

Seasonal Climate Watch

October 2026 to February 2027

Date issued: 30 September 2026

1. Overview

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), which is currently in a Strong El Niño state and current predictions indicate that it will continue strengthening towards a very strong El Niño state within the next couple of months and last at least until the end of the 2026/27 summer season. The typical signs that El Niño will affect South Africa are starting to materialise over the Pacific Ocean and it is expected that South Africa will experience the typical impacts of dryer and warmer conditions during this coming summer.

Predictions indicate that during late spring, early- and mid-summer there is increased chances for below-normal rainfall to occur over most of the north-eastern half of South Africa. This forecast is consistent with typical El Niño effects for Southern Africa.

Minimum and maximum temperatures are largely expected to be above-normal for most parts of South Africa during the spring and early summer seasons.

The SAWS will continue to monitor the weather and climate conditions and provide updates on any future assessments that may provide more clarity on the current expectations for the coming season.

2. South African Weather Service Prediction System

2.1. Seasonal Forecasts for South Africa From the SAWS Seasonal Prediction System

The ECMWF system (Obtained through the Copernicus C3Ss system) for South Africa, as issued with the Sep 2026 initial conditions, is presented below (district names can be seen in the appendix indicated in Figure A4):

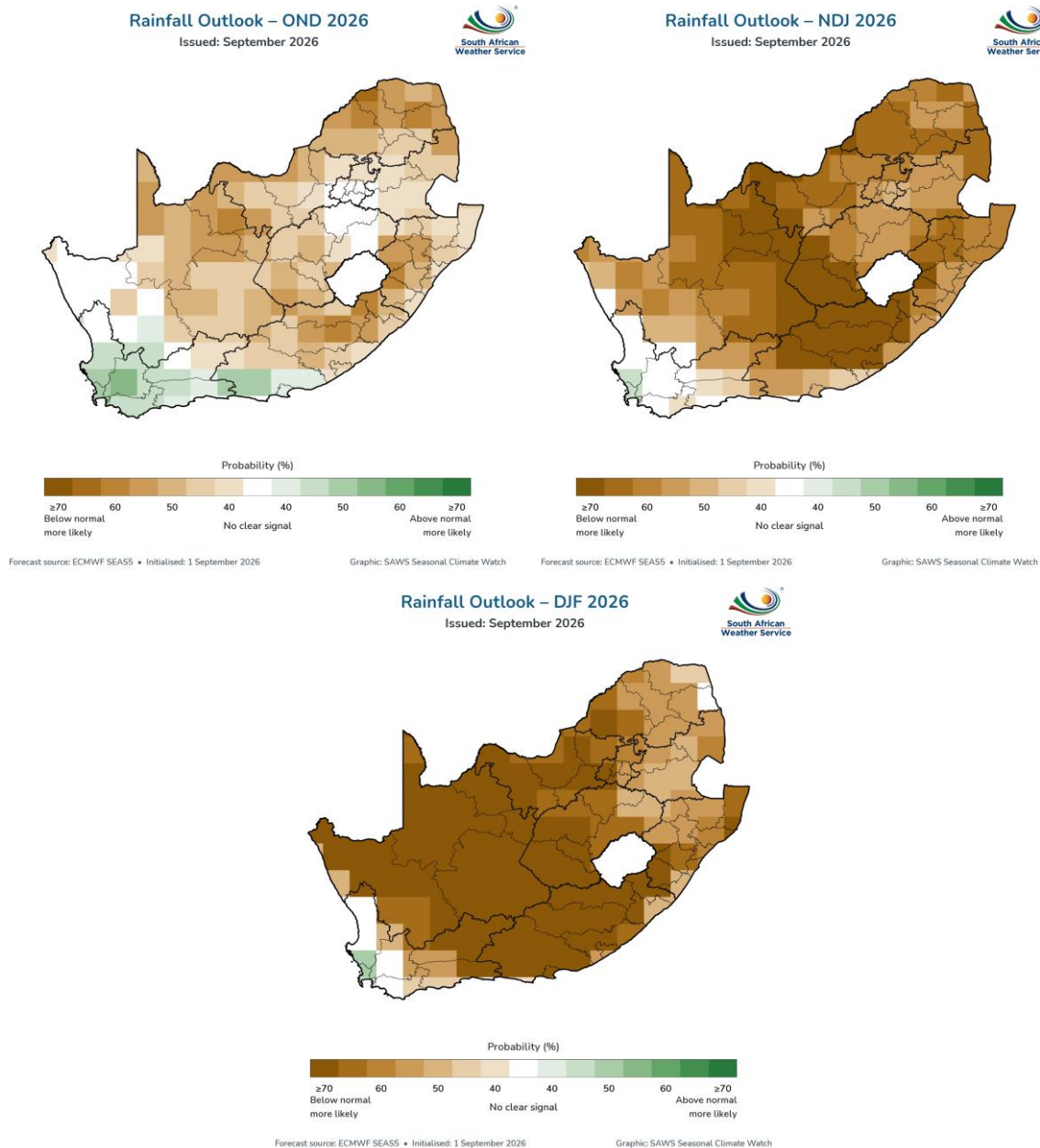


Figure 1: October-November-December 2026 (OND; left), November-December-January 2026 (NDJ; middle), December-January-February 2026/27 (DJF; right) seasonal precipitation prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to the appendix, Figure A1 for forecast skill levels.

