



**NCSBN**  
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RESEARCH BRIEF  
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# 2023 NCLEX<sup>®</sup> Examination Statistics



# 2023 NCLEX® Examination Statistics

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

#### Mission Statement

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN<sup>1</sup>) empowers and supports nursing regulators in their mandate to protect the public.

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## 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 from 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. On Jan. 5, 2015, the first candidates were able to take the NCLEX-RN examination for purposes of licensure/registration in Canada. On April 1, 2023, NCSBN launched the Next Generation NCLEX exams, an enhancement of the existing NCLEX exams. This publication provides a detailed breakdown of candidate performance for 2023, as well as historical data.

### Computerized Adaptive Testing

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% 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 changes over time, it is necessary to reevaluate the appropriateness of the passing standard from time to time. To ensure that the passing standards for the NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN examinations accurately reflect the knowledge, skills and abilities essential for entry-level nurse practice, NCSBN's BOD reevaluates the passing standard every three years or when the test plan changes. In evaluating the passing standard, the BOD considers information from a variety of sources. Although there is no limit on the information it may consider, the BOD is typically presented with the following information:

1. The results of a standard-setting exercise undertaken by the panel of judges. Currently, this exercise consists of a modified Angoff procedure with additional statistical compromise procedures. A

list of the members on the panel of judges and their

determined with 95% certainty whether the candidate has passed or failed, alternative criteria are used. If the candidate has not answered the minimum number of required items, the candidate automatically fails. If at least the minimum number of required items were answered, then the final ability estimate will be based on all responses given before the exam time expired. If the score is at or above the passing standard, the candidate will pass; otherwise, the candidate will fail.





**Table 3. Summary Statistics for First-Time, U.S.-Educated NCLEX-RN Candidates**

<b>NCLEX-RN®</b>	<b>January–March 2023</b>	<b>April–December 2023</b>
Passing Standard <sup>1</sup>	0.00 logits	0.00 logits
Estimated Decision Consistency <sup>2</sup>	0.87	0.93
Average Test Length <sup>3</sup>	100	97
Percent of Candidates Taking the Minimum Number of Items	47.5%	71.8%
Percent of Candidates Taking the Maximum Number of Items	27.1%	13.0%
Average Testing Time <sup>4</sup>	2 hours 3 minutes	2 hours 14 minutes
Percent of Candidates Taking the Maximum Amount of Time	0.3%	0.6%

<sup>1</sup> The NCLEX-RN passing standard scale uses logits as the unit of measurement. Logits is short for log-odds-units. These units have no inherent meaning with regard to nursing content and in fact have an arbitrary zero point, but logits are practical because the probability of a correct response can easily be computed when the candidate's ability and the item's difficulty are known. Typically,

A table with 20 rows and 2 columns. The top portion of the table is obscured by a diagonal black bar. The visible cells are light gray, indicating redacted content. The table is enclosed in a thin black border.















**Table 7. First-time, U.S.-educated Candidates Taking the NCLEX-RN® for U.S. Licensure, by Degree Type (Oct. 1– Dec. 31, 2023)<sup>1</sup>**

Jurisdiction	RN-Diploma			RN-Associate Degree			RN-Baccalaureate			Total Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023		
	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%
Ohio	94	76	80.9%	528	457	86.6%	274	243	88.7%	896	776	86.6%
Oklahoma				71	69	97.2%	53	44	83.0%	124	113	91.1%
Oregon				63	58	92.1%	133	123	92.5%	196	181	92.3%
Pennsylvania	69	63	91.3%	212	191	90.1%	405	378	93.3%	686	632	92.1%
Rhode Island				58	46	79.3%	5	5	100.0%	63	51	81.0%
South Carolina				152	145	95.4%	51	51	100.0%	203	196	96.6%
South Dakota				7	5	71.4%	32	29	90.6%	39	34	87.2%
Tennessee				69	65	94.2%	166	156	94.0%	235	221	94.0%
Texas	1	1	100.0%	537	506	94.2%	795	746	93.8%	1,333	1,253	94.0%
Utah				128	118	92.2%	319	270	84.6%	447	388	86.8%
Vermont				2	2	100.0%	5	4	80.0%	7	6	85.7%
Virgin Islands							14	8	57.1%	14	8	57.1%
Virginia				217	193	88.9%	231	199	86.1%	448	392	87.5%
Washington				144	127	88.2%	107	88	82.2%	251	215	85.7%
West Virginia				108	104	96.3%	18	13	72.2%	126	117	92.9%
Wisconsin				110	102	92.7%	254	233	91.7%	364	335	92.0%
Wyoming				5	5	100.0%	1	1	100.0%	6	6	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>89.0%</b>	<b>7,587</b>	<b>6,669</b>	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>9,307</b>	<b>8,409</b>	<b>90.4%</b>	<b>17,130</b>	<b>15,288</b>	<b>89.2%</b>

<sup>1</sup> Data does not include Special Program Codes.





**Table 8. First-time, U.S.-educated Candidates Taking the NCLEX-RN® for U.S. Licensure, by Degree Type (Jan. 1– Dec. 31, 2023)**

