



# Background Report: Population



Background Report 1 of 9  
**Prepared by West Hants Planning  
and Development Department**

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## **Executive Summary**

The pattern of in-migration of seniors combined with the decreasing number of young children is resulting in population decline. This will continue unless steps are taken to encourage working-age people and young families to move to the Municipality of the District of West Hants (West Hants).

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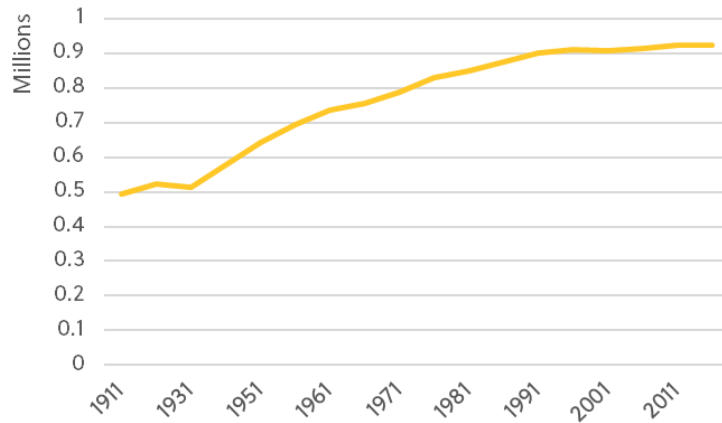
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# 1. Historic Population Trends

Nova Scotia's population grew rapidly in the 1940s and 50s (up to 12% in five years) and continued to increase by 5-6% every 5 years until the 1980s (Figure 1). Since 2001, the population increase has been less than 1% each census period.

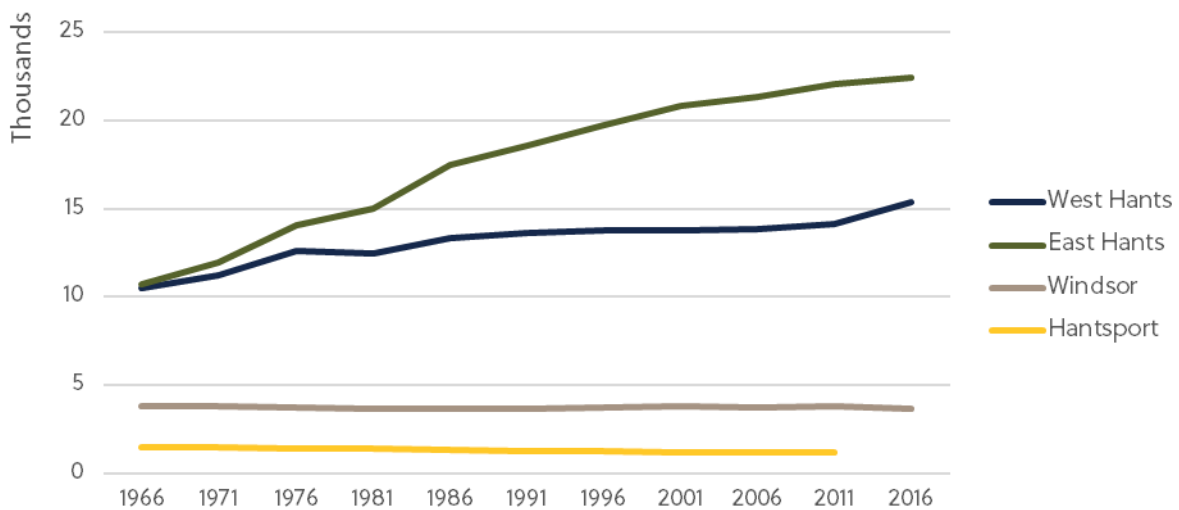
Figure 1: Nova Scotia Population, 1911-2016



Source: Statistics Canada

Hants County has experienced population growth averaging 4.7% every year over the last 50 years (Figure 2) most of which has happened in the rural municipalities. East Hants has experienced growth on average of 8% every five years and West Hants an increase of 4% in the same period. Windsor has had several periods of population decline and the former Town of Hantsport has experienced decline since 1976.

