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# Latest developments in the synthesis of metal–organic frameworks and their hybrids for hydrogen storage†

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Metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) are promising materials for hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) storage due to their versatile structures, high surface areas and substantial pore volumes. This paper provides a comprehensive review of MOF synthesis and characterization, as well as their practical applications for H<sub>2</sub> storage. We explore various MOF synthesis techniques, highlighting their impact on the nanopore structure and functionality. Special emphasis is placed on strategies for enhancing H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities by increasing specific surface areas, optimizing pore size distributions, and facilitating H<sub>2</sub> release by improving thermal conductivity. Key advances in MOF-based hybrids, such as MOFs combined with carbonaceous materials, metals or other inorganic materials, are discussed. This review also addresses the effectiveness of linker functionalization and the introduction of unsaturated metal centers to optimize H<sub>2</sub> storage under ambient conditions. We conclude that the development of competitive MOF-based hybrids, particularly those that incorporate carbons, offers significant potential for improving H<sub>2</sub> storage and recovery, enhancing thermal stability and increasing thermal conductivity. These advancements are in line with the US Department of Energy (DOE) specifications and pave the way for future research into the optimization of MOFs for practical H<sub>2</sub> storage applications.

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## 1. Introduction

Hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) is a promising alternative energy carrier due to its potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when produced from renewable energy sources. However, efficient and safe storage of H<sub>2</sub> remains a major challenge.<sup>1</sup> Although H<sub>2</sub> has the highest specific energy density, 33.6 kW h kg<sup>−1</sup>, it also has the lowest volumetric energy density, 0.0108 MJ L<sup>−1</sup>, measured under standard conditions,<sup>2</sup> which is 3000 times less than that of gasoline.<sup>3</sup> Hydrogen appears to be one of the most promising alternatives to achieve carbon neutrality, offering a clean energy source to replace fossil fuels in industries, transportation and power systems.<sup>4</sup> Produced from renewables, it enables deep decarbonization and ensures a stable energy supply, driving the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon future.<sup>5</sup>

Storing H<sub>2</sub> at pressures above 70 MPa or at temperatures below −253 °C is a possible alternative for increasing H<sub>2</sub>

density during transport and storage, but it requires harsh conditions and raises public safety concerns. Adsorption of H<sub>2</sub> at −196 °C, the boiling point of liquid nitrogen, enables H<sub>2</sub> to be stored at moderate pressures, of the order of 5 MPa, but requires high-surface area materials with a suitable pore size distribution (PSD) and high bulk density.

A wide range of carbon-based materials has been thoroughly studied for H<sub>2</sub> storage, showing that excess H<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities at room temperature are lower, typically less than 2 wt%, compared with capacities observed at −196 °C, which remain generally below 7 wt%.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) have emerged as promising candidates for H<sub>2</sub> storage due to their tunable porosity, high surface area and the possibility of tailoring their properties to specific applications.<sup>7</sup> Excess H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities in the range of 2.4 to 9.1 wt% have been obtained in MOFs with Brunauer–Emmett–Teller (BET) areas (*A*<sub>BET</sub>) of up to 6000 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>−1</sup>. The highest H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity reported to date is 9.05 wt% at −196 °C and 7 MPa for NU100.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the limitations of the BET method, these very high *A*<sub>BET</sub> values are more indicative of pore volume than the actual surface area. Indeed, when excess H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities at −196 °C are plotted as a function of *A*<sub>BET</sub> for a large number of MOFs, the observed trend does not follow Chahine's heuristic

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rule of 1 wt% H<sub>2</sub> per 500 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> of surface area. Moreover, increasing  $A_{\text{BET}}$  leads to an increase in average pore volume and thus to a decrease in adsorbent–sorbate interactions and isosteric enthalpy of adsorption. The increase in pore volume also results in a reduction of particle density. Indeed, while absolute gravimetric H<sub>2</sub> capacities reach values as high as 120 mg H<sub>2</sub> per g (12 wt%), volumetric H<sub>2</sub> capacities peak at values of around 40 kg H<sub>2</sub> per m<sup>3</sup>. Thus, MOFs with high  $A_{\text{BET}}$  and high absolute H<sub>2</sub> uptake on a gravimetric basis are not necessarily those with the highest H<sub>2</sub> uptake on a volumetric basis.

In this field, MOF hybrids, *i.e.*, MOFs combined with other materials, such as other MOFs, carbon-based materials or metallic particles, have shown promise as a viable choice for H<sub>2</sub> adsorption by increasing their adsorption capacity through an increased specific surface area.<sup>9,10</sup> The addition of carbon-based materials to produce MOF hybrids can improve thermal conductivity and allow tuning of the chemical composition to provide greater selectivity<sup>11</sup> for H<sub>2</sub> adsorption compared with other gases. A bibliometric analysis (conducted in English in the Scopus database, followed by an analysis using the Bibliometrix package in R language) was carried out to give an overview of the use of MOFs for H<sub>2</sub> adsorption. A clear upward trend in the use of MOFs for H<sub>2</sub> storage is observed over time, with a peak of 111 publications in 2024 (last access 15 August 2024) (Fig. S1†). Another bibliometric analysis has been performed, now considering the use of MOF-based hybrids for H<sub>2</sub> adsorption. A clear upward trend in the use of MOF-based hybrid materials for H<sub>2</sub> storage is observed over time, especially after 2016, peaking in 2024 (last access 15 August 2024) with 27 publications, followed by 2019 and 2022 with 24 publications each (Fig. S2†).

This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of research in H<sub>2</sub> storage, using MOFs as materials of interest, focusing on the enhancement of the properties of MOF hybrids, the challenges faced and future prospects, including their potential applications in the energy industry.

## 2. Basic aspects of MOF synthesis and characterization

MOFs or porous coordination polymers (PCPs) are materials containing metal ions connected by organic linkers to form a 3D network.<sup>14</sup> The metal ions form primary building units (PBUs) with precise geometric structures, linked by secondary building units (SBUs).<sup>15</sup> Commonly used metal ions include Cr<sup>3+</sup>, Fe<sup>3+</sup>, Co<sup>2+</sup> and Zn<sup>2+</sup>,<sup>16</sup> with coordination numbers from 2 to 7, yielding various geometries such as linear, T-shaped, tetrahedral, square planar, octahedral, *etc.*<sup>17</sup> Organic linkers, such as carboxylates, phosphates, sulfonates, *etc.*, can form coordination bonds, with fumaric, succinic, and terephthalic acids being low-cost options. Other ligands such as peptides, carbohydrates, amino acids and cyclodextrins are also used.<sup>18</sup> Different classes of MOFs exist, of which “MOFs” is the

abbreviation and general name,<sup>19</sup> and their discovery is the result of the collective efforts of many research groups and laboratories around the world. Several major laboratories have made significant contributions to the field of MOFs, including materials from Universitetet i Oslo (UIO), Institut Lavoisier (MIL) and Northwestern University (NU), among others (Fig. S3a†).

MOFs have high surface area, tunable pore size and diverse functionalities, making them attractive for various applications such as gas storage, separation, catalysis and sensing.<sup>20</sup> In Fig. 1a, (–CO<sub>2</sub>)<sub>x</sub> represents the organic linker, with *x* being the number of linkers associated with the cluster, giving rise to the crystalline geometry of the MOF. MOFs are also highly customizable, with the ability to vary not only the metal ion (Fig. 1b) and the organic linker (Fig. 1c), but also the synthesis conditions to tailor the material's properties and provide different varieties of MOFs with varied characteristics of interest.

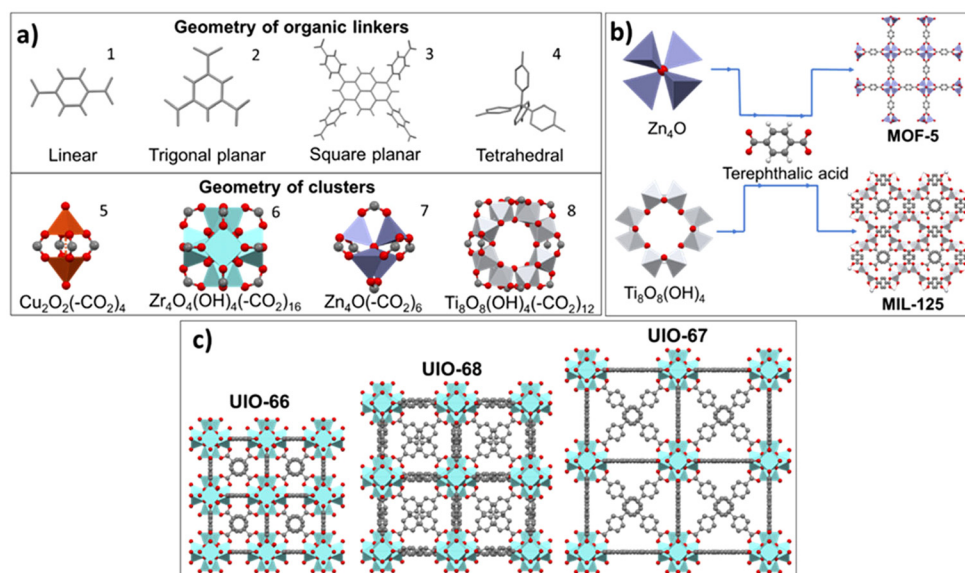
### 2.1. MOF synthesis

The energy required for MOF synthesis, to allow linkage between PBUs and SBUs, can be provided by a variety of synthesis approaches, including solvothermal/hydrothermal, sonochemical, electrochemical, microwave-assisted and mechanochemical, which can be applied to produce MOFs with contrasting structures and features. Table 1 shows some advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches, which are briefly reviewed, from the classical solvothermal/hydrothermal route to the Resonant Acoustic Mixing (RAM) route:

- **Solvothermal (with organic solvents) or hydrothermal synthesis** (with water) takes place in sealed vessels above the boiling point of the liquid medium under standard pressure.<sup>21</sup> Conventional solvothermal/hydrothermal synthesis involves heating metal ions, linkers and solvents together (80–200 °C)<sup>22</sup> in a polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE)-lined autoclave (for high temperatures) or in scintillation vials (for lower temperatures).<sup>16</sup> The synergy of pressure, temperature and solvent produces single crystals due to the material's solubility in a hot and pressurized solvent, whether organic or aqueous,<sup>22</sup> which favors reaction and crystal growth. Although solvothermal/hydrothermal synthesis produces well-formed MOFs with controlled size, it requires longer synthesis times and often organic solvents. Zheng *et al.*<sup>23</sup> compared hydrothermal, reflux, vessel, and microwave methods to synthesize MOF-303 for water harvesting from desert air. The hydrothermal method took 24 h, while the reflux and vessel methods needed 4 to 8 h. Microwave synthesis was the fastest at 5 min.

