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Road Safety Scotland Annual Seminar

Safe Road Use:

RITS Drivers' Attitudes and Behaviours Tracking Study

Transport Scotland / Scottish Government

March 2025



Project background

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The RITS Drivers' Attitudes and Behaviours Tracking Study has been running since 2010.

Study set up to:

- provide a consistent **monitor of driver attitudes and behaviours** across Scotland
- **evaluate the impact of various road safety campaigns** run by the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland.



The tracking study allows Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government and partners to assess longer term trends in a robust and consistent way.

Each year two waves of research are conducted – 22 waves were completed between 2010 and 2022.

Following a two year hiatus, waves 23 and 24 were conducted in August 2024 and February 2025.

Method summary

Research method:

W1 to W18 – F2F in-home interviews; W19 to W24 online survey

Quantitative online survey

Sample – nationally representative of drivers in Scotland


Sample size:

- Main sample – 500 per wave (twice a year)

Margin of error (calculated at the 95% confidence level):

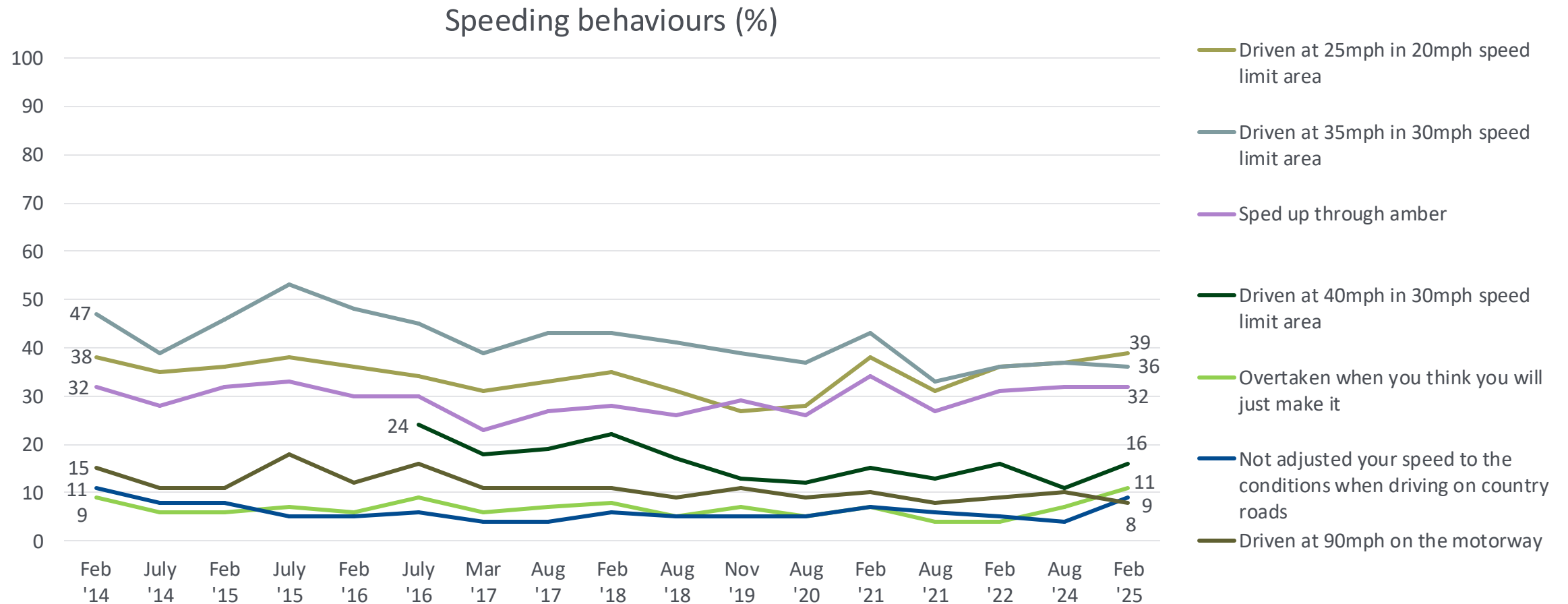
- Main sample - between $\pm 0.84\%$ and $\pm 4.23\%$

Fieldwork: February and August annually

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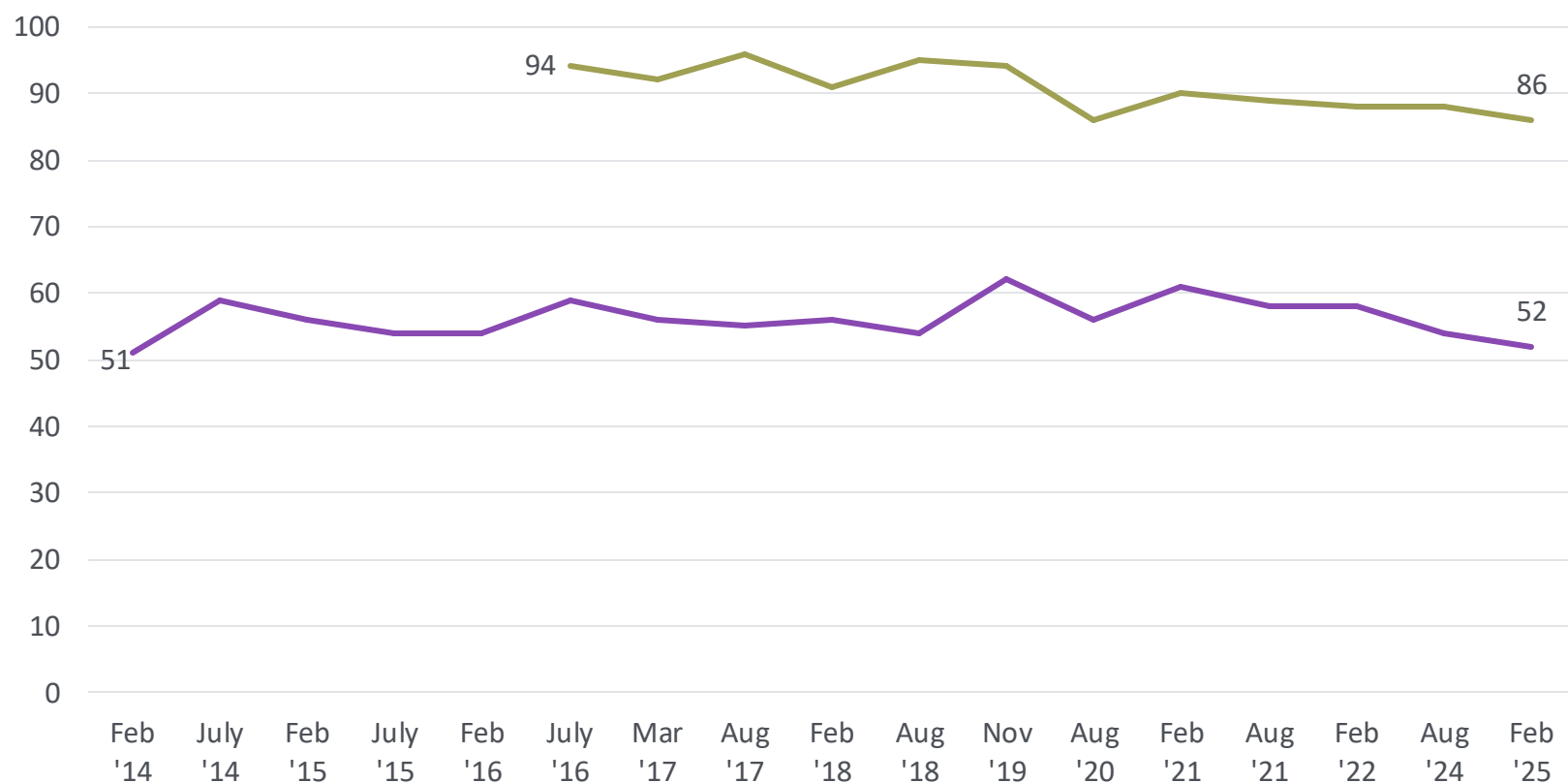
Speeding and road safety cameras

