

# #virus

Data Science High Frequency Indicators

# S&P Companies Have Committed to Social Distancing

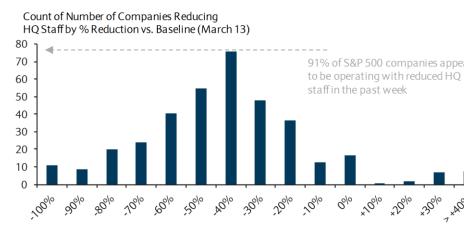
Geolocation data suggests that the median S&P 500 company had reduced headquarters (HQ) staff by 46% as of Friday, and more than 40% of those firms had cut staff by 50% or more. The moves to reduce numbers only appeared to take serious effect in the past week, but have accelerated sharply (Figure 2).

We used geolocation data to estimate the median number of people who work in **S&P 500 company headquarters.** The starting point was to identify the headquarters addresses based on corporate filings. Then, we identified the closest large building to use as our attachment polygon, and estimated the number of people. Finally, we treated the median for each working day from January 15, 2020 to Feb 28, 2020 as the baseline. In practice, we can see the results for 373 of the 500 names in the index.

Because we looked at this across many firms, there are limits to using this data to look at any single company: The working locations for any given company can be complicated, so would require much more nuanced examination. In addition, the virus has strained geolocation delivery, so the data has more uncertainty than usual.

# FIGURE 1

90% of S&P 500 companies whose headquarters we can track appear to have reduced the number of people working at HQ; >40% have cut by half or more



Source: Complementics, Barclays Research

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# Special Report | Research

16 March 2020

#### **INDUSTRY UPDATE**

#### Investment Sciences

# **Equity Research - Investment Sciences**

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# S&P 500 Companies Quickly Committed to Social Distancing

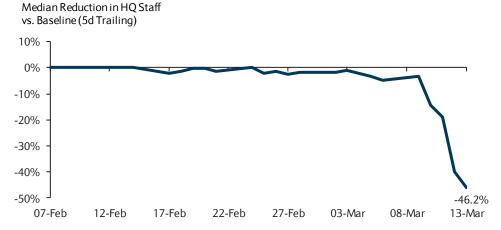
To serve as a high-frequency indicator of social distancing, we used geolocation data to estimate the share of people who are "missing" from the headquarters of S&P 500 companies on any given day.

A general overview about our methods for working with geolocation is available in our report *Data Science Methods: Making Geolocation Data Work*, October 16, 2019.

For this analysis, the starting point was to identify the headquarters addresses for each S&P 500 company based on corporate filings, from which we were able to select the closest large building to use as our location polygon. Then, we place-attached geolocation pings to count the number of unique users in that location, and normalized the count using the total count of unique users from ~1,000 suburban zip codes (which we believe will be relatively unaffected by behavior changes due to the COVID-19 outbreak). Finally, we treated the median for each workday in the period from January 15, 2020 to Feb 28, 2020 as the baseline for each company.

The median company has reduced their HQ staffing by 46% as of our last data update on March 13, 2020. More than 40% have reduced staff by half or more from the baseline. Fewer than 10% have not reduced staff in our data.

FIGURE 2 The median S&P 500 company has reduced HQ staffing by 46% in the most recent week



Source: Complementics, Barclays Research

Because we did this as a mass exercise, there are limits to using this data to look at any single company: the working locations for any given company can be complicated. HQs can be huge multi-building campuses, or a single floor in a shared office tower. Because of that, we think this is only an appropriate way of looking at a broad cross-section of corporate behavior. Understanding the approach of a given company would require much more nuanced examination of their work sites and work practices to create appropriate baselines and measure changes to them.

Additionally, the virus outbreak appears to be straining the infrastructure for geolocation data delivery, so these numbers are even more uncertain than usual and may be subject to future updates.

16 March 2020

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