

# National Collegiate Retention and Persistence-to-Degree Rates

Since 1983, ACT has collected a comprehensive database of first-to-second-year retention rates and persistence-to-degree rates. These rates provide national benchmarks for institution type and level of selectivity. Data are compiled by ACT from the ACT Institutional Data Questionnaire, an annual online survey of information collected from two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions.

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See [www.act.org/collegepersistence](http://www.act.org/collegepersistence) for more information and access to interactive charts.



# Important Information About These Tables

- **Cohort description:** First-time/full-time students who were first enrolled at a postsecondary institution in fall 2013.
- **Retention rate:** Percent of first-time/full-time students who first enrolled in fall 2013 and were also enrolled in fall 2014 at the same institution.
- **Persistence-to-degree rate:** Percent of students completing a degree within a designated time frame at the same institution. The tables in this document are based on the year in which a particular cohort enrolled as first-time/full-time degree-seeking students, as illustrated below.

	Number of Years to Complete				
	2	3	4	5	6
Year of First Enrollment	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008

These reports are based on data accumulated through May 14, 2015.

**Many of the tables are reported by institutional selectivity. The selectivity categories are based on the general descriptions below.**

Selectivity Level	ACT® Test Middle 50%	SAT® Test Middle 50%*	Definition
Highly Selective	25–30	1710–2000	Majority admitted from top 10% of high school class
Selective	21–26	1470–1770	Majority admitted from top 25% of high school class
Traditional	18–24	1290–1650	Majority admitted from top 50% of high school class
Liberal	17–22	1230–1530	Majority admitted from bottom 50% of high school class
Open	16–21	1170–1480	Generally open to all with high school diploma or equivalent

\*SAT score ranges are a point-to-point concordance with ACT scores based on a joint study by ACT and the College Board. Selectivity ranges may vary from one institution to another.

# Table 1

**Summary Table: National First-to-Second-Year Retention Rates by Institutional Type**

<b>Degree Level/Control</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean (%)</b>	<b>SD*</b>
Two-Year Public	673	54.7	12.7
Two-Year Private	45	63.4	21.1
BA/BS Public	86	64.2	16.3
BA/BS Private	249	70.2	19.3
MA/MS/MBA/1st Professional Public	174	69.9	10.7
MA/MS/MBA/1st Professional Private	416	73.9	12.6
PhD Public	239	78.6	10.9
PhD Private	261	81.7	11.3
Total	2,143	68.0	NA

\*Standard Deviation

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015

## Table 2

**First-to-Second-Year Retention Rates: Two-Year Institutions by Admission Selectivity**

Admissions Selectivity	Two-Year Private Institutions			Two-Year Public Institutions			All Reporting Institutions in Row		
	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD
Highly Selective	1	93.0	—	1	59.0	—	2	76.0	24.0
Selective	4	83.5	25.6	2	46.5	0.7	6	71.2	27.6
Traditional	10	64.0	29.2	13	53.2	15.3	23	57.9	22.5
Liberal	3	72.0	8.0	9	59.6	14.4	12	62.7	14.0
Open	27	58.1	15.5	648	54.7	12.6	675	54.8	12.8
All Reporting Institutions in Column	45	63.4	21.1	673	54.7	12.7	718	55.2	13.5

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015

## Table 3

**First-to-Second-Year Retention Rates: Four-Year Public Institutions by Level of Selectivity and Degrees Offered**

Admissions Selectivity	Offering Bachelor's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees			All Reporting Institutions in Row		
	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD
Highly Selective	3	92.7	1.5	2	91.5	2.1	25	93.3	3.9	30	93.1	3.6
Selective	4	84.8	10.0	22	81.1	7.6	71	82.7	11.7	97	82.5	10.8
Traditional	38	69.2	8.5	115	70.5	8.0	135	74.4	7.2	288	72.1	8.0
Liberal	1	85.0	—	9	62.6	11.5	6	66.0	12.5	16	65.3	12.4
Open	40	54.7	16.3	26	58.5	9.8	2	66.5	6.4	68	56.5	14.1
All Reporting Institutions in Column	86	64.2	16.3	174	69.9	10.7	239	78.6	10.9	499	73.1	13.1

