

RDA: Who? What? Where?

Introducing the Research Data Alliance and its Opportunities for the Social Sciences

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1 Aim of this report

This report aims to provide an introduction to the Research Data Alliance (RDA) for social science scholars. It summarizes the outcomes of an analysis of the RDA groups and their relevance for professionals within the domain of social sciences. This report is based on previous reports available on Zenodo¹. The previous work was executed as part of the RDA Europe 4.0 project² in which Data Archiving and Networked Services (DANS)³ acted as a national RDA node in the Netherlands and as an ambassador for the social sciences.

In this report, a brief introduction of the RDA is given, followed by an outline of the current RDA Interest and Working Groups (status October 2022). Groups were analyzed with respect to their relevance for social science researchers and the work considered most important for this target audience is highlighted. We also summarize selected RDA recommendations and outcomes relevant for the social science community.

Social sciences in this context should be understood as the broad field of research that is concerned with “society and the relationships among individuals within a society”⁴. This definition includes, but is not limited to, the field of sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, psychology, educational sciences, pedagogics and economics.

This report should be seen as a starting point for researchers and other professionals working within this domain to get acquainted with the RDA and identify work that would be interesting for them. This analysis can, in addition, be used by research supporters as basis to provide information to scientists at events or conferences specifically addressing the social science community.

1 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3580674>

2 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-europe> [accessed 26-10-2022]

3 <https://dans.knaw.nl/en/> [accessed 26-10-2022]

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_science [accessed 26-10-2022]



2 What is the RDA?

The Research Data Alliance, short RDA, is a community-driven organization that was launched in 2013 by the European Commission, the United States Government's National Science Foundation and National Institute of Standards and Technology, and the Australian Government's Department of Innovation. The goal of the RDA is to build the social and technical infrastructure that is needed to enable open sharing of data. The organization envisions “researchers and innovators openly sharing data across technologies, disciplines, and countries to address the grand challenges of society”⁵. Since 2013, the EU has supported RDA activities within Europe, by funding Europe-specific projects such as RDA Europe 4.0.

In May 2022, the RDA counted over 12.600 members from 145 different countries and from various backgrounds, including data professionals, researchers, librarians and policy developers. Individual membership to the RDA is free for anyone who supports the RDA mission and its guiding principles (see Figure 1).

- **Openness** – Membership is open to all interested individuals who subscribe to the RDA's Guiding Principles. RDA community meetings and processes are open, and the deliverables of RDA Working Groups will be publicly disseminated.
- **Consensus** – The RDA moves forward by achieving consensus among its membership. RDA processes and procedures include appropriate mechanisms to resolve conflicts.
- **Inclusive** – The RDA seeks to promote broad, balanced and inclusive representation of its membership and stakeholder communities.
- **Harmonization** – The RDA works to achieve harmonization across data standards, policies, technologies, infrastructure, and communities.
- **Community-driven** – The RDA is a public, community-driven body constituted of volunteer members and organizations, supported by the RDA Secretariat.
- **Non-profit and technology-neutral** - The RDA does not promote, endorse, or sell commercial products, technologies, or services and the development of open and re-usable recommendations and outputs within the RDA is mandatory.

Figure 1. The RDA Guiding principles. Taken from <https://www.rd-alliance.org/get-involved.html>

⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/about-rda> [accessed 26-10-2022]



RDA members can join **Interest Groups (IGs)** and **Working Groups (WGs)** focused on various topics related to data sharing and innovation. Both IGs and WGs undergo a review process before they are established and endorsed by the RDA.

IGs consists of experts from the community and serve as a platform for exchange. IGs produce outputs such as surveys, recommendations, reports, and can initiate new WGs. While IGs can be active over longer periods of time, WGs have a fixed period of 12 to 18 months during which members work on concrete outputs. WG outputs can include, for instance, technical specifications, conceptual models or frameworks, or implemented policies.

An important event at which members of the RDA come together are the **RDA Plenaries**. Plenaries are held every six months in different places around the world – and since the start of the COVID pandemic also online - and serve as an important point of contact where the communities are brought together and where WGs and IGs present and discuss their work.

