



realising postgraduate talent

# Exploring employability for postgraduate researchers

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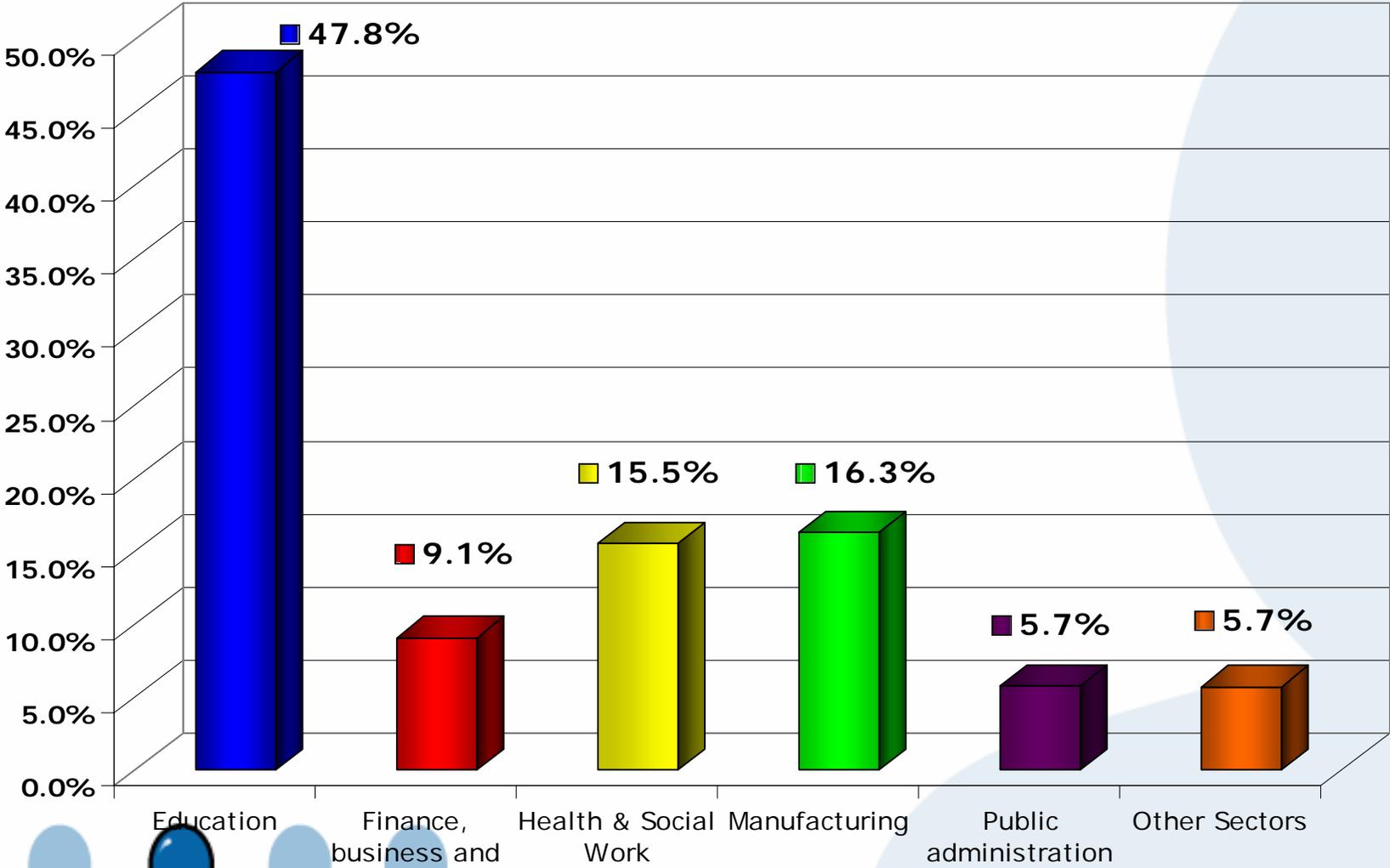
# Aims

- To explore
  - destinations of our PhD researchers
  - the career expectations of our postgraduate researchers
  - key messages from employers
  - how we can help researchers to bridge the gap, examples and discussion
- Share information and practice



