

Ronaldo or Messi? What your answer reveals about your political views

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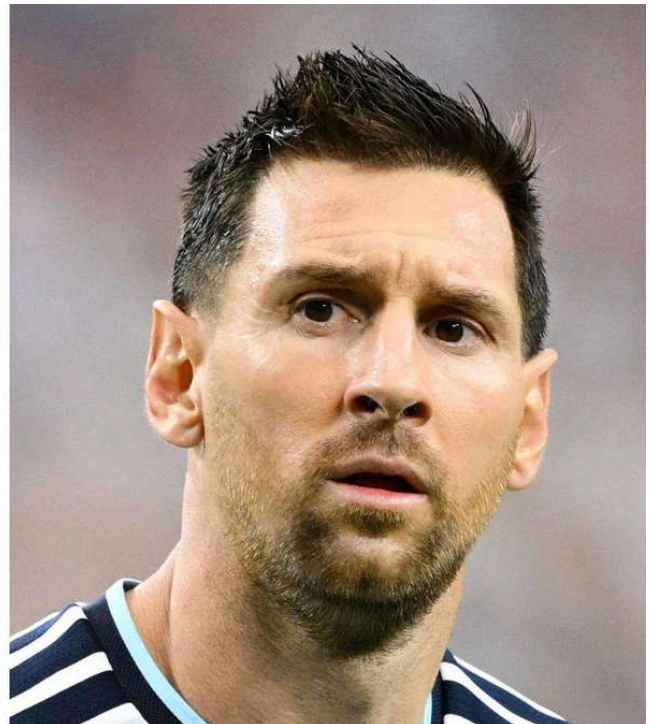
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Those who support Ronaldo are more conservative – those who love Messi are more progressive: A study with 10,000 fans from 26 countries delivers surprising results.

Singapore – “Tell me which footballer you support and I’ll tell you how you think politically” – the rivalry between Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi is a historic duel between two exceptional talents that has lasted for almost 20 years – but apparently it is not only played out on the pitch.

A new study by Nanyang Technological University in Singapore suggests that a preference for one of the two players also reveals the political compass of the respective fans.

The study also points to the context of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, currently being held in the USA, Mexico, and Canada, where both stars are performing at their best. According to the study, the decision for Messi or Ronaldo reflects not only sporting preferences but also values.



Ronaldo (left) or Messi (right)? The question occupies millions of football fans. (Photo montage) © IMAGO / Kirchner-Media & IMAGO / AFLOSPORT

The choice between the two players is said to be linked to the political and ideological leanings of the fans. This association is based on the public image of the two, explains Saifuddin Ahmed, a researcher at the University of Singapore and lead author of the study. Both footballers represent contrasting character traits and personal values.

[Messi, who played against Austria in Dallas on June 22](#) , is considered to be calmer and more focused on teamwork, while Ronaldo has been known for pronounced individualism and great ambition since the beginning of his professional career.

Contrasting images and worldwide identification

It is precisely in these diverse facets that fans worldwide could find common ground, including from a political and ideological perspective. The Singapore study was conducted with 10,661 volunteers from 26 different countries.

Ronaldo was reportedly favored in 11 countries, including Indonesia, Turkey, and Mexico, while his "home country" Portugal was less clear-cut. Eight nations, such as Argentina, South Korea, and Finland, favored Messi.

Seven "neutral" countries lie between them, including Japan, Brazil, and Germany, which, according to the study, did not clearly take sides. Italy was not included in the study. The researchers emphasize that the study focuses on statistical correlations and not rigid categories that must apply to every single fan.

Conservative versus progressive – and the age factor

Above all, the results are intended to reveal two mirror-image political positions among the respective fan groups. Those who vote for Cristiano Ronaldo tend, on average, to hold more conservative views, while Messi fans tend towards more progressive ideas.

According to the study, the correlation between player preference and political orientation is strongly related to age: it is most pronounced among younger fans, while it gradually weakens among older fans.

Relationships with mass media also appear to be an important influencing factor. Participants who get their news daily from social networks like TikTok or Instagram tend to prefer Ronaldo. This preference could be largely due to the Portuguese player's exceptionally strong presence on social media.

Self-esteem as a crucial lever

Last but not least, self-esteem plays a key role in the decision. According to the study, self-confident fans were more likely to choose Ronaldo – as a kind of psychological projection of their own personality.

Ahmed explains: “People may want to appear humble, but that doesn’t mean they strongly identify with humble public figures. Those with higher self-esteem might be more inclined to gravitate towards someone who embodies excellence, confidence, and success – qualities they might see reflected in themselves.”