

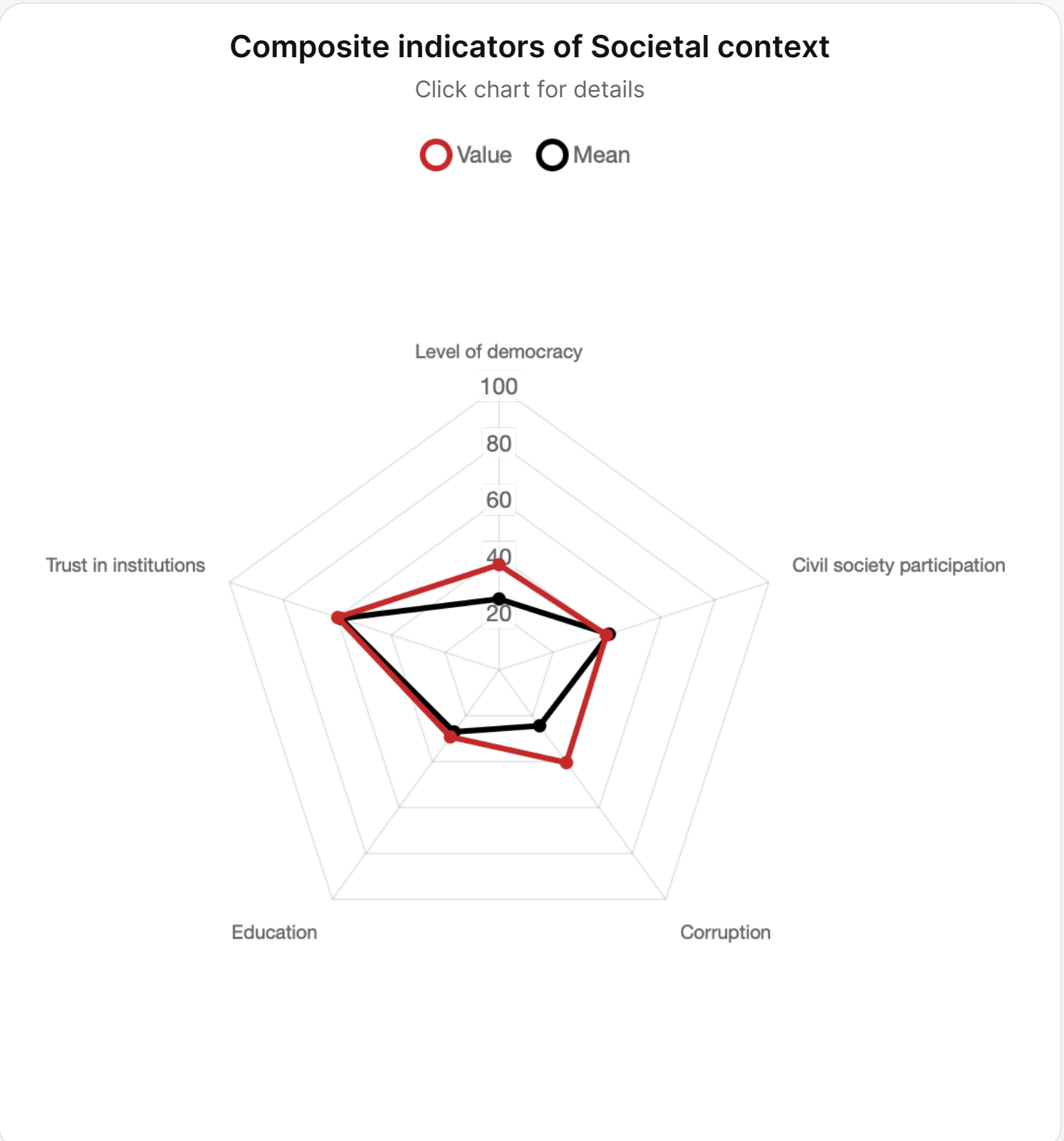
