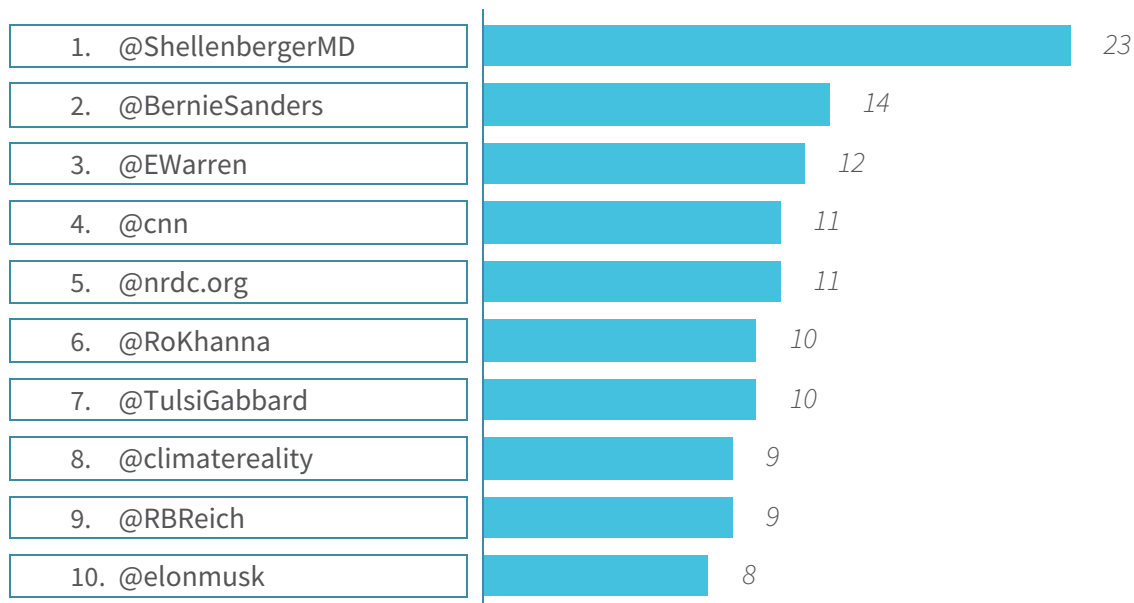
1. Reminder of what people are calling the “radical, extreme-left agenda”:  Medicare for All  A Living Wage & Labor Rights  K-16 schooling, aka Public Colleges  100% Renewable Energy  Fixing the pipes in Flint  Not Hurting Immigrants  Holding Wall Street Accountable.
@AOC | 70,433 engagements
2. Super strong roof that generates clean energy, looks great & costs less than a normal roof plus solar panels! <https://t.co/D9yUuL7NVE> **@elonmusk | 52,488 engagements**
3. The Wisconsin-based brand Organic Valley says they're now the largest food company in the world to be 100 percent powered by renewable energy. (via Wisconsin Public Radio).
@NPR | 41,777 engagements
4. Thank for helping grow sustainable energy through solar. **@elonmusk | 41,160 engagements**
5. "Coal miners are not the enemy. Oil rig workers are not the enemy. Climate change is the enemy. As we transition to 100% renewable energy, the Green New Deal will ensure a just transition for ALL..." **@BernieSanders | 39,289 engagements**
6. "The #GreenNewDeal works in coal country because we've been fighting to fully fund coal workers' pensions & work w/ impacted communities to plan a just transition. A GND can put everyone to work...". **@AOC | 37,094 engagements**



7. Get Tesla Solar plus Powerwall battery for 24/7 clean power & no more blackouts!
@elonmusk | 27,755 engagements
8. Akon is building a new city named “Akon City” in Senegal, West Africa that will be powered solely by renewable energy. It will also have its own airport 🤖 <https://t.co/njFzsquojq>
@RapAllStars | 26,574 engagements
9. Order Tesla Solar + Powerwall battery for 24/7 clean power & no blackouts!
<https://t.co/mDoPO17YB9> **@elonmusk | 24,899 engagements**
10. @Akon is in the process of building his own city in Africa...it will have renewable energy and an airport. <https://t.co/TcUaziKRx6> **@Shanestackamil1 | 24,735 engagements**

Top Users (By Engagement)

Methodology: Ranked by # of times this user's post appeared in a weekly top ten.



