CURRENT NEWS

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VOLUME X, ISSUE 7 • JULY 2025

TAMIL NADU ELECTRICITY OMBUDSMAN - GRIEVANCE ANALYSIS REPORT (2021-2025) - PART II

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The previous article explained the grievance redressal mechanism as per the Electricity Act, 2003. It also highlighted the number of complaints handled by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Ombudsman from 2021 to 2025. This section will provide a comprehensive analysis of consumer complaints, breaking down the data on a year-on-year basis.

Tamil Nadu Electricity Ombudsman deals with cases from all consumers who are in the Low Tension (LT) category, such as domestic, agricultural, commercial and Industrial consumers. The nature of complaints in the Tamil Nadu Electricity Ombudsman is decided based on a systematic classification and analysis of actual consumer grievances recorded with the Ombudsman between 2021 and 2025.

A publication from

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Citizen consumer and civic Action Group

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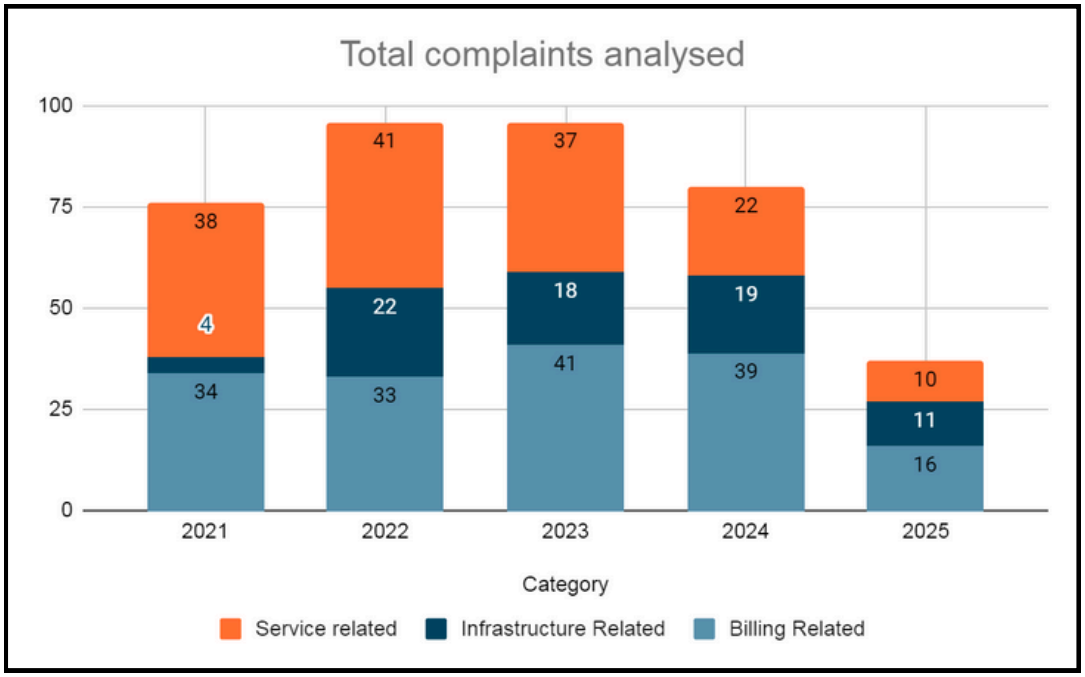
Electricity Ombudsman Cases Reviewed

