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Health, Disability, and Pathways into Retirement in Spain

Pilar García-Gómez, Sergi Jiménez-Martín,
and Judit Vall Castelló

3.1 Introduction

Disability has always been an important social welfare program in developed countries and Spain is not an exception. The program represented an average of 1.5 percent of the gross national product (GDP) in the 1995 to 2010 period, slightly below the European Union (EU) average of 2.2 percent of the GDP. The relative importance of the program with respect to the pension program has varied in the last twenty to twenty-five years. In 1977 the ratio of disability to retirement benefits was 0.44, in 1985, by the end of the crisis of the early 1980s, it reached a maximum of 0.58 and it has slowly decreased since then. By 1997 the ratio was again down to 0.45. Figures from 1998 are difficult to compare as all disability pensions from age 65-plus were, since that year, converted to retirement benefits, but back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest that the ratio decreased in the early 2000s and increased from 2008 onward because of the recent crisis.[1]

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1. Own calculations using data from the Muestra Continua de Vidas Laborales (MCVL), a random sample of administrative records provided by the Spanish Social Security Administration.

The previous ratio of benefits has a clear business cycle component because the disability program has often been used to cushion recessions and to alleviate transitions into and from economic inactivity in regions of high unemployment (Disney and Webb 1991; McVicar 2006; Benítez-Silva, Disney, and Jiménez-Martín 2010). In addition, disability programs have often been used as an alternative to early retirement through old-age programs, either because of restrictions on early retirement itself, or because disability programs offer a more attractive after-tax benefit level (Gruber and Wise 1999, 2004; Jiménez-Martín, Labeaga, and Vilaplana Prieto 2006; Jiménez-Martin and Vall Castelló 2009). This alternative route into inactivity for older people proved particularly attractive when employers were seeking to shed older workers in periods of recession such as the early 1980s, early 1990s, and late 2000s.

It is common in the literature to distinguish between "health disability," which arises from clearly diagnosed medical conditions, and "work disability," which may also have its roots in economic and social circumstances. Although there is a link between work and health disability, economic conditions and the variations in the risk of unemployment over time may play an important part in explaining the dynamics of the disability rolls (Benítez-Silva, Disney, and Jiménez-Martín 2010). Other factors, including the trend in the relative generosity of disability benefits relative to unemployment or pension benefits (Autor and Duggan 2003, 2006; Burkhauser and Daly 2001; OECD 2006, 2007 more generally), and underlying demographic and morbidity trends, are also relevant.

As in many other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, the underlying demographic trends in Spain are very favorable. The increase in life expectancy at birth has also been translated in increases in life expectancy at age sixty-five. In 1960 women aged sixty-five expected to live 15.3 more years, while the expectations were 21.9 in 2008. Similar improvements are also observed among men (from 13.1 in 1960 to 18.0 in 2008) (OECD Health Data 2010). As a consequence, there have been striking improvements in age-specific mortality rates over the last fifty years in Spain across individuals aged over fifty-five. The extent to which these changes translate into higher labor capacity depends on the evolution of ill health. Thus, further reduction in the age-specific mortality rate will only translate in an increase in the population able to work at older ages if the average age of the onset of a work-related disability increases and, simultaneously, the requirement to work for the disabled are adjusted accordingly.

When analyzing trends of disability rolls, Social Security reforms should also be taken into account, as they may change the relative balance between the various exit routes into (retirement) benefits. There have been two main social security reforms since 1990. In 1997 there was a reorganization of the disability assessment system, the medical requirements for temporary

disability were tightened, and the generosity of the old-age pension system was reduced, while in 2002 more incentives to retire later were introduced.

The main purpose of this chapter is to analyze the trends in labor force participation and transitions to benefit programs of older workers in relation to health trends. In particular, we explore questions such as: Do mortality improvements at older ages translate into more participation? Do we reach the same conclusions with other health variables? Do health improvements reduce the prevalence of disability among older workers? Have recent social security reforms favored the participation of older workers, and in particular, of disabled workers? Have they affected transitions from employment to unemployment or disability at older ages? Do we find any substitution across programs?

The link between program participation and health will be analyzed descriptively. Alternatively, the effect of reforms on program participation will be evaluated using administrative data on the stock and inflow into unemployment, disability, and retirement for individuals approaching the normal retirement age. We complement the analysis using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey. In order to identify the key parameters of the model we aggregate data by gender and age group (fifty to fifty-four, fifty-five to fifty-nine, sixty to sixty-four) using two levels of regional aggregation.

Our preliminary conclusions are pessimistic regarding the effect of health improvements on the labor market attachment of older workers. We show that despite the large improvements in mortality rates among older individuals in Spain, the employment rates of individuals older than fifty-five remain lower than the ones observed in the late 1970s. On the other hand, decreases in mortality rates do not necessarily go hand in hand with improvements in population health. We do not find any conclusive evidence on whether morbidity has improved or worsened during the period of analysis. Regarding the effect of social security reforms we find that both the 1997 and the 2002 reforms decreased the stock into old-age benefits at the cost of an increased share into disability. More interestingly, the magnitude of the two opposite effects is the same, suggesting a clear substitution effect among these two programs in the older age-groups. Finally, we find that none of these two reforms had any effect on the share of these age-groups into unemployment, which is highly explained by the total share of the population out of employment. Regarding the effects of these two reforms on the outflows from employment, we find that there was a significant increase in the outflow from employment into disability after the 2002 reform.

The rest of the chapter proceeds as follows. In section 3.2 we present the institutional setting and discuss disability insurance and pension reforms. In section 3.3 we review historical data on mortality, health status, and labor force participation and compare their trends during the last thirty years. We analyze the effect of program reforms on disability rolls and the substitution among the different programs in section 3.4. Finally, section 3.5 concludes.

3.2 Disability Insurance (DI) and Social Security Reforms

The aim of this chapter is to provide descriptive evidence on the relationship between past trends on health status and labor market participation at older ages and the role of social security reforms. Therefore, we first describe the disability system in Spain, as it is the pathway out of employment more closely linked to the individual's health. However, the transition into a program will also depend on the availability and characteristics of the other programs. Therefore, we also highlight the main changes in the unemployment and old-age systems. In all three cases, social security is responsible for the payment of contributory benefits (old-age, disability, unemployment, temporary sick leave, maternity leave, and survivor's benefits), while non-contributory benefits are managed by the regional authorities of each Autonomous Community and the IMSERSO (the Institute of Aged People and Social Services) in Ceuta and Melilla.

3.2.1 The Disability Insurance System

In Spain, there are two types of permanent disability benefits: (a) contributory, which are given to individuals who have generally contributed to the social security system before the onset of the disabling condition, and (b) non-contributory, which are given to individuals who are assessed to be disabled but have never contributed to the social security system (or do not reach the minimum contributory requirement to access the contributory system). Non-contributory disability benefits are means-tested and managed at the regional level.[2] The size of the non-contributory system is relatively small compared to the contributory system (197,126 individuals received non-contributory disability benefits in 2009, while 920,860 received contributory benefits during the same year). The amount of benefits received is also smaller in the non-contributory case (the average non-contributory pension is 417.09 euros per month compared to an average contributory disability pension of 831.49 euros per month). For these reasons, in the remainder of this chapter, we put more emphasis on the permanent contributory disability system in Spain.

Social security defines the permanent contributive disability insurance as the economic benefits to compensate the individual for losing a certain amount of wage or professional earnings when affected by a permanent reduction or complete loss of his or her working ability due to the effects of a pathologic or a traumatic process derived from an illness or an accident.

In order to capture the different situations a person can be in after suffering from a disabling condition, the Spanish Social Security Administration uses

2. Income is evaluated yearly. The income threshold in 2010 was set at 4,755.80 euros per year for an individual living alone. This amount is adjusted if the individual lives with other members.

a classification of four main degrees of disability that depend on the working capacity lost:

1. Permanent limited disability for the usual job: the individual loses at least 33 percent of the standard performance for his or her usual job, but the individual is still able to develop the fundamental tasks of his or her usual job or professional activity. Individuals in this level of disability only receive a one-time lump sum payment.
2. Partial disability: the individual is impaired from developing all or the fundamental tasks of his or her usual job or professional activity, but he or she is still capable of developing a different job or professional activity.
3. Total disability: the individual is impaired from the development of any kind of job or professional activity.
4. Severe Disability: Individuals who, as a result of anatomic or functional losses, need the assistance of a third person to develop essential activities of daily living such as eating, moving, and so forth.

Figure 3.1 shows the distribution of individuals receiving disability benefits by degree of disability and region in 2009. Note that in all Spanish regions, the percentage of individuals receiving permanent limited disability was rather small. In fact, at a national level, only 917 out of the 920,863 contributory permanent disability pensions were for individuals classified as permanent limited disabled for the usual job in 2009. The first dimension that can be highlighted from figure 3.1 is the strong regional variation, not only in the percentage of the working-age population receiving disability benefits, but also on its distribution across types. Asturias is the region with a higher share of the working-age population receiving contributory disability benefits (4.9 percent) followed by Galicia (3.8 percent), Andalucía (3.7 percent), and Cantabria (3.6 percent). On the other end, Madrid is the region with the lowest percentage of recipients of contributory disability benefits (1.6 percent). As can be observed in the figure, Ceuta and Melilla concentrate the largest share of the population receiving non-contributory disability benefits in Spain. Therefore, the share of the population receiving non-contributory benefits in the country as a whole is smaller when we exclude the special autonomous regions of Ceuta and Melilla. Among the other regions, we find the highest percentages in Canarias, Galicia, and Extremadura.

Eligibility and Pension Amount

The eligibility requirements and the pension amount depend on the source of the disability (ordinary illness, work related, or unrelated accident or occupational illness), the level of the disability, and the age of the onset of the disability. Table 3.1 summarizes the main parameters of both the eligibility criteria and the pension formula. The two main features to highlight are: (a) there are no contributory requirements if the health impairment is due

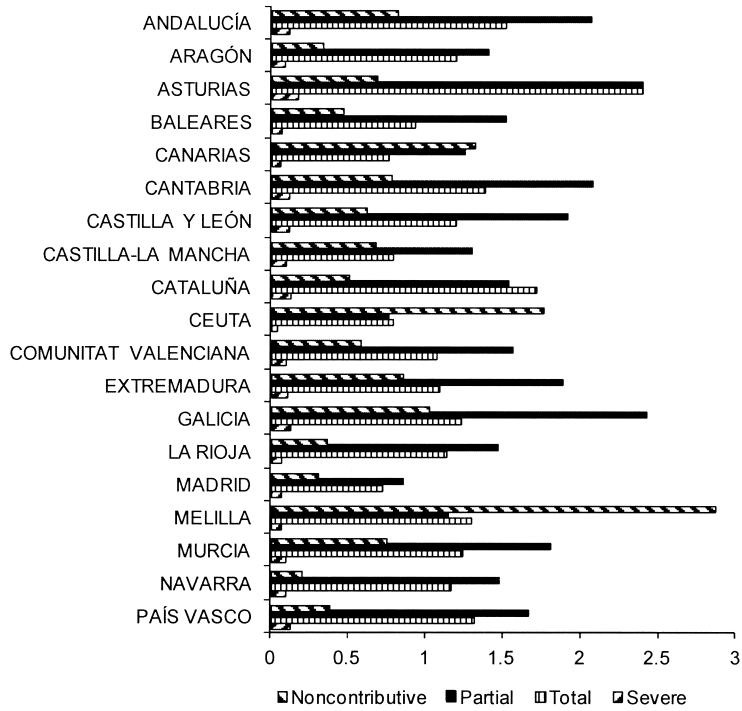

Fig. 3.1 Percentage of individuals receiving disability benefits, by region and degree of disability in 2009

Source: Own elaboration using data on disability pensions from the Ministry of Work and Immigration (www.mtin.es) and population from the Spanish Institute of Statistics (www.ine.es).

Note: The percentages have been computed as (total number of disability beneficiaries/population aged sixteen to sixty-four) * 100. The percentage receiving permanent limited disability benefits has been excluded as it is smaller than 0.01 percent in all regions.

to either an accident or an occupational illness, and (b) individuals older than fifty-five with a partial disability receive a higher replacement rate if it is considered difficult for them to find a job due to lack of education or the social and labor market conditions of the region where they live.

The total amount of the pension is obtained by multiplying a percentage, which varies depending on the type of pension and the degree of disability (as shown in the last rows of table 3.1) to the regulatory base, which depends on the source of the disability and on previous salaries.[3] The number of years included in the regulatory base depends on the source of the disability.

The income tax rules differ across disability types. Partial disability benefits are taxable under the general income tax rules, while total disability pen-

3. Benefit = Regulatory Base * Percentage.

Table 3.1 Summary of the parameters to calculate permanent disability pensions

Ordinary illness	Work-unrelated accident	Work-related accident or professional illness
	Eligibility	
Age > = 31: Contributed 1/4 time between 20 years old and disabling condition. Minimum of 5 years Age < 30: Contributed 1/3 time between 16 years old and disabling condition. No minimum number of years required	No minimum contributory period required	No minimum contributory period required
	Regulatory base	
Average wage last 8 years of work	Average annual wage of 24 months within the last 7 years of work	Average wage last year of work
	Percentage applied to the regulatory base	
Partial Disability: 55% Individuals older than 55 with difficulties to find a job due to lack of education or characteristics of the social and labor market of the region where they live: 75% Total Disability: 100% Severe Disability: 100% + 50%		

sions are always exempted from income taxes. Furthermore, if the individual works while receiving the pension, there is a reduction in the earnings used to calculate the income tax of 2,800 euros per year if their degree of disability is low (between 33 percent and 65 percent), and of 6,200 euros per year if the disability level is higher (more than 65 percent), or if the disabled has reduced mobility. In addition, individuals receiving partial disability benefits can combine the benefits with earnings from work, as long as the type of job is compatible with his or her disability.

In general, to be granted a permanent disability benefit, the individual must come from a situation of sick leave (also called temporary disability/incapacity) and be observed as still presenting anatomic or functional reductions that decrease or cancel his or her capacity to work after following the prescribed medical treatment. The application can be started by the provincial office of the National Institute of Social Security (NISS), by the institutions that collaborate in the process (such as hospitals), or by the individual himself (in which case, more documentation is required). The Disabilities Evaluation Team evaluates the medical report and the professional background of the applicant and, on the basis of this analysis, the directors of the provincial office of the NISS decide on the type of disability pension granted (if any), the benefit level, and the date of the next medical check-up.

All permanent disability pensions are automatically converted to old-age pensions once the individual turns sixty-five.[4]

Sick Leave or Temporary Disability

Sick leave benefits are available to all workers who have contributed for at least 180 days during the five years prior to the onset of the illness in the case of common illness. If the origin of the sick leave is an accident (whether or not working accident) or an occupational illness, no minimum contributory period is required.

