

# NORTH DAKOTA STATE CLIMATE OFFICE



# May

2026



*A rainbow cuts through the clouds at Center 5S NDAWN*

May is often a month of striking extremes in North Dakota, and 2026 was no exception. Temperatures across NDAWN stations ranged from a low of 13°F to a high of 97°F during the month. While the monthly average temperature ended up close to the current 30-year normal, daily temperatures rarely hovered near that average.

Despite near-normal overall temperatures, much of the state experienced unusually dry conditions. This left the topsoil vulnerable, setting the stage for a devastating mid-month wind storm that stripped away loose soil in scenes reminiscent of the Dust Bowl years of the 1930s and the late 1980s.

May 2026 served as yet another powerful reminder that we live in a land defined by weather extremes.



Figure 1: Strong winds impacted western North Dakota in mid-May causing a dust storm



## Precipitation Summary

May 2026 Statewide Average Precipitation: 1.56"

Percent of Normal Statewide Precipitation: 58%

May is typically one of the rainiest months of the year in North Dakota. While the rainfall can sometimes delay spring planting, it is vital for crop and plant development. In 2026, however, precipitation was notably lacking across much of the state, with a large percentage of North Dakota receiving less than 50% of normal May rainfall. This dryness pushed portions of western North Dakota into D1 (Moderate Drought) and even placed a small area into D2 (Severe Drought).

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%) 05-01-2026 - 05-31-2026

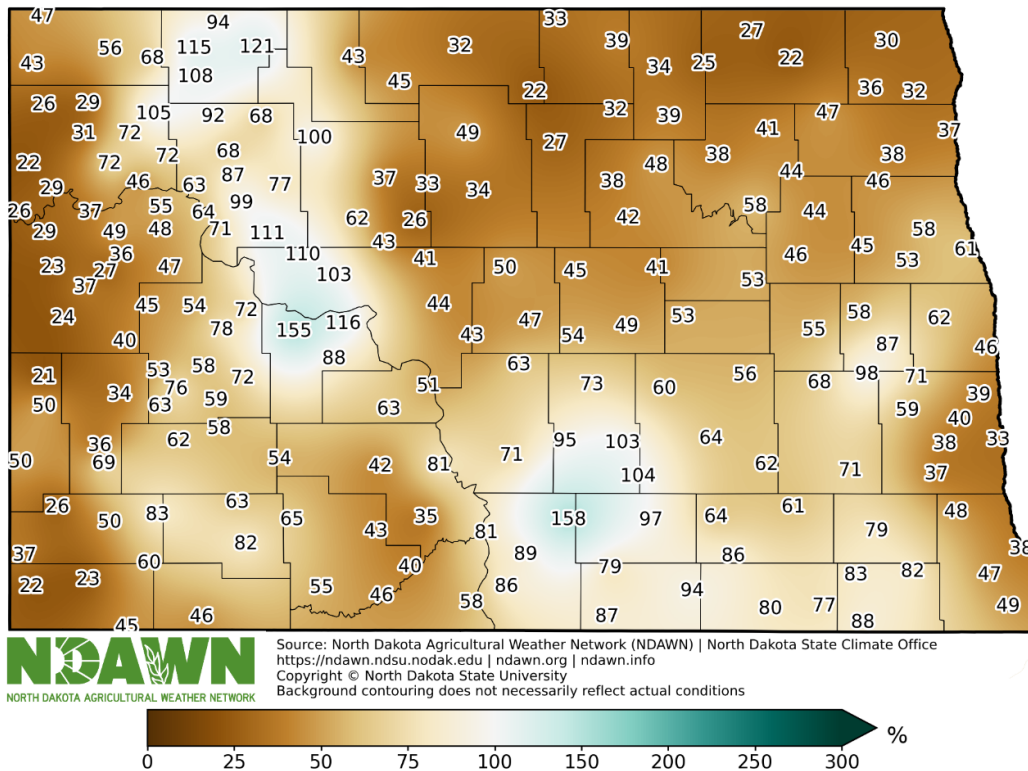


Figure 2: Percent of Normal Precipitation measured at NDAWN stations in May 2026

# Precipitation



The maximum monthly precipitation recorded by the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN) in North Dakota during the month of April was 2.81 inches at the Ekre station in Richland County. That was 171% of average. The minimum monthly precipitation recorded at NDAWN in North Dakota was in McKenzie County at the Williston 5SW station with only 0.07 inches of precipitation, 7% of normal (Figure 3).

