



The Higgs boson's lifetime measurement via off-shell decays to W-bosons

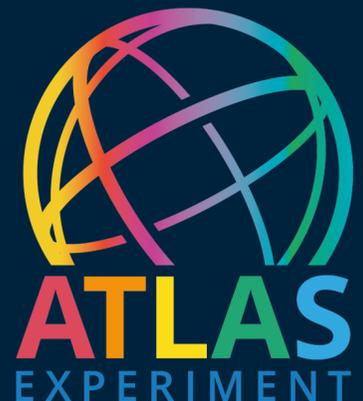
MoriondEW, 29-03-2025, La Thuile

Zef Wolffs,
on behalf of the ATLAS collaboration

Nikhef, University of Amsterdam



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM



The lifetime and the width

- The lifetime of the Higgs boson is $\sim 10^{-22} s$, but is closely related to its **decay rate**

$$\Gamma = \frac{\hbar}{\tau}$$

- The **decay rate is the width of the Breit-Wigner peak! Let's measure it**

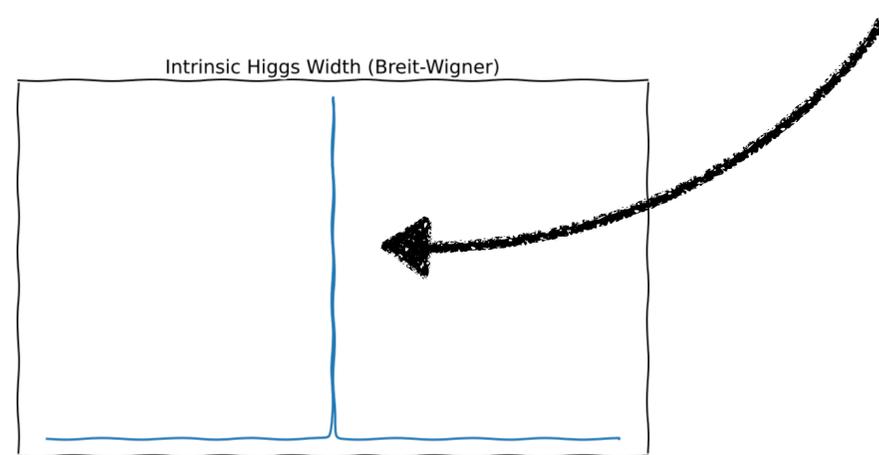
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Intrinsic Higgs
width 4.1 MeV in
standard model



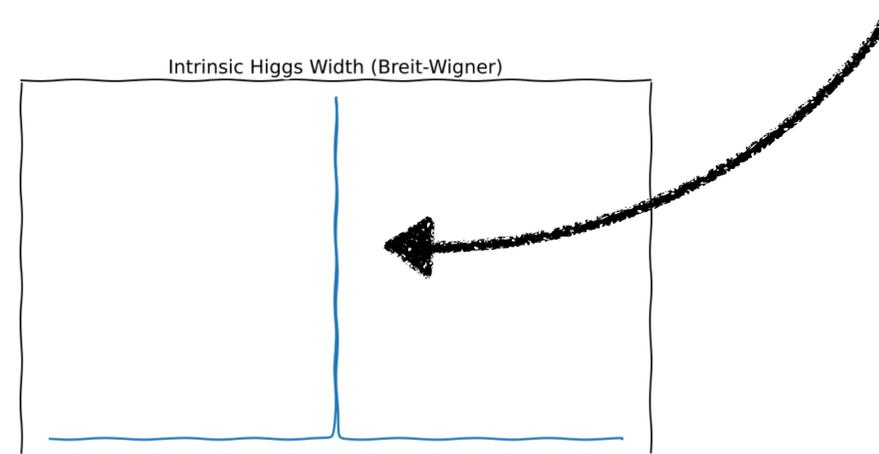
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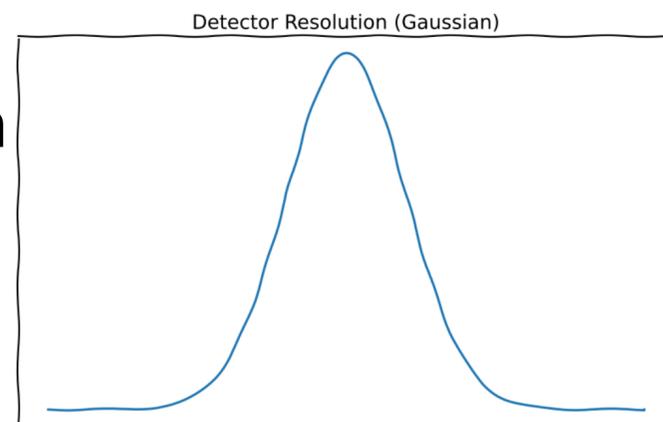
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Detector resolution
 ~ 1000 MeV in
ATLAS detector



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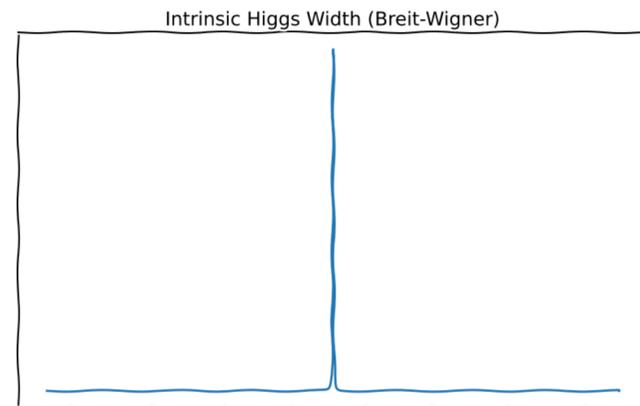
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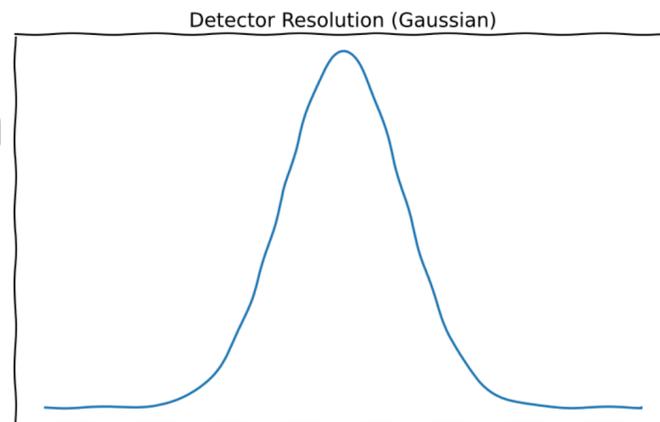
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What we see in the detector:

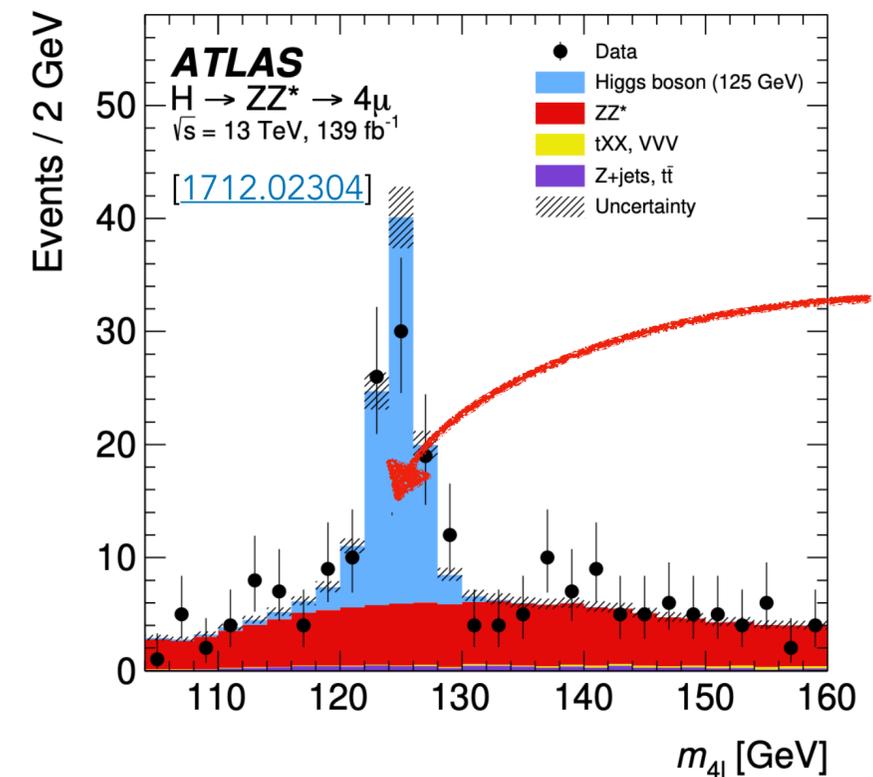
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Detector resolution ~ 1000 MeV in ATLAS detector



Convolution



This dot has a width of 250 MeV

The lifetime and the width

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$$\Gamma = \frac{\hbar}{\tau}$$

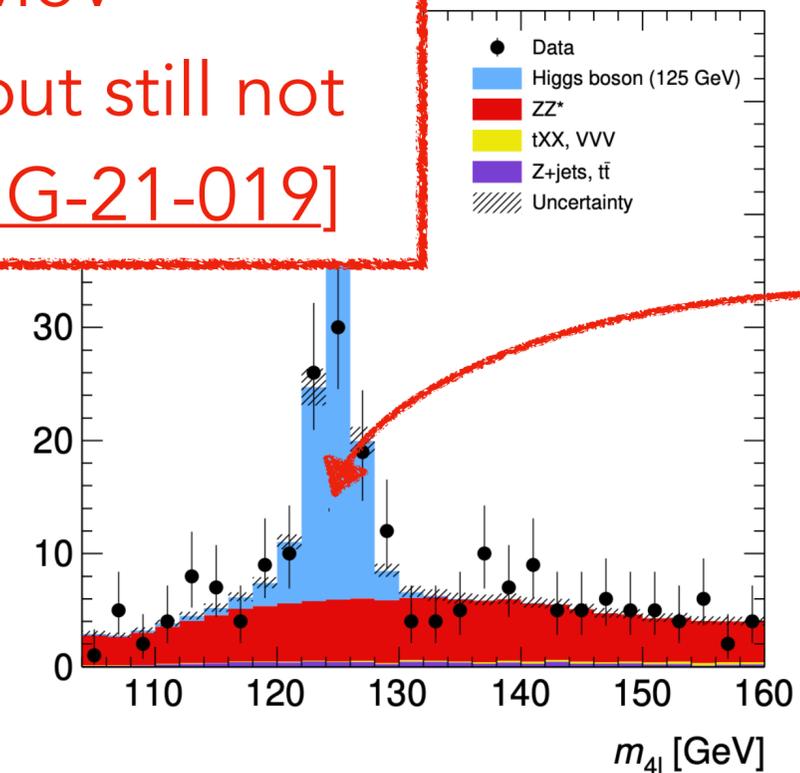
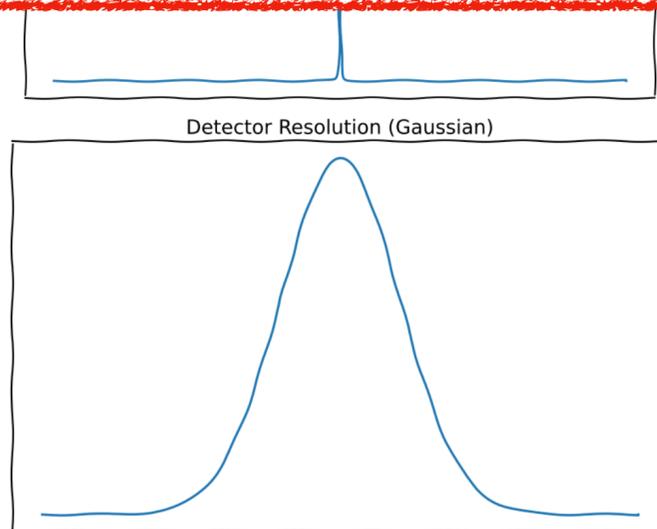
- The **decay rate**

The CMS collaboration did try the direct approach, and achieved a constraint of ~ 60 MeV \rightarrow pretty impressive given the situation, but still not close to the actual SM value (~ 4 MeV) [HIG-21-019]

it
in the detector:

Intrinsic Higgs width 4.1 MeV in standard model

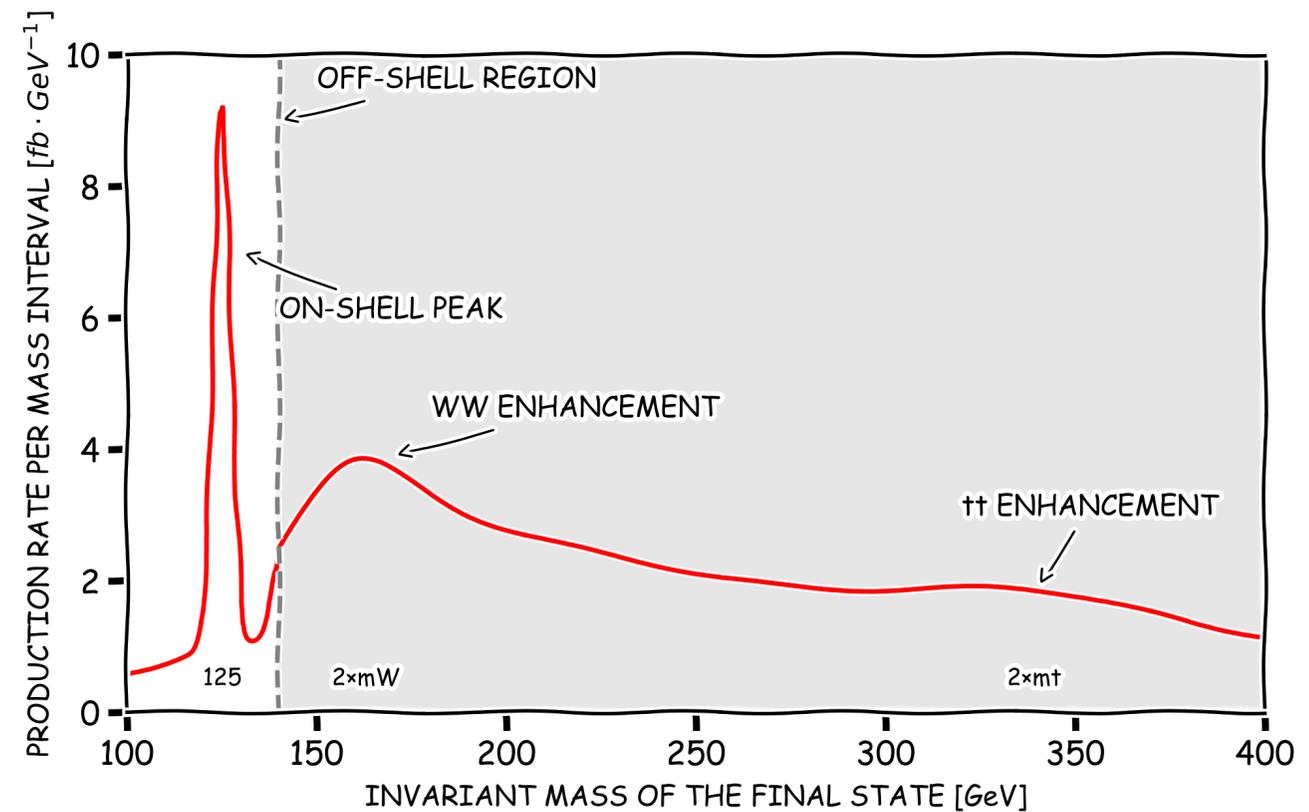
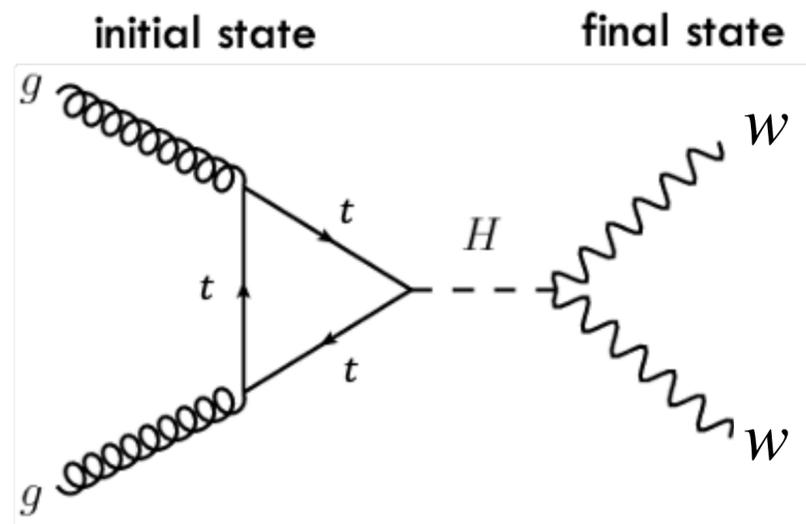
Detector resolution ~ 1000 MeV in ATLAS detector



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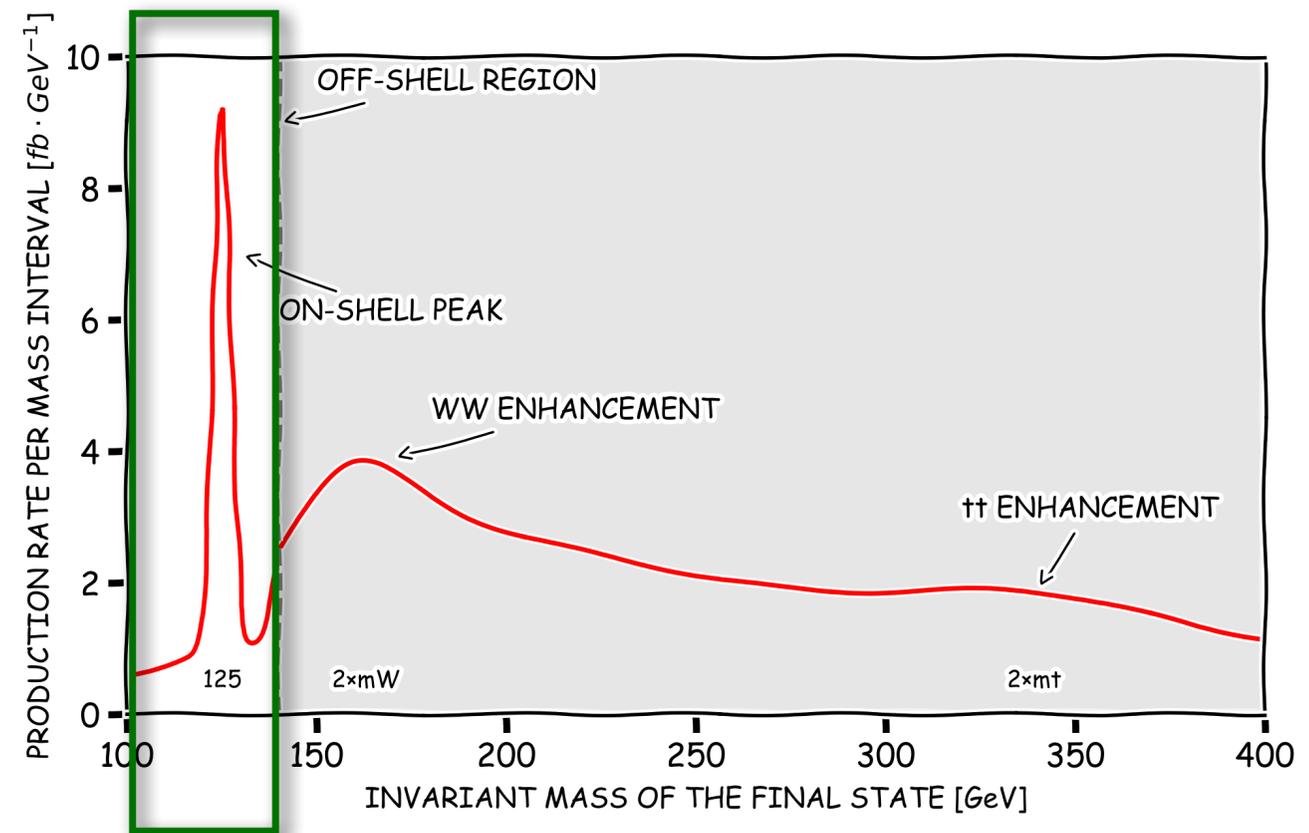
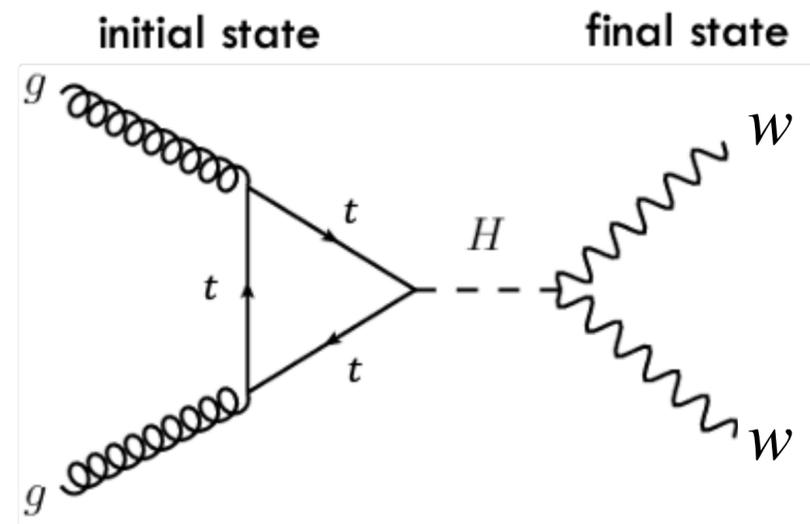
Another strategy to measure the Higgs width