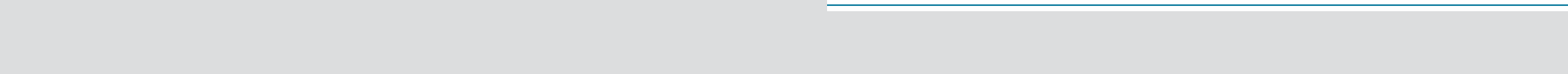
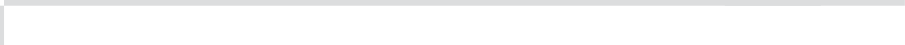
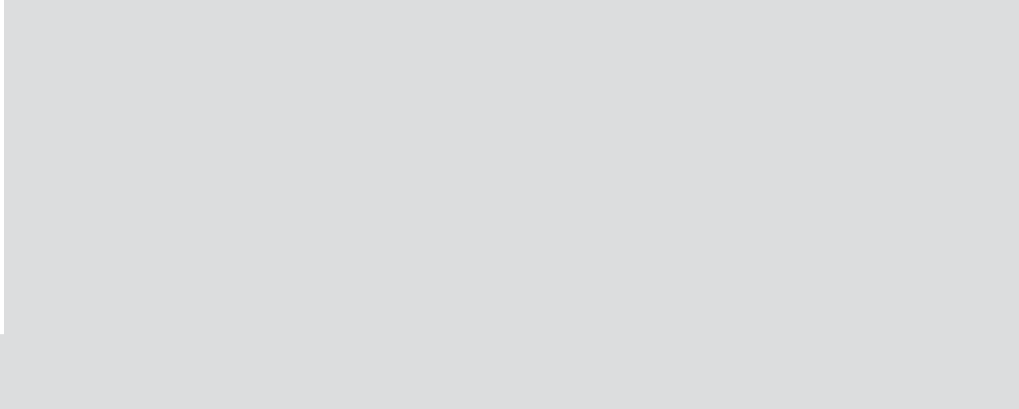
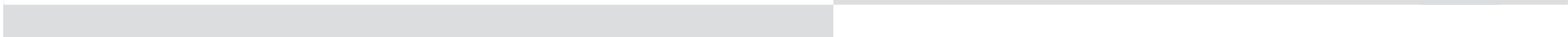
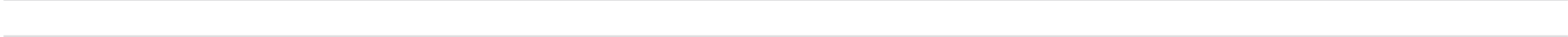
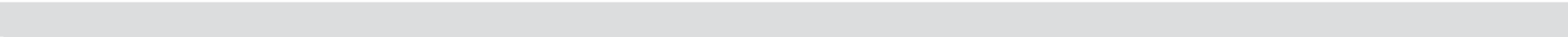
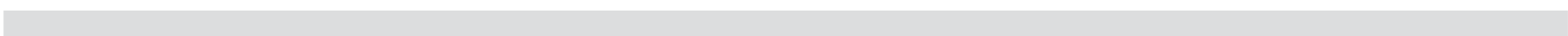
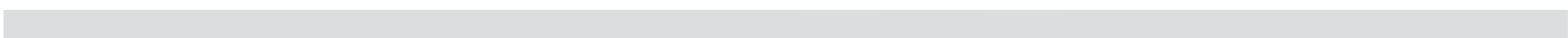
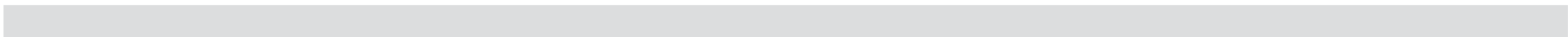
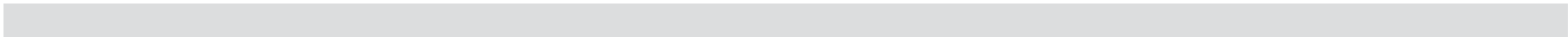
Jurisdiction	RN-Diploma			RN-Associate Degree			RN-Baccalaureate			RN-Special Program Codes			Total Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023		
	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%
Wyoming				271	253	93.4%	58	58	100.0%				329	311	94.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,183</b>	<b>1,943</b>	<b>89.0%</b>	<b>83,430</b>	<b>73,222</b>	<b>87.8%</b>	<b>99,300</b>	<b>90,290</b>	<b>90.9%</b>	<b>89,300</b>	<b>82,910</b>	<b>92.8%</b>	<b>114,463</b>	<b>106,329</b>	<b>92.9%</b>











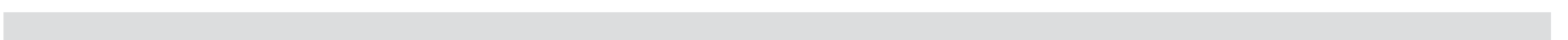
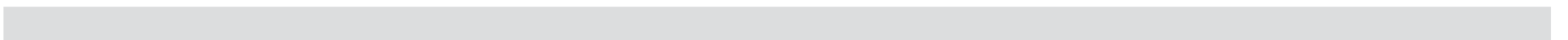
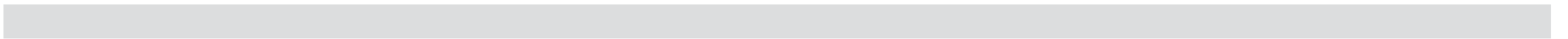








Table 11. First-time, Internationally Educated Candidates Taking the NCLEX-RN® for Canadian Licensure/Registration, by Country of Education (Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023)

Country of Education	Jan. 1 – March 31, 2023			April 1 – June 30, 2023			July 1 – Sept. 30, 2023			Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023			Total Jan. 1 – Dec. 31, 2023		
	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%	Candidates	Passed	%
Sweden							1	1	100.0%				1	1	100.0%
Switzerland										1	1	100.0%	1	1	100.0%
Taiwan	3	3	100.0%	1	1	100.0%	1	1	100.0%				5	5	100.0%
Tanzania	1	0	0.0%										1	0	0.0%
Thailand	1	1	100.0%				2	2	100.0%	2	2	100.0%	5	5	100.0%
Trinidad and Tobago				1	1	100.0%							1	1	100.0%
Turkey										2	2	100.0%	2	2	100.0%
Uganda							1	1	100.0%				1	1	100.0%
Ukraine	1	0	0.0%							1	0	0.0%	2	0	0.0%
United Arab Emirates	2	2	100.0%	1	1	100.0%	1								

Figure 1. NCLEX-RN® Pass Rates for First-time, U.S.-educated Candidates for U.S. Licensure



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

\*\* Oct. 1995 Passing Standard changed from -0.4766 to -0.42 logits.

