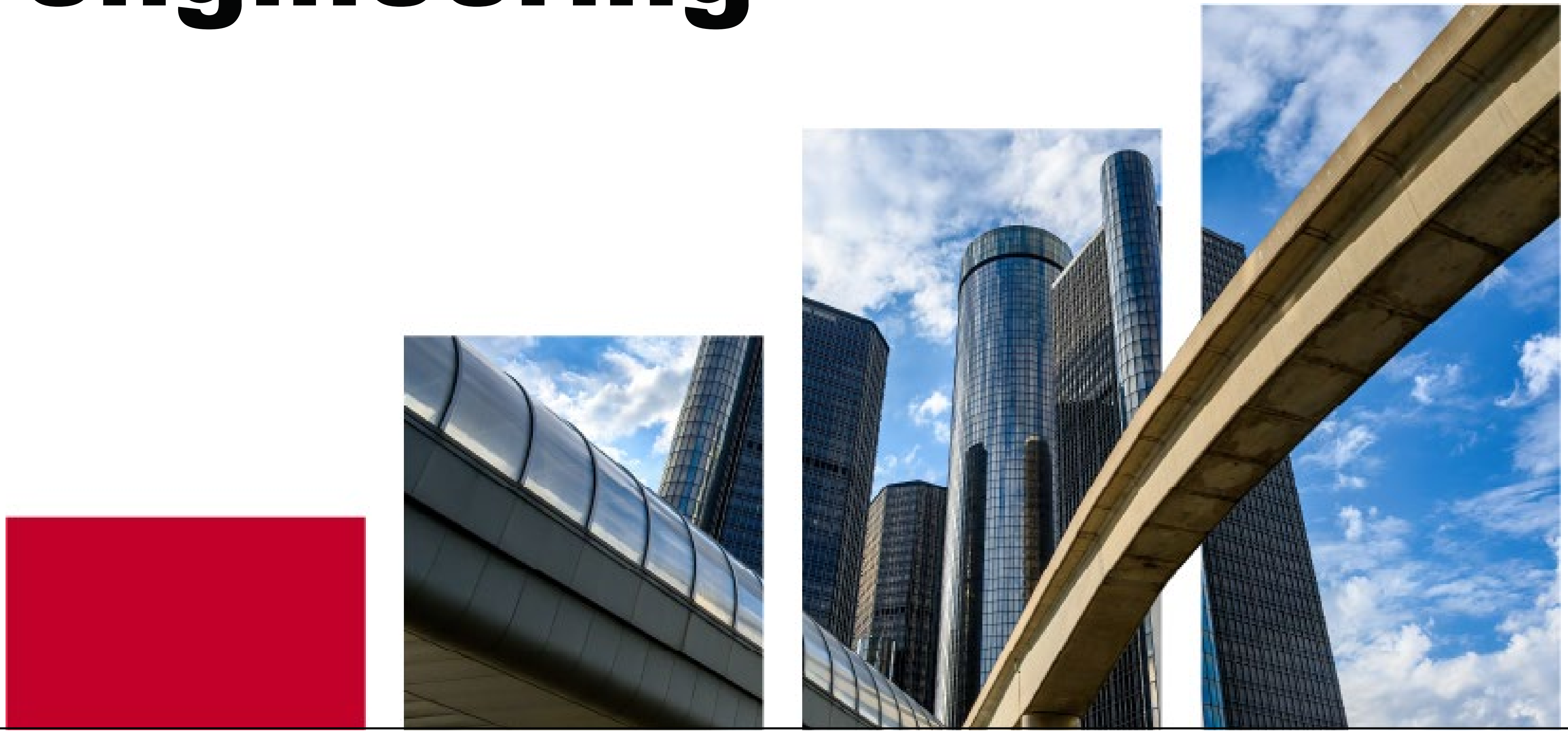
Vanguard | VIEWPOINTS

Custom DC plan benchmarks

Architecture and engineering



Strategic Retirement Consulting | June 2026

Key highlights

The following report contains insights into full-service plans at Vanguard and compares them with our findings from *How America Saves 2026*.

