

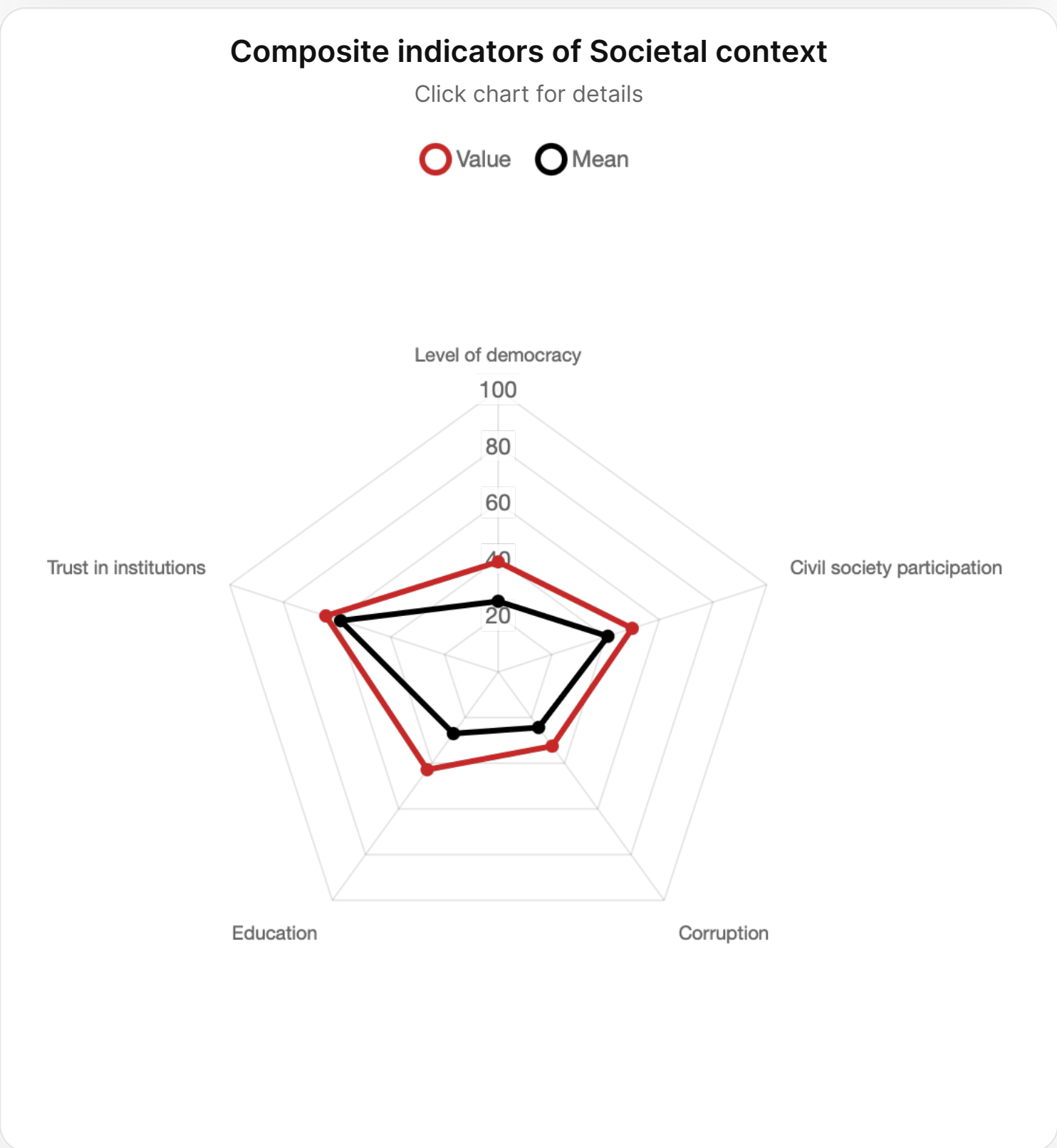