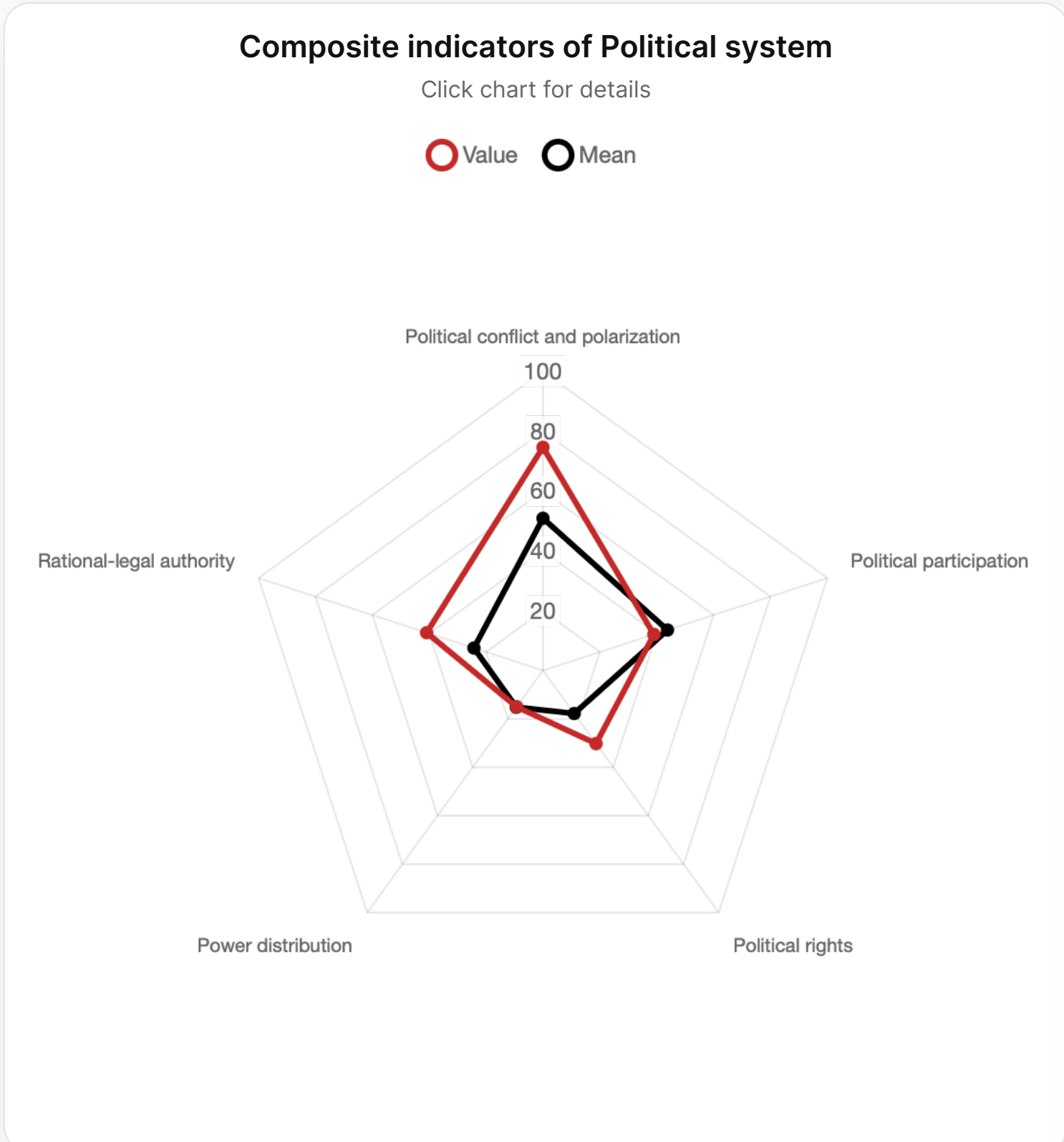
