

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

Giacomo D'Amico,
Michele Doro & Michela De Caria

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TeV Particle Astrophysics

TeVPA

Valencia 2025

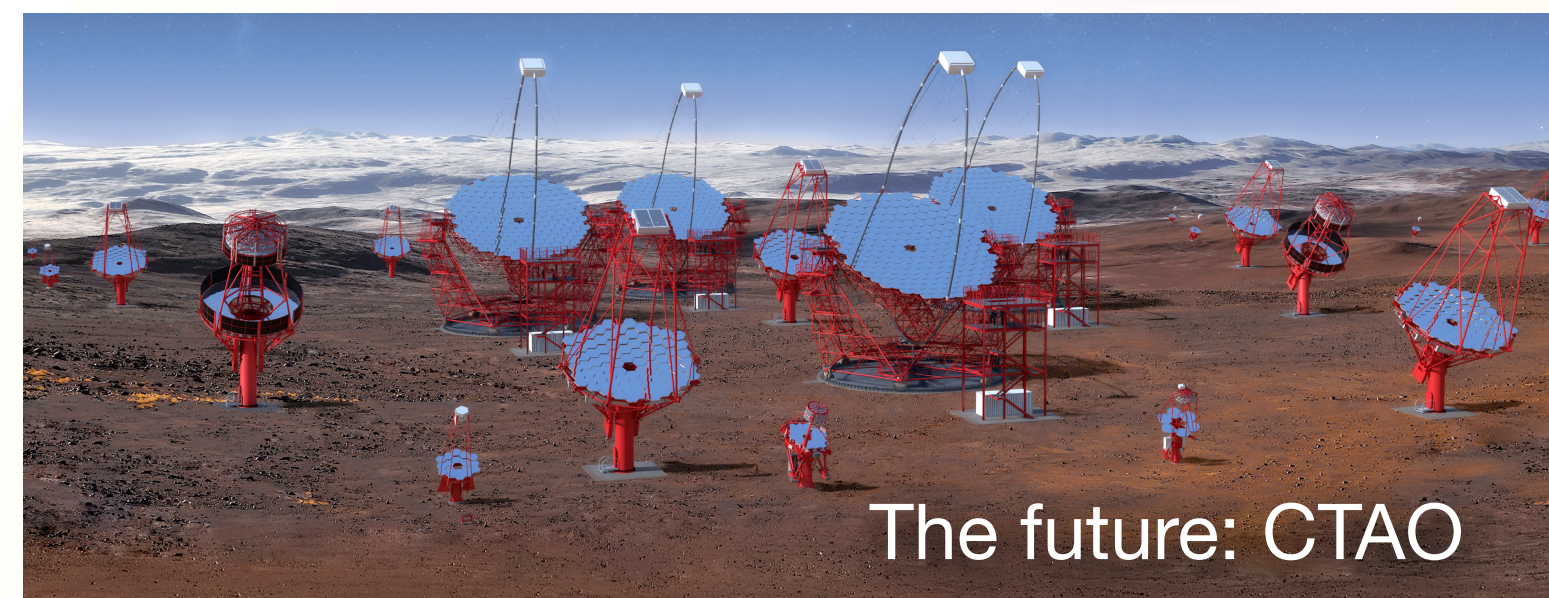
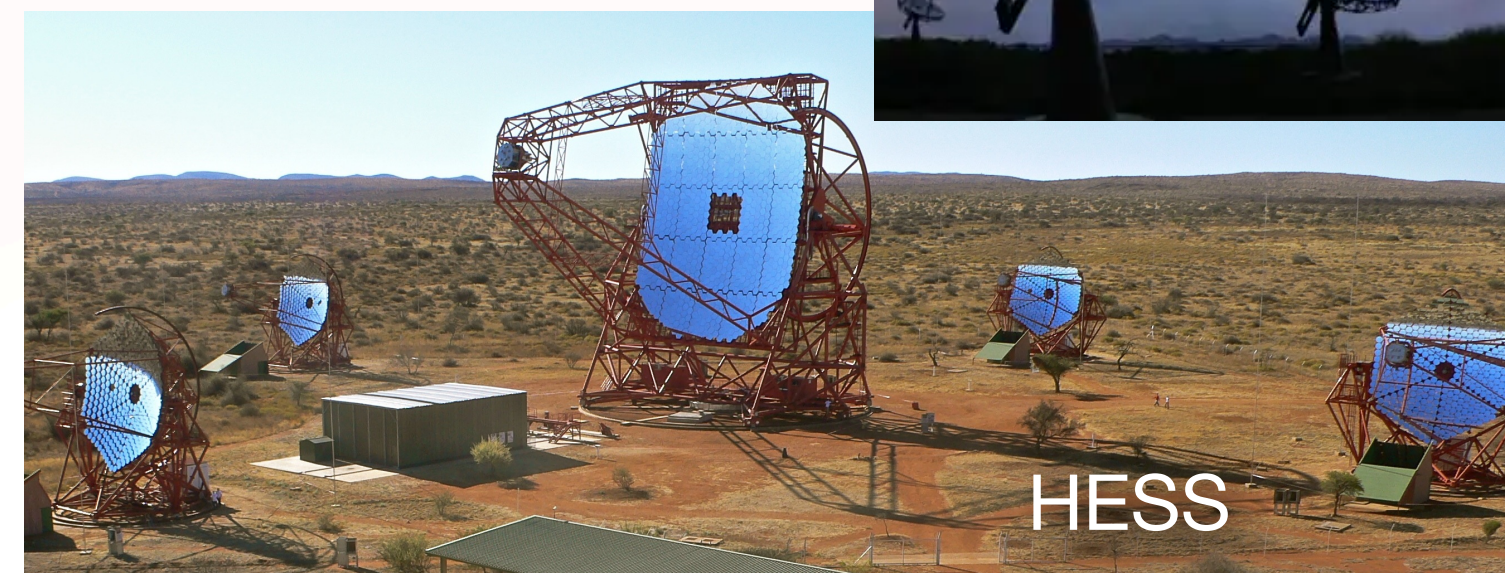
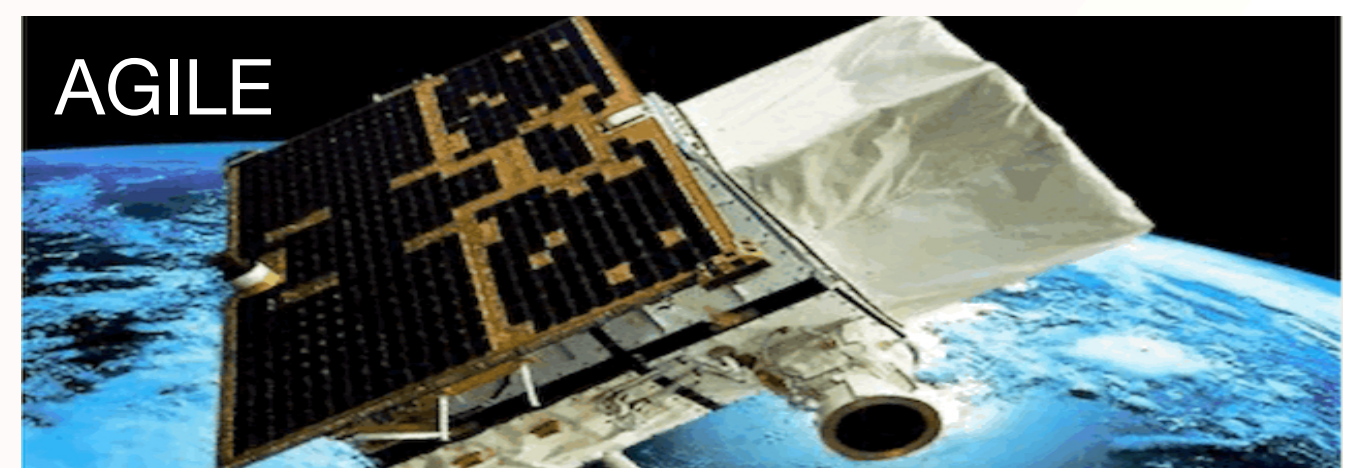
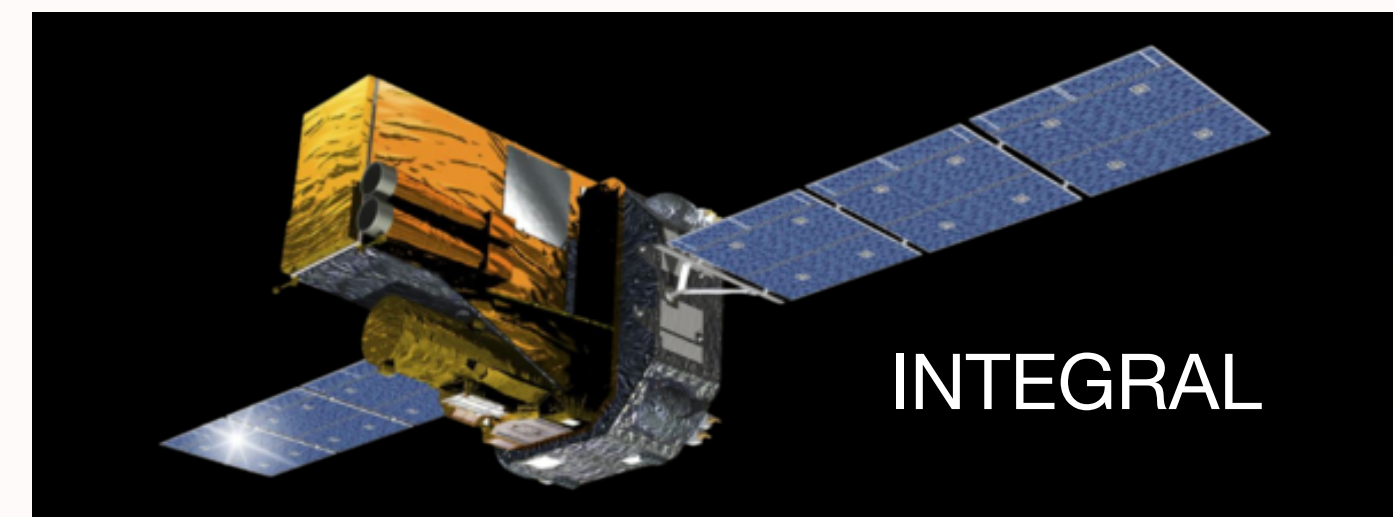


Motivation

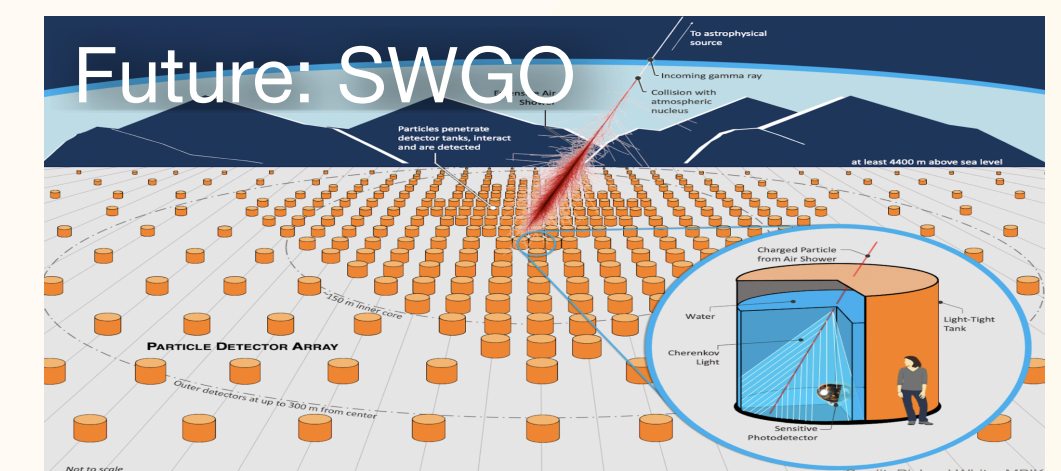
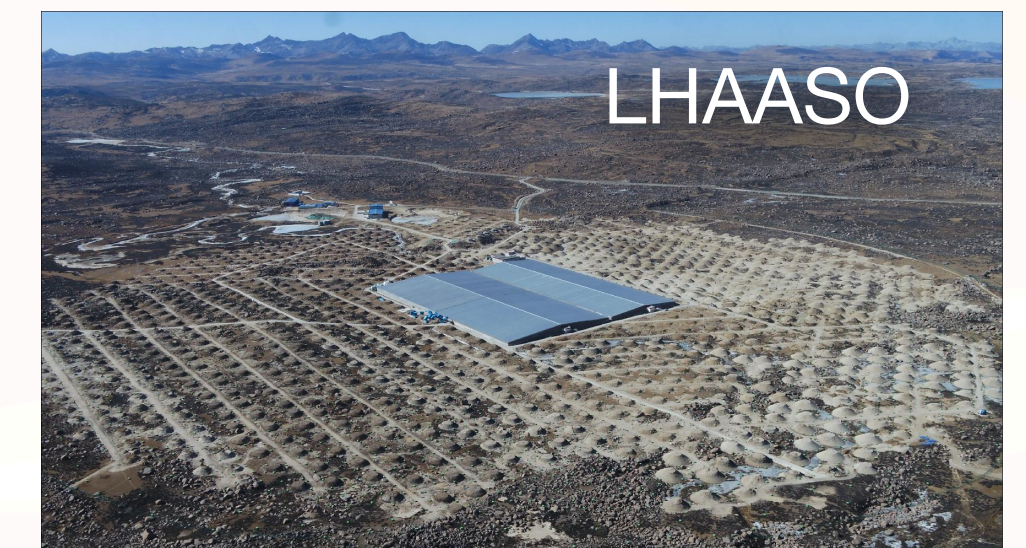
Different γ -ray telescopes have been trying to detect DM in the past decade

