



**BY THE NUMBERS:**

# MISSING THE MARK ON RENEWABLES

The growth in wind and solar has far outstripped sober, mainstream forecasts.

**BY JEFFREY WINTERS**

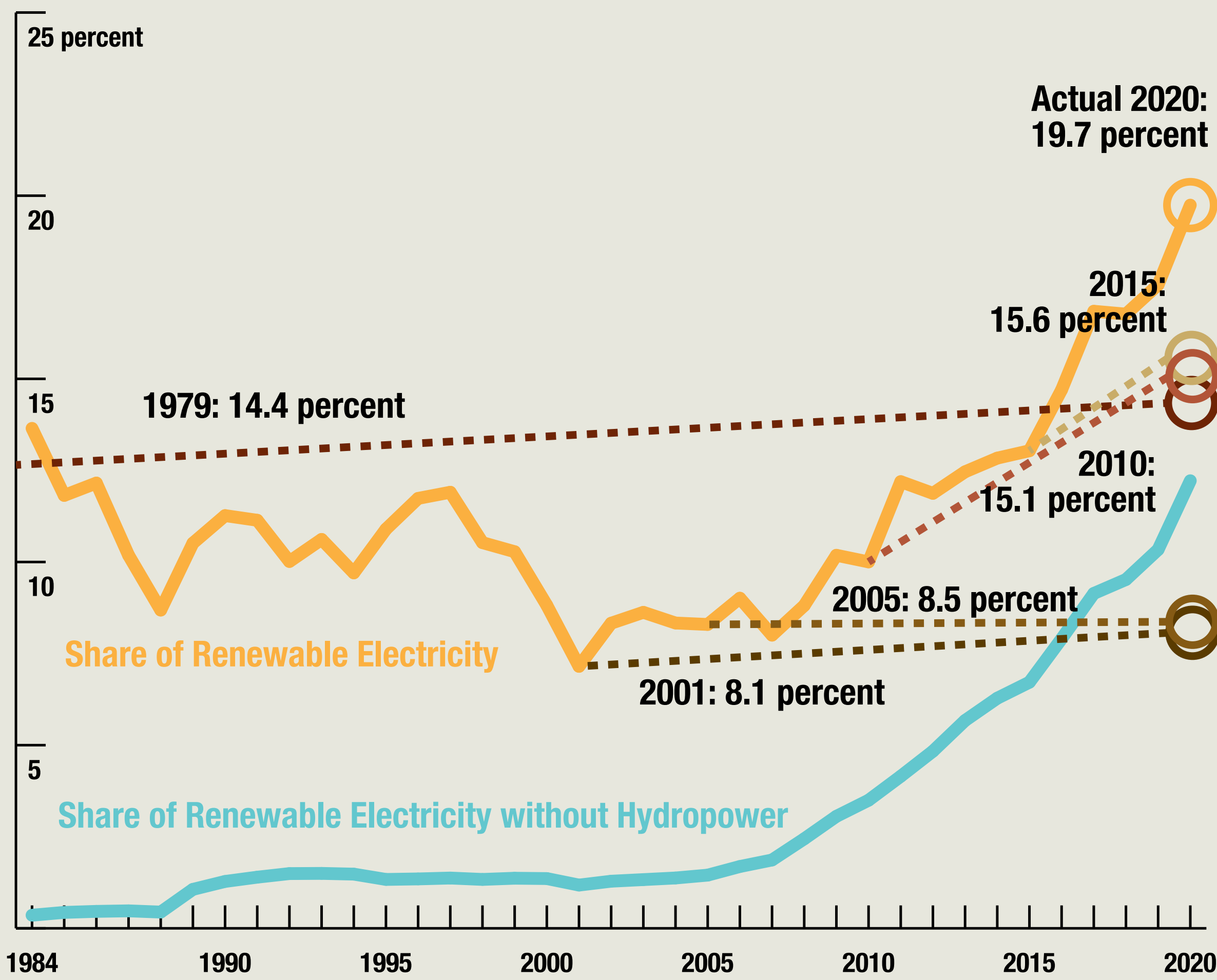
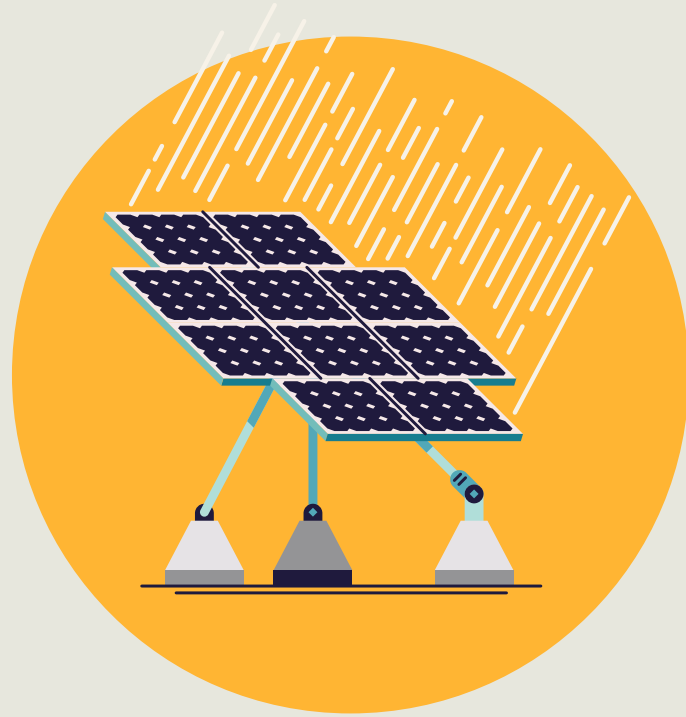
**T**he most enthusiastic backers of wind and solar power from decades past overestimated how fast the energy system would shift to renewables. But mainstream energy analysts have consistently underestimated wind and solar's potential.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration's *Annual Energy Outlook* from 1979 to 2015 included forecasts of the share of the electric power output due to renewable sources (including hydro) out to 2020. These range from 8.1 percent to 15.6 percent. Even as wind power began to gain greater market penetration in the 2010s, the EIA forecast that it would stall rather than surge, and government energy experts completely missed the rapid increase in photovoltaic solar power until the very last few years.

For 2020, the most recent year with complete data, the share of all renewables was 19.7 percent.

## Forecasts for Renewable Electricity Share in 2020

*Energy Information Administration Annual Energy Outlook*



EIA Forecasts	PERCENT RENEWABLE	PERCENT RENEWABLE WITHOUT HYDRO
1979	14.4%	8.8%
2001	8.1%	2.8%
2005	8.5%	2.3%
2010	15.1%	8.0%
2015	15.6%	8.3%
Actual data 2020	19.7%	12.2%

Source: Energy Information Administration