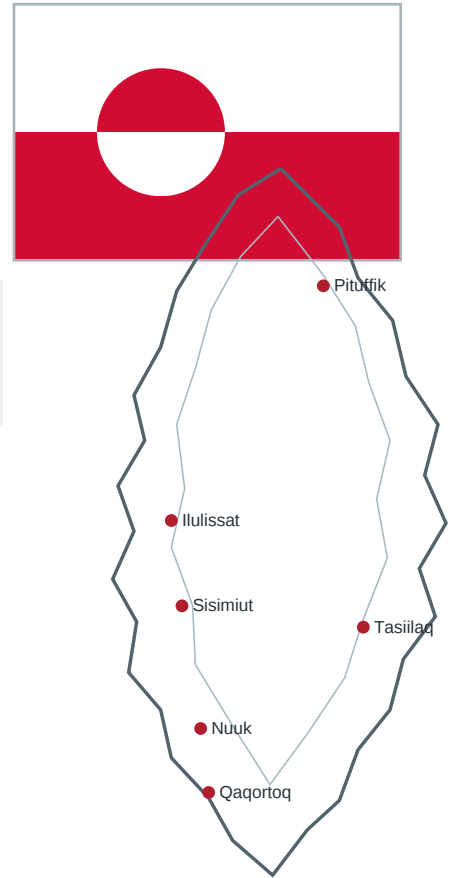


CIA WORLD FACTBOOK-STYLE GREENLAND

TERRITORY REPORT
North America / Arctic
Self-governing territory within the Kingdom of Denmark



Schematic orientation map - not for navigation

Updated 15 August 2026
Population 56,948 (1 April 2026) | Capital Nuuk | Area 2,166,086 sq km | Currency Danish krone

Independent reference profile modeled on the former CIA World Factbook. Not issued or endorsed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Greenland is the world's largest island and occupies a strategically important position between the Arctic Ocean and North Atlantic, northeast of Canada. Geographically it is part of North America; politically it is a self-governing territory within the Kingdom of Denmark.

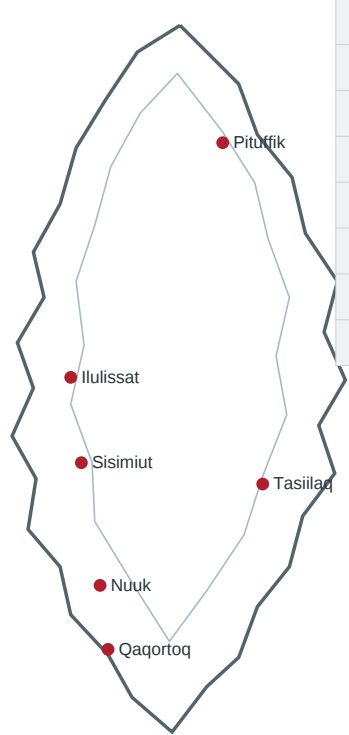
Inuit peoples reached Greenland in successive migrations from the North American Arctic. Norse settlements appeared in the late 10th century. Danish-Norwegian colonization began in 1721; Greenland became constitutionally integrated into the Kingdom of Denmark in 1953, gained Home Rule in 1979, and entered the current Self-Government framework in 2009.

The 2009 Self-Government Act recognizes the people of Greenland as a people under international law with a right to self-determination. Greenland controls most domestic policy fields, while Denmark retains responsibility for defense, security, nationality, monetary policy and important elements of foreign affairs.

KEY FACTS

Political status	Self-governing territory within the Kingdom of Denmark
Capital	Nuuk
Population	56,948 (1 April 2026)
Area	2,166,086 sq km
Official language	Greenlandic (Kalaallisut)
Currency	Danish krone (DKK)
Legislature	Inatsisartut, 31 seats
Head of state	King Frederik X of Denmark
Head of government	Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen
National Day	21 June

GEOGRAPHY



Schematic orientation map - not for navigation

Location	Northern North America; Arctic Ocean and North Atlantic
Coordinates	Approx. 72° N, 40° W
Coastline	Approx. 44,087 km
Highest point	Gunnbjørn Fjeld, about 3,694 m
Climate	Arctic to subarctic
Terrain	Central ice sheet; mountainous, fjord-cut coastal margins
Ice cover	Roughly four-fifths of the island
Hazards	Arctic storms, avalanches, landslides, glacial hazards, permafrost