\*\*\* April 1998 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.35 logits.

\*\*\*\* April 2004 Passing Standard changed from -0.35 to -0.28 logits.

\*\*\*\*\* April 2007 Passing Standard changed from -0.28 to -0.21 logits.

\*\*\*\*\* April 2010 Passing Standard changed from -0.21 to -0.16 logits.

\*\*\*\*\* April 2013 Passing Standard changed from -0.16 to 0.00 logits.

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





Figure 3. NCLEX-RN® Yearly Pass Rates for U.S. Licensure

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

\*\* Oct. 1995 Passing Standard changed from -0.4766 to -0.42 logits.

\*\*\* April 1998 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.35 logits.

\*\*\*\* April 2004 Passing Standard changed from -0.35 to -0.28 logits.

\*\*\*\*\* April 2007 Passing Standard changed from -0.28 to -0.21 logits.

\*\*\*\*\* April 2010 Passing Standard changed from -0.21 to -0.16 logits.

\*\*\*\*\* April 2013 Passing Standard changed from -0.16 to 0.00 logits.

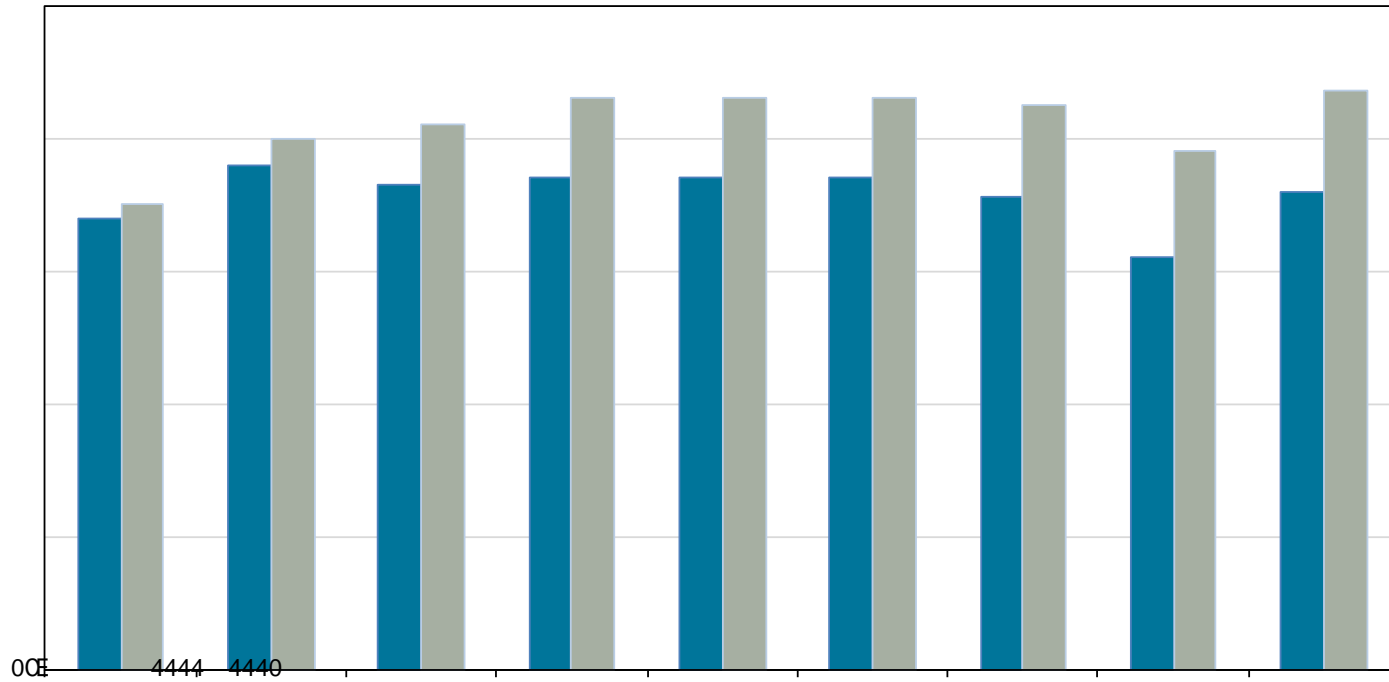
\*\*\*\*\* Due to COVID-19, the first quarterly data for 2020 contain NCLEX examinations administered from Jan. 1 to March 24, 2020, and the second quarterly data for 2020 contain NCLEX examinations administered from March 25 to June 30, 2020.



Figure 5. NCLEX-RN® Pass Rates for All Candidates for Canadian Licensure/Registration



Figure 6. NCLEX-RN® Yearly Pass Rates for Canadian Licensure/Registration



\* Due to COVID-19, 2020 Q1 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from Jan. 1 to March 24, 2020, and Q2 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from March 25 to June 30, 2020.





