

Brace yourselves, pirates
are coming!
The effects of Game of Thrones
leak on TV viewership

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CopyCamp 2017



File-sharing is a multidimensional problem



- Effects can vary for different types of content.
- Influence is changing over time.
- Seems mostly harmful if it happens before the authorised availability.

„There but not back again? A pirate’s tale.”



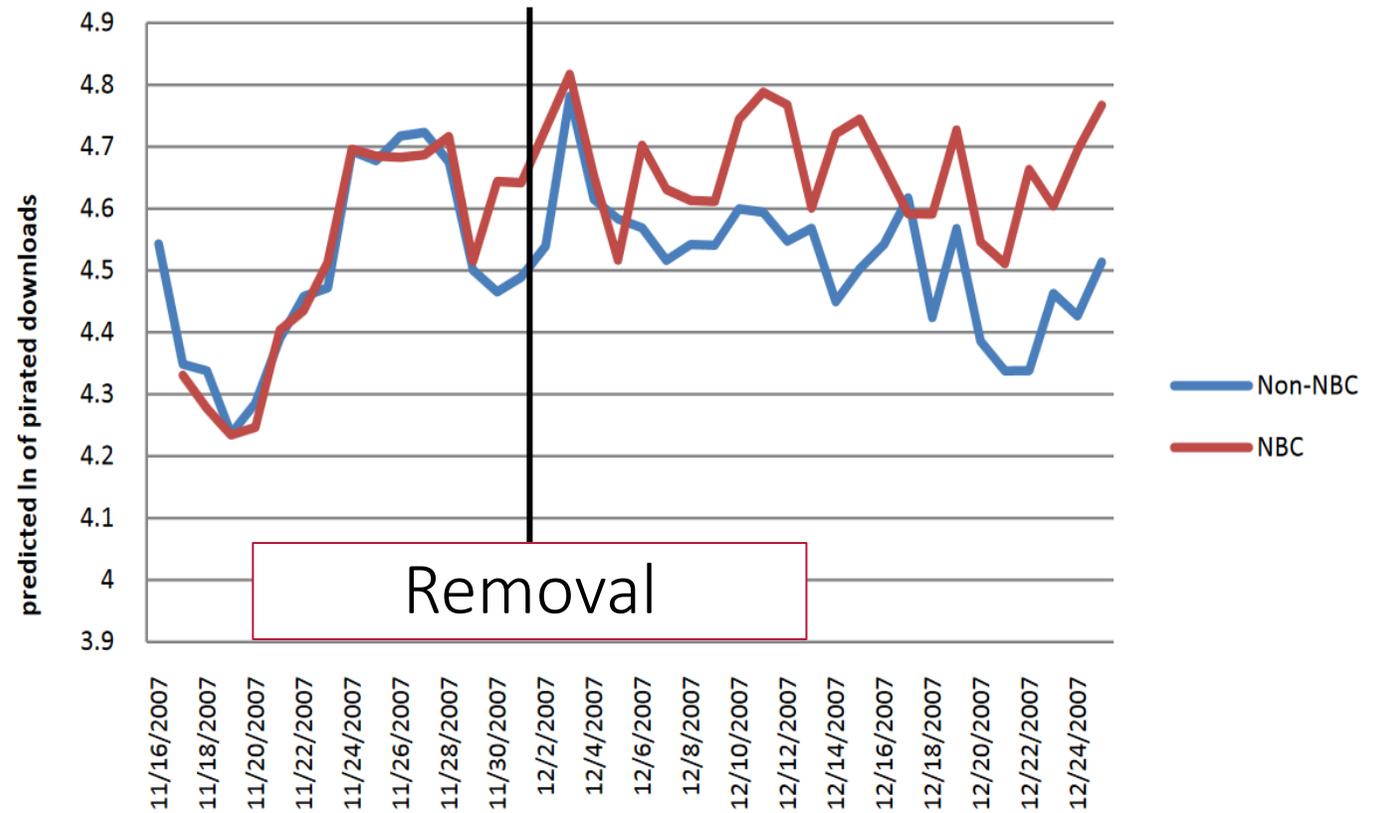
- What happens when people try file-sharing for the first time?
- What happens when people try authorised sources for the first time?