- Caola and Melnikov [[1307.4935](#)] propose another strategy to measure the Higgs width



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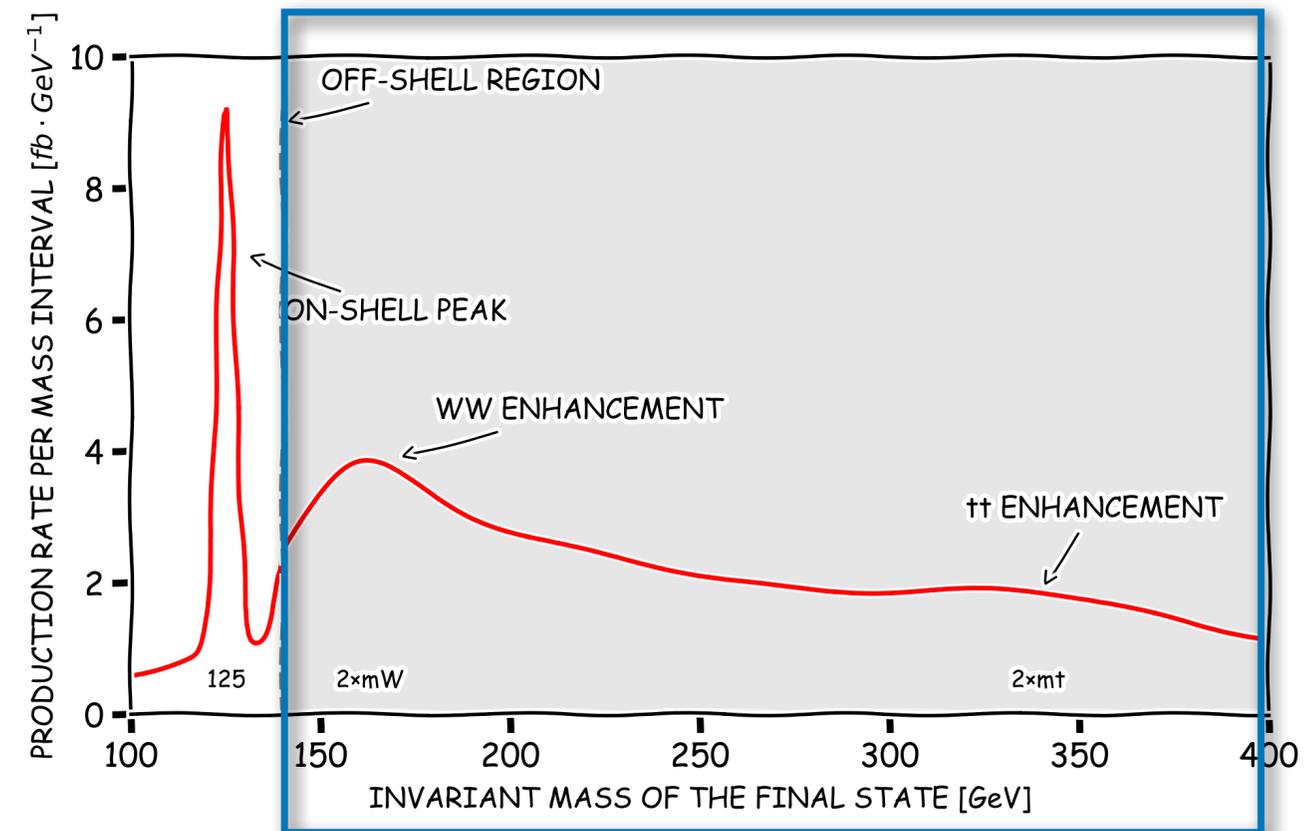
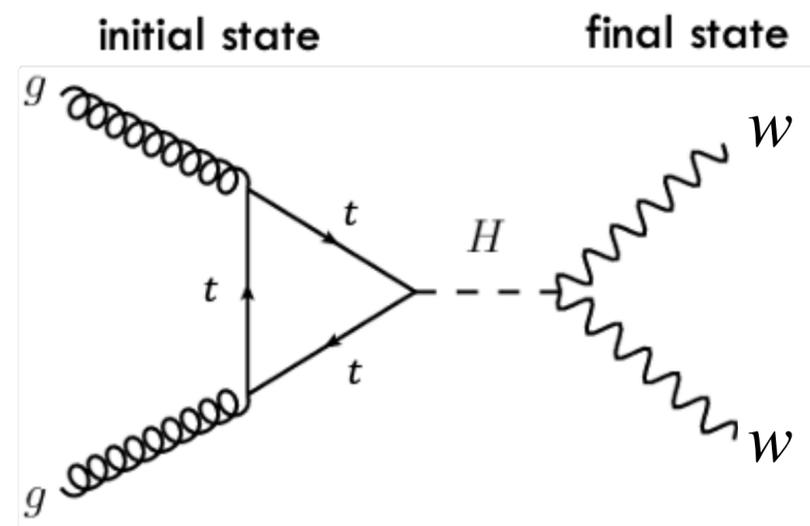
$$\frac{d\sigma_{i \rightarrow H \rightarrow f}}{dM_f^2} \sim \frac{g_i^2 g_f^2}{m_H^2 \Gamma_H^2 + (\cancel{M_f^2} + \cancel{m_H^2})^2}$$

Dominant term for the on-shell region

Degeneracy between couplings and the width in onshell regime!

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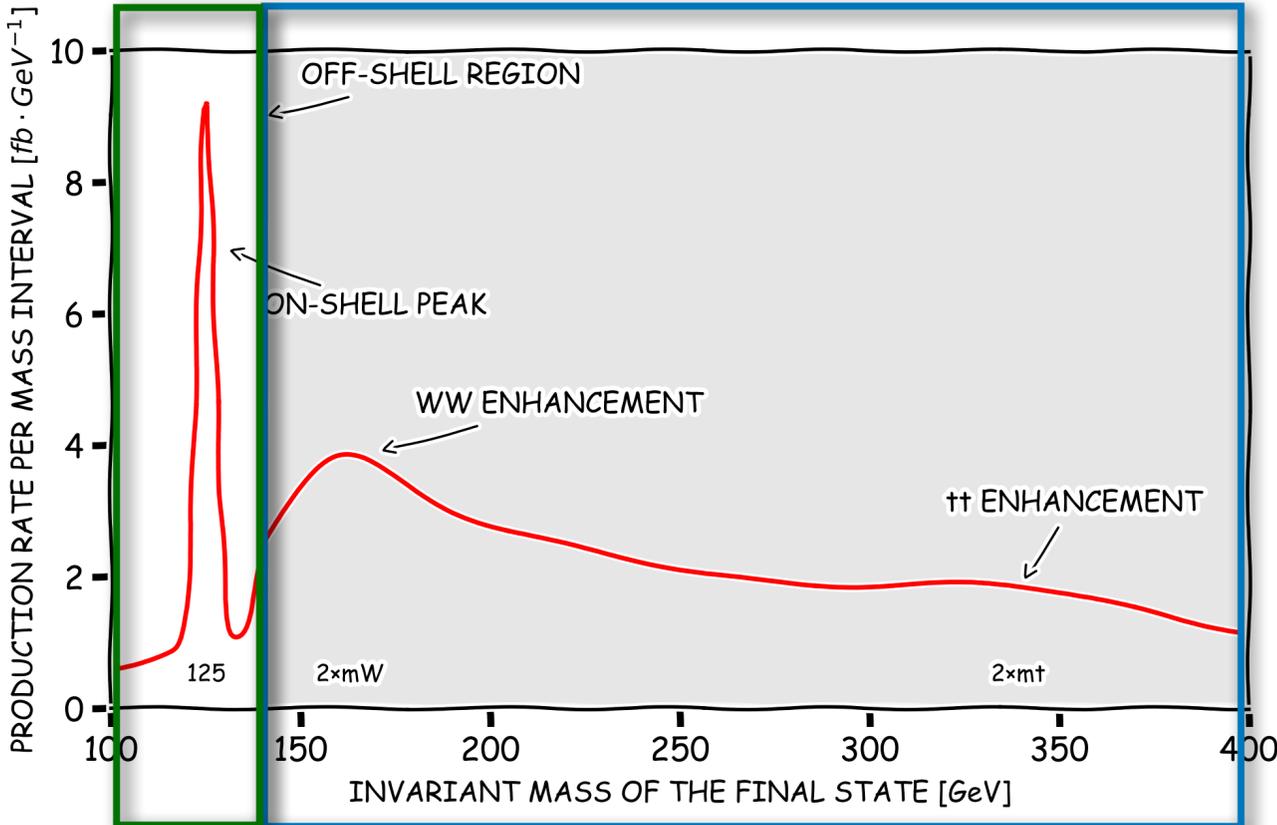
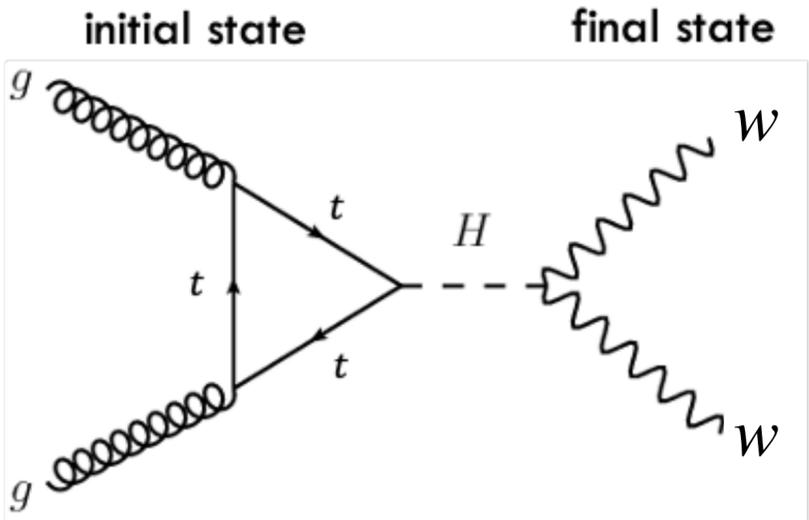
$$\frac{d\sigma_{i \rightarrow H \rightarrow f}}{dM_f^2} \sim \frac{g_i^2 g_f^2}{\cancel{m_H^2} + (M_f^2 - m_H^2)^2}$$

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Degeneracy resolved in offshell regime!

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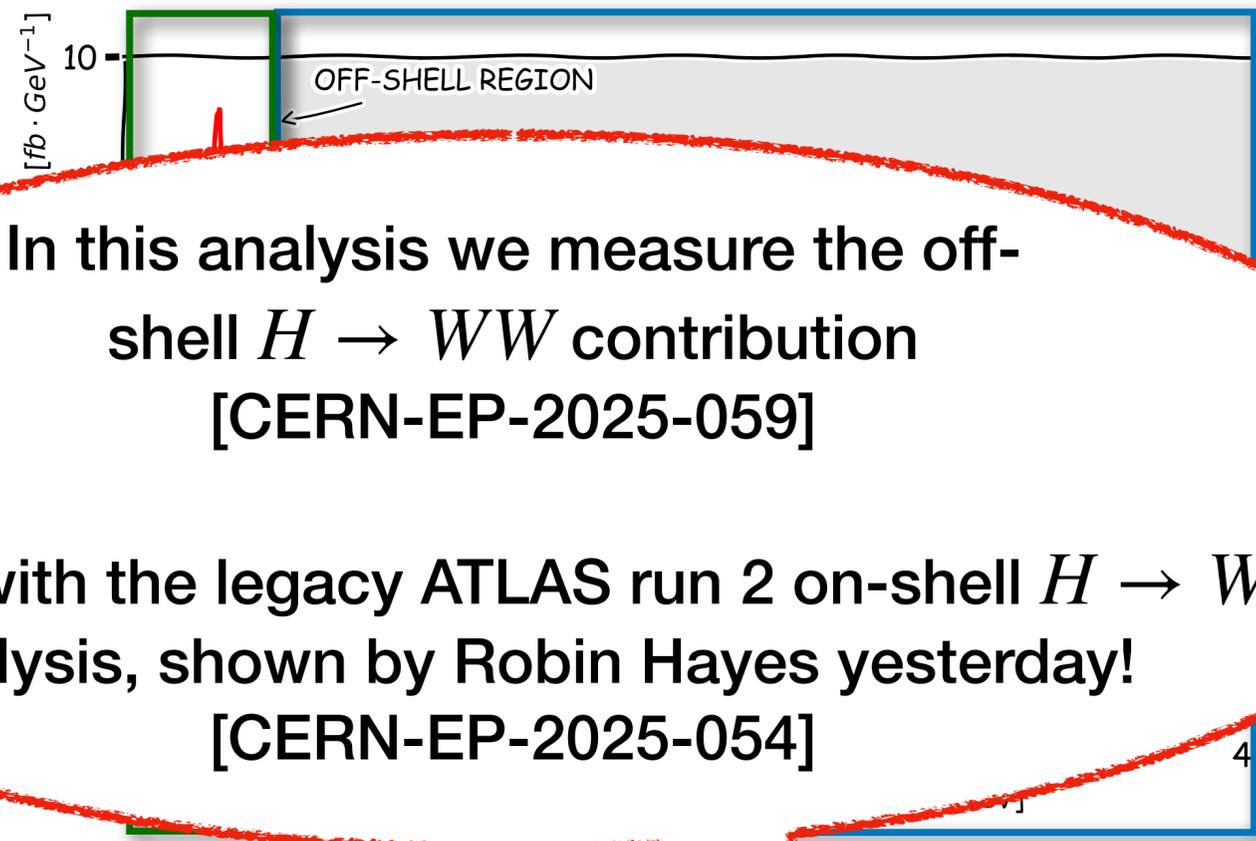
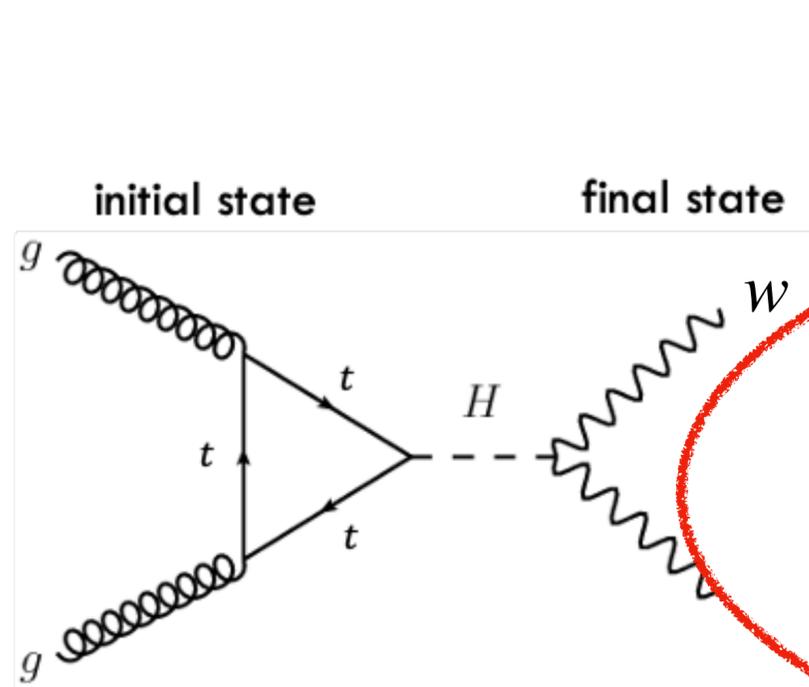
Dominant term for the on-shell region
Dominant term for the off-shell region

$\Gamma_H \propto \frac{\sigma_{i \rightarrow H \rightarrow f}^{off-shell}}{\sigma_{i \rightarrow H \rightarrow f}^{on-shell}}$

Assuming couplings (kappas) cancel out in on- and off-shell regimes

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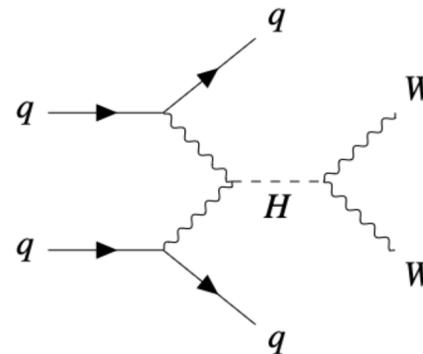
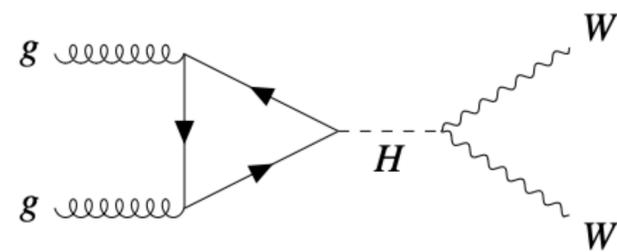
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Analysis strategy

