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# Iceland

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SURVEY

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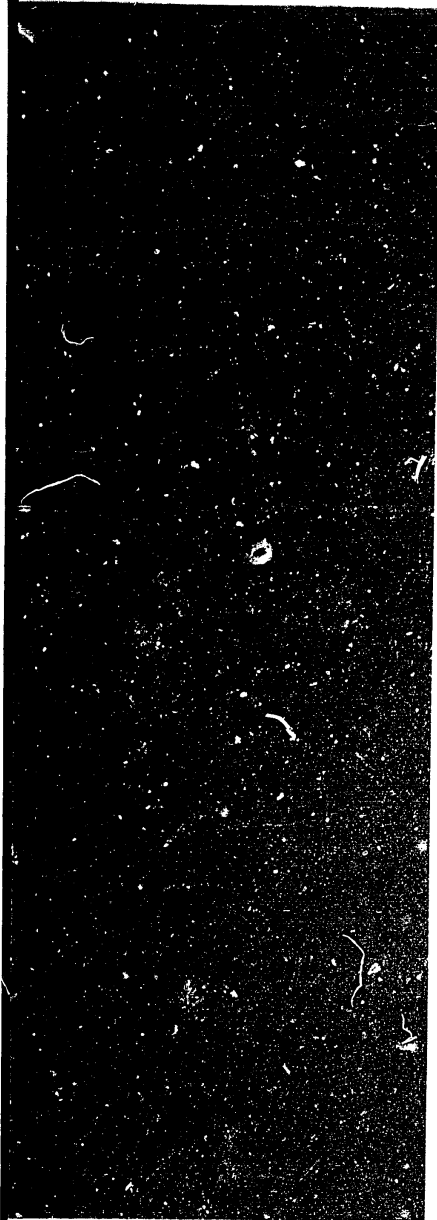
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# ICELAND

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with his associates, has enabled the resourceful population to attain a living close to levels in prosperous mainland Scandinavia. The accomplishment is especially impressive in the light of Iceland's limited natural resources—basically fish and cheap power.

## B. Structure and characteristics of the society

### 1. Ethnic and cultural homogeneity

The basic homogeneity of the Icelandic population exceeds even that of the other Scandinavian societies. For the past six centuries at least, there have been no important minority groups. The Old Norse culture, introduced by the first settlers in the 9th century, retained much of its original base. The language, literature, and systems of law developed slowly and uniformly throughout the island, with outside influences coming largely from continental Scandinavia. Practices of family feuding and systems of slavery and vassalage introduced by some of the early Norse chieftains could not flourish in a primitive, isolated frontier environment; mere survival demanded productive labor and mutual cooperation from all. Viking peasant privileges were, therefore, gradually extended to practically the entire population and were later protected by the Norwegian and Danish suzerains. The Protestant Reformation, although imposed from without, was thorough. Religiously motivated civil disorders were brief, and by the end of the 16th century no dissenting religious enclaves remained to disrupt the social order. Even the industrial revolution, because of its arrival after the welfare state was already in being, did not bring in its wake a dominant social class. Thus, over a period of 1,000 years the fabric of the society remained relatively intact, and a similar social and cultural outlook was preserved among nearly all segments of the Icelandic population.

### 2. Insularity

Like most culturally inbred people, the Icelanders are jealous of their way of life. This insularity is especially evident among the intellectuals, who have been particularly vocal in denouncing cultural influences from the United States. Leading writers, artists, and parliamentarians regard the U.S. Armed Forces Network, both radio and television, as a major corrupting influence. They decri American music and the violence and naivete of the gangster, war, and western serials. The considerable receptivity such

programs find among the youth, many of whom speak English, has become a subject of concern to the intelligentsia. Cultural and political leaders still try to encourage the indoctrination of young people in the early great Icelandic literature, as well as the indigenous music and other art forms. Pride in the ancient Icelandic language is instilled in the young at home and at school. National costumes, parts of which were designed with care as recently as the last century, are kept in most rural and even in numerous urban households, and are frequently worn, especially by the older women, on Sundays and holidays. The national consciousness of Icelanders is also evidenced in what some observers regard as a mild form of xenophobia. Tourists from both America and Europe occasionally complain of a vague feeling of not being entirely welcome. Such reactions, however, may be prompted in part by a misinterpretation of normal Icelandic reserve and feelings of ultra-independence. In spite of a serious labor shortage, most Icelanders side with the labor unions in opposing importation of workers, particularly from the ample reservoirs of Southern and Eastern Europe, where ethnic and cultural differences are more marked. When moved by compassion to admit a handful of Jewish and other displaced persons after World War II, the *Althing*, at the behest of the Minister of Education, passed a law obliging these people to change their "foreign sounding" names to Icelandic ones. While it would be incorrect to ascribe a racist outlook to this insular but socially responsible people, it is clear that they desire to maintain their present ethnic complexion relatively intact. Thus, of the foreigners wishing to settle permanently in Iceland, the least unwelcome are fellow Scandinavians, Germans, British, and Americans of the predominant northwestern European strains.

### 3. The family

Family ties are strong in Iceland, in spite of the urbanization that has been underway since the early years of the century and the fairly liberal attitudes toward sex. Parental affection is warm and protective, strengthened as it was during the centuries when the population suffered from the hazards of the environment. Discipline in the home, therefore, tends to be more relaxed than elsewhere in Western Europe, and permissiveness may even exceed that normally found in U.S. families. The schools maintain high academic standards, but the pace is slower than elsewhere in Europe and more like that in the United States. Icelanders regard childhood as a carefree and happy period of life which should not be unduly burdened with studies. Although the children may



appear to Europeans to be lacking in proper respect and decorum, they are devoted to their parents and grow up to be good citizens, responsible and hard working.

Standards of morality in the home are generally high, although attitudes toward sex are still typically Scandinavian. Premarital relations, traditionally condoned to insure that the union would result in the bearing of children and resulting from the scarcity of clergymen in isolated rural areas, continue to be accepted as the private business of the individuals concerned. No stigma whatever is attached to an illegitimate child. The only strong censure connected with premarital sexual experiments is directed toward a father who refuses to acknowledge and help support his child. Once a family is established, sexual loyalty between the parents is expected and is usually forthcoming. Double standards for male and female are not generally condoned.

As in other small societies in sparsely settled territory, inbreeding is not uncommon, and the kinship units have thus become enlarged. The Icelandic system of naming—once common throughout Scandinavia—in which the last name is formed by adding "son" or "dottir" as a suffix to the first name of the father is still practiced. Tracing family lineage is therefore difficult, if not chaotic. Nevertheless, because of excellent family records and strong interest, many Icelanders have traced their ancestors back to the first settlers in the ninth and 10th centuries.

#### 4. Pragmatism and group cooperation

The cohesion of Icelandic society proceeds in large measure from the common effort put forth to master a harsh natural environment. The challenge of survival ultimately forced the individual to accommodate his personal freedom of action to the demands of cooperative group enterprise. Such accommodation, in time, became a mode of conduct. It was further encouraged by the introduction of Lutheran Protestantism with its ethic of social responsibility. Civic consciousness is apparent in the well-kept appearance of the exteriors of private homes and of parks and playgrounds. It is also evident in the almost complete absence of crime. Although the welfare state did not develop until the second quarter of the 20th century, the social security system is rapidly becoming as comprehensive as systems in continental Scandinavia, the most advanced in the world. As in the other Nordic countries, the cooperative movement was already underway by the second half of the 19th century, its antecedents even predating those in Denmark. Approximately three-quarters of the

population either belong to or as dependents are affiliated with such diverse cooperatives as general merchandizing, marketing of produce and dairy products, insurance, shipping, and fishing. In agriculture alone cooperative societies have built and commonly own and operate slaughterhouses, chilling and freezing plants, and dairies. They may also, through volume purchases, procure farm supplies and equipment for members at reduced costs.

The pragmatic, cooperative approach to human relations is seen in the political arena. Although the centrist Progressive Party, the Organization of Liberals and Leftists, and the Communist-dominated People's Alliance may hold strongly divergent views, all three compromise positions to achieve mutual gains. The governing coalition of these three parties exemplifies this "practical politics." Political life in Iceland is thus typical of that in several of the Germanic countries, and contrasts with that of parliamentary democracies in France and the Latin nations.

An illustration of the Icelander's pragmatism is his final abandonment of the belief, until lately shared by all Scandinavians, that he could avoid war by pursuing a strict policy of neutrality. Even though ties with the United Kingdom were then close, the Icelanders deeply resented the British occupation in 1940. Only when they became clearly aware of the Nazi German threat to civilization as they knew it, did they acquiesce in the presence of British and subsequently U.S. troops. Wartime prosperity, derived partly from the occupation forces, further softened their attitude, but the Icelanders were pleased to see their island entirely evacuated by the foreigners in 1947.

In the face of the rising Soviet threat, majority opinion held that another allied occupation was unnecessary, and that the United States could assume responsibility for Iceland's defense without again establishing bases there. Thus, when Iceland became a charter member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949, the treaty stipulated that no foreign troops were to be stationed in the country in peacetime. In 1951, however, after stormy debate in the *Althing*, the press, and other public forums, the U.S. troops were invited to return, but only after the government took elaborate precautions to insulate the country from the new American presence. Virtually all forces were (and are) confined to the NATO base at Keflavik,<sup>1</sup> with leave and furlough privileges strictly controlled. The presence of U.S. troops still remains a source of political contention.

<sup>1</sup>For diacritics on place names see the map in the text and the list of names at the end of the chapter.

Iceland for all practical purposes has no indigenous defense force. However, if the average citizen were pressed into service, he could make an effective seaman, and despite the lack of military tradition, perhaps a soldier as well. His pragmatic approach to compromise, like that of his Norwegian cousin in World War II, would lead him only so far toward "practical" arrangements with a potential enemy. Once his home and family were clearly threatened, he could be expected to respond with vigor. The Icelander's strong feelings of national identity, ingrained instincts for cooperative endeavor, and stubborn courage suggest that he could be a most dependable ally.

### 5. Social mobility

Iceland comes as close to being a classless society as any in the Western world. What class consciousness may exist is loosely defined and tends to be based more on intellectual background and achievement than on wealth. This essentially frontier society, which typically emphasizes practical, technological attainment, is unique in the respect accorded the philosopher, linguist, historian, writer, or artist.

Virtually no well-to-do upper class in the European or American sense exists in Iceland, as high incomes are especially heavily taxed, nor is there any really deprived lower class. The gradations within the vast middle class are so amorphous and social mobility so complete as to render groupings by percentages of the population rather meaningless. Social relations between the more and the less wealthy are informal and easy, and a laborer's son or daughter may attend the university without handicap. The government has encouraged social mobility through comprehensive measures designed to bring higher education within the reach of all students with ability.

The society is entirely open, and strongly held ideological differences are readily aired in the partisan press, the labor unions, and the political parties. Such forums for venting grievances combine with social mobility and the pervasiveness of public welfare to maintain the high social stability and national solidarity.

### C. Population

It is estimated that as of January 1973 there were 209,000 permanent inhabitants in Iceland, comprising only 1% of the population of Scandinavia. The land area of Iceland is 39,750 square miles, yielding a population density of 5 persons per square mile—a very low average even for Scandinavia and by far the

lowest in Europe. Most of the interior uplands are unpopulated. Much of the area is covered by glaciers, lava drift sands or gravel deposits, and there are still numerous active volcanoes scattered around the island. The absence of trees accentuates the desolate appearance of most of the island. The people live on the lowlands near the coast, but even here the country is sparsely settled. In the relatively well occupied southwestern peninsula, population density (Figure 1), excluding the capital city of Reykjavik, is 35 persons per square mile, comparable to densities in the state of Oklahoma. The population of the eight electoral districts in December 1969 is given in the following tabulation:

Reykjavik (Reykjavik city)	93,953
Reykjavik (Reykjavik peninsula)	23,799
Northland (North)	13,191
Westland (Westlands)	10,253
Southland Westra (North-West)	9,576
Southland Eystra (South-East)	21,870
Southland (East)	11,241
Southland (South)	17,922
<b>Total</b>	<b>202,191</b>

The Icelanders are particularly homogeneous. Even in relation to the other Scandinavian societies, all of which have shared a common, self-contained development in northern Europe, modern Iceland seems especially isolated. During a millennium or more of isolated existence, the Old Norse culture introduced by the original settlers evolved slowly, with outside influences largely restricted to those coming from the two Scandinavian neighbors, Norway and Denmark. Racial admixture has been very slight and confined to similar strains, springing from the British wives and Irish slaves brought over by the original settlers in the ninth and tenth centuries, and introduced again by traders in the 12th and 13th centuries. Most Icelanders have light-colored eyes, with blue predominant, and tend to be just slightly darker in complexion and hair than the Norwegians. Figure 2 depicts modern Icelandic adults and children in both contemporary and traditional garb. The greatest concentration of darker Celtic strains is found on the Vestmannaeyjar just off the southern coast of Iceland. The majority of the 3,000 inhabitants of these small islands, which are politically integrated with Iceland, are the direct descendants of early Irish settlers and were at one time regarded by the mainlanders as a semi-breed race.

Compared to other advanced Western countries, both the United States and Iceland have young populations in the demographic sense (Figure 3). The lower third of the Icelandic pyramid is even broader than its U.S. counterpart, reflecting a higher birth rate

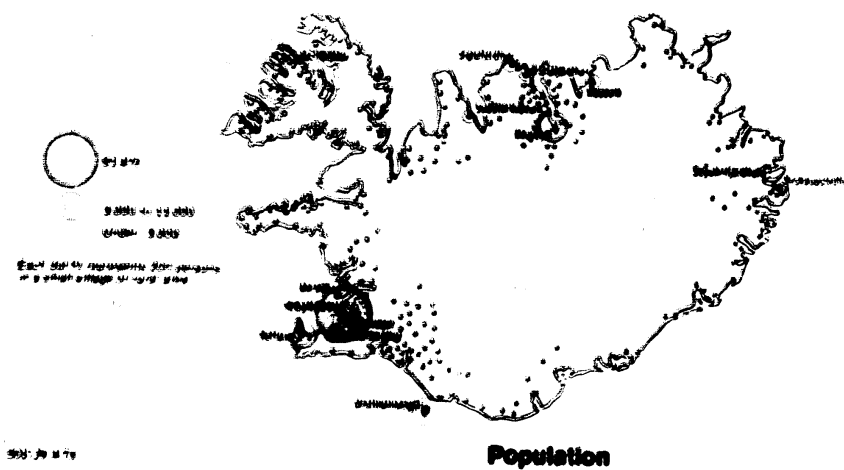


FIGURE 1. Distribution of the population

since the early 1920's. Children account for a larger share of the population than in the United States, and the ratio of the dependent age to the working age (15 to 64) is less favorable to Iceland than in the United States. The lower level of fertility in both countries during the depression and early war years is indicated by the concentration of the population in the 20 to 29 age groups.

In 1949 the birth rate was estimated at 102 males per 1000 females. Male mortality is the highest in all of the age groups below 55, reflecting the increased rates of bone and joint disease among men in industry, which is made possible by the higher mortality of the women. The mortality of lower ages in the age groups above 55 differs from the general European pattern, and to a slight degree, in part because of emigration in which men have participated to a greater extent than women.

The average rate of 8.2 per 1000 indicates that for the years 1920-50 an average for Scandinavia but is an even less precise indication of potential population growth than in the other Nordic countries. Approximately 30% of all Icelandic births during the years 1920-50 occurred out of wedlock, while nearly one fifth of all Icelandic women mark the end of the reproductive period without having been formally married. A comparison of the divorce rates of Iceland (1.1 per 1000 population) and selected countries for

the years 1920-50 suggests that the rate for Iceland is about average for the Western world. Although the small data base for Iceland renders analogies somewhat insecure, the rate for the 5-year period appears to be slightly higher than in neighboring Norway (0.8 per 1000), but lower than in Denmark (1.5 per 1000) and Sweden (1.4 per 1000), and much lower than in the United States (3.0 per 1000). The official divorce rate in Iceland is lower than the actual rate of dissolved husband-wife relationships because of the high incidence of common-law unions in Iceland.