- **Automatic enrollment:** 65% of architecture and engineering firms use an automatic enrollment plan design, compared with the Vanguard benchmark of 61% (all plans).
- **Automatic enrollment default rates/annual increase:** 80% of architecture and engineering firms with auto enrollment plans have an initial default rate of 4% or higher, above the Vanguard benchmark (62%).
- **Participation rates:** The average architecture and engineering plan participation is 90%, compared with the Vanguard benchmark of 86%.
- **Saving rates:** Participants in the architecture and engineering industry have an average deferral rate of 8.1% and total saving rate of 12.4%. Both numbers are above the Vanguard benchmark (7.6% and 12.1%, respectively).
- **Professionally managed allocations:** 51% of participants in the architecture and engineering industry have a professionally managed allocation (pure target-date funds [TDFs], pure balanced funds, or advised), below the Vanguard benchmark of 69%.
- **Loans and hardship withdrawals:** Participants in architecture and engineering firms tend to have lower loan usage and are less likely to take hardship withdrawals when compared with other participants.

Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Benchmark population

	Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Number of plans	21	25	46	1,316
Number of participants	3,790	84,775	88,565	4,611,469
Average number of participants	180	3,391	1,925	3,504
Median number of participants	126	1,523	557	616
Amount of assets	$1.1B	$17.1B	$18.2B	$774.7B
Average assets	$52.4M	$682.3M	$394.8M	$588.7M
Median assets	$53.3M	$330.6M	$111.2M	$104.1M
Average participant balances	$250,453	$208,678	$210,301	$167,970
Median participant balances	$73,165	$59,953	$60,452	$44,115

Insights

- Plans within the architecture and engineering industry tend to have total plan assets that are in line with the typical Vanguard plan.
- Participant balances in the architecture and engineering industry are slightly higher than the Vanguard benchmark.

Architectural, engineering, and related services is defined by (North American Industry Classification System) NAICS code 5413.

Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Automatic enrollment options*

		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Automatic enrollment*	Number of plans	8	22	30	742
	Percentage of plans	38%	88%	65%	61%
Default automatic enrollment rate	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%
	3%	13%	23%	20%	32%
	4%	50%	5%	17%	14%
	5%	25%	23%	23%	17%
	6%+	13%	50%	40%	31%
Default automatic increase rate	1%	62%	71%	67%	69%
	2%	8%	0%	3%	2%
	Voluntary election	23%	24%	23%	23%
	Service feature not offered	8%	6%	7%	6%
Default automatic increase cap	<6%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	6%–9%	0%	0%	0%	13%
	10%–14%	83%	33%	48%	49%
	15%–19%	0%	60%	43%	26%
	20%+	17%	7%	10%	6%
	No cap	0%	0%	0%	5%
Default fund	Target-date fund	100%	100%	100%	98%
	Other balanced fund	0%	0%	0%	1%
	Money market or stable value fund	0%	0%	0%	1%

* Limited to plans using Vanguard's automatic enrollment service.
Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Insights

- Architecture and engineering firms have slightly higher usage of automatic enrollment.
- Firms using automatic enrollment in the architecture and engineering industry are more likely to have higher default saving rates.

Employer contributions

		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Types of employer contributions	Matching only	58%	50%	53%	48%
	Nonmatching only	25%	5%	13%	11%
	Both matching and nonmatching	8%	45%	31%	37%
	No employer contribution	8%	0%	3%	4%
Employer matching contributions (maximum value of employer match as a % of pay)	<2%	11%	5%	7%	4%
	2.00%–2.99%	11%	0%	4%	7%
	3.00%–3.99%	33%	42%	39%	26%
	4.00%–4.99%	22%	26%	25%	31%
	5.00%–5.99%	0%	21%	14%	13%
	6.00%–6.99%	11%	0%	4%	13%
	7.00%+	11%	5%	7%	6%
	Average match	5.8%	3.8%	4.5%	4.7%
	Median match	3.8%	4.0%	3.9%	4.0%
Employer nonmatching contributions (maximum value of employer nonmatch as a % of pay)	<2%	0%	13%	8%	9%
	2.00%–2.99%	0%	25%	17%	11%
	3.00%–3.99%	25%	38%	33%	19%
	4.00%–4.99%	50%	13%	25%	14%
	5.00%–5.99%	0%	0%	0%	14%
	6.00%–6.99%	0%	0%	0%	12%
	7.00%+	25%	13%	17%	21%
	Average employer nonmatch	8.4%	3.9%	5.4%	5.0%
	Median employer nonmatch	4.5%	3.1%	3.1%	4.2%

