



The Economy Observer

Insights from 1QFY24 GDP data

Corporate investments likely to have declined for the second consecutive quarter

- India's <u>real GDP</u> grew 7.8% YoY in 1QFY24, in line with the market consensus but slightly lower than the RBI's forecast of 8%. GDP data is the most comprehensive macroeconomic indicator and thus, it is widely covered. It is unfortunate that the quarterly GDP data published in India does not provide much detail. The annual data that gives details is available with a lag of 11 months, which makes it outdated.
- India's GVA data helps to understand the key drivers of economic growth (agriculture, industry and/or services) and GDP data helps to gauge consumption, investment and foreign trade trends. Nonetheless, there are many insights that one can use to understand the data further. In this note, we share seven key insights from 1QFY24 GVA/GDP data:
- 1.) Although nominal investments grew 8.6% YoY in 1QFY24, they were largely led by the government sector, which rose 54% YoY during the quarter. It suggests that private sector investments (including PSUs) grew only 2.6% YoY in 1QFY24.
- 2.) After the release of 1QFY24 data, weak manufacturing growth (4.7% vs. estimate of 7-8%) came as a big disappointment. While it was surprising initially, slower growth is compatible with the listed manufacturing companies' data, the primary input in quarterly GDP estimates.
- 3.) The services sector, on the other hand, posted better growth. Within services, seven-year high double-digit growth in the 'financial, real estate and professional (FR&P)' sector was unexpected. Listed companies' data showed that the non-IT services sector grew at a much faster rate than IT services. It is, thus, likely that the real estate and non-banking financial sectors (such as insurance) led higher growth in the services sector.
- 4.) GVA/GDP data, along with listed companies' data, gives some idea of a recovery in the unlisted, informal and/or unorganized sector. Unlike in the four quarters of FY23 when it was clear that the listed sector was growing slower than the rest of the economy (RoE), we found mixed signals of that in 1QFY24.
- 5.) In the absence of the current account deficit (CAD), we use investments and net imports of goods & services to get an idea of gross savings in the economy. With static investments in (vs. 1QFY23) and lower net imports, it is clear that India's savings improved in 1QFY24; however, it was likely led by the non-household sector, possibly the government.
- 6.) With real GDP growth of 7.8%, nominal GDP growth of 8% probably did not get much attention. Barring a short episode in FY01-03 and FY20-FY21, the Indian economy has not witnessed single-digit nominal GDP growth during the past four decades. Nominal data is important since it affects corporate sales and profits, government tax receipts, exports and imports, and bank credit growth.
- 7.) The details of the expenditure approach were very unconvincing in 1QFY24. While net imports narrowed in 1QFY24, real net imports dragged down real GDP growth massively during the quarter. Moreover, discrepancies contributed >80% to real GDP growth in 1QFY24, indicating possible upward revisions in consumption and/or investments in the future.
- Overall, although headline GVA/GDP growth was good, the details showed some improvements and some concerns.

Private investments (including PSUs) grew only 2.6% YoY in 1QFY24, marking the slowest growth in three years for the second successive quarter: India's nominal investments (defined as the sum of gross fixed capital formation and change in stocks) grew 8.6% YoY in 1QFY24, marking the first single-digit growth in 10 quarters. Based on the official monthly data, government investments grew 54% YoY during the quarter (led by 45% YoY growth in the Center's capex and 65% YoY by states). Hence, it is clear that private investments (including PSUs) grew only 2.6% YoY in 1QFY24, marking the slowest growth in three years.

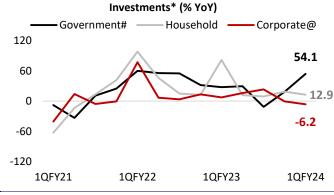


Using data on stamp duty & registration fees collected by states, cement production and steel consumption, we have prepared some estimates on household investment. Our calculations suggest that it grew decently by ~13% YoY during the quarter. It means that corporate investments declined 6.2% YoY in 1QFY24, marking the second consecutive fall and the worst contraction in three years (*Exhibit 1*).