The birth rate in Iceland is the second highest after Ireland in Western Europe, and the death rate is one of the lowest in the world, yielding a rate of natural increase that is higher than that of any other populous Western nation. This vigorous demographic growth, however, is only a recent development. Between the original settlement in the ninth and tenth centuries and the year 1100, the Icelandic population reached an estimated 75,000, but by 1800 it had declined to 17,000. Epidemics, volcanic eruptions, and famines repeatedly took drastic tolls, particularly from the 11th through the 18th centuries. Since Iceland was one of the first countries to develop a nationwide system of registration, vital rates may be traced back as far as 1735 (Figure 1). Here the obvious effects of the famine of the 1750's and the

FIGURE 2. Icelandic types



Woman and children in national dress

eruption of the volcano Laki in 1783 may clearly be seen. It is noted that only during the last three-quarters of a century have the hazards to life produced by the difficult environment been overcome. This has been accomplished principally through the advancement of medical and geological science, the diversification of the economy, and improved communications. The crude death rate (number of deaths per 1,000 population per year) exceeded the crude birth rate (number of births per 1,000 population per year) for the last time during an epidemic of measles in 1582, and it thereafter began an irregular but persistent downward trend, falling from an annual average of 24 per 1,000 population in the 1550's to a low of 7.0 per 1,000 in the late 1960's (average for 1966-70). The crude birth rate (1966-70)

Asgeir Asgeirsson, former President of Iceland



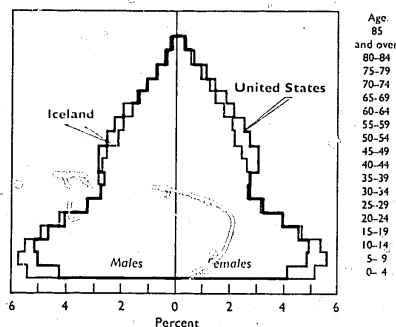


FIGURE 3. Age-sex distribution, Iceland and the United States, 1969

averaged 21.4 per 1,000 population. While the exceptionally low crude death rate is principally accounted for by the high level of public health in Iceland, it also stems from the fact that the population includes a much larger proportion of children and young adults and conversely a smaller proportion of old people than the population of virtually any other advanced Western nation.

Infant mortality rates are a sensitive indicator of social well-being and provide a valid measure for international comparisons since they are not affected by differences in age structure. In the late 1960's Iceland's infant mortality rate ranked with rates of the Netherlands and Sweden as the lowest in the world. The average rates per 1,000 live births in selected countries (1966-68) were as follows:

Sweden	12.9	New Zealand	18.1
ICELAND	13.5	France	20.9
Netherlands	13.9	Canada	22.0
Norway	14.4	United States	22.6
Denmark	16.4	West Germany	23.0

Life expectancy at birth in Iceland ranks with that in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Norway as among the highest in the Western world (Figure 5).

The government encourages natural population increase through free obstetrical and child care and liberal family allowances. Population growth averaged 1.1% annually during 1965-70—slightly greater than growth in the other Scandinavian countries, but substantially below the 2.0% annual Icelandic rate of

the early 1960's. The projected mid-year population of Iceland for selected 5-year periods through 1990 is as follows:

1975	221,100
1980	239,000
1985	255,600
1990	273,700

Iceland's population growth derives almost entirely from natural increase, international emigration and immigration having had only a slight impact in the 20th century. Manifestly, the insular population, and hence its government, have shown only a modest desire to attract outsiders. In January 1966 there were merely 4,633 Icelandic citizens of foreign birth, or 2.4% of the population. Of these, 2,546 were from other parts of Scandinavia, 69 from Finland, 772 from West Germany, 456 from the United States, 218 from the United Kingdom, 116 from Canada, 46 from the Netherlands, 45 from Austria, 33 from France, 29 from Hungary, and 303 from all other areas. Thus, the few immigrants are overwhelmingly of Northern European background and blend quite readily with the native population. Icelandic law requires that all immigrants who apply for and are granted citizenship take Icelandic names. Partly because of their insular pride and spirit of independence, and partly out of a dispassionate resolve to avoid social problems that they do not now have, the Icelanders have proved somewhat race conscious. During and after World War II the government unofficially looked with disfavor on the stationing of blacks at the U.S. (NATO) base at Keflavik. While not disavowing this general principle, the Icelandic authorities have been more relaxed on the question since the early 1960's. The number of Negroes at the base has varied, but in 1971 approximated 40, including several families.

The only known large-scale emigration occurred in the late 19th century, when approximately 15,000 departed for North America. Since any sizable population loss could adversely affect the well-being of the small, sparsely settled country, Icelanders remain highly sensitive to the subject of emigration. In the late 1960's, in response to a severe economic slump, the excess of emigrants over immigrants rose sharply to nearly 1,100 per year (average for 1968-70), accounting in part for the recent marked decline of the population growth rate.

Only about 16% of Iceland's population is officially classified as rural; the figure, however, by conventional Western European or U.S. standards

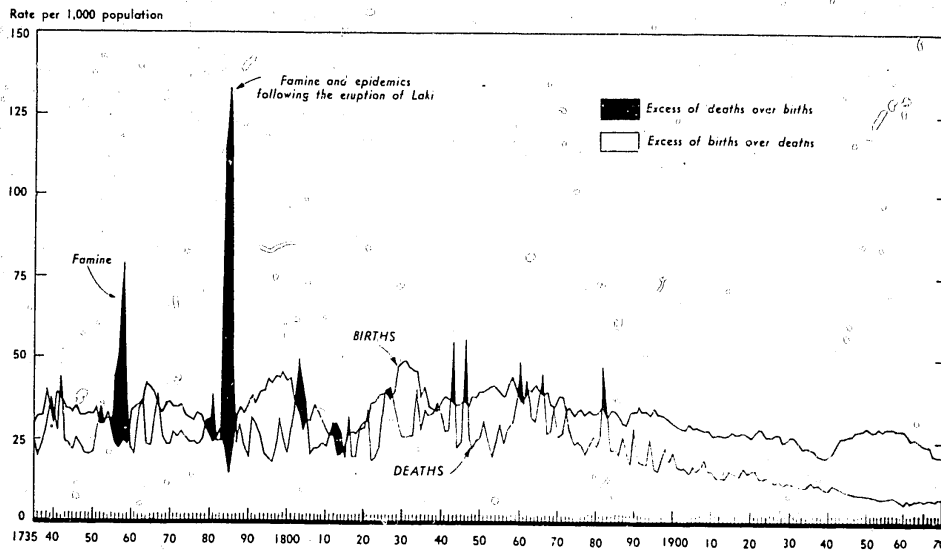


FIGURE 4. Vital rates

should be at least doubled. Of the 84% who are listed as urban, about one-third lives in towns and villages with fewer than 1,000 population. Most of these communities are small fishing villages, with few of the amenities associated with urban life. Nearly three-fifths of the Icelandic people live in urban communities with populations of 1,000 or more, and 46% live in the urban agglomeration around the capital city of Reykjavik. Internal migration continues at a rapid rate from the farms to the villages, towns, and cities (Figure 6). This has occasioned a

FIGURE 5. Life expectancy at birth, selected countries

	YEAR/YEARS	MALE	FEMALE
Sweden.....	1963-67	71.7	76.1
Netherlands.....	1968	71.0	76.4
ICELAND.....	1961-65	70.8	76.2
Norway.....	1961-65	71.0	76.0
Denmark.....	1961-65	70.3	74.5
Canada.....	1965-67	68.8	75.2
France.....	1968	68.0	75.5
New Zealand.....	1960-62	68.4	73.8
West Germany.....	1966-68	67.6	73.6
United States.....	1968	66.6	71.0

depopulation of some agricultural rural areas, notably in the northeastern part of the island; one of the few instances of officially inspired immigration occurred shortly after World War II, when the government recruited some 300 German farmers to resettle these areas.

#### D. Societal aspects of labor

##### 1. Working force

As in other advanced Western nations, the working force in Iceland is intelligent and industrious. Its maximum utilization, however, has been impeded by the limited resources of the country and a delayed diversification of the economy. The full force of the industrial revolution is just now making itself felt, as reflected in the transfer of workers from farms to the growing processing and manufacturing industries; in 1880 fully three-quarters of the labor force were engaged in farming; by 1910 only one-third was so engaged; and by 1970 the proportion of farmers had fallen to one-eighth. The small domestic market open to the new local manufactures, however, is unable to

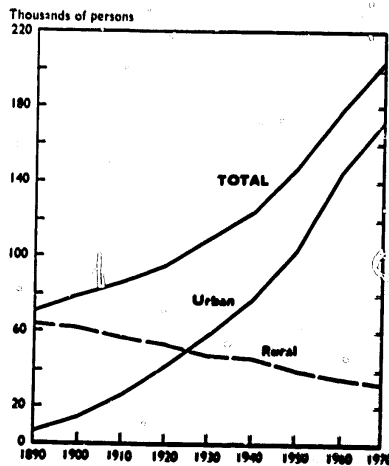


FIGURE 6. Changes in population, rural and urban

offer adequate stimulation for the development of mass production and mass sales techniques. The high prices of domestically produced goods, which result from limited turnover and the need to import most raw materials, have been protected by high tariffs. The entry of Iceland into the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1970 and subsequent trade negotiations with the European Communities (EC) reflect growing government awareness of the need to seek wider markets for domestic industries even at the expense of increased foreign competition. Only in the fish-processing industry, with its large overseas markets, has production been streamlined to the point of affording efficient utilization of available manpower. Figure 7 illustrates the start of fish processing in a small northern village.

Training in the more complicated industrial techniques is limited in Iceland principally because of the prohibitive expense of equipment in a small society, but this has not seriously hindered the development of the economy. Most small manufacturing enterprises, including machine shops, clothing factories, leather goods factories, printing plants, woodworking shops, and even construction firms are informally managed. The expense of introducing modern techniques would not be justified since the small market available. Having more extensive development of overseas outlets would be desirable to

absorb all of the production. Some technological underemployment could also result, at least initially, because many energetic workers maintain their current high level of living only by holding more than one job.

For advanced engineering and production techniques, Iceland has traditionally depended on foreign-trained experts, notably from Scandinavia and Germany, but also from the United States. German engineers and German-trained Icelanders in the 1930s were responsible for much of the early planning and developmental work leading to exploitation of geothermal springs *free* to heat almost all of the buildings in Reykjavik and to provide power for some factories. Since World War II, U.S. and Scandinavian-trained experts have been largely responsible for modernization of the fishing and fish-processing industries, which together still account for about 80% of the value of Icelandic exports.

Should economic pressures continue to erode the insularity of the society of Iceland and bring about closer political and economic association of its government with Europe, its industries working force could be a major national asset. Efficiency would be increased by competition for foreign markets and exposure to more advanced technologies. Like the Danes, once adequately primed through free trade, Icelandic workers and entrepreneurs could probably produce quality goods at world market prices and through efficient exploitation of their extensive hydroelectric and thermal power resources, secure the continent, and improve most of their high standards of living.

The working force totaled more than 55,000 persons in 1970. This figure came to 11% of the total



FIGURE 7. Salting the herring catch in a village in north Iceland

population at that time and about two-third of the working-age population (15 to 64). Between 35% and 40% of all women between the ages of 15 and 64 were in the working force in 1968, including 60% of those under 20 and 30% of all women over 25. The one-third of the working-age population in the force in 1970 represents a reserve made up principally of women who are rearing children and students. Sizable numbers from the *e* groups may be called upon to expand the working force in time of need. Students provide a large supplement to the working force during vacation months, as evidenced in part by the average 10.9% rise in total employment when school closes in late spring and the 8.7% decline in the fall. A sizable but indeterminate number of children of both sexes are gainfully employed part-time.

Because Iceland does not have a minister of Labor nor any office charged specifically with collating labor statistics, the normally hazardous division of the work force into skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled segments becomes more difficult. Certainly, however, the labor force has made rapid strides in developing skills. The unskilled segment is estimated to have decreased from 67% of the total labor force in 1950 to 25% in 1968. This rapid transformation has been spurred by the steady migration from the farms to the urban centers, especially Reykjavik, and facilitated by the energy, adaptability, and high educational level of the working force. Information on the geographic distribution of labor also lacks precision because of inadequate or outdated statistics; however, it is safe to say that about 60% of the nonagricultural labor force (including transportation, communications, and commerce) are located in Reykjavik, while about 25% are located in other towns of 1,000 population or over. The remaining 15% or more in the villages and rural districts are principally engaged in fishing and fish processing.

The high intelligence and adaptability of the workers available to the underdeveloped technology, combined with the lack of strong regional attachments and class consciousness in Icelandic society, permit a high labor mobility. Such mobility is frequently necessitated by the seasonal nature of fishing, fish processing, construction, and agriculture. The large majority of workers hold two or more jobs, as they strive to enjoy a standard of living comparable to that in mainland Scandinavia. Unemployment, or even underemployment, has seldom been a problem in Iceland. Under a 1930 law major towns must carry out a periodic registration of the unemployed on several occasions in the mid-1960's no unemployed persons were reported in Reykjavik and other important towns. The only recent exception to this pattern of full

employment occurred during a sharp economic slowdown in 1967 and 1968. By the end of 1970, however, unemployment again dropped below 1% of the labor force.

The outlook for 1972-76 is for continued high employment. The tight labor market should be eased somewhat, however, by the addition of an estimated 1,730 workers (2.2% of the labor force) per year, as Icelanders born during the baby boom of the 1950's reach working age. Although legal provision exists for the admission of foreign workers, the ethnic insularity of the Icelanders has been a bar to any large-scale influx, even in periods of acute labor shortage. In 1965, 1,320 work permits were issued to foreigners, almost half of them to Faroe Islanders who help man the fishing fleets and are the least unwelcome outsiders. Most of the remainder were given to other north Europeans, principally to skilled workers in the building trades from Scandinavia, who are admitted for short periods without stimulating significant public notice or criticism.

## 2. Wages, hours, and conditions of work

Despite the sharp rise in the cost of living since World War II, money wages have risen more rapidly, and real wages in Iceland are becoming comparable to those in most parts of mainland Scandinavia. A factor greatly aiding this development is the substantial social and health insurance benefits available to all Icelanders.

The average hourly wage of unskilled workers in Reykjavik in June 1971 was 85.7 kronur (US\$1.01), while the average yearly earnings of all workers were more than US\$4,000 in 1970. The average yearly earnings of married workers and seamen, as well as hourly wages, have risen more sharply than the cost of living and consumer goods prices since 1960. The discrepancy between these average yearly earnings and the wages of unskilled and industrial workers exists partly because married workers are older and more experienced, and therefore command higher wages, and partly because most workers (married and unmarried) increase their yearly earnings through overtime and additional part-time jobs.

Icelandic incomes reflect the Scandinavian pattern in having a relatively narrow range. In 1966 medical doctors were at the top of the earnings scale, with an average income of 112,000 kronur, followed closely by trawler captains with 392,000 kronur per year. In that same year all seamen and married workers, skilled and unskilled, earned an average of 199,550 kronur. Only in rare instances does the highest paid make more than four times the lowest paid.



In response to union pressure, the standard workweek was reduced in 1971 from 44 to 40 hours, while civil servants enjoy a 36-hour workweek. The 8-hour day is the norm throughout the country, but overtime is regularly scheduled in many businesses and a certain number of work hours at overtime rates are expected by the employee as normal procedure. In 1964 skilled and unskilled working hours showed an annual equivalent of 66 work weeks based on a 44-hour work week at regular rates. Approximately 40% of the average earnings resulted from overtime and holiday work.

