CED Public Policy Watch
Weekly News Round-up
February 3, 2023

1. DEVELOPMENTS ON UKRAINE

Military developments: Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said that Ukraine expects a major offensive around the one-year anniversary of the invasion on February 24 involving several hundred thousand troops. The UK Ministry of Defence noted that there has been "some of the most intense shelling of the conflict" along the Dnipro River, including the city of Kherson, and Russia also attacked around Bakhmut. President Zelensky called the situation on the frontline "extremely acute," particularly in Donetsk.

Military aid: Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said that Ukraine expects to receive up to 120-140 tanks in what it describes as a "first wave" of shipments from 12 NATO countries, including up to 60 from Poland; another Ukrainian official said that 321 in total have been promised. Belgium announced a further €93.6 million for Ukraine, its largest ever military aid package. Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said additional funds from Norway's sovereign wealth fund, whose value has risen sharply with energy prices, will be used for military and civil aid to Ukraine. Australia and France, in a summit to patch up relations damaged after Australia canceled a $90 billion order for French nuclear submarines, agreed to joint manufacture of 155mm artillery shells for Ukraine. New German defense minister Boris Pistorius announced that Germany would raise defense spending to address the current situation and replenish military equipment. He added that it was a mistake for Germany to suspend compulsory military service in 2011.

Fighter jets: The President said that the US will not supply F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine; the Defense Department stated it would discuss the issue "very carefully" with NATO allies. The UK and Germany made similar statements; The Netherlands said it would examine a request for F-16s with "an open mind"; Poland is reportedly considering providing the jets, which would require several months of training by Ukrainian pilots to fly correctly, though Poland said that it would act "in full coordination" with NATO. French President Macron stated that any delivery of fighter jets could not be "escalatory" and "not be likely to hit Russian soil but purely to aid the resistance effort [.]" UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace noted that "I think what we know about all these demands is that . . . the initial response is no and it ends up being yes." Fighter jets would provide air cover for tanks and armored vehicles that NATO countries have provided.

Putin speech: Speaking in Volgograd, the now-renamed city of the World War II Stalingrad defense against Nazi forces, President Putin harshly criticized Germany for sending military aid to Ukraine and said that Russia faces "the ideology of Nazism in its modern form and manifestation again [which] directly threatens the security of our country," continuing a theme Russia has used to seek to justify the invasion.

Nuclear arms talks: On Monday, Russia warned that the New START Treaty could expire in February 2026 without a replacement because of what Russia termed the US effort to inflict "strategic defeat" on Russia. There is currently no schedule for resuming talks on a replacement treaty, which were suspended in November after Russia canceled a bilateral meeting. The treaty limits both the US and Russia to 1550 warheads delivered on intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine ballistic missiles, and heavy bombers. Expiration of the treaty would permit breakout above the current limits. The State Department responded that Russia is refusing to facilitate inspections in Russia as the treaty requires; "[t]here is nothing preventing Russian inspectors from traveling to the United States and conducting inspections."

Grain harvest estimate: Ukraine estimated that its 2023 grain harvest may fall from around 51 million tonnes to 49.5 million in 2023.

Anticorruption campaign: Ukraine continued its anti-corruption campaign, including a search of the property of an oligarch who supported President Zelensky, ahead of a summit with the EU; the director of the Ukrainian State Bureau of Investigation called the current corruption cases "just the beginning" and said corrupt officials were undermining Ukraine's "combat readiness." Ukraine will set up a new agency for infrastructure recovery, headed by current deputy infrastructure minister Mustafa Nayem.

Czech election: Petr Pavel, former Chairman of NATO's Military Committee, was elected President of the Czech Republic, defeating populist former Prime Minister Andrej Babis. Current President Milos Zeman had supported closer ties with Russia before the invasion of Ukraine. During the campaign, Pavel said that "I won't offer you pie in the sky, but instead I'll describe reality as it is," The President has some roles in government, notably naming judges to the constitutional court and commanding the armed forces. On Wednesday, Pavel said that Ukraine should join NATO once the war is over.