Find information about	
RDA in general	www.rd-alliance.org
Interest Groups	www.rd-alliance.org/groups/interest-groups
Working Groups	www.rd-alliance.org/groups/working-groups
Recommendations & Outputs	www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/all-recommendations-and-outputs
RDA on Twitter	@resdatall
RDA on LinkedIn	www.linkedin.com/in/researchdataalliance/
RDA Contact	www.rd-alliance.org/contact
RDA and the Social Sciences	www.rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines/rda-and-social-sciences

Table 1. This table gives an overview of where to find information about the RDA online. All weblinks where accessed 26-10-2022.

3 RDA and the Social Sciences

The following part of this report provides an overview of the RDA IGs, WGS and Outputs which are of particular interest for scholars working within the field of social sciences.

To establish an overview of the RDA work, a list of the current IGs and WGs was taken from the RDA website in October 2022^{6,7}. The IGs and WGs were then classified into broader categories (see 3.1) to structure the presentation and give a quick overview of the different aspects that are addressed by the RDA. Finally, the relevance of the IGs, WGs and Outputs for the social sciences was evaluated and the results of this evaluation are summarized in section 3.2 to 3.3 below.

3.1 Categorization of the RDA groups and outputs

The described analysis was performed in October 2022 when 60 Interest groups (IGs) and 38 Working Groups (WGs) were listed on the RDA website^{5,6}.

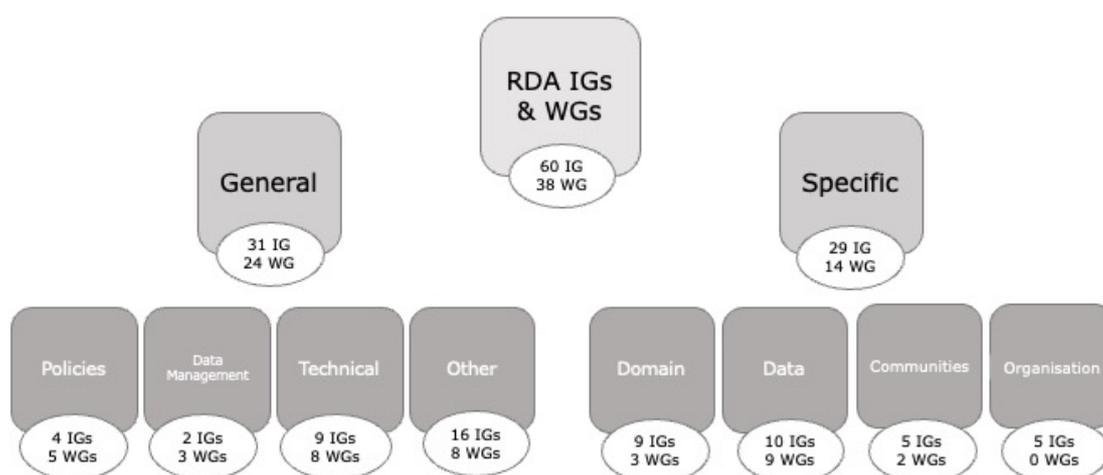


Figure 2. This Figure illustrates the classification that was adopted to group the Interest Groups (IGs) and Working Groups (WGs) into logical larger units to provide an overview of the work that is performed within the RDA.

⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/interest-groups> [accessed 26-10-2022]

⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/working-groups> [accessed 26-10-2022] Please note that the RDA COVID-19 groups and subgroups were counted as one WG.



In order to establish a manageable overview of the different aspects that are addressed by the RDA, the IGs and WGs as well as their corresponding outputs were grouped into larger units by classifying the groups into different categories according to the topics they are dealing with. The same classification was used as in the previous reports⁸ and it was chosen to create logical sub-groups suitable for this analysis focused on social sciences scholars. It should be noted that for other purposes and audiences, other classifications may be more appropriate. In addition, the RDA has since the publication of the first version of this report in August 2018 worked on a classification scheme for IG and WGs. This scheme classifies groups according to “Main Focus” and “Domain/Field of Expertise”. Anyone interested in the RDA can now search for groups and outputs using these criteria (see Table 2).⁹ In addition, dedicated pages for different disciplines on the RDA website¹⁰, including the social sciences¹¹ have also been created based on these efforts. The social science domain page is a good starting point for social scientists to get to know the RDA and WGs and IGs relevant to this field.

