AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND
# Seasonal Climate Summary

Earth Sciences New Zealand

**Autumn 2026** Issued: 5 June 2026

# A mild and dry autumn for many parts of the country

| | |
|---|---|
| Temperature | Autumn temperatures were above average (0.51-1.20°C above average) for southern Southland, Fiordland, Dunedin, inland Canterbury, the West Coast, Tasman, parts of northern Waikato, and northern Northland. Temperatures were near average (±0.50°C of average) for the remainder of the country. |
| Rainfall | Rainfall was below normal (50-79% of normal) for coastal and central Otago, eastern parts of Canterbury especially about Christchurch and Banks Peninsula, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and southern Waikato. Rainfall was above normal (120-149% of normal) or well above normal (>149% of normal) for Northland, northern Auckland, and eastern Marlborough. Rainfall was near normal (80-119% of normal) for the remainder of the country. |
| Soil Moisture | At the end of autumn, soil moisture levels were considerably lower than normal in eastern parts of Canterbury from Cheviot to Orari. Soil moisture levels were lower than normal for the remainder of Canterbury, eastern and inland Otago, south Auckland, Waikato, coastal Bay of Plenty, East Cape, Taranaki, and Manawatū-Whanganui. Soil moisture levels were higher than normal in southeastern parts of Marlborough, and coastal parts of the Tararua District. Near normal soil moisture levels were typical for the remainder of the country. |

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## Overview

The first half of autumn was generally settled with slow-moving high pressure systems dominating over Aotearoa New Zealand. An unsettled period of weather impacted the northern North Island in late March, while the arrival of Cyclone Vaianu in mid-April heralded a week with bouts of heavy rain, localised downpours, and flooding for many parts of the North Island. Slow-moving high pressure systems returned during the back end of autumn, with extended periods of dry and calm weather across the country. Prolonged dry spells[1] occurred during May for many regions, but especially in Canterbury, where several locations registered dry spells of at least 35 days. ENSO-neutral (El Niño – Southern Oscillation) conditions were present in the tropical Pacific throughout autumn. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) surrounding New Zealand were generally above average, particularly off the coast of the South Island. However, lower than average SSTs were observed near the east and west coast of the North Island in March, and these persisted near the eastern North Island throughout April.

[1] Consecutive days with less than 1 mm of rain on any given day.

The nationwide average temperature in autumn 2026 was 13.7°C. This was 0.3°C above the 1991-2020 autumn average, ranking as New Zealand's 30th-warmest autumn since Earth Sciences New Zealand's seven station temperature series began in 1909. Autumn temperatures were above average (0.51-1.20°C above average) for southern Southland, Fiordland, Dunedin, inland Canterbury, the West Coast, Tasman, parts of northern Waikato, and northern Northland. Temperatures were near average (±0.50°C of average) for the remainder of the country.

Autumn rainfall was below normal (50-79% of normal) for coastal and central Otago, eastern parts of Canterbury especially about Christchurch and Banks Peninsula, Taranaki, Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, and southern Waikato. It was and especially dry autumn for Ranfurly, Clyde, and Akaroa, where rainfall totals were less than 50% of normal, respectively. Rainfall was above normal (120-149% of normal) or well above normal (>149% of normal) for Northland, northern Auckland, and eastern Marlborough. Rainfall was near normal (80-119% of normal) for the remainder of the country. By the end of autumn, very dry to extremely dry conditions were present[2] in eastern parts of Waimakariri and Selwyn Districts, as well as Christchurch.

Further Highlights:

- The highest temperature was 30.9°C, observed at Alexandra on 7 March.
- The lowest temperature was -7.6°C, observed at Mt Cook Airport on 20 May.
- The highest 1-day rainfall was 214 mm, recorded at Cathedral Cove on 26 March.
- The highest wind gust was 194 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 13 April.
- Of the six main centres in autumn 2026, Tauranga was the warmest and sunniest, Christchurch was the driest and coolest, and Wellington was the wettest and least sunny.
- The sunniest four locations in 2026 so far are Nelson (1253 hours), New Plymouth (1250 hours), Whakatāne (1189 hours), and Richmond (1189 hours).

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## Temperature: A mild season overall

Four locations observed near-record high mean temperatures for autumn, with no locations observing record or near-record low mean air temperatures.

