

Global analysis shows major electric utilities not moving to greener alternatives

1 September 2020, by Bob Yirka



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An enterprise environmentalist at the University of Oxford has conducted an analysis of the major electricity-producing utilities around the world and has found that they are not doing much to move from fossil fuels to greener alternatives. In her paper published in the journal *Nature Energy*, Galina Alova describes her analysis of big electricity producers in countries around the globe and what she found.

As the planet continues to warm due to rising levels of carbon dioxide (and other gasses) in the atmosphere, scientists continue to monitor the situation. In this new effort, Alova has looked into the role that major electricity producers are playing in the current scenario. Specifically, she wanted to know if they are working toward reducing their reliance on fossil fuels (most particularly coal) by moving toward [renewable resources](#).

Currently, China, India, and the U.S. are the countries that consume the most coal, and most of that goes toward generating electricity. In the United States, coal still makes up 65% of energy

consumption. And China consumes more coal than all of the rest of the world combined.

The major part of Alova's effort involved analyzing data that described [fuel sources](#) that are being used by 3,311 electric companies spread around the globe and investments they made for future fuel sources covering the years 2001 to 2018. In so doing, she discovered that just 10% of the companies she looked at were prioritizing [renewable fuels](#) over conventional fossil fuels. She notes that investments made in the recent past went toward development of [fuel](#) sources meant to be used decades into the future. She notes that while many such utilities had invested in renewable sources, they did so at much lower rates.

Alova suggests that the major electric producers around the globe are still very much committed to using fossil fuels well into the future—an attitude that could make meeting climate change goals extremely difficult. If such plants continue to burn [fossil fuels](#), particularly coal, the only way to prevent them from thwarting greening efforts is somehow to capture the carbon dioxide they emit from their smokestacks.

More information: Galina Alova. A global analysis of the progress and failure of electric utilities to adapt their portfolios of power-generation assets to the energy transition, *Nature Energy* (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/s41560-020-00686-5](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41560-020-00686-5)

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