THE LIMITS OF WORKING LIFE

Alfonso J. Cruz-Jentoft

Hospital Universitario Ramón y Cajal. Madrid. Spain

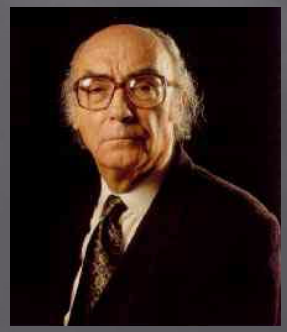
President. EUGMS

Why shall working life have an age limit?

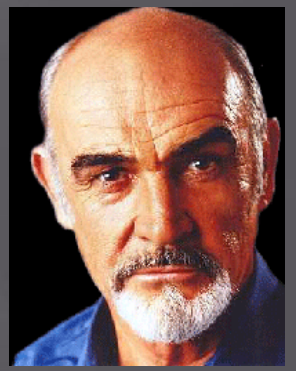
Sophia Loren
72 y.o.

Benedictus XVI
80 y.o.

Elizabeth II
81 y.o.



Jose Saramago
84 y.o.



Sean Connery
76 y.o.

Retirement from work is a legal, not a biological limit

Is retirement an anachronism?

Not a wall…

Kohli M. *Age boundaries as social regulation of individual life organization: an anachronism?* Z Gerontol Geriatr 2000

… but a gently sloping ramp.

From a biological viewpoint,
retirement should be a proccess,
not a brisk transition.

Why does someone stop working?

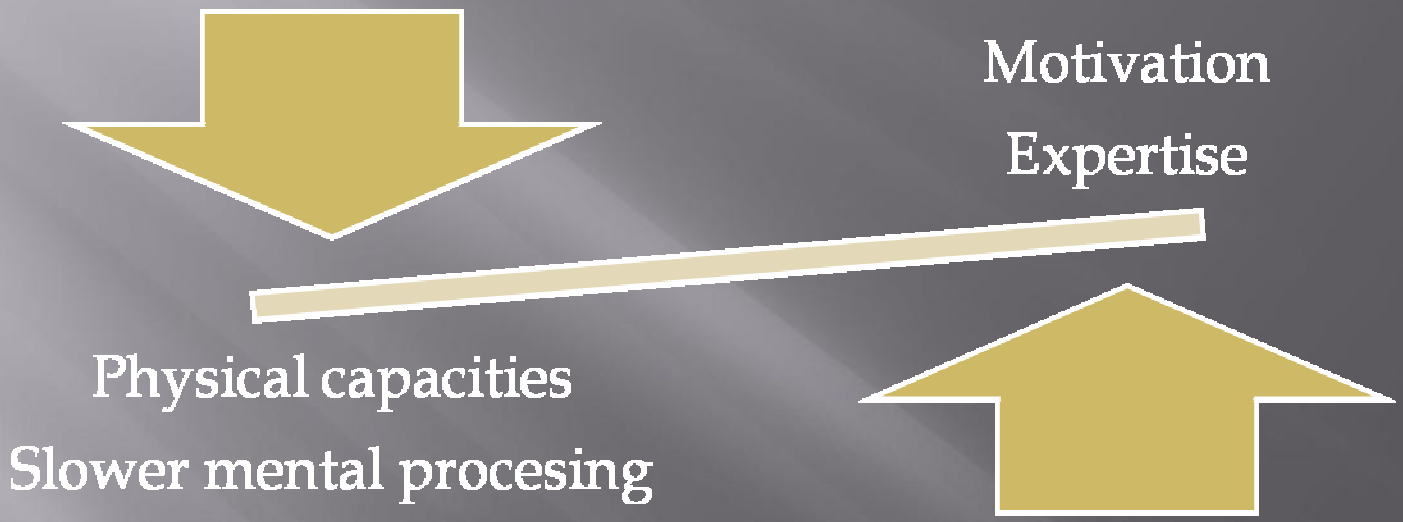
- Legal limitation
- No job available
- Disease and disability
- Personal decission
- Other

Reasons for retirement before usual age

- Physical reasons:
  - heavy lifting, physical workload, low temperature, vibration, fatigue after work
- Lack of leisure time
- Disability

Szubert Z, Sobala W. *Some job factors associated with departure from working life before retirement age.* Med Pr 2006

Older workers



"Factors that make advancing age into a handicap are motily related with working contraints that outstrip actual human capabilities and work organization that denies employees growth in their jobs".

Wegman DH. *Older workers*. Occup Med 1999

Is an older worker reliable?

