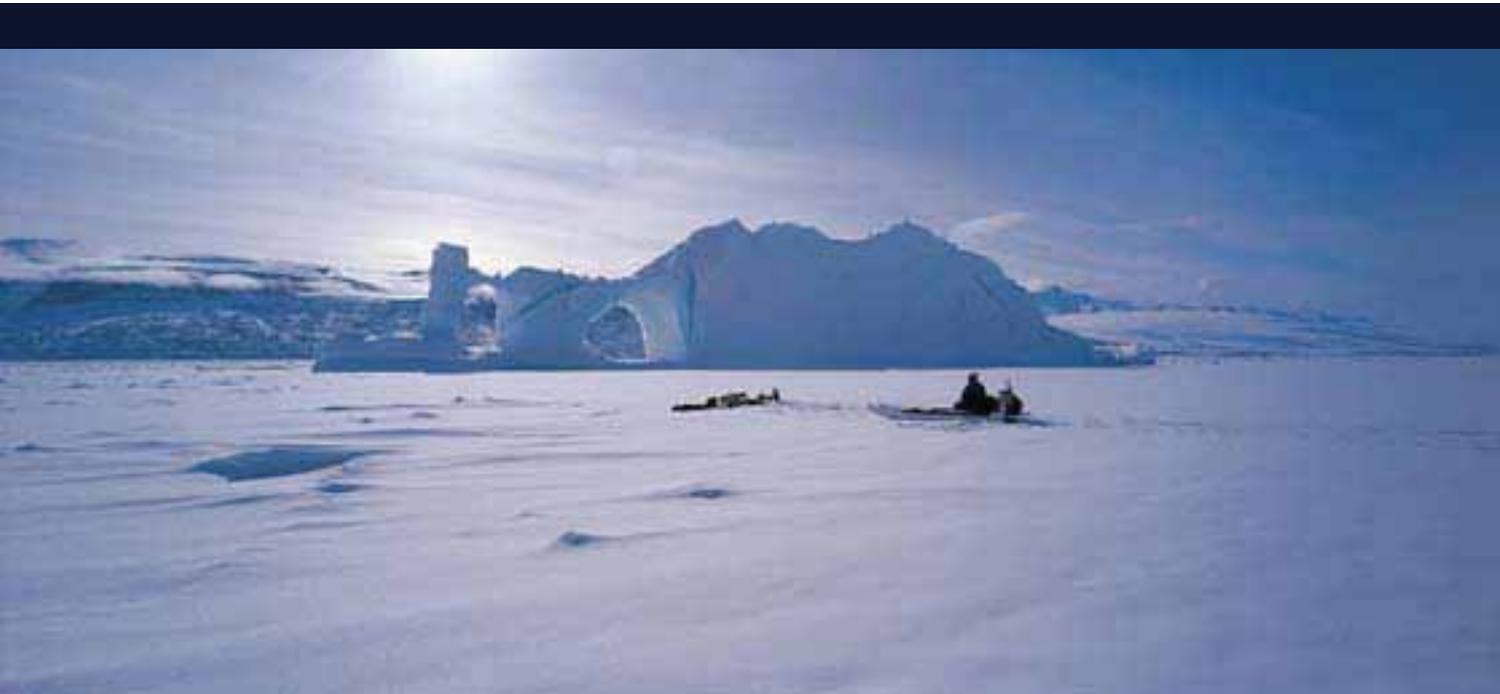


# Factsheet Denmark



For thousands of years, life in Greenland has been a unique interaction of the amazing and changeable nature – as here at Uummanaq in North Greenland – and a population that has understood how to adapt to its changes. Photo: Kristian Fridriksson, Greenland Tourism.

FEBRUARY 2010

## GREENLAND

The development of Self Government in Greenland in many ways serves as a model for other indigenous population groups around the world, especially the Arctic societies. Greenland has developed a modern, well-functioning welfare society, where education, pension, health service and unemployment benefit are taken for granted, while the Self Government makes Greenland's population self-governing in virtually all areas, and in charge of decisions regarding its future development.

On the other hand, the country has the same problems as other societies based on a few resources. The economy is closely tied to fluctuations in the resource basis and the price developments on the global market. It also still has close links with Denmark, partly in the form of annual subsidies of over DKK 3.2 billion and partly through the free provision of education, hospital and many other services to Greenlandic citizens. Together, these factors set certain limits to both the economic and the political scope.

### Geography

Greenland is part of the North American continent. It is the world's largest island, with a total area of around 2.2 million square kilometres, but only approx. 410,000 square kilometres are not covered by ice. The northernmost extremity, Cape Morris Jesup, is the northernmost land area in the world, just 740 kilometres from the North Pole. Cape Farewell, Greenland's southernmost point, is situated approx. 2,670 kilometres to the south, at the latitude of the Nordic capitals of Oslo and Helsinki. Measured west-east, Greenland is 1,050 kilometres wide at its broadest point.

Such a great expanse results in wide climatic variations in Greenland. In addition, the ice cap has a distinctive influence everywhere. With the exception of a few sheltered valleys in South Greenland, the climate is arctic, with an average temperature during the warmest month of the year of less than 10°C.

The east coast is dominated by the

East Greenland polar current, covering it with a sheet of ice over a metre thick during the six winter months. During the summer, large ice masses slowly drift from the polar basin down along the coast and south of Cape Farewell. Along the southern part of the west coast, a relatively warm current keeps the coast clear of sea ice all year round. Navigation is only impeded at the southernmost point during the spring and summer months by the ice drifting down from the polar basin. From Disko Bay northwards, the sea is covered by ice during the six winter months, but fully or partly navigable during the six summer months. The further north you get, the shorter the navigable period.

### History

There have been cultures in Greenland for more than four thousand years. The first people migrated across the Davis Strait from the American continent around 2200 BC. However, settlement has not been continuous, for the communities

**Settlement in Greenland:** Ever since the first settlers migrated across the Bering Strait via Alaska and Canada to the Thule area around 2500 BC, life in Greenland has been shaped by the interaction of human ability and nature's mutability. The next settlements were along the west coast and the culture survived almost a thousand years before disappearing, probably due to climate changes. Later, another couple of migrations occurred along the east and west

coast. The current population originates from the last of these, around 1000 AD. Cultures have left different traces in the landscape and one of the most spectacular finds are the 15th century mummies of six women and two children from Qilakitsoq. The photo shows one of the very well-preserved mummified children from the cave where they were found. Photo: Greenland Tourism.



**Kalaallit Nunaat – Greenland**

Constitution: Self Government within the Kingdom of Denmark. Popularly elected parliament – the Landsting. This has taken over legislative authority in virtually all areas from the Danish Folketing, which includes two members elected in Greenland.

Area: 2,170,000 square kilometres, of which 410,449 square kilometres are ice free.

Population: 56,462 inhabitants (2008).

Capital: Nuuk (Godthåb) with 16,421 inhabitants (2008).

Currency: Danish krone (DKK).



have always been dependent on hunting. With climate changes, over-exploitation and natural fluctuations in the resource basis, the settlers had to follow the animals and at times succumbed from starvation.