The amount of benefits also depends on the source of the disability. Individuals who have a disability because of a working accident or an occupational illness are entitled to receive 75 percent of the basic salary (including overtime pay) from the first day of leave. In the other cases, there is a waiting period of three days without benefits unless it is covered by a collective agreement and, from the fourth day until the twentieth, the employee receives 60 percent of the basic salary. After the twenty-first day, the compensation represents 75 percent of the basic salary. Social security is responsible for the payment from the first day in the case of a working accident or occupational illness and from day sixteen otherwise. In this last case, the employer pays from the fourth until the fifteenth day. It is not possible to combine sickness benefits with any kind of paid work, not even part-time work.

The duration of the benefits is for a maximum of twelve months with a potential extension of an additional six months when it is foreseeable that the beneficiary will become capable of working within this additional period of time. At the end of this period the individual is either considered nondisabled or can apply for permanent disability benefits. Certification and monitoring of sick leave is ensured by a doctor (GP) of the Public Health Services (or from a doctor from a Mutual Work Fund).

Major Health Conditions of Disability Benefits Recipients

Figure 3.2 shows the percentage distribution of total contributory and non-contributory disability recipients by health conditions, distinguishing among mental, musculoskeletal, and other health problems by three age-groups in 2004. First of all, it is important to note the importance of the musculoskeletal conditions because 50.3 percent of all the individuals receiving a disability benefit in Spain do so on the basis of a musculoskeletal health problem. This condition is more prevalent among the youngest group, as it represents 59.4 percent of the individuals aged twenty to thirty-four receiving disability benefits. Its importance slightly decreases with age (54.0 per-

4. Most of the outflows from the permanent disability system are due to death or automatic transfer to old-age pensions. Around 4 percent of the outflows are due to improvement of the health condition and 2.7 percent to a judicial process. Monthly outflows in 2010 were around 2,500 to 3,000.

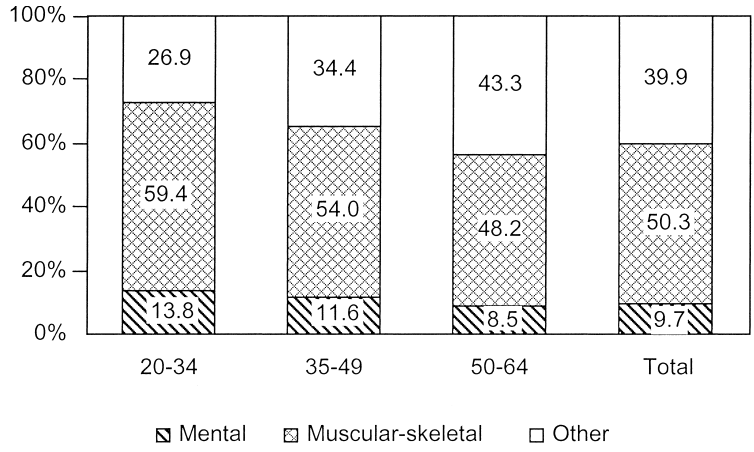

Fig. 3.2 Major health conditions of disability benefit recipients in Spain, 2004 (percentage distribution of total benefit recipients by age-group)

Source: Data from OECD (2007). Data refer only to a sample of people officially diagnosed with a disability. These data come from special tabulations provided by the University of Madrid, based on linked NISS and IMSERSO data.

cent of disability pensioners aged thirty-five to forty-nine and 48.2 percent of disability pensioners aged fifty to sixty-four).

The figure also shows that 9.7 percent of all the individuals in the disability rolls are diagnosed with a mental condition, the prevalence being higher among the youngest group. The share of claimants due to mental health conditions is among the smallest in Europe. For example, the share of inflows into disability due to mental health diseases was 34.3 percent in the United Kingdom in 2006, 41 percent in Switzerland in 2004, 43.4 percent in Denmark in 2005, and 25.4 percent in Norway in 2004 (OECD 2008).

The share of other health conditions varies across age-groups, as it represents from 26.9 percent of the pensioners aged twenty to thirty-four up to 43.3 percent of the pensioners aged fifty to sixty-four. Unfortunately, there is no evidence available of the distribution of the other illnesses. In order to shed some light on its likely distribution, figure 3.3 shows both the percentage of total cases and total days of sickness leave in Spain in 2005. The biggest category within the specific illnesses is diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue, which corresponds to the main category among the recipients of disability benefits. Next, diseases of the respiratory system have the second highest share among the number of cases, while mental health problems have the second highest share in the number of days. Surprisingly, the share associated with circulatory problems both in days and cases is smaller, and similar to the share of diseases of the digestive and the nervous systems.

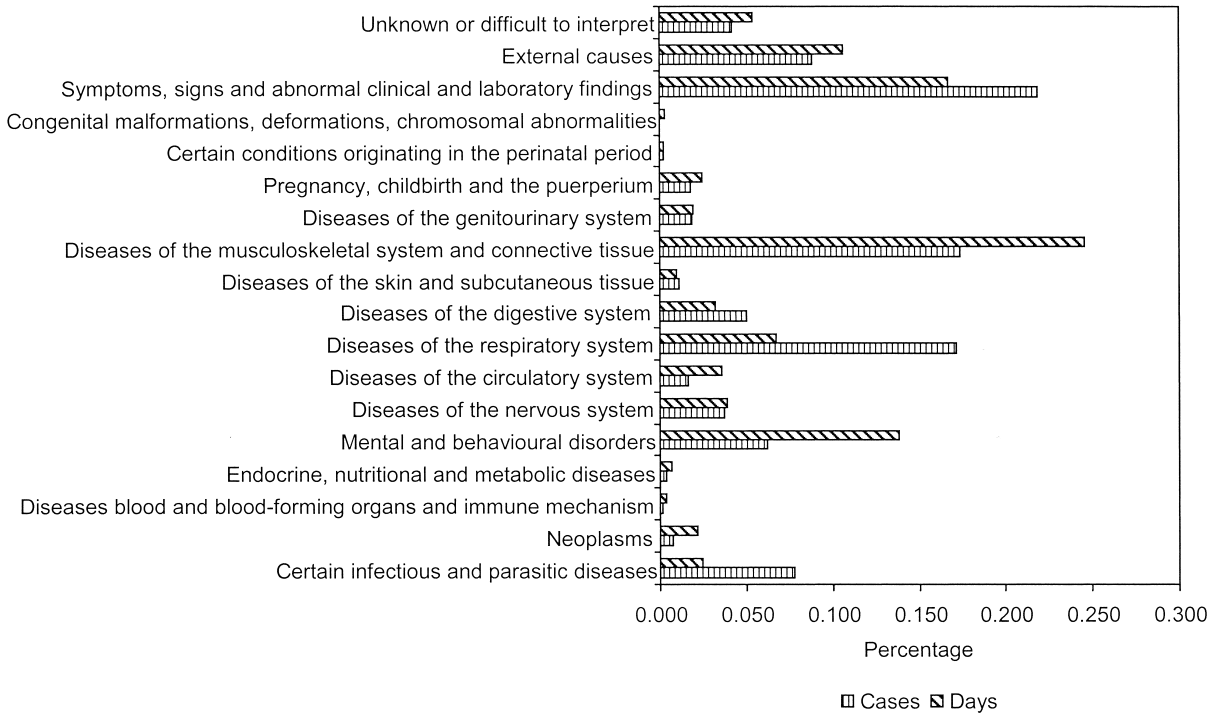

Fig. 3.3 Distribution by health problems of temporary disability or sickness leave in Spain in 2004
Source: Own elaboration using data from Oliva (2010).

Reforms of the Disability Insurance System

Permanent disability benefits were used extensively as an early retirement mechanism for workers in restructuring industries (such as shipbuilding, steel, mining, etc.) or as substitution for long-term unemployment subsidies in depressed regions during the late 1970s and 1980s (OECD 2001), which resulted in an increase in the inflows into the disability system and permanent disability benefits.

These events prompted a number of reforms introduced during the second half of 1980 and the beginning of 1990 that aimed at reversing these trends. The main objective of these reforms was to abolish the incentive effects to permanently leave the labor market before reaching the legal retirement age through the disability system.

Here we focus on some distinctive features of the main reforms since the creation of the National Institute of Social Security in 1979, while we refer the reader to table 3.2 for a summary of all the reforms in the disability system in Spain during this period.

The biggest reform of the disability system took place in 1997 and it included four main points:

1. Sickness benefits: stricter control of the sickness status by doctors of the social security system, reduction of the level of long-term sickness benefits, replacement of the old own job assessment by a more objective definition of the usual occupation of the individual.

Table 3.2 Main reforms of the disability system in Spain

1985	The terms of eligibility for disability pensions are tightened.
1990	Introduction of a means-tested non-contributory disability pensions for people aged 65+ and for disabled people aged 18+ who satisfy residency requirements.
1997	Stricter control of sickness status, reduction of long-term sickness benefit level, usual occupation replaces own job assessment.
	Permanent disability pensions individuals 65+ are converted to old-age pensions.
	New INSS disability assessment team to assess permanent disability instead of the GP.
	Entitlement to non-contributory benefits is not lost if working, and can be collected if losing the job.
1998	Possibility for doctors from INSS and mutual insurance companies to review health situation of beneficiaries.
2004–2005	Improve monitoring and control of sickness leave with new INSS tool.
	Possibility to combine non-contributory disability with some earnings.
2007	Minimum contributory period to access permanent disability is reduced for young workers.
	The formula to calculate the regulatory base of the benefit gets closer to the formula for old-age pensions.

2. The permanent disability pensions of individuals aged at least sixty-five are automatically transferred to the old-age pension system. This is just a change in the classification within the pension system.

3. Organizational reform, as all the permanent disability matters are transferred to the NISS. The permanent disability status was in the past assessed and granted by local GPs and this reform created a group of experts (the disability assessment team inside the NISS) that was in charge of assessing the person's ability to work on the basis of the available medical files and a special medical assessment done by one of the NISS doctors.

4. The individual does not lose entitlement to non-contributory disability benefits if he or she starts working. He or she will then still be entitled to receive non-contributory disability benefits if he or she loses his or her job.

Apart from this major reform in 1997, the 1998 budget law introduced the possibility for doctors from the NISS and mutual insurance companies to review the health situation and status of beneficiaries. However, in reality, very few individuals in the permanent disability system do effectively lose their benefits. In 2004 and 2005 monitoring the use of sick leave was tightened with the creation of a new subdepartment at the NISS and a new monitoring tool to reduce absence rates. In 2005, a general absence control was put in place for cases in which the absenteeism took longer than six months.

Finally, in 2007 the minimum contributory period to access permanent disability pensions was reduced for young workers in order to adjust for the current later entrance into the job market of younger workers. At the same time, the formula to calculate the regulatory base of the benefit was slightly modified: the regulatory base of permanent disability due to a common illness since then decreased by 50 percent if the individual had not contributed at least fifteen years, and it is lower the further the individual is from age sixty-five.

All these reforms have ensured the financial stability of the disability system in Spain as inflow rates have remained at stable levels and have not experienced any dramatic increases like in other countries.

3.2.2 Reforms in Other Social Security Programs in Spain

The extent to which reforms in the disability system are able to decrease the outflows from employment at older ages will depend on the evolution of other programs that can be used as alternative early retirement routes. Therefore, in this section we summarize other important reforms that have taken place in other social security programs in Spain. In particular, we focus on reforms in the unemployment and old-age systems. Table 3.3 provides a chronological summary of these reforms.[5]

5. A detailed exposition of the changes in the old-age pension system in Spain is provided in Boldrin, García-Gómez, and Jiménez-Martín (2010).

Table 3.3 **Main reforms since 1980 of the old-age and unemployment systems in Spain**

1984	Introduction of temporary contracts.
	Introduction of unemployment assistance (UA) benefits (non-contributory).
	Special provision for workers aged 55+; they can receive UA until retirement if comply with requirements to get old-age pension (except age requirement).
1985	Increased the minimum mandatory annual contributions from 8 to 15.
	The number of contributive years used to compute the pension increases from 2 to 8.
	Several early retirement schemes are introduced; partial retirement and special retirement at age 64.
1989	Special scheme of UA (permanent until retirement) extended to workers 52+.
1997	The number of contributive years used to compute the pension increases from 8 to 15 (progressively by 2001).
	The formula for the replacement rate is made less generous.
	The 8% penalty applied to early retirees between the ages of 60 and 65 is reduced to 7% for individuals with 40 or more contributory years.
	Introduction of a new permanent contract with reduced severance payments targeted to certain population groups.
	Lower social security contributions for employer's for the first two years if one of these new permanent contracts was signed.
2001	Broaden the 1997 labor market reform; extension of new permanent contract of 1997 to more population groups.
	Suppression or reduction of social security contributions to support permanent employment for certain groups of the population.
2002	Early retirement only from age 61.
	Impulse partial retirement; possible to combine it with work.
	Unemployed aged 61 can retire if contributed for 30 years and the previous 6 months registered in employment offices.
	Incentives to retire after age 65.
	Individuals aged 52+ can combine unemployment benefits with a job.
	Extension of group of individuals that can benefit from the integration contract (program to help integrate the unemployed into the labor market).
2007	15 effective contributory years are used to calculate the pension.
	Reduction from 8% to 7.5% of the per-year penalty applied to early retirees between 60 and 65 for individuals with 30 contributory years.
	Broaden incentives to stay employed after age 65.
	Increase contributions made by the social security administration for individuals receiving the special scheme of UA for 52+ (they will receive a higher old-age pension when retiring).

In 1984, both temporary contracts and non-contributory unemployment benefits (also called unemployment assistance benefits) were introduced. In addition, a special provision was established for workers aged over fifty-five who were allowed to receive unemployment assistance benefits until retirement age. To receive these benefits, individuals had to satisfy the entitlement requirements of the retirement pension except for the age. The subsidy paid 75 percent of the minimum wage until reaching the age to be transferred to an old-age pension. Furthermore, the years spent unemployed under

this special scheme were counted as contributive years toward an old-age pension.

In the following year, 1985, an old-age pension reform was passed that increased the minimum mandatory annual contribution to old-age pensions from eight to fifteen years, it also increased the number of years of contribution used to calculate the pension from two to eight years, and introduced several early retirement programs linked to hiring a new worker such as the partial retirement program that allowed part-time retirement at sixty-three combining part-time wages and old-age pension, and special retirement at sixty-four if the employer hired a registered unemployed.[6]

In 1989 the special provision of unemployment assistance benefits until the retirement age of sixty-five for individuals aged at least fifty-five was extended to individuals aged fifty-two, thus increasing the incentives of older workers to leave the labor market at younger ages. The decrease in the labor force participation rates of older individuals observed in Spain during the 1980s and the early 1990s prompted the government to adopt a change in the strategy, and to start a series of reforms to reverse these negative labor market trends. Therefore, the reforms introduced during the 1990s had the objective of keeping older workers active in the labor market for longer.

