

# Wisconsin Elections Commission: Absentee voting in Wisconsin: A recent history

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Looking back at statewide elections since November 2008, the rate of absentee voting by Wisconsin citizens ranges from a low of 7.0 percent in the April 2012 spring election to a high of 65.6 percent in the August 2020 primary, an election that occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tracking absentee voting trends is complicated, in that there are several categories to consider, and the ways in which absentee ballots are defined has evolved over the years. For example, UOCAVA (the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act of 1986) requires that states allow for members of the United States Uniformed Services and other citizens living overseas to have access to vote in federal elections. In addition, most states have their own laws that allow citizens covered by UOCAVA to vote in state and local elections. UOCAVA ballots are used for military personnel, their families, and U.S. citizens residing overseas.

In the data below, in elections from November 2008 until August of 2018, absentee ballots were generally counted in just three categories: absentee (meaning, mailed ballots and in person delivery of absentee ballots), overseas, and military.

Starting in the August 2018 Partisan Primary, the way in which we record absentee ballots changed, and remains that way. Today, we report absentee ballots in the

following categories: in-person absentee, non UOCAVA (meaning, mailed ballots not from the military or overseas civilians), military, temporary overseas, and permanent overseas. (Note: There is also a category for Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots, but those numbers are miniscule and do not affect the overall percentages).

Below are the raw numbers and percentages associated with absentee voting in recent years.

### **November 2008 general election (presidential)**

Total ballots - 2,996,869

Absentee ballots - 633,610

Overseas ballots - 3,059

Military ballots - 3,437

Total absentee ballots - 640,106

Percent of total ballots - **21.3 percent**

*Wisconsin Elections Commissioners*

Don M. Millis, chair | Marge Bostelmann | Julie M. Glancey | Ann S. Jacobs | Robert Spindell | Mark L. Thomsen

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*Administrator*

Meagan Wolfe

**November 2010 general election** Total ballots - 2,185,015

Absentee ballots - 229,074 Overseas ballots - 640

Military ballots - 763

Total absentee ballots - 230,477

Percent of total ballots - **10.5 percent**

**April 2012 spring election** Total ballots - 1,127,415

Absentee ballots - 78,749 Overseas ballots - 161

Military ballots - 393

Total absentee ballots - 79,303

Percent of total ballots - **7.0 percent**

**August 2012 primary election** Total ballots - 844,829

Absentee ballots - 80,548

Overseas ballots - 678

Military ballots - 454

Total absentee ballots - 81,680

Percent of total ballots - **9.7 percent**

**November 2012 general election (presidential)**

Total ballots - 3,084,115

Absentee ballots - 659,444 Overseas ballots - 2,299

Military ballots - 3,595

Total absentee ballots - 665,338

Percent of total ballots - **21.2 percent**

**November 2014 general election** Total ballots - 2,422,241

Absentee ballots - 374,294 Overseas ballots — 278

Military ballots - 861

Total absentee ballots - 375,433

Percent of total ballots - **15.5 percent**

**August 2016 primary election** Total ballots - 645,619

Absentee ballots - 76,529

Overseas ballots - 228

Military ballots - 208

Total absentee ballots - 76,965

Percent of total ballots - **11.9 percent**

**November 2016 general election (presidential)**

Total ballots - 2,997,276

Absentee ballots - 819,316

Permanent overseas ballots - 3,436

Military ballots - 2,984

Total absentee ballots - 824,736

Percent of total ballots - **27.5 percent**

**August 2018 primary election** Total ballots - 1,041,837

In person absentee ballots - 48,403

Non UOCAVA ballots - 59,659

Military ballots - 2332

Temporary overseas - 1

Permanent overseas - 166

Total absentee ballots - 108,461

Percent of total ballots - **10.4 percent**

**November 2018 general election** Total ballots - 2,688,473

In person absentee ballots - 413,336

Non UOCAVA ballots - 162,445

Military ballots - 1,418

Temporary overseas - 202

Permanent overseas - 1,645

Total absentee ballots - 579,046

Percent of total ballots - **21.5 percent**

**August 2020 primary election** Total ballots - 929,995

In person absentee ballots - 50,416

Non UOCAVA ballots - 558,108

Military ballots - 839

Temporary overseas - 61

Permanent overseas - 379

Total absentee ballots - 609,803

Percent of total ballots - **65.6 percent**

**November 2020 general election (presidential)**

Total ballots - 3,294,872

In person absentee ballots - 653,091

Non UOCAVA ballots - 1,301,849

Military ballots - 6,839

Temporary overseas - 1,129

Permanent overseas - 5,563

Total absentee ballots - 1,968,471

Percent of total ballots - **59.7 percent**

**April 2022 spring election** Total ballots - 979,359

In person absentee ballots - 47,946

Non UOCAVA ballots - 189,440

Military ballots - 203

Temporary overseas - 29

Permanent overseas - 0

Total absentee ballots - 237,618

Percent of total ballots - **24.3 percent**