How Much has the Need for Human Services Grown? - An Analysis of "Total Caseload"

Most caseloads reported in this forecasting document went up quite a lot during the "Great Recession," but average monthly caseload counts can't answer the question, "how many people in Oregon are served by DHS and OHA?" After all, people often receive multiple services at the same time, such as healthcare through OHP and nutrition assistance through SNAP. So adding up separate caseloads from multiple programs will over-count how many people are receiving assistance. Also, not everyone on a caseload at the beginning of a year is still on the caseload at the end of the year - people's economic conditions improve, they move out of state, etc. This makes the "total number of people served" question something of a moving target.

In order to get a true sense of how the need for human services has grown over the last few years, a different methodology for counting cases was employed – one that counts people rather than cases in a caseload. In this methodology, a unique, unduplicated count of each person receiving at least one service from OHA and/or DHS was calculated for each year from 2006 to 2013[1]. Each person was included if they received any service for at least one day in the calendar year. For the purposes of this analysis, we'll call this count the "total caseload."

The results at the statewide level can be seen in the table below.

Total Unduplicated Count of Persons Served by Year

Year	Counts of Person Served	Percent Change from Previous Year
2006	552,017	
2007	559,465	1.3%
2008	618,739	10.6%
2009	775,618	25.4%
2010	883,996	14.0%
2011	943,088	6.7%
2012	962,200	2.0%
2013	954,262	-0.8%

As can be seen in the table, the recession had its biggest effect in 2009, when the total caseload increased by 25 percent compared to the year before. The number of people served by DHS/OHA continued to increase even after the official recession ended in mid-2009, increasing by over 74 percent from 2006 to 2012 before declining slightly in 2013.

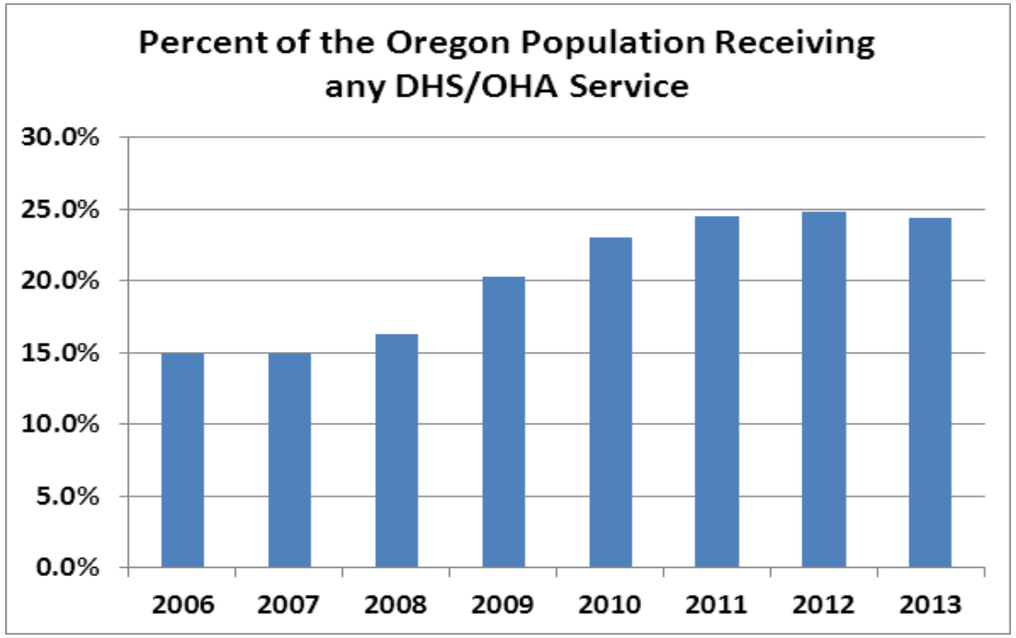
County Analysis and Total Caseload as a Percent of the Population

Total caseload grew at the county level in generally the same way as it did statewide, with some exceptions. Some counties had caseloads that grew fast, at the early part of the recession, others grew later. Whether a county caseload grew early in the recession or later does not seem to be related to the total magnitude of increase. Of course, it is difficult to compare counties in Oregon because county population size varies widely.

In order to make the data more comparable between counties, total caseload for each county was expressed as a percentage of that county's total population. In order to perform this analysis, population figures for each year (2006 to 2013) were obtained from the Annual Oregon Population Report from the Portland State University Population Research Center (http://www.pdx.edu/prc/annual-oregon-population-report).

It was necessary to compare the caseload increase to population values for each year separately, since the population of the state grew continuously from 2006 to 2013. Furthermore, it did not grow uniformly in every part of the state, and in some counties, the population shrank. The county that shrank the most was also the county with some of the worst economic problems during the recession – Crook County. As a region, the biggest population shrinkage occurred in the northeastern corner of the state.

