

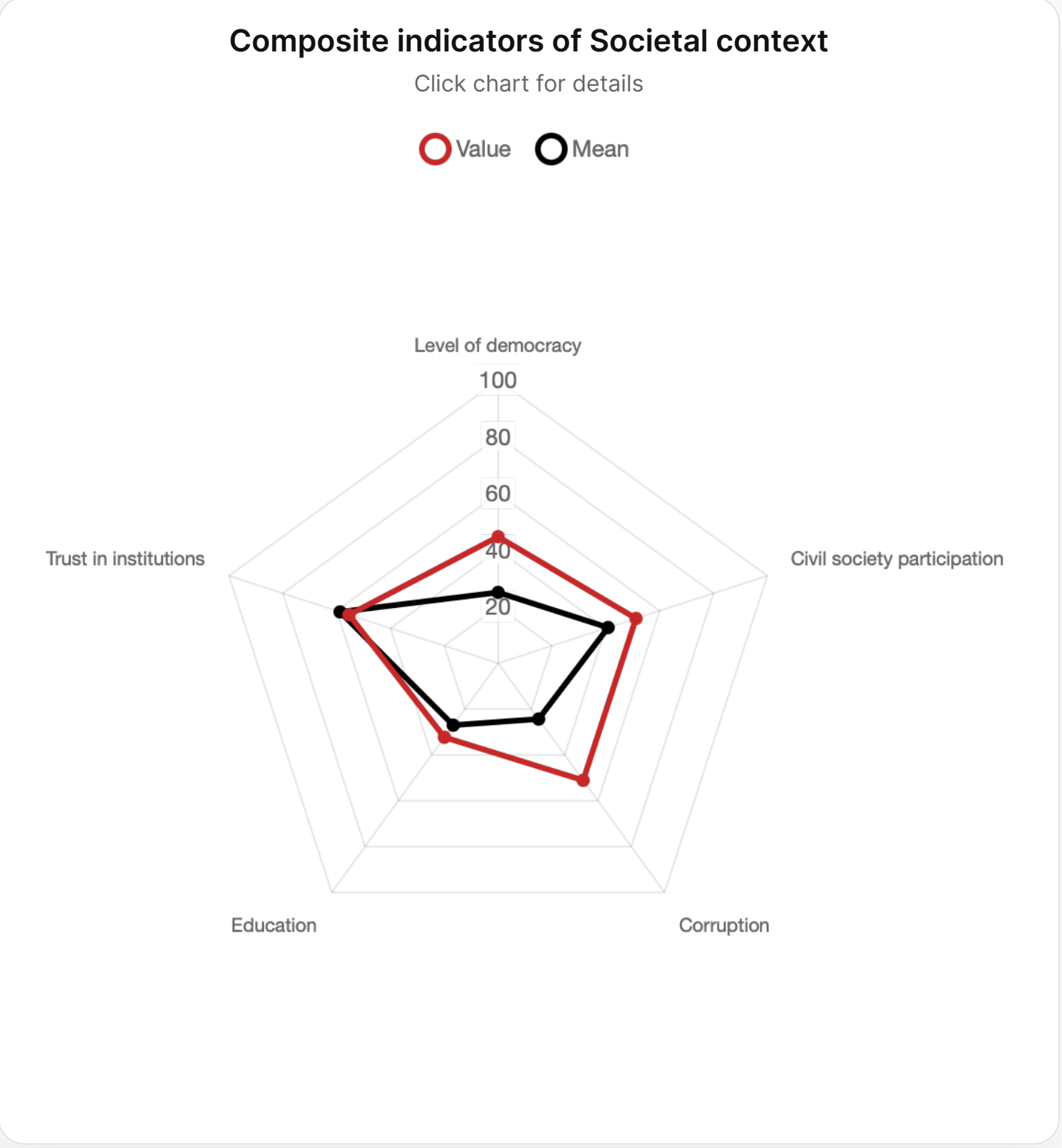
