

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: FY2026 Wheels Dial-A-Ride Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

FROM: Kadri Klm, Senior Paratransit Planner

DATE: April 27, 2026

Action Requested

Staff requests that the Projects and Services committee review and forward the FY2026 Wheels Dial-A-Ride Customer Satisfaction Survey results to the Board for approval.

Background

LAVTA historically conducts Dial-A-Ride (paratransit) customer surveys to gauge rider satisfaction with the service, particularly as a means of tracking and benchmarking opinions and perception of the service over the years. The previous survey was conducted two years ago in FY2024.

Methodology

This year’s survey was conducted in early 2026 using a similar methodology as in prior years, utilizing both telephone and online survey instruments. To better understand current or more recent trends, only those who had utilized LAVTA’s paratransit service (or their caregivers) in the previous 12 months were contacted.

The survey was administered by a third-party vendor Quantum Marker Research (QMR), and a total of 205 Dial-A-Ride surveys were completed, which included 173 phone surveys and 32 online surveys. The sample provided by LAVTA included a total of 348 individuals, including 53 residing in nursing homes.

The surveyors asked passengers to rate Dial-A-Ride service on a 1-to-5 scale (5 being highest and 1 being lowest) on a variety of topics, including the reservation process, pick-up experience, ride experience, drop-off experience, and their overall satisfaction with the service. They were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments.

Discussion

Unfortunately, this year’s survey showed decreasing scores across every question from FY2024. The table below shows the comparison of mean ratings over the years, with the largest drops in:

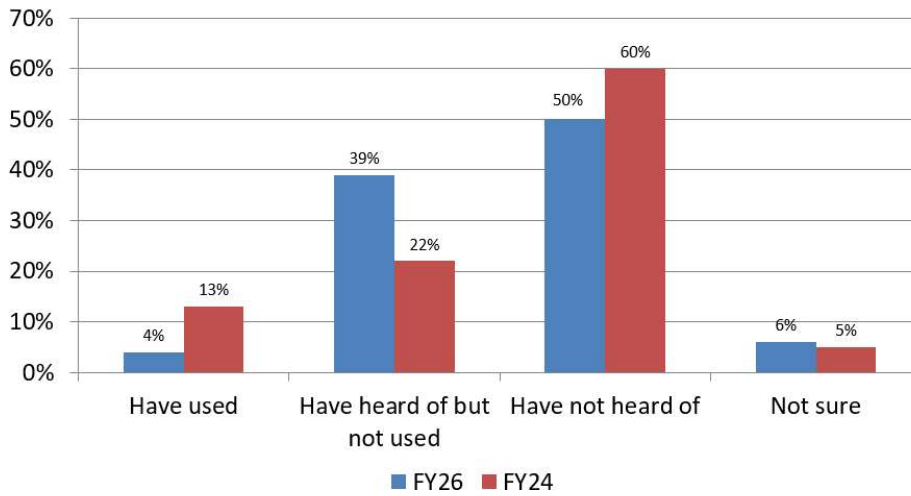
	<u>FY26</u>	<u>FY24</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY26</u> <u>FY24</u>	<u>v FY26</u> <u>FY23</u>	<u>v</u>
Overall experience	3.52	3.93	4.02	3.74	-0.41	-0.50	
Overall high level of satisfaction with pickup experience	3.49	4.09	3.85	3.90	-0.60	-0.36	
Overall high level of satisfaction with ride experience	3.79	4.17	3.85	4.14	-0.38	-0.06	
Overall high level of satisfaction with drop off experience	3.84	4.25	3.84	4.12	-0.41	0.00	
Driver dressed appropriately/clean	4.17	4.24	3.97	4.27	-0.07	0.20	
Driver courteous and helpful	4.14	4.26	4.19	4.21	-0.12	-0.05	
Driver offered me help during drop off	4.13	4.13	3.85	4.14	0.00	0.28	
Driver operated vehicle safely/followed traffic laws	4.12	4.24	4.03	4.28	-0.12	0.09	
Vehicle/shuttle was clean	4.07	4.19	4.25	4.21	-0.12	-0.18	
My wheelchair/scooter was safely secured	4.04	4.48	NA	NA	-0.44	NA	
Important that vehicle has Wheels Dial-A-Ride logo	4.01	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
No problems with phone menu	3.98	4.16	3.77	4.11	-0.18	0.21	
Driver arrived at the correct address/pickup spot	3.93	4.13	4.19	4.12	-0.20	-0.26	
Vehicle/shuttle was modern and in working order	3.91	4.14	3.95	4.14	-0.23	-0.04	
Hold times were not an issue	3.89	3.98	3.18	3.90	-0.09	0.71	
Person on phone knowledgeable	3.85	4.01	4.21	4.08	-0.16	-0.36	
Easy to make arrangements for transportation on phone	3.72	4.10	3.90	4.06	-0.38	-0.18	
Driver dropped me off on time/in correct place	3.63	4.17	4.00	4.05	-0.54	-0.37	
Driver on time	2.88	3.74	3.95	3.62	-0.86	-1.07	

The mean rating for the driver arriving on time showed the steepest decline, falling from 3.74 on the 5-point scale to 2.88, or -.86. Given that rating, it is no surprise that the overall level of satisfaction with the pickup experience showed the second largest decline, down from 2023’s 4.09 to 3.49 this year, a drop of .60. The other significant drop was seen in the driver dropping the rider off on time and in the correct place (-.54). While not statistically significant, other large declines were seen in ratings for the wheelchair or scooter being safely secured (-.44), the overall experience (-.41), overall level of satisfaction (-.41), overall level of satisfaction with the ride experience (-.38), and ease of making arrangements on the phone (-.38).

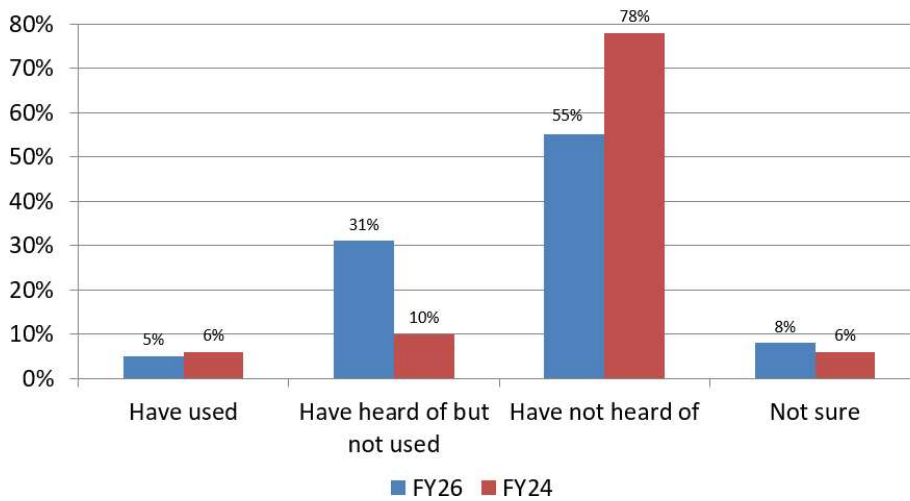
The survey also asked about familiarity with Para-Taxi and One Seat Ride programs as well as the My Transit Manager phone app. The familiarity with all three has increased significantly in FY2026 when compared to FY2024 as the following charts illustrate:



Familiarity with Para-Taxi Program

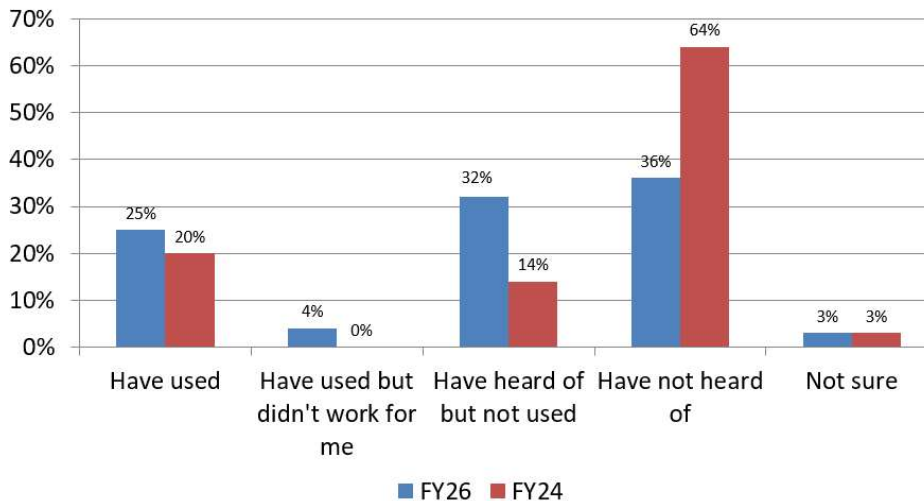


Familiarity with One Seat Ride Program





Familiarity with My Transit App



Note: "Have used but did not work for me" added in FY26

In terms of usage, the My Transit App has the highest adoption rate; however, only one-quarter (25%) of riders' report having used it. Only 4% of riders report on using Para-Taxi, down from 13% in 2023, but it's important to note that there are Para-Taxi users who were excluded from this study due to not having used Wheels Dial-A-Ride in the past 12 months. While Dial-A-Ride ridership decreased by about 11% compared to a year earlier, Para-Taxi ridership has about doubled during the same timeframe (going from 2,312 trips between 3/24 to 2/25 to 4,781 trips between 3/25 to 2/26).

This year, a new question was added relating to receiving one-on-one travel training on Wheels fixed route. Fifteen percent of the respondents were interested in it while three-quarters were unsure. Both demographic categories – race and income – showed significant changes compared to 2023 (when the questions were first posed). The percentage of white riders has decreased (-15 percentage points). In terms of income, there was a significant increase of 12 percentage points in the number of those at the lowest income level (less than \$29,750). This year, more riders were willing to provide their income level as opposed to in 2023.

The survey also included an open-ended question about how Dial-A-Ride service could be improved. Those who gave a general rating of neutral to high were asked, "Please provide Wheels Management with your thoughts on how our service can be even better." Those who gave a low rating were asked, "Please provide Wheels Management with your thoughts on how we may improve our service." The data from the open-ended questions was analyzed and compiled into the following table:

Coded Responses to Verbatim Suggestions on Ways to Improve Dial-a-Ride Service

	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Total	%
Timeliness	141	46	187	40.6%
Need better routes/GPS makes trip longer	22	10	32	6.9%
Driver leaves them outside the dialysis place unattended	30	1	31	6.7%
General process issues: problem with scheduling/payment/management*	20	10	30	6.5%
Drivers should be compassionate/respectful/courteous. Need more help for people with disabilities/accommodate handicapped or special wheelchairs or scooters/Better accommodations for the blind and hear impaired	17	7	24	5.2%
Rudeness/harassment/don't say hello/Dispatcher rude & unprofessional	16	5	21	4.6%
Dispatcher lack of competence (eg. Don't know distances, Sent wrong kind of vehicle, Sent drivers to wrong place	13	3	16	3.5%
No comments	15		15	3.3%
General process positive: scheduling/payment/service. It's good./Love the driver!/Love the app	11	3	14	3.0%
Need more drivers/better vehicles/Need modern vans/vehicles too small/Vehicle quality varies	11	3	14	3.0%
Safety issues and concerns*	4	7	11	2.4%
Safety issues: Driver high or smells of weed/vaping/Afraid of Driver/Left stranded	9	1	10	2.2%
Need logo	9		9	2.0%
Driver lack of personal hygiene or smells bad/not dressed professionally/need ID or uniform/should wear a mask	6	2	8	1.7%
Need same day appointments/one-week appointment too long /2 days/Need more flexibility with pickups (sometimes I work late)	8		8	1.7%
App issues/Need help to set it up/has glitches/App can't book NEW times	7		7	1.5%
Disconnect/miscommunication between dispatcher and drivers	4	3	7	1.5%
Quit Wheels/Not using as much because of service performance		7	7	1.5%
Personal car issues (can't accommodate wheelchairs/walkers), Car condition	4		4	0.9%
Too expensive/Price increase concern	2	1	3	0.7%
Flexibility in scheduling/They don't have availability when I need it & have to schedule earlier than I need	1	1	2	0.4%
Customer service slowly/ never returns calls/emails	1		1	0.2%
Grand Total	351	110	461	

In 2021, 26% cited timeliness as needing improvement, compared to 34% in 2023. This year, 41% identify timeliness as an area needing improvement. Notably, there is almost no difference between positive and negative raters: scheduling issues are cited by 42% of negative raters versus 40% of positive raters.

Next Steps

The survey results are concerning, and since receiving the result staff have been taking proactive measures to improve the service and address customer complaint trends. LAVTA staff have brought the survey results to the contractor's (Transdev) and County Connection staff's attention and we will be monitoring and following up on any new customer service complaints closely, as well as following up with a number of complaints each month moving forward.

Staff also intends to add Liquidated Damages (LDs) for KPI's, such as OTP and customer complaints, into the next paratransit operations and maintenance contract; the procurement for the next joint paratransit contract is slated to begin this fall.

LAVTA intends to conduct the next customer satisfaction survey again before the end of 2026.

Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Projects and Services committee review and forward the results of the FY2026 Wheels Dial-A-Ride Customer Satisfaction Survey results to the Board for approval.

Strategic Plan Goal

Operational Effectiveness: Streamline LAVTA's operational effectiveness through the application of innovative technology and proven best practices in public transit operations.

Attachments:

1. Summary of Findings presentation



Livermore Area Valley Transportation Authority (LAVTA)
Ridership Satisfaction
Phone and Online Survey

Summary of Findings

Prepared March 2026

Quantum Market Research



Background

- Overall goal of the study is to gauge rider satisfaction with LAVTA's Wheels Dial-A-Ride service, particularly as a means of tracking opinions over the years.
- Survey has been conducted in English over the telephone since 2015.
- Since 2017, interviewing includes online surveys and Spanish-language interviewing, in addition to English-language surveys.
- QMR has conducted every survey since 2017, with the exception of 2022.
- Respondents were users or caregivers of users of Wheels Dial-A-Ride service in the previous 12 months.