The most common speeding behaviours are generally consistent over time, although there is a concerning upward trend in driving at 25 in a 20 zone, while driving at 40 in a 30 zone, risky overtaking and not adjusting speed on country roads are higher this wave.



High agreement it may be necessary to drive below the speed limit in a built-up area, although some decline over time. Half agree there should be a maximum speed limit on all country roads – also lower this year than in recent waves.

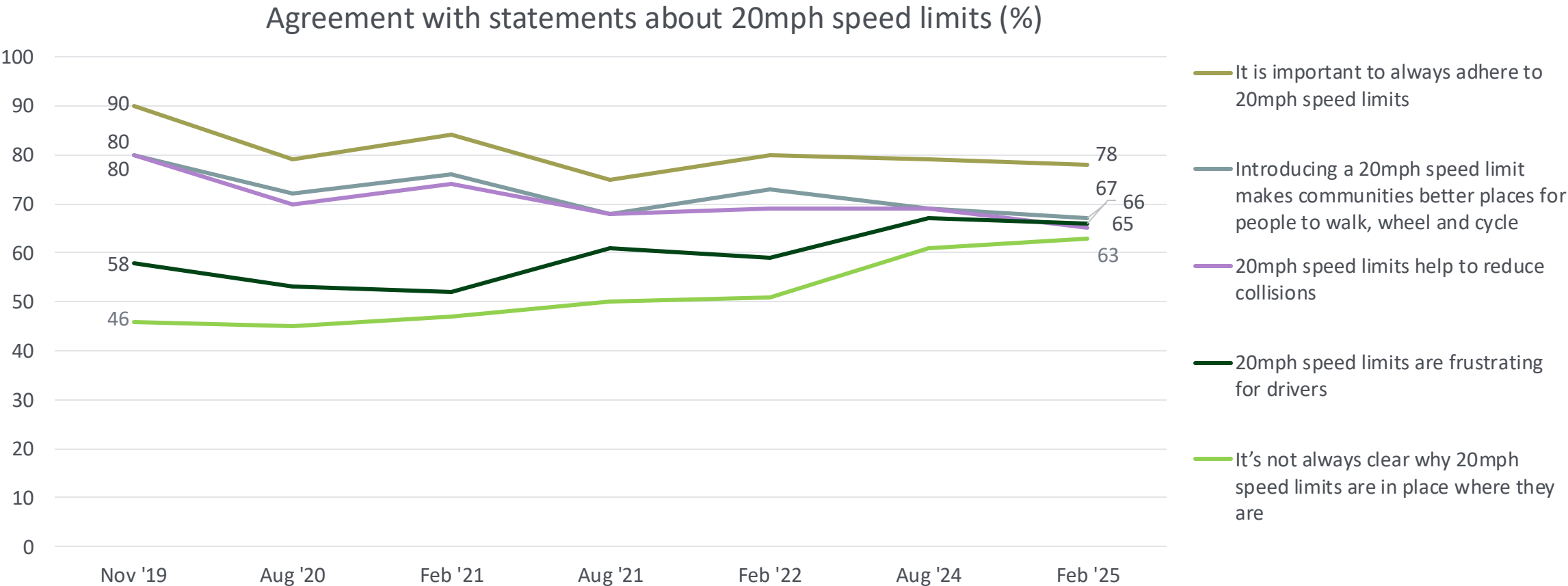
% saying agree strongly / agree slightly



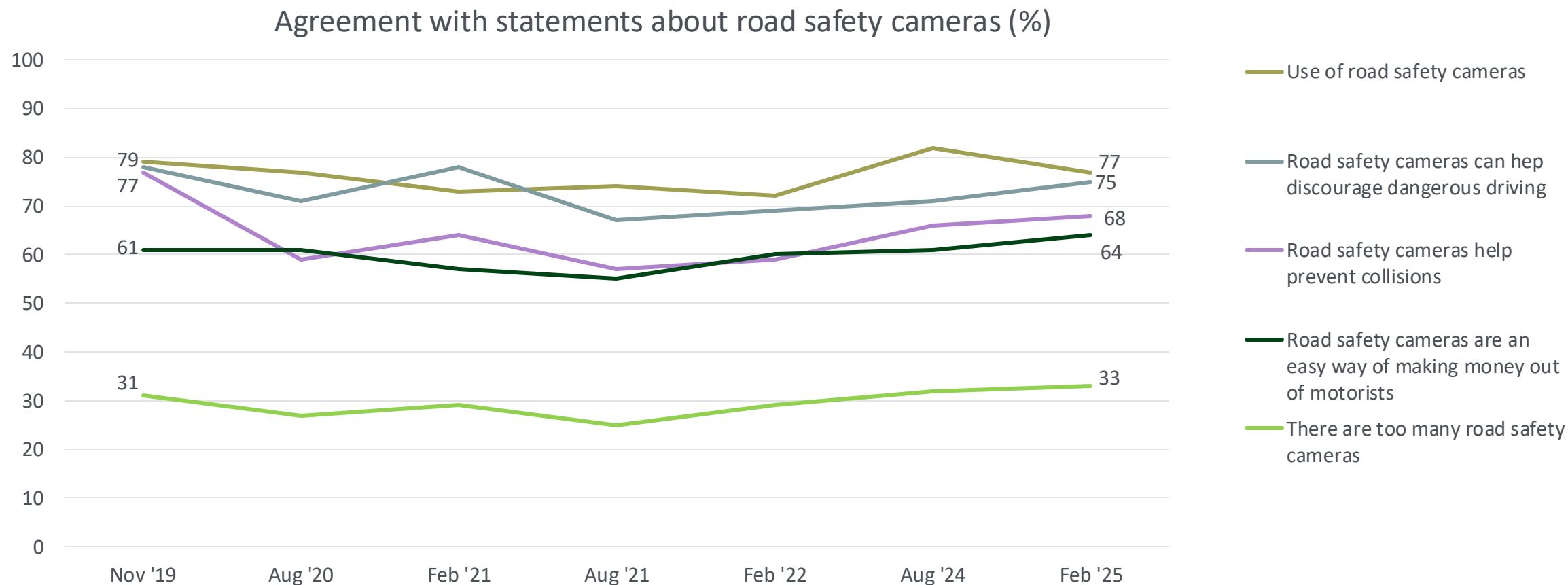
In built up areas, where there are pedestrians and people on pedal bikes, it may be necessary to drive below the speed limit

There should be a maximum speed limit of 50 mph on all country roads because of the greater risks when driving on these

There has been a downward trend in positive perceptions of 20mph speed limits since 2019, and a corresponding upward trend in negative perceptions.



