

COP and the Arctic What's at Stake?

Who are they?

There are over 40 different ethnic groups living in the circumpolar north, including indigenous communities whose ancestors have inhabited the region for over 20,000 years. Today, about 10 percent of the Arctic's population is indigenous, including the Saami, the Nenets, the Aleut, and the Inuit.

4 million people live in the Arctic. They are spread across the United States, Canada, Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

These groups are diverse, not only in their history but in culture, lifestyles, and employment. They live in major cities and remote rural settlements, in multigenerational homes and urban apartments. They are subsistence hunters and oil workers, artists and entrepreneurs.

Urban & Rural

There is no homogenous Arctic citizen, but these many distinct peoples and communities have one thing in common – the Arctic is their home. And that home is one of the most at-risk geographies to climate change in the world.

Some of the most vulnerable communities are located on the shoreline

Where are they located?

Numbers represent residents in the Arctic Circle



Key
 Stable or aggrading
 Slow erosion (0-1 m/yr)
 Moderate erosion (1-2 m/yr)
 Rapid erosion (2-10 m/yr)

The most vulnerable populations are located on the shoreline of the Arctic ocean, seas, and rivers. They face shoreline erosion, storm surges, and melting sea ice that threatens their livelihoods, personal safety, cultural vitality, and community wellbeing.

In Alaska
 186 communities.
 31 villages face imminent threat of destruction.
 12 villages have decided to relocate.



Many of these communities are indigenous, and their populations rely on subsistence fishing, hunting, and ice travel that is integral to their identity.

What is threatening them?

Thawing permafrost and shoreline erosion puts homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods at risk and in extreme cases, requires relocation of entire communities.

The Arctic is now experiencing some of the most severe and rapid climate change on Earth. Annual temperatures are rising twice as fast as temperatures in the rest of the world.

Changes in snow cover and thinner sea ice make travel hunting hazardous. Less snow forces hunters to rely on cumbersome, colder tents instead of traditional igloos, while thinner ice makes traditional practices of travel and communication between communities more dangerous.

Marine species and herds upon which many rely for subsistence harvests and traditional knowledge transfer, including polar bears, walrus, seals, birds, reindeer, and caribou, are or will soon be in decline as a result of warmer temperatures and less sea ice.

The Bottom Line What We Need

Mitigation

Strong commitments by world leaders to limit greenhouse gas emissions and halt global temperature rise to no more than 2 degrees celsius.

Adaptation

Financial assistance for community adaptation for those facing climate change consequences today in the Arctic.

There's a lot at stake in Paris for the Arctic – 4 million people live on the northernmost front line of climate change. The time for accountability by world leaders to mitigate emissions and empowerment of Arctic communities to adapt is now.

