



SPORTELLLO SANS-PAPIERS SIX MONTH REPORT

Quantitative analysis January – June 2021



1. Number of visits

The Sportello Sans-Papiers is a migrant drop-in space in Palermo, Italy. Founded in 2016, the space is located in the neighborhood of Ballarò, home to the city's historical market. Today, the drop-in represents a reference point for migrants passing through Palermo as well as for many people who live in the neighborhood. The drop-in has a multi-disciplinary team made up of a dozen professionals and activists (social workers, lawyers, translators) from different countries and background. Emphasis is laid on taking care to listen to and fully understand the needs expressed by people who come to the drop-in for a whole range of reasons. Thanks to a constant focus on language interpretation and cultural awareness, as well as forming bonds of trust, people who visit the space are supported and encouraged to have awareness of their own rights and freedoms – irrespective of their legal status in Italy. People who come to the space are also, when necessary, often accompanied to other locations in the city – such as dormitories, hospitals, legal clinics, mental health centers – in order to encourage a community-based approach to care and case management.

477

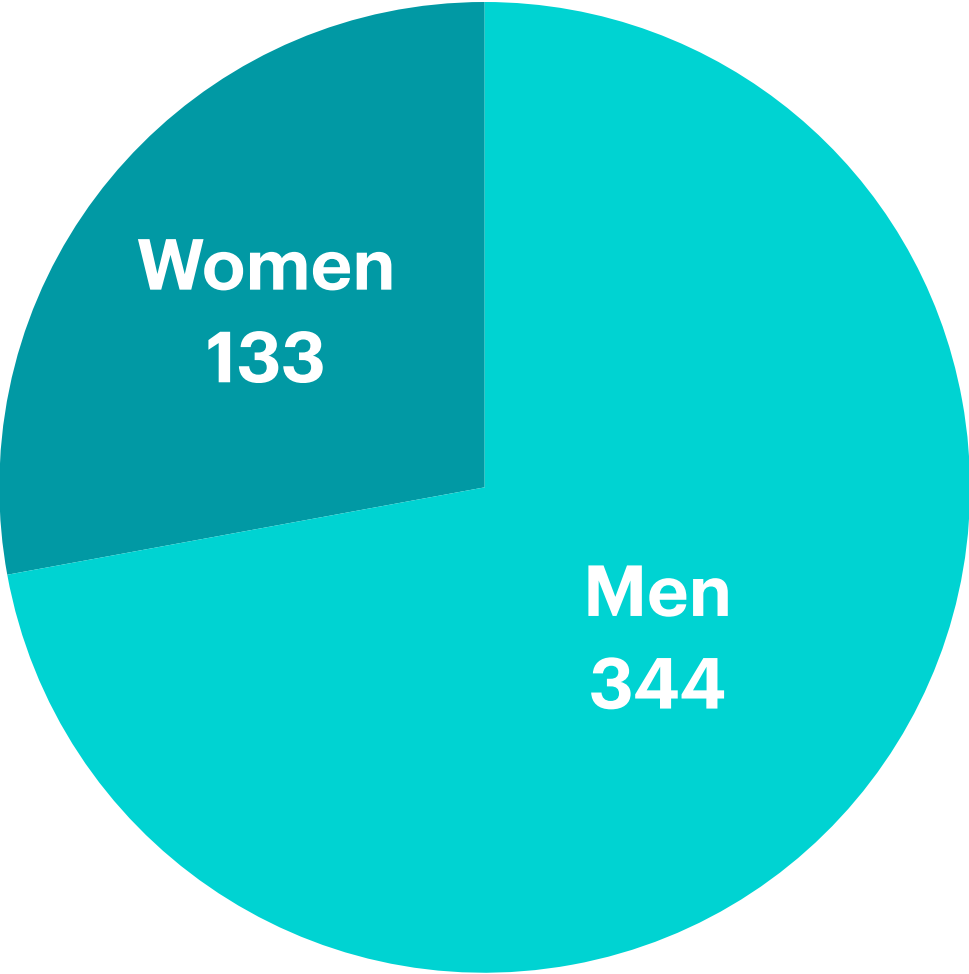
**VISITS TO THE DROP-IN OVER
THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 2021**

Our drop-in space has been extremely busy over the first six months of this year: we recorded a total of 477 visits. This represents the number of meetings in the drop-in space itself, and does not include all of those that take place outside of the space during the week, such as our monitoring and social-legal work in the train station following migrant landings, in informal labor sites in the countryside and in asylum seeker hostels across Western Sicily.