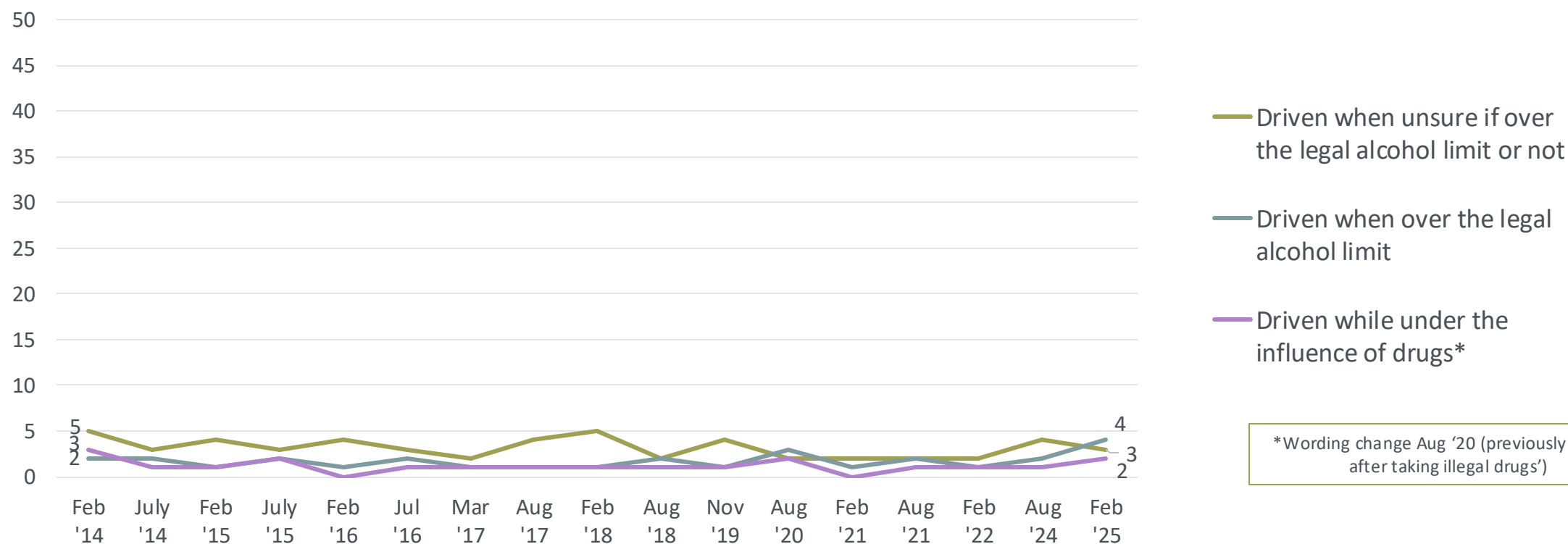
The majority of drivers consistently agree in principle with the use of road safety cameras, and that they prevent collisions and discourage dangerous driving. However, there is a persistent perception that they are an easy way to make money.



Drink and drug driving

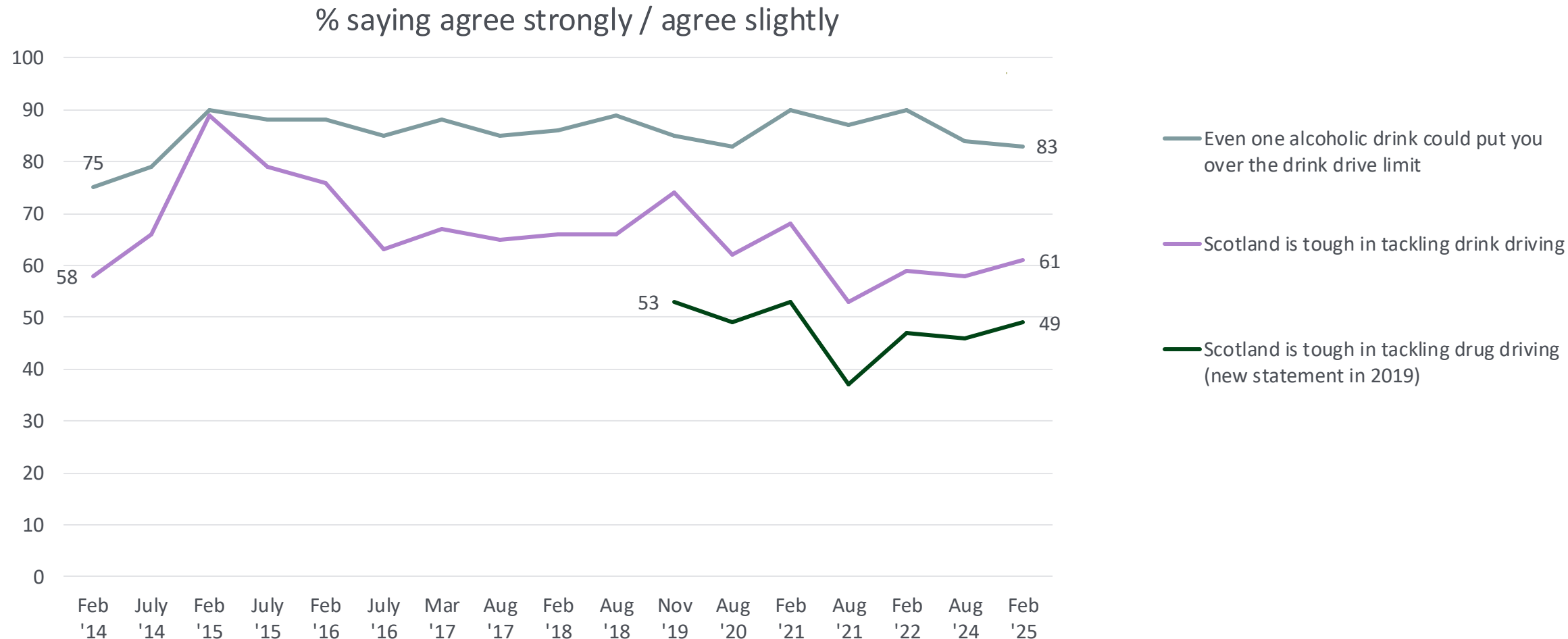
Only a very small minority of drivers admit to drink or drug driving, and this is generally consistent over time.


Drink and drug driving behaviours (%)



*Wording change Aug '20 (previously 'driven after taking illegal drugs')

Upward trend in perception that Scotland is tough on drink and drug driving since a low in Aug '21; however, slight decline in belief than one alcoholic drink can put you over the limit.