Main Focus	Domain/Field of Expertise
Data Management	Social Sciences
Data Collection	Natural Sciences
Data Description	Engineering and Technology
Identity, Store, and Preserve	Medical and Health Sciences
Disseminate, Link, and Find	Agricultural Sciences
Policy, Legal Compliance, and Capacity	Humanities
Not applicable	Domain Agnostic

Table 2. Search criteria established by the RDA along which groups and outputs can be searched for on the RDA website¹².

The classification that was applied for this report had two levels and a schematic overview is given in Figure 2. In a first step, groups were divided into General vs. Specific topics: Groups covering domain-general topics, such as data management or infrastructure development, were classified as *general*, whereas groups dealing with specific data, domains or communities were classified as *specific*.

⁸ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3580674>

⁹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-for-you> [accessed 26-10-2022]

¹⁰ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines> [accessed 26-10-2022]

¹¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-disciplines/rda-and-social-sciences> [accessed 26-10-2022]

¹² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-for-you> [accessed 26-10-2022]



In a second step, the general groups were divided into four categories: Policies and guidelines, data management, technical and infrastructure, and other (i.e., groups concerning domain-general topics that did not fit any of the prior three categories). The specific groups were also sub-divided into four categories: Domains, data, communities, and organizations.

Consecutively, for all IGs and WGs the description on the RDA website was studied in order to establish their relevance for social sciences researchers. Three categories were used: Groups were considered *highly relevant* if they covered topics that should be of interest for social sciences researchers in general. These topics, for instance, include dealing with privacy-sensitive data or RDA work on research data management. Groups that may be interesting for social sciences researchers depending on their exact field of research or particular interest were labeled as *moderately relevant*. This category includes, for instance, groups working on big data or within the field of machine learning. RDA groups that did not fit into these prior categories were labeled as being *low in relevance*. It should be noted that our analysis aims to give a broad perspective on relevance for social sciences, and that groups or outcomes classified as low relevance may still be interesting for a particular social sciences researcher interested in specific topics. Our analysis should be seen as a starting point for social science researchers that are new to the RDA and wish to receive some guidance through the large amount of work and topics covered by the RDA.

Below the results of the group and outcome assessment are presented, following the structure of the categorization described above. An overview of the categorization and evaluation for all groups can be seen in the related dataset that has been published alongside this report on Zenodo¹³.

3.2 Interest Groups

In the following, an overview is given of the Interest Groups (IGs) that can be considered highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers. An overview of all IGs is given in the related dataset on Zenodo¹⁴.

¹³ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7267347>

¹⁴ <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7267347>

3.2.1 General topics

3.2.1.1 Policies and guidelines

All of the IGs in this category were classified as either highly or moderately relevant to social science researchers as these groups are engaged in creating policies and guidelines for general issues related to (open) research data. One group is considered highly relevant for social sciences researchers, namely the Ethics and Social Aspects of Data IG¹⁵ which is concerned with ethical and social issues with respect to data archiving, sharing, and reuse. Given that most social sciences researchers deal with sensitive data that impose ethical issues, this IG is considered highly relevant for the community. The three other IGs in this category may also be interesting for social sciences researchers, but their relevance is more dependent on the interest and specific field of the particular researcher. The groups deal with legal interoperability (RDA/CODATA Legal Interoperability IG¹⁶), data policies that support publication of research (Data policy standardization and implementation IG¹⁷), and the Preservation Tools, Techniques, and Policies IG¹⁸ which discusses preservation issues and policies.

3.2.1.2 Data Management

As with policies and recommendations, the groups within the Data Management category can be considered highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers. In particular, the Education and Training on handling of research data IG¹⁹ is seen as highly relevant as it fosters the exchange of information about developments and initiatives for trainings on how to manage research data throughout the data lifecycle. The other IG may be relevant for social sciences researchers interested in Data Management Plans (Active Data Management Plans IG²⁰).

