

# Make Me Smart October 15, 2021 transcript

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**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, for sure. My kids are all kicking butt. Oh, my kids are all kicking butt! But most specifically, that type of thing. Hey everybody, I'm Kai Ryssdal. Welcome back to Make Me Smart. Can you tell it's Friday? Cause it is.

**Molly Wood:** It is just crawling toward the finish. I'm Molly Wood. It's happy hour Friday, also known as economics on tap, the live stream is up and running. The discord is happening. Thanks everyone joining wherever you're finding us, might be live, it might be on demand, might be on YouTube. But you're here and that's what matters.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That's right. You can listen to us any way you want. This also is the day where we do our little game called half full half empty. First though, we do the news. But first, first, we check in on libations. I myself am having from faction brewing in Alameda, California a sobro Cyclone India Pale Ale. It's quite delicious. Thank you very much.

**Molly Wood:** That's right around the corner from me.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I know, so local. So, well, I'll tell you the story. I'll tell you the story. So last week, as we all know, was my birthday on Friday. Thank you very much. And, and beer showed up at the studio. Swear to god, a case of beer, literally with a card, with a card that says happy birthday, Kai. No signature, no nothing. So if you sent me beer, thank you.

**Molly Wood:** That's pretty awesome.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That's it. That's what I got.

**Molly Wood:** I like that other people like me made sure to enter that in their calendar on a yearly recurring basis.

**Kai Ryssdal:** We're not going there. We're not going there.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, I did. Yeah, remind me every single year, Siri. I had said I might have a hot toddy. If my son was still homesick. My son is still homesick, but it's 80 degrees so I'm just having bourbon on ice. No hot, no hot toddy today. I'm also wearing, just because it's so useful, I shouldn't show it off because they're not, I don't think these are official merch yet, but Sitara, on her way out was nice enough to have T-shirts made for us for the staff. So I have my little how we survive lunch shirt on today.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That is awesome.

**Molly Wood:** I know, when I went to CVS to get like, nose spray for my son I was like, maybe someone will recognize the podcast.

**Kai Ryssdal:** That's excellent. Takes a little charm out of it though, that's all I'm saying.

**Molly Wood:** Maybe on a happier outing, someone will spot the T-shirt and be like, oh hey, yeah. I do always reveal merch early, that is true, Sarah Schlosser, that is accurate. Hopefully they're gonna make some for you guys, too.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Okay, shall we?

**Molly Wood:** Shall we, new?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, yeah, I'll go first cuz, yeah, cuz mine, mine kind of segues into yours. So first of all, I just want to call the people's attention, you know, lots of back and forth about the size of the Biden administration's infrastructure plan and the human infrastructure plan and all that stuff going back and forth, three and a half trillion dollars, whatever. At the root of it is a discussion about how involved and what size we want the government to be as it is involved in the economy. And I'm, I would just commend to your attention, those of you who are into these kinds of things, a column by Katherine Pellet of The Washington Post, she's a Friday regular but, but before that, she was writing opinion pieces for the Post. And she points out that the desire for Americans to have large government has slipped for the first time ever last year, late last year. More than half of respondents, 54%, said they wanted more from their government. That's, that's, that's a majority of the American population wanting more from their government in a population that typically has been government, get out of my life, right, mostly. That has now slipped she reports. A survey from Gallup again, it's back down to the norm of 43% want bigger and more involved government. And she points out, and I would just like to suggest that the administration might want to pay attention to this, the Biden administration should review and revise its plans because the people aren't necessarily with you. A lot of what's individually in that plan is popular. But by and large, rethinking American government's role in the economy is not so popular. And that's something that's interesting, people ought to pay attention to, because it's, because that's the whole, that's the crux of this thing, right?

