



## Facts and figures

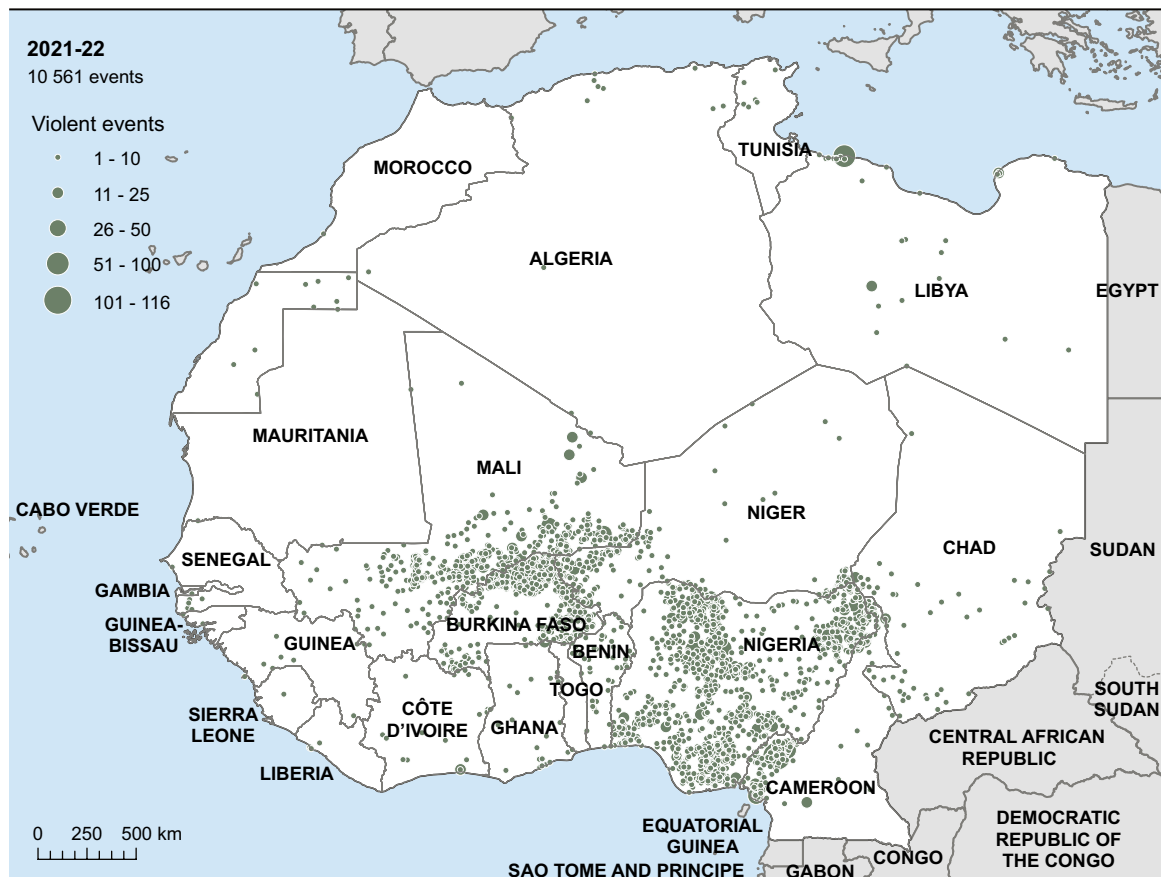
# Urbanisation and Conflicts in North and West Africa

### VIOLENCE IS PREDOMINANTLY RURAL

Despite rapid urbanisation, violence has become more rural, particularly in West Africa. More than 40% of all events and fatalities recorded since 2000 occurred in areas with fewer than 300 people per square kilometre. When violence

does occur in urban areas, it is more frequent in small urban agglomerations of less than 100 000 inhabitants than in medium or large urban areas.

Violent events in North and West Africa, 2021-22



Note : Data is available through 30 June 2022

Source : OECD/SWAC (2023), based on ACLED (2022) data. ACLED data is publicly available.



