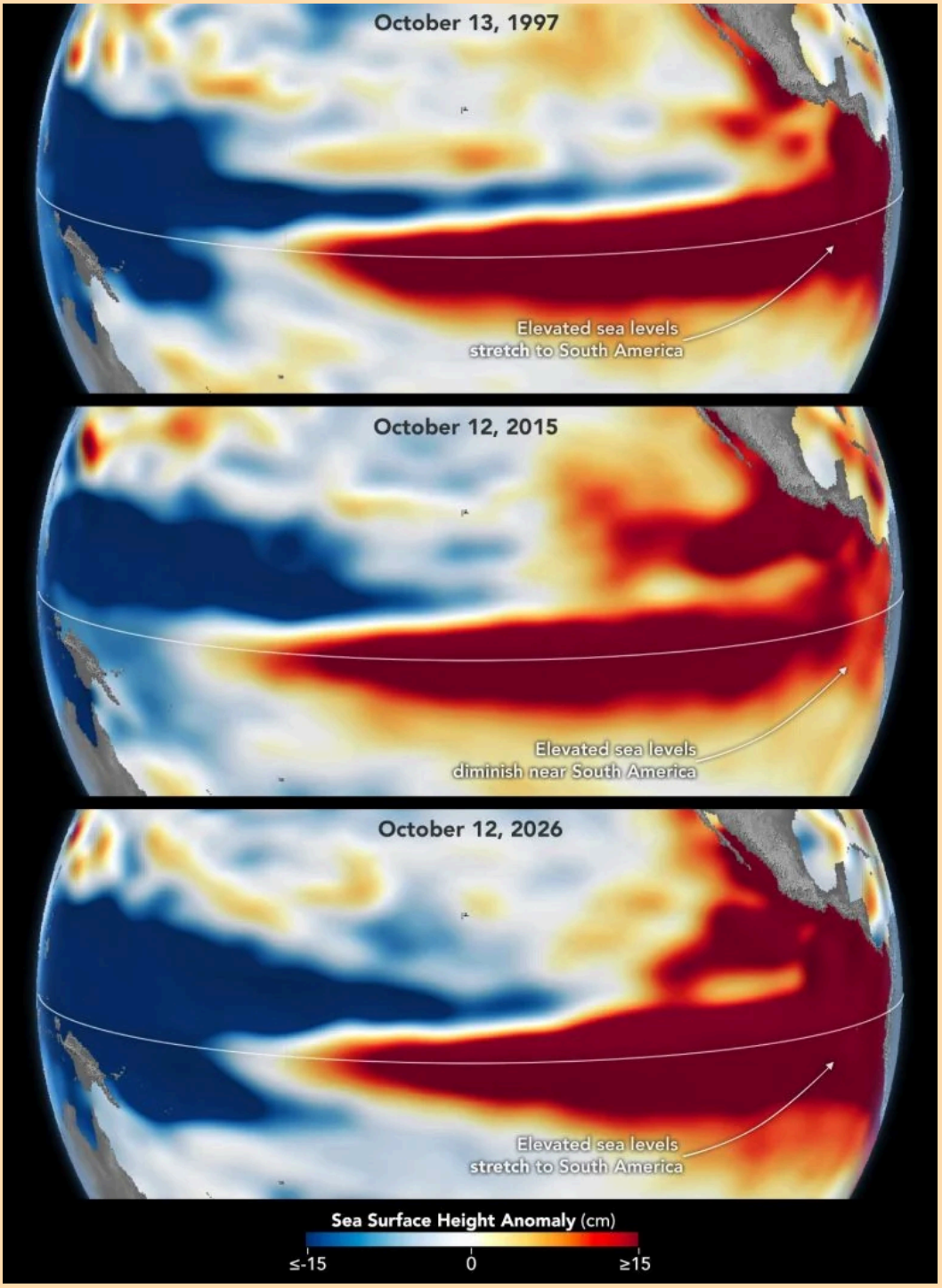
El Niño Digest Times

Volume 1, Number 9 Nov 15, 2026

a summary of advances in knowledge of the 2026-7 El Niño events, and of their social, political and economic implications.