Figure 2: Hants County Population, 1966-2016\*



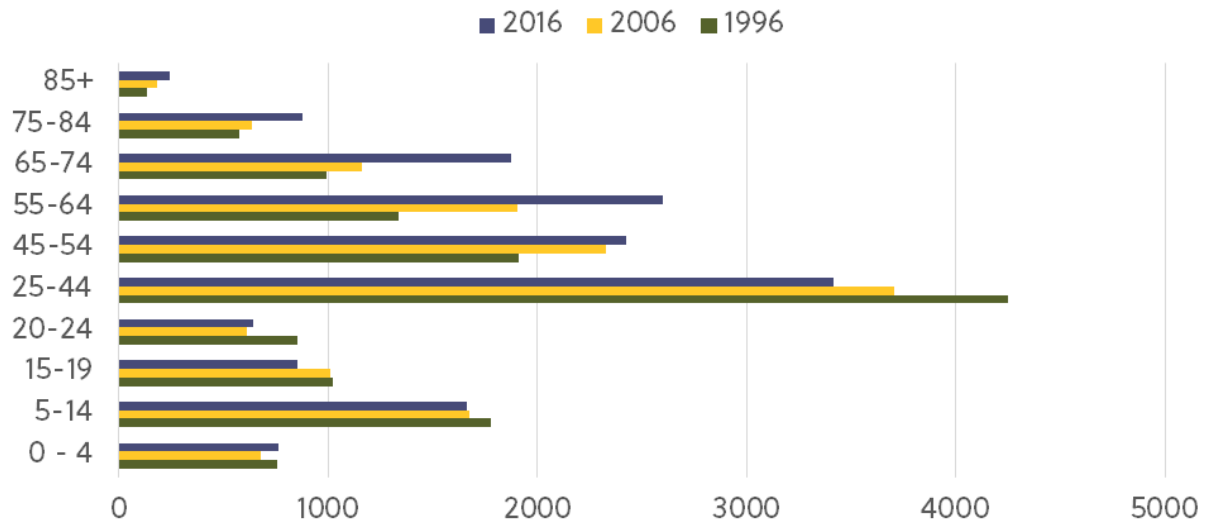
Source: Statistics Canada

\*Hantsport became part of the Municipality in 2015, which increased the Municipal population count for the 2016 census.

## 2. Current Population Characteristics

There have been significant decreases in the key working age 25-44 category (Figure 3) while the 55+ categories have increased in West Hants. This trend is true in much of Canada, particularly the Atlantic provinces.