- Older workers have been found highly reliable.
- Able to adapt and learn new technology.
- Able to accomplsih job duties.
- May need some changes in workplaces:
  - More light
  - Easier mobility
  - Have lower physical strenght

Fulks JS, Fallon LF. *The older worker.* Occup Med 2001

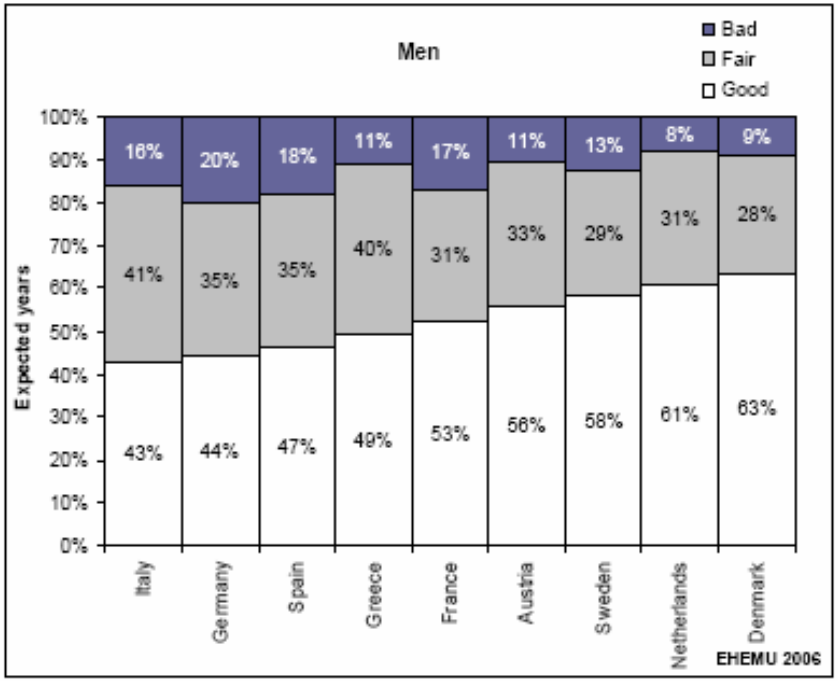
How many are disabled at retirement age?

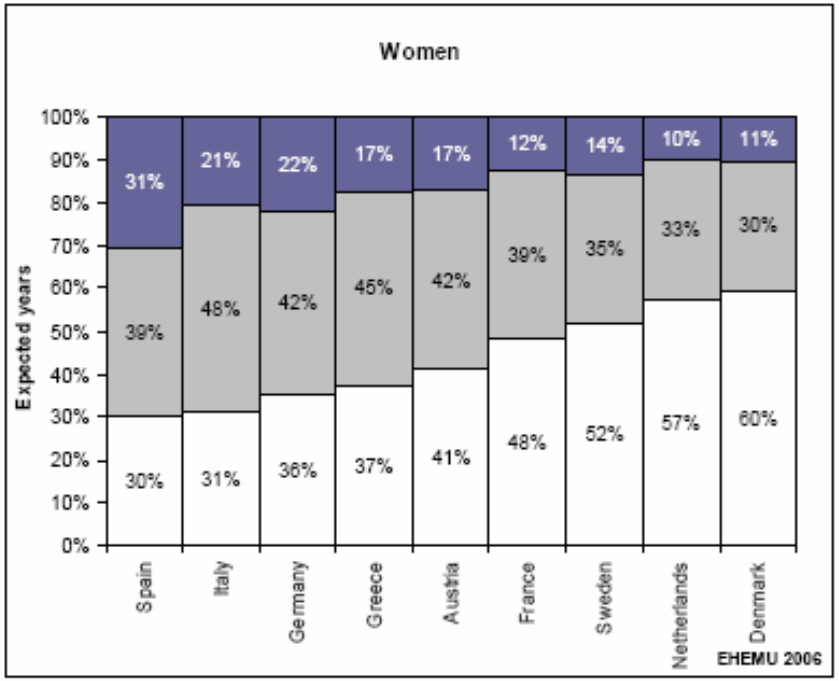
- Among Canadians reaching their 65th birthday, **only about 15%** report a disability that affects the ability to work that could clearly justify the end of a working career.

Michaud JF, George MV, Loh S. 1996. *Projections of Persons with Disabilities*. Ottawa: Statistics , Canada, 1996, Catalogue no. 91-538.

How is your health status at 65 years old?

Figure 1b: Proportion of expected years in good, fair and bad perceived health at age 65 by country, men and women, 2004 (European version)