Dataset: Full LHC Run 2 collected by ATLAS experiment

Signal production modes: EW and ggF production of Higgs

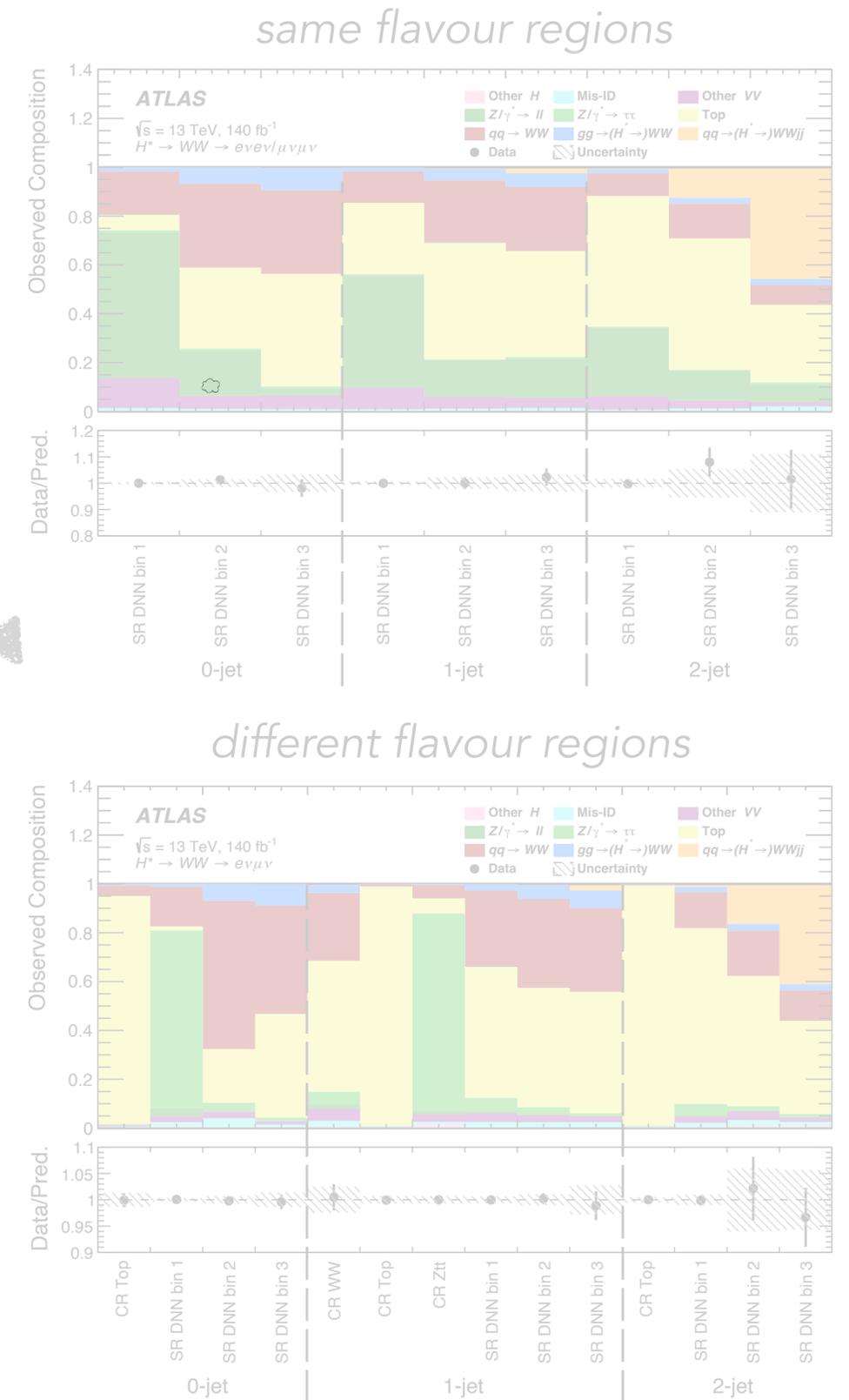
- Split up into **three jet channels**, 0j focusing on ggF, 2j focusing on EW, 1j mixed



Two signal decay modes

- Same flavour $H \rightarrow WW$ decays ($WW \rightarrow e\nu e\nu / \mu\nu \mu\nu$)
- Different flavour $H \rightarrow WW$ decays ($WW \rightarrow e\nu \mu\nu$)

Three DNN bins per analysis region

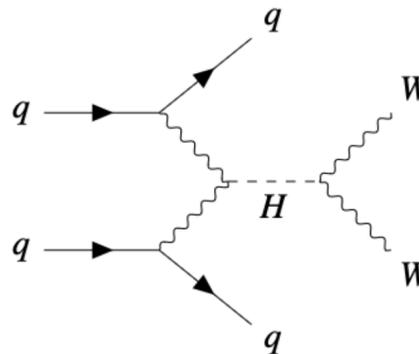
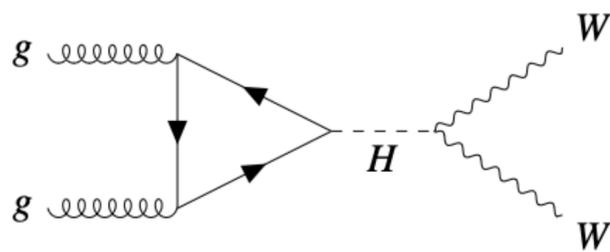


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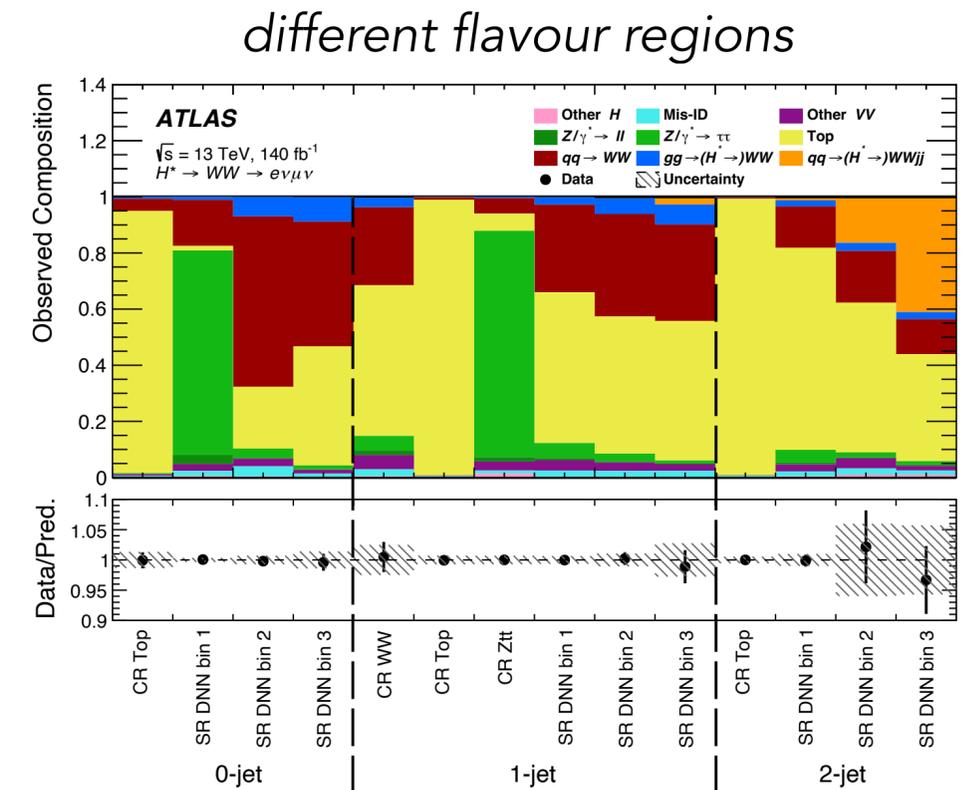
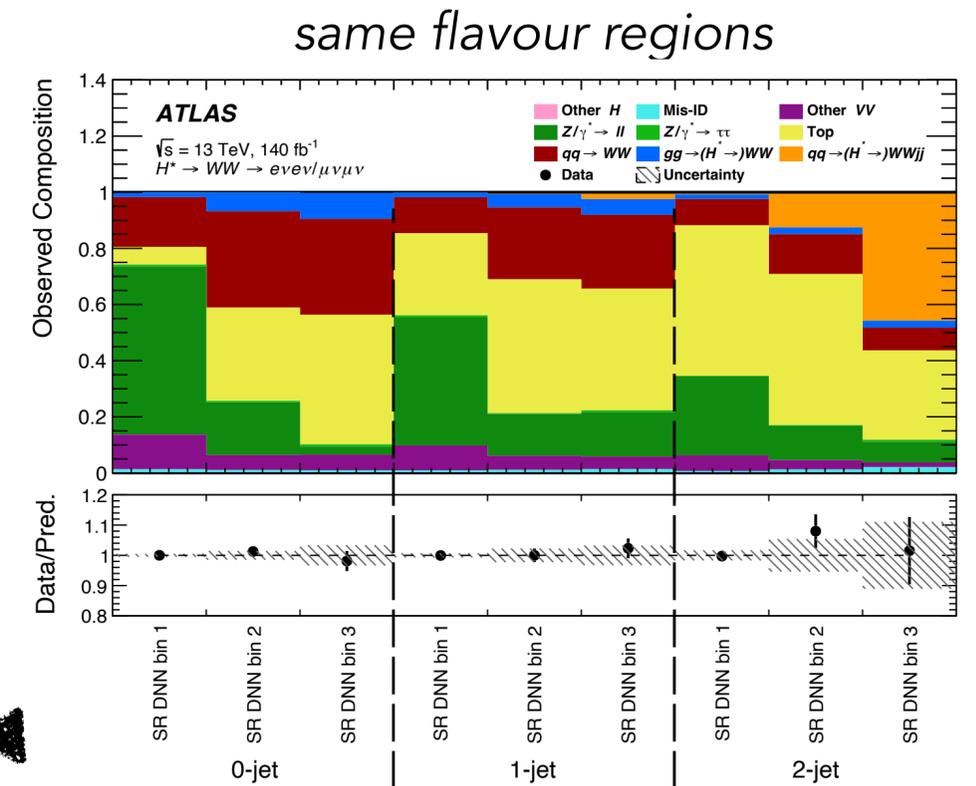
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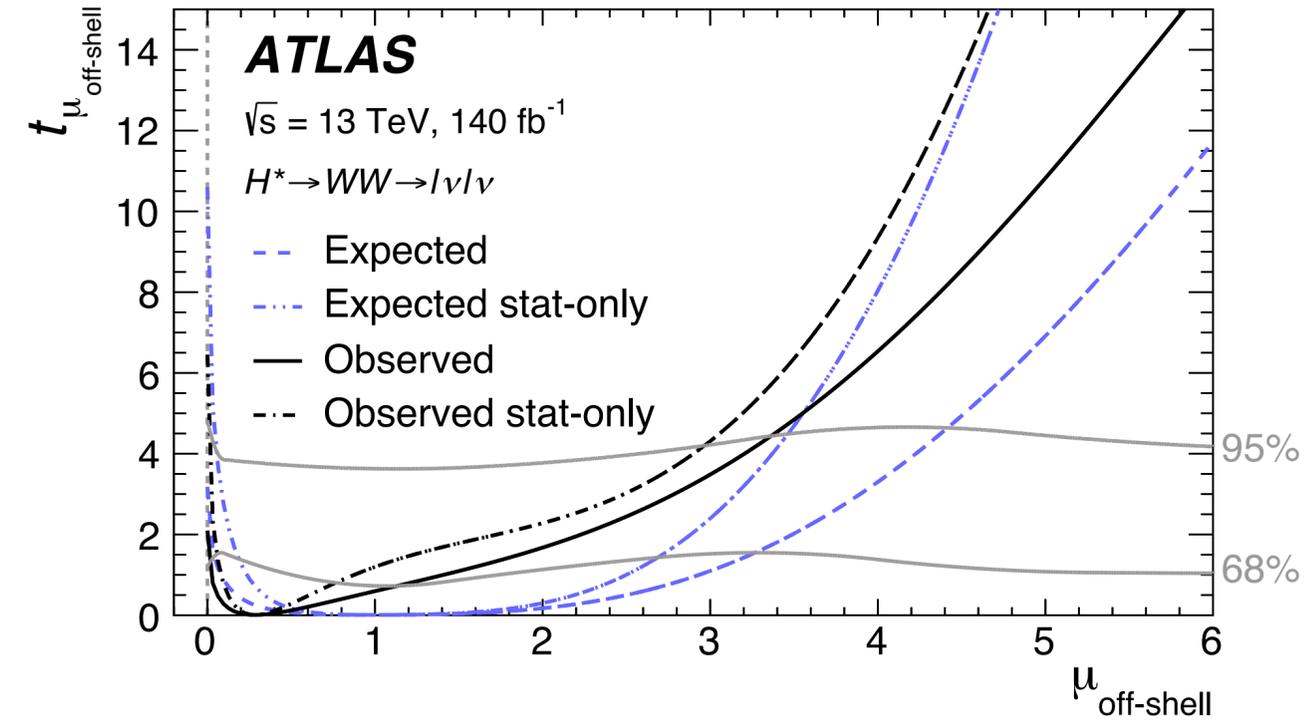
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Results

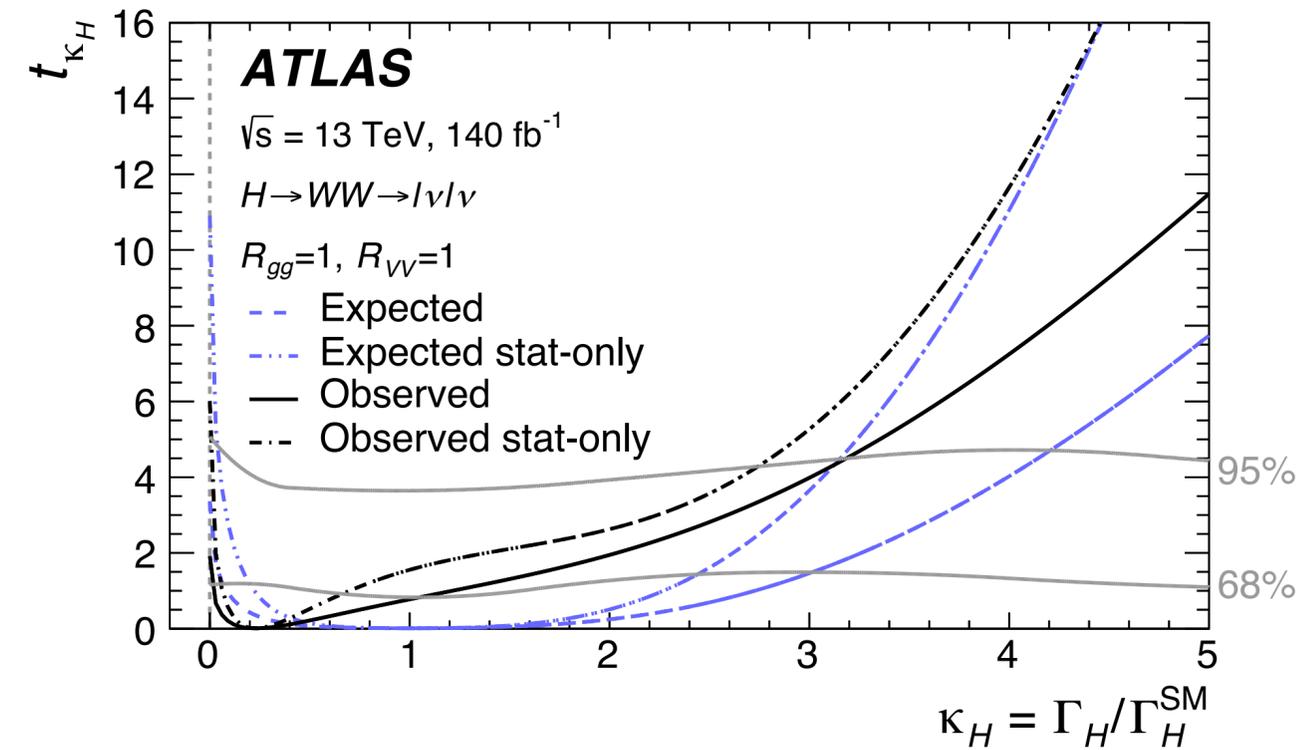
$H \rightarrow WW$ Off-shell signal strength parameter

- $\mu_{\text{off-shell}} = 0.3^{+0.9}_{-0.3}$ obs. ($1.0^{+2.3}_{-1.0}$ exp.)
- $\mu_{\text{off-shell}} < 3.4$ obs. (4.4 exp.) @ 95% CL



