

Parent Demographics in *Nurturing Parenting*: Implications for Programming

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Background

Parent education provides a mechanism to intervene with families that face challenges in raising children and assist them in developing the patterns of care that are important for a healthy childrearing environment. In particular, parent-training programs are helpful for families involved in the child welfare system. In North Dakota, in FY 2014 there were 23.9% (N=911) of child abuse and neglect assessments that were referred for services required or recommended (ND DHS, 2015). The *Nurturing Parenting* Program is a parent-training program designed for use with a child welfare population and parents in general to develop positive, empathic and nurturing parental attitudes and behaviors.

Effective usage of parent training programs involves careful consideration of audience needs and assessment of program fit with the target audience. Hughes et al. (2012) emphasize that “considering contextual factors and diversity in audience characteristics is an essential part of...program development” (p. 714). The current study addresses the participant characteristics of individuals involved in *Nurturing Parenting* in our state and the implications of key patterns for adapting the program to better accommodate participant needs.

Objectives

- **Analyze the Demographics of NPP participants in state child welfare system.**
- **Determine commonalities and variations among participants.**
- **Assess current operational procedures in the program.**
- **Identify areas where operational adjustments can be made to better accommodate cultural and social norms of the geographic area.**

Methods

We utilized a demographic analysis of participants in the *Nurturing Parenting* program in North Dakota to explore participant characteristics and their implications for programming choices. Program sessions occurred between summer of 2014 and spring 2015. Participant surveys included demographic information and responses were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 24 program. A total sample of 212 participants from 10 sites enrolled in the *Nurturing Parenting Program* in North Dakota during 2014-2015 completed surveys that were used for analysis.

Measures

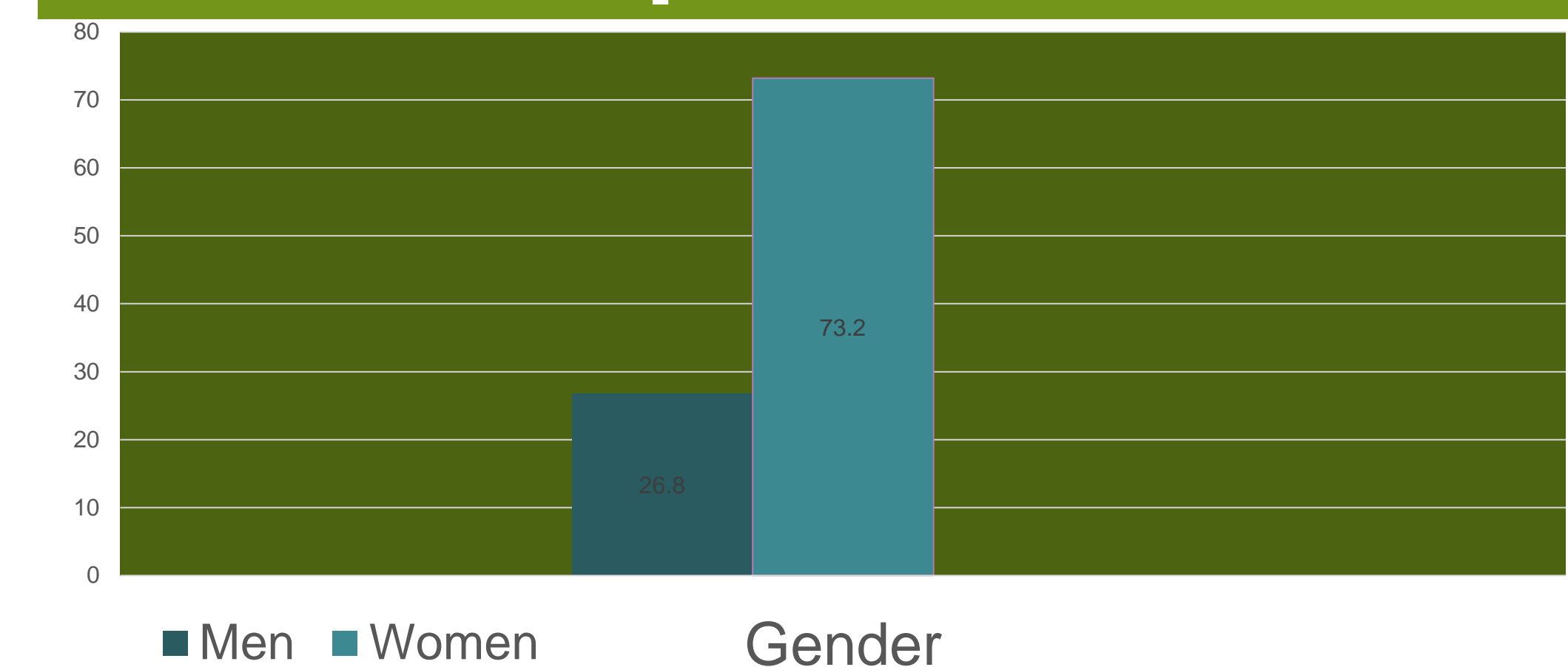
Results were compiled using feedback gathered from participants who completed the AAPI-2 measure and an accompanying demographic survey. Demographic information furnished by participants included age, gender, racial or ethnic background, family status (marital), education level, income level, number of children, history of abuse experience, and military service history. Frequency data and basic descriptive statistics were calculated in order to furnish a profile of participant characteristics that could be utilized in understanding the audience being served and exploring potential needs for program adjustments.

