

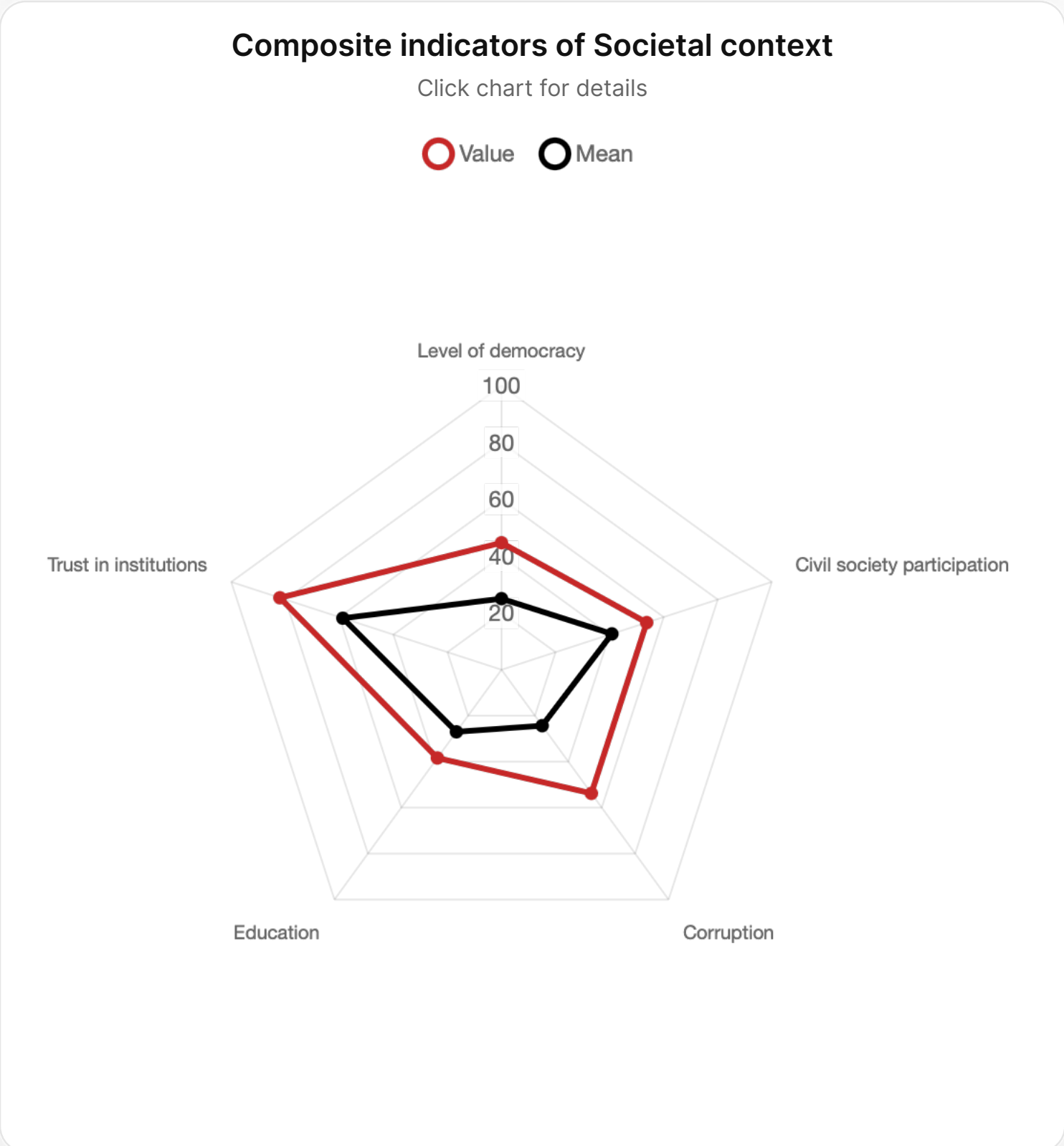
