

# The search for $HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$

IX Reunião Geral - Projeto Especial FAPESP: Física e Instrumentação de Altas Energias com o LHC-CERN

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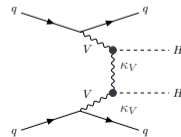
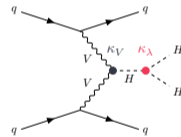
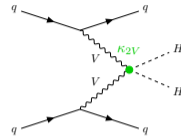
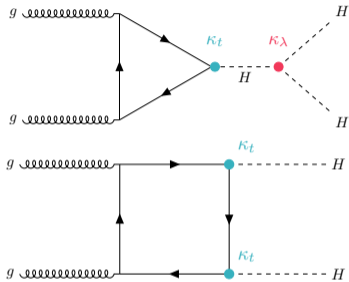
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- The Higgs boson is now established experimentally, but an important question remains: how does the Higgs field interact with itself?
- Higgs-boson pair production gives direct access to that self-interaction and therefore to the shape of the Higgs potential.
- Measuring this process tests whether electroweak symmetry breaking really behaves as predicted by the Standard Model.
- Because Higgs-pair production is very rare, any deviation from the Standard Model could be a particularly clean sign of new physics.
- The  $HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  final state offers one of the best balances between branching fraction and background rejection.

- There is a significant discovery potential even if we do not find evidence in single Higgs couplings measurements ([10.1038/s42254-021-00341-2](https://arxiv.org/abs/10.1038/s42254-021-00341-2)).
- Helps to address questions related to the electroweak phase transition, electroweak symmetry breaking, and vacuum stability ([10.1007/JHEP08\(2012\)098](https://arxiv.org/abs/10.1007/JHEP08(2012)098))
- Probing the Higgs potential in HL-LHC is a high priority.
- In the  $\kappa$ -framework for considering Higgs couplings, it is good to spot large deviations from the Standard Model.
- The Higgs trilinear self-coupling modifier  $\kappa_\lambda$  rescales the Higgs three-point self-interaction relative to its Standard Model value,  $\kappa_\lambda \equiv \lambda_{HHH}/\lambda_{HHH}^{\text{SM}}$ .
- The Higgs–vector-boson quartic coupling modifier  $\kappa_{2V}$  rescales the  $HHVV$  contact interaction relative to its Standard Model value,  $\kappa_{2V} \equiv g_{HHVV}/g_{HHVV}^{\text{SM}}$ .

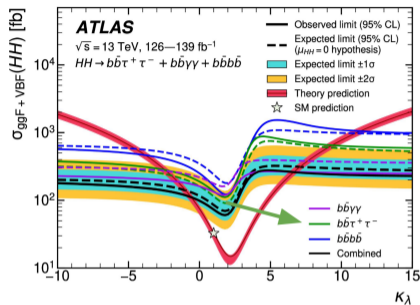


- ggHH sensitive to  $\kappa_t$ ,  $\kappa_\lambda$
- VBF sensitive to  $\kappa_V$ ,  $\kappa_{2V}$ ,  $\kappa_\lambda$

- The horizontal axis is the Higgs trilinear self-coupling modifier

$$\kappa_\lambda \equiv \lambda_{HHH} / \lambda_{HHH}^{\text{SM}}$$

- $\kappa_\lambda = 1$ : Standard Model prediction
- $\kappa_\lambda = 0$ : no Higgs self-coupling
- $\kappa_\lambda = 2$ : twice the Standard Model coupling
- $\kappa_\lambda < 0$ : opposite-sign coupling
- Two amplitudes interfere:
  - $gg \rightarrow H \rightarrow HH$  (triangle diagram), which contains the self-coupling  $\lambda_{HHH}$  and
  - $gg \rightarrow HH$  (box diagram), which does not.



