

Low-carbon economy 370 kWh

All data and visualizations on Our World in Data rely on data sourced from one or several original data providers. Preparing this original data involves several processing steps. Depending on the data, this can include standardizing country names and world region definitions, converting units, calculating derived indicators such as per capita measures, as well as adding or adapting metadata such as the name or the description given to an indicator.

At the link below you can find a detailed description of the structure of our data pipeline, including links to all the code used to prepare data across Our World in Data.

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A low-carbon economy (LCE) is an economy which absorbs as much greenhouse gas as it emits. Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions due to human activity are the dominant cause of observed climate change since the mid-20th century. There are many proven approaches for moving to a low-carbon economy, such as encouraging renewable energy transition, energy conservation, and electrification of transportation (e.g. electric vehicles). An example are zero-carbon cities.

Shifting from high-carbon economies to low-carbon economies on a global scale could bring substantial benefits for all countries. It would also contribute to climate change mitigation.

There are many synonyms or similar terms in use for low-carbon economy which stress different aspects of the concept, for example: green economy, sustainable economy, carbon-neutral economy, low-emissions economy, climate-friendly economy, decarbonised economy.

The UK Office for National Statistics published the following definition in 2017: "The low carbon economy is defined as economic activities that deliver goods and services that generate significantly lower emissions of greenhouse gases; predominantly carbon dioxide."

GHG emissions due to human activity are the dominant cause of observed climate change since the mid-20th

century. Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause long-lasting changes around the world, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible effects for people and ecosystems.

Nations may seek to become low-carbon or decarbonised economies as a part of a national climate change mitigation strategy. A comprehensive strategy to mitigate climate change is through carbon neutrality.

Achieving a low-carbon economy involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors that produce greenhouse gases, for example energy, transportation, industry, and agriculture. The literature often speaks of a transition from a high-carbon economy to a low-carbon economy. This transition should take place in a just manner (this is termed just transition).

There are many strategies and approaches for moving to a low-carbon economy, such as encouraging renewable energy transition, efficient energy use, energy conservation, electric vehicles, heat pumps, and climate-smart agriculture. This requires for example suitable energy policies, financial incentives (e.g. emissions trading, carbon tax), individual action on climate change, business action on climate change.

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