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# **2014 Nurse Licensure Volume and NCLEX® Examination Statistics**

National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Inc. (NCSBN®)

## Mission Statement

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN®) provides education, service and research through collaborative leadership to promote evidence-based regulatory excellence for patient safety and public protection.

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## INTRODUCTION

The mission of the National Council of State Boards  
of Nursing (NCSBN

## PART I – LICENSURE STATISTICS

The data reported in this section indicate licensure processing activity and the total number of individuals licensed to practice within each jurisdiction from Jan. 1, 2014 to Dec. 31, 2014. All data was obtained from state and territorial boards of nursing (BONs).

Estimates were provided where the exact figure requested for this collection of data was unknown.

Data are presented in a series of tables. Table 1 lists the NCSBN member boards, the geographic locality where a BON has responsibility for regulating nursing practice (JD), the types of licenses for which a BON has licensing authority, and whether or not the BON is empowered to issue licenses or certificates to practice in a specialty area of nursing. Tables 2 through 4 provide data related to new licenses issued by endorsement or examination and total numbers of active licenses (both registered nurse [RN] and licensed practical/vocational nurse [LPN/VN]) by jurisdiction. Table 5 provides a summary of licensing activities by examination and endorsement for RNs, LPN/VNs. Tables 6 and 7 provide the numbers of active specialty licenses issued within each jurisdiction by specialty license category. Figure 1 provides a review of the numbers of active licenses for the years 2005–2014. Unless noted otherwise, all percentages are calculated in terms of column totals.

### Key Terms

**RNs and LPN/VNs** obtain licensure by endorsement (if licensed in another jurisdiction) or by examination (if the applicant has never taken the appropriate NCLEX® examination).

**Active license** figures are based on the reported actual or estimated total number of individuals holding an active license within a jurisdiction and represent the nurses available for employment. Due to an unknown number of individuals holding active licenses in more than one jurisdiction, the total number of active licenses nationwide may be higher than the total number of nurses.

**Advanced practice licenses/authority to practice** figures and tables contain data for advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) groups: certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA); certified nurse midwife (CNM); clinical nurse specialist (CNS); and certified nurse practitioner (CNP).











**Table 4. Total Number of Active Licenses: RNs and LPN/VNs, by Jurisdiction**

JD	RNs	LPN/VNs	Total Number
	N	N	N
AL	49,963	12,935	62,898
AK	13,079	1,006	14,085
AS	100	114	214
AZ	77,926	10,525	88,451
AR	37,861	15,570	53,431
CA-RN	408,675		408,675
CA-VN		94,054	94,054
CO	67,349	8,040	75,389
CT	62,905	13,582	76,487
DE	17,565	2,931	20,496
DC	26,005	2,979	28,984
FL	275,579	71,444	347,023
GA	121,088	35,163	156,251
GU	1,843	323	2,166
HI	19,672	2,201	21,873
ID	23,463	4,858	28,321
IL	174,963	30,430	205,393
IN	106,931	24,791	131,722
IA	50,385	11,513	61,898
KS	52,578	10,633	63,211
KY	63,896	14,620	78,516
LA-RN	61,420		61,420
LA-PN		23,363	23,363
ME	23,403	2,486	25,889
MD	76,494	13,341	89,835
MA	120,683	22,182	142,865
MI	143,168	26,471	169,639
MN	94,974	23,426	118,400
MS	46,600	14,386	60,986
MO	99,969	23,418	123,387
MP	1,430	61	1,491
MT	19,974	3,909	23,883
NE	26,094	6,926	33,020
NV	30,228	3,343	33,571
NH	21,369	3,326	24,695
NJ	63,832	12,394	76,226
NM	25,569	2,782	28,351
NY	306,292	80,892	387,184
NC	124,926	22,086	147,012
ND	13,901	3,965	17,866
OH	194,771	53,504	248,275

**Table 4. Total Number of Active Licenses: RNs and LPN/VNs, by Jurisdiction**

JD	RNs	LPN/VNs	Total Number
	N	N	N
OK*	51,266	19,587	70,853
OR	52,620	4,822	57,442
PA	215,233	55,021	270,254
RI	18,966	1,991	20,957
SC	59,034	11,682	70,716
SD	16,094	2,484	18,578
TN	91,682	30,083	121,765
TX	274,695	100,282	374,977
UT	29,923	2,785	32,708
VT	18,147	2011	20,158
VI	1,026	150	1,176
VA	99,724	28,669	128,393
WA	84,713	11,977	96,690
WV-PN		12,862	12,862
WV-RN	30,154		30,154
WI	91,670	16,435	108,105
WY	9,159	854	10,013
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,291,029</b>	<b>1,011,668</b>	<b>5,302,697<sup>1</sup></b>

\*Based on fiscal year data

<sup>1</sup> Includes 84,771 – total number of active licenses reported in 2013 for Alabama and Hawaii.

