



Children's standard of living in Greenland

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT SERIES *Children's standard of living in Greenland*—PARTS 1, 2, AND 3 WITH RECOMMENDATIONS

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Meeqqat Inuusuttullu Pillugit Iisimasaqarfik

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Preface

The Greenlandic public has seen several debates on children's standard of living, differences in income, and poverty. Despite the fact that these debates primarily concern children and their circumstances, children's voices have been largely absent from the debate. Furthermore, the lack of statistics makes it difficult to assess the number of children affected by poverty or living without sufficient means.

This is why MIPI—Documentation Centre on Children and Youth decided to carry out the survey *Children's standard of living in Greenland*. With the child in focus, MIPI is commissioned to gather, create, and relay information, and this survey is thus part of the endeavor to meet this obligation. We hope that the survey will provide a foundation for a qualified debate on children's standard of living and applied initiatives in the field. We also hope that parts of or the entire survey will be repeated later by either MIPI or others in order to investigate whether developments in children's standard of living are observable.

The survey consists of three parts, published as separate reports:

Children experiencing deprivation—interview survey of children and parents from families under economic strain

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1

From a children's perspective, the report describes how children from families under economic strain experience and handle the financial situation of their family. In addition to interviews with children and parents from families under economic strain, the report is based on school essays written by pupils in the 9th and 10th grades and drawings made by children aged 11 to 12 years.



Child poverty—a statistical analysis of data on the income of households with children

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2

There is no official definition of poverty in Greenland, so the report makes use of three definitions on poverty inspired by internationally used methods. Based on data from Statistics Greenland on income, social benefits, and household composition, the report describes the proportions of children affected by poverty in Greenland. Moreover, the report analyses what characterizes a child living in poverty.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the child's right to an adequate standard of living

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 3

The third part of the report series further elaborates on the analyses conducted in *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1* and includes the results from *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2*. The report treats the question whether children from families under economic strain enjoy the adequate standard of living to which—according to Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—they are entitled. The report also describes what duties rest with the authorities in relation to the UN Convention and refers to a number of recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which monitors children's rights.

The present publication is a summary of the results from the report series *Children's standard of living in Greenland*.



Acknowledgements

MIPI is very grateful to the children and parents who took part in interviews, wrote school essays, and made drawings. This report would not have been possible without their help. We hope that they will know that the topic is now debated thanks to their efforts.

We also wish to express our gratitude to the municipalities and the local government employees who supported the survey. They did so by establishing contact with the respondents and making sure that all the practical details concerning transportation, accommodation, and interpretation were in order. The municipalities also supported the project financially by providing accommodation and/or interpretation. This demonstrates that the authorities, too, are very interested in research on children's standard of living.

Schools and children's institutions have also been very helpful organizing school essays and drawings. The swimming baths of Pisiffik and Malik have donated presents for the interviewed children. A number of private individuals have also supported this survey, e.g. by letting the authors stay with them. Thank you very much!

Moreover, an advisory group has been attached to the project. It consisted of representatives from KANUKOKA (Association of Municipalities in Greenland), The Ministry of Families, The Ministry of Culture, Education, Research and The Church, The Ministry of Housing and Infrastructure, The Ministry of Health, Statistics Greenland, Ilisimatusarfik (University of Greenland), and Sorlak (Greenland Youth Council). In addition, Statistics Greenland has provided work space and continuous assistance in relation to the preparation of the statistical analysis, which was very useful. The advisory group generally contributed to improving the quality of the survey by means of thorough comments and numerous suggestions that we appreciated immensely.

We would also like to thank MIPI employees Louise Mortensen, Lona Lynge, Katti Frederiksen, Hanne K. Hansen and Avijâja Absalonsen for assisting us regarding translation, coordination, and launching.



Likewise, we are grateful that Professor Jens Qvortrup, Department of Sociology and Political Science in Trondheim, and Christoffer Ulrik Badse, Project Manager at The Danish Institute for Human Rights in Copenhagen, both took the time to read and provide feedback on *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 3*.

Finally, a number of foundations and sponsors have made the survey possible by funding it. These benefactors count The Augustinus Foundation, The Commission for Scientific Research in Greenland, The Greenland Home Rule Research Fund, The Knud Højgaard Foundation, Kalaallit Røde Korsiat (Greenlandic Red Cross) as well as NAPA/The Nordic Institute of Greenland. We cordially thank these donors for their financial support.

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Contents and purpose of the report series

Purpose

The purpose of the report series *Children's standard of living in Greenland* is to procure information about child poverty and the ways in which living in families under economic strain affects children. This knowledge may form the basis of a formulation and implementation of initiatives to combat child poverty and improve children's standard of living in Greenland.

We aim to meet this purpose by, firstly, giving an account of children's experiences of and coping with life in families under economic strain. Secondly, by mapping out the number of children living in poverty, and thirdly, by investigating whether the rights of children from families under economic strain to a satisfactory standard of living as stipulated in Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are being respected.

The report is based on:

- 1) A qualitative interview survey of children and parents from families under economic strain as well as school essays written by pupils in the 9th and 10th grades and drawings made by children aged 11-12. The qualitative material was obtained in the capital Nuuk and towns and villages in Northern Greenland.
- 2) A statistical analyses of the proportion of child poverty based on income data from Statistics Greenland including all households with children in 2004.
- 3) An analysis of the right to a satisfactory standard of living as stipulated in Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in a Greenlandic context.

The reports also includes knowledge and experiences derived from conversations with professionals on children's standard of living as well as from meetings with school classes of different age groups in which the pupils have received lessons in and discussed children's living conditions and rights.



Contents

The report series *Children's standard of living in Greenland* consists of three subreports.

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1 contains an analysis of interviews with 24 children and their parents from families under economic strain. The criterion for the selection of families has been the fact that one or both of the parents are on social welfare because of their inability to provide for themselves and their family.

The analysis focuses on the children's experiences of and coping with their family's financial and material situation, but also on social conditions such as leisure activities, school, friendships, family life, etc. It is described what aspects of life and to what extent the children suffer daily deprivation due to the strained economy of their family.

