

NCLEX-RN 2020: Canadian and International Results



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Executive Summary

The NCLEX-RN has now been in use in Canada for six years (2015 to 2020, inclusive).

In early 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, modifications were made to the NCLEX-RN. These modifications were fully evaluated and tested before implementation to ensure the continued reliability and legal defensibility of the exam.

In 2020, 85.8% of people who wrote the NCLEX-RN for the first time passed (see Table 2).

First-attempt pass rates by Canadian-educated writers have increased to 85.8% in 2020 from 79.9% in 2016 (see Tables 2 and 6).

All provinces have seen an increase in their first-attempt pass rates in 2020 compared with 2016 (with the exception of Prince Edward Island) (see Table 7).

Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest first-attempt pass rate of any Canadian province or territory in 2020, at 90.8%. The province or territory with the second-highest first-attempt pass rate in 2020 was British Columbia, at 90.7% (see Table 7).

First-attempt pass rates by internationally-educated writers have decreased to 59.0% in 2020 from 65.4% in 2016 (see Tables 2 and 6).

For writers who wrote their first attempt of the NCLEX-RN in French, the first-attempt pass rate has increased to 61.8% in 2020 from 35.2% in 2016 (see Table 8). Only the first-attempt pass rate is presented in this report because NCLEX-RN writers can change the language in which they write the exam on subsequent attempts. This means it is not possible to compare pass rates across all attempts by language of write.

Background of the NCLEX-RN in Canada

The role of Canada's provincial nursing regulators

In Canada, registered nursing is professionally regulated in collaboration with the public. Each province or territory has a regulator and they are all members of the Canadian Council of Registered Nurse Regulators (CCRNRR).

Through provincial and territorial legislation, Canada's Registered Nurse (RN) regulators are accountable to the public for ensuring RNs are safe, competent and ethical practitioners within their province or territory.

Regulators achieve their mandate by taking responsibility for such activities as:

- registering and licensing RNs
- overseeing reviews of professional conduct
- setting standards that govern nursing education and how RNs perform their work
- identifying the competencies needed by RNs entering the profession
- implementing an entry exam that tests for the specific skills RNs need to practice safely
- monitoring the exam results to identify trends and areas for improvement

The purpose of the regulators' nursing exam

When an RN starts their first day of nursing practice, the public needs to feel confident they have the skills, knowledge and judgment to provide safe care. For example, can the RN:

- assess and respond to a patient's vital signs?
- evaluate a patient's need for pain management?
- administer medications?
- maintain the confidentiality of a patient's personal health information and respect their privacy?

Legislation gives Canada's regulators the responsibility to ensure RN applicants have these abilities before they start practicing nursing. This means, before an applicant can be licensed/registered to practice as an RN in Canada, they must pass a regulator-selected registration exam.

The registration exam used by 10 of Canada's nursing regulators is the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN).¹ The NCLEX-RN is a computer-adaptive test administered by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). NCSBN has administered the NCLEX-RN as a registration exam for licensure in the United States since 1982 and in Canada since 2015. NCSBN is an independent, not-for-profit organization whose members include boards of nursing in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories and 24 associate members (including all members of CCRNR).²

¹Yukon Registered Nurses Association processes applicants via endorsement from other Canadian provinces or territories, and the Northwest Territories and Nunavut have a combined nursing regulator. Applicants for RN licensure in Québec complete the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination.

²Visit [ncsbn.org/about](https://www.ncsbn.org/about) for more information on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN).

The groundwork leading up to the new nursing registration exam

Throughout the early 2000s, Canada's RN regulators reviewed and discussed best practices for an entry-to-practice exam. This review resulted in 10 of Canada's RN regulators (excluding Québec and Yukon) choosing the NCLEX-RN as the exam to test applicants' readiness to enter the practice of nursing.

In late 2011, regulators informed Canada's RN educators and other stakeholders they would be adopting the NCLEX-RN on January 1, 2015. NCSBN gave educators access to resources to help prepare students for the exam. These resources included: webinars, teleconferences, FAQs, a quarterly NCLEX-RN newsletter, conferences organized by NCSBN, information about computer-adaptive testing (CAT) and links to test plans. NCSBN continues to update and provide these resources.

Developing the NCLEX-RN for Canada

Developing the test questions³

NCSBN consulted with Canadian RNs in the 10 provinces and territories that use the NCLEX-RN when developing the test questions. This was to ensure test questions were suitable for Canadian writers. For example, NCSBN modified questions to include metric measurements and generic drug names familiar to Canadian writers. Canadian RNs continue to assess the exam to ensure it meets the needs of Canadian writers.

French translation process

NCSBN used Canadian translation standards to translate NCLEX-RN questions from English to French. A translation panel consisting of three to six Canadian bilingual RNs then reviewed the translated questions. NCSBN required these RNs to be practicing in a bilingual facility or setting and have their nursing regulators approve their participation in the process or ensure they are in good standing with their nursing regulators. NCSBN removed questions not approved by the translation panel from both the French and English versions of the NCLEX-RN exam.⁴

Topics covered on the exam

NCSBN divides the content of the NCLEX-RN exam (referred to as the test plan) into four categories, with two categories having sub-categories.⁵ The NCLEX-RN asks exam writers questions from each category. The breakdown of the number of questions asked within each category and subcategory is in Table 1.

³Visit ncsbn.org/9011.htm for more information on NCLEX-RN exam development.

⁴Visit the Canadian French Translation section of ncsbn.org/1213.htm for more information on the NCLEX-RN translation process.

⁵Visit ncsbn.org/testplans.htm for more information about the NCLEX-RN's test plan.

Table 1: NCLEX-RN exam categories

Category	% of questions asked from each category
Safe and effective care environment The nurse promotes achievement of patient outcomes by providing and directing nursing care that enhances the care delivery setting to protect patients and health care personnel:	
Management of care • Providing and directing nursing care that enhances the care delivery setting to protect patients and health care personnel.	17–23%
Safety and infection control • Protecting patients and health care personnel from health and environmental hazards.	9–15%
Health promotion and maintenance The nurse provides and directs nursing care for the patient that incorporates the knowledge of expected growth and development principles, prevention and/or early detection of health problems, and strategies to achieve optimal health.	6–12%
Psychosocial integrity The nurse provides and directs nursing care that promotes and supports the emotional, mental and social well-being of the patient experiencing stressful events, as well as patients with acute or chronic mental illness.	6–12%
Physiological integrity The nurse promotes physical health and wellness by providing care and comfort, reducing patient risk potential and managing health alterations:	
Basic care and comfort • Providing comfort and assistance in the performance of activities of daily living.	6–12%
Pharmacological and parenteral therapies • Providing care related to the administration of medications and parenteral therapies.	12–18%
Reduction of risk potential • Reducing the likelihood that patients will develop complications or health problems related to existing conditions, treatments or procedures.	9–15%
Physiological adaptation • Managing and providing care for patients with acute, chronic or life-threatening physical health conditions.	11–17%

The format of the NCLEX-RN

Computer-adaptive test (CAT)

The NCLEX-RN is a computer-adaptive test.⁶ A computer-adaptive test is different from a traditional pen-and-paper exam in the way it presents the questions, how the exam writer responds to the questions and how the test determines a pass.

Typically, with a pen-and-paper exam, all writers receive the same questions and the same number of questions. Some questions are easy and others are more difficult. In the end, a percentage of correct responses on the test indicates the candidate's ability and whether they pass or fail. An exam writer with a high level of ability will have to answer all the questions, even the easy ones. Having to do this is an inefficient way to test someone's level of ability.

On a pen-and-paper exam, multiple-choice questions can also make the results of a lower-ability writer seem higher than they are. For example, if the writer can choose from one of four answers to a question, they can guess at an answer. This gives them a 25% chance of getting the answer right, even if they did not know the answer. Therefore, the question is not measuring their ability. In contrast, a computer-adaptive test uses computer technology and measurement theory to provide a more efficient and effective means of assessing a writer's ability.

⁶Visit ncsbn.org/356.htm for more information on computer-adaptive tests (CAT).

With the NCLEX-RN, writers must answer questions covering several categories. As the exam proceeds, the computer selects each question from its question bank. NCSBN has classified each question by its level of difficulty.

After the writer answers the question, the computer calculates an *ability estimate* based on all of the writer's previous answers. The computer selects the next question from its question bank based on this ability estimate. It selects a question with a level of difficulty that should give the writer a 50% chance of answering the question correctly. That way, the question will not be too difficult or too easy for the writer.

If the writer answers the question correctly, the next question they see will be more difficult than the previous one. If they answer the question incorrectly, the next question will be slightly easier. The exam repeats this process for each question and across each category, recalculating the writer's ability estimate each time. This process creates an exam tailored to the writer's ability. Two writers in the same examination room will not get the same exam.⁷

The exam continues until the computer determines if the writer has passed or failed.

How is a pass or fail determined?

The computer decides whether a writer has passed or failed the NCLEX-RN using one of three rules:

95% confidence interval rule:⁸ The exam will stop once the computer has calculated with 95% certainty that the writer's ability is clearly above or below the passing standard. This is the most commonly applied rule.

Maximum-length exam rule:⁹ When a writer's ability is very close to the passing standard, the computer continues to give questions until the writer reaches the maximum number of questions. At this point, the computer disregards the 95% confidence rule and decides whether the writer has passed or failed based on their final ability estimate.

Run-out-of-time rule:¹⁰ When a writer runs out of time before reaching the maximum number of questions and the computer has not been able to determine whether they passed or failed with 95% certainty, the computer has to use an alternative rule to determine if the writer has passed or failed. If the writer hasn't answered the minimum number of questions, then they will fail. However, if the writer has answered at least the minimum number of questions, the computer will review the last 60 ability estimates. If the writer's last 60 ability estimates were above the *passing standard*, then they will pass. However, if their ability dropped below the passing standard, even once, during their last 60 questions, then they will fail. This does not mean the writer must have answered the last 60 questions correctly; the computer bases each ability estimate on all the previous items the writer has answered.