There have been two main reforms since the mid-1990s, one in 1997 and the other in 2002. In 1997 the number of contributory years used to compute the benefit base was progressively increased from eight to fifteen years and the formula to calculate the replacement rate was also made less generous.[7] On the other hand, the 8 percent penalty applied to early retirees between the ages of sixty and sixty-five was reduced to 7 percent for individuals with forty or more years of contributions at the time of early retirement. Some changes in the incentives on the demand side were also introduced in 1997 to reduce the unemployment rates and the share of temporary contracts among the disadvantaged groups, including individuals aged forty-five or older who were either unemployed or had a temporary contract.

In 2002 changes in both the old-age and the unemployment systems were introduced. Before 2002, only individuals who had contributed to the system earlier than 1967 could benefit from early retirement at sixty, while the rest had to wait until the normal retirement age of sixty-five. In 2002, earlier retirement at age sixty-one was made available for the rest of the population. At the same time, there was an impulse to the partial and flexible retirement

6. The change in the minimum mandatory annual contributions to have access to an old-age pension affected all individuals since 1985, but the number of years used to calculate the pension was progressively increased: during the first year, the last seventy months were used, seventy-two months in the second year, and eighty-four in the third year.

7. In 1997 the last 108 months are included, the last 120 months in 1998, the last 132 months in 1999, the last 144 months in 2000, the last 156 months in 2001, and the last 180 months from 2002 onward.

schemes with the possibility of combining income from work with old-age benefits, and the introduction of incentives for individuals to retire after the legal retirement age of sixty-five (an additional 2 percent per additional year of contribution beyond the age of sixty-five for workers with at least thirty-five years of contributions on top of the 100 percent applied to the regulatory base). At the same time, the possibility to access retirement was extended to individuals who are unemployed for reasons beyond their willingness at sixty-one, and who have contributed for at least thirty years and have been registered in the employment office for the previous six months.

On the other hand, the reform in 2002 opened up the possibility for individuals aged fifty-two or more who are receiving unemployment benefits to combine the receipt of these benefits with earnings, as they could receive 50 percent of normal benefits and the employer would pay the remaining quantity in wages. In addition, it extended the program that helps to integrate unemployed persons in the labor market to all individuals aged at least forty-five who have been unemployed for one month and to people with disabilities, among others.[8]

Last, in 2007 the incentives to retire later than age sixty-five were further increased by providing an additional 3 percent, instead of the 2 percent agreed to in 2002. Moreover, in order to have access to an old-age pension the individual must have contributed for at least two out of the last fifteen years, and the proportional part related to the extra monthly salaries would not be taken into account when computing the number of contributed years. On the other hand, the 8 percent penalty applied to early retirees between the ages of sixty and sixty-five was reduced to 6 to 7.5 percent, depending on the number of years contributed, for those individuals with thirty years of contributions. In addition, the contributions for unemployed workers older than fifty-two were increased so that they would receive a higher old-age pension when retiring.

3.3 Historical Data

Mandatory insurance for job-related accidents was introduced in Spain in 1900 through a bill that also authorized the creation of some funds, for public employees only, for paying disability and retirement pensions. In 1919, mandatory retirement insurance (*Retiro Obrero Obligatorio*) was introduced for private-sector employees aged sixteen to sixty-five whose total annual salary was below a certain threshold. In 1926, a universal pension system for public employees (*Régimen de Clases Pasivas*) was established, which still exists under the same name. By the late 1930s, most Spanish employees were covered by some minimal government mandatory retirement insurance program.

8. This program is called Contrato de Integración (Integration Contract).

Since the introduction of the first insurance programs, the life expectancy of the Spanish population has experienced an outstanding improvement; while the life expectancy at birth in 1930 was of 51.13 years for females and 47.46 for males, it reached 71.65 (females) and 66.66 (males) years in 1960, and it still increased up to 84.07 (females) and 77.58 (males) years by 2006 (Human Mortality Database 2010). The labor force participation of older workers has not always gone hand in hand with the evolution of life expectancy. In this section we provide some descriptive evidence of the trends in mortality, health, and labor force participation in order to unravel the existence of any common trends during the last thirty years.

3.3.1 Mortality

The increase in life expectancy at birth has also been translated into increases in life expectancy at age sixty-five. In 1960 women aged sixty-five expected to live 15.3 years more while the expectation was 21.9 in 2008. Similar improvements are also observed among men (from 13.1 in 1960 to 18.0 in 2008) (OECD Health Data 2010). Moreover, the higher reductions in mortality rates achieved since 1960 are concentrated among the population aged sixty-five and older as figure 3.4 shows. Figure 3.5 shows how much steeper the decrease in mortality was among individuals aged sixty-five compared to individuals aged sixty or fifty-five.

Figure 3.4 also shows that the decrease in mortality rates observed from 1960 to 1985 is similar to the decrease from 1985 to 2006. In addition, it shows that males' mortality rates evolve after female's mortality rates, as the curve for men in 1985 overlaps the curve for women in 1960, and mortality rates of men in 2006 are similar to mortality rates of women in 1985. Therefore, one would expect further improvements in life expectancy and mortality rates, at least for men, in the coming years.

One of the conclusions to be derived from figure 3.5 is that individuals in later years reach the mortality rates of previous cohorts at older ages. For example, women aged fifty-five in 1960 had the same mortality risk as women aged sixty in 1980 and women aged sixty-five in 2005 (0.006). If one understands by old age the later part of life with some reference to deterioration, then one would probably agree that the experience of a given high mortality rate should be part of the elements to be considered when classifying a group of individuals as elderly. As recently pointed out by Shoven (2010), this raises some challenges to compare individuals through time.[9] For example, if individuals were classified as elderly in the 1960s at age sixty-five, it seems somehow surprising that they were still classified as elderly in 2000 when their mortality rates were like the ones of individuals aged sixty in 1960 among men, and even lower among women. This suggests

9. As Shoven (2010) acknowledges, similar ideas were proposed earlier by others. See, for example, Fuchs (1984) or Cutler and Sheiner (2001).

that age-since-birth is possibly not the best measure to compare the aging of populations across time, and it poses some questions about its convenience to set the rules of the social security system.

Figure 3.6 shows how individuals of different ages-since-birth could be considered to have the same age if measured by the same mortality rate. It plots the ages at which cohorts in different years face the mortality risk as

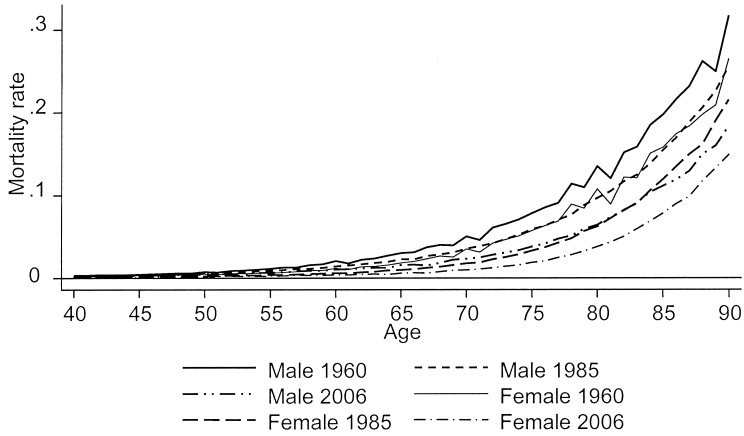

Fig. 3.4 Mortality rates by gender and age (1960, 1985, and 2006)
Source: Own elaboration from data from the Human Mortality Database.

Fig. 3.5 Mortality rates at different ages by year
Source: Own elaboration from data from the Human Mortality Database.

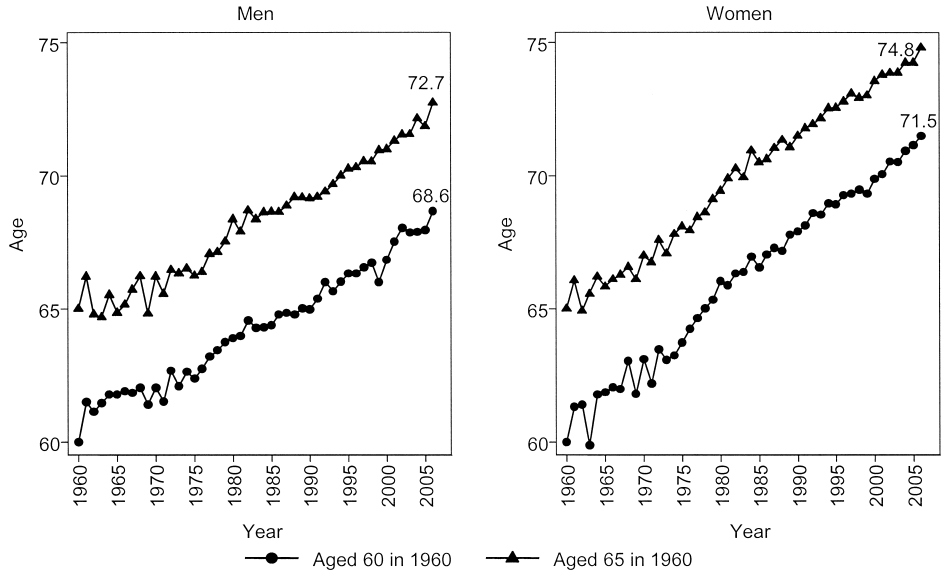

Fig. 3.6 Ages of equal mortality rate in Spain in 1960 and age at which 1960 mortality rates are reached in Spain

Source: Own elaboration from data from the Human Mortality Database.

sixty and sixty-five-year-olds in 1960. It can be seen that a man aged 72.7 (68.6) in 2006 had the same mortality risk as a sixty-five- (sixty)-year-old in 1960. Similarly, a woman aged 74.8 (71.5) had the same mortality risk as a sixty-five- (sixty)-year-old in 1960. Then, a mortality-based age system would suggest that a 74.8-year-old woman in 2006 and a sixty-five-year-old woman in 1960 were the same age. Similarly, a 72.7-year-old man in 2006 would have the same age as a sixty-five-year-old man in 1960.

3.3.2 Health Trends

We have previously shown that there have been striking improvements in age-specific mortality rates over the last fifty years in Spain across individuals aged over fifty-five. The extent to which these changes translate into higher labor capacity depends on the evolution of ill health. Thus, further reduction in the age-specific mortality rates will only translate in an increase in the population able to work at older ages if the average age of the onset of a work-related disability increases. This would certainly be the case if the compression of morbidity hypothesis (Fries 1980) was satisfied.[10] However,

10. Fries' (1980) compression of morbidity states that the burden of lifetime illnesses will be concentrated in a shorter period before death as the age of functional impairment due to ill health will be increased.

the international literature is inconclusive in this respect (Mackenbach et al. 2008). For example, the evidence provided by several studies that analyze disability trends in the United States from the 1980s and 1990s suggests that while the prevalence rates for individuals older than sixty have decreased, the rates for the younger age groups have seen no improvement or even a deterioration (for example, Crimmins, Reynolds, and Saito 1999; Lakdawalla, Bhattacharya, and Goldman 2004; Bhattacharya, Choudhry, and Lakdawalla 2008).

In order to shed some light on the past trends of health status in Spain, we use data from the 1987, 1993, 1995, 1997, 2001, 2003, and 2006 editions of the Spanish Health Survey (ENS) available from the Ministry of Health and Social Policy (www.msps.es). These are nationwide cross-sectional surveys that collect information on health and socioeconomic characteristics of individuals. The surveys contain separate samples for adults (aged sixteen and older) and children. The following figures are based on the adult samples. We use weighting factors to compute the different averages.

Figure 3.7 shows the evolution of self-assessed health status for men and women in the age-groups forty to forty-four, fifty to fifty-four, and sixty to sixty-four based on the question "how would you rate your health during the last twelve months?". We show the percentage of each age and gender group that report being in good or very good health (good at least) and the percentage that report being in fair, good, or very good health (fair

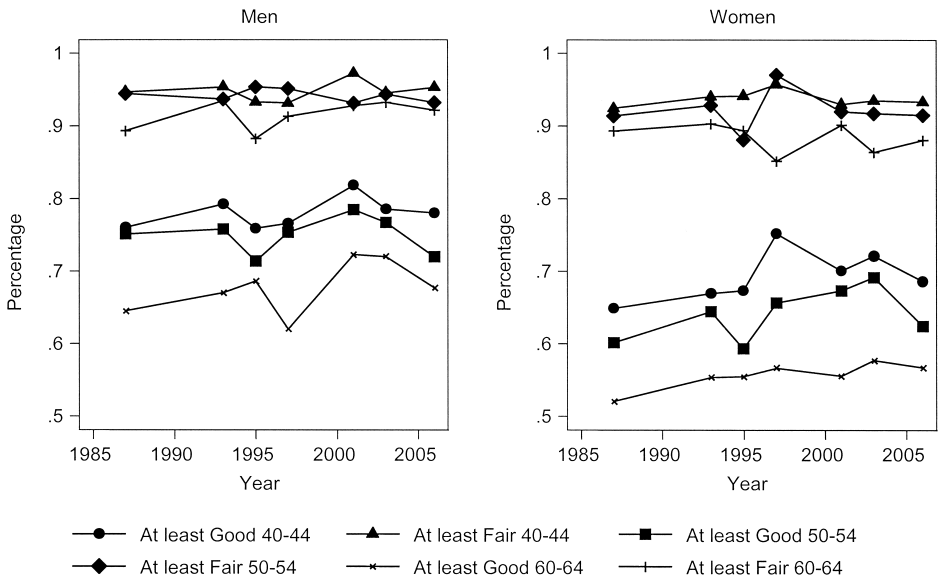

Fig. 3.7 Evolution of self-assessed health

Source: Own elaboration from data from the Spanish Health Surveys.

