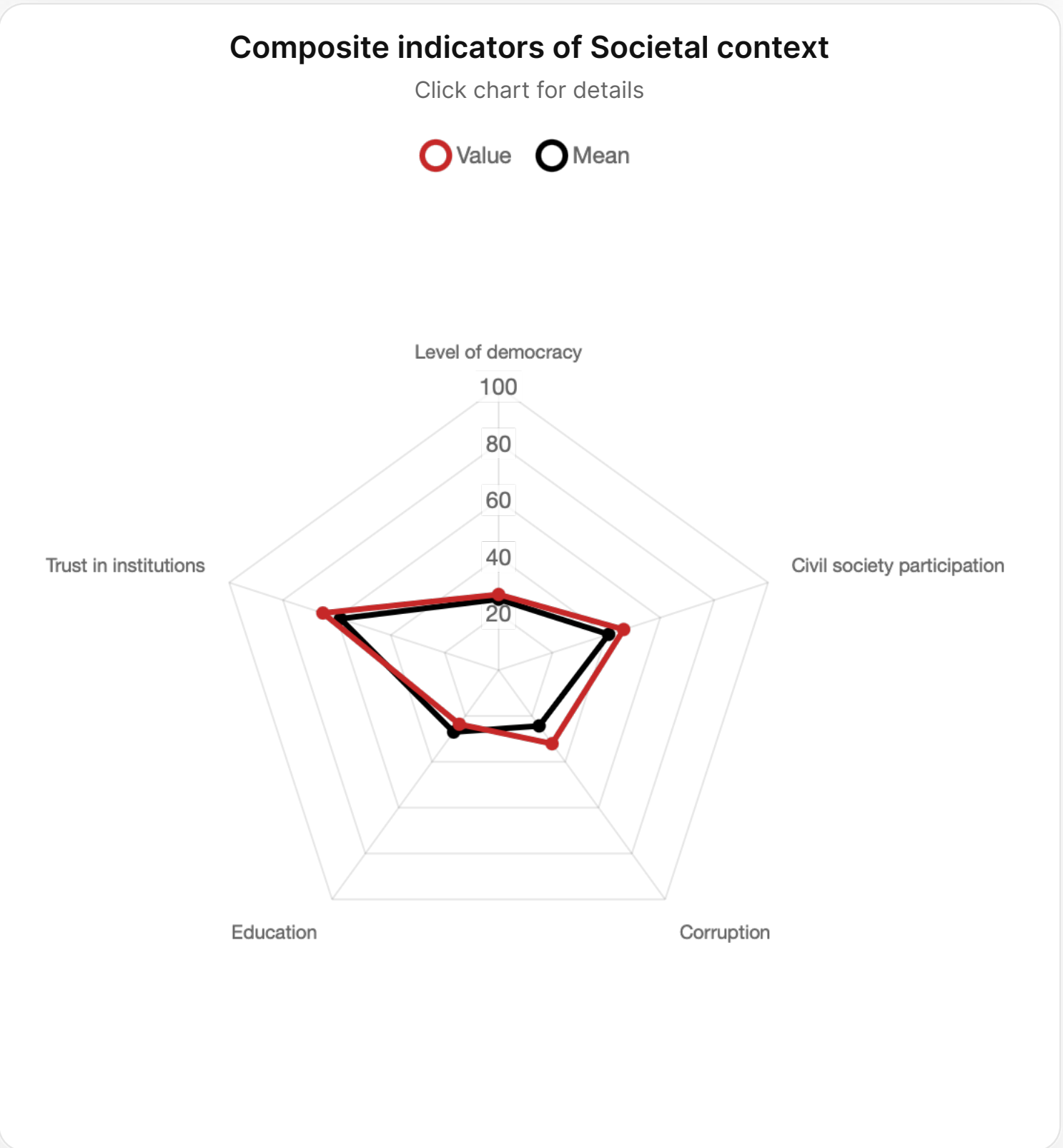