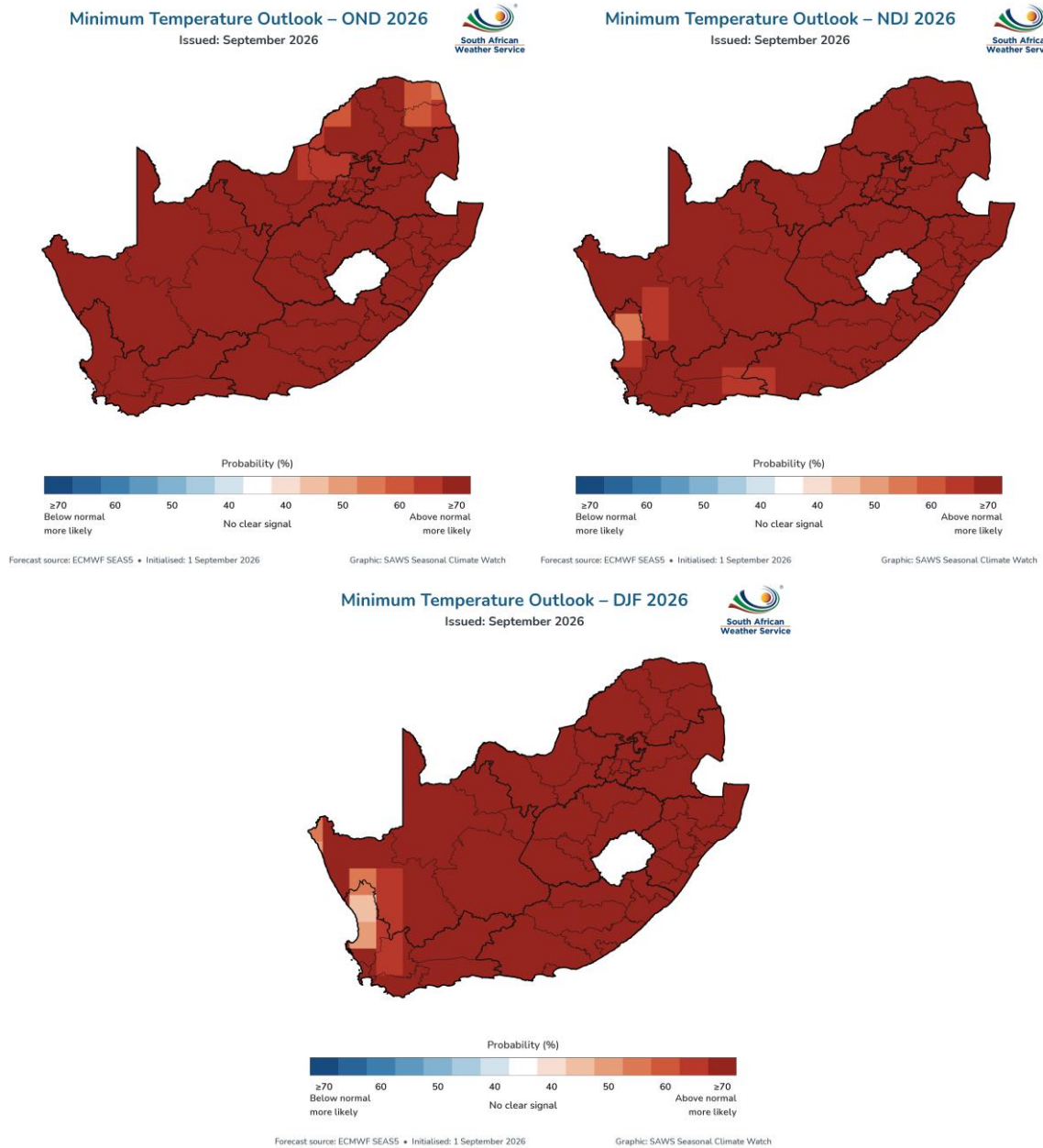


Figure 2: October-November-December 2026 (OND; left), November-December-January 2026 (NDJ; middle), December-January-February 2026/27 (DJF; right) seasonal minimum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to the appendix, Figure A2 for forecast skill levels.

