

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

### A Broken Property Tax Appeals System

**How the assessment appeals system disproportionately shifts the tax burden onto homeowners in low-income, Black and Latino communities**

**Cook County Treasurer Maria Pappas**

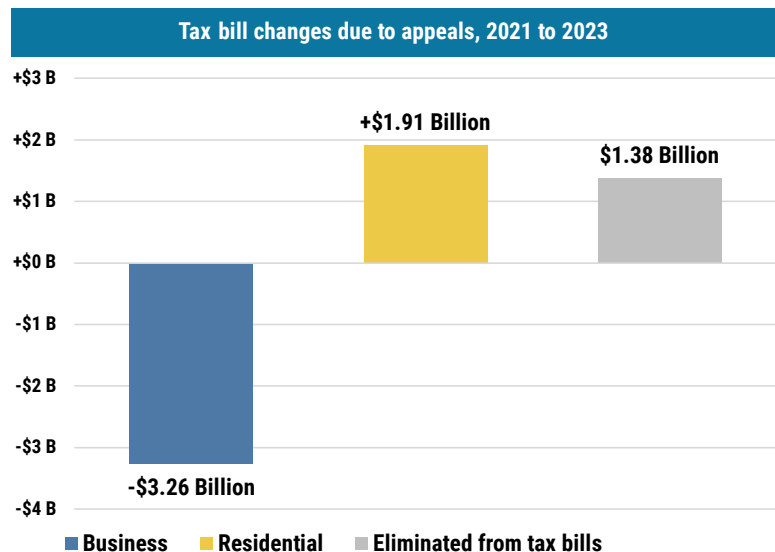
**May 2025**

The Cook County property tax assessment appeals system shifted nearly \$2 billion in property taxes onto homeowners from businesses over just three years, with lower-income, Black and Latino homeowners picking up a disproportionate share of the burden, a first-of-its-kind study by Treasurer Maria Pappas found.

The study quantifies the financial impact of tax appeals on homeowners and businesses. It does that by estimating how much property tax bills would have been prior to appeals to the Assessor and Board of Review and how much they were afterward.

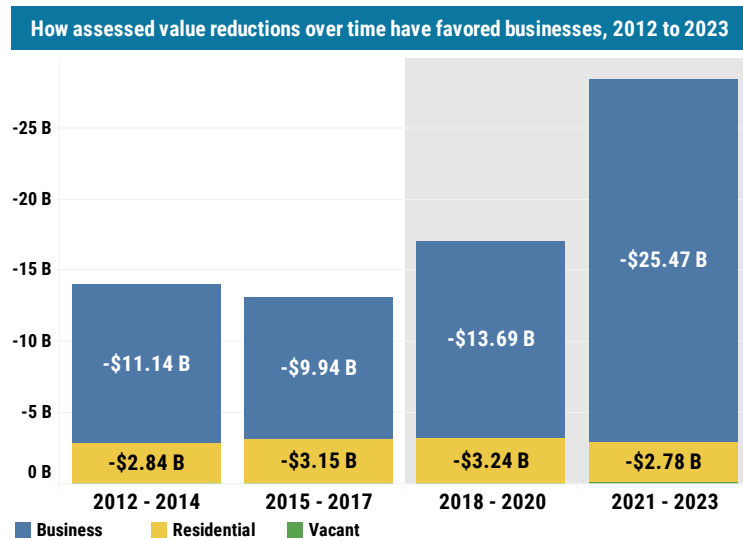
From 2021 to 2023 — the most recent period during which all county properties were reassessed — businesses won nearly \$25.5 billion in reductions to their estimated property valuations that determine how much each pays in taxes, the study found. Homeowners, by contrast, shaved a comparatively meager \$2.8 billion off their property valuations.

As a result, a significant portion of the tax burden shifted from businesses onto homeowners. Businesses saved about \$3.3 billion in taxes — a reduction of 12.5% of their total tax tab, while homeowners ended up paying \$1.9 billion more, an increase of 6.9% to their total tax tab. The remaining \$1.4 billion, which would have been paid by businesses to special taxing districts, was eliminated from tax bills.