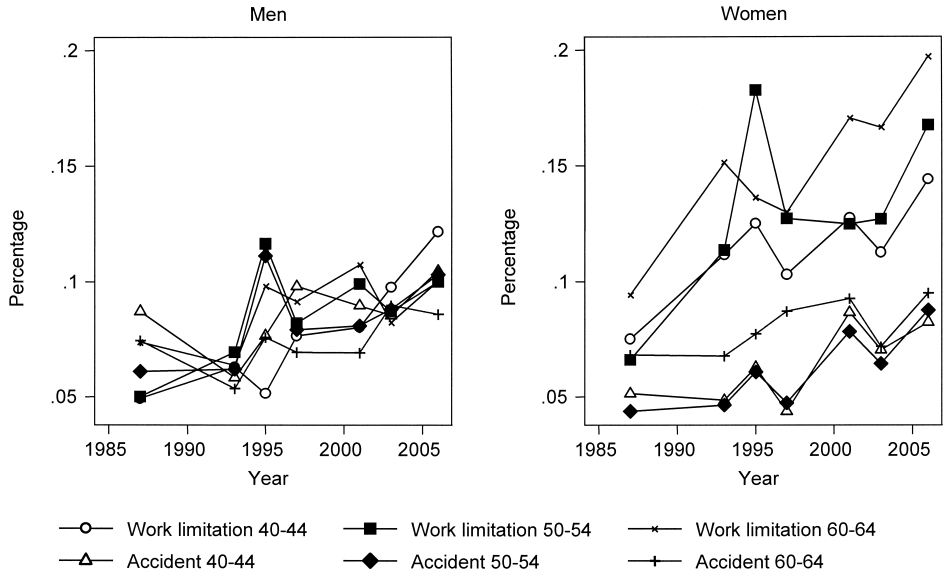

Fig. 3.8 Evolution of health limitations
Source: Own elaboration from data from the Spanish Health Surveys.

at least). We cannot conclude that there has been an overall improvement in self-reported health, neither a worsening, although there has been an increase in the percentage of women in at least good health among the three age-groups considered. This improvement in self-assessed health among women is not found when looking at the percentage of women in at least fair health. In addition, older individuals do not report being in worse health on average than the younger counterparts if we compare the percentage who report being in at least fair health. The age-gradient is observed with the other dichotomization used (at least in good health). This could suggest that reporting heterogeneity among age-groups is stronger for reporting being in fair health, as one would expect a clear age-gradient in average health status.

In order to hypothesize what could have happened with the percentage of individuals with a health impairment to work, information which is not available for Spain, figure 3.8 depicts the percentage of individuals with a work limitation in the two weeks prior to the survey[11] and the percentage of individuals who had any type of accident during the last year. First, the percentage of individuals with a work limitation or who have experienced an accident has increased for all age-groups for both sexes during the last twenty years. On the other hand, while there is a clear age pattern among

11. It is based on the question: "Have you had to reduce your principal activity (work, study, housework) at least half a day due to a health discomfort or symptom in the last two weeks?"

women, that is, a higher prevalence of both work limitations and accidents among women aged sixty to sixty-four compared to women in the other two age groups, the evidence among men is more mixed.

Figure 3.9 shows trends in the prevalence of several diagnosed chronic illnesses: cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems, and asthma or bronchitis (respiratory problems). The data show that the prevalence of cholesterol and high blood pressure have increased both for men and women across all age groups. Moreover, the reported prevalence of men and women in their forties at the end of the time period is similar to the one reported by individuals aged fifty twenty years ago. On the other hand, one should be cautious before concluding from these increasing trends that the

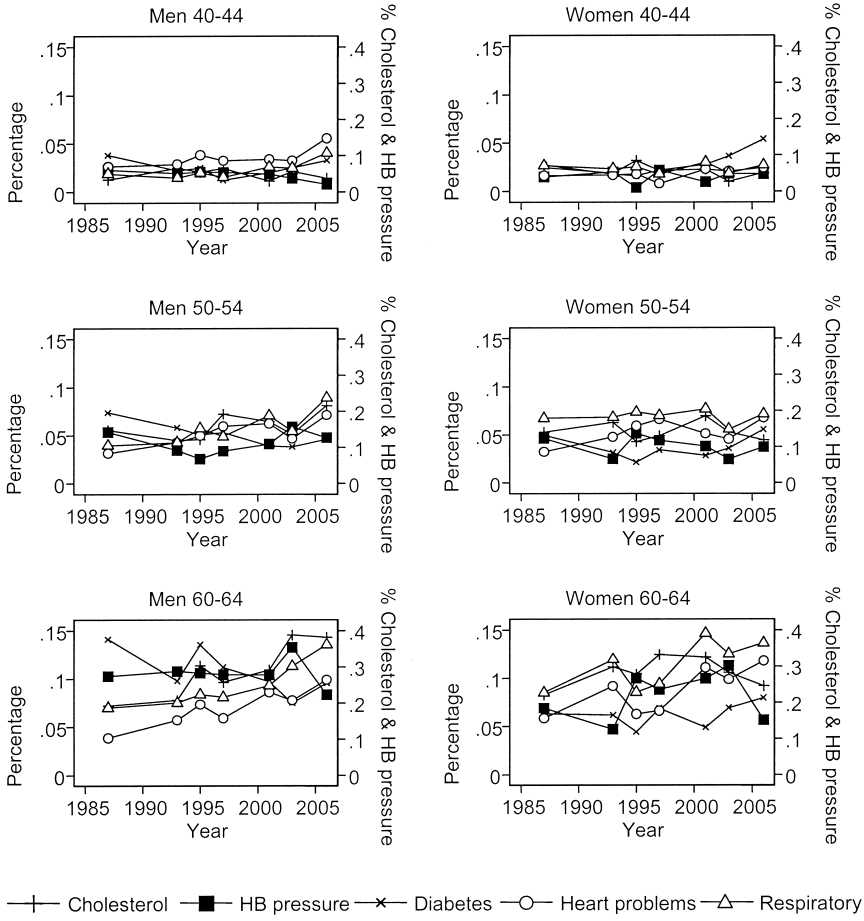

Fig. 3.9 Prevalence of chronic illnesses

Source: Own elaboration from data from the Spanish Health Surveys.

prevalence of these two health problems has increased over the observed period as this could be due to a better awareness of the population, which would translate in higher self-reported rates. Johnston, Propper, and Shields (2009) find that, while the rates of self-reported hypertension in England were 5.5 percent in 1998 and 8.5 percent in 2003, hypertension measured by a nurse on the same sample decreased from 37 percent to 31 percent over the same period. Unfortunately, this objective information is not available for Spain through time.

On the other hand, the reported prevalence of diabetes, heart, and respiratory problems remained stable through time with few exceptions: the prevalence of diabetes has increased among men older than fifty, the prevalence of bronchitis or asthma has increased among the youngest and the oldest group of women, and women in their sixties now suffer more heart problems.

Figure 3.10 shows the prevalence of overweight and/or obesity in the last twenty years, which are known to be risk factors that could increase the burden of disease in the future. The data show that both the percentage of men with overweight and with obesity have increased during the last twenty years among all age-groups, with the increase in obesity rates being steeper than the increase in overweight rates. In 2006 almost 80 percent of men older than fifty were either overweight or obese compared to 60 percent in 1987.

The percentage of women who are overweight is lower compared to men, which is consistent with the evidence found by Andreyeva, Michaud, and van Soest (2007) using data from the 2004 sample of the Survey of Health and Retirement in Europe. On the other hand, little has changed in the

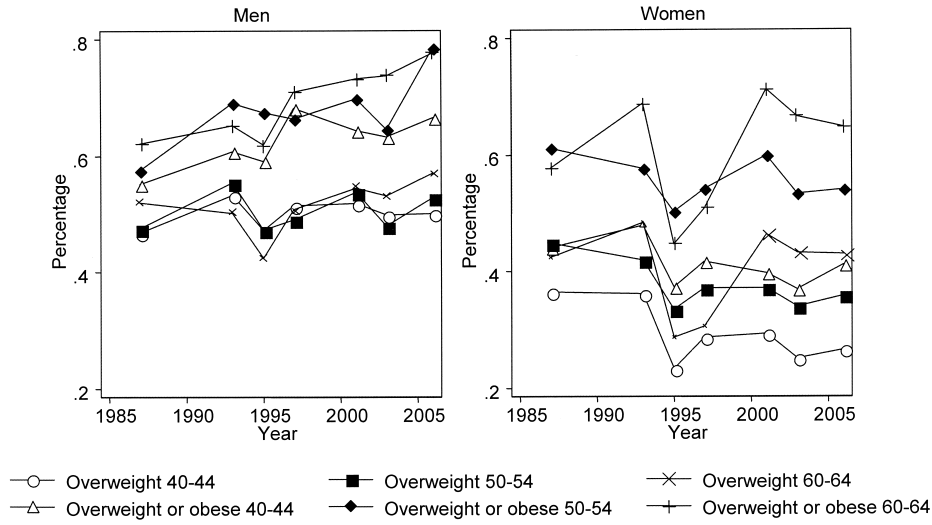

Fig. 3.10 Prevalence of overweight and/or obesity

Source: Own elaboration from data from the Spanish Health Surveys.

weight distribution of women aged forty to fifty-five during the last twenty years. Finally, the prevalence of reported obesity among women in their sixties has increased by 10 percentage points, while the percentage that report being overweight has remained around 45 percent.

In order to complement the self-reported descriptive evidence, we provide some information on the number of hospitalizations by type of diseases using administrative data from 1998 to 2007 from the Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy. We present data for the same three age-groups, but unfortunately we are not able to show figures for men and women separately.

Figure 3.11 shows the number of hospitalizations for each 10,000 inhabi-

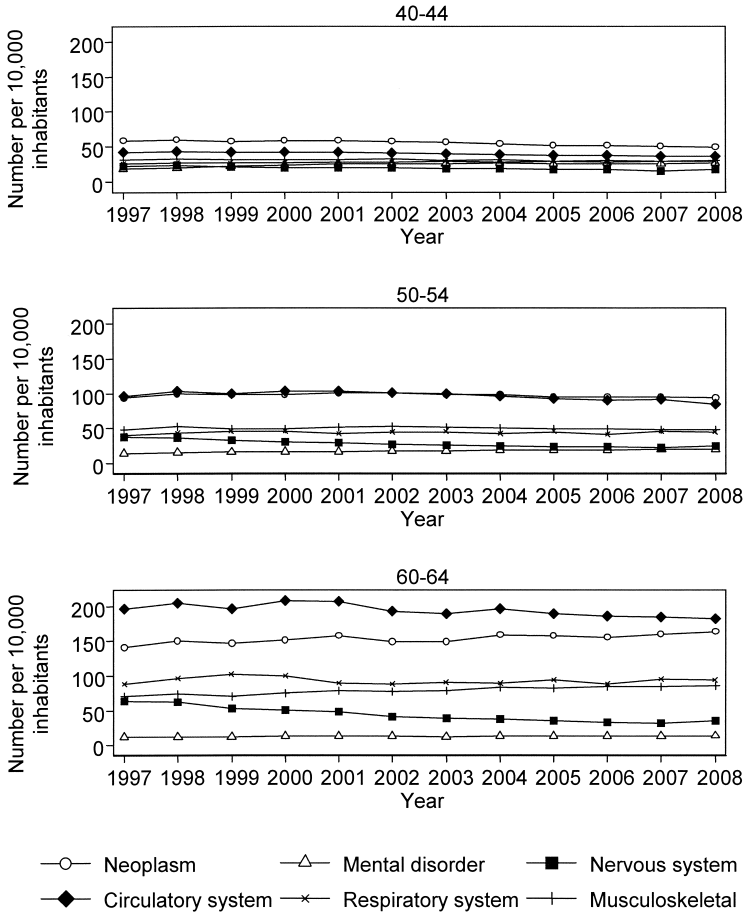

Fig. 3.11 Number of hospitalizations per 10,000 inhabitants by major health conditions

Source: Own elaboration from administrative data from the Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy.

tants by age-group and by major condition. The data show that neoplasm and circulatory diseases are the two main groups of health conditions leading to a hospitalization among all age-groups. Neoplasm represents the first cause among individuals younger than fifty in the overall period, but its incidence has decreased since 2000. On the other hand, while circulatory problems were the main cause of hospitalization among individuals aged fifty to fifty-four ten years ago, it currently ranks second after neoplasm due to a decrease in the number of hospitalizations due to circulatory problems in the last decade. There is a decreasing trend in the number of hospitalizations due to health problems related to the circulatory system among the older age-group, which remains the first cause, but simultaneously there is an increase in the number of hospitalizations due to a neoplasm.

It is also worth mentioning the observed increase in the number of hospitalizations due to mental problems, it being steeper among the youngest age-group. The number of hospitalizations related to respiratory health problems has also increased among the younger group, while a decreasing trend is found for the rest of the health problems considered.

3.3.3 Mortality and Health

In the previous two sections we have shown that, while age-specific mortality rates have decreased through time, the evidence on the health status of the individuals aged forty to sixty-five is less conclusive, and it depends on the health measure used. Here we explore further the relationship of mortality with the other health variables.

Figure 3.12 (men) and 3.13 (women) compare mortality equivalent ages versus SAH equivalent ages. We plot the average for each age-interval at the

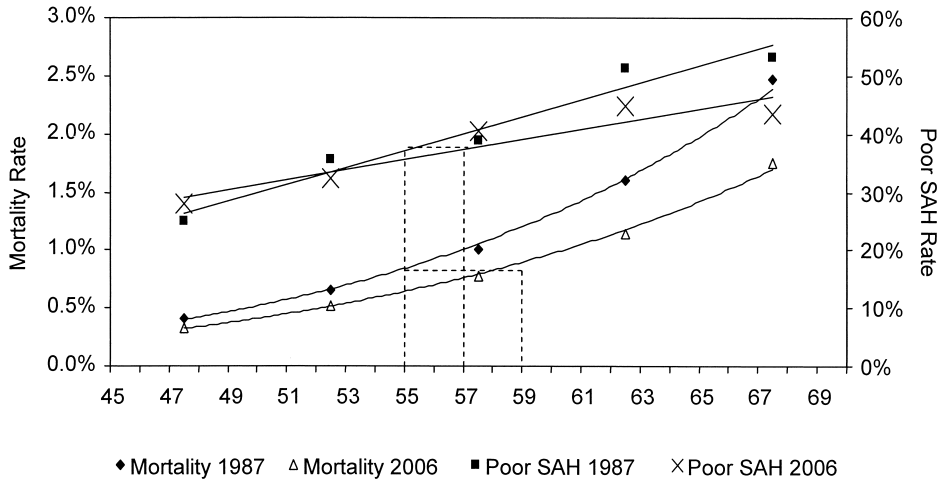

Fig. 3.12 Mortality and self-assessed health 1987 and 2006, men

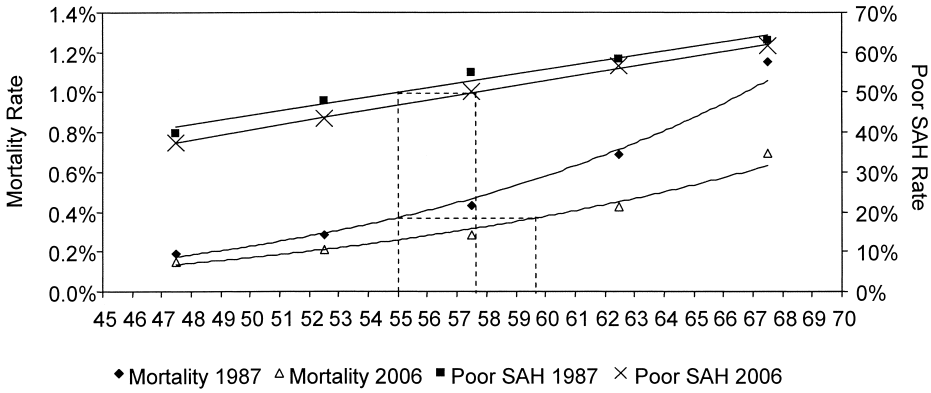

Fig. 3.13 Mortality and self-assessed health 1987 and 2006, women

midpoint of the intervals and then we fit a linear functional form for SAH and a power function for mortality. First, based on these rough estimates, figure 3.12 shows that men aged 58.7 in 2006 had the same mortality rates as men aged fifty-five in 1987, a difference of almost four years.