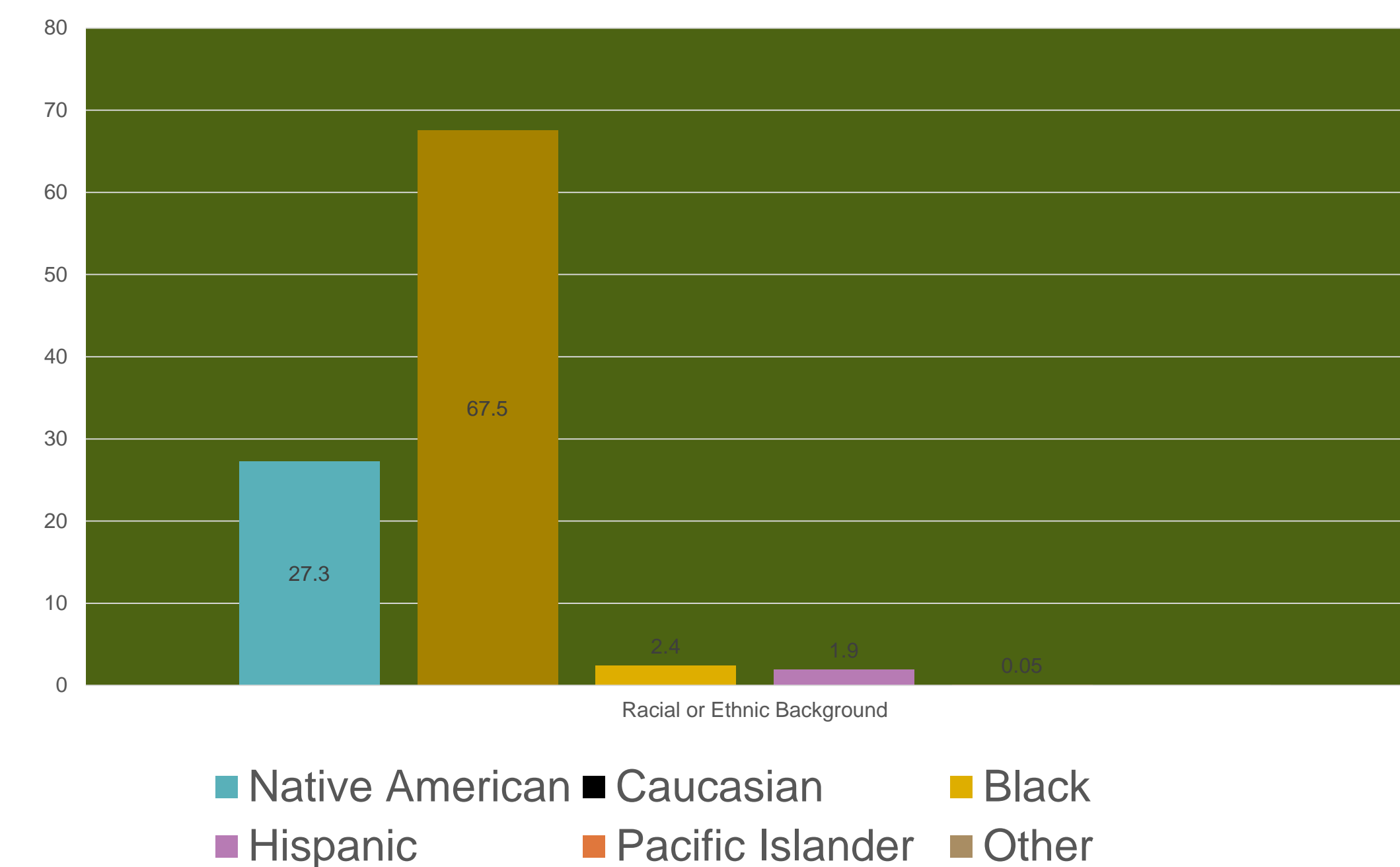
Results

The demographic analysis of *Nurturing Parenting* Program clients in ND indicates:

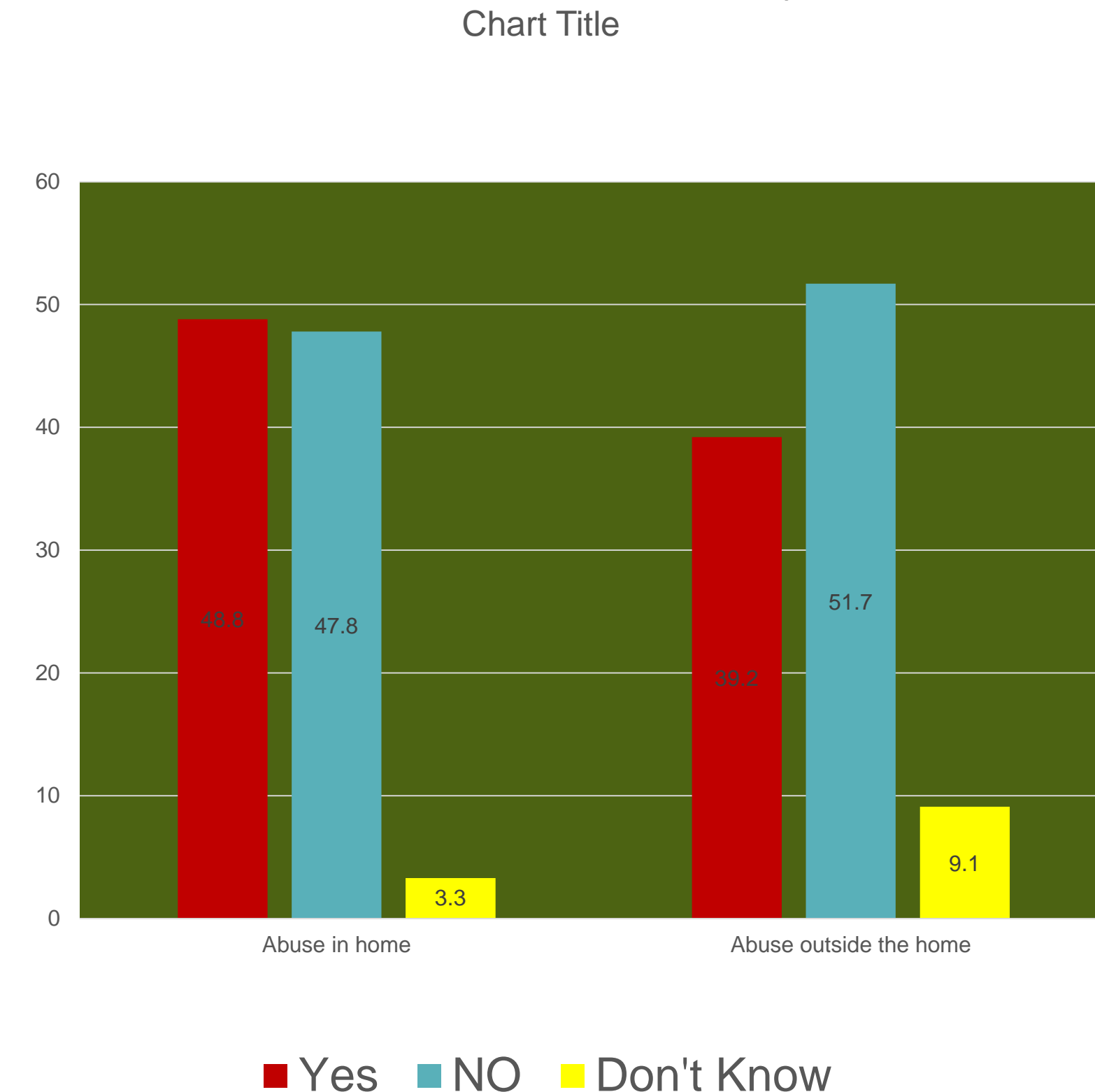
- Three times more likely to be women.
- Vary in age between ages 20 and 40, with a quarter under age 25.
- Predominantly Caucasian and Native American.
- 1 in 2 experienced some type of abuse within the family.
- 2 in 5 experienced some type of abuse outside the family setting.

