



# Questions in Context:

The Republican Presidential Primary Debates  
Through NBC News (11/8)

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## Overview

In past presidential elections, the Winston Group has analyzed the primary and general election debates to build a picture of how the topics covered interact with what voters have said — through surveys and exit polls — are their greatest concerns and the issues that are the most important for them in choosing for whom they will vote.

The following report continues our analysis for the Republican primary debates in anticipation of the general election next fall. This report covers the third Republican Primary Debate, hosted by NBC News on November 8, 2023. Topics covered include the distribution of issue topics in the debate questions, the number of questions asked of specific candidates, and candidate speaking times.

Qualified candidates for the NBC News November 8 debate were former Governor of New Jersey Chris Christie, Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida, former South Carolina Governor and ambassador Nikki Haley, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, and Senator Tim Scott.

## Debate Topics

The chart on the next page shows the distribution of questions by topic area. For the purposes of comparability, we re-use the same topic categories from our debate reports for the 2016 Republican primary and general election debates and the 2020 Democratic primary and general election debates. The exception is the “Presidential Fitness” category, which is a new category that covers questions such as whether presidents should be required to pass mental or physical acuity tests in order to serve.

Most of the topics are self explanatory, but for a few, definitions may be helpful. The “electability” topic area includes questions addressed directly to a candidate about his/her ability to attract a large portion of the electorate (for example, asking a candidate about his/her standing in the polls or statements he/she made that have raised questions), while the “other candidates” topic area refers to questions that directly ask one candidate about another candidate’s past, policies, or prospects. If however the lead-in to a question refers to another candidate’s policies but the substance of the question is that candidate’s own positions, the question would be categorized according to the issue area. The “For Fun” topic area includes unusual topics or lighthearted questions aimed at letting viewers see more of a candidate’s personality. “Social Security/Retirement” consists of questions that address that topic as a separate individual retirement benefit issue — other entitlements questions fall under “Spending/National Debt.” “Energy/Environment”

has been expanded to “Energy/Environment/Climate Change.” “Social Issues” has been renamed to “Social/Cultural Issues.” Given the breadth of the Social/Cultural issues category, we break this out by sub-category to get a better sense of the specific content of questions that may drive the debates.

Questions asked multiple times of different candidates are not counted more than once.

## NBC News November 8

General Topic Area	Number of Questions	Percentage of Questions
Covid	0	0.0%
Economy	2	11.1%
Education	0	0.0%
Electability	0	0.0%
Energy/Environment/Climate Change	0	0.0%
For Fun	0	0.0%
Foreign Policy/National Security	7	38.9%
Health care	0	0.0%
Immigration	2	11.1%
Judicial System	0	0.0%
Other Candidates	1	5.6%
Presidential Fitness	0	0.0%
Presidential Priorities	1	5.6%
Social/Cultural Issues	4	22.2%
Social Security/Retirement	1	5.6%
Spending/National Debt	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	

## Total - All Debates

General Topic Area	Fox News August 23		Fox Business September 27		NBC News November 8		Total	
	# of Qs	% of Qs	# of Qs	% of Qs	# of Qs	% of Qs	# of Qs	% of Qs
Covid	1	3.0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.1%
Economy	3	9.1%	6	14.0%	2	11.1%	11	11.7%
Education	3	9.1%	5	11.6%	0	0%	8	8.5%
Electability	3	9.1%	2	4.7%	0	0%	5	5.3%
Energy/ Environment/ Climate Change	2	6.1%	0	0%	0	0%	2	2.1%
For Fun	1	3.0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.1%
Foreign Policy/ National Security	4	12.1%	7	16.3%	7	38.9%	18	19.2%
Health care	0	0.0%	3	7.0%	0	0%	3	3.2%
Immigration	3	9.1%	7	16.3%	2	11.1%	12	12.8%
Judicial System	0	0.0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other Candidates	2	6.1%	3	7.0%	1	5.6%	6	6.4%
Presidential Fitness	1	3.0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.1%
Presidential Priorities	0	0.0%	0	0%	1	5.6%	1	1.1%
Social/ Cultural Issues	8	24.2%	8	18.6%	4	22.2%	20	21.3%
Social Security/ Retirement	0	0.0%	0	0%	1	5.6%	1	1.1%
Spending/ National Debt	2	6.1%	2	4.7%	0	0%	4	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>43</b>		<b>18</b>		<b>94</b>	

## Topic Subcategories

Because of the potentially broad nature of some of the question categories, some additional clarification may be helpful.

### Foreign Policy/National Security

Foreign Policy/National Security, the dominant category in the NBC News November 8 debate and accounting for about 1 in 5 questions overall, includes questions on China, Ukraine, and a subtopic that emerged following the attack on Israel on October 7, the Middle East.

Foreign Policy/ Natl. Security Sub-topics	Fox News August 23			Fox Business September 27			NBC News November 8			Total		
	# of Qs	% of Qs (FP/NS)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (FP/NS)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (FP/NS)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (FP/NS)	% of Qs (All)
China	1	25.0%	3.0%	4	57.1%	9.3%	2	28.6%	11.1%	7	38.9%	7.4%
Middle East	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	2	28.6%	11.1%	2	11.1%	2.1%
Ukraine	2	50.0%	6.1%	2	28.6%	4.7%	2	28.6%	11.1%	6	33.3%	6.4%
Other	1	25.0%	3.0%	1	14.3%	2.3%	1	14.3%	5.6%	3	16.7%	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>			<b>7</b>			<b>7</b>			<b>18</b>		

### Immigration

The broad topic of immigration, which has accounted for almost 13% of the questions so far, can be further subdivided into questions pertaining to border security (including questions about drugs coming from across the border), and questions pertaining to immigration policy itself, such as questions about DACA .

Immig. Sub-topics	Fox News August 23			Fox Business September 27			NBC News November 8			Total		
	# of Qs	% of Qs (Immig)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (Immig)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (Immig)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (Immig)	% of Qs (All)
Border Security	3	100%	9.1%	4	57.1%	9.3%	2	100%	11.1%	9	75.0%	9.6%
Policy	0	0%	0%	3	42.9%	7.0%	0	0%	0%	3	25.0%	3.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>7</b>			<b>2</b>			<b>12</b>		

## Social/Cultural Issues

“Social issues,” about 22% of all questions asked in the NBC News November 8 debate, and about a fifth of the questions asked across both debates so far, includes a variety of subcategories, such as abortion, crime/guns, or LGBTQ+ issues.

Social Issues Sub-topics	Fox News August 23			Fox Business September 27			NBC News November 8			Total		
	# of Qs	% of Qs (Soc/ Cult)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (Soc/ Cult)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (Soc/ Cult)	% of Qs (All)	# of Qs	% of Qs (Soc/ Cult)	% of Qs (All)
Abortion	3	37.5%	9.1%	2	25.0%	4.7%	2	50.0%	11.1%	7	35.0%	7.4%
Crime/ Guns	2	25.0%	6.1%	4	50.0%	9.3%	0	0%	0%	6	30.0%	6.4%
LGBTQ+ Issues	1	12.5%	3.0%	2	25.0%	4.7%	0	0%	0%	3	15.0%	3.2%
Other	2	25.0%	6.1%	0	0%	0%	2	50.0%	11.1%	4	20.0%	4.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>			<b>8</b>			<b>4</b>			<b>20</b>		

## To Whom Were Questions Directed?

“Number of Questions” refers to questions directed by a moderator at a particular candidate and includes questions that were asked of all candidates - so totals may differ from the charts above. “Number of Rebuttals” includes any times the moderator addressed a follow-up or rebuttal opportunity to a candidate, or a candidate broke in and gave a rebuttal to another candidate's answer on their own initiative. Given the difficulty of quantifying rebuttals and counter-rebuttals in high-tempo debate discussions, the “Rebuttals” column should be viewed as a reasonable estimate of what occurred in a given debate. While direct questions are somewhat easy to count, rebuttals and counter-rebuttals are somewhat more difficult to quantify, given the nature of the cross-talk that can occur when multiple candidates are on stage. Generally speaking, complete sentences or thoughts were counted as rebuttals, while, for example, single-word attempts to jump into the conversation were not.

