Restructuring the ASA: Findings on the Condition of UK Anthropology 2023

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Outline

This report sets out findings on the present condition of UK anthropology, and the ASA's place within it. Research carried out from February-June 2023 aimed to investigate three main areas. First, the number of social anthropology PhDs and postdocs enrolled or working in UK institutions. Second, the post-PhD career destinations of anthropologists graduating from UK institutions. Third, the perspectives anthropologists have of the ASA as an organisation. The overarching project sought to focus on the status of individuals at the earliest stages of their career in social anthropology, aiming to identify what the association needs to do to foster relationships with them as they shape the future of the discipline.

The first two areas of research were investigated independently and via collaborations with UK anthropology departments. Perspectives on the ASA were gathered via a survey disseminated among UK-based postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and early career researchers (ECRs). Findings presented here demonstrate several pertinent issues to be considered as part of the ASA's process of restructuring. Survey data shows **that a significant proportion of PGRs and ECRs hold concerns, or encounter barriers, that prevent them from engaging in meaningful interactions with the association**, and from attending ASA events. The costs associated with ASA membership and conference registration fees were particularly notable examples of such barriers, as well as a lack of information on the association's purpose and activities.

A series of recommendations are made in this report based upon conclusions drawn from the presented data. Recommendations include **reducing costs for PGRs and ECRs**, alongside offering them assistance in sourcing funding; **taking a greater role in disseminating information to PGRs and ECRs**, on social anthropology generally, and on the association's goals and activities**; acting as a facilitator** in helping to set up PGR and ECR networks and sponsoring PGR and ECR led events; and continuing to **lead the way in investigating the condition of social anthropology in the UK by commissioning and disseminating original research**.

Research Impetus: Key Objectives and Questions

This project was commissioned by the ASA to investigate how the association can ensure its continued relevancy to the contemporary landscape of anthropology in the UK. Trends in the discipline have seen an **increasing emphasis on interdisciplinarity and engagement with organisations outside the traditional domains of academia**. These trends place new demands on the ASA as a professional association. To retain its place at the heart of the UK anthropology community, the association is looking to restructure, increasing its inclusivity, and helping to shape the careers of anthropologists making their first steps within the field. To this end, this report details a selection of findings on the current state of the ASA, and British anthropology more generally. The aim is to utilise these findings to determine what next steps need to be taken in the restructuring project to address the issues most pressing to UK-based anthropologists.

Key research objectives were:

- **Mapping the present landscape of anthropology in the UK.**

- **Gathering data on post-PhD career destinations of those completing PhDs in social anthropology in the UK.**

- **Gathering data on the current awareness and perception of the ASA among UK based PGRs and ECRs.**

In investigating the present state of UK social anthropology, the ASA posed a series of research questions that this report shall address. These questions aim to build a picture showing what proportion of the UK anthropology community engages with, or is an active member of, the ASA, as well as looking at what their impressions are of the association, and how it could improve. The questions posed were:

1. **Approximately how many anthropology PhD students and post-docs are presently working in UK institutions?**

2. **What are typical career destinations for UK-trained anthropologists 5-10 years after completion of their PhD?**

3. **Approximately what percentage of UK-based anthropologists are actively engaging with the ASA (either through active membership or through attending activities and events)?**

4. **What do UK-based anthropologists think are the pressing issues for the discipline and what should a professional association like the ASA do to address them?**

The questions here will be discussed with direct reference to the data presented in this report. First, a full inventory of research findings is listed. Findings are displayed through data visualisations and analysed in the next section. Analysis of each area of findings includes essential notes of the methodological steps taken to collect the data. Next, conclusions on each area of data are drawn, directly bringing the findings to bear upon each of the research questions and objectives. Following on from these conclusions, a set of recommendations are made. Recommendations raise broad areas of concern brought to light in the research findings and suggest some specific courses of action to tackle each area. Finally, a full breakdown of the methodological approaches employed in carrying out the project is provided at the end of the report.

Findings

1. **Approximate number of anthropology PhD students and postdocs enrolled/working in UK institutions.**

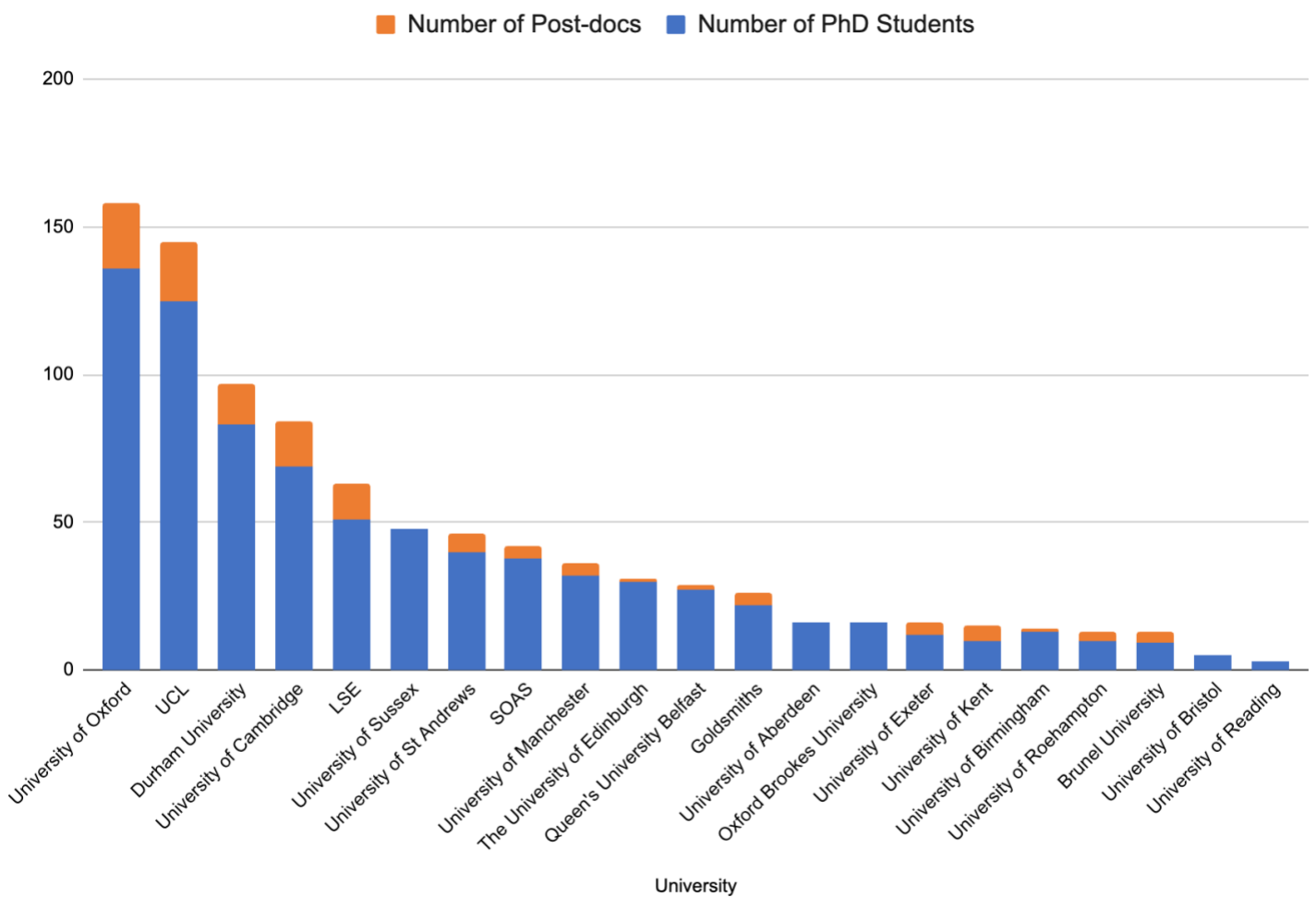**Figure 1 – Number of PhD students and postdocs by institution**

Figure 1 shows approximate numbers of PhD students and postdocs at the **21 different institutions** that were confirmed to have departments educating

anthropologists to PhD level. In total, across all institutions examined there were approximately **795 PhD students** and **121 postdocs**. This data was gathered via contact with administrators at each department. Where information on postdoc and student numbers was not available this way, data was gathered independently by accessing online profile pages for research students and postdocs on department websites.

