

For immediate release

## **CANADA NEEDS NEW DIRECTION ON KEY HEALTH ISSUES**

### ***New poll underscores concern with national drug strategy, cuts to AIDS funding***

**Toronto, October 9, 2008** — The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian AIDS Society (CAS) called for a change in direction today on two important public health issues — providing sustainable federal funding for AIDS programs and the inclusion of harm reduction and treatment programs as part of the national drug strategy. A new poll prepared for the same organizations by Angus Reid Strategies indicates Canadians also want a new policy direction on these issues.

According to the poll, nine in ten Canadians (91%) want federal funding for the fight against AIDS either increased (44%) or maintained (47%). Support for maintaining or increasing federal funding for AIDS programs is largely consistent across demographic and regional lines as well as income and education levels. Support for increasing or maintaining funding for AIDS is highest among women (96%), in the regions of Quebec and Manitoba/Saskatchewan (95% each), among Canadians aged 18–34 (94%), and those making under \$50,000 per year and less well-educated Canadians (93% each).

Despite a 2003 all-party agreement that federal funding for Canada's AIDS strategy should be gradually increased over five years, last year the federal government reversed course and began cutting funding for the fight against AIDS — by almost 15 percent in 2007, and the same amount again this year. This funding includes money for research, community support for those living with HIV and programs that help Canadians most at risk for infection.

“Many Canadians take the measure of our country based on how we treat our most vulnerable citizens,” said Monique Doolittle-Romas, Executive Director of CAS. “Funding for AIDS programs is an important factor in that measurement and one to which all parties made a unanimous commitment in 2003 — it’s a promise they should honour.”

On the question of what Canada's dominant approach to drug policy should be — addiction treatment services and harm reduction programs versus increased

prosecution and incarceration — the poll indicates that Canadians see the need for both in Canada’s drug strategy. Nationwide, a slim majority (51%) favours prioritizing harm reduction and treatment. This support was highest in Ontario (52%), Quebec (53%), Atlantic Canada (63%) and British Columbia (58%) — home of Vancouver’s safe injection site, Insite. Young Canadians aged 18–34 (69%), and those with a university education or higher (62%) also prefer this approach.

Unsafe drug use is a key factor driving the spread of HIV and hepatitis C virus in Canada. Scientifically proven preventive services, including harm reduction programs like needle exchanges and supervised injection sites, protect the lives of people struggling with addiction as well as the public at large. However, the federal government’s new National Anti-Drug Strategy focuses exclusively on punishment, omitting the type of harm reduction and treatment programs that have proven effective in Canada and many other countries around the world.

“Today’s poll indicates that Canadians see the importance of a balanced drug strategy that includes harm reduction and addiction treatment services,” said Alison Symington, Senior Policy Analyst with the Legal Network. “We know the American ‘war on drugs’ approach does not work. We need a made-in-Canada strategy based on scientific evidence to keep our communities safe and healthy.”

The federal government’s public health agency says almost 60,000 people in Canada are infected with HIV and a few thousand new cases of HIV are diagnosed each year.

As the federal election campaign enters its final days, four out of the five major political parties have registered support for these issues. The Bloc, NDP, Greens and Liberals have all backed harm reduction programs and addressed the need for predictable, stable federal funding for AIDS — either through their campaign platforms or in responses to questionnaires from the Legal Network and CAS.

“We need the next federal government to understand the impact that HIV and AIDS has on so many Canadians, particularly young Canadians,” said Angel Parks, Positive Youth Coordinator at the AIDS Committee of Toronto and a young woman living with HIV. “We need to elect a government willing to commit to a plan to fight HIV/AIDS.”

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*For more details on the poll please see the attachment. For more information on polling technique please visit [www.angusreidstrategies.com](http://www.angusreidstrategies.com).*

### **Canadian AIDS Society**

The Canadian AIDS Society ([www.cdnaids.ca](http://www.cdnaids.ca)) is a national coalition of over 125 community-based AIDS organizations from across Canada. Dedicated to

strengthening the response to HIV/AIDS across all sectors of society, we also work to enrich the lives of people and communities living with HIV/AIDS.

### **About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada's leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

### **About the survey**

The survey was conducted on-line by Angus Reid Strategies on behalf of the Canadian AIDS Society and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network among a nationally representative sample of 1,005 Canadians from October 6 to October 7, 2008. The results of this survey are accurate to within +/- 3.1%, 19 times out of 20.