Within private sector, corporate investments declined 6.2% YoY in 1QFY24, marking the second consecutive fall

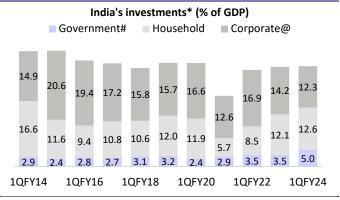
It also suggests that corporate investments fell further to 12.3% of GDP in 1QFY24, the lowest in the first quarter of any year in the past decade. Government investments, on the other hand, were exceptionally high at 5% of GDP and household investments were also strong (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 1: Corporate investments are estimated to have declined for the second consecutive quarter in 1QFY24...



* GFCF + Change in stocks (excluding acquisition of valuables) # Center + States @ Residual

Exhibit 2: ...though government investments were exceptionally high at 5% of GDP during the quarter



Quarterly data by economic participants is MOFSL estimates Source: CAG, CGA, CSO, RBI, Various national sources, MOFSL

2) Manufacturing GVA growth disappointing but not unexplainable: Although headline real GVA growth was in line with the market consensus, one of the biggest disappointments was weaker-than-expected growth in the manufacturing sector. Against our forecast of 7.5% YoY, real manufacturing activities grew just 4.7% YoY, similar to that in 4QFY23.

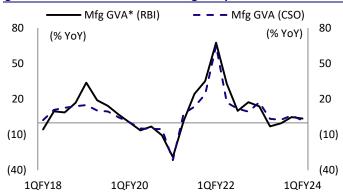
GVA of listed manufacturing companies grew 3.5% YoY in 1QFY24, slower than 4.8%/13.8% in 4Q/1QFY23

For quarterly GVA data, listed corporate data is a crucial input. Just a day prior to the GDP release, the RBI released the data on the performance of the private corporate business sector during 1QFY24. Based on some 1,700 odd nongovernment manufacturing listed companies, an estimation of gross value addition suggests that it grew just 3.5% YoY in 1QFY24, slower than 4.8%/13.8% in 4Q/1QFY23 (Exhibit 3). According to the CSO, nominal growth in manufacturing GVA was just 2% YoY in 1QFY24 vs. 6.1%/17.2% in in 4Q/1QFY23.

A look at payments to various factors of production (that together make up GVA) confirms that while remuneration to entrepreneurs (profits after taxes, PAT) declined for the fourth successive quarter and payments to capital (depreciation and interest payments) grew at the slowest pace in four quarters. Only staff costs (remuneration to labor) grew 11.4% YoY in 1QFY24, marking the highest growth in five quarters (Exhibit 4). In short, weaker-than-expected growth in the manufacturing sector was disappointing but not unexplainable.

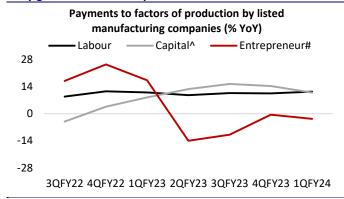


Exhibit 3: Weak manufacturing GVA is in line with weak growth in the listed manufacturing companies



* Estimated using the payments to factors of production

Exhibit 4: Payments to entrepreneurs fell last quarter, while they grew for labor & capital



^ Interest + depreciation

Profits before taxes (PBT) Source: CSO, RBI, MOFSL

3) Services sector, however, grew faster, largely led by listed corporate sector: In stark contrast to the industrial/manufacturing sector, the services sector posted faster-than-expected growth, helping GVA/GDP growth to match the market consensus. However, just like the manufacturing sector, listed corporate data plays an important input in quarterly services GVA. Importantly, the services sector is more pervasive and thus, listed data is not as closely related to national GVA data, as in the case of the manufacturing sector.

Still, it does give us an idea directionally. Within services, there were two different trends – the real growth in 'trade, hotels, transport & communication' (THT&C) was slower than the forecast, while 'financial, real estate & professional services (FR&P)' grew at the fastest pace in seven years and marked the first double-digit growth in 27 quarters (Exhibit 5).

The RBI's data on the non-government non-financial (NGNF) listed corporate sector showed that GVA of 'hotels & restaurants' grew strongly, while that of 'wholesale & retail trade' was weak in 1QFY24.