Each time the computer estimates the writer's ability, the estimate becomes more precise. The test measures this ability against a passing standard that reflects the amount of nursing ability an RN needs when they start in their profession.

⁷Visit [ncsbn.org/5906.htm](https://www.ncsbn.org/5906.htm) for more information on the question selection process.

⁸Visit [ncsbn.org/5908.htm](https://www.ncsbn.org/5908.htm) for more information on the 95% confidence rule.

⁹Visit [ncsbn.org/5910.htm](https://www.ncsbn.org/5910.htm) for more information on the maximum-length exam rule.

¹⁰Visit [ncsbn.org/5912.htm](https://www.ncsbn.org/5912.htm) for more information on the run-out-of-time rule.

COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, NCSBN modified the length of the NCLEX-RN exam to allow the greatest number of candidates to test within social distancing requirements.¹¹

The psychometric integrity of the exam was not compromised in any way and the difficulty level and passing standard was not changed.

- **January 1, 2020 to March 24, 2020**
 - The test remained unchanged compared to previous years
 - Maximum length of questions: **265 Questions**
 - Minimum length of questions: **75 Questions**
 - Seat time: **6 hours**
- **March 25, 2020 to September 30, 2020**
 - Experimental/pretest questions were removed from the exam
 - Maximum length of questions: **130 Questions**
 - Minimum length of questions: **60 Questions**
 - Seat time: **4 hours**
- **October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020**
 - Experimental/pretest items were added back to the exam
 - Maximum length of questions: **145 Questions**
 - Minimum length of questions: **75 Questions**
 - Seat time: **5 hours**

The **95% confidence interval rule**, **Maximum-length exam rule**, and **Run-out-of-time rule** remained in place during 2020. The rules still made pass/fail decisions using the parameters in place at the time of testing. For example, for an exam attempted on February 28, 2020, the Maximum-length exam rule used 265 as the maximum number of questions. However, on July 13, 2020, the Maximum-length exam rule used 130 questions. Similarly, for the Run-out-of-time rule, the rule used 4 hours as the maximum time for an exam attempted on August 19, 2020. For an exam attempted on November 24, 2020, the maximum time was 5 hours.¹²

What is a passing standard?

The *passing standard* is a cut point along an ability range that marks the minimum ability requirement. For the NCLEX-RN, it is the minimum ability required to safely and effectively practice nursing at the entry-level.

Since the skills and knowledge needed by RNs change over time, the passing standard must reflect these changes. To ensure the passing standard remains accurate, NCSBN reviews it at least once every three years.¹³ The exam reviewers look at information such as:

- the results of a survey in which NCSBN asks employers and educators for their opinions on the competency of the current cohort of nurses entering the profession, and
- a historical record of candidate performance on the NCLEX-RN since it was started.

The current passing standard is set at 0.00 *logits*. NCSBN does not alter the passing standard to set a maximum number of writers who are successful on the exam.

¹¹Visit ncsbn.org/covid-19.htm for COVID-19 information.

¹²Visit ncsbn.org/15108.htm for more information on the 2020 COVID-19 adjustments.

¹³Visit ncsbn.org/2630.htm to learn more about the current passing standard.

What is a logit?

A *logit* is a unit of measurement used to report relative differences between a writer's ability estimates and the difficulty of the questions.

Because the exam questions vary in their level of difficulty, there is no linear way to measure the writer's performance on the exam. The computer has to factor in the level of difficulty of the questions each writer received and the writer's ability estimates. The logit puts ability estimates and question difficulty on the same measurement scale. If the writer keeps answering questions correctly, their ability estimate will increase as the difficulty of the questions increases.

The logit scale ranges from negative infinity to positive infinity, with most of the ability distribution being within the range of -3.0 to 3.0 logits.

Introduction to the Report

Who is included in this report?

This report provides statistics on the performance of people who wrote the NCLEX-RN between 2016 and 2020 as part of their registration/licensure application to one of the 10 provinces or territories where regulators require nursing graduates to successfully complete the NCLEX-RN.

Most Québec-educated nursing graduates write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and do not write the NCLEX-RN. These graduates are not included in this report. However, some Québec-educated nursing graduates choose to write the NCLEX-RN as part of their application to one of the 10 provinces or territories where the regulators require the successful completion of the NCLEX-RN. These graduates are included in this report. When this report refers to *Canadian-educated writers*, this term includes writers from the above 10 provinces or territories and Québec.

Nursing graduates educated outside of Canada and applying to one of the above 10 provinces or territories are also included in this report as *internationally-educated writers*.

What is a cohort?

This report separates exam writers into *cohorts* based on the first year in which they wrote the NCLEX-RN. By using cohorts, the reader can follow a group of writers every year in which they attempt the NCLEX-RN.

Pass Rates by Cohort and Attempt

Table 2: Pass rates by attempt and location of nursing education for the 2020** cohort

Attempt	Canadian-educated writers*		Internationally-educated writers		All writers	
	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate
First	9,312	85.8%	1,697	59.0%	11,009	81.6%
Second	871	68.1%	361	46.5%	1,232	61.8%
Third	126	55.6%	84	45.2%	210	51.4%
Fourth or more	27	33.3%	18	50.0%	45	40.0%
Final write pass rate by the end of 2020**	9,312	93.0%	1,697	71.7%	11,009	89.7%

¹ * Canadian-educated writers include writers educated in Québec who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 3: Pass rates by attempt and location of nursing education for the 2019 cohort

Attempt	Canadian-educated writers*		Internationally-educated writers		All writers	
	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate
First	9,856	85.5%	1,115	59.5%	10,971	82.9%
Second	1,329	62.2%	391	45.5%	1,720	58.4%
Third	426	49.8%	152	28.9%	578	44.3%
Fourth or more	251	36.7%	122	33.6%	373	35.7%
Final write pass rate by the end of 2020**	9,856	97.0%	1,115	83.0%	10,971	95.6%

¹ * Canadian-educated writers include writers educated in Québec who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 4: Pass rates by attempt and location of nursing education for the 2018 cohort

Attempt	Canadian-educated writers*		Internationally-educated writers		All writers	
	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate
First	9,527	85.6%	1,150	61.0%	10,677	82.9%
Second	1,326	60.6%	395	40.5%	1,721	56.0%
Third	479	48.9%	206	37.9%	685	45.5%
Fourth or more	420	36.7%	211	28.9%	631	34.1%
Final write pass rate by the end of 2020**	9,527	98.1%	1,150	87.0%	10,677	96.9%

¹ * Canadian-educated writers include writers educated in Québec who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 5: Pass rates by attempt and location of nursing education for the 2017 cohort

Attempt	Canadian-educated writers*		Internationally-educated writers		All writers	
	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate
First	9,659	82.1%	966	59.1%	10,625	80.0%
Second	1,673	58.9%	361	42.9%	2,034	56.1%
Third	634	48.3%	176	28.4%	810	44.0%
Fourth or more	633	34.3%	260	23.5%	893	31.1%
Final write pass rate by the end of 2020**	9,659	97.7%	966	86.6%	10,625	96.7%

¹ * Canadian-educated writers include writers educated in Québec who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 6: Pass rates by attempt and location of nursing education for the 2016 cohort

Attempt	Canadian-educated writers*		Internationally-educated writers		All writers	
	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate	Writes	Pass rate
First	9,338	79.9%	573	65.4%	9,911	79.1%
Second	1,828	63.9%	170	50.6%	1,998	62.8%
Third	603	50.7%	70	40.0%	673	49.6%
Fourth or more	608	33.1%	77	32.5%	685	33.0%
Final write pass rate by the end of 2020**	9,338	97.8%	573	89.7%	9,911	97.4%

¹ * Canadian-educated writers include writers educated in Québec who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

First-Attempt Pass Rates by Location of Nursing Education

Table 7 shows the first-attempt pass rates of writers broken down by the Canadian province of education or by the country of education. The top five international countries are displayed in descending order of total number of writes from the cohorts for 2016 to 2020.

Table 7: First-attempt pass rates by location of nursing education

Location of nursing education	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020**	
	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate
Alberta	1,568	78.1%	1,500	84.5%	1,427	86.9%	1,407	88.9%	1,323	90.0%
British Columbia	1,482	87.0%	1,502	89.7%	1,433	89.9%	1,456	89.5%	1,435	90.7%
Manitoba	466	85.8%	494	87.2%	355	88.2%	417	91.4%	377	90.5%
New Brunswick	321	60.4%	287	63.4%	225	74.7%	207	79.2%	237	73.4%
Newfoundland and Labrador	223	87.9%	226	91.6%	241	91.3%	234	93.6%	249	90.8%
Northwest Territories and Nunavut	16	68.8%	14	92.9%	14	71.4%	16	62.5%	28	71.4%
Nova Scotia	382	77.5%	399	79.2%	430	87.0%	601	78.9%	423	78.7%
Ontario	4,216	80.1%	4,506	79.5%	4,710	83.9%	4,767	83.9%	4,550	83.8%
Prince Edward Island	66	87.9%	72	86.1%	75	89.3%	75	82.7%	62	83.9%
Québec*	53	67.9%	77	59.7%	79	70.9%	80	68.8%	50	76.0%
Saskatchewan	545	69.2%	582	80.8%	538	85.9%	596	86.1%	578	85.6%
Canada	9,338	79.9%	9,659	82.1%	9,527	85.6%	9,856	85.5%	9,312	85.8%
India	214	56.1%	486	47.5%	563	51.5%	512	50.0%	867	50.5%
Philippines	173	73.4%	253	72.7%	357	72.8%	406	68.0%	582	68.7%
Ireland	14	57.1%	22	72.7%	35	62.9%	38	57.9%	37	73.0%
Great Britain	23	56.5%	33	63.6%	31	51.6%	23	78.3%	24	58.3%
Australia	17	70.6%	30	63.3%	36	66.7%	20	70.0%	13	69.2%
All other countries	132	72.0%	142	70.4%	128	69.5%	116	66.4%	174	64.9%
International	573	65.4%	966	59.1%	1,150	61.0%	1,115	59.5%	1,697	59.0%

¹ * Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

First-Attempt Pass Rates for the French NCLEX-RN

Table 8 shows the first-attempt pass rates of writers who wrote their first attempt of the NCLEX-RN in French, from 2016 to 2020.