The first links with Europe were established with the Norse settlements from 982 AD and lasted until the mid 15th century, when the settlers moved away, partly as a result of the colder climate. The flourishing European whaling in the 16th century restored regular visits to Greenland, but a permanent link was not established until 1721, when Hans Egede settled on Håbets Ø (Hope Island) near the current capital, Nuuk. This formed the basis of Danish sovereignty for the next 258 years, when the establishment of, KGH – Kongelige Grønlandske Handel (Royal Greenland Trade Company) with its trade monopoly was crucial to the social development.

Until the Second World War, Greenland was a closed country, based primarily on subsistence production and the sale of catch to the trade monopoly. In 1906, sheep farming was introduced in South Greenland and commercial fishing started in 1908. During the Second World War, the German occupation of Denmark meant that all contact with Greenland was suspended. Instead, the administration in Greenland and the Danish legation in Washington contacted the US government, who agreed to defend Greenland against possible occupation. Among other things, this resulted in the establishment of military bases at Narsarsuaq, Kangerlussuaq and Grønneal in 1941 and at Thule in 1951-1952.

However, the standard of living was very low both before and after the war and a popular movement arose in Denmark in favour of modernisation of the Greenlandic society. There were calls for an opening of the economy and investment in both housing and production as well as a change of the country's colony status. The basis of the welfare state was laid during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

**Political life**

Already at an early stage, the first steps were taken towards increased independence of the Greenlandic society. With the establishment of the directorates in 1862, the Greenlanders were involved in the decision-making processes for the first time and the 1908 Statute introduced both municipal councils and a regional government with democratically elected representatives. In 1953, Greenland became a county on an equal footing with the other Danish counties. However, the early Danicisation policy created opposition in Greenland and contributed to the introduction of Home Rule in 1979, an association with Denmark based on extensive self-government, where the legislation was formally approved by the Danish parliament, the Folketing.

On 21 June 2009, Greenland changed to Self Government. In consequence, the Greenlandic people is recognised under international law and Greenlandic has become the official language. Greenland has assumed ownership of both subsoil and living resources, while the economic agreement in relation to grants from Denmark has been fixed at DKK 3.2 billion a year, index-linked. Whenever it wishes, Greenland can take over the few administrative matters not already transferred to the country under Home Rule, such as foreign policy, oceans, police, legal system and surveillance of Greenlandic waters, albeit without financial compensation. Greenland will continue to be represented in the Folketing with two members. The Folketing and the Danish administration issue acts and directives for the few areas not transferred to the Home Rule, but almost all legislation originates in the Greenlandic parliament, the Landsting. The Self Government Act allows the Greenlandic people to decide when the final matters will be taken over by the Landsting, so that Greenland becomes entirely independent.

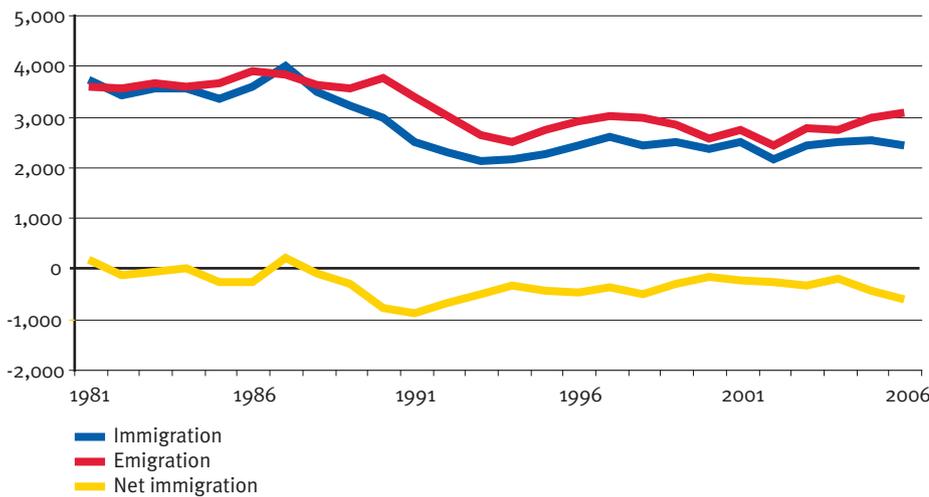
The members of the Landsting are elected at least every four years by a general election among all Danish citizens resident in Greenland and aged over 18. The



**Norsemen:** The Norsemen lived in Greenland for around 500 years. They were the descendants of Norwegian and Icelandic Vikings, who came to Greenland led by Erik the Red in 985, searching for new lands to farm. They found what they were looking for, partly in Østerbygden, now Julianehåb Bay, partly in Vesterbygden, now Godthåb Fjord. The photo shows ruins of the Gardar settlement in Østerbygden, now Igaliko, which in the Norsemen's time functioned as

episcopal seat. There are many theories about the Norsemen's disappearance from Greenland during the 16th century. One of the reasons may be climate changes. The Norsemen came to Greenland during a warm period and disappeared during an extremely cold period, described as a minor ice age. Photo: Manfred Horender.

### Immigration and emigration



Landsting nominates the president of the executive, the Landsstyre, and approves the nomination of its members, who act as the country's government. Each Landsstyre member serves as minister for particular areas of responsibility.

Greenland implemented a municipal reform on 1 January 2009 and the country is now divided into four large municipalities, each led by a municipal council headed by a mayor. The municipalities are responsible for the welfare of the local communities, including childcare, elemen-

tary school, culture and leisure as well as various social services.

Greenland has a very active political life, dominated by four parties: Siumut, with a policy seeking extensive independence within the framework of the Kingdom of Denmark, the Democrats, who focus more on securing the economic basis for the further development of the country, Inuit Ataqatigiit, with a policy aimed at independence for Greenland, and Atassut, which advocates close collaboration with Denmark.

### Ice cap and glaciers

With an area of approx. 1,800,000 square kilometres and a thickness of almost 3.5 kilometres, Greenland's ice cap is the second-largest in the world, only exceeded by the ice cap on the Antarctic continent. From the ice cap, numerous glaciers release large quantities of ice and melt water into the surrounding waters. The largest glacier – also the largest in the Northern hemisphere – is the Ilulissat glacier. It releases 86 million tons of ice every 24 hours, which represents 8-10 per cent of all the ice which flows away from the ice cap, and therefore produces as much fresh water per day as New York City uses in a whole year. In 2004, Ilulissat ice fjord was included in UNESCO's World Heritage List of the most outstanding natural and cultural phenomena in the world. The warmer climate has accelerated the melting and the production of icebergs, causing the ice front to recede further and further back into the ice fjord.

Although dog sleigh and kayak are no longer essential to survival in Greenland, both are valued by the Greenlandic population and the traditions are therefore maintained. Photos: Kristian Fridriksson, Greenland Tourism (left) and Isak Kleist (right).