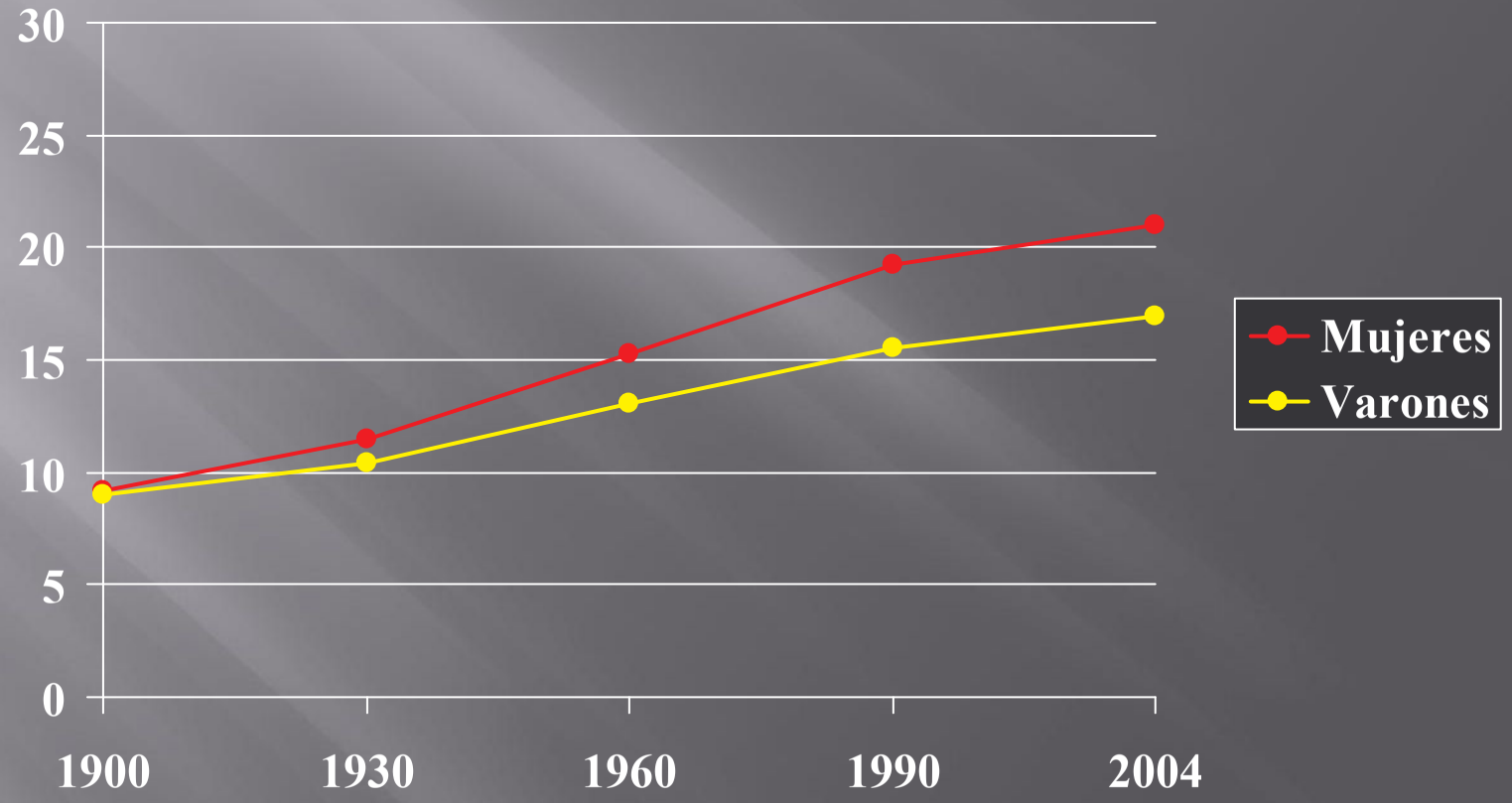
Sources: Eurostat and SHARE 2004

Disabilities and life expectancy

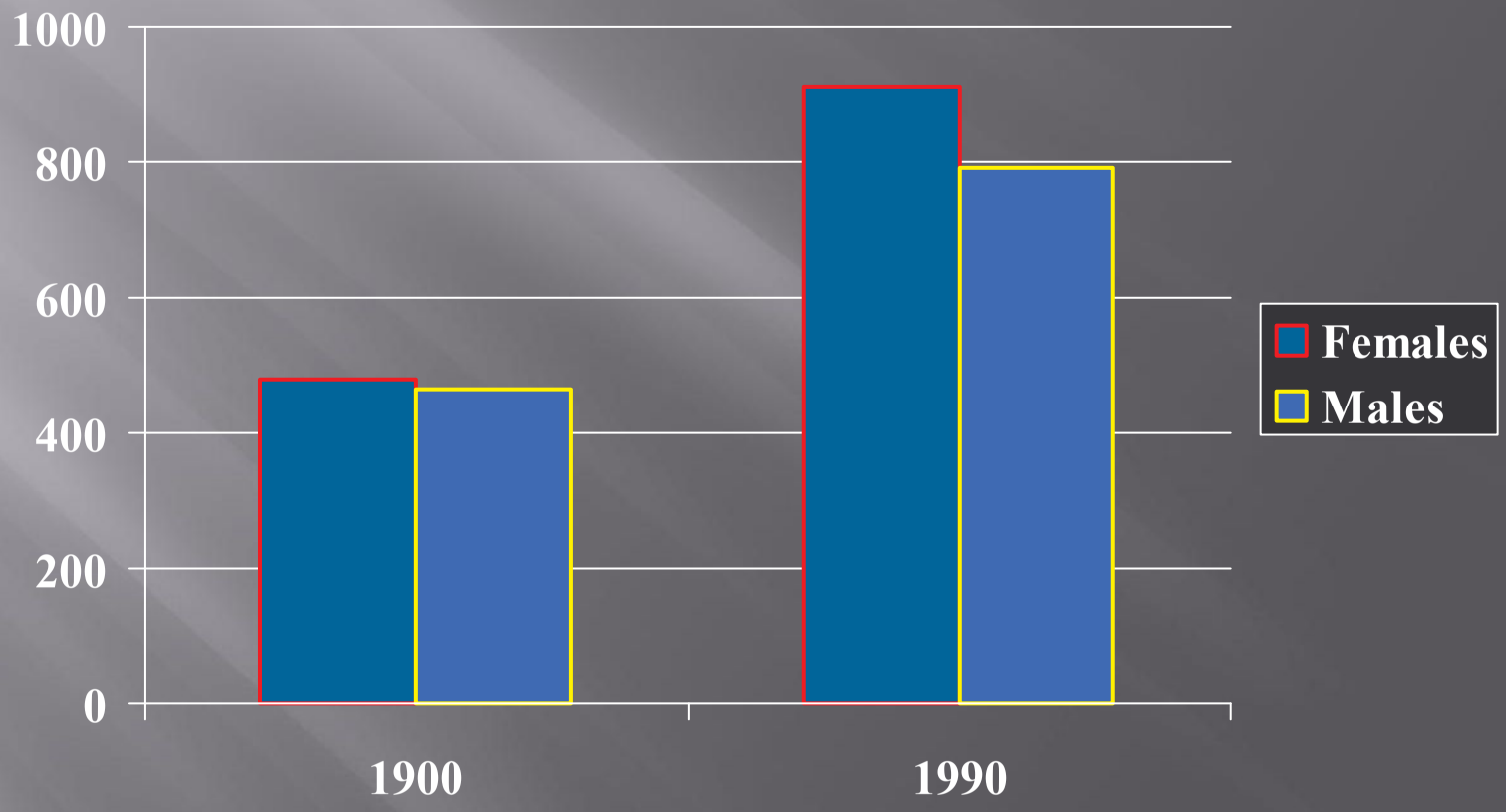
- The average 63-year-old Canadian male can expect to be free of activity limitation to over 75 years of age, whereas the average female of the same age can expect to be free of activity limitation until the age of 78.
- Given that the current average retirement age is about 63, these results suggest that there may be scope to lengthen working life significantly, if this is considered desirable.

