securly   PINE|COVE CONSULTING

The State of K-12 Student Wellness in 2022

Uncovering the good, the web, and the ugly to understand student mental health today and what schools can do to help

In October 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, and Children's Hospital Association (CHA) **declared a national emergency in children's mental health.**

In the third quarter of 2021 alone, children's hospitals throughout the US recorded almost **38% more emergency department visits** for mental health cases. They also reported nearly **54% more suicide and self-injury cases** compared to 2020, according to the CHA.

How did we get here?

Well, first there was a global pandemic. Remote learning left many students isolated and alone with their devices.

But pandemic or not, a large number of students spend their time online. While some play games or explore interests, others search for help. These searches may start out harmless enough but, faster than we may realize, a child's curiosity can lead them down a rabbit hole of information. This can set off a downward spiral and a rapid decline in their mental health without anyone being any the wiser.

This unfortunate trend has become more than a national concern: it's being declared a "crisis." This report seeks to provide insights into how we got here and what we can do to improve our students' mental health and wellbeing.

Read on to learn:

- The 10 most concerning things K-12 students are searching for online
- Online behavior trends and patterns that may be impacting your students
- New ways to know how your students are doing… really

A brief overview of student safety

As the reliance on technology in education continues to increase, so does the need for online safety for students. Student safety comes in many forms, including:

• **Web filtering:** Use of a web filter protects students from harmful content and can be used to block online distractions. **Web filtering** can also ensure a school is compliant with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA).

• **Flagged alert systems:** **Flagged alerts** are sent to designated school staff notifying them of online activities that are potentially harmful, including self-harm, depression, violence, bullying, and more. Once alerted, schools can act to provide the student the necessary resources to address the issue at hand.

Flagged alerts can reveal much about your students' wellness

Flagged alerts based on your students' web searches can illuminate patterns and trends in the way your students are feeling. Flagged alerts are typically associated with four critical areas of safety and wellness:
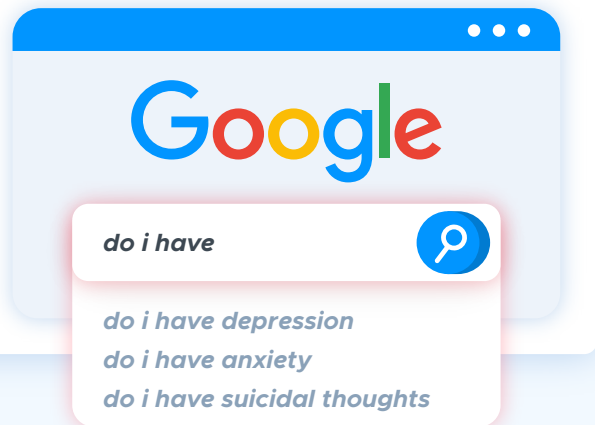
Self-harm	Suicidal ideation	Depression	Violence

Kids may not tell the whole truth to their teachers and parents.

But they never lie to Google.

