

#virus

Data Science High Frequency Indicators Update

The Start of Divergence

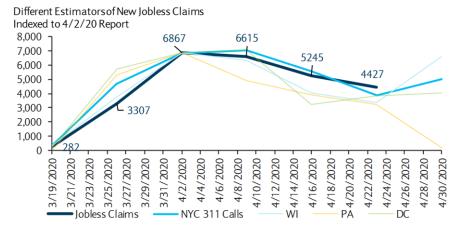
We have reached a stage in the COVID-19 epidemic where the path of social distancing is beginning to diverge between states and countries, with some relaxing constraints as others maintain them. Because the places that are reducing restrictions are diverse in terms of their case growth and testing situations, we should soon have new data to help judge when conditions are (and are not) ripe for re-opening without accelerating infections.

In the US, some states started to permit businesses and other public places to reopen last weekend, and more will take that step this week. It is too early to see the US outcomes in our data, but in Europe, Sweden and Germany have visibly reduced distancing (based on TomTom road traffic data). Those countries also have different trajectories in their positive test rates, so in a few weeks we may have some additional insight into how much testing is required to support a successful reopening.

In the US, we are also seeing some divergence in economic data, with NYC 311 calls (and data from WI) suggesting that jobless claims may increase this week, while PA jobless claims have fallen sharply.

FIGURE 1

The Jobless Claim Picture is Also Diverging This Week: Unemployment Calls to NYC 311 and WI Jobless Claims Rose, But Claims Were Flat in DC, and Down in PA



Source: NYC Open Data, State Government Websites, Barclays Research

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Special Report | Research

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MACRO STRATEGY

Investment Sciences

Equity Research - Investment Sciences

Ryan Preclaw

+1 212 412 2249

ryan.preclaw@barclays.com BCI. US

Ben McSkelly, CFA +44 (0)20 3555 3606 ben.mcskelly@barclays.com Barclays, UK

Troy Li +1 212 526 1825 troy.li@barclays.com BCI, US

Data Science

Adam Kelleher ** +1 212 526 5697 adam.kelleher@barclays.com BCI, US

Xuyan Xiao **
+1 212 526 8487
xuyan.xiao@barclays.com
BCI, US

^{**}This author is a member of the Fixed Income, Currencies and Commodities Research department and is not an equity or debt research analyst.

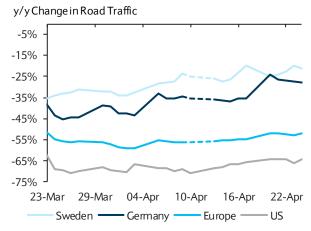
Small Divergences in Social Distancing

This week we are seeing the first hints of divergence in the path of social distancing between jurisdictions after a sustained downturn in economic activity across developed markets.

A small number of US states plan to relax their social distancing policies beginning this week. None of the states have a combination of case growth and low positive test rates that characterized South Korea's successful use of "test and trace" to contain its epidemic, which raises the risk that they will not be able to contain a resurgence of infections (*States Reopening Now Should Not Expect South Korea-Like Results*, April 24, 2020). However, they have all implemented substantial social distancing and, for now at least, it is too early to see in our data how many people actually return to regular activities. Even once we can see that, we will likely need to wait several weeks before we learn whether their COVID-19 case growth can be controlled within frameworks that allow more activities.

In Europe, however, Sweden and Germany have both seen a relaxation of social distancing already begin to show up in road traffic data (Figure 2). And like the US states, they are diverse in terms of their virus contexts, with Germany having experienced a sustained drop in case growth and a decline in positive test rates to levels similar to what South Korea saw at their new case peak. Sweden, by contrast, has not yet seen declines in new cases, and has seen an uptick in positive test rates even before social distancing started to fade (Figure 3). So they may provide early insights as to the relationship between distancing and testing in battling the growth of virus cases.

