

Do large vessels cause poor reliability?

In the wake of the Ever Given incident, there is a sentiment across some cargo owners and industry commentators that larger container vessels lead to poor service quality. The size impact of container vessels has long been a hotly debated topic in the industry but has once again come to the forefront, following the Suez Canal blockage. In issue 509 of the *Sunday Spotlight*, we therefore looked at one aspect of service quality – schedule reliability – to see whether larger vessels are indeed more unreliable than the smaller ones.

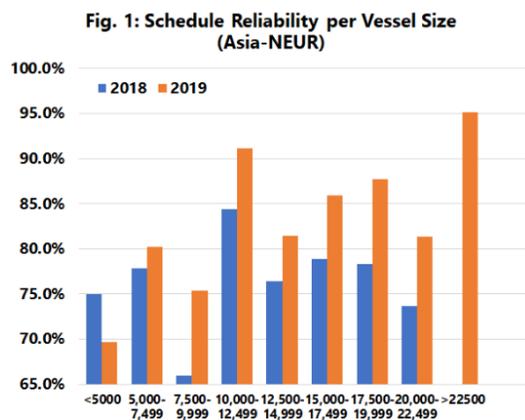


Figure 1 shows the schedule reliability per vessel-size group for both 2018 and 2019 on the Asia-North Europe trade lane. We can very clearly see that the assumption that larger vessels are unreliable is incorrect. In fact, the +22,500 TEU vessels, that were deployed on the trade lane from September 2019, had the highest schedule reliability of 95.1%, across all vessel-size groups in that year. In 2018 however, we see a slightly different trend, with the 10,000-12,499 TEU vessels the most reliable with 84.4% schedule reliability. The

vessel-size groups from 15,000 TEU upwards see decreasing schedule reliability with increasing vessel size. However, both 15,000-17,499 TEU and 17,500-19,999 TEU vessel groups had higher schedule reliability than the 12,500-14,999 TEU vessel group.

On Asia-Mediterranean in 2019, when looking at vessels of over 10,000 TEU, schedule reliability increased with increasing vessel-size groups, with both the 20,000-22,499 TEU and the 23,000 TEU vessels recording perfect 100% schedule reliability. Even in 2018, the two largest vessel-size groups in deployment – 17,500-19,999 TEU and 20,000-22,499 TEU – had the highest schedule reliability of 85.2% and 84.2%, respectively.

While the ultra-large container vessels are only consistently deployed on Asia-Europe, we also extended our analysis to the Transpacific, for reference. On Asia-North America West Coast, both the 7,500-9,999 TEU and 12,500-14,999 TEU vessel-size groups had similar schedule reliability in both 2018 and 2019, while the 10,000-12,499 TEU group had a higher schedule reliability in 2019 of 73.3%. The only variation on Transpacific was on Asia-North America East Coast, where the largest vessel-size group had the lowest schedule reliability.

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