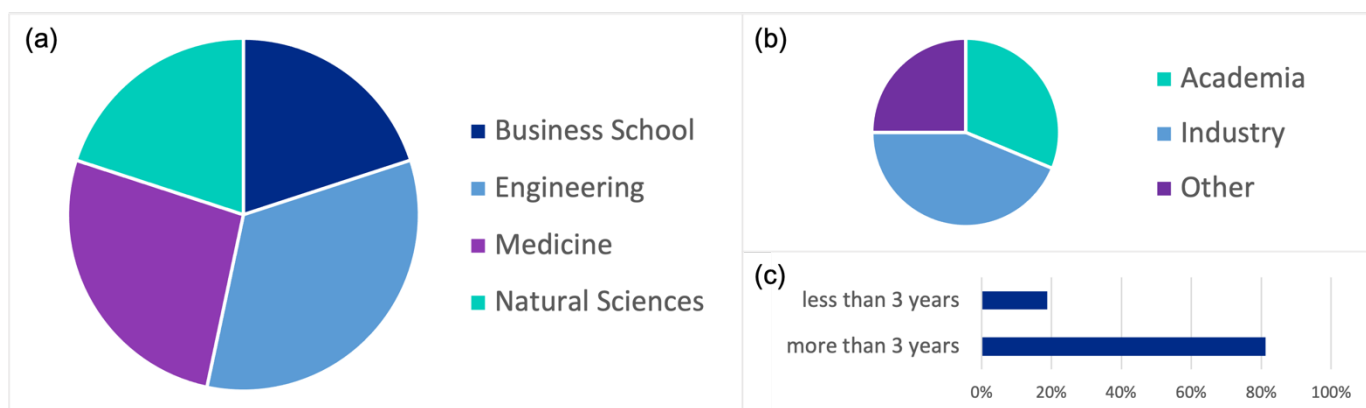# ALUMNI VIEWS AND ADVICE ON NETWORKING

Student Programme Partners Norris Igbineweka and Maria Lima carried out a survey and interviews with Imperial doctoral alumni (data collected Jan-Mar 2022).

Imperial doctoral alumni from various academic backgrounds shared their insights on the importance of networking and offered points advice to current PhD students.
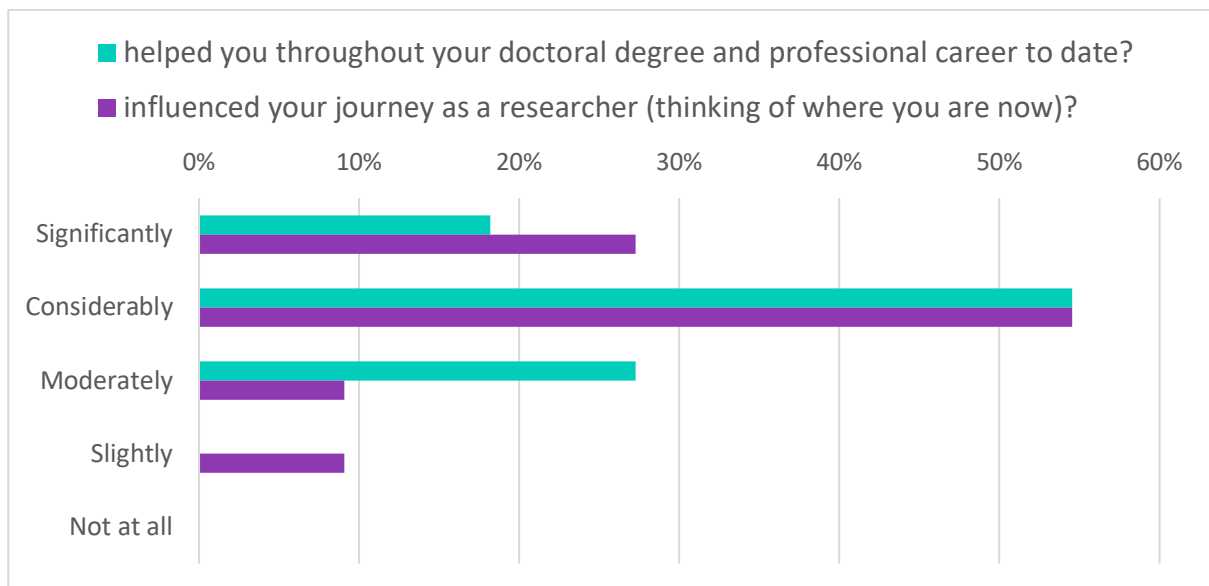
They strongly recommend spending more time on progression and networking skills both during the PhD and for moving forward in careers!