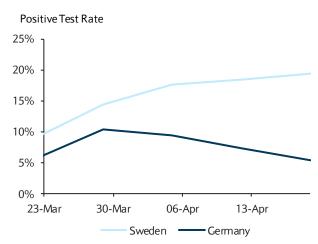
FIGURE 2
Within Europe, Sweden and Germany Have Seen Notable
Increases in Traffic...



Note: Dotted lines normalize a volume drop in Europe on April 10-13 that occurred because of Easter. Source: TomTom, Barclays Research

FIGURE 3

...Despite Their Positive Test Rates Moving In Opposite Directions



Source: Johns Hopkins University, ourworldindata.org, Barclays Research

In the US, though there is less clear divergence in social distancing, there are early hints of diverging economic paths between states. After declining for several weeks, 311 unemployment calls actually increased in the most recent week, to levels that suggest a rebound towards 5mn new claims in this week's data under a simple indexing model. Also different from last week is the disagreement between 311 calls and early claims reporting data. While WI new jobless claims climbed ever more (in relative terms) than NYC 311 calls, Washington DC jobless claims were flat over the prior week, and PA claims suggested a sharp drop. Given that Bloomberg is reporting a median Wall Street estimate of a drop to 3.5mn claims, it appears there is real risk that new claims come in worse than expected.

High Frequency Series Updates

Tracking COVID-19 Confirmed Cases

There were 22,412 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 in the US yesterday, a decrease of 5,219 from 27,631 new cases the day before. The cumulative total cases grew to 988,197 from 965,785 the day before. The 3-day trailing daily CDGR in cumulative cases was 3%.

There were 190,075 new tests administered for COVID-19 in the US yesterday, a decrease of 15,458 from 205,533 new tests the day before. The positive test rate was 12%, down from 13% the day before.

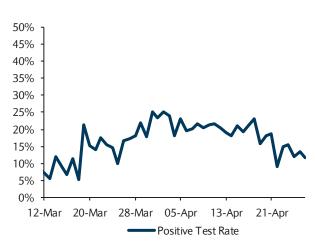
FIGURE 6
Growth in New Total Tests



Source: the COVID Tracking Project, Barclays Research

FIGURE 7

Positive Test Rate



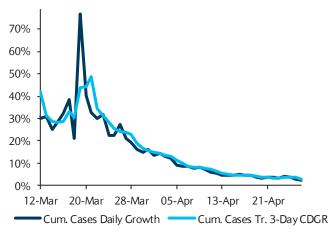
Source: Johns Hopkins, the COVID Tracking Project, Barclays Research

New York City Hospital Emergency Room Admissions

In New York City, the number of emergency room visits has now completed a full swing. Not only has it declined sharply from record highs, but on the most recent day reported, the number of combined visits for respiratory and influenza-like and respiratory illnesses fell to the lowest level since August 2019, the 20th lowest day since 2015.

FIGURE 4

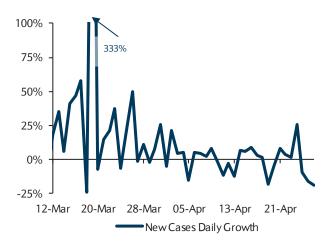
US Daily Growth in Cumulative Total Cases



Note: Chart since the US crossed the 100-case threshold. Source: Johns Hopkins, Barclays Research

FIGURE 5

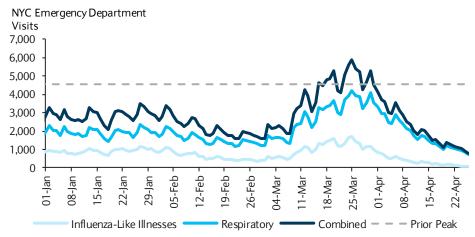
US Daily Growth in New Cases



Note: Chart since the US crossed the 100-case threshold. Source: Johns Hopkins, Barclays Research

FIGURE 8

NYC Hospital Emergency Room Visits for Combined Flu-like and Respiratory Illnesses Have Fallen Sharply



Source: New York City Department of Health, Barclays Research

For details about how we look at emergency room admissions, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: NYC Emergency Room Admissions Are Already at Peaks*, March 16, 2020.