Furthermore, *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1* features an analysis of 71 school essays by 9th and 10th graders on the ways in which it affects children and youth when their family is short of money, and what elements are essential to their well-being. In addition, the subreport contains an analysis of drawings made by 36 children aged 11-12. The drawings illustrate what it is like to grow up in a family of means and a poor family respectively. Contrary to the interview survey, the children who wrote the essays and made the drawings were not selected according to specific criteria, but represent different income groups in Greenland.

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2 features statistical analyses of child poverty in Greenland. Poverty is measured by three different methods, relative poverty, need-assessed benefit poverty, and implicit poverty. The proportion of children living in poverty is estimated by these standards. Finally, the report analyzes what characterizes a child living in poverty.

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 3 deals with children from families under economic strain and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The subreport gives an



account of the right to an adequate standard of living as defined by the convention and analyzes whether children from families under economic strain enjoy this entitlement. Moreover, the duties of the Greenlandic authorities are delineated vis-à-vis ensuring that the children enjoy an adequate standard of living, and references are made to a number of recommendations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child which monitors the enforcement of children's rights.

This summary of the report series *Children's standard of living in Greenland* roughly introduces the methods and conclusions of the individual subreports. Finally, the reports' recommendations for additional initiatives are presented. For further information, please refer to the three subreports, all available in Greenlandic and Danish on the MIPI website: www.mipi.gl.



Summary of Children's standard of living in Greenland— Parts 1, 2, and 3

Children experiencing deprivation—interview survey of children and parents from families under economic strain - Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1

“Living in a low-income family makes me sad. One envies other young people who always have money when one never has any. One envies children with parents who have a job. Lacking food isn't healthy. If we had enough money, we could go away on summer holiday and we could buy clothes. I could ride my bike in my spare time, too, if we could afford such things” (Girl, 15 years old).

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1 describes how children understand and experience their surroundings and the conditions under which they live from a child's perspective. Their experience of and coping with their family's economic situation is central to the survey.

Children from families under economic strain experience various kinds of material and social deprivation

Many children from families under economic strain notice that time and again their family is short of food, and some children report that they do not always have enough food, neither at home nor in their lunchbox at school.

Several children express discontent with their housing situation. They are not only referring to the residence being too small to house the entire family. The children's discontent also owes to the quality of their residence. They speak of flawed houses, summer damp and sheets of ice inside during the winter. To a few of the children in the survey, inadequate housing literally meant not having a roof over their heads.



Most of the children from families under economic strain experience limited opportunity to participate in organized leisure activities due to the financial situation of their family. Being precluded from leisure activities that cost money entails that the children are barred from taking part on equal terms with the other children in the social communities which organized leisure activities involve. A few children were, however, able to participate in leisure activities that were paid by either public authorities or private actors.

Some children express disinterest in leisure activities or lack of reflection as to whether they feel like engaging in such. This may be their way of attuning their expectations to their family's financial situation, thus in advance excluding themselves from leisure activity participation. But another reason may be that no leisure activities are offered in their area. Several children from villages state that they miss the option to engage in leisure activities.

The majority of children from families under economic strain have not been outside their local area— neither during school breaks or at any other time. To some of these children, summer vacation means doing what they usually do. A few children have had alternative holiday options independent of their parents, e.g. a free summer camp or together with their grandparents.

A number of children never have friends over and fail to understand why. The setting and the children's opportunity to spend time together seem to influence whether the children mostly go their friends' place or have *them* over. Some children spend more time at their friends' place because it allows them to engage in other activities such as computer games. Taking the setting for the children's interaction into account, it is crucial that more or less all children in the survey share their room with their siblings and in some instances also with their parents, and that they long to have a room of their own, e.g. to invite friends over.

Common to all children from families under economic strain is their testimony that they receive pocket money to a lesser degree than their peers of the same age and that sometimes they do not receive any at all. The few children who get pocket money on a regular basis are paid by either grandparents or a parent with whom they do not live. The



children describe the ability to “go to the store” and buy candy, soft drinks, etc. as a decisive indicator of the difference between families of insufficient as opposed to abundant means. Pocket money allows the children to participate in the social community surrounding “going to the store” during school hours as well as after, and, moreover, it allows them a visible parameter to demonstrate that they do not deviate from the norm, but are like other children.

Most of the older children have a job after school. To the children, a job after school is not an individual project. On the contrary, the majority of the children specify the incentive to get a job as a desire to help the family financially. The children are very worried about their family’s financial situation and try to help out as best they can. Most of all they wish to contribute the extra amount that permits the family to buy sufficient daily subsistence goods. The older children’s jobs may to a large extent contribute to protecting them—as well as their siblings and parents—from suffering regular hardship in the form of want for daily necessities such as food.

Pocket money and jobs after school give the children independent financial latitude. Children experiencing financial latitude find it easier to maintain a positive self-image. Furthermore, financial latitude is conducive to keeping up social relations. A spare time job may also have the opposite effect that the children have less time for their friends and it may adversely affect school, e.g. due to fatigue and less time for homework, the extreme consequence being that the children are withdrawn from school.

The majority of children from families under economic strain declare that their well-being is less than optimal or downright poor in a class setting. This is a consequence of their exclusion from the social class community and the fact that they are bullied. As far as some children are concerned, their poor well-being is combined with vocational difficulties. A few children experience that bullying is connected to unequal access to material goods. This notion is also common in the school essays in which the pupils describe how children from families of poor means are bullied, e.g. due to their old clothes.



Despite the fact that the children's well-being is not optimal or that they are uncomfortable in social school contexts, more of them are aware of the importance of going to school. To a few of the children, this awareness is implanted by their parents: It is crucial for them to learn something and attend to their school work in order to obtain more alternatives than their parents had and avoid ending up as unskilled workers with meager job opportunity and unstable income. Other children have no idea what they will be doing later on. These are predominantly younger children, to whom further training and jobs figure only in a distant future, but a few of the older children also express no clue as to what they would like to do with their lives. These youngsters seem to be characterized by apathy and lack of faith in the future.





