



ENGAGE NOVA SCOTIA'S SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS PROGRAM

# Steam Space PARTNERSHIP *Report*

A report for Josée-Ann Cloutier,  
Founder of Steam Space and Circulate



Prepared by Engage Nova Scotia • December 2023



# Hello reader,

You're reading what we at Engage Nova Scotia call a partnership report.

The partnership opportunity through our SDG program is an offering of support to advance a new idea or scale up a pre-existing project in a way that is community-informed, data-driven, and supported by resources. We support partners through a participatory engagement process over the course of several months.

Our partnership with Steam Space was in support of their Circulate Initiative, whose purpose was to pilot a financially accessible community sauna model. Steam Space is a thermal bathing space (i.e., sauna), imagined, founded, and operated by Josée-Ann Cloutier.

As part of our partnership, we supported the Circulate Initiative, including a participant feedback survey (its development and a synthesis of participant responses) and the analysis of relevant, local wellbeing data that can be used by Steam Space in funding applications and conversations with municipal leaders and stakeholders.

## In this partnership report, you'll find:

- Background information on Steam Space and Engage Nova Scotia.
- Wellbeing data from the 2019 Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey results relevant to Steam Space.
- Participant feedback on the Circulate Initiative.

On behalf of the Engage Nova Scotia team, thank you to Josée-Ann at Steam Space for her partnership and for advancing quality of life in Nova Scotia.

Erika Bout, SDG Program Director  
Engage Nova Scotia



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The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.



# Table of Contents

About Steam Space	6
.....	
About Engage Nova Scotia	7
.....	
Background on the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative and Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey	8
.....	
2019 Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey: Relevant results	10
.....	
Circulate Initiative: Participant feedback (Part 1)	16
.....	
Circulate Initiative: Participant feedback (Part 2)	23
.....	
Concluding thoughts	36
.....	

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# Glossary

## Thermal bathing

Thermal bathing consists of immersing oneself into water at varying temperatures — which can be warm, hot, really hot, ambient, cool, cold and freezing. The form of the water can vary from liquid, to ice to steam. The chemical composition of the water is also considered in its therapeutic application. Thermal bathing typically encourages a cyclical practice of heating, cooling, and resting to achieve the greatest health outcomes.

## Sauna

The term sauna comes from Finland, however the practice of sweat-bathing is common in many cultures. In Finland, 'sauna' means a heated room or cabin that heats stones by fire, electricity or gas. Water is poured on the stones to create steam which heats the body in an enclosed wooden space.

## Community Sauna

A community sauna serves as a hub for rest and renewal in a relaxing and safe space with people you may or may not know. The sauna is a tool to relax, creating the conditions for connection and a sense of community.

## Hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is the therapeutic application of water to the body in its three forms — solid, liquid, and vapour. The water is experienced at varying temperatures to increase circulation throughout the body, or it can be specific to an area to support the health and healing of a particular part of the body.

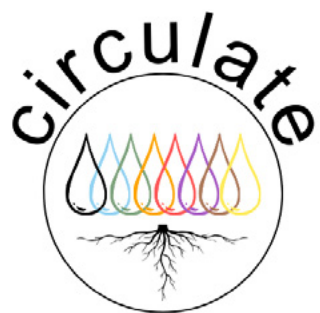


## Steam Space

As of January 2024, Steam Space is a wellness service agency offering design, consulting, guidance, facilitation, hosting, and bodywork. Areas of specialization include optimizing the thermal cycle in a variety of settings and experience design.

Steam Space was founded in 2016 by Josée-Ann Cloutier, which offers mobile wood-fired sauna sessions, consulting, education, and rituals. The vision from the start was to create accessible pathways to thermal bathing as a way of life rather than an occasional luxury.

Regenerative design and ecological care are integrated into decisions for the enterprise. Josée has travelled to many parts of the world to learn about and from bathing cultures and hydrotherapy-based spa practices. These deep learning experiences, including a Master's degree in Wellness and Spa Service Design from the University of Tartu in Estonia, informs Steam Space's orientation to thermal bathing as a longstanding social practice in creating community, a sense of belonging, and placemaking, as well as being a public health care practice.



## Circulate Initiative

The Circulate Initiative (Circulate) started as a pilot project seeking to foster community connections and social wellbeing through thermal bathing.

The pilot ran for the month of October 2023 at the Wolfville Rotary Field. At the same time, Circulate has transitioned from a pilot project to a non-profit organization. Circulate strives to foster connection and wellbeing by offering affordable and accessible experiences in thermal bathing.

The community sauna serves as a hub for rest and renewal within an inclusive and social atmosphere. There is also an 'accessibility fund' associated with Circulate where people can donate to support free and pay-what-you-can community sessions that create opportunities for the sauna and its benefits to be experienced by all. Community sessions are hosted with opportunities to learn and experience the thermal cycle in a group setting as a health and wellness practice.



## About Engage Nova Scotia

**Engage Nova Scotia is an independent non-profit with a vision for a more vibrant, inclusive, equitable, and resilient province, and we have been engaging residents in conversation, visioning, and storytelling for over a decade.**

We work collaboratively with the community, business, government, and academic sectors to centre wellbeing as a measure of success and progress that guides us all. We do this by:

- Driving provincial and national initiatives as part of a global movement aimed at measuring and improving quality of life for all.
- Equipping governments, organizations, and individuals with the insights and tools they can use to:
  - Address complex challenges.
  - Rise to opportunities.
  - Invest in what matters most.
  - Affect change in their own backyards.
- Nurturing belief in a better world that everyone can feel part of and committed to.

Our work is brought to life through three primary focus areas:

1. Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative.
2. Sustainable Development Goals program.
3. Projects that foster and strengthen social connections.

# Background on the Nova Scotia Quality of Life Initiative and Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey

**Part of the SDG Program's partnership opportunity includes us working with partners to share relevant data from the NS Quality of Life Survey, which is part of the broader efforts of the NS Quality of Life Initiative.**



**The purpose of the NS Quality of Life Initiative is to prompt fresh perspectives and new action – by all of us – that better balance our social, environmental, cultural, and economic priorities. Traditionally, much of the information we use to make decisions is based on economic data. Those data aren't wrong – they're just incomplete. So, the NS Quality of Life Initiative began with us getting curious about different ways to measure how we're doing.**

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) is our primary academic partner in the Initiative. The CIW regularly reports on the quality of life of Canadians – nationally, provincially, and locally – and advocates for change that reflects our values and places wellbeing at the heart of policy. They are recognized nationally and globally as one of the leading organization's measuring wellbeing. The 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey is modelled after the CIW's Community Wellbeing Framework's national survey that has been administered in over a dozen communities across Canada.

Our collaboration with the CIW began even before the survey though, with the release of the NS Quality of Life Index in 2018 and was followed by undertaking the NS Quality of Life Survey in 2019.

**Over 12,800 people in Nova Scotia responded, making it the single, largest dataset of its kind in Canada.**

The summary results of the survey were released in March 2020 and are organized by domain, according to the CIW's Eight Domains of Wellbeing Framework. Additionally, a supplementary analysis was released in Fall 2020 that shares high-level information about demographic groups that caught the attention of the CIW, insights about the eight domains of wellbeing, and analysis related to six areas of focus: social isolation, sense of community, feelings of trust, experiences of discrimination, poverty, and health. In 2022, we released 'Survey Snapshots,' an infographic report that shares findings from the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey related to each of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. These resources can be found on our website: [engagenovascotia.ca](http://engagenovascotia.ca).