Most Popular Hashtags

Methodology: Ranked by overall average ranking in weekly top 10 hashtags.

1. Energy

2. Renewableenergy

3. Climatechange

4. Solar

5. Climate
6. Greennewdeal

7. Actonclimate

8. Cleanenergy

9. Sustainability

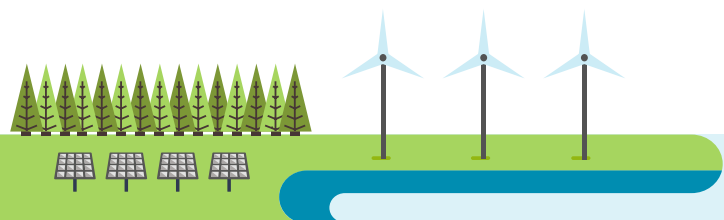
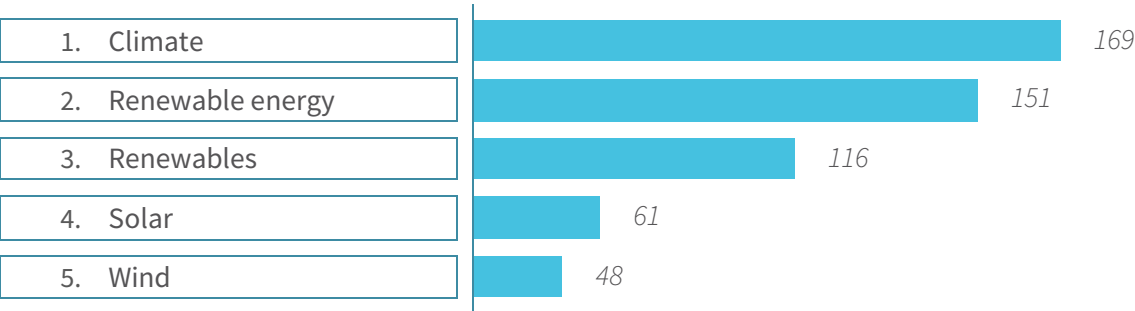
10. Climateaction

? Results from Querying Post Text

Querying the database of high-engagement social media posts for certain words and phrases reveals topic trends within the renewable energy conversation on social media.

