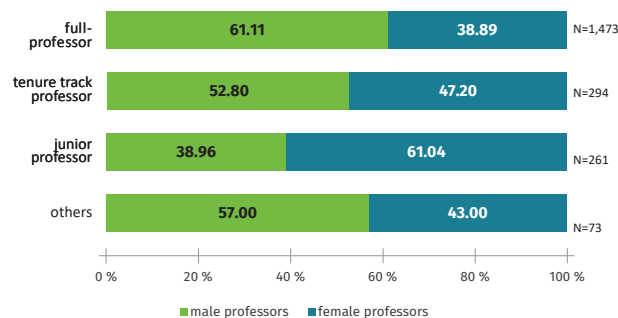


## The **prof\*panel** – Academic career trajectories in transition?

The goal of the DZHW (German Centre for Higher Education Research and Science Studies) professors survey is to establish a comprehensive quantitative database for researching academic careers in Germany since the appointment to a professorship, with a focus on the diversity of career paths since the introduction of the tenure track programme as a significant structural reform in the academic system.

The **prof\*panel** is designed as a longitudinal study and currently comprises two waves of data collection (2022, 2023). The data from the first wave (N=2,586) contain extensive information on the career paths, social determinants, or family situations of professors and much more.

### Gender distribution by types of professorship (in %)



DZHW/prof\*panel, Wave 1

Overall, the gender distribution of our sample shows a majority of 57% male professors compared to 43% female professors (male: 1,467; female: 1,098). The data illustrated shows a varied gender distribution depending on the type of professorship, but above all, it shows that the significant gender disparity present among full professorships (tenured) is lower among junior and tenure track professorships.

## Relevance of the **prof\*panel**

While good empirical data are available for the analysis of students with a higher education entrance certificate, students, or doctoral candidates, this has not been the case for professors at German universities for a long time. Thus, insights into the career paths and general life situations of professors in Germany, as well as their changes over time, have been largely unknown.

The DZHW professors survey, **prof\*panel**, aims to close this data gap by providing an empirical basis to analyse professorial career paths and generating well-founded insights for political decision-making processes.

With this brochure, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the various pathways to professorship in Germany and selected demographic characteristics of those professors who have participated in the **prof\*panel**.



## The first longitudinal survey study on university professors in Germany.

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Jasmin M. Kizilirmak



<https://profpanel.dzhw.eu>  
State: April 2024, Hanover

**DZHW**  
German Centre for Higher Education Research  
and Science Studies

## Paths to professorship

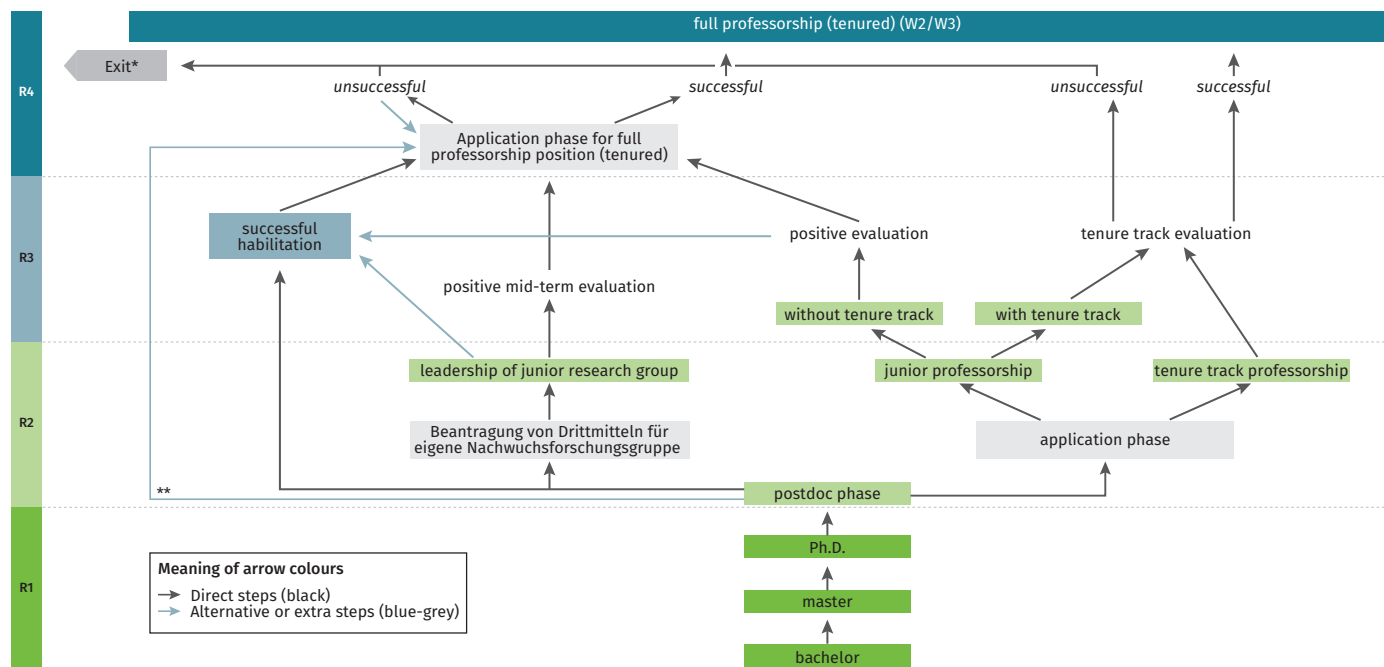
In the German higher education system, there are several paths to a full professorship (tenured) position. However, the probability of success varies greatly depending on the field of study. Following a successful doctoral degree, the traditional route to a professorship has been through **habilitation** or equivalent achievements. Habilitation grants *Venia Legendi* the right to teach at universities. However, during habilitation, researchers are typically faced with **low scientific independence and significant uncertainty** due to fixed-term contracts [1]. This makes the career path of habilitation less attractive for young researchers.

