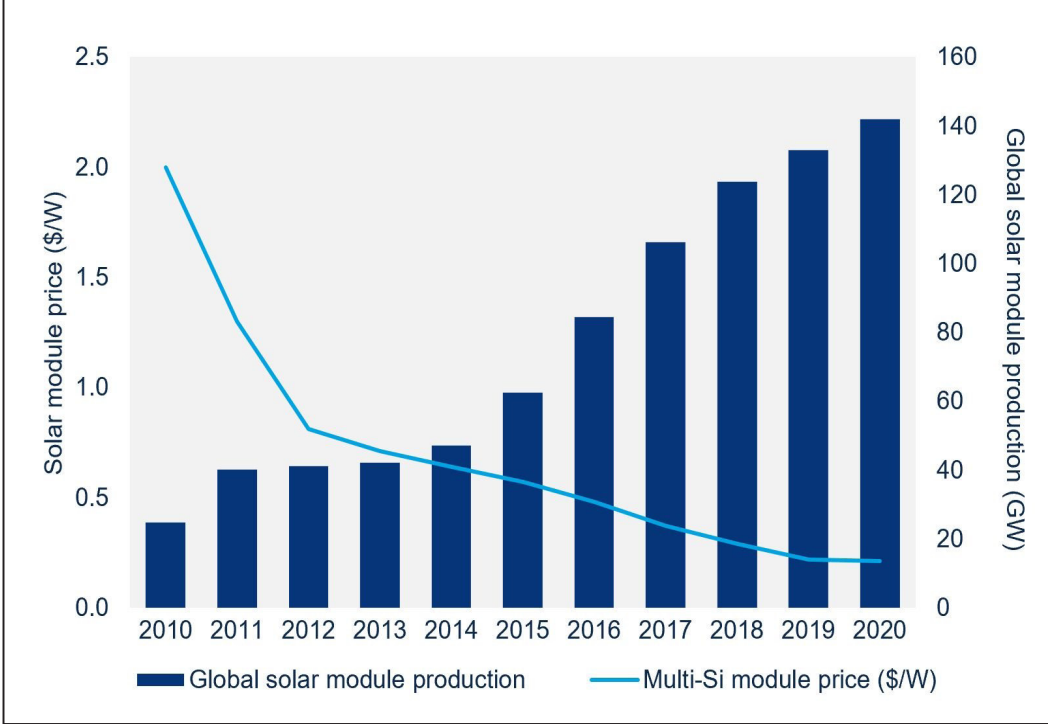


# HOME SOLAR: frequently asked questions



**Left:** This graphs shows how the price of solar panels has DECREASED so dramatically over the

last decade (thin blue line) and how quickly the amount of solar produced world-wide has INCREASED over the same period (blue bars).

## SHOULD I WAIT FOR EVEN LOWER PRICES?

Probably not. Yes, the cost of solar panels has dropped dramatically over the last decade. This is due mostly to a huge ramp up in world-wide mass production, manufacturing innovation and automation.

As you can see from the graph above, the dramatic drop in price has essentially levelled off. Now improvements are more about getting

higher efficiency out of each panel. The newer panels convert a bit more of the sunlight hitting them into electricity, from about 17% efficiency 10 years ago to about 22% efficiency today. That does help with cost, but not as much as you might think.

That's because panels are only about 1/3 of the cost of a home solar power system. The rest is racking to mount the panels, inverters to get the power ready to feed into the grid and to power

your home, and most of all, labour to install, wire and commission the system. These costs have not fallen much, and are not likely to fall much any time soon.

## NEW TECH: SHOULD I WAIT FOR IT?

Probably not. There's lots of research going into new solar tech, mostly aimed at getting that conversion efficiency even higher so fewer solar panels will do the same job.

Science tells us that solar panel efficiency probably cannot exceed much above 40%, or twice today's 20%. So 15 years from now my solar array can be half the size to produce the same power. Who cares?

More importantly, new tech takes awhile to catch up with old tech, both in price and availability, usually 10-15 years or more.

The fact is, today's standard polycrystalline panels, the one's that

are widely sold and seen everywhere, are in massive global production and are widely available, reliable (25 year guarantees!), rugged, attractive and easy to ship and install.

It will take quite awhile for any new solar technology to catch up with all these features. The wait is probably not worth it.

## IS SOLAR A GOOD INVESTMENT?

Yep, not bad. Most of the home solar that Peace Energy Co-op installs in the BC and Alberta Peace Region provides a 5 to 8% return on the money invested. Better than any bank, that's for sure.

Plus, the solar array retains its value for a long time – a long term asset that adds to the value of your home while paying for itself with reduced (or eliminated) electrical bills for decades into the future.

Today's solar technology makes good sense, both economic and environmental. That's why the world is going solar, and fast.