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Striking the balance

How and where will oil and gas producers deploy their cash?

A report on investment choices and strategies of global upstream oil and gas producers by the Deloitte Research Center for Energy & Industrials

August 2022



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Executive summary: Investing in the future of energy

Recession worries and energy policy shifts present downside risks to energy markets.

But disrupted trade flows and ongoing financial discipline of O&G companies, along with low inventories and spare capacity, could limit significant downside despite volatility in energy prices.

Over the next decade, O&G companies could have a key role in striking the balance between energy security and energy transition, while helping commercialize essential low-carbon technologies.

Backed by strong financial health and discipline, oil and gas (O&G) companies can play a big role in accelerating and securing the energy transition

Global O&G
upstream likely to
generate highestever **US\$1.4 trillion** in free
cash flows in 2022.1

O&G industry's financial health is excellent at 20% leverage and 4%-6% of dividend yield.²

US shales can potentially become **debt-free** by early 2024 if prices stay strong and discipline prevails.³

Global upstream likely to generate up to US\$1.5 trillion in surplus cash by 2030, after meeting all its cash priorities.4

How big is this surplus? Enough to fund and balance both low-carbon and core O&G priorities in this decade.⁵

70% of the surplus could be generated by 2024, making it an inflection point for investment in new energy solutions.⁶

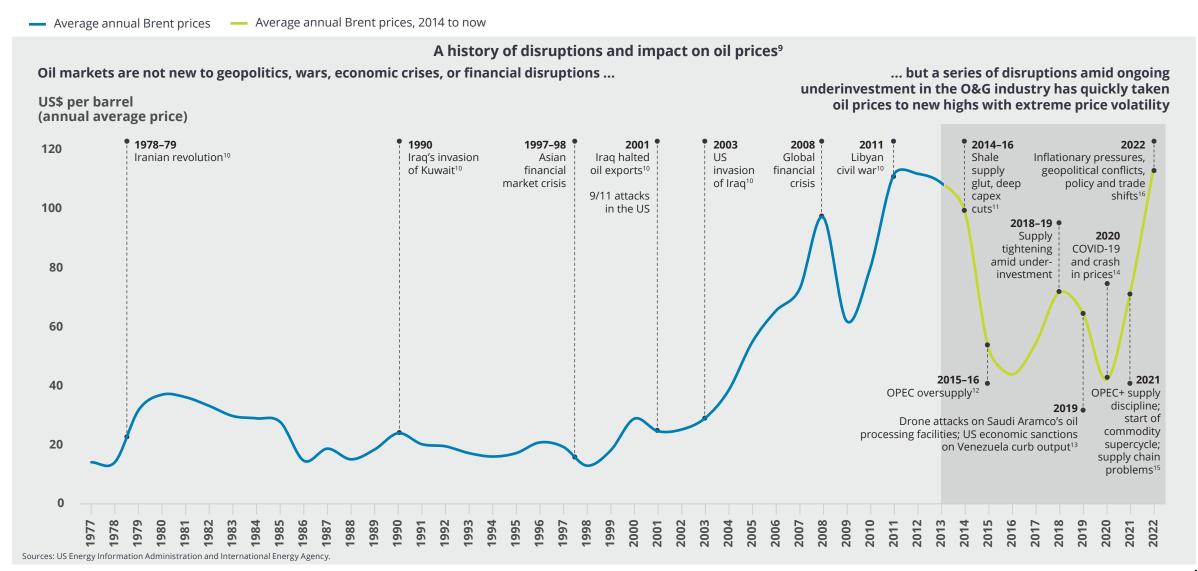
Low-carbon capex as a percentage of total capex of global upstream could reach 30% by 2030 in certain scenarios, from the current 5%.7

Going green can reduce the overall internal rate of return (IRR) of an O&G company by 2% to 4.5%. Is the tradeoff significant?8

Notes: Please refer to sources and citations at the end for more details. Also, the analysis excludes the impact of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, a bill passed by both chambers of Congress in August 2022. The bill contains a wide array of subsidies, taxes, credits, and pricing reforms, each with varying impacts on households and businesses. Additionally, the bill contains several energy, environment, and climate-related provisions that may influence production, cost competitiveness, profitability, tax payouts, and investment and share buyback decisions of US O&G companies. For more details, refer: The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

A series of disruptions amid ongoing underinvestment ...

Oil prices have risen sharply and remain highly volatile as ongoing disruption exacerbates the underinvestment problem



... triggering a readjustment in the broader energy market ...

Existing energy narratives, corporate priorities, and trade relationships are undergoing a massive shift

⊙ Natural gas prices outpacing oil prices in Europe

Disrupted trade flows have spurred European natural gas prices to 8–10 times that of the United States and higher than oil in energy equivalent terms.¹⁷

• Widening margins between the US, European, and Asian refiners

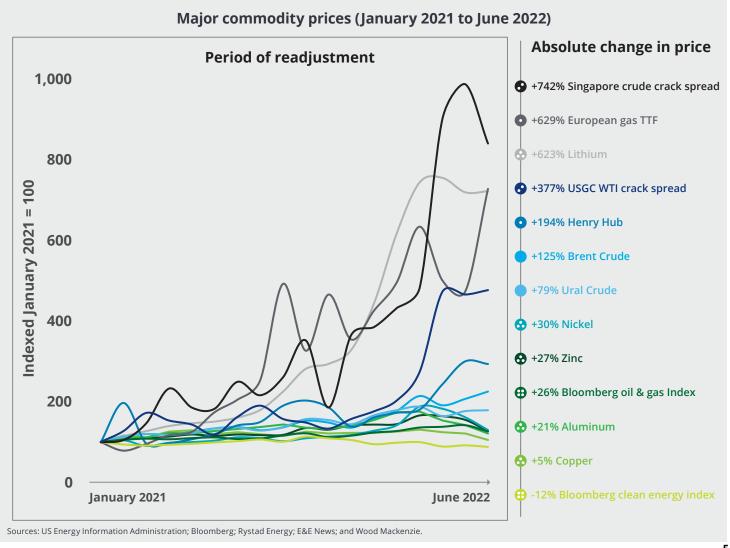
Differential feedstock pricing (Russia's crude to Asia is at a significant discount)¹⁸ and changes in gasoline taxes and energy subsidies have led to a significant divergence in downstream prices and profitability worldwide.¹⁹

Energy transition faces energy security risks

Limited supply of key materials, high raw material prices, and ongoing supply chain disruption are adding pressure on renewable project economics, which are already characterized by single-digit IRRs.²⁰