The government, under steady pressure from the unions, has enacted legislation on job safety, workmen's compensation, minimum vacation time and child labor. Early in the 20th century laws were passed providing minimum hours of rest for certain hazardous occupations, notably seafaring. They were supplemented by Factory Inspection and Industrial Safety Laws in 1928, 1951, and 1956. Frequent inspection by government officials is mandatory for all plants employing three or more persons. Official codes regulate the location and maintenance of steam boilers and other dangerous machinery, lighting and ventilation, sanitation, and hours of rest. The National Insurance Act of 1963 provides compensation for on-the-job injuries for all workers except casual laborers and unpaid family workers. A minimum paid vacation time for all workers has been required by law since 1943, when it was set at 12 days annually. This period was extended to 18 days in 1957, 21 days in 1964, 24 days in 1965, and to 28 days in 1971. Most paid leave, however, sick leave as well as vacation time, is fixed by collective agreement and usually exceeds the statutory minimum. The official prohibition of full-time child labor is well enforced, both through the compulsory school attendance law and through frequent inspections of plants and vessels. During summer vacations, however, young children work in fish-processing plants and on farms, while during the school term they may hold part-time jobs, such as selling newspapers. The minimum age of 15 years has been established for employment on ships and in factories; stokers and ships' trimmers must be at least 18.

### 3. Organization of labor

Despite a relatively late start, the trade union movement has forged a prominent place in Icelandic society. Since the first small fishermen's union was established in 1894, urbanization and the shift from an agrarian economy have encouraged a rapid rise in union membership. Icelandic workers are about 75%

unionized, ranking after their contemporaries in Sweden as the most organized in the free world. Approximately 41,300 or 50% of the total labor force are concentrated in the Icelandic Federation of Labor (IFL), which was established in 1916. Most of the remaining organized workers belong to nine nonaffiliated unions, the most important of which are the Federation of State and Municipal Employees, formed in 1942, and the Federation of Fishing Seamen of Iceland, formed in 1936. The other nonfederated unions are for industrial apprentices, bank employees, construction workers, metal workers and shipbuilders, supervisors and foremen, journalists, and airplane pilots.

The IFL is composed of seven national federations as well as 56 individual unions. The largest of the affiliated federations are the 16,500-man Laborers Federation of Iceland and the 5,800-man Federation of Office and Store Clerks of Iceland. The 56 individual unions represent some 10,800 workers. Most IFL affiliates are established on a craft or industrial basis. In the larger towns separate unions have been organized for specific trades, for women, and for unskilled workers; in the smaller communities all workers may be collected into one local union. Each affiliated union pays to the IFL annual dues amounting to approximately one-fourth of the total dues it receives from its own membership. The IFL is associated with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

In accordance with procedures revised by the IFL in 1968, delegates to the next quadrennial meeting of its Congress, the highest governing body, are to be elected by the national federations organized on craft or industry lines, or in certain circumstances elected directly by individual trade unions. Delegates will total 150. A simple majority vote settles most questions, such as IFL policy and controversies between member unions; on particularly sensitive questions a referendum may be called, in which case the delegate or delegates from each union are allotted a number of votes equal to its membership.

The executive board is the governing body of the IFL between sessions of the congress. Its membership is composed of 15 officers elected by the congress for a 4-year period. Meetings of the board must be held at least once a year but may be convened as often as deemed necessary by its members. The president of the IFL, elected for a 4-year term by the congress, is ex officio president of the board. A 50-member central committee assumes the daily executive authority of the IFL.

Trade union leadership spans the Icelandic political spectrum, but factional infighting in recent years has

generally been subordinated to the broader interests of the labor movement. The strongest single political force in Icelandic labor is the People's Alliance, which controls such large and important groups as the Federation of Unskilled Workers, Federation of Construction Workers, and Federation of Metal Workers and Shipbuilders. By 1970 the conservative Independence Party had supplanted the Social Democratic Party as the second-ranking political faction in organized labor, its strength based primarily on control of the Office and Store Clerks Union and the Factory Workers Union. The Progressive Party has also made advances in the trade union movement in the last decade, particularly in areas outside Reykjavik, where party strength traditionally derives from the Icelandic Cooperative Movement. In November 1968 democratic labor elements succeeded in wresting control of the IFL from the Communists for the first time since 1954, winning the presidency, vice presidency, and 11 of 15 seats on the executive board. Nevertheless, the People's Alliance continues to play a leading role in the trade union movement as the only entirely labor-based political party and as a member of the present governing coalition.

Organized labor occupies a strong and secure position in Icelandic society; any governing coalition must have at least tacit labor acceptance to maintain a viable administration. Closed shop is normal procedure and arouses no controversy. Contracts negotiated by individual unions are legally binding on their workers, and agreements reached collectively by a labor federation are binding on member unions that have delegated bargaining authority to the federation. With the exception of strikes by civil servants, political strikes, and those in breach of contract, the right to strike is guaranteed.

The incidence of labor unrest is moderated to a certain extent by the homogeneity of the population—the social and economic gap between employer and employee tends to be narrow—and by the small scale of industry. Nevertheless, competition among skilled and unskilled labor and civil servants for relative position in a chronically inflationary economy has contributed to the erratic pattern of industrial disputes (Figure 8).

Although the Communist Party of Iceland has long been a powerful force in the trade union movement, labor has rarely used the strike for identifiable political ends. This may be partly explained by the insularity of the party and by its need to enlist the cooperation of non-Communist labor on domestic issues.

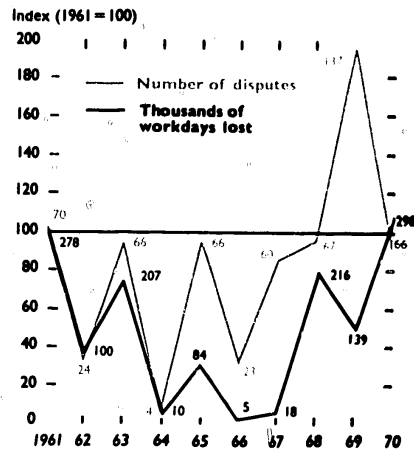


FIGURE 8. Labor disputes and workdays lost

#### 4. Organization of management

Management in Iceland is almost as well organized as labor, and collective bargaining with the unions is usually carried on by associations of employers. The central organization for management is the National Association of Icelandic Employers. It was founded in 1934 under the name Employers Association of Iceland, which was changed in 1946. The association is composed of about 33 affiliates, including all large privately owned firms. Among the more important of these are the two major airlines, *Flugfélag Islands II F* and *Lofteidir*; the major steamship line, *Islands Eimskipafélag II F*; the National Dairy Association, the cement factory; and the fertilizer plant. The National Association of Icelandic Employers is the principal spokesman for free enterprise and is strongly identified with the conservative Independence Party. Not all of its affiliates, however, share this political persuasion. Nonetheless, it has grown steadily in influence as a counterpoise to the powerful labor movement.

Just as the principal labor federation does not include every significant union, so the principal employers' organization does not include all

significant employer groups. The most important nonmembers are the National Association of Icelandic Industries, the National Federation of Wholesalers, the National Federation of Retailers, the Association of Icelandic Boat and Trawler Owners, and the Federation of Icelandic Cooperative Societies. Mutual cooperation in labor disputes is developing, however, between the association of employers and these nonmembers, notably the relationship formalized in the case of the association of industries. Some enterprises may belong to two employer groups, although such dual membership is opposed by organized labor as conferring excessive power on the employer associations.

The National Association of Icelandic Employers is controlled by a 30- to 40-member governing board composed of at least one representative from each affiliated employer, the three largest firms each have two representatives. The board is elected for 3 years and in turn selects from its number a five-member executive committee. The daily affairs of the association are conducted by an executive director named by the executive committee.

### 3. Labor management

The high level of organization of Icelandic labor and management—there are virtually no nonunion enterprises—is reflected in the prevalence of collective bargaining. Wages, benefits, and conditions of work are generally subject to contractual agreement between a union and an employers' association. Such agreements, however, set only minimal conditions acceptable to organized labor; individual workers, especially in times of high employment, may bargain for additional concessions.

The relatively limited legislation governing relations between the unions and employers is contained in Law Number 80 of 11 June 1938, as amended. The workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively, and to strike were delineated by this law, which also created the Labor Court and provided the state arbitration machinery that helps management and labor to negotiate new contracts. In 1948 and 1951 amendments were adopted which were concerned primarily with compulsory arbitration. The law is regarded as outdated and inadequate, and a number of attempts have been made to revise it or to pass a completely new law. These attempts have been frustrated by labor's strong opposition to giving up the flexibility it enjoys under the present law. A supplementary Law on the Rights of Laborers (1938) further delineates the right of workers to change their places of employment and covers pay benefits during periods of illness.

The Labor Court has exclusive jurisdiction over disputes arising while a contract is still in effect. Specifically, it judges disputes between employers and employees over the interpretation and validity of the contract, and it is empowered to prevent illegal work stoppages through the imposition of fines on the offending party. The court may judge any other disputes between workers and employers—during the term of a contract—which both parties have agreed to refer to the court, but only if a majority (three) of the presiding judges agrees to accept the case. It also passes judgment on jurisdictional disputes between unions or between individual workers and a union.

The Labor Court consists of five judges appointed for a 3-year term of office. One is normally selected by the National Association of Icelandic Employers, one by the IFL, and one by the Minister of Social Affairs, who chooses from among three candidates nominated by the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court appoints the remaining two judges directly. All judges nominated or selected by the Supreme Court must have a law degree. The other two are simply required to be responsible citizens. If an employer who is party to a dispute is not a member of the National Association of Icelandic Employers, or if a litigant union is not a member of the IFL, the Labor Court judge appointed by one or the other of these bodies must relinquish his seat in favor of a judge selected by the respective employer or union. If either the employer or employee group should fail to choose a judge, before half the delay of the summons expires, the replacement judge or judges will be named by the president of the court. All decisions of the Labor Court are binding on the litigants.

The civil courts may become involved in labor disputes if the Labor Court decides that an element of a case must be ruled upon by the District Court. The Supreme Court may assume occasional (and rare) appellate jurisdiction in a labor case, as when government workers in Akureyri held a 1-day strike in November 1961, notwithstanding the legal ban on striking by government employees. They were ruled to be government employees within the meaning of the law, and the highest court imposed a nominal fine on the union.

The state Arbitration Authority has been created to prevent work stoppages and assist labor and management to reach agreement during periods of collective bargaining for new contracts. It is composed of four mediators appointed by the Minister of Social Affairs, one from each of the four districts into which the country is divided for labor relations purposes. The minister also appoints four deputy mediators, who may substitute for their principals if they should

become ineligible in a particular case to carry out their function.

All appointments are made from among responsible citizens put forward as candidates by the Labor Court. The mediator and deputy mediator from District Number 1 (Reykjavik) must reside in the capital city; either one may serve as state mediator, a position carrying supervisory authority over the other three district mediators. The proposals made by the mediators are not binding on the parties to a dispute, but are usually respected.

The mediators may intervene in collective bargaining whenever settlement appears unlikely, but are required to intervene if half the negotiating period has passed without progress toward a new contract. The parties to the dispute are then required to notify the district and state mediators. The district mediator calls a closed session which both union and employer representatives must attend. If differences cannot be reconciled here, the district mediator is authorized to submit a compromise proposal which the two principal negotiating groups vote upon by secret ballot. Failing some compromise at this point, a strike usually ensues. In the event of a particularly severe dispute or one posing a threat to the economy, the Minister of Social Affairs may appoint a Special Conciliation Board, provided the action is requested by one of the opposing parties.

## E. Living conditions and social problems

### 1. Material well-being

Notwithstanding the persistent inflationary trend in the economy, wages continue to rise more rapidly than the cost of living, and in material possessions and health standards the Icelanders enjoy a near typical Scandinavian level of living. Only the Swedes, with the highest level in Europe, seem clearly to be better off. Real per capita income increased more than 350% between 1901 and 1960, and the per capita gross national product in 1971 was about US\$2,830, a figure rendered more meaningful in Iceland because of the relatively even dispersion of goods and services. Housing, a chronic problem through the mid-20th century because all timber had to be imported, is now adequate for nearly the whole population. As recently as the early 1900's, most of the populace lived little better than American frontiersmen on the Great Plains, in sod and timber huts, or at best, in corrugated iron-faced dwellings. Figure 9 illustrates two types of buildings that were still typical in the first quarter of the 20th century. Nearly all the old structures, therefore, have had to be replaced. Housing

investment since World War II has ranged up to 10.5% of the gross national income; more than half of Iceland's dwellings have been built since 1945. New units are modern by European standards; private homes and apartments are built of reinforced concrete and equipped with the plumbing conveniences considered normal in middle class continental Scandinavian homes. Figure 10 illustrates typical contemporary urban and rural housing. Utilizing one of the few natural resources that the land offers, Icelanders heat approximately 50% of all housing geothermally. Many houses are still completed by the exchange of skills among friends and relatives, resulting in an unusually long construction period averaging 2 years. As in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, city slums have practically disappeared, while the rural "sod farmhouses" are still found in some number only on the east coast.

Nearly all dwelling units have refrigerators and either private washing machines or immediate access to community machines. Vacuum cleaners, electric mixers, and other kitchen appliances are virtually as commonplace as in Sweden, where an average 85% of the population use them. Cheap electric power as well as high per capita income accounts for the wide use of electrical appliances.

Icelanders rank among the best fed peoples in the world, although the cuisine is not too imaginative. They are also generally well clothed. Most textile and leather goods are expensive by U.S. and European standards, because of high protective tariffs. However, domestically manufactured woolen goods made from Icelandic yarn tend to be more reasonable. On the whole, high wages enable the people to have wardrobes adequate for the climate and the fairly frequent changes of clothing that are customary in most Icelandic homes.

In 1970, 205 passenger cars were in use per 1,000 population, or nearly one automobile for every household, despite import and special levies which raise the cost of vehicles destined for private use to about 200% of the factory price. The retail price of a U.S. built subcompact car, all taxes included, is about US\$4,500. In 1969, 335 telephones were available per 1,000 population, the number of radios approaches 500 per 1,000. Thus, the average home has perhaps one telephone and two radios. Icelandic TV broadcasting was not introduced until September 1966, but in the Reykjavik-Keflavik area, where U.S. Armed Forces television could be received, nearly one-half of the homes already had sets by that date. By 1970 coverage had been extended to all major population centers, and receivers numbered 200 per 1,000 persons.



FIGURE 9. Traditional rural and urban structures

Farm buildings still functional in 1941



Upper secondary school (Gymnasium), Reykjavik, early 20th century

## 2. Social welfare

The comprehensive, government-directed social welfare system of Iceland is typically Scandinavian, rooted in the traditions of communal responsibility and cooperative endeavor which have characterized the area. While the proper welfare role of the state was at issue as recently as the 1930's, all political parties now support a broad welfare program. Even the Independence Party tends to confine its sporadic opposition to sudden increases in benefits. The national budget in 1971 allocated for social security

purposes 4.236 billion kronur (US\$48.1 million). This represented 38.4% of planned expenditures and was by far the largest single item. Local jurisdictions also participate in social insurance programs, allocating approximately one-third of their budgets for welfare purposes.

Social security has been a government responsibility only since 1936; before that it was the affair of privately sponsored sickness insurance societies and of accident insurance programs maintained by employers. From 1936 to 1972 government-administered social security evolved into a far-reaching system that



Typical form of the 1970s

FIGURE 10 Contemporary housing

Section of a house with a flat roof and a small porch. The house is built on a hillside and is surrounded by a fence.



FIGURE 11. Distribution of social insurance costs (percent), 1969

SOURCE	PENSION FUND	ACCIDENT INSURANCE	SICKNESS INSURANCE	UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE
National government.....	36	0	42	50
Local authorities.....	18	0	19	25
Employers.....	14	100	0	25
Insured persons.....	32	0	39	0
Total.....	100	100	100	100

may be regarded on a par with systems in continental Scandinavia as one of the most comprehensive in the Western world. Other than a residual role in voluntary health insurance, private social insurance programs are no longer common in Iceland. Figure 11 shows the distribution of responsibility for social insurance costs.

