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Abstract title: Things are not what they seem: Review of diverse forms of child abuse in Iceland

Background: International research shows that child physical health in Iceland, as measured for example by the infant mortality rate, is ranked as the best in the world and childhood conditions are ranked as one of the best for positive growth and development. Here we examine and summarize published research on child abuse in Iceland, with particular focus on physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect and intra-familial conflicts suffered by children at the hands of their parents and other carers.

Method: Review that builds on published research, books and reports on child abuse in Iceland that are mostly accessible in the native Icelandic language, and compares the findings with Nordic research and global estimates of child abuse.

Results: Analysis of qualitative and quantitative research reveals that the prevalence of different forms of child abuse, child neglect and intra-familial conflicts in Iceland are similar to, or higher than, global and Nordic estimates. Younger respondents report less physical abuse than older respondents, but higher levels of emotional abuse. Legislation, greater awareness, public debates and research on child abuse in Iceland has contributed to the growing recognition of the negative consequences of child abuse and strengthened support for prevention strategies.

Discussion: Icelandic children experience diverse forms of child abuse and neglect from their parents and other carers. Diverse preventive initiatives have been put in place that underline increased general understanding of the problem at hand and the urgent need to tackle such behavior.

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