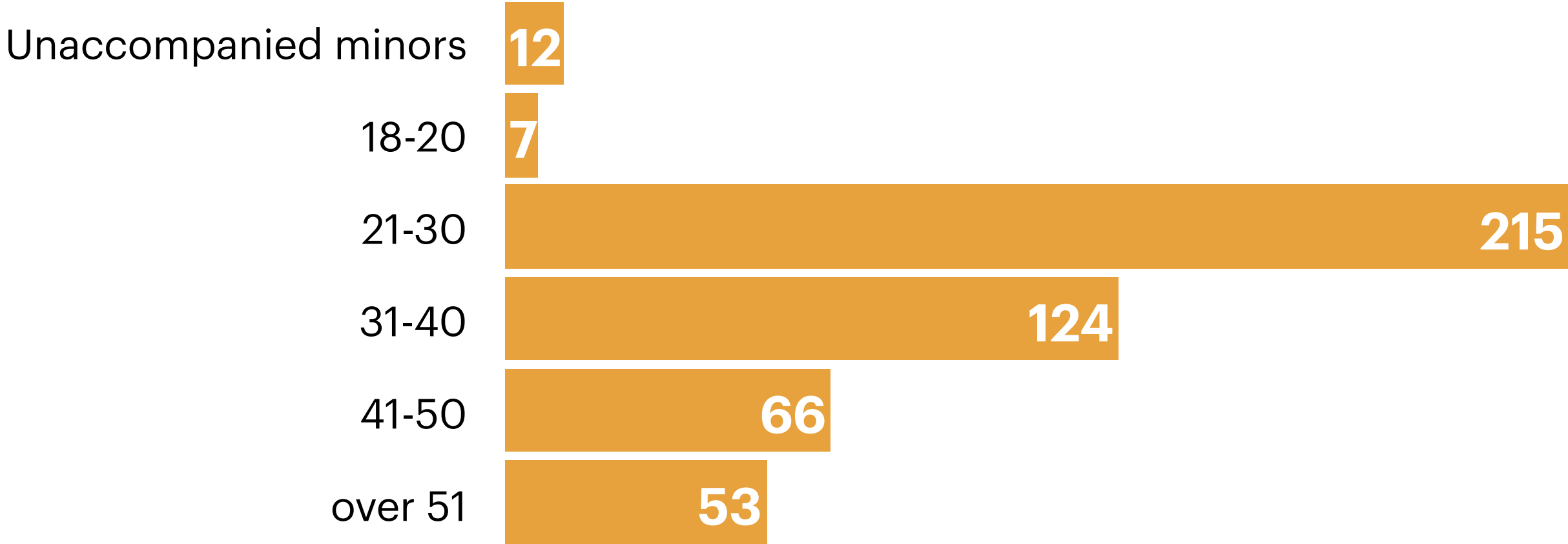
2. Demographics

Behind all of the numbers provided here are people with hopes and dreams, who have shared their lives, strengths, sufferings and stories of resistances with us – people driven forward in their search for a better life and to be more at ease with themselves and greater well-being. Around 70% of the people who came by are men and 30% women; most people fall into the age group of 21-30 years old. The majority of people are adults born in another country, some of them only recently arrived in Europe (including unaccompanied foreign minors who have run away from government hostels), others are asylum seekers hosted in hostels in the city or the local area. They also include homeless people looking for somewhere to live, farm-laborers at risk of exploitation at work, and people without any documents who are even more at risk of exploitation. The women who come by the space are mainly: asylum seekers; victims of people trafficking and of sexual exploitation; and women involved in care work. Many of them are mothers, including single mothers. Many of them passed through Libya, Algeria and Mali in order to reach Europe, where they experienced trauma and violence."