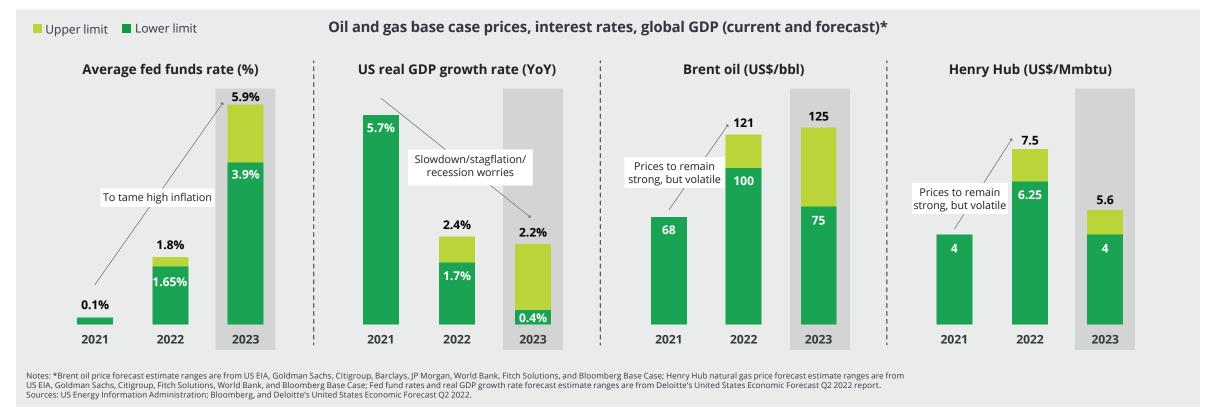
® Resource industries gaining interest of investors

Postpandemic recovery amid compressed oil price cycle supported by active capital management have crowned resource industries stocks as top market performers in 2021 and 2022 YTD.²¹



... which is likely to keep prices high for a while

Despite recessionary fears, higher short-term prices are driven by the underlying supply crunch and trade flow disruption



2021

- Economic activity recovered²²
- O&G capex remained muted
- Travel and consumption rebounded²³
- Supply chain disruptions persisted²⁴

2022

- Geopolitical driven supply constraints²⁵
- Low levels of oil and gas reserves²⁶
- Tightening monetary policy sparking recession concerns²⁷
- Rising LNG demand to keep natural gas prices high²⁸
- Rerouted trade flows²⁹

2023

- Economic slowdown or recession worries
- Continued O&G supply and trade flow constraints
- Tight US Federal monetary policy³⁰
- Uncertainty limits energy investment

The result: O&G producers set to report highestever free cash flows of US\$1.4 trillion in 2022

Left axis: — Indexed WTI prices

— Indexed capex

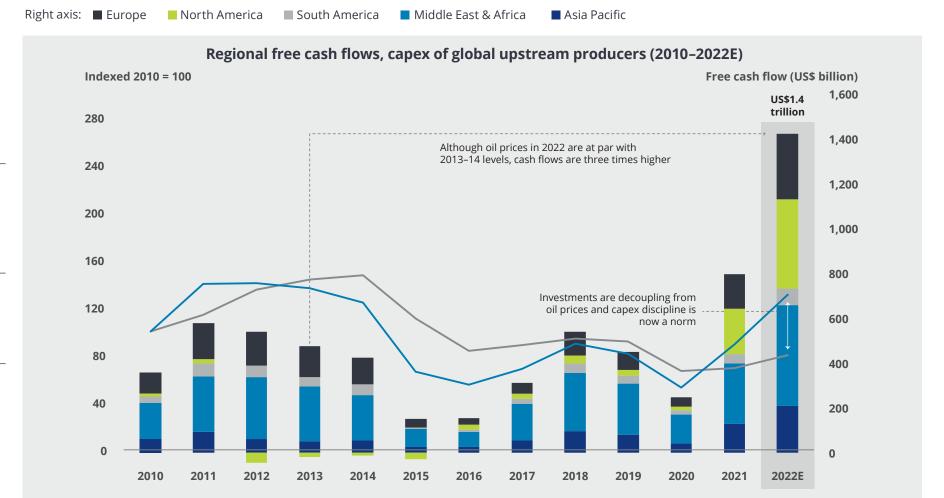
High prices and financial discipline could lead to as much as a three-fold jump in the industry's cash flows

The industry has been running ahead of the oil price cycle—for instance, it generated approximately US\$793 billion of **free cash flows in 2021**, **three times higher** than the previous high price period of 2013–14.³¹

Capital discipline is now a practiced norm for most in the industry. Despite oil prices recovering by about 70% in 2021 YoY, capex growth was below 10%.³²

Global upstream producers are projected to generate **record free cash flows of US\$1.4 trillion in 2022** (Brent at US\$106/bbl assumed) in 2022.³³

Regional share of cash flows is shifting from Middle East & African producers (above 50% in 2010–20 vs. 30% in 2021–22) toward North American producers.³⁴



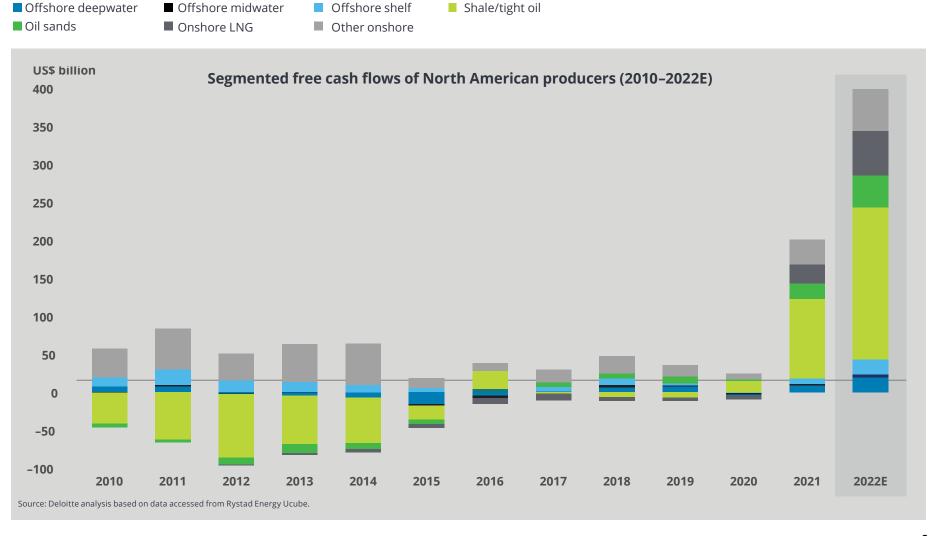
Notes: Free cash flows are operating cash flows minus capex of global O&G upstream companies (US\$ billion). The analysis excludes the impact of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, a bill passed by both chambers of Congress in August 2022. The bill contains a wide array of subsidies, taxes, credits, and pricing reforms, each with varying impacts on households and businesses. Additionally, the bill contains several energy, environment, and climate-related provisions that may influence production, cost competitiveness, profitability, tax payouts, and investment and share buyback decisions of US O&G companies. For more details, refer: The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Source: Deloitte analysis based on data accessed from Rystad Energy Ucube and US Energy Information Administration.

