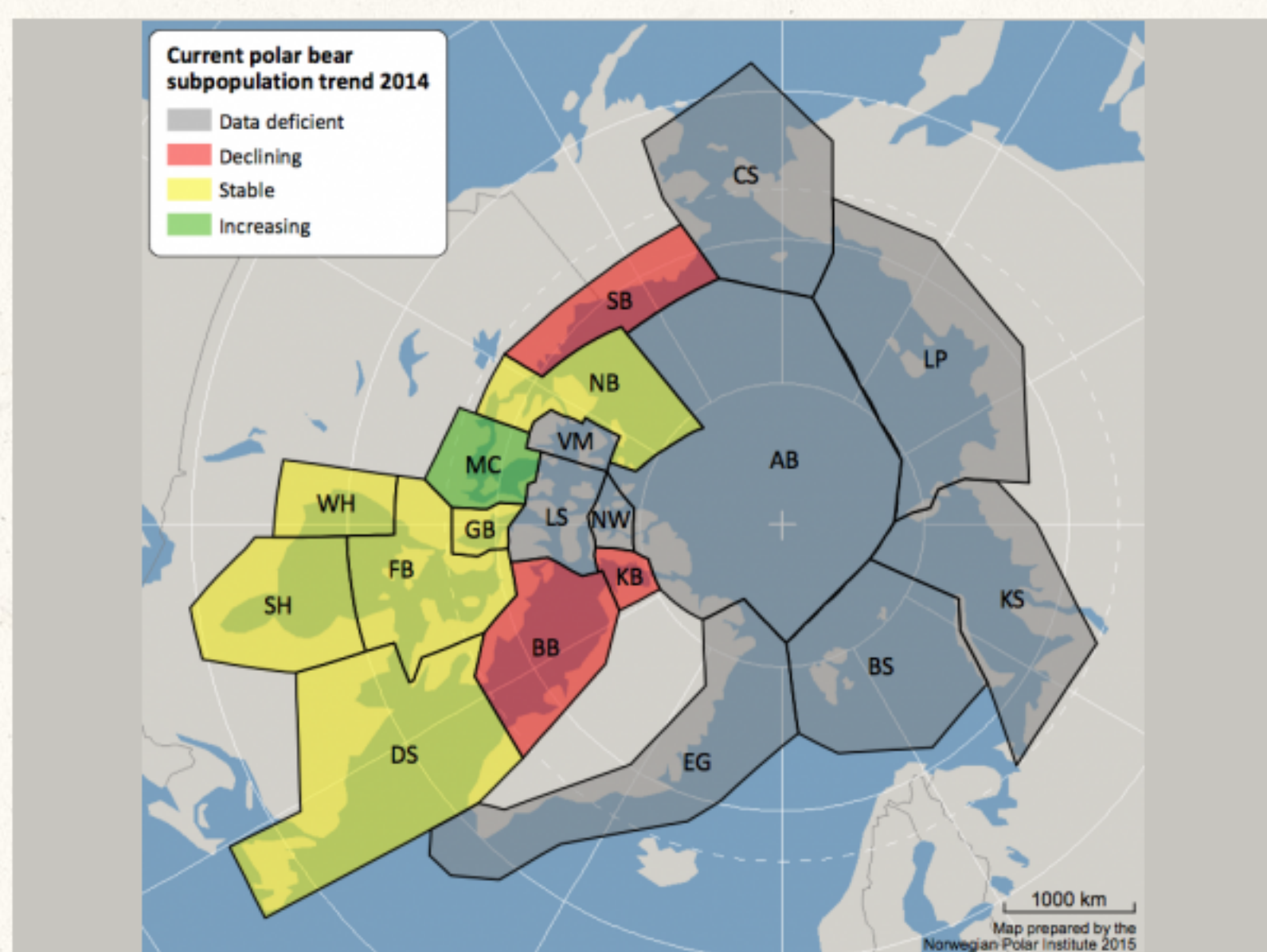


## Polar Bear Status Report

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This map by the Norwegian Polar Institute shows the status of the 19 polar bear subpopulations according to the latest IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group report: 3 are declining, 6 are stable, 1 is increasing, and 9 have insufficient data to make a determination. [Details...](#)

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Scientists don't have solid figures on the total number of polar bears worldwide because they lack data on some populations, specifically those in Russia and East Greenland (see map above).

Polar bears live in remote areas that are difficult and expensive to study. This makes monitoring a challenge, both for single surveys and long-term studies. This is especially true in Arctic Russia. Not only is it one of the most remote areas on the planet, it lacks basic infrastructure (roads and airfields) and logistical support (small aircraft).

### How many polar bears are there?

Biologists estimate there are roughly 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears. They base this estimate on the best available information, combined with expert opinions on those populations that lack current data.

About 60% of the world's polar bears live within or are shared by Canada. Polar bears are also found in the U.S. (Alaska), Russia, Greenland, and Norway (Svalbard).

### Conservation status

The IUCN lists the polar bear as a vulnerable species, citing sea ice losses from climate change as the single biggest threat to polar bear survival. Polar bears rely on the sea ice to hunt, travel, breed, and sometimes to den.

At their 2014 meeting, the [IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group](#), reported that of the 19 populations of polar bears:

- 3 are declining
- 6 are stable
- 1 is increasing
- 9 have insufficient data

### Current Trends of the World's 19 Populations

Declining	Stable	Increasing	Data deficient
Baffin Bay	Davis Strait	M'Clintock Channel	Arctic Basin
Kane Basin	Foxe Basin		Barents Sea
S. Beaufort Sea	Gulf of Boothia		Chukchi Sea
	N. Beaufort Sea		East Greenland
	S. Hudson Bay		Kara Sea
	W. Hudson Bay		Lancaster Sound
			Laptev Sea
			Norwegian Bay
			Viscount Melville Sound

### Results from long-term studies show:

- **Canada's Western Hudson Bay population:** has experienced a 22% decline or greater since the early 1980s, directly related to longer ice-free seasons on Hudson Bay during this same time frame.
- **Southern Beaufort Sea population** along the northern coast of Alaska and western Canada: plunged by about 40% over a 10-year study period from 2001–2010, dropping from about 1500 bears to 900 bears before stabilizing.
- **Baffin Bay population**, shared by Greenland and Canada: at risk from both significant sea ice loss and likely overharvesting in recent times. An updated population estimated is expected in late 2015.

Visit the Polar Bear Specialist Group's website for a [summary on each population's status](#).

### Some people report seeing more bears

Some northern hunters and communities are reporting an increase in the numbers of polar bears on land. Some suggest this equates to an increase in the local population. In places like Foxe Basin, Davis Strait, or the Chukchi Sea, that could be true, as these areas show robust populations capable of growth—at least for now.

However in many areas, encountering more bears is more likely due to a larger percentage of the existing population spending more time on shore and in places where they are more likely to be seen due to the reduction of sea ice habitat.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service states, "... extensive scientific studies have indicated that the increased observation of bears on land is (often) a result of changing distribution patterns and a result of changes in the accessibility of sea ice habitat."