

1 **Occurrence frequency of ~~Kelvin Helmholtz~~**
2 **~~instability~~subcritical Richardson number assessed by global**
3 **high-resolution radiosonde and ERA5 reanalysis**

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29 **Abstract.** Kelvin Helmholtz instability (KHI) is most likely to be the primary source
30 for clear-air turbulence that is of importance in pollution transfer and diffusion and
31 aircraft safety. ~~It is exemplarily indicated by the critical value of Richardson (Ri)~~
32 ~~number, which is typically taken as 1/4. It is indicated by the critical value of the~~
33 ~~dimensionless Richardson (Ri) number, which is predicted to be 1/4 from linear stability~~
34 ~~analysis.~~ However, Ri is fairly ~~–~~sensitive to the vertical resolution of the dataset; a
35 higher resolution systematically leads to a finer structure. The study aims to evaluate
36 the performance of ERA5 reanalysis (~~137 model levels~~) in determining the spatial-
37 temporal variabilities of KHI ~~subcritical Ri spatial-temporal variabilities,~~ by comparing
38 it against a near-global high-resolution (~~10 m~~) radiosonde dataset during years 2017 to
39 2022, ~~and to~~ further highlight ~~the~~ global climatology and dynamical environment of
40 subcritical Ri KHIs. Overall, the occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ ~~in the free atmosphere~~
41 is inevitably underestimated by the ERA5 reanalysis over all climate zones at all heights
42 from near-ground up to 30 km, compared to radiosonde, due largely to the severe
43 underestimation in wind shears. Otherwise, the occurrence frequency ~~of of KHI~~
44 ~~indicated by $Ri < 1$ in ERA5 is climatologically consistent with that from $Ri < 1/4$ in~~
45 ~~radiosondes in the free troposphere, especially over the midlatitude and subtropics in~~
46 ~~the Northern/Southern Hemisphere. Therefore, we infer argue that the threshold value~~
47 ~~of Ri should could be approximated as 1, rather than 1/4, when using ERA5-based Ri~~
48 ~~as proxy for KHI for the KHI estimation. The occurrence frequency of subcritical~~
49 ~~Ri KHI occurrence frequencies revealed by both datasets exhibits significant seasonal~~
50 ~~cycles over all climate zones polar, midlatitude, and subtropics regions, and they are~~
51 ~~consistently strong at heights of 10–15 km in the tropic region. In addition, the~~
52 ~~frequency it at low levels is positively correlated with the standard derivation of~~
53 ~~orography at low levels, and it is exceptionally strong over the Niño 3 region at heights~~
54 ~~of 6–13 km. Furthermore, high occurrence of subcritical Ri would likely be~~
55 ~~accompanied by strong wind speeds and intensive orographic or non-orographic gravity~~
56 ~~waves.~~
57 ~~Furthermore, the dynamical environment of KHI favors strong wind shears probably~~
58 ~~induced by the mean flows and the propagation of orographic or non-orographic gravity~~

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59 waves.

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61 **Key words:** High-resolution radiosonde dataset; ERA5 reanalysis; Kelvin-Helmholtz
62 instability; Wind shears; Threshold Richardson number; Gravity waves

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66 Introduction

67 Kelvin-Helmholtz instability (KHI) is a common phenomenon in the atmospheric
68 boundary layer and the free atmosphere (Muschinski and Wode, 1998), and its
69 wavelengths and depths span a wide range of scales throughout the atmosphere, varying
70 from few meters or less to 10s of km (Fritts et al., 2011). It contributes to vertical mixing
71 of heat, momentum, and constituents, and it acts to limit the maximum shears, just to
72 name a few (Fritts et al., 2011). KHI along with gravity wave (GW) breaking are the
73 most recognized instabilities in stably stratified flows (Fritts and Rastogi, 1985). In
74 addition, GW breaking has been identified as important sources of instability (e.g.,
75 Fritts et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2020, 2021, 2022). KHI arises preferentially from micro-
76 and mesoscale wind shear intensification on strong shears due to medium-frequency and
77 lower-frequency GWs, tides, planetary waves (PWs), and mean flows (Baumgarten and
78 Fritts, 2014), with maximal occurrence frequency near synoptic scale upper-level
79 frontal zones near jet streams, with mountain waves, and above the tops of severe
80 thunderstorms (North et al., 2014). Large wind shear is commonly associated with
81 regions where stability changes rapidly (e.g., near the top of the boundary layer) and
82 the large wind gradient in jet stream (Grasmick and Geerts, 2020). In a changing climate,
83 wind shear in the North Atlantic upper-level jet stream could be increased (Lee et al.,
84 2019), which may increase clear-air turbulence at cruise altitudes. In turn, KHI can
85 reduce wind shears and alter tracer gradients where turbulence and mixing are most
86 intense (Fritts et al., 2022).

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87 ~~In addition, complex terrain may locally enhance wind shear, leading to KHI~~
88 ~~(Grasmick and Geerts, 2020). Large wind shear is common in regions where stability~~
89 ~~changes rapidly (e.g., near the top of the boundary layer) and the associated large~~
90 ~~gradient in jet stream (Grasmick and Geerts 2020), which may increase clear air~~
91 ~~turbulence (Williams and Joshi, 2013). In turn, KHI can reduce wind shears and alter~~
92 ~~tracer gradients where turbulence and mixing are most intense (Fritts et al., 2022).~~

93 KHI influences depend on the spatial scales at which they lead to turbulence (Fritts
94 et al., 2022). Turbulence is by far the most common cause of serious injuries to aircraft
95 (Williams and Joshi, 2013). Convective instability, shear instability, KHI, and GW
96 breaking are known to be the major sources for turbulence (Sharman et al., 2012; Ko et
97 al., 2019; 2022). ~~Among others, KHI is one of the most common causes of turbulence~~
98 ~~throughout the atmosphere from Earth's surface to the lower thermosphere (Fritts et al.,~~
99 ~~2011; Sharman et al., 2012).~~ KHI requires a sufficiently large Reynolds number and a
100 Richardson (Ri) number sufficiently below 1/4 to enable KHI formation and subsequent
101 secondary instability leading to turbulence (Fritts et al., 2022). Ri is not a good guide
102 to instability character in general, and $Ri > 1/4$ does not assure flow stability for
103 superpositions of mean and GW motions. Despite these caveats, $Ri < 1/4$ does provide a
104 reasonable guide to expected local KHI structure in cases where clear KH billows arise,
105 according to the simulation in the mesosphere and lower thermosphere region (Fritts et
106 al., 2014). Values of Ri close to zero favor strong instability, deep billows, and relatively
107 intense turbulence, whereas values of Ri closer to 1/4 favor weak instability, shallow
108 billows (Fritts et al., 2011). The Richardson number criterion can be applied as a
109 turbulence diagnostic in numerical model output (e.g. Sharman and Pearson, 2017), and
110 it has been used as such in climatological studies on the occurrence of clear air
111 turbulence (Jaeger and Sprenger, 2007). Kunkel et al. (2019) includes a brief discussion
112 on the capability of ECMWF models based on case studies to resolve subcritical
113 Richardson numbers, and argues that the threshold value of Ri (R_{it}), taken as 1, might be
114 a good proxy for observed KHI. A very recent study by Lee et al. (2023) also sets R_{it}
115 from 0-1 in their climatology on the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere
116 turbulence diagnostics. The threshold value of Ri can be potentially used an indicator

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117 of turbulence (for instance, Jaeger et al., 2007). Moreover, Zhang et al. (2022) shows
118 that over half of turbulence exists below $Ri < 1$ when the environment is beneficial for
119 the development of turbulence (Zhang et al., 2022).

120 Turbulent mixing is of crucial importance to mass, energy, momentum transfer, the
121 dispersion of pollutants, and stratosphere-troposphere exchange. In numerical models,
122 turbulent dissipation rate, turbulent diffusivity and other parameters representing
123 turbulent mixing efficiency are the most basic parameters, which need to be accurately
124 parameterized to evaluate the impact of turbulence effect on matter and energy
125 distribution (Gavrilov et al., 2005). However, it presents a challenge both in
126 observation and numerical modeling (Sharman et al., 2012; Homeyer et al., 2014;
127 Plougonven and Zhang, 2014). However, due to the intermittent nature of turbulence
128 it is generally not resolved in (global) numerical weather prediction models, even at
129 nowadays common/states of the art horizontal resolutions of the order of tens of
130 kilometers (Sandu et al., 2019), and it presents a challenge both in observation and
131 numerical modeling (Sharman et al., 2012; Homeyer et al., 2014; Plougonven and
132 Zhang, 2014). While in numerical models, turbulent dissipation rate, turbulent
133 diffusivity and other parameters representing turbulent mixing efficiency are the most
134 basic parameters, which need to be accurately parameterized to evaluate the impact of
135 turbulent effect on matter and energy distribution (Gavrilov et al., 2005). For this reason,
136 For this reason, the indices of turbulence, such as large wind shear, small Ri and the
137 negative squared Brunt-väisälä frequency, could be a great tool to characterize
138 turbulence (Jaeger et al., 2007).—

139 The Richardson number Ri is estimated by the finite differences across thin layers
140 and is quite sensitive to the vertical resolution of measurements (Haack et al., 2014).
141 Thus, a proper estimation of Ri requires a high-resolution measurement of temperature
142 and wind speed. The near-global distributed radiosonde site offers a unique opportunity
143 to investigate the climatology of subcritical Ri KHI occurrence frequency. The
144 overview of subcritical Ri KHI occurrence by using a near-global high-resolution (10-
145 m) radiosonde data was presented in Zhang et al. (2022), and a close association
146 between subcritical Ri KHI occurrence frequency and turbulence fraction has been

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147 found. However, the global climatology characteristic of subcritical Ri KHI remains
148 most unclear, especially over oceans where the radiosonde network has a poor coverage.

149 By comparison, ERA5 global reanalysis can provide a seamless coverage of
150 temperature and wind, and it is the last version of the European Centre for Medium-
151 Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) model and has 137 model levels (Hersbach et al.,
152 2020). ~~It experiences a lot of improvements, including the statistically significant~~
153 ~~improvement in short range forecasts by the Aeolus satellite (Rennie et al., 2021).~~ Its
154 predecessor, ERA-Interim, was found in particular wind shear a factor of 2–3 lower
155 simulated based on high-resolution radiosondes (Houchi et al., 2010). Moreover, results
156 show that whatever the location and the geophysical conditions considered, biases
157 between ERA-Interim and balloon wind measurements increase as a function of altitude
158 (Duruiseau et al., 2017). Recent studies have suggested that the structure and
159 variability of the trade winds in the lower troposphere are reasonably reproduced in the
160 ERA5 reanalysis based on the EUREC4A field campaign (Savazzi et al., 2022).
161 However, the similar comparison between ERA5 and high-resolution radiosonde across
162 a near-global area has largely been undetermined. The proper estimation of wind shear
163 and Brunt-Väisälä frequency is essential for the determination of Ri .

164 Thus, our objectives are to: (1) Evaluate the performance of ERA5 at different
165 heights and climate zones in estimating wind shear and small Richardson number
166 occurrence frequencies, in comparison with a large high-resolution radiosonde dataset
167 spanning the years from 2017 to 2022. ~~Thus, our objectives are to: (1) The performance~~
168 ~~of ERA5 (137 model levels) at different heights and climate zones in estimating wind~~
169 ~~shear and KHI occurrence frequency, comparing with a large high-resolution (10-m)~~
170 ~~radiosonde dataset spanning years from 2017 to 2022.~~ (2) Based on the validation and
171 comparison results, we pose a question: how to use ERA5 for KHI-subcritical Ri
172 study estimation? (3) The global climatology of KHI-subcritical Ri occurrence based on
173 versatile measurements and model products. (4) The dynamic environment (GWs and
174 mean flow) of subcritical Ri KHI. These works would be valuable for the understanding
175 of the global distribution of subcritical Ri KHI, and furthermore, turbulence fraction. To
176 this end, this analysis is organized as follows. Section 2 shows the data and methods

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177 used. Section 3 represents the climatological variation of subcritical R_i and its
178 comparison with radiosonde. Section 4 ends with a summary.
179

180 **2 Data and methods**

181 **2.1 High-resolution radiosonde dataset**

182 As described in Guo et al. (2021) and Zhang et al. (2022), a high vertical resolution
183 radiosonde (HVRRS) dataset gained from several organizations was adopted, spanning
184 January 2017 to October 2022, in a total of 5.8 years. The organizations include the
185 China Meteorological Administration (CMA), the U.S National Oceanic and
186 Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS)
187 Reference Upper-Air Network (GRUAN), the Centre for Environmental Data Analysis
188 of the United Kingdom (CEDA), University of Wyoming, Deutscher Wetterdienst, and
189 ECMWF. In total, around 0.9545 million radiosonde profiles from 434 radiosonde
190 stations released at regular synoptic times of 0000 UTC and 1200 UTC were collected
191 to determine the value of R_i . These profiles were sampled at 0.5 Hz or 1 Hz,
192 corresponding to a vertical resolution of approximately 10 m or 5 m. Thus, all the
193 profiles were evenly interpreted to 10 m resolution in vertical by applying a cubic spline
194 interpolation. In addition, the sounding with the burst height lower than 10 km above
195 ground level (a.g.l.) was directly discarded for further study. Meteorological variables,
196 including temperature and wind speed, were prepared for the R_i estimation.

197 One of the shortages of radiosonde measurements is its inadequate
198 concentration over the polar and ocean regions (Xia et al., 2021). The geographical
199 distribution of total profile number of each radiosonde station is demonstrated in Figure
200 S1 in the supporting information in Support Information. The released radiosoundings
201 over Europe, the United States, and Australia have good geographical coverage and
202 time duration. Over some islands of oceans (e.g., the Pacific Ocean) there are dozens
203 of stations that can provide high-resolution measurement. Over the polar regions, there

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204 are around thirty stations.

205 2.2 ERA5 reanalysis and the collocation procedure

206 ERA5 is the latest version of ECMWF meteorological reanalysis, benefiting from
207 a decade of developments in model physics, core dynamics, and data assimilation
208 (Hersbach et al., 2020). The wind and temperature fields are modelled by the ERA5
209 reanalysis on a spatial resolution of 0.25° latitude/longitude and a temporal resolution
210 of 1 hour. The reanalysis has 137 model levels, giving a vertical resolution of
211 approximately 300 m in the middle and upper troposphere ~~and 500 m in the lower~~
212 ~~stratosphere~~. The vertical resolution of ERA5 is illustrated in Figure S2. Compared to
213 ERA5, the HVRRS does not provide global seamless observations ~~Compared to ERA5~~
214 ~~reanalysis, the HVRRS is hard to provide global seamless observations~~. Thus, the
215 collocation procedure between reanalysis and HVRRS goes as follows: (1) the matched
216 grid of ERA5 reanalysis is the nearest neighbor of radiosonde station; (2) the regular
217 synoptic start time of radiosonde and reanalysis needs to keep exact the same; (3) the
218 pressure coordinate of reanalysis is converted into geometric altitude to match with
219 HVRRS.

220 In addition, the standard deviations of orography (SDOR) and the gravity wave
221 dissipation due to the effects of stress associated with unresolved valleys, hills and
222 mountains ~~and near surface wind speed at 10 m~~ in ERA5 reanalysis are extracted.

223 The relative error between HVRRS-based and ERA5-based quantities is estimated
224 by the ratio of deviations between HVRRS and ERA5 derived quantities to the HVRRS
225 one.

