

Elections Commission: 389K absentee ballots requested for primary, 295K returned so far

Posted on Tuesday, Aug 9, 2022

Voting absentee has dropped off significantly from 2020 levels, though voters are still using it more frequently than they did pre-COVID, according to the latest numbers from the Elections Commission.

Wisconsin voters have requested 389,811 absentee ballots for today's election and 295,059 returned. Both numbers could climb higher as clerks continue to update the WisVote system; the deadline to return absentee ballots is 8 p.m. today.

By comparison, there were 609,803 absentee ballots cast in the Aug. 11, 2020, primary. They accounted for 65.6 percent of the 929,995 votes in that primary.

In the Aug. 14, 2018, primary, there were 108,461 absentee ballots returned, accounting for 10.4 percent of the more than 1 million votes.

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The use of absentee ballots peaked in November 2020 as voters cast nearly 2 million, including nearly 1.4 million by mail, during the COVID-19 pandemic. That fall, 3.3 million votes were cast.