DO YOU SEA WHAT I SEA?



"Satellite measurements show that the current El Niño resembles the 1997–98 event, with warm water stretching across the equatorial Pacific to South America. But that oceanic resemblance does not guarantee the same weather during winter 2026–27, as the outcome also depends on how the atmosphere responds." Anon, 2026. NASA Warns a Monster El Niño Could Surpass the Historic 1997 Event. SciTechDaily, November 11

Quote of the week

"The effects of these El Niños are not benign," said Cullen Hendrix, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics who has estimated that this event could cost the global economy more than $7 trillion over the next five years. "We're talking about a phenomenon that has systemic impacts that can adversely affect populations all across the globe." Lu, C. 2026. The Global Economy Braces for Yet Another Blow. Foreign Policy, November 10.

Welcome to the 9th weekly issue of the El Niño Digest Times (END Times - geddit?). The *why* should be self-explanatory, but here's a FAQ just in case. We are still just about in the first of the three phases of El Niño but not for long…

There are a lot of good El Niño explainers out there - this one, by *Al Jazeera* is really good and I will link to it at the top of every digest until someone suggests a better one (ideally with the url written on a £50 note).

Editorial

There's a scene in Monty Python and the Holy Grail where one of the characters John Cleese plays tells two idiots what to do (stay and guard the prisoner) and they are too dumb to follow orders. Then they look out the window (well, slit) and see someone running towards them with bad intent. They look again and again, and he's still at the same point, running but not getting closer.
And then, in an eye blink, in the time it takes a fist to turn into an open palm, he's there, slaughtering them.
That's what (to me) this particular bit of the beginning of phase two, looks like. You know it's coming - you can see it running towards you - but it doesn't seem to be getting any closer. This is surely entirely to do with where I live, in a sleepy part of England. Anyway, here we are.

Meanwhile, I continue to indulge in unhelpful and reductive sweeping generalisations about the entirety of our species. But also, goddamn Hairless Murder Apes…

The three phases of El Niño

1. **The Antici…pation**

From early this year until … (looks at watch)... about *now*. Scientists saying they've double-checked and triple-checked and they're as sure as they can be. Disaster management folks pleading for money and decent plans. Politicians telling us to stock up, or declaring States of Emergency in advance, with an eye on their 2028 Presidential run… Journalists writing SEO-ed disaster porn speculations. Everyone holding their breath, putting their fingers in their ears to not hear the Doomers gloating *"I told you so."*

2. **"Then someone yelled out 'Contact!'"**

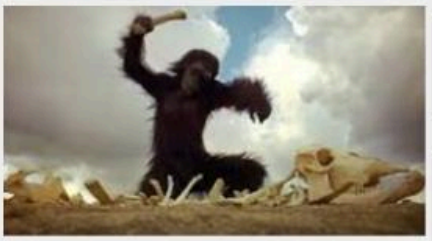
The rolling roiling disasters, especially salient when (rich) White People in Peril can be filmed. The shark in the shopping mall meme resurfaces. The re-insurers point to their fine print, and some insurers go belly-up. The rich libertarians squeal for state bail-outs. Food prices through the roof. Hard-to-replace infrastructure washed away.

3. **Back to the perfect paradise**

The wreckage is quietly swept away, the global machine reboots, and the important (rich white) people continue their merry way. The End. (Actual outcomes may vary; always read the label).

"HAIRLESS MURDER APES"

A reductive, a-historical and implicitly Malthusian epithet that I invented and am unwilling (or unable?) to wean myself off. **Not** a helpful lens, because it is not accurate, and obscures just how unusual the last few centuries have been, and ascribes technologies of violence to genetics rather than, well, choices. That said, hairless murder apes… Why couldn't we have been bonobos with bigger brains and opposable thumbs??



[See also, Sapolsky's baboons…]

101 damn notions: marchudson.net, allouryesterdays.info

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"El Nino is a massive threat to the food security of millions who are already vulnerable," Carl Skau, WFP's acting executive director. (cited in Ali and Haddad, 2026, Sept 15).