From 2000-22, rural areas accounted for

> **40%**

of all violent events and fatalities



Proportion of violent events in urban areas **has decreased** over time:

**WEST AFRICA**

2012:

**70%**

2022:

**< 20%**

**NORTH AFRICA**

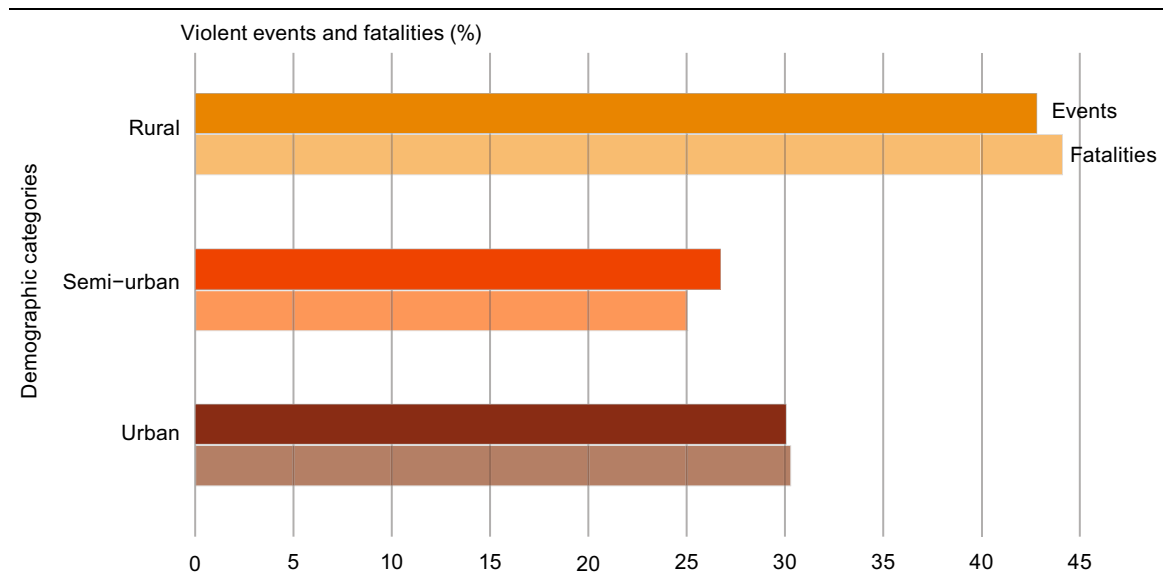
2012:

**80%**

2022:

**40%**

Violent events and fatalities by demographic categories in North and West Africa, 2000-22



Notes: Data available through 30 June 2022. Under the United Nations definition, cells of 1 500 or more people per square km are classified as urban, those between 300 and 1 499 as semi-urban, and those below 300 are rural (United Nation 2020).

