

What We Heard So Far

2025 Climate Action Engagement

Corporate Services

January 2026



EAST HANTS

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Executive Summary

East Hants is updating its Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP). This updated plan will serve as a “Roadmap to Resilience” to help guide the Municipality in preparing for both long-term climate changes and sudden extreme weather events. The MCCAP Update will support efforts to ensure that Municipal Services and infrastructure can continue to operate safely and effectively under changing climate conditions. It will also encourage collaboration with community partners to help shape a future where East Hants remains healthy, safe, and resilient, regardless of how the climate changes.

A key part of this work is building open and ongoing dialogue with residents, Municipal staff, and Council. These conversations will help identify shared climate concerns and determine where the strongest interest exists for taking action to protect people, property, infrastructure, and essential services.

To begin this process, East Hants carried out engagement activities in 2025. To-date, 416 people have participated in the engagement process, including the public, staff, and Council. This “What We Heard So Far” report provides a summary of what was heard through activities completed to-date, with specific focus on the General Public Survey, to identify key themes and inform future engagement in a way that is accessible and inclusive.

Key messages from the General Public Survey include:

The image contains six callout boxes arranged in two rows of three. Each box has a dark blue border and a light blue background. The text inside each box is as follows:

- 76% of those surveyed are ‘concerned’ or ‘very concerned’ about climate change.
- 70% of those surveyed are motivated to take action, and want the municipality to do so too.
- 34% of respondents feel prepared to protect their homes and communities from climate and weather impacts.
- Residents want information about localized risk and emergency preparedness.
- Top climate hazard risk concerns are: Drought, Wildfire, Inland Flooding, Pests & Diseases, Biodiversity Loss.
- Communities would like local sustainability grants, waste and energy reduction programs, and green building incentives.

With Gratitude and Respect

We would like to acknowledge all participants that contributed to this engagement and thank them for their time and perspectives during this process.

The Municipality of the District of East Hants (“the Municipality” or “East Hants”) acknowledges that it operates within Sipekne’katik, one of the seven geographic districts of Mi’kma’ki; the ancestral and present home of the Mi’kmaq people.

The lands and waters discussed in this report are part of Sipekne’katik’s traditional territory. Protecting the ecological health of Mi’kma’ki’s is connected to the cultural well-being, economy, and overall health of Sipekne’katik and its approximately 3,000 members.

It is with gratitude and respect for Sipekne’katik’s rights, sovereignty, culture, and knowledge, that the Municipality is moving forward with updating its Municipal Climate Change Action Plan. As the Municipality works to prepare for the changing weather and climate, it does so with a commitment to engage in a respectful and meaningful process that recognizes both shared and distinct concerns.

The Municipality further recognizes that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies, and contributions have enriched this part of Mi’kma’ki, now known as Nova Scotia, for over 400 years.



Background

Since the 2013 Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (“MCCAP”), the Municipality has made significant progress in responding to climate-related risks. The MCCAP Update will build on this work by identifying which further actions could have the greatest impact in helping East Hants become a more weather-ready and climate-prepared organization.

Community engagement is intended to support the MCCAP Update. The engagement work completed to-date was designed to establish a baseline understanding of how residents perceive climate risks in East Hants.

This “What We Heard So Far” report focuses primarily on results from the General Public Survey, since it represents the largest group of responses for engagement activities completed to-date. This report summarizes key themes, but does not include results for every survey question asked. Instead, it provides an overview of the main findings and early trends. Municipal staff will review and consider all survey responses in full, and results will be reflected in a final “What We Heard” report and in the recommended actions included in the MCCAP Update.

It is important to note that survey results represent the perspectives of participants and may not fully reflect the views of all East Hants residents. Some districts and demographic groups were underrepresented, particularly youth and young adults. For this reason, the findings in this report should be interpreted as a snapshot of early engagement, rather than a statistically representative assessment of community-wide opinion.

Key Definitions

When interpreting engagement findings, it is important to understand how key terms are used.

- **Climate Risk** refers to the potential for harmful local impacts caused by climate change, such as damage to infrastructure, effects on the economy, or impacts on health and safety. Climate risk depends on who/what is exposed and how vulnerable they/it is.
- **Hazardous conditions** include both long-term environmental stresses, such as ecosystem shifts, and sudden extreme events, such as wildfires, hurricanes, and flash floods.