226 2.3 The occurrence frequency of subcritical Ri /KHI and its uncertainty

227 ~~The burst of KHI is characterized by the occurrence of the Ri~~
228 ~~under a critical value which is frequently taken as 1/4, and~~

229 Based on a linear theory, the threshold Ri (Ri_t) defines the threshold where the air

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230 flow changes from stability to turbulence, and it is usually suggested to be 1/4 (Haack
231 et al., 2014). Ri is formulated as:

232 ~~Ri is formulated as:~~

$$233 \quad Ri = \bar{N}^2 / \bar{S}^2 \quad (1)$$

234 where N is the Brunt-Väisälä frequency ($\sqrt{\frac{g}{\theta} \frac{d\theta}{dz}}$), S is the vertical wind shear
235 ($\sqrt{(\frac{dU}{dz})^2 + (\frac{dV}{dz})^2}$), and the overbar denotes a moving average in 200-m step to eliminate
236 the influence of small-scale fluctuations, such as turbulence and small-scale waves. In
237 addition, horizontal winds measured under radiosonde at the scale of a few tens of
238 meters are affected by the chaotic movements of the gondola due to the pendulum and
239 to the balloon's own movements (Ingleby et al., 2022). For 10-m radiosondes, the
240 moving average in a step of 200-m could offset the effect of chaotic movements, at least
241 to some extent. ~~In this case, the matching quantities that include Ri , wind shear, and~~
242 ~~the Brunt-Väisälä frequency between radiosonde and ERA5 profiles are actually~~
243 ~~handled in averaged 200 m intervals. The occurrence frequency of KHI is defined as~~
244 ~~the ratio of $Ri < 1/4$ relative to all Ri calculations at a specified time period or height~~
245 ~~interval.~~

246 ~~In Eq.(1), the length scale of overbar could potentially impact the value of Ri , and~~
247 ~~eventually, the occurrence frequency of KHI. In addition, the critical value of Ri and~~
248 ~~the vertical resolution of archived radiosonde could also cause the change in Ri values.~~
249 The Richardson number calculated from Eq.(1) depends on the vertical resolution of
250 the underlying data, as well as on the averaging interval. Ultimately, this influences the
251 estimated occurrence frequency for subcritical Richardson numbers as a proxy for KHI.
252 ~~We resample the HVRRS data~~We resample the HVRRS data to 50 m and 100 m, and
253 range the length scale of overbar from 100 m to 500 m, to diagnose the uncertainties
254 raised by the length scale of segments and the vertical resolution of dataset. As indicated
255 in Figure 1, under the same length scale of overbar, a sparser vertical grid inevitably
256 leads to a lower occurrence frequency of subcritical Ri KHI. For instance, as the length
257 scale set to 100 m, the occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ at 0–2 km above sea level
258 (a.s.l.s.l.) decreases from 22% when vertical resolution is equal to 10 m to 16% for a

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259 vertical resolution of 50 m. Moreover, a longer length-scale of segment generally yields
 260 a smaller occurrence frequency. For example, as the vertical resolution of radiosonde is
 261 equal to 10 m, the occurrence frequency at 10–15 km decreases from 9% when the
 262 length scale of segment equals 100 m to 1% when it equals 500 m. It is interesting to
 263 note that the occurrence frequency under a vertical resolution of 50 m and a segment
 264 interval of 100 m is a bit larger than that under a vertical resolution of 10 m and a
 265 segment of 200 m, possibly implying the fact that a shorter segment interval could be
 266 expected for a sparser vertical resolution. –

267 2.4 Gravity wave energy

268 The GW energy is extracted based on the broad spectral method, according to Wang
 269 and Geller (2003). In this method, the magnitude of measured zonal wind (u),
 270 meridional wind (v), and temperature (T) consisting of background states (u_0 , v_0 and
 271 T_0) that are determined by applying a second-order polynomial fit (Chen et al., 2018;
 272 Zhang et al., 2022) and perturbations. Therefore, total perturbations are derived as:

$$273 \quad (u', v', T') = (u, v, T) - (u_0, v_0, T_0) \quad (2)$$

274 The perturbations could include measurement noises, KH waves, GWs, and
 275 planetary waves. Only the perturbations with vertical wavelengths of 0.3–6.9 km are
 276 considered as GWs (Wang and Geller, 2003).– The mean vertical wavelength of GWs
 277 is about 2 km (Wang et al., 2005), and therefore, the lowermost threshold of 0.3 km
 278 could have little influence on the GW energy. However, the retrieval of the largest
 279 wavelength is not well determined, which is acknowledged as the radiosonde’s
 280 “observational filter” (Alexander, 1998). By applying this band-pass filter, the average
 281 gravity-wave kinetic energy per unit mass (energy density) and the average potential
 282 energy density can be expressed as:

$$283 \quad E_k = \frac{1}{2} [\overline{u'^2} + \overline{v'^2}] \quad (3)$$

$$284 \quad E_p = \frac{1}{2} \frac{g^2 \overline{T'^2}}{N^2} \quad (4)$$

285 where g is the gravitational constant, $\hat{T}' = T'/\bar{T}$ the normalized perturbation
 286 temperature, and the overbar indicates an averaging over the tropospheric segment,

287 which is chosen as 2–8.9 km for all regions, except the polar region, and it is selected
288 as 2–7.4 km for the polar region (Wang and Geller, 2003).—Eventually, the total GW
289 energy E_t is the sum of E_k and E_p .

290 3 Results and Discussions

291 3.1 Comparisons of wind shear between HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis

292 The variations in vertical shear of horizontal wind speed and the squared Brunt-
293 väisälä frequency entirely determine the Ri magnitude. Figure 2 provides an overview
294 of the spatial distribution of wind shear at heights of 0–2 km ~~a.s.l.a.s.l.~~ and 10–15 km
295 ~~a.s.l.a.s.l.~~ obtained from the HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis. ~~HVRRS-based wind shear~~
296 ~~is taken from Eq.(1), with a vertical resolution of 10-m.,—explicitly representing the~~
297 ~~variations of shear in the planetary boundary layer (PBL) and the upper troposphere,~~
298 ~~respectively.~~ The shear ~~at heights of 0–2 km a.s.l.in the PBL regime~~ estimated by ERA5
299 reanalysis demonstrates a strong spatial variation, and it is largely dependent on
300 underlying terrains and latitudes (Fig.2a). For example, large values ~~in the PBL regime~~
301 can most likely be observed along the coastline, which could be attributed to the
302 prevailing sea-breeze circulation. ~~Large wind shear is common in regions where~~
303 ~~stability changes rapidly (Grasmick and Geerts, 2020).~~ As compared to the HVRRS,
304 these shears are slightly underestimated by ~~5.37 approximately 4 m/s/km.,—mostly~~
305 based on ~~all eontinental~~ sounding measurements (Fig.2b). ~~However, the oceanic shear~~
306 ~~is hard to be quantitatively assessed by a large number of in situ radiosonde stations,~~
307 ~~with this aspect likely being evaluated by the ship-based radiosonde. Over the tropical~~
308 ~~oceans, Savazzi et al. (2022) found the wind bias between EUREC⁴A field campaign~~
309 ~~and the ERA5 reanalysis varies greatly from day to day, attributing to the bias in wind~~
310 ~~forecasting in the ERA5 reanalysis.~~ Nevertheless, a close association between averaged
311 ERA5-reterived shears and HVRRS-determined shears can be noticed in terms of
312 geospatial distribution, with a correlation coefficient of 0.36 (Fig. 2b).

313 ~~It is noteworthy that shears in the ERA5 reanalysis at heights of 10–15 km a.s.l is~~

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314 ~~dramatically underestimated by around 8 m/s/km, especially at middle latitudes,~~
315 ~~compared to the HVRRS. It is noteworthy that shear in the ERA5 reanalysis at heights~~
316 ~~of 10–15 km a.s.l. is significantly underestimated compared to the HVRRS, especially~~
317 ~~at middle latitudes, with a mean absolute error for all stations of about 8 m/s/km (Table~~
318 ~~1).~~ The underestimation could partly be due to the coarse vertical resolution (around
319 300-m) in the ERA5 reanalysis in this height interval. However, the spatial distribution
320 of the ERA5 shear still exhibits a significant positive correlation with the HVRRS shear,
321 with a correlation coefficient of 0.35 (Fig.2d).

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322 ~~Following Houchi et al. (2010),~~ Following Houchi et al. (2010), the monthly shears
323 over seven typical climate zones are separately investigated (Fig. 3), which are defined
324 as follows: polar (70°–90°), mid latitudes (40°–70°), subtropics (20°–40°), and tropics
325 (20°S–20°N). ~~the monthly shears over seven typical climate zones are separately~~
326 ~~investigated, which are defined as follows: Northern Hemisphere/Southern Hemisphere~~
327 ~~polar (70°–90°), Northern Hemisphere/Southern Hemisphere midlatitude (40°–70°),~~
328 ~~Northern Hemisphere/Southern Hemisphere subtropics (20°–40°), and tropics (20°S–~~
329 ~~20°N).~~ Over the polar region in the Northern/Southern Hemisphere, HVRRS-based
330 shears are exceptionally strong in the lower stratosphere compared to those in the
331 troposphere (Fig.3a, g), which could be attributed to the stratospheric polar jet.
332 However, the similar altitude variation can hardly be found in ERA5-based shears that
333 are dramatically underestimated by around 146 m/s/km in the lower stratosphere
334 (Fig.3h, n, also seen in Table 1). The results in midlatitudes reach a similar conclusion
335 (Fig.3b, f, i, m). Over subtropical regions ~~in the Northern/Southern Hemisphere,~~
336 HVRRS-based shears are consistent strong at heights of 16–21 km ~~a.s.l.a.s.l.~~, just above
337 the subtropical jet stream (Fig.3c, e). However, in the ERA5 reanalysis, the region with
338 consistently strong shears can be noticed at approximately 16 km ~~a.s.l.a.s.l.~~ (Fig.3j, l),
339 which is about 3 km lower than that in the HVRRS. ~~One possible reason might be that~~
340 ~~the model fails to resolve the further increasing shear in the lower stratosphere.~~ In the
341 tropics, the signature of quasi-biennial oscillation (QBO) can be identified in the lower
342 stratosphere (Fig.3d, k).

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343 The comparison between HVRRS-based and ERA5-based shears at three typical

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344 regimes is tabulated in Table 1. Overall, the ERA5-based shears are underestimated at
345 almost all investigated heights and over all climate zones, especially in the lower
346 stratosphere. The comparison between HVRRS-based and ERA5-based shears at three
347 typical regimes are tabulated in Table 1, representing the comparison result in the PBL
348 region, the middle and upper troposphere, and the lower stratosphere. These metrics
349 highlight that ERA5-based shears are underestimated by approximately 5 m/s/km, 7.5
350 m/s/km, 10 m/s/km at heights of 0–2 km, 10–15 km, and 20–25 km a.s.l.,
351 respectively, which are roughly consistent with Houchi et al. (2010).

352 By comparison, the ERA5-acquired N^2 averaged from the surface to 30 km a.s.l.
353 is reliably estimated over all climate zones at all heights, with a relative error of around
354 14%, as illustrated in Figure S3. This finding indicates that the ERA5 reanalysis can
355 properly present the static stability of the background atmosphere, but it is not properly
356 coincident with radiosonde in terms of the small-scale variability of dynamical
357 structures. Due to a lack of global measurement of the fine-structure of the upper-air
358 wind, however, the accuracy of ERA5-resolved shears is hard to be globally validated.

359 3.2 Occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ in HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis

360 As a prominent example, the monthly occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ over the
361 Corpus Christi station (27.77° N, -97.5° W) during years from January 2017 to
362 October 2022 is illustrated in Figure 4. As a result, the monthly occurrence rate of
363 $Ri < 1/4$ in the planetary boundary layer (PBL) regime determined from HVRRS is
364 lower than the ERA5-based one, with mean values of around 10.6% and 16.9%,
365 respectively. In the lowermost 2 km, the vertical resolution of ERA5 reanalysis is less
366 than 200 m, and it is less than the moving segment interval in Eq.(1). The high
367 occurrence frequency in the PBL regime could be likely related to the convective
368 activity that leads to a negative or small N^2 . Especially during the daytime, PBL is
369 well mixed due to strong turbulence induced by uprising thermals (Song et al., 2018).
370 In addition, an obvious seasonal cycle of occurrence frequencies is revealed by HVRRS
371 in the middle and upper troposphere and has a maximum in the winter (December–

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372 ~~January-February) and~~ spring ~~season~~ (March-April-May) ~~seasons,~~ which is
373 consistent with the finding in Zhang et al. (2019). In the vicinity of jet streams, the
374 occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ is generally enhanced by large wind shears. ~~H~~However,
375 ~~the ERA5 reanalysis does not provide such a seasonal cycle pattern, however, the ERA5~~
376 ~~reanalysis is hard to provide such a seasonal cycle pattern,~~ and the occurrence frequency
377 of $Ri < 1/4$ ~~it~~ is significantly underestimated by around 8% (Fig.4b), which could be
378 attributed to the underestimation in wind shears. In the lower stratosphere, both the
379 HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis provide a low estimation of occurrence frequencies, with
380 a value of around 1%.

381 Furthermore, on a large spatial scale the occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ retrieved
382 by ERA5 reanalysis is remarkably underestimated in the free atmosphere, as compared
383 to the HVRRS. The annual variation of the occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ over seven
384 climate zones at 10 to 1530 km a.s.l., indicated by HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis is
385 further demonstrated in Figure 5. It is clearly seen that the occurrence frequency of
386 $Ri < 1/4$ provided by ERA5 reanalysis is underestimated in all months, over all climate
387 zones, possibly implying that, in the free atmosphere, the threshold value of 1/4 in Eq.(1)
388 is too small for the ERA5 reanalysis to capture the occurrence of KHI.

389 ~~However, the ERA5 reanalysis data is non-uniformly sampled in altitude. Its~~
390 ~~vertical resolution drops from about 100-m in the boundary layer to about 500-m in the~~
391 ~~lower stratosphere. In contrast, radiosondes have a vertical resolution of 10-m at all~~
392 ~~heights. Therefore, we selected four typical heights and vertically interpolated the~~
393 ~~radiosonde to the same height resolution as ERA5 for comparison. The four height~~
394 ~~intervals are 0.8–1.3 km, 2.2–3.2 km, 6–15 km and 20–21 km a.s.l., as shown in Table~~
395 ~~2. In these height intervals, the vertical resolution of ERA5 is about 100-m, 200-m, 300-~~
396 ~~m and 400-m respectively. Even at the same vertical resolution, ERA5 still seriously~~
397 ~~underestimates the value of $OF(Ri < 1/4)$ at all heights and all climate zones. These~~
398 ~~results indicate that the greatest difficulty in evaluating subcritical Ri with ERA5 is that~~
399 ~~its simulation of wind shears might be seriously underestimated compared with~~
400 ~~radiosonde. As illustrated in Table 3, even accounting for the fact that ERA5 has a~~
401 ~~comparable vertical resolution of radiosonde, wind shears in ERA5 reanalysis are still~~

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402 underestimated by around 51.9%, 50.7%, 44.5%, and 62.5% at 0.8–1.3 km, 2.2–3.2 km,
403 6–15 km and 20–21 km a.s.l., respectively. In order to obtain an occurrence frequency
404 of subcritical Ri from ERA5 reanalysis that is comparable with radiosonde-based
405 $OF(Ri < 1/4)$, the Ri for ERA5 should be set larger than 1/4. For instance, at
406 0.8–1.3 km and 2.2–3.2 km a.s.l., the $Ri = 1$ could be a proper choice for
407 ERA5 reanalysis, rather than 1/4 (Table 2). More generally, $0.5 < Ri < 1.5$ could be more
408 suitable for ERA5 reanalysis, compared to $Ri = 1/4$.

409 Due to the huge change in the vertical resolution of ERA5, it could be difficult to
410 interpolate ERA5 into uniform data vertically with a relatively high resolution.