Hogan S, Lise J. *Life Expectancy, Health Expectancy, and the Life Cycle*. Horizons 2006

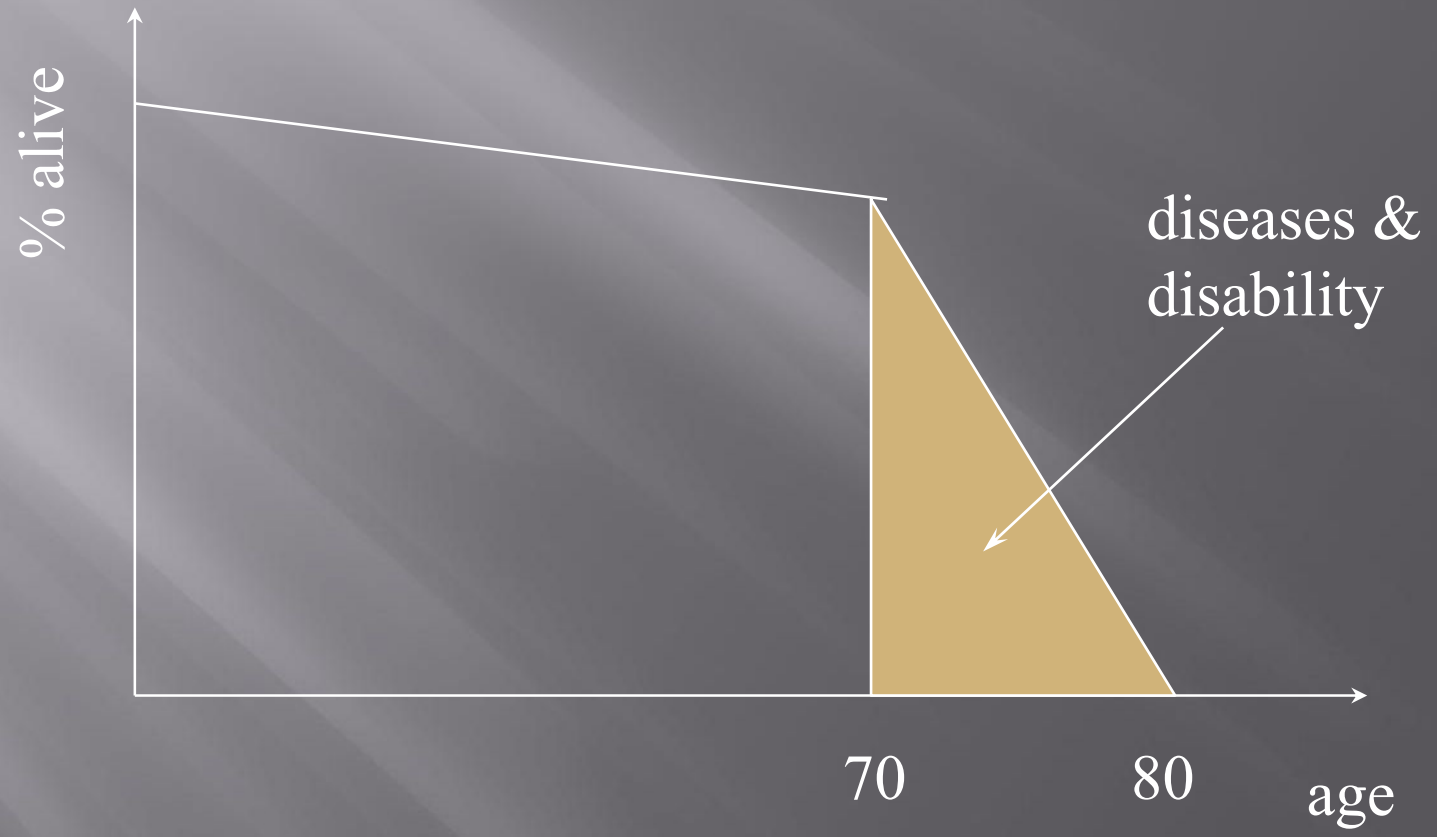
Changes in life expectancy at 65 years in Spain