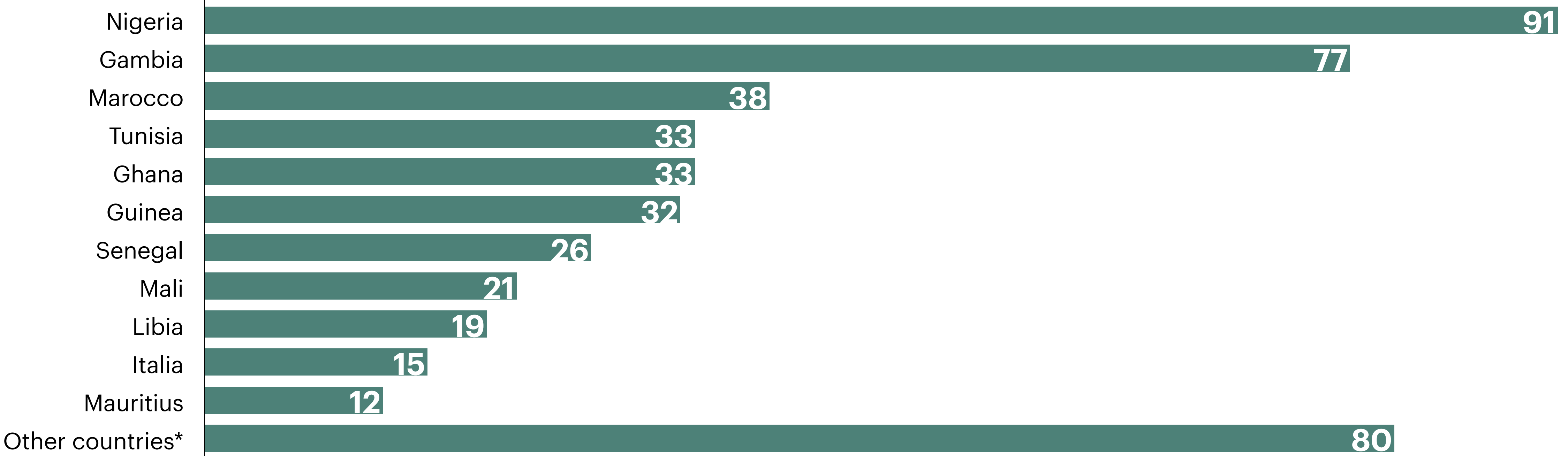
Number of visitors by gender



Number of visitors by age



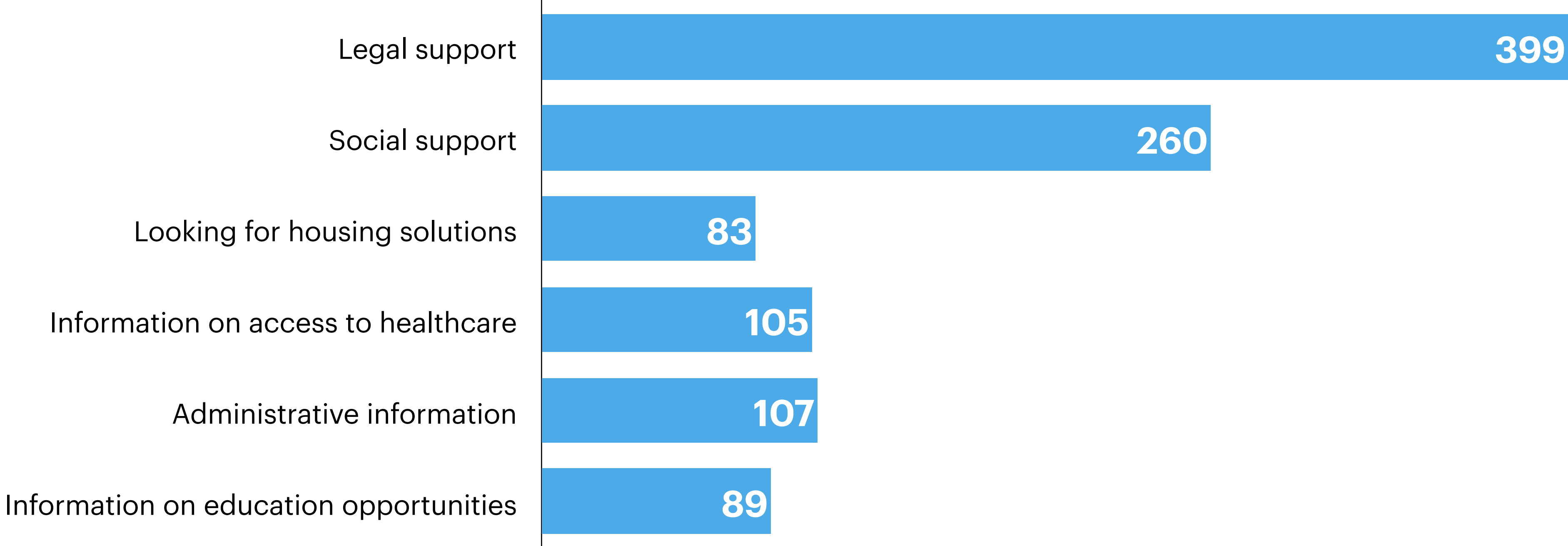
Among our visitors from West African countries, the most frequent nationalities recorded are Nigerian (19%), Gambian (16%) and Guinean (7%). Among visitors from North African countries, the most frequent nationalities recorded are Moroccan (8%), Tunisian (7%) and Libyan (4%). The numbers given here represent the number of times that someone of a particular nationality has come to the drop-in with a request, not the number of people from a particular nationality that have come to the space over all.



**Other countries: Ivory Coast 8, Egypt 7, Peru 7, Romania 7, Sudan 7, Kenya 5, Somalia 4, Sri Lanka 4, UK 4, Venezuela 4, Syria 3, USA 3, Bangladesh 2, Chad 2, South Korea 2, Iraq 2, Burkina Faso 1, Chile 1, China 1, Ecuador 1, France 1, Jordan 1, Mexico 1, Togo 1, Ukraine 1.*

3. Needs analysis and types of support provided

Many people who come to the space come back over time, with a whole range of needs. Thanks to the bonds of trusts that we form, case-work often becomes increasingly complex and touches every aspect of people's lives. The different types of support given here describe the needs expressed by people at different moments, i.e. we have also counted the different needs/requests of the same person. Indeed, it is quite common for someone to present a complex state of necessity that reflects a situation to be confronted on different levels, and that arises for different reasons – first and foremost structural reasons that depend on our society. To give an example, social support is closely connected to someone's legal situation – and in turn, someone's social condition and their legal status have a strong impact on their mental and physical well-being.

