

# MEMORANDUM

**TO: INTERESTED PARTIES**  
**RE: DeSANTIS BOUNCE IN IOWA POST-DEBATE**

Public Opinion Strategies conducted an Iowa statewide survey among likely Republican caucus-goers following the first presidential debate, August 24, 2023. A total of 400 voters were interviewed on cell and landline phones, and the survey has a margin of error of  $\pm 4.9$  percentage points. The sample was selected from the voter file and stratified by geography, age, gender, and vote history to ensure a representative sample. Much of this poll data is compared to a pre-debate survey conducted last week.

## KEY FINDINGS

- Following the debate, Governor Ron DeSantis had the best image improvement of any candidate.

<i>Favorable-Unfavorable</i>	<i>Pre-Debate</i>	<i>Post-Debate</i>	<i>Net Change</i>
Ron DeSantis	68%-26%	72%-26%	+4
Tim Scott	69%-14%	71%-15%	+1
Donald Trump	71%-27%	67%-32%	-9
Nikki Haley	56%-24%	61%-31%	-2
Vivek Ramaswamy	56%-14%	61%-25%	-6
Mike Pence	34%-62%	35%-63%	Even
Chris Christie	22%-66%	17%-75%	-14

Trump, Ramaswamy, and Christie were the big losers from the debate in terms of their image as each of these candidates had negative change in their net favorable-unfavorable.

- More than one-third of voters now say they are “NOT considering Trump” – the highest figure we’ve seen.

	<i>June</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>Pre-Debate</i>	<i>Post-Debate</i>
Only Considering Trump	23%	21%	26%	26%
Considering Trump & Others	57%	49%	45%	38%
Not Considering Trump	20%	29%	29%	35%

- In a head-to-head ballot, DeSantis is now within the margin of error against Trump.

<i>Two-Way Ballot</i>	<i>Pre-Debate</i>	<i>Post-Debate</i>
Ron DeSantis	34%	40%
Donald Trump	51%	43%

- **Further, a full ballot test also shows DeSantis picking up significant ground since the debate.** Both DeSantis and Haley saw significant increases in their ballot standing since before the debate, while Scott and Ramaswamy both slipped back a bit:

<i>Full Ballot</i>	<i>Pre-Debate</i>	<i>Post-Debate</i>
<b>Ron DeSantis</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>21%</b>
<b>Donald Trump</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Nikki Haley</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Tim Scott</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Vivek Ramaswamy</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Mike Pence</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Chris Christie</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Doug Burgum</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Asa Hutchinson</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>1%</b>

- **DeSantis was the clear winner on the debate stage.** Comparing the candidates who debated on Wednesday evening, DeSantis won every single key “attribute” among likely Iowa caucus-goers:

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Strongest Conservative</i>	<i>Strongest Leader</i>	<i>Able to Defeat Biden</i>	<i>Strongest on Border Security</i>	<i>Able to Defeat Trump</i>
<b>Ron DeSantis</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Nikki Haley</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Tim Scott</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Vivek Ramaswamy</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Mike Pence</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Chris Christie</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Doug Burgum</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>
<b>Asa Hutchinson</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&lt;1%</b>

- **Ramaswamy was simply a placeholder position on the debate stage for core Trump voters.** Vivek doesn’t even win over voters who say he won the debate on Wednesday night:
  - Among those who believe that Ramaswamy won the debate, they are voting for Trump (60%), then Ramaswamy (21%), then DeSantis (10%) on the ballot.
  - Among those who believe that DeSantis won the debate, they are voting for DeSantis (64%), then Trump (28%), then Scott (3%) and Haley (3%) on the ballot.
  - Among those who believe that Haley won the debate, they are voting for Haley (50%), then DeSantis (13%), then Trump (12%).