

Doxing:

When Does Sharing Information Online Become Digital Abuse?*



“Doxing” is often used as a blanket term for sharing another person’s private information on the internet. But it’s important to understand the difference between unlawful doxing and lawfully sharing information about people online.

Doxing may be unlawful when someone shares Personally Identifiable Information (PII) of another individual without their consent and with the intent to harm, harass, or intimidate the targeted individual. Individuals who engage in unlawful doxing may also be held civilly liable. Different jurisdictions have different legal standards for when doxing rises to the level of criminal or civil liability.

Examples of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) include:

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 Full name | 4 Phone number |
| 2 Birthday | 5 Social security number |
| 3 Address | 6 Bank account information |

Tip: While jurisdictions may have different intent standards, a big difference may be whether the person sharing the information wants to harm the other person. If their goal is to hurt someone, that’s when the doxing may be unlawful. It is important to consult legal counsel or law enforcement if you feel that a line has been crossed.

Legal or illegal, seeing your information shared online can be a terrifying experience. The best thing you can do is take stock of your digital footprint BEFORE someone uses it to target you.

*This document is not intended to constitute legal advice and should not be interpreted as providing legal advice.



What You Can Do

Privacy is Prevention: How to protect yourself

You deserve to feel safe expressing yourself online. Taking proactive steps to understand where your information is online, and who can see it, will help you understand the impact of what you say and share online so that you can make an informed choice.

1 Google yourself. What information can someone find online about you? Here's a short list of what to look for:

- Home address(es)
- Email (personal & work)
- Online connections (relatives, friends, associates)
- Career information (LinkedIn, website)
- Employer (email, physical address, phone)

2 Know your social media. Understand the privacy settings for all your accounts. Look for these in your profile's account settings, privacy preferences, or similar.

- Who can see your content? Who can share your posts?
- Who can comment on/like your posts?
- Who can see the commenters/likers of your posts?

3 Pause before you post. Just because you can say something, should you?

- Who can screen capture your posts (and share them elsewhere)?
- When you post, what do you want your audience to know? How else might your message be interpreted?
- What are you unintentionally revealing that someone could abuse?
 - Home address numbers, street names, school names
 - Likes or comments that you make on public accounts

Understand how your online footprint can be harmfully used:

The things you post, like or comment on publicly, if used or shared by others, are not usually examples of doxing. This includes:

1. Information on LinkedIn
2. Any professional or community affiliations
3. Public posts, comments, likes, shares, reposts on your social media or on other people's profiles
4. Reviews you post anywhere online.

Understand that your offline life may be documented online:

This is an era of ubiquitous cell phones and surveillance technologies. While there are circumstances in which an individual has a reasonable expectation of privacy, be mindful that the things you do offline can find their way online. The online sharing of your offline life and conduct may not necessarily amount to doxing.

About ADL

ADL is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all." Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all. More at www.adl.org.

The guidance shared here is derived from ADL's Online Incident Response work, through which we provide support to those experiencing hate and harassment, including instances of doxing.

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