Imaging Atmospheric Cherenkov Telescopes

Space Telescopes



Water Cherenkov detector

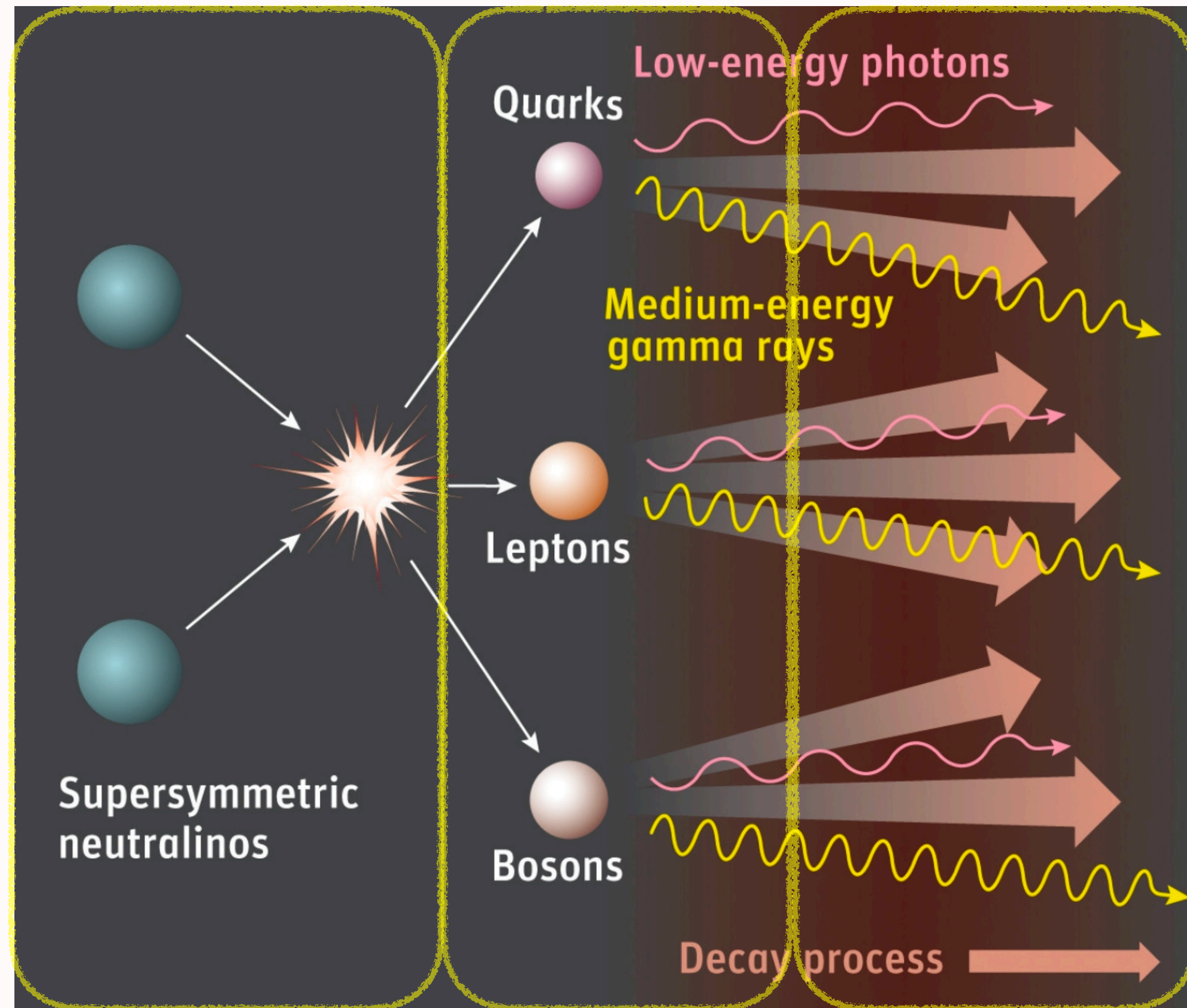


Motivation

Supersymmetry or
other models

Standard Model

Astrophysics

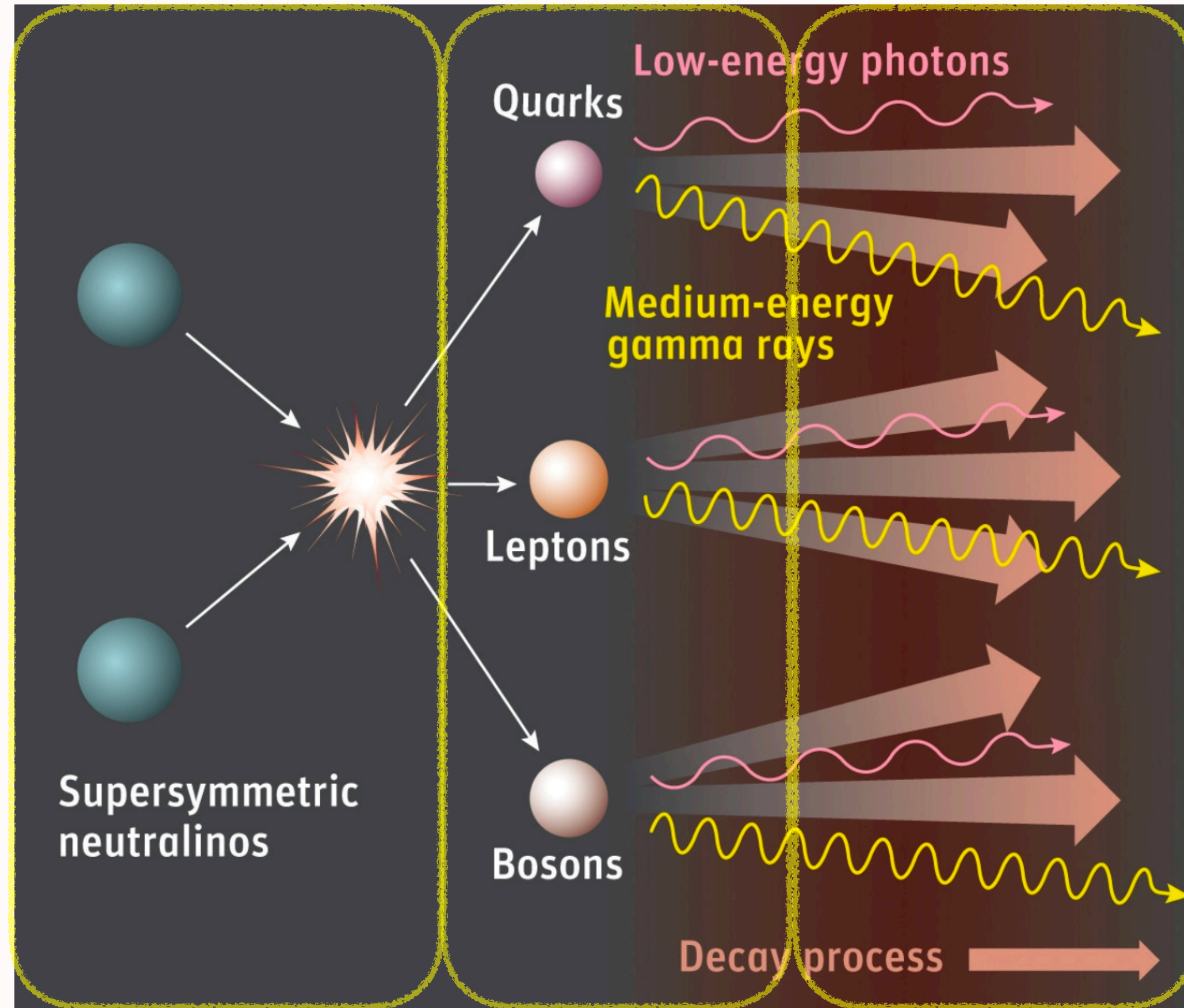


Motivation

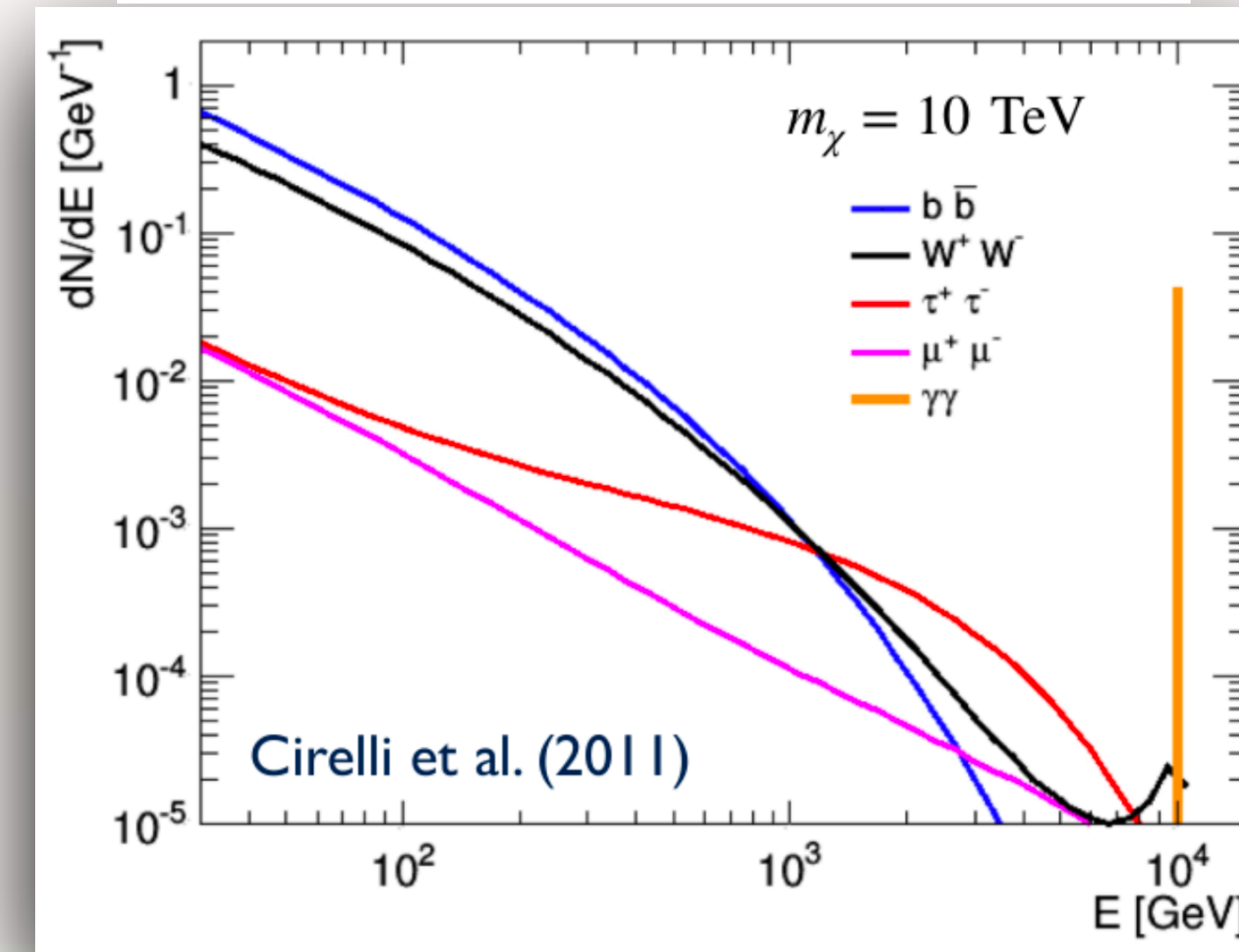
Supersymmetry or other models

Standard Model

Astrophysics



Energy distribution of gamma-rays from DM annihilation



DM cross-section

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

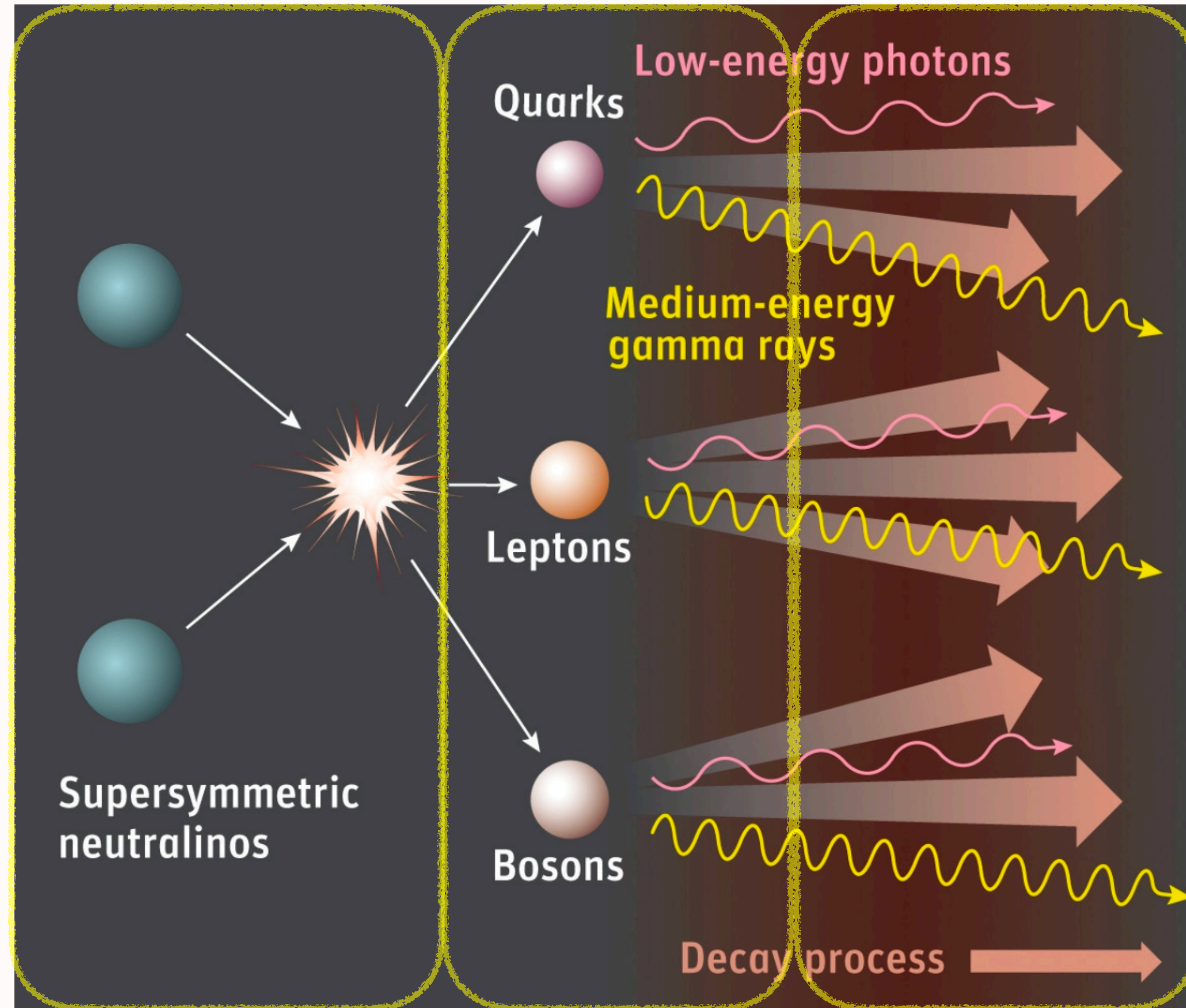
Instrument Response Function

Motivation

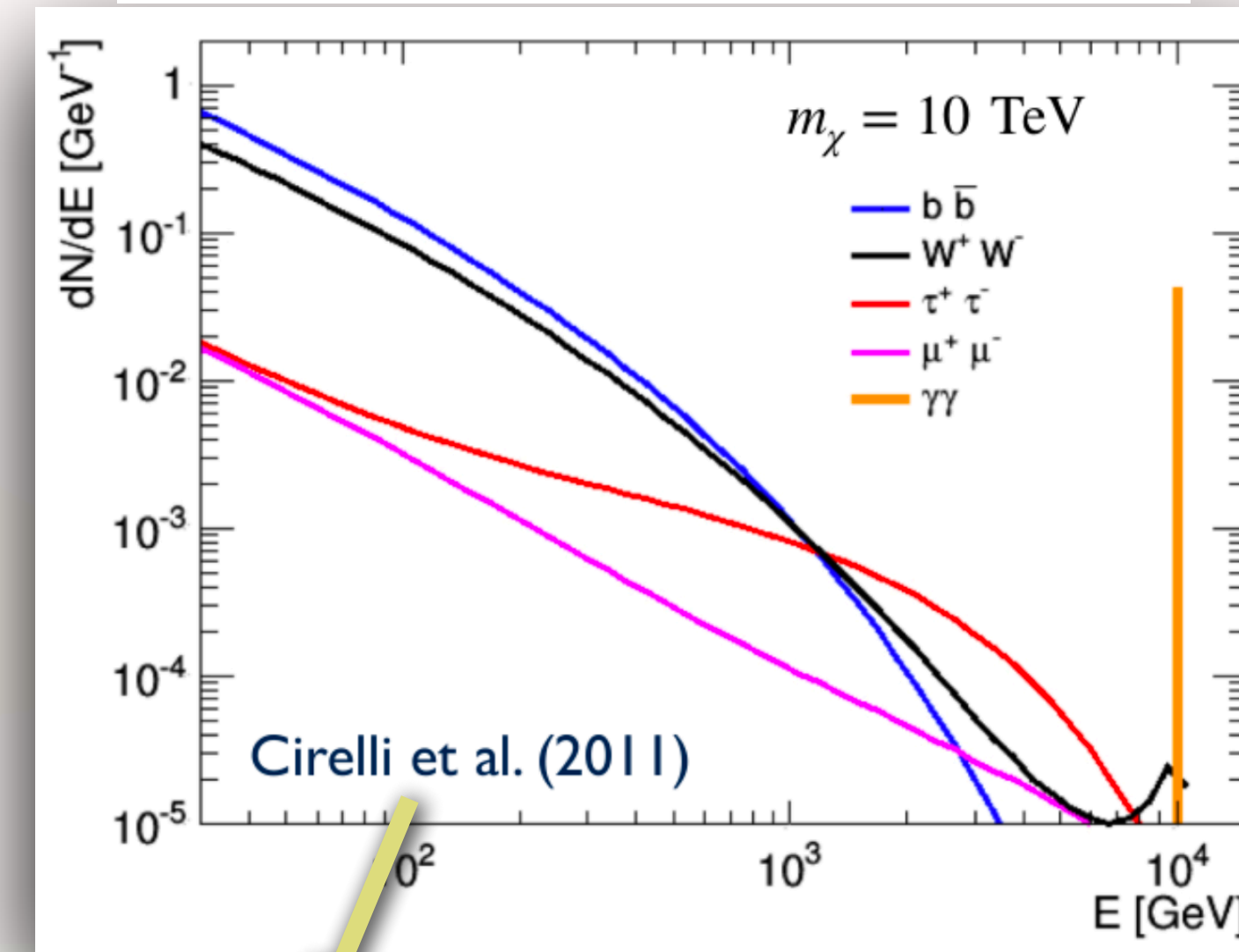
Supersymmetry or
other models

Standard Model

Astrophysics



Energy distribution of gamma-rays from
DM annihilation



PPPC 4 DM ID: a poor particle physicist cookbook for dark matter indirect
