

Special Report | Research

29 April 2020

#virus

China: COVID-19 tracking

# Labor Day: spend more but keep safe

Our weekly tracker suggests continued recovery in the services sector, standing at a  $\sim$ 3-4% y/y contraction in April versus  $\sim$ 8% in March. A notable contribution came from recovering real estate services and retail sales (led by autos), in addition to still-strong internet and financial services. The pace of recovery in manufacturing is relatively milder in April (-6 $\sim$ 7% versus -10% in March) amid deteriorating external demand.

With the country approaching the five-day International Labor Day holiday, we think the authorities are trying to strike a balance between boosting consumption/services and containing outbreak risks from an increase in public gatherings and outdoor activities during the holiday.

On the one hand, we see some positive developments in the services sectors, including: 1) some regions (Jiangxi, Qinghai, and Gansu) plan to, or have begun to, reopen indoor attractions, cinemas, and bars; 2) some major cities (Shanghai and Shenzhen) coordinated with giant internet companies to carry out large-scale promotional activities; and 3) some inland provinces encouraged 2.5-day-a-week vacation system, providing residents a longer weekend to boost spending in services/consumption.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism called for continued efforts to control passenger flows, avoid over-crowding, and implement reservation systems. Meanwhile, some tourism restrictions remain in place, including 1) limiting visitor numbers to 30% of the daily capacity at outdoor scenic attractions, and 2) cross-provinces/outbound group tours are still suspended.

Some industry data already predict a rebound in holiday travel. Ctrip.com expects around 90mn Chinese travelers to make domestic trips during the Labor Day holiday. While that's about 40% y/y lower, it is still twice the number who traveled during the Qingming Festival in early April (-60% y/y). We think the data from the holiday will be key to assessing the recovery's strength, given high-frequency data show the tourism, accommodation and catering sectors remain deep in contraction y/y.

On external front, we note the downward pressure on exports was exacerbated in April as seen in: 1) bulk carriers and container ships leaving/entering China's ports fell more significantly; 2) PMI new export orders is expected to remain deep in contraction; and 3) China's exports to Korea weakened. Reflecting this, we expect the contraction in exports to widen to  $\sim 20\%$  y/y in April from  $\sim 7\%$  in March.

China announced the National People's Congress (NPC) will convene on 22 May. While COVID-19 has spurred expectations of massive stimulus similar to the 2008 GFC response, we think authorities are likely to remain cautious and release stimulus at a measured pace, amid a likely more hostile external environment. In *China: COVID-19 stimulus: A changed playbook* (27 Apr) we discussed how the COVID-19 outbreak may have reinforced earlier changes in China's strategic policy thinking, the fiscal package we expect to be announced at the NPC meeting, and the implications for the economy.

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### Relevant reports

China: COVID-19 tracking: Services outperform manufacturing, 23 April 2020

China: COVID-19 tracking: Diverging recovery, lingering caution, 16 April 2020

China: COVID-19 tracking: Uneven recovery, eyes on jobs, 9 April 2020

China: COVID-19 tracking: Manufacturing stalls on global slump, 2 April 2020

China: COVID-19 - Activity tracking: Manufacturing slows amid rising risks, 27 March 2020

China: COVID-19 - Activity tracking: Downgrade 2020 GDP to 1.3%, 19 March 2020

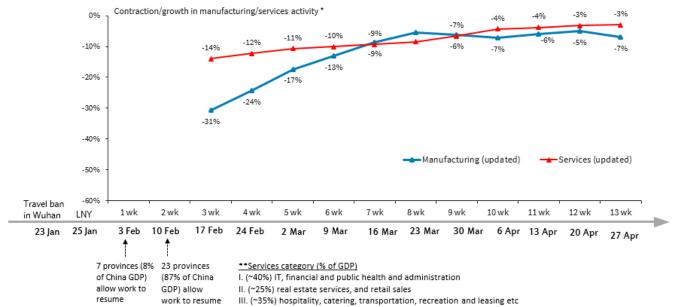
China: Jan-Feb data suggest -10% y/y 1Q contraction, 16 March 2020

China: Cutting GDP on deep Q1 slump, demand shock, 13 March 2020

Presentation slides: China Outlook: Covid-19: Cost of containment and recovery tracking, 24 February 2020

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FIGURE 1
The weekly tracker implies the recovery in services was quicker than manufacturing in April

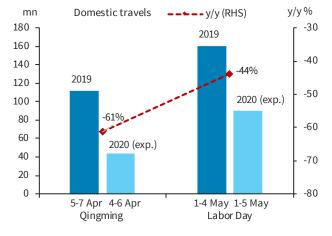


Note: Methodology: the contraction/growth in manufacturing/services activity is based on hard activity data. Specifically, for manufacturing activity (30% of GDP), we take a simple average of implied y/y growth of: 1) migration index; 2) manufacturing operation rate in textile; 3) coal consumption by six major power plants, and 4) air quality index, and then discounted by 0.5. For services activity (54% of GDP), we take a weighted average of implied y/y growth of: 1) category I services (take a simple average of credit growth, stock market turnover\*0.05, and IT); 2) category II services (take a simple average of implied y/y growth of home sales and auto sales, and then discounted by 0.3); and 3) category III (take a simple average of implied y/y growth of hotel revenue, passenger transportation, and road congestion, and then discounted by 0.5). For services classification, we have IT, financial and public health and administration (~40% of services) in category I, real estate services, and retail sales (~25% of services) in category II, and the rest of services (~35% of services) – hospitality, catering, transportation, and leasing, etc – in category III.