Figure 1: Aspects of Climate Risk

Equity and Vulnerability

The changing climate and weather events do not affect all residents equally. The impacts can be more severe for people who have fewer resources, face health challenges, or experience barriers to services and support.

Certain groups may be more vulnerable during extreme heat, flooding, wildfire smoke events, or prolonged power outages during storms. This can include seniors, people with disabilities, individuals with chronic health conditions, low-income households, residents with limited access to transportation, and those living in housing that may be less resilient to weather impacts.

As East Hants continues engagement and develops the MCCAP Update, the Municipality will continue to consider how climate risks intersect with social and demographic factors. This will help ensure that future actions improve community safety and resilience in a way that is fair, inclusive, and responsive to differing needs across the Municipality.

Approach and Methodology

To-date, four (4) engagement streams have been completed to capture a broad range of perspectives:

1. **General Public Survey** - an online survey, with print copies available upon request, to gather broad community input.
2. **Targeted Surveys** - conducted at community events, with a focus on seniors and people with particular interest in emergency preparedness.
3. **Municipal staff** - online surveys and in-person discussions to provide internal insight into operational risks, service delivery, and organizational readiness.
4. **Council Workshop** - Councillors participated in a workshop that included discussion and mapping of climate and weather impacts affecting their districts.

This multi-stream approach ensured input from both the general public, municipal staff, and Council. Although several engagement activities were completed, the analysis in this report focuses primarily on the General Public Survey, as it represents the largest portion of engagement responses to-date.

A summary of these engagement activities is in Table 1.

Table 1: Engagement Events and Response To-Date (excludes April 2025 Council workshop)

| Engagement Opportunity | Where | When | Response |
|------------------------|---|---|--------------------------------|
| General Public Survey | Online survey (with print copies available) | September 25, 2025 to November 30, 2025 | 323 |
| Targeted Survey | Senior Safety Fair Elmsdale Uniacke Kennetcook* Community Safety Day in Lantz | April 10, 2025 June 4, 2025 October 8, 2025 May 10, 2025 | 49 *Kennetcook response |

| | | | was counted in General Public Survey |
|--------------|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Staff Survey | Online Municipal staff survey version 1 | September 24, 2024 to October 9, 2024 | 44 |
| | Online Municipal staff survey version 2 | August 26, 2025 to September 10, 2025 | |
| | Directors Only - Surveys & Discussion | August 21, 2024 to August 30, 2024 | |
| Total | | | 416 |

What We Heard So Far

The goal of engagement completed to-date was to understand early perceptions of climate risk in East Hants. Survey results show that residents have a wide range of priorities, levels of concern, and preparedness. Differences also exist in how people view the Municipality’s role in addressing climate risk.

This report highlights some key findings from the General Public Survey; see Appendices for more results.

Priority Climate Risk Concerns

Key Message: 7 in 10 residents are concerned about climate change impacts and support a proactive response.

Survey respondents were asked to rank their level of concern across seven (7) climate risks. The top three (3) climate risks concerns were:

- 
1. Drought - 74%
- 
2. Wildfire - 62%
- 
3. Ecosystem shifts - 37%

Inland flooding ranked as the 4th climate concern by 33% of those surveyed. Inland flooding can be caused by poor stormwater drainage and/or river flooding. The districts that primarily expressed concern about inland flooding are areas of denser population growth and/or near rivers, where flooding is already being experienced.



Key Action Areas

Survey respondents were asked to rank what key actions they would like to see, relating to both climate mitigation (ex. reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and adaptation (ex. preparing for impacts). The following key themes emerged:

- **Protect Natural Assets:** Many respondents strongly support protecting forests, wetlands, wildlife habitat, and greenspaces. People also supported increasing pollinator-friendly plantings and using “green and blue” infrastructure to help manage stormwater and reduce heat.
- **Protect and Conserve Water:** Concerns about water quality and water supply were common. Many respondents believe protecting water source should be a major priority, especially as climate change and development increase pressure local water systems and sources.
- **Access to Information and Education:** Respondents expressed interest in better access to climate risk information, including online maps and continued public sessions focused on weather preparedness.
- **Improving Energy Efficiency:** Many respondents want the Municipality to lead by example through energy-efficient building upgrades and support for clean energy. These actions can reduce emissions and also reduce risk during power outages and rising energy costs.