Total Precipitation (in)

05-01-2026 - 05-31-2026

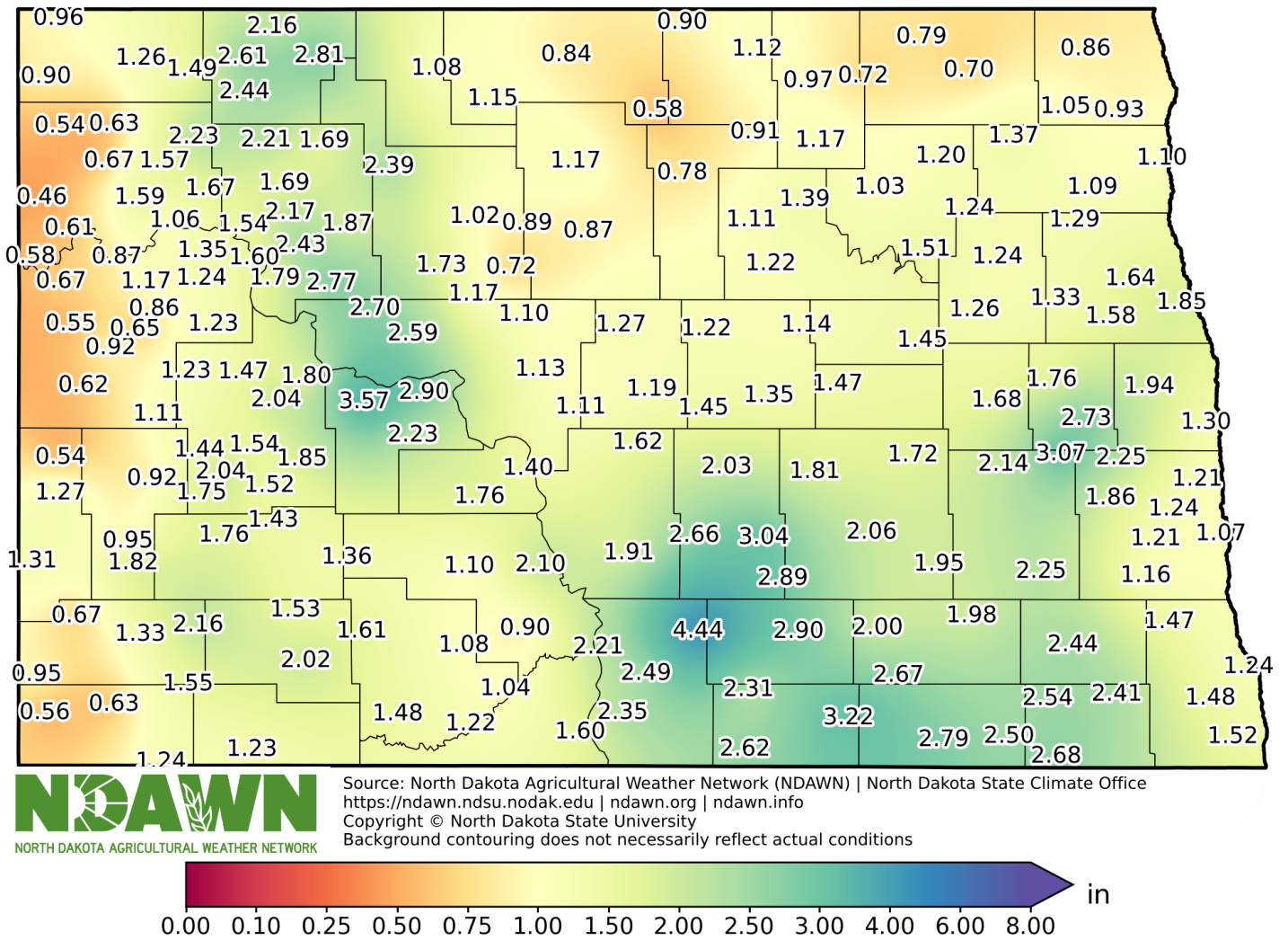


Figure 3: Total Precipitation measured at NDAWN stations in May 2026

# Precipitation



From a long-term perspective, precipitation for the year is widely below average across the state. Statewide, precipitation has been about 70% of normal, or 1.78” below average, from January 1 – May 31. (Figure 4).

