The United States was self-sufficient in energy until the late 1950s when energy consumption began to outpace domestic production. At that point, the Nation began to import more energy to fill the gap. In 2005, net imported energy accounted for 30 percent of all energy consumed.

Figure 1. Energy Overview

Energy use per person stood at 215 million British thermal unit (Btu) in 1949. The rate generally increased until the oil price shocks of the mid-1970s and early 1980s when the trend reversed for a few years. From 1988 on, the rate held fairly steady. In 2005, 337 million Btu of energy were consumed per person, 57 percent above the 1949 rate.

Figure 2. Energy Consumption per Person

Most energy consumed in the United States came from fossil fuels. Renewable energy resources supplied a relatively small but steady portion. In the late 1950s, nuclear fuel began to be used to generate electricity, and in most years since 1988, nuclear electric power surpassed renewable energy.

Figure 4. Energy Consumption by Source
In the long view of American history, wood served as the preeminent form of energy for about half of the Nation’s history. Around 1885, coal surpassed wood’s usage. Despite its tremendous and rapid expansion, coal was, in turn, overtaken by petroleum in the middle of the 20th century. Natural gas, too, experienced rapid development into the second half of the 20th century, and coal began to expand again. Late in the 20th century still another form of energy, nuclear electric power, was developed and made significant contributions.

While the Nation’s energy history is one of large-scale change as new forms of energy were developed, the outlook for the next couple of decades (assuming current laws, regulations, and policies) is for continued growth and reliance on the three major fossil fuels—petroleum, natural gas, and coal—modest expansion in renewable resources, and relatively flat generation from nuclear electric power.
All four major economic sectors of the economy recorded tremendous growth in their use of energy. The industrial sector used the biggest share of total energy and showed the greatest volatility; in particular, steep drops occurred in the sector in 1975 and 1980-1983 largely in response to high oil prices.

In the 1950s and 1960s, coal, which had been important to residential and commercial consumers, was gradually replaced by other forms of energy. Petroleum use peaked in the early 1970s. Natural gas grew fast until the early 1970s and then fluctuated around the 1970 level over the next three decades. Meanwhile, electricity use (and related losses) expanded dramatically.

In the period studied, most energy produced in the United States came from fossil fuels—coal, natural gas, and crude oil. Coal, the leading source at the middle of the 20th century, was surpassed by crude oil and then by natural gas. By the mid-1980s, coal again became the leading energy source produced in the United States, and crude oil declined sharply. In the 1970s, electricity produced from nuclear fuel began to make a significant contribution and expanded rapidly in the following decades.

The United States almost always produced more than enough coal for its own requirements. For many years, the United States was also self-sufficient in natural gas, but after 1967, it produced less than it consumed each year. Petroleum production fell far short of domestic demands, requiring the Nation to rely on imported supplies.

Since the mid-1950s, the Nation imported more energy than it exported. In 2005, the United States imported 34 quadrillion Btu of energy and exported 5 quadrillion Btu. Most imported energy was in the form of petroleum; since 1986, natural gas imports expanded rapidly as well. Through 1992, most exported energy was in the form of coal; after that, petroleum exports often exceeded coal exports.
When U.S. petroleum production peaked at 11.3 million barrels per day in 1970, net imports stood at 3.2 million barrels per day. By 1996, net imports exceeded production. In 2005, production was 6.8 million barrels per day, and net imports were 12.4 million barrels per day.

The amount of crude oil produced per day per well rose sharply in the 1960s and reached a peak of 18.6 barrels per day per well in 1972. After that, productivity generally declined. The 2005 rate of 10.1 barrels per day per well was 46 percent below the peak and was the lowest level since the Energy Information Administration began reporting oil well productivity.

Crude oil production peaked in the 48 States at 9.4 million barrels per day in 1970. As production fell in the 48 States, Alaska's production came on line and helped supply U.S. needs. Alaskan production peaked at 2.0 million barrels per day in 1988; in 2005, production stood at 43 percent of the peak level.

Rotary rig activity declined sharply from 1955 to 1971. After 1971, the number of rigs in operation began to climb again, and a peak of nearly 4 thousand rigs in operation was registered in 1981. In 2005, 1,383 rigs were in operation, more than double the low of 625 in 1999, but only 35 percent of the peak level in 1981.
Petroleum Consumption and Prices

Transportation was the largest consuming sector of petroleum and the one showing the greatest expansion over the second half of the 20th century. In 2005, 14 million barrels per day of petroleum products were consumed for transportation purposes, accounting for 67 percent of all petroleum used.

Motor gasoline was the single largest petroleum product consumed in the United States. Its consumption stood at 9.1 million barrels per day in 2005, 44 percent of all petroleum consumption. Distillate fuel oil and liquefied petroleum gases (LPG) were other important products. The use of residual fuel oil fell off sharply after 1977.

