

#virus

Data Science High Frequency Indicators

COVID-19 Calls to NYC's 311 Are Starting to Spike

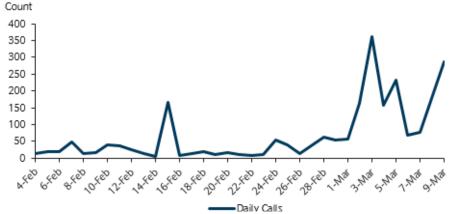
Calls to New York City's 311 information line are starting to see significant spikes of interest for COVID-19 (Figure 1), with call volume jumping from <10/day as recently as late February to 100s per day in March (up to the last update day on March 9).

This is already a notable change from prior virus outbreaks. We examined the history for calls related to ebola, zika, and other viral outbreaks that were features in the press. The most calls we saw in a single day relating to those was 341 for influenza in 2013.

The 311 Call Center Inquiry dataset contains information on about 78mn agent-handled calls to the City's 311 information line, including date, time and topic. NYC 311 normally handles informational and non-emergency calls. The callers typically inquire about city services and government programs, including information about school closures, street parking, and if a complaint needs to be filed with a city agency. In the case of COVID-19, people are likely to call 311 seeking non-emergency information about how to get tested, 1 so we believe there is a high likelihood that these calls will be correlated to the pace of the outbreak.

FIGURE 1

New York City 311 calls inquiring about COVID-19



Source: New York City Open Data, Barclays Research

 $^{\rm 1}$ It Took Me 3 E.R. Visits to Get a Coronavirus Test in New York, New York Times, March 9, 2020

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Special Report | Research

13 March 2020

INDUSTRY UPDATE

Investment Sciences

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311 Calls Can Help Us Track How Many People Are Seeking Official Resources and Help for COVID-19

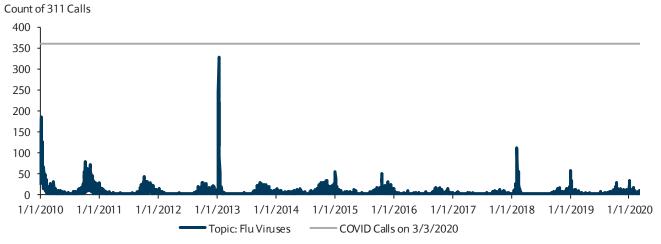
NYC 311 Call Center handles calls from the residents of New York City. These calls are normally informational and non-emergency, though 311 Call Centers can route emergency calls to agencies like the New York Police Department (NYPD) or Fire Department (FD). The 311 Call Center Inquiry dataset contains information on about all agent-handled calls to the City's 311 information line, including date, time and topic. The data had 78,531,758 calls from July 13, 2010 to March 9, 2020 (as of the date of this publication). The data are updated daily on what appears to be a 3-day lag.

To find examples of COVID-19 related calls, we first extracted a list of all the unique topics, resulting in 7,547 candidates. We then manually selected any that we could relate to COVID-19, giving us the following topics of interest:

- "Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)"
- "Coronavirus (COVID-19)"
- "Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)"

COVID-19 calls are already being received at a much higher pace than has been seen for any other virus outbreak. For context, we also charted the requests to 311 for information about influenza viruses (Figure 2, we use a similarly manual process of identify the relevant topic groups). Every day in March, the number of COVID requests would have been in the 99th percentile for flu virus requests, and on March 3 the volume of 311 calls exceeded the all-time peak for flu.

FIGURE 2
The volume of 311 about COVID-19 has already exceeded the peak of calls about influenza during any flu season



Source: New York City Open Data, Barclays Research

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