Bridging the Digital Skills Gap of Records Officers in Zambia in Line with the eGovernance Reform:

Needs Assessment and Developing Professional Training Programme

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Why this project?

Zambia vision: a time of change

- Zambia is implementing the Smart Zambia vision by 2030. It requires large-scale digital transformation of the public service sector undertaking digitalisation of records management by deploying electronic records and document management systems (ERDMS).
- Previous study by Bwalya and Akakandelwa (2023) show that records officers in Zambia lack digital skills for managing e-records.

Aims

- Identify the needs in upskilling records managers.
- Provide a plan for bridging the skills gap and develop a pilot educational programme.

Collaboration

This is a new collaboration between the Computer and Information Sciences Department (University of Strathclyde) and the Department of Library and Information Science (University of Zambia) and supported by governmental agencies such as the National Archives of Zambia.

Approach

The project combines an assessment of the training needs related to digital skills of the records officers in government/local authorities with developing an appropriate training programme for the records management sector in Zambia. It also aims to promote open government data, which is still in its infancy in Zambia.

Stakeholders Research

Key policy makers (Ministry of the eGovernance / Smart Zambia, the National Archives of Zambia, and Cabinet Office) and **records managers**.
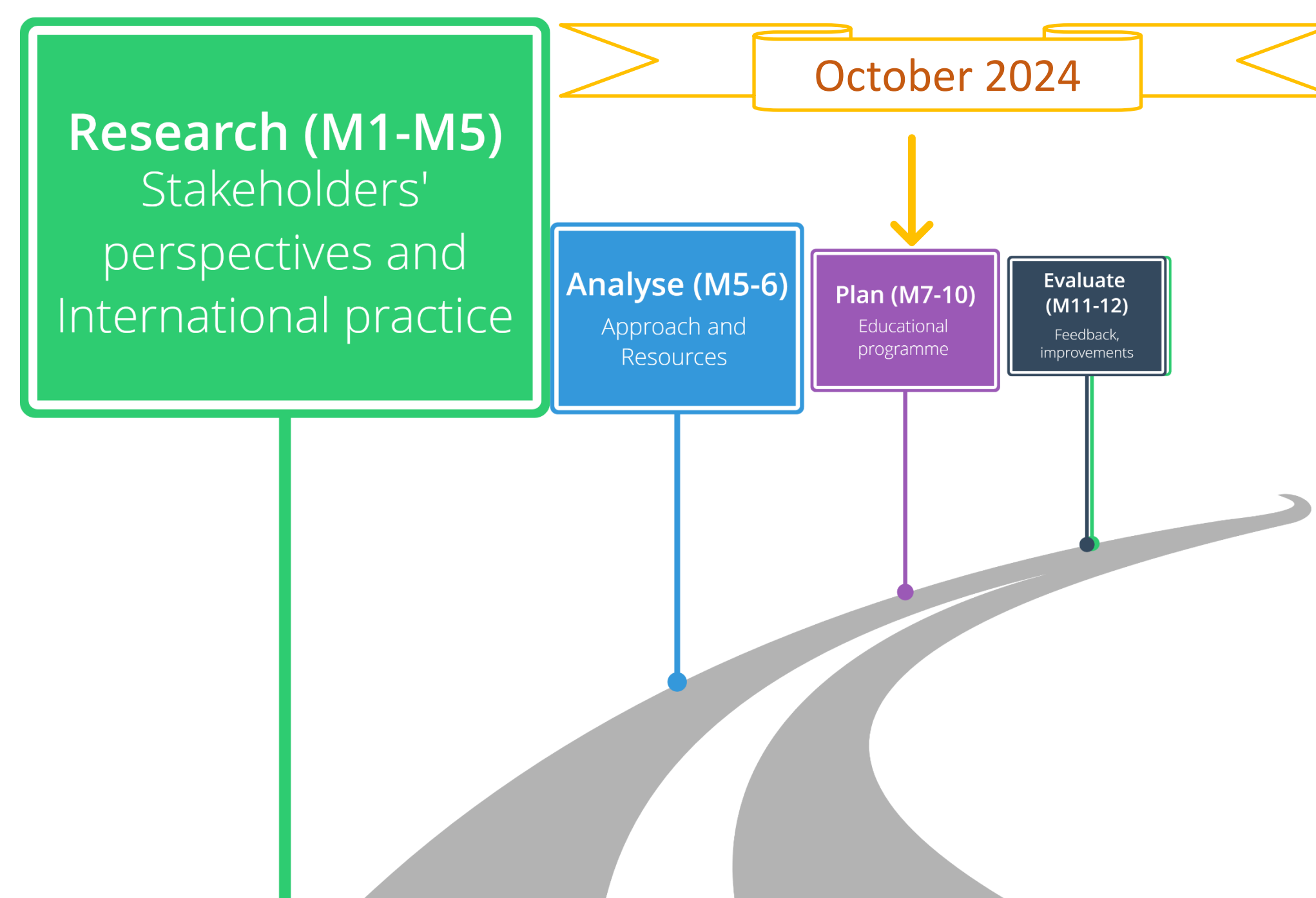
Meeting of M. Dobreva with Smart Zambia Directors: Mr Munukayumbwa – Planning, Mr. Hameja – Digital Government Services, and Mr Mwansa – HR. July 2024, Lusaka.

