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# A possible solution to the gallium anomaly moving beyond the leptonic wave function factorization

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PHYSICAL REVIEW D **113**, 033006 (2026)

## Reassessing the gallium anomaly using self-consistent electron wave functions

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The gallium anomaly, a persistent discrepancy exceeding  $4\sigma$  in the  $^{71}\text{Ga}$  neutrino capture rates from  $^{51}\text{Cr}$  and  $^{37}\text{Ar}$  radioactive sources by the GALLEX, SAGE, and recently BEST experiments, has challenged particle physics and nuclear theory for over three decades. We present a new calculation of the neutrino capture cross section, abandoning the conventional leading-order approximation for electronic wave functions by numerically solving the Dirac-Coulomb equation for both bound and continuum electron states. Finally, we reevaluate the gallium anomaly, updating its global significance and presenting the most up-to-date status of its interpretation in terms of sterile neutrinos.

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. PHYSICAL REVIEW D 113, 033006 (2026)

## A possible solution to the gallium anomaly moving beyond the leptonic wave function factorization

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(Dated: 21/01/26)

For over thirty years, a  $\sim 20\%$  deficit, now exceeding  $5\sigma$ , has persisted between measured and predicted neutrino capture rates on  $^{71}\text{Ga}$ , as observed in radioactive source experiments (namely GALLEX, SAGE, and more recently BEST) using  $^{51}\text{Cr}$  and  $^{37}\text{Ar}$ . This long-standing discrepancy, referred to as the gallium anomaly, has posed a significant challenge to our understanding of both experimental methods and theoretical predictions. In this work, we revisit the theoretical calculation of the neutrino capture cross-section by moving beyond the standard treatment of the leptonic wave functions, revealing limitations in the commonly used factorization approach based on the detailed balance principle. Incorporating phenomenologically constrained Gamow-Teller transition densities, able to correctly reproduce the precisely measured half-life of  $^{71}\text{Ge}$ , we find that the revised cross-section can be significantly reduced, potentially resolving the gallium anomaly without invoking new physics.

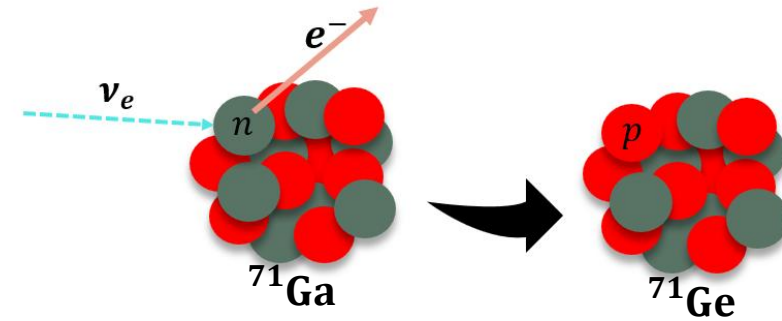
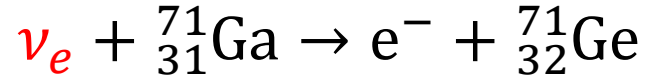
M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. [arXiv:2512.20560](https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.20560)

## Short-baseline anomaly

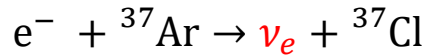
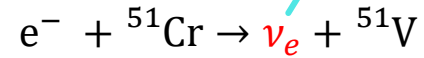
Gallium	$\nu_e \rightarrow \nu_e$ (disappearance)	Very Significant ( $> 5\sigma$ )	Unknown (many tests failed)
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# Gallium Source Experiments

**SAGE** and **GALLEX** experiments have been studying solar neutrinos through the neutrino capture reaction on a gallium target:



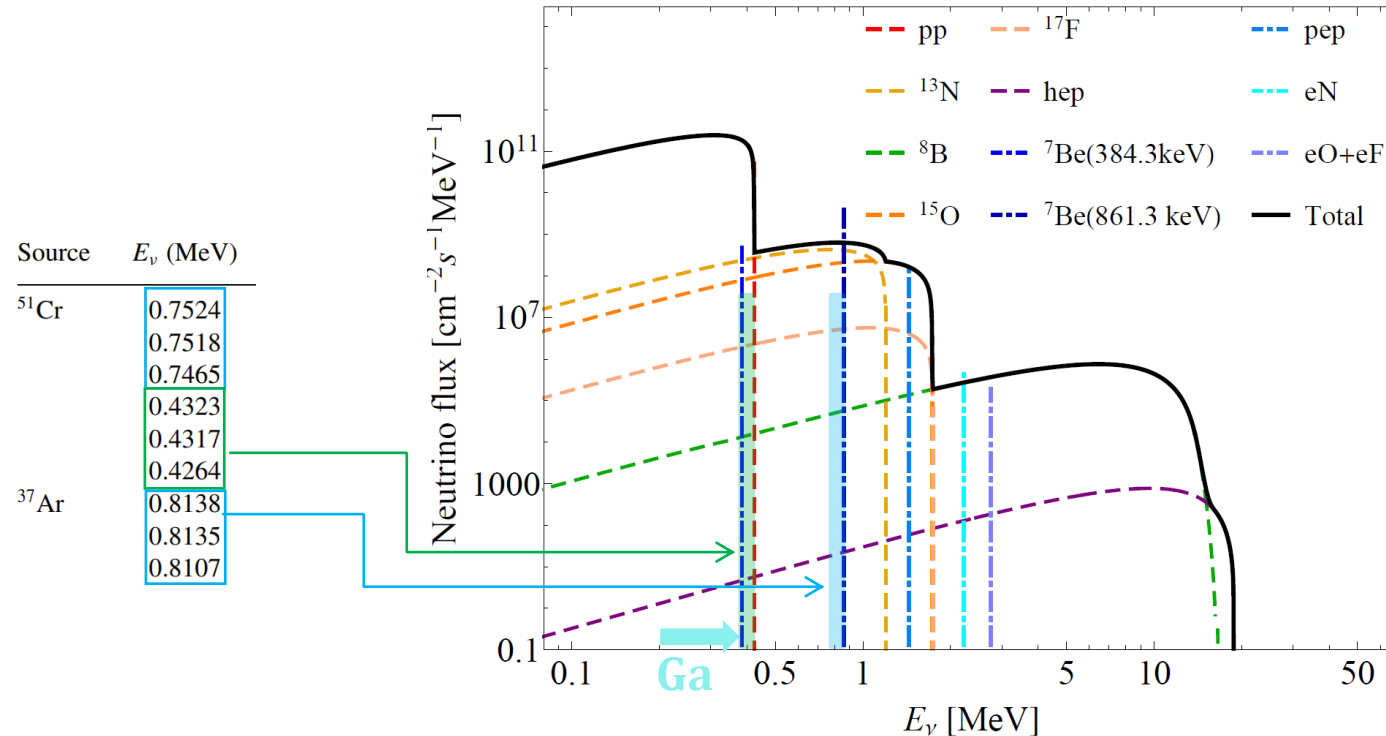
**Artificial neutrinos source used for calibration :**



$$Q_{EC} = 232.47(9) \text{ keV}$$

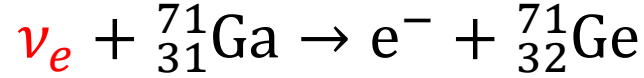
Nuclear Data Sheets 188, 1 (2023).