1. Service types used to create the "total caseload" include most all MAP services with the exception of some very small specialized programs. Other services not counted include community mental health, adults receiving services in Child Welfare cases, and Developmental Disability caseloads. There is a great deal of overlap between these caseloads and the caseloads that are used in the analysis, so the resulting under-count is probably very slight. For more information in the amount of overlap between services in DHS/OHA, see the graphic here: http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/ofra/Documents/DHS%20PERSPECTIVE%20OVERLAP%20CHARTS%202011%20Adults%20including%20DD.pdf

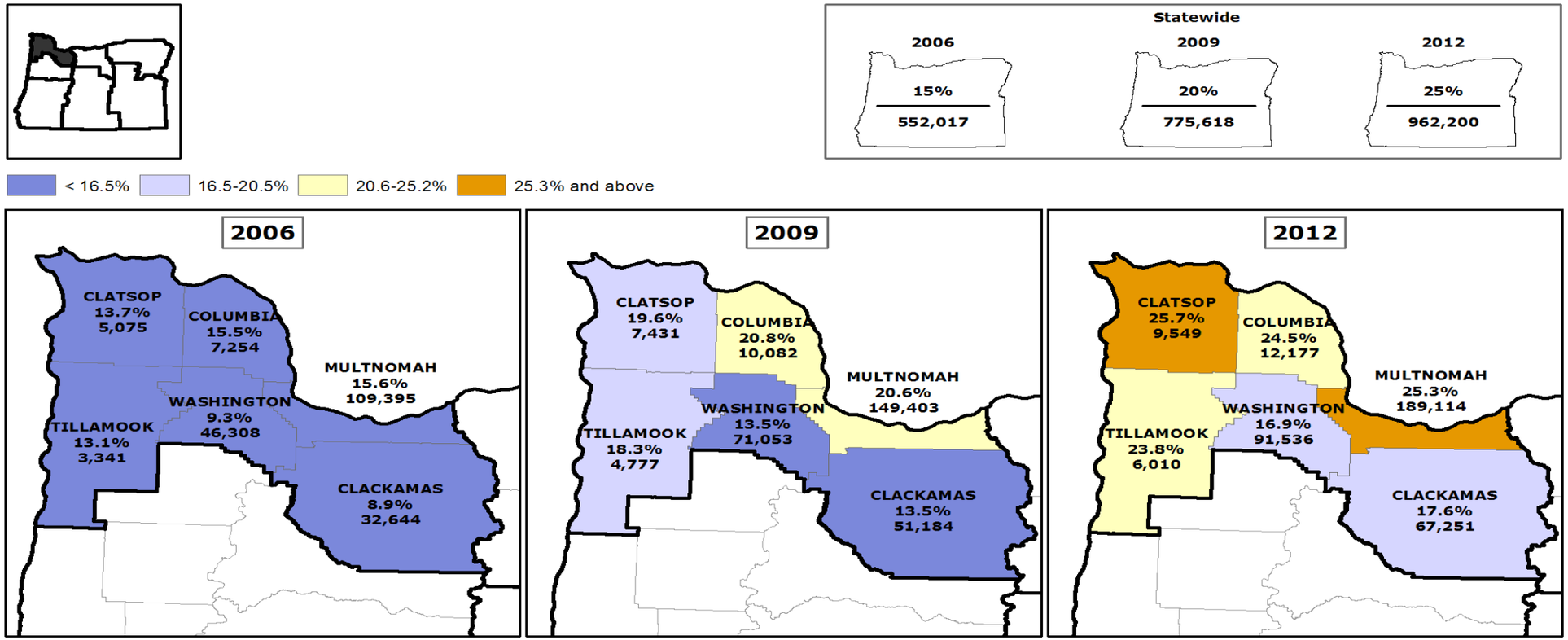


Additional highlights from this analysis:

- Although the number of people receiving human services grew from 2006 to 2007, that increase was due to population growth only. The percent of the population on services stayed the same as the total number of people residing in Oregon went up.
- In 2006, about one in seven people were on OHA/DHS services at some point during the year. By 2012 it was one in four.
- The county with the biggest total caseload increase from 2006 to 2012 was Wheeler, which grew by over 156 percent. One reason for such a steep increase was that Wheeler's total caseload had nowhere to go but up. Before the recession, Wheeler had the lowest proportion of residents in the total caseload (7.5 percent) of any county in the state. By 2012, over 21 percent of residents were counted in the total caseload.
- Deschutes County, with a roughly 125 percent increase from 2006 to 2012 had the second highest increase in total caseload after Wheeler. Clackamas was third highest, with a 106 percent increase.
- Total caseload began to decrease (modestly) for the majority of counties after 2012, but this was not uniform. Some counties had caseloads that continued to rise, mostly due to population increase - the percent of people on services stayed the same while the population went up.
- Counties that rose fastest during the Great Recession were among those with the biggest reduction in total caseload from 2012 to 2013: Lane, Douglas, Deschutes, and Clackamas counties all saw reductions in the total number of persons on at least one DHS or OHA service. These reductions were modest, however – between 2 and 2.5 percent. Benton County had the biggest one-year drop from 2012 to 2013 (3.8 percent).
- Although total caseload continued to rise in Multnomah County from 2012 to 2013, it fell in the other counties in the Portland Metro area (Washington, Clackamas, Columbia, and Yamhill).
- The county with the highest proportion of residents in the total caseload is Jefferson. This has been consistent since before the recession. In 2006, when the economy was booming in Oregon, one in four people in Jefferson County was on the caseload at some point during the year. By 2012, over 40 percent of residents were counted in the total caseload.

The maps on the following pages illustrate the total caseload and the percent of the population that total caseload represents for each county in 2006, 2009, and 2012. Total caseload for 2013 was almost identical to 2012, with a decrease of only 0.8 percent statewide. As the economy improves, caseloads for specific programs sensitive to the economy are forecasted to go down, but it is debatable as to whether total caseload will do the same. Reforms in the Affordable Care Act led to a substantial increase in the Medicaid caseload, which may outweigh decreases in other case types, at least for the near future. The prevalence of jobs that offer relatively high salaries and employer-based health insurance will play a large part in determining how fast the total caseload decreases.

Total Caseload: Northwest



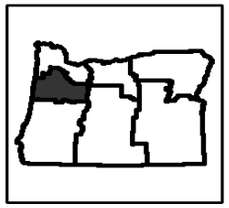
These maps show the number of people on the "total caseload," that is, the total number of people on any OHA or DHS service, for the years 2006, 2009, and 2012. The maps also show the percent of the county's population in the "total caseload."

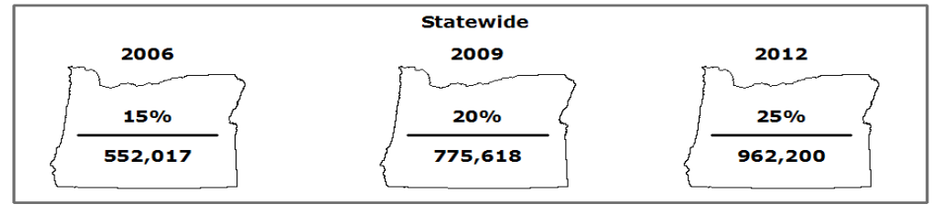
This area, which in includes the Portland Metro counties of Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas, has among the highest total caseload counts in the state. Still, the percent of the population in the total caseload is not high. In fact, Clackamas and Washington counties have the second and third lowest percentages (respectively) of their population in the total caseload. This remained true from 2006 through 2012. Multnomah, like the rest of the region, was much more in line with the state overall in terms of the percent of the population in the total caseload.

Clackamas County's total caseload more than doubled from 2006 to 2012, making its growth one of the highest in the state. So although having 17.6 percent of the county on DHS and/or OHA services is a small ratio compared to other parts of the state, It represents a very big change from the years before the Great Recession.

Statewide, total caseload declined modestly (a 0.8% reduction) from 2012 to 2013. Clackamas County saw a bigger (though still modest) one-year decrease of 2.5 percent. Unlike most counties in the state, Tillamook County saw an increase in total caseload from 2012 to 2013. The fact that Tillamook County's total caseload continues to grow is somewhat ominous, given that the population of the county shrank during the great recession. People who had the means and opportunity to leave the county to look for work did so, leaving behind a growing proportion of people who receive DHS and/or OHA services.