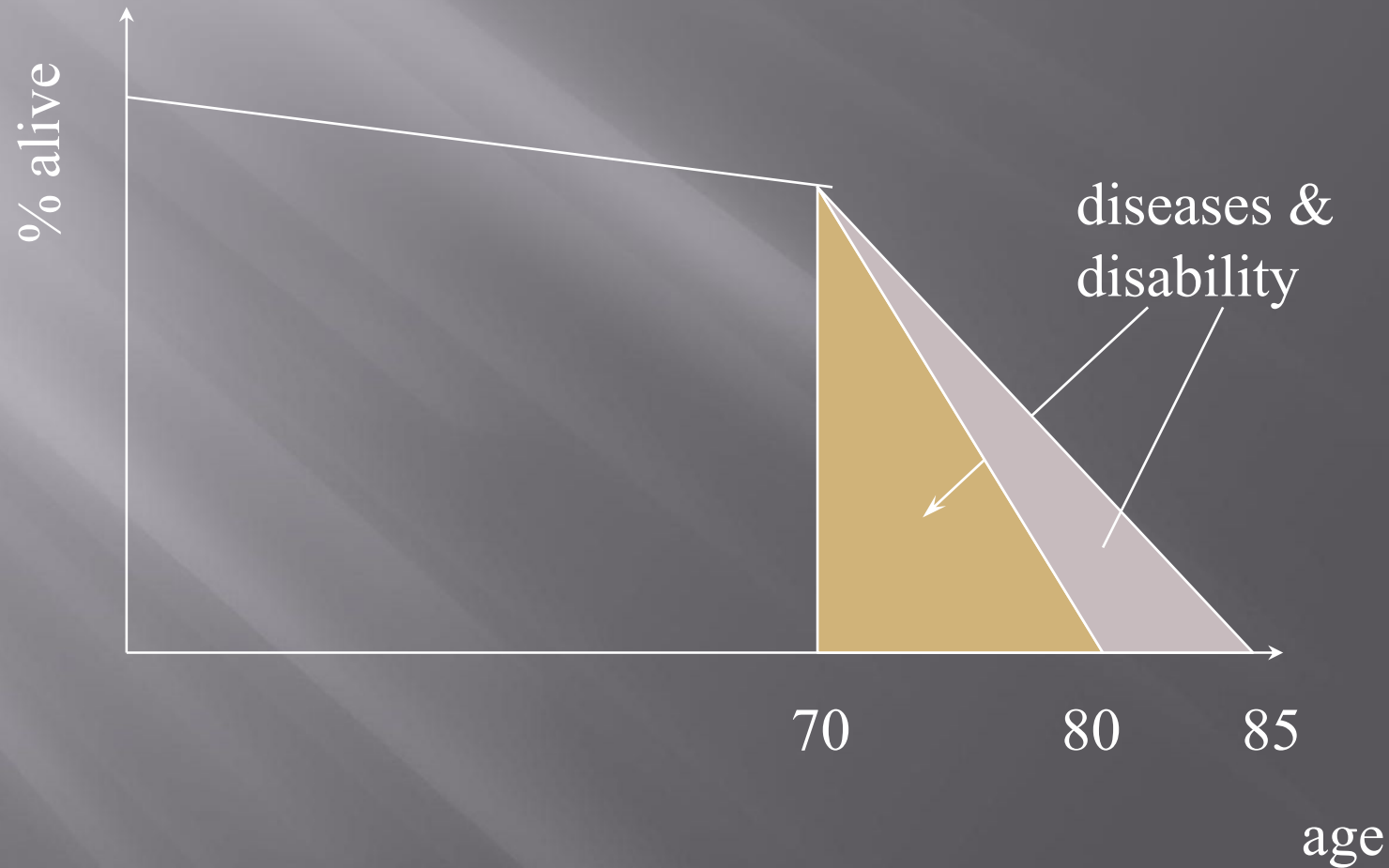
Of1,000 persons at age 20, how many will expect to live longer than 65 years?