Gallium can also absorb neutrinos from the solar pp chain.

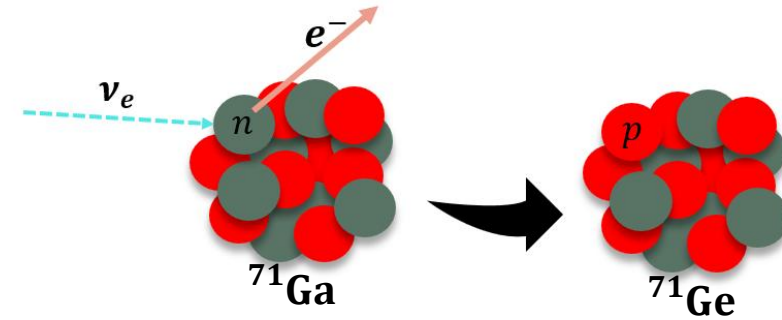
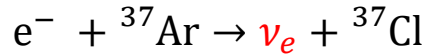
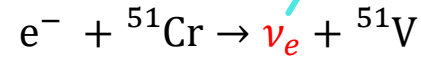


# Evidence for the Anomaly

**SAGE** and **GALLEX** experiments have been studying solar neutrinos through the neutrino capture reaction on a gallium target:



Artificial neutrinos source used for calibration :



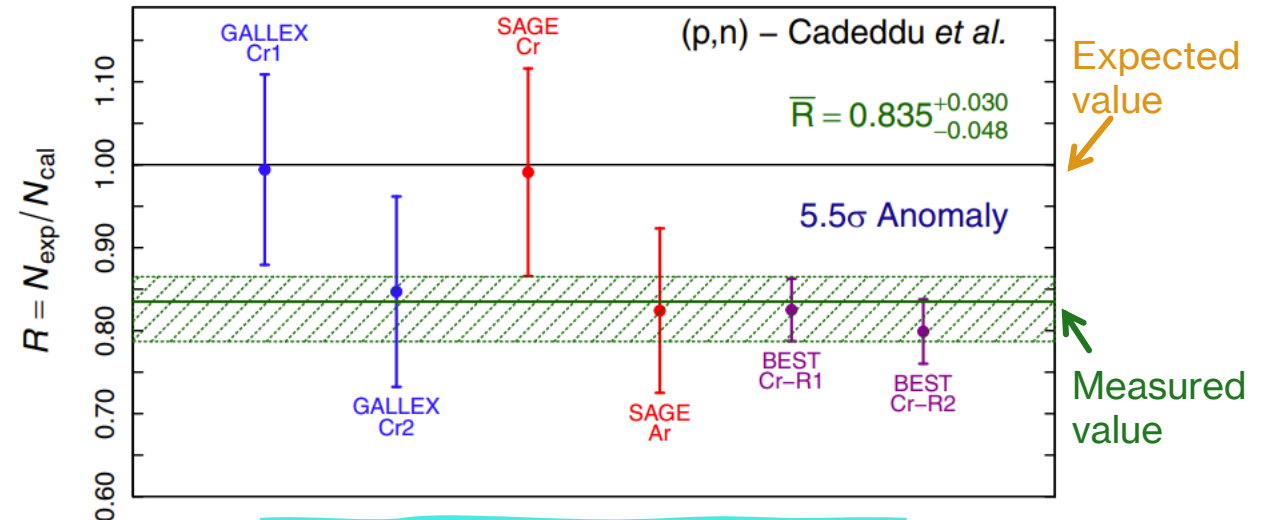
After the results from **BEST** the anomaly increases its significance to approximately **5.5σ**

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. PHYSICAL REVIEW D 113, 033006 (2026)

Source	$\sigma_{\text{gs}}^{\text{db}}$	$\bar{\sigma}_{\text{gs}}^{\text{db}}$	$\bar{\sigma}_{(p,n)}^{\text{db}+6\%}$	$\bar{\sigma}_{({}^3\text{He}, {}^3\text{H})}^{\text{db}+9\%}$
${}^{51}\text{Cr}$	$5.42 \pm 0.06$	$5.28 \pm 0.06$	$5.57^{+0.28}_{-0.07}$	$5.73 \pm 0.17$
${}^{37}\text{Ar}$	$6.50 \pm 0.07$	$6.32 \pm 0.07$	$6.71^{+0.35}_{-0.09}$	$6.93 \pm 0.22$

Considering only the ground-state cross section:  $\bar{R}_{\text{gs}} = 0.881 \pm 0.031 \rightarrow$  Anomaly at **3.8σ**

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. PHYSICAL REVIEW D 113, 033006 (2026)



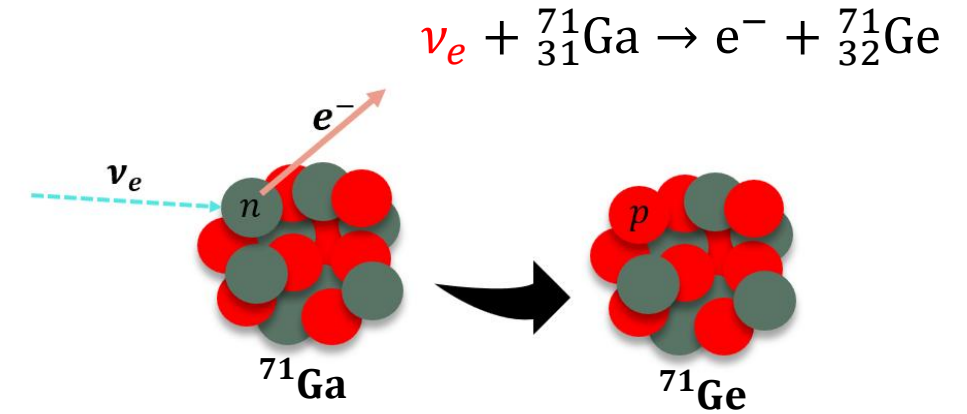
Calibration data require a  $\sim 20\%$  cross-section reduction.