Climate Risk Concerns by District

Key Message: Climate impacts can be widespread or very local.

When results were reviewed by district, some differences appeared compared to the overall survey findings. These differences likely reflect each district’s physical landscape, local hazard exposure, demographics, and ability to respond to emergencies.

To better understand local concerns, survey results were analyzed by district. A summary of the climate risks for each district is included in Appendix B.

Climate Concerns and Weather Preparedness

Key Message: Citizens want information about how to protect their families and properties.

Overall, respondents are concerned about climate change and are motivated to act. In the General Public Survey:

- 76% of respondents reporting being concerned or very concerned about climate change.
- 70% of respondents said they feel motivated to take action.

However, less than half of those respondents said they feel prepared to protect their home or community from climate-related impacts.

Residents were asked to select which **emergency preparedness ideas** they were most interested in. The top four (4) ideas were:

1. Community risk assessment to identify who or what is most at risk.
2. Community or neighbourhood emergency planning sessions.

3. Programs to check in on seniors or vulnerable people post extreme weather events.
4. Public information sessions and training, such as how to build a 72-hour emergency kit, home generator use, pet safety during emergencies, flood safety, etc.

Individual preparedness Actions: When asked about actions people **have taken or plan to take** in preparation for extreme weather, the top three actions reported were:

1. Creating a home emergency plan and kit.
2. Installing backup source of heat or power.
3. Improving home energy efficiency.

Council Concerns, in Relation to General Public Survey

In April 2025, Municipal Councillors participated in a workshop called “Building a Climate Resilient Community”. Councillors participated in a mapping activity to identify areas experiencing or at risk of climate impacts, including where residents may be vulnerable and municipal infrastructure at risk.

Council’s concerns closely matched the General Public Survey results:

- **Drought and Wildfire:** Councillors raised concerns about dry wells and increasing wildfire risk.
- **Infrastructure Vulnerability:** Councillors noted that flooding has already damaged roads and other public and private assets.
- **Extreme Heat:** Councillors discussed the health risks of heat, particularly for vulnerable residents, as well as impacts on local industries.
- **Water Quality:** Councillors highlighted stress on certain water sources due to development, geology, or other pressures.

This workshop provided valuable insight into local and operational priorities, and helped to complement and validate findings from the General Public Survey.

Demographic Highlights

| Demographic Overview | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Number of Respondents | 45+ Years Old | Gender |
| 323 | 65% | 63% Women |

The General Public Survey received 323 responses, representing approximately 1.4% of East Hants’ population (using the Statistics Canada Count of 22,855 residents).

Survey respondents skewed toward older age groups, suggesting that youth and young adults were underrepresented. Participation from Indigenous residents, racialized communities, gender-diverse individuals,

and people with disabilities was limited, although survey proportions were generally similar to broader population proportions.

Survey responses were received from all districts, showing good geographic reach; however, district participation was uneven. Districts such as Mount Uniacke-South Rawdon, Elmsdale, and Rawdon-Kennetcook were more strongly represented, while South Uniacke and the Maitland-Noel Shore were underrepresented.

More detailed demographic results are provided in Appendix A.

How Risks and Demographics Intersect

Engagement to-date shows that climate concerns differ across groups and locations, partly due to the different experiences and perspectives of survey respondents; this is known as response bias.

- **Age-related Differences:** Seniors were generally less concerned about drought than younger age groups; however, older respondents showed strong concern about extreme heat. Among senior respondents, 77% ranked extreme heat as the second highest concern, after wildfire.
- **Geographic Differences:** Residents living in the “Corridor” frequently expressed concerns about flooding and drainage problems. Rural residents often ranked drought and wildfire as top concerns.
- **Municipal Perspective:** Municipal staff ranked heavy storms as a greater concern than the respondents of the General Public Survey. This reflects staff responsibilities related to protecting infrastructure, maintaining services, and ensuring public safety during extreme weather.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The climate risk rankings presented in this report represent an important first step toward identifying, understanding, and prioritizing municipal actions that can protect people, infrastructure, and services over the long-term.

All climate and weather hazards affecting East Hants will be assessed further as part of developing the MCCAP Update. This work will strengthen internal climate knowledge and support better integration of climate risk into municipal planning and decision-making.