North American upstream to generate US\$600 billion free cash flow in 2021–22, primarily led by shales

The North American upstream industry cumulatively generated only US\$47 billion in free cash flows over the last decade (2010–2020) due to losses in shale plays.³⁵

However, the industry is expected to generate **US\$600 billion in free cash flows just between 2021–2022, a 13-time quantum jump** over the cumulative cash flows made between 2010–2020.³⁶

Shale producers, which generated negative cash flows in nine out of the last 10 years, will likely witness a record free cash flow in 2021–2022 that could overcome the decade-long loss of US\$300 billion.³⁷



Since 2014, the industry has been reducing debt, increasing efficiency, and practicing capital discipline

From reducing debt to practicing capital discipline and prioritizing shareholder returns

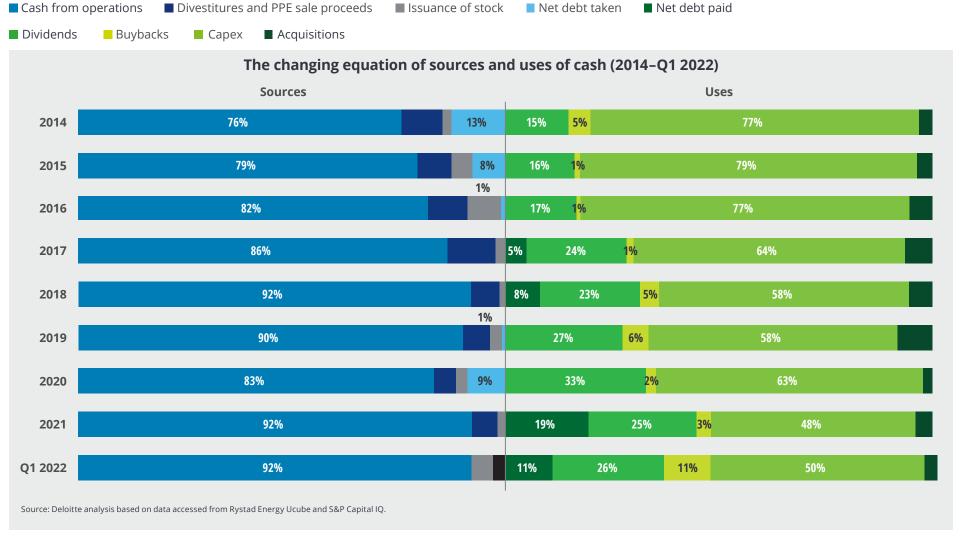


Cash from operations funded over 90% of inflows in 2021 (vs. ~75% in 2014)³⁸

Favorable debt equation: Net debt is at the lowest in recent years with the debt equation shifting positively³⁹

Prioritized shareholder returns: Returns have become a key priority, up to about 30% in recent years (vs. 15–17% in 2013–15)⁴⁰

Cautious/paced capital deployment: Capex intensity
consistently reduced YoY (77%
pre-2016 to less than 50% in
2022)⁴¹



The O&G industry is strongly positioned due to its healthy financial state and industry-leading returns

40%-135%*

shareholder growth of O&G subsectors between 2021 and June 2022,⁴² reflecting renewed market appraisal.

4%-6%

dividend yield, the highest among all industries over the last three years.⁴⁴ 20%

leverage ratio in 2021, the best in the history of upstream industry.⁴³

US\$275 billion

free cash flows for US shale producers in 2022– 2023, which could make the industry debt-free* by 2024.⁴⁵

*Note: Assuming maintained capital discipline.

Sources: Deloitte analysis based on data accessed from Rystad Energy Upstream Ucube and S&P Capital IQ.

Investing for an uncertain future

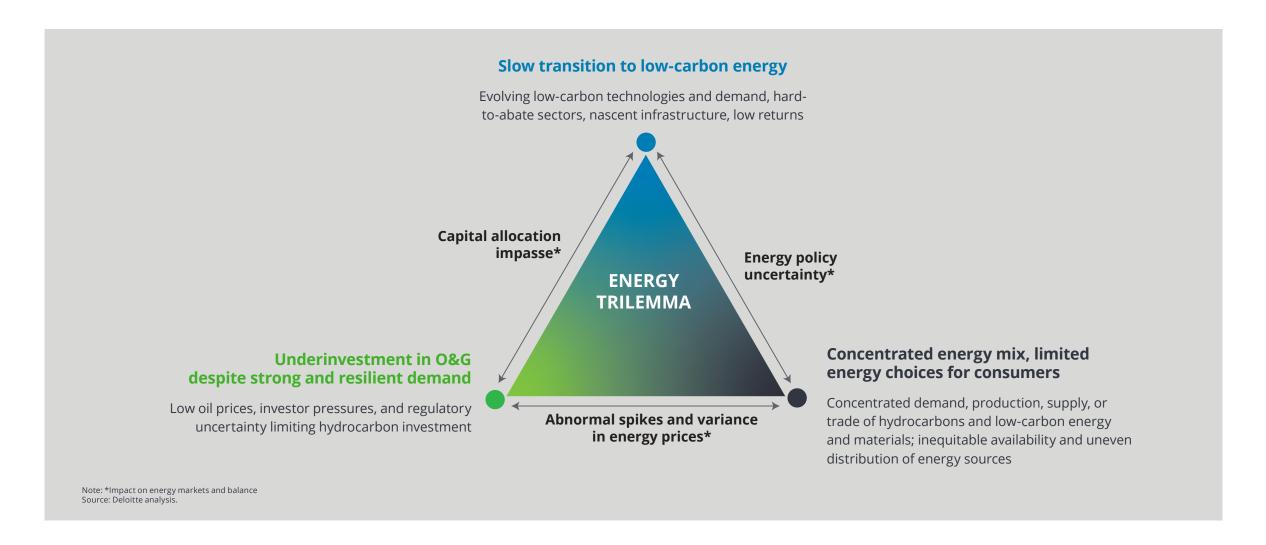
Faced with record-high cash flows, O&G companies have decisions to make—where to invest, and how much.

But the future path is not easy due to critical uncertainties, including price volatility and supply and trade disruption in the long road to a low-carbon world.



