

# Halo Initiative



**David  
Kovach**

SENIOR ASSOCIATE  
GENERAL COUNSEL

Comscore

**Vanessa  
Otero**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER

Ad Fontes Media

**Carol  
Hinnant**

CHIEF REVENUE  
OFFICER

Comscore

“Journalism is fundamental to our democracy and finding ways to increase ad support for vetted, professional journalism is important to the evolution of digital advertising.”

-MIKE ZANEIS, CO-FOUNDER, BRAND SAFETY INSTITUTE

**Reputable news publishers that offer trustworthy content have earned the confidence of their viewers and readers, and brands that advertise with them can benefit.** This aura of reliability has been referred to as the Halo Effect, and for over a decade, studies have consistently validated its impact. In 2016, Comscore’s report on [The Halo Effect](#) drew a causal relationship between quality news environments and enhanced conversion lift enjoyed by brands who advertise on trusted content sites. Additionally, the IAB’s recent [News Trust Halo](#) report continues to prove the benefits of advertising in trusted news, including improved ROI for the advertiser, especially among affluent audiences.

**Unfortunately, in recent years, misinformation has proliferated, along with consumer backlash against intentionally misleading content and fake news, and the pressure on consumers and advertisers alike to distinguish between safe and unsafe news environments has mounted.** There is a [growing body of articles](#) calling on brands and ad tech to defund misinformation, with [one recent study](#) from IPG reporting that an astounding 87% of consumers surveyed expect brands to take full responsibility for their advertising choices.

Despite seeking better intelligence and more transparency around ad partners and placements, the fact is that distinguishing between reliable and unreliable, safe and unsafe environments for advertising is a complex feat. To limit risk, brands and agencies have employed brand safety and suitability strategies that block sensitive categories of content as one means to protect them from the risks of advertising in misleading content. Many argue that news blocking has gone too far, as homepages of news sites as well as more sensitive categories of news like politics, crime and social issues are often completely blocked at the category level regardless of whether the content is from a trusted source or not.

Data from the IAB News Trust Halo Report strongly refutes the widely-held notion that advertising in trusted news environment is risky for brands:

*“[N]ews—even if disconcerting—either increases or has no impact on consumer trust for brands advertising within that content,” and “84% of news consumers feel that advertising within the news either increases brand trust or maintains it.”*

**The reality is that we need smarter insights and more reliable tools that brands can confidently use to identify and choose responsible news.** We also need more nuanced approaches to brand suitability that empower brands to differentiate between trusted news environments that drive a halo effect, and misinformation. Such tools can help advertisers and also equip ad sales representatives with the differentiators needed to attract brand safety and suitability champions searching for trustworthy media partners.

That’s why Comscore is announcing Halo Initiative, our commitment to support responsible media and work with partners like Ad Fontes Media to close the widening gap for data, insights and innovation tools. We believe the time is now to rebuild trust and move the industry forward.

**“Marketers and agencies are signaling their interest in increasing their support for vetted journalism, but to make that interest operational, the buying process needs to be achievable at scale and in a brand safe and suitable manner. Innovations like the partnership between Comscore and Ad Fontes that look to make buying vetted journalism inventory easier and more reliable are valuable steps forward for the industry.”**