Around  $\kappa_\lambda \sim 2\text{--}3$ , the destructive interference is strongest, so the  $HH$  rate is smallest. If no signal is seen, the most sensitive channel gives the lowest excludable  $HH$  rate. In the SM-like nonresonant search considered here,  $b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  is one of the most sensitive channels and is the most sensitive

- The Higgs–vector-boson quartic coupling modifier is

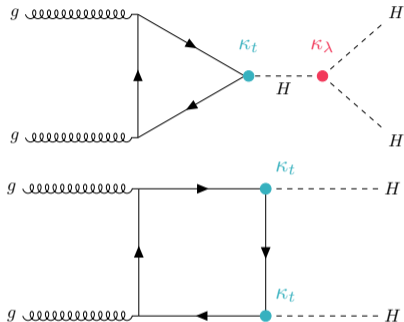
$$\kappa_{2V} \equiv g_{HHVV} / g_{HHVV}^{\text{SM}}.$$

- $\kappa_{2V} = 1$ : Standard Model prediction
- $\kappa_{2V} = 0$ : no direct  $HHVV$  quartic coupling
- $\kappa_{2V} = 2$ : twice the Standard Model coupling
- $\kappa_{2V} < 0$ : opposite-sign quartic coupling
- VBF  $HH$  production probes this coupling through

$$VV \rightarrow HH.$$

- In the Standard Model, diagrams with  $HHVV$ ,  $HVV$ , and  $HHH$  vertices interfere to keep the high-energy rate under control (contributions cancel rather than add uncontrollably).
- If  $\kappa_{2V} \neq 1$ , this cancellation is spoiled, so the VBF  $HH$  rate grows, especially at high  $m_{HH}$ .

- Higgs pair production probes the Higgs self-coupling  $\kappa_\lambda$  through the shape of the Higgs potential.
- In the Standard Model,  $ggF$  dominates  $HH$  production.
- In  $HH$  production,  $\kappa_\lambda$  matters because one production amplitude contains an off-shell Higgs boson that connects to the  $HH$  final state through the Higgs self-coupling.
- $\kappa_{2V}$  tells us how strongly two  $W/Z$  bosons talk to two Higgs bosons at once.

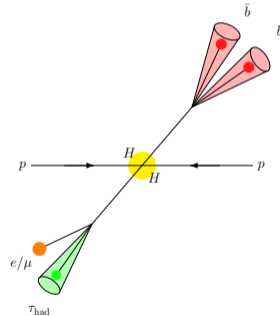
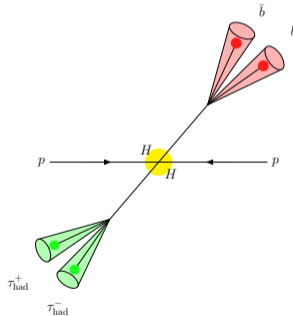
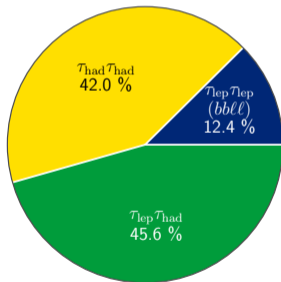


- Search target: non-resonant  $HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  in Run 2 plus 2022–2023 Run 3 data ( $140 \text{ fb}^{-1}$  at 13 TeV and  $56 \text{ fb}^{-1}$  at 13.6 TeV)
- The Standard Model single- $H$  production cross-section is three orders of magnitude greater than the  $HH$  production cross-section. Standard Model  $HH$  production is tiny!
- However, the combined  $HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  final state has a *relatively* large branching fraction of about 7.3 %, together with *relatively* good background rejection from the  $\tau^+\tau^-$  signature. This gives a good tradeoff between branching fraction and signal purity.

