

**Risk of Child Welfare Involvement among Children of Kalaallit Inuit Descent in  
Denmark and Greenland\***

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## **ABSTRACT (150 words)**

Young adults with a history of child welfare services (CWS) involvement have worse health and socioeconomic outcomes. In settler-colonial societies, indigenous children experience elevated CWS risk, yet population-level estimates distinguishing indigenous and non-indigenous territories remain scarce. This study examines age-standardized CWS involvement risk for Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark and Greenland versus Danish children in Denmark (2010-2023), providing first estimates of CWS gradients in both Greenland and Denmark. Kalaallit Inuit children face 3.5-6 times higher out-of-home placement risk than Danish children, with highest risks among Kalaallit Inuit in Denmark. Risks increase across the study period for both groups. Further, within Denmark, Kalaallit Inuit children are twice as likely to be reported to CWS and receive in-home services than Danish children. Thus, the Kalaallit Inuit-Danish gradient is starkest for the most severe form of CWS involvement. Across childhood, Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark was 3.5-4 more likely to ever be placed in care compared to Danish children.

## INTRODUCTION

Intervention into the family sphere by child welfare services (CWS) is one of the most far-reaching policy measures available to the state to mitigate children's exposure to what the state deems a harmful home environment. Given the stark social disparities in child welfare involvement across socioeconomic and -demographic background (Andersen and Fallesen 2010; Berger and Waldfogel 2004; Dvalishvili et al. 2024; Eiermann, Baker, et al. 2025; Mertz and Andersen 2017; Wildeman et al. 2014), such decisions can be controversial. Perhaps no more so than for indigenous populations residing in countries with a history of settler-colonialism (Allen and Hamnett 2022; Eiermann, Nielsen, et al. 2025; Roehrkasse 2021; Roehrkasse et al. 2025; Rouland and Vaithianathan 2018; Tilbury 2009; Trocmé et al. 2004; Wildeman et al. 2014; 2025; Jensen 2023).

Yet, documentation of such gradients at standardized population levels remains sparse (see, however, Eiermann, Nielsen, et al. 2025; Roehrkasse et al. 2025; Roehrkasse 2021). This dearth of knowledge partly reflects issues around general availability of population wide data on CWS involvement that allow for breakdown across indigenous status, differences in CWS' remit on indigenous territory, and differences in definitions on who can hold or be assigned the identity of indigenous (REF.). The CWS involvement gradient across indigenous status can be seen as either as an intervention into the lives of youth facing adverse living situations, the addition of more vulnerability to and already disadvantaged group, or the extension of a historical legacy of colonialist separation of children from their native land and people (Courtney and Hook 2017; Valentine and Gray 2006; Edwards et al. 2023; Thorleifsen et al. 2021; Thiesen 2022). Yet, no matter the stance on the nature of the gradient, the first step to addressing the difference in CWS involvement prevalence among indigenous and non-indigenous children in societies with history of settler-colonialism is to establish the magnitude of the gradient.

In this study, we consider CWS involvement among the populations of children of Danish and Kalaallit Inuit (Greenlandic) origin in the countries of Greenland (Kalaallit Nunaat) and Denmark for the period 2010-2023. Both countries are part of the Danish realm, with Greenland being under various degrees of Danish colonial rule since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with a gradual transition towards independent rule beginning from 1953. Kalaallit Inuit children and their descendants reside both in Greenland and in Denmark, whereas very few Danish children reside in Greenland. Using new data made available to us by Statistics Greenland, we estimate age-standardized rates of CWS involvement of Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland and Denmark and compare the rates to CWS involvement among children of Danish origin in Denmark. We specifically study the Kalaallit Inuit-Danish gradient in the prevalence of out-of-home-placements (OOHP) (in Denmark and Greenland), as well the prevalence of CWS in-home services and notices of concern to CWS (in Denmark only, due to data limitations). By doing so, we contribute first estimates of CWS gradients among historical indigenous and settler populations both in the country of colonization and the origin country of the settler population.

The age-standardized rates of out-of-home placements are 3.5-6 times higher for Kalaallit Inuit children than for Danish children, with Kalaallit Inuit children residing in Denmark consistently seeing higher rates than Kalaallit Inuit children residing in Greenland. In both countries, the gradient is increasing across the study period, while we find a consistent rate of 1 per 100 Danish children placed outside home throughout the period. In Denmark, within Denmark, Kalaallit Inuit children are twice as likely to be reported to CWS and receive in-home services than Danish children. Thus, the Kalaallit Inuit-Danish gradient is starkest for the most severe form of CWS involvement.

## **BACKGROUND**

There are multiple causes behind the CWS involvement disparities between ethnoracial minority/indigenous children and majority children. In our reading of the literature, these causes can broadly be grouped into three categories. First, there exist compositional differences in the prevalence of known risk factors, such as poverty and other parental characteristics that may influence caregiving ability and thereby risk of CWS involvement (Putnam-Hornstein et al. 2013; Drake et al. 2011; Font et al. 2012; Fluke et al. 2010), also for Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland and Denmark (Baviskar 2015; Niclasen and Köhler 2009; Christensen et al. 2008; Dahl et al. 2022). Second, bias in all stages of CWS involvement (reporting, screening, investigation, and intervention) may overexpose ethnoracial minority/indigenous children to CWS involvement (Baron et al. 2024; Palusci and Botash 2021; Rebbe et al. 2022). An ongoing public case in Denmark highlights such a mechanism: standardized psychological tests used to screen for parental competencies in Denmark did not accommodate fundamental cultural and language differences between Danish and Kalaallit Inuit parents. This inattention to cultural differences potentially caused Kalaallit Inuit children to enter OOHP for unfounded reasons (Social- og boligministeriet 2025). Last, both compositional differences in underlying characteristics as well as direct and latent systemic biases exist in the context of the specific historical development of a given settler-colonial society (Rocha Beardall and Edwards 2021; Lyons and Grinnell-Davis 2025; Landertinger 2021; Arnfjord 2023).

### ***Historical development of child welfare in Greenland***

Having been settled several times across history by peoples coming both from North America and the European North, the present indigenous population of Greenland (the Kalaallit Inuit) can trace their roots back to the arrival of early Inuit (also referred to as the Thule Culture or

Taissumanialungmiut) from what today is Alaska through Canada during the 1200s (REF). The modern intertwined histories of Greenland and Denmark are usually traced back to the onset of Danish colonization in 1721. This marks the arrival of Norwegian-Danish missionary Hans Egede in the Nuuk fjord (Heinrich et al. 2025). The establishment and expansion of colonial authority led to a fundamental restructuring of Greenlandic society and social policy which continue to influence Greenlandic society and its relationship with Denmark today. This section provides a short overview of the colonialist link to child welfare among indigenous populations, as well as historical overview of the development of social policy and child-centered interventions in Greenland including the influence of Danish colonialism. For a more thorough accounts of the (colonial) history of Greenland, we refer the reader to Heinrich et al. (2025) and Rud (2017).

With the exception of the period during World War II where Denmark was occupied by Germany, Greenland has effectively been governed by Danish authorities since the start of colonization. The Kalaallit Inuit received status as member of the Danish realm including political representation in parliament since 1953 and was prior to this effectively treated as colonized subject. With the introduction of Home Rule in 1979 and Self-rule in 2009, decision making authority for the Kalaallit Inuit population has increasingly moved from residing in Denmark to residing in Greenland, although Greenland still does not have independence..

