

MLA Issue Brief: The Academic Workforce

One Faculty Serving All Students

All college and university teachers, whether in full- or part-time positions, on or off the tenure track, need to see themselves as members of one faculty working together to provide a quality education to all students.

All faculty members need to receive compensation and institutional support and recognition commensurate with their status as professionals.

- Full- and part-time faculty members teaching off the tenure track are professionals who make indispensable contributions to their institutions.
- In 1970 part-time faculty members represented only 22.0% of all faculty members teaching in United States colleges and universities; in 2007 part-timers represented 48.6%.
- A third of full- and part-time faculty members teaching off the tenure track in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences have been in their current teaching position longer than six years; a fifth or more have held their current position longer than ten years.
- These faculty members function as permanent members of their institutions' faculties, yet institutions continue to follow personnel and compensation policies based on outdated assumptions that non-tenure-track faculty members are short-term employees who will make up no more than a small proportion of the faculty.
- Despite overwhelming evidence of the professional contributions and permanence of full- and part-time non-tenure-track faculty members, at every point institutions shortchange the members of their faculties who teach off the tenure track and part-time—from hiring to salaries to office space and equipment to opportunities for review of job performance and professional development and advancement.

All long-term faculty members need to be fully enfranchised to participate in planning their departments' curricula in the areas in which they teach.

- Institutional contracts and personnel policies need to distinguish full- and part-time faculty members who teach off the tenure track on a long-term basis from those employed for one or two years; only the latter can reasonably be regarded as contingent.
- Non-tenure-track faculty members are often not included in curriculum planning, student advising, and other aspects of college life fundamental to sustaining good learning environments and positive departmental cultures.
- Although a substantial portion of non-tenure-track faculty members, including those teaching part-time, are actually permanent members of their departments, their formal institutional status as contingent faculty members impedes their integration into department life.

All faculty members should be aware of the MLA's recommended standards and guidelines for the academic workforce.

- The number of tenure lines should be sufficient to cover courses in the upper-division undergraduate and graduate curricula and to ensure an appropriate presence of tenured and tenure-track faculty members in the lower division.
- The MLA recommends that 45% of undergraduate course sections in Carnegie doctoral institutions, 55% in master's institutions, and 70% in baccalaureate institutions be taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty members.
- The MLA recommends that 60% of undergraduate course sections in Carnegie doctoral institutions, 70% in master's institutions, and 80% in baccalaureate institutions be taught by full-time faculty members (on or off the tenure track). The percentage of course sections taught by full-time faculty members should never drop below the majority of the course sections a department offers in any given semester.
- The MLA recommends a salary range of \$6,600–\$9,500 per course section, with fringe benefits and cost-of-living increases, as the reasonable minimum compensation for part-time faculty members.

