



Halifax Census Division: Climate Risk Summary

December 2022

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Halifax Census Division



Climate Change Projections

The evidence is clear – Nova Scotia’s climate is changing. Analysis of local climate change projections and literature has identified how the province’s climate is expected to change over the coming decades. The trends presented here are based on model runs for a high emissions scenario (RCP8.5) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) from 2013, with the outputs from these global climate simulations statistically downscaled by the Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC) to better account for local geography and climate patterns.

Temperatures are continuing to rise.

Average annual temperature is projected to increase 2.6°C by mid-century and 4.5°C by the end of the century. More frequent extreme heat will make days and nights more uncomfortable, drought and wildfire more likely, and average winter temperatures may rise above freezing.

Precipitation patterns are changing.

Warmer temperatures will mean less snow and more rain, while rainfall events are also increasing in intensity. Total annual precipitation will likely increase, but more of that water will evaporate in warmer air or run off in more intense downpours. Risks of flooding and erosion are likely to increase.

Storms will be more frequent and more intense.

Warming oceans will enable tropical storms to track further north without losing strength, bringing higher peak wind speeds and more powerful storm surges. It will be more likely for larger storms to impact the province.

Sea levels are rising.

Projections for Nova Scotia indicate an increase of up to 1 metre in relative sea level by the end of the century. Higher sea levels have the potential to damage coastal communities and infrastructure, infiltrate freshwater supplies, and threaten sensitive coastal species and ecosystems. Storm surge and high tides will be more impactful with rising seas.

Ocean conditions are changing.

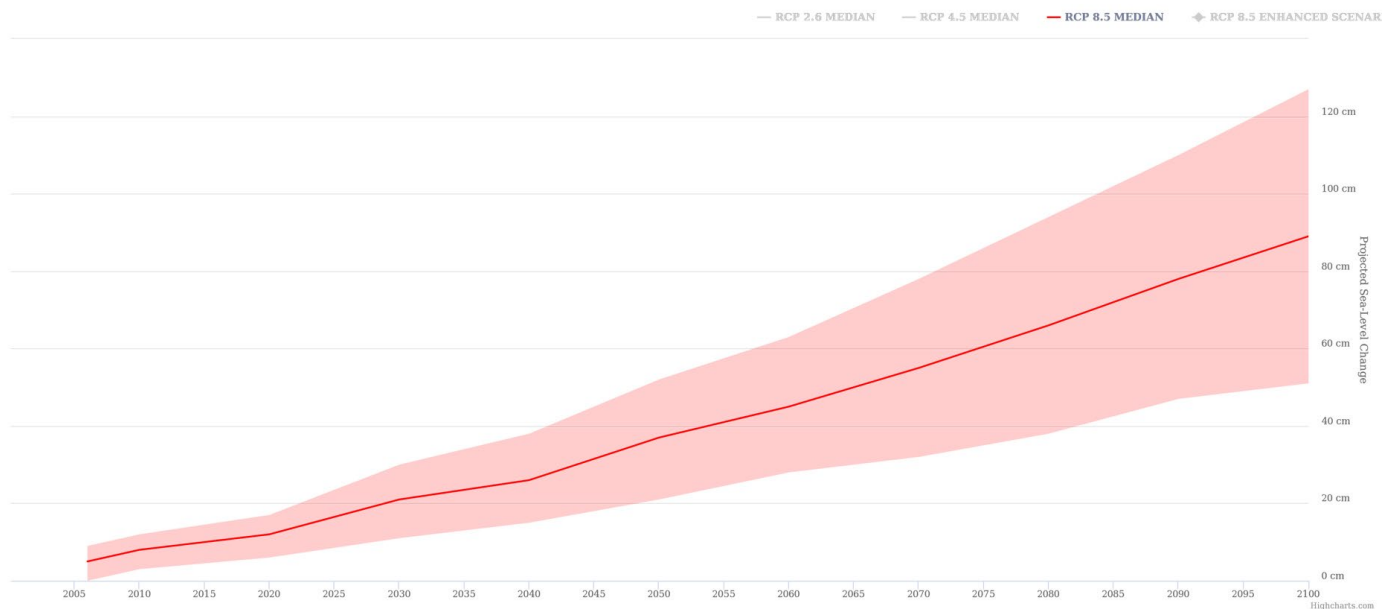
Sea surface and deep-water temperatures are increasing, ocean waters are becoming more acidic, dissolved oxygen levels are decreasing, and ocean currents could weaken due to the changing physics and chemistry of ocean waters. These changing conditions will likely make it harder for current ocean life and coastal ecosystems to thrive.

