

Are leasing companies advising clients to go electric?

An undercover investigation by Transport & Environment (T&E) scrutinising the sales strategies of leasing companies in France and Germany





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November 2023

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1. Introduction

1.1. Leasing companies claim they steer consumers towards electric cars

Transport & Environment (T&E) has shown that leasing companies claim to be green leaders, driving the transition to electric cars¹. Not only in terms of their overall strategy and commitments but also in the way they are advising their clients (i.e. fleet managers) when leasing new cars.

“To accompany our customers on all their daily journeys, we offer them a whole range of solutions and services to facilitate low-carbon mobility. We advise and encourage them to electrify their vehicle fleets and use alternative mobility solutions.”

Sarah ROUSSEL,
Director General d'Arval France
(Translated from France CSR report 2023,
13/07/23)

“Mobilize Financial Services offers innovative services and digital experiences which allow customers to reduce their usage cost while accessing a greener mobility.”

Mobilize Financial Services
(Business report, 27/07/23)

“On a mission to support our customers in their energy transition. As a mobility manager, one of ALD Automotive's missions is to encourage companies to include more clean vehicles in their fleet.”

**Translated from ALD Automotive
press release
(14/12/22)**

T&E has commissioned a business intelligence research organisation to scrutinise if the latter is really the case: are leasing companies - as they claim publicly - promoting battery electric cars (BEV) when advising their consumers?

¹<https://www.transportenvironment.org/discover/leasing-giants-called-out-for-greenwashing-and-low-ambition-on-electric-cars-in-new-investigation/>

1.2. T&E undercover investigation

The business intelligence research organisation created profiles of fictive companies that want to lease cars for their employees. The profiles of these companies and their business case were designed in a way that would make a switch to electric vehicles very feasible: mileage of less than 100 kilometres a day, undefined budget, flexibility on car models, geographical location in large urban centres, etc. (for more details see the [methodology](#)).

This was the starting point for 29 'mystery calls' made to sales staff of the top seven leasing companies in Europe (Volkswagen Financial Services, Mobilize Financial Services, ALD | LeasePlan², Arval, Leasys, Alphabet and Athlon). In France, 12 calls were conducted³; in Germany 17. Given the impossibility of conducting hundreds of telephone interviews to reach statistical significance, this investigation is qualitative research.

How were the telephone interviews conducted?

The calls started with the fictitious company describing their business case (fleet size, mileage required, etc.). The interviewee would conclude this introductory phase with an open question asking about the pros and cons of different car technologies and what the leasing company would advise. This ensured that the sales staff of the leasing company had the liberty and opportunity to promote the technology they would deem fit for purpose. The possibility of leasing an electric car was only raised by the investigators later in the interview when this technology was not spontaneously offered by the sales representatives when answering the open question.

What criteria did we use to assess their performance?

In assessing their performance per interview, the leasing company falls in one of the two following categories: i) the leasing company recommends a battery electric car; ii) the company does not recommend a battery electric car.

A leasing company would fall into the first category if they - replying to our open question - spontaneously and proactively advised and promoted a battery electric car. When leasing employees in their first reply remained neutral and left the choice to the consumer, offered other technologies alongside BEV or promoted other fuel types (i.e. diesel, petrol, hybrid and plug-in hybrid) as the better option, they fall into the second category.

² Rebranded Ayvens on 16 October 2023. In this release, we still refer to the name ALD Automotive | LeasePlan. The rollout of the new brand will happen in 2024.

³ Leasys and Alphabet sales representatives could not be reached in France, despite multiple attempts by investigators (online forms, e-mails and calls).

This approach was selected for the following three reasons: i) leasing companies publicly claim that they advise and steer consumers towards electric cars; ii) the business case i.e. very low mileage and no budgetary limits makes it very feasible for leasing companies to promote a BEV; and iii) the approach of starting with an open question, gives the leasing company the opportunity to decide themselves which technology they want to promote.

The following [section](#) of this briefing discusses the results of this investigation in France and Germany. [Section three](#) draws conclusions. A full description of the methodology can be found in [section four](#). T&E has also published the transcripts of all the interviews conducted. Please refer to the transcript [document](#).

2. Results

2.1. In France, leasing companies are not steering their customers to electric

2.1.1. Electric cars almost never promoted as the first option

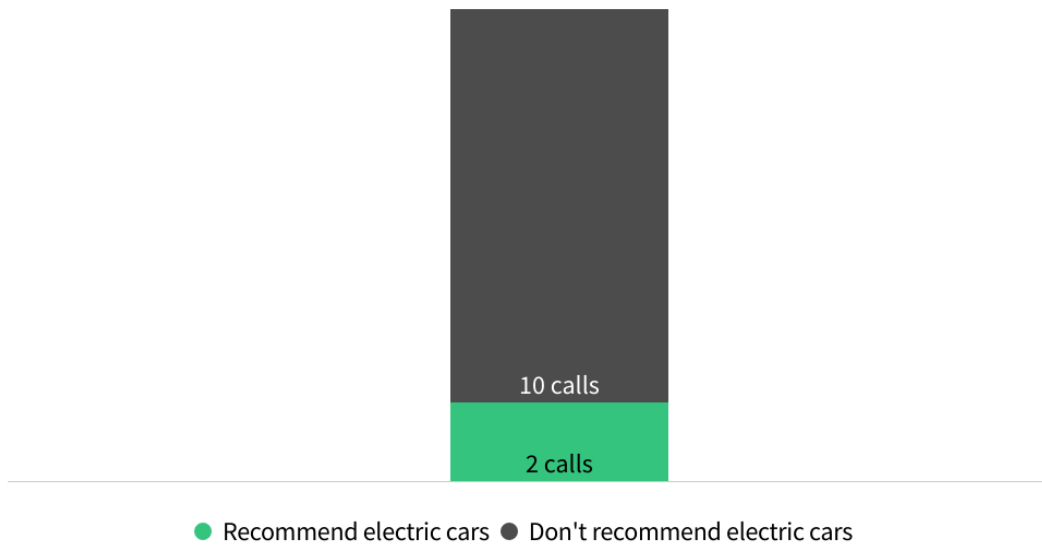
The first conclusion of the investigation is very clear: in France, the largest leasing companies are not actively advising their customers to make the transition to electric cars, despite the EV-friendly business case and the public statements of leasing companies.

