



Alaska State Legislature

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Child Marriage in America Executive Summary

Fraidy Reiss, founder of the advocacy group Unchained At Last that is working to outlaw marriage before the age of 18, collaborated with FRONTLINE to gather data about underage marriage in the USA. Examining a dataset spanning the years 2000 to 2015, they found that:

- At least 207,468 minors were married in the United States. They were unable to get data from some of the more populous states like California, so the number is likely higher.
- The number of people marrying before the age of 18 is in decline nationwide. The rate fell roughly 61% from 23,583 in 2000 to 9,247 in 2010. This is in keeping with national trends where fewer Americans are getting married, and those who do are waiting until their 20s or early 30s.
- 87% of the minors who married were girls.
- 96% of the minors who married were 16 or 17, but children as young as 12 were granted marriage licenses in Alaska, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Tennessee.
- In some instances, children were married before they could legally consent to sex. Acts considered statutory rape outside of marriage were made lawful within marriage. Most of these marriages were approved by court clerks and judges.
- 14% of minors who married were married to other minors. 86% were married to adults. 60% of these adults were between 18 and 20; 37% were in their 20s; and 3% were 30 or older. 368 of these adults were in their 40s; 61 were in their 50s; and 31 were 60 or older.
- Marriages involving minors occurred most often in states with large rural populations.
- In Alaska, 756 children were married between 2000 and 2014. In the year 2010, 25 out of every 10,000 people married in the state were children.
- The number of minors getting married in Alaska is in decline. 77 children were married in 2000 while the number was down to 26 in 2014.