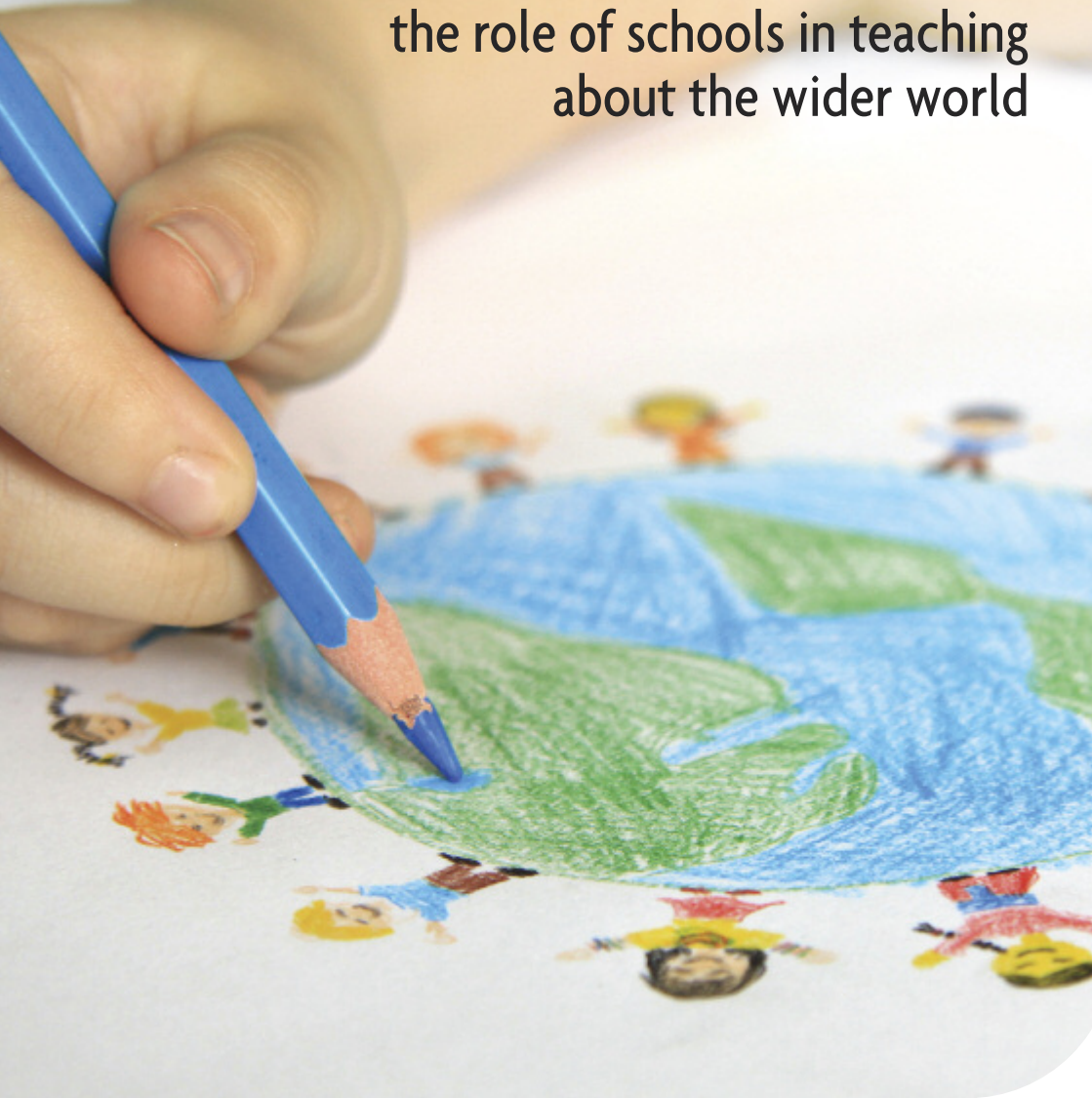


# What parents want

the role of schools in teaching  
about the wider world



Think  
Global



The Development Education Association



## Summary

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This report presents the findings from a YouGov survey of parents' attitudes towards their children's education. The results show that parents of school-age children think it is vital that schools teach about the wider world. At Think Global we know that many schools and teachers already prioritise such teaching, recognising how important it is to prepare their pupils to live in a globalised world and the positive contribution this can make to pupil attainment and behaviour. This report details the high level of support for schools that decide to prioritise this work; we hope it will provide schools and teachers with the information they need to expand this area of their teaching.

