HIDDEN HARMS: THE MISLEADING PROMISE OF STUDENT ACTIVITY MONITORING

Survey Research on Parent,
Student, and Teacher Experiences

August 2022

About This Research

Research Objectives

This year's surveys comprise a fourth wave of tracking responses among teachers and parents, and the second wave among students. The surveys measure and track changes in perceptions, experiences, training, engagement, and concerns about student data privacy and student activity monitoring. Surveys were conducted in May/July 2020, February 2021, June/July 2021, and May/June 2022.

Methodology

Online surveys of **1,008 6th-10th grade teachers**, **1,606 6th-12th grade parents,** and **860 9th-12th grade students** (conducted via two, simultaneous surveys) were fielded **May-June 2022.**

	Sample size	Average Survey Time
Teacher survey (6th-10th)	1,008	14 minutes
Parent survey (6th-12th)	1,606	21 minutes
Student (9th-12th) – Data Privacy survey	460	8 minutes
Student (9th-12th) – Activity Monitoring survey	400	10 minutes

*2022 surveys focused on teachers and parents of middle and high schoolers (excluding elementary schoolers). Student surveys continued to cover 9th-12th graders.

2022: 6th-10th grade teachers; 2020, 2021: 3rd-10th grade teachers
2022: 6th-12th grade parents; 2020, 2021: K-12th grade parents

For tracking purposes, 2020 and 2021 data has been filtered, weighted, and reported to be comparable to the 2022 data.

Throughout the report, ↑ ↓ indicates significant differences between comparison groups at the 95% confidence level. ▲ ▼ Indicates significantly higher/lower than previous survey at the 95% confidence level.

Key Takeaways

While stakeholders are optimistic that student activity monitoring will keep students safe, in practice it creates significant efficacy and equity gaps

- **Monitoring is used for discipline more often than student safety:** Despite assurances and hopes that student activity monitoring will be used to keep students safe, teachers report that it is more frequently used for disciplinary purposes in spite of parent and student concerns.

- **Teachers bear considerable responsibility but lack training for student activity monitoring:** Teachers are generally tasked with responding to alerts generated by student activity monitoring, despite only a small percentage having received training on how to do so privately and securely.

- **Monitoring is often not limited to school hours, despite parent and student concerns:** Students and parents are the most comfortable with monitoring being limited to when school is in session, but monitoring frequently occurs outside of that time frame.

- **Stakeholders demonstrate large knowledge gaps in how monitoring software functions:** There are significant gaps between what teachers report is communicated about student activity monitoring, often via a form provided along with a school-issued device, and what parents and students retain and report about it.

Additionally, certain groups of students, especially those who are already more at risk than their peers, disproportionately experience the hidden harms of student activity monitoring:

- **Students are at risk of increased interactions with law enforcement:** Schools are sending student data collected from monitoring software to law enforcement officials, who use it to contact students.

- **LGBTQ+ students are disproportionately targeted for action:** The use of student activity monitoring software is resulting in the nonconsensual disclosure of students' sexual orientation and gender identity (i.e., "outing"), as well as more LGBTQ+ students reporting that they are being disciplined or contacted by law enforcement for concerns about committing a crime, as compared to their peers.

- **Students' mental health could suffer:** While students report they are being referred to school counselors, social workers, and other adults for mental health support, they are also experiencing detrimental effects from being monitored online. These effects include avoiding expressing their thoughts and feelings online, as well as not accessing important resources that could help them.

- **Students experiencing poverty, Black students, and Hispanic students are at greater risk of harm than others:** Previous CDT research showed that certain groups of students, including students experiencing poverty, Black students, and Hispanic students, rely more heavily on school-issued devices. Therefore, they are subject to more surveillance and the aforementioned harms, including interacting with law enforcement, being disciplined, and being outed, than those using personal devices.
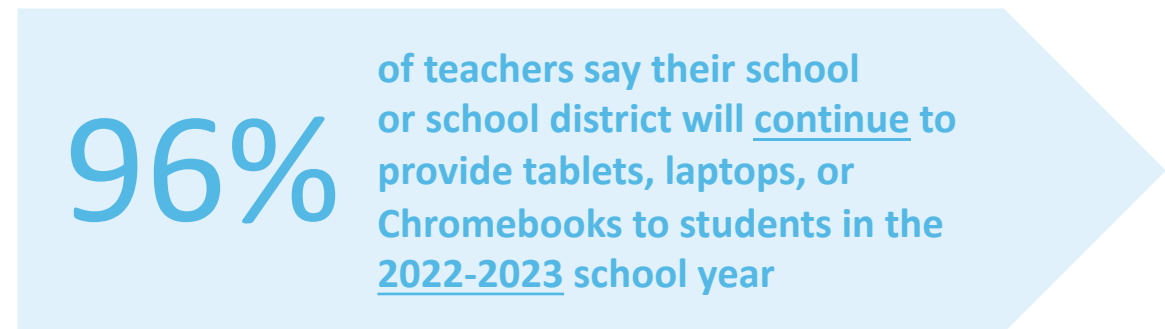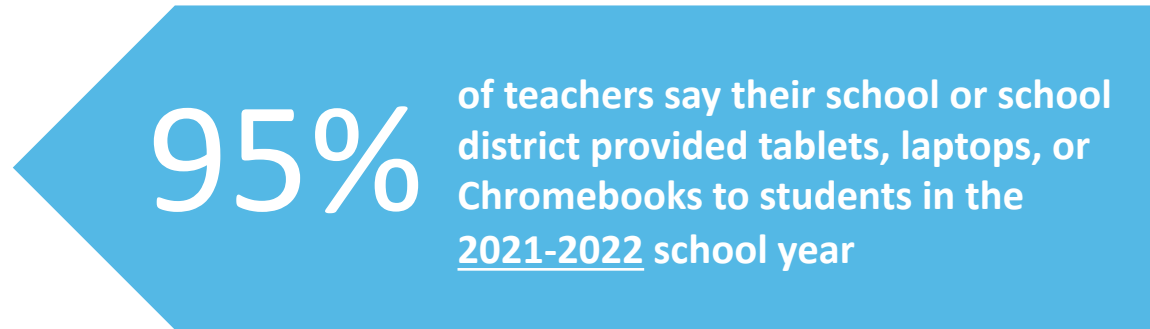
Context

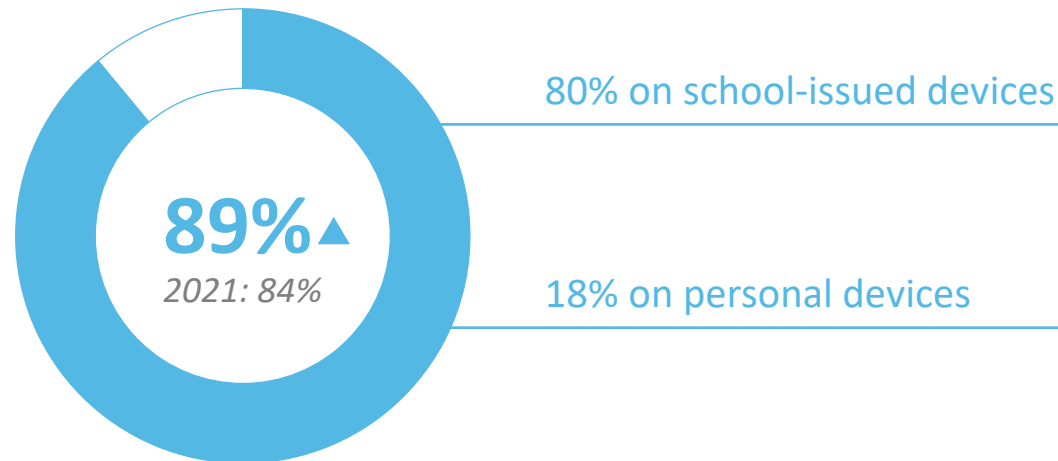# Schools continue to rely heavily on technology

- 9 in 10 teachers and students say their school engages in student activity monitoring, an increase since last year

School and School District Provision of Devices to Students

■ Teachers (n=1008)

95% of teachers say their school or school district provided tablets, laptops, or Chromebooks to students in the **2021-2022** school year

96% of teachers say their school or school district will **continue** to provide tablets, laptops, or Chromebooks to students in the **2022-2023** school year

Teachers
School engages in student activity monitoring:

89%▲
2021: 84%

80% on school-issued devices

18% on personal devices

Q15: This most recent school year (2021-2022), did your school or school district support students by providing and/or maintaining tablets, laptops, or Chromebooks to students for their use at school, at home, or both?
Q15A: When school resumes next year (2022-2023), will your school support students by providing and/or maintaining tablets, laptops, or Chromebooks to students for their use at school, at home, or both?
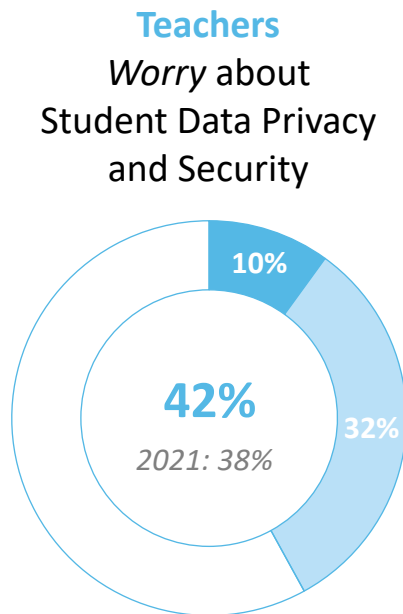Q42A: TEACHERS: Does your school or district engage in student activity monitoring? Select all that apply.

Concerns about student privacy remain high

- 6 in 10 parents and students are very or somewhat concerned about the security of data and information that may be collected and stored by the school (a slight decrease since last year).
- 4 in 10 teachers worry about a lot or some about this issue.

Concern about Student Data Privacy and Security

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=460)

Teachers
Worry about
Student Data Privacy
and Security

10%
32%
42%
2021: 38%

Parents
Concern about
Student Data Privacy
and Security

26%
35%
61%▼
2021: 69%

Students
Concern about
Student Data Privacy
and Security

21%
36%
57%
2021: 56%

24% neutral or don't think about it

% worry a lot or some   % very or somewhat concerned

Darker shading = stronger intensity

Stakeholders share concerns about several aspects of monitoring

- Monitoring social media, using remote proctoring software, and tracking students' online activity elicit concern from all stakeholders.

Concern about Student Data Privacy and Security

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400/460)

% very or somewhat concerned

	Monitor students' publicly posted social media content on their personal accounts	Use remote proctoring software to determine if a student is cheating on an exam	Use technology to track student activity online (e.g., student activity monitoring)
Teachers	60%	63%	61%
Parents	61%	62%	60%
Students	68%	63%	42%

■ Teachers   ■ Parents   ■ Students
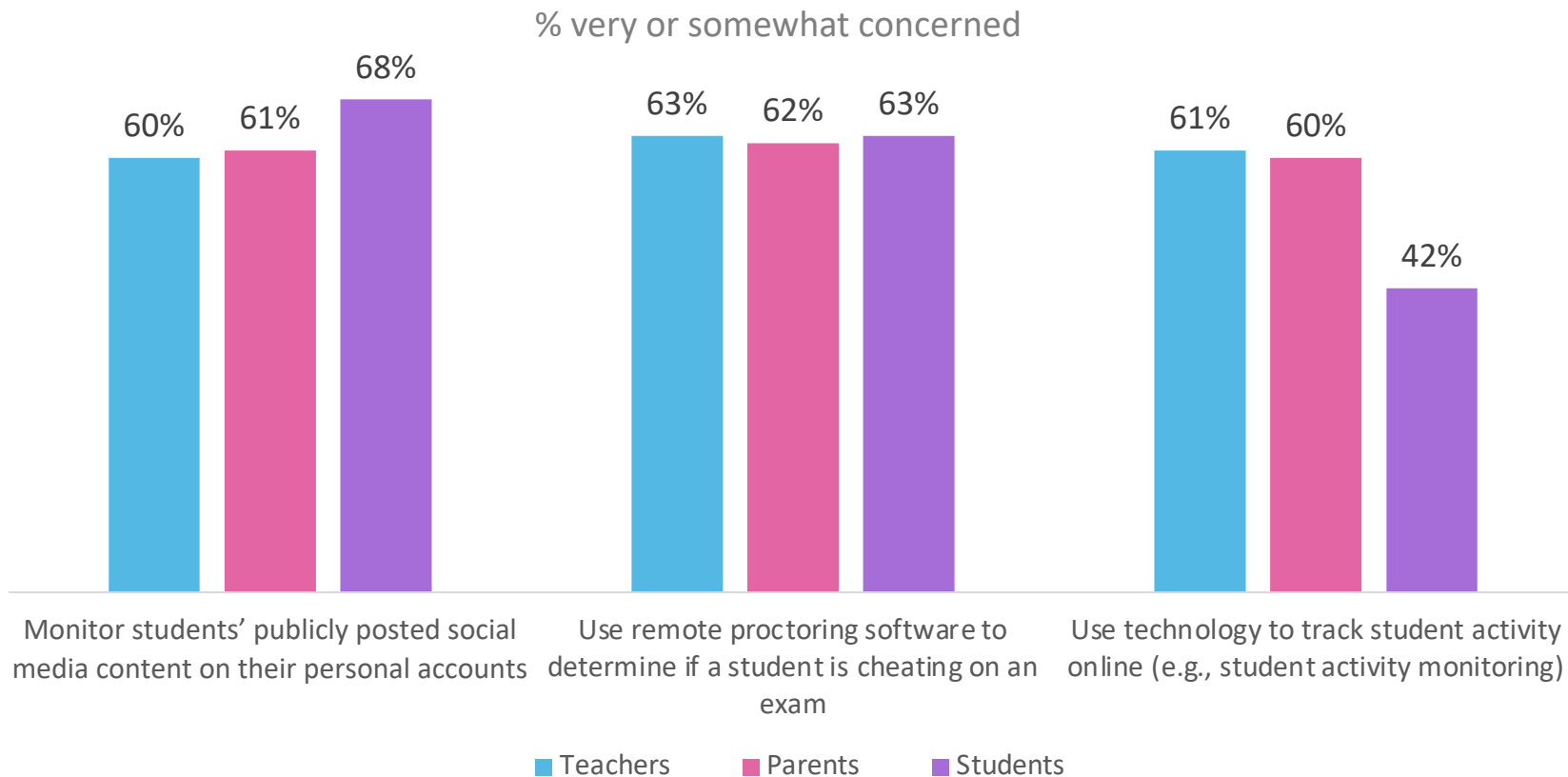
Q45/Q29/Q29: TEACHERS/PARENTS/STUDENTS: Listed below are potential ways that [student/your child's/your] data could be used or shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
Q34B: TEACHERS/PARENTS: Overall, how concerned are you about the practice of monitoring students' online activity?
Q24: STUDENTS: Overall, how concerned are you about your school conducting student activity monitoring?

What Is Promised?

Parents and students are most comfortable with student activity monitoring when it is used to keep students safe

- Approximately 8 in 10 parents and students are comfortable if there is an urgent need to keep others safe (i.e.,, identifying threats of violence).
- Approximately 7 in 10 parents and students are comfortable if it helps to identify students at risk of self-harm or other mental health crises.