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For more information, please contact:

*Disponible en français*

Christopher Holcroft (*English*)

*Empower Consulting*, on behalf of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

Mobile: +1 416 996-0767

E-mail: [chris\\_holcroft@yahoo.com](mailto:chris_holcroft@yahoo.com)

Tricia Diduch (*English, French*)

Canadian AIDS Society

Telephone: +1 613 230-3580 ext. 130

E-mail: [triciad@cdnaids.ca](mailto:triciad@cdnaids.ca)

Table 1

Gender

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
Gender	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	Male	COL %	50%	53%	52%	48%	50%	50%	48%	100%	0%	52%	50%	49%	43%	56%	58%	45%	46%	62%	50%	50%
		SIG														A	A			A B		
	Female	COUNT	504	63	50	35	191	125	40	504	0	139	210	155	149	221	92	116	219	169	394	110
		COL %	50%	47%	48%	52%	50%	50%	52%	0%	100%	48%	50%	51%	57%	44%	42%	55%	54%	38%	50%	50%
		SIG													B C			C	C			
		COUNT	501	56	47	37	189	127	44	0	501	128	211	162	197	173	66	145	254	102	390	110

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Results are based on two-sided tests with significance level 0.05. For each significant pair, the key of the category with the smaller column proportion appears under the category with the larger column proportion.

Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each innermost subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

Cell counts of some categories are not integers. They were rounded to the nearest integers before performing column proportions tests.

Table 2

Age

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
AGE	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	18-34	COL %	27%	24%	30%	29%	27%	26%	26%	28%	26%	100%	0%	0%	32%	25%	25%	18%	29%	30%	27%	26%
		SIG																	A	A		
		COUNT	267	29	29	21	102	65	22	139	128	267	0	0	110	99	40	48	138	82	209	58
		SIG														A	A					
	35-54	COL %	42%	41%	45%	38%	42%	42%	40%	42%	42%	0%	100%	0%	34%	45%	47%	42%	44%	38%	42%	42%
		SIG																				
		COUNT	421	49	44	27	160	107	34	210	211	0	421	0	119	177	74	108	208	104	329	93
		SIG																				
	55+	COL %	32%	35%	25%	33%	31%	32%	34%	31%	32%	0%	0%	100%	34%	30%	28%	40%	27%	31%	31%	32%
		SIG																	B			
		COUNT	317	42	24	24	118	80	29	155	162	0	0	317	119	118	45	105	127	85	246	70
		SIG																				
MEAN	MEAN	46.5	47.1	44.9	47.0	46.5	46.9	45.6	46.3	46.7	27.7	46.0	62.9	46.4	46.4	44.8	49.9	45.2	45.5	46.4	46.6	
	SIG											A	A B				B C					
	STDDEV	14.6	13.8	14.2	16.5	15.3	13.5	14.5	15.1	14.1	4.5	5.8	6.9	16.4	13.2	13.6	15.0	14.3	14.3	14.9	13.6	
	MEDIAN	48.0	49.0	45.0	47.0	48.0	51.0	47.0	47.0	48.0	28.0	47.0	62.0	48.0	47.0	45.0	52.0	46.0	45.0	47.0	50.0	

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Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each innermost subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

Cell counts of some categories are not integers. They were rounded to the nearest integers before performing column proportions tests.

Results are based on two-sided tests assuming equal variances with significance level 0.05. For each significant pair, the key of the smaller category appears under the category with larger mean.

Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each innermost subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

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Table 3

Age\_Gender

			TOTAL	REGION							Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)	
AGE/Gender	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221	
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161	
	Male 18-34	COL %	14%	12%	15%	14%	15%	13%	13%	28%	0%	52%	0%	0%	14%	15%	16%	9%	12%	21%	14%	14%	
		SIG																		A B			
	Male 35-54	COUNT	139	15	15	10	57	32	11	139	0	139	0	0	49	58	26	24	58	58	110	30	
		COL %	21%	22%	23%	19%	21%	21%	19%	42%	0%	0%	50%	0%	15%	24%	26%	17%	22%	23%	21%	21%	
	Male 55+	SIG													A	A							
		COUNT	210	26	23	13	79	53	16	210	0	0	210	0	53	96	41	44	106	61	164	46	
	Female 18-34	COL %	15%	18%	13%	15%	15%	16%	16%	31%	0%	0%	0%	49%	14%	17%	16%	19%	12%	19%	15%	16%	
		SIG																B		B			
	Female 35-54	COUNT	155	21	13	11	56	40	14	155	0	0	0	155	48	68	25	49	55	51	120	34	
		COL %	13%	12%	15%	15%	12%	13%	13%	0%	26%	48%	0%	0%	18%	10%	9%	9%	17%	9%	13%	13%	
	Female 55+	SIG													B C				A C				
		COUNT	128	14	14	10	45	33	11	0	128	128	0	0	61	41	14	24	79	25	100	28	
	Female 18-34	COL %	21%	19%	22%	19%	22%	21%	21%	0%	42%	0%	50%	0%	19%	20%	21%	25%	22%	16%	21%	21%	
		SIG																C					
	Female 35-54	COUNT	211	22	21	14	82	54	17	0	211	0	211	0	66	81	33	65	103	43	164	46	
		COL %	16%	17%	12%	18%	16%	16%	18%	0%	32%	0%	0%	51%	20%	13%	12%	21%	15%	13%	16%	16%	
	Female 55+	SIG													B			C					
		COUNT	162	20	12	13	62	40	15	0	162	0	0	162	71	51	20	56	72	34	126	36	

