

# Evaluating Wage Inequality in Oregon Using Unemployment Insurance Wage File Data

Pacific Northwest Regional Economic Conference  
May 2026

Anna Johnson, Senior Economic Analyst  
Beth Dyer, Wage File Analysis Coordinator  
Oregon Employment Department

# ABOUT THE DATA: UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE TAX REPORTS

- Lists every job covered by unemployment insurance, the wages paid, and hours worked per quarter.
- Quarterly records that cover more than two million individuals.
- Excluded from UI reports:
  - Self-employed
  - Federal government workers
  - Workers paid solely by commission
  - Employees of small agricultural employers

# DATA AND ANALYSIS CAVEATS

- Annual earnings are influenced by the number of hours or quarters worked during the year.
- Workers drop in and out of wage records for various reasons.
- Wages are a subset of income.
- This analysis will focus on workers who worked all four quarters of the year.

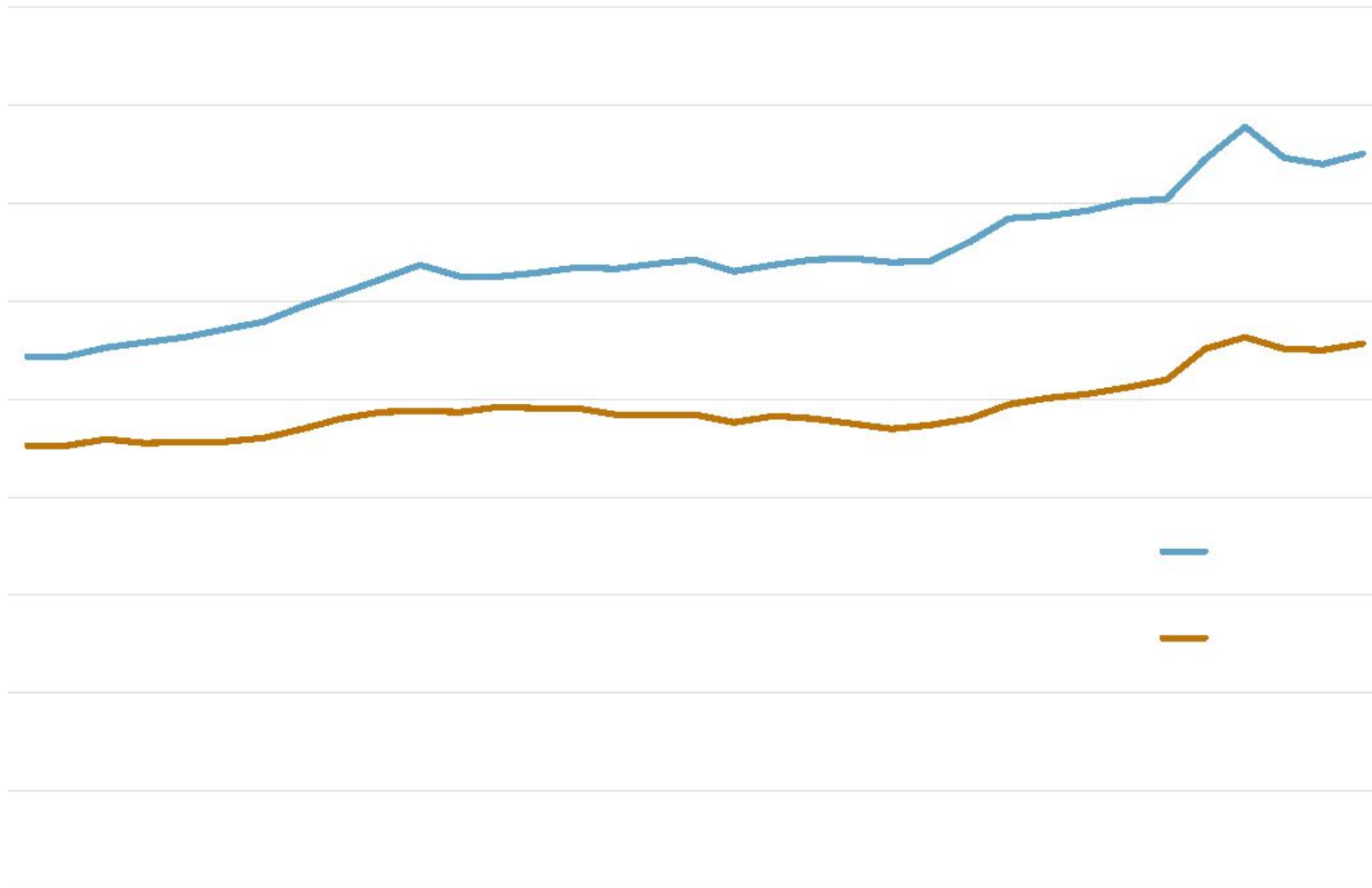
# SUMMARY STATS

## Oregon Covered Workers and Inflation-Adjusted Wages, 1990 - 2024

Year	Total Wages		% of Wages Earned by Four- Quarter Employees	Total Four- Quarter Employees		% of Employees Working All Four
	Four-Quarter Employees	Total Wages, All Employees		Total Employees	Total Employees	
1990	\$22,083,209,274	\$25,016,693,417	88%	976,318	1,615,206	60%
2000	\$46,242,607,677	\$51,351,090,419	90%	1,323,647	2,013,247	66%
2010	\$58,370,239,679	\$64,210,448,932	91%	1,307,158	1,935,294	68%
2020	\$94,211,810,744	\$106,345,118,589	89%	1,533,149	2,296,938	67%
2024	\$123,313,844,195	\$137,270,305,663	90%	1,643,233	2,360,214	70%
% Change 1990-2024	458%	449%		68%	46%	

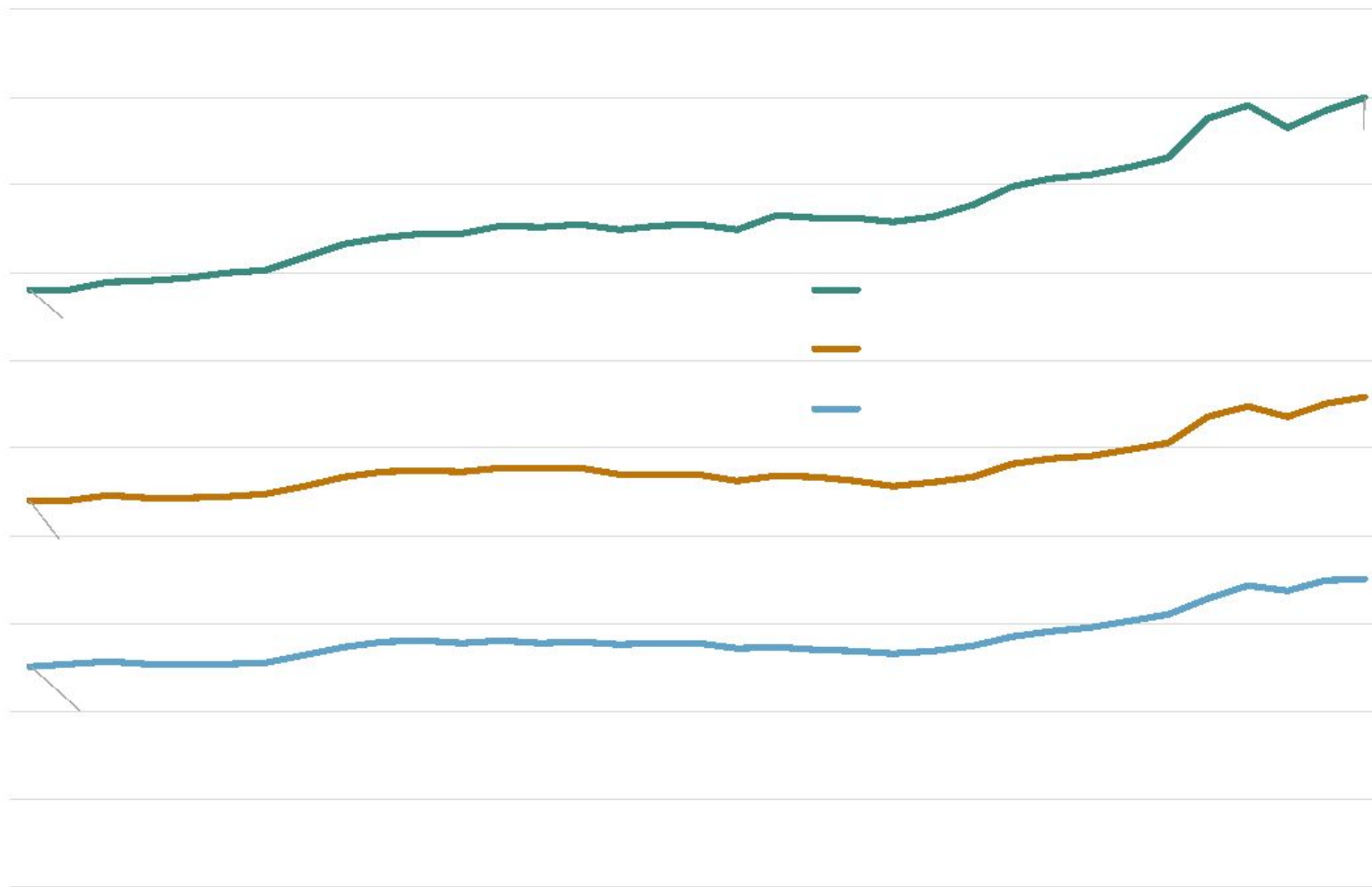
Source: Oregon Employment Department, Unemployment Insurance Wage Records

