

Elective Deferral, Section 415(c), and Catch-Up Contribution Limits for 1987–2012

Tax Year	Elective Deferral Limit	Section 415(c) Limit	Catch-Up Contribution Limit
1987	\$7,000		
1988	\$7,313		
1989	\$7,627		
1990	\$7,979		
1991	\$8,475		
1992	\$8,728		
1993	\$8,994		
1994	\$9,240		
1995	\$9,240		
1996	\$9,500		
1997	\$9,500		
1998	\$10,000		
1999	\$10,000		
2000	\$10,500		
2001	\$10,500		
2002	\$11,000	\$40,000	
2003	\$12,000	\$40,000	\$2,000
2004	\$13,000	\$41,000	\$3,000
2005	\$14,000	\$42,000	\$4,000
2006	\$15,000	\$44,000	\$5,000
2007	\$15,500	\$45,000	\$5,000
2008	\$15,500	\$46,000	\$5,000
2009	\$16,500	\$49,000	\$5,500
2010	\$16,500	\$49,000	\$5,500
2011	\$16,500	\$49,000	\$5,500
2012	\$17,000	\$50,000	\$5,500

The IRS elective deferral limit, I.R.C. section 402(g), is a limit placed on regular employee contributions. The elective deferral limit applies only to regular employee contributions that are made before-tax (i.e., tax-deferred) dollars. For members of the uniformed services, this includes all tax-deferred contributions from taxable basic pay, incentive pay, special pay, and bonus pay.

The I.R.C. section 415(c) limit is an additional limit that the IRS imposes on the total amount of contributions made to an eligible retirement plan in a year. “All contributions” include employee contributions (both tax-deferred and tax-exempt) and Agency Automatic (1%) and Matching Contributions. The 415(c) limit, however, is applied separately to each employer plan in which you contribute. Participants with both uniformed service and civilian TSP accounts are considered to have one employer plan even though they have separate accounts.

The IRS catch-up contribution limit, I.R.C. section 414(v), is the maximum amount of catch-up contributions that can be contributed in a given year by participants who are or will turn age 50 in the calendar year. This limit is separate from the elective deferral limit imposed on regular employee contributions and the 415(c) additional limit.