“Percentage of Direct Questions” a candidate received comes from only questions directly addressed to a candidate or those addressed to all candidates, while “Percentage of Answers” includes all opportunities a candidate had to speak, including rebuttals, as described above. The “Percentage of Answers” comes out of the total of all answers given — not the total questions asked — so once again, the totals differ.

Candidate	Previous Debates		NBC News November 8					Total - All Debates			
	Direct Qs	Total Answers	Direct Qs	Rebuttals	Total Answers	% of Qs	% of Answers	Total Qs	Total % of Qs	Total Answers	Total % of Answers
Doug Burgum	14	22	0	0	0	0%	0%	14	7.4%	22	7.9%
Chris Christie	17	28	11	1	12	18.6%	16.9%	28	14.7%	40	14.4%
Ron DeSantis	22	35	13	3	16	22.0%	22.5%	35	18.4%	51	18.4%
Nikki Haley	18	27	13	3	16	22.0%	22.5%	31	16.3%	43	15.5%
Asa Hutchinson	9	11	0	0	0	0%	0%	9	4.7%	11	4.0%
Mike Pence	17	27	0	0	0	0%	0%	17	9.0%	27	9.8%
Vivek Ramaswamy	16	33	11	2	13	18.6%	18.3%	27	14.2%	46	16.6%
Tim Scott	18	23	11	3	14	18.6%	19.7%	29	15.3%	37	13.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>71</b>			<b>190</b>		<b>277</b>	

## Questions Asked Of All Candidates

The following table highlights the questions that the moderators asked of every single candidate as well as the topic area of the question. Of note, the moderators appeared to take special care to make sure every candidate had an opportunity to speak on a given topic, even if they did not pose the question to each candidate in exactly the same way. For this reason, multiple questions may be captured in this chart from that debate.

Debate	Question	Topic
1 — Fox News August 23, 2023	Polls consistently show that young people's number one issue is climate change. How will you, as both president of the United States and leader of the Republican Party, calm their fears that the Republican Party doesn't care about climate change?	Environment/ Climate Change
1 — Fox News August 23, 2023	So we want to start on this with a show of hands. Do you believe in human behavior is causing climate change? Raise your hand if you do.	Environment/ Climate Change
1 — Fox News August 23, 2023	Former President Trump has been indicted in four different states on 91 counts. He will be processed tomorrow in Georgia at the Fulton County Jail for charges relating to the 2020 election loss. You all signed a pledge to support the eventual Republican nominee. If former President Trump is convicted in a court of law, would you still support him as your party's choice? Please raise your hand if you would.	Other Candidates
1 — Fox News August 23, 2023	The US has committed nearly \$77 billion in aid to the Ukraine war. The administration is now asking Congress for \$24 billion more. Regardless of that, the specific specifics of that plan. Is there anyone on stage who would not support the increase of more funding to Ukraine?	Foreign Policy/ National Security
1 — Fox News August 23, 2023	In your closing statement tonight, please tell American voters why you are the person who can inspire this nation to a better day.	Electability
2 — Fox Business September 27, 2023	And candidates, it's now obvious that if you all stay, in the race, former President Donald Trump wins the nomination. None of you have indicated that you're dropping out. So, which one of you, on stage, tonight, should be voted off the island?	Other Candidates



Debate	Question	Topic
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>Our first question, the opening question is one for all of you. Donald Trump is the first ex-president in more than 100 years to run for the white House again. And he remains popular among Republican primary voters as his legal challenges mount. Governor DeSantis, let me begin with you on this. <b>When I speak to Republican voters who are supporting Donald Trump, why should you and not him be the Republican nominee to face Joe Biden a year from now?</b> ... Let me turn to Ambassador Haley. <b>Why you and not the former President?</b> ... Mr. Ramaswamy, let me turn to you. Please make your case. <b>Why should you be the nominee and not the former president?</b> ... <b>Governor Christie, why you and not former President Trump?</b> ... <b>Senator Scott, you've said former President Trump can't win. Make your case to Republican voters.</b></p>	Other Candidates
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>So as we continue forward, the Israel-hamas War is barely a month old. Tonight, Israeli troops are fighting inside Gaza City with over 200 hostages who remain captive there. And civilian casualties mount inside Gaza. <b>As president of the United States, what would you be urging Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to do at this moment?</b> Governor DeSantis. ... Ambassador Haley. <b>What would you do? What would you be urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to do? Would you consider humanitarian pause, for example?</b> ... Mr. Ramaswamy, any daylight between you and the candidates we just heard on this issue on what you would tell the Prime Minister? ... Senator Scott. Yes, Senator. Same question to you about you're the president. <b>You're on the phone in the Oval Office with the Prime Minister. You tell him what?</b> ... <b>Governor Christie, I want to get you to weigh in here.</b></p>	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Middle East)
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>Jewish students across the country are threatened and under attack. <b>What do you say to Jewish students on college campuses who feel unsafe, given the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism? And what do you say to university presidents and college presidents who have not met the moral clarity moment to forcefully condemn Hamas terrorism?</b> Mr. Ramaswamy, would you like to take that one?... Senator Scott, let me get you to weigh in on what you just heard. ... Let me turn to Governor DeSantis here. <b>What do you think about what he just said?</b> ... Let me turn to governor Governor Christie, and considering what he just said. You led a state with a sizable Muslim population. Last month, as you know, a six year old Palestinian American boy was killed in Illinois by his landlord. His mother was also stabbed more than a dozen times. And that has been charged as a hate crime. <b>What do you say to Muslim Americans who are also feeling afraid for their safety right now?</b> ... <b>Ambassador Haley, what do you say to Americans who are simply afraid right now in this current environment that we're talking about?</b></p>	Social/Cultural Issues ( <i>Other</i> )

Debate	Question	Topic
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>This is another question for the entire field. So you will all get a chance to respond. But, Senator Scott, I'd like to start with you. The United States has given Ukraine financial and military support since the war began more than 600 days ago. President Zelensky told me on Sunday, if Russia isn't stopped now, "the price will be higher for the United States" and Americans would be forced to "send your sons and daughters to defend NATO countries." <b>Senator Scott, where do you stand on more funding for Ukraine?</b> ...</p> <p>Senator Scott, thank you. But just to be very clear, if you were president, if you were in the Oval Office today, would you sign off on more military funding for Ukraine or would you discontinue it? ... <b>Mr. Ramaswamy, are you persuaded by President Zelensky's urgent new plea? Where do you stand on more funding? ... Ambassador Haley, what is your take on more funding for Ukraine? ... Governor Christie. What is your take and how long should Americans be expected to help fund the war in Ukraine?</b> ... Governor DeSantis, I'd like you to weigh in on this idea. <b>Are you concerned that this could become a wider war if Putin is not stopped now?</b></p>	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Ukraine)
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>We are going to go from the hot wars in Ukraine and Gaza and Israel to what many people are calling the new Cold War with China. And I remind the audience that it's important for our visitors at home to be able to hear you, and especially for the people in Beijing, to hear you. Many Republicans believe that the Chinese Communist Party in General Secretary Xi is an existential threat to the United States. The flashpoint is Taiwan. For decades and decades, the American military, but primarily the United States Navy, has deterred an attack from China to the island state of Taiwan. But Ronald Reagan's navy of 600 ships is gone. Now, the question to you is, and I'll start with you, Ambassador Haley, because you were in President Trump's cabinet, his goal was a 355 ship navy. That's what he pushed for. He got to 300. It's now at 291. <b>Is that big enough to deter and if necessary, defeat an invasion of Taiwan?</b> ... Governor DeSantis, my question is specifically about the Navy. It's a 291. It's going to go down perhaps as low as 280. <b>Is it enough? And what would you build if you were going to build more?</b> ... Senator Scott, you've been in the Congress since 2011. Defense spending has fallen over that entire period of time. <b>Where are we going to get the money and what would you build and what kind of ships to deter China from attacking Taiwan?</b> ... Mr. Ramaswamy, I'm looking for specifics. <b>What would you build? Where would you build it? When would they be in the water? How big would the fleet get?</b> ... Do you have a number and a plan? ... Governor Christie.</p>	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)

