



Probing the Top-Higgs Quartic interaction

through an EFT interpretation of $t\bar{t}H$ production at ATLAS

arXiv:[2603.13113](https://arxiv.org/abs/2603.13113)

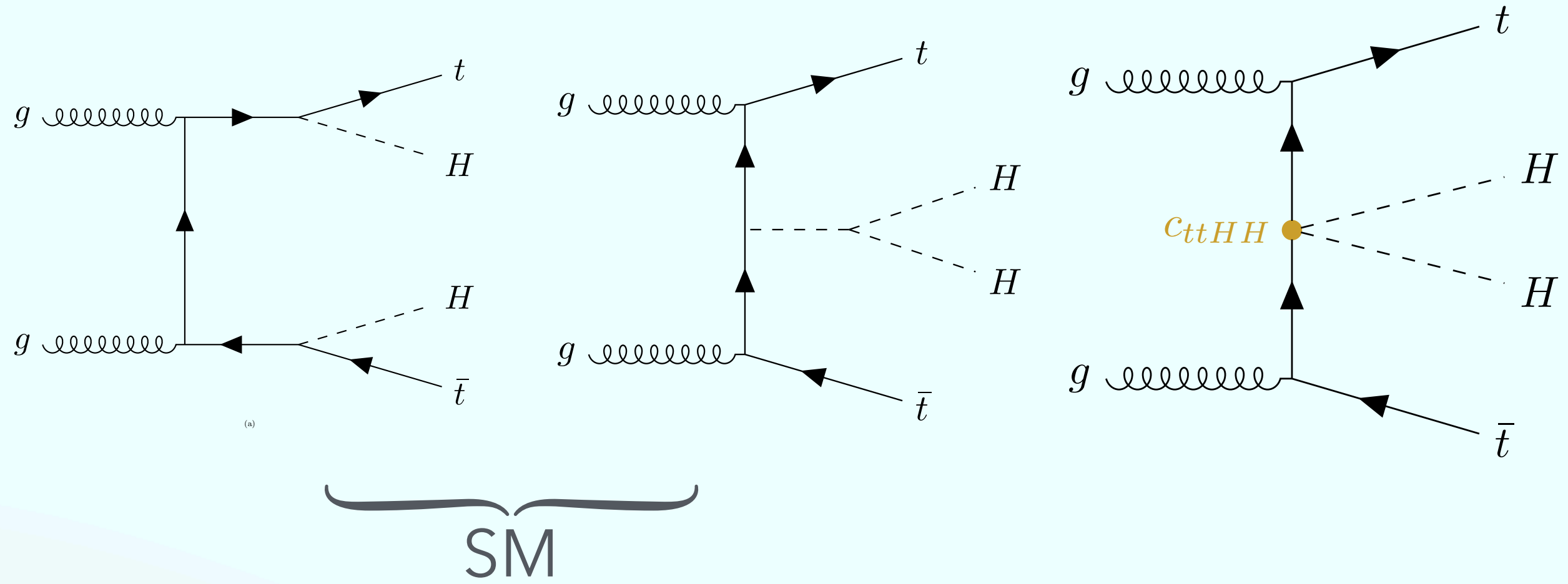
Adrien Gutierrez-Auriol, adrien.auriol@cern.ch
26th May, 2026



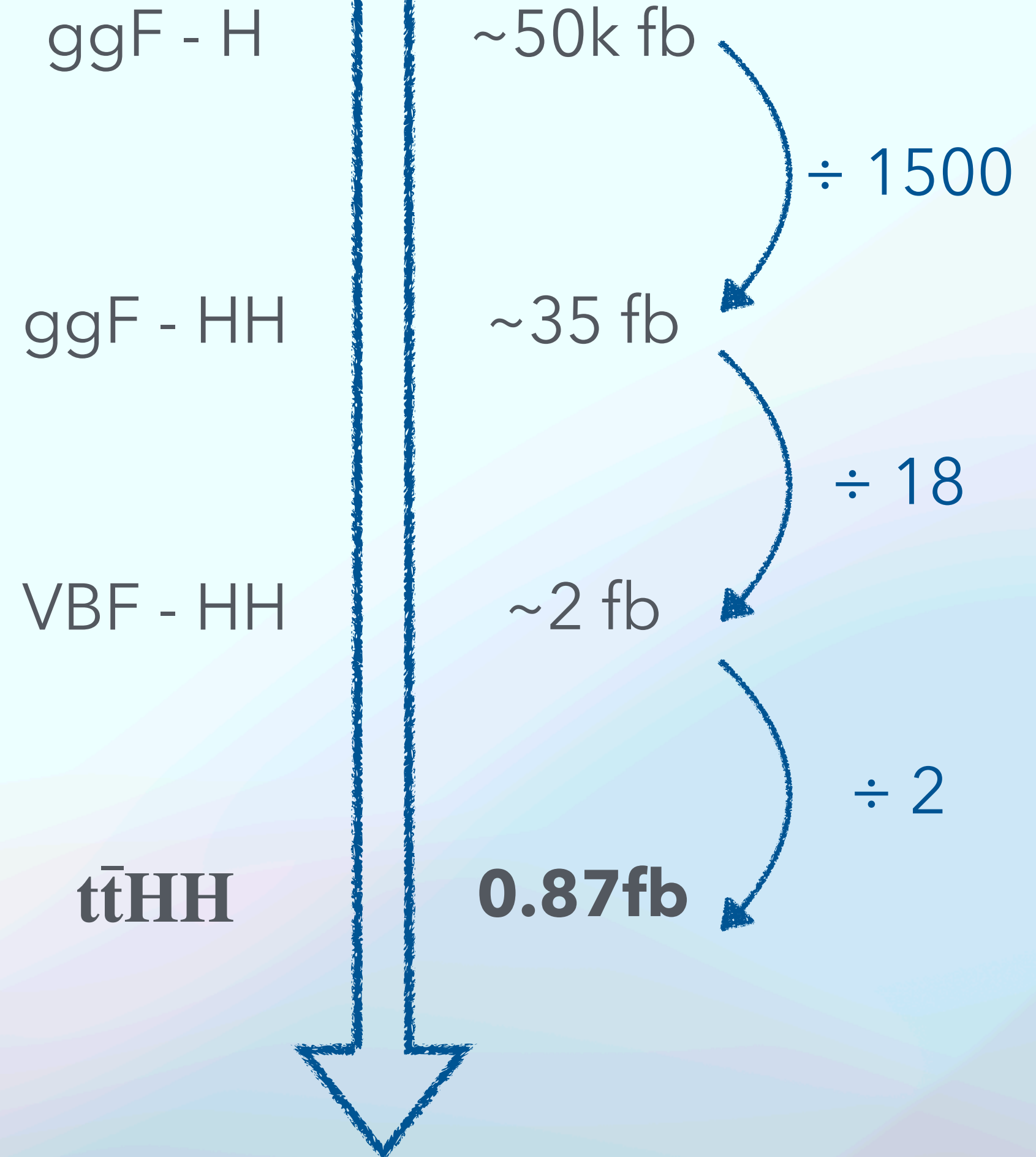
Run: 438481

Event: 550081963

Motivations

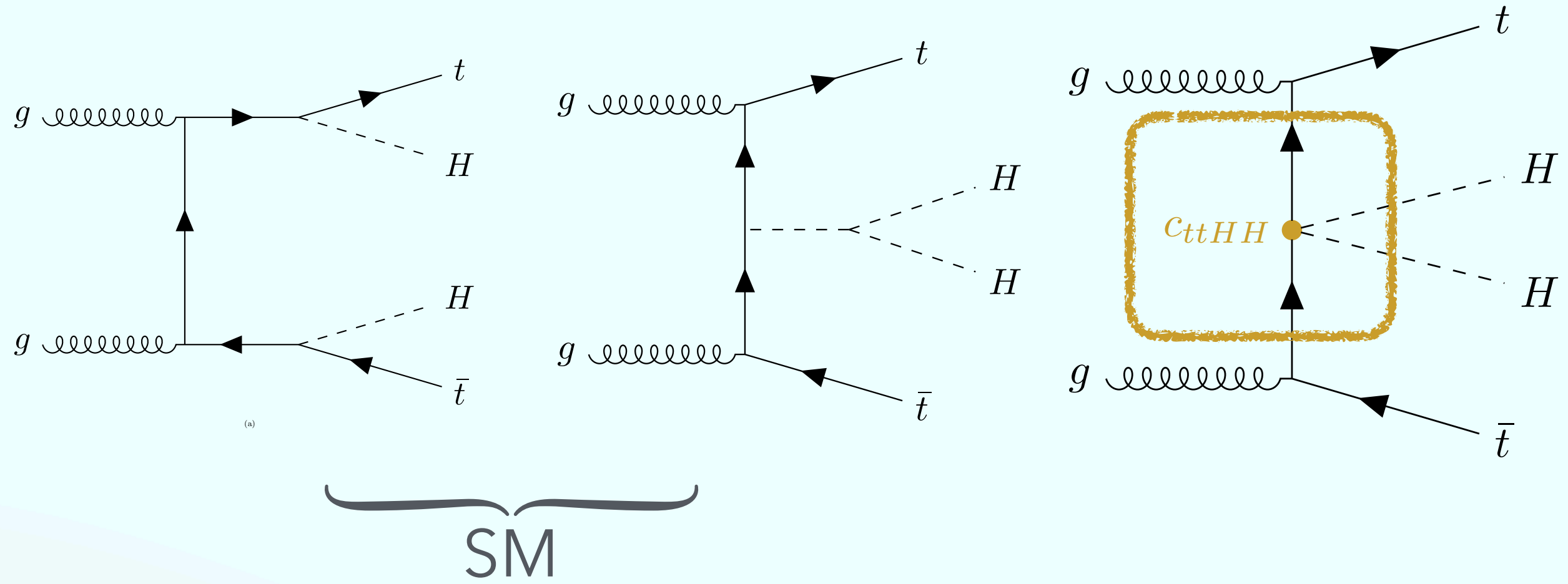


LHC @ 13.6 TeV

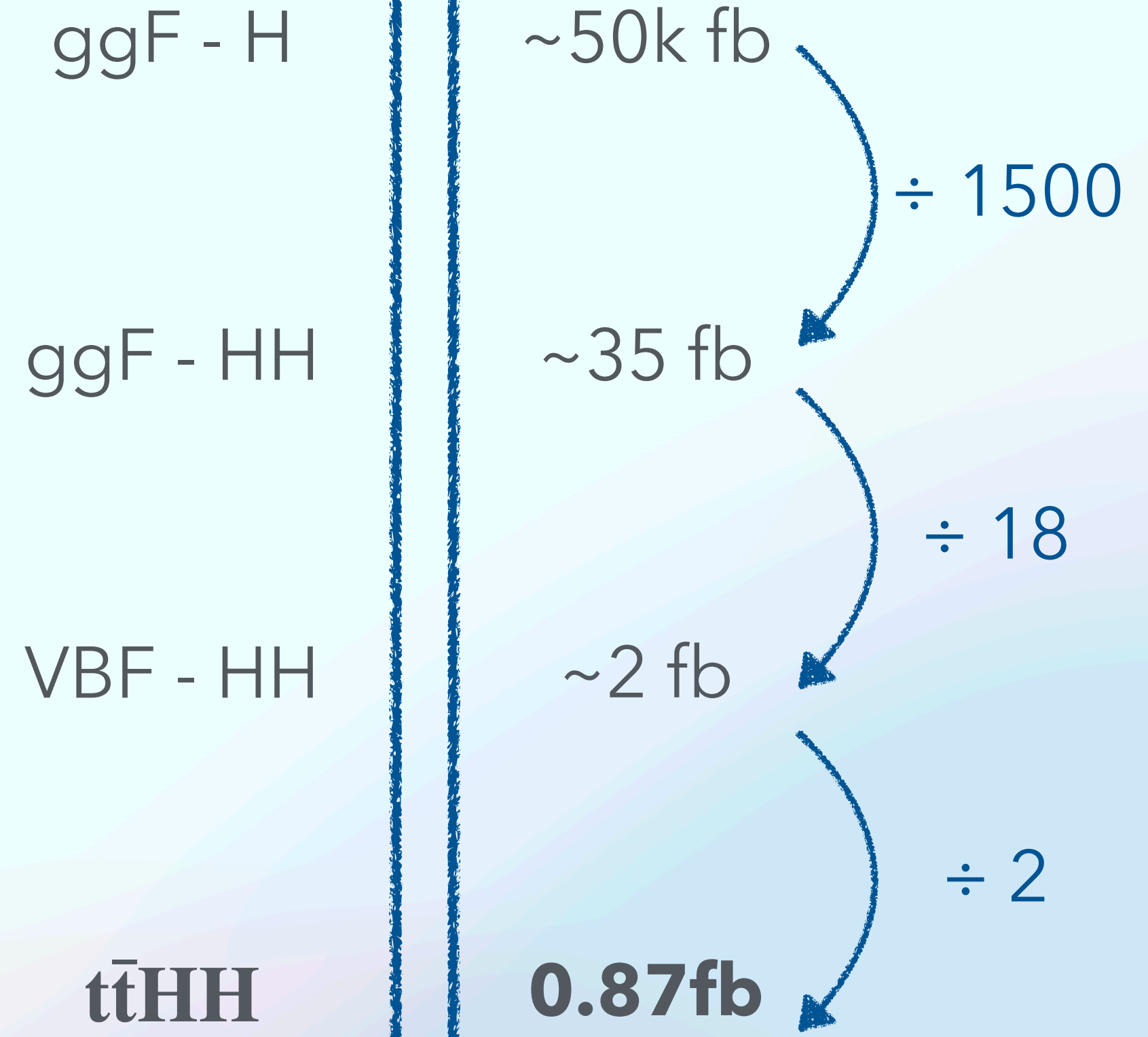


- 3rd leading HH production mode @ LHC

Motivations



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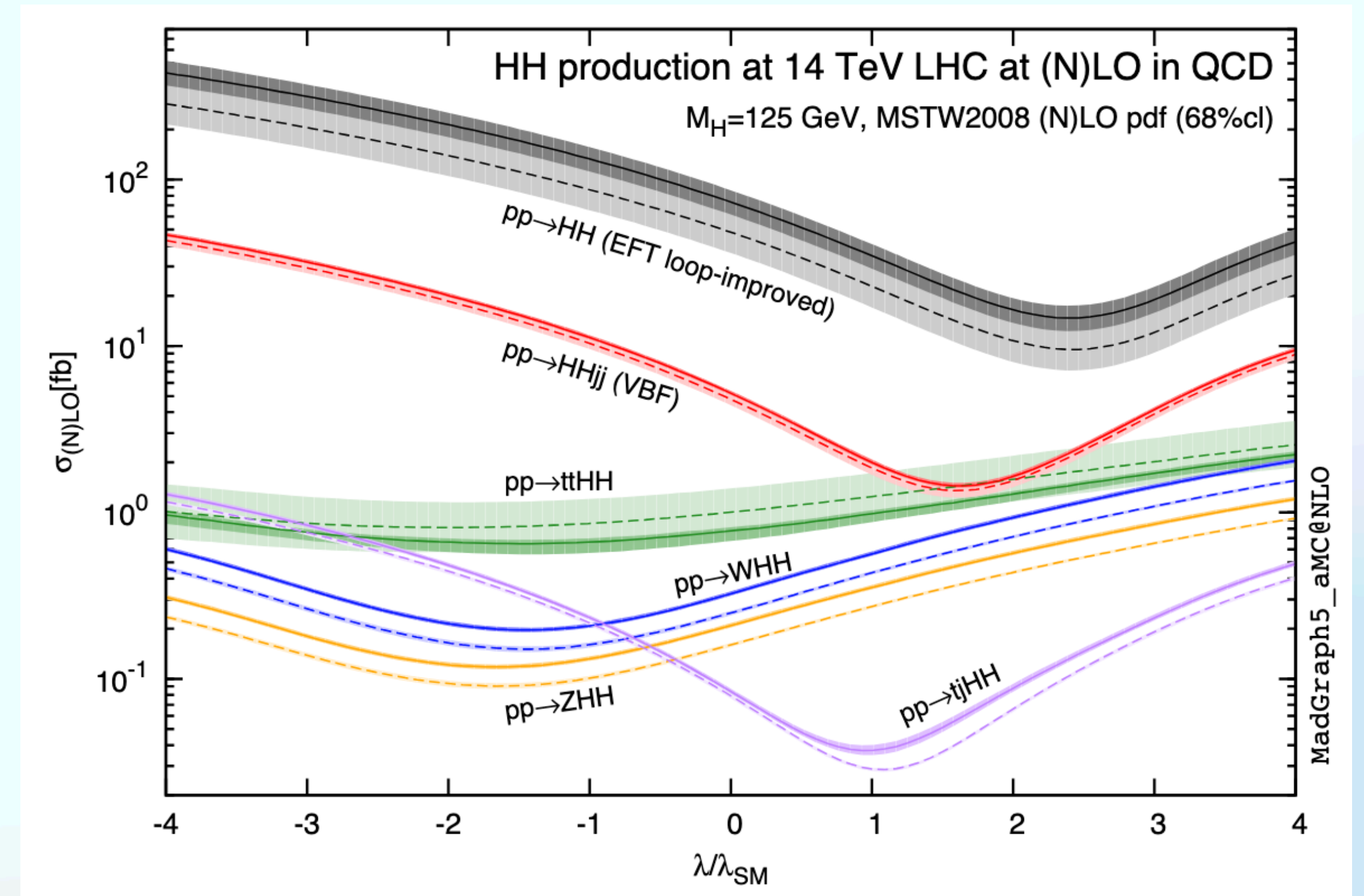
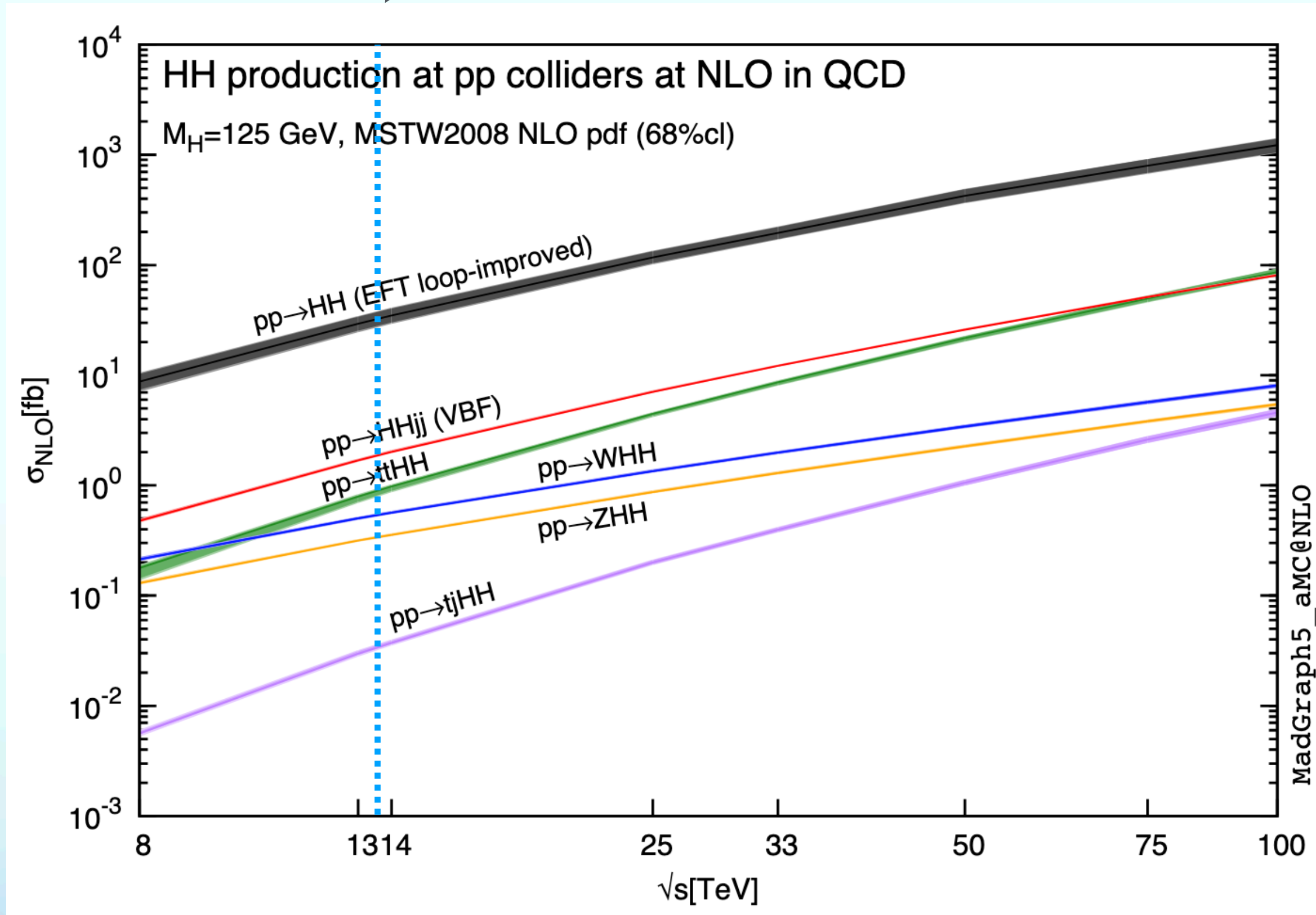


- 3rd leading HH production mode @ LHC
- Gives **direct** access to $t\bar{t}HH$ quartic interaction

ttHH production

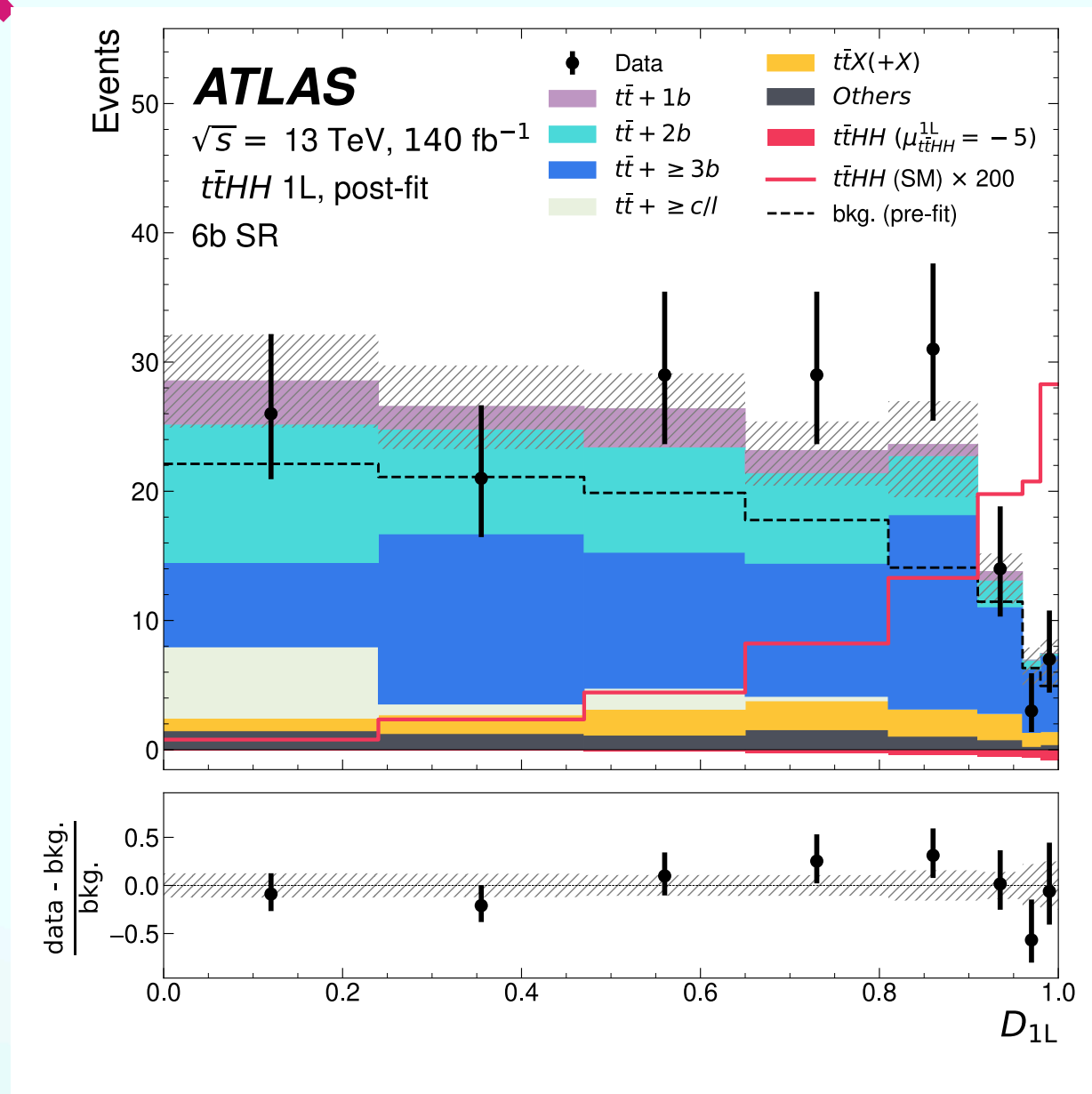
[arXiv:1401.7340](https://arxiv.org/abs/1401.7340)

We stand here



- Cross-section scales faster with \sqrt{s}
- Unique interference pattern dependance on κ_λ

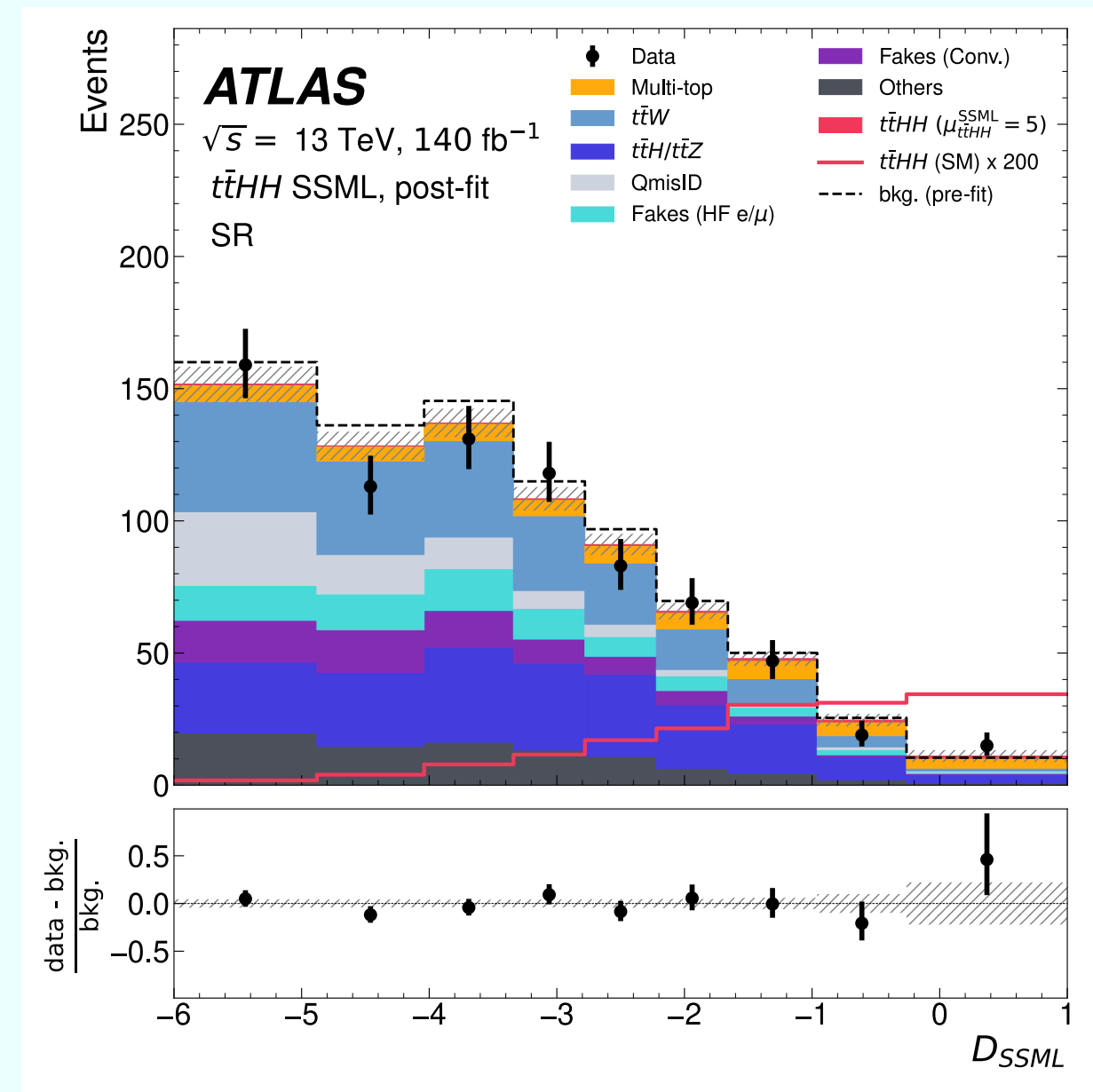
Strategy



Single lep. channel (1L)

$HH \rightarrow 4b$ and semileptonic $t\bar{t}$
 dom. bkg : $t\bar{t} + jets$

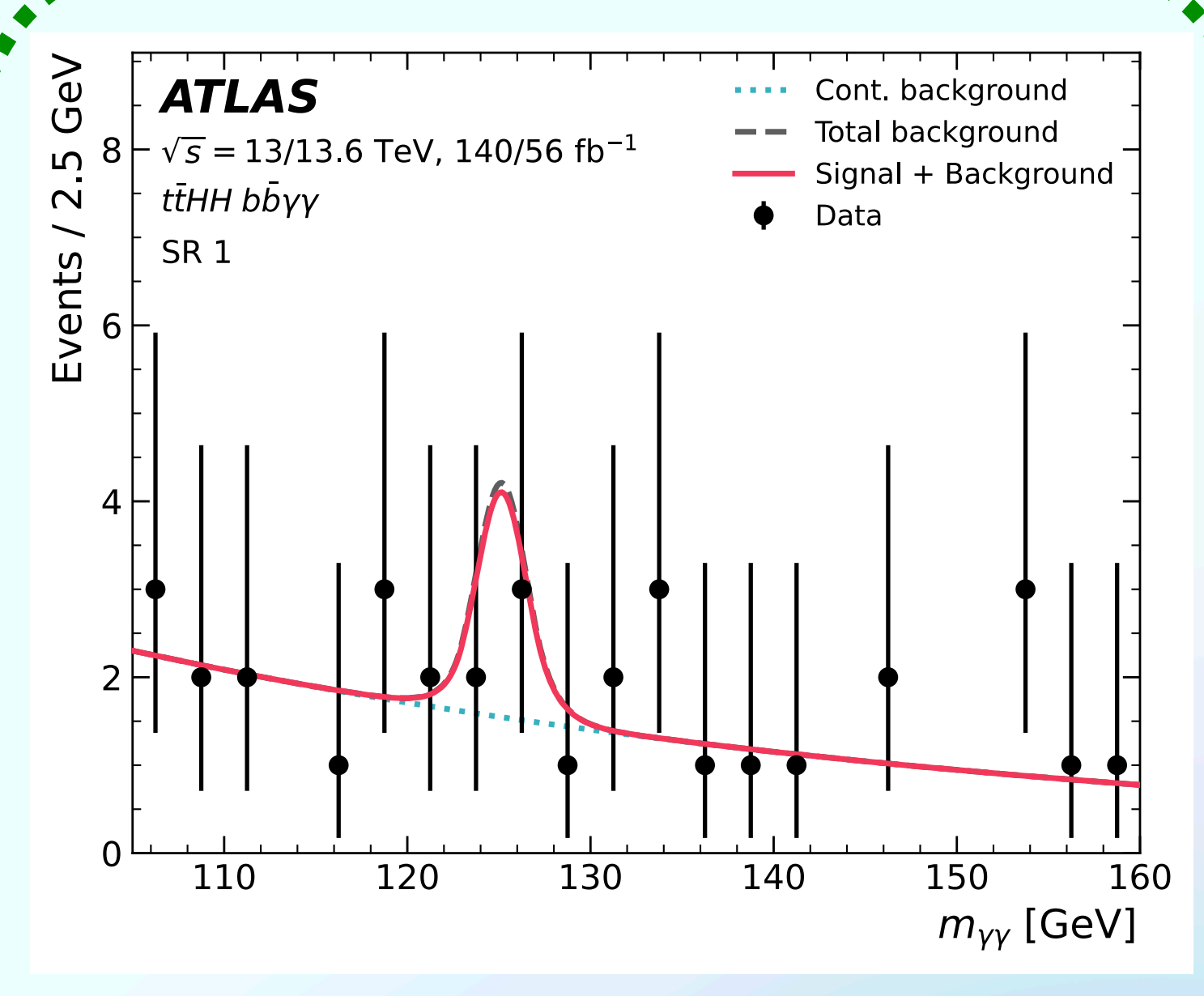
Obs. limit on μ : **26** x SM



Multi-lep. Channel (ML)

$HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}WW, b\bar{b}\tau\tau, \dots$
 dom. bkg : $t\bar{t}W, t\bar{t}t\bar{t}, QmidID$

Obs. limit on μ : **40** x SM

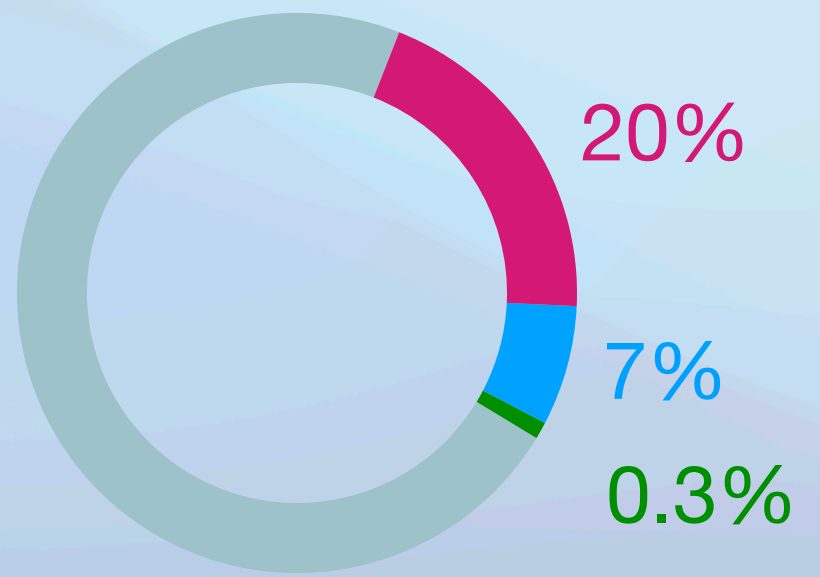


$b\bar{b}\gamma\gamma$ channel

$HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\gamma\gamma$
 dom. bkg : $\gamma\gamma + jets$ continuum

Obs. limit on μ : **75** x SM

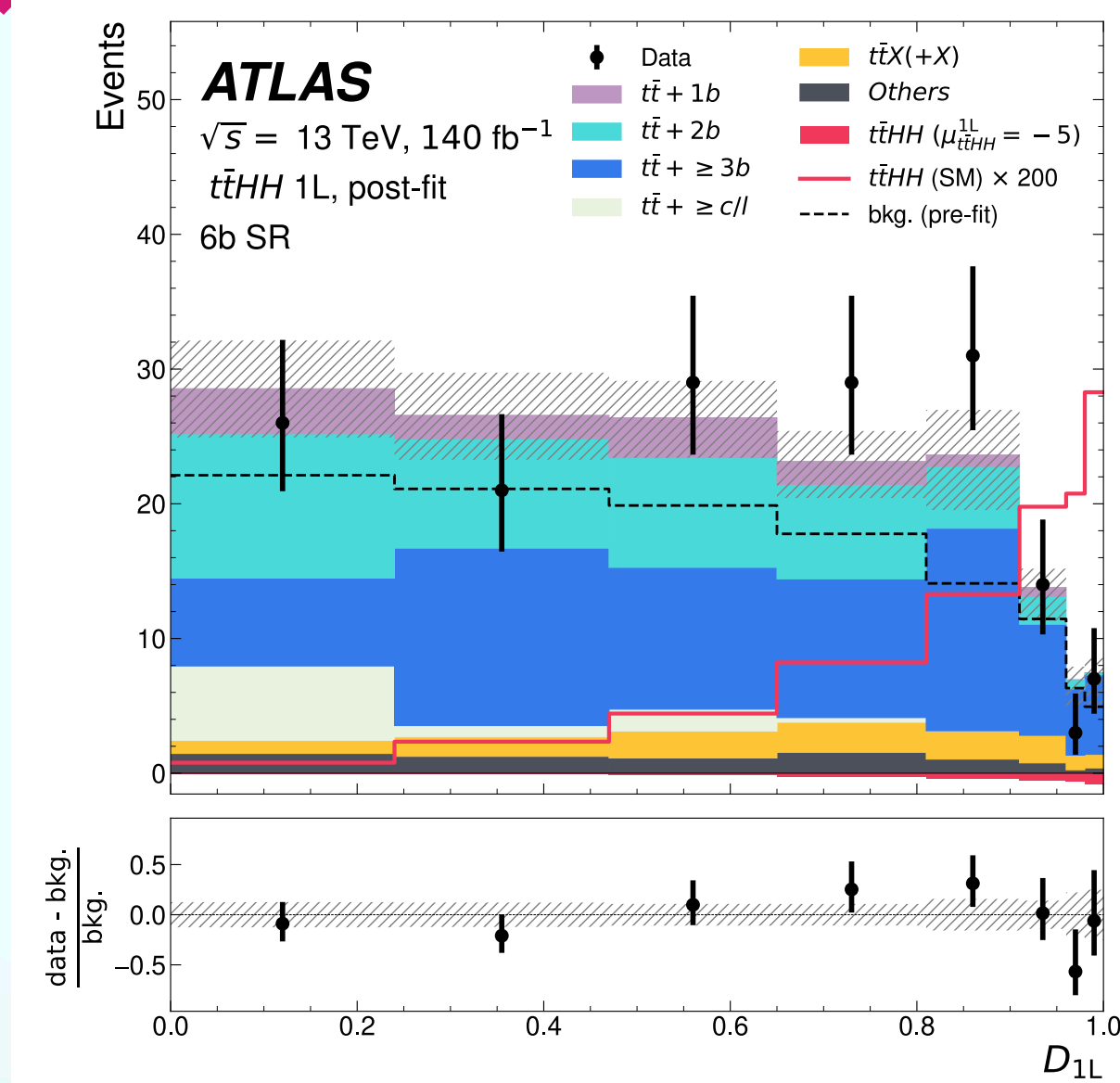
arXiv:[2603.13113](https://arxiv.org/abs/2603.13113)



- 1L and ML : Fit Transformer score
- $b\bar{b}\gamma\gamma$: Fit on $m_{\gamma\gamma}$ after BDT selection

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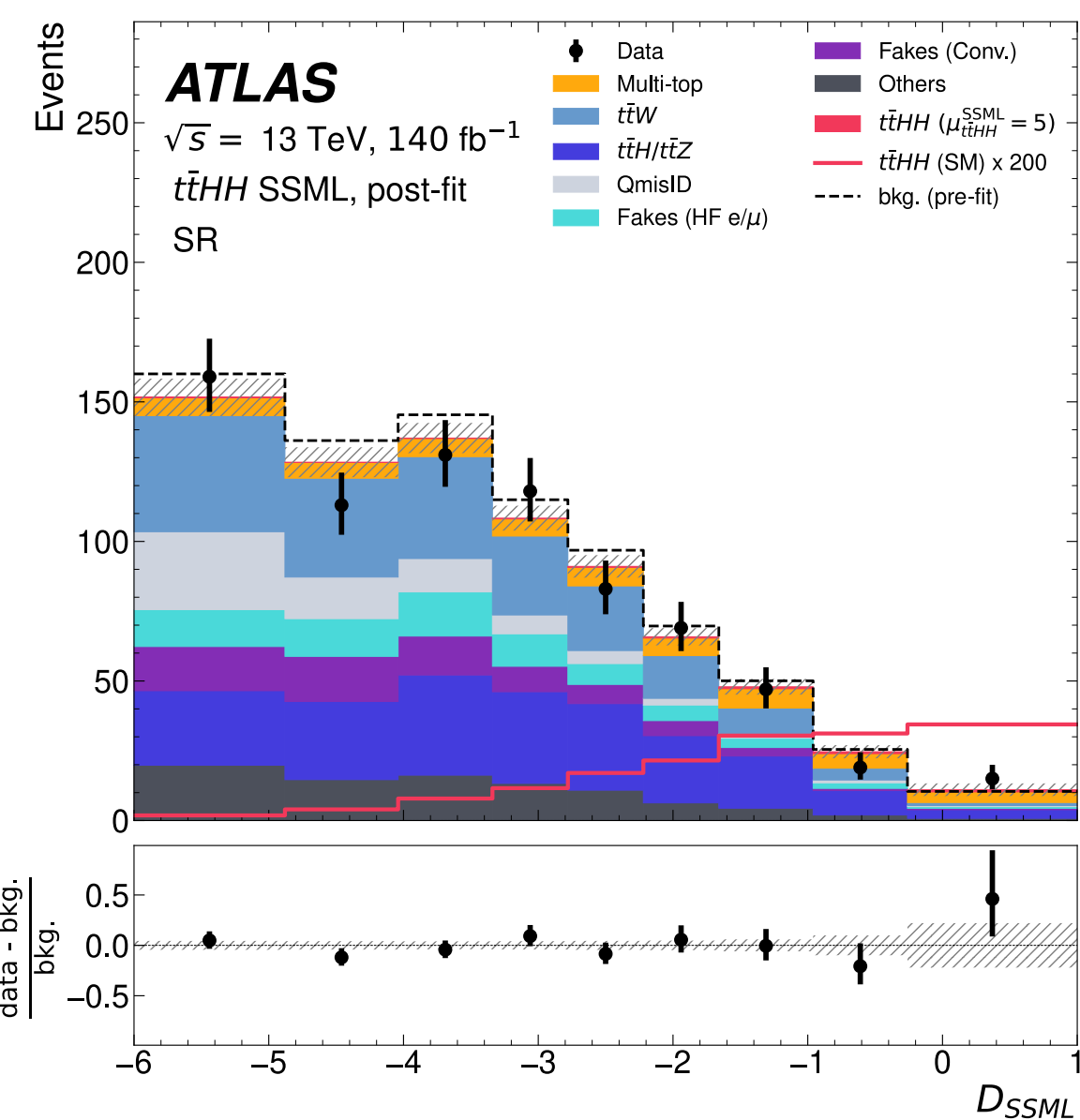
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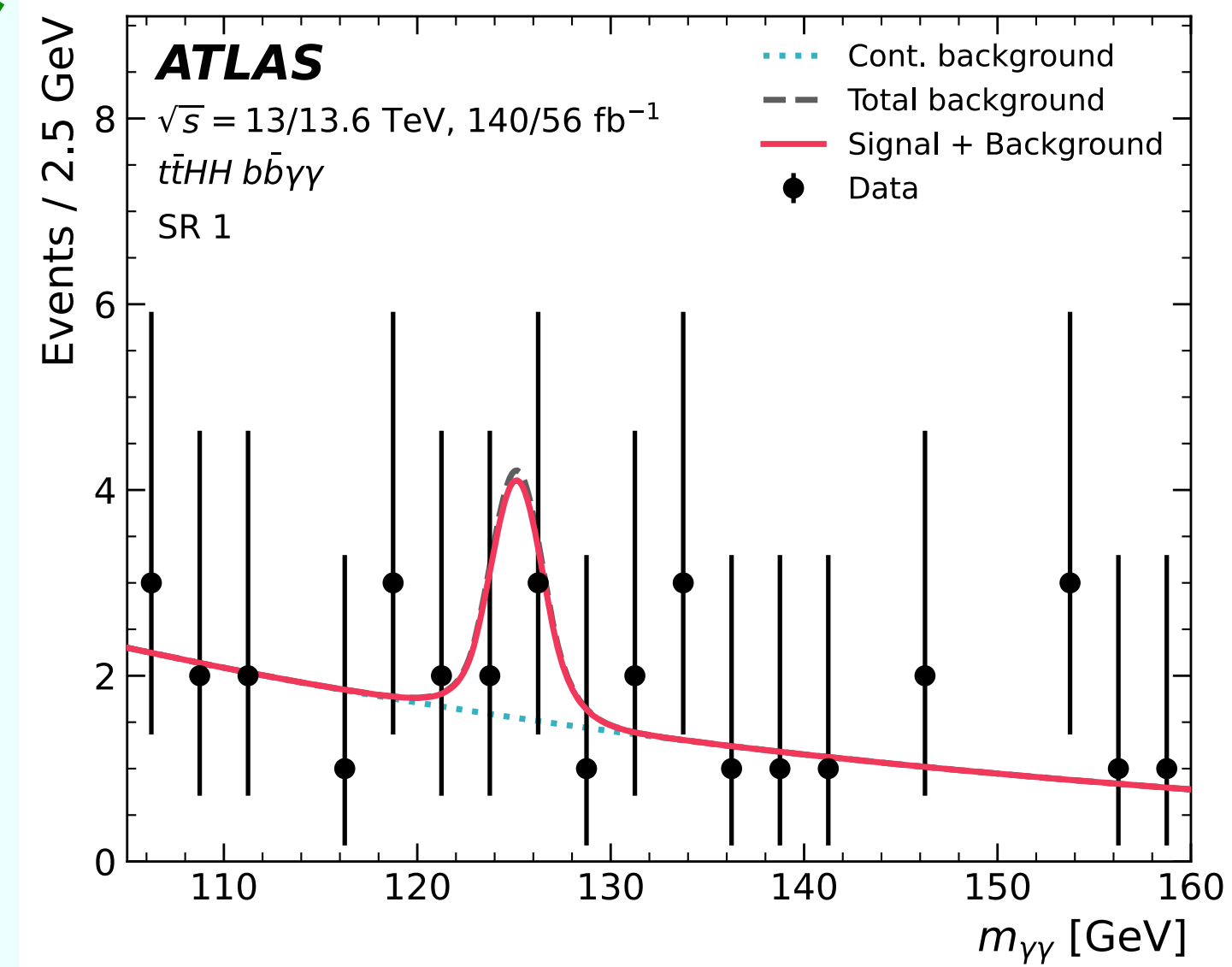
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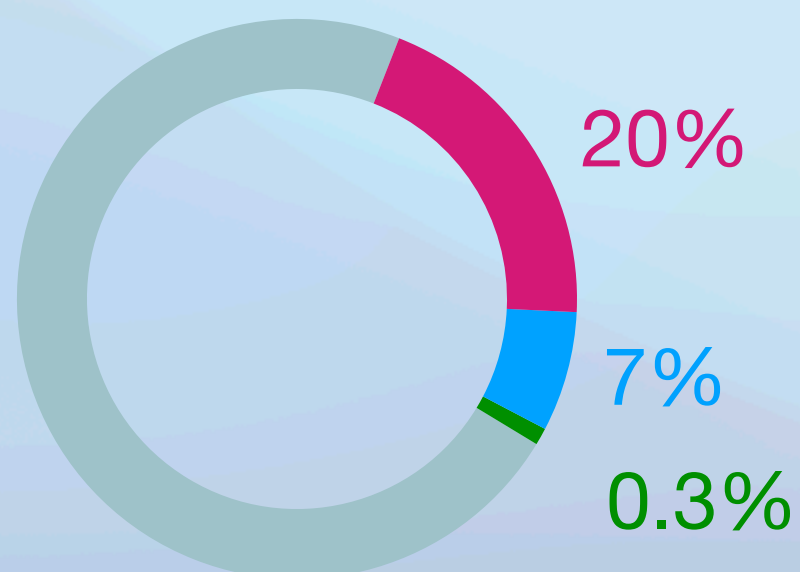


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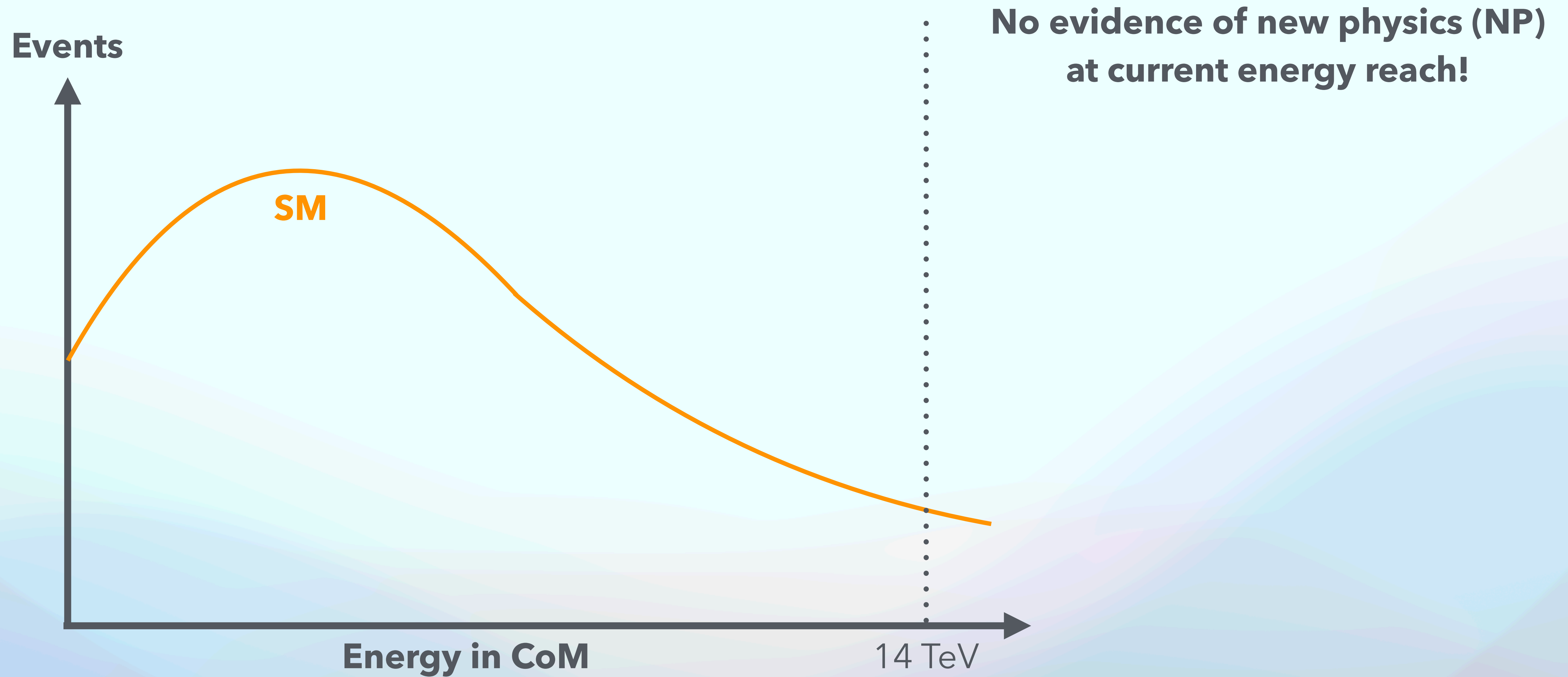
Limitations

Uncertainty Source	Observed	Expected
Signal modelling	(+0.9, -1.8)	(+1.3, -1.0)
Background modelling	(+6.8, -8.2)	(+5.7, -6.2)
$t\bar{t}$ + jets	(+5.3, -6.5)	(+4.7, -5.0)
$t\bar{t}\bar{t}\bar{t}$	(+4.6, -6.4)	(+2.9, -4.0)
$t\bar{t}H$	(+2.1, -1.6)	(+2.0, -1.9)
others	(+0.9, -0.7)	(+0.9, -0.8)
MC statistical	(+2.8, -3.7)	(+2.5, -2.7)
Detector systematic	(+2.2, -3.4)	(+1.9, -1.5)
Total systematic	(+8.3, -9.4)	(+7.3, -7.4)
Data statistical	(+7.2, -6.8)	(+7.2, -6.7)
Total	(+11.0, -11.6)	(+10.3, -10.0)

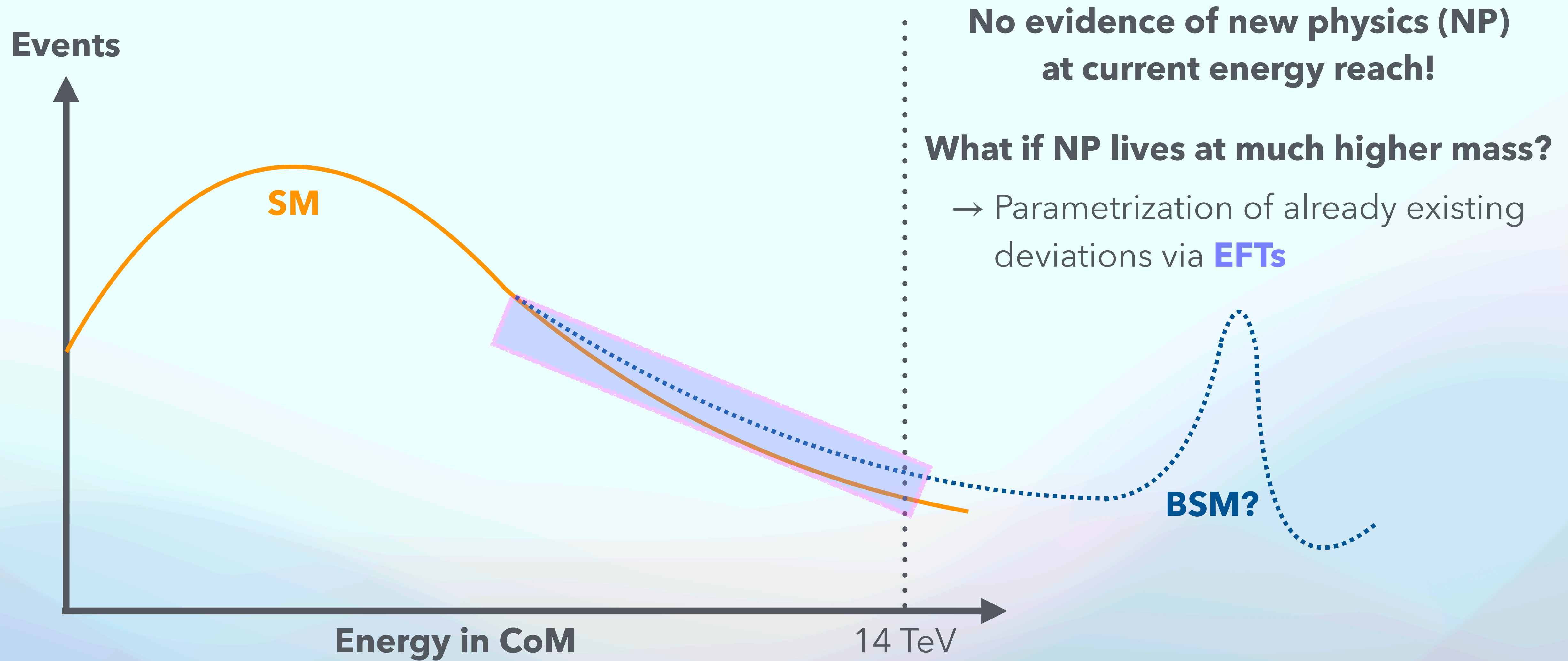
Dominant systematic unc. :
heavy flavour modelling and 4 tops

Overall → Balance between stat. and modelling

Going beyond the SM using an effective approach ?



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Recipe of an EFT

EFT recipe

Step 1 : We fix the field content

Step 2 : We fix the symmetries

Step 3 : We write an exhaustive list of allowed interactions
at a fixed order

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$$\rightarrow \mathcal{L}_{\text{SMEFT}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{SM}} + \sum_{d=5}^{\infty} \sum_i \frac{c_{i,d}}{\Lambda^{d-4}} \mathcal{O}_i^{(d)} \quad \text{"usual" in LHC analyses}$$

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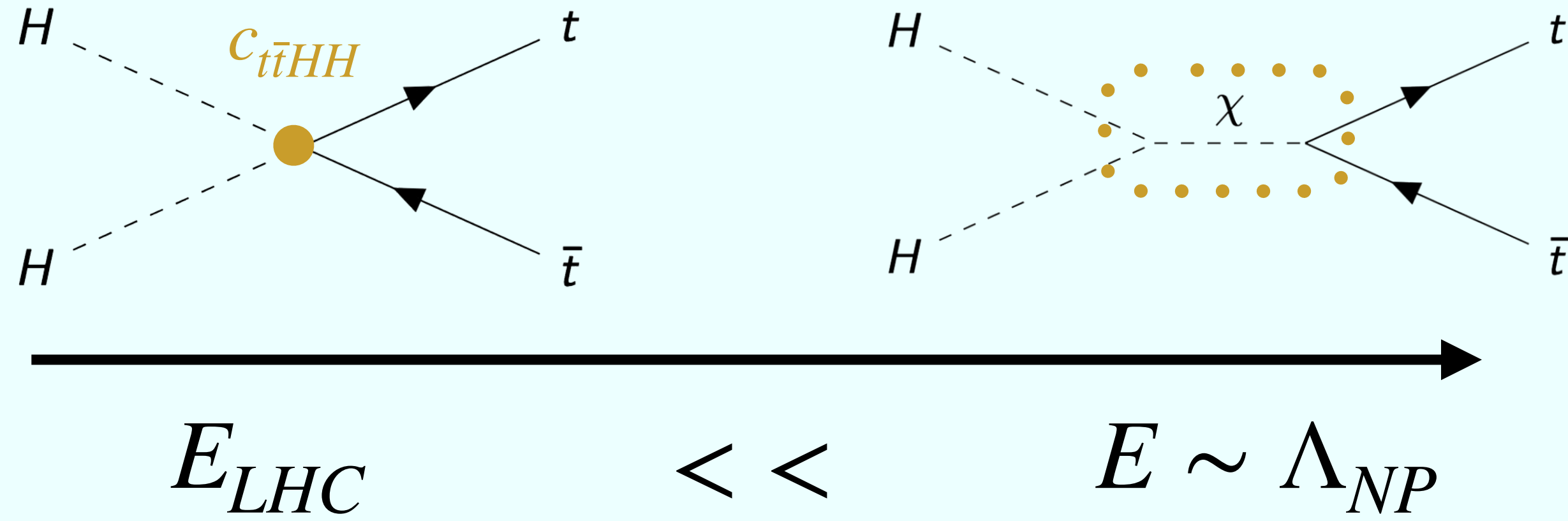
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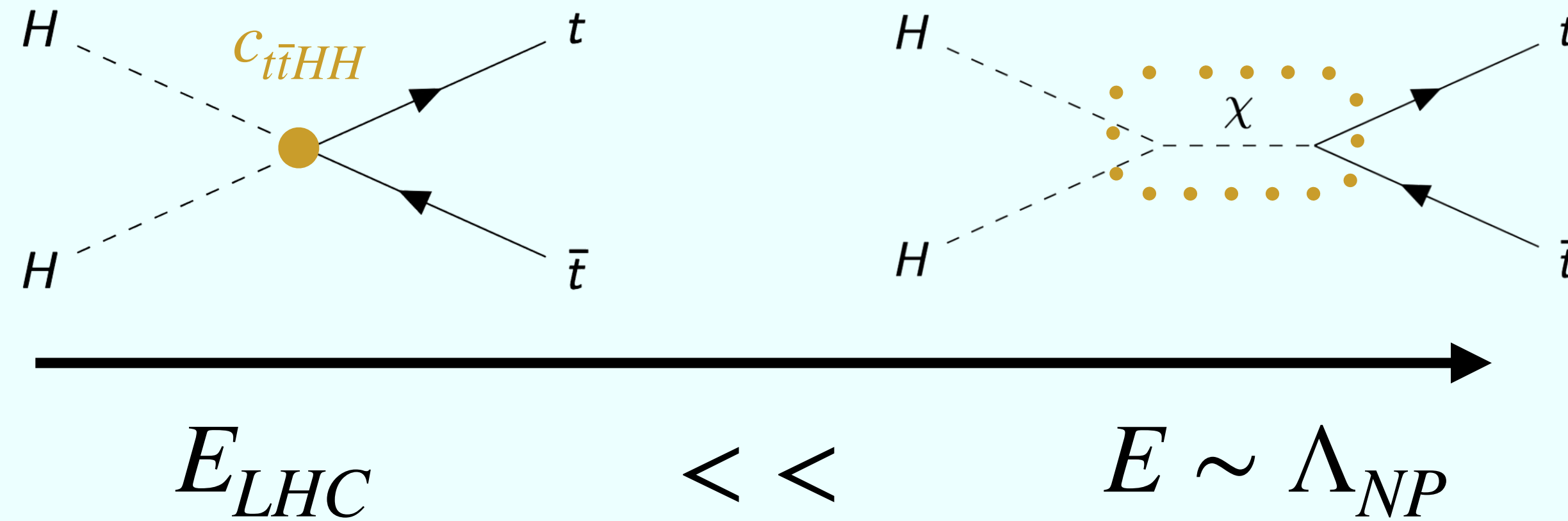
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There are other assumptions that we can make! (e.g. for Step 2)

Higgs Effective Field Theory



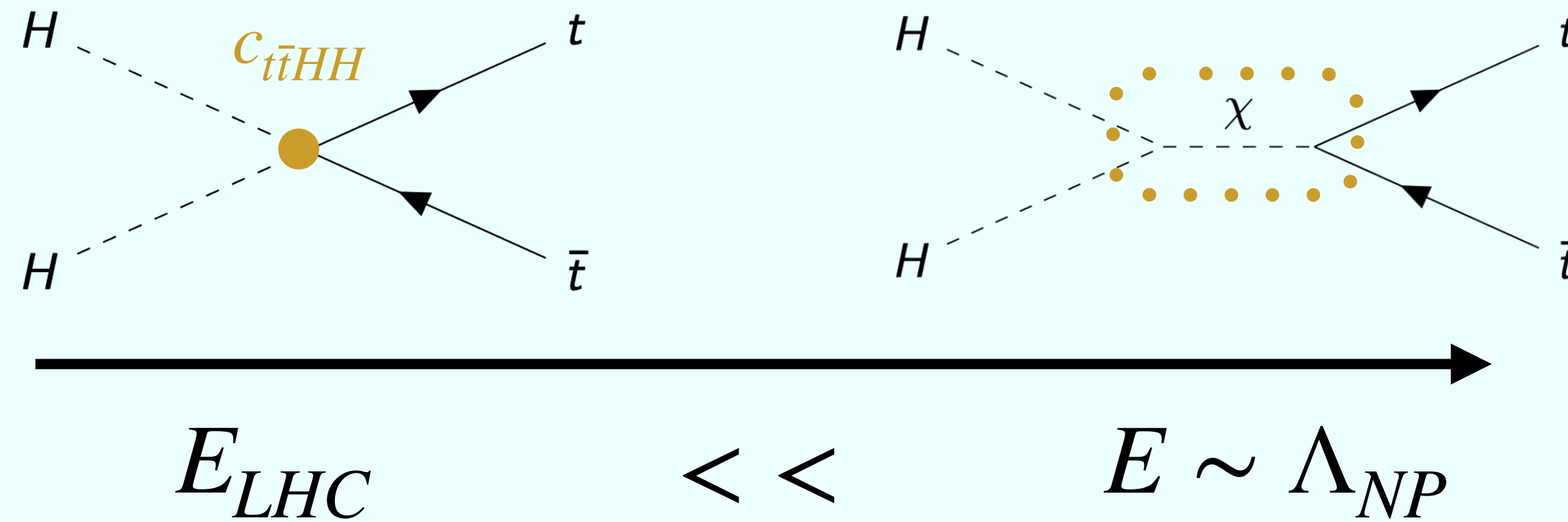
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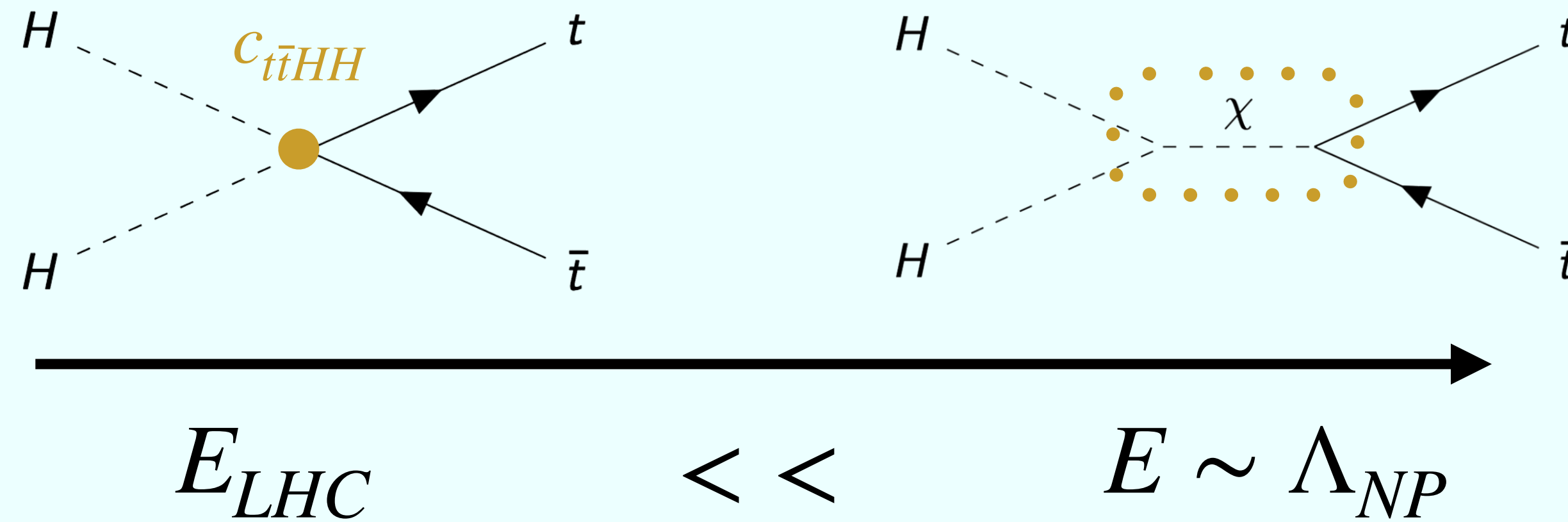
HEFT relaxes the assumption that the physical Higgs boson h is part of a $SU(2)_L$ doublet

