

Over 12,000 people applied to fly to the moon and Mars as NASA Artemis astronauts

As it turns out, a whole lot of people would like to visit the moon (and Mars). NASA has received over 12,000 applications for its next class of astronauts, it announced this week.

The space agency is calling them the "Artemis generation" since the chosen few will be on active duty when NASA plans to send humans back to the moon in 2024.



The applications poured in during March with potential candidates coming from every US state. It will take NASA over a year to dig through the resumes. The process involves interviews and medical tests for the most qualified applicants. NASA expects to unveil the new astronaut class in mid-2021.

While 12,000 applications is a massive number, it represents a significant dip from the 18,300 who answered NASA's last call in 2016. The space agency narrowed that group down to a dozen astronaut candidates in 2017.

It's not just the moon that's calling to these future astronauts. Mars is also on the menu. "The next class of Artemis Generation astronauts will help us explore more of the Moon than ever before and lead us to the red planet," NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine said in a statement.

If NASA's space-exploration plans stay on track, it will launch the first woman and next man to the moon's surface in 2024 while eyeing a crewed Mars mission for the 2030s.

The 12,000 applicants represent a whole lot of moon dreams coming from all across the country. Some of them could become our next Neil Armstrongs and Buzz Aldrins. Those are some big moon boots to fill.

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