



Wisconsin

Potential Challenges

Wisconsin may be unable to recruit the 30,000+ poll workers needed for the General Election. Public health concerns about COVID-19 have reduced volunteers from normal recruitment numbers in a year when the Wisconsin Election Commission (WEC) expects high in-person turnout and needs staff to process a surge in mail-in ballots. The state saw a jump from 6% mail-in ballots in pre-COVID-19 elections to 82% mail-in ballots in the most recent primary election. The United States Postal Service has warned the state about possible challenges to meeting its mail-in ballot request and return deadlines (October 29, 2020 and Election Day respectively). The WEC has advised voters who plan use mail-in voting to do so as early as possible, warning that it may take up to two weeks in total to receive and return a mail-in ballot. With the expected surge in mail-in ballots, Wisconsin may encounter tabulation and reporting delays compared to past years, as the state does not allow election officials to begin processing ballots before Election Day. Continued civil unrest in Wisconsin could pose challenges for the election community to conduct safe and smooth in-person voting. Civil unrest leading up to Election Day may threaten the security and access to polling places. CISA Region V has established an effective working relationship with the WEC through outreach from Protective Security Advisors (PSA) and Cybersecurity Advisors (CSA). This outreach includes being active members of the Wisconsin Election Security Council established by WEC to improve cyber and physical security preparedness ahead of the 2020 elections. A bipartisan group of politicians has launched VoteSafe WI to support confidence in the election system and to support both in-person and mail-in voting. Wisconsin has the most election jurisdictions in the country (1,852 jurisdictions at the municipal level and 72 county clerks), creating challenges to effectively engaging at the local level.

COVID-19 Considerations

The WEC is in the process of securing the supplies necessary for the safe administration of in-person voting, but many vendors around the state have exhausted their supply of hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and other cleaning supplies. The state is planning to implement de-escalation training for clerks to handle encounters related to face coverings. Recognizing challenges to voting during the spring primary amid COVID-19, including long lines at reduced polling places and a high number of rejected mail-in ballots, the WEC has mailed all registered voters informational packets that outline voters' options for casting ballots in the General Election. These packets include mail-in ballot applications, for which all voters are eligible without providing an excuse. The Center for Tech and Civic Life, a nonprofit voting advocacy group, will give five cities (Madison, Milwaukee, Green Bay, Kenosha, and Racine) a total of \$6.3 million in grants to support election administration. Funds will go toward polling stations, curbside voting, public education, and PPE for poll workers.

State Elections Background

- **Voter Registration System:** Hybrid
- **Voting Type:** Paper Ballot; DREs with VVPAT
- **CISA Cybersecurity Services for Elections at the state level:**
 - Last Mile: 2020 Election Security Snapshot Poster delivered
- **CISA Cybersecurity Services for Elections at the local level:**

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- **CISA Physical Security Services for Elections:** CISA Regional Personnel work regularly with state and local election officials, providing a variety of physical security services. Due to the large number of services provided, they are not specifically listed here.

- **DHS Sponsored Security Clearances:**

(b) (7)(E)

- **Albert Sensor:** Yes. (b) (3) (B)
- **Local EI-ISAC Membership:** 2% of locals are members of EI-ISAC.
- **Polling Hours:** 7:00am – 8:00pm (CT)
- **Official Election Website:**
<https://elections.wi.gov/>

Risk Assessment and Indicators

- **Voter Registration:** Wisconsin has a hybrid voter registration system, meaning the WEC oversees elections and local election offices transmit data to the state in real time. Hybrid models are a combination of top-down and bottom-up models including risk advantages and vulnerabilities. The voter registration deadline is October 14, 2020 by mail or online. Voters may register in person after this date at the municipal clerk's office or at the polling place on Election Day.
- **Vote Casting:** Wisconsin uses paper ballots and DREs with VVPAT. Ensuring there is an auditable record provides election officials with the ability to verify that the outcomes of the election are correct. On Election Day, polling places will be open between 7:00am and 8:00pm (CT) across the state.
 - **Mail-in Ballots:** All Wisconsin voters are eligible to utilize mail-in voting without an excuse. The WEC mailed all voters a mail-in ballot application with an informational packet that encourages them to vote as early as possible, notifying that it may take as long as two weeks to deliver and return a ballot by mail. The mail-in ballot request deadline is October 29, 2020. Voted ballots must be returned by Election Day according to an early October federal appeals court decision. The previous deadline was that ballots had to be postmarked by Election Day and received by November 9, 2020.
- **Early Voting:** Wisconsin offers in-person absentee voting in municipal clerks' offices starting October 20, 2020, although hours and dates vary by locality.

Election Day Posture

- PSA (b) (6) will be located at WEC headquarters in downtown Madison, WI and connected virtually to Wisconsin Statewide Intelligence Center. CISA will be supporting all election operations virtually, rather than in person, based on current COVID-19 public health guidelines and guidance from CISA leadership.
- CSAs (b) (6) and (b) (6) will be monitoring remotely and standing by if additional local support is requested.
- CISA Region V Operations, Regional Director, and Regional PSA will be monitoring remotely (from Chicago) and standing by if support is requested.
- CISA Region V Operations will also participate in multiple chat rooms, dashboards, and collaboration sites during the voting period to monitor election activities, including the ESI dashboard that will be used to communicate directly with CISA Headquarters.