**Colonisation:** In 1721, the Danish King Frederik IV sent the priest Hans Egede to Greenland to find the Norsemen. He discovered many remains, but no surviving Norsemen. Instead, he was met by the Inuit, who had come from the north and who with whale and seal hunting as their main source of food were adapted to the colder climate. Hans Egede founded Godthåb (Nuuk) and initiated both mission and trade on behalf of the Danish King. Greenland thus

became a Danish colony and over the next century several trading stations were established on Greenland's west coast. However, East Greenland was difficult to access due to the ice cap and the pack ice in the sea, so it was not colonised until 1892, when Gustav Holm led an expedition to the area around Ammassalik. The photo shows the statue of Hans Egede, looking out over today's Nuuk. Photo: Lars Reimers.



**Links with the outside world**

The Danish state is represented by the High Commission, which is headed by the High Commissioner.

Greenland is a member of the Nordic Council and in this way maintains close links with the other Nordic countries. Greenland's economy, settlement structure, education system and welfare system have much in common with the general Scandinavian welfare model, but there are also many links across the Davis Strait to

the North American continent. Particularly the collaboration within the ICC – Inuit Circumpolar Council – has contributed positively to the development of the polar collaboration, which among other things has manifested itself in the establishment of the Arctic Council in 1996.

**Population**

Some 56,700 people live in Greenland. About 50,000 of them were born on the island. With a rate of natural increase of

**Key population figures 2007**

Average life expectancy for people born in Greenland:

Men: 64.4 years.

Women: 70.4 years.

Fertility rate for women born in Greenland:

In towns: 2.2 children.

In settlements: 3.0 children.

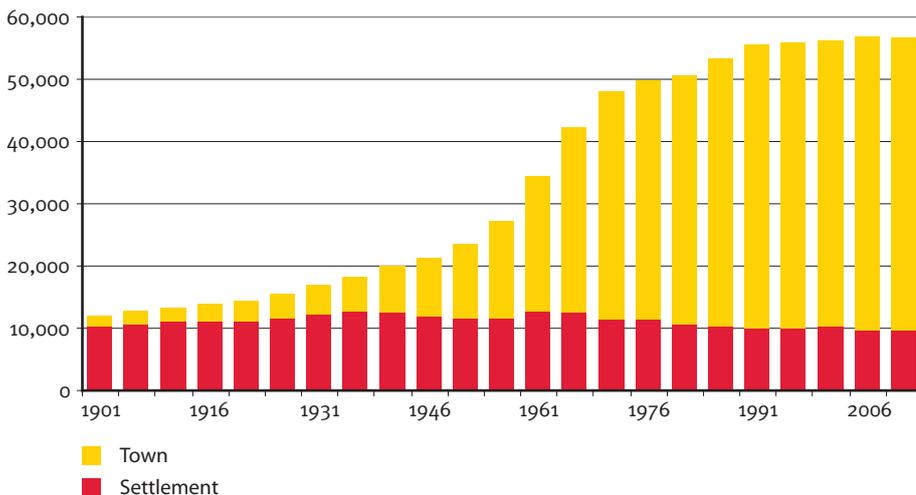
Infant mortality:

Boys: 15.2.

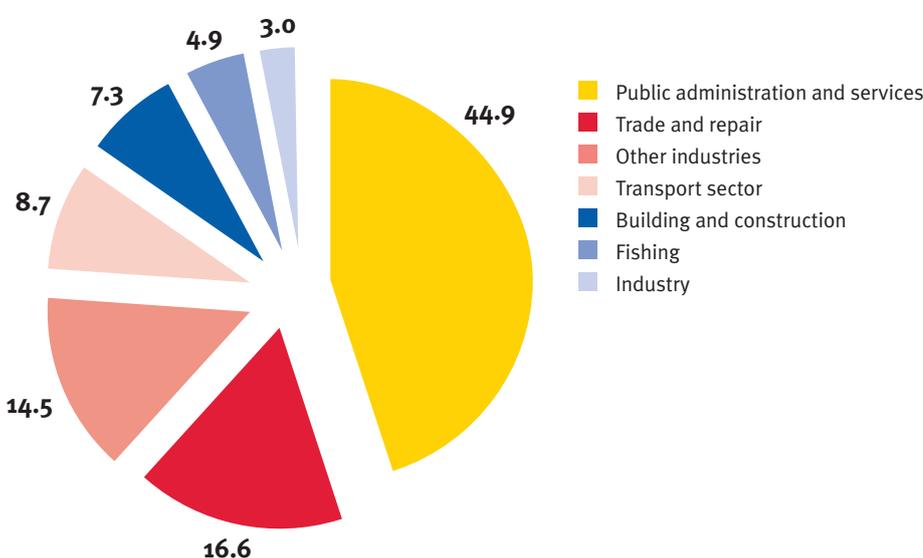
Girls: 6.9.

The population pyramid shows that relatively more children are still born in Greenland than in the Nordic countries and Europe generally. Relatively larger emigration by women than men results in a significant imbalance and this is particularly prevalent in the settlements, where there is often an actual shortage of women.

**Population development in Greenland 1900-2007**

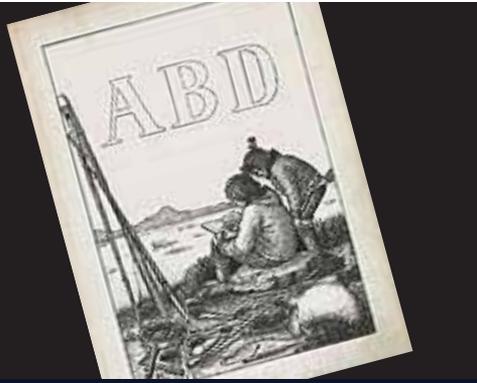


**Wage earners' employment in 2005, per cent on sectors**



approx. 12 per thousand, the Greenlandic population is growing steadily, but until recently the total population has remained stable since the 1980s. This is partly due to the partial repatriation of Danes in recent decades. When the Danish workforce climaxed, more than 10,000 people born in Denmark worked in Greenland, but the number has now declined to approx. 7,000. On the other hand, there has been net emigration of the Greenlandic population corresponding to the surplus of births. The Greenlanders who choose to settle in Denmark are often young people who have established a family there during or after their studies. As a result, the total population after remaining very stable at the same level for decades has declined in recent years.

The central parts of West Greenland are the most densely populated, largely because this area is ice free so that its waters are navigable all year round and the development opportunities for fishing are best here for the same reason. Most of the population – around 47,000 – live in the towns. Nuuk is the largest, with a population of over 16,000. Sisimiut and



**The Greenlanders' language:** Greenlandic (in Greenlandic: kalaallisut = "The Greenlanders' language") is part of the Inuit-Aleut family of languages, spoken throughout the Arctic area. There are three main dialects in Greenland: North, East and West Greenlandic. The West Greenlandic dialect is used for teaching and administration, and also forms the basis of written Greenlandic. The written language was developed by Samuel Kleinschmidt in the 1850s

and comprehensively revised in 1973. Written Greenlandic uses the Latin alphabet. The photo shows the first primer in Greenlandic. The letter C is not included as Greenlandic does not include any pronunciations corresponding to this letter. However, C is now included in the alphabet due to the increasing use of words of foreign origin. Photo: Arctic Institute.