Total Caseload: Mid-Valley





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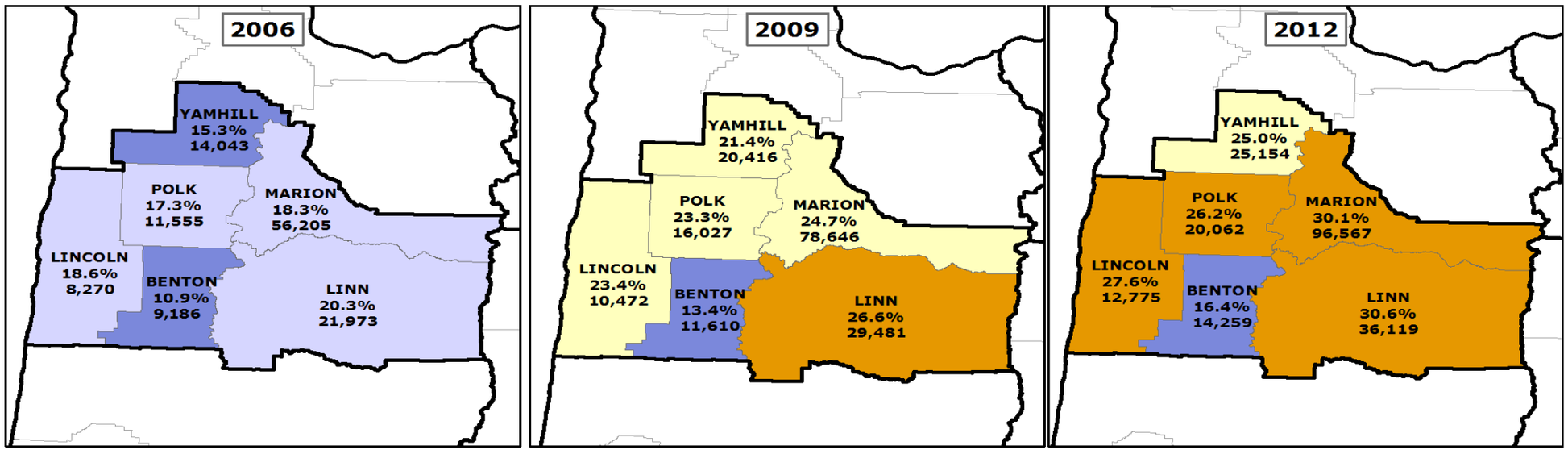

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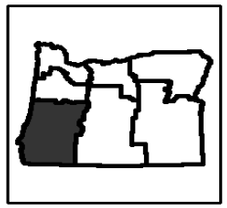
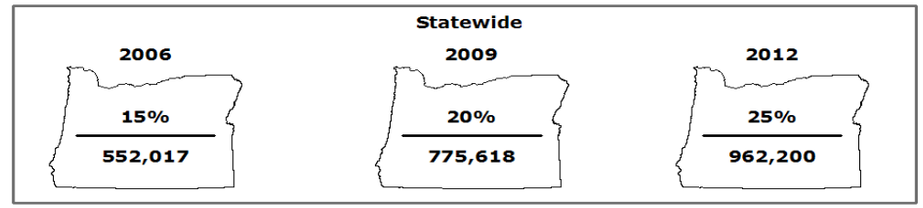
Oregon's Mid-Valley area had some of the highest increases in the state in total caseload, especially Marion and Linn Counties. The exception was Benton County, which in general performed better than most other counties during the Great Recession. Linn County had a high percentage of its population on the total caseload in 2006, when the Oregon economy was humming, and that ratio only increased during the Great Recession.

Statewide, total caseload declined modestly (a 0.8% reduction) from 2012 to 2013. Unlike most counties in the state, Lincoln County saw an increase in total caseload from 2012 to 2013, while Polk County saw no change from 2012 to 2013. Benton County had the largest one-year decline from 2012 to 2013 – a 3.8 percent drop.

Total Caseload: Southwest





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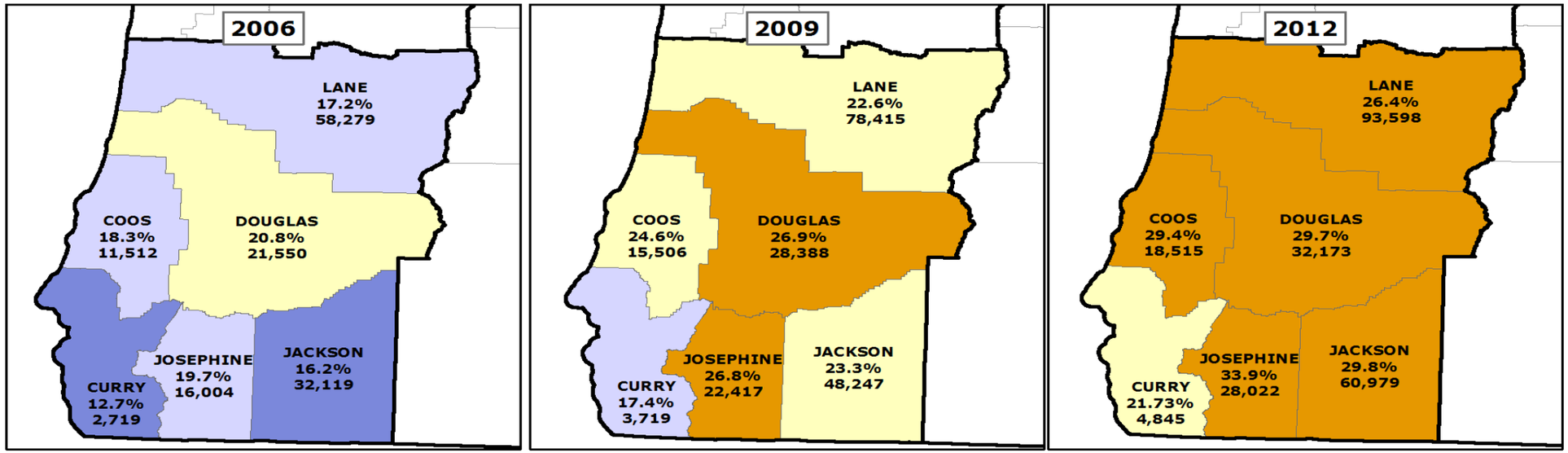

