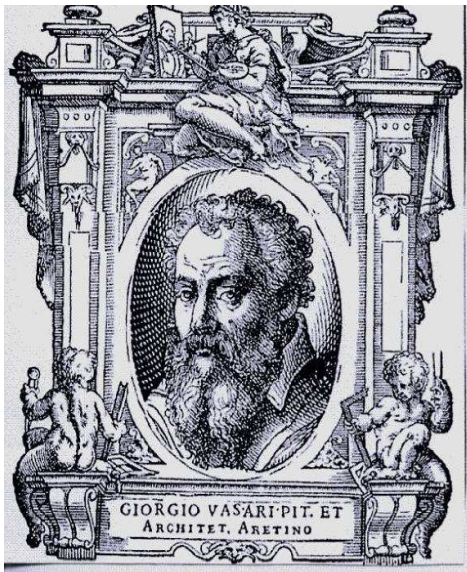


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THE LENGTH OF LIFE OF ITALIAN PAINTERS, SCULPTORS AND ARCHITECTS FROM THE 13TH TO THE 16TH CENTURY

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THE LIVES OF THE MOST EXCELLENT
PAINTERS, SCULPTORS AND ARCHITECTS

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Unfortunately, the lack of data does not allow us to sufficiently examine the levels of human mortality during the past centuries.

The knowledge about the length of life in past times is more and more scarce and unreliable the further back in time it is from today.

We have tried to give some answers to this aspect of human history by gathering some data regarding the mortality of people whom, rather noted at their time, could furnish acceptable information about their dates of birth and death.

This data, which refers to Italian painters, sculptors and architects during the Middle Ages, was mainly gathered from the book written by Vasari, which he completed in 1550, and which was then published for the first time in 1928 by Casa Editrice Sonzogno in Milan ⁽¹⁾. The other source was the first of two volumes by Rooses and Bénédite. ⁽²⁾

These include 450 people, nearly all males, born between the 13th and the 16th century, of which the relative dates of birth and death are indicated.

This group includes a small number of people that were tied to the lives of the artists considered, for motives of work and genealogical lineage.

In Figure 1, one can observe the distribution of the various lengths of life during the period of time examined.

Obviously, this is only for curiosity. We do not make any other type of claims, as the number cannot be assimilated to a statistical sample, nor can it represent a valid observation for all of the population of the eras examined. In fact, a quite non-homogeneous group was considered for their degree of activity, with rather similar characteristics and possibly very different from that of the rest of the population.

Therefore, due to the great variability of the individual data shown in Figure 1., the maximum duration of life passed from 79 years (Ugolino Sanese, 1260-1339) to 99 years reached by Titian in 1576 (1477-1576)⁽³⁾ and by the writer Lodovico Cornaro (1467-1566) who was responsible for architectural questions regarding the conservation of the city of Venice. These cases were evident exceptions among those born during the 15th century, as only one person reached 93 years of age, and another 91, while 6 died at ages of between 85 and 90 years.