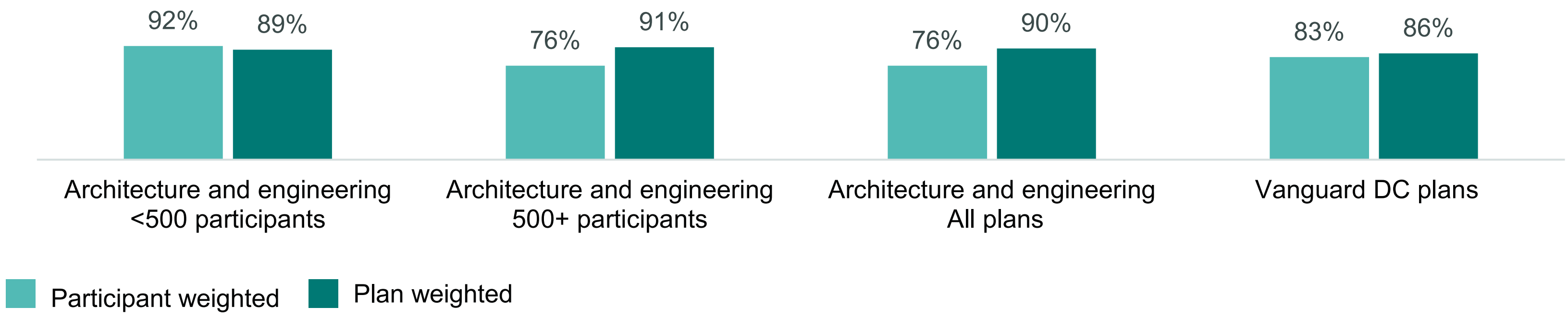
Insights

- Architecture and engineering firms offer similar types of employer contributions when compared with the Vanguard benchmark.
- Plans within the architecture and engineering industry have slightly lower average maximum employer match values.

Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard active plans with nondiscrimination testing completed during the past two years. Data as of December 31, 2025.

Participation and savings

Percentage of employees participating



		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Participant deferral rates (employee pre-tax and Roth)	Average	9.0%	8.0%	8.1%	7.6%
	Median	7.8%	6.7%	6.7%	6.6%
Total saving rates (employee and employer contributions)	Average	12.8%	12.4%	12.4%	12.1%
	Median	11.4%	11.6%	11.6%	11.6%
Elected deferral rate changes	No change	52%	53%	53%	45%
	One-step increase	22%	22%	22%	31%
	Increase	16%	16%	16%	14%
	Decrease	7%	8%	8%	8%
	To zero	2%	1%	1%	2%

Insights

- Architecture and engineering firms have participation rates that are higher than the Vanguard benchmark.
- Participants in the architecture and engineering industry have higher deferral rates and total saving rates when compared with the Vanguard benchmark.