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# Employment Sectors

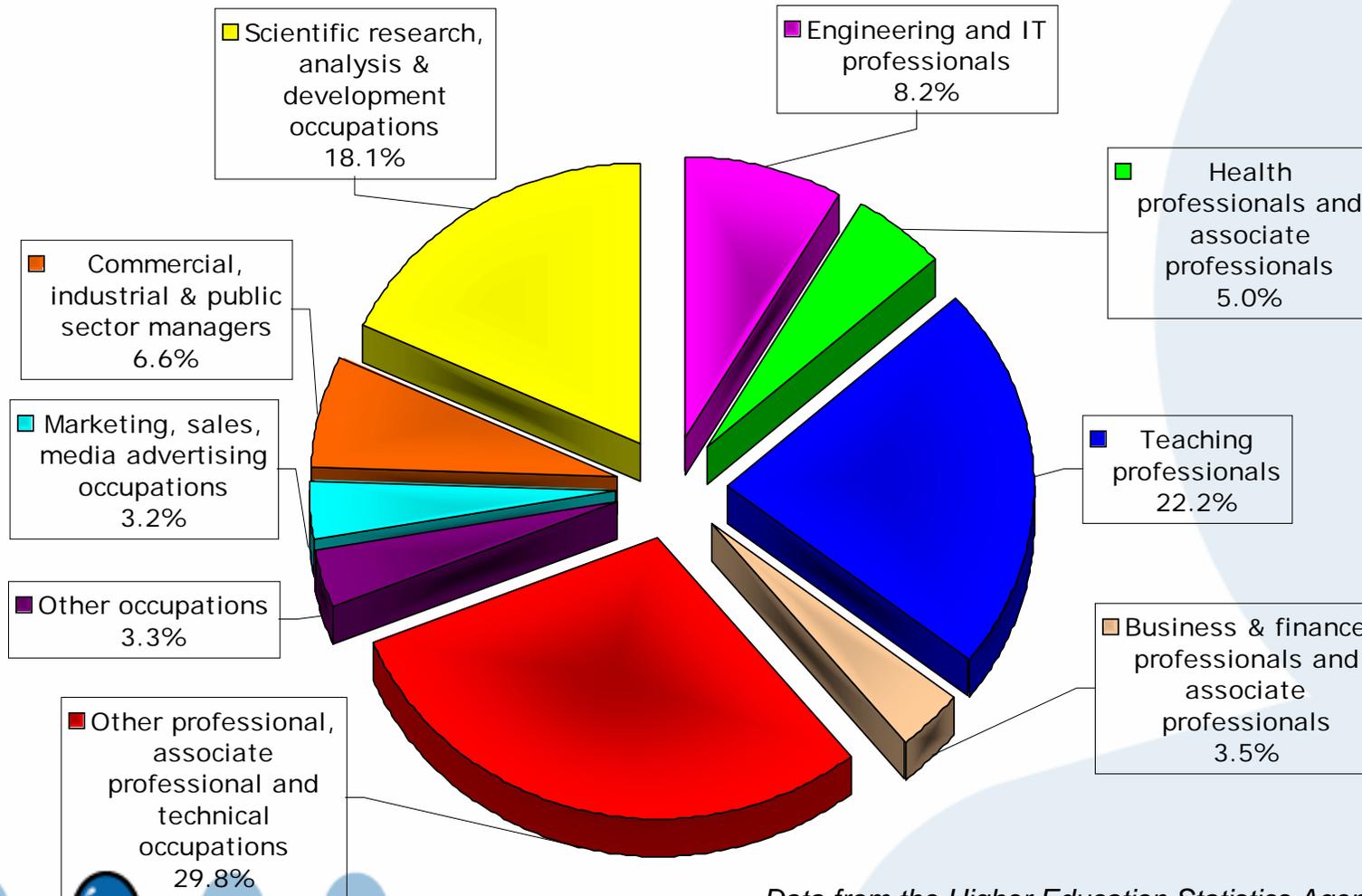


Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency



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# Key Occupations



Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency

## Destinations: key messages

- PhDs offer a full package of skills and attributes
- PhD qualifications can take graduates beyond academia and research (38%)
- PhD graduates contribute to all sectors and occupations
- Employers value generic skills as well as specific knowledge
- PhDs are increasingly able to articulate their skills using the language of employers
- Many see great value in generic skills training they are now receiving