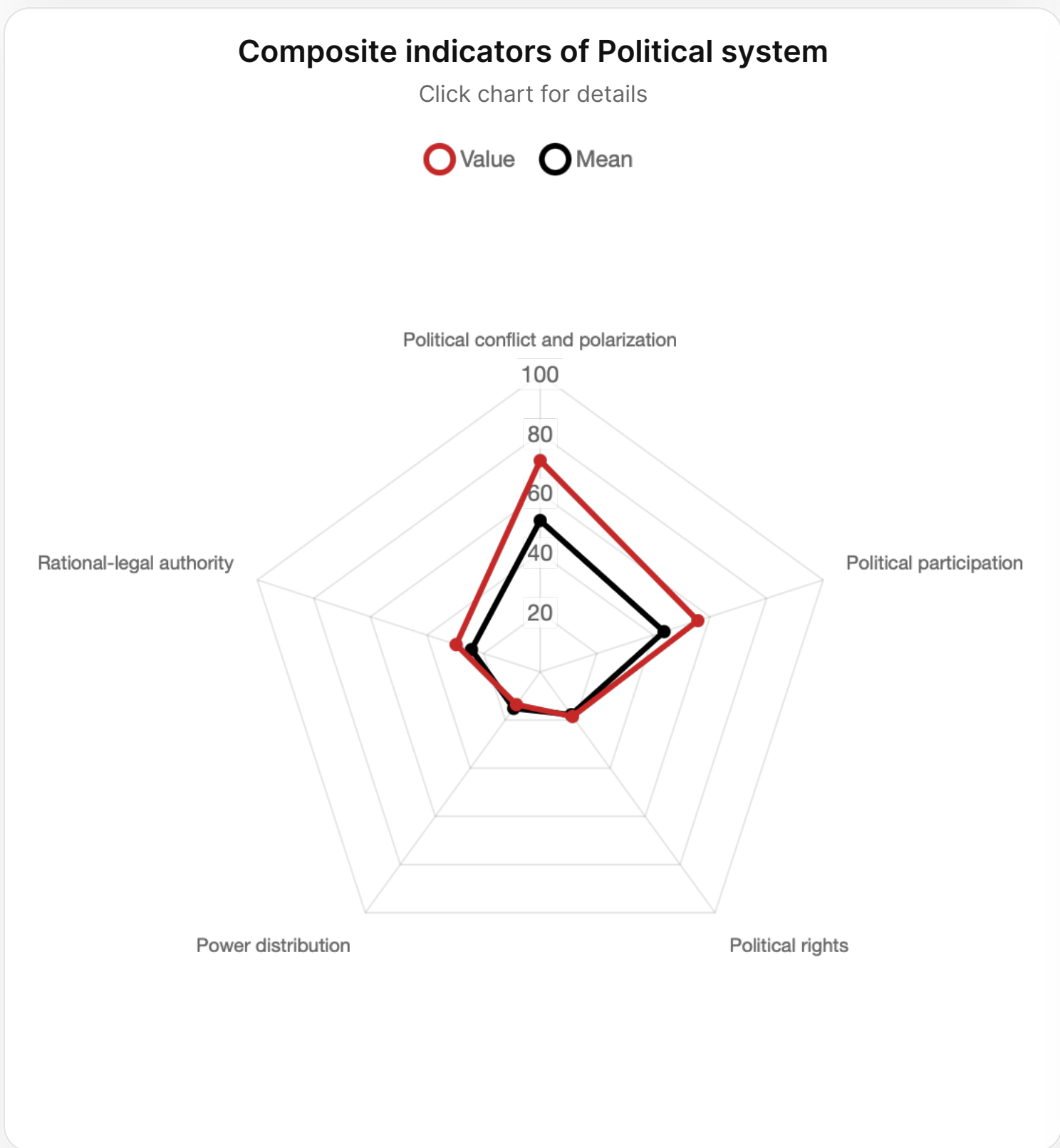