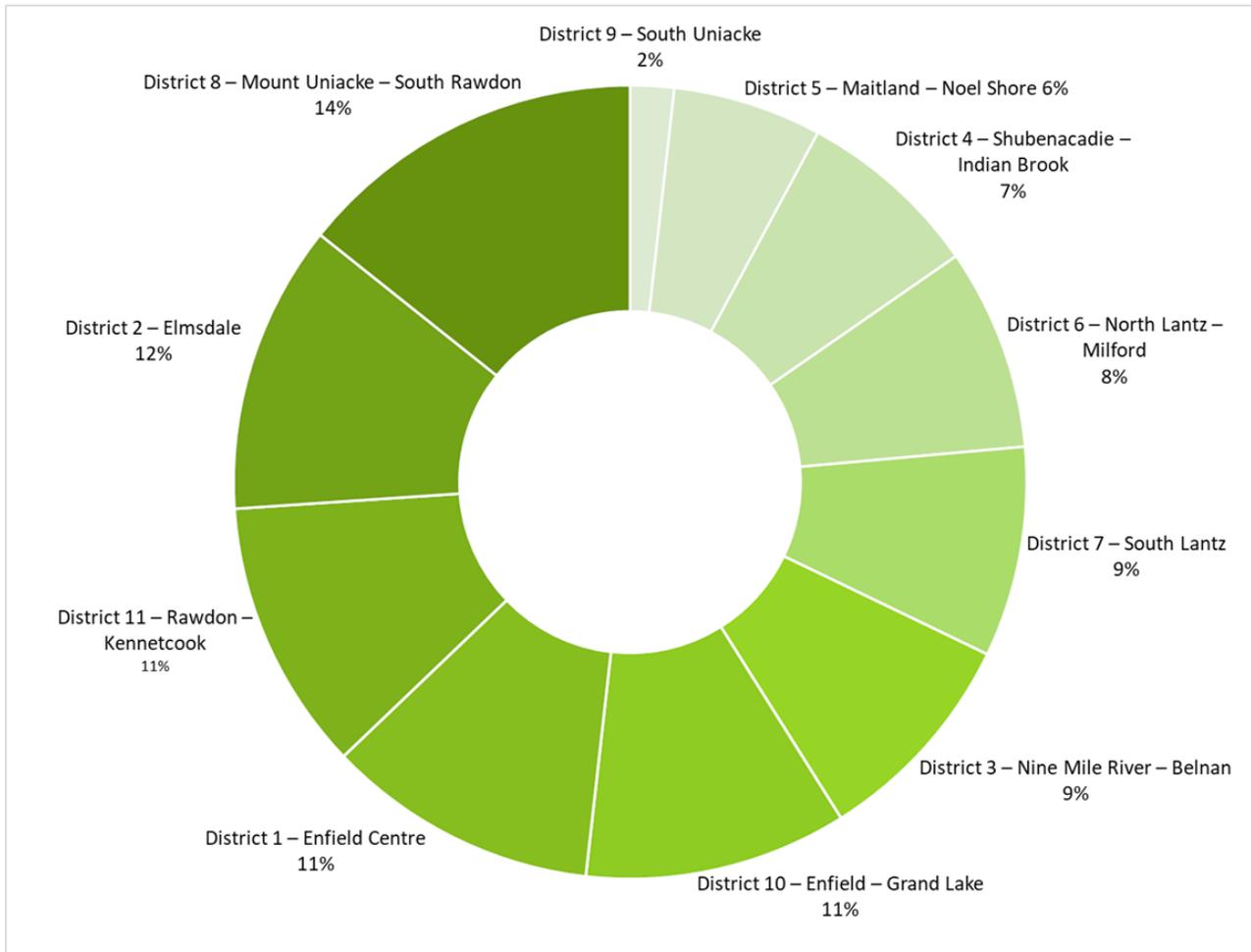
Reviewing engagement results helps identify which districts and community groups are underrepresented in this conversation so far. This information will guide future engagement efforts in 2026, including who should be engaged, how engagement should occur, and what additional data may be needed to support meaningful discussion. This will ensure the MCCAP Update reflects community priorities and supports practical, effective climate actions aligned with how residents live and work in East Hants.