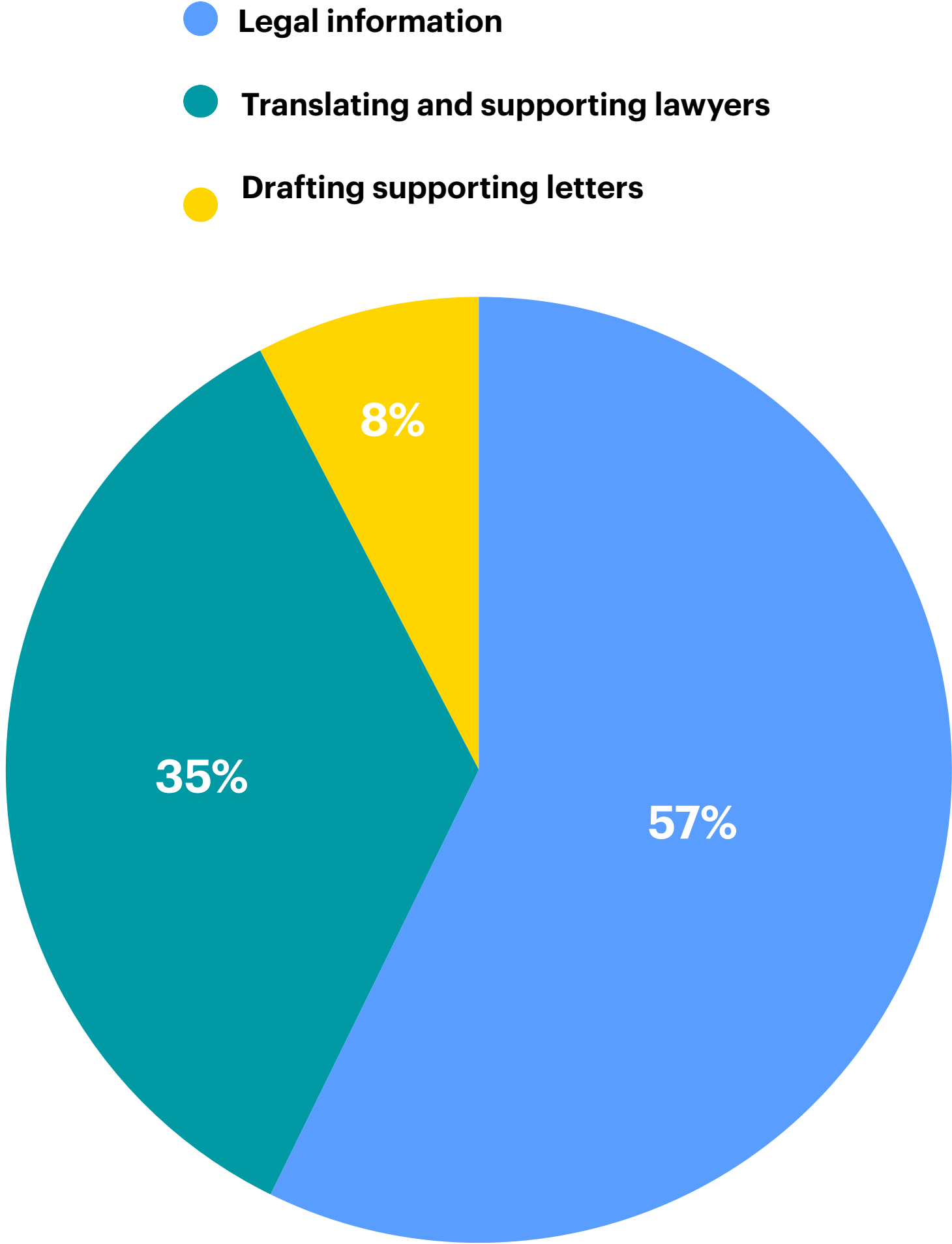


4. Actions undertaken and signposting

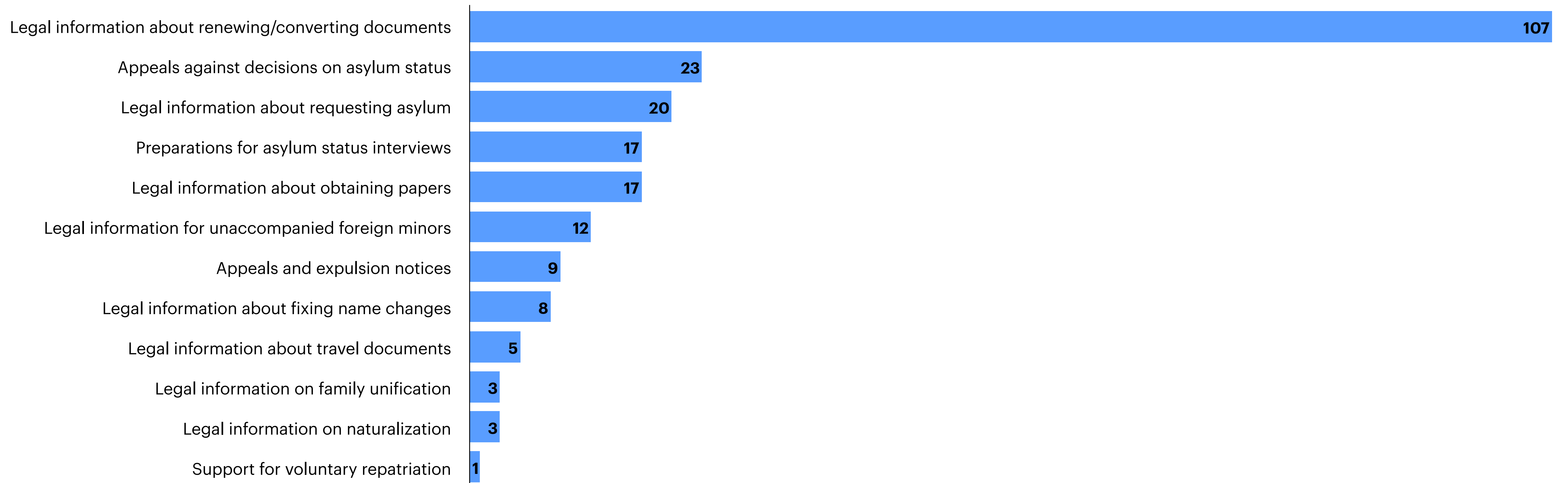
Legal support

Unfortunately, a migrant's legal status has a huge impact on every aspect of their life in society. This means that we put great attention and care into forms of legal support. Our team currently includes 4 paralegals, 2 of whom are part of the University of Palermo's legal clinic ('CLEDU'). We also coordinate on a constant basis with lawyers from the national legal network ASGI, not only locally but also to support people we know up and down the country who have passed by our space. When someone comes to the drop-in and already has a lawyer but has not been able to make contact with them or to fully understand how their case is going, our social workers and translators intervene to accompany and translate for them, so that they can better understand what the lawyer is doing, their advice, and what next steps need to be taken.

