

The genetic history of Greenlandic-European contact

The Inuit ancestors of the Greenlandic people arrived in Greenland close to 1,000 years ago.¹ Since then, Europeans from many different countries have been present in Greenland. Consequently, the present-day Greenlandic population has 25% of its genetic ancestry from Europe.² In this study, we investigated to what extent different European countries have contributed to this genetic ancestry. We combined dense SNP chip data from 3,972 Greenlanders and 8,275 Europeans from 14 countries and inferred the ancestry contribution from each of these 14 countries using haplotype-based methods. Due to the rapid increase in population size in Greenland over the past 100 years, we hypothesized that earlier European interactions, such as pre-colonial Dutch whalers and early German and Danish-Norwegian missionaries, as well as the later Danish colonists and post-colonial immigrants, all contributed European genetic ancestry. However, we found that the European ancestry is almost entirely Danish and that a substantial fraction is from admixture that took place within the last few generations.

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Type: Article | Artikel

Årstal: 2021

Emner: Genetics; Colonial history

Titel på tidsskrift: Current Biology

Volume på tidsskrift: 31

DOI nummer:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2021.02.041>

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