The difference is about one year higher for women (figure 3.13) as women aged 59.9 in 2006 had the same mortality rates as women aged fifty-five in 1987. Second, both figures also show the proportion of individuals who reported that their health status was less than good in 1987 and 2006. The gain in SAH over this period is smaller than the gain in mortality as men aged 56.9 in 2006 reported similar SAH as men aged fifty-five in 1987 and women aged 57.7 in 2006 had almost the same SAH as women aged fifty-five in 1987. Thus, figures 3.12 and 3.13 show that the large gains in mortality rates have not been translated into better SAH.

To reinforce the previous evidence, figures 3.14 (men) and 3.15 (women) depict trends in mortality, self-reported health status, and self-reported work limitations as defined earlier. On the one hand, the percentage of individuals who reported that their health status was less than good in the last year slightly decreased over the last twenty years, while the percentage who reported having to cut their principal activities at least half a day because of a health-related problem increased during the same period.

3.3.4 Trends in Disability and Labor Force Participation

In this section we provide some graphical evidence on labor force trends by age-groups and gender. Data on employment, unemployment, and disability come from the *Encuesta de Población Activa* (EPA). The EPA is a rotating quarterly survey carried out by the Spanish National Statistical Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística* [INE]). The planned sample size consists of about 64,000 households with approximately 150,000 adult individuals. Although the survey has been conducted since 1964, publicly released cross-

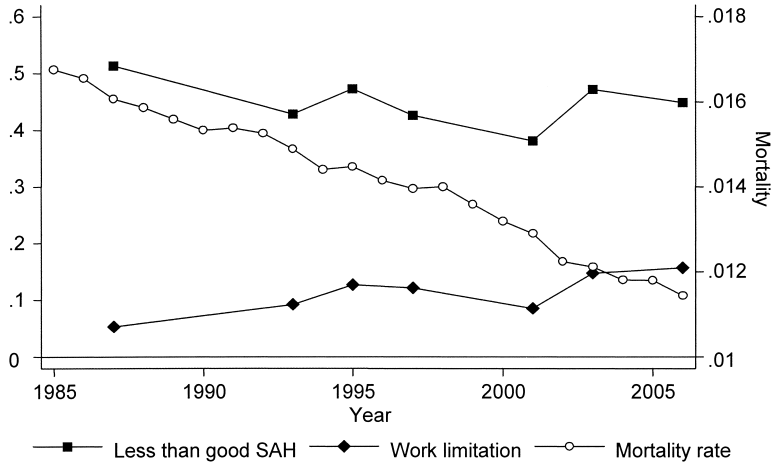

Fig. 3.14 Mortality rate of men, percent in less than good health and with work limitations, aged sixty to sixty-four

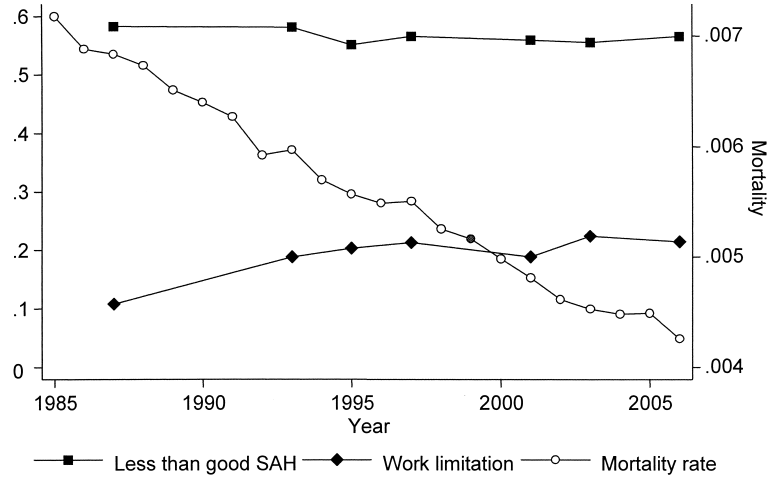

Fig. 3.15 Mortality rate of women, percent in less than good health and with work limitations, aged sixty to sixty-four

sectional files are available only from 1977. The 1977 questionnaire was modified in 1987 (when a set of retrospective questions were introduced), in the first quarter of 1992, in 1999, and 2004. The EPA provides fairly detailed information on labor force status and education and family background variables but, like most of the other European-style labor force surveys, no information on health is provided. The reference period for most questions is the week before the interview.

Figure 3.16 shows the evolution of employment rates by age-group for men and women separately. The data show that there has been an important increase in female labor force participation since the mid-1980s, although employment rates of women in their forties are still far below the rates of their male counterparts (around 20 percentage points difference). The increase in female participation also translates in an increase in unemployment rates (figure 3.17). The unemployment rates of males and females have moved in parallel since the beginning of the nineties. In addition, the data show that there are no differences across age-groups among men, except for

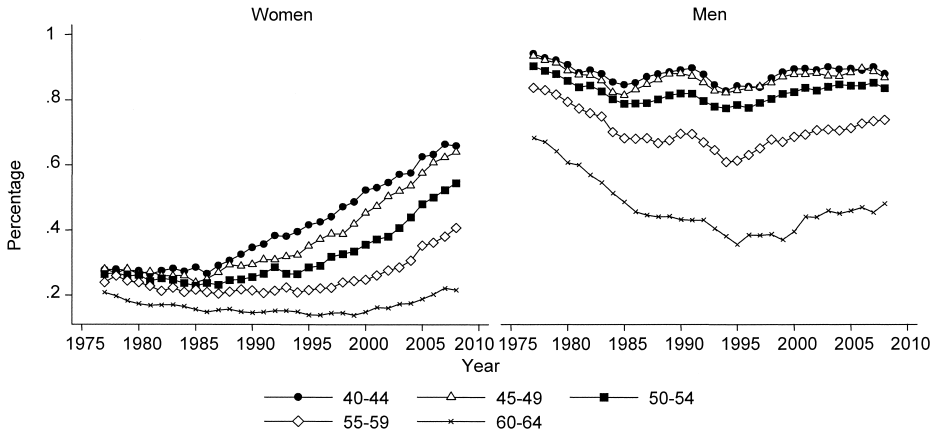

Fig. 3.16 Employment by age-group, men and women
Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

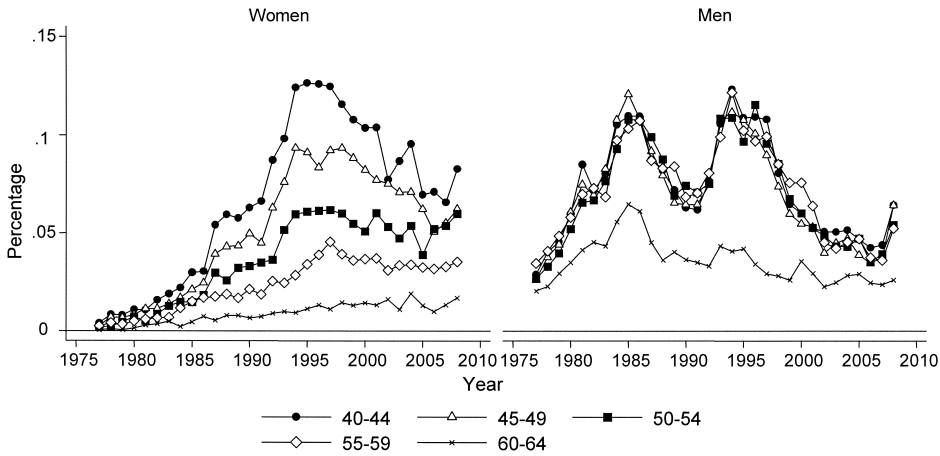

Fig. 3.17 Unemployment by age-group, men and women
Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

the lower unemployment rate of the older group resulting from lower labor force participation as also suggested by the employment rate.

In the same spirit, figures 3.18 (men) and 3.20 (women) show the evolution of the percentage of individuals who classify themselves as permanently disabled when asked about their labor status in the previous week using data from EPA. It should be noticed that there was a change in the survey in 1987 that affects the numbers shown. Before 1987 there is information available about one state, while after 1987 individuals can be seen in up to three different states. This implies that some individuals could report being permanently disabled and doing some volunteer or paid work, for example. We have decided to count an individual as permanently disabled if he reports being so in any of the three possible states. This results in an increase in the percentage of disabled individuals after 1987, the discontinuity being higher among the older age groups.

The data show that, for both male and female, the percentage of permanently disabled individuals is higher among the older age-groups, the difference across age-groups being larger among males. Figure 3.19 shows the different enrollment rates into DI for men by age for the last year of data available. The data show that the percentage of men collecting disability benefits increases with age from less than 4 percent among men aged forty to over 12 percent among men aged sixty-four.

The share of women who can claim a contributory disability pension has increased through time with their labor market participation. This could explain the lower differences across age-groups among women, as well as the increase in the percentage of women into DI, while the share among men remains stable, except for the group aged over fifty-five.

Figures 3.18 and 3.20 illustrate the years in which the two main reforms took place (1997 and 2002). We will investigate their effects in a bit more

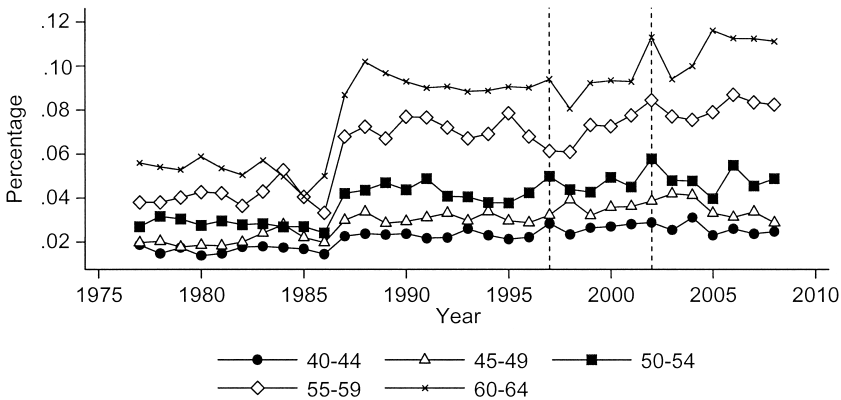

Fig. 3.18 Evolution of disability rates by age-group, men

Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

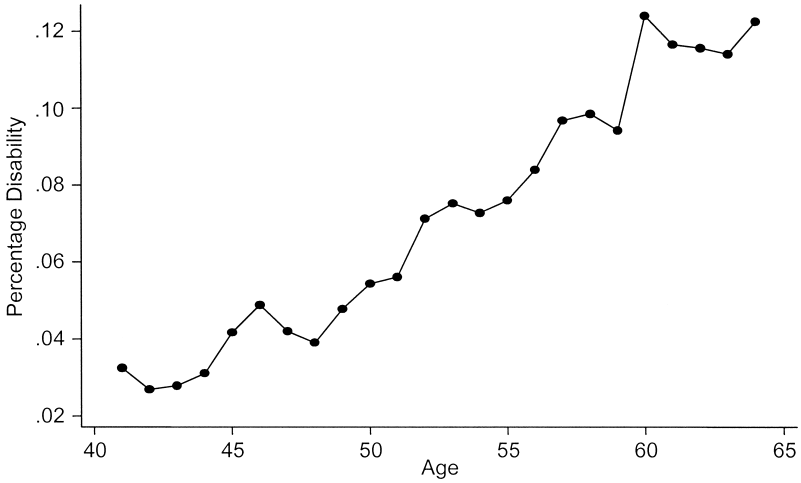

Fig. 3.19 Proportion of men collecting disability benefits at different ages
Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

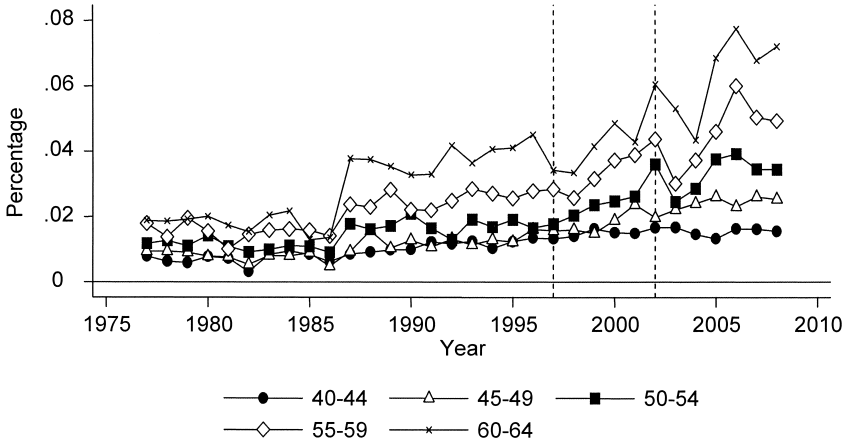

Fig. 3.20 Evolution of disability rates by age-group, women
Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

detail later. However, it is now worth mentioning that neither the trends nor the levels seem to have changed after the implementation of these reforms.