The children's awareness of and coping with their family's strained economy

The children are aware of their family's strained economy to varying degrees. This becomes apparent in various ways. Some children worry that their family lacks food from time to time and do their best to help, for instance by getting a spare time job. Other children adapt their expectations to the strained economy of their family and do not express the desire to participate in leisure activities or go on holiday with their family.

“I would like a steady job after school to help out my parents financially—mostly as regards foodstuffs for my parents and making ends meet financially” (Girl, 15 years old).

The children's awareness generally increases as they grow older, and the oldest children thus seem more aware of their family's strained economy than the younger children. The older children recount that they no longer ask their parents for money and express the desire to fend for themselves. The younger children either claim to be indifferent or that they pester their parents if they do not get what they want. Claiming to be indifferent may also be a way to protect oneself from feeling deprived. Parents experience that their children—particularly the older ones—largely understand and accept the fact that they cannot do and have the same things as other children. The children phrase this as an adjustment of their needs and wishes to the strained economy of their family. They learn to endure hardship, which may reduce their immediate expectations and aspirations in life.

“After my Confirmation, I stopped asking my parents for things, and instead I started earning my own money” (Boy, 16 years old).

The children's view of their family's financial situation is molded by their surroundings, and in this context both the material and social consumption of their peers is a highly influential parameter. The children meticulously compare their own situation to that of other children.



They notice that other children have more money, e.g. because their family owns a car or because they can afford to go to the store every day, etc. On the one hand, the children downgrade their expectations and abstain from wanting to do and have the same things as their peers. But on the other hand, this immediate pressure experienced by the children as a consequence of the norm among their peers also causes them to express the desire for the same things as other children in several contexts.

The children's ways of handling strained economy vary. Some children actively tackle the situation, while others do so more passively. Examples of active coping strategies count getting a spare time job, saving up money, or participating in free leisure activities for children. The children who actively tackle their situation have what you might call a problem-solving approach. The children who tackle their situation passively, on the other hand, have what you might call an avoidant approach. They try more or less consciously to convince themselves that they have neither needs nor desires or expectations. A passive coping strategy might be exemplified by the fact that the children refrain from asking their parents for anything, be it things, entertainment, or pocket money, or by their testimony that they never considered participation in leisure activities or having friends over. They have learned to control themselves and go without both things and entertainment, and this may lead to apathy and social isolation.

The children's awareness of their family's financial situation also encompasses more sensitive areas of life, such as how it affects the atmosphere in the home. Some children relate how their parents' mood is adversely affected by their shortage of money, and that this leads to excessive drinking from time to time. Other children, on the contrary, have noticed that their parents—despite financial limitations—preserve an amount of social energy. A few children feel that it is easier to deal with strained economy if they form part of open and positive family relations, and that feeling loved by one's parents is the most important thing.

“Sometimes I sense that my classmates ask their parents for money, and they get it every day [...] Sometimes I long to have all the things that people who are better off than me have (Girl, 14 years old).



Children in Greenland are generally very aware of the connection between the financial situation of their family and their own standard of living

Children in Greenland are generally very aware that children from families under economic strain suffer a number of material and social hardships in their everyday lives. This is evident in the school essays in which the pupils describe how children in families of insufficient means lack food, and that lack of food may influence the children's ability to concentrate at school. They write about children wearing old clothes because their parents cannot afford to buy them new ones, causing them to be bullied at school. They recount that the children's sense of shame makes them withdraw from other children, and that the children feel bad and powerless as a result of their family's situation. They also give an account of the children's limited opportunities and that their consequences may haunt them well into their adult life.

“Parents’ low income leads to lack of food, no lunchbox for school, and only a little to eat every day” (Girl, 13 years old).

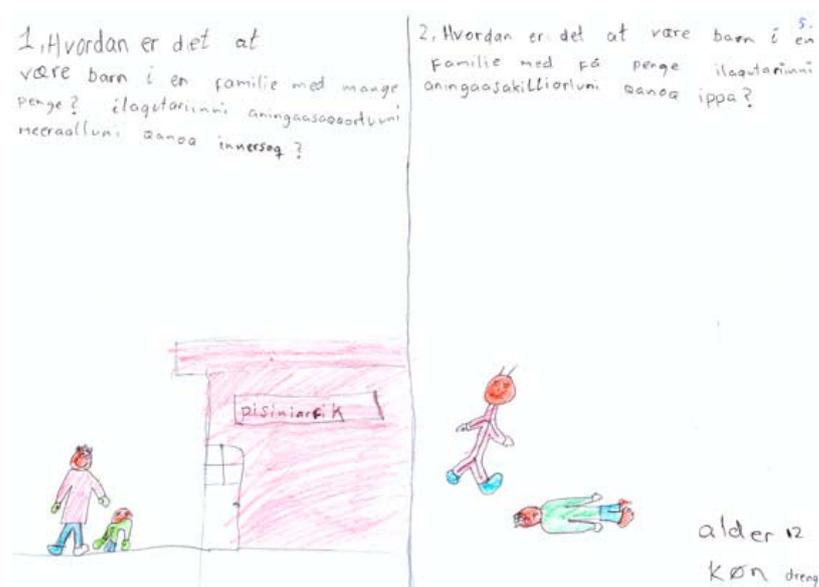
The fact that children are generally aware and display a balanced understanding of the connection between a family's financial situation and the children's standard of living is also manifest in their drawings illustrating the living conditions for a family of means and a poor family respectively as markedly dissimilar. They show that not only the material standard of living differs. Also the family mood is affected by the amount of money in hand. Children of wealthy families are depicted as happy, while poor families are depicted as sad, partly because they cannot afford food or clothes.

“They get tired, unfocused, and lose interest in school because they don't feel well” (Boy, 14 years old).