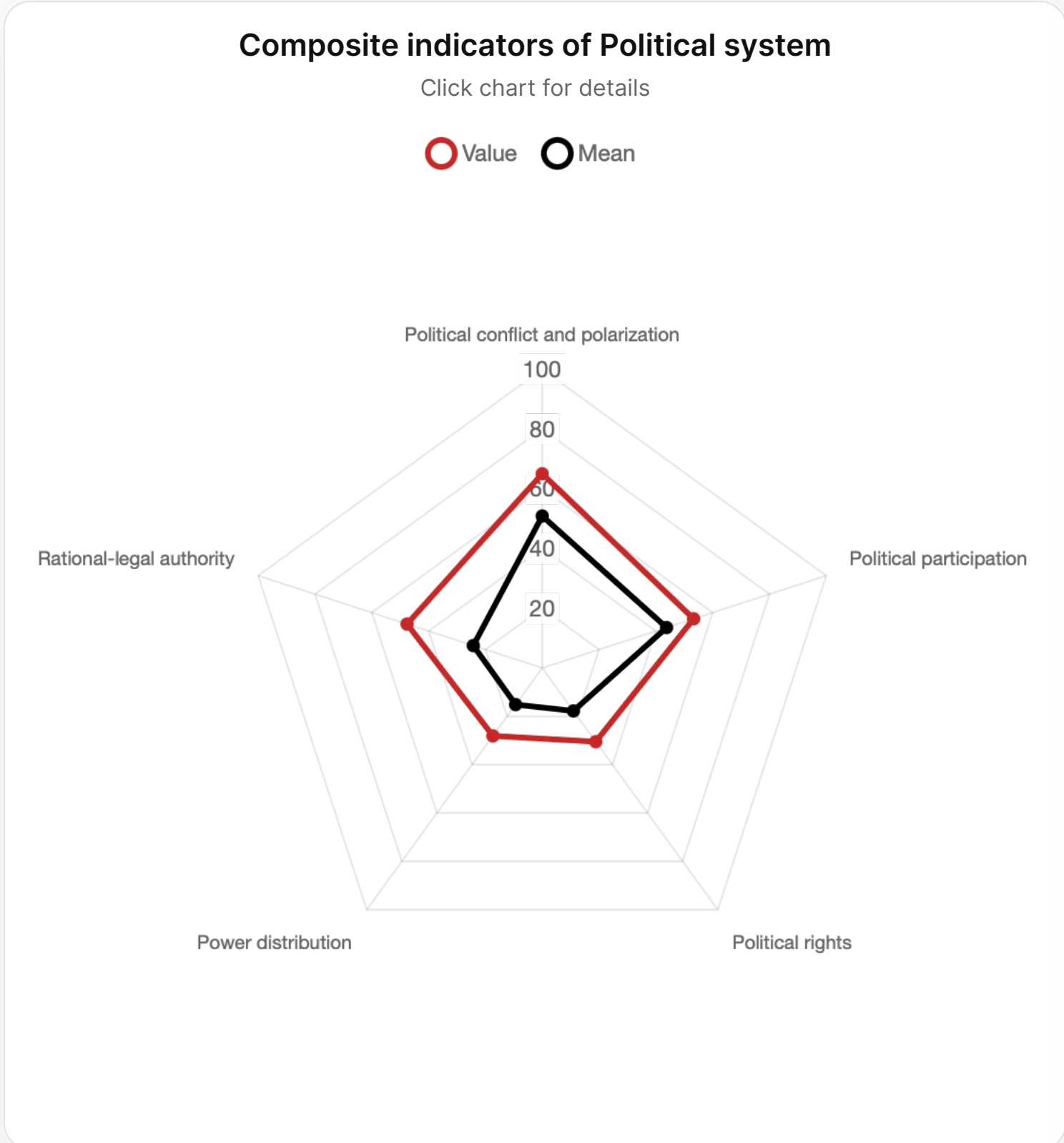