Figure 9. NCLEX-RN® Annual Volume for U.S. Licensure, April 1994 – December 2023

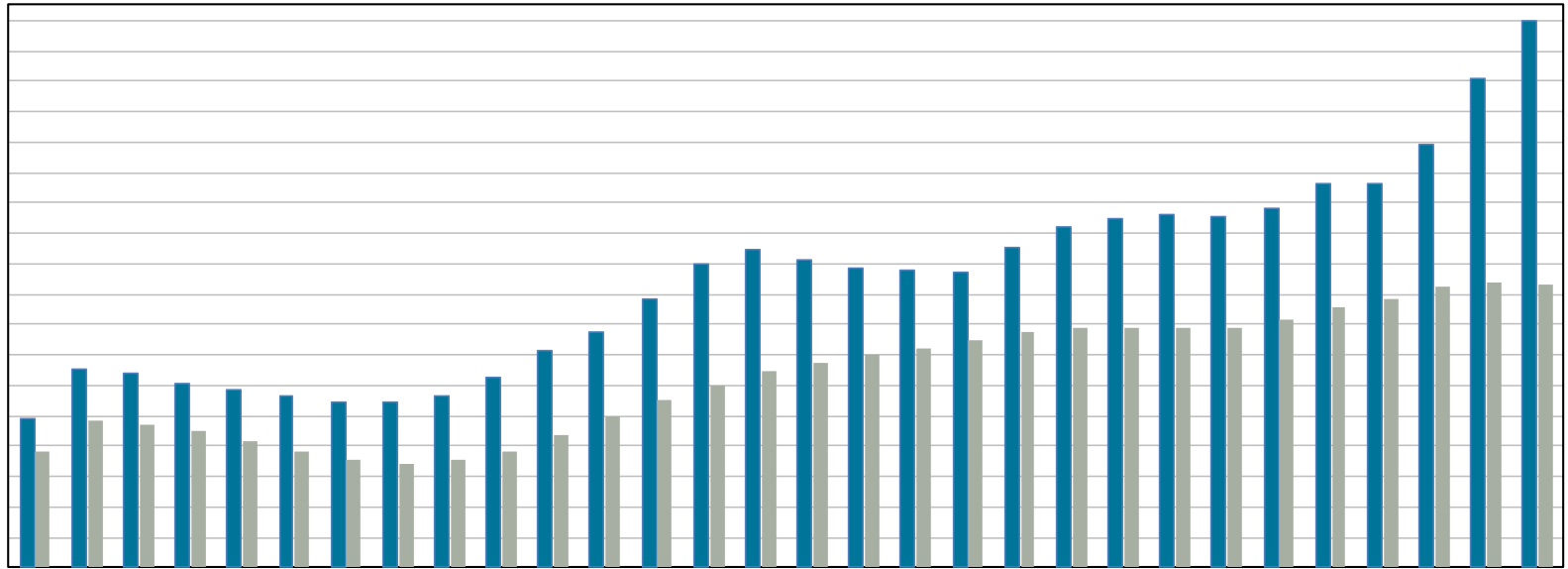


Figure 10. NCLEX-RN® Volume for First-time, Canada-educated Candidates for Canadian Licensure/Registration

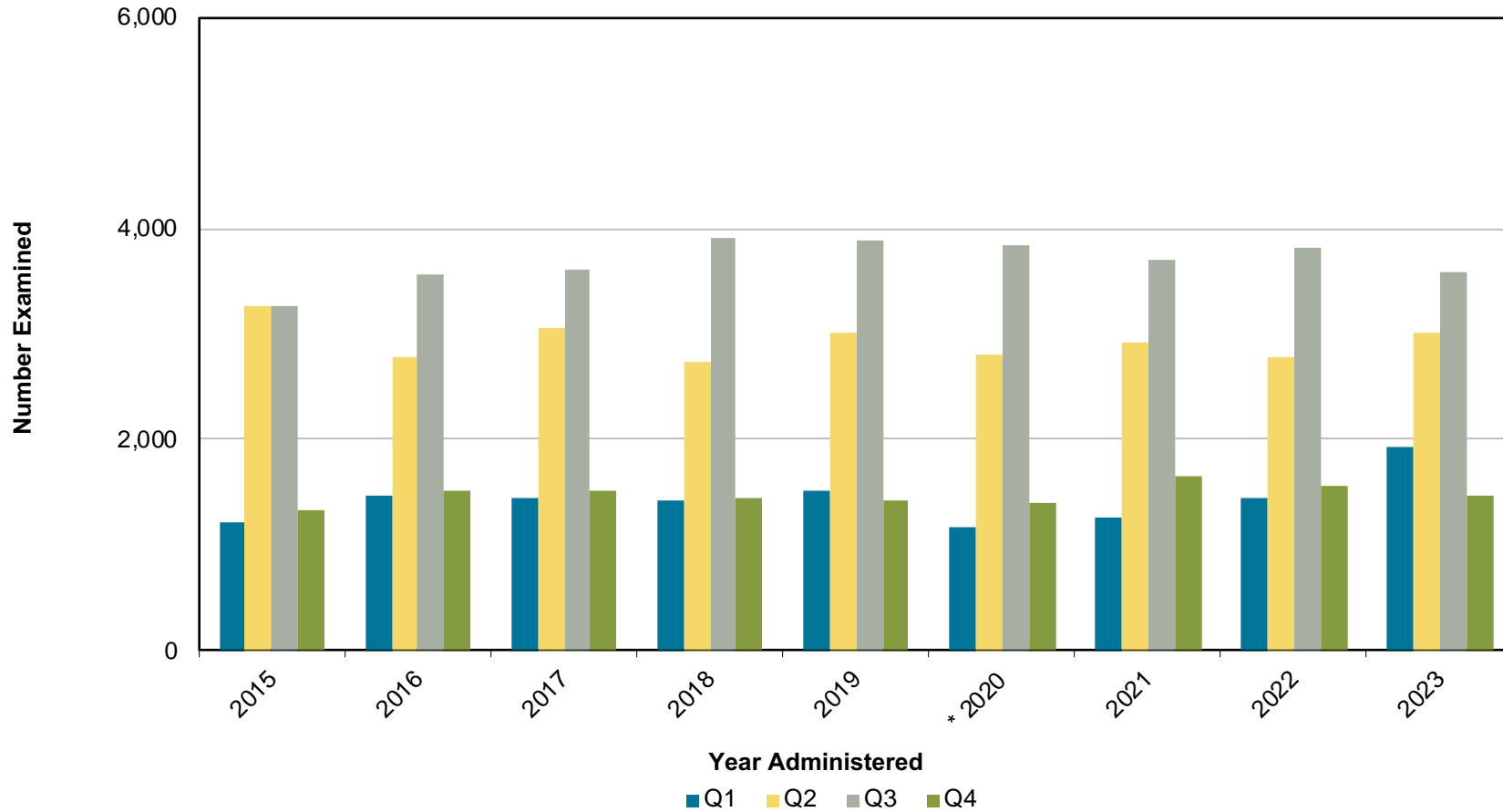




Figure 11. NCLEX-RN® Volume for All Candidates for Canadian Licensure/Registration