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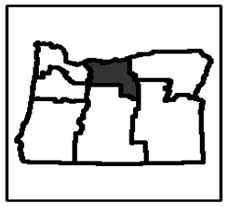
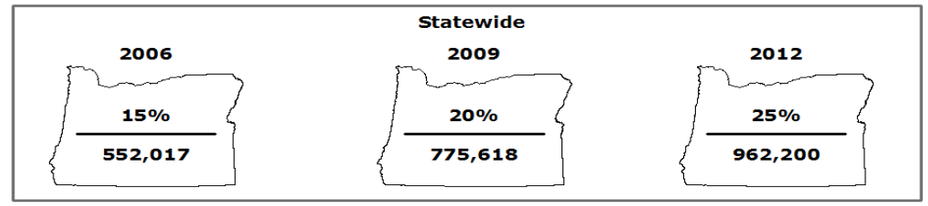
The southwest corner of the state had high percentages of people on the total caseload even before the Great Recession began. Caseload as a percent of the population was especially high in Josephine and Douglas counties. By 2012, one in three residents of Josephine County was in the total caseload, a ratio that didn't change in 2013. Coos, Jackson, and Josephine counties have ratios almost as high. Part of the reason for the high ratios in Coos County is that the population of the county shrank from 2006 to 2013, while the total caseload rose. People who had the means and opportunity to leave the county to look for work did so, leaving behind a growing proportion of people who receive DHS and/or OHA services.

Jackson County's total caseload effectively doubled from 2006 to 2012, one of the biggest increases found anywhere in the state.

Statewide, total caseload declined modestly (a 0.8% reduction) from 2012 to 2013. Lane and Douglas counties did better, with year-over-year decreases of greater than two percent, but the rest of the region did not fare so well. Curry and Josephine counties increased total caseload from 2012 to 2013.

Total Caseload: Columbia Gorge





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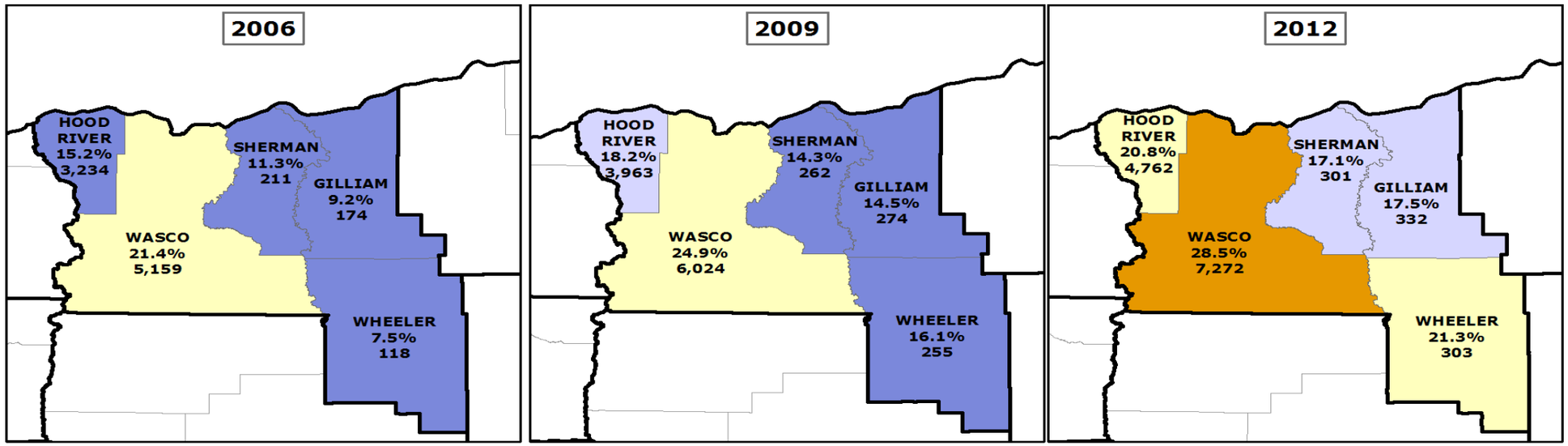