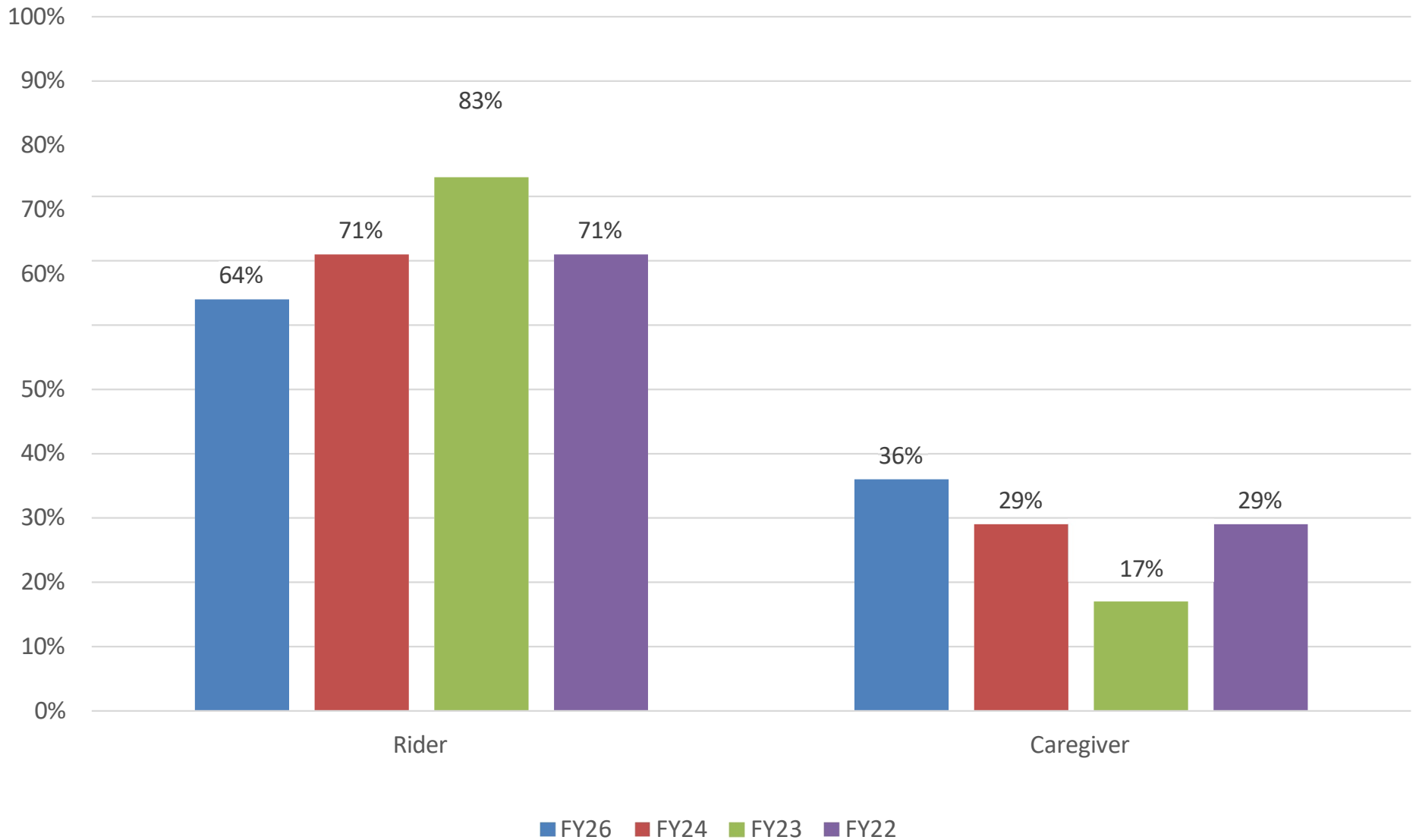


Methodology

- This year, 205 surveys were conducted, with 173 surveys completed on the phone and 32 completed online.
- As has been the case each year, nearly everyone completed the survey in English, with just 3 opting to complete in Spanish.
- It should be noted that, unlike in previous years, only riders who used the service in the previous year were eligible to complete the survey. QMR cautions the reader to keep that in mind when viewing comparisons to previous years. In the past, all eligible riders were included in the sample, even those who had not used the service in the previous 12 months. In 2023, the last time the study was conducted, while nearly 8 in 10 (79%) had used the service in the previous 12 months, the remaining 21% had not
- The margin of error is $\pm 4.5\%$ at the 95% confidence level.
- The sample provided by LAVTA included a total of 348 individuals, including 53 residing in nursing homes.
- Postcards were sent to all riders in individual residences inviting them to complete the survey online or over the phone. Non-respondents with a valid email address also received an email invitation to participate.
- Two staff members at nursing homes each received an honorarium of \$100 for completing the survey for multiple residents
- As the data collection period neared to a close, \$15 incentives were offered to individuals to complete the survey. 35 riders received that incentive.
- A raffle of four prizes of \$50 was offered to all respondents.

