



**North America :: Greenland**  
(part of the Kingdom of Denmark)

**Introduction :: Greenland**

**Background:**

Greenland, the world's largest island, is about 81% ice capped. Vikings reached the island in the 10th century from Iceland; Danish colonization began in the 18th century, and Greenland was made an integral part of Denmark in 1953. It joined the European Community (now the EU) with Denmark in 1973 but withdrew in 1985 over a dispute centered on stringent fishing quotas. Greenland was granted self-government in 1979 by the Danish parliament; the law went into effect the following year. Greenland voted in favor of increased self-rule in November 2008 and acquired greater responsibility for internal affairs when the Act on Greenland Self-Government was signed into law in June 2009. Denmark, however, continues to exercise control of Greenland's foreign affairs, security, and financial policy in consultation with Greenland's Home Rule Government.

**Geography :: Greenland**

**Location:**

Northern North America, island between the Arctic Ocean and the North Atlantic Ocean, northeast of Canada

**Geographic coordinates:**

72 00 N, 40 00 W

**Map references:**

North America

**Area:**

**total:** 2,166,086 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** 12

**land:** 2,166,086 sq km (410,449 sq km ice-free, 1,755,637 sq km ice-covered)

**Area - comparative:**

slightly more than three times the size of Texas

**Land boundaries:**

0 km

**Coastline:**

44,087 km

**Maritime claims:**

**territorial sea:** 3 nm

**exclusive fishing zone:** 200 nm or agreed boundaries or median line

**continental shelf:** 200 nm or agreed boundaries or median line

**Climate:**

arctic to subarctic; cool summers, cold winters

**Terrain:**

flat to gradually sloping icecap covers all but a narrow, mountainous, barren, rocky coast

**Elevation extremes:**

**lowest point:** Atlantic Ocean 0 m

**highest point:** Gunnbjorn Fjeld 3,700 m

**Natural resources:**

coal, iron ore, lead, zinc, molybdenum, diamonds, gold, platinum, niobium, tantalite, uranium, fish, seals, whales, hydropower, possible oil and gas

**Land use:**

**arable land:** 0%

**permanent crops:** 0%

**other:** 100% (2011)

**Irrigated land:**

NA

**Natural hazards:**

continuous permafrost over northern two-thirds of the island

**Environment - current issues:**

protection of the arctic environment; preservation of the Inuit traditional way of life, including whaling and seal hunting

**Geography - note:**

dominates North Atlantic Ocean between North America and Europe; sparse population confined to small settlements along coast; close to one-quarter of the population lives in the capital, Nuuk; world's second largest ice cap

**People and Society :: Greenland**

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**Nationality:**

**noun:** Greenlander(s)

**adjective:** Greenlandic

**Ethnic groups:**

Inuit 89%, Danish and other 11% (2009)

**Languages:**

Greenlandic (East Inuit) (official), Danish (official), English

**Religions:**

Evangelical Lutheran, traditional Inuit spiritual beliefs

**Population:**

57,714 (July 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 206

#### **Age structure:**

**0-14 years:** 21.6% (male 6,336/female 6,147)

**15-24 years:** 16.8% (male 4,919/female 4,774)

**25-54 years:** 42.8% (male 13,083/female 11,617)

**55-64 years:** 10.7% (male 3,517/female 2,649)

**65 years and over:** 8.1% (male 2,469/female 2,203) (2013 est.)

#### **Median age:**

**total:** 33.6 years

**male:** 35 years

**female:** 32.2 years (2013 est.)

#### **Population growth rate:**

0.03% (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 190

#### **Birth rate:**

14.57 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 137

#### **Death rate:**

8.3 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 90

#### **Net migration rate:**

-5.98 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 196

#### **Urbanization:**

**urban population:** 84% of total population (2010)

**rate of urbanization:** 0.3% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

#### **Major urban areas - population:**

NUUK (capital) 15,000 (2009)

#### **Sex ratio:**

**at birth:** 1.05 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 1.03 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 1.03 male(s)/female

**25-54 years:** 1.14 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 1.35 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 1.1 male(s)/female

