CED Public Policy Watch
Weekly News Round-up
October 14, 2022

1. DEVELOPMENTS ON UKRAINE

Kerch bridge attack: Early Saturday morning, a large explosion struck the 12-mile Kerch bridge linking Crimea to Russia, killing three and collapsing one of the highway links on the bridge while damaging the rail link. In retaliation, Russia launched over 100 missiles, striking parks and playgrounds as well as energy and other infrastructure, claiming it hit "all designated targets" using "high-precision long-range weapons." Ukraine claimed that 30 percent of its energy infrastructure was hit by Russian missiles (though the energy situation has been stabilized) and that it shot down a number of the missiles as well as drones. Denmark said that the island of Bornholm, near the presumed sabotage attack on the NordStream pipeline, suffered a power outage simultaneously with the strikes, and the websites of several US airports (though not flight operations) suffered cyberattacks.

UN Secretary General António Guterres called the attacks "another unacceptable escalation of the war," and President Biden condemned the "utter brutality" of the strikes German Chancellor Olaf Scholz accused Russia of waging a "crusade against liberal democracy, a crusade against the rules-based international order, a crusade against freedom and progress, a crusade against our way of life."

G-7 meeting and additional military aid: The G-7 countries held an emergency video meeting with President Zelensky on Tuesday, in which Zelensky requested anti-aircraft systems and longer-range missiles. The G-7 called Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure a "war crime" and reaffirmed they would "stand firmly with Ukraine for as long as it takes" and "will continue to provide financial, humanitarian, military, diplomatic, and legal support." In response to Ukraine's call for air defense systems, Germany sent the first of four Iris-T air defense systems to Ukraine which Chancellor Scholz said could "protect an entire major city from Russian air attacks"; the UK will send AMRAAM rockets that can shoot down cruise missiles; and the US is sending National Advanced Surface-To-Air Missile Systems (NASAMS) in what Ukraine called a "new era of air defense."

Nuclear threat: Responding to a question about Russian nuclear threats, the President said "[w]e have not faced the prospect of Armageddon" since the Cuban missile crisis, adding "[w]e've got a guy [Putin] I know fairly well. He's not joking when he talks about potential use of tactical nuclear weapons or biological or chemical weapons because his military is, you might say, significantly underperforming." EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that "[a]ny nuclear attack against Ukraine will create an answer, not a nuclear answer but such a powerful answer from the military side that the Russian Army will be annihilated." NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that the alliance is "closely monitoring" Russia's nuclear forces and that there would be "severe consequences" if Russia uses nuclear weapons, repeating NATO's comment last week that a deliberate attack against critical infrastructure "would be met with a united and determined response."

NATO meetings: NATO held a meeting for Allied Ministers of Defense, including a meeting of its Nuclear Planning Group. The NATO Defence Ministerial meeting focused on measures to "ramp up" defense production and "strengthen [NATO's] industrial base" as the delivery of equipment to Ukraine forces an urgent need for many Allies to replenish their own stocks of defense equipment. Finland and Sweden were invited to join the session as well, even though they remain in the accession process because some members, notably Turkey, have not yet ratified the accession protocols for the two Nordic countries. On Thursday, 14 NATO Allies and Finland signed a letter of intent for a "European Sky Shield Initiative," an effort for a common European air defense system, including "common acquisition" of air defense systems. Before the meeting, a separate third meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group brought together nearly 50 countries which are involved in efforts to support Ukraine with military assistance.

Putin-Erdoğan meeting on energy: Meeting at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia in Astana, Kazakhstan, President Putin and Turkish President Erdoğan discussed energy; Erdoğan raised the idea of Russia building a second nuclear plant in Turkey. Putin proposed a "gas hub," stating that "Turkey has turned out to be the most reliable route for deliveries today, even to Europe. We could consider the possibility of creating a gas hub in Turkey for supplies to other countries." Putin said this would be "a platform not only for supplies, but also for determining the price, because this is a very important issue . . . . Today, these prices are sky-high; we could easily regulate at a normal market level, without any political overtones" -- presumably an effort to avoid the EU proposal for a price cap on Russian gas. Erdoğan did not respond publicly to Putin's proposal.