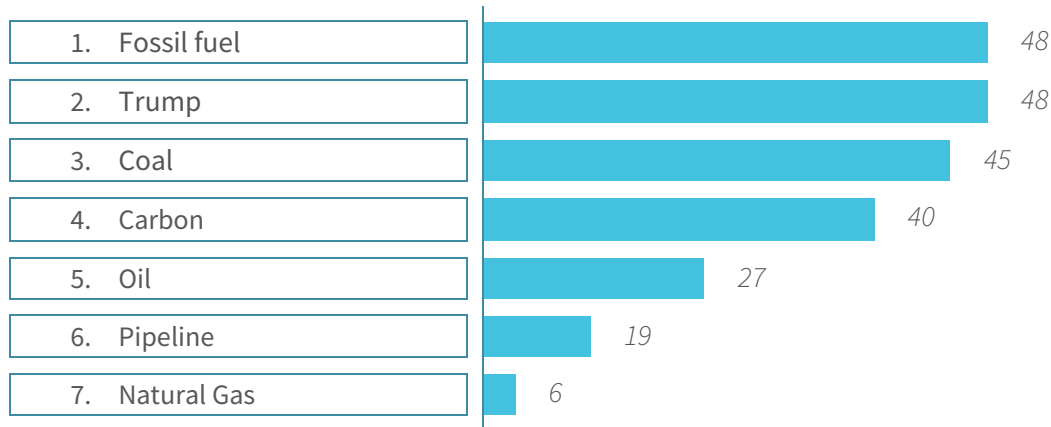
SEARCHING
WITHIN
428
TOTAL POSTS

Baseline Topics



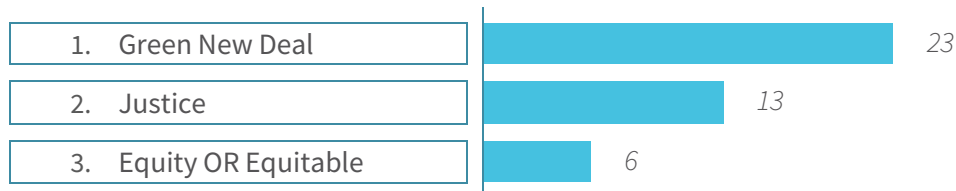
Calling For Change

Key to note that non-renewable energies and movement antagonists have such high-mention counts, suggesting that anti-fossil fuel rhetoric may eclipse pro-renewable energy rhetoric in these posts.

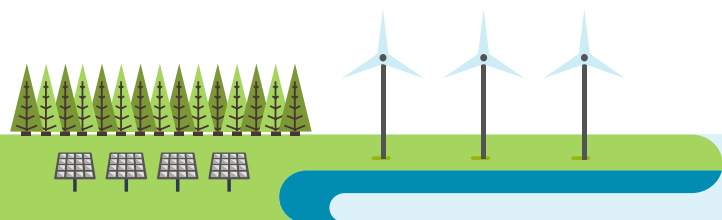
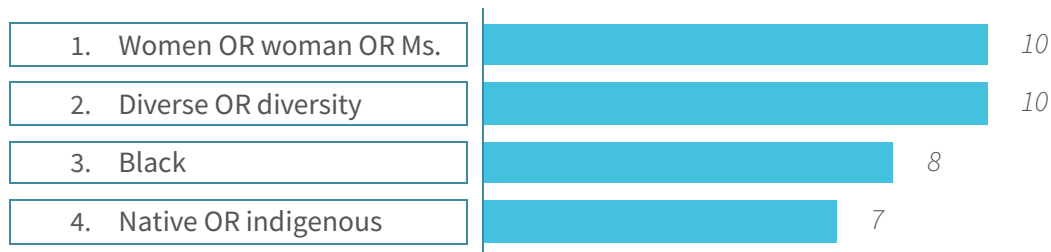


Equity and Justice

The Green New Deal, under which principles of equity and justice coalesce, was a more frequently used search term than either equity or justice.



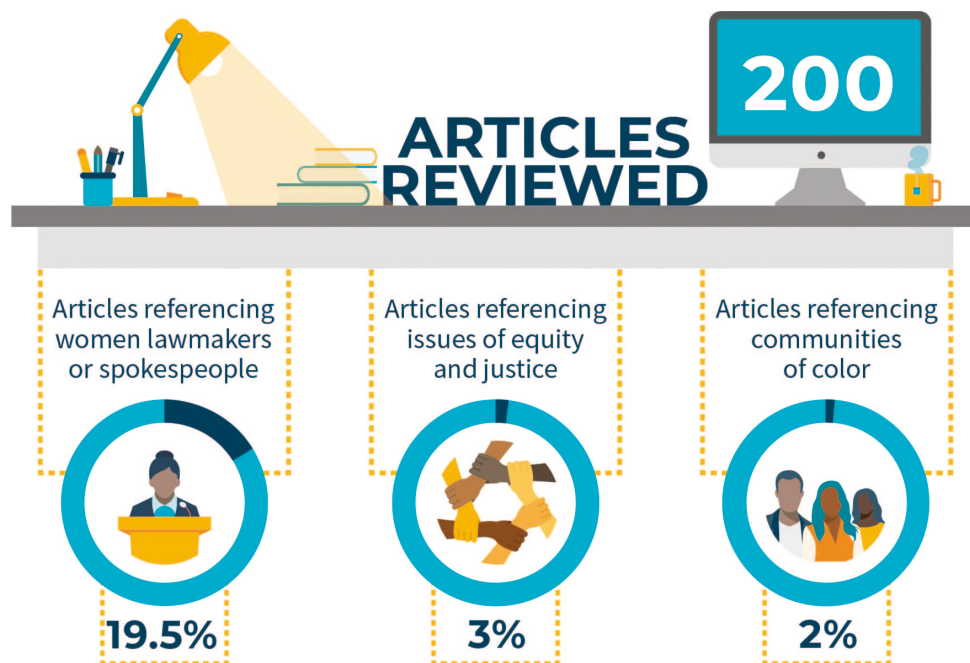
Whose Voices?