- **Non-solvothermal synthesis** takes place at temperatures below the boiling point of the solvent under standard pressure, usually at room temperature.<sup>16</sup> For instance, some widely used MOFs such as MOF-5, MOF-74, MOF-177, HKUST-1, IRMOF-0, MIL-53(Al), MOF-2 and ZIF-7 have been successfully synthesized under ambient conditions.<sup>24–28</sup> The shape of the crystals obtained and the percentage of purity are strongly influenced by the reaction temperature.<sup>29</sup> Yields are also affected by





**Fig. 1** (a) Geometry of some organic linkers (1: BDC; 2: BTC; 3: H4TBAPY and 4: tetraphenylmethane) (adapted from ref. 12 and 13), and geometry of some clusters; (b) assembly of two different clusters with the same organic linker to obtain two MOFs; (c) assembly of the same cluster ( $\text{Zr}_4\text{O}_4(\text{OH})_4(-\text{CO}_2)_{16}$ ) with 3 linkers to obtain three different MOFs.

temperature, as shown by Lestari *et al.*,<sup>30</sup> who reported a 24% yield for HKUST-1 at room temperature *versus* 99% at 120 °C. However, by using ambient temperature, other synthetic routes emerge as alternatives, broadening the horizons for future research.

- **Sonochemical synthesis** uses ultrasound to create nanomaterials with the help of sound-wave-induced bubbles. The small bubbles promote interactions between particles up to 13 eV, leading to significant reactions. The bubble stages – formation, growth and collapse – induce chemical reactions in the synthesis of MOFs.<sup>31,32</sup> Reaction time has a significant influence on crystal size in sonochemical synthesis. Qiu *et al.*<sup>33</sup> found that short runs (5–10 min) produced spherical nanocrystals of 50–100 nm, while longer runs (30–90 min) produced needle-shaped crystals of 700–900 nm. Vaitsis *et al.* concluded that ultrasound outperforms electrical and microwave heating due to its simplicity, faster reactions and improved energy efficiency, but with the use of organic solvents.<sup>34</sup>

- **Electrochemical synthesis** was first used to synthesize HKUST-1 in 2005, paving the way for various electrochemical methods and materials design for MOFs, including MOF-5,<sup>35</sup> MIL-53,<sup>36</sup> MIL-100(Fe)<sup>37</sup> and ZIF-8.<sup>38</sup> Electrosynthesis is practical and cost-effective, as it operates under milder conditions and within shorter timescales. It offers advantages such as mild reactions, easy operation and efficient charge transfer, which promotes rapid MOF crystal growth.<sup>35,39</sup> Antonio *et al.*<sup>40</sup> used electrosynthesis to prepare titanium(III)-based MOFs, namely  $\text{Ti}^{\text{III}}$ -MIL-101 and  $\text{Ti}^{\text{III}}$ -MIL-102, and extended it to other  $\text{Ti}^{\text{III}}$ -MIL structures using  $\text{TiCl}_4$ . The materials produced by electrosynthesis showed similar characteristics to the more expensive  $\text{TiCl}_3$ , demonstrating its cost-effectiveness. However, electrochemical synthesis often involves organic solvents,

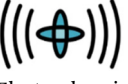
which can potentially impact the surface area, pore volume and thermal stability.<sup>41</sup>

- **Microwave-assisted synthesis** is an effective method for high-throughput syntheses, as it heats the material uniformly due to molecular dipolarity and ionic conduction.<sup>42</sup> Rapid microwave heating can generate hot spots that give rise to metastable materials.<sup>43</sup> However, after careful control of the synthesis conditions, this approach increases efficiency as crystals disperse throughout the solution, leading to faster and higher yields due to rapid consumption of reagents.<sup>44</sup> Although crystals are smaller than with traditional methods, microwave crystallization reduces synthesis time and material use while maintaining the surface area.<sup>45–47</sup> Wu *et al.*<sup>48</sup> synthesized conductive, partially carbonized metal–organic frameworks with ruthenium nanoparticles using household microwave ovens. Among them,  $\text{Ru}@p\text{-Co3HHTP2-3.2\%}$  exhibited excellent performance in the electrocatalytic  $\text{H}_2$  evolution reaction. These studies highlight the potential of microwave-assisted methods for the efficient synthesis of advanced materials with enhanced  $\text{H}_2$ -related properties, but they are generally associated with the use of organic solvents.

- **Ionothermal synthesis** uses ionic liquids (ILs) as solvents or templates, resulting in MOFs with a negatively charged skeleton structure. The IL cations are firmly integrated into the MOF framework.<sup>49</sup> ILs have properties that can be advantageous over traditional solvents, such as their extremely low vapor pressures. They can advantageously replace organic solvents such as *N,N*-dimethylformamide (DMF).<sup>50</sup> This synthesis can operate at lower temperatures such as 30 °C, consuming less energy than the solvothermal approach. Peng *et al.* synthesized mesoporous Cu-MOF nanoplates using ILs.<sup>51</sup> The resulting material had high crystallinity and combined the pro-



**Table 1** Advantages and disadvantages of different MOF synthesis methodologies/strategies

| Synthesis method                                                                                               | Advantages                                                                                                                                                                            | Disadvantages                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Solvothermal/hydrothermal<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ High crystallinity<sup>63</sup></li> <li>○ Control of morphology<sup>64,65</sup></li> <li>○ Control of particle size<sup>66</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Long synthesis times<sup>30</sup></li> <li>○ Use of organic solvents<sup>67</sup></li> </ul>                        |
| Non-solvothermal<br>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Energy saving by using room temperature<sup>68,69</sup></li> </ul>                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Low yield<sup>70</sup></li> <li>○ Use of organic solvents<sup>26</sup></li> </ul>                                   |
| Sonochemical/ultrasound<br>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Control of crystal growth<sup>33</sup></li> <li>○ High yield<sup>71,72</sup></li> <li>○ Short synthesis times<sup>73</sup></li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Use of organic solvents<sup>74</sup></li> </ul>                                                                     |
| Electrochemical<br>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Easy to scale<sup>75</sup></li> <li>○ Short synthesis times<sup>76,77</sup></li> </ul>                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduction in <math>A_{\text{BET}}</math><sup>39,41</sup></li> <li>○ Use of organic solvents<sup>78</sup></li> </ul> |
| Microwave-assisted<br>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Short synthesis times<sup>79,80</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Small crystal size<sup>44</sup></li> <li>○ Use of organic solvents<sup>21</sup></li> </ul>                          |
| Ionothermal<br>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ionic liquids replace organic solvents<sup>81,82</sup></li> </ul>                                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduction in <math>A_{\text{BET}}</math><sup>83</sup></li> </ul>                                                    |
| Mechanochemical<br>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Solvent-free<sup>57,84</sup></li> <li>○ Short synthesis times<sup>85</sup></li> </ul>                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difficult to control morphology and particle size<sup>86</sup></li> </ul>                                           |

properties of a mesoporous material with small particle sizes. In 2014, Liu *et al.* introduced an innovative approach for immobilizing ILs into ZIF-8 membranes. ZIF-8's inherent hydrophobicity and ability to act as a template with an ionic liquid effectively confined the IL within the membranes and reduced leaching when exposed to water.<sup>52</sup>

- **Mechanochemical synthesis** uses mechanical energy, such as compression, shear or friction, to facilitate chemical transformations. This technique is particularly relevant to green chemistry, as it eliminates or reduces the need for solvents.<sup>53</sup> Mechanochemical synthesis is a promising method for the large-scale production of MOFs due to its advantages, such as solvent-free reactions at room temperature and relatively short reaction times of 10 to 60 min. Ball milling is the primary process used to crush precursors between balls, resulting in bond breakage, defects and increased reactivity.<sup>54,55</sup> Over the past decade, mechanochemical synthesis of MOFs has performed well compared with conventional techniques, as shown in reviews<sup>56</sup> or book chapters.<sup>57</sup> Although ball milling is widely used, it has limitations such as sample damage and non-uniform mixing. Other methods, such as RAM, can overcome these problems. RAM uses low-frequency, high-intensity acoustic energy to gently mix materials without physical contact with balls.<sup>58</sup> Titi *et al.* demonstrated that the RAM

technique is more advantageous than ball milling for synthesizing ZIF-L, ZIF-8 and HKUST-1.<sup>59</sup> RAM enables larger batches to be synthesized while retaining control over product composition and particle size.

