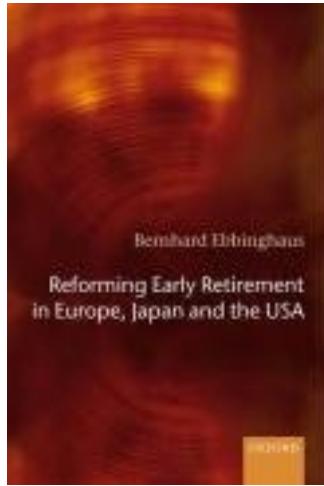


Reforming Early Retirement in Europe, Japan and the USA



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出版者:

出版时间:2008-9

装帧:

isbn:9780199553396

Since the 1970s early exit from work has become a major challenge in modern welfare states. Governments, employers, and unions alike once thought of early retirement as a peaceful solution to the economic problems of mass unemployment and industrial restructuring. Today governments and international organizations advocate the postponement of retirement and an increase in activity among older workers. Comparing the USA, eight European countries, and Japan, this book demonstrates significant cross-national differences in early retirement across countries and over time. The study evaluates the impact of major variations in welfare regimes, production systems, and labor relations. It stresses the importance of the 'pull factor' of extensive welfare state provisions, particularly in Continental Europe; the 'push factor' of labor shedding strategies by firms, particularly in Anglo-American market economies; and the role of employers and worker representatives in negotiating retirement policies, particularly in coordinated market economies. Over the last three decades, early retirement has become a popular social policy and employment

practice in the workplace, adding to the fiscal crises and employment problems of today's welfare states. Attempts to reverse early retirement policies have led to major reform debates. Unilateral government policies to cut back on social benefits have not had the expected employment results due to resistance from employers, workers, and their organizations. Successful reforms require the cooperation of both sides. This study provides comprehensive empirical analysis and a balanced approach to studying both the pull and the push factors affecting early exit from work needed to understand the development of early retirement regimes.

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