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 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

Research Data Centres in 2022

(Most RDCs keep their German acronym FDZ)

FDZ at KBA — Flensburg
FDZ-Land — Kiel
FDZ-Land — Hamburg
FDZ GePaRD / FDZ-Land / FDZ pairfam / FDZ Qualiservice — Bremen
FDZ-Land — Schwerin
DeZIM.fdz / FDZ-BAuA / FDZ-BO / FDZ-Bund / FDZ-DZA / FDZ IQB / FDZ-Land / FDZ-RV / RDC-aviDa / RDC RKI / RDC SOEP — Berlin
FDZ Ruhr at RWI / RDC Wissenschaftsstatistik — Essen
FDZ BZgA / FDZ pairfam / RDC ALLBUS / RDC Elections / RDC International Survey Programmes — Cologne
FDZ-Land / RDSC Bundesbank — Düsseldorf
FDZ-Land / FDZ-DZHW — Hanover
FDZ eLabour — Göttingen
FDZ-Land / RDC-IWH — Halle
IOER-Monitor — Dresden
FDZ-Land — Kamenz
FDZ-Land — Erfurt
FDZ pairfam — Jena
BIBB-FDZ / FDZ-Bund / FDZ IZA, IDSC — Bonn
FDZ-Land — Bad Ems
FDZ Bildung / RDSC Bundesbank / SAFE FDZ — Frankfurt
FDZ-RV — Würzburg
RDC-LIfBi — Bamberg
FDZ-Bund — Mannheim
FDZ PsychData at ZPID — Trier/Saarbrücken
FDZ-Land — Saarbrücken
FDZ-Land — Stuttgart
FDZ-AGD / RDC GML / RDC PIAAC / ZEW-FDZ — Stuttgart
FDZ-Land — Fürth
EBDC / FDZ-DJI / FDZ SHARE / FDZ-Land / FDZ pairfam / RDSC Bundesbank — Munich
BAMF-FDZ / FDZ BA at IAB — Nuremberg

