Vanguard | VIEWPOINTS

Custom DC plan benchmarks

Retail trade

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:** 51% of retail trade firms use an automatic enrollment plan design, compared with the Vanguard benchmark of 61% (all plans).
- **Automatic enrollment default rates/annual increase:** 45% of retail trade firms with automatic enrollment plans have an initial default rate of 4% or higher, below the Vanguard benchmark (62%).
- **Participation rates:** The average plan participation rate in the retail trade industry is 68%, compared with the Vanguard benchmark of 86%.
- **Saving rates:** Participants in the retail trade industry have an average deferral rate of 7.1% and total saving rate of 10.8%. Both numbers are below the Vanguard benchmark (7.6% and 12.1%, respectively).
- **Professionally managed allocations:** 66% of participants in the retail trade industry have a professionally managed (pure target-date funds [TDFs], pure balanced funds, or advised), slightly below the Vanguard benchmark of 69%.
- **Loans and hardship withdrawals:** Participants in retail trade firms tend to have higher loan and hardship withdrawal usage when compared with other participants.

Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Benchmark population

	Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Number of plans	19	17	36	1,316
Number of participants	9,229	370,683	379,912	4,611,469
Average number of participants	486	21,805	10,553	3,504
Median number of participants	488	5,739	886	616
Amount of assets	$1.2B	$44.1B	$45.4B	$774.7B
Average assets	$65.0M	$2.6B	$1.3B	$588.7M
Median assets	$47.5M	$502.0M	$131.7M	$104.1M
Average participant balances	$117,233	$102,358	$102,848	$167,970
Median participant balances	$30,659	$20,967	$21,266	$44,115

Insights

- Plans within the retail trade industry tend to have total plan assets that are greater than the typical Vanguard plan.
- Participant balances in the retail trade industry are lower than the Vanguard benchmark.

The retail trade industry is defined by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code 44-45.

Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Automatic enrollment options*

		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Automatic enrollment*	Number of plans	9	9	18	742
	Percentage of plans	50%	53%	51%	61%
Default automatic enrollment rate	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	2%	0%	0%	0%	4%
	3%	44%	67%	56%	32%
	4%	0%	22%	11%	14%
	5%	11%	0%	6%	17%
	6%+	44%	11%	28%	31%
Default automatic increase rate	1%	70%	100%	83%	69%
	2%	10%	0%	6%	2%
	Voluntary election	20%	0%	11%	23%
	Service feature not offered	0%	0%	0%	6%
Default automatic increase cap	<6%	0%	0%	0%	2%
	6%–9%	14%	33%	25%	13%
	10%–14%	29%	22%	25%	49%
	15%–19%	14%	22%	19%	26%
	20%+	29%	11%	19%	6%
	No cap	14%	11%	13%	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

- Retail trade firms have lower usage of automatic enrollment.
- Insurance firms using automatic enrollment are less likely to have higher default saving rates.

Employer contributions

		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Types of employer contributions	Matching only	58%	86%	73%	48%
	Nonmatching only	8%	0%	4%	11%
	Both matching and nonmatching	25%	14%	19%	37%
	No employer contribution	8%	0%	4%	4%
Employer matching contributions (maximum value of employer match as a % of pay)	<2%	11%	8%	9%	4%
	2.00%–2.99%	11%	0%	5%	7%
	3.00%–3.99%	11%	46%	32%	26%
	4.00%–4.99%	33%	23%	27%	31%
	5.00%–5.99%	22%	23%	23%	13%
	6.00%–6.99%	11%	0%	5%	13%
	7.00%+	0%	0%	0%	6%
	Average match	3.8%	3.7%	3.7%	4.7%
	Median match	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%
Employer nonmatching contributions (maximum value of employer nonmatch as a % of pay)	<2%	33%	0%	20%	9%
	2.00%–2.99%	0%	50%	20%	11%
	3.00%–3.99%	33%	50%	40%	19%
	4.00%–4.99%	0%	0%	0%	14%
	5.00%–5.99%	0%	0%	0%	14%
	6.00%–6.99%	0%	0%	0%	12%
	7.00%+	33%	0%	20%	21%
	Average employer nonmatch	4.5%	3.5%	4.1%	5.0%
	Median employer nonmatch	3.4%	3.5%	3.4%	4.2%