411 Therefore, the question posed here is, what is the proper threshold value of Ri in
412 predicting the occurrence of KHI when using the ERA5 reanalysis, compared to
413 HVRRS? The occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ indicated by the HVRRS, the ERA5-
414 determined occurrence frequencies produced by $Ri < 0.25$, $Ri < 0.5$, $Ri < 1$, $Ri < 1.5$, and
415 $Ri < 2$ at all heights up to 30 km a.s.l. are demonstrated in Figure 6. It is notable that
416 over all climate zones and in the free atmosphere, occurrence frequencies of $Ri < 0.25$
417 and $Ri < 0.5$ obtained from the ERA5 reanalysis are underestimated, but the
418 frequencies of $Ri < 1.5$ and $Ri < 2$ are generally overestimated. Among others, the
419 occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1$ gives a close estimation both in magnitude and spatial
420 variation compared to HVRRS over all climate zones.

421 Furthermore, the correlation coefficients between HVRRS-determined KHI
422 occurrence frequency and the ERA5-determined frequencies indicated by different
423 threshold values of Ri at height levels of 0 to 30 km are illustrated in Figure 7. It is
424 worth noting that, in the troposphere, the ERA5-based frequencies indicated by $Ri < 1$,
425 $Ri < 1.5$, and $Ri < 2$ are highly positively correlated with those from the HVRRS, with a
426 correlation coefficient of around 0.6 over all climate zones. In the lower stratosphere,
427 however, these coefficients rapidly decline to 0.1, which can be explained by the low
428 occurrence frequency of KHI in this height regime.

429 Combined the findings in Figures 6 and 7, in the free troposphere, we can conclude
430 that the ERA5-determined occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1$ is closest to the frequency of
431 $Ri < 1/4$ based on the HVRRS. In the free atmosphere, KHI is the dominant source for

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432 clear-air turbulence (CAT) that is a well-known hazard to aviation. Therefore, the global
433 characterization of KHI occurrence frequency in the free atmosphere obtained from
434 ERA5 reanalysis could be of importance for understanding the spatial-temporal
435 variation of CAT. In the following sections, the occurrence frequency of ~~KHI~~ subcritical
436 Ri (hereinafter ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ $OF(Ri < Rit)$) is based on $Ri < 1$ in ERA5 reanalysis and $Ri < 1/4$
437 in HVRRS, unless otherwise noted.

438 Finally, it is noteworthy that $OF(Ri < Rit)$ includes the component of $Ri < 0$ that
439 indicates potential for convective instability. However, both ERA5 and HVRRS are
440 difficult to totally avoid $Ri < 0$ when calculating Ri . Therefore, we evaluated the
441 proportion of $Ri < 0$ in all $Ri < Rit$ in the two datasets to evaluate the possible contribution
442 from convection, as shown in Figure 8. For HVRRS, the proportion of $OF(Ri < 0)$ drops
443 sharply from about 40% in the PBL region to about 18% at 5–15 km a.s.l.. Similarly,
444 for ERA5 its proportion drops from about 40% in the lowermost part of the atmosphere
445 to about 2% at 5–16 km a.s.l.. These findings indicate that, in the free atmosphere,
446 $OF(Ri < Rit)$ is mainly composed of $OF(0 < Ri < Rit)$, which implies that local instabilities
447 constitute most of the dynamic instability.

449 3.4 3.3 The ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ $OF(Ri < Rit)$ climatology

450 For a first hint the global distributions of ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ $OF(Ri < Rit)$ provided by the
451 ERA5 reanalysis at 0–2 km ~~a.s.l.~~ a.s.l. and 10–15 km ~~a.s.l.~~ a.s.l. are displayed in Figure
452 98. ~~$OF(Ri < Rit)$~~ $OF(KHI)$ in the PBL region is considerably spatially heterogeneous.
453 Over subtropical oceans in the Northern/Southern Hemisphere, the intense $OF(Ri < Rit)$
454 ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ can be noticed and has a magnitude of around 50% (Fig. 98a). In addition,
455 over the Sahara Desert the ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ $OF(Ri < Rit)$ reaches as high as 65%. Interestingly,
456 the spatial variation in $OF(Ri < Rit)$ ~~–ensampled by years 2017 to 2022 in~~ $OF(KHI)$
457 keeps high consistency with that of planetary boundary layer height (PBLH) over
458 oceans, such as the Pacific Ocean near Japan and the Atlantic Ocean near U.S., as shown
459 in Figure S4. However, at 0–2 km a.s.l., the spatial variation of $OF(0 < Ri < Rit)$ exhibits

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460 a large difference with that of $OF(Ri < Rit)$ in terms of magnitude, as shown in Figure
461 S5. It is around 40% (20%) lower than that of $OF(Ri < Rit)$ over subtropical oceans
462 (Australia and North Africa). Usually, in the PBL regime, a deeper PBLH that
463 represents more vigorous convection activities can predict a higher $OF(KHI)$. These
464 findings suggest that, in the PBL regime, the burst of KHI is likely closely associated
465 with thermal convection due to the heating of the ground. Similarly, at heights of 10–
466 15 km a.s.l., intensive $OF(KHI)$ $OF(0 < Ri < Rit)$ can be viewed over subtropic
467 regions and has a value of around 10% (Fig. 9b), which is likely attributed to upper
468 tropospheric jets.

469 In comparison, the spatial-temporal variability of $OF(KHI)$ $OF(Ri < Rit)$ indicated
470 by HVRRS keeps highly high consistency with that of ERA5 reanalysis over all climate
471 zones and in the free troposphere at all heights up to 30 km, except in the stratosphere
472 of polar region (Figure 10), especially in the free troposphere. Obvious seasonal
473 cycles can be detected by both the HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis over all climate zones,
474 especially over subtropics and midlatitude regions subtropics and midlatitude regions in
475 the troposphere by both the HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis. However, the ERA5-based
476 $OF(KHI)$ $OF(Ri < Rit)$ can only reflect the large scale structure backbone of the cycles,
477 and it is hard to quantify the detailed variation like the HVRRS does. For regions
478 without high resolved wind and temperature measurements, the ERA5 model product
479 could be a good choice to represent the thermodynamic instability of background
480 atmosphere. Although ERA5-based $OF(KHI)$ is consistent with the HVRRS-based one
481 from a global perspective, it is generally underestimated over polar regions (Fig. 9a, g,
482 h, n).

483 Furthermore, the seasonal variation of $OF(Ri < Rit)$ with $Rit=1/4$ for HVRRS and
484 $Rit=1$ for ERA5, for all climate zones is further analyzed in Figure 11. In the
485 midlatitudes and subtropics, the $OF(Ri < Rit)$ exhibits maximum values in the PBL, as
486 well as a local minimum in the middle troposphere and a local maximum at altitudes
487 around 9 km. In the stratosphere the occurrence frequencies decrease to values of the
488 order of 1% (Fig. 11b,c,e,f) the seasonal variation of $OF(KHI)$ over seven climate zones
489 indicated by two datasets is shown in Figure 10. Over midlatitude and subtropics

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490 regions, the $OF(KHI)$ quickly decreases from around 40% in the PBL regime to around
491 6% at around 3 km and then increases to around 8% at around 9 km, and eventually, it
492 decreases to around 2% in the lower stratosphere (Fig.10b,e,e,f). Over tropic regions,
493 a primary peak can be clearly noticed at around 13 km, with a maximum of 12% for the
494 HVRRS and 20% for the ERA5 reanalysis (Fig.110d, k). The seasonality over the
495 tropical region could be related to some large scale flow features like the Summer Asian
496 Monsoon and the tropical easterly jet (Roja Raman et al., 2009; Sunilkumar et al., 2015;
497 Kaluza et al., 2021). Over polar regions, the tropospheric $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ is
498 significantly lower than that over other climate zones, with values ranging from around
499 4% at heights of 2–8 km to 1% in the lower stratosphere (Fig.110a,g).

500 —As well, the latitude-altitude variation of ERA5-retrieved $OF(KHI)$ is clearly
501 notable. In the free atmosphere the highest occurrences can be noticed at height
502 intervals of 8–15 km over tropical zones in all seasons, with magnitudes of around 30%.
503 A poleward-decrease pattern can be clearly detected in all seasons, with values varying
504 from 30% at low latitudes to around 5% at high latitude in the middle and upper
505 troposphere, which is consistent with the report in Zhang et al. (2022).

506 In Table 42, the mean $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ magnitudes over seven climate zones
507 and at three typical altitude regimes are listed. In the PBL At 0–2 km a.s.l., the ERA5-
508 based $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ is about 20% larger than that of the HVRRS-based one. At
509 10–15 km a.s.l. In the middle and upper stratosphere, the ERA5-based
510 $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ is reasonably well estimated, except that it is overestimated by
511 around 5.8% over the tropics region. In addition, ERA5 underestimates
512 $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ by around 0.5% in the lower stratosphere.

513 According to Fig.98a, it seems that low-level continental $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ is
514 dependent on underlying terrains. However, the vertical resolution of ERA5 in the PBL
515 decreases sharply, leading to the fact that the resolution of the PBL data over the region
516 with high elevations can be significantly lower than that of regions with low elevations,
517 which could bring great challenges to the analysis of the impact of topography on low-
518 level $OF(Ri<Rit)$.—Therefore, we investigate the association of low-level HVRRS-
519 determined $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ —with the standard deviation of orography (SDOR).

520 At heights of 1–2 km a.g.l., the underlying terrain with a large SDOR generally
521 corresponds to a high $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$, with a correlation coefficient between
522 $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ and SDOR of 0.24. Then, the coefficient decreases to 0.15 at 3–4
523 km a.g.l. (Fig.124b), and eventually, it equals 0.14 at 5–6 km a.g.l. (Fig.124c). These
524 findings indicate that, complex terrain may locally enhance over mountainous areas, a
525 high low-level $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ would be expected.

526 Moreover, it is quite evident from Fig.98b and Fig.S5 that both the
527 $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ and $OF(0<Ri<Rit)$ are largely enhanced over the tropical
528 ocean associated with the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events. The most
529 of the enhanced $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ can be identified over the Niño 3 region (5° N–
530 5° S, 150° W–90° W), and the time-height cross section of $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ during
531 years of 2000 to 2022 is illustrated in Figure 132. The $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ at height
532 region of 6–13 km are evidently large, with values of around 40%, which is about 20%
533 larger than the climatological mean value (Fig.109j). More specifically,
534 $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ during time periods of La Niña events is obviously stronger than
535 that during the El Niño periods. The identification of ENSO events is based on Ren et
536 al. (2018), Li et al. (2022), and Lv et al. (2022). It is also worth recalling here that the
537 wind shear does not exhibit such an anomaly over the Niño 3 region (Fig.2c), implying
538 that the $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ anomaly could likely be attributed to the ENSO-related
539 tropical convective heating in the upper troposphere, leading to a low Brunt-Väisälä
540 frequency.

541 3.4 The dynamical environment of $OF(Ri<Rit)$ in the free troposphere

542 In the PBL, the raised KHI could be attributed to the interaction between complex
543 terrain and low-level wind and thermal convection. While in the free troposphere
544 atmosphere—where the convection activity is generally weak, KHI is preferentially
545 generated from strong wind shear, which may be closely associated with mean flows
546 and wave activities.

547 We first evaluate the association of low-level $OF(KHI)$ with near-surface wind

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548 speed for the HVRRS station with a SDOR greater than 50 (Figure 13). It is probably
549 not surprising that the $OF(KHI)$ is positively correlated with near surface wind speed
550 at both heights of 1–2 km and 3–4 km a.g.l., with correlation coefficients of 0.09 and
551 0.04, respectively. These low coefficients could be attributed to too large samples.
552 Therefore, we infer that the interaction between near surface winds and complex
553 terrains could increase the magnitude of low level $OF(KHI)$.

554 —The propagation of GW could raise strong wind shear, and therefore generate KHI.
555 Thereby, we investigate the joint distribution of $OF(KHI)OF(Ri<Rit)$ with tropospheric
556 GW total energy and wind shear (Figure 14). The latitudinal variation of GW total
557 energy exhibits a double-peak structure, with two peaks at around 30° in the
558 Northern/Southern Hemisphere (Fig.14a). The joint distribution of $OF(Ri<Rit)$ with
559 GW energy and wind shear indicates that large $OF(Ri<Rit)$ (for instance, larger than
560 10%) generally corresponds to GW energy larger than 10 J/kg or wind shear exceeds
561 14 m/s/km (Fig. 14b). Also, $OF(0<Ri<Rit)$ exhibits a similar distribution (Figure S6).
562 Overall, $OF(Ri<Rit)$ obviously increases with GW total energy (Figure S9a), possibly
563 implying that the propagation of GWs could enhance wind shear and therefore, the burst
564 of KHI. Overall, large $OF(KHI)$ always corresponds to strong GW activities and large
565 wind shears, likely indicating that GW activity is crucial for the occurrence of KHI.

566 In addition, the interaction between low-level wind and mountain barrier could be
567 a source of orographic GWs (Zhang et al., 2022). We take orographic GW dissipation
568 in ERA5 reanalysis, which is the accumulated conversion of kinetic energy in the mean
569 flow into heat over the whole atmospheric column, as an indicator of the strength of
570 orographic GWs. It is interesting to note that monthly averaged orographic GW
571 dissipation and monthly ERA5-determined $OF(KHI)$, $OF(Ri<Rit)$ —at heights from
572 ground up to 30 km demonstrates a close association (Figure S75). For instance, in the
573 middle troposphere, they are positively associated over mountainous areas such as the
574 Rocky Mountains and the Alps Mountain, with correlation coefficients of around 0.5.
575 These findings also suggest that the propagation of orographic GWs could be a potential
576 source for KHI, during months with strong unresolved gravity wave activity, which
577 then modify the flow and stability parameters of the resolved flow, and result in an

578 ~~enhanced $OF(Ri < Ri_t)$.~~
579 At jet heights (10–15 km a.g.l.), a large shear ~~can be~~ easily induced by strong
580 wind speed. Figure 15 demonstrates the joint distribution of ~~$OF(KHI)OF(Ri < Ri_t)$~~ with
581 wind speed and wind shear. Similarly, large ~~$OF(KHI)OF(Ri < Ri_t) (> 10\%)$~~ can be easily
582 found when the wind speed exceeds ~~250 m/s and wind shear is larger than 20 m/s/km.~~
583 ~~In addition, $OF(0 < Ri < Ri_t)$ can draw a similar conclusion (Figure S8). In the middle and~~
584 ~~upper troposphere, $OF(Ri < Ri_t)$ almost linearly increases with wind speed (Figure~~
585 ~~S9b). However, it is clear that large wind speed is not a necessary condition for KHI.~~
586 ~~The occurrence of KHI favors the mean flow with a speed exceeding 20 m/s, but it does~~
587 ~~not ensure to happen for an extremely large wind speed.~~

588
589 In a short conclusion, in the ~~free~~ troposphere, the occurrence of KHI ~~would~~ favors
590 the dynamical environment with strong orographic or non-orographic GW activities
591 and relatively large mean flow (~~around >250 m/s~~).

