

# Regulatory limits for 2026

Vanguard Strategic Retirement Consulting annual reference to important limits and dates\*

Important limits	2024	2025	2026
Internal Revenue Code (IRC) §402(g) limit on 401(k), 403(b), and 457 elective deferrals**	\$23,000	\$23,500	\$24,500
Catch-up contribution limit for employees ages 50 and older in 401(k), 403(b), and 457 plans**	\$7,500	\$7,500	\$8,000
Catch-up contribution limit for those attaining ages 60, 61, 62, or 63**	NA	\$11,250	\$11,250
Annual limit on compensation	\$345,000	\$350,000	\$360,000
Highly compensated employee (HCE) threshold***	\$155,000	\$160,000	\$160,000
Limit on annual additions to a defined contribution plan	\$69,000	\$70,000	\$72,000
Limit on annual benefit payments under a defined benefit plan	\$275,000	\$280,000	\$290,000
Social Security wage base	\$168,600	\$176,100	\$184,500
Eligible distribution limit for victims of domestic abuse under §72(t)(2)(K)(ii)(I)	\$10,000	\$10,300	\$10,500
Roth catch-up FICA wage threshold under §414(v)(7)(A) FICA wage limit earned in prior year	NA	NA	\$150,000

Return of excess amounts	Description	Due date****
<b>Excess deferral</b> IRC §402(g)	<b>Deferrals in excess of \$24,500 (2026)</b> If distributed by April 15 following the year the excess is realized, the excess deferral is included in income in the year of deferral. The corresponding earnings are included in income in the year of distribution. If not distributed by April 15, corrective distribution may be made if certain conditions are satisfied. Excess deferrals will be taxed twice—once in the year of deferral and once in the year of distribution. If excess is in one or more plans of the same employer, a disqualification condition exists.	<b>April 15</b>
<b>Excess contribution</b> IRC §401(k)	<b>401(k) contributions that fail Actual Deferral Percentage (ADP) test</b> Return of excess contributions and earnings that are taxable in the year of distribution. If returned more than 2½ months after the end of the plan year, employers are subject to a 10% excise tax on the refund. Excess contributions must be corrected by the end of the next plan year or a disqualification condition exists.	<b>March 15</b> for calendar-year plans <b>June 30</b> for calendar-year plans with an eligible automatic contribution arrangement
<b>Excess aggregate contribution</b> IRC §401(m)	<b>401(m) contributions that fail Actual Contribution Percentage (ACP) test</b> Return of excess aggregate contributions and earnings are taxable in the year of distribution. If returned more than 2½ months after the end of the plan year, employers are subject to a 10% excise tax on the refund. Excess aggregate contributions must be corrected by the end of the next plan year or a disqualification condition exists.	<b>March 15</b> for calendar-year plans <b>June 30</b> for calendar-year plans with an eligible automatic contribution arrangement
<b>Excess annual addition</b> IRC §415(c)	<b>Amounts in excess of \$72,000 (2026)</b> A disqualification condition exists if an excess annual addition is made. However, excess annual additions may be corrected in accordance with the procedures in the Employee Plans Compliance Resolution System.	<b>December 31</b> for plans with calendar-year limitation year

Important requirements	Description	Due date****
<b>Deposit of employee contributions</b>	Employee contributions must be deposited in a trust as early as the contributions can be reasonably segregated from the employer's assets, but no later than the 15th business day of the month following the month in which the participant contributions are withheld. For small plans (fewer than 100 participants) there is a seven-business-day safe harbor to deposit participant contributions.	The earliest that the contributions can be reasonably segregated from the employer's assets
<b>Form 5500</b> (including all required schedules)	Due at the end of the seventh month after the end of the plan year. 1. A 2½-month extension can be obtained automatically by filing Form 5558 before the due date for Form 5500. An automatic extension may be granted until the due date of the employer's federal tax return if certain requirements are met. 2. For a short plan year, file the form and applicable schedules by the last day of the seventh month after the short plan year ends.	<b>July 31</b> for calendar-year plans (October 15 with an extension)
<b>Summary annual report</b>	Summary of Form 5500 that includes a basic financial statement of the plan. Due two months after Form 5500 is due, including extensions.	<b>September 30</b> for calendar-year plans (unless extended)
<b>Summary plan description</b>	Easily understood plan description required to be delivered to all participants and beneficiaries.	Within 90 days after an individual becomes a participant or beneficiary Updated once every five years to reflect plan amendments
<b>Summary of material modification</b>	Description of changes to the information contained in the summary plan description, as well as any material modification to the plan.	Within 210 days after the end of the plan year in which the change was effective

\* This is a reference for the most frequently asked questions regarding dates and limits. This does not represent all important dates and limits. As always, pension limits are subject to change in the event new pension legislation is enacted.

\*\* The 2026 plan limits for SIMPLE 401(k)/IRA plans are \$17,000 for deferrals and \$4,000 for catch-up contributions. For 2026, a higher catch-up contribution limit is \$5,250 for participants ages 60-63.

\*\*\* For the 2026 plan year, an employee who earns more than \$160,000 in 2025 is an HCE. For the 2027 plan year, an employee who earns more than \$160,000 in 2026 is an HCE.

\*\*\*\* Historically, when the date falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or legal holiday, the IRS has not extended the deadline for return of excess amounts, but has extended the deadline for deductible contributions, as well as filing returns/reports.