**Record[3] or near-record mean air temperatures for autumn were recorded at:**

| Location | Mean air temp. (°C) | Departure from normal (°C) | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High records or near-records | | | | |
| Secretary Island | 13.9 | 1.2 | 1985 | 3rd-highest |
| South West Cape | 12.2 | 1.3 | 1991 | 3rd-highest |
| Campbell Island | 8.4 | 0.7 | 1991 | 3rd-highest |
| Arapito | 14.8 | 1.5 | 1978 | 4th-highest |

[2] According to the New Zealand Drought Index: https://niwa.co.nz/hazards/weather-hazards/new-zealand-drought-monitor

[3] The rankings (1st, 2nd, 3rd etc.) in all Tables in this summary are relative to climate data from a group of nearby stations, some of which may no longer be operating. The current climate value is compared against all values from any member of the group, without any regard for homogeneity between one station's record, and another. This approach is used due to the practical limitations of performing homogeneity checks in real-time.

| Low records or near-records | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| None observed | | | | |

**Record or near-record mean maximum air temperatures for autumn were recorded at:**

| Location | Mean maximum air temp. (°C) | Departure from normal (°C) | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High records or near-records | | | | |
| Tākaka | 20.5 | 1.6 | 1978 | 2nd-highest |
| Arapito | 19.8 | 1.7 | 1978 | 2nd-highest |
| Secretary Island | 16.9 | 1.4 | 1985 | 2nd-highest |
| Mt Ruapehu Chateau | 14.3 | 1.2 | 2000 | 3rd-highest |
| South West Cape | 14.6 | 1.4 | 1991 | 3rd-highest |
| Campbell Island | 10.5 | 0.9 | 1991 | 3rd-highest |
| Low records or near-records | | | | |
| None observed | | | | |

**Record or near-record mean minimum air temperatures for autumn were recorded at:**

| Location | Mean minimum air temp. (°C) | Departure from normal (°C) | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High records or near-records | | | | |
| South West Cape | 9.9 | 1.1 | 1991 | 3rd-highest |
| Secretary Island | 10.9 | 1.0 | 1985 | 4th-highest |
| Low records or near-records | | | | |
| Appleby | 5.7 | -0.7 | 1932 | 4th-lowest |
| Waipounamu | 4.1 | -0.4 | 1980 | 4th-lowest |

## Rainfall: A dry autumn for many regions

Four locations observed their second-driest autumn on record. Of those four, perhaps most notable was Ranfurly where records began in 1897. Ranfurly was New Zealand's driest location relative to normal; the town registered 41 mm of rain in autumn which is just 39% of normal. Cape Campbell was New Zealand's wettest location relative to normal, with 250 mm of autumn rainfall (207% of normal).

**Record or near-record autumn rainfall totals were recorded at:**

| Location | Rainfall total (mm) | Percentage of normal | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High records or near-records | | | | |
| None observed | | | | |
| Low records or near-records | | | | |
| Tūrangi | 206 | 60 | 1968 | 2nd-lowest |
| Akaroa | 106 | 42 | 1977 | 2nd-lowest |
| Ranfurly | 41 | 39 | 1897 | 2nd-lowest |
| Tiwai Point | 182 | 67 | 1970 | 2nd-lowest |
| Stratford | 315 | 66 | 1960 | 3rd-lowest |

## Autumn climate in the six main centres

Autumn temperatures were above average in Dunedin, and near average for the remaining main centres. It was a dry season in Christchurch and Dunedin, where total rainfall was just over half of normal, respectively. Rainfall was near normal for the main centres in the North Island. Of the six main centres in autumn 2026, Tauranga was the warmest and sunniest, Christchurch was the driest and coolest, and Wellington was the wettest and least sunny.

**Autumn 2026 main centre climate statistics:**

| Temperature | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Location | Mean temp. (°C) | Departure from normal (°C) | Comments |
| Auckland[a] | 16.2 | -0.3 | Near average |
| Tauranga[b] | 16.4 | +0.4 | Near average |
| Hamilton[c] | 14.5 | 0.0 | Near average |
| Wellington[d] | 14.1 | +0.2 | Near average |
| Christchurch[e] | 12.2 | +0.2 | Near average |
| Dunedin[f] | 12.6 | +0.8 | Above average |
| Rainfall | | | |
| Location | Rainfall (mm) | % of normal | Comments |
| Auckland[a] | 286 | 97 | Near normal |
| Tauranga[b] | 321[4] | 94 | Near normal |
| Hamilton[c] | 273 | 96 | Near normal |
| Wellington[d] | 323 | 87 | Near normal |
| Christchurch[e] | 89 | 55 | Below normal |
| Dunedin[f] | 94 | 53 | Below normal |
| Sunshine | | | |
| Location | Sunshine (hours) | | |
| Auckland[a] | 597 | | |
| Tauranga[b] | 602[5] | | |
| Hamilton[g] | 563 | | |
| Wellington[d] | 483 | | |
| Christchurch[e] | 556 | | |
| Dunedin[f] | 510 | | |

[a] Māngere [b] Tauranga Airport [c] Hamilton Airport [d] Kelburn [e] Christchurch Airport [f] Musselburgh [g] Ruakura

[4] Missing three days of data.
[5] Missing two days of data.