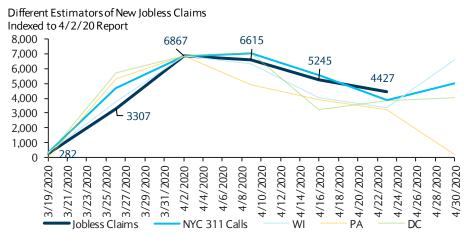
Jobless Claims

NYC 311 calls about unemployment have been quite useful in anticipating the jump in national initial jobless claims filings released every Thursday. After declining for several weeks, 311 unemployment calls actually increased in the most recent week, to levels that suggest a rebound towards 5mn new claims in this week's data under a simple indexing model. Also different from last week is the disagreement between 311 calls and early claims reporting data. While WI new jobless claims climbed even more (in relative terms) than NYC 311 calls, Washington DC jobless claims were flat over the prior week, and PA claims suggested a sharp drop. Given that Bloomberg is reporting a median Wall Street estimate of a drop to 3.5mn claims, it appears there is real risk that new claims come in worse than expected.

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FIGURE 9

The Jobless Claim Picture is Less Clear This Week: Calls to NYC 311 Unemployment Calls, and WI Jobless Claims Rose Last Week, But Were Flat in DC, and Down in PA



Source: NYC Open Data, State Government Websites, Barclays Research

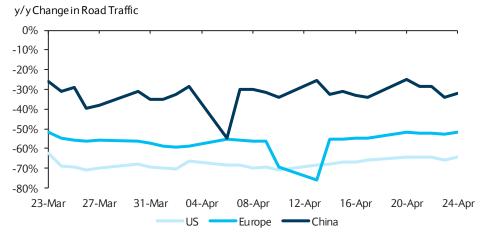
For details about how we look at the relationship between 311 unemployment calls and initial jobless claims, see *311 Calls About Unemployment Lead Weekly Jobless Claims*, March 24, 2020.

Road Traffic

Road traffic data are reported by TomTom for more than 400 cities globally and is the rare high frequency indicator that can be applied equally to many countries. Here, there is little indication of improvement in economic conditions. There is not yet much evidence of a sustained general increased in any of China, Europe, or the US (though specific places have grown, as described above).

FIGURE 10

Road Traffic is Up Slightly In the US and Europe, and flat in China, but Has Not Yet Clearly Trending Up



Source: TomTom, Barclays Research

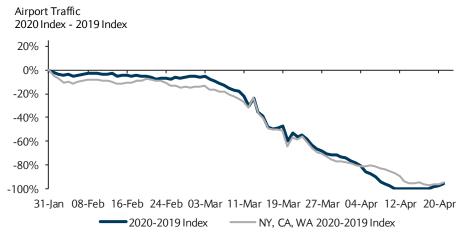
For details about how we look at road traffic, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: TomTom congestion data show impact of global lockdowns*, April 9, 2020.

Airports

Nationally, airport traffic increased just slightly off troughs last week; rising from down 100% y/y in the prior to end down only 95% in the most recent.

FIGURE 11

Traffic at Airports across the US Increased Just Slightly Off Troughs Last Week



Source: Complementics, Barclays Research

For details about how we look at airport traffic, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: US Airport Traffic Is Down and Falling*, March 12, 2020.

NYC Subways

Subway ridership appears to remain at the now-flattened steady rate of down >90% (Figure 10-11).

For details about how we look at subway ridership, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: NYC Subway Ridership Is Declining*, March 10, 2020.

S&P 500 Headquarters

S&P 500 company headquarters staffing remains near zero. The median company has reduced headquarters staffing by almost 95%, which has now been essentially steady for several weeks.

FIGURE 12

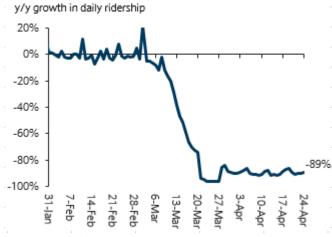
NYC Subway Ridership Remains Near Zero...