IBS project 2017-2020: Funded by National Science Centre.

File-sharing grew when NBC removed its content from iTunes



Figure 1: NBC vs. Non-NBC Piracy Surrounding December 1, 2007



Source: Danaher et al. (2010).

File-sharing grew when NBC removed its content from iTunes



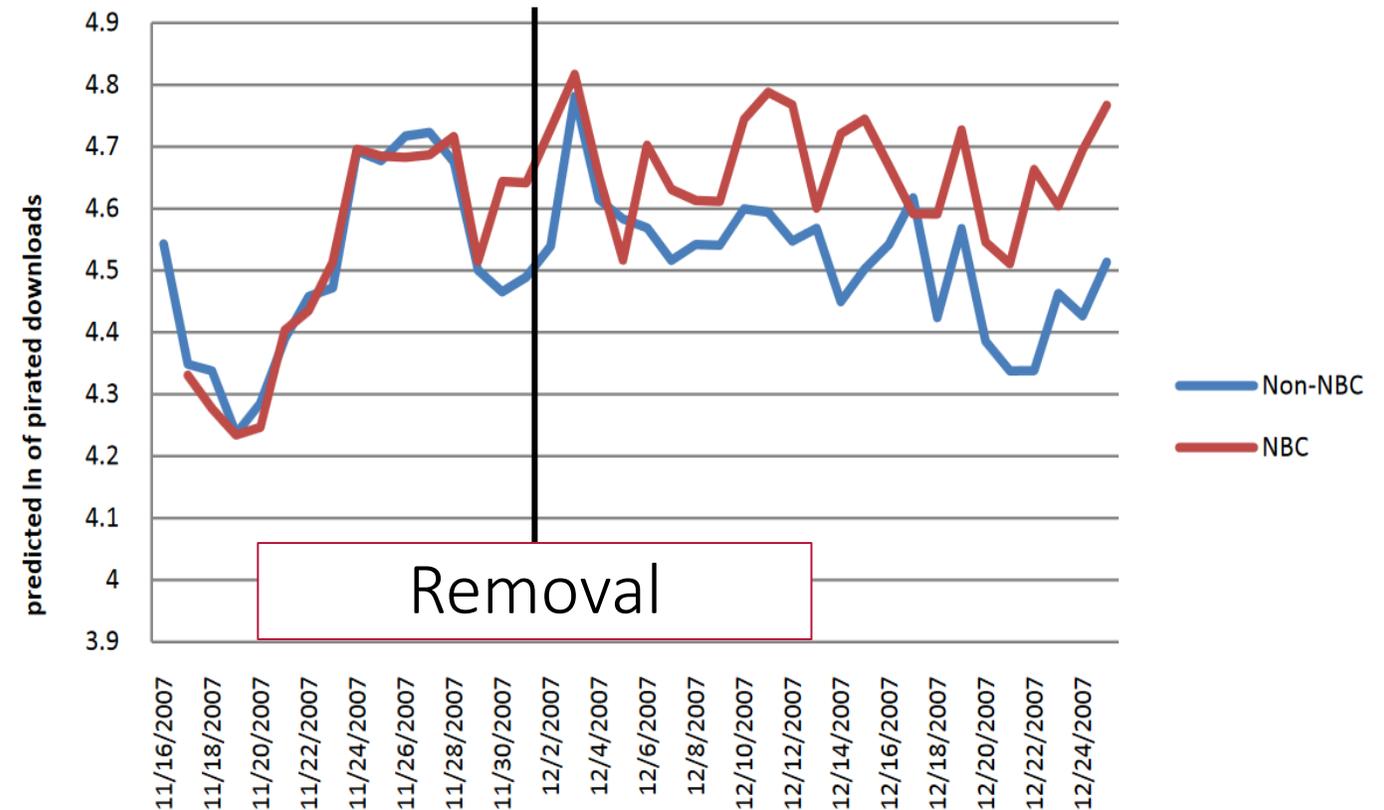
Main findings:

- Did not decline after the content was returned to iTunes!

