

Messi vs Ronaldo: What Your G.O.A.T. Choice Says About Your Personality, Political Views And Self-Esteem, Study Finds

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For nearly two decades, one question has divided football fans, sparked endless social media wars and even tested friendships: Messi or Ronaldo? Whether you're passionately defending Lionel Messi's effortless brilliance or Cristiano Ronaldo's relentless drive, chances are you've had this debate more than once.

For years, fans have argued over stats, trophies, and playing styles. But a major international study reveals that your choice of GOAT (Greatest of All Time) might say more about you than just your taste in football—it could reflect your political ideology, self-esteem, and even how you consume news, telling more about your preference, personality and even your political outlook.

A new international study led by researchers at Nanyang Technological University suggests that choosing between the two football icons may be linked to factors such as political ideology, self-esteem and even the way you consume news. While the findings do not imply that football preferences determine political beliefs or personality, they offer an intriguing glimpse into how our identities may subtly shape our everyday choices.



Messi Vs Ronaldo? What Your Favourite Football Icon Choice Reflects

Conducted by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Singapore and involving over 10,000 respondents across 26 countries, the research found a clear pattern: individuals identifying as more liberal tend to favor Lionel Messi, while those leaning conservative often prefer Cristiano Ronaldo. This connection is particularly pronounced among younger adults and weakens with age.

Messi is often perceived as the quiet, humble, team-oriented genius qualities that resonate with collaborative, progressive values. Ronaldo, on the other hand, embodies bold individualism, relentless ambition, and unapologetic celebration of personal success, traits that align with more conservative ideals of merit and self-reliance. As Associate Professor Saifuddin Ahmed of NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information noted, people are drawn to public figures whose personas mirror their broader worldview.

This isn't just about football. It highlights how political identity increasingly shapes everyday cultural choices, from entertainment to sports fandom, extending far beyond traditional American contexts.

Self-Esteem

Beyond politics, self-esteem plays a significant role. The study discovered that respondents with higher self-esteem are more likely to favor Ronaldo. This aligns with psychological

research on self-affirmation—individuals who feel confident may identify strongly with dominant, high-achieving figures whose success reinforces their own positive self-image.

Messi's understated brilliance might appeal to those who value modesty and collective harmony, while Ronaldo's charismatic confidence attracts those seeking inspiration from overt excellence. In relationships, this dynamic can influence compatibility. Couples with differing football allegiances might discover deeper ideological or personality alignments (or clashes) when exploring why one partner roots for the humble maestro and the other for the flamboyant superstar.



Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi at FIFA World Cup (AP)

Social Media Habits

Another fascinating factor is media consumption. Fans who get more news from short-form video platforms like TikTok and Instagram tend to lean toward Ronaldo. His strong, visually curated presence on social media likely amplifies this preference, creating echo chambers that reinforce admiration for his persona.

In the age of AI and digitalisation, algorithms feed us content that confirms our biases, turning a simple sports debate into a reflection of lifestyle and values. Younger fans, immersed in these platforms, show the strongest political-football correlations, underscoring how popular culture influences emerging identities.

Preferences vary significantly by country. Messi enjoys stronger support in Argentina, Western Europe, the US, Canada, and notably South Korea. Ronaldo dominates in parts of North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia, including Singapore. These patterns aren't simply explained by national loyalty or team success but reflect broader cultural and societal nuances.

Messi Vs Ronaldo: Debate That Turns Into A Personality Test

Whether it is couples, friends or family members, the Messi-versus-Ronaldo debate often becomes far more personal than a discussion about football.

People tend to associate celebrities with qualities they admire. Messi is widely perceived as humble, team-oriented and understated, while Ronaldo is often viewed as ambitious, disciplined and highly self-confident. These symbolic traits can shape first impressions and influence how people perceive one another, even outside sport.



Your GOAT choice doesn't define you: The researchers caution against reading too much into the findings. The study identifies statistical associations, not cause-and-effect relationships. Preferring Messi does not make someone politically liberal, just as supporting Ronaldo does not automatically indicate conservative beliefs or higher self-esteem.

Instead, the research highlights a broader psychological idea: our personal preferences, even those that seem unrelated to politics or identity, may sometimes reflect the values and beliefs that shape how we see ourselves and the world around us.