Comfort-level with Student Activity Monitoring when Used to Keep Students Safe

■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

% very or somewhat comfortable

	Parents	Students
Determining if a student is in need of urgent intervention to keep others safe (e.g., acts/threats of violence, school shooting, etc.)	79%	78%
Determining if a student is in a possible mental health crisis or an ongoing mental health event (e.g., students at risk of self-harm or suicide, eating disorder, etc.)	73%	66%
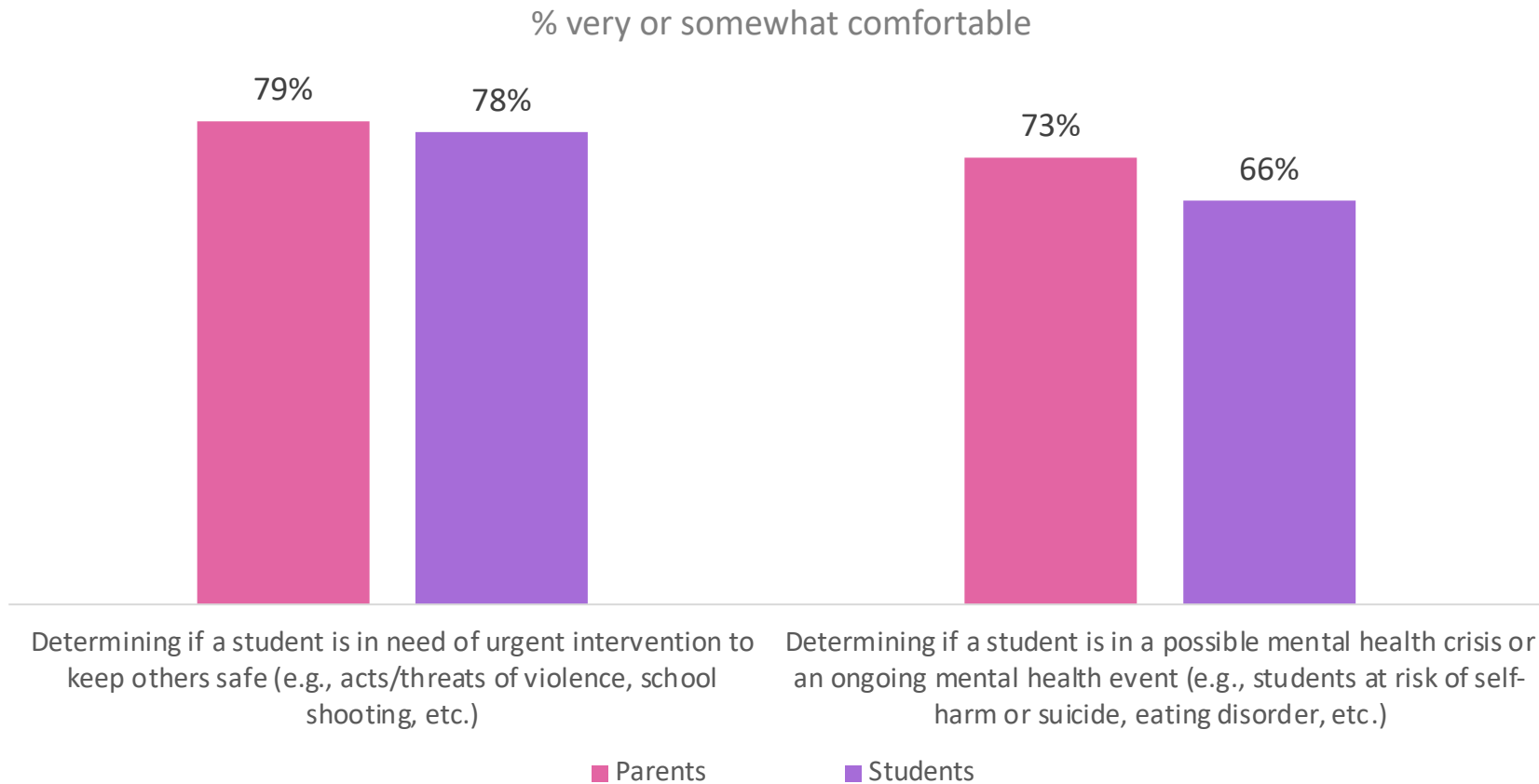
■ Parents   ■ Students

"[Student activity monitoring] should be used for well-being and well-being only."
- Parent of high school student

Q42CC: PARENTS/STUDENTS: How comfortable are you with the school or school district monitoring [your child's/student's] activity for each of the following reasons?

10

Teachers and parents express concern about long-term harm from using student activity monitoring for disciplinary purposes

- Approximately 6 in 10 parents and teachers agree that student activity monitoring could bring harm to students if it is used for discipline.

Student activity monitoring could bring long-term harm to students if used to discipline them or is shared and used out of context

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606)

Teachers

21%

59%

38%

Parents

25%

59%

34%
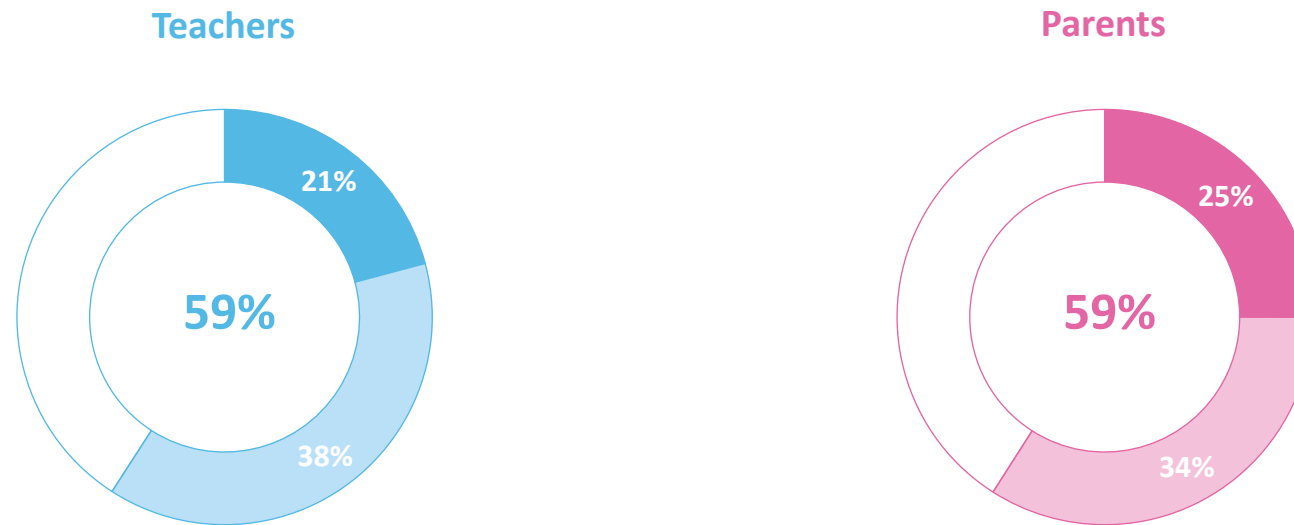
% strongly or somewhat agree:
student activity monitoring could bring long-term harm to students
if used to discipline them or shared and used out of context

Q42E: TEACHERS/PARENTS: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools or school districts monitoring students' online activity?

Darker shading = stronger intensity

Overall, parents, students, and teachers express relative comfort with student activity monitoring

- 68 percent of teachers and 63 percent of parents agree that the benefits of student activity monitoring outweigh concerns.
- Similarly, only 29 percent of students agree that "it is unfair for schools to monitor how students use devices that schools provide."

Benefits of student activity monitoring outweigh concerns about student privacy

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

Teachers
68%
24%
44%
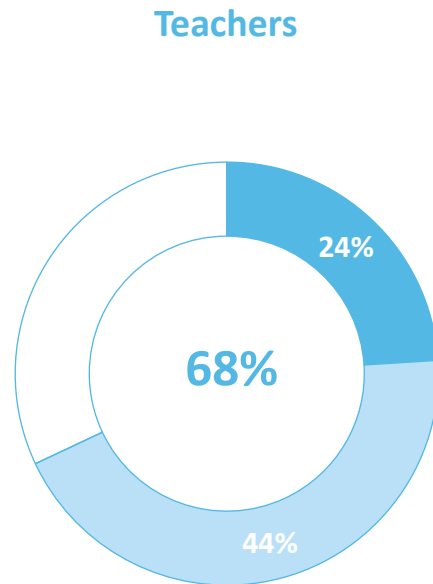
% strongly or somewhat agree:
the benefits of student activity monitoring
outweigh concerns about student privacy

Parents
63%
26%
37%

Students
29%
12%
17%

% strongly or somewhat agree:
it is unfair for schools to monitor how
students use devices that schools
provide, like tablets or laptops

Q42E: TEACHERS/PARENTS: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools or school districts monitoring students' online activity?

Darker shading = stronger intensity

12
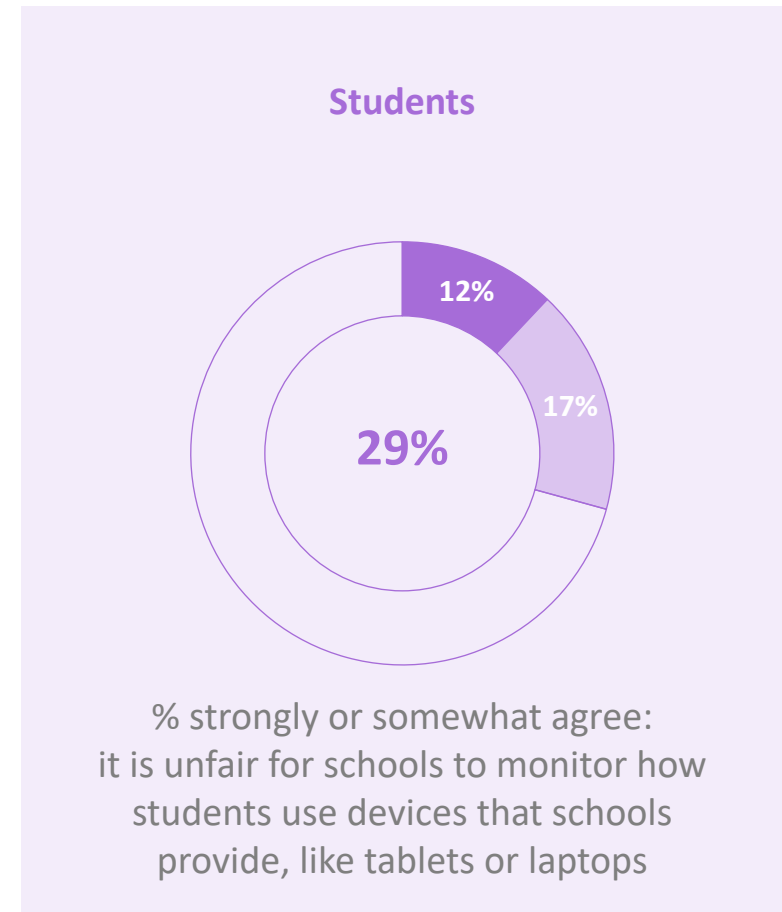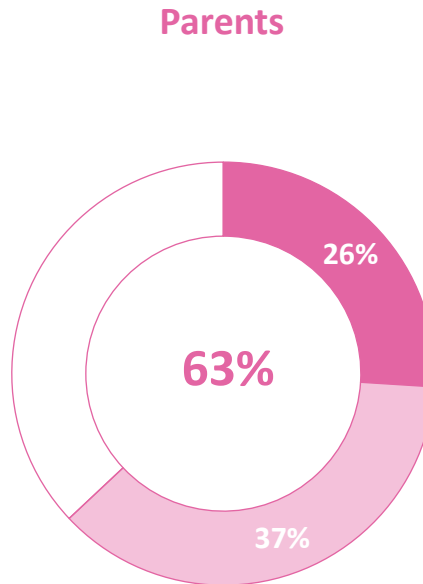
There is a general atmosphere of trust in schools' use of technology and data

- 7 in 10 parents trust their child's school with the information being collected about their child.
- Half of parents view school administrators as most responsible for protecting student privacy and security.

Trust child's school with the information being collected about their child

■ Parents (n=1606)

70%
of parents trust their child's school with the information being collected about their child

51%
of parents feel the school administration is MOST responsible for protecting student privacy and security (more than any other entity)

Q32: PARENTS: How much do you agree or disagree with the following?
Q33: PARENTS: When you think about your child's student data, who do you feel is MOST responsible for protecting student privacy and security? Select up to three.

What Is Happening?

Monitoring is used for discipline more often than student safety

Teacher responses indicate that monitoring software is **more commonly used** for disciplinary purposes than for identifying threats to safety or providing mental health support

Use of Student Activity Monitoring

■ Teachers (n=897) that report their school engages in Student Activity Monitoring

Teachers:

78%
Report that students at their school were flagged by monitoring software for **violating disciplinary policy**

54%
say it was used to **refer students to a counselor, therapist, or social worker** for behavior-related interventions

Q42E2A: TEACHERS: Which of the following has happened at your school as a result of the school or district's student activity monitoring?
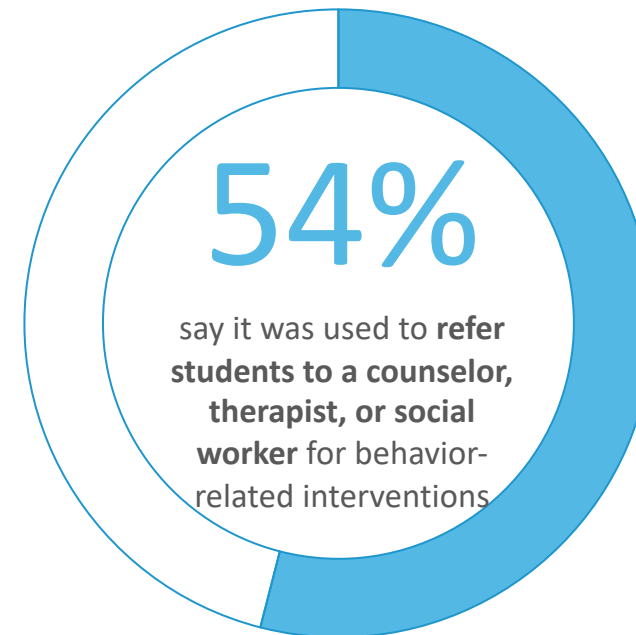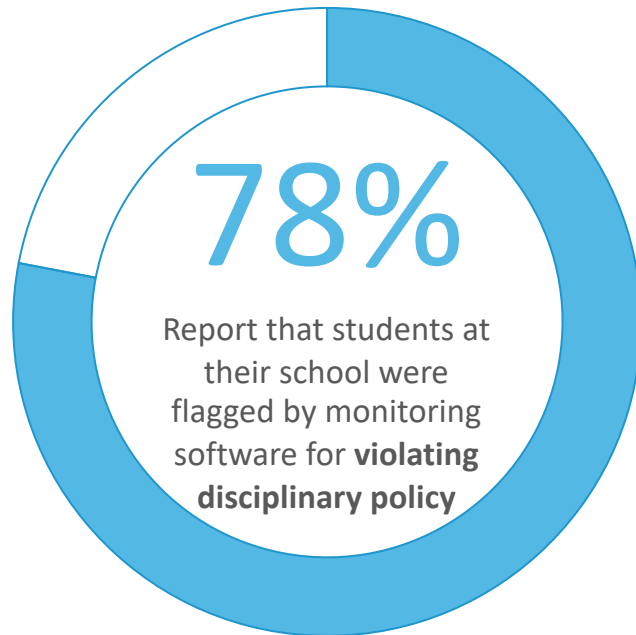
The emphasis on discipline is also evident in how teachers report the purpose of student activity monitoring

Reported Purpose of Student Activity Monitoring

■ Teachers (n=897) that report their school engages in Student Activity Monitoring

% of teachers who report that this is a way in which their school or district engages in student activity monitoring

70%	47%	45%
Determine if a student violated disciplinary policy	Determine if a student is in a possible mental health crisis/ongoing mental health event	Determine if a student is in need of urgent intervention to keep others safe

Q42C: TEACHERS: In which of the following ways does your school or district engage in student activity monitoring? Select all that apply.

Teachers bear considerable responsibility but lack training for student activity monitoring

Students and parents **prioritize the roles of those closest to students** for reviewing alerts generated by student activity monitoring

Comfort with individuals being involved in the review process of student activity monitoring

■ Parents (1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

% very or somewhat comfortable

"Well, I think anything that pertains to my child, I think you should notify me before you do it."
- Parent of high school student

	Parents	Students
Teachers	73%	57%
School counselors	76%	68%
Law enforcement staff	57%	50%
School or district IT staff	56%	49%
Staff of monitoring software companies	42%	35%

■ Parents ■ Students

Q42E2: PARENTS and STUDENTS: When it comes to the school or school district monitoring or reviewing your child's online activity, how comfortable would you be with each of the following types of individuals being involved in that monitoring and review process?