Interpretation:

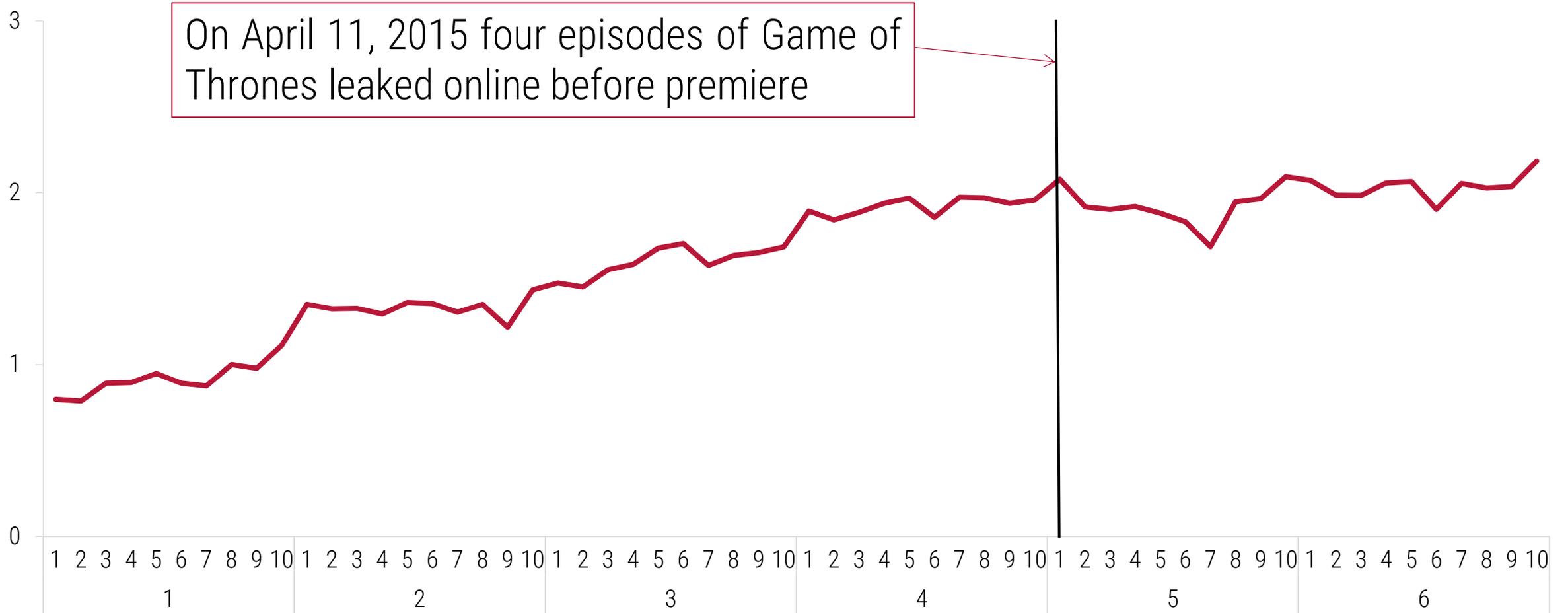
- People permanently switched to unauthorised sources.