In only 2 of the 12 calls the battery electric car was spontaneously and proactively offered as the best solution⁴.

⁴ These were the following interviews: Athlon (interview n°3) and ALD Automotive (interview n°17).

In France, leasing companies are not pushing customers to go electric

Car technology presented by sales representatives as the preferred solution for their client



Source: "Mystery calls" to sales representatives of the French branches of major leasing companies (ALD-Leaseplan, Arval, Athlon, Mobilize Financial Services et Volkswagen Financial Services).



Figure 1: Overview of whether leasing companies in France recommend customers to go electric

2.1.2. Leasing companies still promote climate-harming fossil fuel cars

A closer analysis of the transcripts and conversations reveals that sales staff frequently recommended customers to opt for a combustion engine car.

When advising their clients, they raise several arguments why a diesel or petrol car would still be a good option. More specifically they refer to the French CO₂ penalty system (the threshold in 2023 was 123 g/CO₂, which effectively exempts almost one out of every two new combustion engine cars⁵). In other words, they actively steer the consumer towards a climate-harming technology:

“The best compromise is still a petrol-based engine. Especially with the upcoming low emission zone.”

 **ALD**
Automotive |  LeasePlan
(11/09/2023)

“Today, it's quite possible to opt for a petrol car with a very low CO₂ level to avoid incurring a penalty, which is the case for the Taigo for example.”

VOLKSWAGEN
FINANCIAL SERVICES
THE KEY TO MOBILITY
(12/09/2023)

“For instance, if these cars were to be used by sales staff, that could mean long drives and use of highways. In that case, I could recommend a diesel engine which remains the most adapted technology for such a use.”

 **ALD**
Automotive |  LeasePlan
(11/09/2023)

Remarkably in multiple cases, leasing company sales staff in France did not make their consumers aware of the increasing number of economic, tax and regulatory restrictions on petrol and diesel cars. As a matter of fact, all of these factors increase the ownership costs of a fossil car and make it a more expensive technology than a BEV.

⁵ T&E analysis based on new internal combustion car registrations in 2022 ([AEE data](#)).

In France these elements include: i) the CO₂ penalty that will be tightened for diesel and petrol cars over the coming years; ii) less advantageous tax schemes in terms of benefit in kind and depreciation for combustion engine cars compared to battery electric and ; iii) the introduction of low-emission zones. By not raising these facts with their consumers, they steer fleet managers towards a technology that is not only climate harming but also more expensive than an electric car (see [section 2.3.2.](#)). In other words, in their consulting, they are not serving in the best interests of their clients.

Hybrid cars: do they have a future?

Hybrid cars (non plug-in), were often presented by the sales staff as ‘green’ and ‘clean’ cars. This is not the case. Hybrids are fossil cars equipped with a small electric engine that hardly brings any carbon and fuel savings as the electric engine has a very low range⁶. In a life cycle analysis, hybrids emit 4.1 times more CO₂ than electric cars (see Figure 2 below)⁷. In this paper these fuel types are therefore considered as fossil cars.

2.1.3. Plug-in hybrids are falsely promoted as a green solution

When the representatives of the business intelligence consultancy expressed interest in greening their fleet, plug-in hybrids (PHEV) were in the large majority of cases presented as the best option. This is in line with the fact that the share of PHEVs in the French leasing market is much higher than the private segment (15.3% vs 4.5%)⁸.

“My advice, honestly, go for hybrid engines.”

MØBILIZE

(06/09/2023)

“But it's true that when it comes to comfort, plug-in hybrids are much more popular, because you have the comfort of a clean vehicle with an electric battery on the one hand, but a full tank of petrol for a long journey on the other.”

ALD
Automotive | **LeasePlan**

(12/09/2023)

⁶ UFC-Que-Choisir, [Voitures hybrides: Comment choisir une voiture hybride ?](#)

⁷ T&E (2022), [How clean are electric cars?](#)

⁸ T&E calculations based on Dataforce (2023). New passenger car registrations H1 2023

Sales representatives of leasing companies present plug-in hybrids as a technology that is still “green” but also flexible (due to the petrol/diesel engine). What is striking is that the necessity to effectively charge the car is almost never raised by the leasing staff, unless specifically asked about it. On the contrary, customers are actually encouraged to use the car in fuel mode:

“When people take a hybrid, it also has the petrol part, so they don't need to recharge. It can take a long time to wait 30-45 minutes before setting off again, so you have the comfort of petrol for long journeys.”



(12/09/2023)

“With hybrids, it's not essential to install a charging point.”