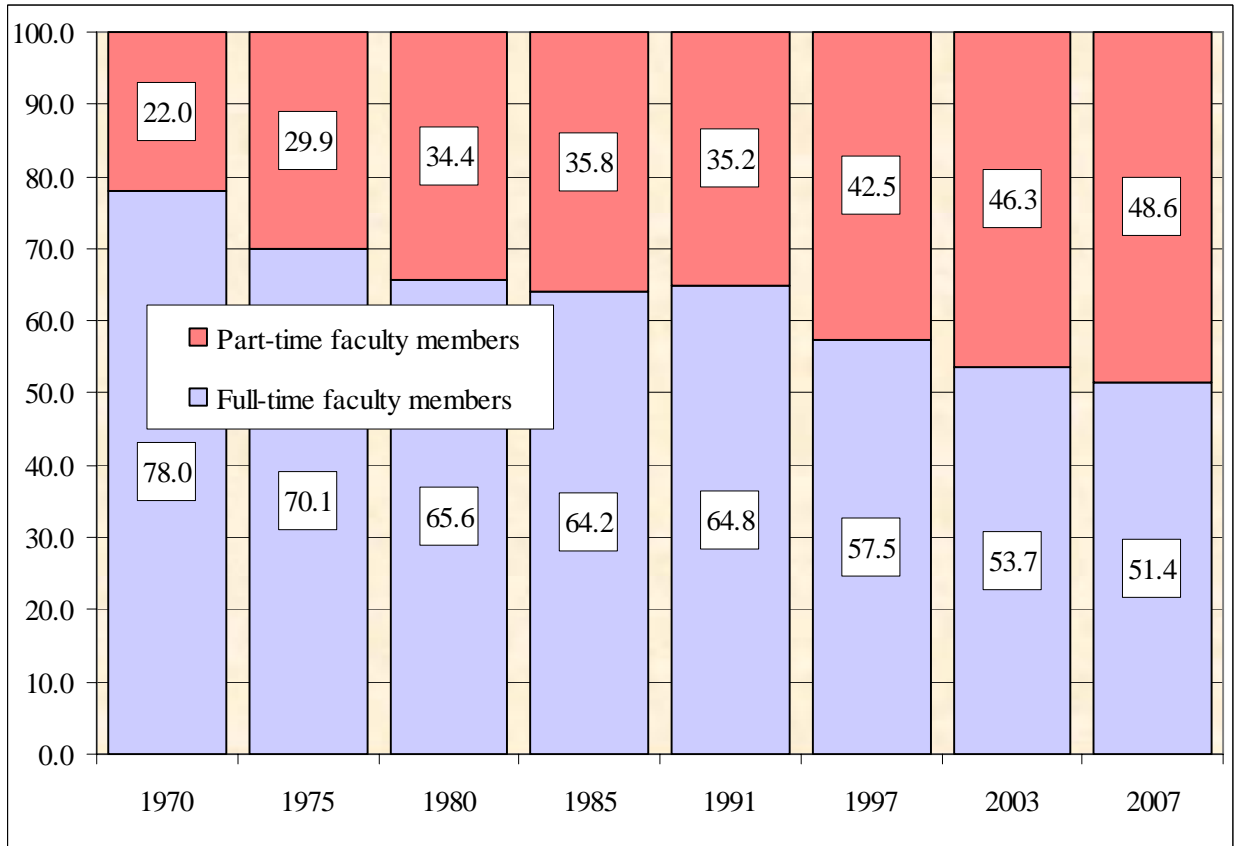
All faculty members should have access to key information on academic staffing in their departments and use this information, along with MLA-recommended targets for staffing, contracts, compensation, and working conditions, to advocate for change.

- As a profession, as departments, and as individual faculty members and administrators, we need to know the population of undergraduate and (where applicable) graduate students who complete courses in our departments and the allocation of teachers in different employment categories across levels of the curriculum—introductory or general education courses, upper-division courses chiefly for majors, and graduate courses.
- We need to know the policies and procedures departments and institutions follow when hiring faculty members in the different contract categories and the policies for salary increases and benefits, professional review, development, and advancement that apply to faculty members in each category.
- We need to know the contractual arrangements of faculty members teaching in various types of full- and part-time non-tenure-track positions and the number of years individuals in the various contract categories have been in their positions.
- We need to share our findings with the MLA, which will use them to develop anonymous composite portraits of typical local circumstances in different institutional settings.

When all teachers are appropriately compensated and are active participants in curriculum planning, student advising, and campus life, then learning flourishes and student retention and completion rates increase.

For the most recent data on the academic workforce, please see the figures below. For more information about what you can do, please go to the MLA Academic Workforce Advocacy Kit (www.mla.org/advocacy_kit).

Fig 1. Percentage of Part-Time and Full-Time Faculty Members, 1970–2007



Source: Table 238, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007*; 2007 Fall Staff Survey, IPEDS

In 1970 part-time faculty members represented only 22.0% of all faculty members teaching in United States colleges and universities. In 2007 the percentages of part-timers had increased to 48.6% of faculty members in all institutions and 41.2% in four-year institutions.