### Parents believe that schools have a crucial role to play in preparing young people to live in a globalised world.

Almost three-quarters of parents agree that it is important for schools to help young people to think globally (71%) and be responsible global citizens (72%). Parents think schools should be doing more to prepare young people to live in a globalised world; fewer than one in ten (7%) think schools should do less.

Three-quarters of parents think it is important for young people to develop the capabilities that they will need to live and work in a globalised world, including:

- openness to the cultures and perspectives of people from different places and backgrounds (79% say this is important);
- learning to lead more environmentally sustainable lives (84%);
- their knowledge about the causes of international poverty (73%); and
- understanding the causes of mass migration, including migration to the UK (74%).

The detail of this new research can be found in the main section of this report.

## Young people, teachers and the general public agree with parents about the importance of learning about the wider world.

This new research chimes with existing findings that:

- Young people want to learn more about the wider world (Ipsos MORI, 2009a):
  - The great majority of 11-14 year olds (93%) think it is important to learn about issues affecting different parts of the world, particularly how the world they live in may change.
  - Two-thirds of 11-14 year olds (63%) think that not enough time is spent learning about the wider world in school.
- Teachers believe it is important to teach about the wider world, and doing so motivates them (Ipsos MORI, 2009b):
  - The great majority of teachers (94%) feel that schools should prepare pupils to deal with a fast-changing and globalised world.
  - Four in five teachers (80%) agree that thinking about how teaching contributes to making the world a better place motivates them to stay in teaching.
- The general public agree that it is important for schools to teach about the wider world (Hogg, Shah, 2010). Almost nine in ten (86%) of the British public agree that global learning in school is crucial if global issues are to be tackled in future.
- Forecasting experts agree. In a recent Foresight report by the government's Chief Scientific Adviser Sir John Beddington (Foresight, 2011), he makes clear that if we are to prevent "...the capacity of the earth to produce food for humankind [being] compromised with grave implications for future food security...consideration of sustainability must be introduced to all sectors [including] in education...building a societal consensus for action will be key to modifying demand."

## Behaviour, attendance, attainment and school ethos can all be improved by teaching about the wider world.

Ofsted highlights that learning about global issues such as sustainability leads to "more positive attitudes to learning in general, better behaviour and attendance, and to improved standards and achievement." (Ofsted, 2009)

Recent research conducted by Ipsos MORI (Hogg, Shah, 2010) highlights that teaching about the wider world in school:

- encourages people to feel that they can do something about climate change, reducing by half the proportion of people who feel that it is pointless to take personal action on this issue;
- greatly increases people's propensity to support the UK's role in tackling global poverty;
- nurtures socially responsible, outward-looking attitudes in society, cutting in half the proportion of people who are uninterested in getting involved in positive social action; and,
- counteracts a widespread sense of discomfort about racial and religious difference.

## There are proven methods and resources for teachers and headteachers to embed global thinking and global citizenship into their teaching, their curriculum development and their school ethos.

At a time when the Government is hoping to give teachers more freedom, schools have a great opportunity to reap the benefits of teaching about the wider world through making use of resources such as those available on the Global Dimension website ([www.globaldimension.org.uk](http://www.globaldimension.org.uk)). Teachers can also subscribe to The Globe, the twice-termly newsletter from the website.

A recent review of good practice in this area (Hogg, 2011) summarises what has worked well for schools, and a range of case studies brings this good practice to life.

# Introduction

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Choosing a school is one of the most important decisions a parent makes for their child. In the past few years governments have worked hard to give parents more freedom over this choice, meaning that it is more important than ever that schools respond to what parents want.

This research, commissioned by Think Global and conducted by YouGov, explores what parents want from their child's education. It also seeks to understand parents' hopes and concerns for their children as they grow up in today's world.