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(06/09/2023)

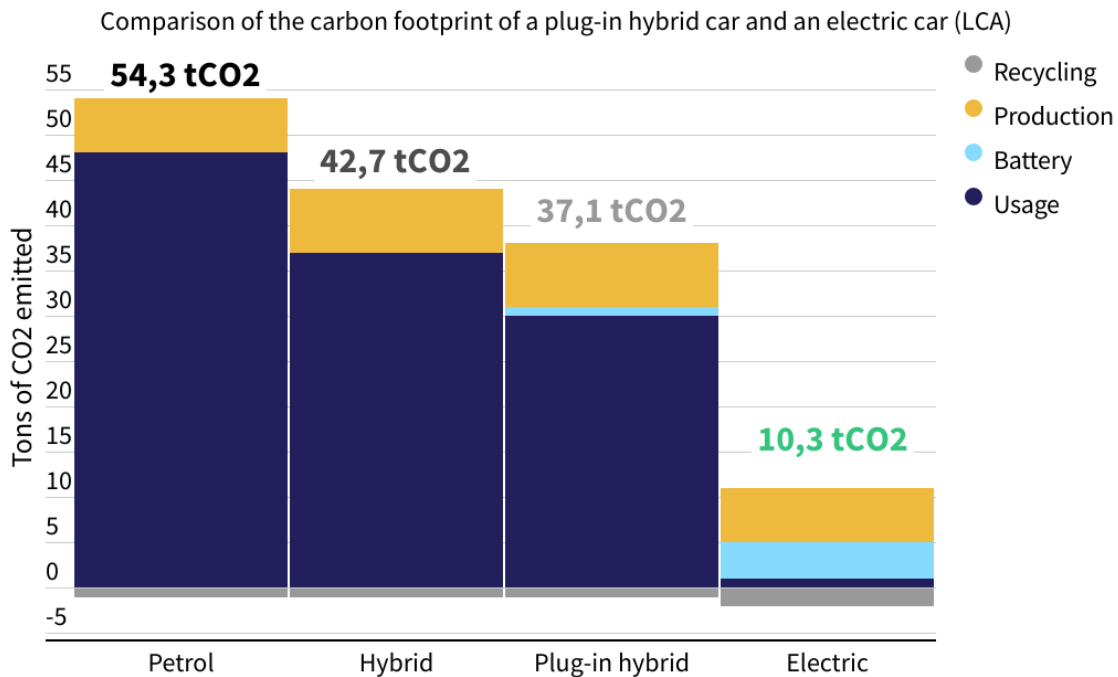
Multiple tests have shown that plug-in hybrid cars are fake electric vehicles with high real-world emissions. Research has found that employees predominantly drive plug-in hybrids in the combustion engine mode (around 85 to 89% of their mileage⁹). Moreover PHEV drivers have - through the fuel card system - no strong incentive to charge their car. Furthermore, these cars have several design problems: the small electric engine is insufficient during rapid acceleration and recharges very slowly, which further increases the share driven in internal combustion engine mode.

As a result, in real-world driving conditions, plug-in hybrids consume much more fuel than officially advertised and have emissions that are on average 3.6 times higher than battery electric cars¹⁰.

⁹ ICCT (2022), [Real-world usage of PHEVs in Europe: A 2022 update on fuel consumption, electric driving, and CO2 emissions](#).

¹⁰ T&E (2022), [How clean are electric cars?](#)

The future of cars is electric



Source : T&E (2022), How clean are electric cars?

Note: Comparison under real-world driving conditions, for a medium-sized car driving in France in 2022.

Figure 2: Comparison of the carbon footprints of different engine types in life cycle analysis.

Due to their high purchase price, low fuel efficiency, high maintenance costs and unfavourable taxation compared to battery electric cars, **the ownership costs of plug-in hybrids are much higher than a battery electric car.** What is striking, is that even leasing companies like Arval, ALD Automotive or Leaseplan (the last two now having merged under the name of Ayvens) openly communicate that ownership costs of petrol, hybrid and plug-in hybrids are higher than battery electric cars (see [section 2.3.2.](#) below).

Just as with diesel and petrol cars, leasing employees are explicitly and in multiple cases strongly advising their consumers to opt for a technology that from a total cost of ownership point is more costly than a BEV and in reality not a green technology. In other words, they are steering consumers towards a technology that is financially not the best option.

2.2. Sales staff point to risks of switching to battery electric cars

When leasing companies discussed the battery electric car as a possibility - mainly because the business intelligence consultancy had to explicitly ask about this option - in multiple conversations the employees were actively stressing the risks of switching to BEVs rather than actively promoting it. This is in contradiction with the interviews in Germany where in several cases BEVs are actively promoted (see [section 2.4.](#)). In some interviews French leasing staff even raised outdated - and to some extent false - facts about electric cars.

The sales representatives of the leasing companies allude to the fact that the time is not yet ripe to switch to battery electric cars raising challenges with regards to charging and vehicle range. This type of discourse directly contradicts with the official communication of leasing companies, who claim to assist and actively encourage their clients to transition to electric vehicles by offering them dedicated advice, solutions, and services (see [section 1.1.](#)). Upon closer analysis of the transcripts, the arguments used by sales staff reflect a lack of understanding of e-mobility. In their advice, leasing employees don't take into account the improved performance of the latest electric car models, in terms of range and fast charging.

“For a full electric vehicle, a 58 kW battery, at a household socket it's going to take you 30 hours to recharge it to 100%. It's not the same thing as just filling up with petrol at the petrol station.”

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(06/09/2023)

“But as you told me the cars were destined to salespersons... electric cars require to be charged, so you need to be equipped with charging points. Additionally the autonomy might not be enough for a salesperson.”

MØBILIZE
(06/09/2023)

“Because a full electric car for someone who has never used it... might be a step back for your employees.”

ATHLON
(06/09/2023)

With the increase in battery range and the development of fast charging, the battery electric car models entering the market today can meet the needs of the vast majority of companies and employees (e.g. in terms of mileage). Looking for example at the Netherlands: the uptake of battery electric cars in the corporate market (22% compared to 9% in France¹¹) is much higher while at the same time their annual mileage (28 000 km¹²) is the same as France (25 879 km¹³). What is possible in the Netherlands should also be feasible in France. Moreover, also in France there are already companies with a high fleet penetration of electric cars (EDF, La Poste, Uber, La Française des Jeux, FIRALP, etc.¹⁴). These include service cars which have high mileages. Furthermore, France has one of the best charging networks in Europe¹⁵, and the vast majority of charging occurs at employees' homes or on company premises¹⁶.

