

The role of digital technologies in managing digital heritage: findings from the InMAP study



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1. Focusing on the intangible

The InMAP study analysed the situation of recent **memory archives** created in Portugal over recent decades, focusing on heritage institutions that document **Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** and **oral history**.

Documentation, digital preservation, and digital access emerged as the central areas of inquiry, given their critical role in collecting intangible heritage.

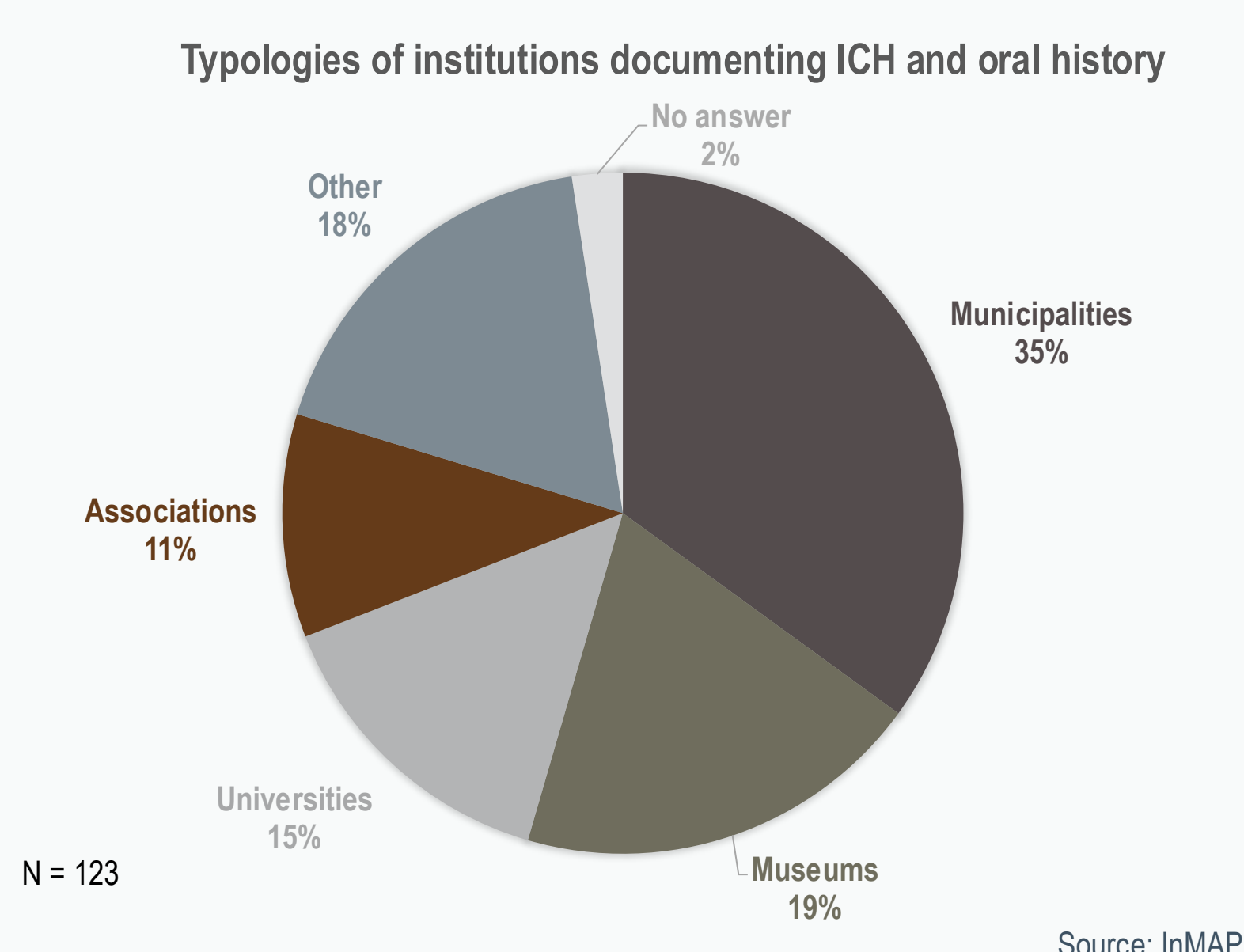
The primary goal was to identify the **key barriers** within these areas, along with the factors limiting heritage reuse and long-term sustainability, with a view to broader social, educational, and scientific impact.

2. Methods

The research combined two complementary instruments: a nationwide questionnaire **survey** which obtained 195 valid responses (of which 123 entities are actively engaged in this field), and semi-structured **interviews** with 19 professionals from representative heritage institutions across the sample (GLAM, universities, associations, etc.)