We hope the findings will be of real interest to teachers and headteachers, assisting them to embed teaching about the wider world into classrooms, curricula, and their wider school ethos.



The Development Education Association

**Think Global** is a membership-based charity that works to educate and engage the UK public on global issues. We aim to help people in the UK learn about global issues such as poverty and climate change and find out how they can play a part in creating a more just and sustainable world.

## Methodology

This report is based on the results of a survey conducted using an online interview administered by YouGov Plc. The findings are weighted to be representative of the adult population of Great Britain, screened for parents of children under the age of 18. The total sample size is 1,985, of which 481 reported having one or more children under the age of 18. All following statistics are based on that sample size of 481, unless otherwise indicated. Fieldwork was carried out between 26th and 29th November 2010.

## Definition of terms

We define **thinking globally** as learning about the wider world and our interdependence with it. In our view, thinking globally fosters:

- critical and creative thinking;
- self-awareness and open-mindedness towards difference;
- understanding of global issues and power relationships; and
- optimism and action for a better world.

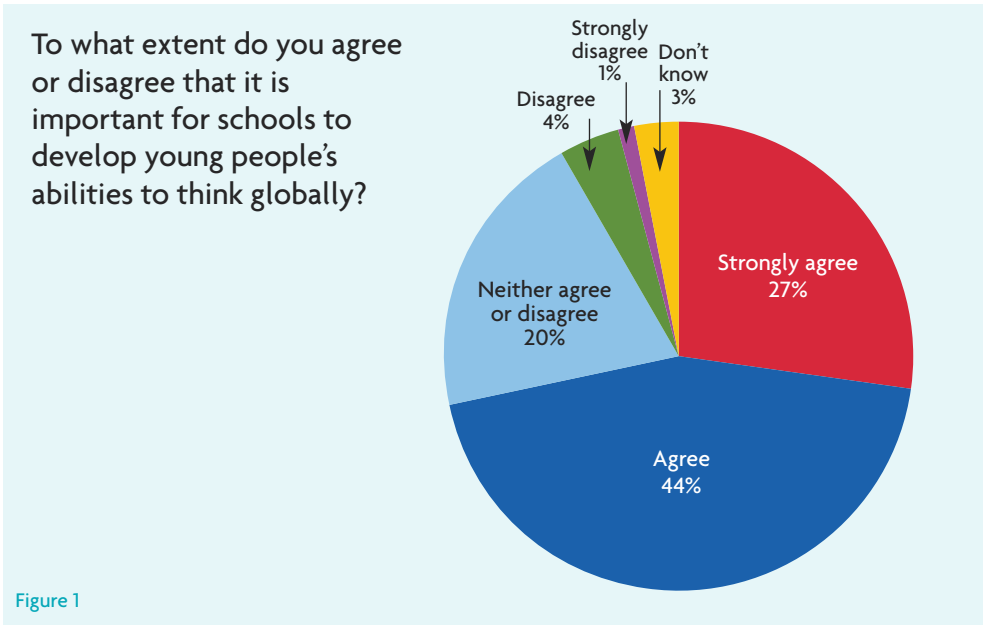
For the purposes of the survey, YouGov explained the term ‘think globally’ with reference to two examples: learning about emerging economies such as China and India; and learning about global challenges like international poverty and climate change.

In turn, **being a responsible global citizen** is defined as acting on an understanding of global challenges in order to create a more just and sustainable world. For the purposes of the survey, YouGov explained the term with reference to two further examples: caring about poor people in other countries; and helping to combat climate change.

# Parents believe it is important that schools develop young people's abilities to think globally and be responsible global citizens

Parents of children under 18 were asked by YouGov to what extent, if at all, they agree that schools should help develop young people's abilities to *think globally* and *be responsible global citizens*. The response from parents was emphatic:

Almost three quarters (71%) of parents agree that schools should help young people to *think globally*. More than a quarter (27%) strongly agree, and 6% disagree.



Almost three quarters (72%) of parents agree that schools should help young people to *be responsible global citizens*. Almost a third (29%) strongly agree, and less than one in 14 (7%) disagree.