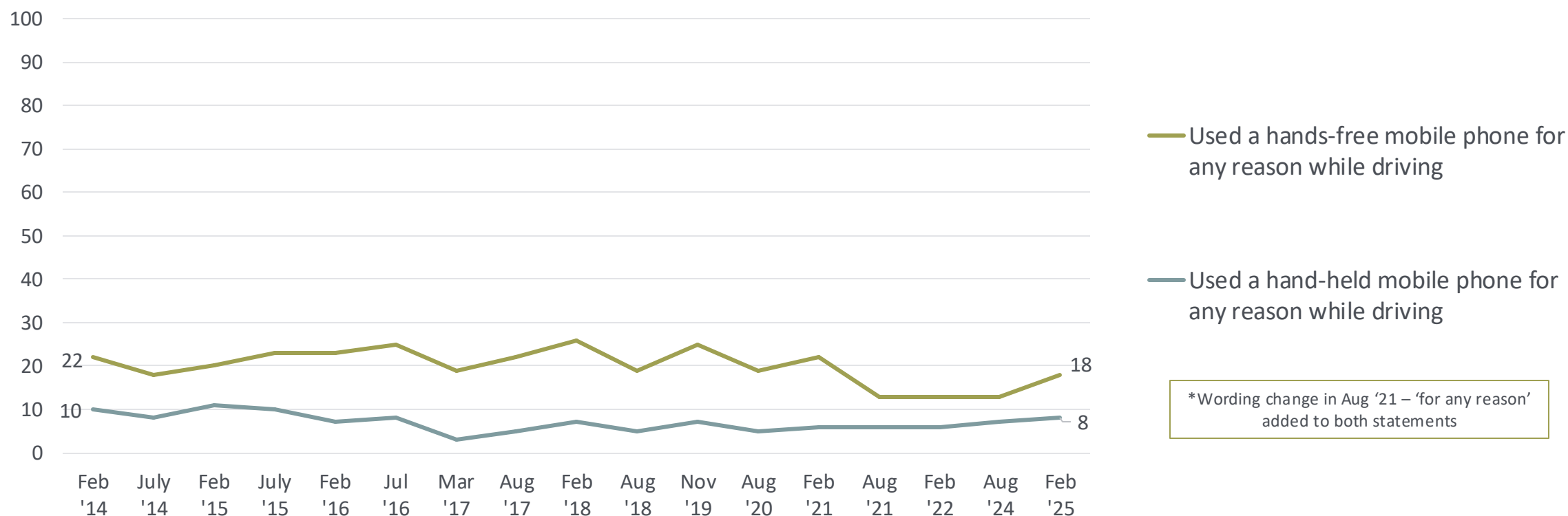
A thick, solid olive-green vertical bar.

Mobile phones

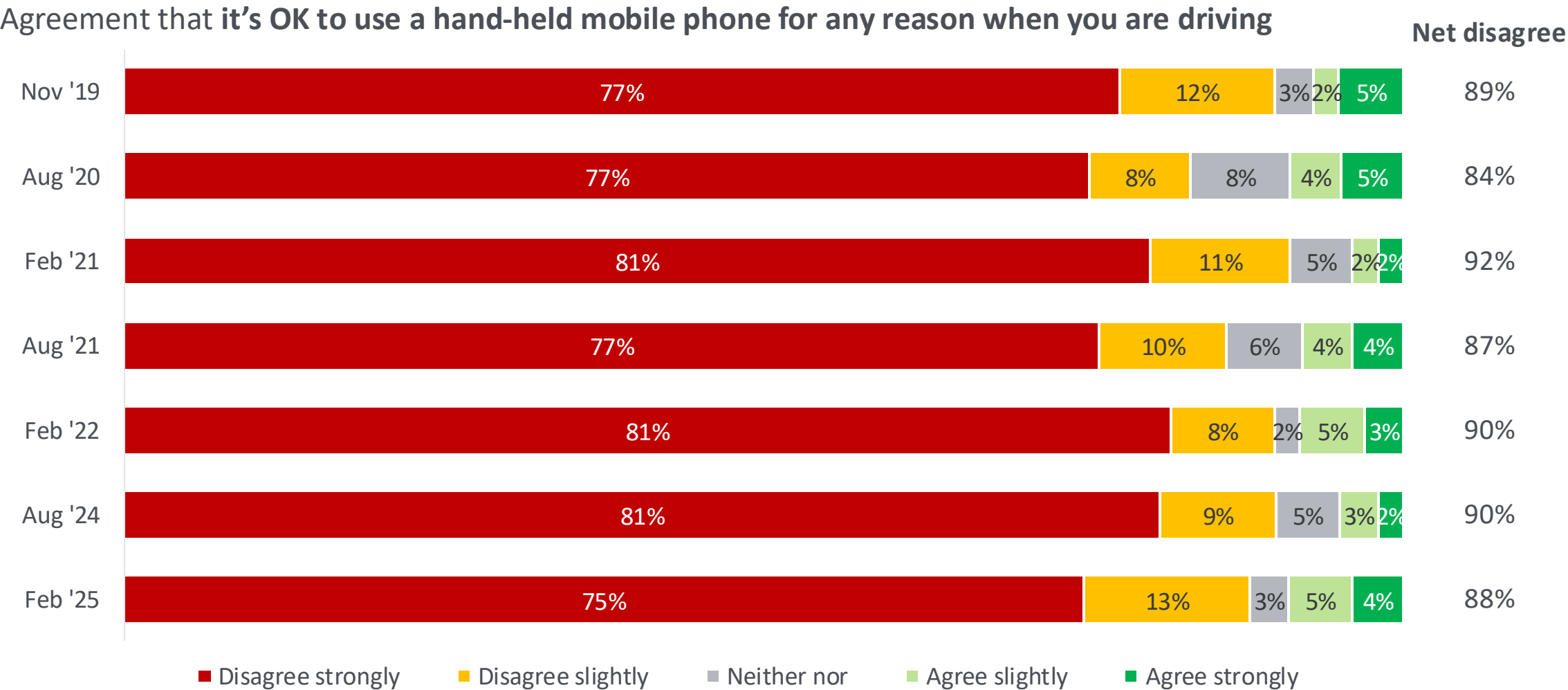
Consistently just less than one in ten drivers report that they have used a hand-held mobile phone while driving in the last 12 months.



Mobile phone behaviours (%)

