



## NEWSBANK HOT TOPICS

*June 2023*

### CURRENT EVENTS

#### **ECONOMICS: Debt Ceiling Vote**

**TOPIC:** President Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy have negotiated terms for raising the nation's borrowing limit in order not to default on federal payments to bondholders and others. What is the timeframe in which the borrowing limit would have to be raised in order for the federal government to keep its financial commitments? What could be the economic impact of their agreement if it does not pass in Congress? What are the terms that the president and speaker worked out, what has been some of the strongest reactions from within their political parties and why?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "debt ceiling" AND default AND Biden AND McCarthy

#### **ECONOMICS: Worldwide – Global Debt Crisis**

**TOPIC:** The International Monetary Fund estimates that 60% of poorer countries are facing a debt crisis. Over 20 nations are spending 20% or more of their revenue on debt servicing. Sri Lanka defaulted last year. From whom do countries borrow? What nation expanded its loan program while working on infrastructure projects around the world? What is the role of private lenders in this crisis? Are there any proposed solutions to this international problem?

**SEARCH TERMS:** ("International Monetary Fund" OR IMF) AND "global debt crisis"

#### **HEALTH: Surgeon General Warns Social Media Can Imperil Mental Health**

**TOPIC:** The U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has warned that there is evidence that children and adolescents who spend a lot of time on social media are likely to view a high amount of disturbing material that has shown to result in anxiety and depression. What is the evidence that Surgeon General Murthy cites showing that young people are developing anxiety and depression from what they see on social media? What kinds of disturbing content is Surgeon General Murthy referring to? How can social media content be better regulated?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Surgeon General" AND Murthy AND "social media" AND (anxiety OR depression) AND (children OR adolescents)

#### **TECHNOLOGY: United Kingdom – New View of the Titanic**

**TOPIC:** Magellan Ltd. has stitched together over 700,000 images of the Titanic to produce a 3-D scan of the doomed vessel. It is hoped that this model will allow researchers to answer many questions about the sinking of the ship. What is Magellan's main business? How did they capture the images? Who did they work with to create videos of wreckage?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Magellan Ltd." AND Titanic

**TECHNOLOGY: AI Experts Warn of its Dangers**

**TOPIC:** The US Center for AI Safety (CAIS) has posted a statement on its website stating that among their concerns with a super intelligent system like artificial intelligence (AI) is the risk of human extinction. Who are some leading experts that have agreed with this statement and why? What experts have said the statement exaggerates the problem and why? What is meant by the phrase “existential threat” and how does it apply to some of the concerns about AI?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “artificial intelligence” AND “Center for AI Safety” AND extinction

**EDUCATION: South Africa/World – Literacy Rates Measure**

**TOPIC:** The 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (Pirls) measured literacy rates among fourth graders (typically 9- and 10-year-olds) in fifty-seven countries around the world. It found that 81% of those tested in South Africa could not read for meaning. Was South Africa the worst country measured by this group? If not, what country was? What countries were at the top of the list? How has the South African government reacted to this news?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Progress in International Reading Literacy Study” OR Pirls

**MOVIES AND TELEVISION: France – Cannes Film Festival**

**TOPIC:** The 2023 edition of the Cannes International Film Festival has occurred. What was controversial about the opening night film? What directors presented films at the festival and how were they received? What film, director and actors won the prizes given by the festival jury?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Cannes International Film Festival”

## BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

**BUSINESS: Montana Bans TikTok**

**TOPIC:** Montana has become the first state in the U.S. to ban the use of TikTok. What are the reasons that Montana has banned TikTok? What is the legal basis of a lawsuit filed to overturn this ban? What concerns have the federal government and other states voiced about TikTok and what action have they taken?

**SEARCH TERMS:** (“Tik Tok” OR TikTok) AND Montana AND (ban OR banned)

**BUSINESS: Disney Scraps Florida Office Complex**

**TOPIC:** The Walt Disney Company has announced that it is scrapping its plans to build a large office complex near Lake Nona, Florida. What was Disney’s reason for canceling this project and what were Florida Governor Ron DeSantis’s comments on this decision? How many jobs were estimated to be at this office complex? What resort at Disney World is closing and why? What has been the public response to this news from Disney?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Florida AND Disney AND (campus OR “office complex”) AND “Lake Nona”