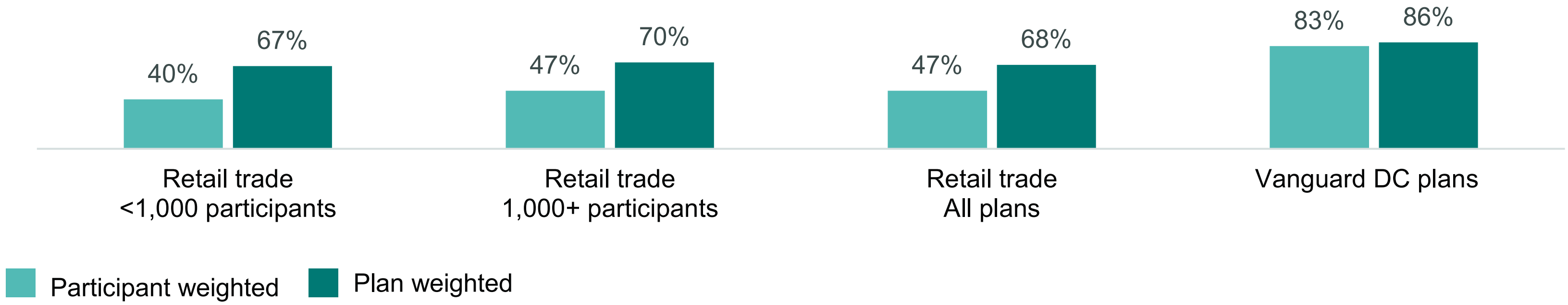
Percentages may not total 100% because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard active plans with nondiscrimination testing completed during the past two years. Data as of December 31, 2025.

Insights

- Retail trade firms are most likely to offer an employer matching contribution.
- Plans within the retail trade industry have lower average maximum employer match values and have lower employer nonmatching contributions when compared with the Vanguard benchmark.

Participation and savings

Percentage of employees participating



		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Participant deferral rates (employee pre-tax and Roth)	Average	7.8%	7.1%	7.1%	7.6%
	Median	6.7%	5.9%	6.0%	6.6%
Total saving rates (employee and employer contributions)	Average	11.5%	10.8%	10.8%	12.1%
	Median	11.4%	10.1%	10.1%	11.6%
Elected deferral rate changes	No change	51%	42%	43%	45%
	One-step increase	29%	37%	37%	31%
	Increase	11%	11%	11%	14%
	Decrease	7%	9%	9%	8%
	To zero	2%	1%	1%	2%

Insights

- Retail trade firms have participation rates that are lower than the Vanguard benchmark.
- Participants in the retail trade industry have lower deferral rates and total saving rates when compared to 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

		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade 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*	4%	4%	4%	6%
	Percentage of participants making Roth contributions (past 12 months)**	17%	12%	12%	18%
After-tax	Percentage of plans offering after-tax	17%	18%	17%	24%
	Percentage of participants making after-tax contributions	18%	4%	5%	40%
Roth in-plan conversions	Percentage of plans offering Roth in-plan conversions	47%	29%	39%	36%
	Percentage of participants using Roth in-plan conversions	0%	0%	0%	4%