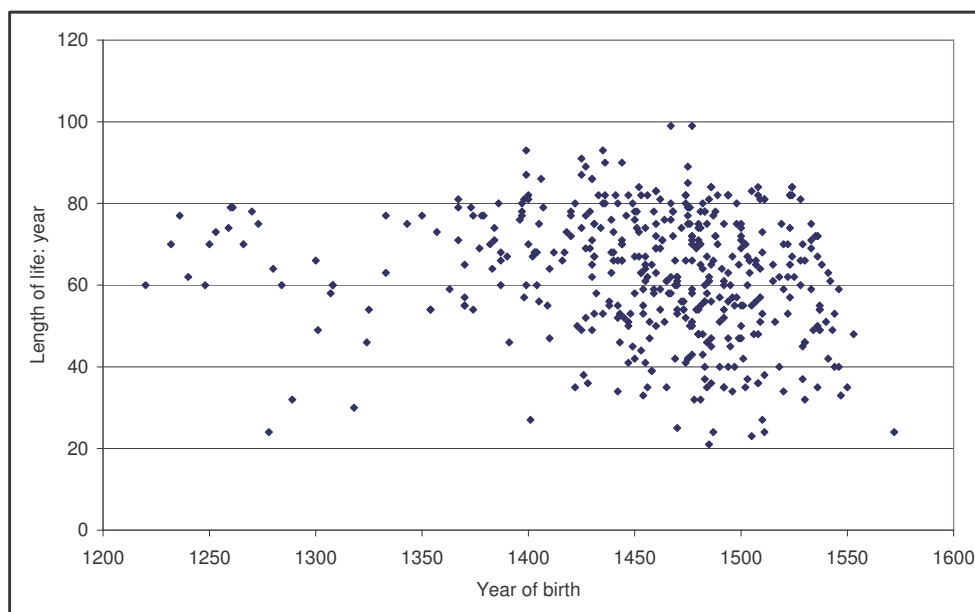


Figure 1. Length of life of 450 Italian painters, sculptors and architects that lived during the Middle Ages, by year of birth.

The data reported in Tables 1 and 2 shows some diversity in the distribution of the length of life of those born during the 4 considered centuries.

Table 1 Average and maximum length of life for 450 Italian painters, sculptors and architects born during the period of the four centuries from the 13th to the 16th.

Length	Century	13th	14th	15th	16th
average: years		68.0	65.5	64.0	53.6
maximum: years		79	93	99	84
number of people		17	46	283	104

The first table indicates the average length and the maximum, while the second reports the percentage values of the lengths of life over 70 and over 80 years, with respect to the total lengths.

The average length of life decreases, passing from 68 to 53.6 years respectively for those born in the 13th and 16th centuries; however, the maximum length gradually increases from 79 to 99, then descending to 84 years for those born during the 16th century.

Another aspect that shows a higher mortality for those born in the 16th century is that which refers to the number of people that lived beyond 70 and 80 years compared to all of those belonging to the group of those born during the same century (Table 2).

Table 2 Percentage of Italian painters, sculptors and architects that lived over 70 or 80 years compared to the number of those born during the same century.

Length	Century	13th	14th	15th	16th
> 70		58.8	47.8	37.1	28.2
> 80		=	8.7	14.1	10.7
>80/>70		=	18.0	38.1	37.9

The results of this table conform what we have seen in Table 1.

During the historical period examined, the length of life over 70 years diminishes slightly, so much that for those born during the 16th century, these are less than half of those born during the 13th century.

Naturally, after 80 years of life, the percentages of the presence in life are inferior to those calculated for durations of over 70 years, due to the deaths that occurred between the ages of 70 and 79 years. Particularly in the third line of Table 2, one observes that, passing from the 13th to the 16th century, for people who lived longer than 70 years, the length of life increased also after 80 years, or rather the possibilities of living a higher number of years increased.

In short, the people considered showed how it was not impossible to arrive at rather long lengths of life, although they lived during historical periods in which there were serious environmental situations (food, sanitation, economic, etc.).

A greater amount of information on this subject might have allowed for a deeper and more articulated analysis.

(1) Giorgio Vasari (1928), "Le vite dei più eccellenti pittori, scultori et architettori", the first edition included comments and was illustrated by Pio Pecchioli, in three volumes for a total of 3,612 pages - Casa Editrice Sonzogno-Milano.

(2) Max Rooses, Bénédite Leonce (undated, but from the 1920s), "Storia della pittura dal 1400 al 1800", first volume translated by Gino Fologari, Società Editrice Libreria-Milano.

(3) In the "Annotazioni" by Pio Pecchioli (see the Bibliography, n. 1), on page 601 of the third volume he states that, in spite of some uncertainties, the "...majority of the authoritative Italian and foreign biographers and critics has accepted the year 1477 up until now", as the year in which Titian was born. Also the Grande Dizionario Enciclopedico, UTET, 1939 indicates 1477 as the year of Titian's birth, in which, it is said, he died of the plague along with his son Orazio.

Regarding Lodovico Cornaro, the dates of birth and death are given on page 734 of the second volume.