Bars in chart may not align precisely with percentages because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Roth and after-tax availability and use

		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Roth	Percentage of plans offering Roth (among plans with elective deferrals)	100%	100%	100%	98%
	Percentage of plan assets invested in Roth*	6%	6%	6%	6%
	Percentage of participants making Roth contributions (past 12 months)**	30%	25%	26%	18%
After-tax	Percentage of plans offering after-tax	10%	36%	24%	24%
	Percentage of participants making after-tax contributions	6%	51%	49%	40%
Roth in-plan conversions	Percentage of plans offering Roth in-plan conversions	57%	64%	61%	36%
	Percentage of participants using Roth in-plan conversions	0%	1%	1%	4%

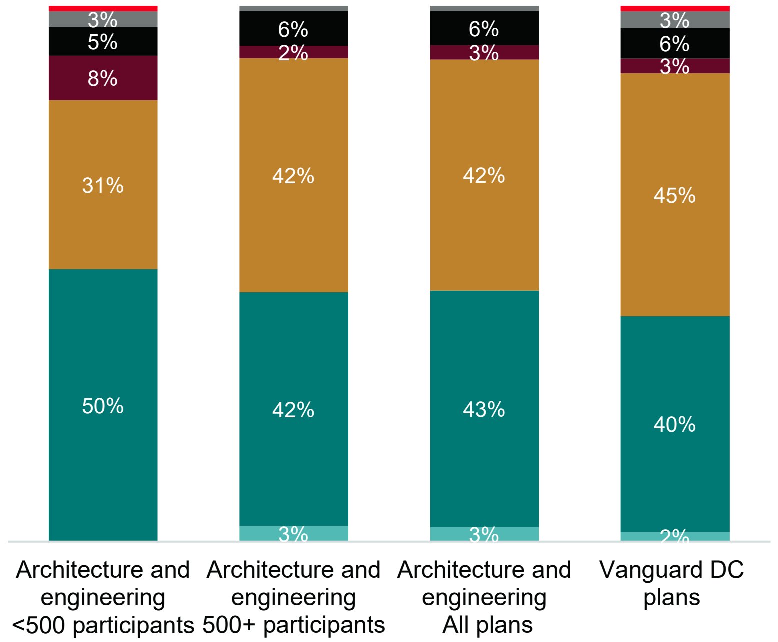
Insights

- All architecture and engineering firms offer Roth contributions. Roth usage tends to be higher than the Vanguard benchmark.

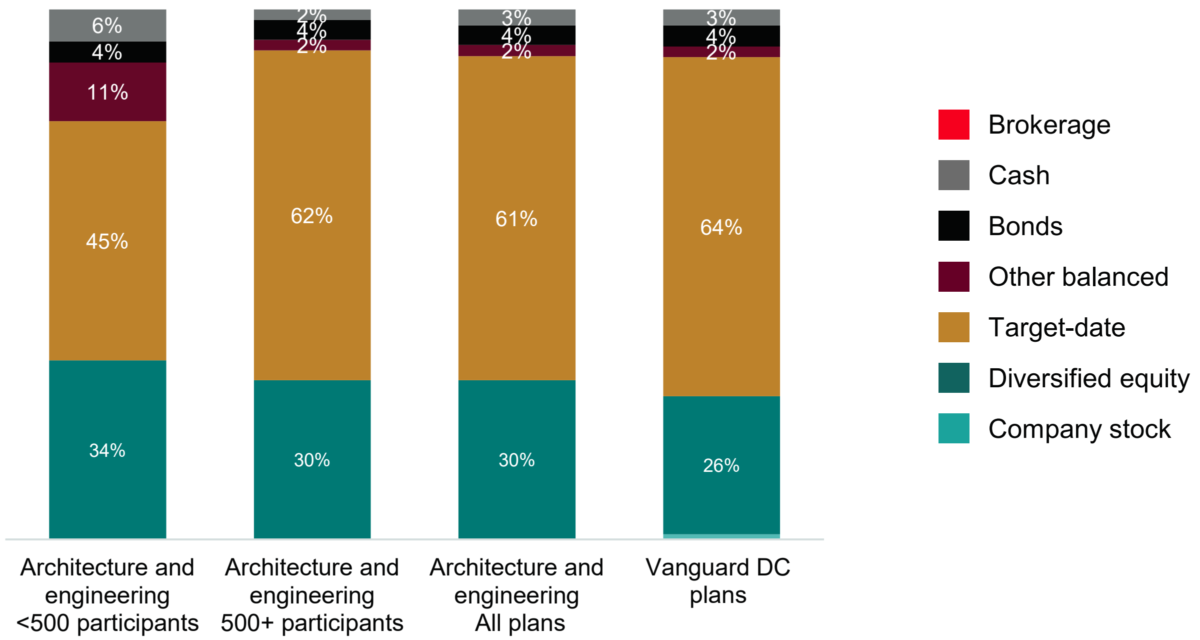
* Among plans offering Roth.
** Among participants making elective deferrals.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Asset and contribution allocations