Workshop and survey at the 3rd Zambian Archives and Records Management Association – ZARMA, July 2024, Livingstone (Mosi-oa-Tunya).

Project timeline: M1 - March 2024

October 2024

Research (M1-M5) Stakeholders' perspectives and International practice

Analyse (M5-6) Approach and Resources

Plan (M7-10) Educational programme

Evaluate (M11-12) Feedback, improvements
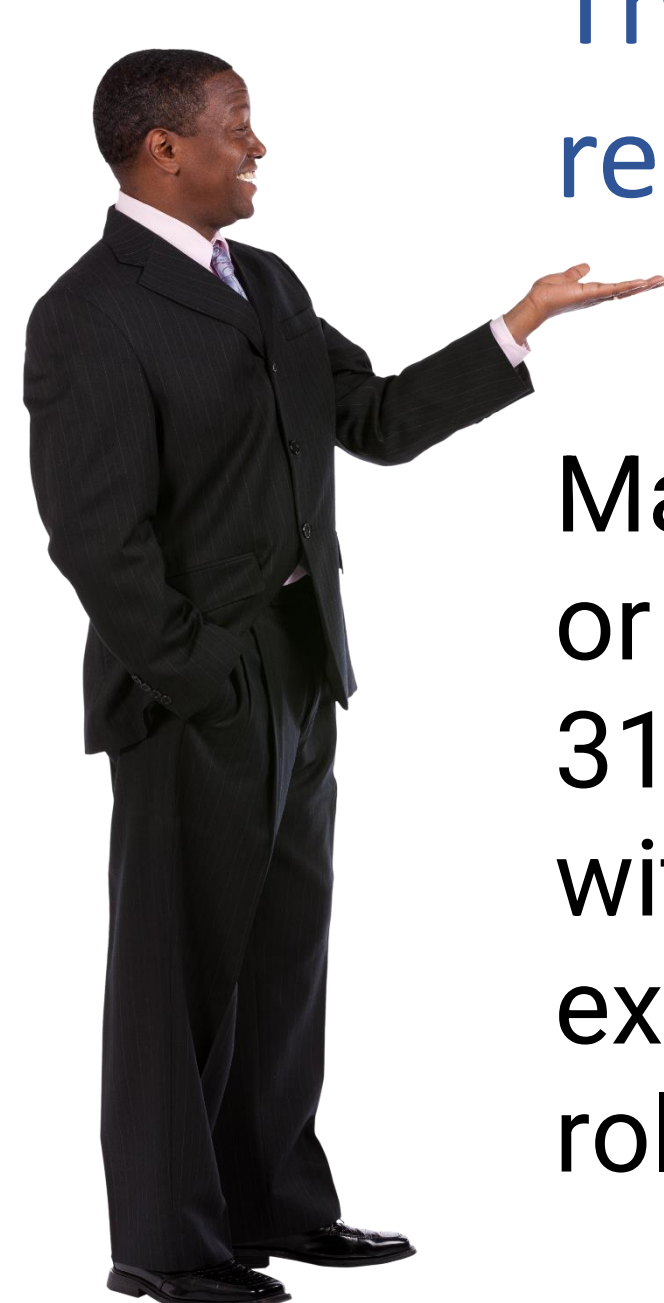