In terms of child welfare policies, the Danish colonial influence can be argued to go as far back as the 1730's, where colonizers brought six Greenlandic children to Copenhagen as "foster children". Only two survived the foreign diseases in Europe, and brought smallpox with them when they returned to Greenland, setting off a devastating epidemic amongst Kalaallit Inuit (Heinrich et al. 2025). During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the organisation of social welfare including caretaking of orphans first shifted from traditional social practice in civil society to colonial managers, and later to Greenlandic "headmen" organized under colonial managers (Heinrich et al. 2025). In the last half of

the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the standard of living had devolved into squalor, as Greenlandic economy suffered from the decline in demand for whale blubber and the comparative advantages of the technological development in Europe (Heinrich et al. 2025). In an attempt to strengthen social efforts, the Danish state established Greenlandic municipalities in 1908/1911, where municipal councils oversaw child-focused social interventions and from 1925 came under the authority of the district councils (Sysselråd) (Arn fjord 2021).

The first traces of an official out-of-home care system were introduced in the 1920s where outbreaks of tuberculosis had left many children as orphans. The first sanatorium opened in 1925 in Maniitsoq, and others followed up in the 1930s, where they developed into homes for orphans and children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 1948 Denmark established *The Greenland Commission* in response to desires to modernize and align welfare levels between Denmark and Greenland, initiating the so-called modernization processes and the “Danification” of Greenlandic society. After the commissions first report (G50), authorities and national councils (landsråd) decided in 1951, at the request of Red Cross, to send 22 Greenlandic children down to the age of five to Denmark for cultural and linguistic education. They were to return and support modernization through dual-lingual schooling and acting as “cultural ambassadors” (Heinrich et al. 2025; Jensen 2022). A 2020 investigation found that those who did in fact return had lost their Greenlandic language, hindering reintegration into schools, families, and society, causing long-term cultural and personal trauma (Thiesen 2022; Thorleifsen et al. 2021).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile in the 1950s–70s, several hundred children were adopted—mainly to Denmark—on a highly questionable legal basis (Trøndheim 2009). As evident from this, the colonial legacy continued to impact Greenlandic society and child interventions after Greenland’s official status

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<sup>1</sup> See also Thiesen (2022) for a personal testimony.

changed from a colony to a Danish county (amt) in 1953 in the wake of the UN's decolonization policy (Heinrich et al. 2025).

Since 1968, Greenland has had its own social administration which has, in practice, managed social affairs. This was formally affirmed with the introduction of Home Rule in 1979, where the social sector was only briefly described in the Commission report, as the area had in practice already been transferred to Greenlandic control (Arnford 2021). According to Jensen (2023), the social system was imported from the Danish Social-Democratic welfare model without much contextualization. This meant that the UN provisions that formed the basis for Danish legislation and practice regarding OOHP<sup>2</sup> by extension formed Greenlandic legislation and practice as well. In fact, according to Jensen (2023), official guidelines for the social assessments that form the basis for child placements are nearly identical, with the exception of the Danish legislation explicitly mentioning kinship and network foster care, as well as an explicit right to contact with parents, which are not mentioned in Greenlandic legislation (Jensen et al. 2023).

### ***Child welfare involvement in Greenland in the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

Despite the similarities between Danish and Greenlandic legal basis for child interventions, patterns in OOHP's differ significantly, placement rates are known to be significantly higher in Greenland although robust documentation has remained scarce. According to Jensen (2022) it was not until the 1990s that official records of placement numbers in Greenland were conducted, and few have been made since then (in contrast, population rates for child welfare placements in Denmark exist as far back as to 1901). In 1992, it was estimated that 4.3 % of children were in OOHP either at institutions or in foster families (Kreutzmann 1994). In 2010, the consultant firm Deloitte estimated that 7 % were placed out of home (Deloitte 2011), in 2015 the Department for Family and Law estimated 4.2 % (Jensen 2022), and in 2016 a report by KORA estimated 6-7% (Pedersen et al.

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<sup>2</sup> For a thorough description of the CWS in Denmark, we refer to Pösö et al. (2014) and Hestbæk et al. (2023).

2016). Based on numbers from Dahl et al. (2020; 2021), Wildeman et al. (2025) found that 5.4% of children in 2019 was in OOHP on a given day. As argued by Jensen (2022), numbers vary due to variation on both data collection, definitions of OOHP and measurement strategies. For example, variation in age limits (including or excluding 18-year-olds), the definition of the required *duration* of a placement, and recording of point prevalence vs. accumulated placements or distinct children in care produce very different results. Which types of placements are considered also causes numbers to vary substantially. While official records of recorded placements produce lower rates, addressed based calculations using registry data to count the number of children not living with either parent produce significantly higher estimates (Eiermann, Nielsen, et al. 2025). As this study considers children intervened upon by the state, we will focus only on children registered as living outside the home under some type of child welfare mandate.

### ***Types of out-of-home placements***

Not much is currently known on the quantitative level about how use of different placement types varies between Greenland and Denmark, but there are both practical and cultural reasons why both use, and definitions may vary. Kalaallit Inuit culture is known to have a collective orientation of life both regarding family and broader social network. According to Trondheim (2010) it has historically and to this day been common social practice in Greenland for children to stay with relatives or people in their social networks for shorter or longer periods. Traditionally, the high risks associated with hunting culture would often leave families without breadwinners, leading the surrounding community to provide for or take in children as a natural part of life (Jensen 2022). Additionally, the adoption of children has also been considered a way to create, maintain and strengthen social networks and relationships between families, e.g. in the case of childlessness or if a family only had children of one gender. These traditional adoption and foster care practices also meant that children would typically maintain a relationship with their biological family and know

their origins, setting them fundamentally apart from the Danish model were family contact is formalized and controlled (Trøndheim 2010).

Current Greenlandic OOHPs primarily include placements in foster families or institutions (apart from preventive interventions), but distinguishments have not previously been made between children in foster care in- or outside family/social networks (Jensen 2022). A recent survey found that according to the municipal records, 767 of 0-23 children lived with neither parent in 2020 (approximately 4% of the population aged 0-23, although with regional variation), mostly due to parental difficulties such as substance abuse and neglect (Dahl et al. 2021). Of those, 317 were living in institutions (ca. 41%), 366 in foster families (ca. 48%) and 84 in private arrangements foster care arrangements (ca. 11% although this category is assumed to be underestimated). Of those placed in foster care, 24% lived with family, 17 % with others already known by the child, and 59% with a foster family not previously known to the child.

Jensen (2022) likewise argues, partly based on the observations of Trondheim (2010), that there is reason to believe that private arrangements in family/social networks are used to a non-trivial extent. Legally, a privately arranged placement cannot exceed three months, but no data is available to confirm the extend of such arrangements (Jensen 2022; Dahl et al. 2021). As a result, numbers based on official municipal records may on one hand underestimate the number of children placed out of the home, and on the other hand, it is unclear whether such private arrangements can be meaningfully categorized as OOHPs. Private arrangements can both be motivated by parents being unable to care for their children for shorter or longer periods of time, but also by practical reasons such as cross country moves for work or education, which can necessitate families living apart due to the great distances across Greenland (or to Denmark) (Arn fjord 2023). Finally, a study by Dahl et al. (2021) importantly pointed out that it often takes more before authorities intervene in Greenlandic families, due to the high workload of caseworkers, implying that the threshold for

determining a level of “neglect” which triggers an intervention by Greenlandic authorities may be higher than it would be in Denmark although officially the two countries are covered by the same child welfare legislation. This should also be seen in light of the general shortage of qualified personnel in the social sector, also affecting child interventions (Arn fjord 2023; Jensen 2022).