Only the first-attempt pass rate is shown because, on subsequent attempts, NCLEX-RN writers can change the language in which they write the exam. This means it is not possible to compare pass rates across all attempts by language of write.

Table 8: First-attempt pass rates for writers who wrote in French

	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020**	
	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate	Writers	First-attempt pass rate
Writers who wrote in French*	91	35.2%	64	29.7%	57	61.4%	62	58.1%	68	61.8%

¹ * Fewer than five internationally-educated writers wrote in French between 2016 and 2020.;

² ** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Exam Parameter Statistics

Exam parameter statistics provide a look at how close writers are to passing or failing.¹⁴

- **Average exam duration:** This number is generally longer if a writer:
 - passes but is close to failing or
 - fails but is close to passing.
- **Average number of questions answered:** This number is generally larger if a writer:
 - passes but is close to failing or
 - fails but is close to passing.
- **Percentage of writers answering the minimum number of questions:** This number is generally higher if the writers are:
 - strongly passing or
 - strongly failing.
- **Percentage of writers answering the maximum number of questions:** This number is generally higher if the writers are:
 - close to failing or
 - close to passing.

Canadian-educated writers

Table 9: Canadian-educated writers: Average exam duration of their first attempt (in hours:minutes)

Average exam duration	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	7,987	1,325	9,312
2019	1:56	3:02	2:05
2019: Total number of first attempts	8,430	1,426	9,856
2018	1:57	3:10	2:08
2018: Total number of first attempts	8,151	1,376	9,527
2017	2:00	3:09	2:12
2017: Total number of first attempts	7,926	1,733	9,659
2016	2:02	3:04	2:15
2016: Total number of first attempts	7,461	1,877	9,338

* The test duration parameter was adjusted during 2020, 2020 test duration statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

¹⁴See the section "How is a pass or fail determined?" for more information.

Table 10: Canadian-educated writers: Average number of questions answered on their first attempt

Average number of questions answered	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	7,987	1,325	9,312
2019	107	167	116
2019: Total number of first attempts	8,430	1,426	9,856
2018	107	173	116
2018: Total number of first attempts	8,151	1,376	9,527
2017	109	173	121
2017: Total number of first attempts	7,926	1,733	9,659
2016	107	168	119
2016: Total number of first attempts	7,461	1,877	9,338

* Test parameters were adjusted during 2020, 2020 questions answered statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 11: Canadian-educated writers: Percentage of writers answering the minimum number of questions on their first attempt

Percentage of writers answering the minimum number of questions	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	7,987	1,325	9,312
2019	59.6%	24.8%	54.6%
2019: Total number of first attempts	8,430	1,426	9,856
2018	59.8%	22.0%	54.3%
2018: Total number of first attempts	8,151	1,376	9,527
2017	59.2%	21.8%	52.5%
2017: Total number of first attempts	7,926	1,733	9,659
2016	60.6%	23.0%	53.1%
2016: Total number of first attempts	7,461	1,877	9,338

* The minimum number of question parameter was adjusted during 2020, 2020 minimum number of question statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 12: Canadian-educated writers: Percentage of writers answering the maximum number of questions on their first attempt

Percentage of writers answering the maximum number of questions	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	7,987	1,325	9,312
2019	9.0%	32.3%	12.4%
2019: Total number of first attempts	8,430	1,426	9,856
2018	8.7%	33.9%	12.4%
2018: Total number of first attempts	8,151	1,376	9,527
2017	9.9%	34.6%	14.3%
2017: Total number of first attempts	7,926	1,733	9,659
2016	8.8%	30.5%	13.2%
2016: Total number of first attempts	7,461	1,877	9,338

* The maximum number of question parameter was adjusted during 2020, 2020 maximum number of question statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Internationally-educated writers

Table 13: Internationally-educated writers: Average exam duration of their first attempt (in hours:minutes)

Average exam duration	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	1,001	696	1,697
2019	2:31	3:13	2:48
2019: Total number of first attempts	663	452	1,115
2018	2:42	3:04	2:51
2018: Total number of first attempts	701	449	1,150
2017	2:32	3:00	2:43
2017: Total number of first attempts	571	395	966
2016	2:32	3:14	2:46
2016: Total number of first attempts	375	198	573

* The test duration parameter was adjusted during 2020, 2020 test duration statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 14: Internationally-educated writers: Average number of questions answered on their first attempt

Average number of questions answered	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	1,001	696	1,697
2019	111	142	123
2019: Total number of first attempts	663	452	1,115
2018	117	138	125
2018: Total number of first attempts	701	449	1,150
2017	110	134	120
2017: Total number of first attempts	571	395	966
2016	109	143	121
2016: Total number of first attempts	375	198	573

* Test parameters were adjusted during 2020, 2020 questions answered statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 15: Internationally-educated writers: Percentage of writers answering the minimum number of questions on their first attempt

Percentage of writers answering the minimum number of questions	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	1,001	696	1,697
2019	58.4%	42.7%	52.0%
2019: Total number of first attempts	663	452	1,115
2018	50.4%	39.0%	45.9%
2018: Total number of first attempts	701	449	1,150
2017	58.5%	42.3%	51.9%
2017: Total number of first attempts	571	395	966
2016	59.7%	36.9%	51.8%
2016: Total number of first attempts	375	198	573

* The minimum number of question parameter was adjusted during 2020, 2020 minimum number of question statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Table 16: Internationally-educated writers: Percentage of writers answering the maximum number of questions on their first attempt

Percentage of writers answering the maximum number of questions	By writers who passed	By writers who failed	By all writers
2020*	NA	NA	NA
2020*: Total number of first attempts	1,001	696	1,697
2019	10.3%	19.5%	14.0%
2019: Total number of first attempts	663	452	1,115
2018	10.8%	16.9%	13.2%
2018: Total number of first attempts	701	449	1,150
2017	9.6%	12.2%	10.7%
2017: Total number of first attempts	571	395	966
2016	8.8%	17.7%	11.9%
2016: Total number of first attempts	375	198	573

* The maximum number of question parameter was adjusted during 2020, 2020 maximum number of question statistics are not comparable to previous years. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

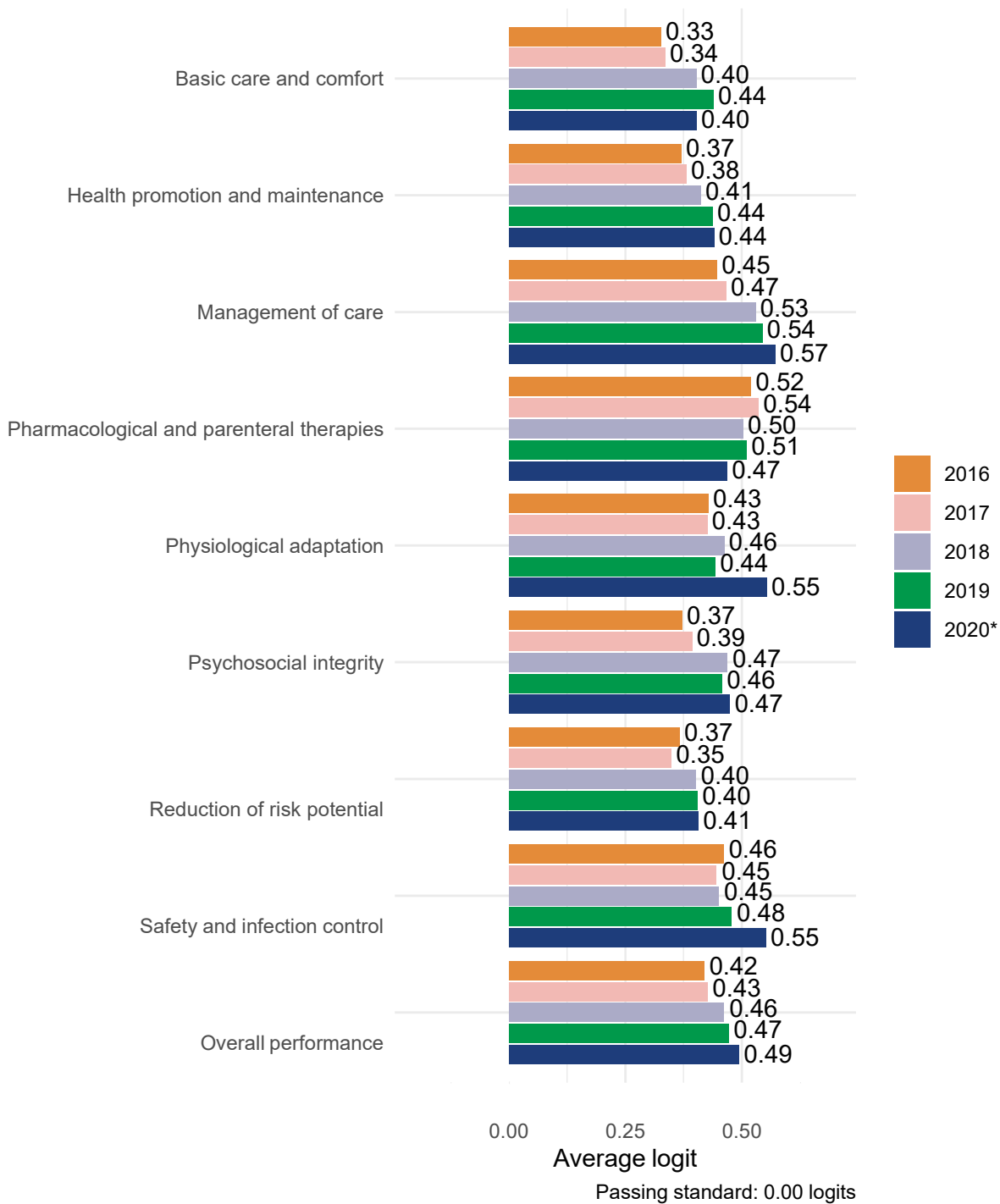
Test Plan Performance

To pass the NCLEX-RN, the writers must exceed the passing standard,¹⁵ which is set at 0.00 logits. Higher numbers indicate better performance.