Key figures in 2021

5,517
Datasets
600 datasets added

52,758
External
Data users

88,392
Downloads
of open access datasets

3,101
Publications
based on RDC data

292
Full-time
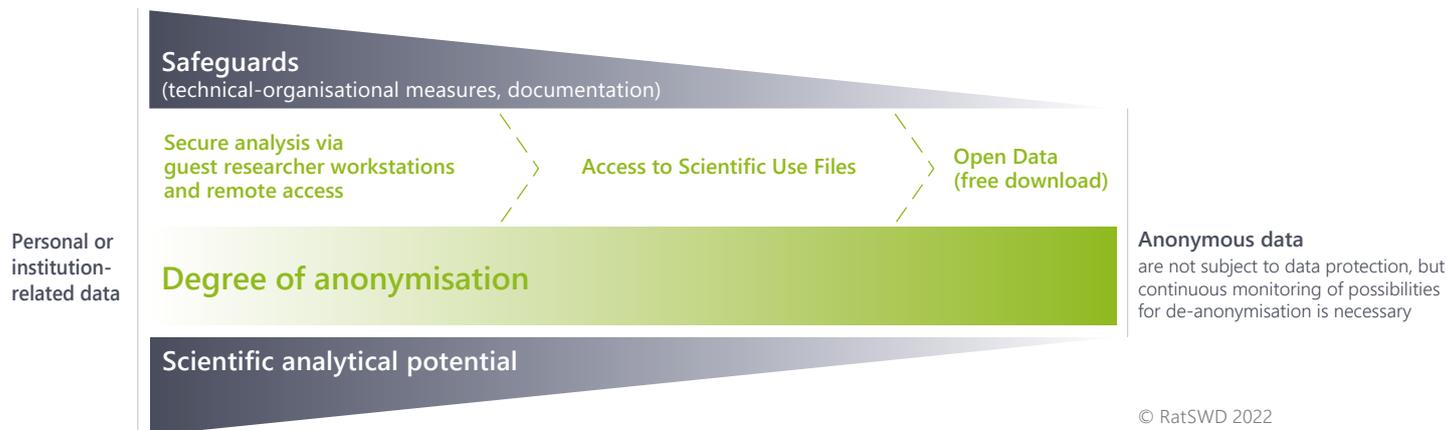equivalent staff

538
Scientific publications
of RDC staff

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

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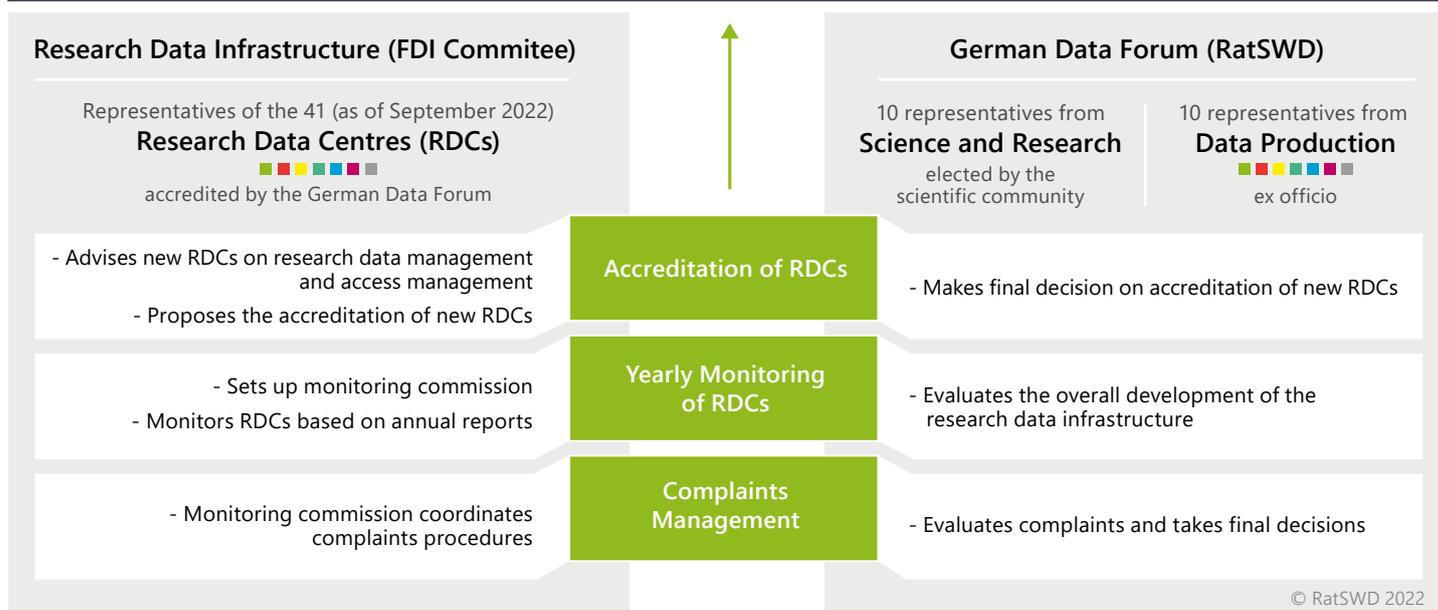
- provide at least one data access path
- provide sufficient data documentation
- ensure the long-term availability of the data

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 Commitee)

Representatives of the 41 (as of September 2022)
Research Data Centres (RDCs)

accredited by the German Data Forum

German Data Forum (RatSWD)

10 representatives from **Science and Research** elected by the scientific community

10 representatives from **Data Production** ex officio

Accreditation of RDCs

- Advises new RDCs on research data management and access management
- Proposes the accreditation of new RDCs

- Makes final decision on accreditation of new RDCs

Yearly Monitoring of RDCs

- Sets up monitoring commission
- Monitors RDCs based on annual reports

- Evaluates the overall development of the research data infrastructure

Complaints Management

- Monitoring commission coordinates complaints procedures

- Evaluates complaints and takes final decisions

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www.konsortswd.de/datenzentren