Climate Change Projections for Halifax Census Division

Climate Index	Baseline (1981-2010)	Early century (2015-2045)	Mid century (2035-2065)	End century (2065-2095)
Annual hottest day	29.8°C	31.2°C	32.5°C	34.5°C
Days > 29°C	1.7 days	5.1 days	11.7 days	29.1 days
Nights > 18°C	1.1 nights	6.7 nights	16.4 nights	38.9 nights
Annual coldest day	-22.6°C	-20.4°C	-18.1°C	-14.4°C
Days < -15°C	16.0 days	9.5 days	4.6 days	0.9 days
Growing season length	204 days	218 days	233 days	258 days
Total precipitation	1378 mm	1441 mm	1468 mm	1527 mm
Days with snow	32.9 days	26.6 days	21.1 days	14.5 days
Intense rain days > 20	18.7 days	20.5 days	21.1 days	22.7 days

Median results for a high emissions scenario averaged over 30-year periods.

Sea Level Rise Projections for Halifax Census Division



Relative sea level in this region is expected to rise approximately 90 cm by the year 2100.

Climate Risks for Halifax Census Division

A provincial climate change risk assessment was completed in 2022 to explore what is at risk and the different effects of climate change on the well-being of Nova Scotians. A climate change risk assessment helps us to understand how the climate is changing. It also helps us to understand issues of concern and opportunities to act. Risks were explored across the province and for each census division, which align with the 18 counties in Nova Scotia. The assessment combines climate projections (AR5) with social, environmental, and economic information.

The background research and quantitative analysis identified:

- climate hazards of greatest relative concern
- priority regions, groups, and issues for further exploration, and
- opportunities.

Nineteen different climate hazards and opportunities were assessed. These climate impacts fall into four categories and offer the potential to improve or negatively affect the well-being of Nova Scotians.











Each climate impact was scored and ranked within each of these four impact categories for each census division and provincially. It is important to note that a lower ranking for a climate hazard or opportunity does not mean the impact is insignificant. The ranking indicates that the potential consequences for well-being are relatively higher or lower compared with other hazards or opportunities within that category.

Climate Risks for Halifax (High Emissions Scenario)

As in all parts of Nova Scotia, the Halifax census division is likely to experience all the climate impacts explored in the provincial climate change risk assessment to some extent during the next century. These hazards interact and change over time. **Taking an all-hazards approach to strengthening adaptive capacity and improving well-being will offer the most long-term benefit in the context of a changing climate.**

The following are the top five ranked climate hazards that negatively affect well-being in order of higher to lower for Halifax for early and mid century under a high emissions scenario.

Early century (2015-2045)	Mid century (2035-2065)
 Fluvial flooding	 Shifting ecoregions
 Shifting ecoregions	 Fluvial flooding
 Vector-borne diseases	 Vector-borne diseases
 Heat extremes for human health	 Wildfire

By mid century, the reduction in freeze-thaw cycles has the potential to contribute more to improved well-being for Halifax relative to the other two impacts in this category.

Halifax could take advantage of the longer growing season, but this will need to be balanced with other hazards. While benefits from winter tourism will decrease over time, summer tourism and recreation opportunities could increase.

Potential Adaptation Opportunities

The risk assessment offers some insights into opportunities to reduce risk and adapt to the changing climate by looking at how we can reduce exposure and sensitivity to climate hazards and improve the capacity to cope and adapt.

Halifax has been identified as one of the regions with a higher need to adapt to reduce risks and take advantage of opportunities. It is ranked in the top five census divisions for both impacts that can worsen well-being and impacts that could improve well-being. Halifax is the largest census division with the largest population in Nova Scotia and exposure to climate hazards influences risk. Adaptation efforts will be needed to ensure Halifax is well positioned to take advantage of any opportunities.

The following are the common adaptation approaches across census divisions.

- Further investigation based on specific climate hazards may yield insights into how to **reduce exposure**, such as for people, the natural environment, and infrastructure.
- Across all hazards, opportunities to enhance economic opportunities, improve financial security, and improvements to health could reduce **sensitivity**.
- Improvements to financial security and civic engagement and governance offer opportunities to improve **adaptive capacity**.

Every region in Nova Scotia has a unique mix of rural communities and regional centres with different populations, which offer strengths and vulnerabilities in relation to climate change. More information at the local level can help guide adaptation action, including for those who may be disproportionately impacted within communities. Regional collaboration is an equally important approach to address climate impacts and risks that are not confined within census division boundaries.

For More Information

For more information on how the climate is changing, climate risks for Nova Scotia, and additional regional information, please see *Weathering What's Ahead: Climate Change Risk and Nova Scotia's Well-being* and the associated technical report at <https://climatechange.novascotia.ca>.