Asset allocation



Contribution allocation

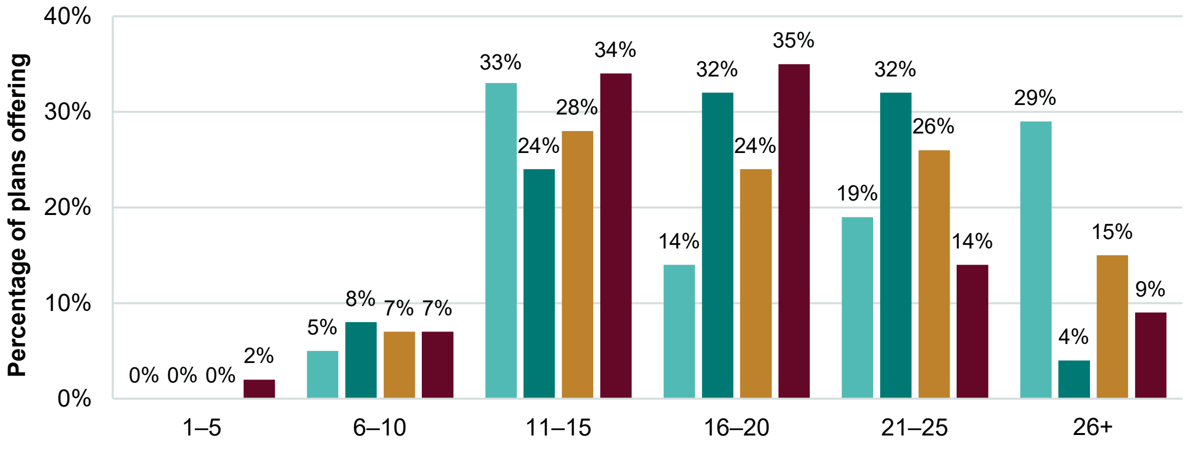


	Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Percentage of asset allocation in equities*	78%	76%	76%	76%
Percentage of contribution allocation in equities*	76%	79%	78%	80%

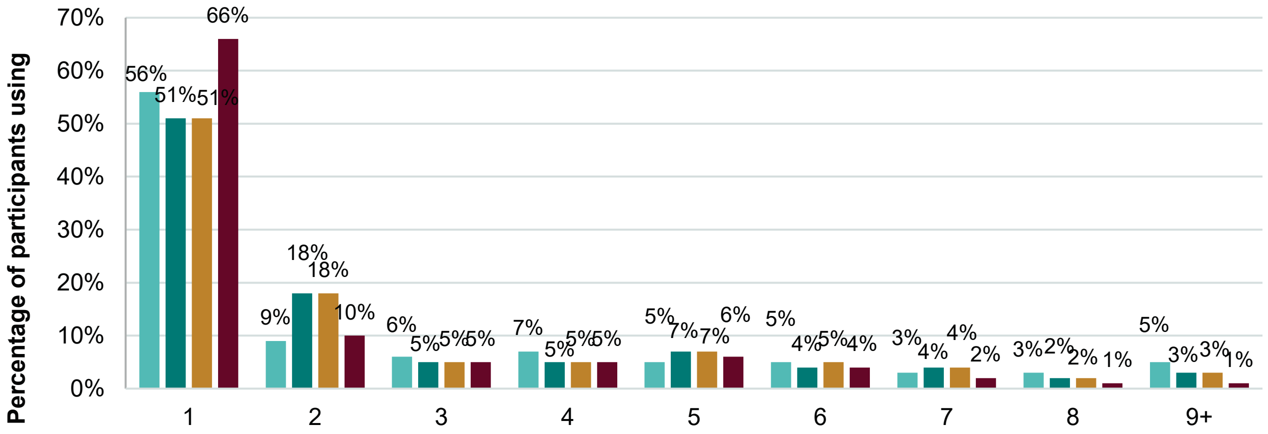
* Equities include company stock, diversified equity, and the equity portion of balanced funds.
Bars in chart may not align precisely with percentages because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Number of fund options offered and used

