

Human Rights Watch

Children's Rights

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/07/27/victory-against-child-marriage-new-york-state>

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Sixth US State to Explicitly End Practice; Rest Should Follow Suit

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New York States Governor Andrew Cuomo signed legislation on Thursday to end child marriage, making New York the sixth state in the United States to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 without exceptions.

When the law goes into effect next month, New York will join Rhode Island, Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania as states that have banned child marriage outright. There's no doubt that this law was urgently needed: An estimated [4,890 children were married in New York](#) between 2000 and 2018, almost all of them girls wed to adult men.

Between 2000 and 2018, [nearly 300,000 children under the age of 18 were legally married in the US](#). Around the world, [12 million](#) girls under age 18 marry every year. Human Rights Watch opposes all marriage of children under the age of 18, without exception, because of the devastating consequences for children who marry, the vast majority of whom are girls. Married children usually leave school and are more likely to live in poverty. Married girls are more likely to experience domestic violence than women who marry as adults; child brides also face serious health risks, including death, due to early and closely spaced pregnancies.

The Covid-19 pandemic has [pushed more girls out of school](#) and [plunged millions of families into poverty](#), two of the main risk factors for child marriage.

While this big victory in New York is worthy of celebration, child marriage is still legal in much of the US and progress has been gradual. As recently as 2018, child marriage was legal in every state. But laws to end child marriage have been introduced in a growing list of states, as activists across the US and around the world push for reform. The United Nations has [set a goal](#) of ending all child marriage by 2030.

Last week was a great one for girls and boys in New York, but there is still a long way to go in the fight against child marriage in the US. It's time for the other 44 states to follow in New York's footsteps and end child marriage once and for all.

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