

EL NIÑO/SOUTHERN OSCILLATION (ENSO) DIAGNOSTIC DISCUSSION

issued by

CLIMATE PREDICTION CENTER/NCEP/NWS

12 February 2026

ENSO Alert System Status: [La Niña Advisory](#)

Synopsis: A transition from La Niña to ENSO-neutral is expected in February-April 2026 (60% chance), with ENSO-neutral likely persisting through the Northern Hemisphere summer (56% chance in June-August 2026).

La Niña continued in January 2026, with below-average sea surface temperatures (SSTs) observed in the east-central equatorial Pacific Ocean (Fig. 1). The latest weekly Niño-3.4 index value was -0.9°C , with the westernmost (Niño-4) and easternmost (Niño-1+2) indices at -0.4°C and 0.0°C , respectively (Fig. 2). The equatorial subsurface temperature index (average from 180° - 100°W) significantly increased (Fig. 3), reflecting the strengthening and expansion of above-average subsurface temperatures across the Pacific Ocean (Fig. 4). Atmospheric anomalies weakened due to subseasonal variability, but still reflected aspects of La Niña. Low-level westerly wind anomalies were present over the western equatorial Pacific, and upper-level westerly wind anomalies continued across the east-central equatorial Pacific. Suppressed convection was weakly evident near the Date Line and over the equatorial Maritime Continent, with enhanced convection located off the equator (Fig. 5). The traditional and equatorial Southern Oscillation indices were positive. Collectively, the coupled ocean-atmosphere system remained consistent with La Niña.

The North American Multi-Model Ensemble (NMME) average, including the NCEP CFSv2 (Fig. 6), favor the onset of ENSO-neutral in February-April 2026. The team consensus also reflects this outcome, with ENSO-neutral persisting through the Northern Hemisphere summer 2026. For the late summer and beyond, there is a 50-60% chance of El Niño forming, though model uncertainty remains considerable and forecasts made this time of year tend to have lower accuracy. In summary, a transition from La Niña to ENSO-neutral is expected in February-April 2026 (60% chance), with ENSO-neutral likely persisting through the Northern Hemisphere summer (56% chance in June-August 2026; Fig. 7).

This discussion is a consolidated effort of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), NOAA's National Weather Service, and their funded institutions. Oceanic and atmospheric conditions are updated weekly on the Climate Prediction Center website ([El Niño/La Niña Current Conditions and Expert Discussions](#)). A probabilistic strength forecast is [available here](#). The next ENSO Diagnostics Discussion is scheduled for 12 March 2026. To receive an e-mail notification when the monthly ENSO Diagnostic Discussions are released, please send an e-mail message to: ncep.list.enso-update@noaa.gov.

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Relative SST Anomalies (°C)

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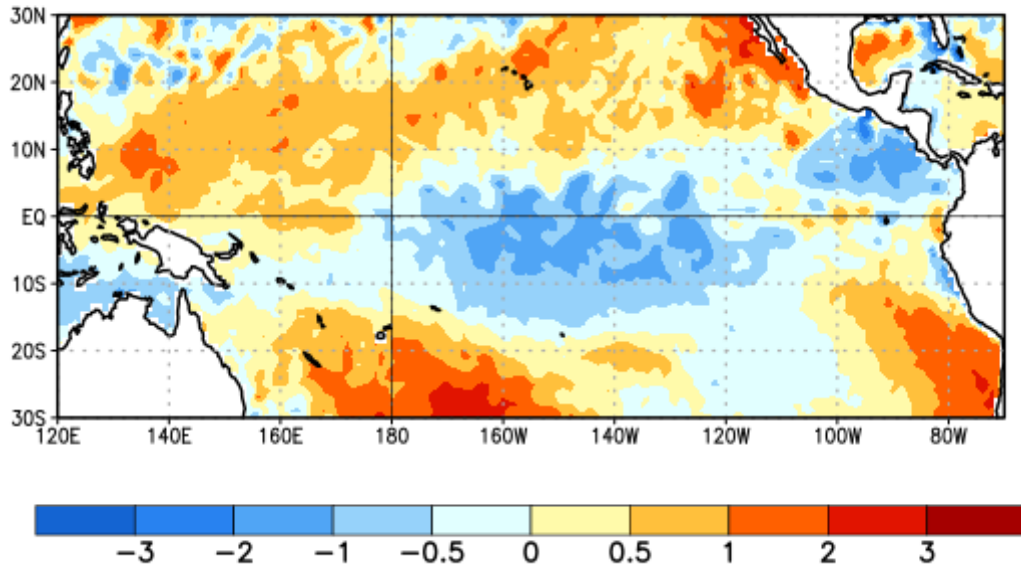


Figure 1. Average relative sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies (°C) for the week centered on 4 February 2026. Anomalies are computed with respect to the 1991-2020 base period weekly means.

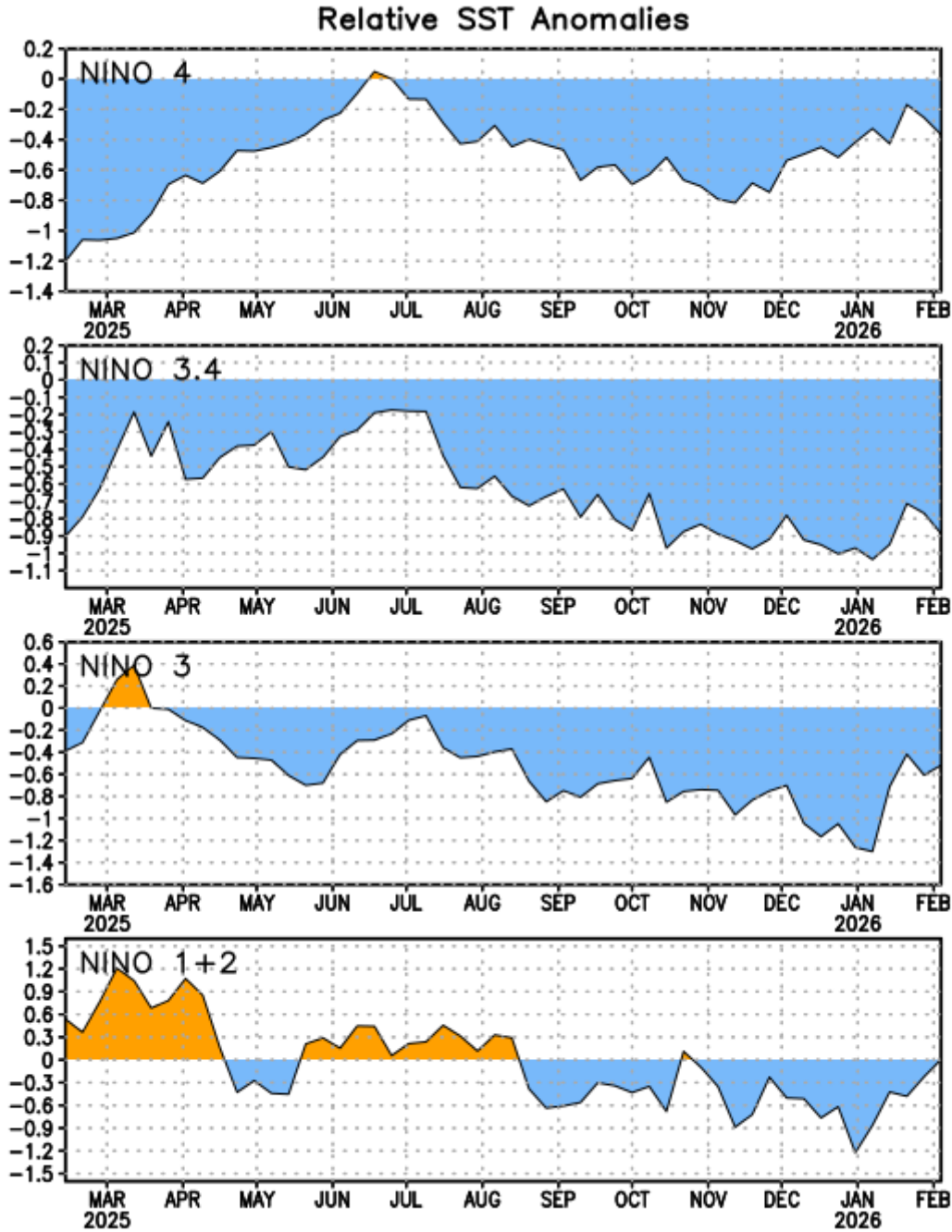


Figure 2. Time series of area-averaged relative sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) in the Niño regions [Niño-4 (5°N - 5°S , 150°W - 160°E), Niño-3.4 (5°N - 5°S , 170°W - 120°W), Niño-3 (5°N - 5°S , 150°W - 90°W), Niño-1+2 (0° - 10°S , 90°W - 80°W)]. Anomalies are departures from the 1991-2020 base period weekly means.

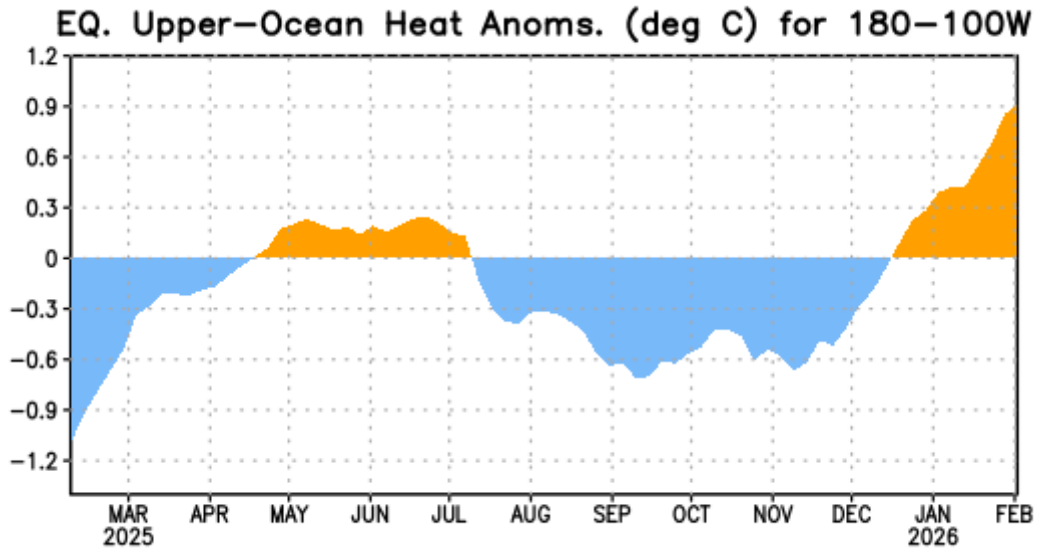


Figure 3. Area-averaged upper-ocean heat content anomaly ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) in the equatorial Pacific (5°N - 5°S , 180° - 100°W). The heat content anomaly is computed as the departure from the 1991-2020 base period pentad means.

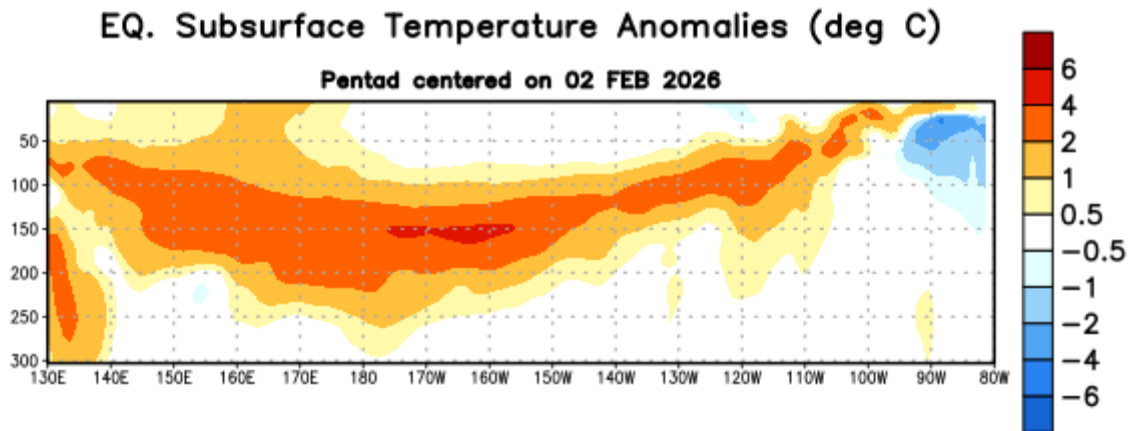


Figure 4. Depth-longitude section of equatorial Pacific upper-ocean (0-300m) temperature anomalies ($^{\circ}\text{C}$) centered on the pentad of 2 February 2026. Anomalies are departures from the 1991-2020 base period pentad means.

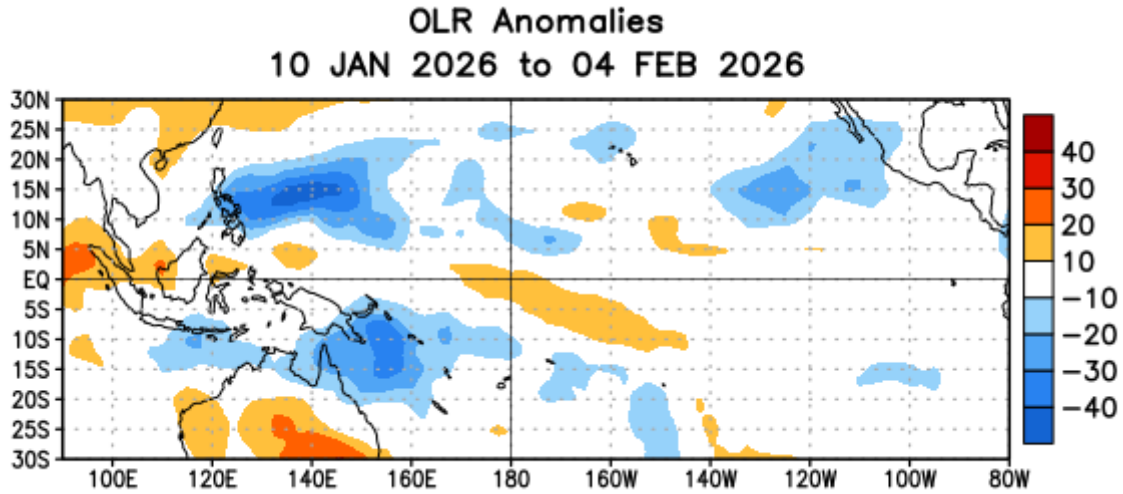


Figure 5. Average outgoing longwave radiation (OLR) anomalies (W/m^2) for the period 10 January – 4 February 2026. OLR anomalies are computed as departures from the 1991-2020 base period pentad means.



NWS/NCEP/CPC

Last update: Mon Feb 9 2026
Initial conditions: 30Jan2026–8Feb2026

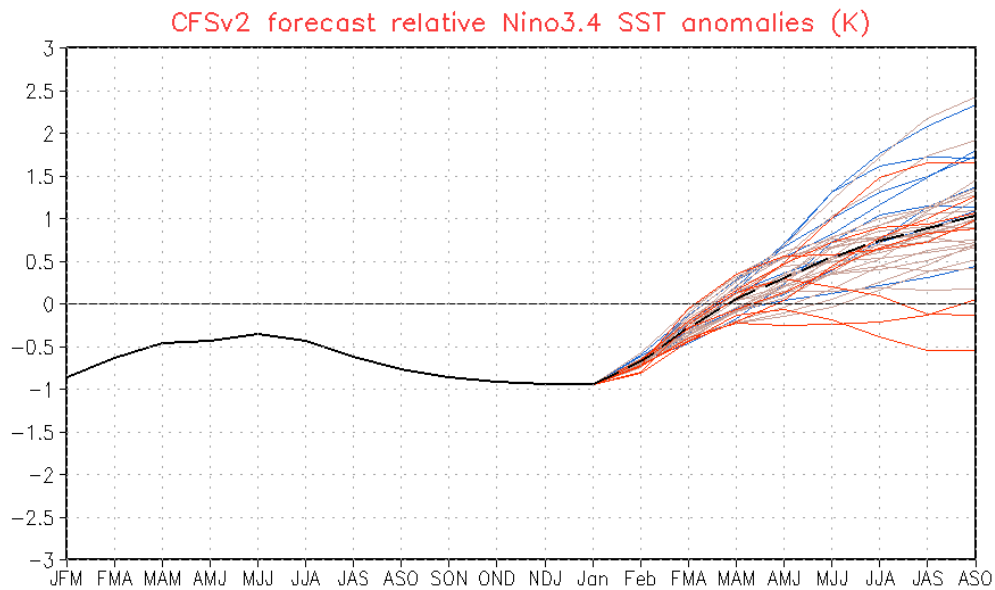


Figure 6. NCEP Climate Forecast System (CFSv2) prediction of relative sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies for the Niño 3.4 region ($5^{\circ}N-5^{\circ}S, 120^{\circ}W-170^{\circ}W$). Figure updated 9 February 2026.

Official NOAA CPC ENSO Probabilities (issued February 2026)

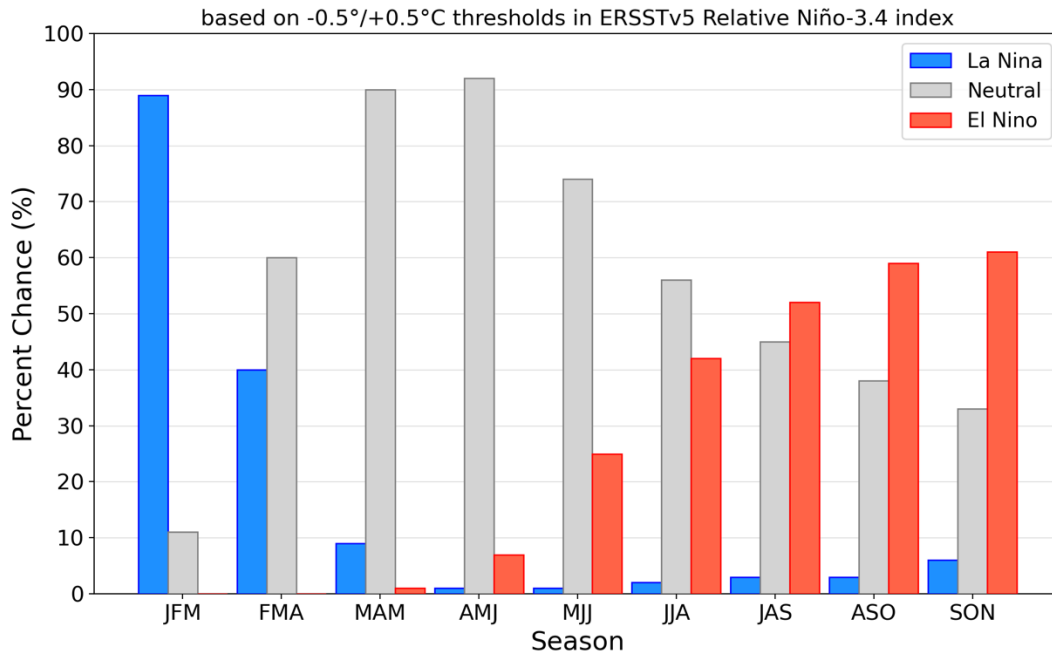


Figure 7. Official ENSO probabilities for the Niño 3.4 relative sea surface temperature index (5°N - 5°S , 120°W - 170°W). Figure updated 12 February 2026.