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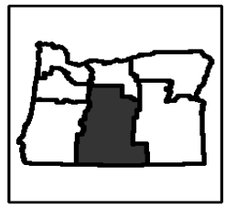
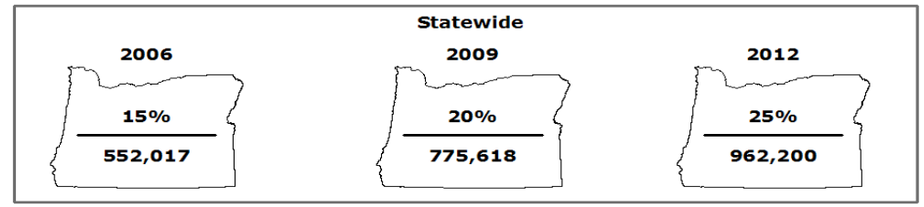
The counties with the smallest populations in the state can be found in Oregon's Columbia River Gorge area. This is reflected in the small numbers of people in the total caseload. Yet even with the small numbers, the amount of change was steep in some areas: Wheeler County saw the biggest change in total caseload of any county in the state – more than doubling from 2006 to 2012. Wasco County, which has the highest population of any county in the region, also has the largest percentage of the population in the total caseload. Wasco has historically had a large percentage of its population in the total caseload – over one in five residents of Wasco County was in the total caseload in 2006, when the Oregon economy was booming.

Statewide, total caseload declined modestly (a 0.8% reduction) from 2012 to 2013. Modest reductions along the same order happened in the Columbia Gorge area, with the exception of Sherman County, which had a small increase in percent of people in the total caseload. This change was due in part to an increase in total caseload size, as well as a modest reduction in county population.

Total Caseload: Central Oregon





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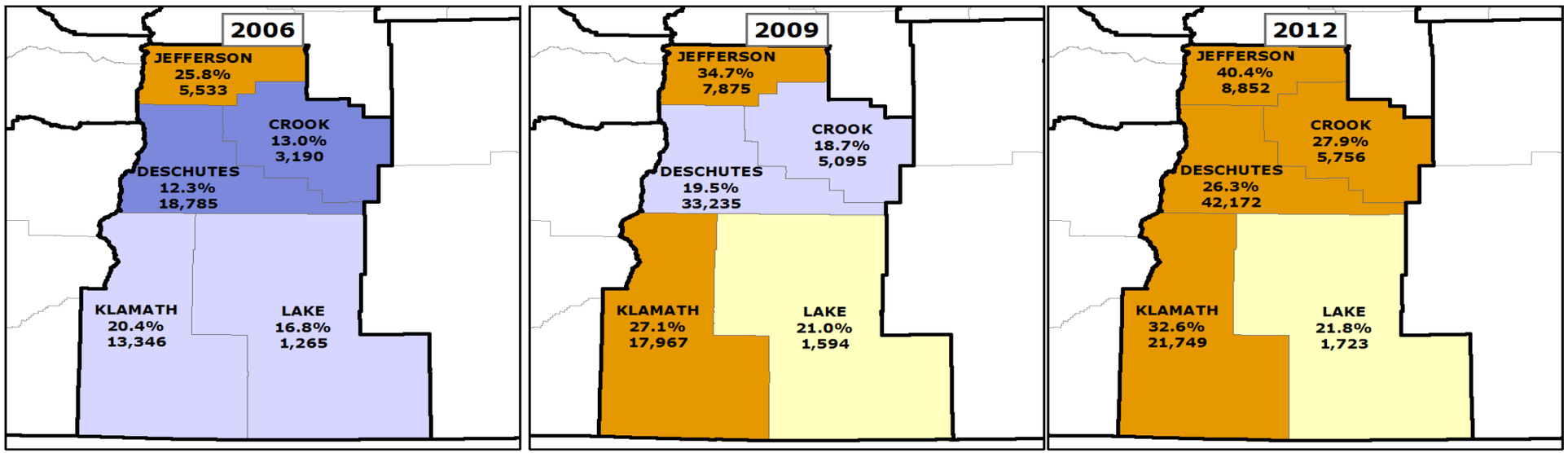

