

50 Years of Consistent Oil and Gas Advocacy Against Renewables and Electric Vehicles

Powerful Industry groups have been repeating the same misleading narratives for decades in a systematic effort to oppose, weaken and delay the energy transition

For Immediate Release

A new report by InfluenceMap, finds that the world's most powerful oil and gas industry associations have been using the same playbook of narratives to oppose, weaken, and delay the global energy transition since as early as 1967. The use of these narratives over the past half a century, firstly by the [American Petroleum Institute \(API\)](#) and subsequently by [Fuels Europe](#) and [Fuels Industry UK](#), likely succeeded in delaying the energy transition and continues to pose a serious threat to policy progress on climate change.

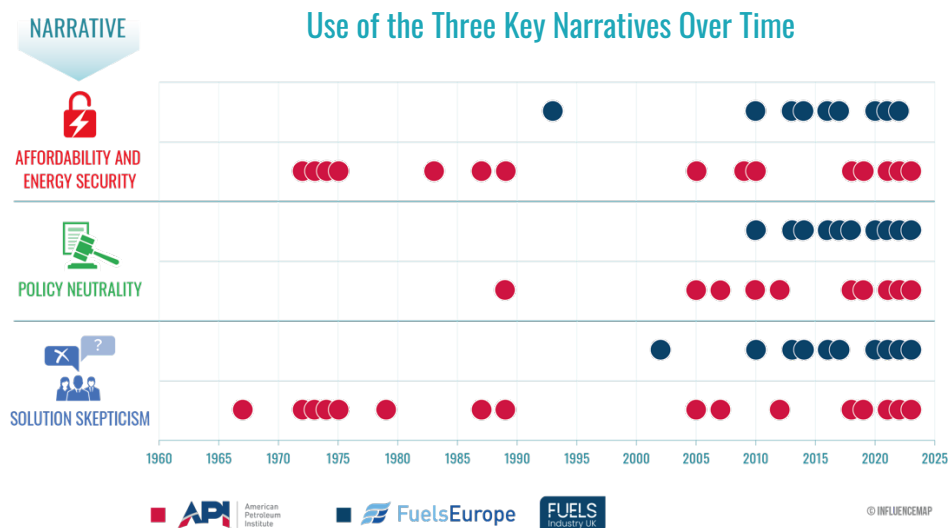
Over the 50 years this playbook has been in use, EV and renewable growth in the US and Europe has been limited. Over the same time-period the [Carbon Majors](#) database shows that the cumulative emissions associated with the sale of the associations' members' fossil fuel products grew significantly. Between 1950 and 2022, the members of these associations have a combined contribution of approximately 350 billion tons of greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for approximately 18% of the world's total cumulative CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels and industry.

This report identifies and analyses the three broad categories of argument that these associations have consistently used in their advocacy, all of which contradict science-based policy as set out by the IPCC and IEA. The earliest evidence in the dataset shows these narratives have been used since the 1960s by the API. The report establishes how even as the scientific community, policymakers and the public advanced their understanding of the climate crisis and its causes, these oil and gas giants continued to employ these narratives in their opposition to various climate policies that would threaten their industry.

This report also challenges the claim made by many oil and gas companies that consumer demand for oil and gas is 'outside of their control'. It demonstrates the significant and longstanding role they have played in fueling demand for their products via the ongoing circulation of obstructive narratives aimed at preserving the societal and market forces that favor fossil fuels.

The arguments consistently used by these associations can be grouped into three broad categories:

- "Solution Skepticism", which downplays the impact and viability of alternative energy.
- "Policy Neutrality", which promotes consumer choice, market solutions, and minimal government intervention.
- "Affordability and Energy Security", which paints fossil fuel alternatives as a risk to cost-effective and secure energy.



The earliest evidence in the dataset, 1967-1992, relates solely to the **API** where it can be seen to use all three narratives. Evidence in the dataset for **Fuels Europe** and **Fuels Industry UK** begins in 1993 and 2013 respectively and the report does not assess narratives used before this date, however their consistent use in the period covered by the data suggests a wholesale adoption of the same playbook.