The government-sponsored social security system was established by the Social Insurance Act of 1936 and was expanded by major legislation in 1946, 1956, 1960, and 1963. The Ministry of Health and Social Security, through its State Social Security Institute, is responsible for administering the specific programs. The institute is managed by a director, appointed by the minister, and a five-member board chosen by the *Althing* after each legislative election. The institute is represented in each of the 23 rural districts and 14 incorporated towns by the district and municipal sheriffs.

All citizens are covered by compulsory pension insurance, which includes old-age and disability pensions, family allowances, children's annuities, mothers' allowances, maternity grants, widows' compensation, and widows' pensions. With the exception of the family allowance, which is wholly state financed, these benefits are funded jointly by the national government, the insured, the municipalities, and employers. Under the 1963 National Insurance Act, most Icelanders are entitled to an old-age pension at age 67. In 1967 the annuity, regardless of income, amounted to 2,786 *kronur* per month (US\$64.70); an eligible man and wife together draw 90% of the sum of two single pensions. The stipend increases for each year up to age 72 that retirement is postponed, with a maximum rise of 67%. The pension for 75% or greater disability is the same as the old-age payment. A disabled person is eligible, in addition, for supplementary assistance for a spouse (80%) and for children under 16 (46%). Impairments of 50% to 74% are compensated by smaller pensions. The degree of disability is determined by the chief physician of the State Social Security Institute and, upon appeal, by an outside committee of three physicians; the civil courts

provide additional recourse. Funds for the support of widows also derive in part from the pension fund. The amount of such support is contingent on the woman's economic status, the number of her dependent children, her age and working capacity, and the local cost of living.

The accident insurance fund is maintained entirely by the employers. Its benefits follow a complex schedule; payments vary greatly according to family circumstances, but in all instances cover full medical and hospital costs, and enable the insured and his dependents, while he is incapacitated, to maintain approximately the standard of living to which they are accustomed. The support of parents, women widowed by accidental death, and orphans also derives partly from the funds of the accident insurance program.

Sickness insurance in Iceland has grown out of the early programs of privately sponsored societies, which have been subordinate to the Director of Social Security since 1936. All residents of Iceland aged 16 and over are required by law to participate in their local societies, which defray fully hospital expenses incurred by the insured and his dependents for all but a few exceptional illnesses. Care at childbirth is entirely free, and new mothers are granted a cash stipend. For outpatient care, Icelanders pay a general practitioner US\$0.11 for a consultation and \$0.28 for a house call. The sickness insurance societies pay the balance of the physician's bill, in accordance with periodically negotiated contracts with the Icelandic Medical Association. Outpatients pay 25% of the fees charged by specialists, and the societies pay the remaining 75% in accordance with rates stipulated in the same contracts. The societies also pay 50% to 100% of the costs of medicines and participate in transportation expenses. Costs incidental to mental illness, tuberculosis, and a few other chronic diseases are borne entirely by the government, 30% by national and 20% by local authorities.

Sickness benefits help compensate the insured for lost wages. The minimum daily allowances, payable for up to 52 weeks in a 2-year period, amount to



US\$1.16 for married men, \$0.14 each for as many as three children, and \$1.02 for other adults. The amounts allowed vary among the societies and may be slightly augmented through the payment of larger premiums by the insured, but the total benefits forthcoming from publicly sponsored societies may not exceed 75% of normal wages. In practice they are rarely that high. Benefits are payable after sick leave, which averages 28 days per year, is used up. If the insured person is chronically ill, national and local authorities take over the medical and maintenance costs after a specified time.

A national unemployment insurance program was established in 1956 under the administration of the State Social Security Institute. The director of the institute is advised by a seven-member board elected by the *Althing* from nominations made by labor and management. Benefits are available to dues-paying members of trade unions, age 16 to 67, who have been employed at least 6 of the previous 12 months at standard union wages, and who have been out of work at least 36 working days in the last 6 months and at least 9 of the preceding 18 working days. Workers are ineligible for benefits if they reside abroad, refuse work offered by the Labor Exchange, or if their income in the last 6 months equals 65% of the annual average wage for workmen in their district. Commercial, office, and public employees are not protected by unemployment insurance. The daily allowance was, in November 1968, \$3.75 plus \$0.33 each for as many as three children. This stipend may be drawn for as long as 4 months. The large reserves accumulated by the insurance fund during normal periods of high employment have been invested to stabilize employment in the smaller communities.

### 3. Social problems

Serious social problems are at a minimum in Iceland. As in other northern countries, alcoholism continues to result in occasional rowdiness, health difficulties, and broken homes, and is a persisting concern of the authorities. It is probably under better control, however, than at any other time in Iceland's history. Chronic alcoholics receive free public assistance as outpatients or in state-maintained homes. Temperance societies have existed since the last century, as they have in the other Scandinavian countries. They are usually affiliated with church groups and have probably had some effect in reducing alcoholism. Drug abuse exists, but on a reduced scale in relation to the problem in other socially advanced countries. Known abuse in 1972 was largely confined to marijuana smoking by young adults.

While juvenile delinquency is less of a problem in Iceland than in most other societies, government officials and many other Icelanders are concerned about it as a potentially serious problem. Some corrective efforts have been made, none with great success to date. Heavy teenage drinking is prevalent. Nevertheless, the state-maintained homes for juvenile delinquents had only 16 inmates in 1965. In the total population, serious crimes are very rarely perpetrated, and begging and vagabondage have been entirely eliminated; the jails, therefore, are small and sparsely inhabited except on weekends, when those guilty of drunkenness and disorderly conduct are briefly incarcerated. The high incidence of illegitimate births seems partly balanced by the generally responsible relationship existing in the "informal" families; furthermore, civil marriages, if not religious ceremonies, are coming to be more accepted as proper and necessary.

## F. Health

### 1. Incidence of disease

The Icelandic population is one of the world's healthiest. This physical well-being, however, is associated almost entirely with the 20th century. During 1,000 years of prior existence the Icelanders had considerable difficulty in surviving their rugged environment. Such disasters as volcanic eruptions, floods, and famine, as well as fishing accidents took a high toll. Poor communications hampered medical care in many isolated communities; the damp, cold climate, together with confined, primitive living conditions, caused a high incidence of tuberculosis; the periodic plagues caused a high death rate among the weakened population; the isolation during the long winter months, aggravated by seasonal unemployment, led to widespread alcoholism. Since the end of the 19th century, however, modernization of the fishing industry, expansion of the economy, and urbanization have brought a marked rise in living standards. The same factors stimulated the development of communications, public education, technical and scientific knowledge, and an efficient public health service. Conditions necessary for the suppression of disease were thus present, and within little more than half a century remarkable success has been attained. In the early 1970's low infant mortality and high life expectancy place Iceland nearly on a par with Sweden and the Netherlands as having the highest standards of public health in the world.

Some health hazards to the indigenous population still remain. Acute respiratory infections aggravated

by the inclement weather account for the highest incidence of illness. Influenza outbreaks occur annually. Mumps, measles, and whooping cough have reached epidemic proportions a number of times during the 20th century; they have become endemic to Iceland only in relatively recent years, and the population has not developed resistance to them. Excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages (principally *akeavit*) is also a lingering health problem. But other illnesses once prevalent, notably tuberculosis, have been drastically curtailed, while the enteric diseases have been virtually eliminated since the introduction of strict sanitation procedures. Venereal diseases, so common in European port cities, did not become a problem until World War II brought the Icelanders into frequent contact with the crews of foreign ships; these diseases have been vigorously combated by public health authorities and are again effectively controlled. The causes of mortality in 1969 are shown in the following tabulation:

	DEATHS PER 1,000 POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF DEATHS FROM ALL CAUSES
Diseases of the heart	2.104	30.5
Cancer	1.444	21.0
Apoplexy	.857	12.4
Violence (all forms)	.577	8.4
Pneumonia	.562	8.2
Influenza	.103	1.5
Congenital malformations	.079	1.2
Birth injuries, postnatal asphyxia	.064	0.9
Bronchitis	.064	0.9
Other or unknown causes	1.038	15.0
	6.892	100.0

The low incidence of diseases recognized as controllable by medical science is another indication of the high level of public health. Violence as a cause includes death by drowning and from other injuries at sea, still measurable hazards in the fishing fleets. The only endemic diseases which could seriously affect outsiders protected by modern preventive measures are acute respiratory ailments. Frostbite, trenchfoot, and snowblindness are also potential hazards.

## 2. Animals and plants

Endemic animal diseases largely affect sheep, which are the principal livestock, and include progressive pneumonia (*maedi*), paratuberculosis, adenomatosis (*jaagstekte*)—another lung ailment, and chronic encephalitis. Hog cholera was introduced into Iceland during World War II, but is no longer a serious problem. Dog tapeworm (*Echinococcus granulosus*, locally called *sullaviki*) is also endemic, but dogs are banned from urban areas, and the disease is well controlled.

Indigenous animal and plant life constitute a negligible threat to health. The large variety of birds, though carriers of some avian diseases, is not a hazard to human or animal life. Snakes or poisonous reptiles are not found on the island. Seals abound but carry no diseases dangerous to man. A wild fox may occasionally be rabid, or a nonindigenous, hungry polar bear may arrive from Greenland on a section of drift ice. The only rodents are mice and brown rats; both, however, are fairly numerous and often raid food storage areas; rats may attack sheep when food is scarce in the countryside. Effective measures by the public health services limit the number of these rodents in the towns and cities. Although Iceland, unlike other northern areas, is blessed by the absence of mosquitoes, some species of flies are harmful to cultivated vegetables, while other biting species constitute a minor health hazard. The three species of lice associated with human beings are only rarely encountered in Iceland because of strong habits of personal and environmental cleanliness.

The only dangerous Icelandic plants are poisonous mushroom fungi, notably of the genera *Ananita* and copper trumpet (*Clitocybe curtipes*). Both grow in meadows and among patches of grass in the lava fields during summer. The Icelandic species of *Ananita* contains the liver poison amanitine, producing acute abdominal pains 6 to 24 hours after ingestion, followed by persistent vomiting and diarrhea, and usually death 3 to 8 days after ingestion. The ingestion of copper trumpet produces within 1 to 6 hours gastrointestinal irritation, accompanied by nausea, diarrhea, and headache. Another poisonous mushroom, *Leptota amianthina*, is confined almost entirely to the Vestmannaeyjar off the southern coast and after ingestion produces the same symptoms as copper trumpet.

## 3. Diet

The Icelanders eat very well. The daily per capita caloric intake of 2,833 (1966/67) represents a decline from the 3,200 to 3,300 average of the preceding decade, but the percentage derived from animal sources increased to 46, a proportion typical of the better fed nations. As the following tabulation shows, Iceland compares quite favorably with its Nordic neighbors in availability of foodstuffs per capita:

	YEAR	CALORIES PER DAY	PERCENT ANIMAL ORIGIN	PROTEIN PER DAY (GRAMS)
Denmark	1968/69	3,180	46	89
Finland	1968/69	2,890	45	88
ICELAND	1966/67	2,833	46	122
Norway	1968/69	2,910	43	82
Sweden	1967/68	2,850	41	80

Food is plentiful in Iceland, although variety is rather limited, and the national cuisine, therefore, is somewhat monotonous. Fish is one of the most important items in the diet and may be prepared fresh, frozen, salted, or dried. The most popular are salmon, trout, char, cod, halibut, and herring. The Icelanders also take red algae (*Rhodymenia palmata*) from the ocean and usually eat it with fish and potatoes. Cheese and coagulated cow milk, or *skyr*, are important sources of animal protein. *Skyr*, a popular product similar to yogurt, is mixed with sugar, jam, honey, or cream. Lamb and mutton are plentiful, and smoked lamb is a traditional main course. Beef is also eaten, but is less plentiful and therefore more expensive. Pork products are increasingly popular, but do not yet constitute an important part of the diet. More bizarre national dishes include boiled sheep's head, ripe raw shark meat, raw whale blubber, and seal flippers, cooked or raw. The consumption of vegetables and fruits, most of which are grown in greenhouses (heated by natural hot water springs) or imported, remains limited because of the high cost. A variety of such products is available, however, including tomatoes, grapes, melons, citrus fruits, and bananas. A few hardy root vegetables, notably potatoes and turnips, are grown on regular farms and are plentiful and inexpensive. Various native berries, including bilberry and whortleberry, are available in abundance, and are frequently eaten fresh with sugar and cream. Other staple foods include cereals (principally imported wheat and rye), poultry, and butter. Coffee is the chief beverage; milk, cocoa, and tea are also consumed. Notwithstanding high prices, the excessive consumption of a native ale, *mungat*, and other alcoholic beverages is a problem.

#### 4. Food handling and waste disposal

Standards of food handling and storage conform to the high Scandinavian norm, and instances of food contamination are rare. The natural asset of a cool climate is supplemented by the use of modern food preservation techniques, including refrigeration, and the cooperation of a populace well indoctrinated in sanitary procedure. The climate, combined with the sparse population, helps preclude problems of water pollution. Rivers, however, which are partly fed from glaciers and direct surface drainage, carry large quantities of fine mineral dust and do not afford water suitable for drinking. Potable water derives almost entirely from underground or from spring-fed streams. Virtually all homes in the towns are supplied with municipal piped water. Most villages also have municipal water systems, but those which do not are

so located that adequate private supplies are readily available. Fresh water for drinking and all other purposes is also available on farms, except on the Vestmannaeyjar islands, where ground water is brackish and total reliance must be placed on rain water. The town of Vestmannaeyjar, however, has been served since 1908 by a fresh water pipeline from the mainland.

Waste disposal is not a health hazard in Iceland. All towns and most villages have adequate public sewerage systems. Many homes, however, still have private septic tanks, or sewage drains to the sea. The public systems usually treat the sewage before letting it into the sea; the private systems do not. Because nearly all settlements are close to the ocean, the rivers are little used for sewage disposal, and they remain largely uncontaminated.

Every municipality of 500 or more inhabitants has a locally elected sanitary board chaired by the sheriff or his representative and including *ex officio* the district physician. The board is responsible for environmental sanitation, food control, and enforcement of national and local sanitary ordinances.

#### 5. Medical care

The standards of medical care are among the world's best. In 1969 there were 263 practicing physicians residing in Iceland, or one doctor for every 771 inhabitants. This ratio is comparable to ratios in mainland Scandinavia and is only somewhat less favorable than the 1 to 650 physician to population ratio enjoyed by the United States. In the same year, Icelandic physicians were complemented by 89 dentists, 193 nurses, 133 midwives, and 95 pharmacists. Although the geographic distribution of medical personnel is heavily skewed in favor of the Reykjavik area, where most doctors, including three-fourths of the specialists, practice, an air ambulance service links isolated areas with the capital when specialized care is required.

The availability of hospital care is also impressive, even by the very high Scandinavian standards. In 1969, 41 hospitals provided a total of 2,173 beds, or 1 bed for every 96 Icelanders as shown in the following tabulation:

TYPE	HOSPITALS	BEDS
General (cottage hospitals included)	29	1,482
Tuberculosis	2	62
Mental	3	324
Leprosariums	1	4
Alcoholic	2	44
Mental rehabilitation	1	111
Maternity	3	146

In addition, there are a number of nursing homes for the aged and chronically ill; in 1966 they accommodated approximately 500 residents. Of the hospital beds available, 64% are located in Reykjavik.