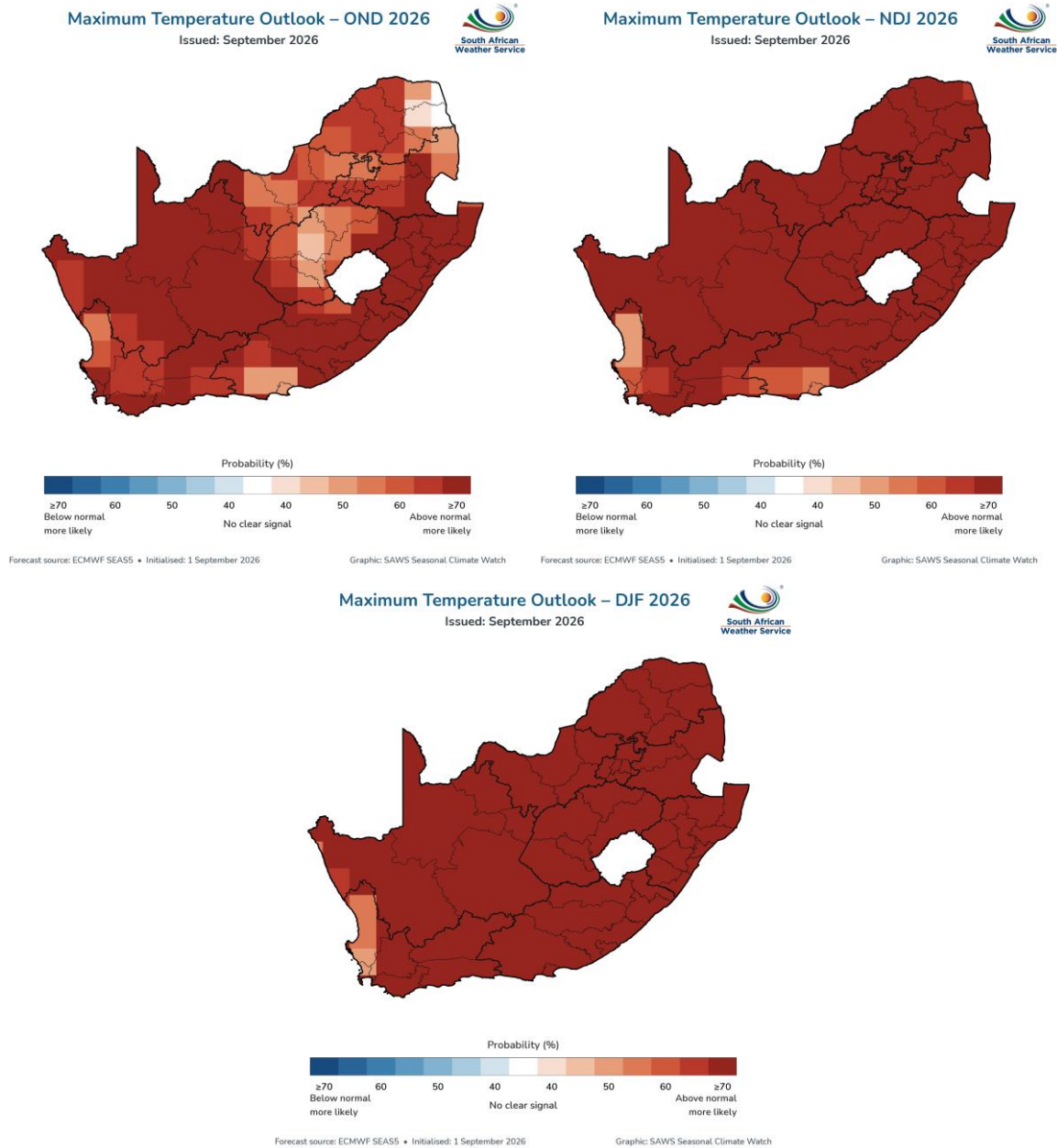


Figure 3: October-November-December 2026 (OND; left), November-December-January 2026 (NDJ; middle), December-January-February 2026/27 (DJF; right) seasonal maximum temperature prediction. Maps indicate the highest probability of the above-normal and below-normal categories. Please refer to the appendix, Figure A3 for forecast skill levels.

2.2. Climatological Seasonal Totals and Averages

The following maps indicate the rainfall and temperature climatology (minimum and maximum temperature) for the October-November-December, November-December-January and December-January-February seasons. The rainfall and temperature climates are representative of the average rainfall and temperature conditions over a long period for the relevant 3-month seasons presented here.

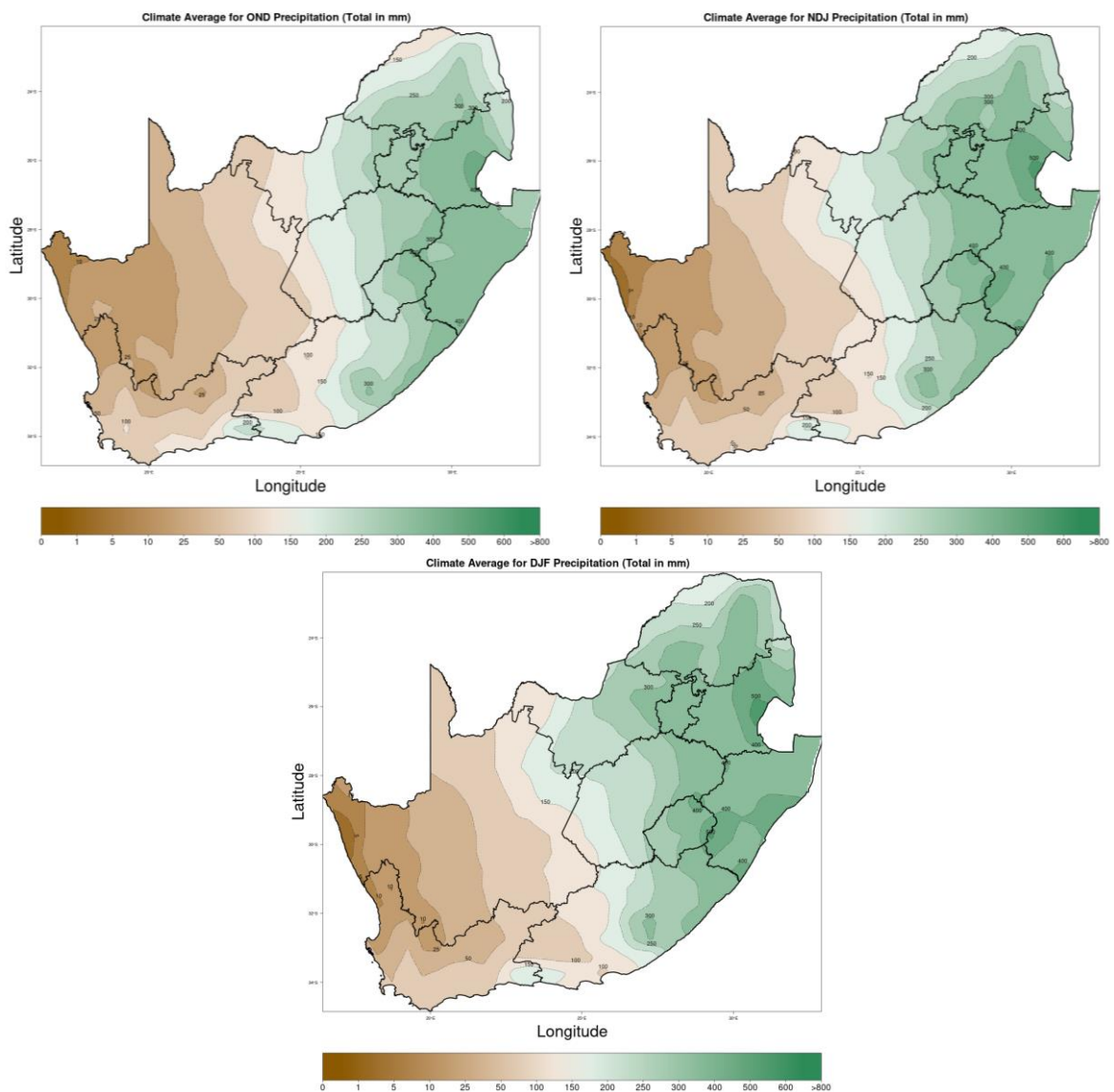


Figure 4: Climatological seasonal totals for precipitation during October to December (OND; left), November to January (NDJ; right) and December to February (DJF; bottom).