Ilulissat have approx. 6,000 inhabitants and several towns such as Qaqortoq, Maniitsoq and Aasiaat have over 3,000. Altogether, more than some 60 per cent of the total population live in these six largest towns. The rest of the population live in more than 100 settlements, trading posts and sheep stations. The total number of settlement residents remained largely constant from the turn of the last century until the end of the 1980s, while the population growth since the 1950s has mainly been in the towns. In the last few decades, the population has been further concentrated, partly because the population growth continues to be in the towns, especially Nuuk, partly because the large settlements have grown, while several of the very small ones have been abandoned. In addition, the settlements have experienced a population drain, especially by the women, who move to the towns, as they offer more employment opportunities within the service sector and jobs requiring medium-long or long further education.

Daily life is very different in towns and settlements. The settlement shop offers relatively few shopping opportunities beyond basic necessities. There are also very few opportunities for paid employ-

ment in the settlements. By contrast, many of the large towns offer a rich choice, both in the shops and in terms of schools and education opportunities, which in turn give access to a wider range of jobs. For many families, especially in the settlements, but also in the towns, hunting and fishing for personal consumption still play an important part, both as a supplement to the family finances and in terms of maintaining a relationship with the surrounding nature.

### Resources

Greenland has considerable raw material deposits, but until now commercial exploitation has been limited by the rough natural conditions and difficult access. Formerly, cryolite was mined in Ivittuut (1865-1987), coal at Qullissat (1924-1970), marble, zinc, lead and silver at Maarmorilik (1965-1990) and zinc at Mestersvig (1956-1963). There are plans to reopen the mine at Maarmorilik as well as mining of gold (Nalunaq in Nanortalik), while mining of olivine (Fiskefjord in Maniitsoq) and rubies (Fiskenæsset) continues. However, the international interest in the search for raw materials and energy is increasing and a number of minerals may prove of

economic interest in the future, including one of the world's largest iron ore formations in the Godthåbsfjord region as well as offshore oil fields by Nuuk on the west coast of Greenland, in Jameson Land in East Greenland and in the inaccessible waters along North West and North East Greenland. In addition, there has been great interest in the possible deposits of gold, niobium, tantalite, uranium, molybdate and diamonds.

Greenland's first major hydroelectric plant is located in Buksefjorden south of Nuuk. It was completed in 1993 and has an effect of 30 megawatt. The power is led to Nuuk on pylons crossing two fjords, including the Ameralikfjord with the world's longest free span of 5,376 meters. A 1.2 megawatt plant was inaugurated at Tasiilaq in East Greenland in 2005 and a 7.2 megawatt plant at Qorlortorsuaq near

Mining used to play a secondary role in the Greenlandic community, but in future the many raw materials and energy resources will increasingly contribute to Greenland's economy. Left: The Black Angel lead and zinc mine near Uumannaq. Right: A selection of facet-cut rubies and pink sapphires from Fiskenæsset. Photos: B. Thomassen (left) and P. Warna-Moors, The Geological Survey of Denmark (right).



**International recognition:** In 1921, Denmark announced that all of Greenland was under Danish sovereignty. To mark the Danish rule in North Greenland as well, the town of Ittoqqortoormiit (Scoresbysund) was established in 1925. However, Norway regarded it as an old Norse possession and pursued extensive seal and whale hunting in East Greenland. The Norwegian government therefore believed Denmark was infringing Norwegian rights and officially occu-

pled the area 1932-33. The Danish government brought the case before the International Court of Justice in The Hague, which decided that the area was Danish. The decision was among other things influenced by the polar explorer Knud Rasmussen's many sleigh expeditions. To maintain Danish sovereignty, the Sirius Patrol was established to carry out tours of inspection in the uninhabited parts of North and East Greenland. Photo: Svend Erik Nielsen.



### Towns and settlements – two different ways of life

Two very different ways of life are lived side by side in Greenland – on the one hand life in the 18 towns and on the other, life in some 60 settlements. The population of the settlements ranges from very few to approx. 500. Employment is focused on hunting and fishing and service functions are limited to a single shop and a school, where the children can attend the elementary forms. The towns are the administrative centres of the 18 municipalities, with a population ranging from 500 to 16,000. Here, too, hunting and fishing play a significant part, but there is also a broader employment spectrum and above all a wider selection of service functions. The towns have more shops and the schools offer teaching at every level. There are also boarding houses for older schoolchildren from the settlements, where they stay during the week, while returning to the settlements at weekends. With the receding role of hunting and fishing, it is increasingly difficult for the settlements to survive, partly because many of the young people, especially the women, seek employment and a future in the towns. It is mainly the capital Nuuk which attracts an ever-increasing proportion of the population.

Qaqortoq in South Greenland was inaugurated in 2007. There are other good opportunities to harness water power and a 15 megawatt plant by Lake Tasersuaq near Sisimiut will open in 2010. Several new plants intended mainly for supplying energy for large-scale raw material processing are also being planned. The first project is the supply of energy to a proposed aluminium production plant at Maniitsoq.

### Hunting

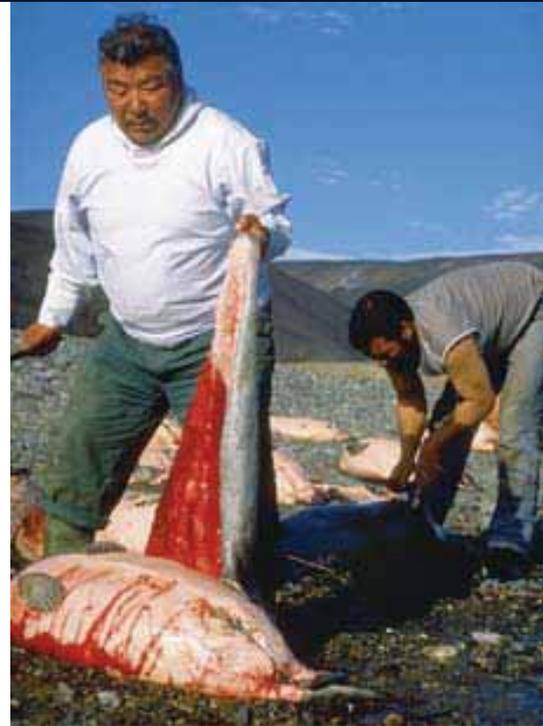
In the traditional hunter society, the marine mammals were essential for survival, especially the five types of seal present in the seas around Greenland. Every year, approx. 150,000 seals are killed, along with some walrus and a limited number

of whales. The meat of the animals is used locally, where it is sold and traded for considerable sums, but the only commercial exploitation of the seals is currently through the sale of sealskins to the tannery Great Greenland in Qaqortoq (Julianehåb). Due to the difficulties of selling the seal skins on the global market, the Home Rule generously subsidises the purchasing. The global sealskin market has, however, improved considerably in recent decades. Fewer than 200 polar bears are killed annually and they are reserved for hunters who are largely dependent on this catch.