Debate	Question	Topic
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>We're going to stay on China. And we're going to talk specifically about TikTok. Last week, Congressman Mike Gallagher, who is chairman of the House Bipartisan Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, published a long essay on TikTok following the flooding of pro-Hamas propaganda under TikTok accounts across the United States. Chairman Gallagher called it shocking. He called the app predatory, controlled by America's preeminent adversary, one used to push propaganda and divide America its spyware, he said, a means of surveillance. <b>Governor Christie, do you agree with Chairman Gallagher? And if so, would you ban or force the sale of TikTok?</b> ... I want to go to governor DeSantis. <b>Would you ban or force the sale of TikTok? Regardless of whether or not China allowed American apps to operate in China? ... Ambassador Haley, speak to the parents out there. They're probably TikTok apps on half the phones in this auditorium. ...</b> Mr. Mr. Ramaswamy, we've talked about this, your campaign on TikTok. <b>How do you get TikTok banned if you use it?</b> ... Senator Scott?</p>	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>Let's turn to one of the biggest issues for voters. That, of course, is the economy. This is a question that will go to all of you. An Iowa voter recently told NBC news, "How am I going to make sure my pantry is stocked without breaking the bank?" You've all said the best way to deal with rising prices is to cut government spending, but that would take time to play out in. Americans are struggling right now. Senator Scott, I'll start with you. <b>What would you do the moment you take office to help Americans manage the cost of living?</b> So we're talking about short term here. ... Let me just follow up the idea of pumping gas, of turning on pipelines that doesn't put make gas cheaper that day. I'm talking about you become president. What can you do specifically to help people feel better about their situation or be better with their situation? ... Let me ask the same question to Governor DeSantis. <b>Can you give us some — you ticked off a number of things a moment ago — but some specific examples of ways that would put people on a better economic footing right away?</b> ... Mr. Ramaswamy. Weigh in on the ways that you can improve people's financial condition in the short term. ... To Governor Christie on that. ... Ambassador Haley, let me come at this from a slightly different direction. Americans in rural communities are being especially squeezed by inflation right now. An Iowa State University study found that last year, inflation cost rural households about an extra \$5,000. <b>How would you specifically help rural Americans who are suffering right now?</b></p>	Economy

Debate	Question	Topic
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>Americans could see their Social Security benefits drastically cut in the next decade because the program is running out of money. Former President Trump has said, “Under no circumstances should Republicans cut entitlements.” Governor Christie, first to you. <b>You have proposed raising the retirement age for younger Americans. What would that age be specifically? And would you consider making any other reforms to Social Security?</b> ...</p> <p>Governor, can you give me a specific age? 69, 70. What would the age be? ... All right, <b>Ambassador Haley, let me have you weigh in on this because you said in June that you would be open to raising the retirement age. Have you determined what that age would be specifically, and what other reforms are you looking at?</b> ... And can you give me a specific age? Have you determined that age? ... <b>Mr. Ramaswamy, have you determined if you would touch entitlements and Social Security, what, if any, reforms are you looking at?</b> ... Senator Scott, weigh in here. <b>What are you looking at to keep Social Security sustainable?</b> ... Senator, very quickly, would you raise the retirement age? Would you be open to raising the retirement age, or do you rule that out? ... <b>Governor DeSantis, finally to you, would you be open to raising the retirement age and how would you keep Social Security sustainable?</b> ... Yes or no. Would you raise it? Would you raise the retirement age?</p>	Social Security/ Retirement

Debate	Question	Topic
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>When NBC News talks to voters, when I talk to voters every day, they all say that the border is a top issue. It can mean a lot of different things. It can mean 2 million people who crossed illegally last year. It can mean more than 150 arrests of people on the terror watch list. It can mean the burden on states from having migrants move into their states from the southwestern border. But I want to talk about opioids specifically and fentanyl. And I'll start with you, Senator Scott. Tens of thousands of Americans families have suffered a death to fentanyl. Young people sometimes die taking one pill.</p> <p><b>What can you do as commander in chief on the first day to stop fentanyl and the waterfall of it into this country?</b> ... Governor Christie, Senator Scott, just mentioned ports of entry. 90% of the fentanyl that is seized in the United States is seized at ports of entry. We don't know what's coming in across the open southern border. You've been in the United States Attorney. <b>You've taken on cartels. Can it really be done quickly? What would you do as president?</b> ... Governor DeSantis, you have talked about using United States special forces to attack the cartels where they manufacture the chemicals that come from China. <b>How often? How many? What what does that look like?</b> ... Ambassador Haley. If Ambassador Haley. <b>If the United States uses special forces in Mexico without prior notice to the Mexican allies to our south, what would your colleagues at the United Nations think about that?</b> ... Mr. Ramaswamy. Special forces in Mexico. <b>Shoot them stone cold dead at the border?</b></p>	Immigration (Border Security)
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	<p>Let's talk now about last night's election results. Abortion rights supporters saw victories in Ohio and Virginia following earlier wins in states like Kansas and Kentucky. <b>Governor DeSantis, first to you, how do you see the path forward for Republicans on this issue?</b> ... Ambassador Haley, let me have you weigh in. Former President Trump has consistently blamed the abortion issue and how Republican candidates have talked about it for their electoral losses. <b>How do you see the path forward?</b> ... Scott, I'd like you. To weigh in. <b>How do you see the path forward? And what do you make of what Ambassador Haley just said? Do you see this as a consensus issue?</b> ... Ambassador Haley, your name was invoked. <b>Would you support a 15-week federal limit?</b> ... Let me go to Mr. Ramaswamy. <b>Would you support a 15 week federal ban and what is the path forward on this issue?</b> ... Governor Christie, as you know, federal limits are important to a lot of Republicans. <b>Where do you stand on this issue and what is the path forward for Republicans?</b></p>	Social/Cultural Issues (Abortion)

Debate	Question	Topic
3 — NBC News November 8, 2023	With only two hours for a debate, we know there are other major issues that are important to Republican primary voters. I'll ask you each to please use your closing statement to focus on any topic you didn't have time to address, and why you and not former President Trump would be the party's best choice to tackle these important issues. You each have a minute.	Presidential Priorities

## Speaking Time

The speaking times listed for the Fox News August 23 debate, the Fox Business September 27 debate, and the NBC News November 8 debate are taken from CNN: Fox News August 23 - <https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/23/politics/speaking-times-candidate-republican-debate-dg/index.html>; Fox Business September 27 - <https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/27/politics/speaking-times-republican-second-debate-dg/index.html>; NBC News November 8 - <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/08/politics/speaking-times-republican-third-debate-dg/index.html>.

Candidate	Fox News August 23	Fox Business September 27	NBC News November 8	Total - All Debates
Vivek Ramaswamy	11:38	12:30	17:37	41:45
Ron DeSantis	10:01	12:08	16:19	38:28
Chris Christie	11:37	10:27	16:15	38:19
Tim Scott	7:57	11:21	18:55	38:13
Nikki Haley	8:20	10:22	18:02	36:44
Mike Pence	12:26	9:38	-	22:04
Doug Burgum	7:50	7:39	-	15:29
Asa Hutchinson	7:24	-	-	7:24

## Conclusion

One of the first noteworthy elements of the NBC News November 8 debate was that the moderators did not allow candidates to interrupt or speak over each other, and with a few rare exceptions, they did not allow candidates to rebut other candidates if their names were invoked in a negative light. Relatedly, the moderators seemed to take special care to ensure that all candidates had the opportunity to speak on almost all the questions. Having only five candidates on the stage may have also helped ensure that each one had an opportunity to speak. In our opinion, this created the conditions for a more substantive debate.