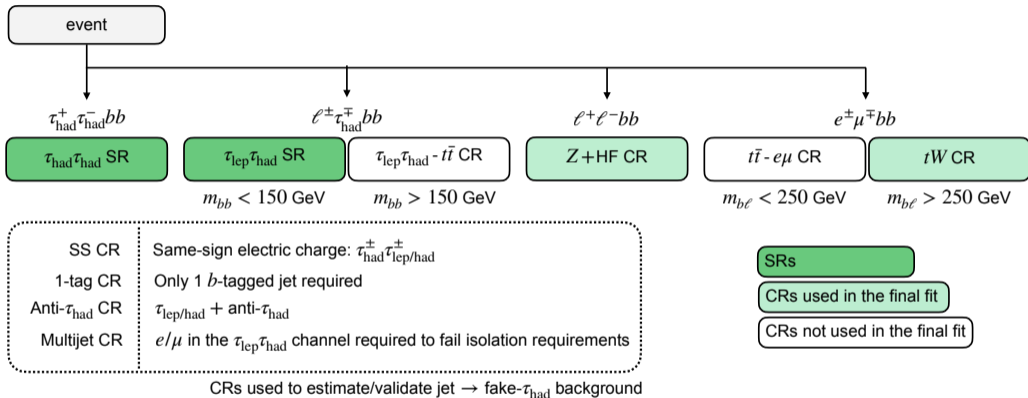
	bb	WW	$\tau\tau$	ZZ	$\gamma\gamma$
bb	34 %				
WW	25 %	4.6 %			
$\tau\tau$	7.3 %	2.7 %	0.39 %		
ZZ	3.1 %	1.1 %	0.33 %	0.069 %	
$\gamma\gamma$	0.26 %	0.10 %	0.028 %	0.012 %	0.0005 %

- ggF  $HH$  is directly sensitive to  $\kappa_\lambda$  through the interference between the box and triangle diagrams.
- VBF  $HH$  is smaller but directly probes  $\kappa_{2V}$  (the quartic coupling modifier, which is much harder to access elsewhere),  $\kappa_V$ , and  $\kappa_\lambda$ .
- In the quoted note and its comparison set, the  $b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  final state is the most sensitive ATLAS single channel for SM  $HH$ .
- This analysis therefore targets both inclusive  $\mu_{HH}$  and separate ggF/VBF interpretations.

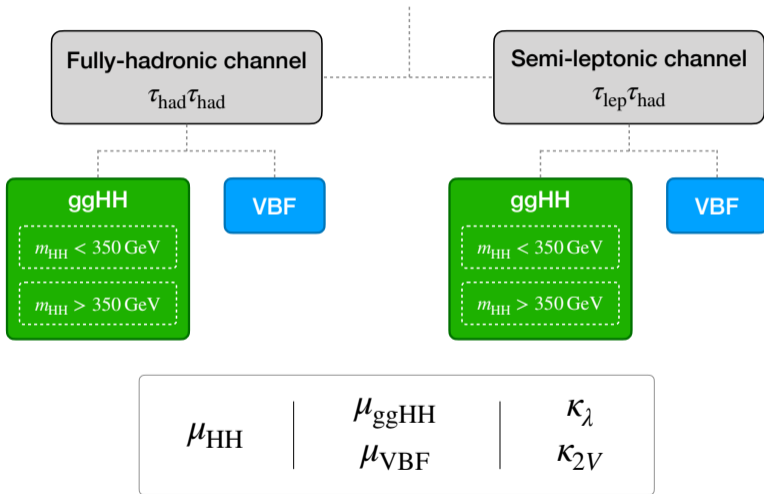
- Channels: full-hadronic decays  $\tau_{\text{had}}\tau_{\text{had}}$  and semileptonic decays  $\tau_{e/\mu}\tau_{\text{had}}$
- HadHad final state: two  $b$ -jets and two opposite-signed  $\tau$  decays