Legal support activities according to macro-areas of intervention:

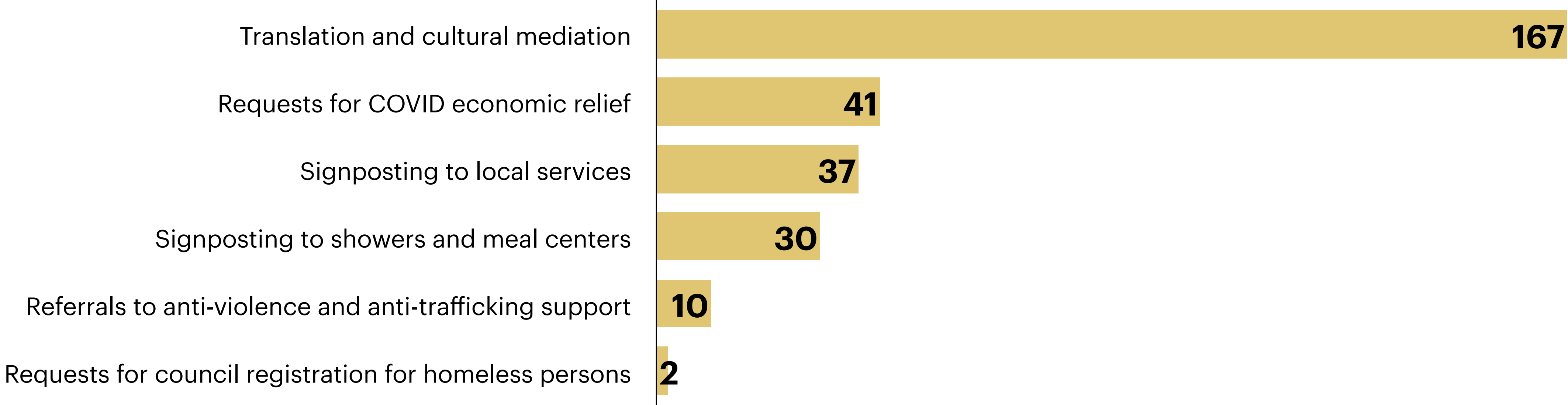


As can be seen from the graphic on different kinds of legal advice and information provided to people who came by, the most frequent kind is information about renewing and converting documents to stay in Italy. This high number reflects the pressing need expressed by people who come to us over recent months to have information about renewing documents following the changes to the Italian law introduced by the ‘Lamorgese Decree’; people also seek information about the continuation of special document extensions brought in to deal with the Covid-19 emergency. In particular, many employers do not trust what their employees – or potential employees – explain to them about their document situation, and are reluctant to sign work contracts when migrant’s papers appear on the face of it to have expired – even if they have in reality been extended by law. In many cases we have tried to try and explain the current legal situation to both employers and workers – but it nonetheless remains that the handling of these emergency measures has often worsened situations for people who had lost jobs (both legal and unregulated work) during the pandemic.



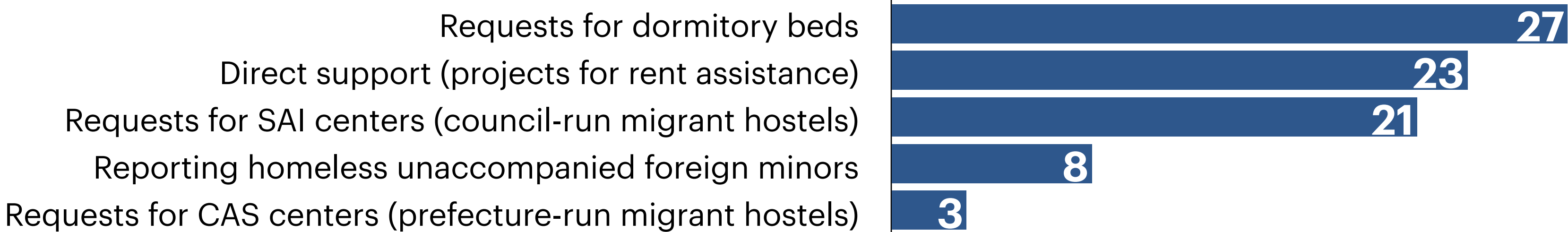
4.1. Social support

Our work in the drop-in is led by our approach of staying very attentive to people’s needs, which relies not only on language translation but also on non-verbal communication, active listening and inter-cultural mediation. The work of cultural mediators is a fundamental part of the encounters that happen in the space, providing the basic setting and explains the high number recorded for translation provided. The second most frequent category here represents the requests for economic support activated by local and national government in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. This figure needs to be contextualized: for the majority of people meeting the criteria to make these requests (which excludes people without documents and, in an initial phase, people without council registration), it was nearly impossible to do so online without support. This was due simply because many people do not have access to a computer and a printer, or did not have an adequate level of literacy or of digital literacy. At the same time, the official help-desks to help people access these economic relief measures were closed over the months in which they were needed the most.