The children take local reality and—in more instances—their own lives as their point of departure when describing or illustrating how a family's financial situation affects children's living conditions. Drawings made by children from the capital, towns, and villages



respectively turn out to be markedly dissimilar. It is significant that village children in contrast to children from the capital depict what it is like to be a child in a family of means and a poor family respectively as a matter of access to basic necessities such as food, while children from the capital move within a larger material range, in which money is depicted as predominantly significant to whether the family can afford a big house and one or more cars.



“They’re teased at school. They can’t buy new clothes or any of the other things they’d like to have—that the other kids have” (Boy, 14 years old).

Putting the findings into perspective

Other Greenlandic surveys indicate social differences in children’s well-being and standard of living.¹ Children in less affluent families assess their own health as poorer; they recount more

¹ Schnohr, Christina; Pedersen, Michael J.; Alcón, Maria Carmen Granado & Niclasen, Birgit (2004): *Sundhed og helbred i Grønland fra 1994 til 2002*, INUSSUK – Arktisk forskningsjournal 2, 2004.



frequent bullying and seldom feel that they have a good life in comparison to children from more affluent families. The differences are also expressed by the fact that children from families of low income go to bed or to school hungry more frequently than other children. Similarly, as pointed out by this report series, wealth is unevenly distributed not only in the social sense, but also geographically. Thus, children in the villages are less affluent than children from the towns and particularly the capital, in which we find the highest affluence among children.²

While the living conditions of Greenlandic children from families under economic strain are to be considered unique on the one hand, this study shows a number of parallels to children in similar situations in other countries, e.g. Canada, the U.S., and European countries.³ The overall parallel consists in the children's experience of material and social want in their everyday lives. This want provides limited opportunity to participate on equal terms with their peers in the common lifestyle of the society in which they live. They also share a keen awareness of their family's poor financial situation and adjust their expectations accordingly. They learn to live with deprivation, and international studies show that this reduces the children's immediate expectations and aspirations in life.⁴

Schnohr, Christina; Niclasen, Birgit; Løngaard, Katja; Lauersen, Laila Kærgaard (2007): *Sundhed på toppen – resultater fra Health Behaviour in School-aged children (HBSC) undersøgelsen i Grønland i 2006*, INUSSUK – Arktisk Forskningsjournal 1, 2007.

² Ibid.

³ Harju, Ann (2005): *Barn och knapp ekonomi*, Rapportserie i socialt arbejde No. 001, IVASO, Växjö Universitet.

⁴ Shopshire, Jules & Middleton, Sue (1999): *Small Expectations. Learning to be poor?* York, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



Child poverty—a statistical analysis of data on the income of households with children - Children’s standard of living in Greenland—Part 2

Children’s standard of living in Greenland—Part 2 is a statistical analysis of child poverty in Greenland. The purpose of the survey is twofold: Firstly the proportion of children living in poverty in Greenland is estimated. Secondly, it analyzes the characteristics of households with children living in poverty.

The analyses are based on registry data from Statistics Greenland which comprises all registered households with children aged 18 years and below in 2004. The data covers 8,082 households distributed on 17 municipalities. Data includes 17,923 adults and 15,979 children in total. 1,362 households (17%) are located in a village and 4,703 households (58%) in the towns of Greenland, while 2,017 households (25%) are to be found in the capital Nuuk.

Three ways to measure poverty

No fixed measure for poverty exists for Greenland, nor has an official poverty line been agreed upon. *Children’s standard of living in Greenland—Part 2* therefore takes three measures for child poverty used in other surveys as its starting point.

Type of poverty	Children in poverty (number and % in all of Greenland)		
	Number of children	Number of households	Share of children (%)
Relative poverty <50% ¹	1,416	576	9
Relative poverty <60% ¹	2,817	1,142	18
Need-assessed benefit poverty	6,142	2,821	39
Implicit poverty ²	507	174	4

Table 1: Children living in various forms of poverty in Greenland
 1 Of the OECD-weighted median income for Greenland
 2 Calculations for households with 1-2 adults, 11,698 children in total

The three measures are relative poverty, need-assessed benefit poverty, and implicit poverty. The results figure in Table 1 to the left.



Relative poverty: A child is categorized as poor if the disposable income of the child's household is less than 50% of the median income in Greenland. *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2* also includes a measure for relative poverty, by which a child is categorized as poor if the disposable income of the child's household is less than 60% of the median income in Greenland. Both of these measures for relative poverty are recognized within international research and statistics.

Relative poverty refers to those who in a given society have less than everyone else in that same society. The generally applied interpretation is that children living in this kind of poverty do not have access to the things that are considered normal and necessary.

The median income splits the population in two halves of equal size. One half has an income below the median income, while the other half has an income above the median income. When calculating relative poverty, the disposable income is weighted by household composition, i.e. by number of adults and number of children in the household.

Need-assessed benefit poverty: A child is categorized as poor when a member of the child's household has received need-assessed benefit ("trangsvurderet hjælp/Pisariaqavissuinnarnut ikiorsiissutit") from the social authorities at any time during the year in question. Need-assessed benefit poverty is assigned with reference to legislation when all other support options are exhausted. The incentive to include this measure for poverty is the assumption that a household having received need-assessed benefit at any time during the year in question will consequently have experienced economic problems at some point during that year.

Implicit poverty: A child is categorized as poor if the disposable income of the child's household is less than an assumed annual minimum income constructed on the basis of public assistance. As mentioned previously, no official poverty line has been established for Greenland. But as the assumed annual minimum income is based on public assistance, this measure may be interpreted as an indirectly established lower threshold of acceptable income.



Results

Children in relative poverty

9% of all children in Greenland live in relative poverty when the line is drawn by 50% of the median income. This corresponds to 1,416 children living in 576 households—or every 11th child in Greenland. If the threshold of relative poverty is set by 60% of the median income, 18% of all children in Greenland live in this form of poverty. This corresponds to 2,817 children living in 1,142 households—or every 6th child in Greenland.

Children in need-assessed benefit poverty

39% of the children in Greenland live in need-assessed benefit poverty. This corresponds to 6,142 children living in 2,821 households—or four out of every ten children in Greenland.

