

Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo? A study reveals that your political ideology is the key to choosing one or the other.

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Archive photos of Cristiano Ronaldo and Leo Messi. AL NASSR / LAPRESSE

Rolling Stones or Beatles, Batman or Superman, Nadal or Federer, Cervantes or Shakespeare, Oasis or Blur... history is full of **rivalries that have divided public opinion**. But if we think about football and the last 20 years, few reach the level of the rivalry between [Leo Messi](#) and [Cristiano Ronaldo](#) (especially among their fans).

Now, a [scientific study](#) reveals that your preference for the Argentinian or the Portuguese player has a lot to do with your political ideology. Researchers from **Nanyang Technological University in Singapore** surveyed more than 10,000 people in 26 countries about their favorite footballer.

The results revealed that people who prefer Messi tend to be more liberal. In contrast, those who support Cristiano Ronaldo **tend to be more conservative**.

"Messi and Ronaldo project markedly different public images," explains Dr. **Saifuddin Ahmed**, who led the study. Messi is typically associated with a calmer, team-oriented

image, while Cristiano Ronaldo is known for openly expressing his ambition and celebrating individual achievements.

"People may be more attracted to the player whose public image **aligns with their more general values** ," Ahmed adds.

Overall, people in eleven countries rated Cristiano Ronaldo more favorably on average, compared to people in eight countries who **rated Leo Messi more favorably**. The remaining seven countries showed no statistically clear preference between the two players.

Across the 26 countries, people who identified as **more liberal tended to prefer Messi**, while those who identified as more conservative tended to prefer Cristiano Ronaldo.

According to experts, **this relationship is strongest among young people** and weakens substantially in later adulthood. Furthermore, researchers found links between gamers' preferences, self-esteem, and media consumption habits.

Those surveyed who got more news from **TikTok and Instagram** tended to prefer Cristiano Ronaldo. According to researchers, this could be related to the footballer's strong presence on these platforms, where users can encounter his carefully cultivated public image more frequently.

Furthermore, participants with higher self-esteem were also more likely to be fans of Cristiano Ronaldo. "People may want to appear modest, but that doesn't mean they primarily identify with modest public figures. Those with higher self-esteem may, instead, **be drawn to someone who embodies excellence** , confidence, and success—qualities they may see reflected in themselves," Ahmed argues.

Countries that prefer Cristiano Ronaldo

1. Indonesia
2. Türkiye
3. Mexico
4. Egypt
5. Malaysia
6. Portugal
7. Singapore
8. China
9. France
10. India
11. Nigeria

Countries that prefer Leo Messi

1. South Korea
2. Argentina
3. Finland
4. Spain
5. United Kingdom
6. Norway
7. USA
8. Canada

Neutral countries

1. Netherlands
2. Germany
3. Australia
4. Brazil
5. Philippines
6. Japan
7. South Africa