The Russian news agency RIA said that the leaders did not discuss resolution of the conflict in Ukraine. Earlier, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu had proposed "a viable ceasefire and a just peace" that will "ensure Ukraine's border and territorial integrity," with a suggestion that Turkey host talks between Russia and the West (it was unclear whether Ukraine would be included in the talks).

Putin-Biden meeting? Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia would not decline a meeting between President Biden and President Putin at the G-20 meeting in Bali November 15-16 but that Russia had not received any "serious offers" to negotiate. The President said he currently had "no intention" of meeting Putin but might be willing to meet to discuss the release of detailed American citizen Brittany Griner. Putin has not confirmed his attendance, but Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said that all countries in the G-20 are expected to attend the summit.

Prospects for grain deal: Martin Griffiths, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said he is "reasonably confident" that the deal between the UN, Turkey, Ukraine, and Russia promoting grain and fertilizer exports through the Black Sea will be renewed. Renewal would give farmers greater certainty in planning their upcoming planting season and ease global food supply concerns.

Economists on effects of sanctions: A new analysis suggests that the impact of sanctions on Russia's economy have been larger than generally estimated. Economist Mikhail Mamonov, who modeled the effect of sanctions on Russia after the invasion of Crimea, used this model to measure the current effect of sanctions and believes that the contraction in Russia's economy this year will reach 10 percent rather than the IMF's estimated 6 percent and that investment will fall by 17 percent, even with the price of oil higher than in 2021. Mamonov said, "It takes time for sanctions to have their impact, and especially when the target is a country run by an autocratic leader who can marshal large resources to offset the effects in the first six months." Along similar lines, University of Warwick economics professor Mark Harrison said it is "wrong to think of Russia's energy profits paying for the war in Ukraine. They are not because Putin cannot buy what he wants for the war effort," adding "[w]hen we talk about waging a trade war alongside a military one, all the action is on the import side." Catarina Martins of Bruegel in Brussels estimates that Russian imports have fallen by half in 2022 on the 75 percent of trade she measured (Russia no longer publishes official trade figures, so the study relied on data from other countries), which will have significant impacts on future Russian production.

2. INFLATION REMAINS ELEVATED IN SEPTEMBER

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose 8.2 percent over the last 12 months, and 0.4 percent in September, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Core CPI index for all items excluding more volatile food and energy prices, which may better predict future inflation, rose 6.6 percent, with 0.6 percent in September. Persistent core inflation is likely to lead to additional increases in interest rates; the Federal Reserve raised the Federal Funds Rate by 0.75 basis points in response to August's CPI figures, which also showed 0.6 percent monthly core inflation. Energy prices have fallen each month since June's peak, 4.6 percent in July, 5.0 in August, and 2.1 percent more in September. However, broader inflationary pressures remain; monthly increases in shelter (0.8 percent) and medical care services (1.0 percent) were above levels consistent with the Fed's long-term inflation target of 2 percent. The Conference Board's Economy, Strategy and Finance Center projects that higher interest rates "will trigger a recession in the coming months." Its analysis of September's inflation figures can be found here.

3. MIXED NEWS ON INFLATION EXPECTATIONS

The New York Federal Reserve Bank's Survey of Consumer Expectations, a national survey of a rotating panel of about 1,300 household heads, contained mixed news. Median one-year-ahead inflation expectations declined 0.3 percentage points to 5.4 percent from the previous month: this was the lowest reading since September 2021. However, the three-year-ahead inflation expectations rose to 2.9 percent from 2.8 percent, reflecting an expectation that inflation would remain above the Fed's target.

The Fed closely monitors inflation expectations, because these are an input into its decisions setting the federal funds rate. The higher inflation, the higher nominal interest rates need to be to achieve the same real interest rate. The impact of inflation expectations on the rate-setting process is one reason the Fed considers well-anchored expectations to be an important goal in monetary policy.
Another significant result from the survey was a sharp drop in expectations of consumer spending growth; the median response for one-year-ahead spending growth fell from 7.8 percent to 6.0 percent.

4. SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFICIARIES RECEIVE 8.7 PERCENT COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT

The Social Security Administration (SSA) Thursday announced that Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits would increase 8.7 percent for 2023. This is an automatic feature of the program, a cost of living adjustment (COLA) tied to the change in the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers (CPI-W) from the third quarter of one year to the next. For many seniors, take-home benefits will grow by even more than the Social Security COLA because Medicare Part B premiums, which are often deducted from benefits, are set to fall this year, in part because of the Administration's decision to deny coverage for a class of drugs that may slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.

5. INITIAL UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS RISE

The Department of Labor reported Thursday that initial claims for unemployment insurance, a weekly indicator of labor market health, rose to 228,000 for the week ending October 8. This an increase of 9,000 over the previous week's level, and the second consecutive increase. Claims are elevated above September's lowest reading, 190,000, or the immediate pre-pandemic figure of 186,000 for March 7, 2020. And they are well above the spring lows of 166,000. However, they are moderate by historical standards, and below the July highs of 261,000. An increase in initial claims is consistent with recent data from other surveys showing a softening labor market, including the payroll survey, which shows decelerating job growth, and the Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, which shows a decline in job openings. The Conference Board's latest economic forecast shows the unemployment rate rising to 4.3 percent, well above its current level of 3.5 percent, by the second quarter of next year.

6. JOBS REPORT SHOWS MODERATING GAINS

Friday's Employment Situation report showed moderating job gains in September. The survey, which measures employment by collecting data from firms and government agencies, showed a gain of 263,000 jobs, down from a gain of 315,000 in August. The unemployment rate fell by 0.2 percentage points to 3.5 percent, in part because of job gains, and in part because labor force participation—the percent of people in or seeking employment—ticked down from 62.4 percent to 62.3. The largest job gains were in leisure and hospitality (83,000) and health care and social assistance (75,400). Analysis of the jobs report by The Conference Board Economy, Strategy, and Finance Center can be found here.

7. THE CONFERENCE BOARD 2023 AND 10-YEAR ECONOMIC PROJECTIONS

This week, the Economy, Strategy, and Finance Center of The Conference Board released its global economic outlook, including both projections for 2023 and 10-year projections. For 2023, global growth is estimated to be only 2.1 percent, with recessions "all but certain in the US and Europe." Growth for 2022 is now estimated to be only 3.2 percent -- a dramatic fall from last year's 6.1 percent. The Conference Board also estimated to growth to average 2.6 percent for both 2024-2029 and 2030-2035, down substantially from the pre-pandemic 2011-2019 average of 3.3 percent. Negative demographic forces with aging populations in many advanced economies, contribute to this trend. As a result, "emerging markets are poised to drive an even larger proportion of global growth over the decade ahead than they did in the 2010s."

8. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PROPOSES INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR RULE

The Department of Labor (DOL) this week issued a proposed rule to provide guidance on determining which workers are employees or independent contractors. Key aspects of the rule include guidance on an "economic realities" test for worker status. This test includes seven factors, including (1) opportunity for profit or loss depending on managerial skill, (2) investments by the worker and employer, (3) degree of permanence of the relationship, (4) the nature and degree of control, (5) extent to which the work performed is an integral part of the employer's business, (6) skill and initiative, and (7) other factors. However, DOL notes that these factors are not exhaustive and that "no single factor is dispositive."

DOL said that it "does not believe [the rule] would result in widespread reclassification of workers." However, contractors in passenger transportation or delivery services could be affected; personal vehicles would not be counted towards the investments test. In a statement, Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh said that "[w]hile independent contractors have an important role in our economy, we have seen in many cases that employers misclassify their employees as independent contractors, particularly among our nation's most vulnerable workers. Misclassification deprives workers of their federal labor protections, including their right to be paid their full, legally earned wages."