MOF formation, layout and shape are affected not only by the building blocks, but also by factors such as solvent, pH, temperature, reagent concentration, reaction time, molar ratios, counter ions and pressure. These factors fall into two categories (Fig. S3b†): (1) compositional parameters – solvent, pH, molar ratios, counter ions, and concentration; and (2) process parameters – pressure, time, and temperature.<sup>60</sup> In assembly processes, solvents coordinate with metal ions or integrate into the lattice.<sup>61</sup> Although they do not integrate directly into the MOF, solvents play a role in structure orientation and crystal growth. The choice of solvent influences ligand deprotonation, which in turn has an impact on the MOF structure.<sup>60</sup> For instance, using different solvents, Banerjee *et al.* revealed various crystal structures in MOFs synthesized with magnesium and 3,5-pyridine dicarboxylic acid (PDC).<sup>62</sup> Water coordinated best with magnesium, but the maximum  $A_{\text{BET}}$  value achieved was  $52 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ . Acidity/basicity has a significant influence on the crystallization and growth of inorganic–organic composite materials. pH has an impact on ligand deprotonation, strengthening the bond between ligands





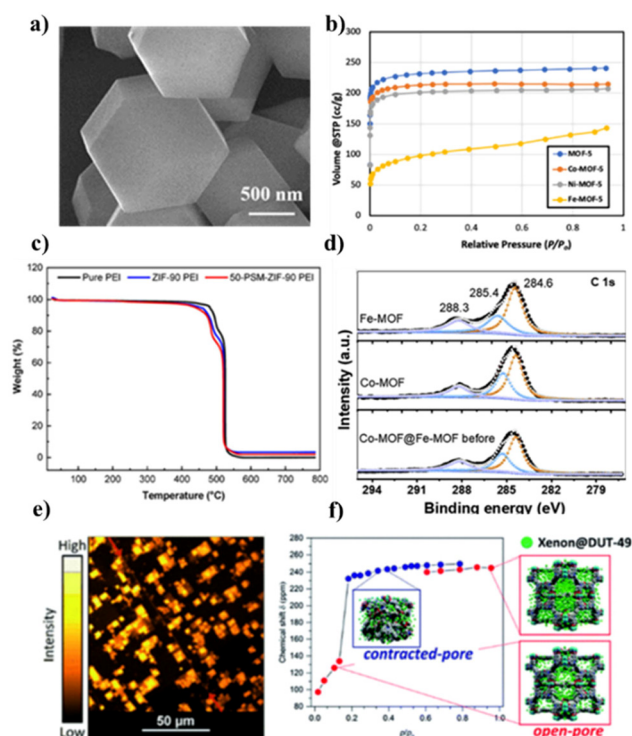
and metal ions through pH adjustments.<sup>60</sup> Temperature also has a significant impact on MOF characteristics, as demonstrated by Biemmi *et al.*, who found that temperature variations (from 75 to 180 °C) altered the morphology and purity of HKUST-1.<sup>29</sup>

Synthesis time has a significant effect on MOFs' crystal size, as shown by Xu *et al.* who synthesized MOF-808 at 120 °C using ZrCl<sub>4</sub>/BTC (3:1 ratio) for 36–96 h.<sup>87</sup> During the first 36–72 h,  $A_{\text{BET}}$  and micropore volume increased from 1052 to 2177 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> and from 0.30 to 0.72 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. After 72–96 h,  $A_{\text{BET}}$  and micropore volume decreased to 968 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup> and 0.28 cm<sup>3</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. Suresh *et al.*<sup>88</sup> studied various process parameters to optimize MOF synthesis for H<sub>2</sub> storage. The researchers investigated the effect of reagent concentration, temperature and reaction time on crystal size distribution. Shorter reactions (12–18 h) at higher temperatures (110–150 °C) produced cubic crystals with a wide size distribution (200–1300 μm), whereas longer reactions (24–72 h) at lower temperatures (60–90 °C) produced crystals with a narrower size distribution and with a 15% reduction in  $A_{\text{BET}}$ .

## 2.2. MOF characterization

Characterizing MOFs is a crucial step in understanding their structure and properties. The main techniques to characterize a MOF are as follows: X-ray diffraction (XRD), to identify the crystal structure and unit cell dimensions; scanning electron microscopy (SEM), which provides images of surface morphology and particle size distribution (Fig. 2a); thermogravimetric analysis (TGA), to determine thermal stability and weight loss behavior upon heating (Fig. 2c); gas sorption analysis, to determine pore volume, pore size distribution and the surface area (Fig. 2b); Fourier-transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR), to identify functional groups present; and elemental analysis to find out the composition of the MOF, usually in terms of carbon, nitrogen and oxygen contents. These analyses provide valuable information on the physical and chemical properties of MOF materials. This information is crucial for understanding their potential applications.

Other promising but less explored techniques are described in Fig. 2. Confocal fluorescence microscopy has the unique ability to capture three-dimensional images at the level of individual crystals (Fig. 2e), while offering the sensitivity needed to investigate the initiation of defect formation. Raman spectroscopy provides detailed information on the molecular vibrations and vibrational modes present in a material, which can be useful for studying the structure, composition and properties of MOFs. Confocal laser scanning microscopy can be used to observe the stability of MOF hybrids if they contain a fluorescent component such as carbon dots (CDs). XPS spectra are used to analyze the elemental composition and chemical state of a material's surface, to confirm the doping of a MOF (Fig. 2d), and nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) can be used to study the structure of organic components in MOFs and the interaction between organic molecules and metal ions (Fig. 2f).



**Fig. 2** Main MOF characterization techniques: (a) SEM images of ZIF-8 (reproduced from ref. 89 © 1996–2024 MDPI); (b) nitrogen adsorption isotherms at –196 °C of MOF-5 and doped MOF-5 (reproduced from ref. 90 © 1996–2024 MDPI); (c) TGA of pure PEI, ZIF-90 PEI and 50-PSM-ZIF-90 PEI membranes (reproduced from ref. 91 © 1996–2024 MDPI); (d) XPS spectra of Fe-MOF, Co-MOF, Co-MOF@Fe-MOF, and the hybrid MOF (reprinted with permission from ref. 92; Copyright © 2024 with permission from Elsevier. Also Lancet special credit, reprinted from The Lancet from ref. 92; Copyright © 2024 with permission from Elsevier); (e) confocal fluorescence imaging of defects in a MOF-5 single-crystal (reproduced from ref. 93 © 1999–2024 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. or related companies); (f) chemical shift of xenon adsorbed in DUT-49 at –73 °C measured during the adsorption experiment (red symbols indicate DUT-49op signals; blue symbols indicate DUT-49cp signals) (reprinted with permission from ref. 94; Copyright(2017) American Chemical Society).

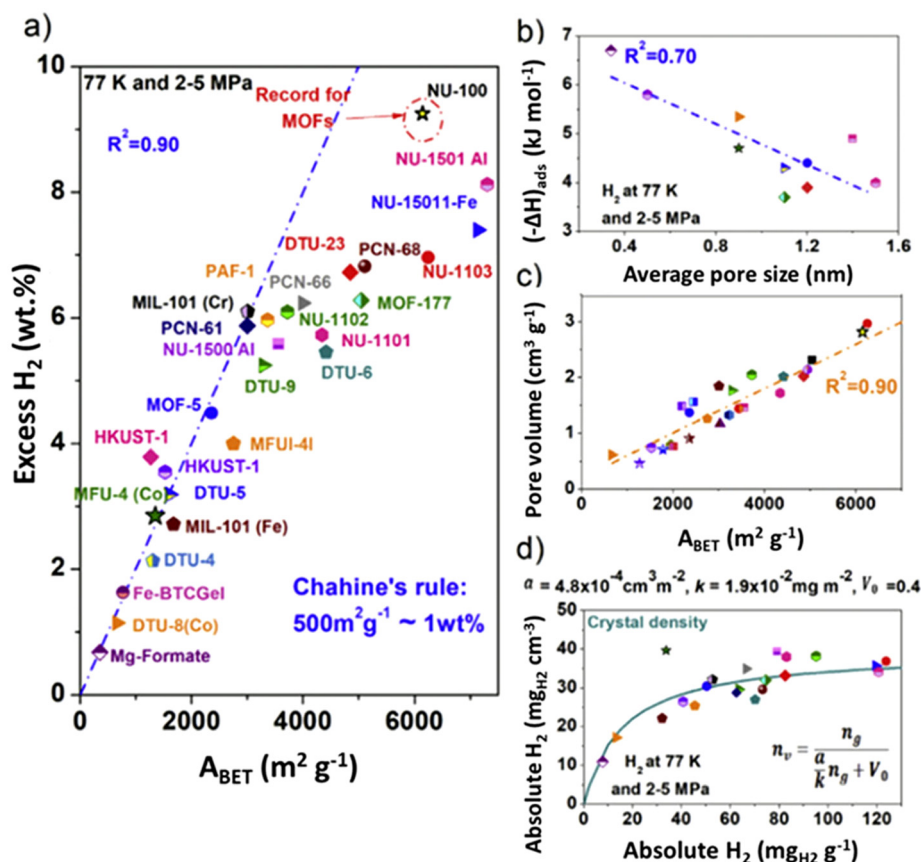
## 3. Fundamental properties and performance of MOFs for hydrogen storage

The characteristics required to design the ideal MOF for H<sub>2</sub> sorption have been reported in several studies.<sup>15,95,96</sup> In general, MOFs must have a high surface area and a large number of relatively small, interconnected pores to maximize H<sub>2</sub> adsorption. Low-density MOFs are disadvantageous as they can lead to weak H<sub>2</sub>–H<sub>2</sub> interactions in the channels, reducing adsorption capacity. Additionally, volumetric H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities are also reduced. When used near room temperature, the inner surface of MOFs must feature local polar groups to enhance interactions between MOFs and H<sub>2</sub> molecules, and this requirement relates specifically



narrow pores, due to overlapping van der Waals forces. The presence of 1.5 to 2.5 nm pores has been shown to significantly enhance H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity at high pressures. However, nanopores smaller than 1.5 nm are found to be the most efficient for H<sub>2</sub> storage at all pressure levels.<sup>97</sup> H<sub>2</sub> interactions with MOFs can be enhanced by reducing pore size, with the optimum size corresponding to the kinetic diameter of the H<sub>2</sub> molecule (0.289 nm),<sup>98</sup> although porous materials with a unimodal PSD of around 0.3 nm and high surface areas are difficult to obtain.