**BUSINESS: European Union – Massive Fine for Meta**

**TOPIC:** European regulators have fined Meta, the parent company of Facebook, for sending data from European users to the U.S. The 1.2 billion Euros fine is the largest fine imposed for breaching the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Meta has been given five months to implement the changes it needs to make in order to be in compliance. What did the regulators say about Meta’s behavior in releasing this news? What was Meta’s response to this?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Meta AND “data privacy”



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**SEARCH TERMS:** "debt ceiling" AND default AND Biden AND McCarthy

### **FINANCE: Interest Rates**

**TOPIC:** The U.S. Federal Reserve has raised interest rates by .25 percentage points to 5.1%, the highest in 16 years. What is the purpose of raising the rate and what is the impact on inflation? How does the Federal Reserve make these decisions and what are some of the factors that are causing inflation in the U.S.?

**SEARCH TERMS:** ("interest rates" OR "interest rate") AND "16 years" AND "federal reserve" AND highest

## **CIVICS, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

### **GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: 2024 Presidential Race**

**TOPIC:** Ex-President Donald Trump holds a strong lead in the polls against six competing candidates that have filed for the Republican primaries. What candidates are getting the most press and why? What are some of the key issues being discussed by these candidates and why? What two candidates from the Democratic Party have entered the primaries to challenge President Biden and why?

**SEARCH TERMS:** (president OR presidency) AND Trump AND ("Nikki Haley" OR "Tim Scott" OR Hutchinson OR "Joe Biden" OR "Robert Kennedy Jr." OR Williamson) AND 2024

### **GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Japan – G7 Summit**

**TOPIC:** The Group of Seven leaders met in Hiroshima, Japan, along with the leaders of eight other countries. The agenda included the current war in the Ukraine, as well as other topics. What countries are in the Group of Seven? What other countries were invited to this meeting and why were they invited? Did this meeting produce any tangible results? Who was a surprise guest at the conference?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Japan AND ("Group of Seven" OR G7)

### **GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS: Turkey – Run-Off Election**

**TOPIC:** The run-off election for the Turkish presidency has taken place, with the result that its current president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has won another five years in office. Who did he run against in the first election and who was his opponent in the run-off election? What are the major issues confronting him?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Recep Tayyip Erdogan" AND "run-off election"



**HISTORY: Israel – Historic Anniversary**

**TOPIC:** The state of Israel came into existence seventy-five years ago when the British Mandate expired. What was the British Mandate and how was the United Nations involved in its expiration? How did Israel celebrate this? How do the Palestinians characterize this event?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Israel AND anniversary

**HISTORY: Mother's Day**

**TOPIC:** Mother's Day was founded in 1905 by Ann Reeves Jarvis, her daughter Anna and their friend, Julia Ward Howe who famously wrote the lyrics to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. What was the original purpose of Mother's Day and how did the work these women did for wounded soldiers influence their work for Mother's Day? What are the traditions of Mother's Day in contemporary times and how is it usually celebrated?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Mother's Day" AND ("Anna Jarvis" OR "Ann Reeves Jarvis" OR "Julia Ward Howe")

**SOCIAL ISSUES**

**CRIME AND LAW: Proud Boys Found Guilty of Sedition**

**TOPIC:** Four members of the extremist group the Proud Boys, including ex-head of the group Enrique Tarrio, have been found guilty of seditious conspiracy for their participation in a violent effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election. Who are the Proud Boys and what do they stand for? What was their role in trying to overturn the 2020 election?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Proud Boys" AND (sedition OR "seditious conspiracy") AND Tarrio

**CRIME AND LAW: South Africa – Arrest of a Fugitive**

**TOPIC:** Fulgence Kayishema has been arrested in South Africa. He had been on the run since 2001 and is accused of participating in genocide in Rwanda by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). What happened during the genocide in Rwanda and who were its victims? How many people is Kayishema alleged to have killed?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Rwanda AND genocide AND "Fulgence Kayishema"

**EDUCATION: South Africa/World – Literacy Rates Measure**

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**SEARCH TERMS:** "Progress in International Reading Literacy Study" OR PIRLS

**EDUCATION: Student Debt Relief**

**TOPIC:** The Biden Administration and the Republicans in Congress are debating Republican legislation that is trying to rescind the president's student debt relief plan. What are the aspects of the president's student debt relief program that the Republicans object to and what is the president's argument in favor of it? What is the average debt that recent college graduates are likely to carry and what are some of the factors that have driven up the cost of college so much?

