



# How Can Social Media Impact a Visa Application?

**Social Media**

Do you have a social media presence?

Select from the list below each social media platform you have used within the last five years. In the space next to the platform's name, enter the username or handle you have used on that platform. Please do not provide your passwords. If you have used more than one platform or more than one username or handle on a single platform, click the 'Add Another' button to list each one separately. If you have not used any of the listed social media platforms in the last five years, select 'None.'

Social Media Provider/Platform

Social Media Identifier

[Add Another](#)

[Remove](#)

**Help: Social Media**

Enter  information associated with your online presence, including the types of online providers/platforms, applications and websites that you use to collaborate, share information, and interact with others. List the username, handle, screen-name, or other identifiers associated with your social media profile. (You do not need to list accounts designed for use by multiple users within a business or other organization.)

Do you wish to provide information about your presence on any other websites or applications you have used within the last five years to create or share content (photos, videos, status updates, etc.)?

Yes  No

*By, Andrea Santini, Legal Intern*

In an increasingly digital world, the influence of technology extends far beyond connecting friends and sharing moments. Social media is extremely present in many people's lives. Most people have heard about the dangers of social media when it comes to bullying, identity theft, hacking, and other issues. But the impact of social media in immigration petitions is rarely considered. As individuals pursue immigration to new countries, their online footprint can significantly impact their prospects.

## How did it start?

- In 2014, The United States government [began utilizing social media more frequently for immigration checks](#). It began with a small team of officers manually reviewing certain applicants' social accounts, but quickly it grew.

- On September 18, 2017, USCIS published a [Federal Register Notice](#) indicating that social media information may be part of the background check process for certain immigration benefit requests.
- October 18, 2017, storage of social media data in [A-files](#) goes into effect.
- By June 2019, the Department of State said all roughly 15 million people applying for United States visas each year had to disclose all their social media usernames.
- In January 2021, President Biden, [called for a review](#) on how USCIS is using social media information to screen applicants.

### **How is social media seen in the immigration petition process?**

Currently, immigrants who are applying for a U.S. Visa using forms *DS-160*, *DS-156*, and *DS-260* are required to provide their social media profiles. USCIS officers look for content that may raise red flags or that is not compatible with the information provided during the petition process. Content checked by USCIS officers may be videos, photos and comments that are publicly available to anyone online. If they discover important details that could influence how they assess the application, they might share these findings with the applicant during an interview or by requesting more evidence. USCIS has the option to include this information in the application file.

### **In which cases is social media most influential?**

The opinion regarding the impact social media has on visa applications varies between legal professionals. However, a consistent online presence with documented interactions between the couple in a marriage-based case will benefit the application. The more posts a couple has together, and the older those posts are, the better for their case. Other instances where social media may play a big role is to check if the applicant is involved in any criminal activity, part of a terrorist group, or other terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds (TRIG), plans to engage in unauthorized employment, and other offenses.

### **Tips for Applicants:**

1. Adjust privacy settings: It can limit public access to personal information.
2. Avoid sharing sensitive or controversial opinions or content that may be misconstrued.
3. Ensure consistency between information provided in the petition and your social media profiles.

4. Don't delete social media accounts at the time of applying for a visa, since it may cause suspicion.
5. Periodically review social media presence. Remove content that may increase the possibility of compromising the immigration application.

The undeniable influence of social media on immigration petitions is evident, as it increasingly complements the data submitted in applications. For individuals seeking immigration, cultivating a favorable and steady digital footprint has become essential in how they portray themselves to immigration officials. Recognizing the importance of social media and actively managing one's online image can profoundly affect the result of an immigration request. With the digital realm constantly changing, applicants must tread carefully, understanding that their online activities can significantly impact their path toward a new homeland.

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