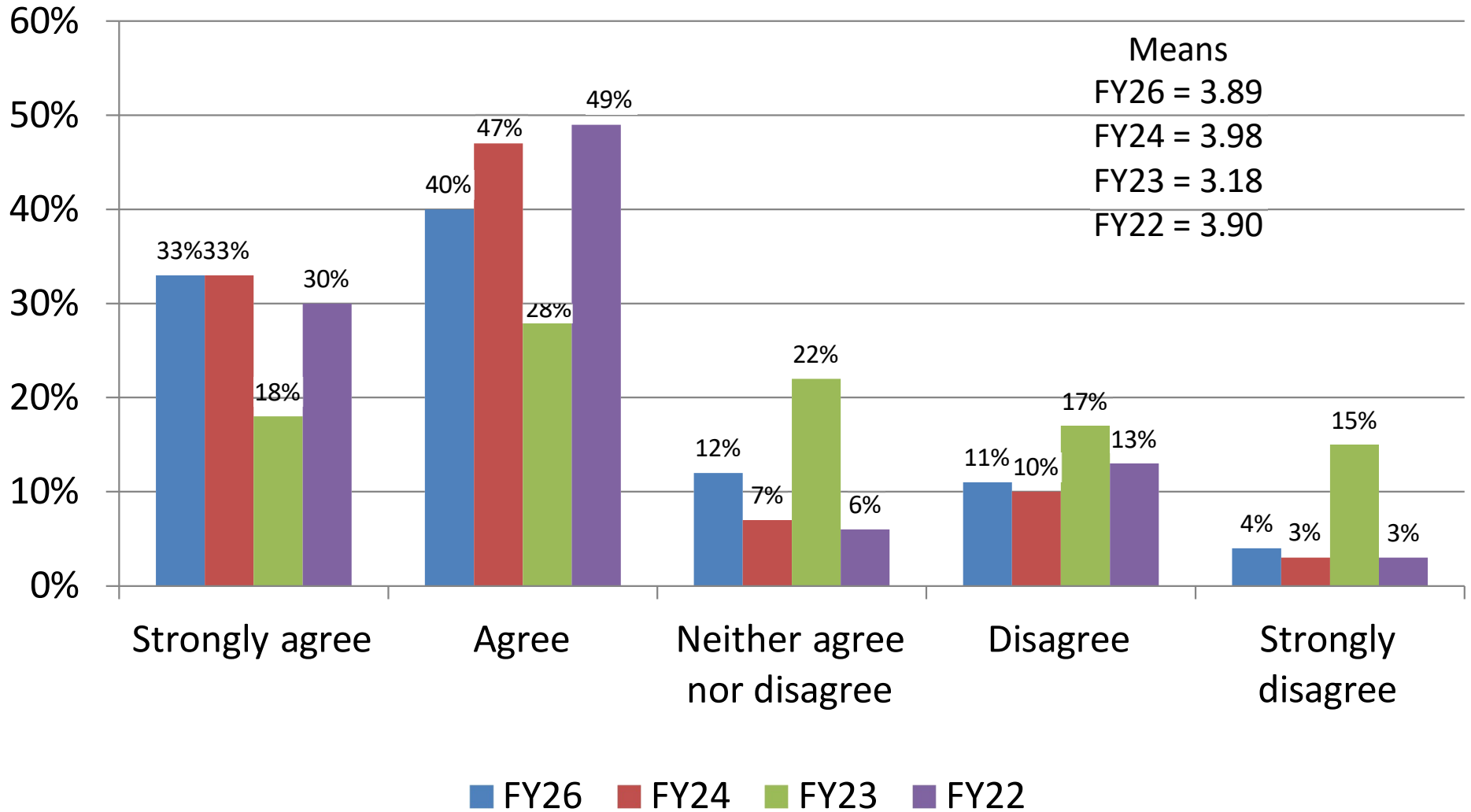


Rider or Caregiver



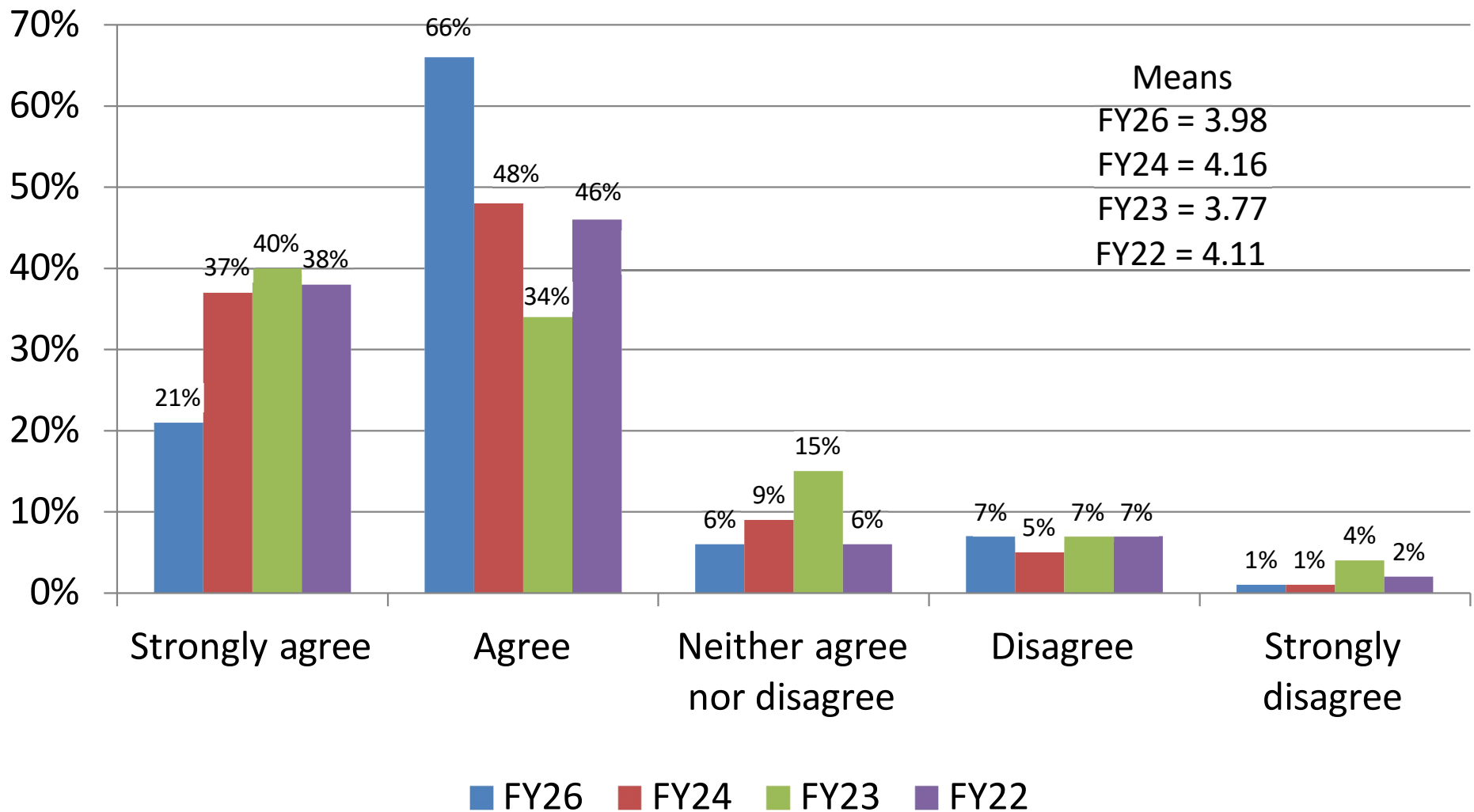


Hold Times Were Not an Issue



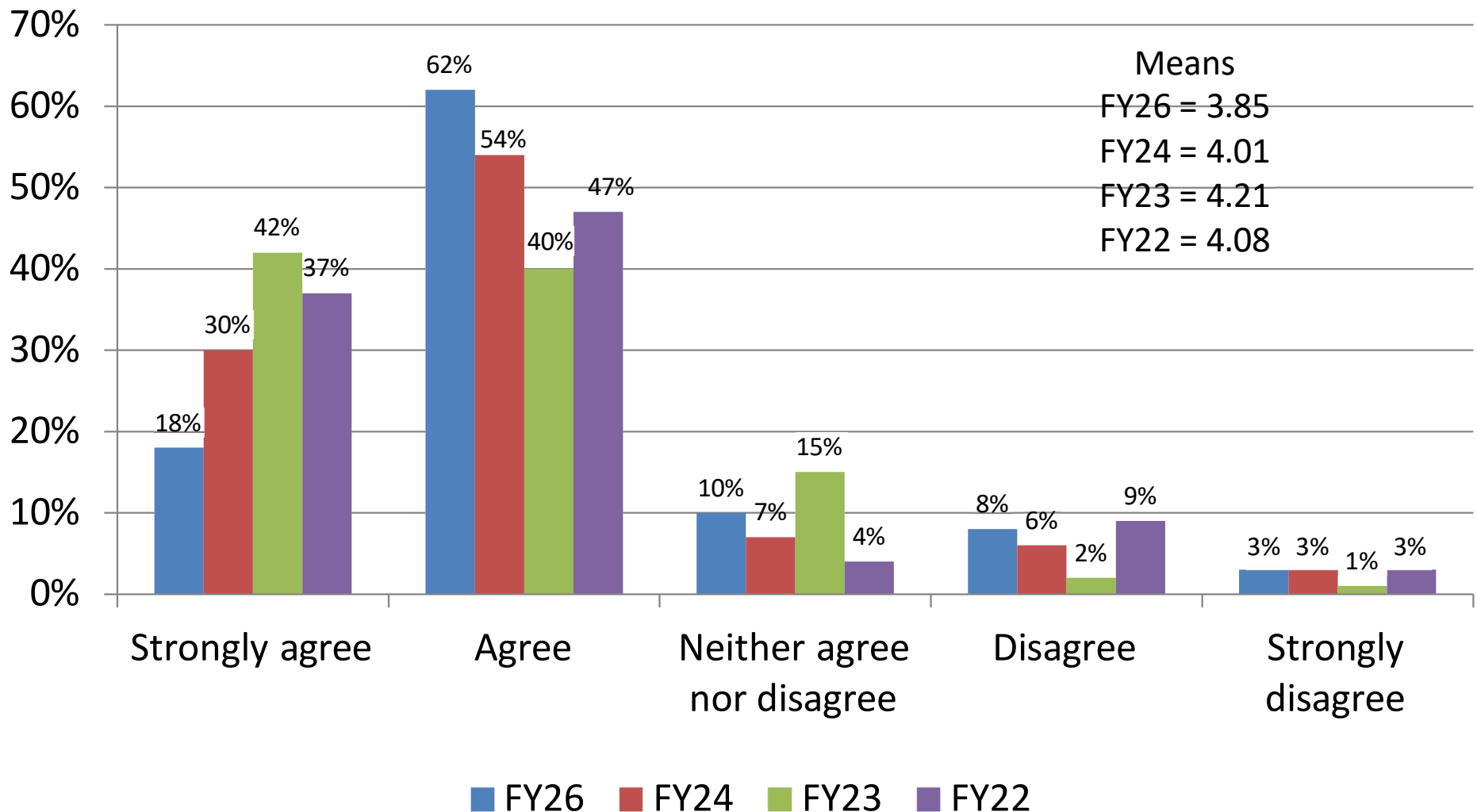


No Problems with Phone Menu



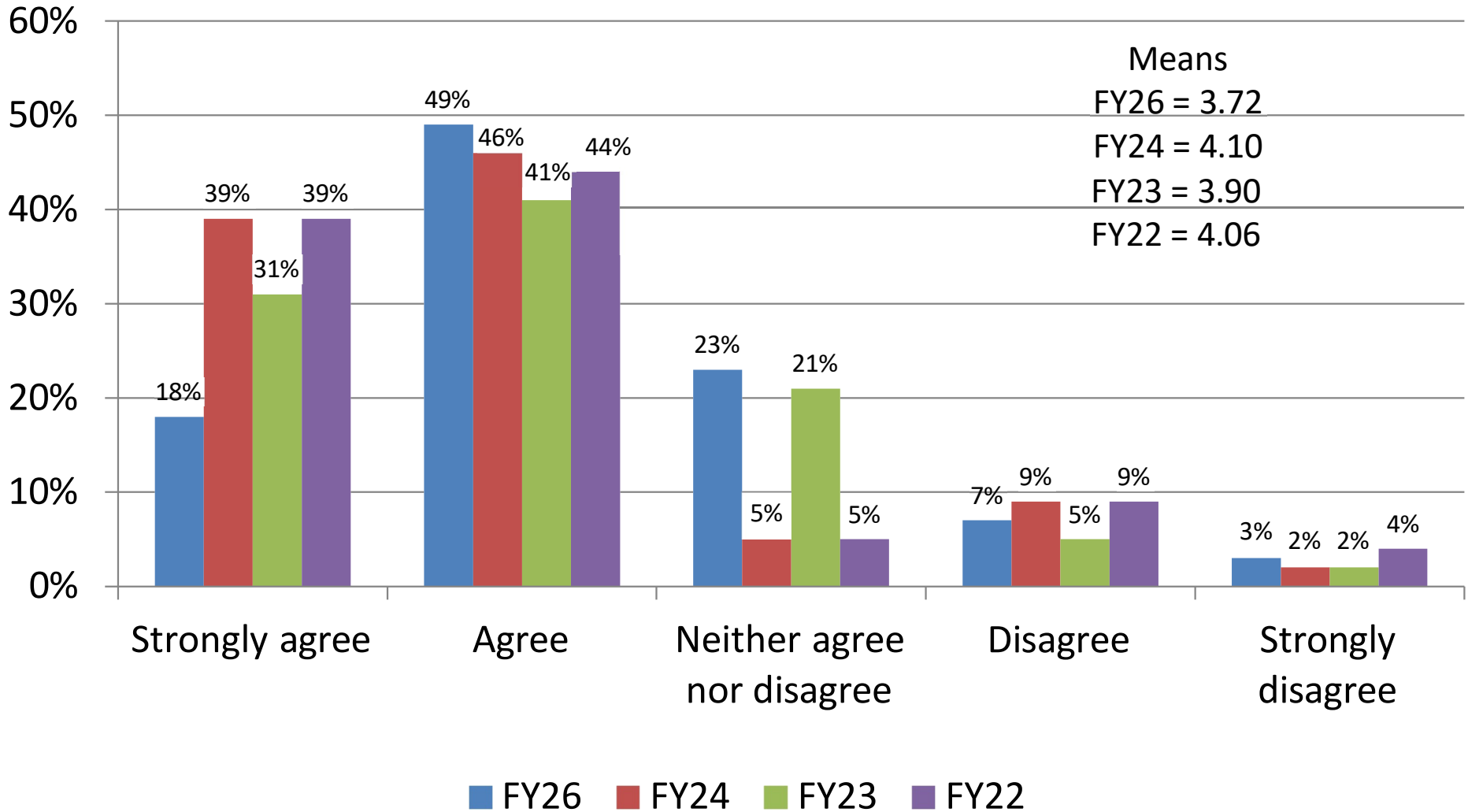


Person on Phone Was Knowledgeable



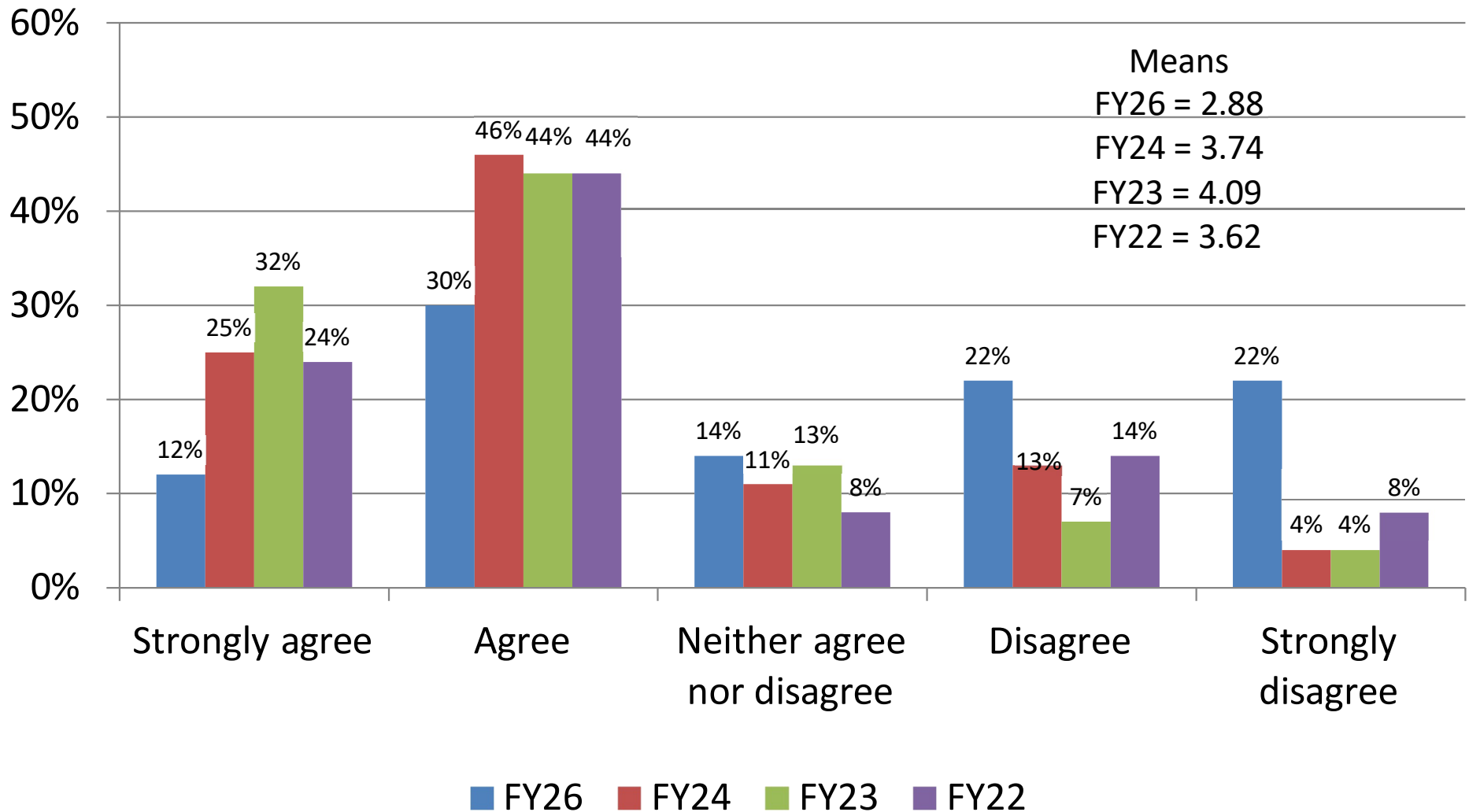