**SEARCH TERMS:** (student OR students) AND "loan forgiveness" AND Biden AND (GOP OR Republican OR Republicans)





**RELIGION: Study on Religion in America**

**TOPIC:** A recent study by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) has found that only 16% of Americans find religion the most important thing in their lives compared to 20% a decade ago. What are some of the possible reasons for the decline? What are some differences between religious groups that this study also discovered? How do politics impact American religious views?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Public Religion Research Institute" AND (Americans OR "United States") AND "importance of religion"

**SOCIAL RELATIONS: United Kingdom – Evidence for Equality National Survey**

**TOPIC:** Research done by the Evidence for Equality National Survey (Evns) shows that Roma, Gypsies, and Travelers have faced racism, assault, hazardous health conditions, and economic deprivation. Who organized this survey and what did they do to ensure the participation of those being surveyed? What are the most shocking results of this survey? How was it received and how can it be useful in devising policies that will foster change?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "United Kingdom" AND (Gypsies OR Roma OR Travelers)

**SOCIAL RELATIONS: Title 42 Comes to an End**

**TOPIC:** Title 42 of the U.S. Code which was to prevent people with communicable disease risks from entering the United States has been repealed. What were the concerns about the volume of illegal border crossings in regard to repealing this code? What was the change of volume in border crossings before and after the repeal and why?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Title 42" AND (immigration OR immigrants OR border OR migrant OR migrants)

**SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND HEALTH**

**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE: Carbon Capture**

**TOPIC:** The Biden Administration has announced it is investing \$251 million in carbon capture and storage projects. What is carbon capture and what is the objective of these projects? What states are getting involved in these projects?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Biden AND "carbon capture"

**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE: Guam/Philippines – Typhoon Mawar**

**TOPIC:** After rolling over Guam and causing serious damage, including the loss of power to 51,000 homes, Typhoon Mawar has re-intensified as it heads towards the Philippines. There are no reports of deaths from Guam. How powerful are the winds of Mawar? What sort of damage was caused in Guam? Has Mawar hit the Philippines and what kind of damage resulted?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Typhoon Mawar"

**HEALTH: Switzerland – Able to Walk Again**

**TOPIC:** An accident left Gert-Jan Oskam paralyzed below the waist and with the loss of some movements in his arms. Brain and spinal implants, including a digital bridge between his brain and his spine, have given him the ability to walk with a walker. How was Oskam recruited into this research program? How do these two implants communicate with one another to get his brain impulses turned into spinal cord pulses? What are the limitations of the implants? What do the researchers see as the next steps in this experiment?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Gert-Jan Oskam"



**HEALTH: Surgeon General Warns Social Media Can Imperil Mental Health**

**TOPIC:** The U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has warned that there is evidence that children and adolescents who spend a lot of time on social media are likely to view a high amount of disturbing material that has shown to result in anxiety and depression. What is the evidence that Surgeon General Murthy cites showing that young people are developing anxiety and depression from what they see on social media? What kinds of disturbing content is Surgeon General Murthy referring to? How can social media content be better regulated?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Surgeon General" AND Murthy AND "social media" AND (anxiety OR depression) AND (children OR adolescents)

**HEALTH: First Cases of Drug-Resistant Ringworm in the U.S.**

**TOPIC:** The U.S. Center for Disease Control has confirmed that two women are the first Americans to have come down with a new strain of drug-resistant ringworm also known as Tinea. What preventative measures are recommended for Tinea and what are the symptoms? What country was this new strain first discovered in?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "drug-resistant" AND ringworm AND CDC

**SCIENCE: Brightest Cosmic Explosion Yet Seen**

**TOPIC:** Zwicky Transient Facility in California has spotted the brightest cosmic explosion ever viewed that they named AT2021lwx. Where in the universe did this take place and what do scientists think caused the explosion? What makes this event so extraordinary?

**SEARCH TERMS:** AT2021lwx

**SCIENCE: Outer Space – China's First Civilian Astronaut**

**TOPIC:** China has sent three new astronauts to its Tiangong space station, including its first civilian to be sent to space. The Shenzhou-16 crew arrived safely after a six-hour flight. Who are the replacement astronauts? What are China's long-term goals in outer space?