**total population:** 1.11 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

#### **Infant mortality rate:**

**total:** 9.63 deaths/1,000 live births

**country comparison to the world:** 146

**male:** 10.99 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 8.19 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

#### **Life expectancy at birth:**

**total population:** 71.54 years

**country comparison to the world:** 143

**male:** 68.88 years

**female:** 74.33 years (2013 est.)

#### **Total fertility rate:**

2.08 children born/woman (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 116

#### **Drinking water source:**

**improved:**

urban: 100% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 100% of population

**Sanitation facility access:****improved:**

urban: 100% of population

rural: 100% of population

total: 100% of population (2010 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

NA

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

100 (1999)

country comparison to the world: 161

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

NA

**Education expenditures:**

NA

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write

**total population:** 100%

**male:** 100%

**female:** 100% (2001 est.)

**Government :: Greenland**

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**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** none

**conventional short form:** Greenland

**local long form:** none

**local short form:** Kalaallit Nunaat

**Dependency status:**

part of the Kingdom of Denmark; self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark since 1979

**Government type:**

parliamentary democracy within a constitutional monarchy

**Capital:**

**name:** Nuuk (Godthab)

**geographic coordinates:** 64 11 N, 51 45 W

**time difference:** UTC-3 (2 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

**daylight saving time:** +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

**note:** Greenland is divided into four time zones

**Administrative divisions:**

4 municipalities (kommuner, singular kommune); Kujalleq, Qaasuitsup, Qeqqata, Sermersooq

**note:** the North and East Greenland National Park (Avannaarsuani Tunumilu Nuna Allangutsaaliugaq) and the Thule Air Base in Pituffik (in northwest Greenland) are two unincorporated areas; the national park's 972,000 sq km - about 46% of the island - make it the largest national park in the world and also the most northerly

**Independence:**

none (extensive self-rule as part of the Kingdom of Denmark; foreign affairs is the responsibility of Denmark, but Greenland actively participates in international agreements relating to Greenland)

**National holiday:**

June 21 (longest day)

**Constitution:**

(June 2009) Act on Greenland Self Government

**Legal system:**

the laws of Denmark apply

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** Queen MARGRETHE II of Denmark (since 14 January 1972), represented by High Commissioner Mikaela ENGELL (since April 2011)

**head of government:** Prime Minister Aleqa HAMMOND (since 13 March 2013)

**cabinet:** Home Rule Government elected by the Parliament (Landsting) on the basis of the strength of parties

(For more information visit the [World Leaders website](#))

**elections:** the monarchy is hereditary; high commissioner appointed by the monarch; prime minister elected by parliament (usually the leader of the majority party)

**election results:** Aleqa HAMMOND elected prime minister

**Legislative branch:**

unicameral Parliament or Inatsisartut (Landsting) (31 seats; members elected by popular vote on the basis of proportional representation to serve four-year terms)

**elections:** last held on 13 March 2013 (next to be held by 2017)

**election results:** percent of vote by party - S 42.8%, IA 34.4%, A 8.1%, PI 6.4%; D 6.2%; other 2.1%; seats by party - S 14, IA 11, A 2, PI 2, D 2

**note:** two representatives were elected to the Danish Parliament or Folketing on 15 September 2011 (next to be held by September 2015); percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - Siumut 1, Inuit Ataqatigiit 1 (2013)

**Judicial branch:**

**highest court(s):** High Court of Greenland (consists of the presiding professional judge and 2 lay assessors)

note - appeals beyond the High Court of Greenland can be heard by the Supreme Court (in Copenhagen)

**judge selection and term of office:** judges appointed by the monarch upon the recommendation of the Judicial Appointments Council, a 6-member independent body of judges and lawyers; judges appointed for life with retirement at age 70

**subordinate courts:** Court of Greenland; 18 district or magistrates' courts

**Political parties and leaders:**

Candidate List (Kattusseqatigiit) or K [Anthon FREDERIKSEN]

Democrats Party (Demokraatit) or D [Jens B. FREDERIKSEN]