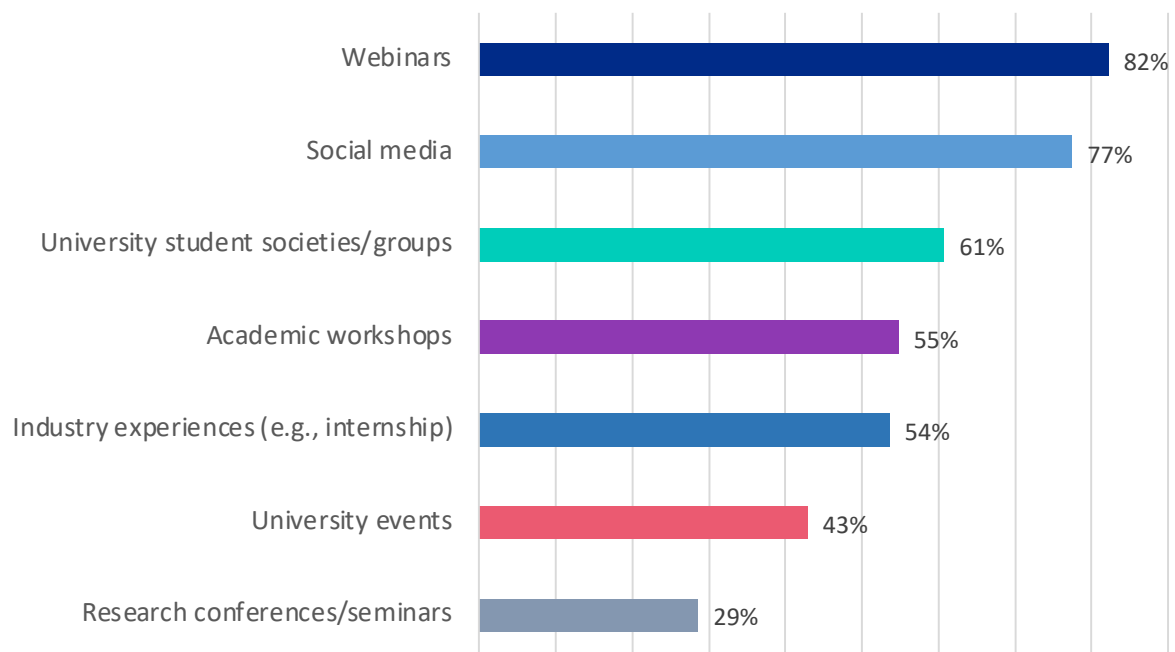## Alumni respondents' background

- Alumni from various departments across all Imperial faculties took part in the survey (Figure-a).
- Most respondents are currently working in industry (44%) or academia (31%) (Figure-b)
- The vast majority of respondents finished their PhD more than 3 years ago (Figure-c)

Networking helped them throughout the PhD and influenced their journeys:

Legend:
- helped you throughout your doctoral degree and professional career to date?
- influenced your journey as a researcher (thinking of where you are now)?

Categories: Significantly, Considerably, Moderately, Slightly, Not at all

Alumni found these forms of networking the most useful during their PhDs

Form of networking	Percentage
Webinars	82%
Social media	77%
University student societies/groups	61%
Academic workshops	55%
Industry experiences (e.g., internship)	54%
University events	43%
Research conferences/seminars	29%

Here are some examples of their recent networking activities

We asked alumni to provide an example of a recent networking situation and how they engaged with others. Have a look at these interesting examples:

Networking situation	How you engaged with others
New job	"Effective networking is about building relationships with others who can refer you once they've come to trust you, have confidence in you and feel loyal to you. This truly is the key to networking success"
Online event	"Breakout rooms - this is a somewhat new experience due to the pandemic but also an opportunity to develop new skills. Building a rapport with strangers is difficult enough but in a virtual setting can be even harder that requires more patience and skill in engaging with everyone in the breakout room"
Conference	"Always reach out to contacts external to current workplace. Have lunch, coffee/tea with different people throughout the event and get to know colleagues/contacts of your contacts"
Conference	"Connect with them in advance, learn about their work, meet in person and explore the potential of a working or staying-in-touch relationship"
Conference	"You have to get out and talk - and look for the connections"
Research seminar	"Walked up and asked for advice in one area"
Invited panellist	"I went up to people and had a friendly non-academic chat"
Work charette	"Talked about personal experience through my family & hobbies"

Networking key points of advice from Imperial alumni:

Keep yourself updated on domain knowledge - things are changing fast

Reach out and seek feedback from other researchers

Be genuine and yourself

It's 2-way so look at what you can give them

Remember you have something to offer too

Be prepared

Present yourself well

Networking is a skill and something that requires practice

Ask questions and listen

Put yourself out there!

Network through your hobbies

Seek informed opinion

Your friends and family count as part of your network

Meet people from outside your discipline

Prepare. Schedule appointments ahead of time

Increase soft skills. Participate in outreach

Be patient, not all networking events are the same so if one event isn't interesting it doesn't mean all future events will follow this