RESEARCH BRIEF

Data can make innovation less risky

Evidence on how data spending and R&D work better together

The study follows companies over a long period

A strong base for testing how data spending changes business choices.

11,000+

Italian firms in the Bank of Italy survey

2002–24

Firm-level evidence across 23 years

2016

GDPR adoption used as the policy shift

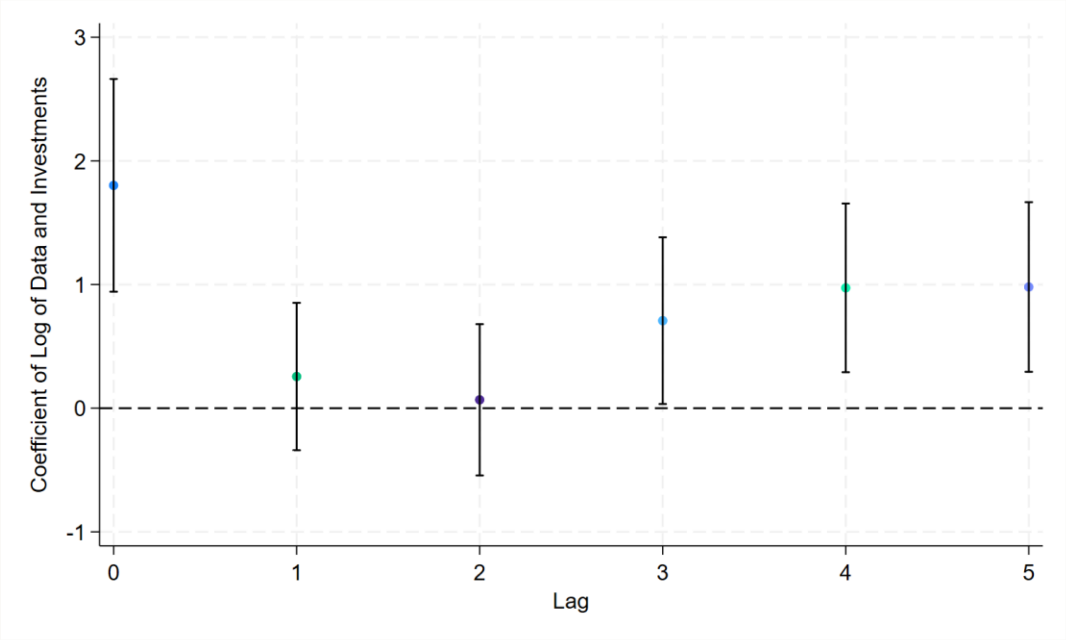
2

Main outcomes: R&D and labour productivity

A policy change helps separate a shift in data spending from normal business noise.

Data spending is linked to more R&D now

Data spending and R&D across lag years



Later estimates are less steady. The same-year result is the strongest basis for action.

What the evidence shows

When data spending rises for reasons linked to the 2016 policy shift, R&D spending rises too. The evidence is strongest within the same year.

0 years

Strongest effect appears within the year

1.5×

R&D response relative to its usual variation

The value comes from what leaders do next

FOR BUSINESS

Plan data and R&D together

The productivity payoff appears when firms invest in both, not when each budget works alone.

FOR POLICY

Keep the rules clear

Stable data and privacy regulation can shape investment by reducing doubt around data use and future costs.

FOR BUSINESS

Build the right capability

People, systems and management help data turn into better research choices and faster learning.

FOR POLICY

Measure what changes

Track firm investment and productivity, not only compliance activity or take-up numbers.

RESEARCH & STRATEGY CONSULTANCY

We help firms and policymakers make choices with evidence they can use.

RESEARCH

Find what is changing

We frame the question, test the data and explain what the results mean for the decision.

ACTION

Choose the next move

We turn findings into practical options, clear measures and steps your team can use.

Evidence that helps you act

START WITH A CLEAR QUESTION

Then build the evidence around the choice you need to make.