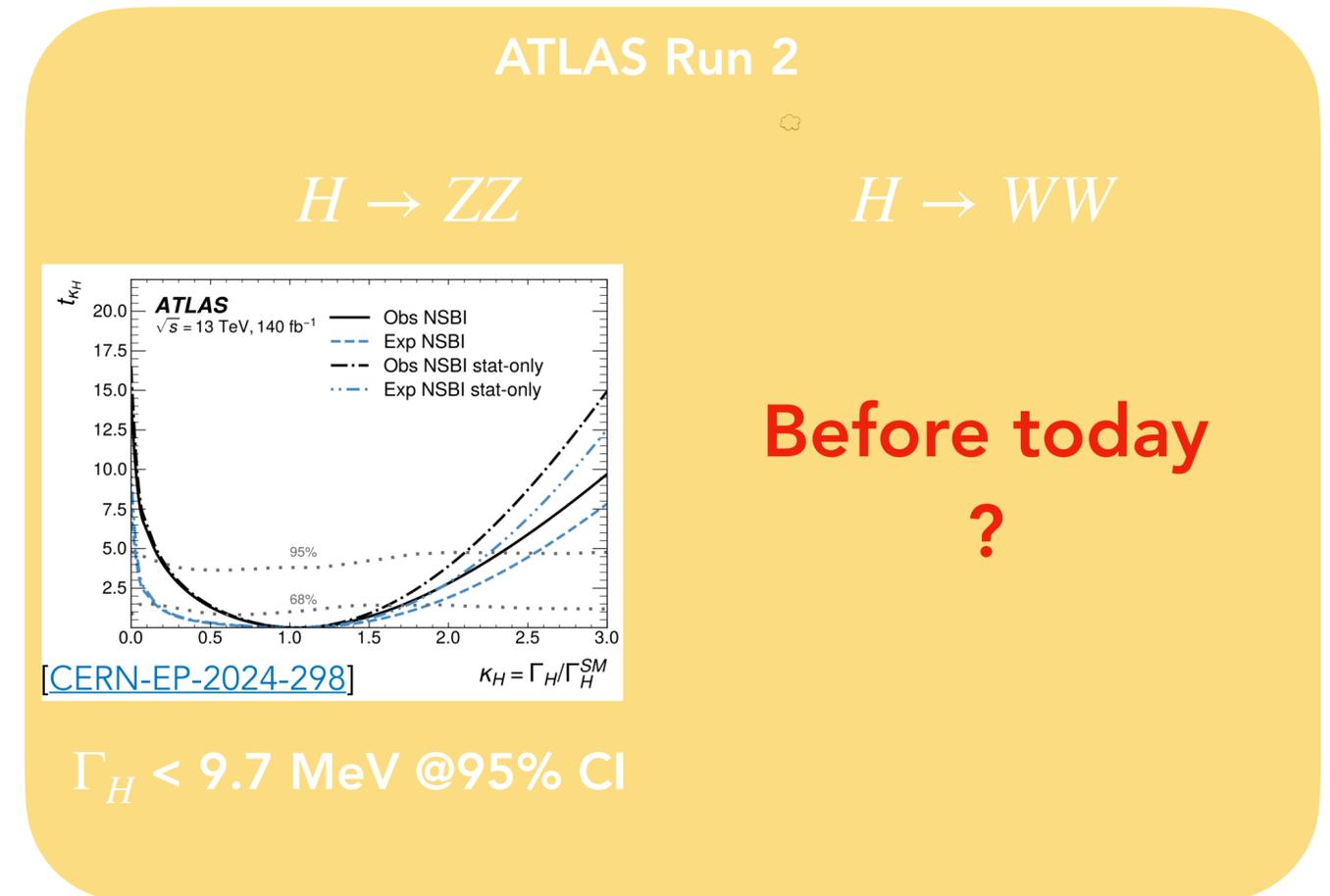
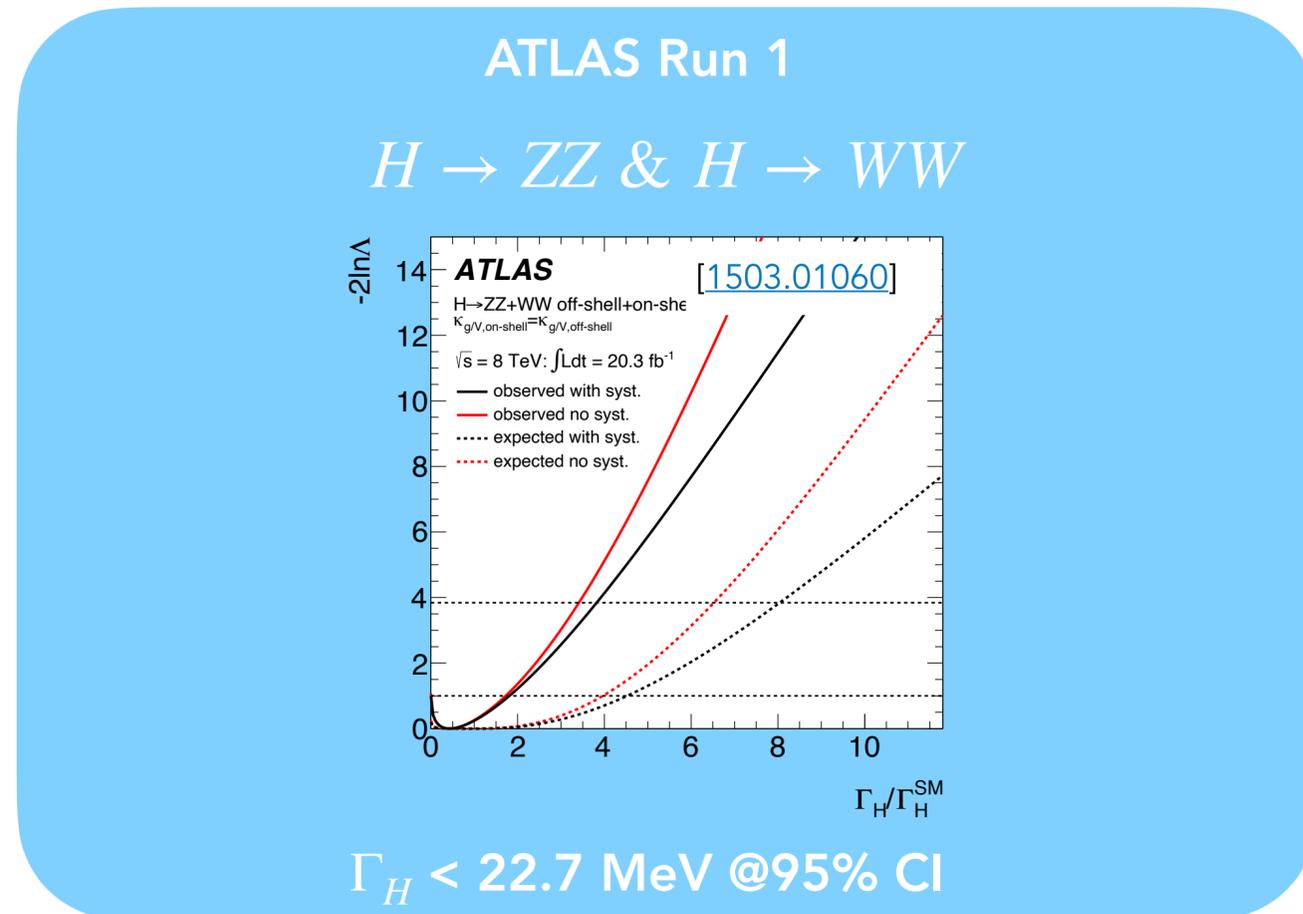
The Higgs boson total width

- $\Gamma_H = 0.9^{+3.4}_{-0.9}$ MeV obs. ($4.1^{+8.3}_{-3.8}$ MeV exp.)
- $\Gamma_H < 13.1$ MeV obs. (17.3 MeV exp.) @ 95% CL



Conclusion

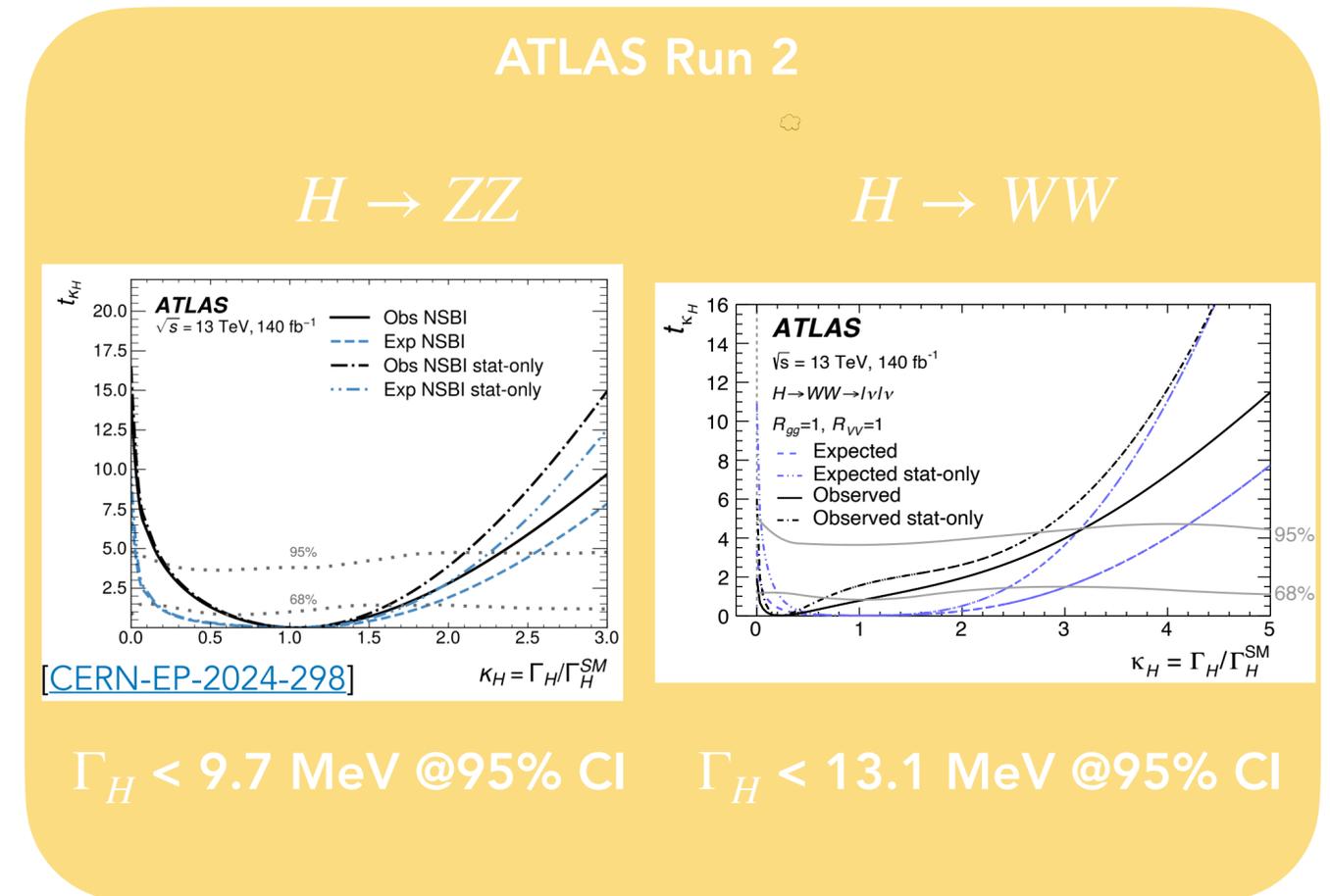
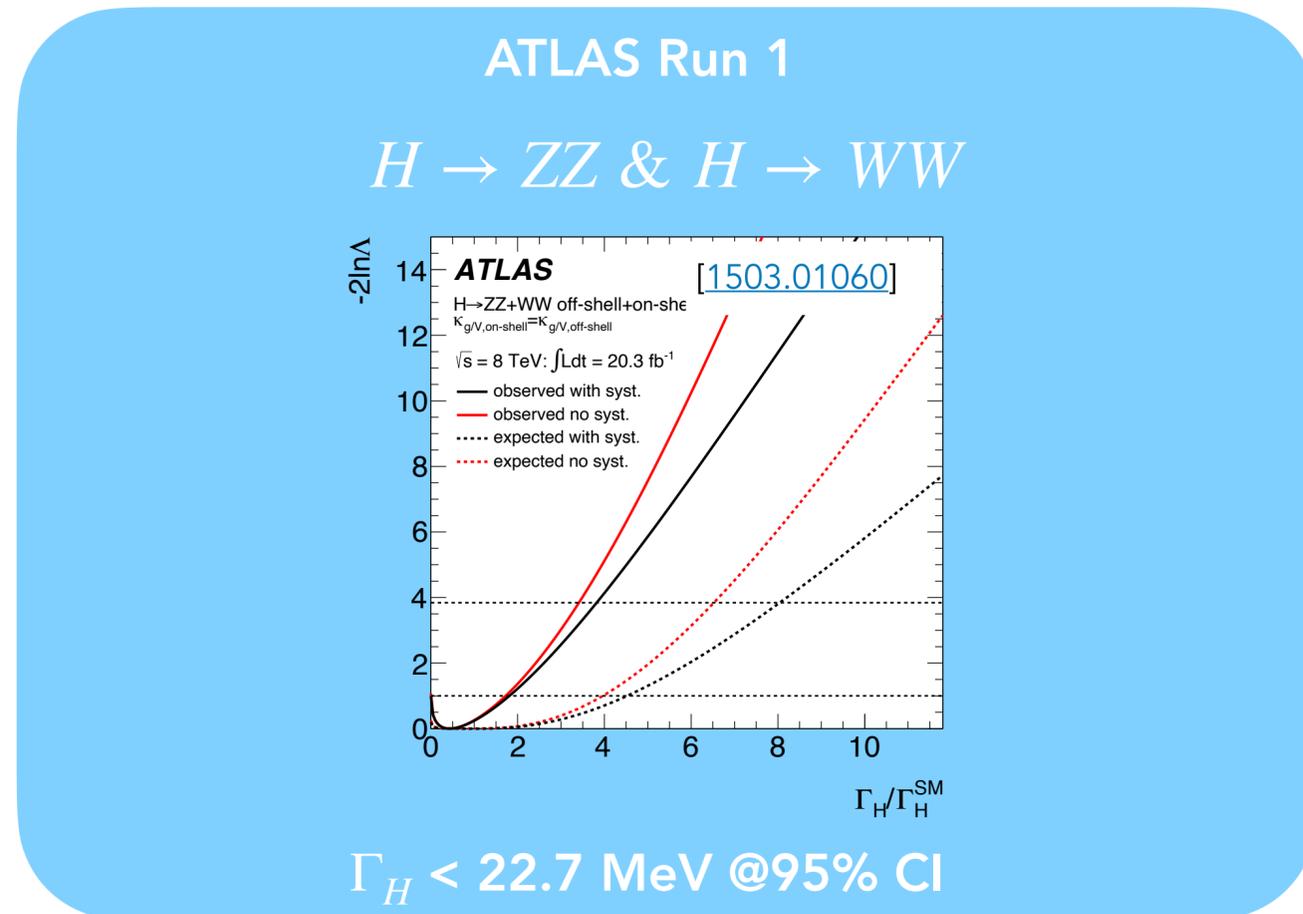
Presented the first ATLAS standalone $H \rightarrow WW$ width measurement!



- Γ_H competitive with state of the art, also large improvement over run 1 $ZZ \& WW$
- Large improvement over run 1 $H \rightarrow WW$ standalone $\mu_{\text{off-shell}}$ measurement
 - 3.4 obs. (4.4 exp.) @ 95% CL versus 17.2 obs. (21.3 exp.) @ 95% CL
- The lifetime is $\tau_H = 7.0_{-5.5}^{+82.1} \times 10^{-22} \text{ s}$ ($\tau = \hbar/\Gamma$)

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Backup

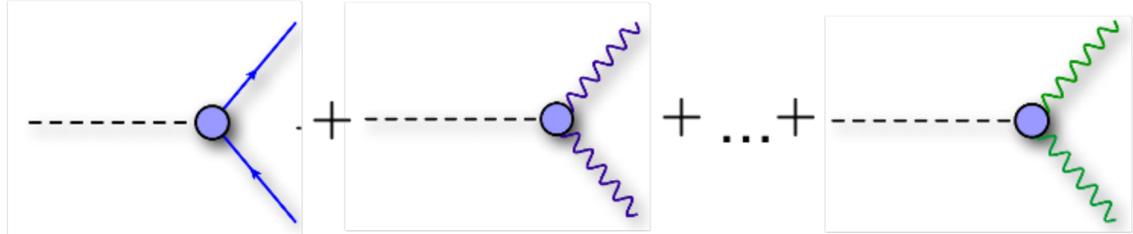
Breakdown of uncertainties

Table 1: Breakdown of the observed impact of sources of uncertainties on the value of $\mu_{\text{off-shell}}$ at 68% confidence level where $t_{\mu_{\text{off-shell}}} = 1$. The values in the right column represent the relative difference in quadrature between the best-fit $\mu_{\text{off-shell}}$ and the $\mu_{\text{off-shell}}$ from a fit where a set of nuisance parameters (θ_i) are fixed to their best-fit values $\hat{\theta}_i$.

Statistical uncertainty	52%
MC stat. uncertainty	15%
Theory uncertainty	39%
- Theory background	22%
- Theory signal	34%
Experimental uncertainty	25%
- Jets	19%
- Leptons	5.3%
- Others	6.8%
- Misidentified leptons	3.1%
Background normalisation	7.6%

Why measure the Higgs width?

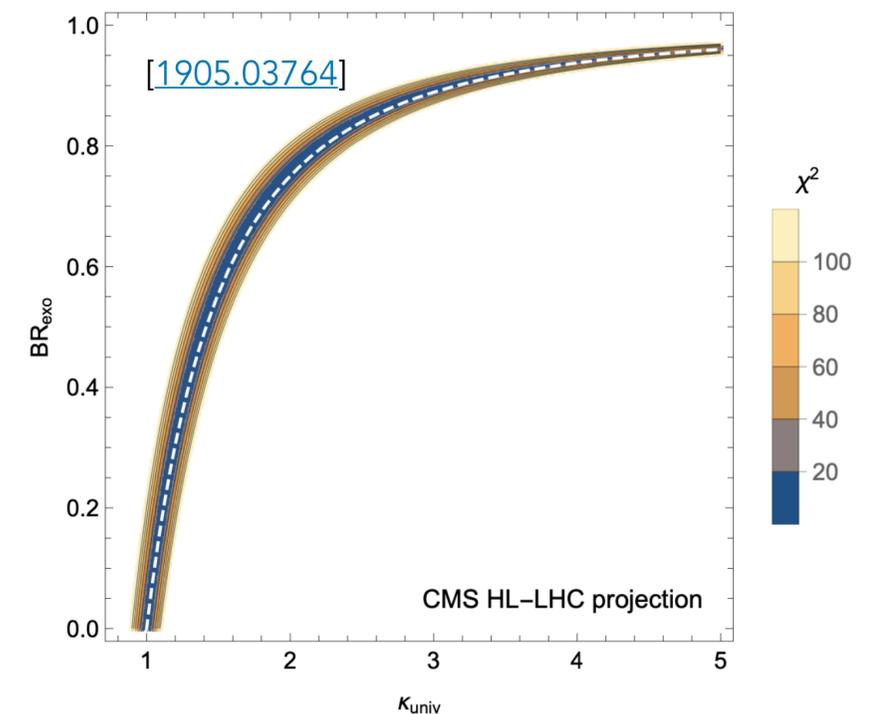
The Higgs decaying faster, or with **larger width**, might indicate **decay to undiscovered particles** [\[2107.08343\]](#)

$$\Gamma_H = \Gamma_{H \rightarrow bb} + \Gamma_{H \rightarrow WW} + \dots + \Gamma_{BSM}^?$$


The diagram shows three Feynman diagrams representing Higgs decays. The first diagram shows a Higgs boson (dashed line) decaying into two bottom quarks (solid blue lines). The second diagram shows a Higgs boson decaying into two photons (wavy purple lines). The third diagram shows a Higgs boson decaying into two particles (wavy green lines), representing a Beyond Standard Model (BSM) decay. The diagrams are separated by plus signs and an ellipsis, indicating a sum of various decay channels.