Appendix A

Demographic Results of the General Public Survey

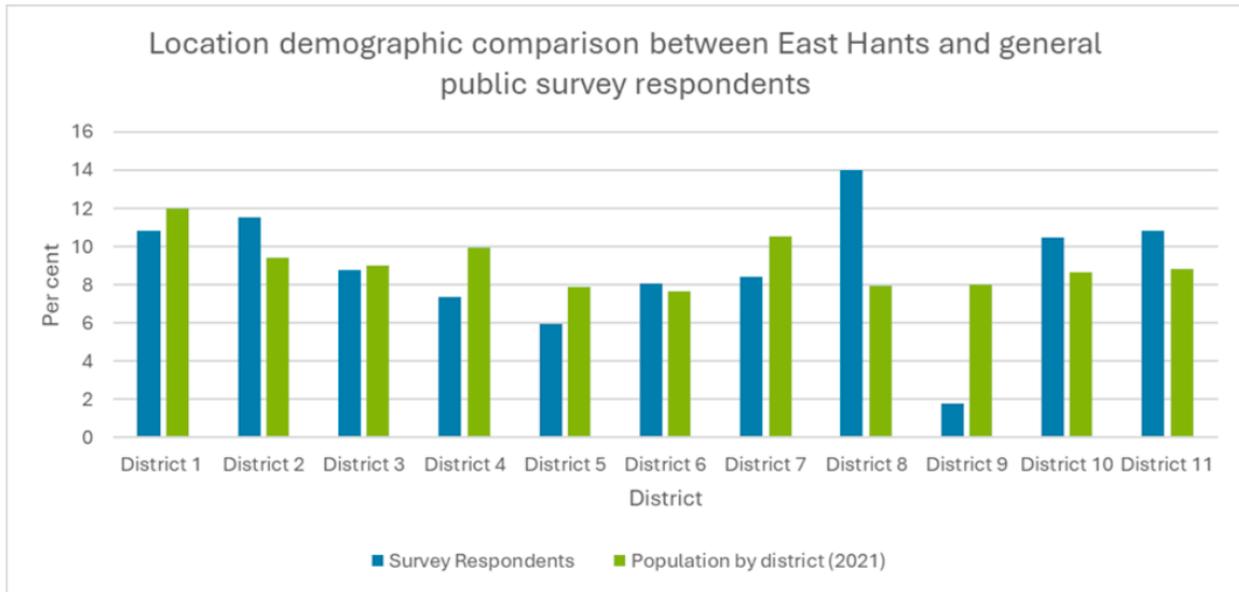
1. Engagement coverage by District: Survey Respondents Compared to East Hants Population

Survey responses were received from residents in every district across East Hants. This shows that the General Public Survey reached people from a wide range of communities and neighbourhoods. However, the number of responses was not evenly spread across districts. Some districts had a higher number of survey participants than expected based on population size, while others had fewer participants than expected.



Districts 2 (Elmsdale), 8 (Mount Uniacke-South Rawdon), 10 (Enfield-Grand Lake), and 11 (Rawdon-Kennetcook), had strong representation compared to their share of the overall municipal population. In contrast, Districts 4 (Shubenacadie-Indian Brook), 5 (South Uniacke), 7 (South Lantz), and 9 (Maitland-Noel Shore) were underrepresented; fewer residents from these areas participated than would normally be expected based on the population size of those Districts.

This difference in participation should be considered when interpreting the results at the district level. While the survey provides useful insights into climate concerns across East Hants, additional targeted engagement may be needed in underrepresented districts to ensure a more complete and balanced community perspective.