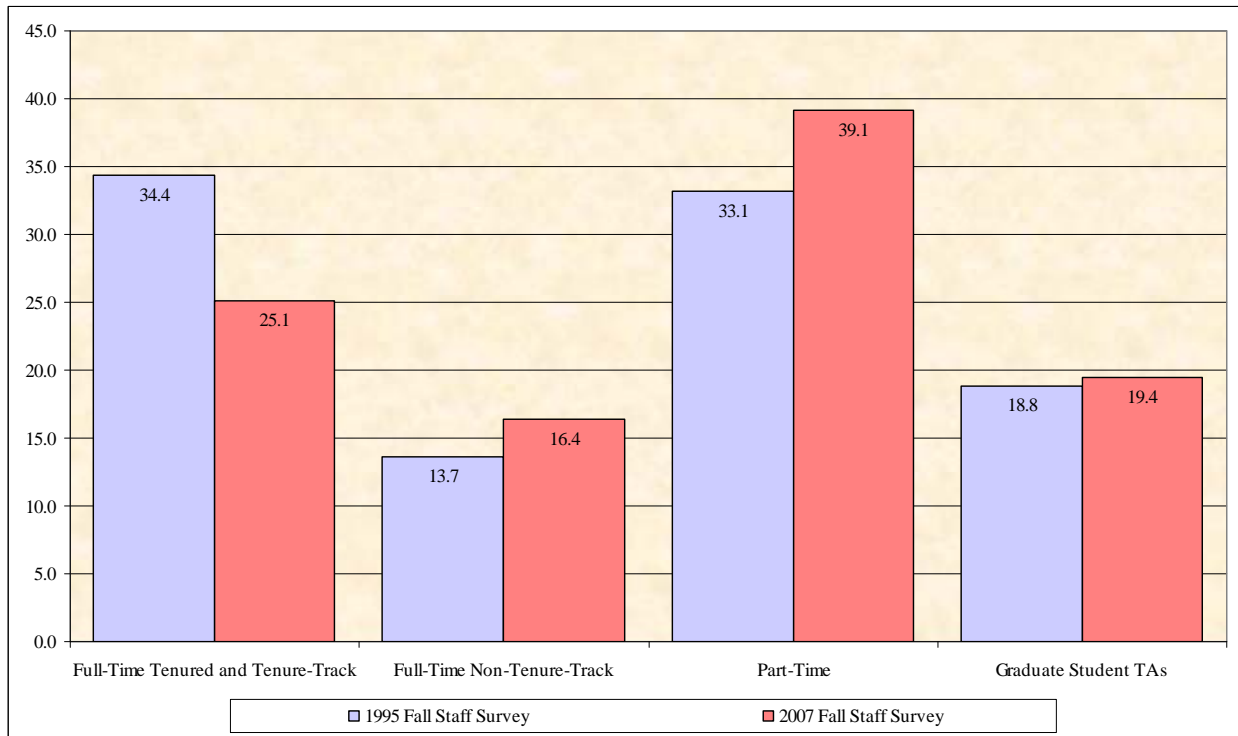
Fig. 2. Percentage of Teachers Employed in Full- and Part-Time Positions On and Off the Tenure Track, 2007



Source: 1995 and 2007 Fall Staff Surveys, IPEDS

Note: The part-time non-tenure-track faculty figure is an estimate because the Fall Staff Survey does not disaggregate the small percentage of tenured and tenure-track faculty members who are employed part-time from other part-time faculty members.