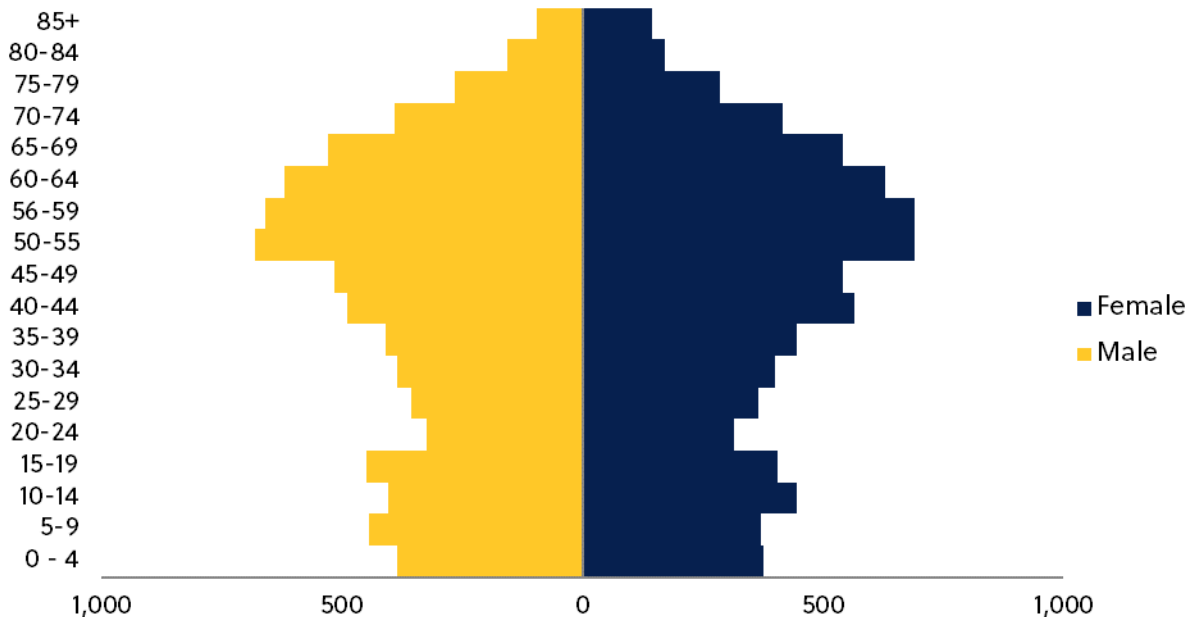
Figure 3: Total Population, 1996-2016



Source: Statistics Canada

A large portion of the population in West Hants is now between 50 and 70 (Figure 4). There are significantly fewer individuals between 20 and 24, possibly as a result of school or work opportunities outside of the Municipality.

Figure 4: 2016 Census by Age and Sex



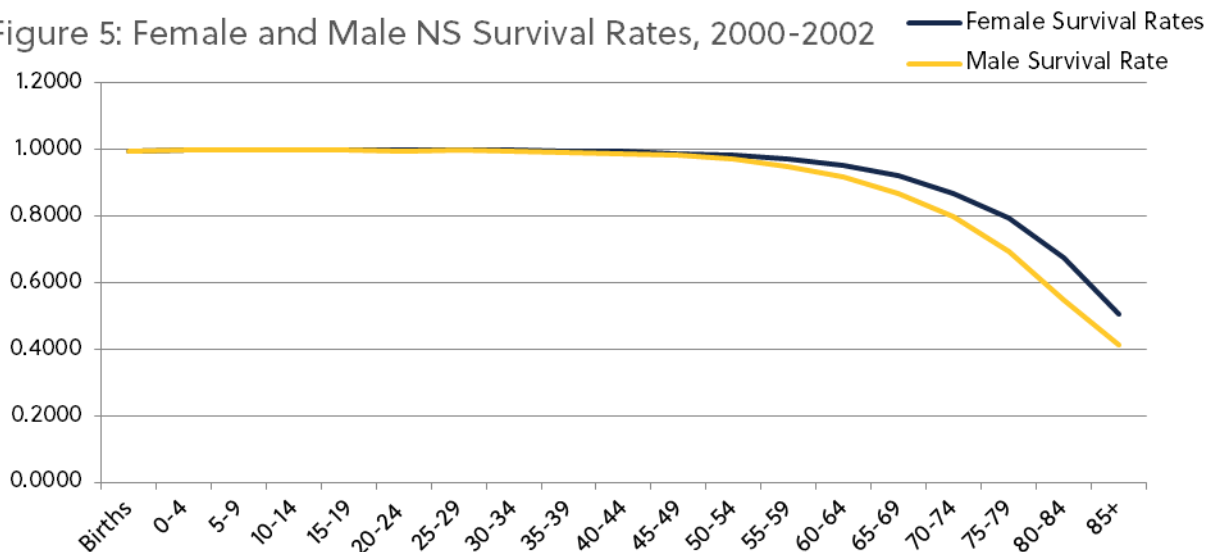
Source: Statistics Canada, 2016

### 3. Population Projection Method

The population projection model used in this report is based on recent survival, fertility, and migration rates.

Survival rates are based on Statistics Canada 2000-2002 life tables and it is highly unlikely that the rates will change for the projection period. Survival rates of males and females are similar until the age of 50; from 50 onwards, women tend to live longer than men (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Female and Male NS Survival Rates, 2000-2002



Source: Statistics Canada

Figure 6: Nova Scotia Age Specific Fertility Rates\*

Figure 6 shows that fertility rates in Nova Scotia have decreased in all categories except those between the ages of 40 and 44 years.