Implications

- 
- | Gender | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| Men | 26.3 |
| Women | 73.2 |
- **Gender, only a quarter of participants in the program are male.** This finding indicates the need to consider outreach efforts to attract potential male participants, train staff to adopt male-friendly approaches, and assess program materials and activities to be of interest to male participants.



- **Racial or ethnic background, nearly one third of participants identified as Native American.** This indicates the need to assess possible adjustments based on cultural sensitivity to an indigenous audience, as well as consider whether the curriculum materials and examples are culturally relevant.



Implications (Continued)

- **Abuse history, nearly 1 in 2 participants experienced abuse within the family, and 2 in 5 experienced abuse outside their family setting.** Highlighting the importance of being aware of the effects of past trauma on participants, cultivating staff sensitivity to potential triggers related to anxiety or PTSD, and linking participants with community resources for dealing with trauma as needed.
- **Age, also a quarter of participants are under the age of 25.** This finding suggests a need for staff to be aware of ongoing developmental status of participants, and how to communicate information effectively to a younger audience.

Conclusion

Based on Duncan and Goddard's (2017) 5-stage model of program development and implementation they suggest that “many [educational] programs fail because they do not spend time thoroughly investigating the needs of target audiences” (p. 39). The *Nurturing Parenting* Program is a well-established, evidence-based program (CEBC, 2015); however, this type of analysis highlights the importance of undertaking an assessment of audience characteristics and needs in any setting as a fundamental and key part of the program implementation process. Such an approach is a useful but sometimes-forgotten element of program evaluation and making adjustments to maximize the effectiveness of parent training programs with any specified audience.

References

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- Duncan, S. F., & Goddard, H. W. (2017). *Family life education: Principles and practices for effective outreach* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
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- Hughes, R., Bowers, J. R., Mitchell, E. T., Curtiss, S., & Ebata, A. T. (2012). Developing online family life prevention and education programs. *Family Relations*, 61(5), 711-727.
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