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By EDF | Posted May 29, 2024 The definition of renewable energy source is 'energy that is sustainable - something that can't run out or is endless, like the sun'. When you hear the term 'alternative energy', it's usually referring to renewable energy', it's usually referring to renewable energy sources that are considered alternative. Renewable energy, it's usually referring to renewable energy sources that are considered alternative. means energy that's different to the most commonly used non-sustainable sources - like gas. Currently the most popular energy sources are: Each source has its own strengths and weaknesses, and only with a combination of all of them can we hope to reach net zero. The advantages of using renewable energy in your home are: Cut your electricity bills: Once you've paid for the costs of installing a renewable energy system your energy bills will be reduced substantially. Customers who install solar panels and batteries can see savings of up to £525 a year(1) as well as earn for any energy that's exported to the grid through our Smart Export Guarantee. Become more energy independent: By installing solar panels and particularly a battery you become far less reliant on the National Grid. This gives you far more control to your energy usage and therefore increases your energy usage and therefore increases your energy usage and therefore increases your carbon footprint: Green, renewable sources of energy don't release carbon dioxide or other harmful pollutants into the atmosphere. According to the Energy Saving Trust, a typical solar PV system could save around 1 tonne of carbon per year. You can find out more in our solar panels quide. Related articles Understand where renewable energy comes from and how much Britain is using. Are some renewable sources better than others? And how to support the use of renewable energy? Renewable energy is a type of energy that comes from renewable energy goes by many different names - green energy, sustainable energy sources: Wind energy Solar energy Hydro energy Geothermal energy What are renewable resources? A renewable energy resource is energy that is sustainable - something that can't run out, like the sun, wind and water. What is the difference between renewable resources? A non-renewable resource for example would be fossil fuels. These take millions of years to develop, and they're a limited resource because we're using them much faster than they're being produced. Burning fossil fuels produces the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide (CO2). So we're increasingly turning to renewable energy sources to generate more environmentally-friendly power. We're supporting Net Zero We're helping the UK hit zero carbon emissions by 2050 with a mix of carbon-free technologies key to supporting the transition away from fossil fuels. Check out Our Journey to Net Zero for more information. Using electricity at off-peak electricity at off-peak times could help discount your bills while making energy more sustainable. About off-peak electricity at off-peak times could help discount your bills while making energy more sustainable. greater extent to help power our homes and businesses across Britain and the UK. Zero-carbon power sources in Britain's electricity mix outperformed traditional fossil fuel generation in 2023 by providing 51% of the electricity used, compared to 32% from gas and 1% from coal.1 Below we explain more about each of the renewable energy sources. Wind is a plentiful source of clean energy and wind farms are an increasingly familiar sight in the UK with wind power making an increasing contribution to the National Grid. To harness electricity from wind energy - on land or at sea - turbines are used to drive generators which then feed electricity into the National Grid. To harness electricity from wind energy - on land or at sea - turbines are used to drive generators which then feed electricity into the farms The UK is a world leader in offshore wind farm in the North Sea. Offshore wind farm in the North Sea. Offshore and onshore wind farms and boasts the world's largest offshore wind farm in the North Sea. Offshore wind turbines rotate at faster, more consistent speeds so they can produce significantly more electricity than turbines on land. High cost The downside is they're more expensive to develop and to maintain. Onshore wind turbines are cheaper to build and to install, but they're often unpopular with local communities. It might seem like sunny days are in short supply, but the UK gets nearly 5% of its electricity from solar energy.1 After wind and bioenergy, solar technologies convert sunlight into electrical energy that can be used to generate electricity or be stored in batteries or thermal storage. A solar PV (photovoltaic) panel consists of many cells made from layers of semi-conducting material, a flow of electricity is created. Over the past decade solar energy has emerged as a viable, mainstream solution to climate change. However, the amount of solar energy we can use varies according to the time of day, time of year and geographical location. In the UK, solar energy usage. PV installations rose by nearly 30% in 2023 to just under 1.42 million - more than 5% of all UK households2. In addition, there are currently around 1,000 solar farms in the UK providing clean energy to the grid. Reduce your bills and carbon footprint with solar panels, you're a homeowner with solar panels. your home with solar energy - our solar solutions. Hydro energy or hydroelectric energy is a form of renewable energy that uses the power of moving water to generate electricity by using a dam or diversion structure to alter the natural flow. It's one of the oldest sources of renewable energy dating back thousands of years. Hydro energy accounted for around 1.8% of the UK's total electricity generation in 2023, mostly from large scale schemes in the Scottish Highlands.1 Advantages and disadvantages and disadvantages of hydro energy With its mountainous terrain and high reservoirs, the UK is a great place for building hydroelectric power stations and it's a