

## Barack Widens His Lead

David A. Andelman, 05.13.08, 11:50 AM ET

Barack Obama has widened his lead as the most appealing presidential candidate--outdistancing Sens. Hillary Clinton and John McCain in the May edition of the Forbes 08 Tracker.

Some 41% of the voting-aged Americans in the sample population found Obama an "appealing" candidate for president, compared with 29% for Clinton and 31% for McCain. Clinton's appeal quotient faded three points from April while Obama added two points; McCain's appeal score remained unchanged.

None of the candidates has been able to pass the 50% barrier, which means that more than half of our sample population considers none of them as particularly appealing as a potential president.

In this monthly study, 46 different attributes are examined by Forbes.com and its partner, California-based ePoll Market Research. Neither Forbes.com nor ePoll, the California market research company 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 spokespeople for advertising campaigns for more than a decade.

Politics, 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 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, then the candidate's overall appeal and, finally, which of the 46 traits selected by ePoll they feel describes that candidate.

Overall appeal is the broadest measure of viability of the candidates and whether the individual voter in the sample population considers them worthy contenders for the presidency.

All three candidates are, by now, well recognized--more than 80% of our sample are aware that they are contenders for the presidency. But that's where the similarities between the three ends.

Clinton continues to earn higher scores than either Obama or McCain on most of the principal negative attributes considered by the sample population, including cold, mean, rude, boring and emotional, while Obama scored consistently higher on positive such positive traits as sincere, trustworthy, down-to-earth, charming and exciting.

Obama was also picked as the most intelligent of the three candidates--as well as the most articulate and the most confident.

Clinton was picked two-for-one over the other two for being the most aggressive and the most activist. She also substantially outdistanced Obama as the most experienced--40% to 19%, though McCain trumped both of them on this attribute, with 48% considering him the most experienced. Indeed, he has had a longer tenure in Washington than either candidate: When he was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1982 (he moved to the Senate four years later), Clinton was between two terms as First Lady of Arkansas, while Obama was a junior at Columbia University in New York.