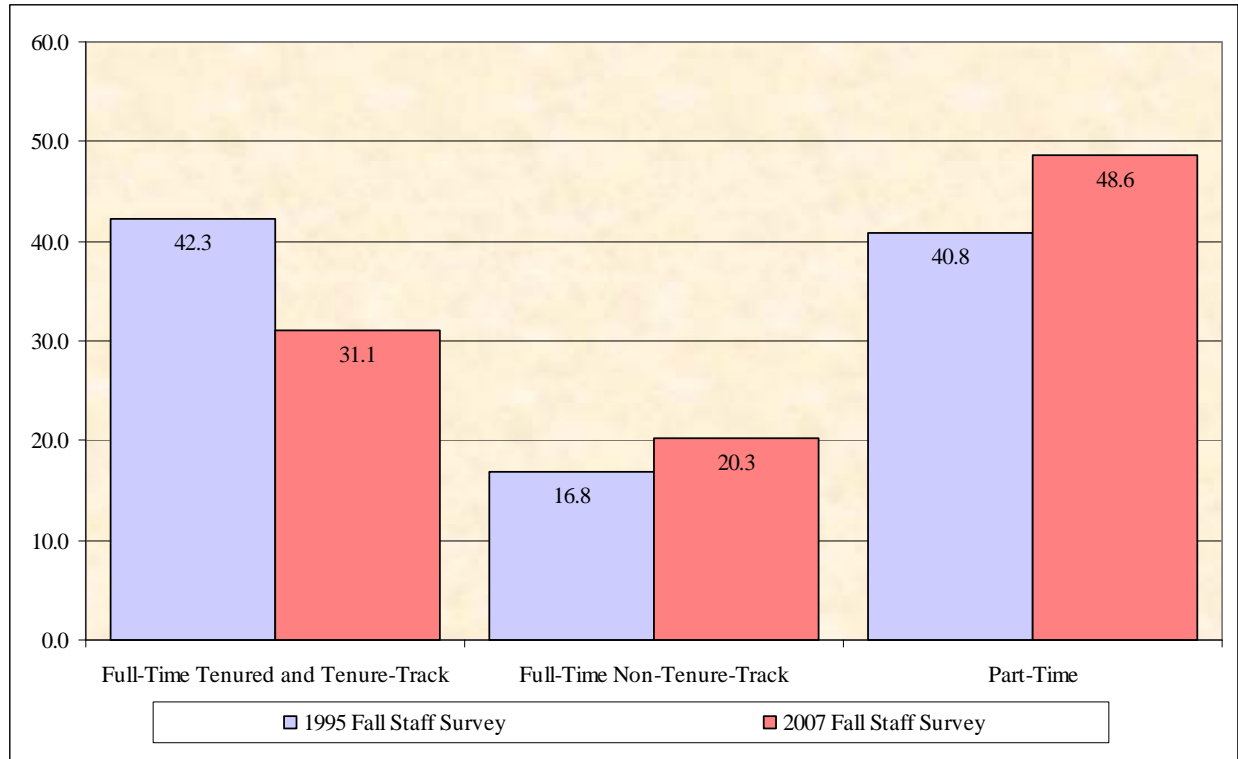
Fig 3. Percentage of Teachers in Different Employment Categories, 1995 and 2007



Source: 1995 and 2007 Fall Staff Surveys, IPEDS

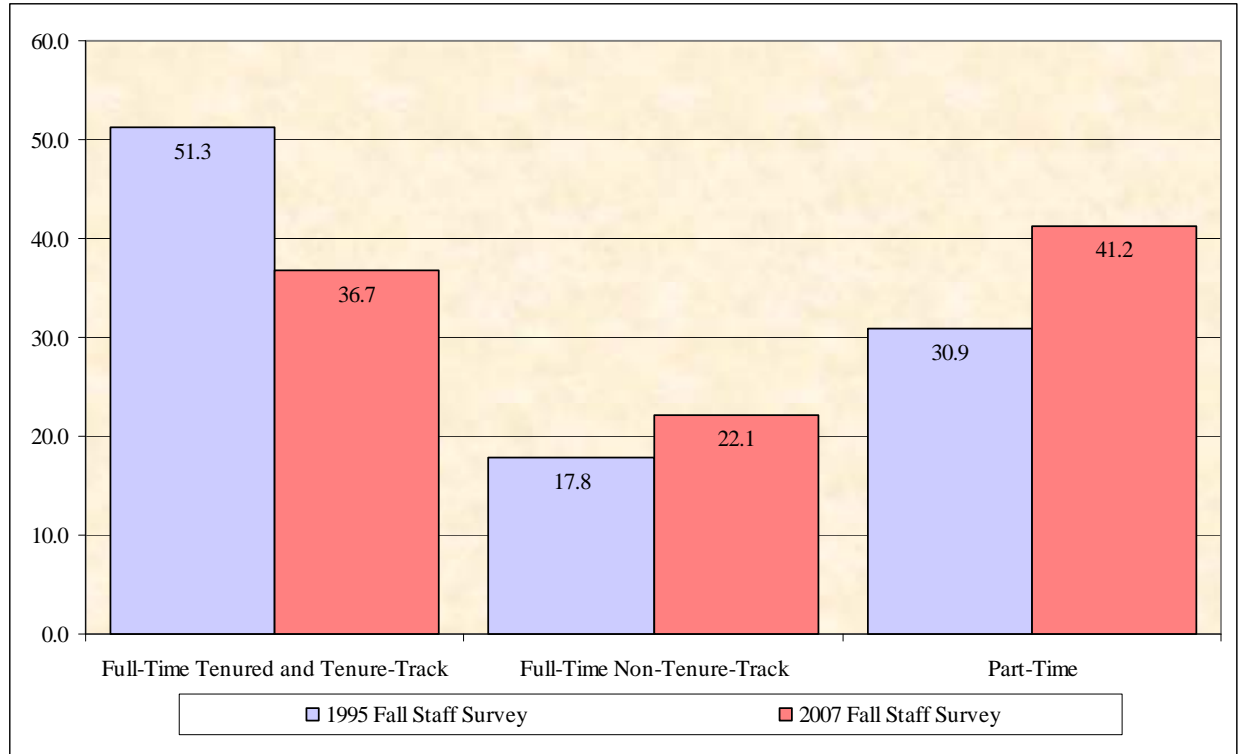
When graduate student teaching assistants (TAs) are included, almost three-fifths of the teaching corps in higher education taught part-time in 2007—58.5% in all institutions and 55.9% in four-year institutions. Graduate student TAs accounted for 19.4% of teachers in higher education in 2007 (25.0% in four-year institutions); full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members made up only 25.1% (27.5% in four-year institutions).