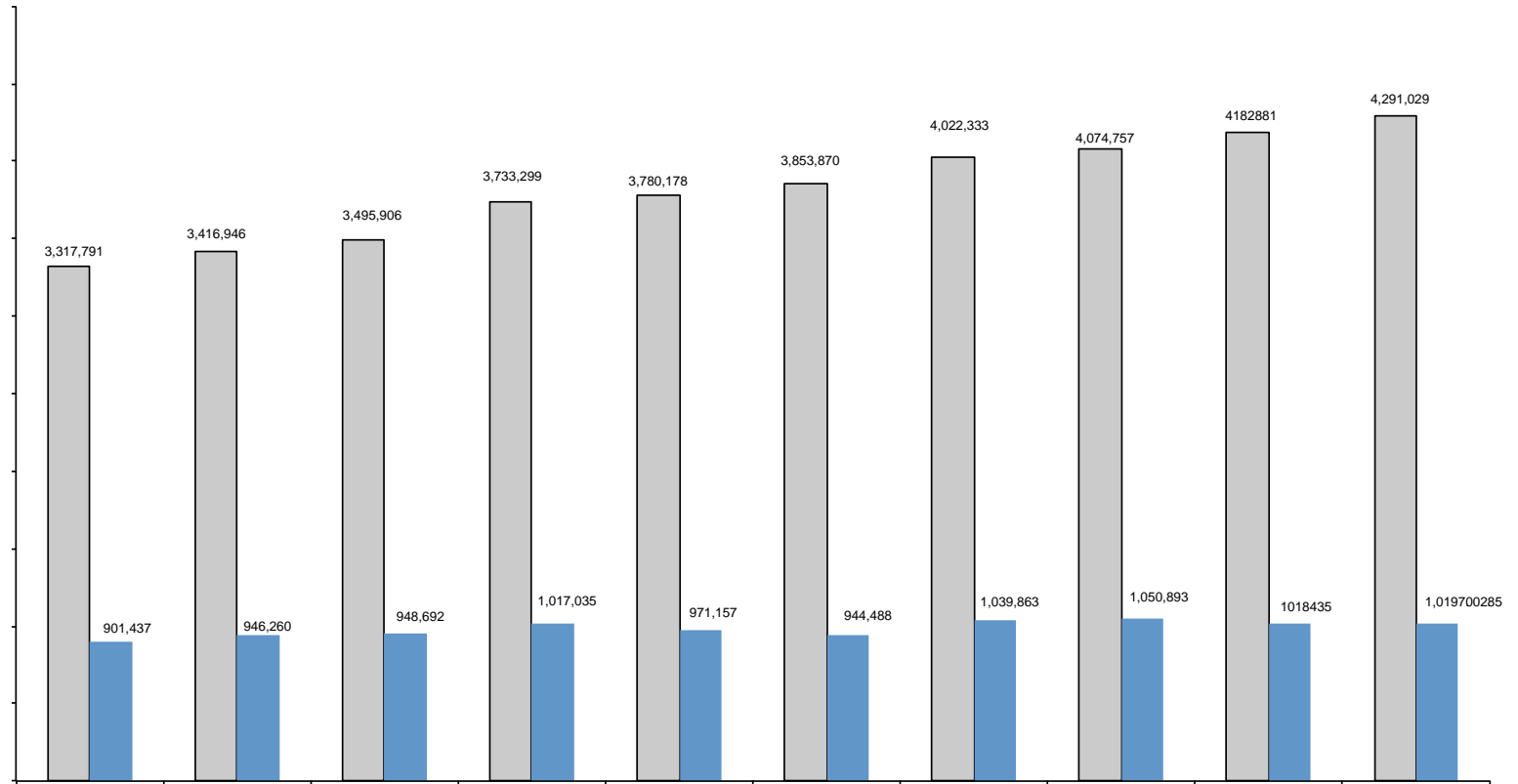
Table 5 provides aggregate data of newly licensed nurses and active licenses for RNs and LPNs/VNs.

**Table 5. Total Number of New and Active Licenses**

Total Number of Newly Licensed Nurses in All Jurisdictions	
RNs	290,713
LPN/VNs	65,529
<b>Total</b>	<b>356,243</b>
Total Number of Active Licenses in All Jurisdictions	
RNs	4,291,029
LPN/VNs	1,011,668
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,302,697</b>



Figure 1. Total Number of Active Licenses: RNs and LPN/VNs - 2005-2014





## Introduction

In 1982, NCSBN substantially revised the State Board Test Pool Examination (SBTPE). NCSBN changed the examination from a norm-referenced test to a criterion-referenced test, implemented a new test plan and used Rasch's (1960) one parameter logistic model to calibrate items and measure candidates' abilities. At that time, NCSBN renamed the examinations the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®) and the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses (NCLEX-PN®). However, these NCLEX® examinations were very different than the NCLEX examinations taken by candidates today. These examinations were only administered twice a year in a pencil-and-paper format; each administration lasted two days.

In 1986, the NCSBN Board of Directors (BOD) funded an initial investigation on the feasibility of using computerized adaptive testing (CAT) procedures. CAT held the promise of making examinations available year round, shortening examination length by only giving candidates items that were appropriate for their ability and providing greater security for the content of the items. On April 1, 1994, NCSBN began administering the NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN Examinations exclusively via CAT. This publication provides a detailed breakdown of candidate performance for 2014, as well as historical data.

## CAT

CAT is a method of administering examinations that combines the power and speed of current computer technology with modern measurement theory. With CAT, each candidate's test is unique; it is assembled interactively as the individual is tested. As the candidate answers each question, the computer calculates an ability estimate based on all earlier answers. The test administration software then identifies the content area for the next item. Next, the software scans through available items within the identified content area for an item that has a degree of difficulty sufficient to give the candidate approximately a 50 percent chance of answering it correctly. This item is selected and presented to the

candidate on the computer screen. This process is repeated for each item, creating an examination tailored to the individual's ability level, while fulfilling all NCLEX test plan requirements. The examination continues in this way until a pass-fail decision can be determined. Because the examination could end at any time after the minimum number of items has been answered, it is important that the test plan specifications are met throughout the entire test.

## Setting the Passing Standard

To ensure a consistent standard of competence in nursing practice, NCSBN uses a criterion-referenced standard, which means that passing or failing depends solely upon a candidate's level of performance in relation to the established point that represents safe entry-level competence. There is no preassigned percentage of candidates that pass or fail each examination. Because the practice of nursing is a dynamic and ever-changing profession, the passing standard is set at a level that ensures that candidates who pass the examination have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe, competent nursing care. The passing standard is set at a level that ensures that candidates who pass the examination have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide safe, competent nursing care.



and educators regarding the competence of the current cohort of entry-level nurses.