It was Easy to Make Arrangements for Transportation on Phone



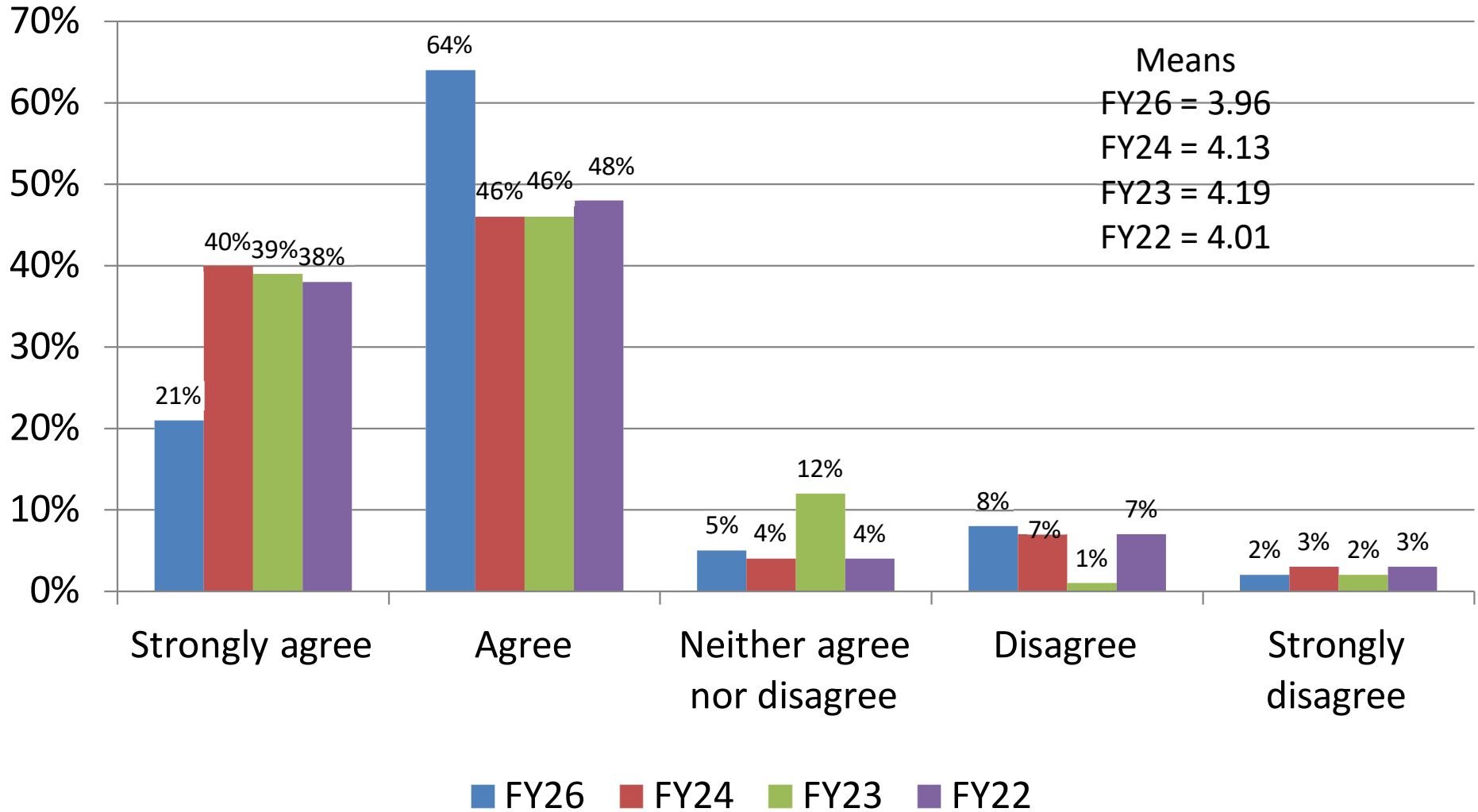


Driver was on Time



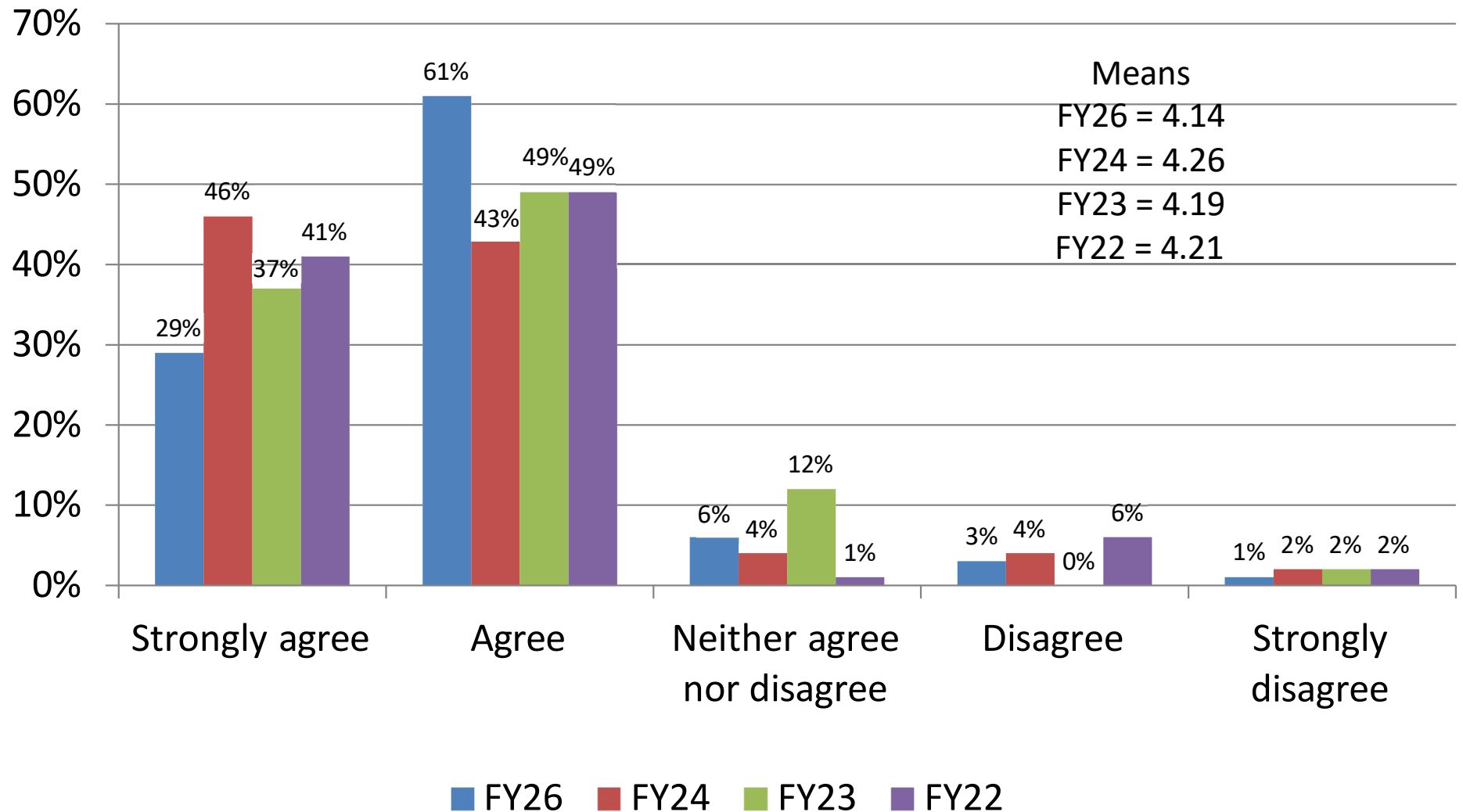


Driver Arrived at Correct Address/Pick up Spot



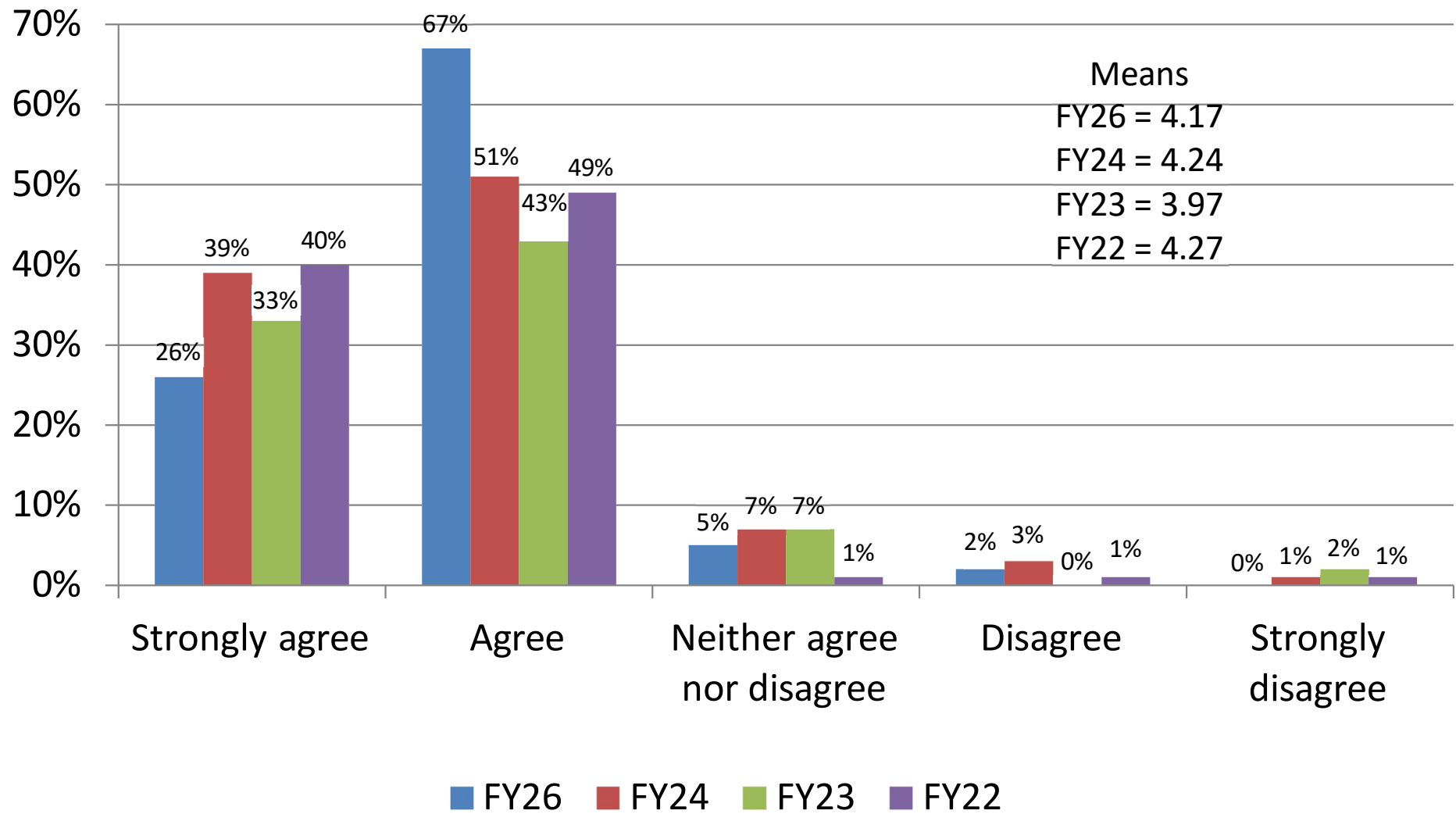


Driver was Courteous and Helpful