Since surveying, we've been sharing the results widely and equipping people to use them – and creating innovative tools to do that like the Wellbeing Mapping Tool and Wellbeing Analysis Tool. The

Wellbeing Mapping Tool enables you to explore results at scales that range from provincewide down to neighbourhoods. We use the Wellbeing Analysis Tool to visualize group, demographic, or regional deviations from the provincial average. We've primarily used the Wellbeing Analysis Tool to prepare the survey findings shared in this partnership report.

Survey findings can be used to inform and influence leadership, decision-making, and policy across sectors so that what matters most to Nova Scotia residents and their wellbeing can be invested in, created, and supported. The data shared here is part of us sharing the results widely and equipping people to use them. We share them with the intention that Circulate (as an organisation) will now be able to cite the survey findings to advocate for what they need to support communities. It is also relevant to reflect on survey findings in the context of the Circulate Initiative, to consider if and how a community sauna model might be part of a meaningful response to some wellbeing concerns in the Annapolis Valley region.

## A few more things to note about the data shared in this partnership report

The 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey data includes, specifically, 12,826 completed surveys, which asked 230 questions. In the summary analysis and supplementary analysis, the data has been weighted based on region, sex, and age. We used unweighted data for the analyses in this report. At all times in this partnership report, the NS Quality of Life Survey results shared are referring to Annapolis Valley-Hants.

Functional economic regions have boundaries that reflect the realities of how people live, shop, work, and socialize, rather than municipal and county lines. (The idea is that they enable more place-based policies.)

We've shared what we consider to be meaningful, which is a difference threshold of 20%. (For example, people with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 20% less likely to report being satisfied with their life.) Each survey response is part of a person's life story. And, for many reasons, survey findings can't tell the whole story – an inherent limitation of survey research – even though aggregating responses (combining them) can tell us a lot, as they do here.



**When we say, 'young adults,' we mean people aged 16-35.**

**When we say, 'older adults,' we mean people aged 65 and up.**

**And, when we say, 'new to the community,' we mean people who have lived there for five years or less.**

# 2019 Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey: Relevant Results

The data is organized by areas of wellbeing important to Steam Space's vision and work.



## Sense of belonging 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 73%...	<b>...more likely to feel isolated from others in the community.</b>
Young adults are 69%...	
People living with a disability are 57%...	
People who've completed up to a high school education are 42%...	
People new to the community are 23%...	<b>...less likely to feel isolated from others in the community.</b>
Males are 28%...	
Older adults are 22%...	

## Help in case of need 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

Young adults are 96%...	<b>...more likely to feel people aren't willing to help those in need in their community.</b>
People living with a disability are 33%...	
People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 25%...	
Females are 24%...	
Males are 47%...	<b>...less likely to feel people aren't willing to help those in need in their community.</b>
People new to the community are 30%...	
Older adults are 30%...	

# Social connections

## 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 57%...	<b>...more likely to have difficulty connecting with people in their community.</b>
Young adults are 47%...	
People new to the community are 36%...	
People living with a disability are 34%...	
Older adults are 41%...	<b>...less likely to have difficulty connecting with people in their community.</b>

# Discrimination

## 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 81%...	<b>...more likely to report being discriminated against because of their ethnicity, culture, race, or skin colour.</b>
Young adults are 60%...	
Males are 27%...	
People living with a disability are 86%...	<b>...more likely to report being discriminated against because of a disability they have.</b>
Females are 34%...	<b>...more likely to report being discriminated against because of their gender.</b>
Young adults are 91%...	<b>...more likely to report being discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.</b>
Young adults are 90%...	<b>...more likely to report being discriminated against because of their age.</b>
Young adults are 118%...	<b>...more likely to report being discriminated against because of their gender.</b>

# Democratic engagement

## 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 24%...	<b>...more likely to feel like public officials don't care what they think.</b>
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# Community needs

## 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 42%...	<b>...more likely to report having few opportunities to satisfy their needs in their community.</b>
People living with a disability are 39%...	
People who've completed up to a high school education are 25%...	

# Affordability

## 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 60%...	<b>...more likely to report the cost of recreation and cultural programs prevents them from participating.</b>
People who've completed up to a high school education are 39%...	
People living with a disability are 27%...	
Males are 22%...	<b>...less likely to report the cost of recreation and cultural programs prevents them from participating.</b>

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 131%...	<p><b>...more likely to report not having enough money to buy the things they needed at least once in the past year.</b></p>
Young adults are 75%...	
People living with a disability are 44%...	
People new to the community are 42%...	
Females are 25%...	
People who've completed up to a high school education are 23%...	<p><b>...less likely to report not having enough money to buy the things they needed at least once in the past year.</b></p>
Older adults are 49%...	
Males are 47%...	

## Life satisfaction

### 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

Compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall,

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 are 20%...	<p><b>...less likely to report being satisfied with their life.</b></p>
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## Trends in the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey

The survey findings we've shared in this partnership report are ones relevant to Steam Space and a sampling of what's available from the 2019 NS Quality of Life Survey data.



The patterns in the data shared here include that the following groups of people in Annapolis Valley-Hants – those with household incomes less than \$40,000, people with up to a high school education, females, people with disabilities, people new to community, and young adults – are disproportionately experiencing a lower quality of life compared to Annapolis Valley-Hants residents overall and, in most cases, compared to males and older adults specifically.

People with annual household incomes less than \$40,000, young adults, females, and people living with a disability are more likely to feel isolated, more likely to feel people aren't willing to help those in need in their community, more likely to have difficulty connecting with others (here, the exception is females), and more likely to not have enough money to buy what they needed. In fact, people with annual household incomes less than \$40,000 reported a lower quality of life in every area of wellbeing explored in this partnership report. In light of the well-documented positive relationship between education and income, it's unsurprising that people who have completed high school as their "highest" level of education often are experiencing the same challenges as those with lower household incomes.

People new to community most often experienced challenges related to community connection; they are more likely to feel isolated and have difficulty connecting with others in their community. The severity of challenges that young adults are experiencing are greatest and they are also uniquely more likely to feel discriminated against because of their age, gender, and/or sexual orientation.