Unadjusted for inflation (nominal dollars), the refiner acquisition composite (domestic and foreign) cost of crude oil reached $35.24 per barrel in 1981. Over the years that followed, the price fell dramatically to a low of $12.52 per barrel in 1998 before rising again. The preliminary price reported for 2005 was $50.23 per barrel, a new peak nominal level and up 36 percent over the 2004 price.

In nominal (unadjusted for inflation) dollars, Americans paid an average of 65¢ per gallon for motor gasoline in 1978. The 2005 average price of $2.34 was 289 percent higher than the 1978 rate; adjusted for inflation, it was 46 percent higher.
U.S. crude oil imports grew rapidly from mid-century until the late 1970s but fell sharply from 1979 to 1985 due to conservation efforts and improved efficiency. After 1985, the upward trend resumed and stood at 10.1 million barrels per day in 2005. Petroleum product imports were 3.5 million barrels per day in 2005. Exports totaled 1.2 million barrels per day in 2005, mainly in the form of petroleum coke and residual fuel oil.

Among OPEC countries, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Nigeria—nations from three different continents—were key suppliers of petroleum to the American market. Each experienced wide fluctuation in the amount of petroleum it sold to the United States over the decades. In 2005, 0.5 million barrels per day of petroleum came into the United States from Iraq.

U.S. petroleum imports rose sharply in the 1970s, and reliance on petroleum from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) grew. In 2005, 41 percent of U.S. petroleum imports came from OPEC countries, down from 70 percent in 1977. After 1992, more petroleum came into the United States from non-OPEC countries than from OPEC countries.

Canada and Mexico, our national neighbors, supplied the largest quantities of petroleum from non-OPEC countries. In 2005, imports from Canada reached a new high of 2.2 million barrels per day. Imports from Mexico were insignificant until the mid-1970s when they began to play a key role in U.S. supplies. Canadian and Mexican petroleum together accounted for 28 percent of all U.S. imports in 2005.
Petroleum Stocks

Through 1983, the Nation held most of its petroleum storage in the form of products, which were ready for the market. After that, most petroleum in storage was in the form of crude oil that still needed to be refined into usable end products. At the end of 2005, petroleum stocks totaled 1.7 billion barrels, 59 percent crude oil and 41 percent products.

Figure 26. Stocks of Crude Oil and Products

Most crude oil in the SPR was imported and came in during the early 1980s. In fact, from 1991 through 1997, only 14 million barrels were imported for the reserve, and in 3 of those years, no oil at all was imported for the reserve. SPR imports picked up again beginning in 2002 and brought in 117 million barrels from 2002 through 2005.

Figure 28. Crude Oil Imports for the SPR¹

An important SPR measure is the number of days of total net imports of petroleum that could be met by the reserve in an emergency. The peak level occurred in 1985 when the reserve could have supplied 115 days of petroleum net imports, at the 1985 level. The rate trended down for many years, falling to 50 days in 2001. In 2005, SPR held 55 days of net imports.

Figure 29. SPR Stocks as Days of Petroleum Net Imports

In 1977, the United States began filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR), a national reserve of petroleum stocks in case of emergency. At the end of 2005, the SPR held 685 million barrels of crude oil, 40 percent of all U.S. petroleum stocks.

Figure 27. Total Stocks and the Strategic Petroleum Reserve

¹ Includes crude oil stored in the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

² Imported by the SPR and imported by others for the SPR.

¹ Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

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Motor Vehicles

The composite motor vehicle fuel rate (miles per gallon) rose 42 percent from 1973 to 1991 and then varied little over the next 13 years. Mileage grew steadily from 1980 to 1998 and then hovered around 12 thousand miles per vehicle per year through 2004. Fuel consumption (gallons per vehicle) fell 21 percent from 1973 to 1991, bounced back 9 percent from 1991 to 1999, dipped down in 2001, and averaged 715 gallons per vehicle in 2004.

From 1966 to 2003, truck miles traveled per year, which greatly exceeded the other vehicle categories, grew by 124 percent. Truck mileage fell by 1 percent in 2004 to 27.7 thousand miles per vehicle, while passenger cars averaged 12.5 thousand miles per vehicle and vans, pickup trucks, and sport utility vehicles averaged 11.0 thousand miles per vehicle.

Fuel rates (miles per gallon) for both passenger cars and vans, pickup trucks, and SUVs improved noticeably from the late 1970s through the early 1990s. Passenger cars improved further in subsequent years, but rates for vans, pickup trucks, and SUVs deteriorated. Truck rates, which were much lower than the other vehicle categories and recorded much less year-to-year change, experienced a 16-percent jump in 2003.