- Both channels are split into low- $m_{HH}$  ggF, high- $m_{HH}$  ggF, and VBF signal regions by respective GNN-based categorisation (previous strategy was BDT).
- Event-level and object-level inputs are used for multiclass  $HH$  categorisation, high-mass signal versus background,  $H$  and  $t$  parents.
- Fitting by binned simultaneous profile-likelihood fit
- Results: measurement of di-Higgs and constraints on Higgs coupling modifiers

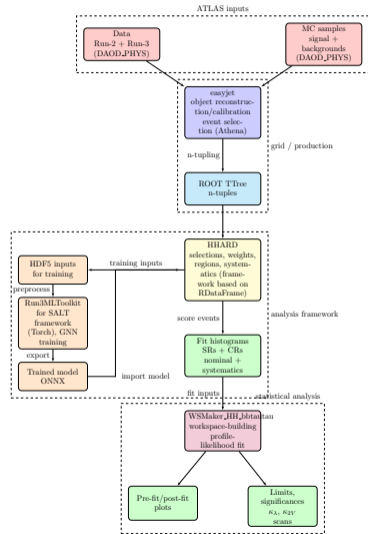


- Main backgrounds:  $t\bar{t}$ , jets faking  $\tau_{\text{had}}$  in  $t\bar{t}$ , Z + HF( $bb, bc, cc, bl$ ),  $tW$ , diboson, single  $H$  (e.g.  $ZH$  and  $t\bar{t}H$ ), jets faking  $\tau_{\text{had}}$  in QCD multijet production
- Observables entering the fit: GNN score for all SRs,  $m_{ll}$  in Z + HF CR,  $m_{bl}$  in  $tW$  CR



- Fast-paced (analysis started in 2024): Marco Leite and Mariasilvia Donadelli launching efforts at USP when the analysis was first designed: [Indico 1344492](#)
- 21 May: 5<sup>th</sup> Editorial Board meeting: [Indico 1686799](#)
- Top secret/exciting: unblinding scheduled for 1 June
- ATLAS-only, follow status: [Glance](#)
- **ATLAS Restricted:** [ATL-COM-PHYS-2025-825](#)

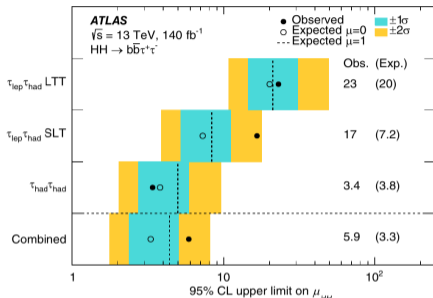
- **easyjet**: common  $HH$  analysis framework used to process centrally produced analysis datasets
- Input workflow: DAOD\_PHYS  $\rightarrow$  analysis ntuples (Athena)
- **HHARD**: post-processing stage built on ROOT RDataFrame-style workflows, converting n-tuples into analysis-ready histograms
- MVA infrastructure: production of multivariate model inputs and evaluation of trained classifiers
- **Run3MLToolKit**: validation of MVA inputs, preprocessing, training with the Salt framework (Torch), and inference
- **WSMaker**: construction of the statistical model and fit inputs for the final likelihood analysis



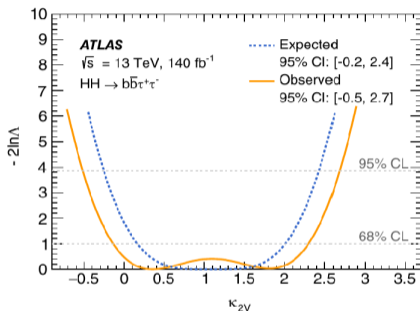
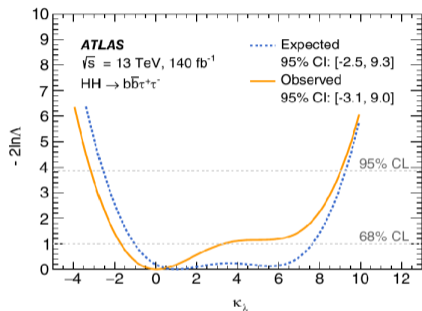
- Final results come from a simultaneous binned profile-likelihood fit with Poisson terms per bin.
- Parameters of interest include  $\mu_{HH}$ ,  $\mu_{ggF}$ ,  $\mu_{VBF}$ ,  $\kappa_{\lambda}$ , and  $\kappa_{2V}$ .
- Gaussian-constrained nuisance parameters encode detector and modelling uncertainties.
- Background MC statistical uncertainties are represented with one Beeston-Barlow-style  $\gamma$  parameter per merged bin.
- Blinding is applied to the most signal-sensitive part of the MVA distributions.