The numbers here are **approximate because of difficulty in conclusively defining whether individual PhD students or postdocs would identify their primary field as social anthropology**. Students enrolled in anthropology departments conducted research in fields that intersect and overlap with social anthropology (for example, migration studies or human ecology). Where data was gathered independently, the main criteria for deciding whether individuals should be included in the final count or not was whether they may realistically be interested in becoming ASA members. Those whose work encompassed or overlapped with significant areas of interest for social anthropology were included, while those with very little, or no connection to social anthropology (primarily biological anthropology and archaeology PhD students) were omitted. This is of course an imperfect means of accounting for the total population of social anthropology PhD students and postdocs since judgements of this nature are inherently subjective.

2. **Career destinations of those graduating from UK anthropology departments**

2.1 Independently gathered career destination data

Figure 2 – Present occupations of those completing PhDs in social anthropology from 2012-2022
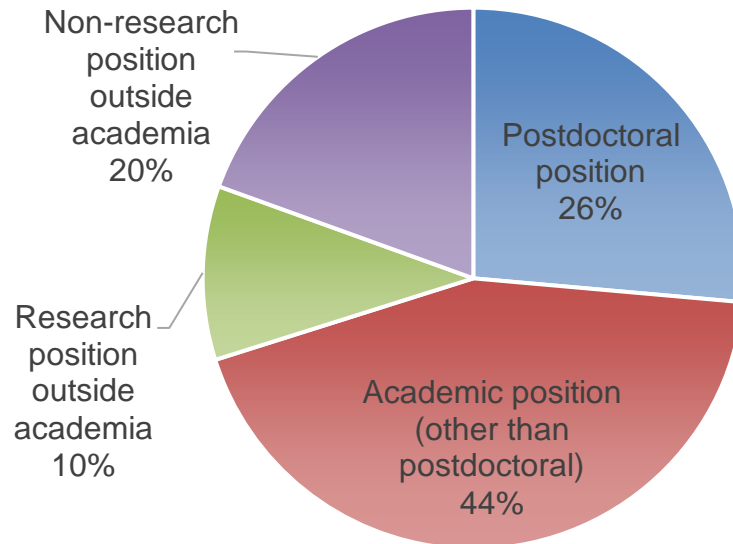
Post PhD career destination data was primarily gathered independently, using publicly available theses repositories. Current occupation of those who had completed a PhD in social anthropology and had a copy of their thesis publicly available was determined by searching for information online. Linkedin and organisational staff profile pages were the main source of information on current occupations. Information on **309** individuals' occupations was publicly available, drawing names of those completing PhDs from repositories from **4 institutions**: the University of Aberdeen, the University of Cambridge, the University of Durham, and the University of Edinburgh.

Figure 2 examines the occupations of those finishing PhDs in the last 10 years, between 2012 and 2022. In total this amounted to **231** individuals' occupations that could be determined. Occupations have been split into four categories: 'postdoctoral position', 'academic position (other than postdoctoral)' generally signifying a more senior academic position, 'research position outside academia', and 'non-research position outside academia'. The aim of coding the data this way was to assess **how many of those completing PhDs in social anthropology are still working within the discipline to some extent**. Those with postdoctoral, or more senior academic positions, have generally continued work connected to social anthropology. Those working in research fields outside academia are generally self-

describing anthropologists working for organisations such as consultancies and NGOs. Those working in non-research positions outside academia are generally no longer explicitly engaged in the field of social anthropology through their occupations.

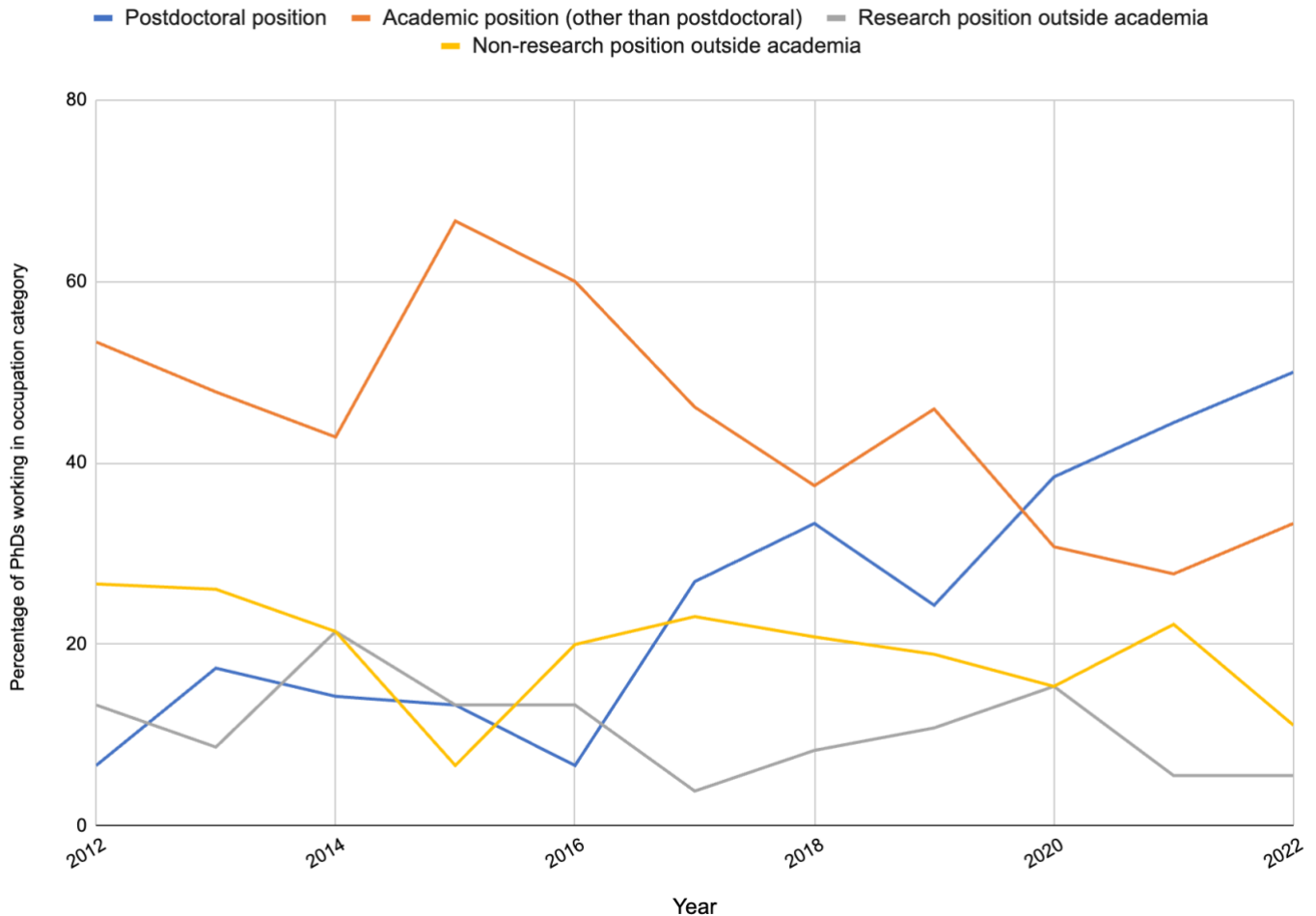**Figure 3 - Percentages of PhDs graduating 2012-2022 by current occupation category.**

Figure 3 depicts the percentages of the sample of social anthropology PhDs working in each occupation category tracked against the year they completed their PhD. Both **figures 2** and **3** show that **the majority do still work in academia**. As is to be expected, the number in postdoctoral positions is higher among those who completed their PhD more recently, as most are presumably yet to progress to more senior academic roles. The **percentage** of those currently working **outside**

academia remains **relatively consistent, regardless of when individuals completed their PhD**. It should be noted that those working in academic roles outside the UK have generally been counted with those holding academic positions that are not postdoctoral, unless their position is generally acknowledged to correspond with the grade of a UK postdoc.

2.2 Career destination data provided by UK anthropology departments

The majority of the **21 anthropology departments** contacted as part of this project were not able to share data on career destinations as per institutional policy. The anthropology departments at **UCL** and **LSE** were able to provide detailed data. Other departments offered general statements on the areas of work their PhD graduates went into.

LSE noted that **"Of the fifty-four PhD students who graduated between 2016 and 2022, forty-two have proceeded to either post-doctoral research or teaching fellowships, or to permanent academic appointments."** The most common employer industries for LSE PhD graduates were **Education and teaching**, and **government and politics**.