Fig. 3c illustrates a linear relationship between SSA and pore volume for different MOF families. This behavior was previously reported by Gómez-Gualdrón *et al.*, who calculated the  $A_{\text{BET}}$  of microporous and mesoporous MOFs.<sup>99</sup> In Fig. 3d, absolute volumetric  $\text{H}_2$  adsorption is plotted against absolute gravimetric  $\text{H}_2$ , showing that for MOFs with high BET areas, a plateau in  $\text{H}_2$  uptake on a volumetric basis is reached. The latter was determined using the following equation, deduced



**Fig. 3** (a) Excess H<sub>2</sub> uptake at −196 °C and 2–7 MPa of metal–organic frameworks (MOFs) reported in recent studies ( ref. 111, ref. 104, ref. 112, ref. 113, ref. 8, ref. 114, ref. 115, ref. 116. (a) Chahine's rule (dotted line) applied to MOFs; (b) isosteric heat of adsorption (−Δ*H*)<sub>ads</sub> as a function of average pore size; (c) evolution of pore volume with A<sub>BET</sub>; (d) volumetric versus gravimetric absolute hydrogen uptake of porous materials using the density of the single crystal for its calculation for MOFs: ( ref. 111, ref. 104, ref. 112, ref. 113, ref. 8, ref. 114). The green line in (d) corresponds to the model proposed by Balderas-Xicohtencatl *et al.* in ref. 101. The absolute uptake from the excess reported data was calculated using REPROF software to calculate the density of H<sub>2</sub> gas and assuming that the volume of the adsorbed phase volume is equal to V<sub>pore</sub>. (reprinted with permission from ref. 117; Copyright © 2024 with permission from Elsevier. Also Lancet special credit, reprinted from The Lancet from ref. 117; Copyright © 2024, with permission from Elsevier).





### 3.3. Hydrophobicity

To achieve optimal performance and recyclability in H<sub>2</sub> storage, one of the most important objectives is to improve the water stability of MOFs, which are sensitive to moisture.<sup>125,126</sup> When MOFs are exposed to moisture from the air, the organic ligands in the framework are replaced by water molecules. This substitution disrupts the metal-linker bonds, which are generally the weakest points of the MOF structure. As a result, the MOF structure partially decomposes, leading to a reduction in SSA.<sup>127,128</sup> There are two approaches for addressing this challenge. The first is the direct synthesis of water-stable MOFs, which can be achieved by incorporating non-polar functional groups into the organic linkers.<sup>129,130</sup> The second method involves post-synthetic modifications, which include encapsulation of hydrophobic guest molecules in the MOF's pores and channels,<sup>131</sup> as well as functionalization of the MOF's external surface.<sup>132</sup> Qian *et al.* have synthesized a hydrophobic DUT-4 by a facile solution-immersion approach. After exposure to aqueous solutions, DUT-4 treated with a hydrophobic coating successfully preserved its crystal structure, morphology, surface area and H<sub>2</sub> uptake capacity.<sup>133</sup>

### 3.4. Thermal conductivity

Thermal conductivity within MOFs is a crucial but often overlooked issue in numerous adsorption-based applications, including gas storage and separation. In adsorptive gas storage applications, the heat generated by exothermic gas adsorption can potentially lead to a considerable increase in temperature (hot spots) and decrease the MOF's adsorption capacity if not promptly dissipated.<sup>134</sup> Effective thermal conductivity is a crucial parameter for assessing the rate at which adsorption heat dissipates and for devising strategies to maintain a lower temperature in a fuel storage tank while it is being filled with hydrogen.<sup>135</sup> Islamov *et al.* reported that MOFs exhibit enhanced thermal conductivity when they have high densities (>1.0 g cm<sup>-3</sup>),<sup>136</sup> small pores (<1 nm)<sup>137</sup> and four-connected metal nodes.<sup>138</sup> The highly porous nature and low density of MOFs prevent efficient phonon transport<sup>139</sup> and result in low thermal conductivities (<2 W m<sup>-1</sup> K<sup>-1</sup>).<sup>140</sup>

### 3.5. Tap density

The use of MOF powders in large industrial reactors can lead to pressure drops, clogs and complex handling. To mitigate these issues, MOF powders are shaped into defined structures using various methods such as pelletization, extrusion, granulation, spray-drying or 3D printing.<sup>141</sup> This shaping process usually involves the incorporation of binders to improve the mechanical stability of the pellets, which is highly advantageous. Binders generally fall into two categories: organic binders, which include starch, cellulose and polyvinyl alcohol, and inorganic binders, such as clay, silica and graphite.<sup>142,143</sup> Factors such as pore collapse, pore blocking and amorphization of the crystalline structure can lead to a reduction in the storage capacity of compressed MOFs.<sup>144</sup> Packing efficiency is a key factor in determining the H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity of MOFs.

Research on the packing density on real MOF samples with different crystal shapes and sizes is the most effective method for gaining insight into packing efficiency. The choice of the synthesis method and the precise adjustment of various parameters (such as temperature, synthesis time, pH, concentration, *etc.*) are essential in determining the size and shape of the resulting crystal.<sup>145</sup> Suresh *et al.* designed a strategy to improve packing efficiency and significantly increase the volumetric storage density of H<sub>2</sub> gas by controlling the crystal morphologies and crystal size distributions for MOF-5.<sup>88</sup> This strategy has the potential to minimize the structural damage when the MOF is compacted, thereby maximizing the H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity compared with compacted commercial MOF-5. The synthesis method chosen can also alter the crystal size. For example, Leng *et al.* synthesized MIL-101(Cr) by mechano-synthesis, obtaining crystals between 40 and 200 nm, in contrast to the 300 to 500 nm crystals achieved by solvothermal methods.<sup>146</sup> The choice of the appropriate synthesis route thus plays an important role in MOF crystal size, which can result in better packing.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.6. Thermal stability

The thermal stability of a MOF refers to its ability to avoid irreversible changes to its structure when heated to a specific temperature.<sup>147</sup> Yuan *et al.* highlight that the stability of MOFs is strongly influenced by various factors, such as the framework structure, particle size, crystal defects, and operational conditions,<sup>126</sup> but overall, two factors have been identified to contribute the most to the stability of MOFs: the properties of the linkers and the metal-linker bonds.<sup>148</sup>

Recognizing the key influence of linkers on the thermal stability of MOFs, Mohamed *et al.* studied the impact of using functionalized linkers in MOF-5. They concluded that non-functionalized linkers exhibit greater thermal stability.<sup>149</sup>

The thermal stability of amorphous regions of MOFs is generally much lower than that of crystalline regions of similar composition.<sup>150</sup> During the heat treatment process, degradation of MOF structures can lead to amorphization, melting, cluster dehydration or dehydrogenation of the organic ligand.<sup>151–153</sup> Increased thermal stability results in more stable and durable materials.

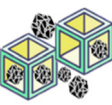
## 4. Hydrogen adsorption on MOFs and their hybrids

MOF hybrids are materials that combine MOFs with other substances to create new materials with improved properties or functionalities.<sup>163</sup> The aim of combining MOFs with alternative materials is to overcome the limitations of MOFs, such as low stability, poor mechanical properties or high production costs. In addition, the hybrids can be tailored to specific applications such as H<sub>2</sub> capture, with improved efficiency and performance.<sup>164–167</sup> Table 2 presents the advantages and disadvantages of certain types of MOF hybrids. The following sections provide a detailed description of each selected hybrid.





**Table 2** Advantages and disadvantages of different MOF hybrids

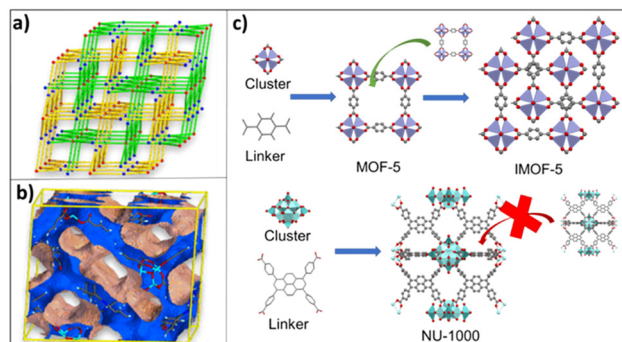
| Hybrids                                                                                                           | Advantages                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Disadvantages                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interpenetrated MOFs (IMOFs)<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved framework stability<sup>154</sup></li> <li>○ Larger adsorption selectivity<sup>155</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Surface area potentially decreased<sup>156</sup></li> </ul> |
| MOF-on-MOF<br>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Properties of different MOFs combined<sup>157</sup></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Difficult synthesis<sup>11</sup></li> </ul>                 |
| MOF/carbon-based materials<br>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increased <math>A_{\text{BET}}</math><sup>158</sup></li> <li>○ Increased <math>\text{H}_2</math> adsorption (<math>-196\text{ }^\circ\text{C}</math>)<sup>159</sup></li> <li>○ Increased thermal conductivity<sup>143</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Decreased crystallinity<sup>159</sup></li> </ul>            |
| MOF/metal particles and ions<br> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increased <math>\text{H}_2</math> adsorption (<math>25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}</math>)<sup>160</sup></li> <li>○ Enhanced adsorption enthalpy<sup>161</sup></li> </ul>                                                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Decreased surface area<sup>162</sup></li> </ul>             |

#### 4.1. MOF@MOF hybrids for hydrogen adsorption

MOF@MOF hybrids refer to materials composed of two MOFs combined into a single system. By combining two MOFs, it is possible to achieve various advantages aimed at increasing  $\text{H}_2$  adsorption capacity, such as reducing pore size, increasing gas selectivity and improving MOF stability.<sup>168,169</sup> Fig. 5 shows the influence of combining two MOFs on  $\text{H}_2$  adsorption at  $-196\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  and  $25\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ . Combining MOFs by interpenetration can have a reducing effect on the SSA of the resultant hybrids. However, all samples show an increase in  $\text{H}_2$  adsorption.