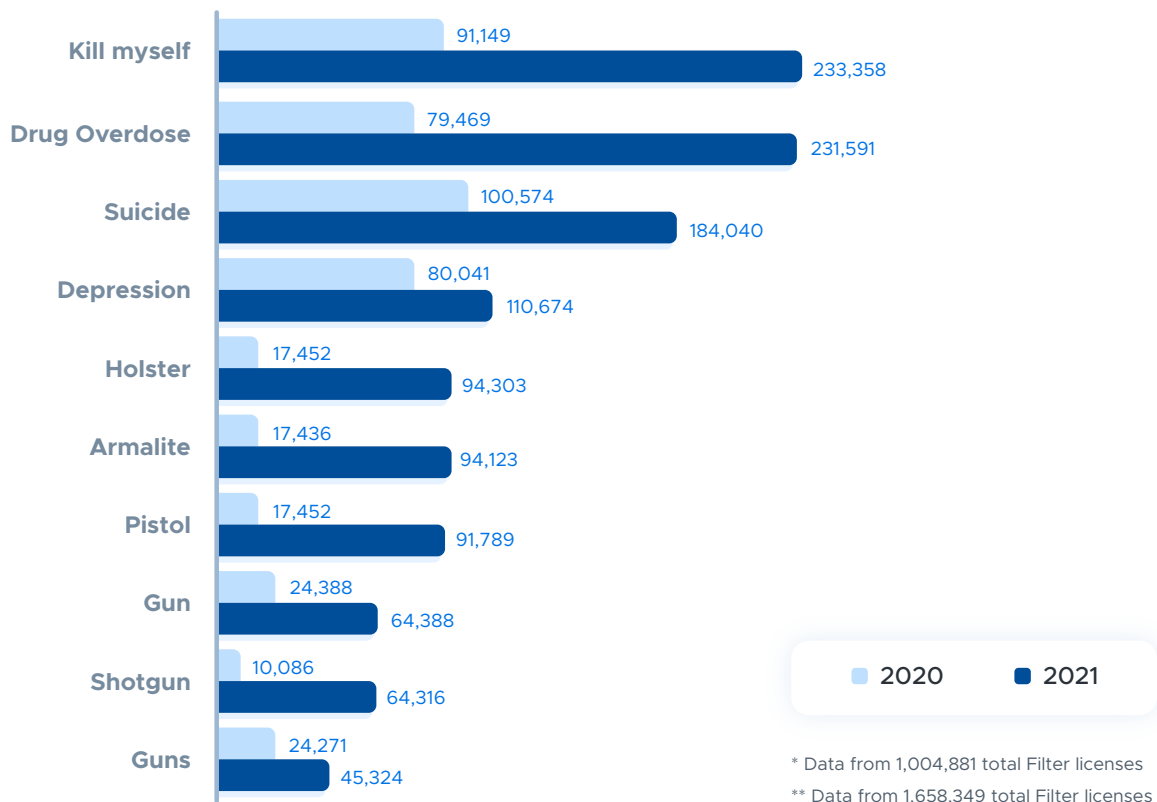Google

do i have

do i have depression
do i have anxiety
do i have suicidal thoughts
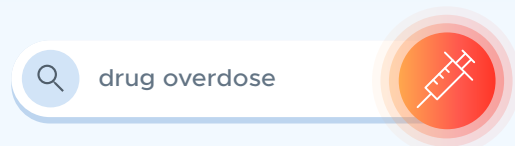
The top 10 flagged terms

Based on actual web searches done by our customers' students.

The following data was gathered from Securly's K-12 student safety and wellness technology platform from Fall 2019 through Fall 2021. From these searches, you gain a better understanding of what students are searching online, and uncover insights into the most pressing student safety and wellness concerns.

Term	2020	2021
Kill myself	91,149	233,358
Drug Overdose	79,469	231,591
Suicide	100,574	184,040
Depression	80,041	110,674
Holster	17,452	94,303
Armalite	17,436	94,123
Pistol	17,452	91,789
Gun	24,388	64,388
Shotgun	10,086	64,316
Guns	24,271	45,324

■ 2020   ■ 2021

* Data from 1,004,881 total Filter licenses
** Data from 1,658,349 total Filter licenses