Moreover, the rich bird life is exploited and land mammals are also hunted, for instance the reindeer living in West Greenland from Paamiut northwards and the musk oxen living in North East Greenland and around Kangerlussuaq, where they were introduced in 1960. Hunting continues to play a role for the population in North and East Greenland, although it is no longer the dominant occupation in a financial sense. On the other hand, hunting has become increasingly important as a subsidiary occupation and leisure activity in both towns and settlements. In addition, hunting is very important for the self-perception of a hunting society.

### Sheep farming

Although it is difficult to imagine Greenland as an agrarian country, sheep farming has developed into a viable industry. The more fertile areas of South Greenland are suitable for sheep farming and altogether there are approx. 50 farms, with some 250 people directly financially dependent on the industry. An important factor has been the deliberate work to avoid importing feed by cultivating fairly large field areas, where the necessary winter feed is harvested during the summer. As there is no private right of ownership for land in Greenland, the Landsstyre has made the sheep farmers jointly responsible for agreeing the terms of the right to use the land. Approx. 20,000 lambs are slaugh-



Marine mammals – and especially seals – play an important part in Greenlandic daily life, both as a source of income through the sale of skins and as a significant food resource. Photo: Lars Reimers, Greenland Tourism.

tered annually at the abattoir in Narsaq and in addition large numbers are slaughtered on the farms. The sheep farming products are virtually only sold in Greenland, even though attempts have been made to export part of the production.

### Fishing

The waters around Greenland are among the most productive in the world, as large amounts of nutrient salts from melting snow and ice in the summer months, together with long, light summers, encourage abundant phytoplankton, which is the fundamental feed basis of more than 200 species of fish, crustaceans and mussels in the sea. The exploitation of marine resources has therefore always formed the basis of the settlements. After the introduction of more efficient catch methods, but also due to the declining cod population, employment in the fishing industry has declined. The fishing fleet consists of around 800 cutters and vessels of less than



**Danish paternalism:** The Danish colonial policy in Greenland in the 20th century is best described as “paternalism”. The colonial power did not trust the Greenlanders to assume responsibility for the development themselves and introduced an administrative system to handle all aspects of life in Greenland. Among other things, this meant that Greenland was virtually closed to access until World War II, partly justified by the colonial power’s desire to protect the Greenlandic language

and culture from outside influences. The attitude is clearly illustrated by the picture, showing Thorvald Stauning, Danish Social Democratic Prime Minister 1929-42, seated as the father of the country surrounded by the people. On the left is Iceland (as a fisherman) and the Faroes (in traditional Faroese clothes), while Greenland stands by Stauning’s knee as a little child dressed in Greenlandic clothes. Painting: W. Glud, 1939. Arbejderbevægelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv.

10 gross register tons and some 70 sea-going vessels of more than 81 gross register tons. Most of the vessels in the settlements are small, while the trawlers are found in towns with more developed harbour facilities. In addition to these vessels, there are between three and five thousand dinghies, some of which are used for industrial fishing, while others are primarily used for leisure fishing.

By far the most important commer-

cially exploited species is the cold-water prawn. The annual catch of approx. 135,000 tons contributes more than DKK 1.2 billion to Greenland’s economy. Formerly, cod played a key role in the economy, but cod fishing then declined significantly. However, it now appears to be recovering due to climate changes. While cod lost its economic importance, Greenland halibut became very important and the annual catch of 10,000 tons, mainly

from Disko Bay and the North West Greenland municipalities, is contributing more than DKK 500 million (2006 figures). In addition, the fishing of Norway haddock, catfish, Atlantic halibut, salmon and char is of some local economic importance.

In Greenland, the right to exploit the main fish resources is allocated through two quota systems. For deep-sea fishing, the exploitation is distributed on individually transferable quotas (ITQ). For fishing close to the coast, the rights are not linked to specific quantities of fish, but allocated to the fishermen in the form of a specific catch capacity, which is transferable between the fishermen.

By agreement with the Greenland Home Rule, foreign nations carry out considerable fishing. The main agreement is with the EU and comprises approx. 80,000



Left: Some of the areas in South Greenland which were already cultivated by the Norsemen are now used for sheep farming – as here at Igaliko. Photo: Kristian Fridriksson, Greenland Tourism. Below left: Today, Greenlandic fishing – and especially the large sea-going prawn trawlers – constitutes the basis of Greenland’s economy. Photo: Royal Greenland. Below right: It is easy to see why the prawns are called “the red gold”. Photo: Ruth Gundahl Madsen.



**Home Rule:** Greenland's Home Rule was established on 1 May 1979. As a symbol, the flag Erfalasorput (Our Flag) was chosen. It was drawn by the painter and graphic artist Thue Christiansen (b. 1940), a former Landsstyre member. The motif is white and red horizontal bands with a circle in the opposite colours. The colour white symbolises the ice cap, while Greenland's innumerable fjords are represented by the red part of the circle. The colour red also

symbolises the sea, with the white part of the circle representing icebergs and pack ice. In addition, the red and white halves of the circle symbolise the rising and setting sun, which represent the return of light and warmth at midsummer. The red and white colours are the same as in the Danish flag, Dannebrog, and therefore also represent the association with Denmark. The flag was launched on Greenland's national day, 21 June 1985. Photo: Lars Reimers.



tons, for which the EU compensates with an annual contribution of DKK 133 million to Greenland's treasury. In addition, Greenland has agreements with the Faroe Islands, Norway, Russia and Iceland.

### Fishing industry

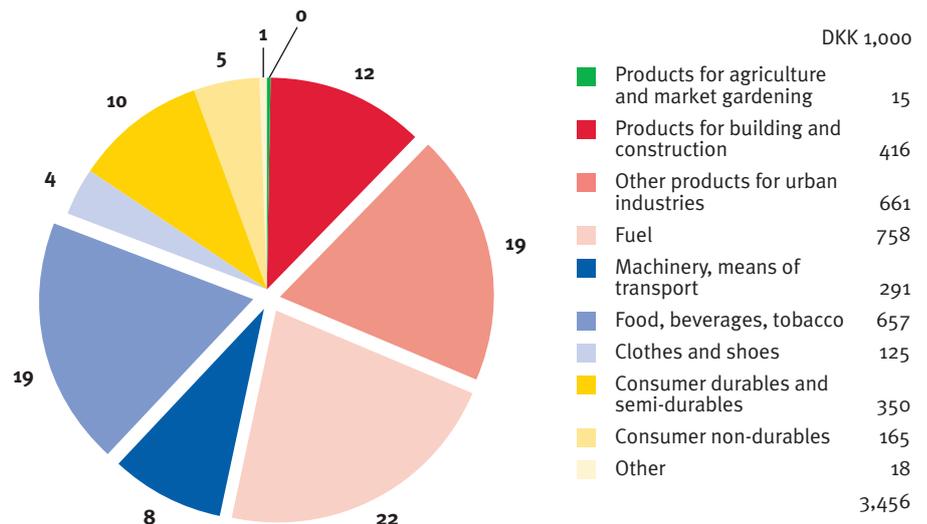
Approx. half the Greenlandic catches are processed on the large trawlers or exported for processing. The other half is processed at trading posts along the coast.

