Wisconsin Mail Ballot Trends

October 22, 2020

The accompanying graphs document important trends related to absentee ballots in Wisconsin. The data were downloaded from the website of the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC). Request data and return data are based on weekly reports supplied by the state. Ballots outstanding are calculated by subtracting returned from requested ballots for the relevant time periods.

Note that these statistics pertain to individual ballot requests and returns. A small number of voters may have more than one request or return, because of problems encountered with the ballots. (For instance, if a voter “spoils” a ballot—that is, makes a mistake and asks for a new ballot—both the spoiled and replacement ballot will appear in the dataset.) We have not removed duplicates such as these. Therefore, there are slightly more requests reflected in this document than there are individuals who requested mail ballots.

Each week runs from Sunday to Saturday. The data on the x-axis is the Sunday that begins the week.

Authors: Bradley Lawrence and Emily Kohn

Of Note this Week

• As of last week, approximately 1,380,972 mail ballots have been requested. In comparison, 23,700 ballots had been requested for the 2016 general election at this time in 2016.
  − A total of 29,000 ballots were requested for the 2016 general election.
• Only approximately 131,442 requested ballots have been returned. Ballot returns peaked in early October and have declined since.
• The number of mail ballots requested has remained constant (at around 75,000 per week) for the last three weeks.
• As of October 14th, no ballots have been reported as rejected.

General trends

For the week of October 11, 2020:

• 60,035 mail ballots were requested. This brings the total number requested to 1,431,265.
  − 59.33% of all requested ballots have been returned for counting.
• 157,552 mail ballots were returned. This bring the total number returned to 849,101.
• 582,164 mail ballots are still outstanding.
Appendix: Aggregate Ballot Request and Return Trends