



## Illinois Community College Board Frequently Asked Questions

### WHAT IS THE RETENTION RATE FOR ILLINOIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS?

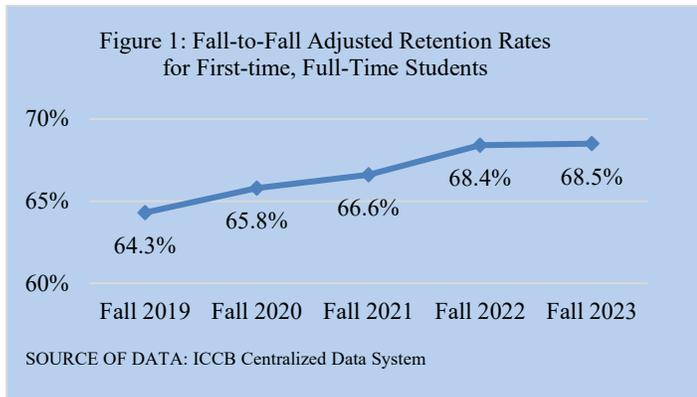
Retention Rates provide a measure of student attachment to college. First-year retention is particularly important since new students—especially recent high school graduates—need to successfully transition to college and the accompanying elevated academic and personal responsibility expectations. Elevated Retention Rates show an ongoing engagement in the educational process and demonstrate an attachment to college. Elevated Retention Rates are typically associated with individuals who are making academic progress and improve the individual’s chances of completing a certificate or degree.

Table 1

#### Fall-to-Fall Adjusted Retention (Including Completers) for First-Time, Full-Time College-Level Students in Illinois Public Community Colleges, Fall Cohorts 2019–2023

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
First-Time, Full-Time Entering Cohort	27,477	23,274	23,473	24,826	24,237
Returned	17,106	14,826	15,056	16,194	15,843
<b>Unadjusted Retention</b>	<b>62.3%</b>	<b>63.7%</b>	<b>64.1%</b>	<b>65.2%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>
Completed Year 1	572	480	580	785	764
Not Returned, Not Completed	9,799	7,968	7,837	7,847	7,630
Returned or Completed	17,678	15,306	15,636	16,979	16,607
<b>Adjusted Retention</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>66.6%</b>	<b>68.4%</b>	<b>68.5%</b>

Source of Data: ICCB Centralized Data System—Fall Enrollment (E1) and Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1)



Statewide first-time, full-time student Fall-to-Fall Retention Rates were calculated for the most recent five years. The source of the data was the Fall Enrollment (E1) and Annual Enrollment and Completion (A1) data. Retention Rates are always expressed as a percentage. A Retention Rate only includes individuals who re-enrolled the following fall, and an Adjusted Retention Rate includes individuals who re-enrolled the next fall plus those individuals who graduated during the intervening year. Part of the reason for the adjustment is that a variety of community college certificate programs

can be completed within one year. The Adjusted Retention Rate reflects a more comprehensive perspective and will be the focus of the analysis provided. The difference between these two rates is typically small.

Retention information is reported for five years: Fall 2019 to Fall 2020, Fall 2020 to Fall 2021, Fall 2021 to Fall 2022, Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, and Fall 2023 to Fall 2024. The overall statewide Adjusted Retention Rate has increased about four percentage points over the past five years, from 64.3 percent for the Fall 2019 cohort to 68.5 percent for the Fall 2023 cohort.

According to NCES’s Digest of Education Statistics (2023, [Table 326.30](#)), the national first-to-second year Retention Rate for full-time, first-time freshmen in public community colleges was 62.7 percent (Fall 2021 to Fall 2022). An Adjusted Retention Rate is not calculated. The Fall 2021 to Fall 2022 unadjusted statewide Retention Rate for the Illinois community colleges—64.1 percent—compares favorably with this national figure.

For more information, please see [Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System](#). Visit the ICCB website to [locate a Community College near you](#) or for a [map of district boundaries](#).