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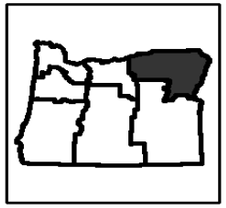
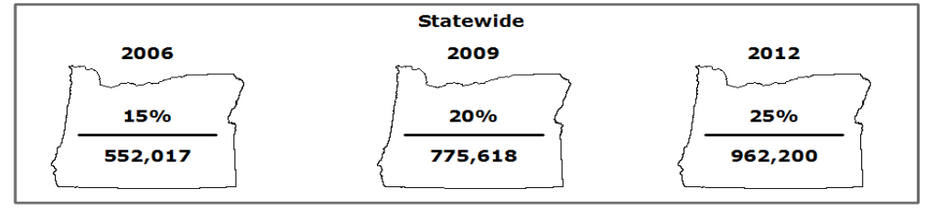
The central part of Oregon experienced some of the worst economic times of the Great Recession, and that is reflected in the explosive growth in total caseload from 2006 to 2012. Deschutes had one of the largest increases in total caseload found anywhere in the state – an almost 125% increase from 2006 to 2012. Jefferson County had the highest proportion of its population in the total caseload in 2006, before the great recession started, and that distinction continued through to 2012. Jefferson County had by far the highest percentage of residents in the total caseload in 2012 – greater than 40 percent –and the caseload continued to grow in 2013. Nearly one in three residents of Klamath County was in the total caseload in 2012, the third highest ratio in the state.

Statewide, total caseload declined modestly (a 0.8% reduction) from 2012 to 2013. Total caseload dropped in Crook and Klamath Counties modestly in 2013, while Deschutes County had one of the highest year-over-year reductions in the state between 2012 and 2013. Like Jefferson, Lake County had total caseload numbers that continued to grow from 2012 to 2013.

Although the state's population increased from 2006 to 2012, not all counties grew. The biggest drop in population happened in Crook County, which lost over 3,800 residents while at the same time the number of people in the county on DHS and/or OHA services increased.

Total Caseload: Northeast





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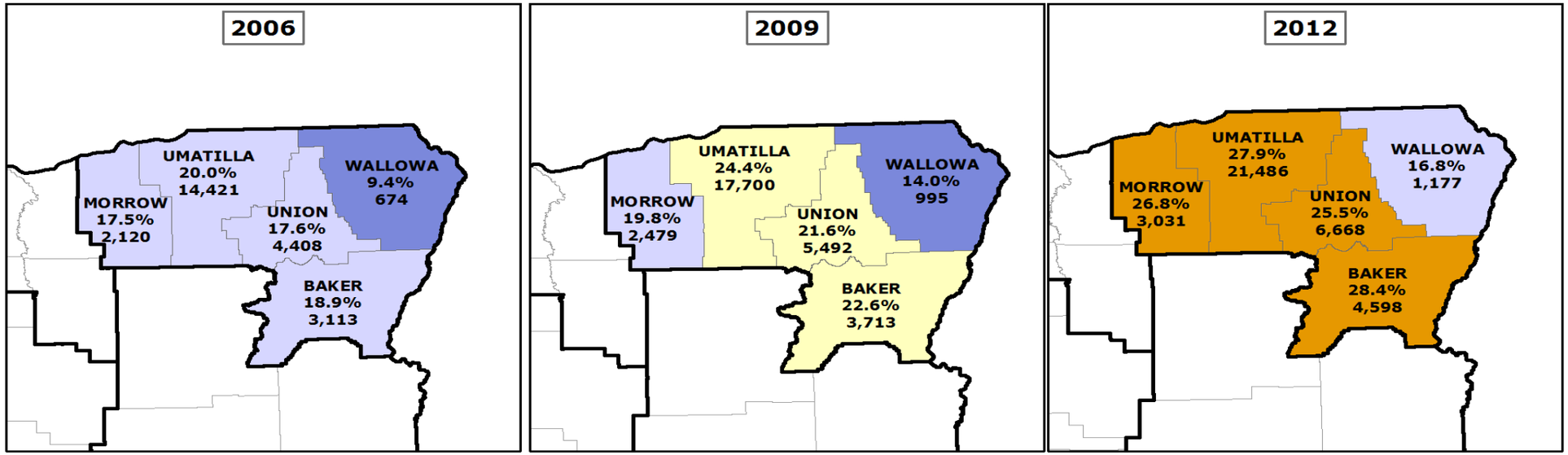

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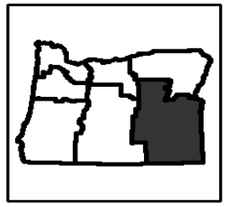
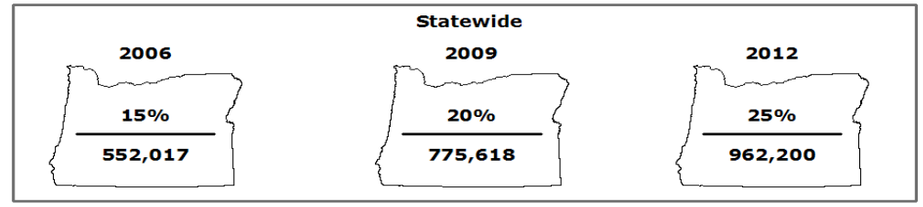
In general, the total caseload grew in the northeast corner of the state in line with the state overall. The exception was Wallowa County, which consistently had a lower ratio of people on DHS/OHA services compared to most of the rest of the state. Still, although the total number of people on the total caseload was small, the amount of change was high – a 75 percent increase from 2006 to 2012. This is a pattern consistent with the other small-population counties in the state, which had big increases in the number of people requiring services, but those increases still representing a modest percentage of the population.