The majority of the fishing industry in Greenland is managed by the Home Rule owned limited company Royal Greenland A/S, which is also the largest company in Greenland. The company has four factories in West Greenland as well as trading posts in several settlements. It also owns many of the sea-going trawlers. In addition, it has factories in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Poland and Canada. The main product is peeled prawns, which

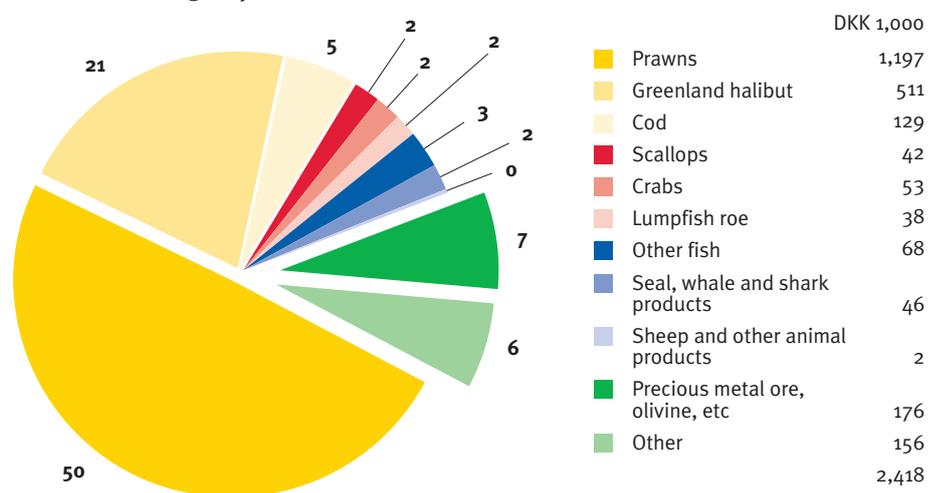
### Opening towards the north

The Arctic Ocean and the North Pole have long been regarded as an area of limited economic interest with waters four kilometres deep and significant ice cover in constant movement determined by the prevalent marine current. This has resulted in limited access to the area. However, the ice is increasingly melting as a result of the ocean getting warmer and this creates completely new opportunities, partly in terms of navigation and partly in terms on hunting and fishing as well as the exploitation of the resources which are believed to exist in the area, such as large quantities of oil and natural gas. This raises the issue of ownership of the resources. From a Greenlandic and therefore also Danish perspective, it is a question of whether there is a natural connection between the Greenlandic continental shelf and the long, narrow, submarine Lomonosov mountain range. Extensive geological and geophysical investigations of the geographic structures in the area are therefore underway. If such a connection is established, Greenland/Denmark will have the disposal of energy reserves which are thought to be the largest in the world.

### Import of products to Greenland, per cent distribution on main groups



### Export of products from Greenland, per cent distribution on main groups



are sold on the northern European market. The company's trawlers mainly produce unpeeled cooked or raw prawns, frozen at sea. The largest prawns are sold on the Japanese market and the company is the world's largest retailer of cold-water prawns.

Arctic Green Food A/S is also owned by the Home Rule and manages approx. 25 smaller factories in settlements and small towns in Greenland. The company ensures that local fishermen and hunters

have an opportunity to sell their catches and its products are primarily sold on the domestic market.

Finally, the private company Polar Seafood A/S manages a number of trawlers and plants for processing especially prawns, but also other species, both in Greenland and Denmark.

### Services, trade and sales

Much of Greenland's wholesale and retail



**From hunting to fishing:** Hunting and fishing are important factors for both the economic development and the Greenlandic identity. The sea-going fleet of large trawlers makes the largest contribution to the national economy, while the medium-large vessels play a key role in the large towns' ability to maintain active fishing and a fishing industry. The little dinghies are the basis of the settlements' existence, but also of crucial importance to the hunting and fishing carried

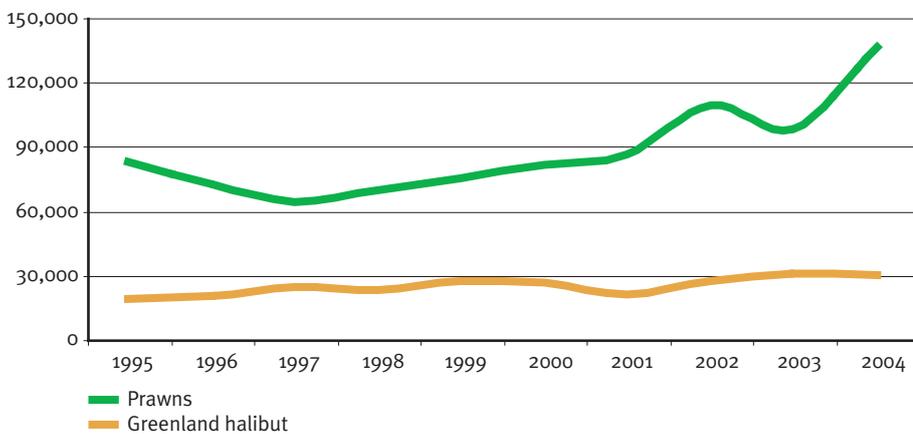
out by most Greenlandic households. More than 5,000 small boats contribute to the household supply of Greenlandic food through own catches and the informal economy. Unlike other parts of the Arctic, where most of the food is imported, Greenlandic products still constitute a significant part of the food supply and local hunting and fishing are prerequisites for maintaining the dispersed settlements. Photo: Royal Greenland.

Greenland's towns offer rich shopping opportunities for both Greenlandic and imported products. The photo shows the Coop Brugsen in Nuuk. Photo: Coop Danmark.



business is managed by the publicly owned company KNI – Kalaallit Niuerfiat (Greenland Trade). The company is divided into two independent units: Pisiffik A/S, which is jointly owned by the retail group Dagrofa (main shareholder), a selection of Pisiffik's employees and the Greenland Home Rule, with 36 supermarkets, local shops and specialist shops in the six largest towns in Greenland and Pilersuisoq A/S, which supplies settlements and the 11 small towns with 65 shops on both west and east coast. KNI is responsible for approx. half the total turnover, while the

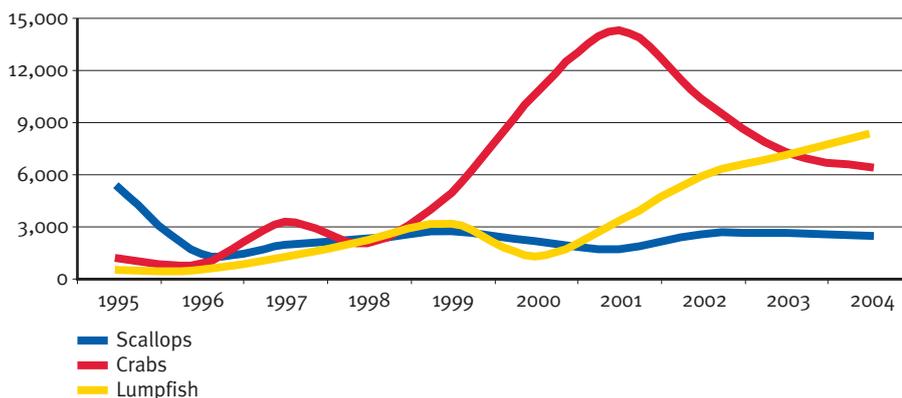
**Total fishing by Greenlandic vessels by Greenland**



rest is handled by the coop FDB's Brugsen and various private businesses. Brugsen manages 13 shops in seven towns. Together, trade and sales employ approx. 3,000 people (2004 figures). An important component of Greenland's trade is "the board" ("brættet"), i.e. the place where hunters and fishermen are able to sell seasonal produce directly to the customers. Large towns have purpose-built facilities with electricity and water supply for "brættet", while small towns and settlements manage with open-air stands without any installations.

