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American stewards can get work in 30 minutes with credentials

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yachts cruising the world's oceans fly some other flag, a majority of owners are American and many simply prefer American crew, sources said.

"American-flagged yachts comprise a small percentage of our vessels, but many owners and guests prefer to have American nationals on board, therefore we are constantly trying to find American crew," said Rupert Connor, president of Luxury Yacht Group in Ft. Lauderdale.

"If an American stewardess walks in, we'll have work for her in half an hour," assuming she had the proper qualifications and experience, he said. "There are so few people to choose from."

Other crew agencies service the American market heavily.

"About 45 percent of our business is American flagged," said Robin Crose, a crew agent with Carole Manto in Ft. Lauderdale. "American stewards are the most requested position and the most challenging to find and fill."

The shortage of available American nationals gives crew members like Deryn Black, a Canadian citizen with a green card, an advantage.

"The first thing my crew agency said

was, 'You'll be so easy to place. You're just as good as any American for a U.S.-flagged boat,'" said Black, first mate on the *M/Y Destiny*. "That's when I first realized there was a shortage."

Hard numbers on the demand for American crew are difficult to find. The U.S. Coast Guard's statistics on the number of U.S.-flagged boats don't include a majority of recreational vessels, which are tracked by states, according to the agency's data administration division.

Manning requirements also are not specified, making the number of crew needed an elusive figure.

But the professionals who work in the industry each day know what the numbers don't show.

"There is certainly less American crew compared to other nationalities," said Angela Arthur, crew agent with Elite Crew International in Ft. Lauderdale. "We have over 8,000 crew in our database, but we're seeing a decline in experienced crew of all nationalities, including American."

"With about 200 new yachts out of production every year, the industry as a whole needs to find new ways to recruit, bringing new, qualified crew

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