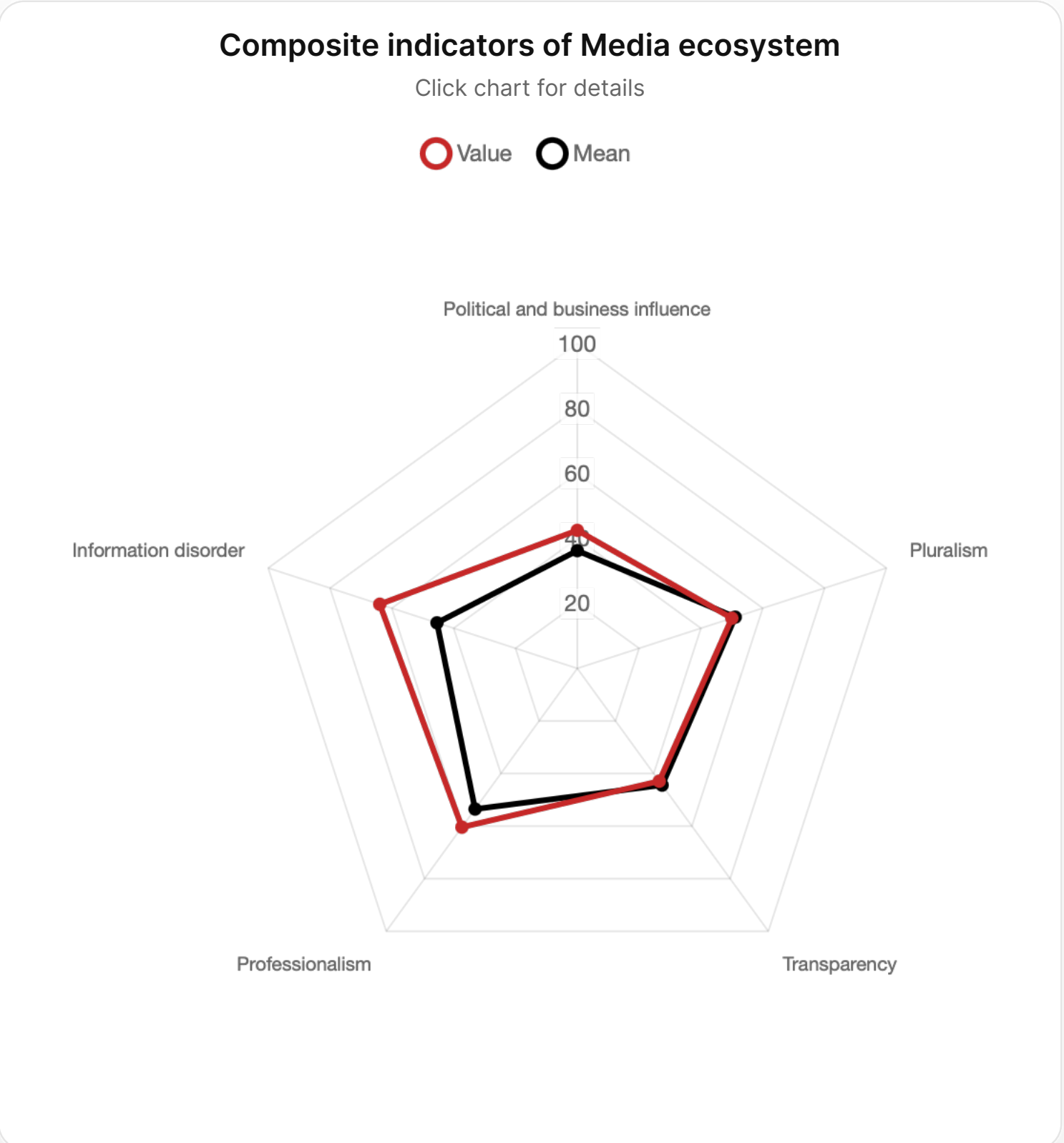