readily available domestic source of energy, but future development is likely to be limited by concerns over its environmental impact on the land and wildlife. Plus, the cost of large-scale construction is prohibitive. Tidal flow, unlike other hydro energy sources, isn't constant but it is plentiful and highly predictable. The main barrier to investment in tidal power is high construction costs when compared to wind and solar. Biomass energy is generated from burning wood, plants and other organic matter like manure or household waste to produce electricity. It releases carbon dioxide (Co2) when burned, but substantially less than fossil fuels. Is biomass renewable? We consider biomass a renewable energy source, if the plants or other organic materials being burned come from a sustainable source and are replaced. There are currently around 78 biomass power stations operating in the UK. Biomass not contributed around 5% of Britain's electricity mix in 2023.1 This is expected to rise by as much as three times that in the coming years and will be an important renewable resource for the UK to help reach its Senerated from plant and organic material that can re-grow in a relatively short time - compared to the millions of years it takes to form coal and natural gas. Climate change concerns Burning biomass produces greenhouses gas, so there are questions about its sustainability. Some say that burning wood is carbon-neutral? Whether they're burned or decompose naturally, the amount of CO2 released is about the same. So in theory, if trees are replanted as quickly as they're harvested, the new trees will absorb and store the same amount of CO2 that burning wood produces. is certainly 'greener' than fossil fuels - where none of the released carbon is offset. But the greenhouse gas savings are much less than other forms of renewable energy like wind or wave power, which create almost no CO2 emissions. Geothermal energy is a renewable energy like wind or wave power, which create almost no the slow decay of radioactive particles, a process that happens in all rocks. It's a reliable and constant source of low-carbon, renewable heat that is not dependent on weather conditions. People use geothermal heat for bathing, for heating buildings, and for generating electricity through for example ground source heat pumps (GSHP). Advantages and disadvantages of geothermal energy Geothermal energy is a reliable source of power with a small land footprint and can be used for large and small-scale installations. However, it's location dependent - geothermal power plants can only be built in certain locations - set up costs are high and can lead to surface instability. While we use very little geothermal energy in the UK, the industry is growing worldwide and it's a significant source of renewable energy for countries like Iceland, New Zealand and Kenya. We're at the forefront of cleaner, greener energy. For years we've been investing in the development of offshore wind farms. And in 'greener' gas - biomethane produced from biomass We're greener than you may think As a uniquely integrated energy and services company, we're committed to helping decarbonise the UK's electricity system and reaching net zero. Learn more about Our Journey to Net Zero. Check out our smart energy tariffs and greener home solutions Our smart tariffs and greener energy solutions can help you take steps to reduce your bills and your carbon footprint. Together we can make energy work better. Take a look at our smart export to the grid. Using electricity at off-peak times could help discount your bills while making energy more sustainable. About off-peak electricity Reduce your bill and your carbon footprint by trying our energy saving tips Find out how to save How does the energy you use compare to the typical UK household? See an average energy bill All the
renewable energy sources we rely on today ultimately come from two primary origins: the Sun and the Earth. However, experts often classify these energy forms into five key categories, each with its distinct characteristics. Renewable energy sources that, at least on a human timescale, are inexhaustible and widely available. The five primary types are solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and geothermal. What they have in common is that, during use, they emit little to no harmful pollutants, which helps in the fight against greenhouse gases and climate change. Solar panels can be installed on residential rooftops. © Cotrim, Pixabay, CC0 Creative Commons Solar energy is the energy we can harness from the Sun's radiation. There are two main types: photovoltaic solar energy and solar thermal energy. Photovoltaic solar energy refers to electricity generated by photovoltaic cells, which absorb sunlight and convert it into electricity. One of the advantages of this technology is its modularity—photovoltaic panels can be used to heat a fluid, like water, as in some solar water heaters. When a concentrating system—such as mirrors—is added, it can heat the fluid to temperatures around 1,000°C, making it viable for electricity generation. The downside of solar energy is its intermittency as it can only be utilized when the Sun is shining. Wind turbines can be installed offshore. © A-Different-Perspective, Pixabay, CC0 Creative Commons The ancestors of modern wind turbines were windmills. Wind turbines generate energy-typically electricity when coupled with a generator-by harnessing the kinetic energy of moving air. Wind turbines can be installed on land, known as onshore wind turbines. These are relatively straightforward to design, though available land may quickly become scarce. More efficient turbines might be offshore wind turbines, installed in bodies of water. Like solar energy, wind energy is also intermittent; wind turbines might be offshore wind turbines only generate power when the wind blows. energy is typically reserved for large-scale installations. Dams generate electricity from the movement of water. It's less dependent on weather conditions, though still typically reserved for large-scale production. There are several forms of hydropower: Dams release large