The compression of morbidity

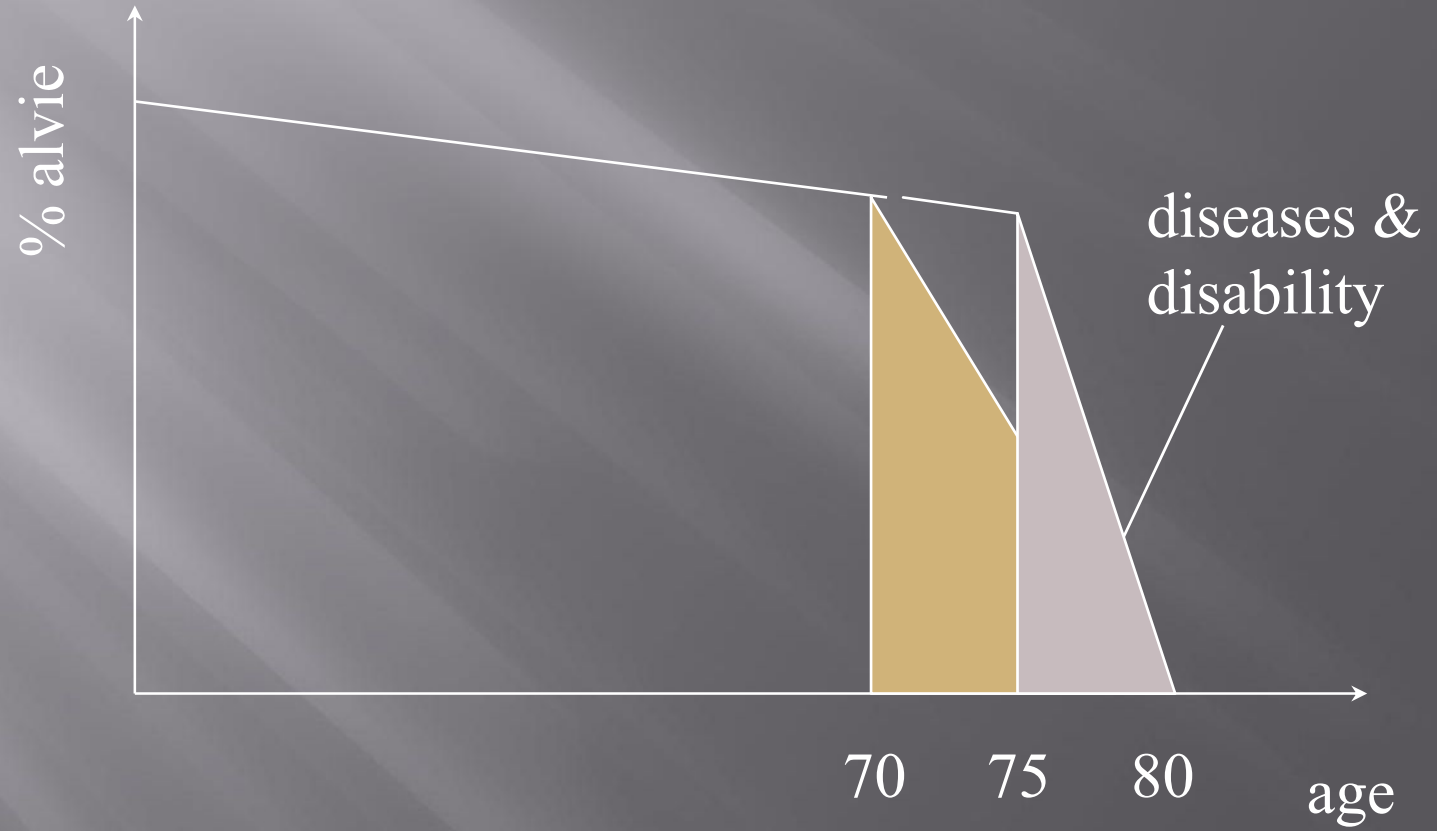


Compression of morbidity
Longer life expectancy



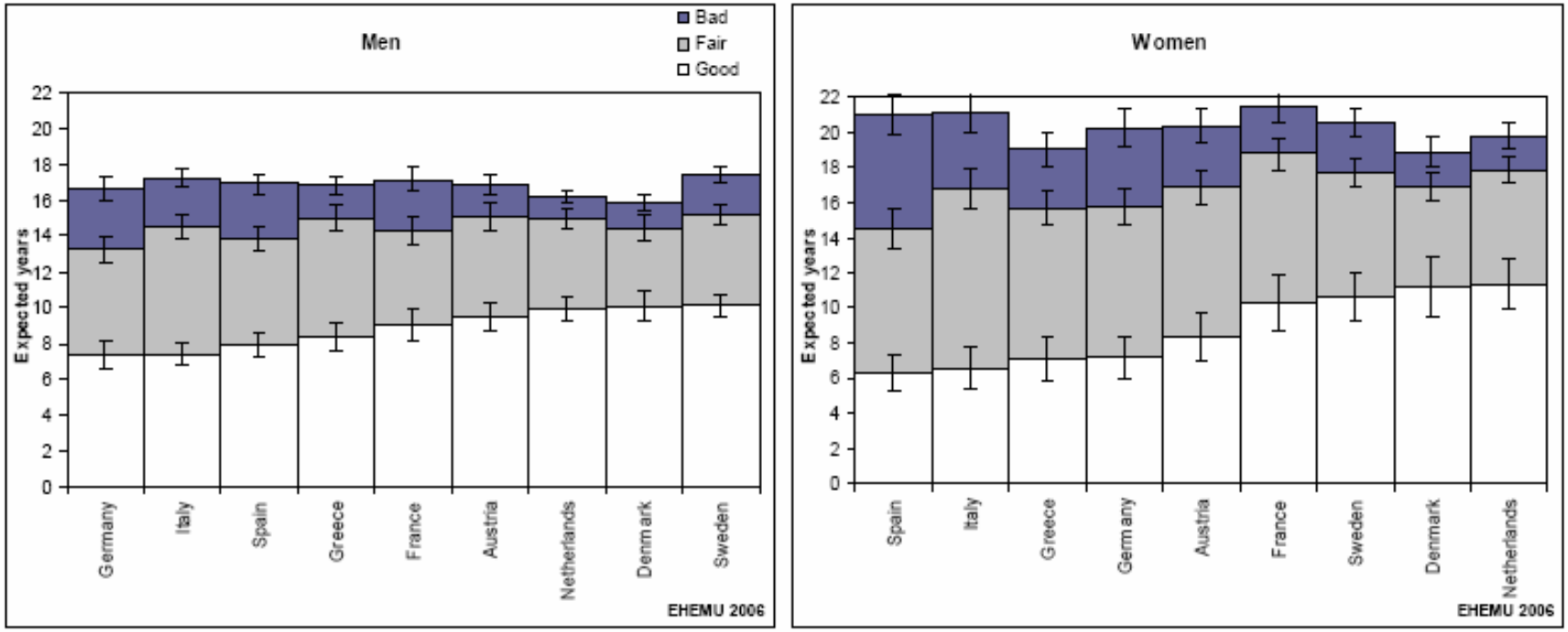
Compression of morbidity

Delay of disease onset



Are we ageing in good health?