In terms of the topics covered, there were two categories that dominated the questions. These were Foreign Policy/National Security (about 39% of all questions asked in this debate) and Social/Cultural Issues (about 22%). In this debate, there was no dominant subcategory in either of these questions, with China, the Middle East, and Ukraine getting roughly equal coverage in Foreign Policy, and questions about abortion balanced with other Social/Cultural Issues questions.

Overall, Social/Cultural Issues and Foreign Policy/National Security are also the dominant question categories across all the debates, together accounting for about 40% of all questions asked. The economy, the consistent priority for voters, comes in at about 12% of the questions asked across all three debates.

However, another set of numbers worthy of consideration are the ratings for the debates. The NBC News November 8 debate had 7.5 million viewers, down from 9.5 million for the Fox Business September 27 debate. The first debate, hosted by Fox News, drew 13 million viewers.

## Appendix - Republican Primary Debate Questions

Debate Number — Location — Date — Sponsors	Question	Asker	To Whom (or to whom it was directed by moderator)	Question Topic
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	As we sit here tonight. The number one song on the Billboard chart is called Rich Men North of Richmond. It is by a singer from Farmville, Virginia, named Oliver Anthony. His lyrics speak of alienation, of deep frustration with the state of government and of this country. Washington, D.C. is about 100 miles north of Richmond... So, Governor DeSantis, why is this song striking such a nerve in this country right now? What do you think it means?	Martha MacCallum	Ron DeSantis	Social/ Cultural Issues (Other)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Christie, do you agree with what Governor DeSantis just said there? And why would you be better on the economy than him? ... New Jersey, when you were governor, had the second lowest credit rating in the nation after Illinois and it was downgraded 11 times.	Bret Bair	Chris Christie	Economy
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Senator Scott, the song also goes after welfare programs as a senator. Now, President Biden argued for freezing federal spending. This was back in the 80s and dealing with sacred cows. He does not talk about that anymore. You have been a senator, though, for ten years. So what have you done to rein in the increasing size of government? ... During the Trump administration, you approved \$4.4 trillion, \$4.1 trillion, \$1.7 trillion over the course of that administration. That's a lot of money.	Martha MacCallum	Tim Scott	Spending/ National Debt
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Mr. Ramaswamy, listening to all of this, why should voters choose you over more experienced politicians on this stage? You're basically a blank slate for people. You're 38 years old. You've said that you only voted in two presidential elections before this moment, this political race.	Bret Bair	Vivek Ramaswamy	Electability
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Why are you better positioned to turn around this economy that we've heard all of these voters talking about tonight, than Mr. Ramaswamy, who is a successful entrepreneur. Nationally right now, he's beating you in the polls.	Martha MacCallum	Nikki Haley	Economy
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	The nation's report card was the weakest ever for American schoolchildren, exposing chronic absenteeism, deep declines for reading and math for 15 year olds and 13 year olds. Governor DeSantis, you would eliminate, you said, the Department of Education, but as president, would you still have a responsibility to fix this crisis as we see it?	Bret Bair	Ron DeSantis	Education
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Vice President Pence. You were mentioned there. 54% of voters say the cost of groceries is a, quote, major problem for them. You blamed the Biden administration spending for that increase. But as vice president, your administration spent more than any prior \$7.8 trillion added to the national debt, 3.5 trillion of that before Covid. So does that mean that you're part of the spending problem?	Bret Bair	Mike Pence	Spending/ National Debt
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	There are two people who we have not heard from yet. So let's hear from Governor Burgum and then from Governor Hutchinson on the economy, sir.	Martha MacCallum	Doug Burgum, Asa Hutchinson	Economy
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Polls consistently show that young people's number one issue is climate change. How will you, as both president of the United States and leader of the Republican Party, calm their fears that the Republican Party doesn't care about climate change?	Voter	All Candidates	Environment /Climate Change



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1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	So we want to start on this with a show of hands. Do you believe in human behavior is causing climate change? Raise your hand if you do.	Martha MacCallum	All Candidates	Environment /Climate Change
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Haley, would you like to respond? Are you being paid for? ... Senator Scott, are you bought and paid for?	Bret Bair	Nikki Haley, Tim Scott	Electability
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Abortion has been a losing issue for Republicans since the Dobbs decision. In six state referendums, all have upheld abortion rights in this country and even in red states, there are more swing state referendums that are coming up as we head into the elections as well on this. So, Governor Haley, what do you say to your party and to your state, which today confirmed a six week abortion law as well, especially the impact on women suburban voters across this country?	Martha MacCallum	Nikki Haley	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor DeSantis, you signed a six week abortion ban in Florida. One of your biggest financial backers said that you need to, quote, shift to get moderates or you will lose. What do you say to him and others who say politically that is a tough thing to sell nationally? ... But just to be clear, Governor, would you sign a six week ban federally?	Bret Bair	Ron DeSantis	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	The Supreme Court did overturn Roe v Wade. And the result of that decision was that it went back to the states. So that's where it is right now. So as I understand it, you are not in favor of a federal ban. What do you say about the states? There's about five of them, including New Jersey, I think a few others, that allow abortion up until the time of birth, though, if you were president, would you be able to abide that? ... Governor Burgum, you signed a six-week ban. So you're saying federally it's all going to go to the States?	Martha MacCallum Bret Bair	Doug Burgum	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Another issue is America and the crime crisis, the homelessness crisis. American cities are in decline. People are moving out as homelessness, drugs, crime move in. There are problems accelerated. They did accelerate during the pandemic and are still rising, actually. Murders in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, all up 30% between 2019 and 2022. Homelessness is up 11%, the largest jump in recorded history. Vice President Pence. A lot of this began in the Covid era. How much of what we're seeing happening around this country is a result of those Covid lockdowns? And is your administration in part to blame for how we got here?	Bret Bair, Martha MacCallum	Mike Pence	Covid
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Christie, another issue this weekend here in Milwaukee. Reports say there were 30 shootings and a number of them including kids. Add that to the big increase in school shootings around the country. Democrats blame this crisis on easy access to guns. They also blame Republicans for blocking gun control legislation. What would President Christie do? ... What about a President Ramaswamy? What does the president Ramaswamy do about guns?	Bret Bair	Chris Christie, Vivek Ramaswamy	Social/ Cultural Issues (Crime/ Guns)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Crime has been on the rise in Florida. Governor DeSantis, how do you stop crime?	Bret Bair	Ron DeSantis	Social/ Cultural Issues (Crime/ Guns)