3.2.1.3 Technical and infrastructure

¹⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/ethics-and-social-aspects-data.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

¹⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdacodata-legal-interoperability-ig.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

¹⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-policy-standardisation-and-implementation> [accessed 27-10-2022]

¹⁸ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/preservation-tools-techniques-and-policies> [accessed 27-10-2022]

¹⁹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/education-and-training-handling-research-data.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁰ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/active-data-management-plans.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

Although associated outputs of IGs and related WGs dealing with technical aspects and infrastructure developments such as persistent identifiers, data provenance, or virtual research environments can be of interest for the social sciences, the IGs in this category were overall considered less relevant for social science researchers than the other categories. One IG that may be interesting for social science researchers, however, is the Virtual Research Environment IG²¹. This IG is exploring all aspects of existing and planned future Virtual Research Environments with the aim of moving towards common policies and best practices.

3.2.1.4 Other general topics

There are four additional IGs that can be considered highly relevant for social sciences researchers. The Data Discovery Paradigms IG²² aims to improve the discovery of research data and may hence be highly relevant for social sciences researchers interested in finding and reusing data or making their own data findable. The Engaging Researchers with Data IG²³ discusses how researchers can be engaged in data management and is considered highly relevant as the importance of data management is ever growing across all disciplines. The Sharing Rewards and Credit (SHARC) IG²⁴ is seeking to understand and improve the crediting and rewarding mechanisms in the data and resources sharing process. It currently covers several disciplines but lacks social sciences representatives despite being a general topic that is of interest to all communities and hence also to social science researchers. A group that was established since the last report is the Social Dynamics of Data Interoperability IG²⁵ which can be interested for social science researchers interested in social dynamics and their impact on the FAIR data movement.

Besides these highly relevant groups, nine groups can be considered moderately relevant, depending on the specific interest of the social sciences researcher. Although not yet endorsed, the Science communication for research data IG²⁶ seems relevant for social sciences as well as the Professionalising Data Stewardship IG²⁷. The other groups in this category deal with data commons (Global Open Research Commons²⁸), rescue of data (Data Conservation IG²⁹), the implementation of

²¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/vre-ig.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-discovery-paradigms-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/engaging-researchers-data-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁴ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/sharing-rewards-and-credit-sharc-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/social-dynamics-data-interoperability-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/science-communication-research-data> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁷ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/professionalising-data-stewardship-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁸ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/global-open-research-commons-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

²⁹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-conservation-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]



the FAIR principles (GO FAIR IG³⁰), the development of a survey on Open Science Practices (IG for Surveying Open Data Practices³¹), the nature of information across various fields (Structure of Information IG³²), vocabulary services (Vocabulary Services IG³³), metadata (Metadata IG³⁴), and data as economic goods (Data Economics IG³⁵).

3.2.2 Specific topics

3.2.2.1 Domain

The most important RDA group for the social sciences is the Social Science Research Data IG³⁶. This group aims to foster exchange between various professionals on issues particular to data originating from the social sciences and humanities. In addition, there are a couple of domain-specific groups that may be interesting for social scientists. Whether or not a domain-specific group is relevant of course highly depends on the specific field of research, therefore groups covering specific topics received the label moderately relevant. The groups that fall under this example are the Linguistics Data IG³⁷, the Psychological Data IG³⁸ and the Digital Practices in History and Ethnography IG³⁹.

3.2.2.2 Data

Similar to domain-specific groups, data-specific groups may or may not be interesting for a social science researcher depending on their exact field of research. Taking a broad perspective on social sciences, we would consider five data-specific IGs as (potentially) relevant. The RDA/NISO Privacy Implications of Research Data Sets IG⁴⁰ should be of interest to most social scientists as it discusses issues regarding data containing human subject information. The Sensitive Data Interest Group⁴¹ also seems highly relevant for social science researchers who are often dealing with sensitive data. Besides

30 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/go-fair-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

31 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/ig-surveying-open-data-practices> [accessed 27-10-2022]

32 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/structure-information> [accessed 27-10-2022]

33 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/vocabulary-services-interest-group.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

34 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/metadata-ig.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

35 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-economics-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

36 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/social-science-research-data-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

37 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/linguistics-data-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

38 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/psychological-data-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

39 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/digital-practices-history-and-ethnography-ig.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

40 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdaniso-privacy-implications-research-data-sets-wg.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

41 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/sensitive-data-interest-group> [accessed 27-10-2022]



these two, IGs concerning developmental studies (Data for Development IG⁴²), health data (Health Data IG⁴³).