“Many oil and gas companies justify their significant scope 3 emissions by pointing to consumer demand, claiming it’s beyond their control. However, this report challenges this narrative by uncovering a strategic playbook designed to protect and sustain the societal and market forces favoring fossil fuels. This long-standing use of misleading narratives has likely delayed the energy transition for decades and continues to pose a serious threat to climate policy progress.”

Tom Holen, InfluenceMap Program Manager for the Energy Transition

Comparing First Use, and Most Recent Use, of the Three

1967

Main Narratives by the API

Comments from Sun Oil and behalf of the API on the 1967 Clean Air Act.

"We in the petroleum industry are convinced that by the time a practical electric car can be mass-produced and marketed, it will not enjoy any meaningful advantage from an air pollution standpoint. Emissions from internal-combustion engines will have long since been controlled"

1972

Comments from the API on the 1970 Clean Air Act.

"At this point in time, the cost of meeting the automobile exhaust emission goals in the clean air amendments cannot be known precisely, but certainly the economic impact is going to be great. The recent study of the National Academy of Sciences indicates that for the motorist there will be a substantial increase in the initial cost of the new automobile, a reduction of mileage per gallon of fuel, and an increase in maintenance costs."

1989

Comments from Mobil on behalf of the API on the Clean Air Act amendments of 1990.

"We believe performance standards should be set and all fuels and vehicles which can meet them should be allowed to compete in the market. This will ensure that the most cost-effective fuels and vehicles prevail."

2022

API joint letter on the Inflation Reduction Act.

"The United States has experienced its second consecutive quarter of negative GDP growth, and American consumers are facing record high inflation. We share the goal of addressing climate change, as evidenced in the policies we support and in the actions that we take every day. However, the considerable tax increases and new government spending in the IRA amount to the wrong policies at the wrong time"

2023

API comments on the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles—Phase 3.

"EPA's focus on zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) solutions, and specifically battery electric vehicles (BEVs), ignores fuel- and vehicle-based options that could better accomplish the agency's objectives to expeditiously achieve greater transportation sector-related emission reductions from the entire vehicle fleet (both new and in-use) at lower cost."

API comments on the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles—Phase 3.

"API is concerned that there is significant uncertainty with regard to technology and infrastructure readiness for the proposed 2027–2032 timeframe; further, the transportation industry will be competing for the same resources to successfully implement both the heavy-duty and light- and medium-duty proposed programs on the same timeframe"

 POLICY NEUTRALITY
  AFFORDABILITY AND ENERGY SECURITY
  SOLUTION SKEPTICISM
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The [full report](#) details the 13 distinct sub-narratives contained within these broader groups and compares each to the science-backed evidence that contradicts them. These narratives are still being used despite clear guidance from the IPCC that alternative technologies are technologically feasible and must be scaled alongside the phaseout of fossil fuels.

The report also finds that some of the world's largest oil and gas companies are still paying a high premium to participate in these industry associations, despite the fact that they do not seem to wholly represent them on climate policy. **Shell, Chevron and Exxon** have disclosed that they pay between \$5 million and \$12.5 million per year to hold membership with the API. These fees are far higher than API's peers: for example, **Shell and Exxon's** next highest membership fees were at most \$2,500,000, around 10% of the cost of the API. The API has achieved the lowest possible InfluenceMap score of F, whereas these companies score C, D- and D respectively. In the case of the **API, BP, Shell and Repsol**, InfluenceMap has found "partial misalignment" with the associations position on climate policy, although these companies appear to be aligned with the API's position on matters concerning fossil fuel exploration and development.

The analysis utilizes a dataset compiled by Dario Kenner, a visiting research fellow at the University of Sussex. It includes over 50 detailed instances of the American Petroleum Institute, FuelsEurope, and Fuels Industry UK engaging on policy relevant to a transition towards alternatives to fossil fuels between 1967 and 2021. Additional data from 2021 to 2023 was collected by InfluenceMap to ensure that the analysis is up-to-date, and the entire dataset was then analyzed by InfluenceMap for narrative trends

[Full report and analysis](#)

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About InfluenceMap

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