Children in implicit poverty

4% of the children in Greenland live in implicit poverty. This corresponds to 507 children in 174 households—or every 25th child in Greenland. This calculation has been made for households comprising up to two adults, meaning that the analysis has been carried out for just under 3/4 of all children.

Characteristic of households with increased risk of child poverty

Regression analyses have elucidated some characteristics of families in poverty that are common to all three measures for poverty. Child poverty thus occurs more frequently if one or more of the following factors are true of the household:

- Adults in the household are aged less than 25
- Household comprises single adults
- Household comprises many children
- Household is located in a village



- All adults in the household are born in Greenland

Child poverty distributed on municipalities

In order to compare municipalities, the number of children per 1,000 children living in the three different forms of poverty was calculated for each municipality. The results figure in Table 2.

	Number of children IN TOTAL	Relative poverty 50%			Need-assessed benefit poverty			Implicit poverty			
		Number of children	Number of children per 1,000	Share of children (%)	Number of children	Number of children per 1,000	Share of children (%)	Number of children	Number of children per 1,000	Share of children (%)	Number of children (households with 1-2 adults)
GREENLAND	15,959	1,416	89	9	6,142	385	39	507	43	4	11,698
Nanortalik	739	105	142	1	384	520	2	21	41	<1	516
Qaqortoq	891	62	70	<1	349	392	2	25	37	<1	672
Narsaq	530	11	21	<1	253	477	2	3	7	<1	417
Paamiut	570	51	90	<1	291	511	2	15	31	<1	491
Nuuk	3,680	179	49	1	831	226	5	140	49	1	2,841
Maniitsoq	1,018	114	112	1	458	450	3	35	45	<1	772
Sisimiut	1,670	96	58	1	602	360	4	25	20	<1	1,271
Kangaatsiaq	565	116	205	1	426	754	3	38	110	<1	345
Aasiaat	870	56	64	<1	249	286	2	10	15	<1	668
Qasigiannugit	404	7	17	<1	15	37	<1	-	-	-	300
Ilulissat	1,354	69	51	<1	523	381	3	26	27	<1	955
Qeqertarsuaq	310	23	74	<1	120	387	1	3	12	<1	247
Uummannaq	803	65	81	<1	384	478	2	14	24	<1	596
Upernavik	1,012	165	163	1	485	479	3	47	70	<1	668
Qaanaaq	289	53	183	<1	140	484	1	14	65	<1	215
Ammassalik	1,055	209	198	1	542	514	3	40	68	<1	588
Ittoqqortoormiit	199	35	176	<1	90	452	1	51	375	<1	136

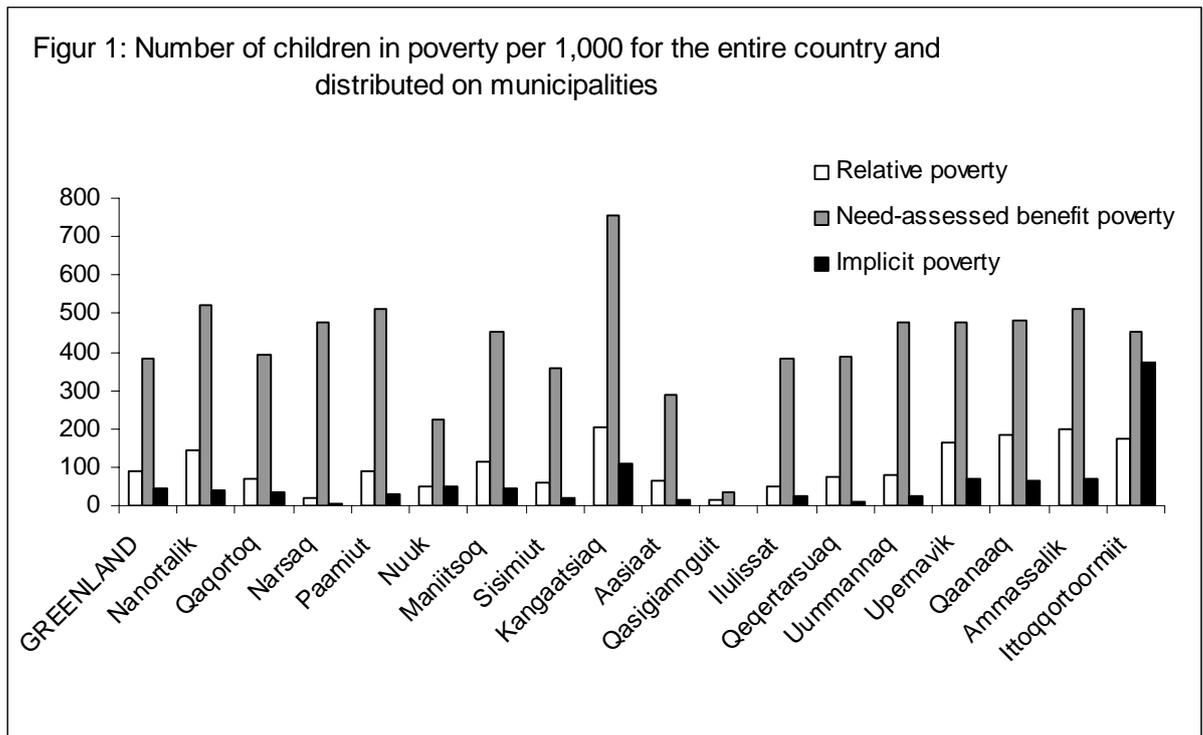
Table 2: Number of children, number of children per 1,000, and share of children in poverty in Greenland and distributed on municipalities