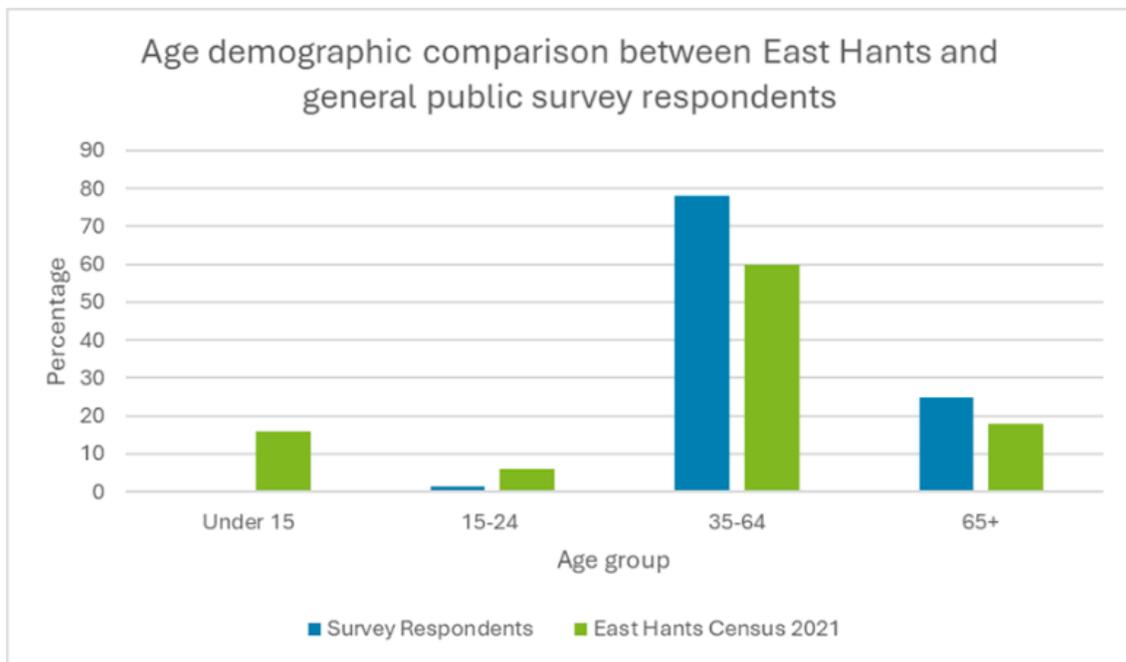


2. Age Distribution: Survey Respondents Compared to East Hants Population

The age breakdown of survey respondents shows that participation was much higher among older residents.

Youth and young adults under age 25 make up approximately 22% of East Hants’ population, but were almost completely absent from survey responses. In contrast, residents aged 35 and older were strongly overrepresented, especially in the 45+ age groups. This means that the survey results reflect the perspectives of middle-aged and senior residents more strongly than other age groups.

This age gap is important, because younger residents may have different concerns, experiences, and preparedness levels related to climate impacts. Future engagement will need to focus on better reaching youth and young adults.

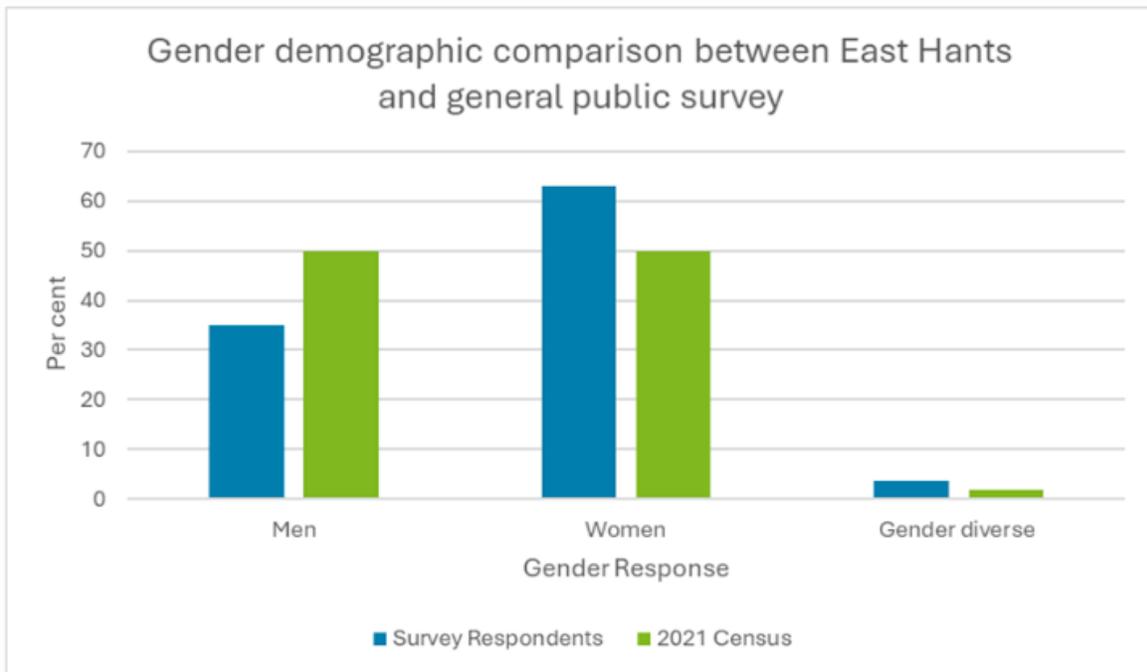


3. Gender Distribution: Survey Respondents Compared to East Hants Population

Survey responses also showed an imbalance in gender representation.

