

# A novel method for Forecasting and Recasting Dark Matter Annihilation Limits from Gamma-Ray Observations

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Institut de Física  
d'Altes Energies

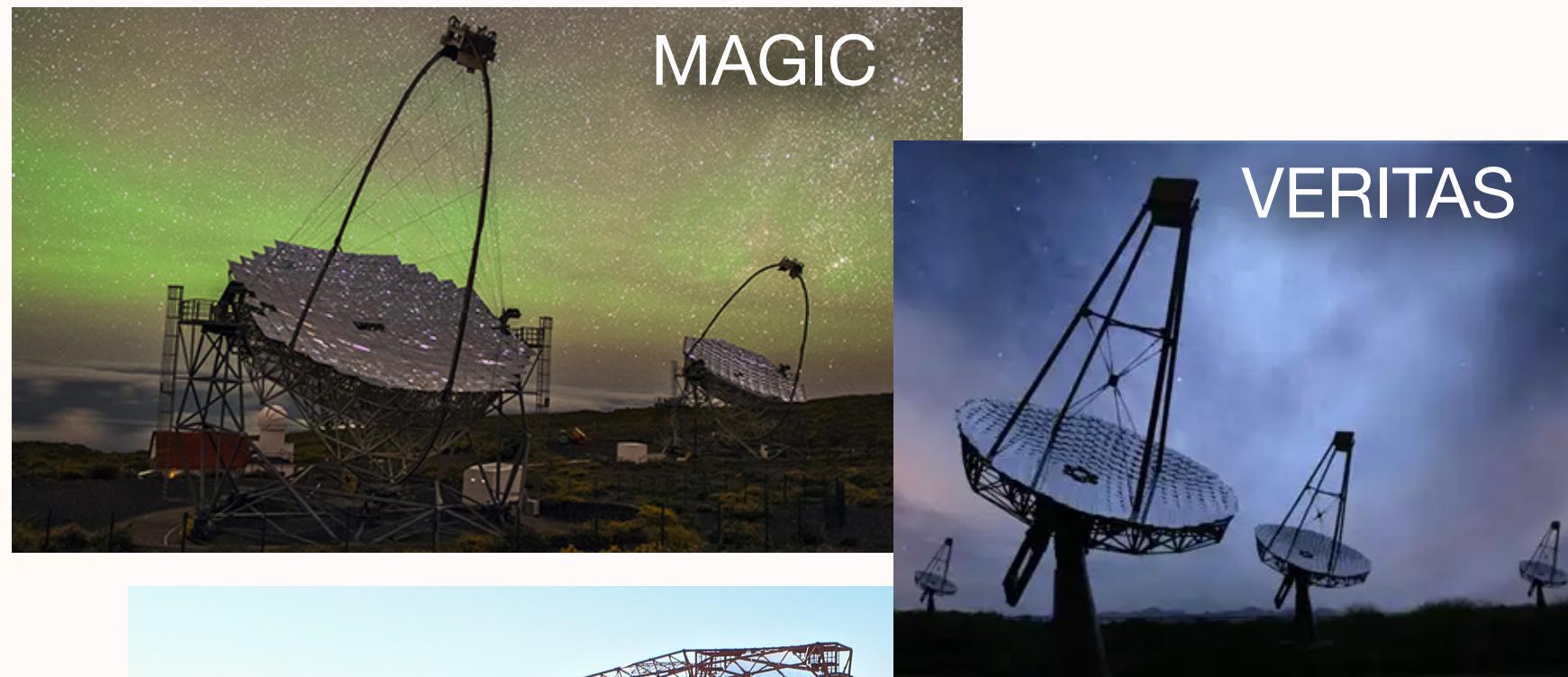
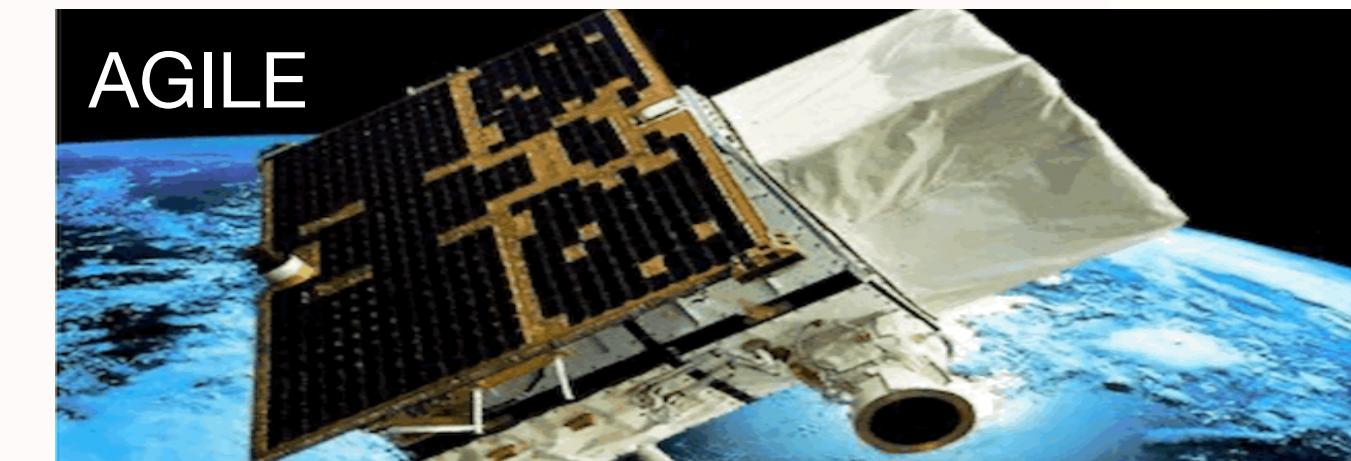
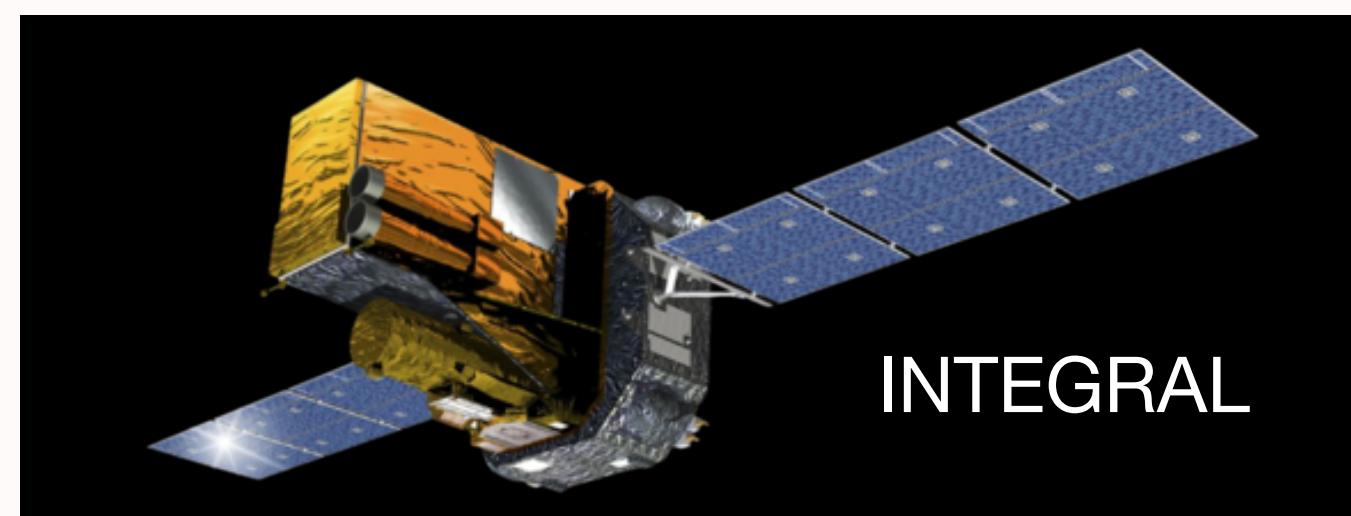
beatriu  
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# Motivation

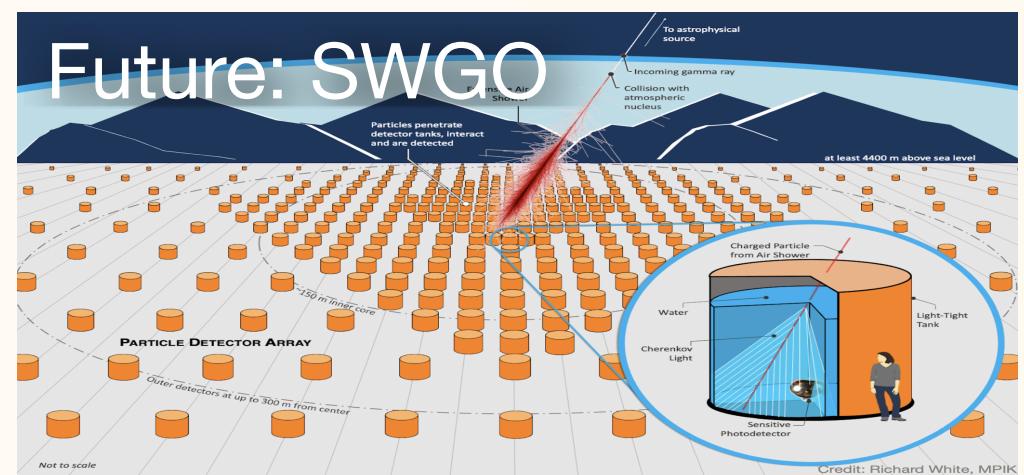
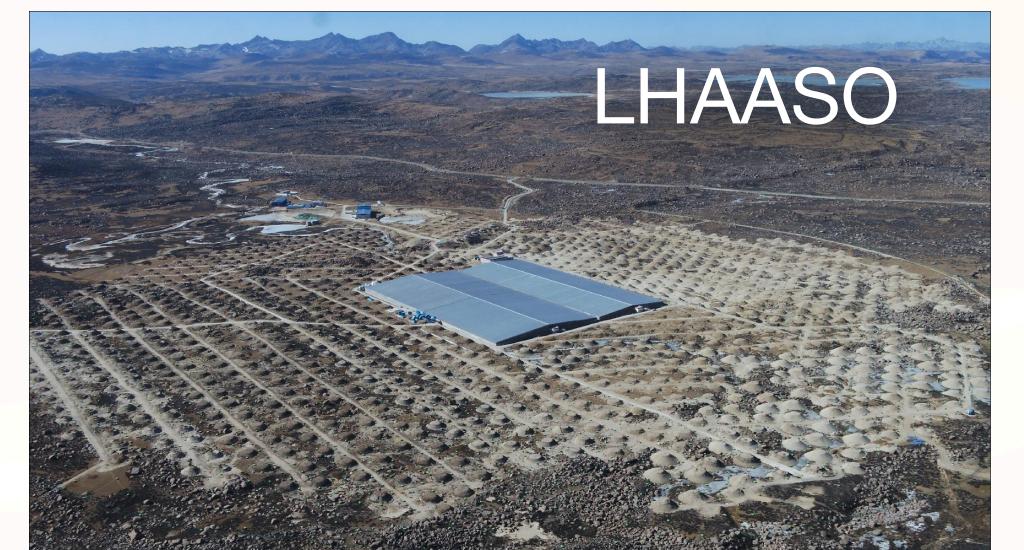
**Different  $\gamma$ -ray telescopes have been trying to detect DM in the past decade**

