Denmark

Population: 6.0m

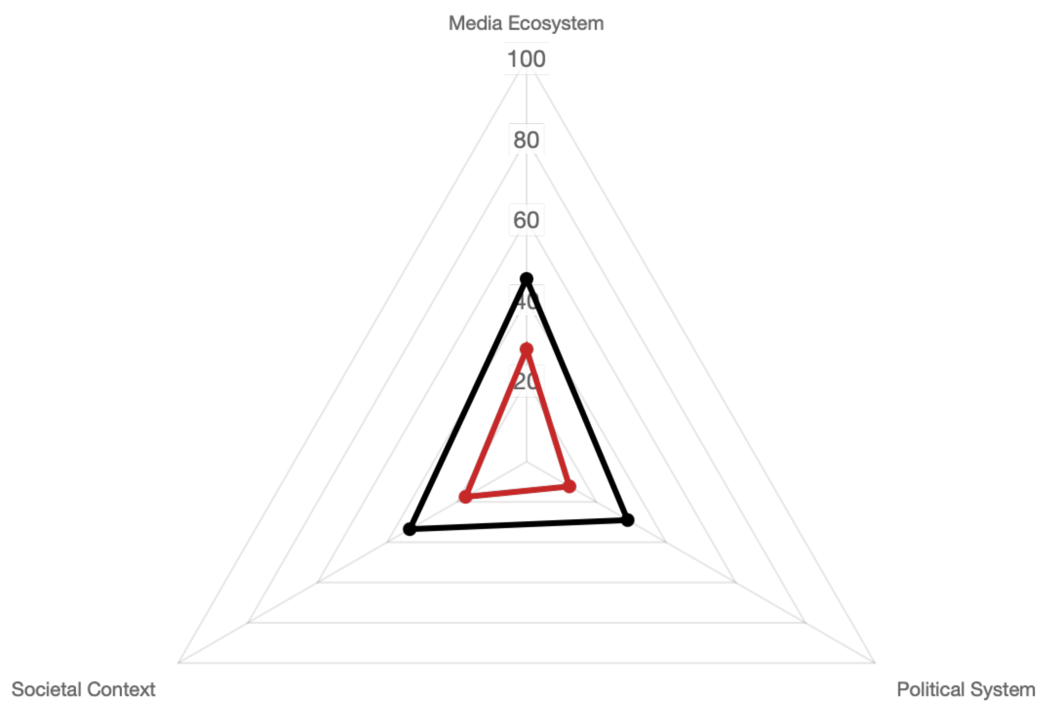
Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 21.4