Fig. 4. Percentage of Faculty Members in Different Employment Categories, 1995 and 2007



Source: 1995 and 2007 Fall Staff Surveys, IPEDS

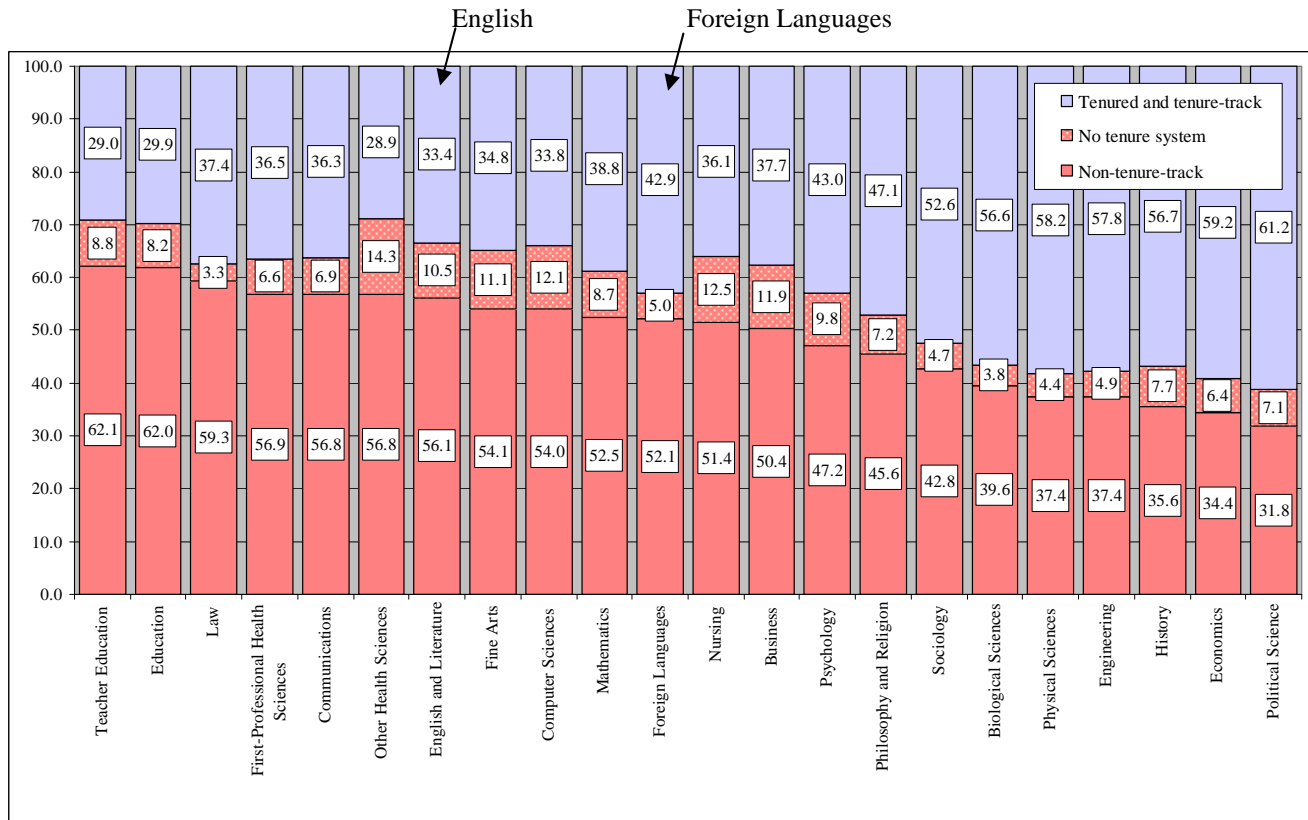
Fig. 5. Percentage of Faculty Members in Four-Year Institutions in Different Employment Categories, 1995 and 2007