Figure 1: NBC vs. Non-NBC Piracy Surrounding December 1, 2007



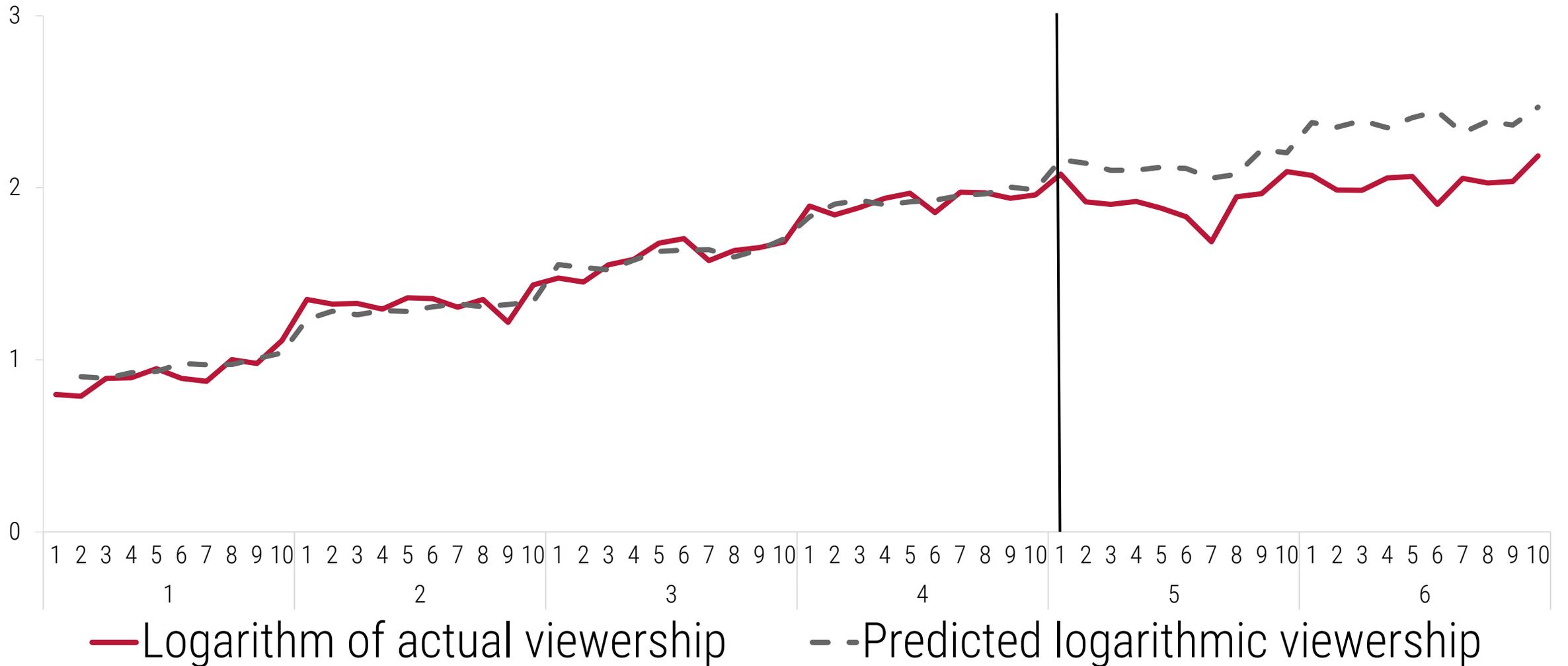
Source: Danaher et al. (2010).

Brace yourselves, pirates are coming!