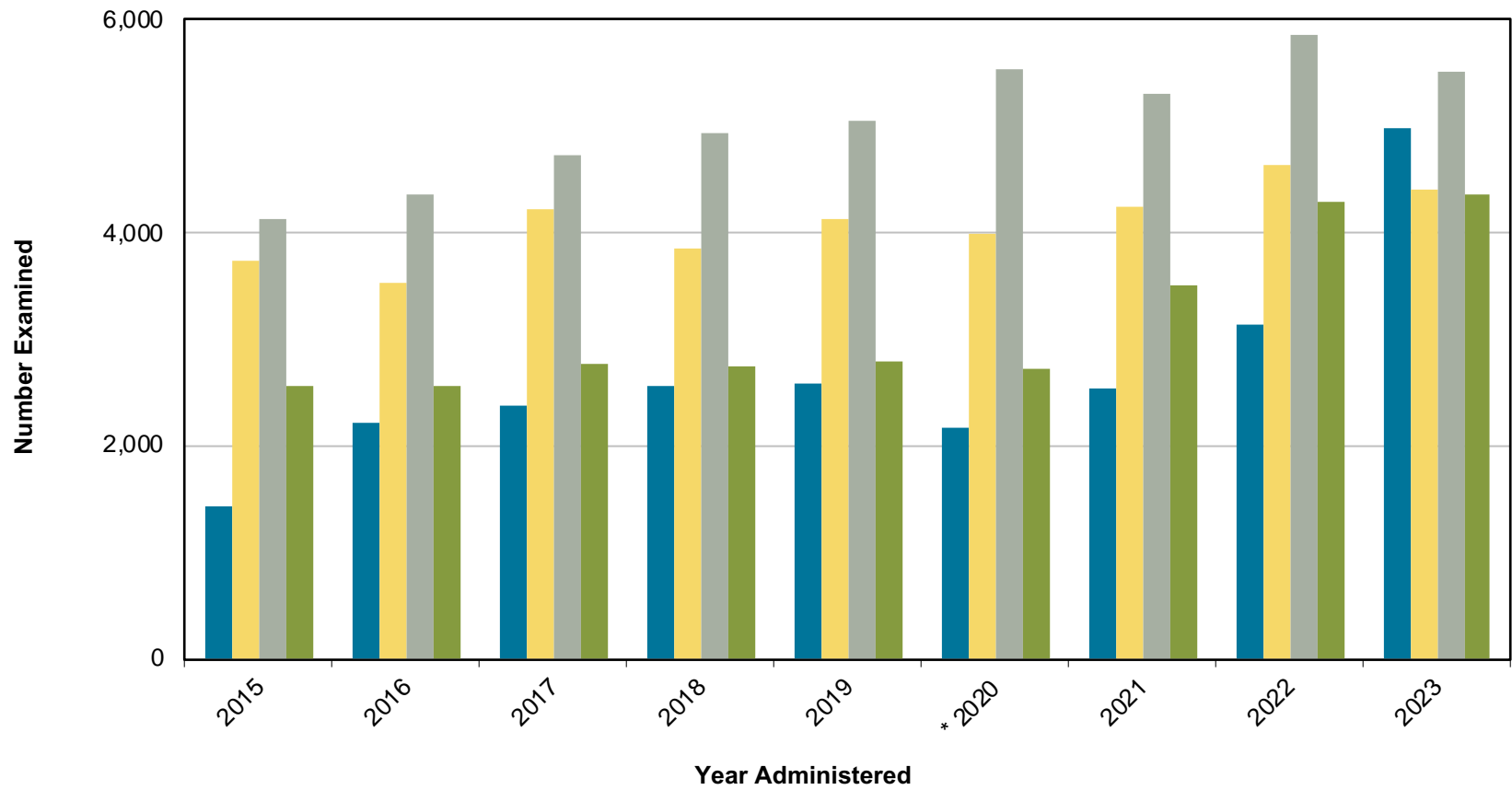


Figure 12. NCLEX-RN® Annual Volume for Canadian Licensure/Registration, January 2015 – December 2023