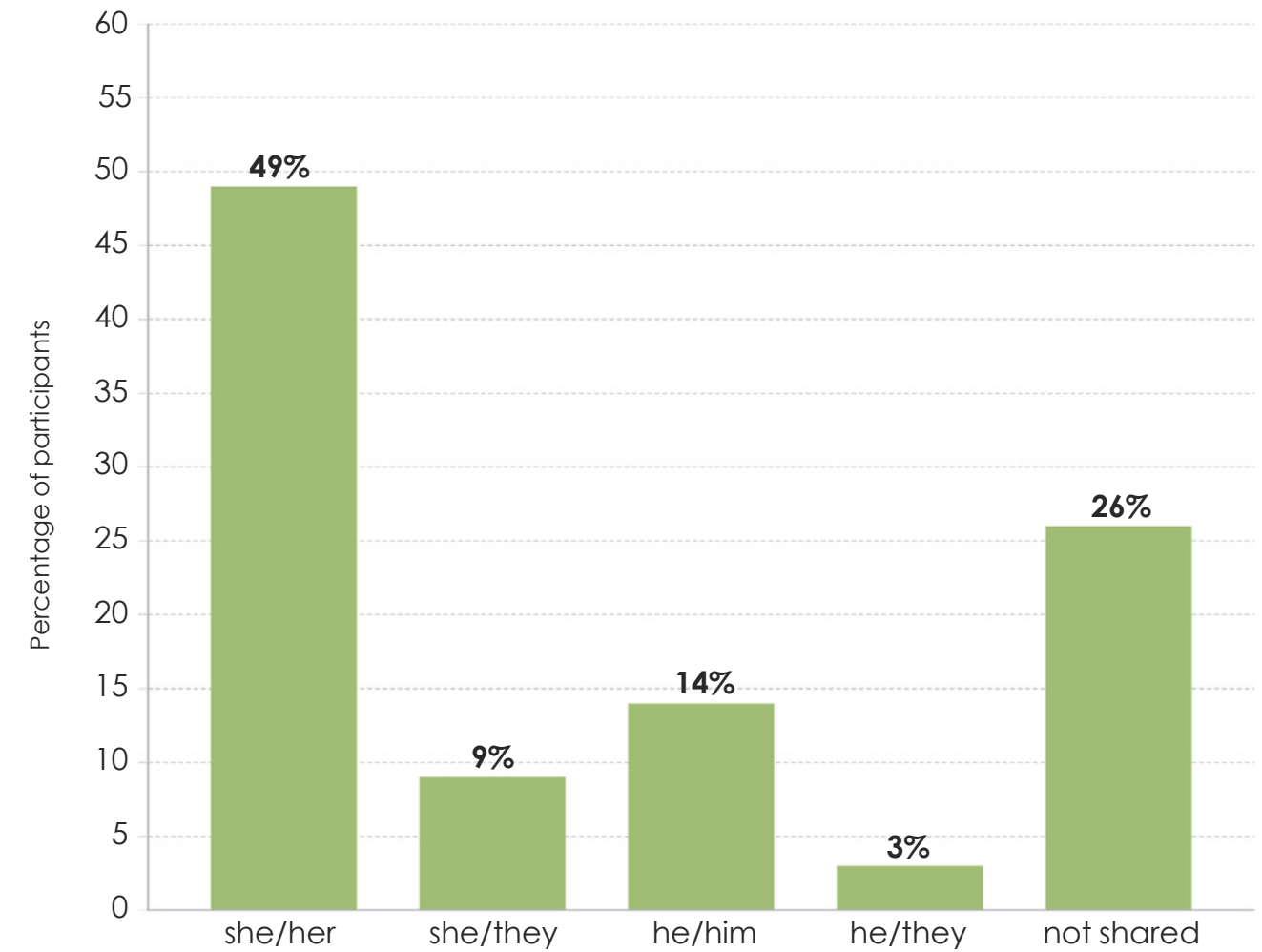
With this data in hand, the Circulate Initiative is being designed to operate in a way that acknowledges the realities of these lived experiences. Through the Circulate Initiative, the sauna is striving to be a space that supports the wellbeing of equity-deserving groups and does not replicate barriers to access, safety, and enjoyment that persist.



## Circulate Initiative: Participant Feedback (Part 1)

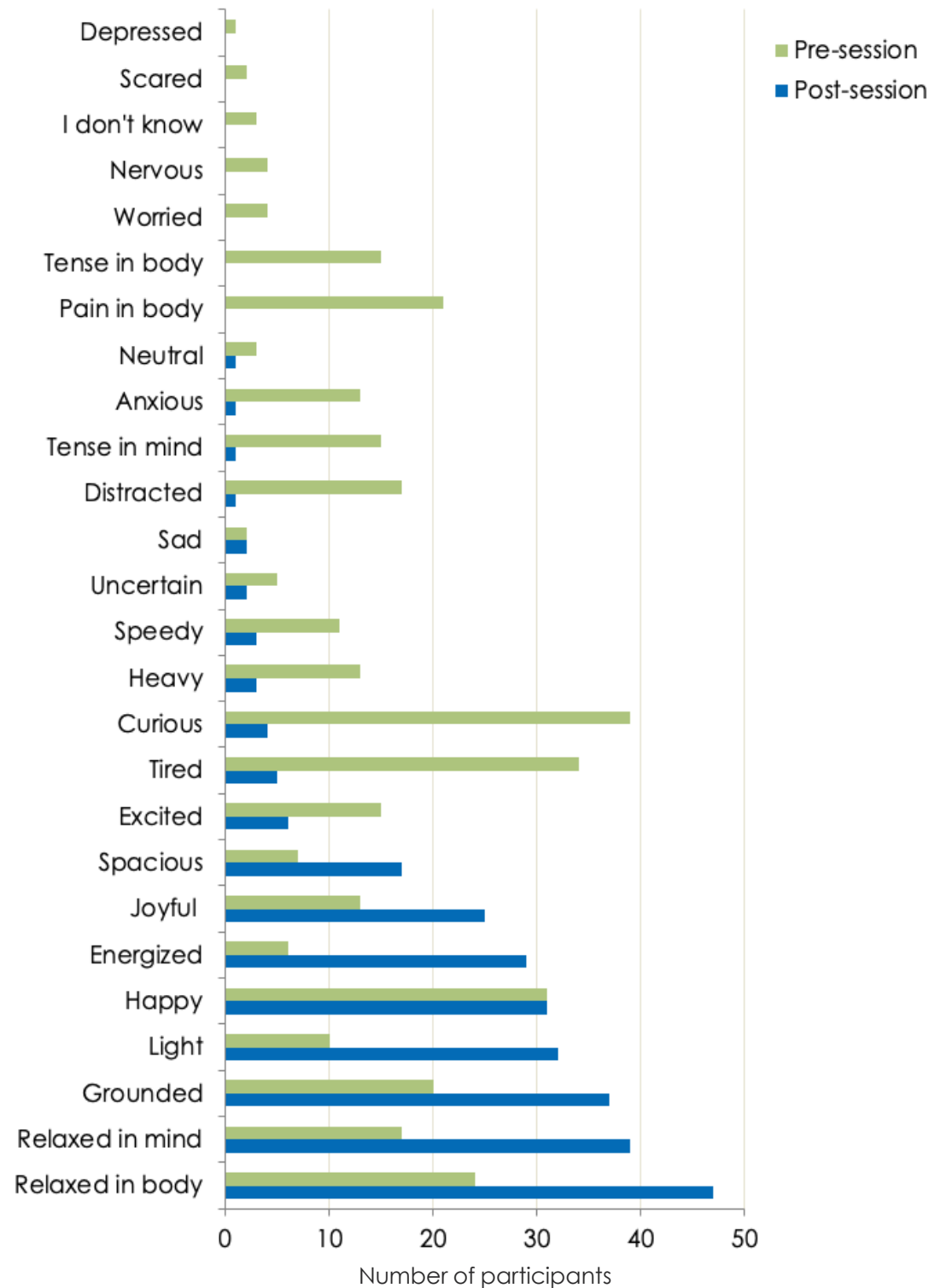
During the Circulate Initiative's pilot in October, **66** people completed a feedback survey before and after using the sauna. What follows is their compiled survey responses.

