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Employer Health Plan Deductibles See Big Jump

According to a recent analysis from the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research & Educational Trust (Kaiser), deductibles are up nearly 50% since 2009. Average annual premiums for employer-sponsored family health coverage are up a modest 3% in 2014, but deductibles are another story. Since 2009, the average deductible has increased 47% to \$1,217 as employers aim to save on healthcare costs, researchers said. That's compared to \$826 in 2009.

This year, 41% of all covered workers face an annual deductible of at least \$1,000, including 18% who face a deductible of at least \$2,000. And, covered workers at small firms (three to 199 employees) are even more likely to face large deductibles, with 61% facing at least \$1,000 deductibles and a third (34%) facing \$2,000 deductibles or higher.

Meanwhile, the main headline from the Kaiser report is that average annual premiums for employer-sponsored family health coverage increased 3% this year, reaching \$16,834, continuing a recent trend of modest increases. Workers on average paid \$4,823 annually toward the cost of family coverage this year, the survey of more than 3,000 firms concluded. Kaiser analysts called the premium growth good news for employees and employers, pointing out that premiums increased more slowly over the past five years than the preceding five years (26% vs. 34%) and well below the annual double-digit increases recorded in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Additionally, the survey found that nearly all employers with 100 or more workers (94%) already offer health benefits, shedding some light on trends on the employer market before PPACA's employer mandate takes effect.

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