CONSPICUOUS INVISIBILITY in Disaster Risk Reduction

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INTRODUCTION

People with very high body mass (extreme obesity) have been left behind in disasters relating to their size, shape and weight.1 Disaster risk reduction (DRR) considerations involving people with high body mass are not visible in DRR literature.2 The numbers of people living with very high body mass in Aotearoa are not insignificant (around 200,000 individuals): 5.1% average all population, of which 10.6% Māori and 17.3% Pacific peoples3 and higher than average in the 55-64 year age group (6.6%).

METHODS:

Semi-structured face to face interviews were conducted with people living with very high body mass in Aotearoa. Interviews were transcribed, coded and organised into themes.

RESULTS

Four major themes emerged:

1. Size, shape, weight and age of participants in this study were no proxy for health, mobility or preparedness status.
2. There were shared concerns regarding assistance requirements in the event of a fall or becoming trapped.
3. Participants had an expectation that Emergency Management (EM) will plan and be prepared for their particular needs in the community and yet EM appear to have no such plans in place other than expecting health agencies to flag any needs.
4. Participants felt their DRR needs associated with high body mass would not be flagged with any health agency and less-mobile participants were unclear if they were registered ‘disabled’ with any agency.

REFERENCES


DISCUSSION POINTS

People with high body mass exist in increasing numbers across Aotearoa1 yet there is conspicuous invisibility of considerations relating to size, weight, shape - even in groups disproportionately impacted by high body mass and already thought of as a priority e.g. people with chronic conditions, diabetes, people with disabilities, people with severe mental conditions, older people.

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Image Credit: World Obesity Federation

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PARTICIPANTS:

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