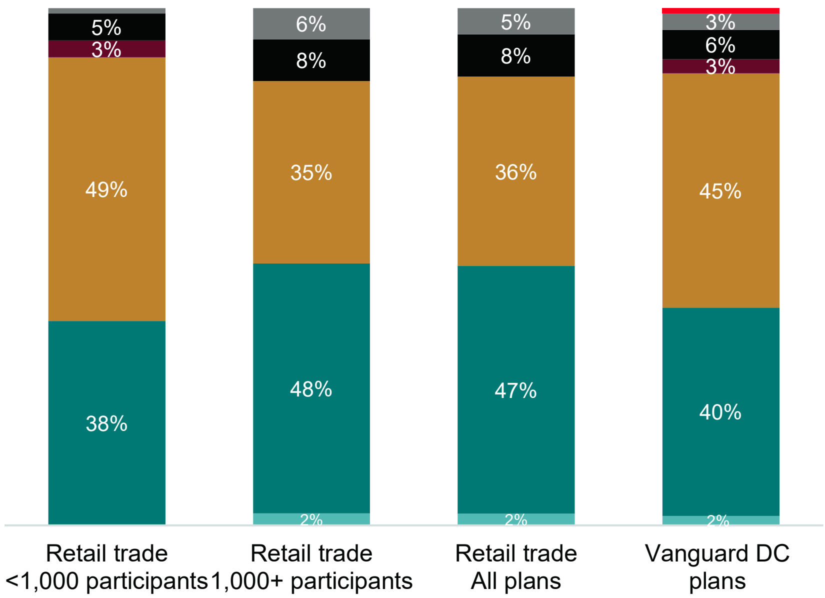
Insights

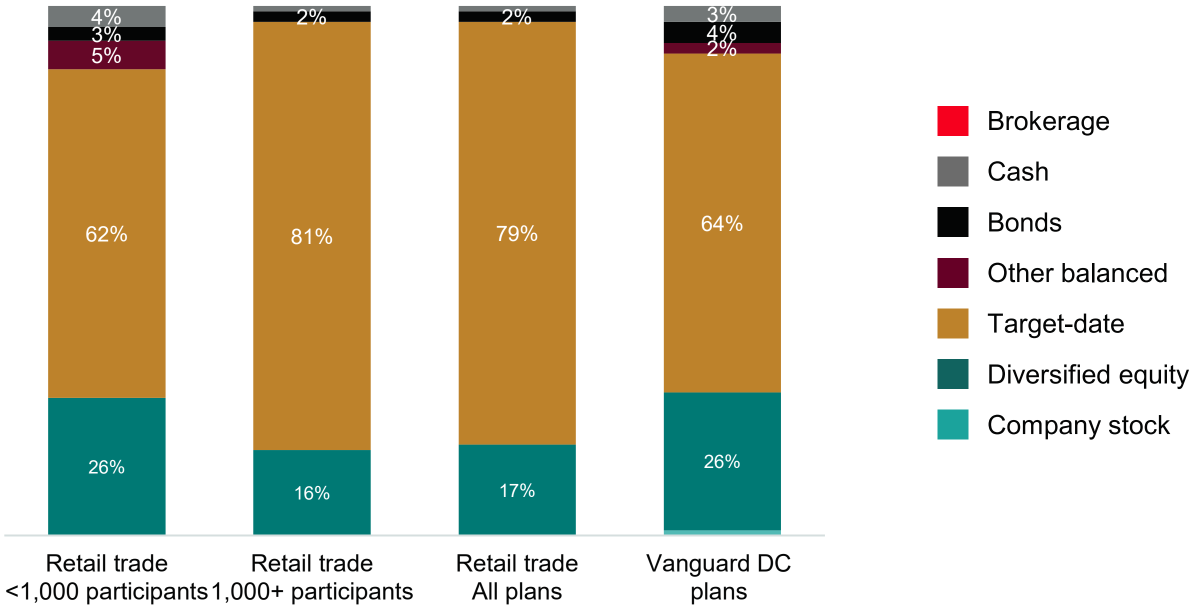
- All retail trade firms offer Roth contributions. Roth usage tends to be lower than the Vanguard benchmark.