**Molly Wood:** I read a, I read a piece the other day about, I think it was like the Bulwark or something, you know, where it's sort of, it's Republicans who were like, yes, we're conservative, but we're never Trumpers, kind of publication. Yeah. Yeah, exactly. I think it was there. And it essentially said, like, look, Biden came into office not expecting to have all three branches, right, not expecting to have the Senate and the House and the White House, it was only kind of like, Trump screwing up Georgia for the republicans that handed this slim majority. And this piece suggested that as a result then, Biden got sold on this kind of go big or go home model, right? Like oh, this is our big chance. We should just like, go crazy. I don't know, the guy's been around a long time, right? It's hard to say who gets sold on what. But it is also possible that there was

some drunk on power. But the thing is, like, it would be really interesting to see what would happen if each of these was to be were to be passed, piecemeal, or one at a time, it's just that that can never happen, because they had to jam it all on the one thing to make it a reconciliation package. Like it's very possible that Americans want literally every single thing that's in this bill, it's just that Congress being what it is with the filibuster, like none of it can get passed unless it was all jammed into one big thing. It's a weird world we live in.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Hell of a way to run an economy. Speaking of the economy, another piece I want to commend to all y'all is attention by another Friday Marketplace regular, Gina smiley, who covers the Fed for the New York Times, she points out that in the inflation numbers that were out this week, the consumer price index was out on Monday, and the producer price index, which is of course, wholesale inflation was out on Wednesday, they were up a lot, 5.4% for consumer price index and 8.6% for the producer price index, and that means more inflation is coming down the pike. Anyway, one key element of the CPI is rent and lodging. And the thing about rent and lodging being up so high is that elevated rents are really sticky, they tend not to go back down, gas prices can go back down, food prices can go back down, rents, once they get elevated, are really sticky, and that's going to put the Fed in a jam and it leads me to this declarative sentence. This transitory thing is bold.

**Molly Wood:** Come on.

**Kai Ryssdal:** No, no.

**Molly Wood:** Well, what do you mean by transitory? Couldn't it mean anything from three months to three years?

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, it totally could. But here's the catch. What's going to happen if--everybody kept saying it's going to be transitory, right? And every, by everybody, I mean, Jay Powell, Jay Powell says it's gonna be transitory. That does not mean inflation goes away, it means the spikes go away, but the price level stays elevated. And I don't think people are ready for that. And rent is the key example. So if prices go up 5% for six months in a row, and then the next month they are, you know, back down to 1% price inflation year on year, you're still stuck with that 5% bump. It's not like it goes away. It's not going back to where it was in March 2020. And I just think people need to wrap their brains around that. Truly. I seriously do.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, I mean, we got to admit transitory was always a weird word, because by definition like every other inflation increase has also been transitory. And so has it decreased. Because it all goes away eventually.

**Kai Ryssdal:** By the way, yeah, the other thing that's not transitory, by the way, is the whole supply chain thing. I think the whole supply chain thing is gonna be boarded up for, for years. I was, I was, I was down at a container Depo in Long Beach this morning. Holy cow. It's a mess. Holy cow. Holy cow. Holy cow.

**Molly Wood:** Oh my god, so fun, though, that you're going out in the field. I love it.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It's so cool. It's so cool. Yeah, it's just, it makes it better than being in a small soundproof room. Last thing from me, which leads into yours. I just, we haven't talked about, mostly because it's not really up our alley, but kind of it is in a culture kind of way, these, so Jon Gruden, longtime NFL coach, longtime commentator for ESPN I think on the NFL and he's been around football for, it's got to be 45 years by now. Bunch of his emails were leaked in which he was homophobic, misogyny, misogynist, racist. Take your pick on, on all the horrible things Jon Gruden said in emails. Here's the important part. There are two important parts: number one more of those 650,000 emails will be leaked and we will see the dark underbelly of the NFL. But even without seeing that, you can infer that the underbelly of the NFL is dark because Gruden has been saying this stuff for a decade or more. And sending these emails to other people in professional football and nobody raised their hand and said hey, Jon, stop, man.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah. And my way they, cause they're all just like him at that level. Yeah. This season, only three of 32 head coaches in the NFL are Black. Yeah, there are all of those emails. I mean, we sort of just like, skipped on by the fact that I don't think Gruden himself, but people on those email chains were just like, sharing around topless photos of cheerleaders. In addition to everything at like, yeah, the best thing I ever did was quit the NFL, like, almost a decade ago now. I did it over domestic violence. I know, weird. And then it turned out there were so many other reasons not to spend my time on that. Yep. Yeah.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, man. See, this is why you got to read the comments. I had not muted my zoom. And so I was, I'm really sorry. I'm really sorry.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, I didn't even notice. But good catch. Good catch.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It wasn't me. It was, it was Bridget. She was like, she was like, you're not muted. And then two minutes later, she was like, I gotcha. See? Producers. They get the job done.