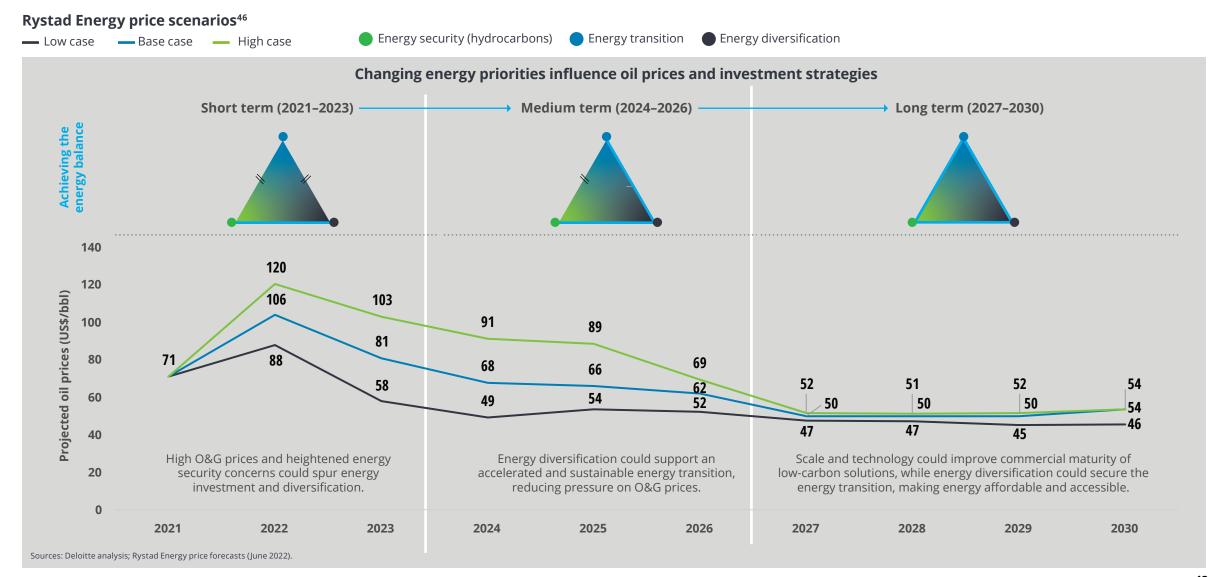
The ongoing energy trilemma is complicating investment decision-making for O&G companies

Evolving questions around energy transition, security, and diversification are creating a "trilemma" of concerns



Solving the puzzle is possible, but it will take time

High oil prices could spur short-term energy investment and diversification, while a clean, secure energy mix could reduce long-term prices



Balancing priorities

Would a maintained, disciplined capex program amid a high oil price environment help the industry deliver on its priorities?

US\$3.6 trillion is the projected hydrocarbon capex at base price^ to maintain operations and generate significant cash flows during 2022–2030.47

Significant investments are required to strike a careful energy balance, but they would be competing with growing priorities for cash irrespective of changes in oil prices

	Priorities*						
Oil prices	Low-carbon growth	Shareholder payouts	Buybacks	Debt repayment			
Strong	Accelerate 个	Accelerate 个	Maintain)	Reduce V			
Weak	Accelerate 个	Maintain ->	Accelerate 🔨	Accelerate ↑			

Notes: *Growing priorities are majorly applicable for public, nongovernment-owned companies such as IOCs and public E&Ps mainly based out of the United States and may differ for NOCs with differing priorities. For more details on the split between capex and cash flows between company types, refer to the Appendix; ^Rystad's base case scenario is covered in the previous page. Source: Deloitte analysis.

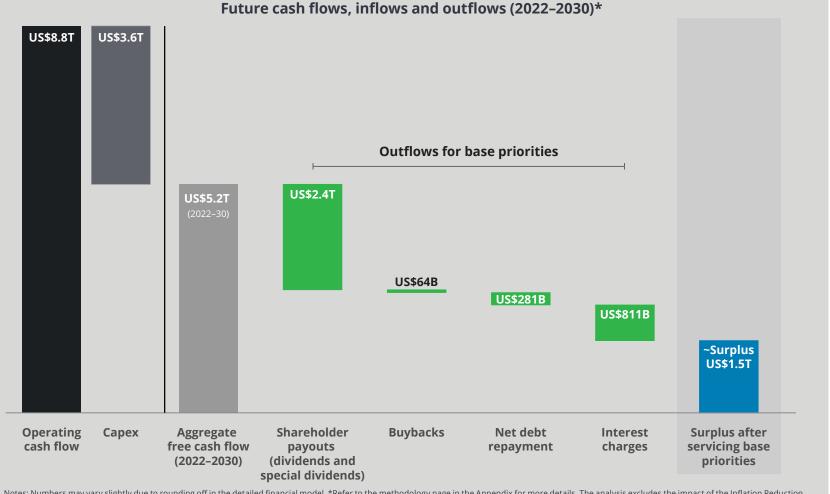
After meeting all priorities, global O&G could still have a cash surplus of US\$1.5T between 2022-2030

Of the estimated free cash flows of US\$5.2T, about 70% would go toward rewarding shareholders and strengthening the balance sheet

The global upstream industry is expected to generate US\$5.2 trillion in free cash flow by 2030 after taking care of core hydrocarbon capex requirements.⁴⁸

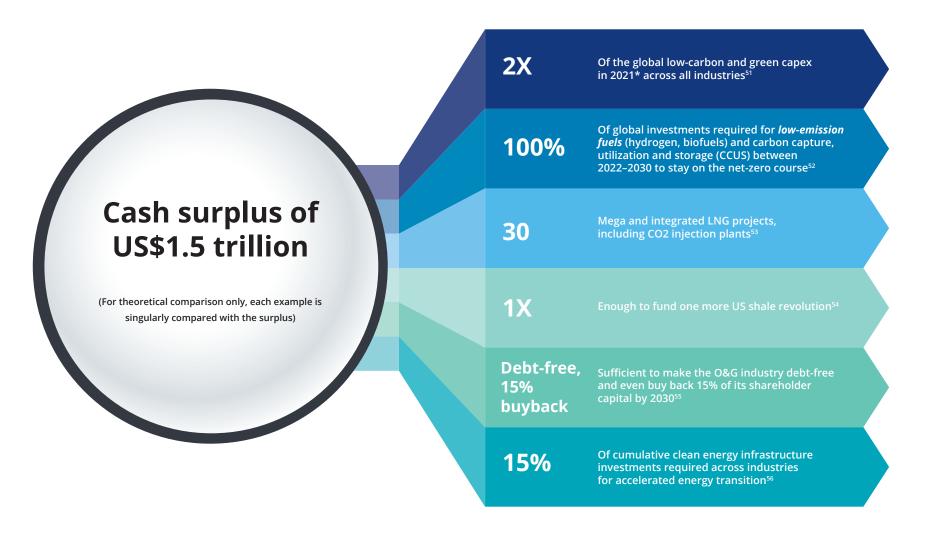
Base corporate financial priorities such as shareholder payouts, buybacks, debt repayment, and interest charges are expected to take up about 70% (US\$3.7 trillion) of the future cash flow.⁴⁹

Even after taking care of all priorities, global upstream is likely to have a cash surplus balance of about US\$1.5 trillion between 2022 to 2030.⁵⁰



Notes: Numbers may vary slightly due to rounding off in the detailed financial model. *Refer to the methodology page in the Appendix for more details. The analysis excludes the impact of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, a bill passed by both chambers of Congress in August 2022. The bill contains a wide array of subsidies, taxes, credits, and pricing reforms, each with varying impacts on households and businesses. Additionally, the bill contains several energy, environment, and climate-related provisions that may influence production, cost competitiveness, profitability, tax payouts, and investment and share buyback decisions of US O&G companies. For more details, refer: The inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Source: Deloitte analysis based on data from Rystad Energy Ucube database.