2. PRESIDENT, SPEAKER MEET ON DEBT CEILING

On Wednesday, the President and Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) met at the White House for over an hour to discuss the debt ceiling. Afterwards, McCarthy said that "[w]e both laid out some of our vision of where we want to get to. I can see where we can find common ground" and that he and the President had agreed to address the issue in a "responsible" way. However, the meeting is only the start of a series of negotiations that will likely continue for some time, particularly with McCarthy's very narrow House majority, some of whose members favor aggressive spending cuts beyond what the Senate is likely to accept. McCarthy had earlier said that he wants "to find a reasonable and responsible way that we can lift the debt ceiling but take control of this runaway spending," while noting that Social Security and Medicare cuts are "off the table." Republicans have not yet outlines specific spending cuts as part of "structural" fiscal reform; the President said he would release his budget March 9 and asked that McCarthy do the same. Also on Wednesday, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell endorsed Congressional action on the debt ceiling: "There's only one way forward here, and that is for Congress to raise the debt ceiling so that the United States government can pay all of its obligations when due. And any deviations from that path would be highly risky," adding that "no one should assume that the Fed can protect the economy from the consequences of failing to act in a timely manner."

3. FED RAISES RATES 25 BASIS POINTS, EXPECTS "A COUPLE" MORE

The Federal Reserve Wednesday increased interest rates 0.25 percent, the latest in a series of eight hikes but slower than the increases of a half point in December and 0.75 points in November for a total of 4.5 points over the last year. The Federal Open Market Committee also noted that it would "continue reducing its holdings of Treasury securities and agency debt and agency mortgage-backed securities." In his news conference following the decision, Powell stated "we're talking about a couple of more rate hikes" while noting that "the full effects of our rapid tightening are so far yet to be felt." In Powell's view, progress is being made on inflation but that work remains, commenting that inflation in core services ex-housing (or "super core" inflation) remained too high but that the trend in goods inflation was positive and relief in housing inflation was "in the pipeline." While Powell reiterated that he does not expect the Fed to cut rates in 2023, he found it "very reassuring" that "[t]he fact that people now do generally believe that it will come down, that'll be part of the process of getting it down. And it's a very positive thing." On the broader economy, Powell said that his "own assessment would be that growth would continue, positive growth will continue, but at a subdued pace as it did last year," signaling his view that slow growth, rather than a recession, in 2023 is most likely.

4. THE CONFERENCE BOARD CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX DECLINES IN JANUARY

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index® decreased in January following an upwardly revised increase in December 2022. The Index now stands at 107.1 (1985=100), down from 109.0 in December (an upward revision). The Present Situation Index—based on consumers' assessment of current business and labor market conditions—increased to 150.9 (1985=100) from 147.4 last month. The Expectations Index—based on consumers' short-term outlook for income, business, and labor market conditions—fell to 77.8 (1985=100) from 83.4 partially reversing its December gain. The Expectations Index is below 80 which often signals a recession within the next year. "Consumer confidence declined in January, but it remains above the level seen last July, lowest in 2022," said Ataman Ozyildirim, Senior Director, Economics at The Conference Board. "Consumer confidence fell the most for households earning less than $15,000 and for households aged under 35." "Consumers' assessment of present economic and labor market conditions improved at the start of 2023. However, the Expectations Index retreated in January reflecting their concerns about the economy over the next six months. Consumers were less upbeat about the short-term outlook for jobs. They also expect business conditions to worsen in the near term. Despite that, consumers expect their incomes to remain relatively stable in the months ahead. Meanwhile, purchasing plans for autos and appliances held steady, but fewer consumers are planning to buy a home—new or existing. Consumers' expectations for inflation ticked up slightly from

6.6 percent to 6.8 percent over the next 12 months, but inflation expectations are still down from its peak of 7.9 percent last seen in June."

5. MANUFACTURING SURVEYS DECLINE FOR THIRD MONTH

Two separate US manufacturing surveys, one by the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) and one by S&P Global, both showed a decline for January, the third consecutive month of decline after a long 28-month expansion. In the ISM data, most components measured were in contraction and the overall index read 47.4, below the neutral mark of 50 and the previous month's 48.4. This was the lowest mark since May 2020, which had an index of 43.5. The decline was led by new orders, a leading indicator, which were well into contraction territory at 42.5. The production index and prices index were also in decline territory, but employment remained in slight expansion. The S&P Global data, with an overall reading of 46.9, also recorded its lowest reading since May 2020. New orders, down for the eighth straight month, led the decline, with production following. S&P Global also showed very slightly increasing employment. However, unlike ISM, S&P Global showed slightly positive price pressures.

