

Air

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The quality of Scotland's air has improved considerably over the last few decades, and in general it is now cleaner than at any time since the Industrial Revolution (in the 19th century). However, in some areas poor air quality still affects human health and the environment.

State

Air quality in urban areas has improved significantly since the 1950s, but there are still some areas of towns and cities where the air quality is of concern. We have significantly reduced some pollutants through tighter controls on emissions. However, there is still a significant amount of work to be done.

The main air pollutants are:

- nitrogen oxides;
- particulate matter (fine dust);
- sulphur dioxide;
- ammonia;
- volatile organic compounds;
- ozone.

These pollutants are generated from a wide range of human and natural sources, and affect urban and rural environments, although the sources and effects may be different in the two environments. Despite reductions in emissions, we still see the impacts of airborne pollutants (acid and nitrogen-rich pollutants) in many of our sensitive habitats.

Challenges

The main challenges are emissions from:

- transport;
- energy production;
- industry (including agriculture).

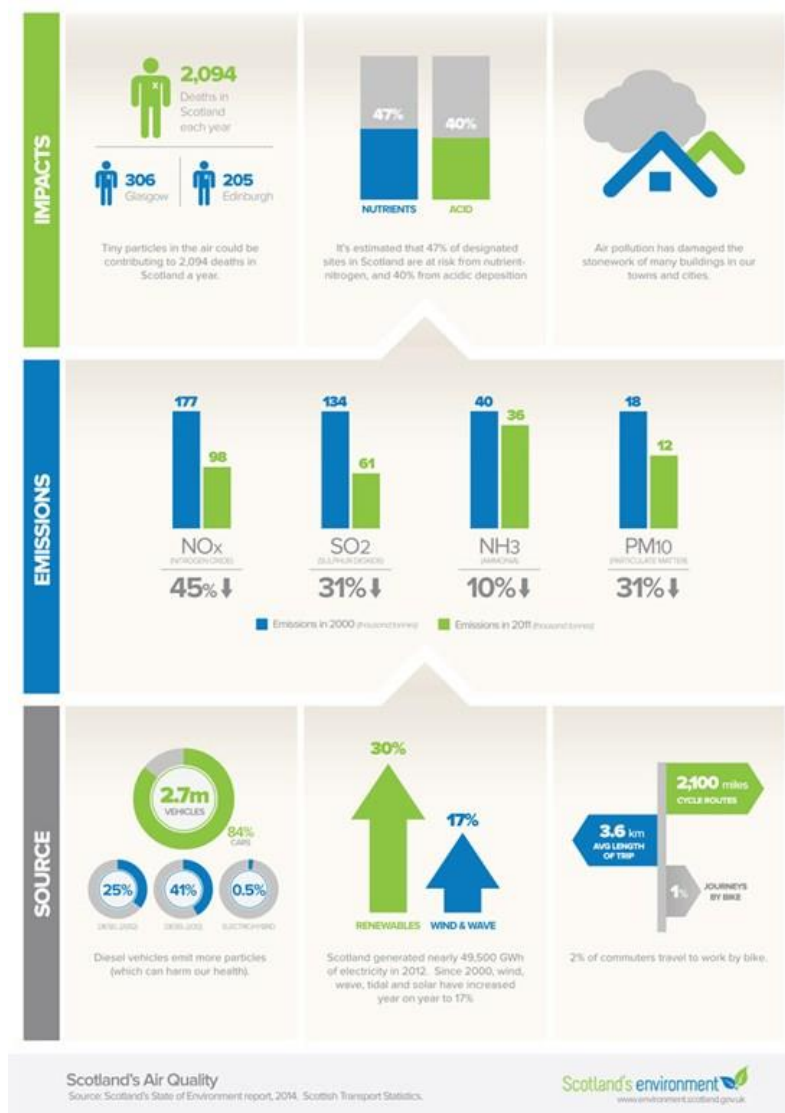
In urban areas, emissions from transport are the primary concern, increasing levels of particulates and nitrogen oxides.

Response

Where air-quality standards are not being met, local authorities have set up [Air Quality Management Areas](#) (AQMAs). As monitoring and assessment in Scotland has increased, more AQMAs have been identified.

Policy and legislative measures aim to reduce air pollution, but wider measures need to be considered to achieve further reductions.

Air Infographic



What is it?

[Air quality](#) - Our understanding of the sources and impacts of air pollution has improved over the years and applying it has led to better air quality in some areas. However, there are still areas in Scotland where poor air quality affects human health and the environment.