Figure 4 – UCL Anthropology PhD graduates by industry

Industry sectors

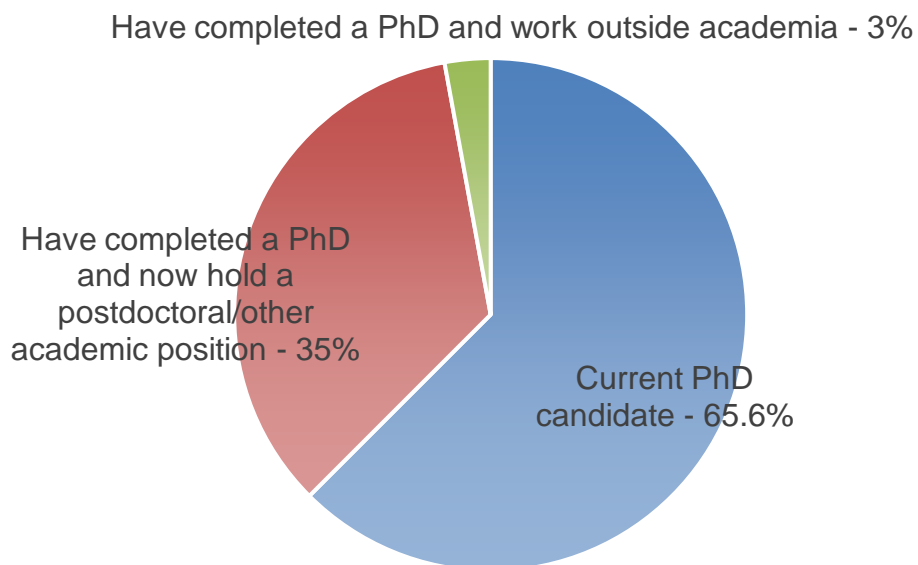| Industry	Percentage
Media	16.5%
Academic Research and HE	10.8%
Health and Social Care	10.2%
IT, technology & telecommunications	9.0%
Teaching or other educational activities	7.8%
Social or Market Research	4.8%
Performance and Creative Arts	4.8%
Retail and Wholesale activities	4.5%
Publishing, Journalism, or Translation	4.5%
Manufacturing	3.3%
PR, Advertising, Marketing	3.0%
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	3.0%
Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism	2.7%
Consultancy	2.4%
Scientific Research, development & analysis	2.1%
Accountancy & Financial Services	2.1%
Policy and Government	1.5%
Charities, NGOs and international development	1.5%
Security and Intelligence	0.9%
Law	0.9%

UCL provided a breakdown of the industries their PhD graduates were currently employed in, which can be seen in **Figure 4**. The graph displays the percentages of graduates now working in each employer industry category. In total, the graph reflects data gathered from **35 PhD graduates**. In contrast to the independently gathered data on career destinations, UCL's data shows **'Media'** as the most popular industry for anthropology PhD graduates, ahead of academia.

3. Survey Responses

A survey on perceptions of the ASA was disseminated to UK-based PGRs and ECRs from March-May 2023. In total, **106** respondents completed the survey. Their answers to each survey question are visualised and analysed below.

3.1 Respondent Occupations

Figure 5 – Respondent occupation

Have completed a PhD and work outside academia - 3%

Have completed a PhD and now hold a postdoctoral/other academic position - 35%

Current PhD candidate - 65.6%

Respondents were asked to give their present occupation, choosing from three categories: 'current PhD candidate'; 'have completed a PhD and now hold a postdoctoral/other academic position'; or have completed a PhD and now work outside academia. The survey was primarily targeted at PGRs and ECRs and so PhD candidates and postdocs make up the majority of those who responded.

3.2 Respondent Demographics
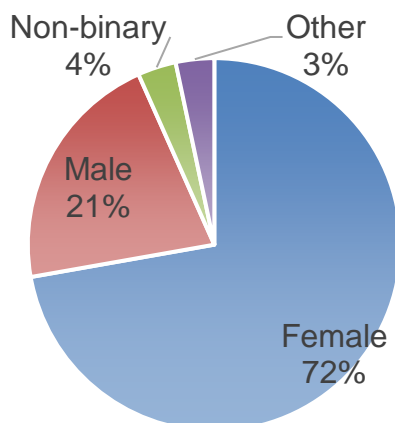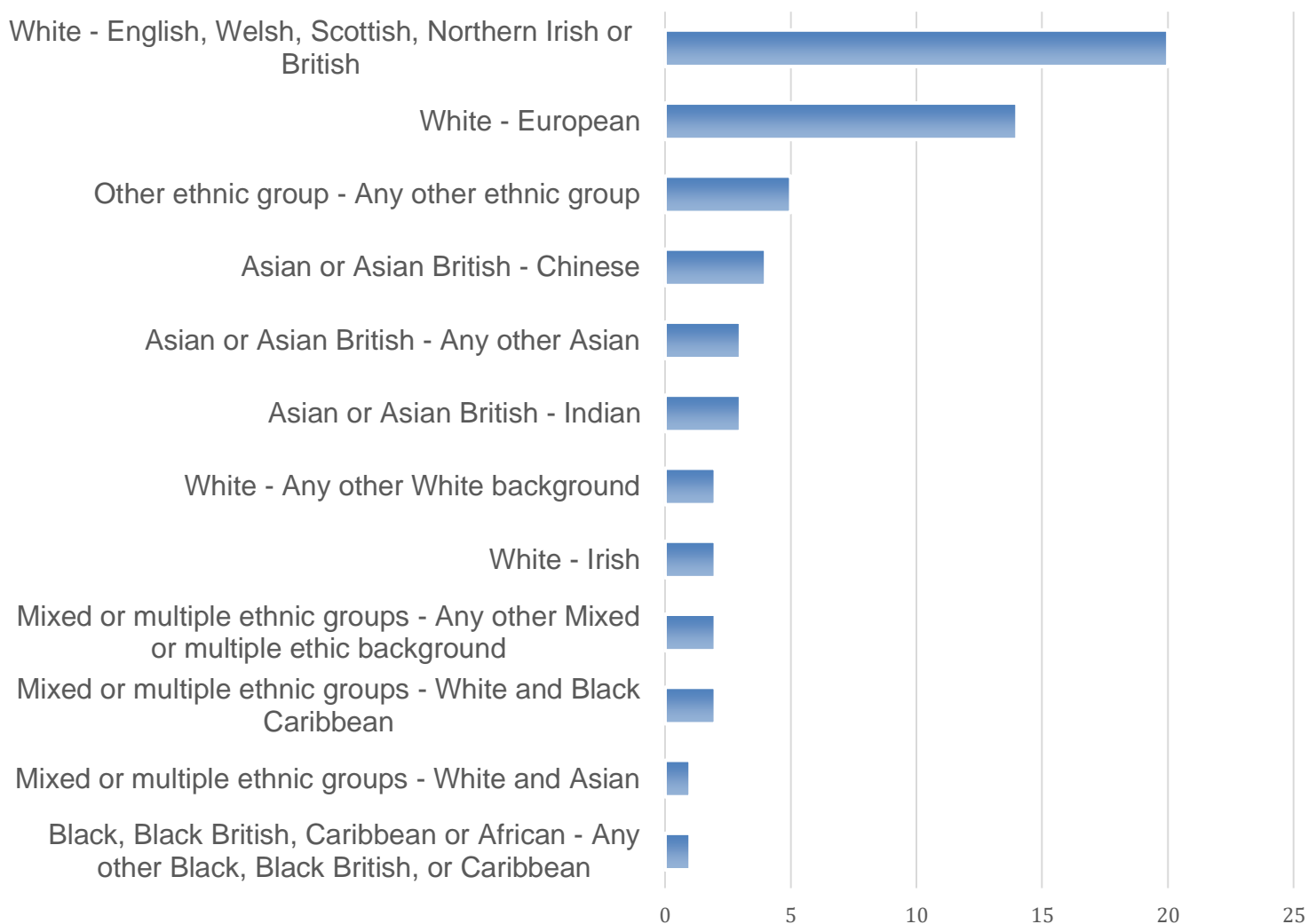
Figure 6 – Respondent gender

Non-binary
4%

Other
3%

Male
21%

Female
72%

Figure 7 – Respondent ethnicity

Ethnicity	Count
White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	20
White - European	14
Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group	5
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	4
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian	3
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3
White - Any other White background	2
White - Irish	2
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Any other Mixed or multiple ethic background	2
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean	2
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian	1
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean	1

Demographic information on respondents' gender and ethnicity was collected via the survey. Respondents could enter their own identity categorisations or choose not to divulge this information. For ease of representation here, the demographic information has been coded. **Figure 6** shows coded responses, using the categories: 'female', 'non-binary', 'male', and 'other'. Ethnicity (shown in **Figure** 7) was coded using the UK census categorisation of ethnic groups (with the addition of 'White European as a distinct category since a significant number or respondents chose to describe their ethnicity using this term). Respondents' full, uncoded answers to the demographic questions can be seen by accessing the complete data set.

