



Key points

LionAid 2025 synthesis of wild lion numbers in remaining African range states.

- The LionAid 2025 comprehensive compilation of wild lion populations remaining in Africa estimates a total of 13,014 lions in eastern and southern Africa and 342 in western and central Africa where resident lions are highly genetically distinct.
- There are currently only five individual lion populations in Africa where over 1,000 lions are estimated to occur: Okavango/Chobe/Hwange in Botswana/Zimbabwe, Serengeti/Mara in Kenya/Tanzania, Selous/Nyerere in Tanzania, Rungwa/Ruaha in Tanzania and Kruger in South Africa.
- Of the 48 African continental nations:
 - Wild lions are extinct in 26 countries – 54% of the total
 - Wild lions exist only in small, scattered populations, if at all, and are considered highly vulnerable in 12 countries – 25% of the total
 - Wild lions still exist in 10 countries – 21% of the total.
- It is highly disappointing to note the quality of surveys involved in estimating lion populations. Very few are scientifically rigorous. Most lion estimates are still based on “guesses”. Even in areas where there are active lion research programmes, researchers do not seem to prioritise rigorous lion counts. Very many regions that have been surveyed to some extent then used various means of extrapolation to attempt to derive a total number for the area. This lack of standardised survey methods has greatly hindered collection of reasonably accurate lion population data.
- A reliance on guesstimates pertained to populations in Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Niassa in Mozambique, Nigeria, Kruger in South Africa, Serengeti and Selous/Nyrere in Tanzania, Hwange in Zimbabwe and Luangwa in Zambia. Some of these populations are extremely important to be able to assess the long-term viability of African lions.
- Along these lines, it should be noted that by far the largest percentage of lions occur in isolated regions with no connection between them and no ability of lions to disperse into, or out of, such areas. This is due to increasing use of previously “wild” lands for human settlements, spread of subsistence

agriculture, livestock invasion, and in some countries irrigation projects and commercial farms/plantations being established. The pan-African total of lions is in no small degree made up of adding up small remnant populations across this very large continent.

- Total number of continental African nations where lions are already extinct, effectively extinct or highly vulnerable – 38/48 (79%).
- Overall, the situation for continued lion survival in Africa is extremely concerning. The lion is the only large cat not given Appendix I protection by CITES and continues to only listed as “vulnerable” by the IUCN despite all contrary information. Lion conservation is underfunded and conflicted with several international and local conservation organizations stubbornly promoting trophy hunting as a “conservation” measure. There is very little funding made available for crucial nationwide population surveys conducted to adequate standards.
- The tragedy is that ALL wildlife is in serious decline across Africa – some range states seem to have little will, few financial resources, have ineffective governments, are experiencing insurgencies and civil strife, have high levels of bushmeat poaching and have implemented few effective plans to ensure the future for what has to be seen as a greatly valuable natural resource. Wildlife tourism not only creates significant employment but also constitutes a substantial proportion of African nations’ GDP and foreign exchange earnings.
- Targeted poaching of lions is an emerging and growing threat. Lion body parts like claws, teeth, paws, fat are used locally for African traditional medicine and even exported to countries like Viet Nam.
- Overall, LionAid would encourage African range states to develop and implement much stronger lion conservation measures. Similarly, we would strongly encourage funding organizations to spend far greater funds on proper lion population surveys, to better fund proven effective programs that reduce the incidence of lion/human/livestock conflict and to work more closely with African wildlife departments to implement practical lion conservation programmes supported by citizens. LionAid would strongly urge CITES to place lions on their Appendix 1 and for the IUCN to move all African lions from their “vulnerable” to their “endangered” category. Such measures would lead to greater awareness of the true status of African lions, enable greater funding and greatly reduce levels of destructive trophy hunting.

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