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' pronouns



Steam Space also asked about people's age. Participants were aged 19 to 73 with an average age of 40.

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' feelings pre- and post-sauna session

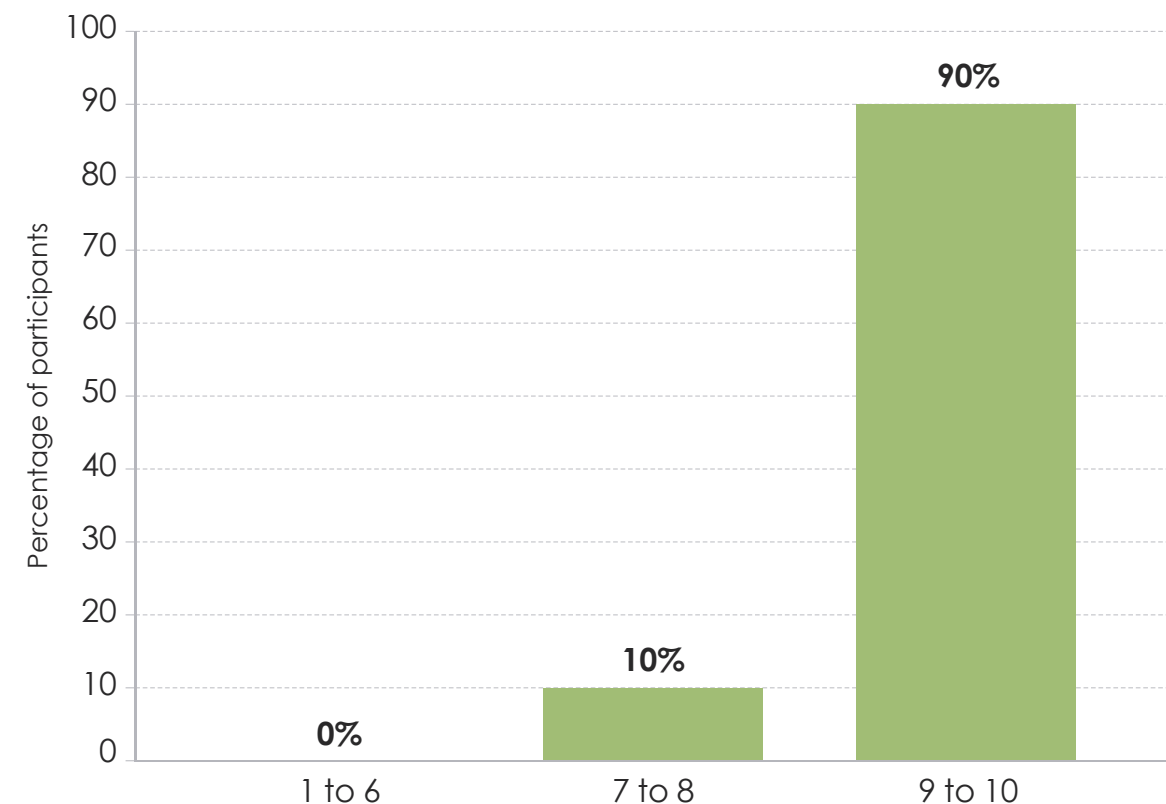


Participants were invited to identify with a range of emotions before and after they experienced a sauna session. Therefore, some of the same people who said they felt curious could have also felt relaxed in their body, tired, anxious, etc.

The ability of participants to tune into how they felt before and after taking part in a sauna session provides an overall illustration of some of the benefits experienced by its users. In addition to the feelings identified in the graph, participants were invited to note other ways they were feeling. One person noted they were feeling 'open-minded' pre-session. And three others noted they felt grateful, connected to others, and soft, respectively.

There's a clear trend in positive feelings that sauna participants felt after the session compared to before. Some people before the session felt 'depressed,' 'scared,' 'nervous,' 'worried,' 'tense in body,' and 'pain in body.' After the session, those feelings weren't identified by anyone. There was a great reduction in the number of people who felt 'tense in mind,' 'distracted,' 'anxious,' 'speedy,' 'heavy,' 'tired,' and 'excited.' There was a positive trend of vastly increasing feelings of being relaxed in body and mind as well as feelings of spaciousness, energy, lightness, groundedness, and joy.

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' overall experience on a scale of 1 to 10

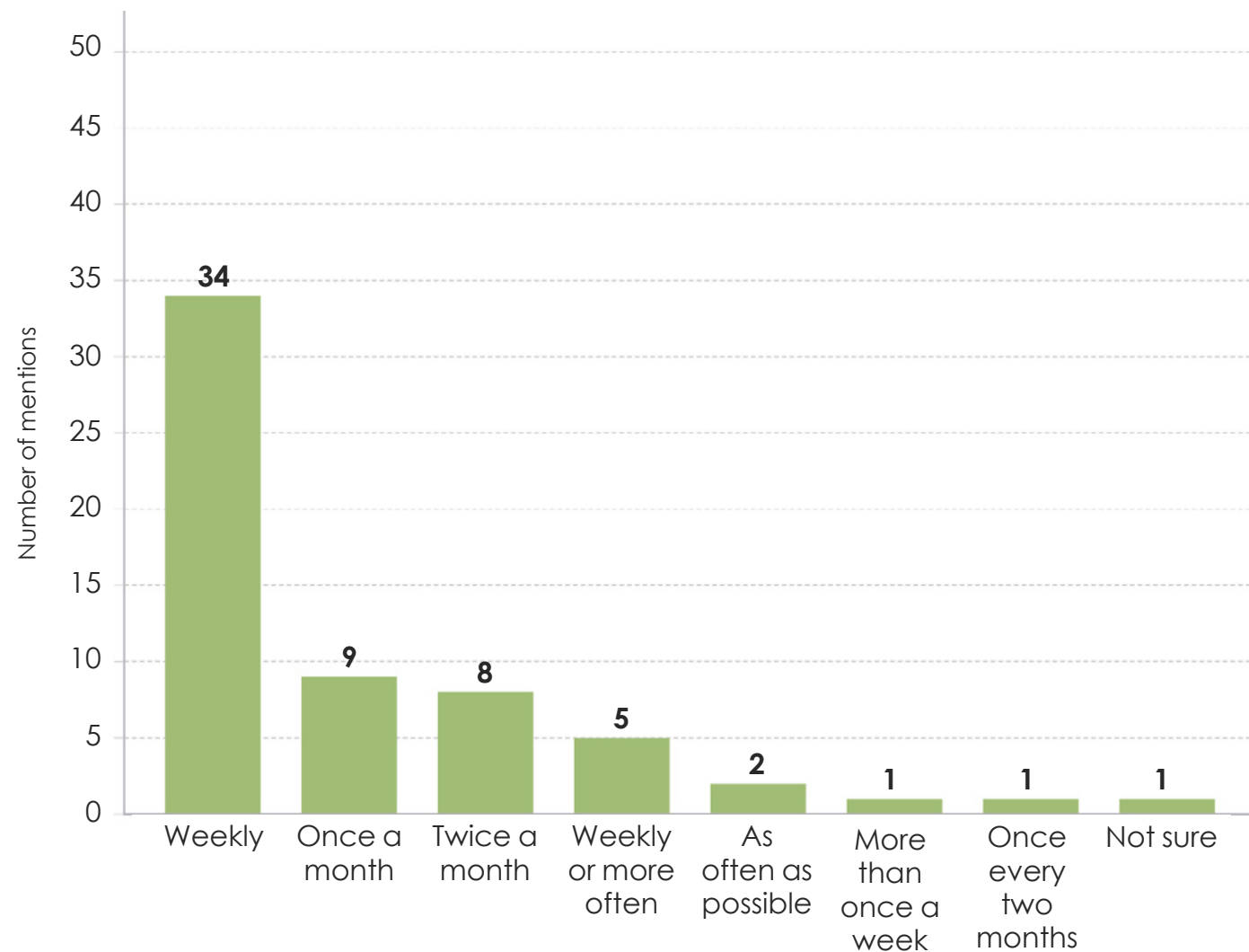


We asked participants how they'd rate their experience on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being fantastic). All participants rated their experience as 7 or higher, with 90% of respondents rating it either a 9 or a 10. Of that 90%, 60% of participants rated their experience a 10/10.