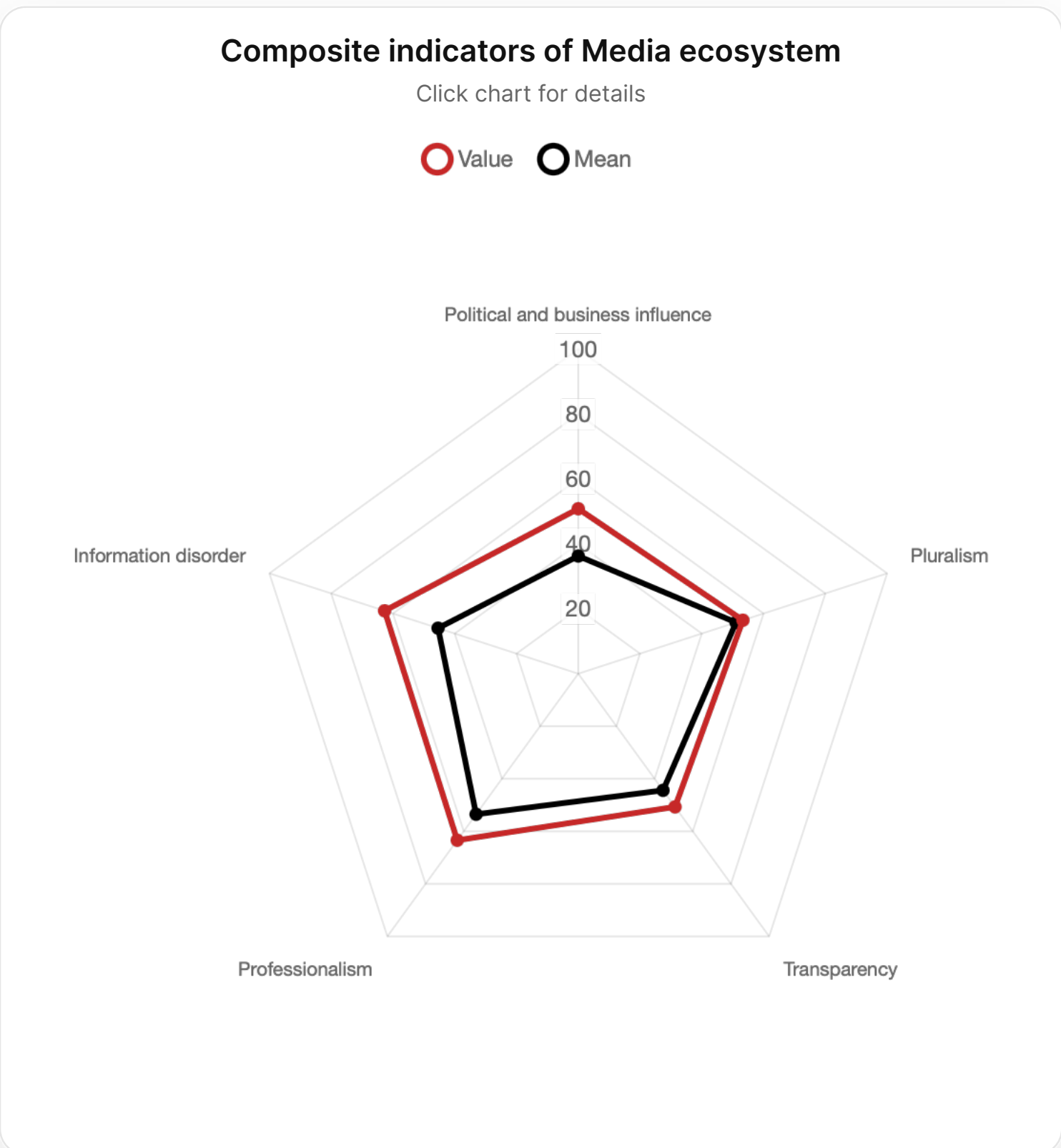