## Imaging Atmospheric Cherenkov Telescopes

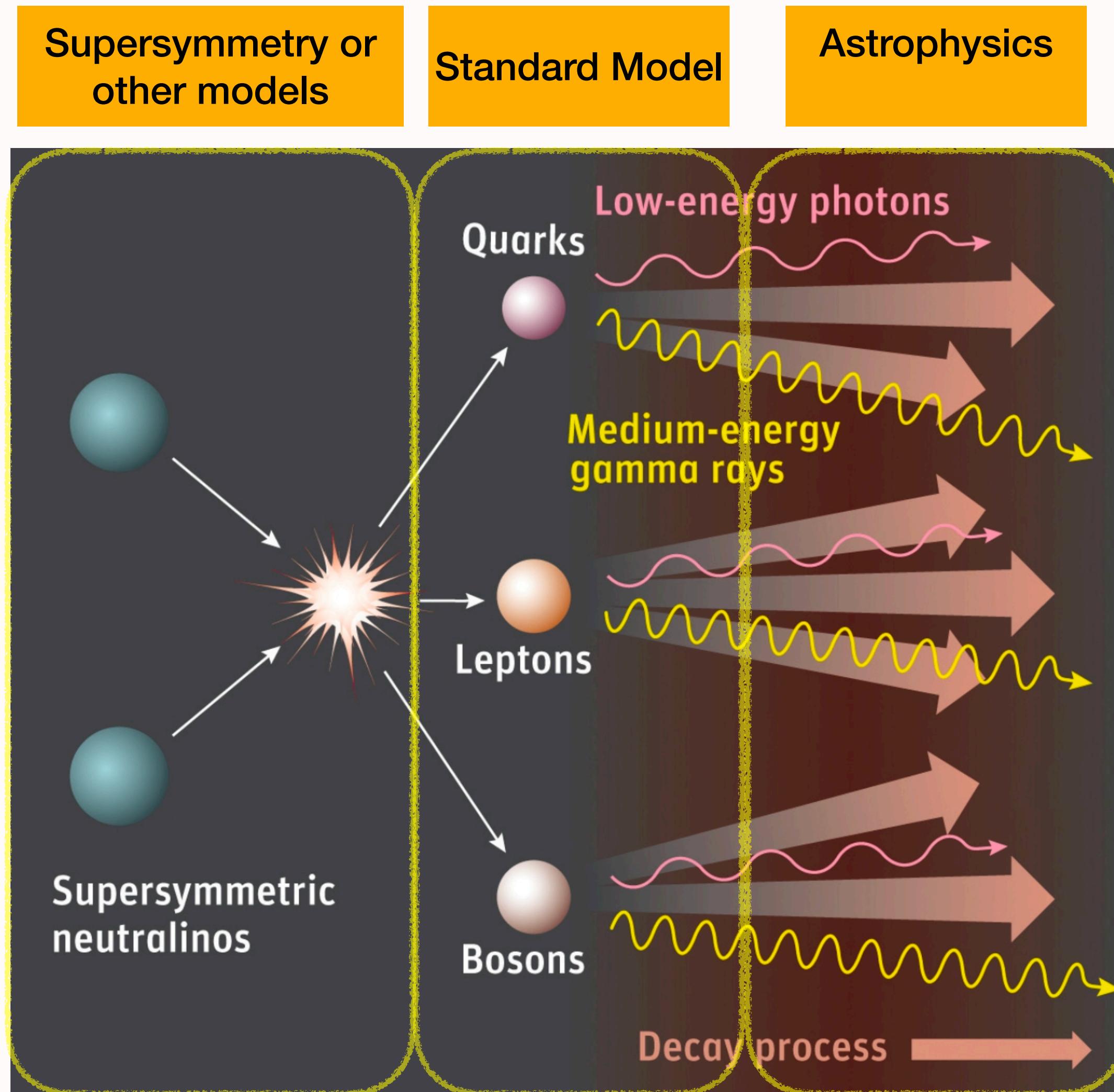
### Space Telescopes



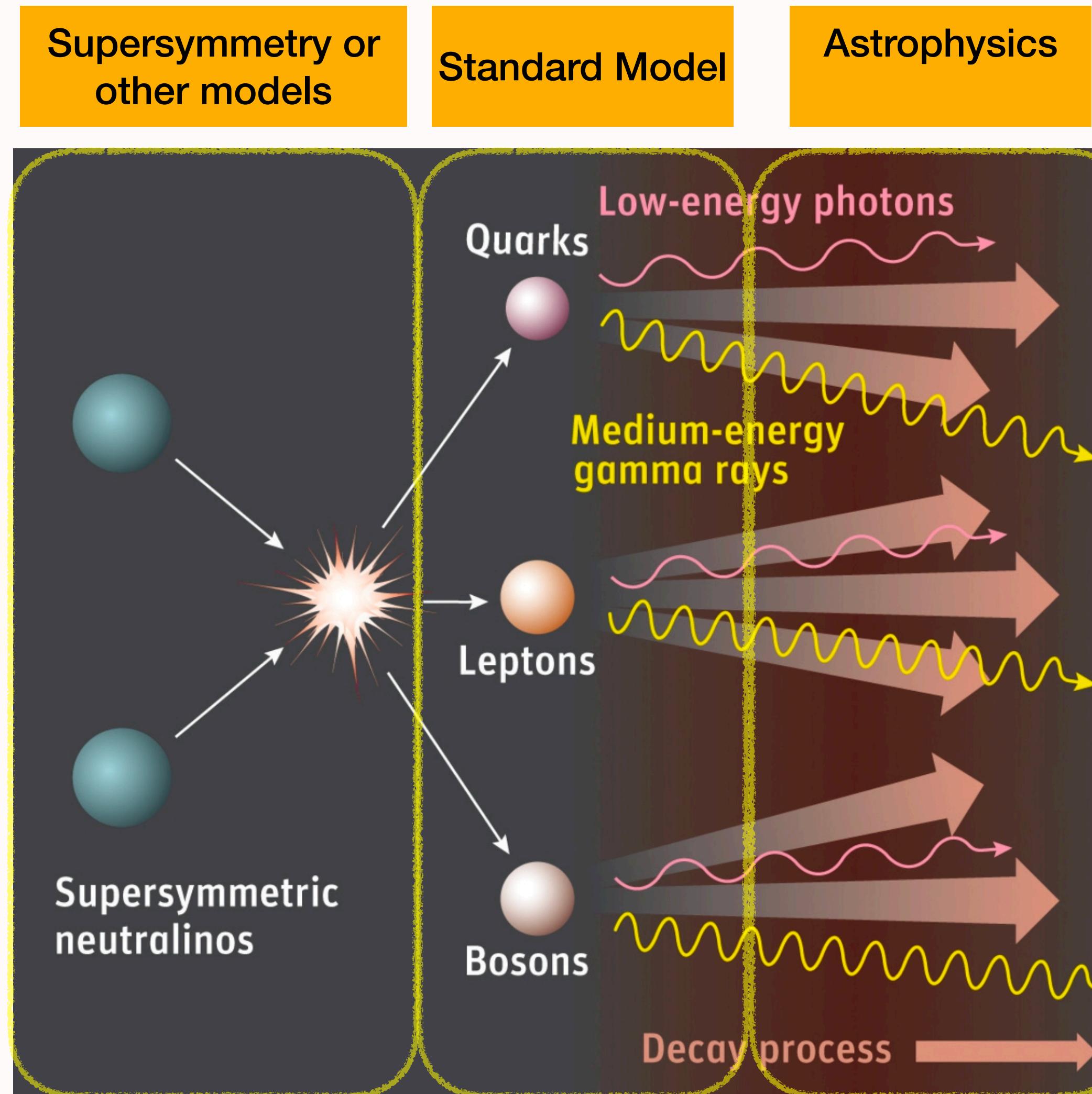
### Water Cherenkov detector



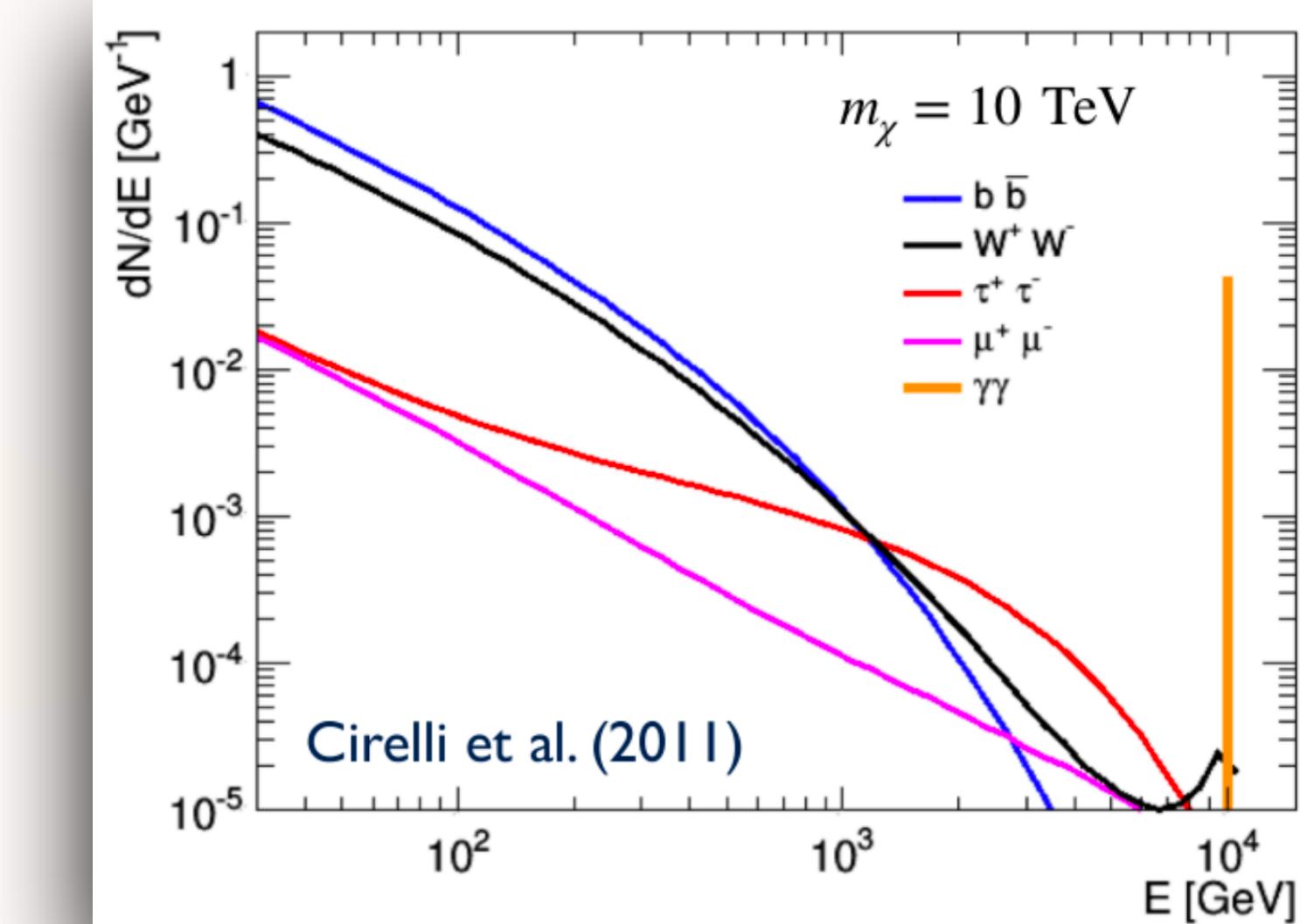
# Motivation



# Motivation



Energy distribution of gamma-rays from DM annihilation

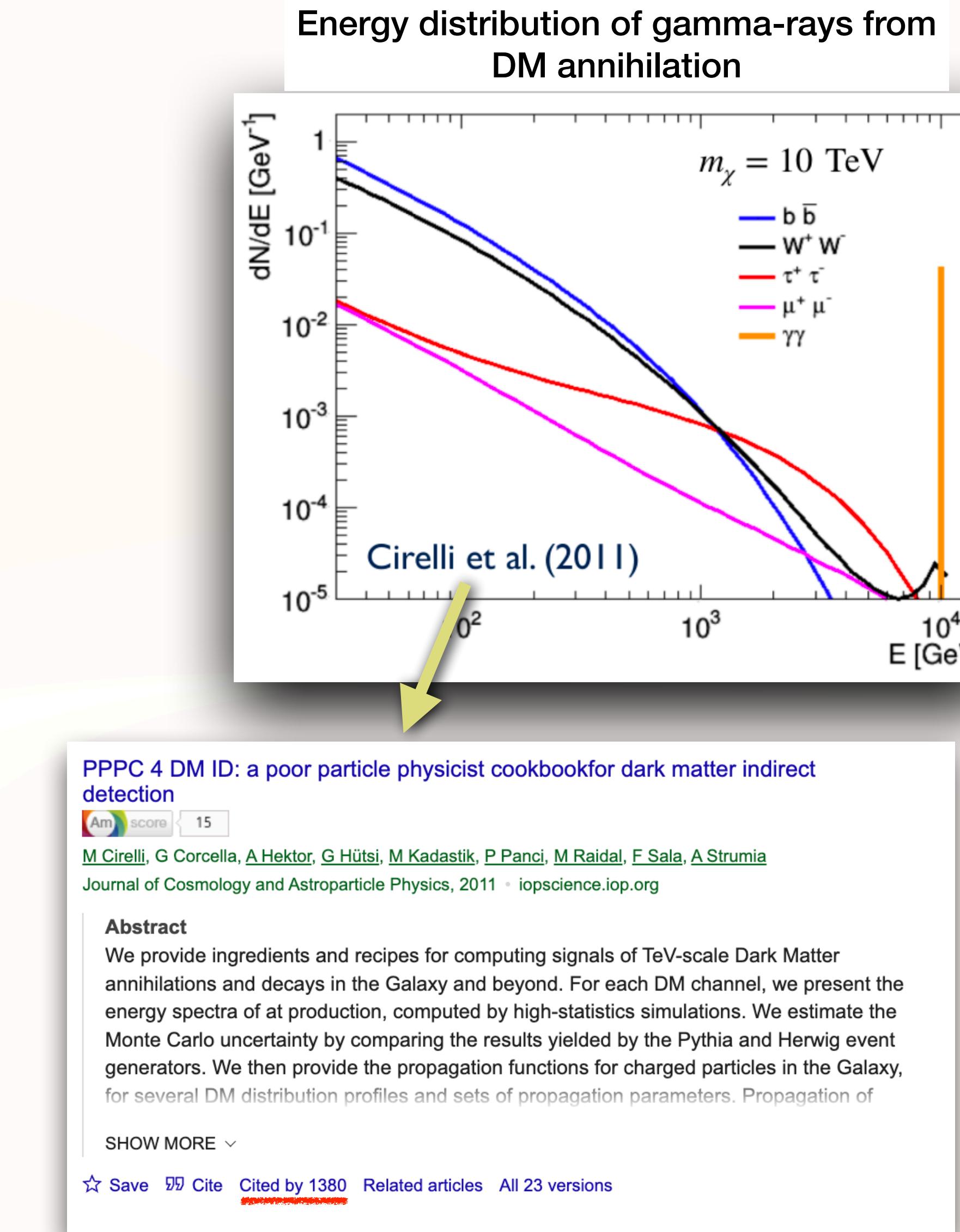
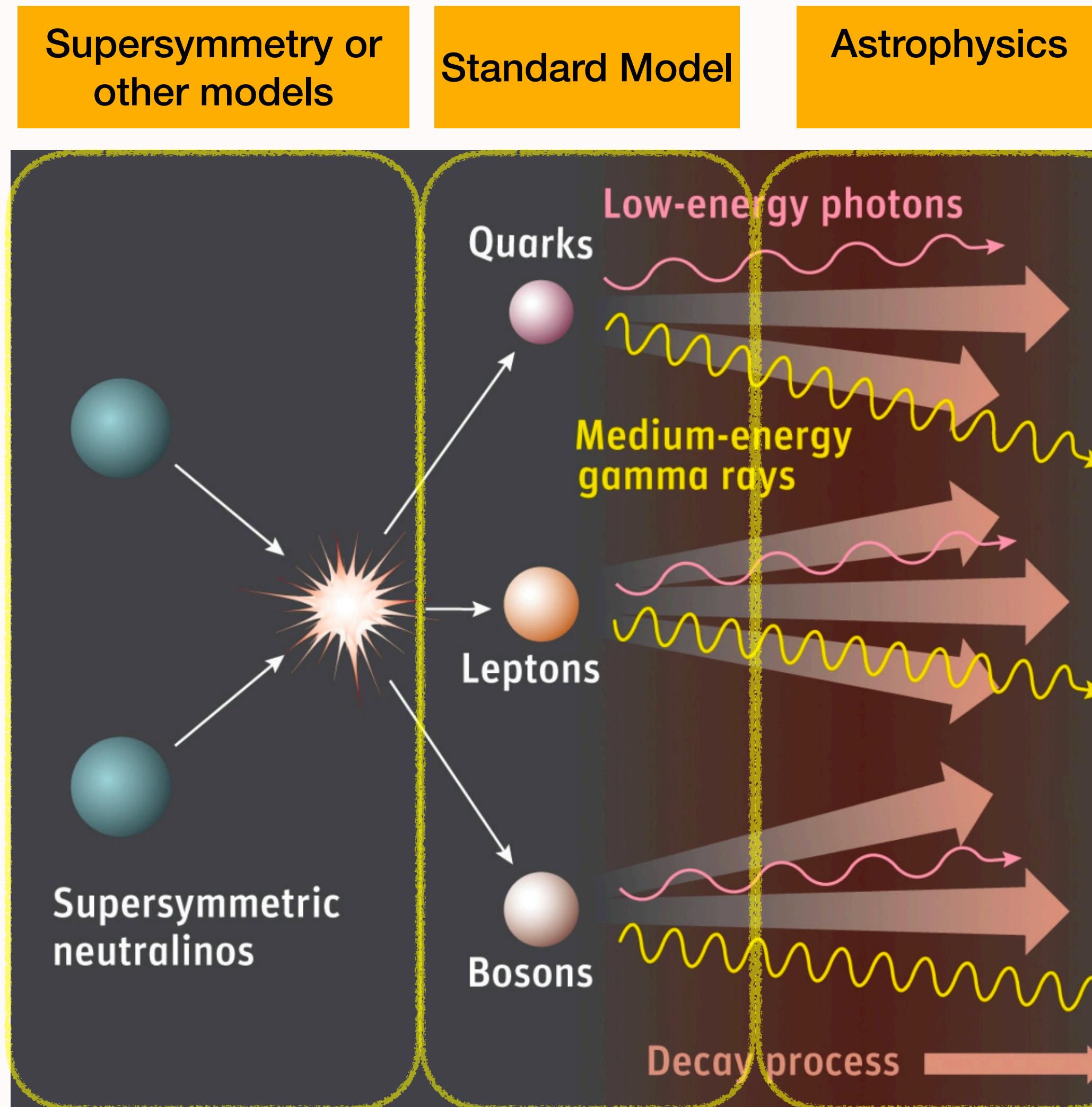


