



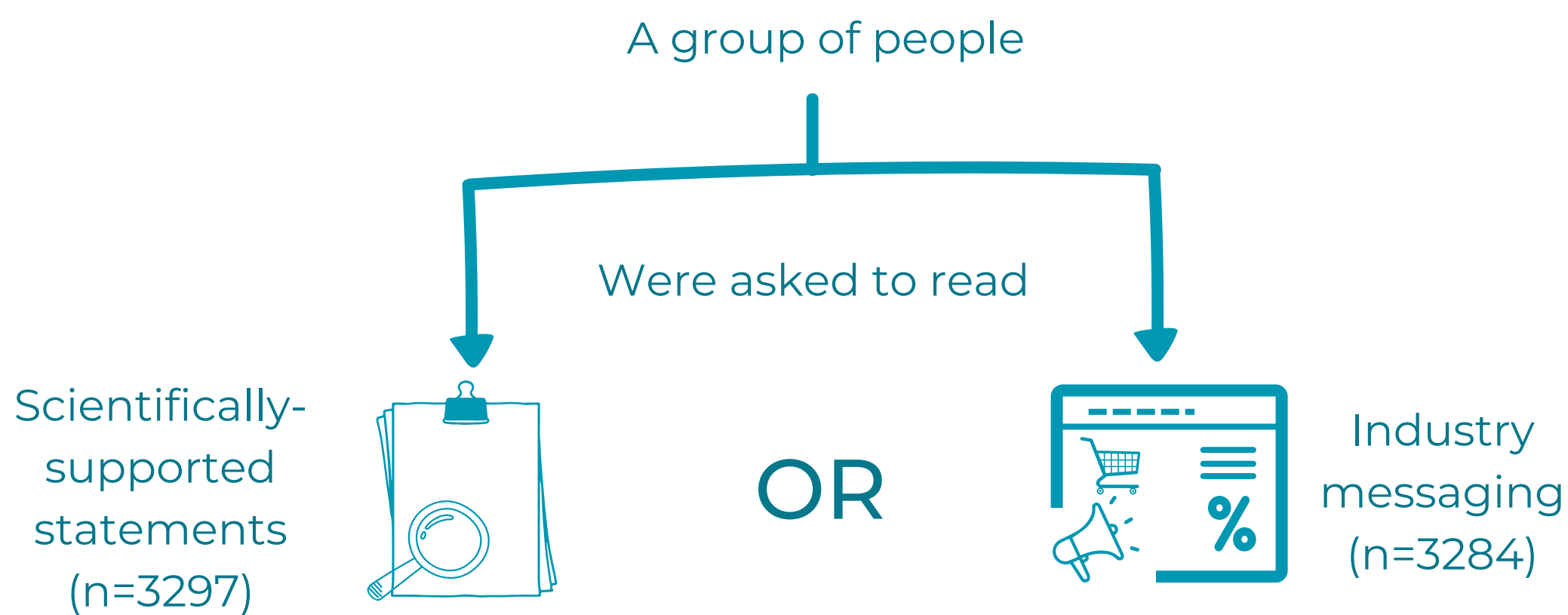
Manufacturing doubt about harm

Manufacturers of harmful products sometimes use 'alternative causation' arguments to dispute scientific evidence about product-harm relationships, to deflect negative attention away from their products.



"Health harms might be caused by something else. Other things can lead to that kind of harm"

What did the research do?



On harms related to fossil fuels, smoking, alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverages

What did the research find out?



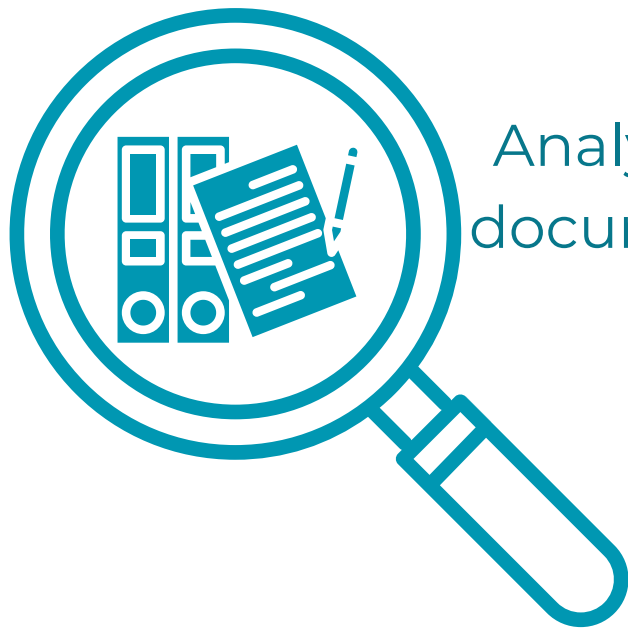
Maani et al. (2022) Manufacturing doubt: Assessing the effects of independent vs industry-sponsored messaging about the harms of fossil fuels, smoking, alcohol, and sugar sweetened beverages, SSM - Population Health, 17, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.101009>