Teachers play an outsized role in responding to alerts generated by student activity monitoring systems

Teachers' role in responding to alerts from student activity monitoring systems

■ Teachers (n=897) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

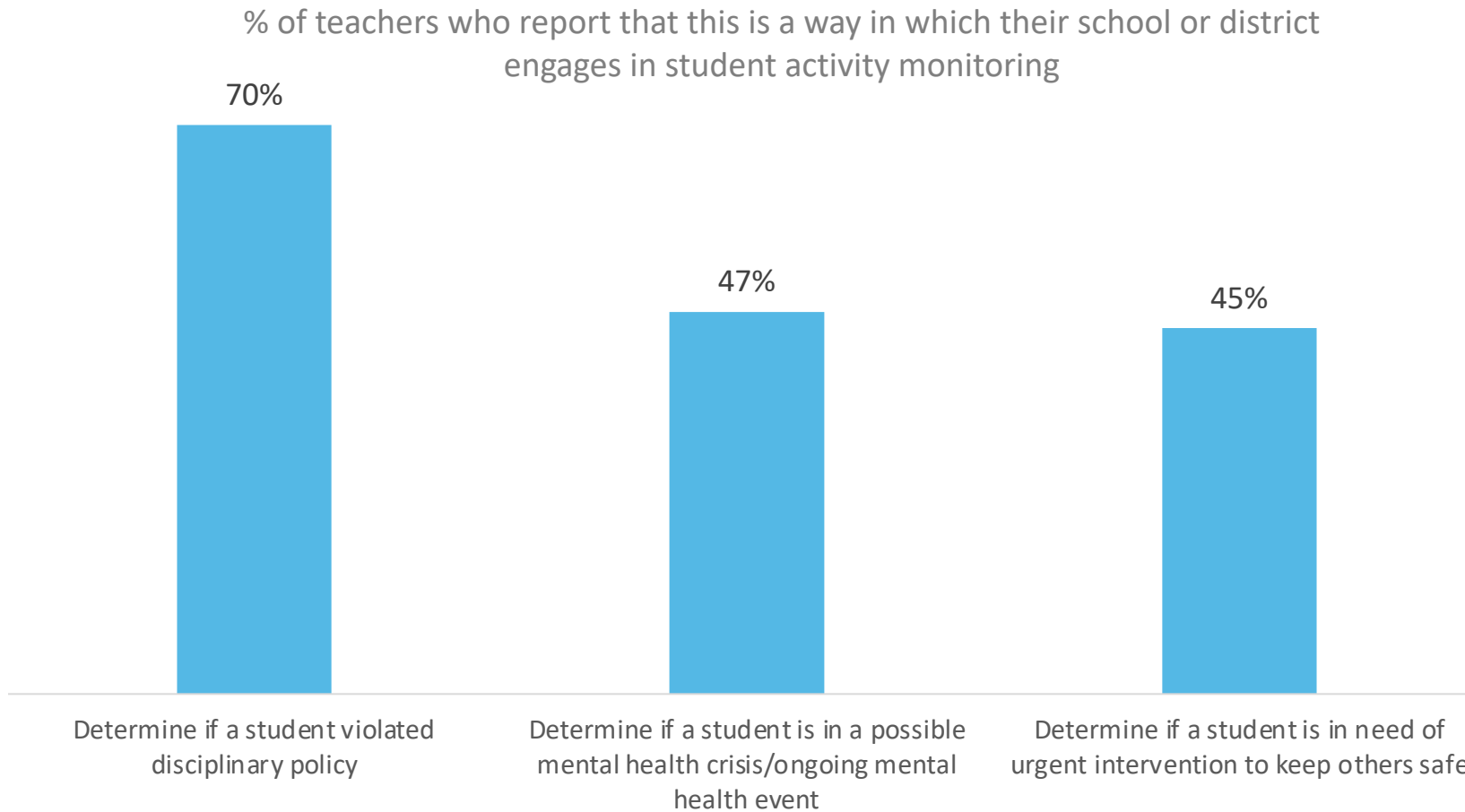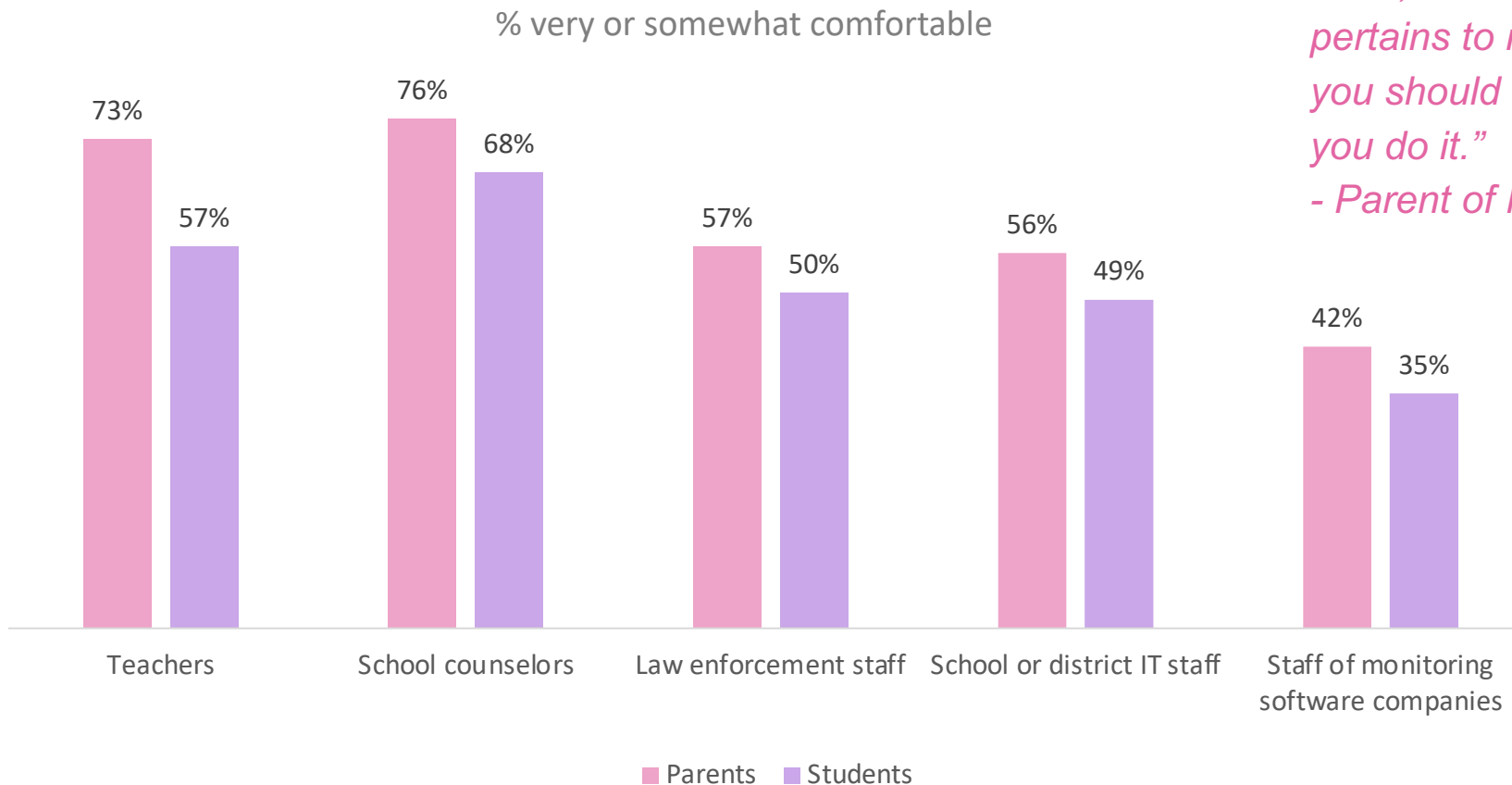% of teachers who receive alerts

Daily	17%
Weekly	29%
A few times/month	18%
A few times/semester	15%
Never/not sure	21%
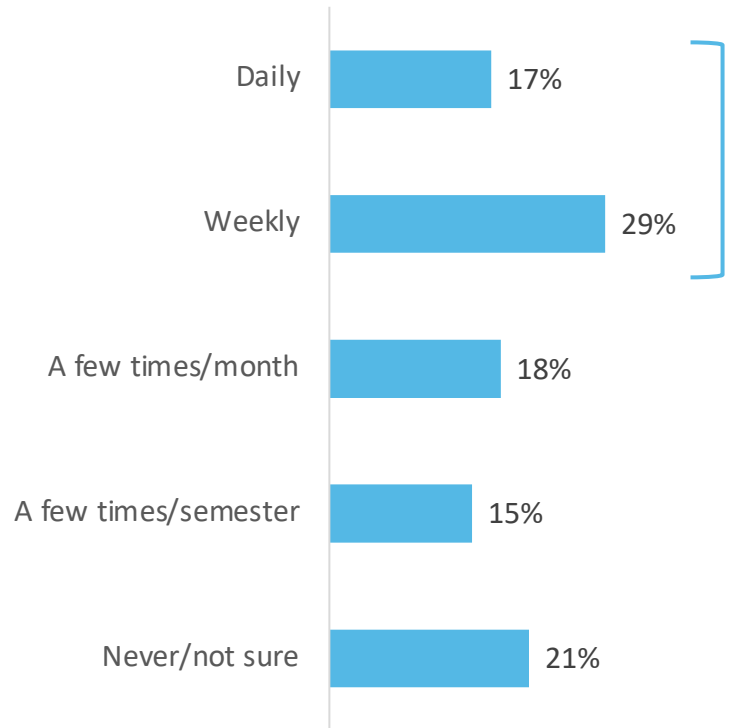
45% of teachers whose school uses student activity monitoring report receiving **weekly** alerts

% of teachers responsible for responding to alerts and % who received guidance

65% report that they are responsible for following up on one or more of these flags

31% report they have received guidance about how to use these systems
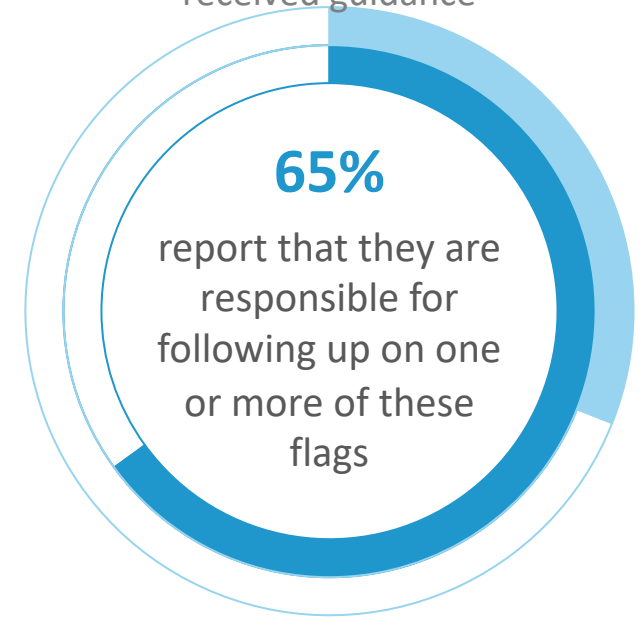
Q42B6: TEACHERS: On average during this school year, how frequently were you notified that students' activities had been flagged by the school's student activity monitoring system?
Q39: TEACHERS: Which, if any, of the following have been discussed or covered as part of your teacher training about school policies and procedures regarding student data privacy? Select all that apply.
Q42B1: TEACHERS: If the schools' student activity monitoring flags one of your students for any of the following reasons, who is responsible for next steps or following up with the student about the activity or behavior?

At least 3 in 10 teachers report being responsible for each scenario for which their school uses student activity monitoring

Teacher responsibility for student activity monitoring flags

■ Teachers (n=399-472) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring & use for reason specified

Scenario	Percentage
Tracking productivity/making sure students are staying on task	63%
Determining if a student has violated academic disciplinary policy (e.g., cheating, academic integrity issues)	50%
Determining if a student is in a possible mental health crisis or an ongoing mental health event (e.g., students at risk of self-harm or suicide, eating disorder, etc.)	36%
Flagging potential destructive or illegal behavior by students before it happens (e.g., destruction of property, stealing, etc.)	35%
Determining if a student has violated non-academic disciplinary policy (e.g., cyberbullying, bullying, etc.)	32%
Determining if a student is in need of urgent intervention to keep others safe (e.g., acts/threats of violence, school shooting, etc.)	29%

Q42B1: TEACHERS (I AM RESPONSIBLE): If the schools' student activity monitoring flags one of your students for any of the following reasons, who is responsible for next steps or following up with the student about the activity or behavior?

Teachers report that third parties play an important role in responding to alerts after hours

Third party role in responding to alerts after school hours

■ Teachers (n=427) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring and monitors students after school hours

A third party working with the school or district that is focused on public safety is responsible for following up (e.g., local police department, immigration enforcement, etc.) **37%**

A third party working with the school or district that is focused on delivering public services is responsible for following up (e.g., health or social services agencies) **16%**

Q42B5: TEACHERS: Who receives alerts from the student activity monitoring system that happen AFTER SCHOOL HOURS? Select all that apply.

Nearly half of teachers and students in **schools that use student activity monitoring** report that student activity monitoring takes place outside of school hours

- Only 45 percent of teachers report that student activity monitoring is limited to when school is in session.

Student Activity Monitoring Occurs…

■ Teachers (n=897) | ■ Students (n=343) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

Total outside school hours: 47% | 49%

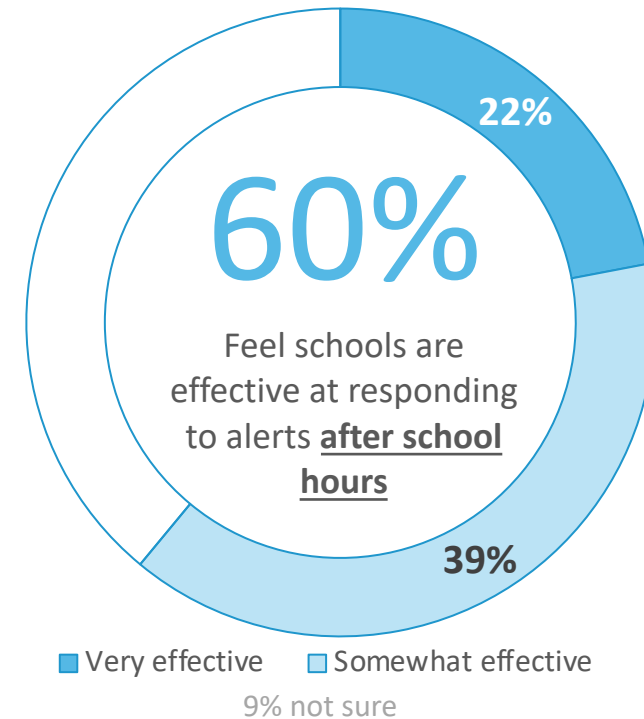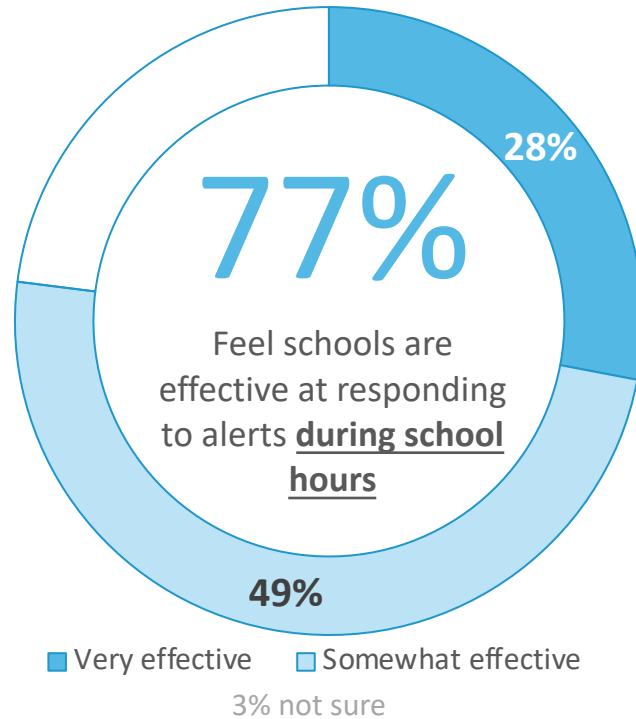|	Teachers	Students
During school hours only	45%	35%
All of the time	37%	38%
Outside school hours only	10%	11%
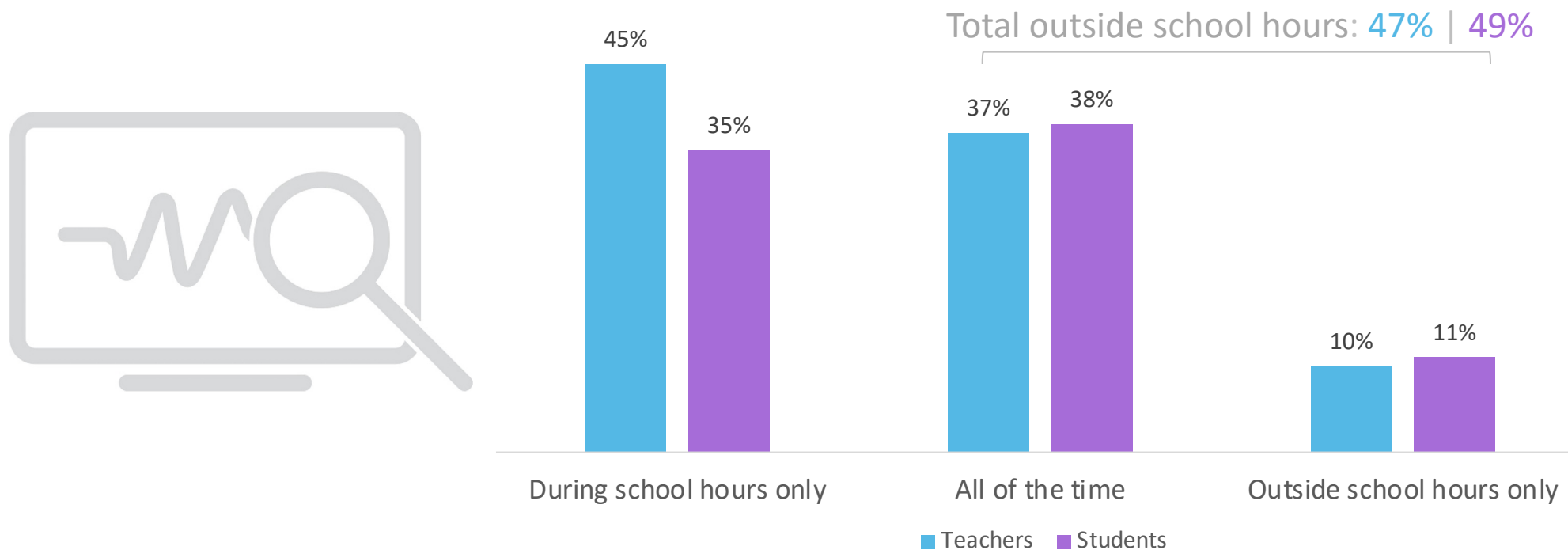
■ Teachers ■ Students

Q42D TEACHERS:: When is students' online activity monitored? Select one.
Q42D STUDENTS:: To your knowledge, when is students' online activity on their school-provided computers, tablets or Chromebooks / personal computers or tablets used for schoolwork: monitored? Select one.