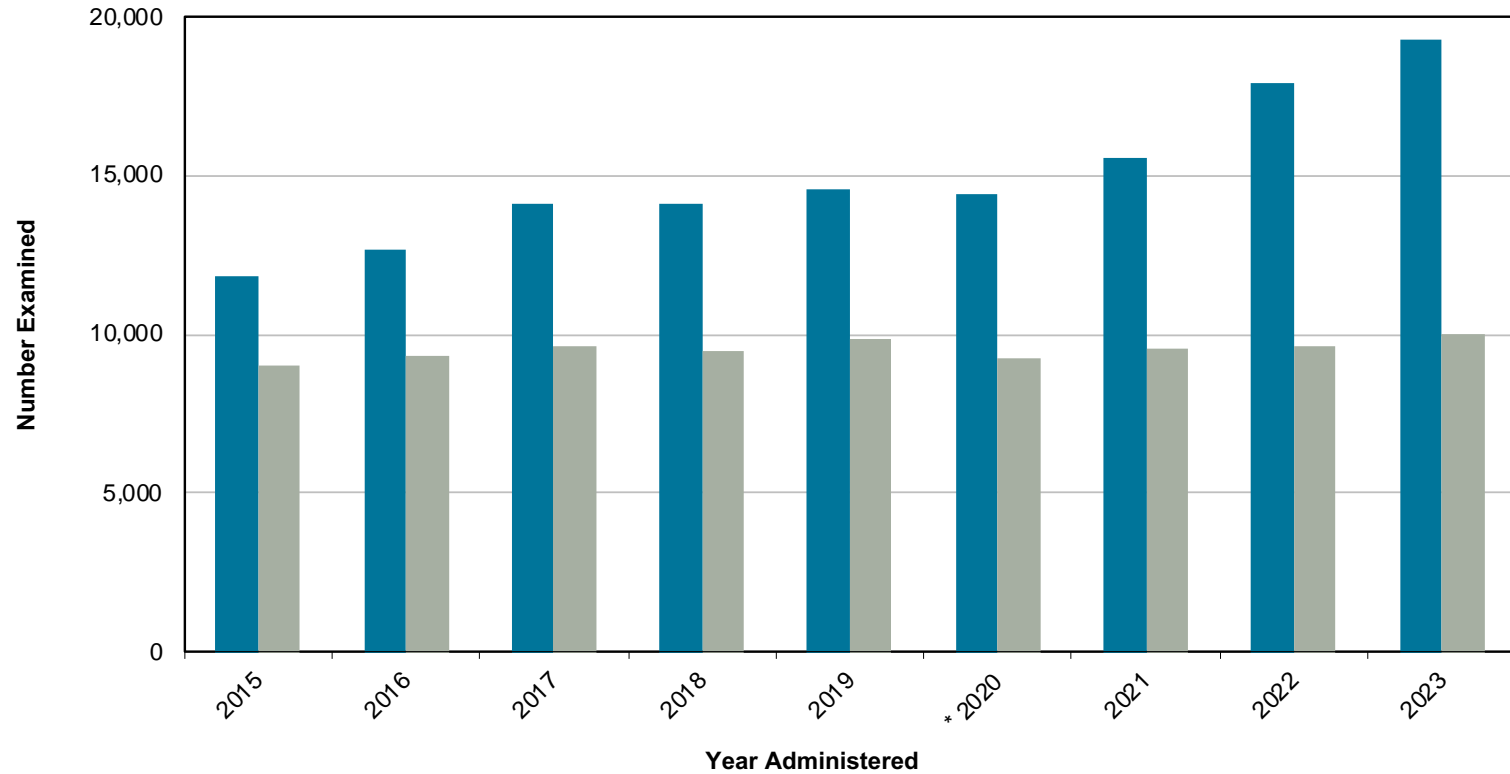


Table 12. Candidates Taking the NCLEX-PN®, by Type of Candidate

Type of Candidate	Jan. –March			April – June			July – Sept.			Oct. – Dec.			Total (2023)		
	# Testing	# Passing	% Passing	# Testing	# Passing	% Passing	# Testing	# Passing	% Passing	# Testing	# Passing	% Passing	# Testing	# Passing	% Passing
First-time, U.S.-educated	13,969	11,114	79.6%	8,816	7,942	90.1%	15,236	13,813	90.7%	9,527	8,345	87.6%	47,548	41,214	86.7%
Repeat, U.S.-educated	6,694	2,532	37.8%	3,626	1,808	49.9%	3,464	1,493	43.1%	3,422	1,536	44.9%	17,206	7,369	42.8%
First-time, Internationally Educated	137	65	47.4%	78	49	62.8%	87	44	50.6%	108	63	58.3%	410	221	53.9%
Repeat, Internationally Educated	201	52	25.9%	100	33	33.0%	96	28	29.2%	118	37	31.4%	515	150	29.1%
<b>All Candidates</b>	<b>21,001</b>	<b>13,763</b>	<b>65.5%</b>	<b>12,620</b>	<b>9,832</b>	<b>77.9%</b>	<b>18,883</b>	<b>15,378</b>	<b>81.4%</b>	<b>13,175</b>	<b>9,981</b>	<b>75.8%</b>	<b>65,679</b>	<b>48,954</b>	<b>74.5%</b>

Table 13. Summary Statistics for First-time, U.S.-educated Candidates

NCLEX-PN®	January–March 2023	April–December 2023
Passing Standard <sup>1</sup>	-0.18 logits	-0.18 logits
Estimated Decision Consistency <sup>2</sup>	0.89	0.92
Average Test Length <sup>3</sup>	97	98
Percent of Candidates Taking the Minimum Number of Items	52.2%	69.3%
Percent of Candidates Taking the Maximum Number of Items	22.9%	15.1%
Average Testing Time <sup>4</sup>	1 hour 59 minutes	2 hours 22 minutes
Percent of Candidates Taking the Maximum Amount of Time	0.4%	1.0%

<sup>1</sup> The NCLEX-PN scale uses logits as the unit of measurement. Logits is short for log-odds-units. These units have no inherent meaning with regard to nursing content and, in fact have an arbitrary zero point, but logits are practical because the probability of a correct response can easily be computed when the candidate's ability and the item's difficulty are known. Typically, the logit range on the NCLEX-PN scale is from -2.00 (easy items or low ability candidates) to 2.00 (difficult items or high ability candidates).

<sup>2</sup> Estimated Decision Consistency is an indicator of reliability. Conceptually, it is the proportion of pass-fail decisions that would remain the same if the same population were retested immediately after their first test (assuming no learning or fatigue effects) using a different set of items.

<sup>3</sup> During January–March 2023, NCLEX-PN examinations consist of 75 to 145 items. During April–December 2023, NCLEX-PN examinations consist of 85 to 150 items.

<sup>4</sup> The standard amount of allotted testing time for the NCLEX-PN examination is five hours.