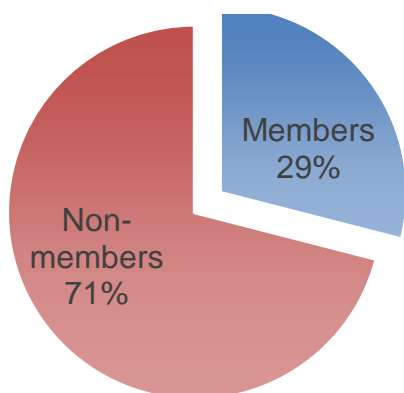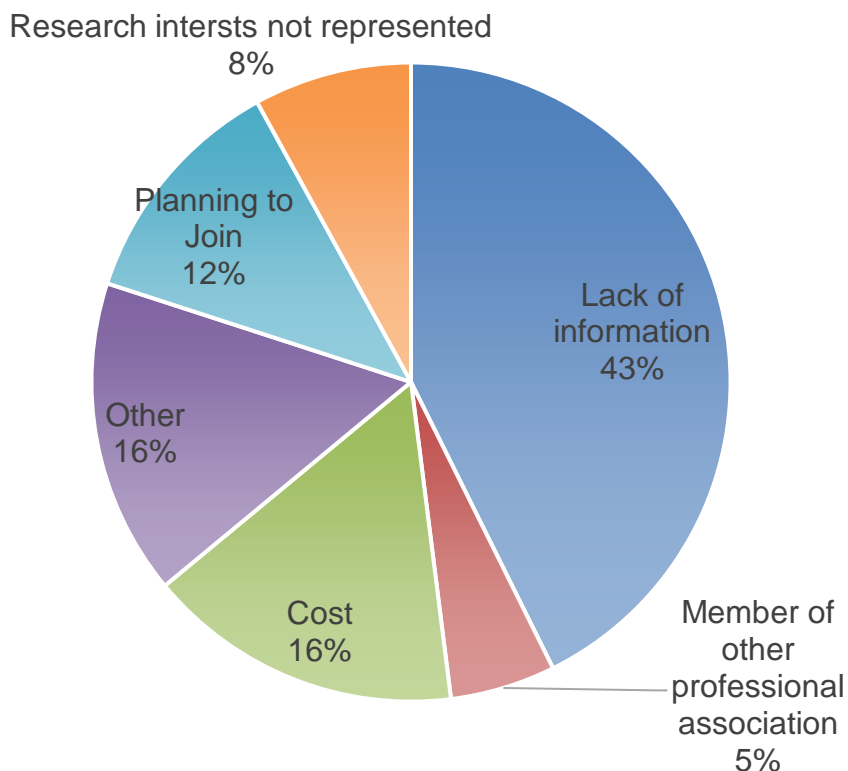### 3.3 ASA Membership

Figure 8 - Are respondents ASA members?

Members
29%

Non-members
71%

Figure 9 - Non-member reasons for not joining ASA.

Research intersts not represented
8%

Planning to Join
12%

Lack of information
43%

Other
16%

Cost
16%

Member of other professional association
5%

Out of the **106 people** who completed the survey, **29** were already ASA members, **72** were not, and **5** chose not to answer (**Figure 8** shows the percentage breakdown of those who did respond). Those who identified themselves as non-members were asked to provide their reasons for not yet signing up. Responses were coded according to the most common reasons given for not yet becoming ASA members. **Figure 9** shows the percentage of responses fitting each category. Those who responded by saying they were already a member of another professional association listed organisations such as the EASA or AAA as their preferred association. The 'research interests not represented' category refers to answers in which the respondent felt that the ASA did not hold events or activities that engaged with their area of research.

3.4 ASA Event Attendance

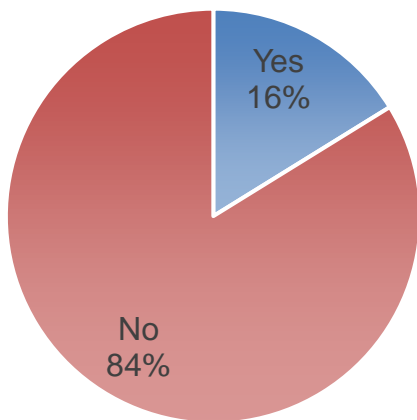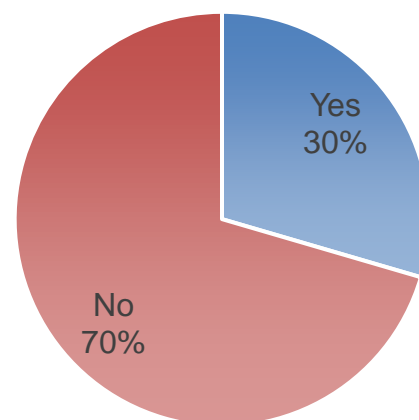**Figure 10 - Have respondents attended an ASA event in the last 12 months?**

Yes 16%
No 84%

Figure 11 – Have respondents ever attended an ASA event?

Yes 30%
No 70%

Respondents were queried as to their attendance at ASA events. Of the **106** surveyed, **17** had attended an ASA event within the last 12 months. It should be noted that this figure will have been **affected** by the fact that survey dissemination took place predominantly prior to the **2023 ASA conference**. **31** respondents reported having attended some form of ASA event in the past. They also reported which events they attended and in what capacity. The **ASA conference was the event most popular among the responses given**, with most of those attending doing so in the capacity of a speaker or panel organiser.

3.4 ASA Network Membership

Figure 12 – Respondent membership in ASA networks
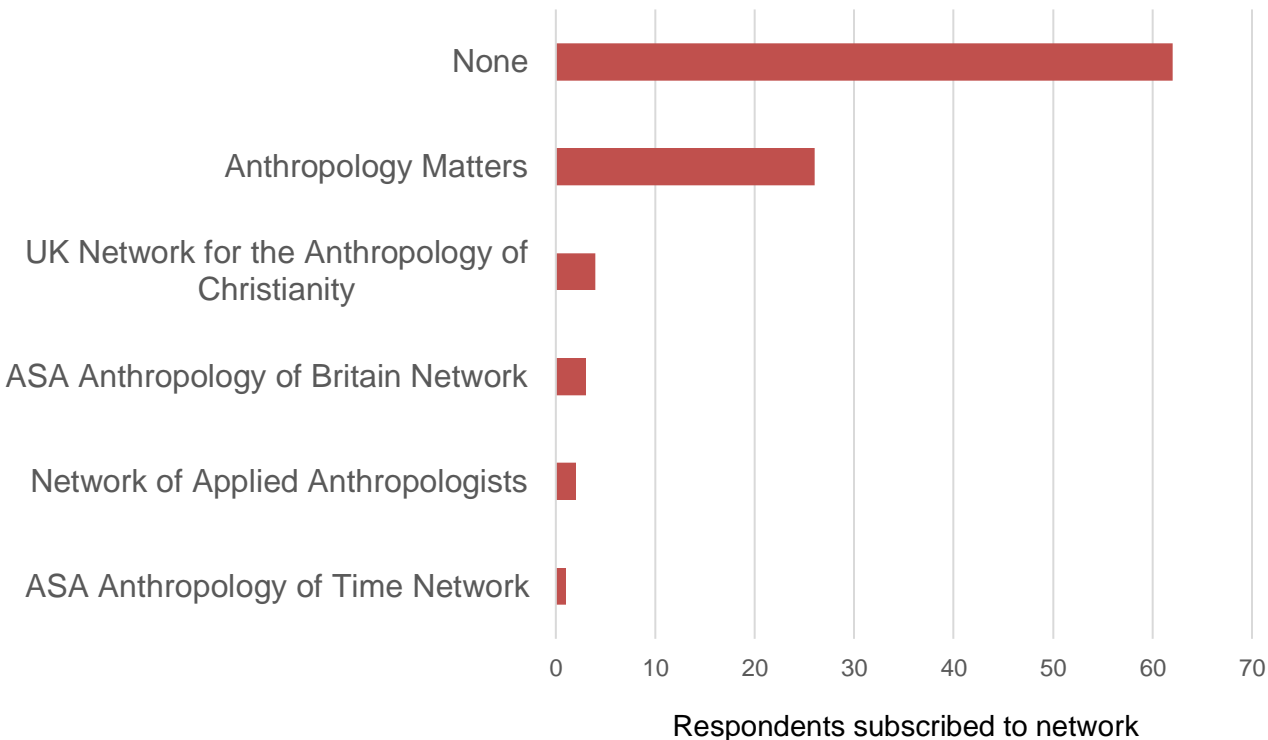
Respondents were asked to report which ASA networks they were a part of if any. **Figure 12** displays the breakdown of answers. In total, **62** of those who completed the survey were not a member of any ASA network. **Anthropology Matters** was the most subscribed to network, with **26** members among the respondents. Although this is a complete list of the networks currently listed on the ASA website, some may be inactive.