"El Nino is being supersized before our eyes…. The science leaves no room for doubt: the planet is in uncharted waters, and those waters are heat ing up."
UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a WMO statement.

"A few inches of extra ocean may not sound like much, but coastal flooding is a game of margins stacked on margins. The wave itself will not flood anything on its own — this is not a tsunami, and there will be no moment when it 'hits.' Instead, it quietly raises the baseline the tides ride on top of for weeks or months at a time,"
Macaday, S. 2026. El Niño-born 'Kelvin waves' are sneaking towards California. What to know. *Sacramento Bee*, September 14
https://www.sacbee.com/news/weather-news/article317211661.html

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"We can't just assume that this El Niño is going to be the same as the last because there are so many challenges that have been stacking on top of each other."
"We have come to a stage where climate change is putting so much pressure on us – on our existing, already crumbling or structurally unsound, systems…. Nature will force us to have a reckoning."
Elyssa Kaur Ludher, a climate and food security expert based in Singapore.
Holmes et a.l, 2026. 'Forcing a reckoning': How Asia is preparing for a 'supersized' El Niño. *The Guardian*, September 18
'Forcing a reckoning': How Asia is preparing for a 'supersized' El Niño | El Niño southern oscillation | The Guardian

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"I have never seen an El Niño signal this intense in our forecasts. A typical El Niño leads to an equatorial Pacific sea-surface temperature rise of between 1-2 degrees, with 2C being a really big event….This implies that if the forecast is accurate – and other forecast systems show similar extreme values – then 2026 will far exceed our recent experience of El Niño and its worldwide climate influences."
Professor Adam Scaife, head of long range forecasting at the Met Office (August 2026)

Think Global Health: What's your reaction to the El Niño news, and what impact could extreme weather have on global food insecurity?
Sam Vigersky: I'm hesitant to say that this couldn't come at a worse time—because something worse can always happen—**but it's arriving at a moment when the international humanitarian system has no shock absorbers left.** The funding cuts ongoing since 2022 became truly catastrophic in 2025 after the Trump administration leveled the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).
Krugman, A. 2026. A Food Security Expert on the Record-Breaking El Niño. *Think Health Global,* September 18
https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/a-food-security-expert-on-the-record-breaking-el-nino

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"Historical precedent can no longer serve as a reliable guide for ENSO teleconnections, as anthropogenic warming patterns intensify."
NCAR senior scientist Clara Deser
Newsby article Sept 20 2026

"This event is a huge redistribution of energy in the climate system and is dangerous because it is unfolding on top of a much warmer, human-influenced climate system. So, in many places around the world we will see never-before-experienced heat extremes, with all their consequences on health, food security and water stress. El Niño comes and goes, but as long as we continue to burn fossil fuels it occurs on an increasingly hotter baseline, making it much more difficult for communities to deal with the consequences."
Prof Friederike Otto, at Imperial College London, quoted in Carrington, D. 2026, Sept 21

ROUND THE WORLD

Good overview!



El Nino Watch: The impacts around the world this week | ABS-CBN News

World

El Nino could intensify heat-related illnesses, disease outbreaks and air pollution into 2027, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Secretary-General Celeste Saulo warned Monday.
Speaking at a COP31 news briefing in Antalya, Saulo said above-average temperatures could trigger health threats extending beyond direct exposure to extreme heat.
"We are speaking also about dengue outbreaks, malaria outbreaks," she said, explaining that the risks would vary depending on regional rainfall patterns.
"If we expect a hot and dry season, you will have wildfires. With wildfires, you will have poor air quality," she said.
Necva Tastan Sevinc 2026 El Nino threatens to worsen disease outbreaks, heat risks into 2027: WMO chief AA, November 9

PACIFIC

During the three strongest El Niño events since 1997–1998, the land carbon sink weakened by as much as 50%. Elevated temperatures and water stress suppressed photosynthesis, reducing the amount of carbon absorbed by vegetation. Meanwhile, increased ecosystem respiration and wildfire activity released additional carbon back into the atmosphere.
Using the 2026 El Niño as a testbed, researchers, supported by the European Space Agency's (ESA's), Climate Change Initiative, have developed an initial framework to identify and quantify carbon-cycle risk hotspots before the full impacts unfold.
Anon, 2026. Predicting El Nino's impact on carbon sinks. ESA, November 10

