



IPY : Frequently asked Questions

1. What is IPY?

The International Polar Year is an intense, internationally coordinated scientific programme focused on both the Arctic and the Antarctic from March 2007-March 2009 that will initiate a new era in polar science. It is in fact the fourth IPY - three others took place in 1882-83, 1932-33 and 1957-58 - but this is the first time it is being carried out against the backdrop of climate change. It is also broader in scope than previous IPYs.

2. Why are the polar regions important?

The poles are sensitive barometers of environmental change and polar science is crucial to our understanding of our planet. The poles are also exceptional archives of what the Earth was like in the past, and offer a unique vantage point for many terrestrial and cosmic phenomena. To a great extent, oceanographic, atmospheric and biological processes in the polar regions regulate global climate. Understanding these processes and how they interact is essential to developing a better understanding of global climate change and its potential impacts.

3. Why is it called "International"?

No one country has the financial resources or scientific expertise to accomplish a comprehensive polar study. IPY will foster collaboration that enhances research and knowledge, as well as build harmony among nations.

4. What science will be studied during IPY?

IPY will involve almost all areas of science, including the social sciences, and will cover areas as diverse as ecology, human and animal health, geophysics and astronomy.

5. How many scientists are involved in IPY?

IPY will involve approximately 10,000 scientists and 50,000 participants from more than 60 countries.

6. How much is being spent on IPY?

Together, the IPY nations will spend approximately 1.5 billion US dollars on IPY research.

7. What is the difference between the Arctic and the Antarctic?

Polar bears live only in the Arctic, and penguins live only in the Antarctic! The Arctic is a semi-enclosed ocean almost completely surrounded by land. The Antarctic is the geographic opposite, a land mass surrounded by an ocean. Except for Greenland, most ice in the Arctic is sea ice, which moves with wind and ocean currents. Ice on the Antarctic continent exists as large thick ice sheets that normally move at glacial speeds. Sea ice surrounding Antarctica roughly doubles Antarctica's size during winter months. The Arctic includes nearly 4 million residents. The Antarctic receives thousands of summer researchers and tourists.

8. Why is the IPY lasting two years and not one?

A complete polar season requires 18 months of summer-winter-summer to allow access, a full measurement cycle, and removal of equipment. Two years are therefore necessary to encompass a complete season in both the Arctic and the Antarctic.

9. What impact do polar researchers and polar stations/ships have on their environment?

All Antarctic research operations comply with strong environmental protection provisions of the Antarctic Treaty. In the Arctic, each country imposes regulations and requirements for research operations. IPY intends to conduct all research activities with minimal environmental impact and to stimulate the development energy-efficient technologies for polar transportation and housing.

10. Who are ICSU and WMO and what is their role?

Founded in 1931, the International Council for Science (ICSU) is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to 'strengthen international science for the benefit of society'. ICSU represents a global membership that includes both national scientific bodies (111 members) and international scientific unions (29 members) and it initiated the planning for IPY. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) is the United Nations system's authoritative voice on the state and behaviour of the Earth's atmosphere. An ICSU-WMO Joint Committee is responsible for overseeing the implementation of IPY.

For News, Events, Information, see www.ipy.org



Participation in IPY

Nations Involved in IPY (63)

Argentina • Australia • Austria • Belgium • Bermuda • Brazil • Bulgaria • Canada • Chile • China • Colombia • Czech Republic • Denmark • Egypt • Estonia • Finland • France • Germany • Greece • Hungary • Iceland • India • Indonesia • Ireland • Israel • Italy • Japan • Kazakhstan • Kenya • Kyrgyzstan • Latvia • Lithuania • Luxembourg • Malaysia • Mexico • Monaco • Mongolia • Morocco • Netherlands • New Zealand • Norway • Peru • Philippines • Poland • Portugal • Romania • Russian Federation • Slovakia • Slovenia • Spain • South Africa • Republic of Korea • Sweden • Switzerland • Tanzania • Turkey • United Kingdom • Ukraine • Uruguay • United States of America • Uzbekistan • Venezuela • Vietnam

Nations with IPY National Committees (31)

Argentina • Australia • Belgium • Brazil • Canada • Chile • China • Denmark • Greenland (local committee) • Finland • France • Germany • Iceland • India • Italy • Japan • Malaysia • Netherlands • New Zealand • Norway • Poland • Portugal • Russian Federation • South Africa • Republic of Korea • Spain • Sweden • Ukraine • United Kingdom • United States of America • Uruguay

Nations with IPY National Points of Contact (3)

Austria • Czech Republic • Switzerland

Nations Involved in 50% or more of the IPY Projects (4)

Canada • Norway • Russian Federation • United States of America

Nations involved in 10% or more of the IPY Projects (21)

Argentina • Australia • Belgium • Canada • China • Denmark • Finland • France • Germany • Iceland • Italy • Japan • Netherlands • New Zealand • Norway • Poland • Russian Federation • Spain • Sweden • United Kingdom • United States of America