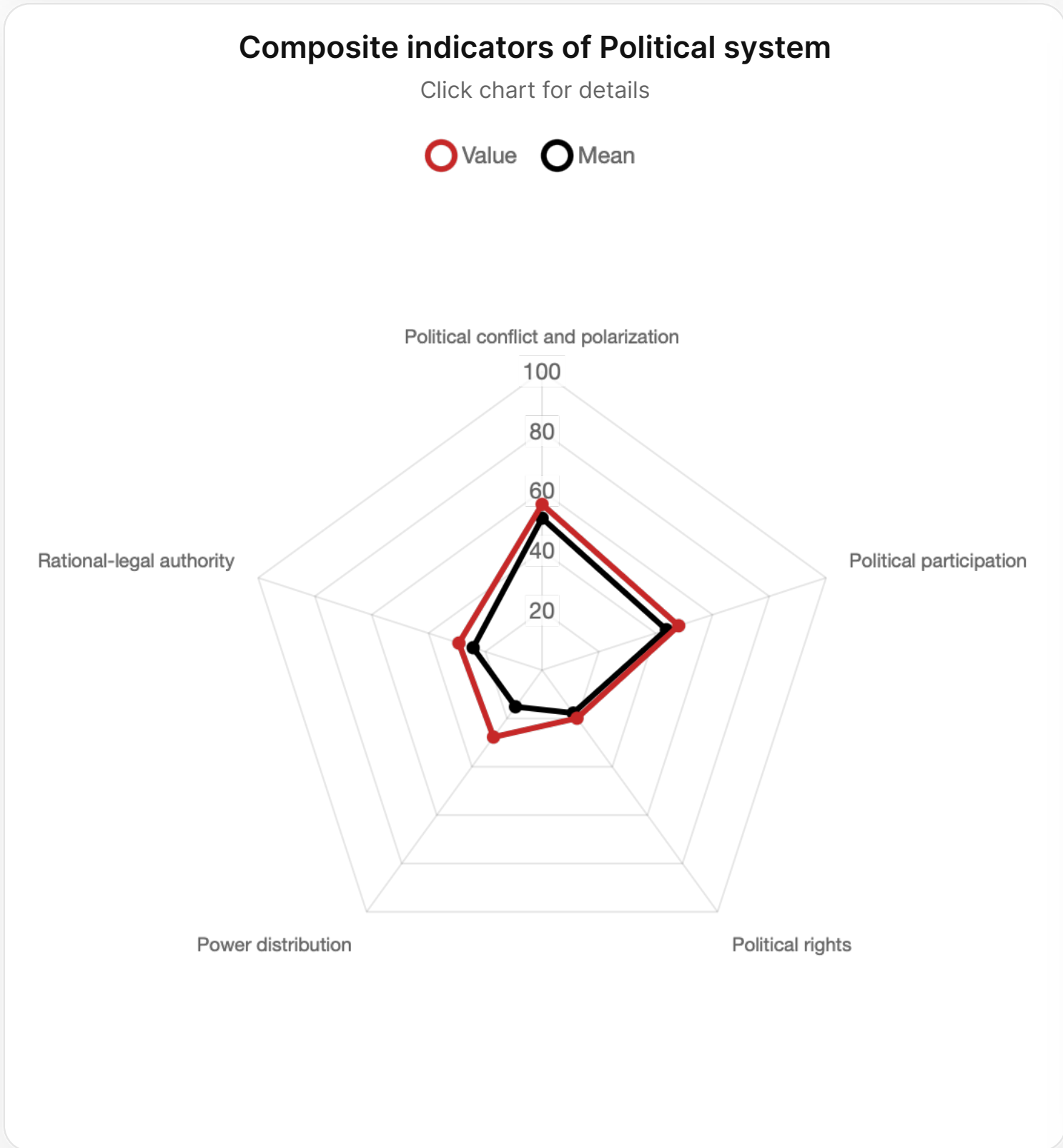
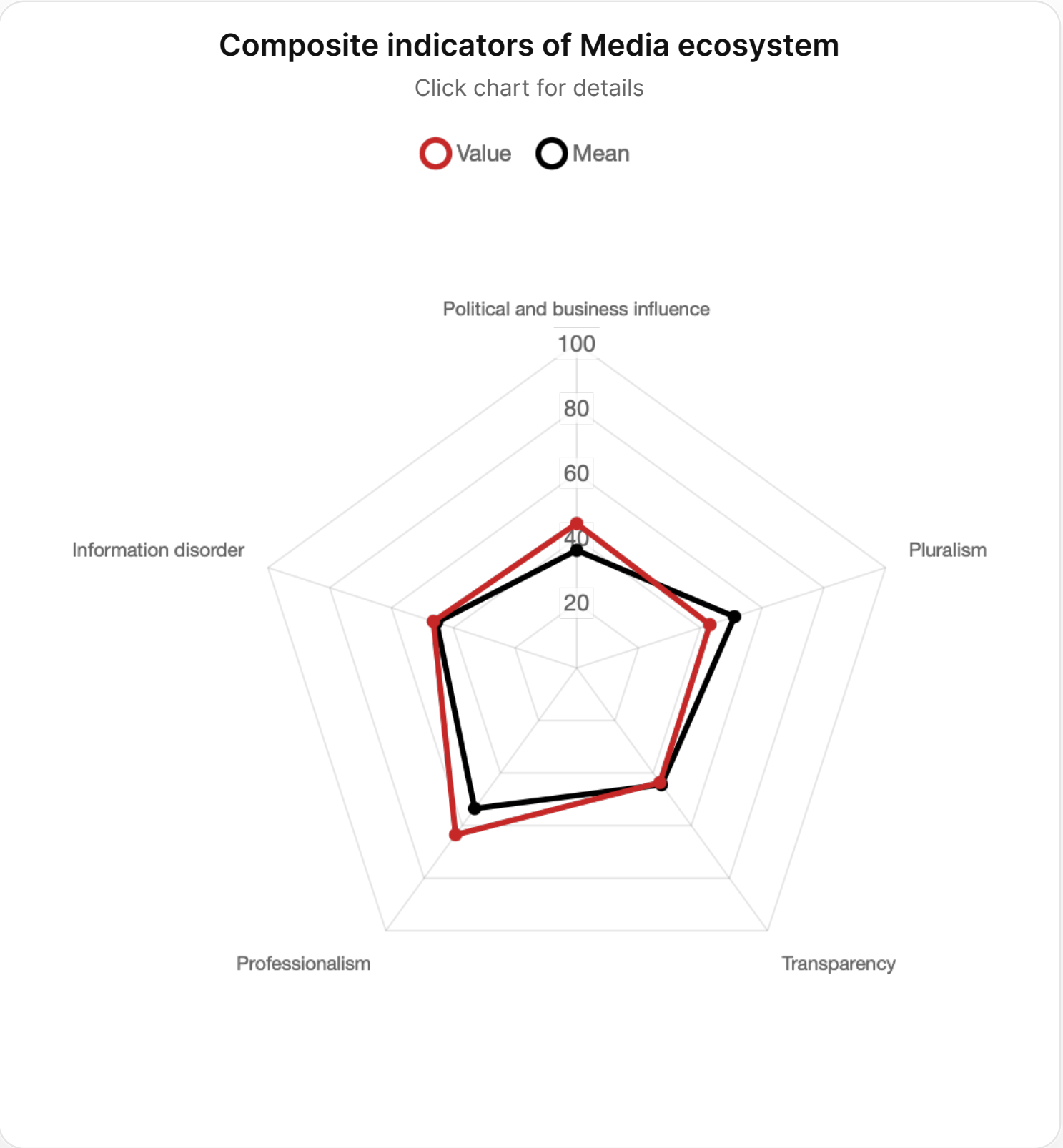
