

[Yoon Hee-young's News English] Messi and Ronaldo fans also have different political leanings.

chosun.com/opinion/specialist_column/2026/06/22/ZB3Y5ZTXHRADTHLNXUSW2JNPNU

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Argentina's Lionel Messi and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, currently competing in the FIFA World Cup, are considered the greatest rivals in the history of world football. It is difficult to determine who is superior in terms of skill, including exceptional individual skill, natural instinct, and goal-scoring ability.

However, their physiques, facial features, playing styles, and approaches to life are vastly different. Consequently, the preferences of the fans following the two players are also contrasting. There is even research showing that political leanings differ depending on whether one is a Messi supporter or a Ronaldo supporter.



A research team at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore conducted an in-depth analysis of the correlation between the preference for the two players and political leanings on 10,661 people from 26 countries. The results showed that fans who like Messi tend to be relatively liberal, while fans who support Ronaldo tend to be conservative.

The public images of the two players are distinctly different. While Messi stands out for his composed demeanor and team-oriented nature, Ronaldo openly displays his ambition and unapologetically flaunts his achievements. In this regard, the research team explains, “The public is drawn to the public image of public figures that aligns with their personal values or social ideologies.”

Average preferences by country were also mixed. While Ronaldo received higher ratings in 11 countries, including France and China, Messi held the edge in 8 countries, including the U.S. and the U.K., and no statistically significant difference was found in the remaining 7 countries, including Germany and Japan. South Korea drew attention as it was classified as a country where the overall average of fans preferred Messi.

The link between player preference and political orientation was more pronounced among the younger generation. As age increased, the correlation weakened. Meanwhile, fans with high self-esteem tended to lean toward Ronaldo.

The research team explained, “Outwardly, people praise humility as a virtue, but that does not necessarily mean they are drawn to humble individuals,” adding, “Those with high self-esteem are instead fascinated by individuals who unabashedly radiate their excellence and confidence, and have a desire to identify with them vicariously.”

[English Reference Sites]

📄 <https://www.ntu.edu.sg/news/detail/messi-or-ronaldo--your-political-ideology-may-play-a-part>

📄 <https://phys.org/news/2026-06-messi-ronaldo-political-ideology-play.html>

📄 <https://footmundo.co.uk/cristiano-ronaldo-vs-lionel-messi-politics-right-wing/>

📄 <https://www.psypost.org/your-political-ideology-predicts-which-world-cup-icon-you-prefer-lionel-messi-or-cristiano-ronaldo/>