Forward Party (Siumut) or S [Aleqa HAMMOND]

Inuit Community (Inuit Ataqatigiit) or IA [Kuupik KLEIST]

Inuit Party (Partii Inuit) or PI

Solidarity Party (Atassut) or A [Gerhardt PETERSEN]

**Political pressure groups and leaders:**

conservationists; environmentalists

**International organization participation:**

Arctic Council, NC, NIB, UPU

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

none (self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark)

#### **Diplomatic representation from the US:**

none (self-governing overseas administrative division of Denmark)

#### **Flag description:**

two equal horizontal bands of white (top) and red with a large disk slightly to the hoist side of center - the top half of the disk is red, the bottom half is white; the design represents the sun reflecting off a field of ice; the colors are the same as those of the Danish flag and symbolize Greenland's links to the Kingdom of Denmark

#### **National symbol(s):**

polar bear

#### **National anthem:**

**name:** "Nunarput utoqqarsuanngoravit" ("Our Country, Who's Become So Old" also translated as "You Our Ancient Land")

**lyrics/music:** Henrik LUND/Jonathan PETERSEN

**note:** adopted 1916; the government also recognizes "Nuna asiilasooq" as a secondary anthem

### **Economy :: Greenland**

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#### **Economy - overview:**

The economy remains critically dependent on exports of shrimp and fish, income from resource exploration and extraction, and on a substantial subsidy from the Danish Government. The subsidy is budgeted to be about \$650 million in 2012, approximately 56% of government revenues in 2012 for the year. The public sector, including publicly owned enterprises and the municipalities, plays the dominant role in Greenland's economy. Greenland's real GDP contracted about 1% in 2009 as a result of the global economic slowdown, but is estimated to have grown 2% in 2010 and 3% in 2011. The relative ease with which Greenland has weathered the economic crisis is due to increased hydrocarbon and mineral exploration and extraction activities, a high level of construction activity in the Nuuk area and the increasing price of fish and shrimp. During the last decade the Greenland Home Rule Government (GHRG) pursued conservative fiscal and monetary policies, but public pressure has increased for better schools, health care and retirement systems. The Greenlandic economy has benefited from increasing catches and exports of shrimp, Greenland halibut and, more recently, crabs. Due to Greenland's continued dependence on exports of fish - which accounted for 89% of exports in 2010 - the economy remains very sensitive to foreign developments. International consortia are increasingly active in exploring for hydrocarbon resources off Greenland's western coast, and international studies indicate the potential for oil and gas fields in northern and northeastern Greenland. In May 2007 a US aluminum producer concluded a memorandum of understanding with the Greenland Home Rule Government to build an aluminum smelter and a power generation facility, which takes advantage of Greenland's abundant hydropower potential. Within the area of mining, olivine sand continues to be produced and gold production has resumed in south Greenland, while rare-earth and iron ore mineral projects have been proposed or planned elsewhere on the island. Tourism also offers another avenue of economic growth for Greenland, with increasing numbers of cruise lines now operating in Greenland's western and southern waters during the peak summer tourism season.

#### **GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$2.133 billion (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 192

\$2.071 billion (2010 est.)

\$2.03 billion (2009 est.)

#### **GDP (official exchange rate):**

\$2.16 billion (2011 est.)

#### **GDP - real growth rate:**

3% (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 106

2% (2010 est.)

-1.2% (2009 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$37,400 (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 35

\$36,600 (2007 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 4%

**industry:** 29%

**services:** 67% (2009 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

forage crops, garden and greenhouse vegetables; sheep, reindeer; fish

**Industries:**

fish processing (mainly shrimp and Greenland halibut); gold, niobium, tantalite, uranium, iron and diamond mining; handicrafts, hides and skins, small shipyards

**Industrial production growth rate:**

NA%

**Labor force:**

33,670 (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 204

**Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 4%

**industry:** 29%

**services:** 67% (2009 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

4.9% (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 44

4.2% (2010 est.)