DM cross-section

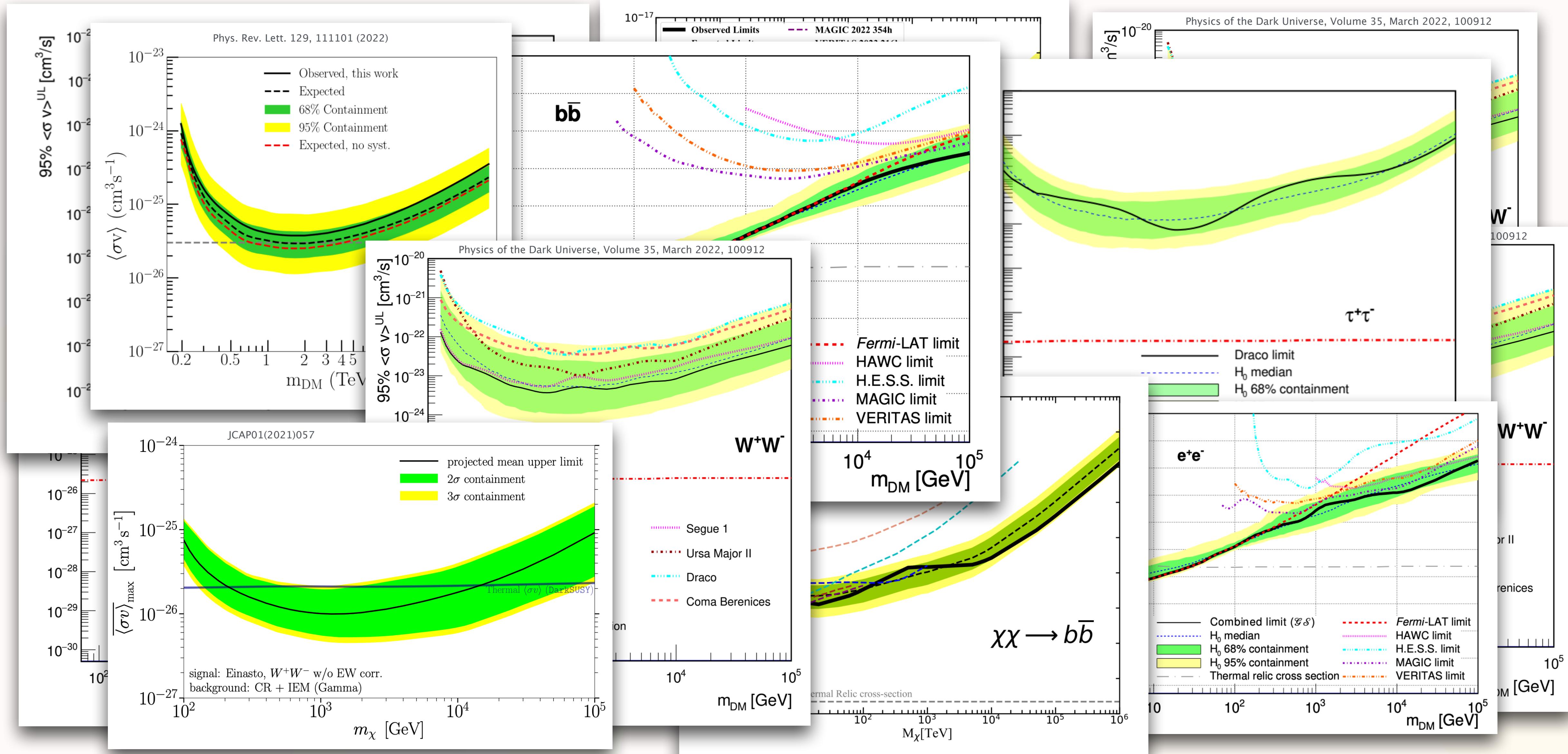
$$\text{IRF} \otimes \frac{dN_\gamma(E)}{dE} \cdot \frac{T_{\text{obs}} J}{8\pi m_\chi^2} \cdot \langle \sigma v \rangle$$

Instrument Response Function

# Motivation



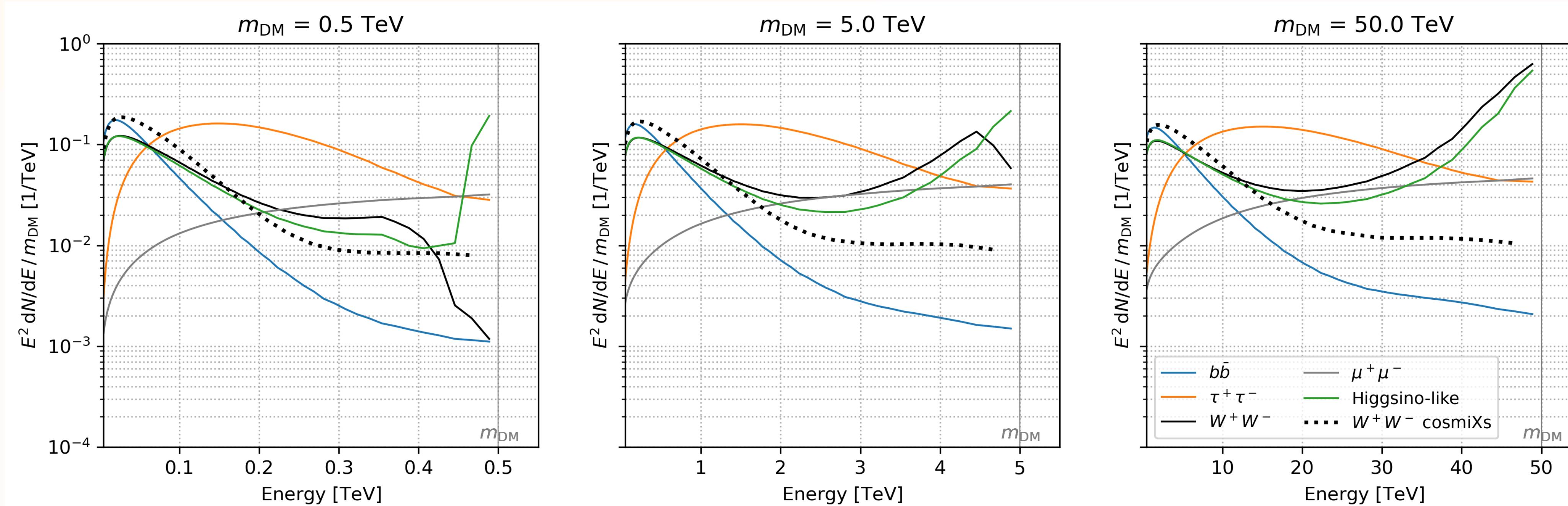
# Motivation



# Motivation

Would it be possible to reinterpret (*recast*) the published DM ULs from “benchmark” annihilation modes into alternative models?

## Example:



# Upper/Lower Limits

The standard “rule” for getting upper/lower limits

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) = \lambda$$

**The likelihood**

By definition the probability of the data given your model

**parameter of interest  $\sigma$**

**A threshold value**

Whose value can be 2.71 for a 95% CL if the likelihood is properly *profiled* (Wilks’ theorem)

Or obtained through MC simulations

# Upper/Lower Limits

The standard “rule” for getting upper/lower limits

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) = \lambda$$

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) \equiv 2 \sum_i f_i(s_i) \quad \text{Analysis usually performed in bins}$$

# Upper/Lower Limits

The standard “rule” for getting upper/lower limits

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) = \lambda$$

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) \equiv 2 \sum_i f_i(s_i)$$

$i$  ↑

Expected signal count per bin  $i$

$$s_i = K_i \cdot \sigma$$

with  $K_i$  a bin-dependent proportional factor

$$K_i \equiv \int_{\Delta E'_i} dE' \int dE A_{\gamma, \text{eff}}(E) \cdot \mathcal{G}(E, E') \cdot \frac{dN_\gamma}{dE} \cdot \frac{T_{\text{obs}} J}{8\pi m_\chi^2}$$

# Upper/Lower Limits

The standard “rule” for getting upper/lower limits

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) = \lambda$$

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) \equiv 2 \sum_i f_i(s_i) \simeq \sum_i K_i^2 f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma}) (\sigma - \hat{\sigma})^2$$

$i$

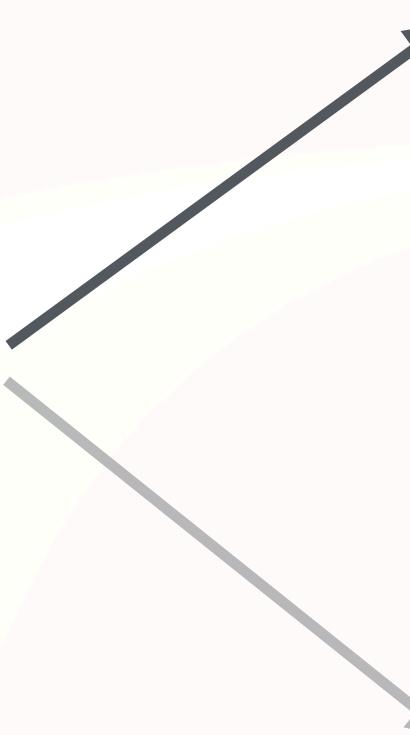
Taylor expansion around the value  $\hat{\sigma}$  that maximizes the likelihood [1]

# Upper/Lower Limits

The standard “rule” for getting upper/lower limits

$$-2 \ln \mathcal{L}(\sigma) = \lambda$$

$$\sum_i K_i^2 f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma}) (\sigma - \hat{\sigma})^2 \simeq \lambda$$



$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \hat{\sigma} + \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2 f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma})}}$$

# Upper Limits

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \hat{\sigma} + \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2 f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma})}}$$

↓

$$f_i(s_i) = s_i - n_i \ln(s_i + b_i) + (1 + \alpha) b_i - m_i \ln(\alpha b_i) + C$$

On counts

Expected bkg (nuisance)

Off counts

Model-independent constant

Cash Statistic

Wstat (On/Off) Statistic

The diagram illustrates the relationship between the Cash Statistic and the Wstat (On/Off) Statistic. The Cash Statistic is the sum of four terms: On counts, Expected bkg (nuisance), Off counts, and Model-independent constant. The Wstat (On/Off) Statistic is the sum of the On counts and Off counts terms. Arrows point from the terms in the Cash Statistic equation to their respective components in the Wstat equation.

# Upper Limits

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \hat{\sigma} + \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2 f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma})}}$$

↓

$$f_i(s_i) = s_i - n_i \ln(s_i + b_i) + (1 + \alpha) b_i - m_i \ln(\alpha b_i) + C$$

On counts

Expected bkg (nuisance)

Off counts

Model-independent constant

Cash Statistic

Wstat (On/Off) Statistic

$$f''(s) = n \frac{(1 + \frac{db}{ds})^2 - (s + b) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}}{(s + b)^2} + m \frac{\left(\frac{db}{ds}\right)^2 - \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}b}{b^2} + (1 + \alpha) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}$$

# Upper Limits

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \hat{\sigma} + \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2 f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma})}}$$

↓

Expected bkg (nuisance)

On counts

Off counts

Model-independent constant

$$f_i(s_i) = s_i - n_i \ln(s_i + b_i) + (1 + \alpha) b_i - m_i \ln(\alpha b_i) + C$$

Cash Statistic

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$$f''(s) = n \frac{(1 + \frac{db}{ds})^2 - (s + b) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}}{(s + b)^2} + m \frac{\left(\frac{db}{ds}\right)^2 - \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}b}{b^2} + (1 + \alpha) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}$$

$\xrightarrow{\begin{array}{l} \text{No signal hypothesis } \hat{\sigma} = 0 \\ s = 0 \quad n = b \quad m = ab \end{array}}$

# Upper Limits - Approximate expression

**Cash statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/b_i}}$$

**Wstat (On/Off) statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/((1 + \alpha^{-1})b_i)}}$$

# Forecasting Upper Limits

## Cash statistic

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/b_i}}$$

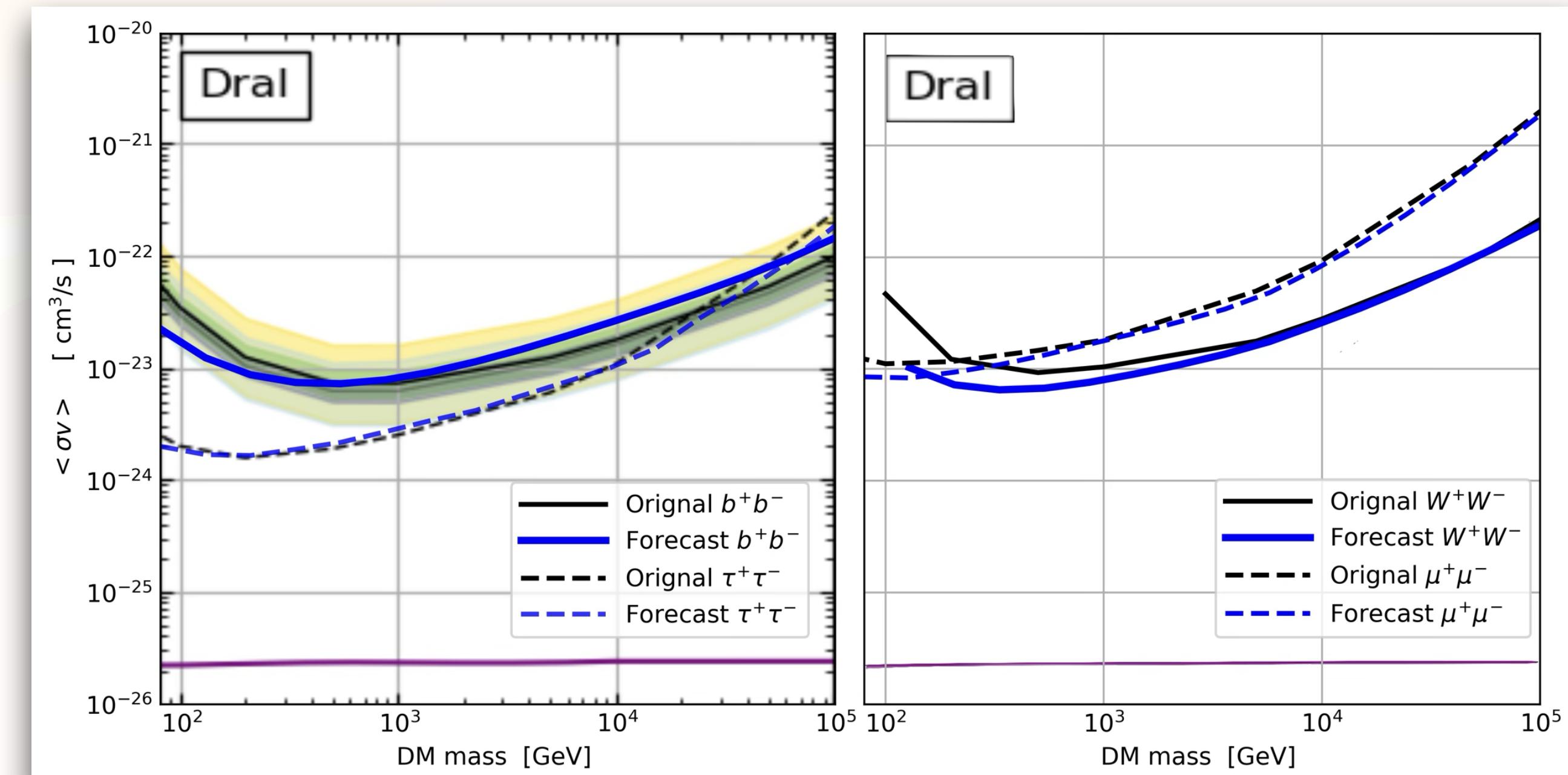
## Wstat (On/Off) statistic

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/((1 + \alpha^{-1})b_i)}}$$

## 1 Forecasting Upper Limits

We adopt the same observational assumptions as in [1]:

- a  $J$ -factor of  $10^{18.7}$  GeV $^2$ /cm $^5$  integrated over a cone of radius  $0.5^\circ$
- total observation time of 100 hours
- Publicly available IRFs of CTAO



[1] Abe, K., et al. "Prospects for dark matter observations in dwarf spheroidal galaxies with the Cherenkov Telescope Array Observatory." *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society* (2025): staf1798.