Source: 1995 and 2007 Fall Staff Surveys, IPEDS

Excluding graduate student TAs, in 2007 less than one-third of all faculty members—31.1%—were professors in full-time tenured or tenure-track positions, compared with 42.3% in 1995. In four-year institutions the figure is 36.7%, compared with 51.3% in 1995.

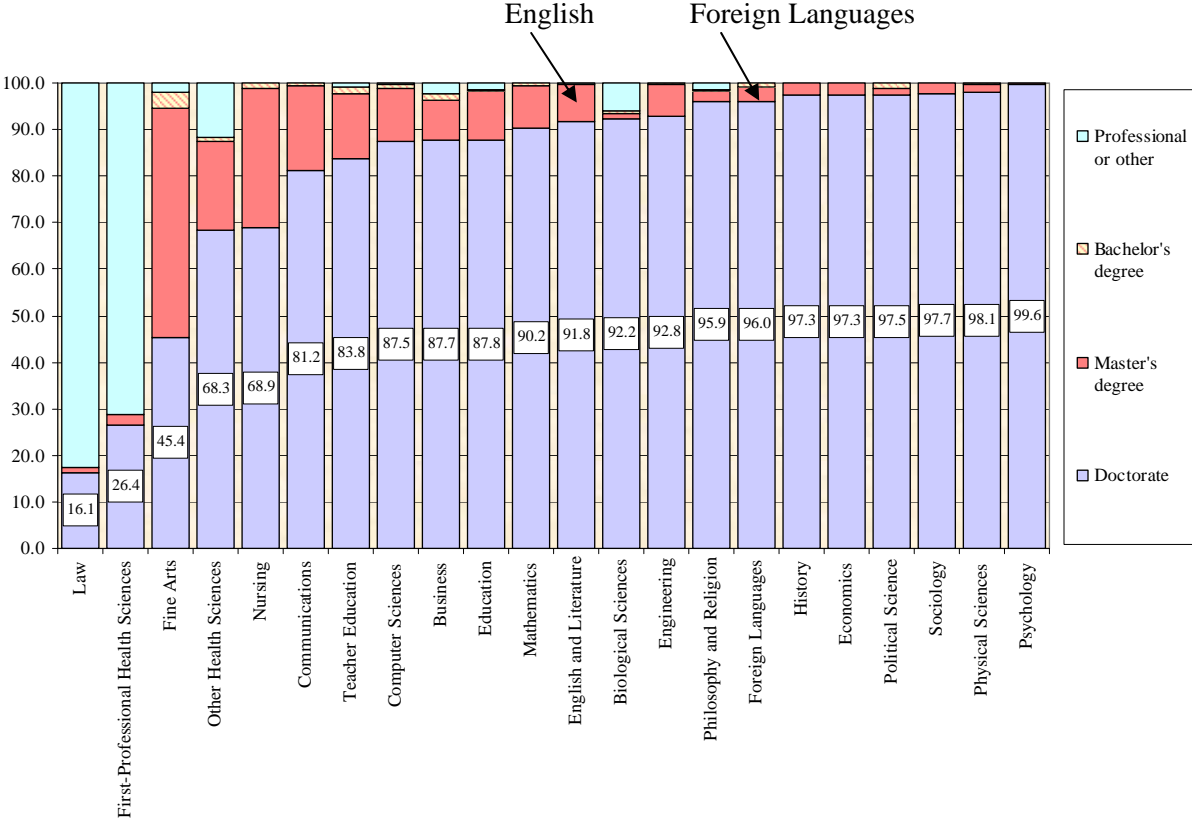
Fig. 6. Percentage of Faculty Members in Different Employment Categories in Twenty-Two Teaching Fields