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
15 to 19 years	18.7	18.3	17.9	17.3	17.5	16.6
20 to 24 years	55.2	55	52.8	51.2	52.4	50.5
25 to 29 years	92.6	88.1	86.3	86.2	92.6	83.9
30 to 34 years	94.5	92.2	93	91	90.5	91.7
35 to 39 years	41	40.3	37.2	40.4	40	41.1
40 to 44 years	5.5	6.2	7	7	7	7
45 to 49 years	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3

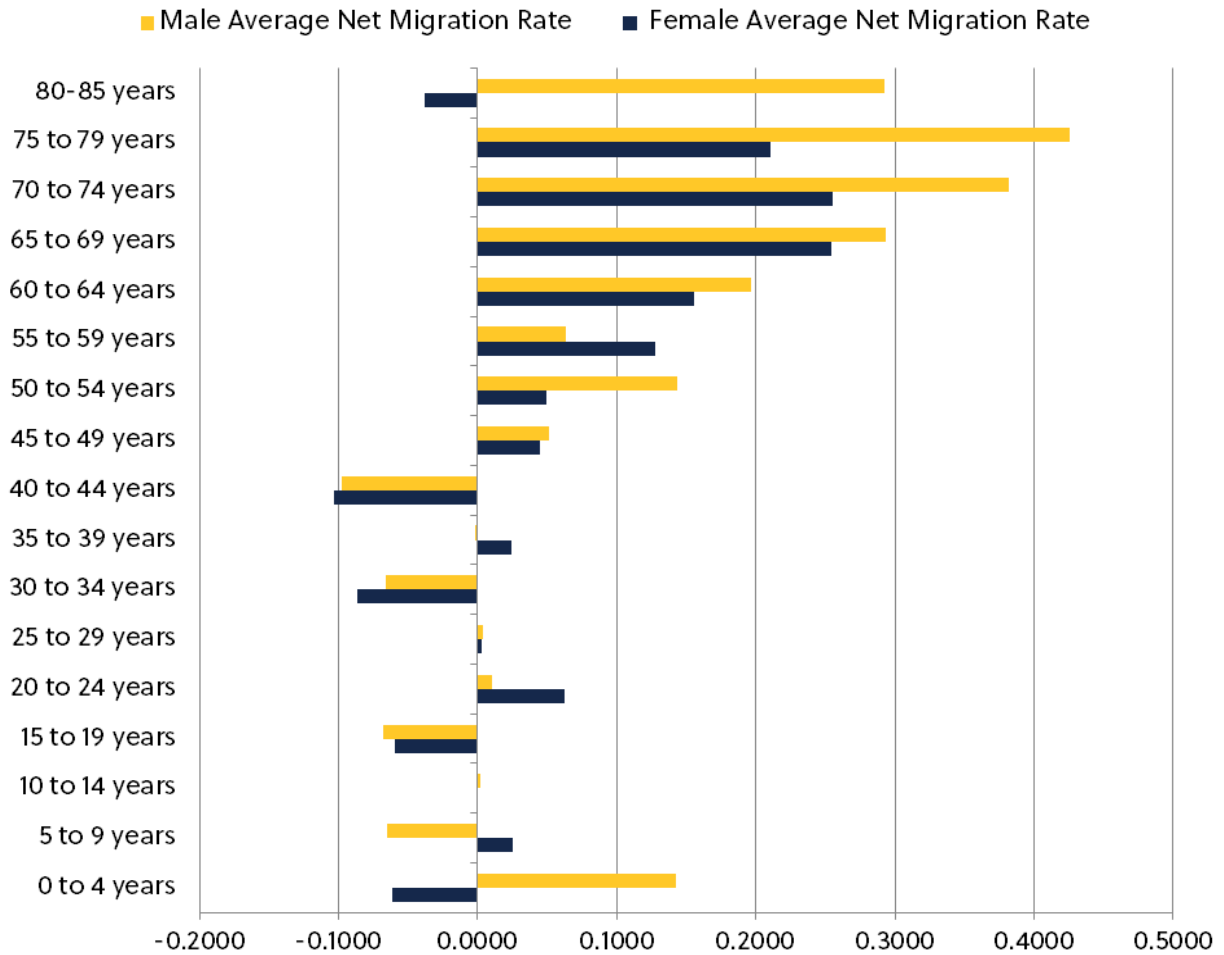
Source: Statistics Canada

\*The fertility rate used is based on 1,000 women per age group. All projections are based on the most recent fertility rate statistics available.

Migration rates are based on the expected population compared to the actual population for a specific year. Positive migration rates represent new residents whereas a negative migration rate shows residents that have left the region.

The expected population is determined when the survival rate and fertility rate are applied to the previous population count. This is compared to the actual population for the next census year to estimate how many new people migrated to the community. There is a clear increase of retirees to the Municipality with most new residents being 50 years old and older (Figure 7). The migration rate was not determined for 2016 because the added Hantsport population would have resulted in an unusually high in-migration rate.