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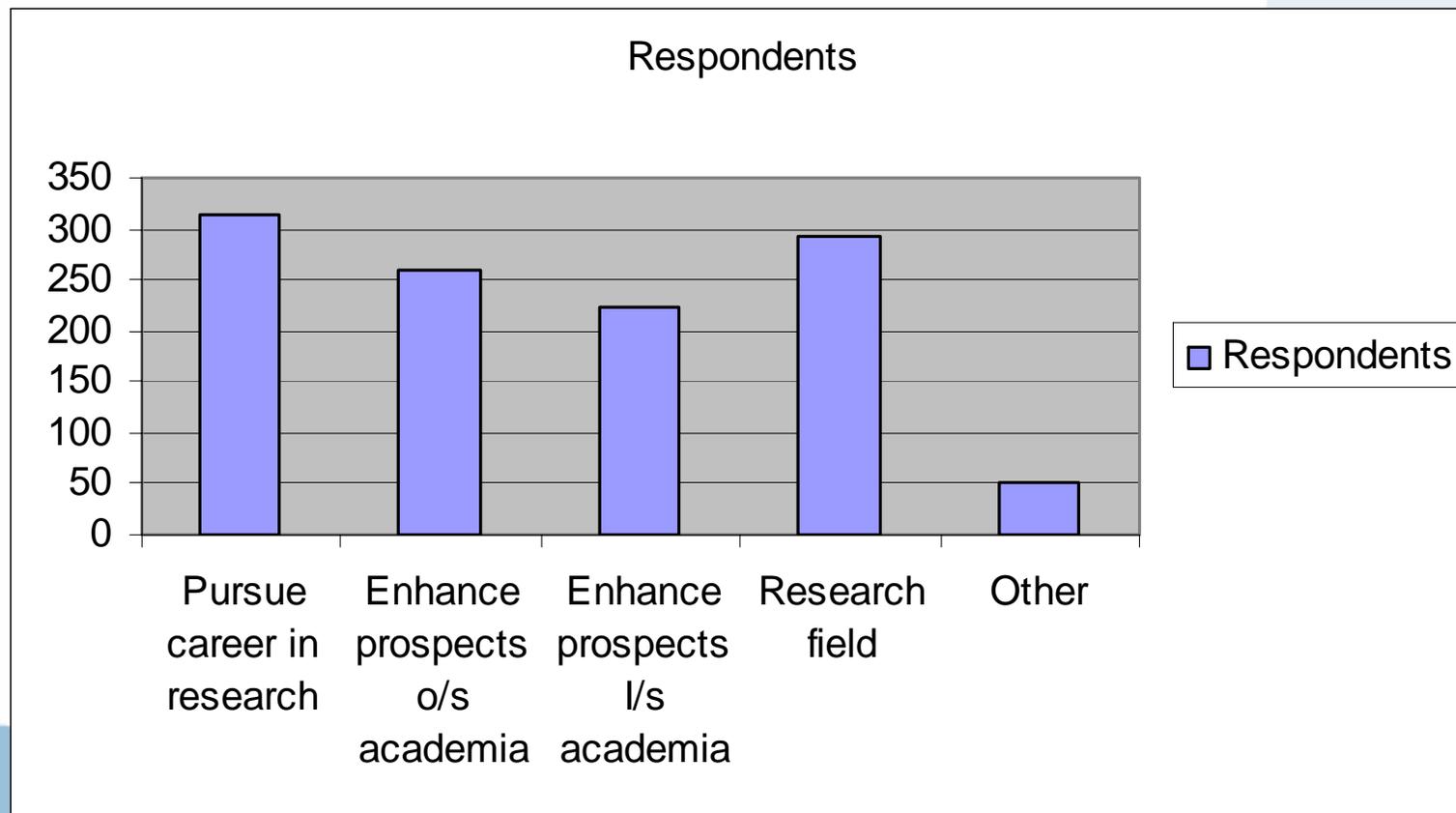
# Career Expectations Survey

- Part of internal strategic review about UK GRAD's work with employers
- Aim: to better understand the expectations PhDs had of the employment market, and their career aspirations
- 647 respondents, 90% full-time researchers
- 81% RC funded
- 60% + either at the end of their PhD or close to the end
- 85% were under 30 years old
- 43% 25 years old or under
- 97.8% EU/UK domiciled
- Not a representative sample!!!



# Career Expectations Survey

What was your core reason for undertaking a PhD?



# Career Expectations Survey

## Career expectations on starting PhD?

- 27% had a clear idea about what they wanted to do when finishing their PhD
- 51% had a vague idea of what they wanted to do on graduation
- 22% no clear career in mind