# Recasting Across Models

## Cash statistic

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/b_i}}$$

## Wstat (On/Off) statistic

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/((1 + \alpha^{-1})b_i)}}$$

## 2 Recasting Across Models

Dark Model  $I$

Dark Model  $0$

$$\frac{\sigma_I^{UL}}{\sigma_0^{UL}} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}}$$



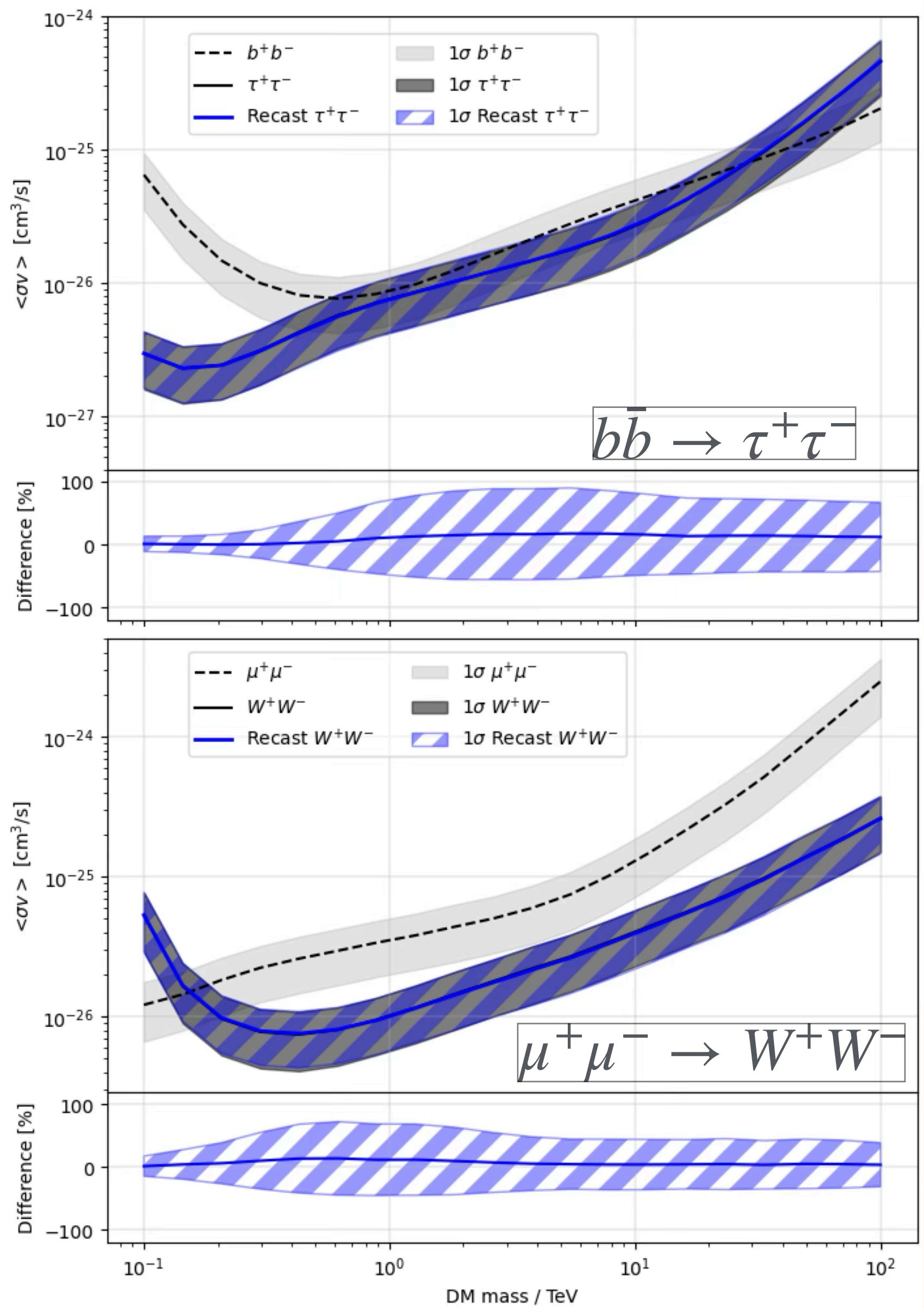
$$\sigma_I^{UL} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL}$$

# Recasting Across Models

## Validation on MC simulations

We generated  $10^5$  toy MC realizations under the null hypothesis of no DM signal:

1. We draw Poisson distributed counts  $n_i$  (ON region) and  $m_i$  (OFF region) in every energy bin
2. Publicly available IRFs of CTAO were adopted
3. Using the binned likelihood, we derived  $\sigma^{\text{UL}}$  for each DM mass  $m_\chi$  and for four annihilation channels:  $\tau^+\tau^-$ ,  $b\bar{b}$ ,  $\mu^+\mu^-$ , and  $W^+W^-$
4. The ULs for  $\tau^+\tau^-$  and  $W^+W^-$  were recast from those of  $b\bar{b}$  and  $\mu^+\mu^-$ , respectively



# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



Recasting expression required knowledge of the instrument IRF (background  $b_i$  and telescope response for computing  $K_i$ )

$$\sigma_I^{UL} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL}$$


# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



Recasting expression required knowledge of the instrument IRF (background  $b_i$  and telescope response for computing  $K_i$ )

$$\sigma_I^{UL} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL} \equiv \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^0)^2}{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^I)^2}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL}$$


# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



Recasting expression required knowledge of the instrument IRF (background  $b_i$  and telescope response for computing  $K_i$ )

$$\sigma_I^{UL} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL} \equiv \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^0)^2}{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^I)^2}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL}$$

?



**intrinsic number of photons  
predicted by the DM model**



We can compute it!

$$\Delta N_{\gamma,i} \equiv \int_{\Delta E'_i} dE \frac{dN_{\gamma}}{dE}$$

# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



Recasting expression required knowledge of the instrument IRF (background  $b_i$  and telescope response for computing  $K_i$ )

$$\sigma_I^{UL} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL} \equiv \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^0)^2}{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^I)^2}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL}$$

$\downarrow$

$$V_i \equiv \frac{K_i}{\sqrt{b_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}}} \approx \frac{1}{\sqrt{b_i}} A_i$$

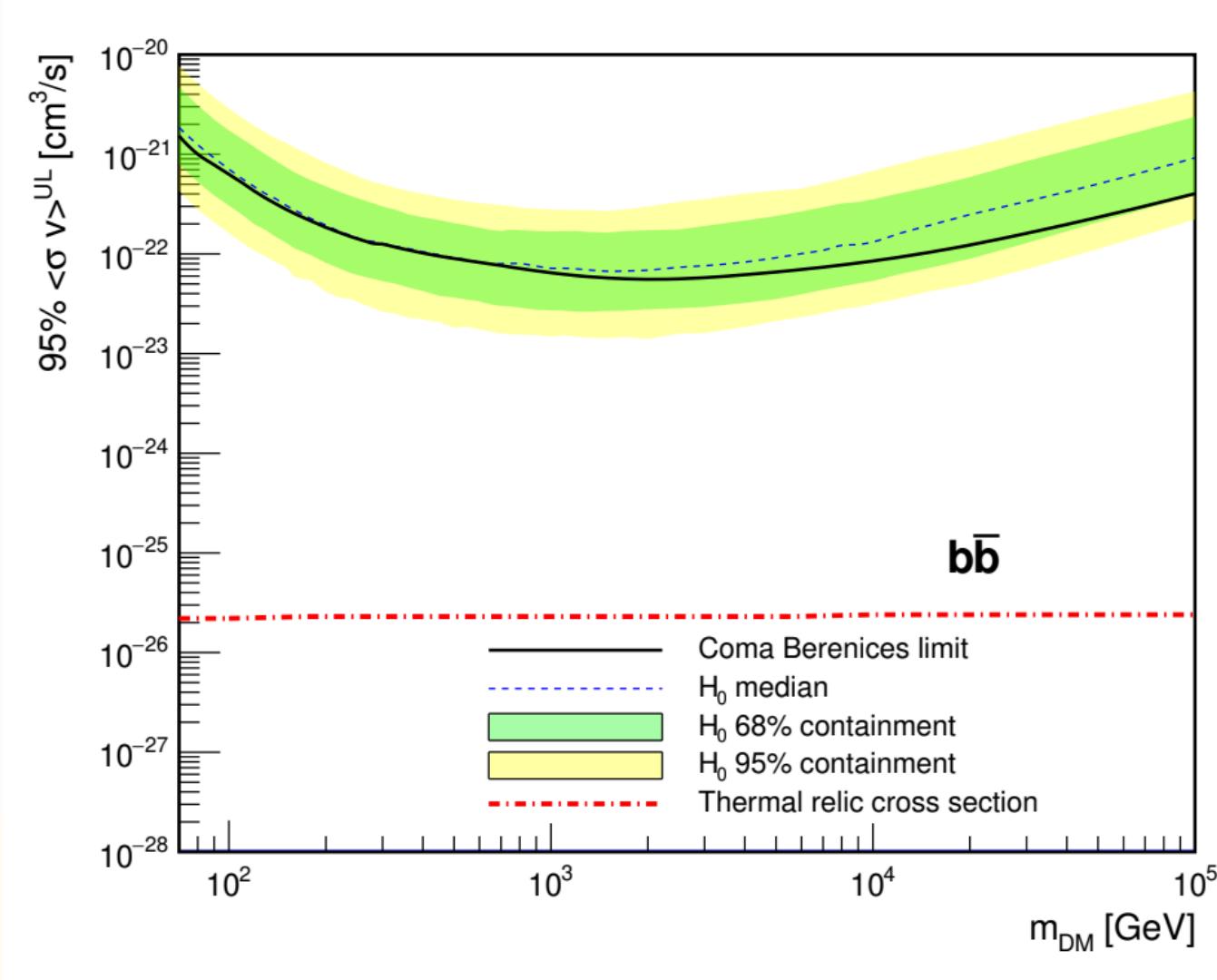
$\uparrow$        $\uparrow$

✓ V<sub>i</sub> are approximately model independent, therefore can be obtained by comparing ULs from 2 channels

Under the assumption of good energy resolution and DM spectrum varying slowly compared to the bin width