How big is the projected cash surplus of US\$1.5 trillion?



How would an O&G organization actually deploy its surplus?

Sensitivity of hydrocarbon profits to market risk (scenarios)

Extreme economic conditions and an unfavorable regulatory stance would cut into the surplus

Impact on the US\$1.5 trillion surplus (recent headwinds)

-US\$125 billion*

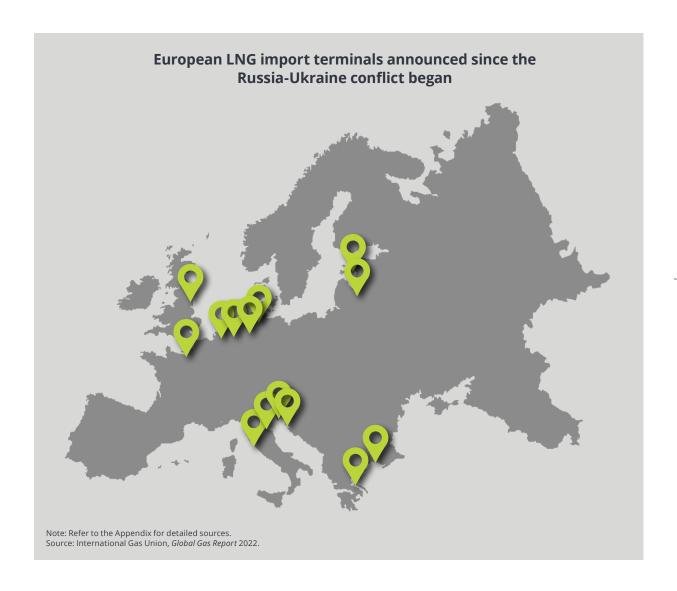
if US Fed rates increase by an additional 1% over and above the assumed increase of 2.5% in 2022 and 2023⁵⁷

-US\$650 billion*

if crude oil and natural gas prices fall to projections before Russia's invasion of Ukraine⁵⁸

Notes: *Assumes direct impact on pretax cash flows with other things equal. Also, the analysis excludes the impact of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) of 2022, a bill passed by both chambers of Congress in August 2022. The bill contains a wide array of subsidies, taxes, credits, and pricing reforms, each with varying impacts on households and businesses. Additionally, the bill contains several energy, environment, and climate-related provisions that may influence production, cost competitiveness, profitability, tax payouts, and investment and share buyback decisions of US Companies. For more details, refer: The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Sources: Deloitte analysis; S&P Capital IQ.

But the renewed focus on natural gas for energy security and decarbonization could limit major downsides to hydrocarbon markets



Enabling energy security

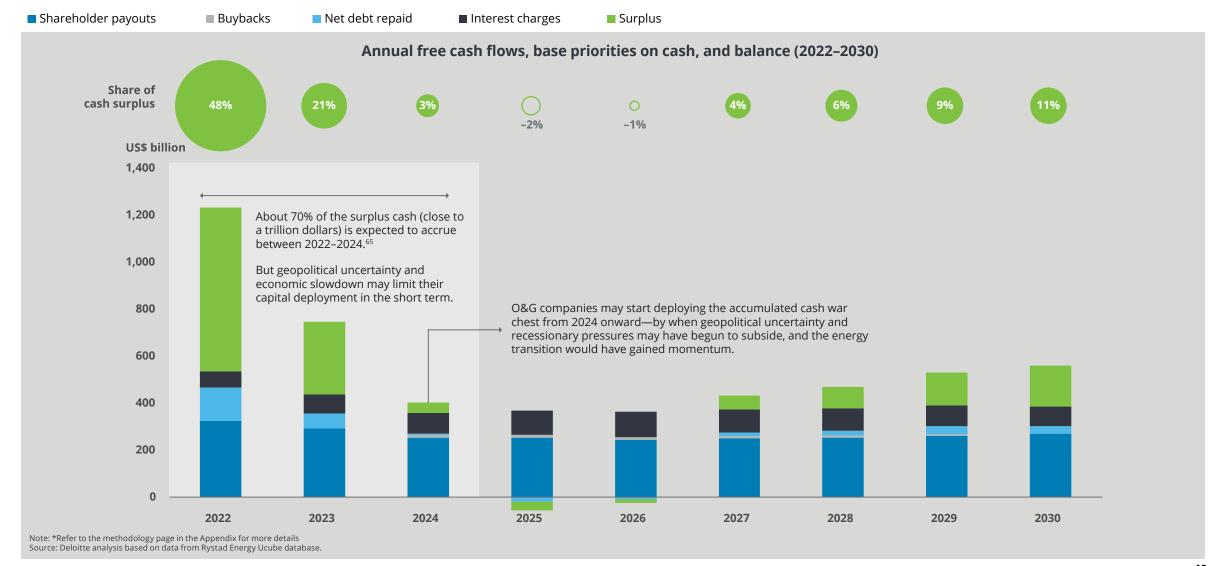
- Europe is increasingly relying on imported natural gas for energy security, shifting focus from pipelines to LNG terminals (15+ new import terminals proposed in Europe since February 2022).⁵⁹
- Major capacity expansions are being planned across top LNG exporters, including the United States, which aims to increase production by at least 1.5 times by 2030.⁶⁰
- Rising natural gas demand is also driving exploration and production (E&P)
 activity across Africa that is estimated to result in a 30% rise in gas production
 by the end of the decade.⁶¹

Ensuring energy decarbonization

- Natural gas is a viable low-emission fuel source, especially for developing nations aiming for electrification, but volatile and high natural gas prices could occasionally incentivize fuel switching toward coal.⁶²
- Natural gas, along with CCUS, supports deeper decarbonization of hard-toabate industrial sectors, which utilize fossil fuels to run high-temperature processes economically.⁶³
- Some major national oil companies (NOCs) are utilizing natural gas to produce low-carbon fuels such as ammonia and hydrogen.⁶⁴

2024 will likely be an investment inflection point for the O&G industry

About 70% of the O&G industry's projected US\$1.5T cash surplus will likely be generated by 2024



Commitment to a low-carbon world was already gaining momentum

Over the past five years, O&G companies have been accelerating their low-carbon investment commitments by reducing emissions at source, investing in carbon management technologies to develop the ecosystem, and boosting renewable power generation and electrifying transportation.

