



Global Linkages

A graphic look at the
changing Arctic



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Change is clearly accelerating in the Arctic, and it has global implications for us all. We all have a stake in this future, but none more than the young people who are coming of age, living in the midst of this change.

FOREWORD

The Arctic in a new state

While this report was being prepared, heat records continued being shattered around the world. Last summer, new maximum temperatures were recorded in Norway, Canada, Japan and California. Fires raged in many countries and the haze from forest fires obscured the view of the melting glaciers of the magnificent Stikine mountains in British Columbia.

The Arctic Council's *Snow, Water, Ice and Permafrost in the Arctic* report succinctly summarizes the situation: "the Arctic's climate is shifting to a new state." The 2017 report says this shift could see the Arctic Ocean largely free of summer sea ice only two decades from now.

Change is clearly accelerating in the Arctic, and it has global implications for us all. We all have a stake in this future, but none more than the young people who are coming of age, living in the midst of this change.

The homes of the Inuit of the Alaskan island community of Shishmaref are being washed into the sea. As part of a photo project called *Portraits of Resilience*, young people from the village documented their struggle.

"Did you ever lose your home?" wrote Renee Kuzuguk, whose family had to move its house from one coast of Shishmaref to the other. On the other side of the world, her words are echoed by Siobhan Turner, a student from Fiji who worries that her community will eventually have to move to the mainland, threatening their way of life and culture.

These two stories from young people thousands of kilometres apart show that the devastating impact of a changing Arctic is being felt across the world.


The Arctic people have a saying: "what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic." To create awareness about the critical role the Arctic plays in sustaining all life on this planet, UN Environment and GRID-Arendal have produced a series of maps and graphics that illustrate the global consequences of change in this region. By undertaking a visual depiction of the changing Arctic, we hope to alert policymakers to the effects of human activity.

We have the science, we know the facts. It is time to make the right decisions for a sustainable future of the Arctic and the world as a whole.




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The Arctic: Not deserted, quite connected

In many people's imaginations, the Arctic is an isolated region, disconnected from global concerns. Images of polar bears, vast expanses of ice and frozen tundra come to mind more easily than urban centres and villages where people use the Internet to connect with the rest of the world. From outside, the Arctic is seen as distant and out of mind, a vast homogeneous region. But if you look at it from a different perspective, you will see it is very much connected to the rest of the world.

The Arctic is home to just over 4 million people. Around 10 per cent of the population are indigenous, comprising dozens of different cultures and languages (Larsen and Fondahl, 2015). About 70 per cent of the Arctic population lives in the Russian Federation (Glomsrød et al., 2017). Except for Greenland and northern Canada, Indigenous Peoples are a minority. Nevertheless, they have survived and thrived everywhere in the Arctic for millennia. Throughout the region, people live in scattered communities of different sizes from Murmansk

The diversity of activities also means people in the Arctic are experiencing the socioeconomic effects of rapid change differently. This means the responses to the challenges facing the region outlined in this report need to be tailored to particular circumstances: in the Arctic, one size definitely does not fit all. The third Economy of the North report (Glomsrød et al., 2017) found major differences in the socioeconomic status of people living in the Arctic: inequality is highest in the Russian Arctic, high in North America and lower in the Nordic countries.

Compared to 2006, the proportion of women and young people in North America is falling, while it is rising in Russia. In the Nordic Arctic, there have been both increases and declines in the proportion of women, with a fall in young people (Glomsrød et al., 2017). Still, many Arctic residents are relatively young and looking for work. This search means that they often have to leave the region where they grew up. Supporting the livelihoods of those who remain in the north and creating conditions for

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