Effective area averaged over the bin  $i$

# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF

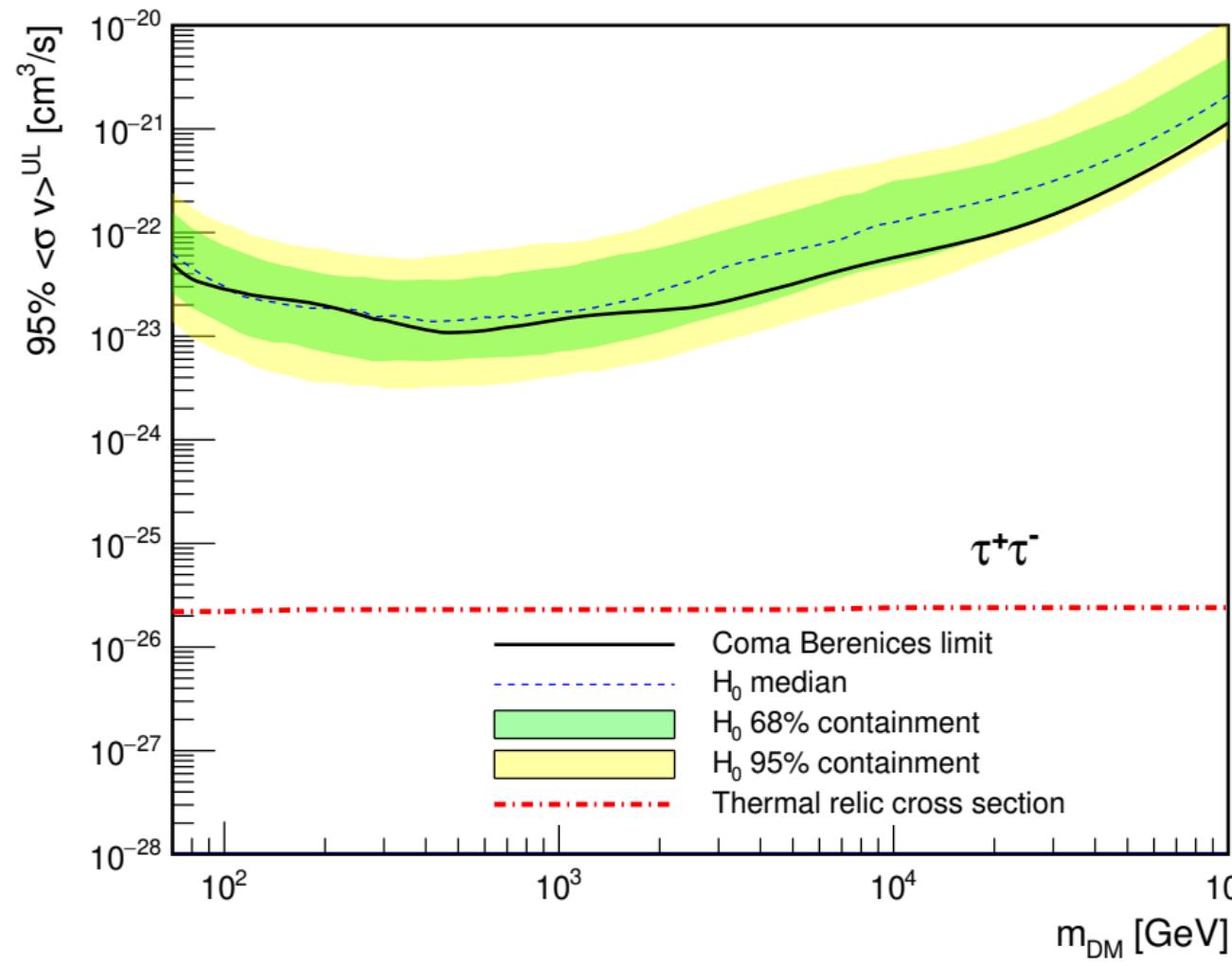
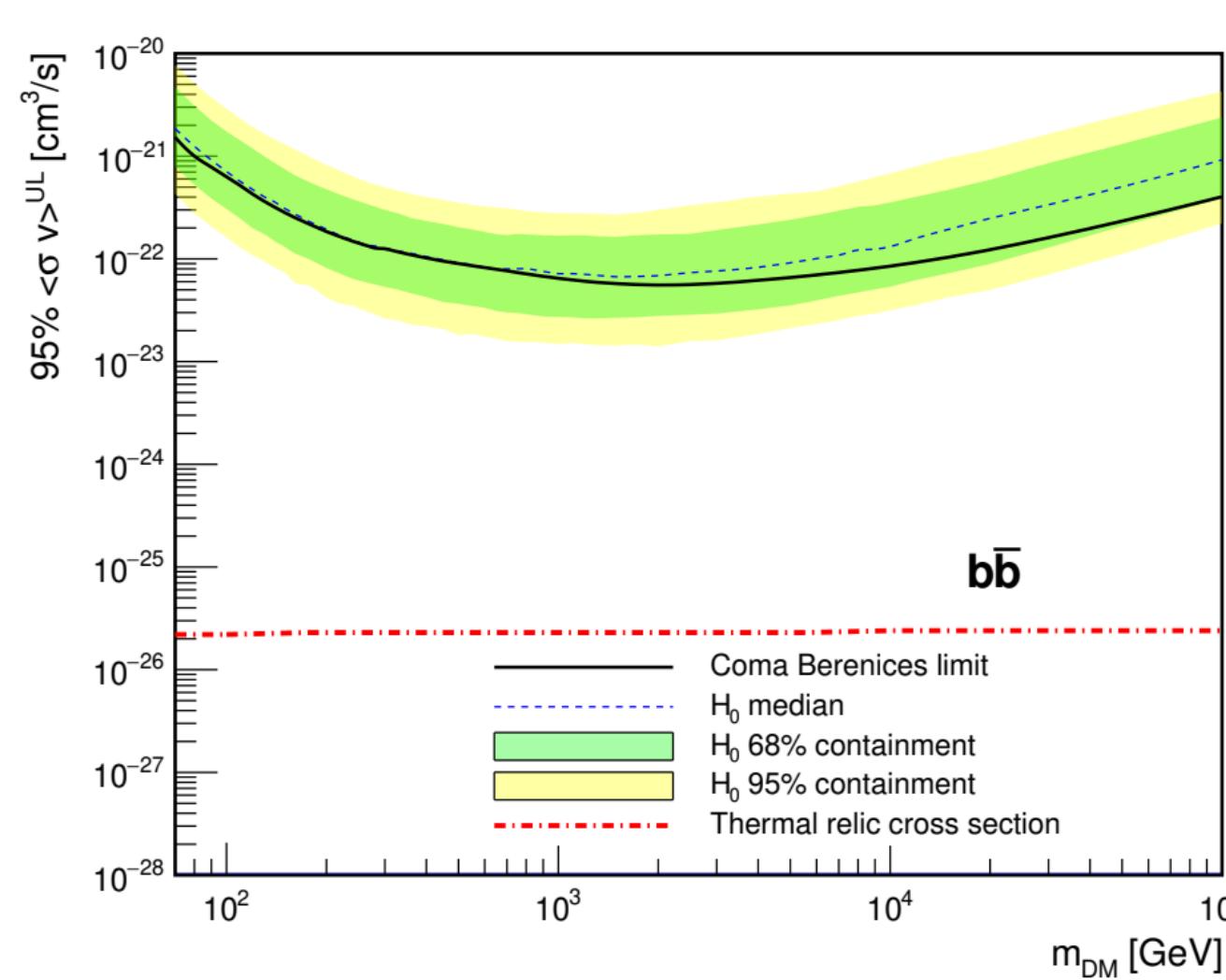


?

$\rightarrow$

$W^+ W^-$

# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



?

→

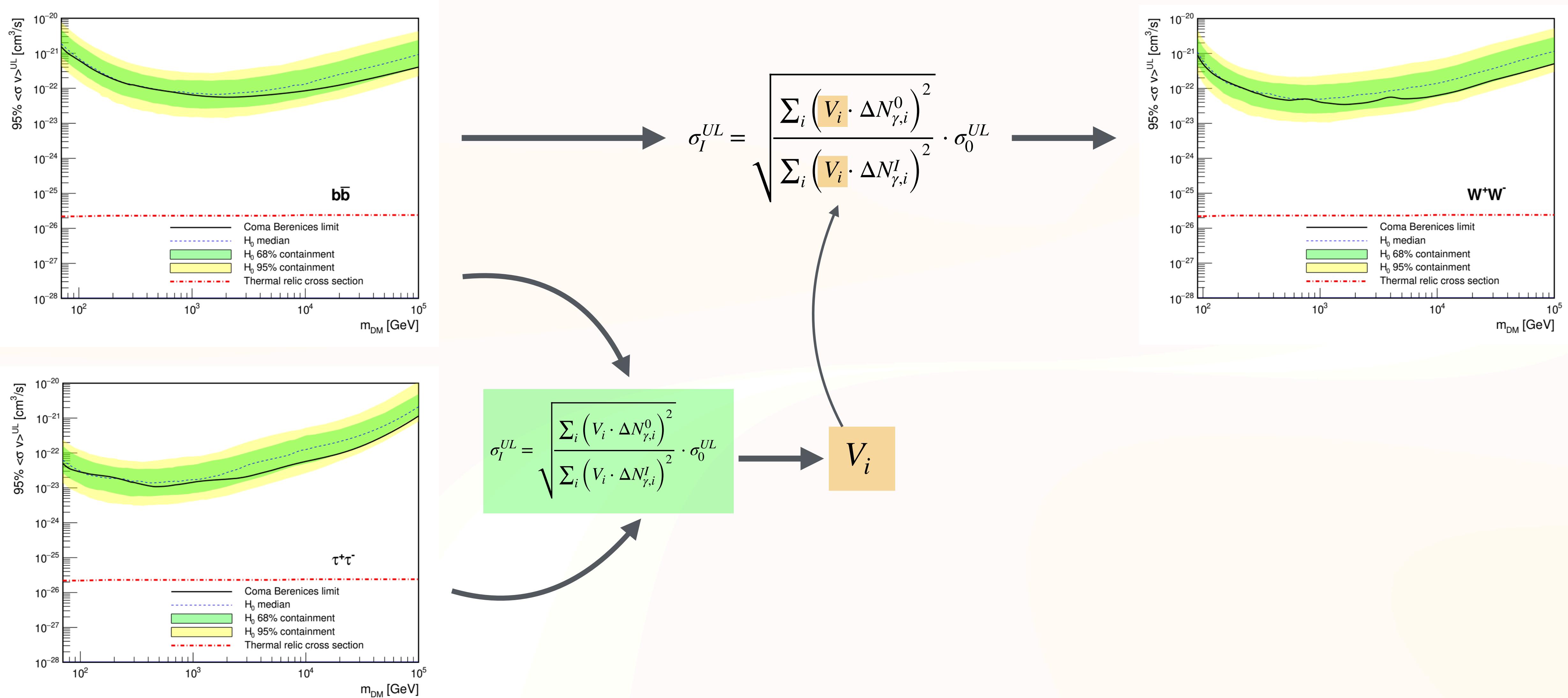
$W^+ W^-$

$$\sigma_I^{\text{UL}} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^0)^2}{\sum_i (V_i \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}^I)^2}} \cdot \sigma_0^{\text{UL}}$$

→

$V_i$

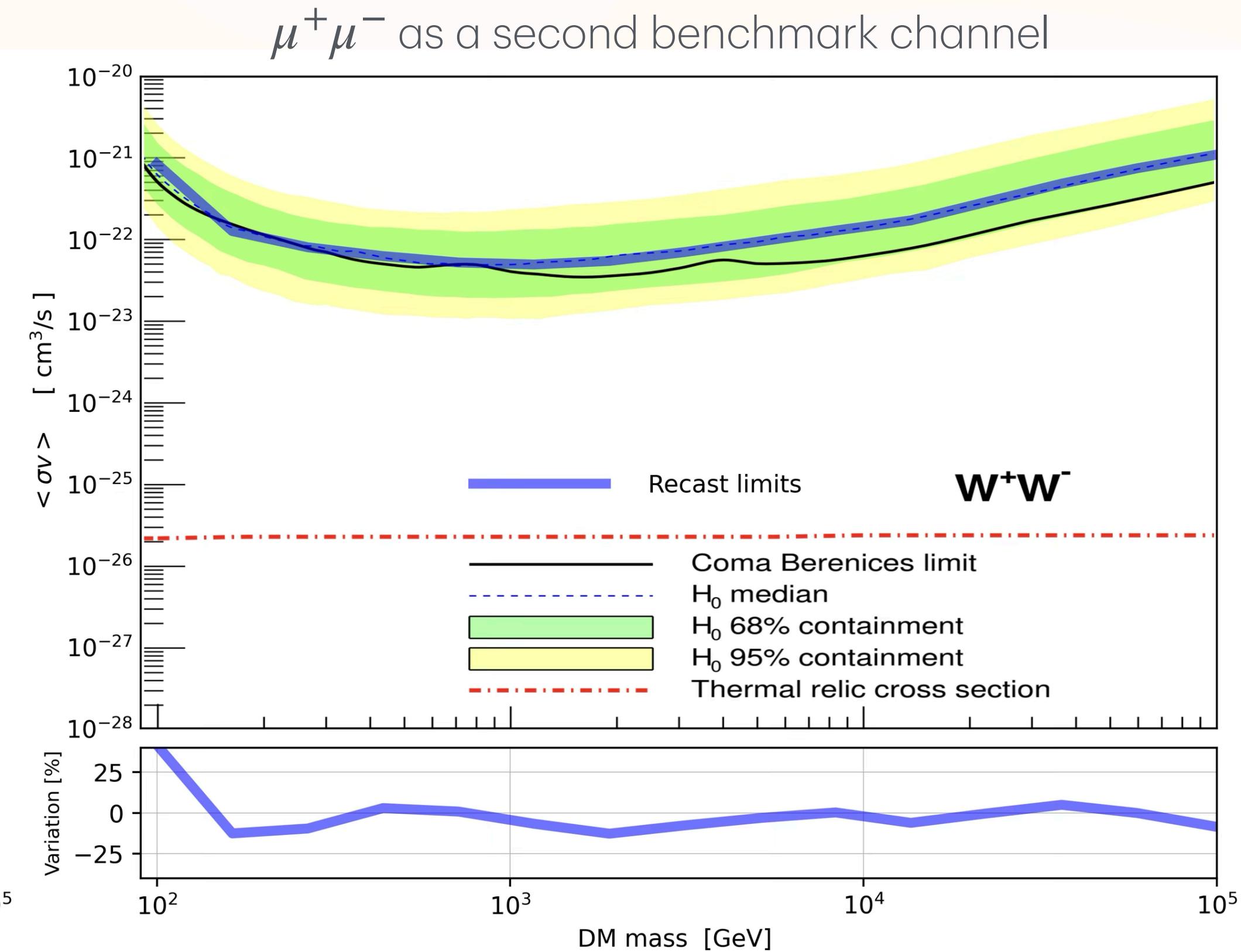
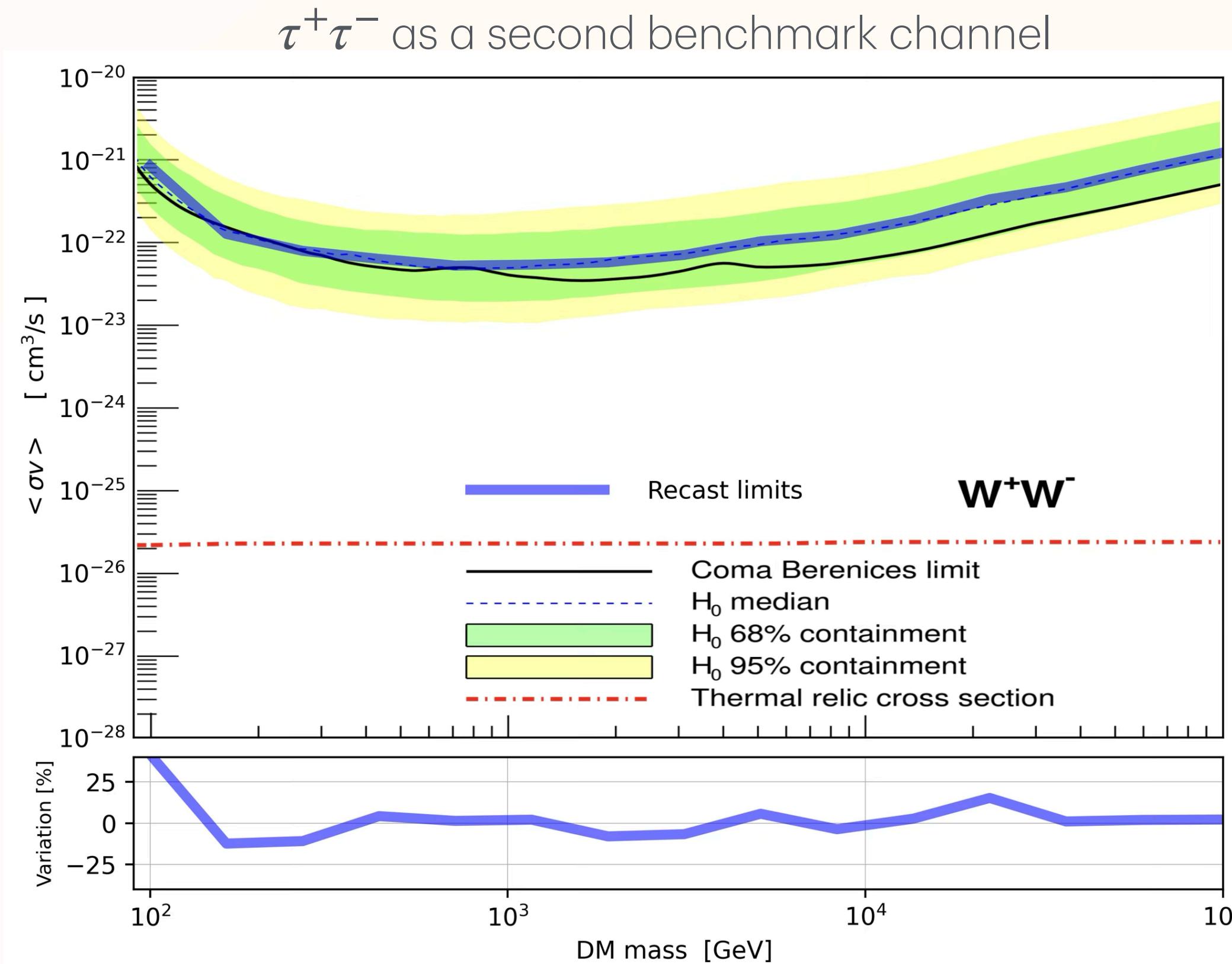
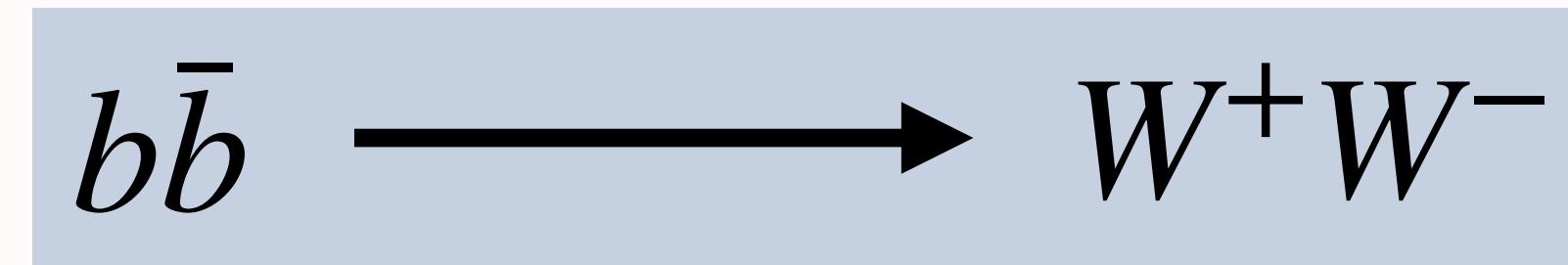
# Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