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015

# Table 4

**First-to-Second-Year Retention Rates: Four-Year Private Institutions by Level of Selectivity and Degrees Offered**

Admissions Selectivity	Offering Bachelor's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees			All Reporting Institutions in Row		
	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD	N	Mean (%)	SD
Highly Selective	31	94.0	4.2	21	91.6	5.2	49	95.0	3.0	101	94.0	4.1
Selective	62	80.8	11.7	117	81.2	8.3	95	82.9	7.3	274	81.7	8.9
Traditional	87	64.9	16.0	219	71.0	10.4	99	76.2	7.4	405	71.0	11.9
Liberal	20	57.0	11.6	24	64.5	12.2	9	80.0	7.5	53	64.3	13.7
Open	49	56.6	19.9	35	62.8	15.9	9	59.0	26.2	93	59.2	19.2
All Reporting Institutions in Column	249	70.2	19.3	416	73.9	12.6	261	81.7	11.3	926	75.1	15.0

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015

# Table 5

**Summary Table: National Persistence-to-Degree\* Rates by Institutional Type**

<b>Degree Level/Control</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean (%)</b>	<b>SD</b>
Two-Year Public	345	21.9	14.7
Two-Year Private	17	40.2	30.5
BA/BS Public	50	36.4	21.9
BA/BS Private	155	57.2	24.6
MA/1st Professional Public	145	38.9	18.2
MA/1st Professional Private	321	54.1	16.2
PhD Public	223	49.5	18.3
PhD Private	226	62.5	17.7
Total	1,482	45.3	NA

\*Completion in three years for associate's degree; five years for BA/BS

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015

# Table 6

**National Persistence-to-Degree Rates: Two-Year Institutions by Level of Selectivity**

Admissions Selectivity		Two-Year Private Institutions			Two-Year Public Institutions			All Reporting Institutions in Row		
		In 2 Years	In 3 Years	In 4 Years	In 2 Years	In 3 Years	In 4 Years	In 2 Years	In 3 Years	In 4 Years
Highly Selective	N =	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	—
	Mean (%) =	66.0	72.0	—	—	—	—	66.0	72.0	—
	SD =	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Selective	N =	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	3	2
	Mean (%) =	35.5	40.0	—	—	—	—	23.7	26.7	—
	SD =	50.2	56.6	—	—	—	—	41.0	46.2	—
Traditional	N =	6	3	3	5	6	4	11	9	7
	Mean (%) =	27.2	29.0	40.7	14.8	31.8	36.0	21.5	30.9	38.0
	SD =	25.6	7.9	10.3	15.5	17.7	22.9	21.6	14.6	17.5
Liberal	N =	1	1	—	1	3	1	2	4	1
	Mean (%) =	54.0	54.0	—	63.0	52.3	67.0	58.5	52.8	67.0
	SD =	—	—	—	—	13.7	—	6.4	11.2	—
Open	N =	7	10	9	274	335	251	281	345	260
	Mean (%) =	24.1	39.0	32.3	12.2	21.5	24.7	12.5	22.0	25.0
	SD =	27.1	33.3	28.8	11.1	14.3	13.8	11.8	15.4	14.6
All Reporting Institutions in Column	N =	17	17	13	281	345	257	298	362	270
	Mean (%) =	30.8	40.2	31.8	12.4	21.9	24.9	13.4	22.7	25.3
	SD =	27.8	30.5	26.0	11.6	14.7	14.3	13.6	16.2	15.0

