



*What is a forced marriage?* A forced marriage is when a girl or young woman is forced, coerced, or otherwise threatened by her family members to enter into a marriage against her will and without her consent.

*How is this different from an arranged marriage?* In many cultures, it is customary for families to arrange meetings between their children in the hopes of fostering a voluntary relationship that will lead to a marriage. In such situations, while the initial meetings are arranged by the families and a marriage is encouraged, the ultimate decision regarding whether to marry remains with the couple and the choice to marry is strictly voluntary. In contrast, in a forced marriage, the girl or woman is threatened and/or coerced by her family to enter into the marriage against her will and may suffer honor violence if she resists or refuses the marriage.

*Does this happen in the United States?* Yes. Although this is generally treated as a private family matter that remains hidden from public view, there are numerous reports of girls being taken out of school in the United States in their early teenage years and returned to their parents' home countries to be forcibly married. For example, in 2007, the New York Daily News reported that a number of girls were being forced to return to Pakistan to marry men chosen by their families. One woman recalled being tricked and drugged before being put on a plane to Pakistan and, once there, being forced at gunpoint to acquiesce to a marriage to a man chosen by her father.

The [Tahirih Justice Center](#) released survey results in September of 2011 that found as many as 3,000 known or suspected cases of forced marriage within immigrant communities in the United States in the two years preceding the survey. We believe the actual number of forced marriage cases in the United States to be much higher, as the survey was directed towards service providers and other professionals. Many more existing cases are likely hidden from the view of officials.

The United Kingdom has set up a hotline specifically to handle cases of forced marriage. In 2010, there were 1,735 cases of forced marriage reported to the hotline. Of those victims, 131 were British citizens who were rescued after having been taken to Pakistan for marriage against their will.