3. A diverse landscape

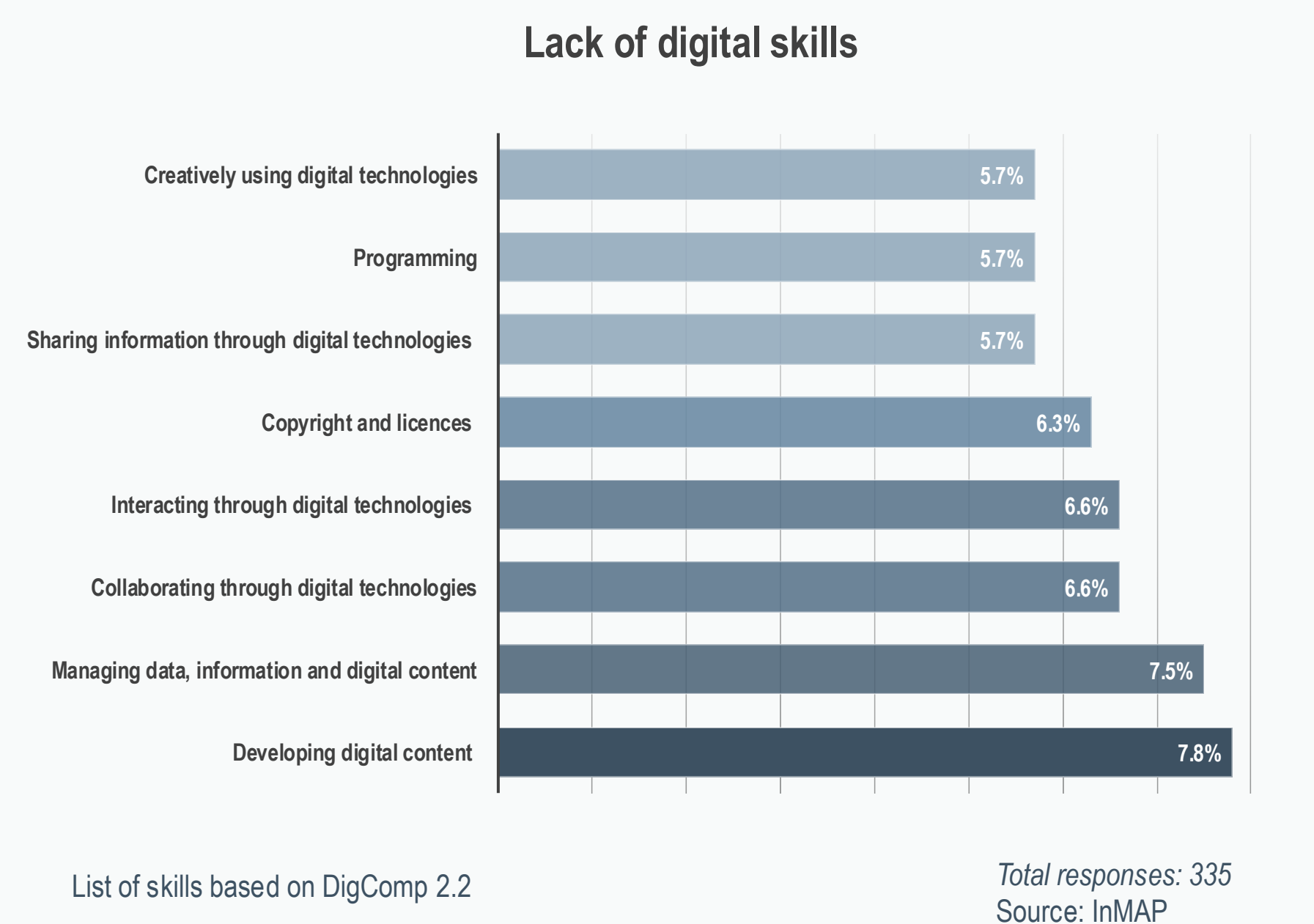
The surveyed sample reveals significant institutional diversity, with **municipalities** predominating (35%), followed by **museums** (19.5%), **universities** (14.6%) and associations (10.6%).