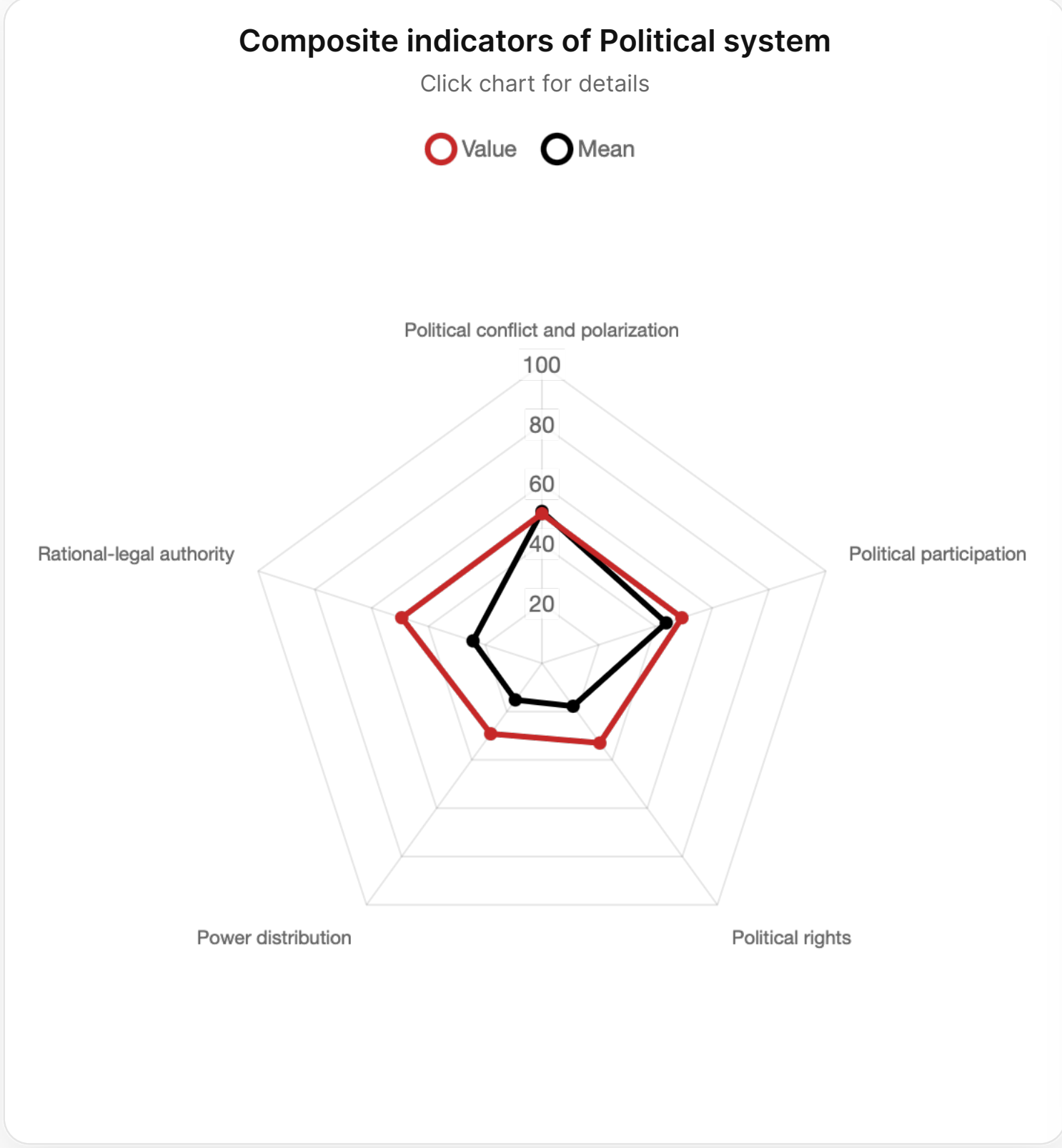
