

## Navigating Social Media as a Non-Citizen in the United States

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### INTRODUCTION

All non-citizens should be aware that their online activity is subject to monitoring by government officials and can potentially have an impact on their immigration status in the United States.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN

As previously [reported](#) by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Biden-Harris administration expanded on existing programs intended to surveil immigrants' social media and other online activity. Although these programs are used by government agencies in investigations related to national security matters, they can easily result in mistaken judgments and assumptions of criminality which put many non-citizens at risk. In particular, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [searches and collects information](#) related to non-citizens' social media accounts, which is placed into their immigrant record and may be used in determining their eligibility for immigration benefits with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) or the Immigration Court.

As shown in the case of [a Harvard student whose visa was denied](#) based on an investigation into the content contained within his friends' social media posts, there can be significant consequences resulting from this online surveillance.

### WHAT STEPS SHOULD YOU TAKE

Considering the existence of these monitoring programs, all non-citizens should be aware of the content contained within their social media accounts. This not only means that they should be careful with their own posts, but also other's posts, tweets, and other content that they are liking, re-tweeting, re-posting, or otherwise interacting with. This is especially important for any public accounts that they interact with online.

#### A few key tips to remember:

- Keep all social media accounts private. \*Note, this may not prevent access entirely as some social media platforms cooperate with law enforcement agencies by providing access to private user accounts if, for example, a warrant has been issued.
- Be mindful of what you are posting online or interacting with through your social media accounts. Think about whether your posts could be viewed in a way that suggests you are involved in criminal activity or present any other negative associations.
- Be aware of any public pages or accounts you interact with that may be visible to government officials who search for you online.

- Do not accept friend requests from people you do not know.
- Do not post images of your immigration-related documents online. These documents often contain personally identifiable information that should be safeguarded.

As a non-citizen, it is important to consider how you use your social media to avoid any risk to your immigration status in the United States.