**All participants said they'd return to the community sauna!**

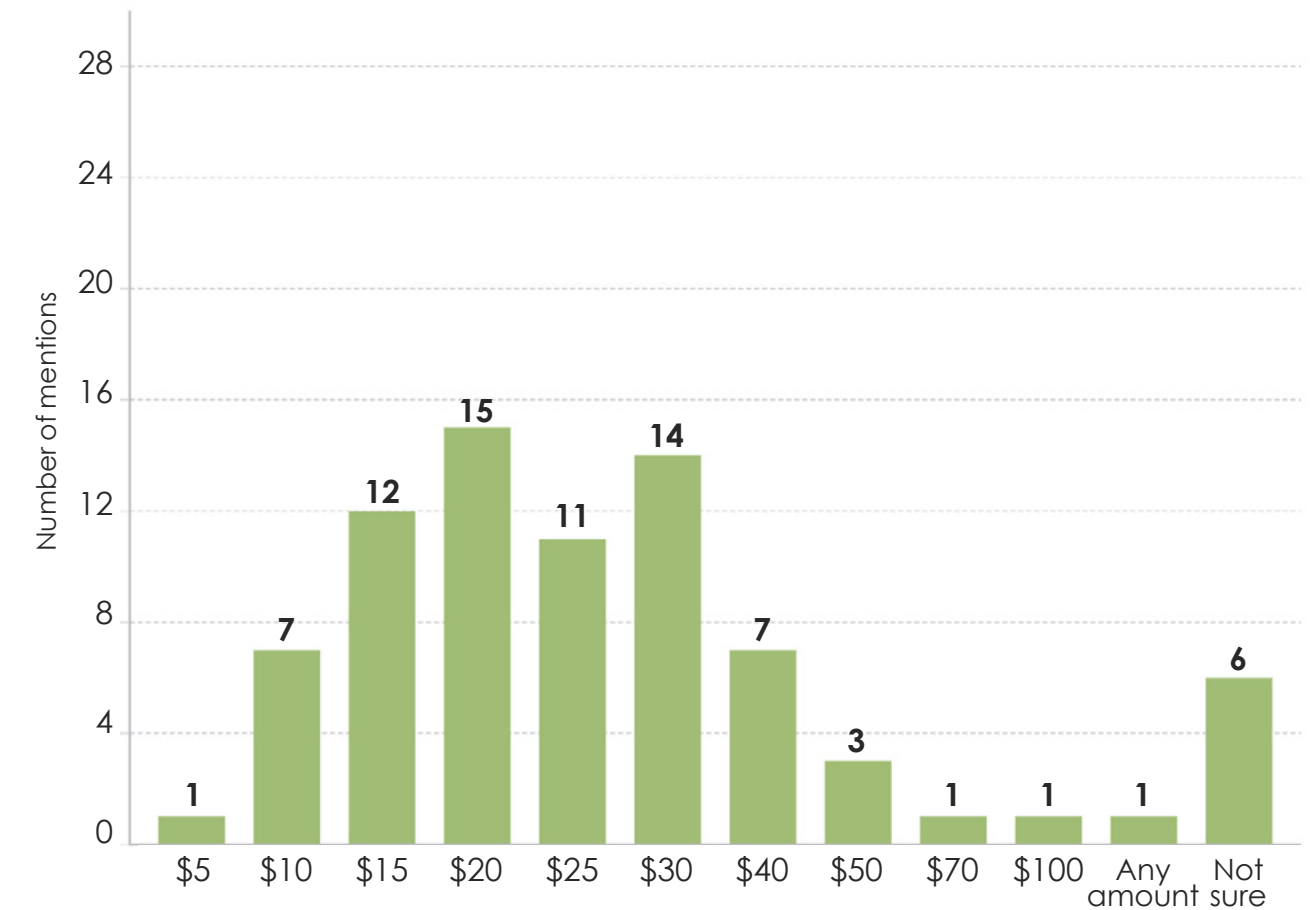
**Circulate Initiative:**  
**How often participants would like to use the sauna**



Over half (34) of participants said they'd ideally like to use the sauna once a week.

Almost all participants said they'd like to use the sauna in both group and individual settings, predominantly with friends. People also often identified community groups and co-workers as groups they'd use the sauna with.

**Circulate Initiative:**  
**What participants would pay for a sauna session**



Most people were willing to pay between \$15 and \$30 for a sauna session. A handful of people weren't sure, and one person noted they'd pay 'any amount.'

## **Circulate Initiative: Barriers to participation**

When asked about barriers to participation, 16 participants noted specific ones. Eight people identified time of the session as a barrier, and some suggested making community sauna sessions available on evenings and weekends to accommodate common weekday work schedules. Three people noted that the distance of the community sauna to where they live was a barrier. Almost 90% of participants said they had transportation to the sauna, but two people noted that transportation might be a barrier. Two people noted the importance of having a changing room. The following barriers were noted by one person each: cost for people with disabilities and chronic illnesses, and peoples' different social schemas.

## **Circulate Initiative: Highlights from additional feedback**

Over 30 participants offered additional feedback, outside the specific survey questions. Many people expressed simple and straightforward thanks ("Loved it!" "Nice and relaxing", "Thank you!" "It's amazing!") and some noted what they specifically appreciated ("oils and smells" "branches and rain shower"). Still others had ideas for the community sauna and what they'd be interested in. Some highlights from the additional notes were:



**"Thank you so much! I was feeling pretty heavy before, but no more!"**

**"This is such a gift to our community. Josée does an incredible job."**

**"It was intimate and I really appreciate your [Josée's] time and energy. Thank you so much!"**

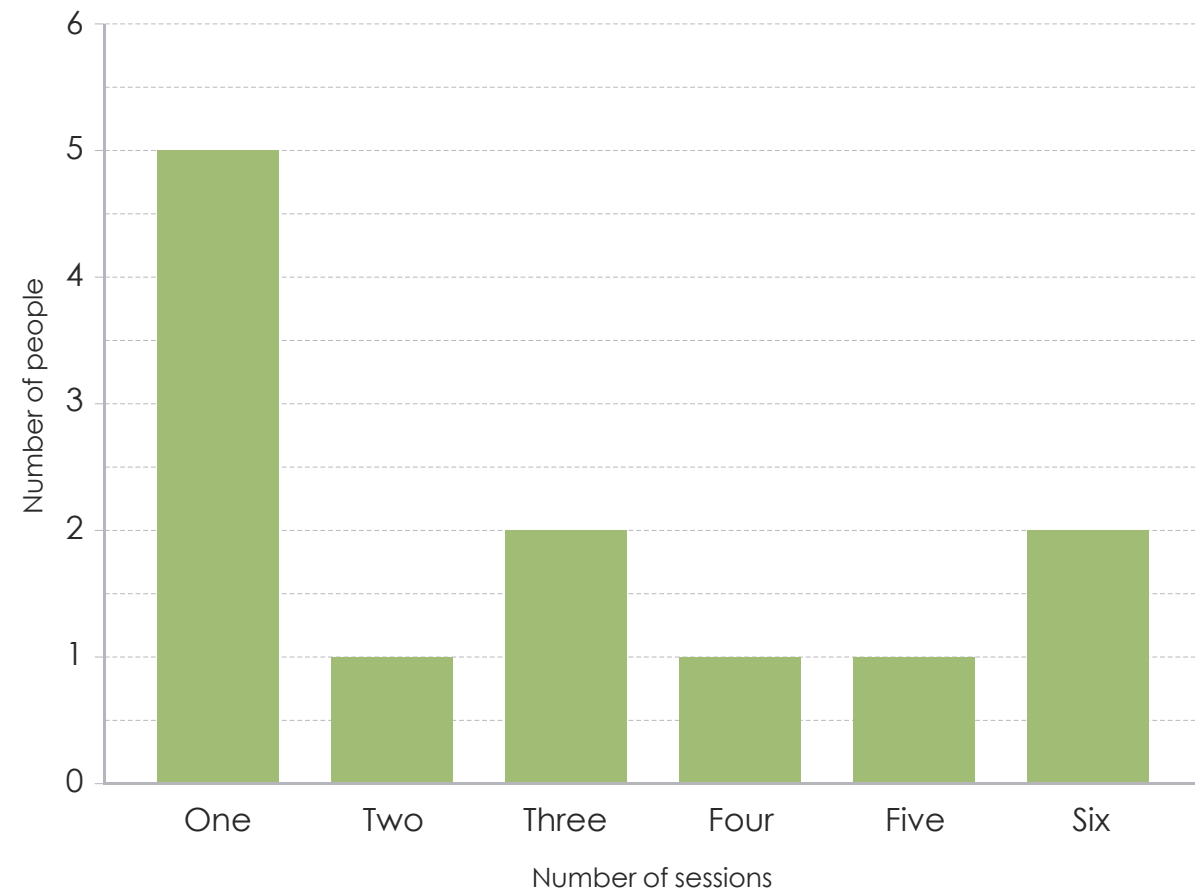
**"This was AMAZING! I felt comfortable and I've never experienced a facilitated sauna session before! Thank you, thank you, thank you!"**

**"Wonderful experience with an amazing host! Thank you. Josée is the authentic deal :) Thank you!"**

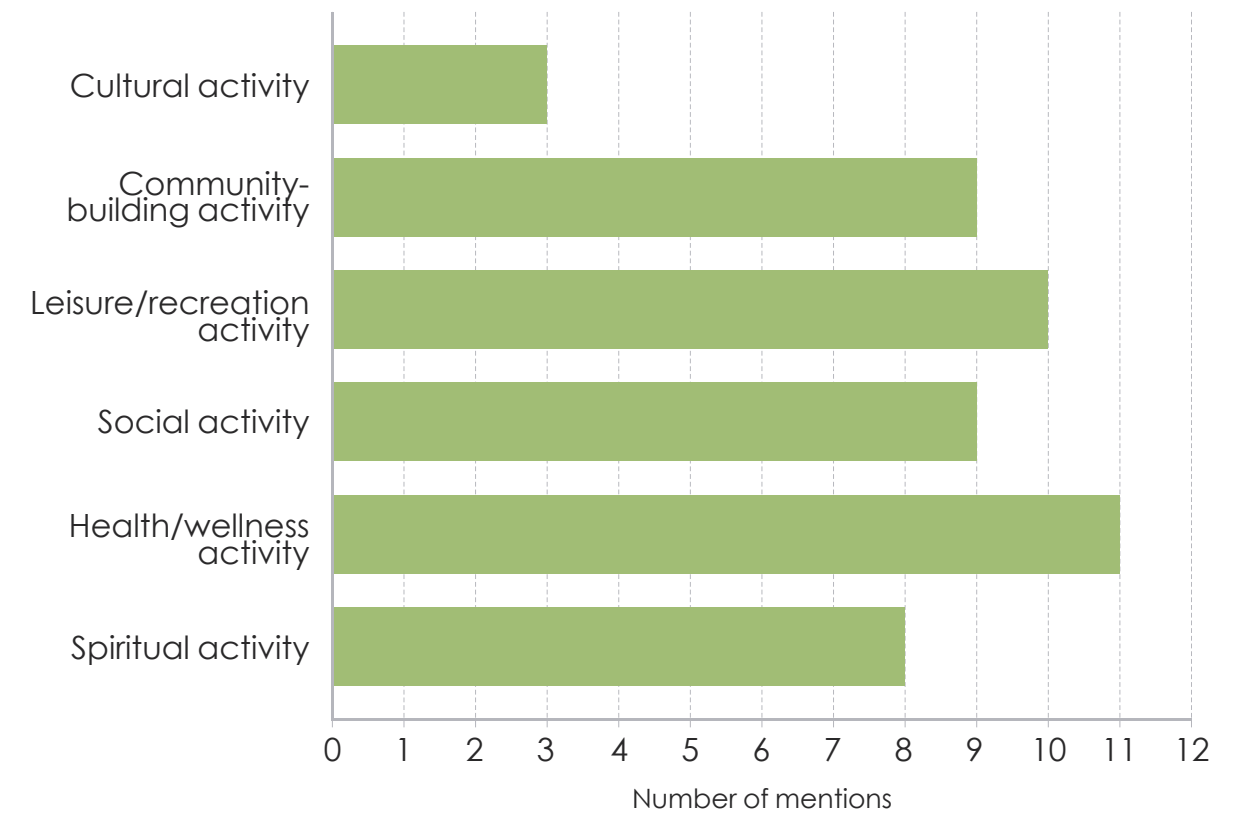
## **Circulate Initiative: Participant Feedback (Part 2)**

**In November 2023, a second survey was sent to everyone who'd taken part in the Circulate Initiative during the previous month. The following is compiled responses from 12 people who responded to that second survey.**

**Circulate Initiative:**  
**Number of times people used the sauna**



**Circulate Initiative:**  
**Type of activity people considered the sauna to be**

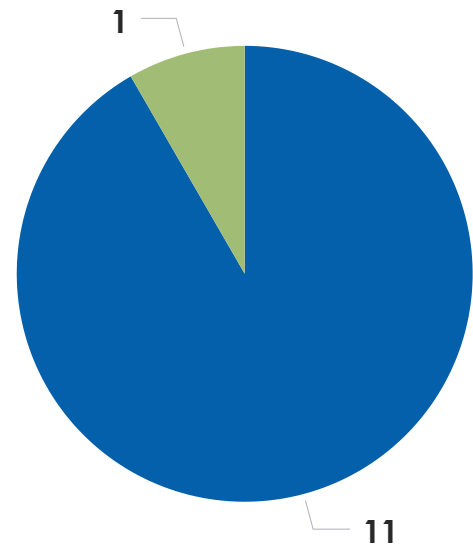


People most often considered the sauna a health/wellness activity and a leisure/recreation activity. One person commented:



**“It’s the only thing that gets me out of daily stress, worries, anxieties. I also sauna’d with Josée last winter and was much less depressed than other years. It’s wonderful to connect with community and to be warm and cozy, and Josée’s facilitation makes me feel incredibly safe.”**

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' sense of belonging

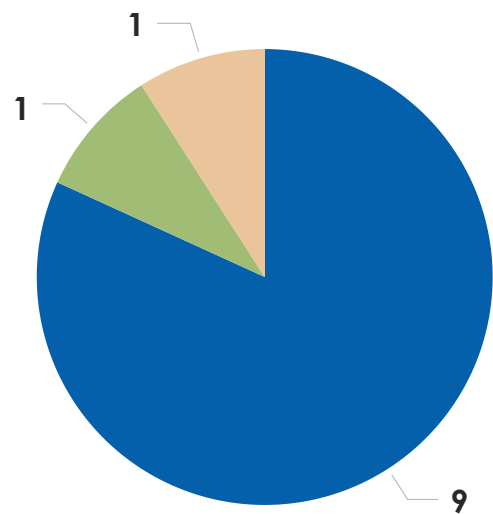


Almost all (11) people who completed the November survey responded that the sauna had impacted their sense of belonging because they felt more connected to their community and had made new or strengthened relationships with people who they participated with.



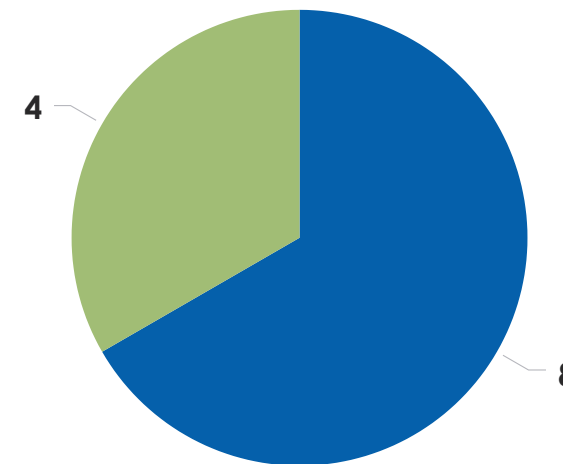
**“It was the reminder that I am connected to so many people who call this place home. Those I have known before and those I met while in session. It felt so good to know my little thread weaves together with so many others!”**

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' trust in their neighbours



When asked if participating in the sauna impacted the level of trust in their neighbours, almost all (9) participants said yes. One said 'maybe' and another said it hadn't.

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' experience of support in their community



When asked if participating in the sauna impacted how they experienced support in their community, most (8) participants said it did. The remaining (4) participants responding that this question didn't apply to them. People's experiences ranged from feeling more supported as a result of the sauna itself to feeling more support as a result of having a new experience with neighbours, and one person noted three actions they're taking as a result of conversations they had with others in the sauna.



**“Just being able to show up as I am, not having to bring my best self, but being allowed to bring my quiet self or shy self or struggling self – and Josée always creates a space where that is just held in community, without needing to go into it or fit it. And when I leave, I always feel better, more supported, and more alive.”**



## Circulate Initiative: Participants' experience of growing their social network through the sauna

Almost everyone (10) agreed they'd grown their social network by participating in the sauna.



**"I met people of different generations and backgrounds as well as new neighbours."**

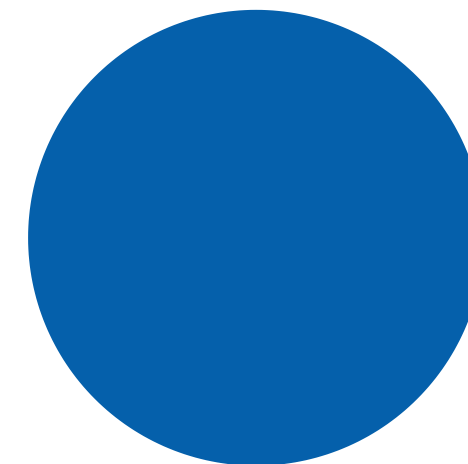
A couple people mentioned neighbours, specifically, and one person noted the sauna facilitated their healing a relationship.



**"Yes, I have met new friends here in Wolfville and continue to meet again some fellow 'skinships' outside the sauna. Thank you!! ...It isn't easy meeting new people in a small rural town."**



## Circulate Initiative: Participants' experience of the sauna meeting a need



12

All respondents said the sauna had met a need and most expressed it was the people they connected with while they were there. Some broadly noted their enjoyment of the experience.



**"Warmth; both sensory heat and emotional warmth."**

A few people also noted mental and physical health challenges that the sauna helped them with.



**"I am struggling with some health issues [...] and sauna is an excellent therapy to provide symptom relief."**

## Circulate Initiative: Participants' experience of the sauna impacting discrimination or inclusion in their community

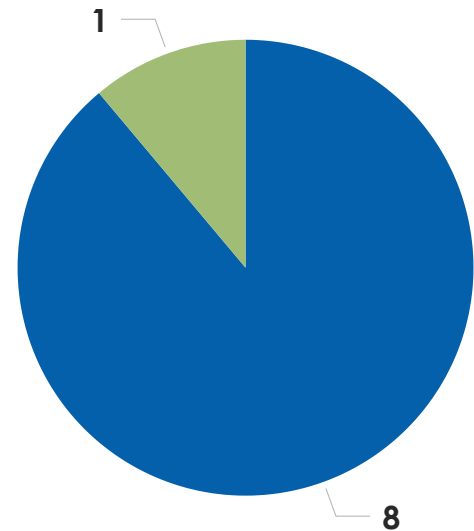
When asked if the sauna impacted any ways participants experienced discrimination or inclusion in their community, most people said it didn't. A couple people noted, though, that they'd felt included and connected to others, and appreciated seeing others who didn't know each other have a shared experience.



“It made me believe that this area has the potential to be as amazing as I see it in the future. What an example to set for other communities.”

**Circulate Initiative:**

## Participants’ experience of the sauna impacting how they experienced care in their community



In response to whether participating in the sauna impacted how people experienced care in their community, of the nine people who responded, eight people said it had and one person said it hadn't. People noted three things: they either felt cared for by Josée, the sauna created a caring environment, or that they, in turn, expressed more care in some way for their community.

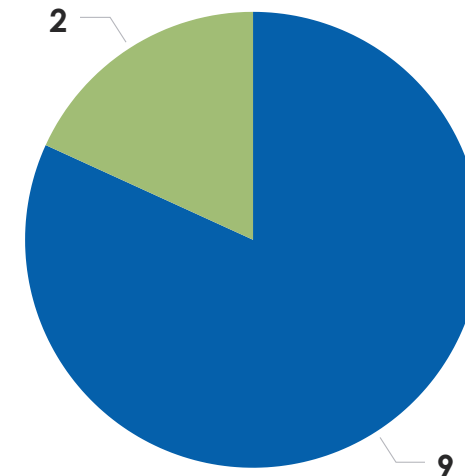


“We shared stories about our lives that, in another setting, may not have happened in the same way it did in the sauna. The atmosphere was also supportive and nurturing.”