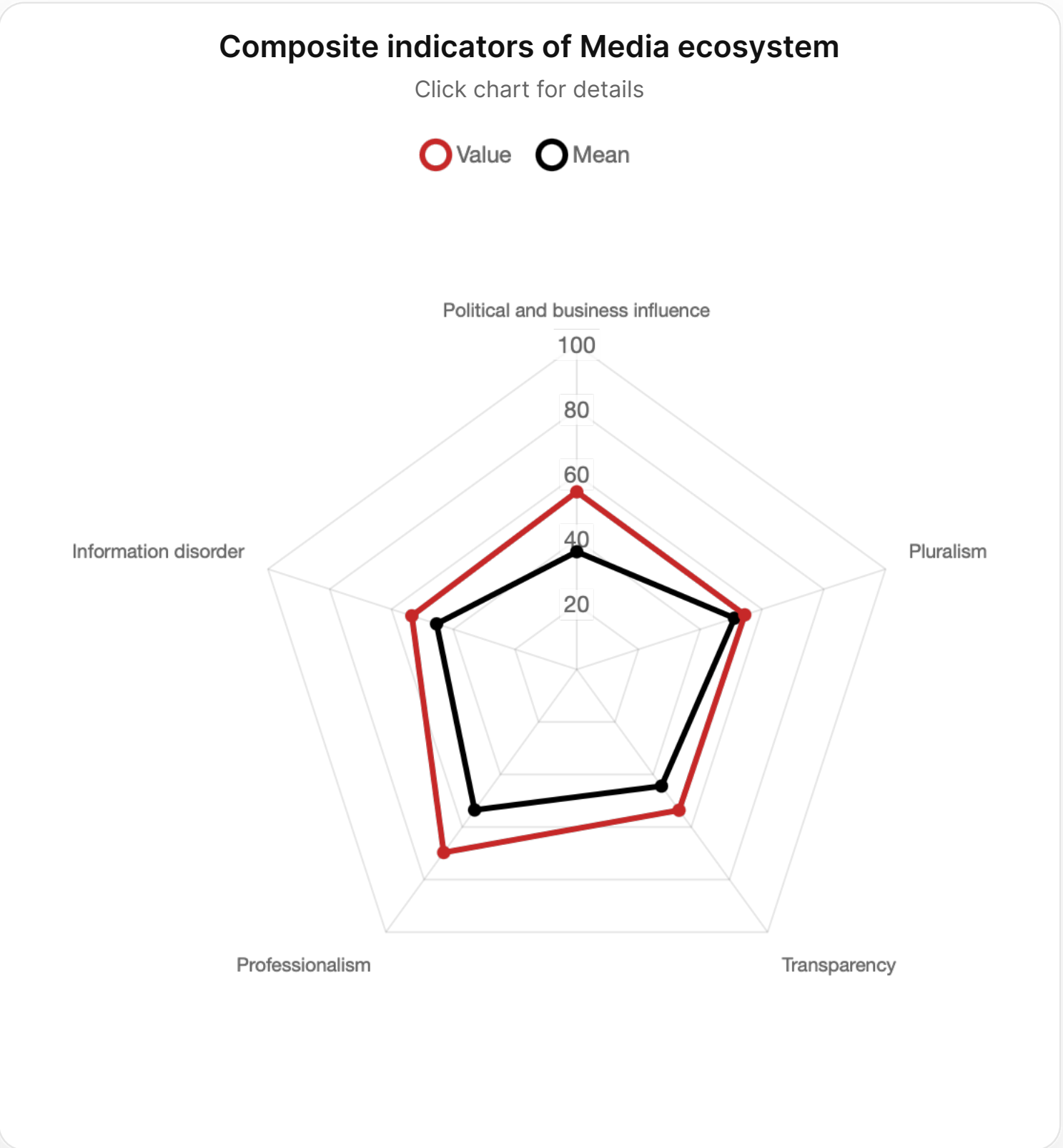