**SEARCH TERMS:** China AND ("space station" OR Tiangong)

**TECHNOLOGY: United Kingdom – New View of the Titanic**

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**TECHNOLOGY: AI Experts Warn of its Dangers**

**TOPIC:** The US Center for AI Safety (CAIS) has posted a statement on its website stating that among their concerns with a super intelligent system like artificial intelligence (AI) is the risk of human extinction. Who are some leading experts that have agreed with this statement and why? What experts have said the statement exaggerates the problem and why? What is meant by the phrase "existential threat" and how does it apply to some of the concerns about AI?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "artificial intelligence" AND "Center for AI Safety" AND extinction



## SPORTS

### **SPORTS: United Kingdom – Winning the League**

**TOPIC:** Manchester City Football Club has won the English Premier League for the third straight year. They are in the finals of two other competitions. Which new player for the team had the greatest impact on its style of play? What other players were impressive throughout this campaign? What is manager Pep Guardiola's overall record with the club, what other teams did he manage and how successful was he with them?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Manchester City FC" OR "Pep Guardiola"

### **SPORTS: Kenya/Spain – Kipchoge Wins Award**

**TOPIC:** Kenyan marathoner Eliud Kipchoge has won this year's Princess of Asturias Award for sports. He has won two gold Olympic Medals and is currently the holder of the world record for marathons. What other marathons has Kipchoge won? What other awards are given out by the Princess of Asturias Foundation? And who are some of the other winners who have been announced?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Eliud Kipchoge" AND "Princess of Asturias Award"

### **SPORTS: Kentucky Derby**

**TOPIC:** The racehorse Mage was the winner of this year's Kentucky Derby. What is the background of Mage and how was this horse trained? What was the unusual instance of horse deaths leading up to the Kentucky Derby and how have officials responded to it?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Kentucky Derby" AND (Mage OR horse OR horses)

### **SPORTS: Indianapolis 500**

**TOPIC:** American Josef Newgarden is the winner of this year's Indianapolis 500 automobile race. What are the key strengths of Josef Newgarden's driving and how were they shown in this race? Who won the pole position in this race and what was the dramatic last lap like that that saw Newgarden pull out for a win?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Indianapolis 500"

### **SPORTS: France – French Open**

**TOPIC:** The second major tournament of the tennis year is the French Open. Rafael Nadal has announced he will not compete in it due to injury and that 2024 will be his last year of playing tennis. Who are the favorites to win? Which players have the toughest paths through the tournament? Who won the first major, the Australian Open? Who are the other notable tennis players not appearing in this event?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "French Open" AND tennis

### **SPORTS: Jim Brown**

**TOPIC:** Jim Brown of the NFL football team The Cleveland Browns was not only considered one of the greatest running backs of all time but was also an effective civil rights leader and an actor. What years did Brown play for the Cleveland Browns, what is the role of the running back and how did he distinguish himself in that role? What did he do for the cause of civil rights? What is the most esteemed film he acted in and what kind of roles did he play? What other sport did he distinguish himself in when at Syracuse University?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Jim Brown" AND "Cleveland Browns"



## ARTS AND LITERATURE

### **FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: United Kingdom – Tate Britain Reopens**

**TOPIC:** Tate Britain, named National Gallery of British Art at its opening in 1897, has reopened after rehanging and relabeling its collection for the first time in a decade. It has increased its representation of minority and female artists in its public galleries. What works of art were removed to make room for the new works? What was the rationale for the rehang? How did the critics react to the changes?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Tate Britain” AND rehang

### **FINE ARTS AND ARCHITECTURE: Warhol Estate Loses Copyright Case**

**TOPIC:** The Supreme Court has ruled that pop artist Andy Warhol violated copyright law in his unauthorized use of Lynn Goldsmith’s photograph of the rock star Prince. What specific use did Goldsmith authorize and how was the image subsequently used that exceeded the authorization? Who were the two dissenting judges in this case and what was their legal argument?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Prince AND Warhol AND “Lynn Goldsmith” AND “Supreme Court”

### **LITERATURE: *Demon Copperhead***

**TOPIC:** The recent novel *Demon Copperhead* by Barbara Kingsolver has won a Pulitzer Prize. What famous work of fiction is this new novel influenced by and how? What are some other acclaimed books by Barbara Kingsolver and what are the qualities of her fiction that impress readers and critics?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Demon Copperhead” AND “Barbara Kingsolver”