- Dominated by data statistics! (need HL-LHC!)
- Next in importance:
  - acceptance uncertainty on single-Higgs plus heavy-flavour production,
  - ggF  $HH$  cross-section uncertainty.





- Summary of observed (filled circles) and expected (open circles) 95% CL upper limits on  $\mu_{HH}$  for each individual channel and for the combined fit.
- Dashed markers show the expected 95% CL limit in the SM signal hypothesis,  $\mu_{HH} = 1$ .
- Inner and outer bands indicate the  $\pm 1\sigma$  and  $\pm 2\sigma$  variations on the expected limit around the background-only hypothesis.
- Reference: [10.1103/PhysRevD.110.032012](https://arxiv.org/abs/10.1103/PhysRevD.110.032012)

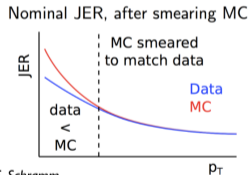
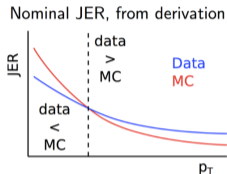


- Coupling modifiers shown on negative log-likelihood plots. Values of  $-2 \ln \Lambda$  for different  $\kappa_\lambda$  and  $\kappa_{2V}$  Standard Model hypotheses obtained from fits to the data (orange) and an Asimov dataset (blue).
- Reference: [10.1103/PhysRevD.110.032012](https://arxiv.org/abs/10.1103/PhysRevD.110.032012)

- Transition of n-tuple production versions (v6, v7, v8)
- Procedures for SAMPA/local CVMFS productions
- Cut-flow challenges
- Code contributions (HHARD and WSMaker)
- Documentation/tutorial

- JER matters directly for  $HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  because the measured jet energies affect the reconstructed  $b\bar{b}$  mass, the overall event kinematics, and the determination of  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$ .
- If JER is mismodelled in simulation, then signal acceptance, background shapes, and fitted nuisance-parameter behaviour can all become biased.
- ATLAS provides JER uncertainty components as nuisance parameters with up/down variations, for example
  - JET\_JER\_EffectiveNP\_1,
  - JET\_JER\_EffectiveNP\_12restTerm,
  - JET\_JER\_DataVsMC\_MC16.
- For this kind of precision analysis, the relevant prescription is *FullJER*, which is designed to preserve the correct statistical behaviour of JER nuisance parameters in the fit.

- JER variations are propagated by Gaussian smearing of jet energies in simulation.
- If a variation worsens the resolution, MC jets can be smeared directly.
- If a variation would make the resolution better, the effect is represented with a complementary *pseudodata-smear* construction rather than trying to “unsmeared” MC.
- This is essential when a JER component changes sign across phase space: FullJER preserves the resulting correlations and anti-correlations across regions, while simpler MC-only schemes do not.