Funds offered per plan *(all life-cycle funds counted as one)*



Funds used per participant



	Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Average funds offered	21.2	18.1	19.5	17.7
Median funds offered	20	18	19	16
Average funds used	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.2
Median funds used	1	1	1	1

Bars in chart may not align precisely with percentages because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Types of investment options offered and used*

	Architecture and engineering <500 participants		Architecture and engineering 500+ participants		Architecture and engineering All plans		Vanguard DC plans	
	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*
Cash	**100%**	**14%**	**100%**	**14%**	**100%**	**14%**	**98%**	**9%**
Money market	71%	11%	72%	4%	72%	4%	79%	6%
Stable value/GIC	62%	14%	92%	11%	78%	11%	67%	8%
Bond funds	**100%**	**18%**	**100%**	**18%**	**100%**	**18%**	**98%**	**16%**
Active	86%	14%	92%	6%	89%	6%	81%	7%
Index	90%	11%	96%	14%	93%	14%	91%	13%
Inflation-protected securities	43%	6%	52%	4%	48%	4%	34%	2%
Multisector	5%	0%	16%	2%	11%	2%	8%	1%
High-yield	29%	8%	20%	2%	24%	3%	18%	3%
International	10%	1%	20%	4%	15%	4%	20%	5%
Emerging markets	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Balanced funds	**100%**	**80%**	**100%**	**84%**	**100%**	**83%**	**99%**	**87%**
Traditional balanced	90%	23%	56%	9%	72%	10%	59%	11%
Target-risk	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	8%
Target-date	90%	69%	100%	81%	96%	80%	96%	84%

* Among participants offered the option.
Percentages should not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Types of investment options offered and used* (continued)

	Architecture and engineering <500 participants		Architecture and engineering 500+ participants		Architecture and engineering All plans		Vanguard DC plans	
	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*	Percentage of plans offering	Percentage of participants using*
Equity funds	**100%**	**41%**	**100%**	**36%**	**100%**	**36%**	**99%**	**29%**
Domestic equity funds	**100%**	**40%**	**100%**	**35%**	**100%**	**35%**	**99%**	**28%**
Large-cap index	100%	30%	100%	26%	100%	26%	98%	23%
Large-cap active	100%	23%	92%	17%	96%	17%	88%	14%
Large-cap value	100%	15%	88%	11%	93%	11%	86%	7%
Large-cap growth	95%	17%	92%	14%	93%	14%	90%	11%
Large-cap blend	100%	29%	100%	26%	100%	26%	98%	23%
Mid-cap index	90%	12%	96%	18%	93%	18%	84%	12%
Mid-cap active	62%	13%	76%	8%	70%	8%	52%	5%
Small-cap index	81%	11%	60%	15%	70%	15%	61%	11%
Small-cap active	81%	10%	76%	8%	78%	8%	64%	6%
Socially responsible	24%	4%	28%	2%	26%	2%	17%	7%
International equity funds	**100%**	**20%**	**100%**	**20%**	**100%**	**20%**	**97%**	**18%**
Index international	86%	11%	92%	10%	89%	11%	84%	14%
Active international	100%	15%	96%	12%	98%	12%	85%	7%
Emerging markets	38%	8%	32%	4%	35%	5%	33%	9%
Global equity funds	**33%**	**12%**	**8%**	**5%**	**20%**	**8%**	**14%**	**2%**
Sector funds	**52%**	**10%**	**44%**	**7%**	**48%**	**7%**	**36%**	**6%**
Company stock	**5%**	**3%**	**8%**	**19%**	**7%**	**19%**	**8%**	**20%**
Self-directed brokerage	**14%**	**6%**	**28%**	**1%**	**22%**	**1%**	**23%**	**1%**

