

AIR POLLUTION

Hi!

I am Sara Fernández de Prada, a student of IES Gran Capitán in Madrid. I am writing to you to express my concerns about an environmental problem that is choking not only our city, but our country as well.

One of the most critical environmental problems in my country of Spain is the air pollution. We might not see it, but more than half of the country is breathing air containing high levels of contamination.

People in Madrid and Barcelona are breathing some of the dirtiest air in Spain. Andalusia, Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, and Valencia are also dealing with high-risk levels of air contamination. This is according to a recent report by El Pais.

Burning of fossil fuels, car emissions, and the inevitable byproducts of these two are the main contributors to the poor air quality of the country.

Based on a 2017 report by the European Environment Agency, there is a strong link between air contamination and public health in Spain, more than the common asthma. This includes:

- 1,600 premature deaths in Spain in 2014 because of ozone. Ozone gas is good when it is in the stratosphere, but at ground level, it is very polluting.
- 6,740 premature deaths in Spain because of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), caused by traffic and predominantly a problem in big cities.
- 23,180 premature deaths in Spain due to PM10 particulate matter, which consists of dust, ash, soot, and other substances produced by car emissions, central heating systems, industry, and construction works.

According to the World Health Organization, 29% of illness and deaths globally are due to lung cancer, which in part, is linked to air pollution.

In total, there have been 38,600 premature deaths in Spain in 2015 related to pollution, and 27,900 of these were caused by particulate pollution.

These data worry and alarm me, as it should everyone. But I believe there are many things we can do to improve the situation.

Firstly, if more of us use public transport, pollution can be reduced. In my opinion, this is one of the best and easiest steps to help manage the problem. This will reduce pollution, traffic, and noise. It will also make the city a nicer and quieter place.

Another step to reducing air pollution could be using new technologies like electric cars. The price might be a concern now, as they are expensive, but maybe in a few years when the price goes down or if you have the resources, this can prove to be a good investment.

We can do many things to help make the air cleaner. If we take action now, I am sure we can make the city a better place to live in. I would love to hear from others about their take on this issue and how we can all work together to help address it.

Thank you so much for your attention.

Best regards,
Sara

SUBJECT: Have You Heard About This Problem?

Hello!

My name is Carmen Barón and I am a student from Madrid. I am writing to share my thoughts on an environmental problem in our city that many people do not often hear about: noise pollution.

A big problem in our city of Madrid is the noise pollution; everywhere you look, there are construction works, traffic jams, and cars honking, among many others.

People don't realize the noise is a problem, but it is – a significant one at that.

In my opinion, people do not notice the environmental noise because we are used to it; we just ignore it or drown it out either with louder sounds or by sticking in our earphones and blasting music.

As kids, we notice some relatives and friends tend to talk very loudly to us, and in some occasions, they are already shouting without them knowing.

In the long-term, all these can affect our health.

Noise affects our ability to concentrate. More than that, there have been many studies saying there is a relationship between excessive noise and a person's health. [A more recent research says that one of the biggest but often-ignored sources of noise is road traffic](#). It goes on to mention that in Madrid, a densely populated metropolitan area, 80% of all environmental noise exposure can be attributed to traffic. The findings suggest there is a connection between the high traffic noise and health problems (particularly cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, as well as related deaths).

This highlights the importance of being aware of the traffic noise and managing it, especially for citizens in large cities.

In my opinion, everyone can help in managing this problem with a few small steps. For example, in our everyday life, we can:

- Use the car horn only when strictly necessary (for those who drive their own car)
- Avoid loud music (be it at home or in the car)
- Use public transportation whenever we can
- Try walking more or riding a bike, especially if you are only travelling a short distance
- When leaving nightclubs, be mindful that people are resting, and along the streets, there is no soundproofing, so we need to minimize our noise

- Do not set the volume of your mobile or music too high, especially when using headphones.

I hope these simple steps can help in managing the noise. I would also love to hear about suggestions from others on how we can make our city a more peaceful, quieter place to live in.

Sincerely,

Carmen Barón, a concerned student

Good day!

I am Elena Hu, a student of I.E.S Gran Capitán in Madrid, and I'm writing to you to talk about a serious problem in our city: noise pollution.

Noise pollution is caused by many different factors, but most of it can be traced back to the streets. It starts with cars and follows a domino effect that leads to high noise levels that are not good for health or for our wellness.