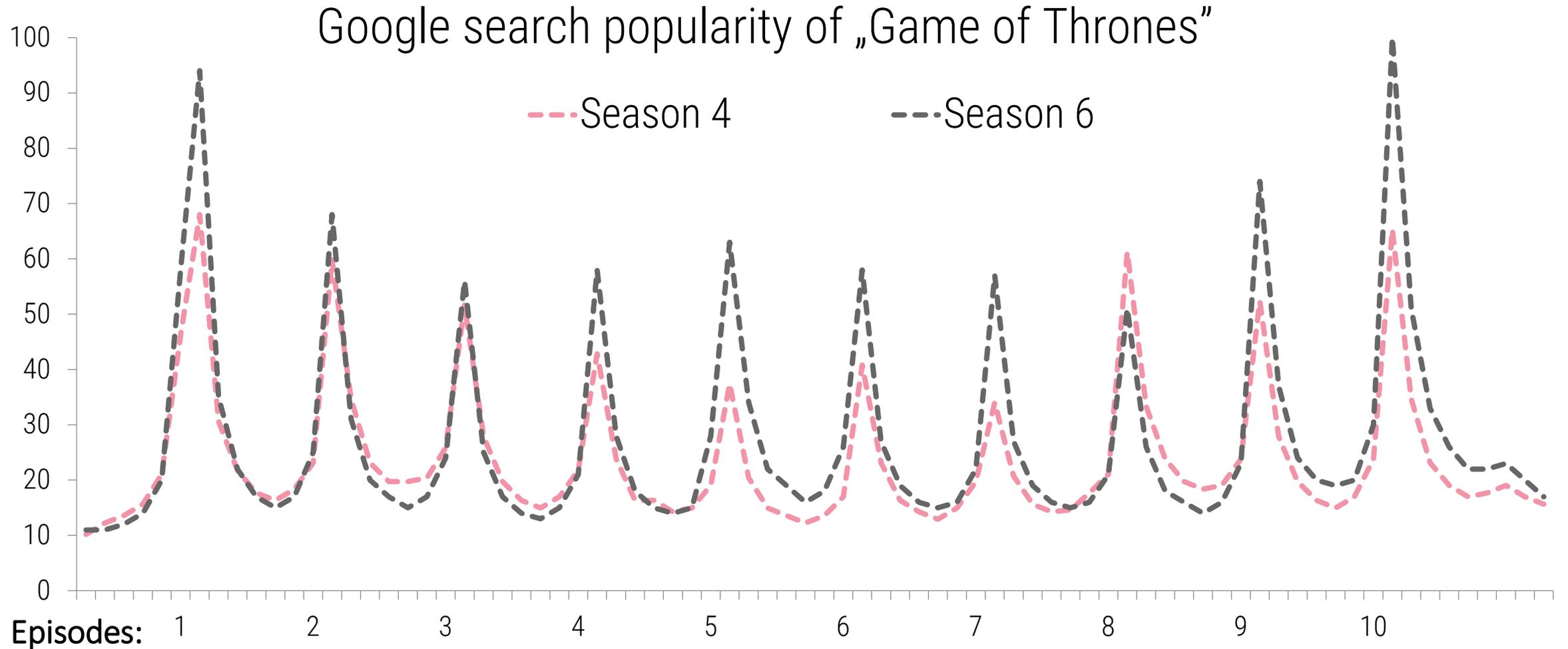
—Logarithm of actual viewership

The trend broke - unexplained by the ratings

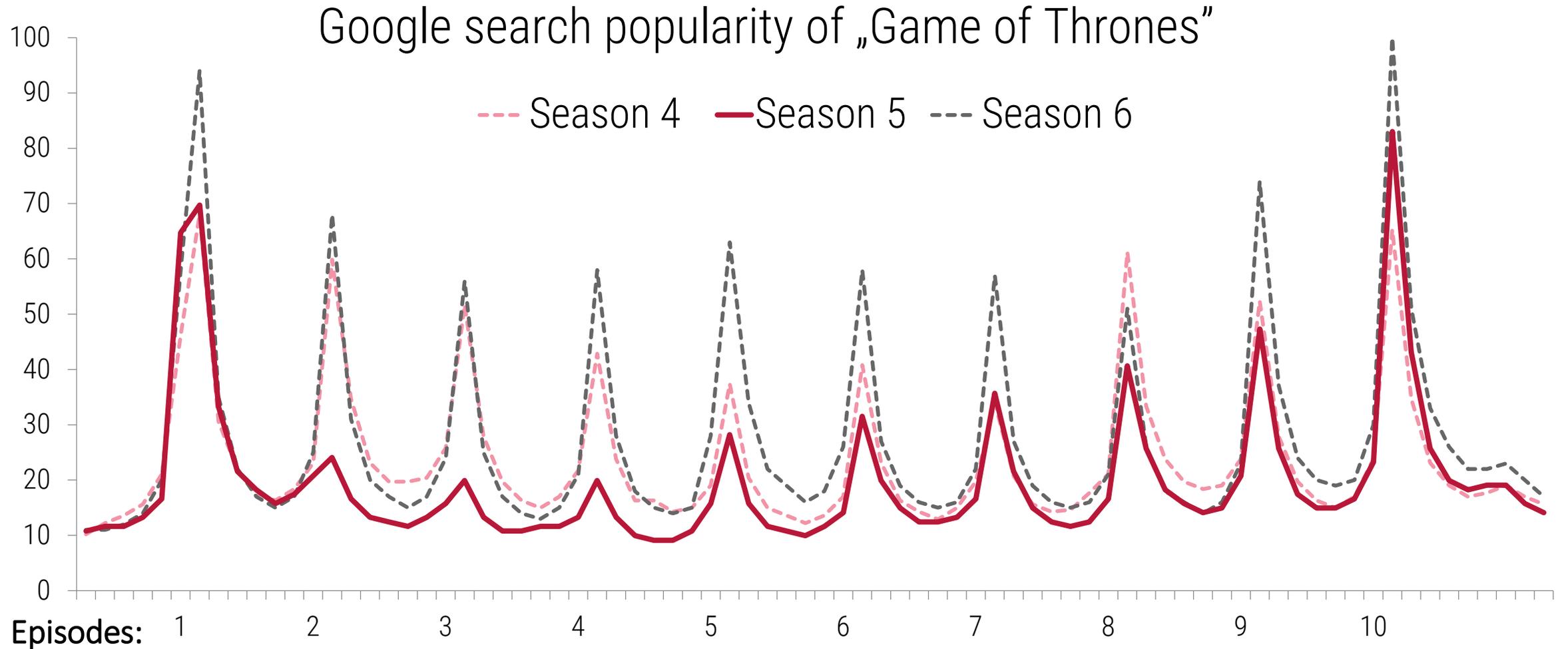


The predicted values are from a regression on seasons 1-4: $\text{viewership} \sim \text{lagged viewership} + \text{lagged rating}$.

Online interest in GoT season 5 focused around the leak



Online interest in GoT season 5 focused around the leak



Did GoT TV viewers switch to file-sharing?



If so:

- Unrelated shows would not experience drops.
- Shows sharing the GoT audience could experience drops.
- The effects would be (at least partially) persistent over time.
- Searches for unauthorised copies of GoT-like shows would increase.

What does data say?