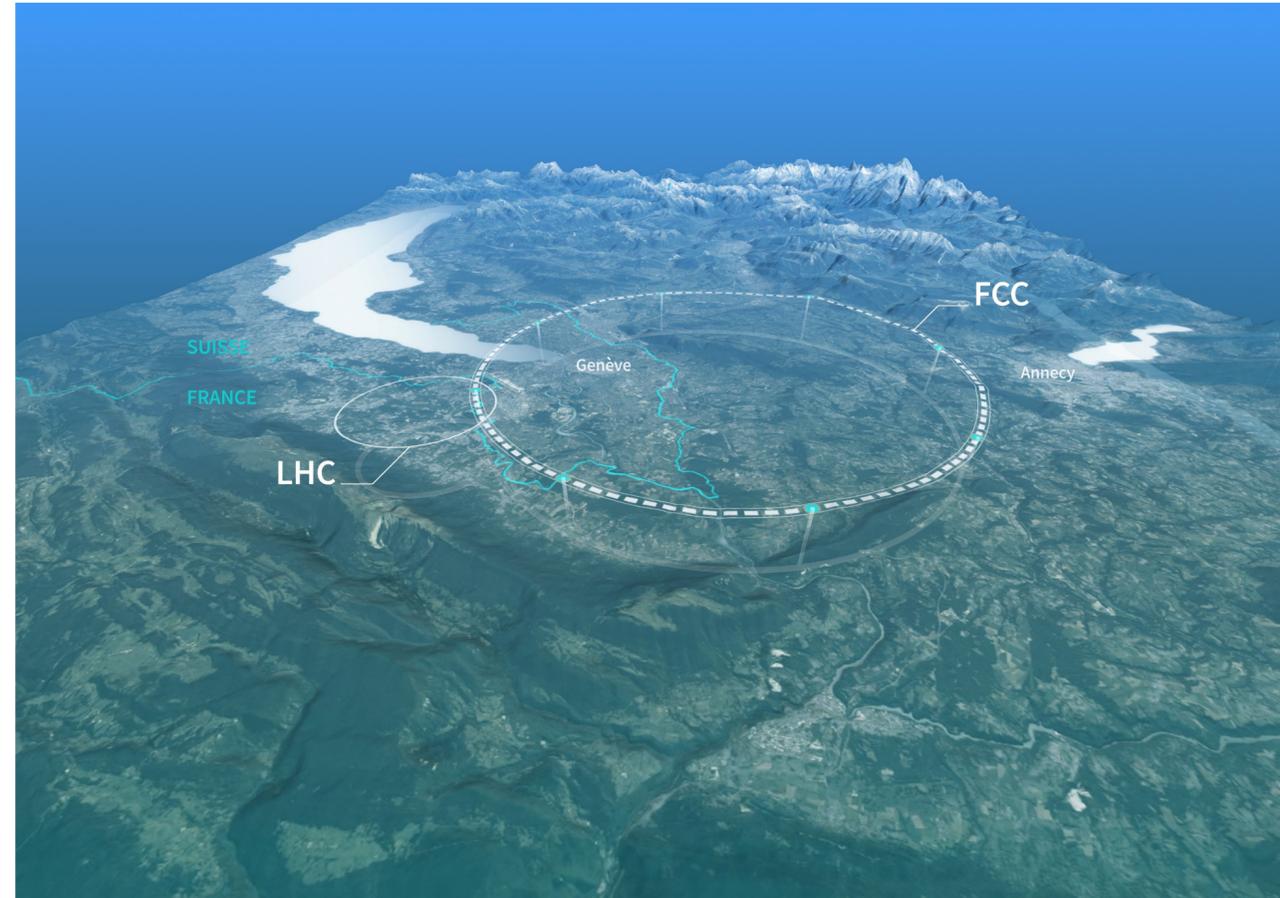
Measuring **off-shell Higgs boson production** is by itself important

- As shown before: $\sigma_{onshell} \propto g^4 / \Gamma_H \rightarrow$ **degeneracy** between couplings and width!
- This can be **resolved in the offshell regime!** $\sigma_{offshell} \propto g^4$



Higgs width at the FCC-ee

One of the more realistic future colliders is the FCC, future circular collider



There are multiple options, but the FCC-ee would collide electrons, which generally comes with lower collision energy than hadronic colliders, but with the ability to more precisely tune the energy

Higgs width at the FCC-ee

With a lepton collider we can tune the beam energy to exactly $m_Z + m_H$ and produce the Higgsstrahlung process with a very high rate

Doing this we can target the Higgs width with minimal assumptions as follows

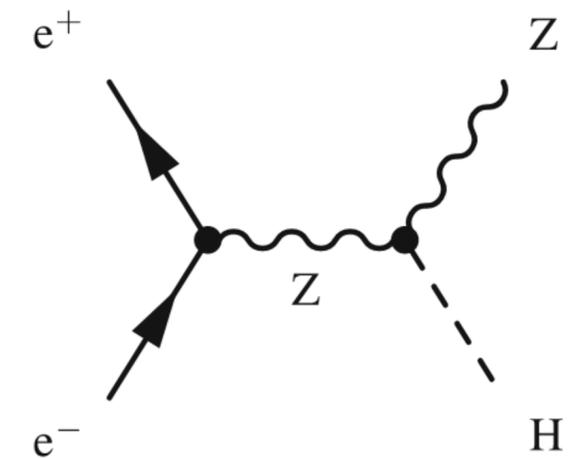
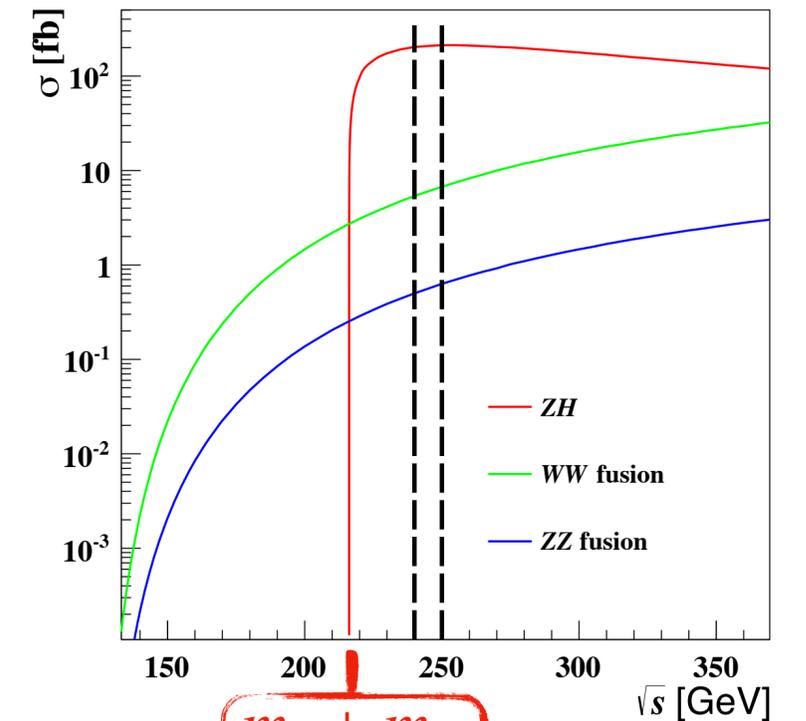
The cross section of the Higgsstrahlung process

$$\frac{\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow ZH)}{\text{BR}(H \rightarrow ZZ^*)} = \frac{\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow ZH)}{\Gamma(H \rightarrow ZZ^*)/\Gamma_H} \approx \left[\frac{\sigma(e^+e^- \rightarrow ZH)}{\Gamma(H \rightarrow ZZ^*)} \right]_{\text{SM}} \times \Gamma_H$$

The branching ratio of $H \rightarrow ZZ$

Assume that new physics effects cancel in this ratio \rightarrow SM!

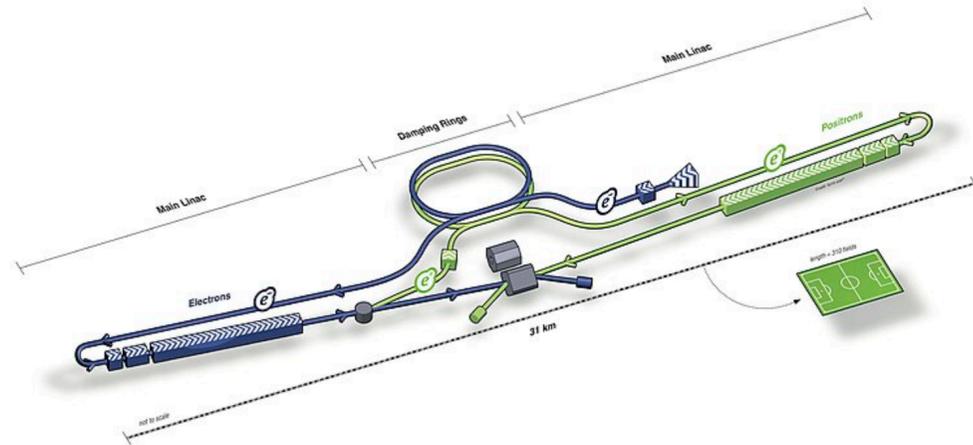
Left with an explicit dependence on the width



Higgsstrahlung, where the Higgs recoils off a Z boson

Higgs width at future (?) colliders

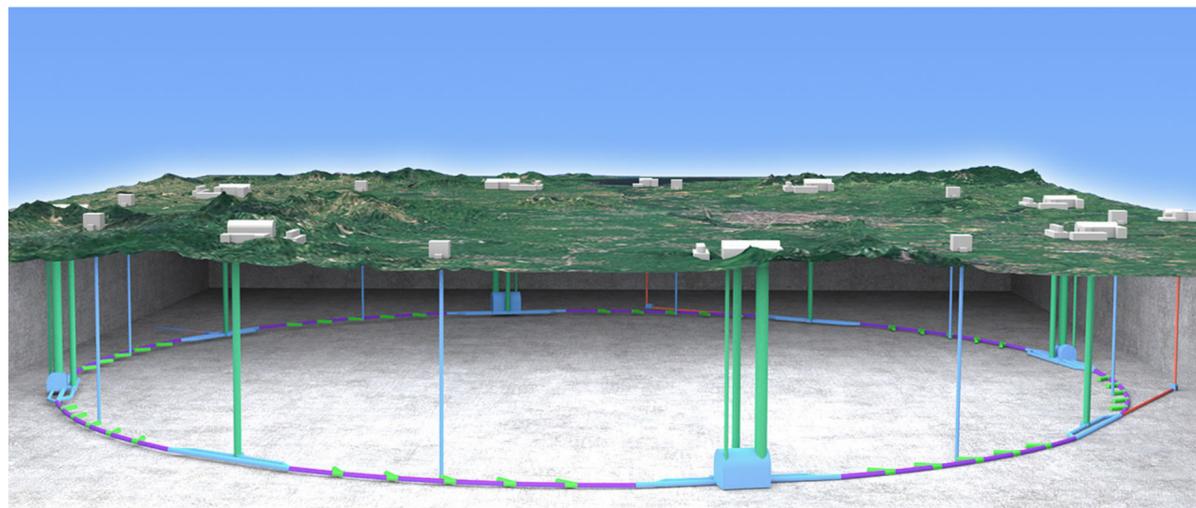
Takeaway is that few-percent level precision is achievable!



International linear collider



Compact linear collider



Circular electron-positron collider
(experiments in 2030?)

The future circular collider (ee)

Collider	$\delta\Gamma_H$ [%] from Ref.
ILC ₂₅₀	2.3
ILC ₅₀₀	1.6
ILC ₁₀₀₀	1.4
CLIC ₃₈₀	4.7
CLIC ₁₅₀₀	2.6
CLIC ₃₀₀₀	2.5
CEPC	2.8
FCC-ee ₂₄₀	2.7
FCC-ee ₃₆₅	1.3

[1905.03764]

A refresher: What is the width of a particle?

- The width, Γ , is defined as the decay rate $\Gamma = \frac{1}{\tau}$

- Take a wave function, add an exponentially decaying term

$$\psi(t) = \psi_0 e^{-iEt}$$

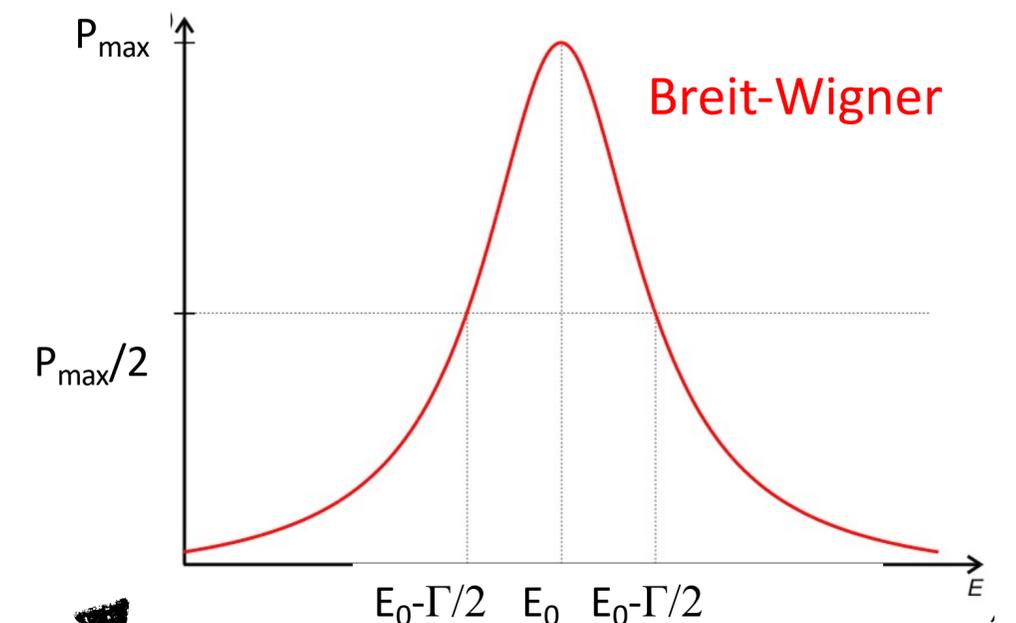
$$\psi(t) = \psi_0 e^{-iEt} e^{-\frac{1}{2}\Gamma t}$$

- Fourier transform to energy domain

$$\Psi(E) = \Psi_0 \frac{i}{(E - E_0) + \frac{i}{2}\Gamma}$$

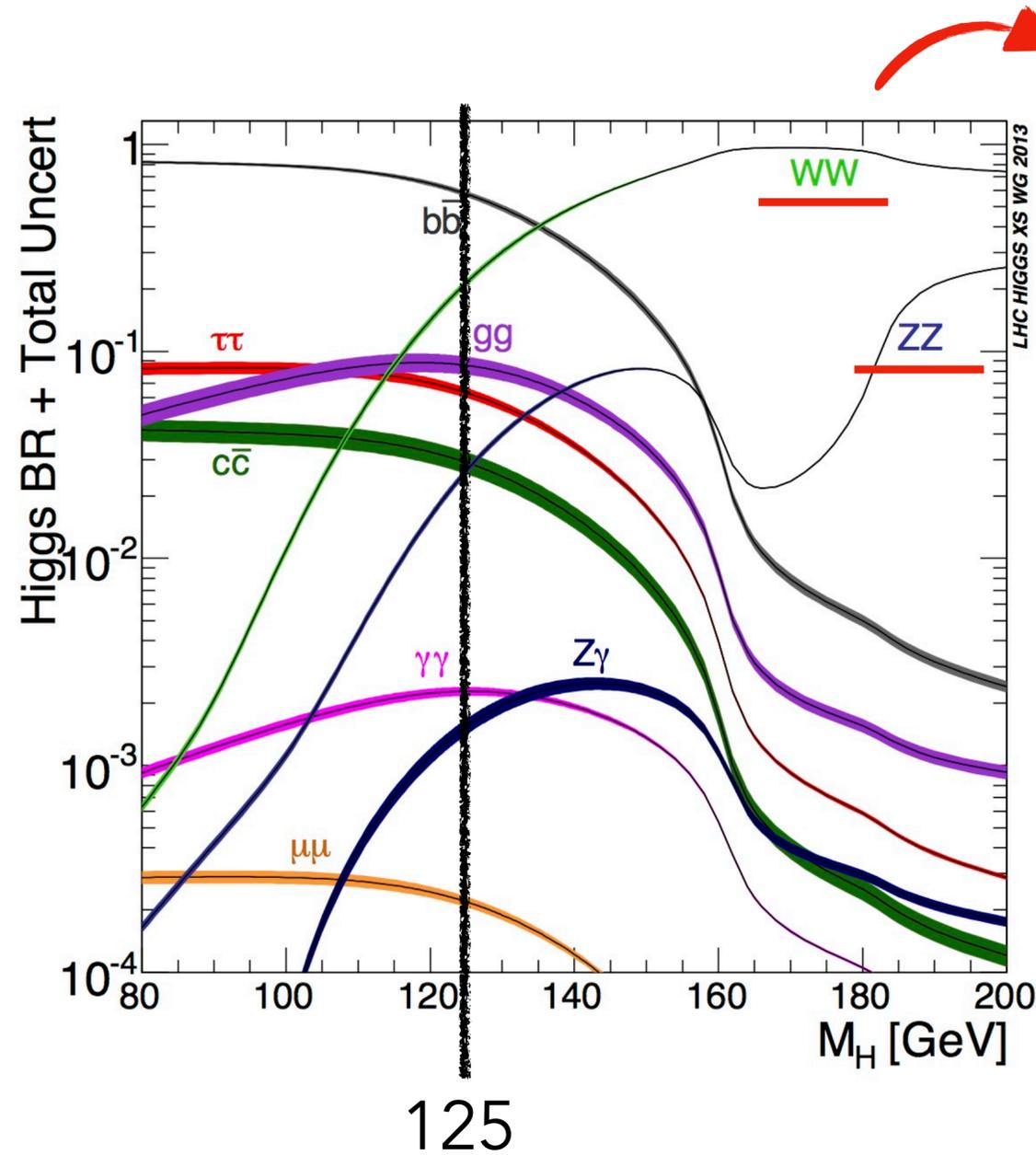
- Now ask, what is the probability to measure the particle with energy E ?

$$\Psi(E)^* \Psi(E) = \Psi_0^* \Psi_0 \frac{1}{(E - E_0)^2 + \frac{1}{4}\Gamma^2}$$



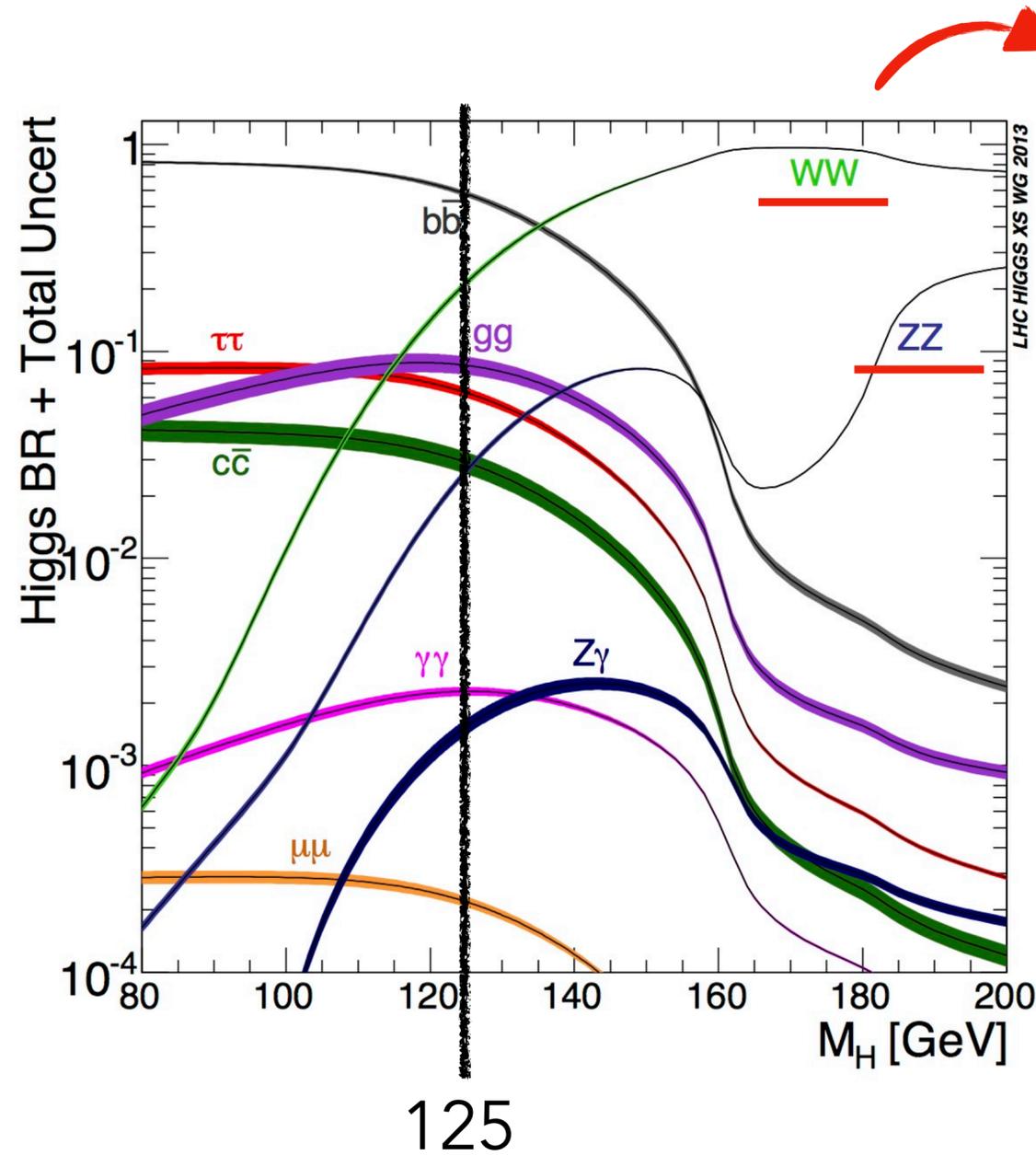
Width of the peak is intrinsically connected to the decay rate