3.3.5 Disability, Health, and Mortality

We combine in figures 3.21, 3.22, and 3.23 the information on permanent disability shown in the previous section with the health and mortality information shown previously for three age-groups: (a) forty to forty-four (figure 3.21), (b) fifty to fifty-four (figure 3.22), and (c) sixty to sixty-four

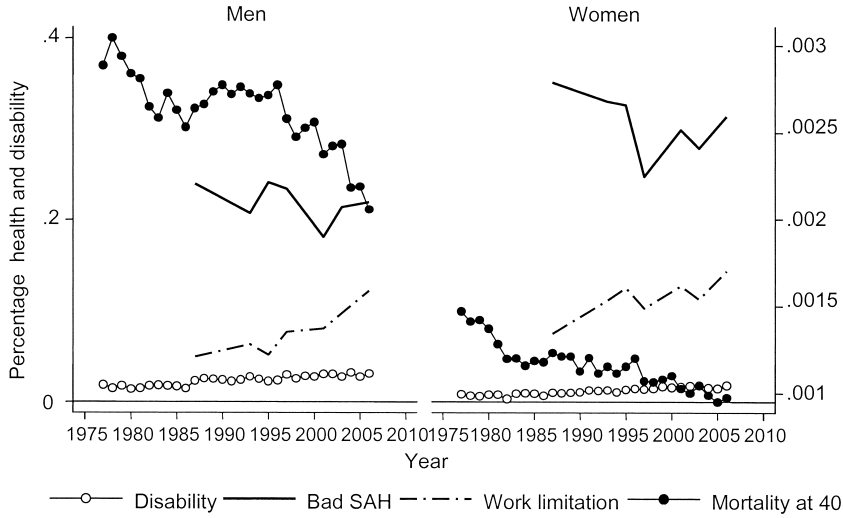

Fig. 3.21 Disability, self-reported health, work limitation, and mortality at age forty, individuals aged forty to forty-four, by gender

Note: The *x*-axis is common for the graph of men and women. The axis on the left is for the variables disability, bad self-assessed health, and work limitation, while the axis on the right refers to the mortality rate.

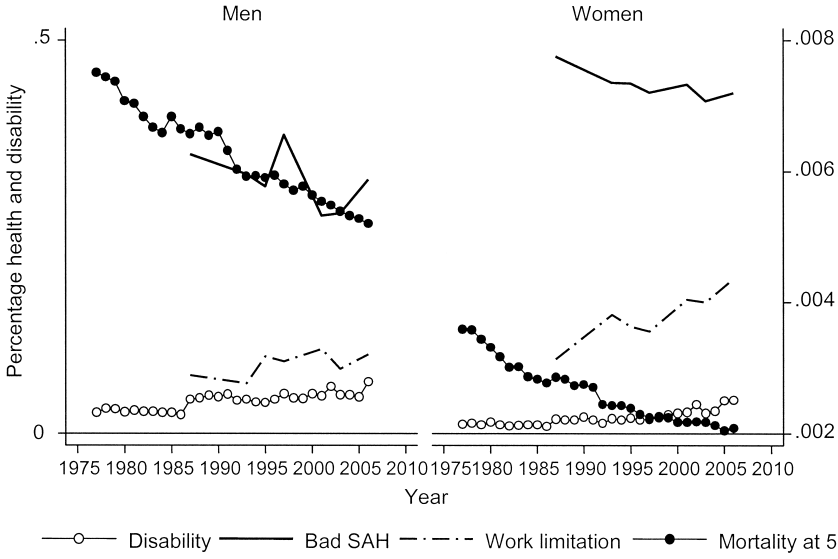

Fig. 3.22 Disability, self-reported health, work limitation, and mortality at age fifty, individuals aged fifty to fifty-four, by gender

Note: See figure 3.21 note.

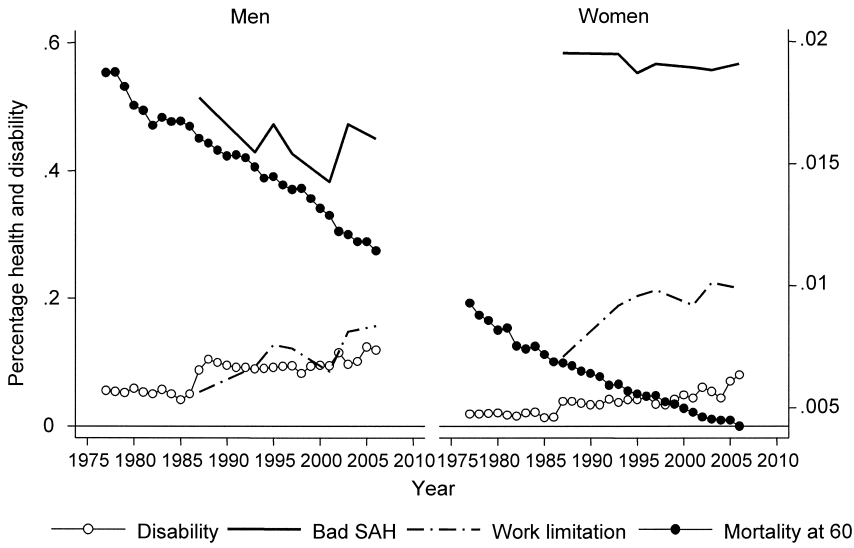

Fig. 3.23 Disability, self-reported health, work limitation, and mortality at age sixty, individuals aged sixty to sixty-four, by gender

Note: See figure 3.21 note.

(figure 3.23). The data show that the trend of the percentage of individuals into disability does not follow any of the other health measures. So, despite the reduction in age-specific mortality, the percentage of individuals into disability remains almost constant. As argued earlier, we would expect a reduction of disability coming from an improvement in mortality only if the onset of the disabling condition happens later in life. Otherwise, the share of the population at a given age in ill health could even increase. Unfortunately, we cannot take any conclusive evidence on this regard with the analysis shown here. On the other hand, the stability of the share into disability during the last twenty years suggests that any changes that could have happened in the population's health have not affected the inflows into disability. Thus, it is likely that other dimensions of the program are more important in explaining its evolution. We focus on the role of the different social security reforms in section 3.4.

3.3.6 Health, Mortality, and Labor Force Participation

The data in figure 3.16 showed that employment rates of men in their late fifties and early sixties in Spain decreased during the 1980s until the mid-1990s and, although they have slightly increased in the last decade, they are far from the rates observed in 1980. In this section we combine data on health status and labor force participation. We do not show figures for

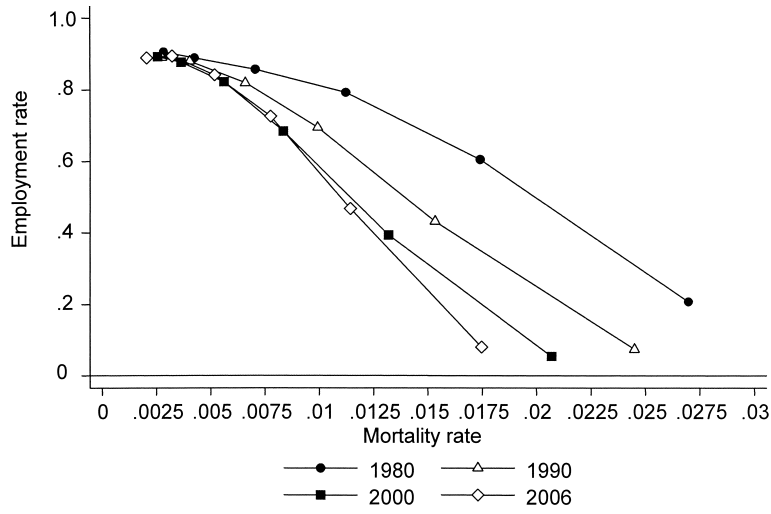

Fig. 3.24 Evolution of the employment rate by mortality rate, men

women as the continuous increase in female participation rates masks any relationship.

We follow Shoven (2010) and look at a different definition of age based on mortality risks and compare the employment rates of individuals at the same mortality risk in different points in time. Then, if we assume that individuals with the same mortality risk experience the same health status, we can evaluate how participation rates change across time for individuals with the same health status. Figure 3.24 illustrates the employment rate in 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2006 (the last year for which both employment and mortality data are available) for each mortality risk for men.[12]

The conclusions we draw from figure 3.24 are somehow different from the ones drawn before. First of all, we find that participation rates have not increased among the older group of individuals, defined as individuals with higher mortality, in the later years. On the other hand, the employment rates have decreased, not for all the individuals, but among the ones whose mortality risk is at least 0.5 percent. Consistently, the decrease through time is higher among the groups with higher mortality risks to the extent that the employment rates of groups whose mortality risk is at least 0.01 have been halved. Looking at the data in another way, the mortality rate when 60 percent of men were employed was 0.0175 percent in 1980, but it was only 0.01 percent twenty-six years later. Therefore, men in 2006 had to be much

12. We combine the previously presented information on employment rates from the EPA with information on mortality rates from the Human Mortality Database for individuals aged forty to sixty-nine. The rates refer to five age-group averages for both measures.

healthier (by the mortality measure) in 2006 that they were in 1980 for the employment rate to be 60 percent.

As argued earlier, individuals with the same mortality risk do not necessarily face the same health status, as health care technology improvements could have helped to decrease the age-specific mortality risks, but at the cost of a higher prevalence of disability. In order to shed some light on this, we focus on the evolution of employment rates using both information on self-assessed health and the existence of a work limitation using ENS data.

Figure 3.25 shows the employment rates by an individual's self-assessed health. We have grouped self-assessed health into two categories: good or very good health (thin lines in the figure) and fair, bad, or very bad health (thick lines in the figure). We have used this division because it was found to better capture the age differences in health status (see figure 3.7). The data show that employment rates of individuals in bad health are much lower compared to their healthy peers among individuals younger than sixty. More specifically, among men aged fifty to fifty-four who report being in bad health, only about 60 percent is at work, while this number is higher than 80 percent among the healthy ones. The employment rates of healthy and unhealthy individuals converge among the group aged at least sixty.

The second feature shown by figure 3.25 is that employment rates of individuals older than fifty-five in good health had fallen from 1987 to 1997 and, although some recovery is observed in 2006, employment rates are still below the ones observed in 1987. This is in line with the data shown in figure 3.16. The evidence regarding individuals in bad health is less clear-

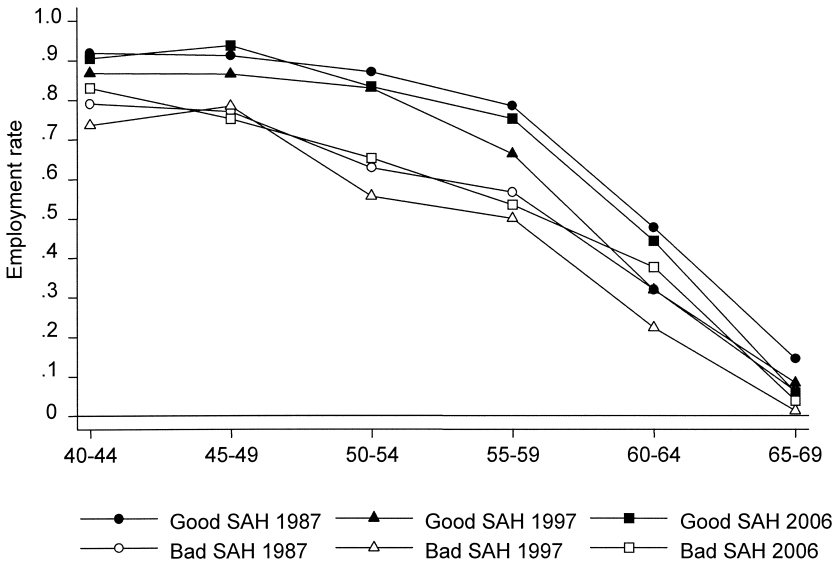

Fig. 3.25 Evolution of the employment rate by self-assessed health, men

cut and it seems that employment rates of this group have remained stable through time.

All together, the evidence presented here suggests that health status is an important variable in determining labor force participation among individuals younger than sixty years old, but it becomes less important as the social security incentives of the old-age pension system kick in. Therefore, we will now focus on the role played by the different social security reforms in explaining the evolution of labor force participation trends in general, and more specifically, the participation in the disability program.

3.4 Pathways to Retirement and Program Reforms

In the previous section we have shown that trends in labor force participation are not likely to be driven by the evolution of health in the population. Thus, in this section we analyze the relationship with the other usual suspects, that is, the incentives that the social security system poses to individuals to withdraw from the labor market.

In particular, we first look at the association between the characteristics of the social security system and the inflow into and the stock of the main contributory social security programs (permanent disability, retirement, and unemployment). After that, we provide a tentative evaluation of the two main reforms of the social security system that have affected the incentives of old-age workers to withdraw from the labor force during the period for which we have data available.

3.4.1 Descriptive Evidence on the Pathways to Retirement

The evidence illustrated in figures 3.16 to 3.20 using aggregate data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey, which uses self-reported labor status, did not show any change in behavior after the 1997 reform, nor after the 2002 reform. Let us recall that the main characteristics of the reform held in 1997 were the reorganization of the disability assessment system, the implementation of stricter medical control to apply for temporary disability benefits, and the decrease in the generosity of the contributory old-age benefits. The 2002 reform provided individuals with more incentives to continue working beyond the age of sixty-five while, at the same time, a more stringent search criteria was required among the unemployed.

Figure 3.26 shows administrative data on the inflows into contributory permanent disability benefits obtained from the Spanish National Social Security Institute (www.seg-social.es). The data show that the percentage of individuals going into this system slightly decreased after 1997 for all the age-groups considered (from forty to sixty-four) and it stayed constant thereafter. Figure 3.27 shows comparable data for the inflows into contributory old-age benefits. The trends and levels remain stable through the period despite the different reforms.

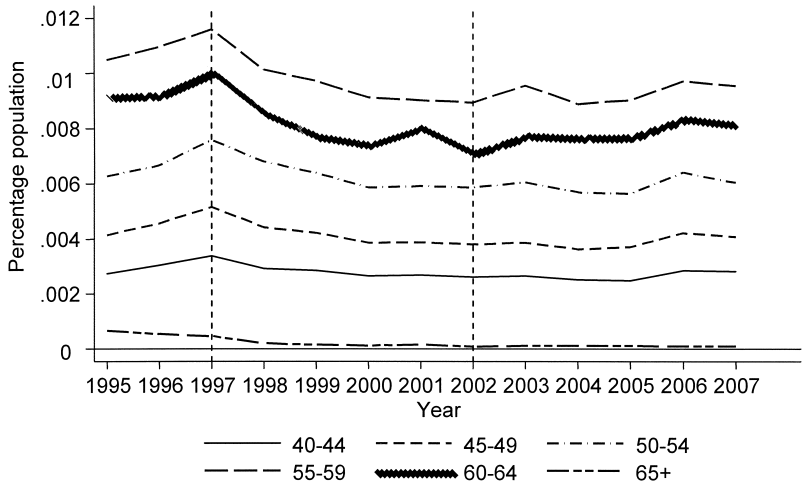

Fig. 3.26 Inflow into contributory permanent disability by age-group

Source: Own calculations using administrative data from the Ministry of Employment and Immigration and population figures from the Ministry of Health and Social Policy.

