

Fall Enrollment (EF)

Retention Rates: Less-than-Four-year Institutions

Tutorial Script

2024-25 Data Collection

This tutorial discusses the reporting of retention data and the calculation of retention rates in IPEDS.

The IPEDS retention rate identifies the percentage of first-time degree- or certificate-seeking undergraduate students beginning in a Fall that were either still enrolled for credit at the same institution, or had completed their program at that institution, by the following Fall. Retention rates are calculated separately for full-time and part-time students.

Examples of students who are not retained at an institution are students who transfer to another institution before completing their program or students who drop-out.

When reporting retention data to IPEDS, the full-time, first-time cohort and the part-time, first-time cohort are preloaded from the data reported in the prior year Fall Enrollment survey component. Institutions should verify this information and make corrections to the cohorts only when necessary.

Note that a student's cohort — full-time or part-time — is based on their attendance status in the Fall when they first enrolled, regardless of whether the student's attendance status later changed.

When applicable, institutions may report exclusions to the retention cohorts. These particular students are then not included in the retention rate calculation. Allowable exclusions are students who left the institution for any of the following reasons:

- To serve in the armed forces, including those called to active duty;
- To serve with a foreign aid service of the Federal Government, such as the Peace Corps;
- To serve on official church missions; or
- Died or were totally and permanently disabled

When applicable, institutions may report inclusions to the retention cohorts. An institution's freshman study abroad students that were excluded from the prior year first-time enrollment count can be added back into the prior year's first-time cohort for the current year's retention calculation.

Freshman study abroad students can be added to the first-time cohort by reporting them in inclusions. Report in inclusions for the Fall cohort first-time degree/certificate-seeking study abroad students who were excluded from the first-time cohort but who have re-enrolled at the institution their second year.

The original cohort minus the reported exclusions plus the reported inclusions results in the adjusted cohort. The adjusted cohort is used to calculate the institution's retention rate.

First-time students from the prior Fall that are either still enrolled for credit at the institution or that completed their program should be reported as "retained."

Sophomore study abroad students that have been excluded from an institution's Fall Enrollment count because they are taking classes in a foreign country can be included as part of the institution's retention calculation.

Sophomore study abroad students are considered part of the retained cohort even though they may not be included in the institution's Fall Enrollment count. Count these students in the retained cohort.

Academic reporting institutions should report students retained as of the institution's official Fall reporting date, or as of October 15th. Program reporting institutions should report students retained as of August 1st.

The retention rate is then calculated as: students from the prior year Fall cohort still enrolled in the current Fall plus students from the prior year cohort who completed their program as of the current Fall, divided by adjusted prior year Fall cohort, times 100.

The institution's first-time, full-, and part-time retention rates are posted on the College Navigator website along with any context box text entered by the institution.

For more information on the material presented in this tutorial, please contact the IPEDS Help Desk.