4. Information detailing the educational readiness of high school graduates who expressed an interest in nursing.

In April 1998, the passing standard for the NCLEX-RN Examination increased from  $-0.42$  logits to  $-0.35$  logits. In April 2001, this standard was retained for another three years. In April 2004, the standard increased to  $-0.28$  logits. In April 2007, the standard increased again to  $-0.21$  logits. In April 2010, the standard increased to  $-0.16$  logits. In April 2013, the standard increased to  $0.00$  logits.

The passing standard for the NCLEX-PN Examination has experienced a similar increase over time. In April 1999, the passing standard for the NCLEX-PN Examination increased from  $-0.51$  logits to  $-0.47$  logits. In April 2002, this standard was retained for another three years. In April 2005, the NCLEX-PN passing standard increased from  $-0.47$  to  $-0.42$  logits. In April 2008, the standard increased to  $-0.37$  logits. In April 2011, the standard increased to  $-0.27$  logits. In April 2014, the standard increased to  $-0.21$  logits. It is important to note that the RN and PN standards are not directly comparable because they are based on different item pools and different scopes of practice.

### Pass-Fail Decisions

Candidate performance on the NCLEX examinations is reported only as a pass-fail decision. Scores are never reported. As a result, almost all the statistics presented here are pass rates or statistics based upon a pass-fail decision.

To make pass-fail decisions, the computer seeks to determine with 95 percent certainty whether the candidate's true ability is above or below the passing standard. To do this, three pieces of information must be known: the current person ability estimate, the precision of that estimate and the passing standard. After the minimum number of items has been answered, the computer compares the candidate's ability level to the standard required for passing. Candidates clearly above the passing standard pass. Candidates clearly below the passing standard fail.

If the candidate's ability level is close enough to the passing standard that it is not clear which side

Table 1. Candidates Taken on 13.315 ISQ 0 0 1 671.5021 213.57the E959 cm0 fEX-RN®1®