**- NEAL THURMAN, CO-FOUNDER, BRAND SAFETY INSTITUTE**

# BRAND AND PUBLISHER TOOLS

## Ad Fontes Media

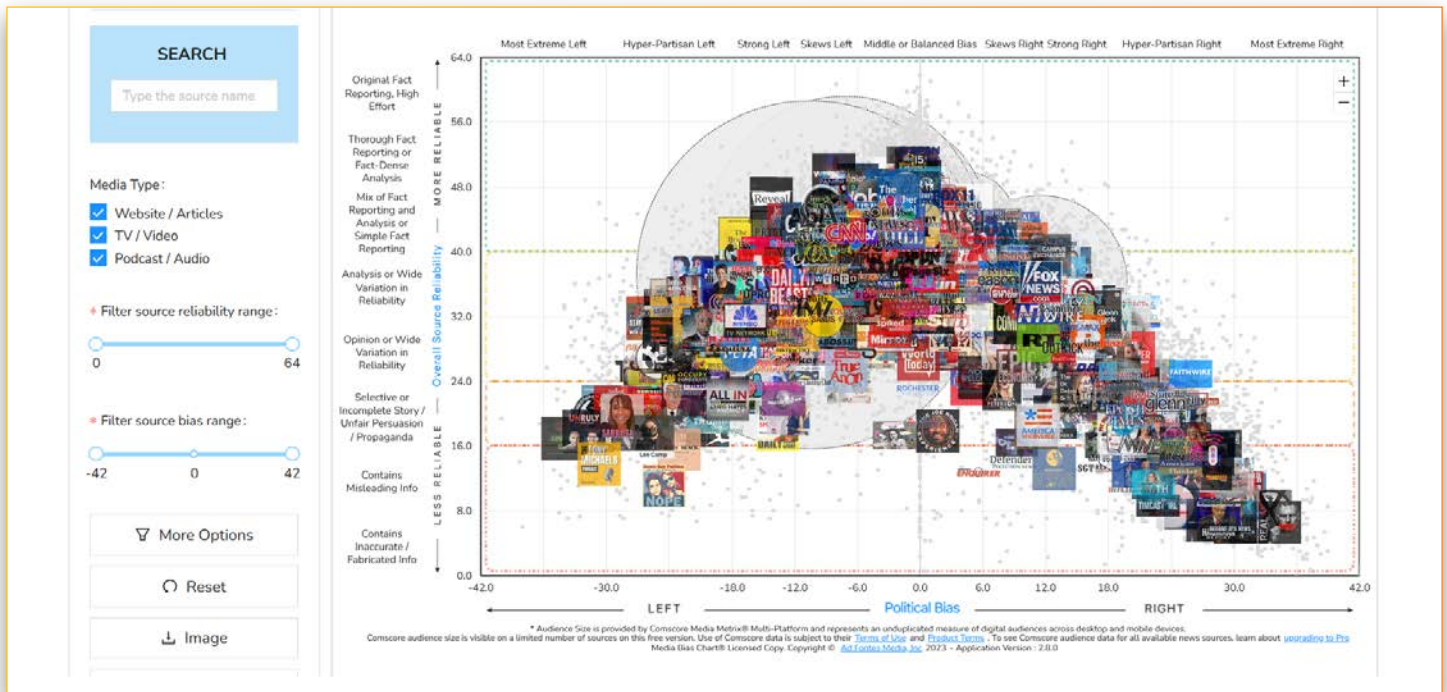
The Media Bias Chart®

Ad Fontes Media, the media bias and reliability intelligence leader and producer of The Media Bias Chart®, reached out to Comscore looking for a more comprehensive way to quantify the audiences in their tool to make it useful for advertisers. The integration of Comscore’s audience data with Ad Fontes’ The Media Bias Chart®, yields a powerful divining rod in the search for the Halo Effect, as it is

designed to graphically display these results.

As shown in the example below, a given media property’s logo-placement on this chart represents their rating on Ad Fontes’ continuum of political bias and reliability, while the shaded circles surrounded by bubbles represent Comscore’s measurement of the audience coverage (or ‘reach’) of the media property:

A brand safety and suitability champion can use this tool to navigate towards properties most likely associated with the halo effect. Likewise, representatives of a given media property can use this tool to reference their platform’s attributes.



“There are scaled audiences consuming the objective reporting from reputable news organizations in the findings from Comscore and Ad Fontes Media versus the perception that audiences are only consuming commentary, opinion talk shows and misinformation as proxies for journalism... From news media inclusion lists to ad networks, brands have the ability to work with publishers on their Brand Suitable requirements and should feel comfortable using technologies that promote advertising associated with quality journalism.”