A monster is growing in the Pacific — not the kraken, but something far scarier and deadlier. El Niño is a natural phenomenon in which a band of warm water forms every three to five years off the coast of South America. It raises ocean water temperatures by just a few extra degrees for typically nine to 12 months and ends up injecting an extraordinary amount of energy into the sky. It's already the strongest El Niño on record, and it might not even peak for about another month or two.
"Those are actually really big changes for the ocean," Art Miller, a climate scientist at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, told Grist in September. "The ocean has a lot of heat content — 1,000 times more ability to hold heat than the atmosphere — so slight changes in the ocean surface temperatures can actually do a lot for the atmosphere."
Austin Corona and Leia Larsen 2026. A monstrous El Niño has arrived. Here's what it means for where you live. | Grist November 9

ASIA

Indonesia's fiercest fires in at least a decade were amplified by an "El Niño that turned off the taps" and "fossil fuels that turned up the heat", scientists have revealed.
Along with the conversion of forests to plantations, this created the conditions for blazes that have burned almost 3m hectares (7.4m acres) – 19 times the size of Greater London – this year, and

“MELTSCHMERTZ”

Weltschmertz (literally "world-pain") is a literary concept describing the refusal or incapacity to accept the world as it is, creating a deep sadness at the state of the world. It results in "a mood of weariness or sadness about life arising from the acute awareness of evil and suffering."

Meltschmertz is Weltschmertz, only for the Fafocene, as the ice sheets melt, the seas rise, and Faust’s bill comes up for payment.



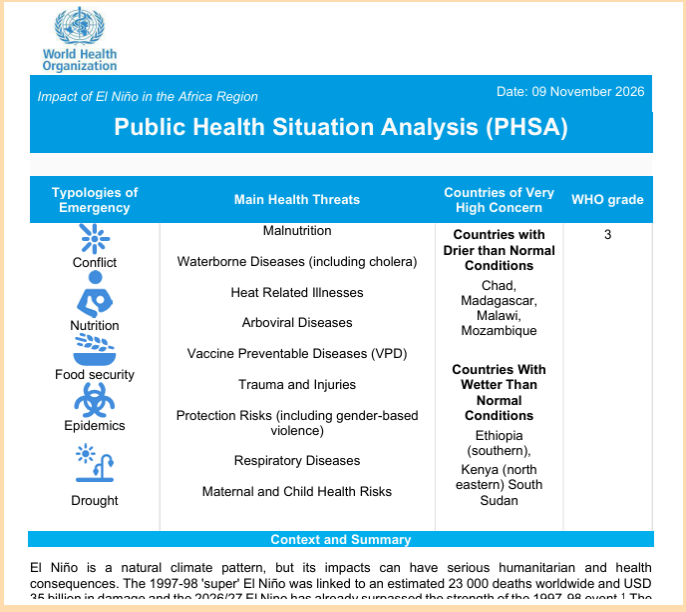
101 damn notions: marchudson.net, allouryesterdays.info

cast a choking haze across much of south-east Asia.

An international team of World Weather Attribution scientists analysed the different elements of this triple whammy in Java, Kalimantan and Sumatra to assess how each affected the peak fire season from August to October.