Note: Motor vehicles include passenger cars, motorcycles, vans, pickup trucks, sport utility vehicles, trucks, and buses.
Natural Gas

U.S. natural gas production and consumption were nearly in balance through 1986. After that, consumption began to outpace production, and imports of natural gas rose to meet U.S. requirements for the fuel. In 2005, consumption stood at 22.0 trillion cubic feet (Tcf), production at 18.2 Tcf, and net imports at 3.3 Tcf.

Net imports of natural gas as a share of consumption was in the 4-to-6 percent range from 1970 through 1987. Then, during a period when consumption outpaced production, the share rose from 4.2 percent in 1986 to 16.2 percent in 2001. The share fell in 2002 and 2003 and then rose again in 2004 and 2005.

The industrial sector was both the largest consuming sector of natural gas and the sector with the greatest volatility due to variability in industrial output. In 2005, the industrial sector accounted for 35 percent of all natural gas consumption.

¹ Through 1988, electric utilities only; after 1988, includes independent power producers.
Coal


In the 1950s, most coal was consumed in the industrial sector, many homes were still heated by coal, and the transportation sector consumed coal in steam-driven trains and ships. By the 1960s, most coal was used for generating electricity. In 2005, the electric power sector accounted for 92 percent of all coal consumption.

Improved mining technology and the shift toward more surface-mined coal promoted dramatic improvement in productivity from the Nation’s mines from 1978 through 2000, but declining productivity occurred in four of the five most recent years.

Electricity Net Generation and Useful Thermal Output

Total electric power net generation grew from 0.3 trillion kilowatt-hours in 1949 to 4.0 trillion kilowatt-hours in 2005, failing to increase in only 2 years (1982 and 2001) over the entire span. Most generation was in the electric power sector, but some occurred directly in the commercial and industrial sectors.

Most generating facilities exist to produce only electricity, but some function as combined-heat-and-power (CHP) plants that produce both electricity and heat from a single heat source. Rather than being wasted, the heat from a CHP plant is used for processes and applications other than electrical generation.

The non-electrical output at a CHP plant is called useful thermal output. Useful thermal output is thermal energy that is available from the plant for use in industrial or commercial processes or heating or cooling applications. In 2005, the industrial sector generated 0.9 quadrillion Btu of useful thermal output; the electric power and commercial sectors generated much smaller quantities.

Most electricity net generation came from coal. In 2005, fossil fuels (coal, petroleum, and natural gas) accounted for 72 percent of all net generation, while nuclear electric power contributed 19 percent, and renewable energy resources 9 percent. Nearly three-fourths of the net generation from renewable energy resources was derived from conventional hydroelectric power.
Over the decades, industrial consumers paid the lowest rates for electricity; residential customers usually paid the highest prices. In 2005, all sectors paid lower rates than they had in 1960, when adjusted for inflation.

Enormous growth occurred in the amount of electricity sold to the three major sectors—residential, commercial, and industrial. Industrial sector sales showed the greatest volatility. Sales to residences exceeded sales to industrial sites since the early 1990s, and sales to commercial sites surpassed industrial sales since the late 1990s.

Except for a few years in the 1960s when imported and exported electricity were nearly equal, the United States imported more electricity than it exported. Most electricity trade occurred with Canada; very small exchanges occurred between the United States and Mexico. In 2005, net imported electricity was just 0.7 percent of all electricity used in the United States.

Over the latter part of the last century, nuclear electric power began to play a key role in meeting the Nation’s rapidly growing electricity requirements. In 2005, 19 percent of U.S. total electricity net generation came from nuclear electric power.

Capacity factors measure actual power generation as a share of maximum possible output. Factors for the industry, which were in the 50-to-60 percent range through the 1980s, generally improved in later years and stood at 89 percent in 2005.

A total of 259 nuclear electric power units were ordered since the industry got its start in the United States in the 1950s. The last new orders were placed in 1978. Of the 259 orders, 177 advanced to the issuance of construction permits and, of those, 132 eventually gained full-power operating licenses.

Out of the 132 units that were granted full-power operating licenses, over time, 28 were permanently shut down. The largest number of units ever operable in the United States was 112 in 1990. From 1998 through 2005, 154 units were operable.
Total renewable energy consumption generally followed the pattern of hydroelectric power output, which was the largest component of the total for most of the years shown. In 2005, for example, hydroelectric power accounted for 45 percent of the total. Wood was the next largest source of renewable energy, followed by waste, geothermal, alcohol fuels, wind, and solar.

In recent decades, the industrial sector was the largest consuming sector of wood as an energy source. Residential use of wood recovered sharply from 1974 through 1985 but then resumed its general downward trend.

Most renewable energy was consumed by the electric power sector to generate electricity. After 1958, the industrial sector was the second largest consuming sector of renewable energy; residential sector usage of renewable energy was the third largest consuming sector.