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1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Former President Trump has been indicted in four different states on 91 counts. He will be processed tomorrow in Georgia at the Fulton County Jail for charges relating to the 2020 election loss. You all signed a pledge to support the eventual Republican nominee. If former President Trump is convicted in a court of law, would you still support him as your party's choice? Please raise your hand if you would.	Martha MacCallum Bret Bair	All Candidates	Other Candidates
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	President Trump's former vice president is on this stage tonight. He has faced hecklers on the campaign trail over his actions on January the 6th. On that day, the vice president moved forward with the certification of the election. So do you believe that Mike Pence did the right thing? ... Governor DeSantis, do you believe he did the right thing? ... Governor DeSantis, do you believe that Mike Pence did the right thing on January 7th? ... Vice President Pence, what do you think? ... Governor Hutchinson, you did not raise your hand. ... Governor, you agree that Vice President Pence did the right thing that day or not?	Martha MacCallum	Tim Scott, Ron DeSantis, Mike Pence, Asa Hutchinson, Nikki Haley	Other Candidates
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	The US has committed nearly \$77 billion in aid to the Ukraine war. The administration is now asking Congress for \$24 billion more. Regardless of that, the specific specifics of that plan. Is there anyone on stage who would not support the increase of more funding to Ukraine?	Bret Bair	All Candidates	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Ukraine)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Haley, you did not raise your hand, meaning that you would support more funding for the Ukraine war. You have said of Governor DeSantis that you didn't appreciate it when he initially called it a territorial dispute. Why?	Martha MacCallum	Nikki Haley	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Ukraine)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Burgum, China has the biggest navy in the world, the biggest army in the world. Now they have warships, warships off the coast of Alaska. They are threatening Taiwan. In coming years, China will have 1500 nuclear warheads. It's believed the US just arrested two sailors accused of spying for China within our military. So the question is, how would you deter China as a president? ... Senator Scott, on China, that same question.	Bret Bair	Doug Burgum	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Hutchinson ... earlier this month, images showed suspected cartel members crossing into Texas with rifles. Do you consider this an invasion? Would you authorize lethal force along that border? ... Let's go to Governor DeSantis. So as president, would you support sending us special forces over the border into Mexico to take out fentanyl labs, to take out drug cartel operations? Would you support that kind of American military use?	Bret Bair	Asa Hutchinson, Ron DeSantis	Immigration (Border Security)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Vice President Pence. Why would you be better at this issue than Governor DeSantis? Governor DeSantis on the campaign trail refers to your administration as not finishing the wall, right?	Bret Bair	Mike Pence	Immigration (Border Security)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Another issue that is related to this is that almost 7 million migrants have crossed this border, our southern border, during the Biden administration. So, Governor Christie, what would you do about the 7 million who are here? How would you handle them? What would you do? ... I want to clarify, would you send those people back?	Martha MacCallum	Chris Christie	Immigration (Border Security)

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1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Mr. Ramaswamy, you've said that the Department of Education, the FBI, the ATF, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the IRS, the Department of Commerce, many of these should not exist. So to the education question, how would you deal with the crisis?	Bret Bair	Vivek Ramaswamy	Education
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Burgum. Governor Haley has said Governor. Haley has said that biological boys playing in girls sports is the women's issue of our time. You said that even though you signed a ban on this in North Dakota, that there hadn't been one instance where it was actually needed. Are you saying that you think that too much is made of this issue? ... Governor Haley, you said that this is the women's issue of our time?	Martha MacCallum	Doug Burgum, Nikki Haley	Social/ Cultural Issues (LGBTQ+ Issues)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	President Biden will be 82 years old on Inauguration Day. Nearly 70% of Americans say that he is too old to serve. Should presidents have to pass a mental and physical test in order to serve, Vice President Pence? ... Mr. Ramaswamy, I think you were mentioned there. You're 38. You're the youngest on the stage. You've said and you just said you want a civics test or public service for those under 25 to be able to vote. So the question is, do you want a mental acuity test for presidents over 75?	Martha MacCallum Bret Bair	Mike Pence, Vivek Ramaswamy	Presidential Fitness
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor Hutchinson, you have 30s on the same question on education.	Bret Bair	Asa Hutchinson	Education
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Senator Scott, faith is on decline in this country. You talked about it a little bit before tonight. So is there a role for a president of the United States in changing that? What would you do to change that?	Martha MacCallum	Tim Scott	Social/ Cultural Issues (Other)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Governor DeSantis, would you support some mandatory military service for all Americans?	Bret Bair	Ron DeSantis	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Other)
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	Now for something a little out of this world. And this is for you, Governor Christie. Do you believe that the recent spike in UFO encounters. ... We've been hearing a lot of testimony in Congress, and people are taking this a lot more seriously. And we're hearing that there are things going on. So if you were president, Governor Christie, would you level with the American people about what the government knows about these possible encounters?	Martha MacCallum	Chris Christie	For Fun
1 — Milwaukee, WI — August 23, 2023 — Fox News	In your closing statement tonight, please tell American voters why you are the person who can inspire this nation to a better day.	Martha MacCallum	All Candidates	Electability
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Senator Scott, you recently reacted by praising Ronald Reagan for firing air traffic controllers in the 1980s, saying, you strike, you're fired. Would you fire thousands of striking auto workers today, Senator?	Stuart Varney	Tim Scott	Economy
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Mr. Ramaswamy, you've said you really empathize with the strikers. You're standing next to Senator Scott and do you agree with what he said or do you think he's wrong?	Dana Perino	Vivek Ramaswamy	Economy

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2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Together the CEOs of General Motors, Ford, and Stellantis make 336 times the number of rank and — the member — number of rank and file workers. That's just part of a wider income inequality trend in the country. The richest 1 percent now controls one-fifth of all income. Vice President Pence, last week you said you side with American workers, but you also support how these companies operate. Which is it?	Stuart Varney	Mike Pence	Economy
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	The government will shut down, if Congress does not reach a deal, by the end of this week. Vice President Pence warns that politics of quote, "Trump's populist prodigies," like Mr. Ramaswamy are a road to ruin, for the GOP. If the government shuts down, should voters blame populist Republicans?	Ilia Calderon	Chris Christie	Spending
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	I'm going to go to Senator Scott, but I have a question that is on the minds of a lot of moms and dads and Americans, and I know that you've been thinking about it because — childcare costs, they are up. They're topping \$10,000 per month. Some families are spending up to half of their income on childcare. And they're having to decide, is it worth it for me to work or does it not make sense for me financially? In three days, the billions of dollars in pandemic-era funding is going to end. And 70,000 daycares could close. So you had an effort to broaden eligibility for childcare assistance. That fell apart last year. And for the moms and dads out there who are worried, what can you tell them, if you weren't able to get it through the Congress, how could you do it as president?	Dana Perino	Tim Scott	Economy
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	In 1984, President Ronald Reagan said the following: "The idea of amnesty for those who have put down roots and who have lived here even though some time back they may entered illegally." Two years later, President Reagan granted amnesty to nearly 3 million immigrants, something no Democrat or Republican president has done since. Governor Christie, as governor of a non-border state, in 2010, you supported a path to citizenship. But when you ran for president in 2016, you flipped, saying, "Immigrants should be tracked like Fedex packages." Where do you stand now on a path to citizenship for 11 million undocumented immigrants?	Ilia Calderon	Chris Christie	Immigration (Border Security)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Haley, most illegal immigrants are coming from countries south of the border. You've seen the Fox News drone. It's captured the steady stream of people coming into the country on a daily basis. In fact, I believe we have a live picture of it tonight, that is happening right now, live. In the last decade, the US has spent nearly \$55 billion to address the root causes of migration. But crime, poverty, and corruption, they persist, and the number of migrants is only growing. Are we wasting our money? ... What about the aid that federal taxpayers are paying to deal with the root causes. It's not working? Or is it?	Dana Perino	Nikki Haley	Immigration (Border Security)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor DeSantis, we have a question for you. Governor DeSantis, China invested \$12 billion in Latin American just last year. They've signed strategic partnerships with seven countries, including Mexico. And China's military ties to the region now include arms sales and training exercises. Are you comfortable with China deepening ties with our southern neighbors?	Stuart Varney	Ron DeSantis	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Mr. Ramaswamy, you proposed "universal deportation" for all undocumented immigrants and their children, even if the children are citizens of the US. Under what legal premise would you expel US citizens?	Ilia Calderon	Vivek Ramaswamy	Immigration (Policy)