detection

Am score 15

M Cirelli, G Corcella, A Hektor, G Hütsi, M Kadastik, P Panci, M Raidal, F Sala, A Strumia

Journal of Cosmology and Astroparticle Physics, 2011 · iopscience.iop.org

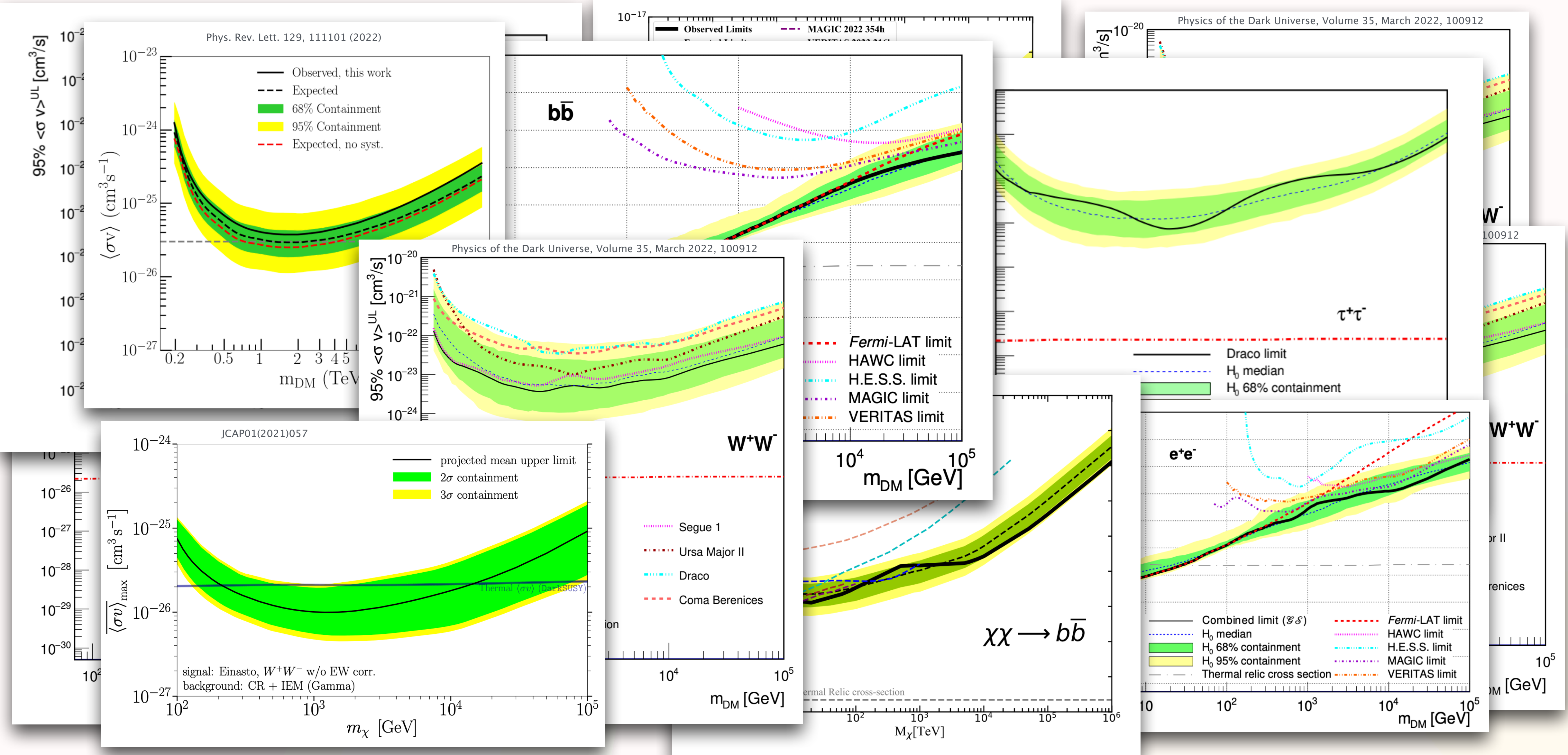
Abstract

We provide ingredients and recipes for computing signals of TeV-scale Dark Matter annihilations and decays in the Galaxy and beyond. For each DM channel, we present the energy spectra of at production, computed by high-statistics simulations. We estimate the Monte Carlo uncertainty by comparing the results yielded by the Pythia and Herwig event generators. We then provide the propagation functions for charged particles in the Galaxy, for several DM distribution profiles and sets of propagation parameters. Propagation of