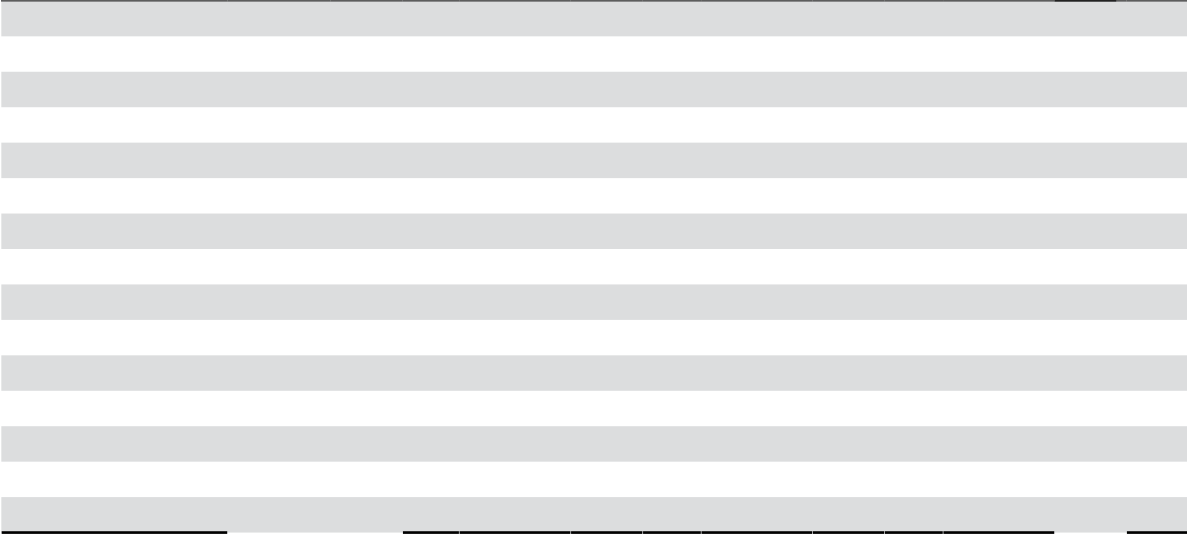




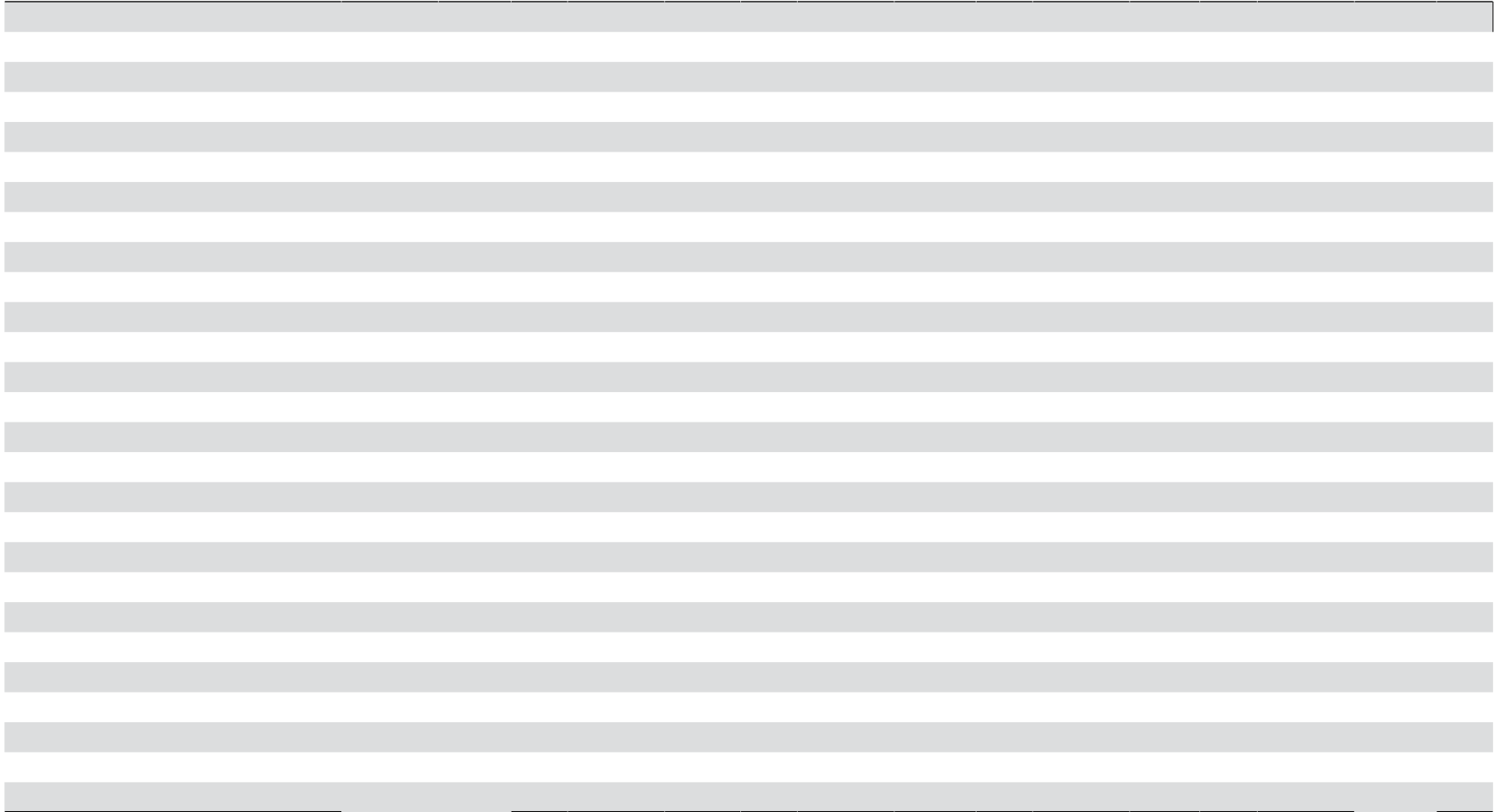












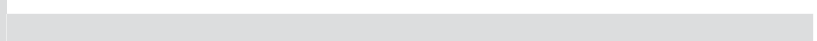
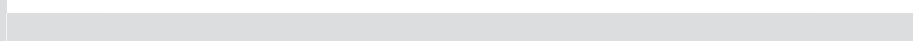
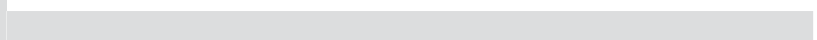
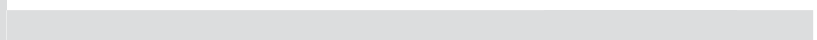
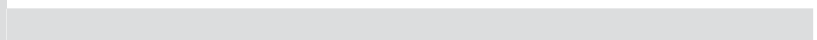
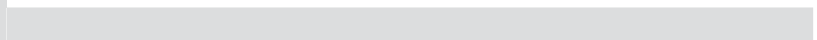
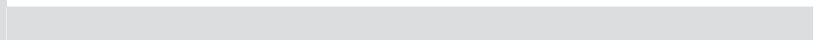
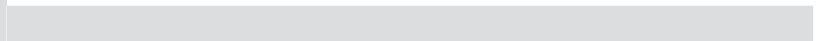
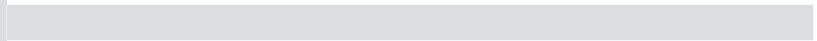