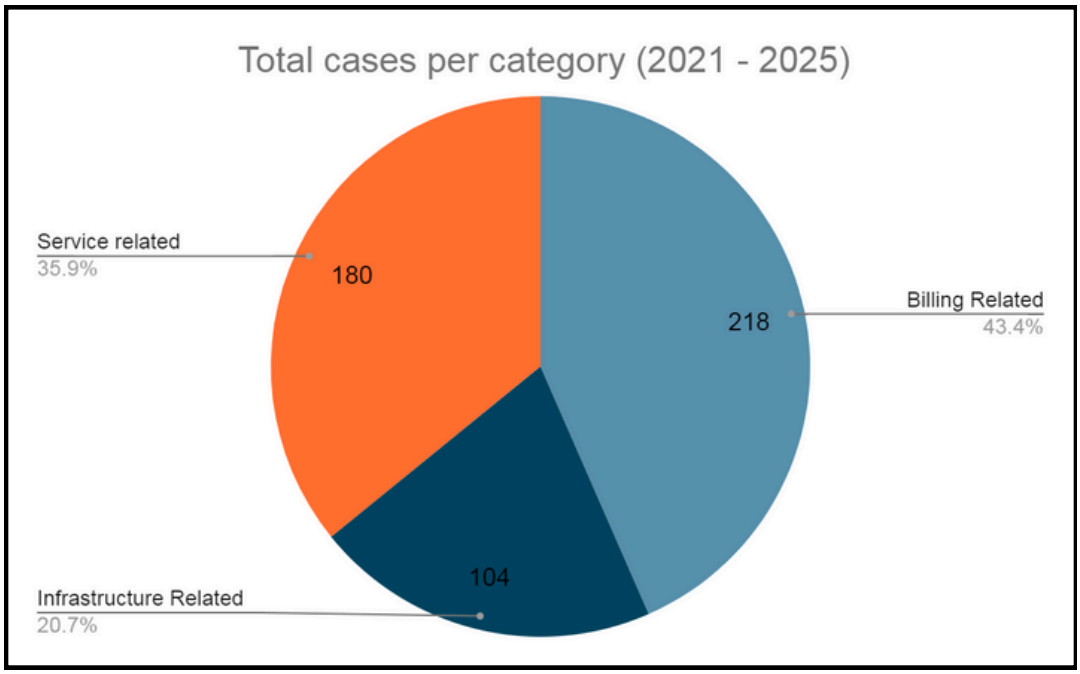
A total of 385 cases were reviewed. The table indicates that billing-related complaints are the most frequently registered each year. In the upcoming issues, we will provide a detailed analysis of the nature of complaints on a year-by-year basis.



Consumer complaints classification

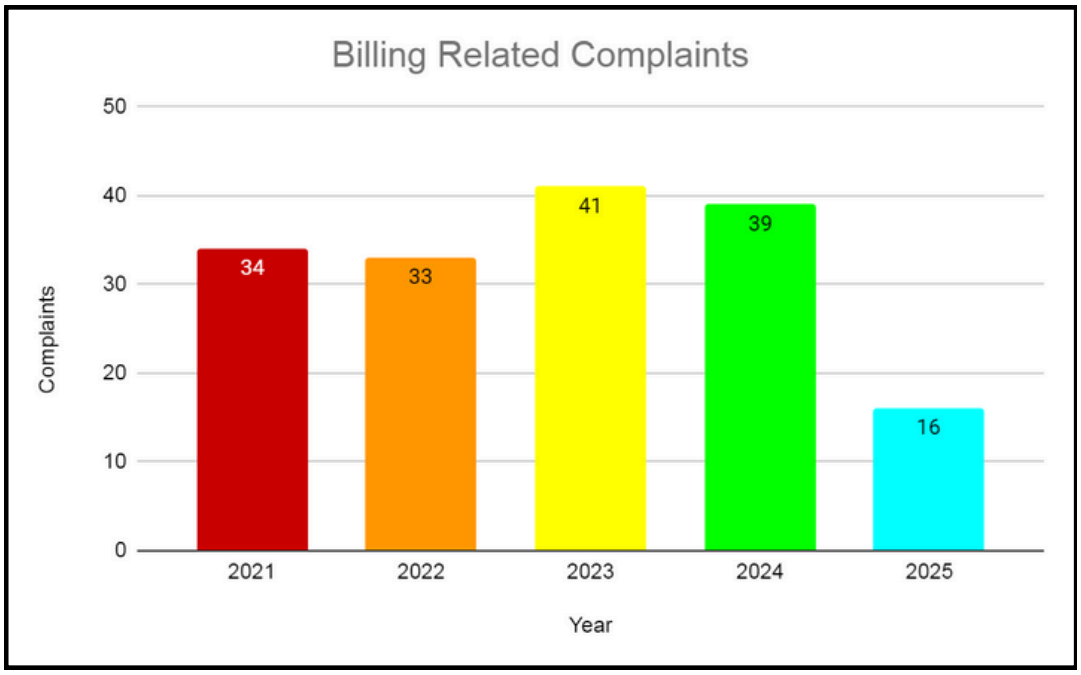
Further, complaints were divided into distinct categories based on the specifics of the complaint. The primary categories identified and compiled were:

- Billing Related: Disputes about charges, meter readings, estimated billing, or calculation errors and wrongly assigned tariffs.
- Infrastructure Related: Issues with voltage fluctuations, power outages, transformers, and maintenance of supply lines.
- Service Related: Complaints about delay in effecting new connections, name transfer requests, and compensation claims



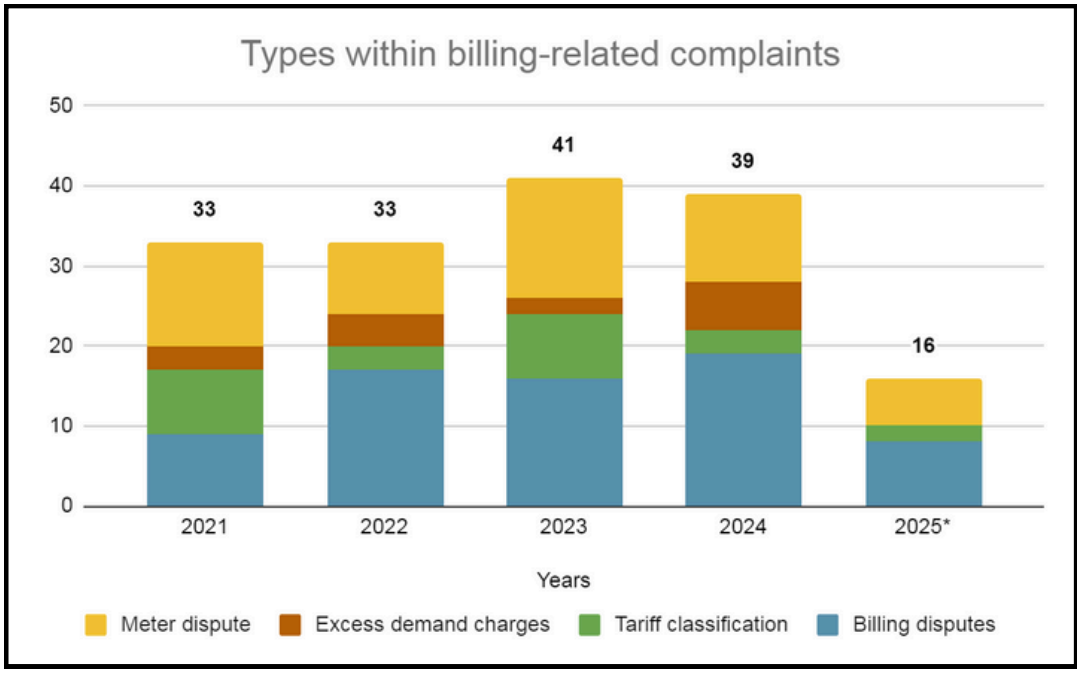
Billing-Related Complaints - Analysis

Billing-related complaints consistently emerged as the most significant concern for consumers between 2021 and 2025, accounting for 163 complaints. Many consumers voiced their frustration over how distribution companies communicated these charges. Notably, in 2023 and 2024, billing disputes were 41 and 39 cases respectively, highlighting ongoing difficulties with accurate meter readings and tariff classification. 2025 shows a lower number of complaints because data collection was only until May 2025.