# Recasting Across Models

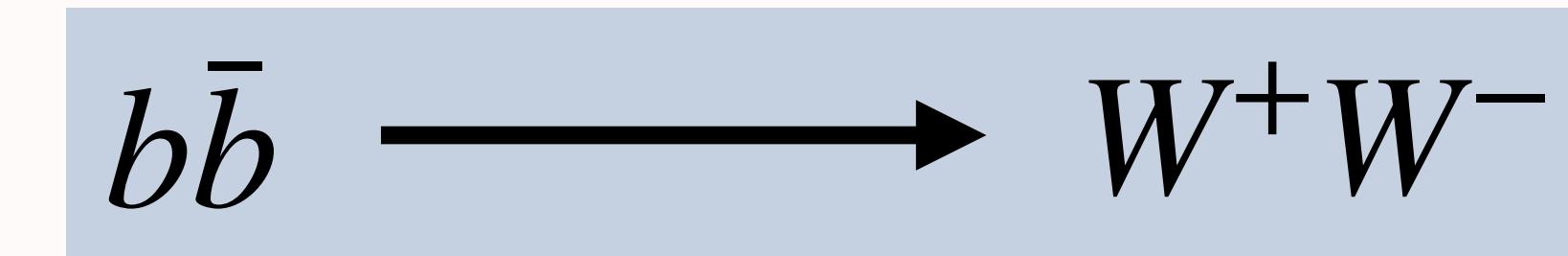
Validation on published ULs from the MAGIC collaboration [1]

[1] Acciari, V.A., et al. (MAGIC), 2022. Combined searches for dark matter in dwarf spheroidal galaxies observed with the MAGIC telescopes, including new data from Coma Berenices and Draco. Phys. Dark Univ. 35, 100912.



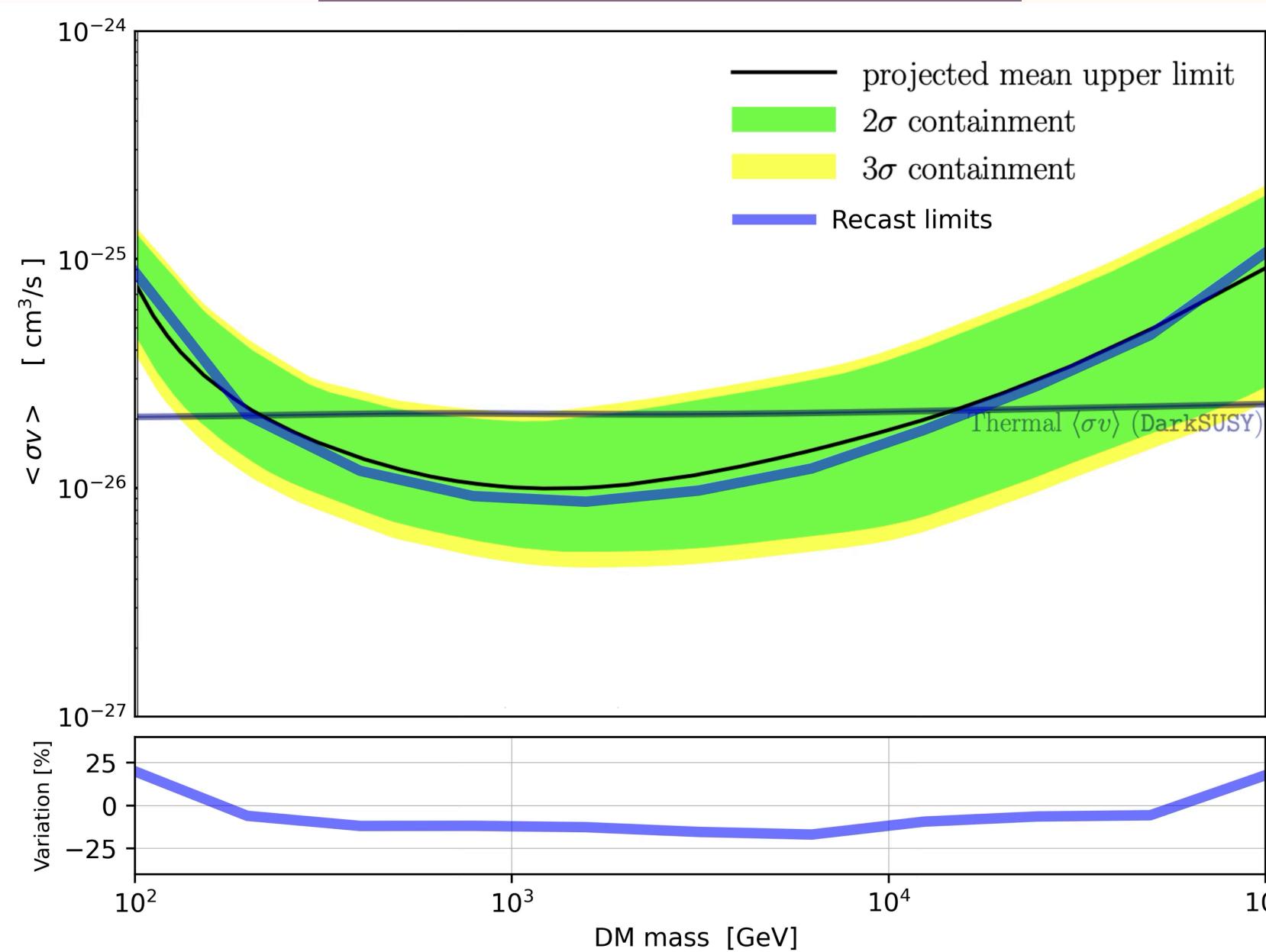
# Recasting Across Models

Validation on Published ULs - other instruments

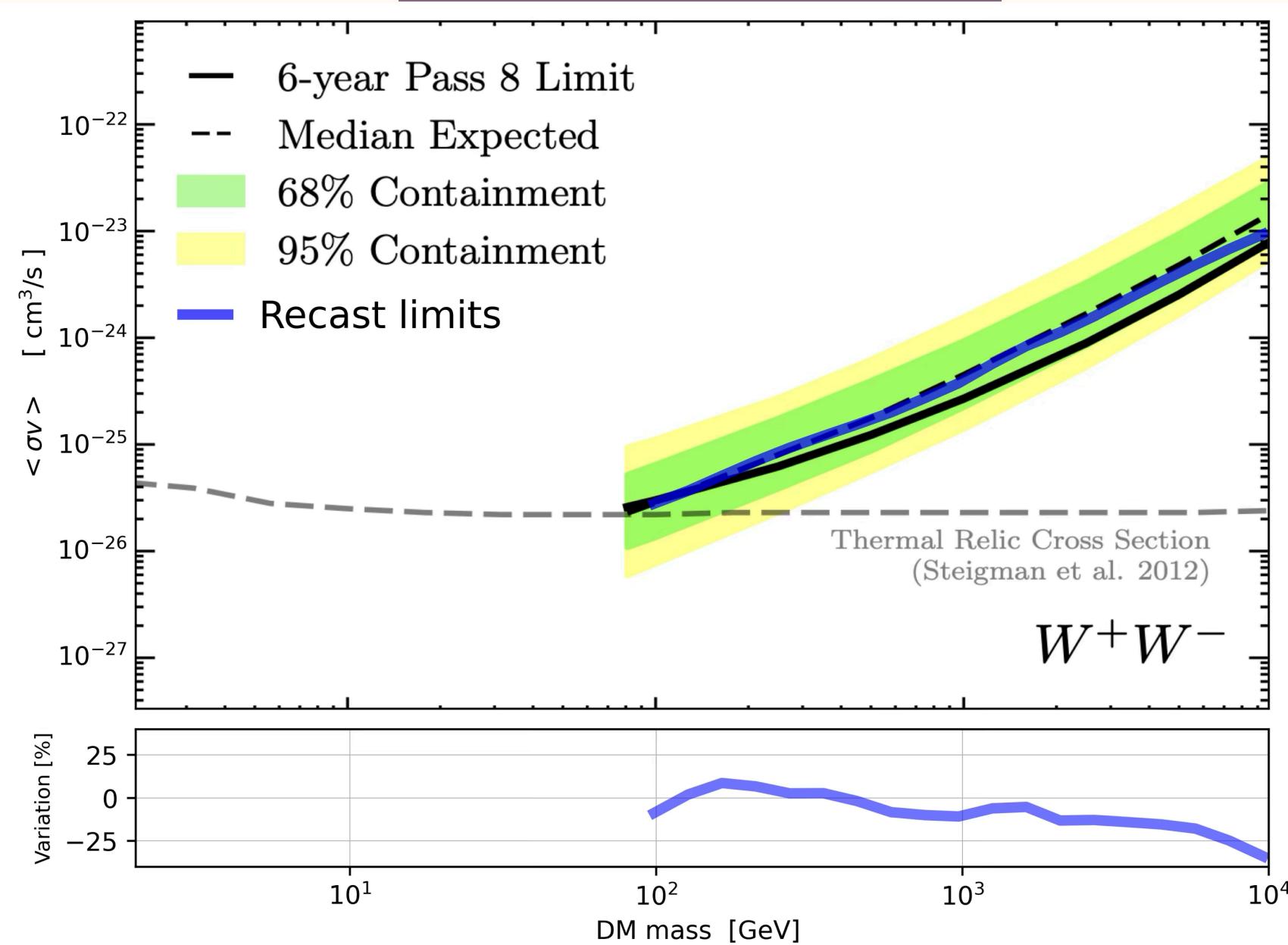


$\tau^+\tau^-$  as a second benchmark channel

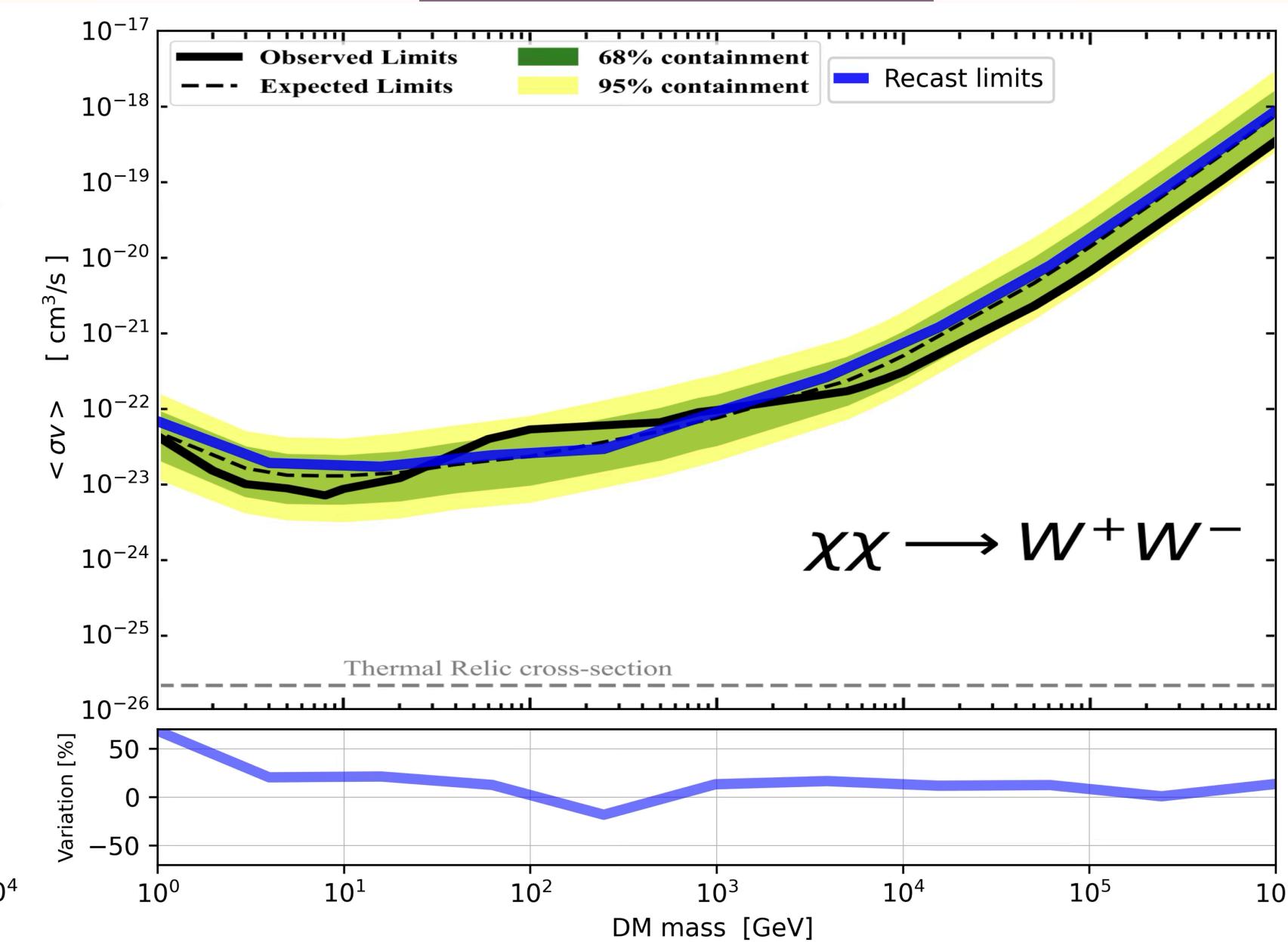
## CTAO / GC Projection



## Fermi - LAT / dSph



## LHAASO / dSph



Acharyya, A., et al. (CTA), 2021. Sensitivity of the Cherenkov Telescope Array to a dark matter signal from the Galactic centre. *JCAP* 01, 057