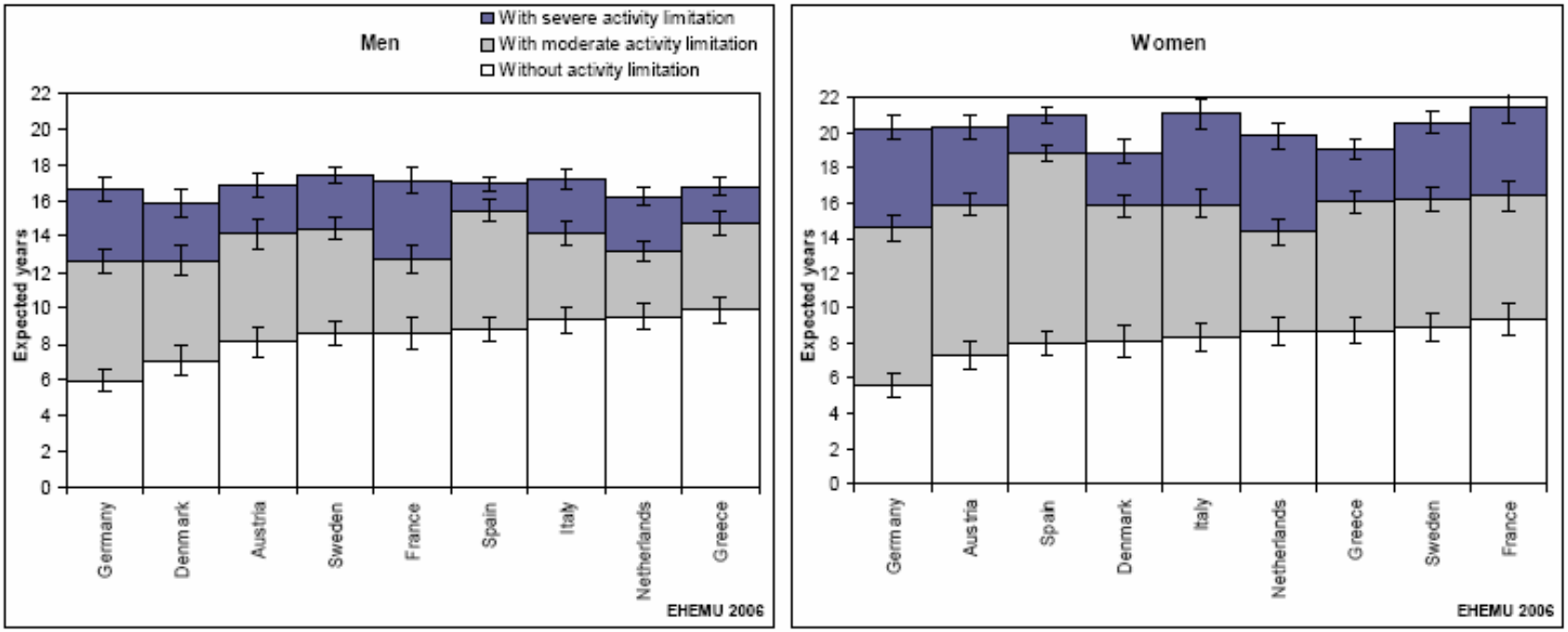
Figure 1a: Life expectancy and expected years in good, fair and bad perceived health at age 65 by country, men and women, 2004 (European version)



Sources: Eurostat and SHARE 2004

Do we expect some disability?