¹⁵See the section “What is a passing standard?” for more information.

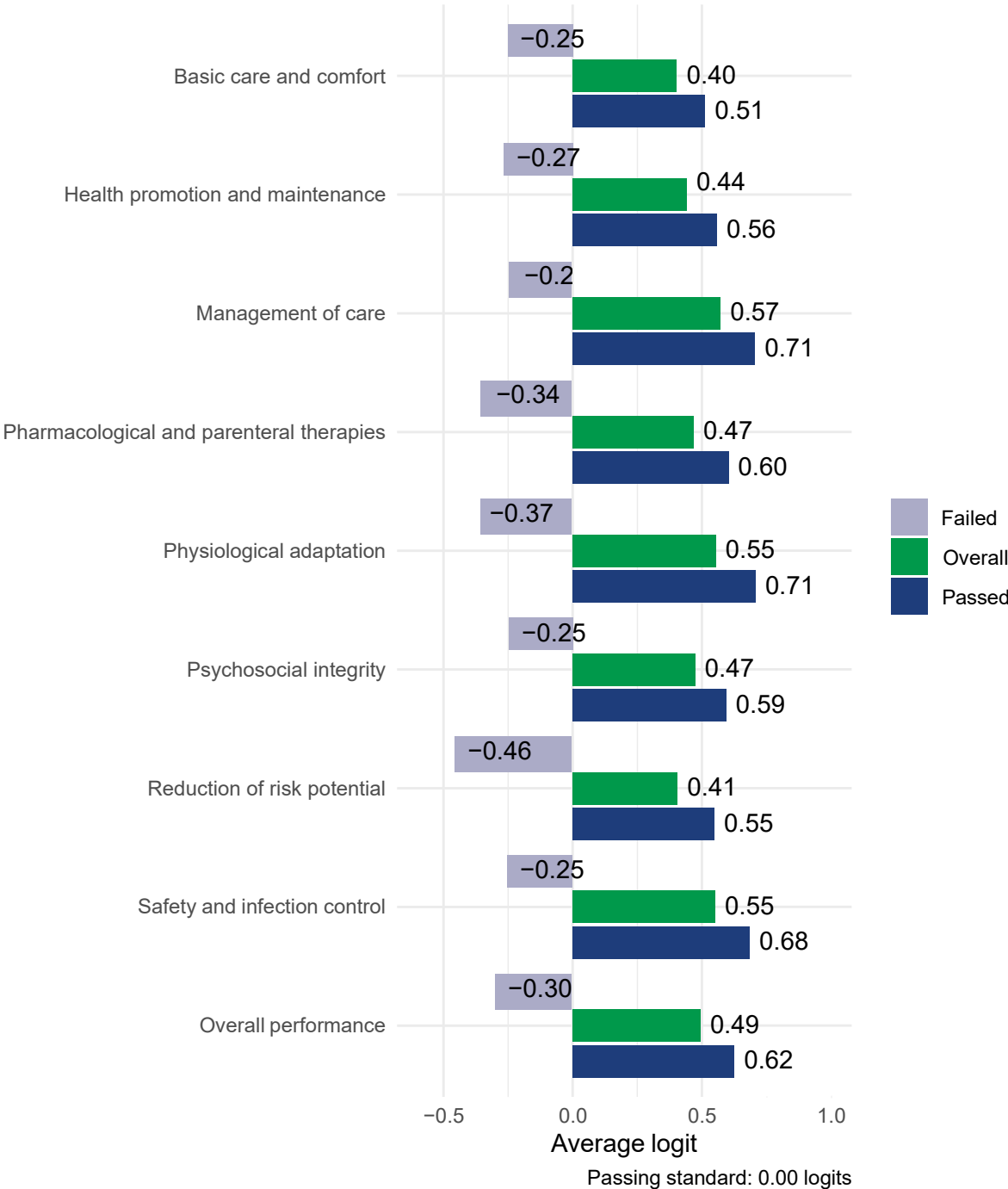
Canadian-educated writers

Figure 1: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt performance in each category (in logits)



* Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

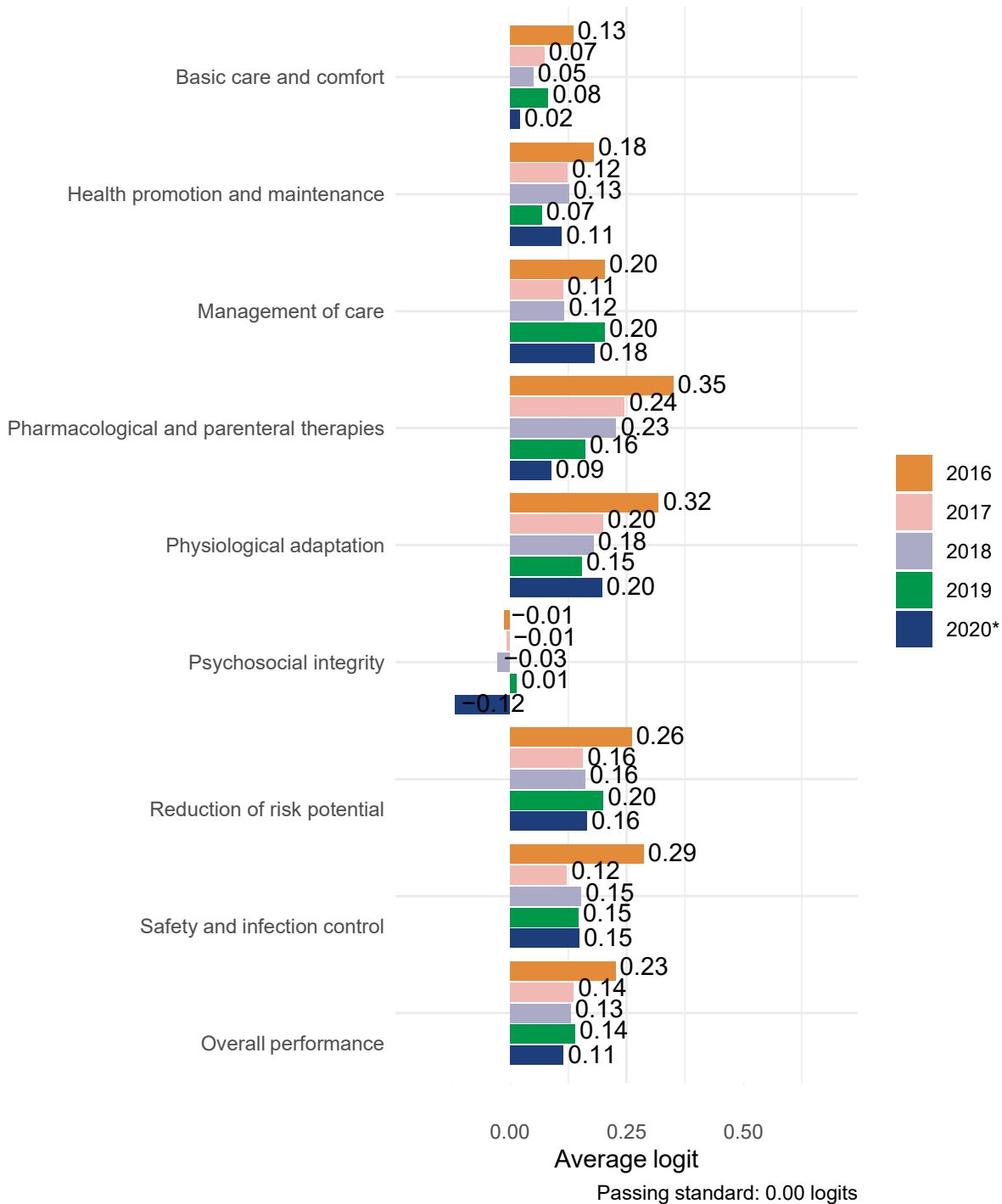
Figure 2: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt performance in each category in 2020* in logits (presented separately for those who passed and those who failed).



* Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

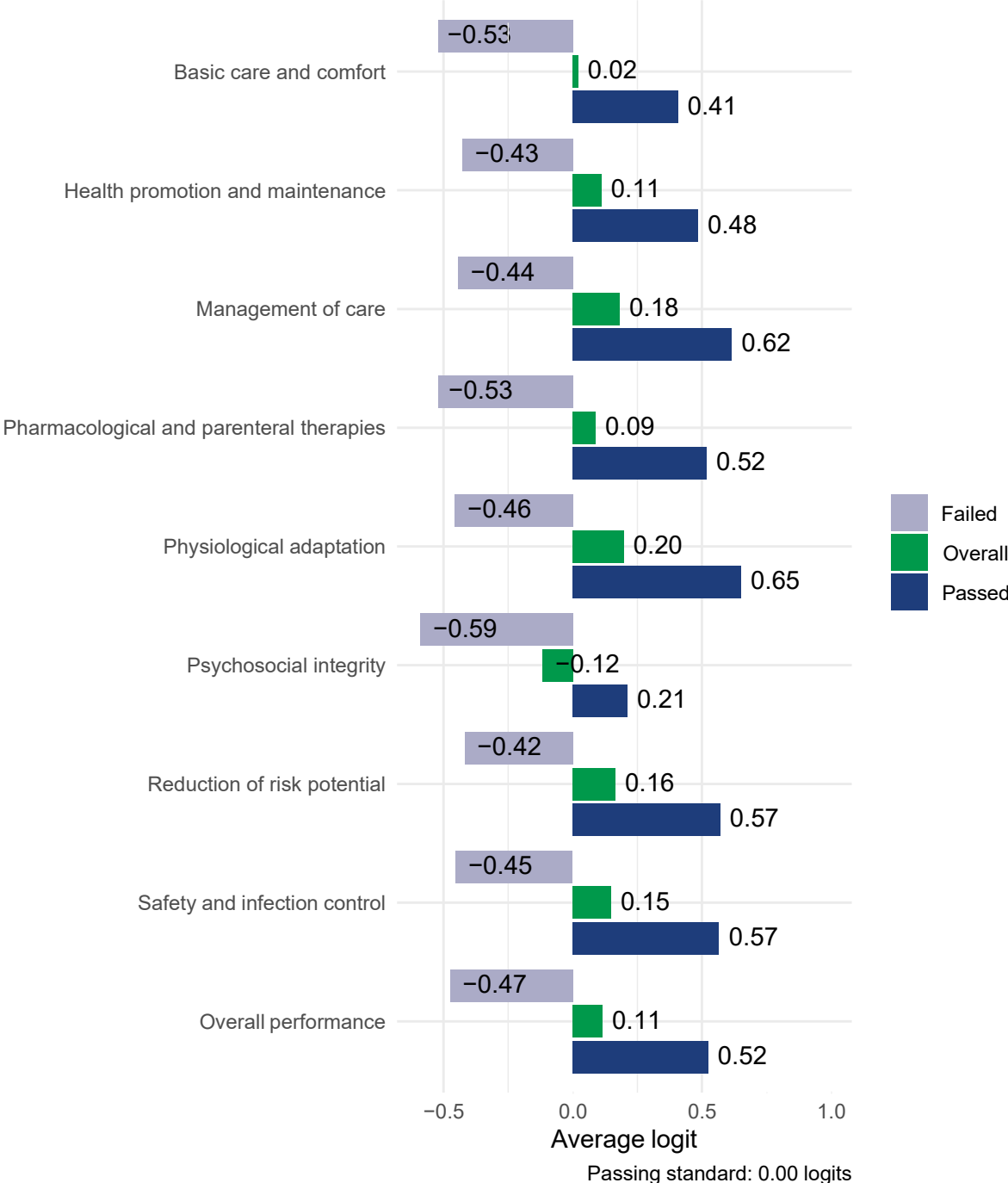
Internationally-educated writers

Figure 3: Internationally-educated writers: Average first-attempt performance in each category (in logits)



* Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

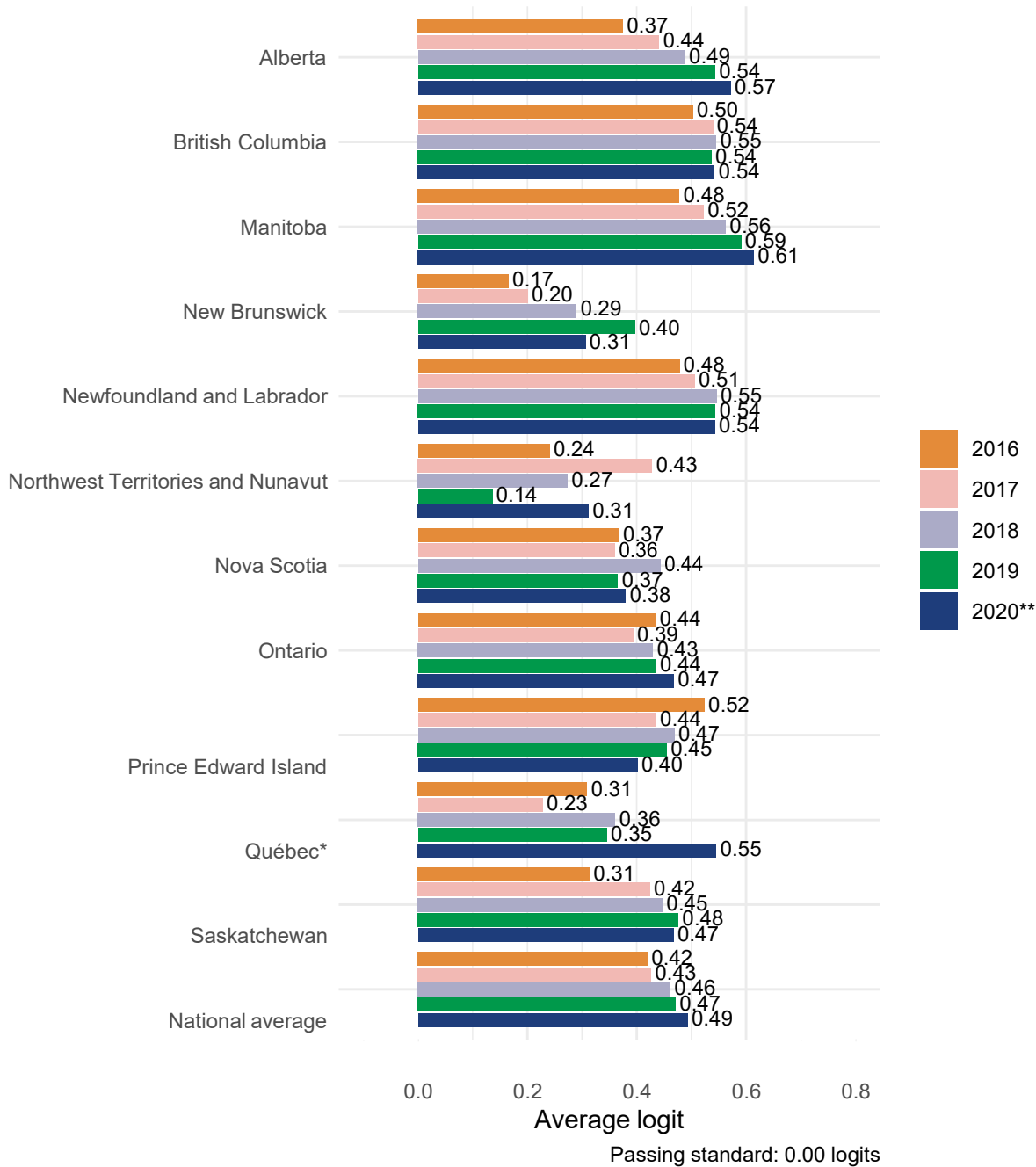
Figure 4: Internationally-educated writers: Average first-attempt performance in each category in 2020* in logits (presented separately for those who passed and those who failed)



* Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Appendix: Provincial and Territorial Test Plan Breakdown

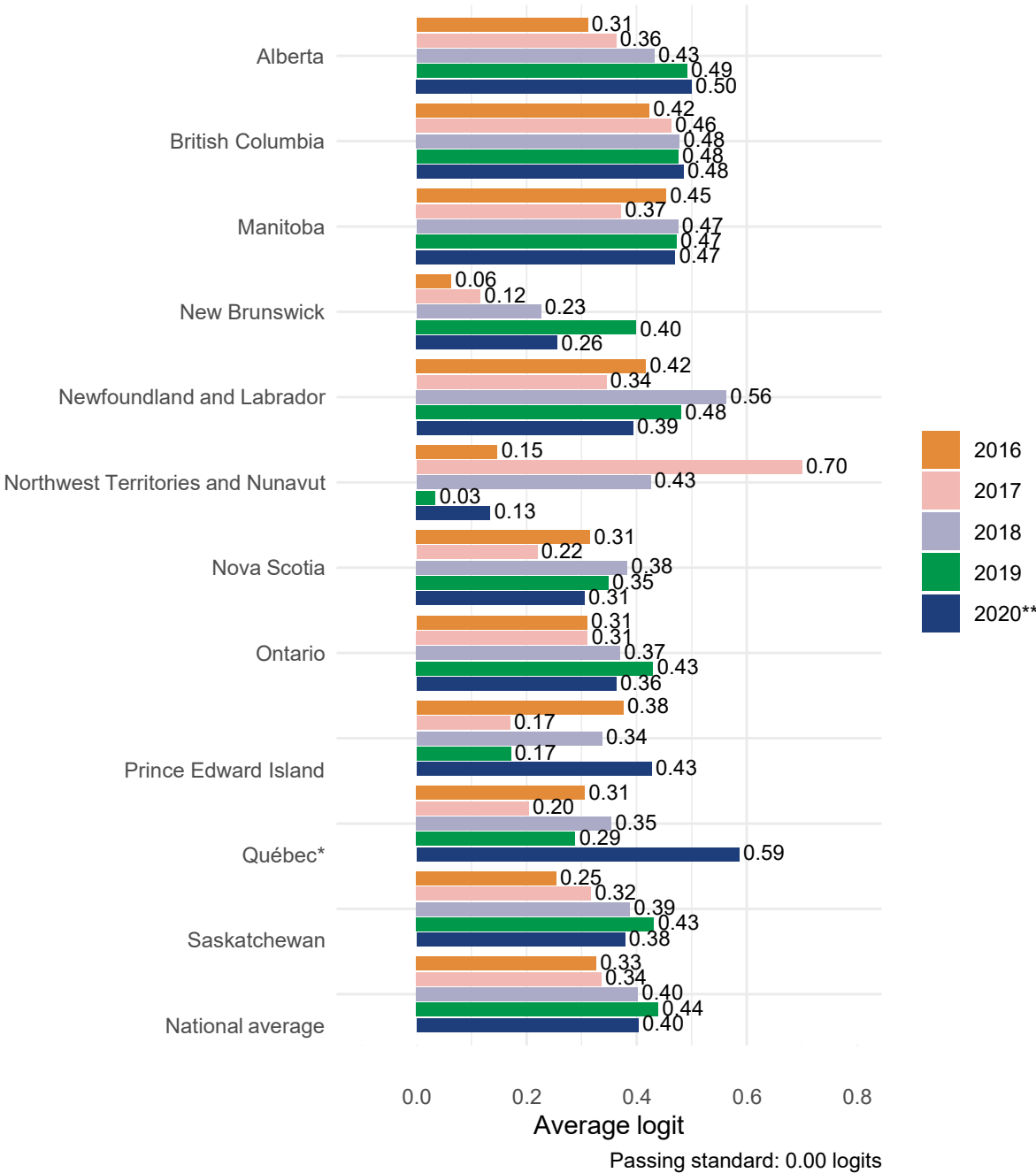
Figure A1: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Overall performance