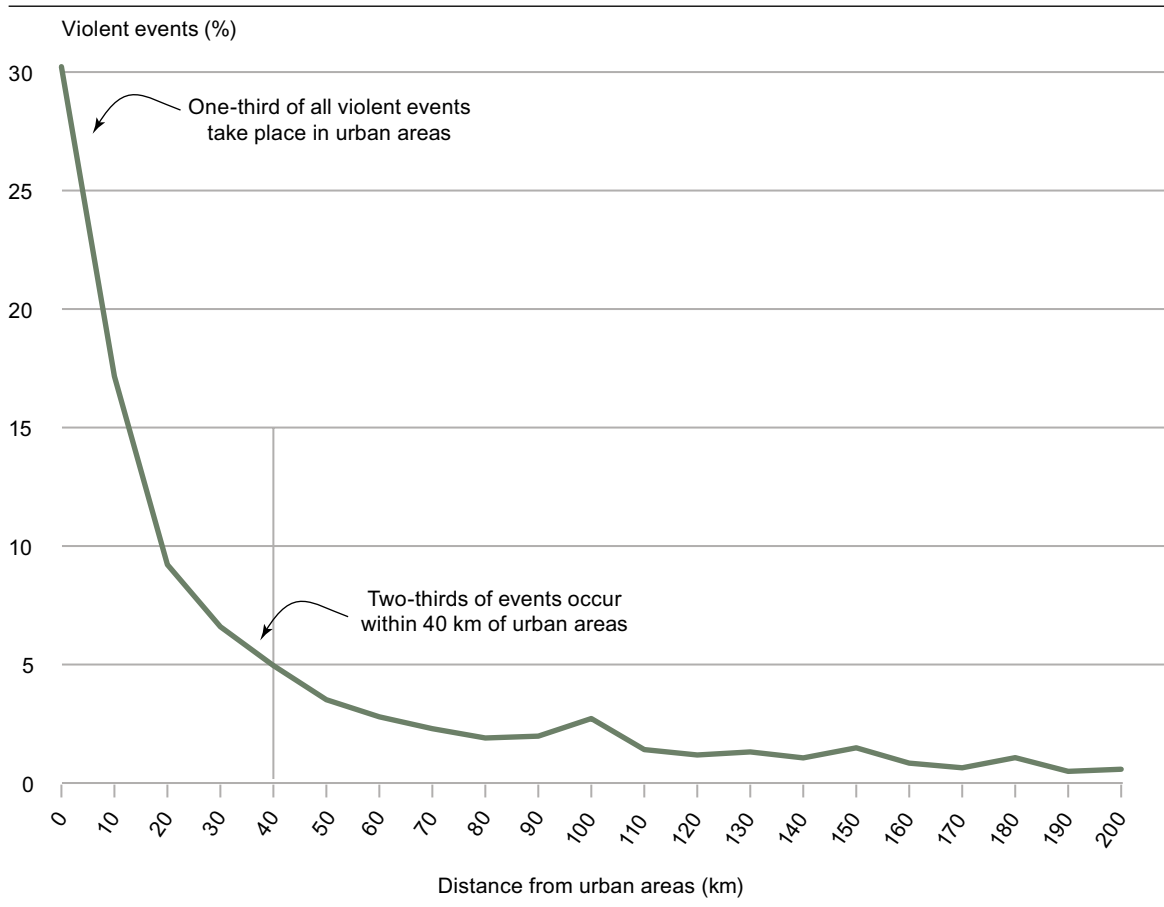
Source : OECD/SWAC (2023), based on data from ACLED (2020) and WorldPop (2022) data. ACLED data is publicly available.

## VIOLENCE IN RURAL AREAS ISOLATES MAJOR CITIES

Violence in rural areas tends to cut off major cities from their hinterlands. Since the mid-2010s, major urban centres such as Niamey, Ouagadougou or Bamako have been surrounded by ever-expanding areas of conflict. Movement and communication between secure areas around these centres has become

increasingly difficult as adjacent rural areas have become zones of profound insecurity. This illustrates the need to better understand the geographical dimension of conflicts. It also highlights the need for policies to consider the local, national, cross-border and regional dimensions of conflict.

Violent events by distance from urban areas in North and West Africa, 2000-22



Source: OECD/SWAC (2023), based on data from ACLED (2020) and WorldPop (2022) data. ACLED data is publicly available.

## MAJOR HOTSPOTS OF VIOLENCE



**5 countries:** Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Cameroon and Niger, account for

**93%**

of violent events

**94%**

of fatalities

in North and West Africa from January 2021 - June 2022.

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### NIGERIA

Nigeria has suffered a series of overlapping conflicts, including the jihadist insurgency led by Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad

region, violence carried out by armed groups in the Niger River Delta, and communal violence in the middle belt.



