

Burning the Gas ‘Bridge Fuel’ Myth: Why Gas Is Not Clean, Cheap, or Necessary

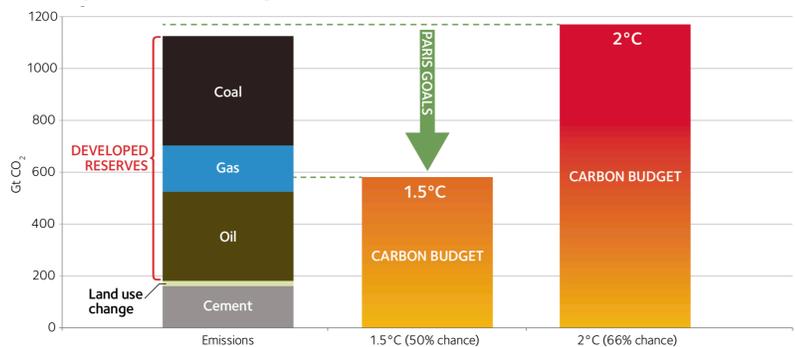


As the global climate crisis intensifies while the production and consumption of gas soars, it is clearer than ever that gas is not a solution to the climate crisis. While leaking methane along the entire gas supply chain has been at the center of the debate around the climate impact of gas, it is not the definitive issue. **There are five additional reasons why gas cannot form a bridge to a clean energy future, even if methane leakage is addressed.**

Five Reasons Gas Is Not Clean, Cheap, or Necessary:

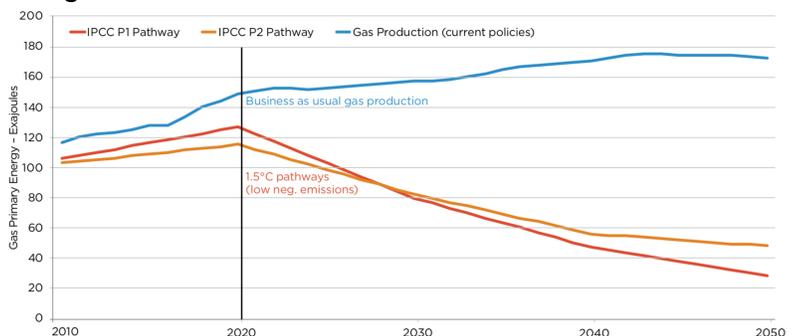
- Gas Breaks the Carbon Budget:** The economically recoverable oil, gas, and coal in the world’s currently producing and under-construction extraction projects would take the world far beyond safe climate limits. Further development of untapped gas reserves, including new shale wells, is inconsistent with the climate goals in the Paris Agreement. Even if global coal use were phased out overnight, already-developed reserves of oil and gas would push the world above 1.5°C of warming. There’s simply no room for more gas.
- Coal-to-Gas Switching Doesn’t Cut It:** Climate goals require the energy sector to be decarbonized by mid-century. This means that both coal and gas must be phased out. Replacing coal plants with new gas plants will not cut emissions by nearly enough, even if methane leakage is kept to a minimum. Current plans for gas production growth drastically overshoot climate safe models and are a bridge to climate disaster.

CO₂ From Developed Fossil Fuel Reserves, Compared to Carbon Budgets within Range of Paris Goals



Source: Rystad Energy, IEA, World Energy Council, IPCC, OCl analysis

Global Gas Pathways: Business as Usual Extraction vs. Demand Aligned with 1.5°C



Source: IPCC/IAMC 1.5°C Scenario Explorer and Data hosted by IIASA (Release 11) and Rystad Energy AS UCube (April 2019)

3. Low-Cost Renewables Can Displace

Coal and Gas: The dramatic and ongoing cost declines for wind and solar disrupt the business model for gas in the power sector. Wind and solar are already cheaper to build and operate than coal and gas in most markets. Cost is clearly not a prohibitive factor to adding renewable generation capacity, whether to replace fossil fuel capacity or to meet rising demand.

