

Chart of the Week #2023-11



Ambition vs. Reality

Share of Renewables in U.S. Primary Energy Demand

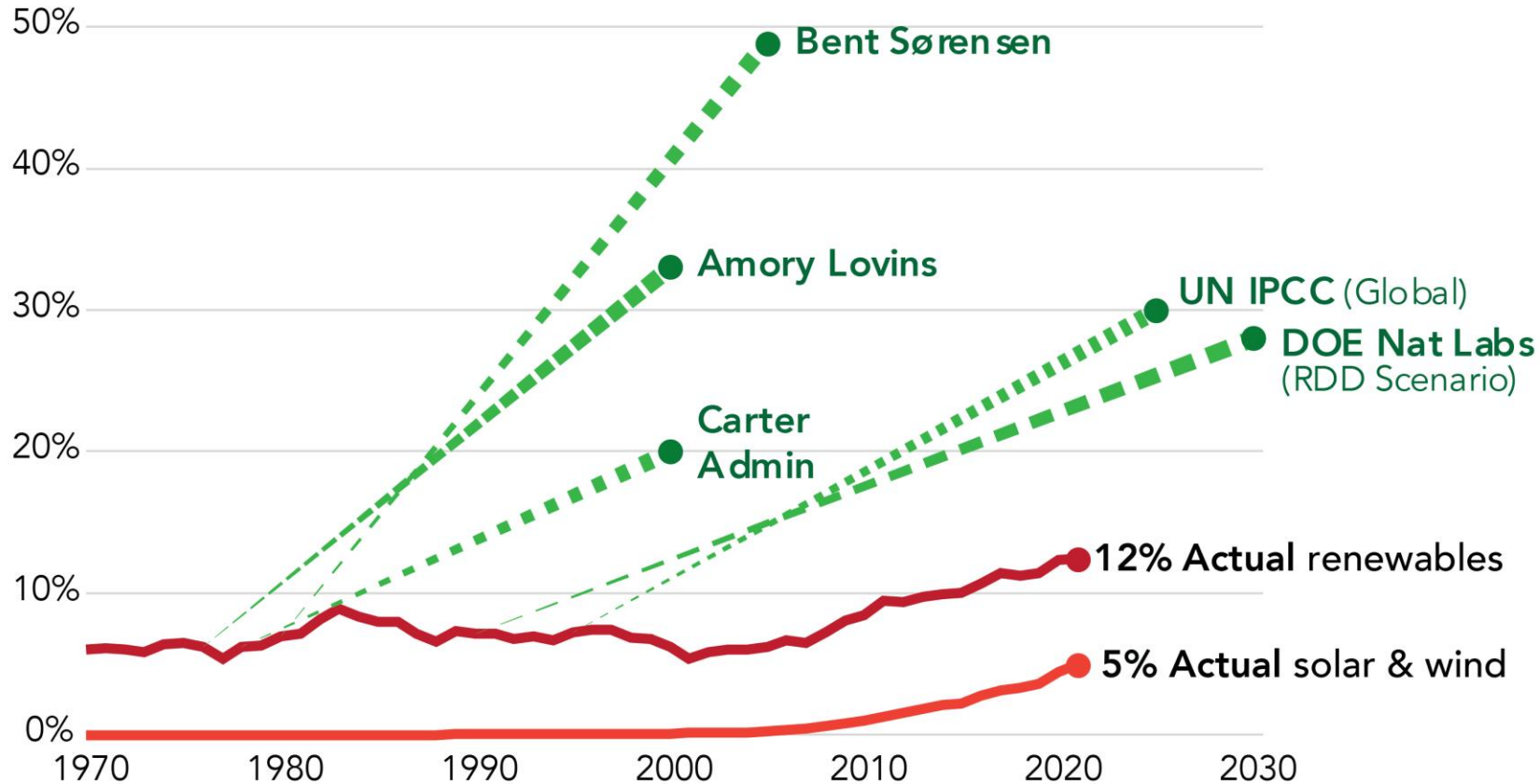
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Photo: Pixabay

Ambition vs. Reality

Share of Renewables in U.S. Primary Energy Demand (1970-2021)



Sources: Vaclav Smil (original chart from *JPMorgan 2021 Annual Energy Paper*); Amory Lovins, "Energy Strategy: The Road Not Taken?" (1976); "President Jimmy Carter's Remarks at White House Solar Panel Dedication Ceremony, 1979"; DOE, *The Potential of Renewable Energy: An Interlaboratory White Paper* (1990); IPCC *Second Assessment: Climate Change* 1995.
Note: Renewables include wind, solar, hydropower, geothermal, biomass.



- In recent years, there has been a resurgence of "net zero" scenarios and government targets, with most of the future energy supply expected to come from solar and wind.
- History has taught us that ambition doesn't always match reality. There have been a number of ambitious scenarios and targets for renewable energy production in the U.S. over the past several decades.
- Many of these scenarios were unable to come to fruition, and many more are almost certain to fail in the future, as the share of renewables in the overall U.S. energy supply remains low (as of 2021, all renewables: 12% and solar & wind alone: 5%).