

Greenland

KEY FACTS

Official name: Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat)

Head of State: Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, represented by High Commissioner Søren Hald Møller (since 1 Apr 2005)

Head of government: Prime Minister Aleqa Hammond (Siumut) (from 12 Mar 2013)

Ruling party: Coalition lead by Siumut (Forward) with Atassut (Solidarity/Community Spirit) and the new Partii Inuit (Inuit Party) (from 12 Mar 2013)

Area: 2,166,086 square km, of which 410,449 square km is not covered by permanent ice

Population: 56,744 (2011)* (56,452; census figure 2010)

Capital: Nuuk (Godthåb)

Official language: Greenlandic Inuit and Danish

Currency: Danish krone (Kr) = 100 ore

Exchange rate: Kr5.63 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$37,517 (2011)

GDP real growth: -5.40% (2009)

GDP: US\$1.27 billion (2009)

Labour force: 28,240 (2009)

Inflation: -19.00% (2009)

* estimated figure

A A research article entitled *A Reconciled Estimate of Ice-Sheet Mass Balance* and published in *Science* in November 2012 showed that Greenland is losing mass at an increasing rate – five times the rate in 1992 – due to rising temperatures. The other ‘non’ news on Greenland in 2012 was the lack of oil discovered by Cairn Energy, although Cairn, which launched its campaign in Greenland in 2007, has switched its focus to a licence in the Baffin Bay area of offshore Greenland with Norwegian explorer Statoil, which is a 30 per cent partner in the block.

However, the up-side of the retreating ice sheet is that it makes the exploration and exploitation of rare earths possible. Beneath the icecap Greenland is rich in rare earths such as cerium (used in glass manufacturing) and yttrium (essential in electronic displays) and as climate change melts the ice, so these rare earths, which are often mixed in with uranium, become accessible. This made the elections held on 12 March 2013 more interesting, giving the two main contestants something to disagree about, although only in the detail. The result was a surprise win for the Siumut Partii (Forward Party) led by Aleqa Hammond. Although just short of a majority (14 out of 31 seats), Ms Hammond, leader of the Siumut Partii, was able to form a coalition government to include Atassut (Solidarity/Community Spirit) and the new Partii Inuit (Inuit Party) who each won two seats. The previous ruling party, Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) (Inuit Community), held on to 11 seats.

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1940 During the German occupation of Denmark in the Second World War, Greenland came under US protection. Denmark re-assumed control of Greenland but with continued military use of bases by the US and later NATO.

1953 Greenland ceased to be a colony and became an autonomous province of the Danish Kingdom under the Home Rule Constitution. Native Inuit were expelled, by Danish officials, from their ancestral lands in the north to make way for expansion of the US airbase at Thule.

1973 Greenland joined the EEC (later EU) as part of Denmark.

1979 Full home rule was granted to Greenland; Denmark retained control of constitutional matters, foreign relations and defence.

1985 Greenland left the EEC following two referenda.

1987 A disagreement with Denmark over the presence of a US military radar system in Thule led to the fall of the coalition government.

1991 Parliamentary elections resulted in a coalition government composed of the Siumut (Forward) party and the Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) (Inuit Brotherhood).

1995 The IA formed a coalition with Atassut. Lars Emil Johansen became prime minister.

1999 The Danish High Court concluded the Inuit were illegally removed from their land around Thule in 1953, but their right to return was denied.

2000 NASA scientists found that the ice sheet which covers 85 per cent of Greenland's territory was melting by one metre per year.

2002 A coalition government was formed comprising the Siumut and IA parties; Hans Enoksen, became prime minister. 2003 The short-lived coalition collapsed amid allegations of corruption and the use of a native shaman. A new coalition of Siumut and the Atassut party was formed, but it failed within months during a row over the budget. Siumut resumed its coalition with the IA. Inuits lost their appeal to the Danish Supreme Court for return of their land.

2004 Denmark signed an agreement with the US to refurbish the US airbase at Thule.

2005 Prime Minister Enoksen was returned to power in early elections, called in response to allegations of misuse of public funds by ministers and failure of budgetary discussions.

2006 Official studies declared the Greenland ice sheets were melting at an increased rate.

2007 Plans by Greenland Inuits to increase their quota for whale hunting deadlocked the International Whaling Commission negotiations. Critics accused Greenland of expanding for commercial reasons rather than for cultural and nutritional values of native whaling.

2008 The five countries surrounding the Arctic met in Greenland to discuss territorial claims. The talks were aimed at reducing the detrimental effect of unrestrained exploration for oil and gas and forming an agreement concerning access to the north-west passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. A referendum on more autonomy from Denmark was agreed by 75 per cent. Under the new arrangement Greenlanders are recognised as a separate people under international law and the local government was given more control of resources, including a bigger share of oil revenues, and control of internal security.