3.5 Future ASA Events and Membership

When asked what events they thought were best for disseminating anthropological research and issues, respondents affirmed the value of activities such as workshops, conferences, and lectures while also suggesting **some format changes to make such events more accessible**. Some respondents called for more recurrent events, rather than retaining a focus on 'one off' yearly conferences. Several respondents also noted that an increase in the number of online events would

increase accessibility and could provide options for networking as an alternative to paid events that early career researchers might struggle to afford. **The traditional lecture format for academic events was subject to criticism because of a perceived lack of opportunity for engagement and conversation, as well as because of a tendency for such events to perpetuate academic hierarchies**. Smaller events, catering specifically to the needs of early career researchers were a popular suggestion, with an emphasis on informality and the ability to socialise.

Quotes responding to Q.10 – What types of events do you think are best suited to the discussion of anthropological research and issues (for example, conferences like ASA 2023, thematic workshops, lectures such as the Malinowski Lecture etc.)?

"Any event that brings together **colleagues across institutions** in a venue intimate enough to allow for questions and **smaller conversations as well as large presentations.**"

"**Thematic workshops** would be interesting and **collaborative**, more useful for students. Lectures are always a decent idea but shouldn't be the bulk of it."

"There needs to be a **range of activities**. The annual conference is important but because there are so many parallel panels one ends up talking to a very small audience of other panel members and therefore **preaching to the choir**. Smaller roundtables with invited guests and papers circulated beforehand will invite **deeper discussion** but can also be very **exclusionary**."

"Thematic workshop and similar events that are open to **anthropologists working outside academia**. Conferences can be quite **expensive** and often not terribly known to non-academia/other academic disciplines so not all employers will cover registration and other costs."

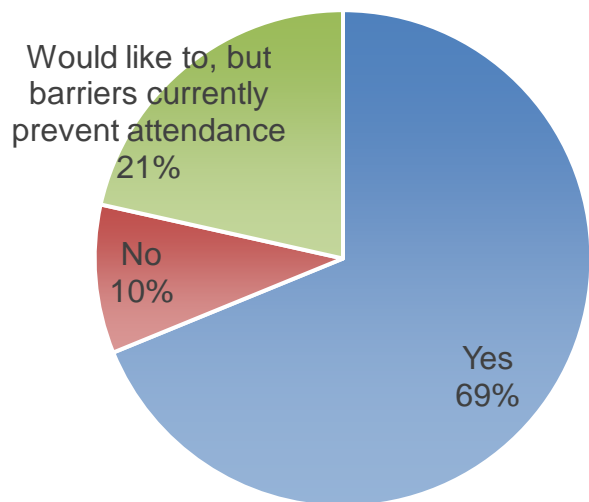**Figure 13 – Are respondents interested in attending future ASA events?**

Figure 14 - Barriers and concerns preventing respondents from attending ASA events.
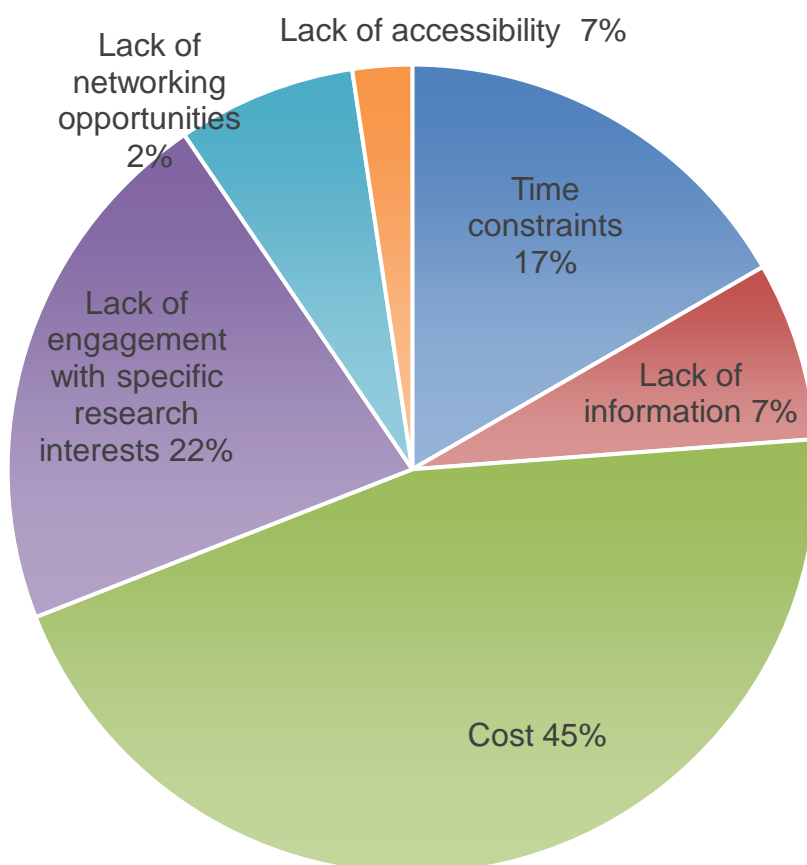
Would like to, but barriers currently prevent attendance 21%

No 10%

Yes 69%

Lack of accessibility 7%

Lack of networking opportunities 2%

Time constraints 17%

Lack of engagement with specific research interests 22%

Lack of information 7%

Cost 45%

Figure 15 - For those respondents who are not currently ASA members, would they consider becoming members in the future?
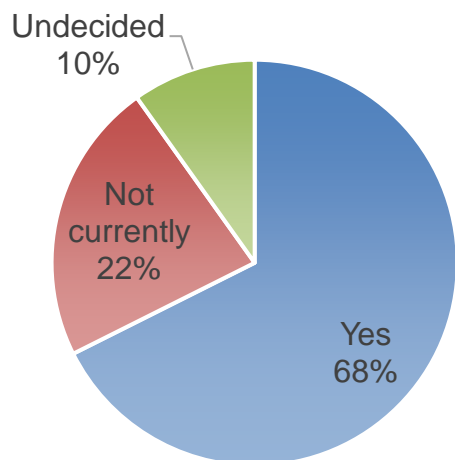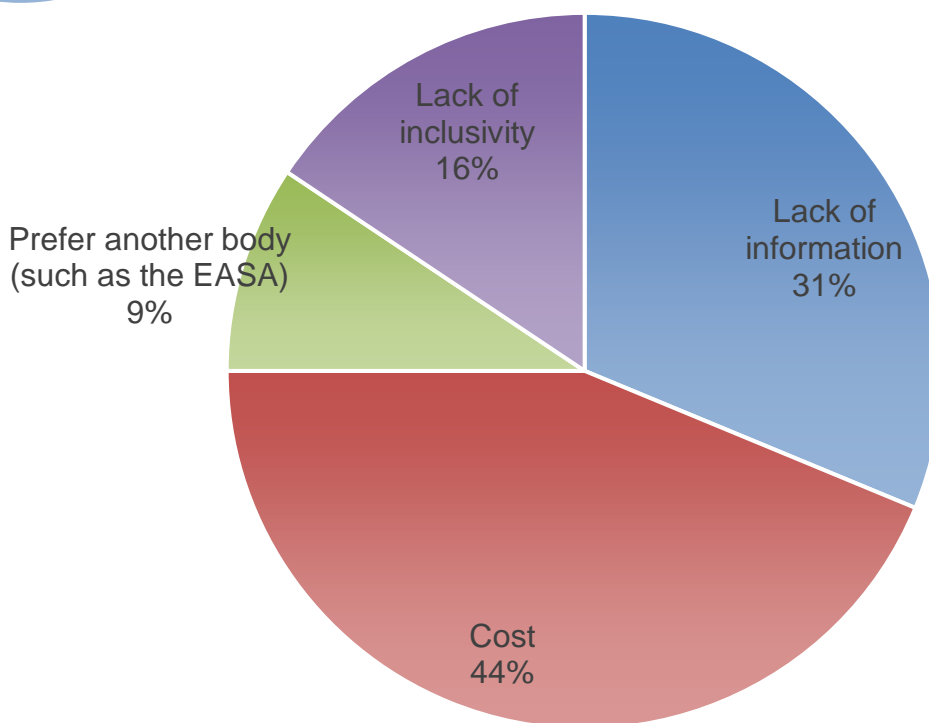
Undecided
10%

Not
currently
22%

Yes
68%

Figure 16 – Barriers and concerns preventing respondents from becoming ASA members.