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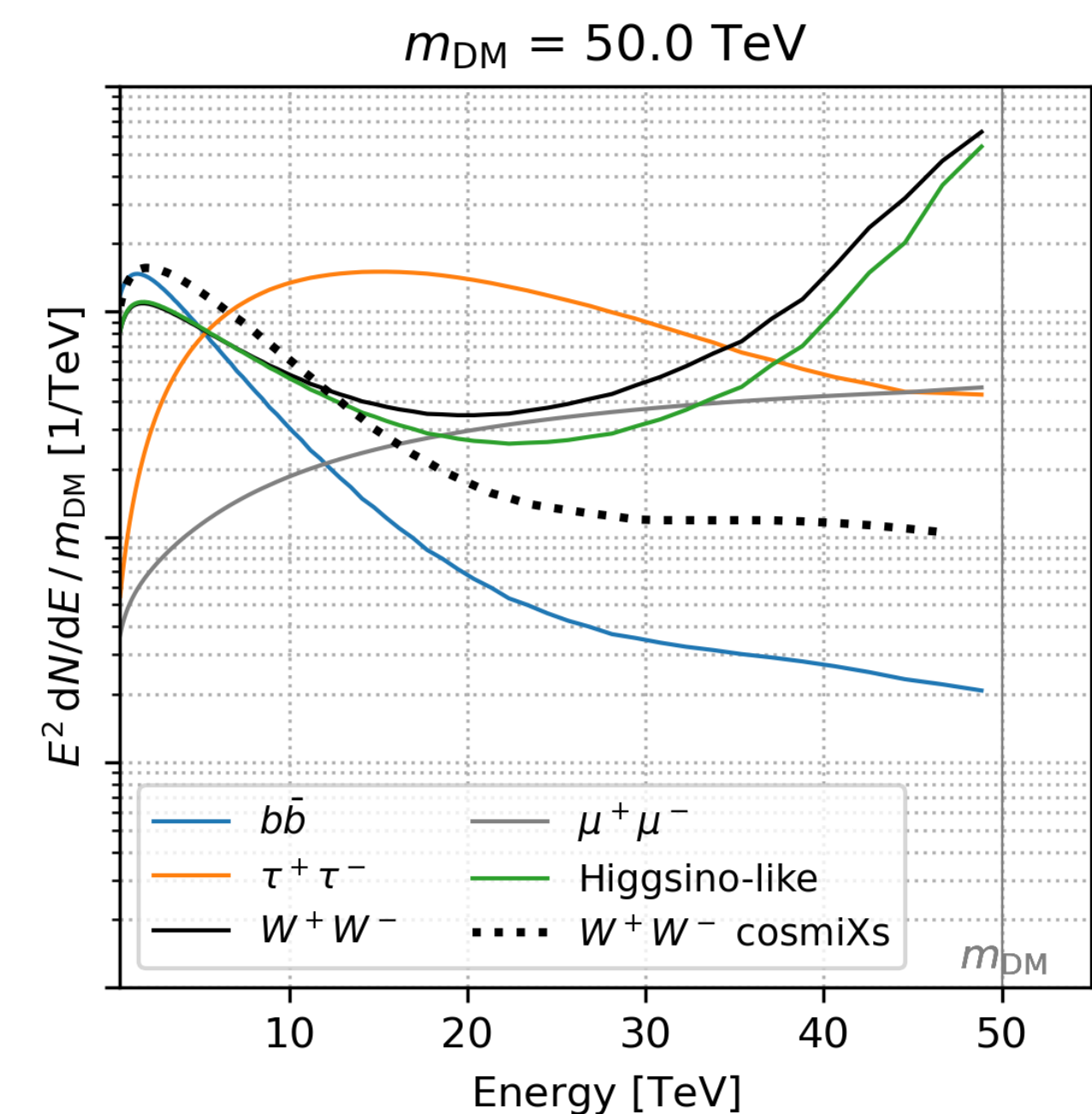
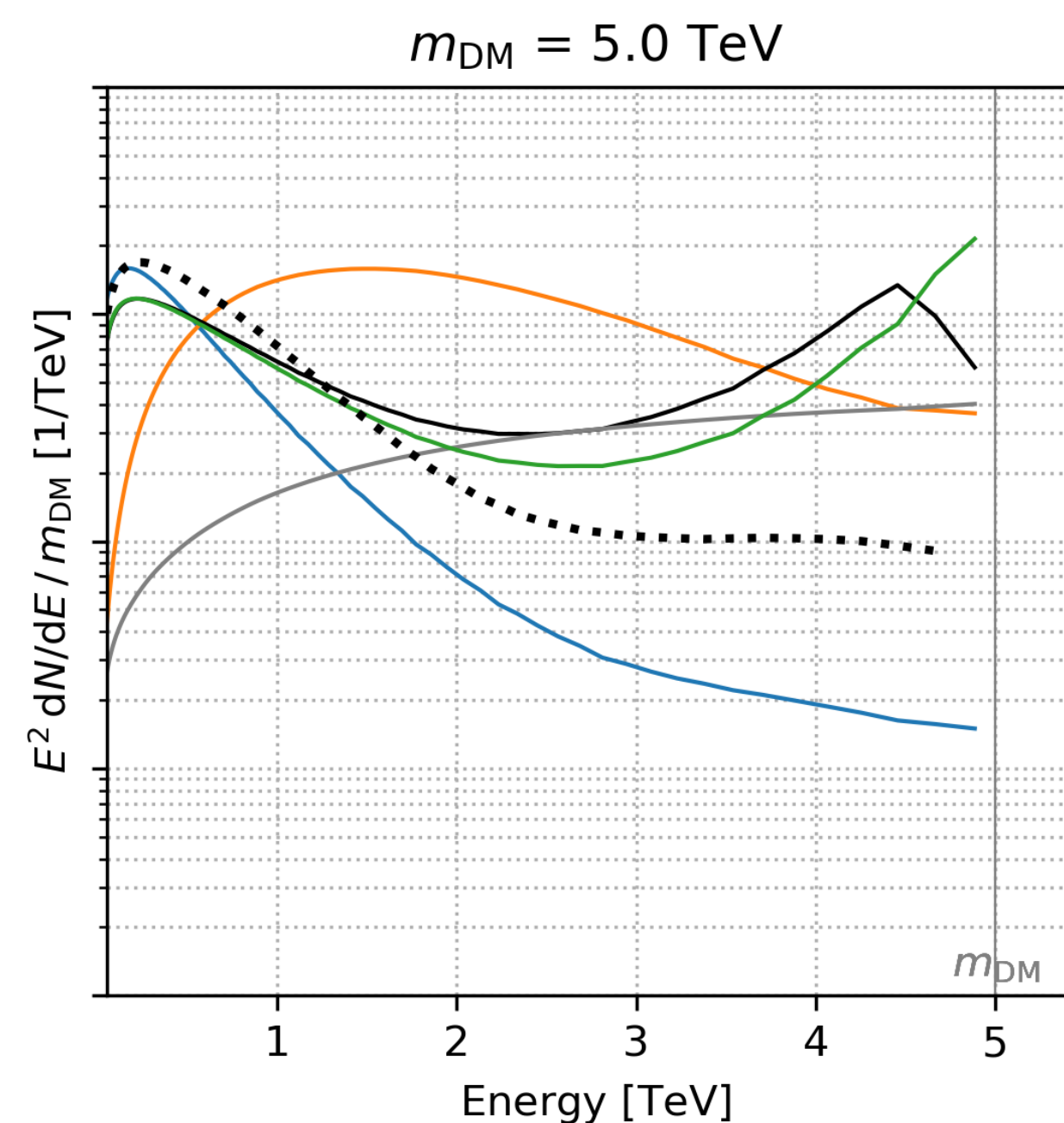
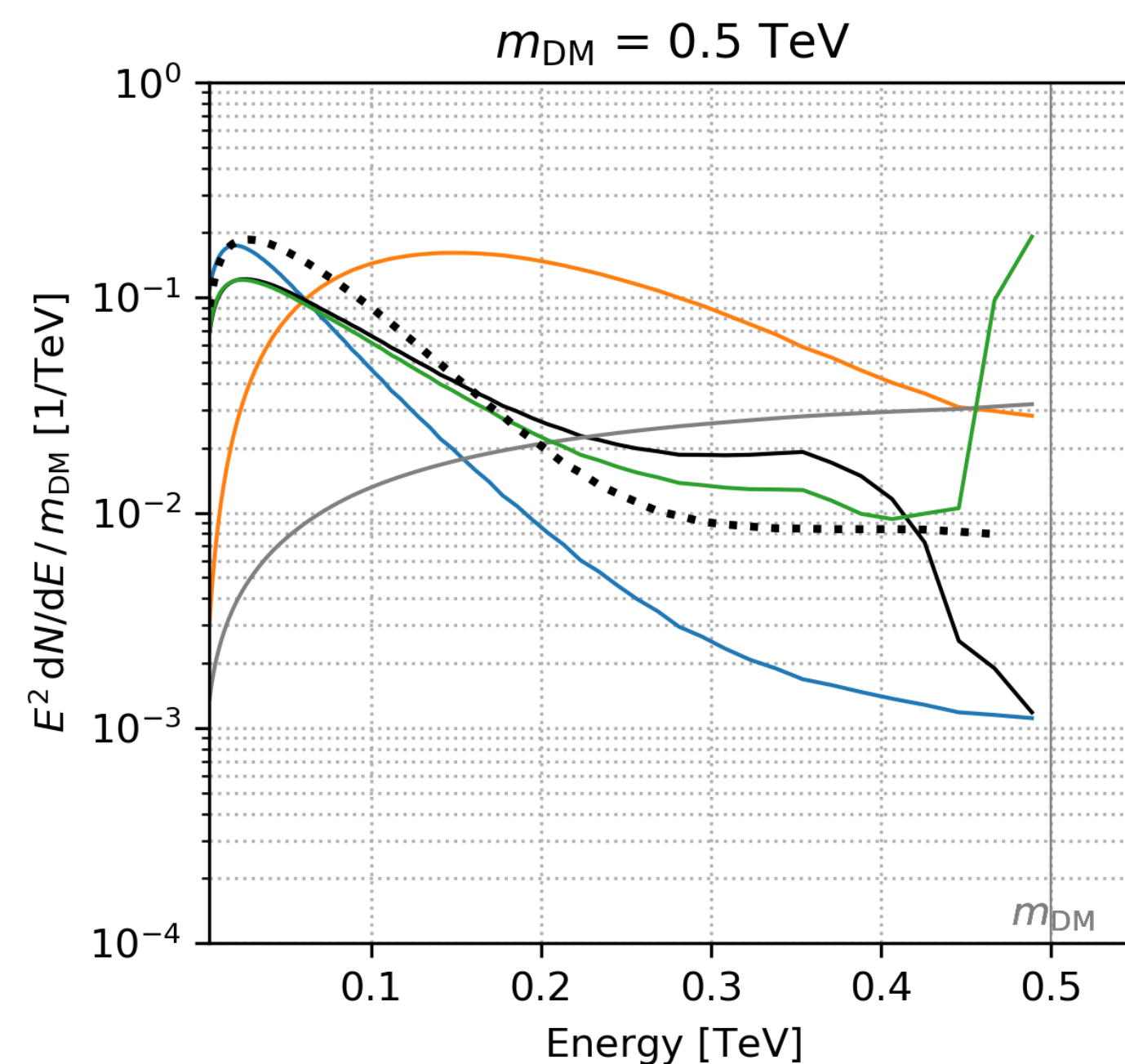
Motivation



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 σ

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

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

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

$$\ln \mathcal{L}_i(s_i | D_i) \equiv f_i(s_i)$$

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

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

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

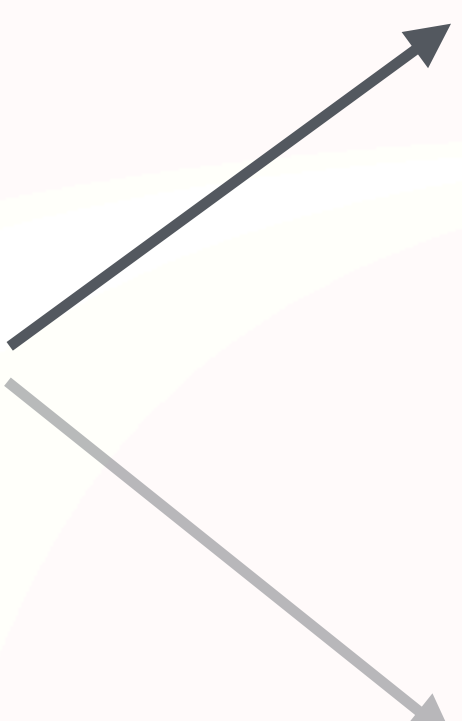
Taylor expansion around the value $\hat{\sigma}$ that maximizes the likelihood [1]

[1] Cowan, Glen, et al. "Asymptotic formulae for likelihood-based tests of new physics." *The European Physical Journal C* 71.2 (2011): 1554.

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

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

Expected bkg (nuisance) Off counts Model-independent constant

On counts

$$f_i(s_i) = s_i - \underbrace{n_i \ln(s_i + b_i)}_{\text{Cash Statistic}} + (1 + \alpha) b_i - m_i \ln(\alpha b_i) + C$$

Wstat (On/Off) Statistic

The diagram illustrates the relationship between the asymptotic formula for upper limits and the Wstat (On/Off) statistic. The asymptotic formula is shown in a yellow box. Below it, the Wstat equation is presented. Arrows indicate the correspondence between terms: λ points to the expected background b_i ; $\sum_i K_i^2$ points to the on counts n_i ; $f_i''(K_i \hat{\sigma})$ points to the off counts m_i ; and the constant term points to the model-independent constant C . The term $n_i \ln(s_i + b_i)$ is identified as the Cash Statistic, and the entire equation is identified as the Wstat (On/Off) Statistic.