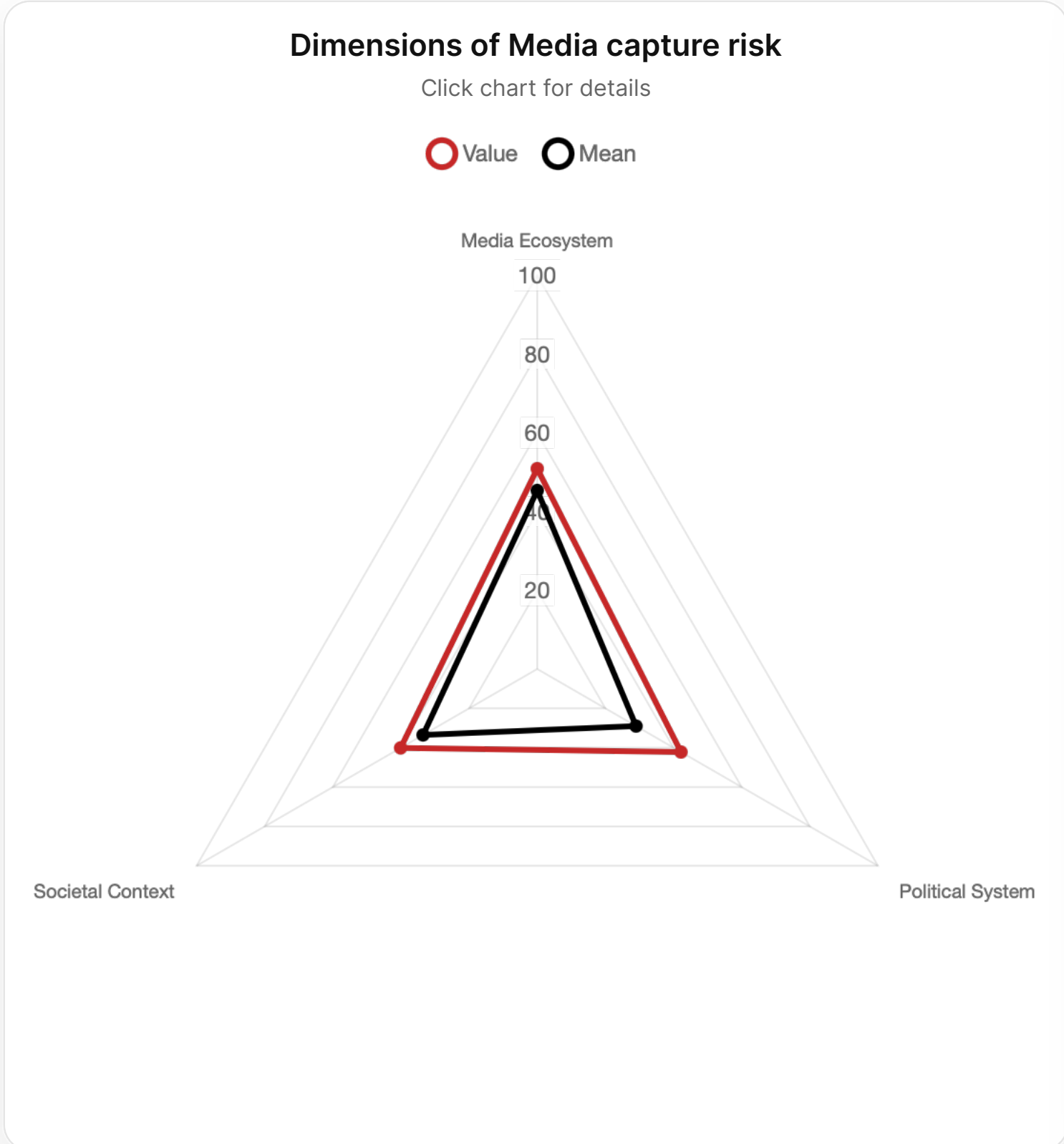
Montenegro