Watts, J. 2026. ‘El Niño turned off the taps’: factors behind Indonesia’s wildfires revealed | Indonesia | *The Guardian* November 13

AFRICA



World Health Organization

Impact of El Niño in the Africa Region Date: 09 November 2026

Public Health Situation Analysis (PHSA)

Typologies of Emergency	Main Health Threats	Countries of Very High Concern	WHO grade
Conflict Nutrition Food security Epidemics Drought	Malnutrition Waterborne Diseases (including cholera) Heat Related Illnesses Arboviral Diseases Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) Trauma and Injuries Protection Risks (including gender-based violence) Respiratory Diseases Maternal and Child Health Risks	**Countries with Drier than Normal Conditions** Chad, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique **Countries With Wetter Than Normal Conditions** Ethiopia (southern), Kenya (north eastern) South Sudan	3

Context and Summary

El Niño is a natural climate pattern, but its impacts can have serious humanitarian and health consequences. The 1997-98 'super' El Niño was linked to an estimated 23 000 deaths worldwide and USD 35 billion in damage and the 2026/27 El Niño has already surpassed the strength of the 1997-98 event ! The

The current El Niño event could be unprecedented in strength – off the monitoring charts that have been used for the past four decades – and will peak towards the end of 2026. Eastern Africa in particular is facing heightened humanitarian risks as El Niño conditions. Present since June 2026, these risks are expected to strengthen into a potentially very strong event and persist through late 2026 and early 2027

Public Health Situation Analysis (PHSA) - Impact of El Niño in the Africa Region

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Floods disproportionately affect informal settlements in Nairobi, especially those near rivers, like Kibera and Mathare.

In most of these settlements, houses sit just a few metres from rivers. Some people, including Shikoli, live on the slopes of the river itself due to the constant expansion of the settlements. When flash floods occur, these houses are swept away, endangering the lives of their occupants.

Nairobi's drainage system has not been upgraded to deal with the rapid growth in the population and infrastructure over the decades

"The existing drainage system was developed 30 years ago to cater for a population of about 2.5 million residents but we're dealing with about seven million in the daytime and 5.5 million night-time," Simiyu says.

Mukhwana, T. 2026. 'It can kill us': Kenyans fear impact of El Niño with floods predicted. BBC November 11

The economy of Nyanga, in Zimbabwe's eastern highlands, mostly runs on tourism, but those in the rural areas survive on farming. But climate change is threatening their livelihoods.
In September, the World Meteorological Organization announced that the El Nino climate pattern is strengthening rapidly in the Pacific Ocean, raising the prospect of months of extreme heat, floods and drought around the globe. Forecasters predict it will peak around late 2026 and continue until at least February next year.
Matiashe, F-S. 2026. Southern African farmers prepare for powerful El Nino with agroecology. RFI, November 8

NORTH AMERICA

"Mike Couffer, a semiretired biologist from Newport Beach, has been scuba diving nearly every day to see the mohawk-style fins of star-studded grouper, tiny iridescent orange creolefish, three-banded butterflyfish, and other exotic fish hardly ever seen in this area. "It's just nuts, what's going on out there," he told me. The balmy waters produced during this year's El Niño have essentially imported a whole ecosystem from Mexico. In recorded history, "this is the most profound movement of tropical fishes into California that anyone's ever seen," Milton Love, a research biologist at UC Santa Barbara's Marine Science Institute, told me."

Partlow, J. 2026. The Waters Off California Are Unrecognizable. The Atlantic, November

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LATIN AMERICA

Along the shores of a small estuary near Playa Langosta, just south of Costa Rica's popular Tamarindo beach, residents came across an unsettling scene: two bull sharks (*Carcharhinus leucas*), rays, pufferfish and several other fish species had died, their bodies strewn across the sand in a haphazard burial by nature herself. For a region where sharks are familiar "neighbors" in the coastal waters, the discovery was concerning, especially because according to community reports, bull sharks had never previously been documented entering this particular estuary.
Marquez, M.C. 2026.Bull Sharks Found Dead In Costa Rica As Drought And El Niño Raise Environmental Concerns.Forbes, November 10

RANDOM STUFF

When the El Niño drought ended in a remote Papua New Guinea rainforest, the trees did not immediately recover. Many kept dying.
That is one of the findings of a recent study of more than 21,000 trees in the Wanang Forest Dynamics Plot, a 50-hectare (124-acre) research site in northern Papua New Guinea.
Researchers measured tree mortality before, during and two years after the catastrophic 2015-17 El Niño drought and found that mortality was significantly higher after the drought than before or during it.
"It was after the drought, the post-drought period, that you could actually see those trees dying," said Hayden Wagia, the study's lead author and a faculty botanist at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology's School of Forestry.
Burkhart, M. 2026. El Niño's hidden toll on trees emerges years later in Papua New Guinea rainforest. Mongabay, November 9