# Neutrino Capture Cross Section

$$\sigma_{\text{gs}} = \frac{G_F^2 |V_{ud}|^2 g_A^2}{\pi(2J_{\text{Ga}} + 1)} \sum_j p_e^j E_e^j |\mathcal{H}_j^{\text{IBD}}|^2 \mathcal{B}(E_e^j)$$

CKM Matrix el.  $\rightarrow |V_{ud}|^2$   
 Axial-vector coupling const.  $\rightarrow g_A^2$   
 Fermi constant  $\rightarrow G_F^2$   
 Momentum  $\rightarrow p_e^j$   
 Energy  $\rightarrow E_e^j$   
 Matrix el.  $\rightarrow |\mathcal{H}_j^{\text{IBD}}|^2$   
 Branching ratio  $\rightarrow \mathcal{B}(E_e^j)$



$g_k$  and  $f_k$ : large and small Dirac electron wave-function radial components for a given eigenvalue  $k$ , for allowed transition ( $\Delta J^\pi = 1^+$ )  $\rightarrow k = \pm 1$

$j_0$  and  $j_1$ : neutrino wave functions, spherical Bessel functions  $j_l(qr)$  of order 0 and 1

$$|\mathcal{H}^{\text{IBD}}|^2 = (4\pi)^2 \left[ \left| \int dr r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) \left[ g_{-1}(r) j_0(qr) + \frac{1}{3} f_{-1}(r) j_1(qr) \right] \right|^2 + \left| \int dr r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) \left[ f_1(r) j_0(qr) - \frac{1}{3} g_1(r) j_1(qr) \right] \right|^2 \right]$$

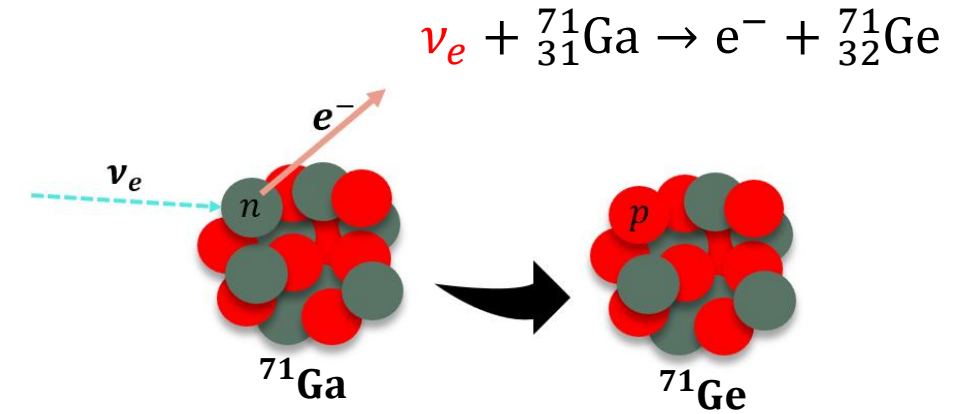
**Gamow-Teller transition density** represents the overlap of the initial and final nuclear wave functions through the weak interaction operator.

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}(\mathbf{r}) = \Psi_{71\text{Ge}}^*(\mathbf{r}) \hat{H}_{\text{GT}} \Psi_{71\text{Ga}}(\mathbf{r})$$

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**Gamow-Teller transition density** represents the overlap of the initial and final nuclear wave functions through the weak interaction operator.

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}(\mathbf{r}) = \Psi_{71\text{Ge}}^*(\mathbf{r}) \hat{H}_{\text{GT}} \Psi_{71\text{Ga}}(\mathbf{r})$$

In principle, we must **calculate the exact overlap** between the leptonic wave functions and the nuclear transition density.

### Required ingredients:

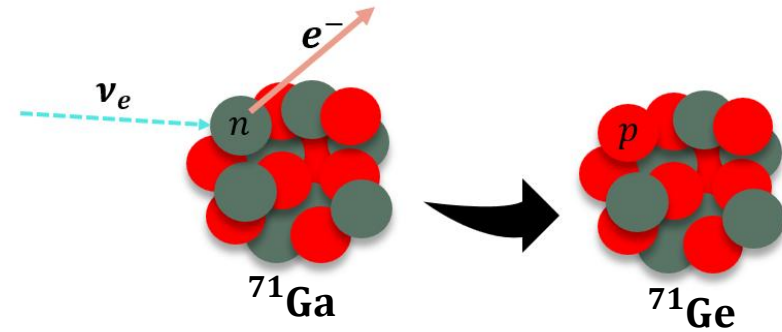
- Leptonic wave functions
- Nuclear transition density

# The Factorization Approximation

In the classical treatment, one invokes the **factorization of the leptonic wave functions**:  $\nu_e + {}^{71}_{31}\text{Ga} \rightarrow e^- + {}^{71}_{32}\text{Ge}$

**Both leptonic wave functions**  
(electron and neutrino) are  
evaluated at  $r_0 \simeq 0$ .

$$j_l(qr_0) \simeq \frac{(qr_0)^l}{(2l+1)!!}$$



**Factorization scheme:**

$$|\mathcal{H}^{\text{IBD}}|^2 = (4\pi)^2 \left[ \left| \int dr r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) [g_{-1}(r)j_0(qr) + \frac{1}{3}f_{-1}(r)j_1(qr)] \right|^2 + \left| \int dr r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) [f_1(r)j_0(qr) - \frac{1}{3}g_1(r)j_1(qr)] \right|^2 \right]$$

$$\simeq (4\pi)^2 [g_{-1}(r_0)^2 + f_1(r_0)^2] \underbrace{\left| \int dr r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) \right|^2}_{\text{Nuclear matrix element}}$$

$$\leftarrow \mathcal{M}_{\text{nuc}}^{\text{IBD}}|^2$$

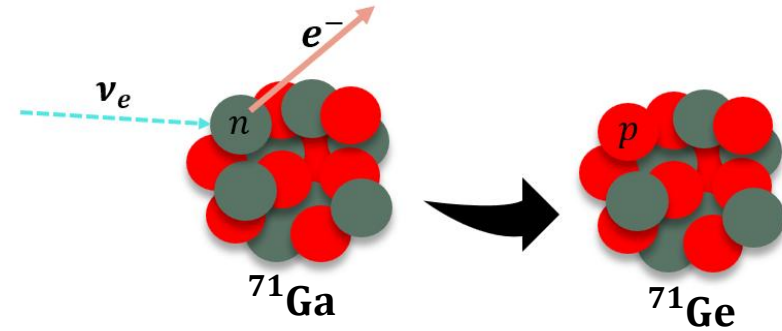
**Nuclear matrix element**

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$\leftarrow$   $|\mathcal{M}_{\text{nuc}}^{\text{IBD}}|^2$   
**Nuclear matrix element**