→ Higgs properties
unconstrained by EWSB pattern

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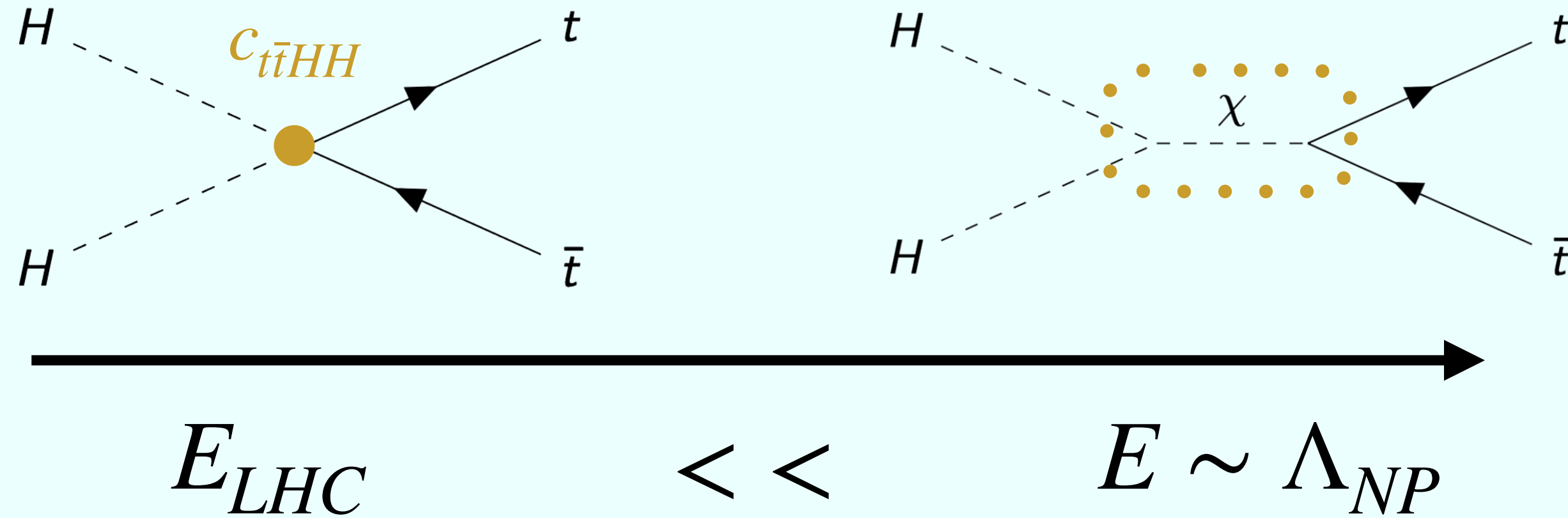
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→ **single and multi-Higgs couplings are decoupled**

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{HEFT}} \supset -m_t \left(c_{t\bar{t}H} \frac{h}{v} + c_{t\bar{t}HH} \frac{h^2}{v^2} \right) t\bar{t} - \kappa_\lambda \frac{m_H^2}{2v} h^3$$

Strategy and results

Exploit **cross-section
dependance**
in **1L** and **ML** channels



Reinterpretation

$$\mathcal{L}(d | \mu) \longrightarrow \mathcal{L}(d | \sigma(c_{t\bar{t}HH}))$$

Strategy and results

Exploit **cross-section
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*Acceptance effects
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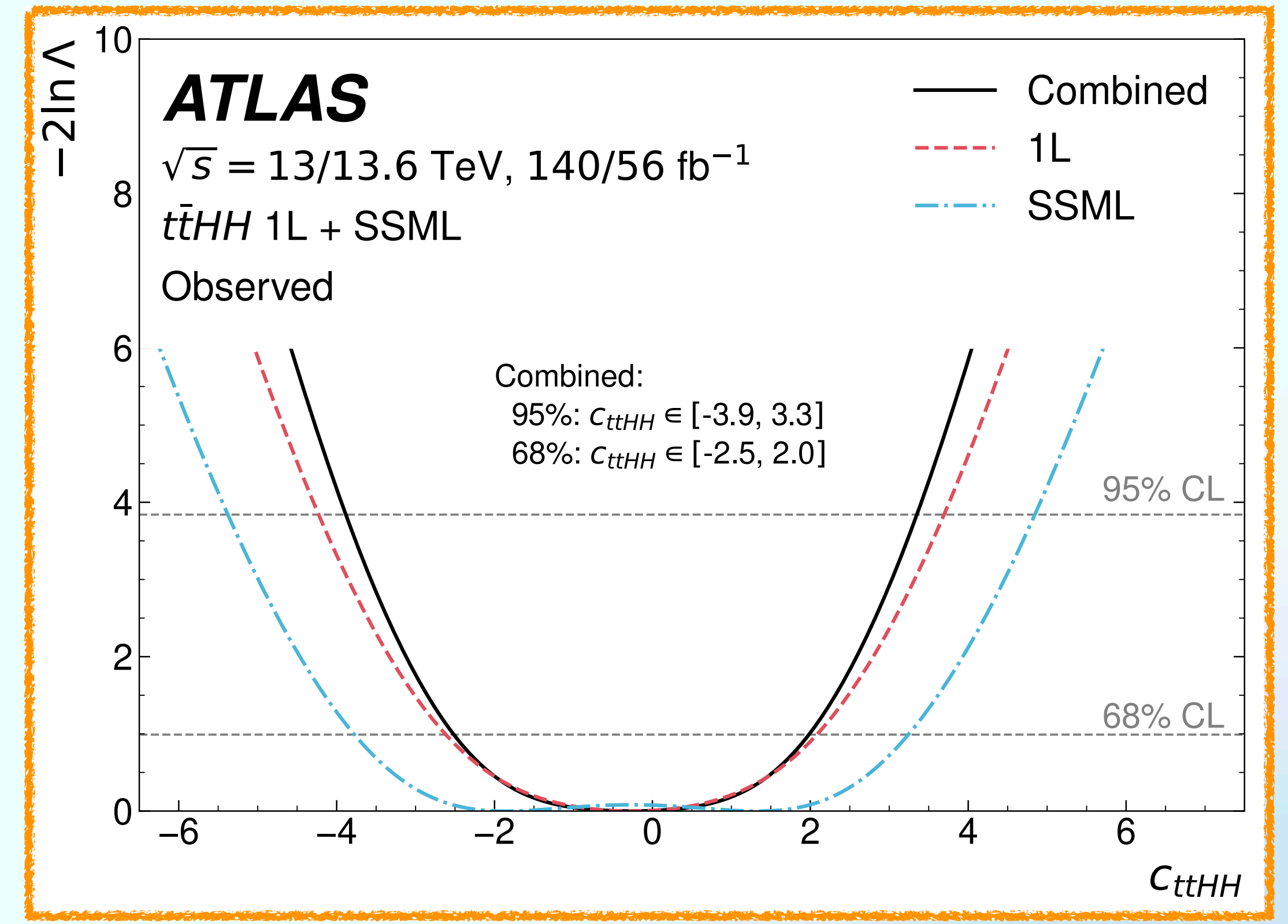
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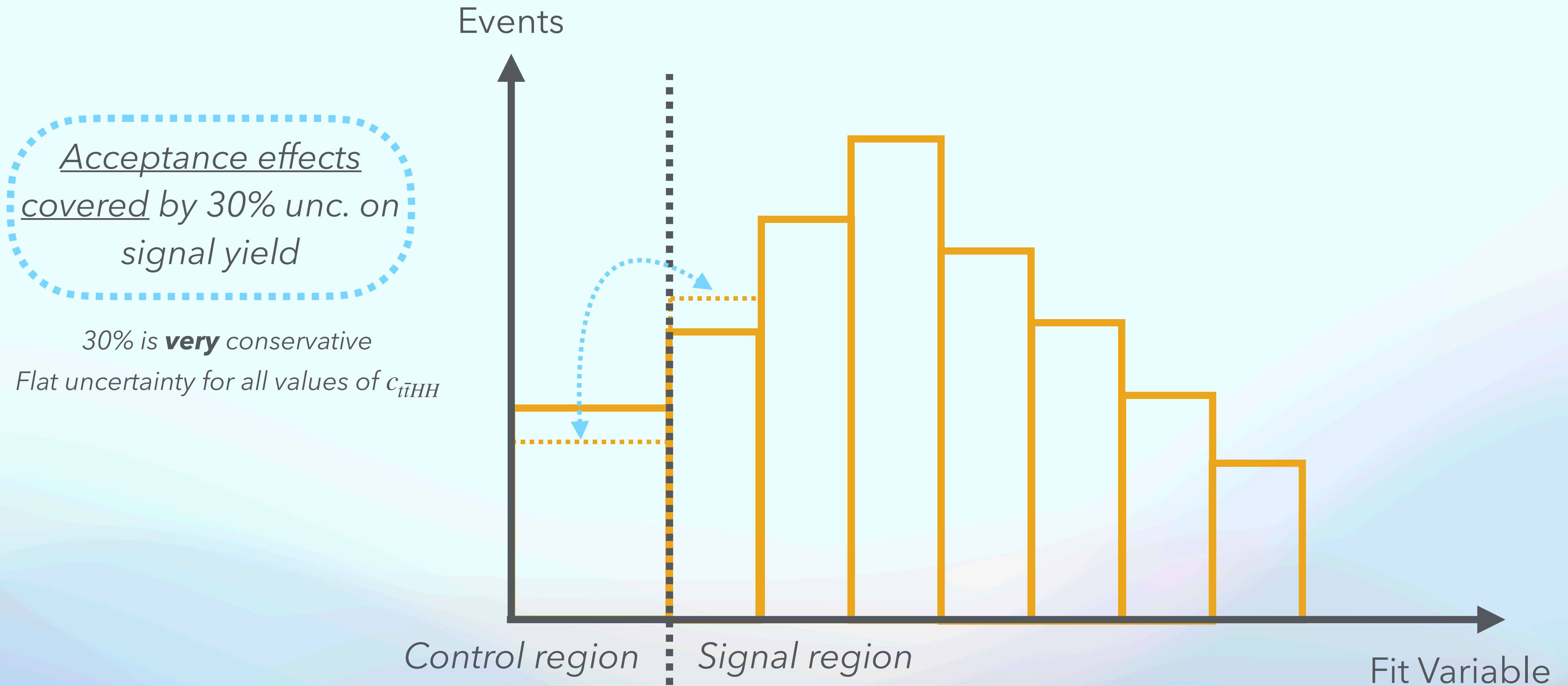
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Almost flat likelihood (small degeneracy in ML channel) arXiv:2603.13113
 → Not sensible to sign

Exp. : $c_{t\bar{t}HH} \in [-4.1, 3.5]$ @ 95 % CL
Obs. : $c_{t\bar{t}HH} \in [-3.9, 3.3]$ @ 95 % CL

What effects do we need to take into account?



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Does the shapes have an impact on the sensitivity?



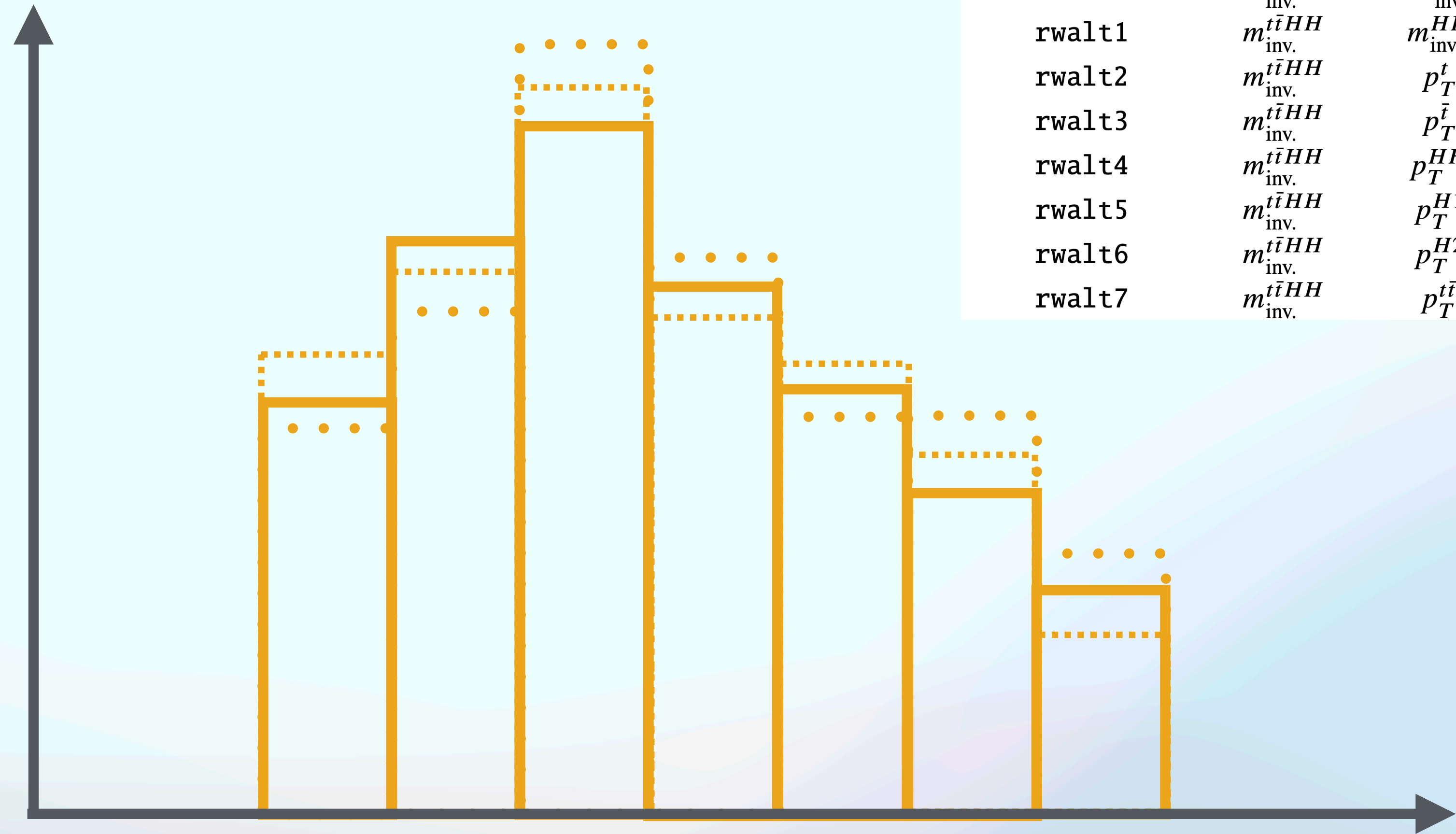
We tested 7 alternative reweightings against no shape variation



Shape variations neglected (evaluated to have a small impact)

At most 10% impact on 95% CL interval

Events



Signal region

Fit Variable

Alt. reweighting	Variable 1	Variable 2
rwalt0 - nominal	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}}$
rwalt1	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	$m_{inv.}^{HH}$
rwalt2	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	p_T^t
rwalt3	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	$p_T^{\bar{t}}$
rwalt4	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	p_T^{HH}
rwalt5	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	p_T^{H1}
rwalt6	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	p_T^{H2}
rwalt7	$m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}$	$p_T^{t\bar{t}}$

Outlook of ATLAS analysis

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- **First search** for $t\bar{t}HH$ done by ATLAS
→ Most stringent **direct limits** on $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$

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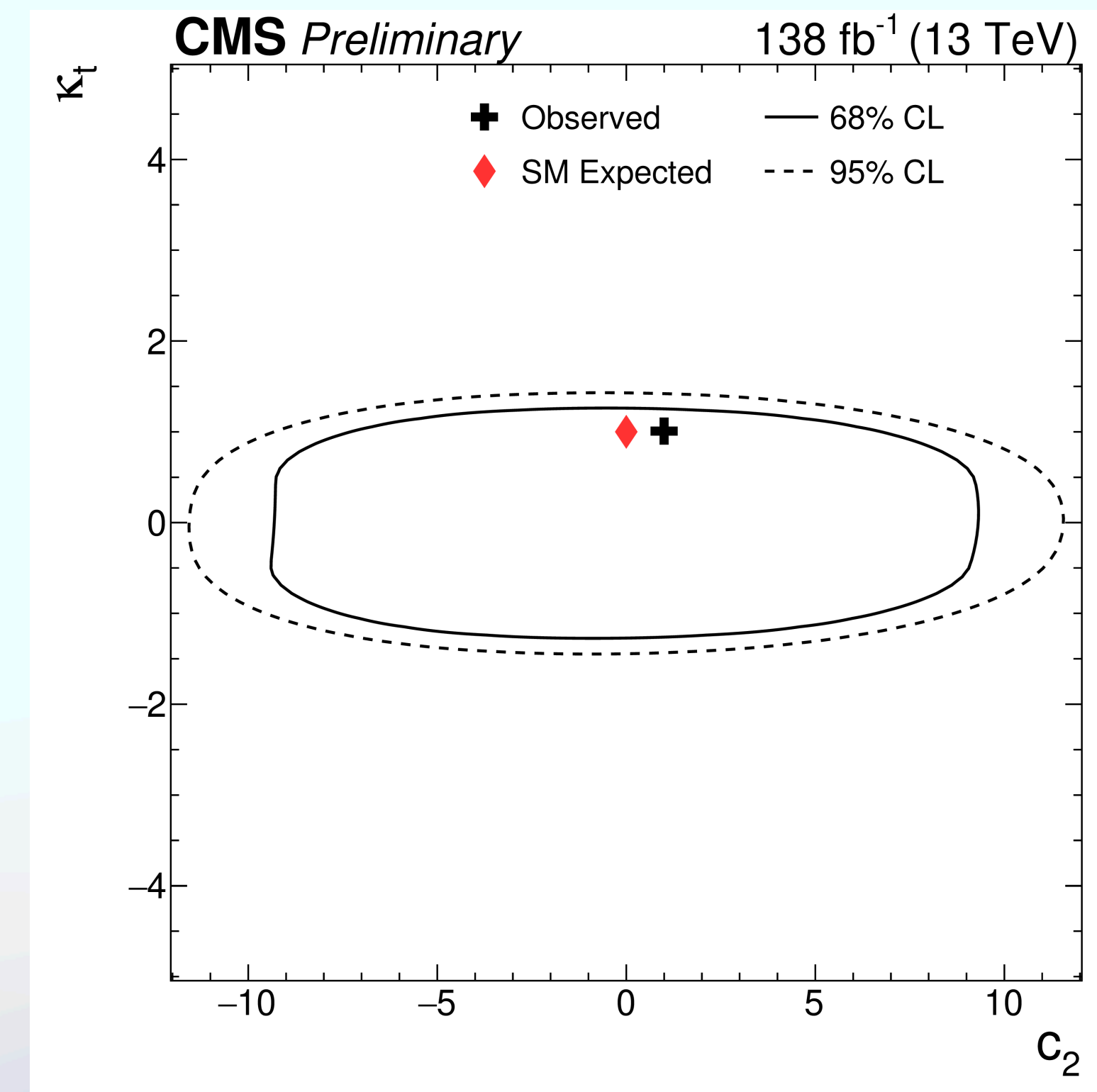
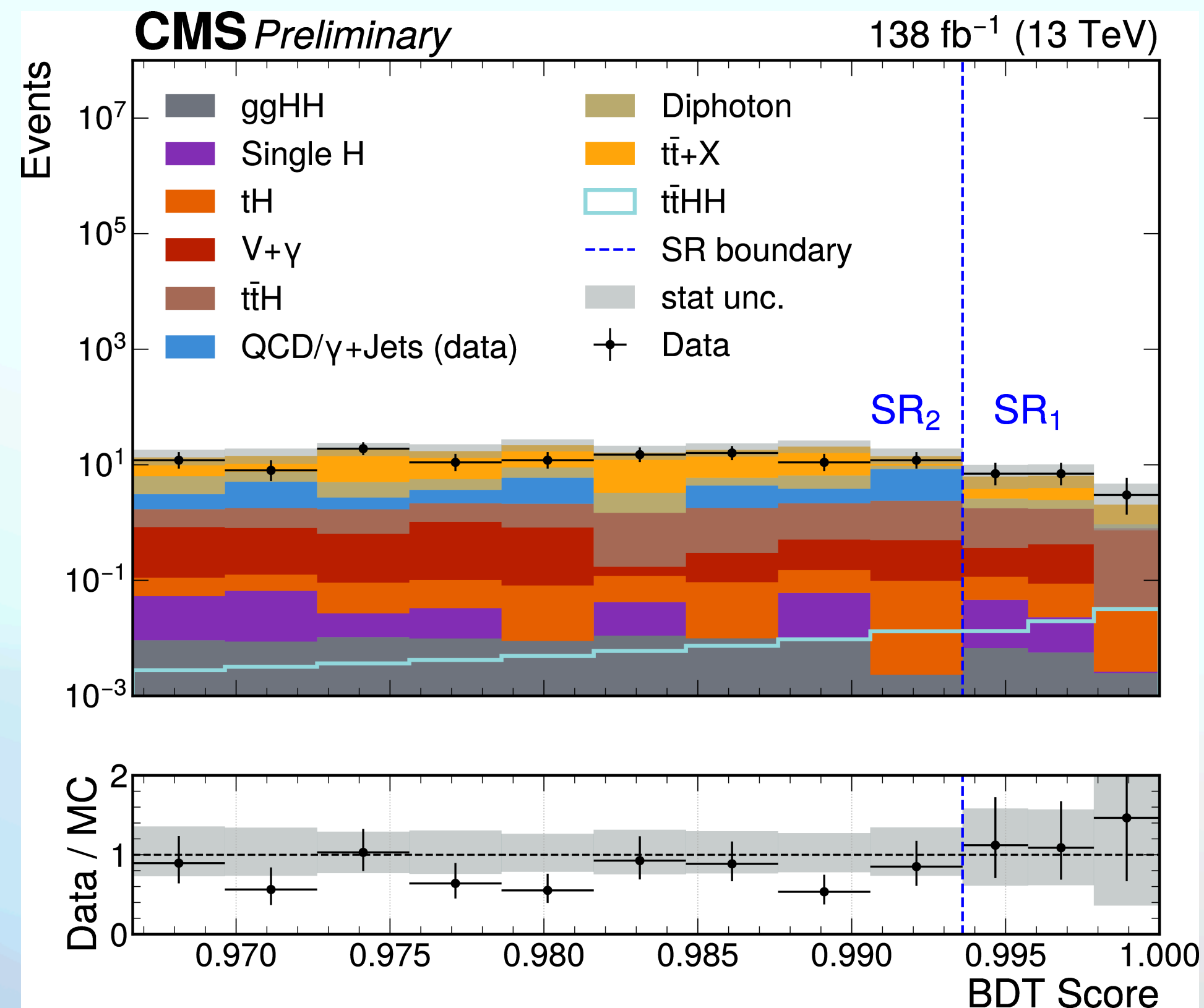
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	CMS $t\bar{t}HH$ [CMS-PAS-HIG-23-004]
Obs. 95% CL limits on $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$	[-8.0, 7.5]

CMS ttHH analysis (1)

CMS-PAS-HIG-23-004

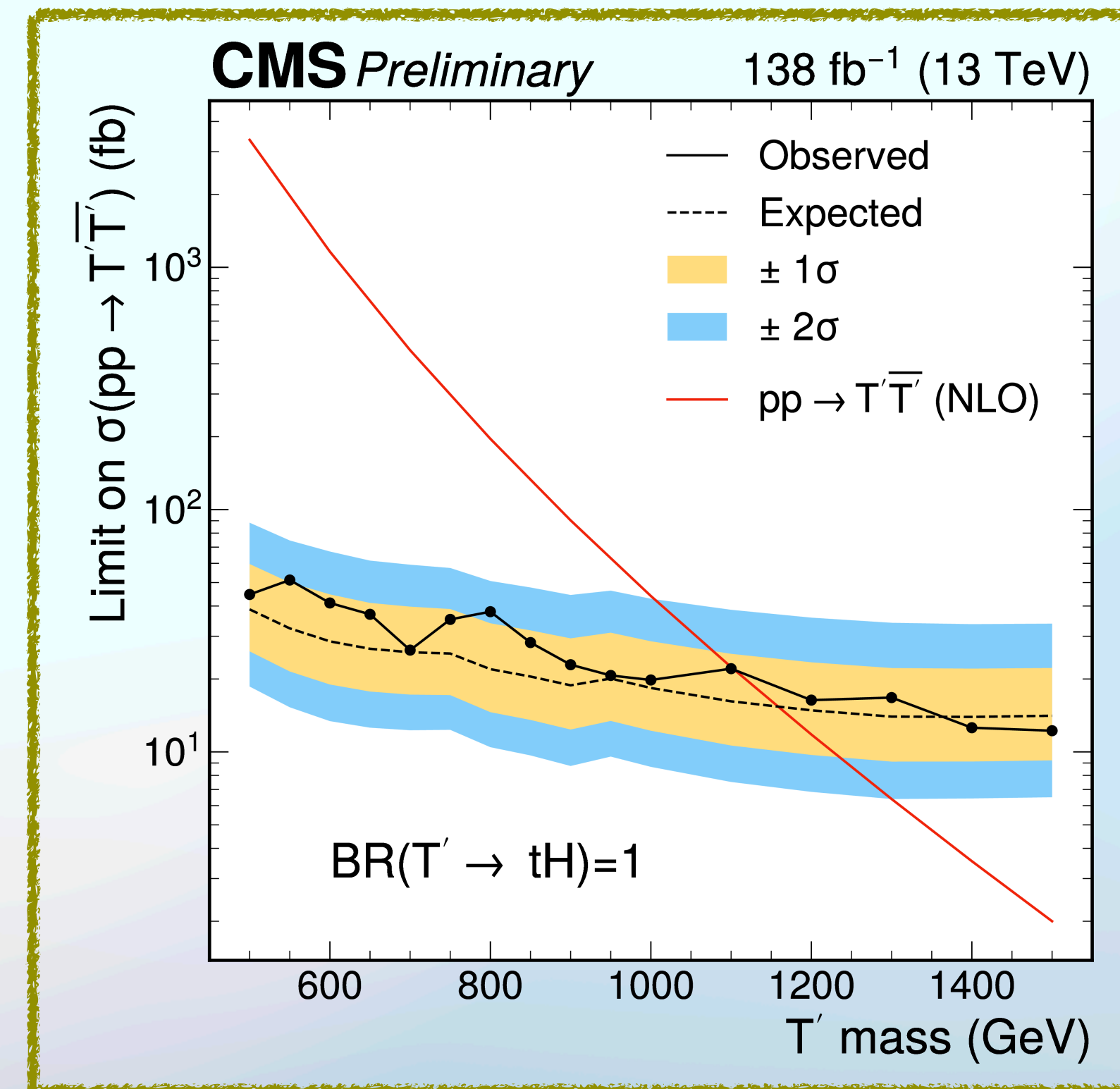
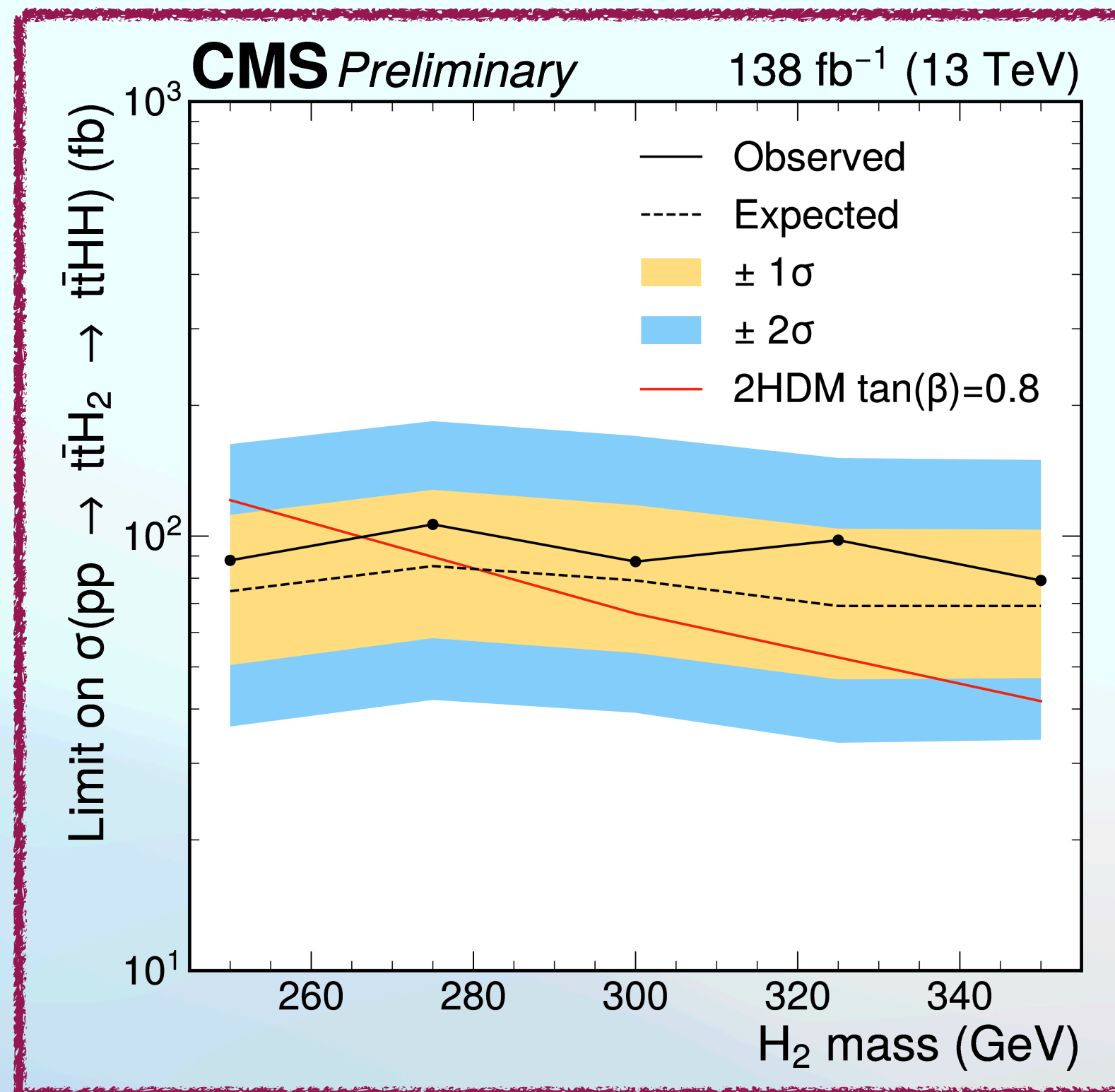
- **Targets** $\gamma\gamma + X$ with $X \in [b, W^\pm, \tau^\pm]$ with **Run 2 data**
- Similar modelling strategy as ATLAS (MVA discriminant)
- **Both** $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$ and c_{tHH} probed (called resp. c_2 and κ_t)
Not $\kappa_\lambda...$



