

21027 Yes, electric vehicles really are better than fossil fuel burners

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Back in April a paper was published claiming electric cars were worse than diesel. The study was roundly criticised for being misleading. Even Germany's largest carmaker VW felt compelled to publicly contradict the report days after its publication, giving a rare glimpse of its own lifecycle analysis based on company-specific data that shows Volkswagen EVs are better than their diesels. / ... /

There will always be a new study with some flawed assumptions to keep us all busy and we could rebut these until we all drop. The advantage for the oil and diesel industry is that articles and reports, however poor, keep the controversy alive. Discrediting or distorting science is a political strategy.

So let's skip the detailed rebuttal and just look at some basic facts. Every year we burn around 275m tonnes of petroleum and diesel in cars, vans and trucks in the EU alone. Petrol and diesel vehicles are hugely inefficient. Around 70% of the energy that goes into a car engine is wasted. Oil that is burned cannot be recovered, reused or recycled. Oil cannot be made clean. Actually, thanks to the rise of unconventional oil, it is getting dirtier.

So if we want to halt global warming we need vehicles that don't burn stuff. That's the unique appeal of electric cars, trains and buses. They're ultra-efficient and have no tailpipe emissions. And yes, of course, we'll need clean electricity to run the vehicles and to produce the cars and batteries.

But we know how to make power clean and we're making rapid progress towards exactly that. The UK has almost got rid of coal, Germany is phasing it out, and even in Poland and Trump's America, coal is in decline. Meanwhile clean wind and solar power are on the rise. By 2030 half of the EU's electricity will come from renewables driven by renewable electricity mandates and the increasingly robust EU carbon pricing scheme.

The rise of electric cars and green power are some of the biggest climate success stories of the past few years.

That might not please some but it is fair, effective and, for the climate, unequivocally a good thing. As the Nobel prize committee eloquently put it: "Lithium-ion batteries have revolutionised our lives since they first entered the market in 1991. They have laid the foundation of a wireless, fossil fuel-free society, and are of the greatest benefit to humankind."

400 words