



The Daily Dish

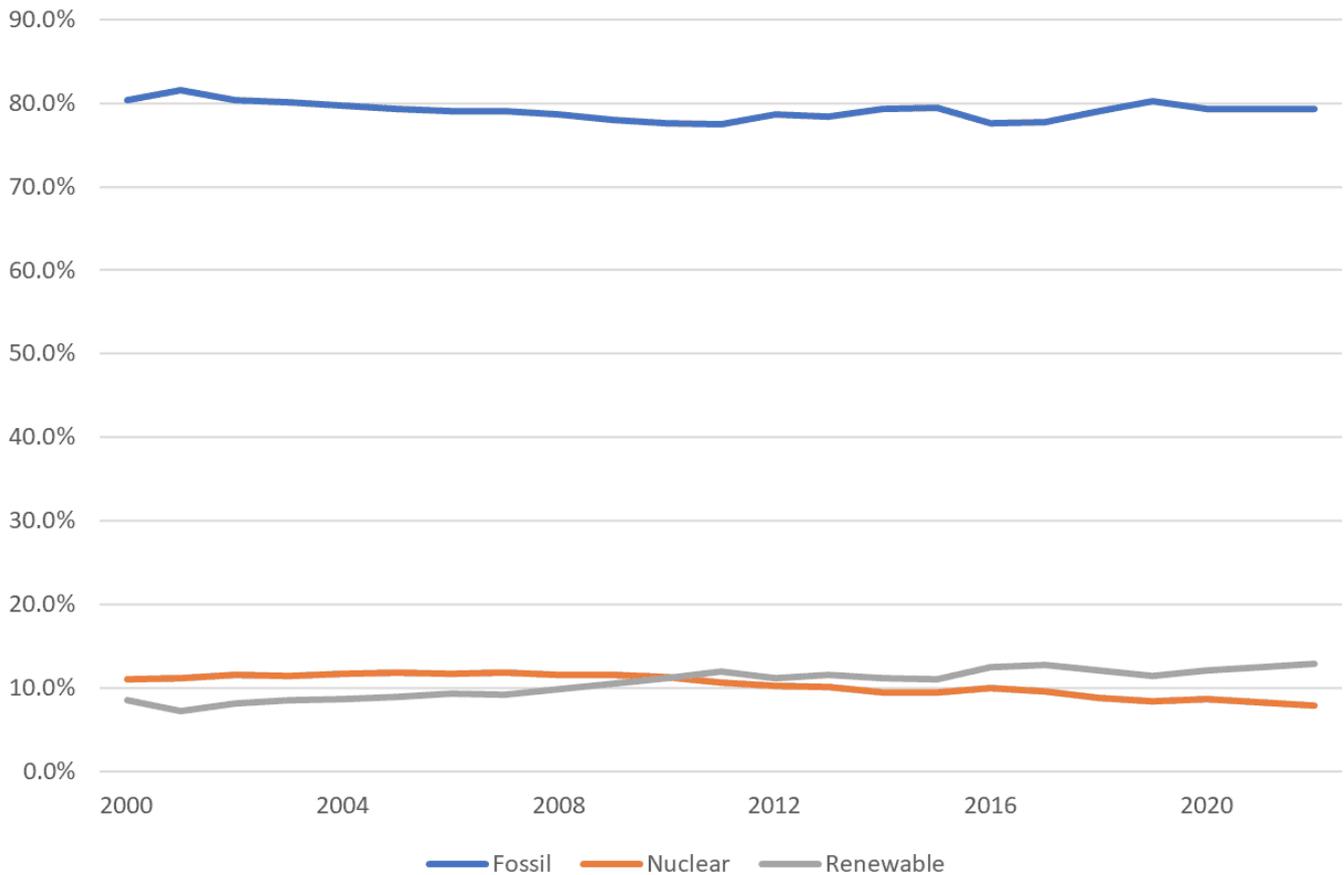
Fact-checking The New York Times

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | AUGUST 14, 2023

The New York Times headline caught my attention as hyperbolic: [The Clean Energy Future Is Arriving Faster Than You Think](#). How do they know what I think? And how fast is that? And the prose seemed comparably breathless: “Across the country, a profound shift is taking place that is nearly invisible to most Americans. The nation that burned coal, oil and gas for more than a century to become the richest economy on the planet, as well as historically the most polluting, is rapidly shifting away from fossil fuels.”

