

Electric cars have a smaller carbon footprint than traditional cars, despite claim



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Fact Check By: Craig Jones, [Newswise \(/institutions/newsroom/2658/\)](#)

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Truthfulness: False



Claim:



Coal powered electric cars... Helping liberals pretend they are solving a make-believe crisis



Claim Publisher and Date: [Facebook and other viral social media posts](#) (<https://www.facebook.com/MentallyEmancipated/posts/5167469593266304>) on 2022-01-25

A meme of a busy electric car charging station with the words, "Coal powered electric cars... Helping liberals pretend they are solving a make-believe crisis" was shared by thousands on Facebook. Setting aside the controversial statement that there's a "make-believe crisis," the meme suggests that since electric car batteries require charging, particularly from an electric energy source such as coal, they are not good for the environment. However, data shows that electric vehicles still produce fewer emissions over their lifespan than gasoline-powered vehicles, even in regions where coal is burned to make electricity. We find the claim about the overall environmental impact of electric vehicles misleading.

Studies have shown that the total indirect emissions from electric vehicles pale in comparison to the indirect emissions from fossil fuel-powered vehicles. A study published in *Nature Communications* (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-021-27247-y>) shows that electric vehicles have a clear advantage emissions-wise over conventional vehicles. Read more on the study in this [news release](#) (<https://www.newswise.com/articles/study-finds-electric-vehicles-provide-lower-carbon-emissions-through-additional-channels>) from Yale School of the Environment. Another study (<https://publications.anl.gov/anlpubs/2020/06/158307.pdf>) led by Argonne National Laboratory (<https://www.newswise.com/institutions/newsroom/Argonne-National-Laboratory-16>) found that, even when accounting for CO2 emissions from electricity consumption, electric vehicles have cumulatively reduced CO2 emissions by 6.9 million metric tons.

As more clean energy is being used to power grids such as wind and solar power, the environmental impact of electric vehicles compared to traditional gas-powered vehicles is becoming more consequential. Experts broadly agree that electric vehicles create a lower carbon footprint over the course of their lifetime than vehicles that use traditional, internal combustion engines.

Sources:

<https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/electric-vehicle-myths>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamesmorris/2021/10/23/electric-vehicles-are-not-zero-emissionsbut-they-are-much-greener-than-fossil-fuel-and-hydrogen/?sh=2f3e1a22197d>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-51977625>

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Claim Publisher: Facebook and other viral social media posts
Date of Claim: 2022-01-25
Author of Article: Craig Jones
Truthfulness: False

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