

Study links preference for Messi or Ronaldo to political leanings

دراسة تربط تفضيل ميسي أو رونالدو [aljazeera.net/sport/2026/6/20](https://www.aljazeera.net/sport/2026/6/20)



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A mural depicting the two legends Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi (French)

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A recent research study published by the French newspaper "Le Parisien" revealed that the public's preference for Argentine star Lionel Messi or his Portuguese rival Cristiano Ronaldo may not be a mere coincidence or purely technical bias, but may go beyond that .to reflect the political leanings of each individual in France

After a career spanning more than two decades, the rivalry between the two legends, currently competing in their sixth World Cup, continues to be a hot topic of global debate.

However, an academic study titled "Political Identity Beyond Politics: Messi or Ronaldo Preferences in 26 Countries," published on the Social Science Research Network (SSRN) platform, has placed this debate in an unprecedented context, linking the two football icons .to political orientation

The researchers in this work, which involved a select group of specialists in the humanities, social sciences and communication, relied on a large sample that included 10,661 participants from 26 countries spread across the six continents of the world, during the period from April to May 2026.

To determine the results, participants were given a questionnaire assessing their football tastes on a scale of 1 to 7, along with an in-depth analysis of their personality traits, including individualistic ideology, authoritarian tendencies, and self-esteem levels.



Who do you prefer, Messi or Ronaldo? (Al Jazeera)

Results of political orientation

The study indicates strong links between ideological affiliation and football choice; it shows that progressive-minded people are more inclined to support Messi, while Ronaldo has a greater chance of winning the admiration of conservative-minded fans.

The researchers believe that political orientation is one of the most accurate factors in predicting individuals' preferences between the two stars.

The study went further in its analysis, pointing out that Messi's fans are often characterized by an "analytical thinking pattern," while the admiration of a segment of Al-Nasr's striker's fans is linked to authoritarian tendencies and a high level of self-esteem.

In an attempt to refine these conclusions, Saifuddin Ahmad, an associate professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and one of the co-authors, stressed the need to avoid generalizing the results, explaining that "our finding is that individuals in any country tend to give Ronaldo a higher rating the more conservative they are compared to their fellow citizens, and this does not mean that all conservatives are automatically fans of Ronaldo, or that all progressives are fans of Messi

The report stressed that these results remain preliminary and are subject to further scrutiny, as the study has not yet completed the scientific "peer review" process, noting that the observed statistical impact - despite its importance - remains limited, which necessitates dealing with these results with caution and objectivity

Source: Al Jazeera + Foreign Press