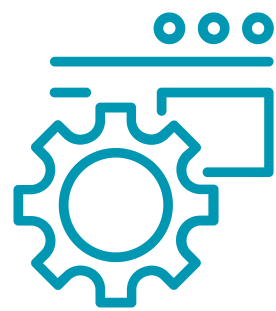


Misleading the public about harm

What did the research do?



Analysed a total of 1448 Exxon documents spanning 1924–2013



Coded 267 advertorials that were identified as relevant

What did the research find out?

Discrepancy between internal acknowledgement that climate change is real and human-caused and external promotion of doubt



For example, accounting for expressions of reasonable doubt, 83% of peer-reviewed papers and 80% of internal documents acknowledge that climate change is real and human-caused, yet only 12% of advertorials do so, with 81% instead expressing doubt.



Knowingly misleading public through communications that were at odds with available scientific knowledge

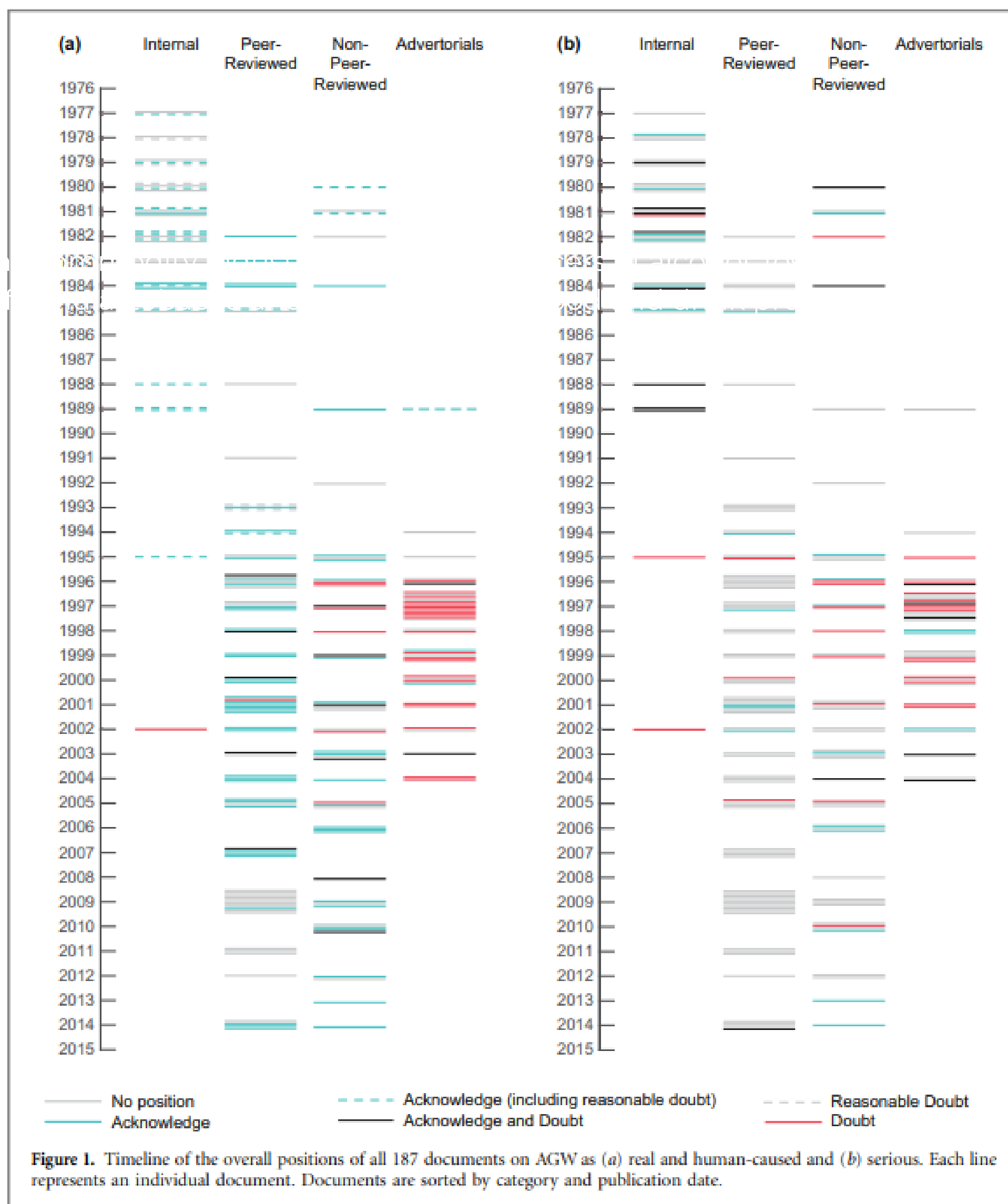
Direct and indirect climate denial including funding groups and individuals and participating in organisations that cast doubt in public on climate science