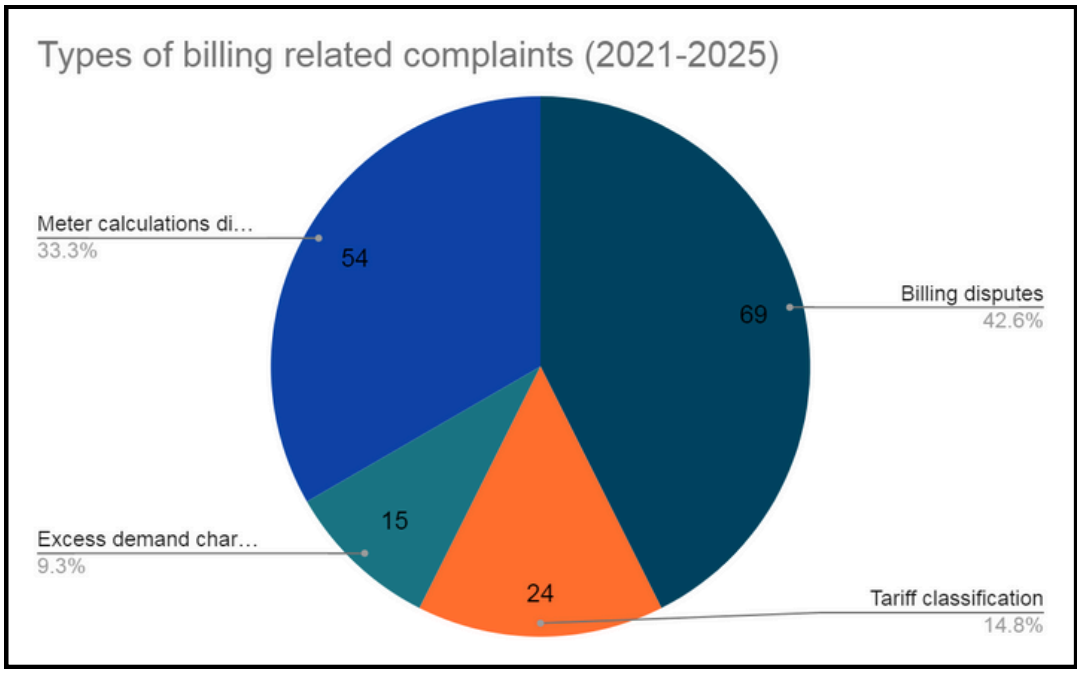


Types of billing-related complaints

On analysing further, billing-related complaints can be broken into (i)average billing calculations for billing disputes (ii) meter disputes, (iii) consumers' misunderstanding of the tariff charges and their category and (iv) excess demand charges.



From 2021 to 2024, the total number of billing-related complaints ranged between 33 and 41 annually, with the highest in 2023 (41 complaints) and the lowest in 2022 (33 complaints). Billing disputes were the most frequent issue, rising from 9 cases in 2021 to 19 in 2024. Meter disputes also fluctuated from 13 cases in 2021 to a peak of 15 in 2023. Tariff classification complaints were low, with a high of 8 in both 2021 and 2023. Excess demand charges remained the least reported, with complaints never exceeding 6 per year. The data for 2025 covers only the period from January to May, and therefore represents just a partial view of the year. As of May, a total of 16 billing-related complaints have been recorded.



- From 2021 to 2025, billing disputes were the most, with 69 cases (40%). This is linked to disagreements over meter readings, unexplained high bills, and errors in billing processes.
- Meter dispute calculations formed the second most common type, with 54 cases pointing to consumer dissatisfaction with average bills or faulty meter readings.
- Tariff classification issues accounted for 24 cases, but occurred intermittently, highlighting gaps in communication on which category the consumer falls. For example, A temple was classified under tariff category V (commercial) rather than tariff II-C (public worship places).
- Excess demand charge, or using higher than the sanctioned power, attracts higher charges: These complaints were less frequent, with 15 cases, but still significant due to the financial burden they imposed on affected consumers.

(To be continued)

CONSUMER FOCUS

The petitioner, a commercial consumer running an agro farm unit, seeks to restore his service connection without paying any penalty. The petitioner states that on 18.02.2017, an audit report for a recovery amount of Rs.1,07,362/- for the period of 04/2014 to 09/2015 was issued. He mentioned that the business unit was not in operation during the disputed months. He also produced evidence towards this, and based on this, did not pay the recovery amount mentioned in the audit report.

