

# air quality



The air we breathe and live in contains a wide variety of particles, vapours and gases, some natural, some man-made. Those that are considered harmful to human health, harmful to the environment or a potential nuisance are called 'pollutants'. The Government, with advice from health experts, has set limits for each of these pollutants to help inform the public about air pollution levels.

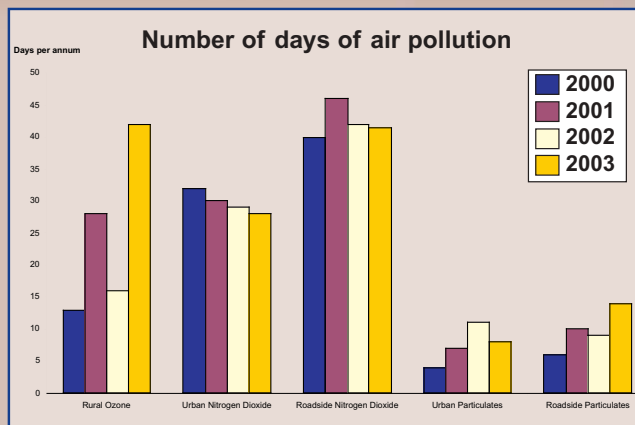
## Indicator QoL27 – Air Pollution

Indicator QoL27 is used to illustrate air pollution levels in Hertfordshire, and whether air quality is getting better or worse. The indicator is calculated using accurate measurements collected continuously from a number of monitoring sites around the county. It has five separate values:

- the number of days in which ozone levels in rural areas exceeded the Government's standard;
- the number of days in which particulate levels in urban areas exceeded the Government's standard;
- the number of days in which particulate levels close to busy roads exceeded the Government's standard;
- annual mean nitrogen dioxide levels in urban areas; and
- annual mean nitrogen dioxide levels close to busy roads.

Not all districts and boroughs in Hertfordshire have the facility to calculate these indicators. Therefore, one overall set of indicator values has been calculated for the whole of the county. Where possible, results from a number of districts are used to produce an average.

The graph shows how the five air pollution indicators have changed for Hertfordshire since 2000. Local pollution levels are dependent on a range of factors including traffic levels, vehicle technology, imported pollution from other areas such as London and continental Europe and the prevailing weather. It usually takes a long time for emissions from traffic and other sources of pollution to change, so short-term variations in the indicator are largely due to weather conditions – a warm sunny summer will cause the rural ozone indicator



to go up; a cold, still winter will cause the urban and roadside indicators to go up.

Most of the indicators for 2003 were lower than 2002. The particularly stable weather conditions in the spring and summer of 2003 caused an unusually high number of pollution episodes across Hertfordshire and the whole of the South East of England. The warm and stable weather conditions resulted in a greater number of days recorded at 'Moderate' and 'High' ozone pollution days.

Air quality monitoring in Hertfordshire is co-ordinated through the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Air Pollution Monitoring Network. More detail on the monitoring network including measurements, reports and daily bulletins can be found through the Network's website [www.hertsbedsair.org.uk](http://www.hertsbedsair.org.uk).

Local authorities in Hertfordshire have to make regular detailed studies of air pollution levels throughout their areas. Where they estimate that air quality will not meet the Government's standards by specified dates, they have to produce Action Plans describing how they intend to improve the situation. Visit your local authority's website to find out more about this 'Review and Assessment' process.