### ***Previous studies of placement rates in Denmark – Danish and Greenlandic descent***

The share of the Danish child population age 0-17 placed out-of-home at a given point of the year has decreased from around 1.2% in 1985 to a steady level of 1% from the early 2000’s and onward. It is estimated that 3-4% experience OOHP at some point during their upbringing (Andersen and Jensen 2016; Fallesen et al. 2014; VIVE 2025). OOHPs in Denmark can be categorized into four types: professional foster care, kinship/network foster care, institutions and placements at boarding schools/own rooms. The use of *foster care* has risen from 40% of placements in 1980 to around 63% in 2024, making it the most frequently used solution, followed by institutions (34% in 2024). Use of placements in boarding schools and own rooms have decreased from 25% in 1985 to 3% in 2024, due to the 1993 shift from the Social Assistance Act to the Social Services Act, which reclassified boarding school stays and own rooms as preventive interventions rather than placements (VIVE 2025). Unlike comparable western countries, such as the US, Danish placement risk increase with age and peak in the teen years (Fallesen et al. 2014). This is likely due to placements being used as a supportive and preventive intervention for young people who are not thriving in their home environment or who are exhibiting risk behaviors such as criminal activity, as an alternative to juvenile detention (Pösö et al. 2014).

Grounds for placement vary some for children of Danish and Kalaallit Inuit descent in Denmark (Dahl et al. 2022). Children of Kalaallit Inuit background are more often placed in care due to assessments of parental circumstances and inadequate care in the home, whereas children of Danish background are more frequently placed due to their own difficulties. According to their

findings, 48% of placements for children with Kalaallit Inuit-background are solely due to parental issues (compared to 39% for Danish-background children), and inadequate care is noted in 78% of cases versus 70% for Danish-background children. Substance abuse, mental illness, poor housing conditions, and lack of emotional or cognitive stimulation from parents are often underlying factors, and decisions to place children also consider an assessment of parents' willingness and ability to cooperate with caseworkers to address these concerns. These differences also mean that the age distribution of children in OOHP differ between these two groups, as children of Greenlandic background are younger – on average – when they are placed out of home for the first time (Dahl et al. 2022).

Importantly, the overrepresentation of children with Kalaallit Inuit backgrounds in the Danish out-of-home care system should be seen in the context of the broader overrepresentation of Inuit in other marginalized areas of society, including lower educational attainment, lower income, higher reliance on social support, homelessness, treatment for alcohol and substance abuse, and involvement in crime (Baviskar 2015). Qualitatively, Dahl et al. (2022) find that the parents to children with Greenlandic background sometimes experience misunderstandings with regard to the nature of the placement in a Danish context, and pressure to agree to a placement when confronted with Danish authorities. These misunderstandings can arise from both language barriers and differing cultural understandings of what leads to a placement, as well as what rights and options (Dahl et al. 2022). Recently, this has been exemplified in public debate in both Denmark and Greenland, as the standardized psychological tests used for parental assessments were criticized for being culturally and linguistically biased. As a result, they were recently discontinued for families with Inuit background by agreement between the Danish and Greenlandic government (Social- og Boligministeriet 2025).

Despite current efforts, disparities in child-welfare involvement across Denmark and Greenland remains understudied, particularly the development over time and composition of placement types. This paper aims to contribute to the current literature by examining placement rates from 2010-2023 in both Greenland and Denmark by age and placement types, using novel data collected specifically for this study. Furthermore, we examine disparities in child welfare involvement between children of Kalaallit Inuit and Danish descent living in Denmark from notices of concerns to preventive measures and out-of-home placements.

### ***In-home services***

OOHP represents the most invasive form of CWS intervention, but less invasive forms also exist. Such fall into the category of in-home services, which is a group of preventive measures aimed at reducing the risk for a need for OOHP. In Danish legislation, these fall in two broad categories covered by different sections of the Danish Social Service Act. The first category (Section 11) covers economic assistance for leisure activities for the children, family counselling, and participation in network- and support-groups. The second category [Section 52(3) covers practical and educational support in the home, placement in day care facilities, a designated contact person for the child, and respite care arrangements at a placement facility.

## **DATA AND METHOD**

This analysis is based on novel OHP-data collected by Statistics Greenland upon request, data from Statistics Greenland's databank and full-population administrative data from Statistics Denmark. For both countries, the analysis concerns the population of children aged 0-17 years, excluding interventions after 18 (aftercare).

### ***Greenlandic data***

Population data for Greenland was retrieved from Statistic Greenland's Data Bank based on the population register. Since data showed that less than 5% of all residents under 18 are not native-born, and the likelihood of non-native-born children being placed in OOHP in Greenland is exceedingly low, we made no distinctions of indigeneity within Greenland and view all as Kalaallit Inuit.

### *Out-of-home placements*

As the official Greenlandic statistics does not include full information on OOHPs, data for this study was constructed upon request by Statistics Greenland. Using data from all six municipalities of Greenland, out-of-home placements were observed based on registered addresses of children and payment of care orders observed in municipal statistics. The status followed the calculation in the population statistics, calculated as of January 1st. It was first determined whether the child resided with both parents, with one parent, or with neither. For children residing with neither parent, additional municipality payment data on placement-related financial transfers was used to classify if they were either in 1) kinship care (with remuneration), 2) in foster care, or 3) in an institution. These three types of living arrangements were classified as out-of-home placements, leaving one residual category of children in neither of the three, still not residing with either parent, who we did not treat as living in an OOHP. Each category is described in detail below.

### *Kinship care*

Kinship care was defined as sharing a household with a close relative aged 25 or more. Kinship was examined based on Statistics Greenland's generation register which hold information on known kinship relations between citizens. This made it possible to determine whether a child shared an address with grandparents, great-grandparents, siblings, parents' siblings and cousins.

According to Greenland Parliament Act no. 20 of June 26, 2017, on support for children, a care permit must be obtained from the municipality if the child does not live with either parent. Statistics Greenland did not have information on whether care permits were obtained, and so the term kinship care in this case does not fully overlap with the term as defined in the legislation. A kinship family can receive payment from the municipality when caring for a child, but this is not a given.

### *Foster families*

Foster children were identified as children not living with either parent, but who were either registered as receiving a foster care allowance (as per December) or shared a household with an adult receiving a foster care payment (as per December). Numbers since 2018 are based on Statistics Greenland published statistics on ordinary foster care, containing information on all ordinary foster care activities. It is presupposed that the child had changed address to the address of the foster parents.

Foster care was measured based on payments to fostering allowances as well clothing and pocket money paid from the Greenlandic municipalities to the child's or the foster parents' social security number. Posting errors and inaccuracy in determining month of payment cause some measurement error. It was not possible to appoint professional foster families, nor include emergency foster families, as this intervention does not result in a change of address.