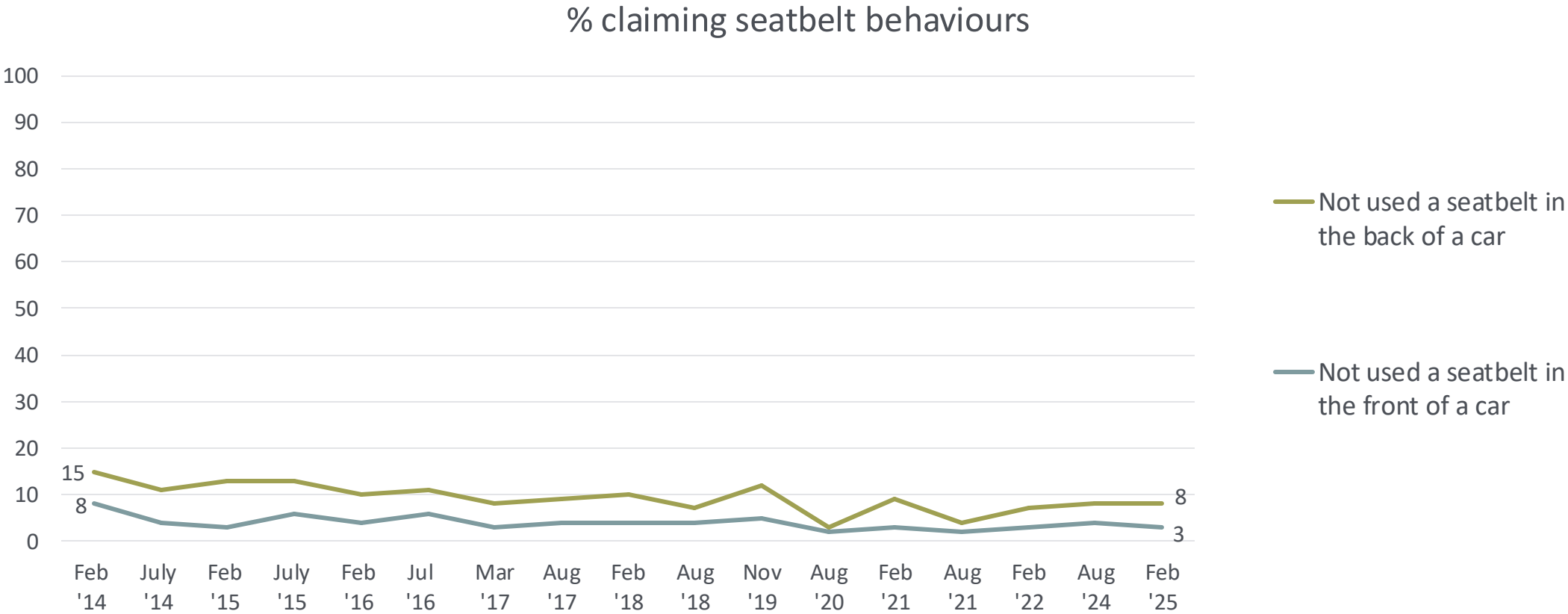


The vast majority of drivers consistently disagree that it's OK to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving; however, around one in ten agree.

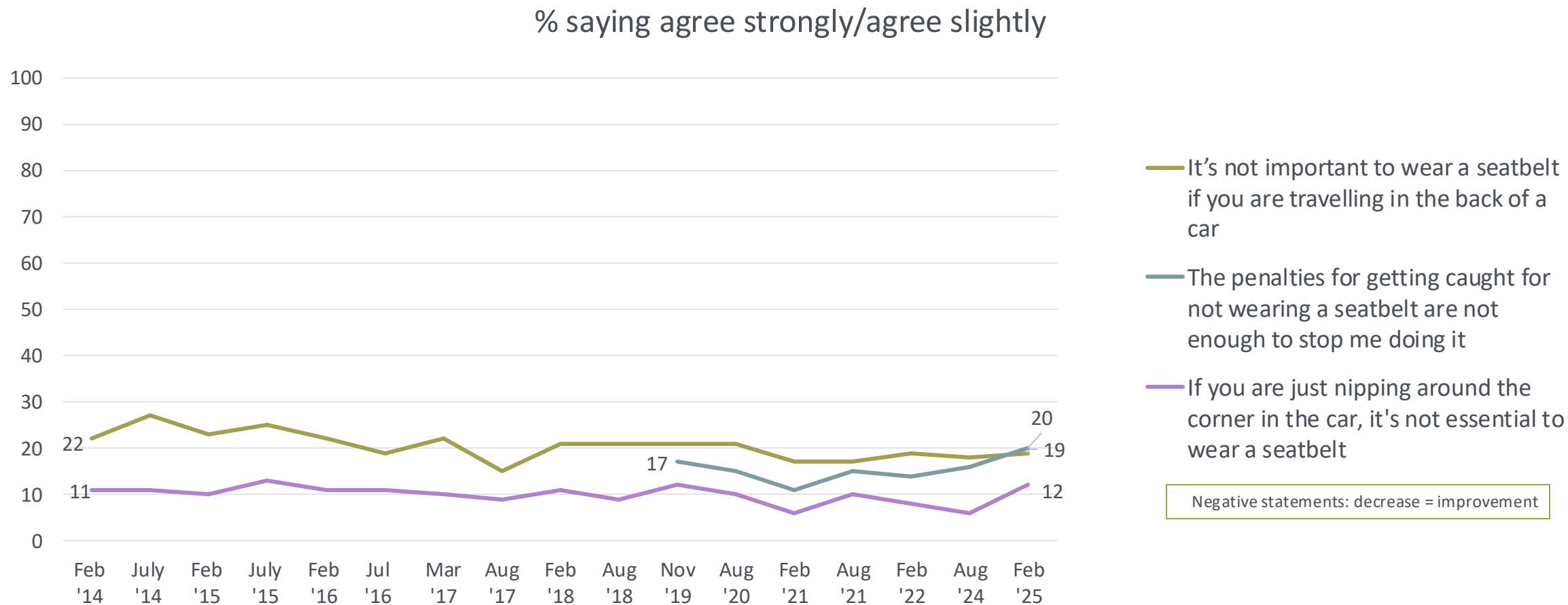


Seatbelts

Despite some variances between waves, non-compliance with seatbelt wearing has been reasonably consistent since around 2017 at just under one in ten.