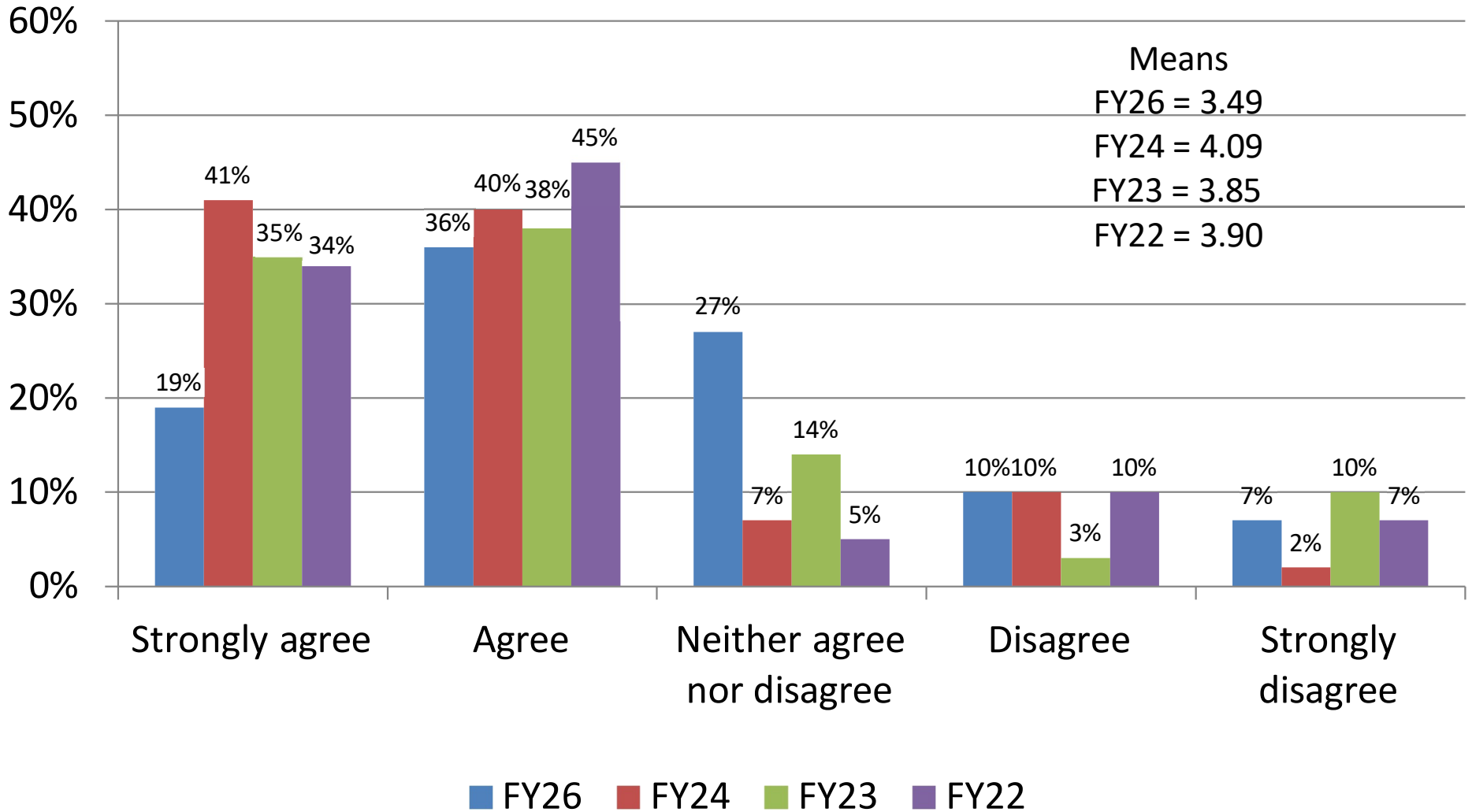


Driver was Dressed Appropriately/Clean



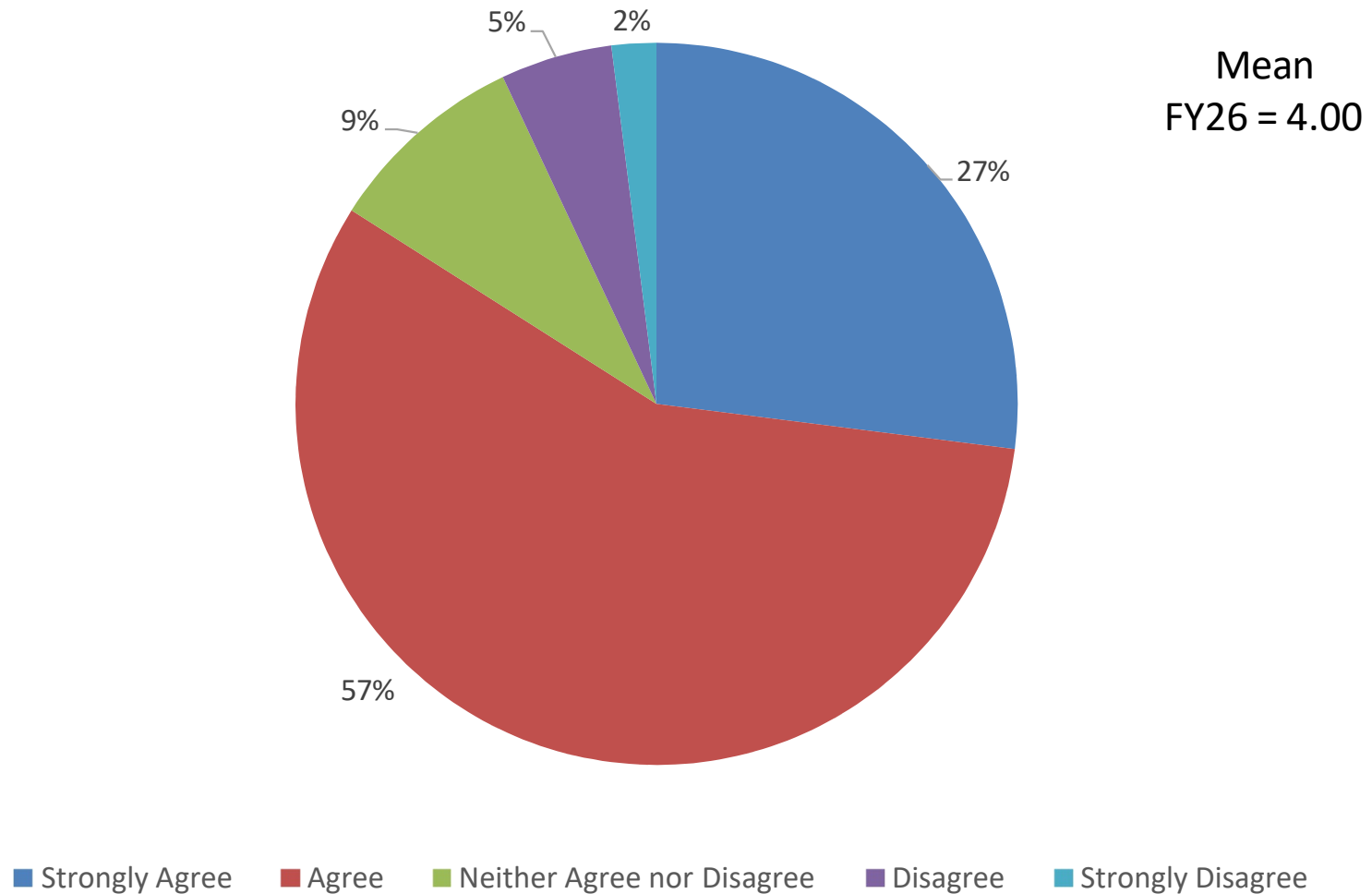


Overall High Level of Satisfaction with Pickup Experience



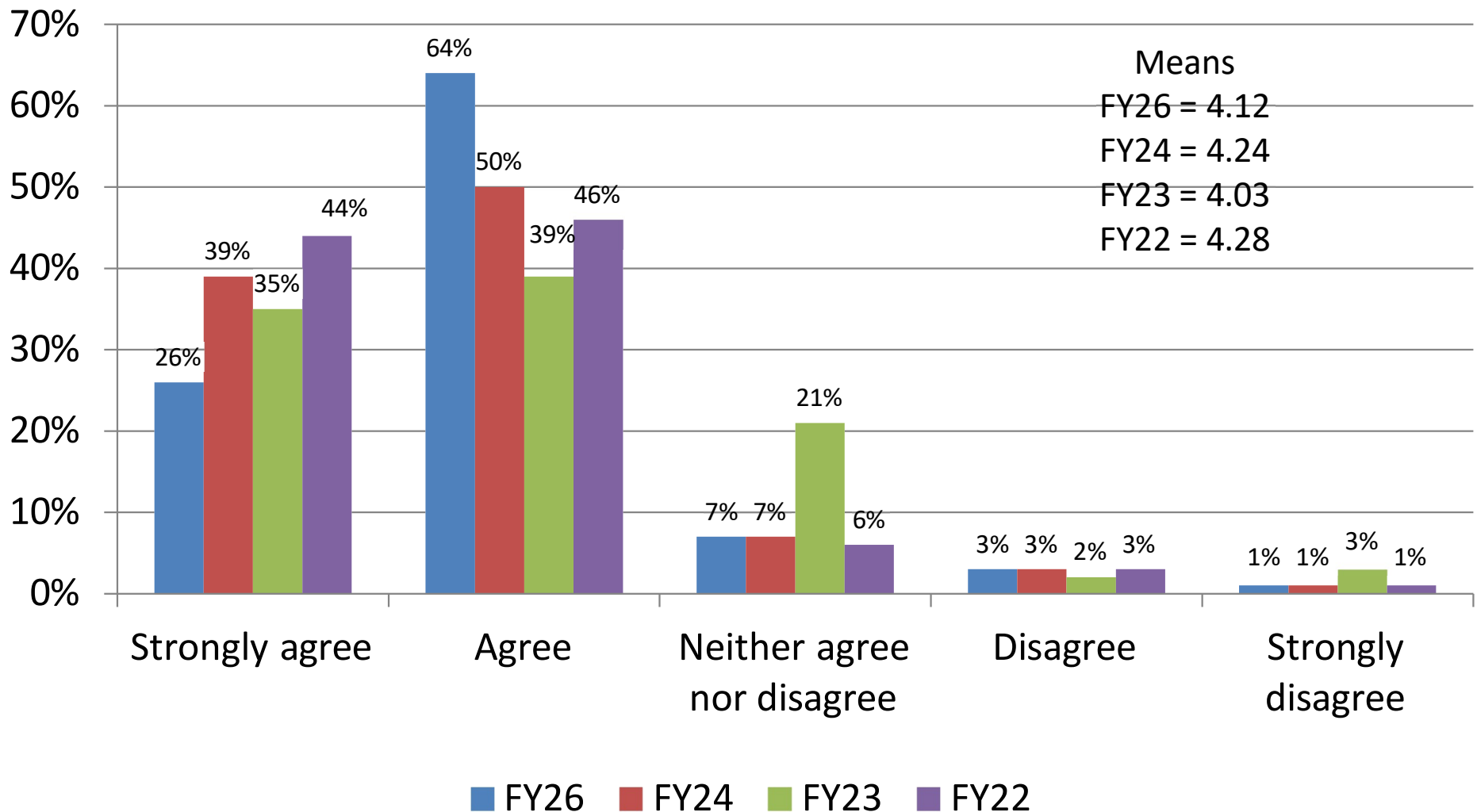


Important That Vehicle Has Wheels Dial-a-Ride Logo (New Question in FY26)



