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Big Oil's 'Low Carbon' Investments and Lobbying Do Not Match its 'Green' PR

Oil and gas companies are spending hundreds of millions on climate-positive messaging while lobbying to lock in fossil fuels

Big Oil's investment in 'low carbon' technologies isn't living up to the industry's 'pro-climate' PR campaigns, according to [detailed analysis](#) of company disclosures and public messaging by climate think tank InfluenceMap.

The report finds that 60% of the public messages from **BP, Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil**, and **TotalEnergies** contain 'green' claims, while 23% promote oil and gas. Yet these companies are forecast to spend a relatively small fraction (12% on average) of their capital expenditure (CAPEX) budgets on 'low-carbon' investments this year.

It also conservatively estimates that these five companies combined spent at least \$750 million on climate-related messaging (including both 'green' claims and pro-oil messaging) during 2021, although the real figure is likely to be significantly higher because this calculation does not include the cost of external advertising or PR agencies.

The report suggests there is a “systematic misalignment” between the business models and lobbying activities of these oil supermajors when compared with their public relations strategies.

It also highlights how several of these companies are forecast to expand oil and gas production through to 2026.

InfluenceMap Program Manager Faye Holder said: *“The world’s big oil and gas companies are spending huge amounts of time and money talking up their ‘green’ credentials, while their business investments and lobbying activities tell a very different story.*

“These companies talk about cutting emissions and transitioning the energy mix, but at the same time continue to invest heavily in new fossil fuels.

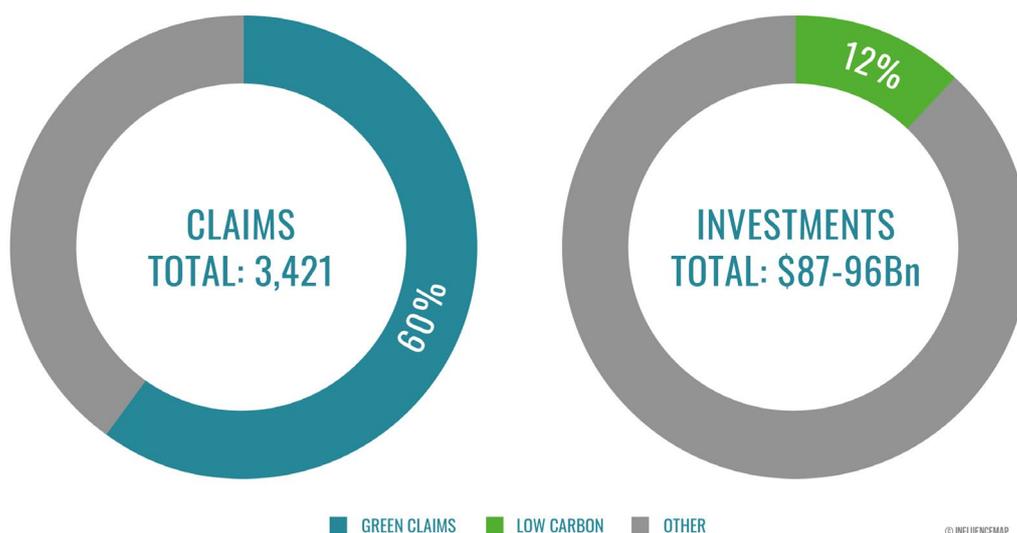
“While this PR strategy might convince some people, it doesn’t change the fact that these companies are out-of-step with science-based pathways to net zero.”

Big Oil's 'green' PR strategy

The research analyzed 3,421 individual evidence items of public communication from the five Big Oil companies during 2021, including company and CEO social media accounts, press releases, speeches, and secondary websites intended for outreach purposes.

It then categorized each item based on its narrative, noting that some items contained multiple messages (for example, both 'green' and pro-oil claims).

PERCENTAGE OF GREEN CLAIMS IN 2021 PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS VS
PERCENTAGE OF 'LOW CARBON' INVESTMENTS IN 2022 CAPEX



Overall, the report shows 60% of public messages contained at least one 'green' claim, such as emissions reduction targets, transitioning the energy mix, or promoting fossil gas as part of a clean energy solution.

However, there were significant differences between the five supermajors, with 70% of **Shell's** public messages containing at least one 'green' claim, compared with 49% of **Chevron's**.

By further analyzing the types of 'green' claims, the research shows the three European-based supermajors – **Shell, BP, and TotalEnergies** – focused more on energy transition claims than their US-based competitors. In effect, presenting themselves as broad energy companies.

ExxonMobil, by comparison, focused most of its public messaging on emissions reductions, suggesting its strategy is to present itself as a 'low emission' oil and gas producer.

Chevron appears less concerned about promoting its climate credentials than the other four companies - it used more pro-oil and gas messages (37%) than any of its competitors.