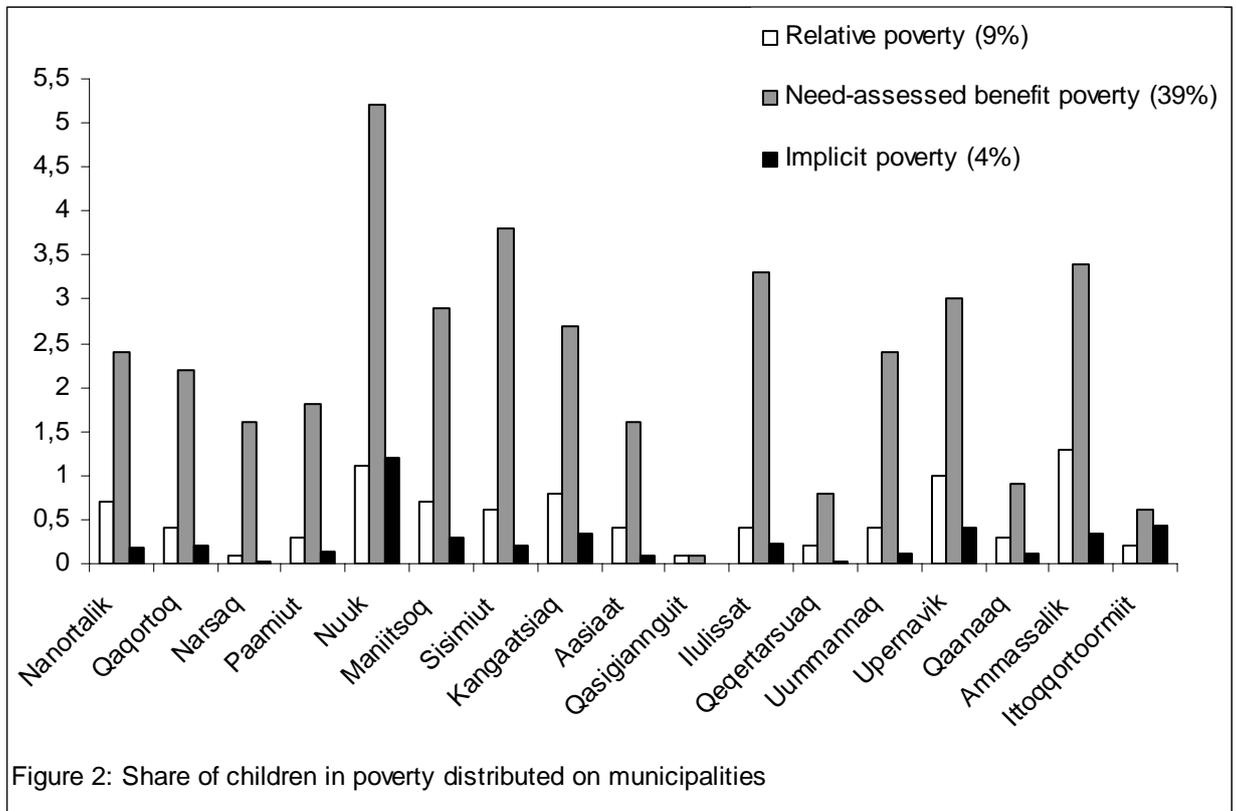
The number of children living in the three different forms of poverty is shown for all of Greenland and for each municipality respectively. In order to compare municipalities, the total number of children has been converted into a number expressing the amount of poor



children if each municipality had 1,000 inhabitants. This has been done in the columns “Number of children per 1,000” in Table 2. These columns are helpful if one wishes to compare the share of poor children in one municipality to another. Finally, the columns “Share of children (%)” are calculated on the basis of the total amount of children in poverty in Greenland. These columns, then, express the distribution on the various municipalities of all children in Greenland living in poverty. On a national level, this information may be used when assessing where an effort to combat poverty would help the highest amount of children.

Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate the information in Table 2.





If one wishes to use the information available in *Children’s standard of living in Greenland—Part 2* to assess where in Greenland an effort to improve children’s conditions would be of most benefit, one should consult the absolute numbers (Figure 1) as well as the relative numbers, i.e. the shares (Figure 2). Nuuk, for example, appears to have a fine statistic compared to the other municipalities of Greenland, in that relatively few children out of 1,000 in Nuuk are categorized as poor. However, the absolute numbers will reveal that there are many poor children in Nuuk because this is the town that houses most children. Many of Greenland’s poor children would, in other words, benefit from an effort here. Another example would be Ittoqqortoormiit which houses only a limited number of the children living in poverty. But when the number of children in poverty is compared to the total number of children in the municipality, it turns out to be a large proportion of the municipality’s entire child population. For instance, 90 of the municipality’s 199 children live in households that have received need-assessed benefit. If there were exactly 1,000 children in the municipality,



452 of them would live in households receiving need-assessed benefit. Viewed this way, poverty is a major problem in relation to the municipality’s child population and size.

Relative child poverty in other countries

Country	Year	Share of children (%) in relative poverty (<50%)	Share of children (%) in relative poverty (<60%)
Norway	2000	3	8
Finland	2000	3	8
Denmark	2004	4	11
Sweden	2000	4	9
Canada	2000	15	24
Great Britain	1999	17	28
USA	2000	23	30

Table 3: Shares of children living in relative poverty in different countries.
Source: Luxembourg Income Study 2007.

In Greenland, 18% of the children live in relative poverty under 60% of the median income, and 9% under 50% of the median income. No matter which of the two poverty lines one refers to, a comparison will yield the same overall picture: Greenland has a larger share of poor children than the Nordic countries, and a smaller share than Canada, the U.S.,

and Great Britain. For child poverty in other countries, please see the table to the left.

Methodological reservations

The authors make a number of methodological reservations on the basis of the data in relation to the definitions of household and income.

It is not possible to extract information on family relations from Statistics Greenland’s existing registers. As a result, households—i.e. persons registered on the same address—have entered into the calculations instead. With regard to income, a number of the subsidies that are granted as public assistance are not registered in a way that allows them to be incorporated into the income statistics. Likewise, it is impossible to take account of informal economy in the present survey. Informal economy cannot be assumed to be equally distributed; nor can universal access to informal economy be assumed as a matter of course.



