

# 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 survey of information collected from two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions.

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For more information, contact ACT Educational Services at 319/341-2275 or go to our website: [www.act.org](http://www.act.org)

# Important Information About These Tables

Beginning with the 2004 ACT Institutional Data Questionnaire (IDQ), several changes took place in the format, collection, and reporting of these data.

1. The definitions of two important data elements were modified: institutional selectivity and level of degree offerings.
2. The IDQ information was collected online rather than in traditional paper format.
3. Previous tables published by ACT featured “freshman to sophomore dropout rates.” Those rates are now reported as “first- to second-year retention rates.” Individuals who compare these results with previous reports or monitor trends in these data should keep this change in mind.
4. These reports are based on data accumulated through 7/1/11.

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

<b>Selectivity Level</b>	<b>ACT Middle 50%</b>	<b>SAT Middle 50%*</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Highly Selective	25-30	1710-2000	Majority admitted from top 10% of H.S. class
Selective	21-26	1470-1770	Majority admitted from top 25% of H.S. class
Traditional	18-24	1290-1650	Majority admitted from top 50% of H.S. class
Liberal	17-22	1230-1530	Majority admitted from bottom 50% of H.S. class
Open	16-21	1170-1480	Generally open to all with H.S. 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>SD*</b>	<b>Mean %</b>
Two-year Public	792	12.4	55.4
Two-year Private	84	27.4	57.8
BA/BS Public	86	11.5	65.6
BA/BS Private	378	18.9	69.0
MA/1st Professional Public	228	10.3	71.2
MA/1st Professional Private	507	14.0	71.9
PhD Public	250	12.5	77.9
PhD Private	258	13.9	80.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,583</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>67.1</b>

\* Standard Deviation

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

Table 2

## First- to Second-Year Retention Rates: Two-Year Colleges by Admission Selectivity

Admissions Selectivity	Two-Year Private Institutions			Two-Year Public Institutions			All Institutions in Row		
	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD
Highly Selective	92.0	1	—	—	1	—	96.0	2	5.7
Selective	66.7	3	57.7	—	1	—	75.0	4	50.0
Traditional	61.5	24	25.3	48.6	8	8.7	58.3	32	22.9
Liberal	58.3	13	35.4	59.4	12	8.4	58.8	25	25.6
Open	54.2	43	23.7	55.3	770	12.3	55.3	813	13.1
All Institutions in Column	57.8	84	27.4	55.4	792	12.4	55.7	876	14.5

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

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 Institutions in Row		
	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD
Highly Selective	87.5	4	5.0	—	1	—	89.5	27	16.8	89.4	32	15.5
Selective	81.3	3	15.5	82.9	31	5.9	82.9	68	7.5	82.9	102	7.3
Traditional	69.5	37	9.9	71.2	117	7.6	73.6	105	9.8	71.9	259	9.0
Liberal	60.3	4	2.2	65.8	13	9.9	62.0	7	29.1	63.8	24	16.7
Open	58.8	38	7.6	66.3	66	11.4	75.6	43	9.0	67.1	147	11.6
All Institutions in Column	65.6	86	11.5	71.2	228	10.3	77.9	250	12.5	73.3	564	12.3

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

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 Institutions in Row		
	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD	Mean	N	SD
Highly Selective	93.8	32	2.9	91.1	19	6.7	93.9	51	4.3	93.3	102	4.6
Selective	78.2	61	20.7	80.5	123	7.9	84.2	75	4.8	81.1	259	11.9
Traditional	66.6	130	13.8	70.5	233	10.5	72.6	87	10.5	69.8	450	11.7
Liberal	61.2	44	12.3	59.7	36	19.8	69.2	5	13.6	61.0	85	16.0
Open	62.9	111	20.4	64.9	96	16.3	73.8	40	21.9	65.5	247	19.5
All Institutions in Column	69.0	378	18.9	71.9	507	14.0	80.3	258	13.9	72.8	1,143	16.3

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

Table 5

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

<b>Degree Level/Control</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean %</b>
Two-year Public	447	19.6	26.9
Two-year Private	47	31.1	50.0
BA/BS Public	49	22.2	37.9
BA/BS Private	233	23.0	54.3
MA/1st Professional Public	196	16.6	38.6
MA/1st Professional Private	403	17.4	55.2
PhD Public	233	18.7	47.9
PhD Private	228	18.2	63.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,836</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>46.0</b>