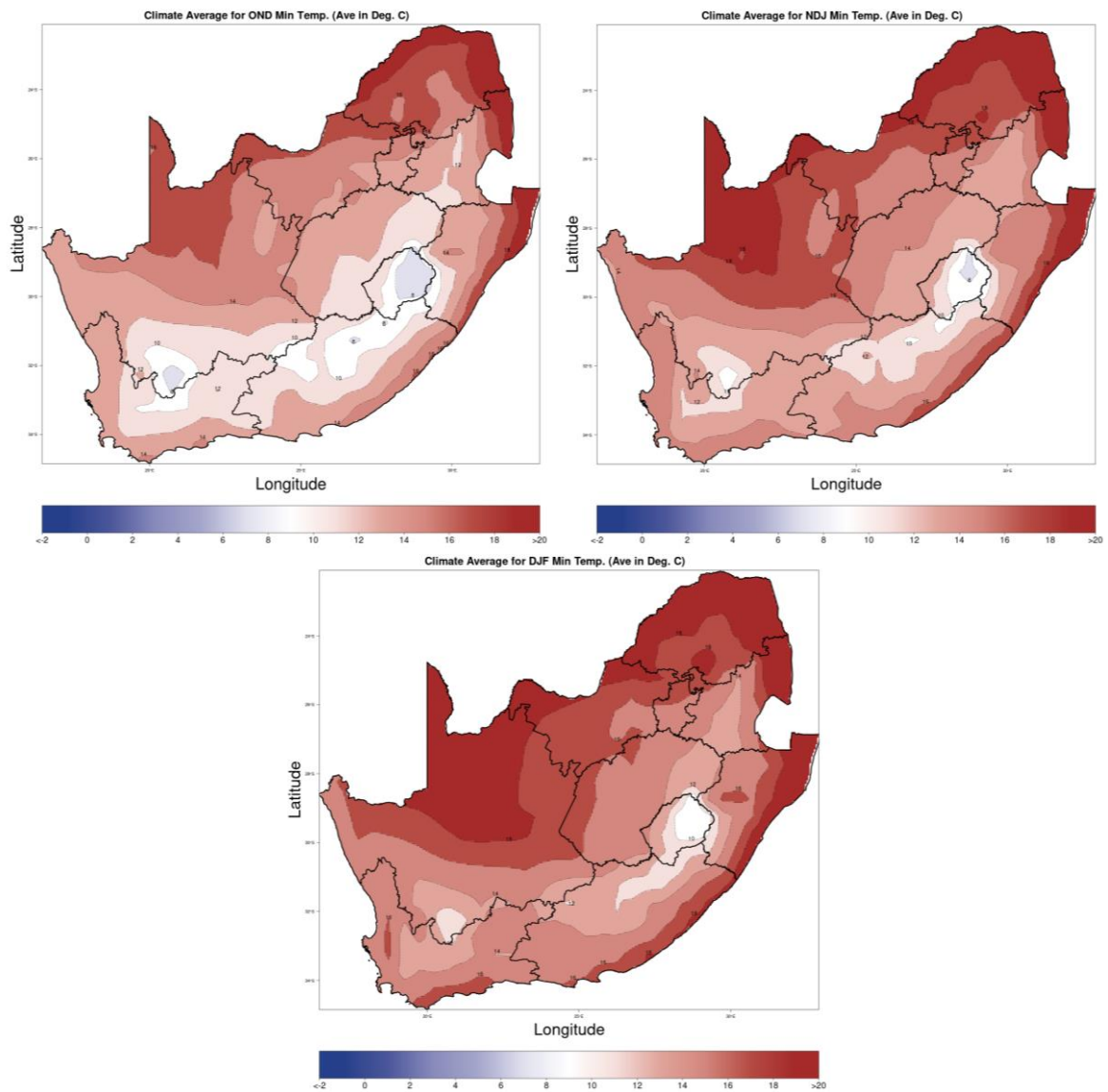


Figure 5: Climatological seasonal averages for minimum temperature during October to December (OND; left), November to January (NDJ; right) and December to February (DJF; bottom).