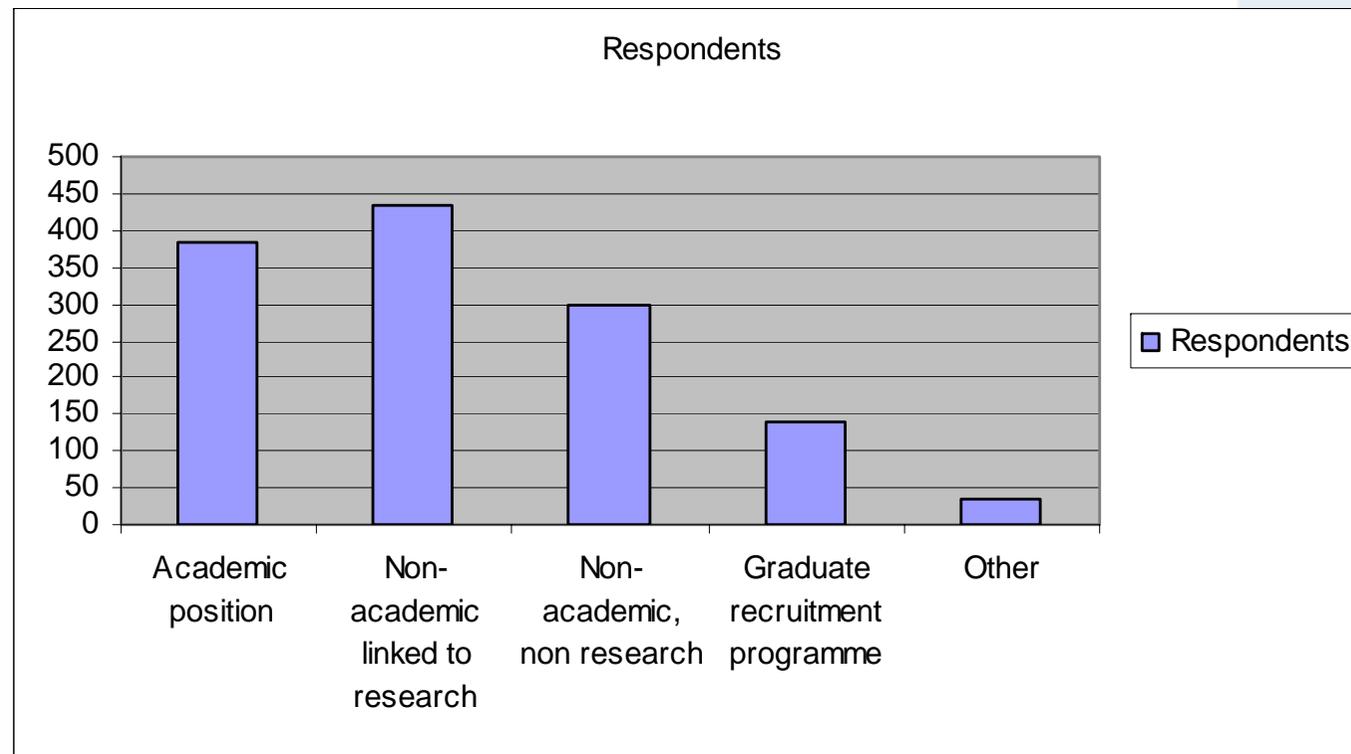
## Career expectations now?

- 20% clear about opportunities and what they want to do
- 28% clear about opps, not decided
- 45% some idea of opps, need to investigate more
- 7% not aware of opportunities available



# Career Expectations Survey

Which options are you considering on completion of PhD?



# Career Expectations Survey

## Salaries:

- 43% expect to be paid more due to their PhD status
- 33% don't know

## Careers provision

- 25% of respondents had visited the University Careers service while they were doing their PhD
- 33% had never visited their CAS (even as undergrad)

## Key themes:

- Perception PhD has positive impact - 72%
- Realistic proportion considering academic career
- Unaware of opportunities

# Key messages from employers

- Seven CRAC member companies

Why PhD graduates?

- An ability to work autonomously
- Independence of thought
- Research trained intellect
- Problem solving skills
- Communication skills
- Ability to manage upwards
- Experience of teaching/coaching
- A high level of maturity



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# Key messages from employers

## Reasons for hesitation

- Niche market
- Interested but will not commit additional resources
- Rarely treated differently
- Expectations of PhDs an issue
- PhD and undergrads are the same market
- Additional skills not worth paying extra for



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# Key messages from employers

CRAC members seminar - BGI cited the following challenges for UK PhDs:

- competition from other PhDs, particularly internationally
- increasing competition from masters students
- the difficulty of finding each other:
  - existing views of careers outside of academia, considered competition - lack of cooperation
  - less structured career provision
  - researchers unaware of opportunities available to them

# How are HEIs responding?

Two examples from the Database of Practice  
([www.grad.ac.uk/practice](http://www.grad.ac.uk/practice))

- Newcastle University: ‘learning by doing’
  - vocational learning and development, building a regional network of research employers
- Oxford Brookes: networking for young researchers and regional industry
  - research collaboration and employment opportunities, raising awareness of CRS skills locally

# How can researchers respond?

Opportunity to discuss in groups emerging issues:

- existing views of careers outside of academia
- less structured career provision
- researchers unaware of opportunities available to them

Share current ideas and practice to consider:

- How can we help researchers to bridge the gap?
- How can we build useful links with local employers?
- Report back three top tips



# Other resources

## ESECT

- Employability and doctoral research postgraduates
- [www.grad.ac.uk/publications](http://www.grad.ac.uk/publications)

## UK GRAD Annual Conference

- Supporting researchers – our investment for the future
- 7 September 2006, London
- [www.grad.ac.uk/events](http://www.grad.ac.uk/events)



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