Lack of
inclusivity
16%

Prefer another body
(such as the EASA)
9%

Lack of
information
31%

Cost
44%

Respondents were asked whether they would consider attending future ASA events, and whether they would consider becoming ASA members if they were not already signed up. **90%** said they would be interested in attending events in the future (although **21%** had concerns that currently prevented them attending), while **68%** said they would consider becoming members. Respondents were also given space to cite their reasons for or against attending future ASA events and/or signing up for ASA membership. In terms of membership, **44%** of respondents who raised specific issues (**13.21%** of total respondents) cited **cost** as a central factor in their

decision-making process, with cost frequently raised as a contingent factor even where respondents had answered 'yes'. Other common reasons for questioning whether they might pursue membership included a **lack of information on the ASA**, its activities, and the **potential benefits of membership**, as well as a **lack of inclusivity**, and a preference for other professional bodies, such as the EASA.

Quotes responding to Q.12 - If you are not already a member of the ASA, would you consider becoming one in the future? Please indicate your reasons for or against becoming a member.

"I actually **hadn't heard of the ASA until now**. I had to google it. I'm a member of the RAI. **What's the difference between ASA and the RAI?** Why should I join ASA on top of that? I joined EASA once to go to a conference. How does that relate to ASA? **What do anthropology associations do and why?**"

"Probably not. If membership gave me **free or very low cost access to the conference**, I might become a member."

"No, historically this has not been a good space for **'othered' researchers**. there is no meaningful plan to redress or address past harms and to make it **a genuinely inclusive space**."

In relation to respondents' interest in future ASA events, similar concerns were raised as those pertinent to membership. Those answering 'yes' often attached contingent factors. Again, cost was the most cited factor, with **45%** of respondents who listed a potential barrier to them attending a future event (**17.92%** of total respondents) mentioned that it could be an issue for them **given current fees associated with the ASA conference**. The second most common issue was the perception that respondents' specific **research interests** would **not** be **represented** at events. Other factors included time constraints, a lack of accessibility (for instance where events were not accessible online), and a lack of information/visibility for ASA events. Although limitations in terms of networking opportunities was raised as a potential issue, the opportunity to build networks was

referenced frequently by respondents who felt positively about attending ASA events in the future.

Quotes responding to Q.11 – Would you consider attending any future ASA events? Please indicate your reasons for or against attending future events.

"I would, however I'm **limited in my ability to travel** for and attend events as I'm **not funded** by my university or funder to do so, and as a PhD student, **my stipend is not sufficient to cover this**."

"I would like to have come to the ASA conference at SOAS but **didn't see any panels that fitted with my work**, and (due to job changes) wasn't in a position to pull a panel together. I therefore didn't submit a paper and therefore don't want to pay fees to attend. It's a shame but it's **expensive to just come as a participant**."

"I'd be open to attending, but **haven't seen it advertised**. I think this is a key gap for applied anthropologists - e.g. **where can we find out about such conferences?** We use LinkedIn a lot for work, for instance."

3.6 Future ASA Activities

Figure 17 – Respondent ideas for what the ASA should do more of in the future.
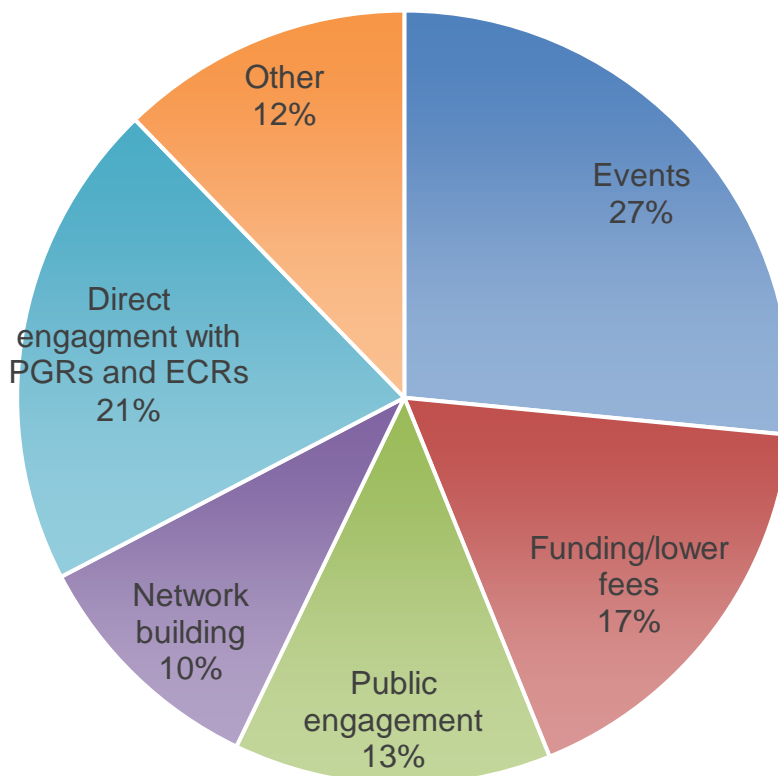
Asked what the ASA should do more of in the future, respondents had a wide array of ideas for activities and ways to change how the association currently interacts with PGRs and ECRs. **26** responses mentioned events directly, with answers suggesting that a **continued focus on events like conferences** should be the main purpose of the ASA. **20** responses include some reference to a desire for **greater direct contact between the ASA and PGRs and ECRs**. As in answers to previous questions, the issue of fees and funding was prominent. **17** responses highlighted either a need to make association **activities more accessible by lowering costs or called for greater assistance in sourcing funding for PGRs and ECRs** from the association.

Quotes responding to Q.13 – What do you think the ASA should do more in the future?

Evidence-based public outreach (i.e. first study **what the public wants to know**, and in what formats it would be most likely to **engage with ASA content**, before beginning to produce that content)

Become **more inclusive**. At the moment, it really doesn't seem to accommodate diversity very much, especially in terms of career stage and **geographical/national representation**. Make **fees** more accessible.

More engagement for the **younger generation of academics** – conference opportunities, etc. for students and phds still gaining experience and maybe don't have enough data for a full conference paper.

more focus on **early phd students**, more transparency into how academia functions, **more outreach** for **mentorship** and **guidance** into the very inaccessible and **opaque world of academia**

Definitely **publicise better** what it is and what it does amongst PhD researchers and continue to **provide platforms for academic exchange**, engagement and collaboration that could culminate in written or other forms of academic and wider social dissemination.

More organised events during conferences or outside conferences specifically geared to **building a community feeling** that defines **'British anthropology'**. Meetings and groups outside of panel format or lecture format that encourage **networking**, community building, and exchange of ideas. Perhaps more organised small social events throughout conferences with a theme instead of the big conference dinner/night. Also specifically **grad-student events at conferences**. Maybe have some flagship workshops or lectures on what exactly IS British anthropology (British anthropology past, present, future... that sort of thing). As attending conferences gets more expensive and harder to do, I feel like **the ASA offers relatively little value to most attendees outside of just presenting a panel and catching up with whoever managed to attend** (both of which can also be done **online**). Events that contribute to bringing scholars together in a more collegial and structured way would be welcome.

Conclusions

Potential Membership

The data gathered demonstrates that there is a significant pool of UK-based PGRs and ECRs who are potential members of the ASA. The ASA directory of members currently lists **480** members in total, a number dwarfed by the estimated **887** potential members identified through this research, which of course was limited to accounting for PGRs and ECRs only, without considering anthropologists who may be at a later stage of their careers. Recent attendance of the 2023 ASA conference further demonstrates the potential for the association to expand its membership, with **560** registered delegates. While this relatively healthy level of engagement with ASA activities is encouraging, this project has identified a number of significant **barriers**, particularly prevalent among PGRs and ECRs, that are preventing ASA events from being truly representative of the UK's anthropology community.

Events and Membership Cost

Cost was the most common factor cited by respondents when considering potential barriers to ASA membership, and future attendance to ASA events. Some reported finding the cost of membership too high, but a greater proportion were simply **unaware of what the benefits of membership might be** and could therefore not justify the cost. Confusion over the functions of the ASA appeared to exacerbate this issue. As recorded in (**Figure 9** and **Figure 16**), several respondents felt that their membership with another association (such as the EASA or the RAI) was a barrier to membership with the ASA. In some instances, this may have been down to the added cost of further professional association membership, but in at least one case the respondent reported confusion over the interaction between the ASA and the RAI. A couple of respondents who did comment upon the benefits of membership did not feel they represented good value for money.