### *Institutions*

Residents at institutions for Children & Youth and institutions for people with disabilities were identified based on the institutions' addresses using a register of the municipalities' payments for stays at the governmental institutions for the period 2010-2022 to validate addresses. There is no similar register for municipal or self-governing institutions. For the period 2009 to 2017,

information on municipal payments to institutions in the municipalities were also used. The information from payment to the institutions was also used to break down observations by type of institution in cases where Children & Youth institutions have separate locations for residents with disabilities.

### *Residual category*

Data collection resulted in a residual category consisting of children who do not live with at least one parent but who are also not in official kinship care, foster care or living in an institution. This residual category can include children in many different life situations. It may also reflect incomplete or incorrect information in the municipalities' registration of residence. First, privately arranged unofficial OOHP without registered foster care allowances or payments will be represented in this category – both in cases where a child stays with family or extended family/social network. Second, a number of children aged 16-17 live in halls of residence, and students in grades 8-10 who move to bigger cities for education from smaller villages and settlements where the local school does not include the last years of schooling. Generally, students in boarding housing do not change their address, but it can be seen from the population register that address changes do occur. As a result, we do not define the living arrangements covered by the residual category as official OOHP.

### *Danish data*

The Danish data is constructed from full-population administrative data from Statistics Denmark using the population register. It contains basic information about the full population of individuals with a registered address in Denmark each year, including age as of December 31 and registered place of birth. The registered place of birth indicates the authority (parish office, religious community, etc.) that registered the birth and is used to define children of Greenlandic descent in Denmark.

### *Measuring Danish and Kalaallit Inuit descent*

Although Greenland achieved home rule in 1979 and self-government in 2009, Greenland remained under the Danish realm for the entire study period. This means that Greenlandic citizens are officially Danish citizens and appear as such so in the Danish registers. Importantly, citizens of Greenlandic descent will only appear in the Danish registers if they immigrate and become residents in Denmark. Since it is not possible to differentiate between Kalaallit Inuit and Danes in the Danish registers by personal identification, citizenship, or country of origin, children of Kalaallit Inuit descent in Denmark were defined as children who had at least one parent born in Greenland – measured as the birth of the parent being registered in a Greenlandic parish<sup>3</sup> - regardless of the child's own place of birth.

### *Out-of-home placements*

Out of home placements were observed using the administrative register on all Danish out-of-home placements from 1977-2023 (*BUAF*<sup>4</sup>). *BUAF* is a longitudinal register that contains information on all events related to placements, recorded at the event level. Each event is linked to the child it concerns through a personal unique ID, which can be connected to the population register.

Each initiated placement is observed with a start and end date. To match the point prevalence of the Greenlandic placement counts, Danish placement counts represent the number of children in OOHP by December 31<sup>st</sup> each year. We included placements both with and without parental and child consent but excluded placements under aftercare programs. Placements on boarding schools, ship projects and own rooms or halls of residence were excluded. As the placement type/place is recorded with each event, these placement types are simply filtered out<sup>5</sup>.

### *Notices of concern*

<sup>3</sup> Greenlandic parishes take values 9501-9599: <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/dokumentation/Times/cpr-oplysninger/foedreg-kode>

<sup>4</sup> BUAF: <https://www.dst.dk/extranet/ForskningVariabellister/BUAF%20-%20B%C3%B8m%20og%20Unge%20anbragte%20forl%C3%B8sregister.html>

<sup>5</sup> Codes 11,13 and 6 on ansted\_klas: <https://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/dokumentation/Times/Udsatte-boem-og-unge/ANSTED-KLAS>

Measurement of notices of concern rely on the administrative register *BUU* of all notices of concern recorded by Danish municipalities available from 2015-2023. Notices of concern can be reported by everyone from family and acquaintances, public authorities (such as teacher, police officers, or social workers), organizations and anonymous reporters. By Danish law, all Danish residents are dutybound to report any incident of child maltreatment that come to their knowledge. Further, all public employees that through their work gain knowledge about any child's potential need for support due to risk of maltreatment have further enhanced reporting requirements under penalty of law. We exclusively include notices of concerns related to children, linking each notice to the specific child in question.

#### *In-home CWS services*

In home services are observed using the administrative register *BUFO*. Like *BUAF*, this is a longitudinal register that contains information on all events related to preventive efforts, recorded at the event level. Each event contains a code for the paragraph that the effort is based on and can be linked to the child it concerns through a personal unique ID.

We include the full range of early-stage and intensive interventions<sup>6</sup> that Danish municipalities may deploy to support children, young people (below 18) and their families—and thereby forestall the need for out-of-home placement. Under the Danish Social Services Act, two principal categories of support are distinguished. First, § 11 (Early Preventive Interventions) authorises short-term, low-threshold offers such as counselling, family-oriented consultant support, network or discussion groups and subsidies for leisure activities; these can be initiated without a formal child-focused assessment. Second, § 52(3) (Intensive Preventive Measures) provides for more comprehensive home-based and community-based assistance—practical and pedagogical

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<sup>6</sup> From the BUFO data documentation, we include the following codes on the variables PGF: 200, 210, 215, 220, 225, 230, 240, 245, 250, 252, 260, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 280, 290, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 415, 420, 425, 430, 435, 440, 445, 450, 451, 452 og 455, 256, 257, 258, 259, 261, 262, 268, 269, 277, 278, 408, 409, 498 and 499.

support in the home, placements in day-care or after-school programmes, assignment of a fixed contact person and respite care—all contingent on completion of the prescribed child-focused investigation (socialfaglig undersøgelse).

In addition, we include interventions established under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which target young persons at risk of offending. These measures encompass mentorship programmes, restorative justice panels, supervised community sanctions and other specialised supports designed both to prevent criminal behaviour and to address underlying social or behavioural challenges. By integrating interventions from these two legislative frameworks, the analysis captures both the “light touch” and the “heavy” preventive instruments available to Danish authorities—as well as the continuum that stretches from informal counselling to structured, legally mandated support.

### *Analytical Strategy*

Analytically, the study provides raw and age-standardized annual rates by Kalaallit Inuit descent of a) children in OOHP end of year in Denmark and Greenland, b) children with at least one report to CWS in Denmark, and c) children who receives at least one type of in-home service. Data from Greenland is only available aggregated to age-group level (age 0-4,5-9,10-14,15-17), and thus for all comparisons that include data from Greenland, age standardization is carried out using those groups. To obtain population counts for age-standardization, we use annual population data provided by Statistics Denmark and Statistics Greenland describing the population as of December 31<sup>st</sup> in Denmark and January 1<sup>st</sup> the following year in Greenland. The data is age-standardized to a uniform age-distribution. The underlying population counts are presented in Table A1.

Further, for Kalaallit Inuit and Danish children in Denmark, data allows us to calculate period cumulative risk of ever entering OOHP for the years 2004-2023. 2004 presents the first year where we observe full OOHP histories of children from birth to age 18. The estimates provide evidence on

temporal dynamics in OOHP entrance rate across childhood. We use the Kaplan-Meier estimator and a late-entry design to account for left-truncation caused by some children entering Denmark (and thereby the risk set) at a time later than birth due to immigration. We assume that risk of OOHP placement at any age is unrelated to age at immigration. We provide both absolute risk for each group, and the relative risk ratio between them.

