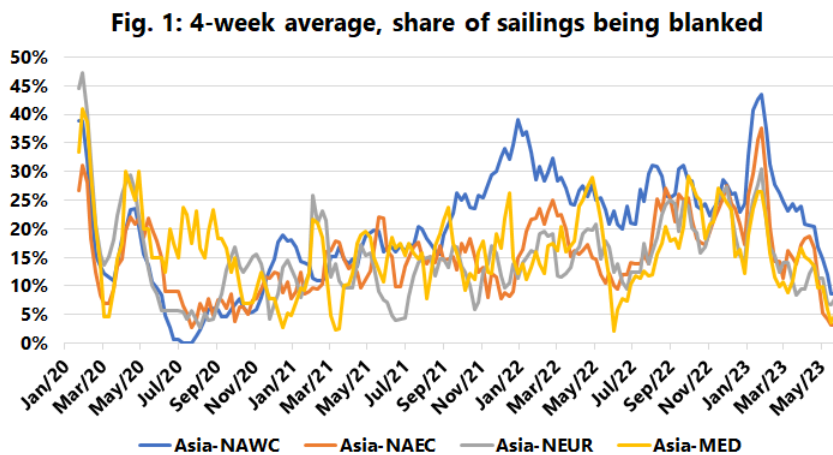


Blank sailings at a post-pandemic low

The conditions on the global container shipping markets are continuing their path towards normalisation. However, a normal container shipping market is not the same as a container shipping market with no changes or disruptions; there will always be operational disruptions, a portion of which will be in the form of blank sailings.

Herein lies the good news for the shippers: the number of blank sailings is at the lowest we have seen since the pandemic started. It is not perfect – the level is not zero. But no-one should expect zero blank sailings, as a normal state of affairs.

Looking at the share of total weekly sailings being blanked on the Asia-North America West Coast trade, we can see that at its worst (and disregarding the peaks), one in every four sailings was being cancelled. This clearly improved during 2023 and went below 10% in June. But we also see a slight uptick again, as we approach early July – likely a reflection of the carriers wanting to bring the spot rate decline under control.



However, when we look at the Asia-North America West Coast trade in conjunction with the other Transpacific and the two Asia-Europe trades (shown in Figure 1), we see an underlying trend where the trends on each trade more-or-less move in an identical fashion. There are a few deviations however,

especially for Asia-North America West Coast. While the earlier deviation (from 2nd half of 2021) can be explained by the severity of the bottlenecks and vessel queues outside the West Coast ports, no such explanatory model fits the deviation that we see in early 2023.

That said, shippers operating in the market now should take the current state of affairs as being very normal indeed. This is as good as it gets.

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All quotes can be attributed to: Alan Murphy, CEO, Sea-Intelligence.

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Sea-Intelligence is a leading provider of Research & Analysis, Data Services, and Advisory Services within the global supply chain industry, with a strong focus on container shipping. Combining strong quantitative analytical skills with a deep understanding of the supply chain industry, based on many decades of experience at all central parts of the Ocean supply chain, Sea-Intelligence supports customers across all stakeholder groups.