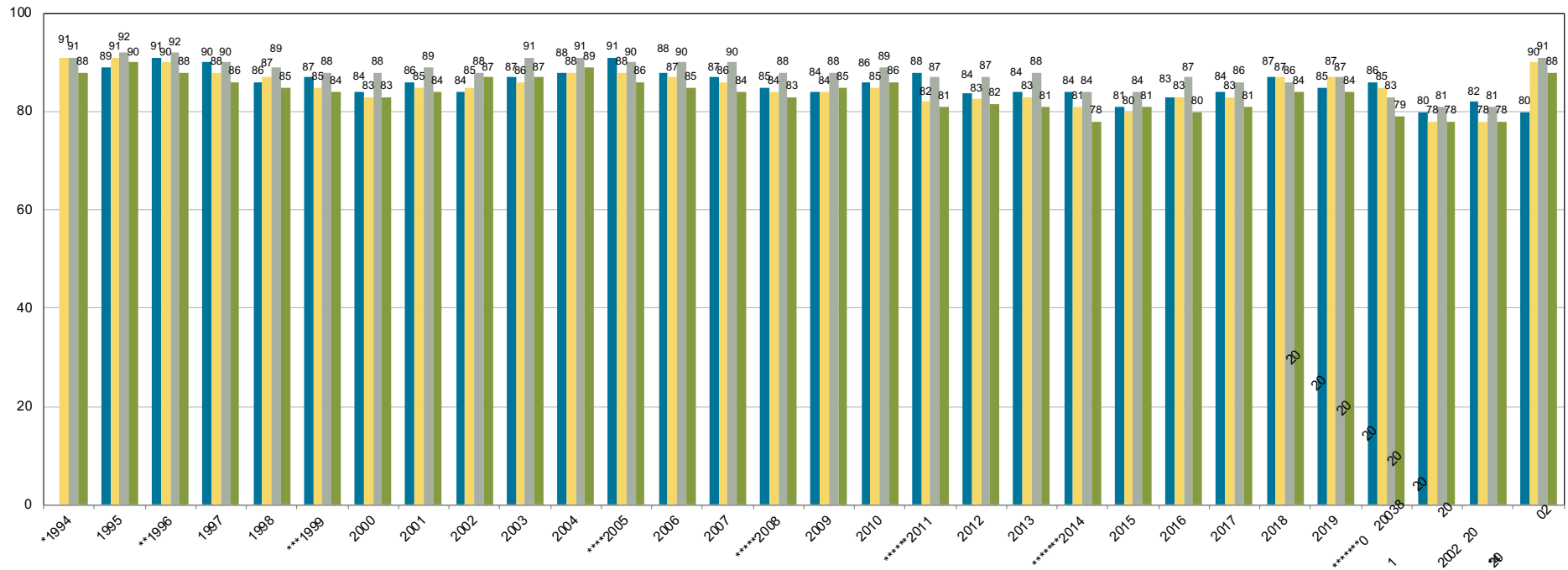








Figure 13. NCLEX-PN® Pass Rates for First-time, U.S.-educated Candidates



\*April 1994 Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) begins. Passing Standard -0.56 logits.

\*\*Oct. 1996 Passing Standard changed from -0.56 to -0.51 logits.

\*\*\*April 1999 Passing Standard changed from -0.51 to -0.47 logits.

\*\*\*\*April 2005 Passing Standard changed from -0.47 to -0.42 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2008 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.37 logits.

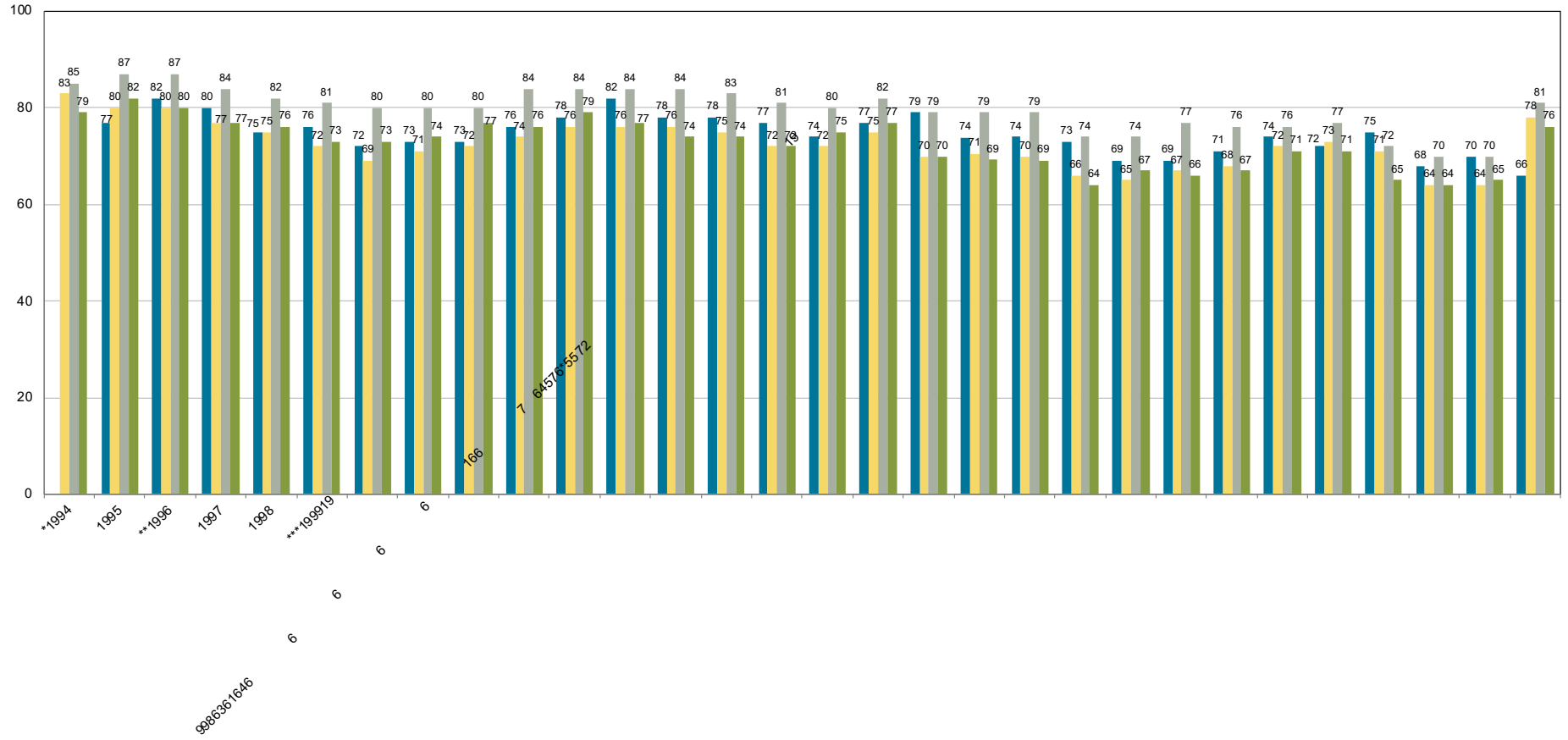
\*\*\*\*\*April 2011 Passing Standard changed from -0.37 to -0.27 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2014 Passing Standard changed from -0.27 to -0.21 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2020 Passing Standard changed from -0.21 to -0.18 logits. Due to COVID-19, Q1 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from Jan. 1 to March 24, 2020, and Q2 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from March 25 to June 30, 2020.