Historical precedents are sobering, with major El Niño events of 1982-83, 1997-98 and 2015-16 leading to extreme flooding in some regions, severe drought in others, and widespread disruption to ecosystems and economies.
Now imagine if hospitals were overrun with respiratory events due to wildfire smoke, migraines, heatstroke and delirium. At the same time, the electricity grid could go down due to overwhelming demand from the use of air conditioning systems.
If that scenario sounds plausible, it's because every element has already happened in Canada, just not all at once. We call these scenarios polycrises, to represent multiple connected crises occurring simultaneously. We've seen these before, such as the 2013 Calgary floods, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and the 2023 Northwest Territories wildfires that required evacuation.
Gohel B and Demarco T. 2026. El Niño 2026-27 as a polycrisis: What happens when health and energy systems fail simultaneously? The Conversation, November 8

COP31: The invisible impact of El Niño on women
Delegates are told women in poorer nations in particular will face more hardship as the climate shocks increase this season
Aouatif Zebiri, spokesperson for YOUNGO, said:
"According to FAO, 44% of working youth earn their living from food and agriculture, while 395 million of rural young people live in areas where climate change is expected to reduce harvests.
"So we, as youth are not simply the future of food systems, we are already part of sustaining them. Yet, when climate shock affect every culture, **the**

consequences go far far beyond food production.
“Water scarcity can increase the time women and girls spend collecting water – declining household incomes for example can compromise children’s nutrition, health and education – and limited access to water and sanitation can make it very hard for adolescent girls to manage their menstrual health safely and with dignity.”
Morley, S. 2026. COP31: The invisible impact of El Niño on women - Energy Live News November 9

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5 ways El Niño could impact the energy sector | Spectra by MHI
1. Electricity demand could climb
2. Renewables could come under pressure
3. Coal and gas could fill the gap
4. Grid resilience could be tested
5. Flexibility could become more valuable

El Niño also affects renewable energy production by changing sunshine, winds and atmospheric circulation.
We expect available solar energy to fall by 5–15% from January to March, alongside a slowdown in available wind energy. Other sources may therefore be needed to meet residential, commercial and industrial electricity demand this winter.
Singh, H. and St. George, S. 2026. **Physics-based models prepare us for El Niño. Insurance Day, November 12**

MONEY

Institute for International Economics estimates if the intensity is similar to the last super El Niño we had in the late 1990s, the economic damage could be close to a trillion dollars next year. And that comes from the physical damage caused by extreme temperatures, flooding, and drought; crop destruction; supply chain disruptions; and, of course, reduced investment and slower economic growth. And it'll hit lower- and middle-income countries in the tropics especially hard. Here in the U.S., though, the San Francisco Federal Reserve estimates it could add one percentage point to inflation throughout 2027. So we're definitely going to feel this over the coming year.
Kimberly Adams, Amy Scott and Ariana Rosas 2026 How this year's Super El Niño could impact the economy Marketplace, November 9

Fitch Ratings-New York/Mexico City-12 November 2026: Latin American sovereigns should have sufficient headroom to absorb the negative economic effects caused by a severe El Niño this year — including sharp economic growth decelerations and rise in inflation — without affecting their ratings, Fitch Ratings says. Fitch’s economic projections incorporate El Nino’s effects via direct and indirect channels, but could be subject to downside risk should this be more severe than anticipated.
LatAm Sovereign Ratings Can Absorb ‘Super El Niño’ Risks. Fitchratings, November 12