50% reduction

in direct carbon emissions (scope 1) over the last three years by select O&G majors⁶⁶

75% of global

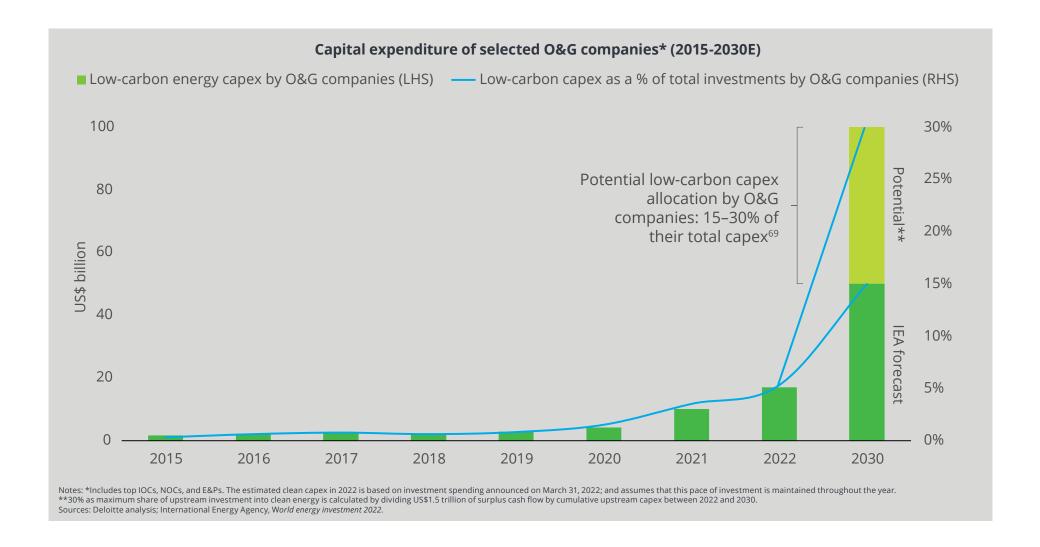
CCUS investment in 2021 made by O&G companies⁶⁷

10.5 GW

operating renewable capacity of O&G companies in 2021, with a 100% growth over the last three years⁶⁸

What could be the low-carbon capex share of O&G companies by 2030?

The industry's low-carbon capex could see new momentum, technically raising the share to 30% by 2030



The trade-off in low-carbon investments

The question: Is this tradeoff worth pursuing?

A 30% low-carbon capex allocation by 2030 could mean a hit of 2%-4.5% to the overall corporate IRR of an O&G company

	Impact on corporate IRR (scenarios) ⁷⁰
Low-carbon capex as	

a percentage of total investable amount	BASE/business as usual	Economical green	High energy prices
(2022–2030)	O&G: Base (US\$45 by 2030, Avg IRR: 20%) Renewables: Current (Avg IRR: 8%)*	O&G: Base (US\$45 by 2030, Avg IRR: 20%) Renewables: Beneficial (Avg IRR: 12%)	O&G: High (US\$80, Avg. IRR: 31%) Renewables: Rewarding (Avg IRR: 15%)
0%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
5% (current)	-0.45%	-0.35%	-1.13%
10%	-0.90%	-0.70%	-2.17%
15% (potential)^	-1.25%	-1.00%	-3.02%
20%	-1.56%	-1.22%	-3.71%
25%	-1.83%	-1.43%	-4.26%
30% (highest)**	-2.01%	-1.56%	-4.61%

Notes: Assumes existing regulatory and environmental policies.

* Current Avg IRR of renewables is based on returns of utility-scale projects. IRRs of solar, wind, and offshore wind projects vary significantly.

[^] Potential low-carbon capex share allocation by O&G companies by 2030 if entire cash surplus of US\$1.5 trillion is invested in clean energy.

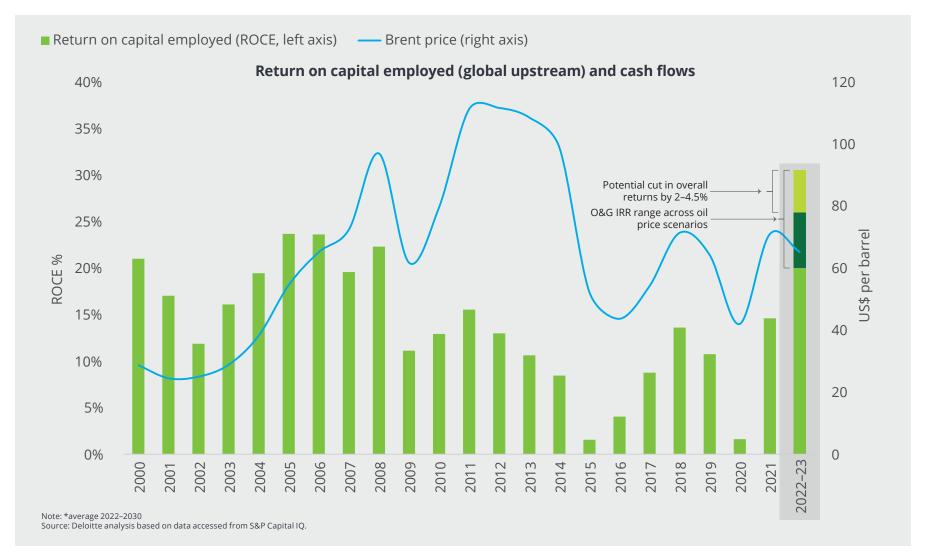
^{**}If the entire projected surplus of US\$1.5 trillion is invested in green energy businesses. Source: Deloitte analysis.

Does giving away a bit of IRR for lower-emissions investments have a bigger benefit than cost for companies?

Even after adjusting for a drop in corporate returns by 2%–4.5%, the industry's overall return profile appears strong and close to previous highs.⁷¹

Benefits of "investing in low-carbon business":

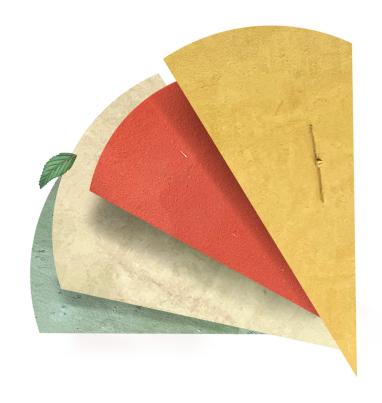
- 1. Enabling regulatory environment
- 2. Lower emissions profile
- 3. Higher revenue growth potential
- 4. Business model innovation
- 5. Supportive shareholders
- 6. Access to green environment, social, and governance (ESG) funds/investors



Range of investment choices

As lower-carbon investments take center stage, how and where companies choose to play will depend on which "archetype"* they most identify with—hydrocarbon stalwarts, low-carbon producers, green followers, or net-zero pioneers—and how the broader green ecosystem evolves.