There are four large general hospitals in Iceland. The State Hospital (400 beds), St. Joseph's Hospital (185 beds), and the City of Reykjavik Hospital (150 beds) are in the capital, while the Akureyri City Hospital (128 beds) is located in that northern port city. The State Hospital, which provides medical and paramedical training, serves as a model for the others; it has departments of internal medicine, general surgery, lung surgery, pediatrics, dermatology and venereal diseases, gynecology and obstetrics, X-ray, and clinical laboratory. The State Hospital and most of the specialized hospitals are state owned; the other general hospitals, with two exceptions, are operated by municipalities and counties with state aid. The exceptions, operated by the Roman Catholic Church, are St. Joseph's General Hospital in Reykjavik and St. Joseph's Hospital (40 beds) in neighboring Hafnarfjordhur. Blood donations may be made in most hospitals; the central collection point is the National Blood Bank in Reykjavik, an annex of the State Hospital. It is responsible for the prompt distribution of whole blood and plasma in the event of emergencies.

The well-organized government health and social welfare services are expected to work with the hospitals in coping with possible disasters. Notwithstanding the Civil Defense Law of 1962, little has been done to anticipate war disaster. Sea and mountain rescue services to deal with the type of emergencies well known to Icelanders and a small, efficient Red Cross are the only other emergency services known to be functioning.

#### 6. Medical training

Medical training at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Iceland meets high standards, and graduates, after completing the necessary supplementary studies at reputable foreign hospitals, may practice anywhere in Scandinavia. On the other hand, only native-born or naturalized citizens may be licensed to practice in Iceland. The teaching staff at the university consists of 13 professors of medicine and 26 lecturers; in the autumn of 1970, 438 Icelanders were pursuing studies in medicine (334), dentistry (70), and pharmacy (34), 18% of them abroad. From a quarter to a third of these students usually leave Iceland permanently and practice medicine or allied

subjects elsewhere in northern Europe or North America. Medical training is completed after 7 to 8 years at the university, after which the young physician goes abroad, usually to Europe or North America, to meet his residency and internship requirements, which together take another 4 to 5 years. Dental training requires 6 years at the Faculty of Medicine, and nurses training requires 3 years at the Iceland State School of Nursing attached to the State Hospital. Graduates of both programs are automatically licensed to practice elsewhere in Scandinavia. The training of midwives takes place in the Midwifery School of Iceland, also at the State Hospital, and requires a 2-year course of study. Courses in veterinary medicine must be completed outside Iceland.

#### 7. Public health administration

Jurisdiction over public health has been shifted among the highly flexible cabinet posts, but it usually rests with either the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Ministry of Justice. Directly subordinate to the ministry is the permanent National Health Service, run by the National Physician (*Landlaeknir*), with the assistance of a seven- to nine-member Medical Council. The council includes the chief officer of the State Social Security Institute and several specialists from outside the ministry who hold executive and consultative positions. The Professor of Hygiene at the University of Iceland is adviser on hygiene and research; the Professor of Pharmacology serves as consultant on drug addiction; the Associate Professor of Pharmacy supervises pharmacies and control of drugs; a special adviser supervises dairies, and another oversees the operation of hotels and restaurants.

Iceland is divided into 57 medical districts, as well as approximately 200 midwife districts and 20 veterinary districts. Each medical district is, by law, to be served by at least one National Health Service physician, but in practice vacancies in the outlying areas are often difficult to fill. The local district and parish councils, in consultation with the medical district physicians and veterinarians, enforce all health regulations concerning markets, restaurants, schools, and public sleeping and eating accommodations, sewage disposal, prevention of disease, control of alcoholism, and maintenance of local sanitary conditions. The cooperation of the population may be depended upon, as is evidenced by the neat, typically Scandinavian appearance of virtually all towns and even villages (Figure 12).

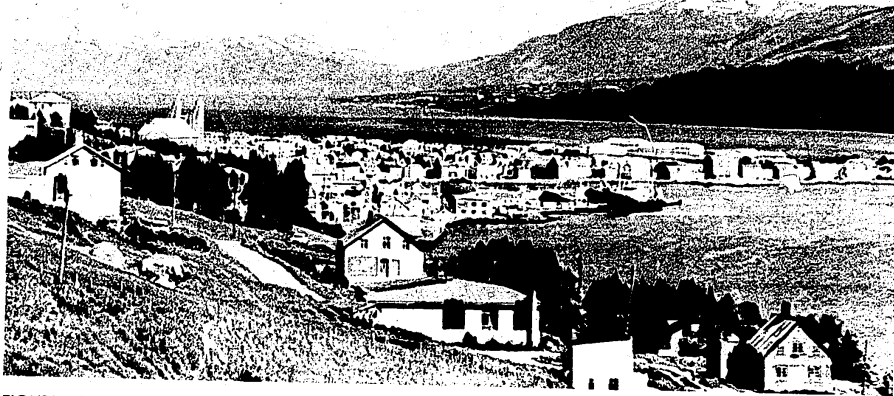


FIGURE 12. Akureyri, principal town of northern Iceland, 1971

### G. Religion

In conformity with the Scandinavian pattern, the overwhelming majority of Icelanders (97.7%) identify themselves with the Lutheran Protestant faith. In contrast with the Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, however, the Icelanders have shown a more pronounced spirit of dissension within the Lutheran denomination. Thus, 91.6% associate themselves with the state-supported Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, while 6.1% belong to the Free Lutheran churches, consisting of the Free Church (about 9,000 members) and the Independent Congregation (about 2,000 members). The Free Lutherans separated from the official church at the end of the 19th century, principally in protest over the association of state and church and the obligatory payment of the church tax.

The religious affiliation of another 1.7% of the population is divided between splinter Protestant groups (1.2%) on the one hand, and Roman Catholics (0.5%) on the other. The Protestants, consisting principally of Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, and Baptists, are concentrated around Reykjavik except for a small Baptist congregation at Akureyri. The Roman Catholics maintain two churches, a convent, two hospitals, and three elementary schools in the Reykjavik-Hafnarfjordhur area, and a convent in the Stykkisholmur area. Reestablished in Iceland

through Danish and French missions at the end of the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church started a vigorous expansion program in the 1920's, when its sponsorship was shifted to the Netherlands. Fewer than 1% of the Icelandic population holds no religious beliefs.

The people of Iceland have been influenced in their culture, manners, and habits by a millennium of Christianity, much the same as have the continental Scandinavians. When the Vikings arrived in 874, the Irish monks who had first settled Iceland some 80 years earlier were driven out, killed, or assimilated into the pagan society. Christianity was reintroduced from Norway in the year 1000. The Bishoprics of Skalholt (founded in 1056) and Holar (1106) were centers of cultural life until the 18th century and figured prominently in the perfection and preservation of much of Iceland's rich early literature, notably the histories and the sagas.

The Reformation was imposed by the suzerain Danes in 1551 after little more than a decade of spirited resistance; as elsewhere in Scandinavia, the transition to Lutheran Protestantism was brief and thorough. Because of proximity to the Lutheran German states and distance from Rome, disruption to the public order was minimal, and enmities engendered by the earlier skirmishes subsided (in Iceland the persistent "Roman" Bishop of Holar had

lost his head). Thus, the entire Nordic area, but notably Iceland, was spared the century or more of violent internecine warfare that characterized the period in Western and central Europe, and the island's social cohesion and stability were not disrupted. Since the mid-16th century, 400 years of pervasive, unchallenged exposure to Lutheran Protestantism have strongly influenced the outlook and behavior of the Icelanders, notwithstanding a latter-day typically Scandinavian approach to formal religious observance, which may be described, at best, as relaxed.

National attitudes that appear to stem at least in part from the Protestant ethic are belief in the essential worthiness of personal industry and the desire for material improvement in this world. Another important social outlook frequently identified with Protestantism, particularly in northern Europe, is a well-developed sense of social responsibility or civic consciousness. Its special manifestation in the comprehensive social welfare programs instituted in the Scandinavian countries has proved to be compatible with the almost equal emphasis placed on self-reliance by Protestants in the past. Here, however, other factors, associated as much with the political development of advanced Western states as with ethical values, come into play.

Although the Protestant ethic has markedly affected the Icelanders' social outlook, his observance of church ceremonies is casual. Faithful communicants of the state church probably account for no more than 7% of the membership, or 6% of the total population. Since the dissenting Lutherans, other Protestants, and the Roman Catholics practice their religion more consistently, perhaps 13% of all Icelanders attend church regularly. This proportion is larger than elsewhere in Scandinavia and may be associated with the relatively rural aspect of the Icelandic population. Clergymen fear that increasing urbanization and the accompanying demand for material betterment are eroding spiritual values and may further loosen the ties of the Icelanders with their national church. All Icelanders, however, are still assured an early and prolonged exposure to the teachings of the Protestant Christian religion; religious instruction is a required subject in the public schools.

The Constitution of the Icelandic Republic (1944) reaffirms that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is to be supported and protected by the state. However, it also stipulates that no person is obligated to contribute to any religious institution against his will, and the taxes designated for the state church may be redirected by the contributing citizen to any of the

other recognized churches, or, if he is a nonbeliever, to the University of Iceland.

The clergy of the state church is well educated. All ministers must have a theological degree, usually from the University of Iceland. In the rural areas a minister, in addition to his church duties, may operate a farm or carry on some other independent economic activity. He may have many of the same economic problems as his parishioners, since he is expected to supplement his small salary from the state with independent earnings. Although ministers have traditionally been leaders in rural cultural life, they are not set apart by dress or standard of living. Most Lutheran clergymen are members of the Association of Icelandic Clergymen, which protects their economic interests and acts as a pressure group for church matters in general.

The national Evangelical Lutheran Church is organized into one diocese or bishopric, with the bishop's seat in Reykjavik; two suffragan bishoprics for the northern and southern subdivisions of the diocese; 21 deaneries, and nearly 300 parishes. The President of Iceland is the supreme authority of the church. He delegates his powers to the Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, who, along with the *Althing*, governs the church in secular matters. The bishop is the religious head of the church and presides over the church synod, the highest purely ecclesiastical body in the country. The synod meets annually and is composed of all the clergymen in the state church. It chooses the bishop, by a three-fifths vote, from a list of three candidates proposed by the synod. Their functions are chiefly honorary, although they may ordain ministers in the absence of the bishop, and they may consecrate a new bishop in the event of the incumbent's death or incapacity. At the head of the deanery is the dean, who is appointed by the bishop on the proposal of the ministers within this administrative unit. He advises the bishop on matters concerning the deanery and may represent him in his duties in the area. Only some 100 ministers serve all the parishes; each one, therefore, may serve two or occasionally more local churches. The ministers are selected by a vote of the parishioners.

## H. Education

### I. General

Public instruction in Iceland was the responsibility of the national church until the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1880. The prestige that the insular society accorded those who could read the vernacular Bible and other Icelandic literary efforts

and the consequent popularity of the family reading circle as a pastime in rural homesteads prompted most Icelanders to learn to read and write. The seeming adequacy of home and church instruction may partly account for the conspicuous tardiness of the sizerain Danes in providing state-directed public education. The 1880 law, which merely stated the concern of the government that all children be instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, left the actual teaching either to the homes (with the help of the minister) or to the elementary schools, which were just then being established in the more populous towns and villages. In 1907 school attendance was made obligatory for people between 10 and 14 years of age, but the home could continue to undertake education until the child was 10. Subsequent laws in 1926 and 1936 extended the authority of the state, and the comprehensive Education Act of 1946 established the school system in its present form. Education is free and compulsory from the ages of 7 to 15, and free through the university, except for books and maintenance.

In spite of the sparse settlement of some rural areas and the difficulties of transportation and communication, the compulsory school laws are well enforced. All towns and villages and most rural districts have adequate elementary school buildings and teaching staffs. Isolated farm families may send their children to boarding schools or play host to itinerant teachers, who instruct formally for 2 months and prescribe work to be accomplished under family supervision for the remaining 7 months of a school year. The determination of curriculum and the control of examinations by the Ministry of Education in Reykjavik assure reasonably uniform standards throughout the country and help to account for the extraordinarily high, typically Scandinavian literacy rate of 99.9%.

Iceland is divided into some 37 educational districts (*skolaheradi*) and 215 local school districts (*skolaherfti*). The former nearly coincide with the 23 rural districts and 14 incorporated towns, and the latter coincide with the 215 civil parishes. In each educational district a five-member educational board is elected for a term of 4 years by the town or district council, with the mayor as *ex officio* chairman in the towns and the judge as chairman in the rural districts. The educational boards concern themselves principally with administrative matters, such as the location of school buildings and the division of a town or district into local school districts. Each school district is governed by a three-member board, one of whom is appointed by the national government and acts as chairman; the other two are elected by the town

council or in rural areas by the township. The functions of the local school board are also primarily administrative and include distribution of books, selection of teaching candidates, submission of local budgets, and supervision of expenditures. Either the educational district or local school boards may suggest slight modifications in curriculums, but all final decisions regarding course content are made by the Ministry of Education.

The national budget in 1971 allocated 1.84 billion Icelandic kronur (US\$20.9 million) for educational purposes. Expenditures for the school system were thus 16.7% of the budget and have been the second largest item for many years, exceeded only by the very large outlays for social welfare, health, and pensions (38.4% in 1971). Total expenditure on education as a fraction of the gross national product has risen steadily from 2.5% in 1950 to an estimated 5.0% in 1971. Capital outlays account for approximately one-fourth of total spending on education (average for 1966-71). The national government pays most of the construction costs of the public schools but is assisted by local government for as much as 50% of construction costs for day primary and secondary schools and 25% of construction costs for boarding schools. The state pays virtually all teachers' salaries and funds one-fourth of general operating costs in primary schools, one-half of such expenses in secondary and technical schools, and all operating costs associated with grammar schools, teacher training colleges, agricultural and nautical schools, and the university. In some cases business and cultural organizations assist in maintaining vocational, technical, or cultural courses of special interest to them. Private primary schools receive no state subsidy, although they are frequently aided by local jurisdictions.

## 2. School system

The Icelandic school system is patterned after the Danish system, which, as throughout Scandinavia, was heavily influenced by Lutheran pedagogy. The Icelandic schools are separated into four levels: primary, lower secondary, upper secondary, and university; they correspond approximately to the traditional primary school, middle school, *gymnasium*, and university in Denmark. The primary school (*barnaskoli*) is organized into a "younger division" and an "older division," for children between the ages of 7 and 10 and 10 and 13, respectively. The school week in the younger divisions consists of 21 40-minute periods, and the course work includes Icelandic, handwriting, arithmetic, environmental studies, handicrafts, gymnastics, and singing.

In the older divisions the school week consists of 33 40-minute periods, and the curriculum includes, in addition to all the subjects cited above, religion, history of Iceland, geography, natural history, drawing, domestic science (for girls only), and swimming. The students who do well in Icelandic, which emphasizes the classic Icelandic sagas, may start one foreign language during their final (6th) year. The emphasis placed on learning the sagas indicates pride in national literature and history. The priority given to swimming lessons reflects the importance of the fishing industry. Classrooms in primary schools are built to accommodate no more than 30 children. In Reykjavik the average class has from 27 to 30 children; in smaller schools, where one to three age groups are sometimes taught in the same room, the size of the class is seldom over 20. To avoid overcrowding, double sessions are necessary for some Reykjavik classes. A primary school certificate, normally acquired at age 13, admits pupils to the lower secondary schools.

The lower secondary schools provide 2-, 3-, and 4-year courses. It is here that students begin to separate into academic and vocational programs, although the differences are not yet marked, and outside of Reykjavik both programs are given in the same physical plants. Compulsory schooling is completed after 2 years, and the student takes an examination for the junior secondary school certificate (*unglingaprof*). He is then entitled to enter certain vocational schools or to continue his secondary schooling. Three years of lower secondary education lead to the examination for the middle school certificate (*midhskolaprof* or *landsprof*), awarded in both the academic and vocational programs. An academic middle school certificate qualifies the student to enter the upper secondary school and the teachers college, while a vocational middle school certificate would entitle him to undertake further study in the more skilled trades at public vocational schools. The curriculum for the 3-year academic program includes Icelandic, Danish, English, mathematics, physics, natural science, hygiene, geography, history, religion, drawing, writing, handicrafts, domestic science (for girls), physical training, and music. Most of the students whose formal schooling ends with the lower secondary school remain for a fourth year and take the examination for a lower secondary school certificate (*gagnfraedhaprof*) in either the academic or the practical course.