**New qualification opportunities** have therefore been implemented to pave the way for a full professorship:

- the **junior professorship** (2002)
- the **junior research group leadership** (2016)
- and the **tenure track professorship** (2017).

As a recently established career path, the **tenure track professorship** is intended to be an attractive and recognised alternative to the habilitation and at the same time modernise and internationalise the German higher education landscape. The tenure track is the only path that **offers guaranteed permanence**, provided that the evaluation criteria are met, and is therefore a **transparent and predictable** career path that is also intended to facilitate better **work-life balance** and **gender equality**. Furthermore, the tenure track aims to encourage young researchers to become **independent** of their professors at an earlier stage, thereby promoting independent research [2].

### Paths to full professorship (tenured)



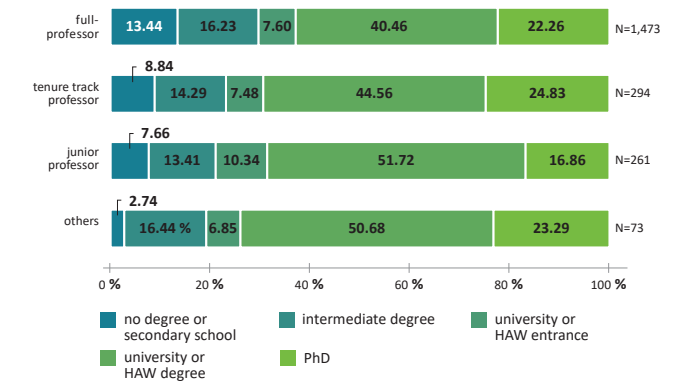
\*Frequent exit from academia due to limits of the maximum fixed-term contract period (WissZeitVG).  
Note: This presentation does not claim to be exhaustive

\*\*Depending on the academic discipline, the significance of pathways via habilitation-equivalent achievements varies.

## Social background of professors

The German education system is generally characterised by strong influences of educational background on opportunities in educational trajectories [3]. This raises the question of the extent to which opportunities for new career paths to full professorship differ depending on social background.

### Highest academic degree of parents (in %)



DZHW/prof\*panel, Wave 1

A closer look at our panel reveals: (1) All types of professorships are more likely than average to come from educated families (for comparison: the proportion of the German population with a doctorate is 1.2% - among professors whose parents have a doctorate it is 22%) [4]. (2) Tenure track professors have the highest proportion of parents with a doctorate (25%).

This observation underscores the importance of making newer paths to full professorship more transparent and accessible to people without a parent with higher education experiences.

## References

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- [3] Kracke, N., Buck, D., & Middendorff, E. (2018). Beteiligung an Hochschulbildung. Chancen(un)gleichheit in Deutschland. DZHW Brief 03/2018. [https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub\\_brief/dzhw\\_brief\\_03\\_2018.pdf](https://www.dzhw.eu/pdf/pub_brief/dzhw_brief_03_2018.pdf).
- [4] Schade, M. (2023). Promotion in Deutschland. Statistik. Wie viele Deutsche haben einen Dokortitel? Zahlen und Fakten zur Promotionsquote. <https://www.academica.de/ratgeber/promotion-statistik>.