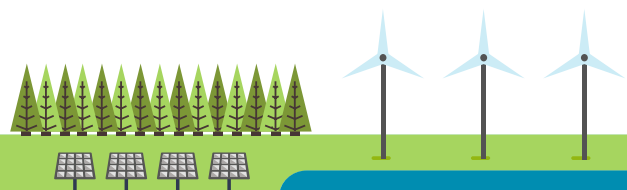
SPECIAL SECTION: CALIFORNIA AND GEORGIA

The Solutions Project and its grantees and partners in California and Georgia are working to realize their vision of 100% renewable energy with a focus on equity. To support these efforts, we conducted a message and messenger analysis of 200 renewable-energy focused articles published in 2018 in state and local newspapers in each state, aiming to understand the current media narrative in each, and to establish a baseline for key metrics related to equity and justice. This will help advocates track their impact in shaping the narrative in the years to come.

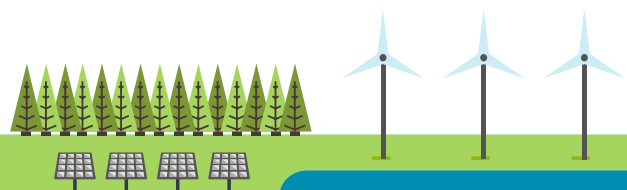
◆ California



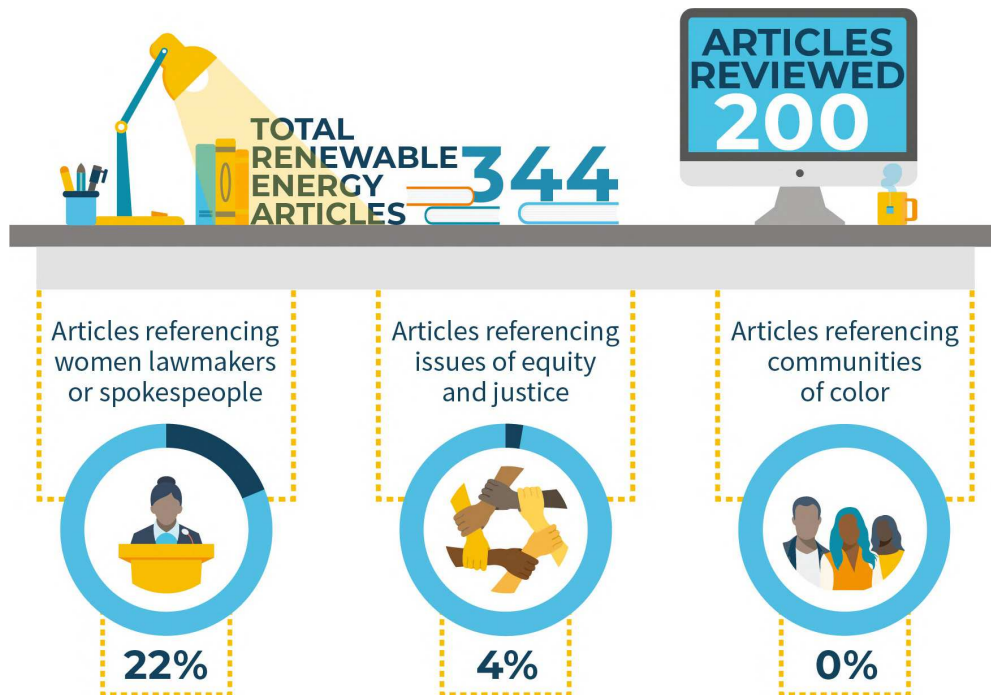
California is the country's leader and bellwether in renewable energy, and 2018 saw growth of renewable energy projects in the state, spearheaded by government agencies and driven by partnerships with large corporations, such as Tesla. Local news outlets also reported on new commitments to energy projects, as well as cash flowing into the state announced in the aftermath of the announcement of the new 2045 targets.