There are five public upper secondary schools: three at Reykjavik, one at Akureyri in the north, and a boarding school at Laugarvatn in the southwest. Construction of at least two additional schools is

contemplated for areas not adequately served. Students entering these schools average 16 years of age; they take 1 year of common study and then choose one of two 3-year courses of study: the language program, which emphasizes modern languages and Latin; or the science program, which stresses mathematics and the physical sciences. The subjects covered in both are approximately the same, but the emphasis varies considerably. In addition to the course work taken for the middle school certificate, the upper secondary students study German, French, Latin, and chemistry. Both programs give bookkeeping as a minor subject, and the science course includes some instruction in astronomy. The emphasis on languages reflects the isolation of Icelanders; the select upper secondary students become leaders in government and business and have to communicate with Europeans and Americans. Nevertheless, heavy emphasis continues to be placed on the native language, which has a strong national appeal. The course work compares with that in the continental *gymnasias* and *lycees*, and it provides an education about the equivalent of completion of 1 year in a strong U.S. college or university. The Icelandic program, however, has a slightly more practical orientation (as in bookkeeping), and the average graduate is 20 years of age, as compared to 19 in Denmark and 18½ in West Germany and France. The private Commercial College at Reykjavik is also fully accredited by the government as an upper secondary institution. At the conclusion of the course work in all six schools, the student may take the examination for the matriculation or university entrance certificate (*studentsprof*).

Precise information on the adequacy of school plants in the secondary school system is lacking. Although the oldest of Reykjavik's three public upper secondary schools is housed partially in a corrugated iron-faced building constructed in 1846, a new building construction program here and at the other upper schools has been under way and is making modern classroom and laboratory space available. A sharply higher birth rate which followed World War II and continued into the late 1950's severely taxed existing facilities and forced an extensive building campaign, somewhat to the detriment of other aspects of Icelandic secondary education. In recent years, as the physical plant shortage has begun to ease, increased attention has been given to improving the pupil/teacher ratio and the quality of instruction.

The University of Iceland (*Haskoli Islands*) in Reykjavik is the only institution of higher education. It was founded in 1911 and includes six faculties:



theology, medicine (including dentistry and pharmacy), law, economics, philosophy (including languages, pedagogy, and Icelandic studies), and technology (including pure as well as applied mathematics, the natural sciences, and engineering). University students normally go abroad for specialized studies. For example, advanced students of medicine prefer to complete their training in the United States or Sweden. During the 1970/71 academic year it was estimated that 30% of Iceland's 2,348 university students were studying abroad; among scientific and technical students the proportion was nearly 60%. The most important sources of foreign training are Denmark, West Germany, Norway, United States, and Sweden, in that order. The establishment in 1970 of a 4-year engineering course at the university is expected to reduce dependence on foreign technical training.

Both European and American influences can be seen at the university. The elevation of technical training, chiefly engineering, to faculty status is an innovation of the U.S. type; the respect accorded this practical discipline reflects the recent frontier status of both countries. The inclusion into the 1960's of economics in the law faculty, however, pointed to a lingering Old World influence. Academic standards are high, comparing well with the Western European norm and with the stronger U.S. universities. The holder of a technical degree from the University of Iceland, as in medicine or engineering, may practice his profession anywhere in Scandinavia and in most other advanced Western countries. Degrees in theology and economics may be taken after 4 or 5 years of university work; similar degrees in Icelandic history and philology, dentistry, pharmacology, and engineering require 5 years; law requires 5 to 6 years; a master (*Magister*) in arts, 6 to 7 years; a medical degree, 7 to 8 years; and various Ph.D. degrees about 8 years. Post-World War II population growth and the expansion in secondary education have led to a doubling of university enrollment in Iceland in the past decade (from 790 in 1961, to 1,595 in 1971). Attendance is expected to redouble by 1978. Until recently the physical plant has not kept pace with this rapid rise in enrollment. In 1969, however, an ambitious building program was launched, with the goal of quadrupling the university capacity by 1980. Admission to the university is free, and in 1960 the government established a low-interest loan fund through which students can cover two-thirds of their living costs. Such loans are repaid starting 3 years after graduation, and payments may be spread over a 15-year period. The Icelandic Government also provides

generous scholarships for university study abroad on condition that the recipients return to Iceland to give the country the benefit of their training.

The university, as a state institution, is ultimately responsible to the Minister of Education. It is, however, largely self-governing; a rector and academic council selected from and by the faculty direct the affairs of the university. The organization of student government was altered in the fall of 1965, when the student council increased its size from 9 to 22 members. Eleven of these are elected for 2 years by students of the respective faculties, and 11 are elected in the same way for 1 year only. The council regulates student activities and represents the student body to the university administration.

The Teacher Training College prepares teachers to instruct in the primary and lower secondary schools. Candidates who have passed the middle school examination take a 4-year teachers training course, while candidates who have the *studentsprof*, or university entrance certificate, take a 2-year course. The university grants a special degree after 3 years, which also qualifies the recipient to teach in the lower secondary schools. Other teacher training schools offer specialized instruction in physical education and domestic science. Nearly all the vocational, technical, and agricultural schools are state supported, and even the few private technical establishments may receive some state aid. Figure 13 summarizes school plant, staffing, and enrollment for the 1965/66 school year.

### 3. Outlook and relative standing

The Icelandic school system has entered a period of rapid expansion at the upper secondary and university levels. As in continental Europe, education through the upper secondary schools and beyond had traditionally been restricted to the relatively few students who would ultimately assume positions of leadership in society. Such an elite system is undergoing a rapid transformation, notably in terms of accessibility to broader sections of the population. Between 1965 and 1970 the annual number of upper secondary school graduates increased 92%; in the latter year approximately 14% of the appropriate age group passed the university matriculation examination, the coveted *studentsprof*. A similar trend is evident at the university level: approximately 11% of the 20-year-old population was enrolled at the University of Iceland in 1970, a proportion expected to approach 20% by 1975.

Iceland's preoccupation with its cultural heritage is reflected in the heavy emphasis still placed on the

FIGURE 13. Schools by type, number of students and teachers, 1965/66

LEVEL AND TYPE	TYPE OF INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS	TEACHING STAFF	ENROLLMENT
First level	Primary schools, public and private	205	1,180	25,380
Second level:				
General	Lower and intermediate secondary schools, public and private	104	928	11,470
	Higher secondary schools, public and private	3	114	1,643
Vocational	Technical school	1	11	81
	Industrial schools	20	184	2,340
	Commercial schools	2	41	562
	Agricultural schools	3	24	114
	Navigation schools	5	63	468
	Domestic science schools	11	66	412
	Other	10	97	924
Teacher training	Teacher training schools, public	3	64	423
Third Level	University	1	64	1,116
Special	Schools for handicapped children, public	9	10	204
Adult		7	78	3,180
Total		384	2,924	48,317

humanities in the school system. A good grounding in the classics has long been regarded as the hallmark of an educated Icelander. One consequence has been the relative neglect of scientific and technical education, the teaching of which has lagged behind that of other western countries. At the university level, however, there is evidence of increased interest in scientific subjects. From 1965 to 1970 the proportion of university students majoring in the humanities declined from 36% to 26.7%, while the proportion studying science and technology grew from 20.9% to 26.7%.

Although Icelandic schools, and especially the upper secondary schools, take pride in their ties to the old rectory schools dating from the Middle Ages, Icelanders have incorporated many nontraditional features usually associated with the mass public instruction concepts of the New World. Like their American neighbors, Icelandic educators responded to some of the problems of an essentially frontier society by bringing the classroom closer to everyday needs. Thus, natural science subjects and arithmetical problems concern themselves with farming and fishing, and all children must learn how to swim as part of their formal school training. Other essentially New World innovations include the requirement for coeducational classes in all public schools from the primary to the university level, and the granting of university degrees in such "nonacademic" subjects as engineering, dentistry, and pharmacology. The awareness seems greater in Iceland than elsewhere in

Europe that school work should serve as an apprenticeship to life. High social mobility, coupled with the greater amount of time permitted for the completion of a sound secondary education, makes it easier for bright, deserving students who may not have a congenial home cultural environment (a limiting factor in some European countries) to advance to the university. The Icelandic school system is thus somewhat more American than European in its responsiveness to the needs of a modern democratic society. School attendance by age for the academic year 1966/67 is tabulated below:

AGE	NUMBER	PERCENT OF AGE GROUP
6	357	7.6
7	4,309	91.7
8	4,298	95.4
9	4,497	98.1
10	4,396	98.6
11	4,312	99.4
12	4,176	99.6
13	3,975	95.5
14	3,586	91.1
15	3,018	77.8
16	2,534	64.7
17	1,368	36.9
18	1,271	34.7
19	1,057	30.0
20	862	26.1
21	745	22.8
22	497	16.3
23	339	11.5
24	215	7.6
Total	45,812	62.2

## I. Artistic and cultural expression

### 1. Literature

While modern Icelanders have contributed little to the mainstream of Western European culture, their early literature enjoys a respected niche in Western letters for both its content and its stylistic quality. As with many other societies, high-water marks in cultural expression have coincided with periods of political and economic growth. The Eddas and Sagas appeared from the 12th to the 15th centuries immediately following the era of Viking expansion over a quarter of the globe. Some of their finest exemplars were contemporaneous with Iceland's full settlement, political independence, and westward probing to Greenland and North America.

Because the Icelandic language has changed only slightly in a thousand years, much of the early literature is accessible in its original form to the modern islanders, a situation unique among European countries. The language, however, is not primitive. The earlier indigenous Icelandic literary output is notable for its skillful development of verse. In the 10th century the Icelandic poets (*skalds*) had already perfected a Norwegian type of verse that emphasized syllabic rhythm. Although the ornate syntax and metaphoric expressions in this "scaldic" poetry are somewhat difficult for the contemporary reader, its treatment of subjects in the 10th and 11th centuries provided some of the most valuable sources for the saga writers of the 12th and 13th centuries. Individual Icelandic *skalds* traveled to several continental North European courts, served the kings as court poets, and are accredited with specific verse; however, they composed in runic characters, and most of their work was passed on by word of mouth until it was recorded again both in runic and the Latin alphabet in the 13th century. This Icelandic verse is the earliest Scandinavian poetry found in manuscripts, and study of it is, therefore, essential to a comprehension of later Norse verse.

The Prose and Poetic Eddas, written in Iceland in the 13th century, have international prestige and in their original form are still popular among the islanders. The Prose Edda is the work of the chieftain and scholar Snorri Sturluson and has won special admiration abroad as an example of narrative art. It contains some original poetry addressed to the rulers of Norway and incorporates heroic lays (short narrative poems) and legends treating the mythology of northern Europe. The work includes a didactic section which is an invaluable source for the study of early

Norse measures and verse forms. The Poetic Edda contains both mythological and heroic poetry by unknown authors, the former including the *Voluspá*, a story in verse of the world and the gods, which is regarded as one of the greatest works in Germanic literature. It also includes interesting discourses on social conduct by Odin, the Norse god of war, wisdom, and poetry, and thus provides some insight into the pagan morality of the earliest Icelanders and their Norse ancestors. The heroic poetry treats legend of England and Germany, as well as Scandinavia. Many of the lays are associated with the legends of Sigurd, Brynhild, and the Burgundians, and the heroes are both Scandinavian and German. The Eddas have remained one of the most popular items of Icelandic literature and provide an important focal point of national culture.

The Sagas are the most widely known of Icelandic literary efforts and have value for their historic content, artistic prose, vivid character presentation, and remarkable if somewhat pessimistic, understanding of human nature. These narratives were essentially biographies of historic personages, families, and heroes; they described places, events, and local customs in great detail, and often expressed the northern ideals of loyalty and heroism, as in such classic works as the *Njálsaga* and the *Grettis Saga*. Their historic authenticity varied, partly in accord with the intent of the authors: the earlier Sagas purported to be accurate records of kings, warriors, and other heroes, while later efforts were by intent inventive precursors to the historical novel. Notable among the former were the First Saga of St. Olaf, written about 1180 in the Benedictine monastery of Thingeyrar in northern Iceland, several Sagas of the kings of Norway written there and in Iceland; the historically invaluable Icelanders' Sagas; and Snorri Sturluson's *Heimskringla* (Orb of the World)—a genealogical Saga tracing the lineage and deeds of ancient kings of Sweden and Norway to his own era, his *Sturlungasaga*, a history of the Sturlung family meticulously recording the history of Iceland from 1117 to 1281, and his Saga of the Skald Egils, a stirring and adventurous story of that Icelandic hero.

While such Icelandic writers as Sturluson, Karl Jónsson, Stymir Karason, the Skalaholt monks, and their many unknown contemporaries did not write history in the technical sense, the major events and dates they cite, as well as the social ambience they project, are considered by specialists on northern Europe to be valid historic evidence. The Icelandic Sagas, written largely by unknown authors, provide

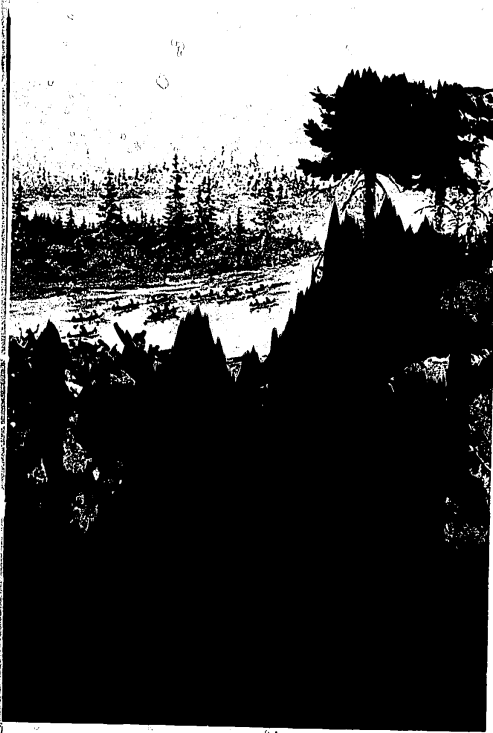
the best and sometimes the only records of specific Viking contacts with the New World. Based in some measure on earlier skaldic poetry, the Saga of the Foster Brothers is set principally in the 11th century Icelandic colony in Greenland. Its companion Sagas of the Greenlanders, of Eric the Red, and of Karlsefni's Voyage to Vinland describe voyages to "Wineland the Good," providing the best available information on the Viking discovery and attempted settlement of America. These trips, presumably to Labrador and Newfoundland, were first mentioned in Adam of Bremen's Hamburg Church History (ca. 1075); but the details, notably of the first voyages by Bjarni Herjolfsson and Leif Ericsson between 986 and 1000 and of Thorfinnur Karlsefni's 3-year attempted colonization (1003-1006), are gleaned from the Icelanders' Sagas (Figure 14). An independent corroboration is the "Vinland Map" (Figure 15), discovered by Yale University researchers in 1968. The historic narratives and their more imaginative successors in the 14th and 15th centuries are studied by Icelandic children and enjoyed by practically all of the population. Through the detailed and often romantic accounts of men, events, and places, all of the Icelandic environment has become imbued with literary and historic significance. Iceland continued to produce remarkable literature almost until the Reformation. The Bishoprics of Skaholt and Holar became centers of learning, and local authors skillfully adapted continental and English historic writing, primitive philosophy, and romances to their style, language, and locale. The relative decline that set in by the 16th century continued after Lutheran Protestantism supplanted the Roman Catholic Church in 1551. It was not until well into the 17th century that Lutheran learning in Iceland began to match that of the "Roman" predecessors, but great natural calamities, in the form of volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, plagues, and famine, helped dampen the creative spirit, and Icelandic literature never again regained its relative standing.