The $H \rightarrow WW$ channel for width measurements



The decay probability of the WW decay is significantly larger than that of ZZ

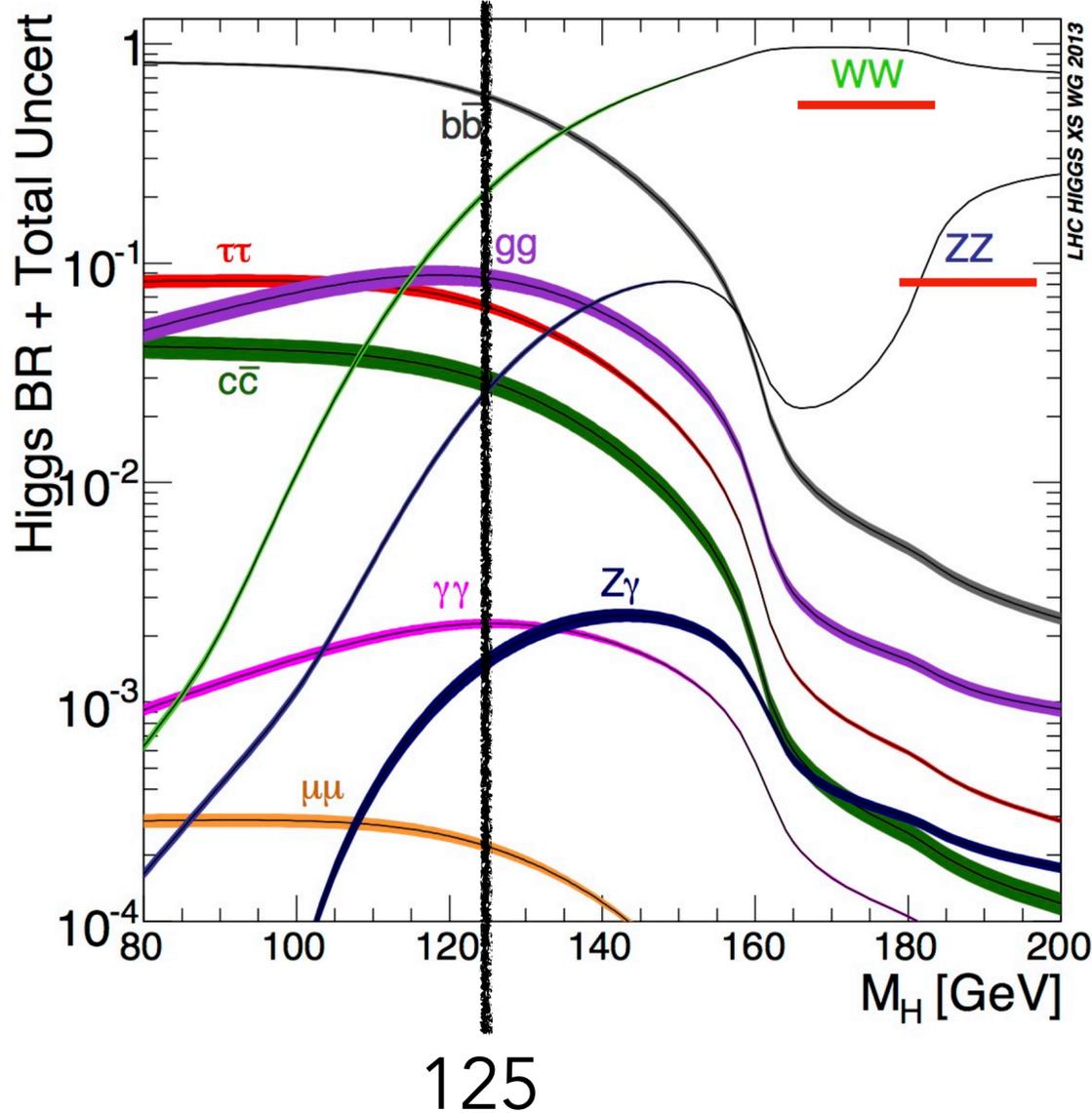
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Expect more WW decays in LHC, so this channel should be more sensitive

The $H \rightarrow WW$ channel for width measurements



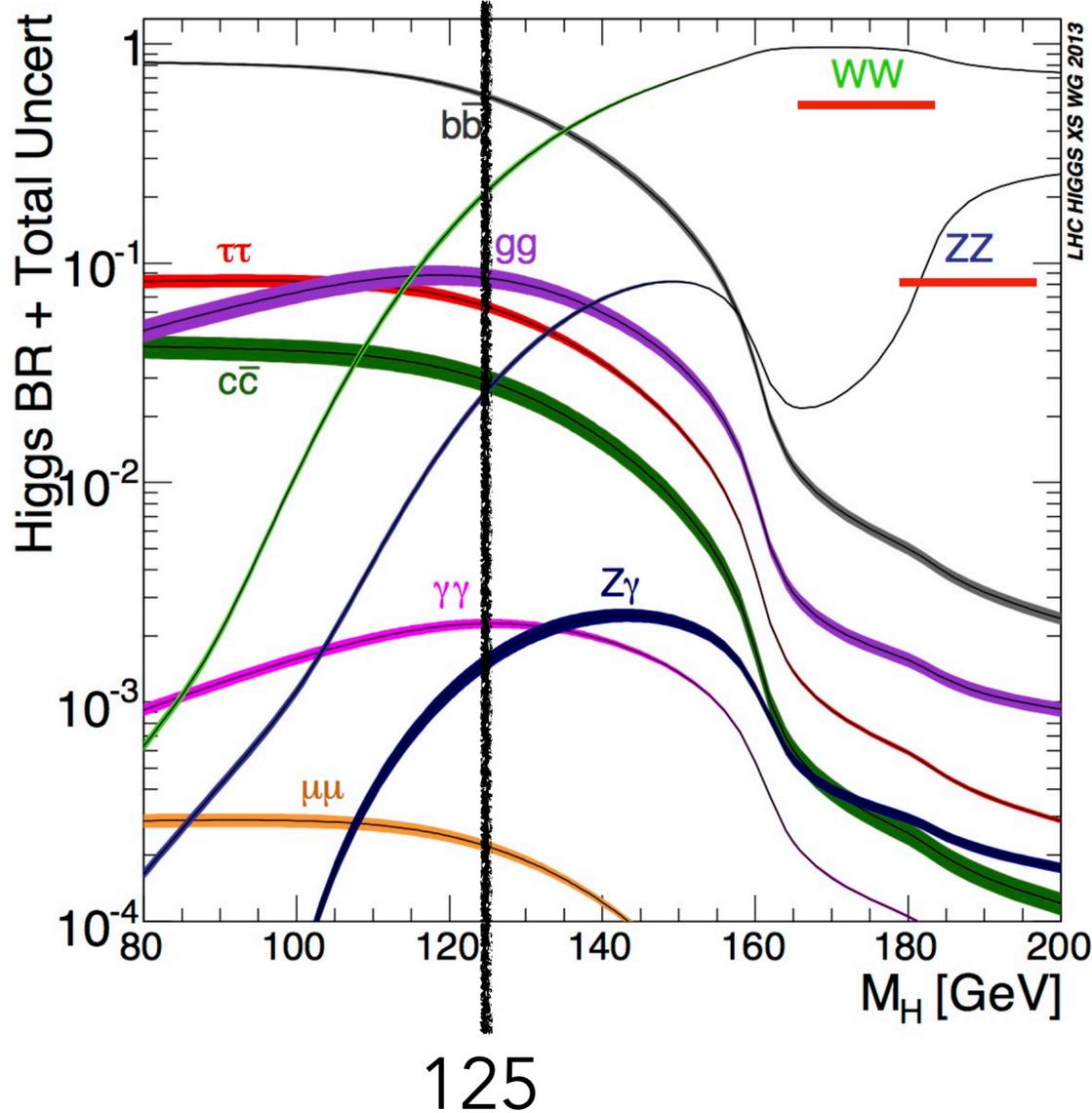
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However, in practice WW is less sensitive than the ZZ measurement?

Run 1: $ZZ: \Gamma_H \lesssim 2\Gamma_H^{SM} @ 95\% \text{ CI}$
 $WW: \Gamma_H \lesssim 6\Gamma_H^{SM} @ 95\% \text{ CI}$

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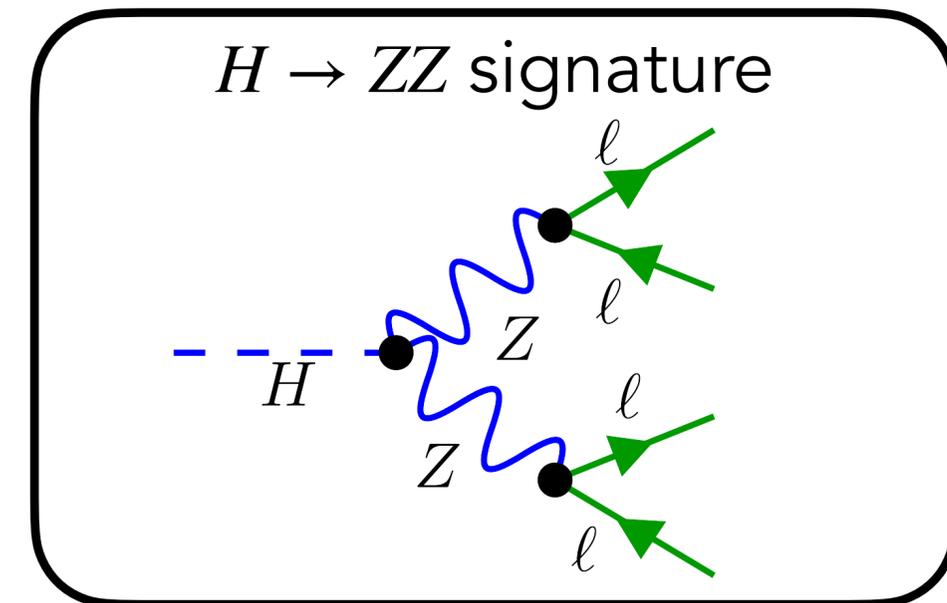
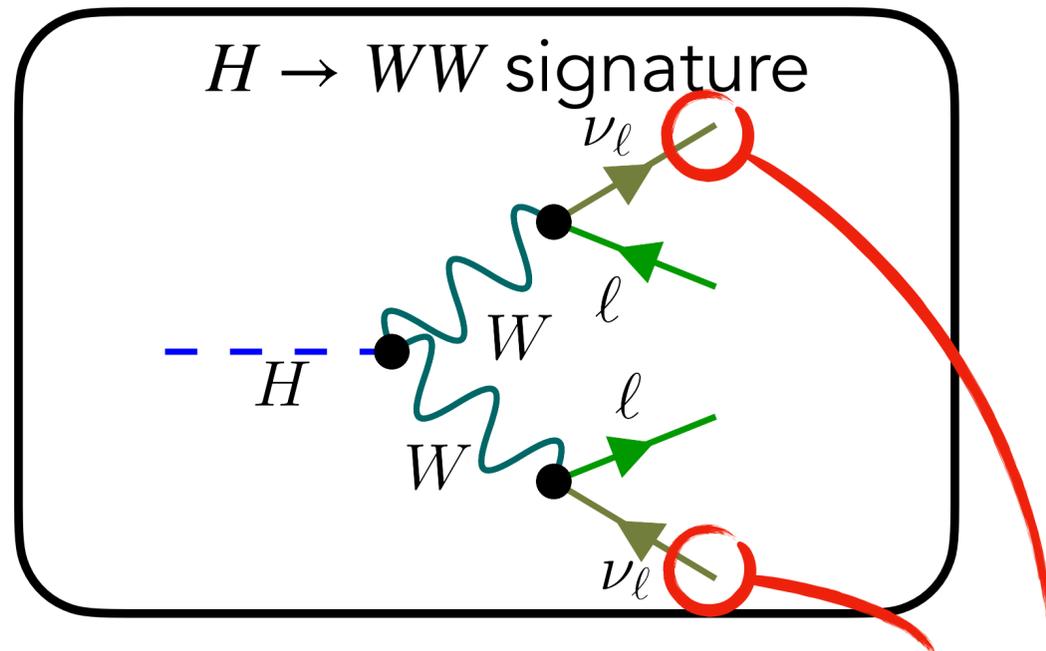
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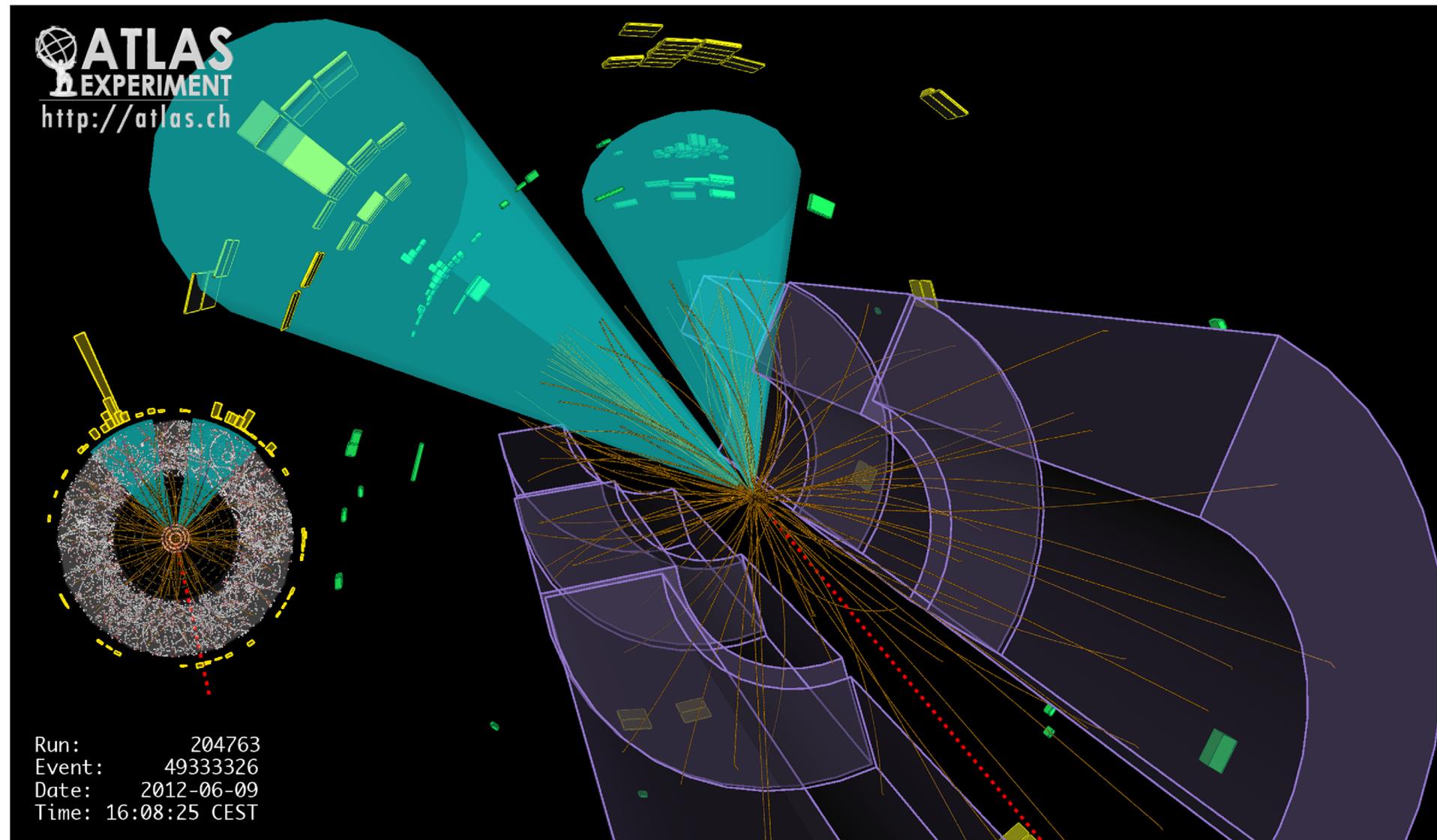
W bosons decay into leptons and neutrinos



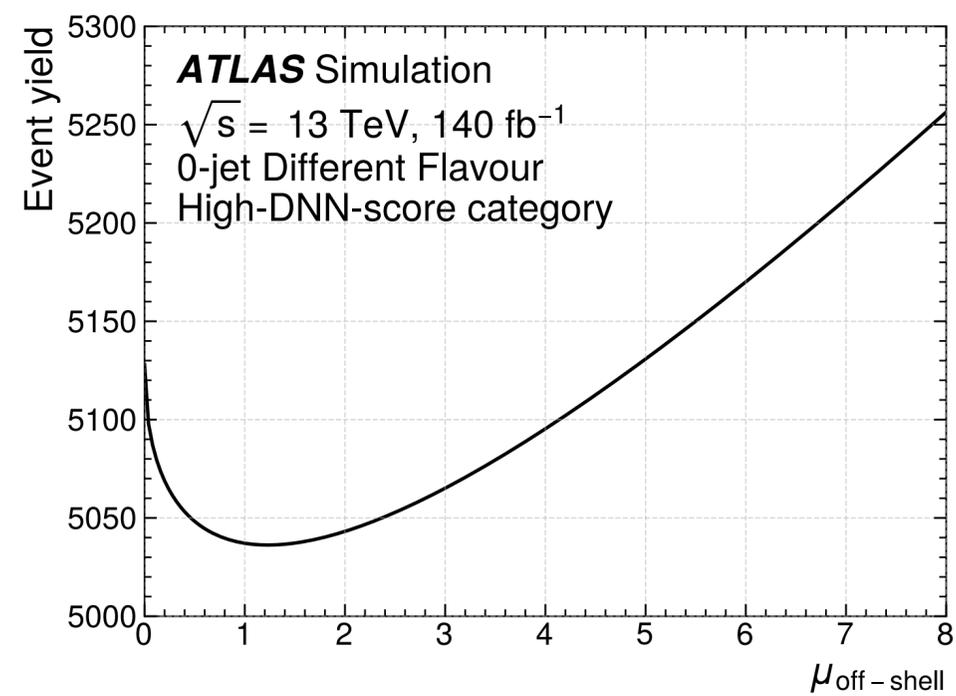
WW bosons decay to neutrino's
which cannot be detected
→ Results in "**missing energy**"
which is hard to reconstruct!