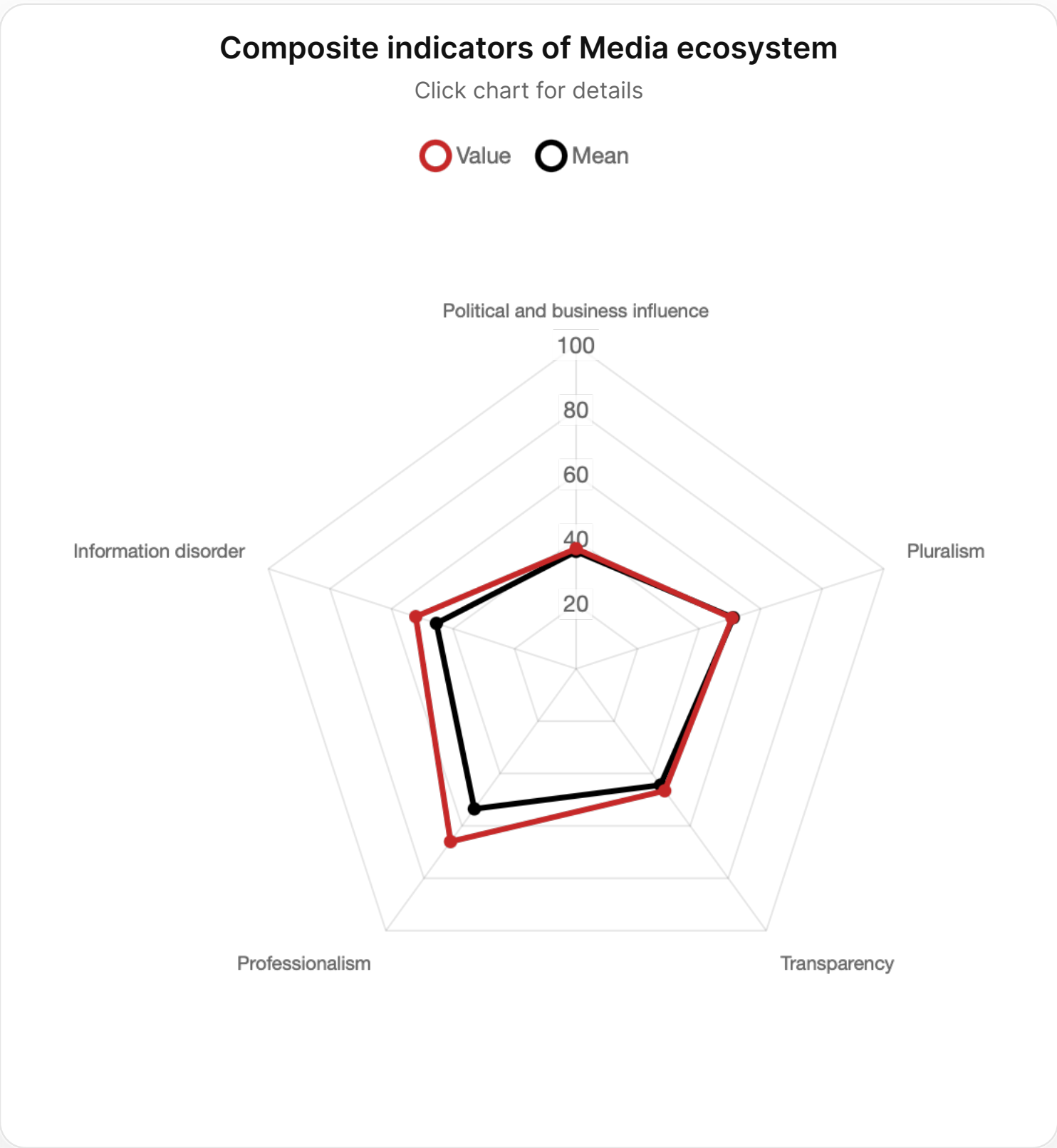