## **RESULTS**

### ***Out-of-home-placement in Denmark and Greenland***

Figure 1 presents age-standardized placement rates at end of year for Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland and Denmark, as well as for Danish children in Denmark for the period 2010-2023. Across the period, Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark have the highest placement rates (but the reader should be mindful that placements of Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland may be undercounted). In 2010, the age-standardized rate of Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark in OOHP was 49 per 1,000. In 2023, that rate had increased to 60 per 1,000 following a sustained increase from 2016 and onwards. For Kalaallit Inuit child in Greenland, the age-standardized rate was 36 per 1,000 in 2010 and increased to 49 per 1,000 in 2023. Throughout the same period Danish children in Denmark had a steady age-standardized OOHP placement rate at 10 per 1,000.

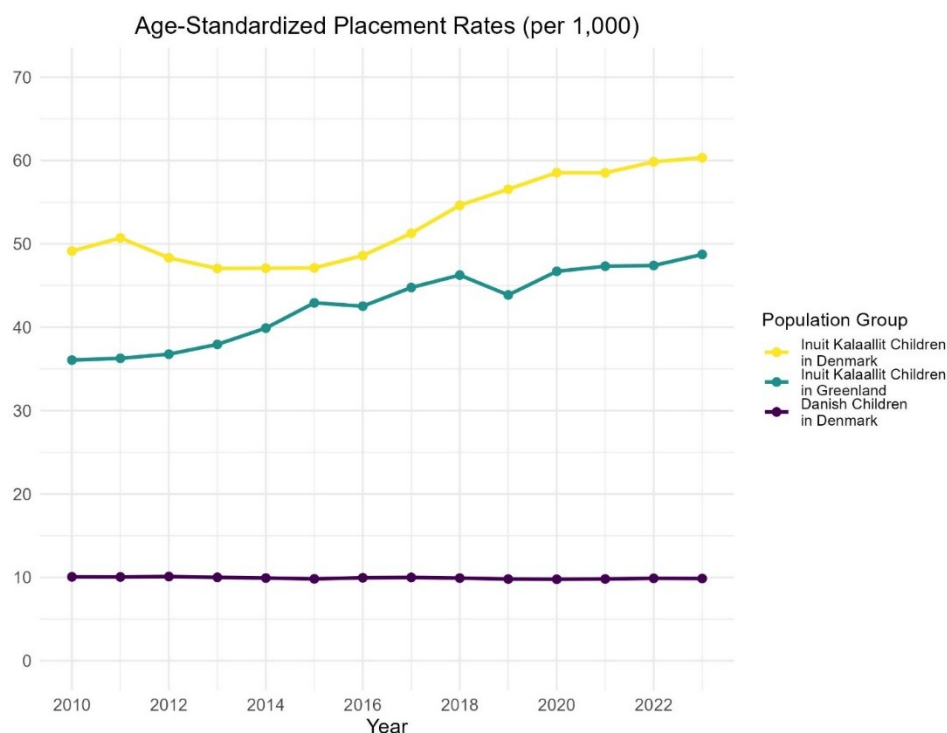


Figure 1: Age-standardized placement rates for children in Greenland, children of Greenlandic decent in Denmark, and Danish children

Notes: Standardized to a uniform age-distribution using age groups 0-4,5-9,10-14, and 15-17.

Source: Own calculations on data from Statistics Greenland and Statistics Denmark.

Figure 2 shows the age-group specific placement rates for all three populations. Across all three populations, the share of children in OOHP generally increase with age, although for Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland the difference is smaller. For Kalaallit Inuit in Denmark, the shares among all age groups are increasing. Further, the share among the two oldest groups converges at the end of the period, which likely reflects a general increase observed first among the 5–9-year-olds from 2016 and onwards, which then translates into an increase among the 10-14-year-olds from 2021 and on (and thus likely will lead to increases among the 15-17- year-olds from 2026 and onwards). In contrast, the 15-17-year-olds Danish children saw a slight decline among the oldest in the beginning of the study period, but otherwise no change. Another take away is that the increases in the age-standardized rates observed in Figure 1 for Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland seems

driven by a general increase across all ages (i.e., a general period change), whereas the increase for Kalaallit Inuit in Denmark seems to be an age-specific cohort change.

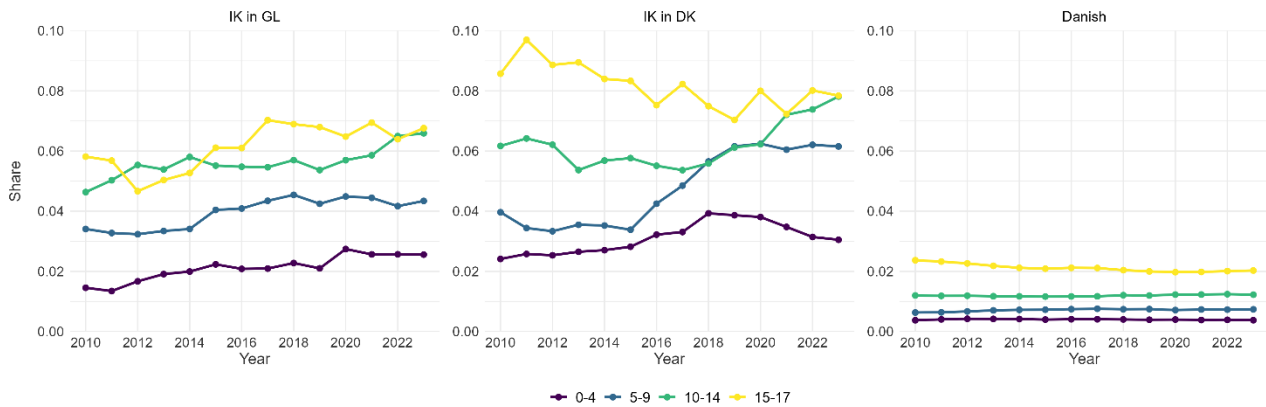


Figure 3: Age-group specific placement shares across indigenous group and location, 2010-2023. Notes: IK=Kalaallit Inuit. GL = Greenland. DK = Denmark. Source: Own calculations on data from Statistics Greenland and Statistics Denmark.

Figure 3 compares the composition of OOHPs by type of placement for the three populations from 2010-2022. Across all years, foster care placements are the largest category in Denmark both for Danish and Kalaallit Inuit children. Approximately 60% to 70% of children of Kalaallit Inuit descent and 50% to 55% of the remaining child population in OOHP in Denmark live in foster care arrangements, with increase in the share in foster care placements among Kalaallit Inuit in OOHP. Comparatively, the share of placed Kalaallit Inuit in Greenland who are in foster care is decreasing across the period from 60% in 2010 to 40% in 2022.