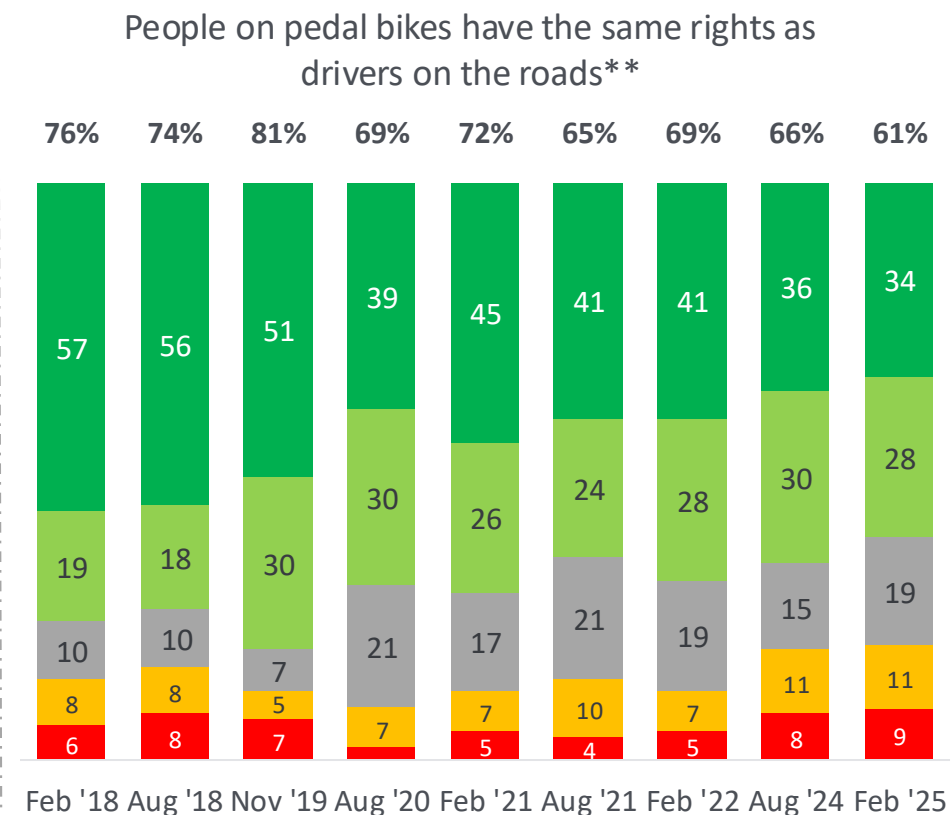
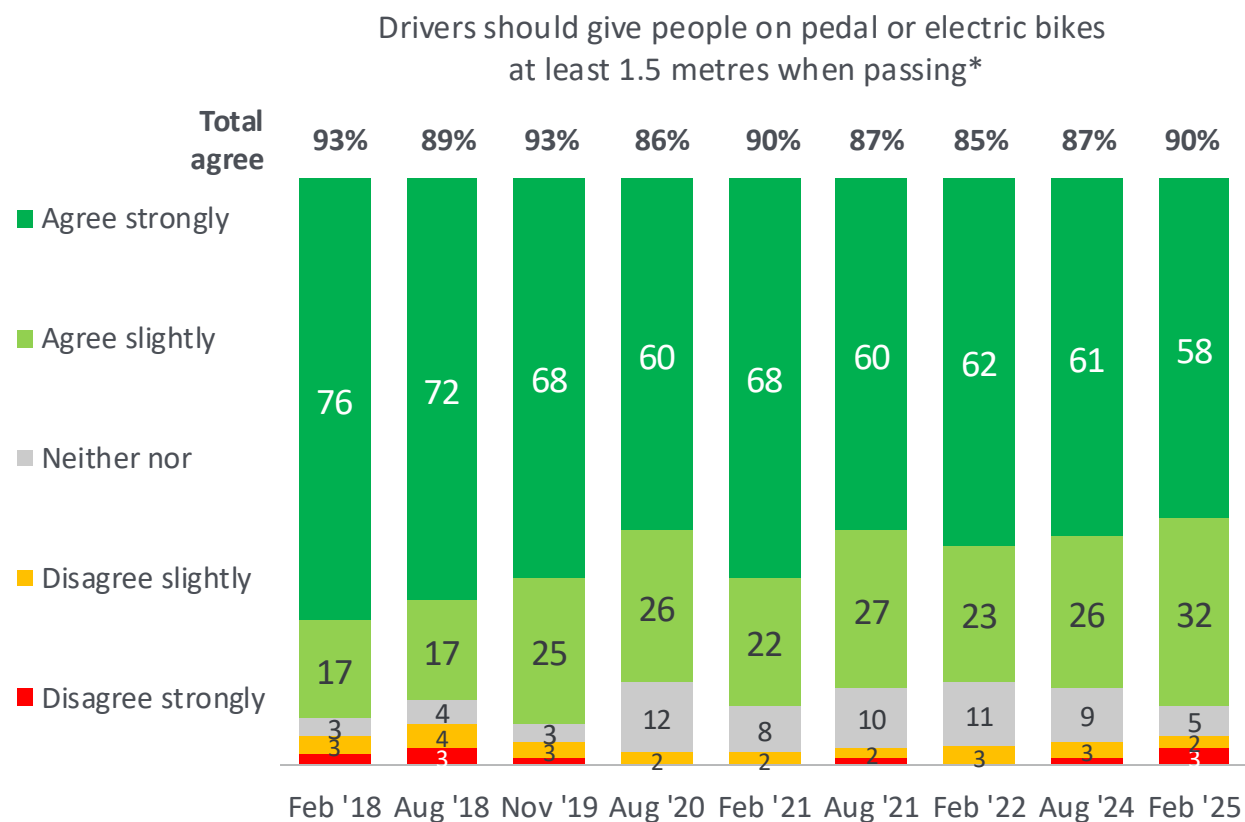


A persistent minority of one in five drivers continue to agree that it's not important to wear a seatbelt in the back of a car and one in ten who feel it's not essential if just nipping around the corner.



Vulnerable road users – attitudes to people cycling

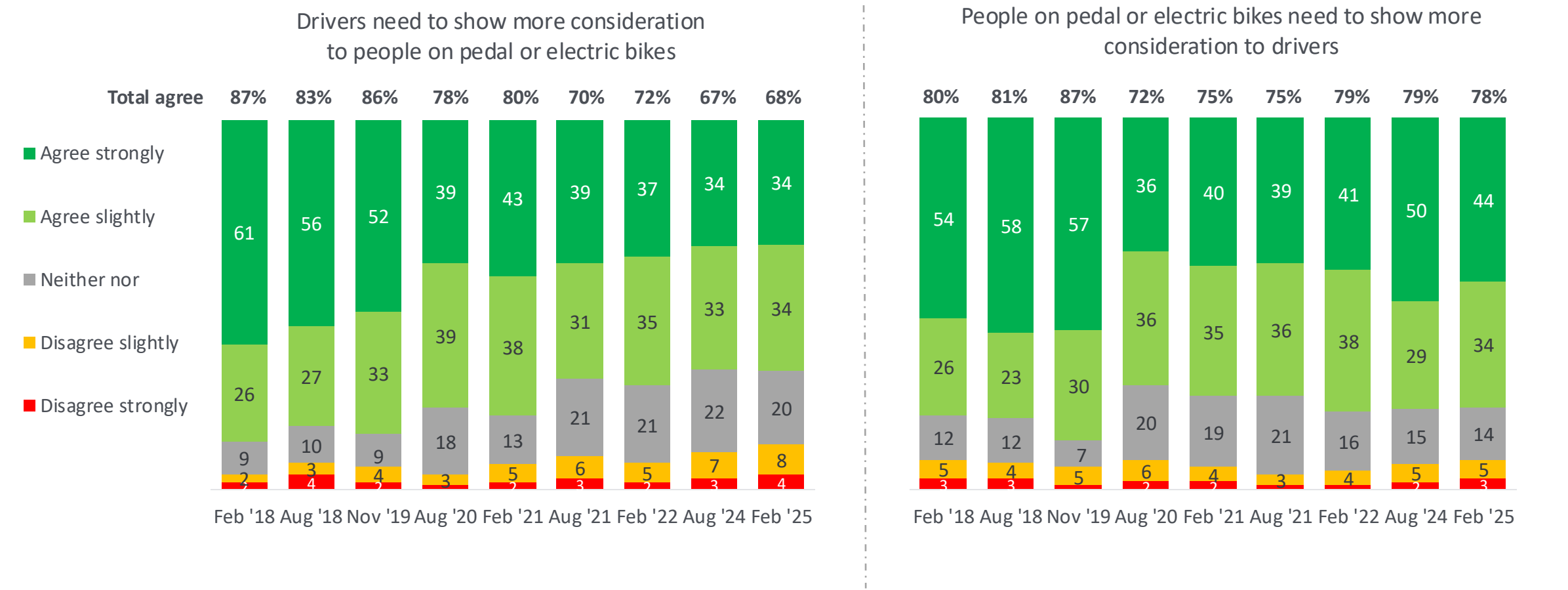
Although the majority consistently agree that drivers should give people on bikes 1.5m, only six in ten strongly agree. Six in ten also agree that cyclists have the same rights as drivers on the roads this wave.