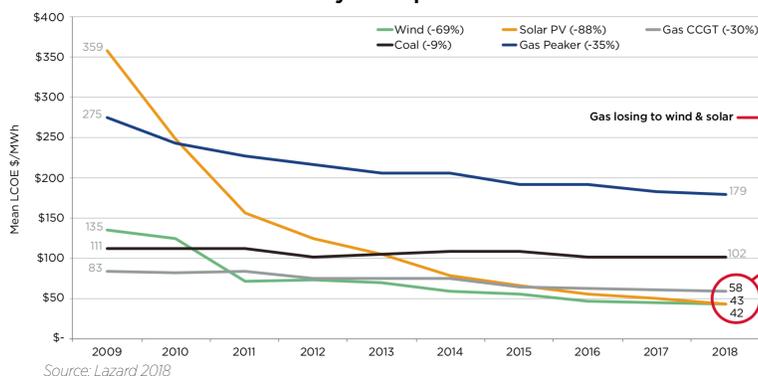
4. Gas Is Not Essential for Grid Reliability:

Wind and solar require balancing, but gas is not the only, nor the best, resource available for doing so. Battery storage is fast becoming competitive with gas plants designed for this purpose (known as “peakers”). Wind and solar plants that are coupled with battery storage are also becoming a competitive “dispatchable” source of energy. Managing high levels of wind and solar on the grid requires optimizing a wide range of technologies and solutions, including battery storage, demand response, and transmission. There is no reason to favor gas as the primary solution.

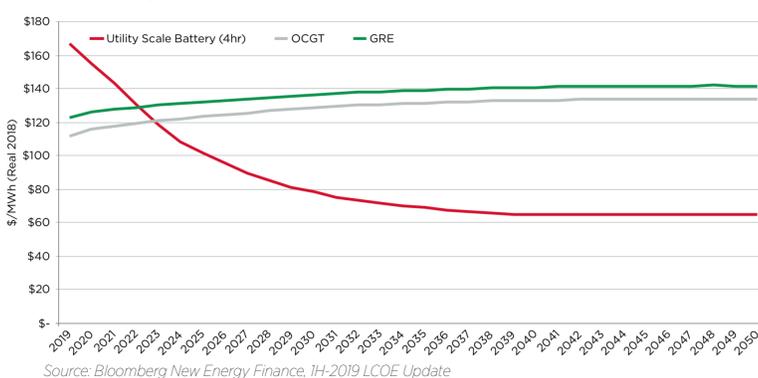
5. New Gas Infrastructure Locks In

Emissions: Multibillion-dollar gas infrastructure built today is designed to operate for decades to come. Given the barriers to closing down infrastructure ahead of its expected economic lifespan, it is critical to stop building new infrastructure, the full lifetime emissions of which will not fit within Paris-aligned carbon budgets.

Wind and Solar Are Already Cheaper than Coal and Gas



Projected Levelized Cost of Energy of Battery Storage and Gas Peakers – United States



The myth of gas as a “bridge” to a stable climate does not stand up to scrutiny. While much of the debate to date has focused on methane leakage, **the data shows that the greenhouse gas emissions just from burning the gas itself are enough to overshoot climate goals.**

There is an urgent need for policymakers and investors to use climate goals as a starting point for energy decisions, particularly when it comes to gas. Rather than searching for ways to justify using the abundant supply that new drilling methods have unleashed, policymakers and investors should consider how much gas is compatible with achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. The answer is the same for gas as it is for coal and oil: **We need less, not more.**

Oil Change International is a research, communications, and advocacy organization focused on exposing the true costs of fossil fuels and facilitating the coming transition towards clean energy.

To learn more about the gas ‘bridge fuel’ myth, download the full report at: priceofoil.org/gas

Photo Credit: Les Stone / Greenpeace