

Space station astronauts: Big family in full house

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In this image from NASA TV Russian Cosmonaut Roman Romanenko, left, flashes a V as he is greeted by Gennady Padalka after arriving via the Soyuz TMA-15 spacecraft at the international space station, Friday, May 29, 2009. In the upper left is Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Koichi Wakata. The Russian Soyuz capsule carrying three new space station residents docked at the orbiting complex Friday. With three astronauts there to greet them, the space station now has a full staff of six for the first time in its 10-year history. (AP Photo/NASA TV)

(AP) -- Life on board the international space station is busier and more crowded now that it's a full house.

For the first time ever, the space station is accommodating a permanent crew of six, the way it was intended when the first piece flew a decade

ago. The population at the orbiting outpost doubled Friday when three new residents moved in.

At a news conference Monday, one of the newcomers described the space station as a surreal world. Canadian astronaut Bob Thirsk says it's like being in the middle of a Salvador Dali painting.

U.S. astronaut Michael Barratt says he comes from a family of seven back on [Earth](#). So having a crew of six, versus three, is comfortable and seems normal to him.

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