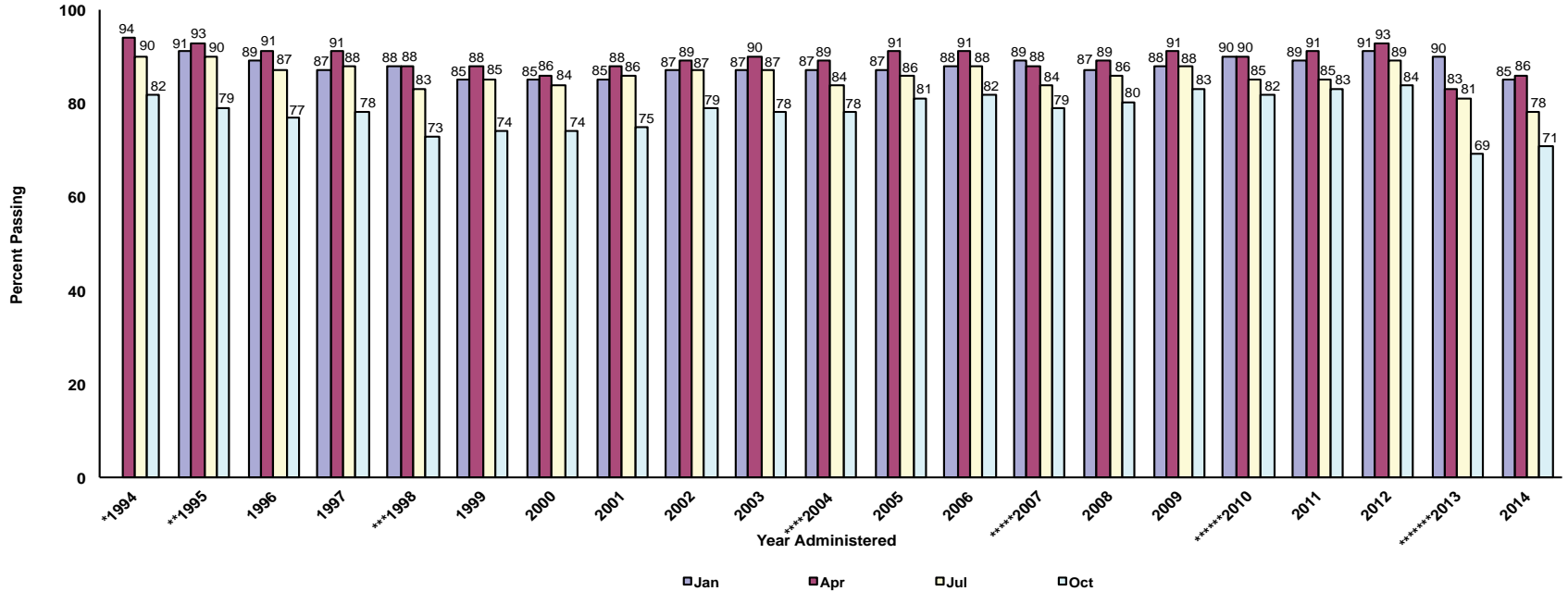




Table 8. First-Time, Internationally Educated Candidates Taking the NCLEX-RN® Examination by Country of Education (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2014)

Country of Education	Jan. 1 – Mar. 31, 2014			Apr. 1 – June 30, 2014			July 1 – Sept. 30, 2014			Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2014			Total Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2014		
	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%
SPAIN	2	0	0.0				4	2	50.0	3	1	33.3	9	3	33.3
SRI LANKA							1	0	0.0	1	0	0.0	2	0	0.0
SWEDEN										3	2	66.7	3	2	66.7
SWITZERLAND										1	0	0.0	1	0	0.0
TAIWAN	10	1	10.0	17	6	35.3	8	2	25.0	7	0	0.0	42	9	21.4
TANZANIA, UNITED REPUBLIC OF	1	0	0.0				1	0	0.0	1	1	100.0	3	1	33.3
THAILAND	5	0	0.0	4	1	25.0	7	0	0.0	2	1	50.0	18	2	11.1
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO	3	0	0.0	1	0	0.0	4	0	0.0	3	1	33.3	11	1	9.1
TURKEY	1	1	100.0	1	0	0.0				1	0	0.0	3	1	33.3
TURKMENISTAN	1	0	0.0	1	0	0.0							2	0	0.0
UGANDA	3	0	0.0	1	0	0.0	2	1	50.0				6	1	16.7
UKRAINE	13	3	23.1	15	2	13.3	11	2	18.2	15	2	13.3	54	9	16.7
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES				2	0	0.0				1	0	0.0	3	0	0.0
UNITED KINGDOM	20	5	25.0	21	8	38.1	22	6	27.3	12	3	25.0	75	22	29.3
UZBEKISTAN	11	0	0.0	16	1	6.3	6	0	0.0	4	1	25.0	37	2	5.4
VENEZUELA							4	0	0.0	1	1	100.0	5	1	20.0
ZAMBIA				1	0	0.0							1	0	0.0
ZIMBABWE										1	0	0.0	1	0	0.0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1737</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>29.6</b>	<b>2,046</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>27.5</b>	<b>2,050</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>7803</b>	<b>2254</b>	<b>28.9</b>

Figure 1. NCLEX-RN® Pass Rates for First-Time, U.S.-Educated Candidates



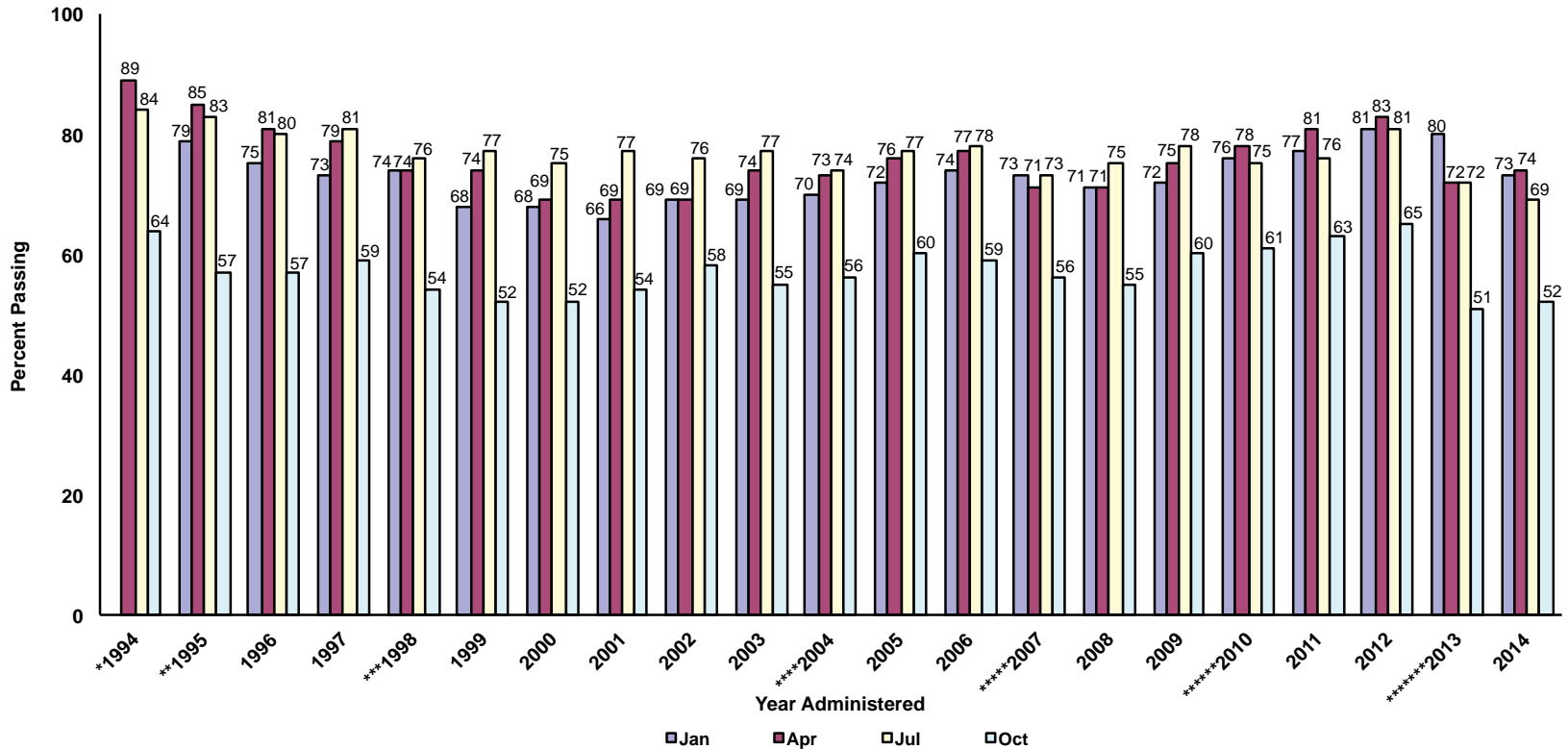
\*Apr 1994 Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) begins. Passing Standard -0.4766 logits.