To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important for schools to develop young people's abilities to be responsible global citizens?

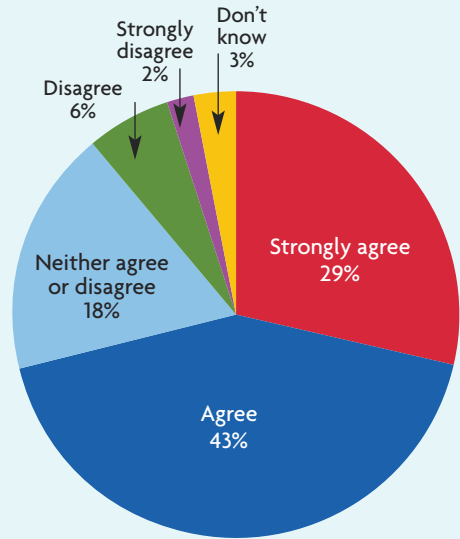


Figure 2

## Parents believe schools should be doing more to help young people think globally

Almost half of parents with children under 18 surveyed (49%) believe that schools should be doing more or much more than they currently do to help young people think more globally. Two fifths (40%) think schools are currently doing about the right amount, and less than one in ten (7%) believe schools should be doing less or much less.

How much more or less do you think schools should be doing than they currently do to help young people think more globally?

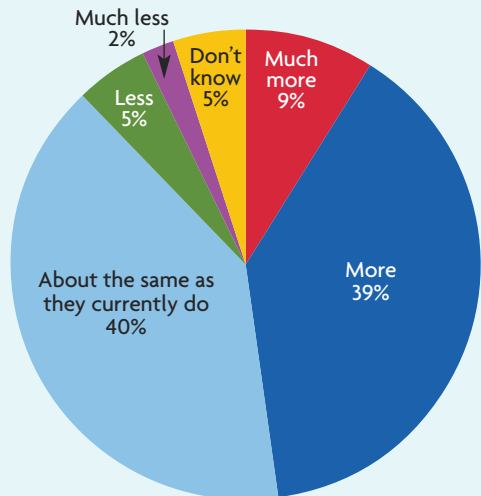


Figure 3

# Parents see global citizenship as a very important aspect of their children’s identities

Parents with children under 18 believe it is very important for young people to learn more about the wider world and to be outward looking and tolerant:

- Three-quarters of parents (79%) believe it is important for young people to develop *openness to the cultures and perspectives of people from different places and backgrounds*, with almost half (41%) believing this is very important.
- Almost nine in ten of these parents (84%) believe it is important for young people to *learn to lead more environmentally sustainable lives*, with almost half (42%) believing this is very important.
- Three-quarters of parents (73%) believe it is important for young people to develop *their knowledge about the causes of international poverty*, with a quarter (26%) believing this is very important.
- Three quarters of parents (74%) believe it is important for young people to *understand the causes of mass migration, including migration to the UK*, with a third (30%) believing this is very important.