GVA of non-IT services sector surged rapidly in 1QFY24, while IT services posted decent growth during the quarter Broadly speaking, GVA of the non-IT services sector surged rapidly in 1QFY24, while IT services posted decent growth during the quarter (*Exhibit 6*). If so, it is possible that the real estate sector was the primary contributor to the positive surprise in the FR&P sector. Additionally, due to some announcements in the Union Budget 2023-24, there were some changes in the tax structure of the insurance sector and debt mutual funds, which may have also contributed to better growth in some parts of the financial sector in 1QFY24.



Exhibit 5: Services sector grew much faster than expected in 1QFY24

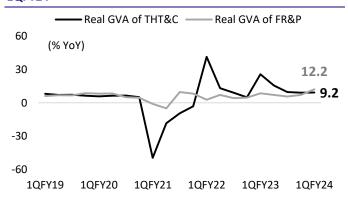
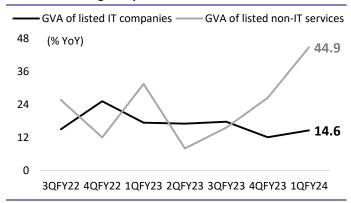


Exhibit 6: Non-IT listed services grew much faster than listed IT services during the quarter



Source: CSO, RBI, MOFSL

Decline in GFCE vs. higher growth in PADOS suggests improvement in the informal services sector

4) Unlike in FY23, there were mixed signals about whether the informal and/or the unorganized sector did well in 1QFY24: One of the key themes we have highlighted many times in our previous notes is that the informal/ unorganized and smaller players were disproportionately hurt by the pandemic, and their revival was also not visible as of FY22 end. This, however, reversed in the four quarters of FY23. From GDP data, a look at 'public administration, defence & other services (PADOS)' gives us some idea about growth trends in the informal sector. PADOS includes government spending and other services, such as education, health, and recreation & personal services, which are dominated by the informal sector. Against our forecast of 7%, PADOS grew 7.9% YoY in 1QFY24 and the fact that real government final consumption expenditure (GFCE) contracted 0.7% YoY during the quarter gave us some hope that the improvement in the informal services sector (i.e., other services) might have continued. This, however, was not supported by other evidence (Exhibit 7).

GVA of listed companies grew 20% YoY in 1QFY24 v/s 7% growth in rest of the economy (RoE) Using the RBI's data on the NGNF listed corporate sector and including non-financial government enterprises within BSE500, we prepare some estimates of the non-financial listed sector. Based on our calculations, GVA of listed companies grew at a seven-quarter high rate of 20% YoY during the quarter, primarily led by the services sector. If so, 8% nominal GVA growth implies that the rest of the economy posted a meagre growth of 7%, the lowest in 10 quarters. In other words, the trend of faster growth in the rest of the economy relative to the listed sector in the four quarters of FY23 appears to have reversed in 1QFY24 (Exhibit 8). This provides mixed signals about whether the large informal sector in India continued its improvement in 1QFY24.

6 September 2023



Exhibit 7: Combination of strong growth in PADOS and fall in GFCE suggest better growth in the informal sector...

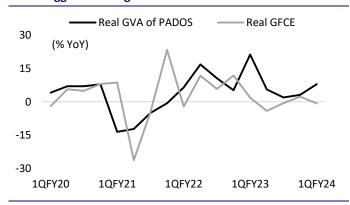
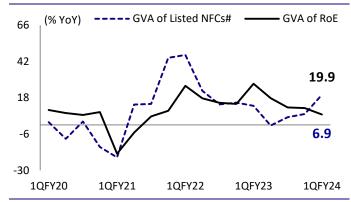


Exhibit 8: ...although faster growth in listed companies hints the opposite



Based on the payments to factors of production

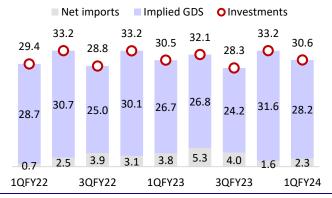
RoE = Rest of the economy Source: CSO, RBI, MOFSL

India's implied gross domestic savings are estimated at 28.2% of GDP in 1QFY24, compared to 26.7% of GDP a year ago 5) India's domestic savings improved in 1QFY24; maybe led by non-household sector: India's investment rate (including acquisition of valuables) was 30.6% of GDP in 1QFY24, broadly unchanged from 30.5% a year ago in 1QFY23. At the same time, India's net imports (of goods & services) narrowed to 2.3% of GDP from 3.8% of GDP. If so, India's implied gross domestic savings (GDS) are estimated at 28.2% of GDP in 1QFY24, compared to 26.7% of GDP a year ago (Exhibit 9). Please note that ideally we should adjust total investments with the

current account balance, data for which is not yet available.