4.2. Housing issues

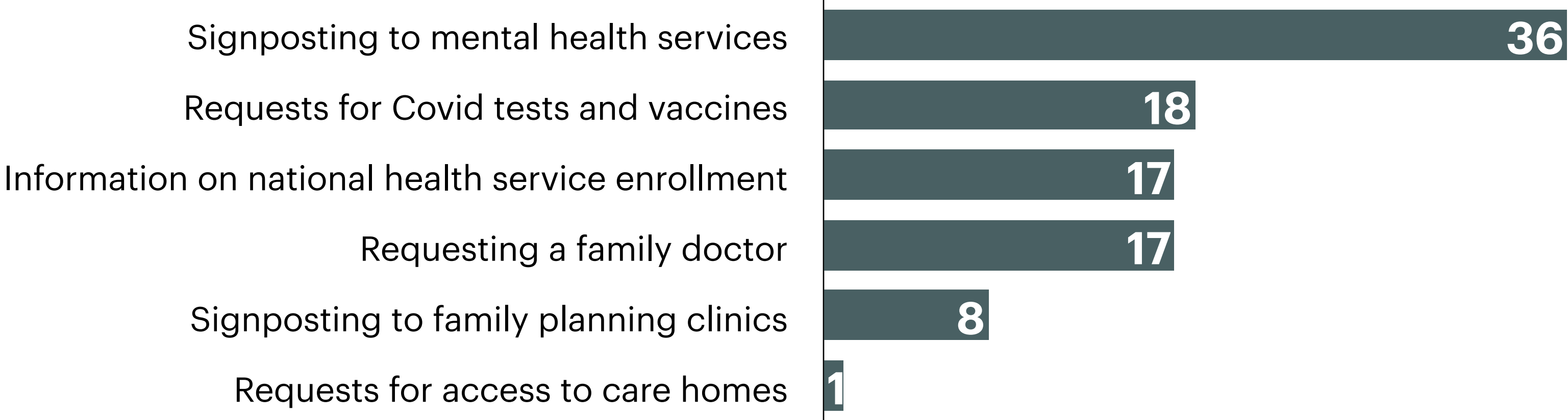
A significant number of people who come to us are looking for different housing solutions. Many are outside of government-run hostel programs when they come to us, and are even street homeless. Others risk soon being made homeless, while others still are farm laborers who live in temporary shacks in the countryside. We also often meet unaccompanied foreign minors who have recently arrived in Italy and left the hostels that they were placed in following port landings. In the first half of 2021, as was the case in 2020, searching for housing solutions has been particularly difficult due to Covid-19 containment measures, which have deteriorated access to emergency shelters – e.g. council and church dormitories – and have also led to a general decrease in the number of beds available.



Given that many people lost their jobs over the past year, we have often found it necessary to try and mediate with landlords, and to support people in accessing direct economic measures. These direct measures support our activity of assisting people in looking for housing alternatives and limit the risk that they will become street homeless. An important tool for this has been the implementation of projects that support people with paying the rent, such as our own involvement in the national project ‘Circoli rifugio – Nessuno in strada’, coordinated by ARCI. Thanks to this project, we have managed to help 3 large families, 4 single women (including two single moms) and a street vendor, all of whom were not able to access official government help due to their legal status. Finally, we have continued our requests for people to be placed in government centers for asylum seekers and refugees across the country, even though we have found such requests to be increasingly difficult to carry out.

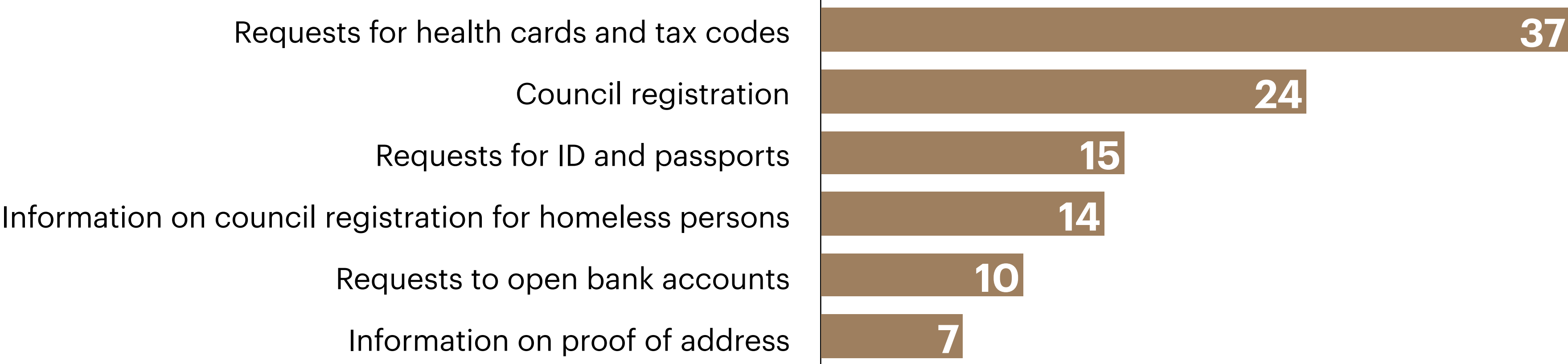
4.3. Information on access to healthcare

The past year has proved more than ever before the importance of the entire community working together to promote good healthcare and correct information. At the drop-in we have always explained to people how Italy's national health system works, their right to healthcare, their right to have a family doctor and how to access healthcare whatever someone's legal status. In terms of people's needs in relation to the pandemic itself, we accompanied many people for free and public rapid Covid tests. At the same time, it should be noted that the costs of molecular testing – which have been necessary for entering government migrant hostels – have proved to be prohibitive. People without documents have often found it difficult to obtain the vaccine and obtain the EU vaccine certificate, with the consequence that they risk being excluded from the prevention program. This not only has inevitable health risks but also threatens the regional and national vaccine campaign in general. Many people living in the neighborhood have expressed opposition to the vaccine and we have invested time and energy in circulating correct information on this subject.