Women made up approximately 63% of survey respondents, while men accounted for about 35%. This suggests that men were unrepresented compared to their share of the East Hants population. A small number of respondents identified as gender-diverse.

Because of this imbalance, the survey results may reflect the concerns and priorities of women more strongly than those of other gender groups. This should be considered when interpreting results, and future engagement efforts should aim to increase participation across all gender identities.



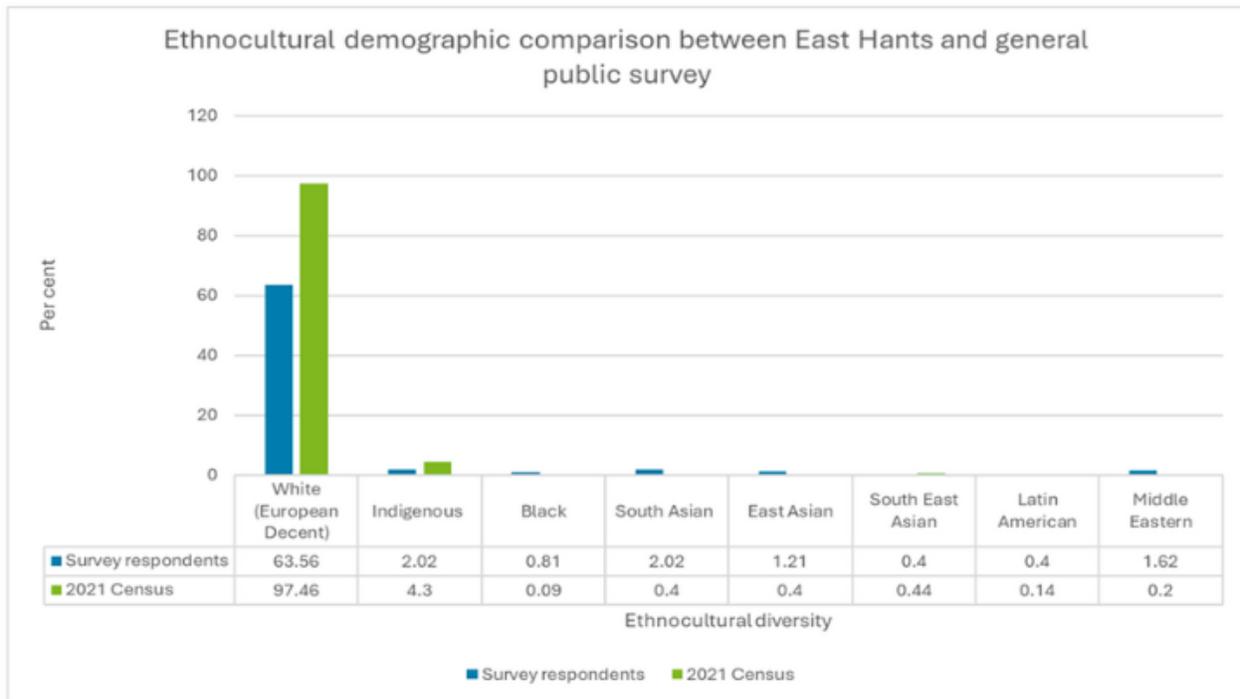
4. Racial and Indigenous Identity

When survey results are viewed as percentages, participation from racialized communities appears generally similar to their share of the East Hants population. This suggests that the survey reached a range of ethnocultural identities. Of note, the actual responses from these groups were small; this makes it harder to draw strong conclusions about their specific perspectives.

For example, Indigenous residents make up approximately 4.3% of the East Hants population, but only about 2% of survey respondents identified as Indigenous.

