

## America's Cooperative Electric Utilities The Nation's Consumer Owned Electric Utility Network

### Key Highlights

- Electric cooperatives are an integral part of the \$422 billion U.S. electric utility industry. They play a critical role in our nation's economy and in local communities.
- This fact sheet provides stats and information on the operation and contributions of rural electric cooperatives.

### Electric Cooperatives Are:

- Private, independent, non-profit electric utility businesses
- Owned by the customers they serve
- Incorporated under the laws of the states in which they operate
- Established to provide at-cost electric service
- Governed by a board of directors elected from the membership which sets policies and procedures that are implemented by the cooperatives' management

**Distribution cooperatives** are the foundation of the electric cooperative network. They are the direct point of contact with the member-owners in the delivery of electricity and other services.

**Generation & Transmission cooperatives** (G&Ts) provide wholesale power to distribution co-ops through their own generation or by purchasing power on behalf of the distribution members.

In addition to providing high-quality electric service, electric cooperatives are deeply committed to their communities. They empower members to improve the quality of their lives through economic development and revitalization projects, job creation, improvement of water and sewer systems, and assistance in delivery of health care and educational services.

### Facts at a Glance:

- 832 distribution and 63 G&T cooperatives, a total of 895 NRECA co-op members
- Serve an estimated 42 million people in 48 states
- Nearly 22 million businesses, homes, schools, churches, farms, irrigation systems, and other establishments in more than 2,500 of 3,141 counties in the U.S.
- 13 percent of the nation's electric customers are served by electric co-ops
- Co-ops added over 475,000 new consumers in 2021

## To Perform Their Mission, Electric Cooperatives:

- Own assets worth over \$213 billion (distribution and G&T co-ops combined)
- Have equity over \$75 billion (distribution and G&T co-ops combined)
- Own and maintain 2.7 million miles, or 42%, of the nation’s electric distribution lines
- Deliver 12 percent of the total kilowatt-hours sold in the U.S. each year
- Generate 5 percent of the total electricity produced in the U.S. each year
- Employ over 73,000 people in the U.S.
- Retire over \$1.3 billion in capital credits annually
- Pay \$1.5 billion in state and local taxes

## Electric Utility Comparisons

<b>Overview</b>	<u>Cooperatives</u>	<u>Total Industry<sup>1</sup></u>
Total Revenue (billions).....	\$50 .....	\$422 .....
Number of Organizations.....	895 .....	3,200 .....
Number of Total Customers (millions).....	21 .....	159 .....
<sup>1</sup> including cooperatives		
<b>Sales</b> (billion kilowatt hours)	<u>Cooperatives</u>	<u>Total Industry<sup>1</sup></u>
Residential.....	251 .....	1,470 .....
Commercial .....	99 .....	1,326 .....
Industrial.....	119 .....	989 .....
Total .....	469 .....	3,791 .....
<sup>1</sup> including cooperatives		
<b>Other comparisons</b>	<u>Cooperatives</u>	<u>Rest of Industry<sup>2</sup></u>
Share of Sales .....	12% .....	88% .....
Share of Net Generation.....	5% .....	95% .....
Miles of Distribution Line Ownership .....	42% .....	58% .....
Customers per mile of line (density) .....	7.98 .....	32.40 .....
Revenue per mile of line .....	\$19,135 .....	\$79,298 .....
Revenue per Customer .....	\$2,390 .....	\$2,585 .....
Distribution plant per Customer .....	\$4,219 .....	\$3,698 .....
Equity as percent of assets .....	35% .....	33% <sup>3</sup> .....

<sup>2</sup>not including cooperatives

<sup>3</sup>investor-owned utilities only

Source: 2021 EIA data

## Source Notes

- **Energy Information Administration (EIA)** Table 1.2. Summary Statistics for the United States, 2011 - 2021.  
<https://www.eia.gov/electricity/annual/>  
The data for “Electric cooperatives are an integral part of the \$422 billion U.S. electric utility industry” (Fact Sheet page 1) comes from the above EIA Table 1.2., Revenue From Ultimate Customers (million dollars).
- **Hitachi ABB Ability Velocity Suite**  
<http://new.abb.com/enterprise-software/energy-portfolio-management/market-intelligence-services/velocity-suite>
- NRECA currently has 832 electric distribution system members and 63 G&T (Generation & Transmission) systems for a total of 895; the distribution members include a small number of rural public power districts and mutual utilities.
- Density and distribution plant per customer data is from the Platts UDI Directory of Electric Power Producers and Distributors, 2017, mostly based on 2015 data.
- Co-op financial data is from the 2021 RUS/CFC Form 7.
- EIA: Energy Information Administration (a part of DOE), Washington, DC.
- RUS: Rural Utilities Service (a part of USDA), Washington, DC.
- CFC: Cooperative Finance Corporation, Herndon, VA.

## Contact for Questions

Madelyn Roche, Program Manager Data and Analysis  
NRECA Business and Technology Strategies  
[madelyn.roche@nreca.coop](mailto:madelyn.roche@nreca.coop)

Posted to cooperative.com at <https://www.cooperative.com/programs-services/bts/pages/data/electric-co-op-fact-sheet.aspx>