Natural resources

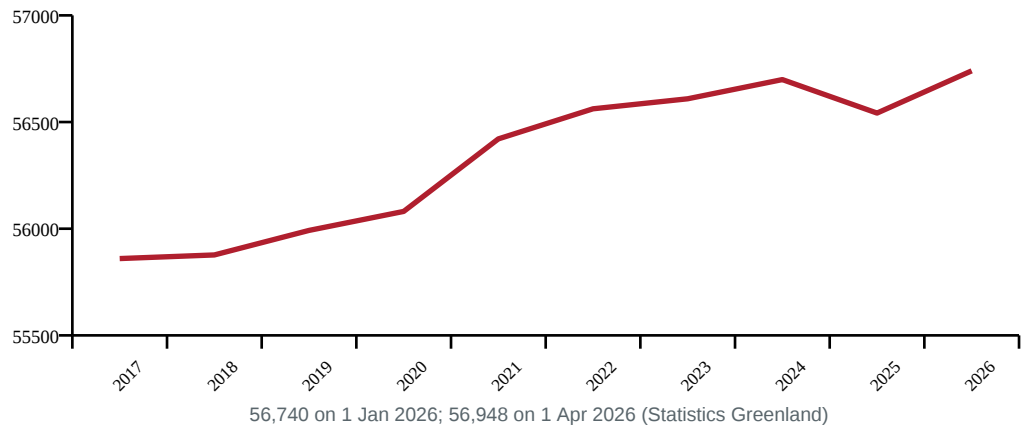
Fish and marine resources remain the economic foundation. Known or potential mineral resources include rare-earth elements, zinc, lead, iron ore, gold, graphite, molybdenum, niobium, platinum-group metals and other critical minerals. Greenland also possesses substantial hydropower potential.

Environment

The Greenland Ice Sheet is the second-largest body of land ice on Earth after Antarctica. Long-term ice loss is globally important because it contributes to sea-level rise and affects Arctic and North Atlantic systems.

PEOPLE AND SOCIETY

Population estimate, 1 January (2017-2026)



Population distribution

Nearly the entire population lives in ice-free coastal settlements, concentrated particularly along the southwest coast. Nuuk is the dominant political and economic center and had more than 20,000 residents in early 2026.

Language and society

The population is predominantly Greenlandic Inuit (Kalaallit), with Danish and other residents. Greenlandic (Kalaallisut) is the official language; Danish remains widely used in administration, education, commerce and relations with Denmark. English is increasingly important in tourism and international business.

GOVERNMENT

Government type	Parliamentary democracy under the Self-Government framework
Cabinet	Naalakkersuisut
Legislature	Inatsisartut; unicameral, 31 members
Folketing	Greenland elects two representatives
Major parties	Demokraatit, Inuit Ataqatigiit, Naleraq, Siumut, Atassut
Independence	Not independent; the Self-Government Act provides a legal path for a Greenlandic decision and negotiations with Denmark

ECONOMY

Greenland has a small, high-income Arctic economy with a large public sector, substantial fiscal transfers from Denmark and heavy dependence on fisheries. Diversification is a central policy objective because a broader revenue base would increase resilience and expand Greenland's future constitutional options.

Principal export base	Fish and seafood, especially shrimp and Greenland halibut
Fiscal structure	Large public sector and substantial annual block grant from Denmark
Growth sectors	Mining, tourism, renewable energy, infrastructure, telecommunications, Arctic services
Mining constraints	High costs, infrastructure, labor, environmental review, financing and political risk
Tourism	Glaciers, Ilulissat Icefjord, Arctic cruises, wildlife, hiking, culture, northern lights