In terms of events, respondents predominantly focused on the conference, with **45%** of those citing barriers to attending ASA events, noting cost as an issue. Many respondents expressed a **desire to be more active** in attending ASA events, but that a lack of options for covering the registration fee, as well as other expenses such as

travel and accommodation, made their attendance **unfeasible**. This view was particularly emphasised in some responses regarding **the prospect of attending an event such as the ASA conference as a participant** who was not organising or speaking on a panel. It may be inferred that the expense of attending the conference was only potentially offset by the potential **career advancement associated with organising or presenting a panel**. Furthermore, some respondents noted that while membership does offer a discount for conference registration, this discount was not **nearly sufficient to justify the price of membership**, or meaningfully enable them to be able to afford registration.

Information on ASA events

Aside from event cost, one of the most cited reasons for a lack of interest in attending future ASA events related to a **perception of the limited scope of research interests** relevant to any particular event. Some respondents noted that they would not be attending the ASA 2023 conference because they did not believe the theme resonated with their own area of research, or because they felt their own work had nothing to contribute to the discussions happening around the conference theme. It is important to note that many early career researchers may be **totally unfamiliar with the conventional conference format**, and perhaps assume that the conference theme has a larger influence on the topics of the panels taking place at the conference than is accurate. These respondents expressed a need to feel that their specific area of research would be presented and well-received at such an event if they were to consider attending in the future.

Engagement with networks

As demonstrated by **Figure 12**, engagement by survey respondents with ASA networks is relatively low. Anthropology Matters was by far the most subscribed to network among the PGRs and ECRs who completed the survey. This is perhaps to be expected, given the objectives of Anthropology Matters (providing information on events, publications, and job opportunities) are especially well aligned with the presumed goals of PGRs and ECRs. Nevertheless, the success of Anthropology Matters shows that the **ASA has the capacity to aid in building networks** that form an active part of anthropologists' engagement with their wider academic community.

What PGRs and ECRs want out of events

Those who completed the survey responded positively to the notion of an increase in ASA events. The established formats of academic events (conferences, thematic workshops etc.) generally found favour, but some respondents did note **improvements** that could be made to these formats. An increase in **accessibility** was the most widely called for change to the present format of ASA events. Accessibility here, meaning an increase in the possible modes of engagement through which participants can access events, and a removal of the barriers currently preventing them from attending. Cost was one aspect of ASA events that was noted as reducing accessibility. Online and hybrid events were highlighted by some respondents as particularly accessible, enabling more regular communication and collaboration than in person events. Other suggestions for improving events included **catering them more towards an engagement with other academic disciplines, or with the public, as well as calls for a greater quantity of small-scale social events that may be especially catered to PGRs and ECRs**. Lectures were the only established format of academic events that were found **lacking**, primarily because of the lack of opportunity for discussion and collaboration.

What PGRs and ECRs feel the ASA should be doing more

Many respondents noted that a focus on future events should be a primary concern for the ASA. However, the responses noted above regarding changes to events, in addition to other feedback given in response to question 13, indicate that PGRs and ECRs completing the survey feel that the **ASA's approach to organising events could be improved**. The two areas arising most frequently after a call for more events were: a general increase in the amount of **direct engagement** the ASA has with PGRs and ECRs, and an increase in **funding opportunities** or reduction of costs (such as conference registration and membership fees). These responses speak to a desire among PGRs and ECRs for the ASA to **take greater notice of their situations and needs**. In general, responses in this area overlapped significantly, with concerns over costs, network building, and direct engagement from the association all feeding into the way the ASA approaches the planning of events and activities. One other issue raised called for the association to take more of a leading

role in assisting anthropologists to communicate with the public, an area that may also concern future events and activities planning.

Recommendations

1. **Reduce costs for PGRs and ECRs and help them to find opportunities for funding.**

The data presented in this report demonstrates that the cost of entry into ASA events and membership is too high for a significant proportion of PGRs and ECRs. Regarding membership, the ASA should explore ways to introduce new members at the start of their careers, without the barrier of cost standing in the way. One suggestion would be to offer free membership, for at least one year, to PhD students enrolled at UK universities. This would afford PGRs the opportunity to become acquainted with the association, and may encourage them to participate in ASA activities, networks, and events. PGRs who could engage with the ASA may find their own value in the collaborations and relationships fostered by the association, making the prospect of continued membership far more attractive, even if a cost were involved to maintain membership. Removing this barrier to entry would allow PGRs to become acquainted with the ASA's functions from the earliest point in their careers and enable them to see it as an integral part of the UK anthropology community.

In terms of ASA events, if the association can hope to attract a greater proportion of PGRs and ECRs, addressing the costs associated with attendance will be critical. This change could be brought about by subsidising conference registration fees for PGRs and ECRs. A reduction in costs could be implemented by adding gradations to the present range of course fees. For example, **special rates for unfunded PhD students could be introduced, as well as for unaffiliated ECRs who may have only just completed their PhD**. The reduction in fees could also be introduced via the membership system. If PGRs and/or ECRs were offered membership with a significant discount on conference registration fees, this may attract potential ASA members as well as enabling greater attendance at events. It is also worth considering a collaboration with anthropology departments to help PGRs to attend events.

Some departments already offer funding to PhD students to cover the cost of registration fees, travel, and accommodation associated with conferences. However, **PGRs may not access these departmental resources, because of the requirement for them to take on costs originally, and then wait to be reimbursed by their department following submission of an application for funds**. This process could be streamlined if the ASA could collaborate with departments to cut out the step during which students must be out of pocket. For instance, **departmental liaisons could be responsible for setting up a direct system whereby PhD students could apply for conference registration**, with their registration fees then covered directly by their department.

In addition to mitigating membership and events costs for PGRs and ECRs, the ASA should consider the benefits it provides its members and the ways it advertises these benefits. Presently, the ASA website lists the membership benefits for student associate members as including:

- The annual ASA monograph from Bloomsbury
- Reduced-rate admission to ASA conferences
- Advance information about ASA training courses
- Discounts on ASA monographs published by Bloomsbury

As demonstrated by the survey data presented in this report, **many respondents were either unaware of these benefits, or did not find them to be worth the cost of membership**. Offers of publications, or access to future publications, rely on the assumption that prospective members have prior experience with the quality of material published by the ASA. Given the concerns about costs raised by survey respondents (as well as their lack of familiarity with the association) it seems **unlikely** that many would consider receiving **publications** as a **benefit** that could secure their decision to subscribe.

Offering **reduced-rate admission to ASA events may prove a more attractive prospect to potential members**, but only if the discount is significant enough to justify the cost of the membership itself. The ASA website pages on full membership and associate membership focus almost exclusively on presenting the tangible benefits for members. **Information on the association's values or**

community is absent. The responses from those who filled out the survey indicated that what PGRs and ECRs want from a professional association is a form of **direct engagement** with them, and an **ability to facilitate their aims and projects**, something the ASA already does to some extent but **fails to advertise** as a benefit of becoming a member and an active participant in the association's community.

Ways in which the ASA may be able to directly offer funding to PGRs and ECRs may be limited, but it nevertheless has an important role to play in aiding those at the beginning of their careers to find opportunities. Seeking out relevant funding opportunities can be arduous, especially for PGRs and ECRs who are unfamiliar with the systems in place for distributing funding. The ASA already does some important work in terms of seeking out and disseminating calls for funding, such as through the Anthropology Matters network, but more could be done to **provide a general guide for PGRs and ECRs** who may appreciate advice geared towards communicating the fundamentals of funding applications. The association could also do more to raise the profile of anthropology, both within the academy, and by communicating important aspects of anthropological research to the public. As a broader and more long-term aim, the ASA should look to emphasise the importance of anthropological research in order to ensure adequate levels of funding are available to PGRs and ECRs.

2. **Disseminate information about the association and anthropology in the UK generally and act as a vital source of information for PGRs and ECRs.**

One of the major issues identified by the survey data presented here, is the **lack of awareness** many PGRs and ECRs have of the ASA. Some respondents noted **that the survey itself was the first contact** they had had with the ASA, or even noted that they had never heard of the ASA at all until receiving the survey. PGRs and ECRs who have already spent several years within the UK anthropology community without ever hearing about the ASA might understandably assume that it has very little role in shaping that community. This problem may have been particularly **exacerbated** among the present generation of PGRs and ECRs because of **reduced opportunities** to network and collaborate during the **pandemic**. The challenge for the ASA now is to determine how it can disseminate information about its activities

and persuade members of this generation of PGRs and ECRs that it does have a central role to play in the future of UK anthropology.