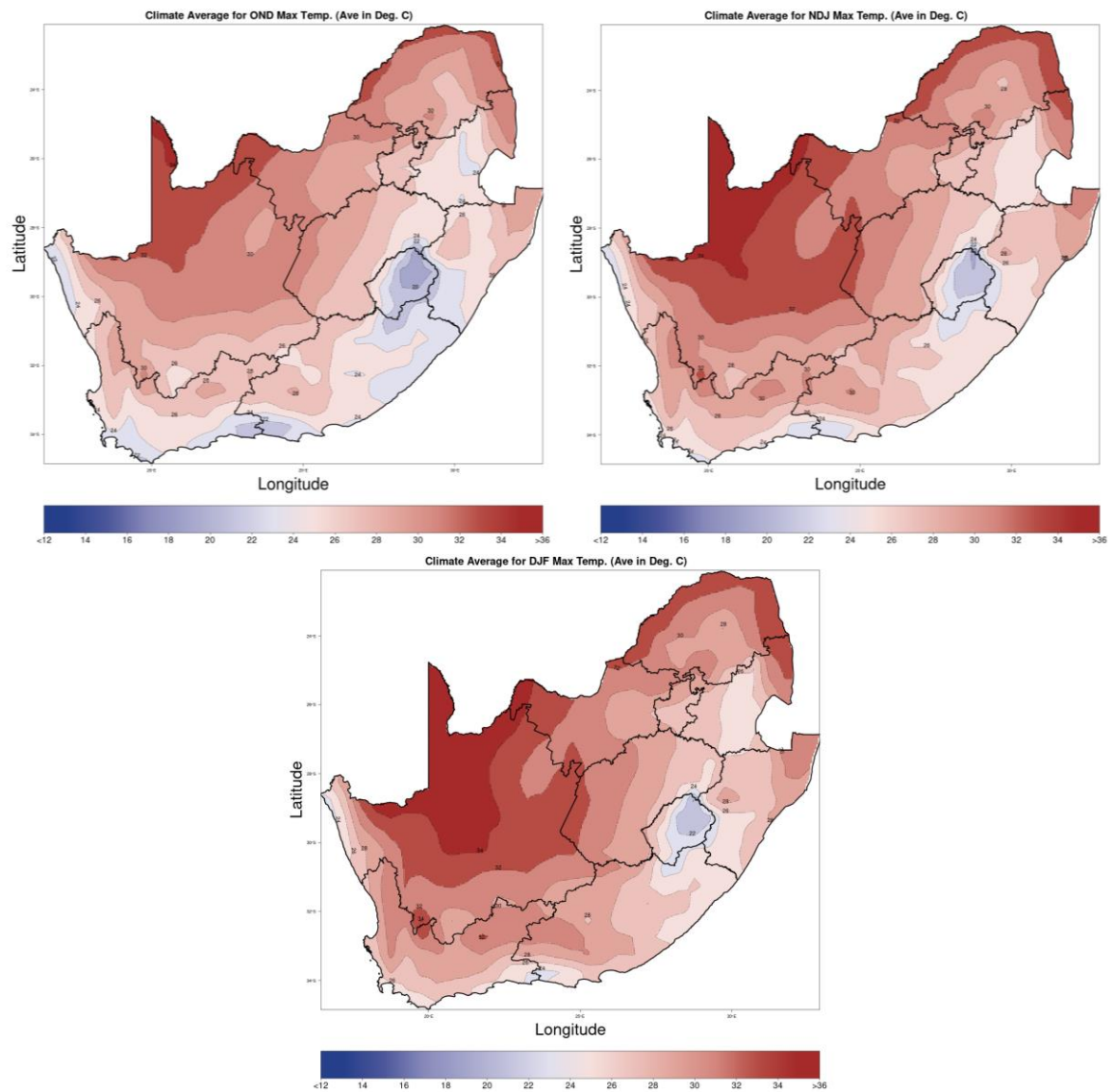


Figure 6: Climatological seasonal averages for maximum temperature during October to December (OND; left), November to January (NDJ; right) and December to February (DJF; bottom).

3. Summary Implications to Various Economic Sector Decision Makers

Water and Energy

The anticipated below-normal rainfall conditions during late spring, early- and mid-summer seasons, coupled with largely expected above-normal temperatures are likely to exacerbate water loss, adding pressure on water-scarce regions, particularly over the central interior and the far north-east half of the country. Such conditions may also lead to increased dry soils including drought, significantly disrupting water resources by reducing water infiltration, accelerating runoff, as well as obstructing groundwater recharge. In addition, minimum and maximum temperatures are expected to be mostly above normal across the country during spring and early summer seasons. These conditions are likely to increase demand for space cooling. Decision-makers should note these possible outcomes and communicate with affected businesses and communities.

Health

Below-normal rainfall is increasingly likely over most of the north-eastern half of South Africa during late spring, early summer and mid-summer. This outlook is consistent with typical El Niño effects over Southern Africa and may intensify pressure on water availability, especially in communities already facing supply challenges. Where water shortages occur, reduced access to safe water could compromise hygiene and sanitation, raising the risk of diarrhoeal and other water-related illnesses.

Above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures are expected over most parts of the country during spring and early summer. These conditions may heighten the risk of heat stress, dehydration and other heat-related illnesses, particularly during periods of intense or prolonged heat. Children, older persons, outdoor workers and people with pre-existing health conditions are especially vulnerable.

Health authorities are urged to use the seasonal outlook to strengthen preparedness for heat and potential water shortages, with particular attention to vulnerable communities and the continuity of water, sanitation and health services. Public communication should emphasise adequate hydration, reduced exposure to excessive heat, access to cool or shaded spaces, responsible water use, and safe water and hygiene practices.

The seasonal outlook indicates increased probabilities rather than certainty and does not establish the timing or severity of individual weather events. Preparedness and public health messaging should therefore be guided by updated seasonal forecasts, short-term weather warnings and local health surveillance.

Agriculture

The forecasts indicate that below-normal rainfall is expected over most parts of the summer rainfall areas due to the anticipated strong El Niño. Above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures are predicted for most parts of South Africa. The country will experience drier and warmer conditions during early and mid-summer seasons. These below-normal rainfall and above-normal temperature forecasts will likely have a negative impact on crop and livestock production. Above normal maximum temperatures increase the risk of heat stress in crops and livestock and may raise the risk of veld fires. Therefore, the relevant decision-makers are encouraged to advise farmers in these regions to practice soil and water conservation, proper water harvesting and storage, and other appropriate farming practices.

This forecast is updated monthly, and users are advised to monitor the updated forecasts, as there is a possibility for them to change, especially the longer lead-time forecasts. Moreover, farmers are advised to keep monitoring the weekly and monthly forecasts issued by the SAWS. Farmers are also advised to keep monitoring advisories from the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development and make the necessary adjustments accordingly.