CMS ttHH analysis (2)

[CMS-PAS-HIG-23-004](#)

Limits on **resonant production** of CP-even **heavy neutral scalar (H_2)** in the context of **type-II 2HDM** and **heavy VLQ T' pair production** in the $T' \rightarrow tH$ final state
natural candidate to test HEFT vs. SMEFT



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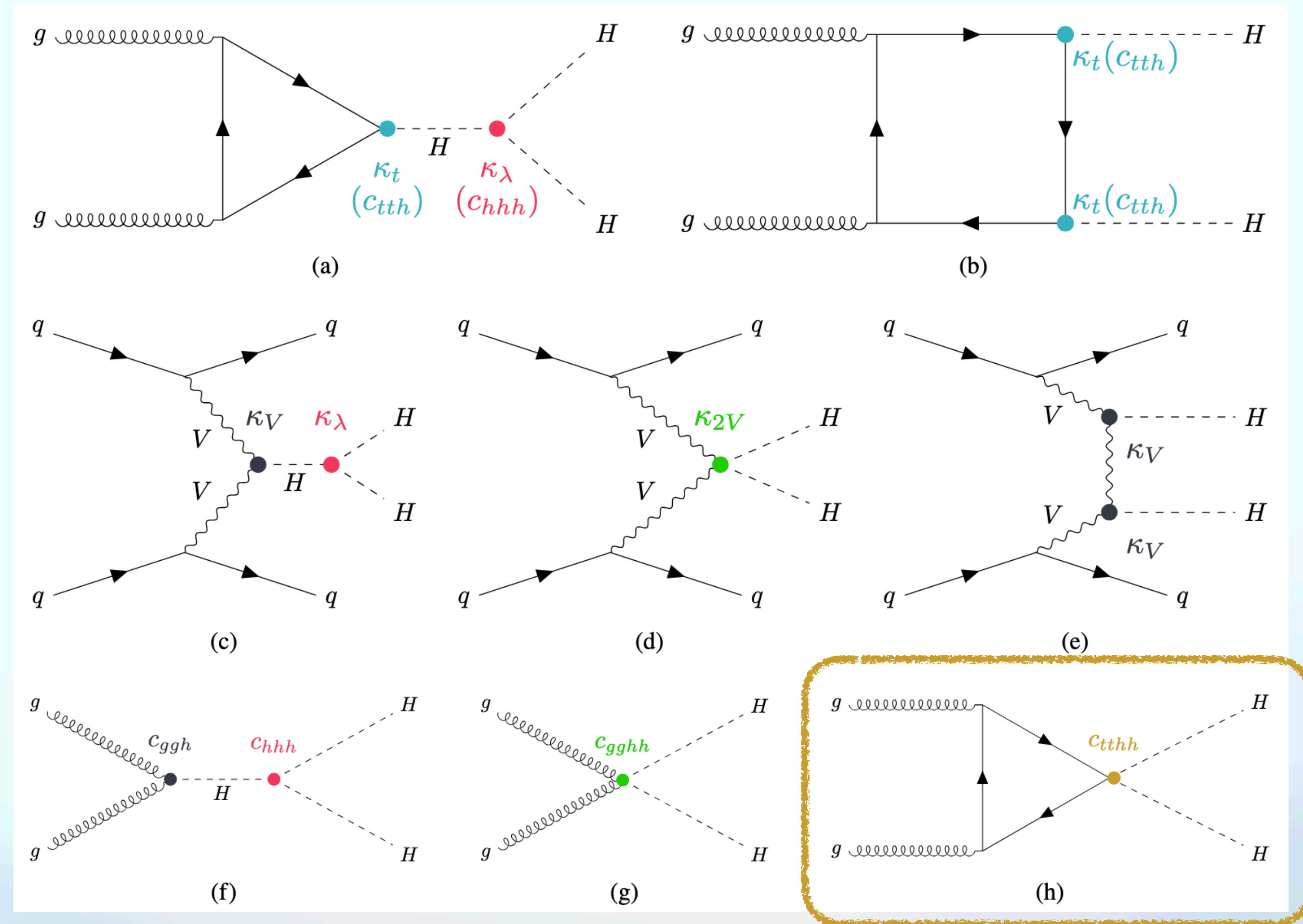
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Obs. 95% CL limits on $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$	[-8.0, 7.5]	[-0.19, 0.7]	[-0.29, 0.59]

Comparison with ggF - HH



Parametrised with **more** couplings

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- **First search** for $t\bar{t}HH$ done by ATLAS
 - Most stringent **direct limits** on $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$
- ggF more sensitive, but parametrised with two additional Higgs-gluon couplings : c_{ggH} and c_{ggHH}
 - In $t\bar{t}HH$, these enter at higher loop order
 - More challenging in ggF unless further assumptions imposed

	CMS $t\bar{t}HH$ <small>[CMS-PAS-HIG-23-004]</small>	ATLAS HH comb. <small>[arXiv:2406.09971]</small>	CMS HH comb. <small>[arXiv:2510.07527]</small>
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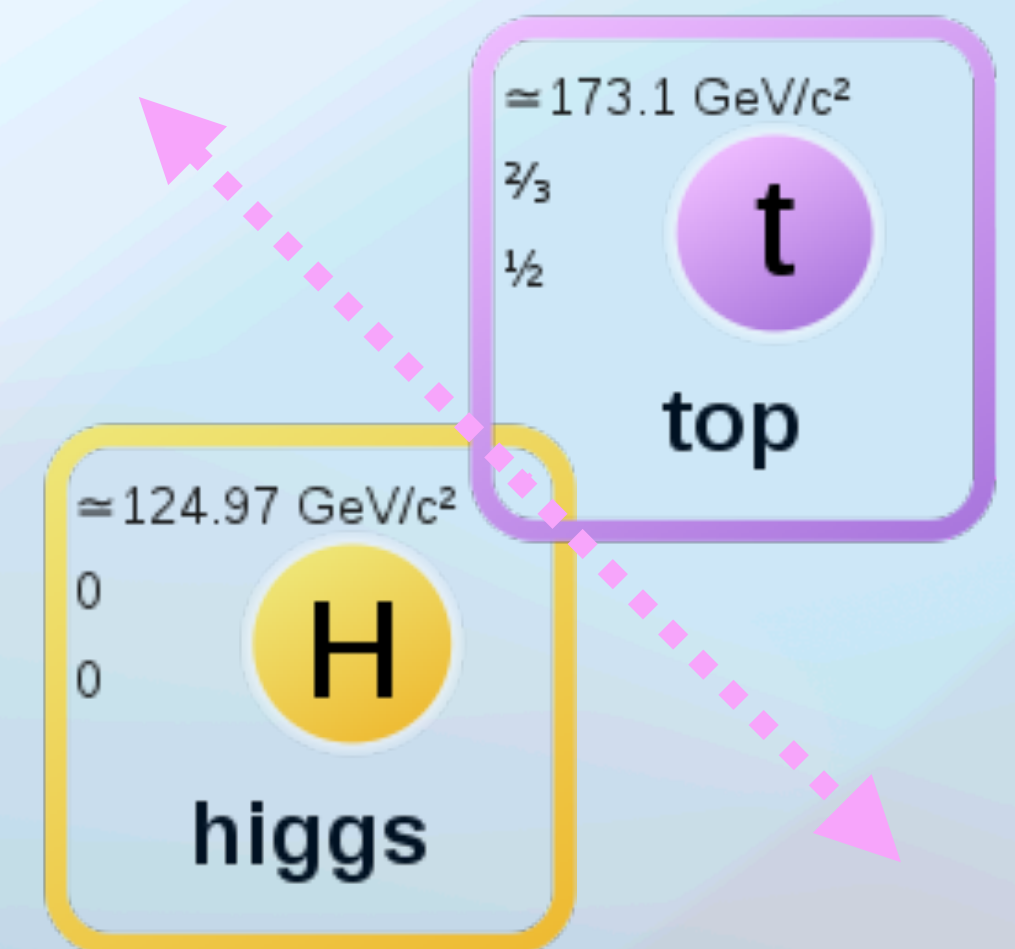
Conclusion and prospects

$t\bar{t}HH$ is promising but still limited

→ Importance of multi-top processes such as $t\bar{t}t\bar{t}$, $t\bar{t}H$

→ Factor ~ 2 of size of 95%CL interval by the end of Run 4

ATLAS internal studies ongoing



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HEFT vs. "traditional" **SMEFT** interpretation *when relevant*

What UV model have different predictions in both frameworks?



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Top and Higgs sectors are **promissing probes** for exploring EWSB + connexion to heavy NP



Backup

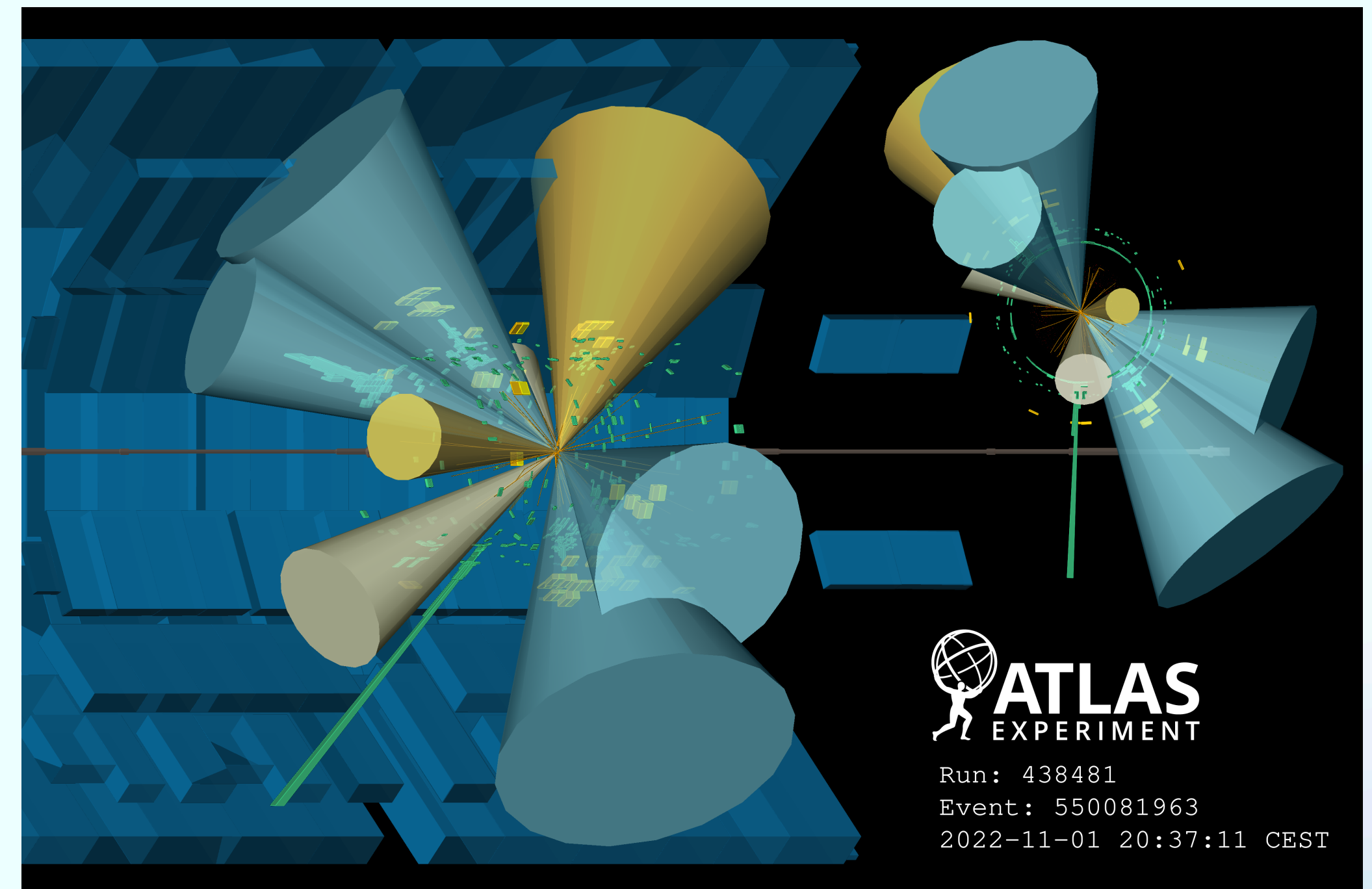
Single-lepton channel

Single lepton from W and ≥ 4 b-tagged jets

Dominant background : $t\bar{t} + jets$

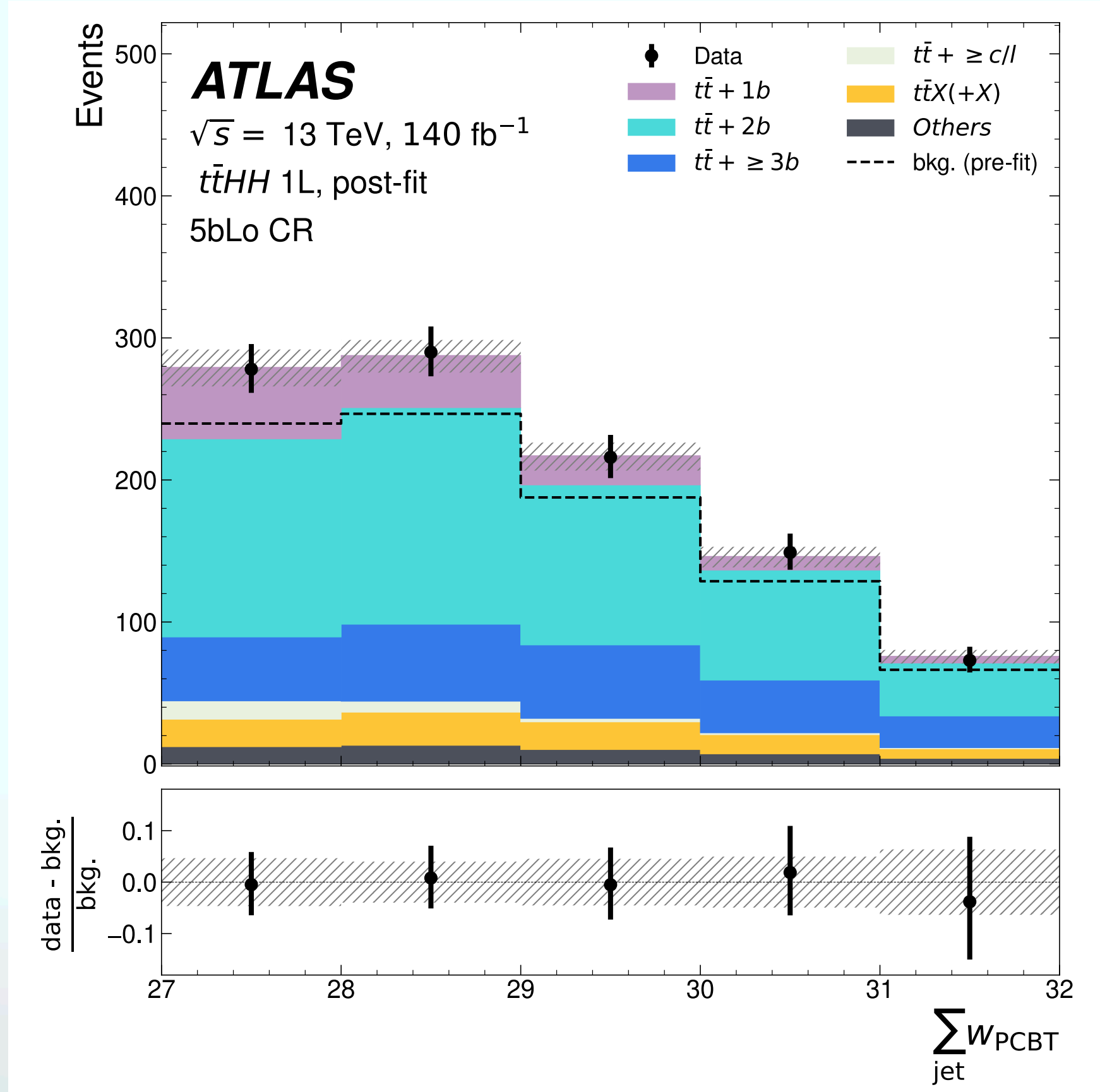
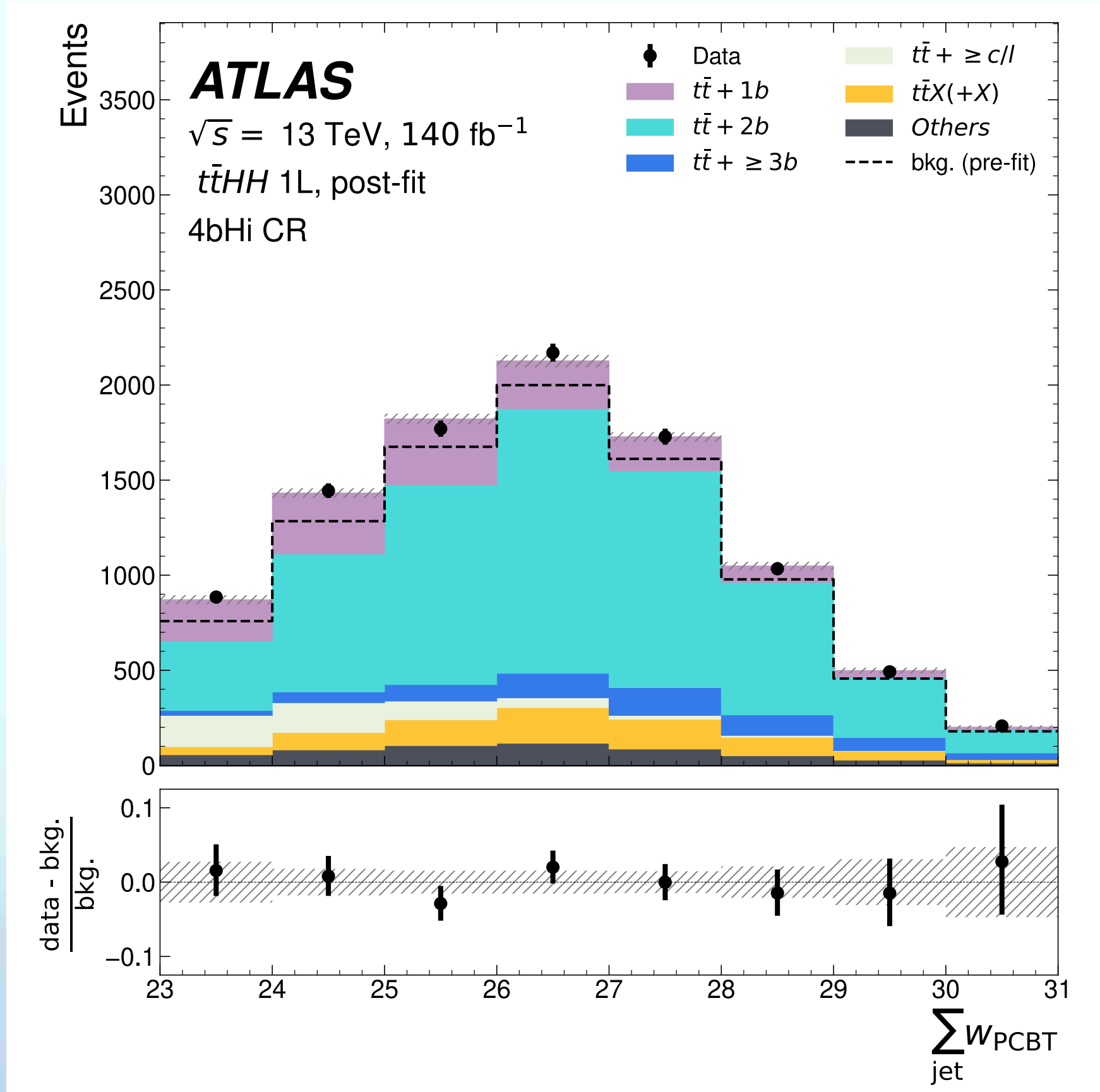
Signal / Background split by jet-multiplicity

Fit from a GNN score



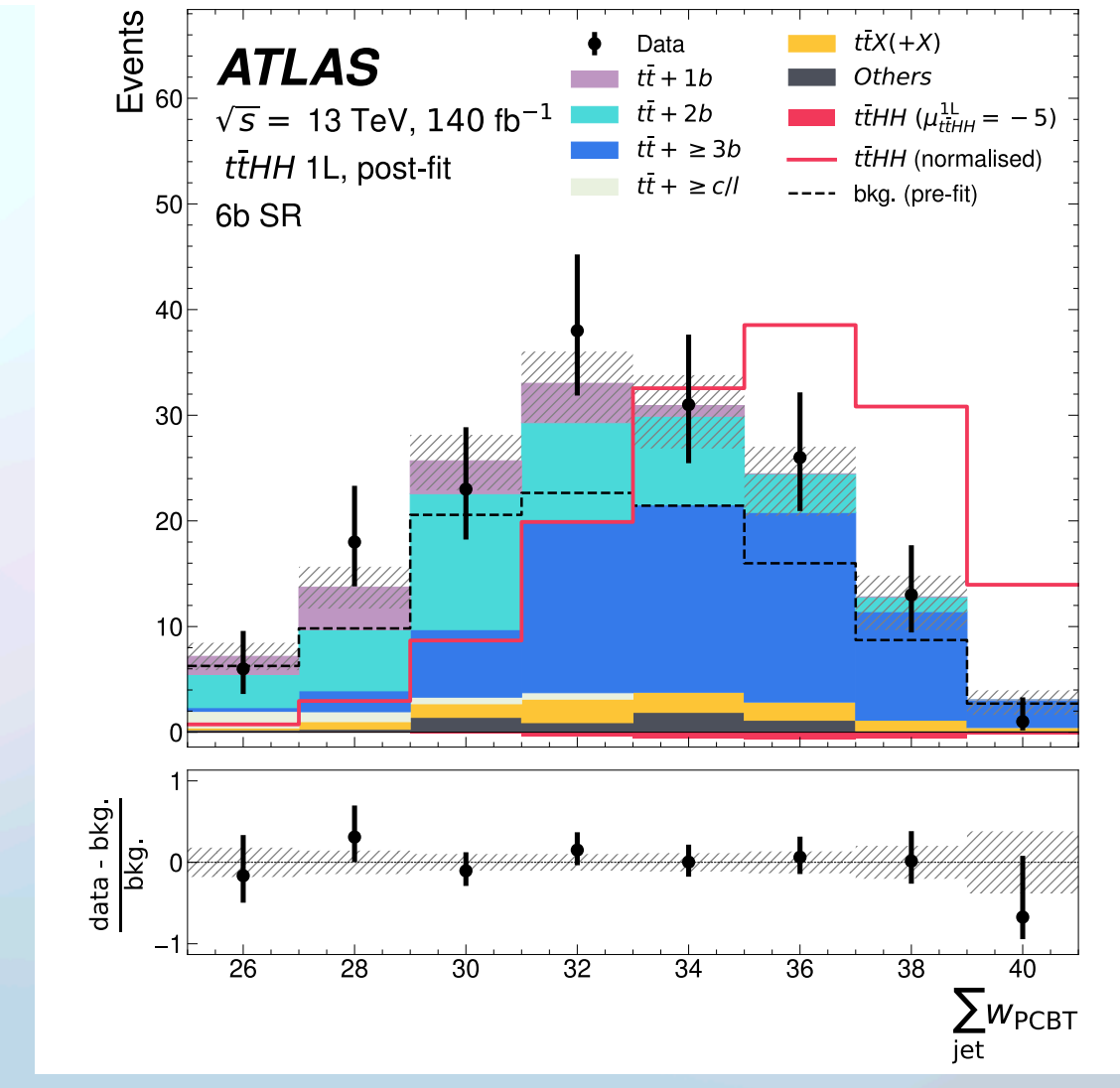
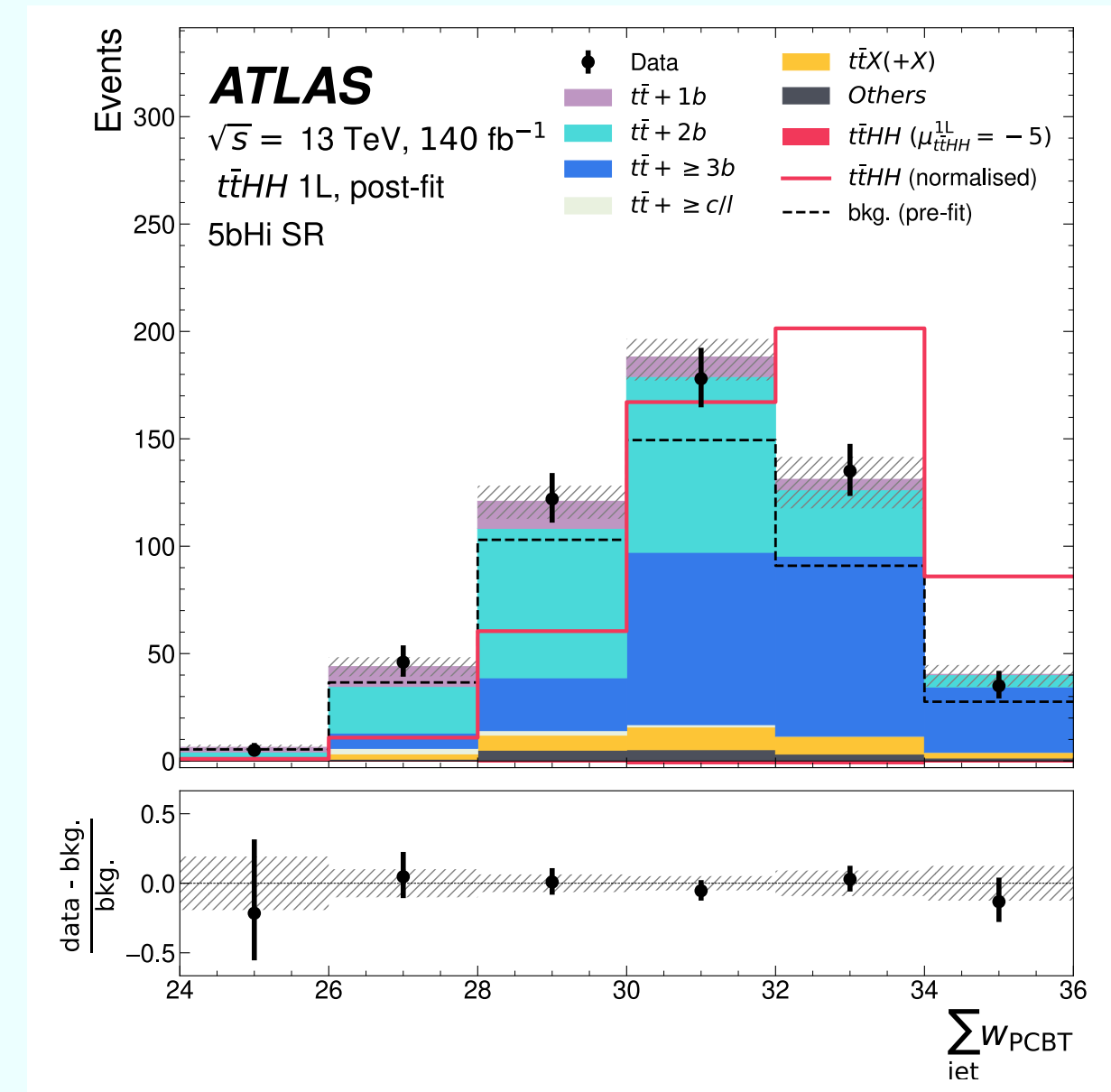
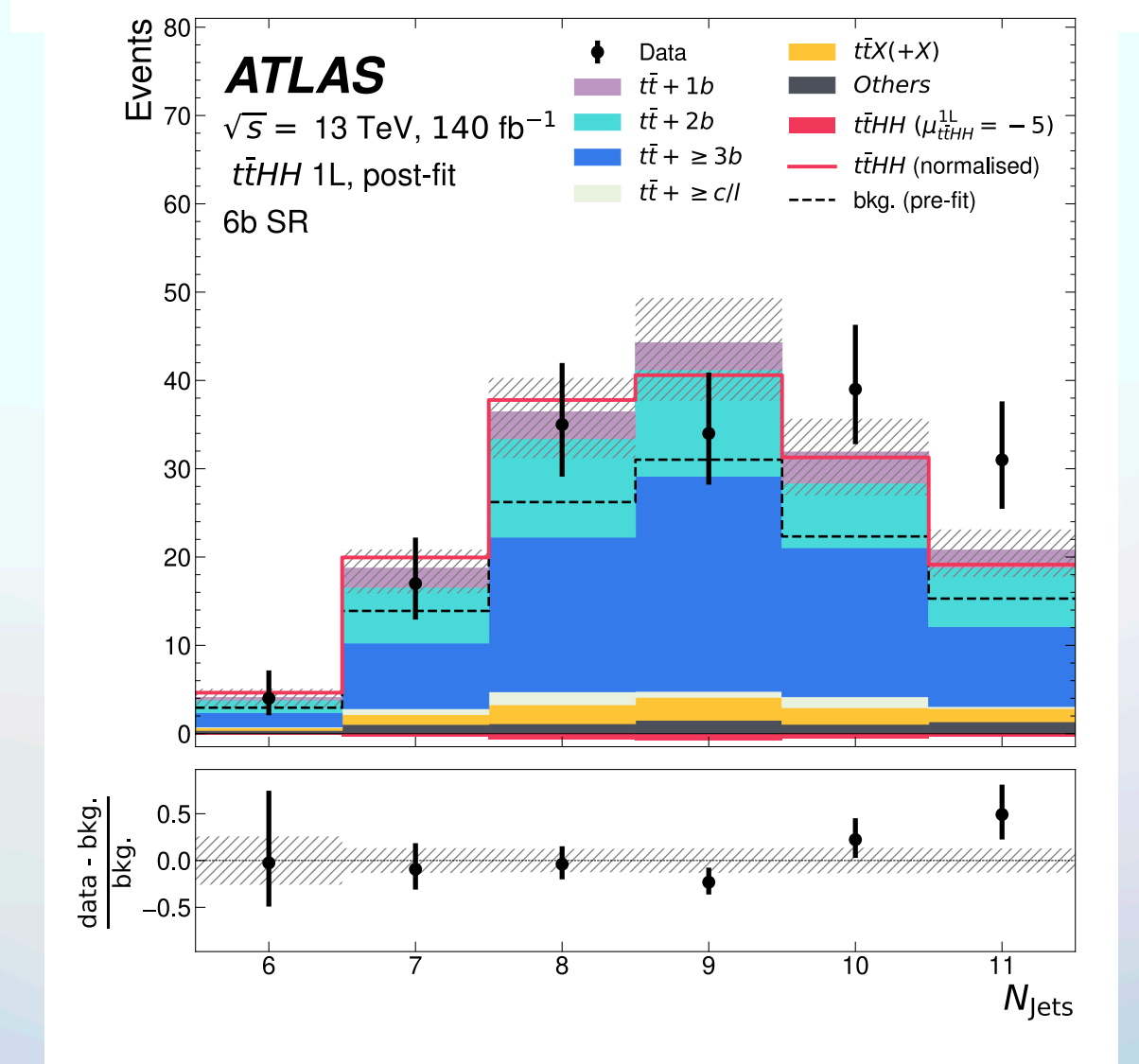
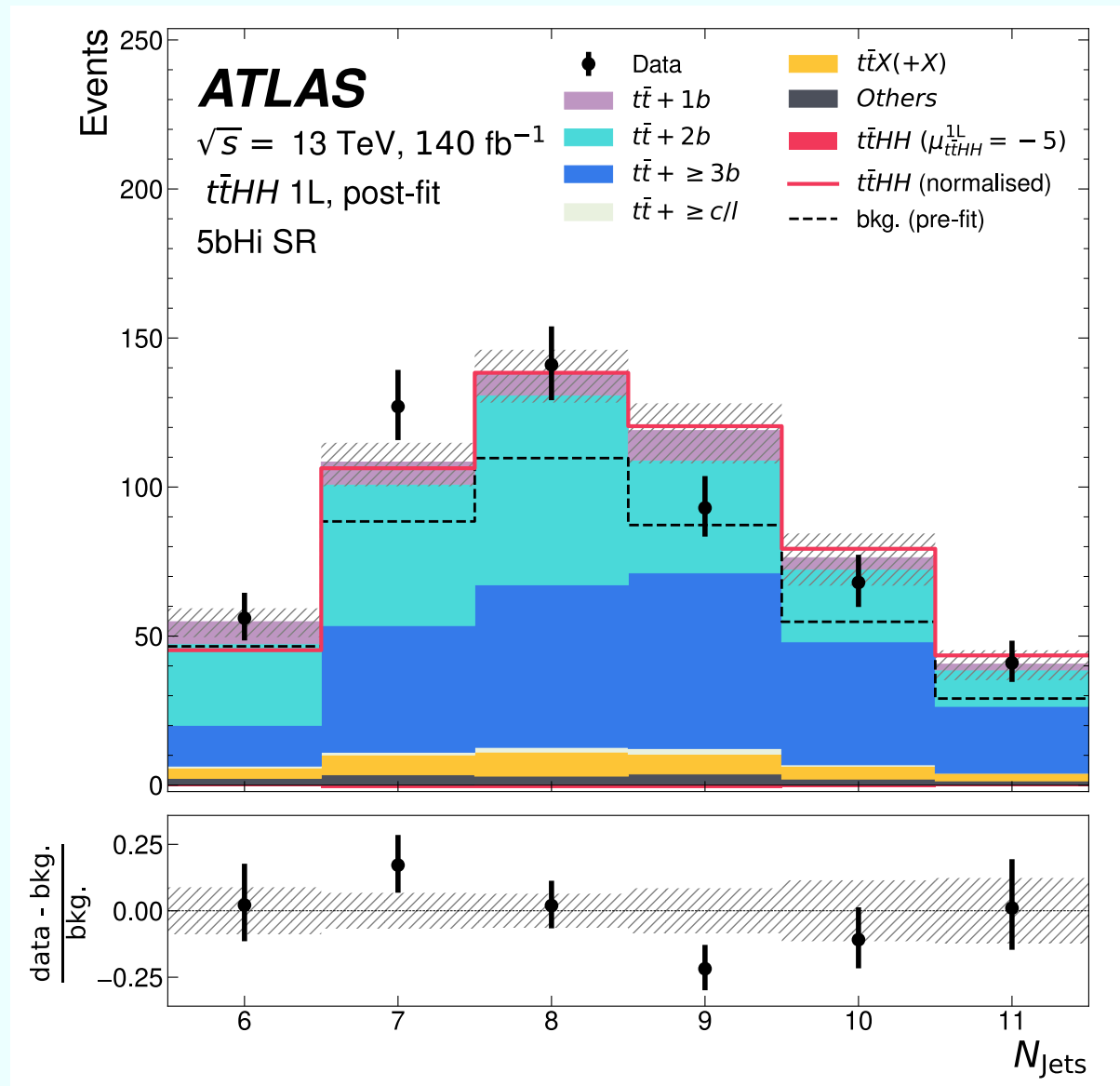
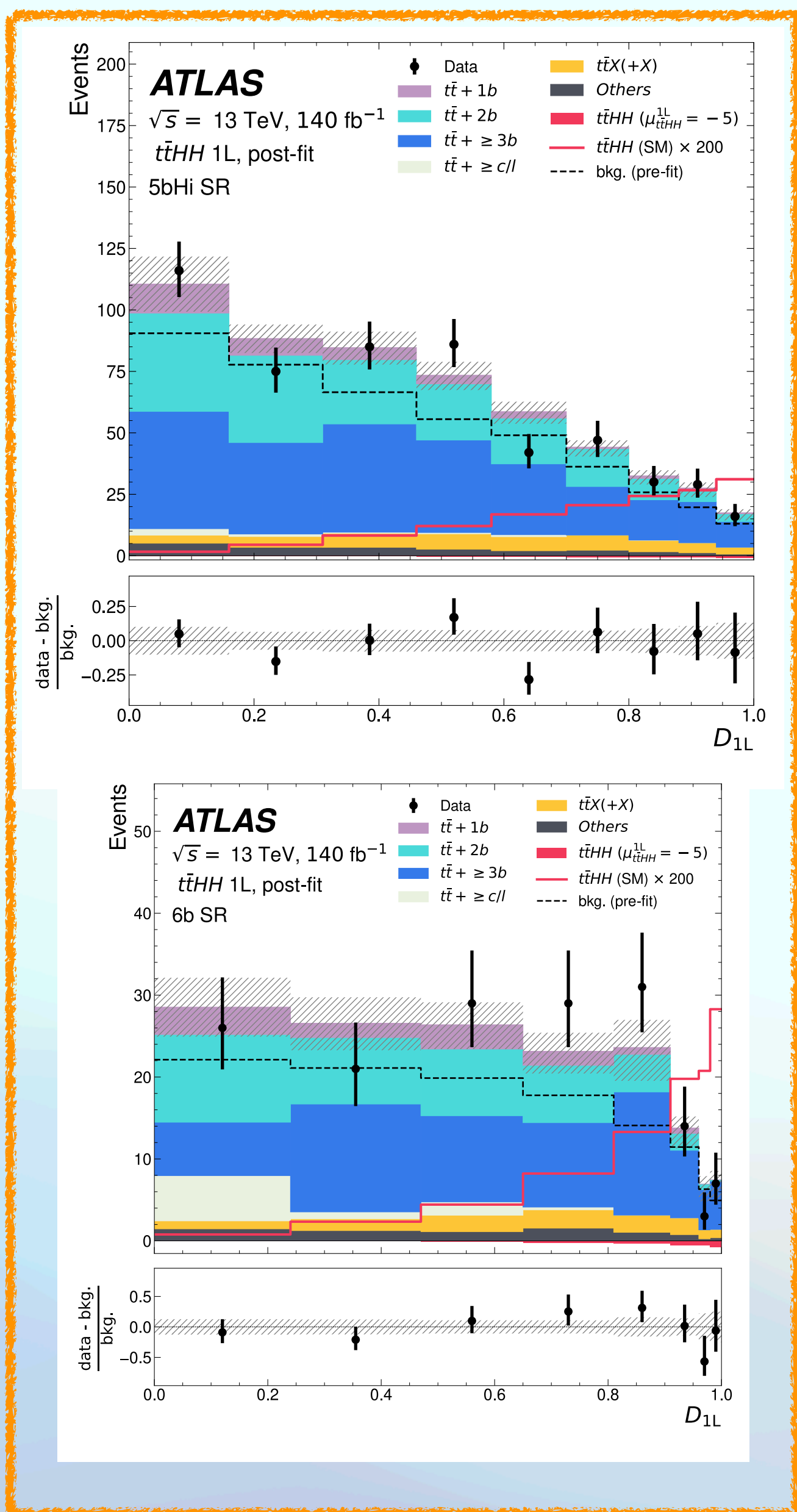
Variable	Description
(p_T, η, ϕ, E)	Kinematic variables of the object, i.e. transverse momentum, pseudorapidity, azimuthal angle, and energy.
w_{GN2}	GN201 b-tagging pseudo-continuous score for identifying jets. Non-jet objects are assigned a value of zero.
$q_{Lep.}$	Charge of the object. Non-lepton objects are assigned a value of zero.
$(isJet, isLep, isMET)$	Boolean flags indicating the object type: jet, lepton, or missing transverse energy.

