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As the Clinton administration considers major overhauls in health insurance, welfare, and labor market regulation, it is important for economists and policymakers to understand the impact of social and welfare programs on employment rates. This volume explores how programs such as social security, income transfers, and child care in Western Europe, the United States, and Japan have affected labor market flexibility—the ability of workers to adjust to fast-growing segments of the economy. Does tying health insurance to employment limit job mobility? Do housing policies inhibit workers from moving to new jobs in different areas? What are the effects of daycare and maternity leave policies on working mothers? The authors explore these and many other questions in an effort to understand why European unemployment rates are so high compared with the U.S. rate. Through an examination of diverse data sets across different countries, the authors find that social protection programs do not strongly affect labor market flexibility. A valuable comparison of labor markets and welfare programs, this book demonstrates how social protection policies have affected employment rates around the globe.