592 4 Conclusion and remarks

593 The occurrence of KHI is potential crucial for many implications, such as aircraft
594 ~~safety and mass transfer, and climate change, just name a few,~~ but it is very hard to be
595 globally understood due to its fine structure. ~~The subcritical Richardson number is~~
596 ~~commonly used as an indictor for KHI. This analysis uses high resolution model~~
597 ~~products and radiosondes to globally characterize the distribution of KHI occurrence~~
598 ~~frequency from the years 2017 to 2022. This study uses the ERA5 as the latest~~
599 ~~reanalysis product from the ECMWF as well as a comprehensive data set of HVRRS~~
600 ~~radiosonde soundings to globally characterize the distribution of low Richardson~~
601 ~~numbers as a proxy for the occurrence of KHI, for the years 2017 to 2022.~~

602 ~~Vertical w~~Wind shears are considerably underestimated at almost all heights and
603 over all climate zones by the ERA5 reanalysis, compared to the HVRRS. It is
604 noteworthy that ~~vertical wind shear shears~~ in the ERA5 reanalysis at heights of 10–15
605 km ~~a.s.l.s.l.~~ is dramatically underestimated by around 8 m/s/km, especially at middle

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606 latitudes. However, the spatial distribution of the ERA5 shear exhibits a statistically
607 significant positive correlation with the HVRRS shear. ~~The underestimation therefore~~
608 ~~influences the performance of KHI analysis.~~ As a result, the ERA5-determined
609 occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ ~~in the free troposphere~~ is significantly underestimated.
610 In addition, it is ~~poorly-weak~~ correlated with HVRRS-determined ones at ~~all-most~~
611 heights and over ~~all-most~~ climate zones. _

612 ~~However, the vertical resolution of ERA5 reanalysis sharply decreases with altitude,~~
613 ~~which is not comparable with HVRRS. Thus, to match with ERA5 reanalysis at~~
614 ~~specified height intervals, the HVRRS was vertically interpolated with resolutions~~
615 ~~spanning from 100-m to 400-m. Even at a comparable resolution, vertical wind shear~~
616 ~~is underestimated by around 50%, leading to a considerable underestimation in~~
617 ~~$OF(Ri < 1/4)$, compared to radiosondes.~~

618
619 Interestingly, the ERA5-determined occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1$ is ~~highly~~
620 ~~generally~~ consistent with the frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ obtained from HVRRS, in terms of
621 magnitude and temporal variation. Rather than $Ri < 1/4$, ~~we argue that~~ the threshold
622 value of $Ri < 1$ could be more proper when using ERA5 reanalysis for KHI study,
623 especially in the middle and upper troposphere over midlatitude and subtropic regions
624 in the Northern/Southern Hemisphere, ~~where a high consistency between HVRRS and~~
625 ~~ERA5 has been found in terms of $OF(Ri < Rit)$ magnitude.~~ ~~In other words, under a~~
626 ~~similar occurrence frequency, the identification of vertical segments with $Ri < 1$ in ERA5~~
627 ~~is equitable with identification of vertical segments with $Ri < 1/4$ using HVRRS.~~

628
629 ~~The climatology of $OF(KHI)$ exhibits significant seasonal cycles over polar,~~
630 ~~midlatitude, and subtropic regions.~~ ~~The climatology of $OF(Ri < Rit)$ exhibits significant~~
631 ~~seasonal cycles over all latitudes.~~ A poleward decrease can be clearly identified in the
632 middle and upper troposphere. In addition, ~~over mountainous area, the low-level~~
633 ~~$OF(KHI)$ complex terrain may locally enhance low-level $OF(Ri < Rit)$.~~ ~~is positively~~
634 ~~sensitive to the standard deviations of orography.~~ Moreover, it is immediately obvious
635 that the ~~both $OF(Ri < Rit)$ and $OF(0 < Ri < Rit)$~~ ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ in the middle and upper

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636 troposphere of the Niño 3 region is largely enhanced, probably by the tropical
637 convective heating.

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639 Moreover, both $OF(Ri < Rit)$ and $OF(0 < Ri < Rit)$ exhibit close relationship with GW
640 activities and background mean flow. For instance, large $OF(Ri < Rit)$ (>10%) favors
641 GW energy larger than 10 J/kg or mean flow stronger than 25 m/s. Over complex
642 terrains, the orographic GW breaking could locally enhance $OF(Ri < Rit)$. Over the
643 mountainous area, the low-level $OF(KHI)$ favors large near-surface wind speed. In the
644 free troposphere, the $OF(KHI)$ favors intensive orographic or non-orographic GW
645 activities and relatively large mean flow (>20 m/s).

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646 ~~Those findings could be valuable for pointing out the performance of ERA5~~
647 ~~reanalysis in terms of representing KHI occurrence frequency, as compared to a near-~~
648 ~~global high-resolution radiosonde measurement. Those findings are valuable for~~
649 ~~pointing out the performance of the ERA5 reanalysis in terms of resolving low~~
650 ~~Richardson numbers as a proxy for KHI, in comparison with a near-global high-~~
651 ~~resolution radiosonde measurement.~~ In addition, the spatial-temporal variability of
652 ~~$OF(KHI)$~~ ~~$OF(Ri < Rit)$~~ over different climate zones from near-ground up to 30 km is
653 quantitatively characterized by ERA5 and HVRRS, which could provide new insights
654 that increase our understanding of the fine structure of upper air.

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670

671 **Competing interests**

672 The contact author has declared that neither they nor their co-authors have any
673 competing interests

674

675 **Data availability**

676 The dataset can be accessed at ECMWF (2022).

677

678 **Author contributions**

679 JZ conceptualized this study. JS carried out the analysis with comments from other co-
680 authors. JZ wrote the original manuscript. WW, SZ, TY, WD provided useful
681 suggestions for the study. All authors contributed to the improvement of paper.

682

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Table 1. Comparisons of mean wind shears between HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis at heights of 0–2 km a.s.l.s.l. (a), 10–15 km a.s.l.s.l. (b), and 20–25 km a.s.l.s.l. (c).

(a) Wind shear at 0–2 km <u>a.s.l.s.l.</u> (m/s/km)							
	Polar	Midlatitude	Subtropics	Tropics	Subtropics	Midlatitude	Polar
	(NH)	(NH)	(NH)		(SH)	(SH)	(SH)
HVRRS	12.67	12.94	12.30	10.57	13.03	14.16	15.01
ERA5	7.45	7.68	7.78	5.4	8.44	9.67	8.42
(b) Wind shear at 10–15 km <u>a.s.l.s.l.</u> (m/s/km)							
HVRRS	13.23	14.71	13.02	9.40	13.28	14.64	13.00
ERA5	4.22	6.13	6.82	5.86	6.86	5.20	3.42
(c) Wind shear at 20–25 km <u>a.s.l.s.l.</u> (m/s/km)							
HVRRS	15.12	15.74	15.41	16.76	16.69	16.12	17.15
ERA5	2.87	3.52	4.06	5.27	3.99	3.36	2.92

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Table 2. The occurrence rate of low Ri at 0.8–1.3 km a.s.l. (a), 2.2–3.2 km a.s.l. (b), 6–15 km a.s.l. (c), and 20–21 km a.s.l. (d). The critical Ri (R_{it}) is 1/4 for radiosonde, and it increases from 1/4 to 2 for ERA5 reanalysis. Note that HVRRS data were vertically resampled to 100-m, 200-m, 300-m, and 400-m at these four height intervals to match with the ERA5 reanalysis. In addition, the moving average number in Eq.(1) is 0. RS stands for radiosonde.

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(a) Frequency of low R_i at 0.8–1.3 km a.s.l. (%) / Vertical resolution of RS is 100-m

	<u>Polar</u>	<u>Midlatitude</u>	<u>Subtropics</u>	<u>Tropics</u>	<u>Subtropics</u>	<u>Midlatitude</u>	<u>Polar</u>
	<u>(NH)</u>	<u>(NH)</u>	<u>(NH)</u>		<u>(SH)</u>	<u>(SH)</u>	<u>(SH)</u>
<u>RS, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>15.20</u>	<u>24.25</u>	<u>22.86</u>	<u>13.92</u>	<u>22.09</u>	<u>22.43</u>	<u>20.77</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>2.55</u>	<u>8.88</u>	<u>6.37</u>	<u>2.19</u>	<u>6.80</u>	<u>4.47</u>	<u>2.94</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=0.5$</u>	<u>3.77</u>	<u>12.06</u>	<u>9.63</u>	<u>3.65</u>	<u>11.91</u>	<u>7.95</u>	<u>7.22</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1$</u>	<u>8.54</u>	<u>21.22</u>	<u>20.48</u>	<u>8.27</u>	<u>25.45</u>	<u>18.21</u>	<u>15.78</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1.5$</u>	<u>14.18</u>	<u>29.62</u>	<u>30.44</u>	<u>12.88</u>	<u>36.07</u>	<u>27.97</u>	<u>23.22</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=2$</u>	<u>19.44</u>	<u>36.58</u>	<u>38.32</u>	<u>17.20</u>	<u>43.72</u>	<u>36.00</u>	<u>29.68</u>

(b) Frequency of low R_i at 2.2–3.2 km a.s.l. (%) / Vertical resolution of RS is 200-m

<u>RS, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>3.04</u>	<u>6.22</u>	<u>9.00</u>	<u>5.67</u>	<u>9.71</u>	<u>4.29</u>	<u>3.98</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>0.24</u>	<u>0.60</u>	<u>1.00</u>	<u>1.30</u>	<u>2.26</u>	<u>0.26</u>	<u>0.1</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=0.5$</u>	<u>0.37</u>	<u>1.03</u>	<u>1.96</u>	<u>2.10</u>	<u>4.22</u>	<u>0.50</u>	<u>0.18</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1$</u>	<u>1.16</u>	<u>3.26</u>	<u>6.35</u>	<u>5.20</u>	<u>10.00</u>	<u>2.20</u>	<u>0.91</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1.5$</u>	<u>2.77</u>	<u>6.75</u>	<u>12.20</u>	<u>9.00</u>	<u>16.31</u>	<u>5.60</u>	<u>2.68</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=2$</u>	<u>5.02</u>	<u>10.85</u>	<u>18.05</u>	<u>13.03</u>	<u>22.45</u>	<u>9.84</u>	<u>5.10</u>

(c) Frequency of low R_i at 6–15 km a.s.l. (%) / Vertical resolution of RS is 300-m

<u>RS, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>0.76</u>	<u>2.24</u>	<u>3.91</u>	<u>5.98</u>	<u>4.46</u>	<u>1.98</u>	<u>0.59</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>0.10</u>	<u>0.38</u>	<u>0.54</u>	<u>1.46</u>	<u>0.56</u>	<u>0.24</u>	<u>0.05</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=0.5$</u>	<u>0.32</u>	<u>1.16</u>	<u>1.95</u>	<u>4.36</u>	<u>2.10</u>	<u>0.93</u>	<u>0.15</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1$</u>	<u>1.37</u>	<u>4.33</u>	<u>7.72</u>	<u>13.14</u>	<u>8.89</u>	<u>3.51</u>	<u>0.61</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1.5$</u>	<u>2.93</u>	<u>8.31</u>	<u>14.54</u>	<u>21.78</u>	<u>17.05</u>	<u>6.76</u>	<u>1.38</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=2$</u>	<u>4.70</u>	<u>12.35</u>	<u>20.91</u>	<u>29.28</u>	<u>24.55</u>	<u>10.02</u>	<u>2.32</u>

(d) Frequency of low R_i at 20–21 km a.s.l. (%) / Vertical resolution of RS is 400-m

<u>RS, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>0.03</u>	<u>0.07</u>	<u>0.13</u>	<u>0.04</u>	<u>0.04</u>	<u>0.10</u>	<u>0.07</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1/4$</u>	<u>0.01</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>0.01</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>0.03</u>	<u>0.04</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=0.5$</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>0.03</u>	<u>0.01</u>	<u>0.02</u>	<u>0.03</u>	<u>0.04</u>	<u>0.04</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1$</u>	<u>0.03</u>	<u>0.05</u>	<u>0.04</u>	<u>0.05</u>	<u>0.05</u>	<u>0.08</u>	<u>0.04</u>
<u>ERA5, $R_{it}=1.5$</u>	<u>0.04</u>	<u>0.11</u>	<u>0.13</u>	<u>0.19</u>	<u>0.09</u>	<u>0.17</u>	<u>0.04</u>

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	<u>ERAS, Rit=2</u>	<u>0.05</u>	<u>0.21</u>	<u>0.32</u>	<u>0.55</u>	<u>0.18</u>	<u>0.30</u>	<u>0.05</u>
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965	<u>Table 3. Vertical wind shears at 0.8–1.3 km a.s.l. (a), 2.2–3.2 km a.s.l. (b), 6–15 km*</u>							

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966 a.s.l. (c), and 20–21 km a.s.l. (d). Note that HVRRS data was vertically resampled to
 967 100-m, 200-m, 300-m, and 400-m at these four height intervals to match with the ERA5
 968 reanalysis. RS stands for radiosonde.

(a) Wind shear at 0.8–1.3 km a.s.l. (m/s/km) / Vertical resolution of RS is 100-m

	<u>Polar</u>	<u>Midlatitude</u>	<u>Subtropics</u>	<u>Tropics</u>	<u>Subtropics</u>	<u>Midlatitude</u>	<u>Polar</u>
	<u>(NH)</u>	<u>(NH)</u>	<u>(NH)</u>		<u>(SH)</u>	<u>(SH)</u>	<u>(SH)</u>
<u>RS</u>	<u>12.50</u>	<u>13.63</u>	<u>11.80</u>	<u>9.83</u>	<u>13.54</u>	<u>13.06</u>	<u>13.85</u>
<u>ERA5</u>	<u>5.43</u>	<u>5.92</u>	<u>6.47</u>	<u>4.83</u>	<u>7.02</u>	<u>6.71</u>	<u>6.05</u>

(b) Wind shear at 2.2–3.2 km a.s.l. (m/s/km) / Vertical resolution of RS is 200-m

<u>RS</u>	<u>8.31</u>	<u>9.09</u>	<u>9.24</u>	<u>9.08</u>	<u>9.45</u>	<u>9.39</u>	<u>10.00</u>
<u>ERA5</u>	<u>3.72</u>	<u>4.47</u>	<u>5.19</u>	<u>4.65</u>	<u>5.41</u>	<u>4.71</u>	<u>4.19</u>

(c) Wind shear at 6–15 km a.s.l. (m/s/km) / Vertical resolution of RS is 300-m

<u>RS</u>	<u>8.30</u>	<u>9.50</u>	<u>9.41</u>	<u>7.72</u>	<u>9.80</u>	<u>9.38</u>	<u>8.00</u>
<u>ERA5</u>	<u>4.00</u>	<u>5.22</u>	<u>5.84</u>	<u>5.21</u>	<u>6.14</u>	<u>4.76</u>	<u>3.37</u>

(d) Wind shear at 20–21 km a.s.l. (m/s/km) / Vertical resolution of RS is 400-m

<u>RS</u>	<u>9.02</u>	<u>10.40</u>	<u>11.67</u>	<u>12.56</u>	<u>12.14</u>	<u>10.48</u>	<u>9.80</u>
<u>ERA5</u>	<u>3.00</u>	<u>3.83</u>	<u>4.79</u>	<u>5.59</u>	<u>4.72</u>	<u>3.63</u>	<u>2.98</u>