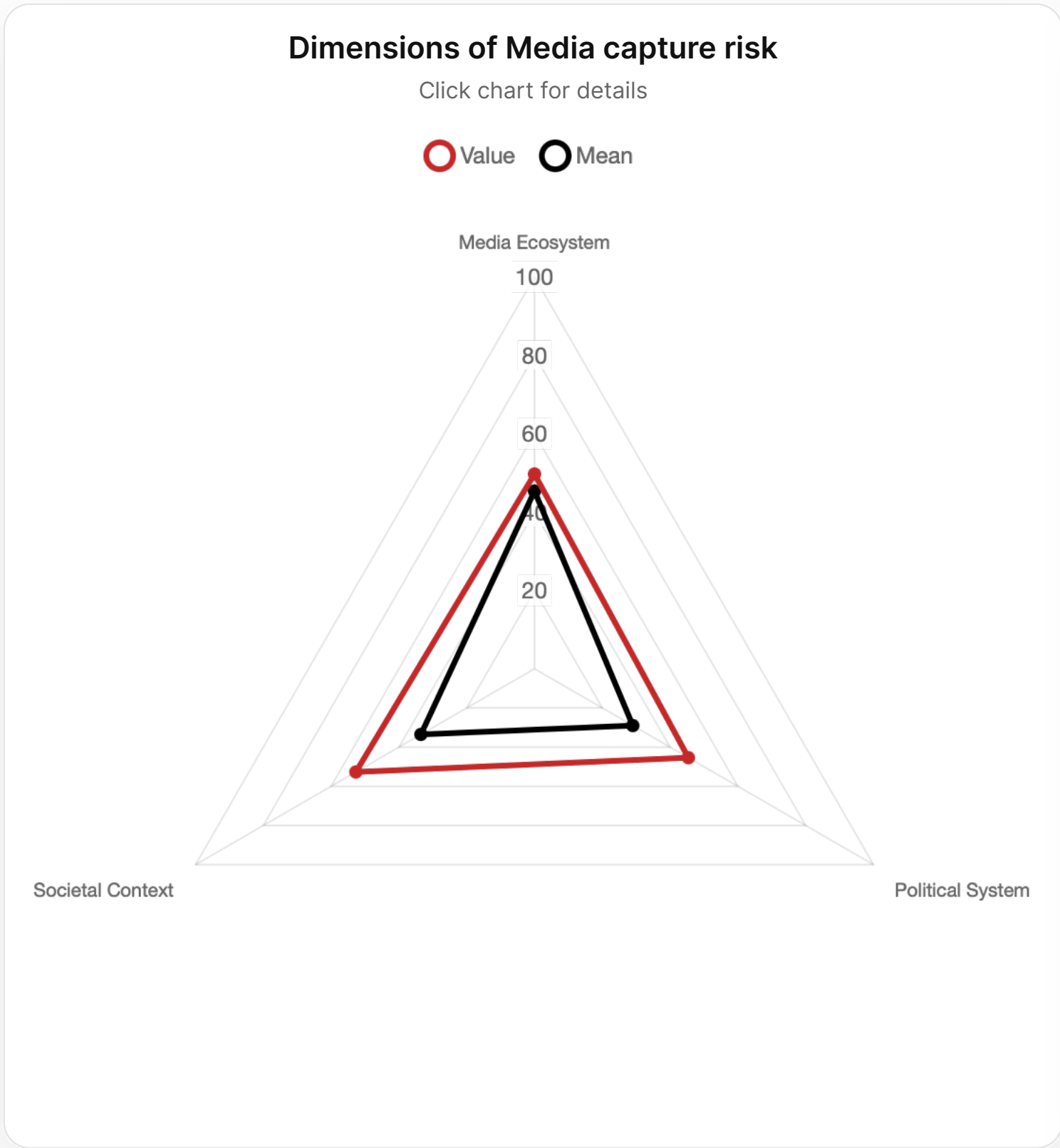
North Macedonia