2009 Early general elections were called so that a new administration would be in place to implement the new self-governing reforms. The left-wing opposition IA won 43.7 per cent of the vote, the ruling Siumut 26.5 per cent. Jakob Edvard Kuupik Kleist (IA) became prime minister.

2010 The Scotland-based exploration company Cairn Energy began drilling for oil offshore between Greenland and Baffin Island. Following the hottest six months of global recorded temperatures, the biggest ice island to break from the Arctic ice sheet since 1962, broke away from northern Greenland. Estimated at around 250 square kilometres and 180m deep the island slowly drifted into the Atlantic Ocean and melted down. Cairn Energy announced that it had found natural gas and oil-bearing sands (containing crude oil) off the coast of Greenland.

2011 Mikaela Engell became High Commissioner in February. The leader of the environmental activist group Greenpeace, Kumi Naidoo, was arrested in June, having breached a court-imposed exclusion zone and scaled the Cairn Energy's Greenland exploration oil rig.

2012 In June an international conference that included scientists, business people and politicians, was held in Svalbard (Norway), close to the North Pole, to discuss the implication of industrial development, global warming, ecosystems and livelihoods during rapid change. Oil exploration is already underway offshore in Greenland's Arctic waters. On 25 July, satellite images of Greenland, produced by the US's Nasa, showed the unprecedented rapid melting of a huge ice sheet. On 7 August, a new ice island (160 square km) had broken away from the Petermann Glacier in Greenland; scientists were unable to judge whether this had occurred due to global warming because records of the seawater around the glacier only go back to 2003.

2013 Elections were held on 12 March. The result was a win for the Siumut party with 42.8 per cent of the vote (14 out of 31 seats) with the previous ruling party

Inuit Ataqatigiit second with 34.4 per cent (11). Turnout was 74.2 per cent. Aleqa Hammond became prime minister, forming a coalition with the Atassut (Solidarity/Community Spirit) and the new Partii Inuit (Inuit Party), which each won 2 seats.

Political structure

Constitution

The Home Rule constitution, enacted on 2 June 1953, altered the status of Greenland from a colony to an autonomous province of Denmark. In 1979 full powers were granted with executive, judicial and legislative branches. Denmark retained control of constitutional matters, foreign relations and defence. Following a 26 November 2008 referendum, Greenlanders became recognised as a separate people under international law and the local government gained more control of resources, including a bigger share of oil revenues, and control of internal security. Self-government came into effect on 21 June 2009.

Greenland elects two members to the Danish parliament.

Form of state

Parliamentary democratic dependency

The executive

The Danish monarch is head of state and is represented by a High Commissioner appointed by the monarch.

Executive power is exercised by a prime minister who heads the government, which is composed by the majority political party or parties in parliament.

There are seven Landsstyremaend (ministers) headed by the Landsstyreformanden (prime minister).

National legislature

The unicameral Landstingets (parliament) has 31 members, elected by proportional representation for four-year terms.

Last elections

Parliamentary: 12 March 2013

Results: Parliamentary: Siumut (Forward) won 42.8 per cent of the vote (14 out of 31 seats), Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA) (Inuit Community) 34.4 per cent (11), Atassut (Solidarity/Community Spirit) 8.1 per cent (2), Demokraatit (Democrats) 6.2 per cent (2) and Partii Inuit (Inuit Party) 6.4 per cent (2). Turnout was 74.2 per cent.

Next elections

2013 (parliamentary)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition lead by Siumut (Forward) with Atassut (Solidarity/Community Spirit) and the new Partii Inuit (Inuit Party) (from 12 Mar 2013)

Main opposition party

Siumut (Forward)

Political situation

As warmer winters have melted more Arctic ice, the countries that surround the

newly accessible land and waters free of ice may now allow exploitation. This has become an international bone of contention. The US was in disagreement with Canada concerning access to the North-west Passage as free passage for all shipping in 2006. Russia, using a submarine, planted its national flag on the Arctic seabed and claimed an area of one million square kilometres in 2007. The five countries surrounding the pole – the US, Russia, Canada, Norway and Denmark (including Greenland) – finally sat down to discuss the future of the region in August 2009. No immediate resolution was agreed but Russia and Denmark were confident that each of their proposals would be ready for submission to the Arctic Council, within the UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), by 2014.