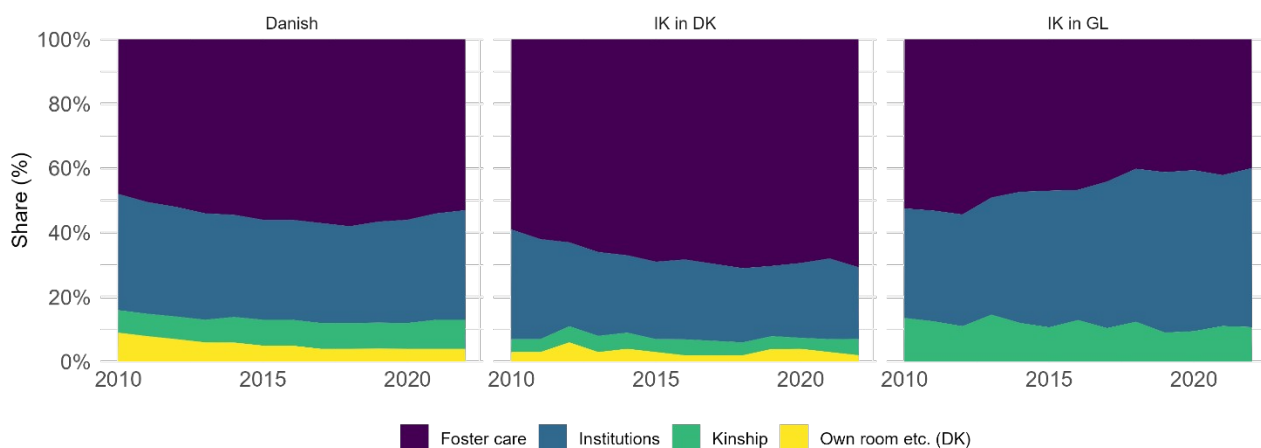


Figure 3: Use of OOHP types in Denmark and Greenland, 2010-2022

Notes: Raw distribution. Kinship placements only include placements with remuneration.

IK=Kalaallit Inuit. GL = Greenland. DK = Denmark.

Source: Own calculations on data from Statistics Greenland and Statistics Denmark.

Institutional placements are the second most used OOHP type in Denmark, with about 34% of children of Inuit descent and 36% of the Danish child population in OOHP living in institutions in 2010. These shares decrease to 34% and 22% in 2022. In contrast, the share of institutional OOHPs in Greenland increases from 34% in 2010 to 49 % in 2022.

In 2010, kinship care placements (with remuneration) were less used amongst children of Kalaallit Inuit descent in Denmark (4%) than amongst other children in Denmark (7% in 2010) and Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland (14%). In Denmark, the share of children placed with kin had increased in 2022 for both groups (9% of Danish children and 5% of Kalaallit Inuit children), but only the increase for Danish children seems outside the realm of annual stochastic variation. For Kalaallit Inuit in Greenland, the share placed with kin also declined to 11%.

Lastly, we have children placed in their own room/apartment In Denmark, about 4 % of children of Inuit descent lived in own rooms in 2010, while this was true for 9 % of the remaining child population in OOHP. In 2022, the share was 4% for Danish children and 2% for Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark.

Whereas foster care placements were the dominant mode for children in Denmark no matter the indigenous status, in for Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland, placement at institutions seems increasingly to become the mode. Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark are the least likely to be in a kinship placement, which perhaps to some extent is due to lower supply of available kin.

### ***Kalaallit Inuit-Danish Gradient in Children Reported to CWS in Denmark***

For the period 2015-2023 we have access to data from Denmark on children reported to the CWS. Figure 4 presents age-standardized rates of number of Kalaallit Inuit and Danish children per 1,000 who annually was reported at least once to CWS. In 2015 the age-adjusted rate of children reported to CWS was 46 per 1,000 for Danish children and had in 2023 increased to 73 per 1,000. In comparison, 101 per 1,000 Kalaallit Inuit children was reported to CWS in 2010, increasing to 141 per 1,000 in 2023. Across the period 2015-2023, Kalaallit Inuit children were around twice as likely to reported to CWS than was Danish children—a stark contrast to their 5-6 times higher rate of OOHP in the same period.

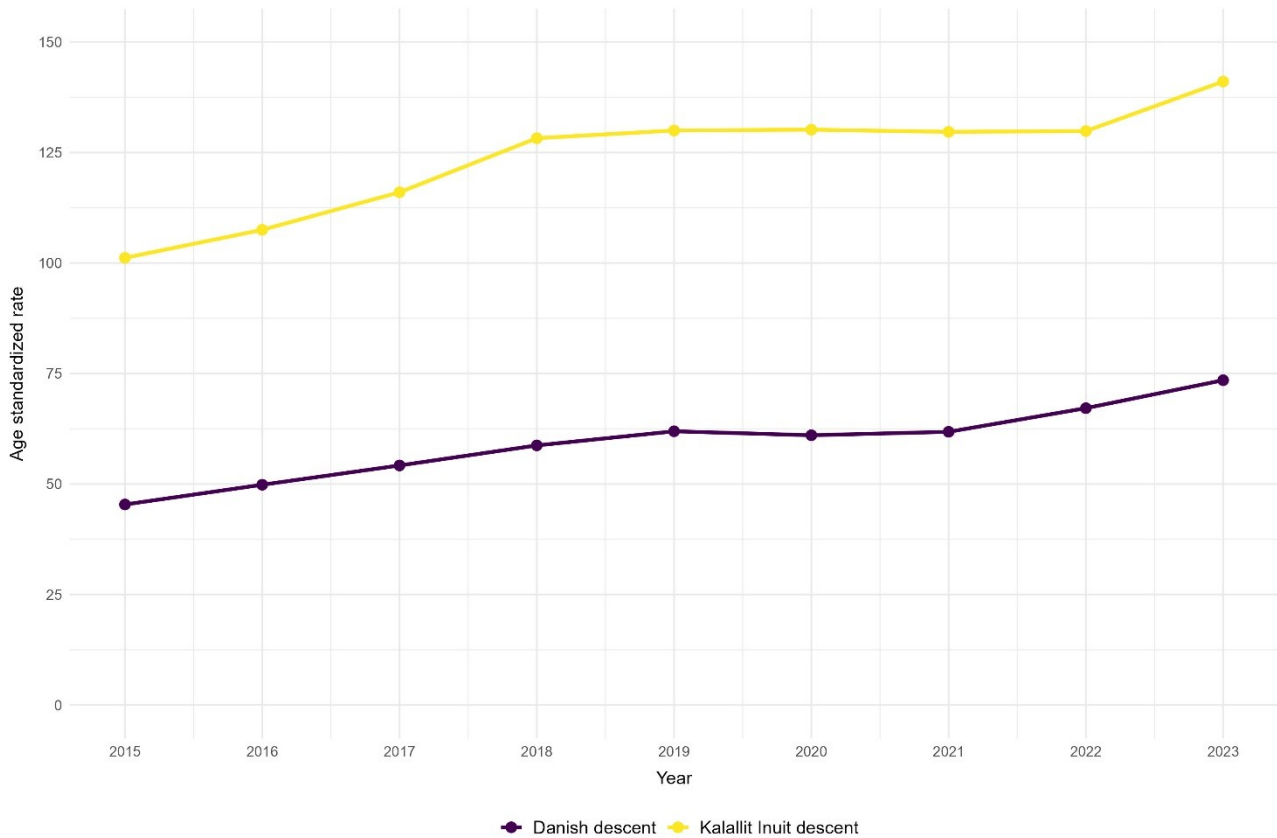


Figure 4: Age-standardized annual share of children with at least one notice of concern in Denmark, 2015-2023 per 1,000 children

Source: Own calculations on data from Statistics Denmark.