- Messaging was largely positive, with regional and local outlets adopting a congratulatory tone for California’s pioneering stance in light of environmental pushback from the Trump administration. Nevertheless, groups like The Clean Power Alliance sought to temper expectations by highlighting that fossil fuel emissions are rising, investors continue to support polluting projects, and some renewable projects (e.g., wind farms) have failed to obtain approval.
- Pessimism emerged from federal government pushback on environmental issues (e.g., its levying tariffs on Chinese-made solar panels). Media coverage still appeared supportive of state efforts, positioning California as the country’s leader in green policy.
- Many residents are concerned about how energy commitments will impact ordinary Californians. As excitement about SB100 passed with time, the conversation switched to discussing how California might meet its ambitious goals and, specifically, who would shoulder the costs. Six articles did raise questions of equity, pointing to the costs of clean vehicles and “exit fees” imposed on residents defecting to green energy suppliers. Equity messages, such as advocating for sharing the benefits of clean energy with communities of color, were not a priority when reading about coverage of SB100.

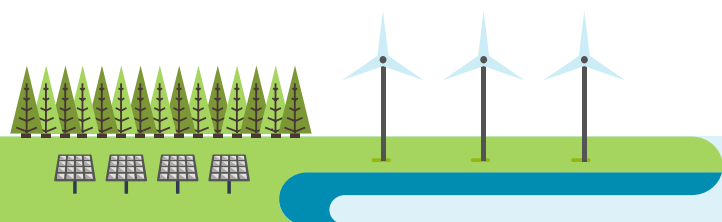


◆ Georgia



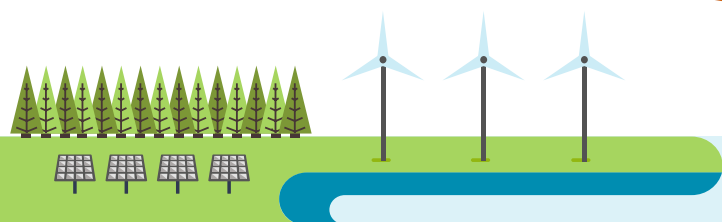
Commitment to 100% renewable energy is on the rise in Georgia. The 100% movement has grown its base of support in the state, including the support of more elected officials. Key developments included 100% resolutions in Clarkston and Atlanta, and a town hall on a 100% Clean Energy proposal held in Athens-Clarke County. However, debates over the introduction of renewable energy projects showed that the issue is still highly partisan, which poses a major barrier to further commitments.

- Coverage made few connections between renewable energy and equity. Where equity was discussed, it referenced high-energy costs in low-income communities, and those communities' marginalization in the renewable energy revolution. The implicit—and rarely, explicit—message was that as renewable energy grows, costs fall, making renewable energy more inclusive. However, these messages appeared in only 4% of reviewed coverage, and no articles explicitly mentioned people or communities of color.
- Political tussles over new renewable projects dominated coverage, with both Democratic and Republican spokespeople quoted extensively. Consequently, readers were exposed to conflicting messages about health consequences of renewable projects—especially wind



farms. However—likely driven by the approval of new clean energy projects—positive coverage of renewable energy won out toward the end of the year.

- Renewable energy growth and job creation were dominant themes—both within the state and elsewhere. A range of spokespeople, from the government and environmental groups alike—reinforced these themes.
- Renewable energy became an important issue in state political races, especially for Secretary of State and a Public Service Commission seat. Most candidates talked about renewable energy and emphasized its job-creation potential, while others raised concerns over zoning for wind farms. No candidates explicitly advocated a pro-100% position.
- Planned expansion of the Vogtle nuclear power plant encroached on the renewable energy narrative. Especially in the last four months of 2018, most articles reported negatively on the plant, emphasizing the project’s considerable costs. The extensive reporting offered multiple opportunities for renewable energy spokespeople (notably from the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy and the Sierra Club) to comment; however, spokespeople tended to reinforce costliness, rather than highlight negative health concerns, outcomes for those who live close by, or the advantage of alternative energy projects.