**Molly Wood:** Taking care of us, taking care of us all the time. Always. I have like, a little trio of stories that I am going to refer to as the sister theme, the sister trend of the great resignation, which I'm going to be calling the great rebellion. Because as people decide that their workplaces are unacceptable in various ways, they are either leaving or going on strike. We know that the Hollywood strike is looming. There's also, in California, potentially Monday, in California, hospital workers might go on strike because they're like, we don't have enough critical workers, nurses, technicians, janitors, Kaiser, right, which will be a huge deal. I mean, COVID isn't as bad in most of California as it is in some other states. But it's bad. And many places are, in fact, inundated. And then you have two stories in a row about, which I have been referring to all week, but just follow up stories on these tech companies who are just like, not interested in dissent from the inside, listen, at least in California, like all employment is at will, right? You can leave anytime you want, and you can get fired anytime you want. And Apple and Netflix in particula, are going ahead and taking advantage of that reality. Netflix just fired the organizer of the trans employee walkout.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I can't, I can't understand who in that company said yes, it would be a good idea to fire this person right now.

**Molly Wood:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, they've doubled down on, this is of course, in case you haven't been following this all week. This is, of course, in response to the Dave Chappelle special called The Closer, which has a lot of people in the trans community upset over comments that he made in that special, including some Netflix employees who spoke out about it and then organized a walk out. Netflix responses all along, I think it like, let go three people saying that they tried to go to meetings that they weren't allowed to go to, even though these employees also happened to be trans people who spoke out against this special, I believe, has reinstated them but then now fired. And by the way, the one person that they fire, is the one person who's Black and trans.

**Kai Ryssdal:** They're just looking for trouble, right?

**Molly Wood:** I guess so. It's just fascinating. And then Apple is having almost the exact same response to the person who started the internal movement, #AppleToo. Apple is making this broad move to crackdown on leaks and worker organizing. They're just not having it. And so they fired this what, this is astonishing, fired this person for deleting files off of her work devices during an internal investigation, which Apple categorizes as non compliance. The files included apps like Robin Hood, Pokemon Go, and Google Drive. That seems fireable. I'm sure it's unrelated to organizing a large internal protest about treatment of people at that. You know, like, there's one, there's another, actually, software engineer who started sharing stories about workplace harassment and discrimination on Apple, and who, about Apple, and is now on paid medical leave as a result of him receiving so much internal harassment while advocating for things like remote work and pay transparency.

**Kai Ryssdal:** So you wonder, I mean how high up in the--go ahead, sorry. It is, it is a response. Definitely. It is, of all the responses, it is one of them. Yes, that is true. You have to wonder how high up the food chain the decision making process went. At what level did somebody say, yep, that's it. They're out.

**Molly Wood:** Right. I'm gonna go, right. And you know, ACB in the YouTube chat points out that the person who was fired from Netflix is pregnant. Also, in case you just wanted to hit the like, protected class trifecta.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, for sure. Yep.

**Molly Wood:** Is it a hat trick?

**Kai Ryssdal:** It's a bunch, yeah.

**Molly Wood:** And it just is sort of, it's just very interesting to see how different companies are responding to you, look, like people are unhappy. It's been a long two years. Some companies have handled it well. Others have not, others have not. There's clearly a need for change at some or all of these organizations. And the way that you respond to it says a lot about you as a company, maybe there will never be any consequences for Apple and Netflix. But I would imagine there will be people who don't want to work there anymore as a result of these actions.

**Kai Ryssdal:** And this goes back to what you were saying yesterday, you have had an incredibly insightful week from the, you know, are we a country that wants to do the work to the whole yesterday thing of, of the primacy of work in so many people's lives to which I will play, I will absolutely plead guilty, plead guilty. That's, that dynamic has changed. You know, people have realized that working ain't it, life is life. And also, life is short. So do what you want.