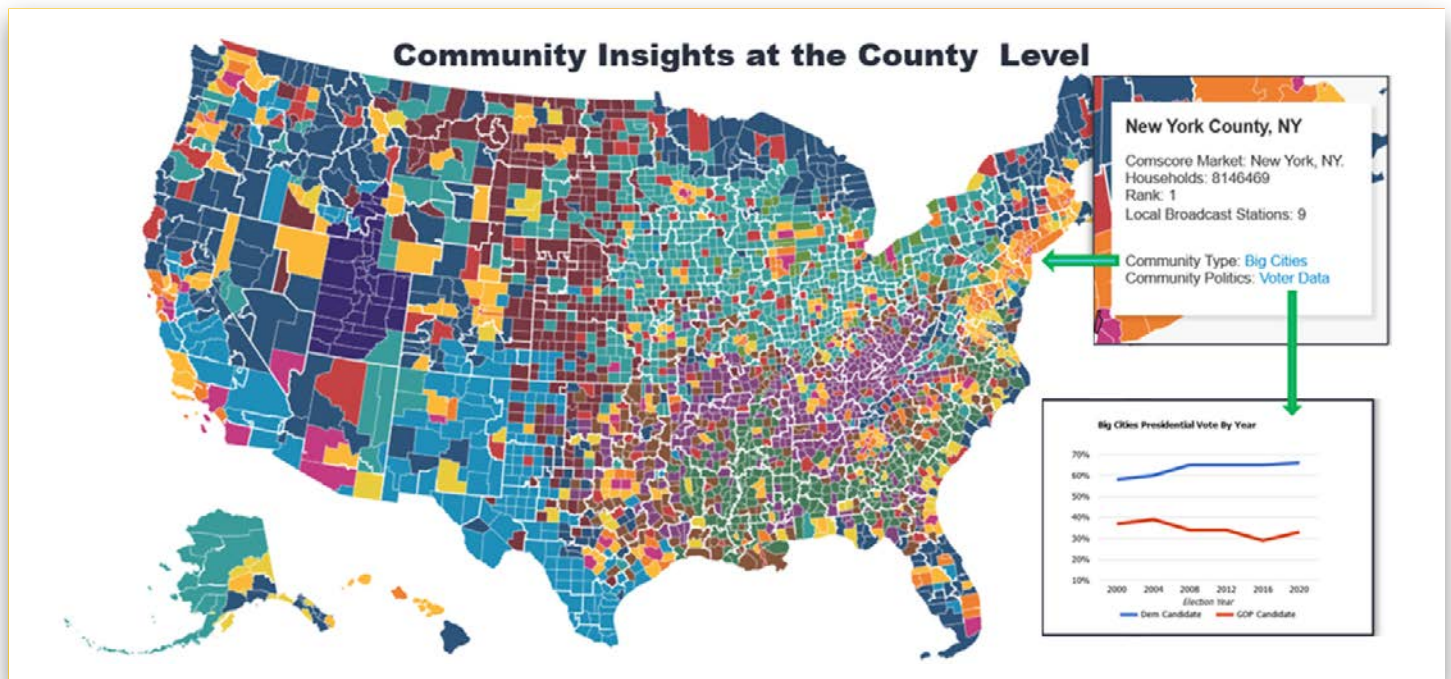
-SCOTT CUNNINGHAM, INITIATIVE LEAD FOR NEWSPASSID AD NETWORK BY THE LOCAL MEDIA CONSORTIUM, CHAIR OF THE PUBLISHER COUNCIL AT THE BRAND SAFETY INSTITUTE, AND FOUNDER OF THE IAB TECH LAB

# BRAND AND PUBLISHER TOOLS

## Comscore Markets® Community Insights Interactive Map

The [Comscore Markets® Interactive Map](#), which provides granular insights at the county level, can also be used in conjunction with The Media Bias Chart® to understand how community-level groups use and consume media (see graphic below).

**Broadcasters and cable networks can feature their local reach down to the community level, and advertisers can fine-tune their channel mix to reach their best audiences.**



A closer look at the Ad Fontes publisher scores for bias and reliability in combination with Comscore's reach and community level data reveals a key insight:

### **THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT AUDIENCES FOR LOW-BIAS/HIGH RELIABILITY NEWS CONTENT.**

Comscore's Total Digital Population data reveals that about half of all news audiences fall in the low-bias/ high reliability category as defined by Ad Fontes. Although there are certainly substantial audiences outside of this

zone and across the media bias spectrum, brands can use these insights to understand how different publishers and audiences align and what suits their brands.

To address brand safety and suitability concerns for programmatic ad-placement, Ad Fontes data can be applied as a brand suitability tool programmatically. Segments are available for use through Comscore's activation division, Proximic by Comscore, on the open exchange or via PMP across desktop, mobile, and CTV campaigns.

**As Halo Initiative continues to evolve, we plan to offer new solutions and encourage others to join us.**

For more information, contact David Kovach at: [dkovach@comscore.com](mailto:dkovach@comscore.com)