Greenland is well furnished with private services in the form of lawyers, accountants and other consultancy companies. These services are in demand by the shipping companies and large private businesses. Some of the major service companies are branches of large Danish consultancy companies.

There are over 12,000 public employees within administration and services. The Home Rule and the Landsstyre act as employers of most of the public employees, who work in social institutions, health service, education, telecoms, NKI and the Landsstyre administration. Many of the jobs are in the capital Nuuk, with others distributed on the four municipal admin-



**From Home Rule to Independence:** In 1999, the Landsstyre decided to set up an Independence Commission to clarify Greenland's future status within the Danish Realm. The work was concluded on 17 April 2008, forming the basis of a referendum in Greenland. A large majority voted in favour and as a result Greenland changed to Self Government on 21 June 2009. In accordance with the new arrangement, the Greenlandic people is now recognised under international law and

Greenlandic has become the official language. Similarly, Greenland has assumed ownership of both subsoil and living resources, but maintained the economic links to Denmark. Whenever it wishes, however, Greenland can take over the few administrative matters not already been transferred to the country under Home Rule, such as foreign policy, oceans, police, legal system and surveillance of Greenlandic waters, albeit without financial compensation. Photo: Laila K. Nielsen.



The building of the Greenlandic university park Ilimmarfik in Nuuk demonstrates the importance attached to education in Greenland. Photo: Birgit Kleist Pedersen.

istrations, Greenland's education system and the social institutions, such as homes for the elderly, nursery schools, crèches and youth centres. Most of the central administration jobs are within the police and legal system.

**Foreign trade**

Greenland's foreign trade is dominated by a very broad range of imports and very few exports, which is a manifestation of Greenland's need to import virtually all necessities for daily survival and the realisation of production. In addition, the foreign trade is characterised by extensive trade with Denmark. The total imports amounted to DKK 4.42 billion in 2008,



while the export revenue was approx. DKK 2.4 billion. The trade deficit is covered by a block grant from Denmark of more than DKK 2.48 billion a year. The development in the new millennium has been characterised by increasing imports and stagnating exports. The export revenue has declined as a result of lower prices for fish and prawns, while the cost of imports has been growing, mainly due to increasing prices of energy products such as oil and petrol.

Especially due to the very small domestic market, it is very limited what can be profitably produced in Greenland, but attempts are regularly made to establish new activities. For instance, a beer bottling plant and a fizzy drinks factory were established in Nuuk in the 1980s and the hydroelectric plant at Buksefjorden started

With its theatre, cinema, art exhibitions and spaces for large-scale cultural events, the Culture Centre in Nuuk provides the framework for a rich cultural life in Greenland's main town. It promotes both tradition and renewal. Photo: Ruth Gundahl Madsen, Greenland Tourism.

production in 1993. The hydroelectric plant has helped reduce the import of oil. The establishment of a micro brewery has proved excellent business and the plans to extend the hydroelectric capacity will further reduce the energy imports.

More than 90 per cent of the exports go to the EU, especially Denmark. Despite the closeness to the North American continent, there is very limited trade across the Davis Strait, mainly due to the limited interest in Greenland's products in a region which itself has a large production in the same areas.

**Infrastructure**

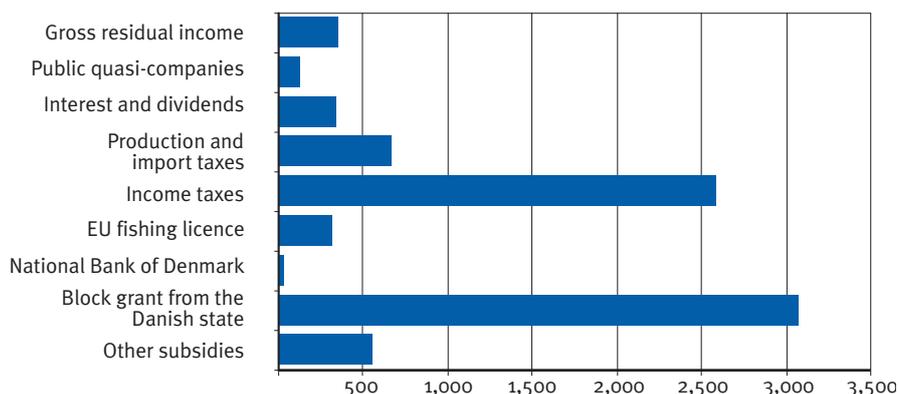
Due to distances and the nature of the landscapes, there are no road connections between the individual towns and settlements. Shipping is still by far the most important infrastructure element in Greenland, in terms of both volume and value. A well-developed freight system handles transports between especially Greenland and Denmark, but also to some extent between Greenland and for instance Iceland and Canada. Within Greenland,



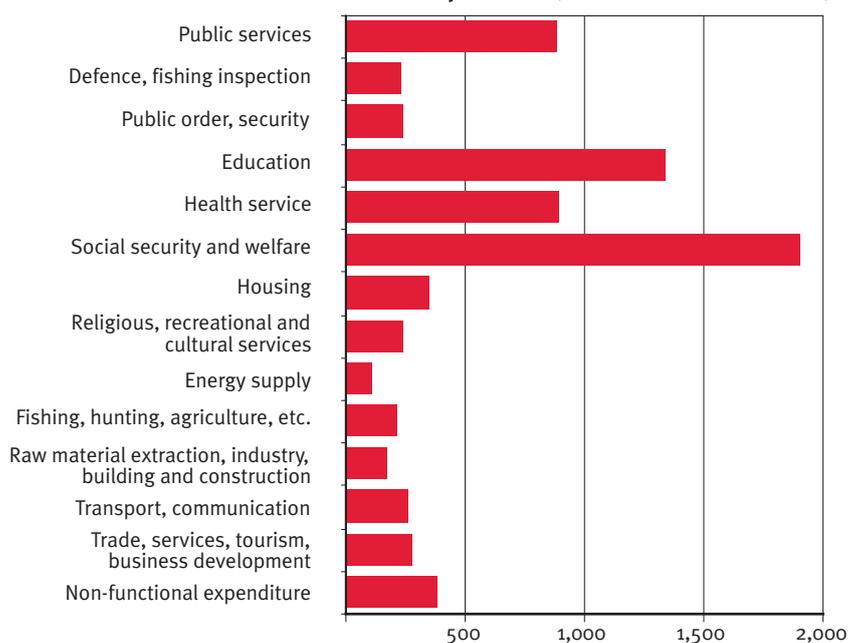
**Part of the Danish monarchy:** The change of Greenland's status from colony to Danish county in 1953, to Home Rule in 1979 and now to expanded independence has had a great effect on the relationship with Denmark, but regardless of the changes, the Greenlanders have shown a desire to maintain the association both with Denmark and the Danish royal family. In relation to the association, reference is made to a "Partnership contract concerning Greenland's

independence" to signal the desire for a good relationship between the parties, based on mutual respect. The royal family is always met with great enthusiasm when visiting Greenland. The enthusiasm is mutual, e.g. when Crown Prince Frederik (photo) was received by excited children during a visit to Thule. Photo: Keld Navntoft, Scanpix.