**Molly Wood:** And then go loud and proud. I mean, when these people are getting fired, they're just coming out swinging. Like people have just had it. Thank you, by the way, for that compliment. You made me blush.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh, no, no, it's real. I mean, look, it's, anyway. Anyway.

**Molly Wood:** Anyway, yes, Netflix, as Andy says, believes it's too big to be held accountable. Every company does at this point. Yes, for sure.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yeah, absolutely. Including, you know, a bunch that. Go ahead, shall we?

**Molly Wood:** Yeah, let's play a game, let's play.

**Kai Ryssdal:** You know what happens when it gets hot down here? The mosquitoes come back out and I've got mosquitoes swarming around in my shed here. Anyway, so I know, half full half empty, our predictions on various topics. Drew Jostad is our host today, I believe, although, although there was a head fake last week, so who the hell knows what's going to happen now?

**Molly Wood:** I heard him.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Did you? Alright, okay.

**Drew:** Sorry to disappoint. It's me. Are you full or half empty on adaptive reuse?

**Molly Wood:** Meaning? Sounds like a circular economy thing.

**Drew:** Converting office space to apartments.

**Molly Wood:** Oh, smart. That's genius. We need so much more housing. Genius. 100% full. All the way full. That is super smart. I didn't even know this is like an actual phrase that refers to the process of reusing an existing building, specifically, it's not like, broad. It's all about buildings, for

a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed. It is also known as recycling and conversion.

**Kai Ryssdal:** The YouTube chat is, they're up on this. They know, they didn't even need your, your Duck, Duck, Go-ing.

**Molly Wood:** I know. Wow. Yeah, definitely. Half full. That's fantastic. And if you can turn it into housing, super, and it would be in places that like, the kids want to live. It's downtown. It's close to urban centers. It's probably close to transit. Brilliant. Let's do it. Let's just change everything.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Sarah Sloser with her second mention in the pod today, I converted my apartment to an office in the pandemic, lol. I mean, that's a fair point. Anyway, Drew, go.

**Drew:** Half full or half empty on fast food drive through AI?

**Kai Ryssdal:** So this was so interesting. This is a piece Matt Levin did talking about, was it like, Wendy's working with Google to get AI going into your drive thru, and how basically Wendy's is going to know what you want before you get there, which is number one, really convenient. But number two, slightly terrifying because it's all about AI and voice recognition and pattern recognition and all of this predictive stuff that is coming, and we're gonna have to get used to it, but still kind of scary. So I'm a little bit eh-h-h on it.

**Molly Wood:** I'm half empty on this, I think this is like exactly the kind of thing that, you know, there's like a tendency to slap a little AI on it. And then it's like, new and cool and whatever. But the truth is that it's just not good enough now to be seamless enough to be anything but annoying. Because if you went there and you ordered for your friend or your kid, and then you're there to order for yourself, and your history is blah, blah, blah, that's not going to work and then it's gonna be only a matter of time before they're like, oh, if we just, you know, took pictures of the cars and the people in the race and it's like there's a data disaster waiting to happen. Like, this is not what people need the AI for..

**Kai Ryssdal:** And it's, the whole thing is, it's racially fraught. And I mean, the whole deal, so yeah, no.

**Molly Wood:** It's literally like, it just means can we order fewer people or hire fewer people? Which to be honest, it sounds like people at this point would be fine with that. So if it's like, yeah, I don't want to get yelled at at McDonald's anymore. So go crazy with your AI. Half empty. Next!

**Drew:** Okay, half full or half empty on Best Buy getting into the home health care industry.

**Kai Ryssdal:** We all need health care, I don't know. I mean this is like, like, like Walmart setting up a clinic in the corner?

**Molly Wood:** Best Buy has purchased a care at home tech platform called current health, which gives healthcare organizations insight into people's health.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I'm starting to laugh, you know what I love about this segment, those moments where you and I both go, I don't really know. Everybody needs health care, it's kind of a bummer there's a profit motive, but okay.

**Molly Wood:** Why Best Buy? It is not Best Buy's first foree.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Don Bachmeier, I assume selling wearables, he says in the YouTube chat. That's, that's, that's probably close.