In the meantime, he received a Current Consumption (CC) bill of Rs.51,838/- for the 05/2017 billing assessment, which was abnormal compared to his previous bills. On checking this, the petitioner found that 47220 (KWH) had been wrongly entered as 49958 (KWH) in his white meter card. He therefore wrote back that this was the fault of the respondent, and not a cost that had to be borne by him.

Since the petitioner did not pay the audit slip, and subsequent to that, the 05/2017 CC bill, TANGEDCO, the respondent disconnected his service connection. The petitioner therefore applied for a temporary service connection to run his business. In the meantime, a letter from the Chief Engineer of the Audit Branch stated that the audit slip for the recovery amount of Rs.1,07,362/- was cancelled on 03.07.2017.

After the Chief Engineer removed the audit slip, the petitioner assumed that pending arrears for the 05/2017 CC bill would also be cancelled. However, on finding that it was not, the petitioner filed an online complaint with CGRF on 17.11.2021. The online complaint asked that his service connection be reinstated, his CC charges be revised, and the remaining balance on his temporary service connection be refunded.

The respondent stated that the petitioner had not responded to the audit slip from 2017 to 2021. With regards to the CC payment, the respondent stated that during the 03/2017 billing cycle, the meter had been in working condition for which the petitioner had paid the CC bill. However, for the 05/2017 bill, the meter had been found defective. Therefore, the respondent had calculated the bill using the average method according to regulations, which amounted to Rs.51,838/-

Subsequently, the meter was tested by the MRT wing to solve the reading discrepancies. Based on the MRT report, the actual consumption for 05/2017 billing assessment was 47220 KWH (49958 KVAH). Also, it was found that in the consumer's white meter card, the meter reading was wrongly entered as 49958 KVAH, which was what had caused the confusion.

Due to nonpayment of CC charges and the audit slip, the service connection was disconnected on 18.05.2017. Moreover, the petitioner had not paid CC charges for more than two years after his disconnection, with the account going into a state of permanent service disconnection on 11.03.2021.

The CGRF, after hearing the arguments of both parties, passed an order on 20/01/2022. It held that the petitioner’s service connection could only be restored after he cleared his pending amounts. Once the petitioner had settled the payment, the respondent was liable to provide a new service connection.

Dissatisfied with the CGRF’s order, the petitioner filed an appeal with the Electricity Ombudsman on 31/10/2022.

After hearing from both parties, the Ombudsman observed whether the petitioner's claim to restore the disconnected service, due to non-payment of dues to the licensee beyond the period of two years, was tenable.

Ombudsman's findings:

As per the respondent's statement, since a duration of more than 2 years had already passed since the service connection was terminated, it could not be reconnected. If the petitioner had approached the Licensee within a period of 2 years, the service connection could have been reconnected after paying the charges. The Electricity Ombudsman referred to Regulation 22(6)(i) of the Supply Code 2004

"22.Restoration of Supply of Electricity:
(6) (i) When a service connection remains disconnected for more than six months for non-payment of electricity charges beyond the notice period of three months, if the consumer comes forward within the period mentioned below to pay the actual dues and agrees to remit the charges in clause;"

Category	**Period for reconnection of disconnected service**
HT Consumers	Within 5 years from the date of disconnection
LT Agricultural Consumers	-do-
Other LT Consumers	Within 2 years from the date of disconnection

Based on the regulations, the Ombudsman mentioned that the petitioner's service connection was disconnected on 18.05.2017 for non-payment of CC charges and the service connection account was closed on 11.03.2021 after the two year waiting period. Hence, the claim of the petitioner to restore the disconnected service was not feasible. While reinstating the connection was not feasible, an application for a new service connection could be put in, provided all dues were cleared.