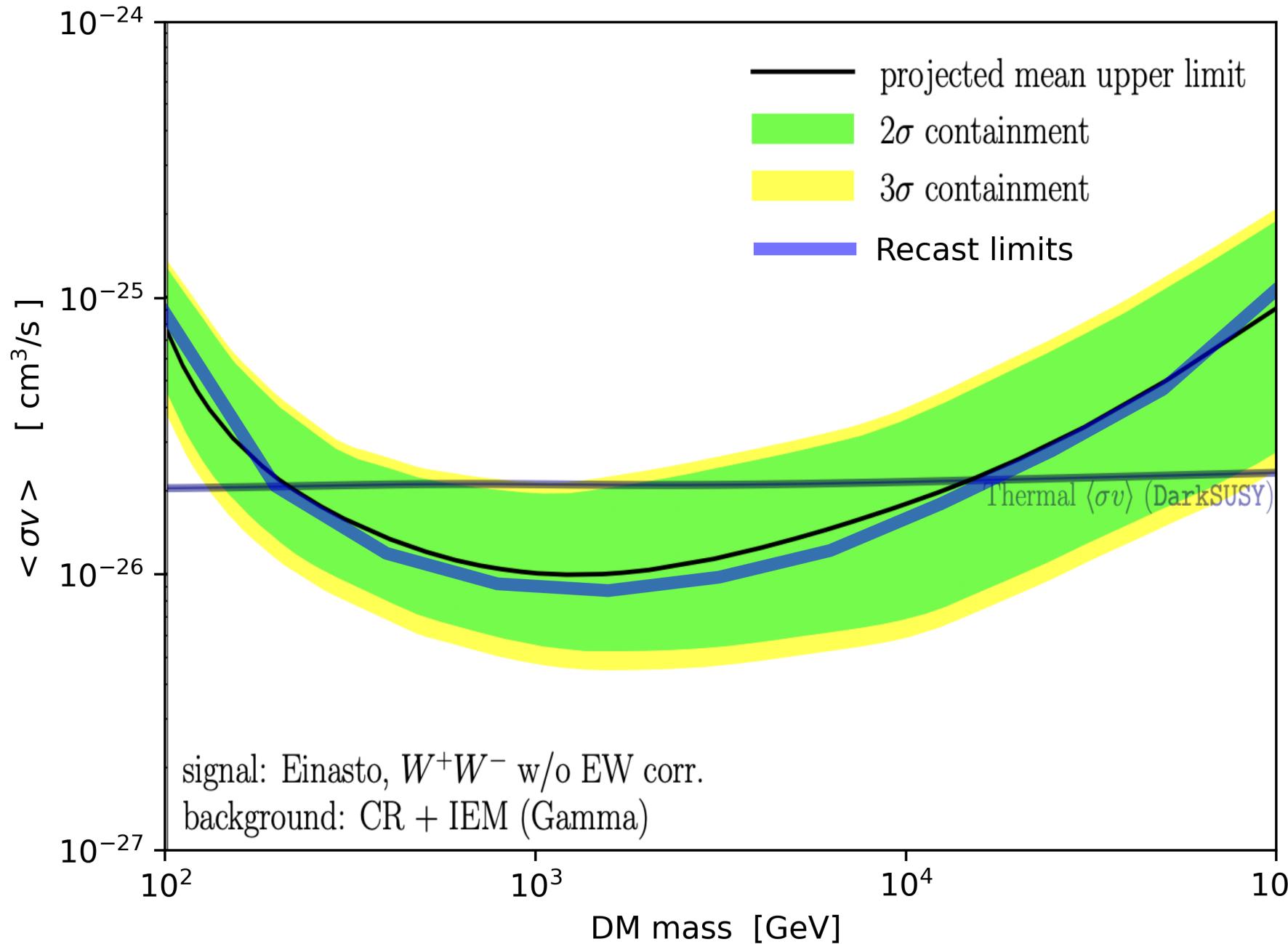
Ackermann, M., et al. (Fermi-LAT), 2015. Searching for Dark Matter Annihilation from Milky Way Dwarf Spheroidal Galaxies with Six Years of Fermi Large Area Telescope Data. *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 115, 231301.

Cao, Z., et al. (LHAASO), 2024. Constraints on Ultraheavy Dark Matter Properties from Dwarf Spheroidal Galaxies with LHAASO Observations. *Phys. Rev. Lett.* 133, 061001.

# Recasting into new models

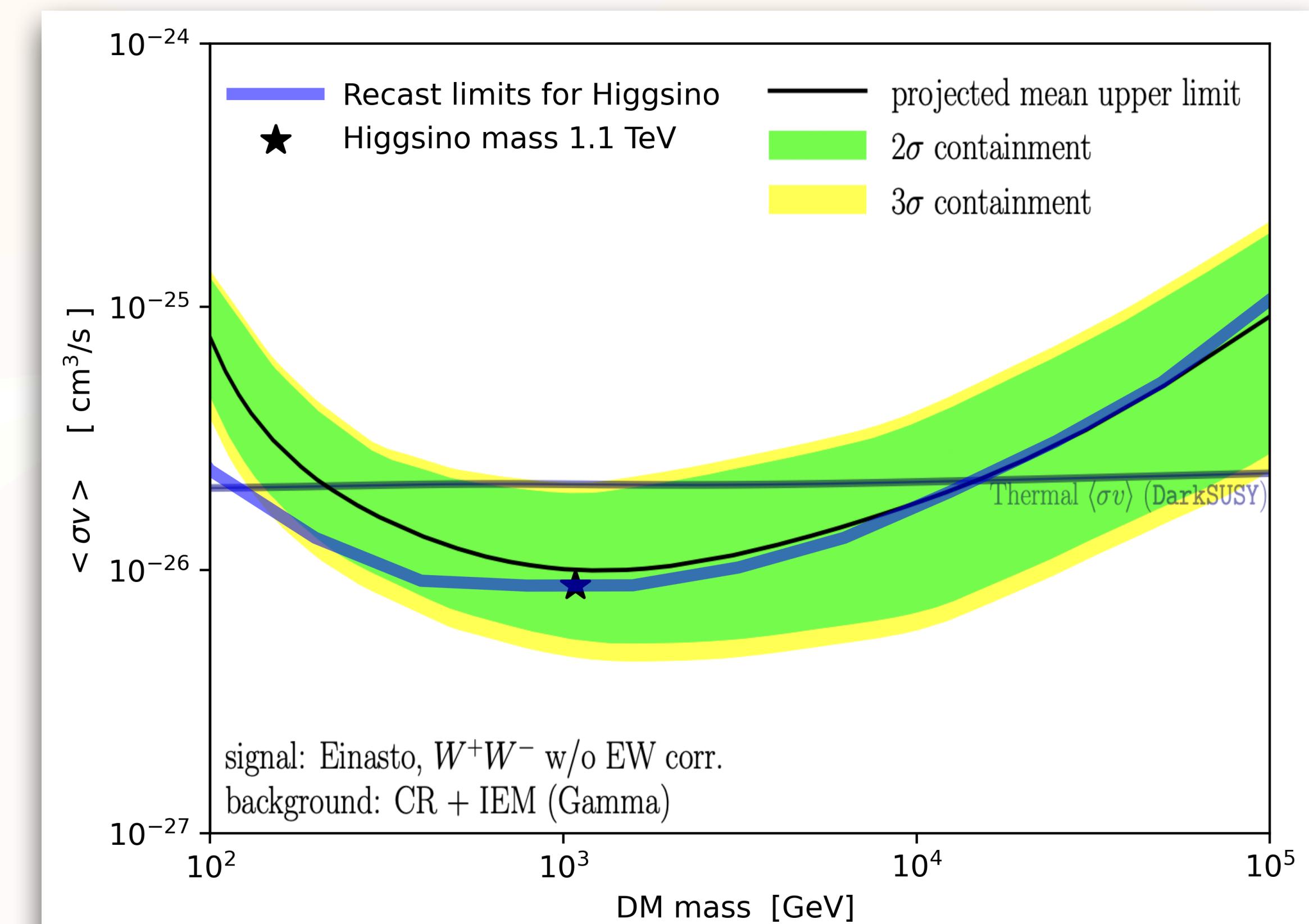
## Higgsino-like scenario - CTAO project from GC [1]

Recasting of  $W^+W^-$  from  $b\bar{b}$



Same recasting but...

of the *Higgsino-like* spectrum with annihilation into  $W^+W^-$ ,  $ZZ$ ,  $\gamma\gamma/\gamma Z$  with branching ratios  $BR_i = 0.611, 0.382, 0.008$  respectively

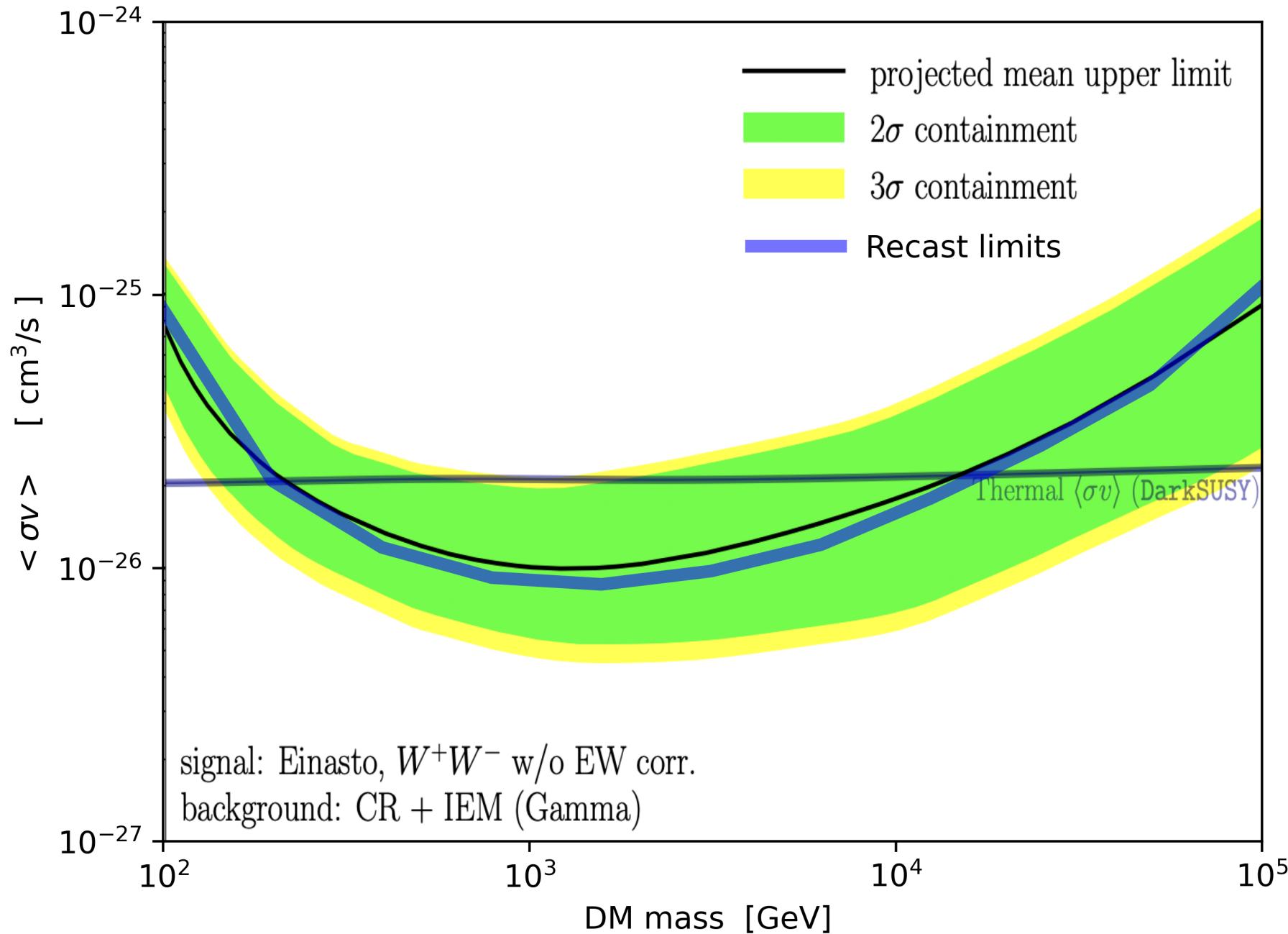


[1] Acharyya, A., et al. (CTA), 2021. Sensitivity of the Cherenkov Telescope Array to a dark matter signal from the Galactic centre. *JCAP* 01, 057

# Recasting into new models

## CosmiXs-based DM photon - CTAO project from GC [1]

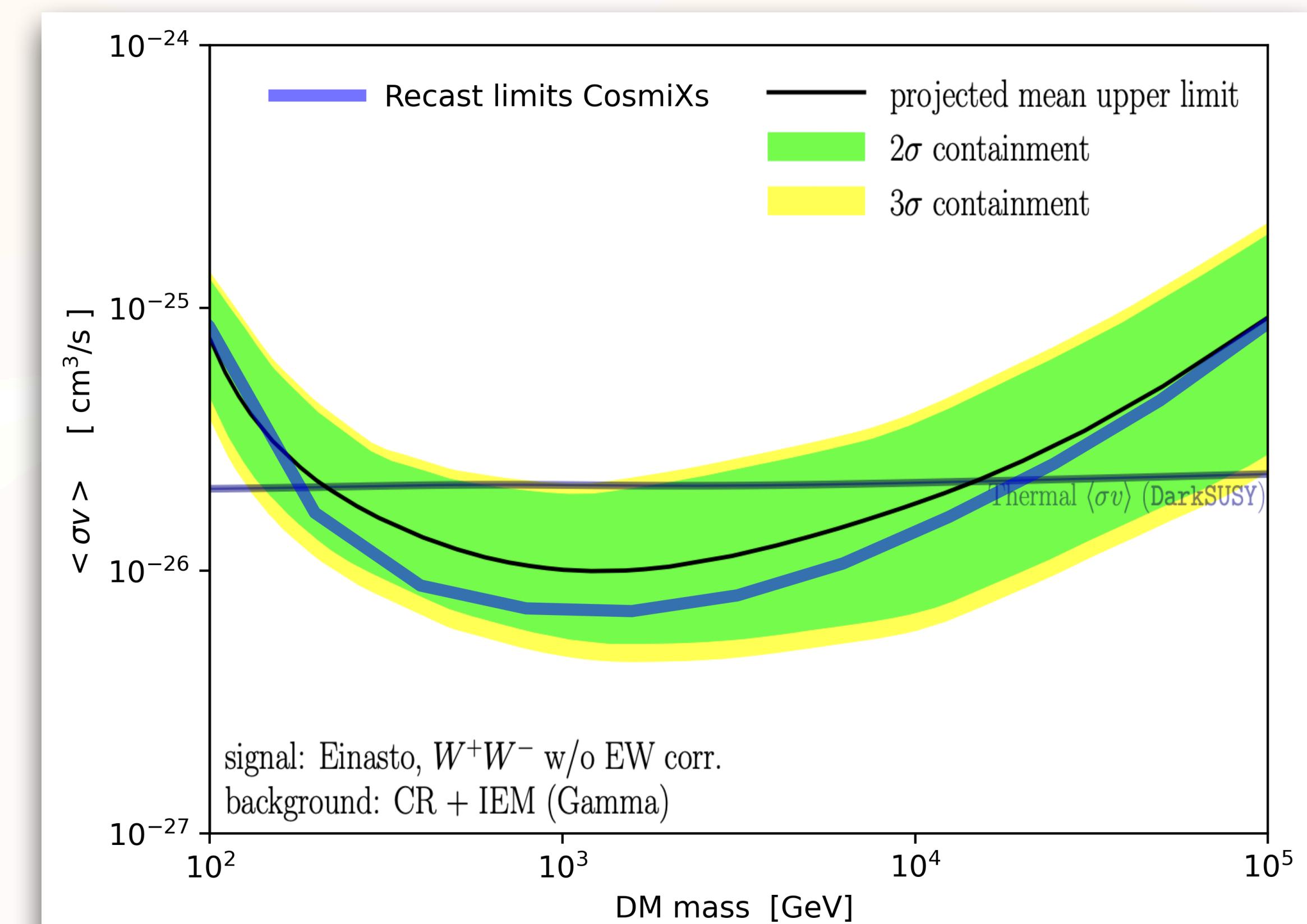
Recasting of  $W^+W^-$  from  $b\bar{b}$