Population: 0.6m

Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 46.0

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



Country Overview

Montenegro displays medium-high levels of risk of media capture across all dimensions, and specifically in the political system. The country, currently pursuing European Union accession, is currently navigating a period of political realignment and institutional reform. Following the end of three decades of dominance by the *Democratic Party of Socialists* in 2020, political competition has intensified, bringing on the one hand increased pluralism, and on the other political instability. Regarding the former, Montenegro's constitution and legal framework guarantee freedom of expression, and defamation has been decriminalized. Despite these formal protections, press freedom remains under pressure from political interference, attacks on journalists, and economic vulnerability in a small and highly competitive media market.

The country has many registered media outlets, including daily newspapers, public and private television channels with national coverage, radio stations, and a national news agency. Media ownership includes a significant foreign component: three of the five national television broadcasters are partially or fully owned by companies based mainly in Serbia, raising concerns about potential cross-border political influence on editorial policies. Public service broadcaster *RTCG* occupies a central position in the media system and receives the majority of state media funding. However, its editorial independence has been repeatedly questioned. In 2024, the parliamentary majority adopted legal changes allowing the director general to remain in office despite multiple court rulings declaring the appointment unlawful, reinforcing concerns about political influence over the public broadcaster.

In 2024, Montenegro adopted a comprehensive package of media laws as part of its EU accession process. The new Media Law, Law on Audiovisual Media Services, and Law on the Public Broadcaster *RTCG* strengthened formal safeguards for editorial independence, increased the powers of media regulators, and expanded public funding for content of public interest. The “Media pluralism and diversity fund” was significantly increased, and registration requirements for online media were clarified, with sanctions introduced for unregistered outlets. Most of the practical effects of these reforms are expected to materialize from 2025 onward. Journalists generally operate in a pluralistic but hostile environment, facing smear campaigns, political attacks, and unresolved cases of violence from the past, including the 2004 murder of editor Duško Jovanović and the 2018 attempted killing of investigative journalist Olivera Lakić.

Above all, the risk of media capture shows its highest score in the information disorder composite indicator: albeit the media credibility is generally stable, Montenegrin's quality of information is heavily influenced by foreign and home governments dissemination of false information, that meets fertile grounds given the lack of appropriate systems of gatekeeping. This, alongside a scarce media literacy amongst the citizens, results in the third highest risk score pertaining information disorder.

Montenegro overall risk is furthermore explainable by looking at the country's political and societal dimensions. After a period of unstable coalition governments, started in 2020, the reform-oriented Europe Now Movement secured both the presidency and the premiership in 2023 on a platform centered on economic reform, identity neutrality, and EU accession. In 2024, Prime Minister Milojko Spajić expanded and reshuffled the government to include pro-Serb and minority parties, creating a 32-member cabinet. While this arrangement strengthened the governing majority's ability to pass reform legislation, it also raised concerns about the frequent use of expedited legislative procedures with limited parliamentary debate and oversight. Generally, the country has shown notable improvements since 2019 in representation, freedom of the press, and personal integrity and security. However, judicial independence, enforcement of anti-corruption measures, and political stability continue to face structural constraints.

The political system's critical features are reflected in the Montenegrin society, which is characterized by pronounced ethnic, religious, and political diversity. The population includes Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks, Albanians, and other minorities, with interethnic relations generally peaceful but marked by underlying tensions, as shown by the score of the political and conflict polarization.

Overall, Montenegro combines increasing political pluralism and progress toward EU accession with persistent challenges related to the rule of law. The media environment is formally free and diverse but remains vulnerable to market concentration and foreign influence. Montenegrin society reflects gradual advances in rights and representation alongside deep-seated identity divisions.