Teachers report their school's response to student activity monitoring alerts is **less effective outside of school hours**

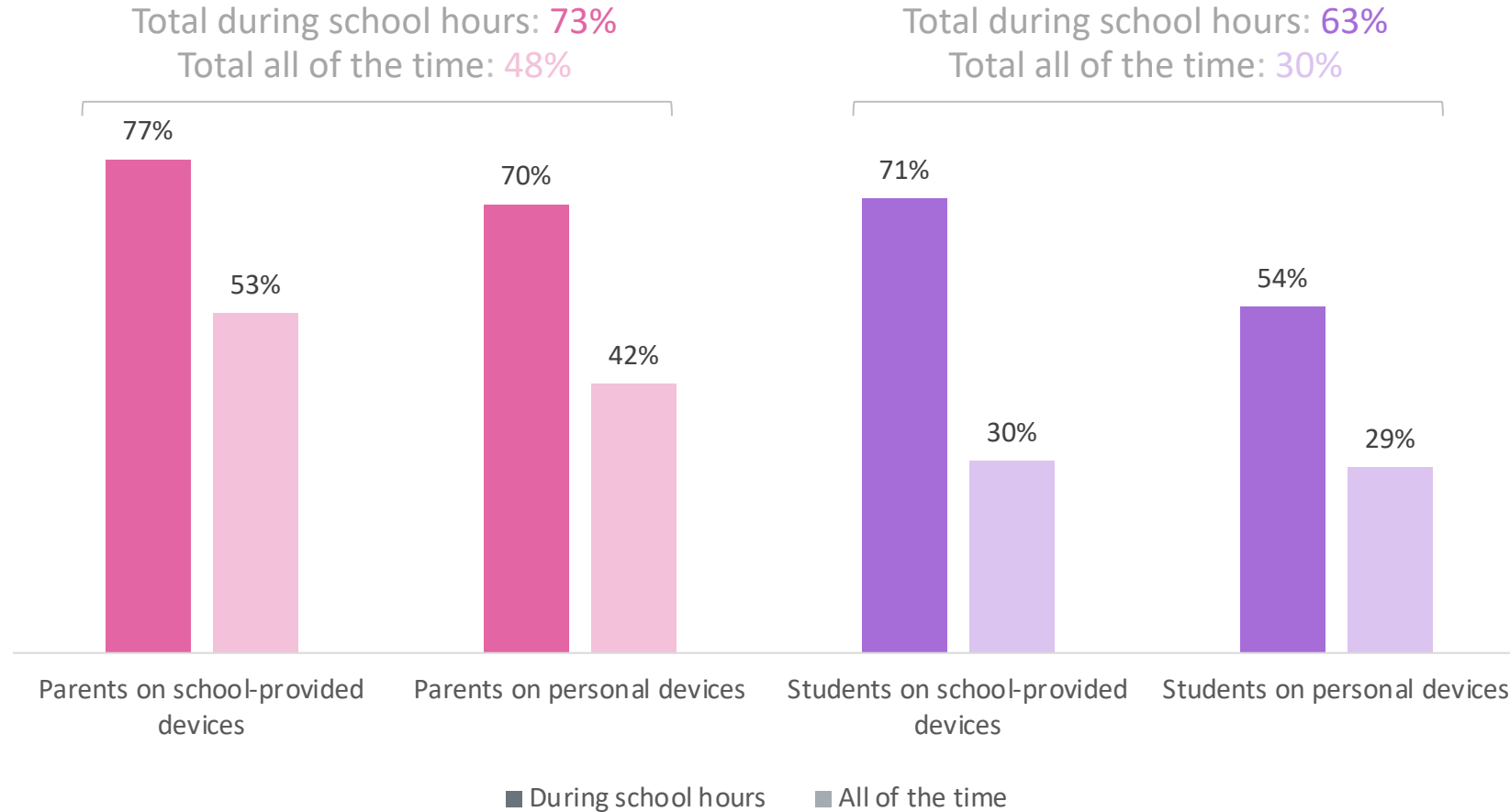## Perceived effectiveness of alerts during vs. after school hours

■ Teachers (n=897) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

28%

77%
Feel schools are effective at responding to alerts **during school hours**

49%

■ Very effective ■ Somewhat effective

3% not sure

22%

60%
Feel schools are effective at responding to alerts **after school hours**

39%

■ Very effective ■ Somewhat effective

9% not sure

Q42B3A Teachers:: How effective is your school at handling alerts from student activity monitoring DURING SCHOOL HOURS
Q42B3B Teachers:: How effective is your school at handling alerts from student activity monitoring AFTER SCHOOL HOURS?

Darker shading = stronger intensity

Parents and students are much less comfortable with monitoring that occurs outside of school hours

Comfort with monitoring during school hours vs. all of the time

■ Parents (1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

Total during school hours: **73%**
Total all of the time: **48%**

Total during school hours: **63%**
Total all of the time: **30%**

	During school hours	All of the time
Parents on school-provided devices	77%	53%
Parents on personal devices	70%	42%
Students on school-provided devices	71%	30%
Students on personal devices	54%	29%

■ During school hours   ■ All of the time

Q42B SPLIT SAMPLE: PARENTS: How comfortable would you be with your child's school or district engaging in each of the following practices on students' school-provided computers, tablets or Chromebooks?
Q42B SPLIT SAMPLE: PARENTS: How comfortable would you be with your child's school or district engaging in each of the following practices on students' personal computers or tablets used for schoolwork?
Q42B SPLIT SAMPLE: STUDENTS: How comfortable would you be with your high school or district doing the following on students' SCHOOL-PROVIDED computers, tablets or Chromebooks?
Q42B SPLIT SAMPLE: STUDENTS: How comfortable would you be with your high school or district doing the following on students' PERSONAL computers or tablets used for schoolwork?

Stakeholders demonstrate large knowledge gaps in how monitoring software functions

One in five parents are not sure if their child's school uses student activity monitoring software

Awareness of school or district engaging in student activity monitoring

■ Parents (1606)

78% of parents report their child's school or district engage in student activity monitoring

18% of **parents report that they do not know** if their school uses student activity monitoring software

28

Q42A: PARENTS: As far as you know, does your child's school or district engage in student activity monitoring? Select all that apply.
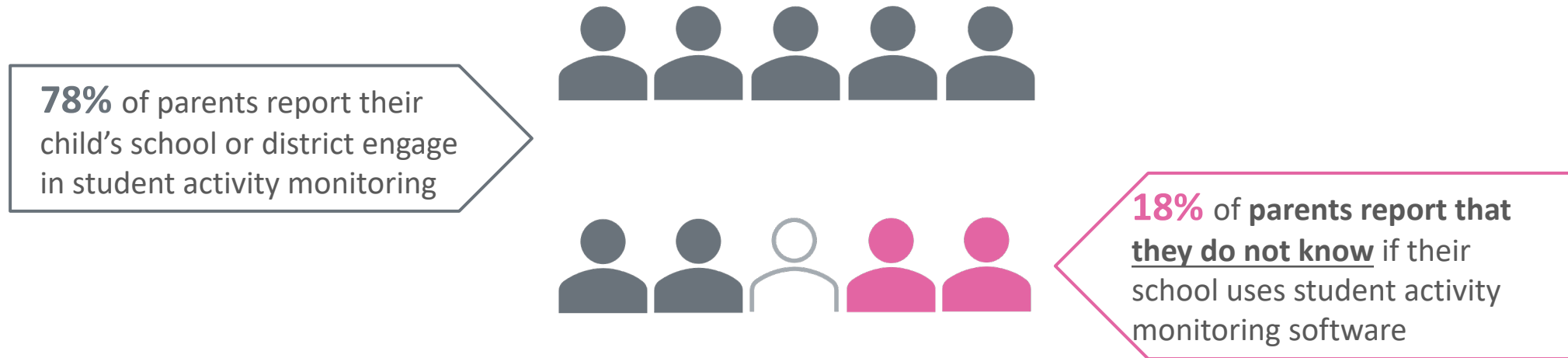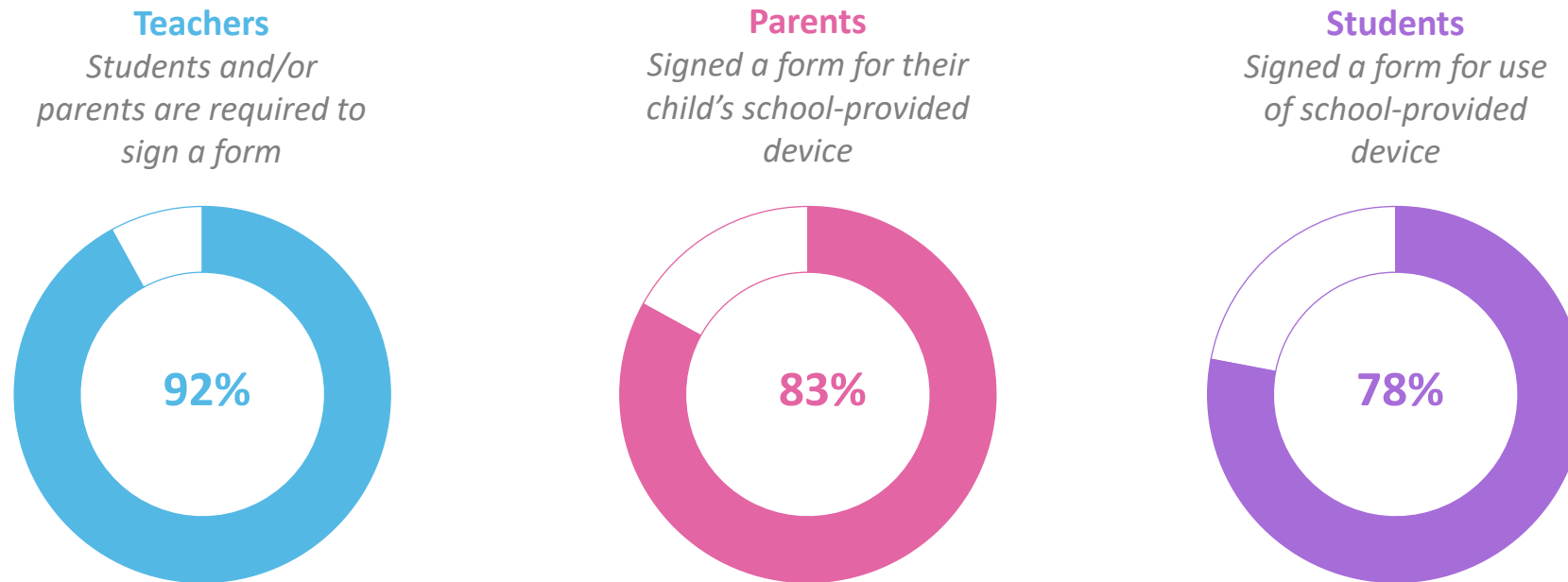
Nearly all teachers report parents/students are required to sign a form agreeing to terms and conditions for use of a school-provided device

- About four in five parents/students recall signing a form as well.

Agreement with terms and conditions for use of school provided devices

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1452) whose child used a school provided device | ■ Students (n=413) that used school provided devices

Teachers
Students and/or parents are required to sign a form

92%

Parents
Signed a form for their child's school-provided device

83%

Students
Signed a form for use of school-provided device

78%

Q15B: TEACHERS: Is a parent or student required to sign a form agreeing to the terms and conditions of how students' school-provided devices can and should be used? Select all that apply.
Q24C: PARENTS: Did you sign a form agreeing to the terms and conditions of how your child's school-provided device can and should be used?
Q24C: STUDENTS: Earlier, you said that you use a school-provided computer, tablet, or Chromebook for your schoolwork. Did you sign a form agreeing to the terms and conditions of how your school-provided device can and should be used?

Stakeholders are less clear about whether the forms indicated how the school will track student activity online

Recall form included details on how the school will track student activity online

■ Teachers (n=932) | ■ Parents (n=1214) | ■ Students (n=319) signed form

Teachers

65%

Parents

47%

Students

39%
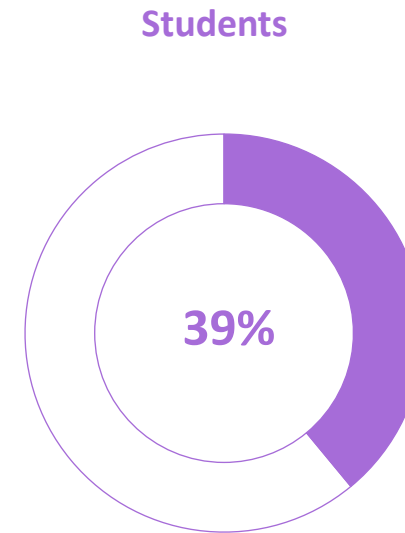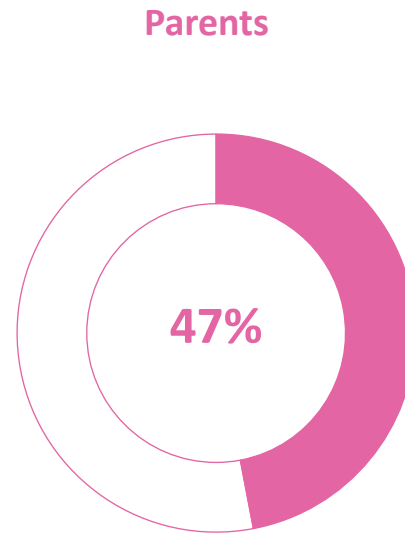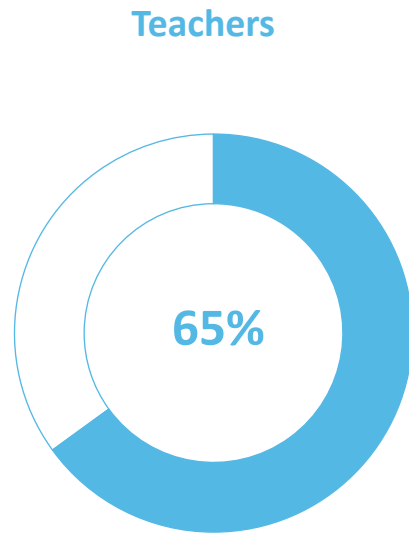
Only one in four teachers feel the form is 'very effective' at influencing how students use school-issued devices

Q15B2: TEACHERS: Which of the following topics are included in the form? Select all that apply.
Q24C2: PARENTS: What do you remember about the terms and conditions you agreed to regarding the school-provided device? Select all that apply.
Q24C2: STUDENTS: What do you remember about the terms and conditions you agreed to regarding the school-provided device? Select all that apply.
Q15B3: TEACHERS: In your opinion, how effective is the form at influencing how students use school-issued devices (e.g., only use for school-related activities, do not access inappropriate websites)?
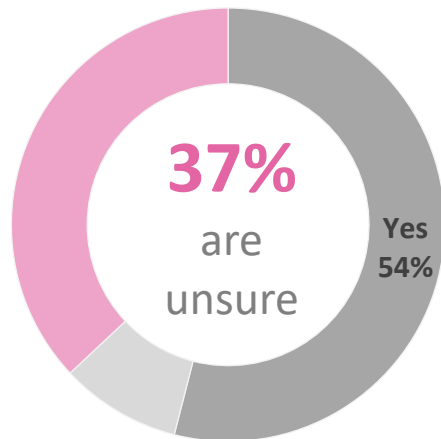
Parent and student engagement on monitoring students online

Nearly all parents want to be engaged with decisions about student data use at their children's schools, but few are
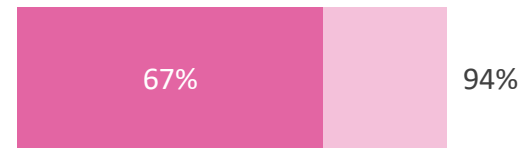
Parent engagement and perceived importance of input

■ Parents (n=1606)

Does school have a technology plan for student data privacy and security issues?

37% are unsure

Yes 54%

94% of parents say it is important for schools and school districts to engage parents/guardians about how they plan to use student data

| 67% | 94% |

■ Very important   ■ Somewhat important

But only **39%** of parents recall being asked for their input to inform how their child's school or school district securely and responsibly use student data and technology

Q30: PARENTS: Does your child's school have a technology plan addressing student privacy and security issues?
Q42H: PARENTS: In your opinion, how important is it for schools and school districts to engage parents/guardians about how they plan to use student data?
Q42I: PARENTS: Has your child's school or district asked for your input as a parent to inform how they securely and responsibly use student data and technology?