Figure 5 reports the age-adjusted share of children who receives at least one type of in-home services from CWS in the period 2013-2025. Both Danish and Kalaallit Inuit children see an increasing share of children receiving services across the period. 23 per 1,000 Danish children received in-home services in 2015, increasing to 57 per 1,000 children in 2023. Children of Kalaallit Inuit descent saw around twice the age-adjusted share as did Danish, with 52 per 1,000 receiving in-home services in 2015, increasing to 120 per 1,000 in 2023. Thus, the ratio of in-home services take up between Danish and Kalaallit Inuit children were similar to that for CWS reports.

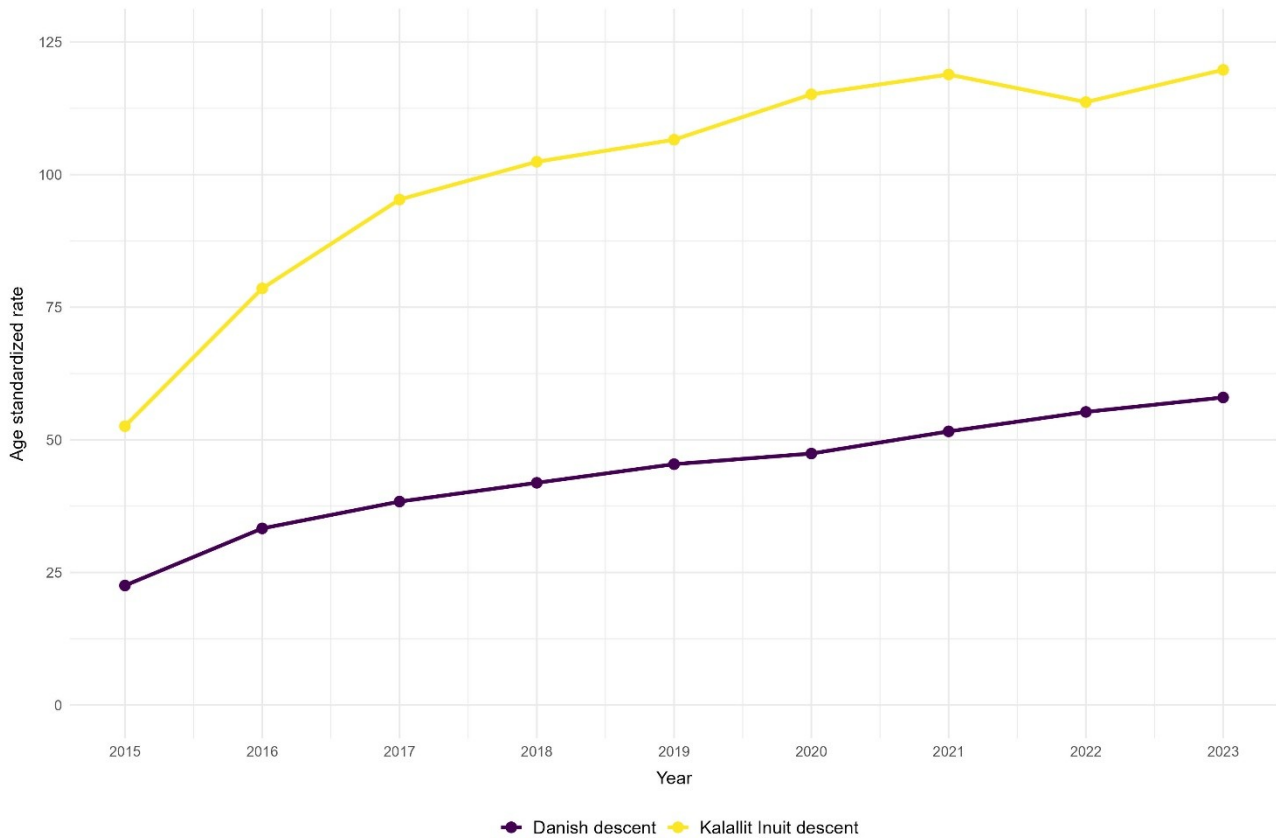


Figure 5: Age-standardized annual share of children receiving at least one in home service in Denmark, 2015-2023 per 1,000 children  
 Source: Own calculations on data from Statistics Denmark.

***Kalaallit Inuit and Danish Cumulative risk of OOHP in Denmark***

Figure 6 reports period cumulative risk for ever being placed in OOHP before age 18 in Denmark for the period 2004-2023, as well as the relative risk between Kalaallit Inuit and Danish children. The period trend for Kalaallit Inuit children exhibits a high degree of volatility driven by the much, much lower sample size (see Table A1). The cumulative risk for Danish children is between .03-.05 depending on year. For Kalaallit Inuit children it is between 0.10-.017. From 2004 to 2013, there is a slight declining trend in the period cumulative risk Danish children. For the first ten years period (2004-2013) Kalaallit Inuit children had around 3.5 times higher risk of ever entering care than Danish children, increasing to around 4.5-5 for latest years of data. Compared to the relative difference in age-standardized placement rates from Figure 1, the relative differences in cumulative

risk is lower, indicating that not only enter Kalaallit Inuit children far more often OOHP in Denmark, when they do so they can also expect to spend more of their childhood in OOHP.

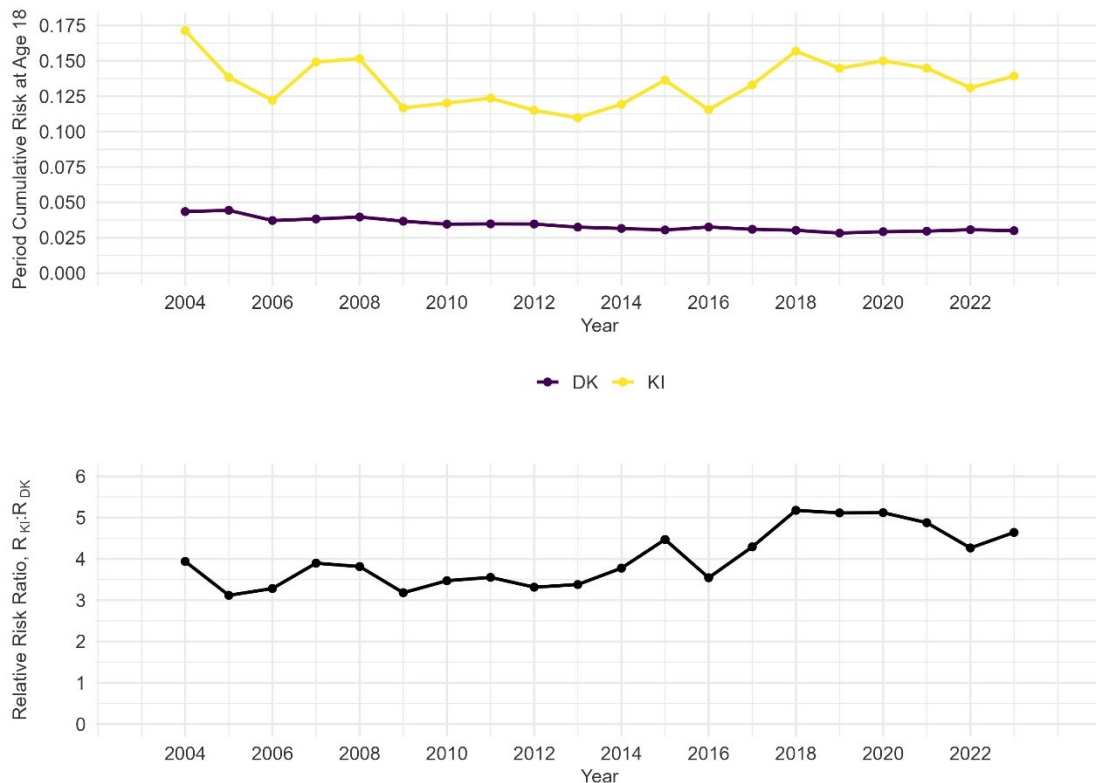


Figure 6: Period Cumulative Risk for Ever Entering OOHP in Denmark at age 18 across Indigeneity Notes: Estimates obtained from late-entry Kaplan-Meier estimations. KI: Kalaallit Inuit. DK: Danish.

