



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on April 6, 2021

## Fossil-fuel Workers Earn More Than Their Green-energy Counterparts, Data Shows

Joe Biden's hopes of ushering in a new era of radical green policies could face a major roadblock: American workers are unlikely to be sold on a system under which they can't put food on the table.

Per [data](#) compiled by the think tank of former Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz, workers in the field of solar and wind power earn drastically less than those who work in coal mining and natural gas drilling.

For example, the median wage for solar workers is \$24.48 an hour. By contrast, the wage for natural gas workers is \$30.33 an hour, which constitutes an annual wage gap of \$12,000.



Photo: CharlieChesvick / E+ / Getty Images Plus

Biden has promised that restructuring the country's economy and energy sector would create opportunity for Americans in the form of well-paying jobs, but the figures undermine his assurances.

But proponents of Biden's climate agenda claim the Democrat is aware of the facts and will address them successfully. "His understanding of labor, I think, extends to knowing intuitively that you can't expect workers and their representatives to embrace this transformation if they can't continue to get work that will pay family-sustaining wages and benefits and be a career," said Jason Walsh, executive director of the BlueGreen Alliance, which united labor unions with environmental groups.

"The reality is that there is so much work that will be created by this transformation that it is just imperative that we get the job quality piece right."

While energy workers in general earn more than the average American, the highest-paying positions are to be found in the nuclear, natural gas, and coal industries. The wind and solar jobs Biden promises would fall below them on the pay scale.

"The big message is that the energy industry has a significantly higher median wage than does the economy as a whole. That's very important," said Moniz, who was secretary of energy under Barack Obama.

Labor groups are reportedly starting to worry that Biden's climate-change plan will get rid of the steady jobs associated with fossil fuels, replacing them with temporary construction jobs dependent on mobility. Another concern is that solar plants, wind farms, and other sources of "green" energy will require fewer workers to keep operating. "For people that are in the fossil sector, the prospect of moving to the clean energy sector if you have to take a pay cut is not attractive," said Brad Markell, the executive director of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Council.

Per Moniz's report, the highest paid workers within the energy industry were utility employees, with a median wage of \$41.08 per hour, or nearly \$85,000 per year.



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Workers in mining and fuel extraction followed at \$36.32 per hour, or over \$75,500 over a year.

Workers in the nuclear industry, meanwhile, received a median hourly wage of \$39.19, or \$81,515 a year — more than double the national median.

Oil industry workers took home a median hourly wage of \$26.59. The hourly wage for coal was \$28.69.

Hopeful for Biden's ambitions, Moniz suggested that the administration will come up with solutions so that displaced fossil-fuel workers can find new employment without relocating.

But the plan to ostensibly create millions of new "green" construction jobs could result in a labor shortage if not enough workers are trained for energy-sector jobs. "What is a power line construction company to do?" said Phil Jordan, vice president at BW Research Partnership, the firm that carried out the research for Moniz's think tank. "If they've got to fill 1,000 openings, and everybody who's sending them resumes or applications were formerly dishwashers, housekeepers or retail sales clerks, they can't just show up at a job and start laying cable."

Biden's overall [program](#) for tackling so-called climate change was developed by a task force trying to create a unified campaign, melding the claims of the Biden camp and that of former primary rival Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.). It would impose sweeping (and expensive) regulations, such as seeking to make America "carbon-free" by 2035, instituting a federal green-energy jobs program, and establishing an Environmental and Climate Justice Division to crack down on polluters.

Sooner or later, however, reality will catch up to the green utopianism. When workers realize that they were better off with fossil fuels than with the new normal of the Green New Deal, the jig will be up — but by then it may be too late to do anything about it.



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