Upper Limits

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

$$f_i(s_i) = \underbrace{s_i - n_i \ln(s_i + b_i)}_{\text{Cash Statistic}} + \underbrace{(1 + \alpha) b_i - m_i \ln(\alpha b_i) + C}_{\text{Wstat (On/Off) Statistic}}$$

On counts
 Expected bkg (nuisance)
 Off counts
 Model-independent constant

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

Upper Limits

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

$$f_i(s_i) = \underbrace{s_i - n_i \ln(s_i + b_i)}_{\text{Cash Statistic}} + \underbrace{(1 + \alpha) b_i - m_i \ln(\alpha b_i) + C}_{\text{Wstat (On/Off) Statistic}}$$

On counts Expected bkg (nuisance) Off counts Model-independent constant

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

$$\xrightarrow[s=0 \quad n=b \quad m=\alpha b]{\text{No signal hypothesis } \hat{\sigma} = 0}$$

$$f'' = \frac{1}{b(1 + \alpha^{-1})}$$

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

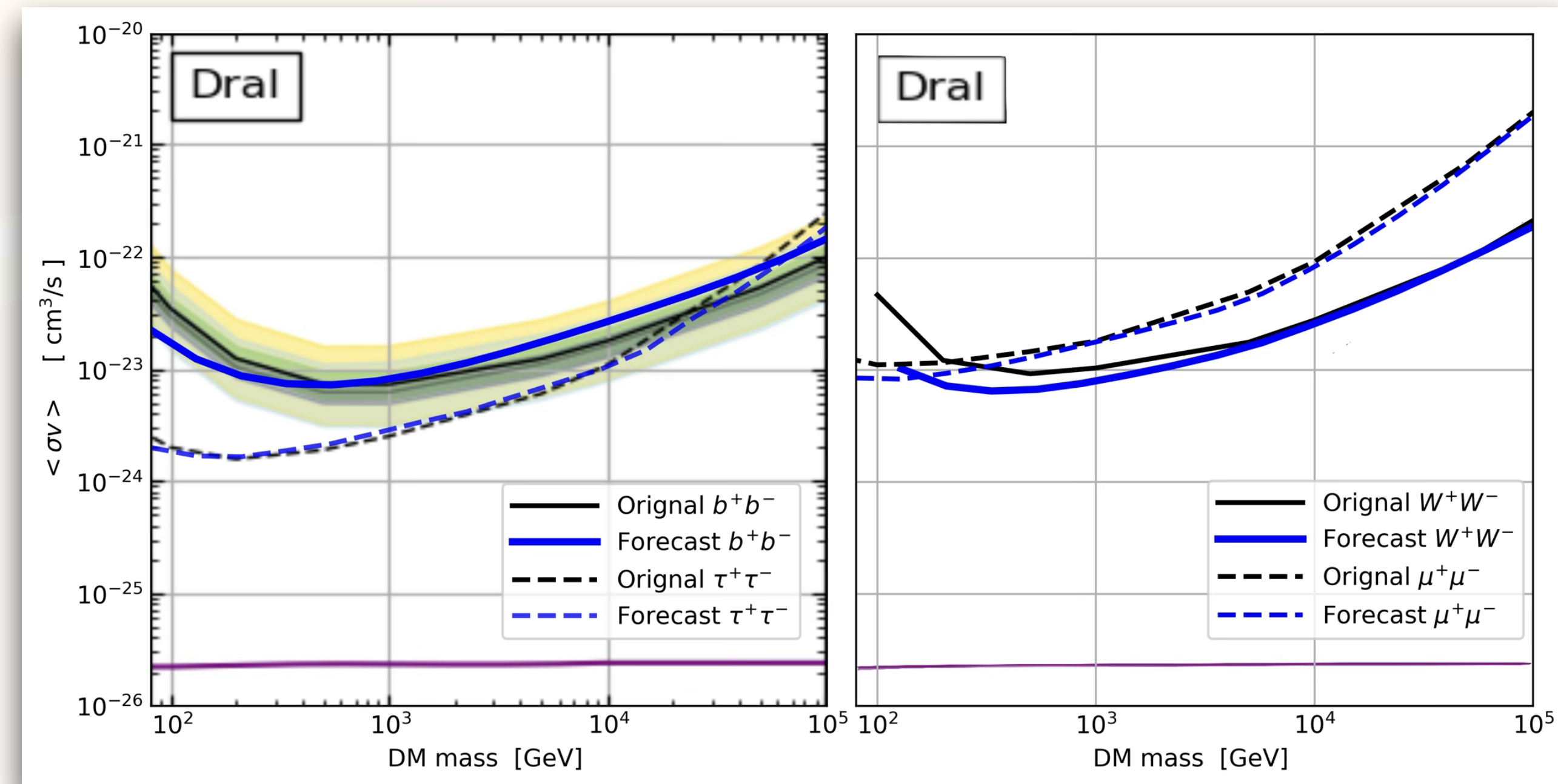
$$\sigma^{UL} \simeq \sqrt{\frac{\lambda}{\sum_i K_i^2 / ((1 + \alpha^{-1}) b_i)}}$$

1 Forecasting Upper Limits

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

- a J -factor of $10^{18.7} \text{ GeV}^2/\text{cm}^5$ integrated over a cone of radius 0.5°
- 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

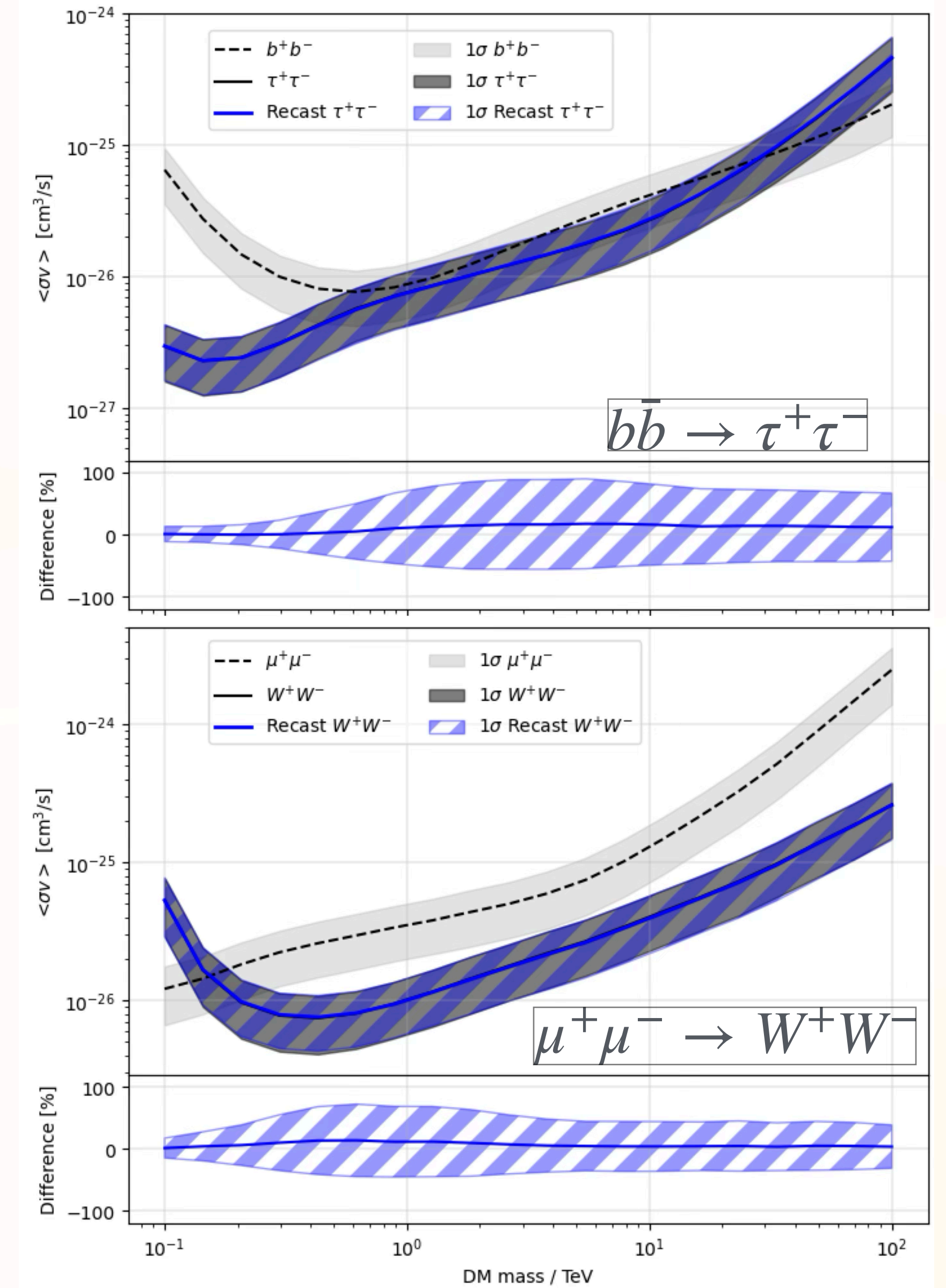
$$\frac{\sigma_I^{UL}}{\sigma_0^{UL}} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \rightarrow \sigma_I^{UL} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_i K_{0,i}^2/b_i}{\sum_i K_{I,i}^2/b_i}} \cdot \sigma_0^{UL}$$

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 σ^{UL} for each DM mass m_χ 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)

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

↖ ↗
?

Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



Recasting expression required knowledge of the instrument IRF (background \mathbf{b}_i and telescope response for computing \mathbf{K}_i)

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

**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)

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

?

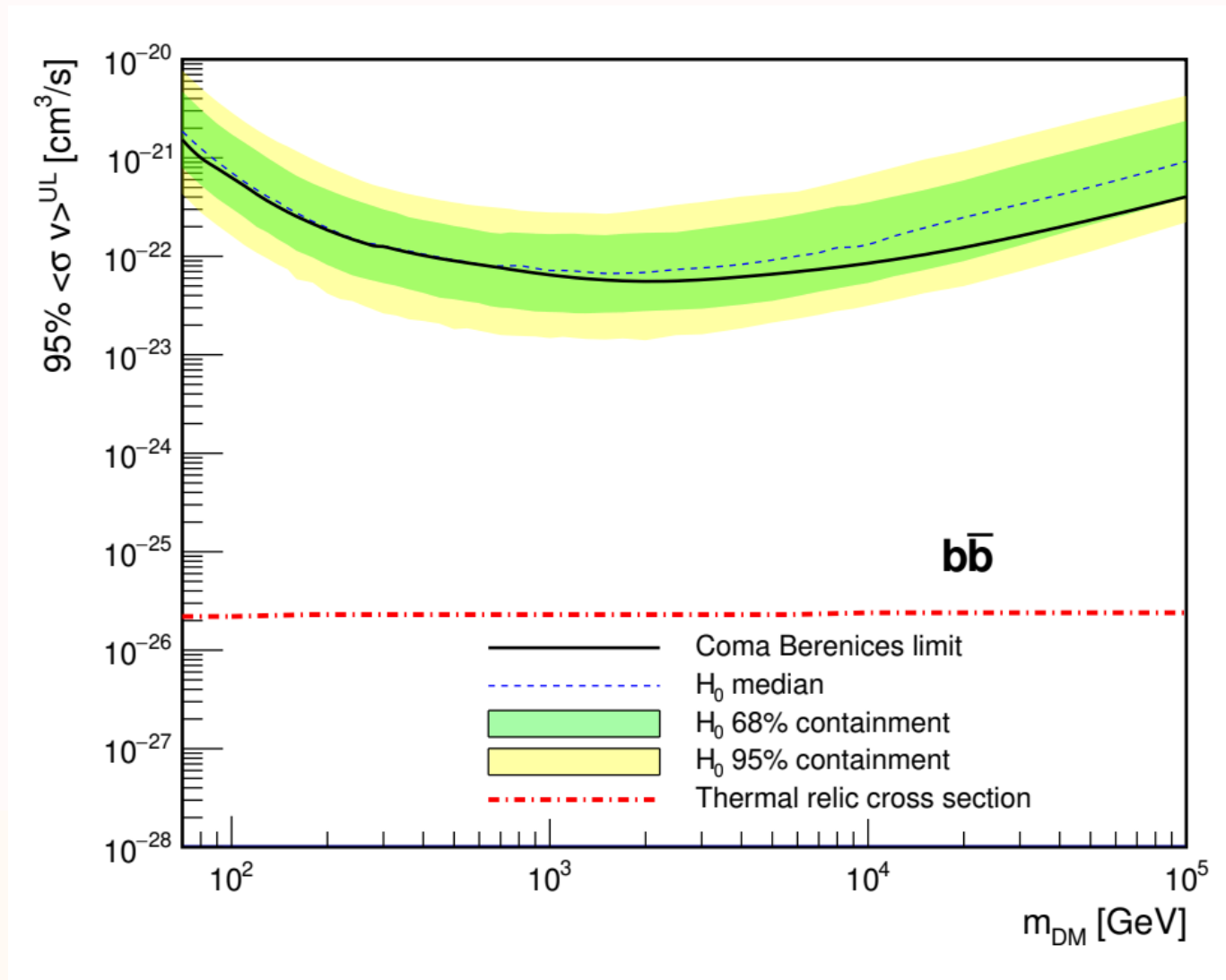
$$V_i \equiv \frac{K_i}{\sqrt{b_i} \cdot \Delta N_{\gamma,i}} \approx \frac{1}{\sqrt{b_i}} A_i$$

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

✓ V_i are approximately model independent, therefore can be obtained by comparing ULs from 2 channels