3.2.2.3 Communities and organizations

The last two classes of specific IGs concern specific communities or organizations (such as libraries, universities and research institutions). Most IGs within these two categories seem not directly relevant to social science researchers. Two IGs that may be considered relevant, however, are the RDA for the Sustainable Development Goals IG⁴⁴ which is related to the Data for Development IG, and the Early Career and Engagement IG⁴⁵. The latter IG is established for early career researchers and RDA newcomers and helps its members to get a better understanding of the RDA and its working procedures. It is hence an interesting group for social sciences researchers who are new to the RDA and who would like some support in finding their way within the RDA. A group focusing on data repositories that may be interesting for social scientists is the Domain Repositories Interest Group⁴⁶

3.3 Working Groups

In the following, an overview is given of the RDA Working Groups (WGs) that can be considered highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers. Since there are fewer WGs than IGs and as WGs deal with specific topics or use cases, overall fewer groups were classified as highly or moderately relevant for social sciences researchers.

3.3.1 General topics

Out of all working groups dealing with general topics, four WGs were classified as highly relevant and ten WGs were classified as moderately relevant for social science researchers.

Firstly, the Exposing Data Management Plans WG⁴⁷ was considered relevant as it aims to take a user perspective on Data Management Plans (DMPs) as well as addressing current problems concerning

42 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-development.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

43 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/health-data.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

44 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/rda-sustainable-development-goals> [accessed 27-10-2022]

45 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/early-career-and-engagement-ig> [accessed 27-10-2022]

46 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/domain-repositories-interest-group.html> [accessed 27-10-2022]

47 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/exposing-data-management-plans-wg> [accessed 27-10-2022]

the lack of standards for DMPs. It is a valuable WG for social science researchers who would like to discuss and be involved in recent and upcoming developments concerning data management. Another group that was classified as relevant was the Discipline-specific Guidance for Data Management Plans WG⁴⁸ which focuses on the researchers needs and discipline-specific adaptations for DMP templates. The third group that was classified as highly relevant is the RDA/WDS Publishing Data Workflows WG⁴⁹. This WG is concerned with data publishing and is working on an analysis of existing and emerging workflows and standards for data publishing within different disciplines. As data sharing becomes increasingly relevant for researchers of all fields, this WG may provide a useful overview of the current state for social sciences researchers. Finally, a more recently established group focusing on artificial intelligence and sensitive data, the Artificial Intelligence and Data Visitation (AIDV) WG⁵⁰ might also be of interest to social science researchers.

General WGs that may further be interesting for social science researchers cover WGs concerning FAIR research software (FAIR for Research Software (FAIR4RS) WG⁵¹), curation practices supporting computational reproducibility and FAIR (CURE-FAIR WG⁵²), and a group concerned with data granularity practice (Data Granularity WG⁵³). Furthermore, groups that may be of interest are the WGs working on FAIR data maturity (FAIR Data Maturity Model WG⁵⁴), data usage metrics (Data Usage Metrics WG⁵⁵), the creation of a catalogue of metadata standards (Metadata Standards Catalog WG⁵⁶), and work related to metadata for physical objects (RDA / TDWG Metadata Standards for attribution of physical and digital collections stewardship⁵⁷). In addition, the Preserving Scientific Annotation WG⁵⁸ concerned with methodologies on annotation of digital resources across domains may be of interest to social science researchers as well. Two groups established since the publication of the last report that may be of interest are the FAIR for Virtual Research Environments WG⁵⁹ and the Data Repository Attributes WG⁶⁰

48 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/discipline-specific-guidance-data-management-plans-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

49 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rdawds-publishing-data-workflows-wg.html> [accessed 31-10-2022]

50 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/artificial-intelligence-and-data-visitation-aidv-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

