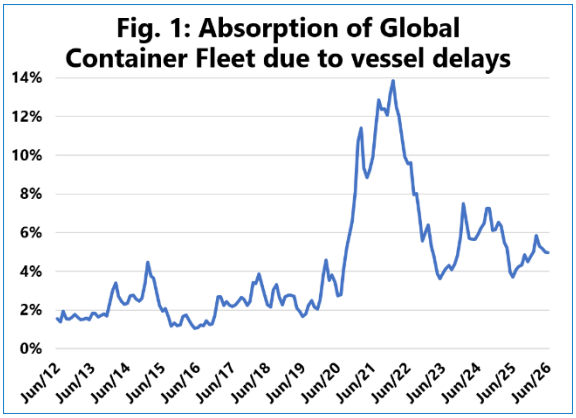
1.7 million TEU vessel space absorbed in delays

Global container vessel schedule reliability remains somewhat stable around 60-65%, showing no signs of improvement, and in stark contrast to the 2011-2019 normality of 70-80%. Furthermore, late vessel arrivals are now settling into 5-5.5 days of delay, up from the pre-pandemic norm of 3-4 days. This structural shift to a larger risk of vessel delays, and their longer durations, inexorably leads to a larger share of global capacity being rendered unavailable, as vessels stuck in delays do not move cargo.



The share of these delayed vessels combined with the duration of the delays, can be used to calculate the amount of global deep-sea capacity effectively absorbed by delays (Figure 1).

In 2011-2019, the container shipping industry was quite stable. During that time, on average, only 2.2% of the world's container shipping capacity was tied up by delays. The industry accepted this 2.2% rate as a standard part of balancing supply and demand. However, following the pandemic, things have changed a lot. Now, a total of 5.0% of all global deep-sea capacity is tied up. This means that 2.8% more shipping space is absorbed right now, compared to what was considered to be normal pre-pandemic.

We can use the current global fleet size to calculate how much total cargo space is currently unusable due to vessel delays. Right now, with a 5% absorption rate, the global market is "missing" capacity for 1.7 million TEUs from continuous delays. To understand how big this is, a fleet of that exact size would be the 8th largest container shipping company in the entire world, sitting just behind Evergreen. If we look at only the extra 2.8% of absorbed capacity above the pre-pandemic baseline level of 2.2%, it equals 1.0 million TEUs of absorbed capacity. That specific amount of missing space is almost equal to the entire total capacity of HMM, the current 8th largest container shipping line.

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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.