6. Q4 2022 EMPLOYMENT COST INDEX SHOWS ELEVATED BUT COOLING WAGE GROWTH

The Employment Cost Index report shows that wages and benefits continued to grow in Q4 2022. Compensation for private industry workers grew by 5.1 percent from the year prior, continuing to decelerate from 5.5 percent and 5.2 percent in Q2 and Q3. Growth in the cost of employee benefits also slowed to 4.8 percent. Wages rose fastest for occupations facing the greatest labor shortages: in-person service workers (including food services, cleaning, and personal care) grew by 7.0 percent over the last year while wages for transportation and production workers grew by 5.3 percent. The report indicates that the economy has passed peak wage growth, with forecasts from The Conference Board projecting an imminent recession in early 2023 that will lower labor demand. However, continued labor shortages are expected to persist into 2023. Nearly 85 percent of CEOs expect to increase wages by 3 percent or more over the next year according to The Conference Board CEO Confidence Survey, suggesting that wage growth will continue to be stronger than the last decade when it hovered between 2 to 3 percent.

7. INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS DECLINE SLIGHTLY

The Department of Labor reported Thursday that initial claims for unemployment insurance, a weekly indicator of labor market health, were 183,000 for the week ending January 28, a decrease of 3,000 from the previous week's unrevised level of 186,000. The 4-week moving average was 191,750, its lowest mark since May 2022. This level of claims is low by historical standards and well below the highs of 261,000 in July, reflecting continued labor market strength even as some leading economic indicators tip into negative territory. The latest economic forecast from The Conference Board shows the unemployment rate rising to 4.5 percent, well above its current level of 3.5 percent, by the fourth quarter of 2023.

8. JOB OPENINGS RISE DESPITE LAYOFFS IN KEY SECTORS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that job openings in the US rose to 11 million in December, rising from 10.4 million following downward revisions of roughly 100,000. Industries seeing large increases in job openings were accommodation and food services (+409,000), retail trade (+134,000), and construction (+82,000), which a significant decline in information (-107,000). However, job openings remain roughly 850,000 below the peak reached in March 2022. Signaling the job market remained strong to close the year, total layoffs remained flat in December at nearly 1.5 million. Layoffs ticked up in several specific sectors indicating some softening of conditions. Layoffs for workers in construction and in professional and business services, which includes the bellwether of temp agency workers, each touched their highest levels since December 2020. Meanwhile, worker quits declined marginally in December to 4.1 million, remaining well below the 2022 high of 4.4 million in March.

9. COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY AND NATIONAL EMERGENCY TO END MAY 11

On Monday, the Administration informed Congress of its intention to end the pair of national emergencies related to COVID-19 on May 11. According to the Administration's plan, the national emergency and the public health emergency (PHE), which are set to expire on March 1 and April 11, respectively, will be extended briefly to end simultaneously in May. The plan aligns to the commitment to provide at least 60 days' notice prior to termination and avoid what the Administration calls "wide-ranging chaos and uncertainty throughout the health care system." During the height of the pandemic, hundreds of rules were suspended under the Medicare and Medicaid programs, with the changes generally followed by private insurers. Under the PHE, special Medicaid rules provided extra funding to states to expand coverage, while hospitals and nursing homes relied on temporary flexibilities. Congress in December detached those programs from the PHE, extending some flexibilities for two years while requiring the orderly wind-down of Medicaid rules scheduled for May 1. Other regulatory flexibilities under the two emergencies will end at that time unless otherwise extended by Congress or administrative rulemaking. House Republicans pushed for a vote on Tuesday on a bill that would have terminated the public health emergency immediately. That vote failed, breaking along party lines.

The May termination date also provides additional time to address border security plans. Title 42 authority, which allows the expulsion of migrants because of health concerns, will also conclude at the termination of the PHE despite currently remaining in force under a December Supreme Court ruling. While the Administration claims that the "number of migrants crossing the border has been cut in half" since new parole rules were instituted in early January, it also has repeatedly asked for more preparation time under the expectation that lifting Title 42 authorities will "result in a substantial additional inflow of migrants at the Southwest border."

10. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AWARDS $1.2 BILLION TO NINE MEGAPROJECTS

The Department of Transportation Tuesday announced $1.2 billion in awards under a new competitive grant program under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for large projects. The program, National Infrastructure Project Assistance, but colloquially known as "Mega," focuses on projects that are "so large and complex that they defy traditional funding systems," according to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. The largest award was $292 million for concrete casing at Hudson Yards in New York City, effectively a prerequisite to a long-anticipated Hudson River tunnel known as the Gateway Project, with the President adding saying "I promise you we're going to get it done." The Brent Spence Bridge, a key freight infrastructure corridor between Ohio and Kentucky, will receive $250 million, complementing $1.3 billion already received through a competitive grant program for large bridges.

11. MOTOR CARRIER SAFETY ADMINISTRATION SOLICITS COMMENT ON SELF-DRIVING TRUCKS

In a supplemental advance notice of proposed rulemaking published Wednesday, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) asked the public for comments on how commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) equipped with Automated Driving Systems (ADS) should be regulated. The agency had previously asked for public comment on the issue in 2019. FMCSA noted that "CMVs have the potential to produce measurable safety benefits in crashes involving human error" but simultaneously might add new safety risks requiring monitoring, making it appropriate to re-evaluate safety policies for vehicles without a driver. FMCSA is particularly interested in public comment on documentation, communication, or inspections a carrier should adopt prior to putting a driverless truck on the road.

12. NEW OIL DRILLING IN ALASKA

The *Washington Post* reported that the Administration is considering partial approval for a major oil project on the North Slope of Alaska. ConocoPhillips proposed the $8-$10 billion Willow project, which would be on Federal territory, with five well pads. The final decision could recommend between one and three pads; the company has said that three, matching a preliminary proposal from last summer, is the minimum needed to make the investment economic, generating up to 629,000,000 barrels of oil over 30 years. A decision is expected before the end of February, as a positive decision would require the company to begin construction of ice roads almost immediately or wait until next winter. Alaska's Congressional delegation supports the project, while several environmental groups oppose it.

13. NEW REGULATIONS ON RENEWABLE ENERGY ON THE OUTER CONTINENTAL SHELF

The Interior Department proposed new regulations on development of renewable energy on the US Outer Continental Shelf, promoting "climate and renewable energy objectives in a safe and environmentally sound manner while providing a fair return to the U.S. taxpayer" and introducing "greater regulatory flexibility" in a rapidly changing industry [.]" Among major changes, the new regulations would affect buoys that gather data from the seafloor, increase flexibility on site surveys by permitting applicants to determine the precise location of wind turbines after a proposal has been submitted, and establish a public renewable energy leasing schedule publishing anticipated lease sales over the next five years (as is currently done for offshore fossil fuel developments). The Department claims the regulations would save the industry $1 billion over 20 years. Comments are due March 31.

14. COLORADO RIVER WATER SHORTAGE

States in the Colorado River basin were unable to reach agreement to restrict water usage, raising the chance that the Federal government will impose mandatory cuts later this year to address serious declines in the level of the river and Lakes Mead and Powell. Six states (Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) agreed on a proposal; California, the largest user of Colorado River water, did not. The Interior Department had urged voluntarily plans to reduce water usage by 2,000,000-4,000,000 acre feet, a significant portion of the average annual flow. (An acre foot is 326,000 gallons of water.) The six states endorsed about 2,000,000 acre feet of reduction; California offered to cut 400,000 acre feet instead of a proportionate 1,000,000 acre feet reduction. An important issue is the question of how to balance reductions between agricultural use (which generally has priority and senior rights to water use) and urban uses; agriculture uses about 80 percent of the river's flow.

15. ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH LATIN AMERICA

The Administration announced it will begin negotiations with 11 nations in Latin America and the Caribbean on regional economic cooperation falling short of a traditional market access trade agreement. The proposed Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity (APEP) includes Barbados, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and

Uruguay. Only Ecuador and Uruguay do not currently have free trade agreements with the US. The new initiative will have a "flexible framework" and focus on issues such as migration, labor standards, supply chains, and decarbonization, along the lines of the similar Asia-Pacific Economic Forum. One official of a participating country told the *Washington Post* that "[t] his is much more modest and limited [than a trade agreement]," adding that "[t]he Chinese are everywhere, and the Europeans are very active in Latin America today." Since 2000, China's share of Latin American exports has risen from 1 percent to almost 15 percent, and 21 Latin American countries, including eight of the APEP countries, participate in the Chinese Belt and Road trade and investment initiative.

