

# "DON'T POKE THE BEAR"

## Disaster risks identified by Emergency Managers and people with high body mass

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## BACKGROUND

Big bodied people (BBP)\* have been left behind in disasters<sup>1</sup>, experience difficulties taking some protective actions<sup>2</sup> and are conspicuously absent in disaster risk reduction planning, policies and practices, with a dearth of research on this topic<sup>1</sup>. Descriptive qualitative methodology was applied, framed by a pragmatic worldview in order to build knowledge from the perspectives and experiences of 55 emergency managers and 17 people identifying as big bodied in Aotearoa New Zealand. These were explored through an online survey and semi-structured interviews. Descriptive and reflexive thematic analysis of the data were undertaken.

\*relates to size, shape and weight and is not a euphemism for fatness

"I WANT TO PREPARE, BUT I DON'T WANT TO PREPARE, BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO POKE THE BEAR."

big bodied participant

## SUMMARY

The research findings highlighted the complexities of disaster risk reduction for big bodied people and emergency managers<sup>3</sup>. Assumptions and expectations were identified that may explain why there has been scant, if any, consideration of the needs of BBP in a disaster particular to size, shape and weight. Importantly, this study amplifies the voices of big bodied people, so often excluded, silenced or invisible in research.

Practitioners should ensure planning, policies and practice include the needs of big bodied people to meet the United Nation's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 requirement for 'all-of-society engagement and partnership'.

## PARTICIPANTS:

Table 1: Online Emergency Management survey participant characteristics (n=44)

Type of Organisation	
Civil Defence/Emergency Management	15
Health	13
Local Government/District Council	6
Ambulance/Fire and Emergency	7
Humanitarian/Search and Rescue	3
Role	
Service Leader/Manager/Controller	15
Advisor/Officer/Coordinator	19
Research/Education	4
Registered Nurse	2
Other	4

Table 2: Semi-structured interview participant characteristics (n=32)

Body Mass (Kg/m <sup>2</sup> )	BBP*	EM**	All	Gender	BBP	EM	All
	(n=17)	(n=15)	(n=32)		(n=17)	(n=15)	(n=32)
20-29.9		8	8	Women	12	6	18
30-39.9	2	7	8	Men	5	9	14
40-49.9	6		6	<b>Age</b>			
50-59.9	6		6	20 – 39 yrs	7	1	8
60-69.9	1		1	40 – 59 yrs	8	11	19
Not provided	2		2	60+ yrs	2	1	3
*Big bodied people **Emergency Management				Not provided		2	2

## RESULTS AND KEYPOINTS

### KNOW YOUR POPULATION

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Prevalence of high body mass is highest in the Pacific Islands and Middle East with high prevalence in the USA, UK, and New Zealand.

#### SEEK

Seek statistics for your country, state or region. Useful global Country profiles can be found at <https://ncdrisc.org/country-profile>.

#### CONSIDER

Consider your own biases and beliefs about BBP.

### MAJOR CONCERNS FOR BBP

#### CLOTHING

Agencies commonly ask that no clothing be sent in a disaster but displaced BBP have specific and uncommon clothing needs.

Work with BBP and their networks to identify the best way to provide appropriate clothing.

#### TEMPORARY SHELTER

Temporary shelters, including short stay information/support hubs or overnight accommodation, are rarely suitable for BBP. Bathrooms must be big enough to manoeuvre in and have handrails and toilets that are weight, height and width appropriate. Chairs and beds (cots) must be weight and width appropriate and beds need adjustable backs for those who cannot lie flat.

Source and provide equipment and facilities that are weight, height and width appropriate for BBP.

## REFERENCES

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"[WE] MAINTAIN A LIST OF MOTELS THAT ARE PET-FRIENDLY... BUT WE WOULDN'T HAVE AN IDEA OF WHICH MOTELS WOULD EASILY ACCOMMODATE PEOPLE WITH A LARGER BODY FRAME, OR HAVE ACCESS ISSUES AND THINGS LIKE THAT."

Emergency Manager participant

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