Debate Number— Location— Date— Sponsors	Question	Asker	To Whom (or to whom it was directed by moderator)	Question Topic
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Senator Scott, you oppose ending birthright citizenship. What does Mr. Ramaswamy have wrong on that issue?	Ilia Calderon	Tim Scott	Immigration (Policy)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Vice President Pence, in 2017, the Trump-Pence administration canceled DACA, which put the legal status of 600,000 Dreamers in the hands of the courts. Dreamers work and they pay taxes. As president, if the Supreme Court ends DACA, would you work with Congress to reach a permanent solution for Dreamers? ... Vice President, would you negotiate with Congress to give a solution to the problem that Dreamers have right now? They are in a limbo.	Ilia Calderon	Mike Pence	Immigration (Policy)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Christie, crime in major cities is striking fear into the hearts of Americans. Just last night, looters took over the streets of Philadelphia. You said in the last debate that you would use U.S. attorneys to prosecute crimes local prosecutors won't. But they are stretched as well and they could not handle all of the lawlessness, the shoplifting, all the carjackings, the armed robberies. They are all surging. Progressive prosecutors were elected by their constituents and they can't be fired by a president. So what would you do to end the revolving door of criminality?	Dana Perino	Chris Christie	Social/ Cultural Issues (Crime/ Guns)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor DeSantis, you fired a couple of prosecutors in your state. But as governor — I mean, sorry, as president, you would not have the ability to do that. How do you think about dealing with the root causes of crime especially this revolving door of the criminals? They just get out and come back and commit another crime.	Dana Perino	Ron DeSantis	Social/ Cultural Issues (Crime/ Guns)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Haley, there's a nationwide policing shortage. Retirements are up. Recruitment is in the tank. The morale is at a record low. Three years ago, you signed a pledge to support law enforcement. Now, pledges are a nice idea, but what's your actual plan to get more police on our streets?	Stuart Varney	Nikki Haley	Social/ Cultural Issues (Crime/ Guns)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Burgum, for the first time ever, a Univision poll found that mass shootings and gun safety are one of the most important issue for Latino voters. Mental health concerns are not unique to the United States, but gun violence is. What is your specific plan to curb gun violence?	Ilia Calderon	Doug Burgum	Social/ Cultural Issues (Crime/ Guns)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Mr. Ramaswamy, according to Customs and Border Protection, about 90 percent of fentanyl is seized at official border crossings, and 57 percent of the smugglers are U.S. citizens. How would you stop fentanyl brought into the country, mostly by U.S. citizens through ports of entry?	Ilia Calderon	Vivek Ramaswamy	Immigration (Border Security)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Vice President Pence, just last month, Vice President Pence, you said if elected you would repeal all Obamacare mandates. However, you also made that same promise in 2016. And at that time, Trump-Pence had congressional majorities for at least the first two years and you did not deliver on that promise. So Obamacare right now, it is more popular than ever. Why should Americans trust you if you become president to fix that or is Obamacare here to stay? ... But does that mean Obamacare is here to stay?	Dana Perino	Mike Pence	Health care

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2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	This question for Governor DeSantis. Over 26 million Americans can — don't have insurance coverage. Governor DeSantis, 2.5 million of them are in your state. That's worse than the national average. Can Americans trust you on this? ... Governor, why is your record, in Florida, on insurance, worse than the national average?	Stuart Varney	Ron DeSantis	Health care
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	On the topic of health care, Governor Haley, health care is the leading cause of bankruptcy, for American families, accounting for two-thirds, of all personal bankruptcies. As president, how you protect Americans, who get sick from financial ruin?	Ilia Calderon	Nikki Haley	Health care
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Haley, American students, they are in academic trouble. They have lower scores in math and reading. There's chronic absenteeism. That's at record highs. And this has even been called "education homicide." You say school choice is the answer, but South Carolina, your home state, still has not enacted universal school choice, and even a current expansion won't be fully implemented until 2027. Parents can't wait four years for a fix, so what would you do right now?	Dana Perino	Nikki Haley	Education
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	On the subject of education, a question for Governor Christie. Students in your state are getting high marks on their report cards. But minorities are not doing well with math and reading. Black and Hispanic students averaging 29 points lower than white students in New Jersey. Would you address minorities first?	Stuart Varney	Chris Christie	Education
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor DeSantis, I have a question for you. Governor DeSantis, I have a question for you. Florida's new black history curriculum says quote, "slaves develop skills which in some instances could be applied for their personal benefit." You have said slaves develop skills in spite of slavery not because of it. But many are still hurt. For descendants of slaves, this is personal. What is your message to them?	Ilia Calderon	Ron DeSantis	Education
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Senator Scott, you oppose — oppose to this new standards. What is your message for Governor DeSantis?	Ilia Calderon	Tim Scott	Education
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	All right, I'm going to have a question for you, Mr. Ramaswamy. Over 10.7 million students and over 18,000 public schools nationwide have the ability to change their identity without parental notification. Governor Christie told Stuart last week that he would pass a federal law to protect parental rights, would you try to do the same? ... Ok, but I want to know, would you try to pass a federal law that says parents should have that right? ... I want to ask Governor Burgum, just to follow up on this. Because in your state, this is — you do not have a law that says parents can't be notified. But you want to be president, would you try to pass a federal law to say parents have that right? ... But you do understand that this is an issue that many people in America really are concerned about, worried about, about parents and notification in schools?	Dana Perino	Vivek Ramaswamy, Doug Burgum	Social/ Cultural Issues (LGBTQ+ Issues)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Vice President Pence, the Department of Homeland Security warns that violence against LGBTQ plus people is on the rise and intensifying, according to a recent study, members of that community are nine times more likely to be victims of violent hate crimes. As President, how would you protect this community from violent attacks and discrimination?	Ilia Calderon	Mike Pence	Social/ Cultural Issues (LGBTQ+ Issues)



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2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	China is investing heavily in their tech companies, \$280 billion every year on semiconductor research and development. That is one CHIPS Act per year. Governor DeSantis, you say companies like Google and Meta have too much power. Doesn't going after them give China an edge?	Stuart Varney	Ron DeSantis	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Christie, I want to follow up on this because 22 percent of American workers fear their jobs will be lost to a robot. And you said in the past that you — that the free market is the way to go. Would you retrain workers who lose a job to artificial intelligence and to do what?	Dana Perino	Chris Christie	Economy
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Mr. Ramaswamy, TikTok is banned on government-issued devices because of its ties to the Chinese government. Yet you joined TikTok after dinner with boxer and influencer Jake Paul. Should the commander-in-chief be so easily persuaded by an influencer?	Stuart Varney	Vivek Ramaswamy	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	So, Governor DeSantis, let me go to you. Experts say President Putin has ordered assassinations across Europe, cheated on arms control treaties with the U.S. and seeks to work with China to force our decline. President Reagan believed that if you want to prevent a war, you better be prepared to fight one. Today the Republican Party is at odds over aid to Ukraine. The price tag so far is \$76 billion. But is it in our best interest to degrade Russia's military for less than 5 percent of what we pay annually on defense especially when there are no U.S. soldiers in the fight?	Dana Perino	Ron DeSantis	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Ukraine)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Christie, President Biden's first two years have brought China, Russia, and Iran closer together. Are we focused too much on Ukraine, and not enough on this threat from the new world order?	Stuart Varney	Chris Christie	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Ukraine)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Burgum — I want to get to Governor Burgum. He hasn't had a chance. I have a question I think you're going to really like, or at least you have experience in it. And we need to talk about America's farmers, because there is a foreign policy connection here. The U.S. and China are in this fierce economic competition. It's hurting American businesses. And there is blowback against American farmers, because China then targets them in retaliation. How would you, as president, protect American farmers and ranchers from that kind of retaliation from a foreign government like China?	Dana Perino	Doug Burgum	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Haley, Mexico's president called who supports sending U.S. military into the country — quote — "scoundrels." Mexico is the United States' most important trade partner in border security. You say you will send special operations to attack the cartels in Mexico. So, this means boots on the ground, drone strikes?	Ilia Calderon	Nikki Haley	Immigration (Border Security)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	You're all auditioning for the job as president of the United States. You want to earn these votes. But the world's problems land in the Oval Office. During the presidential debates in the year 2000, neither Al Gore nor George W. Bush was asked about Al Qaida. Yet, just one year later, Al Qaida's attack on September 11th claimed nearly 3,000 lives. And the farther we get from September 11th, the closer we are to September 10th. Senator Scott, you have no executive branch experience. What has prepared you to protect the nation from a major man-made national security crisis?	Dana Perino	Tim Scott	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Other)