The $H \rightarrow WW$ channel for width measurements

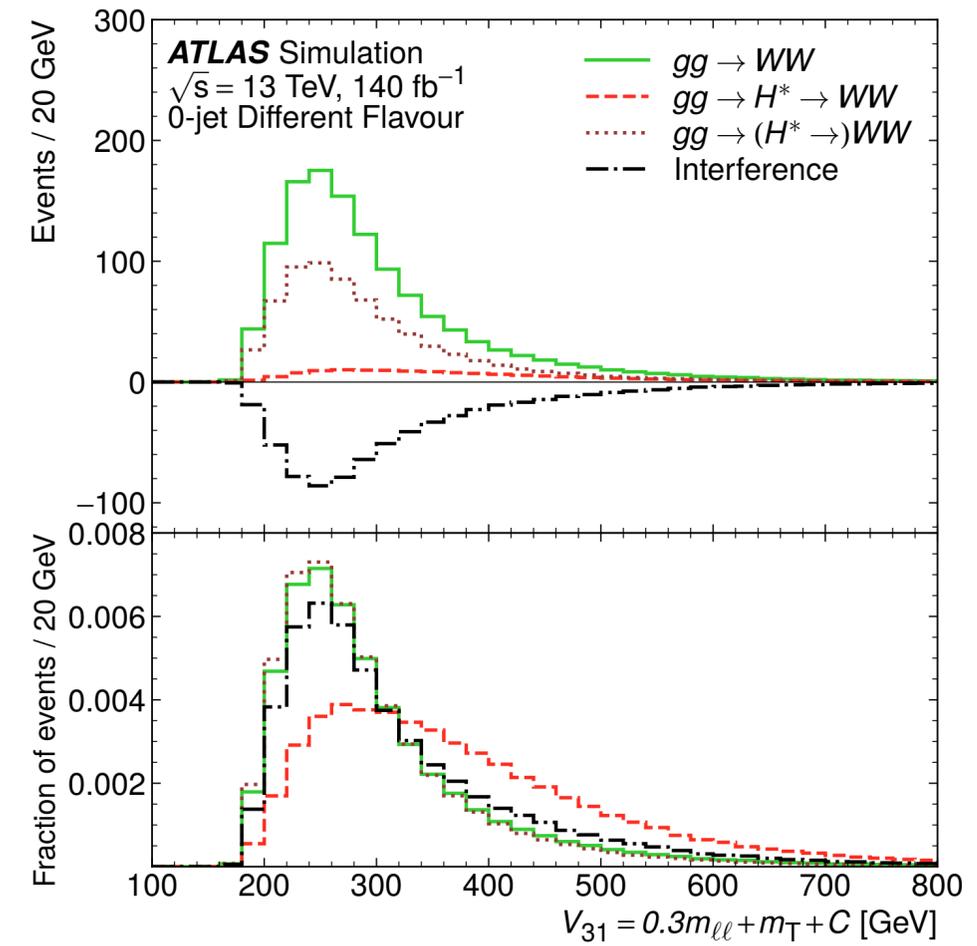
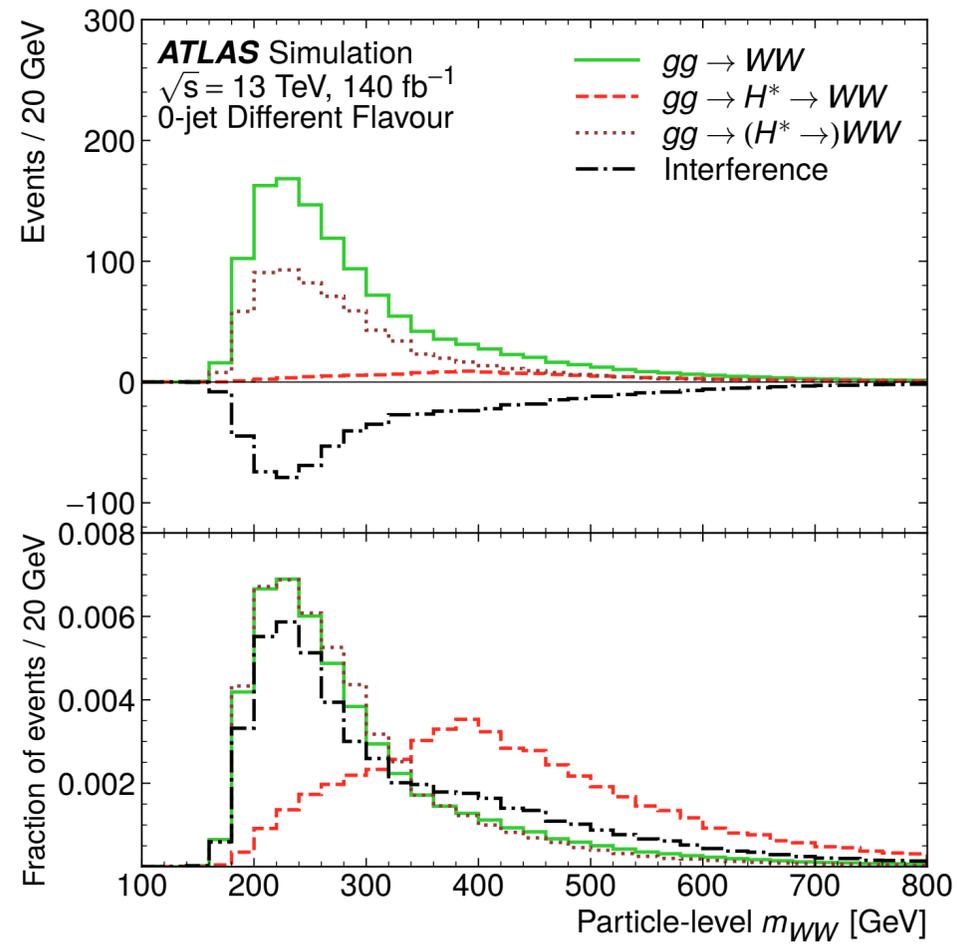
$H \rightarrow WW$ channel has **missing energy** caused by the final state neutrinos



Yield as a function of POI



M_{WW} and V_{31}



R_{gg} and R_{VV}

mu_on and mu off width
and couplings dependencies

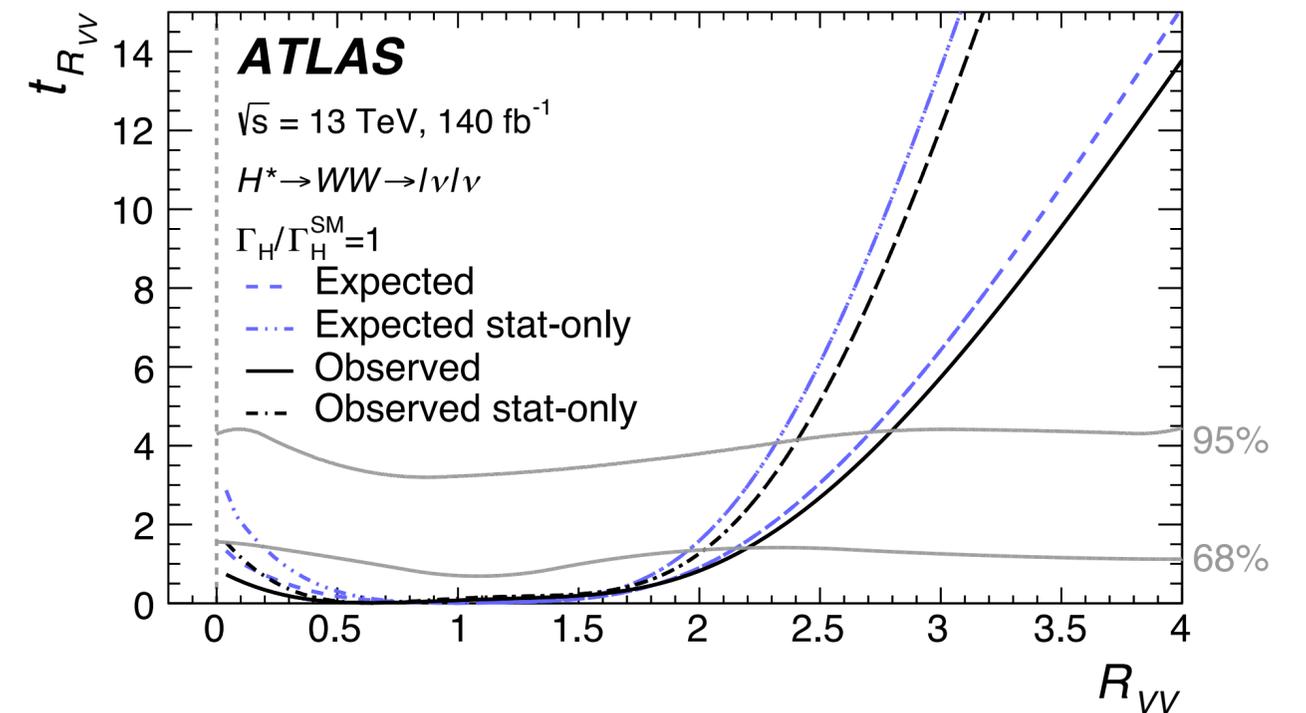
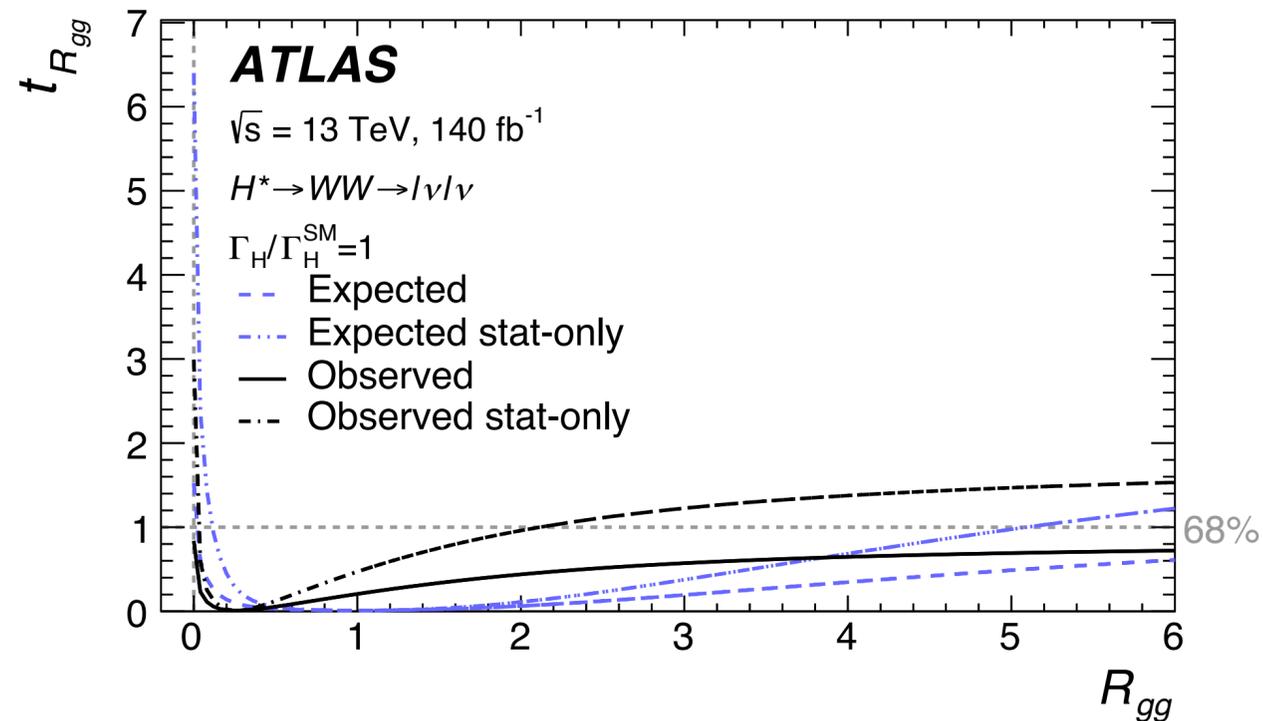
$$\begin{aligned} \mu_{off-shell}^{ggF} &\propto g_{Hgg,off-shell}^2 \cdot g_{HVV,off-shell}^2 \\ \mu_{off-shell}^{VBF} &\propto g_{HVV,off-shell}^4 \\ \mu_{on-shell}^{ggF} &\propto \frac{g_{Hgg,on-shell}^2 \cdot g_{HVV,on-shell}^2}{\Gamma_H} \\ \mu_{on-shell}^{VBF} &\propto \frac{g_{HVV,on-shell}^4}{\Gamma_H} \end{aligned}$$

dividing mu_off by mu_on, and defining R_{gg} and R_{VV}:

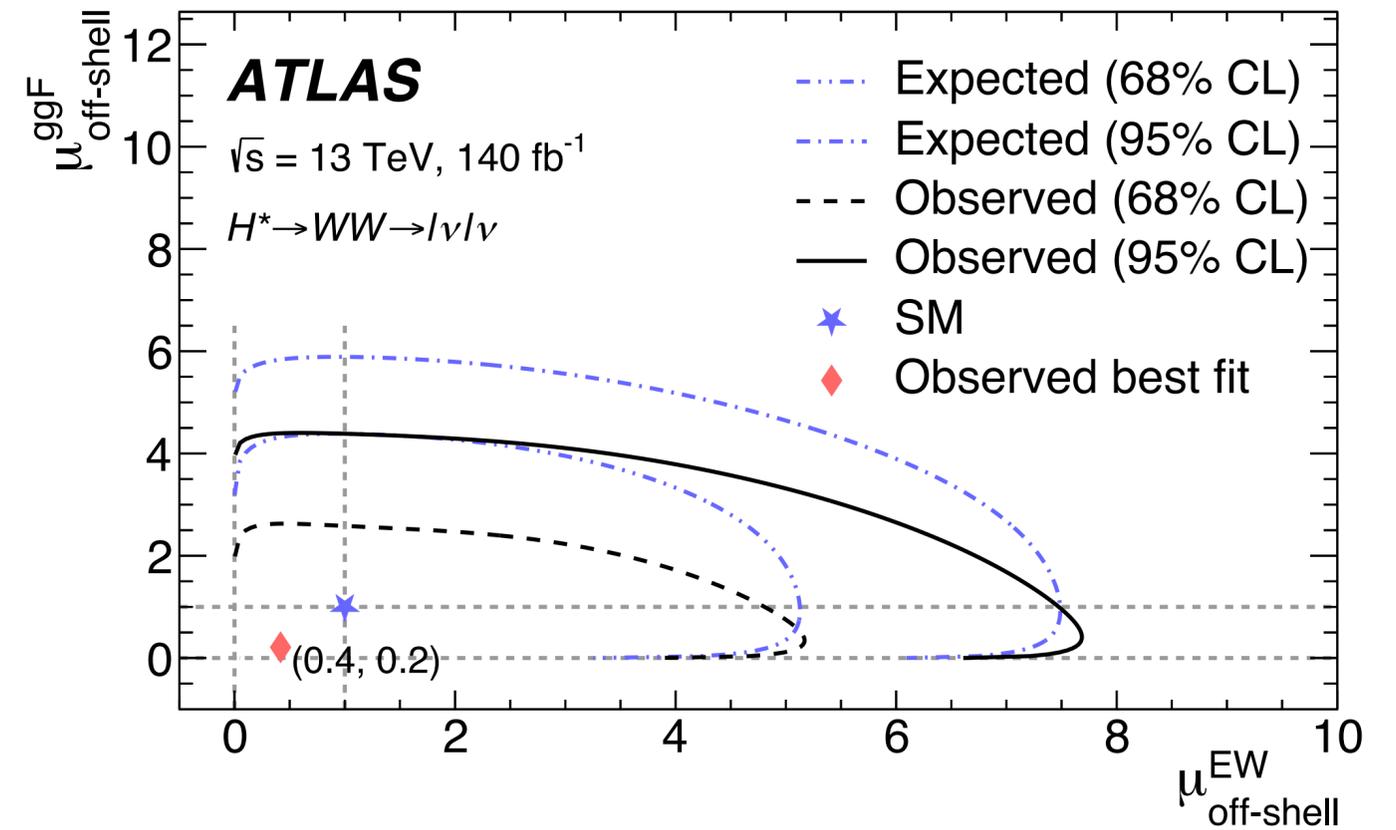
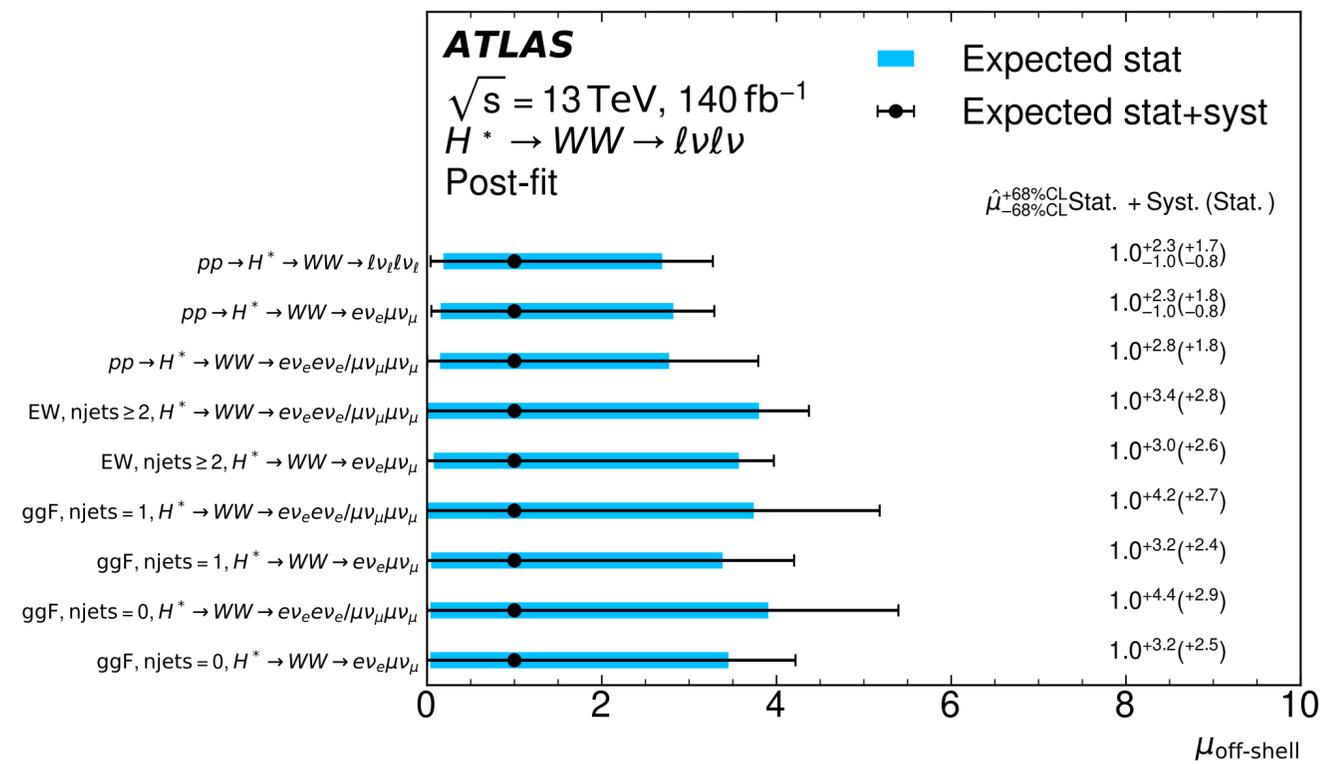
$$\begin{aligned} R_{gg} &\equiv \frac{g_{Hgg,off-shell}^2}{g_{Hgg,on-shell}^2} \\ R_{VV} &\equiv \frac{g_{HVV,off-shell}^2}{g_{HVV,on-shell}^2} \end{aligned}$$

