

May 2026

Issued: 5 June 2026

## A record dry May for many regions

Temperature	Temperatures were well above average (>1.20°C above average) or above average (0.51-1.20°C above average) in Northland, parts of Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, northern Gisborne, western Tasman, Marlborough, Westland, the Canterbury High Country about Arthur's Pass and the Craigieburn Range, Bank's Peninsula and Christchurch, Fiordland, Stewart Island, and some coastal parts of Otago. Near normal temperatures ( $\pm 0.50^\circ\text{C}$ ) were recorded elsewhere.
Rainfall	Rainfall was below normal (50-79% of normal) or well below normal (<50% of normal) for the entire North Island outside of the Far North, much of Tasman, Marlborough, Canterbury, most of Otago, and Southland. Rainfall was above normal (120-149% of normal) for Wānaka. Elsewhere, near normal rainfall (80-119% of normal) fell in May.
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, the 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.

Click on the link to jump to the information you require:

[Overview](#)

[Temperature](#)

[Rainfall](#)

[May 2026 climate in the six main centres](#)

[Highlights and extreme events](#)

### Overview

May was dominated by high pressure and settled weather, which led to unusually dry weather for many areas, and overall near to above average temperatures. Despite a wet end to the month, nearly all of the North Island and much of the South Island experienced below normal rainfall. May was also a warm month, with generally above average to average temperatures across the country. ENSO (El Niño Southern Oscillation) neutral conditions continued through the month of May. Sea surface temperatures (SSTs) surrounding Aotearoa New Zealand were mostly above average. At the end of May, Marine Heatwave (MHW) conditions<sup>1</sup> were present about the lower South Island, stretching from Fiordland, coastal Southland and Stewart Island, coastal Otago, and just off the coast of South Canterbury.

The nationwide average temperature in May 2026 was 11.4°C. This is 0.3°C above the 1991-2020 May average, making it New Zealand's 20<sup>th</sup>-warmest May since Earth Sciences New Zealand's

<sup>1</sup> Defined as five or more consecutive days with SSTs above the 90th percentile for the time of year.

seven station temperature series began in 1909. The long stretches of high pressure generally led to warm afternoons and cool nights. One period of warmer-than-normal temperatures occurred ahead of a front that crossed the country from 6- 9 May. Additionally, very warm temperatures affected the country at the end of the month, as complex low pressure system brought in warm and moist air from 30-31 May.

It was a record setting dry month for many regions of the country. Almost 30 weather stations recorded their driest May on record (see rainfall section below). Rainfall was below normal (50-79% of normal) or well below normal (<50% of normal) for the entire North Island outside of the Far North in Northland, Western Tasman except about Tākaka, a majority of Marlborough, Canterbury, majority of Otago, Westland except about Haast, southern Fiordland, and Southland. Rainfall was above normal (120-149% of normal) for small portion of inland Otago about Wānaka. Elsewhere, near normal rainfall (80-119% of normal) fell in May.

**Further Highlights:**

- The highest temperature was 25.5°C, observed in Cheviot on 7 May.
- The lowest temperature was -7.6°C, observed at Mt Cook Airport on 20 May.
- The highest 1-day rainfall was 209 mm, recorded at Milford Sound on 31 May.
- The highest wind gust was 154 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 26 May.
- Of the six main centres, Auckland was the warmest, Tauranga was the sunniest, Wellington was the wettest and least sunny, Christchurch was the coolest and the driest.
- The sunniest four locations in 2026 so far are Nelson (1253 hours), New Plymouth (1250 hours), Whakatāne (1189 hours), and Richmond (1189 hours).

**For further information, please contact:**

**Chester Lampkin**

Meteorologist

Tel. 09 375 2087

**Temperature: Warm for most regions**

Six locations observed record or near-record breaking high mean air temperatures, with Campbell Island recording its warmest May on record. No stations observed record breaking low mean air temperatures in May. The country’s coolest location relative to average was Pukaki Airport, where the mean temperature of 5.2°C was 0.9°C below average. The warmest locations relative to average were Arthur’s Pass, Mt Cook Village, and South West Cape, where the mean temperature 1.8°C above average, respectively.