Critical minerals

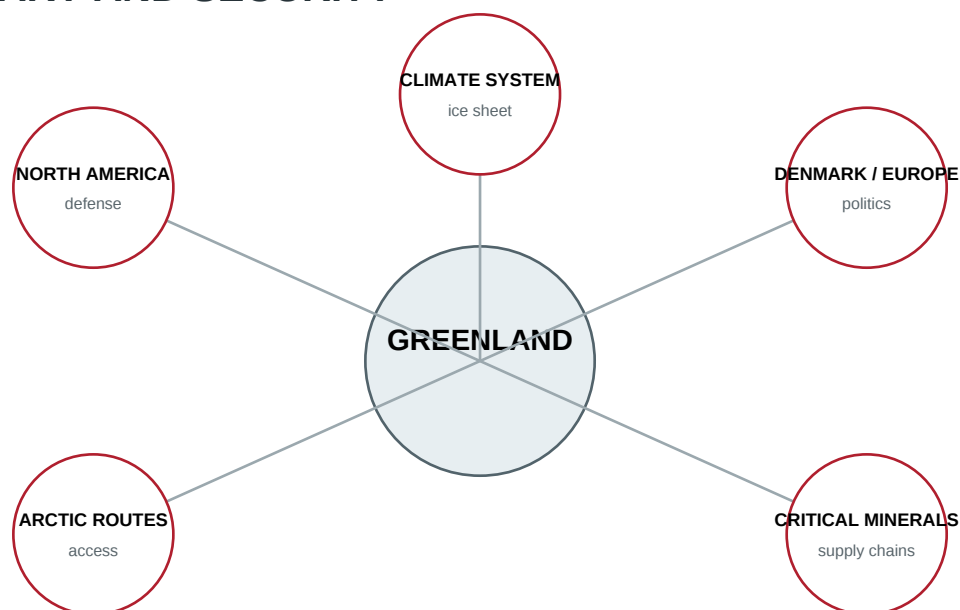
Greenland's mineral potential has acquired strategic significance as the United States and European states seek more diverse supply chains for rare-earth elements and other critical inputs. Commercial development depends on infrastructure, permitting, financing, environmental safeguards and local political consent.

ENERGY, COMMUNICATIONS & TRANSPORT

Hydropower supplies much of the electricity used in several larger communities; smaller settlements may rely on diesel generation. Modern broadband and mobile services depend on subsea cables, microwave systems and satellites.

There is effectively no intercity road network linking Greenland's major settlements. Movement depends on aircraft, helicopters, coastal shipping, small boats, snowmobiles and, in some northern and eastern areas, dog sleds.

MILITARY AND SECURITY



Defense

Greenland does not maintain an independent military. Defense remains a responsibility of the Kingdom of Denmark. Danish forces conduct sovereignty patrols, maritime surveillance, fisheries inspection, search and rescue and other Arctic security missions.

Pituffik Space Base

The United States maintains a strategically important presence at Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland, formerly Thule Air Base. The installation supports missile warning, space surveillance and broader North American defense architecture.

NATO

As part of the Kingdom of Denmark, Greenland lies within NATO's geographic security framework. Its position between North America, the North Atlantic and the Arctic gives the territory military significance disproportionate to its population.

ATLAS STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE: HIGH

Geography: Greenland occupies a commanding position between the North American and European Arctic and along aerospace approaches to the continent.

Continental defense: Pituffik Space Base makes Greenland directly relevant to missile warning, space-domain awareness and North American defense.

Arctic competition: Changing sea-ice conditions, military modernization and expanding commercial interest are increasing the strategic value of Arctic access and surveillance.

Critical minerals: Greenland's resource potential makes it relevant to Western efforts to diversify strategic mineral supply chains.

Self-determination: Greenland's recognized right to decide its constitutional future means that a territory of major strategic importance may, over the longer term, alter its relationship with Denmark and its external partners.

Analytical judgment

Greenland should be viewed as an increasingly autonomous Arctic political actor rather than simply as a remote Danish dependency. The central long-term question is whether Greenland can develop an economic base capable of supporting substantially greater political independence without an unacceptable reduction in public services or living standards.

The most likely medium-term trajectory remains continued expansion of Greenlandic autonomy rather than immediate independence. Regardless of constitutional outcome, Greenland's importance to Arctic security, climate science, critical-mineral strategy and North American defense is likely to increase.

Confidence: High

SOURCES & GRAPHIC NOTES

Statistics Greenland: Population estimates reported 56,740 residents on 1 January 2026 and 56,948 on 1 April 2026, the latter the highest registered population estimate in 20 years.

Factbook baseline: Stable geographic and institutional reference fields are modeled on archived CIA World Factbook Greenland data and public-domain Factbook materials.

Government: Jens-Frederik Nielsen has served as head of government since 28 March 2025.

Graphics: The flag is an original vector reproduction. The orientation map is an original schematic, not a navigation product. The population chart uses Statistics Greenland estimates. The strategic diagram is an ATLAS analytical graphic.

Statistics Greenland	Population Estimates 2026; Quarterly Population 2026 Q2
CIA / World Factbook archive	Geography, flag, government and historical baseline
Kingdom of Denmark	Self-Government / Unity of the Realm framework
Wikimedia Commons	Public-domain CIA World Factbook Greenland map consulted as visual reference

Prepared for ATLAS - Global Intelligence for the Informed Citizen.