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

Dimensions of Media capture risk

Click chart for details

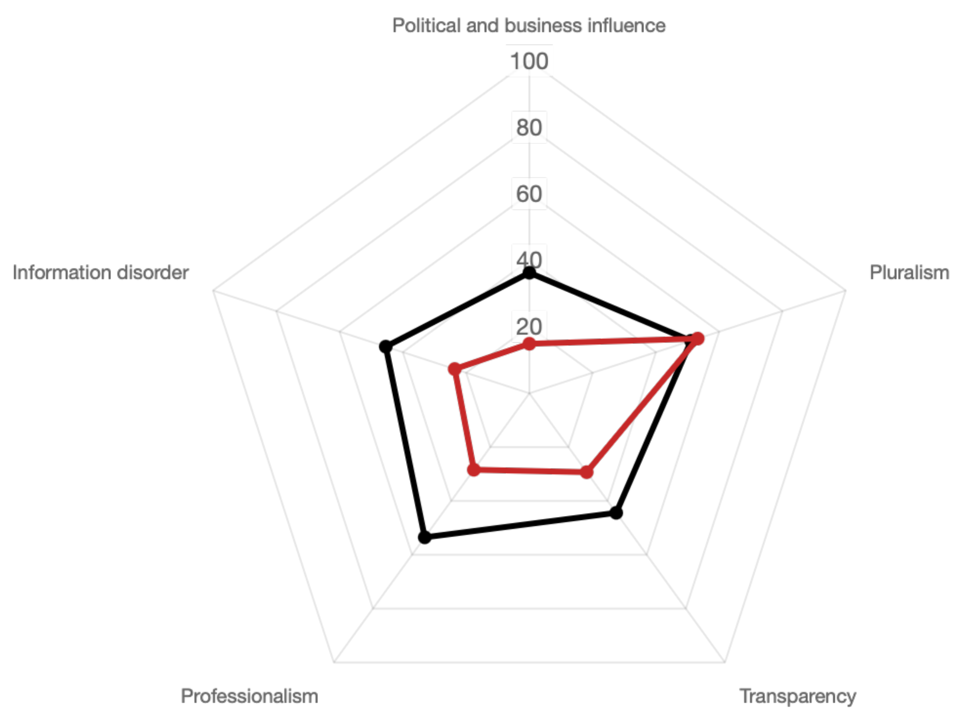
Value | Mean



Composite indicators of Media ecosystem

Click chart for details

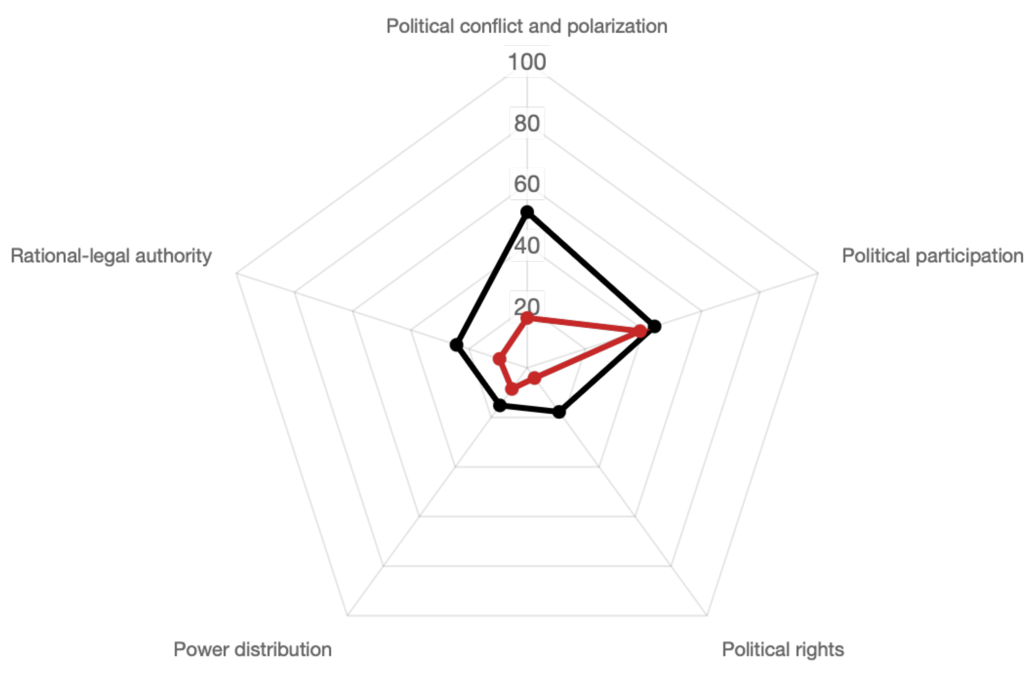
Value | Mean



Composite indicators of Political system

Click chart for details

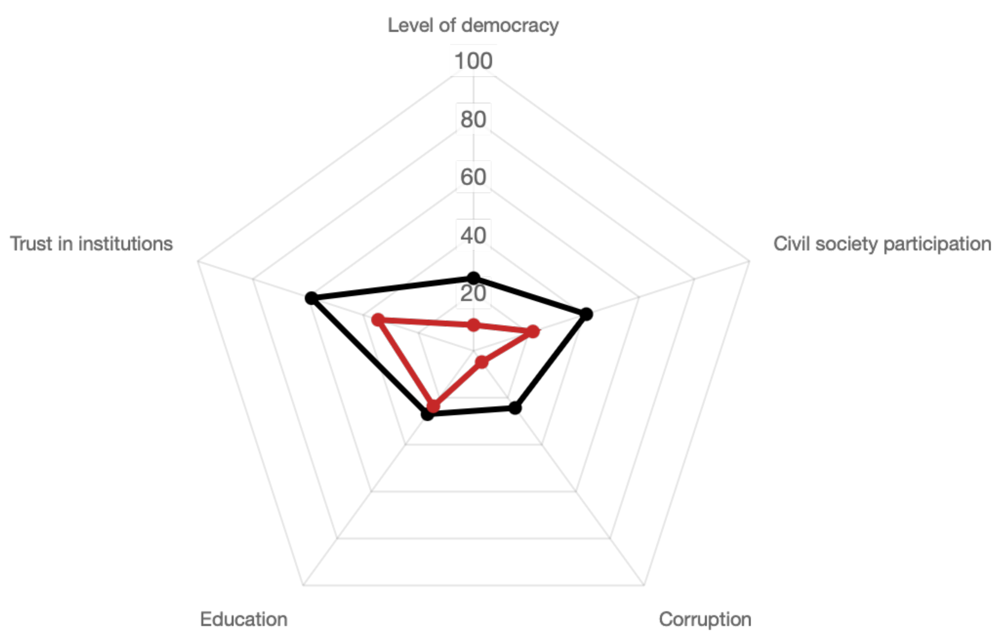
Value | Mean



Composite indicators of Societal context

Click chart for details

Value | Mean



Country Overview

Denmark shows the lowest levels of risk of media capture across all dimensions and amongst all countries considered. Its political landscape is characterised by a strong tradition of inter-party cooperation. While historically minority governments have been prevalent, the current government holds a parliamentary majority. Denmark combines an extensive welfare state with a high level of digitalisation, including nearly universal internet access.

