



## 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.

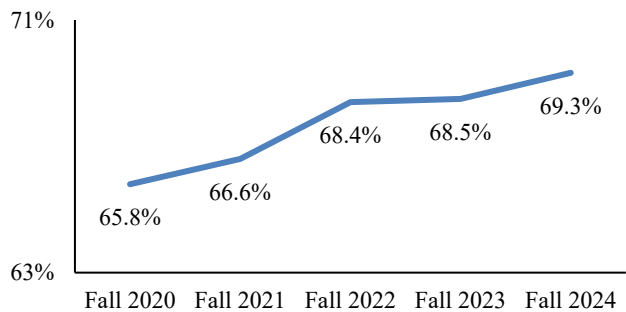
Table 1

#### Fall-to-Fall Adjusted Retention (Including Completers) for First-Time, Full-Time College-Level Students in Illinois Public Community Colleges, Fall Cohorts 2020–2024

	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023	Fall 2024
First-Time, Full-Time Entering Cohort	23,274	23,473	24,826	24,237	24,416
Returned	14,826	15,056	16,194	15,843	16,130
<b>Unadjusted Retention</b>	<b>63.7%</b>	<b>64.1%</b>	<b>65.2%</b>	<b>65.4%</b>	<b>66.1%</b>
Completed Year 1	480	580	785	764	797
Not Returned, Not Completed	7,968	7,837	7,847	7,630	7,489
Returned or Completed	15,306	15,636	16,979	16,607	16,927
<b>Adjusted Retention</b>	<b>65.8%</b>	<b>66.6%</b>	<b>68.4%</b>	<b>68.5%</b>	<b>69.3%</b>

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

**Figure 1: Fall-to-Fall Adjusted Retention Rates for First-time, Full-Time Students**



SOURCE OF DATA: ICCB Centralized Data System

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 2020 to Fall 2021, Fall 2021 to Fall 2022, Fall 2022 to Fall 2023, and Fall 2023 to Fall 2024, and Fall 2024 to Fall 2025. The overall statewide Adjusted Retention Rate has increased 3.5% over the past five years, from 65.8% for the Fall 2020 cohort to 69.3% for the Fall 2024 cohort.

According to NCES’s Digest of Education Statistics (2024, [Table 326.30](#)), the national first-to-second year Retention Rate for full-time, first-time freshmen in public community colleges was 64.5% (Fall 2022 to Fall 2023). An Adjusted Retention Rate is not calculated. The Fall 2022 to Fall 2023 unadjusted statewide Retention Rate for the Illinois community colleges—65.2%—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](#).