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Table 4

Language

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
Language	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	English	COL %	78%	100%	100%	100%	100%	13%	100%	78%	78%	78%	78%	78%	65%	83%	91%	69%	81%	82%	100%	0%
		SIG														A	A B		A	A		
	French	COUNT	784	119	98	72	380	32	84	394	390	209	329	246	225	326	144	180	381	224	784	0
		COL %	22%	0%	0%	0%	0%	87%	0%	22%	22%	22%	22%	22%	35%	17%	9%	31%	19%	18%	0%	100%
		SIG													B C	C		B C				
		COUNT	221	0	0	0	0	221	0	110	110	58	93	70	121	68	14	81	92	47	0	221

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Table 5

Region

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
REGION	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	BC	COL %	12%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%	11%	11%	12%	13%	9%	15%	12%	7%	14%	13%	15%	0%
		SIG														A			A			
	AB	COUNT	119	119	0	0	0	0	0	63	56	29	49	42	31	58	19	19	65	35	119	0
		COL %	10%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	9%	11%	10%	8%	5%	10%	17%	8%	11%	10%	12%	0%
	MB/SK	SIG														A	A					
		COUNT	98	0	98	0	0	0	0	50	47	29	44	24	17	40	26	21	51	26	98	0
	ON	COL %	7%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	7%	7%	8%	7%	7%	8%	7%	6%	12%	6%	5%	9%	0%
		SIG																B C				
	PQ	COUNT	72	0	0	72	0	0	0	35	37	21	27	24	27	29	10	32	26	13	72	0
		COL %	38%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	38%	38%	38%	38%	37%	28%	40%	50%	33%	38%	42%	48%	0%
	ATL	SIG														A	A					
		COUNT	380	0	0	0	380	0	0	191	189	102	160	118	96	156	79	87	178	115	380	0
	PQ	COL %	25%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	25%	25%	24%	25%	25%	39%	20%	11%	35%	22%	21%	4%	100%
		SIG														B C	C		B C			
	ATL	COUNT	253	0	0	0	0	253	0	125	127	65	107	80	135	78	18	90	105	58	32	221
		COL %	8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	8%	9%	8%	8%	9%	12%	8%	4%	5%	10%	9%	11%	0%
	ATL	SIG														C			A			
		COUNT	84	0	0	0	0	0	84	40	44	22	34	29	41	32	7	12	48	24	84	0

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Table 6

Education

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
Education	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	HS or less	COL %	26%	16%	21%	45%	23%	36%	14%	23%	29%	18%	26%	33%	38%	22%	12%	100%	0%	0%	23%	37%
		SIG				A B D F		A D F		A		A	A	B C	C							A
	College/ Tech school	COUNT	261	19	21	32	87	90	12	116	145	48	108	105	132	86	18	261	0	0	180	81
		COL %	47%	54%	52%	37%	47%	42%	57%	43%	51%	51%	49%	40%	45%	53%	42%	0%	100%	0%	49%	42%
	Univ+	SIG								A	C	C										
		COUNT	473	65	51	26	178	105	48	219	254	138	208	127	155	207	67	0	473	0	381	92
		COL %	27%	29%	26%	18%	30%	23%	29%	34%	20%	31%	25%	27%	17%	25%	46%	0%	0%	100%	29%	22%
		SIG								B					A	A B					B	
		COUNT	271	35	26	13	115	58	24	169	102	82	104	85	60	100	73	0	0	271	224	47