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

Asset and contribution allocations

Asset allocation



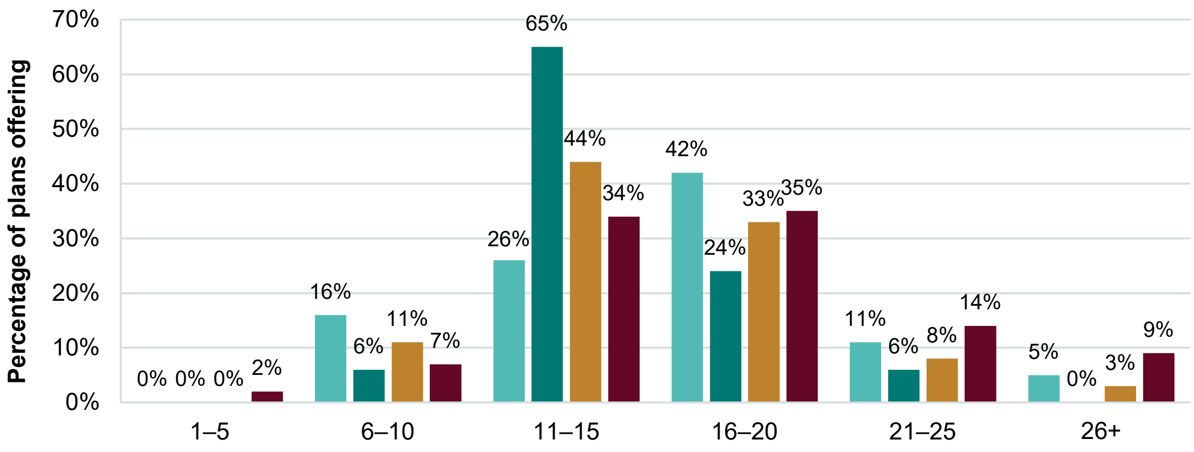


	Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Percentage of asset allocation in equities*	76%	76%	76%	76%
Percentage of contribution allocation in equities*	79%	83%	83%	80%

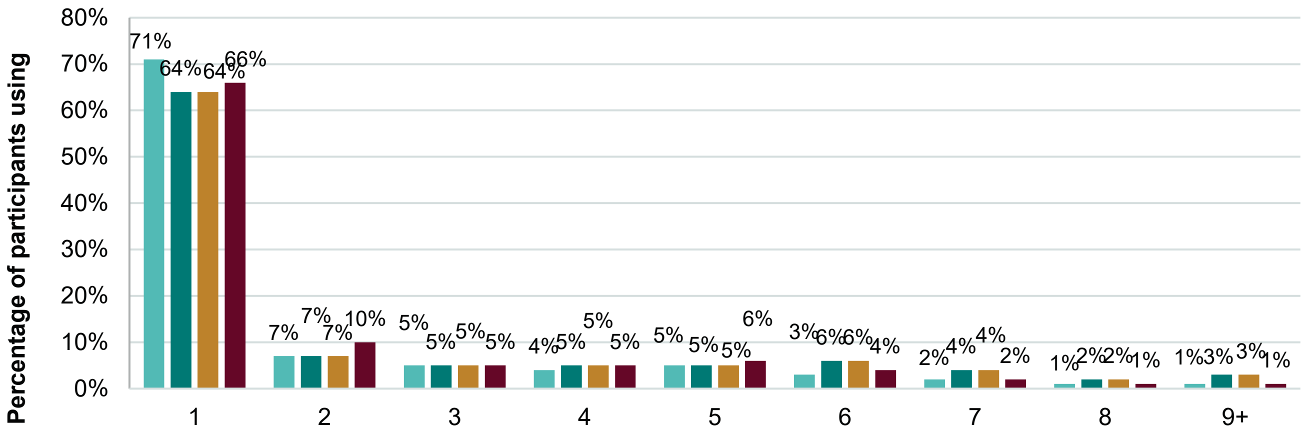
* Equities include company stock, diversified equity, and the equity portion of balanced funds.
Bars in chart may not align precisely with percentages because of rounding.
Source: Vanguard, as of December 31, 2025.