4. Contributing Institutions and Useful Links

All the forecasts presented here are a result of the probabilistic prediction based on the ensemble members from the coupled climate model from the SAWS and two models from the NMME. Other useful links for seasonal forecasts are:

- <http://www.weathersa.co.za/home/seasonal> (Latest predictions from the SAWS for the whole of SADC)
- <https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/enso/current/> (ENSO predictions from various centres)
- <https://iri.columbia.edu/our-expertise/climate/forecasts/seasonal-climate-forecasts/> (Copernicus Global forecasts)



Appendix – Verification

The following three figures show the Relative Operating Characteristic (ROC) scores for the relevant multi-model forecasts in the main document. ROC scores are commonly used in seasonal forecasts to determine the areas where the forecasts perform well, so that the user can make more informed decisions on using the given forecast. As a general guideline, a score over 0,5 is technically better than chance; however, scores around and higher than 0,6 are considered to have significant skill to add confidence to the forecast.

From the figures there will be two ROC scores per season per variable, which indicate the score when a certain rainfall or temperature category is favoured. For example, if an area is favoured to receive above-normal rainfall, then the ROC score to look at would be the one calculated for the above-normal category (right side of the figures below). Also, make sure to look at the correct corresponding seasons indicated in the title of each map.

The aim of these maps is to add (or remove) confidence of a particular forecast over certain areas for specific seasons. Seasonal model skill over South Africa can be highly variable, highlighting the importance of knowing exactly where the forecasting system generally performs well or where it may struggle. It is important to note that the maps do not indicate where the current forecast will be correct or incorrect but rather highlights confidence levels in the forecasting system.

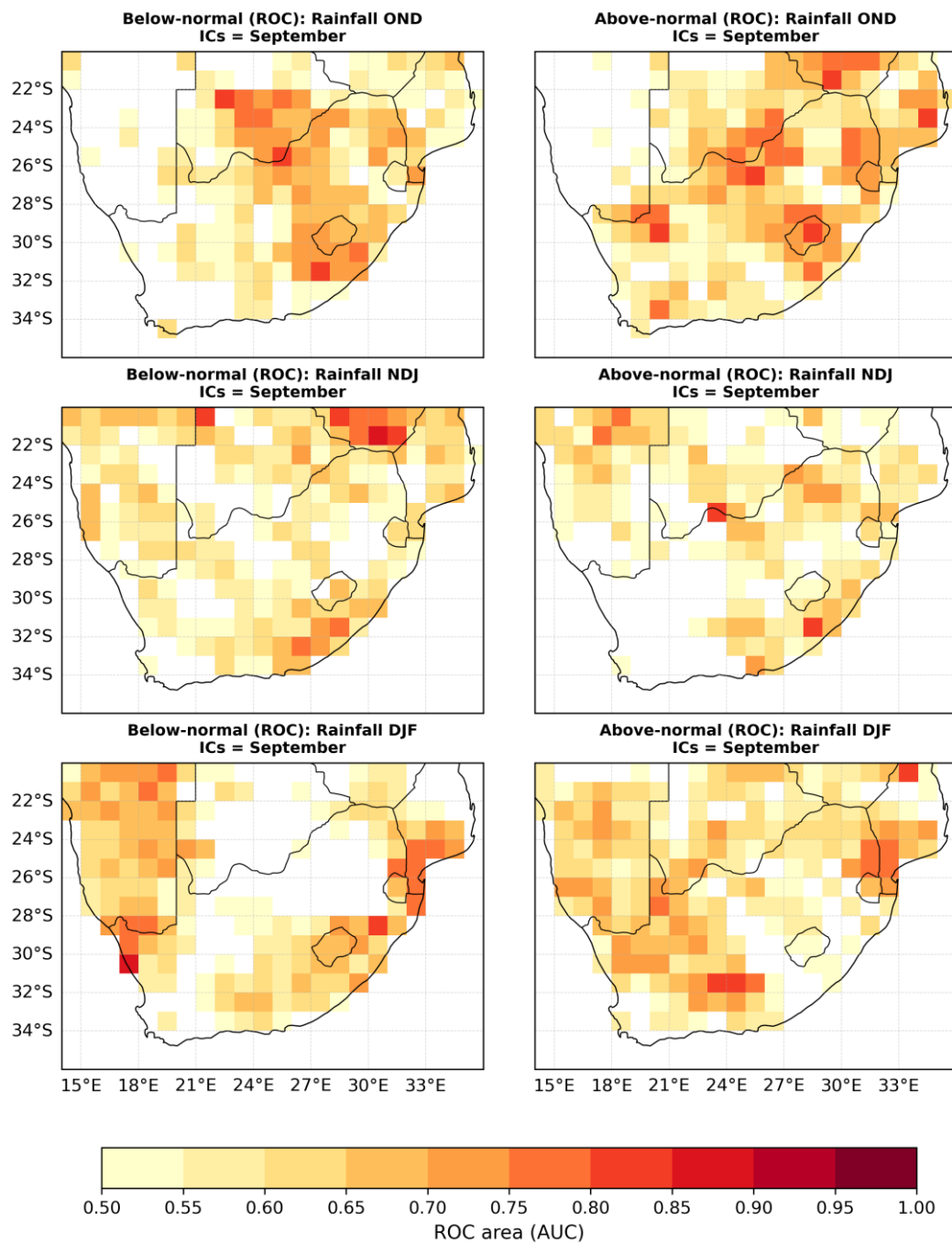


Figure A1: ROC scores for rainfall relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 1.