We get the following
system of equations

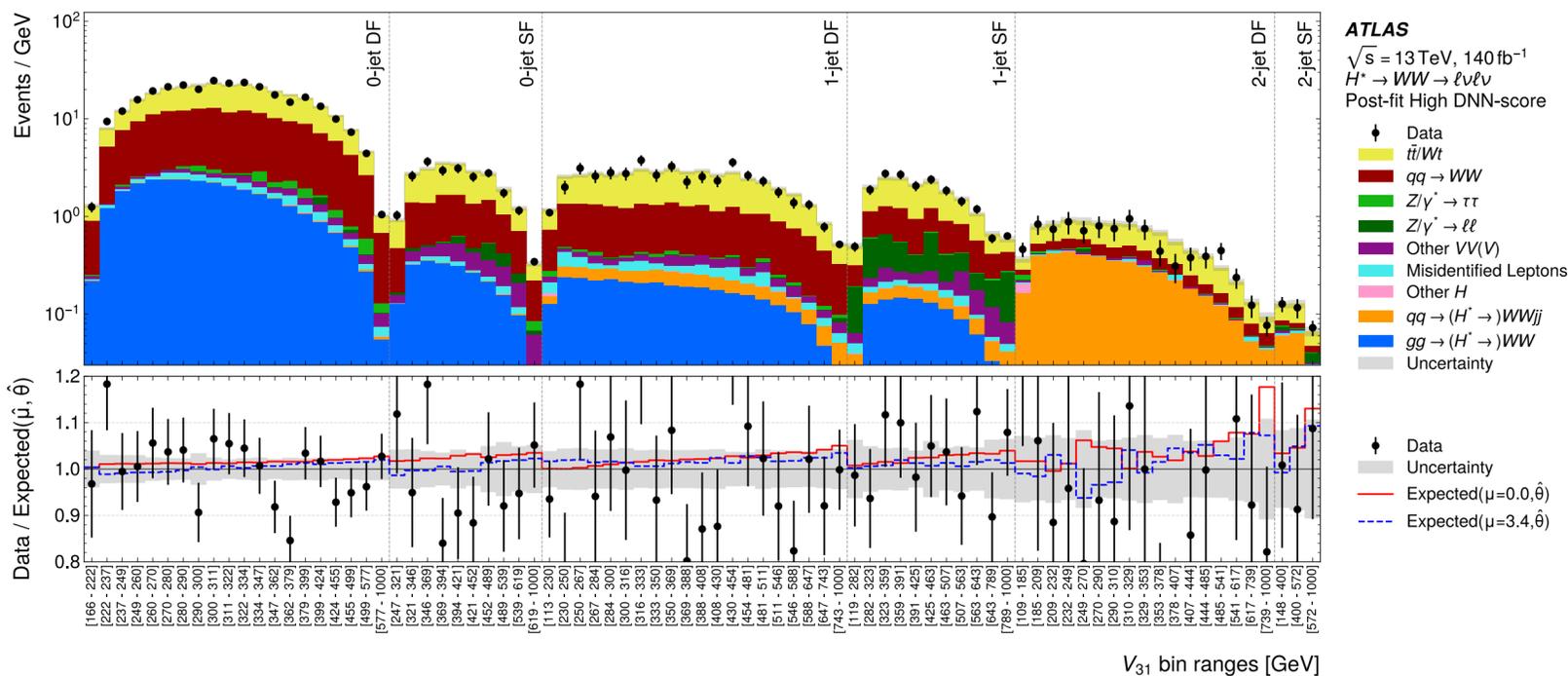
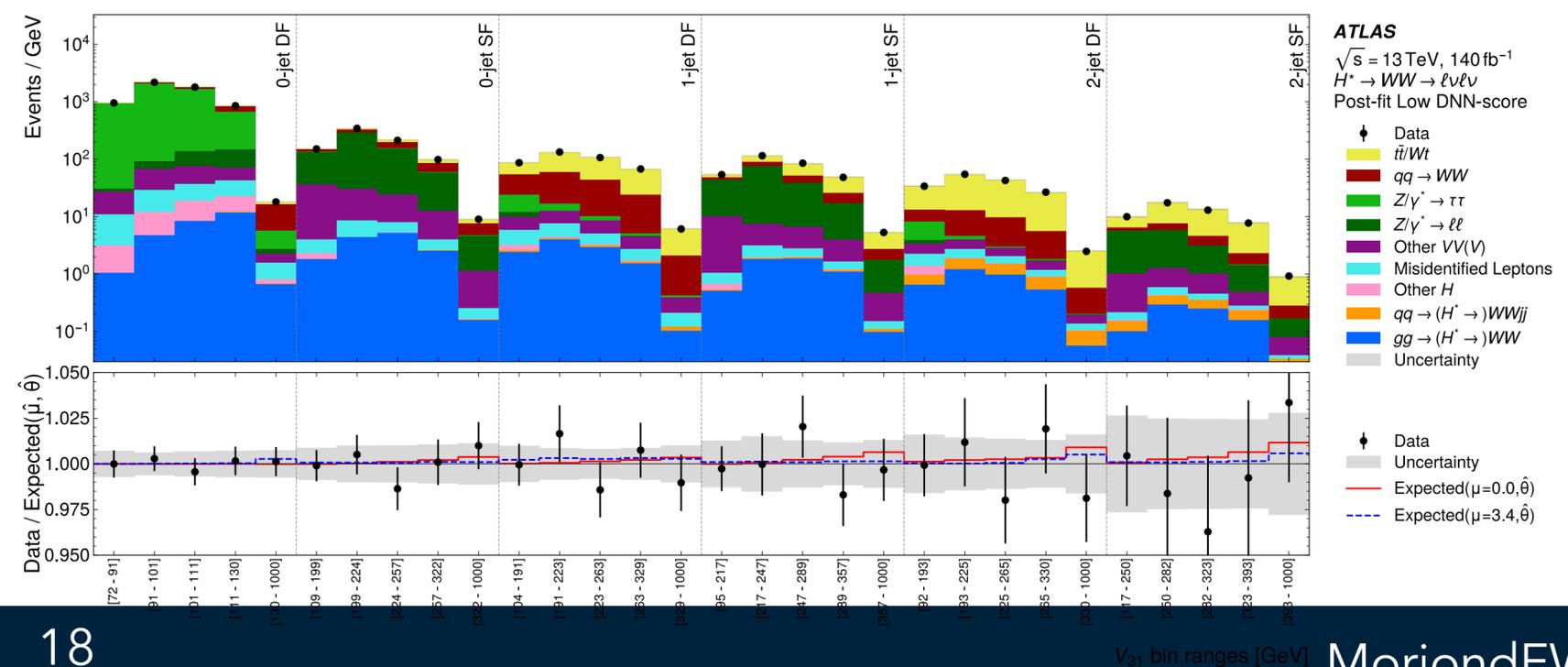
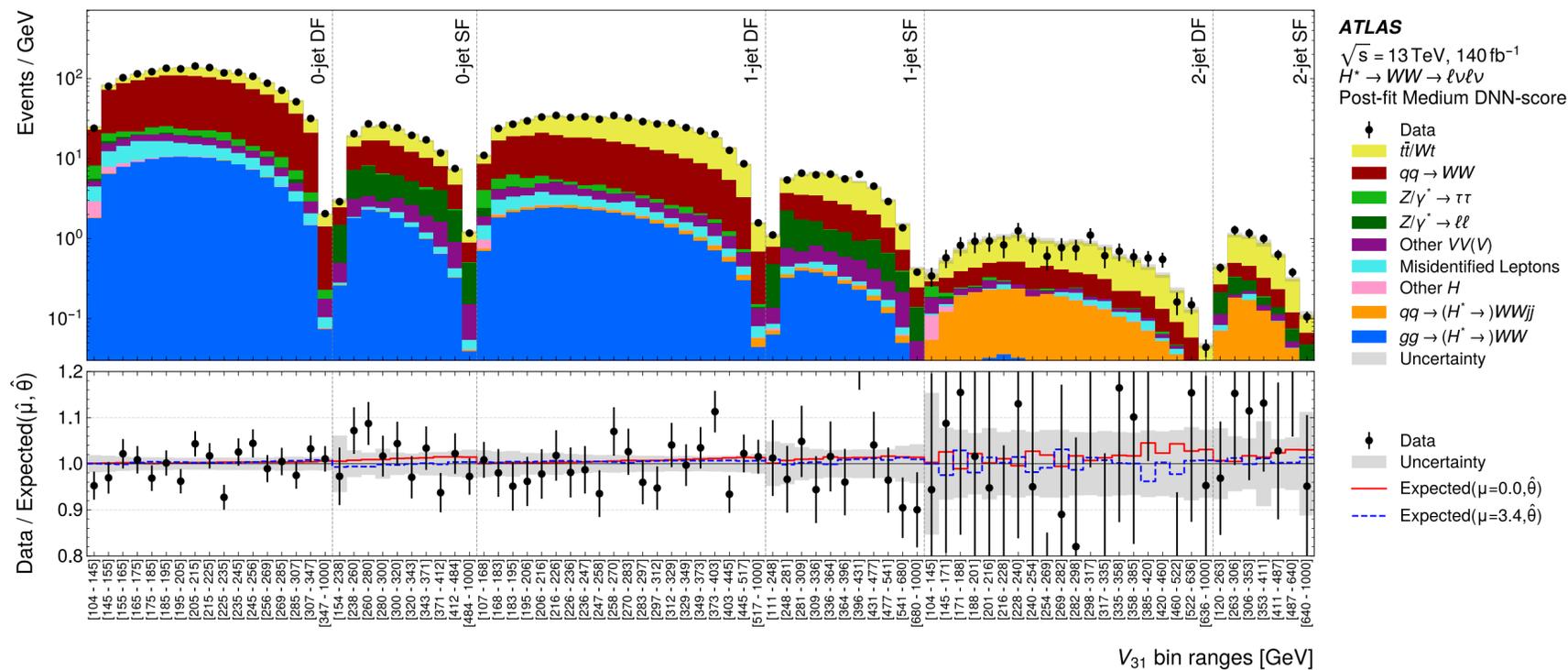
$$\begin{aligned} \mu_{off-shell}^{ggF} &= R_{gg} \cdot R_{VV} \cdot \mu_{on-shell}^{ggF} \cdot \frac{\Gamma_H}{\Gamma_H^{SM}} \\ \mu_{off-shell}^{VBF} &= R_{VV}^2 \cdot \mu_{on-shell}^{VBF} \cdot \frac{\Gamma_H}{\Gamma_H^{SM}} \end{aligned}$$



Multi-POI



All analysis signal regions



Neyman Construction for creating confidence intervals

- Neyman construction using toys can be used to correctly estimate the CI for the off-shell
- Three step procedure
 - 1] Profile dataset
 - Perform conditional fit (assuming particular injected value of POI) to data to obtain best fit values of nuisance parameters (NP)
 - 2] Generate toy datasets
 - Given the injected μ and NP, randomize the global observable according to the PDF and generate a toy dataset
 - 3] Perform unconditional and conditional fits for each toy to get test statistic distribution for each hypothesis (more info in the backup)

Tables

DNN inputs

Variable	Different-flavour lepton category			Same-flavour lepton category		
	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet
$p_T^{\ell 0}$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
$p_T^{\ell 1}$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
$\eta^{\ell 0}$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
$\eta^{\ell 1}$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
$\phi^{\ell 0}$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
$\phi^{\ell 1}$	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
$p_T^{\ell\ell}$		✓				
$\Delta\eta^{\ell\ell}$		✓	✓			✓
$\Delta y^{\ell\ell}$		✓	✓		✓	✓
$\Delta\phi^{\ell\ell}$			✓		✓	✓
$\Delta R^{\ell\ell}$					✓	
m_T	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
$m_{\ell\ell}$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
$\max(m_T^W)$	✓			✓	✓	
p_T^{j0}		✓	✓		✓	✓
p_T^{j1}			✓			✓
η^{j0}		✓	✓		✓	✓
η^{j1}			✓			✓
ϕ^{j0}			✓		✓	✓
m^{j0}		✓	✓		✓	✓
m^{j1}			✓			✓
m^{jj}			✓			✓
Δy^{jj}			✓			✓
$\sqrt{H_T}$		✓	✓			✓
E_T^{miss}	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
$\phi_{p_T^{\text{miss}}}$	✓		✓	✓		✓
$S(E_T^{\text{miss}})$	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
$\Delta R^{\ell 0 j 0}$		✓			✓	
$\Delta R^{\ell 0 j 1}$			✓			✓
$\Delta R^{\ell 1 j 0}$		✓			✓	

Hyperparameters

Hyperparameter	Different-flavour leptons			Same-flavour leptons		
	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet
Nodes in layer 1	256	128	256	256	256	128
Nodes in layer 2	128	32	128	128	64	128
Nodes in layer 3	64	32	64	64	256	32
Nodes in layer 4	16		16	16		16
Nodes in layer 5	16		16			
Activation function	relu	relu	elu	relu	elu	relu
Optimiser	SGD	SGD	SGD	SGD	SGD	SGD
Epochs	300	300	30	300	100	300
Batch-size	256	512	128	256	1024	256
Learning rate	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.03
Learning rate decay ratio	0.01	0.8	0.01	0.3	1	1
Use Nesterov momentum?					✓	
Dropout	0.3	0.1	0.6	0.6	0	0
Momentum	0.8	0.9	0.1	0.3	0.95	0.3
L2 regularisation weight	0	0	0.0003	0.0003	0	0.00003

NFs

		$qq \rightarrow WW$	Top-quark	$Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$	$Z \rightarrow \ell\ell$
Expected	0-jet	$1.00^{+0.07}_{-0.07}$	$1.00^{+0.11}_{-0.10}$	$1.00^{+0.06}_{-0.06}$	$1.00^{+0.15}_{-0.13}$
	1-jet	$1.00^{+0.15}_{-0.12}$	$1.00^{+0.08}_{-0.09}$	$1.00^{+0.12}_{-0.10}$	$1.00^{+0.21}_{-0.16}$
	2-jet	$1.0^{+0.6}_{-0.4}$	$1.00^{+0.05}_{-0.05}$		$1.00^{+0.41}_{-0.27}$
Observed	0-jet	$1.01^{+0.07}_{-0.07}$	$0.93^{+0.10}_{-0.09}$	$0.90^{+0.05}_{-0.05}$	$1.15^{+0.17}_{-0.15}$
	1-jet	$0.90^{+0.14}_{-0.12}$	$0.97^{+0.08}_{-0.08}$	$0.90^{+0.11}_{-0.09}$	$1.08^{+0.23}_{-0.18}$
	2-jet	$0.9^{+0.6}_{-0.4}$	$0.97^{+0.05}_{-0.05}$		$0.87^{+0.35}_{-0.23}$

Tables

Yields

Process	ggF B	ggF S+I	EW B	EW S+I	$t\bar{t}$	$qqWW$	Mis-ID lep.	$Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$	$Z \rightarrow \ell\ell$	Other H	$VV(V)$	Expected ($\hat{\mu}, \hat{\theta}$)	Data
0-jet DF top CR	42	-4	1	0	5309	245	34	21	0	2	33	5684 ± 92	5681
0-jet DF low DNN-score	972	2	5	0	1499	14705	1566	65587	2877	553	2212	89979 ± 516	90008
0-jet DF medium DNN-score	1457	-53	10	-1	4470	12249	725	666	72	81	551	20227 ± 156	20183
0-jet DF high DNN-score	522	-83	7	0	2152	2246	67	74	10	3	73	5071 ± 43	5045
0-jet SF low DNN-score	775	-45	8	0	2609	7403	499	290	25046	47	5212	41844 ± 476	41843
0-jet SF medium DNN-score	371	-54	4	-1	1562	1627	47	26	896	2	260	4740 ± 61	4800
0-jet SF high DNN-score	107	-24	2	0	414	304	8	7	25	0	51	895 ± 15	875
1-jet DF WW CR	58	-3	6	0	865	454	40	85	27	8	82	1621 ± 67	1629
1-jet DF top CR	27	-3	5	-0	19338	175	89	6	1	2	44	19683 ± 151	19670
1-jet DF $Z\tau\tau$ CR	90	-1	10	0	1244	1124	226	16404	316	285	653	20351 ± 266	20352
1-jet DF low DNN-score	671	-34	48	0	13238	7765	543	1312	200	69	918	24730 ± 406	24725
1-jet DF medium DNN-score	562	-62	51	-3	4394	3305	198	250	37	19	266	9018 ± 87	9032
1-jet DF high DNN-score	119	-25	42	-6	656	455	30	14	3	2	32	1321 ± 16	1302
1-jet SF low DNN-score	381	-44	25	-1	5925	2628	172	134	9323	23	1799	20366 ± 334	20351
1-jet SF medium DNN-score	115	-22	15	-1	931	506	20	5	298	1	101	1968 ± 26	1969
1-jet SF high DNN-score	71	-19	29	-5	409	253	13	6	155	0	44	956 ± 17	979
2-jet DF top CR	26	-4	56	0	33796	157	180	56	8	13	43	34333 ± 217	34335
2-jet DF low DNN-score	246	-27	137	-6	7419	1544	180	472	60	48	255	10327 ± 352	10311
2-jet DF medium DNN-score	10	-2	49	-3	149	53	6	5	1	3	10	281 ± 6	287
2-jet DF high DNN-score	10	-2	138	-12	116	39	5	4	1	3	5	307 ± 7	297
2-jet SF low DNN-score	71	-12	29	-2	1897	335	22	7	997	3	196	3542 ± 115	3532
2-jet SF medium DNN-score	11	-3	46	-3	186	50	4	1	42	0	12	347 ± 13	374
2-jet SF high DNN-score	3	-1	42	-5	26	7	2	1	6	0	1	82 ± 5	83

CRs

	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet
Different-flavour lepton category pre-selection			
$qq \rightarrow WW$	-	$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 0$ $m_{\ell\ell} > 80 \text{ GeV}$ $\Delta\phi_{(\ell,\ell)} < 1.8$ $ m_{\tau\tau} - 91 \text{ GeV} > 25 \text{ GeV}$	-
Top-quark	$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 1$ $p_{T,b\text{-jet}} \in [20, 30] \text{ GeV}$ $m_{\ell\ell} > 100 \text{ GeV}$ $\Delta\eta_{(\ell,\ell)} < 1.8$	$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 1$ $p_{T,b\text{-jet}} > 30 \text{ GeV}$ $m_{\ell\ell} > 100 \text{ GeV}$ $\Delta\phi_{(\ell,\ell)} > 1.8$	$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 1$ $p_{T,b\text{-jet}} > 30 \text{ GeV}$ $m_{\ell\ell} > 70 \text{ GeV}$ central jet veto outside lepton veto
$Z \rightarrow \tau\tau$	-	$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 0$ $m_{\ell\ell} < 80 \text{ GeV}$ $m_{\tau\tau} > 66 \text{ GeV}$	-

SRs

	DF			SF		
	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet	0-jet	1-jet	2-jet
Pre-selection	Trigger selection and matching 2 DF oppositely-charged leptons No additional leptons $p_T^{\text{lead}} > 27 \text{ GeV}$ and $p_T^{\text{sublead}} > 15 \text{ GeV}$			Trigger selection and matching 2 SF oppositely-charged leptons No additional leptons $p_T^{\text{lead}} > 27 \text{ GeV}$ and $p_T^{\text{sublead}} > 15 \text{ GeV}$ $p_T^{\ell\ell} > 40 \text{ GeV}$ $S(E_T^{\text{miss}}) > 4$		
Jet categorisation	$n_{\text{jets}} = 0$	$n_{\text{jets}} = 1$	$n_{\text{jets}} \geq 2$	$n_{\text{jets}} = 0$	$n_{\text{jets}} = 1$	$n_{\text{jets}} \geq 2$
Orthogonality	$m_{\ell\ell} > 100 \text{ GeV}$ or ($55 \text{ GeV} \leq m_{\ell\ell} < 100 \text{ GeV}$ and $\Delta\phi_{(\ell,\ell)} > 2$)	$m_{\ell\ell} > 80 \text{ GeV}$ $\Delta\phi_{(\ell,\ell)} > 1.8$	$m_{\ell\ell} > 70 \text{ GeV}$	$\Delta R_{(\ell,\ell)} > 1.8$ $m_{\ell\ell} > 55 \text{ GeV}$ $\Delta\phi_{(\ell,\ell)} > 1.8$		
Top rejection	$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 0$			$n_{b\text{-jets}} = 0$		
Background rejection	$\Delta\eta_{(\ell,\ell)} < 1.8$		central jet veto outside lepton veto	$ m_{\ell\ell} - 91 \text{ GeV} > 15 \text{ GeV}$ central jet veto outside lepton veto		