**Public income, DKK 1,000**



**Public expenditure, functional distribution, DKK 1,000**



some of the local passenger transport is also by ship, but most people travel by air. Local traffic is by helicopter, while transport between districts and large towns is by plane. Within the last decade, this traffic has significantly increased as runways have been established by most major towns. The main air traffic hub is Kangerlussuaq (Søndre Strømfjord).

### Social services and education

Greenland has a well-developed, but also expensive social safety net. In 2007, the benefits amounted to approx. DKK 1.9

billion. The main social services comprise old age pension, early retirement pension, educational grants, social benefits in connection with unemployment and child benefit. In many settlements, especially old age pension constitutes a significant part of the population's total income. It is an important objective for the Home Rule that it should to a large extent be possible to obtain an education without leaving Greenland. Attempts are being made to organise various types of vocational training at a regional level. Hitherto, 14 local vocational schools have covered

the areas building and construction, iron and metal, sales and office work, food and fishing industry. The schools have been merged into a number of regional education centres. In addition, there are upper secondary schools in the towns of Nuuk, Qaqortoq, Aasiaat and Sisimiut. Higher education institutions include a teacher training college, a socio-educational college, business schools and a small university. Several of these studies are gathered in a university park – Ilimmarfik – which allows closer collaboration between the individual units.

### Culture and communication

Greenland's church is part of the national church of Denmark and therefore the Evangelical-Lutheran community. In addition, there are various other religious communities in Greenland, such as Catholicism, Adventism, Pentecostalism, Baha'i, Jehovah's Witnesses and several others. In total, there are 92 churches and other religious venues in the whole country (2007 figures).

Greenland's National Museum and Archive serves as the central museum for Greenland, but in addition several local museums cover the individual local communities.

Despite the vast distances and the nature of the landscape, communication in Greenland is very well developed. A digital radio link along the coast constitutes the backbone of Greenland's telecommunications network. The communication out of the country, especially with Denmark, is also well developed. After the cable connections with Denmark were established in 1961, they constituted the main communication link, but their importance has now been completely overtaken by satellites.

KNR – Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (Greenland Broadcasting Corporation) has overall responsibility for radio and television services in Greenland. In addition to numerous locally produced radio programmes, which fill almost the entire 24-hour broadcasting schedule, a relatively large number of television programmes are also produc-

## Greenland

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ed in Greenland. The rest of the television programmes are mainly imported from Denmark, but especially American-produced films also constitute a significant element.

The building of the Culture Centre in Nuuk in 1997 established an important focus for Greenland's rich cultural life, both as a contact point for cultural experiences from abroad and as a presenter of contemporary and traditional Greenlandic culture. The theatre company Silamiut is Greenland's only professional theatre, with headquarters in Nuuk, where it also runs a theatre school, but all over the country, small theatre and music groups form the core of a very lively cultural scene.

Both traditional and modern art are richly manifested in Greenland. Greenlandic art has always been closely associated with nature and natural materials and in contemporary art, traditional shapes and symbols are combined with modern forms of expression, just as nature continues to play an important role in all art forms. Soapstone, bone and ivory from walrus, narwhal and humpback whale are important materials for carving figures and sculptures, with artists such as Christian Rosing (b. 1944) and Aka Høegh (b. 1947) as important representatives. For several years, the latter has gathered a group

of other sculptors in her native town of Qaqortoq, where they carve sculptures directly into the rocks, thus creating a completely unique townscape. She is also well-known as one of Greenland's great graphic artists, taking her starting point in man's meeting with Greenland's magnificent nature, in line with both the older generation of artists such as Jens Rosing (b. 1925), Kristian Olsen (Aaju) (b. 1942) and Kiistat Lund (b. 1942) and the younger generation such as Anne-Birthe Hove (b. 1951), Bodil Buuti Petersen (b. 1955) and Naja Abelsen (b. 1964).

Story-telling was formerly a key element in Greenland, but with the introduction of writing in the 18th century and the establishment of the South Greenland Printing Press in 1857, the written word became an important part of Greenland's cultural life. The national song, "Nunarput utoqarsuanngoravit", was written by the national poet Henrik Lund (1875-1948) with music by the composer Jonathan Petersen (1891-1960). Knud Rasmussen (1879-1933) wrote fiction inspired by the Greenlandic tradition and at the same time was probably the most important documenter of Greenland's legends and stories as well as the way of life of the Polar communities. Many fiction writers, such as Mathias Storch (1883-1957) and Otto Sandgreen

The beautiful Greenlandic cemeteries illustrate the importance of the church in today's Greenlandic society. Photo: Fillippo Barbanera, Greenland Tourism.

(1914-1999), deal with the major changes occurring in the Greenlandic society in the 20th century. This is also a central theme for many poets, such as Hans Anthon Lynge (Aaju) (b. 1945) and Aqaluk Lynge (b. 1947), while issues such as existence and identity are key themes for instance for Jessie Kleeman (b. 1959).

Traditional drumming song is still practised as a cultural element, but apart from that, the polyphonic singing tradition introduced by the Moravian Brethren has been very dominant in Greenland. It can be heard both in churches and at concerts given by the many choirs, such as the popular Greenlandic choir Mik. The whalers also influenced the Greenlandic music and dance tradition by introducing the polka, but today, Greenland's music scene is mainly characterised by rhythmic music, with rock bands such as Sumé, G60 and Zikaza. Well-known performers are Rasmus Lyberth (b. 1951), Ulf Fleischer (b. 1952) and Ole Kristiansen (b. 1965), but the most famous singer in and outside Greenland is Julie Berthelsen (b. 1979), who has represented Greenland in many international contexts.

Similarly, the traditional drumming dance has largely been superseded by the more contemporary approach of a number of amateur theatre groups, which incorporate the traditional modes of expression using masks and face painting, while focusing on current issues such as identity and generation change. The most prominent is the above-mentioned theatre group Silamiut.

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### Further information

[www.nanoq.gl](http://www.nanoq.gl)  
[www.greenland.com](http://www.greenland.com)  
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