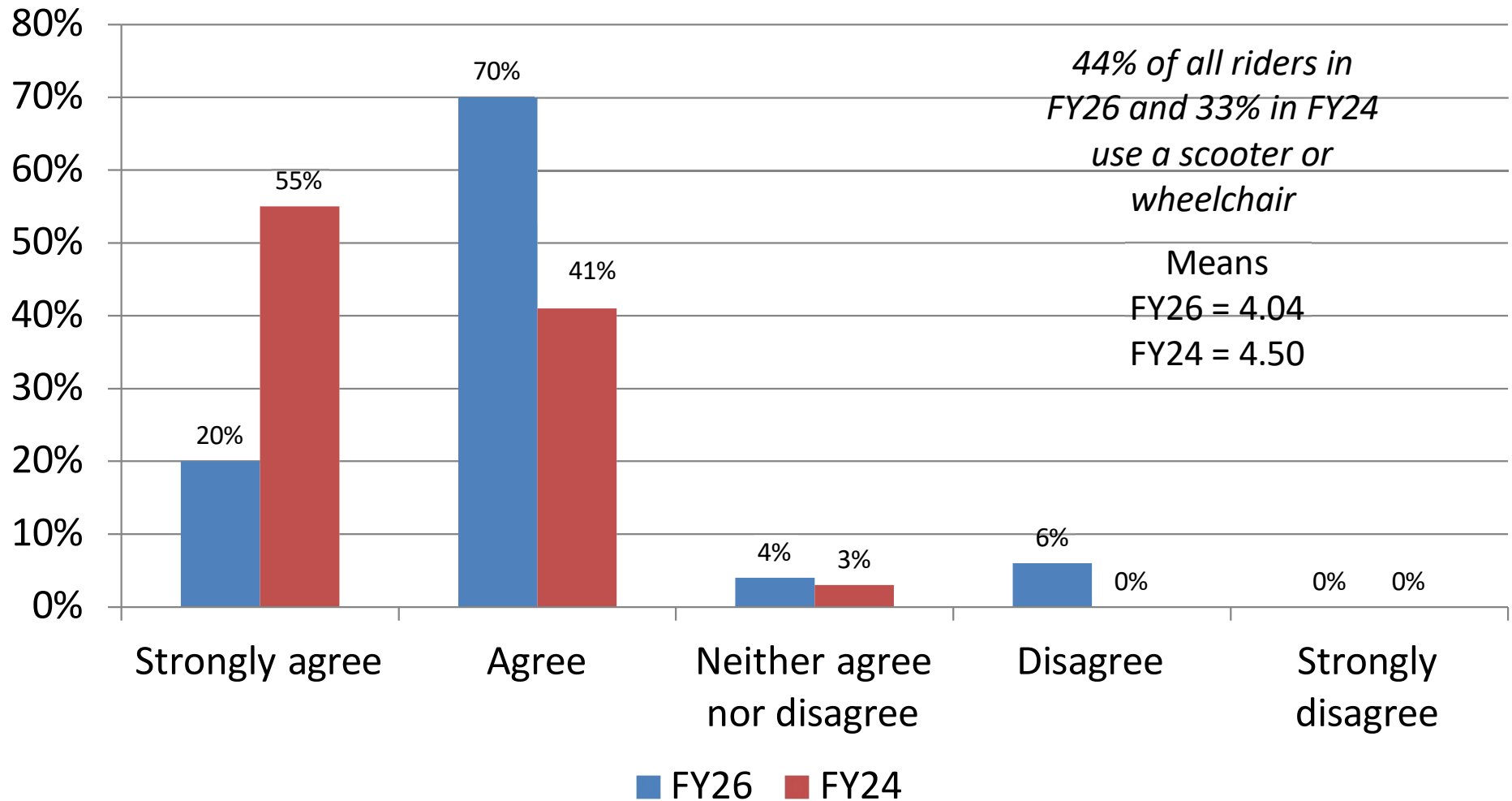


Driver Operated Vehicle Safely/ Followed Traffic Laws



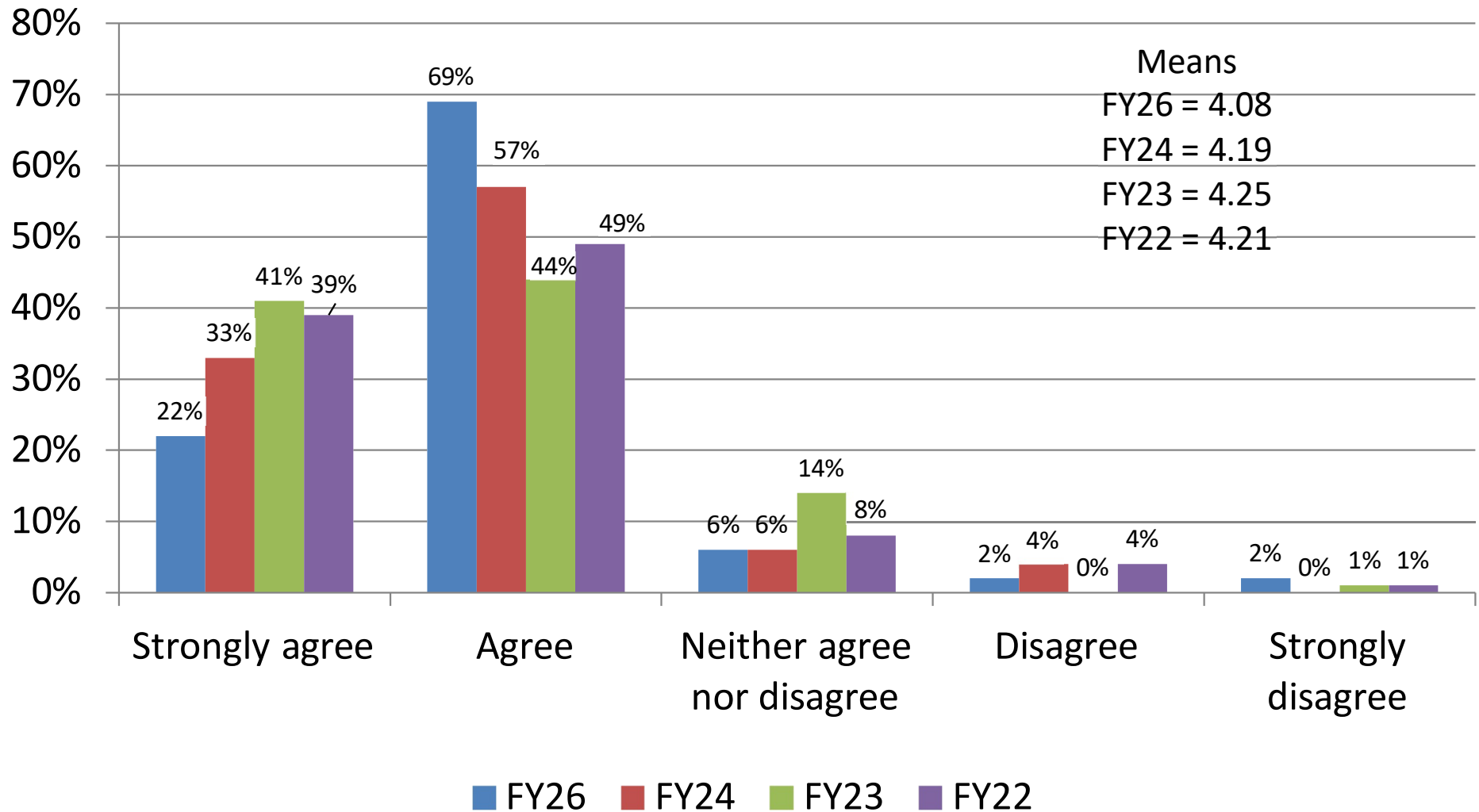


Wheelchair/Scooter Safely Secured



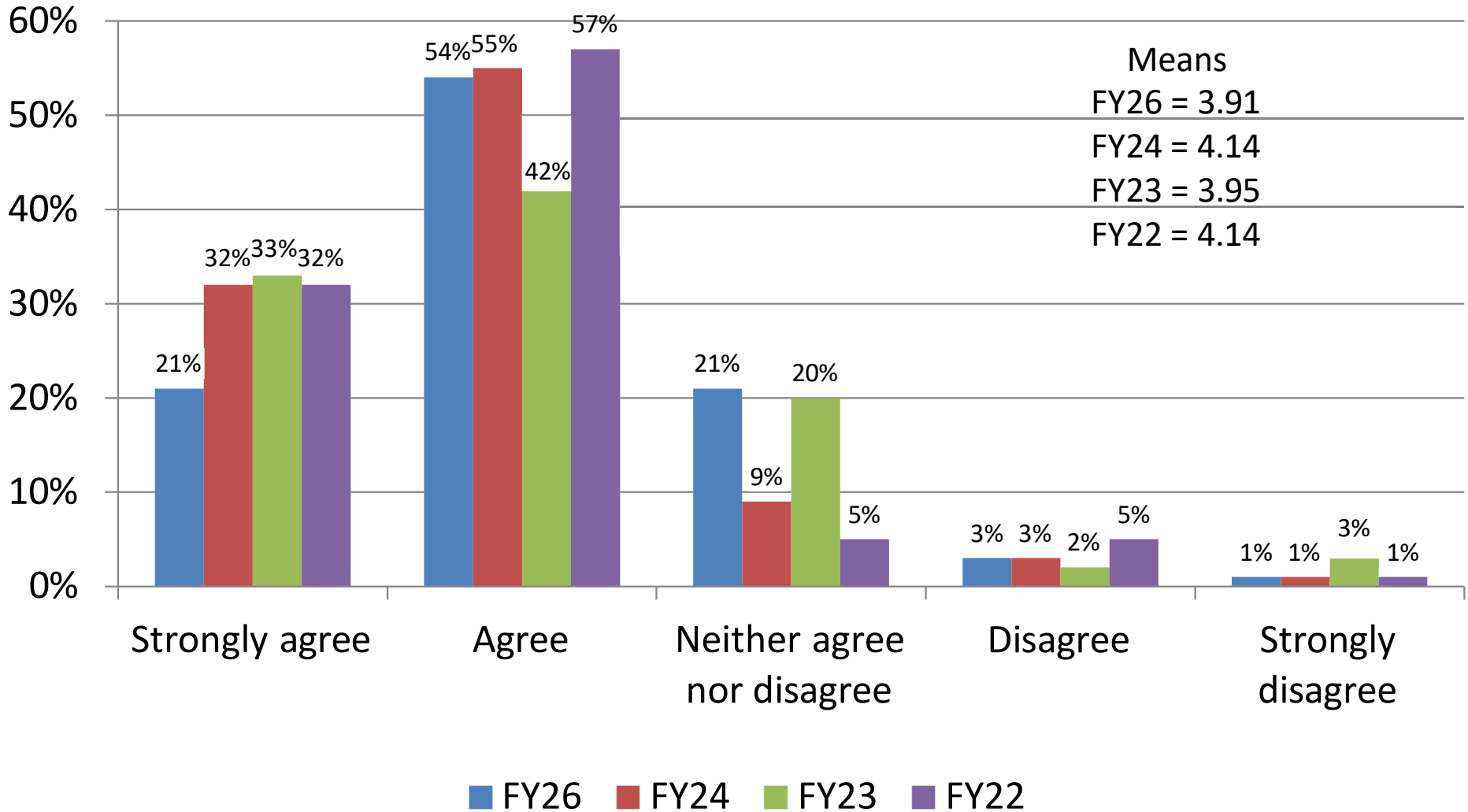


Vehicle/Shuttle was Clean



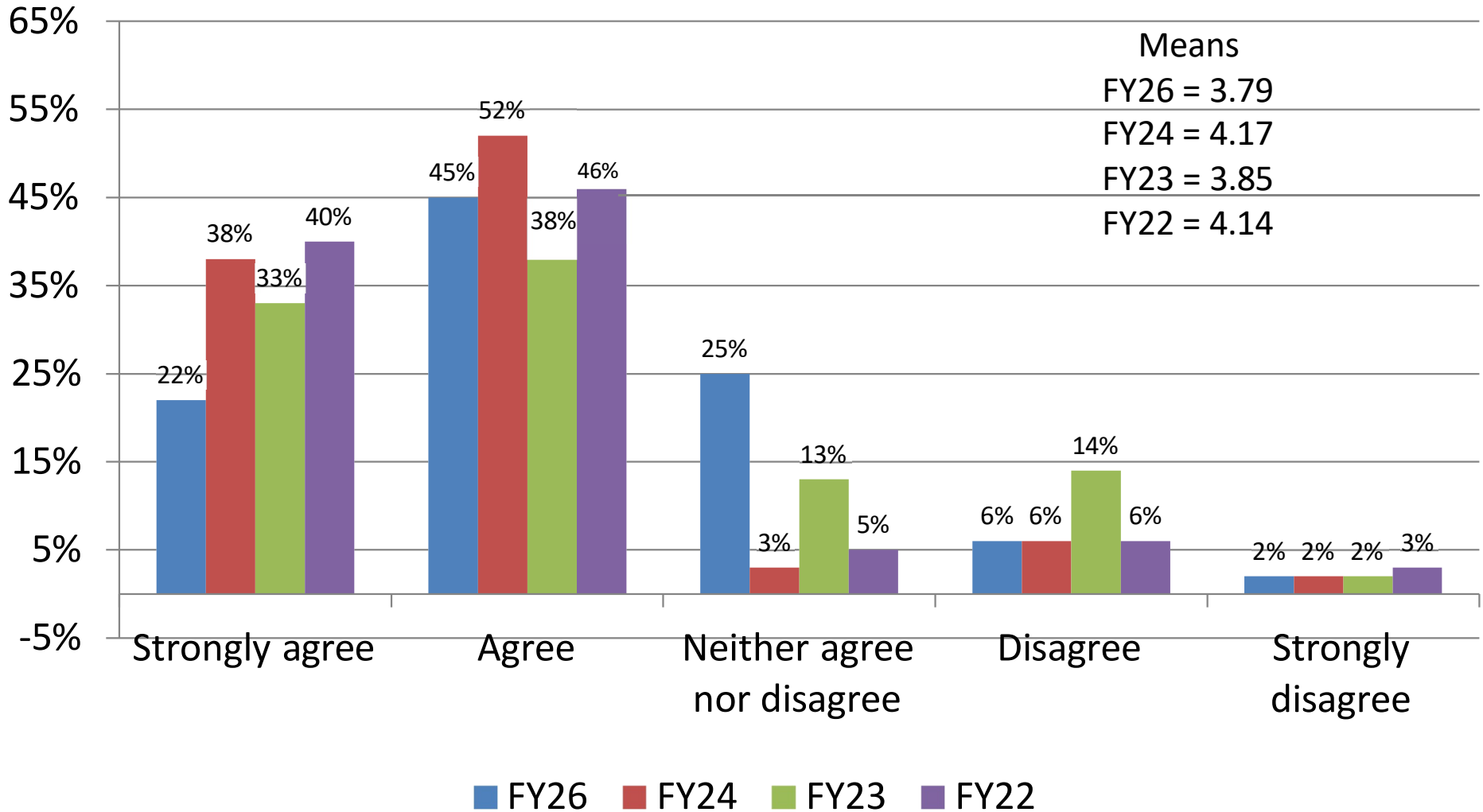


Vehicle/Shuttle was Modern and in Working Order



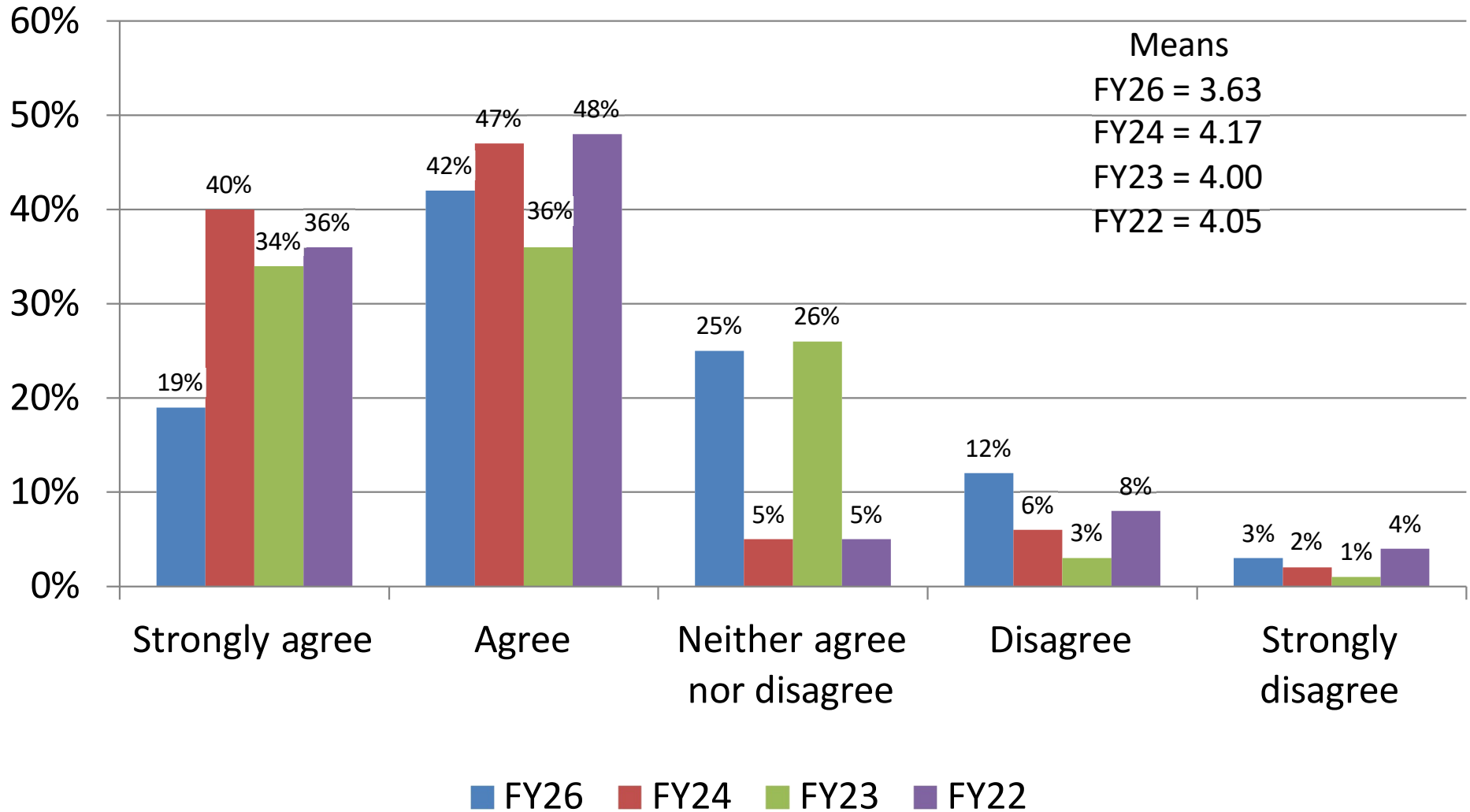


Overall High Level of Satisfaction with Ride Experience



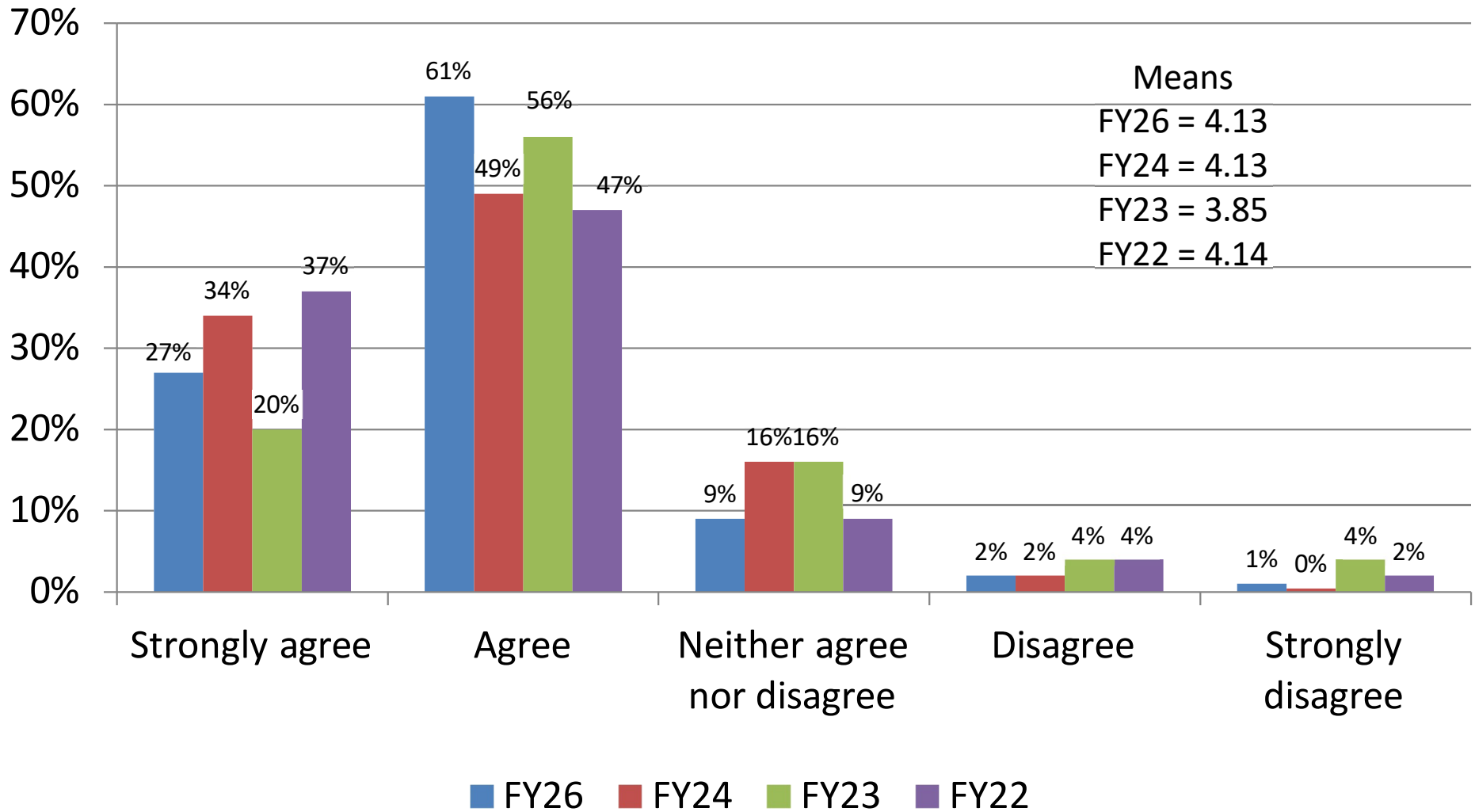


Driver Dropped me off on Time and in Correct Place



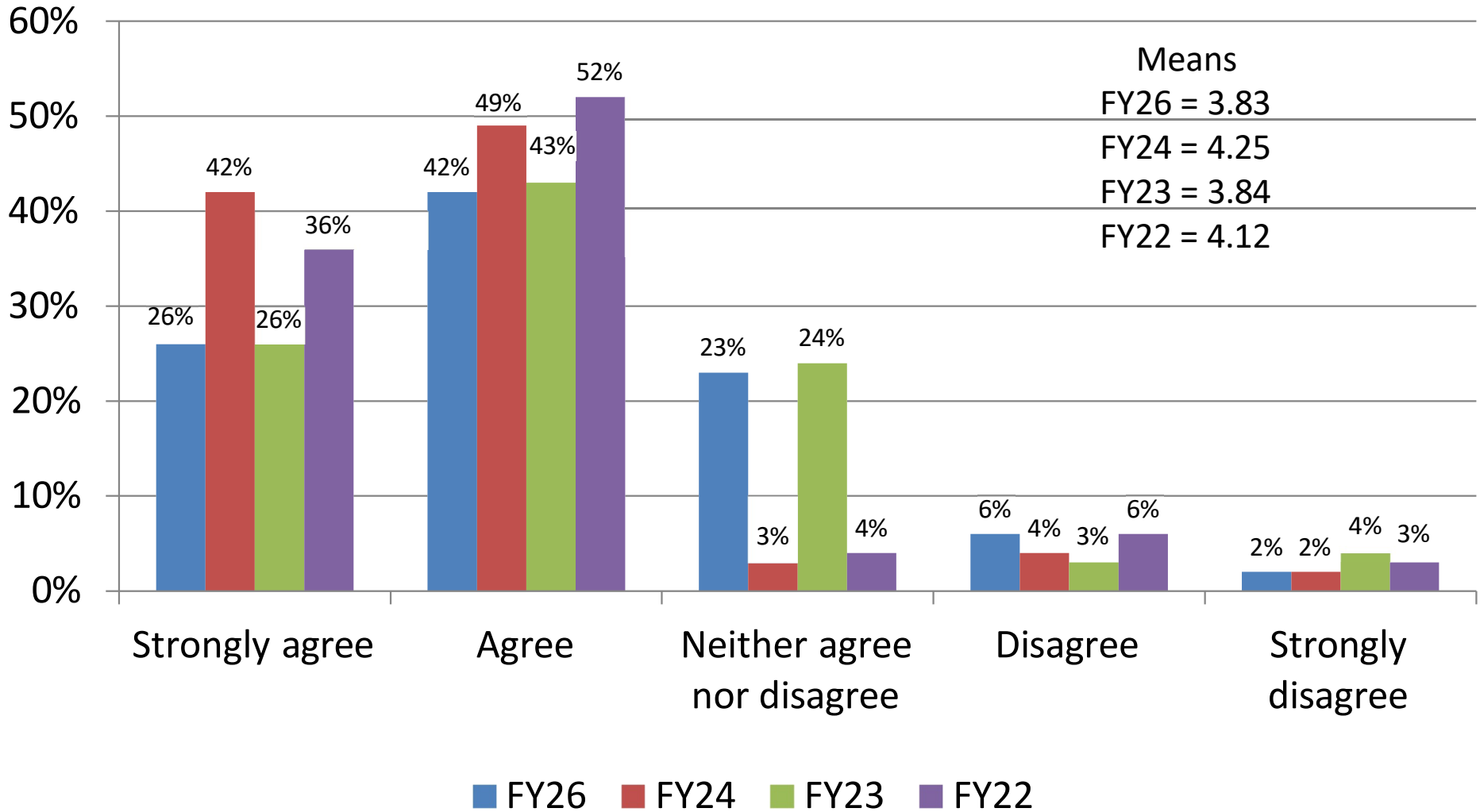


Driver Offered Me Help During Drop Off



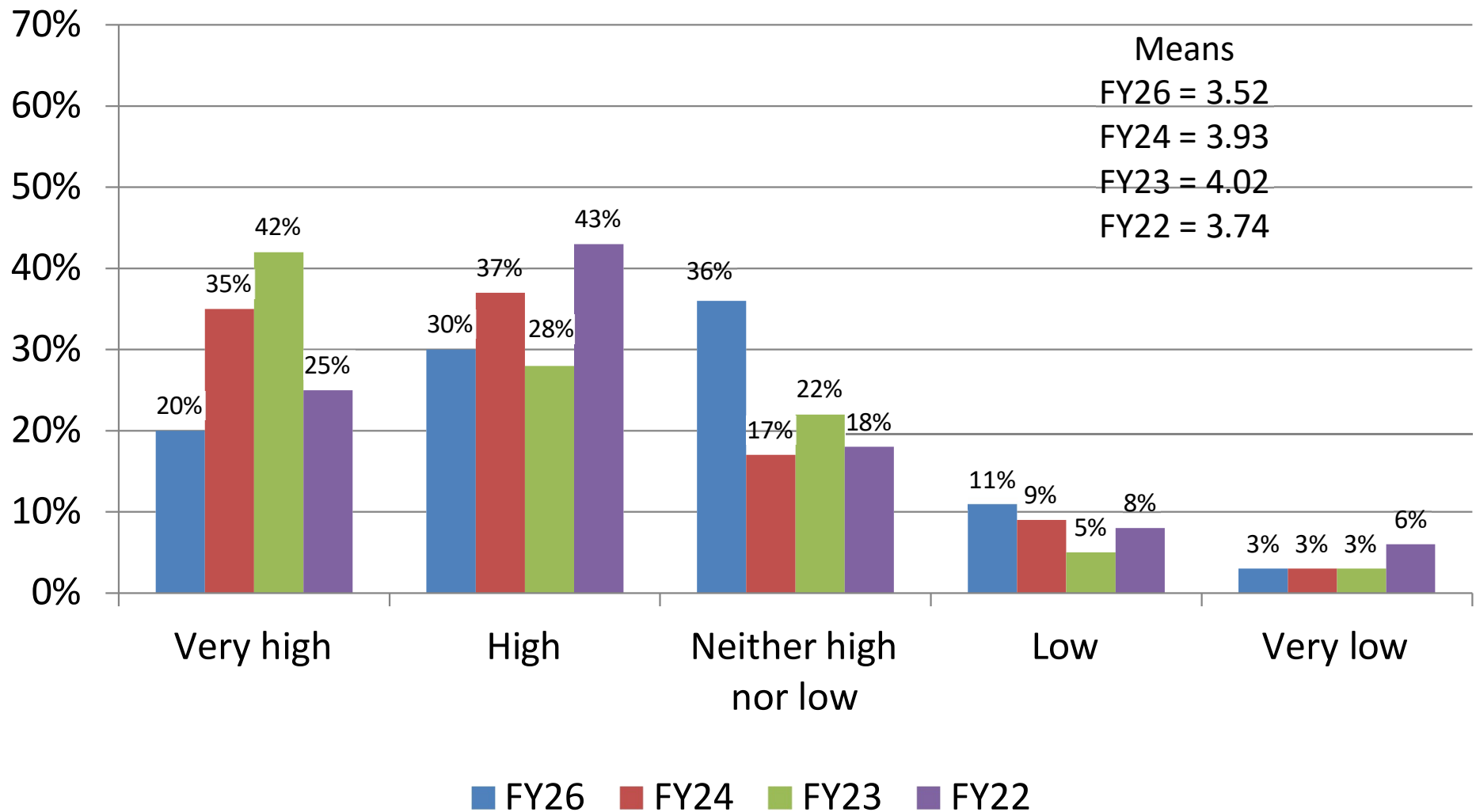


Overall High Level of Satisfaction with Drop Off Experience



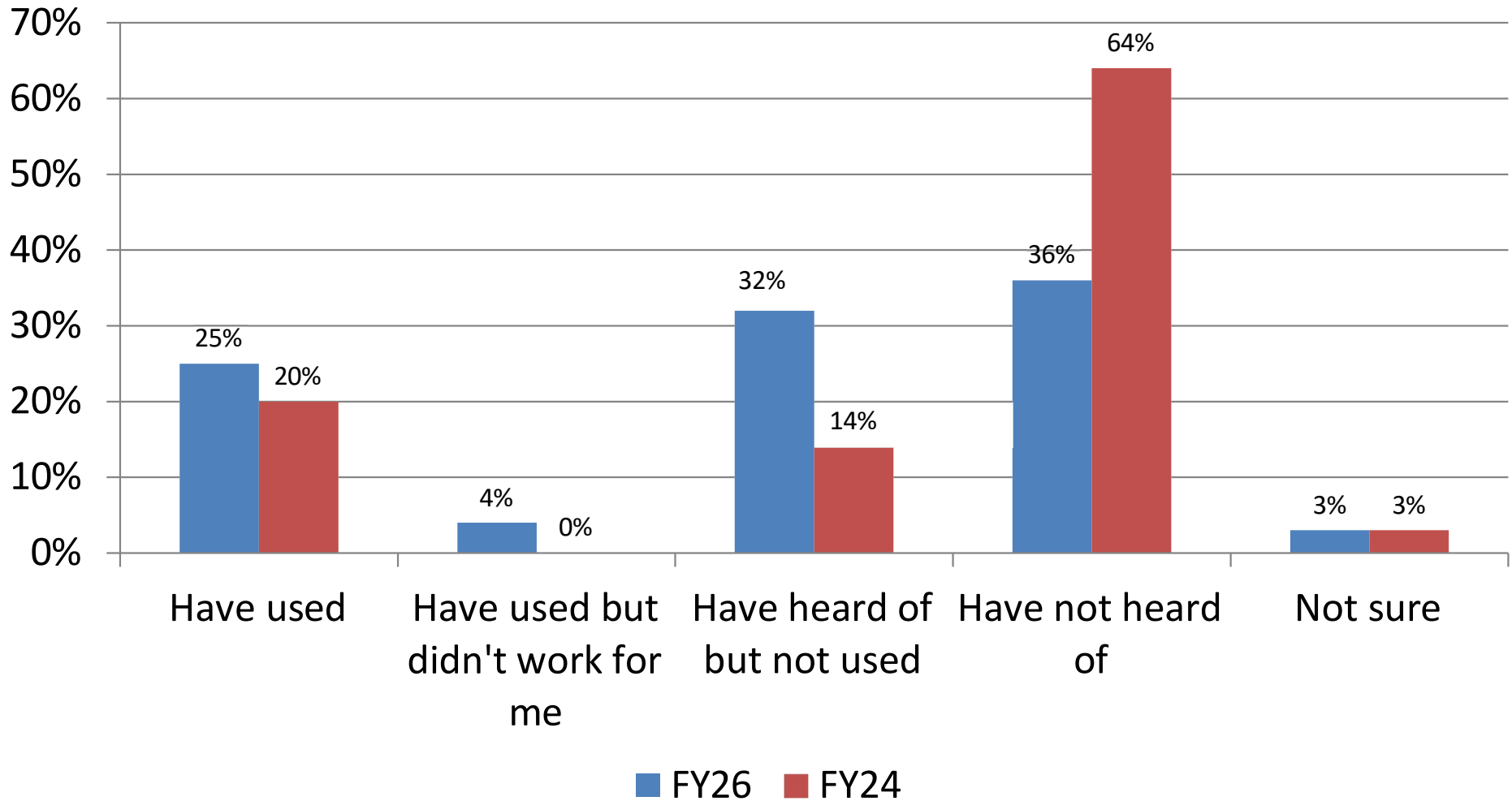


Overall Experience





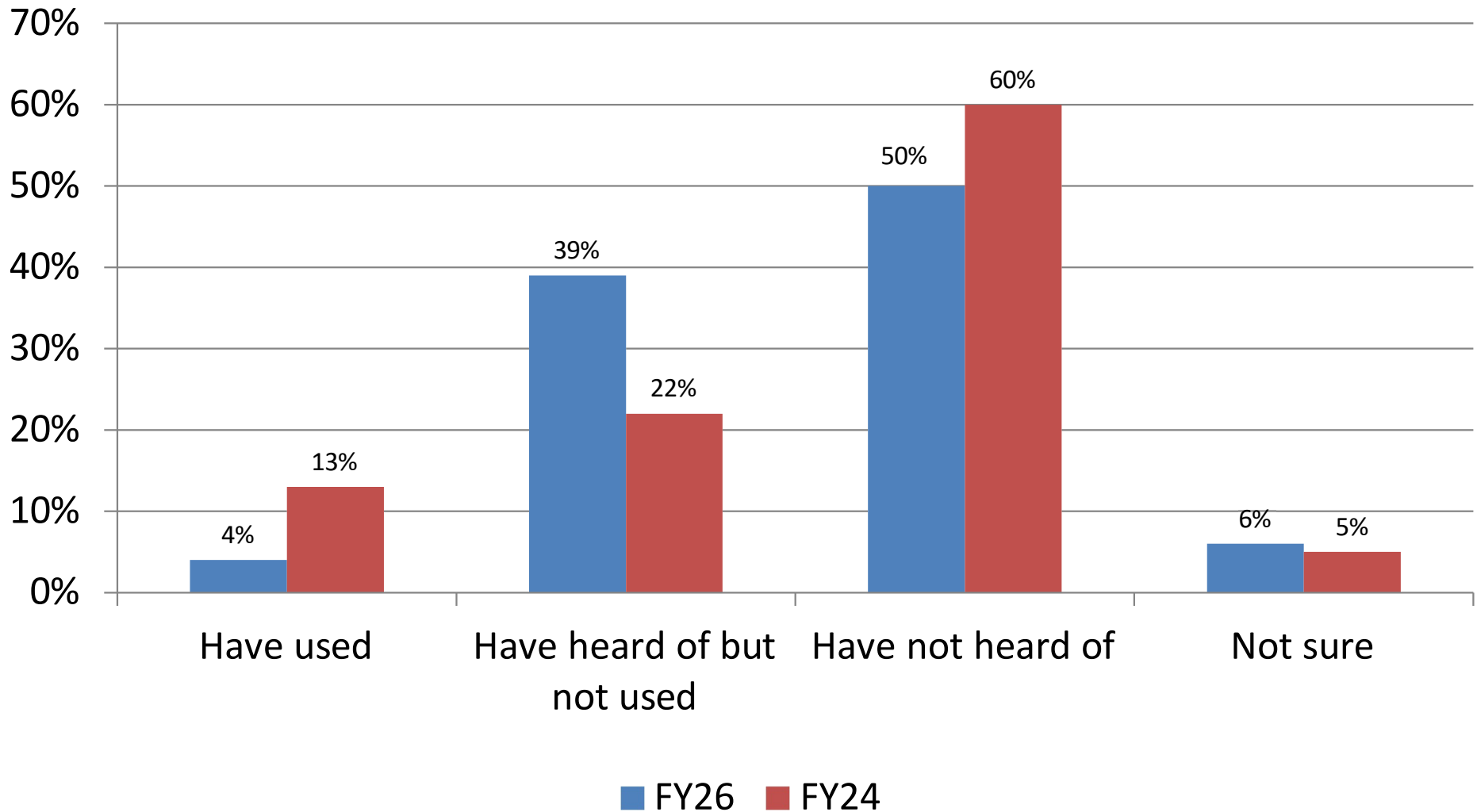
Familiarity with My Transit App



Note: "Have used but did not work for me" added in FY26

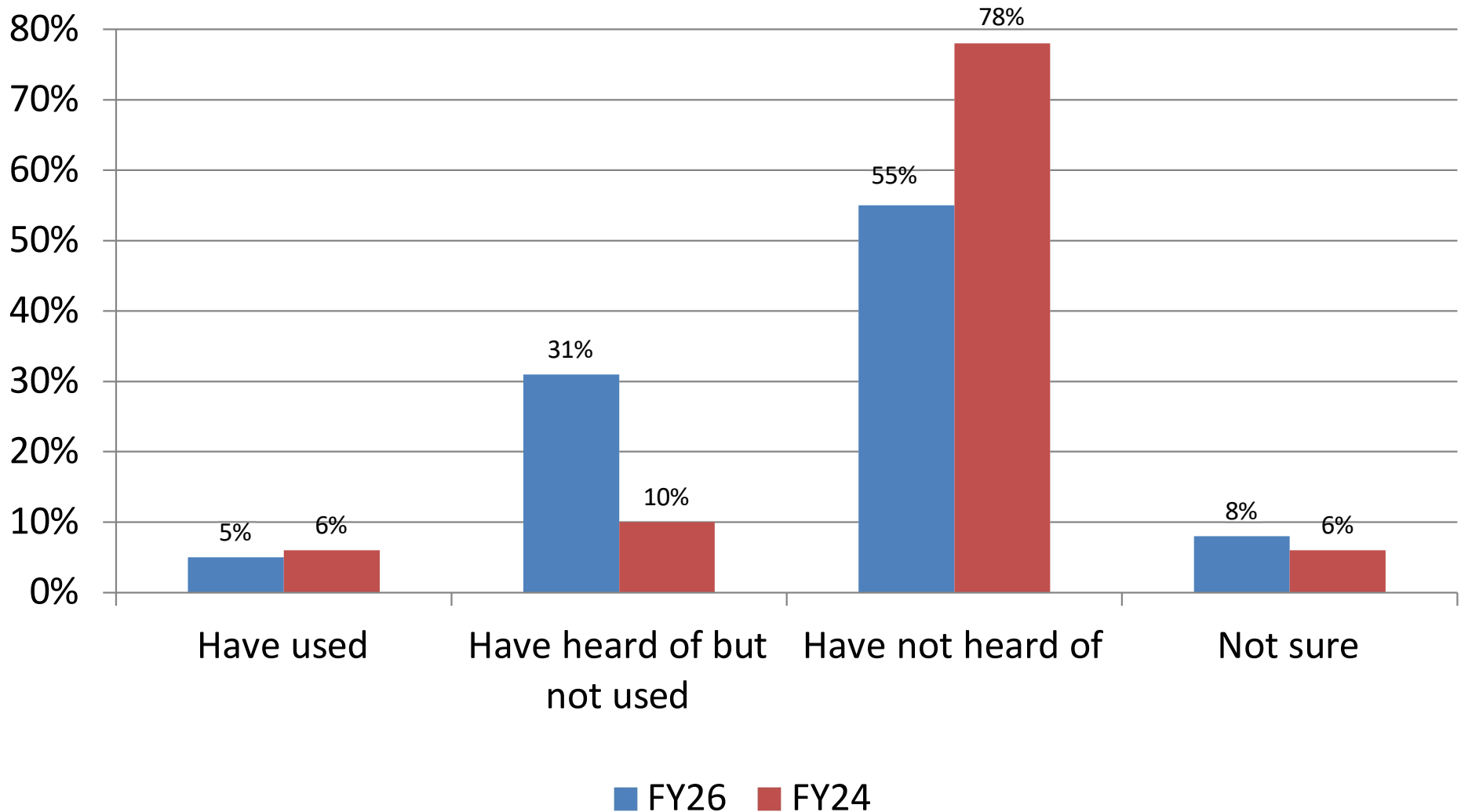


Familiarity with Para-Taxi Program



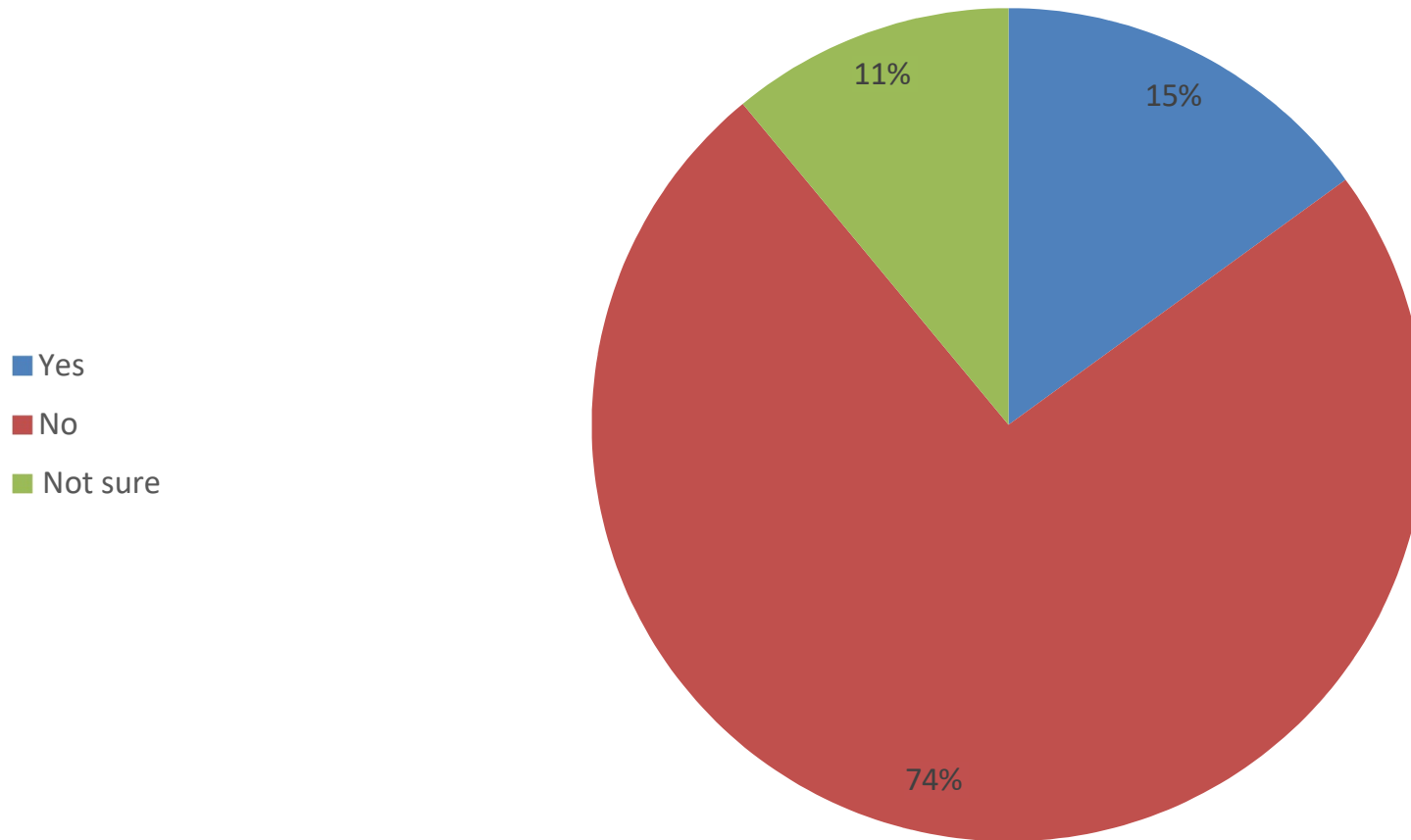


Familiarity with One Seat Ride Program





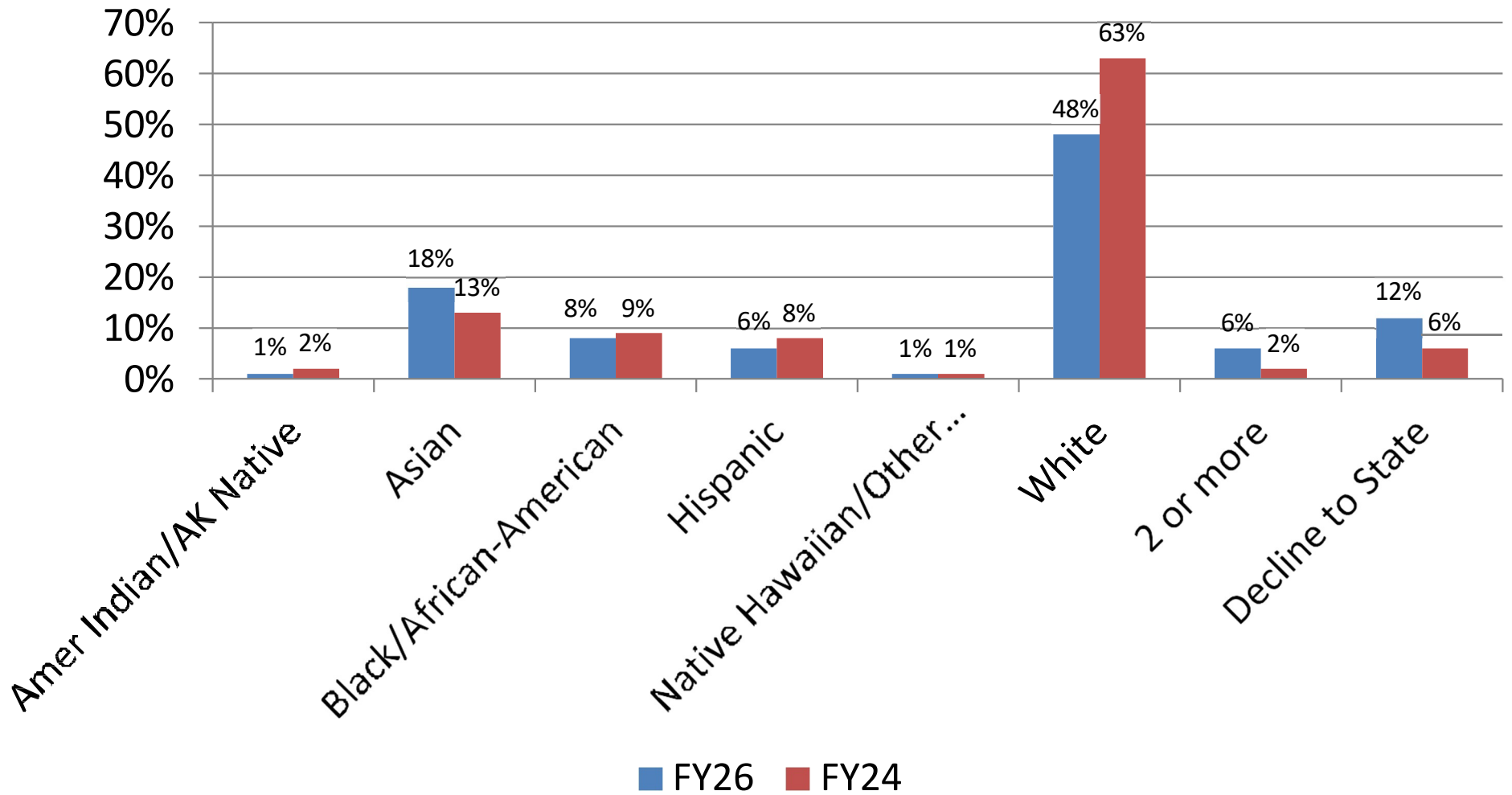
Interested in Receiving One-on-one Travel Training



FY26

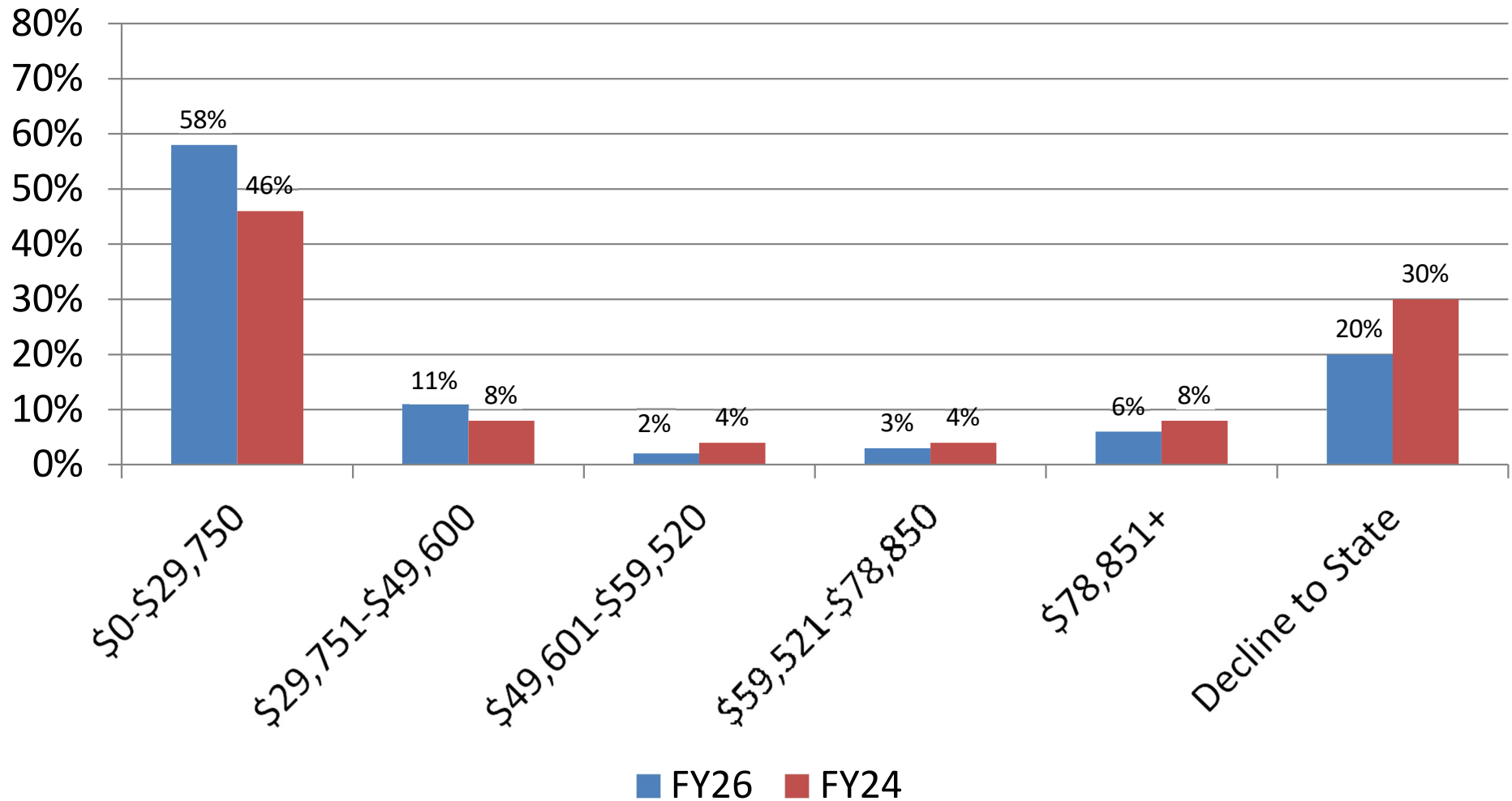


Race/Ethnicity





Annual Household Income





Comparisons of Mean Ratings

	<u>FY26</u>	<u>FY24</u>	<u>FY23</u>	<u>FY22</u>	<u>FY26 v FY24</u>	<u>FY26 v FY23</u>
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Driver courteous and helpful	4.14	4.26	4.19	4.21	-0.12	-0.05
Driver offered me help during drop off	4.13	4.13	3.85	4.14	0.00	0.28