## Highlights and extreme events

This section contains information pertaining to some of the more significant highlights and extreme events that occurred during autumn 2026. Note that a more detailed list of significant weather events for autumn 2026 can be found in the *Highlights and extreme events* section of ESNZ's Monthly Climate Summaries. These monthly summaries may be viewed here.

### Temperatures

The highest autumn temperature was 30.9°C, observed at Alexandra on 7 March. The lowest temperature was -7.6°C, observed at Mt Cook Airport on 20 May.

**Record or near-record daily maximum air temperatures for autumn were recorded at:**

| Location | Extreme maximum (°C) | Date of extreme temperature | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| High records or near-records | | | | |
| Hāwera | 26.6 | Mar-13th | 1977 | Highest |
| Boyle River Lodge | 31.0 | Mar-7th | 1983 | Equal highest |
| Port Taharoa | 28.5 | Mar-13th | 1973 | 2nd-highest |
| Dunedin (Musselburgh) | 30.4 | Mar-6th | 1947 | 2nd-highest |
| Nugget Point | 28.3 | Mar-6th | 1970 | 2nd-highest |
| Waipounamu | 28.0 | Mar-6th | 1980 | 3rd-highest |
| Alexandra | 32.3 | Mar-7th | 1992 | 3rd-highest |
| Whakatāne | 28.7 | Mar-14th | 1975 | Equal 3rd-highest |
| Taihape | 29.0 | Mar-13th | 1972 | Equal 3rd-highest |
| Oamaru | 30.1 | Mar-6th | 1967 | Equal 3rd-highest |
| Clyde | 30.6 | Mar-7th | 1978 | Equal 4th-highest |
| Stewart Island (Oban) | 25.0 | Mar-5th | 1975 | Equal 4th-highest |
| Low records or near-records | | | | |
| Pukaki Aerodrome | 1.9 | May-19th | 1972 | 4th-lowest |
| Middlemarch | 2.8 | May-16th | 2000 | 4th-lowest |

**Record or near-record daily minimum air temperatures for autumn were recorded at:**

| Location | Extreme minimum (°C) | Date of extreme temperature | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Low records or near-records | | | | |
| Waipounamu | -4.1 | May-19th | 1980 | 4th-lowest |
| High records or near-records | | | | |
| Oamaru | 16.8 | Mar-28th | 1972 | Equal highest |
| Arapito | 18.7 | Apr-7th | 1978 | 2nd-highest |
| Matamata | 19.6 | Mar-14th | 1999 | Equal 2nd-highest |
| Whitianga | 21.2 | Mar-14th | 1971 | 3rd-highest |
| Te Puke | 19.9 | Mar-14th | 1973 | 3rd-highest |
| Rotorua | 18.9 | Mar-14th | 1972 | 3rd-highest |
| Motu | 16.7 | Apr-9th | 1990 | 3rd-highest |
| Mt Ruapehu Chateau | 13.4 | Apr-12th | 2000 | 3rd-highest |
| Taihape | 15.0 | Mar-14th | 1973 | 4th-highest |
| Oban (Stewart Island) | 14.0 | Mar-27th | 1975 | Equal 4th-highest |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Balclutha | 15.3 | Mar-7th | 1972 | Equal 4th-highest |

**Rain, flooding, and slips**

The highest 1-day rainfall was 214 mm, recorded at Cathedral Cove on 26 March.

From 25-26 March, heavy rain and strong winds swept across the country as a deep sub-tropical low moved from Northland to the Bay of Plenty. Northland was the hardest hit, where more than a month's worth of rain fell in less than two days. The Far North and Whangārei mayors declared states of emergency due to widespread flooding. An estimated 400-500 residents were evacuated from their homes in Kaitaia after the Awanui River breached its stopbank.