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015



# Table 7

**National Persistence-to-Degree Rates: Four-Year Public Institutions by Degrees Offered and Level of Selectivity**

Admissions Selectivity		Offering Bachelor's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees		
		In 4 Years	In 5 Years	In 6 Years	In 4 Years	In 5 Years	In 6 Years	In 4 Years	In 5 Years	In 6 Years
Highly Selective	N =	3	3	3	1	1	1	22	20	23
	Mean (%) =	82.3	83.3	83.7	37.0	72.0	78.0	62.9	80.0	82.9
	SD =	2.1	1.5	1.5	—	—	—	16.8	9.3	7.4
Selective	N =	4	4	4	20	19	21	69	70	70
	Mean (%) =	46.5	58.3	61.0	43.6	59.0	62.7	38.0	56.9	62.4
	SD =	30.9	22.8	21.4	15.1	12.3	12.1	17.1	14.8	12.7
Traditional	N =	31	30	32	100	98	102	127	126	129
	Mean (%) =	24.7	38.1	42.3	23.4	38.8	43.5	23.6	41.7	48.3
	SD =	11.5	12.7	14.9	14.6	15.3	14.3	11.2	13.5	12.5
Liberal	N =	1	1	1	8	8	8	5	5	5
	Mean (%) =	33.0	45.0	46.0	23.0	39.6	44.3	18.6	32.8	39.6
	SD =	—	—	—	13.6	17.8	18.7	15.5	15.4	15.0
Open	N =	13	12	14	19	19	20	2	2	2
	Mean (%) =	8.7	12.5	19.9	8.8	17.3	21.0	10.5	16.5	29.0
	SD =	12.8	12.8	14.2	5.9	11.5	13.2	0.7	6.4	2.8
All Reporting Institutions in Column	N =	52	50	54	148	145	152	225	223	229
	Mean (%) =	25.9	36.4	40.2	24.4	38.9	43.5	31.6	49.5	55.7
	SD =	21.7	21.9	21.4	16.4	18.2	17.9	18.5	18.3	16.6

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015

# Table 8

**National Persistence-to-Degree Rates: Four-Year Private Institutions by Degrees Offered and Level of Selectivity**

Admissions Selectivity		Offering Bachelor's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees		
		In 4 Years	In 5 Years	In 6 Years	In 4 Years	In 5 Years	In 6 Years	In 4 Years	In 5 Years	In 6 Years
Highly Selective	N =	28	28	30	19	19	19	44	42	46
	Mean (%) =	81.5	85.9	87.1	74.3	80.4	81.5	77.8	86.0	88.1
	SD =	9.0	7.9	7.5	8.9	7.6	7.7	13.3	8.8	7.1
Selective	N =	53	51	52	98	95	99	91	89	91
	Mean (%) =	63.0	68.9	69.7	55.9	64.3	66.0	54.8	64.0	66.3
	SD =	16.5	15.9	15.2	14.3	11.7	11.3	14.4	11.9	11.2
Traditional	N =	49	49	51	182	177	187	82	82	86
	Mean (%) =	37.0	45.3	47.0	38.7	48.5	50.5	38.3	50.5	54.2
	SD =	15.7	15.8	16.0	14.5	11.8	11.1	13.7	12.2	11.2
Liberal	N =	8	8	11	13	13	15	5	6	7
	Mean (%) =	26.3	33.6	39.9	33.9	42.9	47.0	34.6	48.8	55.4
	SD =	10.8	9.5	10.4	15.5	14.5	13.4	14.9	11.2	13.6
Open	N =	25	19	19	16	17	19	7	7	7
	Mean (%) =	22.0	24.1	27.0	26.0	34.4	42.8	46.4	55.4	61.6
	SD =	17.0	15.4	13.3	16.5	19.3	20.1	32.1	30.2	28.9
All Reporting Institutions in Column	N =	163	155	163	328	321	339	229	226	237
	Mean (%) =	50.3	57.2	58.8	45.1	54.1	56.2	52.6	62.5	65.7
	SD =	25.5	24.6	23.7	18.3	16.2	15.3	20.5	17.7	16.7

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2015