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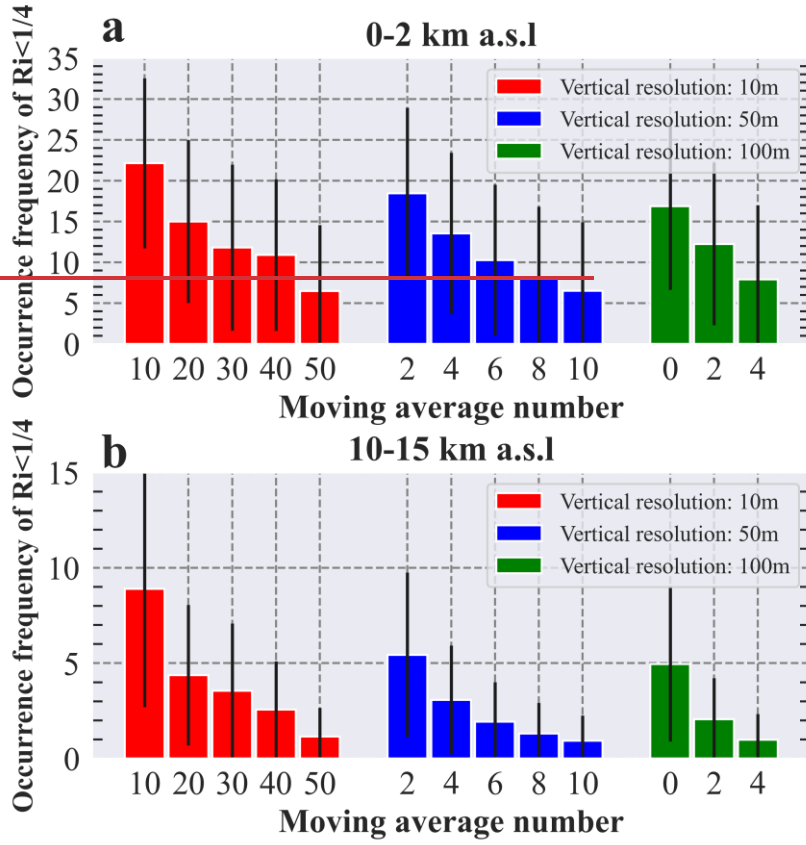
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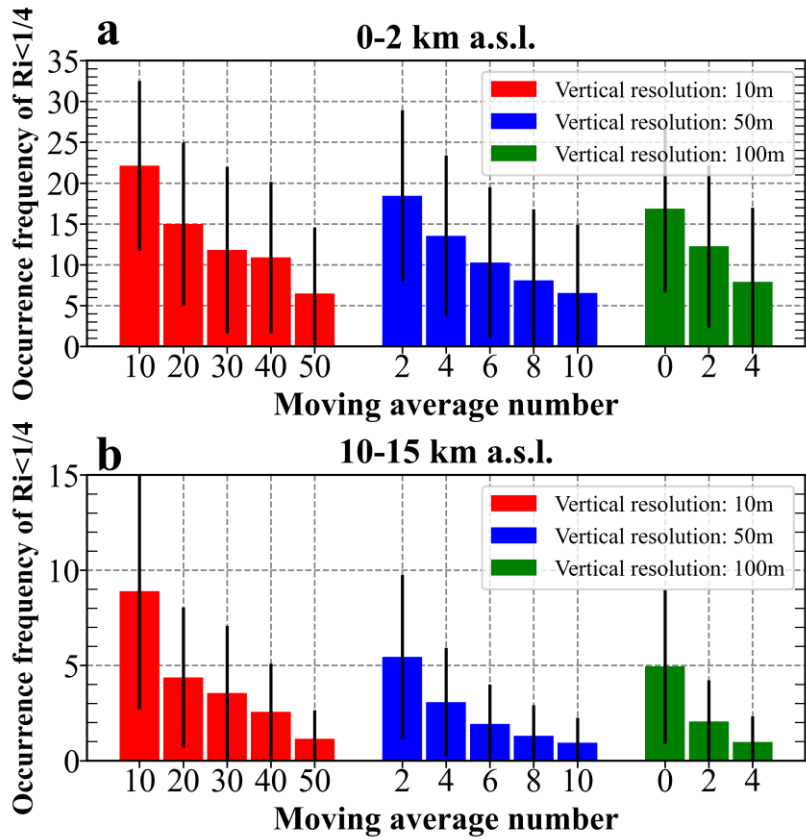
981 **Table 42.** Similar to Tab.1 but for the occurrence frequency of $Ri < Ri_{KHH}$. Note that
 982 Ri the occurrence of KHH is indicated by $Ri < 1/4$ in radiosonde, but it is identified with
 983 $Ri < 1$ in ERA5 reanalysis.

(a) $OF(KHH)OF(Ri < Ri)$ at 0–2 km a.s.l.s.l. (%)							
	Polar (NH)	Midlatitude (NH)	Subtropics (NH)	Tropics	Subtropics (SH)	Midlatitude (SH)	Polar (SH)
HVRRS	9.56	16.10	15.78	13.08	16.98	15.38	13.97
ERA5	26.91	33.85	35.70	37.27	40.56	40.46	26.55
(b) $OF(KHH)OF(Ri < Ri)$ at 10–15 km a.s.l.s.l. (%)							
HVRRS	0.53	2.22	5.44	11.22	6.17	1.55	0.62
ERA5	0.44	2.62	6.86	17.03	7.15	1.67	0.28
(c) $OF(KHH)OF(Ri < Ri)$ at 20–25 km a.s.l.s.l. (%)							
HVRRS	0.36	0.49	0.43	0.5	0.40	0.67	1.35
ERA5	0.06	0.07	0.04	0.1	0.06	0.06	0.04

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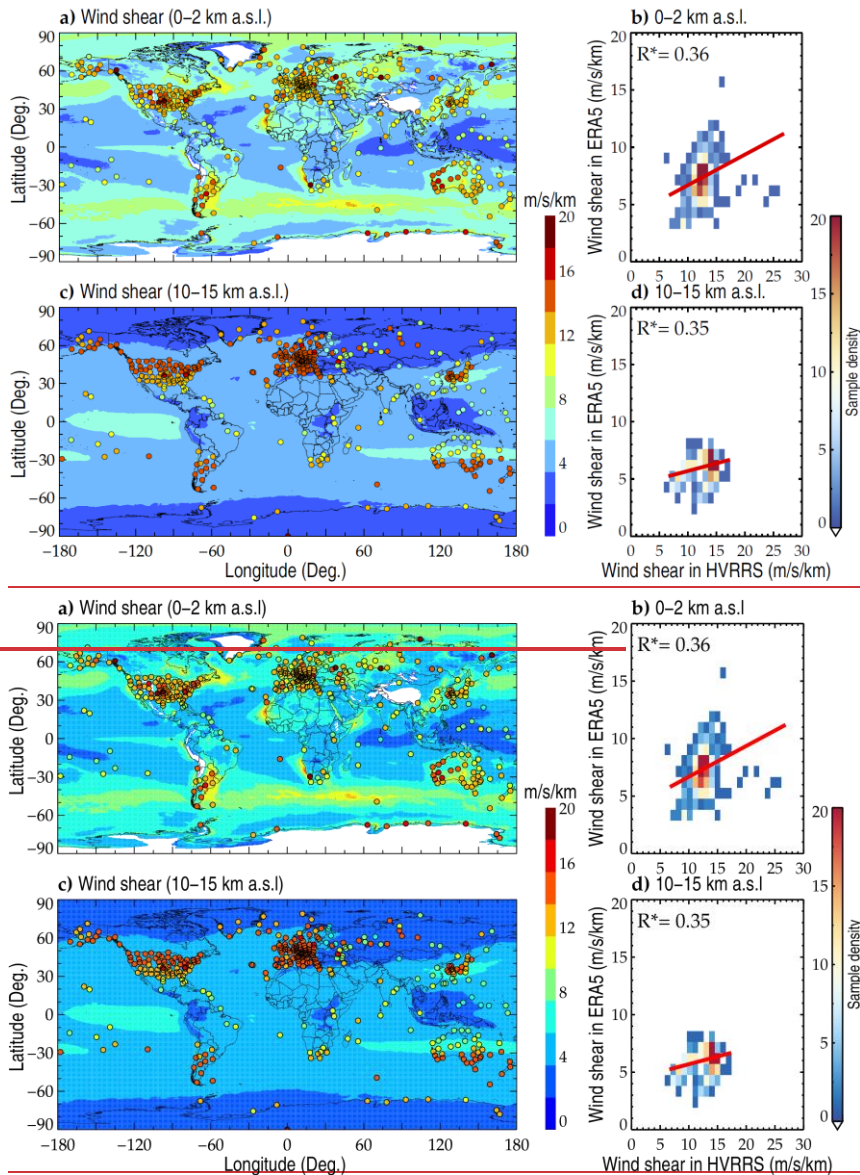
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Figure 1. The averaged occurrence frequencies of $Ri < 1/4$ at heights of 0–2 km [a.s.l.](#) (a) and 10–15 km [a.s.l.](#) (b), with vertical resolutions ranging 10-m to 100-m and moving point numbers increasing from 0 to 50. The error bars correspond to the standard deviation. The metrics are counted based on all radiosonde profiles during years 2017–2022.



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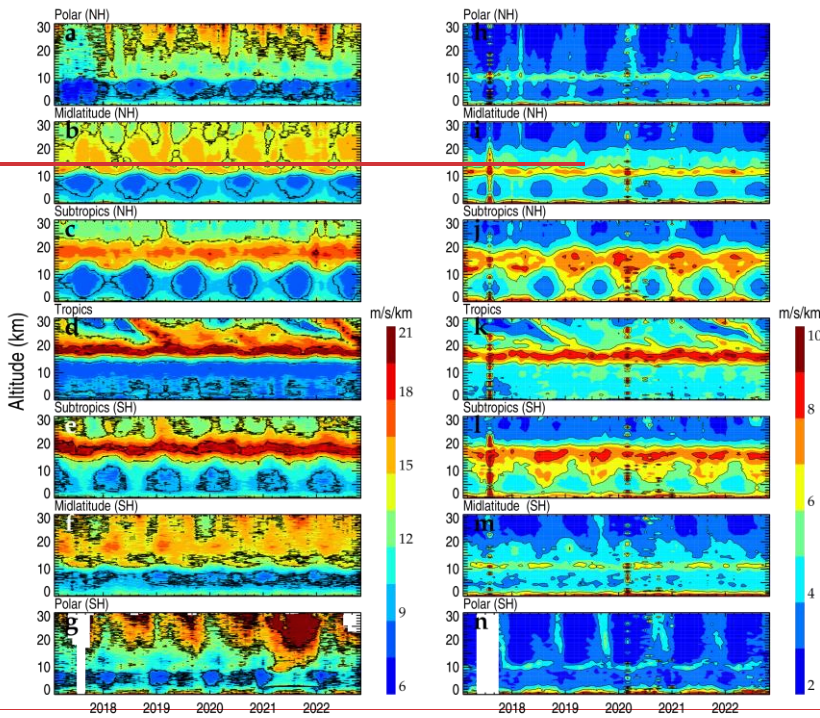
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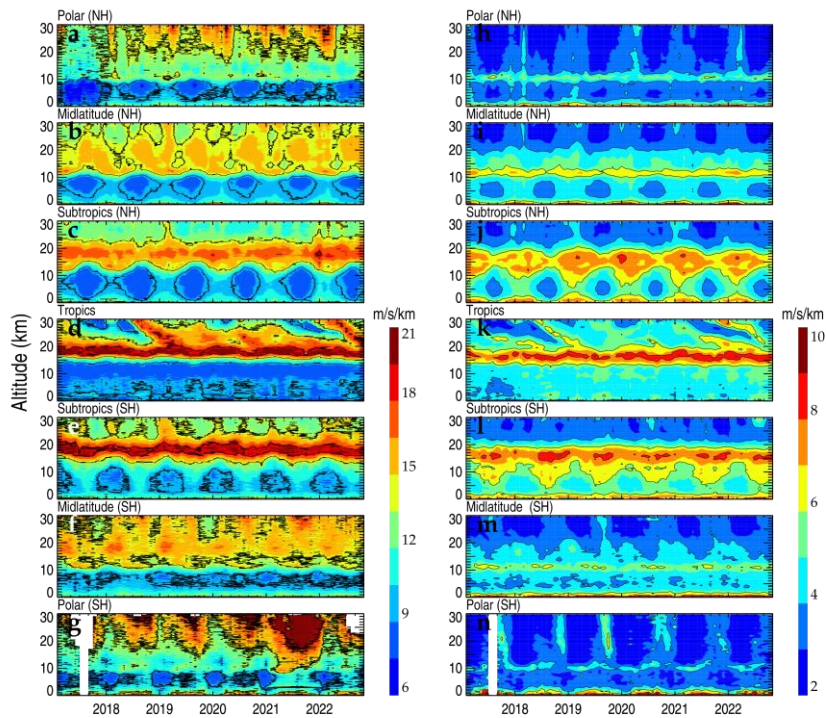
Figure 2. The spatial distribution of mean wind shear in ERA5 reanalysis at heights of 0–2 km a.s.l. (a) and 10–15 km a.s.l. (c), where the areas with a near-surface pressure lower than 800 hPa are masked with white. The overlaid colored circles represent the result in HVRRS at the same height levels. Each data point represents a vertically averaged value of the wind shear at one radiosonde station during the whole

1014 study period. Density plots (b, d) show the correlation between wind shears in HVRRS
 1015 and ERA5 reanalysis. The ERA5 derived wind shears are spatially and temporally
 1016 collocated with those of HVRRS. In addition, the red lines represent a least-squared
 1017 linear regression, and the star superscripts indicate that values are statistically
 1018 significant ($p < 0.05$).

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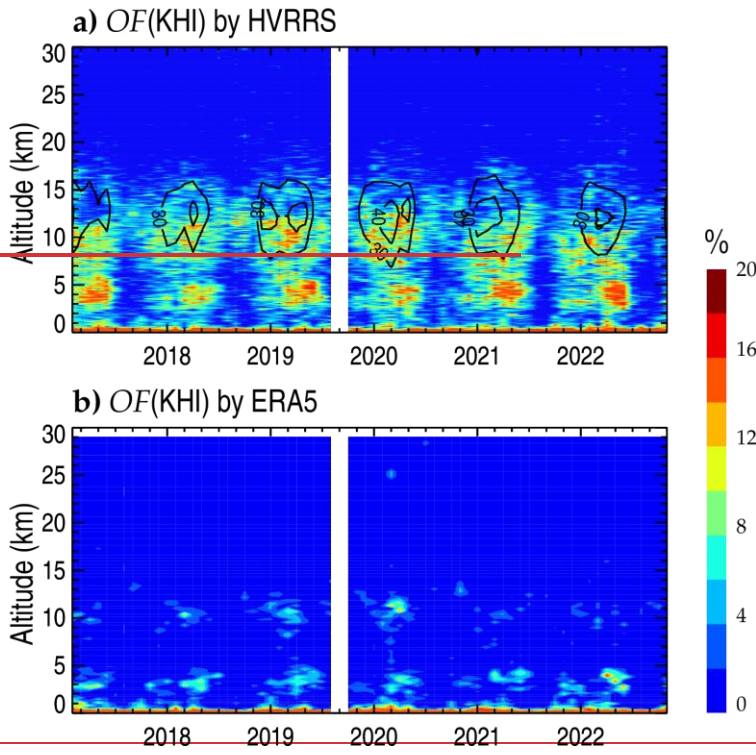


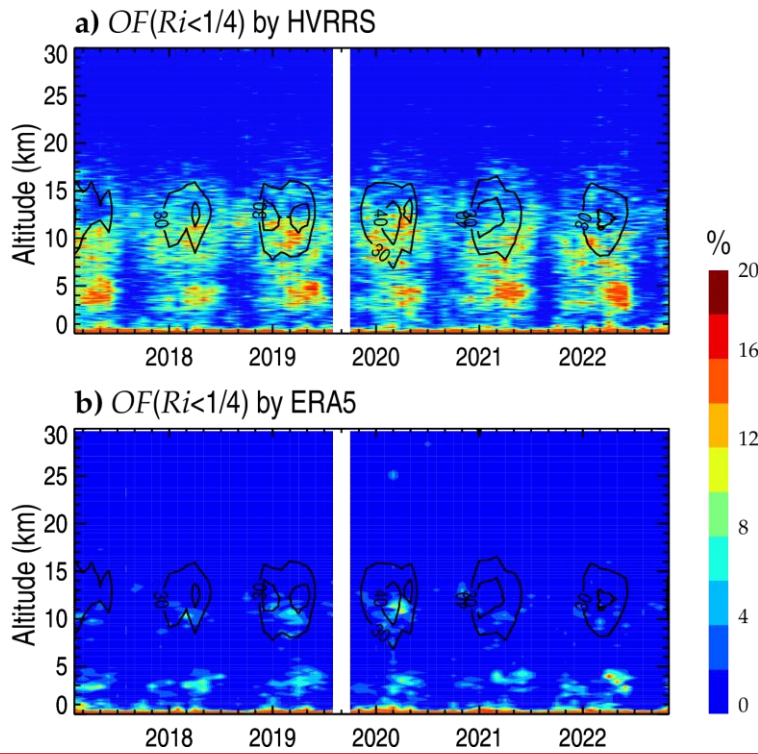
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1022 **Figure 3.** Monthly mean wind shears during years 2017–2022 in HVRRS (a–g) and
 1023 ERA5 reanalysis (h–n) at different climate zones. The ERA5 derived wind shears are
 1024 spatially and temporally collocated with those of HVRRS. NH=Northern Hemisphere;
 1025 SH=Southern Hemisphere.