From 11-13 April, Cyclone Vaianu impacted much of the North Island. Rainfall impacts were focused mainly between Hawke's Bay and Northland, and especially through Coromandel and Bay of Plenty. SH2 and SH35 were closed concurrently due to slips, fallen trees, and downed powerlines, while Thames was left cut off by road closures on the Peninsula. Numerous other closures occurred, including SH16, SH30, SH33, SH34, SH50 and SH25. Eastern coastal parts of Northland were cut off, and average wave heights of 9 metres were recorded in Tauranga Harbour.

Intense, organised north-westerly rain and severe thunderstorms on 18 April led to numerous flooding incidents in the Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kāpiti Coast, with several road closures. The same event generated major rainfall in the Central North Island, leading to widespread road closures, large slips, and States of Emergency being declared in two districts.

On 20 April, an isolated, slow-moving area of converging winds over Wellington city produced torrential rainfall in localised urban areas. The resulting slips and dramatic flooding resulted in a rare State of Emergency for parts of the Wellington region, which persisted for several days in Wellington city. Major city streets were transformed temporarily into rivers, the Mount Victoria tunnel was closed due to flooding, and the Basin Reserve became effectively impassable. A car was washed into the sea at Ōwhiro Bay, and numerous houses and businesses were flooded throughout Wellington's southern suburbs. One fatality occurred in south Karori.

**Record or near-record autumn extreme 1-day rainfall totals were recorded at:**

| Location | Extreme 1-day rainfall (mm) | Date of extreme rainfall | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Purerua | 143 | Mar-25th | 1983 | Highest |
| Rings Beach | 199 | Mar-26th | 1986 | Highest |
| Awakino | 143 | Apr-18th | 2005 | Highest |
| Mahana Lodge | 205 | Apr-20th | 1984 | Highest |
| Trentham Racecourse | 134 | Apr-20th | 1930 | Highest |
| Ohakune | 87 | Apr-18th | 1961 | Highest |
| Waiharara | 131 | Mar-25th | 1956 | 2nd-highest |
| Mokohinau Island | 117 | Apr-23rd | 1994 | 2nd-highest |
| Chiltern | 215 | Mar-26th | 1950 | 2nd-highest |
| Whitianga | 197 | Mar-26th | 1961 | 2nd-highest |
| Coroglen (Coromandel) | 193 | Mar-26th | 1988 | 2nd-highest |
| Mahoenui | 119 | Apr-19th | 1970 | 2nd-highest |
| Lower Retaruke | 113 | Apr-18th | 1967 | 2nd-highest |
| Waiwhero Station | 147 | Apr-21st | 1951 | 2nd-highest |
| Balclutha | 60 | Apr-27th | 1949 | 2nd-highest |
| Kaitaia | 118 | Mar-26th | 1948 | 3rd-highest |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kerikeri | 190 | Mar-25th | 1945 | 3rd-highest |
| Puhata | 106 | Mar-25th | 1979 | 3rd-highest |
| Rawene | 105 | Mar-25th | 1977 | 3rd-highest |
| Te Puke | 148 | Mar-26th | 1973 | 3rd-highest |
| Tarata | 107 | Apr-13th | 1951 | 3rd-highest |
| Mt Ruapehu Chateau | 105 | Apr-18th | 2000 | 3rd-highest |
| Castlepoint | 110 | Apr-20th | 1907 | 3rd-highest |
| Kaihoka | 111 | Mar-26th | 1983 | 3rd-highest |
| Pakawa | 155 | Mar-26th | 1984 | 3rd-highest |
| Kaeo | 173 | Mar-25th | 1981 | 4th-highest |
| Russell | 157 | Mar-25th | 1919 | 4th-highest |
| Karangahake Gorge | 131 | Apr-11th | 1981 | 4th-highest |

**Wind**

The highest wind gust was 194 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 13 April.

**Record or near-record autumn extreme wind gusts were recorded at:**

| Location | Extreme wind gust (km/h) | Date of extreme gust | Year records began | Comments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mokohinau Island | 131 | Apr-11th | 1994 | Highest |
| Tūrangi | 181 | May-30th | 1973 | Highest |
| Māhia | 126 | Apr-12th | 1991 | Highest |
| Kaikohe | 89 | Apr-20th | 1986 | 2nd-highest |
| Alexandra | 119 | May-17th | 2001 | 2nd-highest |
| Hāwera | 102 | Apr-20th | 1986 | 4th-highest |
| Mt Cook (Airport) | 139 | May-21st | 2000 | 4th-highest |
| Diamond Harbour | 96 | Mar-26th | 1980 | 4th-highest |