Figure 14. NCLEX-PN® Pass Rates for All Candidates



\*April 1994 Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) begins. Passing Standard -0.56 logits.

\*\*Oct. 1996 Passing Standard changed from -0.56 to -0.51 logits.

\*\*\*April 1999 Passing Standard changed from -0.51 to -0.47 logits.

\*\*\*\*April 2005 Passing Standard changed from -0.47 to -0.42 logits.

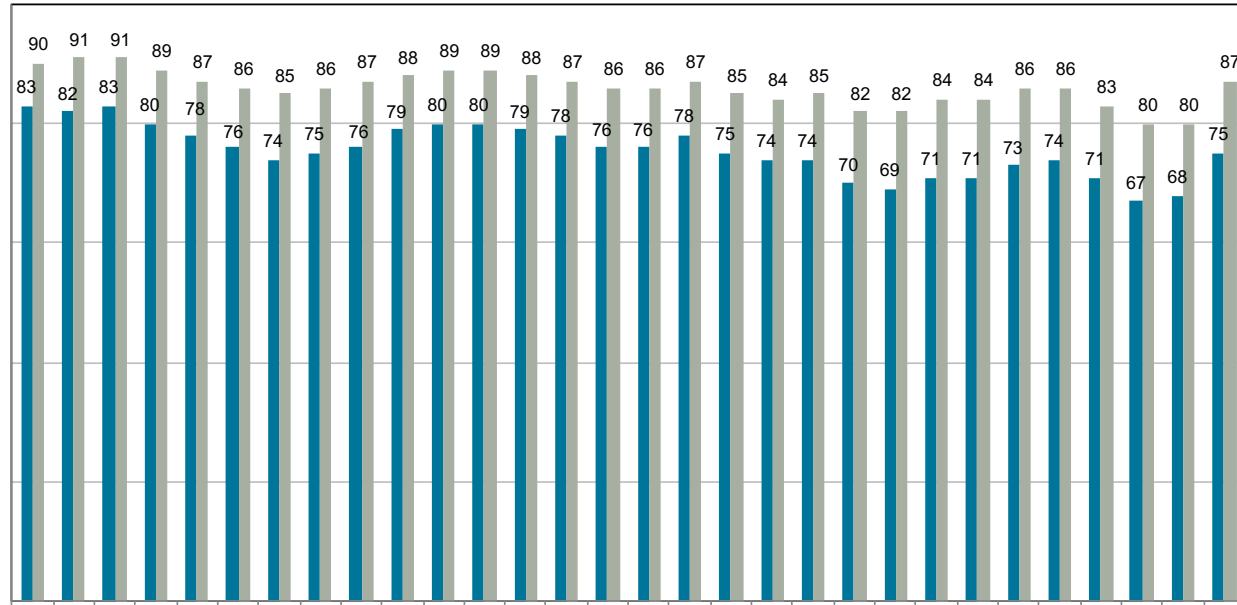
\*\*\*\*\*April 2008 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.37 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2011 Passing Standard changed from -0.37 to -0.27 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2014 Passing Standard changed from -0.27 to -0.21 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2020 Passing Standard changed from -0.21 to -0.18 logits. Due to COVID-19, Q1 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from Jan. 1 to March 24, 2020, and Q2 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from March 25 to June 30, 2020.

Figure 15. NCLEX-PN® Annual Pass Rates, April 1994 – December 2023



\*April 1994 Computer Adaptive Test (CAT) begins. Passing Standard -0.56 logits.

\*\*Oct. 1996 Passing Standard changed from -0.56 to -0.51 logits.

\*\*\*April 1999 Passing Standard changed from -0.51 to -0.47 logits.

\*\*\*\*April 2005 Passing Standard changed from -0.47 to -0.42 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2008 Passing Standard changed from -0.42 to -0.37 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2011 Passing Standard changed from -0.37 to -0.27 logits.

\*\*\*\*\*April 2014 Passing Standard changed from -0.27 to -0.21 logits

\*\*\*\*\*April 2020 Passing Standard changed from -0.21 to -0.18 logits. Due to COVID-19, Q1 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from Jan. 1 to March 24, 2020, and Q2 data contain NCLEX examinations administered from March 25 to June 30, 2020.