Parents’ views of the attributes they would like their children to develop

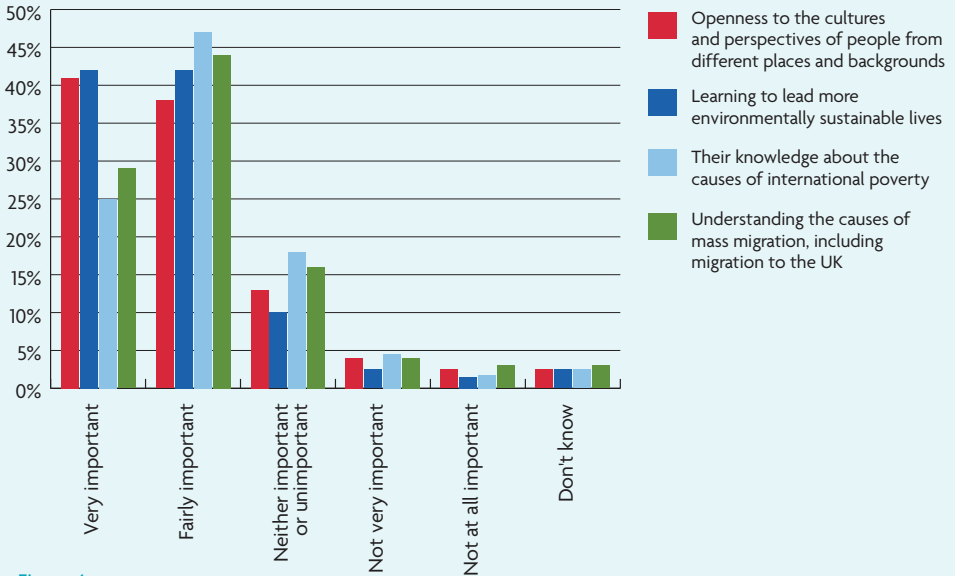


Figure 4

## Parents are concerned about the future of the country...

In the survey parents of children under 18 were asked a range of questions about what the world will be like in 2050. Their responses revealed significant pessimism about the kind of world that their children will be growing up in:

- When asked whether *the wealth gap between rich and poor will be wider than it is now* three-quarters (76%) of parents agreed, against just one in 20 (4%) who disagreed. Almost a third (31%) strongly agreed.
- When asked whether *the world will have been seriously affected by climate change* more than half (58%) agreed, and less than one in five (17%) disagreed. One in five (19%) strongly agreed.
- When asked whether *there will be more racism in the world* almost half of parents agreed (43%), many more than the quarter (24%) who disagreed.
- When asked whether *Britain will be less welcoming to immigrants* two-thirds (67%) of parents agreed, against just one in ten (11%) who disagreed. A quarter (24%) strongly agreed.

Parent's views of the world in 2050

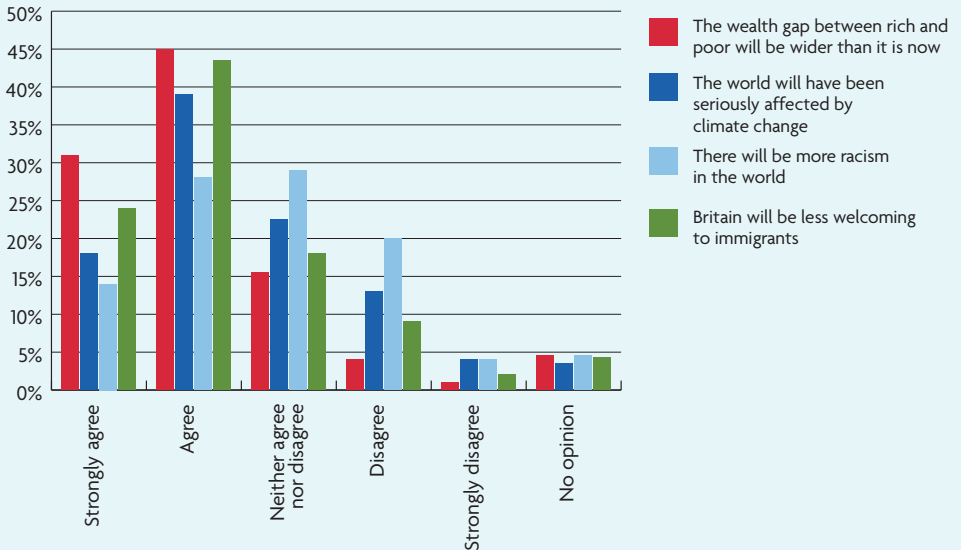


Figure 5

I am concerned about the impacts that climate change will have on the world that my child/children live in

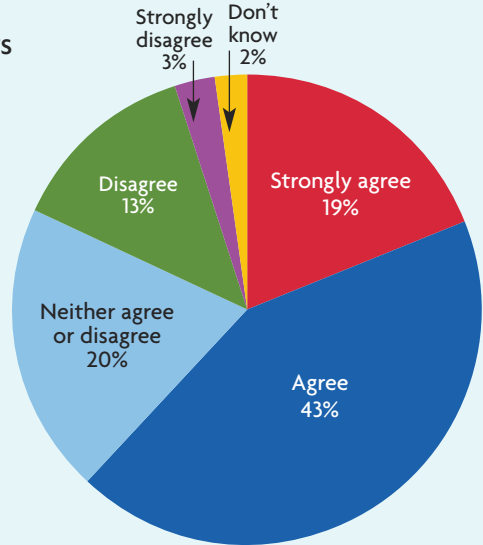


Figure 6

### ...and their own children's futures...

Parents were asked about their own child's future, where many also expressed deep concern.