Population: 1.8m

Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 49.4

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



Country Overview

North Macedonia displays medium levels of media capture risk, with critical scores distributed across the media ecosystem, the political system, and the societal context. While ownership concentration and political influence remain relevant, the highest risks emerge from journalistic professionalism, information disorder, political and ethnic polarization, institutional fragility, corruption perceptions, and extremely low trust in institutions.

These structural vulnerabilities are deeply rooted in the country's historical and political development. The Republic of North Macedonia gained independence in 1991 following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Since then, electoral politics have been dominated by the center-left *Social Democratic Union of Macedonia* (SDSM) and the nationalist center-right *VMRO-DPMNE*, which returned to power after the 2024 elections, with Hristijan Mickoski serving as Prime Minister. The rivalry between these parties has contributed to the development of parallel political and media spheres, reinforcing polarization and facilitating political influence over information flows.

Television and online platforms remain the main sources of information in North Macedonia, with most of the population using them daily. However, both television and digital news media credibility is very low. This distrust is reflected in the risk scores related to professionalism and information disorder. In fact, a distinction persists between professional newsrooms producing original journalism and numerous online portals that republish or copy content without editorial oversight. Such practices contribute to the spread of disinformation, reduce journalistic standards, and undermine public confidence.

The media market also demonstrates notable concentration, particularly in the audiovisual sector, where the four largest actors generate approximately most total sector income. Legal provisions require broadcasters and print outlets to disclose ownership information, which has improved transparency compared to earlier periods. Nevertheless, these requirements historically excluded digital media, and although amendments to include digital providers were initiated in late 2024, transparency gaps remain.

The country's media ecosystem features are deeply rooted in its political and societal dimensions. North Macedonia is a parliamentary republic currently governed by a *VMRO-DPMNE-led* coalition. Political competition is characterized by recurring instability, early elections, and strong polarization between major parties, reflected in the country's risk levels for political conflict and participation indicators. In addition, polarization extends beyond the political sphere to include ethnic divisions (between Macedonian and Albanian communities), creating a dual dynamic in which ethnic and political cleavages intersect and reinforce one another. This is further reflected in the existence of parallel media sub-systems, largely structured along linguistic and ethnic lines, which are themselves polarized along political and ideological orientations.

Institutional performance remains a significant concern. Indicators related to rational-legal authority, power distribution, and political rights show substantially higher risks than the comparative mean, suggesting persistent challenges in the effective functioning of the rule of law and checks and balances. Corruption and clientelist networks continue to affect public administration and political processes. Controversial amendments to the criminal code adopted in September 2023, which reduced penalties for certain corruption-related offenses, triggered criticism from civil society organizations and European institutions, reinforcing concerns about accountability. Finally, media polarization mirrors political divisions, as private outlets are frequently linked to political or business interests aligned with competing parties. This interaction between political competition and media structures contributes to a fragmented public sphere.

The societal dimension represents the most critical area for North Macedonia, particularly due to extremely low trust in institutions, high perceived corruption, and weaknesses in democratic performance. Public confidence in state institutions is among the lowest across the countries analyzed, creating a social environment highly vulnerable to political narratives, misinformation, and media influence. In addition, despite the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in 2020, ethnic tensions persist, particularly affecting Macedonian and Albanian populations. Gender-based violence also remains widespread despite legislative reforms, including criminal code amendments adopted in 2023. Finally, the education indicator shows moderate risk levels but remain insufficient to counterbalance weaknesses in media literacy and civic resilience, contributing indirectly to the spread of information disorder.

In conclusion, North Macedonia's media capture risk reflects the interaction of media professionalism, political and ethnic polarization, institutional weaknesses, and deep societal distrust. While formal pluralism exists and transparency regulations have improved, the combination of economic vulnerability in journalism, political contestation, and low confidence in institutions creates structural conditions that may facilitate influence over media content and public discourse.