Darker shading = stronger intensity

Students want to be engaged and empowered in this arena, but schools are not meeting their expectations

Student views on responsibility to understand use of school devices rules and wish for engagement on student data practices

■ Students (n=400/460)

Agreement on student's responsibility to understand rules for use of school devices

83%
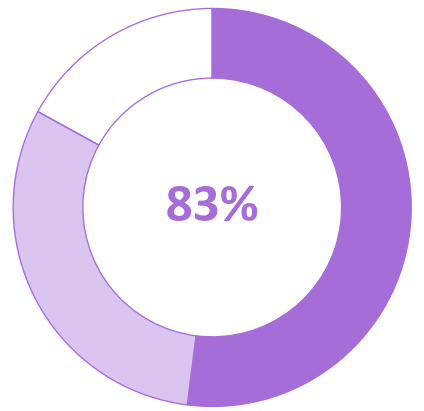
% strongly or somewhat agree:
'It is my responsibility to understand the rules associated with using devices issued by my school'

Say in how your student data and information is collected and used at school

86%

45%

49%

18%

■ Some
■ A great deal

How much of a say did you have?

How much of a say should you have?

88% say it is important for schools to talk to students about how they plan to use student data
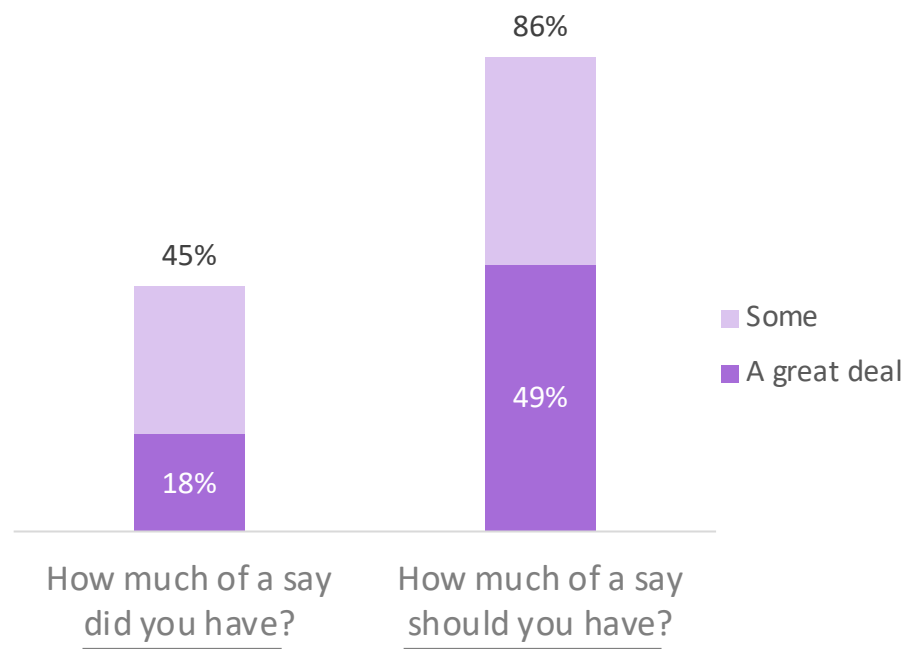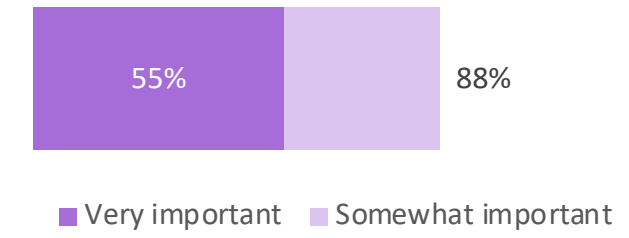
55%   88%

■ Very important   ■ Somewhat important

But only **23%** of students were asked for their input by their school to help them determine how to securely and responsibly use student data and technology

Q42E: STUDENTS: How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools or school districts monitoring students' online activity?
Q26: During your time in high school/as a student, how much of a say did/do you feel you had in how your student data and information was collected and used by your high school?
Q26A: As a student, how much of a say should you have (had) in the way your student data and information was/is collected and used by your high school?
Q42H2: In your opinion, how important is it for schools to talk to students about how they plan to use student data?
Q42I: Has your school or district asked for your input to help them determine how to securely and responsibly use student data and technology?

33

Darker shading = stronger intensity

Topical Deep Dives

Students are at risk of increased interactions with law enforcement

44% of teachers report students were contacted by law enforcement as a result of behavior flagged by student activity monitoring.

- 1 in 5 students report that they, or another student they know, were contacted by a police officer or other adult due to concerns about them committing a crime based on something flagged through student activity monitoring.

Student Activity Monitoring and Law Enforcement Interactions

■ Teachers (n=897) | ■ Students (n=348) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

Teachers:

44%

of teachers report that **a student or students were contacted by law enforcement (e.g., the police)** as a result of behaviors flagged by the school's student activity monitoring system

Students:

22%

Among students that identify as LGBTQ+: 31%↑
(vs. 19% among students that do not identify as LGBTQ+)

of students report that **they, or another student they know, were contacted by a police officer or other adult** due to concerns about them committing a crime (like a school shooting) based on something the school or district's student activity monitoring saw that person doing online

Note: no significant differences emerge by race, learning differences, physical disability, or having been disciplined in the last year

Q42E2A: TEACHERS. Which of the following has happened at your school as a result of the school or district's student activity monitoring?
Q42EE: STUDENT. Which, if any, of the following have happened to you or another student at your school? Select all that apply.

37% of teachers at schools that use student activity monitoring outside the school day report that public safety agencies receive alerts *after school hours*

- 6 in 10 teachers report that another staff member handles alerts about concerning behavior *after school hours.*

Student Activity Monitoring *After School Hours*

■ Teachers (n=897) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

47%

of teachers that report their school engages in Student Activity Monitoring say their school does so even *outside of school hours*
- 37% "all of the time"
- 10% "on school days – even outside of school hours"

Who Receives Alerts from Student Activity Monitoring *After School Hours*

59% another staff member (not me)

37% a third party working with the school or district that is focused on public safety (e.g., local police department, immigration enforcement, etc.)

29% the students' teacher (i.e., me)

16% a third party working with the school or district that is focused on delivering public services (e.g., health or social services agencies)

7% not sure

■ Teachers (n=427) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring *after school hours*

Q42D: TEACHERS: When is students' online activity monitored?
Q42B5: TEACHERS: Who receives alerts from the student activity monitoring system that happen AFTER SCHOOL HOURS? Select all that apply.

A wide response is found to be appropriate if illegal activity or a potential threat to others is detected through student activity monitoring

- In addition to the parent, notifying the student's teacher or principal, a school counselor, law enforcement, and a school resource officer are identified as appropriate people to contact.
- Among students, alerting law enforcement is viewed as just as appropriate as alerting the parent.

Appropriate Person to Contact when Student Activity Monitoring Flags Potential Illegal Activity or Harm to Others

■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

	Parents:	Students:
	63% Parent or guardian	**52%**
	47% Student's teacher or principal	37%
	46% School counselor or someone with mental health or behavioral training at the child's school	38%
	40% Law enforcement officer	**53%**
	35% School resource officer (SRO)	34%
	19% Social worker at third-party social service agency	19%
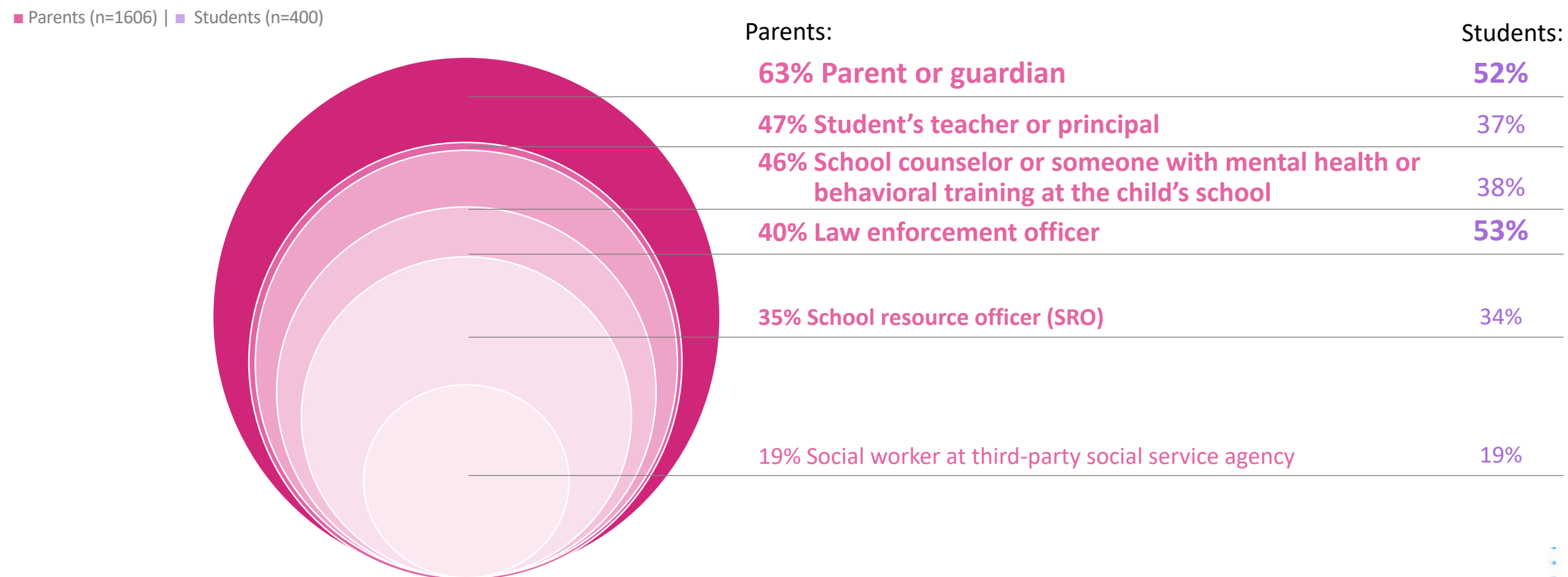
Q42E3: PARENTS: If data from the school's routine student activity monitoring signals an alert indicating that a student may harm others or engage in illegal activity, what do you think is the appropriate course of action for the school or district to take? Select all that apply.

Q42E3: STUDENTS: If data from your school's student activity monitoring determines that a student may harm others or engage in illegal activity, what do you think is appropriate for the school or district to do? Select all that apply.

About 6 in 10 teachers, parents, *and* students express concern about sharing student data with law enforcement

- Concern is even greater among Black parents and among parents of students that have been disciplined in the last year.

Concern about Sharing Student Data with Law Enforcement

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=460)

% very or somewhat concerned

Teachers	Parents	Students
60%	58%	57%
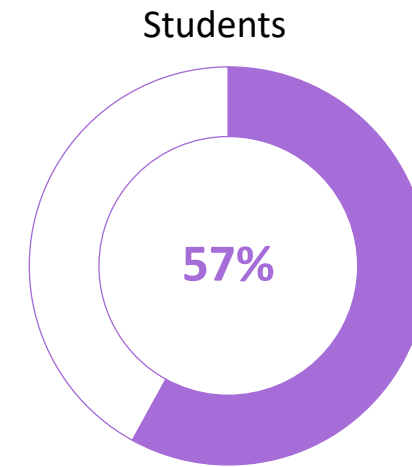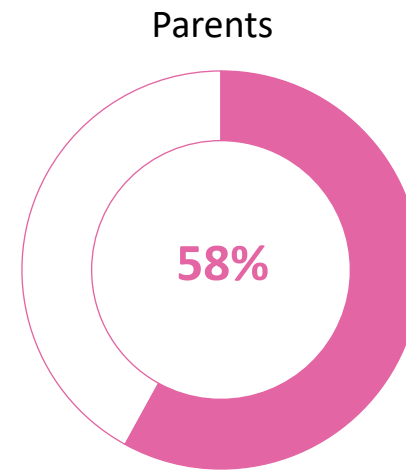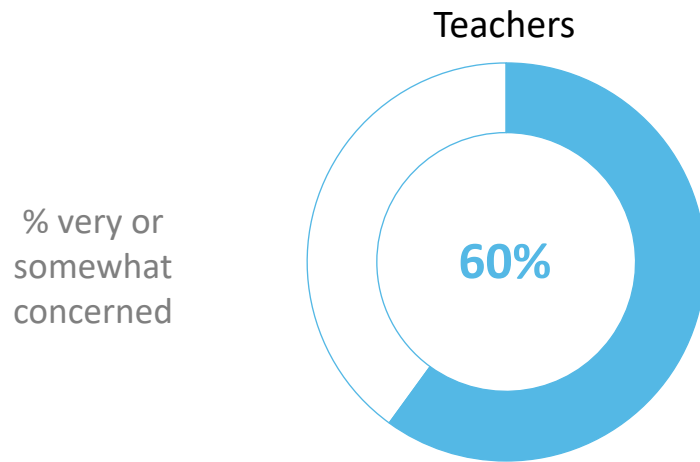
Black parents' concern **(65%)** is higher than *white parents' concern (55%)*; Hispanic parents' concern is in the middle **(60%)**

Parents of students that have had disciplinary action in the last year have greater concern **(65%)** than *parents of students who have not (57%)*

Note: no significant differences emerge among students by race, learning differences, physical disability, or whether they have been disciplined in the last year

Q45: TEACHERS. Listed below are potential ways that student data can be used or shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- Student data being shared with law enforcement (e.g., local police department, immigration enforcement, etc.)
Q29: PARENT. Listed below are potential ways that your child's data could be used and shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- Student data being shared with law enforcement (e.g., local police department, immigration enforcement, etc.)
Q29: STUDENT. Listed below are potential ways that your student data could be used and shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- Student data being shared with law enforcement, such as your school sharing your grades, attendance, and discipline information with your local police department

More than 6 in 10 teachers and parents indicate concern about using student activity monitoring data to predict which students might be involved in high-risk behaviors

- Concern is higher among Black and Hispanic parents and parents of students that have been disciplined in the last year.

Concern about Student Data Being Analyzed to Predict Which Students Would Be More Likely to Commit a Crime, Act of Violence, or Self-Harm

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606)

% very or somewhat concerned

Teachers

66%

Parents

61%
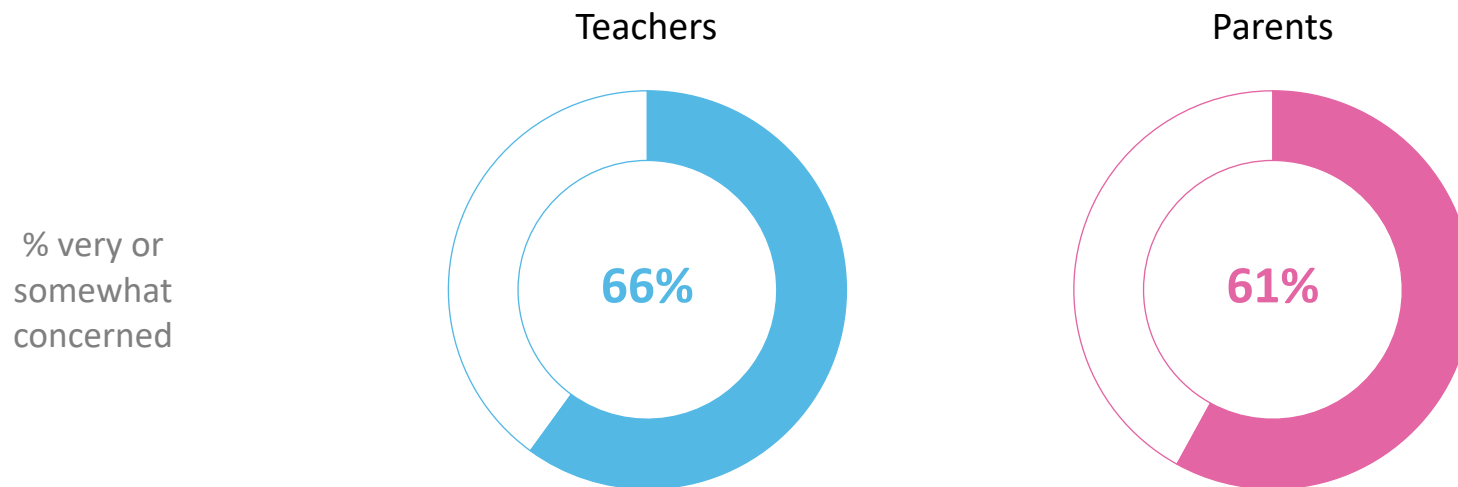
Black **(68%)** and Hispanic **(65%)** parents' concern is higher than *white parents' concern (56%)*

Parents of students that have had disciplinary action in the last year have greater concern **(68%)** than *parents of students who have not (59%)*

Q45: TEACHERS. Listed below are potential ways that student data can be used or shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- Student data being analyzed to predict which individual students would be more likely to commit a crime, commit an act of violence, commit an act of self-harm, etc.
Q29: PARENT. Listed below are potential ways that your child's data could be used and shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- Student data being analyzed to predict which individual students would be more likely to commit a crime, commit an act of violence, commit an act of self-harm, etc.