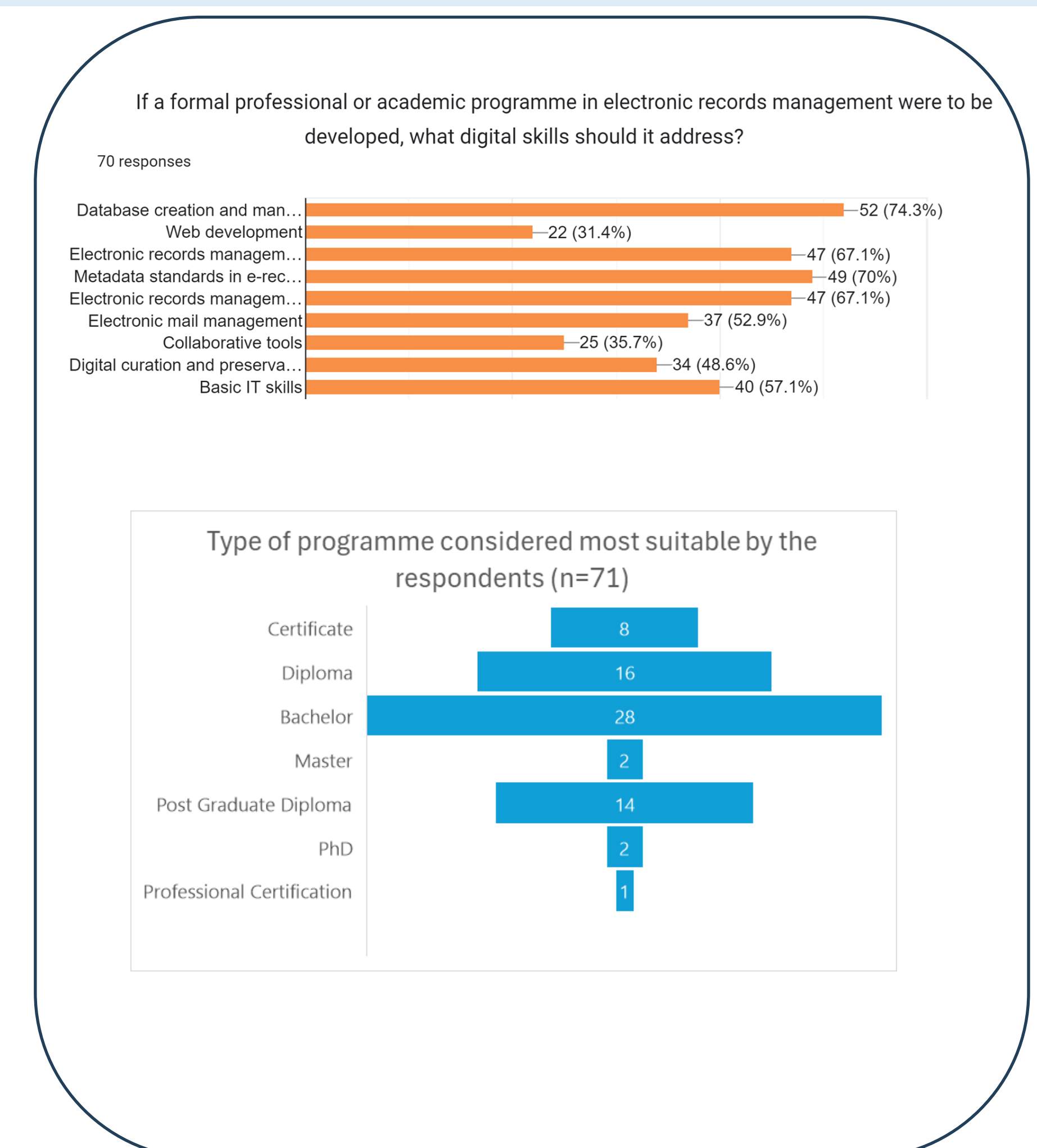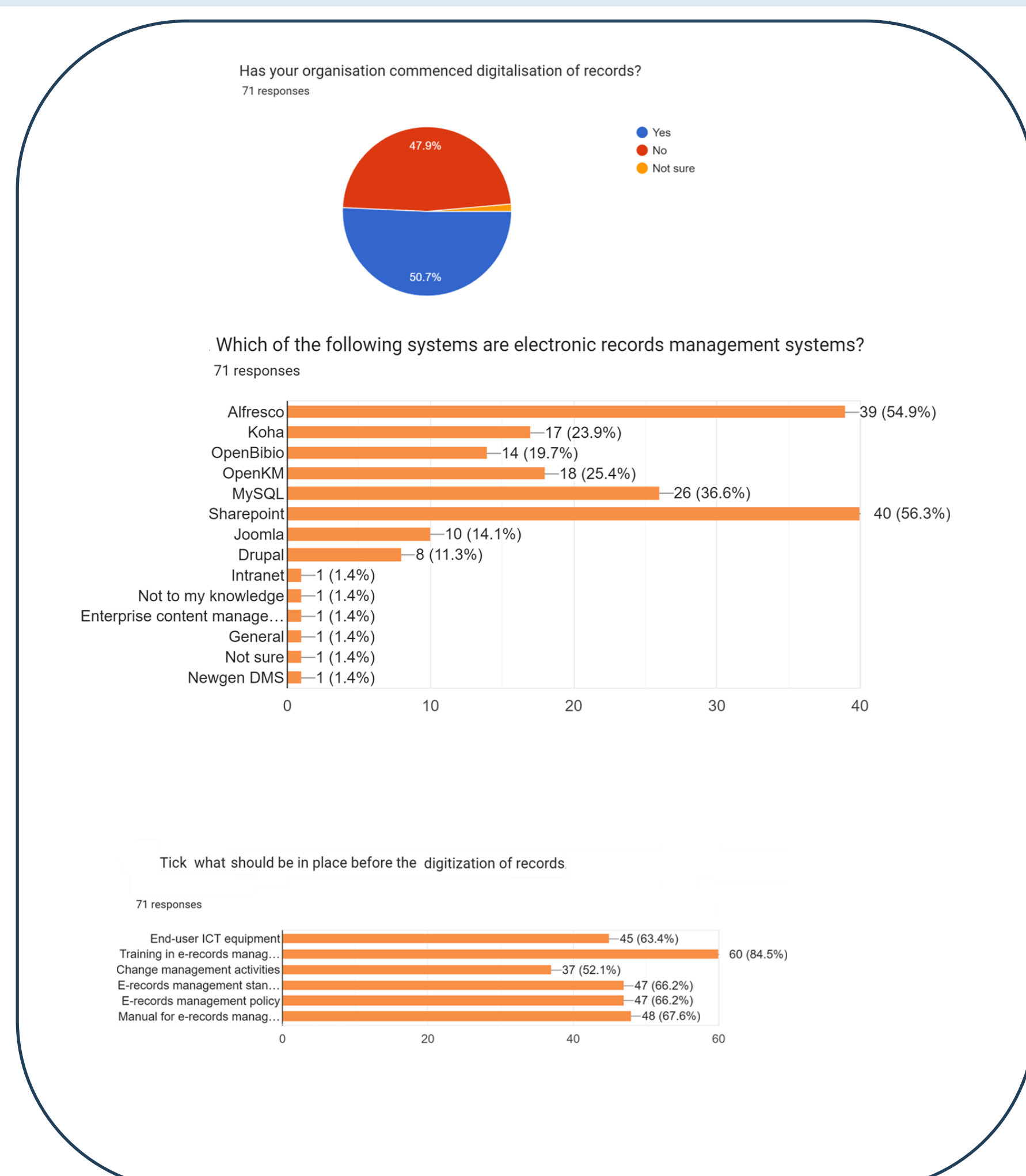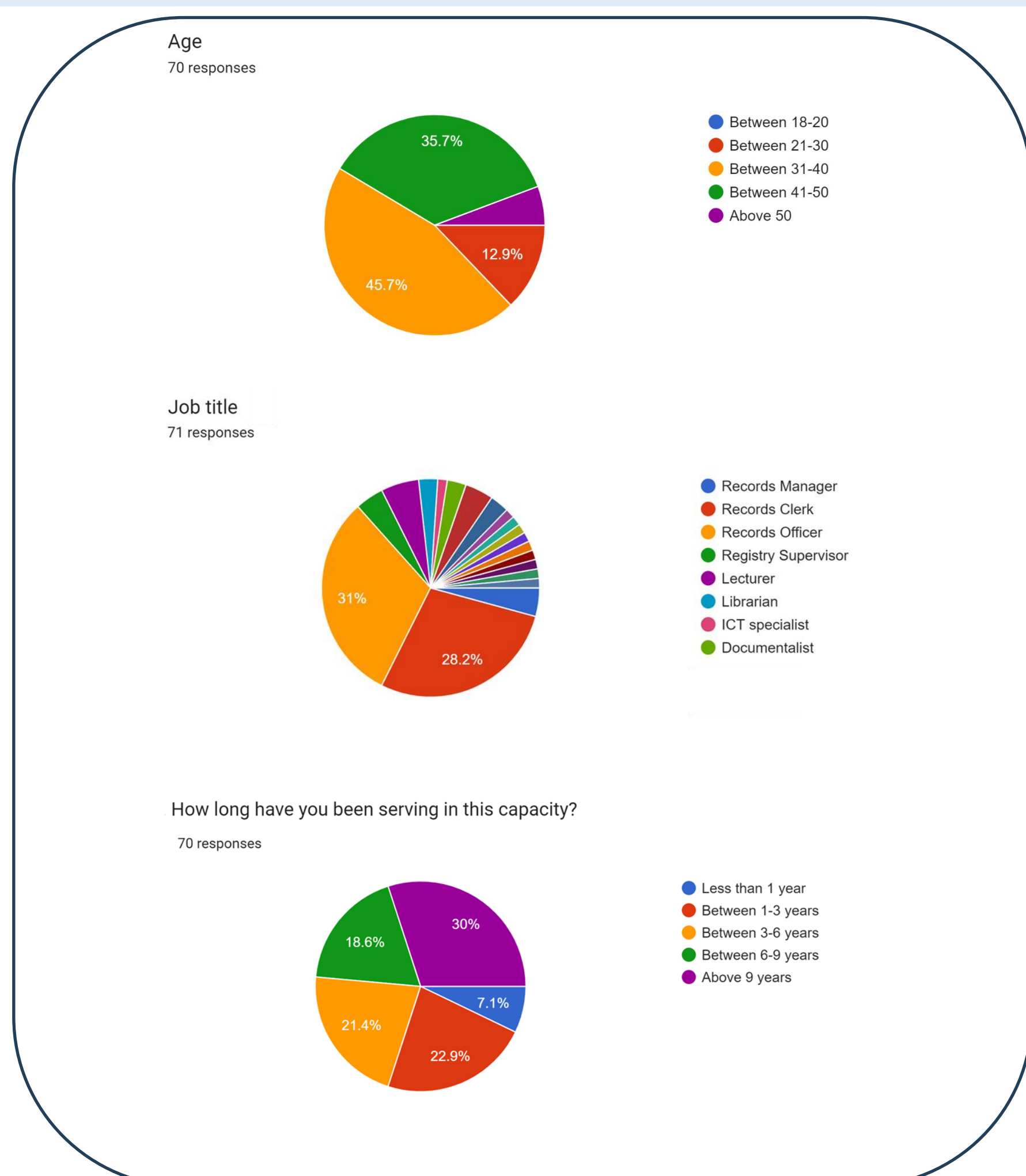
Potential Impacts

