

Why we believe
**County canvass procedures disenfranchised
more than 1,000 Racine County voters
in the 2016 Presidential Election.**

Wisconsin Election Integrity, November 2017

In all elections, officials expect the number of total votes for the race at the top of the ballot (in this case, President) to be only slightly less than the total number of ballots cast.

Ballots that contain no votes for an office are called ‘undervotes.’ The proportion of ballots read as if they are blank is called the ‘undervote rate.’

A high undervote rate in the top race should be taken as a sign of a possible miscount, and results checked for accuracy before certification. For this reason, the Wisconsin Elections Commission instructs county canvasses: “For each reporting unit, check to see that there is not a large difference between the total number of voters and the number of votes cast for the office that would have garnered the largest number of votes at that election. For example, in a presidential election, the total number of voters should be compared to the total number of votes cast for the office of President of the United States. This is an important step in the process because a large drop off between these two numbers might signal a problem with the voting equipment.”

Miscounts cannot always be prevented, which is why statutes require review of election results before they are certified as final—after which they cannot be changed. Common causes of miscounts include machine malfunction, accidental mis-programming, and human error in recording or reporting the machine output. Fraud is not typically suspected with a high undervote rate, because it is so easy to notice if election officials are alert.

In the 2016 Presidential election, Racine County’s election results indicated suspiciously high undervote rates in nearly every ward. Statewide results following the recount indicated that 0.77% of the voters left their ballots blank in the presidential race. In contrast, Racine County election officials certified preliminary results showing an undervote rate more than twice that high (1.78%). In 14 wards, the undervote rate reached more than four times the statewide rate! These high undervote rates were obvious both for the original certification and for the recount. We believe that the Racine County Board of Canvassers should have noticed these high undervote rates and investigated before certifying the results. Responsible county canvass review could have prevented the disenfranchisement of hundreds—possibly more than 1,000—voters.

A detailed table follows, showing the ward-by-ward certified election results and the undervote rates.

Reporting Unit	Total Ballots ^a	Total Presidential votes after recount ^b	Ballots read as blank (Total ballots minus Total votes)	Undervote rate (Statewide average was 0.77%)	Expected undervotes, if at state average of 0.77% ^c	Excess number of ballots read as if they contained no vote for president ^c
TOWN OF BURLINGTON 1-7	2,102	2,064	36	1.71%	16.19	19.81
TOWN OF BURLINGTON 8-10	1,001	991	10	1.00%	7.71	2.29
TOWN OF BURLINGTON Ward 11	397	397	0	0.00%	3.06	0.00
TOWN OF DOVER 1-8	2,005	1,978	27	1.35%	15.44	11.56
TOWN OF NORWAY 1-11	4,827	4,805	22	0.46%	37.17	0.00
TOWN OF RAYMOND 1-6	2,452	2,441	11	0.45%	18.88	0.00
TOWN OF WATERFORD 1-10	3,836	3,751	85	2.22%	29.54	55.46
TOWN OF YORKVILLE 1-5	1,833	1,816	17	0.93%	14.11	2.89
VILL. OF CALEDONIA 1-2	1,883	1,881	2	0.11%	14.50	0.00
VILL. OF CALEDONIA 3-5	2,460	2,405	55	2.24%	18.94	36.06
VILL. OF CALEDONIA 6-8	2,153	2,132	21	0.98%	16.58	4.42
VILL. OF CALEDONIA 9-10,12-13	2,984	2,966	18	0.60%	22.98	0.00
VILL. OF CALEDONIA 11,14-15,17	2,977	2,926	51	1.71%	22.92	28.08
VILL. OF CALEDONIA 16,18-19	1,940	1,925	15	0.77%	14.94	0.06
VILL. OF CALEDONIA Ward 20	549	540	9	1.64%	4.23	4.77
VILL. OF ELMWOOD PARK Ward 1	332	313	19	5.72%	2.56	16.44
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 1,17,20	1,529	1,517	12	0.78%	11.77	0.23
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 2-4,11	2,138	2,095	43	2.01%	16.46	26.54
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT, 5	813	802	11	1.35%	6.26	4.74
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 6-8	2,029	1,963	66	3.25%	15.62	50.38
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 9,13-14	2,400	2,368	32	1.33%	18.48	13.52
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 10,12,15,16	3,135	3,062	73	2.33%	24.14	48.86
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 18,23	785	775	10	1.27%	6.04	3.96
VILL. OF MT PLEASANT 19,21-22	2,436	2,391	45	1.85%	18.76	26.24
VILL. OF NORTH BAY Ward 1	158 ^a	154	4	2.53%	1.22	2.78
VILL. OF ROCHESTER Ward 1-6	2,256	2,236	20	0.89%	17.37	2.63
VILL. OF STURTEVANT 1-8	2,725	2,705	20	0.73%	20.98	0.00
VILL. OF UNION GROVE 1-7	2,428	2,383	45	1.85%	18.70	26.30
VILL. OF WATERFORD Ward 1-7	2,950	2,921	29	0.98%	22.72	6.29
VILL. OF WIND POINT 1-3	1,212	1,194	18	1.49%	9.33	8.67
CITY OF BURLINGTON 1-4	2,598	2,553	45	1.73%	20.00	25.00
CITY OF BURLINGTON 5-8	2,756 ^a	2,704	52	1.89%	21.22	30.78
CITY OF RACINE Ward 1	782	751	31	3.96%	6.02	24.98
CITY OF RACINE Ward 2	729	719	10	1.37%	5.61	4.39
CITY OF RACINE Ward 3	1,291	1262	29	2.25%	9.94	19.06
CITY OF RACINE Ward 4	574	562	12	2.09%	4.42	7.58
CITY OF RACINE Ward 5	487	468	19	3.90%	3.75	15.25
CITY OF RACINE Ward 6	596	586	10	1.68%	4.59	5.41
CITY OF RACINE Ward 7	449	436	13	2.90%	3.46	9.54
CITY OF RACINE Ward 8	617	608	9	1.46%	4.75	4.25
CITY OF RACINE Ward 9	923	904	19	2.06%	7.11	11.89
CITY OF RACINE Ward 10	881	851	30	3.41%	6.78	23.22
CITY OF RACINE Ward 11	798	779	19	2.38%	6.14	12.86
CITY OF RACINE Ward 12	785	766	19	2.42%	6.04	12.96
CITY OF RACINE Ward 13	989	954	35	3.54%	7.62	27.38
CITY OF RACINE Ward 14	1,153	1,127	26	2.25%	8.88	17.12
CITY OF RACINE Ward 15	839	824	15	1.79%	6.46	8.54
CITY OF RACINE Ward 16	1,292	1,267	25	1.93%	9.95	15.05
CITY OF RACINE Ward 17	451	441	10	2.22%	3.47	6.53
CITY OF RACINE Ward 18	396	387	9	2.27%	3.05	5.95
CITY OF RACINE Ward 19	342	339	3	0.88%	2.63	0.37
CITY OF RACINE Ward 20	1,400	1,364	36	2.57%	10.78	25.22
CITY OF RACINE Ward 21	928	913	15	1.62%	7.15	7.85
CITY OF RACINE Ward 22	1,424 ^a	1,372	52	3.65%	10.96	41.04
CITY OF RACINE Ward 23	1,173	1,134	39	3.32%	9.03	29.97