THIS SCEPTIC ISLE

Scientists have spoken out about the 'unusual' polar vortex which could have an unexpected impact on UK due to major changes in the stratosphere.
Winds circulating above the North Pole are splitting into two, which is pushing Arctic air towards Britain and parts of Europe.
The polar vortex is a band of strong winds that remain high in the atmosphere, keeping the trapped air near the North Pole, but when it weakens and breaks up there is a risk of it pushing colder air to the south.
After some of the hottest days on record this summer, and fears about the El Niño phenomenon wreaking havoc on weather and vital food production globally, sparking stockpiling warnings, e**xactly what's in store for us this winter still can't be confirmed just yet.**
Holt, J. 2026. 'Unusual' polar vortex could have unexpected impact on UK as scientists warn 'we’ve never seen anything like this before’. LAD Bible, November 8

The struggle is real

Rice Krispies and Coco Pops are facing a crunch crisis, as “changing weather” is forcing Kellanova – the UK producer of the iconic Kellogg’s cereals – to adjust their ingredients.
In a statement last week, a company spokesperson admitted that the cereals would no longer be made with whole rice grains but rather corn flour and rice flour instead.
The new recipe, the spokesperson added, would help the company “maintain consistent quality at a time when changing weather conditions are affecting the quality and availability of some of the rice and grains used in our cereals.”
Sauers, C. 2026. ‘Snap, crackle and drought’: Why El Niño could change what ends up on your breakfast table | Euronews November 9

‘The UK medicines supply chain is global by design’, explains Ross Maclagan, head of supply and distribution policy at the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI). ‘Around 14,000 licensed medicines reach UK patients through international networks, and key components such as active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) are often sourced from countries including India and China. In normal times that interconnection is a strength, because it gives the system many routes to supply. It also means that events far from the UK can be felt here, with extreme weather and natural

disasters among the many factors that can affect manufacturing and distribution.'
While Mr Maclagan believes 'it would not be responsible to speculate on how any single weather event might affect individual products', he says 'what we do know is that disruptions are most common in generic medicines, which account for 75% of NHS prescriptions, and where supply is often spread across several manufacturers, so when one is affected, gaps can open quickly and be hard to predict – plus recovery also takes time: increasing production capacity can take 9 to 18 months.'

Risks to patients

For patients, even short interruptions in medicines supply can carry clinical consequences.
'A person with epilepsy who misses doses risks breakthrough seizures', says Mr Maclagan. 'A transplant recipient without immunosuppressants risks organ rejection. A patient on antidepressants may experience withdrawal symptoms within days. The impact is also unequal: people with limited mobility, long-term conditions or inflexible working patterns may find it hardest to visit several pharmacies to find what they need.'
Nonetheless, he stresses it is important to keep this in proportion: 'Around 95 per cent of potential disruptions are identified and resolved before they affect patients. Only around one to two per cent are classified as critical, and on average, issues are resolved within 28 days. That reflects close, daily collaboration between industry, the NHS, government and regulators.'

Jankovic, S. 2026. **What effect will this year's 'super' El Niño have on the medicines supply chain?** The Pharmacist, November 10

Just as they appointed a Drought Minister in 1976…

ANTALYA, Nov 12: The United Kingdom on Thursday announced the appointment of a special envoy to tackle threats from climate change while small island leaders called for urgent action, describing the issue as a life-or-death issue for their people at the climate talks in the Turkish resort town of Antalya.

UK names climate security envoy as island leaders warn of 'life-or-death' crisis Daily Excelsior, November 12

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LINKS

For a FAQ see here. The comedy of El Nino (no, really) it's a 1997 video. El Nino acronyms El Nino quotes
El Nino videos El Nino timeline up to 2025

Disclaimers

I am not a climate scientist. I am mostly collating what other people say, not pushing my own "angle". I will get things wrong - when I do, I'll fess up, no fuss. I will quote from "reputable" sources, but sometimes the truth is an outlandish outlier.
Blah blah information provided for lulz only. No responsibility taken for your failure to create broad-based social movements that prevent shit getting even worse and instead leading us into the pit of Sarlac.
The digest is inspired by the awe-inspiring and heart-breaking "CO2 Newsletter published by American geologist William Barbat from 1979 to 1982.


CO₂ Newsletter
Volume 2, Number 6 Sept.-Oct., 1981
A bimonthly summary of advances in knowledge of the CO2 greenhouse problem, and of the social, political, and economic implications.