# GAP BETWEEN MEAN AND MEDIAN WAGE IN OREGON HAS GROWN



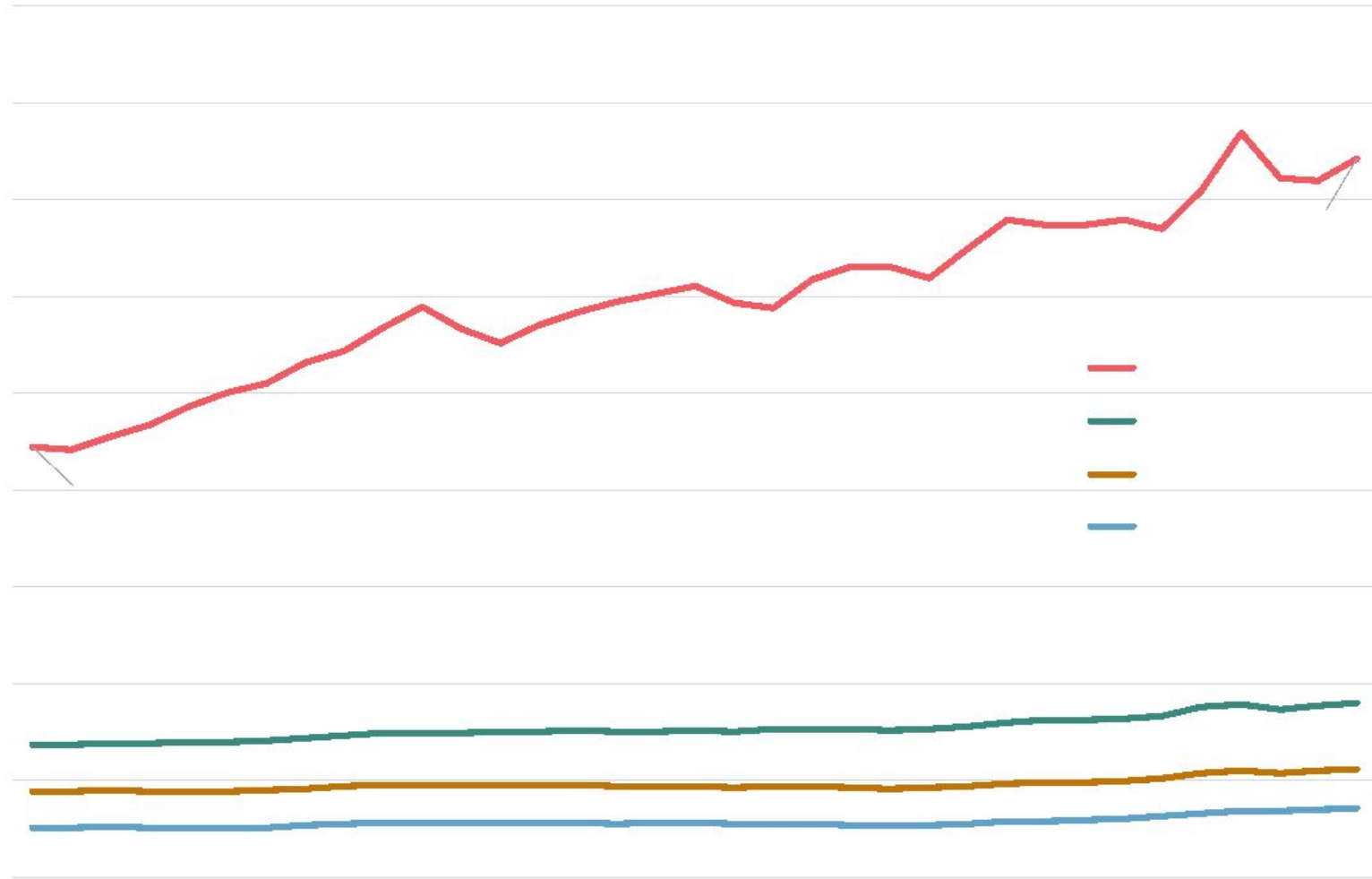
# WAGES BY EARNINGS QUARTILE

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

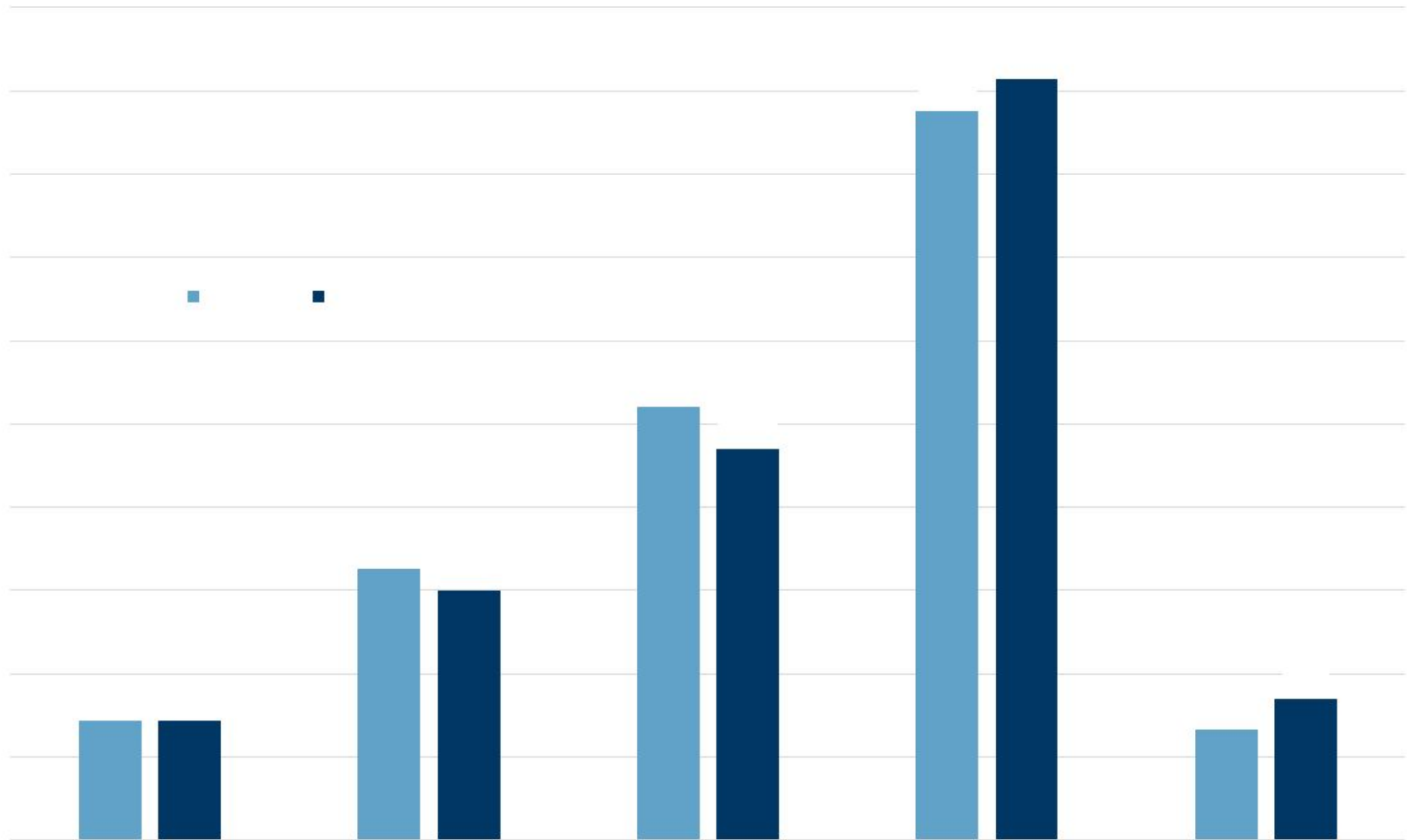


# WAGES BY EARNINGS QUARTILE

2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

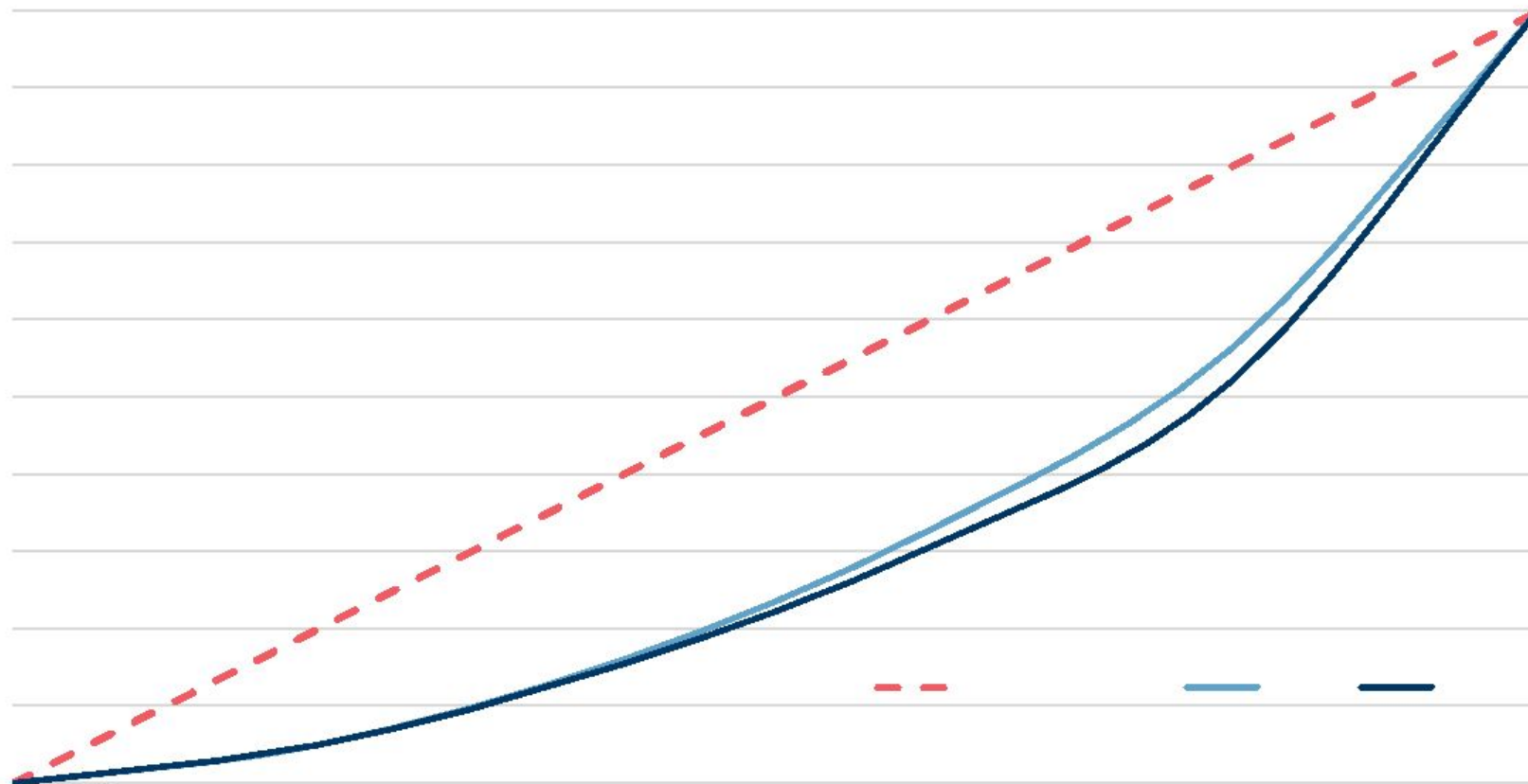