Although the proportions may appear somewhat similar, the low number of responses highlights the need for more focused outreach and engagement. Future engagement will be important to ensure that Indigenous and racialized communities have meaningful opportunities to share their concerns, priorities, and ideas as part of the MCCAP Update.

a. Survey proportions vs. Census proportions



b. Survey Counts vs. Census Counts

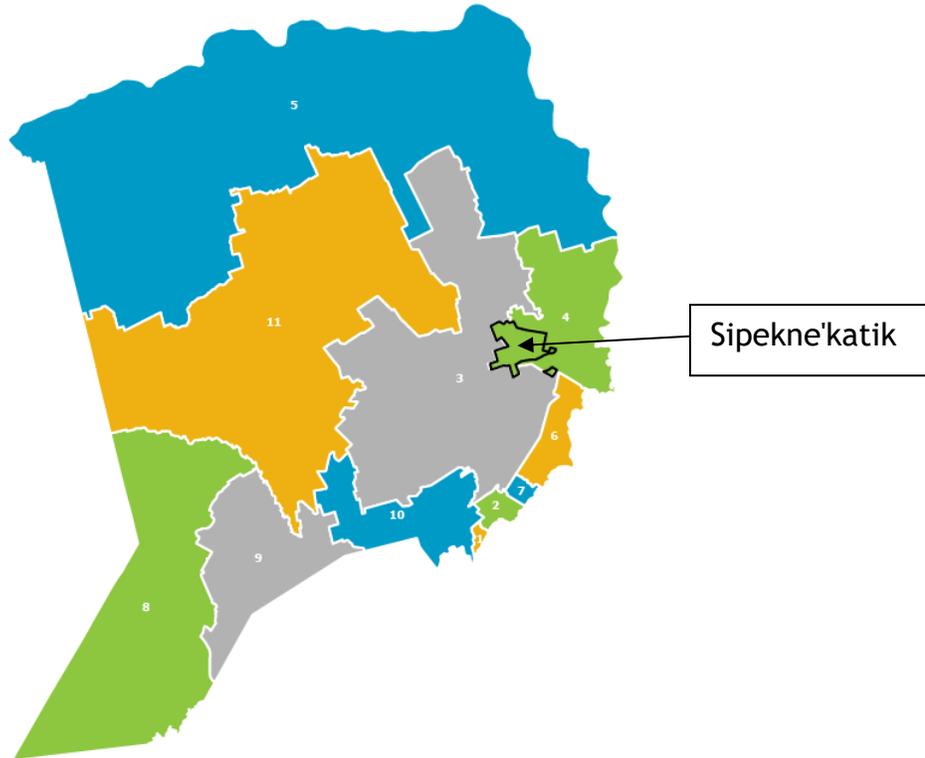
| | White (European Decent) | Indigenous | Black | South Asian | East Asian | South East Asian | Latin American | Middle Eastern |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------|-------|-------------|------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| ■ Survey respondents | 157 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| ■ 2021 Census | 22275 | 4.3 | 200 | 90 | 10 | 25 | 35 | 45 |

Ethnocultural diversity

Appendix B

Climate Risk Rankings by Each District

The General Public Survey results were analyzed by district to better understand how climate concerns vary across East Hants. The table below summarizes the top three climate risks of concern reported in each district.



| Location | Top Three Climate Risks of Concern | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| District 1-Enfield Centre | Drought | Wildfire | Ecosystem Shifts |
| District 2-Elmsdale | Drought | Wildfire | Inland Flooding |
| District 3-Nine Mile River-Belnan | Drought | Ecosystem Shifts | Wildfire |
| District 4-Shubenacadie-Indian Brook | Extreme Heat | Ecosystem Shifts | Drought/Wildfire |
| District 5-Maitland-Noel Shore | Drought | Wildfire | Extreme Heat |
| District 6-North Lantz-Milford | Inland Flooding | Drought | Wildfire |
| District 7-South Lantz | Drought | Inland Flooding | Ecosystem Shifts |
| District 8-Mount Uniacke-South Rawdon | Wildfire | Drought | Ecosystem Shifts |
| District 9-South Uniacke | Drought/Wildfire | Inland Flooding | Extreme Heat |
| District 10-Enfield-Grand Lake | Drought | Wildfire | Heavy Storms |
| District 11-Rawdon-Kennetcook | Drought | Wildfire | Ecosystem Shifts |