

Erin Kirton
Daniel Vermeer

Note on Energy Justice

This conceptual note focuses on the justice implications of the energy transition in the United States, specifically regarding electricity. It is designed to sensitize readers to the ways that justice considerations are implicit in many energy decisions.

The terms environmental justice, climate justice, and energy justice are all related, though each term has its own focus and boundaries. While this conceptual note focuses specifically on energy justice, it is important to understand the definitions of each as presented by the Initiative of Energy Justice (IEJ), which was founded in 2018 to offer strong energy policy solutions focused on equity:¹

Energy Justice is “the goal of achieving equity in both the social and economic participation in the energy system, while also remediating social, economic, and health burdens on those historically harmed by the energy system.”²

Climate Justice is “remediation of the impacts of climate change on poor people and people of color, and compensation for harms suffered by such communities due to climate change.”³

During the Biden administration, the United States Department of Energy (DOE) adopted the same definitions, increasing the likelihood that they would be widely implemented across the federal government.⁴

For environmental justice, this conceptual note uses the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) definition:

“**Environmental justice** means the just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in agency decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment...”⁵

Published by WDI Publishing, a division of the William Davidson Institute (WDI) at the University of Michigan.

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