quantities of water to turn turbines and generate electricity. Tidal energy from underwater currents. Wave energy taps into the kinetic energy of waves and ocean swells. Thermal energy harnesses the temperature difference between deep water and surface water, with minimal environmental disruption. Osmotic energy generates electricity by using the pressure difference created by the varying salinity between saltwater and freshwater. Stones, Pixabay, CC0 Creative Commons Biomass can be a source of heat, electricity, or fuel. Various methods, such as combustion, gasification, pyrolysis, and methanization, are used to extract energy from organic materials. Biomass energy can often be produced locally. However, in some cases, it's important to ensure it doesn't compete with food production. Types of biomass energy include: Wood, an ancient energy source, can produce heat, electricity, or biofuels (e.g., cellulose hydrolysis to glucose, then fermentation), cellulosic materials (second generation), or microorganisms like microalgae (third generation). Note that biomass is only considered a renewable energy source if its regeneration rate exceeds its consumption rate. Geothermal energy is renewable energy source if its regeneration rate exceeds its consumption rate. decay of atoms in rocks. It can be used for heating or electricity generation and is one of the few renewable energy sources that are not weather-dependent. However, the depth at which geothermal energy is extracted plays a role in its use. There are different types of geothermal energy is extracted plays a role in its use. with temperatures of 150 to 250°C) can be used for electricity generation. Medium-depth geothermal energy (found in water reservoirs at temperatures between 10 and 100 meters, with temperatures under 30°C) is used in heat pumps. It's important to note that for geothermal energy to remain sustainable, the rate of heat extraction must not exceed the rate at which the Earth replenishes that heat. These five renewable energy sources are helping to shape a more sustainable future—each with its potential and challenges. By understanding and effectively harnessing them, we can reduce our environmental impact and create a cleaner, greener world for future generations. Renewable energy is energy that has been derived from earth's natural resources that are not finite or exhaustible, such as wind and sunlight. Renewable energy is an alternative to the traditional energy that relies on fossil fuels, and it tends to be much less harmful to the environment. Types of Renewable Energy Solar Solar energy is derived by capturing radiant energy is that sunlight into electricity through the use of solar cells. Benefits One of the benefits of solar energy is that sunlight is functionally endless. With the technology to harvest it, there is a limitless supply of solar energy costs, and in the short term, reduce your energy bills. Many federal local, state, and federal governments also incentivize the investment in solar energy by providing rebates or tax credits. Current Limitations Although solar energy will save you money in the long run, it tends to be a significant upfront cost and is an unrealistic expenses for most households. For personal homes, homeowners also need to have the ample sunlight and space to arrange their solar panels, which limits who can realistically adopt this technology at the individual level. Explore Just Energy's Texas Solar Buyback Program. Wind farms of systems used to convert wind energy and each vary. Commercial grade wind-powered generating systems can power many different organizations, while single-wind turbines are used to help supplement pre-existing energy organizations. Another form is utility-scale wind farms, which are purchased by contract or wholesale. Technically, wind energy is a form of solar energy. The phenomenon we call "wind" is caused by the differences in temperature in the atmosphere combined with the rotation of Earth and the geography of the planet. [1] source Benefits Wind energy doesn't produce carbon dioxide, or release any harmful products that can cause environmental degradation or negatively affect human health like smog, acid rain, or other heat-trapping gases.[2] Investment in wind energy technology can also open up new avenues for jobs and job training, as the turbines on farms need to be serviced and maintained to keep running Current Limitations Since wind farms tend to be built in rural or remote areas, they are usually far from bustling cities where the electricity is needed most. Wind energy must be transported via transition lines, leading to higher costs. Although wind turbines produce very little pollution, some cities oppose them since they dominate skylines and generate noise. Wind turbines also threaten local wildlife like birds, which are sometimes killed by striking the arms of the turbine while flying. Hydroelectric power. Water flows through the dam's turbines to produce electricity, known as pumped-storage hydropower. Run-of-river hydropower uses a channel to funnel water through rather than powering it through a dam. Benefits Hydroelectric power is very versatile and can be generated using both large scale projects, like the Hoover Dam, and small scale projects like underwater turbines and streams. pollution, and therefore is a much more environment. Current Limitations Most U.S. hydroelectricity facilities use more energy than they are able to produce for consumption. The storage systems may need to use fossil fuel to pump water.