Number of fund options offered and used

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



Funds used per participant



	Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Average funds offered	15.7	14.8	15.3	17.7
Median funds offered	16	15	15	16
Average funds used	2.0	2.4	2.4	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*

	Retail trade <1,000 participants		Retail trade 1,000+ participants		Retail trade 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%**	**9%**	**100%**	**17%**	**100%**	**17%**	**98%**	**9%**
Money market	79%	7%	76%	16%	78%	15%	79%	6%
Stable value/GIC	63%	8%	88%	17%	75%	17%	67%	8%
Bond funds	**95%**	**12%**	**100%**	**18%**	**97%**	**18%**	**98%**	**16%**
Active	68%	5%	94%	9%	81%	9%	81%	7%
Index	95%	10%	94%	14%	94%	13%	91%	13%
Inflation-protected securities	11%	1%	24%	3%	17%	3%	34%	2%
Multisector	5%	1%	6%	0%	6%	0%	8%	1%
High-yield	21%	2%	6%	4%	14%	4%	18%	3%
International	16%	2%	6%	2%	11%	2%	20%	5%
Emerging markets	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Balanced funds	**100%**	**86%**	**100%**	**82%**	**100%**	**82%**	**99%**	**87%**
Traditional balanced	58%	14%	29%	8%	44%	10%	59%	11%
Target-risk	5%	12%	6%	6%	6%	7%	4%	8%
Target-date	95%	81%	100%	81%	97%	81%	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)

	Retail trade <1,000 participants		Retail trade 1,000+ participants		Retail trade 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%**	**27%**	**100%**	**32%**	**100%**	**31%**	**99%**	**29%**
Domestic equity funds	**100%**	**26%**	**100%**	**31%**	**100%**	**31%**	**99%**	**28%**
Large-cap index	100%	21%	94%	11%	97%	12%	98%	23%
Large-cap active	84%	13%	88%	27%	86%	26%	88%	14%
Large-cap value	95%	7%	94%	12%	94%	12%	86%	7%
Large-cap growth	89%	10%	88%	6%	89%	6%	90%	11%
Large-cap blend	100%	20%	100%	24%	100%	24%	98%	23%
Mid-cap index	100%	11%	94%	17%	97%	16%	84%	12%
Mid-cap active	37%	8%	53%	6%	44%	7%	52%	5%
Small-cap index	68%	11%	59%	12%	64%	12%	61%	11%
Small-cap active	58%	4%	65%	4%	61%	4%	64%	6%
Socially responsible	5%	1%	18%	2%	11%	2%	17%	7%
International equity funds	**100%**	**13%**	**94%**	**21%**	**97%**	**21%**	**97%**	**18%**
Index international	68%	11%	94%	17%	81%	16%	84%	14%
Active international	84%	8%	76%	8%	81%	8%	84%	7%
Emerging markets	26%	3%	24%	14%	25%	14%	33%	9%
Global equity funds	**11%**	**17%**	**0%**	**0%**	**6%**	**17%**	**14%**	**2%**
Sector funds	**42%**	**7%**	**29%**	**3%**	**36%**	**3%**	**36%**	**6%**
Company stock	**0%**	**0%**	**12%**	**22%**	**6%**	**22%**	**8%**	**20%**
Self-directed brokerage	**0%**	**0%**	**18%**	**1%**	**8%**	**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