How will each of these archetypes approach and deploy the US\$1.5 trillion surplus?



^{*}For more details on the spectrum of O&G archetypes, read our previous research, Positioning for green: Oil and gas business in a low-carbon world.

Multiple pathways to deploy cash across the spectrum, from low-carbon O&G to green energy

Each company archetype* should play complementary, and not conflicting roles to make the new energy system efficient

CCS denotes carbon capture and storage technology

Source: Deloitte analysis.

Not an	Low	Medium	High
investment	priority	priority	priority
priority	priority	priority	priority

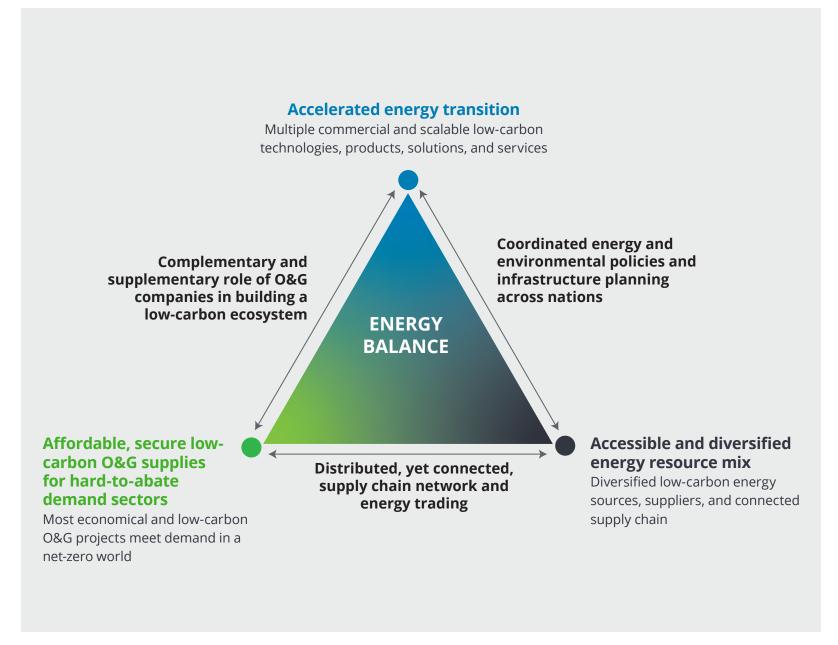
		Archetypes ⁷² *							
		Hydrocarbon stalwarts	Low-carbon producers	Green followers	Net-zero pioneers				
		Gain market share in hydrocarbons business with the least costs and risks	Build a lean, decarbonized, & optimal hydrocarbon portfolio	Pace into low-carbon business once technologies commercially mature	Divest most of their hydrocarbon business, first movers into green				
nyarocarbons)	Solar	Invest via sovereign wealth		Operationalize and scale in- progress utility-scale projects	Build scalable positions in renewables by making ther economical and developing strong decentralized end- customer base				
	Onshore wind	funds to align with national and broader energy goals	Favor buying green power, as against producing and selling it, apart from that developed	Invest cautiously due to rising competition from utilities and specialists					
,	Offshore wind		for captive power usage	Invest by leveraging operational synergies with upstream	Start building new position in less competitive, engineering and tech- oriented plays				
	Green fuels (hydrogen, ammonia)	Invest to build a circular economy in downstream		Build and own a centralized, differentiated, and connected	Engage in partnerships for hydrogen derivatives				
9	CCS^+ clean fuels	Foster public-private partnerships to develop infrastructure	Invest primarily for a CO2 offset strategy	green ecosystem to both store and sell carbon	Take minority stakes in larg scale CCS projects				
Resources	Mobility solutions	Elevate retail experience and invest in EV infrastructure		Part of a wider commitment	Move investment along the electrification value chain				
	Biofuel/bioenergy			to provide a range of lower- carbon transport options	License and/or build partnerships for setting up biomass refineries				
	Hydrocarbons	Develop low-cost, most competitive O&G projects	Digitize to decarbonize and specialize	Initiate structural cost reductions and reduce carbon intensity	Maintain marginal position for cash flow support				

The balanced lowcarbon world

Affordable and accessible hydrocarbons, especially for hard-to-abate sectors and when the broader demand is still transitioning, are necessary to strike the right balance for a low-carbon economy.

A healthy and disciplined O&G industry could overcome the energy underinvestment and supply concentration issue and enable an accelerated energy transition.

The pace and direction of this transition hinges on a supportive regulatory and stable policy environment, coordinated alliances across the low-carbon ecosystem, and innovative business models complementing core values and capabilities.



APPENDIX



Methodology

Assessment of surplus cash

Parameter	Source	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Oil price forecast (base, US\$/bbl)	Rystad	106	75	54	51	52	55	57	59	60
Operating cash flows (A)	Rystad	A bottom-up estimate for all assets of a company at the above base case oil price scenario								
Maintenance capex (B1)	Rystad	A bottom-u	p estimate fo	r all "producii	ng assets in 2	2022" of a com	npany at base	e case oil pric	e scenario	
Growth capex (B2)	Rystad	A bottom-u	p estimate fo	r all "nonprod	ducing assets	in 2022" of a	company at	base case oil	price scenario	0
Free cash flows (A-B=C)	Formula	Operating o	ash flows (O	CF) minus cap	ex is equal to	FCF				
Dividends (E)**	Capital IQ, Deloitte	 If operating cash flows is negative, no dividends If operating cash flows in CY is > PY, 2% annual growth rate over the past five-year average dividends* If operating cash flows in CY is < PY, 0.5% annual growth rate over the past five-year average dividends* *Subject to a maximum of distributable cash (operating cash flows-maintenance capex)/operating cash flows 								
Special dividends (F)**	Capital IQ, Deloitte	 Special dividends kick in if leverage ratio is below 25% and oil prices trade above US\$60/bbl Special dividend ratio is 20% of incremental free cash flows (FCF base case minus FCF at US\$60) 								
Buybacks (G)***	Capital IQ, Deloitte	 Buybacks kick in if oil price is below US\$60/bbl and FCF minus dividends is greater than zero Buyback proportion is past 5-year average multiplied by (CY FCF / LY FCF) 								
Unlevered surplus cash (C-F-F-G=H)	Formula	Free cash flows minus (dividends, special dividends, and buybacks)								
Debt repayment (I)^	Capital IQ, Deloitte	 If unlevered surplus is negative, then debt increases by unlevered cash surplus If unlevered surplus is positive and PY leverage ratio is <25%, then debt reduces by 1/7th of unlevered surplus If unlevered surplus is positive and PY leverage ratio is >25%, then debt reduces by 1/5th of unlevered surplus 								
Interest charges (J)^	Capital IQ, Deloitte	Assumes "global average" interest rate increases by 1% in 2022, 1.5% in 2023, and stays flat until 2030								
Adjusted surplus cash (H-I-J)	Formula	Unlevered of	cash flows mi	nus debt payı	ment minus i	nterest paym	ent			