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

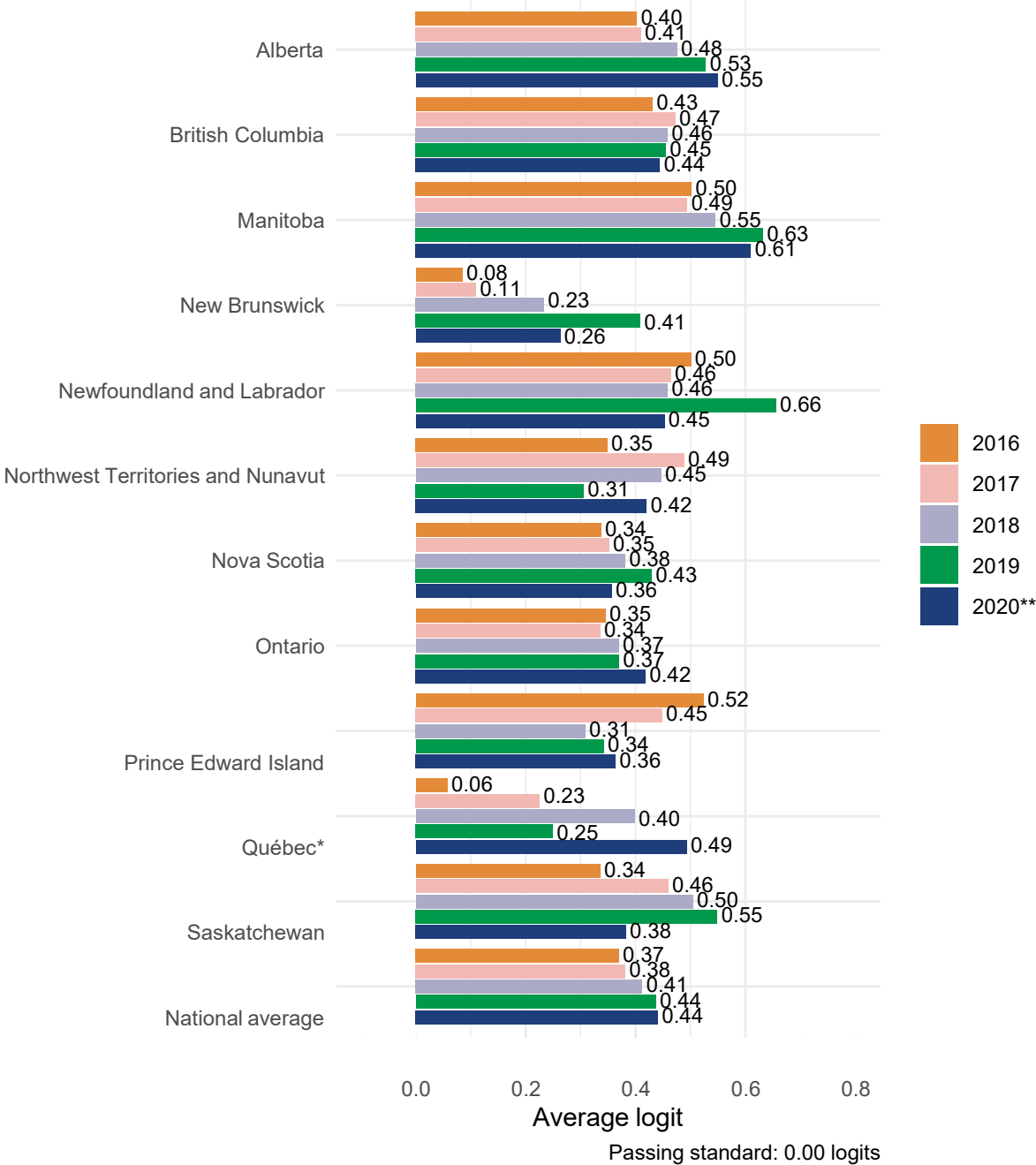
Figure A2: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Basic care and comfort



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

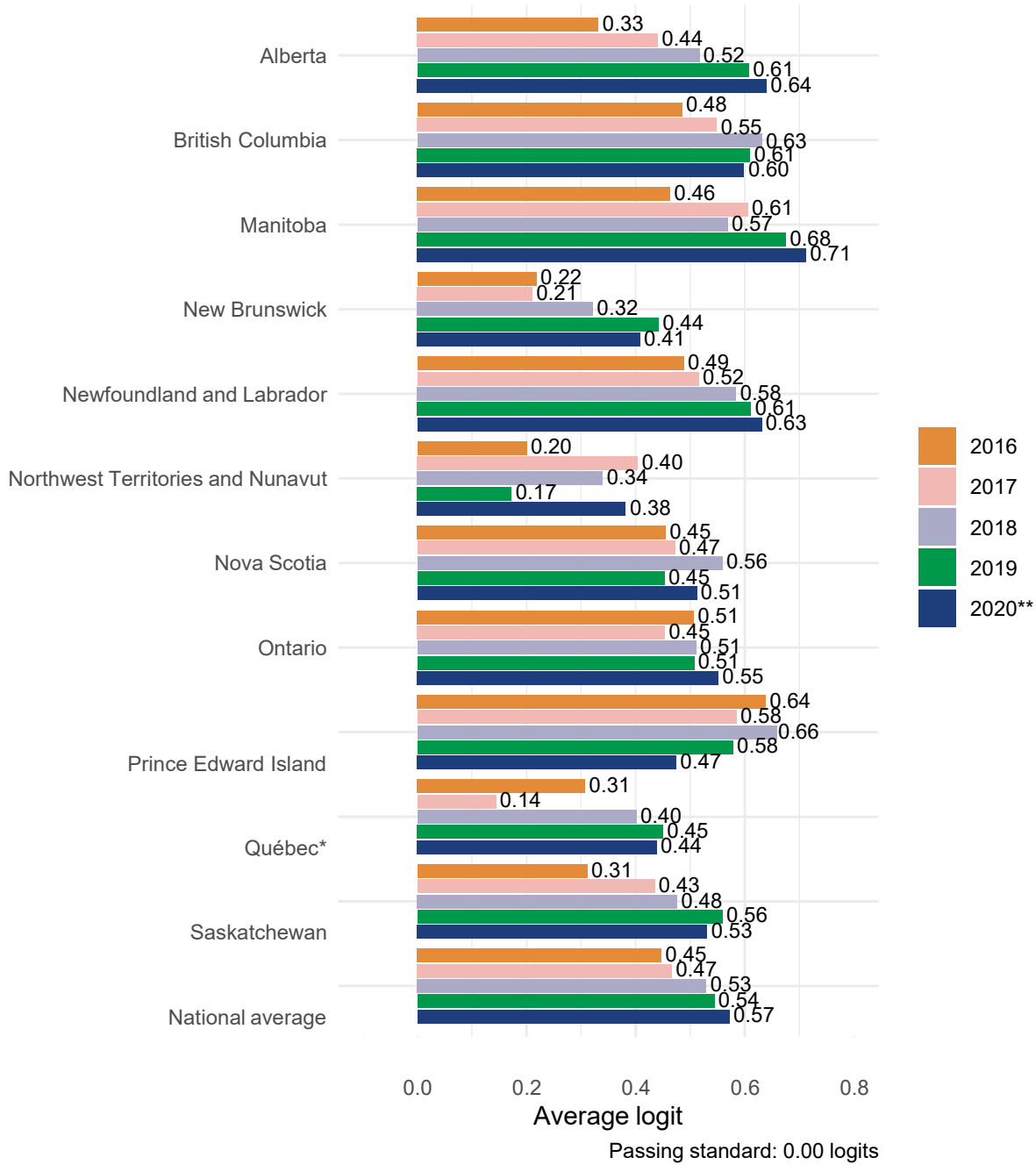
Figure A3: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Health promotion and maintenance