## Challenge:

Direct *ab initio* calculations of the nuclear transition density is challenging



## Solution: Detailed Balance!

The **inverse electron-capture** reaction  ${}^{71}\text{Ge} \rightarrow {}^{71}\text{Ga}$  exists, and from its lifetime a value for the IBD matrix element can be extracted.

# Using Detailed Balance



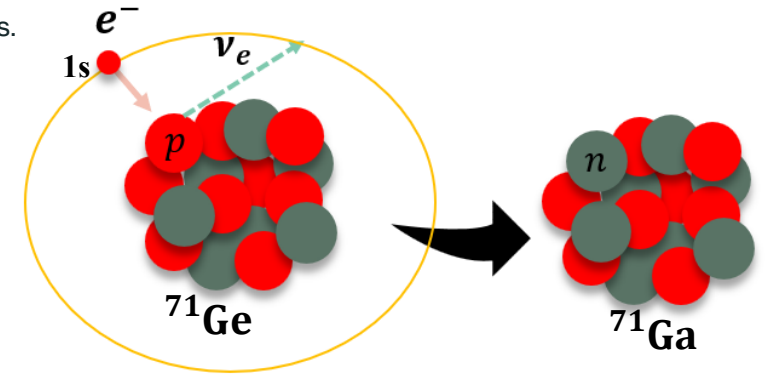
$$\frac{1}{t_{1/2}} = \frac{G_F^2 |V_{ud}|^2 g_A^2}{\pi \ln 2 (2J_{\text{Ge}} + 1)} (E_\nu^{1s})^2 |\mathcal{H}_{1s}^{\text{EC}}|^2 \left[ 1 + \frac{P_L + P_M}{P_K} \right]$$

${}^{71}\text{Ge}$  half life :  $11.465 \pm 0.003$  d

Exp. measured EC prob. for L, M and K shells.

$$\frac{P_L}{P_K} = 0.1174 \pm 0.0009$$

$$\frac{P_M}{P_K} = 0.0188 \pm 0.0004$$



**Without factorization scheme:**  $|H^{\text{IBD}}|^2 \neq |H^{\text{EC}}|^2$   
since the leptonic wave functions are different

$$|\mathcal{H}_{1s}^{\text{EC}}|^2 = \left| \int dr 4\pi r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) \left[ g_{1s}(r) j_0(qr) + \frac{1}{3} f_{1s}(r) j_1(qr) \right] \right|^2$$

$g_{1s}$  and  $f_{1s}$  : large and small Dirac electron **bound** wave-function radial components

The **detailed balance** is valid only if the leptonic wave function can be factorized from the nuclear one

$$|\mathcal{M}_{\text{nuc}}^{\text{IBD}}|^2 \stackrel{\text{db}}{=} |\mathcal{M}_{\text{nuc}}^{\text{EC}}|^2$$



# Using Detailed Balance



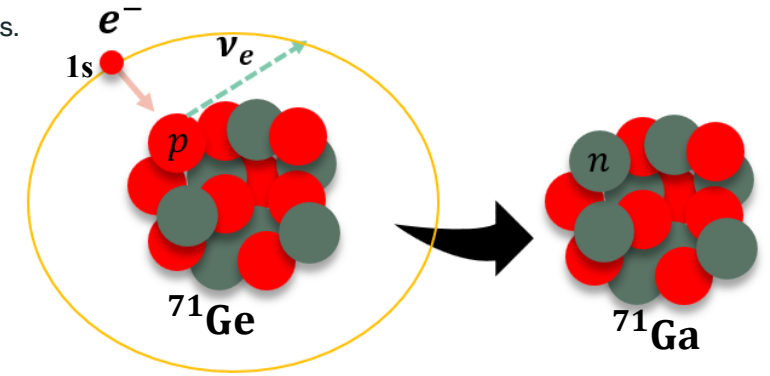
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$$|\mathcal{H}_{1s}^{\text{EC}}|^2 = \left| \int dr 4\pi r^2 \rho_{\text{TD}}(r) \left[ g_{1s}(r) j_0(qr) + \frac{1}{3} f_{1s}(r) j_1(qr) \right] \right|^2$$

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The **detailed balance** is valid only if the leptonic wave function can be factorized from the nuclear one

$$|\mathcal{M}_{\text{nuc}}^{\text{IBD}}|^2 \stackrel{\text{db}}{=} |\mathcal{M}_{\text{nuc}}^{\text{EC}}|^2$$

**Without factorization, does EC still constrain neutrino capture?**

**Yes – via transition densities (TDs).**

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{IBD}}(r) = \rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{EC}}(r)$$

