

POLICY BRIEFING | OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Oakland Homeless Encampment Closures After Grants Pass

JAN 2021–DEC 2024

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Based on:

Kaur, P., Gabbe, C. J., Saxton, K. B., Lattanner, M. R., & Chang, J. S. (2026). Homeless Encampment Closures Before and After City of Grants Pass v Johnson. American Journal of Public Health, (0), e1-e4.

The policy question

In June 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* that municipalities may enforce bans on outdoor sleeping even when shelter space is unavailable.

POLICY SHIFT

After the decision, governments amplified efforts to address public homelessness.

WHAT A CLOSURE MEANS

A “sweep” displaces people from a location and may involve property seizure.

STUDY QUESTION

Did closure frequency and geography change in Oakland after the ruling?

How the study was conducted

BEFORE

Jan 2021 – Jun 2024



AFTER

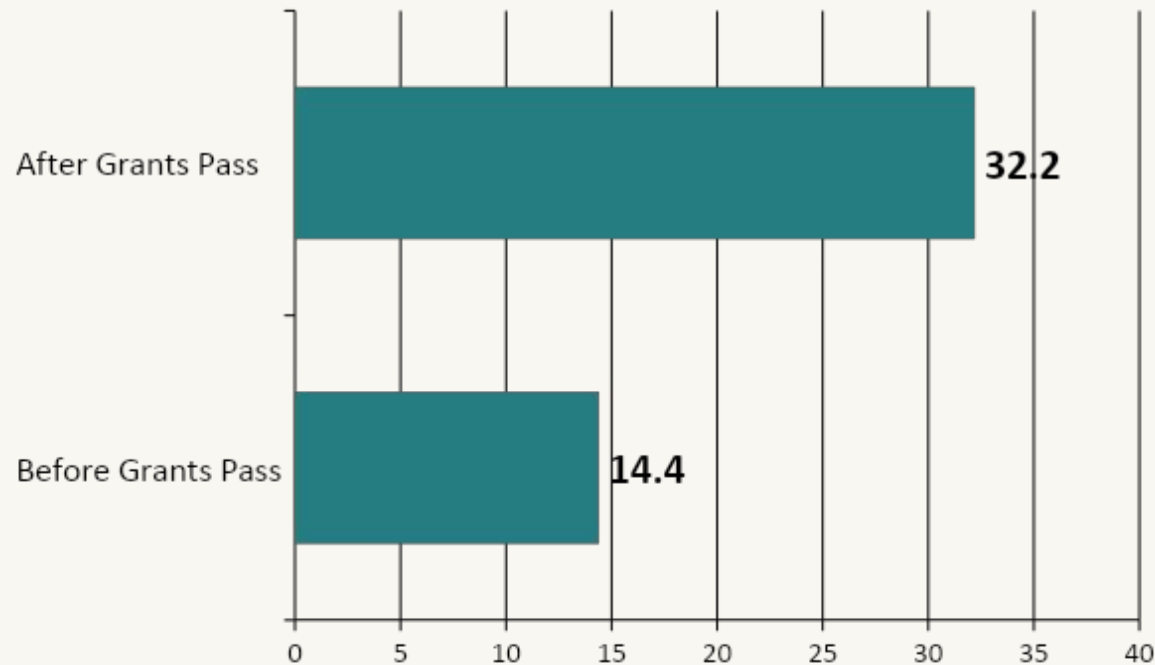
Jul 2024 – Dec 2024



- Publicly available City of Oakland encampment-management records.
- 1,123 total interventions recorded; analysis focused on 785 full or partial closures (70%).
- Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis compared closure activity and neighborhood characteristics.

Monthly closures more than doubled

Mean closures per month



2.2×

**increase in average monthly
closures**

14.4 → 32.2

The monthly distribution was significantly higher after the ruling ($P = .002$).

Repeat closures point to a limited solution

378

unique locations

156

locations closed more
than once

41%

of locations had repeat
closures

One site at Union Point Park was fully closed 9 times before Grants Pass and twice again after.

The authors interpret repeated reinhabitation as evidence that closures do not effectively resolve encampments.

Closure activity spread and shifted east

MEAN CENTER

≈ 1.5 miles

southeast shift toward East
Oakland after the ruling



**Hot spots shifted toward East
Oakland, including industrial areas
near Oakland International Airport.**

The authors identify two possible explanations:

- Enforcement expanded to new locations.
- People dispersed and new encampments formed after earlier closures.