**Molly Wood:** I would have thought so, but only kind of. They say it is a way to pry open new revenue streams, focusing on RPA, like this kind of can help them diversify revenue streams and plant a flag in the quickly growing digital health market. There probably is a wearable component. I'm sure there's like a degree of selling some gadgets that that go along with this, remote patient monitoring does seem to suggest devices, so I don't know, you do you.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Marissa and Steven Byeon and Emily McCune and Grace, do you suppose they sit there when they're putting this together and they say, here's one they're not going to know. Let's put this one in.

**Molly Wood:** I'm much more half full on Best Buy taking all kinds of E waste. I'm delighted that I can take all my electronics recycling to them. I'm a little half empty on them getting into remote patient monitoring, monitoring. Stay in your lane, Best Buy.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Nothing to see here.

**Drew:** All right, we're gonna continue with fast food here. Half full or half empty on the McPlant?

**Molly Wood:** Yep. All the way full. Yep, yeah, right on on the plant.

**Kai Ryssdal:** It's got to happen, it's got to happen, I have not yet done the taste test thing that Molly did with her family about ordering a, you know, impossible burger and uh, you know, Wendy's burger side by side, but yeah, it has to happen, it truly just has to happen. All full.

**Molly Wood:** It really does. I honestly, my only complaint about this is them calling it the McPlant. Which I feel like, yeah, it's just gonna make you feel like an idiot for ordering it. Like it feels like, it feels like it's a smart market decision and also subtle shade. Do you want them mixed up? With the side of not real meat frosty? I guess that's Wendy's. Yeah, so I'm half full on yes to meat replacements. Let's do this. And I'm a little half empty on the name.

**Kai Ryssdal:** There you go. What Molly said.

**Drew:** Alright. Decorating trees for Halloween.



**Kai Ryssdal:** Hard pass, half empty. Fully and completely, full stop.

**Molly Wood:** I like, I want to be, my mom does this, she literally has like, yeah, my mom is a little bonkers when it comes to decorating things, and she has like 12 fake trees that she puts up all around the house and one of them is a black tree that she is, just looks really cool when you put like white lights and snow on it and stuff but then she leaves it, she puts it up early and decorates it with Halloween decorations. Trees are like, all purpose furniture for decoration. Yeah, I mean, I think that's a little bonkers hoarder, all due respect to my mom who is recovering nicely, by the way.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Thank you for throwing in the recovering thing. I was wondering.

**Molly Wood:** But I'm not gonna lie, when she does it up it looks kinda awesome. Oh God, I'm half full.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Oh. Wow. Okay, well.

**Molly Wood:** I love decor.

**Kai Ryssdal:** Yes, you do. That's it, we go out on Halloween trees, in other thing you didn't know you needed to know on this podcast. Alright. We, we are done for today. We are so, and I actually, I mean this, we are so appreciative that all y'all are here and you stick around for whatever it is that Molly and I have to say. If you think of something you want to tell us or ask us or share with us over the weekend, you can email us, [makemesmart@marketplace.org](mailto:makemesmart@marketplace.org) Leave us a voice memo if you want. Our phone number is 508-827-6278. 508-UB-SMART. Call us up.

**Molly Wood:** Please do, and subscribe to our podcast if you haven't already. Leave us a review and tell your friends, because our producers are working hard over here even if we're not. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered and co-hosted by Drew Jostad. The senior producer is Bridget Bodnar.

**Kai Ryssdal:** The team behind the YouTube live stream and our game half full, half empty is Steven Byeon, Catherine Divine, Emily McCune and Mel Rosenberg. The music for half full half empty was written by the one and only Drew Jostad. The Interim Executive Director of on demand is Donna Tam. Donna, Donna Tam.

**Molly Wood:** in India you can get the Maharaja Mac. Choose veggie or chicken, at McDonald's. The mcaloo tiki, potato Patty, yum. McSpicy paneer cheese patty, yum. I wanna go to India McDonald's. This all sounds amazing.

**Kai Ryssdal:** I so want to go to India. I so want to go to India. I should just do it.