

## Saudi Arabia requires premarital genetic screening. How is it working out?

In Saudi Arabia, if you're planning to tie the knot, there's a step you must go through that doesn't happen anywhere else: You have to [get a test for genetic disease](#). Hereditary blood diseases like sickle cell and beta thalassemia [are prevalent](#) in this part of the world, where marriage between cousins is common. A new awareness campaign around genetic disorders aims to reduce the spread of these illnesses.

Saudi Arabia made premarital screening and genetic risk assessment mandatory over a decade ago, hoping that if a couple found out they were at high risk of passing on a hereditary disease to their offspring, they would reevaluate their match. Thousands of couples have called off marriages after finding they were "[genetically incompatible](#)." But just knowing their test results, it turns out, has not been enough. Many couples at risk of passing on genetic diseases go ahead and get married, with the expectation that they will have children.

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In Saudi Arabia, efforts to push forward into a genetically optimized future have at times clashed with local customs. The successes and challenges of these campaigns in Iceland and Saudi Arabia could provide a future roadmap for the U.S. and other nations, where one day genetic testing could put an end to genetic disease—at least among [people who can afford a test](#).

**Read full, original post:** [Why Saudi Arabia Is Pushing Premarital Genetic Screening](#)