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Table 7

Income

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
Income	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	<\$50K	COL %	35%	26%	17%	38%	25%	54%	49%	30%	39%	41%	28%	37%	100%	0%	0%	50%	33%	22%	29%	55%
		SIG				B		A B D	A B D		A	B		B				B C	C			A
		COUNT	347	31	17	27	96	135	41	149	197	110	119	119	347	0	0	132	155	60	225	121
	\$50-99K	COL %	39%	49%	42%	41%	41%	31%	37%	44%	34%	37%	42%	37%	0%	100%	0%	33%	44%	37%	42%	31%
		SIG		E						B								A			B	
		COUNT	394	58	40	29	156	78	32	221	173	99	177	118	0	394	0	86	207	100	326	68
	\$100K+	COL %	16%	16%	27%	13%	21%	7%	8%	18%	13%	15%	18%	14%	0%	0%	100%	7%	14%	27%	18%	6%
		SIG			E F		E			B								A	A B	B		
		COUNT	158	19	26	10	79	18	7	92	66	40	74	45	0	0	158	18	67	73	144	14
	DK/REF	COL %	11%	9%	14%	8%	13%	8%	6%	8%	13%	7%	12%	11%	0%	0%	0%	10%	9%	14%	11%	8%
		SIG								A												
		COUNT	106	11	14	6	49	21	5	41	65	19	52	35	0	0	0	25	44	37	89	17

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Table 8

1. Thinking about the federal government's strategy to deal with illegal drugs, which approach do you personally believe should be the primary focus?

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
	All Respondents	BASE	1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
		UNWT	1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
	Supporting addiction treatment services and harm reduction programs	COL %	51%	58%	32%	41%	52%	53%	63%	51%	51%	69%	41%	49%	57%	48%	47%	42%	50%	62%	50%	53%
		SIG		B			B	B	B			B C								A B		
	More prosecution for drug offences and harsher minimum penalties	COUNT	512	69	31	29	196	133	53	255	257	185	173	154	198	190	75	109	235	168	395	117
		COL %	49%	42%	68%	59%	48%	47%	37%	49%	49%	31%	59%	51%	43%	52%	53%	58%	50%	38%	50%	47%
		SIG			A D E F								A	A				C	C			
		COUNT	493	50	66	42	184	119	31	249	244	83	248	163	149	204	84	152	238	103	390	103

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Results are based on two-sided tests with significance level 0.05. For each significant pair, the key of the category with the smaller column proportion appears under the category with the larger column proportion.

Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each innermost subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

Cell counts of some categories are not integers. They were rounded to the nearest integers before performing column proportions tests.

Table 9

2. Last year, the federal government reduced funding for its strategy to fight AIDS in Canada. Do you think funding should be increased, decreased, or remain the same?

			TOTAL	REGION						Gender		Age			Income			Education			Language	
			(A)	BC (A)	AB (B)	MB/SK (C)	ON (D)	PQ (E)	ATL (F)	Male (A)	Female (B)	18-34 (A)	35-54 (B)	55+ (C)	<\$50K (A)	\$50-99K (B)	\$100K+ (C)	HS or less (A)	College / Tech school (B)	Univ+ (C)	English (A)	French (B)
All Respondents	BASE		1,005	119	98	72	380	253	84	504	501	267	421	317	347	394	158	261	473	271	784	221
	UNWT		1,005	144	109	91	408	186	67	544	461	229	408	368	279	405	208	167	471	367	844	161
Increase funding	COL %		44%	46%	32%	43%	40%	51%	55%	41%	48%	46%	40%	49%	51%	43%	32%	43%	42%	48%	42%	52%
	SIG							B	B		A			B	C							A
	COUNT		445	55	31	31	153	130	47	207	238	123	168	155	176	168	50	113	201	131	330	116
Remain the same	COL %		47%	44%	53%	52%	49%	44%	37%	45%	48%	48%	50%	41%	42%	47%	57%	49%	48%	42%	48%	43%
	SIG															A						
	COUNT		469	53	52	37	186	110	32	228	241	128	210	131	147	186	90	128	226	115	375	94
Decrease funding	COL %		9%	10%	15%	5%	11%	5%	7%	14%	4%	6%	10%	10%	7%	10%	11%	7%	10%	9%	10%	5%
	SIG				E					B												B
	COUNT		91	12	14	4	42	13	6	68	22	17	43	31	24	40	17	19	46	25	80	11

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Results are based on two-sided tests with significance level 0.05. For each significant pair, the key of the category with the smaller column proportion appears under the category with the larger column proportion.

Tests are adjusted for all pairwise comparisons within a row of each innermost subtable using the Bonferroni correction.

Cell counts of some categories are not integers. They were rounded to the nearest integers before performing column proportions tests.