Portugal

Population: 10.4m

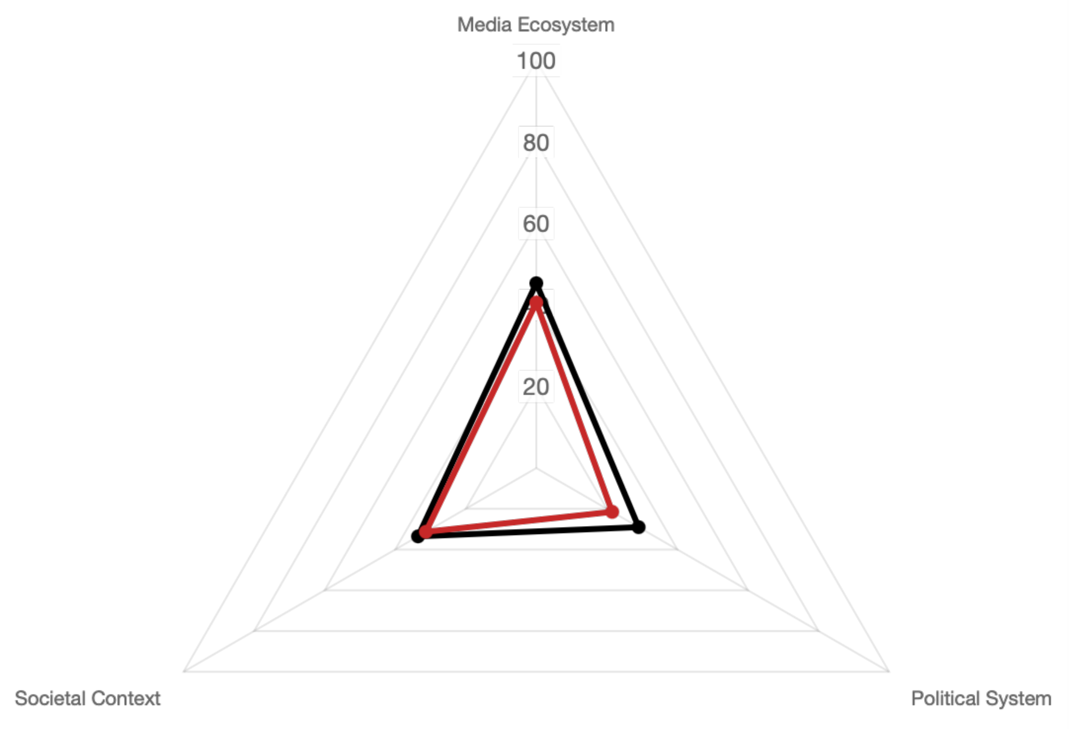
Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 33.5