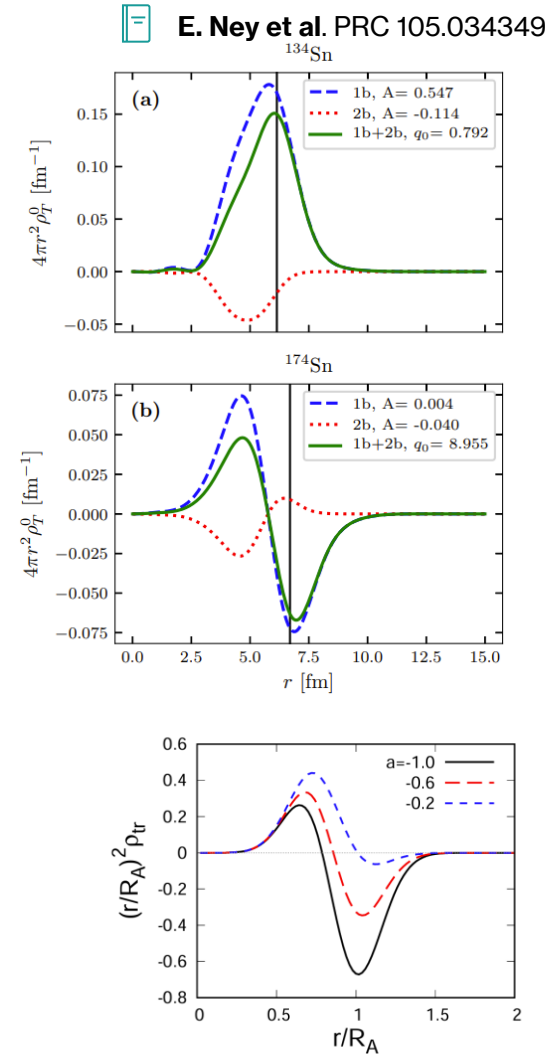
# Constraining the Transition Density

We use phenomenological parameterizations to describe the Transition Density

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{DG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{DG}}) = A e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} - B e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2}$$

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{mDG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{mDG}}) = Ar e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} + Br^2 e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2}$$

This choice of parameterizations is guided by other studies [G. B. King, PRC 102, 025501 (2020)] showing that **weak transition densities are generally smooth, extending beyond the nuclear radius.**



**Horiuchi et al. Arxiv:2103.16815**

# Results: Solving the Gallium Anomaly

We use phenomenological parameterizations to describe the Transition Density

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{DG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{DG}}) = A e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} - B e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2}$$

$$\rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{mDG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{mDG}}) = A r e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} + B r^2 e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2}$$

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. [arXiv.2512.20560](https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.20560)

Model	$\sigma_{\text{gs}, 51\text{Cr}}(\Theta) [10^{-45} \text{ cm}^2]$	$\sigma_{\text{gs}, 37\text{Ar}}(\Theta) [10^{-45} \text{ cm}^2]$	$t_{1/2}(\Theta) [\text{d}]$
DG ✓	4.42	5.13	11.462
mDG ✓	4.50	5.24	11.465

Each transition density parametrization will depend upon a certain set of parameters  $\Theta$



We investigate which values of  $\Theta$  lead to transition densities that yield a theoretical ground-state (gs) cross section capable of explaining the gallium anomaly.

$$\sigma_{\text{gs}, 51\text{Cr}}^{\text{exp}} = (4.44 \pm 0.33) \times 10^{-45} \text{ cm}^2$$

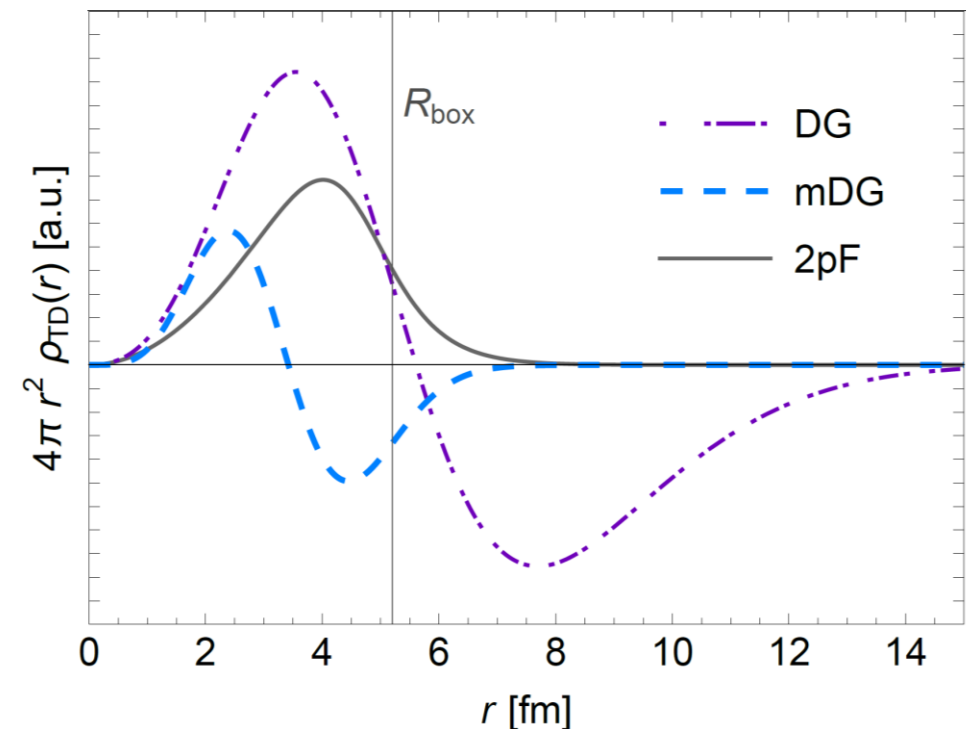
$$\sigma_{\text{gs}, 37\text{Ar}}^{\text{exp}} = (5.21 \pm 0.72) \times 10^{-45} \text{ cm}^2$$



We constrain the Gamow-Teller transition density so that **it reproduces the measured 71Ge half-life**  $t_{1/2}^{\text{exp}} = 11.465 \pm 0.003 \text{ d}$

Ground-state cross-section which solves the Gallium Anomaly if a ~5% excited states contributions is present.

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. [arXiv.2512.20560](https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.20560)

