

RatSWD Output 6 (5)

The survey landscape in the social, behavioural, and economic sciences in Germany

Recommendations of the German Data Forum (RatSWD)

Executive Summary

■ Surveys constitute important research data infrastructures for basic and applied research in many disciplines of the social, behavioral, and economic sciences. The use of survey data developed in various dimensions: secondary data use intensified across disciplines; survey data are increasingly used in replication studies; recently, they have been linked to data from other sources such as administrative data; finally, existing surveys increasingly allow additions to their survey instruments suggested by external scientists as potential data users.

The German Data Forum supports these developments and presents recommendations to spread the secondary use of existing data, to facilitate replication studies and data linkage, and to open the questionnaires of extant surveys to new suggestions. In this document we discuss challenges for existing surveys in the areas of funding, planning, and continuation, with respect to data protection, access to registers, and human resource development. This responds to the needs of extant surveys (see Appendix 1) which have been pointed out to the German Data Forum by data producers. In addition, we suggest measures to safeguard data quality. These refer to sample selectivity as a consequence of low response rates, they cover issues related to the market structure among survey institutes in Germany, and to research on survey methodology.

The appendices of this document describe the diversity and richness of existing surveys in Germany. In order to use the existing infrastructures to their fullest potential, our recommendations address various stakeholders: those administering surveys, research funding organizations, and those in charge of science policy.

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German Data Forum (RatSWD)
Chausseestr. 111
10115 Berlin
Germany
office@ratswd.de
www.ratswd.de/en

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