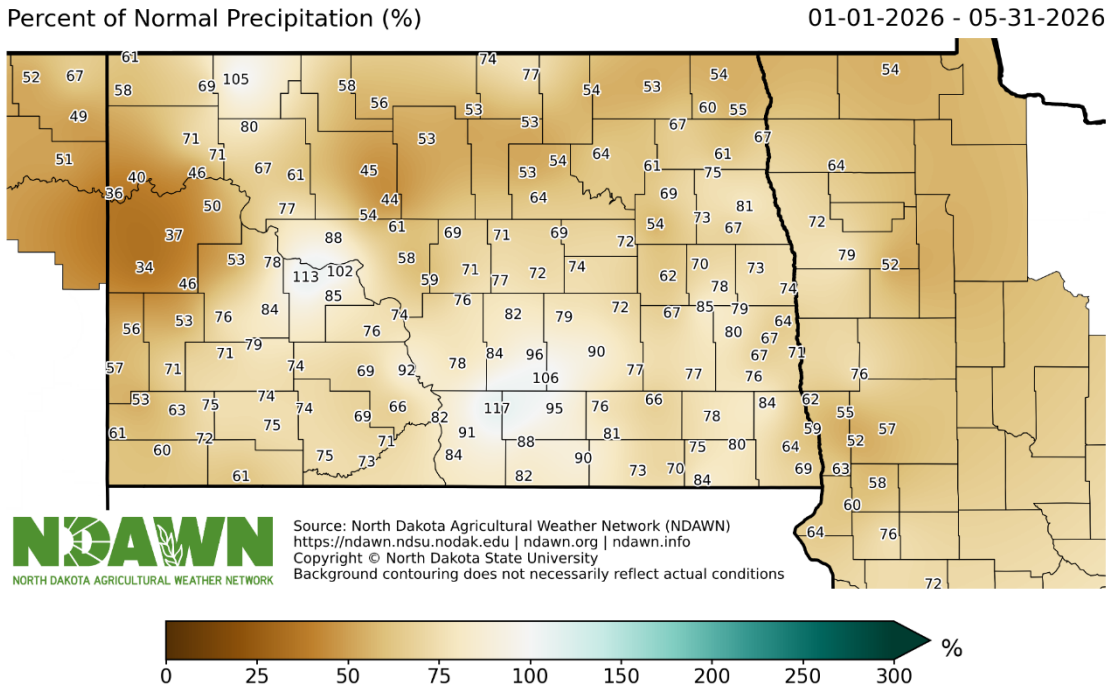
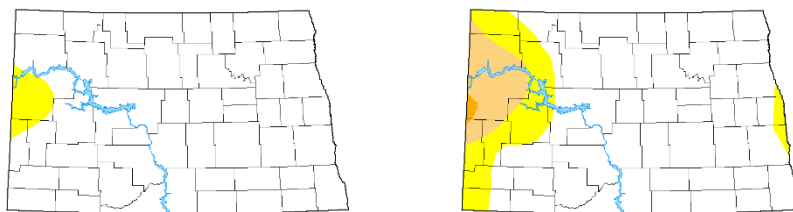


Figure 4: Percent of Average Precipitation measured at NDAWN stations with all-season gauges for the current year

The lack of significant rainfall has led to the subsoil drying out, particularly in western North Dakota. This has led to parts of North Dakota being classified as drought (D1) for the first time since August 5, 2025 (Figure 5).