1L Run 2 CR distributions

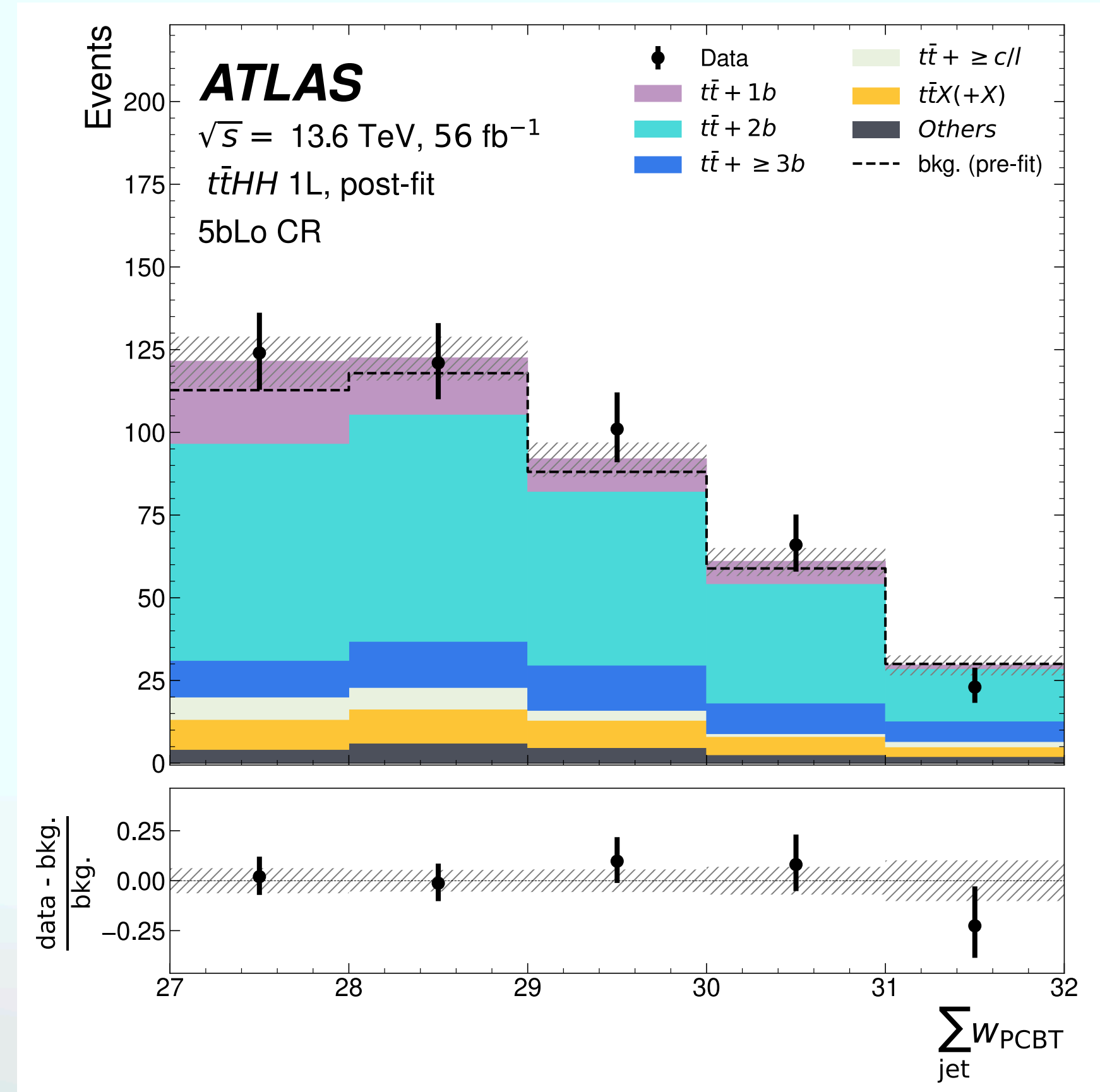
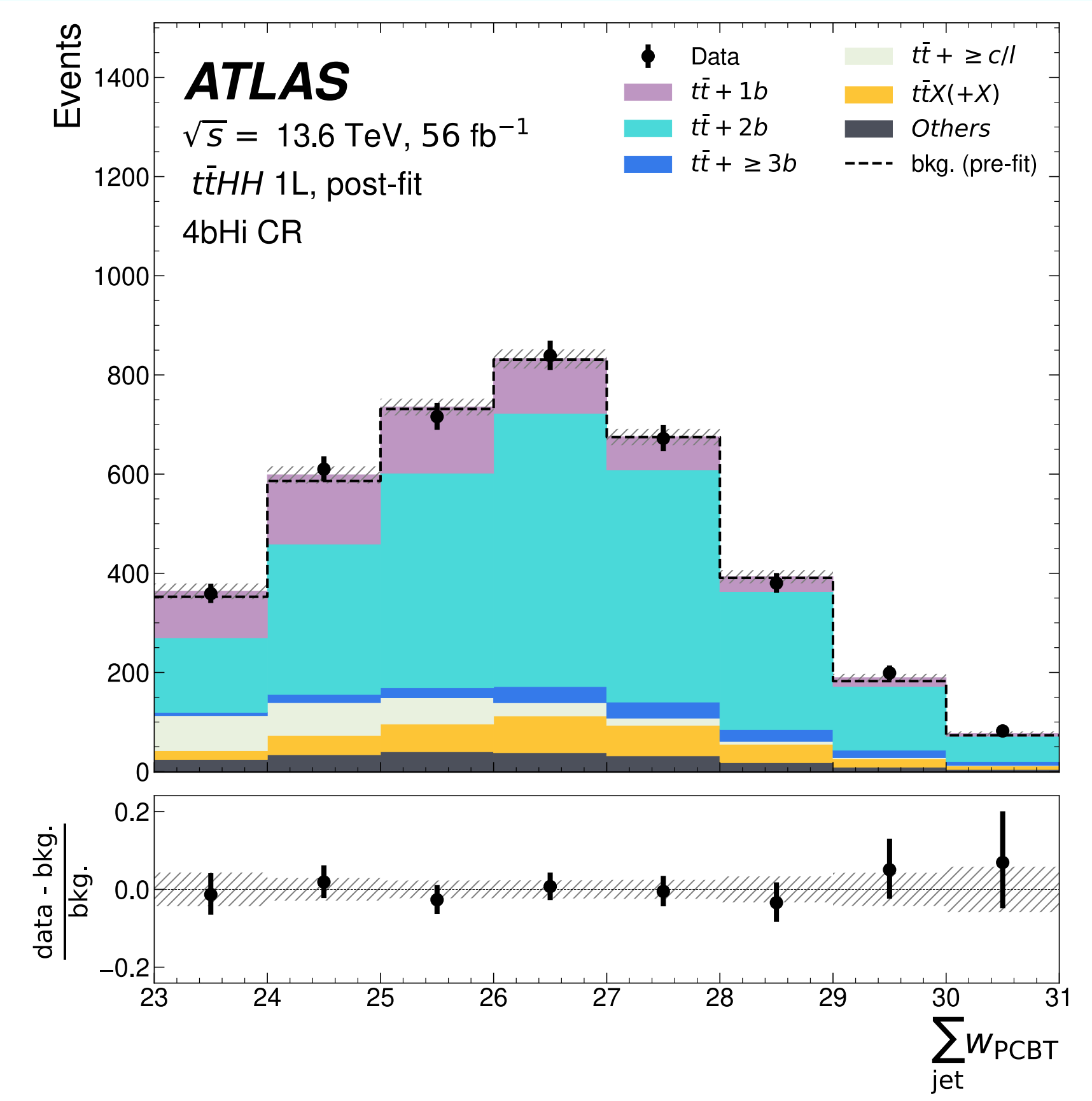


- Signal defined by jet multiplicity
- Well understood background

1L Run 2 SR distributions

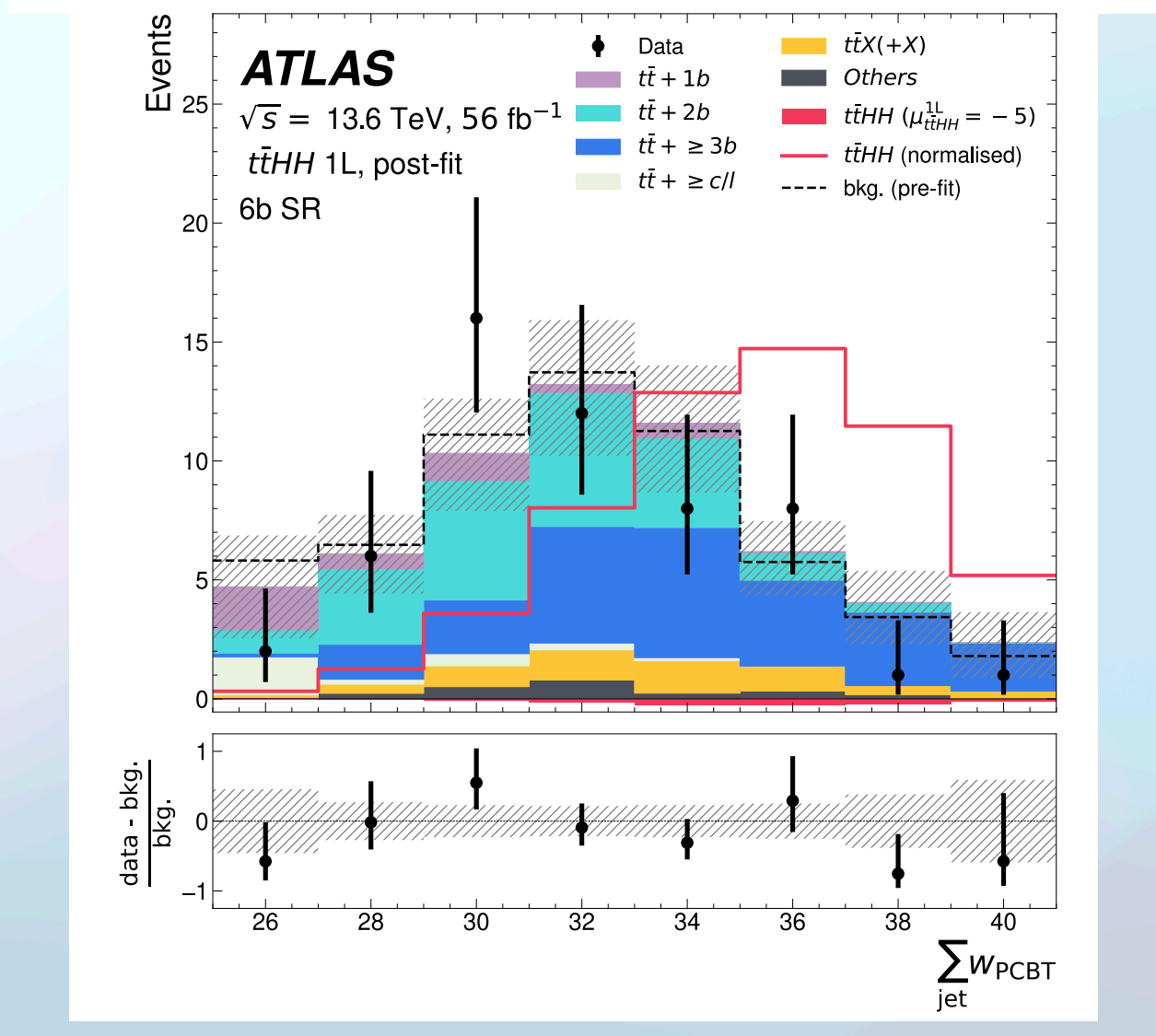
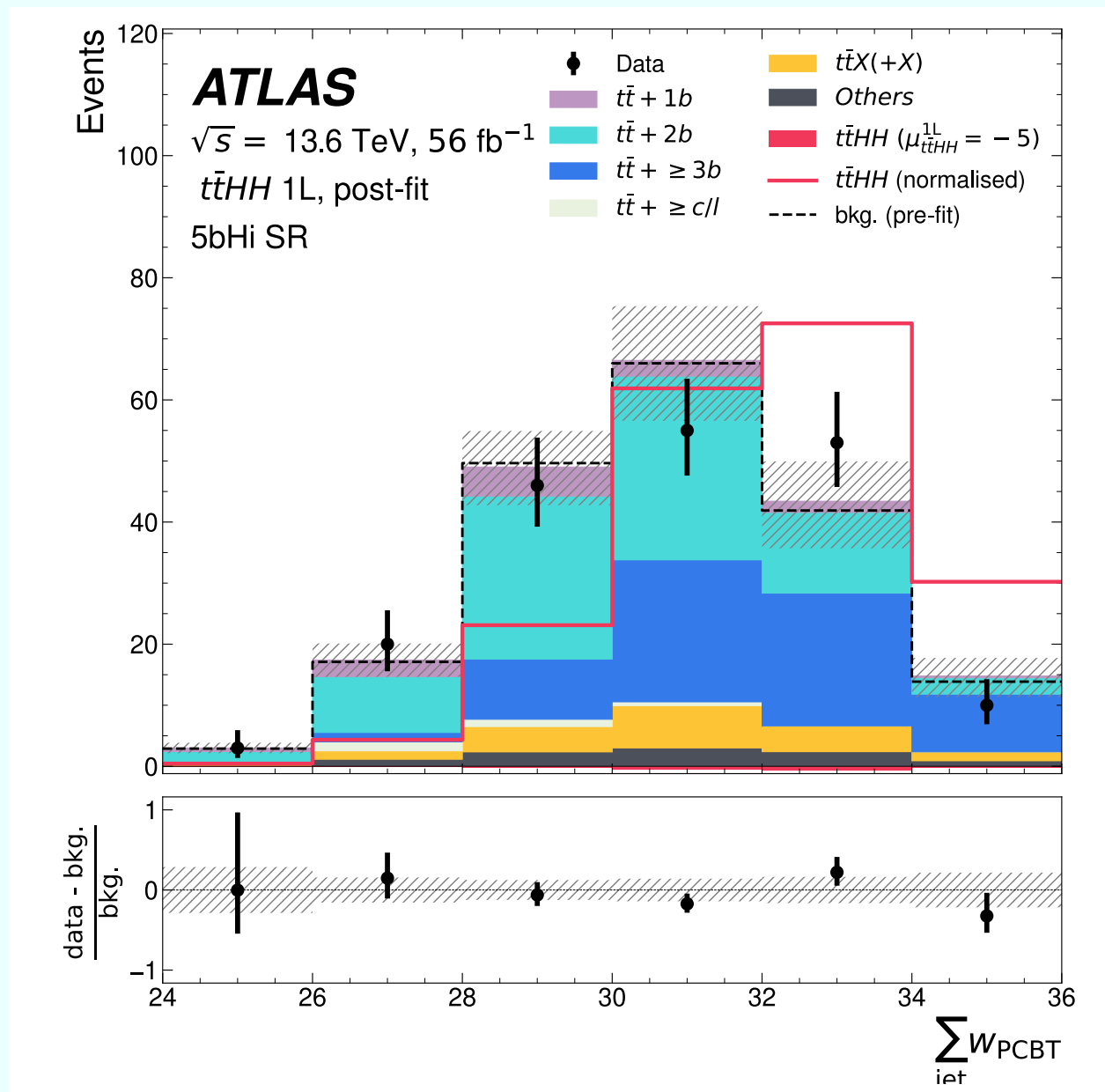
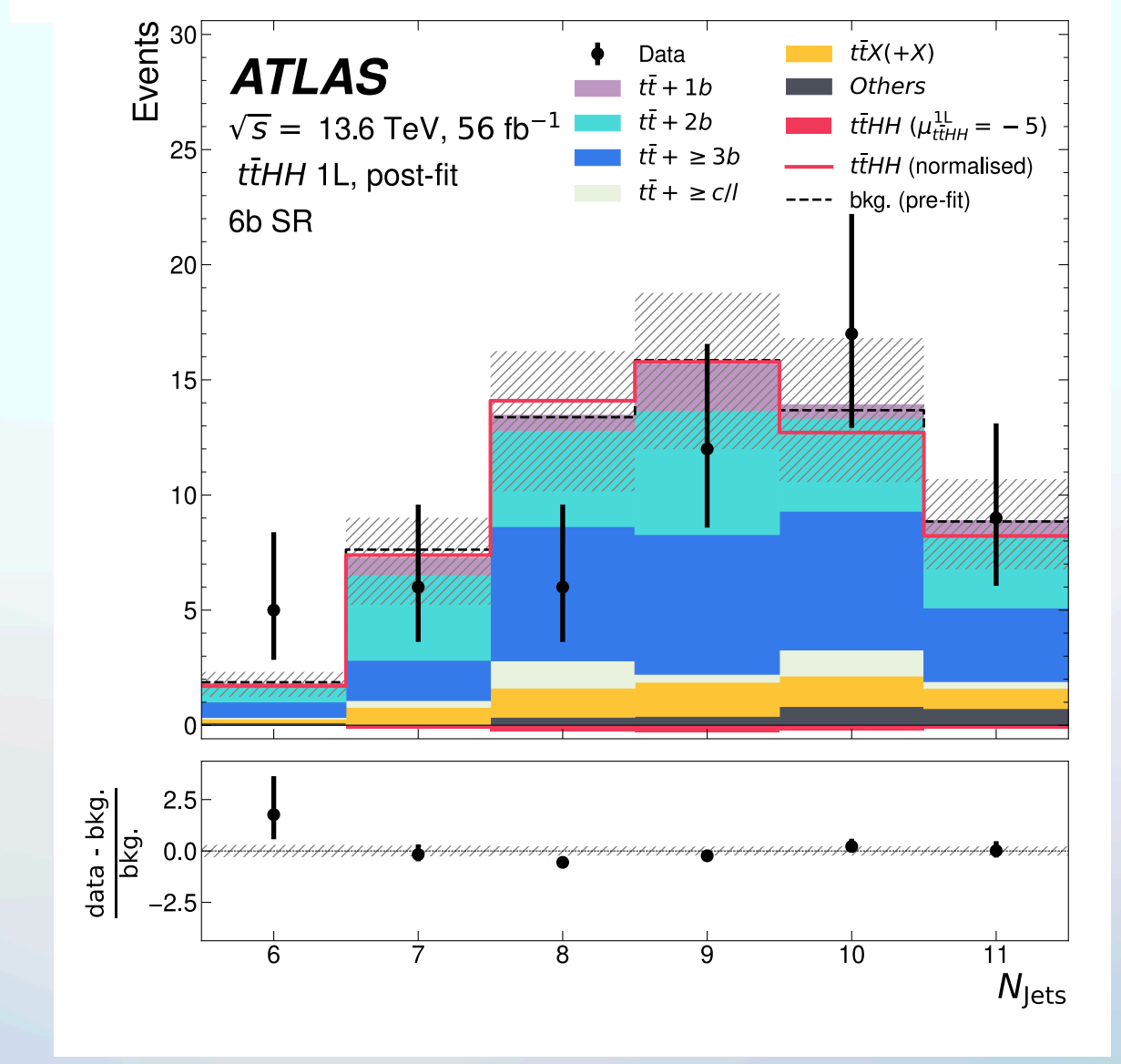
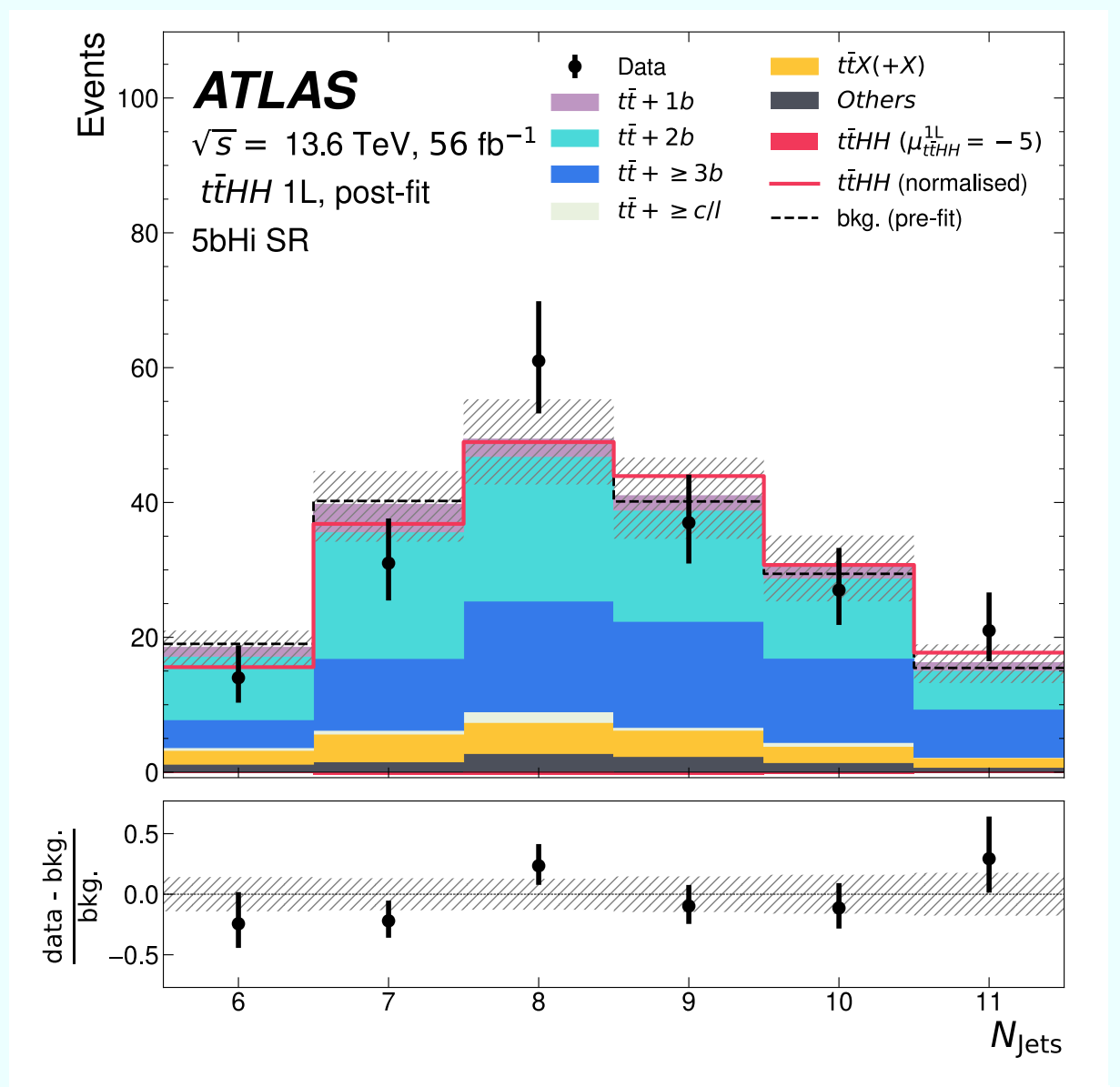
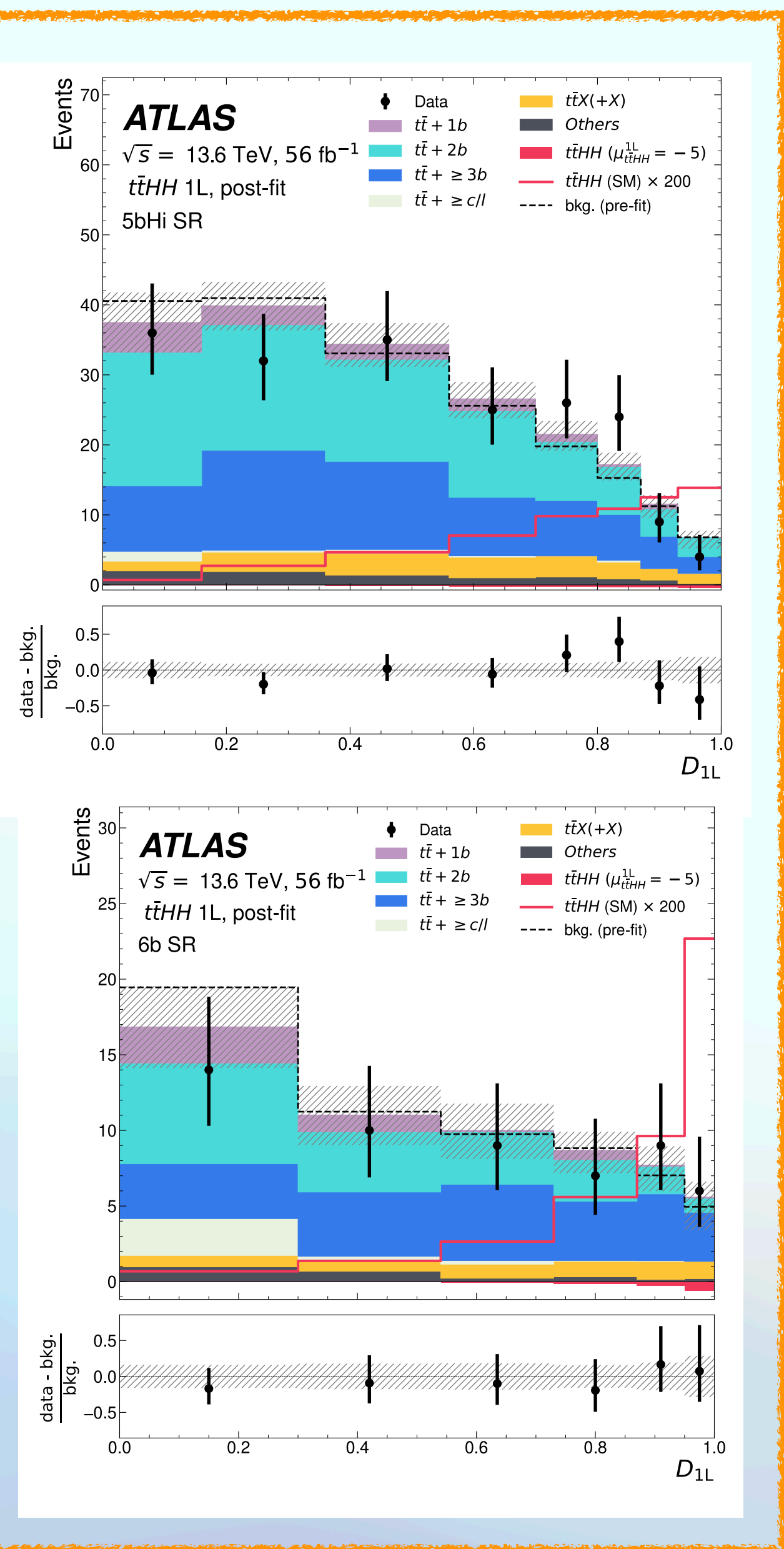


