

Politics

## Negatives Along The Campaign Trail

David A. Andelman, 04.22.08, 2:42 PM ET

As voters head to the polls in Pennsylvania, it's striking to see how deeply entrenched are the negative traits of Hillary Clinton and the positive traits of Barack Obama.

On virtually every negative trait, Clinton outpolls Obama by as much as 2-to-1, while the presumptive Republican candidate, John McCain, comes somewhere in between. Obama comes out on top with the most commonly cited positive traits. With just three viable candidates left in the race, the April edition of the Forbes '08 Tracker is narrowing its focus.

### In Pictures: Positives And Negatives

In this monthly study, 46 different attributes are examined by Forbes.com and its partner, California-based E-Poll Market Research. Neither Forbes.com nor E-Poll, which is conducting the polling, defines any of the 46 attributes on which it polls its sample population--the same traits it has used to select high-level spokesmen and women for advertising campaigns for more than a decade.

"Selling" a candidate, along with selling cars, television shows or any other product, has become a complex marketing process. The 46 attributes help define trends and key drivers of what moves a person to respond or react to the messaging and the messenger. In this case, the candidate's name is given to the polled population, which is then asked to match whichever of the attributes it believes is appropriate for the candidate in question.

The methodology polls a cross-section of Americans of voting age, asking first their awareness of each candidate and each candidate's overall appeal. Those polled are then asked which of the 46 traits selected by E-Poll they feel describes that candidate.

All three candidates are, by now, well-recognized: More than 80% of our sample were aware that all three are contenders for the presidency. But that's where their similarities end.

For example, 29% of our sample population say that Clinton is "cold," compared with just 7% who ascribe that trait to Obama. At the same time, 15% think Clinton is "mean," five times Obama's 3% score. McCain comes in between on both scales--11% and 6% respectively.

On positive traits, 21% describe Obama as "charming," compared with 8% for Clinton and 6% for McCain, while some 20% see Obama as "down-to-earth," double the 10% for Clinton and above McCain's 14%.

Obama is also chosen as more trustworthy, sincere and exciting than Clinton, though she scores higher on the latter two traits than McCain.

The problem for Clinton is that her negatives have failed to drop at all in any of our monthly polls this year, while her positives continue to trail Obama substantially.

For the first time this month, Forbes and E-Poll Market Research also examined the total appeal of 14 different potential president-vice-president tickets. For Republicans, the most appealing is McCain teamed with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, while the least appealing is McCain matched with former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney.

On the Democratic side, the most appealing ticket is the very hypothetical one of former Vice President Al Gore on the presidential line with Obama as vice president. This is followed closely by an Obama-Clinton pairing. A Gore-Clinton ticket came in third, but all three outpolled the most appealing Republican matchup of McCain and Rice. A pairing of Clinton with New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg came in last on the Democratic side (though ahead of McCain-Romney).

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