*Electric bikes added, and distance changed from 'car's width' to 1.5 metres in Nov 2019.
 ** Electric bikes added to statements between Nov 2019 and Aug '24. In waves prior to this and in Feb '25 the statement only referred to pedal bikes.

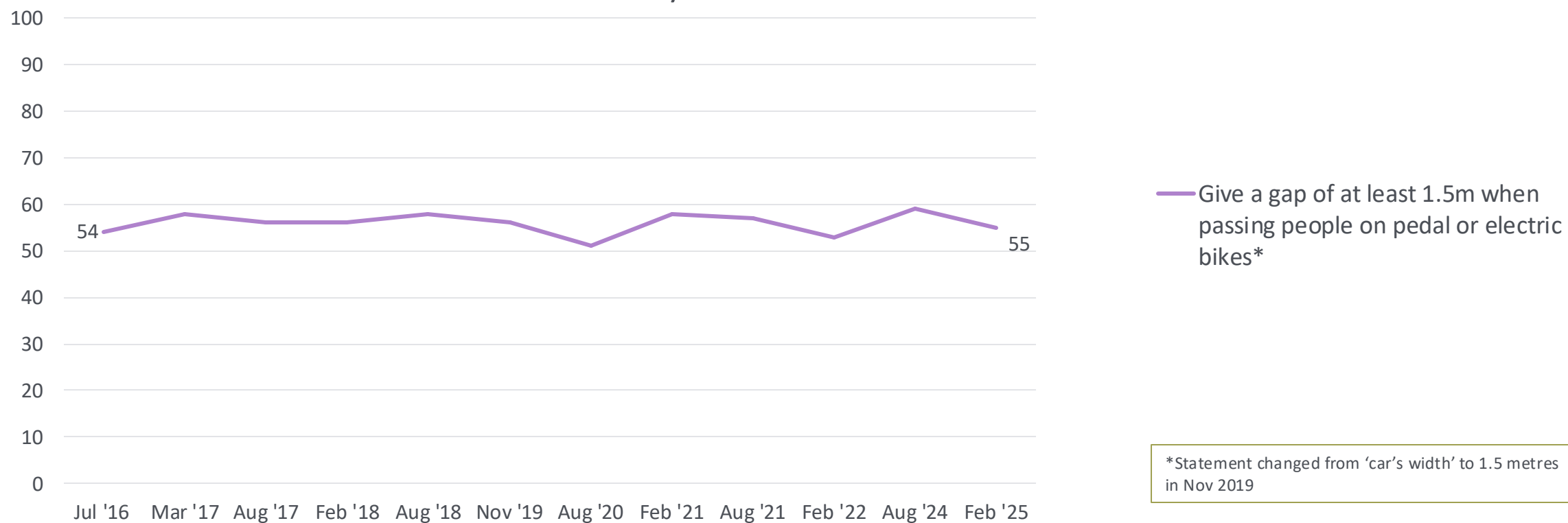
Chart shows % agreeing/disagreeing

Although most agreed that both drivers and people cycling should be more considerate of each other, respondents were more likely to agree that people cycling should show more consideration to drivers than vice-versa.



Just over half of drivers claim to always give 1.5m when passing people cycling, which has also been relatively consistent over time.

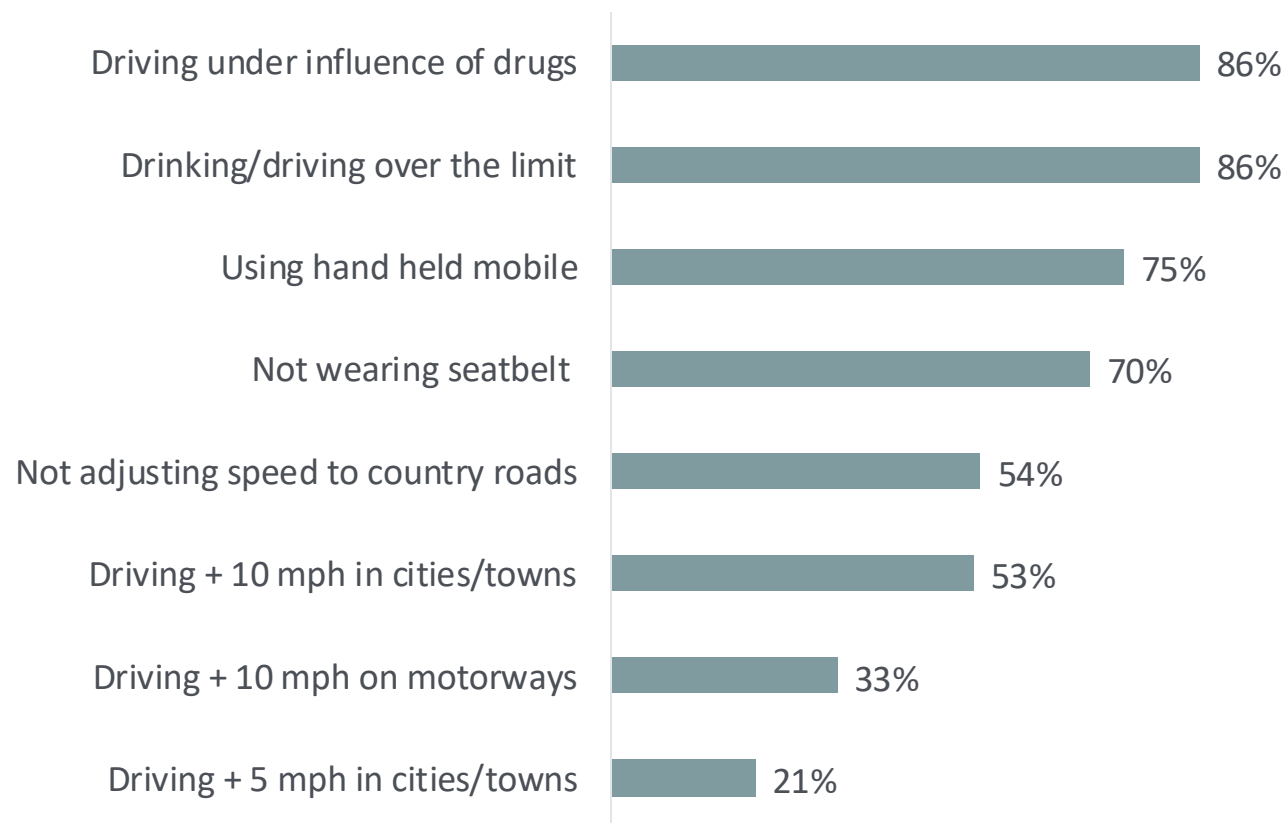
% who always....



Perceived seriousness of driving behaviours

The rank order of the most serious offences has tended to be stable over the waves – **drink and drug driving** are the most likely to be considered very serious, with **speeding offences** lowest on the list.