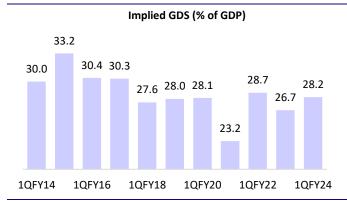
A comparison of India's gross savings in the first quarter of the past 10 years confirms that barring 1QFY22 (just coming out of the pandemic), an estimated gross savings of 28.2% of GDP in 1QFY24 were the highest in the past seven years (Exhibit 10).

Exhibit 9: India's gross savings estimated at 28.2% of GDP in 1QFY24...



Implied gross domestic savings (GDS)

Exhibit 10: ...marking the highest level in 1Q during the past seven years (except 1QFY22)



Source: CEIC, CAG, MOFSL

Another interesting feature is that it appears that the surge in gross savings is led by the non-household sector, probably driven by the government sector. Compared to the nominal GDP growth of 8% YoY, private final consumption expenditure (PFCE) increased 9.1% YoY in 1QFY24, indicating that household total savings may have fallen during the quarter (*Exhibit 11*). It is possible that the very low fiscal deficit in the first quarter helped push India's savings higher, with or without the help of the



corporate sector (Exhibit 12). As a corollary, since we know that household investments grew decently in 1QFY24, it implies that household net financial savings (NFS) fell during the quarter. It must be noted that one should not give too much attention to quarterly numbers, especially in savings and investments, due to seasonality and other issues. Annual numbers are better suited to drawing robust conclusions.

Exhibit 11: Higher growth in PFCE vs. GDP/PDI suggests that household savings may have weakened in 1QFY24...

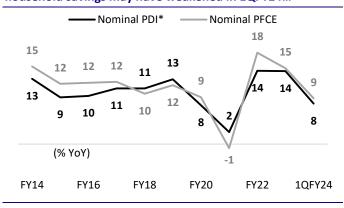
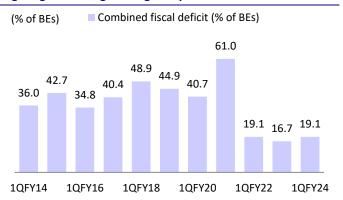


Exhibit 12: ...though lower fiscal deficit may have supported higher gross savings during the quarter



* MOFSL estimates for FY23 and same as GDP growth in 1QFY24

Source: CEIC, CAG, MOFSL

6) Not too different from real GDP growth, nominal GDP grew 8% YoY in 1QFY24:

India's real GDP grew 7.8% YoY in 1QFY24, similar to the market consensus but slightly lower than the RBI's forecast of 8%. At the same time, nominal GDP increased only 8% YoY during the quarter, which probably did not garner as much attention (*Exhibit 13*). Barring a short episode in FY01-03 and FY20-FY21, the Indian economy has not witnessed single-digit nominal GDP growth for the past four decades.

Consensus on WPI-inflation has come down from as high as 2.6% in Apr'23 to as low as 0% in Aug'23

While we have forecast single-digit nominal GDP growth in FY24, the market consensus seems to be adjusting and falling in line with our expectations. One of the reasons for such weak nominal growth is low inflation measured by the wholesale price index (WPI). While we had expected 0.6% growth in WPI, the consensus, as per the RBI Survey of professional forecasts, has come down from as high as 2.6% in the Apr'23 edition (81st round) to as low as 0% in the Aug'23 edition (83rd round). With CPI inflation expected to be 5-5.5% this year, GDP deflator is likely to be ~2%, implying ~8% nominal growth with ~6% real growth.