2.3. French sales staff are poorly trained and informed

The qualitative analysis of the transcripts shows that sales staff in France are not well informed on topics such as car taxation and total cost of ownership. Both are important elements when deciding which type of car to lease.

2.3.1. Incomplete information on car taxation

First and foremost, hybrid cars (both plug-in and full hybrids) are almost consistently presented by the sales staff as having the same tax benefits as electric vehicles, which would justify leasing one:

“Plug-in hybrid cars offer the same tax benefits as the electric ones.”


(06/09/2023)

“The French Government is doing everything to make sure companies shift their fleet to hybrid cars. The tax on company vehicles (TVS) is 0%, the registration documents are free, and the fiscal integration is really interesting.”

 **ARVAL**
BNP PARIBAS GROUP
(12/09/2023)

¹¹ T&E analysis based on new car registrations in 2022 (DataForce data).

¹² Statista (2023), Average annual mileage on car lease contracts in the Netherlands in 2021.

¹³ SesamLLD (2022). [Faits et chiffres](#).

¹⁴ You can consult the full list of these companies in the [T&E study](#) from March 2023 on the greening of large fleets.

¹⁵ Avere France (2023), [\[Baromètre\] 109 856 points de recharge ouverts au public fin septembre 2023](#).

¹⁶ Enedis (2023), [Utilisation et recharge. Enquête comportementale auprès des utilisateurs de véhicules électriques](#).

“The French Government is doing everything to make sure companies shift their fleet to hybrid cars. The vehicle tax for companies (TVS) is 0%, the registration documents are free, and the fiscal integration is really interesting.”



(12/09/2023)

These claims are partially incorrect: the tax rates for benefit-in-kind as well as the depreciation rates are less favourable for hybrids (plug-in and mild hybrids) than for electric cars^{17,18}. By misrepresenting these facts, consumers are losing out on essential information that can strongly influence the total cost of ownership of the cars they will lease and operate.

Moreover, leasing employees are not serving the best interest of their clients as they are not taking into account the fiscal implications in the longer term. For example as part of the 2024 French Finance Law, hybrid cars (plug-ins and mild hybrids) will no longer benefit from exemptions on annual taxes for company cars (formerly known as the *Taxe sur les Véhicules de Société* or TVS). While this last point may not have been formally passed into law at the time of the investigation, the government had already announced its intention to come forward with this reform. This information was never mentioned by the leasing company representatives during the calls, even though this influences the total cost of ownership of their cars - which have an ownership period of three to four years - substantially.

¹⁷ URSSAF (2022), [Avantages en nature : les mesures favorables aux véhicules électriques sont prolongées](#)

¹⁸ Engie (2023), [Fiscalité : tout savoir sur l'amortissement d'un véhicule électrique](#)

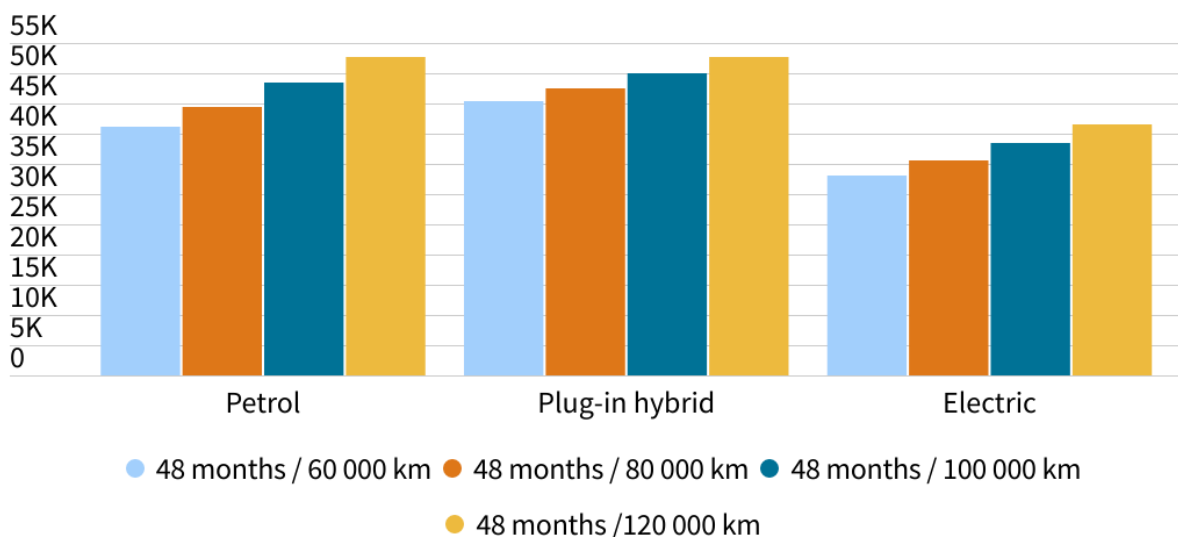
2.3.2. Lack of understanding of the total cost of ownership (TCO)

In none of the interviews, leasing employees spontaneously raised the fact that from a total cost of ownership (TCO) perspective, battery electric cars are the cheapest option. TCO refers to the total cost paid for the use of a car over the entire leasing period, taking into account all elements (monthly rent, fuel or electricity, maintenance, insurance, taxation etc.). This is a fundamental factor in choosing one car technology over the other. Without considering TCO, the economic and financial picture is incomplete and skewed.

Several studies - including analysis by the leasing companies themselves such as ALD Automotive, LeasePlan and Arval - confirm that notwithstanding the higher upfront costs, the total cost of ownership of battery electric cars in France is the lowest compared to PHEVs and petrol cars¹⁹.

Leasing companies demonstrate that electric cars have the best total cost of ownership in the market

Comparison of total cost of ownership (TCO) for a Renault Mégane petrol, plug-in hybrid, and electric vehicle leased in France for various lease durations and different mileages.