🔍 kill myself

"kill myself" was the top flagged search term of 2021

233,358 alerts
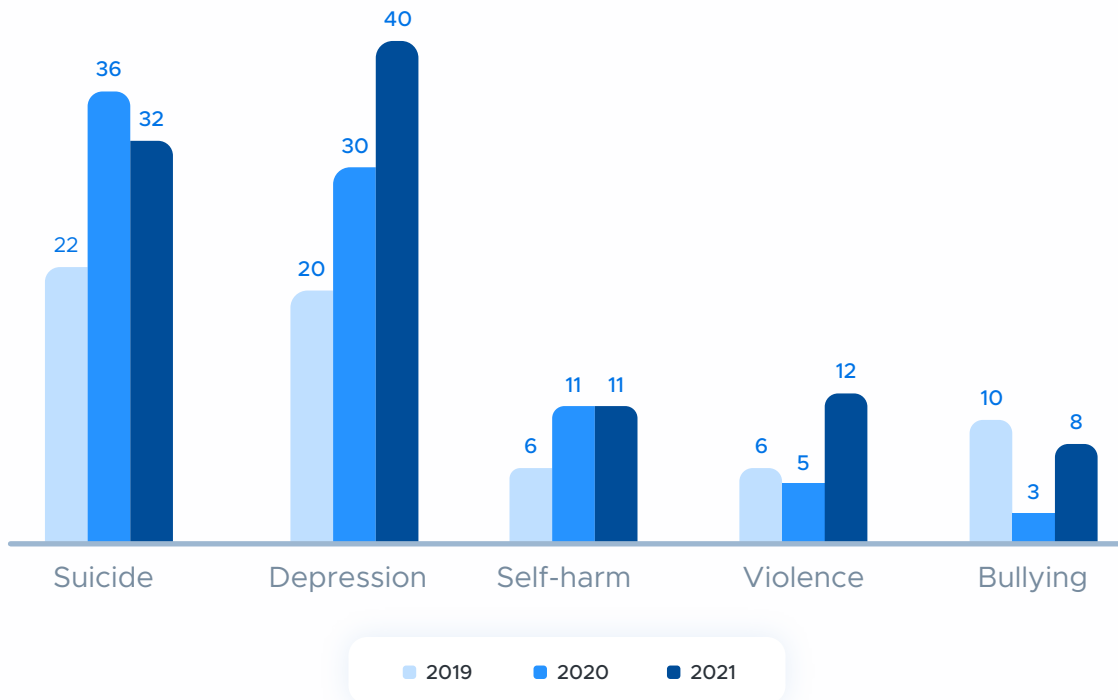
🔍 drug overdose

"drug overdose" was second

231,591 alerts

Depression alerts are growing at an alarming rate

The increase in depression alerts during 2020 can be easily explained as a result of the feelings of isolation so many students experienced during remote learning. But the continued increase after students returned to in-person learning shows that depression doesn't just disappear when in-person learning resumes.

Notification categories per 10k students

	Suicide	Depression	Self-harm	Violence	Bullying
2019	22	20	6	6	10
2020	36	30	11	5	3
2021	32	40	11	12	8

2019 2020 2021

Bullying and violence alerts increase during in-person learning

Unlike trends in depression which show a clear upward trajectory, the trends in bullying and violence look bumpier. It makes sense that bullying and violence dropped when students were mostly schooling remotely. But these trends rose again after students returned to in-person and hybrid learning.

The latest technology supports provide even more insights and opportunities to intervene

Relying on web filtering and flagged alerts to understand what students may be searching for online is a great start. But the more available data your school safety system can draw from, the better your ability to identify students in need.

The alerts generated from artificial intelligence (AI)-powered scanning go beyond basic web filtering. By scanning web searches, emails, Google Docs, Google Drive, OneDrive, and social media posts (incl. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr) in real-time for signs of nudity, cyberbullying, suicide, and violence, Securly's AI-powered scanning and monitoring provide additional indications of potential risks that would otherwise be missed by web filtering alone.
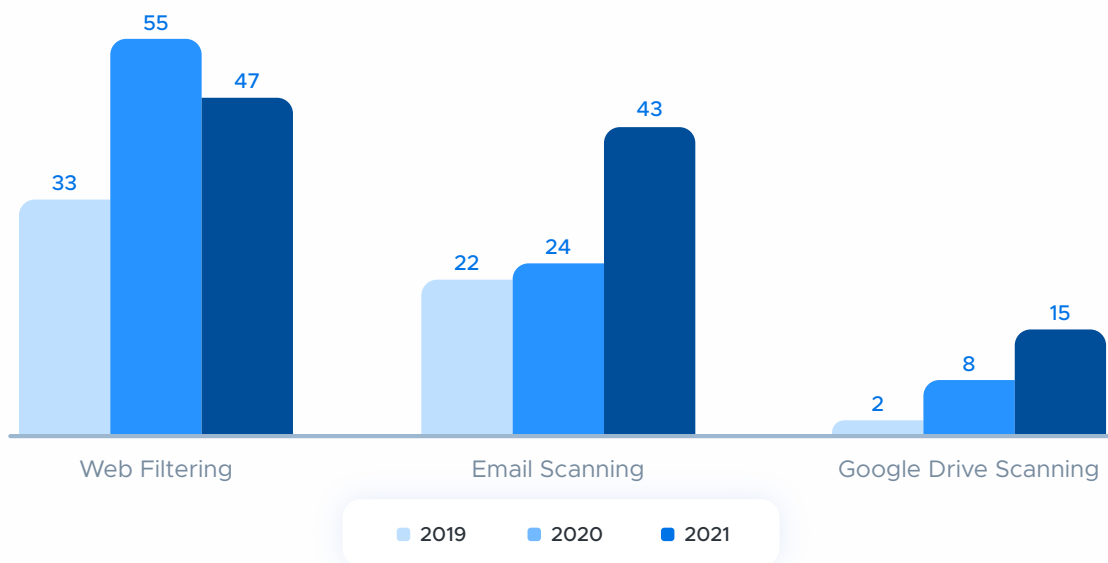
Where are flagged alerts coming from?