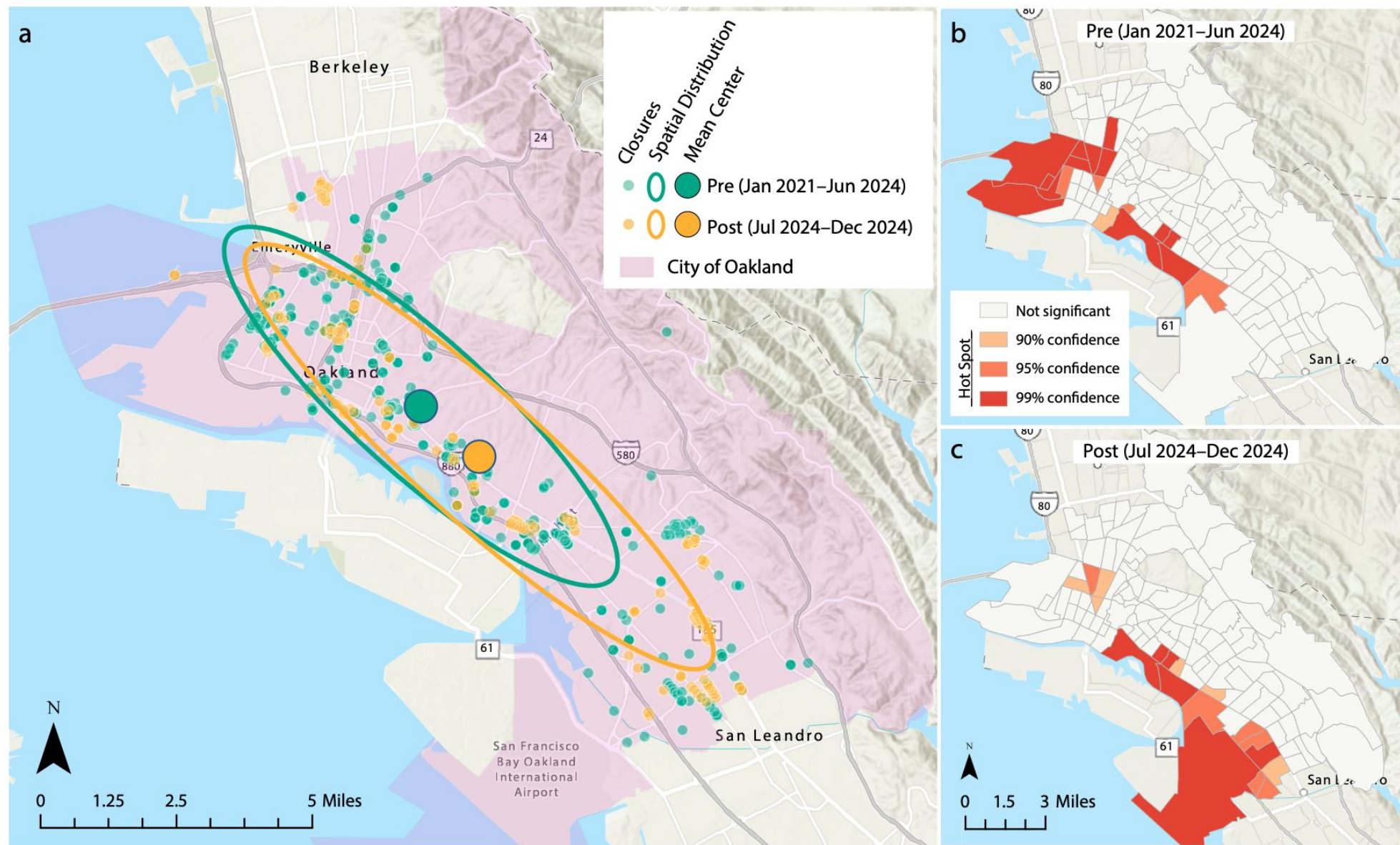


FIGURE 1— Encampment Closures (a) Mean Center and Directional Distribution Pre and Post *Grants Pass*, (b) Pre-*Grants Pass* Census Tract-Level Hot Spot Analysis, and (c) Post-*Grants Pass* Census Tract-Level Hot Spot Analysis: Oakland, CA, January 2021–December 2024

Closures shifted toward more economically vulnerable neighborhoods

Compared with pre-decision closure locations, post-decision locations were in census tracts with:

LOWER

Median household income

\$67,373 vs \$85,391

HIGHER

Median poverty rate

18.1% vs 17.7%

HIGHER

Median share of Hispanic residents

22.4% vs 20.7%

HIGHER

Median share of Black residents

19.4% vs 17.8%

Post-decision locations also had lower median shares of White and Asian/Pacific Islander residents.

Shift resources from repeated closures toward housing and accountability

- | | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| 01 | Expand adequate shelter and housing | The authors recommend reallocating resources toward options that can meet demand. |
| 02 | Improve pathways into housing | Scale supportive housing and strengthen pathways into shelter and housing options. |
| 03 | Publicly report closure outcomes | Track and report health, economic, and displacement outcomes of encampment closures. |