Source: Arval Mobility Observatory (2023), TCO Scope. The following costs are included: monthly lease and its components, energy, and taxation (registration certificate, incentives, VAT, employer social charges related to fringe benefits, non-deductible depreciations, annual taxes on CO2 emissions).

Figure 3: Comparison of total cost of ownership for different car technologies in long-term leasing.

Even though this information is crucial for consumers to make a well-informed choice, this information is not - or wrongly - communicated. In fact, sales staff warn their customers that the monthly lease rate for an electric car is higher than for other fuel types, while they should actually stress that looking at the overall costs (taxation, fuel savings, etc.) the battery electric car is the cheapest option for a company.

¹⁹ LeasePlan (2022), [Car Cost Index 2022](#) ; ALD Automotive (2022), [Mobility Guide 2022](#) ; Arval (2023), [TCO Scope 2023](#).

“Electrics are more expensive.”



(15/09/2023)

“TCO? Sorry, we don’t have more information. [...] Electric cars will be a bit more expensive.”



(11/09/2023)

“With the electric, we are really on the most expensive in terms of budget.”



(07/09/2023)

2.3.3. Environmental performance is never an arguments

What is striking, is the fact that climate, sustainability and lower fleet CO₂ emissions were never raised by the leasing staff as an argument to switch to electric. This is contradictory to the public statements of leasing companies claiming they want to take their responsibility in reducing transport emissions and fight climate change²⁰.

2.4. German leasing staff are more proactive on electromobility

2.4.1. Electric vehicles are often recommended as the best option

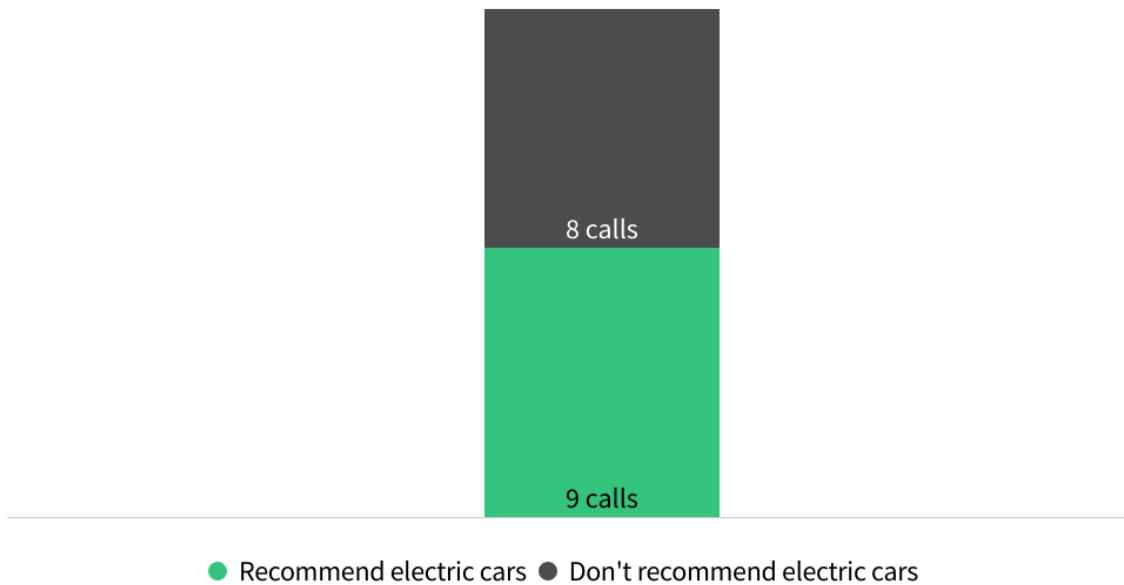
The investigation was also conducted in Germany and reveals that sales representatives from the German branches of the largest leasing companies are more committed to the transition towards electric vehicles than their counterparts in France.

²⁰ T&E (2023), [Stuck in the fossil age: Are car leasing companies in the EU green leaders or greenwashing?](#)



In Germany, leasing staff are starting to be proactive about BEV

Car technology presented by sales representatives as the preferred solution for their client.



Source: "Mystery calls" to sales representatives of the German branches of major leasing companies (ALD-Leaseplan, Alphabet, Arval, Athlon, Leasys, Mobilize Financial Services, and Volkswagen Financial Services).



Figure 4: Overview of whether leasing companies in France recommend customers to go electric

In 9 out of 17 calls, the German sales representatives proactively and spontaneously advised and encouraged the client to opt for the battery electric car²¹:

“But if you're open to all options, I would definitely suggest electric cars. I've been in sales for years, and the trend is clearly moving towards e-mobility, and the advantages are becoming more evident.”



(05/09/2023)

“Yes, of course, e-cars are on the rise. Put simply, on a per-kilometre basis, e-cars are much cheaper. I have to be careful here because, even though I don't have a driving license myself, I'm a huge fan of e-mobility [laughs].”



(11/09/2023)

²¹ These were the following interviews: Leasys (interview n°22), Volkswagen FS (interview n°23), Athlon (interview n°24), Leasys (interview n°34), Alphabet (interview n°36), ALD (interview n°38), Arval (interview n°40), Leasys (interview n°41) and Athlon (interview n°42).

It should be noted, however, that still in 8 of the 17 interviews, sales staff from the German branches of leasing companies remained neutral and did not use the opportunity to actively promote a BEV as the go-to technology, even though the use cases of the fictive companies should have prompted them to do so. In several cases, the sales staff - contrary to other calls - remained neutral or even proposed fossil fuel cars as an option.

“You need to bear in mind that there are now no state subsidies for electromobility anymore. This means that price is no longer the defining factor for the decision between electric and combustion vehicles. For the distances you mentioned I would suggest petrol over diesel, since the fuel savings with diesel would only be noticeable after 20,000km per year.”