**4.1.1. Interpenetrated MOFs (IMOFs).** The presence of large pore spaces in the MOF system can be associated with instability and subsequent collapse of the structure. To solve this problem, interpenetration (also called catenation or interweaving) can be used, as it allows the entanglement of two identical MOFs (homo IMOFs) or two different MOFs (hetero IMOFs) that are not directly connected but cannot be separated without breaking bonds<sup>154,170–172</sup> (Fig. 4). Interpenetration minimizes vacant zones and has the potential to significantly improve framework stability. It allows empty spaces to be occupied and generates repulsive forces that prevent individual networks from collapsing. Consequently, the synthesis of MOFs with adjustable pore sizes using elongated organic linkers poses considerable challenges, as the formation of interwoven frameworks should be preferred to improve stability.<sup>173</sup> Catenation can be used to produce materials with fine pores and enhance adsorption heat by increasing the overlap of attractive potential between opposing pore walls. As a result, the interpenetrated framework shows a significant reduction in pore size, resulting in stronger interaction with  $\text{H}_2$  molecules.<sup>100</sup>

Ma *et al.* (2007) investigated the effect of interpenetration on  $\text{H}_2$  adsorption in PCN-6, a porous coordination network. The  $\text{N}_2$  adsorption isotherm at  $-196\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  shows that the non-



**Fig. 4** (a) Topological representations of interpenetration along the  $a$ -axis; (b) the 1D channel viewed along the  $a$ -axis (a) and (b) reproduced from ref. 174, with these figures having been published in *CCS Chem.* [2022]; [Ultrahigh hydrogen uptake in an interpenetrated  $\text{Zn}_4\text{O}$ -based metal–organic framework] is available online at <https://10.31635/ccschem.021.202000738>; (c) simplified topology of an interpenetrated MOF-5 and the impossibility of NU-1000 interpenetration.

interpenetrated material has a Langmuir surface area of  $2700\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$ , while the interpenetrated material has a Langmuir surface area of  $3800\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$ , representing a 41% increase. Interpenetration resulted in a 133% increase in volumetric  $\text{H}_2$  uptake ( $3.94\text{ kg m}^{-3}$  for non-interpenetrated frameworks vs.  $9.19\text{ kg m}^{-3}$  for interpenetrated frameworks) and a 29% increase in gravimetric  $\text{H}_2$  uptake (1.35 wt% for non-interpenetrated frameworks and 1.9 wt% for interpenetrated frameworks).<sup>185</sup>

Jiang *et al.* also used a MOFMC for  $\text{H}_2$  storage, an interpenetrated MOF-5@Multi-Walled Carbon Nanotubes (MWCNTs), called Int-MOFMC-meso.<sup>175</sup> The latter was able to store 2.02 wt%  $\text{H}_2$  at  $-196\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  under 1 bar. This value is higher than those obtained for the aforementioned MOFMC materials and indicates better thermal and moisture stability. However, the



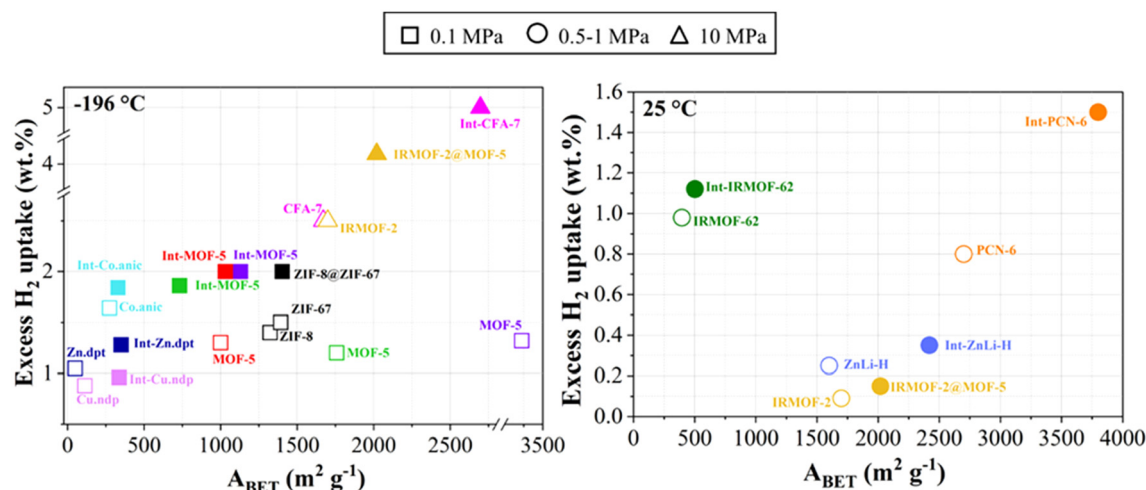


Fig. 5 Excess  $\text{H}_2$  storage capacities of MOFs and their MOF@MOF hybrids at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  (left) and  $25^\circ\text{C}$  (right). (□, ■ ref. 175); (□, ■ ref. 176); (□, ■ ref. 177); (□, ■ ref. 178); (□, ■ ref. 174); (□, ■ ref. 100); (○, △ ref. 179); (□, ■ ref. 180); (□, ■ ref. 181); (○, ■ ref. 182); (○, ■ ref. 183); (○, ■ ref. 184).

$A_{\text{BET}}$  was significantly lower than that of previous MOFMCs:  $805\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$ . According to the authors, the pores were not filled with zinc species or solvent, but it was the presence of an interpenetrated structure and the unsaturated metal site present on the mesopore surface that improved  $\text{H}_2$  storage performance, even with a lower  $A_{\text{BET}}$ .<sup>175</sup>

**4.1.2. MOF-on-MOF.** Extensive studies on MOFs have led to the development of a promising class of hybrid materials known as MOF-on-MOF, as shown in Fig. 6a. The left-hand side of the figure shows the original MOF seed, while the right-hand side displays the MOF grown as a secondary layer. This demonstrates how two or more MOF units are combined to create a new hybrid material.<sup>186</sup> This approach results in unique properties that can be customized for specific appli-

cations. This method enables the distinct properties of different MOFs to be combined, such as high porosity, specific functionality or catalytic activity, and can also improve the stability and mechanical properties of the resulting material.<sup>187</sup>

In general, there are two main approaches for synthesizing MOF-on-MOF structures. The first approach involves a two-step process, with pre-synthesized host MOFs used as seeds in the first step, and guest MOFs are grown on them in the second step to form MOF-on-MOF structures. The second approach involves a one-pot process that controls the nucleation and growth kinetics of both host and guest MOFs.<sup>11</sup>

The growth of guest MOFs can occur *via* five mechanisms, namely: epitaxial, heteroepitaxial, surfactant-assisted, nucleation kinetic-guided, and ligand/metal ion-exchange growth.<sup>11,190</sup> However, current MOF-on-MOF systems mainly focus on compositions consisting of two or more components<sup>188</sup> (Fig. 6a and b). For example, Ikigaki *et al.* reported a ternary MOF-on-MOF copper structure,<sup>191</sup> composed of an oriented MOF-on-MOF film, with lower and upper MOF layers. The films were created by epitaxially matching the interface and “one-pot” and liquid-phase epitaxy methods for the layers with copper-based reactants.

To assess the interaction between MOFs involved in MOF-on-MOF hybrids, their structures can be studied using SEM images, and element mapping enables their structures to be investigated through morphology analysis of two or more MOF varieties (see Fig. 6c–f). By integrating the aforementioned properties of various MOFs into MOF-on-MOF systems, it is possible to control gas adsorption capacity and selectivity while improving adsorbent stability.<sup>11</sup>

Li *et al.* developed a MOF-on-MOF structure specifically designed for gas adsorption. The structure comprised a core composed of a mixture of bio-MOF-11 and bio-MOF-14, while a bio-MOF-14 shell encapsulated the core. Water stability testing confirmed that the hydrophobic bio-MOF-14 shell pro-

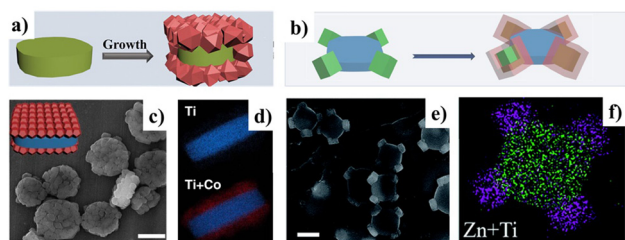


Fig. 6 (a) Scheme of a binary MOF-on-MOF heterostructure (reproduced from ref. 157; Copyright © 1999–2024 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. or related companies); (b) scheme of a ternary MOF-on-MOF heterostructure (ref. 188, reprinted with permission as indicated in the Terms and Conditions of the license); (c) SEM image of MOF MIL-125@ZIF-67 (ref. 188, reprinted with permission as indicated in the Terms and Conditions of the license); (d) element mapping image of MIL-125@ZIF-67 (reproduced from ref. 188, reprinted with permission as indicated in the Terms and Conditions of the license); (e) SEM image of MIL-125@ZIF-8 (reproduced from ref. 189 with permission from the Royal Society of Chemistry); (f) elemental mapping image of MIL-125@ZIF-8 (reproduced from ref. 189 with permission from the Royal Society of Chemistry).

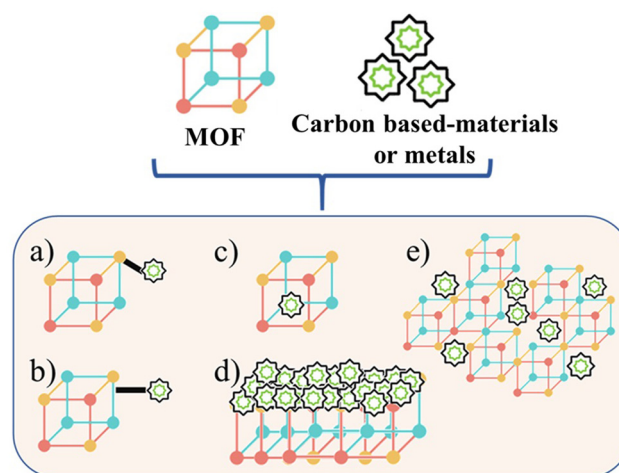
## 4.2. MOF hybrids with carbon-based materials or metals

The exceptional porosity and versatility of MOFs enable the synthesis of hybrids with a variety of materials, including polymers, graphene oxide, carbon nanotubes, metal nanoparticles, *etc.*<sup>170,193</sup> This can be achieved by growing MOFs on the surface or in the pores of other substrates or by incorporating additional materials into MOF cavities. As a result, hybrids can exhibit a combination of the properties of both components or even acquire new functionalities, such as water stability, or even improved mechanical properties.<sup>194,195</sup>

Fig. 7 shows the various possible synthesis approaches for obtaining a MOF hybrid, including covalent modification at metal nodes (Fig. 7a) or organic ligands (Fig. 7b), encapsulation (Fig. 7c), layer-by-layer deposition (Fig. 7d), or nucleation in the presence of other materials (Fig. 7e).<sup>196</sup>

MOF hybrids can be synthesized by various methods, such as *in situ* growth, post-synthetic modification and physical mixing.<sup>180,197,198</sup>