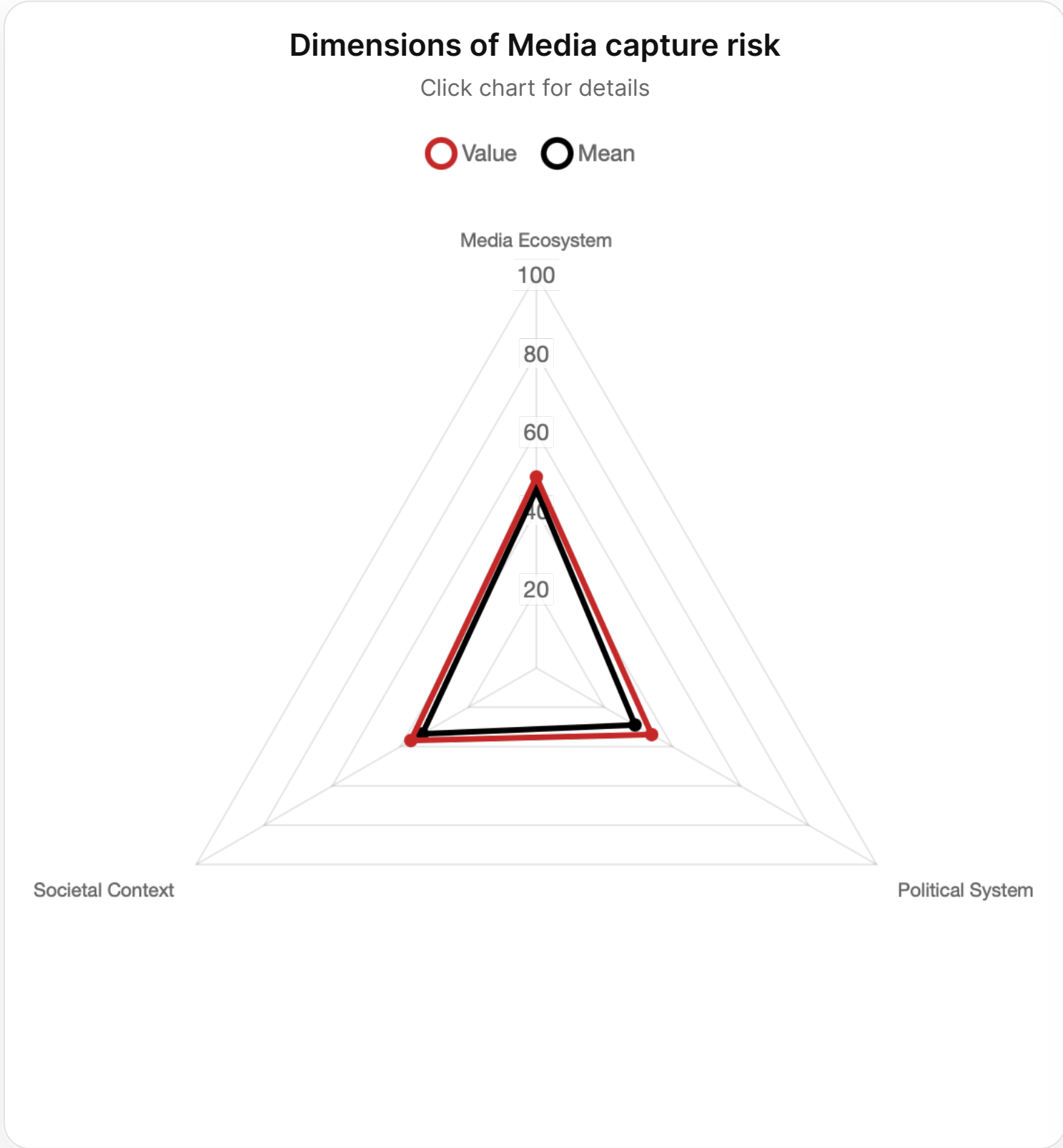