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(08/09/2023)

“The PHEV would also be suitable for commuters, whereas gasoline would of course be more suitable for private use at the weekends, and more cost-effective for your employees if they are using them a lot privately, since filling up at stations is still more accessible.”

ALPHABET
(05/09/2023)

2.4.2. Plug-in hybrids referred to as a choice of the past

In several cases, employees of the German leasing branches - contrary to their French counterparts - explicitly advised against plug-in hybrids. In doing so, they stressed the downsides of a PHEV compared to a BEV, referring to factors such as worse TCO, higher maintenance costs and the fact that in many cases - as they are hardly charged - PHEVs are operated as fake electric cars.

“PHEVs have a smaller fuel tank and also a smaller battery. So for electric driving they have a range of about 40 km. That may be enough in the city, but for longer distances they are absolutely dependent on gasoline. In addition, in the vehicle both technologies are present so you have insanely high maintenance and repair costs in the long run.”

VOLKSWAGEN
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(12/09/2023)

“Plug-ins make in my opinion no longer any sense, because people don't know how to drive or use them properly. The internal battery is charged with the regular gasoline or diesel and this is then at the expense of fuel consumption, which then increases enormously. The next problem is also the maintenance costs. With plug-in hybrids, the problem is that there is not only the maintenance of the regular engine, but also the electric components. And that really hits the wallet.”

 **ALD**
Automotive |  LeasePlan
(11/09/2023)

2.4.3. German sales staff are better informed on electromobility

More generally, a more in-depth analysis of the conversations reveals that in multiple cases the employees are well informed about the cons but especially also the pros of switching to electric. Contrary to their French counterparts, they provided accurate information on taxation, maintenance costs, range TCO and why a BEV is the best option. In the examples below, sales staff explained the latest improvements of electric cars and what this means for performance:

“Apart from the fact that combustion engines are on the way out, the advantage of fully electric vehicles is obvious. Less maintenance, less cost and longer life.”



“Clear advantages [of electric cars] – lower maintenance costs. And zero CO2 emissions. But that goes without saying.”



3. Conclusions

3.1. Discrepancy between France and Germany

This investigation commissioned by T&E has highlighted the poor commercial support offered by leasing companies in France.

In the majority of the interviews, leasing staff continued to actively steer customers towards polluting cars. In doing so, the consumer is misinformed about the advantages of switching to electric (e.g. lower TCO compared to other car types). The risks of leasing a plug-in hybrid or diesel/petrol car (i.e. increase of tax rate over the next years, lower TCO, ...) are to a large extent neglected.

These results are contradictory to the statements made by leasing companies, which present themselves as the leaders in the transition to sustainable mobility and claim to be doing everything they can to steer customers towards battery electric cars (see section 1.1.).

In Germany on the other hand, our investigation shows that in the majority of the interviews, leasing employees are actively steering the customer towards a battery electric car. In doing so, leasing employees are in most cases well informed about the opportunities and benefits this will bring (e.g. lower TCO). However, still in 8 of the 17 interviews, the leasing staff - again contrary to the public statements of leasing companies to drive consumers towards electric - did not encourage the customer to opt for a BEV. Instead the leasing company remained neutral or offered other options such as PHEV and diesel/petrol cars.

3.2. Leasing companies can influence their customers' choices

This investigation sheds a light on leasing companies and their role in influencing the decision of consumers. Leasing companies are not the 'neutral intermediary' that is doing what the customer asks. The interviews make clear that leasing companies can play a very big role in actively influencing the purchase decision of their consumers and steer them towards a zero emission technology.

Looking at some of the positive cases in Germany, leasing companies can take a conscious decision to strongly encourage fleet managers in going electric by proactively promoting battery electric cars during their conversations. In almost all calls in France and multiple calls in Germany, leasing companies have failed to do so.

3.3. T&E calls on the leasing giants to put their money where their mouth is

The findings are problematic, particularly in France, by far the biggest market for the largest multi-brand leasing companies Ayvens and Arval (22% of their EU fleet)²².

Leasing companies are the giants of the automotive market. In Europe, half of all new cars are leased and their market share is forecasted to reach 70% in 2030. Their lack of commitment to electromobility is slowing down the transition to electric cars²³.

T&E is calling on the largest leasing companies to show real green leadership. Leasing companies should commit to stop leasing diesel and petrol cars latest by 2028. This commitment should also be translated in their sales strategies and consumer consulting. Likewise, T&E calls on the top seven leasing companies and the sector overall to publicly support proposals for tax and regulatory reforms at a national and EU level to further increase the demand for electric cars.

²² Latest available data by country from ALpD and Leaseplan 2022 annual report.

²³ T&E (2023), [Stuck in the fossil age: Are car leasing companies in the EU green leaders or greenwashing?](#)

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Methodology

Overview and objective

The aim of this investigation was to get a better understanding of the sales strategies of the top seven European leasing companies (Volkswagen Financial Services, Mobilize Financial Services, ALD-Leaseplan, Arval, Leasys, Alphabet and Athlon). Do they actively support and advise their customers to switch to battery electric cars?

T&E commissioned a business intelligence unit (whose name will not be revealed). This firm created three fictive company profiles and carried out several '*mystery calls*' to the sales representatives of these seven companies in France and Germany. For certain 'captive' leasing companies (notably Mobilize Financial Services and Volkswagen Financial Services), which do not necessarily have sales departments that can be contacted directly, the investigators called dealers that are connected to the leasing companies.

The research question of this investigation was the following: are leasing companies - as they claim - spontaneously and proactively recommending their consumers to opt for a battery electric car?

In order to answer this research question, we applied the following methodology: for each interview, the leasing company falls within one of the two following categories: i) the leasing company recommends a battery electric car; ii) the company does not recommend a battery electric car.