YouGov asked parents of children under 18 whether they are *concerned about the impacts that climate change will have on the world that their child/children live in*. Almost two-thirds agreed (62%), with one in five (19%) strongly agreeing. By contrast, less than one in five (16%) disagreed, with only 3% strongly disagreeing.

I am concerned that my child/children won't be prepared for working in a global economy with the rise of China and India

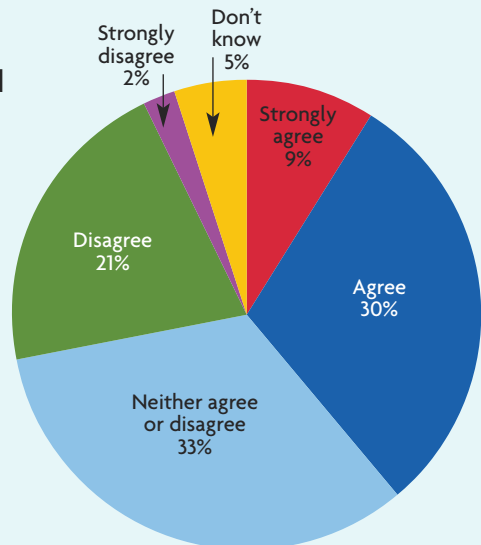


Figure 7

The survey also asked parents whether they are *concerned that their child/children won't be prepared for working in a global economy with the rise of China and India*. Two-fifths (40%) of parents agreed with this statement, whereas less than a quarter disagreed (23%). A third (33%) neither agreed nor disagreed. Results suggest that this concern is more widespread among parents of older children.

## ...which strengthens their view that schools must teach about the wider world

Amongst parents who expressed these concerns most strongly, the desire for their children to learn about global issues at school was strongest.

Of those who are concerned that their child won't be prepared for working in a global economy, 82% felt that it is important that schools develop young people's ability to think globally. A similar proportion (83%) felt the same way about schools developing young people to be responsible global citizens.

Of parents who are concerned about the impact climate change on the world their children will live in, 79% felt that it is important that schools develop young people's ability to think globally. 83% felt it important that schools develop young people to be responsible global citizens.

### To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is important for schools to develop young people's abilities to think globally?

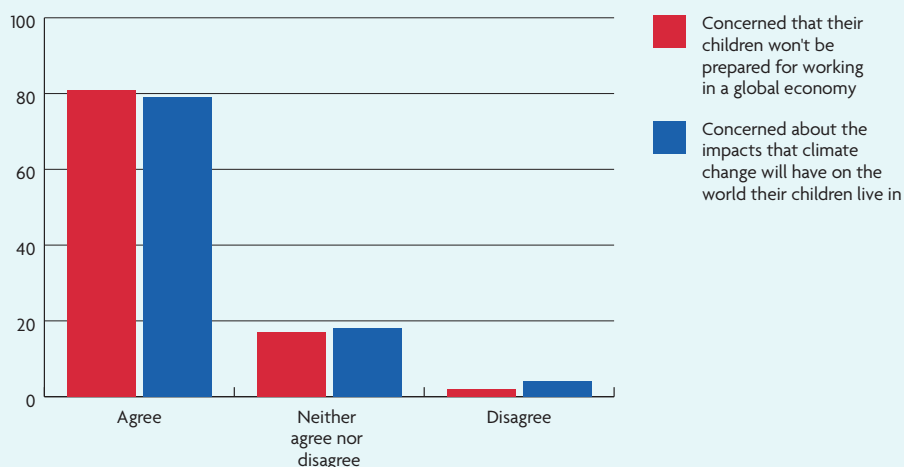


Figure 8

## Do you agree or disagree that it is important for schools to develop young people's abilities to be responsible global citizens?

