

MEMORANDUM

TO: INTERESTED PARTIES
RE: IOWA CAUCUS-GOERS SAY DeSANTIS WON GOP DEBATE



Public Opinion Strategies conducted an Iowa statewide survey among likely Republican caucus-goers following the second presidential debate, September 28-29, 2023. A total of 400 voters were interviewed on cell and landline phones, and the survey has a margin of error of ± 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.

KEY FINDINGS

- Iowa caucus-goers, especially those who watched, say Ron DeSantis won this week's GOP debate. As we have seen with national data ([538/WaPo/Ipsos National Post-Debate Poll](#)), Governor DeSantis clearly won the second presidential debate among all likely Iowa caucus-goers as well as among the 41% who say they watched or listened to all of the debate:

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Debate Winner (All Voters)</i>	<i>Debate Winner (Watchers)</i>
Ron DeSantis	25%	40%
Nikki Haley	15%	21%
Vivek Ramaswamy	8%	11%
Tim Scott	5%	5%
Mike Pence	2%	4%
Chris Christie	1%	2%
Doug Burgum	2%	2%

- DeSantis viewed as the “strongest on border security” and “best able to defeat Donald Trump.” Comparing the candidates who debated on Wednesday evening, DeSantis won these key “attributes” by an overwhelming margin among likely Iowa caucus-goers:

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Strongest on Border Security</i>	<i>Able to Defeat Trump</i>
Ron DeSantis	43%	40%
Nikki Haley	10%	11%
Tim Scott	9%	7%
Vivek Ramaswamy	14%	5%
Mike Pence	4%	3%
Chris Christie	--	1%
Doug Burgum	1%	1%

- Following the debate, DeSantis had the best image improvement of any candidate – by far.

<i>Favorable-Unfavorable</i>	<i>Pre-Debate</i>	<i>Post-Debate</i>	<i>Net Change</i>
Ron DeSantis	70%-27%	76%-21%	+12
Tim Scott	72%-13%	74%-14%	+1
Donald Trump	77%-22%	72%-27%	-10
Nikki Haley	62%-22%	64%-27%	-3
Vivek Ramaswamy	56%-24%	54%-31%	-9
Mike Pence	38%-57%	32%-65%	-14
Chris Christie	15%-75%	15%-77%	-2

In Iowa, Trump, Vivek, and Pence were the big losers from the debate in terms of their image as each of these candidates had the most negative change in their net favorable-unfavorable.