Effective area averaged over the bin i

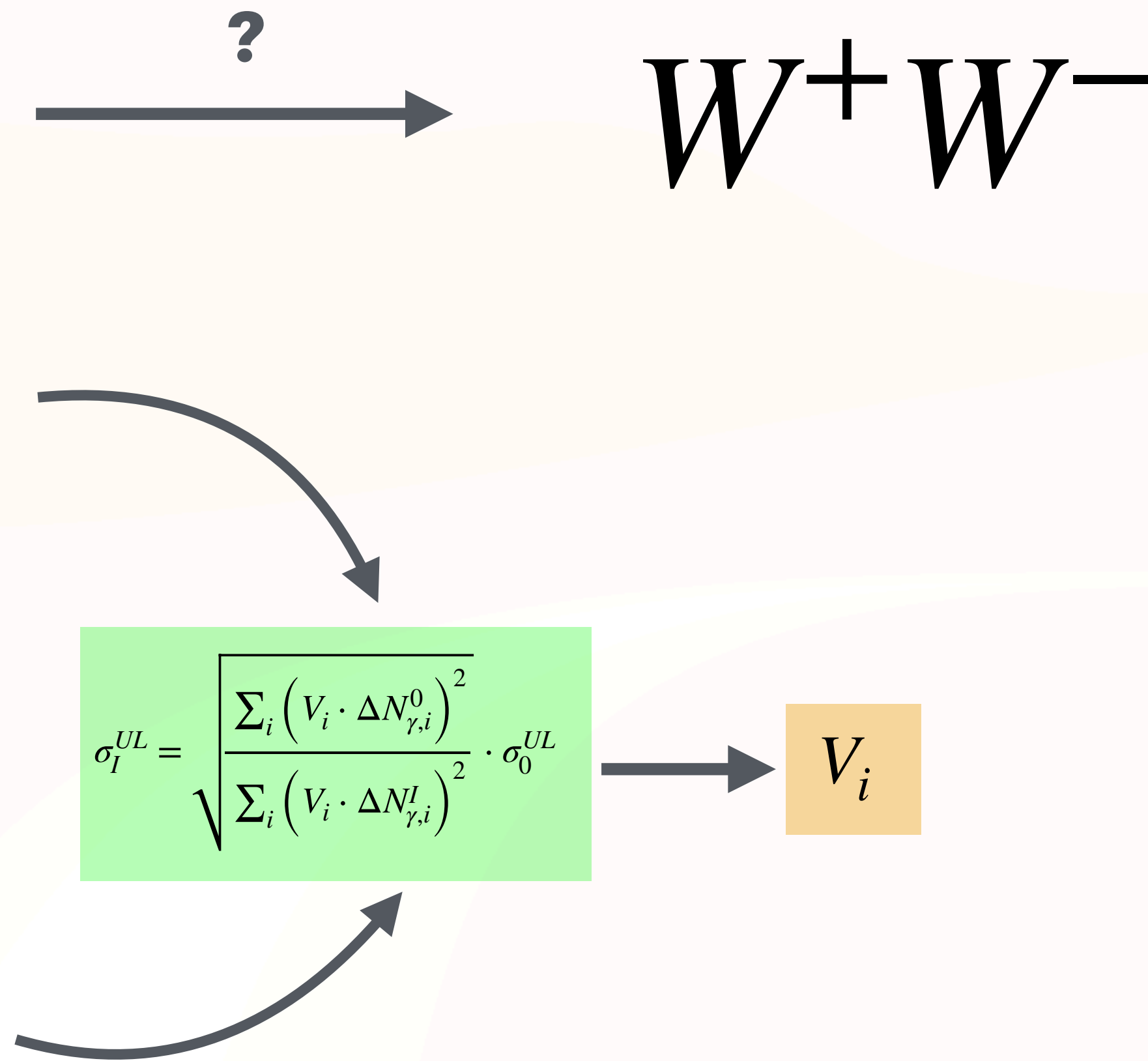
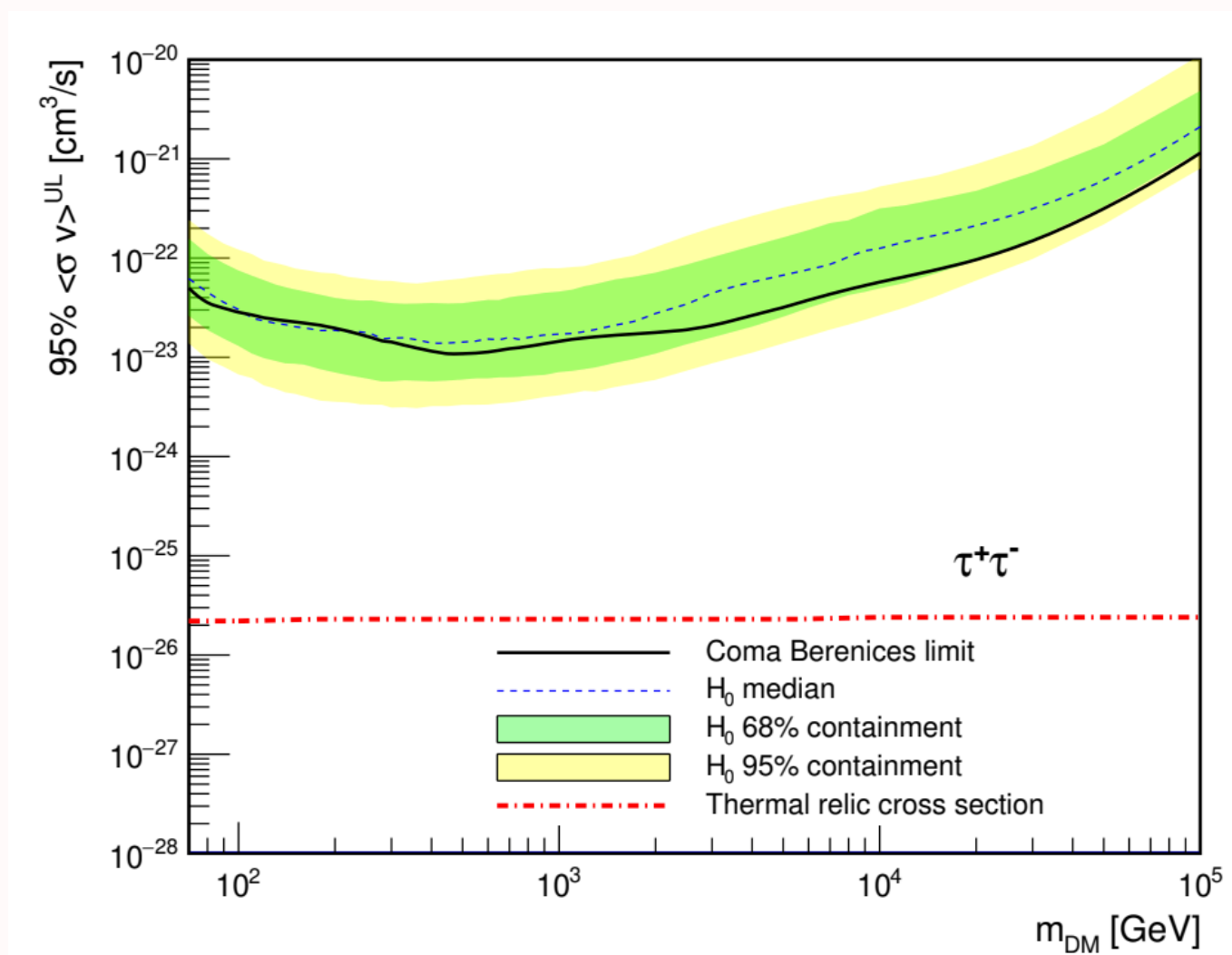
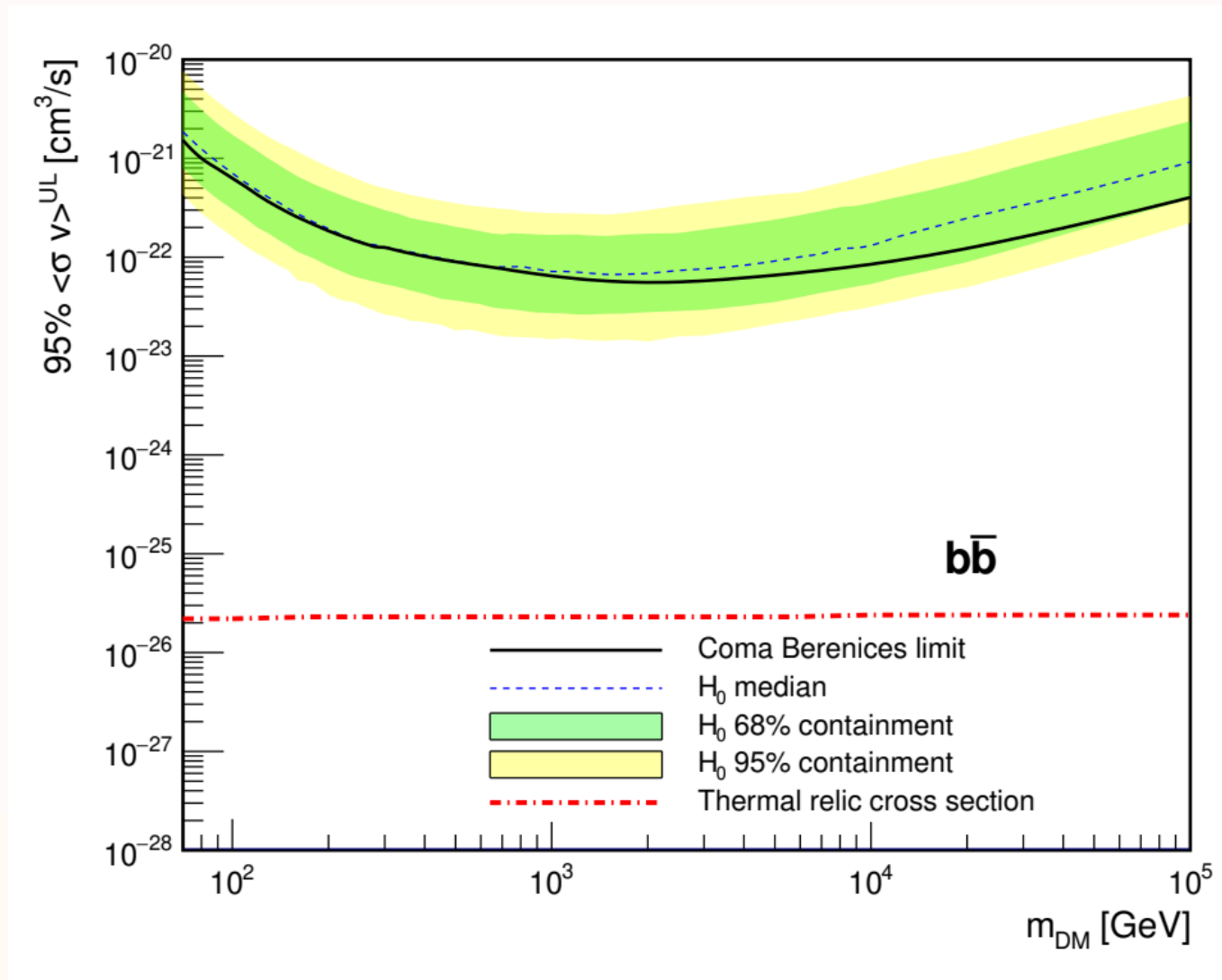
Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