\*\*Oct 1995 Passing Standard changed from -0.4766 s7 3.468 ged 2s.

\*\*Oct 199191 3393.46BT0.005 d -0.4766 logits.

\*\*Oct 1995 Passi40 - .46BT0.005 46.4ETQg Standard -0.4766 logits.

Figure 2. NCLEX-RN® Pass Rates for All Candidates



\*Apr 1994 Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) begins. Passing Standard -0.4766 logits.  
 \*\*Oct 1995 Passing Standard changed from -0.4766 to -0.42 logits.  
 \*\*\*Apr 1998 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.35 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*Apr 2004 Passing Standard changed from -0.35 to -0.28 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*\*Apr 2007 Passing Standard changed from -0.28 to -0.21 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*\*Apr 2010 Passing Standard changed from -0.21 to -0.16 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*\*Apr 2013 Passing Standard changed from -0.16 to 0.00 logits.

Figure 3. NCLEX-RN® Annual Pass Rates, April 1994 – December 2014

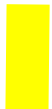
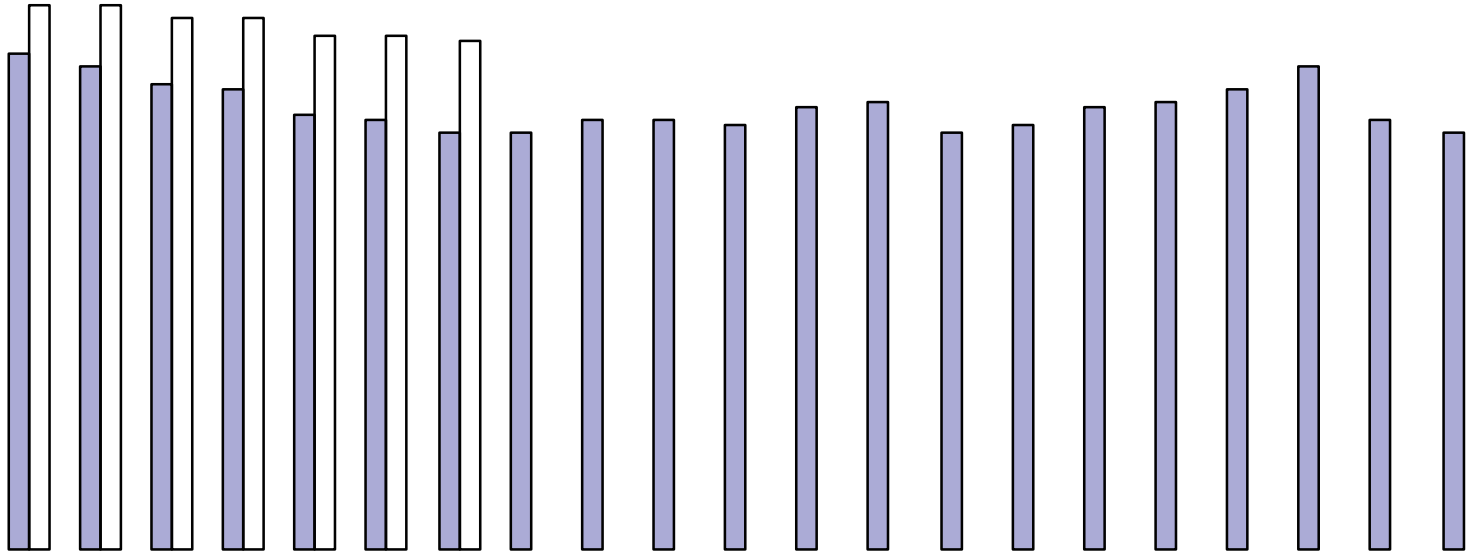