Week	None	D0	D1	D2	D3	D4
2026-04-28	96.72	3.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
2026-06-02	79.87	12.45	7.34	0.34	0.00	0.00
Change	-16.85	+9.17	+7.34	+0.34	0.00	0.00

Figure 5: U.S. Drought Monitor conditions April 28, 2026 (left) vs. June 2, 2026 (right) and the Categorical Percent Area



## North Dakota Precipitation Summary

	Precipitation	Normal	Anomaly	Rank	Record Year
<b>May 2026</b>	1.56"	2.71"	-1.15"	101st Wettest	5.96" (1927)
				32nd Driest	0.23" (1901)

Table 1: May precipitation summary for North Dakota. 2026 statistics from NDAWN station data. Ranking and records based on NCEI climate data (1895-2026) (NOAA).

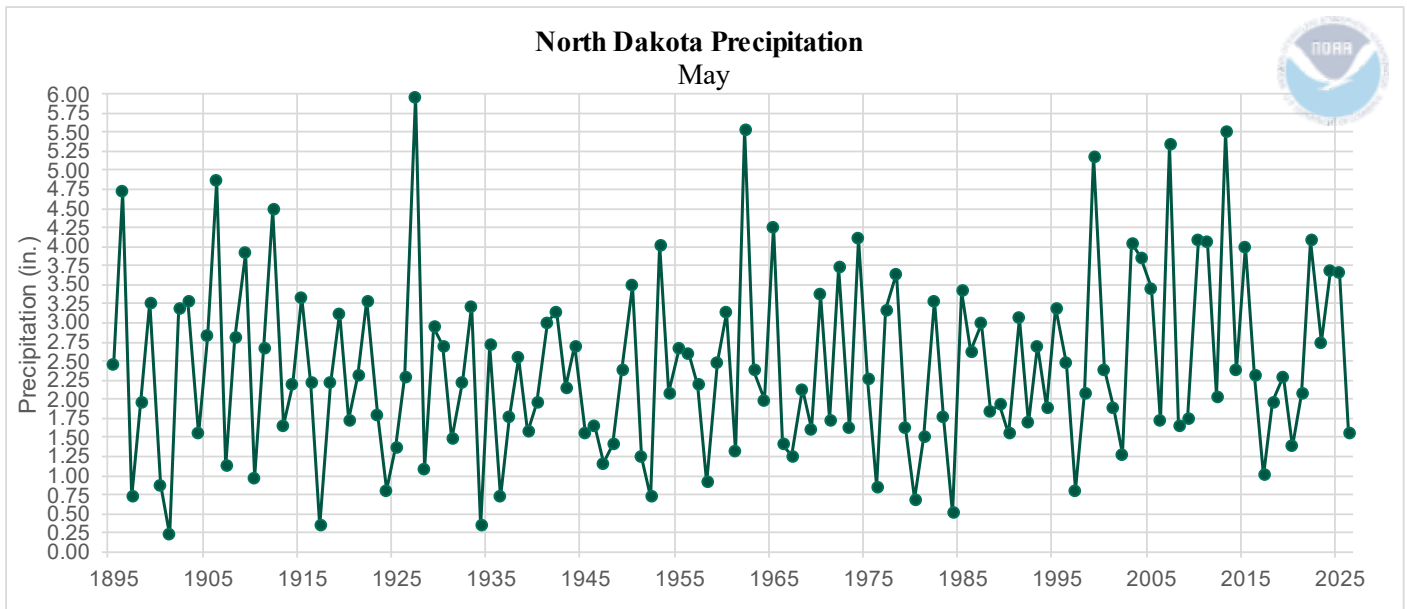


Figure 6: Average Statewide Total Precipitation in North Dakota for the month of May (via NCEI)



## Temperature Summary

May 2026 Statewide Average Temperature: 55.1°F

Departure from Normal Statewide Temperature: 1.2°F above normal

May in North Dakota was mostly above average temperature-wise (Figure 7), but this was due to the daytime highs. The statewide average minimum air temperature was exactly average, but the average maximum air temperature was 2.5°F above normal.