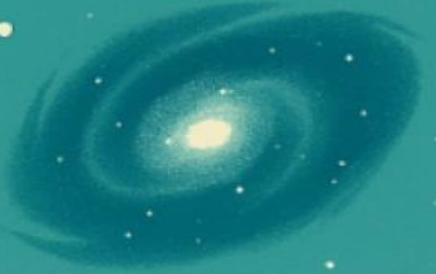


# Conclusions

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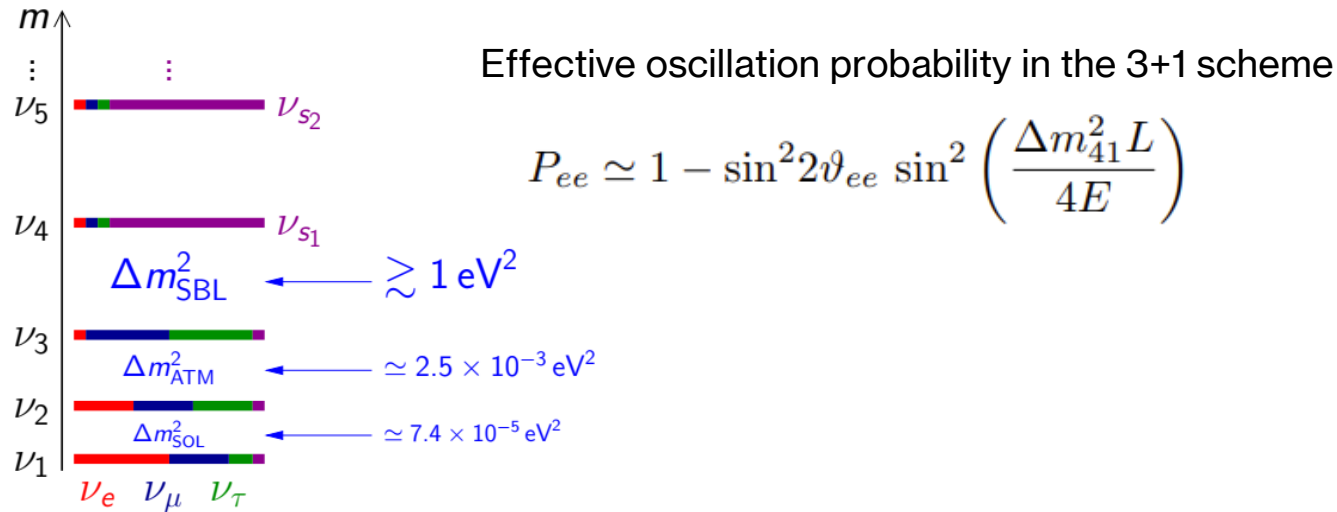
- ❖ The standard approach of factorizing leptonic wave functions fundamentally overestimates the theoretical neutrino capture cross-section.
- ❖ By incorporating phenomenologically constrained Gamow-Teller transition densities, the revised theoretical cross-section is significantly reduced.
- ❖ A **node or sign change** in  $\rho_{\text{TD}}(r)$  induces radial cancellations that reduce the ground-state cross section by  $\sim 20\%$ . This mechanism accurately reproduces the  $^{71}\text{Ge}$  half-life, offering a Standard Model resolution to the gallium anomaly without invoking new physics.

# Backup



# Sterile neutrino interpretation

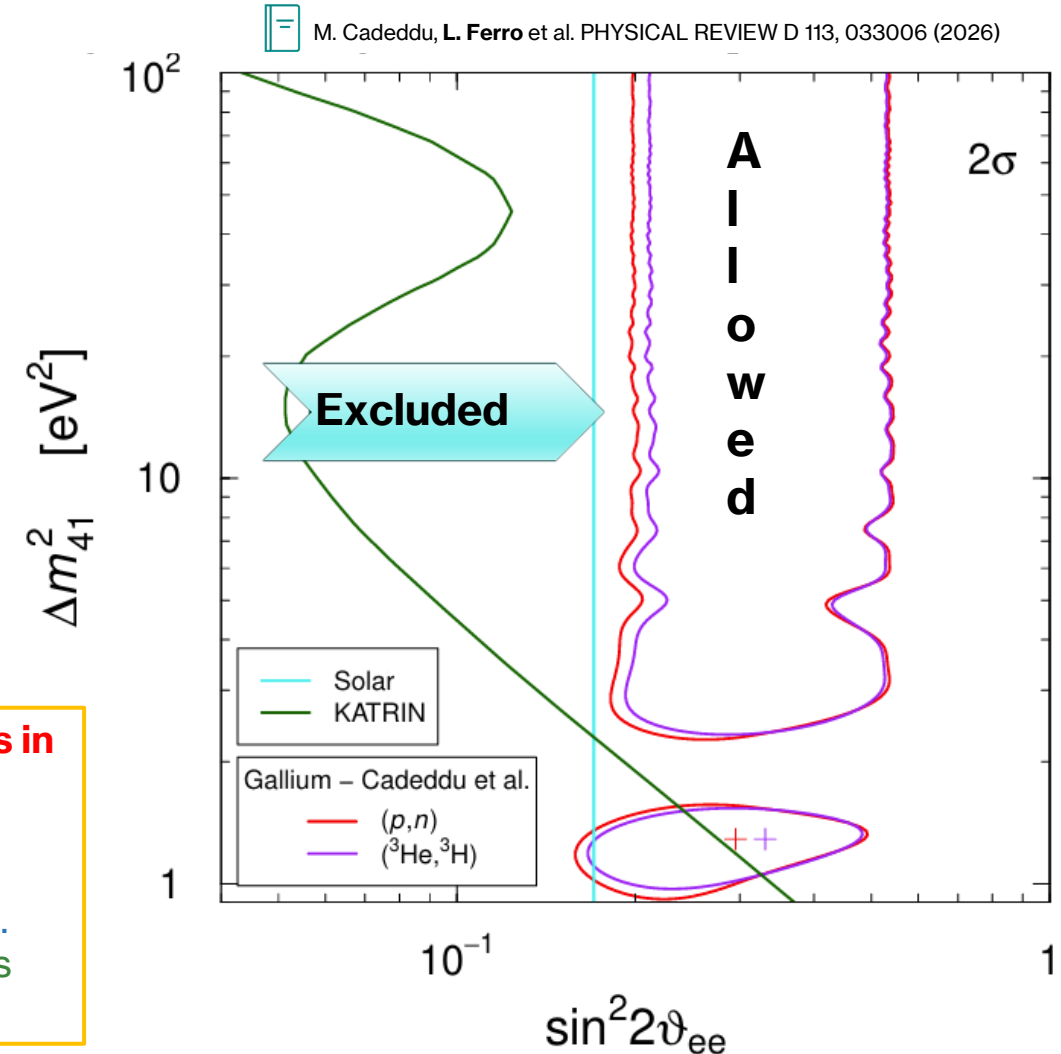
The simplest and most considered explanation of the gallium anomaly is the hypothesis of **short-baseline active-sterile neutrino oscillations**.