9. REPORT SHOWS "MATERNITY CARE DESERTS"

The March of Dimes released a report showing that up to 6.9 million women of childbearing age live in areas of low or no access to maternity care which account for one in eight births in the US, with 2.2 million women living in what the organization terms "maternity care deserts," counties without a hospital or birth center offering obstetrics services and without any obstetrics providers. This includes 36 percent of US counties; five percent of all counties are in a worse position for maternity care than in 2020. Closures of hospitals and obstetrics centers and a shortage of obstetrics physicians in the pandemic are driving the figures, with the impact particularly strong in rural areas and among communities of color. One in four Native American babies were born in areas with no or limited access to maternity care services, and one in six Black babies were born in those areas. The organization also called for expanded access to broadband to increase opportunities for telehealth services.

10. ADMINISTRATION ACTION ON SEMICONDUCTORS AND CHINA

In what could be the largest shift in technology policy towards China in 30 years, on Friday, the Administration announced new US export controls on semiconductors and AI technology, including export restrictions on some supercomputing chips and tighter sales restrictions on some semiconductor equipment, focusing on "sensitive technologies with military applications [.]" The new policy includes the "foreign direct product rule" also invoked against Huawei 5G technology in 2020 and semiconductor exports to Russia after the invasion of Ukraine; items covered by the rule apply to sales anywhere in the world of covered products made with US equipment. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration Thea D. Rozman Kendler said that China "has poured resources into developing supercomputing capabilities and seeks to become a world leader in artificial intelligence by 2030. It is using these capabilities to monitor, track and surveil their own citizens." The move is expected to slow down, but not stop, China's advanced chipmaking efforts. However, the US has also acknowledged the potential risks of the new approach: an unidentified official said, "[w]e recognize that the unilateral controls we're putting into place will lose effectiveness over time if other countries don't join us. And we risk harming US technology leadership if foreign competitors are not subject to similar controls."

China criticized the measures, saying they were designed to maintain US "technological hegemony," adding the US "will only hurt and isolate itself when its actions backfire." In the US, some companies are taking steps to seek the subsidies available under the CHIPS and Science Act Congress passed this summer. Micron recently announced that it chose a site in central New York State over one in Austin, Texas, for its new facility. There are also increasing concerns over what would happen to the Taiwan semiconductor industry in the event of a Chinese invasion; the US National Security Council has estimated that loss of leading chipmaker TSMC would cost the world economy over $1 trillion. TSMC is establishing a $12 billion chip fabrication plant in Arizona.

11. REEVALUATION OF US-SAUDI RELATIONSHIP

After last week's announcement that the OPEC+ group including Russia would cut oil production by 2,000,000 barrels per day, raising global prices and providing more revenue for Russia, the President said "there will be consequences" for the US-Saudi relationship, and the White House indicated it would conduct a policy review, watching developments "over the coming weeks and months." Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called for a halt to arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and National Security Council spokesman John Kirby committed the White House to work with Congress "to think through what that relationship ought to look like going forward," with the President "willing to start to have those conversations right away. I don't think this is anything that's going to have to wait or should wait, quite frankly, for much longer." Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) said that the proposed NOPEC ("No Oil Producing and Exporting Cartels") Act, which would give the Justice Department authority to consider antitrust action against Saudi Arabia and other OPEC members, was designed to provoke changes to the decision: "We hope that this legislation will provide an impetus for the Saudis to reconsider this and reverse. There's still time. The oil supply cuts don't take effect until November." In response to these charges, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan called the decision a purely economic one in which "OPEC+ members acted responsibly."

12. ADMINISTRATION'S NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The Administration released its annual National Security Strategy on Wednesday. The Strategy declares that "the need for American leadership is as great as it has ever been. We are in the midst of a strategic competition to shape the future of the international order" and states that China "harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit [.]" Regarding Russia, the Strategy notes that its government "has chosen to pursue an imperialist foreign policy with the goal of overturning key elements of the international order." China, however, is "the only competitor [with] the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective." Therefore, the Strategy argues that the US "will prioritize maintaining an enduring competitive edge over the PRC while constraining a still profoundly dangerous Russia." It will do so in part by "growing the connective tissue—on technology, trade and security—between our democratic allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific and Europe because we recognize that they are mutually reinforcing and the fates of the two regions are intertwined."