Assessing ExxonMobil's climate change communications (1977–2014)
Geoffrey Supran and Naomi Oreskes 2020 Environ. Res. Lett. 15 119401
DOI10.1088/1748-9326/ab89d5





Assessing ExxonMobil's climate change communications (1977–2014)



Supran & Oreskes paper 'Assessing ExxonMobil's climate change communications (1977–2014)' 2017 Environ. Res. Lett. 12 084019 DOI 10.1088/1748-9326/aa815f

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Legal challenges by health-harming industries



Corporations use legal challenges to hinder government's bringing in policies that could improve health but affect their business or profits they make



Litigation was part of the alcohol industry's strategy to oppose the introduction of minimum unit pricing (MUP) for alcohol in Scotland

MUP is the minimum price at which a unit of alcohol can be sold (e.g. 50p/unit).
The more alcohol, the higher the price.

What did the research do?



Interviews with people involved in the Scottish MUP proces



To understand how industry and litigation shaped alcohol policy processes and outcomes

What did the research find out?

Litigation, and making sure that policymakers knew it *could* be used, was part of a coherent strategy by the alcohol industry to prevent MUP.



This didn't prevent MUP but delayed it six years, which imposed costs on Scottish government, led to subsequent policy inertia, led to more time for alcohol to be sold as before, and for industry to potentially adjust business models, and resulted in the minimum price being worth less due to inflation.



A 'sunset clause' in legislation requires ongoing evaluation of MUP's effects, which gives further opportunity for industry to reverse MUP.



Hawkins & McCambridge (2020) 'Tied up in a legal mess': The alcohol industry's use of litigation to oppose minimum alcohol pricing in Scotland, Scottish Affairs, <https://eupublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/scot.2020.0304>. The online version of this article is published as Open Access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (4.0)





Legal challenges by health-harming industries



“

... if we see their objective as not bringing it in at all they failed. But, actually, in the meantime they **delayed** it. They've tied it all up in knots. They've created a lot of **doubt** about it.

”

“

...overriding all of that is a kind of sense of **regulatory chill** of, well, we've been tied up in this legal mess around MUP for a number of years... what can we do that isn't gonna (sic) get us in court again?... So, we're in a bizarre situation in relation to marketing, where there's a much stronger evidence base around alcohol marketing, and the harms to children, than there is around junk food marketing, and harm to children. And yet, as things currently stand, there is a potential will to legislate on that, but not on alcohol.

”

“

The implementation of minimum pricing, and seeing it through... all of that has been led by the Health team... has completely occupied that team. So, you know, we should have had [a refreshed alcohol strategy] more than two years ago. And it still hasn't issued... it has just completely **soaked up the effort** of that team...