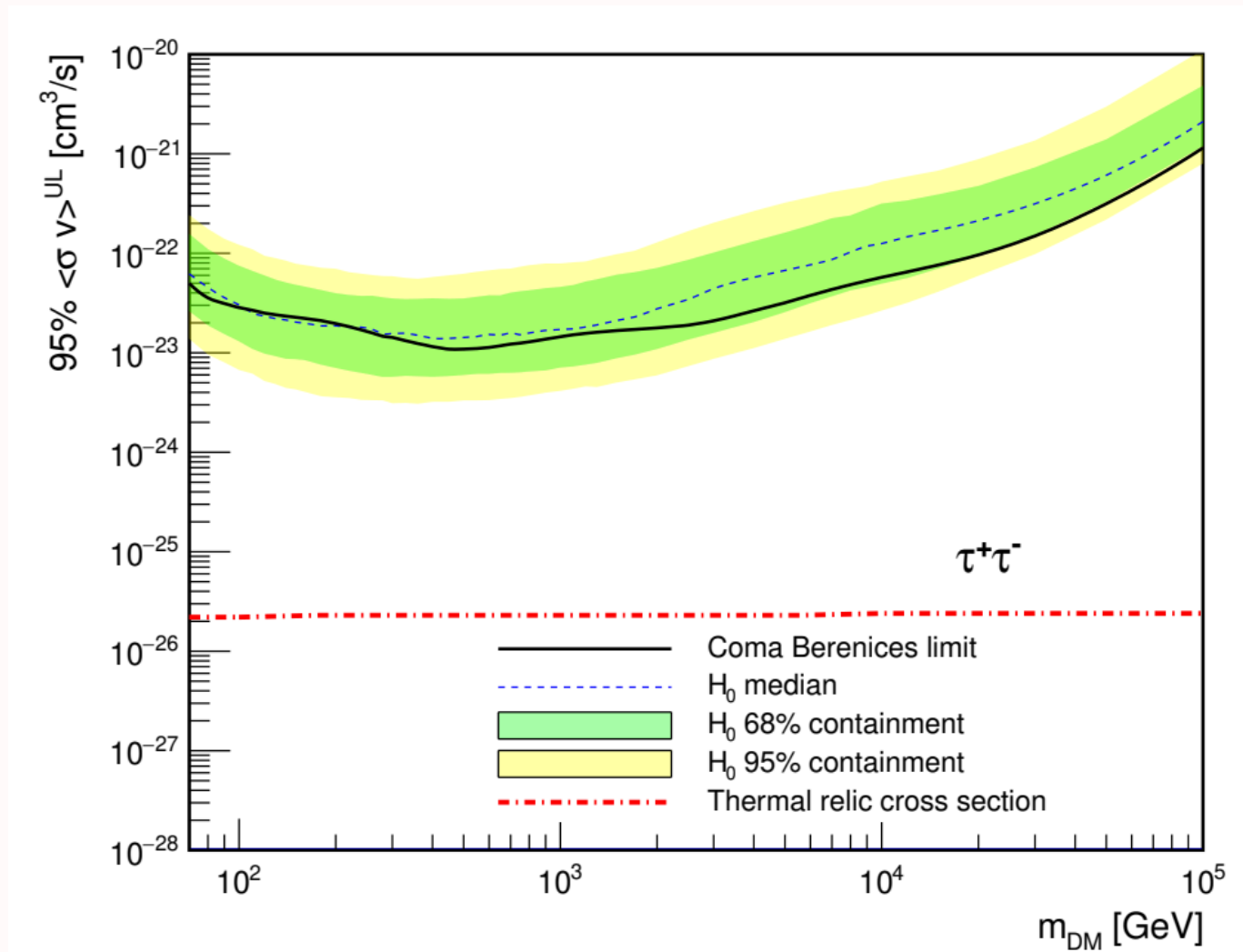
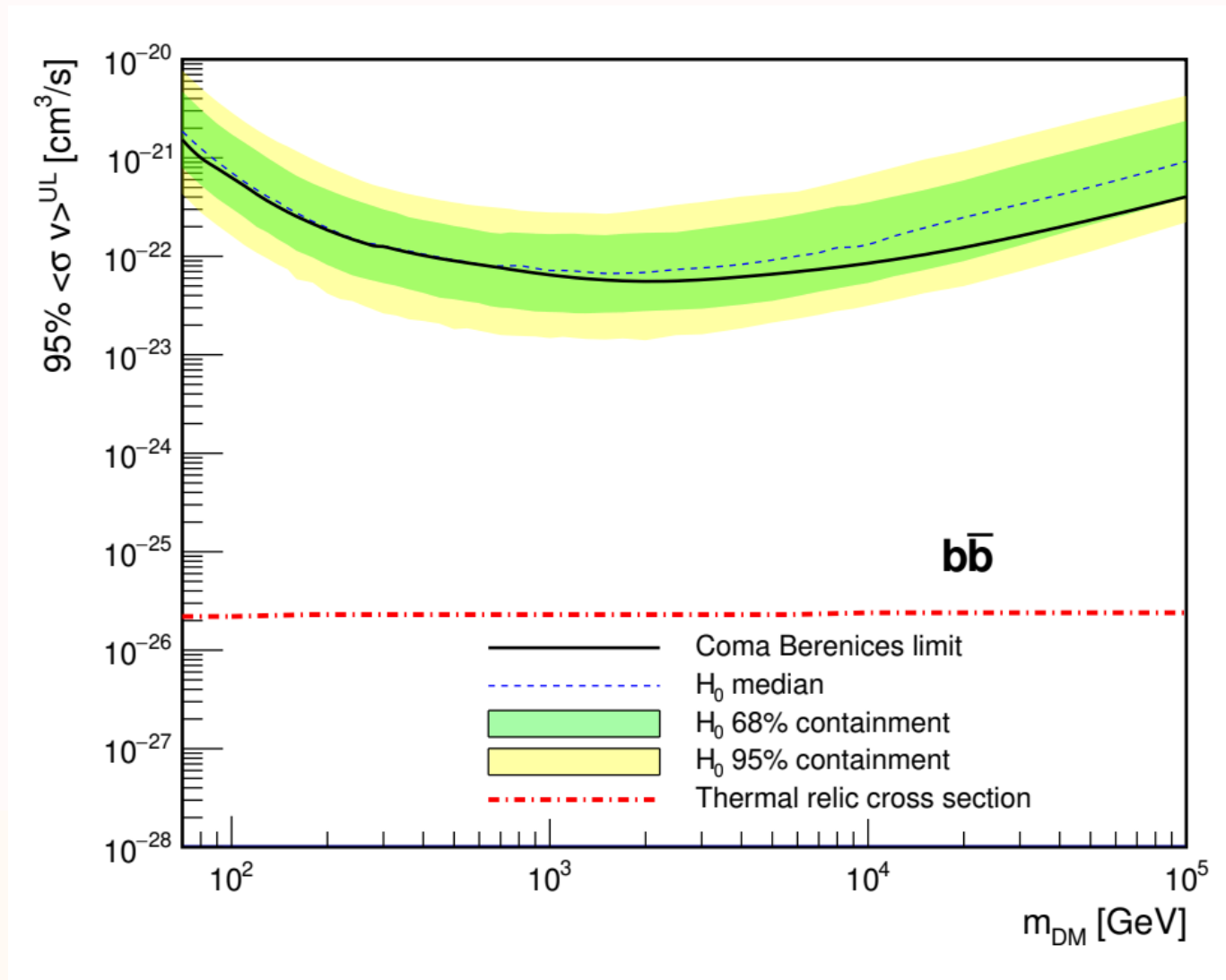
?

$W^+ W^-$

Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



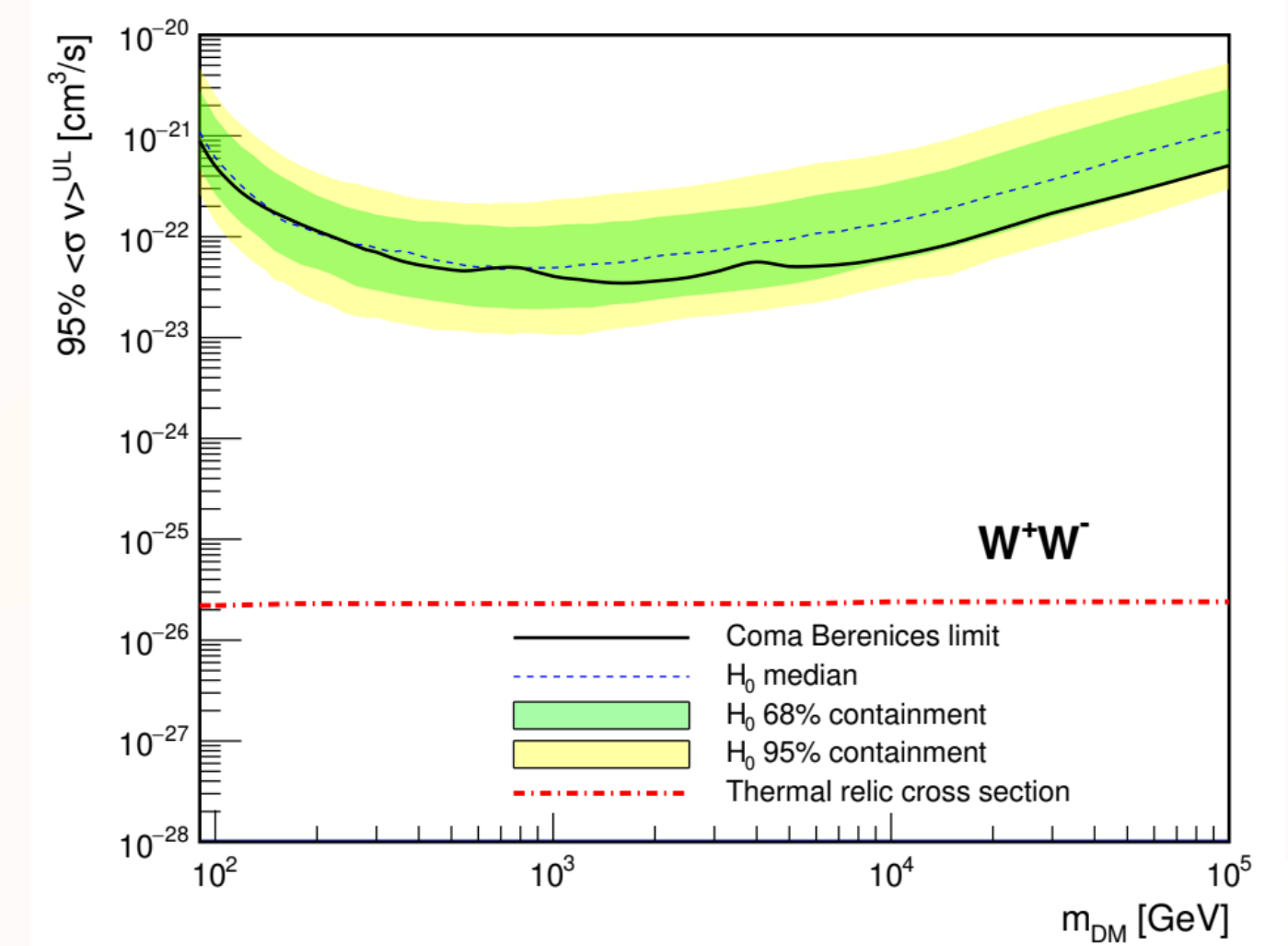
Recasting Across Models - dealing with missing IRF



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

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

Diagram illustrating the recasting process across models. The top equation shows the recasting from the initial model σ_0^{UL} to the final model σ_I^{UL} using the ratio of the sum of squares of the initial and final annihilation cross sections. The bottom equation shows the recasting from the initial model σ_0^{UL} to the final model σ_I^{UL} using the ratio of the sum of squares of the initial and final annihilation cross sections, where V_i is the volume factor.



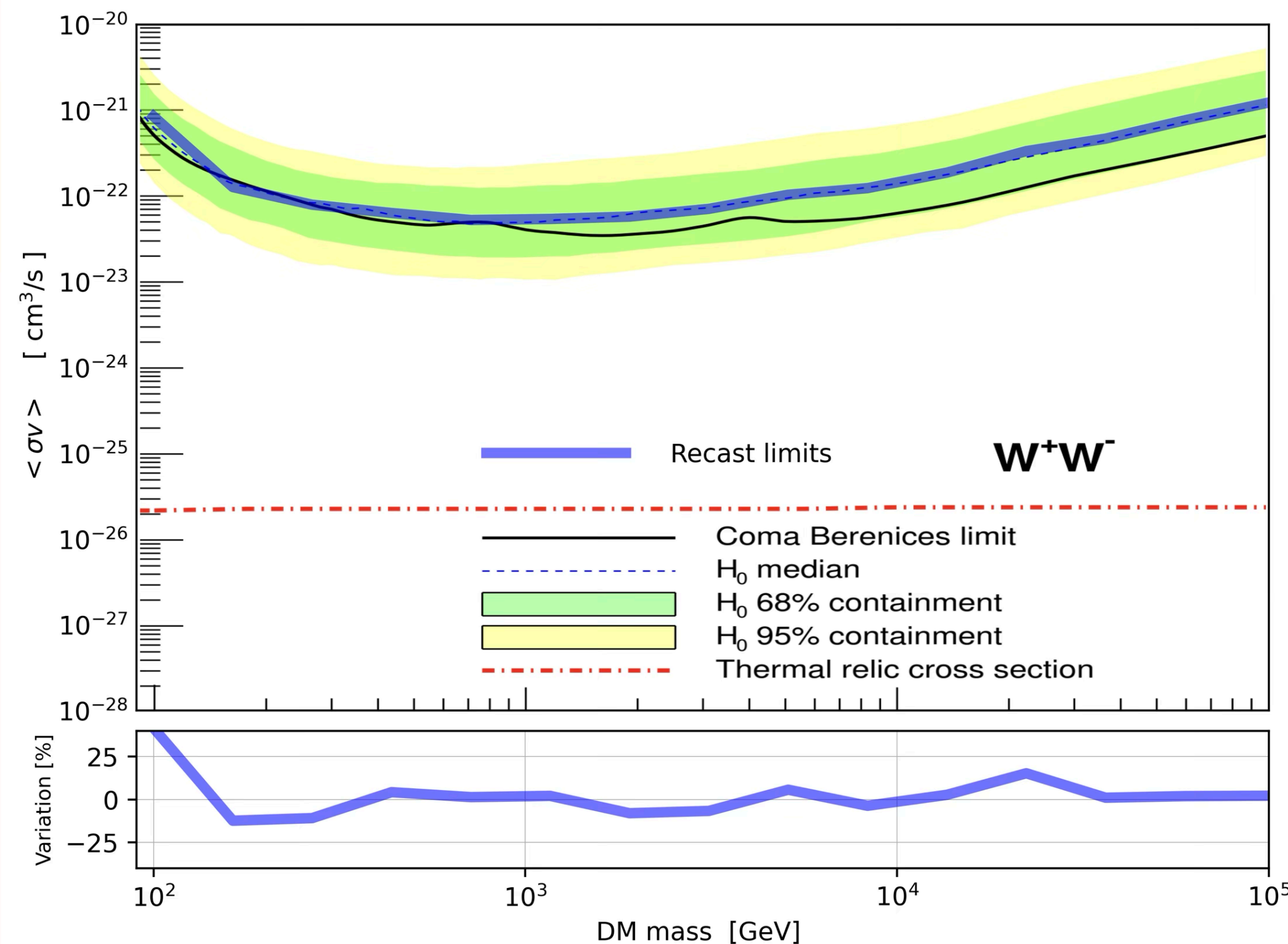
Recasting Across Models

Validation on published ULs from the MAGIC collaboration [1]