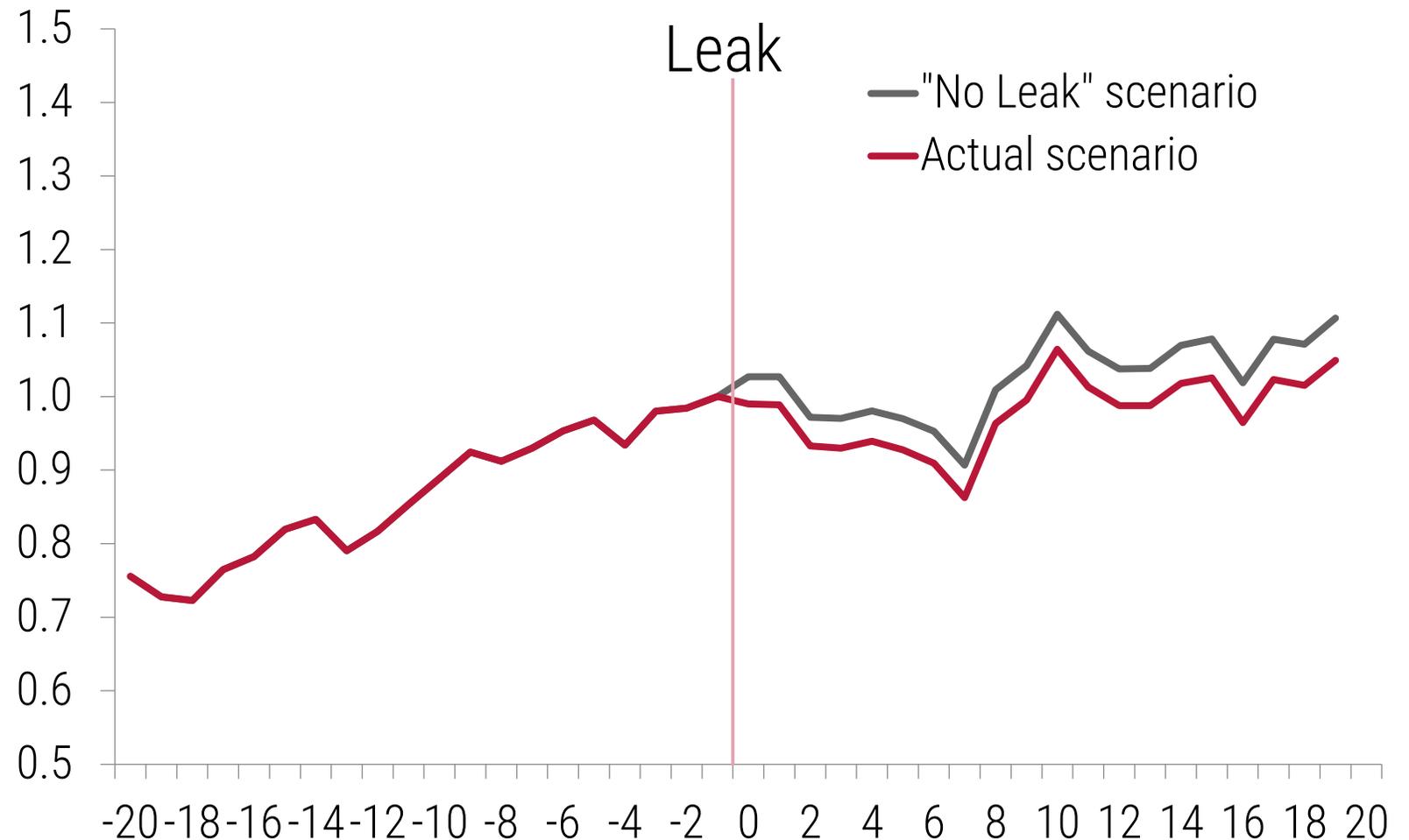
- 71 shows aired at the time => 308 seasons => 6,089 episodes.
- Information:
 - TV viewership (Nielsen)
 - Internet searches (Google Trends)
 - Show characteristics (IMDb, Wikipedia, Commonsensemedia)
 - Shows sharing audience with GoT (Jinni, IMDb, Netflix, TasteDive, Trakt.tv).

[Note: no unethical data collection process was performed.]

The leak affected GoT TV viewership negatively.