The purpose of the present analyses is to contribute to the field the most optimal quantitative estimate of the proportion of child poverty in Greenland based on the available statistical data.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the child's right to an adequate standard of living - Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 3

Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 3 deals with children from families under economic strain and their right to an adequate standard of living under the terms of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The subreport carries on the analyses in *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 1* and includes the results from *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2*. The third subreport concludes that children from families under economic strain in many ways do not enjoy an adequate standard of living, and that the Greenlandic authorities are under an obligation to remedy this situation as soon as possible.

The child's right to an adequate standard of living

Greenland acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in March 1992. The convention is legally binding for the countries that adopt it. It contains a wide range of rights bestowed on the child and a number of obligations resting with the authorities.

In Article 27, the Convention establishes “the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.” The provision, in other words, recognizes the right of every child to the standard of living adequate for his or her development. It contains some basic definitions of the *minimum requirements* for a child to be able to develop.

Children should have access to nutrition, clothing, and housing

According to Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children should have access to the most basic necessities. One necessity is food which should be available to the



child in sufficient and nutritious quantities. Another necessity is clothing which should be suited to the child as regards climatic, cultural, and health-related conditions. In order to be protected against the cold, rain, and wind, the child should, moreover, have access to reasonable housing which at the same time should allow the child enough space to maintain an adequate level of privacy.

Children should be able to develop fully and in accordance with their age

In addition to every child's right to the most basic necessities, Article 27 also mentions the right to conditions of living necessary for the child's full development. This refers to physical and mental development, but also other forms of development characteristic of integral and well-functioning individuals. As far as the child's social development is concerned, he or she should for instance have the opportunity to develop sound and healthy relations to parents, family, and peers and participate in social activities that fit their age, e.g. in the form of play and leisure activities.

All children should be given equal opportunities

The rights listed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child apply to *all children*. This means that all children are to be considered equal and to be given equal opportunities to enjoy their rights. Thus, they must not suffer any kind of discrimination, be it on the grounds of race, sex, color, or the financial circumstances of their family. Children, in other words, must not be discriminated against and be given poorer opportunities to enjoy their right to an adequate standard of living because of the limited financial resources of their family.

Children's standard of living in families under economic strain in Greenland

In Greenland, children from families under economic strain experience that their need for sufficient and nutritious food, proper clothing, and reasonable housing cannot be met, and that they are hampered in the various forms of development described in Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



Parents cannot afford to ensure their children an adequate standard of living

To varying degrees, parents from families under economic strain fail to maintain a standard of living that is sufficient for their children's development. Several families are so marked by the strained economy that they cannot afford to meet their children's need for food, clothing, and housing in a way that accommodates the definitions set forth in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children's development is hampered when they are precluded from participating in social contexts

Children from families under economic strain experience being precluded from participating in activities that are important to their development. An example would be participation in organized leisure activities and other social contexts that demand financial resources.

Children develop as small adults instead of as children

The slightly older children from families under economic strain worry about their family's well-being and attempt to earn money to contribute by buying groceries, etc. By adopting such roles, the children are more or less hampered in developing in accordance with their age along with their peers. Instead, they develop as small adults with worries and responsibilities commonly associated with adult life.

Children's development is hampered because they are bullied at school

The majority of children from families under economic strain describe their well-being as less than optimal or downright poor in a class setting. This may adversely affect their development in more respects. While bullying is a complex phenomenon, the children's own statements suggest that lack of access to money and material goods contributes to children being bullied.

Children's development is hampered in stressful family environments

Money shortage may be a significant stress factor to parents from families under economic strain and adversely affect the moods of parents and children alike. Stressful environments in these families impair the parents' ability to protect and care for their children and detract from



the children's well-being and development. The children lose faith, sadden, and feel less joie de vivre when their family is short of money.

Obligations to ensure children an adequate standard of living and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In recognition of the fact that children are not in a position to ensure the conditions necessary to their own development, the Convention prescribes a number of obligations resting with other actors. These other actors are primarily the parents, but also authorities who are obliged to intervene with assistance and support programs if the parents cannot themselves afford or do not have the energy to ensure the living conditions necessary to their children's development.

Obligations resting with Greenlandic authorities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Greenlandic legislation

Today, the authorities' duty to assist parents in creating an adequate standard of living for their children is prescribed by Greenlandic law. Central aspects of the legislation have been modeled on the provisions in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and enjoin the Greenlandic authorities to realize all rights of the child. As seen from Greenland's perspective, this is a progressive step. It contributes to demonstrating to the outside world that the obligations under the terms of the Convention are taken seriously, but it also leads to increased use of the Convention when assignments pertaining to children are to be implemented in everyday administrative practice.

Obligation to ensure increased transparency with regard to the utilization of public resources

Despite the fact that Greenlandic legislation contains elements that consider every child's right to an adequate standard of living, and despite the authorities having launched a number of efforts to improve children's well-being, a number of children still go without an adequate standard of living in contemporary Greenland.



The question is thus whether the authorities are doing enough to create an adequate standard of living for children. In the sense of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the question is—more specifically—whether authorities *at all times* implement all efforts *to the greatest extent possible* with a view to ensuring *every* child an adequate standard of living *as soon and efficiently as possible* by utilizing *all relevant resources* available in Greenlandic society.

At this point in time, the question cannot be answered satisfactorily. This is e.g. due to the fact that there is no specification of the amount of resources utilized for the benefit of children's well-being by Greenlandic ministries, public units and committees, and various municipalities and institutions. Without such a specification, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the authorities comply with their obligations under the terms of the Convention and actually prioritize the provision of the necessary conditions that allow children to enjoy their right to an adequate standard of living.

Obligation to redistribute Greenlandic resources

Despite the lack of transparency in the authorities' utilization of resources, it is evident that the authorities could do more to improve the standard of living among children from families under economic strain. Greenland—in the sense of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—is namely considered to be a prosperous country with a relatively large amount of resources at its disposal. By redistributing and utilizing these resources for the benefit of children's well-being to a larger degree than is the case today, the authorities would be able to reduce the number of children enduring an inadequate standard of living.