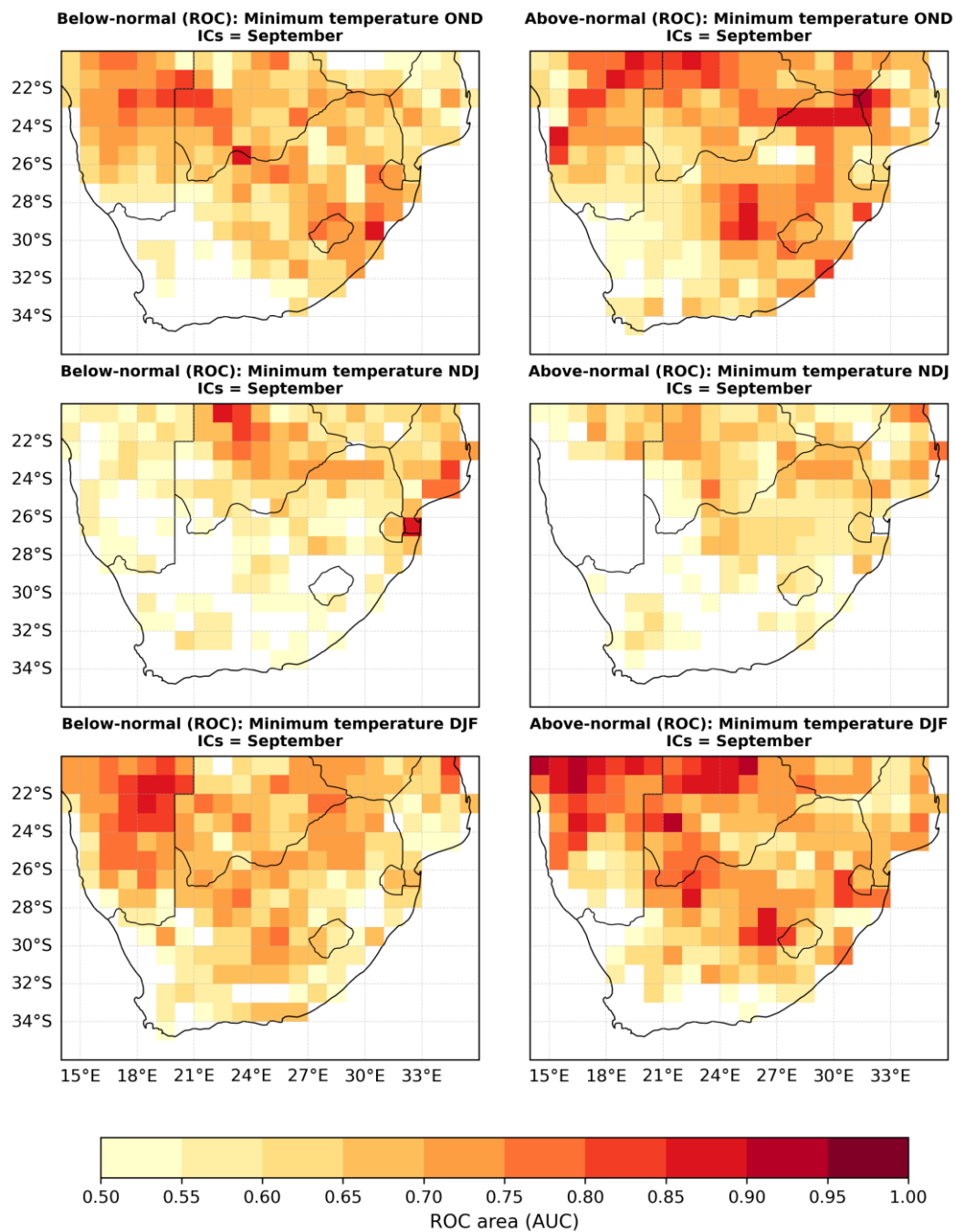


Figure A2: ROC scores for minimum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 2.

