

# HOW TO LIE WITH STATISTICS

1

The "New York Times" reports (5 December 1978) that the average life expectancy of orchestra conductors is 73.4 years, four years more than that of the entire male population at that time. The article ends with the suggestion to become an orchestra conductor in order to live longer.

Assuming the figures are correct, how can that be?

It takes many years of practise to become a musician and even more to become an orchestra conductor. So the average orchestra conductor is very likely to be over 50. But the life expectancy of a 50-year-old person is higher than that of a baby because all the hazards of the first 50 years have been survived.

So the higher life expectancy of orchestra conductors is the effect of a pre-selected sample.