

Scotiabank Nowcast: Wholesale Sales Rise in June Leaving Q2-2019 at 2.79%

This note is part of a series that will be published after important data releases, documenting mechanical updates of the nowcast for Canadian GDP coming from the Scotiabank nowcasting model. The evolution of this nowcast will inform Scotiabank Economics' official macroeconomic outlook.

The model is described in a related note [here](#). Changes to the model this quarter are detailed in the box on the next page.

- Wholesale sales picked up in June (+0.6% m/m), growth stabilizing after heavy swings in the previous few months. Most of the growth came from a significant rise in the miscellaneous category (+3.52% m/m), as well as machinery and equipment sales (+1.46% m/m).
- The laggards included motor vehicle and parts wholesalers (-1.92% m/m), where sales declined for the second consecutive month. Going forward risks to the sector are tilted to the downside, given the significant uncertainties related to trade policy.
- Wholesale inventories increased for the 10th consecutive month, unlike those in the manufacturing sector. The continuing rise in wholesale inventories points to risks to growth going forward, as any potential de-stocking would likely come at the expense of future growth.
- The report is consistent with Q2-2019 growth of 2.79%, on the back of the expected deceleration of industry-level growth in June.

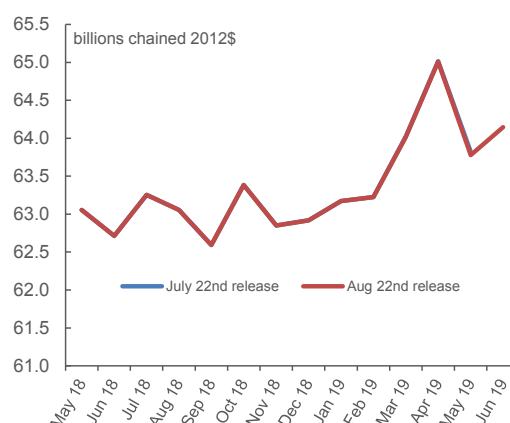
Table 1: Canadian GDP Nowcast, Q2-2019

	Nowcast Date	Q2-2019 GDP Growth, %	GDP by industry, %m/m		
			Apr ^{actual}	May ^{actual}	Jun
Previous nowcast	20-Aug-19	2.78	0.33r	0.23	0.03
Revisions and other data		0.00			
Wholesale sales, Canada		+0.02			
Wholesale inventories, Canada		-0.01			
Current Nowcast	22-Aug-19	2.79	0.33 ^f	0.23	0.04

CONTACTS

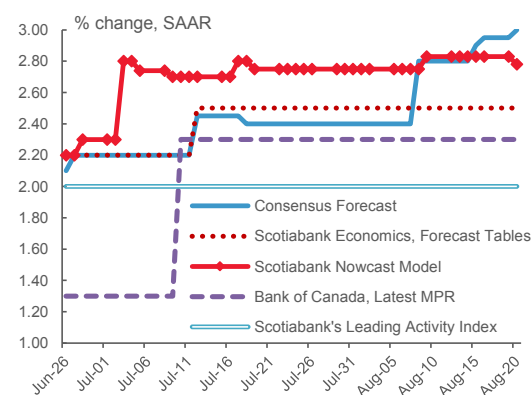
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Chart 1: Wholesale Sales, Canada



Sources: Scotiabank Economics, Haver Analytics, Statistics Canada

Chart 2: The Evolution of the Scotiabank Economics Q2-2019 Nowcast



Sources: Scotiabank Economics, Bloomberg, Haver Analytics.

Box 1. Changes to the Nowcasting Model

Starting in Q2-2019 we made the following tweaks to the model used for the Canadian GDP nowcast. A recent paper from the Bank of Canada points out that revisions to monthly GDP for the first month of the quarter are very significant, construction industry being one of the most heavily-revised (see Rizetto, P., 2018. [GDP by industry in real time: are revisions well-behaved?](#) Staff analytical note 2018-40, Bank of Canada). Given that in Q1-2019 the main reason for the forecast miss was data revisions and construction industry in particular, we made the following modifications to capture these aspects of the Canadian data:

- 1) Within a given quarter we treat observed monthly GDP as more uncertain than later vintages. This implies that first releases of monthly GDP are compared against all other available data and the model is used to back-cast monthly GDP in real-time. Technically this is accomplished by increasing the variance in the observation equation related to monthly GDP.
- 2) In order to cover real estate and construction in more detail we add average seasonally adjusted house price in Canada, as reported by CREA. This is also in line with evidence that house prices have leading information for Canadian GDP (see Lalonde, Perevalov, 2019, [A New Approach to Forecasting Economic Downturns](#)).

Other data we included are i) a measure of equity prices (S&P TSX index), and ii) Canadian employment from the Labour Force Survey.

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