Nevertheless, the traditional dependence on reading as a major form of entertainment and the high quality of the modern public educational system have encouraged literary output. Several contemporary poets and authors show skill and imagination. The first modern novelist to enjoy literary success was Jon Thoroddsen (1818-68), whose works are notable chiefly for their excellent character portraits. Other distinguished novelists of the latter 19th century, who found the realistic school congenial to the depiction of their rude surroundings, include Gestur Palsson, who wrote biting satirical short stories, and the

clergyman, Jonas Jonsson, whose novels and short stories provide accurate descriptions of the more gloomy side of country life. In the 20th century, with renewed political independence after nearly 700 years of Norwegian or Danish domination, a proud, somewhat insular motif tended to dominate Icelandic writing. Continuing to portray folk life, but accenting this new ingredient, complicated by the disenchantment of the depression years, were Gunnar Gunnarsson, Gudmundur Hagalin, and Gudmundur Friojansson. The most important of the contemporary novelists is Halldor Kiljan Laxness, a Nobel Prize winner, whose novels *Salka Valka* and *Independent People* were translated into several languages and widely read abroad. World interest in Icelandic letters, however, still focuses on the past, a focus that modern Icelandic scholars are sharpening by their study and criticism of the early great national literature.

## 2. Theater

Theater in Iceland did not traditionally enjoy great prestige or popularity. Some of the Edda poetry was occasionally acted out through the centuries for local entertainment, and the old Latin schools encouraged minor theatrical productions, but it was not until 1897 that the first permanent professional theater was established as the Dramatic Society of Reykjavik. As living standards rose markedly during the first half of the 20th century, accompanied by a relative degree of urbanization, the dramatic arts quickly gained in popularity. The works of leading foreign dramatists were translated into Icelandic, and local playwrights of reported merit, such as Indridhi Einarsson and Davidh Stefansson, depicted Icelandic life and the universal themes. Johann Sigurjonsson (1880-1919) and Gudmundur Kamban (1888-1945), regarded by many as Iceland's two greatest dramatists, achieved considerable success abroad, where they spent most of their careers. In 1950 the National Theater (*Thjodhleikhusidh*) was opened in Reykjavik, financed by a tax on entertainments. In addition to staging Icelandic and classical plays, the National Theater presents international contemporary works, musical and dance groups from abroad, produces opera and ballet, and runs a drama and ballet school. In the 1964-65 season there were 91,445 paid admissions to the 660-seat National Theater; this was nearly half of the entire population of Iceland and approximately equal to the population of metropolitan Reykjavik. Every town outside the capital and many rural districts have their own dramatic societies, which in 1950 combined to form a National



**FIGURE 14.** An artist's depiction of Karlsefni and fellow settlers attempting to fight off "Skraelings" (Indians) in Newfoundland. The settlement failed because the Viking weapons were fundamentally no better than those of the natives, who greatly outnumbered the Norsemen.

League with about 70 member societies. Most of these are also supported by the entertainment tax.

### 3. Painting and sculpture

Painting and sculpture in Iceland, with the possible exception of the work of the painter Johannes Kjarval (1886-1972) and one or two sculptors, have little relative standing in Western art. Nevertheless, there has been some notable development in the last 75 years. The slow reconquest by the population of its primitive environment, accompanied by the reawakening of national sentiment, inspired creditable landscape art in the late 1880's and the 1890's. The dreaded glaciers and volcanoes, and the desolate lava fields were imbued by such painters as Thorarinn Thorlaksen and Asgrimur Jonsson with a new, appealing national identity as symbols of the tough

and independent Icelandic spirit. Jon Stefansson and Johannes Kjarval continued painting in this vein after the turn of the century, but after studying in France (Stefansson worked with Henri Matisse), they were instrumental in introducing the impressionist and postimpressionist schools to Iceland. Stefansson's "Mountain Pastures" and Kjarval's "Adventure and Landscape" are good examples of Icelandic impressionism and surrealism respectively. As in literature, pride in national occupations led to emphasis on ocean and rural scenes, but in the depression years before World War II the canvases became peopled with morose and somber individuals painted abstractly. Snorri Arinbjarnar, Thorvaldur Skulason, and Gunnlaugur Scheving depicted this period; the latter's "Seamen" is a good example of the style. Since World War II Icelandic artists have continued to concentrate on national themes, and their work reflects most of the contemporary art movements. The promising group of contemporary painters includes Nina Tryggvadottir, Sigurdhur Sigurdhsson, Kristjan Davidhsson, and Karl Kvaran.

Iceland has produced three sculptors of note: Einar Jonsson, who died in 1954, and Asmundur Sveinsson and Sigurjon Olafsson, who still work. Most of Jonsson's work was symbolic and reflected a certain religious mysticism. Although he concentrated his efforts on Nordic heroes, he also created subjects derived from Greek and Oriental mythology.

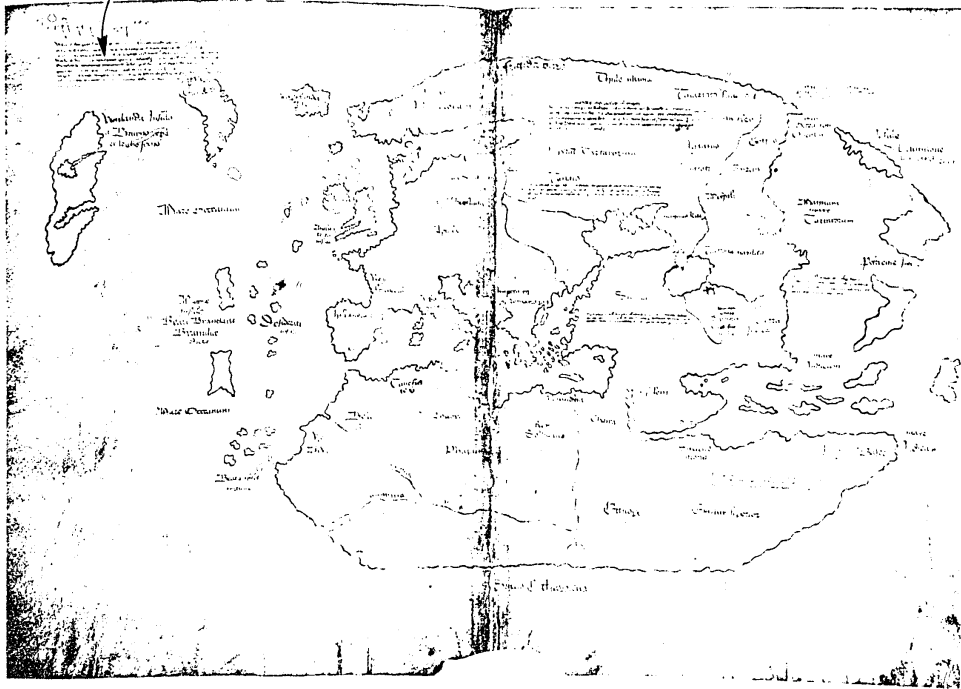
Asmundur Sveinsson resides and works in Reykjavik and has created figures that enjoy a modest reputation in Europe and America. After nearly a decade of study in Sweden and Paris, he came home in 1930 to take up a simple vigorous style and has worked with stone, wood, and metal. Although concentrating on simple workaday subjects and Icelandic folklore and history, he also used subject matter from the Bible, various mythologies, and the machine age. Among his better known works are "The Water Carrier," "The Blacksmith," "The Haymakers," "The Woman at the Churn," "My Mother," "David and Goliath," and "Eve and the Apple." Like Jonsson, who sculptured a memorial to Thorfinnur Karlsefni, Sveinsson created an impressive memorial to the attempted Norse settlement of North America with his "First White Child Born in America."

The expressionist Sigurjon Olafsson has also gained a certain renown outside of Iceland. He has lived and worked most of his career in Denmark. Notable among his works is a relief of salt fish curing at the Seamen's School in Reykjavik, statues of the Reverend Fridrik Fridriksson and of Hedinn Valdimarsson in Reykjavik, and various pieces in the Town Hall Square of Vejle in Denmark.

# THE VINLAND MAP

## PLACE NAMES AND LEGENDS ON THE VINLAND MAP

By God's will, after a long voyage from the island of Greenland to the south towards the most distant remaining parts of the western ocean sea, sailing southward amidst the ice, the companions Bjarni and Leif Eiriksson discovered a new land, extremely fertile and even having vines, which island they named Vinland. Eric (Henricus), legate of the Apostolic See and bishop of Greenland and the neighboring regions, arrived in this truly vast and very rich land, in the name of Almighty God, in the last year of our most blessed father Pascal, remained a long time in both summer and winter, and later returned northeastward toward Greenland and then proceeded (i.e., home to Europe?) in most humble obedience to the will of his superiors.



## EXPLANATION OF THE MAP

The medieval world map reproduced here contains the earliest known and indisputable cartographic representation of any part of the Americas. West and southwest of Greenland the map shows an elongated north-south island divided into three great peninsulas by two deep inlets penetrating the eastern coast. To the right of the northern-most peninsula is the name *Vinlanda Insula*. . . (see location above). Since this is the only known medieval map to delineate and name the early Norse discoveries in America, it has been appropriately called THE VINLAND MAP.

The map was drawn with ink on parchment and measures approximately eleven by sixteen inches in size. . . . The Vinland Map also includes a delineation of Greenland so strikingly accurate that it must have been derived from experience. Presumably this part of the map originated in the north, probably in Iceland, and may well represent the only surviving medieval example of Norse cartography.

FIGURE 15

#### 4. Handicrafts

During centuries of isolation and privation, Iceland's self-reliant inhabitants turned to handicrafts as an outlet for artistic expression. Modern Icelanders retain their traditionally high regard for such pursuits. Wood carving, weaving, fine needlework, stone mosaics, stained glass, handwrought gold and silver, ceramics, and handknitted woolens remain popular and enjoy a ready market. Contemporary experts in these fields include Gerdhur Helgadóttir and Nina Tryggvadóttir (stained glass), Valtyr Petursson (mosaics), Asgerdhur Buadóttir (weaving), and Johannes Johannesson (goldsmith). The skills of these specialists compare with the best in Europe and America.

#### 5. Music

Music has long been popular in Iceland, and tastes, formed in large part by the Lutheran Church, are relatively sophisticated. Interest in choral singing is widespread, and the majority of communities have formed local choral groups. Old Icelandic folk songs and hymns are popular, reflecting the traditionalism and national feeling of the people. The Passion Hymns composed by Hallgrímur Pjetursson in the 1660's are notable. The technical and spiritual excellence of the poetry as well as the music make them outstanding examples of Icelandic creativity in liturgical music. Pjetursson depicted the suffering and death of Christ so movingly because of the suffering all around him, including his own, during this very difficult period of Iceland's history.

There is a fairly widespread appreciation of great Western symphonic and liturgical music, notably of the German masters. The 60-man Symphony Orchestra of Iceland, which was founded in 1950, is competent and popular. Run by the State Radio (*Ríkisutvarpið*), it gives fortnightly concerts in Reykjavik during the winter season. There is also in Reykjavik a Conservatory of Music, supported in part by the city and national governments and by the Philharmonic Society.

Artistic and cultural endeavors have a tradition in Iceland, and in past centuries national literature attained real greatness. Partly because of the difficulties of mere survival from the 14th to the 19th centuries, cultural life suffered. A renaissance of Icelandic arts and letters, which coincided with the 19th century movement toward national independence, continues into the 20th century, as prosperity, population expansion, urbanization, and an end to isolation permit a reawakening of cultural ap-

preciation and expression. Popular appreciation and patronage of the arts may be reflected in the role of the national government. A small stipend, drawn from public funds is paid to most authors, painters, and sculptors.

### J. Public information

#### 1. Press and periodicals

Icelanders have traditionally been a literate people. Newspapers, however, did not appear in the country until the middle of the 19th century, and only within the past 50 years, as living conditions and communications improved markedly, did they attain wide popularity. Since World War II the per capita circulation of newspapers, periodicals, and books has been among the highest in the world. In 1970 the five principal newspapers alone had a combined circulation of 96,000, or nearly one paying reader for every two persons. Figure 16 lists these daily papers as well as the principal periodical newspapers. In 1972, nine weekly or biweekly newspapers were published.

The Icelandic press conforms more closely to the European than to the North American pattern: the newspapers published in the leading city have preeminence throughout the country, and the five principal dailies are all published in Reykjavik. Also in conformity with European practice, the press is clearly politically oriented. Each major daily is controlled directly or is strongly influenced by one of the major political parties and consciously advances its sponsor's views. Since an independent press is virtually nonexistent, objective dissemination of the news is a secondary aim of the newspapers. The close relationship between the press and political parties is likely to continue: the papers need the financial aid of the parties to supplement their revenues from sales and advertising, which are limited in such a small country. Icelandic papers also reflect the European characteristic of emphasis on cultural subjects, such as history, art, music, and book reviews.

All five dailies are printed in tabloid size and average 16 pages per issue; holiday editions frequently have many more pages. Approximately one-quarter of the space in most papers is given over to advertising, with *Morgunblaðið* frequently averaging much higher. Editorials, obituaries, personal eulogies on birthdays or deaths, cartoon strips, and serial stories are ordinarily carried in all dailies. Weekly newspapers have a similar format; *Vikan*, an illustrated paper, runs to approximately 50 pages, and the other smaller weeklies run eight to 12 pages in length.

FIGURE 16. Daily and selected weekly newspapers, 1970

NEWSPAPER	PLACE OF PUBLICATION	CIRCULATION	POLITICAL PARTY AFFILIATION
<b>DAILY EXCEPT MONDAY:</b>			
MORGUNBLADHIDH (The Morning Paper).	Reykjavik.....	39,000	Independence.
TIMINN (The Times).....	.....do.....	20,000	Progressive.
THJODHVIJFJINS (The Will of the Nation).	.....do.....	8,500	People's Alliance.
ALTHYDHUBLADHIDH (The Labor Paper).	.....do.....	12,000	Social Democratic.
VISIR* (The Indicator).....	.....do.....	16,000	Independence.
<b>WEEKLY:</b>			
ISLENDINGUR (The Icelander).....	Akureyri..... (Twice Weekly)	na	Do.
DAGUR (The Day).....	.....do.....	na	Progressive.
MANUDAGSBLADHIDH (The Monday Paper).	Reykjavik.....	na	None.
NYTT LAND (New Land).....	.....do.....	na	Organization of Liberals and Leftists.
VIKAN.....	.....do.....	na	None.

na Data not available.  
 \*Iceland's only afternoon paper (also appears on Mondays).

The only newspapers which are consistently financially sound represent the Independence Party: *Morgunbladhidh* and *Isleendingur*. *Morgunbladhidh* is the largest and most widely read newspaper. The quality of its typography and photographs is the highest among Icelandic newspapers, and its coverage of international news ranks well above that of its competitors. This paper is also more sophisticated than its competitors in the capital and makes less use of sensational items. Its editors are Eyjolfur K. Jonsson, Matthias Johannesson, and Stymir Gunnarsson. *Visir*, formerly controlled by the Independence Party, was sold in April 1966 to a group of party businessmen, who doubtless welcomed the forum it gives them to express views which are not always in line with those of other powerful elements in the party. *Visir's* editor is Jonas Kristjansson. The Independence Party helps support a weekly paper in Siglufjordur (*Siglufirdingur*) and one in Isafjordur (*Vesturland*).

The main organ of the Progressive Party is *Timinn*, which is more widely read in rural areas than in urban communities and carries little foreign news. It is highly partisan and reflects the party's close ties with the cooperative movement, agricultural interests, certain labor unions, rural youth, and some fishermen's groups. Its editors are Thorarinn Thorarinnsson, Andres Kristjansson, Jon Helgason, and Tomas Karlsson. Other journals that obtain support from this party and advance its views include *Dagur*, an Akureyri semiweekly, and the weekly *Framsoknarbladhidh* in Vestmannaeyjar. Both have a very limited circulation.