**Drought, dryness, and fire**

The autumn season ended on a very dry note for many parts of the country, with 27 locations observing their driest May on record. Numerous locations ended the season on a prolonged dry spell (consecutive days with less than 1 mm of rain on any day), including:

- Cheviot and Rangiora: 39 days from 23 April – 31 May.
- Christchurch (Botanic Gardens): 35 days from 27 April – 31 May.
- Whanganui, Martinborough, Masterton, Oamaru and Windsor: 23 days from 9-31 May.
- Palmerston North: 22 days from 10-31 May.
- Hāwera and Waipara West: 21 days from 11-31 May.
- Taupō: 20 days from 12-31 May.

**Snow and ice**

From 21-22 April, a relatively heavy snowfall for the time of year occurred in the mountains of northern and eastern Canterbury. Hanmer Springs Ski Area opened and operated their rope tow for keen skiers and snowboarders while there was sufficient snow to do so; from 24-25 April.

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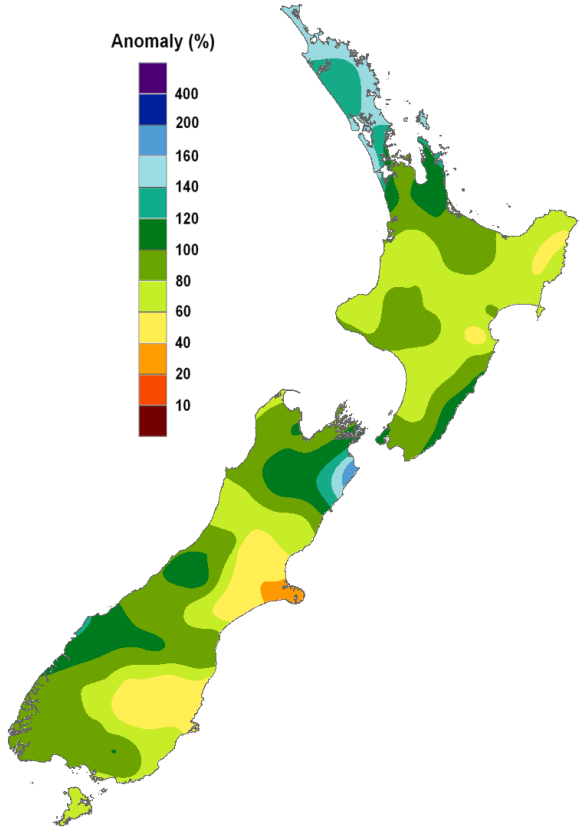
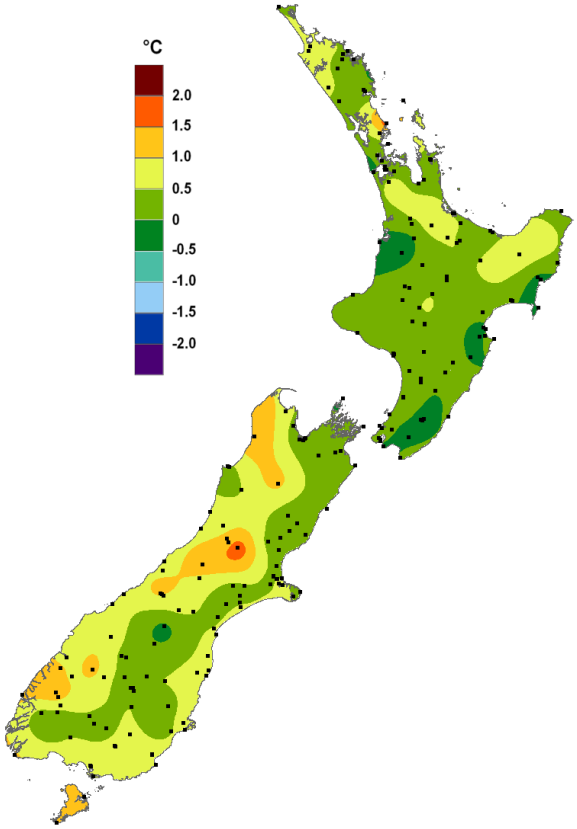



**Autumn rainfall**
Expressed as a percentage of the 1991-2020 normal.




**Autumn temperature**
Expressed as a departure from the 1991-2020 average in degrees Celsius.

https://earthsciences.nz/research/climate-and-weather