A leasing company would fall into the first category if they - replying to our open question - spontaneously and proactively advised and promoted a battery electric car. When leasing employees in their first reply remained neutral and left the choice to the consumer, offered other technologies alongside BEV or promoted other fuel types (i.e. diesel, petrol, hybrid and plug-in hybrid) as the better option, they fall into the second category.

We have decided to take this approach for our assessment because of the following three reasons: i) leasing companies publicly claim that they advise and steer consumers towards electric cars; ii) the business case i.e. very low mileage and no budgetary limits makes it very feasible for leasing companies to promote a BEV; and iii) the approach of starting with an open question, gives the leasing company the opportunity to decide themselves which technology they want to promote.

Please note that the investigation has been led in strict conformity with the local, national and international legislation.

Building the company profiles

In order to understand the differences in marketing strategies of leasing companies, three fictitious company profiles were established. These companies had different turnovers, car use cases, geographies, sectors of activity and number of employees. In all cases, the use cases were designed in a way that made the switch to battery electric vehicles very feasible. For more details, see below.

Profile n°1 - Multinational company	
Number of employees	60 employees at the Paris head office and 10 at the Munich office.
Description of the “cover story”	<p>The company decided that the management team would have company cars leased on a long-term basis, which would be used for both personal and business travel.</p> <p>In addition, as a multinational, the company is expanding its activities and is about to open a German subsidiary in Munich. The new management team will also have company cars available on long-term leases.</p> <p>The company is therefore carrying out market research in France and Germany to select the best car leasing offer. Prior to this, it carried out an internal survey to gain a better understanding of the management team's car use and requirements.</p>
Description of the use case	<p>The company is looking to lease 15 cars in France and 5 cars in Germany (company cars, segments C or D), for a period of 36 months, including maintenance, tyres and insurance. The estimated requirements are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuting (daily) and weekends: 10 to 40 km per day. • Business trips (infrequent): 60 to 100 km per day. • Long holiday trips (exceptional): over 100 km. • Annual distance: 10,000 km / year.
Charging policy	<p>The company would like to ask the leasing company for advice on charging. Installing charging points in company car parks is one option. Allowing employees to charge at home is also an option, particularly for those who live in houses with individual car parks where it is possible to install home charging points. Providing employees with charging cards is also an option.</p>

Profile n°2 - Franco-German startup specialised in online media.	
Number of employees	Two founding partners (one French and one German) and 10 employees (5 in France and 5 in Germany).
Description of the “cover story”	<p>The two founding partners are currently developing a market entry strategy for a startup (registration is in progress), which will be based in Lyon and Frankfurt. They are inquiring about the lease of cars for visiting clients and partners.</p>

Description of the use case	<p>The company wants to lease 6 cars in France and 6 in Germany (company cars, segments C or D), for a duration of 36 months, including maintenance, tires, and insurance. The requirements are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commute (daily) and weekend trips: 10 to 40 km per day. ● Business trips: 60 to 100 km per day. ● Long trips for holidays (occasional): over 100 km. ● Annual mileage: 15,000 km / year.
Charging policy	<p>The company wishes to seek advice from the leasing company. Allowing employees to charge at home is considered an option, especially for those who live in houses with individual parking spaces where it is possible to install home charging stations. Providing employees with charging cards is also being considered.</p>

Profile n°3 - Independent broker representing an anonymous company

Number of employees	40 employees in Paris and 50 in Berlin.
Description of the use case	<p>The company already owns 12 cars and wants to provide its sales team with a new fleet of vehicles. This decision follows a survey conducted by the company, which showed that transitioning to long-term rental would be more cost-effective. Additionally, the company aims to use new vehicles in order to maintain a positive image and reduce maintenance costs.</p> <p>An independent insurance broker, specialised in the field, is assisting and advising the company. As the broker is not an automotive expert, he is conducting a market study with various leasing companies to find the offer best suited to the client's needs.</p> <p>An internal survey was conducted by the company to understand the current use cases and needs of the company's sales representatives.</p>
Description of the use case	<p>The company wants to lease 10 cars in France and 10 in Germany (company cars, parked on the company's premises, segments C or D), for a duration of 36 months, including maintenance, tires, and insurance. The estimated needs are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Business trips: 60 to 100 km per day. ● Annual mileage: 20,000 km per year.

Charging policy	The company wants to seek advice from the leasing company. Allowing employees to charge at home is considered an option, especially for those who live in houses with individual parking spaces where it is possible to install home charging stations. Providing employees with charging cards is also being considered.
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Development of three prototype call scripts

To guide the investigators in conducting interviews, a prototype script was developed. The objective of this script was to systematically start the conversation with an option question as this would allow leasing sales staff to freely provide their advice at the beginning of the call, without being steered towards a specific car technology.

In order to best reflect the mindset of leasing company clients towards electric cars and to test the reactions of leasing company sales representatives, three slightly different scenarios/next steps were developed. In the next step of the interview (i.e. after the open question was answered), the business consultancy followed different scenarios that would enable us to answer the secondary research questions that we identified ahead of the research. If plug-in hybrids were offered, the investigator would ask about the need to charge these cars.

The infographic below outlines the standard procedure followed during the interviews. It should be noted that - due to the fact that interviews cannot be 100% predicted - it was not always possible to strictly follow this procedure. However, the interviewers always followed the schedule as much as possible.

