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## New UK Internet Law May Affect What Americans Access Online

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The United Kingdom's newly enacted Online Safety Act may have global implications, including possible restrictions on what Americans can access online. The law enforces sweeping content regulations on technology platforms, many of which are headquartered in the United States, sparking concerns about overreach beyond British borders.

James Czerniawski, a senior policy analyst with the Consumer Choice Centre (CCC), explained in an interview with The Final 5 that the legislation is aimed at reducing the spread of harmful online content, such as material related to self-harm and suicide. However, Czerniawski noted that to comply with the law's requirements, platforms are increasingly encouraging users to provide government-issued identification, even for routine activities such as streaming music or watching videos.

The Online Safety Act, passed by the UK Parliament earlier this year, requires online platforms to proactively remove or restrict access to content considered harmful or illegal under British standards. Failure to comply can result in severe penalties, including substantial fines. While the law's supporters argue it will protect vulnerable users, critics warn it could set a precedent for censorship that extends far beyond the UK's jurisdiction.

One of the most contentious aspects of the act is its broad scope, which obligates social media companies, streaming services, and other online providers to monitor and control user-generated content. This includes companies based outside the United Kingdom that offer services accessible to UK users. Czerniawski emphasised that such requirements could effectively export British regulations globally, affecting Americans' ability to access content that may be allowed under US law but restricted by UK standards.

As platforms adapt to the Online Safety Act's provisions, concerns are growing over privacy and freedom of expression. Mandatory identity verification could deter users from accessing content anonymously, raising concerns about data security and individual rights. The debate highlights the challenges of balancing online safety with preserving free speech and privacy in an interconnected world.

The full effects of the Online Safety Act remain uncertain, but its broad reach highlights how national laws can influence the global digital landscape, shaping what people worldwide can access and share online.