Source: 2004 NSOPF

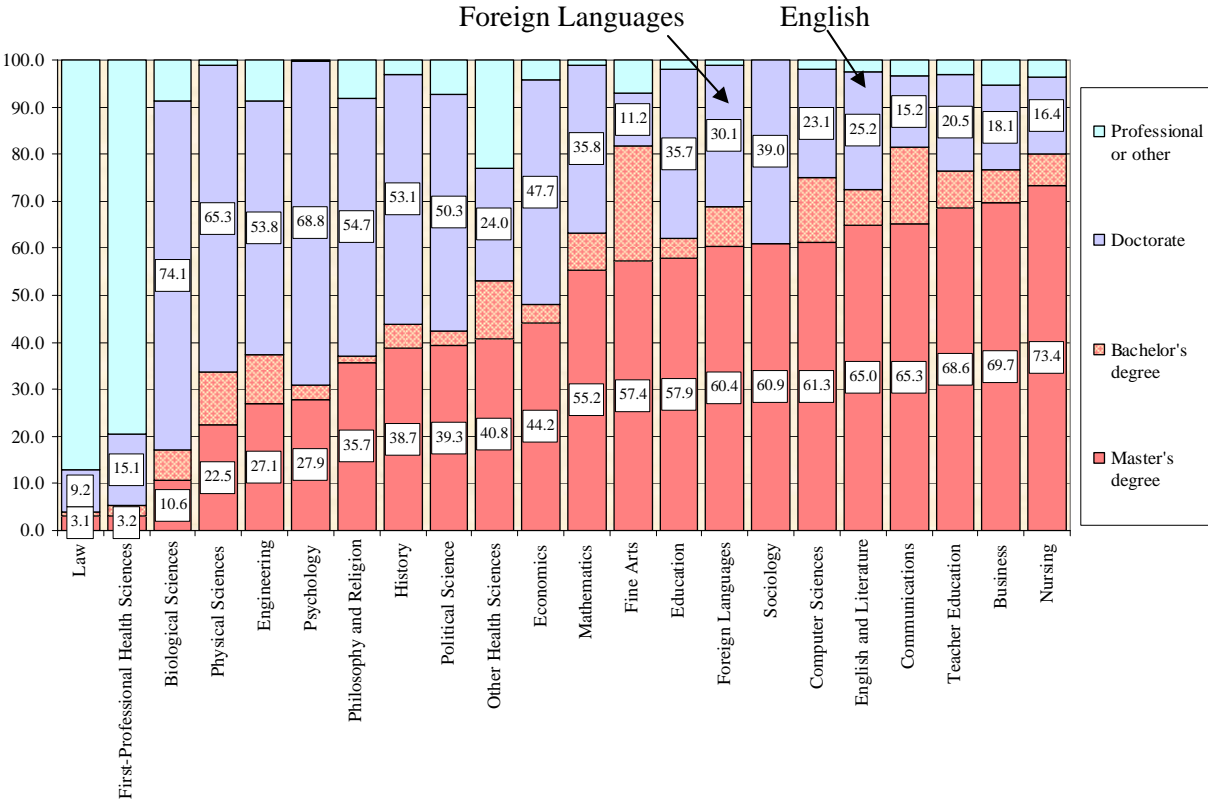
The proportions of faculty members holding appointments on and off the tenure track vary considerably across the different academic disciplines, from about 30% tenure-line appointments in education to about 60% in political science and economics. In English, about a third of the faculty (excluding graduate student TAs) hold positions on the tenure track; in foreign languages, a little more than two-fifths do.

Fig. 7. Percentage of Doctorate-Holding Tenure-Line Faculty Members in Twenty-Two Teaching Fields, Four-Year Institutions Only



Source: 2004 NSOPF

Fig. 8. Percentage of Non-Tenure-Track Faculty Members Who Hold a Doctorate or a Master's Degree as Their Highest Degree in Twenty-Two Teaching Fields, Four-Year Institutions Only



Source: 2004 NSOPF

Faculty members on and off the tenure track also differ markedly in their degree qualifications. Across the arts and sciences, in four-year institutions, well over 90% of faculty members on the tenure track hold a doctorate. Among non-tenure-track faculty members, doctorates are held by two-thirds to three-quarters of those in physical and biological sciences, but by only 25% to 30% of non-tenure-track faculty members in English and foreign languages. A master's degree is the highest degree held by 60.4% of non-tenure-track faculty members in foreign languages and 65.0% in English.