[3] Although hydroelectric power does not pollute the air, it disrupts waterways and negatively affects the animals that live in them, changing water levels, currents, and migration paths for many fish and other freshwater ecosystems. Geothermal heat is the earth's crust from the formation of the Earth 4.5 billion years ago and from radioactive decay. Sometimes large amounts of this heat escapes naturally, but all at once, resulting in familiar occurrences, such as volcanic eruptions and geysers. This heat can be captured and used to produce geothermal energy by using steam that comes from the heated water pumping below the surface, which then rises to the top and can be used to operate a turbine. Benefits Geothermal energy is not as common as other types of renewable energy sources, but it has a significant potential for energy supply. Since it can be built underground, it leaves very little footprint on land. Geothermal energy is naturally replenished and therefore does not run a risk of depleting (on a human timescale). Current Limitations Cost plays a major factor when it comes to disadvantages of geothermal energy. Not only is it costly to build the infrastructure, but another major concern is its vulnerability to earthquakes in certain regions of the world. Ocean The ocean can produce two types of energy: thermal and mechanical. Ocean thermal energy relies on warm water surface temperatures to generate energy through a variety of different systems. Ocean mechanical energy uses the ebbs and flows of the tides to generate energy, which is created by the earth's rotation and gravity from the moon. Benefits Unlike other forms of renewable energy, wave energy is predictable and it's easy to estimate the amount of energy that will be produced. Instead of relying on varying factors, such as sun and wind, wave energy is an astounding as yet untapped energy resource with an estimated ability to produce 2640 TWh/yr. Just 1 TWh/yr of energy can power around 93,850 average U.S. homes with power annually, or about twice than the number of homes that currently exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current
Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the number of homes that currently exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the under of homes that currently exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the under of homes that currently exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the under of homes that currently exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Those who live near the ocean definitely exist in the U.S. at present.[4] Current Limitations Thos those who live in landlocked states won't have ready access to this energy. Another disadvantage to ocean energy is that it can disturb the ocean's many delicate ecosystems. Although it is a very clean source of energy, large machinery needs to be built nearby to help capture this form energy, which can cause disruptions to the ocean floor and the sea life that habitats it. Another factor to consider is weather, when rough weather occurs it changes the consistency of the waves, thus producing lower energy output when compared to normal waves without stormy weather. Hydrogen as a gas on its own. When hydrogen is separated from another element it can be used for both fuel and electricity. Benefits Hydrogen can be used for fuel cells which are similar to batteries and can be used for powering an electric motor. Current Limitations Since hydrogen needs energy to be produced, it is inefficient when it comes to preventing pollution. 4.1 Star Rating from 7085 Reviews I heard about Just Energy through a friend of mine. I went with them because of their low rate, and I save more energy too. With their service, our bills went down. Their people were nice as well. Franklin Powe Biomass Bioenergy is a renewable energy derived from biomass. Biomass is organic matter that comes from recently living plants and organisms. Using wood in your fireplace is an example of biomass. This can be done by burning biomass, or harnessing methane gas which is produced by the natural decomposition of organic materials in ponds or even landfills. Benefits The use of biomass in energy production creates carbon dioxide that is put into the air, but the regeneration of plants consumes the same amount of carbon dioxide, which is said to create a balanced atmosphere. Biomass can be used in a number of different ways in our daily lives, not only for personal use, but businesses as well. In 2017, energy generated from methane captured from landfills or by burning municipal waste. (5) Current Limitations Although new plants need carbon dioxide to grow, plants take time to grow. We also don't yet have widespread technology that can use biomass in lieu of fossil fuels. source Renewable Energy: What Can You Do? As a consumer you have several opportunities to make an impact on improving the environment through the choice of a greener energy solution. If you're a homeowner, you have the option of installing solar panels in your home. Solar panels in your home eco-friendlier energy choice that doesn't depend on resources that harm the environment. There are also alternatives for a greener way of life offered by your electric companies. Just Energy allows consumers to choose green energy offsets. Add JustGreen to your electricity or natural gas plan to lower your impact today! Exploring electric plans? Shop residential electric plans and commercial electric plans from Just Energy. gov, Advantages and Challenges of Wind Energy.gov, Advantages and Challenge Ocean Energy Management, Ocean Wave Energy, Retrieved From: U.S. Energy Information, Biomass Explained, Retrieved From: With many news articles reporting on the growing use and importance of renewable energy is and how it benefits the environment is key. What is renewable energy and why is it important? Renewable energy is a type of energy is not finite or exhaustible unlike more traditional sources of energy. Renewable energy sources include, but are not imited to, solar power, onshore and offshore wind power, hydropower, tidal power, and green hydrogen power. Renewable energy sources are an alternative to fossil fuels, which use oil, coal and gas. Fossil fuels are not replenishable and produce greenhouse gases, which are then dispersed into the atmosphere, and are a major contributing factor for global warming and the climate crisis. What is an energy transition and how is the UK doing? An energy transition refers to the structural changes countries are making as they move from using fossil fuels to generate energy, to using renewable sources. It is one of the main approaches that countries are taking to reduce the effects of climate change. Currently, 43.1% of UK energy comes from renewable