

## Research Data Infrastructure accredited by the RatSWD

Social, behavioural, and economic research often requires access to sensitive microdata on individuals, households, or businesses. To satisfy the demands of data producers, data users, and data protection, the German Data Forum (RatSWD) - as one of many tasks - accredits research data centres (RDCs). Consequently, a network of 41 German RDCs has developed since the early 2000s. The RDCs provide researchers with user-oriented, cost-efficient access to a wide range of data.

Since 2009, the RDCs have been organised in the FDI Committee to coordinate the research data infrastructure. This bottom-up coordination fosters efficient governance as well as securing the quality of the research data infrastructure through monitoring procedures.

The RatSWD and the FDI Committee are part of the consortium Consortium for the Social, Behavioural, Educational and Economic Sciences (**KonsortSWD**) within the National Research Data Infrastructure (NFDI) funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) since 2020.

### Available data

RDCs provide data from the following areas of research:

- Social Data
- Behavioural Data
- Economic Data
- Qualitative Data
- Education Data
- Other Data
- Health Data

### Key figures in 2020



**4,917**  
Datasets  
546 datasets added



**43,703**  
External  
Data users



**68,752**  
Downloads  
of open access datasets



**2,906**  
Publications  
based on RDC data



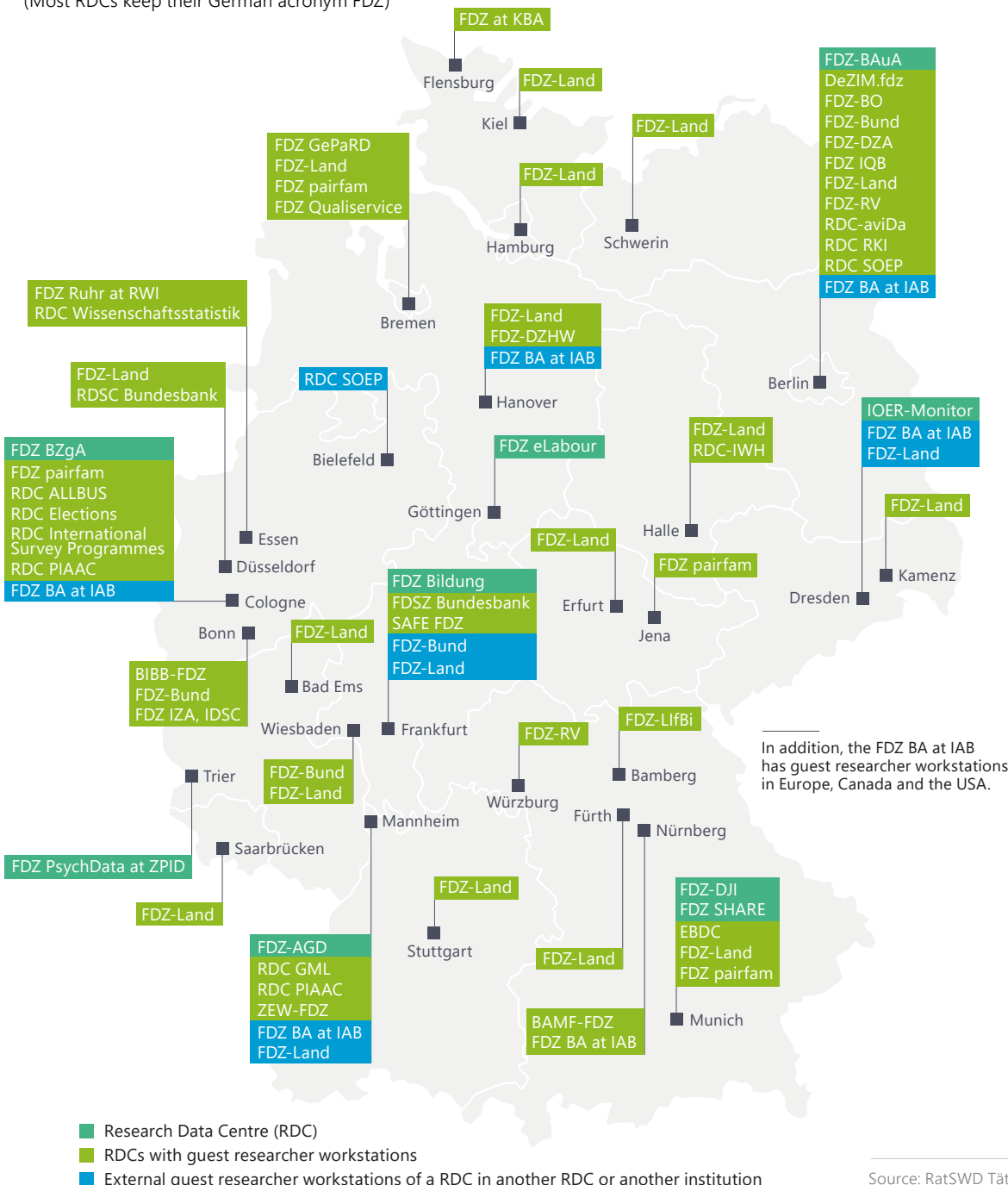
**294**  
Full-time  
equivalent staff



**520**  
Scientific publications  
of RDC staff

### Research Data Centres in 2022

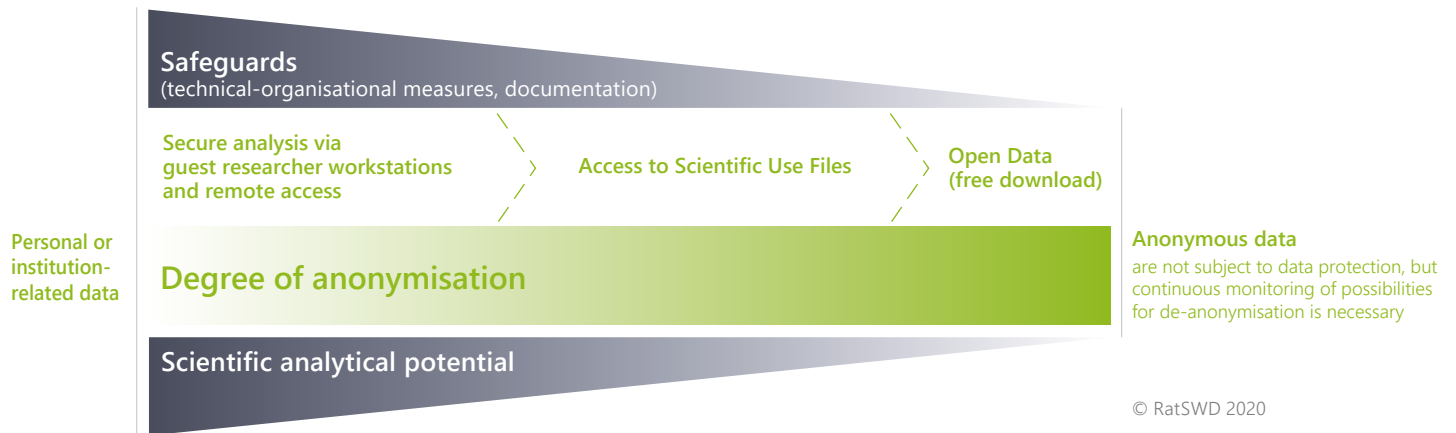
(Most RDCs keep their German acronym FDZ)