**Record<sup>2</sup> or near-record mean air temperatures for May were recorded at:**

Location	Mean air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Campbell Island	8.2	1.7	1991	Highest
Cape Reinga	16.4	1.0	1951	2nd-highest

<sup>2</sup> The rankings (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> 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.

Secretary Island	12.6	1.4	1985	3rd-highest
South West Cape	11.4	1.8	1991	3rd-highest
Kerikeri	15.7	1.2	1945	4th-highest
Leigh	16.8	3.3	1966	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
None observed				

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

Location	Mean maximum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Lower Retaruke	17.4	2.3	1966	Highest
Secretary Island	15.3	1.6	1985	Highest
Mt Cook Village	14.1	3.1	1929	Highest
Campbell Island	9.9	1.5	1991	Highest
Te Kuiti	18.4	1.5	1959	2nd-highest
Mt Ruapehu (Chateau)	12.2	2.2	2000	2nd-highest
Cape Reinga	18.8	1.2	1951	3rd-highest
Whakatāne	19.2	1.2	1974	3rd-highest
Taumarunui	17.9	1.7	1947	3rd-highest
Tūrangi	16.1	1.1	1968	3rd-highest
Stratford	16.0	1.2	1960	3rd-highest
Arapito	17.7	1.8	1978	3rd-highest
Franz Josef	15.7	1.3	1953	3rd-highest
Milford Sound	14.2	1.5	1934	3rd-highest
South West Cape	13.2	1.6	1991	3rd-highest
Port Taharoa	18.4	0.9	1973	4th-highest
Puysegur Point	14.2	1.5	1978	4th-highest
Arthurs Pass	12.4	2.8	1973	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
None Observed				

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

Location	Mean minimum air temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Campbell Island	6.4	1.9	1991	Highest
South West Cape	9.5	1.8	1991	2nd-highest
Purerua	13.1	1.4	1983	3rd-highest
Leigh	14.1	4.6	1966	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Te Kuiti	3.7	-2.6	1959	Lowest
Middlemarch	-1.5	-2.6	2000	3rd-lowest
Waipounamu	1.0	-1.1	1980	Equal 3rd-lowest
Winchmore	0.8	-2.7	1949	4th-lowest

## Rainfall: Record dry for many regions

May 2026 will be remembered for the extreme lack of rainfall, with more than 40 stations recording their driest or second-driest May on record. Two of the most extreme locations were in Canterbury, with a measly 0.6 mm recorded at Christchurch Botanic Gardens, and no rain recorded at Cheviot. Other notable dry records include just 8 mm at Palmerston North, 8 mm in Taupō, 3 mm in Martinborough in the Wairarapa, and just 3 mm in Whanganui (Spriggens Park).

### Record or near-record May 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				
Dargaville	21	18	1943	Lowest
Auckland (Western Springs)	25	20	1948	Lowest
Te Puke	24	16	1973	Lowest
Taupō	8	10	1949	Lowest
Pukekohe	17	14	1944	Lowest
Hamilton (Ruakura)	18	17	1905	Lowest
Awakino	40	20	2005	Lowest
Te Kuiti	29	20	1950	Lowest
Taumarunui	24	17	1913	Lowest
Tūrangi	24	18	1968	Lowest
Lower Retaruke	21	16	1966	Lowest
Mt Ruapehu Chateau	47	19	2000	Lowest
Masterton	10	14	1926	Lowest
Dannevirke	9	12	1951	Lowest
Martinborough	3	5	1924	Lowest
Waipawa	5	9	1945	Lowest
Palmerston North	8	9	1928	Lowest
Hāwera	10	10	1977	Lowest
Ohakune	19	17	1961	Lowest
Waiouru	12	13	1950	Lowest
Whanganui	3	4	1890	Lowest
Cheviot	0	1	1982	Lowest
Winchmore	5	7	1947	Lowest
Waipara West	5	11	1973	Lowest
Rangiora	4	7	1965	Lowest
Christchurch	6	10	1863	Lowest
Akaroa	10	11	1977	Lowest
Whakatāne	16	12	1952	2nd-lowest
Auckland( Māngere)	13	12	1959	2nd-lowest
Port Taharoa	29	22	1973	2nd-lowest
Taumarunui	31	22	1913	2nd-lowest
Ngawi	8	11	1930	2nd-lowest
Hicks Bay	21	15	1916	2nd-lowest
Whakatu	12	21	1982	2nd-lowest
Paraparaumu	18	19	1945	2nd-lowest
Stratford	47	24	1960	2nd-lowest

