The eight bear species

A one-page chart for classrooms and readers. Checked 18 November 2026.

lovebears.org
lovebears.org/types-of-bears/

Polar bear

Ursus maritimus

IUCN status	Vulnerable (2015)
Adult weight	Males 350 to 590 kg (772 to 1,300 lb)
Where	Arctic sea ice: Canada, Alaska, Russia, Norway, Greenland
Population	About 26,000, range 22,000 to 31,000 (PBSG, 2024)

Hunts mainly ringed and bearded seals. The 2024 estimate covers 19 subpopulations.

Brown bear

Ursus arctos

IUCN status	Least Concern (2017)
Adult weight	92 to 357 kg (203 to 787 lb)
Where	North America, Europe and Asia
Population	More than 200,000 (IUCN, 2017)

The widest range of any bear. Grizzly and Kodiak bears are brown bears, not separate species.

American black bear

Ursus americanus

IUCN status	Least Concern (2016)
Adult weight	Males 60 to 140 kg (132 to 309 lb), some over 300 kg
Where	North America
Population	850,000 to 950,000 in North America (IUCN, 2016)

The most numerous bear. Coats can be black, brown, cinnamon or blonde.

Asian black bear

Ursus thibetanus

IUCN status	Vulnerable (2016)
Adult weight	65 to 200 kg (143 to 441 lb)
Where	South and East Asia, from the Himalayas to Japan
Population	No reliable global figure. China about 28,000; Japan 12,000 to 19,000; India 5,000 to 7,000

Also called the moon bear, for the pale crescent on its chest.

Sun bear

Helarctos malayanus

IUCN status	Vulnerable (2017)
Adult weight	27 to 65 kg (60 to 143 lb)
Where	Lowland forests of Southeast Asia
Population	No reliable estimate. Thought to have declined by more than 30 percent over 30 years

The smallest bear. It climbs well, and its long tongue reaches honey and insects.

Sloth bear

Melursus ursinus

IUCN status	Vulnerable (2020)
Adult weight	55 to 145 kg (121 to 320 lb)
Where	India, Nepal and Sri Lanka
Population	Estimates run from under 10,000 to about 20,000

Feeds on termites and ants. It has no upper central incisors, and mothers carry cubs on their backs.

Spectacled bear

Tremarctos ornatus

IUCN status	Vulnerable (2017)
Adult weight	60 to 175 kg (132 to 386 lb)
Where	The Andes of Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia
Population	No range-wide count. National estimates add up to about 13,000 to 19,000

Also called the Andean bear. The only bear native to South America.

Giant panda

Ailuropoda melanoleuca

IUCN status	Vulnerable (2016)
Adult weight	70 to 125 kg (154 to 276 lb)
Where	Mountain bamboo forests of central China
Population	1,864 wild pandas (fourth national survey, 2011 to 2014)

A true bear that lives almost entirely on bamboo. Molecular work in the 1980s placed it in the bear family, Ursidae.

Where bears live: bears are found wild on four continents: North America, South America, Europe and Asia. None live wild in Africa or Australia. The Atlas bear of North Africa died out in the nineteenth century, and the koala is a marsupial, not a bear. Six of the eight species are Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List; only the brown bear and American black bear are Least Concern.

Sources: IUCN Red List assessments (years as shown); IUCN/SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group status report, October 2024; International Association for Bear Research and Management species pages (bearbiology.org); WWF giant panda survey summary. Full table with links: lovebears.org/types-of-bears/

Free to print and share for teaching. Please credit lovebears.org.