

Enhancing the Sharing of (Meta-) Data in Social Science Research on the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Meta-analysis

In March 2020 considerable restrictions to public life emerged across Europe in order to slow down the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. They included the closing of schools and day-cares, restaurants and retail, as well as the transition from in-office work to home-office, changing the everyday life of almost the entire population within a few weeks. Thus, in addition to medical challenges, the Covid-19 pandemic also poses many social science questions, such as how the pandemic affects the economy, family life, or education.

Therefore, as measures to combat Covid-19 emerged, also a number of social, behavioural and economic research projects developed to better understand the effects of the measures on society. To obtain thorough and quality assured insights into the social effects of the pandemic, it is particularly crucial to share these preliminary data and results in both a timely and accurate manner. At the same time, the rapid pace of the disease and the ad hoc mobilisation of resources to study the pandemic may also create conditions for inaccurate or low-quality data that is not useful for secondary use or data linkages. This would pose the danger of diminished scientific impact and social value of the collected data.

In order to support the quality assurance of research data and a cultural shift towards Open Science across larger and smaller ad hoc social, behavioural, educational, and economic research projects on Covid-19, the German Data Forum (RatSWD) started the so-called Best-FDM¹ project. The project builds on a collection of German research initiatives which empirically examine the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on society. The studies were collected through two channels. First, since March 2020 we have actively been monitoring and collecting upcoming initiatives within the above-mentioned fields. Second, once the initiative became known in the community, several individual researchers began approaching the German Data Forum (RatSWD) to ask for inclusion of their projects' findings and designs in the data base. This way, from March 2020 until December 2020, more than 200 independent empirical research projects could be brought together.

The collected studies are systematically categorised in terms of discipline, methodology, research design, and current research phase. An initial analysis reveals that several larger projects provide very carefully designed and openly accessible documentations of their results, questionnaires, and research data management choices that encourage secondary use of their data or data linkages. However, the initial analysis also shows that the awareness of the importance of Open Science could be enhanced, particularly among researchers in small ad hoc projects. The Best-FDM project will identify which incentives are necessary to motivate more researchers to share their data and to make their meta data transparent and interoperable. In sum, based on the collected studies, our poster will present a meta-analysis identifying the gaps regarding Open Science in the social, behavioural, educational, and economic Covid-19 research. Moreover, we will illustrate measures aimed at enhancing the openness of these initiatives.

¹ **Bessere Ergebnisse durch Interoperabilität und standardisiertes Forschungsdatenmanagement: Vernetzung empirischer sozialwissenschaftlicher Forschung in gesellschaftlichen Krisen (Best_FDM)**