For me, I see most of this problem originating from the streets. When traffic systems are not managed properly (like when stoplights break down or are not followed), a traffic jam builds up. Drivers then get annoyed and start honking their horns madly. Combined together, the sounds of blaring horns and engines running from hundreds of cars generate an exaggerated, irritating noise.

These excessive noise are linked to serious health problems such as hypertension, ischemic heart disease, and even sleep problems. It also can lead to hearing problems or even hearing loss. Apart from that, it can cause an irritating headache or be a distraction to drivers, which can lead to accidents.

Even everyday conversations and day-to-day activities can be sources of unnecessarily loud noises.

In Madrid, for example, we are known for being outgoing, lively, and loud. While these are generally positive characteristics, it can lead to serious problems. [A news report mentions that a study](#) shows that by lowering noise levels in the Spanish capital, we could prevent as many as 500 cardiovascular and respiratory-related deaths a year.

In conclusion, excessive noise is a serious environmental problem, and we should minimize it as best as we can. Simple things like improving the transport management systems can help.

I would love to hear not only how others are planning to address this problem, but also how they plan to become more aware about this.

Yours truly, Elena

SUBJECT: The Climate is Changing, Why Aren't We?

Good day!

I'm María González Illanes, a student from Madrid. I am writing to you to express my concerns about the environment and how we are not helping to save it.

When it comes to environmental problems, the climate plays an important role, but many people usually don't notice it. Lately, the climate has been changing drastically and we aren't doing anything about it. Moreover, many people do not care about finding or being part of the solutions.

For example, the changing of the seasons are hardly noticeable now:

- The intervals between low and high temperatures are very far apart, and
- Winters are becoming warmer compared to previous years, and summers are becoming even hotter.

These are the noticeable and unintended consequences of climate change due to global warming. This wasn't a noticeable problem before because the temperatures weren't as different and drastic as now.

The growing number of vehicles is causing a rise in emissions, which increases greenhouse gases that inevitably contribute to global warming. A domino effect follows where the ozone layer is depleted faster, ocean temperature rises, the polar ice caps melt quicker, sea levels rise, which leads to more destructive weather phenomena.

In my opinion, our use of cars is really boundless and inefficient. We have many comfortable and eco-friendlier ways to commute or to get to wherever we want. This includes bikes, public transport (buses, subway, trains, scooters, etc.) and even walking.

Another method that has been gaining more popularity lately is the use of electric cars. These rely on cleaner, more sustainable fuel sources and are a great way to help the environment and reduce our dependence on petrol.

To sum up, we must change our ways and act now to combat climate change. We need to improve current solutions and find new ones so we can help our planet survive.

Aside from the proposals mentioned earlier, another small step we can make is to raise awareness about the problem and encourage others to do their own part in saving the planet.

But this has to change now; otherwise, it will be too late.

Sincerely,

María González Illanes

SUBJECT: A Sea of Plastic

To whom it may concern:

Hello!

I am Serena and I'm a student studying and living in Madrid.

I am writing to you to talk about the important problem of water pollution. Water is an essential resource that humans, plants, and animals need to live. As such, in my opinion, I think we need to be more careful with the way we use it.

One of the biggest threats we face is the plastic pollution in our oceans. This is a problem because we endlessly consume plastic and many of it ends up in the oceans.

With all of the plastic in the ocean, the fishes can mistake it for food and eat it. When we consume seafood, we are thereby consuming plastic as well, which is harmful to the body.

In addition, the factories heavily pollute the river, and the rivers lead to the sea. These factory wastes often contain harmful chemicals that damage the environment.

Our neighbors in the south are swimming through this problem. Cadiz University researcher and marine biologist [Andres Cozár explained](#), "Just like there was a Bronze Age and an Iron Age, we are now living through a Plastic Age." This highlights the growing problem of plastics and how it is affecting our natural resources.

Cózar's latest research shows that there is a recent accumulation of plastics in the Mediterranean Sea. The buildup was not there before and is now slowly growing. This affects Spaniards because it dirties the country's Mediterranean coastline and because we are big consumers of fish and seafood.

The plastic and chemicals are very bad for the environment. We must change our actions if we want to live in a cleaner, healthier environment.

I think one thing we can do is to encourage governments to either create or enforce laws against ocean pollution, as well as to push factories and industries to have more environment-friendly operations.

I hope we can all take action to address this problem while it is still manageable.

Best regards,

Serena Millanes, a concerned student