On nuclear deterrence, the Strategy states plainly that "[n]uclear deterrence remains a top priority for the Nation . . . deterring strategic attacks, assuring allies and partners, and allowing us to achieve our objectives if deterrence fails." In a veiled reference to China's growing power, the Strategy notes that by the 2030s, the US "for the first time will need to deter two major nuclear powers, each of whom will field modern and diverse global and regional nuclear forces." In response, the Strategy commits to "modernizing the nuclear Triad, nuclear command, control and communications, and our nuclear weapons infrastructure as well as strengthening our extended deterrence commitments to our Allies" while at the same time remaining "equally committed to reducing the risks of nuclear war," including "further steps to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our strategy and pursuing realistic goals for mutual, verifiable arms control [.]"

At the same time, the Administration also seeks "to avoid a world in which competition escalates into a world of rigid blocs." In addition, the Strategy discusses a second "strategic challenge" -- "that while this competition is underway, people all over the world are struggling to cope with the effects of shared challenges that cross borders—whether it is climate change, food insecurity, communicable diseases, terrorism, energy shortages, or inflation." It also commits the US to a robust defense of global democracy in competition with autocracy, noting that the US' "competitors mistakenly believe democracy is weaker than autocracy because they fail to understand that a nation's power springs from its people. The United States is strong abroad because we are strong at home."

13. MONKEYPOX UPDATES

As of October 11, the US has confirmed a total of 26,778 cases of monkeypox. States with the highest case numbers include California (5,135), New York (4,010), Florida (2,608), Texas (2,444), and Georgia 1,850). Globally, 71,408 cases have been confirmed, with 70,679 cases confirmed in locations that have not historically reported monkeypox. The countries with the highest case numbers include the US (26,778), Brazil (8,270), Spain (7,219), France (4,043), and the UK (3,654). A total of thirteen deaths have been reported in locations that have not historically reported monkeypox. CDC has reported that the rate of growth in monkeypox cases began slowing in late August. CED Trustees published an opinion piece on ways to prevent the outbreak, and others like it, from becoming pandemics, including closer cooperation with business.

A study published in *The Lancet Microbe* shows widespread monkeypox DNA surface contamination in health care settings, with 93 percent of surfaces in infected patient rooms contaminated and significant contamination on health care worker PPE. The study was based on testing on four respiratory isolation rooms in the Royal Free Hospital in London. The rooms were occupied at various times by six patients with confirmed symptomatic monkeypox from May 24 to June 17, 2022. Of 20 air samples taken, 5 were positive, including 3 of 4 collected before and during a bedding change. This "highlights the importance of suitable respiratory protection equipment for health-care workers when performing activities that might suspend infectious material within contaminated environments," the authors wrote.

14. PANDEMIC NEWS

FDA/CDC approve Omicron-specific pediatric boosters: Earlier this week, FDA granted Emergency Use Authorization for the Pfizer and Moderna bivalent COVID-19 vaccines which target the Omicron BA.5 subvariant. CDC followed with its own approval on Wednesday from Director Rochelle Walensky, who did not wait for the report of its advisory committee. The Moderna shot may be administered to children as young as six, and the Pfizer one for children as young as five, each "at least two months following completion of primary or booster vaccination." According to Peter Marks, director of the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, FDA acted because of "the potential for increased risk of exposure to the virus" following children's return to school and resumption of pre-pandemic activities, noting that "[w]hile it has largely been the case that COVID-19 tends to be less severe in children than adults, as the various waves of COVID-19 have occurred, more children have gotten sick with the disease and have been hospitalized" and "may also experience long-term effects, even following initially mild disease." Pharmacies may begin administering the pediatric shots once they receive shipments.

