To analyze age- and sex-specific frequencies of peripheral fractures, we used data from the third MONICA-Augsburg Survey (1994/95). The study comprises 2404 male and 2450 female participants (age 25 to 74 years) who were questioned regarding fracture history. We investigated fracture prevalence, age-specific incidence rates, and the circumstances under which the fractures occurred.

The age-standardized, cumulative fracture prevalence among men (m) 25 to 74 years of age was 45% and among women (w) of the same age 31%. Fracture prevalence among women was more than 10% lower than among men in the younger age groups (age 25 to 64 years), but after a significant increase in the 65 to 74-year-olds the fracture prevalence corresponded to that of men (m: 42%, w: 40%). A peak of incidence rates was found among men at age 15-24 (overall incidence rate: 2017 fractures/100,000 person-years) and at age 45-54 (overall incidence rate: 1640 fractures/100,000 PY), respectively, and among women at age 65-74 (overall incidence rate: 3214 fractures/100,000 PY). The prevalence of self-reported osteoporosis (age 25 to 74 years) was higher in women (7%) than in men (1%). Falls caused 43% (w: 59%, m: 33%) of all fractures, external violence 40% (m: 47%, w: 29%), and sports activities 15% (m: 18%, w: 10%). Further investigation of risk factors related to fractures can contribute to the development of specific preventive measures in that field. In the future, the prevention and efficient treatment of an existing or an often undiagnosed osteoporosis and also the prevention of falls in elderly persons should be an important public health concern.