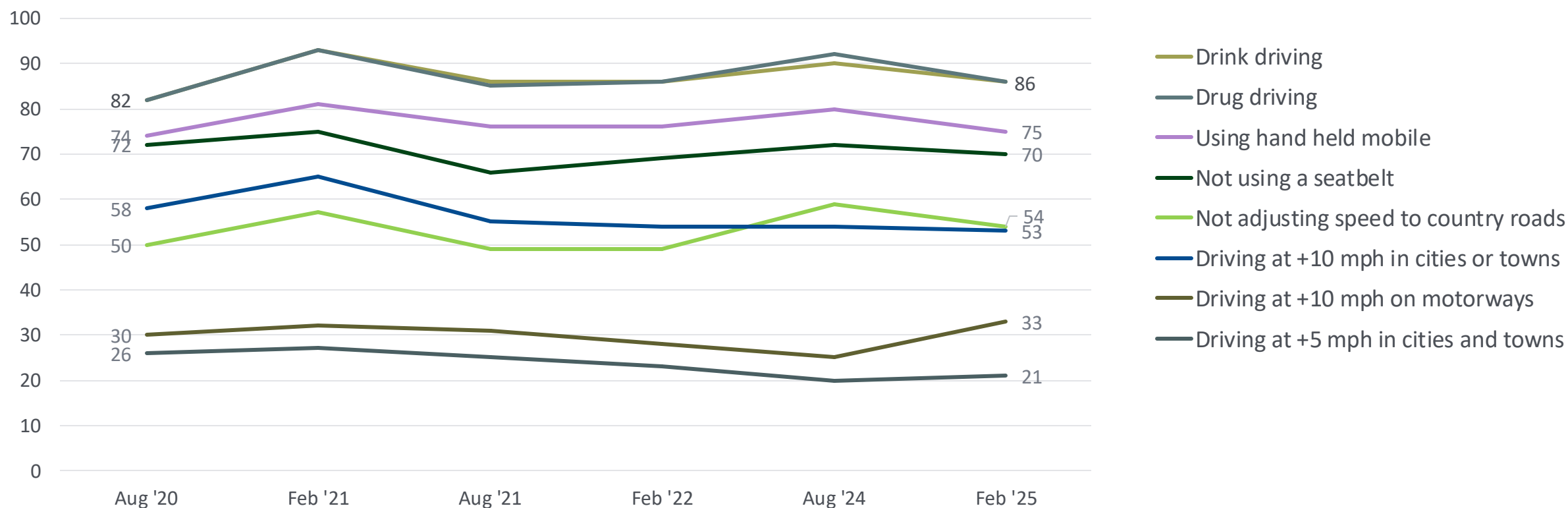
% rating 'very serious' across all behaviours – Feb '25



The perceived seriousness of driving behaviours have been relatively stable for the last five years.



% rating driving behaviours as 'very serious'



The majority of drivers consider driving safely to be important; however, one in five admit they take more risks than they should, and this increased this year.

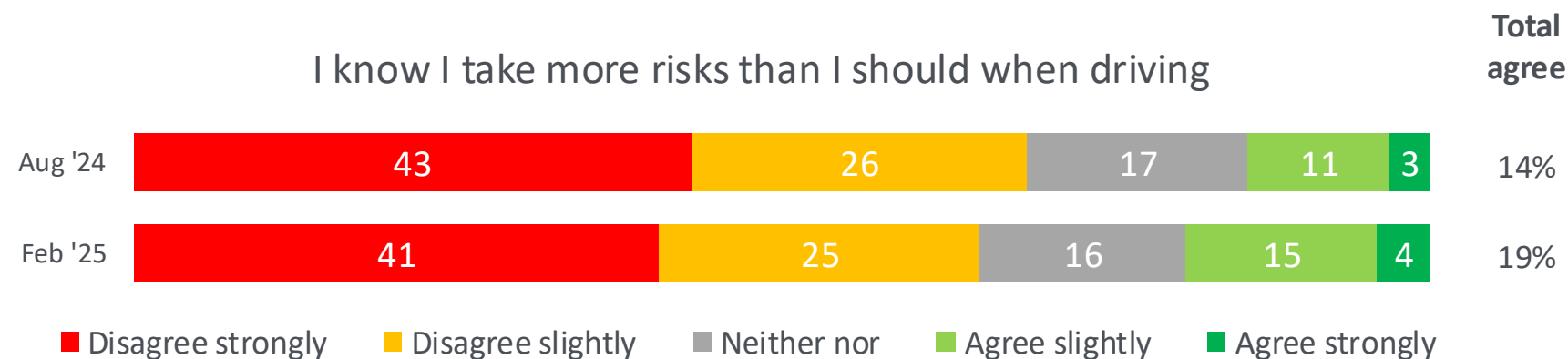
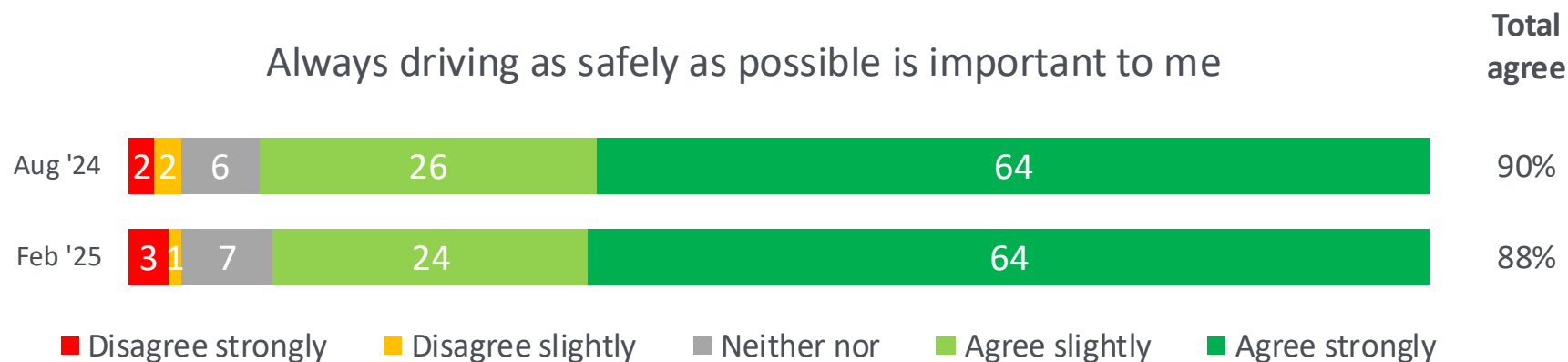


Chart shows % agreeing/disagreeing



Summary and conclusions

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- The RITS research provides a valuable monitor of claimed behaviours and attitudes amongst Scotland's drivers.
- Trends are often only apparent in a longitudinal study such as this – fluctuations between waves can be caused by a variety of factors.
- Some key trends identified this wave have included:
 - Upward trend in drivers driving at 25 in a 20mph zone over last five years
 - Decreasing positive attitudes to 20mph limits, while negative attitudes increase
 - Some upturns in behaviours, such as driving at 40 in a 30 zone, risky overtaking and not adjusting speed on country roads
 - Erosion of perception that even one alcoholic drink can put you over the limit
 - But increasing perception that Scotland is tough on drink and drug driving
- There continues to be a core of drivers who persist with negative behaviours and attitudes, and a significant proportion still do not see speeding as a very serious offence.

Any questions?

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Thank you

The logo consists of a solid olive-green circle with the word "progressive" written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font.

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