Shipments of solar collectors grew strongly in the 1970s and reached a peak of 21 million square feet in 1981. Uneven performance was recorded over the next decade, followed by a mild upward trend during the 1990s and a bump up in 2001 and again in 2004. Imports reached a record level of 3.7 million square feet in 2004.
From 1970 to 2004, world primary energy production grew by 106 percent, reaching 443 quadrillion Btu in 2004. Growth occurred in all types of energy. In 2004, fossil fuels accounted for 86 percent of all energy produced worldwide, renewable energy 8 percent, and nuclear electric power 6 percent.

**Figure 58. World Primary Energy Production by Source**

Crude Oil and NGL¹

Coal

Natural Gas

Renewable Energy

Nuclear Electric Power

¹ Natural gas plant liquids.

Twenty-nine percent of the 443 quadrillion Btu of energy produced worldwide in 2004 came from North, Central, and South America. The second largest regional energy producer was Asia and Oceania with 24 percent of the world total in 2004.

**Figure 59. World Primary Energy Production by Region**

OPEC¹

North, Central, and South America

Asia and Oceania

Europe

Middle East

Africa

Eurasia

The United States accounted for 25 percent of world consumption of petroleum in 2004. China and Japan, the next two leading consumers, together accounted for 14 percent. In 2004, India consumed nearly as much petroleum as Russia.

**Figure 62. Leading Petroleum Consumers**

United States

Former U.S.S.R.

Japan

China

India

From 1974 through 1991, the former U.S.S.R. was the world’s leading crude oil producer. After 1991, Saudi Arabia became the top producer. Since 1999, Russia was the second largest producer. U.S. production peaked in 1970 but still ranked third in 2005.

**Figure 63. Leading Petroleum Consumers**

World crude oil production totaled 74 million barrels per day in 2005, up 2 percent over the previous year. OPEC’s share of the world total in 2005 was 42 percent, compared to the peak level of 55 percent in 1973.

**Figure 61. World Crude Oil Production**

World

OPEC

¹ Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.
The combustion of fossil fuels—coal, petroleum, and natural gas—to release their energy creates carbon dioxide emissions, the most significant greenhouse gas. Total carbon dioxide emissions reached 6 billion metric tons of gas in 2004, 19 percent higher than the 1990 level.

While real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 51 percent from 1990 to 2004, energy-related carbon dioxide emissions grew by 18 percent. From 2003 to 2004, GDP rose 4 percent, and energy-related carbon dioxide emissions rose 2 percent.

In 2004, methane emissions accounted for 9 percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, weighted by global warming potential. Most methane emissions came from energy, waste management, and agricultural sources. The production, processing, and distribution of natural gas accounted for 60 percent of all energy-related methane emissions in 2004.
Figure Sources

Data for “Energy Perspectives” figures and text are derived from the following Annual Energy Review 2005 tables and additional sources:

1. Table 1.1.
2. Table 1.5.
3. Table 1.5.
4. Table 1.3.
5. Tables 1.3, 10.1, and E1.
6. Historical data: Table 1.3. Projections: Energy Information Administration, Annual Energy Outlook 2006 (February 2006), Figure 3.
7. Table 2.1a.
8. Tables 2.1b and 2.1c.
9. Table 2.1d.
10. Tables 2.1e and 5.14c.
11. Table 1.2.
12. Tables 5.1, 6.1, and 7.1.
13. Table 1.4.
14. Table 5.1.
15. Table 5.2.
16. Table 5.2.
17. Table 4.4.
18. Tables 5.13a, 5.13b, 5.13c, and 5.13d.
19. Table 5.11.
20. Table 5.21.
21. Table 5.24.
22. Tables 5.3 and 5.5.
23. Table 5.4.
24. Table 5.4.
25. Table 5.4.
26. Table 5.16.
27. Table 5.16.
28. Table 5.17.
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31. Table 2.8.
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33. Table 2.8.
34. Table 6.1.
35. Table 6.4.
36. Table 6.3.
37. Table 6.5.
38. Table 7.1.
39. Table 7.3.
40. Table 7.6.
41. Table 7.2.
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43. Tables 8.2a, 8.2b, and 8.2d.
44. Table 8.2a.
45. Table 8.2c.
46. Tables 8.3b and 8.3c.
47. Table 8.10.
48. Table 8.9.
49. Table 8.1.
50. Table 9.2.
51. Table 9.2.
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55. Table 10.1.
56. Tables 10.2a and 10.2b.
57. Tables 10.2a and 10.2b.
58. Table 10.3.
59. Table 11.1.
60. Table 11.2.
61. Table 11.5.
62. Table 11.5.
63. Table 11.10.
64. Table 12.1.
65. Table 12.2.
66. Tables 1.5 and 12.2.
67. Tables 12.1 and 12.5.