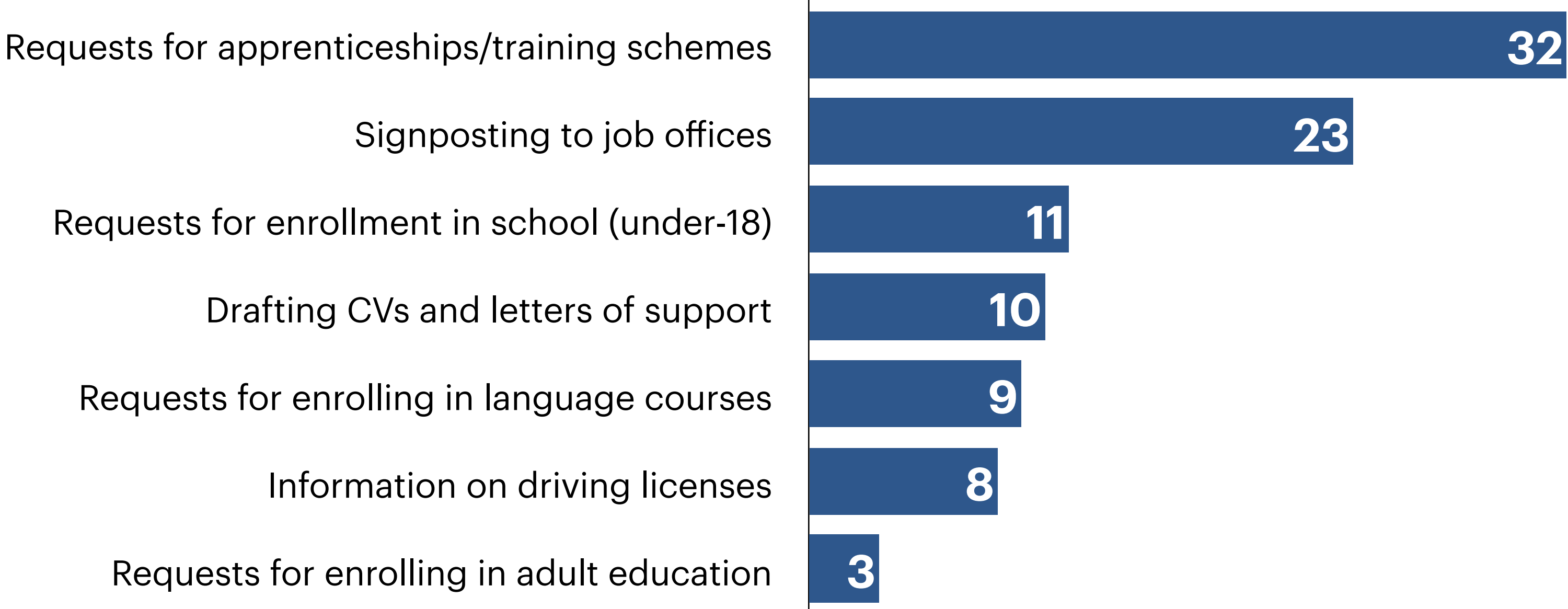
4.4. Administrative information

Aside from direct requests for healthcare assistance, we also note the frequency of requesting health cards, even though the validity of the card itself is often useless given that it's connected to the validity of a migrant's documents more generally. We have been increasingly asked to help people open bank accounts, given that the banks request criteria – such as council registration – even when they are not really required; clerks often are unaware of the correct procedures for opening an appropriate account for someone without Italian ID. This denial of access to a bank account actually violates the right to economic life, and can even block someone's ability to work if there is no way for them to be paid in an accountable manner. Requests for information about proof of address have notably decreased in relation to previous years: the emergency extension of document expiry dates due to the pandemic has meant that many people have had their appointments in the police station pushed on. Now that this emergency extension has come to a close, we are monitoring closely the coming situation.



4.5. Information on education opportunities

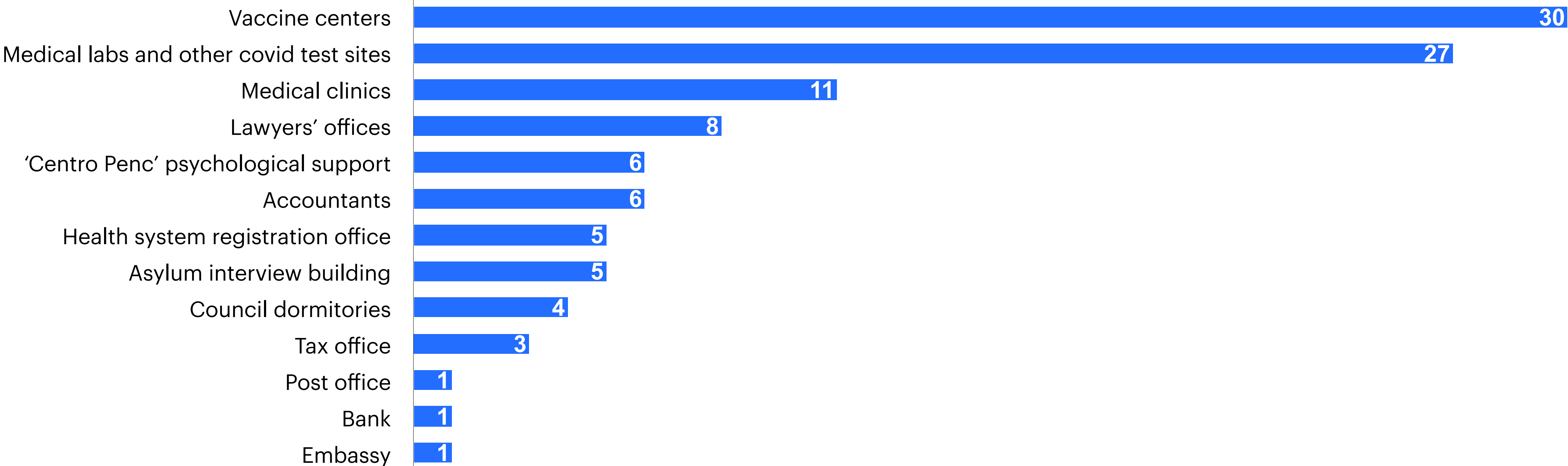
We recorded a significant number of requests for training courses and apprenticeships with economic allowances, given the low offer from the labor market. We nevertheless found great difficulties in accessing these opportunities given the criteria requested by the government job office. In the first six months of the year we recorded a very low number of requests for adult education, however, in relation to previous years. This is probably due to the fact that the classes took place online, a method not appropriate for basic literacy courses, especially given the fact that many people do not have access to a stable internet connection. We also note a very low offer of Italian language courses for single mothers who do not live in the city center.