**Circulate Initiative:**

## Participants’ experience of the sauna impacting their interest in other community activities



Of the 11 participants who responded to this question, nine people said the sauna impacted their interest to participate in other community activities (two people said it hadn't impacted it much).



“Yes, it actually gives me more energy to be out more.”

“I had a profound connection to the land, even within town limits which really surprised me.”

“After several years of COVID, plus a health challenge, I have felt disconnected from society (outside of family and close friends). It was so nice to share this positive experience with the broader community.”

**Circulate Initiative:**

## Participants’ experience of the sauna impacting how they experience or relate to the natural environment

Most people (all but two who answered this question) said the experience of the sauna impacted how they experience or relate to the natural environment, including to feel more mindful and more connected to it.





“I saw the field in a different way and felt the peace that the natural world, even on the edge of a sports field, can give us.”

“I can appreciate the beauty around us so much when I’m there. Where else do I lie on the ground on a cold day and marvel at the rain?”

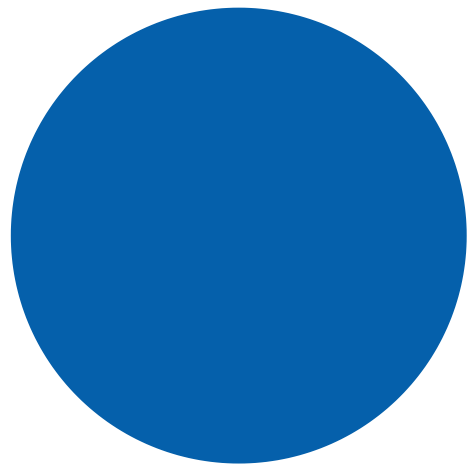
**Circulate Initiative:**

## Participants’ feedback on the accessibility of the sauna

Everyone said it was accessible for them, but people also had ideas for making it even more accessible, like signage, on-site changeroom, more lighting, and session times.

**Circulate Initiative:**

## Participants learning new things through the sauna

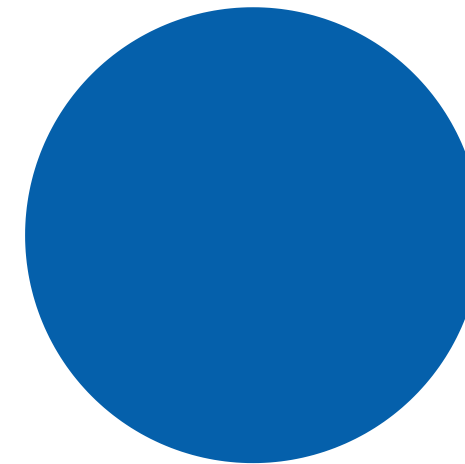


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All respondents (12) said they learned something new by participating in the sauna. Many people noted the things they learned about a sauna practice; for example, what it looks like in other parts of the world, the concept of ‘skinship,’ the role of scents and herbs, and always ending on cool. A couple of people also noted they learned about the people who they were there with, and one person noted their preference to sauna with fewer people than they had.

**Circulate Initiative:**

## The sauna’s impact on people’s quality of life



12

When asked if participating in the sauna impacted their quality of life, all participants responded positively and enthusiastically. Many people said they wanted to sauna on a regular basis, and pointed to the mental, physical, and social health benefits of the community sauna.



“I felt like if I was able to integrate it into my life regularly that it would make my quality of life better and healthier, both physically and mentally.”

“Besides the benefits of sauna in general, I developed a stronger sense of community and fellowship that I had been missing since moving to Wolfville during the pandemic.”

**Circulate Initiative:**

## How participants think their quality of life would be impacted if they had regular and affordable sauna access

Participants anticipated their quality of life would be positively impacted, and people emphasized their physical, mental, and social health equally. There were specific notes on feeling more relaxed, clear, grounded, and calm.



**“I’d be physically healthier and in less pain, less stressed, struggle less with mental health – it makes me feel incredibly alive.”**

**Circulate Initiative:**

## **Participants’ perspectives on affordability and accessibility of the cost to use the sauna**

Of the participants who commented on the cost of the sauna, participants noted that \$10 to \$20 was reasonable, while also noting that the sauna needed to be financially sustainable. Some shared ideas for a pay-what-you-can scale and membership options.

**Circulate Initiative:**

## **Additional things participants shared**

Seven people shared an additional comment at the end of the survey. A few people expressed gratitude and wished the pilot had lasted longer. A couple people included some ideas for the sauna’s operation (i.e., time, number of people to host at once).

**The following quotes highlight some strong sentiments and the reasons why people support the community sauna.**



**“The atmosphere in the sauna was always respectful, inclusive, and very authentic.”**

**“With what we all have been through since 2020, I do strongly believe this community sauna (thermal bathing) strengthens our belief and confidence in one another and is much needed for any community.”**



**“The community of Wolfville would benefit by keeping the community sauna. It’s a place for enhancement of health, building of community, making new connections with people you may never otherwise meet! It does not take up much space. It’s unique and does not compare to a ‘private’ spa or anything else we have in this area. What a wonderful way to support our community’s health and build connections at the same time.”**



# Concluding Thoughts



**At the end of the Circulate Initiative pilot, what we heard from participants is that there is an interest in and possibility for an affordable, accessible, and meaningful community sauna in Wolfville.**

Many participants arrived at the community sauna with openness and curiosity (and sometimes, explicitly, questions), about the experience, and often left having exchanged them for a highly rated experience, including self-assessed physical, mental, emotional, and social health benefits. For example, participants noted benefits, like feeling more grounded, calm, and connected, as being experienced after one community sauna session. The community sauna offered a space for people to connect with others, whether they knew one another already or not, as well as a space for people to connect with the natural environment of their community. Circulate Initiative participants also shared their perspectives on practicalities of the sauna, like how often they'd ideally use the sauna, what they would pay, and how access to it might be strengthened further.

The Circulate Initiative also offered clarity around two models of operation for the sauna, with Steam Space as one part of the enterprise and the Circulate Initiative another. The Circulate Initiative is now a non-profit organization whose focus is offering affordable and accessible community sauna opportunities to people identifying as members of equity-deserving groups.

What participants shared during and after this pilot will continue to inform where and how Steam Space and the Circulate Initiative proceed in creating more opportunities for people to connect and benefit from sauna.

Participants feedback and reflections on the Circulate Initiative paint a picture of its success. Participants highlight the importance of Circulate for their own wellbeing as well as its ability to strengthen the social fabric of their community. Findings from the 2019 Nova Scotia Quality of Life Survey reflect the lived experiences of so many in Nova Scotia (and beyond), which is that access to wellbeing and opportunities for connection is not equal or equitable. The Circulate Initiative is striving to put accessibility and equity at the centre of its role as a community and wellbeing service, and this pilot project met its goal of showing that what is commonly considered a luxury experience, should be one for everyone.



1525 Birmingham Street  
Halifax, Nova Scotia  
B3J 0B5

[engagenovascotia.ca](http://engagenovascotia.ca)

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