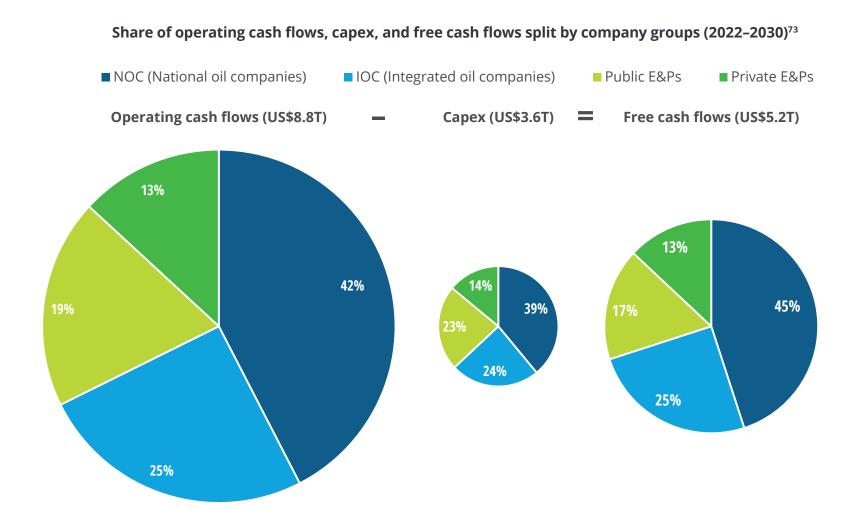
Notes: Small-sized companies having production below 5 kboed in 2022 have been excluded for the purpose of this analysis

** Dividends by an unlisted NOC is ascertained using aggregated dividend proportion of listed companies on its FCF; dividends are not considered for unlisted private E&Ps; Common and special dividends for IOCs have been adjusted to proportionately reflect their upstream segments.

^{***} Buybacks are not considered for unlisted upstream companies (NOCs and E&Ps).

[^] Debt repayment and interest charges for an unlisted upstream company are ascertained using the aggregate proportion of listed companies on its FCF.

Operating cash flows, capex, and free cash flow share by company types



Funding a sizeable share of the total green pie

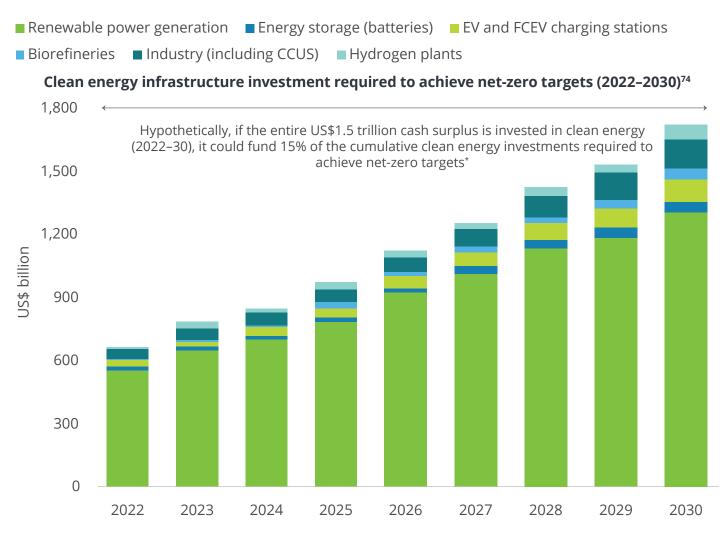
The O&G industry could effectively undertake 15% of the total clean energy infrastructure investment required for net-zero targets over the next eight years

Rising focus on energy security, energy transition, and energy diversification driving a new era for clean energy investments.

US\$10.3 trillion of cumulative investments in clean energy infrastructure is estimated between 2022 and 2030.⁷⁵

Infrastructure investments for power generation dominates with an average share of 80% of clean energy infrastructure until 2030.⁷⁶

Biorefineries and hydrogen plants expected to grow fastest with a CAGR of 33% and 28% respectively, between 2022 and 2030.⁷⁷



O&G companies have a lot to offer in the energy transition

Tapping existing capabilities of O&G companies to unlock synergies for green energy space

Engineering and project management capabilities and experience. Leveraging large-scale engineering and project management capabilities and experience helps upscale while reducing the costs of green technologies.⁷⁸

Subsurface expertise and infrastructure planning expertise.

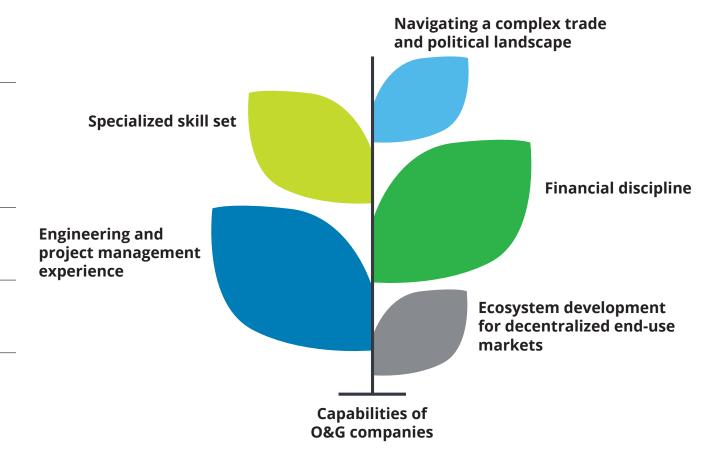
Specialized upstream skills, including geological and geophysical knowledge, guiding selection of underground carbon storage sites while also supporting geothermal production.⁷⁹ Moreover, expertise in pipeline and associated infrastructure supports hydrogen and carbon transfers.⁸⁰

Well-versed in navigating complex trade and political landscape. Prior experience in working with international governments by overcoming political, cultural, and trade barriers.

A long history of shareholder focus and economic returns. Stringent capital discipline showcased by O&G companies could help boost the returns of renewable projects.⁸¹

Developing centralized and decentralized end-use markets.

Establishing ecosystems for green energy markets aids in coordinating across decentralized and fragmented end-use markets.



Endnotes

- 1. Deloitte analysis based on data accessed from Rystad Energy Ucube Upstream database, June 2022.
- 2. Deloitte analysis based on data accessed from S&P Capital IQ, July 2022.
- 3. Deloitte analysis; Rystad Energy Ucube Upstream.
- 4. Deloitte analysis; S&P Capital IQ; and Rystad Energy Ucube Upstream.
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. Ibid.
- 7. Ibid.
- 8. Ibid.
- 9. US Energy Information Administration, Crude oil spot prices, accessed July 2022.
- 10. International Energy Agency (IEA), Response system for oil supply emergencies, February 2012.
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