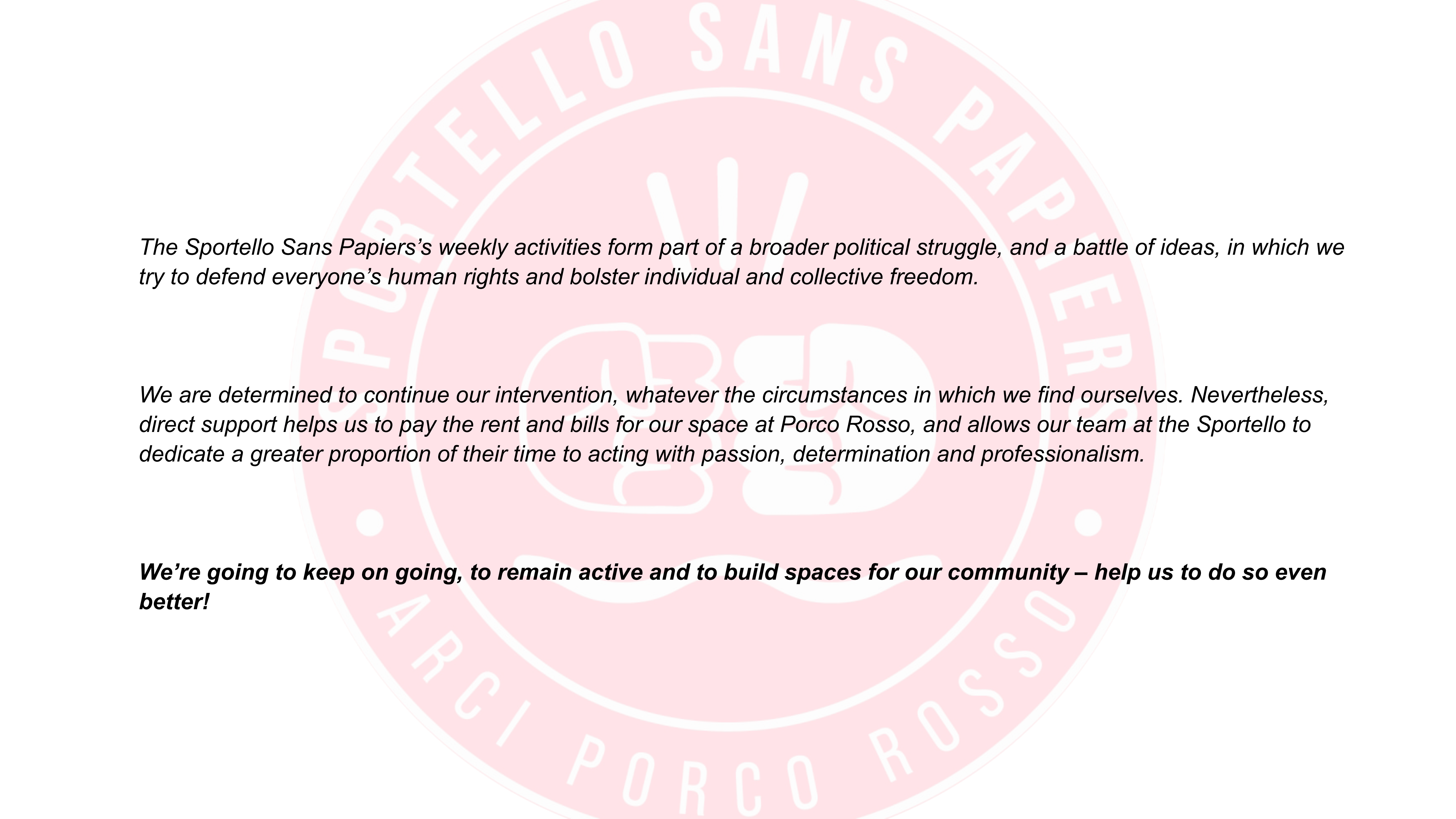


4.6. Support outside of the drop-in

Our team puts great emphasis on preventing people who come by the space from becoming dependent on our support, instead encouraging independence and self-empowerment. Despite this, sometimes we find it is essential to accompanny people to sites outside of the drop-in, especially when someone is in a moment of physical or psychological difficulty, or when an office or service is not adapted to assist vulnerable people and/or non-Italians. This is also often important when public offices do not provide translation services or when space is provided to abuses of power and discrimination, when our work of advocacy becomes paramount – such as in the council registration office.

Over recent months, we have accompanied people to many locations across the city, including:





The Sportello Sans Papiers's weekly activities form part of a broader political struggle, and a battle of ideas, in which we try to defend everyone's human rights and bolster individual and collective freedom.

We are determined to continue our intervention, whatever the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Nevertheless, direct support helps us to pay the rent and bills for our space at Porco Rosso, and allows our team at the Sportello to dedicate a greater proportion of their time to acting with passion, determination and professionalism.

We're going to keep on going, to remain active and to build spaces for our community – help us to do so even better!