# SHARE OF WAGES BY QUARTILE



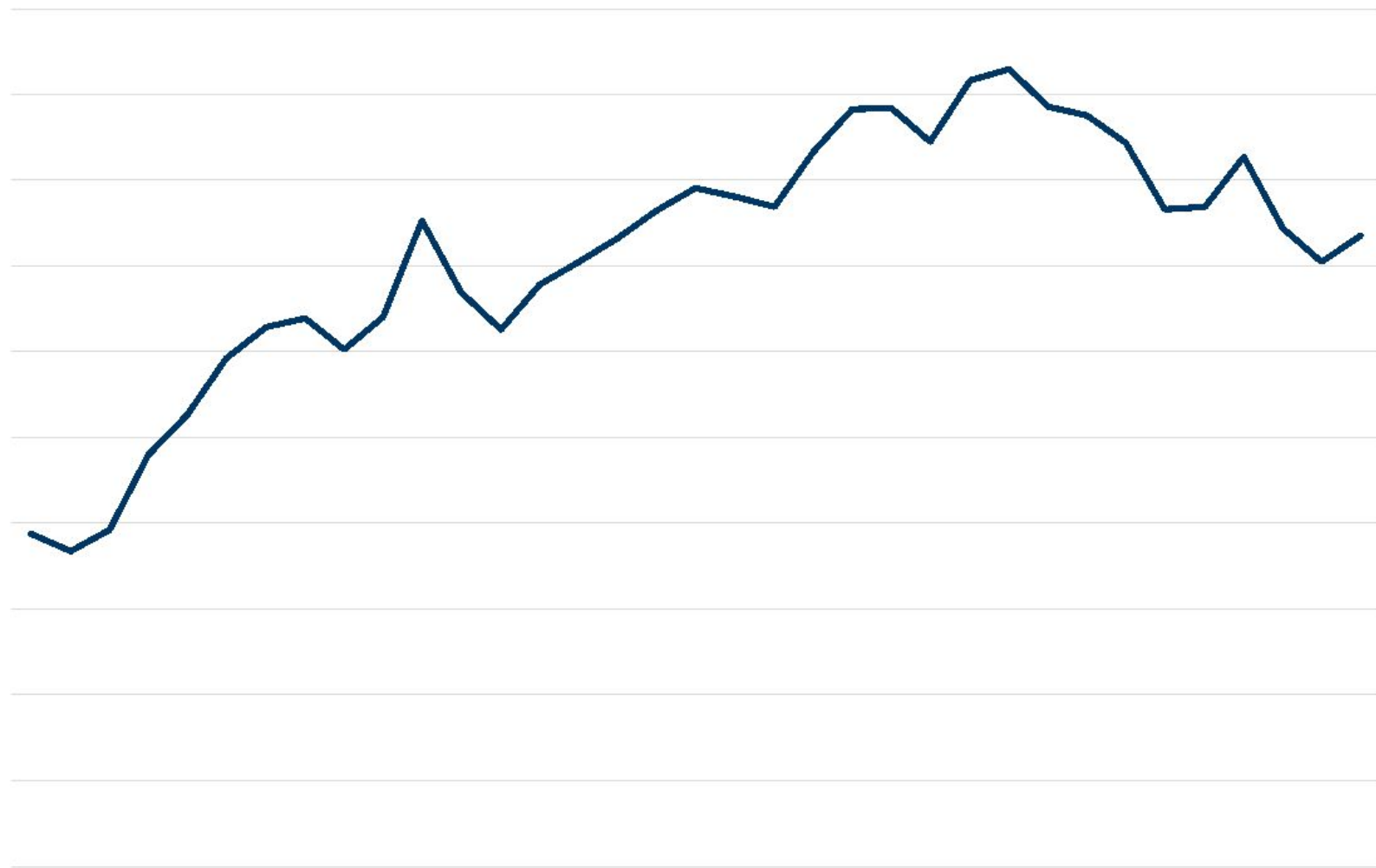
# LORENZ CURVE

100% 100% 100% 100%



# GINI COEFFICIENT

1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024



# SUMMARY AND FUTURE WORK

- While wages have increased faster than inflation, those increases have not been evenly distributed amongst all workers.
- Lowest quartile of earners may be helped by Oregon's robust minimum wage increases.
- Earners in the 25<sup>th</sup> – 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles of workers as losing their share of wages as top earners shares grow.
- Future Work:
  - Incorporate workers who did not work all year (using hourly wages)
  - Industry and regional differences.

# Thank you!

**ANNA JOHNSON, SENIOR ECONOMIC ANALYST**  
[ANNA.L.JOHNSON@EMPLOY.OREGON.GOV](mailto:ANNA.L.JOHNSON@EMPLOY.OREGON.GOV)

**BETH DYER, WAGE FILE ANALYSIS COORDINATOR**  
[ELIZABETH.A.DYER@EMPLOY.OREGON.GOV](mailto:ELIZABETH.A.DYER@EMPLOY.OREGON.GOV)

**SIGN UP FOR THE LATEST WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC RESEARCH**  
[WWW.QUALITYINFO.ORG/SUBSCRIBE](http://WWW.QUALITYINFO.ORG/SUBSCRIBE)



**SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK!**