4. Insufficient capacity-building

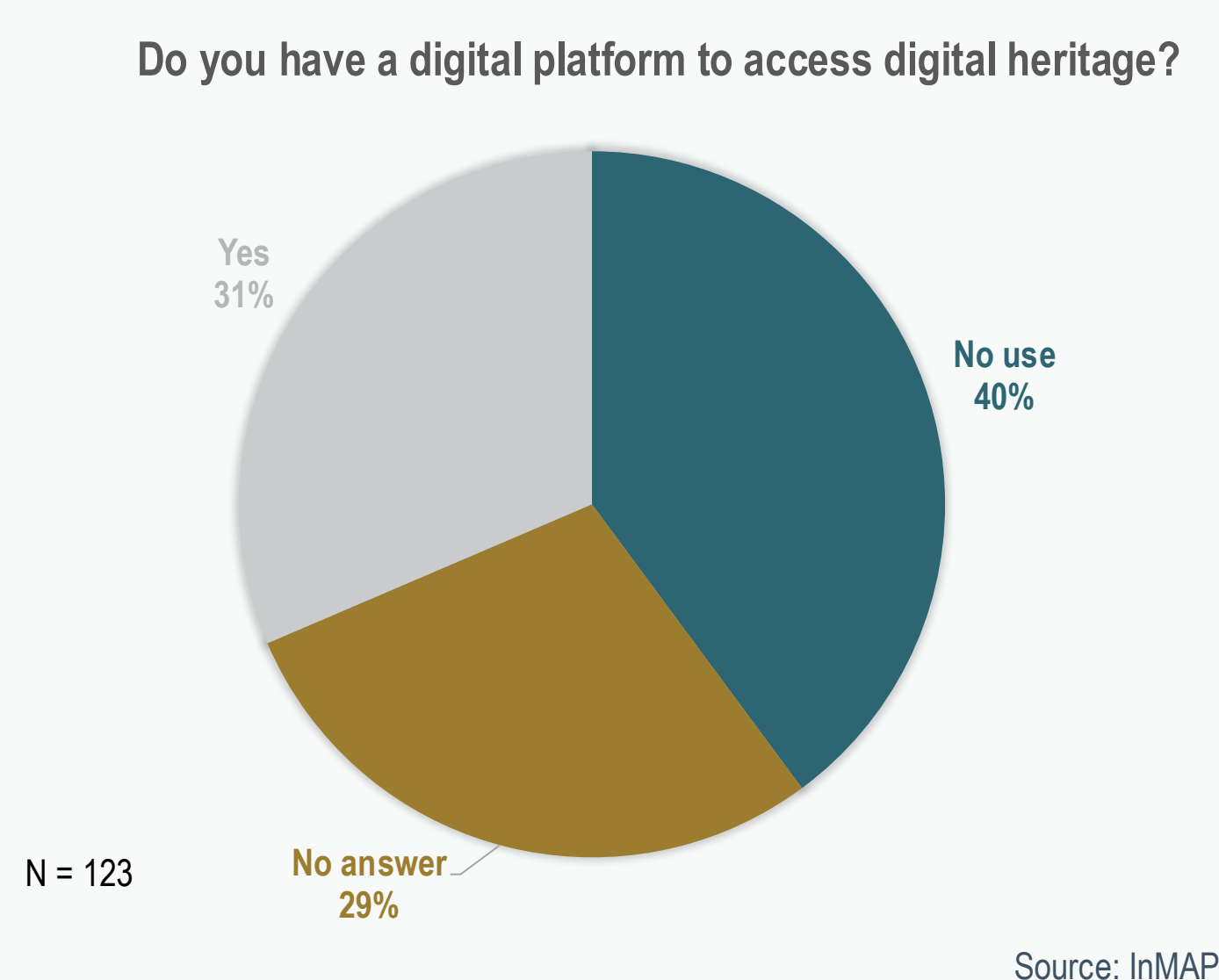
37.4% of the surveyed institutions acknowledge a shortage or need for reinforcement in **digital skills**.

The most frequently **identified gaps** fall within content creation and management — including **developing digital content** (7.8%) and **managing** data, information and digital content (7.5%) — collaborating and interacting through digital technologies (6.6% each), **copyright** and licences (6.3%), and skills related to **sharing**, programming, and creatively using digital technologies (17.1% combined).



5. Limited technological infrastructure

In **40.7%** of cases, institutions report using **no information management system** at all for managing the collections, while 30.1% indicate that they do. This suggests that a significant share of the surveyed institutions continue to manage their records in a fragmented manner, relying on loosely structured or *ad hoc* tools.



6. Limited interoperability

The data reveal a striking **lack of interoperability**: just **8.9%** of cases indicate any connection between the information management system used for ICH or oral history documentation and other systems within the same organisation.