Figure 7: Average West Hants Net Migration Rate, 2006 to 2011



Source: Statistics Canada

## 4. Projection Scenarios

West Hants has experienced several periods of population fluctuation over the last hundred years, reaching a population of 15,350 by 2016\*(Figure 8). In the next 35 years, the population of West Hants will likely decline based on the in-migration rates in 2006 and 2011.

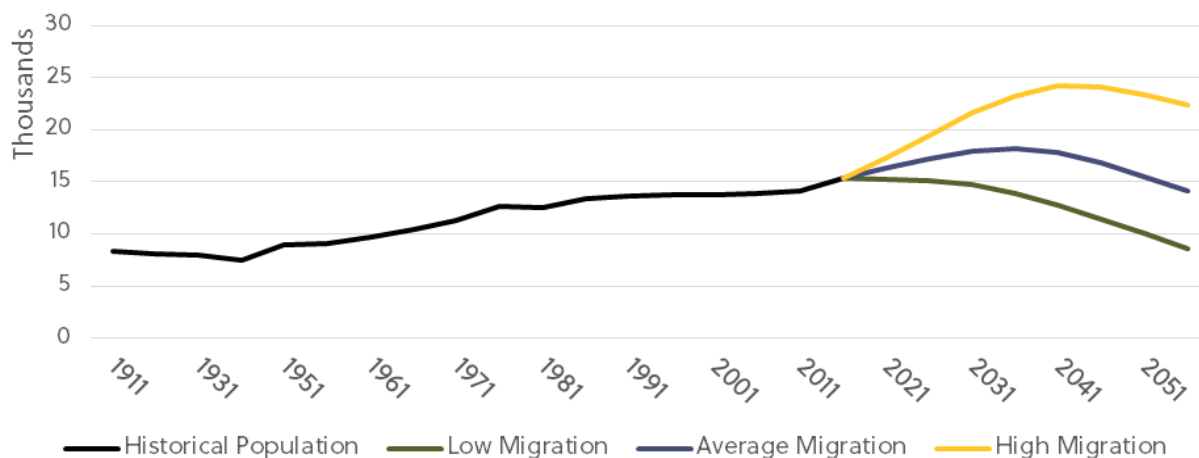
The low in-migration scenario would result in an immediate decrease in population in 2021 leading to a population of 8,632 by 2056. The last time West Hants had a population this low was between 1941 and 1951.

The average scenario projects a population increase to 18,120 in 2036 before declining to 14,117 in 2056.

The high in-migration scenario projects a population size for West Hants close to East Hants current population: 24,166 by 2041. However, even in the high migration scenario, the population of West Hants will decline in 2046 and be down to 22,365 by 2056.