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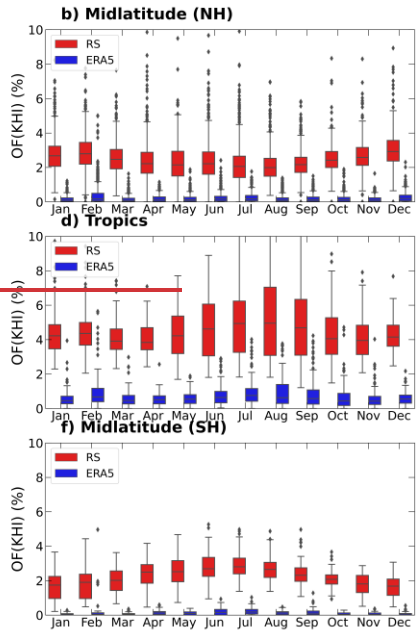
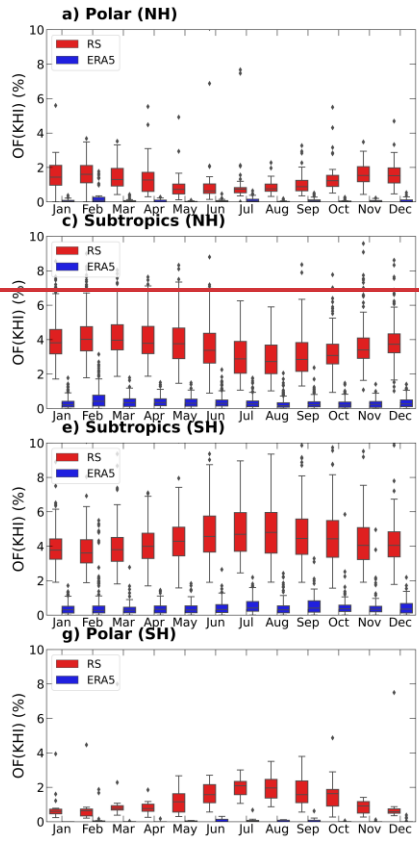
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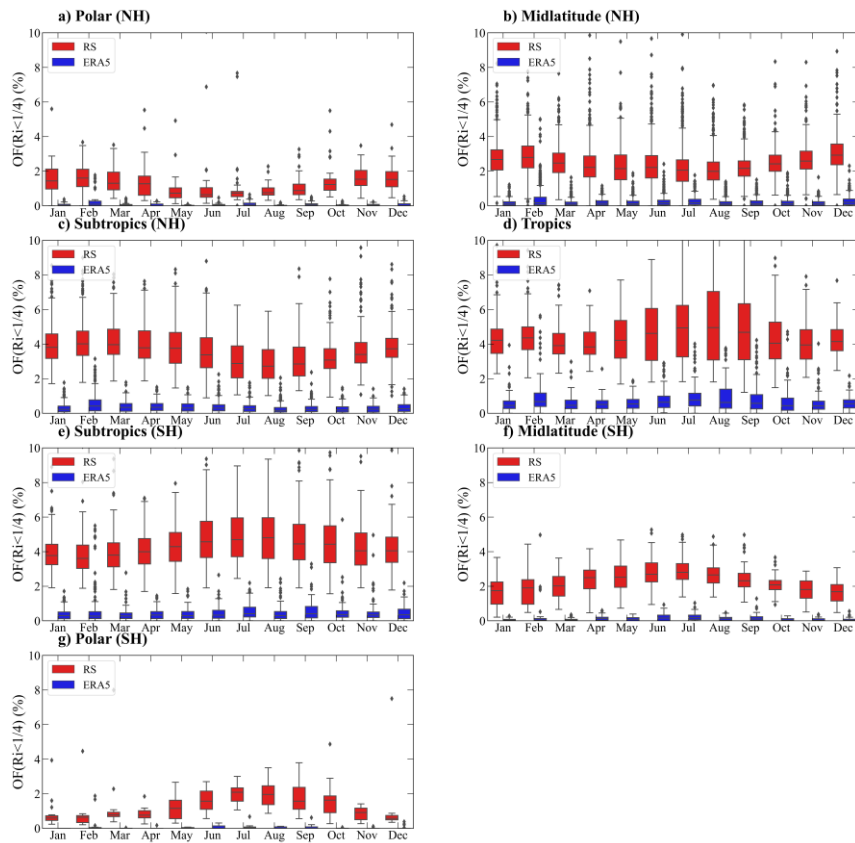


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1029 **Figure 4.** The monthly occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ at Corpus Christi station (27.77°
 1030 N, -97.5° W) in HVRRS (a) and ERA5 reanalysis (b). Note that the contour curves in
 1031 (a) and (b) concern the mean horizontal wind speed, and that the ERA5 derived
 1032 quantities are spatially and temporally collocated with those of HVRRS.



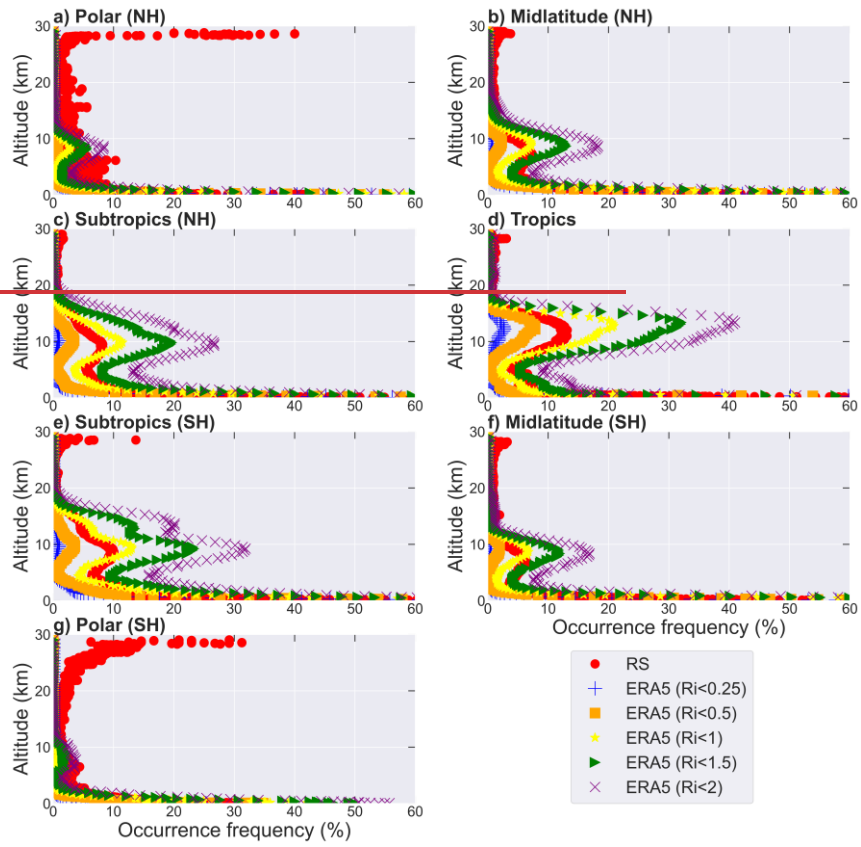
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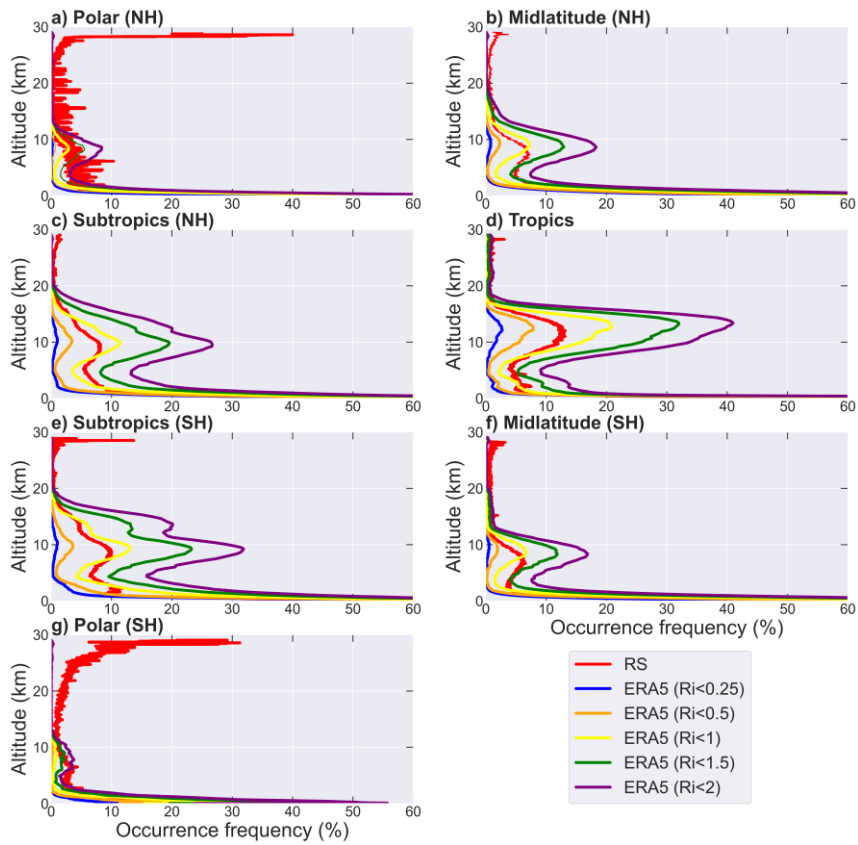
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1035 **Figure 5.** The annual cycles of the occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ in different climate
 1036 zones at 10–15 km a.s.l.. The red and blue boxes represent the frequencies in
 1037 HVRRS and ERA5 reanalysis, respectively. The ERA5 derived Ri is spatially and
 1038 temporally collocated with that of HVRRS. NH, Northern Hemisphere; SH, Southern
 1039 Hemisphere.

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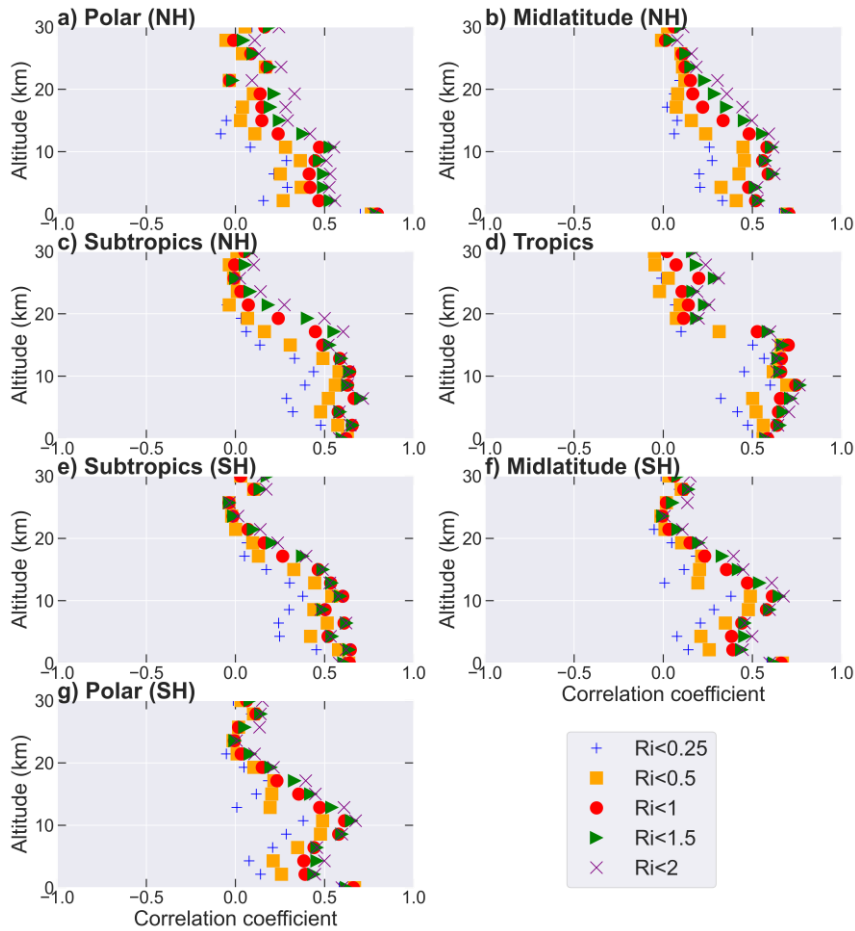


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1043 **Figure 6.** The altitude variation of the occurrence frequency of Ri below certain
 1044 thresholds (0.25, 0.5, 1, 1.5, and 2) in ERA5 reanalysis in various climate zones. The
 1045 ERA5 derived Ri is spatially and temporally collocated with that of HVRRS. The
 1046 occurrences of $Ri < 1/4$ in HVRRS are overlapped with red lines marked with red dots.

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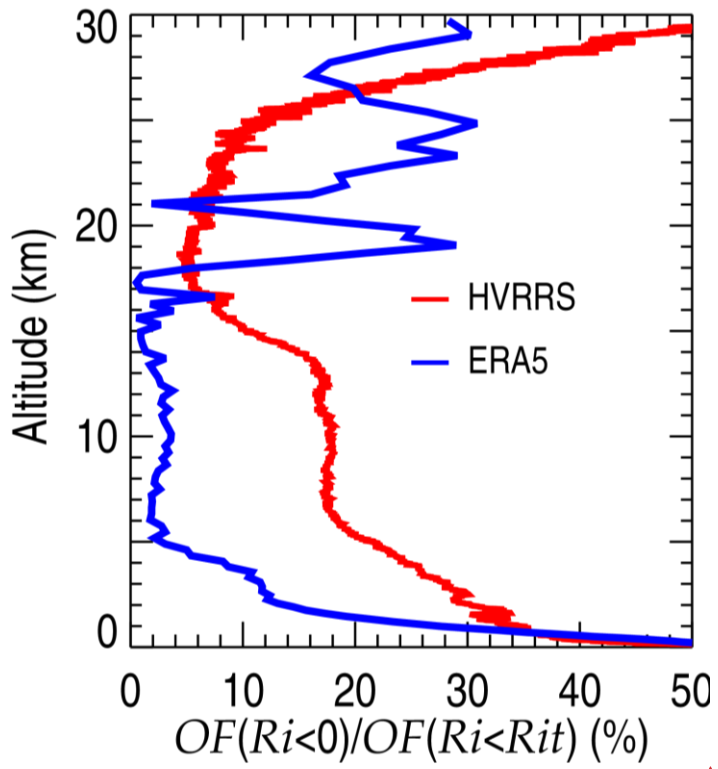
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Figure 7. The correlation coefficients between monthly averaged KHI -occurrence frequency of $Ri < 1/4$ in the HVRRS and the monthly occurrence frequency of Ri below certain thresholds (0.25, 0.5, 1, 1.5, and 2) in ERA5 reanalysis. The ERA5 derived Ri is spatially and temporally collocated with that of HVRRS. The coefficients in various climate zones are estimated in an increment of 2 km.



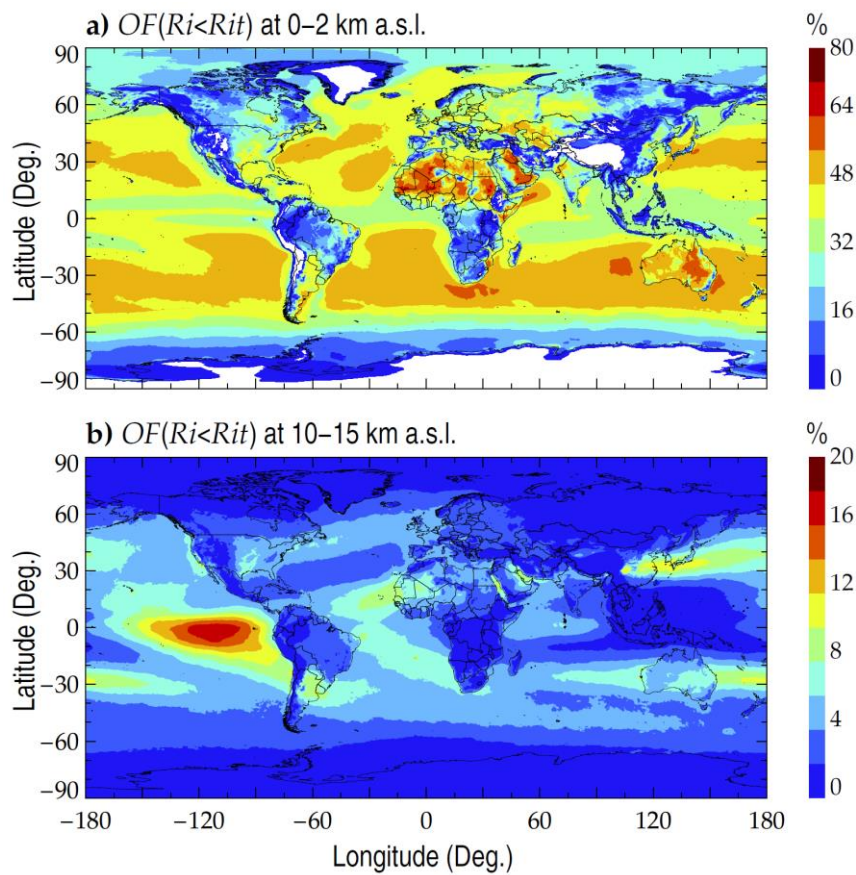
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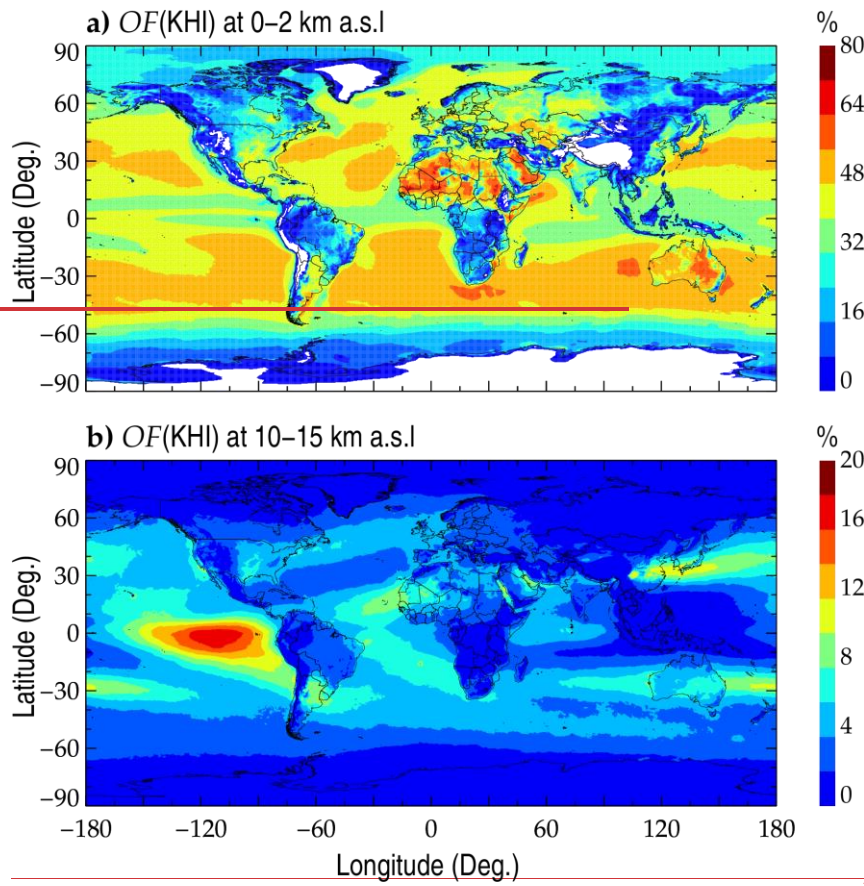
1055 **Figure 8.** The percentage of $OF(Ri<0)$ relative to $OF(Ri<Rit)$ in HVRRS (red) and
1056 ERA5 reanalysis (blue).

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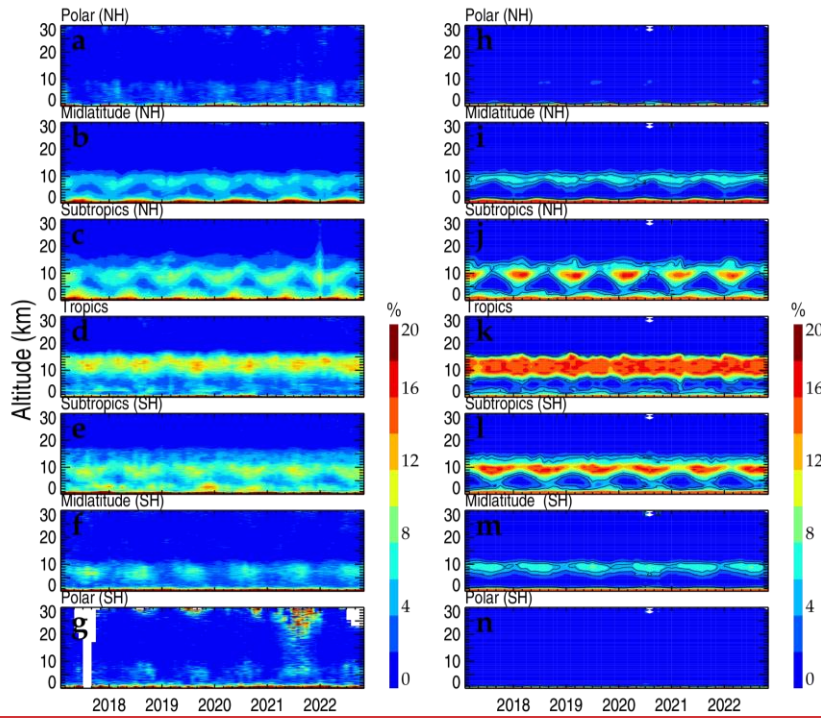


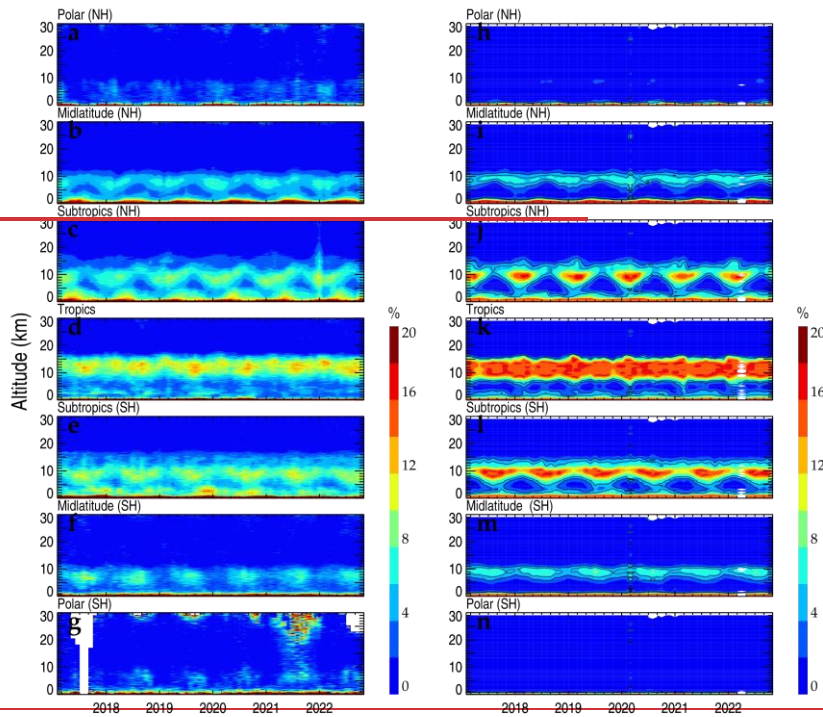
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 1060 **Figure 98.** The spatial distribution of the mean $OF(Ri < Rit)$ occurrence frequency of
 1061 KHI in ERA5 reanalysis at 0–2 km a.s.l. (a) and 10–15 km a.s.l. (b). Note that
 1062 Rit the threshold value of Ri is set to 1.





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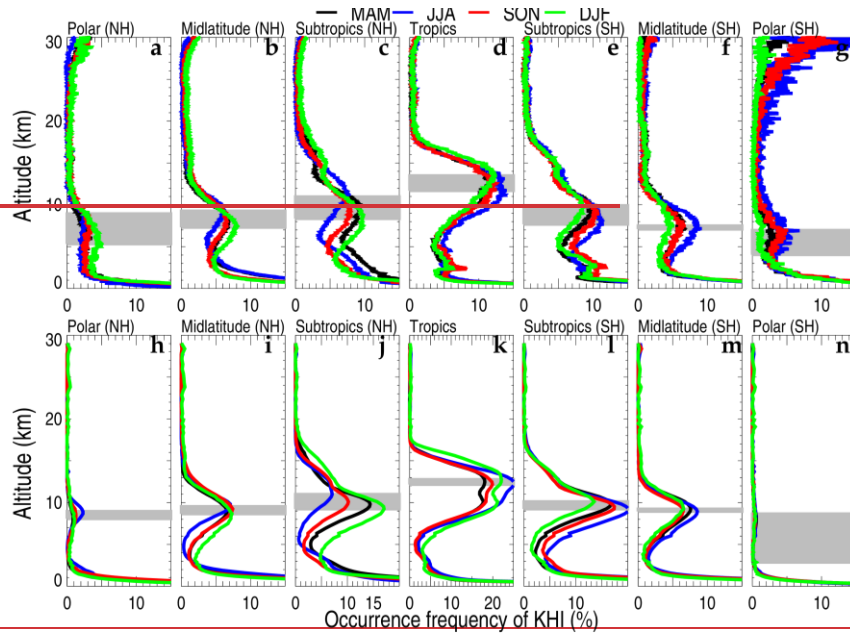
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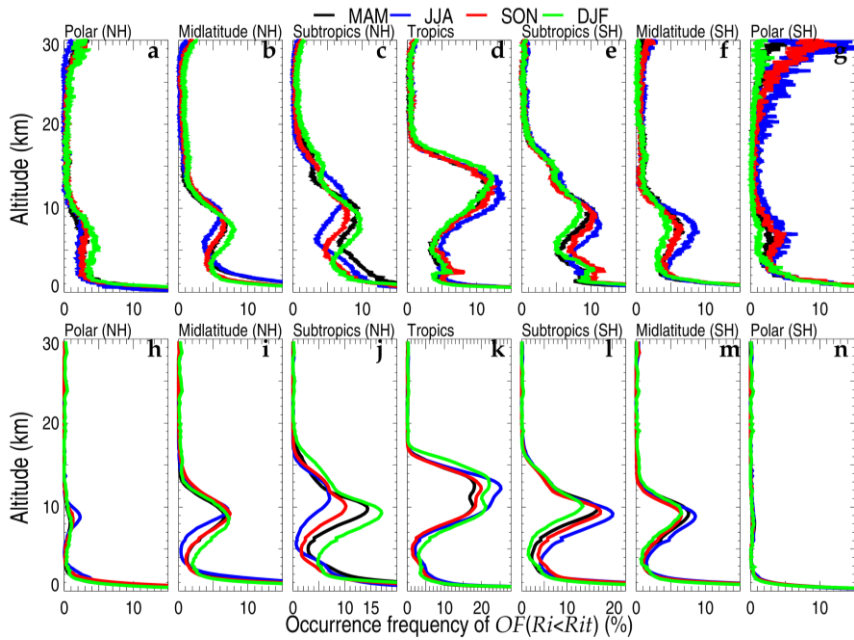
Figure 109. The monthly averaged $OF(KH)$ in the HVRRS (a–g) and ERA5 reanalysis (h–n) in seven climate zones. NH=Northern Hemisphere; SH=Southern Hemisphere.