Departure from Normal Average Air Temperature (°F) 05-01-2026 - 05-31-2026

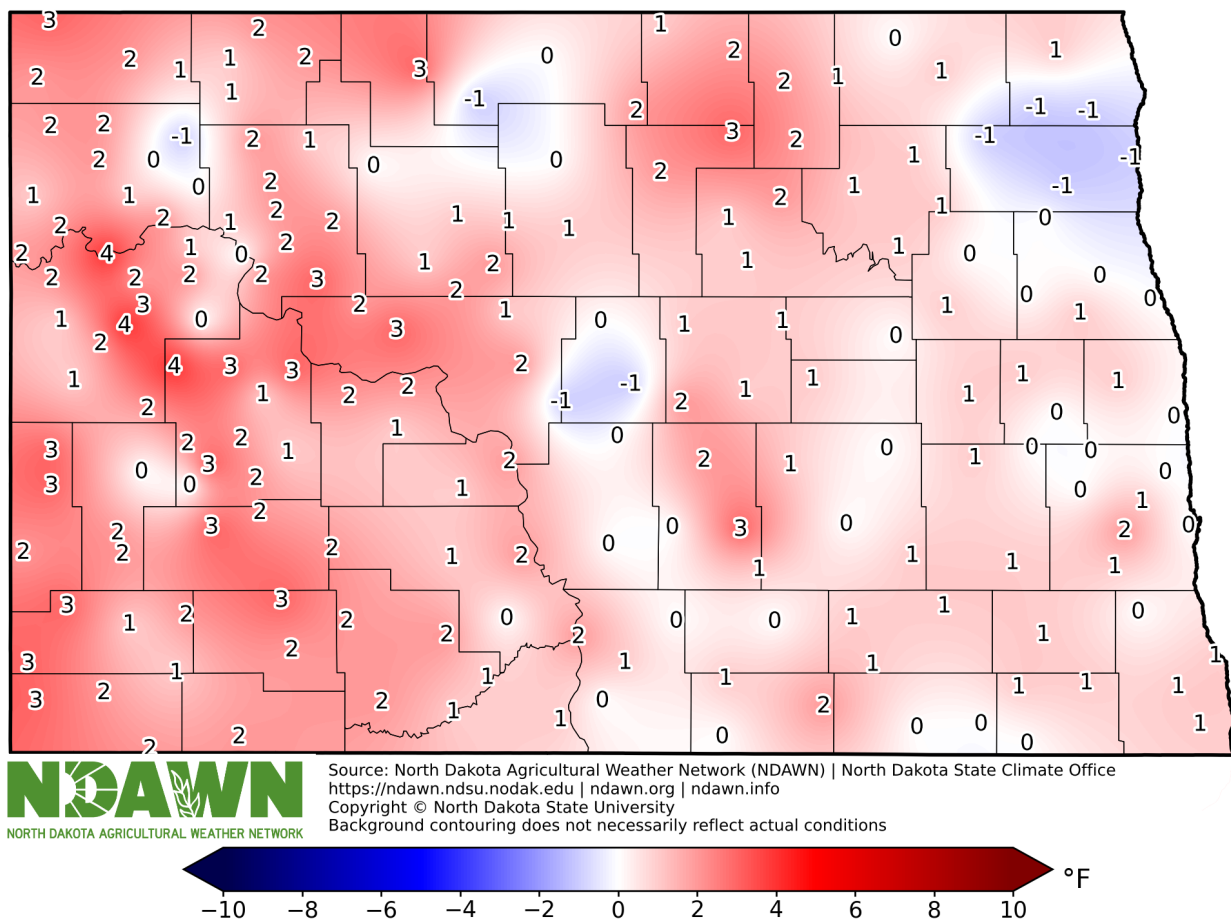


Figure 7: Departure from Normal Average Air Temperature measured at NDAWN stations in May 2026



The highest temperature recorded during May at NDAWN stations in North Dakota was 97.3°F at Gardner 2SSW NDAWN on May 28 (Figure 8). Most of the state saw highs in the 90s, particularly for the last few days of the month.