SOURCE: OMBUDSMAN CASE

NEWS FROM TAMIL NADU

16,000 old EB meters still in use in Madurai city despite digital push

Even as the Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation (Tangedco) continues to advise consumers to shift to digital meters, over 16,000 consumers in Madurai city are still using old electromagnetic meters. According to official records, there are 6,66,795 electricity consumers in Madurai city. Of these, 2,69,696 are from Madurai North, 1,69,732 from Madurai South, and 2,27,367 from Madurai West. Among them, 5,47,424 consumers have already switched to digital meters, while the remaining still use either electromagnetic or high-quality glass-frame electric meters. A total of 1,03,017 consumers in the city are using glass-frame meters, including 30,780 in Madurai North, 18,879 in Madurai South, and 53,358 in Madurai West. However, 16,354 consumers still continue to rely on old electromagnetic meters. A senior Tangedco official (Madurai) said that while the glass-frame electric meters are reliable for accurate readings, electromagnetic meters are outdated and inefficient. "Digital meters are highly precise and sensitive, and though we have mandated their use, the implementation hasn't been aggressive. Most of the old meters are in households belonging to economically weaker sections. These families typically consume less than 100 free units using just a fan and few tube lights, often with single-phase connections," the official said. He added that these low-consumption households are spread across all three divisions of the city, but staff have shown little urgency in replacing their meters. Speaking to TNIE, P Arivazhagan, secretary of the CITU-Tangedco Employees Union, explained that electromagnetic meters can handle only up to 4 kilowatts of load, whereas glass-frame meters can support up to 25 kilowatts, and digital meters can handle up to 50 kilowatts. He further said that though there were oral orders to replace the old meters, the enforcement was weak after higher officials in Tangedco's Chennai office began planning a citywide

SOURCE: TNIE, 27 JULY 2025

NEWS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Govt tightens cybersecurity norms for inverters used in rooftop solar scheme

Amid cybersecurity threats emanating from China, the Union new and renewable energy ministry has mandated all original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) supplying inverters under the 'PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana' to connect their inverters to the ministry's national servers and software platform. The ministry will notify the date for implementation of the directive. In a notification, the ministry said that the integration of 10 million rooftop solar systems under the scheme would also introduce challenges regarding grid stability and cybersecurity concerns. It added that inverter communication modules that transmit data to servers outside India not only pose risks of unauthorized control but also threaten national energy sovereignty by exposing sensitive power consumption and generation data. "All OEMs enlisted for supplying inverters under the PMSG: MBY scheme shall mandatorily connect their inverters directly to national servers and software managed by the ministry or any other agency designated by the ministry, with effect from the date to be notified," it said. Inverters are essential components of solar energy systems, as they convert the direct current (DC) generated by solar panels into alternating current (AC) that can be used by homes and businesses. They also facilitate the interaction between solar energy systems and the electrical grid, allowing the transmission of excess energy back into the grid. The ministry held multiple rounds of deliberations with stakeholders to implement a framework to track the generation benefits of rooftop solar installations. The discussions also deliberated over centralization of rooftop solar data on a national software platform hosted on servers located in India and managed by the ministry or any other government agency, in a bid to ensure effective monitoring of millions of inverters aggregating large.

SOURCE: MINT, 23 JULY 2025

WORLD NEWS

Development of sustainable energy is crumbling in the Netherlands, specialists warn