Statewide, total caseload declined modestly (a 0.8% reduction) from 2012 to 2013. Total caseload in the northeast region was essentially unchanged from 2012 to 2013.

Although the population of Oregon increased from 2006 to 2012, the populations of Morrow, Wallowa and Baker counties decreased. This means that the increase in the percentage of the population in the total caseload is due in part to rising caseload counts, and in part to a decline in numbers of people *not* in the caseload. People who had the means and opportunity to leave the county to look for work did so, leaving behind a growing proportion of people who receive DHS and/or OHA services.

Total Caseload: Southeast





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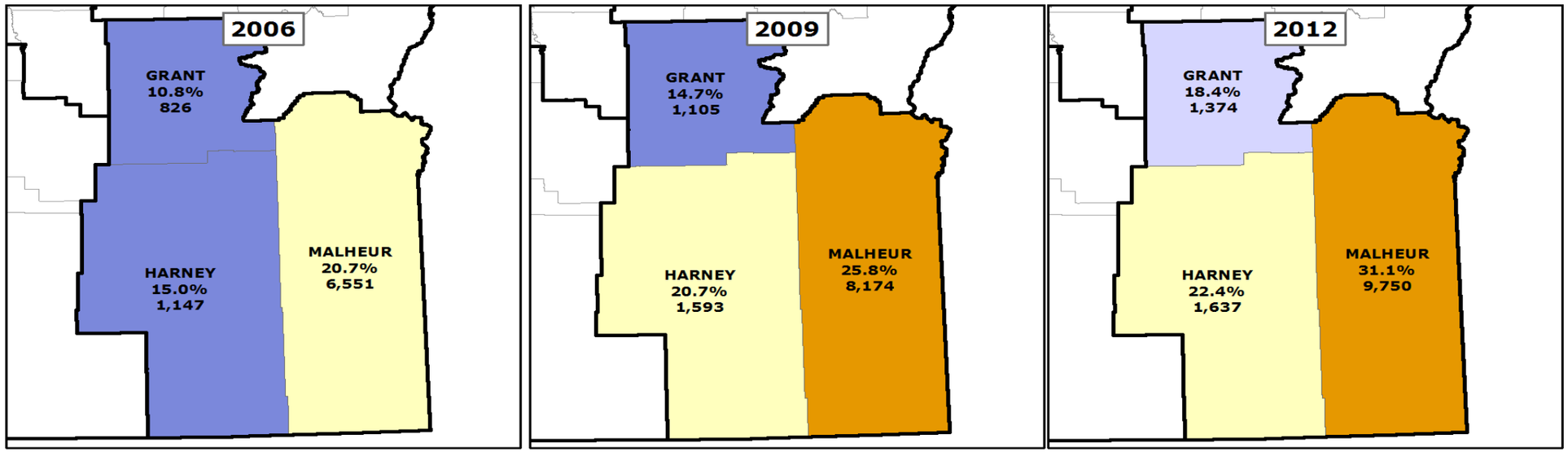

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The southeast corner of the state was a mixed bag in relation to total caseload growth through the Great Recession. Grant County behaved like most of the small-population counties in the state, with a smaller proportion of the county on DHS/OHA services from 2006 to 2012 than statewide. Harney County was more in line with the statewide trend, while Malheur County saw a more aggressive growth pattern in total caseload, especially in 2010 and 2011, leading to a higher ratio of people on the caseload in 2012 than was found statewide. In fact, Malheur County had the fourth highest ratio of people on the total caseload in 2012 – almost one in three. And unlike most counties in the state, total caseload numbers continued to rise in Malheur County in 2013. Total caseload in Grand and Harney counties was virtually unchanged in 2013.

Although the population of Oregon increased from 2006 to 2012, the populations of Grant, Malheur and Harney counties decreased. This means that the increase in the percentage of the population in the total caseload is due in part to rising caseload counts, and in part to a decline in numbers of people not in the caseload. People who had the means and opportunity to leave the county to look for work did so, leaving behind a growing proportion of people who receive DHS and/or OHA services.