Figure 5a: Life expectancy and expected years with and without moderate and severe activity limitation at age 65 by country, men and women, 2004



Sources: Eurostat and SHARE 2004

Working ability and disease

- Some age-related diseases may impose limits to working ability.
  - Cancer: long leaves, sequels, psychological (site related)
  - Heart and lung diseases: limitation of physical effort, psychological, relapses
  - Depression: limits working time and ability
  - Dementia: limits ability
  - Osteoarthritis: physical limits
  - Cataracts: no problem

This limits are not different at other ages, only disease prevalence may grow

Health and disability
Conclusion

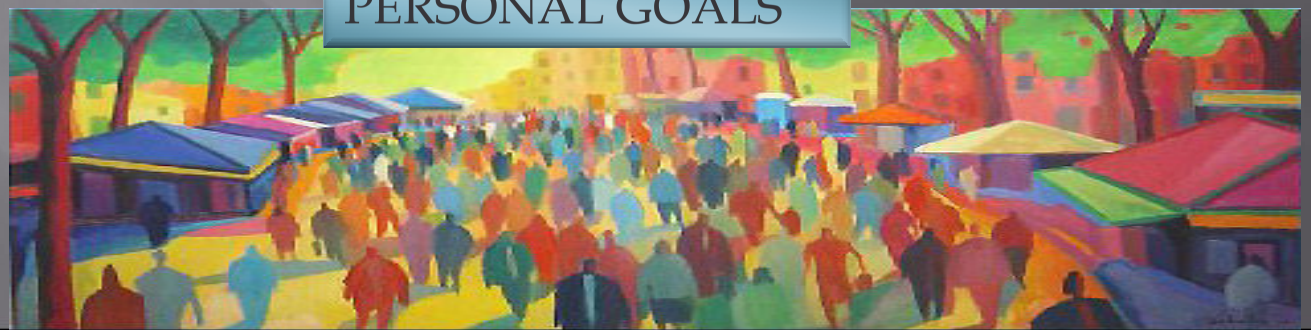
At age 65,
a substantial number of individuals
can expect
a substantial number of years
in good health
and with no disability

But… do you really want to work after retirement age?

Non-health reasons involved

REASONS TO KEEP WORKING	REASONS TO STOP WORKING
Financial needs	Workplace issues
Attitudes about retirement	Family health
Personal satisfaction	Desire to pursue other activities
Lack of retirement planning	"Enough is enough"
Availability of bridge (part time) jobs	Lack of commitment with work
	Weak socialization with co-workers

PERSONAL GOALS



The short working time of extremelly specialized jobs

- Many studies in health professionals show that most are not expecting to work over retirement age.
- A neurosurgeon may have only 15-20 years of productive life!

Kowalski SD, Dalley K, Weigand T. *When will faculty retire?: Factors influencing retirement decisions of nurse educators.* J Nurs Educ 2006.

Rovit RL. *To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose: retirement and the neurosurgeon.* J Neurosurg 2004.

Strategies for retaining older (*vintage*) workers

Valuable human capital: the aging health care worker.

Collins SK, Collins KS. College of Business and Administration, Southern Illinois University

With the workforce growing older and the supply of younger workers diminishing, it is critical for health care managers to understand the factors necessary to capitalize on their vintage employees.

Retaining this segment of the workforce has a multitude of benefits… Retaining the aging employee is possible…

These employees should be considered a valuable resource of human capital because without their extensive expertise, intense loyalty and work ethic, and superior customer service skills, health care organizations could suffer severe economic repercussions in the near future.

Health Care Manag (Frederick). 2006 Jul-Sep;25(3):213-20.

Ageism

The hidden reason behind mandatory retirement?

Ageism

- Ageism = discrimination by age
- May be behind cost reduction issues.
- Managers used stereotypical images to discourage older workers and did not facilitate adaptation.
- However, they rely on the experience of older workers for difficult works, not adapting the workplace.

Mc Mullin FA, Marshall VW. *Ageism, age relations, and garment industry work in Montreal.* Gerontologist 2001

Ageism

- Drury E. *Age discrimination against older workers in the European Community*. Eurolink Age, 1996.
- Sargeant M. *Age Discrimination in Employment*, Institute of Employment Rights, London, 1999.
- Duncan C, Loretto W, White P. *Ageism, early exit and British trades unions*. Industrial Relations Journal 2000.
- House of Commons Select Committee on Education and Employment. *Age Discrimination in Employment*. Seventh Report, 2000.

Conclusions

Working limits are individual.

From a population point of view, theses limits are now far from usual and mandatory retirement ages.

Older workers are capable, reliable, and add value to their organization.

Limits depend on diseases, disabilities and will, conditioned by a personal project.

Conclusions

Gradual retirement is better adapted to physiological aging.

Ageism, not science (or even common sense) may be behind some decisions, and should be avoided.

Thank you