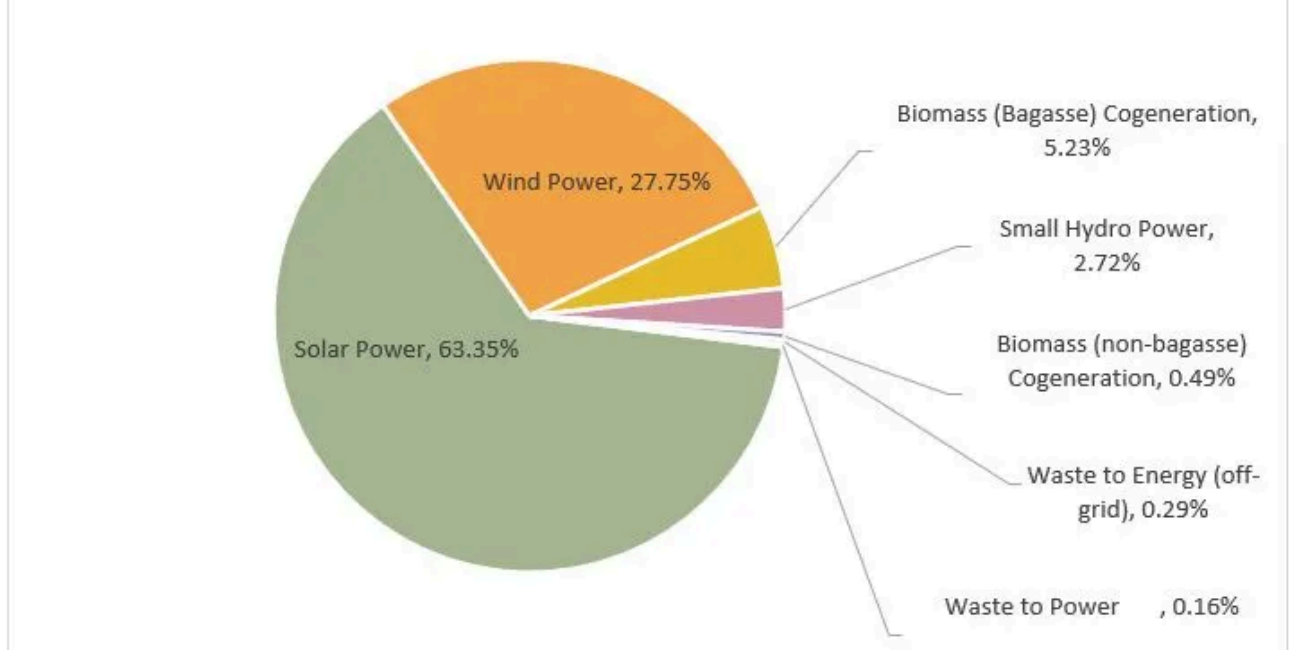
The development of sustainable energy on land is at risk of coming to a standstill, according to a mid-year update from the regional energy strategies (RES). The 2030 target of at least 35 terawatt hours (TWh) of renewable energy on land will likely be met. However, the more ambitious goal of 55 TWh is increasingly out of reach. "The demand for electricity is only increasing, but the development of solar and wind energy is stagnating. You see that climate and energy are no longer the first priority," said Kristel Lammers, the director of the National Program RES. This program supports the 30 RES regions in the Netherlands. Several years ago, the regions drew up plans to jointly generate 55 terawatt hours of energy by 2030 through solar panels and wind turbines. This is significantly higher than the agreement of 35 TWh from the Climate Agreement. The Netherlands aims to be climate-neutral by 2050 at the latest. "The agreement for 2030 will be reached, but our ambitious target is slowly going out of reach because of stagnation," said Lammers. "Areas that were always frontrunners in developing sustainable energy, like Flevoland, Groningen, Friesland, and Zeeland, are also stagnating in continued development after 2030." According to Lammers, this is due to the "social discussion regarding wind energy," the absence of national environmental standards for wind turbines, and the lack of political and public support. It was also stated that the lack of space in the Netherlands is also an issue. "Residential construction, business activity, and more recently, the military are all demanding more and more space. Climate and energy are not currently at the top of the agenda." Alderman Marcel Blind of the Overijssel municipality of Olst-Wijhe, who handles climate and energy matters for the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG), has seen discussions "grind to a halt" in local councils.

SOURCE: NL TIMES, 06 JULY 2025

PUBLICATIONS

- **Statistical Review of World Energy, July 2025, KPMG**
- **Renewable Power Generation Costs in 2024, IRENA**
- **2025 Global Energy Scenarios Comparison Review, World Energy Council**
- **RE News, July 2025, IREDA**

INDIA RENEWABLE ENERGY MIX (JULY 2025)



SOURCE: SOLARQUARTER, JULY 2025

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