”

Hawkins & McCambridge (2020) 'Tied up in a legal mess': The alcohol industry's use of litigation to oppose minimum alcohol pricing in Scotland, Scottish Affairs, <https://eupublishing.com/doi/full/10.3366/scot.2020.0304>. The online version of this article is published as Open Access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (4.0)





Signalling virtue but promoting harm



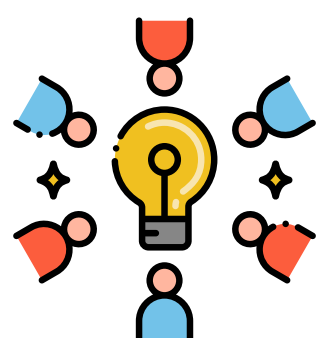
COVID-19 led to exceptional innovation and action across society, with the private sector making important contributions to COVID-19 responses



At the same time, we should consider unintended or indirect harms arising from the involvement of unhealthy commodity industries in the pandemic

Unhealthy commodity industries include producers of alcohol, fossil fuels, infant formula, tobacco and ultra-processed food and drink products

What did the research do?



Crowdsourced survey data from health advocates, researchers and policy experts identifying unhealthy commodity industry actions around the world



786 submissions from **90+** countries

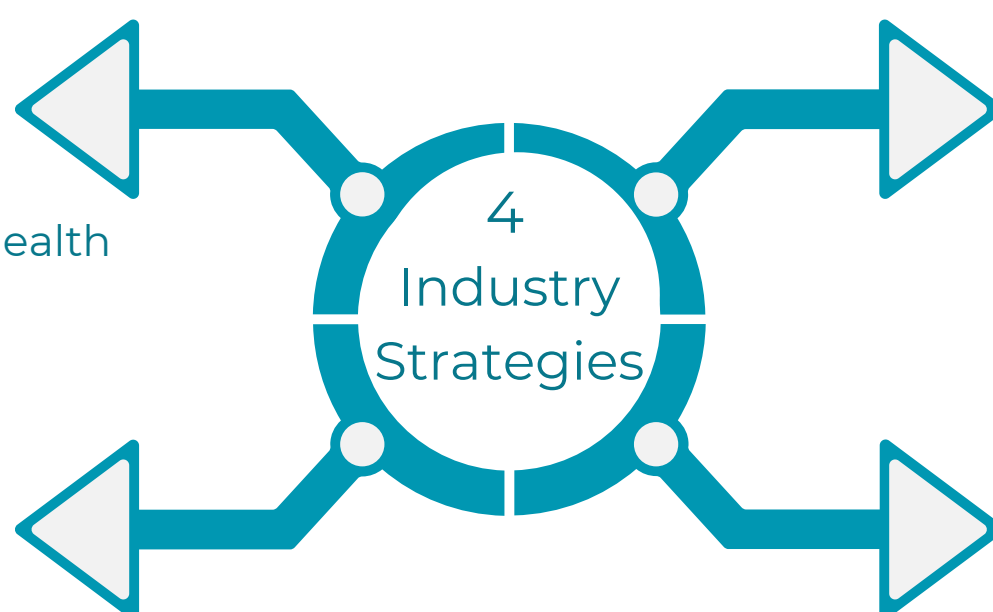
What did the research find out?

Pandemic-tailored marketing

e.g. using pandemic imagery, linking products to efforts of health / emergency professionals via donations

Corporate social responsibility

e.g. philanthropy linked to pandemic such as addressing supply shortages - to enhance / manage their reputation



Partnerships

e.g. collaborations with governments, international agencies, to further their aims

Shaping of policy

e.g. lobbying for products to be classed as 'essential' or to stop lockdowns, trying to shape economic recovery strategies

Signalling Virtue, Promoting Harm: Unhealthy commodity industries and COVID-19, authored by the NCD Alliance and the SPECTRUM Consortium, 2020.

<https://ncdalliance.org/resources/signalling-virtue-promoting-harm>





Tobacco Tactics

“

“...The most certain way to reduce consumption is through price.” (Philip Morris, Australia, 1983)

”



According to WHO
taxation = a best buy

The impact is greater for lower income groups who are most at risk from smoking-related harms, and more effective for youth



Tobacco industry documents show that Tobacco Industry knew price and taxation were important

“

“...Of all the concerns, there is one – taxation – which alarms us the most. While marketing restrictions and public and passive smoking do depress volume, in our experience taxation depresses it much more severely. Our concern for taxation is, therefore, central to our thinking about smoking and health. It has historically been the area to which we have devoted most resources and for the foreseeable future, I think things will stay that way almost everywhere” (Philip Morris, 1985)

”

Industry groups have lobbied against price increases

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Main reference: <https://tobaccotactics.org/article/price-and-tax/>

Quotes can be found in industry document archives: <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/#id=mmhn0127> and <https://www.industrydocuments.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/#id=pxpb0040>

World Health Organization (2017) 'Best buys' and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases.