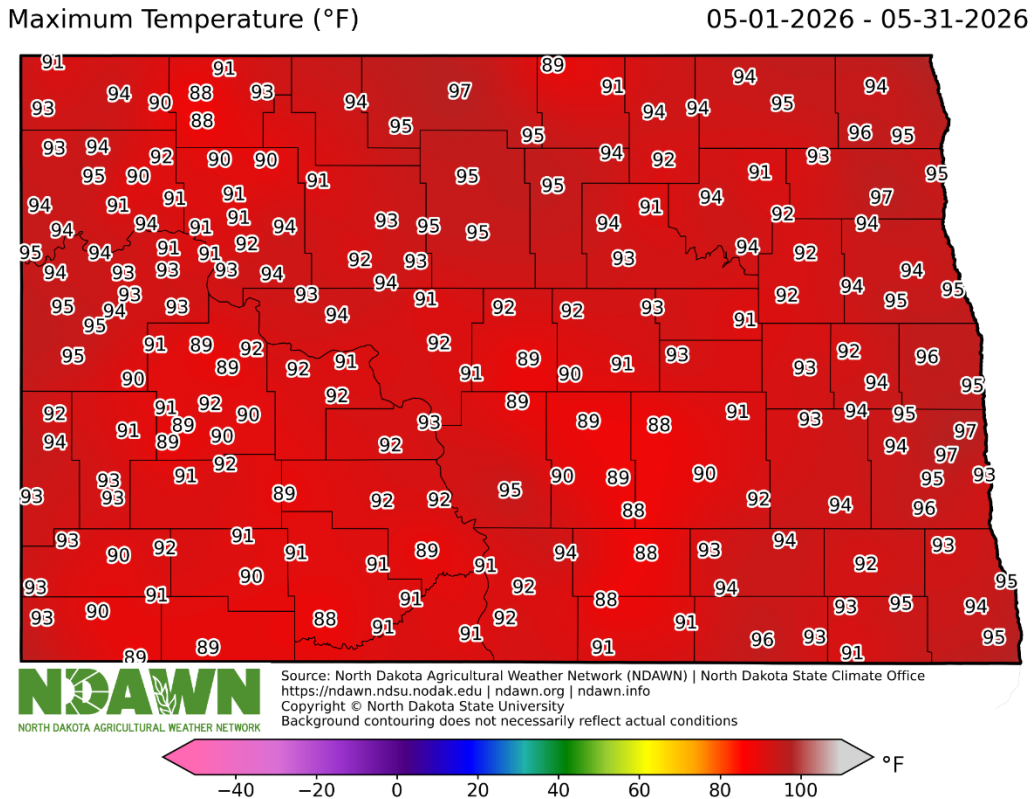


Figure 8: Maximum Air Temperature measured at NDAWN stations in May 2026

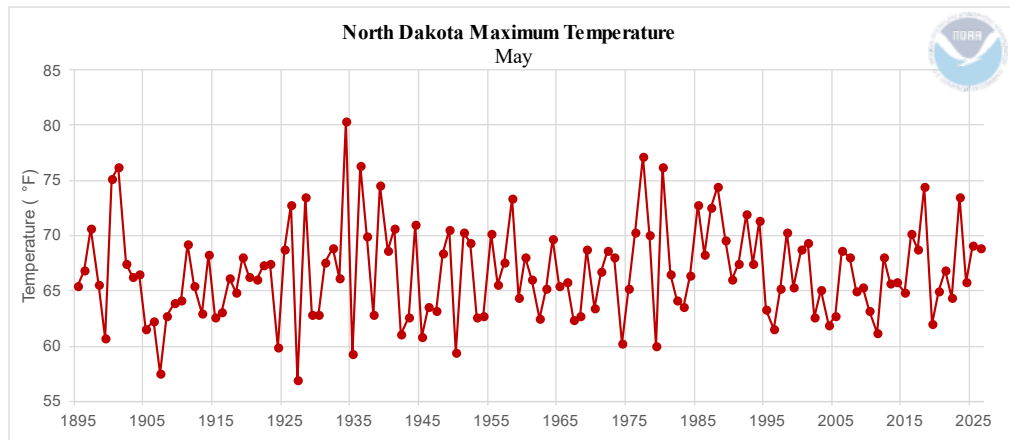


Figure 9: Average Maximum Temperature in North Dakota for the month of May (via NCEI)

# Temperature



The lowest temperature recorded during May at NDAWN stations in North Dakota was 13.2°F at Poker Jim NDAWN on May 6 (Figure 10). Every NDAWN station in North Dakota recorded a freeze in May.