Hanmer Forest	19	24	1905	2nd-lowest
Whangaparāoa	17	14	1946	3rd-lowest
Auckland (Whenuapai)	38	30	1943	3rd-lowest
Matamata	10	9	1951	3rd-lowest
New Plymouth	37	25	1944	3rd-lowest
Levin	32	35	1895	3rd-lowest
Wellington (Airport)	28	32	1958	3rd-lowest
Oamaru	8	18	1941	3rd-lowest
Windsor	8	17	2000	3rd-lowest
Porirua	33	38	1953	4th-lowest
Culverden	11	23	1921	4th-lowest
Methven	15	21	1888	4th-lowest

---

## May climate in the six main centres

Temperatures for the six main centres were near average. Rainfall was well below normal for all six main centres in May, reflecting the dry weather that enveloped most of the country. Of the six main centres, Auckland was the warmest, Tauranga was sunniest, Wellington was the wettest and least sunny, Christchurch was the coolest and the driest.

### May 2026 main centre climate statistics:

Temperature			
Location	Mean temp. (°C)	Departure from normal (°C)	Comments
Auckland <sup>a</sup>	14.5	+0.3	Near average
Tauranga <sup>b</sup>	13.9	+0.3	Near average
Hamilton <sup>c</sup>	11.5	-0.4	Near average
Wellington <sup>d</sup>	12.5	+0.5	Near average
Christchurch <sup>e</sup>	9.4	+0.1	Near average
Dunedin <sup>f</sup>	9.8	+0.2	Near average
Rainfall			
Location	Rainfall (mm)	% of normal	Comments
Auckland <sup>a</sup>	19	16	Well below normal
Tauranga <sup>b</sup>	28 <sup>3</sup>	24	Well below normal
Hamilton <sup>c</sup>	21	18	Well below normal
Wellington <sup>d</sup>	40	28	Well below normal
Christchurch <sup>e</sup>	6	10	Well below normal
Dunedin <sup>f</sup>	19	29	Well below normal
Sunshine			
Location	Sunshine (hours)		
Auckland <sup>a</sup>	181		
Tauranga <sup>b</sup>	195 <sup>4</sup>		
Hamilton <sup>g</sup>	178		
Wellington <sup>d</sup>	139		
Christchurch <sup>e</sup>	160		
Dunedin <sup>f</sup>	147		

<sup>a</sup> Māngere <sup>b</sup> Tauranga Airport <sup>c</sup> Hamilton Airport <sup>d</sup> Kelburn <sup>e</sup> Christchurch Airport <sup>f</sup> Musselburgh <sup>g</sup> Ruakura

<sup>3</sup> Missing 1 day of data.

<sup>4</sup> Missing 1 day of data.

---

## Highlights and extreme events

### Temperatures

The highest temperature was 25.5°C, observed in Cheviot on 7 May. The lowest temperature was -7.6°C Mt Cook Airport on 20 May.

Two warm periods led to several record or near record setting temperatures. On 8 May, several weather stations recorded their warmest night of the month, as a northerly wind flow across the country brought in warm air from the sub-tropics. Additionally, from 30-31 May, a warm air mass flowed across New Zealand, bringing air from the sub-tropics, leading to several record or near-record maximum air temperatures.