## Suggested parameter space :

- $\Delta m_{41}^2 \sim 1 \text{ eV}^2$ .
- $0.2 < \sin^2 2\vartheta_{ee} < 0.6$

The allowed region from **the gallium data is in tension** with the bounds obtained from the analysis of reactor antineutrino data [STEREO, DANSS, PROSPECT], the solar neutrino bound [M.C. Gonzalez-Garcia et al. 2411.16840], and the KATRIN neutrino mass measurement [Acharya et al. 2503.18667]



# Statistical Fit Procedure

To find the best set of parameters to solve or alleviate the gallium anomaly, given a certain parametrization, we perform a fit using the  $\chi^2$  function with  $X = ({}^{51}\text{Cr}, {}^{37}\text{Ar})$

$$\chi_{\text{IBD}}^2(\Theta) = \frac{\eta_1^2}{\delta_{\eta_1}^2} + \sum_X \left( \frac{\sigma_{\text{gs}, X}^{\text{exp}} - (1 + \eta_1)\sigma_{\text{gs}, X}(\Theta)}{\delta\sigma_{\text{gs}, X}^{\text{exp}}} \right)^2$$

Free electron wave-functions unc. (0.003%)

The parameters are constrained to maintain the  ${}^{71}\text{Ge}$  half-life at its experimental value.

Bound electron wave-functions unc. (0.005)

$$\chi_{\text{EC}}^2(\Theta) = \left( \frac{t_{1/2}^{\text{exp}} - (1 + \eta_2 + \eta_3) \cdot t_{1/2}(\Theta)}{\delta t_{1/2}} \right)^2 + \frac{\eta_2^2}{\delta_{\eta_2}^2} + \frac{\eta_3^2}{\delta_{\eta_3}^2}$$

Contribution due to the **exchange** and **overlap** corrections (0.007)

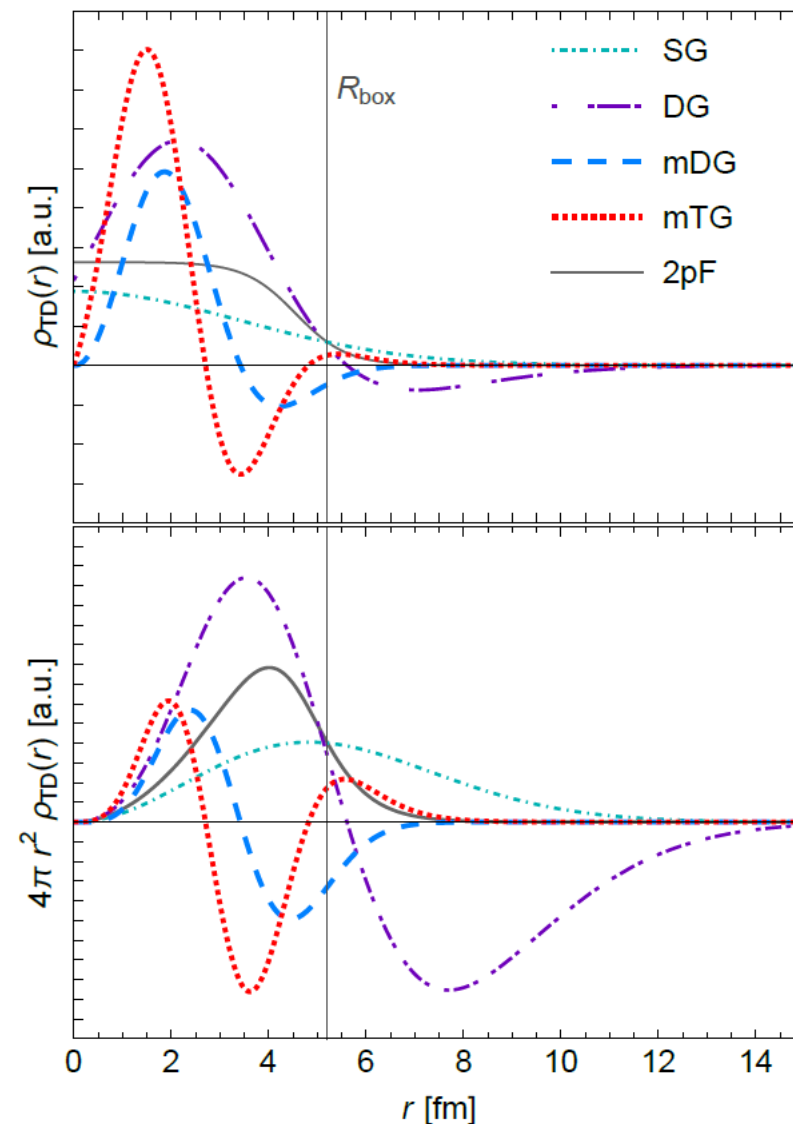
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$$\rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{mTG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{mTG}}) = Ar e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} + B r^2 e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2} + C r^3 e^{-(r-r_c)^2/2c^2},$$

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. [arXiv:2512.20560](https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.20560)