From 2021-22, **Nigeria alone accounts for:**

**40%**

of violent events

**51%**

of fatalities

**38%**

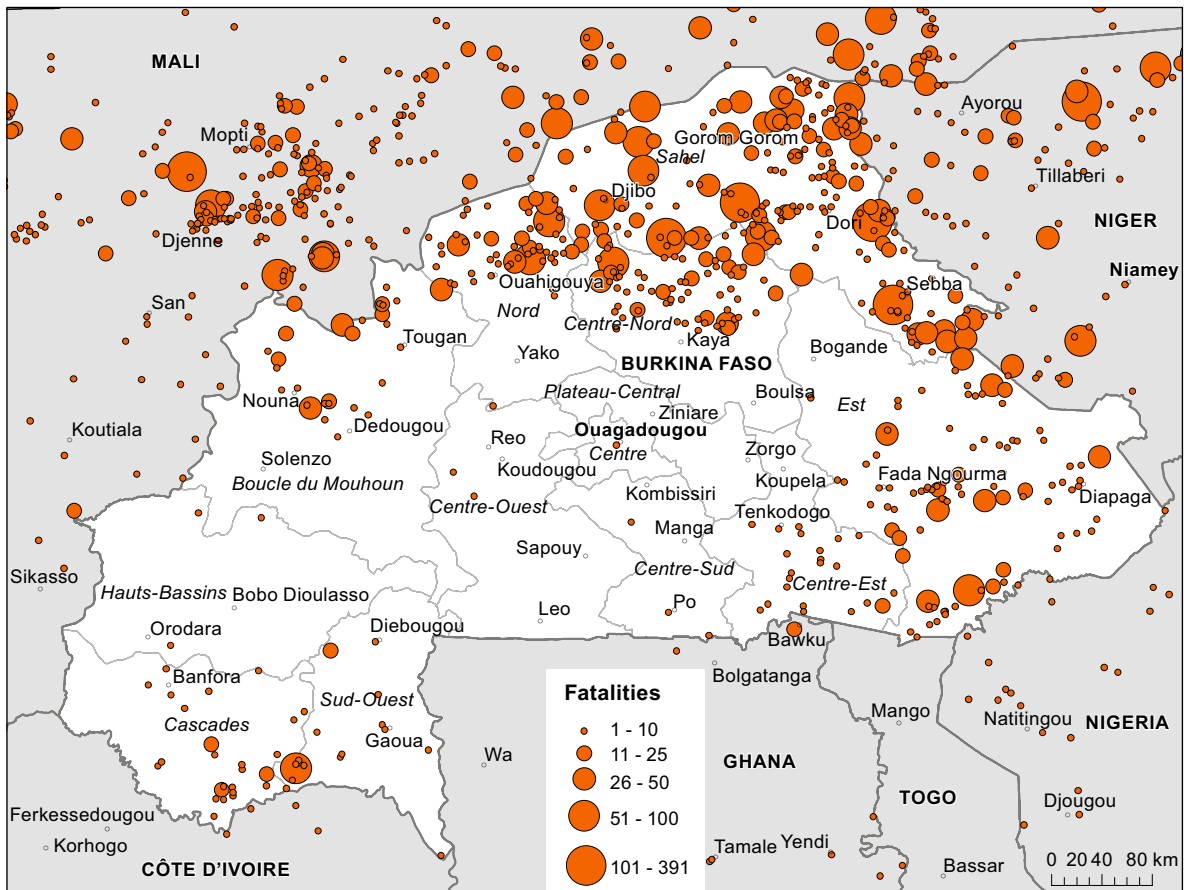
of the population of North and West Africa.

## CENTRAL SAHEL

Central Sahel is contending with a Tuareg rebellion and coups d'état in Mali and Burkina Faso. The spread of the Malian insurgency has made Burkina Faso the second most affected country after Nigeria, with violence engulfing most of its border regions. Ouagadougou, the capital, has so far been largely untouched by

violence, although it is relatively close to some of the areas that have been most severely affected. In Niger, violence has remained constant, with the bulk of violent events (45%) and fatalities (63%) now located in the Tillabéri region in the southwest, bordering both Burkina Faso and Mali.

Fatalities in Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries, 2021



Source: OECD/SWAC (2023), based on data from ACLED (2020) and WorldPop (2022) data. ACLED data is publicly available.

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, most violent events have occurred in rural areas. In Mali, for example, more than 80% of violent events in

2022 occurred in rural areas. All three countries show similar trends as they are all facing major jihadist insurgencies.