METHODOLOGY

◆ Media Analysis

We source articles from LexisNexis and Google News, dividing our article pool into four categories: National, Online, Trade, and Alternative. Our pool of articles does not represent an exhaustive list of all available articles, but a representative sample of high-circulation, high-value coverage. We took direction from The Solutions Project for local outlets and trade publications to follow for relevant topics.

For all categories except Trade, we use the indexed search term “Renewable Energy.” Within our list of Trade organizations, we use the following Boolean search terms:

“solar energy” OR “solar power” OR "hydroelectric" OR "hydropower" OR "wind energy" OR "wind power" OR "geothermal energy" OR "geothermal power" OR "tidal energy" OR "tidal power" OR "renewable energy" OR "clean energy" OR "green energy" OR "energy democracy"

From Jan. 1–Dec. 31 2019, we vetted approximately 3,200 articles. Of these, we thoroughly analyzed 2,304 articles: we excluded articles having to do with the pure financial business of renewable energy (e.g., an article covering fluctuations in NRG stock prices, without making reference to NRG’s activity or business decisions), articles that only covered renewable energy news outside the U.S., and articles with obvious bias that weren’t formal opinion pieces (e.g., advertorials).

Since last year’s annual analysis, we have updated our methodology to more accurately capture relevant data points. The authors of this report have noted where this change in methodology may affect the way we compare 2018 data to 2019 data. Some key updates were:

- ◆ Sourcing our pool of articles through LexisNexis and Google News, allowing us to mitigate the limitations and potential biases of our former pair of sources: Google News and Feedly.



- ◆ Grouping our sources to reflect three key areas of reporting: mainstream news, renewable energy trade organizations, and alternative outlets. We hypothesized in 2018 that, due to the Google News algorithm, our article pool reflected an over-sampling of articles from trade publications and an under-sampling of articles from alternative news sources (alt-weeklies and similar). Our updated methodology, therefore, emphasizes mainstream news while specifically querying a pool of complementary trade and alternative news sources.
- ◆ Updating our approach to recording messaging. In 2018, we recorded renewable energy messaging by article, assessing what the dominant message was in each article. A major takeaway from 2018's process is that any given article may contain multiple messages, even some conflicting messages. Therefore, in 2019, we recorded by message instance, rather than by article.

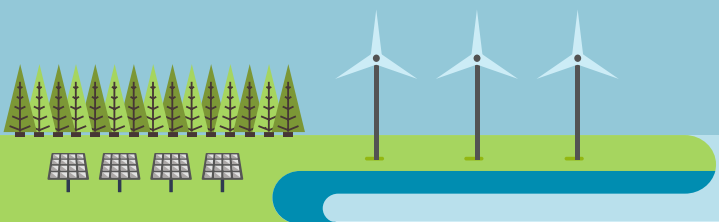
◆ Social Listening

We source social media posts using the hashtag and topic analytics aggregator Keyhole, querying the following topics: “renewable energy” OR “renewables” OR “clean energy” OR “clean power” OR “green energy.” Keyhole aggregates posts from Twitter and a selection of Facebook pages.

For each calendar week, we recorded and ranked:

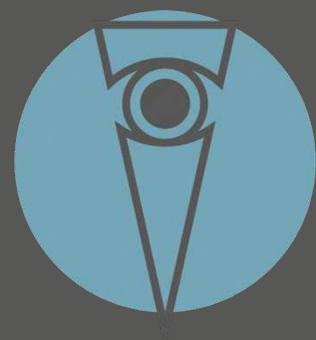
- ◆ The top ten posts by engagement, across all of Twitter and our searchable pool of Facebook posts
- ◆ The top ten hashtags
- ◆ The top ten “related topics”

We aggregated, in our database, the post text for each post that appeared in the weekly top ten, enabling us to query the database on the popularity of certain phrases among the most-engaged-with social media posts on renewable energy.



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