S. Schramm

- For each nuisance parameter and direction, HHARD produces MC-smear and pseudodata-smear histograms on the same nominal event sample.
- The processed up/down templates are then built as

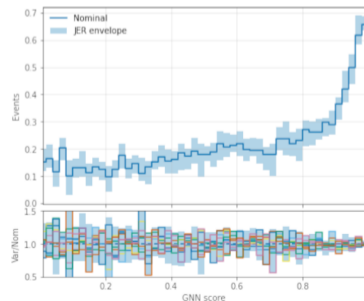
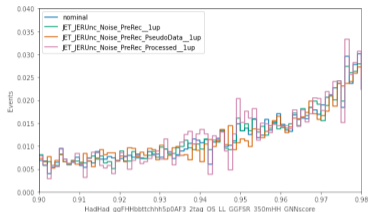
$$T = N + H_{\text{MC}_{\text{smear}}} - H_{\text{PD}_{\text{smear}}} ,$$

with the appropriate nuisance-parameter direction.

- This was successfully implemented and validated as a HHARD post-processing step converting HHARD outputs to fit-ready histograms, and is in use since last month.
- In a sentence, the code converts raw JER systematic ingredients (MC-smear and pseudodata-smear histograms) into fit-ready JER up/down template histograms using

$$H_{\text{processed}} = H_{\text{nominal}} + H_{\text{MC}_{\text{smear}}} - H_{\text{PD}_{\text{smear}}} .$$

- The top picture is a cropped snapshot of the MVA score with JER uncertainties.
- The upper panel of the lower plot shows the nominal yield versus GNN score, with a shaded band spanning the largest processed up/down JER shifts.
- The lower panel of the lower plot shows the variation-to-nominal ratios, with the five most deviant nuisance parameters overlaid.
- Basically a check that processed FullJER templates are behaving sensibly in this analysis region.



- Both channels of the analysis involve tau decays (with HadHad using single- $\tau$  triggers, di- $\tau$  triggers and di- $b$  triggers).
- HadHad is the most sensitive  $b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  channel. If tau trigger efficiency is poor, our best channel loses acceptance directly.
- Tau trigger acceptance directly controls the usable  $HH$  signal yield, especially in the HadHad channel, where  $\tau$  and  $b$ -jet trigger combinations are needed to keep signal efficiency while controlling QCD rates.
- Taking on the role of n-tuple production Tau Trigger and TauCP/offline efficiency scale-factor measurements using framework `xTauFW` and tag-and-probe analyses, for tau trigger and offline analyses (and maintaining/updating calibrations/selections).
- Measurement of 2025/2026 tau trigger efficiency scale factors (tag-and-probe measurement involving GNTau and mc23g)

- HL-LHC pile-up, which would otherwise degrade jets,  $b$ -tagging,  $\tau_{\text{had}}$  reconstruction,  $E_{\text{T}}^{\text{miss}}$ , and VBF-category purity, can be suppressed with precision timing in the forward region  $2.4 < |\eta| < 4.0$ .
- Enter the HGTD with 30 ps track-time resolution at the start of operation.
- This matters particularly in the VBF  $HH$  topology, in which forward jets are part of the signal definition. The HGTD should reject pile-up jets and assign tracks to the correct hard-scatter vertex, improving sensitivity to  $\kappa_{2V}$ .
- The HGTD can survive the brutal radiation with its Low Gain Avalanche Detectors (LGAD) sensors, and it makes the high-pile-up  $HH \rightarrow b\bar{b}\tau^+\tau^-$  analysis not limited by luminosity, but technically feasible in the HL-LHC era.
- However, current tracking methods do not have enough throughput to operate in the extreme HL-LHC conditions – some new, fast tracking methods are needed.
- Advertisement: *Tomorrow: Guilherme & Rodrigo*



- End of Run-3, start of serious upgrades to launch HL-LHC era
- The Standard Model single- $H$  production cross-section is three orders of magnitude greater than the  $HH$  production cross-section.
- With Run 2 plus Run 3 data, the expected sensitivity is about  $1.2\sigma$  for  $HH$ , with an upper limit around 1.9 times the SM rate. At the HL-LHC, the expected sensitivity is about  $3.5\sigma$  with  $3000 \text{ fb}^{-1}$  at 14 TeV.