In July 2009, the Danish government had announced plans to set up a permanent military presence in the Arctic and establish a regional joint service command in the Faroe Islands, with troops also stationed in Greenland. In mid-2010, natural gas and oil deposits were discovered offshore in Greenland territorial waters, by the prospecting company, Cairn Energy, which described the find as 'North Sea-scale' and likely to be significant, with an estimated 20 billion barrels of oil.

Population

56,744 (2011)* (56,452; census figure 2010)

Last census: 1 January 2008: 56,462

Population density: Seven inhabitants per square km (2001) (icecap excluded).

Annual growth rate: 0.2 per cent (2003)

Ethnic make-up

Eighty-eight per cent of the population are Inuit and Greenland-born whites and the remainder are primarily Danes.

Religions

Ninety-six per cent belong to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Denmark.

Education

US\$102 million was spent on education in 2002.

Pupils per teacher: 10 in primary schools.

Health

Life expectancy: 68.9 years (estimate 2003)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.4 births per woman (World Bank)

Birth rate/Death rate: 16 births per 1,000 population; eight deaths per 1,000 population (2003).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 17 per 1,000 live births (2003)

Main cities

Nuuk (Godthåb) (capital, estimated population 16,225 in 2012), Sisimiut (Holsteinsborg) (5,532), Ilulissat (Jakobshavn) (4,658), Aasiaat (Egedesminde) (3,220), Qaqortoq (Julianeåb) (3,161).

Languages spoken

Danish and Greenlandic Inuit, which is an eastern branch of the East-Eskimo language categorised by linguists as Inupik, which is spoken on the northern coasts of Canada and Alaska and the eastern-most tip of Siberia. Greenlanders connected with tourism often speak English.

Official language/s

Greenlandic Inuit and Danish

Media

Press

In Greenlandic (although with Danish and sometimes English online editions), there are only two newspapers, *Atuagagdliutit Gronlandsposten* (www.ag.gl) is published twice weekly and *Sermitsiak* is published weekly; *Niviarsiaq* is published monthly.

Dailies: There are no daily newspapers.

Weeklies:

Grønlandsposten/Atuagagdliutit and *Sermitsiak*.

Periodicals: *Grønland* is a general interest periodical, published 10 times a year.

Broadcasting

The national public broadcaster is Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (KNR) (Greenland Broadcasting Company) with overall responsibility for radio and television services. It is financed through government funding, advertising and sponsorship and broadcasts a range of cultural, news, music and entertainment programmes.

Radio: Greenland Radio (KNR) broadcasts in Greenlandic and Danish with both local productions and Danish programmes.

Private radio stations include Radio 50Z20, an affiliate of the Danish, Radio Nyhederne (www.radionyt.com), Radio Grønneå and Nuuk FM

Television: KNR TV broadcasts in Greenlandic and Danish with domestic productions of cultural and youth programmes and imported (mostly Danish) shows.

Each local community has one or more private TV stations which are allocated a 15-minute broadcast daily on KNR-TV (30 minutes on Sunday).

Economy

There are over 400 licensed fishing vessels operating in Greenland, where over 90 per cent of all exports are derived from fish products, and fishing is the primary industry. Around 2,700 whales are caught each year. Although Greenland draws on subsidies from Denmark, in the form of

block grants, the government maintains a tight fiscal policy to create public budget surpluses and low inflation. The total financial package received from Denmark is around US\$650 million annually, providing 60 per cent of government revenues.

The service sector is an important component of the economy, constituting 63.2 per cent of GDP, of which public service is a leading factor. Although not a mass-market destination, Greenland is a destination for particular travellers and has a growing tourism sector.

Greenland has abundant thermal and hydropower and investigation to utilise them as export elements is being undertaken. The US aluminium producer, Alcoa, has plans to build a smelter, using a thermal power facility. The smelter is expected to come into production at the end of 2014 and together with the related power station will employ some 1,200 workers.

Natural gas and oil deposits were discovered offshore in Greenland territorial waters in mid-2010. The prospecting company, Cairn Energy, described the find as 'North Sea-scale' and likely to be significant, with an estimated 20 billion barrels of oil.

External trade

Greenland is not a member of the European Union, despite being an overseas territory of Denmark. However, it has a fishing agreement with the EU, which allows it to sell its fish products as non-dutiable goods in the EU. It also has leased fishing rights to the EU.

While Canada provides Greenland with fresh fruit and vegetables Greenland does not produce anything that Canada does not already have, so trade is generally one-way.

Imports

Imports include machinery and transport equipment, food, manufactured goods and petroleum products.

Main sources: Denmark (typically 75 per cent of total), Sweden (12 per cent), Norway (2 per cent).