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2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Stuart here in California where gas is nearing \$6 a gallon, oil is close to \$100 a barrel again. You say drill, baby, drill, but the courts won't let you. Mr. Ramaswamy, how would you bring down prices without immediate drilling?	Stuart Varney	Vivek Ramaswamy, Mike Pence	Economy
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor DeSantis, this is your question. The Biden administration is hell bent on student loan forgiveness. But you say colleges should be on the hook when graduates cannot pay their debt? How does that address the cost of college — how does that, the cost of college itself?	Stuart Varney	Ron DeSantis	Education
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Senator Scott, the national debt is nearly doubled in your time in office. The approval rate for Congress is at a mere 19%. If this were a business, you'd probably all be fired in Washington, but you're here tonight looking for a promotion. In 2013, Governor Haley, new for the Senate, I'd like you to tell her why you should be promoted to CEO of the nation instead of her?	Dana Perino	Tim Scott	Other candidates
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Haley, would you think — you think you would deserve the promotion over him?	Dana Perino	Nikki Haley	Other candidates
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Burgum, let's talk big government. This question's for you. Big government keeps getting bigger. One-fifth of all new jobs this year have been created by the government. Governor Burgum, you want to shrink the size of government, but it has been a century since any president has been done that. Why would you be any different?	Stuart Varney	Doug Burgum	Spending
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	I want to ask you about something that I think is on a lot of Republicans' minds. This election could come down to less than 50,000 votes in three states. Abortion was on the ballot in six states in 2022. Republicans lost all of them. Next year, abortion will likely be on the ballot in Arizona. That is a must-win state. Governor DeSantis, how are you going to win over independent pro-choice voters in Arizona?	Dana Perino	Ron DeSantis	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Governor Christie, do you think the Republicans can do that in Arizona if this referendum is on the ballot there?	Dana Perino	Chris Christie	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	Vice President Pence, the latest poll found that 73 percent of Latino voters think the Republican Party doesn't care about or is being hostile toward them. The Hispanic community. Only Governor DeSantis has translated his campaign into Spanish. How will you reach out to Latino voters? .. Senator Scott, your reaction?	Ilia Calderon	Mike Pence, Tim Scott	Electability
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	And candidates, it's now obvious that if you all stay, in the race, former President Donald Trump wins the nomination. None of you have indicated that you're dropping out. So, which one of you, on stage, tonight, should be voted off the island?	Dana Perino	All candidates	Other candidates
2 — Simi Valley, CA — September 27, 2023 — Fox Business	What is your mathematical path, Governor DeSantis? In order to try to beat President Trump, who has a commanding and enduring lead, in this race?	Dana Perino	Ron DeSantis	Electability



Debate Number— Location— Date— Sponsors	Question	Asker	To Whom (or to whom it was directed by moderator)	Question Topic
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Our first question, the opening question is one for all of you. Donald Trump is the first ex-president in more than 100 years to run for the white House again. And he remains popular among Republican primary voters as his legal challenges mount. Governor DeSantis, let me begin with you on this. When I speak to Republican voters who are supporting Donald Trump, why should you and not him be the Republican nominee to face Joe Biden a year from now? ... Let me turn to Ambassador Haley. Why you and not the former President? ... Mr. Ramaswamy, let me turn to you. Please make your case. Why should you be the nominee and not the former president? ... Governor Christie, why you and not former President Trump? ... Senator Scott, you've said former President Trump can't win. Make your case to Republican voters.	Lester Holt	All Candidates	Other Candidates
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	So as we continue forward, the Israel-hamas War is barely a month old. Tonight, Israeli troops are fighting inside Gaza City with over 200 hostages who remain captive there. And civilian casualties mount inside Gaza. As president of the United States, what would you be urging Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to do at this moment? Governor DeSantis. ... Ambassador Haley. What would you do? What would you be urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to do? Would you consider humanitarian pause, for example? ... Mr. Ramaswamy, any daylight between you and the candidates we just heard on this issue on what you would tell the Prime Minister? ... Senator Scott. Yes, Senator. Same question to you about you're the president. You're on the phone in the Oval Office with the Prime Minister. You tell him what? ... Governor Christie, I want to get you to weigh in here.	Lester Holt	All Candidates	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Middle East)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Given attacks by Iranian-backed proxy groups on US military bases in Syria and Iraq, attacks that have wounded approximately two dozen of our US. Servicemen, do you support the use of military force by the United States against Iran? Governor Haley, would you please answer that? ... Governor DeSantis. If I can continue with you. Just today, the US launched another one of its limited airstrikes against targets in Syria, this time [an] Iranian linked facility. How far would you go militarily to hold Iran accountable?	Matthew Brooks, Lester Holt	Nikki Haley, Ron DeSantis	Foreign Policy/ National Security (Middle East)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Jewish students across the country are threatened and under attack. What do you say to Jewish students on college campuses who feel unsafe, given the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism? And what do you say to university presidents and college presidents who have not met the moral clarity moment to forcefully condemn Hamas terrorism? Mr. Ramaswamy, would you like to take that one? Senator Scott, let me get you to weigh in on what you just heard. ... Let me turn to Governor DeSantis here. What do you think about what he just said?	Matthew Brooks, Lester Holt	Vivek Ramaswamy, Tim Scott, Ron DeSantis	Social/ Cultural Issues (Other)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Let me turn to governor Governor Christie, and considering what he just said. You led a state with a sizable Muslim population. Last month, as you know, a six year old Palestinian American boy was killed in Illinois by his landlord. His mother was also stabbed more than a dozen times. And what has been charged as a hate crime? What do you say to Muslim Americans who are also feeling afraid for their safety right now? ... Ambassador Haley, what do you say to Americans who are simply afraid right now in this current environment that we're talking about?	Lester Holt	Chris Christie, Nikki Haley	Social/ Cultural Issues (Other)

Debate Number— Location— Date— Sponsors	Question	Asker	To Whom (or to whom it was directed by moderator)	Question Topic
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	This is another question for the entire field. So you will all get a chance to respond. But, Senator Scott, I'd like to start with you. The United States has given Ukraine financial and military support since the war began more than 600 days ago. President Zelensky told me on Sunday, if Russia isn't stopped now, "the price will be higher for the United States" and Americans would be forced to "send your sons and daughters to defend NATO countries." Senator Scott, where do you stand on more funding for Ukraine? ... Senator Scott, thank you. But just to be very clear, if you were president, if you were in the Oval Office today, would you sign off on more military funding for Ukraine or would you discontinue it? ... Mr. Ramaswamy, are you persuaded by President Zelensky's urgent new plea? Where do you stand on more funding? ... Ambassador Haley, what is your take on more funding for Ukraine? ... Governor Christie. What is your take and how long should Americans be expected to help fund the war in Ukraine?	Kristen Welker	Tim Scott, Vivek Ramaswamy, Nikki Haley, Chris Christie	Foreign Policy/ National Security <i>(Ukraine)</i>
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Governor DeSantis, I'd like you to weigh in on this idea. Are you concerned that this could become a wider war if Putin is not stopped now?	Kristen Welker	Ron DeSantis	Foreign Policy/ National Security <i>(Ukraine)</i>
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	We are going to go from the hot wars in Ukraine and Gaza and Israel to what many people are calling the new Cold War with China. And I remind the audience that it's important for our visitors at home to be able to hear you, and especially for the people in Beijing, to hear you. Many Republicans believe that the Chinese Communist Party in General Secretary Xi is an existential threat to the United States. The flashpoint is Taiwan. For decades and decades, the American military, but primarily the United States Navy, has deterred an attack from China to the island state of Taiwan. But Ronald Reagan's navy of 600 ships is gone. Now, the question to you is, and I'll start with you, Ambassador Haley, because you were in President Trump's cabinet, his goal was a 355 ship navy. That's what he pushed for. He got to 300. It's now at 291. Is that big enough to deter and if necessary, defeat an invasion of Taiwan? ... Governor DeSantis, my question is specifically about the Navy. It's a 291. It's going to go down perhaps as low as 280. Is it enough? And what would you build if you were going to build more? ... Senator Scott, you've been in the Congress since 2011. Defense spending has fallen over that entire period of time. Where are we going to get the money and what would you build and what kind of ships to deter China from attacking Taiwan? ... Mr. Ramaswamy, I'm looking for specifics. What would you build? Where would you build it? When would they be in the water? How big would the fleet get? ... Do you have a number and a plan? ... Governor Christie.	Hugh Hewitt	All Candidates	Foreign Policy/ National Security <i>(China)</i>