'Green' PR versus 'green' investments

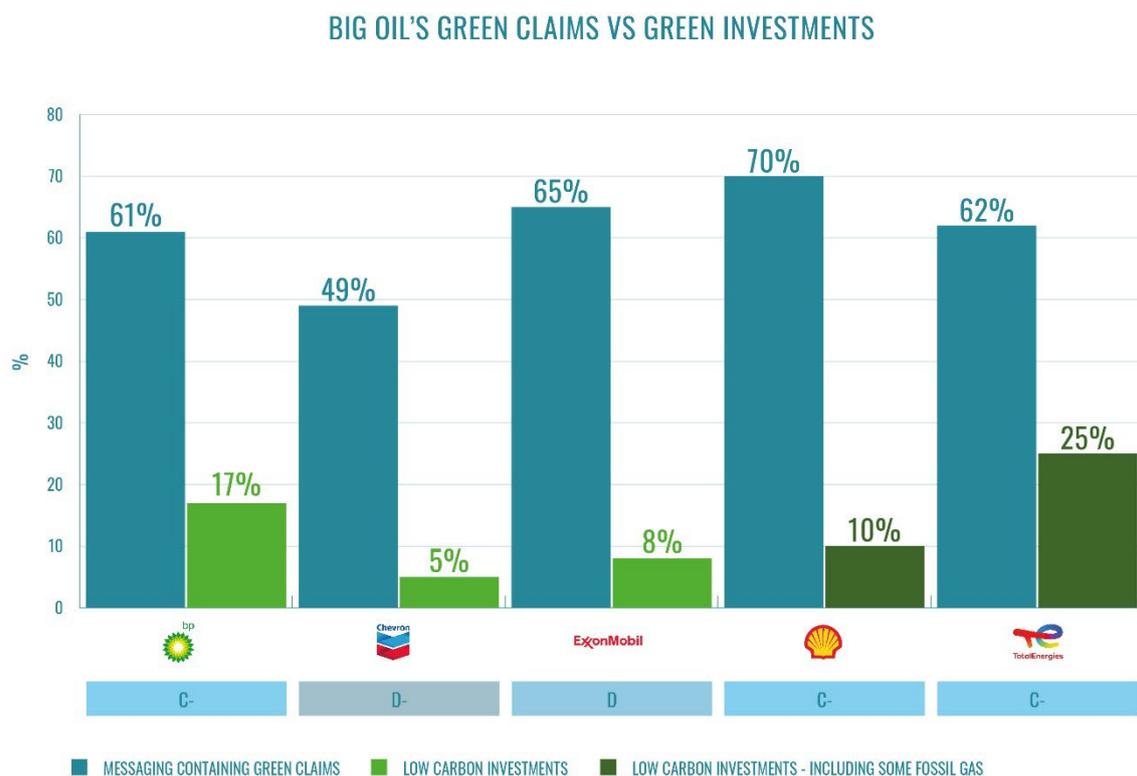
Big Oil's 'green'-focused public communications strategies contrast with its investment in 'low carbon' activities.

Based on public disclosures, the five companies analyzed as part of this research are forecast to spend just 12% of their capital expenditure (CAPEX) budgets on 'low carbon' activities in 2022.

Furthermore, some of these 'low carbon' activities are likely to include fossil fuel investments, given both TotalEnergies and Shell include fossil gas-related investments in their 'low carbon' CAPEX outlook.

As a result, the report finds: "It is therefore likely that the disparity in spending on fossil fuel-related investments as compared to zero-emission technologies is even greater" than publicly disclosed.

The biggest divergence between ‘green’ claims and ‘low carbon’ CAPEX was by **Shell**, followed by **ExxonMobil**.



Graph comparing the percentage of Big Oil's 2021 public communications promoting pro-climate messaging vs the percentage of projected 'Low Carbon' investments in 2022 CAPEX per company. Each company's LobbyMap Grade is also included, assessing lobbying alignment with the Paris Agreement.

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Pro-fossil fuel lobbying

None of the companies assessed by InfluenceMap have aligned their climate policy engagement activities with the goals of the Paris Agreement. **Shell**, **TotalEnergies**, and **BP** rank a 'C-' on InfluenceMap's A-to-F scale, indicating mixed support. **ExxonMobil** and **Chevron** rank a 'D' and 'D-' respectively, indicating broad opposition to Paris-aligned climate policy.

And none of the oil majors have lobbied to strengthen the stringency of methane emissions reduction regulations since 2021, despite the importance of methane mitigation being a key claim from the industry.

Furthermore, each company retains memberships to a dense network of industries groups that are actively engaged in blocking or watering down climate policy.

All companies, except for **TotalEnergies**, are members of the **American Petroleum Institute (API)**, which scores an 'F' on InfluenceMap's A-to-F system of measuring policy engagement against Paris Agreement goals. This makes it one of the most strategically oppositional industry groups globally on climate policy.

The same four companies are also members of the **Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA)** and the **Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)**, both of which score an 'E'.

TotalEnergies, along with several of the others, is a member of **FuelsEurope** and **International Oil and Gas Producers**, both of which score 'D'.

The research found evidence of each company, with the exception of **TotalEnergies**, engaging policymakers directly to advocate for policies encouraging the development of new oil and gas in 2021-22.

The research in this report focuses on public communications in North America and Europe. Future research will focus on how these companies communicate in the Global South.

Full report, graphics, and quotes at this landing page.

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About InfluenceMap

InfluenceMap is a London-based think tank with offices in Tokyo, Seoul and New York. It provides data driven analysis on issues related to energy and climate change. InfluenceMap's metrics for measuring corporate influence over climate policy are used extensively by investors, including the global Climate Action 100+ investor engagement process.