

2026 World Cup: According to a scientific study, left-wing people would prefer Messi, while right-wing people would choose Ronaldo

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According to scientific work made public by several researchers in humanities and communication, people who prefer Lionel Messi to Cristiano Ronaldo tend to lean left.



According to the study, Lionel Messi is more popular among progressive people than Cristiano Ronaldo.
Reuters

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After more than 20 years in the game, their rivalry continues to fuel debate in the football world. [Cristiano Ronaldo](#) and [Lionel Messi, who are playing in their sixth World Cup](#) this summer in North America , have become accustomed to being at odds with football discussions. But perhaps they didn't expect their duel to also reflect a political orientation.

This is the subject of a university study published on [the Social Science Research Network platform](#) . Entitled "Political identity beyond politics: preferences for Messi or Ronaldo in 26 countries", it was carried out in collaboration by several researchers in humanities, social

sciences and communication and has not yet been authenticated by the authors' peers, a key step in the scientific process.

Between April and May 2026, researchers surveyed a total of 10,661 people living in 26 selected countries across six continents. The panel was asked to rate the two football legends on a scale of 1 to 7 using simple questions about their likes and dislikes. When analyzing the responses, the researchers were able to create profiles of the respondents, examining each individual's characteristics based on criteria such as authoritarianism, self-esteem, and personal ideology.

A preference for Ronaldo among the most conservative public

According to the researchers, the study reveals that more progressive individuals tend to prefer the Argentinian, while more conservative ones lean towards the Portuguese player. The study even suggests that the most reliable predictor of respondents' final choice between [Messi](#) and [Ronaldo](#) is their political orientation.

Other theories put forward suggest that Messi supporters possess a more analytical mind, while fans of [the Al-Nassr striker](#) more readily embrace an authoritarian orientation and enjoy higher self-esteem. "The result is that in a given country, people who are slightly more conservative than their compatriots tend to rate Ronaldo higher, not that all conservatives are Ronaldo fans and all progressives are Messi fans," clarifies Saifuddin Ahmed, one of the researchers involved, in his capacity as an associate professor at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

It is also worth remembering that this is a study not yet validated by the scientific community and that its conclusions should therefore be analyzed cautiously, as the observed statistical effect is real but remains modest.