sources in 2024. The Government is aiming for energy providers to be 'Zero Carbon' by 2035 and for the UK to reach Net Zero by 2050. These aims are being bolstered by continuous funding for renewable energy sources, that has allowed the sector to really take off in the past few decades and to support an energy transition for the UK. The benefits of renewable energy Energy sources won't run out Renewable energy by definition will not run out. The sources of renewable energy are continuously replenished. This is in comparison to fossil fuels which are a finite source. As fossil fuels are used, the supply runs the risk of being depleted making it more costly and unsustainable. Greater environmental benefits Greenhouse gas emissions are consistently much lower effect on the environment and will slow down the rate of climate change. Lower geopolitical reliance One of the issues many countries face in accessing fossil fuel sources surround political instability where many sites are located. Wars and trade disputes can interrupt the supply of energy and raise prices. When using renewable energy, many countries have the ability to build their own renewable energy and raise prices. Drawbacks of renewable energy Weather/ seasonal dependence Some of the renewable sources such as solar, hydro and wind depend on the intensity and reliability of the weather problems, such as drought or high rainfall. Many countries that experience changeable weather, such as the UK, need to use a combination of various methods working together to produce a reliable source of electricity throughout the year. High upfront costs As the sector is still in its infancy, currently there is not the infrastructure in place in many countries to support a full energy transition and rely solely on renewable sources. All countries need to expand their renewable energy infrastructure at pace if they wish to move from fossil fuels to renewable energy transition. Types of renewable energy sources There are many types of renewable energy sources is the most sustainable way for countries to make a successful energy transition. Hydropower - Via a dam or reservoir, a controlled flow of water can be used to drive a turbine and generate electricity. However, this methods to generate enough energy needed. Tidal power - Similar to hydropower, tidal power also uses water to generate electricity. This method harnesses the natural power of the tide to turn turbines and generate electricity. Whilst hydropower is on land, tidal power is in the sea, usually in an estuary or in a narrow channel between two parts of land, where there is a strong flow of water. Solar power - Solar cells on solar power through capturing energy from sunlight and converting it into heat, electricity and hot water. It is a relatively straightforward method for capturing energy for hot countries who have sunshine all year round, however, for other countries it can easily generate significant amounts of electricity. may be used in combination with other sources to provide renewable energy in the UK due to our high winds. Wind farms are usually offshore (out at sea) or onshore (on land). Whilst offshore produces more power, it is more expensive and harder to build so both methods are used. Geothermal - Geothermal uses heat that has been trapped under the earth's crust which can be captured through gases and can be used to operate a turbine. organisms can be used as fuel to generate energy, either by burning the dead plants and organisms or by using the gas that is produced during decomposition. Whilst this process still produces carbon dioxide, it is often balanced out by living plants that consume a similar amount of carbon dioxide. an effect on the local community and it's exact environmental benefits have come into question. Is nuclear energy is sometimes included as an alternative energy source to fossil fuels. Nuclear energy is considered a clean energy source as it does not produce greenhouse gases during operation. However, it is reliant
on uranium to produce nuclear energy which has a finite source, while it can be recycled it is not continuously replenished, as with other renewable energy professional, Consult Energy is a renewable energy professional, Consult Energy is a renewable energy professional, consult Energy is a renewable energy sources. If you are looking for a renewable energy professional, Consult Energy is a renewable energy professional, consult Energy is a renewable energy sources. information, please get in touch with our team here. The formation and usage of fossil fuels Which form of energy, a leading type of renewable energy, a leading type of renewable energy. For the first time, according to the International Energy Agency, (IEA), in its World Energy Outlook 2020 published in October 2020, renewable solar is the "new king," beating non-renewable coal at its own game. In fact, solar has surpassed IEA's predictions made last year by 20-50% (though the range varies with location). On- and offshore wind projects also enjoyed similarly large cost reductions from previous estimates, surprising the naysayers as well. Solar and wind represent just two of several types of renewable energy. Here you'll discover tons of clean energy – including how one or more fit into your home, business, or community. Making the switch to renewables will not only save you money. It will reduce your carbon footprint. As our climate crisis intensifies, a clean energy is a general term for all forms of energy that can be naturally replenished — like sunlight, wind, waves, or the Earth's own heat. They never run out. Examples of renewable energy that rely on natural processes are solar, wind, geothermal, hydropower, and ocean energy. Bioenergy derived from biomass is another type of renewable energy. However, it requires that people perform some additional work to extract the energy from plant or animal sources, usually by burning them. Hydrogen is the newest kid on the renewable energy block. One of the greenest ways it's created is by a chemical process extracting it from water. All forms of energy that are non-renewable. Image Source: US Energy Information