		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Target-date funds	Percentage of plans offering*	95%	100%	97%	96%
	Percentage of participants using	84%	82%	82%	84%
	Percentage of participant assets	72%	56%	56%	66%
Percentage of participants owning	One target-date fund only	80%	72%	72%	73%
	One target-date fund plus other funds	16%	24%	24%	22%
	Two or more target-date funds only	2%	1%	1%	2%
	Two or more target-date funds plus other funds	2%	2%	2%	3%
	Percentage of all participants with a pure TDF strategy	65%	59%	59%	61%
Advice	Percentage of plans offering*	42%	65%	53%	46%
	Percentage of all participants using	3%	7%	7%	7%
	Percentage of participants using**	6%	14%	14%	9%
Other balanced funds	Percentage of plans offering*	63%	35%	50%	61%
	Percentage of all participants using	2%	0%	0%	1%
	Percentage of participants using***	3%	0%	0%	1%
All participants with a professionally managed allocation		70%	66%	66%	69%

Insights

- Retail trade firms are more likely to offer advice, compared with other plans, and participants are more likely to use advice.

* 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

		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Outstanding loans*	Percentage of participants with outstanding loans	14%	17%	17%	13%
	Percentage of account balance in loans	8%	12%	11%	8%
	Average loan balance	$10,923	$7,392	$7,519	$11,034
Percentage of active participants with outstanding loans**	No loans	86%	83%	83%	87%
	One loan	13%	10%	10%	11%
	Two loans	2%	7%	7%	2%
	Three+ loans	0%	0%	0%	0%
Percentage of participants taking a hardship withdrawal		6%	8%	8%	6%
Average hardship withdrawal		$5,151	$6,293	$6,268	$5,200
Median hardship withdrawal		$2,109	$2,737	$2,709	$1,900
Reasons for hardship withdrawals	Avoid foreclosure and eviction	44%	41%	41%	36%
	Medical expenses	23%	30%	30%	31%
	Home purchase	6%	5%	5%	5%
	Home repair	14%	9%	9%	11%
	Tuition payment	8%	13%	13%	13%
	Other	5%	3%	3%	4%

Insights

- Retail trade firms tend to have higher loan usage, but the overall loan balances are lower than the Vanguard benchmark.
- Participants within the retail trade industry are more likely to take hardship withdrawals when compared with other participants.

* 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.

Distribution decisions

		Retail trade <1,000 participants	Retail trade 1,000+ participants	Retail trade All plans	Vanguard DC plans
Percentage of participants choosing	Remain in plan	42%	43%	43%	46%
	Rollover	19%	18%	18%	25%
	Installment payments	1%	0%	0%	0%
	Participants preserving assets	62%	61%	61%	71%
	Cash lump sum	37%	38%	38%	28%
	Rollover and cash	0%	1%	1%	1%
Percentage of assets available for distribution	Remain in plan	52%	58%	58%	58%
	Rollover	39%	34%	34%	36%
	Installment payments	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Assets preserved for retirement	92%	92%	92%	94%
	Cash lump sum	8%	7%	8%	5%
	Rollover and cash	0%	1%	1%	1%

Insights

- Participants in the retail trade industry who left their employer in 2025 were less likely to preserve their assets for retirement when compared to the Vanguard benchmark.
- Eight percent of assets were cashed out by participants in the retail trade industry who left their employer in 2025, indicating that a greater percentage of the total assets of these participants were less likely to be preserved for retirement.

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

Important information

All investing is subject to risk, including the possible loss of the money you invest. Be aware that fluctuations in the financial markets and other factors may cause declines in the value of your account. There is no guarantee that any particular asset allocation or mix of funds will meet your investment objectives or provide you with a given level of income. Diversification does not ensure a profit or protect against a loss.

A stable value investment is neither insured nor guaranteed by the U.S. government. There is no assurance that the investment will be able to maintain a stable net asset value, and it is possible to lose money in such an investment.

Because company stock funds concentrate on a single stock, they are considered riskier than diversified stock funds.

Investments in target-date funds are subject to the risks of their underlying funds. The year in the fund name refers to the approximate year (the target date) when an investor in the fund would retire and leave the workforce. The fund will gradually shift its emphasis from more aggressive investments to more conservative ones based on its target date. An investment in target-date funds is not guaranteed at any time, including on or after the target date.

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