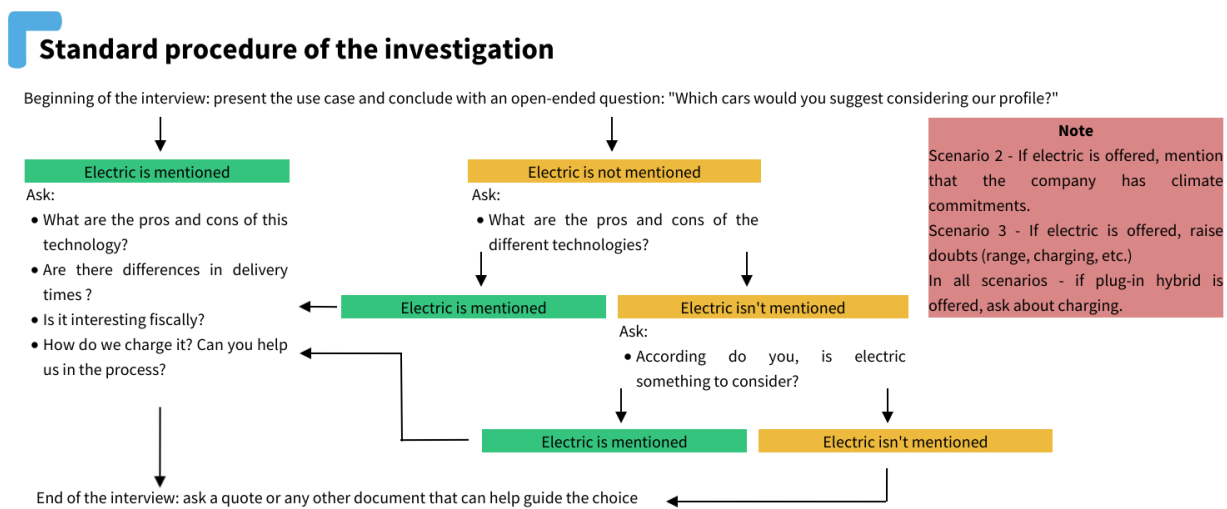


Figure 5 : Standard procedure of the investigation

Steps and timeline

The investigation was carried out in two phases:

1. Test phase (august 2023)

Three leasing companies were contacted to test the methodological approach. These three are not in the top seven that were subsequently analysed in the investigation. The insights gained from these tests allowed for the refining of company profiles and investigation scenarios.

2. Investigation phase (september 2023)

Summary of the investigation phase

The investigation took place from August 31st to September 20th. In total, 42 calls were planned, 21 in France and 21 in Germany - 3 calls per targeted leasing company in each of the two countries, in order to test all company profiles. Scenarios 2 and 3 ("climate commitments" and "doubts about electric") were to be used 12 times each (6 times in both countries) and the first scenario ("neutral" scenario) 18 times (9 times in both countries). Since the neutral scenario was considered closer to the current mindset of clients, it was supposed to be used more frequently.

However, some sales teams refused to engage in discussions with the investigators if they could not provide additional administrative and financial documents. Others never responded to the requests despite several attempts made to contact them (online forms, emails and calls). Ultimately, 32 calls were made (12 in France and 20 in Germany), of which 29 were long enough to extract usable data (12 in France and 17 in Germany). Out of these 29 calls, scenarios 1, 2, and 3 were respectively applied 12 times (6 times in France and 6 times in Germany), 9 times (4 times in France and 5 times in Germany), and 8 times (2 times in France and 6 times in Germany). The complete list of calls can be consulted below:

- France

Profile	Reference	Leasing company	Scenario	Date
Profile n°1	Interview 1	Leasys	Scenario 2	-
	Interview 2	Volkswagen	Scenario 2	12/09/2023
	Interview 3	Athlon	Scenario 1	15/09/2023
	Interview 4	Mobilize	Scenario 1	-
	Interview 5	Alphabet	Scenario 1	-
	Interview 6	ALD	Scenario 3	12/09/2023
	Interview 7	Arval	Scenario 3	-
Profile n°2	Interview 8	ALD	Scenario 2	11/09/2023
	Interview 9	Arval	Scenario 2	12/09/2023
	Interview 10	Alphabet	Scenario 1	-

	Interview 11	Athlon	Scenario 1	06/09/2023
	Interview 12	Mobilize	Scenario 1	07/09/2023
	Interview 13	Leasys	Scenario 3	-
	Interview 14	Volkswagen	Scenario 3	06/09/2023
Profile n°3	Interview 15	Alphabet	Scenario 2	-
	Interview 16	Mobilize	Scenario 2	11/09/2023
	Interview 17	ALD	Scenario 1	07/09/2023
	Interview 18	Volkswagen	Scenario 1	11/09/2023
	Interview 19	Arval	Scenario 1	15/09/2023
	Interview 20	Leasys	Scenario 3	-
	Interview 21	Athlon	Scenario 3	-

- Germany

Profile	Reference	Leasing company	Scenario	Date
Profile n°1	Interview 22	Leasys	Scenario 2	11/09/2023
	Interview 23	Volkswagen	Scenario 2	15/09/2023
	Interview 24	Athlon	Scenario 1	05/09/2023
	Interview 25	Mobilize	Scenario 1	15/09/2023 (not exploitable)
	Interview 26	Alphabet	Scenario 1	11/09/2023
	Interview 27	ALD	Scenario 3	11/09/2023
	Interview 28	Arval	Scenario 3	11/09/2023
	Profile n°2	Interview 29	ALD	Scenario 2
Interview 30		Arval	Scenario 2	11/09/2023 (not exploitable)
Interview 31		Alphabet	Scenario 1	05/09/2023
Interview 32		Athlon	Scenario 1	-
Interview 33		Mobilize	Scenario 1	12/09/2023
Interview 34		Leasys	Scenario 3	11/09/2023
Interview 35		Volkswagen	Scenario 3	08/09/2023
Profile n°3	Interview 36	Alphabet	Scenario 2	08/09/2023
	Interview 37	Mobilize	Scenario 2	08/09/2023
	Interview 38	ALD	Scenario 1	11/09/2023
	Interview 39	Volkswagen	Scenario 1	12/09/2023
	Interview 40	Arval	Scenario 1	08/09/2023
	Interview 41	Leasys	Scenario 3	12/09/2023
	Interview 42	Athlon	Scenario 3	11/09/2023

All conducted interviews were [transcribed in full](#), in their original language and in English. Please consult the transcription document.