Source: MTA, Barclays Research

FIGURE 13

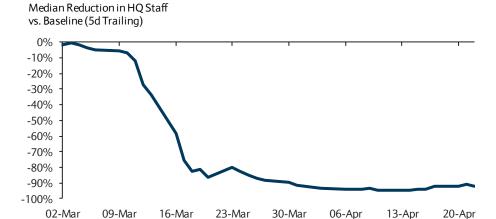
...Whether Measured Daily or Weekly



Source: MTA, Barclays Research

FIGURE 14

S&P 500 Company HQ Staffing Is Holding Steady at Very Reduced Levels



Source: Complementics, Barclays Research

And 80% of S&P 500 constituents have cut staffing by more than 80% (Figure 15), a figure that has been constant for several weeks.

FIGURE 15

More Than 80% of S&P 500 Companies Have Reduced Headquarters Staff by 80% or More, Essentially Unchanged from Last Week



Source: Complementics, Barclays Research

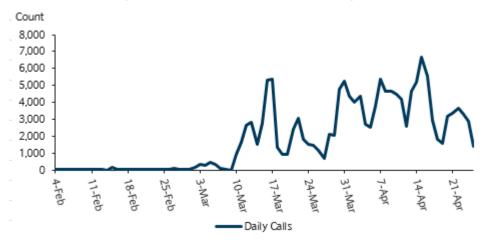
For details about how we look at S&P HQ staffing, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: S&P Companies Have Committed to Social Distancing*, March 16, 2020.

NYC 311 Calls for COVID-19 Information

311 calls for COVID-19 information are touching lower peaks, and lower troughs, suggesting waning attention in the city.

FIGURE 16

NYC 311 Calls Seeking Information about COVID-19 Are Waning



Source: NYC Open Data, Barclays Research

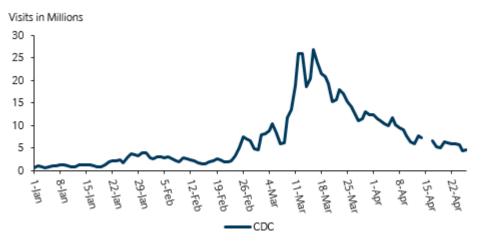
For details about how we look at 311 call volume, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: COVID-19 Calls to NYC's 311 Are Starting to Spike*, March 13, 2020.

Visits to the CDC Website

Visits to the CDC website have continued their declines off mid-March peaks (Figure 17).

FIGURE 17

Visits to CDC Website Have Now Sustained a Multi-week Decline from Their Peak



Source: analytics.usa.gov, Barclays Research

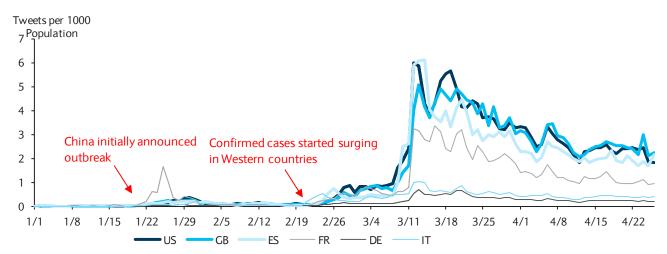
For details of how we look at CDC website traffic, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: Visits to CDC Websites Have Spiked*, March 16, 2020.

Twitter

Tweets that are "virus" or "covid" related have remained quite stable for several weeks. They remain about 50% of peaks, suggesting that the virus continues to be a topic of online conversations.

FIGURE 18

Population Normalized Count of "Virus" or "COVID" Related Tweets, by Country



Source: Twitter, United Nations, Barclays Research

For details about how we look at tweet volume, see *Data Science High Frequency Indicators: COVID-19 Tweet Surges Vary by Country*, March 16, 2020.

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