Exports

Exports consist mainly of fish (cod, halibut and crabs, which accounts for approximately 45 per cent) and shrimp, which makes up over 55 per cent.

Main destinations: Denmark (typically 61 per cent of total), Japan (14 per cent), China (6 per cent).

Agriculture

The agricultural sector, comprising around 60 farms, is largely confined to sheep farming in the south and small-scale reindeer farming. Livestock production is around 360 tonnes of mutton and lamb. The production of lamb

and reindeer meat is mainly for domestic consumption. Arable areas mainly produce hay for fodder.

Fishing is the mainstay of the economy, accounting for over 90 per cent of exports and giving employment to a quarter of the population. Principal products include shrimp, halibut, cod and seal. Typical annual catches include over 142,000 tonnes (t) shrimps and 197,000t fish. Halibut is increasingly important, while cod has declined in importance. Traditional sea mammal catches are typically over 2,500 whales and 115,000 seals annually.

The fishing industry employs around 6,000 people. The principal export markets are the EU, especially Denmark, and Japan.

Greenland lost the vote to have its whaling quota expanded to include 10 humpback whales, at the International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting in 2008. Other members considered that too much of the whale meat, 25 per cent, was sold commercially, in contravention of the IWC qualification for aboriginal or subsistence whaling. The quota for Inuit whaling 2008–12 was agreed at 212 minke, 19 fins and two bowhead whales.

Industry and manufacturing

Industry is centred on fish processing and packaging. Most of the sector is controlled by the government-owned Royal Greenland company, which manages factories and smaller plants in both Greenland and Denmark. Some tanning and leatherworking takes place in the south. Infrastructure improvements have provided a boost to construction activity, in particular the development of new airstrips.

Tourism

There are two tourist seasons, the principal one is during the warm spring-summer months when visitors make the journey to see the spectacular landscapes of the Arctic and semi-Arctic of glaciers, icebergs, Arctic wildlife and activities that include dog-sledding, whale watching, plus experiencing a little of the indigenous Inuit culture. While hardier visitors may visit during the frozen depths of winter for the chance to see the *aurora borealis* (northern lights), although this phenomenon may be seen at other times of the year and in less strenuous circumstances. There has been a marked increase in the number of cruise visitors of 30,000 in 2011, a four-fold increase since 2000.

Mining

There are known reserves of zinc, lead, copper, cobalt, uranium, iron ore, gold and diamonds. Mineral exploration is actively encouraged and the administration

has reformed its mining regulations. Large quantities of two of the world's rarest metals, niobium and tantalum, exist in Greenland.

Hydrocarbons

Greenland still hopes that oil and gas might become one of the mainstays of its economy. However, currently it relies on imports of over 4,000 barrels per day. Oil exploration began in the 1970s and the government is encouraging further exploration offshore of West Greenland. Arctic climatic conditions and deep waters make the task difficult. Greenland does not produce or import gas and coal. Natural gas and oil deposits were discovered offshore in Greenland territorial waters in mid-2010. The prospecting company, Cairn Energy, described the find as 'North Sea-scale' and likely to be significant, with an estimated 20 billion barrels of oil.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity is some 106kW; electricity production was over 300 million kilowatt hours in 2007, the majority of which was produced by thermal power plants. There is a hydroelectric station in Buksefjorden, which supplies Nuuk; other hydroelectric plants are under construction or being planned.

Banking and insurance

NUNA Bank A/S is an independent bank that was formerly a subsidiary of the Danish bank Sparekasse Bikuben AS. The two banks share a strong business relationship. The other major bank in Greenland is Grønlandsbanken, which is owned by Danish banks.

Central bank

Monetary policy and administration is handled by the Danish central bank (Danmarks Nationalbank).

Time

Greenland has four time zones: East Greenland and Scoresbysund – GMT minus one hour (daylight saving, end March to end September, GMT) Central Greenland, Godthåb – GMT minus three hours (daylight saving, GMT minus two hours) Western Greenland, Thule – GMT minus four hours (no daylight saving) Danmarkshavn – GMT (no daylight saving)

Geography

Greenland is the world's largest island, although much of the surrounding seas are permanently frozen forming the arctic shelf. Greenland lies in the North Atlantic Ocean, to the east of Canada and to the west of Iceland. Around 85 per cent of the landmass is permanently covered by ice up to 3,375 metres (m) thick. A snow

peaked central range of mountains run north/south, with the highest peak reaching 3,200m above sea-level. There are 410,449 square km of coastland that is habitable.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Arctic; temperatures at Nuuk/Godthåb vary between about minus 12 degrees Celsius (C) and 11 degrees C.