Black parents express more concern than their white counterparts regarding sharing their child's data with law enforcement

Parent concern about sharing data with law enforcement — by race and ethnicity

■ Parents (n=1606)

All parents — 58%

White parents — 55% ↓

Black parents — 65% ↑

Hispanic parents — 60%

Q29: [PARENTS] Listed below are potential ways that your child's data could be used and shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
Student data being shared with law enforcement (e.g., local police department, immigration enforcement, etc.)
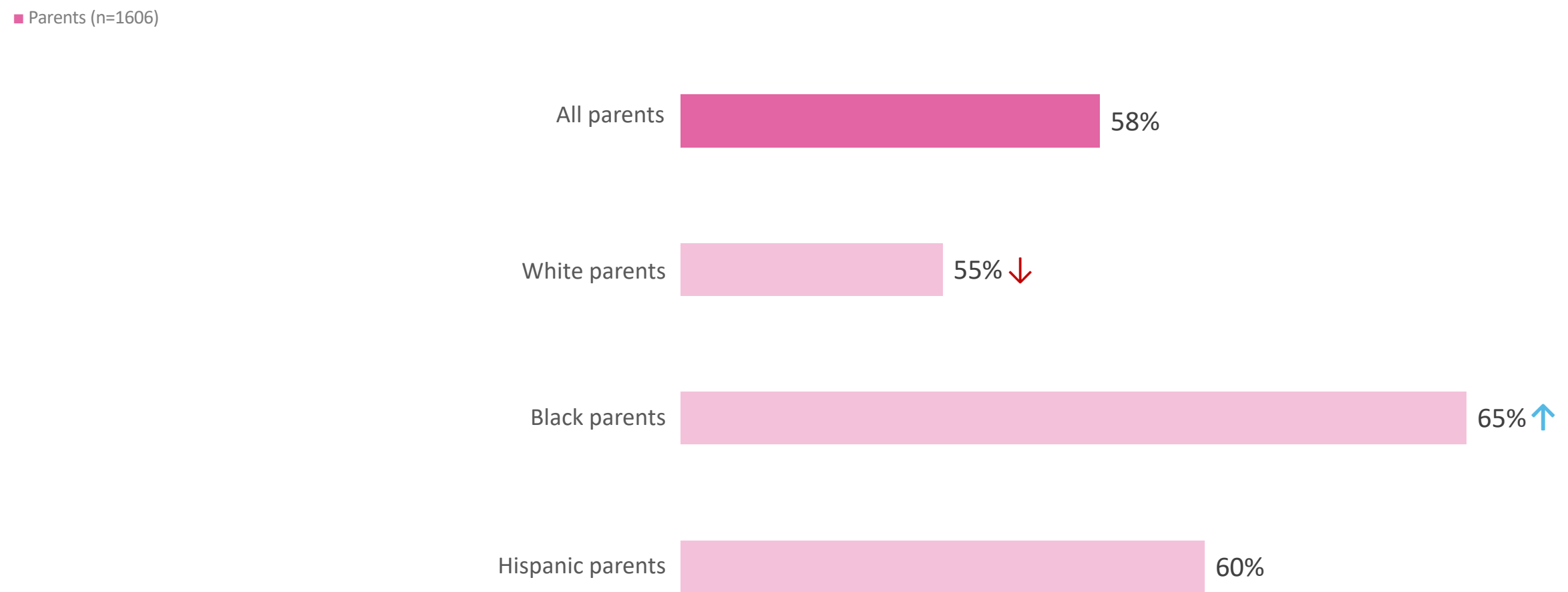
LGBTQ+ students are less comfortable with student activity monitoring compared to others

Comfort with student activity monitoring

■ Students (n=400) | Identify as LGBTQ+ (n=86) | Do not identify as LGBTQ+ (n=302)

Comfortable: **50%** | 66% ↑

Uncomfortable: **27%** ↑ | 14%

■ Identify as LGBTQ+
■ Do not identify as LGBTQ+

	Very comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	Somewhat uncomfortable	Very uncomfortable	Not sure
Identify as LGBTQ+	19%	31%	23%	17%	10% ↑	10%
Do not identify as LGBTQ+	32% ↑	34%	20%	10%	4%	7%

Q42AA: STUDENTS. Overall, how comfortable are you/would you be with your school or district conducting student activity monitoring?

LGBTQ+ students are having their gender identity and/or sexual orientation disclosed without consent

Someone who is LGBTQ+ was outed because of student activity monitoring

■ Students (n=348) | Identify as LGBTQ+ (n=78) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

13% of all students report that they or another student they know who is **LGBTQ+ was "outed"** because of something they did online through the school or district's student activity monitoring.
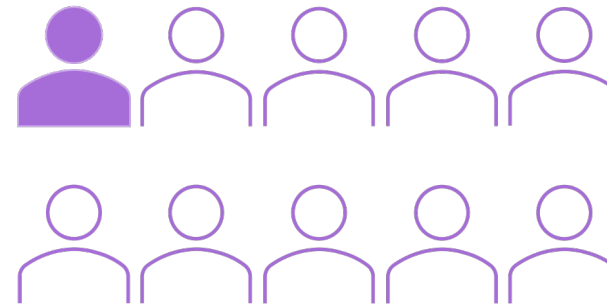
Among students who identify as LGBTQ+, that number **rises to 29%**.

Q42EE: STUDENTS. Which, if any, of the following have happened to you or another student at your school? Select all that apply.: Someone who is LGBTQ+ was "outed" because of something they did online through the school or district's student activity monitoring.
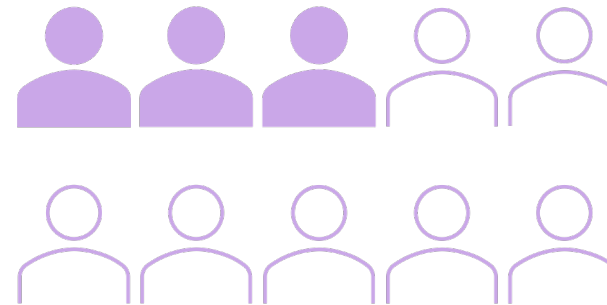
Additionally, LGBTQ+ students are statistically more likely to experience the impact of student activity monitoring

Differences in Impact of Student Activity Monitoring between LGBTQ+ Students and Others

■ Students (n=348) | Identify as LGBTQ+ (n=78) | Do not identify as LGBTQ+ (n=259)

Someone **got in trouble with the teacher or school** when the school or district's student activity monitoring saw that the person **visited an inappropriate site online or said something inappropriate in a document or message**
- Identify as LGBTQ+: 56%
- Do not identify as LGBTQ+: 44%

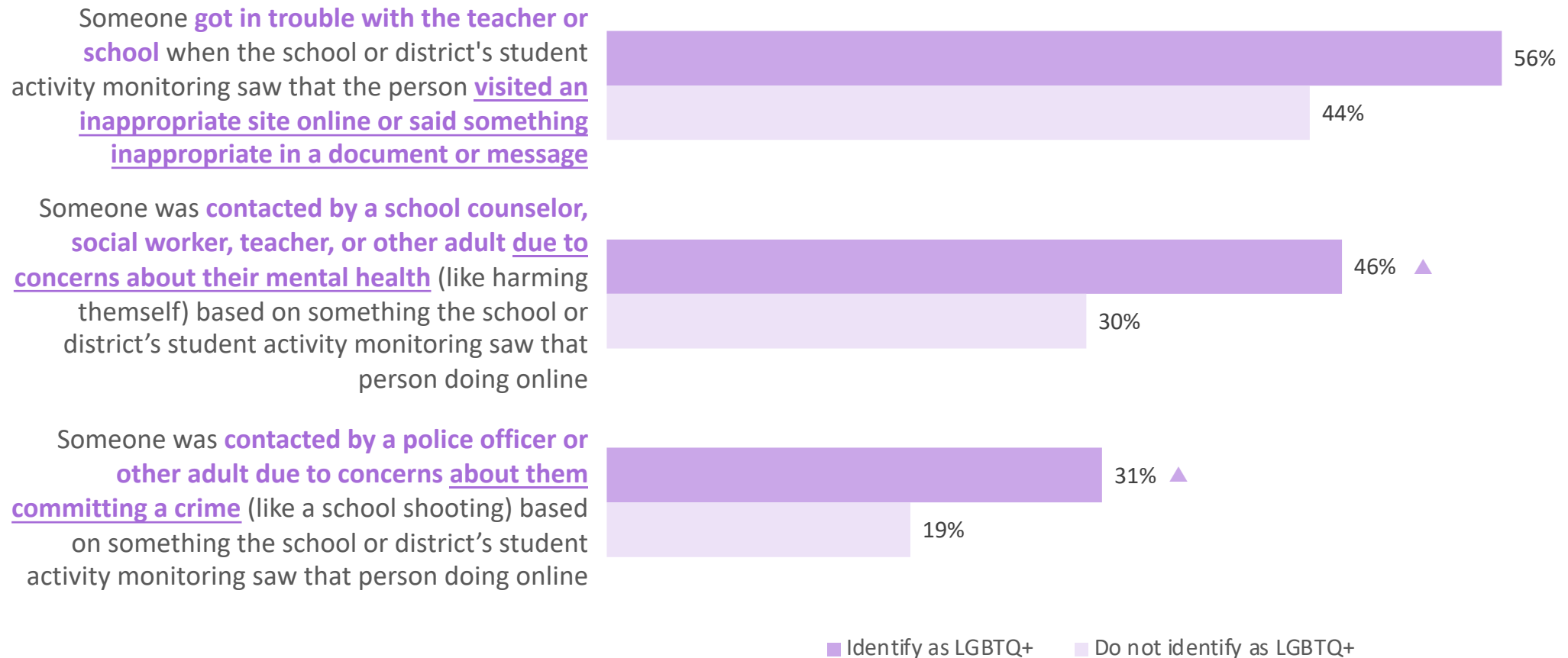Someone was **contacted by a school counselor, social worker, teacher, or other adult due to concerns about their mental health** (like harming themself) based on something the school or district's student activity monitoring saw that person doing online
- Identify as LGBTQ+: 46% ▲
- Do not identify as LGBTQ+: 30%

Someone was **contacted by a police officer or other adult due to concerns about them committing a crime** (like a school shooting) based on something the school or district's student activity monitoring saw that person doing online
- Identify as LGBTQ+: 31% ▲
- Do not identify as LGBTQ+: 19%

■ Identify as LGBTQ+   ■ Do not identify as LGBTQ+

45

Q42EE: STUDENTS. Which, if any, of the following have happened to you or another student at your school? Select all that apply.

Teachers believe there are unintended consequences of student activity monitoring for LGBTQ+ students

Agreement on unintended consequences of student activity monitoring for LGBTQ+ students

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606)

57% of teachers agree that student online activity monitoring could have **unintended consequences like "outing" LGBTQ+ students**

20%   *2021: 15%*

37%

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

51% of parents agree

21%

30%

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

Q42E. TEACHERS. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools monitoring students' online activity?
Q42E: PARENTS. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools monitoring students' online activity?
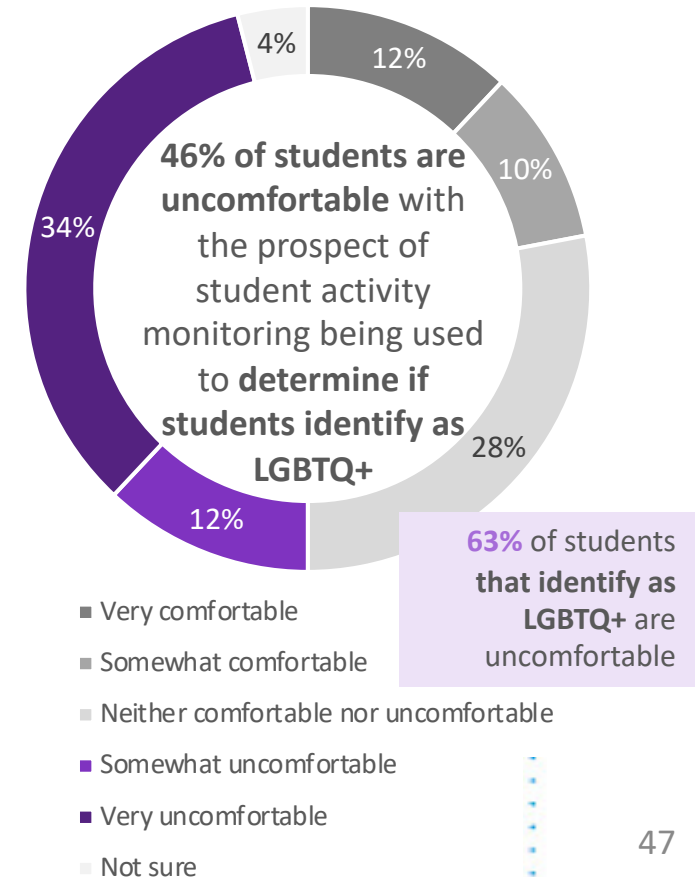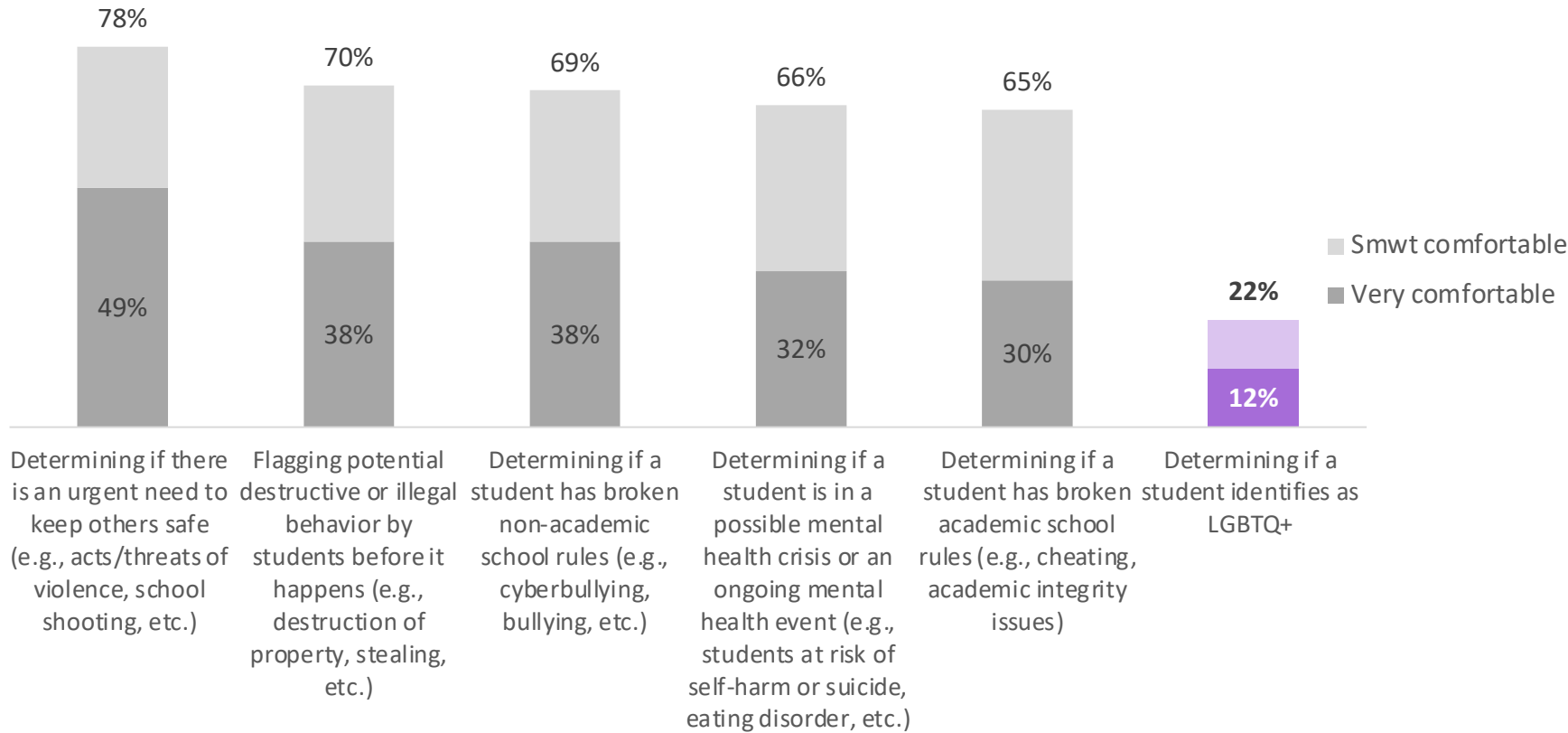
Only 1 in 5 students are comfortable with student activity monitoring being used to determine if students identify as LGBTQ+

- When compared to other possible outcomes of student activity monitoring, students are much less comfortable with LGBTQ+ students being outed.
- Nearly half are uncomfortable with the potential outing of students; 1 in 3 are very uncomfortable.

Comfort with outcomes of student activity monitoring

■ Students (n=400)

78%

49%

Determining if there is an urgent need to keep others safe (e.g., acts/threats of violence, school shooting, etc.)

70%

38%

Flagging potential destructive or illegal behavior by students before it happens (e.g., destruction of property, stealing, etc.)

69%

38%

Determining if a student has broken non-academic school rules (e.g., cyberbullying, bullying, etc.)

66%

32%

Determining if a student is in a possible mental health crisis or an ongoing mental health event (e.g., students at risk of self-harm or suicide, eating disorder, etc.)

