RatSWD.

German Data Forum

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 34 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.

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

Research Data Centres in 2019
(Most RDCs keep their German acronym FDZ)

FDZ at KBA
Flensburg

FDZ-Land*
Kiel

FDZ-Land*
Schwerin

FDZ-Land*
FDZ pairfam*
FDZ Qualiservice*

FDZ-Land*
Hamburg

FDZ-BO*
FDZ-Bund*
FDZ-DZA*
FDZ IQB*
FDZ-Land*
RDC RKI*
FDZ-RV*
RDC SOEP*
FDZ BA at IAB**

FDZ Ruhr at RWI*
RDC Wissenschaftsstatistik*

FDZ-Land*
fdz.DZHW*
FDZ BA im IAB**

Berlin

FDZ-Land*
RDSC Bundesbank*

RDC SOEP**
Bielefeld

Hannover

RDC-IWH*
FDZ-Land*
Halle

FDZ BA at IAB**
FDZ-Land**

FDZ BZgA
RDC ALLBUS*
RDC Elections*
RDC International Survey Programs*
RDC PIAAC*
FDZ pairfam*
FDZ BA at IAB**

Essen
Düsseldorf

FDZ eLabour
Göttingen

FDZ-Land*
Erfurt

FDZ pairfam*

Jena

FDZ-Land*
Dresden

FDZ-Land*
Kamenz

Köln

FDZ-Land*
Bonn

Bad Ems

FDZ Bildung
RDSC Bundesbank*
FDZ-Bund**
FDZ-Land**
Frankfurt

RDC LIfBi*

BIBB-FDZ*
FDZ-Bund*
FDZ IZA, IDSC*
FDZ IQB**

Wiesbaden

FDZ-RV*
Würzburg

Bamberg

FDZ-Bund*
FDZ-Land*

FDZ PsychData at ZPID
Saarbrücken

Trier

Mannheim

Fürth

Nuremberg

FDZ-Land*

FDZ-Land*
Stuttgart

FDZ-DJI
FDZ SHARE
EBDC*
FDZ-Land*
FDZ pairfam*

FDZ-AGD
RDC GML*
RDC PIAAC*
ZEW-FDZ*
FDZ BA at IAB**
FDZ-Land**

FDZ-Land*

Munich

FDZ BA at IAB*

- RDCs
  - *RDCs with guest researcher workstations
  - **External guest researcher workstations

Key figures in 2018

3,940
Datasets
369 new datasets

46,464
External data users

71,488
Downloads
of openly available datasets

2,074
Publications
based on the available data

285
Full-time staff

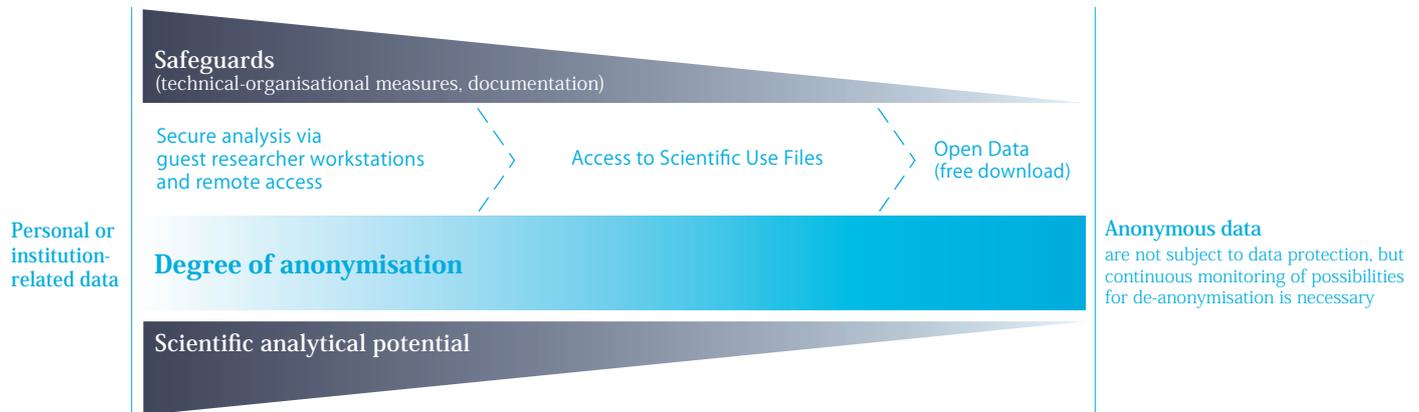**528**
Scientific publications
by RDC personnel

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.

Safeguards
(technical-organisational measures, documentation)

Secure analysis via guest researcher workstations and remote access

Access to Scientific Use Files

Open Data (free download)

Personal or institution-related data

Degree of anonymisation

Anonymous data
are not subject to data protection, but continuous monitoring of possibilities for de-anonymisation is necessary

Scientific analytical potential

Source: RatSWD Tätigkeitsbericht 2018
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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

Research Data Infrastructure (FDI Committee)

Representatives of the 34 (as of July 2019)
Research Data Centres (RDCs)
accredited by the German Data Forum

German Data Forum (RatSWD)

8 representatives from
Science and Research
elected by the scientific community

8 representatives from
Data Production
ex officio

Research Data Infrastructure (FDI Committee)		German Data Forum (RatSWD)
Advises new RDCs on research data management and access management / Proposes the accreditation of new RDCs	**Accreditation of RDCs**	Makes final decision on accreditation of new RDCs
Sets up monitoring commission / Monitors RDCs based on annual reports	**Yearly Monitoring of RDCs**	Evaluates the overall development of the research data infrastructure
Monitoring commission coordinates complaints procedures	**Complaints Management**	Evaluates complaints and takes final decisions

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