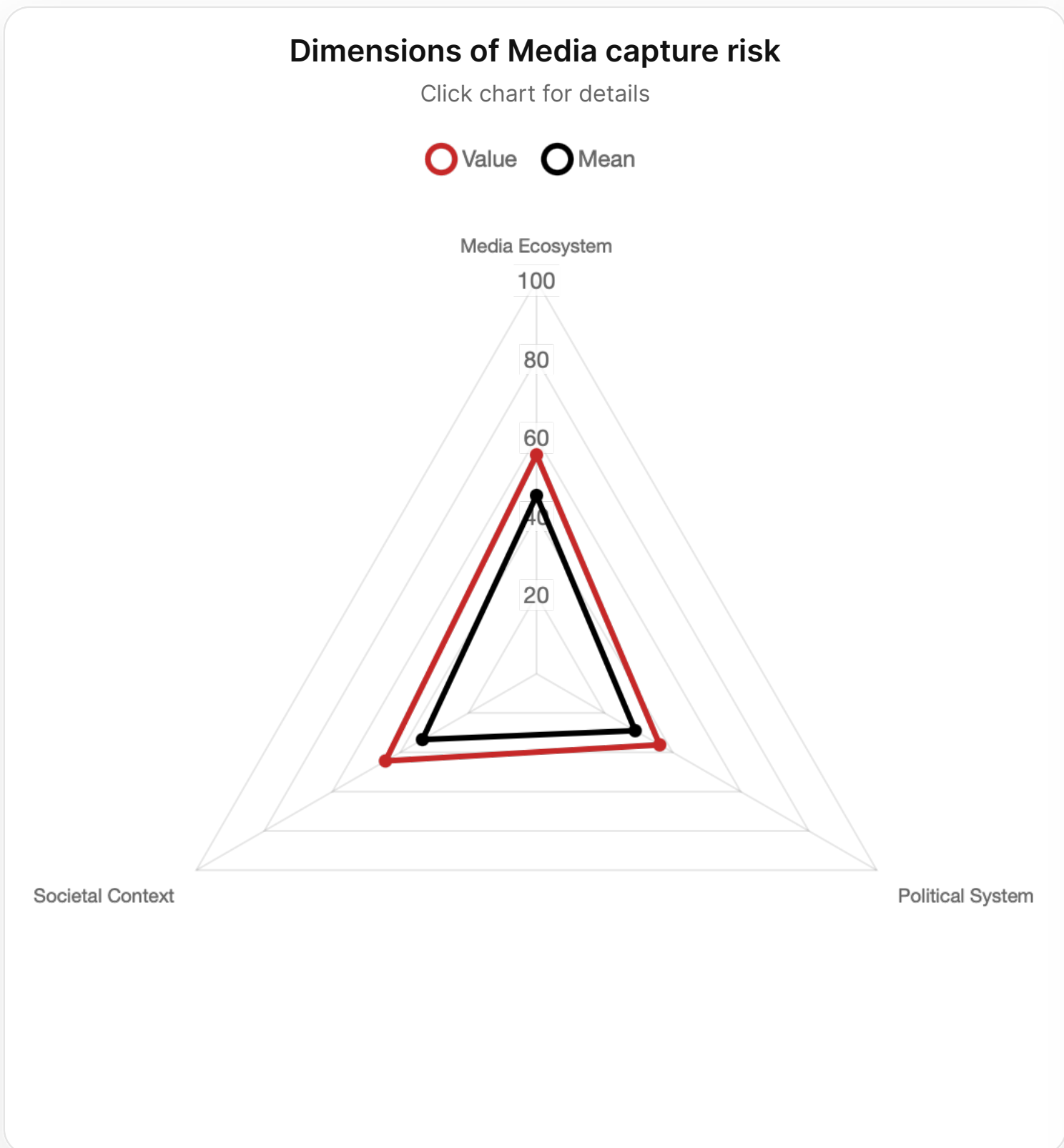
Romania