Figure 4. NCLEX-RN® Volume for First-Time, U.S.-Educated Candidates



Figure 6. NCLEX-RN® Annual Volume, April 1994 – December 2014

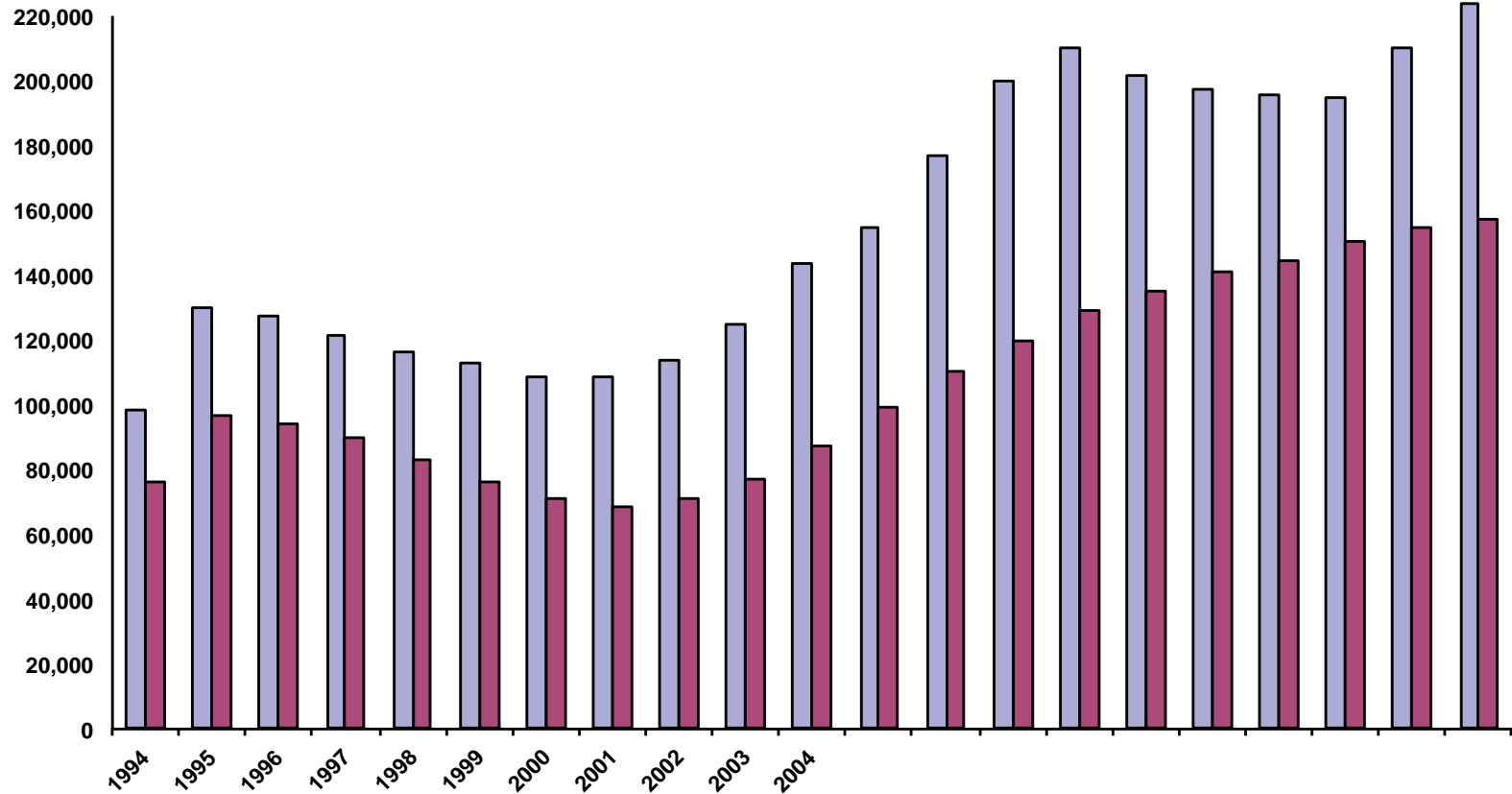






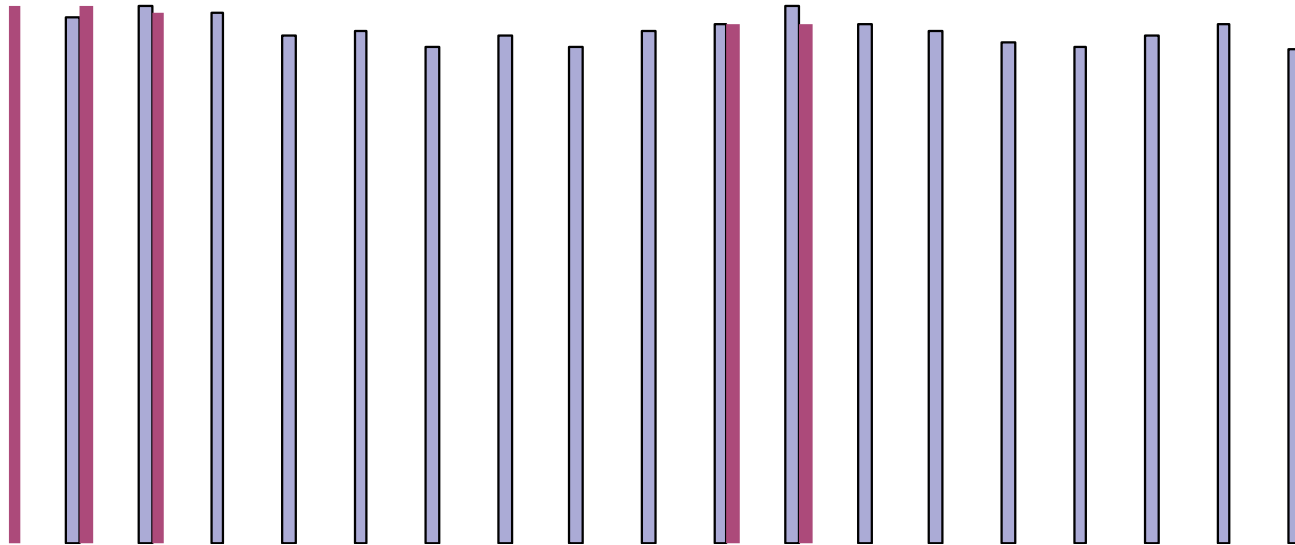








Figure 7. NCLEX-PN® Pass Rates for First-Time, U.S.-Educated Candidates



\*Apr 1994 Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) begins. Passing Standard -0.56 logits.  
 \*\*Oct 1996 Passing Standard changed from -0.56 to -0.51 logits.  
 \*\*\*Apr 1999 Passing Standard changed from -0.51 to -0.47 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*Apr 2005 Passing Standard changed from -0.47 to -0.42 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*\*Apr 2008 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.37 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*Apr 2011 Passing Standard changed from -0.37 to -0.27 logits.  
 \*\*\*\*\*Apr 2014 Passing Standard changed from -0.27 to -0.21 logits