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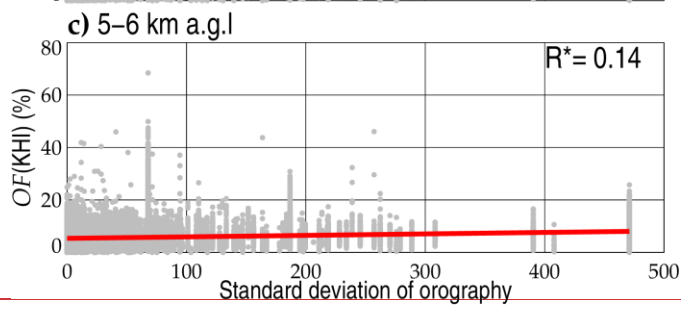
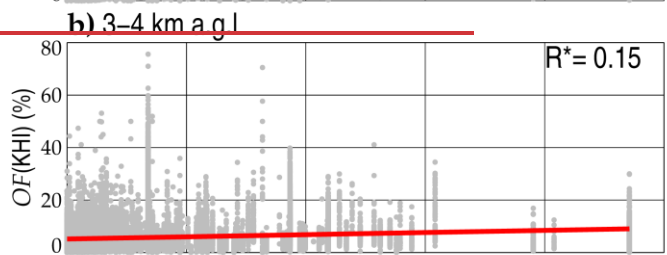
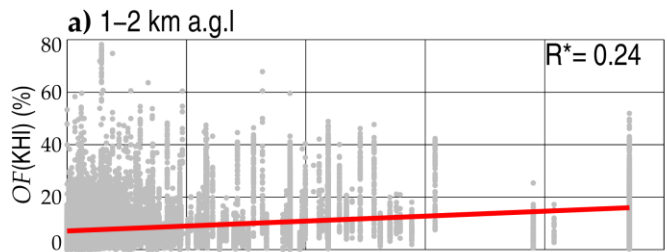
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1071 **Figure 11**. The seasonal averaged $OF(KHI)$ $OF(Ri < Rit)$ in the HVRRS (a–g) and
 1072 ERA5 reanalysis (h–m) in seven climate zones. The gray areas indicate the free

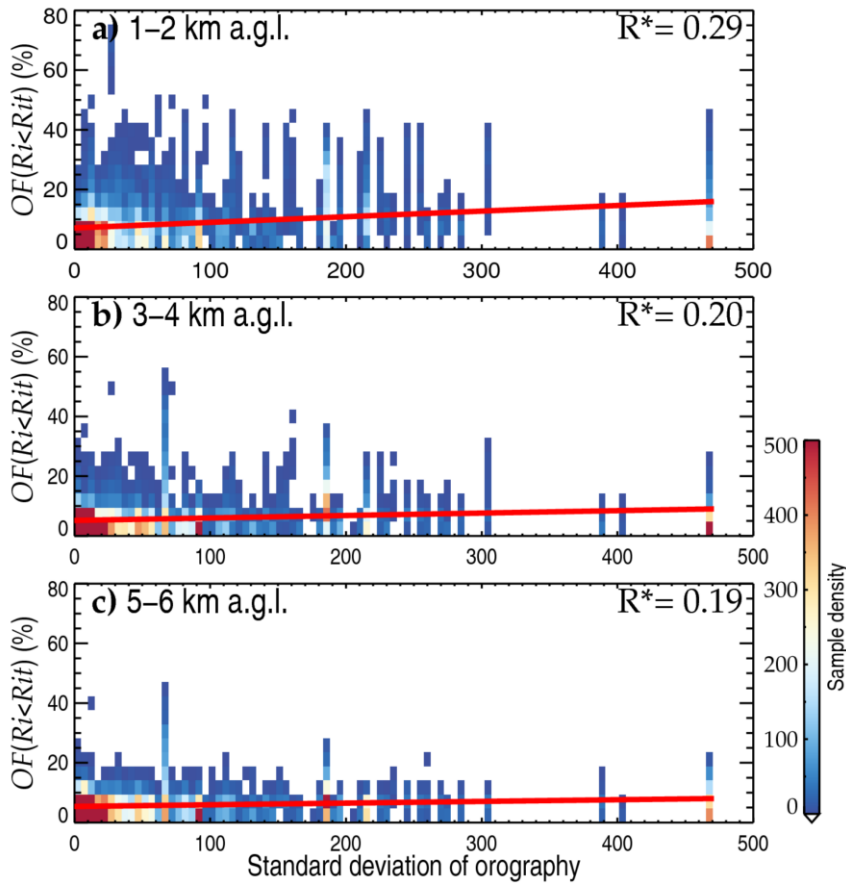
1073 tropospheric regime with maximal $OF(KHI)$ in four seasons. MAM, March–April–May;
1074 JJA, June–July–August; SON, September–October–November; DJF, December–
1075 January–February. NH=Northern Hemisphere; SH=Southern Hemisphere.

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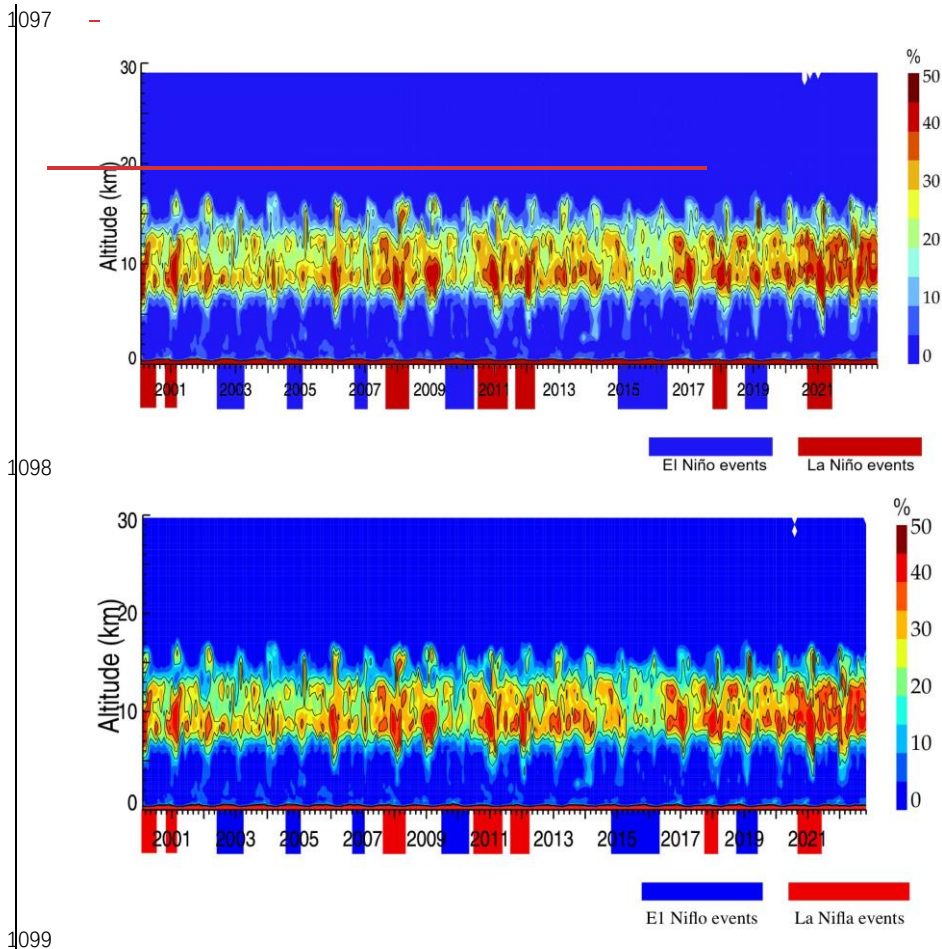
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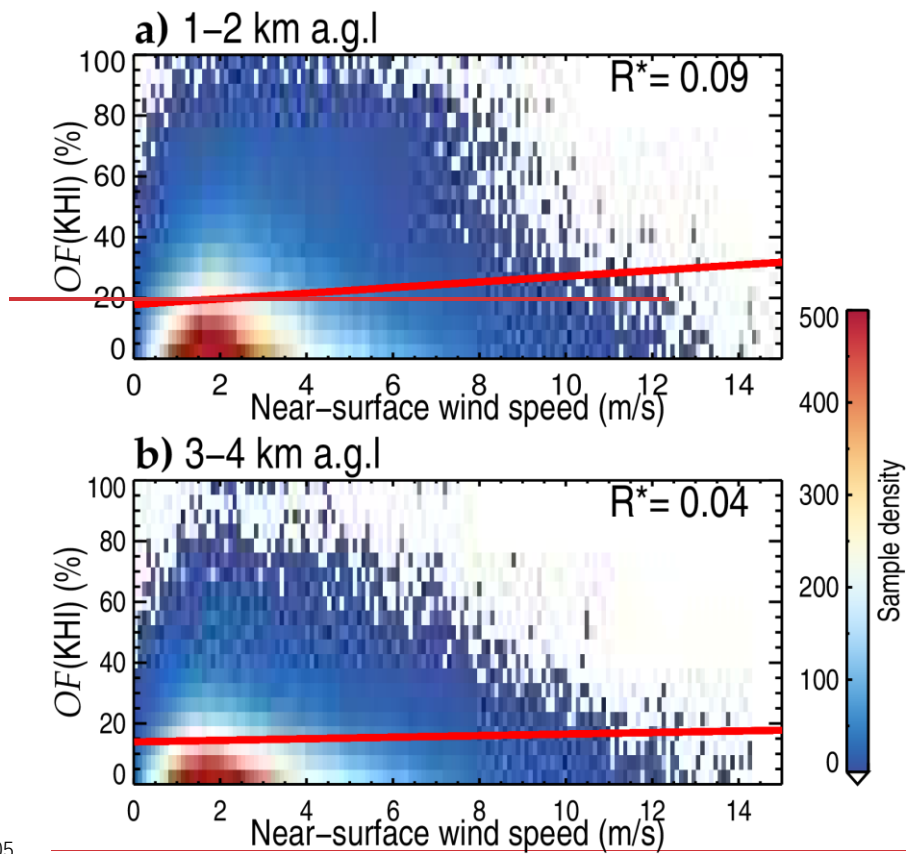
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1089 **Figure 12.4.** The association of HVRRS-determined $OF(KH)OF(Ri<Rit)$ with
1090 different standard deviations of orography (dimensionless). (a), (b), and (c) are for
1091 height ranges of 1–2 km, 3–4 km, and 5–6 km a.g.l., respectively. The correlation
1092 coefficients between $OF(KH)OF(Ri<Rit)$ –and standard derivation of orography are
1093 marked in the top right corner, where the star superscripts indicate that values are
1094 statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

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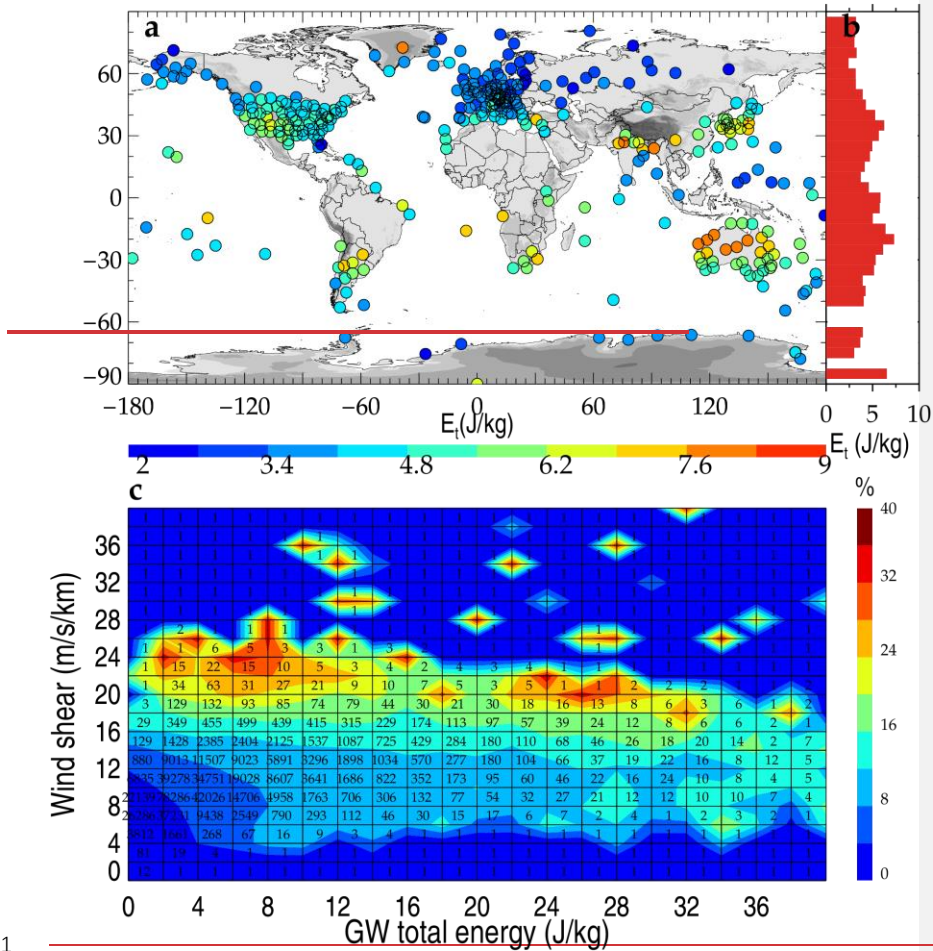


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1100 **Figure 132.** The monthly averaged $\overline{N_r}$ in ERA5 reanalysis over the
1101 Niño 3 region (5° N–5° S, 150° W–90° W). The blue and red shadings in time axis
1102 indicate the time periods with El Niño and La Niña events, respectively.
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 1106 **Figure 13.** Density plots of HVRRS derived $OF(KHI)$ over terrain with standard
 1107 deviation of orography larger than 50 as a function of near-surface wind speed. The red
 1108 lines represent a least-squared linear regression. The star superscripts indicate that
 1109 values are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).
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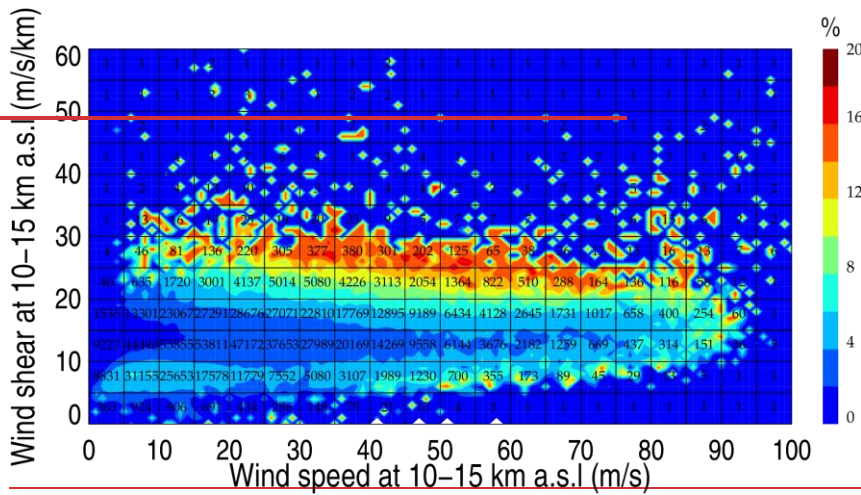


1111
 1112 **Figure 14.** Geographical distribution of mean tropospheric GW total energy obtained
 1113 from the HVRRS (a). The latitudinal variation of mean energy in a grid cell of 5°
 1114 latitude (b). The joint distribution of $\overline{OF(KH)}\overline{OF(Ri < Rit)}$ —with GW energy and
 1115 wind shear (c). The $\overline{OF(KH)}\overline{OF(Ri < Rit)}$ —and wind shear are derived from
 1116 individual HVRRS profiles and vertically averaged over the tropospheric segment that
 1117 is used for GW study. The numerical number in (c) indicates the matched profile
 1118 number in each grid, using a bin size of 2 J/kg along the x axis and 2 m/s/km along the
 1119 y axis.

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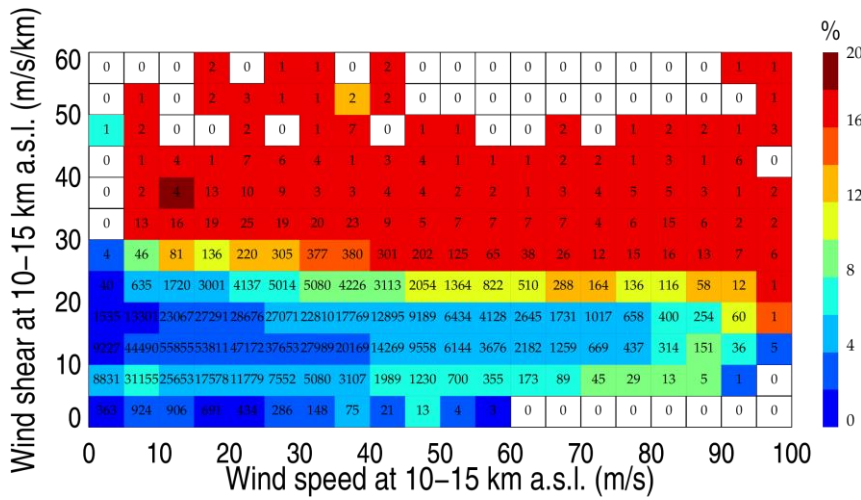
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1128 **Figure 15.** Joint distribution of HVRRS-derived wind speed, wind shear, and $OF(KHI)$
 1129 $OF(Ri < Rit)$, with a bin size of 5 m/s along the x axis and 5 m/s/km along the y axis.
 1130 Note that all the relationship is based on the mean result of individual profiles at heights
 1131 of 10–15 km a.s.g.l.. The number indicates the matched profile number in each grid.