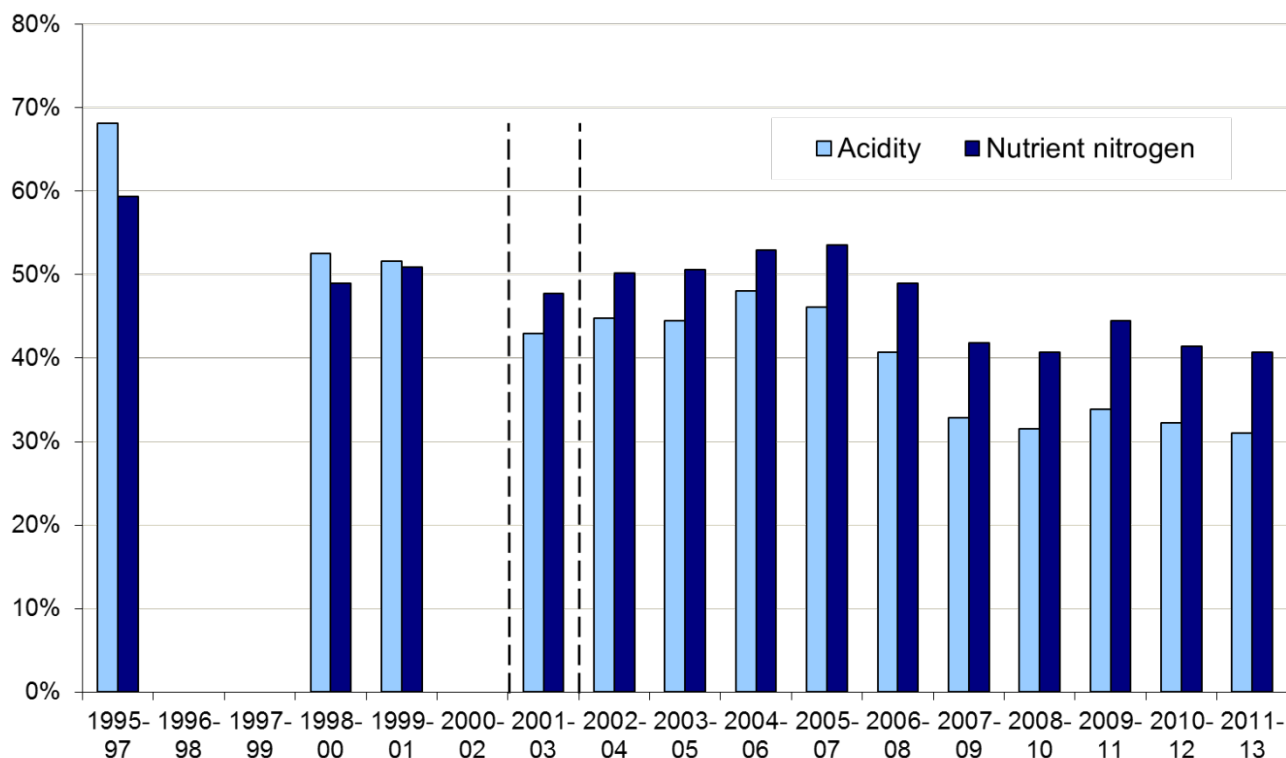


## Sensitive Habitats Exceeding Critical Loads for Acidification and Eutrophication: 1995-1997 to 2011-2013<sup>64, 65</sup>

Percentage exceedance



### Why this measure is important

Critical loads are thresholds above which the deposition of pollutants causing acidification (sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides and ammonia) and eutrophication (nitrogen oxides and ammonia) cause significant harm to the environment<sup>66</sup>. Around 60% of Scotland's land area contains habitats sensitive to acid deposition and 55% to eutrophication, with much of the area sensitive to both.

### Background

Critical loads for acidity and nutrient nitrogen are calculated using internationally agreed methods. These are then compared with deposition values to calculate critical load exceedances and identify habitat areas at risk from the adverse impacts from acidification and eutrophication.

### Trend

The area of sensitive habitats in Scotland exceeding critical loads for acidification fell from 68% in 1995-97 to 31% in 2011-13. Over the same time period, nutrient nitrogen exceedances fell from 59% to 41%<sup>67</sup>.

### Factors affecting trend

Changes in the area of sensitive habitats exceeding critical loads largely depend on changing emissions of pollutants; for instance, the reduction in acidity exceedance has been largely driven by a reduction in sulphur emissions. Changes were also made to the methodology for calculating depositions in 2001-03 and 2002-04, which means that depositions for earlier years may be underestimated.

Source: [Centre for Ecology and Hydrology](#)

[Metadata](#)