#### Record or near-record daily maximum air temperatures for May were recorded at:

Location	Extreme maximum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
High records or near-records				
Puysegur Point	21.1	30th	1978	Highest
Ranfurly	22.1	31st	1897	2nd-highest
Invercargill	22.0	31st	1905	2nd-highest
Hāwera	20.9	6th	1977	3rd-highest
Middlemarch	24.3	31st	2000	3rd-highest
Gore	22.8	31st	1907	Equal 3rd-highest
Cheviot	25.5	7th	1982	4th-highest
Tiwai Point	20.2	31st	1970	4th-highest
South West Cape	19.9	30th	1991	4th-highest
Low records or near-records				
Middlemarch	2.8	16th	2000	4th-lowest

#### Record or near-record daily minimum air temperatures for May were recorded at:

Location	Extreme minimum (°C)	Date of extreme temperature	Year records began	Comments
Low records or near-records				
Waipounamu	-4.1	19th	1980	4th-lowest
High records or near-records				
Campbell Island	10.6	4th	1991	Highest
Greymouth	15.9	8th	1972	Equal highest
Auckland (Western Springs)	18.1	8th	1971	2nd-highest
Port Taharoa	17.4	8th	1974	2nd-highest
Reefton	14.8	8th	1972	2nd-highest
Ōkārito	14.7	8th	1983	2nd-highest
Arthurs Pass	11.8	8th	1973	2nd-highest
Christchurch	15.4	8th	1863	2nd-highest
Tākaka	15.9	8th	1978	Equal 2nd-highest
Hokitika	15.5	8th	1866	3rd-highest
Rangiora	13.9	8th	1972	3rd-highest
Akaroa	17.1	8th	1978	3rd-highest
Oban (Stewart Island)	13.8	3rd	1975	3rd-highest

Ohakune	13.5	8th	1972	Equal 3rd-highest
Richmond	16.6	8th	1862	Equal 3rd-highest
Puysegur Point	15.7	6th	1978	4th-highest
Nelson	16.3	8th	1862	4th-highest
Diamond Harbour	15.2	8th	2004	4th-highest
Ngawi	18.0	8th	1972	Equal 4th-highest
Waipara West	16.8	8th	1973	Equal 4th-highest

### Rain, flooding, and slips

The highest 1-day rainfall was 209 mm, recorded at Milford Sound on 31 May.

On 6 May, six people were rescued from vehicles that became trapped in floodwaters in Marlborough. It came after wild weather caused flooding and power outages in the South Island. Emergency services were called to a group of vehicles stuck in floodwaters on SH6 near Canvastown at around 8:35pm. Crews from Police, Fire and Emergency NZ, the New Zealand Defence Force, and Surf Lifesaving were deployed to the scene. SH6 between Pelorus and Havelock was closed while floodwater levels remained high.

### Record or near-record May extreme 1-day rainfall totals were recorded at:

Location	Extreme 1-day rainfall (mm)	Date of extreme rainfall	Year records began	Comments
None observed				

### Drought, dryness, and fire

On 31 May, a vegetation fire that threatened a house and shed on the eastern outskirts of Cambridge. Fire and Emergency NZ said it was called to the fire on Maungakawa Rd at around 8:40pm on Saturday, 31 May. At its peak the fire stretched 200 by 400 metres, with two pump trucks and three tankers from Cambridge, Morrinsville and Te Awamutu responding. Crews focused first on protecting the house and shed before bringing the blaze under control.

### Wind

The highest wind gust was 154 km/h, observed at Cape Turnagain on 26 May.

### Record or near-record May extreme wind gusts were recorded at:

Location	Extreme wind gust (km/h)	Date of extreme gust	Year records began	Comments
Tūrangi	181	30th	1973	Highest
Alexandra	119	17th	2001	Highest
Mt Cook	139	21st	2000	3rd-highest
Hāwera	94	8th	1986	4th-highest
Reefton	60	8th	1999	4th-highest

### Cloud and fog

On 19 May, SH8 near Lake Pukaki was closed temporarily following a crash. Foggy weather was present at the time of the accident.

From 15-20 May, parts of Central Otago and the Mackenzie Basin experienced consecutive days without sunshine, despite the presence of a high pressure system. This was due to low cloud and

fog becoming trapped under an inversion. In Lauder, the temperature stayed below 0°C for 64 consecutive hours; from 7:00 p.m. on 17 May to 11:00 a.m. on 20 May. During this period the temperature reached as low as -7.0°C.