Administration Non-renewable fossil fuels (coal, crude oil, and fracked gas) supply people with about 80% of all energy consumed globally and in the United States. Their burning releases carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas that's accelerating climate change. Nuclear energy is a second type of non-renewable energy that makes up only 2% of global energy, but 8% in the U.S. It produces radioactive waste that remains hazardous for thousands of years. By contrast, renewable energy consumption across all sectors (transportation, heating, electricity, etc.) is approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity, etc.) is approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity, etc.) is approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity, etc.) is approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity, etc.) is approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity end to the u.S. In terms of electricity end to the u.S. In terms of electricity, etc.) is approximately 18% worldwide, but only 11% in the U.S. In terms of electricity end to the u.S production alone, renewables in the U.S. stand at about 17%. The relative percentages of the various types of renewable energy used around the preceding section) devoted to renewables used for electricity production in the U.S. (2019) is given by the most common to least. Harvesting energy from wind is a technique first used by humans over 1,000 years ago. Windmills on farms to pump water or grind cereals are age-old practices common even today. In the United States, huge wind turbines dot the landscape in several states like the Top 3 in 2019 — oil-rich Texas, Iowa, and Oklahoma — as well as in several offshore wind farms. Would you believe that wind is a form of solar energy? Due to pressure gradients caused by uneven solar heating of the Earth's rotation, large masses of air movements called wind result. To generate electricity, the wind's kinetic energy causes a turbine's blades to turn around a rotor attached to a main shaft. The mechanical energy of the rotating shaft, connected to a gearbox, spins a generator and is transformed into electricity. Using the power of moving water to perform work dates back to Ancient China and Greece. In these civilizations, and later in Europe and Colonial America, grinding wheat into flour, pounding metal ores, or sawing wood were common uses of hydropower. Today, there are three major ways running, fresh water can be used to create electricity. Usually, there is no energy storage system. Water flow can be regulated depending on energy demands. This large system consists of a dam which stores water in a reservoir. When water is released, it falls through turbines connected to a generator and produces electricity at a time. Billed as the world's water battery, pumped storage hydropower is considered the superior form of energy storage compared to other battery types because of its long life, low cost, and non-reliance on raw material extraction. Using upper and lower reservoirs, water circulates between them, moving over turbines and creating electricity when needed. At low peak usage times, this electricity is used to pump the water back to the upper reservoir. Researchers are developing several new technologies using pumped storage hydropower to store solar and wind energy supply. For environmentalists, mega-dam hydroelectric projects are harmful to the animals and plants living in or around rivers. In their view, hydropower is a non renewable energy except on microscales. Humans' ability to harness sun power began as early as the 7th century B.C. when our ancestors used a magnifying glass to concentrate sunlight enough to create fire. Today, we capture the sun's power and convert it to electricity with photovoltaic (PV) cells. There are several types of PV panels on the market. In all of them, silicon is the main element used in current solar cells, but technology into cheaper and easier-to-scale alternative materials like halide perovskites is evolving fast. In the U.S., over the last decade, solar energy has had an average growth rate of 49% every year. A major reason for this is the cost drop for installation in that time 70%! There's no doubt that when people think of the types of renewable energy available to them, solar comes to mind first - and now you know why. A growing number of consumers are investing in solar + storage to maintain a steady supply of energy at night and when demand is high. As with panels, there are several battery types to choose from, depending on your needs. Communities around the world are investing in solar farms using huge mirrors to concentrate the sun's rays across acres of PV cells. The energy is used to heat water, creating steam that in turn drives the turbines in a generator to produce electricity. In most cases, the electricity is synced directly into the local utility power grid. "Floatovoltaics" on the surface of water — lakes, reservoirs, dams, public utilities, etc. — are also becoming commonplace as the renewable energy revolution takes off. These solar farms are ideal for places where land is at a premium. Using organic plant and animal matter — commonly known as biomass — for energy dates back to early human evolution when our ancestors burnt wood to cook or keep warm. Even today, wood is still one of the most common types of biomass used to generate electricity. Ultimately, all biomass derives from the sun through photosynthesis, the process by which plants make food by converting solar energy to chemical energy. Examples of biomass include: Wood and wood products (including black liquor from paper manufacture) Crops (notably corn turned into biofuels like ethanol), crop residues, and food processing waste (used vegetable oil to make biodiesel) Landfill solid waste (like paper, wool, cotton, food waste) Manure and human sewage Algae (second-generation biofuels) When burned, biomass releases heat energy that can be used to produce electricity from a steam turbine. If biomass undergoes various chemical or biological conversions, it may be transformed into liquid, solid or gaseous fuels (collectively called