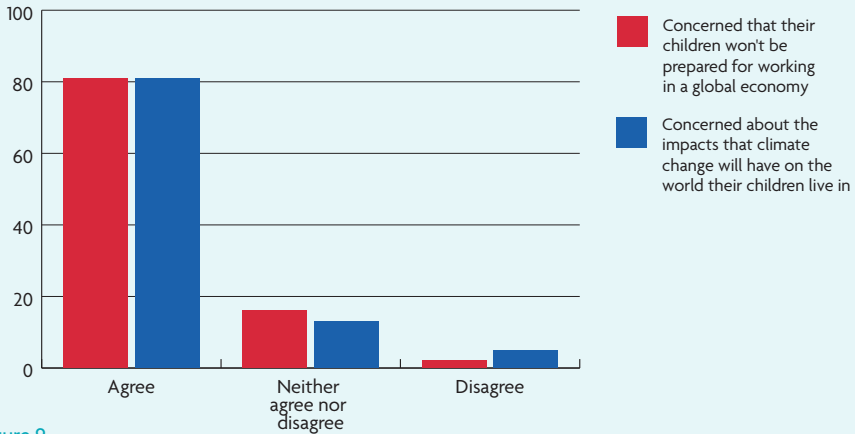


Figure 9

Over half (57%) of parents who express concern about the impacts that climate change will have on the world that their children live in want schools to do more to help young people think globally. Almost two thirds (60%) of parents who express concern that their children won't be prepared for working in a global economy want schools to do more here.

## How much more or less do you think schools should be doing than they currently do to help young people think more globally?

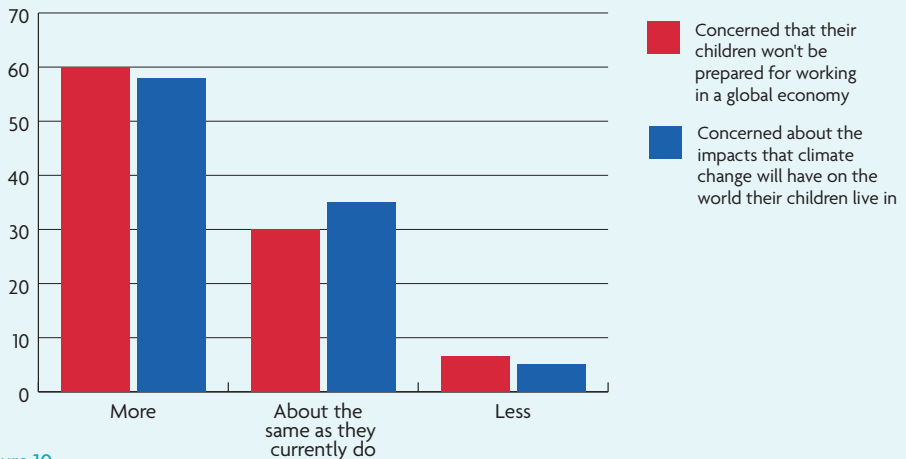


Figure 10

## Conclusion

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This research shows that the vast majority of parents of children under 18 recognise their children are growing up in a globalised, interdependent world. They want their child's education to prepare them to live and work in this world. Parents see education about the wider world as a core part of what schools offer, not an added extra.

When combined with strongly positive views from the general public, from young people themselves and from teachers, this provides compelling support for those schools that are focusing on teaching and learning about the wider world. Evidence from Ofsted and others emphasises that such teaching and learning can lead to improvements in attainment, behaviour and school ethos.

There is a wealth of support for schools to teach about the wider world; if teachers would like to know more the Global Dimension website ([www.globaldimension.org.uk](http://www.globaldimension.org.uk)) is a good place to start for resources and support.

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Global Dimension website: [www.globaldimension.org.uk](http://www.globaldimension.org.uk)

Case studies of good practice available at: [www.globaldimension.org.uk/CaseStudies](http://www.globaldimension.org.uk/CaseStudies)



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