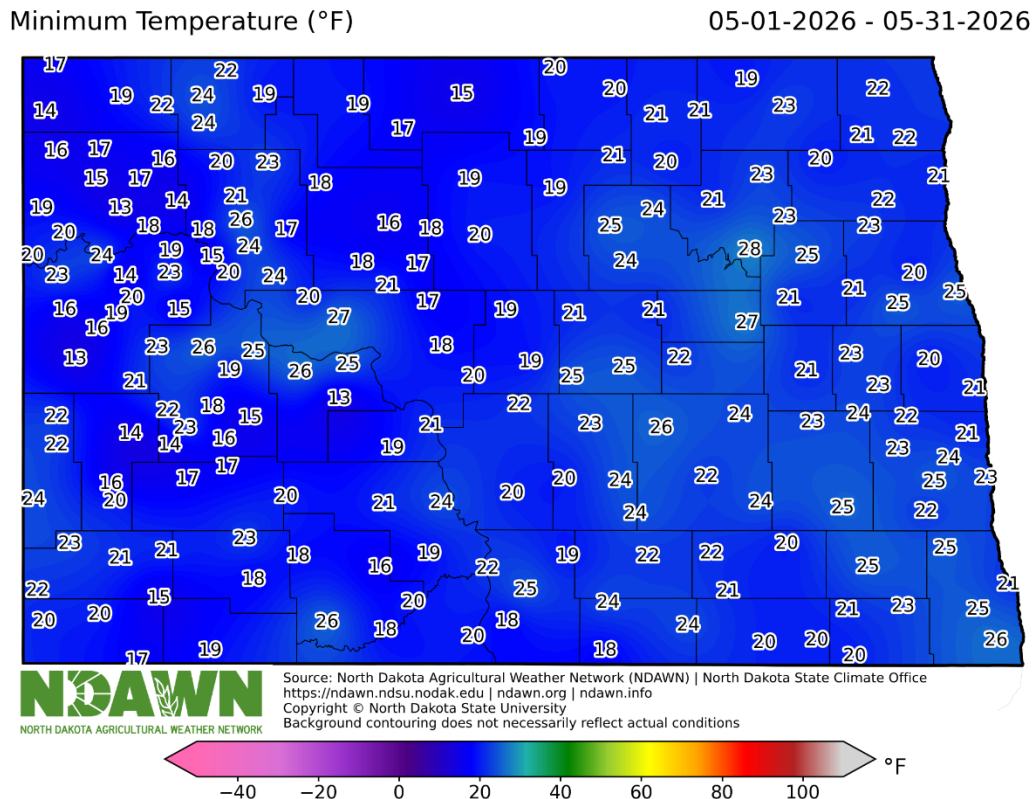


Figure 10: Minimum Air Temperature measured at NDAWN stations in May 2026

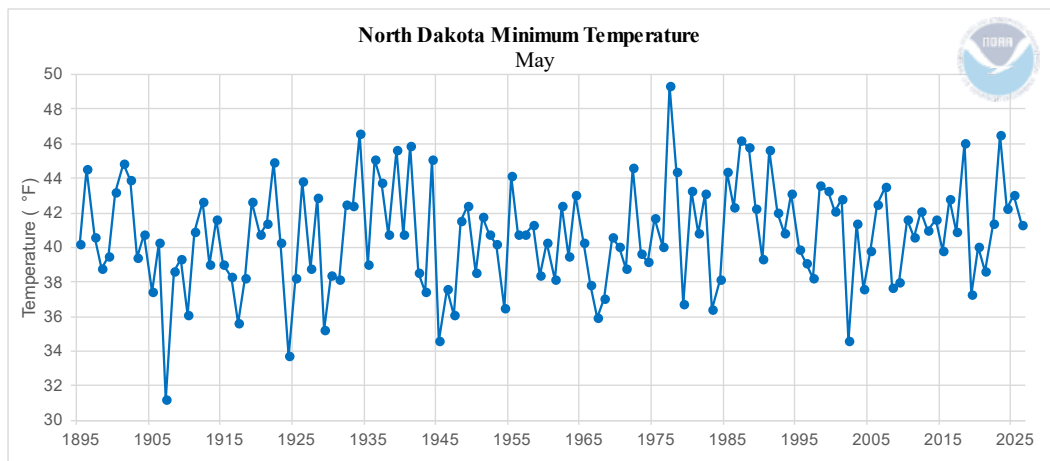


Figure 11: Average Minimum Temperature in North Dakota for the month of May (via NCEI)