### **LITERATURE: United Kingdom – Martin Amis**

**TOPIC:** Martin Amis was a British writer. His father Kingsley Amis was also a novelist. His 1973 first novel *The Rachel Papers* won the Somerset Maugham Prize, as his father’s first novel had. What were some of his later works and which novel was seen to be his greatest achievement? What were some of his non-fiction works?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Martin Amis”

### **MOVIES AND TELEVISION: France – Cannes Film Festival**

**TOPIC:** The 2023 edition of the Cannes International Film Festival has occurred. What was controversial about the opening night film? What directors presented films at the festival and how were they received? What film, director and actors won the prizes given by the festival jury?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Cannes International Film Festival”

### **MOVIES AND TELEVISION: Film and TV Writers Strike**

**TOPIC:** The labor union The Writers Guild of America (WGA) has gone on strike after failing to reach an agreement with the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) largely over residuals from streaming media but also over how artificial intelligence would be used in the industry. What are the specific concerns of the WGA over streaming media and what is the position of the AMPTP? How would the WGA accept the use of artificial intelligence in their industry and what are their key concerns with it?

**SEARCH TERMS:** “Writers Guild of America” AND strike





**MUSIC: Country Music Awards**

**TOPIC:** Singer Jelly Roll was a big winner at this year's Country Music Awards. What song of Jelly Roll's won him his awards and what are some of the qualities of this song that impressed the critics? Who were some other winners of this year's Country Music Award and what qualities impressed the critics in their work?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Jelly Roll" AND "Son of a Sinner" AND "Country Music Awards"

**MUSIC: Canada – Gordon Lightfoot**

**TOPIC:** Gordon Lightfoot was a Canadian singer and songwriter. He emerged from the Yorkville folk scene in the early 1960s and continued performing and recording until very recently. What were his most recognizable songs? What other artists covered his songs? What awards and honors were given to him?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Gordon Lightfoot"

**PERFORMING ARTS: United Kingdom – Eddie Izzard**

**TOPIC:** Eddie Izzard is starring in a one-person adaptation of Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations*. Izzard plays nineteen characters over the course of the two-hour performance. How is this work staged? How does he transition from character to character? How did the critics respond to his performance?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Eddie Izzard" AND "Great Expectations"

**PERFORMING ARTS: Omar**

**TOPIC:** The American opera *Omar* by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels has won a Pulitzer Prize for Music. What is *Omar* about and what are the qualities that have impressed the critics? What is the real story of Omar ibn Said and how does the opera present his story?

**SEARCH TERMS:** Omar AND "Rhiannon Giddens" AND Pulitzer

## PEOPLE

**PEOPLE: Argentina – Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner**

**TOPIC:** Argentinian Vice President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner has announced she will not run for the presidency in next fall's election. The current president Alberto Fernandez had previously stated he would not be running. What did she say prevented her from running? What political offices has she held in Argentina? Who is likely to be the Peronist Party candidate?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner"

**PEOPLE: Tina Turner**

**TOPIC:** Tina Turner has left a strong legacy as a powerful rock singer first with her husband in the band Ike and Tina Turner Revue and then with a powerful solo comeback in the mid-1980s. What are the qualities of her vocals and musical style that made her such a powerful performer? What are some of her biggest hits and who are some of the major talents she worked with?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Tina Turner" AND (music OR singer)

**PEOPLE: Canada – Celine Dion Cancels Tour**

**TOPIC:** Canadian singer Celine Dion has cancelled her remaining tour dates, saying that health issues had precipitated this decision. She suffers from stiff person syndrome, a neurological disorder. When was she diagnosed with this condition? What are the symptoms of it?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Celine Dion" AND "stiff person syndrome"



**PEOPLE: Linda Yaccarino**

**TOPIC:** Linda Yaccarino will be replacing Elon Musk as CEO of Twitter. What is Yaccarino's background and how does the work she has done display some skills that she will need as CEO at Twitter? Why did Musk step down as CEO?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Linda Yaccarino" AND Twitter

**PEOPLE: Bill Lee**

**TOPIC:** Bill Lee was a renowned bass player and composer who played many popular jazz and folk songs as well as composed music for the films of his son Spike Lee. Who are some of the top musicians that Bill Lee has played bass with? What Spike Lee films did Bill Lee compose music for?

**SEARCH TERMS:** "Bill Lee" AND bass AND (jazz OR folk) AND "Spike Lee"