Frosty and foggy conditions near ESNZ's Lauder office. Image taken around midday on 18 May 2026 when the temperature was -2.8°C (credit: Gregor Macara).

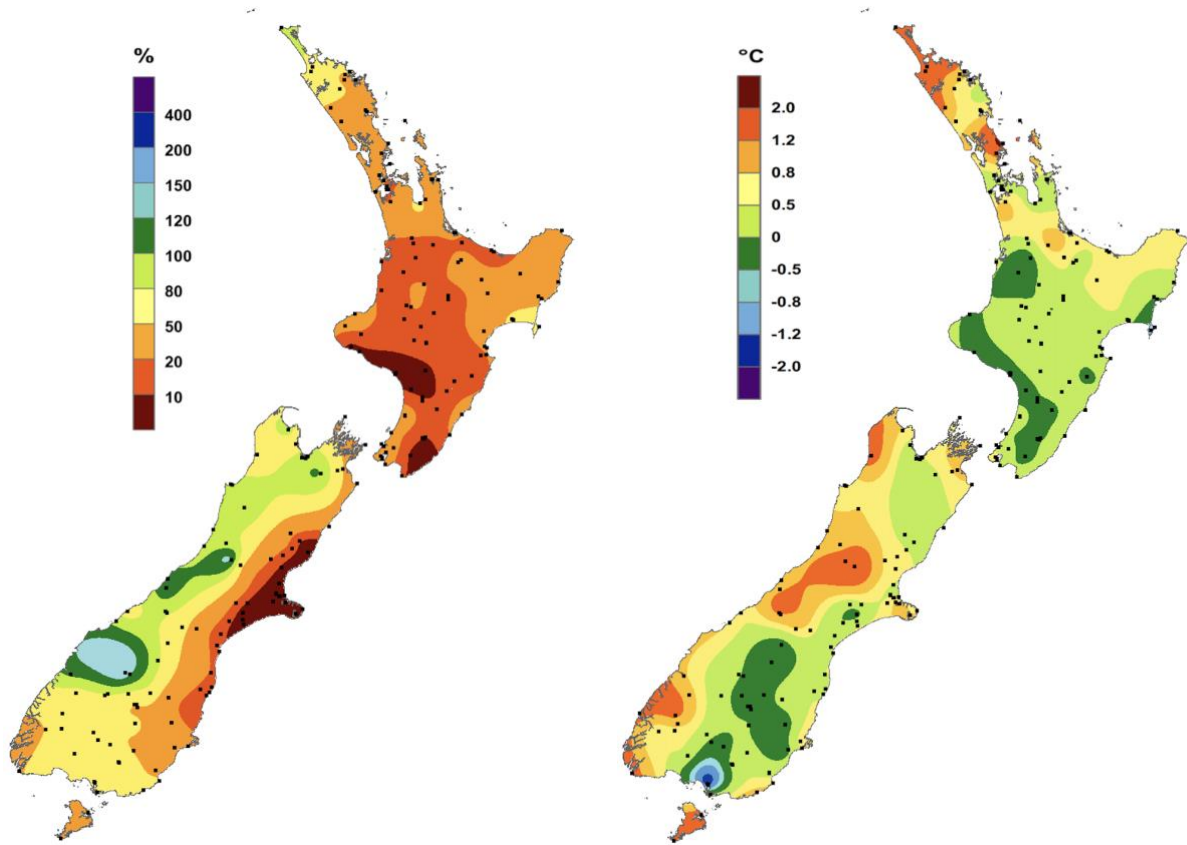
---

**For further information, please contact:**

**Chester Lampkin**

Meteorologist

Tel. 09 375 2087



### May rainfall

Expressed as a percentage of the 1991-2020 normal.

### May temperature

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

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

© Copyright Earth Sciences New Zealand 2026.

All rights reserved. Information presented in this summary is based on data available at the time of publication, which is subject to ongoing quality assurance procedures.