## CONCLUSION

This study provides the first population-level estimates of child welfare services involvement gradients between Kalaallit Inuit and Danish children across both Denmark and Greenland for the period 2010-2023, revealing stark and persistent disparities. Kalaallit Inuit children face 3.5-6 times higher out-of-home placement risk than Danish children, with those residing in Denmark experiencing the highest rates—60 per 1,000 in Denmark and 49 per 1,000 in Greenland by 2023, compared to a stable 10 per 1,000 for Danish children. These disparities are increasing over time for both Kalaallit Inuit populations while remaining constant for Danish children, suggesting existing

policies are failing to address these inequalities. The gradient is starkest for the most invasive interventions: while Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark are twice as likely to be reported and receive in-home services, they are 5-6 times more likely to experience out-of-home placement, and when doing so can expect to spend longer time in care. Compositional differences also emerge, with institutional placements increasingly predominant for Kalaallit Inuit children in Greenland (rising from 34% in 2010 to 49% in 2022), while kinship placements remain relatively rare for Kalaallit Inuit children in Denmark.

While our findings may be limited by undercounted out-of-home placements in Greenland due to incomplete registration of private kinship arrangements, overworked social worker staff, and our inability to capture informal care arrangements reflecting traditional practices, the substantial disparities observed both in Greenland and Denmark demand urgent attention. Whether these gradients reflect compositional differences in risk factors, systemic bias, culturally inappropriate assessment practices, or the ongoing legacy of settler-colonialism, they require systematic investigation and evidence-based policy responses that center indigenous perspectives, practices, and self-determination.

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## APPENDIX

Table A1: Population counts for children as of December 31 (Denmark) and January 1 the following year (Greenland) by descent

	Age	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
KI in Greenland	0	862	805	758	803	799	842	819	847	811	840	828	752	747	707
	1	891	846	791	751	781	775	831	807	843	806	836	829	756	736
	2	803	884	826	783	742	775	783	828	808	850	806	833	828	735
	3	815	801	871	821	764	742	791	774	822	808	854	796	830	822
	4	792	800	790	857	812	756	743	787	765	818	810	843	789	814
	5	823	791	790	793	834	788	760	739	782	764	818	809	841	791
	6	813	830	779	786	777	830	800	761	731	780	761	811	801	832
	7	817	797	820	781	782	764	817	794	763	725	771	759	805	799
	8	865	805	798	802	770	776	773	813	799	754	724	765	753	798
	9	834	858	793	799	795	755	762	768	810	786	751	719	763	750
	10	819	831	859	794	788	780	746	756	763	801	780	739	719	757
	11	831	810	821	851	782	786	772	753	753	750	800	784	736	715
	12	860	828	799	817	844	769	784	789	747	745	746	784	780	743
	13	975	849	813	803	817	838	764	778	781	738	733	741	788	779
	14	890	963	828	803	795	806	834	749	756	775	730	724	725	785
	15	891	861	912	807	776	749	789	795	731	720	766	712	710	713
	16	762	732	698	762	635	619	594	592	629	574	613	675	562	560
17	934	894	852	784	880	763	723	702	744	743	680	693	725	668	
KI in Denmark	0	394	311	341	318	291	319	335	299	298	302	272	276	234	234
	1	390	402	317	345	335	308	320	344	296	303	306	271	275	237
	2	422	398	412	323	353	336	305	324	344	295	305	309	272	282
	3	402	420	402	415	336	362	327	308	331	346	296	310	307	275
	4	382	409	422	410	423	343	359	327	309	332	345	301	312	316
	5	419	384	407	426	427	436	341	362	327	312	331	339	300	312
	6	418	416	392	409	432	431	426	336	365	331	308	329	335	301
	7	441	429	416	391	408	442	439	428	336	367	336	311	335	334
8	415	445	430	429	400	412	443	437	427	341	365	338	315	343	

	9	451	419	455	430	433	407	422	437	438	436	342	370	342	319
	10	426	454	418	454	437	440	415	423	443	447	433	345	372	346
	11	448	431	459	421	462	437	446	411	428	453	448	437	349	373
	12	460	451	439	462	426	468	439	431	413	435	453	452	439	348
	13	424	464	459	434	459	423	468	446	441	417	443	455	449	436
	14	495	428	479	464	433	470	428	470	458	438	423	448	463	455
	15	501	499	452	479	476	456	470	444	481	466	441	429	453	462
	16	525	522	523	482	501	494	473	499	465	509	489	463	455	489
	17	479	505	514	514	464	490	492	467	482	461	495	477	452	439
DK in Denmark	0	63344	58993	57904	55842	56838	58284	61690	61431	61435	61164	60919	63326	58506	57493
	1	63274	63766	59399	58375	56413	57585	58932	62164	61750	61613	61357	61243	64066	58878
	2	65812	63443	64010	59721	58780	57148	58215	59197	62331	61853	61662	61555	61937	64372
	3	65003	65937	63603	64222	60051	59440	57650	58523	59276	62351	61889	61825	62264	62171
	4	66067	65119	66142	63805	64543	60617	59928	57878	58592	59329	62499	61996	62503	62380
	5	65111	66121	65235	66316	64118	65179	61141	60115	58025	58681	59409	62554	62708	62648
	6	65229	65180	66242	65412	66651	64715	65621	61367	60274	58084	58756	59510	63317	62871
	7	65142	65264	65259	66371	65713	67239	65196	65808	61460	60378	58215	58854	60396	63468
	8	64623	65222	65371	65431	66653	66259	67678	65433	65958	61583	60533	58345	59729	60553
	9	65615	64665	65311	65529	65709	67102	66732	67954	65638	66086	61763	60664	59132	59960
	10	67528	65686	64748	65455	65862	66178	67492	66929	68098	65807	66263	61935	61495	59320
	11	66874	67659	65814	64889	65749	66266	66540	67744	67097	68196	65980	66408	62763	61724
	12	67162	66982	67789	65960	65101	66124	66583	66737	67962	67237	68381	66145	67216	62946
	13	68756	67252	67089	67937	66202	65463	66460	66821	66903	68106	67452	68530	67000	67357
	14	69147	68897	67423	67264	68200	66629	65789	66677	67009	67091	68297	67647	69325	67214
	15	71807	69387	69140	67693	67642	68670	67085	66169	67031	67302	67435	68580	68584	69686
	16	72493	72216	69753	69590	68319	68274	69366	67702	66676	67439	67757	67956	69732	69198
	17	70133	72696	72318	69992	69840	68795	68764	69647	67778	66842	67593	67992	68702	69972

Notes: KI: Kalaallit Inuit descent. DK: Danish descent.

Source: Statistics Greenland and Statistics Denmark.