16. JAPAN AND NATO DEEPEN PARTNERSHIP

During NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's visit to Japan, the parties agreed to deepen their partnership to "new heights that reflect the challenges of a new era," and emphasized that the security of Europe, Asia, and the US is "closely connected." Japan will join NATO's new Individually Tailored Partnership Program, a step bringing closer cooperation with NATO without a formal membership path. Japan will also now participate in the North Atlantic Council meetings of Allied leaders and the NATO Chiefs of Defense meetings regularly. The parties also raised concern about military cooperation between Russia and China and expressed firm opposition to "any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea," including Japanese islands there, and declared that peace and security in the Taiwan Strait is "an indispensable element in security and prosperity" of the world. Last June, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio became the first Japanese leader to attend a NATO summit. In an address at Keio University, Stoltenberg said that China is "watching closely and learning lessons" from the war in Ukraine. He stated that China was not NATO's adversary," despite becoming a "more and more authoritarian power" and that "security is not regional but global." Stoltenberg also visited South Korea, thanking the country for provision of some non-lethal military aid and urging more while noting that "several NATO allies, who had as a policy never to export weapons to countries in conflict have changed that policy now."

17. US TO EXPAND MILITARY PRESENCE IN PHILIPPINES

The US will obtain expanded access to military bases in the Philippines after a visit by Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. Two of the new bases would be in northern Luzon, not currently included in the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, to "allow more rapid support for humanitarian and climate-related disasters in the Philippines, and respond to other shared challenges," presumably in the South China Sea and Taiwan. The northernmost Philippine territories are only 200 miles from Taiwan. A Philippine official noted that "tensions are still expected to rise" in West Philippine Sea, particularly after incidents involving the Chinese coast guard, including a forcible seizure of Chinese rocket debris and Chinese ships denying Philippine fishing vessels access to a reef where the Philippines has exclusive rights. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. said at the World Economic Forum about the South China Sea that "[i]t keeps you up at night. It keeps you up in the day. It keeps you up most of the time." In November, Vice President Harris visited Palawan, the Philippine island closest to the Spratly chain.

18. US, NETHERLANDS, AND JAPAN CLOSE IN ON SEMICONDUCTOR EXPORT CONTROL AGREEMENT

Japan and the Netherlands are expected to join the US in restricting exports of advanced semiconductor equipment to China. Bloomberg reported that the countries are nearing a deal, and a US official Tuesday acknowledged progress. The US last year announced new US export controls on semiconductors and AI technology, including restrictions on some supercomputing chips and tighter sales restrictions on some equipment, focusing on "sensitive technologies with military applications." The new rules would cover major producers such as the Netherlands' ASML Holding and Japan's Tokyo Electron. Dutch and Japanese officials have indicated that the terms will be more complex than simply adopting the same provisions as the US. Officials from all countries stressed the importance of fairness—that the deal would not give any one country's industry advantage over the others.

19. MONKEYPOX UPDATES

As of February 1, the US has confirmed a total of 30,123 cases of mpox, formerly known as monkeypox. States with the highest case numbers include California (5,725), New York (4,222), Texas (2,901), Florida (2,865) and Georgia (1,988). Globally, as of February 1, 85,531 cases have been confirmed, with 84,238 cases confirmed in locations that have not historically reported mpox. The countries with the highest case numbers include the US (30,120), Brazil (10,745), Spain (7,528), France (4,128), and Colombia (4,072). A total of 77 deaths have been reported in locations that have not historically reported mpox.

Mpox Public Health Emergency Ends: The Administration ended the public health emergency (PHE) for mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, on January 31, after saying it did not expect to renew the PHE "given the low number of cases today," a much lower rate than during the summer peak. For the past month, average daily cases reported to CDC hovered in the single digits, down from an August 1 peak of 624 daily cases. As of February 1, CDC will no longer provide weekly data on mpox cases.

