

# PROGRESSIVE POLICIES ARE GOOD FOR THE ECONOMY: INVESTING IN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

THURSDAY APRIL 1ST, 2021

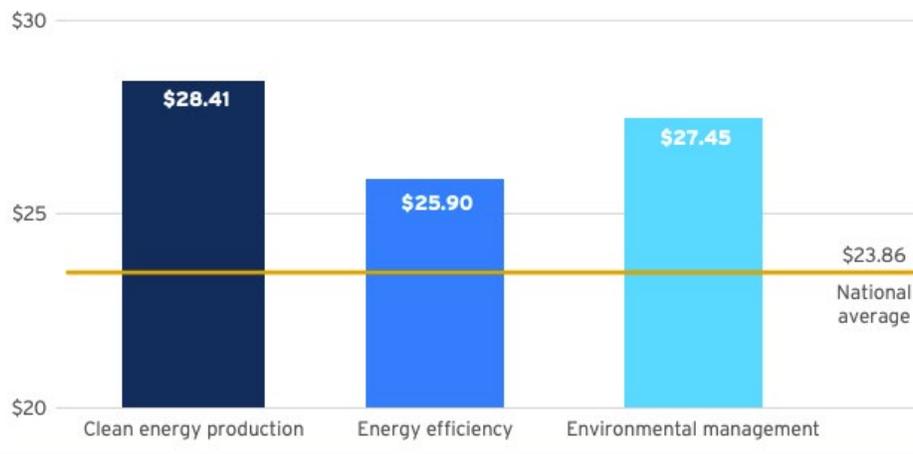
During the Great Recession, our government learned the hard way that we should spend more—not less—in times of crisis. The response to the Great Recession was too small and ended too soon, especially for the Black and brown families that never recovered, and our economy was made less resilient as a result. The government can boost our economy right now by helping struggling families and investing in all of us. Investing in people will benefit everyone, with new jobs, higher wages, and a stronger economy overall. One way to support communities is by investing in green infrastructure.

**Tackling climate change by investing in green infrastructure is not only imperative to save our dying planet but also provides a crucial avenue and pivotal moment to recreate an economy that is resilient, equitable, and generates broad economic opportunity. Investing in green infrastructure could create millions of [jobs](#), provide higher quality [jobs](#) and higher [wages](#) for workers, and [address](#) environmental racism and resulting health disparities, including increased vulnerability to COVID-19.**

## Investing in green infrastructure is good for people and the economy:

- **The costs of unchecked climate change are enormous and doing nothing is not an option:** Climate disasters are only becoming more frequent -- from Western wildfires to massive snowstorms in the South -- and without investing in green infrastructure and clean jobs to build a stronger, more resilient economy and to slow climate change, impacts from climate change could cost up to [7.22 percent](#) of world real GDP per capita by 2100.
- **Green infrastructure investments create millions of jobs:** Investing in clean energy produces almost [three times as many jobs](#) as similar investments in fossil fuels. Researchers estimate that green investments could create more than [8 million jobs](#). Clean energy added jobs [70 percent faster](#) than the overall economy before the pandemic and was one of the fastest-growing industries in the US, but COVID-19 hit this industry hard and it is at risk without further investment.
- **Investing in green infrastructure and clean energy builds a stronger, more equitable labor market:** Green infrastructure and investment in clean energy can create long-term jobs for people at [all skill levels](#), which can bring workers in from other industries that are dying and create jobs that [aren't concentrated](#) in under-paying industries. One report found that jobs in clean energy have wages that are [8 to 19 percent higher](#) than the national average for all workers and that these sectors offer more equitable pay, with low-income workers earning more.

FIGURE 1

**Mean hourly wages by clean energy economy sector, 2016**

Source: Brookings analysis of Occupational Employment Statistics data

## Here's who will benefit from investments in green infrastructure:

- Environmental racism ensures that the burden of environmental devastation and climate change is being disproportionately borne by Black communities:** It is [well documented](#) that Black communities are facing a disproportionate burden of the impacts of environmental devastation and climate change. An Environmental Protection Agency report found that people of color are [disproportionately likely](#) to be exposed to fine particulate matter pollution in the air, which has been linked to a host of health problems including [asthma](#), [heart disease](#), and [cancer](#). Black people in particular are [1.5 times](#) more likely to be exposed to fine particulate matter. Investment in green infrastructure policies is tantamount to protecting communities that are already being harmed and are vulnerable to further devastation if massive investment and action aren't taken.
- Communities that are already struggling will continue to bear the disproportionate burden of climate change:** One study finds that the [bottom fifth](#) of counties in the U.S. ranked by economic vitality will experience the largest damages from climate change, mainly in the South and Southwest regions of the U.S. Researchers note that Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities will particularly bear this burden. Globally, while the richest countries in the world are [producing the most emissions](#), some of the world's poorest countries will face the most [drastic consequences](#) from climate change.