65%

30%

Determining if a student has broken academic school rules (e.g., cheating, academic integrity issues)

22%

12%

Determining if a student identifies as LGBTQ+

■ Smwt comfortable
■ Very comfortable

4%
12%
10%
34%
28%
12%

46% of students are uncomfortable with the prospect of student activity monitoring being used to **determine if students identify as LGBTQ+**

63% of students **that identify as LGBTQ+** are uncomfortable

■ Very comfortable
■ Somewhat comfortable
■ Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
■ Somewhat uncomfortable
■ Very uncomfortable
■ Not sure

47

Q42CC:STUDENTS. How comfortable are you with your high school or school district monitoring student's activity for each of the following reasons?
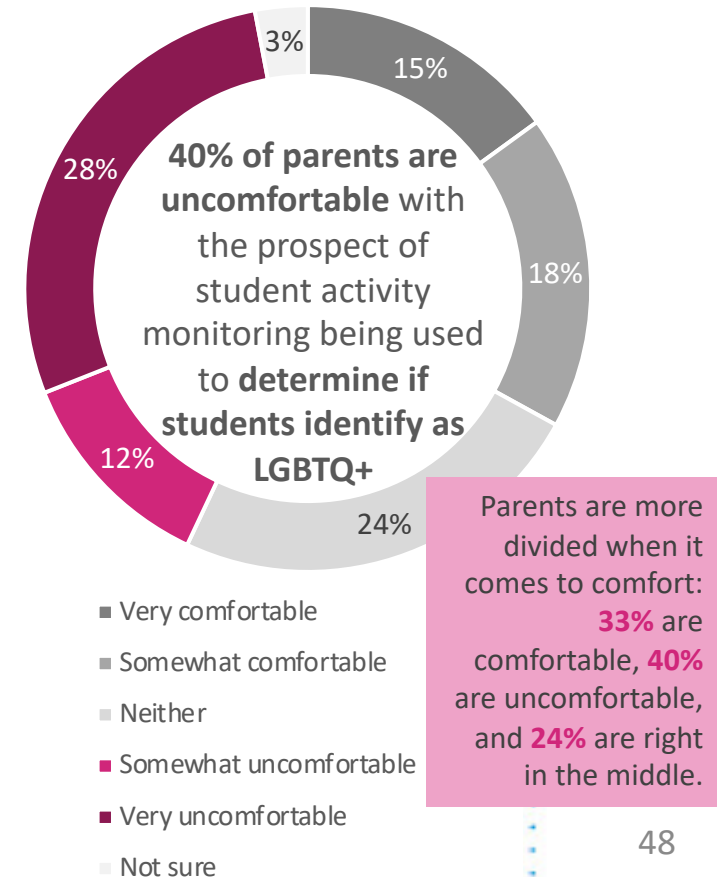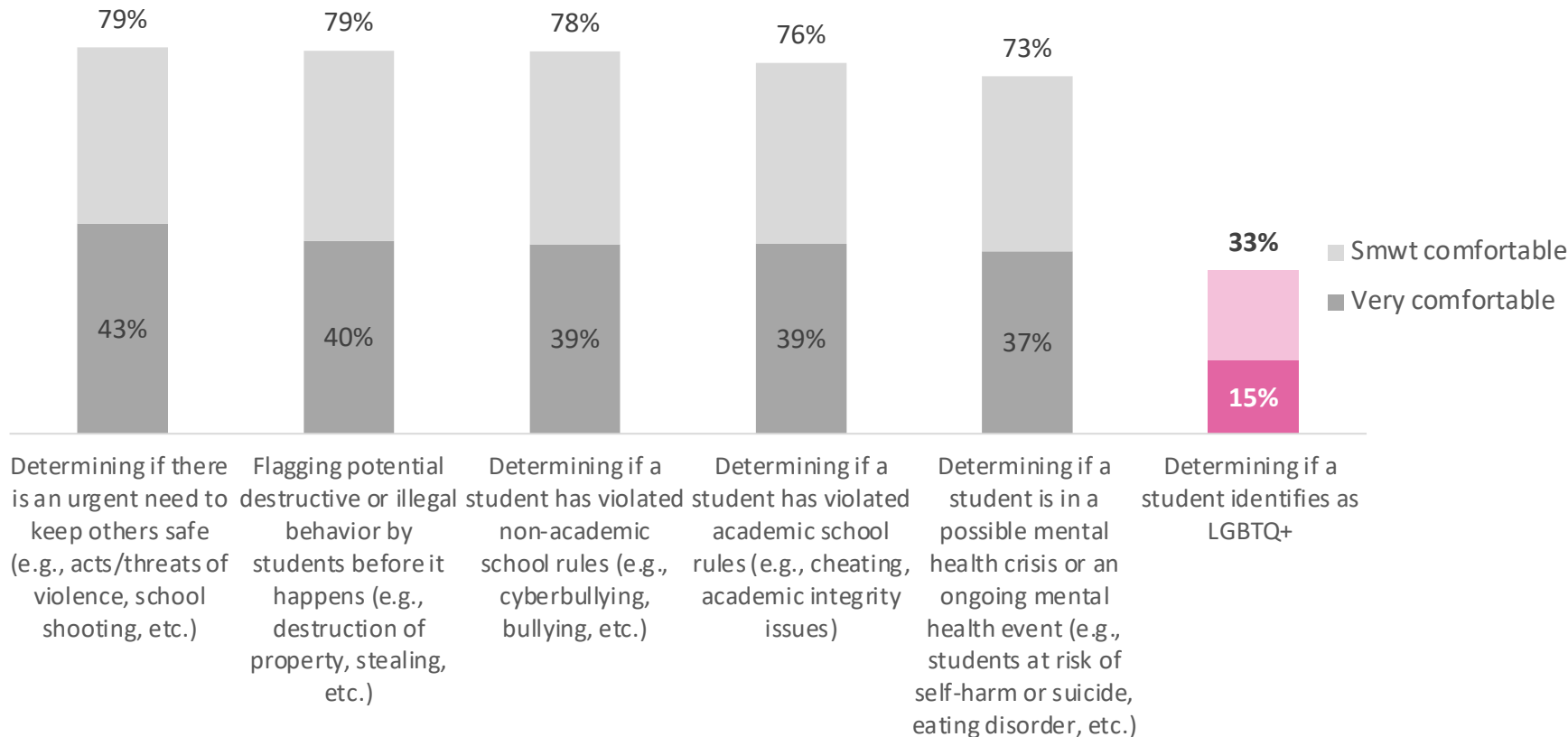
Only 33% of parents are comfortable with student activity monitoring being used to determine if a student identifies as LGBTQ+

- Similar to students, there is much less comfort with this outcome compared to others.
- 2 in 5 of parents are uncomfortable with student activity monitoring resulting in LGBTQ+ students being identified.

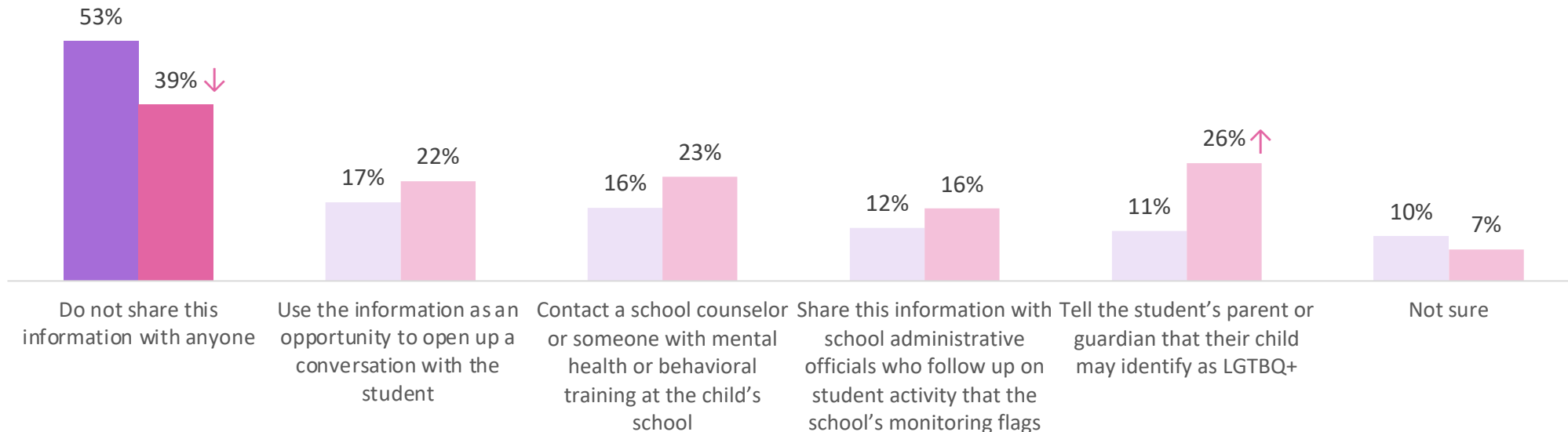## Comfort with outcomes of student activity monitoring

■ Parents (n=1606)

40% of parents are uncomfortable with the prospect of student activity monitoring being used to **determine if students identify as LGBTQ+**

Legend:
- Very comfortable — 15%
- Somewhat comfortable — 18%
- Neither — 24%
- Somewhat uncomfortable — 12%
- Very uncomfortable — 28%
- Not sure — 3%

Parents are more divided when it comes to comfort: **33%** are comfortable, **40%** are uncomfortable, and **24%** are right in the middle.

Bar chart (Smwt comfortable / Very comfortable):

Category	Total	Very comfortable
Determining if there is an urgent need to keep others safe (e.g., acts/threats of violence, school shooting, etc.)	79%	43%
Flagging potential destructive or illegal behavior by students before it happens (e.g., destruction of property, stealing, etc.)	79%	40%
Determining if a student has violated non-academic school rules (e.g., cyberbullying, bullying, etc.)	78%	39%
Determining if a student has violated academic school rules (e.g., cheating, academic integrity issues)	76%	39%
Determining if a student is in a possible mental health crisis or an ongoing mental health event (e.g., students at risk of self-harm or suicide, eating disorder, etc.)	73%	37%
Determining if a student identifies as LGBTQ+	33%	15%

Q42CC: PARENTS. How comfortable are you with your high school or school district monitoring student's activity for each of the following reasons?

Most students feel that the most appropriate action if a school/district learns that a student is LGBTQ+ is to **not** share this information

- Only 1 in 10 feel it would be appropriate to tell the student's parent or guardian or share this information with school administrators.
- Though a plurality of parents share this sentiment, a quarter of them would want the school or district to notify them.

Appropriate action if student activity monitoring uncovers that a student may identify as LGBTQ+

■ Students (n=400) | ■ Parents (n=1606)

70% of students **that identify as LGBTQ+** do not want this information shared

Do not share this information with anyone	Use the information as an opportunity to open up a conversation with the student	Contact a school counselor or someone with mental health or behavioral training at the child's school	Share this information with school administrative officials who follow up on student activity that the school's monitoring flags	Tell the student's parent or guardian that their child may identify as LGTBQ+	Not sure
53% / 39% ↓	17% / 22%	16% / 23%	12% / 16%	11% / 26% ↑	10% / 7%

49

Student activity monitoring is impacting mental health

Over half of teachers report that schools' student activity monitoring resulted in referring a student to a counselor, therapist, or social worker

- 1 in 3 students say they or someone they know was contacted by a counselor, social worker, teacher or other adult due to concerns about mental health flagged by student activity monitoring. This number is higher among LGBTQ+ students and students with learning differences.

Student Activity Monitoring and Mental Health Interventions

■ Teachers (n=897) | ■ Students (n=348) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

Teachers

54%

of teachers say a student or **students were referred to a counselor, therapist, or social worker** as a result of behaviors flagged by the school's student activity monitoring system

Students

33%

Among Students that Identify as LGBTQ+ 46%↑
(vs. 30% among Students that do not identify as LGBTQ+)

of students say they or someone they know was **contacted by a school counselor, social worker, teacher, or other adult due to concerns about their mental health** (like harming themself) based on something the school or district's student activity monitoring saw that person doing online

Note: no significant differences emerge by race, learning differences, physical disability, or have been disciplined in the last year

51

Q42E2A: TEACHERS: Which of the following has happened at your school as a result of the school or district's student activity monitoring?
Q42EE: STUDENTS: Which, if any, of the following have happened to you or another student at your school? Select all that apply.

Students report that student activity monitoring impacts students' online self-expression

- Nearly half of students that report their school monitors activity say they do not share their true thoughts online because they know they may be monitored — the chilling effect is even greater among differently-abled and students that have been disciplined.
- 3 in 4 students say they are more careful about what they search online because of student activity monitoring.

Student Activity Monitoring Impacts on Student Self-Expression and Online Searches

■ Students (n=348) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

When students know their online activity is being monitored they are...

Students

78%
2021: 80%
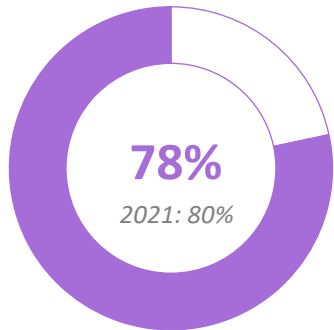
More careful about what they search online because they know it may be monitored

48%▼
2021: 58%
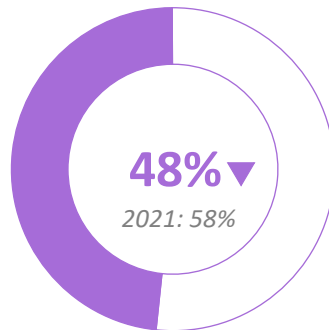
Do not share true thoughts or ideas because they know what they do online may be monitored

Greater chilling effect among students with disabilities and disciplined students

Do not share true thoughts or ideas because they know they may be monitored:

60%↑ Students with learning differences (n=92)
*Students without: **45%***

67%↑ Students with physical disabilities (n=48)
*Students without: **46%***

56%↑ Boy/male students
*Girl/female students: **42%***

% very or somewhat agree

Q42E: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools monitoring students' online activity?
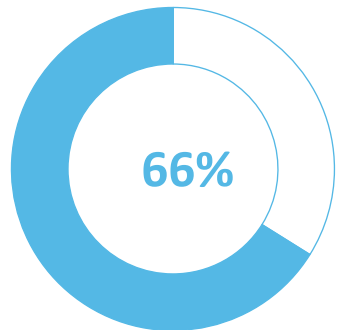
Teachers agree that student activity monitoring impacts students' online self-expression

Student Activity Monitoring Impacts on Student Self-Expression and Online Searches

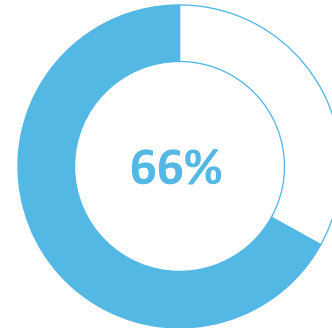■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606)

When students know their online activity is being monitored they are...

Teachers

66%

Less likely to be as open and expressive sharing their personal thoughts and ideas online
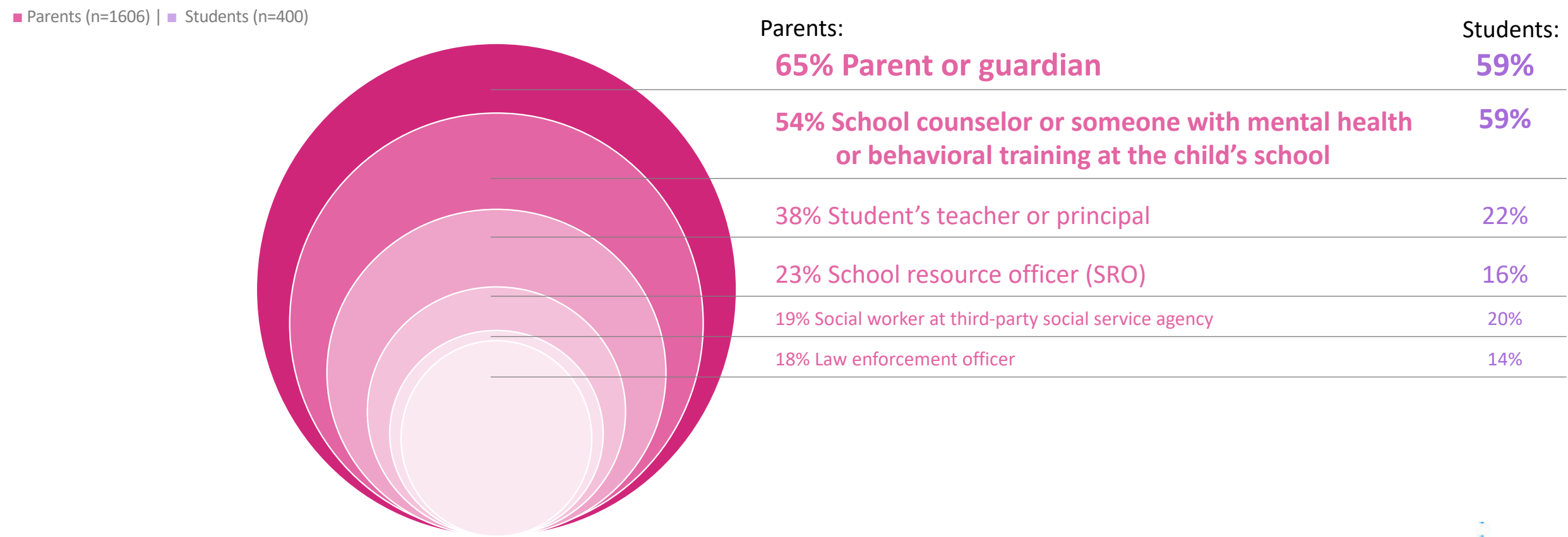
71% of parents agree with this statement

66%

Less likely to access resources or visit websites that might provide help to them (e.g., how to come out to your family, how to access mental health supports)

% very or somewhat agree

53

Q42E: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools monitoring students' online activity?