20. PANDEMIC NEWS

New "Orthrus" subvariant: The Omicron subvariant known as Orthrus, or CH.1.1, is unlikely to cause a new outbreak any time soon, according to China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The more prevalent variants across China are BA.5.2 and BF.4, yet authorities are monitoring Orthrus with 24 cases reported in the past three months. The subvariant, which emerged in Southeast Asia this past fall and includes a mutation from the earlier Delta variant, is responsible for 1.5 percent of US infections in the week ending January 28, according to CDC data. New Zealand is experiencing the highest prevalence of CH.1.1 cases, with 36 percent of infections during the week ending January 26. According to a study from the University of Ohio (awaiting peer review), CH.1.1 binds well to ACE2 receptors, the site where the virus infects the cell. The researchers found that CH.1.1 exhibits "extraordinary" evasion of neutralizing antibodies and could require revised bivalent vaccines.

Chinese wave ending? According to China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the number of severe COVID-19 cases and deaths is trending downward. China's CDC also said that there has been "no obvious rebound" during the Lunar New Year holiday travel season. According to official Chinese numbers, fever clinic rates have dropped over 90 percent through January and hospitalizations are down over 85 percent. Deaths are down as well, on China's more restrictive measure of deaths, different from the measure generally used in Western countries, from a peak of 4,300 on January 4 to 896 on January 23. Infectious diseases expert Hsu Li Yang told BBC News, "This drop in deaths follows the decline in the first huge wave of cases after China relaxed its restrictions, which is understandable and has been seen in virtually every country experiencing a large Covid wave."

21. COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: UNITED STATES

The White House announced Monday that it plans to allow the twin national emergencies for addressing COVID-19, the national emergency and the public health emergency (PHE), to expire May 11. COVID-19 was declared a PHE on January 31, 2020 and was later declared a national emergency in March. The move would officially treat the virus as an endemic threat that can be managed through agencies' normal authorities. The PHE waived many regulations concerning participant providers in the Medicare and Medicaid programs which applied, de facto, to virtually all US health care institutions. It has also allowed the government to provide Americans with COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines at no charge as well as offer enhanced social safety net benefits. With the ending of the PHE, the development of vaccines and treatments will be shifted away from the direct management of the federal government, and the costs of COVID-19 vaccines are expected to skyrocket as the federal government stops being the principal purchaser for them. Additionally, free at-home testing will end.

Despite the end of the PHE, the FDA's emergency authorizations of COVID-19 vaccines, tests, and treatments will not be affected, because the FDA's emergency powers, specifically its ability to issue Emergency Use Authorizations (EUAs), has separate statutory authority. "Existing emergency use authorizations (EUAs) for products will remain in effect and the agency may continue to issue new EUAs going forward when criteria for issuance are met," the FDA wrote on Twitter.

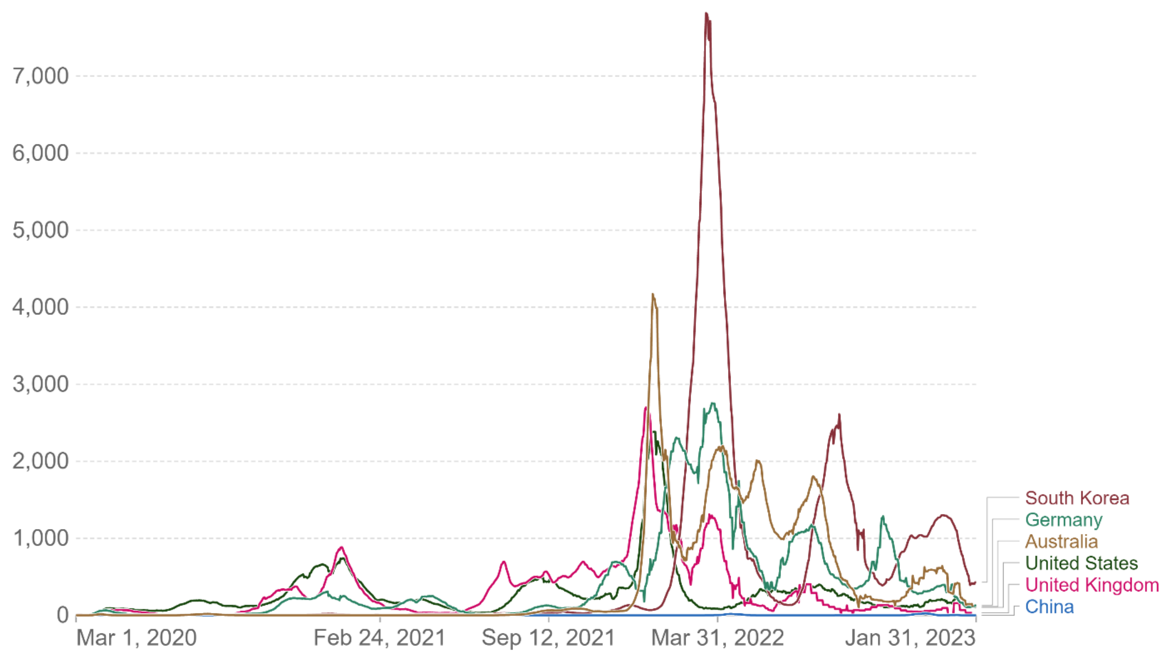
The World Health Organization (WHO), however, said COVID-19 remains a global health emergency. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated he is "hopeful" that this year the world will transition out of the emergency phase of the pandemic "to a new phase in which we reduce hospitalizations and deaths to the lowest possible level, and health systems are able to manage COVID-19 in an integrated and sustainable way," Tedros said.