* Among participants offered the option.
Percentages should not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Professionally managed allocations offered and used

		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Target-date funds	Percentage of plans offering*	90%	100%	96%	96%
	Percentage of participants using	74%	82%	81%	84%
	Percentage of participant assets	59%	61%	61%	66%
Percentage of participants owning	One target-date fund only	73%	58%	58%	73%
	One target-date fund plus other funds	21%	35%	35%	22%
	Two or more target-date funds only	3%	2%	2%	2%
	Two or more target-date funds plus other funds	4%	5%	5%	3%
	Percentage of all participants with a pure TDF strategy	47%	47%	47%	61%
Advice	Percentage of plans offering*	33%	80%	59%	46%
	Percentage of all participants using	3%	4%	4%	7%
	Percentage of participants using**	5%	7%	7%	9%
Other balanced funds	Percentage of plans offering*	90%	56%	72%	61%
	Percentage of all participants using	3%	0%	0%	1%
	Percentage of participants using***	4%	0%	0%	1%
All participants with a professionally managed allocation		53%	51%	51%	69%

Insights

- Architecture and engineering firms are more likely to offer advice, compared with other plans.
- Participants within the architecture and engineering industry are less likely to be pure TDF investors.

* Among plans offering target-date, advice, and other balanced funds options.
** Among participants in plans offering managed account options.
*** Among participants in plans offering traditional balanced or target risk options.
Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Participant loans and in-service withdrawals

		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Outstanding loans*	Percentage of participants with outstanding loans	6%	9%	9%	13%
	Percentage of account balance in loans	6%	7%	7%	8%
	Average loan balance	$13,853	$15,286	$15,254	$11,034
Percentage of active participants with outstanding loans**	No loans	94%	91%	91%	87%
	One loan	5%	8%	8%	11%
	Two loans	1%	1%	1%	2%
	Three+ loans	0%	0%	0%	0%
Percentage of participants taking a hardship withdrawal		1%	2%	2%	6%
Average hardship withdrawal		$5,166	$8,316	$8,266	$5,200
Median hardship withdrawal		$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$1,900
Reasons for hardship withdrawals	Avoid foreclosure and eviction	29%	34%	34%	36%
	Medical expenses	45%	27%	27%	31%
	Home purchase	13%	9%	9%	5%
	Home repair	6%	8%	8%	11%
	Tuition payment	0%	18%	18%	13%
	Other	6%	4%	4%	4%

* Among plans allowing loans.
** Among participants allowed in-service withdrawals.
Percentages should not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Insights

- Architecture and engineering firms tend to have lower loan usage, but the average loan balance is higher than the Vanguard benchmark.
- Participants within the architecture and engineering industry are less likely to take hardship withdrawals when compared with other participants.

Distribution decisions

		Architecture and engineering <500 participants	Architecture and engineering 500+ participants	Architecture and engineering All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Percentage of participants choosing	Remain in plan	57%	54%	54%	46%
	Rollover	22%	24%	24%	25%
	Installment payments	1%	1%	1%	0%
	Participants preserving assets	80%	78%	78%	71%
	Cash lump sum	20%	21%	21%	28%
	Rollover and cash	0%	1%	1%	1%
Percentage of assets available for distribution	Remain in plan	57%	60%	60%	58%
	Rollover	40%	35%	36%	36%
	Installment payments	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Assets preserved for retirement	97%	96%	96%	94%
	Cash lump sum	2%	3%	3%	5%
	Rollover and cash	1%	1%	1%	1%

Insights

- Participants in the architecture and engineering industry who left their employer in 2025 were more likely to preserve their assets for retirement when compared with the Vanguard benchmark.

Percentages should not equal 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Important information