Notification source per 10k students

518.1 million

items scanned by Securly Auditor with **60,768** of those flagged each month

61.29

Students flagged as "Increased Risk" **per 10k students**

|	Web Filtering	Email Scanning	Google Drive Scanning
2019	33	22	2
2020	55	24	8
2021	47	43	15

Legend: 2019 / 2020 / 2021

Exciting advancements in AI-powered monitoring and scanning add even more powerful capabilities. You don't just gain alerts of concerning activities, you get easy-to-use support tools that help you visualize and better understand your students' current levels of wellness, as well as trends over time. You can even pinpoint and deliver interventions to those students who are most at risk of harm to themselves or others.

Visualize each student's mental wellbeing with dynamically updated wellness levels.
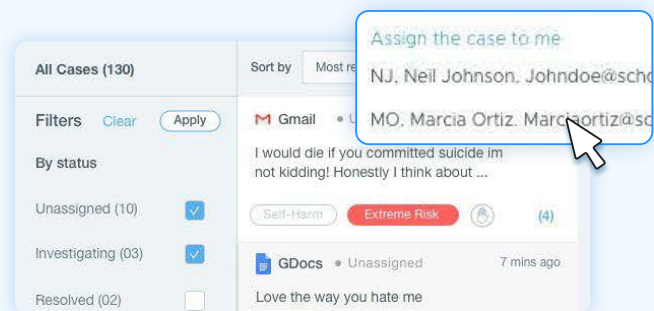Monitor scores and respond proactively if they show a downward trend.

Automatically present online messages and resources to students whose wellness scores drop.
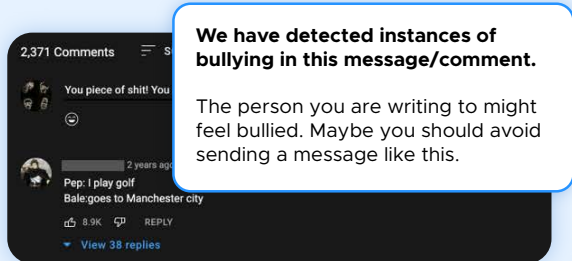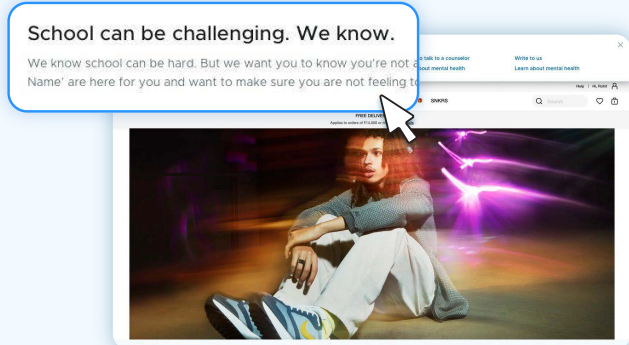
Detect bullying messages as they're being written and prompt the student to think twice.

Track at-risk students, assign cases, and maintain records of in-progress and resolved cases.

Identify at-risk students before they become statistics

In 2021 alone, Securly sent 233,358 alerts to schools like yours because the term "kill myself" was searched by one or more of their students. And that's just one flagged term.

While most students will think better of following through on hopeless, harmful, or dangerous impulses, the sad reality is that some students will not. And even one is too many.

Tools like web filtering and flagged alerts can give you insights into what your students are searching and therefore thinking about. But they can only help so much.

Securly helps you do more

Our student safety and wellness technology solutions are like an extra set of eyes and ears, giving you the ability to home in on the students who are at risk — so you can intervene early and quickly.

Securly is a pioneer and tireless innovator of technology innovations to support K-12 student safety and wellness. And we share your commitment to keeping students safe at school, home, and everywhere in-between.

To learn more about how Securly can help you monitor and make a meaningful impact on your students' wellness, visit **www.securly.com**

Or reach out directly to **solutions@securly.com We'd love to learn more about your student wellness initiatives and how we can help.**

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