- The first comprehensive mapping of the digital skills landscape in records management in Zambia.
- A new educational programme tailored to the skills' gaps and needs on a PGDip level which can impact the 5,000-strong records management professionals.
- Long-term societal impact on improved eGovernment practices in Zambia.
- A blueprint for other sub-Saharan countries striving for digital transformation.
- Useful collaboration experience – first between the University of Strathclyde and the University of Zambia.

Analysis: Survey with Records Management Professionals

Profile of the Respondents

Age, 70 responses — Between 18-20, Between 21-30, Between 31-40 (45.7%), Between 41-50 (35.7%), Above 50 (12.9%)

Job title, 71 responses — Records Manager, Records Clerk, Records Officer, Registry Supervisor, Lecturer, Librarian, ICT specialist, Documentalist (28.2%, 31%)

How long have you been serving in this capacity? 70 responses — Less than 1 year (7.1%), Between 1-3 years (22.9%), Between 3-6 years (21.4%), Between 6-9 years (18.6%), Above 9 years (30%)

Emerging Institutional Picture

Has your organisation commenced digitalisation of records? 71 responses — Yes (50.7%), No (47.9%), Not sure

Which of the following systems are electronic records management systems? 71 responses — Alfresco 39 (54.9%), Koha 17 (23.9%), OpenBiblio 14 (19.7%), OpenKM 18 (25.4%), MySQL 26 (36.6%), Sharepoint 40 (56.3%), Joomla 10 (14.1%), Drupal 8 (11.3%), Intranet 1 (1.4%), Not to my knowledge 1 (1.4%), Enterprise content manage... 1 (1.4%), General 1 (1.4%), Not sure 1 (1.4%), Newgen DMS 1 (1.4%)

Tick what should be in place before the digitization of records. 71 responses — End-user ICT equipment 45 (63.4%), Training in e-records manag... 60 (84.5%), Change management activities 37 (52.1%), E-records management stan... 47 (66.2%), E-records management policy 47 (66.2%), Manual for e-records manag... 48 (67.6%)

What Upskilling Programme is Needed?

If a formal professional or academic programme in electronic records management were to be developed, what digital skills should it address? 70 responses — Database creation and man... 52 (74.3%), Web development 22 (31.4%), Electronic records managem... 47 (67.1%), Metadata standards in e-rec... 49 (70%), Electronic records managem... 47 (67.1%), Electronic mail management 37 (52.9%), Collaborative tools 25 (35.7%), Digital curation and preserva... 34 (48.6%), Basic IT skills 40 (57.1%)

