

Cultural understanding can support a feeling of security for Greenlandic families

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Greenlandic families expecting a baby, often feel safest when care supports cultural elements such as being near to family, home environment and local traditions. Culturally sensitive maternity care, lessens the risk of non-compliance in expecting families and the desire for alternative care solutions can be reduced. This is shown in a new doctoral thesis at the Nordic School of Public Health NHV.

In the [Nordic countries](#), as well as many other parts of the world, the [maternity care](#) is focused on the [physical health](#) of the expecting mother, often neglecting cultural factors affecting the family that can also influence both the pregnancy and childbirth. Midwife and researcher Ruth Montgomery-Andersen has studied how factors such as family/kin, social networks and society affect expecting mothers in Greenland.

There is a 'cultural place' for childbirth in Greenland, where the expecting family's ability to strengthen the bonds within the family, the relatives as well as the social network contributes to the health of the family. Despite this, Greenlandic maternity care service is designed in a way that encourages many women to leave their homes and relatives for up to four weeks in connection to the delivery.

In a doctoral thesis at the Nordic School of Public Health NHV, Ruth Montgomery-Andersen calls attention to the importance of a holistic perspective on family, pregnancy and childbirth and a holistic understanding of maternity care, that includes physical, social, spiritual and cultural factors.

"Greenlandic [maternal health](#) has not been developed in collaboration with the families and the community. As a result of this families sometimes attempt to create their own solutions to the official health policy," explains Ruth Montgomery-Andersen.

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