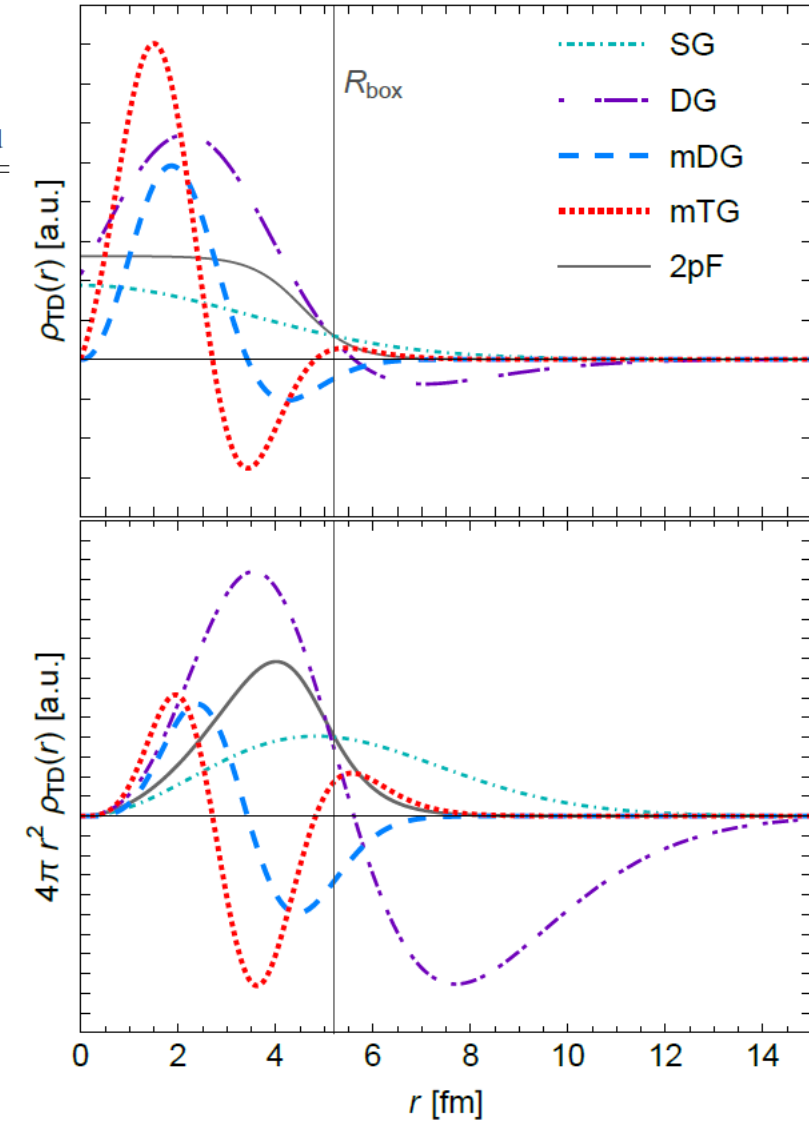
# Results

Model	Best fit parameter values $\Theta$	$\sigma_{\text{gs},51\text{Cr}}(\Theta) [10^{-45} \text{ cm}^2]$	$\sigma_{\text{gs},37\text{Ar}}(\Theta) [10^{-45} \text{ cm}^2]$	$t_{1/2}(\Theta) [\text{d}]$	$\chi^2_{\text{IBD}}$	$\chi^2_{\text{EC}}$	GA solved
SG	{0.00094,-0.005,3.42}	5.27	6.30	11.515	8.68	0.24	no
DG	{-0.0231,-0.0802,3.5119,1.855,2.16,2.16}	4.42	5.13	11.462	0.014	0.0005	yes
mDG	{-0.1498,0.3462,1.192,1.3793,2.6192,0.466405}	4.50	5.24	11.465	0.037	0.00003	yes
mTG	{3.514009,4.53567,-1.5007,1.9457,1.3809,1.14085,0.0029,0.8595,1.513}	4.39	5.10	11.463	0.044	0.0002	yes

$$\begin{aligned} \rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{SG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{SG}}) &= A e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2}, \\ \rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{DG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{DG}}) &= A e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} - B e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2}, \\ \rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{mDG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{mDG}}) &= A r e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} + B r^2 e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2}, \\ \rho_{\text{TD}}^{\text{mTG}}(r, \Theta^{\text{mTG}}) &= A r e^{-(r-r_a)^2/2a^2} + B r^2 e^{-(r-r_b)^2/2b^2} \\ &\quad + C r^3 e^{-(r-r_c)^2/2c^2}, \end{aligned}$$

The mDG and mTG were introduced as they mimic, in a minimal analytic way, the typical polynomial-Gaussian structure of products of single particle wave functions, as for the case of harmonic oscillator radial wave functions

M. Cadeddu, L. Ferro et al. [arXiv.2512.20560](https://arxiv.org/abs/2512.20560)



# Electron wave function and electron capture rate

Electron wave function:

☐ PHYSICAL REVIEW C **111**, 064323 (2025)

$$\Psi_{e^-}(\mathbf{r}) = \begin{pmatrix} G_{\kappa_x}(\mathbf{r})\chi_{\kappa_x\mu_x} \\ iF_{\kappa_x}(\mathbf{r})\chi_{-\kappa_x\mu_x} \end{pmatrix} \quad \begin{cases} \left(\frac{d}{dr} + \frac{\kappa+1}{r}\right)G_{\kappa} - (E_e - V(r) + m_e)F_{\kappa} = 0, \\ \left(\frac{d}{dr} - \frac{\kappa-1}{r}\right)F_{\kappa} + (E_e - V(r) - m_e)G_{\kappa} = 0, \end{cases}$$

$$V_{\text{DHFS}}(r) = V_{\text{nuc}}(r) + V_{\text{el}}(r) + V_{\text{ex}}(r),$$

$$V_{\text{ex}}(r) = -C_{\text{ex}}e^2\left(\frac{3}{\pi}\right)^{1/3}[\rho(r)]^{1/3}$$

$C_{\text{ex}} = 3/2$  corresponds to the Slater approximation while  $C_{\text{ex}} = 1$  to the Kohn-Sham one

Electron capture rate from an  $x$  orbital : ☐ A. Ravlic et al. PHYSICAL REVIEW C **111**, 064323 (2025)

$$\lambda_x = \frac{G_F^2 V_{ud}^2}{2\pi} \sum_{i,f} (E_0^{(i,f)} + E_x)^2 \times \sum_{\kappa_v} \sum_{JL} \frac{1}{2J_i + 1} |\langle f || \mathfrak{E}_{JL}(\kappa_x, \kappa_v) || i \rangle|^2,$$

$$\langle i || \mathfrak{E}_{JL}(\kappa_x, \kappa_v) || f \rangle = \int dr \left\{ \begin{aligned} & -g_V \sqrt{\frac{2J+1}{4\pi}} \delta\rho_{C_J}^{(i,f)}(\mathbf{r}) [g_{\kappa_v} G_{\kappa_x} S_{0JJ}(\kappa_v, \kappa_x) - f_{\kappa_v} F_{\kappa_x} S_{0JJ}(-\kappa_v, -\kappa_x)] \\ & - g_A \sqrt{\frac{2J+1}{4\pi}} \delta\rho_{C_J\gamma_5}^{(i,f)}(\mathbf{r}) [g_{\kappa_v} F_{\kappa_x} S_{0JJ}(\kappa_v, -\kappa_x) + f_{\kappa_v} G_{\kappa_x} S_{0JJ}(-\kappa_v, \kappa_x)] \\ & + g_V \sqrt{\frac{2L+1}{4\pi}} \delta\rho_{[C_L \otimes \alpha]_J}^{(i,f)}(\mathbf{r}) [g_{\kappa_v} F_{\kappa_x} S_{1LJ}(\kappa_v, -\kappa_x) + f_{\kappa_v} G_{\kappa_x} S_{1LJ}(-\kappa_v, \kappa_x)] \\ & + g_A \sqrt{\frac{2L+1}{4\pi}} \delta\rho_{[C_L \otimes \Sigma]_J}^{(i,f)}(\mathbf{r}) [g_{\kappa_v} G_{\kappa_x} S_{1LJ}(\kappa_v, \kappa_x) - f_{\kappa_v} F_{\kappa_x} S_{1LJ}(-\kappa_v, -\kappa_x)] \end{aligned} \right\},$$