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

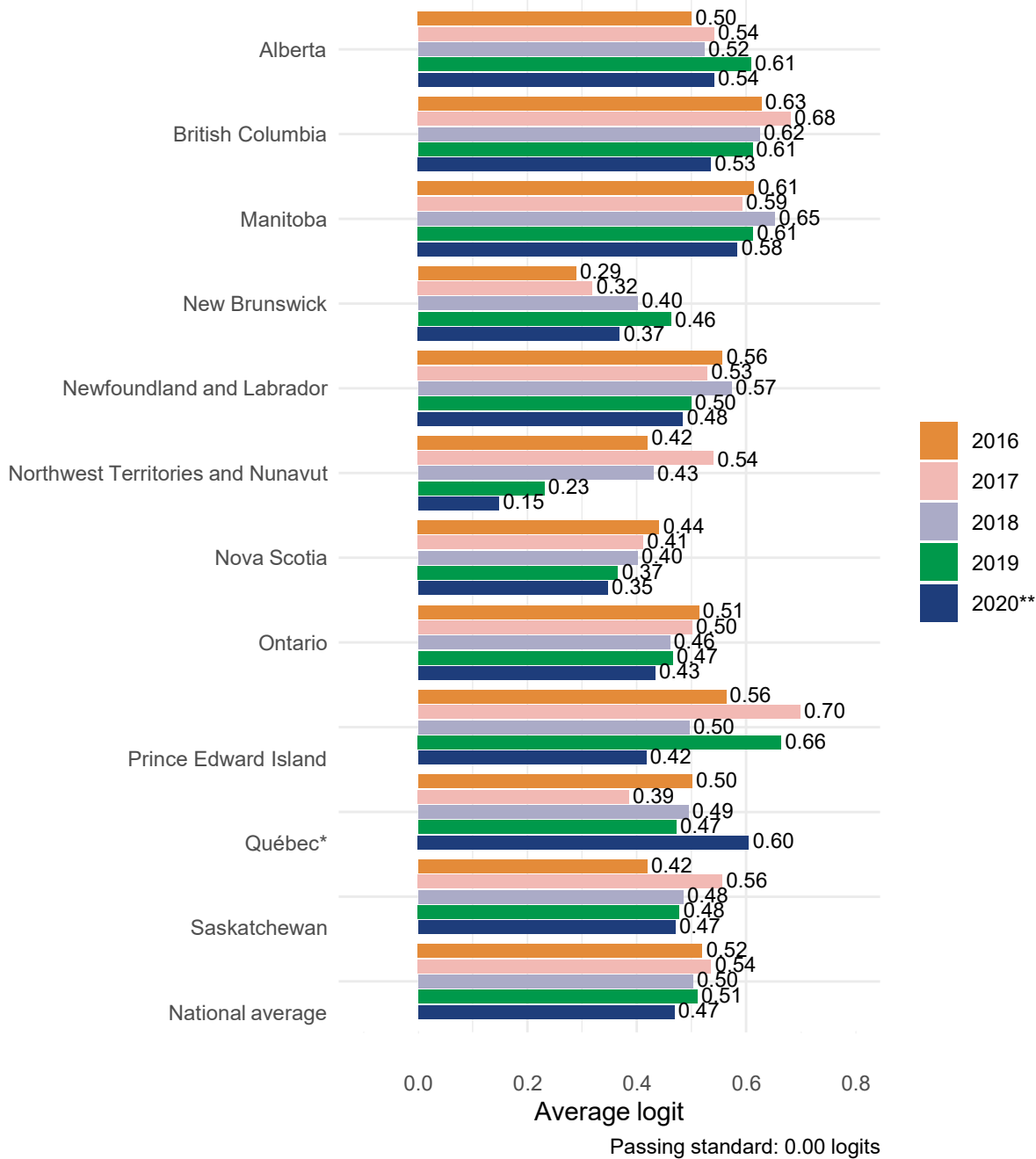
Figure A4: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Management of care



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

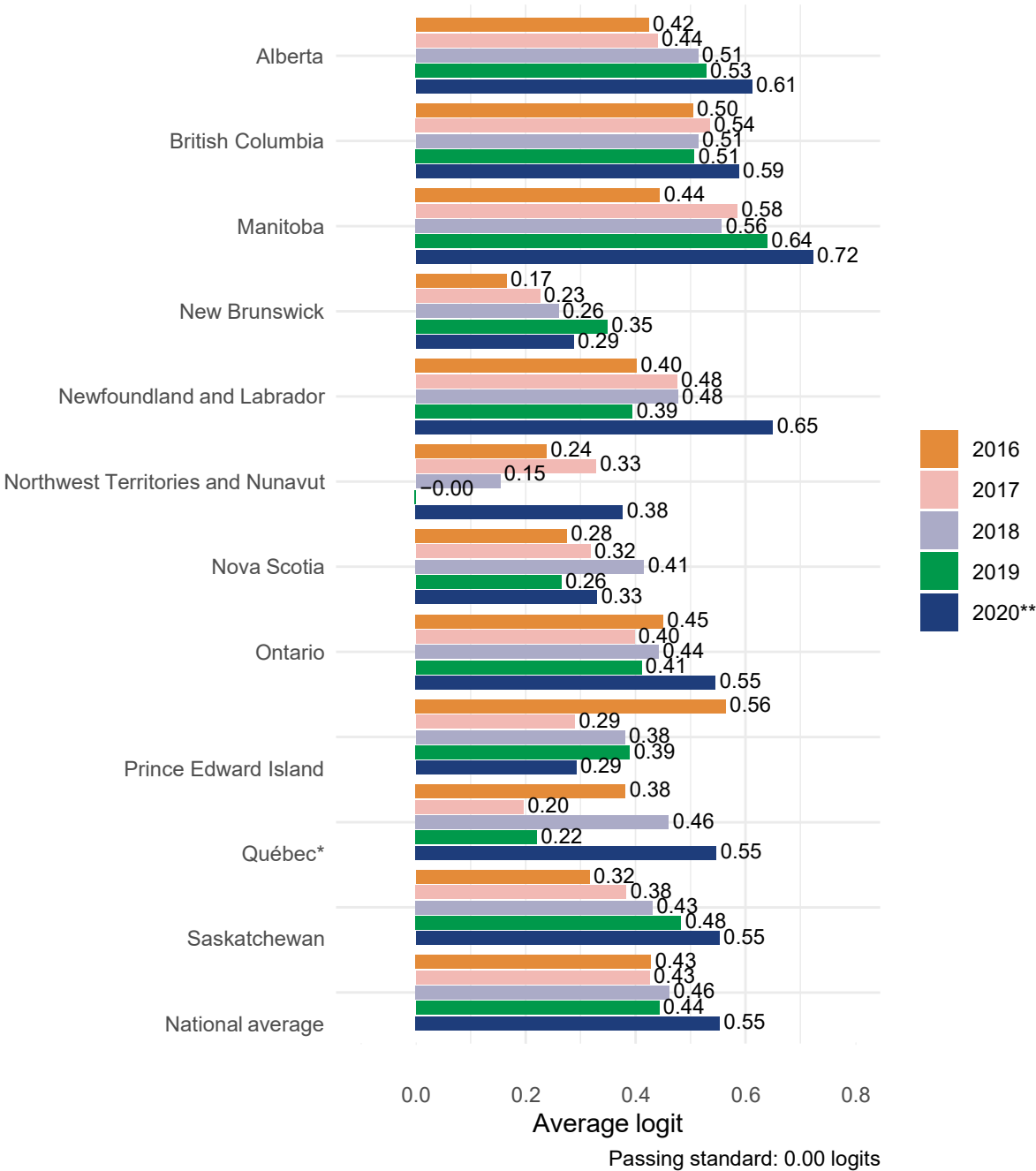
Figure A5: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Pharmacological and parenteral therapies



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

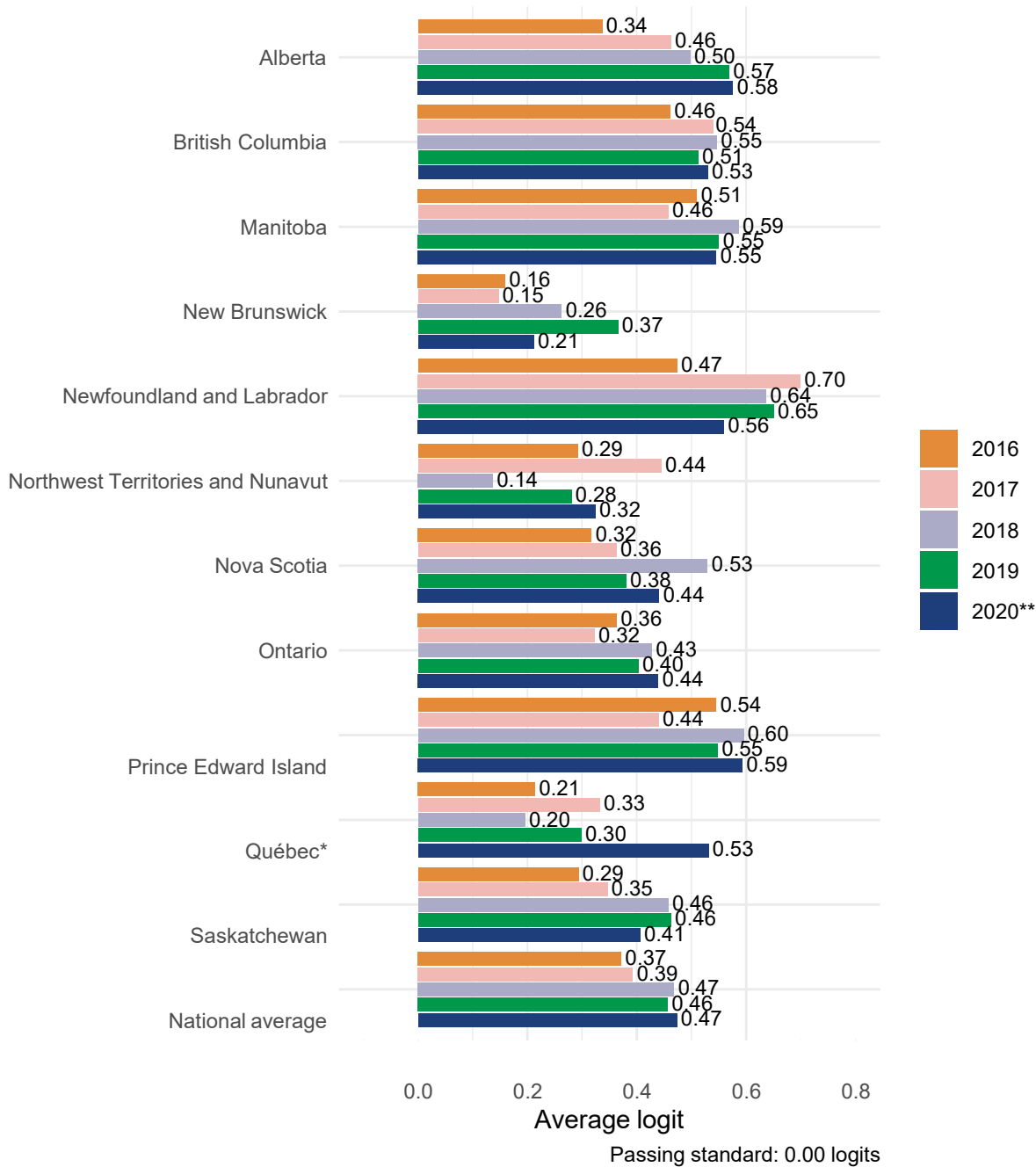
Figure A6: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Physiological adaptation