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

Dimensions of Media capture risk

Click chart for details

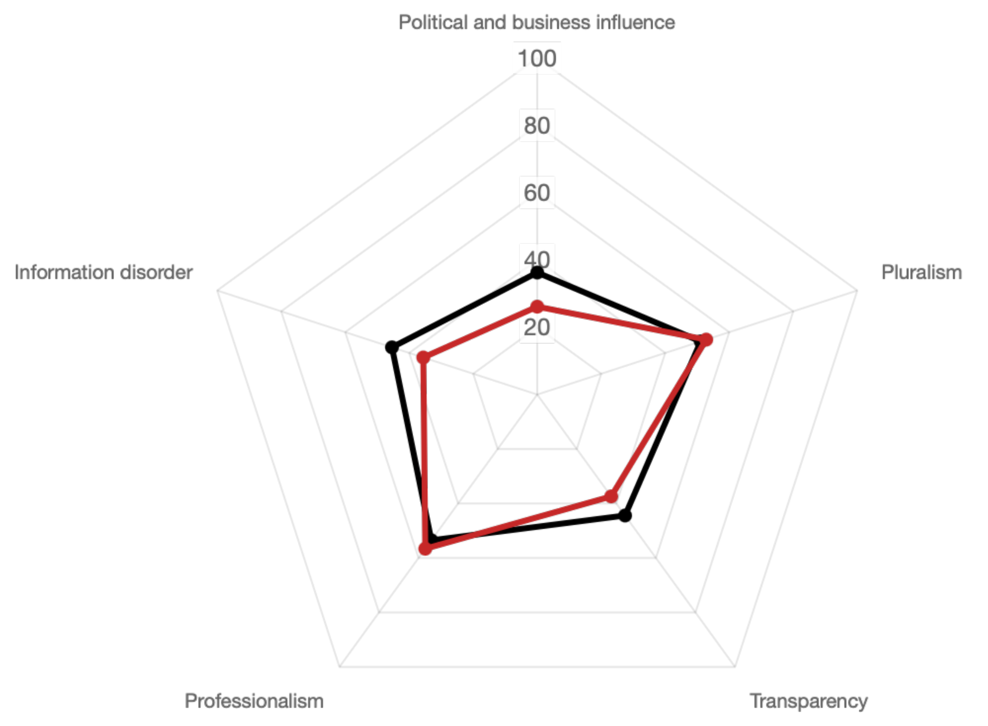
Value | Mean



Composite indicators of Media ecosystem

Click chart for details

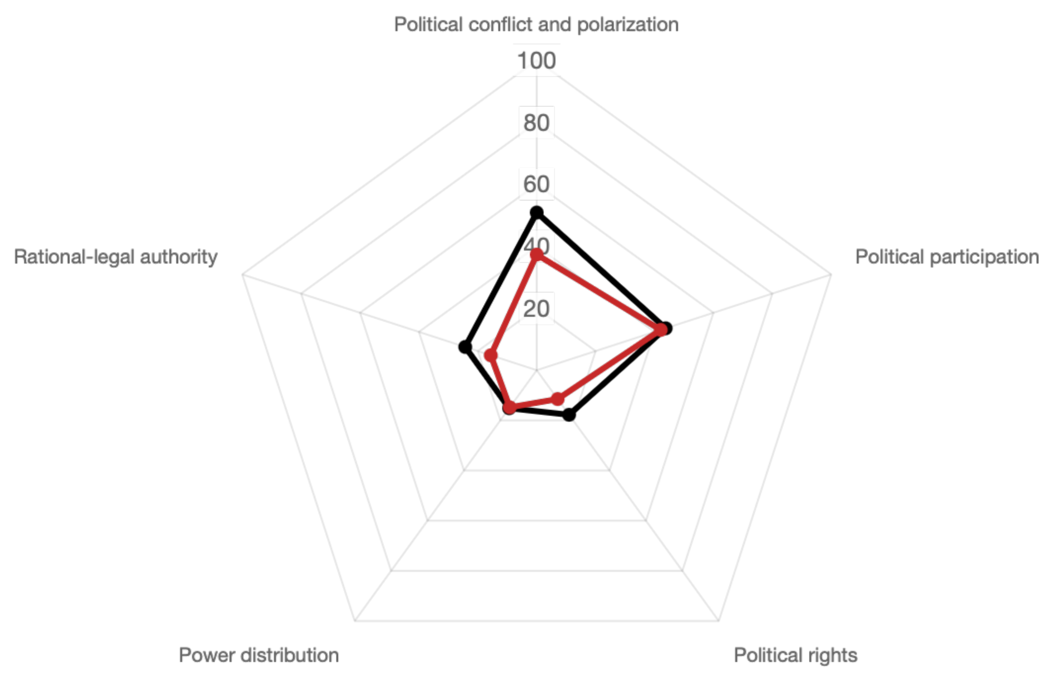
Value | Mean



Composite indicators of Political system

Click chart for details

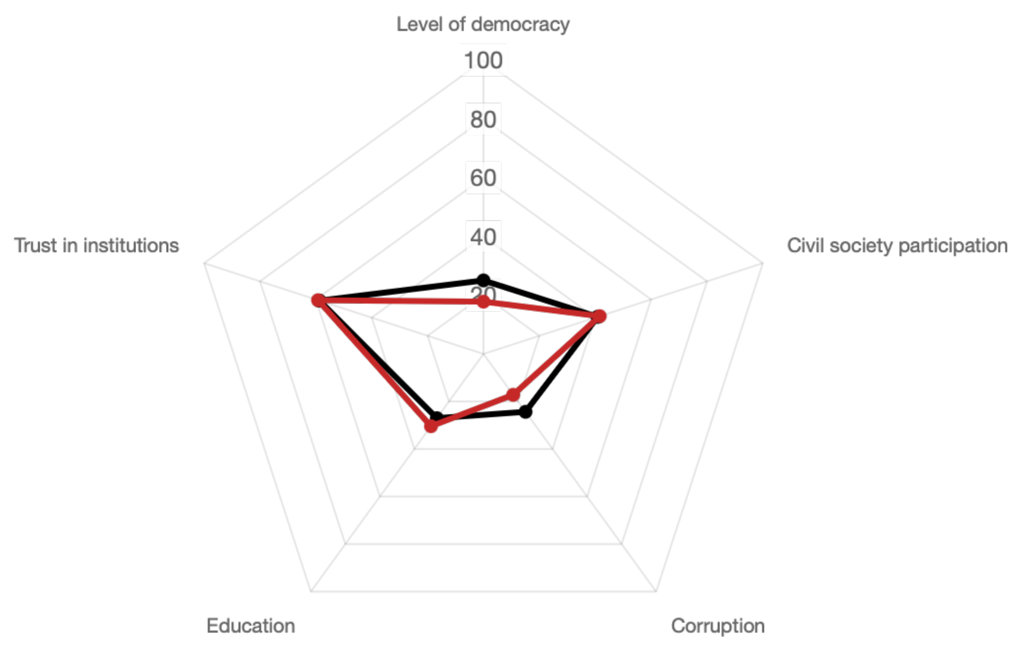
Value | Mean



Composite indicators of Societal context

Click chart for details

Value | Mean



Country Overview

Portugal shows medium levels of risk capture across all three dimensions, specifically linked to pluralism and political and business influence in media, and societal participation and education.

The media ecosystem is characterized by a market composed of both public and private media groups, and is generally small, as highlighted by the medium risk of the pluralism composite indicator. As such, it faces structural constraints related to small audiences, limited advertising revenues and shortages of resources. Public service media played a leading role until the early 1990s, when the introduction of commercial television significantly changed the landscape. The Portuguese media system remains strongly audiovisual-oriented, with television representing the primary source of information for most citizens, while newspaper readership remains comparatively low. In this context, public television continues to play an important role in shaping political debate through dedicated news and information channels, despite attracting lower audience shares than commercial broadcasters.

In 2020, two of the most important Portuguese media groups, *Media Capital* and *Global Notícias*, came under the control of Portuguese companies and businessmen who had limited prior involvement in journalism or media. These changes increased the share of nationally based ownership. This situation contrasts with the early 2000s, when media groups were targeted by foreign investors, particularly from Angola and China, raising concerns about external economic and political influence over the national media landscape. Despite this shift, media ownership in Portugal remains characterised by complex corporate structures and intricate financial holdings, which can limit transparency to varying degrees across media groups.

These structural characteristics of the Portuguese media market are closely linked to its ongoing economic fragility. In 2024, the government introduced a policy package to support the media sector, but despite these measures, economic pressures remain severe, with major private media groups reporting significant losses, salary cuts, layoffs, and delays in wage payments. These conditions culminated in a historic nationwide strike by journalists protesting precarious working conditions. In this context, financial vulnerability increases the dependence of media organizations on both public and private sources of funding, potentially creating indirect forms of influence over editorial choices. However, these dynamics primarily reflect structural market fragility rather than systematic forms of political capture. While economic constraints may increase susceptibility to influence, they should be analytically distinguished from direct political subordination, in order to avoid conflating financial weakness with active forms of control over media content.