1L Run 3 CR distributions



- Signal defined by jet multiplicity
- Well understood background

1L Run 3 SR distributions



Same-sign multi-lepton channel

≥ 2 b-tagged jets

≥ 2 same-sign leptons from top and Higgs

Dominant irreducible backgrounds :

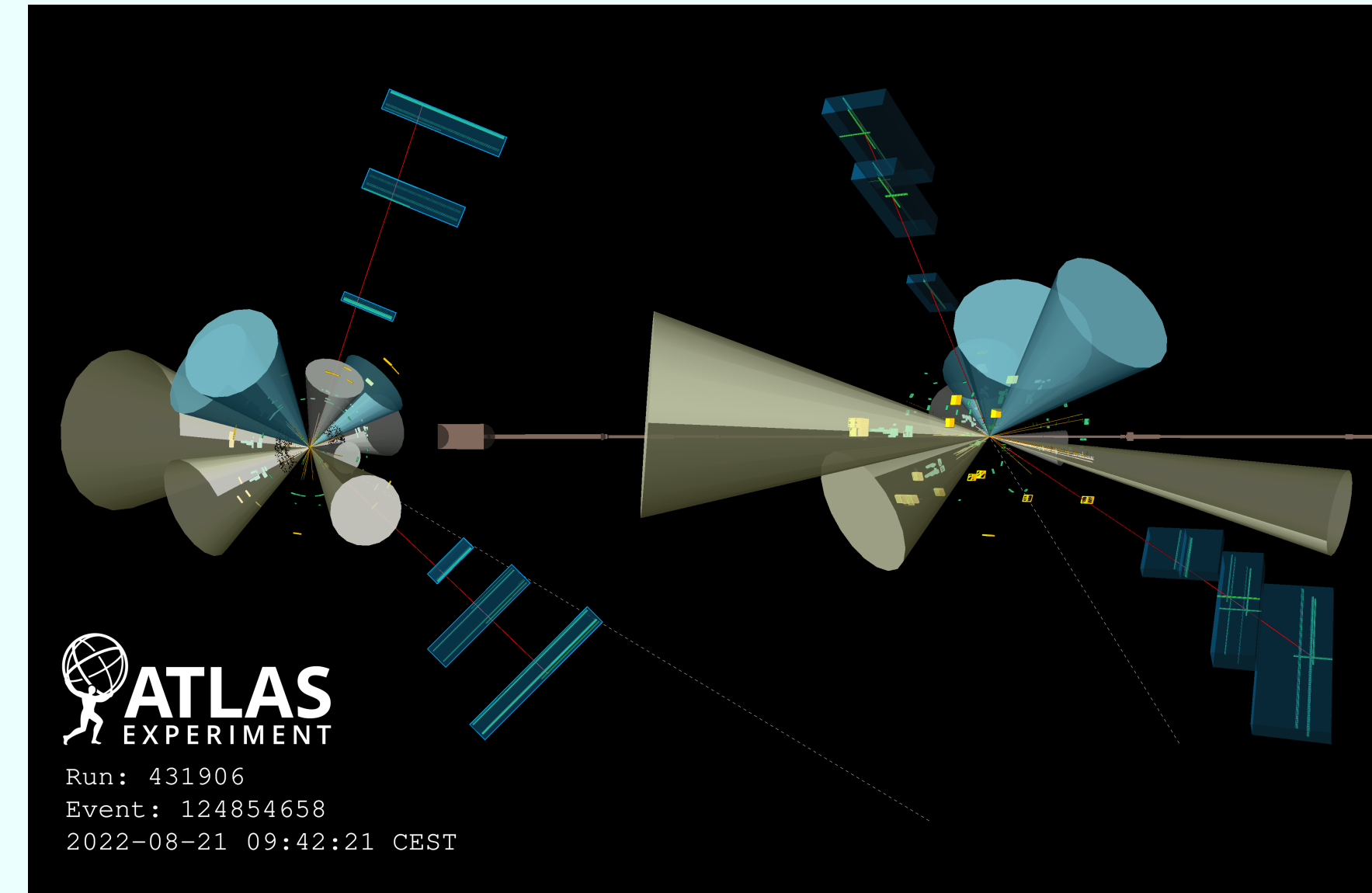
$t\bar{t}W$ and $t\bar{t}t\bar{t}$ normalization

Channel which suffers a lot from instrumental backgrounds :

→ Charge mis-identification

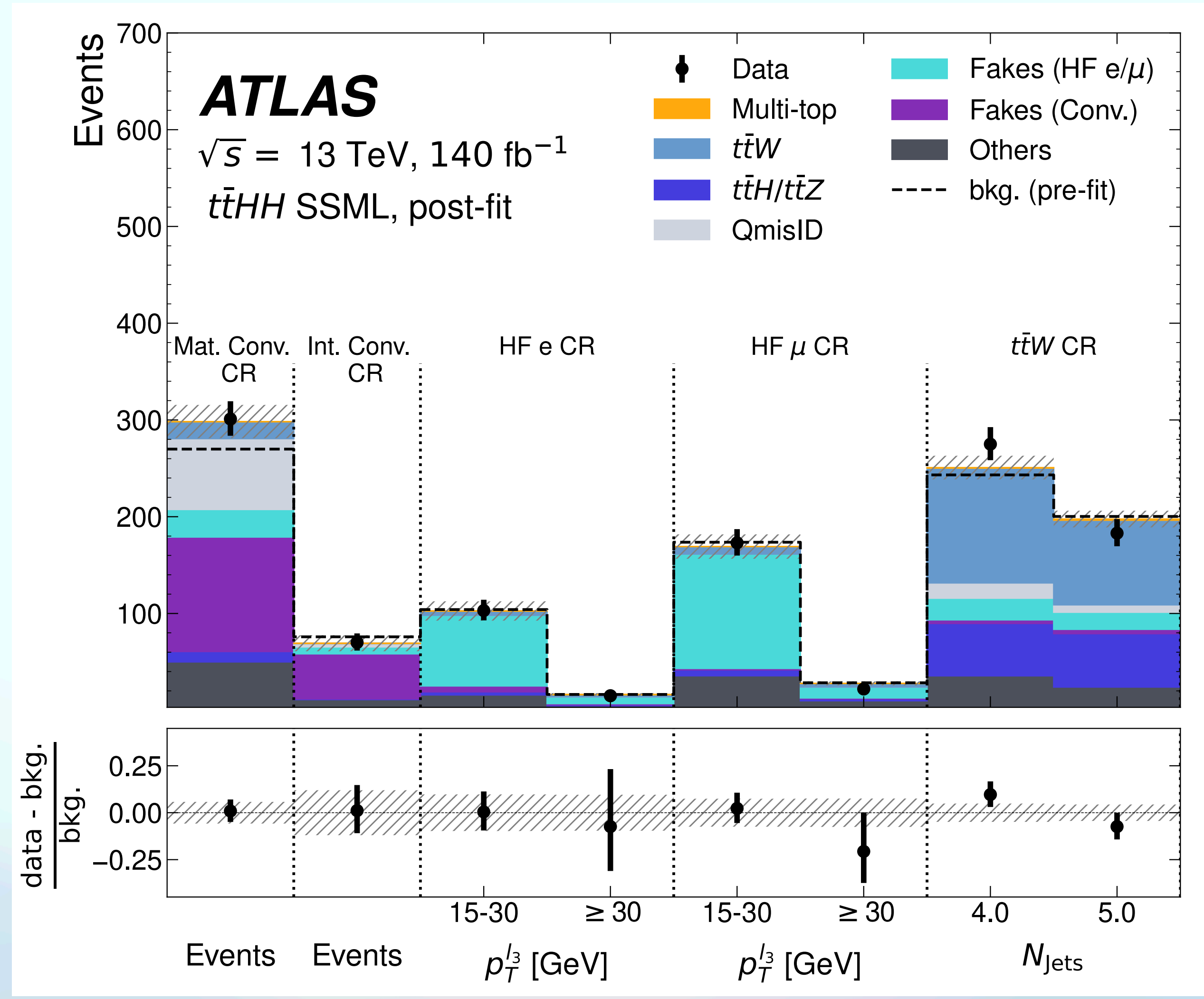
→ "Fake" leptons from HF decays or photon conversions

i.e. photons which look like lepton

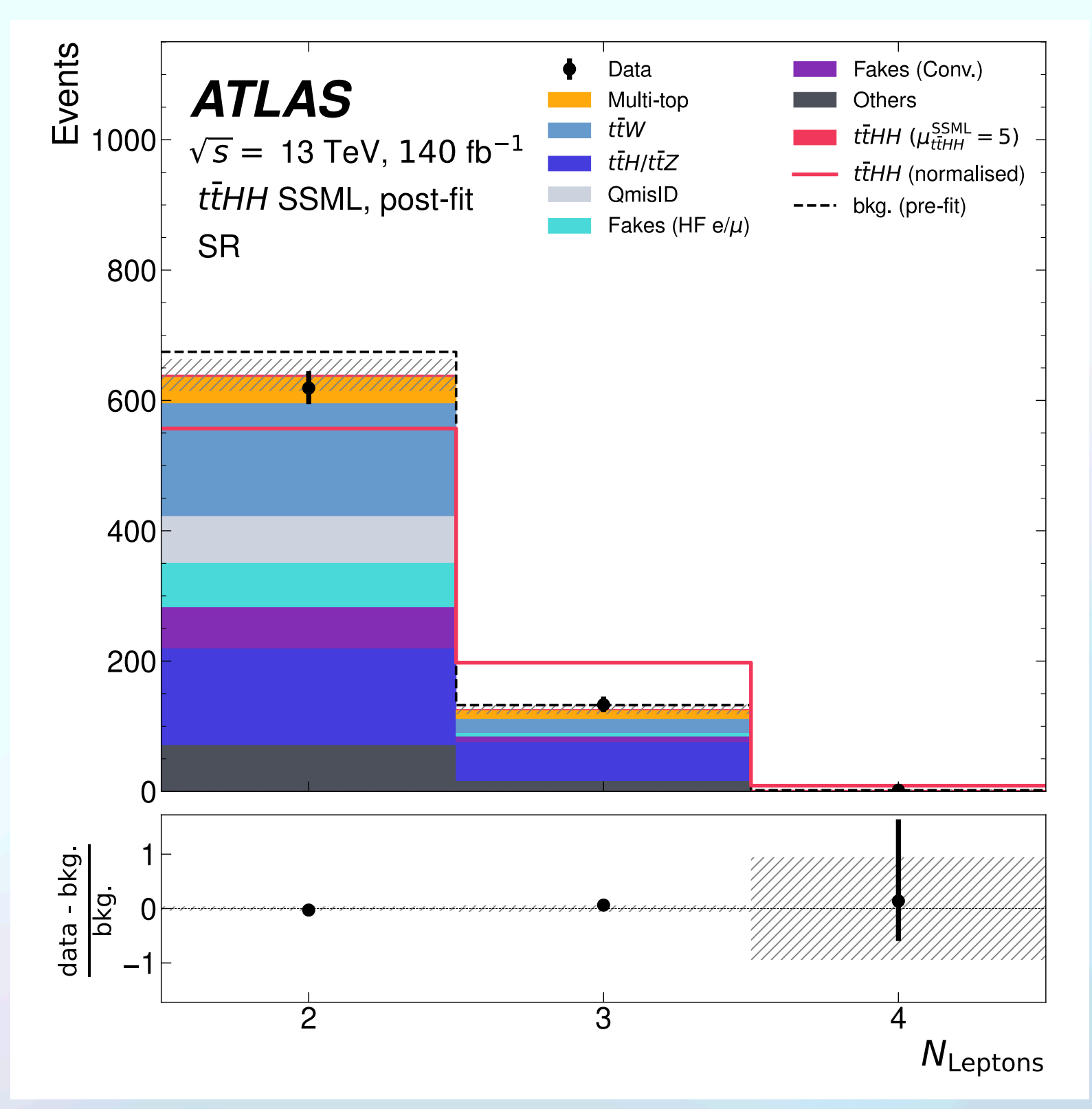
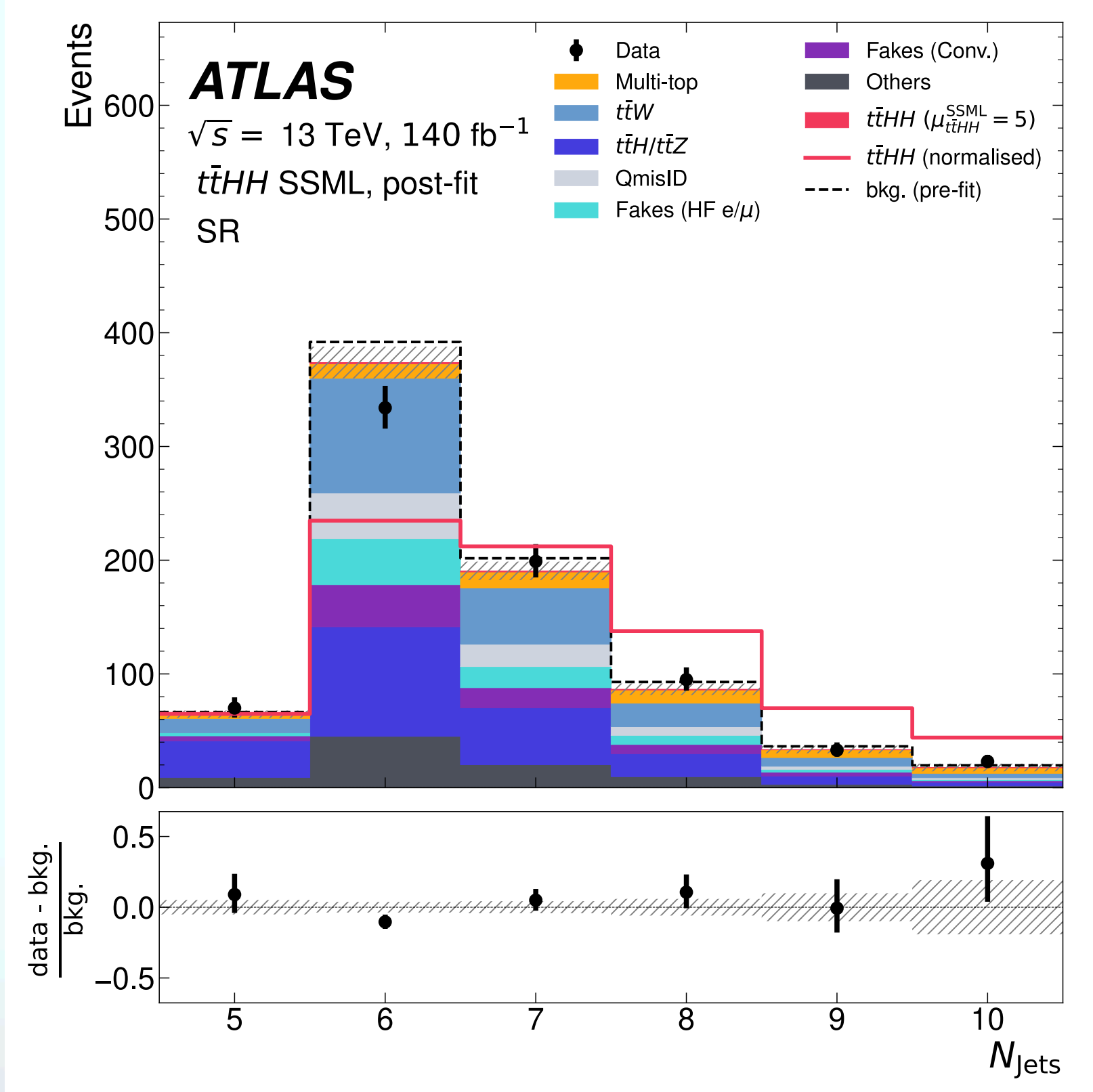
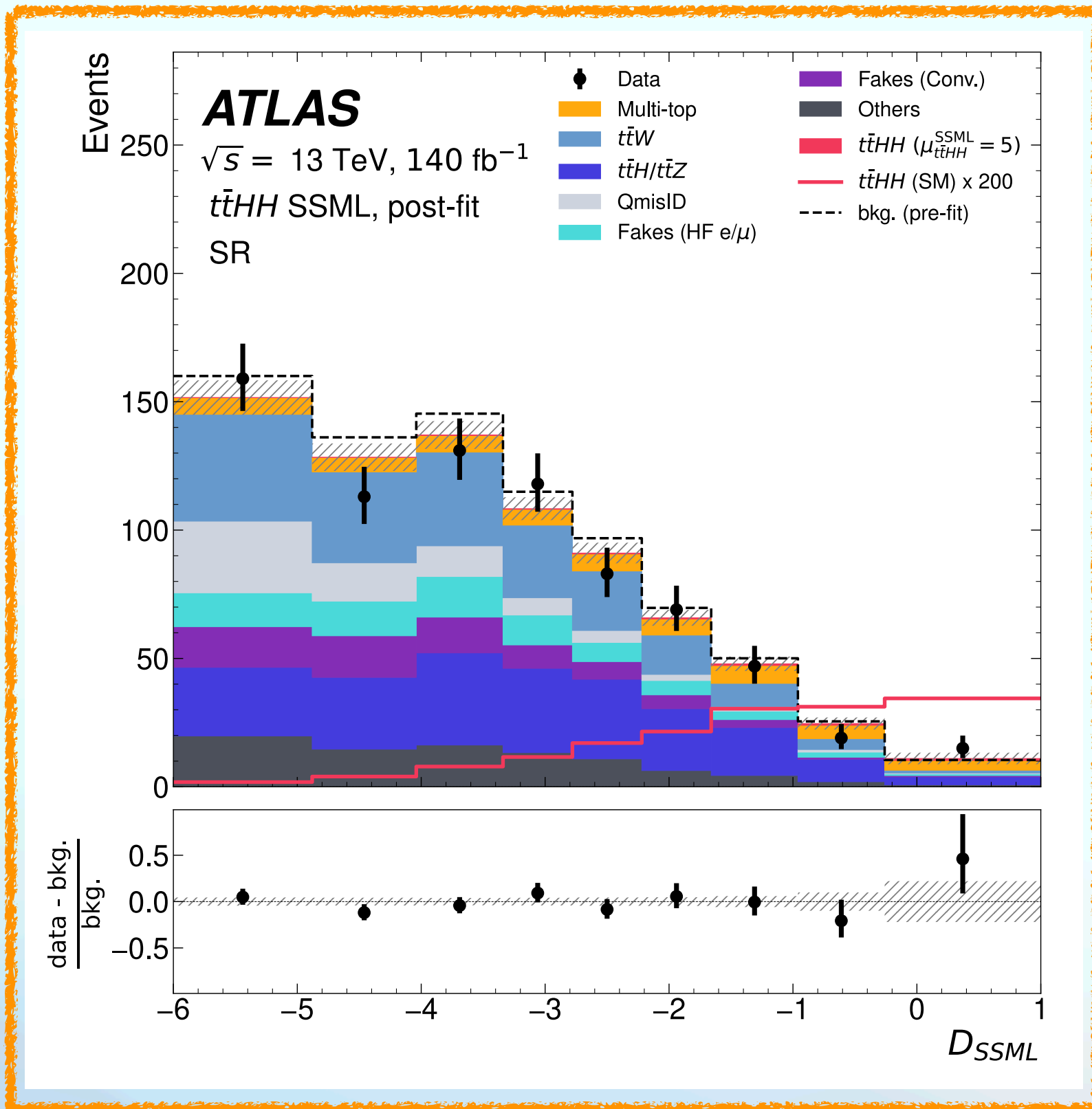


Variable	Description
Event-level	
N_{jets}	Number of jets
$N_{\text{b-jets}}$	Number of b-tagged jets
N_{lepton}	Number of leptons
H_{T}	The scalar sum of the transverse momenta of the leptons and jets in an event.
MET	Transverse energy of the missing momentum vector.
MET_PHI	Azimuthal angle of the missing momentum vector.
Object-level	
$(p_{\text{T}}, \eta, \phi)$	Kinematic variables of the object, i.e. transverse momentum, pseudorapidity, and azimuthal angle.
w_{GN2}	GN201 b-tagging pseudo-continuous score for identifying jets. Non-jet objects are assigned a value of zero.
$q_{\text{Lep.}}$	Charge of the object. Non-lepton objects are assigned a value of zero.
$(\text{isJet}, \text{isElectron}, \text{isMuon})$	Boolean flags indicating the object type: jet, electron, or muon.

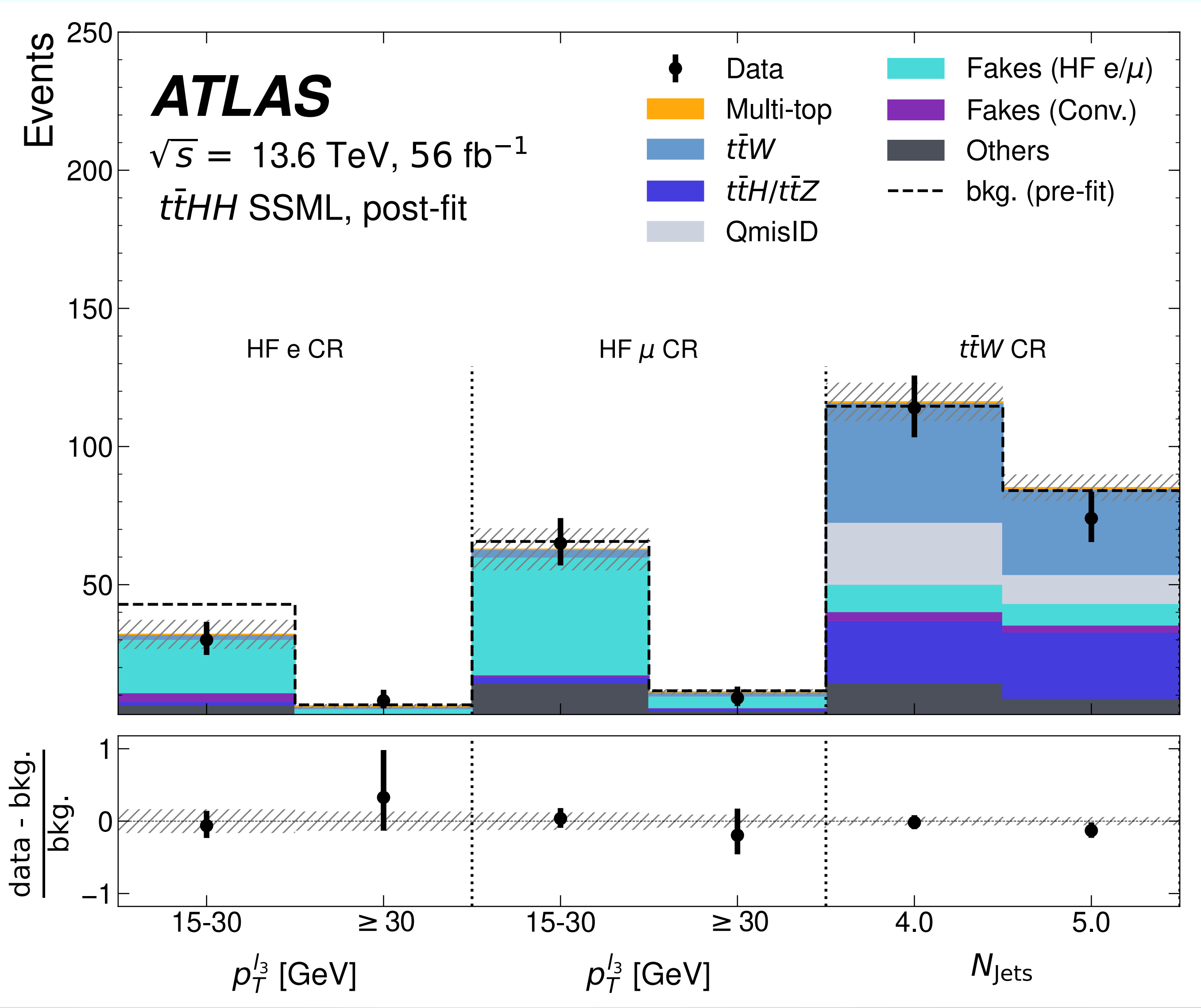
ML Run 2 CR distributions



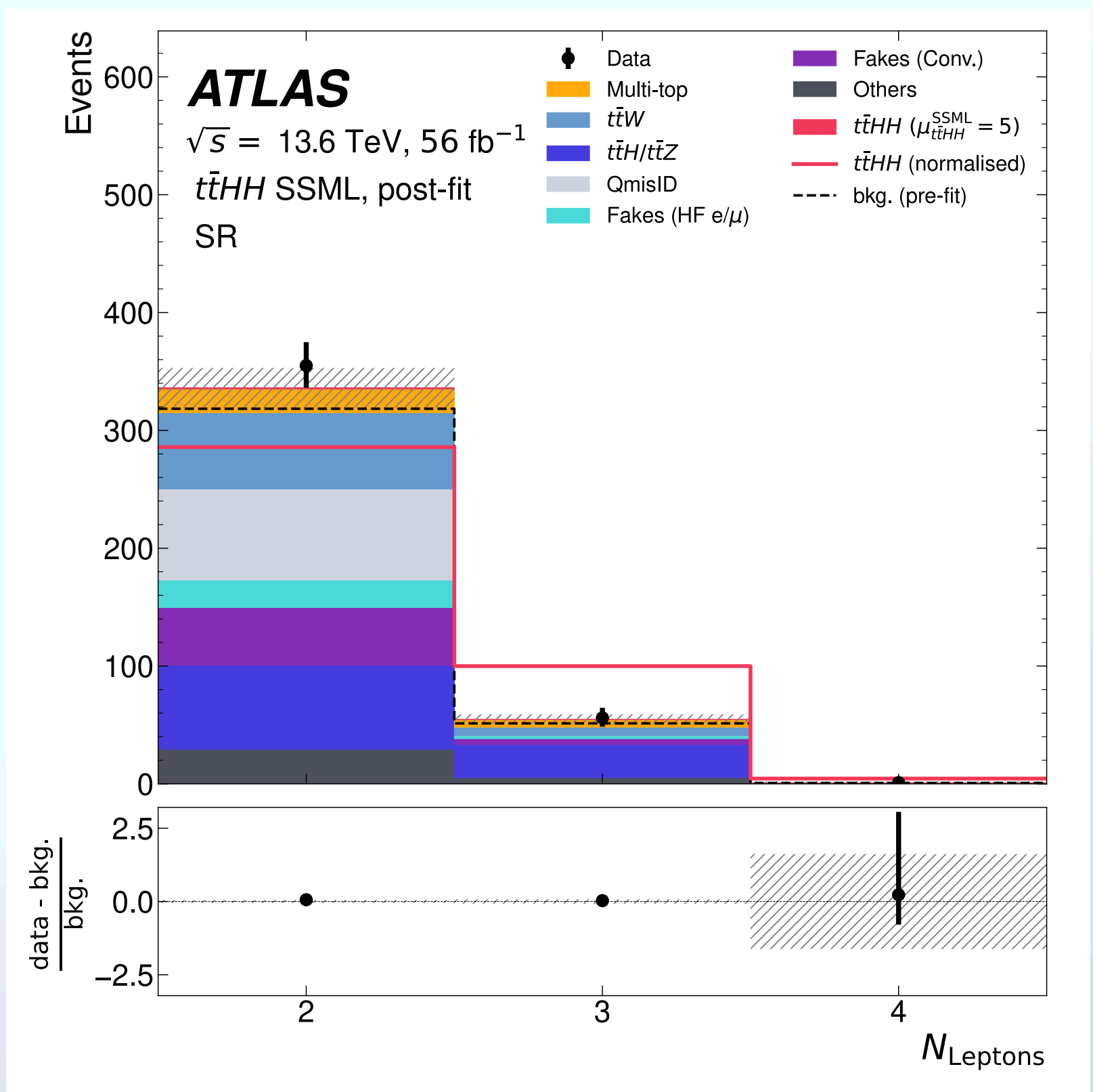
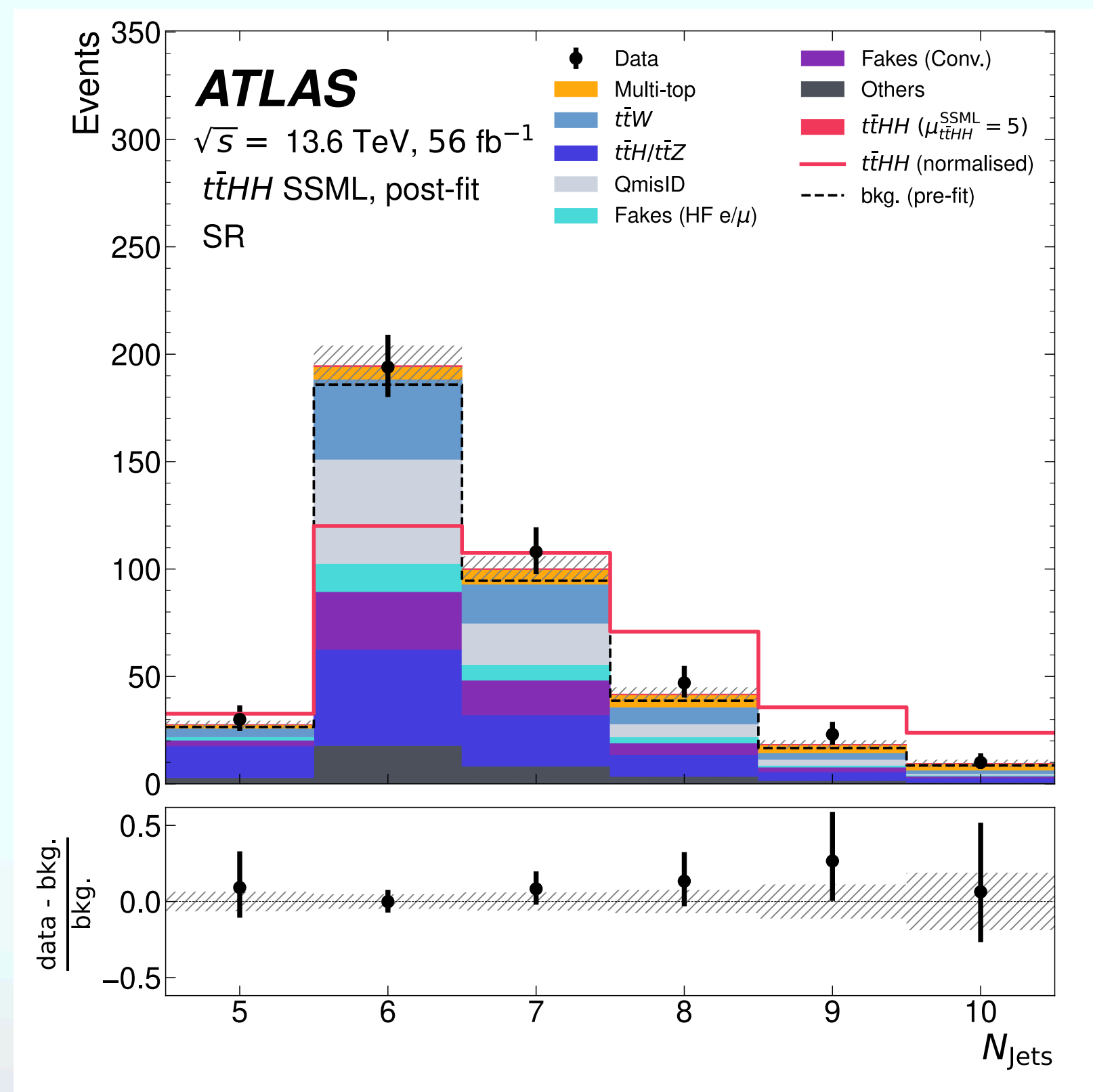
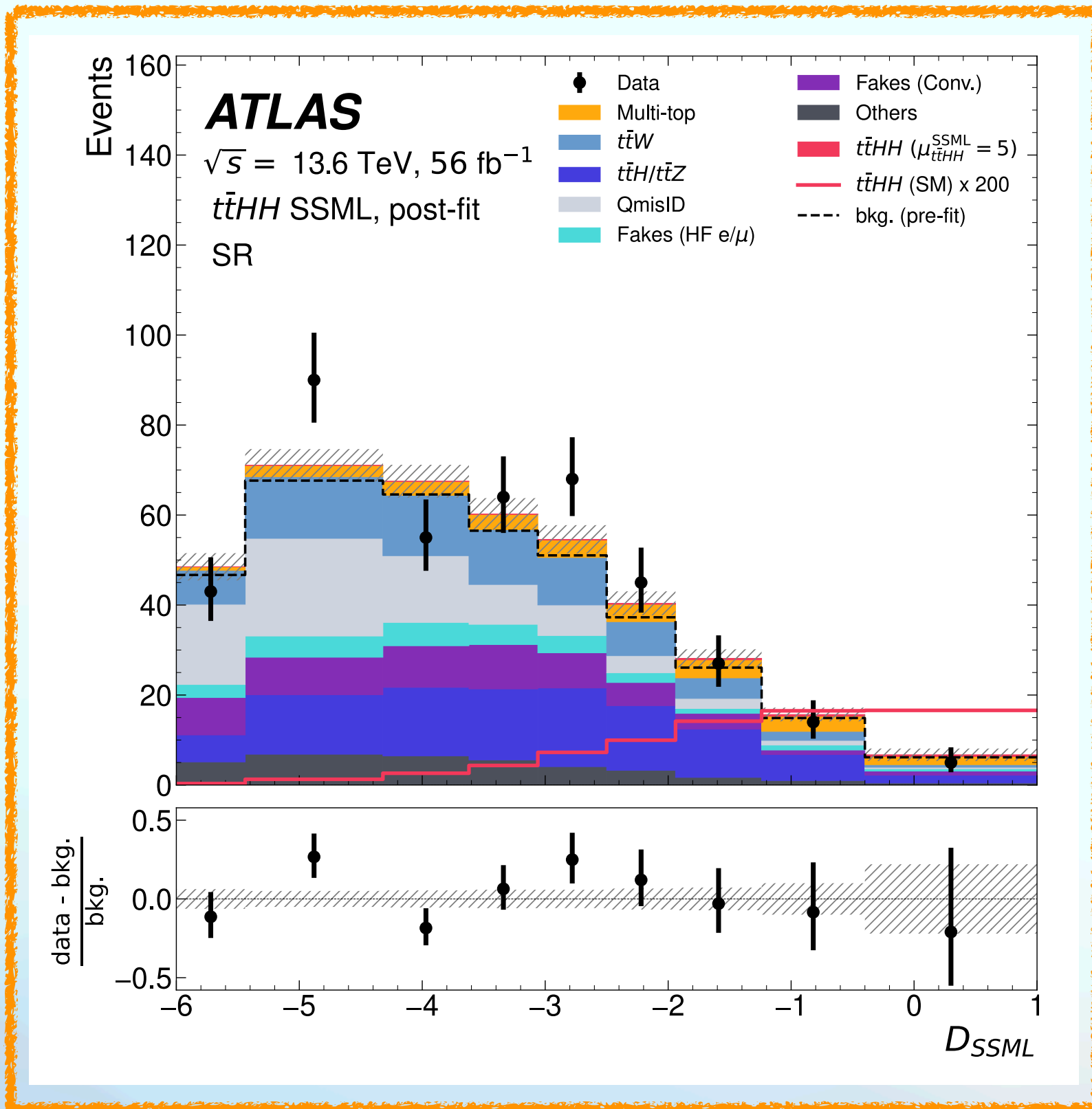
ML Run 2 SR distributions