*Thjodhvitjinn* is the principal newspaper of the Communist-dominated People's Alliance. It reaches some non-Communist readers who may not sympathize with its editorial policies. Its theater, music, visual arts, science, youth, sports, and women's columns rank among the best in the country, while its makeup and typography are excellent by Icelandic standards. Thus, this newspaper lends some dignity to the Communist cause and persistently presents its political philosophy to many uncommitted readers. *Thjodhvitjinn* probably receives substantial subsidies from Soviet bloc countries; nonetheless, it is periodically in financial difficulty. Its editors are Svavar Gestsson and Kjartan Olafsson. At least two weeklies, *Verkamadhurinn* (The Workingman) in Akureyri and *Mjolnir* in Siglufjordur, are pro-Communist and are probably controlled and financed by the party. The People's Alliance also publishes the biweekly journal *Ny Utsyn*.

*Althydhubladhidh*, the largest newspaper propagandizing the views of the Social Democratic Party, leans somewhat toward sensational reporting. Its editor is Sighvatun Bjorgvinsson. Other papers supporting the Social Democrats include *Althydhumadthurinn*, an Akureyri weekly, and *Skutull*, an Isafjordur weekly.

The Reykjavik weekly *Nytt Land* publicizes the views of the Organization of Liberals and Leftists, a political party formed in November 1969. *Nytt Land* evolved from *Frijals Thjodh*, formerly the organ of the small, strongly nationalist and isolationist National



Defense Party, The Organization of Liberals and Leftists is represented in the Vestmannaeyjar by a new publication, *Thjodmal*, launched in July 1972.

Icelandic newspapers are served by the Associated Press (AP), the *Norsk Telegram Byaa* (NTB), and Reuters. *Thjodheiljinn* subscribes to the Soviet news service TASS, the Czech press agency (CTK), and the Chinese news service (NCNA). The office established in Reykjavik in April 1970 by the Soviet news agency *Novosti*, has since had limited success in placing articles both in *Thjodheiljinn* and in the non-Communist press. Most items, totaling perhaps a dozen per month, concern culture, technology, and education. *Novosti* also publishes an Icelandic-language monthly, *News from the Soviet Union*, but the impact of this periodical is minimal.

Complete freedom of the press was first established in principle by legislative act in 1855. It is guaranteed in the 1944 Constitution (article 72), which states that censorship and other restrictions on the freedom of the press may never be enacted. Newspapers are, however, responsible before the courts for alleged defamatory utterances or libel.

Perhaps as many as 250 periodicals are published in Iceland. Many of them are concerned with the economics of fishing, farming, and the cooperative movement; others treat domestic politics, and still others, literature, drama, women's affairs, humor, and student interests. Among these publications several are either controlled by the Communists or are pro-Communist in outlook and partly supported by party funds. They are generally of good quality and depend heavily on the contributions of writers, artists, and other intellectuals. *Rjettur* (Justice), published quarterly, discusses Communist theory; it is edited by former party chairman Einar Olgeirsson. The Soviet-Icelandic Cultural Society publishes the bimonthly *MIR*. Other important pro-Communist periodicals are *Birtungur* (The Dawn), a high quality literary and art magazine that appears quarterly, and *Mal og Menning* (Ideas and Culture), a quarterly literary magazine.

## 2. Book publishing

Iceland has a flourishing book publishing industry. Some 50 printing and publishing firms are in operation, and although books are expensive, the innumerable bookstores do a brisk business. Reykjavik alone has 16 retail establishments, and practically every village has a bookstore or a book section in its general store, supplied principally with Icelandic titles, but including some volumes in Danish, German, and English. In recent years between 300 and 400

titles have been published annually, and the yearly purchase of new books averages eight per family. When collated with library usage statistics, such evidence confirms the Icelanders to be the most avid readers of books in the world. Universal literacy and the confinement of the long, cold winters stimulate this bookishness in virtually all elements of the population. Books published in Iceland are cosmopolitan in content and include Icelandic classics, fiction, travel, history, biography, poetry, books of reference, children's books, and scientific works. Many foreign books, covering a wide spectrum of interests, are translated into Icelandic. In 1969, of some 150 works translated, 62% were from English, 23% from other Scandinavian languages, and 7% from German.

Books manufactured locally are considerably more expensive than foreign books, because the publishers have to pay up to 30% import duty on quality paper and other materials they need; moreover, the average number of copies printed is only 1,500. The majority of paperback and hardcover books imported in 1969 and valued at US\$240,000 came from Denmark (31%), the United Kingdom (19%), and the United States (14%).

Both Communist and democratic elements, notably the Independents, have attempted to influence the type and content of material published in Iceland. Each has established organizations similar to the Book-of-the-Month-Club in the United States. The Communists were the first to appear, shortly after World War II, with the Ideas and Culture (*Mal og Menning*) in 1956, backed principally by the Independents, the General Book Society was founded. Both "clubs" include publishing houses and have been successful in influencing the tastes of the reading public.

## 3. Libraries

Iceland is well supplied with libraries. The three most important, all located in Reykjavik, are the National Library of Iceland (*Landsbokasafn Islands*), the University Library (*Haskolabokasafnidh*), and the Reykjavik Municipal Library (*Baejarbokasafn Reykjavikur*). The National Library, founded in 1817, has a collection which in 1968 numbered approximately 284,000 printed books and periodicals and some 12,000 manuscripts. The National Archives, founded in 1882, is also located in the building of the National Library of Iceland. The University Library was established in 1940 and in 1968 housed approximately 144,000 volumes. In addition, there are town libraries and the libraries of the teachers college

and the upper secondary schools, as well as many splendid privately owned library collections.

The 1955 Library Law established a library service to be maintained by public funds, with one center located in each rural district and incorporated town and in the city of Reykjavik. In 1968 there were 271 People's Libraries (*folkebiblioteker*), including the Reykjavik Municipal Library; they contained a total of 895,000 volumes. The People's Libraries are supported jointly by the local and central governments. Large collections of books are also found in about 270 school libraries, over 200 of which provide English-language books and periodicals. Library patronage is substantial; each inhabitant of the country annually borrows an average of approximately four books.

Significant library facilities are supported by the United States (USIS) and the Soviet Cultural Society. The Soviet effort has been handicapped by the inability of Icelanders to speak or read Russian. Smaller library efforts are undertaken by the United Kingdom (the Anglia Society and the British Council), France (*Alliance Française*), and the Federal Republic of Germany. The British and French operate libraries in Reykjavik; the Germans support a library in Reykjavik and a reading room in Akureyri.

#### 4. Cinema

There is virtually no motion picture industry in Iceland. With the exception of one 35-mm and a very few 16-mm films produced by private persons for commercial exhibition, all films have been imported. Feature-length imports in 1971 totaled some 200 films. Those made in the United States have proved the most popular, accounting for about three-fourths of those shown. Films from the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, Denmark, and Italy figure fairly prominently, but together account for only one-third the number imported from the United States. Commercial Soviet bloc films are rarely exhibited, averaging annually less than 5% of those imported. There is no dubbing, and subtitles are in Danish or Icelandic.

In 1971 there were 50 cinemas in Iceland, 12 of which operated full time. All are equipped with 35-mm projectors and two also have 70-mm equipment. Attendance in 1971 averaged approximately 7.5 films per inhabitant.

In motion picture distribution, as in the circulation of reading matter, the only two foreign countries that support significant information programs are the United States and the Soviet Union. Both USIS and the Soviet-Icelandic Cultural Society provide 16-mm

and 35-mm films for public and private showings. France and West Germany have increased their information activity through motion pictures, but their efforts are not yet significant.

#### 5. Radio and television

Radiobroadcasting in Iceland follows the Western European pattern: it is state controlled and is supported in substantial measure by an annual tax on radio receivers; in principle it attempts to restrict partisan politics over the airwaves to identifiable political discussion programs in which all views are represented. Recently, however, leftist influence in the State Radio Council has increased, and consequently bias in some ostensibly impartial public affairs programs has been noticed by important segments of the public. The council carefully controls the cultural content of radio programs.

The State Radio, in service since 1930, is a monopoly of the government and comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. The minister appoints the Radio Director, who is responsible for supervising all broadcasting services. Broadcasting policy and basic content of programs must be approved by the seven-member State Radio Council (*Utearpsradh*) which is selected annually by the *Althing* and reflects the parliamentary strength of the political parties. Its principal function is to make sure that the air waves are not used to advance partisan political views.

The State Radio (State Broadcast Service) has its headquarters and technical facilities in the Reykjavik Broadcasting Station; its call letters are TFU. The programs are transmitted on 209 kHz (1435 meters) for the general public. The station utilizes two FM carrier signals at 93.5 and 98 megacycles, which also can be picked up easily. Relay stations located strategically throughout the country provide service to the whole island. Without these added facilities, radio reception would be poor because of the northern latitudes and rugged terrain. TFU has won approbation for its technical ability to reach every isolated home. Many Icelanders listen to foreign radio stations, especially BBC, which usually comes in loud and clear. Foreign station signals are strong enough on the east coast to cause troublesome interference with domestic radio. Shortwave broadcasts, designated "Reykjavik to Icelanders Abroad," were transmitted via the 7-kilowatt Reykjavik shortwave station (call letters TFF); they were mainly directed to ships in nearby waters and are believed to be inactive.

Normal broadcasting time over TFU home service is 16½ hours on weekdays, 17 hours on Saturdays, and 15

hours on Sundays. The following tabulation shows specific hours on broadcasting (G.M.T.):

Monday-Friday	7:00 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.
Saturday	7:00 a.m. - 12:00 midnight
Sunday	8:30 a.m. - 11:30 p.m.

Program content emphasizes education and culture, with newscasts and commentary interspersed throughout the day. As much as 60% of a typical daily program is devoted to good music, either classical or folk, with popular tunes screened for quality by the station. The remainder of the time is given over to lectures, readings, and a variety of other programs, including dramatic and occasional mystery productions. General political discussions are permitted during the twice-yearly parliamentary debates and during election campaigns. But the equal time formula is observed, and station announcers must be impeccable. News and weather reports are transmitted six times daily. Twice each day a half-hour of time is given over to paid private advertising, which is subject to strict controls. Advertising medicines and alcoholic beverages is forbidden, as are advertisements involving biased or misleading comparisons between products. "Factual and neutral" announcements of political meetings are permitted, but partisan elaboration is proscribed. One peculiarity of the radio service, a custom indicative both of social cohesion and geographic dispersion, is the practice of broadcasting funeral services; obituaries are a major source of advertising revenue.

As in other European countries where governments attempt to control the cultural content of broadcasting, the public appears to be somewhat dissatisfied with such paternalism. Many average Icelanders, like average Europeans or Americans, find "low-brow" variety programs more to their leisure taste. Since frenetic advertising probably does not bother them as much as it does their more sophisticated governing officials, a majority of Icelanders might actually favor free commercial radio broadcasting on the U.S. pattern.

Icelandic television was introduced in late 1966. By 1972 over 96% of the population was within range of one of the 73 separate transmitters, and some 44,000 receivers were in use. Developmental expenses were largely financed by a high import duty on TV sets, while operating costs are met by license fees and advertising revenue. Iceland and Finland are the only Nordic countries which permit advertising on television, setting aside specific periods between programs for commercial messages. Like radio, however, television is a monopoly of the government

under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Only Channel 13 is in use; outlying stations rebroadcast the Reykjavik program on several different channels. The system employs the European 625-line definition. Programming has been extended gradually to 3 or 4 hours of evening transmission 6 days a week; there is no programming on Thursdays.

The U.S. Armed Forces Radio and Television Service at Keflavik operates on a license granted by the State Radio. The radio programs, with call sign TFK, may be received within a radius of about 75 miles in nearly all directions. Since 1962 telecasts have been clearly received in the Keflavik-Reykjavik area, where the majority of Icelanders reside. The U.S. system employs 525-line definition, requiring sets of U.S. or West German manufacture. Both U.S. radio and television are popular among the populace, particularly youth, many of whom understand English and enjoy the popular music and variety programs. This U.S. "cultural contamination" has been criticized by some government officials and leading intellectuals, who seek to have the U.S. telecasts restricted to the Keflavik NATO base. However, the many independent-minded Icelandic viewers who enjoy U.S. television have reacted strongly against this infringement on their right to judge the merits of available entertainment. Icelanders are, in any event, exposed to a heavy dose of foreign TV fare; fully half of the material used by the national stations is in English.

## K. Selected bibliography

Iceland's remoteness, esoteric language, and small population are reflected in the relative paucity of up-to-date information pertinent to sociological research. All of the sources cited below are published in English or include an English translation.

### I. General works

Perhaps the most readable general survey of Iceland in recent years is that of Englishman John C. Griffiths, whose *Modern Iceland* (London, 1969) portrays enthusiastically, if rather uncritically, the evolution and character of the present society. Griffiths' work includes as an annex the Icelandic Constitution and a variety of statistical material. *Iceland 1966* (Reykjavik, 1967), although somewhat dated, remains an excellent general reference tool. Compiled by the Central Bank of Iceland, it covers in considerable detail an encyclopedic range of subjects, among them history, government, education, living conditions, and the arts. More recent but much less comprehensive

surveys are the essentially commercial and industrial handbooks *Directory of Iceland 1969-1970* (Reykjavik, 1970) and *Vidhskiptaskrain 1971* (Reykjavik, 1971). Donald S. Connery's analytical, eminently readable *The Scandinavians* (New York, 1966) includes a brief, but informative essay on modern Icelandic society. *Iceland in a Nutshell: Complete Reference Guide* (Reykjavik, 1971) provides the information expected of a competent, illustrated travel guide.

## 2. Health, welfare, and conditions of labor

A concise but thorough treatment of labor is found in *Labor Law and Practice in Iceland* (Washington, 1970), a bulletin prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. This publication also provides useful background on the general welfare provisions of Icelandic law. *Iceland 1966* remains valuable for basic information concerning health and welfare, although contemporary developments must be gleaned from more recent sources.

## 3. Education and artistic expression

A good historical survey of the Icelandic arts is presented in the above-cited *Iceland 1966*. For more

recent developments the quarterly *American-Scandinavian Review* (New York) frequently proves useful. Professor Gwyn Jones' translations of *Eink the Red and Other Icelandic Sagas* (London, 1961) illuminate the early Viking literature, which still influences the Icelandic national character.

The most recent analysis available in English of the educational system in Iceland was prepared by the Committee for Science Policy of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. *Iceland* (Paris, 1971) examines the structure and trends of Icelandic education. Its analyses are amply supported by current, broadly based statistics.

## 4. Basic statistical works

Particularly useful statistical sources include the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook*, the *United Nations Demographic Yearbook*, and the *Yearbook of Nordic Statistics* (Stockholm, 1972). The *Tolfræðihandbók* (Statistical Abstract of Iceland, Reykjavik, 1967) contains a wealth of sociological detail collected by the Statistical Bureau of Iceland. Although no longer up-to-date, much of the data spans 50 years or more and is thus valuable in documenting long-term trends.

### Places and features referred to in this chapter

	COORDINATES		
	°	'N.	'W.
Akureyri.....	65	40	18 06
Hafnarfjörður.....	64	04	21 57
Ísafjörður.....	66	05	23 09
Keflavík.....	64	01	22 34
Laki (volcano).....	64	04	18 14
Laugarvatn (farm).....	64	13	20 44
Reykjavík.....	64	09	21 57
Reykjanes (peninsula).....	63	50	22 41
Siglufjörður.....	66	09	18 55
Stykkishólmur.....	65	04	22 44
Thingeyrar.....	65	33	20 25
Vestmannaeyjar.....	63	26	20 16
Vestmannaeyjar (isls).....	63	25	20 18