



## Practitioner perceptions of elderly citizens who overestimate their own abilities during a disaster

Practitioners reflected the citizens' views that, from their professional experience, elderly people who overestimate their own abilities are vulnerable during disasters: "Yes, older people tend to overestimate their abilities. They rarely say they cannot do something. They are limited in all their senses but don't admit it. They want to do things their own, but direct communication is not always possible" (G1; R - see source document for full reference). They were also considered difficult to manage during disaster situations, because practitioners "have much respect for them but they are hard to manage during emergencies" (G2; R). One of the practitioners noted, that it is not just elderly people who may overestimate their physical ability leading to vulnerability in disaster situations, but also citizens in general who overestimate their physical ability leading to vulnerability: "Those who "overestimate" their abilities are not only elderly people. Either because they have a different technical, scientific and cultural education or because they go to the gym 3 times a week, and think they can face everything... this is independent from age. Usually who overestimates his ability in this field is a problem for himself and for others. Certainly elderly people are even worse, because they have a lower resistance" (G5; R4). Participants further suggested that older people may also be more vulnerable, because they are more bound to the place where they live: "Yes, elderly people have more difficulty in leaving their place. If elderly people already live isolated – and there are many in those areas – they will move with a lot of difficulty, they want to stay in their place. While if all the people around are moving, elderly people will follow" (G5; R4). However, not all the practitioners felt that older people will be vulnerable in disasters, as they referred to older people living in mountain communities who they perceived as 'hardy': "In the Amatrice quake, the elderly people were so strong and solid; they are toughened up by hard life" (G2; R).

### Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Age-related roles](#), [Social exclusion](#), [Worldviews](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [National civil protection body](#), [Local authorities](#), [Government](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

### Recommendations:

- [Develop guidelines for disaster practitioners that take into consideration the different needs of and approaches to different ethnic groups](#)
- [Consider vulnerable groups when designing and implementing disaster response measures](#)

### Source

[Deliverable D5.11 "Report on Stakeholder Assembly 2 \(Italy\)" \(page 29\)](#)

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