In the week ending January 25, the US reported 295,140 new COVID-19 cases, according to CDC data. For the same week, 3,756 COVID-19-related deaths were reported, with both numbers in a downward trend from prior weeks. For the same week last year (ending January 26, 2022), the CDC reported 17,023 COVID-19-related deaths. COVID-19 hospitalizations are also on the decline, with 25,011 for the week ending January 28, down from 31,778 the week prior or 21.3 percent. These numbers are significantly lower compared to the peak seven-day average of 146,540 just over a year ago between January 14-January 20, 2022.

Daily new confirmed COVID-19 cases per million people

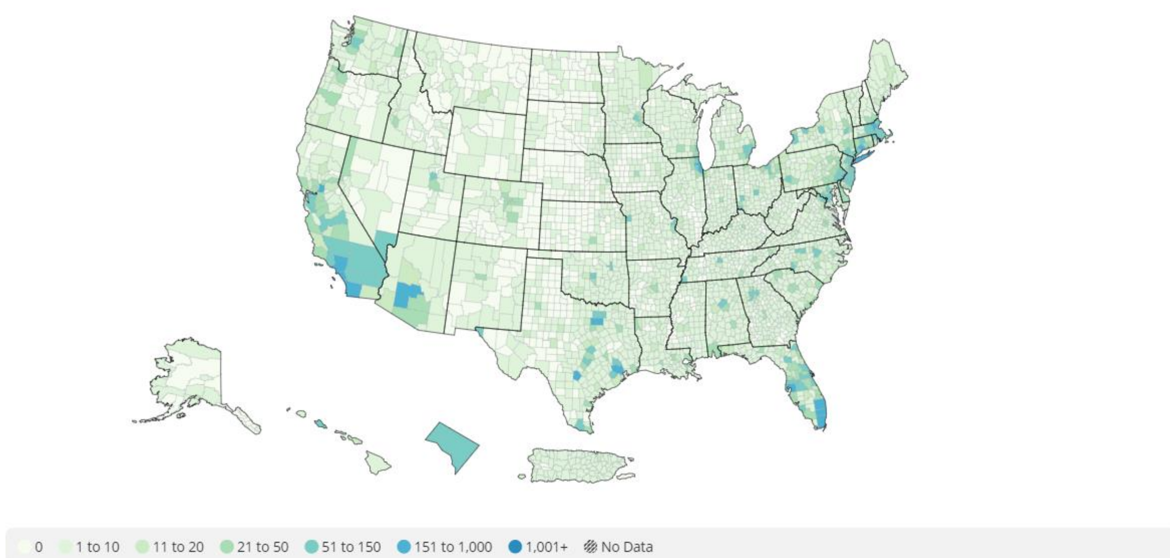
7-day rolling average. Due to limited testing, the number of confirmed cases is lower than the true number of infections.

Our World in Data



Source: Johns Hopkins University CSSE COVID-19 Data

New admissions of confirmed COVID-19 among county residents (estimated) of All Counties in US



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Source: CDC COVID Data Tracker