

Annual bone fracture rate almost 4 percent and double previous estimates

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The annual bone fracture rate in England is just short of 4% of the population, which is more than double previous estimates, suggests a study in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*.

In 2000, the combined health and social care costs of hip fractures alone in the UK came to an estimated £726 million.

Half of middle aged men and four out of 10 elderly women have already sustained a fracture, the figures indicate.

The findings are based on a representative population sample of more than 55,000 people, including over 10,000 people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The sample was taken from participants in the annual Health Survey for England (2002 to 2004), commissioned by the Department of Health.

Analysis of the responses showed that the overall annual bone fracture rate was 3.6%. But there were considerable variations, particularly across age and racial groups.

In men, the annual fracture rate was 4.1%, and ranged from 1.8% in boys up to the age of 4, to 7.7% for men aged 15 to 24. In women, the annual fracture rate was 3.1%, overall, peaking at 7.6% in those over the age of 85.

The most common site for fractures were the hands and feet, followed by the leg and arm bones and the trunk. Head and skull fractures were rare.

Adults with manual jobs had higher fracture rates than those working in other occupations.

The lifetime fracture rate among white people, at just under 40%, was almost double that of black and minority ethnic people at 22%.

Fractures impose a huge burden on healthcare systems, say the authors. In 2000, the combined health and social care costs of hip fracture in the UK came to an estimated £726 million.

Source: British Medical Journal

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