Alerting the parent is considered the most appropriate course of action when a possible mental health event has been identified through student activity monitoring

- In addition to the parent, notifying a school counselor or school mental health specialist is considered appropriate by a majority of parents and students.
- Individuals that are more removed from the student, e.g., the SRO, a third-party social worker, or law enforcement, are deemed least appropriate to get involved as the next step after student activity monitoring identifies a possible mental health event.

Appropriate Person to Alert when Student Activity Monitoring Flags a Potential Mental Health Crisis or Event

■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

	Parents:	Students:
65% Parent or guardian		**59%**
54% School counselor or someone with mental health or behavioral training at the child's school		**59%**
38% Student's teacher or principal		22%
23% School resource officer (SRO)		16%
19% Social worker at third-party social service agency		20%
18% Law enforcement officer		14%

Q42E4: PARENTS: If data from the school's routine student activity monitoring signals an alert indicating a potential mental health crisis or ongoing mental health event, what do you think is the appropriate course of action for the school or district to take? Select all that apply.
Q42E4: STUDENTS: If data from your school's student activity monitoring signals that a student may have a potential mental health crisis or ongoing mental health event, what do you think is appropriate for the school or district to do? Select all that apply.

5 in 10 teachers report their schools' use of student activity monitoring for flagging students that may be experiencing a mental health event

- Majorities of parents and students are comfortable with using student activity monitoring for this purpose.

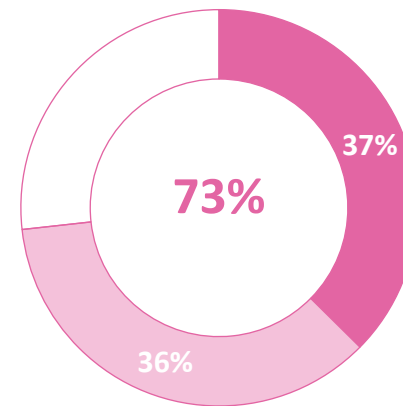## Student Activity Monitoring for Flagging Potential Mental Health Events Among Students

■ Teachers at schools that engage in student activity monitoring (n=897) | ■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

47%

of teachers say their school uses student activity monitoring to **determine if a student is in a possible mental health crisis or an ongoing mental health event** (e.g., students at risk of self-harm or suicide, eating disorder, etc.)

Parents
Comfort with using student activity monitoring for this purpose

73%
37%
36%

17% neutral or not sure
9% not comfortable

Students
Comfort with using student activity monitoring for this purpose

66%
32%
34%

% very or somewhat comfortable
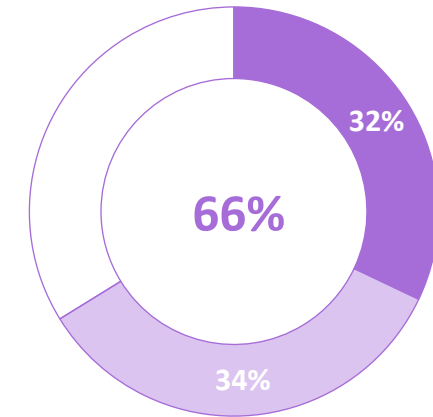
23% neutral or not sure
11% not comfortable

■ Very comfortable   ■ Somewhat comfortable

Q42C: TEACHERS: In which of the following ways does your school or district engage in student activity monitoring? Select all that apply.
Q42CC: PARENTS: How comfortable are you with the school or school district monitoring your child's activity for each of the following reasons?
Q42CC: STUDENTS: How comfortable are you with your high school or school district monitoring student's activity for each of the following reasons?
- [For all questions above]: Determining if a student is in a possible mental health crisis or an ongoing mental health event (e.g., students at risk of self-harm or suicide, eating disorder, etc.)

6 in 10 teachers and parents share concern about anonymous mental health surveys conducted in schools

- Roughly half of students express concern about data collected through anonymous mental health surveys.

Concern with Use of Data Obtained through Mental Health Surveys

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=460)

Concern about:
Schools sharing information about students' mental health, collected through anonymous surveys and reported throughout the year — individual student survey responses would be stored by the school

58%
of teachers
are *concerned*
about this

60%
of parents
are *concerned*
about this

46%
of students
are *concerned*
about this

17% neutral or don't think about it

20% neutral or don't think about it

28% neutral or don't think about it

% very or somewhat concerned

Q45: TEACHERS: Listed below are potential ways that student data can be used or shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- Schools collecting information about all students' mental health through anonymous surveys that are reported throughout the year – individual student survey responses would be stored by the school
Q29: Listed below are potential ways that your child's data could be used and shared. How concerned would you say you are with each?
- PARENTS: Schools collecting information about all students' mental health through anonymous surveys that are reported throughout the year – individual student survey responses would be stored by the school
- STUDENTS: Schools having students take surveys throughout the school year to collect information about the mental health of the student body. These surveys are anonymous but individual student survey responses would be stored by the school

Student activity monitoring is used for discipline

Teachers report student activity monitoring is being used to identify students' academic and non-academic disciplinary violations

Student Activity Monitoring and Flagging Disciplinary Violations

■ Teachers at schools that engage in SAM (n=897)

78% of teachers report that student activity monitoring **flagged a student or students who had violated disciplinary policy**

63% of teachers report that student activity monitoring **flagged a student or students who had violated academic disciplinary policy** (e.g., cheating, academic integrity issues)

60% of teachers report that student activity monitoring **flagged a student or students who had violated non-academic disciplinary policy** (e.g., cyberbullying, bullying, etc.)

Q42E2A: TEACHERS. Which of the following has happened at your school as a result of the school or district's student activity monitoring?

Students face disciplinary action due to behaviors flagged by student activity monitoring

- 46% of students report that they or another student they know got in trouble with the teacher or school because of something seen through student activity monitoring.
- Those numbers are higher among Black and Hispanic students when compared to their white peers.
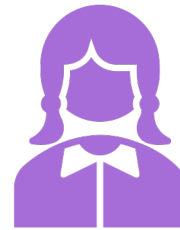
Student Activity Monitoring and Discipline

■ Teachers (n=897) | ■ Students (n=348) that report their school engages in student activity monitoring

Teachers

59%

of teachers report that **a student or students were disciplined** as a result of behaviors flagged by the school's student activity monitoring system.

Students

46%

of students report that **they or another student they know got in trouble** with the teacher or school when the school or district's student activity monitoring saw that the person visited an inappropriate site online or said something inappropriate in a document or message
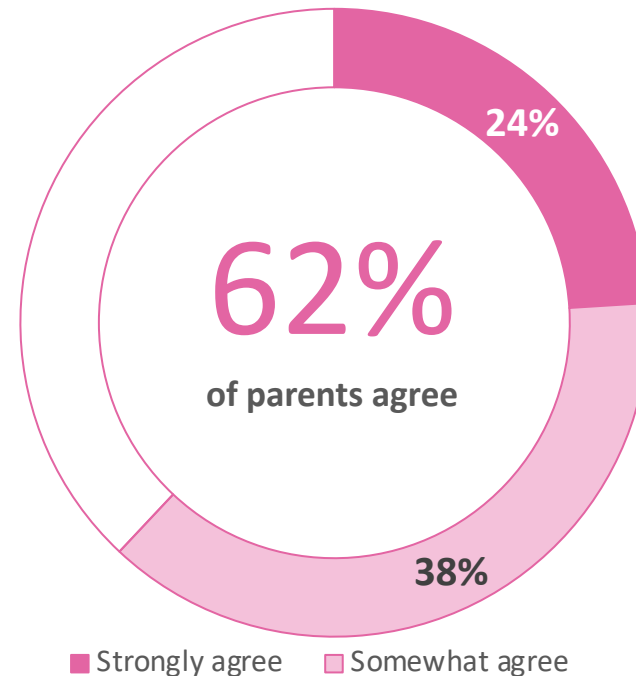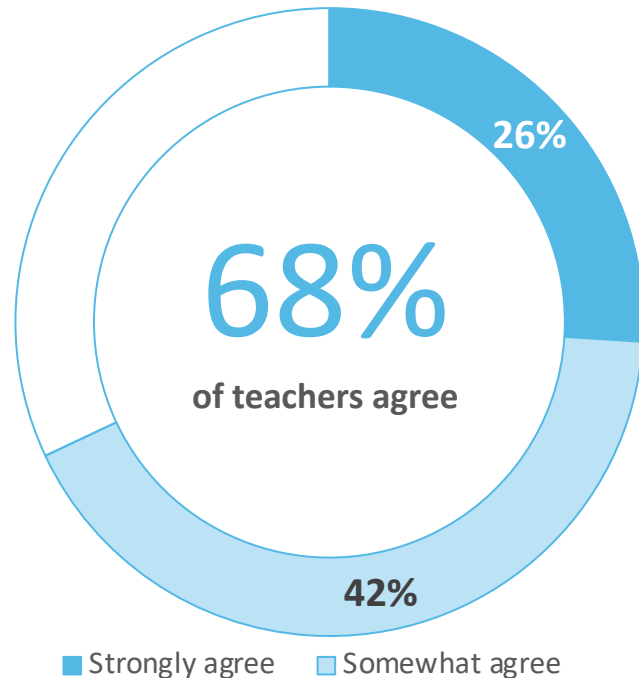
Among students that identify as...

White	41% ↓
Black	48%
Hispanic	55% ↑

Q42E2A: TEACHERS. Which of the following has happened at your school as a result of the school or district's student activity monitoring?
Q42EE: STUDENTS. Which, if any, of the following have happened to you or another student at your school? Select all that apply.

2 in 3 teachers and parents agree that students who rely on school-issued devices could be disciplined more than their peers

Agreement on unintended consequences of student activity monitoring for students who rely on school-issued devices

■ Teachers (n=1008) | ■ Parents (n=1606)

Student online activity monitoring could have **unintended consequences like more frequently disciplining the students who rely on school-provided devices** because they do not have access to a personal device to use for schoolwork

68%
of teachers agree

26%

42%

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

62%
of parents agree

24%

38%

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

Among parents who...

Have a child who's faced disciplinary action
70%↑

Have a child with a physical/learning disability
67%↑

60

Q42E: TEACHERS and PARENTS. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements below related to schools monitoring students' online activity?

Most parters believe disciplinary actions should include parents, teacher, and/or principal

- Similarly, a majority of students feel that a teacher or principal should be notified along with their parents.

Appropriate Person to Alert when Student Activity Monitoring Flags Violations of School Disciplinary Policy

■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)
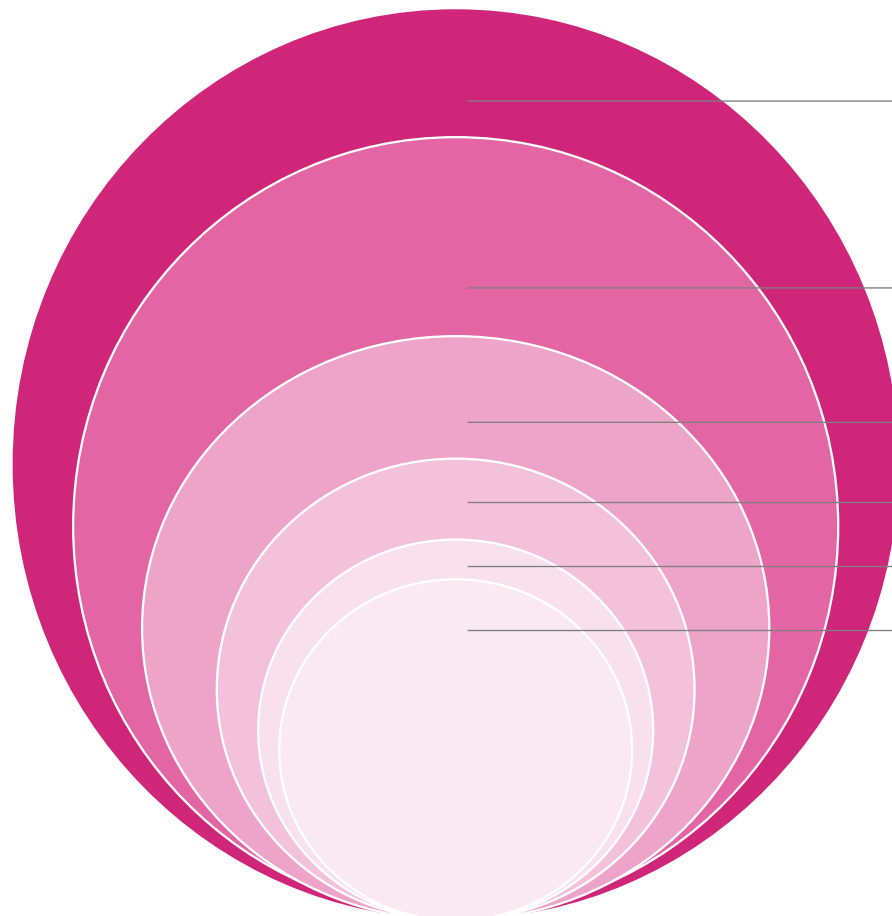
Parents:

	Parents	Students
Parent or guardian	**61%**	**52%**
Student's teacher or principal	**51%**	**55%**
School counselor or someone with mental health or behavioral training at the child's school	33%	22%
School resource officer (SRO)	21%	16%
Law enforcement officer	15%	9%
Social worker at third-party social service agency	12%	8%

Q42E5: PARENTS and STUDENTS. If data from your school's student activity monitoring determines that a student has broken a school rule, what do you think is appropriate for the school or district to do? Select all that apply.
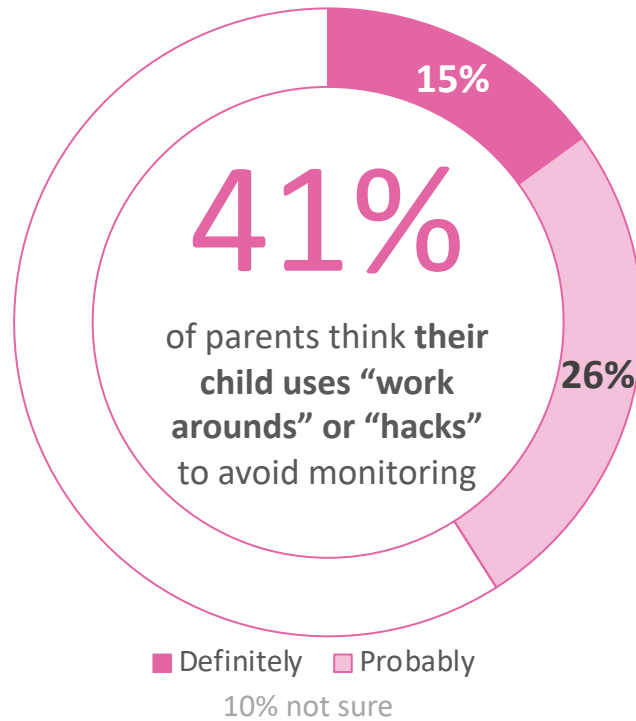
Parents believe more of their children use "hacks" to avoid being monitored than what is reported by students themselves

Using "Work Arounds" or "Hacks" to Avoid Being Monitored

■ Parents (n=1606) | ■ Students (n=400)

15%

41%

26%

of parents think **their child uses "work arounds" or "hacks"** to avoid monitoring

■ Definitely ☐ Probably

10% not sure

29%

of students do use **certain "hacks" to keep their school or school district from monitoring what they're doing online** while in school (e.g., using alternate search terms that won't get flagged, using a personal device instead of a school-issued device, using a VPN, using personal data on your device instead of the school's WiFi, etc.)

11% not sure

Q42K: PARENTS. Do you believe that your child uses "work arounds" or "hacks" specifically to avoid being monitored by your child's school (e.g., using alternate search terms that won't get flagged, using a personal device instead of a school-issued device, etc.)?
Q42K: STUDENTS. Do you use certain "hacks" to keep your school or school district from monitoring what you're doing online while in school (e.g., using alternate search terms that won't get flagged, using a personal device instead of a school-issued device, using a VPN, using personal data on your device instead of the school's WiFi, etc.)?

Contact Us

Center for Democracy & Technology,
Equity in Civic Technology Project

CivicTech@cdt.org

CDT is a 27-year-old 501(c)3 nonpartisan nonprofit organization that fights to put democracy and human rights at the center of the digital revolution. It works to promote democratic values by shaping technology policy and architecture, with a focus on equity and justice.

The Equity in Civic Technology Project works to advance responsible civic technology use and strong privacy practices that protect the rights of individuals and families. If you want to learn more about CDT and our work, please visit our website: https://cdt.org/.