[1] Acharyya, A., et al. (CTA), 2021. Sensitivity of the Cherenkov Telescope Array to a dark matter signal from the Galactic centre. *JCAP* 01, 057

[2] Arina, C., Di Mauro, M., Fornengo, N., Heisig, J., Jueid, A., de Austri, R.R., 2024. Cosmixs: cosmic messenger spectra for indirect dark matter searches. *Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics* 2024, 035

Same recasting but...  
of the  $W^+W^-$  channel with cosmiXs-based spectra [2]  
instead of the PPPC ones



# Conclusion

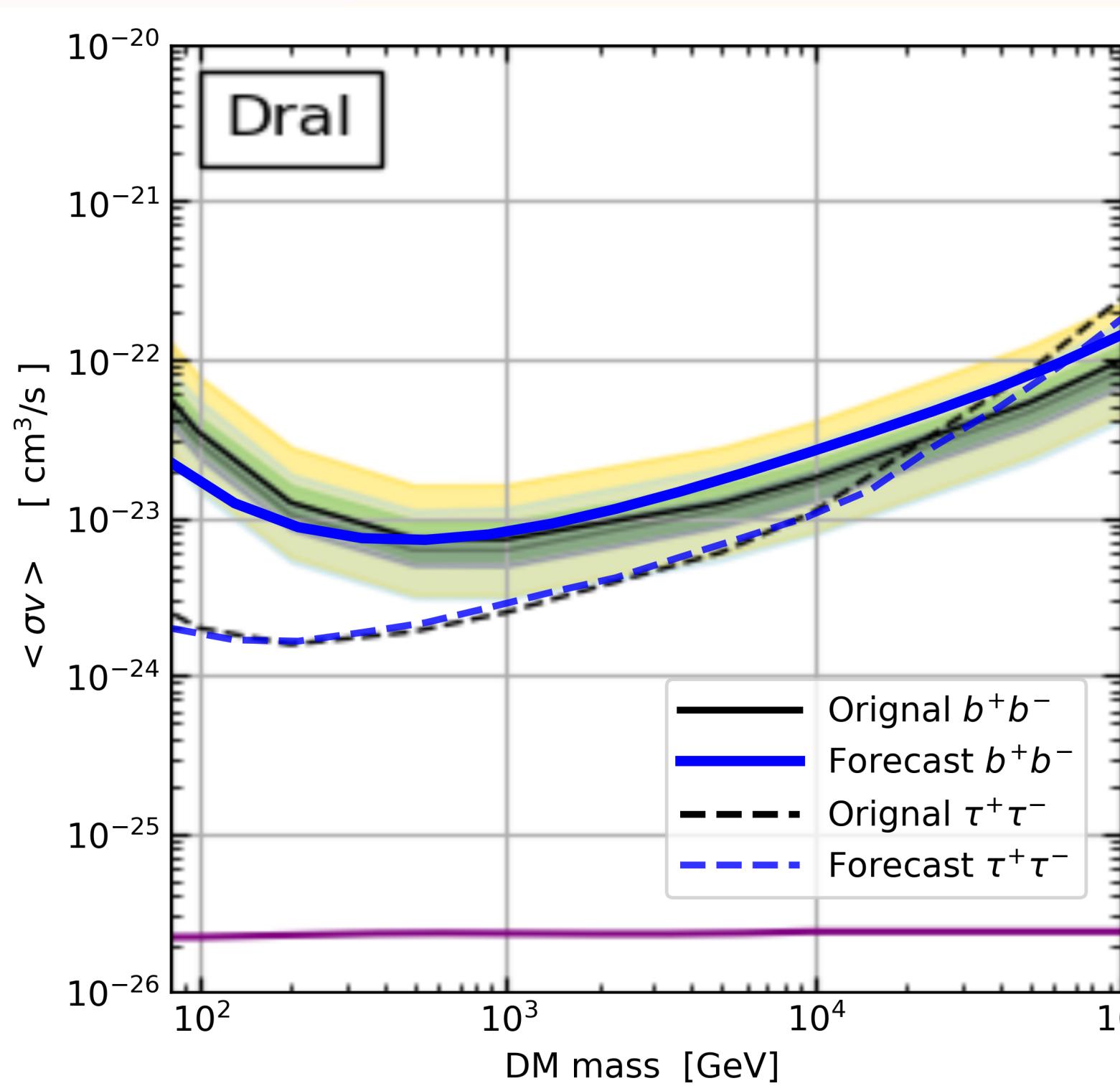
- **This novel method enables recasting of dark-matter limits without raw data**, using only published ULs
- **Validated across multiple gamma-ray telescopes**, reproducing official collaboration results within uncertainties.
- **Forecasting of ULs**: provides sensitivity projections for next-generation experiments such as CTAO.
- **General and portable**: adaptable to any instrument or dark-matter channel (if the DM spectrum varies slowly compared to the instrument energy resolution).
- **Code available**: [https://github.com/giacomodamico24/DM\\_recast\\_limits](https://github.com/giacomodamico24/DM_recast_limits)

# Backup - Recast from annihilation to decay

## Annihilation

$$\frac{d\Phi}{dE}(E) = J_{\text{ann}} \cdot \left( \frac{\langle \sigma v \rangle}{8\pi k m_\chi^2} \frac{dN_\gamma}{dE} \right)$$

$$J_{\text{ann}} \equiv \int_{\Delta\Omega} d\Omega \int_{l.o.s.} dl \rho_\chi^2(l, \theta)$$



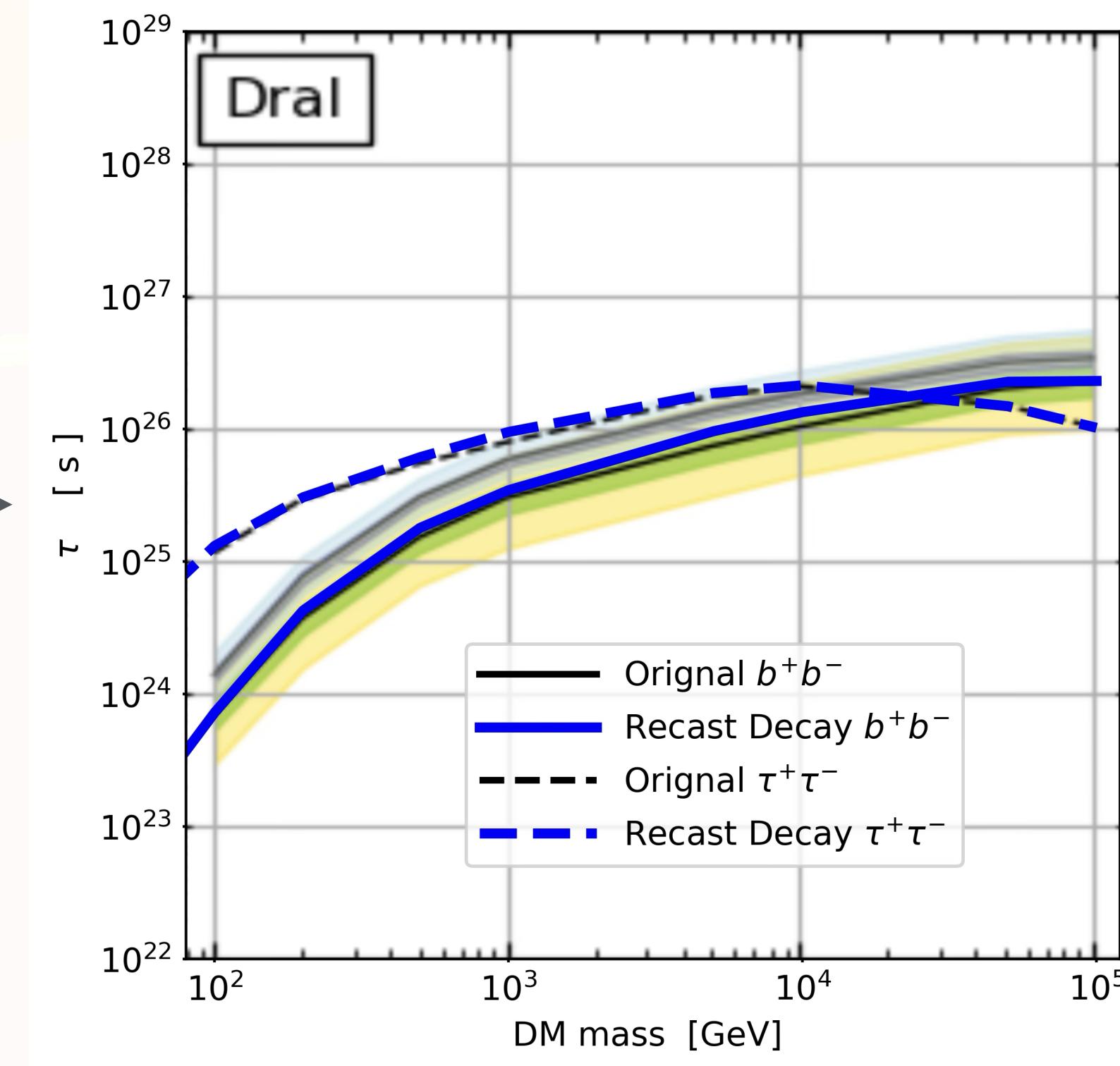
$$\tau^{\text{UL}} = \frac{J_{\text{dec}}}{J_{\text{ann}}} \cdot \frac{m_\chi}{\sigma^{\text{UL}}}$$



## Decay

$$\frac{d\Phi}{dE}(E) = J_{\text{dec}} \cdot \left( \frac{1}{4\pi m_\chi \tau} \frac{dN_\gamma}{dE} \right)$$

$$J_{\text{dec}} \equiv \int_{\Delta\Omega} d\Omega \int_{l.o.s.} dl \rho_\chi(l, \theta)$$



# Backup - First and second derivative

**Cahs case**

$$f(s) = s - n \ln(s + b) + C$$

$$f'(s) = 1 - \frac{n}{s + b} \sim 0 \quad f''(s) = \frac{n}{(s + b)^2} \sim \frac{1}{b}$$

**Wstat case**

$$f(s) = s - n \ln(s + b) + (1 + \alpha)b - m \ln(\alpha b) + C$$

$$b(s) = \frac{n_1(s) + n_2(s)}{2(1 + \alpha)} \quad n_1(s) = n + m - (1 + \alpha)s \quad n_2(s) = \sqrt{n_1^2(s) + 4(1 + \alpha)sm}$$

$$\frac{db}{ds} = \frac{2m - n_1 - n_2}{2n_2} \sim -\frac{1}{1 + \alpha} \quad \frac{d^2b}{ds^2} = \frac{(1 + \alpha^{-1})(n_1 + n_2 - 2m)(n_2 + 2m - n_1)}{2\alpha^{-1}n_2^3} \sim \frac{2\alpha}{(1 + \alpha)^2 b}$$

$$f'(s) = -\frac{n}{s + b} \left( 1 + \frac{db}{ds} \right) - \frac{m}{b} \frac{db}{ds} + 1 + (1 + \alpha) \frac{db}{ds} \sim 0$$

$$f''(s) = n \frac{\left(1 + \frac{db}{ds}\right)^2 - (s + b) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}}{(s + b)^2} + m \frac{\left(\frac{db}{ds}\right)^2 - \frac{d^2b}{ds^2} b}{b^2} + (1 + \alpha) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2} \sim \frac{1}{b(1 + \alpha^{-1})}$$

# Backup - Impact of Background Knowledge

**Cash statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/b_i}}$$

**Wstat (On/Off) statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/((1 + \alpha^{-1})b_i)}}$$



## Impact of Background Knowledge

$$1 + \alpha^{-1} > 0 \longrightarrow \sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i} > \sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i(1 + \alpha^{-1})} \longrightarrow$$

Cash ULs are  
more **stringent**  
than Wstat ULs

# Backup - Impact of Background Knowledge

**Cash statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/b_i}}$$

**Wstat (On/Off) statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/((1 + \alpha^{-1})b_i)}}$$

## Impact of Background Knowledge

$$1 + \alpha^{-1} > 0 \rightarrow \sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i} > \sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i(1 + \alpha^{-1})} \rightarrow$$

Cash ULs are more **stringent** than Wstat ULs

If OFF exposure infinitely larger than ON one



$$\alpha^{-1} \rightarrow 0$$



Cash and Wstat ULs converge

# Backup - Advantage of Multi-bin Analyses

**Cash statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/b_i}}$$

**Wstat (On/Off) statistic**

$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2/((1 + \alpha^{-1})b_i)}}$$

## Advantage of Multi-bin Analyses

Cauchy-Schwarz inequality

$$\left( \sum_i X_i Y_i \right)^2 \leq \left( \sum_i X_i^2 \right) \left( \sum_i Y_i^2 \right)$$



$$\sqrt{\sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i}} \geq \frac{\sum_i K_i}{\sqrt{\sum_i b_i}}$$



$$X_i = \frac{K_i}{\sqrt{b_i}}, \quad Y_i = \sqrt{b_i}$$

Multi-bins analysis gives **stringent** ULs than single bin analysis

# Backup - Recasting Across Models

## Validation on MC simulations

We generated  $10^5$  toy MC realizations under the null hypothesis of no DM signal:

1. We draw Poisson distributed counts  $n_i$  (ON region) and  $m_i$  (OFF region) in every energy bin
2. Publicly available IRFs of CTAO were adopted
3. Using the binned likelihood, we derived  $\sigma^{\text{UL}}$  for each DM mass  $m_\chi$  and for four annihilation channels:  $\tau^+\tau^-$ ,  $b\bar{b}$ ,  $\mu^+\mu^-$ , and  $W^+W^-$
4. The factors  $V_i$  were inferred using another benchmark channel:  $W^+W^-$  (upper case) and  $b\bar{b}$  (lower case)
5. The ULs for  $\tau^+\tau^-$  and  $W^+W^-$  were recast from those of  $b\bar{b}$  and  $\mu^+\mu^-$ , respectively