Population decline in all scenarios is due to the high in-migration rate of soon-to-be retirees and seniors. This population creates growth in the high and average scenario for the next few decades, however, as the elderly population passes on and migration of young adults and children decreases, population declines. A strong focus on increasing in-migration of working-age adults in combination with an increase in developments that provide work and housing opportunities could delay or prevent decline for West Hants.

Figure 8: West Hants Population Projections  
(In-Migration Scenarios)

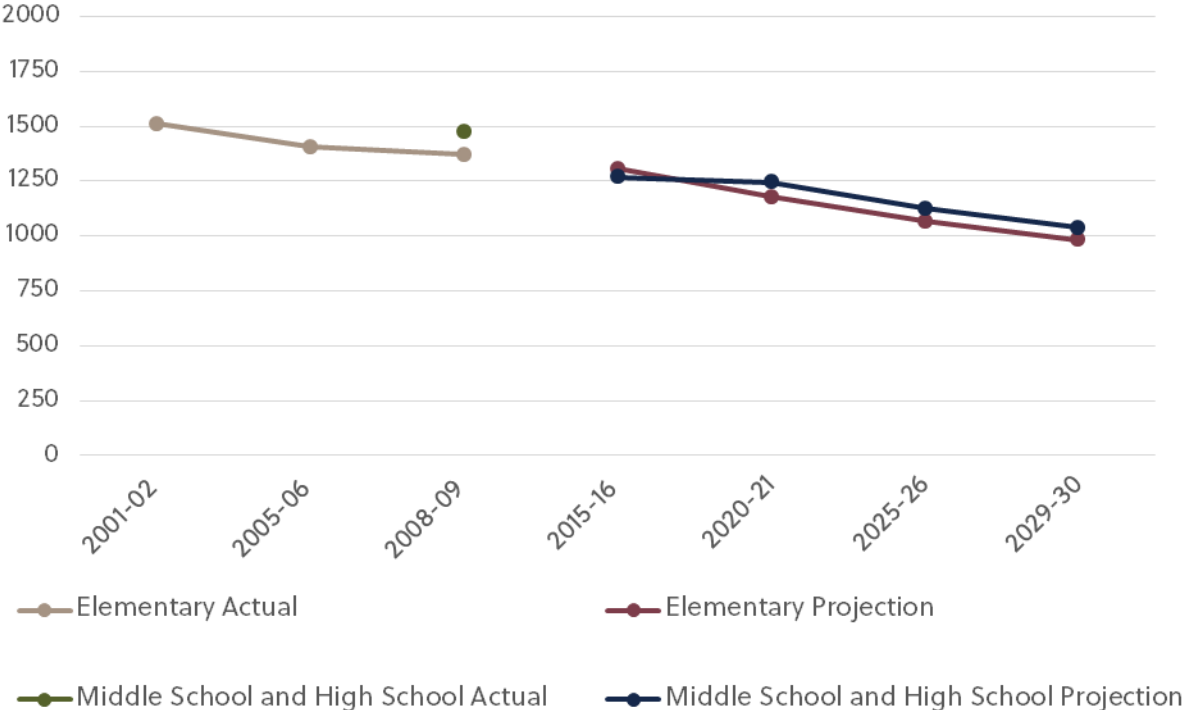


Source: Statistics Canada

\*age specific population numbers from Statistics Canada were used for the projection which differ slightly from the total population numbers from Statistics Canada due to rounding by Statistics Canada.

The school enrollment projection from 2009 to 2020 (Figure 9) was produced by the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board and was extended to 2030 in this report based on the school boards projected 2% decline. More school closures are anticipated, following Newport Station which closed in 2015.

Figure 9: School Enrollment and Projected Enrollment (2% decline)



Source: Annapolis Valley Regional School Board

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## Bibliography

Annapolis Valley Regional School Board. (2009). Hants West Enrollment Actuals 2001-02 to 2008-09 and Projections 2009-10 to 2019-20. Retrieved from Annapolis Valley Regional School Board: <https://avrsb.ca/node/3533>

Statistics Canada. (2017). Census Program. Retrieved from Statistics Canada: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/index-eng.cfm>