Driver operated vehicle safely/followed traffic laws	4.12	4.24	4.03	4.28	-0.12	0.09
Vehicle/shuttle was clean	4.07	4.19	4.25	4.21	-0.12	-0.18
My wheelchair/scooter was safely secured	4.04	4.48	NA	NA	-0.44	NA
Important that vehicle has Wheels Dial-A-Ride logo	4.01	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
No problems with phone menu	3.98	4.16	3.77	4.11	-0.18	0.21
Driver arrived correct address/pickup spot	3.93	4.13	4.19	4.12	-0.20	-0.26
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Driver on time	2.88	3.74	3.95	3.62	-0.86	-1.07



Summary of Findings

- Almost without exception, ratings fell compared to FY24, and in some cases the decline was stark:
 - The mean rating for the driver arriving on time showed the steepest decline, falling from 3.74 on the 5-point scale to 2.88, or $-.86$.
 - Given that rating, it is no surprise that the overall level of satisfaction with the pickup experience showed the second largest decline, down from FY24's 4.09 to 3.49 this year, a drop of $.60$.
 - The other significant drop was seen in the driver dropping the rider off on time and in the correct place ($-.54$).
 - While not statistically significant, other large declines were seen in ratings for the wheelchair or scooter being safely secured ($-.44$), the overall experience ($-.41$), overall level of satisfaction ($-.41$), overall level of satisfaction with the ride experience ($-.38$), and ease of making arrangements on the phone ($-.38$).