To meet this challenge, the association should **increase its range of activities** (see the next recommendation for more details) and make greater attempts to engage directly with PGRs and ECRs. One method for approaching this would be to continue **fostering the department liaison program**, appointing ASA representatives in each UK anthropology department who could not only feedback vital information to the association but could also **be responsible for disseminating information about ASA activities** within their departments. PGRs and ECRs may already be directed towards the ASA for some resources, with the association's publicly available information on research ethics in anthropology being particularly exemplary in this regard. The ASA should strive to make itself a resource for PGRs and ECRs in other aspects of their research, networking, and professional development.

One specific resource the ASA could provide, is to **make information on academic careers in social anthropology**, and the nature of many of the events integral to academic careers, **more** readily **available**. Survey data showed that some respondents were unfamiliar with the format of events such as the ASA conference, perhaps assuming that their research interests would not be catered to or that there was no point in attending if they were not presenting research. This is just one aspect of the academic career in anthropology that may remain opaque, especially for PGRs who have just entered the field. The nature and details of academic career progression, from PhD to postdoctoral positions and beyond, can be difficult to understand and navigate for PGRs. The ASA could assist in **demystifying academic careers in anthropology**, either by publishing and directing PGRs towards publicly available information on career development, or by facilitating relationships between PGRs, ECRs and established academics to engage in mentoring and provide one another with guidance.

3. **Enable PGRs and ECRs to develop their own networks, events, and activities by acting as a facilitator.**

One way in which the ASA has already found success in engaging PGRs and ECRs has been through facilitating networks. The Anthropology Matters network serves

as an example of how a well maintained and active network can successfully fulfil its aims and consolidate vital information for PGRs' and ECRs' research and career development. Anthropology Matters **was originally set up by PhD students at SOAS**, who approached the ASA to aid in disseminating the network nation-wide. This demonstrates the ASA's capacity for aiding anthropologists at all stages of their career to set up activities, events, and networks that can be legitimised and advertised via the association. The association should **capitalise more on this strength** for facilitating networks, by enabling PGRs and ECRs to develop their own ideas for running activities.

Activity in this area has already begun, with initial steps taken **to set up an ASA postgraduate network**. To make the most of this opportunity, both for the association, and those responsible for setting up new networks, the ASA should maintain **consistent contact with network leaders**. Networks like the new postgraduate network should give PGRs and ECRs the space to operate independently to pursue their specific goals, but the process of building the network should be seen as a **collaboration**. The ASA has a responsibility to tend to the **networks it fosters**, providing help and resources when network members reach out, but also taking the initiative to keep up contact with networks to ensure they stand the best chance of thriving. Networks left unmaintained run the risk of seeing activity levels and engagement drop off, with the network eventually becoming dormant. Input from the ASA will be particularly important in fostering networks engaging PGRs and ECRs. As network members progress into the next phase of their careers there will be a requirement to routinely fill leadership roles, and the ASA should take responsibility for managing this process.

4. **Lead the way in understanding the condition of anthropology in the UK**

The research laid out in this report has sought to describe the present state of anthropology in the UK, and by doing so aims to contribute to the ongoing project to restructure the ASA. The hope is that this research can inform the restructuring process and make the association more accessible to a wider number of anthropologists, especially those in the early stages of their careers. However, the present project is naturally limited in scope, and cannot account for all the issues and concerns that may affect the landscape of social anthropology in the UK in

years to come. The ASA should therefore aim to make understanding the condition of UK social anthropology a core part of its role.

This means **commissioning further research** aimed at assessing potential issues within the UK anthropology community, to discover what potential solutions might be. For example, while investigating the **career destinations of UK social anthropology PhDs** was just one aspect of this research, it could well be the central focus of a **future project**. Present information on career destinations is drastically limited by the ability of UK institutions to share data. This means it is very **difficult to describe a nation-wide picture of career prospects** for PGRs and ECRs. Being able to provide more detailed data on this area would contribute towards making the association a valuable resource for PGRs first entering social anthropology. Data like this could assist in illuminating the **often-opaque world of academic careers and give PGRs a sense of the job market for social anthropologists in the UK**, allowing them to plan their careers accordingly. This is just one area in which the ASA could commission further research. The association should consider other domains of interest, where providing data could assist the UK anthropology community.

Methodology

To address the research objectives and questions, this project employed three main methodological approaches. First, data on present numbers of PhDs and postdocs was gathered via contact with UK anthropology departments, who also contributed to providing career-destinations of alumni where this data was available. Second, data on current numbers of PhDs and postdocs was gathered independently, via publicly available sources listing enrolled PhD students, and employed postdocs. Career-destination information was also gathered independently, primarily through the use of repository data on completed PhD theses, which was cross referenced with publicly available information on the present career destinations of individuals who had agreed to have their theses included in repositories. Thirdly, a survey was produced and disseminated to address research questions 3 and 4. Each research question is listed below, with a detailed account of the methods used to gather data pertaining to them.

1. **Number of anthropology PhD students and post-docs working in UK institutions.**

A survey of social anthropology courses taught in the UK yielded 21 departments that could potentially educate social anthropologists to PhD level. Administrative staff at each of these departments were contacted, requesting data on the number of PhD students and post-docs currently working in each department. Data provided by the departments was supplemented with independently gathered data via department websites listing current PhDs and post-docs.

2. **Career destinations of those graduating from UK anthropology departments**

Data on post-PhD career destinations was requested upon contact with each of the 21 UK departments. In addition, data was gathered by cross-referencing thesis repositories with publicly available information. Names of PhDs with a submitted thesis listed in a repository were checked to determine whether their present occupation was listed publicly online, for instance on organisational staff profile pages, or on Linkedin.

3. **Survey responses**

A survey was designed to gather data on engagement with, and perceptions of, the ASA among the UK anthropological community. The survey consisted of thirteen questions, and queried respondents on their perceptions of each aspect of ASA activities (such as networks, events etc.). Questions also covered whether respondents were members of the ASA or not, asking them to list reasons for signing up as members, or why they would not consider paying for membership. This data was collected along with respondents' current career stage (PhD student, post-doc, employed within/outside of academia) as well as demographic data on gender and ethnicity. The aim for the survey was to be able to assess the present landscape of the ASA membership, determining how inclusive it was, and asking how membership could be made more attractive to prospective members.

The survey was targeted primarily at anthropology PhD students and postdocs. Early-career researchers were a demographic of particular interest because of the

continuing need to ensure that the ASA membership is reflective of anthropologists in the UK. However, the survey was designed to be accessible to anthropologists, and those who might previously have studied/worked in anthropology to a minimum of PhD level but now work outside academia. Primary modes of dissemination included requests for all 21 of the anthropology departments identified to circulate the survey internally, as well as posting the survey on the Anthropology Matters listserv network. Delegates at the 2023 ASA Conference were also asked to complete the survey.

Appendix

ASA Survey

The ASA is looking to increase its engagement, both with existing members, and with a new generation of anthropologists. As part of this aim we are looking to gather data on your previous interactions with the association, as well as giving you the opportunity to tell us what we could do in the future to help anthropology in the UK thrive. The data gathered here will be used as the basis of a report, aimed at helping the ASA committee to plan future events and activities aimed at enriching careers in anthropology at all levels.

1. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Please indicate which best describes you:

Current PhD candidate

Have completed a PhD and now hold a postdoctoral/other academic position

Have completed a PhD and work outside academia

Other…

2. What term best describes your gender? (Feel free to leave this blank if you would rather not say)

Short answer text

3. How would you describe your ethnic origin? (Feel free to leave this blank if you would rather not say)

Short answer text

4. If you are still in academia, please state the institution you are currently based in. Otherwise please list your current occupation and workplace.

Short answer text

5. If you have already completed a PhD, please indicate the awarding insitution.

Short answer text

6. Are you currently a member of the ASA? If not please indicate why.

Yes, I am currently a member

Other…

7. Have you attended an ASA organised event in the last 12 months?

Yes/No

8. If you have attended any ASA event in the past, please indicate which event(s) and in what capacity you were attending (for example, speaker, panel organiser, workshop, lab etc).

Long answer text

9. Are you a member of any of the following ASA networks?

Network of Applied Anthropologists

ASA Anthropology of Britain Network

ASA Anthropology of Time Network

Anthropology Matters

UK Network for the Anthropology of Christianity

None of the above

10. What types of events do you think are best suited to the discussion of anthropological research and issues (for example, conferences like ASA 2023, thematic workshops, lectures such as the Malinowski Lecture etc.)?

Long answer text

11. Would you consider attending any future ASA events? Please indicate your reasons for or against attending future events.

Long answer text

12. If you are not already a member of the ASA, would you consider becoming one in the future? Please indicate your reasons for or against becoming a member.

Long answer text

13. What do you think the ASA should do more in the future?

Long answer text

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