## Anonymisation and the analytical potential of data

In research, data protection and the preservation of the data's analytical potential need to be put in balance. As a rule, the more anonymised data is, the lower is its analysis potential for research. The RDCs therefore pursue a variety of approaches regarding the degree of data anonymisation and data access.

Depending on the sensitivity of the data, the RDCs provide a wide range of access paths to their datasets (see figure below). For weakly anonymised data, many RDCs provide guest researcher workstations for on-site data access. Several RDCs also offer (controlled) remote access. For less sensitive but not completely anonymous data, a large majority of RDCs facilitate off-site use through scientific use files. Only completely anonymised data are available for free download.



## Bottom-up governance to secure the quality of the research data infrastructure

The **German Data Forum (RatSWD)** is an advisory board made up of elected representatives from the data-using scientific community in the social sciences and appointed representatives of major German data producers. The **FDI Committee** consists of representatives from all **accredited research data centres (RDCs)**. It complements the German Data Forum's strategic focus with a focus on day-to-day challenges and quality assurance.

### Accreditation

The German Data Forum (RatSWD) has developed standards and criteria for the accreditation of RDCs. Fully operational RDCs need to meet three mandatory criteria (in addition to further information criteria):

- provide at least one data access path
- provide sufficient data documentation
- ensure the long-term availability of the data

### Monitoring and Complaints Management

The FDI Committee elects a monitoring commission which manages:

- the annual monitoring of all accredited RDCs
- complaints from the research community about data access policies in RDCs

## The cooperation between the FDI Committee and the RatSWD: developing and optimising the research data infrastructure