- ***In situ* growth:** In this approach, carbon-based materials or metals are incorporated into the MOF structure during MOF synthesis. These materials can therefore serve as nucleation sites for MOF crystal growth, and their presence can influence the morphology, structure and properties of the resulting MOF hybrid. The designation for this approach is MOF@A, with “A” being another material that forms a non-covalent interaction between the two components. Alfe *et al.* used graphene-like (GL) materials to prepare HKUST-1@GL, MIL-96(Al)@GL and MIL-101(Fe)@GL by *in situ* growth. The materials obtained achieved good selectivity for CO<sub>2</sub> over CH<sub>4</sub> using MOF@GL



**Fig. 7** Scheme of hybrid materials based on MOFs and carbons or metals: (a) covalent modification at metal nodes; (b) covalent modification at organic ligands; (c) encapsulation; (d) layer-by-layer deposition; and (e) nucleation in the presence of other materials (adapted from ref. 196).

hybrids.<sup>199</sup> Pt and Au nanoparticles were used as nucleation sites during ZIF-8 synthesis, enabling Pt and Au nanoparticles to be encapsulated.<sup>200</sup> He *et al.* synthesized MOF-5@Au<sup>201</sup> and Liu *et al.* synthesized UIO-66@Pt using a one-pot method in which the nanoparticles and MOFs were synthesized simultaneously.<sup>202</sup>

- **Post-synthetic modification:** In this approach, pre-synthesized MOFs are modified by introducing carbon-based materials or metals onto the MOF surface or into its pores once MOF synthesis has been completed. Post-synthetic modification methods allow other materials with specific properties or functionalities to be introduced into MOFs without altering the MOF structure.<sup>203</sup>

Covalent modifications encompass both coordinated covalent modifications of metal clusters and covalent modifications of ligands. By employing covalent modification techniques, it is possible to synthesize MOF hybrids with small molecules, metals/metal clusters, covalent organic frameworks (COFs), polymers and graphene.<sup>196,203</sup> Rao *et al.* developed a composite membrane combining graphene oxide (GO) and UiO-66-NH<sub>2</sub> by tethering UiO-66-NH<sub>2</sub> to GO surfaces. The covalent attachment of UiO-66-NH<sub>2</sub> with GO enabled the creation of a continuous proton transfer channel, contributing to the high performance of the composite membrane.<sup>215</sup>

Post-synthetic modification also includes techniques such as coating, layering and other methods that do not rely on the formation of covalent bonds. For instance, Chen *et al.* developed a material comprising perovskite quantum dots (QDs) encapsulated in HKUST-1 by immersing HKUST-1 thin films in solutions containing QD precursors. QDs of 1.5–2 nm matched the pore size of HKUST-1 and the resulting material improved its stability under 70% relative humidity, whereas QDs alone decomposed under the same conditions.<sup>216</sup> Villajos *et al.* obtained a ZIF-8@Pd hybrid by synthesizing Pd nano-



particles in the presence of commercial ZIF-8<sup>212</sup> and Hu *et al.* followed a similar route to obtain HKUST-1@Pd.<sup>209</sup>

- **Physical mixing:** This approach involves simply mixing MOFs and carbon-based or inorganic materials without any covalent or coordination bonds between them. This approach is relatively simple and straightforward but may result in phase separation or weak interactions between MOFs and other materials. Otal *et al.* stated that the inherent characteristics of MOFs, including crystallinity, structure and porosity, were maintained even after the modification of pre-synthesized MOFs.<sup>217</sup> Some studies confirm a significant improvement in H<sub>2</sub> sorption capacities when MOFs are mixed with carbon-based materials.<sup>163,218</sup> Prasanth *et al.* clearly demonstrated a substantial improvement in the H<sub>2</sub> sorption capacities of MIL-101 samples through the incorporation of Single-Walled Carbon Nanotubes (SWCNTs). H<sub>2</sub> sorption capacities increased from 6.4 to 9.2 wt% at −196 °C and 6 MPa and from 0.2 to 0.6 wt% at 25 °C and 6 MPa.<sup>218</sup> In their feature article, Szczeniński *et al.* studied the incorporation of GO into different MOF matrices such as HKUST-1 and MIL-101(Cr). They observed that the presence of GO can significantly increase their surface area and influence their morphology and structure. The dense atomic structure of GO contributes to stronger dispersion interactions and a greater number of unsaturated coordination bonds when combined with MOFs, which is crucial for improving adsorption properties.<sup>163</sup>

**4.2.1. MOF hybrids with metal particles and ions for hydrogen storage.** One of the most attractive structural features of some MOFs is coordinative unsaturation, which can be achieved by introducing additional terminal ligands bound to metal clusters.<sup>219</sup> Fig. 8 shows the influence of ion and metal particle doping on H<sub>2</sub> adsorption. The addition of ions or nanoparticles often reduces the SSA of the hybrid, calling into question the reliability of using the BET area as an indicator of

H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities in MOFs and MOF-derived materials. However, all samples show an increase in H<sub>2</sub> adsorption, especially at room temperature (25 °C). To improve H<sub>2</sub> storage, it is thus crucial to design novel MOF materials that not only have customized pore sizes and substantial void volumes, but also contain highly efficient adsorption sites. Among these sites are exposed metal ions, whose binding enthalpy lies between −20 and −30 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup>.<sup>161</sup>

- **Metal ion doping of MOFs:** Metal ions can be introduced into the MOF matrix by ion exchange procedures as well as by chemical reduction methods, with the aim of increasing the adsorption enthalpy. Peedikakkal *et al.* showed that metal-exchanged MOF-5@Ni and MOF-5@Co exhibit slightly higher H<sub>2</sub> uptake (about 5 wt%) compared with the parent MOF-5.<sup>90</sup> Adsorption results by Prabhakaran and Deschamps revealed a substantial increase in the H<sub>2</sub> uptake capacity of MIL-101 thanks to the synergistic modification involving activated carbon and lithium doping (at both −196 °C and 25 °C). The H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity (−196 °C, 1 bar) of the doped MOF (MIL-101@AC-Li) showed an H<sub>2</sub> uptake of 1.60 wt% compared with 1.20 wt% in undoped MIL-101.<sup>204</sup> Prabhakaran *et al.* demonstrated that Li<sup>+</sup> doping (830 ppm) of MIL-101@SWCNTs improved H<sub>2</sub> uptake by more than twofold (4.96–10.43 mg g<sup>−1</sup>) at 25 °C and 90 bar.<sup>160</sup>

- **Metal nanoparticles on MOFs:** The synthesis of MOF hybrids with metal nanoparticles involves incorporating the latter into the MOF structure using template methods or pre-synthesis strategies. This introduction effectively increases the number of adsorption sites, boosts adsorption enthalpy and enables synergistic physical–chemical H<sub>2</sub> adsorption. In particular, MOF@Pd hybrids have received considerable attention because Pd can absorb large amounts of H<sub>2</sub> at ambient temperature and pressure. Cheon *et al.* reported that H<sub>2</sub> sorption capacity was increased to 1.48 wt% at −196 °C and 1 atm, com-

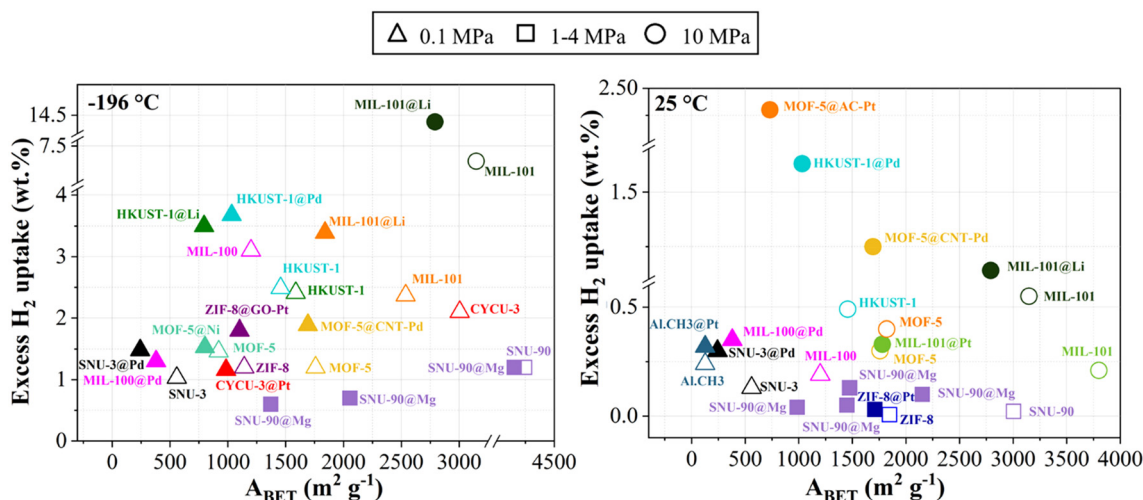


Fig. 8 Influence of adding metal particles into MOFs on the H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities of the resultant hybrid materials (●○ ref. 204); (△, ▲, △ ref. 205); (△, ▲ ref. 206); (△, ▲, ○ ref. 207); (○, ●, △ ref. 90); (□, ▲ ref. 208); (○, ●, △ ref. 209); (△, ▲ ref. 210); (○, ● ref. 211); (□, ▲ ref. 212); (△, ▲ ref. 213); (△, ▲ ref. 214).



pared to 1.03 wt% for pure SNU-3 MOF (despite a 43% decrease in the surface area).<sup>162</sup> Zlotea *et al.* showed that the MIL-100(Al)@Pd hybrid doubled H<sub>2</sub> uptake compared with the original MOF at room temperature.<sup>206</sup> Yang *et al.* loaded Pt into MOF-5@CNT hybrids to further increase H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity. The hybrid was prepared by *in situ* incorporation of the as-prepared Pt-loaded MWCNTs into MOF-5 crystals. Four materials were evaluated in terms of H<sub>2</sub> uptake: MWCNTs ( $A_{\text{BET}} = 147 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ), MWCNTs-Pt ( $A_{\text{BET}} = 124 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ), MOF-5 ( $A_{\text{BET}} = 1758 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) and MOF@MWCNT-Pt ( $A_{\text{BET}} = 1692 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ). The authors studied H<sub>2</sub> uptake at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 1 bar, as well as  $25^\circ\text{C}$  and 100 bar. The highest H<sub>2</sub> uptake ( $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 1 bar) was observed for MOF@MWCNT-Pt with 1.89 wt%, followed by MOF-5 with 1.20 wt%. At  $25^\circ\text{C}$  and 100 bar, MOF@MWCNT-Pt showed much higher H<sub>2</sub> uptake values compared to the other materials, reaching 1.25 wt%.<sup>207</sup>