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3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	We're going to stay on China. And we're going to talk specifically about TikTok. Last week, Congressman Mike Gallagher, who is chairman of the House Bipartisan Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, published a long essay on TikTok following the flooding of pro-Hamas propaganda under TikTok accounts across the United States. Chairman Gallagher called it shocking. He called the app predatory, controlled by America's preeminent adversary, one used to push propaganda and divide America its spyware, he said, a means of surveillance. Governor Christie, do you agree with Chairman Gallagher? And if so, would you ban or force the sale of TikTok? ... I want to go to governor DeSantis. Would you ban or force the sale of TikTok? Regardless of whether or not China allowed American apps to operate in China? ... Ambassador Haley, speak to the parents out there. They're probably TikTok apps on half the phones in this auditorium. ... Mr. Mr. Ramaswamy, we've talked about this, your campaign on TikTok. How do you get TikTok banned if you use it? ... Senator Scott?	Hugh Hewitt	All Candidates	Foreign Policy/ National Security (China)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	We're now going to talk about Venezuela, where millions have fled political and economic turmoil. Many Venezuelan immigrants are settling right here in Florida. Former President Trump and President Biden have taken different approaches to Nicolas Maduro's regime with little result. Former President Trump put economic pressure on Venezuela and backed one of Maduro's rivals. President Biden temporarily eased sanctions to encourage electoral reforms. Governor DeSantis, do you see the political situation in Venezuela as a threat to the United States, and what would your approach be? ... Just to be clear, would you reimpose the sanctions? ... Ambassador Haley, what would your approach be?	Kristen Welker	Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley	Foreign Policy (Other)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Let's turn to one of the biggest issues for voters. That, of course, is the economy. This is a question that will go to all of you. An Iowa voter recently told NBC news, "How am I going to make sure my pantry is stocked without breaking the bank?" You've all said the best way to deal with rising prices is to cut government spending, but that would take time to play out in. Americans are struggling right now. Senator Scott, I'll start with you. What would you do the moment you take office to help Americans manage the cost of living? So we're talking about short term here. ... Let me just follow up the idea of pumping gas, of turning on pipelines that doesn't put make gas cheaper that day. I'm talking about you become president. What can you do specifically to help people feel better about their situation or be better with their situation? ... Let me ask the same question to Governor DeSantis. Can you give us some — you ticked off a number of things a moment ago — but some specific examples of ways that would put people on a better economic footing right away. ... Mr. Ramaswamy. Weigh in on the ways that you can improve people's financial condition in the short term. ... To Governor Christie on that.	Lester Holt	Tim Scott, Ron DeSantis, Vivek Ramaswamy, Chris Christie	Economy
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Ambassador Haley, let me come at this from a slightly different direction. Americans in rural communities are being especially squeezed by inflation right now. An Iowa State University study found that last year, inflation cost rural households about an extra \$5,000. How would you specifically help rural Americans who are suffering right now?	Lester Holt	Nikki Haley	Economy

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3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Americans could see their Social Security benefits drastically cut in the next decade because the program is running out of money. Former President Trump has said, “Under no circumstances should Republicans cut entitlements.” Governor Christie, first to you. You have proposed raising the retirement age for younger Americans. What would that age be specifically? And would you consider making any other reforms to Social Security? ... Governor, can you give me a specific age? 69, 70. What would the age be? ... All right, ambassador Haley, let me have you weigh in on this because you said in June that you would be open to raising the retirement age. Have you determined what that age would be specifically, and what other reforms are you looking at? ... And can you give me a specific age? Have you determined that age? ... Mr. Ramaswamy, have you determined if you would touch entitlements and Social Security, what, if any, reforms are you looking at. ... Senator Scott, weigh in here. What are you looking at to keep Social Security sustainable? ... Senator, very quickly, would you raise the retirement age? Would you be open to raising the retirement age, or do you rule that out? ... Governor DeSantis, finally to you, would you be open to raising the retirement age and how would you keep Social Security sustainable? ... Yes or no. Would you raise it? Would you raise the retirement age?	Kristen Welker	All Candidates	Social Security/ Retirement
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	When NBC News talks to voters, when I talk to voters every day, they all say that the border is a top issue. It can mean a lot of different things. It can mean 2 million people who crossed illegally last year. It can mean more than 150 arrests of people on the terror watch list. It can mean the burden on states from having migrants move into their states from the southwestern border. But I want to talk about opioids specifically and fentanyl. And I'll start with you, Senator Scott. Tens of thousands of Americans families have suffered a death to fentanyl. Young people sometimes die taking one pill. What can you do as commander in chief on the first day to stop fentanyl and the waterfall of it into this country? ... Governor Christie, Senator Scott, just mentioned ports of entry. 90% of the fentanyl that is seized in the United States is seized at ports of entry. We don't know what's coming in across the open southern border. You've been in the United States Attorney. You've taken on cartels. Can it really be done quickly? What would you do as president? ... Governor DeSantis, you have talked about using United States special forces to attack the cartels where they manufacture the chemicals that come from China. How often? How many? What what does that look like?	Hugh Hewitt	Tim Scott, Chris Christie, Ron DeSantis	Immigration (Border Security)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Ambassador Haley. If Ambassador Haley. If the United States uses special forces in Mexico without prior notice to the Mexican allies to our south, what would your colleagues at the United Nations think about that? ... Mr. Ramaswamy. Special forces in Mexico. Shoot them stone cold dead at the border?	Hugh Hewitt	Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy	Immigration (Border Security)

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3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Let's talk now about last night's election results. Abortion rights supporters saw victories in Ohio and Virginia following earlier wins in states like Kansas and Kentucky. Governor DeSantis, first to you, how do you see the path forward for Republicans on this issue? ... Ambassador Haley, let me have you weigh in. Former President Trump has consistently blamed the abortion issue and how Republican candidates have talked about it for their electoral losses. How do you see the path forward? ... Scott, I'd like you. To weigh in. How do you see the path forward? And what do you make of what Ambassador Haley just said? Do you see this as a consensus issue?	Kristen Welker	Ron DeSantis, Nikki Haley, Tim Scott	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	Ambassador Haley, your name was invoked. Would you support a 15-week federal limit? ... Let me go to Mr. Ramaswamy. Would you support a 15 week federal ban and what is the path forward on this issue? ... Governor Christie, as you know, federal limits are important to a lot of Republicans. Where do you stand on this issue and what is the path forward for Republicans?	Kristen Welker	Nikki Haley, Vivek Ramaswamy, Chris Christie	Social/ Cultural Issues (Abortion)
3 — Miami, FL — November 8, 2023 — NBC News	With only two hours for a debate, we know there are other major issues that are important to Republican primary voters. I'll ask you each to please use your closing statement to focus on any topic you didn't have time to address, and why you and not former President Trump would be the party's best choice to tackle these important issues. You each have a minute.	Lester Holt	All Candidates	Presidential Priorities