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

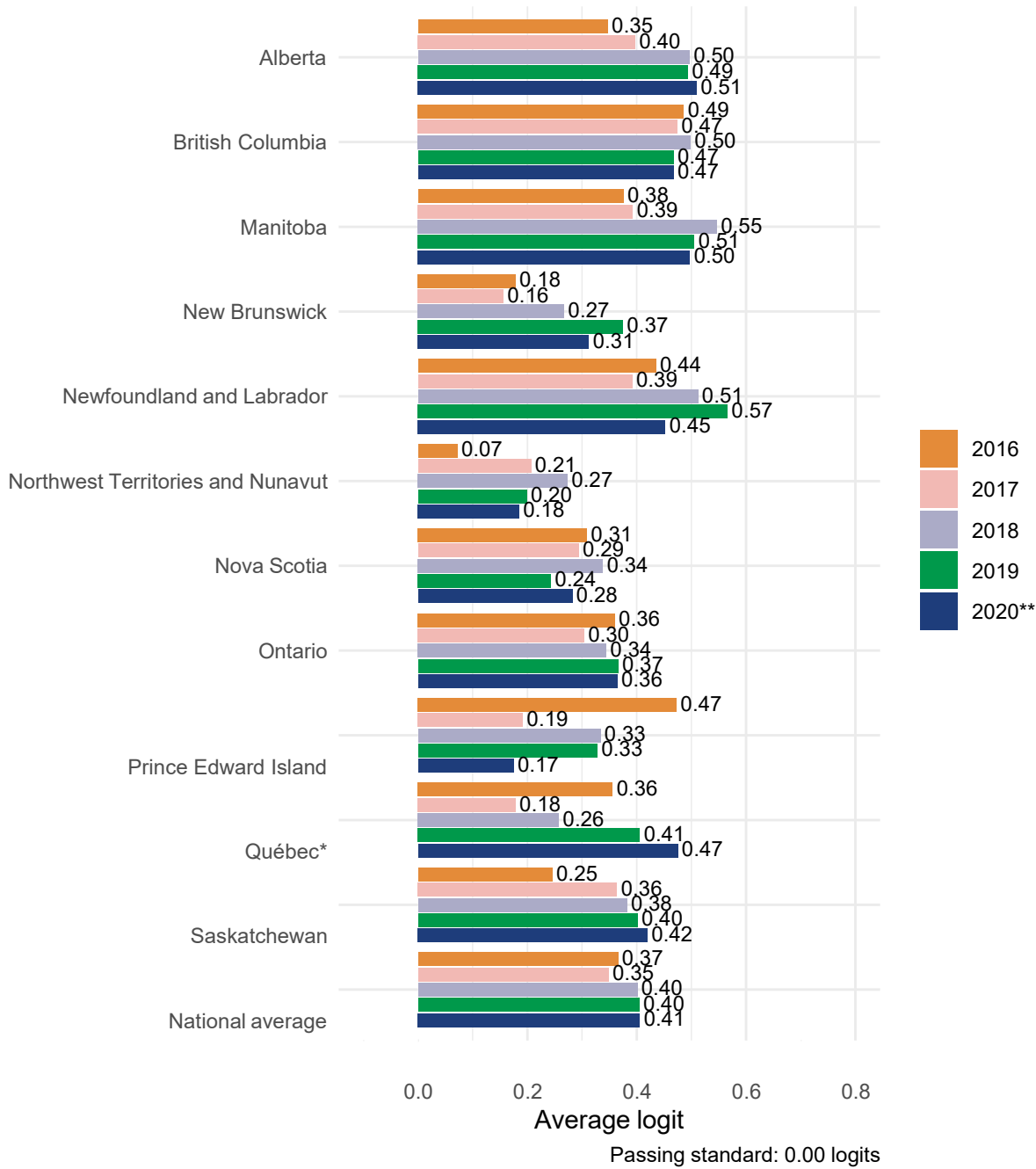
Figure A7: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Psychosocial integrity



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

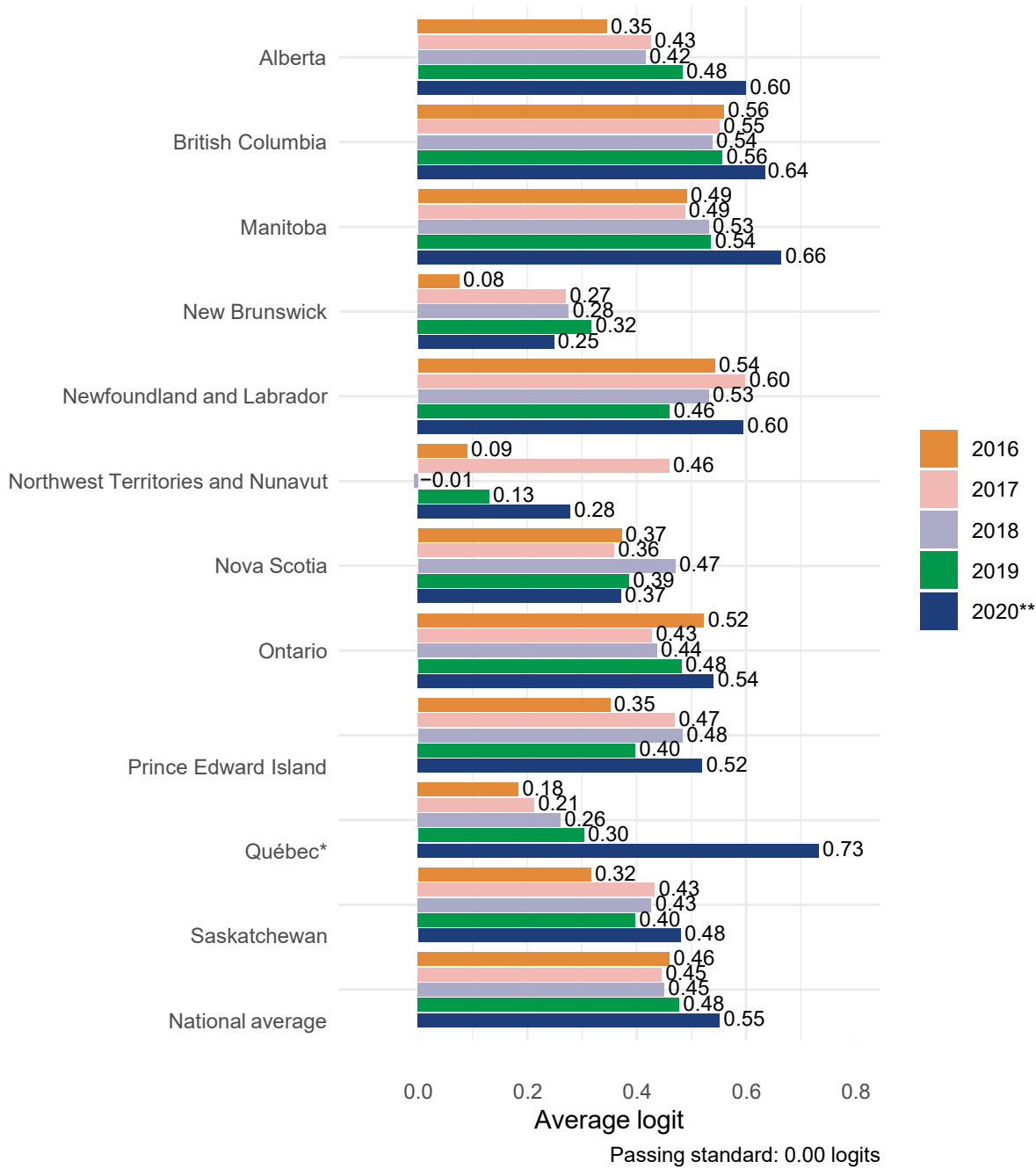
Figure A8: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Reduction of risk potential



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

Figure A9: Canadian-educated writers: Average first-attempt test plan performance by province or territory of education — Safety and infection control



* Most graduates of Québec nursing programs write the OIIQ's (Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec) professional examination and are not included here. This Québec category only includes Québec-educated graduates who wrote the NCLEX-RN. See the section "Who is included in this report?" for more information.

** Test parameters were adjusted during 2020. See the section "COVID-19 and the NCLEX-RN" for more information.

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