

# Human Rights Watch

## Children's Rights

### <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/14/signs-hope-fight-against-child-marriage>

## Campaign and Advocacy

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Fifth US State Ends Marriage Under 18; UK Pledges to do the Same

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Last week, a breakthrough in the global fight to end child marriage came when the [United Kingdom](#) government pledged to raise the minimum age of marriage in England and Wales to 18, without exception. Just days before, Rhode Island became the fifth US state to ban child marriage. These are important steps, but more work lies ahead.

The UK has put itself forward as a leader on ending child marriage, hosting the [2014 Girl Summit](#) on this topic. But in countries with high rates of child marriage, such as Bangladesh and Nepal, UK aid officials and diplomats quietly confessed that they are unable to push effectively for reform due to perceived hypocrisy, as child marriage is still [legal](#) in the [UK](#). The governments pledge to ban child marriage in England and Wales is encouraging. Authorities in Northern Ireland and Scotland should follow suit.

Child marriage is also still legal in the United States. With Rhode Islands decision last week, 45 states still allow children under 18 to marry. That sounds daunting, but in [2018](#) child marriage was legal in every state; laws to end child marriage have been introduced in a growing list of states, including [New York](#).

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 and 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. The United Nations estimated in 2020 that an additional 13 million child marriages would take place over the next ten years due to the pandemic.

The UNs Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 set a target of ending marriage before the age of 18, globally, by 2030. The pandemic has put millions of more girls at risk and made this target more important than ever. Governments in the UK, US, and everywhere else should act to end child marriage now.

Ending Preventable Deaths from Cervical Cancer in Rural Georgia

Families in Temporary Accommodation in London, UK

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