bioenergy). During these processes, varying amounts of the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide, are given off. Because of its contribution to climate change, biomass is not an ideal energy source — although it is better than burning fossil fuels. In urban settings, biomass facilities also contribute to local air pollution and bad odors. Have you ever relaxed in a hot geyser or spring, like at Yellowstone National Park? If so, you've experienced geothermal (literally "earth heat") energy. Dating back 10,000 years to the dawn of human civilization, humans first used the Earth's own heat — called geothermal energy in their public baths. Native Americans likely used this form of renewable energy for cooking and food storage. The Earth continuously produces geothermal energy through the gradual decay of radioactive matter located in its core. This is a natural process that occurs in all rocks. Would you believe that the Earth's center is as hot as the sun's surface are significantly cooler but still hot (about 400 °F). The energy in this form of renewable energy can emanate from heated rock or hot water located below. For a utility-scale geothermal plant, heat may come from magma — molten rock — located below the Earth's crust in the mantle. This heat turns water into steam that drives a turbine above ground, generating electricity. Homeowners can install a smaller-scale geothermal heat pump on their property. Taking advantage of the fact that the Earth, just a few feet below the surface, maintains a fairly constant temperature, these pumps can provide
sufficient energy to heat a small building. The five types of renewable energy listed above are the most commonly used today worldwide. There are two other clean energy technologies that hold a lot of promise. You may think that the ocean, covering 70% of the Earth's surface, would serve as a major form of renewable energy in the 21st century. In fact, it's estimated that a mere 0.002 of the ocean 's energy could meet worldwide energy demand. Unfortunately, this is far from true. Tidal turbine installationImage Source: Wikicommons / RebeccaLouiseJones The ocean absorbs and retains most the thermal energy of the sun compared to land. Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC) is the name for the process of extracting the thermal energy from the ocean and using it to produce electricity. OTEC depends on temperature gradient between the warmer surface waters versus the colder deep layers. However, since the ocean is the Earth's largest carbon sink, it has already absorbed over 90% of the heat associated with greenhouse gas emissions. Scientists quantify this warming to be like the equivalent of everyone in the world boiling 20 tea kettles of water continuously. It is unclear how the ocean's warming will affect OTEC as a source of marine renewable energy. The ocean also possesses energy in its waves. Researchers envision a "wave park" comparable to a wind farm consisting of wave energy-capturing buoys. Innovative projects are getting started in several countries like Australia. The ocean's tidal energy. For this to work, tidal height must be at least 10 feet. Dam-like structures called barrages is one way to harness tidal energy. Several systems exist in countries around the world including South Korea and France. Lastly, the ocean's currents, created from the moon's and the sun's gravitational forces, and marine currents, generated by solar heating and equatorial wind, can be harnessed for energy. Large turbines placed on the seafloor create electricity through the current-moving blades connected to a generator. In the case of tidal currents that reverse direction, continuing to produce electricity is then funneled to land through a cable. Have you ever seen a rocket launch? That's possible courtesy that reverse direction, the turbine blades likewise change direction, continuing to produce electricity is then funneled to land through a cable. of hydrogen, now also one of the newest types of renewable energy. Although it is very small as a molecule, hydrogen contains a huge amount of energy. Hydrogen contains a huge amount of energy. Hydrogen is also unusual in that it doesn't exist naturally as a pure substance. It's always bound up chemically in water, carbohydrates (like sugar), or hydrocarbons (like fossil fuels). Source: US Energy Information Administration In hydrogen fuel cells, the potential energy stored in chemical bonds is converted into electricity, water, and heat. There are no harmful byproducts like those resulting from fossil fuel combustion. One way to produce the hydrogen needed for electricity production is by splitting it off from water in a process called electrolysis. If the electrolysis is from a renewable energy source, the resulting hydrogen to blue or grey hydrogen that comes from burning fracked gas. This state of affairs is rapidly changing as solar costs plummet. In fact, The International Energy Agency predicts that the cost of green hydrogen will fall by 30% by 2030. Then green hydrogen will fall by 30% by 2030. Then green hydrogen will fall by 30% by 2030. to spring for renewables to power certain features of your home or business. For example: Solar water heater - If you can only electrify one thing in your home, a mini-wind turbine can provide an extra boost of wind power. One of our favorites is the Tumo-Int 1000W model. Solar carport - Great for people whose homes don't provide enough roof space for a large solar array. Just add panels to your carport. Solar oven (for camping) - This is exactly what it sounds like; an oven that uses sunlight as an energy source to heat up and cook food, without needing mains power. We recommend the Sunflair Portable Solar Oven if you're in the market for one. Microhydropower system for farming or gardening - An easy way to use the natural features on your property to work for you. Some of the types of renewable energy featured in this article, like ocean or hydrogen, are not widely available in all areas for home use. However there are ways you can support these clean energy innovations. There are a multitude of startup companies in green energy