51 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/fair-research-software-fair4rs-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

52 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/cure-fair-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

53 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-granularity-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

54 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/fair-data-maturity-model-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

55 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-usage-metrics-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

56 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/metadata-standards-catalog-working-group.html> [accessed 31-10-2022]

57 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/metadata-standards-attribution-physical-and-digital-collections-stewardship.html> [accessed 31-10-2022]

58 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/preserving-scientific-annotation-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

59 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/fair-virtual-research-environments-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

60 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-repository-attributes-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]



Specific topics

Out of the 14 WGs in this category, two were labeled as highly relevant and four were labeled as moderately relevant. A group that was established during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic but that remains relevant is the RDA COVID-19⁶¹ WG. Importantly, this group is divided into specific sub-group dealing with different aspects of COVID-19 including a dedicated group for Social Science related research in COVID-19 (RDA-COVID19-Social-Sciences⁶²). Another relevant WG is the Raising FAIRness in health data and health research performing organisations (HRPOs) WG. This WG deals with issues and challenges around confidentiality, privacy, commercial interests and sensitivities which are common in health sciences but also very relevant for social scientists who want to make their data more FAIR. Next to these groups, WGs that may be of interest to social science researchers are the Reproducible Health Data Services WG⁶³ dealing with Health Data, the Neuroimaging Data WG⁶⁴, concerned with neuroimaging data, and the Working Group on Ethical and Legal best practices for Drone Data in a global research context (WELDD)⁶⁵. Lastly, the FAIRSharing Registry: connecting data policies, standards & databases WG⁶⁶ working on a searchable registry with information about databases, content standards, and journal and funder policies in the life sciences may be of interest to social scientists working close to the life sciences.

⁶¹ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-covid-19> [accessed 31-10-2022]

⁶² <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/rda-covid19-social-sciences> [accessed 31-10-2022]

⁶³ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/reproducible-health-data-services-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

⁶⁴ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/neuroimaging-data-wg> [accessed 31-10-2022]

⁶⁵ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/working-group-ethical-and-legal-best-practices-drone-data-global-research-context-weldd> [accessed 31-10-2022]

⁶⁶ <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/fairsharing-registry-connecting-data-policies-standards-databases.html> [accessed 31-10-2022]

3.4 Recommendations and Outputs

The various working and interest groups produced a lot of recommendations and outputs that others can reuse. At the time of writing 66 recommendations and outputs were listed in the catalogue⁶⁷. As it would be quite time consuming to list and review all the new outputs in this overview, and since outputs are being added so rapidly, this report summarizes the outputs marked as relevant for the Social Sciences and does not provide a comprehensive overview of everything that is available. Importantly, however, the RDA has established a search interface which shows all outputs, including a classification that allows searching per topic and primary domain. The reader is encouraged to browse this catalogue⁶⁸ themselves, and discover the RDA outputs that may be relevant to their specific situation.

The RDA uses three classifications for the outputs: RDA Recommendations, Supporting Outputs, and Other Outputs⁶⁹. *RDA Recommendations* have undergone formal phases of discussion, comment and decision making and are “produced by RDA Working Groups and are the official, endorsed results of RDA and considered our ‘flagship’ Outputs”. *Supporting Outputs* have undergone community review and “are useful solutions from our RDA Working and Interest Groups, but may not be as clearly adoptable by organizations as our RDA Recommendations”. Lastly, *Other Outputs* describe resources requested by a Working Group or Interest Group to be published on the RDA website, but have received no level of endorsement.

3.4.1 Outputs relevant for social sciences

From the 66 Outputs listed on the RDA website, four outputs were classified specifically with the domain tag social sciences. [The FAIRsharing Registry and Recommendations: Interlinking Standards, Databases and Data Policies](#)⁷⁰ describes the outputs of a joint RDA-Force11 FAIRsharing WG including guidelines for how various stakeholder groups can reduce the knowledge gap around the resources. [The final version of the RDA COVID-19 Recommendations and Guidelines for Data Sharing, published 30 June 2020](#)⁷¹ consists of an overview of the COVID-10 WGs discussing how data from multiple

67 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/catalogue> [accessed 31-10-2022]