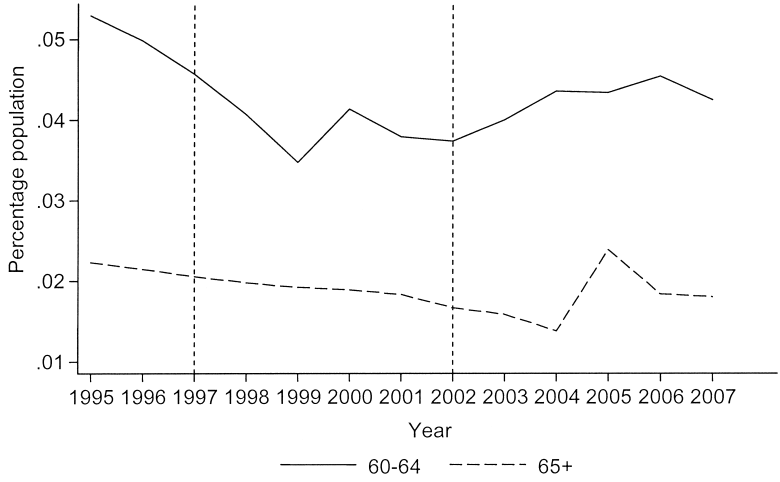

Fig. 3.27 Inflow into old-age benefits, individuals aged sixty to sixty-four and sixty-five-plus

Source: See figure 3.26.

In order to look at changes in the postponement of the retirement age, figure 3.28 shows the percentage of the population that enters into contributory old-age benefits by age for individuals aged sixty to sixty-four. Unfortunately, we do not have information on the total number of inflows into old-age contributory pensions by individual ages for individuals aged

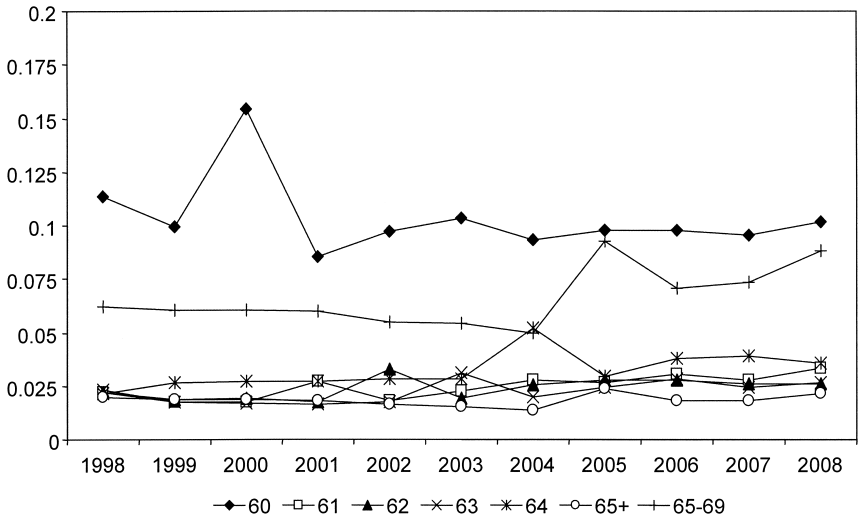

Fig. 3.28 Inflow into old-age benefits by age
Source: See figure 3.26.

sixty-five or older so we present two different shares. The first one considers inflow as a share of the total population aged at least sixty-five (as in figure 3.26), while the second one uses the population aged sixty-five to sixty-nine, as retirement later than sixty-nine is anecdotic.

In order for the policy reforms to have effects on the sustainability of the system, they should have influenced the stock of individuals in the different programs. From 2002 onward, at least in theory, in order to claim unemployment benefits older workers also had to enroll in active searching at the same time that unemployed individuals aged at least fifty-two could combine unemployment benefits with earnings. A priori, one would expect this reform to have some effects on the number of older individuals claiming unemployment benefits. However, the percentage of the population older than fifty-five that was receiving unemployment benefits did not change thereafter. This is shown in figure 3.29, which uses administrative data from the Ministry of Employment and Immigration. In fact, the share of the population older than fifty-five receiving unemployment benefits continued to grow despite the economic growth.

In figure 3.30 we make use of another source of administrative data, the Muestra Continua de Vidas Laborales (MCVL), to contrast the results obtained previously. The MCVL is a microeconomic data set based on administrative records provided by the Spanish Social Security Administration. It contains a random sample of 4 percent of all the individuals who, at

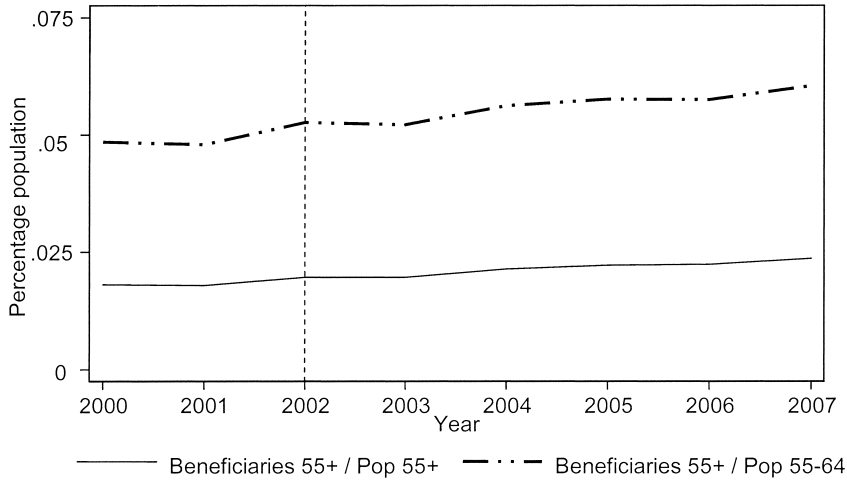

Fig. 3.29 Percentage of the population aged at least fifty-five receiving unemployment benefits, Spain, 1980 to 2009

Source: See figure 3.26.

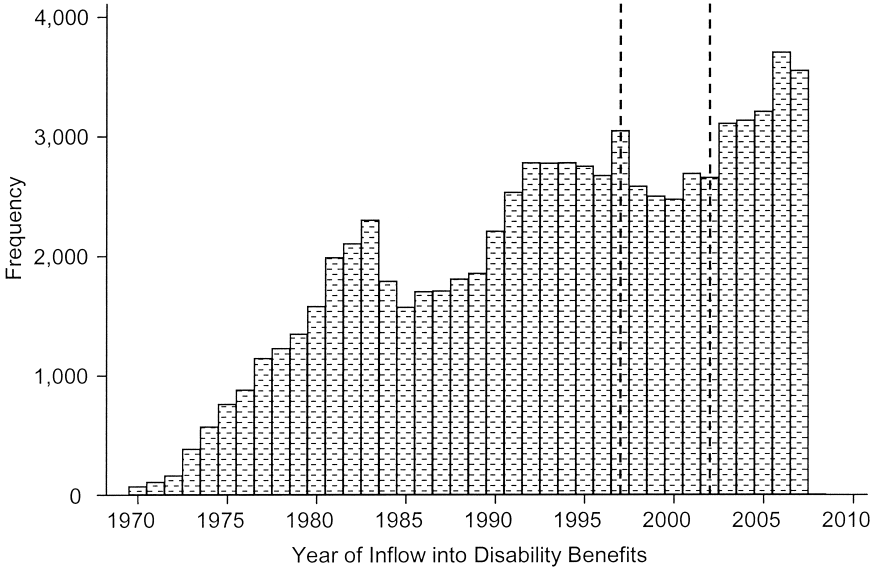

Fig. 3.30 Number of individuals entering permanent disability benefits each year, Spain, 1970 to 2007

Source: Own calculations using administrative data from the Muestra Continua de Vidas Laborales.

some point during 2007, had contributed toward the social security system either by working, being in an unemployment scheme, or receiving a contributory pension. The random sample selected contains over one million individuals. The MCVL provides rich employment history information at the cost of scarce representativeness as we go back in time. This is particularly important here as the individuals of any cohort entering into disability benefits are expected to have higher mortality rates and, therefore, to have a lower probability of being selected in 2007. In this respect, the information provided here is complementary to the other sources.

Figure 3.30 plots the number of individuals entering permanent disability benefits each year from 1970 until 2007. The two vertical lines correspond to the years of the 1997 and 2002 reforms. As for the reform in 1997, a possible anticipation effect is observed as inflows into permanent disability pensions increased in 1997. This could be either due to expectations of potential future higher requirements as a result of the reorganization of the assessment system or to the decrease in the generosity of the old-age pension system. However, inflows into the disability system dropped in the subsequent years.

On the other hand, the 2002 reform, which tightened the job search criteria for unemployed individuals, had a clear substitution effect of increasing the inflows into disability benefits. Recall that disability benefits are of a permanent nature and do not have any job search criteria attached to their eligibility requirements and are, thus, much more attractive for older workers already with some previous health-related problems.

Figures 3.31 and 3.32 report, for the two-fifty and older groups of working-age individuals, the percentage of that being in each program in the EPA. The figures are only shown for men and cannot be fully compared to the ones shown in figures 3.26 to 3.30; not only because it is self-reported, but also because individuals receiving a non-contributory pension should also report receiving a pension or benefit (either disability, old-age, or unemployment) in the EPA, while they were not included in the previous figures.

The data from these figures reinforce the previous evidence; the percentage of the population either unemployed, receiving disability or old-age benefits increases with age. On the other hand, the share of individuals that declare being disabled or retired is higher the older the group, while at the same time, the share of unemployed individuals becomes smaller. In fact, the share of individuals aged sixty to sixty-four that report being unemployed is below 5 percent compared to the rate of 10 percent (except for the last years) of the other group. At the same time, the data do not show any substitution effects across programs after the different reforms or any drop or increase in the participation rates.

In order to better approach a measure of the pathways into retirement, we look at the exit routes from employment. We use the retrospective information available in the second quarter of the EPA regarding the labor status

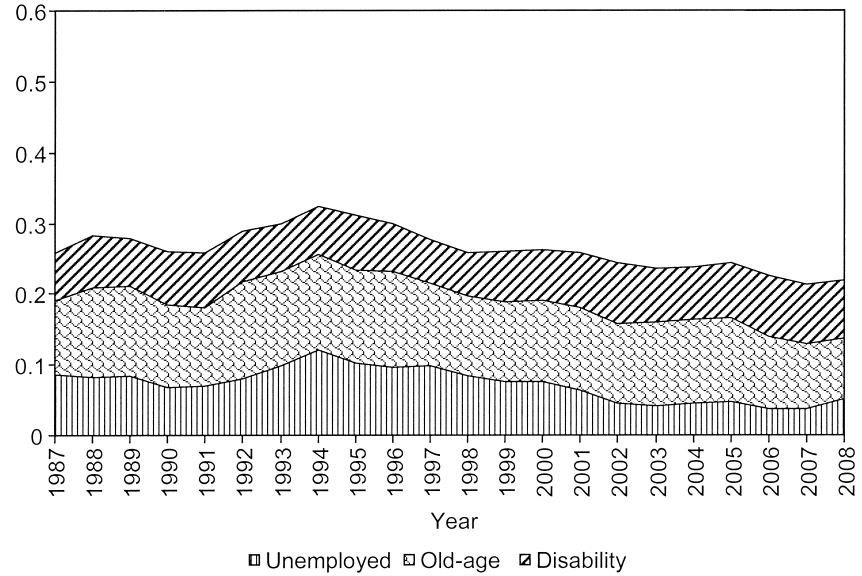

Fig. 3.31 Percentage of individuals in each social security program (self-reported), men aged fifty-five to fifty-nine

Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

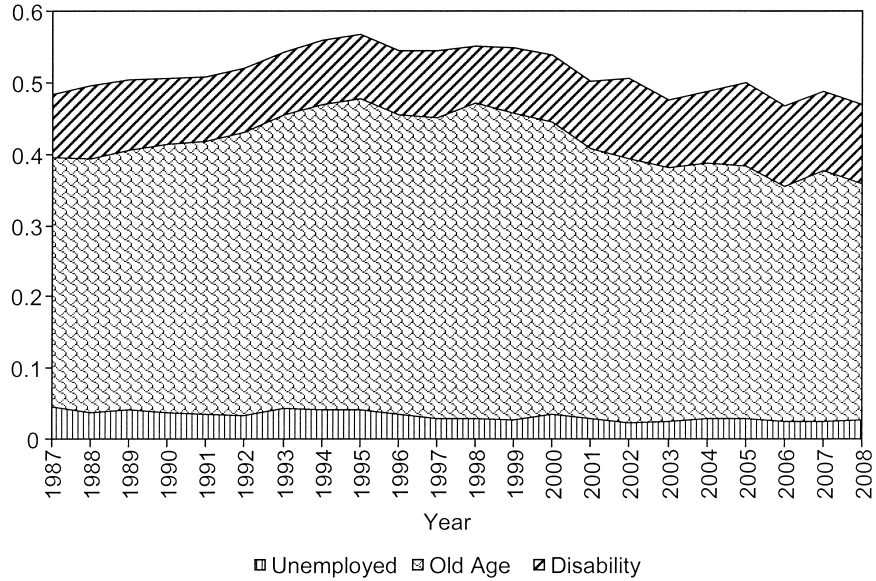

Fig. 3.32 Percentage of individuals in each social security program (self-reported), men aged sixty to sixty-four

Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

of individuals in the previous year. We calculate the percentage that transit from employment to each of the status of interest. This is shown in figures 3.33, 3.34, and 3.35. Unfortunately, the retrospective information does not distinguish between the different jobless statuses, which would have allowed us to identify the individuals that transit from unemployment or disability into retirement.

The conclusions reached from these figures are similar to the ones presented earlier. The share of individuals that leave employment and transit into unemployment is higher among the relatively younger individuals than among the older groups (80 percent of men aged fifty to fifty-four that leave employment and transit to one of the statuses of interest go to unemployment, compared to 20 percent among men aged sixty to sixty-four). The main difference with previous figures is the smaller percentage of individuals that leave employment to transit into disability among men older than sixty. This is consistent with the numbers shown in figure 3.26 for contributory permanent benefits, and suggests that the biggest share of individuals into disability in this age-group is mostly due to an accumulation of individuals who left employment and transit into disability earlier in their career and/or individuals receiving non-contributory disability benefits transiting from another jobless state.