Population: 10.8m

Country media capture risk overall (value - %): 48.0

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



Country Overview

Romania is characterized by high levels of risk of media capture, across all three dimensions, and particularly in the media ecosystem. While democratic institutions are formally consolidated, the country continues to face structural challenges related to corruption, trust in institutions, social inequality, and quality of democracy.

Romania's media landscape is diverse, fragmented, and strongly dominated by television, which remains the primary source of news for most citizens. Several large news television channels and their associated online portals lead news consumption, while radio, print, and digital-native outlets play a secondary role. Major media actors include both international groups (such as *Ringier*, *CME*, *Dogan Media*, *PPT Group*) and Romanian-owned companies, alongside newer investigative and donation-based outlets such as *Recorder* and *G4Media*. Audiovisual media are subject to specific regulation under Law No. 504/2002, which transposes the AVMS Directive and includes provisions on ownership transparency, licensing, and anti-concentration. Audiovisual service providers are required to disclose shareholder structures, which are publicly available through the National Audiovisual Council (CNA). In contrast, print and online media operate under general business law, with ownership information accessible only indirectly and often at a cost, resulting in lower transparency. Beneficial ownership is frequently unclear, particularly for outlets owned by foundations, newly established companies, or entities with complex corporate structures. At the same time, media financing represents a major vulnerability: while there are no direct state subsidies to private media, large amounts of public funds flow into the sector indirectly through political advertising and communication campaigns. The economic sustainability of the sector is further weakened by structural conditions, including a high number of outlets competing in a relatively small market, which contributes to underfunding and increases vulnerability to political and business pressures.

Media professionals in Romania are also often underpaid and this facilitates the risk of media capture. Indeed, there is frequent overlap between the figures of journalists and politicians. This situation is compounded by a fragmented professional environment, in which divisions within the journalistic community have led to the proliferation of separate associations, each with its own code of ethics that applies only to its members, thereby limiting the overall effectiveness of professional self-regulation. Journalism is at times perceived as a substitute for politics, with some journalists openly aligning themselves with political actors. In addition, practices such as advertorials, as well as instances of bribery and blackmail involving journalists, have been reported, further undermining professional standards and increasing susceptibility to media capture.

Digital platforms also play a growing role in news consumption, with social media platforms emerging as influential political communication channels. The 2024 presidential election crisis highlighted the impact of algorithmic amplification, unlabeled political content, and foreign-linked disinformation networks on Romania's information environment. To this regard, the political landscape in 2024-2025 was dominated by the unprecedented annulment of the presidential election following findings of unlawful campaigning, opaque financing, and Russian-linked disinformation conducted primarily through social media. The Constitutional Court concluded that the integrity of the vote had been compromised, leading to a re-run election in May 2025, which was ultimately won by independent pro-western candidate Nicușor Dan. While the re-run was competitive and turnout increased, observers continued to note media bias and insufficient transparency in election administration.

A particularly high indicator for Romania's media capture risk, linked to the political system, is the degree of polarization, which shows high score of risk. Such a level reflects the diversity of the country, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously, with ethnic minorities comprising over 11% of the population, including large Hungarian and Roma communities. While minority parties participate in government, Roma communities continue to face persistent institutional and societal discrimination, including hate speech. In this societal context, trust in institutions is affected by long-standing corruption, weak electoral credibility, and perceived inequalities. Gender equality indicators place Romania in the mid-range, with enduring gaps in income, political representation, and protection from domestic violence. Finally, media literacy remains relatively underdeveloped, with limited integration into the education system, whose related indicator is the highest of all EU countries, therefore highlighting the highest level of risk of media capture. In fact, not only over half of the population possesses above-basic information and data literacy skills, but Romania reports the lowest shares of people with tertiary education (below 25%).

In conclusion, Romania's media environment is pluralistic but marked by opaque financing, political influence, weak self-regulation, and growing exposure to disinformation, particularly on digital platforms. Romanian society reflects deep socio-economic and cultural divides, with uneven access to information, limited media literacy, and ongoing challenges in social inclusion and institutional trust.