Vaccine Long-Term Effectiveness: A new study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) highlights the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, boosters, and prior infection both in reducing risk of future infection and in preventing severe disease. Researchers found that those who received the primary series of vaccines were less likely to become infected or experience severe disease than those who were unvaccinated, even after a year and a half. The study of 10 million North Carolinians also found that booster doses for those previously uninfected conferred strong protection, especially against hospitalization and death. The same was true for those who were previously infected. The data, captured between March 2020 and June 2022, comprises several SARS-CoV-2 variants, including Omicron and its more recent subvariants. The findings also suggest that Omicron infection can protect against re-infection with Omicron; however, the level of protection wanes over time.

WHO calls for action on long COVID: World Health Organization Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus urged countries to begin "immediate" and "sustained" efforts to address long COVID, which he termed a "very serious" global health problem. The WHO estimates that between 10 and 20 percent of COVID-19 survivors have either mid- or long-term symptoms including fatigue, shortness of breath, and cognitive dysfunction, with modeling suggesting that the condition affects women at twice the rate of men, with one in three women likely to develop long COVID. Along with Dr. Tedros' article, *The Guardian* also published an analysis of 2,000,000 electronic health records involving suspected cases of long COVID based on CDC data.

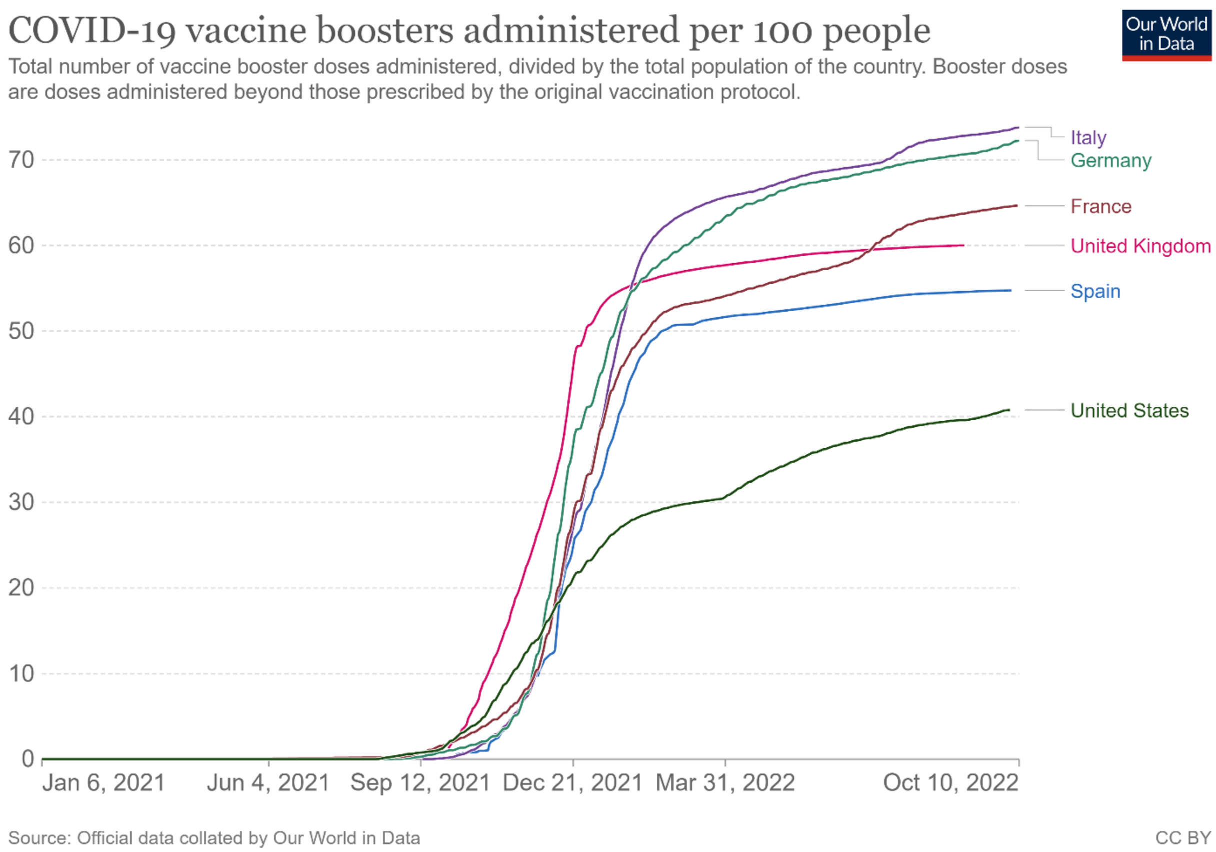
Major "Long Covid" study: A new long COVID study based on the experiences of nearly 100,000 participants found that many people have not fully recovered from the disease months after diagnosis. The study from Scotland found that between 6 and 18 months after infection, 1 in 20 people had not recovered and 42 percent reported partial recovery. Among participants who completed serial questionnaires, there was evidence of improvement in taste and smell between 6 and 12 months. However, there was evidence of increased reporting of dry or productive cough between 6 and 18 months. The study also revealed that those who experienced asymptomatic infection were unlikely to suffer long term and that vaccination offered some protection against long COVID. Jill Pell, professor of public health at the University of Glasgow and head of the study noted that long COVID is widely affecting people's quality of life. "There are lots of different impacts going beyond health to quality of life, employment, schooling and the ability to look after yourself," she said.