\*Completion in 3 years for Associate Degree; 5 years for BA/BS

Table 6

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

Admission Selectivity		Two-Year Private Institutions			Two-Year Public Institutions			All Institutions in Row		
		in 2 yrs	in 3 yrs	in 4 yrs	in 2 yrs	in 3 yrs	in 4 yrs	in 2 yrs	in 3 yrs	in 4 yrs
Highly Selective	Mean % =	—	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0
	N =	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	SD =	—	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	—	0.0	0.0
Selective	Mean % =	38.5	42.0	42.0	0.0	—	0.0	25.7	61.3	42.0
	N =	2	2	2	1	1	0	3	3	2
	SD =	54.4	59.4	59.4	—	—	0.0	44.5	53.7	59.4
Traditional	Mean % =	36.5	49.2	43.0	19.5	28.2	26.4	31.6	40.2	34.7
	N =	10	12	5	4	9	5	14	21	10
	SD =	26.5	26.0	29.1	32.0	27.3	38.8	28.0	28.0	33.5
Liberal	Mean % =	49.8	61.3	0.0	34.0	36.9	27.5	45.3	49.1	18.3
	N =	5	10	1	2	10	2	7	20	3
	SD =	33.3	26.8	—	32.5	21.9	16.3	31.2	26.9	19.6
Open	Mean % =	26.6	46.3	27.4	13.1	23.9	23.7	14.0	25.1	23.9
	N =	17	23	12	250	427	216	267	450	228
	SD =	32.4	33.9	29.4	14.4	19.0	17.2	16.3	20.6	18.0
All Institutions in Column	Mean % =	35.5	50.0	31.4	13.4	26.9	23.8	16.0	26.9	24.4
	N =	35	47	20	257	447	223	292	494	243
	SD =	33.0	31.1	31.2	14.9	19.6	17.8	19.3	22.2	19.3

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011



Table 7

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

Admission Selectivity		Offering Bachelor's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees		
		in 4 yrs	in 5 yrs	in 6 yrs	in 4 yrs	in 5 yrs	in 6 yrs	in 4 yrs	in 5 yrs	in 6 yrs
Highly Selective	Mean % =	73.8	77.8	78.5	—	—	—	60.7	78.7	81.6
	N =	4	4	4	1	1	1	24	23	26
	SD =	11.6	7.3	7.6	—	—	—	15.5	8.5	7.0
Selective	Mean % =	51.7	60.3	63.7	40.2	55.4	61.0	34.0	54.8	59.8
	N =	3	3	3	29	29	30	67	66	67
	SD =	34.5	28.7	28.4	19.6	12.9	10.1	15.8	15.9	14.1
Traditional	Mean % =	25.6	40.7	45.4	21.1	37.2	42.6	21.6	39.6	46.3
	N =	29	29	30	105	104	107	95	94	97
	SD =	11.4	13.3	13.4	12.6	14.0	13.4	10.3	12.8	11.9
Liberal	Mean % =	—	—	—	16.8	28.1	33.7	19.5	36.5	42.7
	N =	1	1	1	13	13	13	6	6	6
	SD =	—	—	—	14.2	14.2	13.9	11.7	19.6	18.7
Open	Mean % =	5.8	12.0	24.7	19.8	33.6	37.2	23.8	41.0	48.2
	N =	12	12	15	50	49	52	45	44	43
	SD =	5.5	8.6	18.7	14.2	16.4	16.2	17.8	16.3	15.1
All Institutions in Column	Mean % =	26.3	37.9	43.0	23.5	38.6	43.6	29.4	47.9	54.2
	N =	49	49	53	198	196	203	237	233	239
	SD =	21.8	22.2	21.2	16.2	16.6	16.1	18.3	18.7	17.1

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011

Table 8

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

Admission Selectivity*		Offering Bachelor's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's and Master's Degrees Only			Offering Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral Degrees		
		in 4 yrs	in 5 yrs	in 6 yrs	in 4 yrs	in 5 yrs	in 6 yrs	in 4 yrs	in 5 yrs	in 6 yrs
Highly Selective	Mean % = N = SD =	83.7 26 5.4	86.8 26 5.3	87.0 26 4.8	77.5 18 9.9	83.2 19 7.4	84.9 18 6.7	75.7 47 15.9	84.4 49 11.5	86.7 51 10.1
Selective	Mean % = N = SD =	59.5 49 19.4	65.8 50 18.5	67.7 49 18.0	56.4 110 15.2	65.8 110 12.0	67.2 108 11.1	55.3 67 12.4	66.7 67 9.7	69.5 70 8.9
Traditional	Mean % = N = SD =	36.6 85 16.0	45.5 83 13.8	47.6 87 13.8	40.5 171 14.2	50.8 175 12.6	52.6 182 12.0	38.7 71 13.7	51.2 74 13.1	53.7 73 11.8
Liberal	Mean % = N = SD =	38.1 17 28.9	40.7 19 21.2	41.1 15 20.0	35.2 26 17.5	45.8 30 19.8	44.3 26 14.6	43.8 6 18.3	52.6 7 25.5	56.4 5 24.7
Open	Mean % = N = SD =	37.1 53 23.9	46.5 55 25.0	46.8 54 25.1	35.9 66 20.0	45.8 69 20.0	48.9 65 16.9	51.3 32 22.1	57.3 31 19.1	62.6 32 17.5
All Institutions in Column	Mean % = N = SD =	47.0 230 24.9	54.3 233 23.0	55.7 231 22.6	45.5 391 18.9	55.2 403 17.4	56.9 399 15.9	53.4 223 20.3	63.8 228 18.2	67.1 231 17.1

Source: ACT Institutional Data File, 2011