Croatia



Population: 3.8m
Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 42.0
Media capture risk average across countries (mean - %): 38.3



Country Overview

Croatia is characterized by a medium risk of media capture across all three dimensions. Croatia's media landscape is relatively small but diverse, reflecting the country's population of fewer than four million people. Several national daily newspapers operate alongside a wide range of broadcast and online outlets, though ownership concentration is high, with three major companies (*Styria*, *Hanza Media*, and *Media Solutions*) dominating the print market. In television, two foreign-owned commercial broadcasters, *Nova TV* and *RTL*, compete with the public service broadcaster *HRT*, while radio stations are largely local in scope. The media landscape structure is highly reflected by the pluralism composite indicator, which reports specifically low risk scores in the areas of market and ownership concentration.

Despite some growth in advertising revenues in 2024 and increased awareness of the need for digital transition, the structure of the news industry remains largely unchanged. Television continues to dominate news consumption, and the public broadcaster *HRT* remains one of the most widely used news sources, despite declining resources and ongoing restructuring. Although *HRT* benefits of a compulsory license fee, the static level of funding over the past 15 years has required repeated government top-ups, raising concerns about editorial independence and political leverage.

The print sector faces structural decline, with falling advertising revenues and distribution challenges following the closure of a major distribution company in 2024. While digital advertising is growing, Croatian audiences remain reluctant to pay for online news, with subscription uptake among the lowest in Europe. This is heavily linked to the media credibility, which is particularly low for Croatian outlets, showing the third highest risk score after Slovakia and Hungary. At the local level, many outlets struggle to survive in small advertising markets, fostering dependence on local authorities and state advertising, often in the absence of adequate accountability mechanisms.

Moreover, Croatia's media ecosystem lacks both in legal framework, in particular to guarantee public service media (PSM) autonomy, and in journalists' protection and independence, as marked by the professionalism composite indicator. In fact, those investigating corruption, organized crime, or war crimes, are frequently subjected to harassment, threats, and intimidation, with limited safeguarding.

The country's features hereby highlighted are rooted in its historical background, characterized by a political development that has been shaped by shifting imperial rule, its incorporation into Yugoslavia after the Second World War, and the violent process of independence in the 1990s. These experiences have left enduring divisions over national identity, religion, and statehood, which continue to influence political and societal dynamics.

Such fragmentation is highly reflected in the country's political polarization, as well as participation. The latter indicator, especially, is influenced by the corruption indexes and weak accountability mechanisms that continue to undermine Croatian public trust and level of democracy, in a context where political rights show medium levels of risk. The Catholic Church plays a prominent role in public life and social debates, influencing attitudes on issues such as gender, sexuality, and migration. Socioeconomic challenges further contribute to societal tensions. Croatia has experienced significant depopulation, emigration, and brain drain, while recent increases in migrant arrivals have generated new political and social divisions.

Overall, Croatia presents a media and political environment that combines formal democratic stability with some structural vulnerabilities. While pluralism exists at the national level, high ownership concentration, economic pressures, and political influence continue to limit media independence. The widespread use of SLAPPs and ongoing safety concerns for journalists further constrain watchdog journalism. At the societal level, unresolved historical legacies, minority discrimination, and socioeconomic pressures reinforce polarization and weaken trust in institutions.