Although real growth matters, nominal growth is also important since it affects a number of other indicators such as corporate sales and profits, government tax receipts, exports and imports, and bank credit growth. We had been highlighting this risk since the end of 2022 and had discussed the likely implications of slower nominal growth.



Exhibit 13: Nominal GDP grew just 8% YoY in 1QFY24...

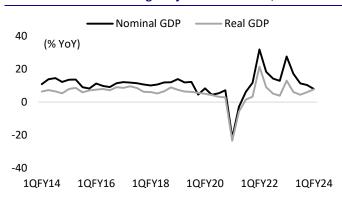
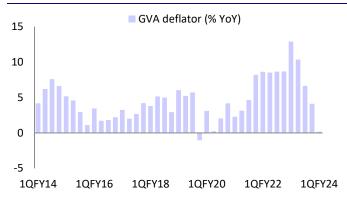


Exhibit 14: ...as GDP deflator was only 0.2% YoY



Source: CSO, CEIC, MOFSL

Despite narrowing nominal net imports, real net imports deducted as much as 4.6pp from real GDP growth in 1QFY24, the highest drag on record since FY13 GDP growth since the series began in FY12 and discrepancies added >6pp to real GDP growth: A look at expenditure details of India's 1QFY24 GDP highlights some trends, which are very hard to make sense of. There are two trends in particular. First, notwithstanding the fall in nominal net imports to 2.3% of GDP in 1QFY24 from 3.8% in 1QFY23, real net imports worsened materially. We have already highlighted this fact in our earlier analysis, wherein we found that the improvement in real external trade was not as strong as the nominal data suggested. However, the extent of deterioration in real net imports suggested by GDP data was shocking.

According to CSO, real exports contracted 7.7% YoY in 1QFY24, while real imports grew 10.1% during the quarter. Consequently, real net imports deducted as much as 4.6pp from real GDP growth, the highest drag on record since FY13 (Exhibit 15).

Discrepancies added as much as 6.4pp to real GDP growth in 1QFY24 Second, discrepancies, which are simply a residual of nominal GDP (estimated from robust GVA estimation and net indirect taxes) and its major components (consumption, investments and external trade) estimated, added as much as 6.4pp to real GDP growth in 1QFY24 (Exhibit 16). This was the highest positive contribution from discrepancies to real GDP growth since the series began in FY13.

Exhibit 15: Nominal net imports narrowed but real net imports were a huge drag on India's real GDP growth

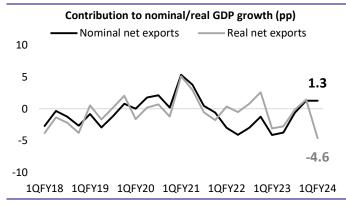
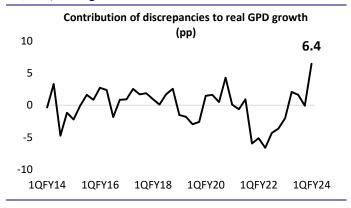


Exhibit 16: Discrepancies added 6.4pp to real GDP growth in 1QFY24, the highest contribution on record

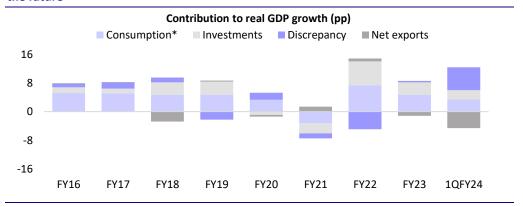


Source: CSO, CEIC, MOFSL



It is important to remember that higher (or lower) discrepancies do not raise doubts over the credibility of GDP estimates because the headline GDP numbers are derived from the robust headline GVA and net indirect taxes. However, it reflects a difficult (or poor) estimation of consumption and investments in the economy. Notably, the share of discrepancies has increased sharply in the post-pandemic period, especially in FY22. Therefore, a higher contribution from discrepancies suggests that there could be upward revision in either consumption or investments in the future, rather than lower GDP growth (Exhibit 17).

Exhibit 17: High discrepancies indicate upward revisions in consumption/investments in the future



^{*} Private and government

Source: CSO, CEIC, MOFSL

Overall, although headline GVA/GDP growth was great, details showed some improvements and some concerns.



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