## In 2021, Jihadist organisations accounted for

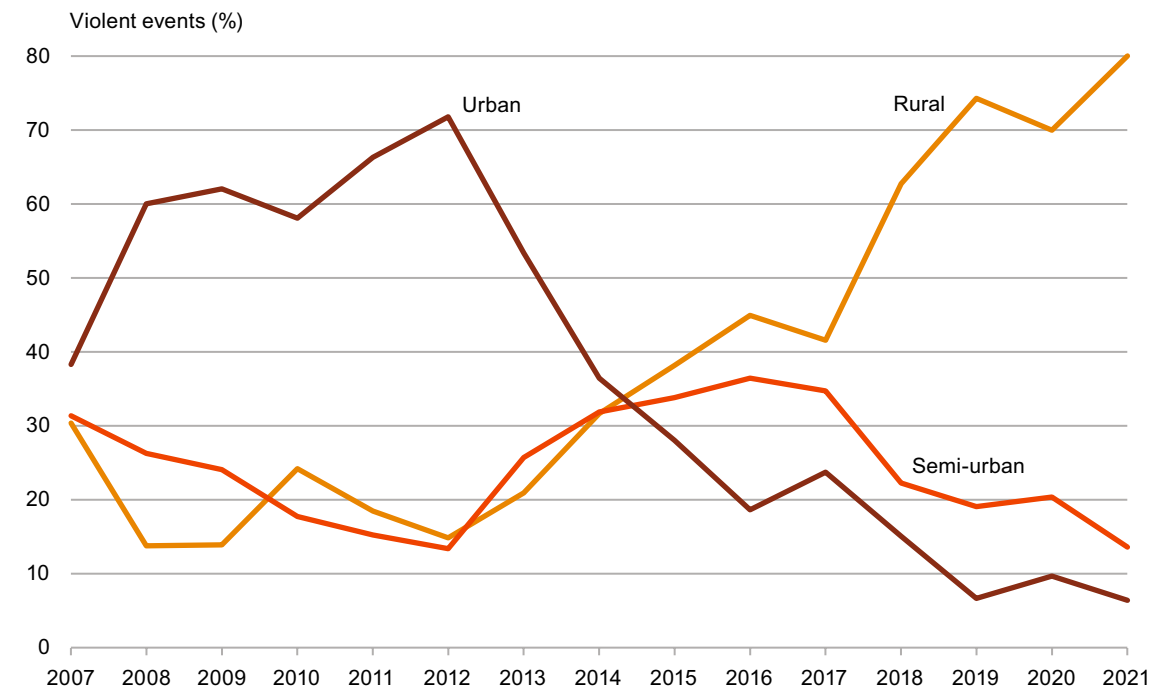
**80%**

of rural violence

**< 10%**

of urban violence

Violent events involving select jihadist organisations in North and West Africa, 2007-21



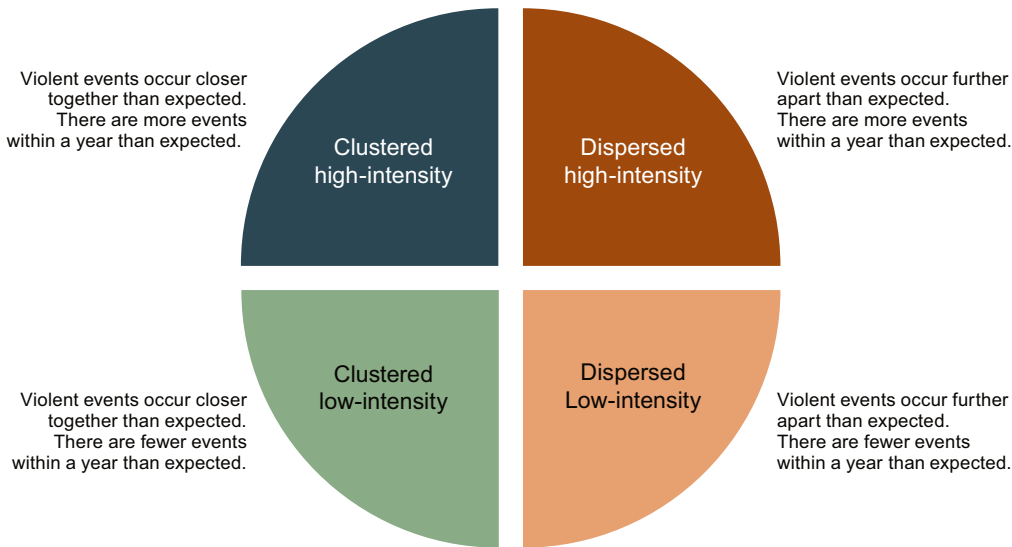
Note : The following organisations are considered: Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, Ansaroul Islam, Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), Group for supporting Islam and Muslims (JNIM), Katibat Macina. Under the United Nations (2020) definition, cells of 1 500 or more people per square km are classified as urban, those between 300 and 1 499 as semi-urban and these below 300 as rural.