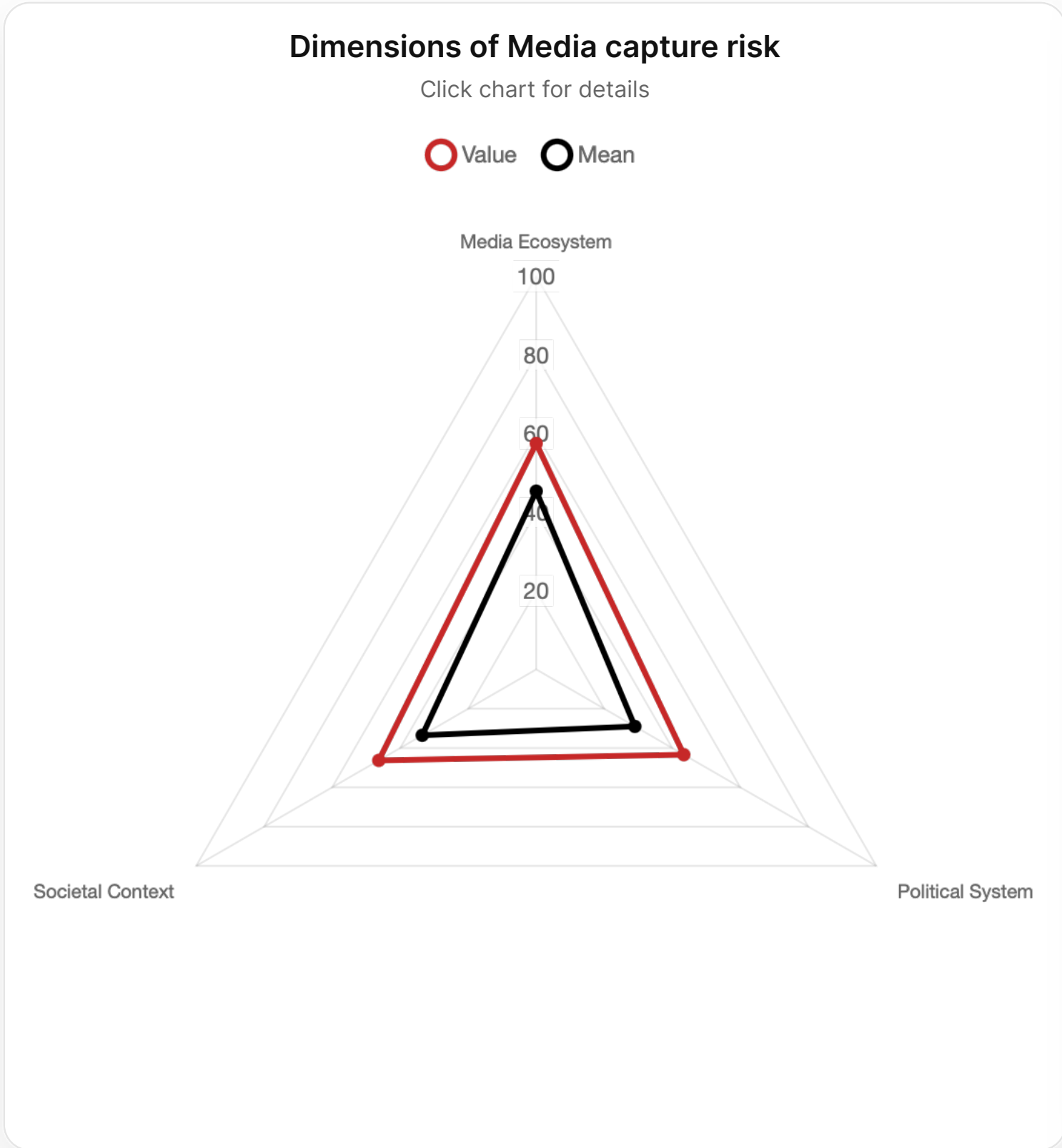
Albania