- Looking specifically at the three overall levels of satisfaction – the drop-off experience was the highest at 3.84, followed closely by the ride experience at 3.79. The overall level of satisfaction with the pickup experience was lowest among the three, coming in at 3.49. With 3.0 being the neutral midpoint, all three landed more positive than negative.



Summary of Findings (cont'd)

- When it comes to familiarity with the three programs and apps posed for the first time in FY24, significantly fewer riders were unaware of My Transit App (36% this time compared to 64% not having heard of it in FY24). In the case of the One Seat Ride Program, 55% report not having heard of it now, compared to 78% being unfamiliar with it in FY24. While half (50%) in FY26 had not heard of the Para-Taxi Program, that is lower than in FY24 (60%). In terms of usage, the My Transit App had the greatest usage, but still only one-quarter (25%) have used it.
- This year, one new question was added relating to receiving one-on-one travel training, and just 15% were interested in it. Three-quarters were unsure, likely because they were unclear on precisely what that training would entail.
- Both demographic categories – race and income – showed significant changes compared to FY24 (when the questions were first posed):
 - The percentage of white riders has decreased (-15 percentage points).
 - In terms of income, there was a significant increase of 12 percentage points in the number of those at the lowest income level (less than \$29,750). This year, more riders were willing to provide their income level as opposed to in FY24.