## North Dakota Temperature Summary

<b>May 2026</b>	<b>Average T</b>	<b>Avg Max T</b>	<b>Avg Min T</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
	55.1°F	68.9°F	41.3°F	97.3°F	13.2°F
<b>Anomaly</b>	+1.2°F	+2.5°F	-0.1°F		
<b>Rank</b>					
<b>Warmest</b>	44th Warmest	36th Warmest	57th Warmest		
<b>Coollest</b>	89th Coldest	98th Coldest	77th Coldest		
<b>Record</b>					
<b>Warmest</b>	63.4°F (1934)	80.3°F (1934)	49.3°F (1977)		
<b>Coollest</b>	44.4°F (1907)	56.9°F (1927)	31.2°F (1907)		

Table 2: May temperature summary for North Dakota. 2026 statistics from NDAWN station data. Ranking and records based on NCEI climate data (1895-2026) (NOAA).

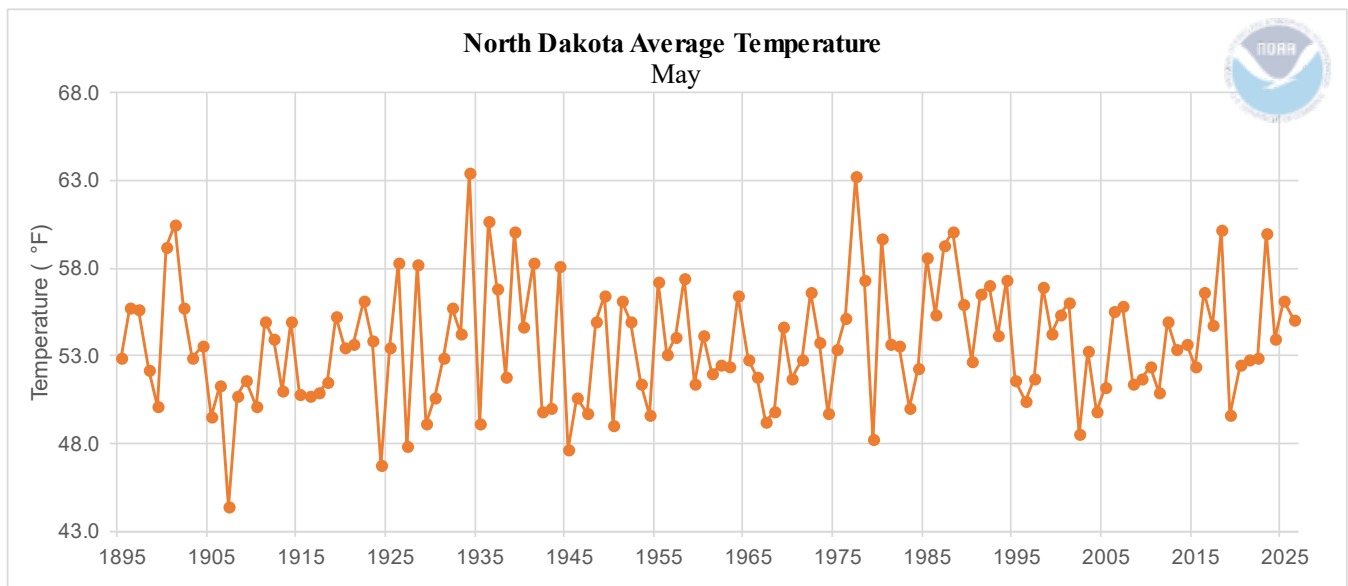


Figure 12: Average Temperature in North Dakota for the month of May (via NCEI)

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For questions, comments, or concerns regarding this publication, email [julia.poblitzki@ndsu.edu](mailto:julia.poblitzki@ndsu.edu).

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