

Findings indicate that youth who experience peer harassment that includes **both** in-person and technology components are at higher risk for suicidal ideation

These findings highlight the **complexity** of relationships between peer victimization and suicidal ideation.

Media stories linking cyberbullying and suicidal ideation or behavior may be

**oversimplifying** the relationship by suggesting that bullying directly causes suicidal behavior.

Examples of peer harassment that includes **both** in-person and technology components:

**Male, 18:** *"I got into a disagreement with one of my friend's girlfriends and she continued to tell me off with text messaging afterwards."*

**Female, 15:** *"I got in a fight last year and people keep posting it on Facebook. The comments made on there are ridiculously rude. I get cut down and called fat, told fat people should not fight a skinny person, that I should be ashamed of myself."*



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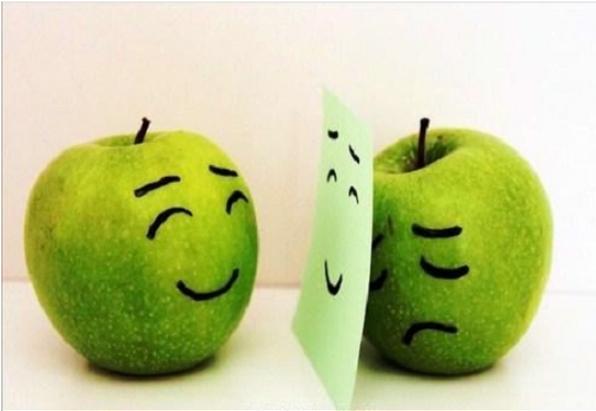
# Cyberbullying and Suicidal Ideation

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Recent media stories have focused on teens who have committed suicide with cyberbullying victimization histories, suggesting a causal link.

What does the research show?





When peer harassment occurs across multiple contexts (online and in-person), the perpetrators may have had **more animosity** towards victims and as a result, the harassment may have been **more personal or meaningful** in ways to youth.

## Is Peer Harassment Related to Later Suicidal Ideation?

- Youth who experienced both in-person and technology-based peer harassment within the past year were 5 times more likely than those without this type of victimization to report suicidal ideation.
- Youth with suicidal ideation were 9 times more likely than those without to have such thoughts two years later.
- Youth with high depressive symptoms were 7 times more likely than those without to have suicidal ideation two years later.

- Youth who experienced in-person only peer harassment were 4 times more likely than those without this type of victimization to report suicidal ideation.
- Experiencing only technology harassment did not significantly predict suicidal ideation.

## What can we do?

Given the multi-layered relationships among these variables, schools, medical and mental health professionals might screen youth who are involved in higher-risk peer victimization situations, (i.e. those that involve both in-person and technology elements), for suicidal ideation to improve their access to appropriate mental health services.

## How the study was conducted

We conducted two telephone interviews, about 2 years apart, with a national sample of 791 youth and young adults, ages 10 to 20 at follow-up. Follow-up data was collected in 2013-2014.

## What to look for

Our data indicates that “mixed” incidents, those that involve harassing communications in-person and through technology, appear to be representative of higher-risk situations. These incidents appear to be marked by more intense, personal, and complex negative interactions that have high emotional salience for those involved.

### Related articles:

Mitchell, K.J., Jones, L.M., Turner, H.A, Shattuck, A., & Wolak, J. (2016). The role of technology in peer harassment: Does it amplify harm for youth? *Psychology of Violence*, 6(2), 193-204.

Turner, H. A., Mitchell, K. J., Jones, L., & Shattuck, A. (2017). Assessing the impact of harassment by peers: Incident characteristics and outcomes in a national sample of youth. *Journal of School Violence*, 16(1), 1-24.

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