68 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-and-outputs/catalogue> [accessed 31-10-2022]

69 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/recommendations-outputs> [accessed 31-10-2022]

70 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/fairsharing-registry-connecting-data-policies-standards-databases-wg/outcomes/fairsharing> [accessed 31-10-2022]

71 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/rda-covid19-rda-covid19-omics-rda-covid-19-epidemiology-rda-covid19-clinical-rda-covid19-0> [accessed 31-10-2022]

disciplines can inform response to a pandemic. In particular guidelines and recommendations on data sharing under the COVID-19 circumstances have been established as a key result of this WG. The third output listed in the catalogue is the [Tromsø recommendations for citation of research data in linguistics](#)⁷² addresses the challenge of linguistic datasets often not being cited due to confusion about how to properly cite them. The output proposes components of data citation for referencing language data for the use of researchers and scholars in this field of science.

Another output that was added since the last report was published in May 2021 are the [FAIR Principles for Research Software \(FAIR4RS Principles\)](#)⁷³ which introduce principles to improve the sharing and reuse of research software.

It should be noted that while these outputs were classified as relevant to social sciences by the RDA groups producing them, other outputs may also be of interest for social science researchers, depending on their exact field of work and scientific interest. For instance, in one of our past reports⁷⁴ we had identified two outputs that we classified as covering general topics that were considered highly relevant for social sciences researchers. The [Metadata Standards Directory](#)⁷⁵ output provides access to a directory of metadata standards for documenting research data, regardless of academic discipline. It features information for metadata in the social sciences and can therefore be seen as a useful tool for social sciences researchers. The output on [Eleven Quick Tips for Finding Research Data](#)⁷⁶ provides eleven practical tips for data discovery which can be useful for social sciences researcher to effectively discover the data that meet their specific needs.

Other useful recommendations could be the [10 Things for Curating Reproducible and FAIR Research](#)⁷⁷, [An Open, Universal Literature-data Cross-linking Service](#)⁷⁸, [FAIR Data Maturity Model: specification and guidelines](#)⁷⁹, [Guidelines for publishing structured metadata on the Web](#)⁸⁰, [RDA DMP Common Standard for Machine-actionable Data Management Plans](#)⁸¹, and [The FAIRsharing Registry and Recommendations: Interlinking Standards, Databases and Data Policies](#)⁸²

72 <https://www.rd-alliance.org/group/linguistics-data-ig/outcomes/troms%C3%B8-recommendations-citation-research-data-linguistics> [accessed 31-10-2022]

73 <https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00068>

74 <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3580674>

75 <https://rd-alliance.github.io/metadata-directory/> [accessed 31-10-2022]

76 <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1006038>

77 <https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00074>

78 <https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00002>

79 <https://doi.org/10.15497/rda00050>

80 <https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00066>

81 <https://doi.org/10.15497/rda00039>

82 <https://doi.org/10.15497/RDA00030>



4 Conclusion

This report presented the results of an analysis of RDA Interest, Working Groups and Outputs relevant for social science researchers. A brief introduction to the RDA was given to provide basic knowledge of the organization, its structure and way of working. In the following, a comprehensive analysis of all current RDA work has been presented and was evaluated with respect to its relevance for researchers working within the social sciences.

Nine IGs and six WGs and were classified as particularly relevant to the social science community, covering the Social Science Research Data IG, as well as topics like sensitive data, COVID-19, training and data management planning, data discovery and standards for discipline-specific metadata (see the related dataset for an overview of all groups and their classification). We highlighted several RDA outcomes that may be interesting for social science researchers and encourage people to explore the recently established the RDA outcomes and recommendation catalogue.

This report can be used as an initial guidance, pointing social scientists towards potentially interesting work of the RDA that they can use within their own field of research. It provides a starting point for finding a way through the large number of diverse groups that operate within the RDA. Identifying topics most relevant to the social sciences community should enhance the visibility of the RDA within this specific domain, encouraging social science researchers to engage (more) with the RDA in the future.

5 Glossary

Abbreviation	Full term
RDA	Research Data Alliance
IG	Interest Group
WG	Working Group
DMP	Data Management Plan