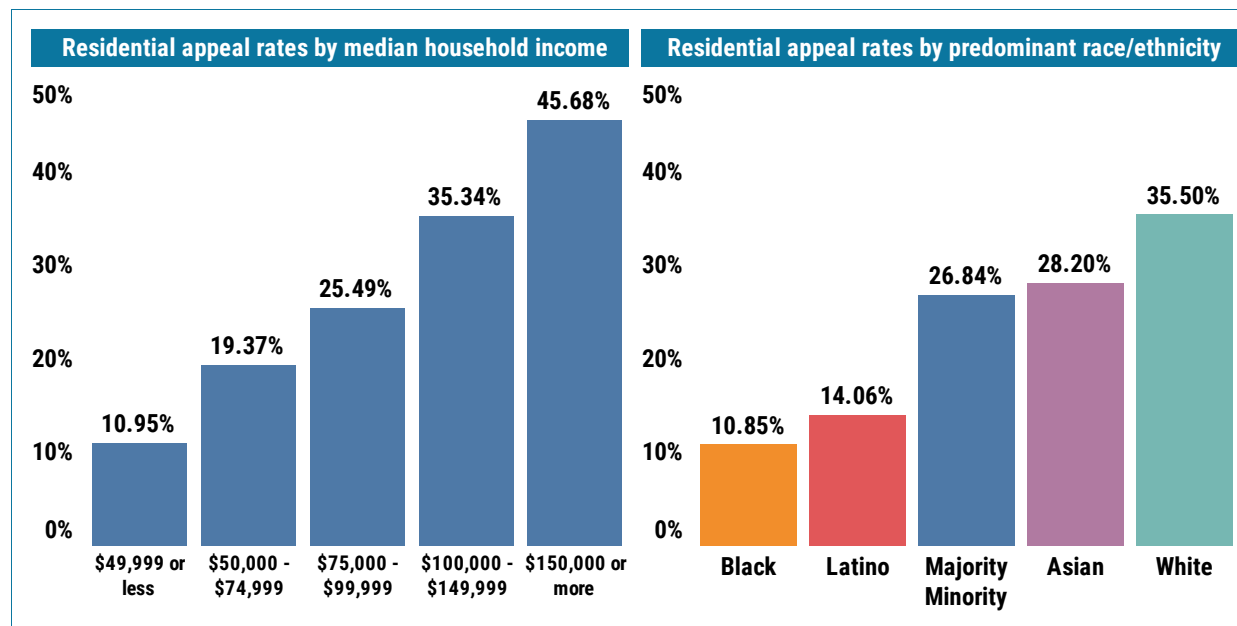
The study found that while businesses historically have done well getting their assessments lowered, they were particularly successful more recently, from 2021 to 2023. During that same period, residential reductions decreased.

The increase in business reductions from 2021 to 2023 came during a period when the Assessor's Office significantly increased initial business assessments, and more appeals were filed with the Board of Review than the assessor. The Board of Review granted more than two thirds of the business reductions.



The additional tax burden on homeowners was not shared equally. Homeowners from the county's wealthiest areas, with annual household incomes of \$150,000 or more, saw their taxes go up by 5.2%. By comparison, homeowners in the least affluent areas, with household incomes below \$50,000, paid nearly 9.8% more.

That disparity was caused in large part by appeal rates that differed substantially by neighborhood, depending on both the neighborhood's predominant race and income level.



Homeowners in the highest-income areas appealed their assessments 46% of the time, compared to less than 11% for homeowners in the lowest-income areas. Similarly, homeowners from predominantly white neighborhoods appealed their assessments far more often than homeowners in Black and Latino areas.

The study also determined that when homeowners don't appeal, they tend to pay more in property taxes than they otherwise would have.

The study highlights these disparities by comparing a Census tract in the Gage Park Community Area on the Southwest Side of Chicago to one in the North Center Community Area on the North Side.

In the Gage Park Census tract, the median household income was \$39,828 and 96% of residents were Latino. Only 5.2% of homeowners contested their 2021 reassessments, and bills rose by 22.8% after appeals.

In the North Center Census tract, the median household income was \$163,625, and more than 57% of residents were white. More than 60% of homeowners appealed their 2021 reassessments, and their bills went up by 14.4% — 8.48 percentage points less than in the Gage Park Census tract.

The study suggests that current efforts by the Assessor's Office and Board of Review to standardize methodology and share data could lead to much smaller business assessment reductions. That, in turn, could reduce the significant shifts in tax burden that fuel the regressivity caused by the appeals process. It also stresses the importance of ensuring that low-income homeowners are provided with the knowhow and tools to appeal their assessments.

*To view all of the data used in our report, please see the [interactive map and table](#), where you can sort appeal rates, success rates and tax bill changes by community, property type, predominant race, median income and assessment years — or download the data.*

*For the complete analysis, please read the full study.*