Type of programme considered most suitable by the respondents (n=71) — Certificate 8, Diploma 16, Bachelor 28, Master 2, Post Graduate Diploma 14, PhD 2, Professional Certification 1
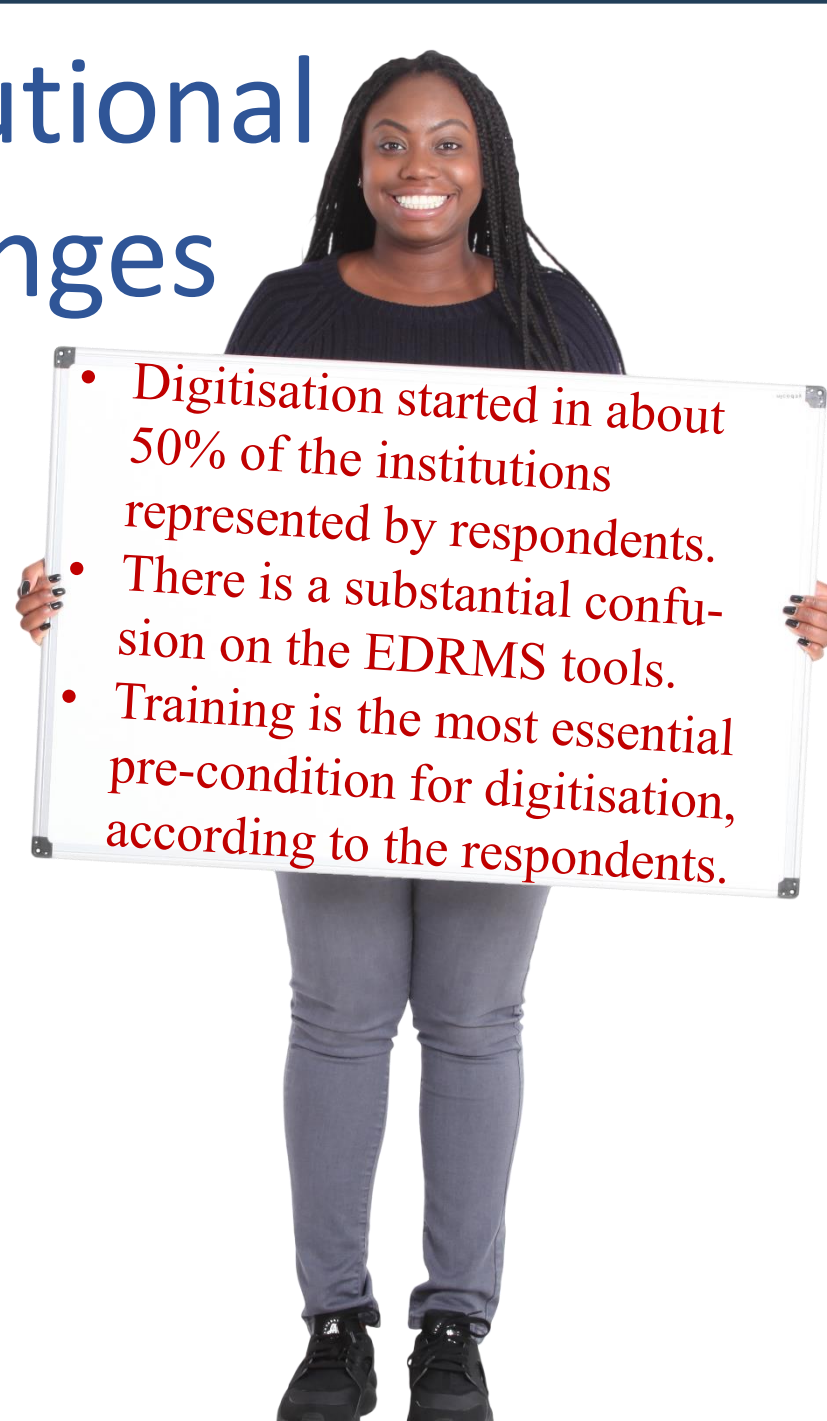
The typical respondent

Male, a records clerk or officer, between 31 and 50 years old, with over 6 years of experience in the role.

The institutional challenges

- Digitisation started in about 50% of the institutions represented by respondents.
- There is a substantial confusion on the EDRMS tools.
- Training is the most essential pre-condition for digitisation, according to the respondents.

Under development: a PGDip in eRecords Management at the University of Zambia.

REFERENCES

Electronic Government Division, Republic of Zambia (2019) Smart Zambia Electronic Government Master Plan 2018-2030. 64 pp. Available: https://www.szi.gov.zm/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/eGOVERNMENT_Masterplan_v3.0.pdf

T Bwalya, A Akakandelwa (2023) An Assessment of Government Efforts Towards the Implementation of an Integrated Electronic Records Management System in the Zambian Public Service. Zambia Journal of Library & Information Science. Available: https://zajlis.unza.zm/index.php/journal/article/view/121