in desperate need of capital to advance their technologies or scale them up. With your financial support, they stand a chance to become competitive in a growing renewable energy economy. In effect, green investment is a form of climate action that individuals can take to help curb our intensifying climate crisis. These plans allow you to purchase the excess renewable energy produced by your neighbors' systems. Alternatively, you can become co-owner of a large system that allows you and your local community to become totally independent of the public utility grid. In some places where homeowners have a choice between energy companies, you can designate a renewable energy business to supply your power. There are several ways to participate depending on the program. In the United States, electricity usage is the second largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions at 27% of total emissions, just shy of transportation's slice of the pie at 28%. In 2019, 63% of total electricity produced in the United States was from fossil fuels. Renewable energy used today in the U.S.: Wind Hydro Solar Biomass Geothermal Ocean energy and hydrogen are two new technologies with great potential for growth. Solar and wind are the two most common types of renewable energy for home use. Green energy investing, purchasing clean energy for home use. part in the renewable energy transformation. With the UK and US aiming to reach net zero by 2050, using electricity that comes from renewable energy contributes different amounts to our electricity mix, alongside non-renewable energy types such as fossil fuels or nuclear energy. Find out about the different types of renewable energy sources that we currently use for electricity and how they'll be used in the future to help further tackle climate change. Renewable energy is energy that comes from a source that won't run out. They are natural and self-replenishing, and usually have a low- or zero-carbon tootprint Examples of renewable energy sources include wind power, solar power, bioenergy (organic matter burned as a fuel) and hydroelectric, including tidal energy sources are considered vital inthe race to tackle climate change. In the UK, there are four main sources of renewable energy: Wind Wind power is the largest producer of renewable electricity by spinning the blades of wind turbines. The turbines convert the kinetic energy of the spinning blades into electric energy by turning a drive shaft and gear box, which is connected to a generator. Electricity is then converted into higher voltages and fed into the planet's most freely available energy resources, which you'd assume would make it the number one source of renewable energy. But of course, the amount of sunlight we get can vary greatly depending on location, season and time of day. Solar power generates electricity by capturing sunlight on solar panels in a joint chemical and physical reaction, known as the 'photovoltaic effect' (or PV). Hydroelectric Hydro power is created using the movement of flowing or falling water. Hydroelectric power plants are found at dams and generate electricity through underwater turbines that turn a generator. Hydro power also encompasses wave and tidal power, which rely on ocean forces to generate electricity at the mouths of large bodies of water, using similar technology. Bioenergy Electricity can be generated when organic matter is burned as a fuel source. These fuels are known as biomass and include anything from plants to timber to food waste. Carbon dioxide (CO2) is emitted when bioenergy is made, but these fuel sources are considered renewable because they can be regrown and absorb as much carbon as they emit across their lifespans. Fossil fuels, such as coal, natural gas and oil, are examples of non-renewable energy sources. These sources can occur naturally, but they are finite in their amount. A disadvantage of non-renewable energy sources is that they often take hundreds of thousands of years to form, and have to be extracted from the earth and burned in order to create the energy that generates electricity. They also emit harmful greenhouse gases like CO2 when they're burned. There are several reasons why harnessing the power of renewable energy sources is so important for our future. As they're in much more plentiful supply, compared to fossil fuels, governments across the world are looking to develop renewables to exclusively power their nations. Perhaps most importantly, renewables produce little or no harmful emissions when used, so the clean energy they provide will play a crucial role in preventing further global warming. It's why so many of our net zero goals in the future hinge on increasing their use today. The terms 'green energy', 'clean energy' and 'renewable energy' are often used interchangeably, but there is a key difference between them. Clean energy produces electricity without emissions. However, its manufacture or maintenance can sometimes have a 'carbon cost'. For example, natural environments have to be cleared to create hydroelectric plants with a dam, and the work to construct them often creates carbon emissions. Green energy comes from totally natural sources, which have low or no environmental impact in their creation or use. They can both be renewable, which essentially means that they come from a source that can't be depleted. So, while most green energy
sources are renewable, not all renewable energy sources are considered green. Today, the use of renewables in our electricity mix has grown massively. At the end of 1991, renewables accounted for a mere 2% of electrical generation in the UK, while by 2013 it had risen to 14.6%. By 2020 - Britain's greenest year on record - renewables contributed a whopping 43.1% of the electricity mix, more than natural gas (34.5%) and coal (1.8%). Combined with low-carbon nuclear energy's 16% contribution, a milestone was reached with the nation being largely powered by clean energy for a year. Last updated: 10 May 2022The information in this article is intended as a factual explainer and does not necessarily reflect National Grid's strategic direction or current business activities.