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CITY OF RACINE Ward 24	1,069	1,050	19	1.78%	8.23	10.77
CITY OF RACINE Ward 25	1,000	961	39	3.90%	7.70	31.30
CITY OF RACINE Ward 26	171 ^a	157	14	8.19%	1.32	12.68
CITY OF RACINE Ward 27	1,506	1,481	25	1.66%	11.60	13.40
CITY OF RACINE Ward 28	1,236	1,203	33	2.67%	9.52	23.48
CITY OF RACINE Ward 29	1,152	1,117	35	3.04%	8.87	26.13
CITY OF RACINE Ward 30	889	869	20	2.25%	6.85	13.15
CITY OF RACINE Ward 31	584 ^a	562	22	3.77%	4.50	17.50
CITY OF RACINE Ward 32	703	690	13	1.85%	5.41	7.59
CITY OF RACINE Ward 33	821	802	19	2.31%	6.32	12.68
CITY OF RACINE Ward 34	929	911	18	1.94%	7.15	10.85
CITY OF RACINE Ward 35	877 ^a	837	40	4.56%	6.75	33.25
CITY OF RACINE Ward 36	615	596	19	3.09%	4.74	14.26
County	96,930	95,206 ^b	1,724	1.78%	746.36 ^c	1,022.20 ^c

a – Except where indicated with this footnote, these figures are from the Wisconsin Election Commission’s report on Form EL-190F: Election Voting and Registration Statistics Report for the 2016 General Election. The EL-190-F reports are submitted by municipalities, with varying degrees of care for accuracy. Outliers were checked against the recount minutes, which also indicated the number of ballots in each reporting unit. When the two numbers did not agree, we selected the one that was closest to the certified total number of presidential votes. Total-ballot figures marked with this footnote came from the recount minutes, not the EL-190F reports.

b – These figures have been adjusted to include an estimate of the number of write-in votes for unregistered candidates (e.g., Aaron Rodgers, Bernie Sanders). Wisconsin law does not require election officials to count protest votes, although most do as a public service. The information is useful for quality-assurance purposes and of course because voters want to have their votes counted, even those who cast protest votes. Election clerks who want to do no more than the minimum required of them, however, do not report the total number of protest votes. The Racine County Clerk is among these. To make Racine’s total presidential votes comparable to the more accurate totals from counties that count and report the number of protest votes, we increased the total votes by 0.99%, the proportion of protest votes reported following the recount, from those counties that counted and reported protest votes. This resulted in fractional votes (e.g., 595.67 votes), which were used in the analysis but are rounded to whole votes on this table.

c – Fractional votes are, of course, impossible, but these are estimates calculated from a rate (i.e., the 0.77% undervote rate in the rest of the state.) We left the fractional votes in for these ‘conclusion’ columns for precision and as a reminder that these are estimates, not counts of actual votes.