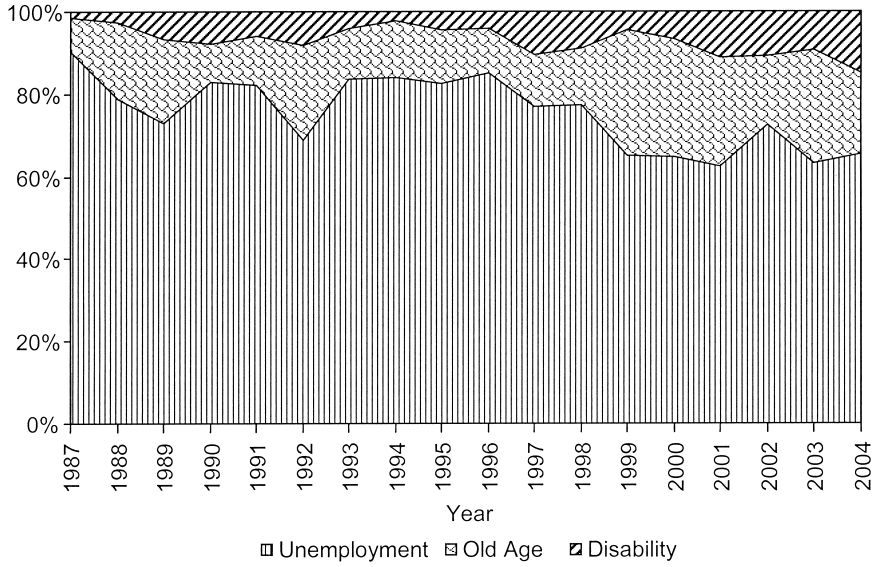

Fig. 3.33 Outflows from employment into unemployment, disability, and old-age, men aged fifty to fifty-four

Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

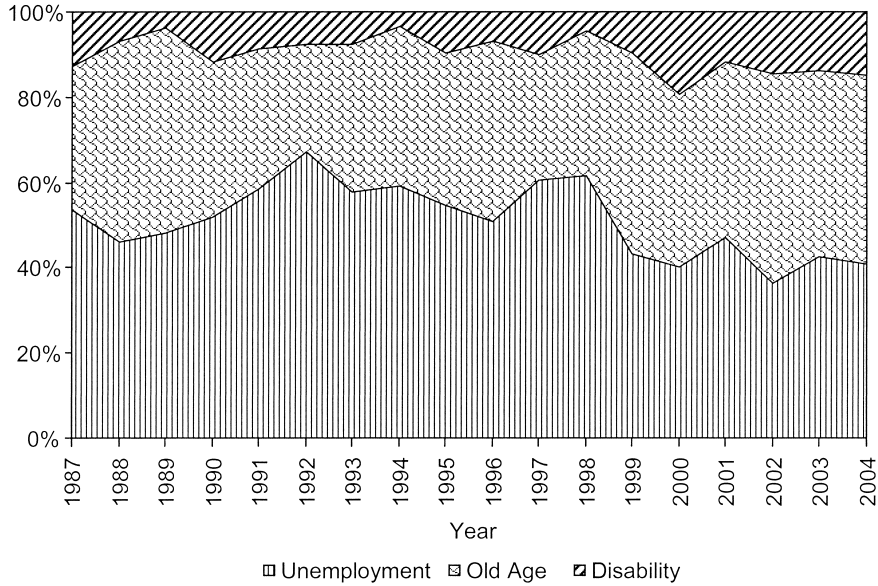

Fig. 3.34 Outflows from employment into unemployment, disability, and old-age, men aged fifty-five to fifty-nine

Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

Fig. 3.35 Outflows from employment into unemployment, disability, and old-age, men aged sixty to sixty-four

Note: Own elaboration using data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey.

3.4.2 A Tentative Analysis of the Quantitative Effects of the Reforms

The descriptive evidence shown in the previous sections of this chapter points out that the reforms had, if any, small effects on the labor market behavior of older workers. In this section we attempt to provide some estimates of both the effects of the different reforms in participation in different programs, as well as analyze the substitution effects among programs.

We first show in figure 3.36 the share of each age-group that goes into permanent contributory disability before and after the set of reforms that took place in 1997 in both the disability and old-age pension systems using the administrative data from the Ministry of Employment and Immigration shown in figure 3.26. The data show that the share of individuals transiting into disability decreases among individuals older than forty, except among individuals aged fifty to fifty-four. The drop is small in absolute terms among all groups, but this is due to the small shares into disability. However, it represents a 9 percent drop for the group with the largest inflow into disability (individuals aged fifty-five to fifty-nine).

These estimates represent a before-after analysis in a period of economic growth. As can be derived from the evidence shown earlier, the labor force participation has been increasing since the midnineties for older workers. Therefore, we need to control, at least, for changes in total employment outflows before drawing any conclusion.

We provide estimates of how the percentage in each program (disabil-

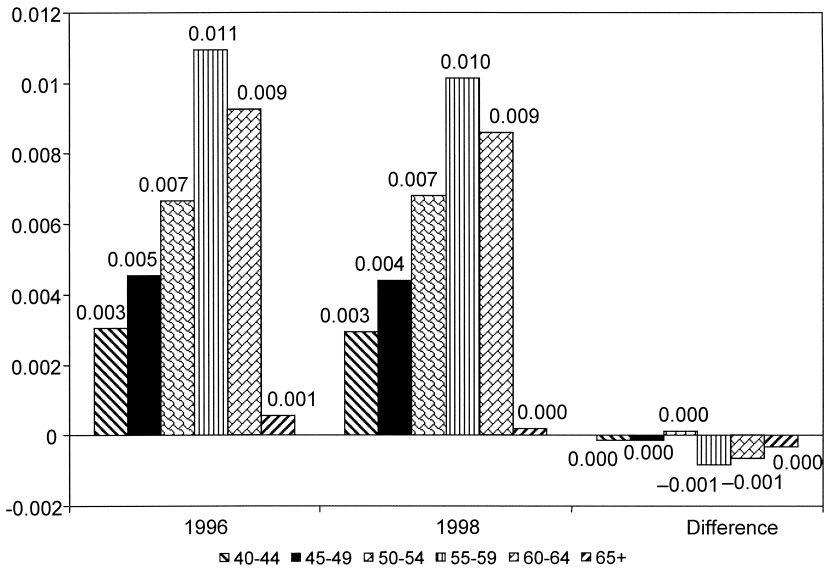

Fig. 3.36 Inflow into permanent disability before and after the 1997 reform
Note: Data from the Ministry of Employment and Immigration.

ity, unemployment, and old-age) changes after each of the two reforms of interest when we introduce controls for the time trend and the total share of individuals out of employment. We use data from EPA aggregated by age and gender (fifty to fifty-four, fifty-five to fifty-nine, sixty to sixty-four) using two levels of regional aggregation. We first use the same figures shown previously in this chapter, and we later construct aggregates at the regional level (Autonomous Communities). Although there is no variation in the timing of the reforms across regions, this exercise provides us with variation in the shares of individuals out of employment and in per capita GDP.

Thus, we estimate the following model:

$$S_{srgat} = \alpha_{s0} + \sum_r \alpha_{sr} D_r + \sum_g \alpha_{sg} D_g + \sum_a \alpha_{sa} D_a + \lambda_{st} + \beta_{s1997} D_{1997} + \beta_{s2002} D_{2002} + \delta_s O_{srgat} + \varepsilon_{srgat},$$

where S_{srgat} is the share of individuals of gender g and age-group a in region r in year t that are in the status s (s being disability, unemployment, and retirement), and O_{srgat} is the corresponding share out of employment. The other set of explanatory variables are region-dummies (D_r), gender-dummies (D_g), age-dummies (D_a), a time trend (λ_{st}) and two dummies capturing the effect of the reforms: D_{1997} takes value one from 1997 onward and zero otherwise, and D_{2002} takes value one from 2002 onward and zero otherwise.

In order to control for the endogeneity of the total outflow, we use regional GDP per capita as an instrument. When we provide estimates at the country-level, we use national values (Spanish Institute of Statistics, www.ine.es).

We repeat the same analysis but, instead of using information about the stock of individuals in the different programs, we use information on the outflows from employment as shown in figures 3.33, 3.34, and 3.35. This analysis is only shown using the aggregates at the country-level because the data cells at the regional-level were too small, as only the information on individuals that were working in the previous year is used to obtain the different aggregates.

The results for the parameters of interest are shown in table 3.4. Tables 3A.1, 3A.2, and 3A.3 in the appendix show both the first-stage estimates and the coefficients of the other variables. First, notice in tables 3A.1, 3A.2, and 3A.3 that the total outflow and the share out of employment diminished after both the 1997 and the 2002 reforms.

The sign of the effects of the two reforms on the participation in each program is the same using the data at the country-level (first three rows of table 3.4) or exploiting the regional variation (second three rows of table 3.4) except for the effect of the 1997 reform on the disability system. However, none of the effects at the country-level are significant, probably due to the small sample size (120 observations). On the other hand, the analysis at the regional-level shows an interesting pattern: both the 1997 and the 2002

Table 3.4 **Selected results of the estimate of the 1997 and 2002 reform on the stock of the different social security programs, and the outflows from employment**

	1997 Coef (SE)	2002 Coef (SE)	*N*	R^2
Stock national level				
Disability	–0.0059	0.0010	120	0.649
	(0.0036)	(0.0019)		
Unemployment	–0.0035	–0.0007	120	0.051
	(0.0020)	(0.0026)		
Old-age	–0.0048	–0.0061	120	0.839
	(0.0026)	(0.0042)		
Stock regional level				
Disability	0.0085	0.0209	1,836	0.481
	(0.0045)	(0.0057)		
Unemployment	–0.0045	–0.0068	1,836	0.276
	(0.0045)	(0.0058)		
Old-age	–0.0111	–0.0193	1,836	0.733
	(0.0048)	(0.0066)		
Outflows from employment (national level)				
Disability	0.0002	0.0008	108	0.626
	(0.0002)	(0.0002)		
Unemployment	–0.0024	0.0002	108	0.781
	(0.0015)	(0.0009)		
Old-age	0.0001	0.0020	108	0.846
	(0.0007)	(0.0011)		

Note: Results based on national and regional aggregates.

reforms decreased the stock into old-age benefits at the cost of an increased share of the participation into disability. More interestingly, the magnitude of the two opposite effects is the same, suggesting a clear substitution effect among these two programs in the older age-groups.

The results also show that these two reforms seem to decrease the participation share of these age-groups into unemployment (although the coefficient is not significant, which is highly explained by the total share of the population out of employment). Regarding the effects of these two reforms on the outflows from employment into the different programs shown in the last three rows of table 3.4, we find that there was a significant increase in the outflow from employment into disability after the 2002 reform. The rest of the coefficients are nonsignificant, although this could be due to the lack of explanatory power of the small sample size (108 observations).

3.5 Conclusions

In this chapter we have shown that despite the large improvements in mortality rates among older individuals in Spain, the employment rates of

individuals older than fifty-five remain lower than the ones observed in the late 1970s, and the decrease in participation is more drastic when comparing different cohorts with the same mortality-based age than with the same age-since-birth.

In addition, decreases in mortality rates do not necessarily go hand in hand with improvements in population health. However, the descriptive evidence on health trends provided here remains inconclusive. On one hand, there is some evidence suggesting a deterioration in population health, as the percentage that reports having reduced their principal activity because of a health problem, as well as the prevalence of hypertension, cholesterol, and obesity, and the number of hospitalizations due to mental disorders have increased. On the other hand, the percentage that reports being in good or very good health has also increased, while the number of hospitalizations due to other illnesses except for mental problems has decreased.

Health status is an important variable in determining labor force participation among individuals younger than sixty, but it becomes less important as the social security incentives of the old-age pension system kick in. The comparison of trends in mortality, health, and employment and participation in different social security programs shows a lack of an overall association among these dimensions in the last twenty years in Spain. Thus, in this chapter we have tried to disentangle the effect of the two main social security reforms since 1990. In 1997 there was a reorganization of the disability system, the medical requirements for temporary disability were tightened, and the generosity of the old-age pension system was decreased, while in 2002 the job search criteria to receive unemployment benefits was tightened and more incentives to retire later were introduced. Using regional aggregate data, we find that both the 1997 and the 2002 reforms decreased the stock into old-age benefits at the cost of an increased share of the participation into disability. More interestingly, the magnitude of the two opposite effects is the same, suggesting a clear substitution effect among these two programs in the older age-groups. An avenue for further research is the evaluation of the aforementioned reforms using longitudinal individual data in order to follow the different transitions. Moreover, it would be of interest to use the time variation in the implementation of the different old-age reforms in order to disentangle the effects of interest.

Appendix

Table 3A.1 **Outflows from employment into the different programs**

	Out of employment		Employment-disability		Employment-unemployment		Employment-retirement	
	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.
Out of employment			0.030	0.017	0.093	0.040	0.118	0.033
Women	–0.003	0.003	–0.003	0.000	–0.012	0.002	–0.018	0.005
50 to 54	0.012	0.004	0.001	0.000	–0.005	0.002	0.004	0.004
55 to 59	0.072	0.004	–0.001	0.001	–0.016	0.006	0.014	0.007
D1997	–0.015	0.007	0.000	0.000	–0.002	0.002	0.000	0.001
D2002	–0.015	0.008	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.002	0.001
GDP	1.5×10^{-7}	4.2×10^{-8}						
Constant	–0.028	0.023	0.001	0.001	0.017	0.003	0.006	0.006
N				108				

Note: Data aggregated at the national level.

Table 3A.2 **Stock in the different programs**

	Nonworking		Disability		Unemployed		Retired	
	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.
Nonworking			–0.191	0.028	0.370	0.142	0.169	0.192
Women	0.391	0.010	0.035	0.011	–0.176	0.069	–0.215	0.108
50 to 54	0.108	0.012	0.039	0.014	–0.048	0.024	0.028	0.048
55 to 59	0.281	0.012	0.089	0.018	–0.143	0.045	0.165	0.048
D1997	–0.010	0.021	–0.006	0.004	–0.003	0.002	–0.005	0.003
D2002	–0.003	0.026	0.001	0.002	–0.001	0.003	–0.006	0.004
Trend	0.012	0.005	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.001
GDP	-6.5×10^{-7}	2.5×10^{-7}						
Constant	0.570	0.117	0.098	0.017	–0.022	0.029	0.049	0.058
N				120				

Note: Data aggregated at the national level.

Table 3A.3 Stock in the different programs

	Nonworking		Disability		Unemployed		Retired	
	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.	Coef.	SE.
Nonworking			0.276	0.124	0.264	0.141	0.006	0.148
Women	0.403	0.004	–0.149	0.051	–0.135	0.058	–0.168	0.063
50 to 54	0.107	0.004	–0.014	0.014	–0.036	0.015	0.049	0.020
55 to 59	0.278	0.004	–0.047	0.035	–0.109	0.039	0.215	0.041
D1997	–0.026	0.007	0.008	0.004	–0.005	0.005	–0.011	0.005
D2002	–0.035	0.006	0.021	0.006	–0.007	0.006	–0.019	0.007
Trend	0.009	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.000
GDP	-1.1×10^{-5}	2.1×10^{-6}						
Constant	0.363	0.010	–0.021	0.043	0.013	0.050	0.099	0.057
N				1836				

Note: Data aggregated at the level of the Autonomous Communities.

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