The leak caused a 6% decline in GoT TV viewership

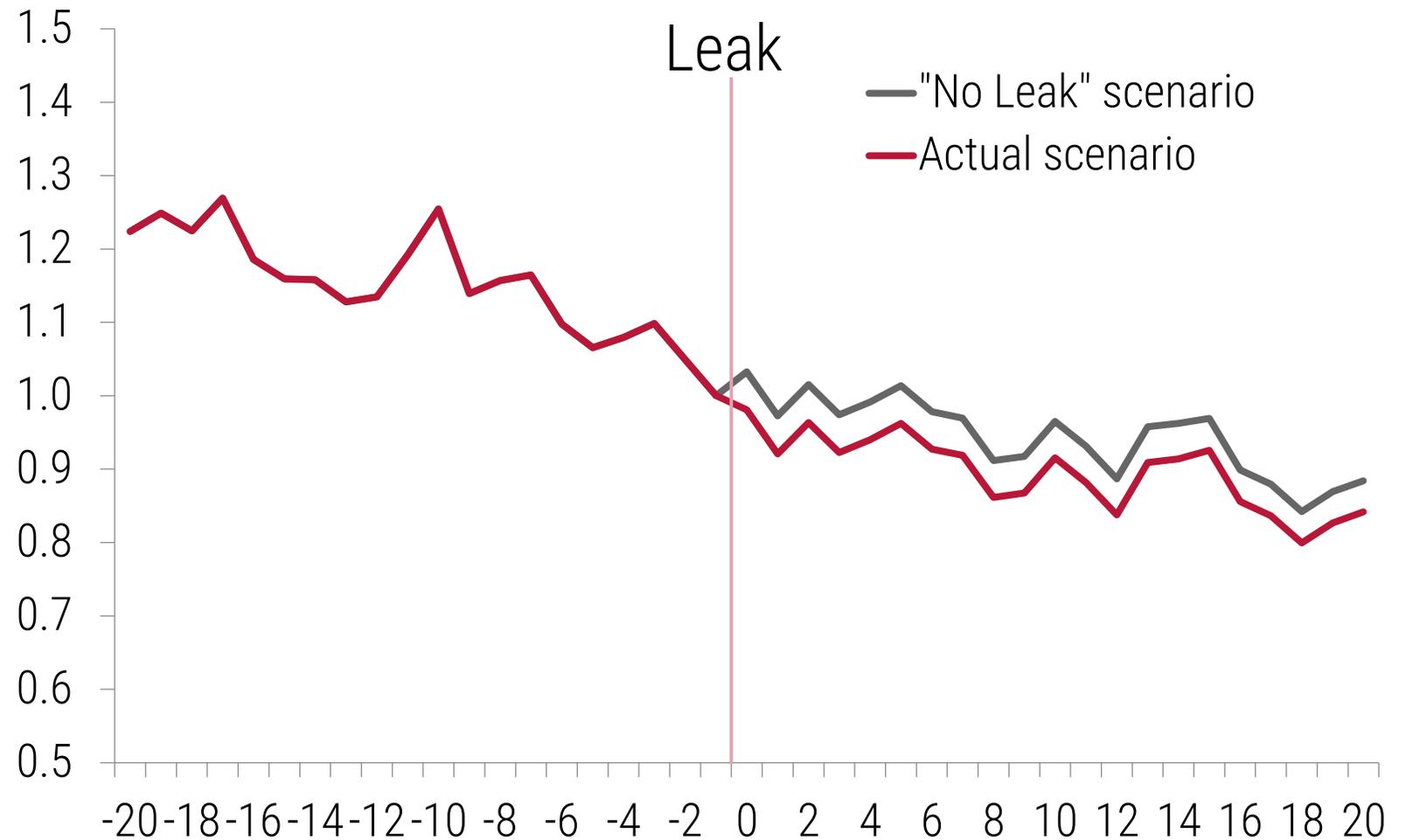


The leak affected GoT-like TV viewership negatively.



The leak caused a 6% decline in GoT TV viewership

And a 4% decline in GoT-like TV viewership



Seems some viewers permanently switched to file-sharing



It's not much but importantly:

Google searches for GoT-like shows (+ „*watch online*”) increased

The TV viewership did not return to its initial path

The leak had a spillover effect on GoT-like TV shows

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„There but not back again. A Pirate’s tale.

Switching between the authorised and unauthorised source of cultural goods”

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