The political system, both in its history and current state, specifically reflect these difficulties. From 1974 to 1976 Portugal underwent a transition from the authoritarian Estado Novo regime, which had been in place since the 1930s. It started as a peaceful military coup known as the Carnation Revolution that culminated in a new Constitution that established the country as a democratic parliamentary republic. Since then, successive reforms have promoted judicial independence and subjected both the executive and the legislative branches to a system of checks and balances. Today, Portugal has a multiparty political system with regular transfers of power between rival parties. However, recently, the traditional two-party system has weakened, with the emergence of new political actors and a more fragmented Parliament, reflecting voters' concerns over economic issues and marking a shift from a long period of political stability. In March 2024, Portugal held snap parliamentary elections following the corruption scandal that led to Prime Minister António Costa's resignation. The centre-right *Democratic Alliance* won, forming a minority government under Luís Montenegro in a fragmented parliament. In May 2025, after a year of political uncertainty under this minority government, the Portuguese were called to vote once again, and Luís Montenegro was re-elected as Prime Minister. While these developments point to a phase of increased political fragmentation and electoral volatility, they should be understood within Portugal's broader trajectory of democratic continuity since 1974, characterized by institutional stability and comparatively moderate levels of polarization. This longer-term perspective helps to contextualize recent dynamics and avoids overstating the extent to which current political developments translate into systemic risks of media capture.

Frequent political campaigns driven by recurrent elections have amplified anti-immigration sentiments in spite of the approval of a National Plan to combat racism and discrimination, issues that are still persistent in Portugal. A further concern is represented by episodes of police violence that prompted several days of protests in Lisbon. Challenges linked to Portugal's levels of media capture risk are also determined by the difficulties highlighted by the education indicator: in fact, the country shows one of the highest shares of population with a low level of education (above 35%) in the EU.

In conclusion, despite Portugal shows fair levels of democracy and corruption, difficulties pertaining to pluralism, concentration and professionalism, as well as citizens' limited media literacy, subject the media ecosystem to a medium risk of media capture.

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