World Health Organization (2015) The economic and health benefits of tobacco taxation

Adda & Cornaglia (2006) *Taxes, cigarette consumption, and smoking intensity*

Bader et al (2011) *Effects of Tobacco Taxation and Pricing on Smoking Behavior in High Risk Populations: A Knowledge Synthesis*

MacKenzie, Collin & Lee *The tobacco industry documents: an introductory handbook and resource guide for researchers*

Smith, Savell & Gilmore (2013) What is known about tobacco industry efforts to influence tobacco tax? A systematic review of empirical studies





Tobacco Tactics

“Doubt is our product, since it is the best means of competing with the ‘body of fact’ [linking smoking with disease] that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing that there is a controversy. If we are successful in establishing a controversy at the public level, then there is an opportunity to put across the real facts about smoking and health”

A 1969 document from the Brown and Williamson tobacco company (a subsidiary of British American Tobacco).

10s of thousands

of internal industry documents, released through litigation, reveal that the industry knew for decades that its products caused cancer and were highly addictive and yet it refused to acknowledge this publicly



Influencing the scientific debate has been a deliberate industry strategy. The tobacco industry has several related goals:

- to influence the research agenda
- to create doubt about evidence
- to divert the issue away from the causal link between smoking and cancer to a variety of diversionary issues such as hereditary disease; healthy cigarettes; or indoor climate

Ultimately, influencing science aims to change the knowledge upon which decision makers set policy. And by creating uncertainty around the smoking and health debate, it simultaneously attempts to reduce public support for regulatory action.

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Main references: <https://tobaccotactics.org/article/influencing-science-creating-doubt-about-scientific-evidence/> and <https://tobaccotactics.org/article/influencing-science/> and <https://tobaccotactics.org/article/latin-america-and-caribbean-region/> (See also [Hill & Knowlton](#) and/or [Tobacco Industry Research Committee](#)).





Education materials funded by fossil fuel industries

Analysis of Canadian education materials funded by fossil fuel industries suggests they

...centre, legitimise, and entrench a set of beliefs relating to climate change, energy, and environmentalism that align with the interests of fossil fuel industry ... centred on individual actions designed to insulate fossil fuel industries from criticism and dissuade young people from questioning or understanding the role of corporate power in the climate crisis.



In the UK, analysis of BP's involvement in primary and secondary education found a more general focus on the importance of business in science education, with some examples of distraction

BP's climate change curriculum works to shift attention away from its own responsibility for climate change (and makes no mention of its efforts to block and undermine climate change legislation), focusing instead on other factors such as population growth, poor building design, deforestation and farming



it's difficult to decide who is responsible...[for anthropogenic climate change]...fossil fuels will remain an important energy source until they finally run out



[Emily M. Eaton & Nick A. Day \(2020\) Petro-pedagogy: fossil fuel interests and the obstruction of climate justice in public education, Environmental Education Research, 26:4, 457-473, DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2019.1650164](#)

[Stuart Tannock \(2020\) The oil industry in our schools: from Petro Pete to science capital in the age of climate crisis, Environmental Education Research, 26:4, 474-490, DOI: 10.1080/13504622.2020.1724891](#)





Tobacco Industry Youth Smoking Prevention Programs: Protecting the Industry and Hurting Tobacco Control

Why was the research done?



To understand

- why the industry developed youth programs
- evidence of whether these programs reduce youth smoking

What did the research do?



Analysed industry documents

What did the research find out?

Authors conclusions

The purpose of the industry's youth smoking prevention programs is



Not to reduce youth smoking



But rather to serve the industry's political needs



In 1991 Philip Morris restated that the success of the “youth initiatives” would be determined by whether they led to a “reduction in legislation introduced and passed restricting or banning our sales and marketing activities” as well as “passage of legislation favorable to the industry” and “greater support from business, parent and teacher groups.”



Anne Landman, Pamela M. Ling, and Stanton A. Glantz, 2002, American Journal of Public Health: [Tobacco Industry Youth Smoking Prevention Programs: Protecting the Industry and Hurting Tobacco Control](#)