Population: 2.8m

Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 51.2

Media capture risk average across countries (mean - %): 38.3



Country Overview

Albania exhibits high levels of media capture risk across all three dimensions, with critically high scores in many of the composite indicators considered within each dimension. These values are heavily linked to the country's specific features.

First, the Albanian media system is featured by a high number of media outlets. Nonetheless, the ownership of those outlets is concentrated among a small group of four or five companies. Even though there are no data that public funding represents a direct significant revenue source, since there is no transparency on such matter, there is indirect influence through provision of tender and services to other businesses of the media groups, but amount of funding remains non-transparent. Moreover, although the country hosts a large number of online media platforms, only a few operate under sustainable business models supported by transparent sources of funding. Finally, the most influential private outlets are controlled by a limited number of companies, with established ties to political actors, particularly in highly regulated sectors such as construction.

Press freedom and media independence in Albania are threatened by conflicts of interest between the economic and political spheres, the inadequate implementation of the existing legal framework, and partisan regulatory practices. Media outlets often operate between the competing interests of political actors and powerful business groups, leading to widespread self-censorship among journalists. In several cases, business owners who also control media outlets have reportedly used their platforms to target judges involved in cases linked to their commercial interests. At the same time, journalism has increasingly shifted toward simple reporting based on government-prepared materials, while hidden advertising and promotional content blur the boundary between information and advertising. These practices raise concerns about journalistic integrity and the public role of the media, as editorial independence is frequently conditioned by owners' interests, and allegations persist that some outlets promote the agendas of government actors, business networks, or even criminal groups in pursuit of financial gain in lucrative markets.

These features of the Albanian media system are rooted in the country's history. Albania declared independence in 1912 after nearly five centuries of Ottoman rule and, after World War II, experienced four decades of one of the most repressive communist regimes, marked by extreme isolation, economic backwardness, and strict state control over information. Following the death of dictator Enver Hoxha, Albania adopted a democratic regime after 1990. Its shift to a market economy has been marked by corrupt privatization processes and state-led pyramid schemes. Today, political competition in Albania is no longer strongly structured along regional lines. While northern areas were traditionally associated with the *Democratic Party* and southern regions with the *Socialist Party*, these distinctions have become less pronounced, and the ruling party currently enjoys support across both parts of the country. Clientelist networks remain influential, but they are no longer primarily regionally based. The political system is nevertheless highly personalized and polarized, with competition often shaped by struggles over power and resources rather than by stable ideological or territorial divisions. Organized crime, money laundering, and drug trafficking are widespread and often linked to political actors. These dynamics have undermined institutional capacity and obstructed inclusive economic development and social equality.

Albania has made EU integration a central strategic objective since the early 2000s. The country was granted EU candidate status in 2014, and accession negotiations formally began in 2022 alongside North Macedonia. Progress in the accession process has largely depended on reforms related to the rule of law, judicial independence, the fight against corruption and organized crime, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. In recent years, Albania has implemented significant reforms, particularly in the justice sector, including a comprehensive judicial vetting process aimed at increasing transparency and accountability. Nevertheless, challenges remain, especially regarding corruption, political polarization, and the effective implementation of reforms. Continued progress in these areas is considered essential for advancing negotiations and aligning Albania more closely with EU standards.

Overall, Albania presents a highly polarized political and media environment characterized by personalized politics, weak institutional resilience, and a high risk of media capture. Media freedom and independence are limited by concentrated ownership, opaque public funding mechanisms, and significant political and economic interference, aggravated by the intimidation of journalists and limited access to state-held information. Despite a formally pluralistic media landscape, economic fragility and partisan regulation and polarization undermine editorial autonomy and public trust in journalism.