Despite its relatively small population of around 6 million inhabitants, Denmark counts several national newspapers, multiple national radio channels, two public television stations, and many regional television channels, alongside a growing number of online-only news outlets. The Danish media system is often described as dual due to the coexistence of strong public service media and private print, online, and broadcast outlets that has historically been stable. The two largest television broadcasters, the *Danish Broadcasting Corporation* (*DR*) and *TV2* are state-owned and state-funded and dominate audience share. However, it should be noted that from 2019 onwards *DR* was subject to substantial budget cuts following political decisions by the then Liberal–Conservative-led government, supported by the *Danish People's Party*. These cuts amounted to a 20 per cent reduction over five years and led to the discontinuation of several channels and in-depth news programmes, alongside a shift toward a more narrowly defined public service remit with greater emphasis on specifically Danish (and Christian) cultural content. These developments have been widely discussed in the Nordic context as raising concerns about increasing political influence over public service media. At the same time, the print and online news market is largely private owned, and the ownership is concentrated among a limited number of actors. In fact, a distinctive feature of the Danish media system is the ownership by industrial foundations. This limits short-term profit incentives, ensures ownership stability over time and reduces pressures linked to succession or shareholder demands. Notably, although no legal restrictions prevent politicians or political parties from owning media companies, political ownership of media outlets is absent in practice. At the same time, recent research highlights changing ownership patterns linked to digitalisation, pointing to reduced transparency and a potential increase in media capture risks, even within this otherwise stable system.

That said, a significant risk is represented by media ownership concentration, particularly in the audiovisual sector and in digital markets, as shown by the score of the pluralism composite indicator, in an opposite trend than the others pertaining to the media ecosystem. The absence of regulation aimed at limiting ownership concentration further exacerbates these risks, potentially constraining competition and pluralism. Additional concerns and new legislation on religious text and hate speech online, which has raised debates about potential self-censorship. For this reason, the Danish Ministry of Culture, in 2024, has established a committee to revise the media support system and address the impact of digital monopolies on the domestic media landscape. Denmark has implemented extensive media support schemes that are applied to both public and private outlets and are generally distributed in a transparent and equitable manner. News organisations are adopting generative AI tools in daily operations and pursuing collective action against major tech platforms over the use of copyrighted content for AI training. Other defining features of the system are high levels of professionalism, strong press freedom protections, and high public trust in legacy media.

The media ecosystem's features have to be considered and interpreted alongside Denmark's political system ones. Denmark is a consolidated democracy in which elections are free and fair, the electoral framework is impartial and election management bodies are effective. The judicial system functions independently. Political rights are fully guaranteed to all citizens, and freedom of expression and association are protected by the state. Party competition and opposition participation face no undue obstacles, ensuring political pluralism. The government has strong safeguards against corruption and operates with a high degree of transparency.

The political dimension is heavily reflected in the societal context score, which highlights a largely inclusive and open environment, supported by strong protections for civil liberties. The country demonstrates strong safeguards across multiple dimensions. Freedom of expression and belief is fully guaranteed, which includes academic freedom as well as broad personal expression. The rule of law is generally strong, with judicial independence and effective protection against the illegitimate use of force. Personal autonomy and individual rights are well protected overall, with only minor limitations in areas such as personal social freedoms. However, it should also be noted that Denmark is the only Nordic country to have experimented with specific legislation targeting areas with large immigrant populations and higher crime rates. These measures have been interpreted in different ways in public debate, being described either as a policy model or as exclusionary and discriminatory, highlighting underlying tensions within an otherwise inclusive societal framework. Nonetheless, challenges persist in fully ensuring fundamental freedoms for immigrants and other newcomers.

In conclusion, Denmark presents a very low risk of media capture, reflecting a stable political system with robust democratic institutions and a well-established media environment. The media system is characterised by the coexistence of strong public service media and private outlets, with high levels of journalistic professionalism and public trust in legacy media. Political ownership of media outlets is completely absent even though there are no legal restrictions. At the same time, structural risks linked to media ownership concentration persist, especially in the audiovisual sector, and the growing influence of global digital platforms on the national media landscape represents a challenge. These factors highlight potential vulnerabilities for media pluralism and independence.

This project is funded by the European Union's HE research and innovation programme under the grant agreement No. 101132483