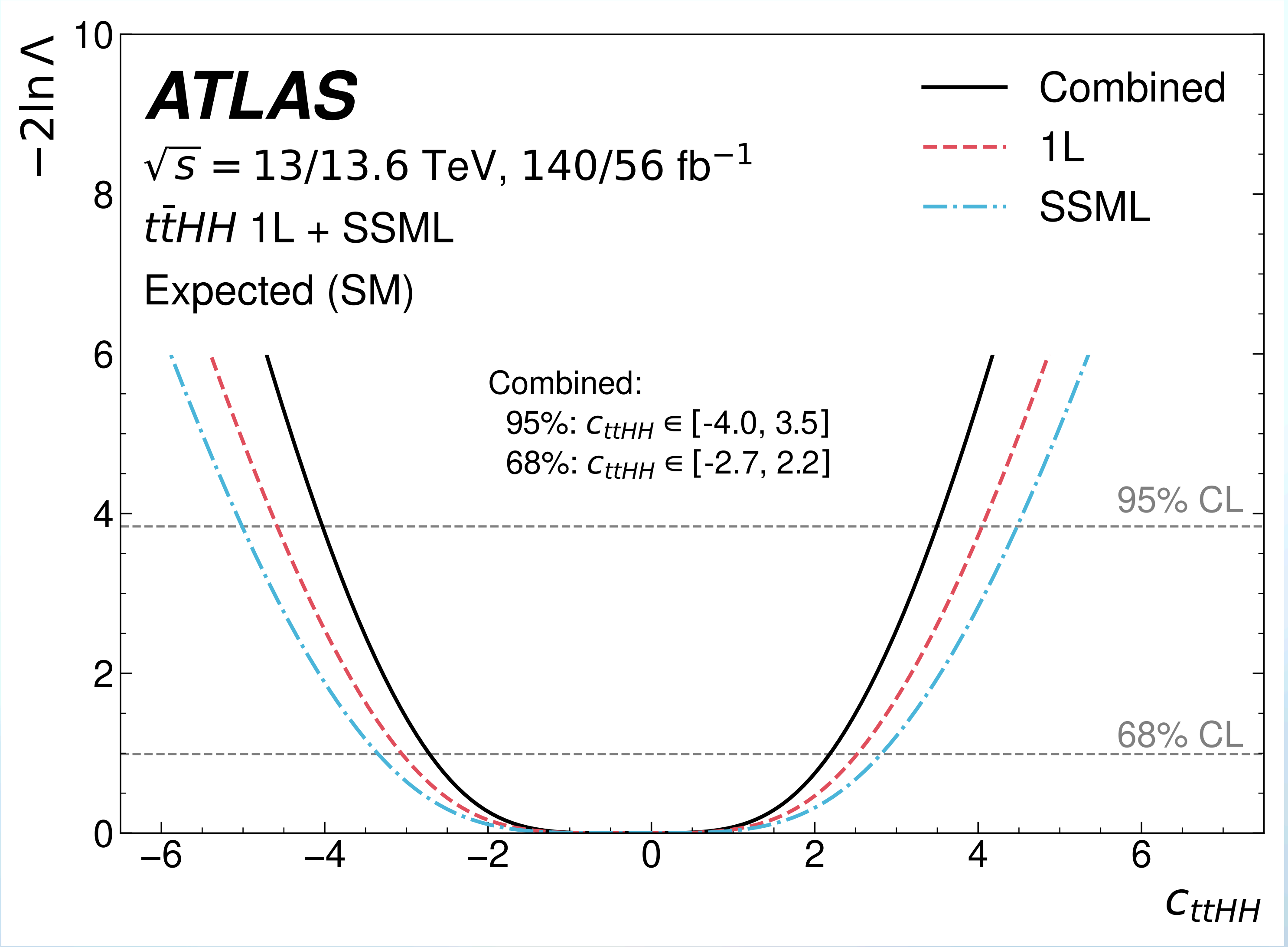
ML Run 3 CR distributions



ML Run 3 SR distributions

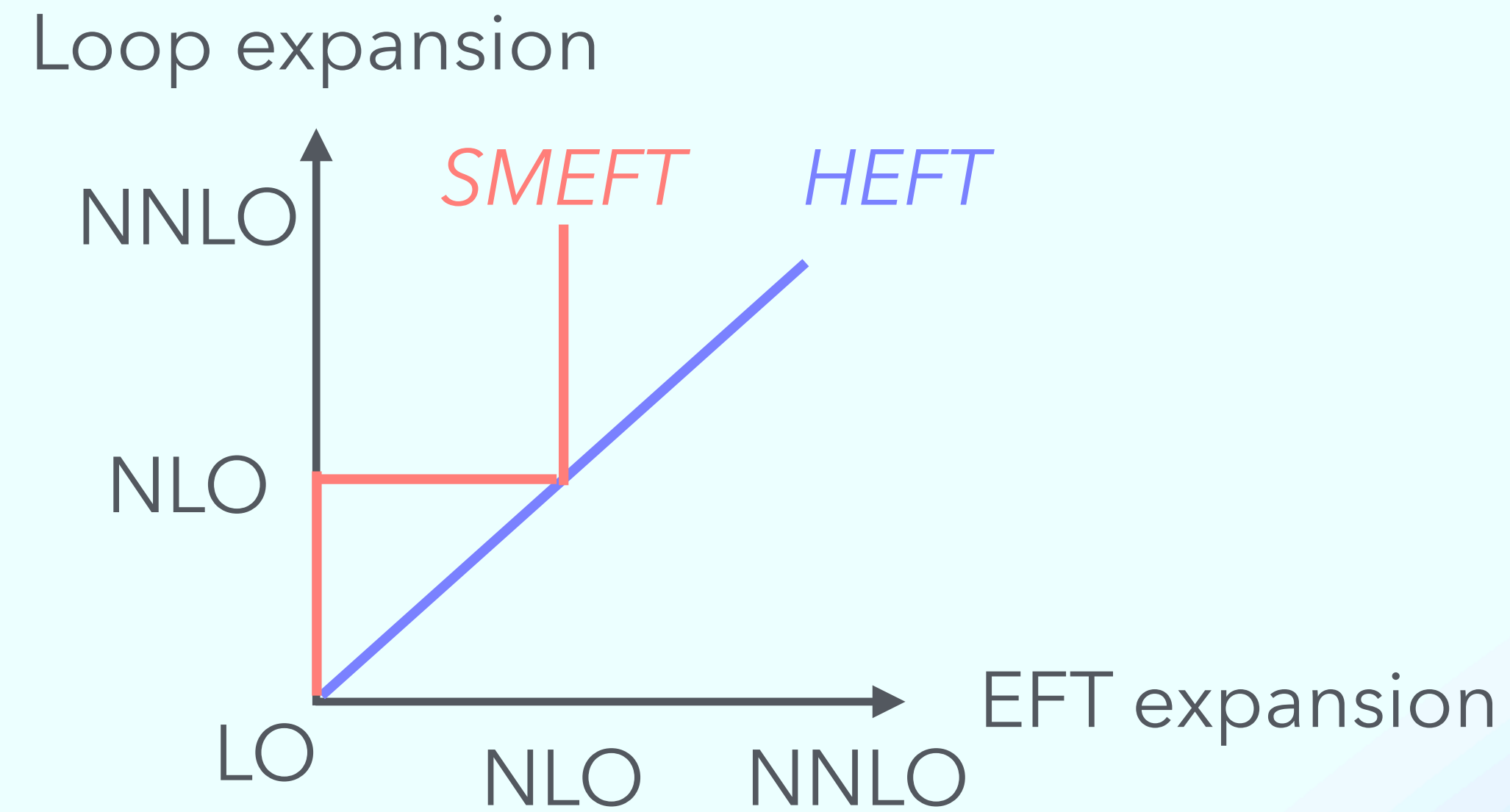


Expected likelihood for EFT fit



HEFT vs. SMEFT power counting

[arXiv:[2511.23410](https://arxiv.org/abs/2511.23410)]



SMEFT power counting keeps EFT independent of loop expansion

HEFT power counting counts loops, so one is constrained on the diagonal

HEFT vs. SMEFT power counting

Lagrangian : $\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{SM}} + \sum_i \frac{c_i^{(6)}}{\Lambda^2} \mathcal{O}_i^{(6)} + \sum_i \frac{c_i^{(8)}}{\Lambda^4} \mathcal{O}_i^{(8)} + \dots$

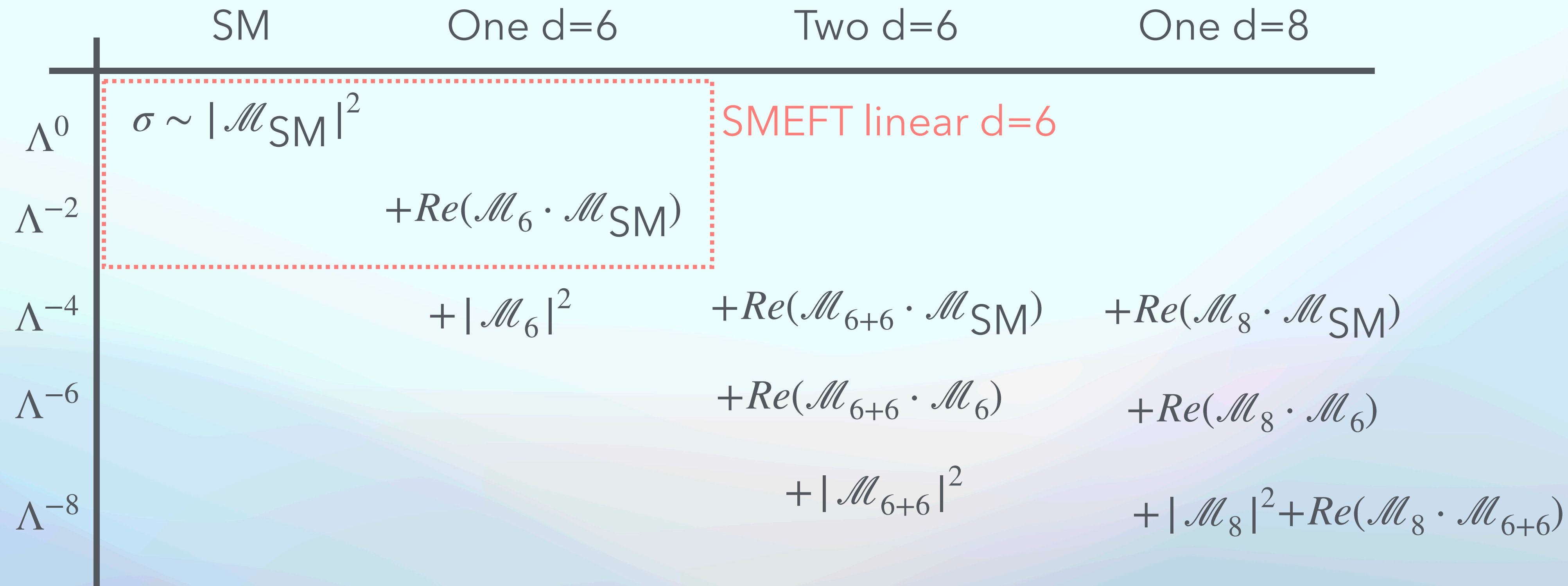
Event rates : $\sigma_{\text{EFT}} \sim |\mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_6}_{\text{One } d=6} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_{6+6}}_{\text{Two } d=6} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_8}_{\text{One } d=8} + \dots|^2$

	SM	One d=6	Two d=6	One d=8
Λ^0	$\sigma \sim \mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}} ^2$			
Λ^{-2}		$+ \text{Re}(\mathcal{M}_6 \cdot \mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}})$		
Λ^{-4}		$+ \mathcal{M}_6 ^2$	$+ \text{Re}(\mathcal{M}_{6+6} \cdot \mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}})$	$+ \text{Re}(\mathcal{M}_8 \cdot \mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}})$
Λ^{-6}			$+ \text{Re}(\mathcal{M}_{6+6} \cdot \mathcal{M}_6)$	$+ \text{Re}(\mathcal{M}_8 \cdot \mathcal{M}_6)$
Λ^{-8}			$+ \mathcal{M}_{6+6} ^2$	$+ \mathcal{M}_8 ^2 + \text{Re}(\mathcal{M}_8 \cdot \mathcal{M}_{6+6})$

HEFT vs. SMEFT power counting

Lagrangian : $\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{SM}} + \sum_i \frac{c_i^{(6)}}{\Lambda^2} \mathcal{O}_i^{(6)} + \sum_i \frac{c_i^{(8)}}{\Lambda^4} \mathcal{O}_i^{(8)} + \dots$

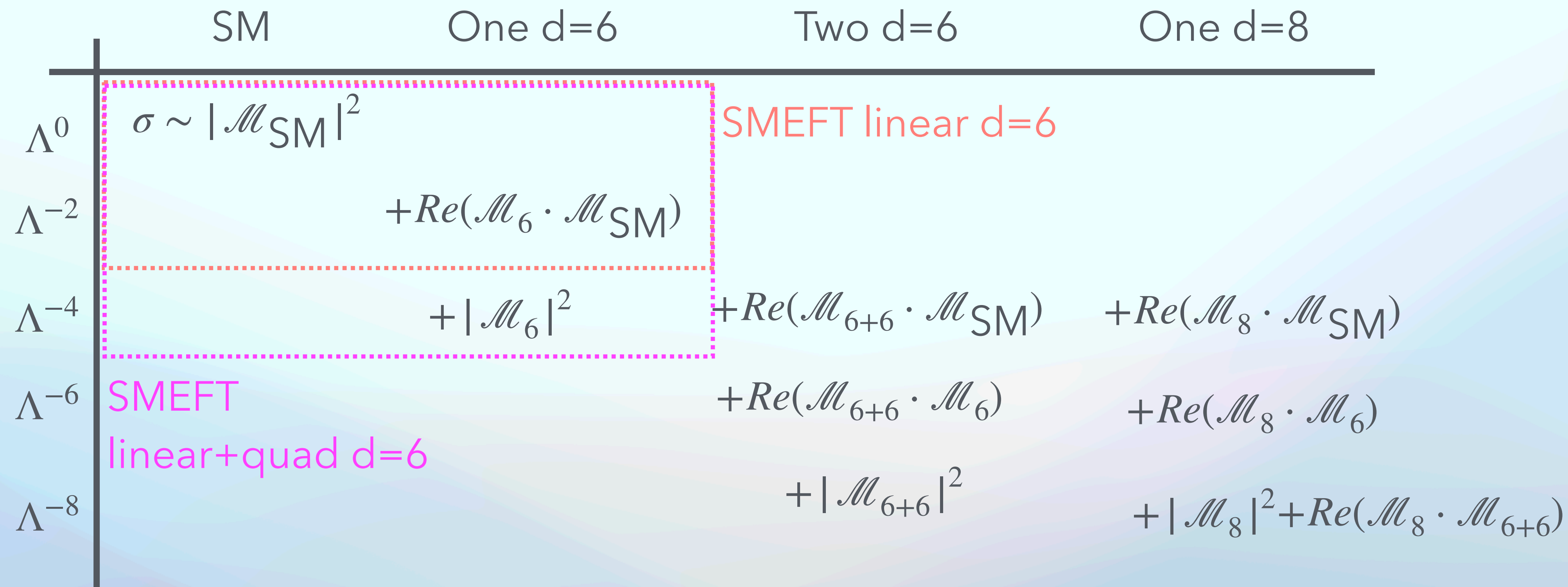
Event rates : $\sigma_{\text{EFT}} \sim |\mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_6}_{\text{One } d=6} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_{6+6}}_{\text{Two } d=6} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_8}_{\text{One } d=8} + \dots|^2$



HEFT vs. SMEFT power counting

Lagrangian : $\mathcal{L}_{\text{EFT}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{SM}} + \sum_i \frac{c_i^{(6)}}{\Lambda^2} \mathcal{O}_i^{(6)} + \sum_i \frac{c_i^{(8)}}{\Lambda^4} \mathcal{O}_i^{(8)} + \dots$

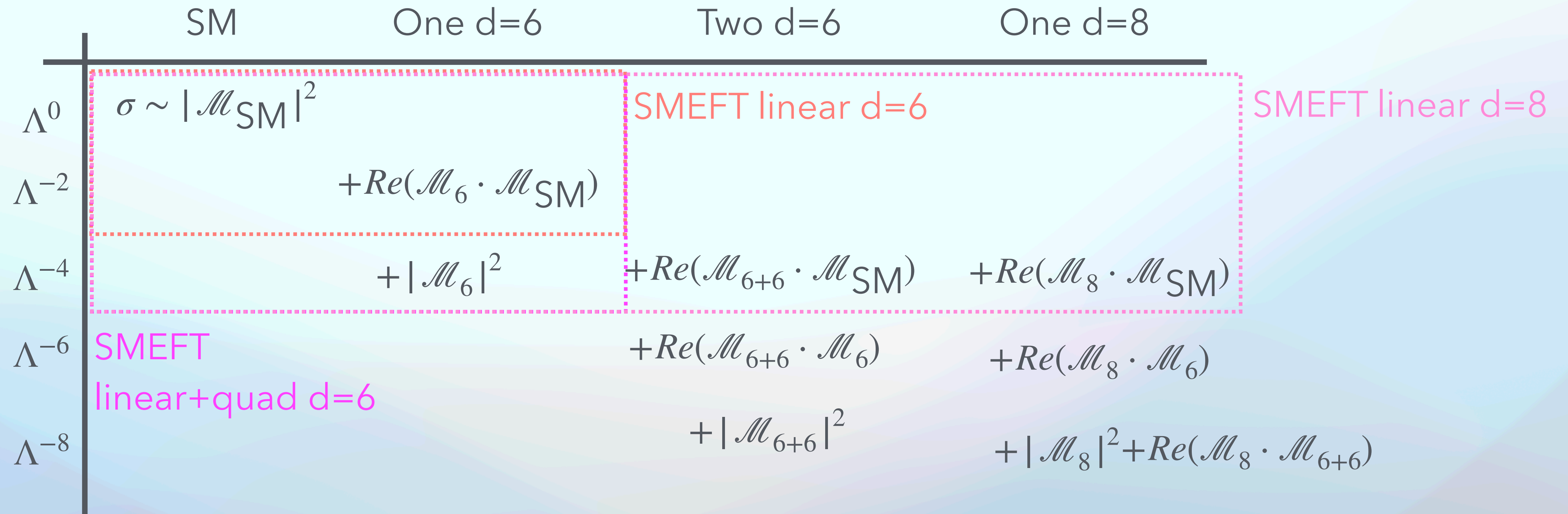
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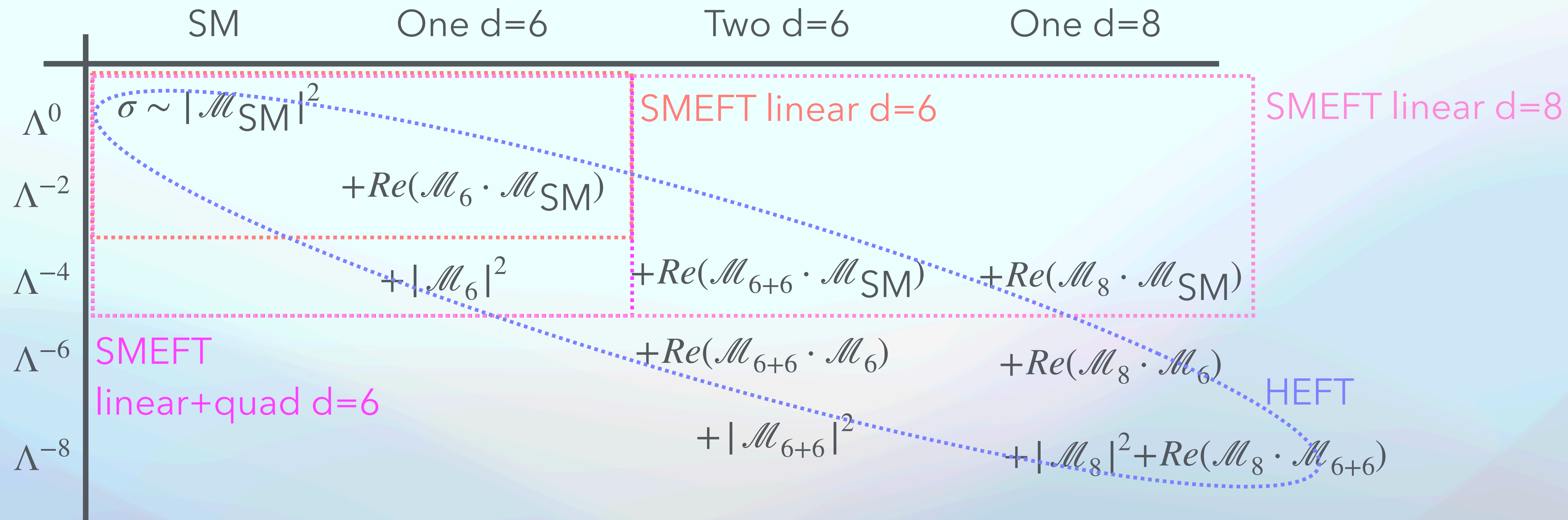
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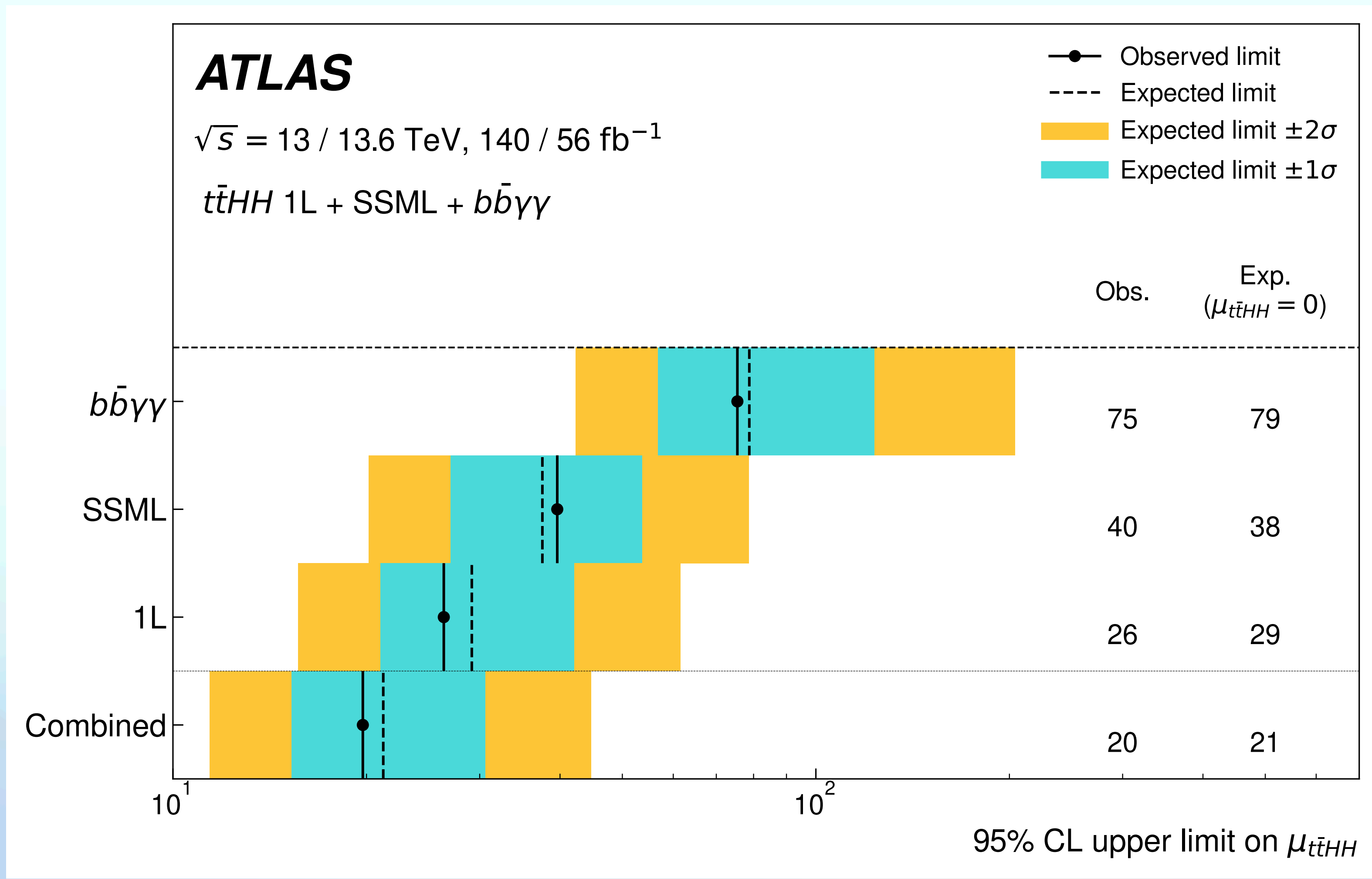
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Event rates : $\sigma_{\text{EFT}} \sim |\mathcal{M}_{\text{SM}} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_6}_{\text{One } d=6} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_{6+6}}_{\text{Two } d=6} + \underbrace{\mathcal{M}_8}_{\text{One } d=8} + \dots|^2$

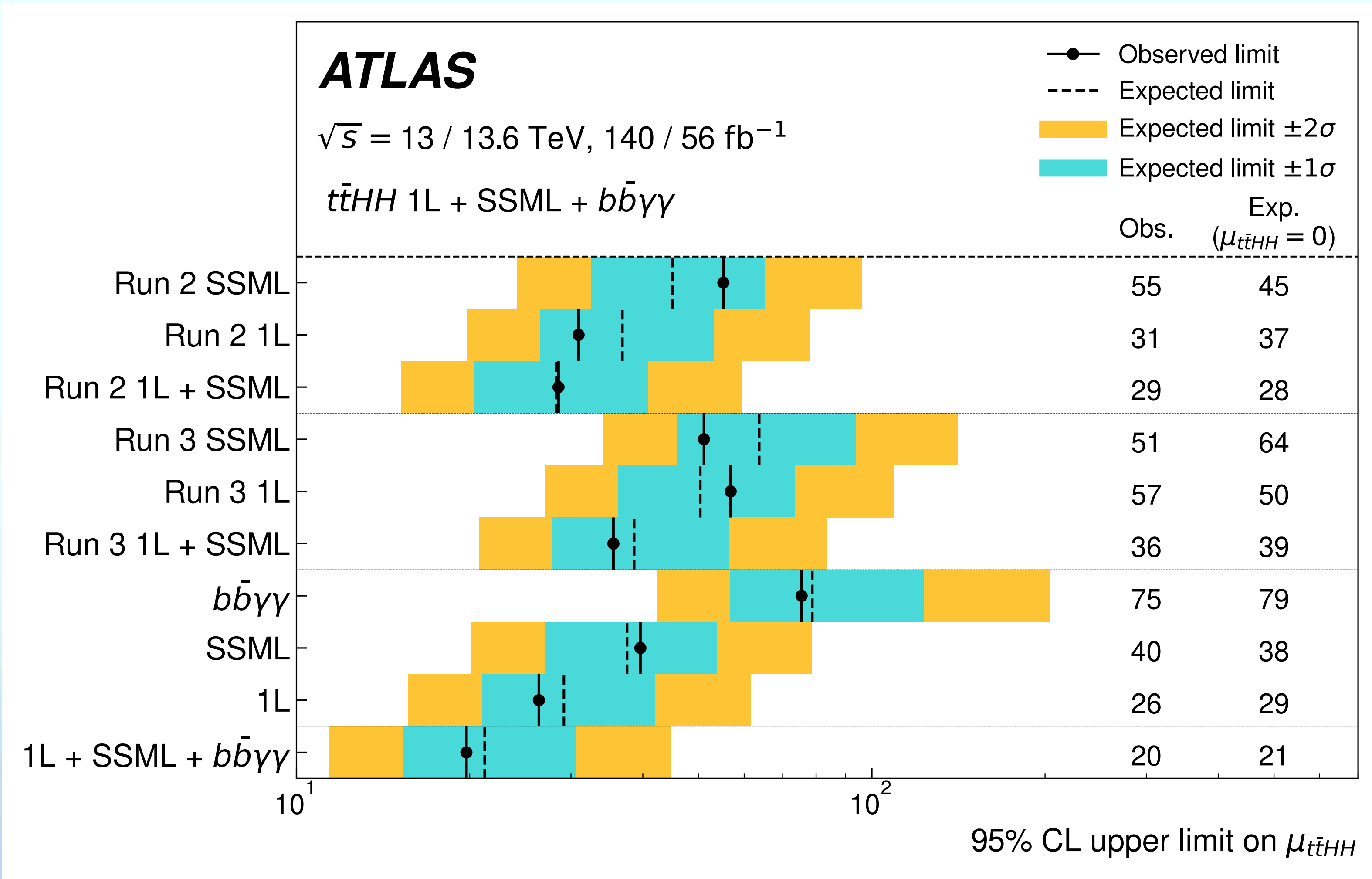


Results on signal strength



- No excess observed
- 95% CL Upper Limits : **20 (21) x SM**
- Most stringent limits to date

Signal strength results split by channels



- 1L and ML are the most sensitive channels

Aparte : EFT modelling

Sample simulation is **expensive**

in €, in time, and in CO2

→ we need a way to save resources while covering the most out of the phase space

1. Generate $t\bar{t}HH$ events at parton level (\sim free)
2. Do it for multiple values of $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$
- 3a. Save the ratio of kinematic information
- 3b. Save the evolution of cross-section
4. Reapply it back to the fully simulated sample

Pros :

It's cheap!