Figure 8. NCLEX-PN® Pass Rates for All Candidates

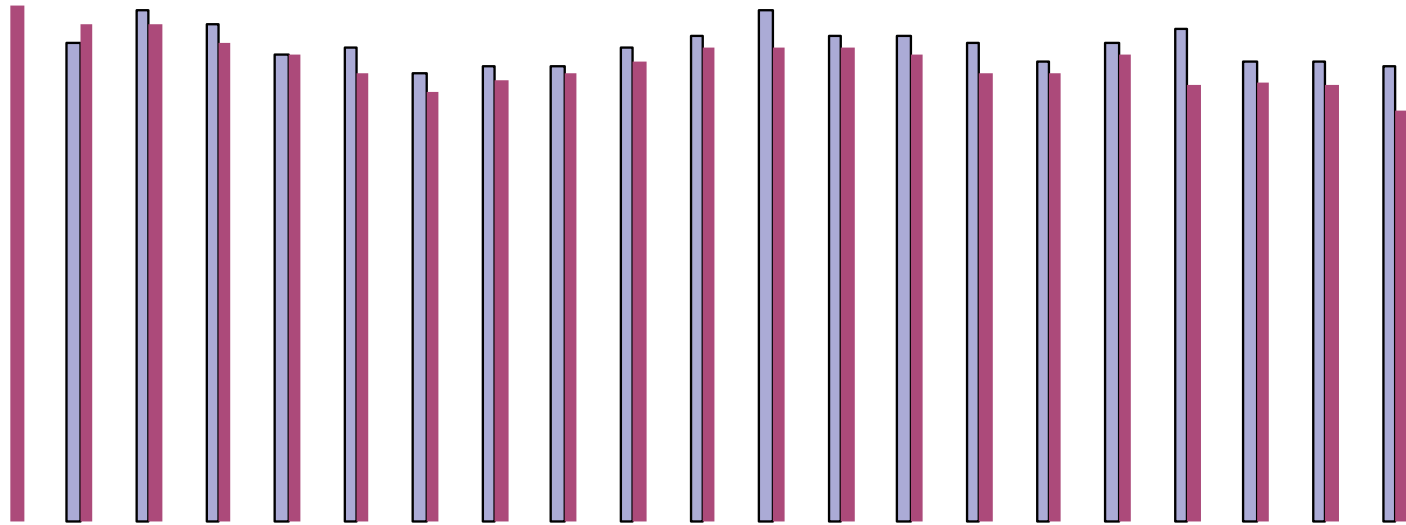


Figure 9. NCLEX-PN® Annual Pass Rates, April 1994 - December 2014

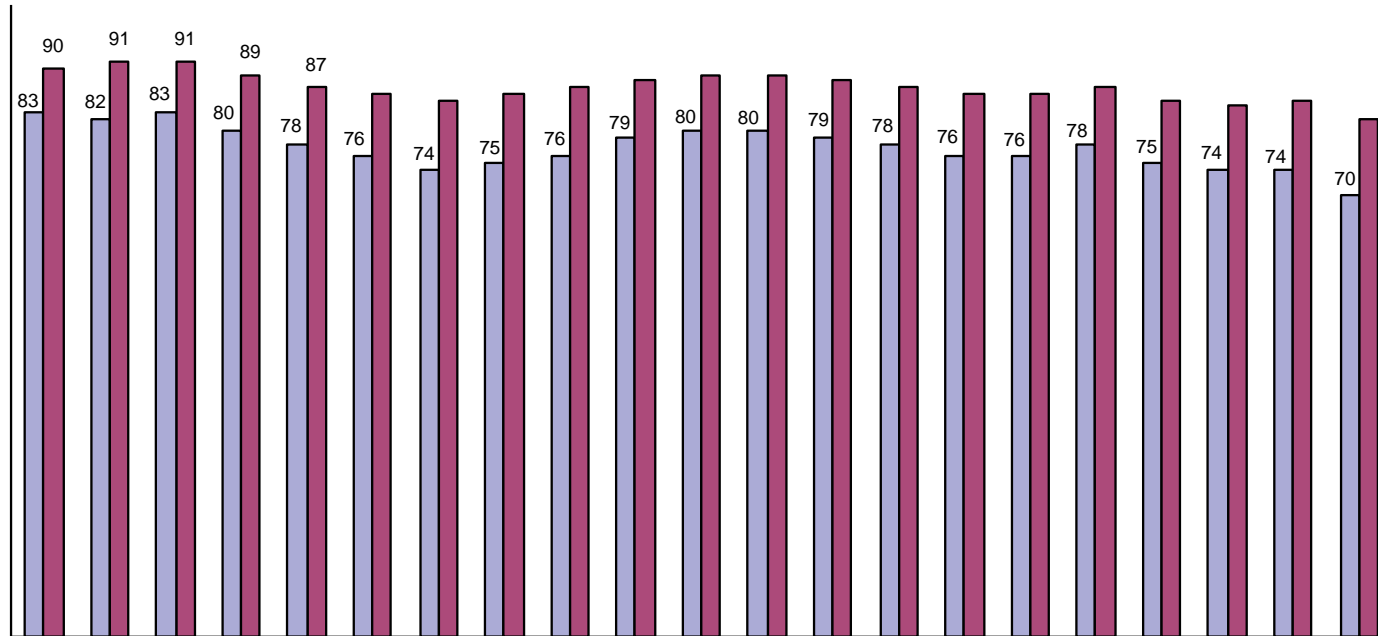
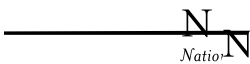








Figure 12. NCLEX-PN® Annual Volume, April 1994 - December 2014



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