Prabhakaran and Deschamps synthesized a hybrid MOF by incorporating an AC, namely NORIT-RB3, during the synthesis of MIL-101, as well as lithium at different concentrations. H<sub>2</sub> adsorption capacities were evaluated at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and  $25^\circ\text{C}$ , using pressures up to 100 bar. The highest H<sub>2</sub> uptakes were obtained for the MIL-101-B@AC-Li material, with 14.4 wt% at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 1.1 wt% at  $25^\circ\text{C}$ , both at 100 bars. Although the  $A_{\text{BET}}$  of the MIL-101-B@AC-Li material was much lower,  $2791 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  than those of MIL-101,  $3148 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , and MIL-101@AC,  $3458 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , and slightly lower than that of MIL-101-A@AC-Li,  $2958 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , all of these hybrids provided H<sub>2</sub> uptake capacities  $>100 \text{ mg g}^{-1}$  (10 wt%) at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$ . However, the significantly lower  $A_{\text{BET}}$  value of MIL-101-C@AC-Li ( $1868 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ ) compromised higher H<sub>2</sub> uptakes, reaching a maximum of  $87.70 \text{ mg g}^{-1}$  at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$ .<sup>204</sup>

**4.2.2. MOF hybrids with carbon materials for hydrogen storage.** In this section, we examine how the addition of carbon materials improves the properties relevant to H<sub>2</sub> storage described in section 3.

**- Increase in surface area:** The addition of carbon-based materials to the MOF matrix often increases the SSA of the resulting MOF hybrid, enhancing its adsorption capacity at cryogenic and near-ambient temperatures.<sup>199,204,220–222,226,227</sup>

Fig. 9 shows the effect of the BET area on H<sub>2</sub> adsorption for pure MOFs and for MOF hybrids with carbon-based materials at different storage pressures.

Yang *et al.* prepared MOF-5@MWCNT hybrids using acid-treated MWCNTs and MOF-5. The resultant materials exhibited a higher Langmuir specific surface area, from  $2160$  to  $3550 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$ , resulting in an approximately 50% increase in H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity at  $25^\circ\text{C}$  and 95 bar (from 0.3 to 0.6 wt%) and a 25% increase in H<sub>2</sub> storage capacity at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 1 bar (from 1.2 to 1.5 wt%). Furthermore, these hybrids demonstrated significantly improved stability in the presence of ambient moisture.<sup>131</sup> Petit *et al.* synthesized copper-based MOF@graphite oxide hybrids, and four materials were evaluated for H<sub>2</sub> adsorption: HKUST-1, HKUST-1@GO (5 wt%), HKUST-1@GO (9 wt%), and HKUST-1@GO (18 wt%).  $A_{\text{BET}}$  and H<sub>2</sub> uptake were  $990 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  and 2.2 wt% for HKUST-1,  $989 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  and 2.4 wt% for HKUST-1@GO (5 wt%),  $1002 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  and 2.2 wt% for HKUST-1@GO (9 wt%), and  $996 \text{ m}^2 \text{ g}^{-1}$  and 2.0 wt% for HKUST-1@GO (18 wt%), respectively. The authors attributed the improved uptake to the formation of new small pores for the hybrids.<sup>221</sup>

Prasanth *et al.* incorporated SWCNTs into MIL-101, and the best-performing material, incorporating 8 wt% of SWCNTs, presented H<sub>2</sub> sorption capacities of 9.2 wt% (at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 6 MPa) and 0.6 wt% (at  $25^\circ\text{C}$  and 6 MPa) compared with 6.4 wt% and 0.2 wt%, respectively, for the pristine MIL-101. Although this material has a slightly lower SSA, the authors ascribed these higher H<sub>2</sub> sorption capacities to the reduction in pore size and the increase in micropore volume in the hybrid due to the incorporation of SWCNTs.<sup>218</sup> Liu *et al.* hybridized Cu-MOFs with graphene oxide (GO) and achieved about

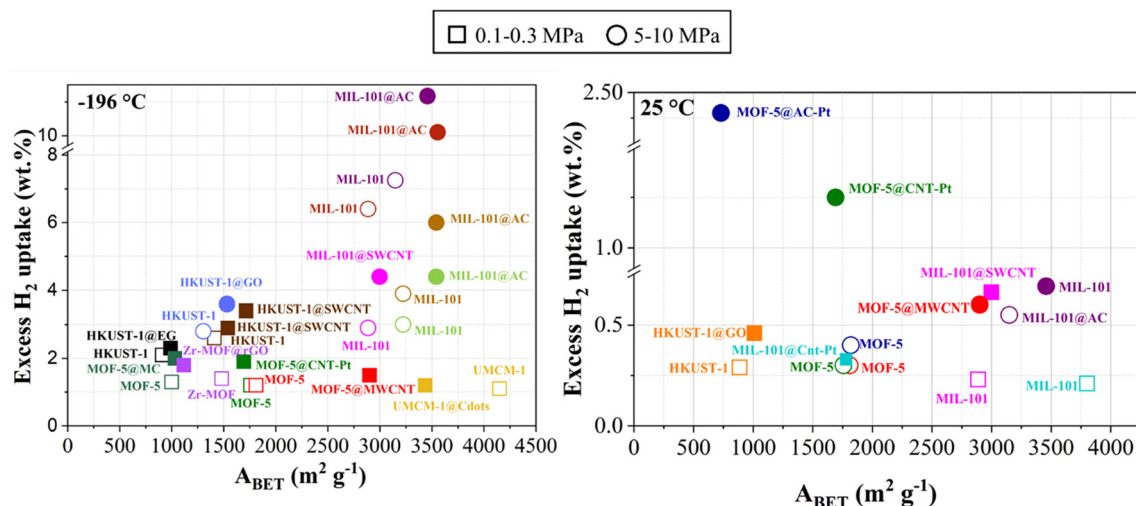


Fig. 9 Excess H<sub>2</sub> uptake of MOF hybrids reported in recent studies at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  (left) and  $25^\circ\text{C}$  (right) (○● ref. 220); (□■ ref. 221); (□■ ref. 222); (□■ ref. 223); (○●, □■ ref. 131); (□■, ● ref. 207); (□■ ref. 175); (○● ref. 224); (□■ ref. 214); (○●, □■ ref. 158); (○●, □■ ref. 218); (○●, □■ ref. 159); (○● ref. 204); (□■ ref. 225).

30% higher  $H_2$  capacities at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 4.2 MPa due to the increased SSA.<sup>220</sup> Rallapalli *et al.* introduced activated carbon (AC) during the synthesis of MIL-101(Cr), and the best-performing material reached an  $A_{\text{BET}}$  of  $3556\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$  and an  $H_2$  uptake of 10.1 wt% at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 6 MPa, outperforming pristine MIL-101 ( $A_{\text{BET}} = 2887\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$  and 6.4 wt%  $H_2$  uptake under the same conditions<sup>159</sup>). Li *et al.* used carbon nanodots (CDs) to prepare UMCM-1@CD materials and the best  $H_2$  uptake was 1.2 wt% at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 0.1 MPa, slightly higher than that of UMCM-1 with 1.1 wt%. The authors suggested that the improvement was due to specific interactions between polar functional groups, *e.g.*  $-\text{COOH}$  and  $-\text{OH}$ , on the CD surface and  $H_2$  molecules.<sup>225</sup> Yu *et al.* investigated MIL-101(Cr) and a MIL-101(Cr)@AC hybrid that displayed a maximum excess  $H_2$  uptake (at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$  and 10 MPa) of 8.2 and 13.5 wt%, respectively, due to an increase in  $A_{\text{BET}}$  from 3407 for the pristine MOF to  $3542\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$  for the hybrid.<sup>158</sup>

The morphology, not just the texture, of the MOF hybrid often changes with the percentage of carbon-based material added. Fig. 10a and b show the HKUST-1@GO hybrid modified by increasing concentrations of GO from 1 to  $2.5\text{ g L}^{-1}$ . The morphology of both samples changed significantly on reaching the highest GO concentration tested. In addition to the typical polyhedral crystals, distinctive rod- and flower-like structures appeared. Fig. 10c and d show the characteristic morphology of the Co-bpdc and Co-bpdc@MWCNT hybrids. In Fig. 10c, the Co-bpdc crystal exhibits a rectangular structure and Fig. 10d clearly shows the successful synthesis of a hybrid of MWCNTs with Co-bpdc.