Entry requirements

Entry requirements are the same as for Denmark.

Passports

Required by all, except EU visitors travelling on national ID cards.

Visa

Even though a Danish territory, visas are not valid for Greenland unless specified in the permit. For a business visa, an original letter of invitation from a local company or organisation, giving details about purpose of visit and duration of stay must accompany an application, along with evidence of hotel reservations.

Approval must be obtained from the Greenland Home Rule administration, PO Box 1015, 3900 Nuuk, Greenland, for entry into the military defence areas including the gateways of Søndre Strømfjord and Thule (unless in direct transit to points outside the airport of Søndre Strømfjord) and entry for the purpose of mountain/glacier climbing or geological/archaeological research.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

Vaccination certificates are not usually required.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 6 Jan (Epiphany), 21 Jun (National Day), 24–26 Dec (Christmas).

Variable dates

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Great Prayer Day (Apr/May), Ascension Day, Whit Monday.

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0930–1600 (Thu 1800).

Business

Mon–Fri: 0800–1600 or 0830–1630.

Government

Mon–Fri: generally 0900–1700.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0800–1700 or 0900–1730, Sat: close at 1300 or 1400.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

There is a 900 GSM service in populated areas only.

Electricity supply

220V AC, 50Hz.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Air Greenland
International airport/s: Kangerlussuaq (Søndre Strømfjord) (SFJ) international airport, on the west coast close to Sisimiut and the capital, Nuuk, has regular flights from Canada, Iceland and Denmark. Facilities include: bureau de change, restaurant, duty-free shops, post office and car rental.

Other airport/s: Narsarsuaq (UAK) is an airport for stopover flights between Europe and North America and internal flights, with few facilities.

Kulusuk (KUS), on the east coast receives some internal flights but most come from Iceland.

Airport tax: None

Surface

Water: Comfortable cruise ships sail during the summer season.

Main port/s: Nuuk/Godthåb

Getting about

National transport

Air: Air Greenland flies routes along the western coast from Pituffik and Qaanaaq in the north to Paamiut in the south and across to Kulusuk and Tasiilaq in the east. The regularity of services is dependent on the weather; reservations should be made well in advance. Helicopter services link other, more remote, settlements.

Road: There are virtually no roads connecting towns in Greenland. Only 60km of paved roads exist, realistically the best means of transport is the traditional sea and air travel where available. Dog-sledges and snow mobiles can be hired for variable periods.

Water: Greenland Trade operates two passenger liners on the west coast. Villages are served by local boats, some of which are for private hire.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling (IDD) code for Greenland is +299, followed by the subscriber's number.

Banking

Grønlandsbanken (Bank of Greenland)
29 Skibshavnsvej, PO Box 1033,
DK-3900 Nuuk (tel: 347-700; fax
347-706).

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Central bank

Danmarks Nationalbank, Havnegade 5, DK-1093 Copenhagen (tel: (+45) 3363-6363; fax: (+45) 3363-7103; e-mail: info@nationalbanken.dk).

Travel information

Greenland Tourism Main Office, 29 Hans Egedesvej, PO Box 1615, Nuuk DK-3900 (tel: 342-820; fax: 322-877; e-mail: info@greenland.com).

National tourist organisation offices

Greenland Tourism a/s, Main Office, PO Box 1552, 3900 Nuuk (tel: 322-888; fax: 322-877; e-mail: info@visitgreenland.com).

Ministries

Grønlands Hjemmestyre (Greenland Home Rule administration), PO Box 1015, 3900 Nuuk (tel: 345-000; e-mail: info@gh.gl; internet site: www.gh.gl).

Greenland Home Rule Government Denmark Office, Sjaeleboderne 2, 1122 Copenhagen K, Denmark (tel: (+45) 3313-4224; fax: (+45) 3332-2024).

Prime Minister's Office, Greenland Department, 3 Hausergade, DK-1128 Copenhagen K, Denmark (tel: (+45) 3393-2200).

Other useful addresses

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asiatisk Plads 2, DK-1448 Copenhagen, Denmark (tel:

(+45) 3392-0000; internet: www.um.dk/en).

Greenland Trade Shipping Department, Grønlandshavnen, DK-9220 Aalborg Ost (tel: (+45) 9815-7677).

Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa (Grønlands Radio) (KNR) (Radio Greenland), H J Rinksvej 35, PO Box 1007, 3900 Nuuk (tel: 321-172; fax: 324-703).

Internet sites

Bureau of minerals and petroleum: <http://bmp.gl/>

Greenland Radio: <http://www.knr.gl/>

Greenland Tourism: <http://www.greenland-guide.gl>