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# Which got more viewers — the debate or the 2015 Patriots Super Bowl?

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**ASaints fan held a sign referencing the presidential debate, which happened during the same time as the game between New Orleans and the Atlanta Falcons.**

By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE STAFF SEPTEMBER 27, 2016

Monday night's war of words between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton was the most watched presidential debate in television ratings history.

Still, the viewership paled in comparison to the Super Bowl the New England Patriots won against the Seattle Seahawks on Feb. 1, 2015.

An estimated 114.4 million people watched that thrilling game.

By comparison, 84 million people tuned in for Monday night's debate, according to [metrics released by Nielsen](#) on Tuesday.



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That beat out the previous record for a presidential debate. In 1980, 80.6 million people watched that year's lone debate between incumbent Democrat Jimmy Carter and Republican candidate Ronald Reagan.

View Story



## At nearly 84 million viewers, debate may be the most-watched ever

Early figures from Nielsen puts the clash between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump on track for the biggest audience since televised debates began.

### Debate renews attention on Trump's tax returns

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Until Monday, no debate since then had exceeded 70 million viewers.

Here are some other examples of how Monday night's viewership compares to other major TV broadcasts over the years, according to figures directly from Nielsen and from media reports citing the TV ratings company:

- Super Bowls have historically been among the most popular broadcasts. Thirty of them, including the Patriots-Seahawks showdown in 2015, drew higher ratings than Monday's debate.
- The final episode of the TV show "M\*A\*S\*H" drew an estimated 105.9 million viewers when it aired in 1983. It



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stands the most-watched TV episode of all time.

- The final episode of the 1977 miniseries “Roots” drew 76.7 million viewers, though the total number of viewers who turned into part of the series was estimated to be nearly twice as high.
- The 1993 finale of “Cheers” was watched by an estimated 80.5 million people.
- About 13.5 million people tuned in for the 2010 finale of “Lost.”
- An estimated 76.3 million people watched the finale of “Seinfeld.”
- The closing episode of “Friends” was watched by an estimated 51.1 million people.
- The last round of presidential debates between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney in 2012 drew 67.2 million viewers on Oct. 3 and 65.6 million on Oct. 16.

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*Material from the Associated Press was used in this report. Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com). Follow him on Twitter [@mrochele](https://twitter.com/mrochele)*

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