Although GO had no measurable SSA by  $N_2$  adsorption at  $-196^\circ\text{C}$ , the total SSA of the HKUST-1@GO hybrid remained constant or even increased with the addition of GO up to a GO concentration in solution of  $2.5\text{ g L}^{-1}$  (see Fig. 10e).<sup>228</sup>

**- Increase in thermal stability:** The presence of a carbon-based material can also increase the thermal stability of the hybrid.<sup>175,222</sup> Policicchio *et al.* provided an overview of the thermal stability of hybrids obtained after the incorporation of

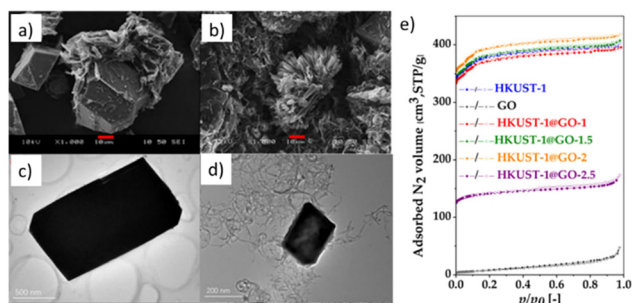
nanographite (nGr) during the synthesis of UiO-66. In addition to a notable increase in material porosity ( $\sim 30\%$ ), linker decomposition in all hybrids occurred at a temperature of around  $80^\circ\text{C}$  higher than that of the pure MOF, probably due to changes in heat capacity caused by the introduction of nGr.<sup>9</sup>

Jiang *et al.* studied the influence of introducing MWCNTs into the MOF-5 matrix, obtaining a hybrid that showed a 6% increase in thermal stability.<sup>175</sup> Rojas-Garcia *et al.* showed that HKUST-1@SWCNT materials exhibit improved thermal stability ( $320^\circ\text{C}$ ) compared to pristine HKUST-1 ( $220^\circ\text{C}$ ) using an InVia Renishaw Raman instrument equipped with a Linkam cell.<sup>222</sup>

**- Increase in hydrophobicity:** Kim *et al.* used carbon black to fabricate a hybrid with MOF-5 and demonstrated that it did not affect the integrity of the MOF-5 and effectively protected the framework from moisture.<sup>230</sup> For the same MOF, Yang and Park reported that an amorphous carbon-coated MOF-5 could be prepared by a simple thermal modification process carried out under an  $N_2$  atmosphere in a temperature range of  $480\text{--}530^\circ\text{C}$ . Amorphous carbon-coated MOF-5 samples were found to have reduced BET areas ( $1740\text{ vs. }3450\text{ m}^2\text{ g}^{-1}$ ), but displayed better water stability compared with pristine MOF-5.<sup>231</sup> Jayaramulu *et al.* obtained a hybrid material using a highly fluorinated graphene oxide (HFG) and ZIF-8 (ZIF-8@HFG). The material exhibited superhydrophobic behavior with an exceptionally high water contact angle of  $162^\circ$ .<sup>232</sup>

**- Increase in thermal conductivity:** The addition of carbon-based materials to a MOF boosts its thermal conductivity, making it more efficient at conducting and dissipating heat. The degree of improvement depends on factors such as the filler type, concentration and dispersion. Nandasiri *et al.* reported an  $\sim 23\%$  improvement in thermal conductivity by adding GO to the MOF matrix MIL-101(Cr).<sup>233</sup> The addition of 10 wt% expanded natural graphite to MOF-5 pellets with a density of  $0.5\text{ g cm}^{-3}$  was previously found to improve thermal conduction near room temperature by a factor of 5 (compared with undoped MOF-5 pellets).<sup>234</sup> A similar behavior was observed by Farrando-Pérez *et al.* for the HKUST-1@graphite flake hybrid, showing that the thermal conductivity of the hybrid monolith (50 wt% graphite flakes) was  $3.15\text{ W m}^{-1}\text{ K}^{-1}$  vs.  $0.49\text{ W m}^{-1}\text{ K}^{-1}$  for the pure HKUST-1 monolith. In terms of  $H_2$  uptake, the hybrid monolith with 10 wt% graphite flakes showed the best result with 1.7 wt% vs. 1.25 wt% for the pure HKUST-1 monolith.<sup>143</sup>

**4.2.3. MOF hybrids with other inorganic materials.** Hybrids with MOFs have been used for various applications, such as  $\text{CO}_2$  capture, and can include alternative materials such as zeolites, cellulose and clays.<sup>235</sup> MOFs@clay hybrids include feedstock materials such as attapulgite, amino-clay, cordierite, kaolin and bentonite. Wang *et al.* studied the influence of introducing diatomite (Da) into the MIL-101 (Cr) matrix. Their study evaluated the  $H_2$  storage capacity of the Cr-MOF@Da hybrid at  $25^\circ\text{C}$  and 1 bar. The  $H_2$  adsorption isotherms showed a linear increase as the wt% of diatomite increased, obtaining 0.022 wt% for Cr-MIL-101@Da-4. The hybrids also showed improved thermal stability.<sup>236</sup>



**Fig. 10** (a) SEM images of HKUST-1@ $1\text{ g L}^{-1}$  GO; (b) SEM images of HKUST-1@ $2.5\text{ g L}^{-1}$  GO. Scale bar is  $10\text{ }\mu\text{m}$  (reproduced from ref. 228 © 1996–2024 MDPI); (c) TEM images of Co-bpdc (cobalt benzene-1,4-dicarboxylate) as a pure MOF; (d) TEM images of Co-bpdc@MWCNTs as a hybrid (reproduced from ref. 229 © 1996–2024 MDPI); (e)  $N_2$  adsorption–desorption isotherms ( $-196^\circ\text{C}$ ) of pristine GO, HKUST-1 and hybrid materials with different GO contents (reproduced from ref. 228 © 1996–2024 MDPI).



MOF@clays have been the subject of research interest, especially for the development of complex geometries of MOFs using 3D printing.<sup>237</sup> MOFs@zeolite hybrids combine the high SSA of MOFs with the high mechanical strength of zeolites. By selecting the type of synthesis, a core-shell structure can be obtained that may offer certain advantages, such as gas separation, hydrophobicity, *etc.*<sup>238</sup> For instance, Musyoka *et al.* fabricated a MIL-101(Cr)@zeolite-templated carbon (ZTC) hybrid for H<sub>2</sub> storage applications. H<sub>2</sub> adsorption measurements were carried out at −196 °C up to 1 bar. The hybrid material was compared with the individual materials and showed an increased surface area and H<sub>2</sub> uptake capacity of 2957 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>−1</sup> and 2.55 wt%, respectively. These results are significantly better than those obtained with MIL-101 (2552 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>−1</sup>, 2.39 wt%) and ZTC (2577 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>−1</sup>, 2.39 wt%).<sup>239</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

The development of MOF-based hybrid adsorbents, combining MOFs with a variety of other materials and nanostructures, has attracted considerable interest in recent times. This approach aims to improve the performance and scalability of MOFs, opening up possibilities for future materials.

MOFs alone, due to their versatile structures, high surface areas and substantial pore volumes, are already considered promising materials for H<sub>2</sub> storage, as evidenced by NU100, which reaches 9.05 wt% at 7 MPa and −196 °C. Moreover, a variety of synthesis methods enables the nanopore structure of MOFs to be controlled, which is essential for their applicability in adsorption. Our review covered different synthesis techniques, delineating their respective advantages and drawbacks in controlling MOF parameters, as well as characterizing MOFs and their hybrids. By recognizing the potential of MOFs, increasing the SSA and optimizing pore size distribution should make it possible to increase H<sub>2</sub> storage capacities in line with the DOE specifications.

To optimize hydrogen storage under ambient conditions, strategies such as linker functionalization and the introduction of unsaturated metal centers are highly effective. A notable example is that of exposed metal ions, which often have binding enthalpies ranging from −20 to −30 kJ mol<sup>−1</sup>. Other advances concern the creation of competitive MOF hybrids, especially through the incorporation of carbon materials, which show promise in increasing adsorption capacity, improving thermal stability and enhancing thermal conductivity. To improve the selectivity and stability of MOFs, MOF@MOF hybrids offer a promising approach. By integrating the characteristics of two distinct MOFs into a single, unified material, this method effectively combines their advantages. Combinations such as MOF@carbon-based materials preserve the advantages of MOFs while improving thermal conductivity, surface area and ease of shaping.

In conclusion, MOF-based hybrids represent a promising approach for improving H<sub>2</sub> storage capabilities, offering significant potential to meet the demanding standards set by the

US DOE. Key areas of future research should focus on increasing the volumetric capacity of these materials, as their gravimetric performance is already outstanding, but volumetric improvements are essential for practical applications such as transportation and portable energy systems. These developments will play a decisive role in optimizing the performance of MOF hybrids and advancing their viability for commercial hydrogen storage applications.

## Abbreviation

|                      |                                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| (−ΔH) <sub>ads</sub> | Adsorption enthalpy                     |
| A <sub>BET</sub>     | Brunauer–Emmett–Teller area             |
| BDC                  | 1,4-Benzenedicarboxylic acid            |
| BET                  | Brunauer–Emmett–Teller                  |
| BPDC                 | Biphenyldicarboxylate                   |
| BTC                  | Benzene-1,3,5-Tricarboxylic acid        |
| CDs                  | Carbon dots                             |
| Co-bpdc              | Cobalt benzene-1,4-dicarboxylate        |
| COFs                 | Covalent organic frameworks             |
| DMF                  | <i>N,N</i> -Dimethylformamide           |
| DOE                  | U.S. Department of Energy               |
| FTIR                 | Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy |
| GL                   | Graphene-like                           |
| GO                   | Graphene oxide                          |
| H <sub>2</sub>       | Hydrogen                                |
| ILs                  | Ionic liquids                           |
| IMOFs                | Interpenetrated MOFs                    |
| MIL                  | Materials of Institut Lavoisier         |
| MOFs                 | Metal organic frameworks                |
| MWCNTs               | Multi-walled carbon nanotubes           |
| nGr                  | Nano graphite                           |
| NMR                  | Nuclear magnetic resonance              |
| NU                   | Northwestern University                 |
| PBUs                 | Primary building units                  |
| PCPs                 | Porous coordination polymers            |
| PDC                  | 3,5-Pyridine dicarboxylic acid          |
| PSD                  | Pore size distribution                  |
| PTFE                 | Polytetrafluoroethylene                 |
| QDs                  | Quantum dots                            |
| RAM                  | Resonant acoustic mixing                |
| SBU                  | Secondary building units                |
| SEM                  | Scanning electron microscopy            |
| SSA                  | Specific surface area                   |
| SWCNT                | Single-walled carbon nanotubes          |
| TGA                  | Thermogravimetric analysis              |
| UIO                  | Universitetet i Oslo                    |
| XRD                  | X-ray diffraction analysis              |
| ZTC                  | Zeolite-templated carbon                |

## Author contributions

L.J.-L.: writing – original draft and formal analysis; R.M.-O.: review & editing, formal analysis, and supervision; L.G. A.:



writing – original draft and formal analysis; A.C.: review & editing and supervision; V.F. review & editing, supervision, project administration, and formal analysis.

## Data availability

The data supporting this article have been included as part of the ESI.†

No primary research results, software or code have been included and no new data were generated or analysed as part of this review.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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