Source : OECD/SWAC (2023) based on ACLED (2022) and WorldPop (2022) data. ACLED data is publicly available.

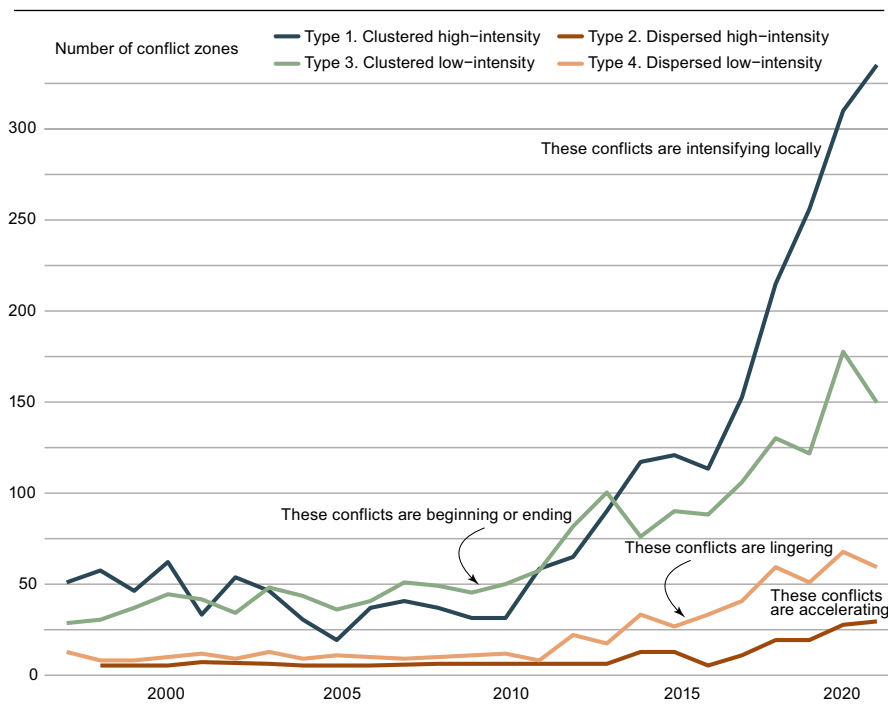
## THE SPATIAL CONFLICT DYNAMICS INDICATOR (SCDI)

The SCDi maps conflict dynamics across North and West Africa. It measures the intensity and spatial distribution of violent events to identify four different categories. These categories indicate where a conflict is in its overall lifecycle. For example, when violence first emerges, it tends to be clustered and of either high or

low intensity. When the conflict becomes established, it tends to persist in a clustered/ high-intensity form. As a conflict starts to end, it tends to move from clustered high-intensity to dispersed high-intensity before stopping altogether.



Number of conflict zones in North and West Africa by type, 1997-2021



Source: OECD/SWAC (2023), based on data from ACLED (2022) data. ACLED data is publicly available.



This report covers:

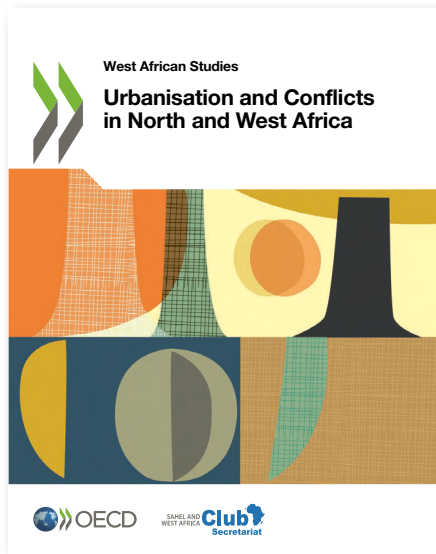
**21**  
countries

**22**  
years

**51 000**  
violent events

**193 000**  
fatalities

**10**  
case studies



## Read and download

An online version of the book *Urbanisation and Conflicts in North and West Africa* is accessible via

[www.oecd.org/swac/publications](http://www.oecd.org/swac/publications)

This work was carried out in co-operation with the University of Florida Sahel Research Group.

The book is part of *The West African Studies series*, which examines current economic and social issues in West Africa. The full series, along with the *West African Working Papers* series, is accessible via

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