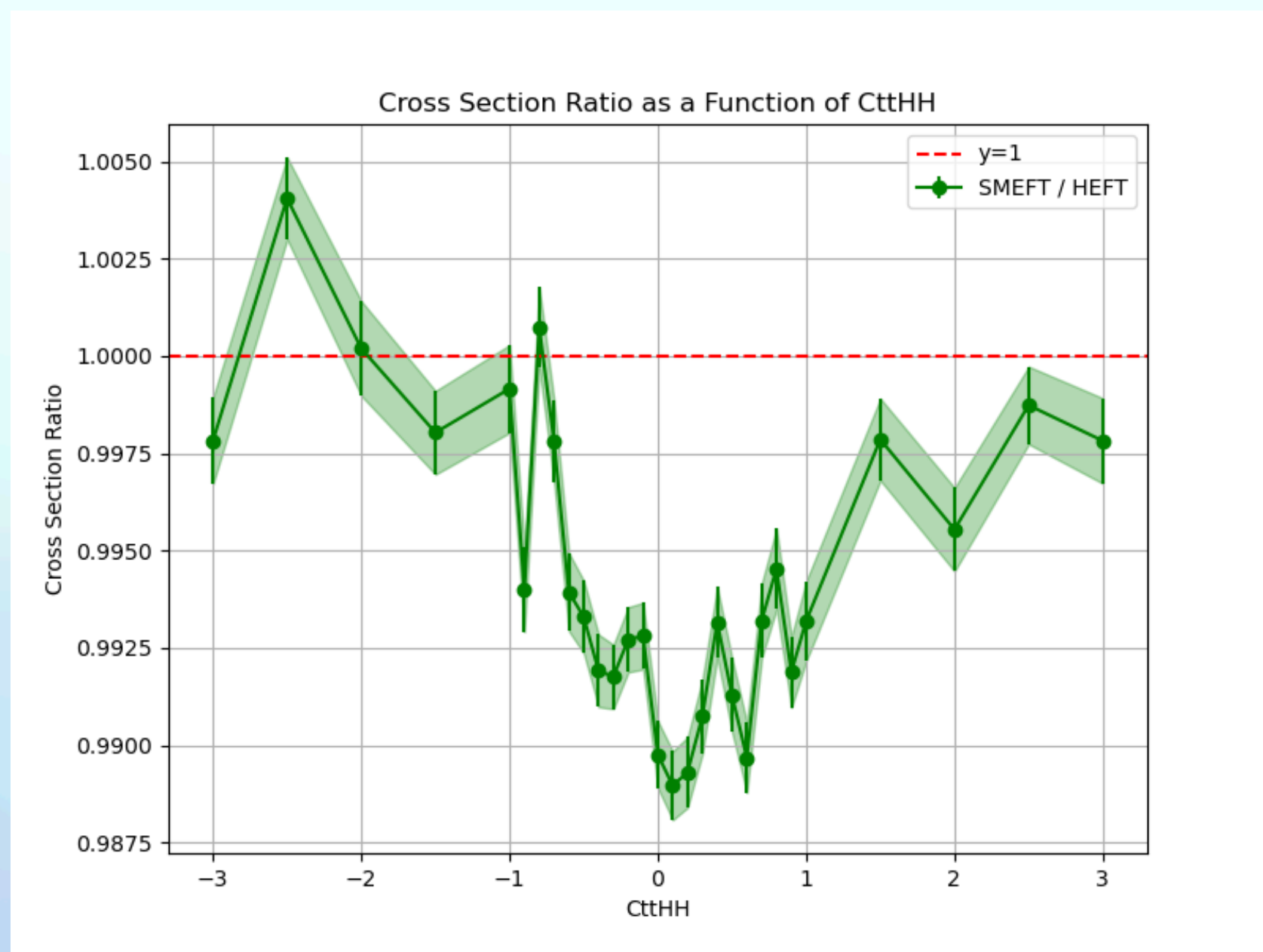
Cons :

How can we be sure that we capture well the dependances for the variable we fit?

We can't, but we can estimate that the effect is \sim small

First : we need a model!

- Modification of the SM Lagrangian with additional vertices $c_{t\bar{t}HH}$, $c_{t\bar{t}H}$, κ_λ
- Implemented by M. Ryczkowski & R. Groeber using FeynRules UFO model format. Can be found on github.com/Ryczek/CttHH
- Model validated against SMEFT using SMEFTsim with internal studies



$$c_{t\bar{t}HH} = -\frac{3v^3}{2\sqrt{2}\Lambda^2 m_t} c_{uH} + \frac{v^2}{\Lambda^2} c_{H\Box} - \frac{v^2}{4\Lambda^2} c_{HD}$$

$$c_{HHH} = 1 - \frac{v^2}{\Lambda^2} \left(2\frac{v^2}{m_H^2} c_H - 3c_{H\Box} + \frac{3}{4}c_{HD} \right)$$

$$c_{t\bar{t}H} = 1 - \frac{v^2}{\Lambda^2} \left(c_{H\Box} - \frac{1}{4}c_{HD} \right) - \frac{v^3}{\sqrt{2}\Lambda^2 m_t} c_{uH}$$

[arXiv:2304.01968](https://arxiv.org/abs/2304.01968)

→ Agreement at ~1% level

A probe for HEFT vs. SMEFT

$$\begin{aligned} c_{t\bar{t}HH} &= -\frac{3v^3}{2\sqrt{2}\Lambda^2 m_t} c_{uH} + \frac{v^2}{\Lambda^2} c_{H\Box} - \frac{v^2}{4\Lambda^2} c_{HD} \\ c_{HHH} &= 1 - \frac{v^2}{\Lambda^2} \left(2\frac{v^2}{m_H^2} c_H - 3c_{H\Box} + \frac{3}{4}c_{HD} \right) \\ c_{t\bar{t}H} &= 1 - \frac{v^2}{\Lambda^2} \left(c_{H\Box} - \frac{1}{4}c_{HD} \right) - \frac{v^3}{\sqrt{2}\Lambda^2 m_t} c_{uH} \end{aligned}$$

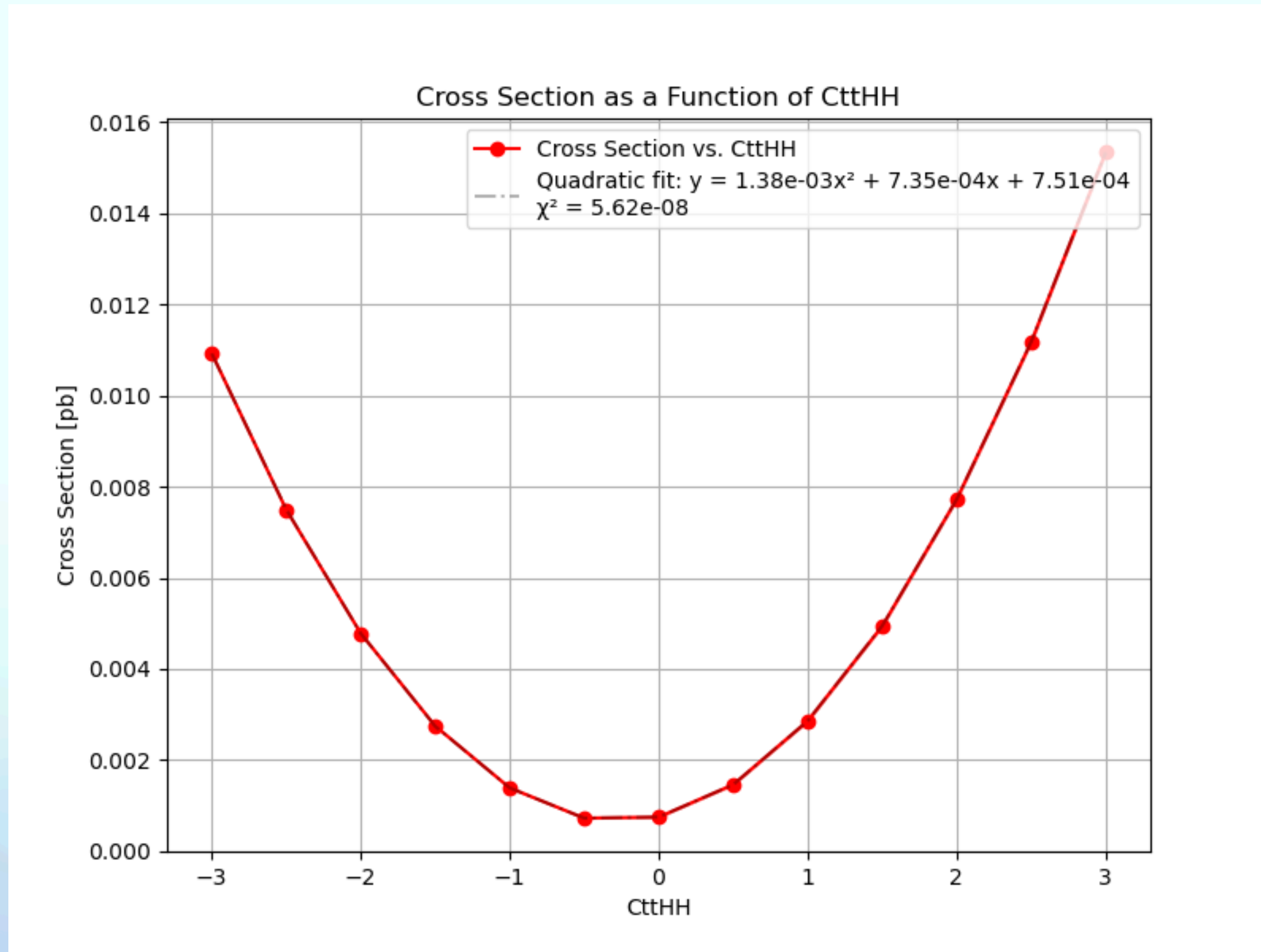
[arXiv:2304.01968](https://arxiv.org/abs/2304.01968)

Connects HEFT and SMEFT in $t\bar{t}HH$

In SMEFT, $t\bar{t}HH$ and $t\bar{t}H$ processes are **bound together**

HEFT provides a way to **decouple them** and study the Higgs mechanism

Cross-section dependance



Quadratic dependance → **Expected**

$$\sigma \sim \left| \text{[Diagram 1]} + \text{[Diagram 2]} + \text{[Diagram 3]} \right|^2$$

The diagrams show the production of a top quark and an anti-top quark via gluon fusion, with two Higgs bosons in the final state. Diagram 1 is a tree-level process with a top quark loop. Diagram 2 is a tree-level process with an anti-top quark loop. Diagram 3 is a tree-level process with a top quark loop and a vertex correction proportional to C_{ttHH}.

$$\sigma \sim \left| \text{[Diagram 1]} \right|^2 + \left| \text{[Diagram 2]} \right|^2 + \left| \text{[Diagram 3]} \right|^2 + \text{cross-terms...}$$

The diagrams are the same as in the previous block, showing the squared magnitudes of the individual amplitudes and their cross-terms.

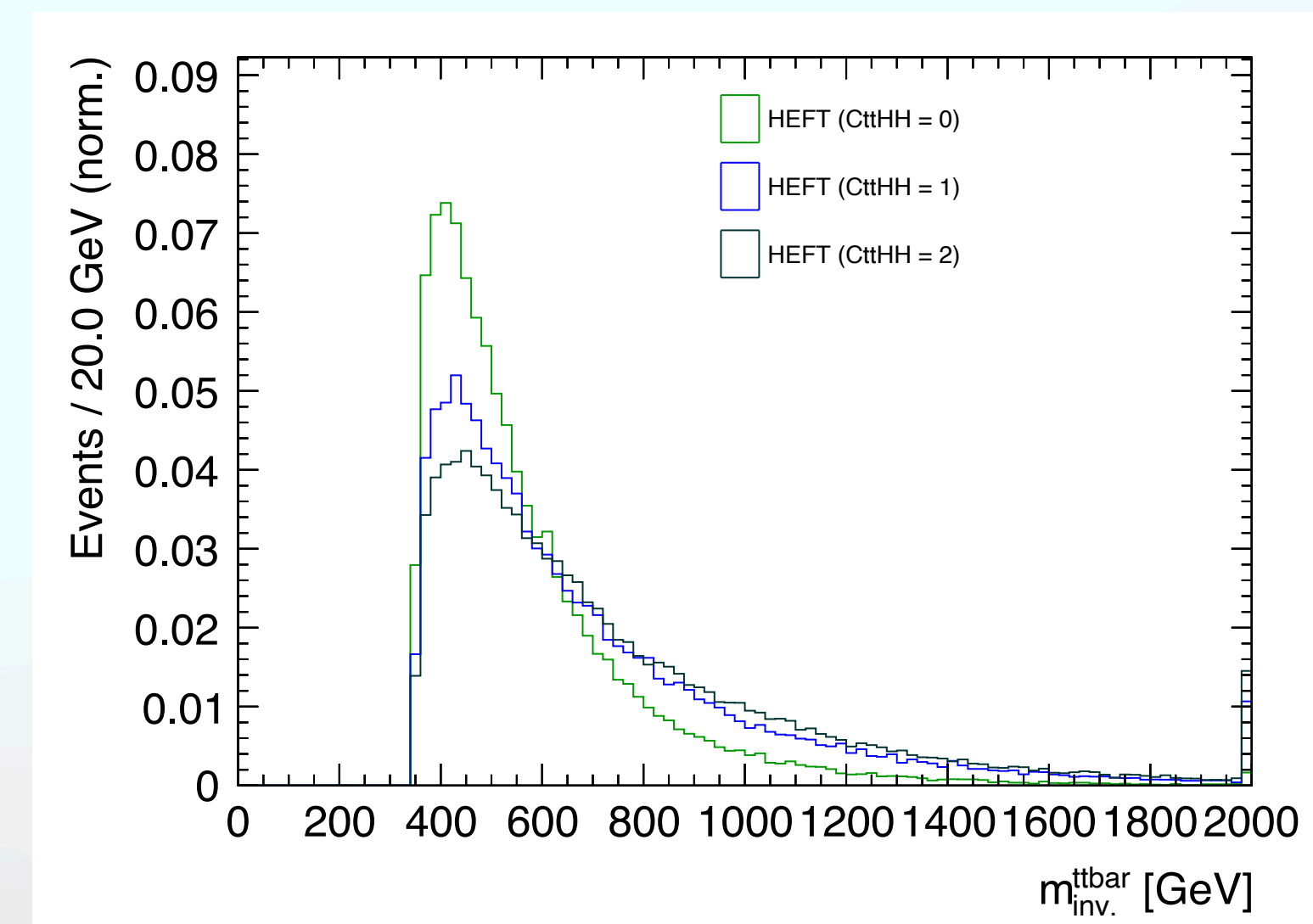
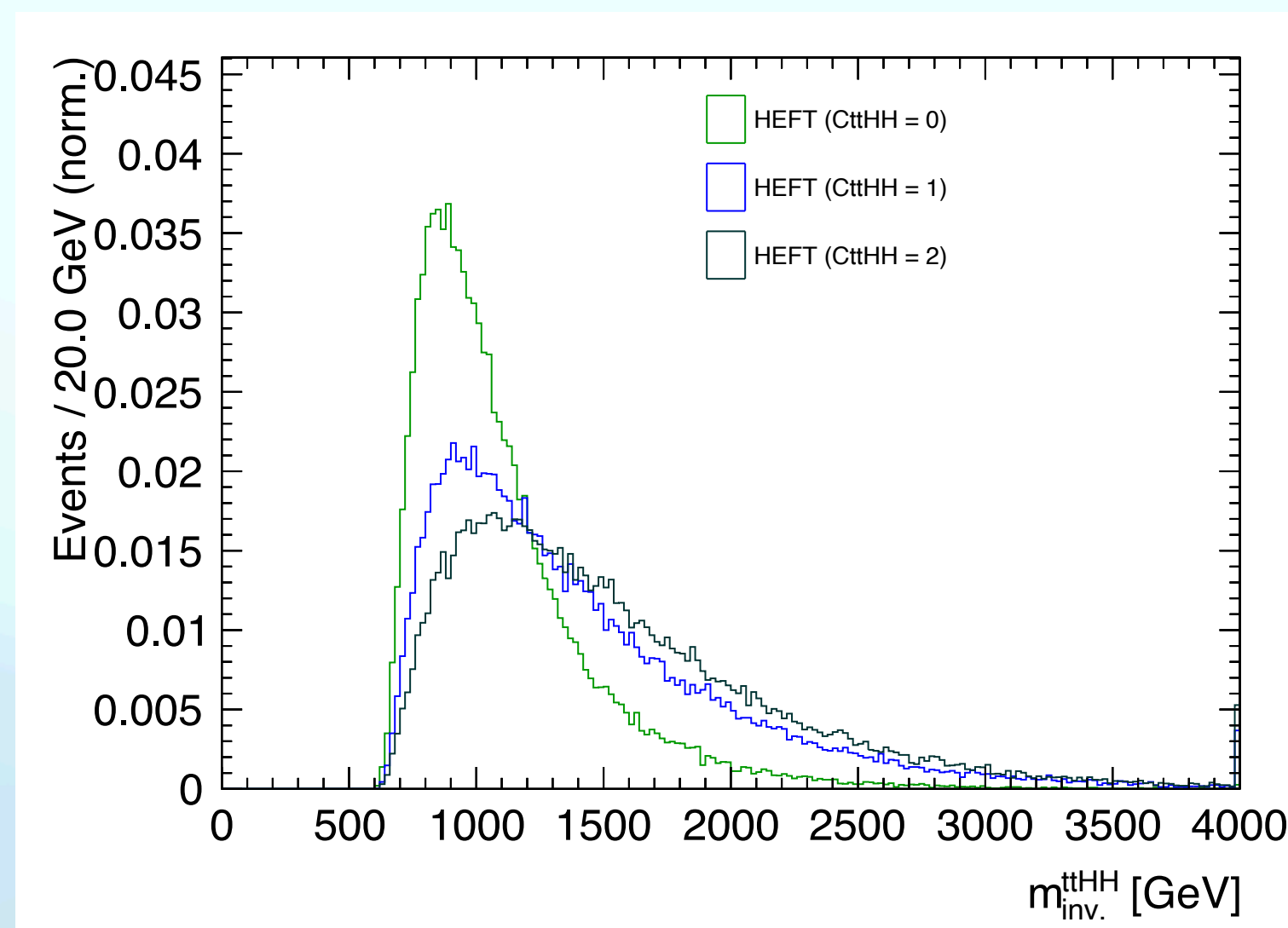
This also tells us that the cross-terms are small wrt. quad. terms

How to extract the most kin. information?

Ideally : $\sim \frac{\mathcal{M}_{SM}}{\mathcal{M}_{BSM}}$ \rightarrow optimal as long as phase-space is \sim comparable
not trivial as we probe heavy-mass

\rightarrow but require to define the Wilson coefficient space to be probed
i.e. you need to know your plan in advance
no modifications a posteriori

Not possible as no **HEFT** model existed at the time!
Instead we can take a sensitive distribution



Or even better...

How to extract the most kin. information?

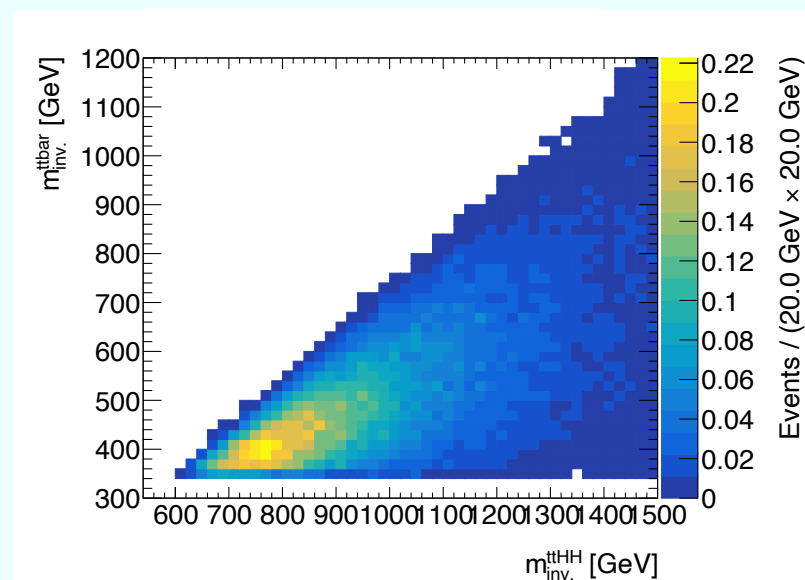
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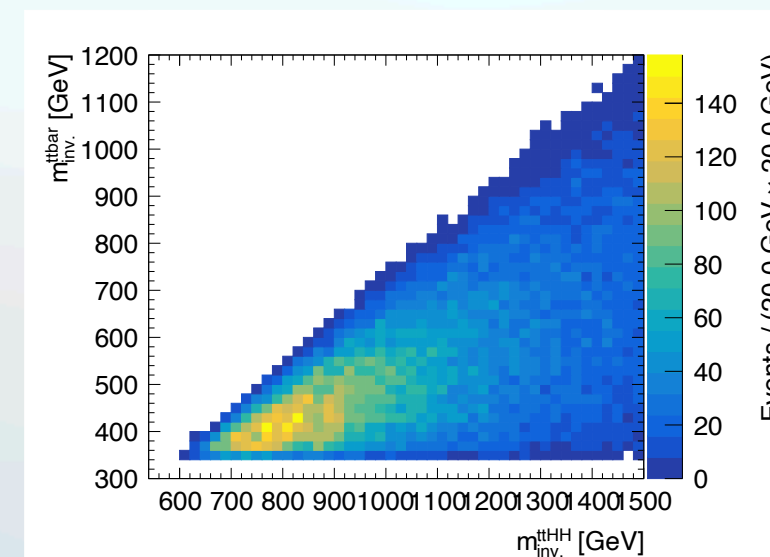
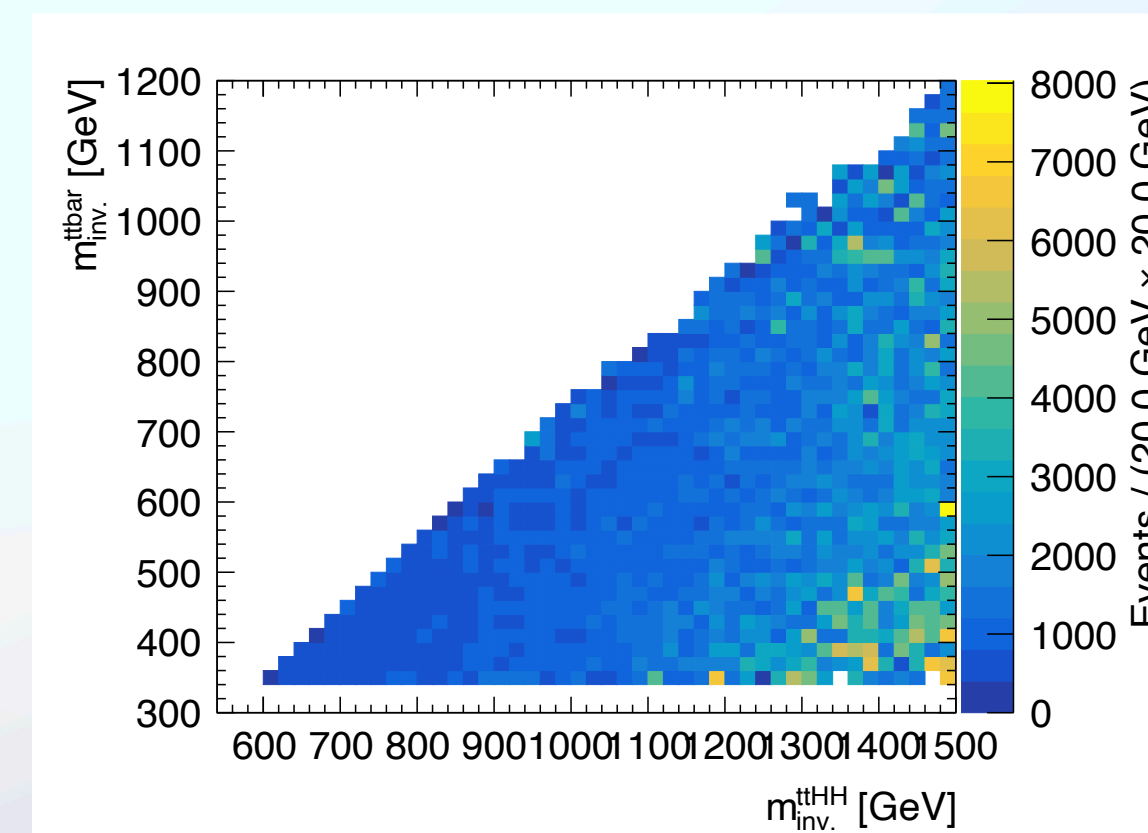
Not possible as no HEFT model existed at the time!

We can take a **2D** distribution:

$$\frac{(m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}, m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}})_{SM}}{(m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}HH}, m_{inv.}^{t\bar{t}})_{BSM}}$$



=



[arXiv:2502.20976](https://arxiv.org/abs/2502.20976)

answers this question in the context of ggF diHiggs

Possible improvements

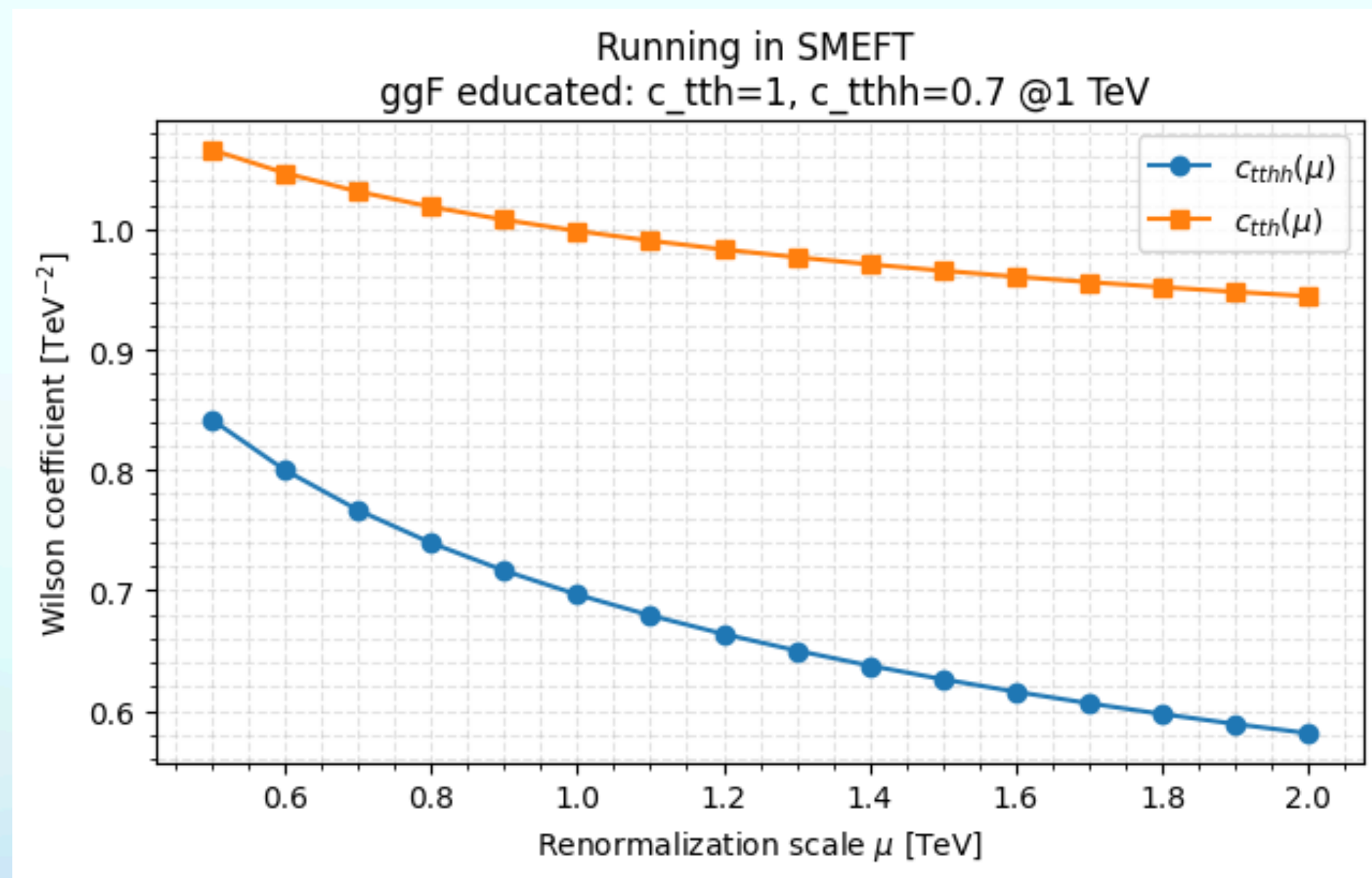
We set limits on Wilson coefficients at a **given scale**

Effect of running?

~1TeV @ LHC

In effective theories : **operators mixing depends on Λ**

*Negligible operators could become
~important at higher scale*



- From SMEFT implementation of RGEs
renormalization group eqs
- Educated guess ~ limits from ggF at typical LHC scale
~30% at 2 TeV
- Subdominant for now, what about in the future?
- Other operators that could become important at higher scale

Is this running valid? → proper implementation of HEFT running needed
probably not