That seemed unbelievable. But maybe I hadn’t been paying attention. After all, it is so easy to get distracted by Bidenomics’ brave assault on junk fees. So, I did what anyone would do in these circumstances. I quickly flipped to [eia.gov](#) (the U.S. Energy Information Administration), downloaded U.S. energy production data, and graphed it. The result is:

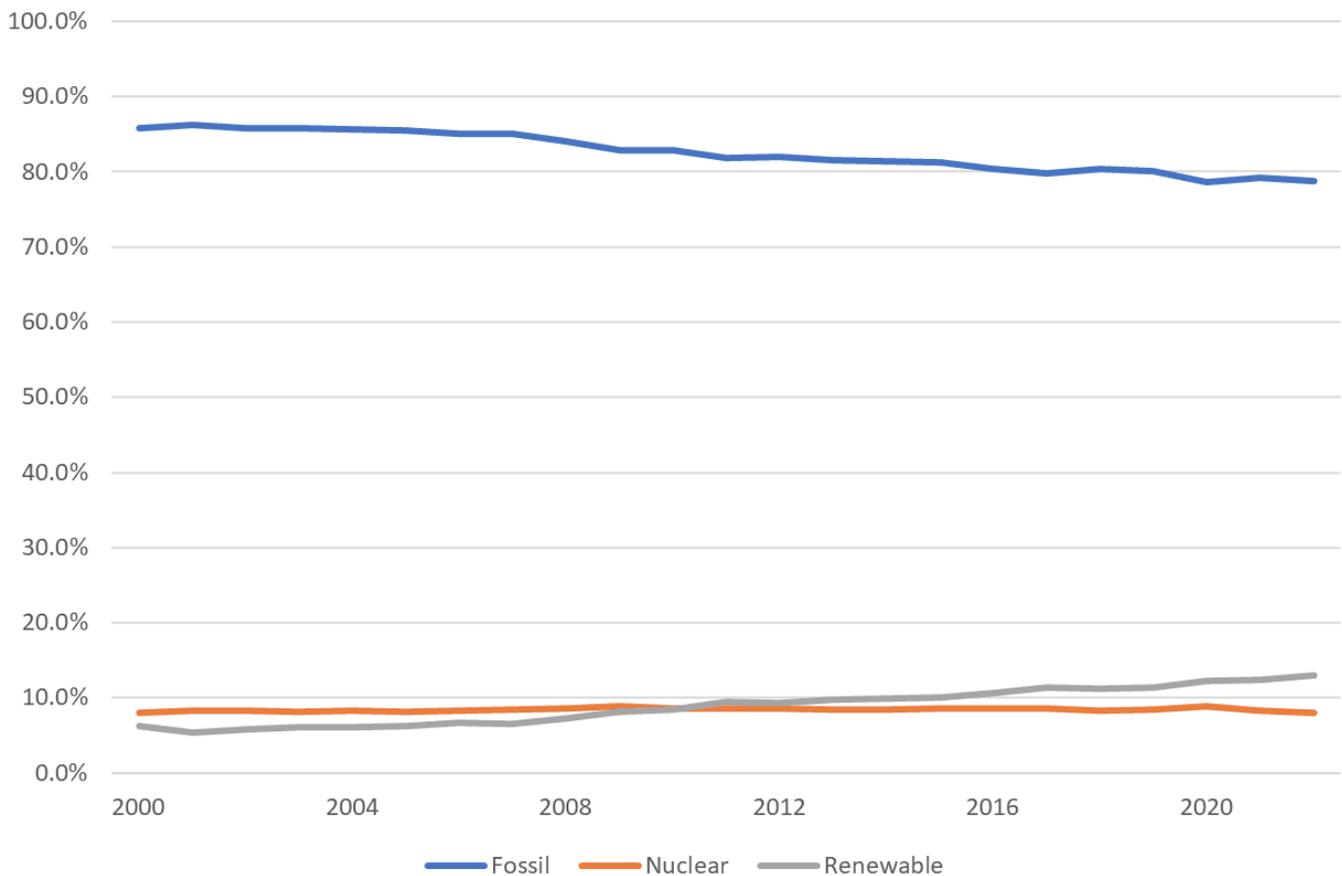
Shares in Total Energy Production



Since 2000, the share of fossil fuels in total production is essentially unchanged. The dramatic clean energy revolution must be the substitution of renewables for nuclear power, a swap that has *zero* impact on greenhouse gas emissions. The attentive reader will also notice that the blue fossil fuels line is WAAAAAY above the others. Viva la revolución!

It is also possible to take a comparable look at U.S. consumption of energy. That picture looks like:

Shares in Total Energy Consumption



This shows a clear move of about 5 percentage points away from fossil fuels toward renewables over the past two decades. Is that what is meant by arriving “faster than you think”? And the attentive reader will also notice that this blue fossil fuels line is also WAAAAAY above the other lines. Not much of a revolution.

The final analytic point is that if the United States is not consuming as much fossil fuels but its production is unchanged, *somebody* is consuming it somewhere. That means that the impact on global emissions and global climate policy is nil.

I get that it is the sworn duty of *The New York Times* to cheerlead for the Biden Administration. But this puts it in the awkward position of reporting as fact the fantasies spun by the White House.

There has never been anything wrong with the president’s proclamation that climate change is the number one policy priority, or his ultimate aspirations for reduced emissions and a cleaner energy portfolio. But the impossible timetables, inefficient strategies, and low-balled costs have read like a bad draft of a ChatGPT fairy tale from the outset.

Serious problems require serious analysis, effective strategies, and honest communications. Repeating President Biden's fiscal policy approach in the climate space is not a recipe for success.