

Growth of Greenlandic children is no longer stunted

June 1 2018



Researcher Marius Kløvgaard has studied children in Greenland since 2012.
Credit: Marius Kløvgaard

For centuries, Inuit children in Greenland, Canada and Alaska have been observed as small. But recently, growth has increased.

"During the last couple of years, people have noticed that Greenlandic boys and girls are getting taller compared to older generations. These common observations have now been scientifically proved," says Marius Kløvgaard, MD and one of the scientists behind a newly published study of growth of Greenlandic [children](#).

Previous studies of the indigenous Inuit people of Greenland, Canada and Alaska have characterized them as shorter, but with the same weight as European or continental U.S. citizens. Yet, this specific growth pattern was not found in the new study of growth of Greenlandic children conducted by researchers from University of Southern Denmark, which has just been published in the scientific journal *Acta Paediatrica*.

"We evaluated the growth of 279 healthy Greenlandic boys and girls aged 6-10 years and found that at puberty, Greenlandic children are now as tall as children in Denmark," says Marius Kløvgaard.

As a part of the study, the research group has also conducted specific growth charts for children in Greenland that can be used for monitoring growth and thrive. Growth charts for Greenlandic children have never been published before.

The fact that the growth of Greenlandic children is no longer stunted has several explanations. "Many people in Greenland have one or more ancestors of Scandinavian origin, so genetic admixture is quite common. That might to some extent explain why children in Greenland have a similar growth pattern to children in Denmark," says Marius Kløvgaard.

Another important finding is a high number of obese mothers.

"It is well-known that obese mothers have large babies, and it seems like these large babies keep on being large during their childhood," says Marius Kløvgaard.

Furthermore, in a recent study, the research group found that children in Greenland are as healthy as children in Denmark. Children in Greenland had fewer visits to doctors than Danish children. "Chronic diseases might hamper [growth](#). But improvements in health and nutrition have reduced these kind of problems," says Marius Kløvgaard.

More information: Marius Kløvgaard et al, Growth of children in Greenland exceeds the World Health Organization growth charts, *Acta Paediatrica* (2018). DOI: [10.1111/apa.14369](https://doi.org/10.1111/apa.14369)

Provided by University of Southern Denmark

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