New Shanghai lockdown? Just days before China's Communist Party Congress, Shanghai is quietly shutting down to reign in a COVID-19 flare up. Several schools throughout the city have suspended in-person classes, and at least five districts have closed entertainment venues, including cinemas, bars, and gyms. Authorities on Sunday said there is no citywide school shutdown, but residents remain on edge given the lockdowns of neighborhoods and residential compounds earlier this year. Residents took to social media to express frustration over the dynamic COVID zero shutdowns and reopenings. On October 11, Shanghai reported 34 local asymptomatic cases and 4 symptomatic cases.

15. COUNTRY SPOTLIGHT: EUROPE

A new COVID-19 wave appears to be looming across Europe as temperatures drop. Data released last week by the World Health Organization (WHO) showed that cases in the European Union (EU) reached 1.5 million, up 8 percent from the week prior despite a dramatic fall in testing, even as global case numbers continue to decline. Hospitalizations across the EU, as well as Britain, are also on the rise. In the week ending on October 4, COVID-19 hospitalizations jumped nearly 32 percent in Italy, while intensive care unit admissions rose 21 percent, compared to the week before. During the same week, Britain saw a 45 percent increase in COVID-19 hospitalizations versus the week prior.

COVID-19 vaccines targeting both the original strain and BA.4/5 subvariants of the virus, known as bivalent vaccines, launched in Europe in early September, but uptake has been slow. Since September 5, the EU has received 40 million vaccine doses produced by Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna, but only between 1 million and 1.4 million doses were administered weekly in the EU throughout September. This is a significant decline in uptake compared with 6-10 million during the same period a year earlier.



The surge in cases and hospitalizations in Europe could be a [sign] that another surge of COVID-19 infections is in store for the US. “In the past, what's happened in Europe often has been a harbinger for what's about to happen” in the US, says Michael Osterholm, director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota. “So I think the bottom line message for us in this country is: We have to be prepared for what they are beginning to see in Europe.” However, it is not certain that the US’s experience this winter will echo Europe’s because it is not clear whether the uptick in cases is due to greater susceptibility to new subvariants or simply changes in behavior in the cooler months. Researchers are already seeing signs of the latter, as [wastewater surveillance] systems in many parts of the Northeast have seen higher levels of viral detection. Infections and hospitalizations are rising throughout New England as well as the Pacific Northwest. "We're seeing the northern rim of the country beginning to show some evidence of increasing transmission," says Dr. David Rubin, the director of the PolicyLab at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. "The winter resurgence is beginning."