Source: Barclays Research

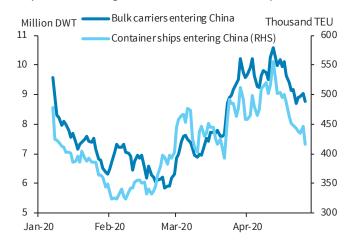
FIGURE 2

Tourism is expected to recover during upcoming holiday



Source: MOCT, Ctrip, Barclays Research

FIGURE 3
Shipments entering China down since start of April

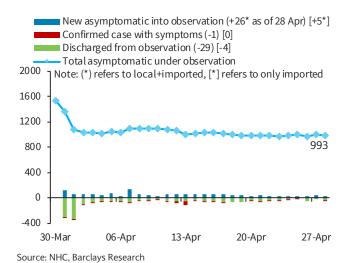


Source: PRC NHC, Barclays Research

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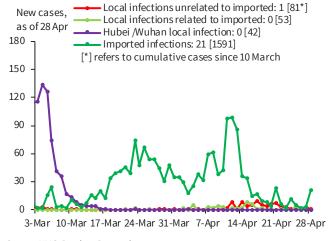
### FIGURE 4

## Asymptomatic cases stabilised



### FIGURE 5

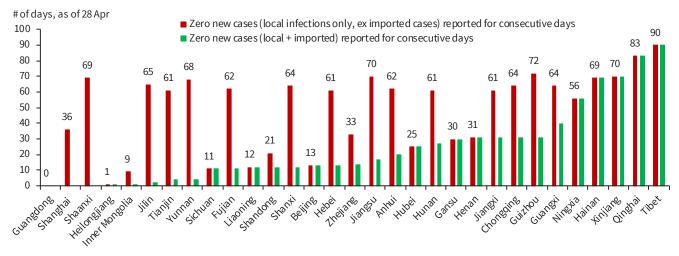
# New imported case stayed at ~7/day in the past week under tight border control



### Source: NHC, Barclays Research

### FIGURE 6

## One more province report zero COVID cases for ≥ 14 consecutive days

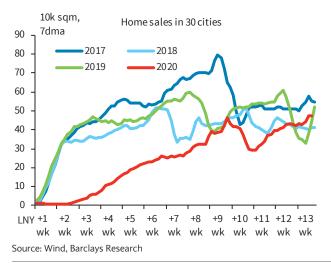


Note: As of 28 Apr, 16 provinces (15 as of 22 April) reported zero cases and 25 provinces (25 as of 22 April) reported zero local cases for ≥ 14 days. Source: PRC and provincial NHC, Barclays Research

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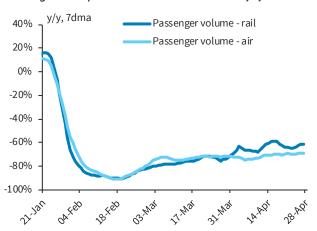
### FIGURE 7

## Home sales remained broadly flat at c.-15% y/y this week



### FIGURE 9

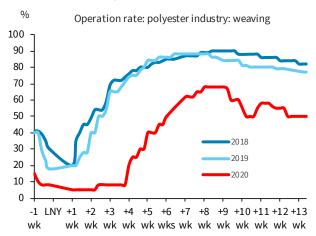
## Passenger transportation still down -60-70% y/y



Source: Wind, Barclays Research

## FIGURE 11

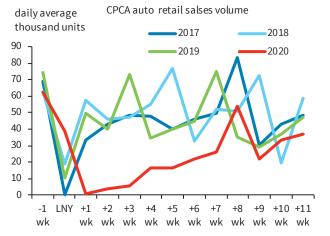
## Textile manufacturing operation rate: stalled at -37% y/y



Source: MOT, Barclays Research

## FIGURE 8

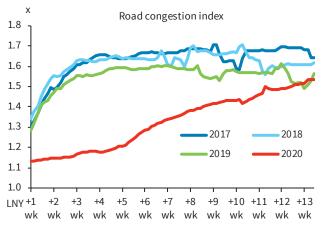
## Auto sales fell 7% y/y in the first three weeks of April



Source: Wind, Barclays Research

### FIGURE 10

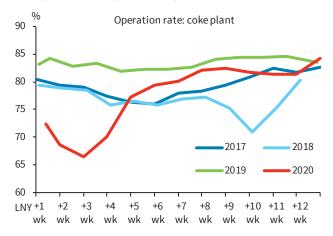
# Road congestion index down ~3% y/y this week (-2% prevs)



Source: Wind, Barclays Research

## FIGURE 12

## Mining and smelting: operating rates close to last year's level

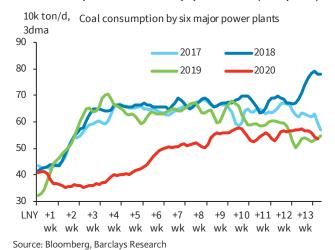


Source: Wind, Barclays Research

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## FIGURE 13

# Coal consumption down ~10% y/y this week (-4% prevs)



#### FIGURE 15

## Air quality in main manufacturing hubs



Source: Wind, Barclays Research

## FIGURE 14

# New export orders likely to stay in contraction in Q2



Source: Wind, Barclays Research

#### FIGURE 16

## Air quality in main steel producer hubs



Source: Wind, Barclays Research

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