**Population below poverty line:**

9.2% (2007 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** NA%

**highest 10%:** NA%

**Budget:**

**revenues:** \$1.72 billion

**expenditures:** \$1.68 billion (2010)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

79.6% of GDP (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 1

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

1.9% of GDP (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 26

**Fiscal year:**

calendar year

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

2.8% (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 82

1.7% (2010 est.)

#### **Exports:**

\$384.3 million (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 178

\$358 million (2009)

#### **Exports - commodities:**

fish and fish products 89%, metals 10% (2008)

#### **Exports - partners:**

Denmark 60.2%, Japan 14.6%, China 7.9% (2012)

#### **Imports:**

\$814.2 million (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 183

\$726 million (2009)

#### **Imports - commodities:**

machinery and transport equipment, manufactured goods, food, petroleum products

#### **Imports - partners:**

Denmark 65.3%, Sweden 17.4%, Netherlands 5.4% (2012)

#### **Debt - external:**

\$36.4 million (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 193

\$58 million (2009)

#### **Exchange rates:**

Danish kroner (DKK) per US dollar -

5.7925 (2011)

5.6241 (2011)

5.6241 (2010)

5.361 (2009)

5.0236 (2008)

### **Energy :: Greenland**

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#### **Electricity - production:**

276.6 million kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 174

#### **Electricity - consumption:**

239.4 million kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 180

#### **Electricity - exports:**

0 kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 201

#### **Electricity - imports:**

0 kWh (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 193

#### **Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

137,000 kW (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 162

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

100% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 16**

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 97**

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 173**

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 133**

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 140**

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 118**

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 191**

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 138**

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 183**

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

3,897 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 175**

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

1,034 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 109**

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

5,376 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 151**

**Natural gas - production:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 136**

**Natural gas - consumption:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 148**

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 107**

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 199

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

0 cu m (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 142

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

555,600 Mt (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 177

**Communications :: Greenland**

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**Telephones - main lines in use:**

19,900 (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 190

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

58,700 (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 199

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** adequate domestic and international service provided by satellite, cables and microwave radio relay; totally digital since 1995

**domestic:** microwave radio relay and satellite

**international:** country code - 299; satellite earth stations - 15 (12 Intelsat, 1 Eutelsat, 2 Americom GE-2 (all Atlantic Ocean)) (2000)

**Broadcast media:**

the Greenland Broadcasting Company provides public radio and TV services throughout the island with a broadcast station and a series of repeaters; a few private local TV and radio stations; Danish public radio rebroadcasts are available (2007)

**Internet country code:**

.gl

**Internet hosts:**

15,645 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 123

**Internet users:**

36,000 (2009)

**country comparison to the world:** 179

**Transportation :: Greenland**

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**Airports:**

15 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** 147

**Airports - with paved runways:**

total: 10

2,438 to 3,047 m: 2

1,524 to 2,437 m: 1

914 to 1,523 m: 1

under 914 m: 6 (2013)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:**

**total:** 5  
**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 1  
**914 to 1,523 m:** 2  
**under 914 m:**  
2 (2013)

#### **Roadways:**

**note:** although there are short roads in towns, there are no roads between towns; inter-urban transport takes place either by sea or air (2012)

#### **Merchant marine:**

**registered in other countries:** 1 (Denmark 1) (2010)  
**country comparison to the world:** 149

#### **Ports and terminals:**

**major seaport(s):** Sisimiut

### **Military :: Greenland**

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#### **Military branches:**

no regular military forces

#### **Manpower available for military service:**

**males age 16-49:** 15,280 (2010 est.)

#### **Manpower fit for military service:**

**males age 16-49:** 10,765

**females age 16-49:** 11,399 (2010 est.)

#### **Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:**

**male:** 488

**female:** 478 (2010 est.)

#### **Military - note:**

defense is the responsibility of Denmark

### **Transnational Issues :: Greenland**

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#### **Disputes - international:**

managed dispute between Canada and Denmark over Hans Island in the Kennedy Channel between Canada's Ellesmere Island and Greenland; Denmark (Greenland) and Norway have made submissions to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental shelf (CLCS) and Russia is collecting additional data to augment its 2001 CLCS submission