7. Lack of digital preservation strategies

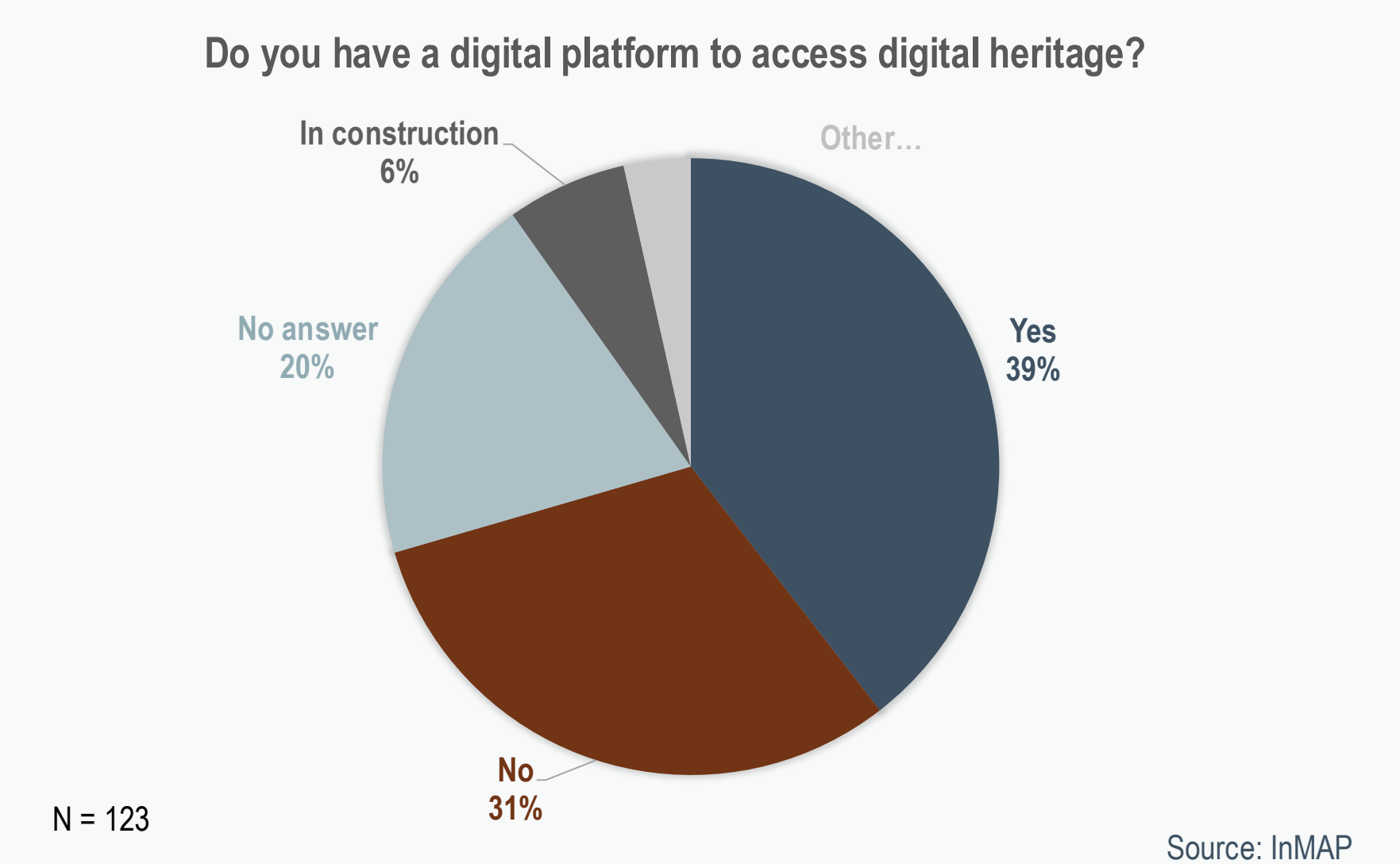
Digital preservation is one of the most fragile areas identified. Despite being widely recognised as important, **only 8.1%** of institutions have a formalised **digital preservation strategy**.

8. Limited digital access

Digital access presents a **heterogeneous** and broadly unsatisfactory picture. **Only 39.5%** of institutions have a website through which they make their digital collections available.

Moreover, among those with a website, the proportion of heritage content published online remains very limited: **just 5.7%** make their entire digital collections **fully accessible**.

Software and information systems, alongside **technological infrastructure**, stand out as significant barriers to the development of digital access.



9. Human resources as a cross-cutting gap

Human resources were identified as the **main gap** across all survey dimensions analysed (inventorying 17.3%; digital preservation 11.3%; digital access 18.6%).

10. Conclusions

Although digital tools are widely integrated into memory institutions' daily work, constraints remain: **insufficient capacity-building** creates **digital skills gaps**; fragile infrastructure includes inadequate or absent **information systems** and interoperability, insufficient storage, and lack of equipment; and **limited access** means not all institutions have digital platforms to present heritage, revealing **uneven technical and digital capacity** to publish and disseminate content – jeopardising long-term preservation, collection management, re-use, and sustainability.

Building a bridge to the future and shaping public policies

Our mission goes beyond diagnosis to inspiration: these constraints demand integrated **policy action** to ensure continuity, quality, and access, while investment in **human resources, training, standardization & guidance**, and **funding** for technical and **digital capacity** is key to document and safeguard this heritage for future generations.