The responsibility rests with all public authorities

While the responsibility to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and occasion a redistribution of society's resources generally rests with the Home Rule Cabinet, it is the duty of all relevant public authorities to mobilize and ensure the resources necessary to create an adequate standard of living for children from families under economic strain. This is particularly true of the municipalities. Their daily administrative business is to assist



parents who, due to strained economy, find themselves unable to ensure the living conditions necessary to their children's development.

Obligation to request assistance in case of resource shortage

Should it turn out that the authorities cannot mobilize the necessary resources to enforce the right to an adequate standard of living inside the borders of Greenland itself, it is up to the Home Rule Cabinet—in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—to request assistance from other countries or international organizations.

As regards the Home Rule Cabinet, it would suggest itself to request assistance from the Danish government, seeing that the latter is very much co-responsible that the rights listed in Convention are implemented in Greenland. This is due to the fact that the Danish government holds the ultimate responsibility vis-à-vis the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as well as the international community as far as realizing children's rights within the entire Danish state is concerned. This also goes for Greenland which—legally speaking—is still part of the Danish state.



Recommendations

The three subreports present a number of recommendations that might be followed if one wishes to improve children's standard of living in Greenland. They are recommendations from Greenlandic children and young people themselves, recommendations on the basis of the statistical analysis, and recommendations based on the practice of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Recommendations from children and young people in Greenland

In their school essays, pupils in the 9th and 10th grades have offered some unsolicited recommendations as to preventing or precluding that children experience everyday deprivation owing to the poverty of their family. The pupils' recommendations may be interpreted as an appeal to both private and public actors in Greenland.

Pupils recommend popularized education, higher wages for low-income groups, lower prices of groceries and direct focus on children in the allocation of public funds. The recommendations are presented as excerpts from school essays, i.e. in the pupils' own words, below.

“Money is something that children and young people need as far as food goes. ‘Cause we can’t buy food. It might help if you would give children more money without informing the parents. Give to the child in need of food! Please help us!?” (Boy, 15 years old).

“If children’s parents don’t have that much money, and if there isn’t enough food, the children will starve. If for instance the father is unemployed and the mother pays all the bills—leaving them with 500 kroner after utilities—then that



won't be enough for food. Wages should be higher! FOOD is important!" (Girl, 14 years old).

"When parents don't have good jobs—if they're for instance cleaners or unemployed—they barely have enough for themselves. This may affect children and young people because it makes them feel bad and they get into trouble. That's why Greenlanders have to get an education to avoid getting a bad life" (Girl, 14 years old).

"Groceries should be cheaper, e.g. vegetables, bananas, apples, and strawberries. They're way too expensive these days, and children need to eat more greens" (Girl, 13 years old).

"In order to sort out their problems, parents have to start looking after their kids better and give them food. From there, they can get a good life" (Girl, 13 years old).



Recommendations based on statistical analysis of child poverty in Greenland

The statistical analysis of income data has elucidated some features characteristic of poor families in Greenland. Child poverty is more likely if one or more of the following characteristics are true of a household:

- Adults in the household are aged less than 25
- Household comprises single adults
- Household comprises many children
- Household is located in a village
- All adults in the household are born in Greenland

Knowledge of these risk factors can be used to orchestrate goal-oriented efforts that improve the conditions for particularly exposed households and thus reduce the probability of child poverty. Furthermore, the mapping of child poverty distributed on municipalities may be used to assess the need for an effort in the individual municipalities.

Child poverty may have serious consequences. Hence, the authors feel that it is important to monitor the development concerning child poverty. This can be done by repeating the statistical analysis available in *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2* which is based on the regularly updated registers of Statistics Greenland.

Long-term poverty may be expected to have more serious consequences to children than short-term poverty. Seeing that the survey *Children's standard of living in Greenland—Part 2* is based on income data for a single year, it follows that it would also be relevant to conduct a survey based on income data for several years. Such a survey would reveal whether there is a group of children living in persistent poverty as well as what factors seem to retain children in poverty, and what factors seem to contribute to helping a household out of poverty.



Recommendations based on practice of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which monitors the enforcement of children's rights, has only had little opportunity to recommend what efforts should be launched in Greenland with a view to improving children's standard of living. This is due to the fact that the documentation relayed to the Committee on children's standard of living in Greenland so far has been inadequate.

The Committee has advanced recommendations to a number of other countries, however, as to how children's standard of living might be improved. The recommendations have been issued in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are relevant to authorities in all countries with a considerable number of children living in poverty and without a sufficient standard of living. Hence, they are also relevant to the Greenlandic authorities.

These recommendations concern support of families under economic strain, reduction of poverty, and ways in which the authorities may fulfill the obligations set forth in the Convention better. Based on the practice of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and with intent to enforce the right of every child to an adequate standard of living in Greenland, it is thus recommended that:

- The financial and non-financial support of families under economic strain be increased in order to reduce poverty and protect children against the negative effects of strained economy on their development.
- A coherent and comprehensive action plan—which may be implemented at central, regional, and local administrative level—to combat child poverty and realize children's rights be adopted.
- Analyses of child poverty be discussed in parliament and by relevant authorities, and that such analyses provide the basis for an action plan to combat poverty.



- Coordination between the various administrative units involved in the realization of children's rights be strengthened.
- Special attention be paid to populations of remote and secluded areas when combating poverty.
- Inequality as regards distribution of wealth be reduced and the country's economic growth be utilized to support marginalized families.
- An official poverty line be adopted. The poverty line would enable supervision of the scope of poverty as well assessments as to whether poverty among the population is increasing or decreasing.
- Retrieval of knowledge and documentation of children's standard of living be intensified—including the establishment of a database on child poverty—and that marginalized children be monitored closely.
- Figures be systematically compiled and published to illustrate in a simple, accessible, and transparent way what share of the country's public resources is being utilized to improve children's standard of living.



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To see all the literature used in the reports, see the following link www.mipi.gl for the reports.