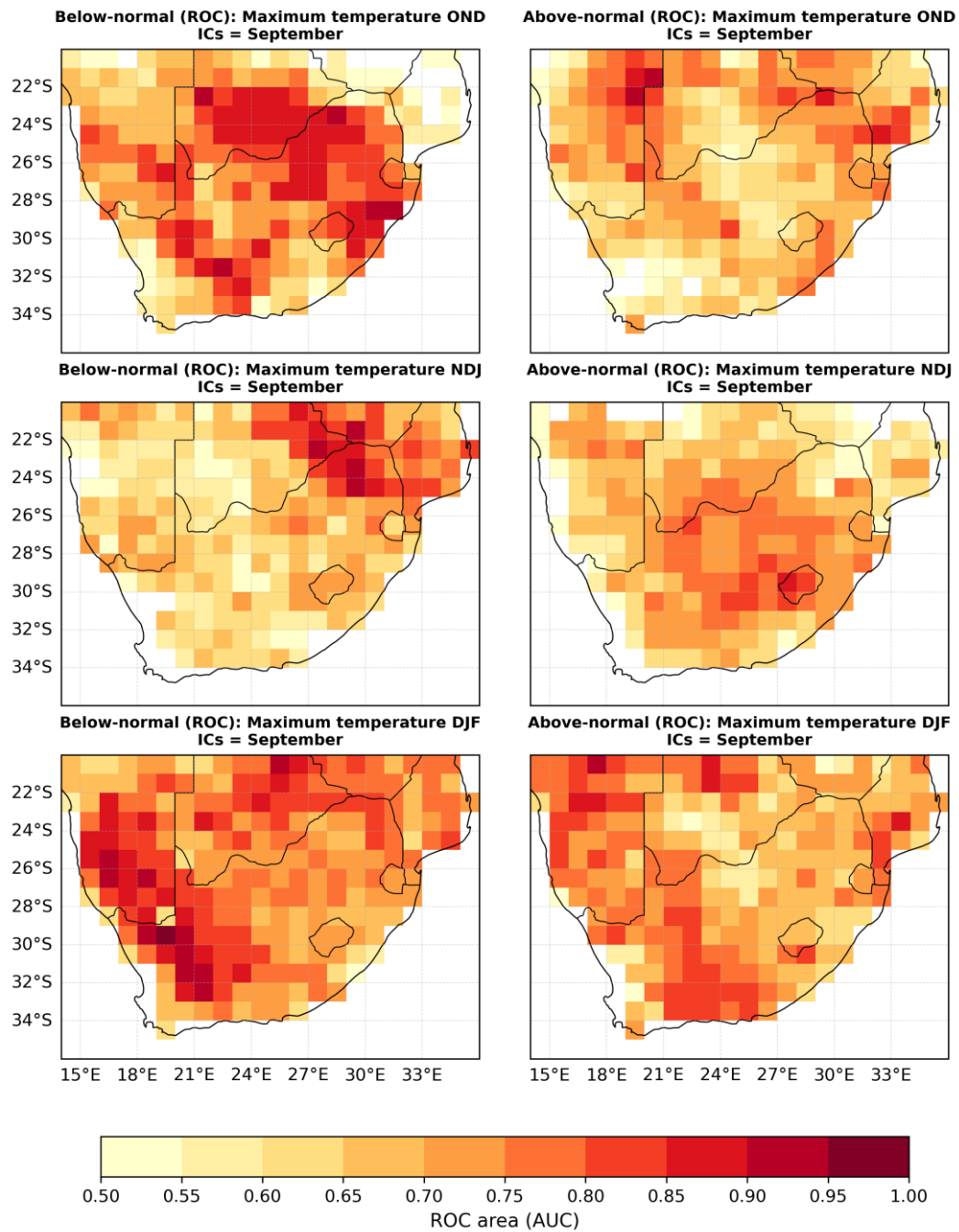


Figure A3: ROC scores for maximum temperatures relevant to the current forecasts in Figure 3.

Appendix – District Information

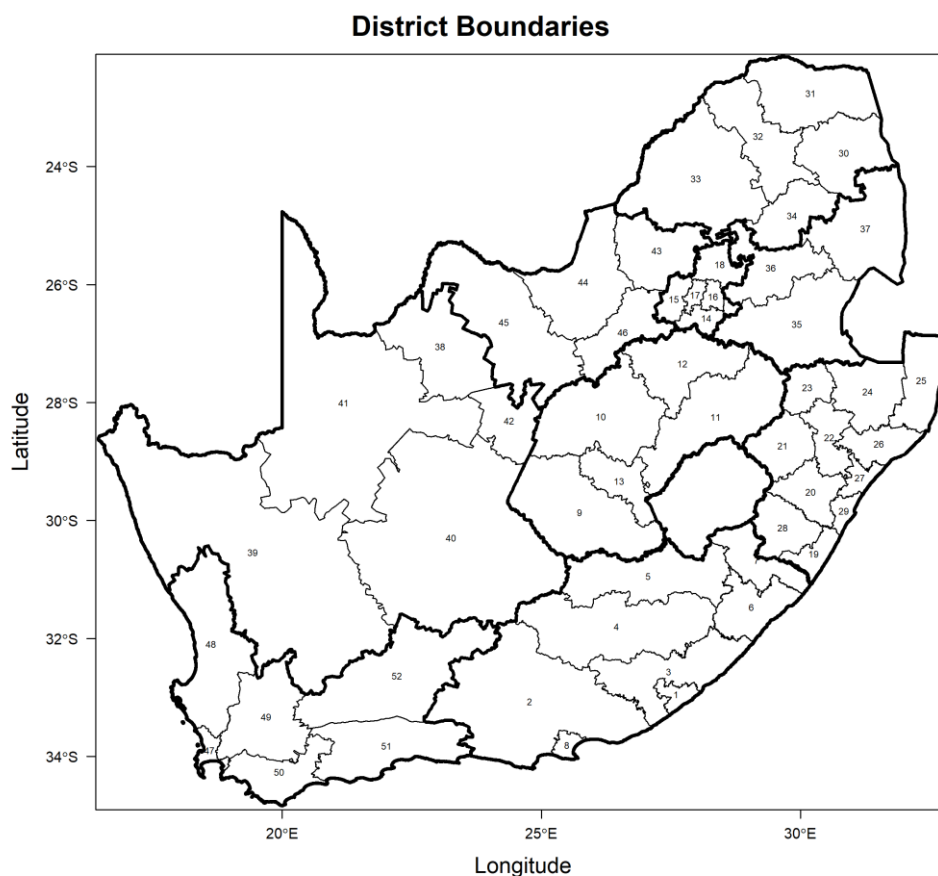


Figure A4: Local District Map with numbers corresponding to the table below with names.

Table with District Names and Numbers

Nr.	District Name	Nr.	District Name	Nr.	District Name	Nr.	District Name
1	Buffalo City	16	Ekurhuleni	31	Vhembe	46	Dr Kenneth Kaunda
2	Sarah Baartman	17	City of Johannesburg	32	Capricorn	47	City of Cape Town
3	Amathole	18	City of Tshwane	33	Waterberg	48	West Coast
4	Chris Hani	19	Ugu	34	Sekhukhune	49	Cape Winelands
5	Joe Gqabi	20	Umgungundlovu	35	Gert Sibande	50	Overberg
6	O.R. Tambo	21	Uthukela	36	Nkangala	51	Garden Route
7	Alfred Nzo	22	Umzinyathi	37	Ehlanzeni	52	Central Karoo
8	Nelson Mandela Bay	23	Amajuba	38	John Taolo Gaetsewe		
9	Xhariep	24	Zululand	39	Namakwa		
10	Lejweleputswa	25	Umkhanyakude	40	Pixley ka Seme		
11	Thabo Mofutsanyane	26	King Cetshwayo	41	Z F Mgcawu		
12	Fezile Dabi	27	iLembe	42	Frances Baard		
13	Mangaung	28	Harry Gwala	43	Bojanala		
14	Sedibeng	29	eThekweni	44	Ngaka Modiri Molema		
15	West Rand	30	Mopani	45	Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati		