



# FACTSHEET

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## Polar Bears

### WWF and Polar Bear Conservation

WWF knows polar bear issues. We have two polar bear researchers on staff, one of whom leads our polar bear programme. We have been working to protect arctic wildlife and its habitat for more than 20 years. The focus of the work has been on documenting and communicating climate change impacts in the Arctic.

### Polar bear basics

- There are about 20-25,000 polar bears in the world, with 19 recognized subpopulations.
- 13 of the 19 subpopulations are found within or shared by Canada.
- Of these subpopulations, 5 are declining, 5 are showing no clear trend, and 2 are likely increasing. We think that the increasing populations are rebounding from previous heavy hunting pressure.
- Polar bears need ice to survive. The ice acts as hunting platform for the bears, but is also important to the entire Arctic food chain that produces the prey bears eat.
- Polar bears have been documented swimming as far as 320 kilometres, but long swims are dangerous for the bears.

### Key threats

- Loss of sea ice habitat through climate change
- Increased industrial activities, primarily oil and gas exploration and development
- Unsustainable harvest for some populations (both legal and illegal). WWF

supports traditional sustainable harvest by Indigenous peoples.

- Loss of primary prey due to sea ice reduction: impacts to availability and abundance

### WWF Solutions

- Work with governments, industry, and individuals to reduce GHG emissions and mitigate climate change
- Promote sustainable consumptive and non-consumptive use of polar bears that directly affect the species, such as hunting, poaching, industrial take, illegal trade, and unsustainable tourism
- Protect critical habitat including important movement corridors, and denning habitat.
- Prevent or remove direct threats from industrial activity such as oil and gas development, and arctic shipping.

### WWF Actions

- Support for and communication of key science that will help us build resilience
  - Engagement with indigenous/local communities to reduce human-wildlife conflicts and work towards sustainable development opportunities
  - Drafting and spearheading management solutions that address the major threats of climate change and industrialization of the Arctic.
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