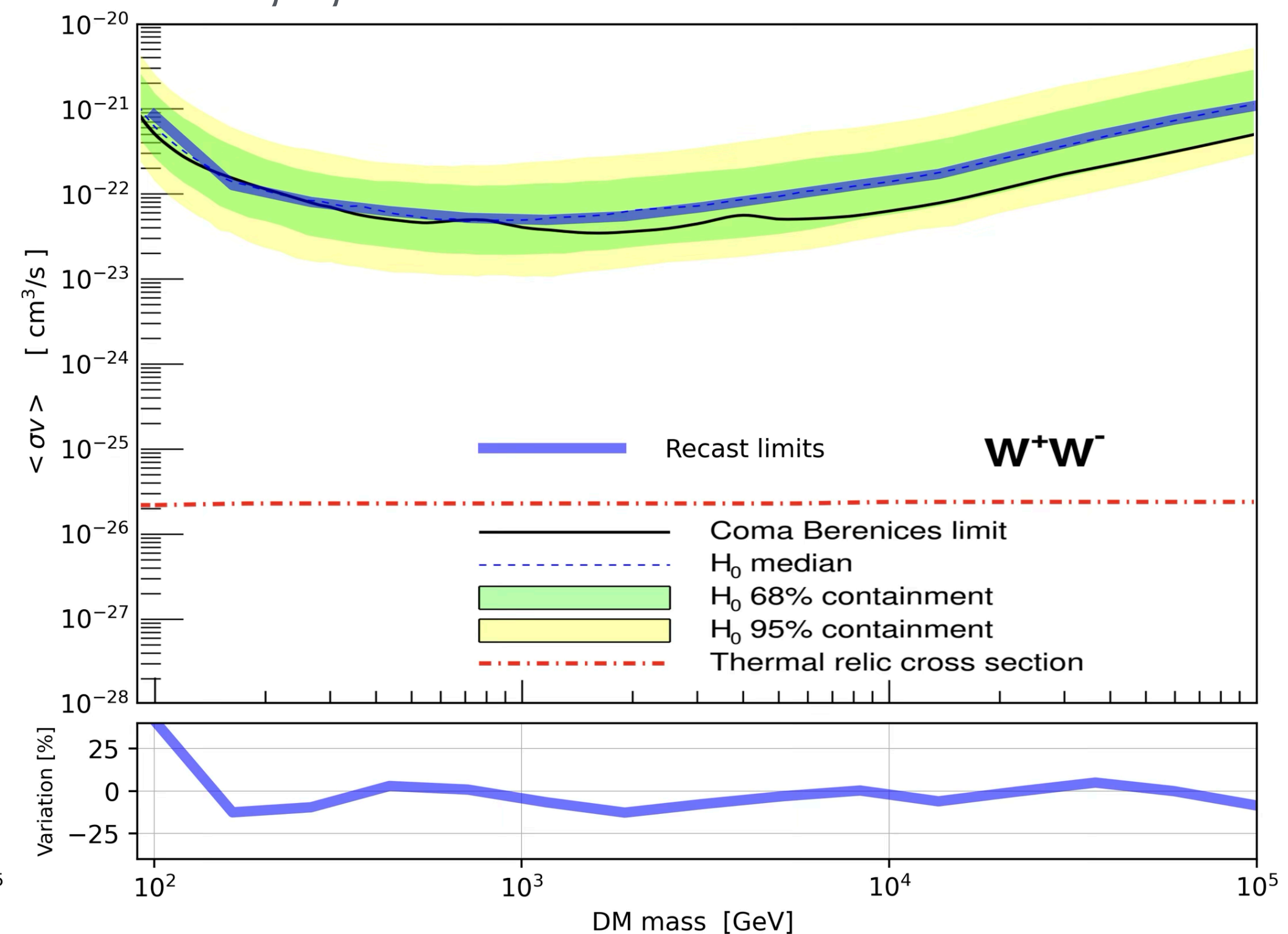
[1] Acciari, V.A., et al. (MAGIC), 2022. Combined searches for dark matter in dwarf spheroidal galaxies observed with the MAGIC telescopes, including new data from Coma Berenices and Draco. Phys. Dark Univ. 35, 100912.

$$b\bar{b} \longrightarrow W^+W^-$$

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



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



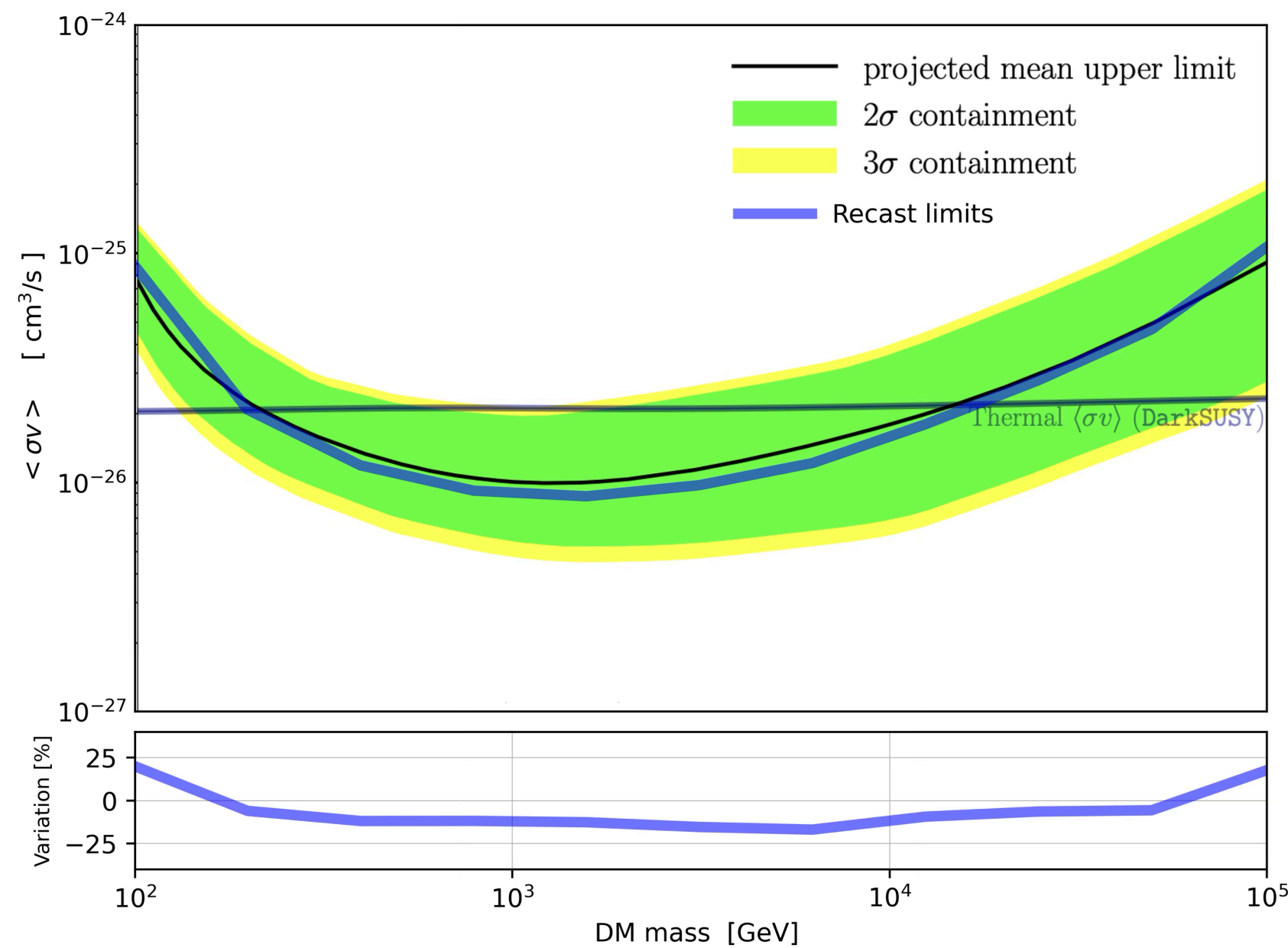
Recasting Across Models

Validation on Published ULs - other instruments

$$b\bar{b} \longrightarrow W^+W^-$$

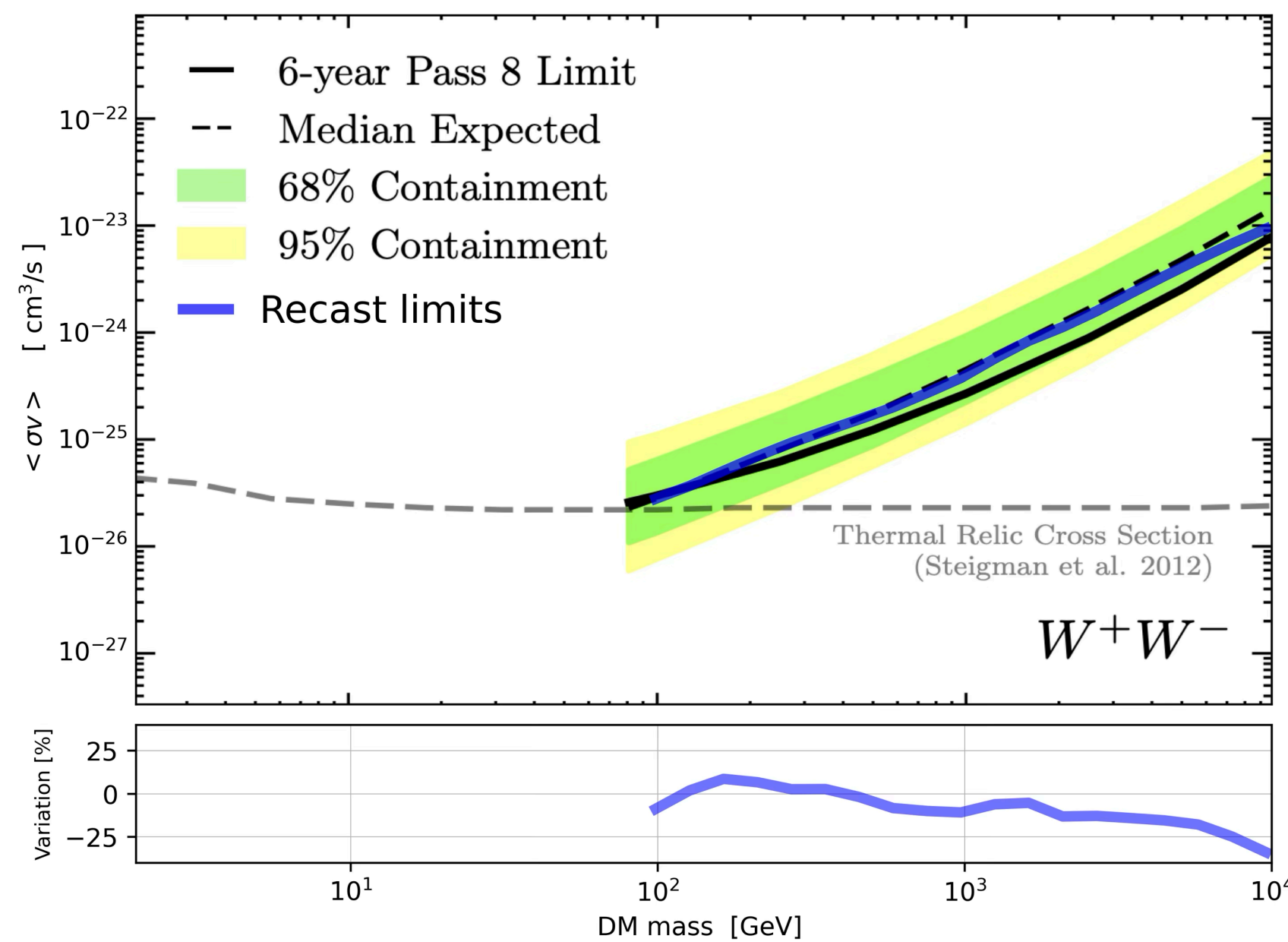
$\tau^+\tau^-$ as a second benchmark channel

CTAO / GC Projection



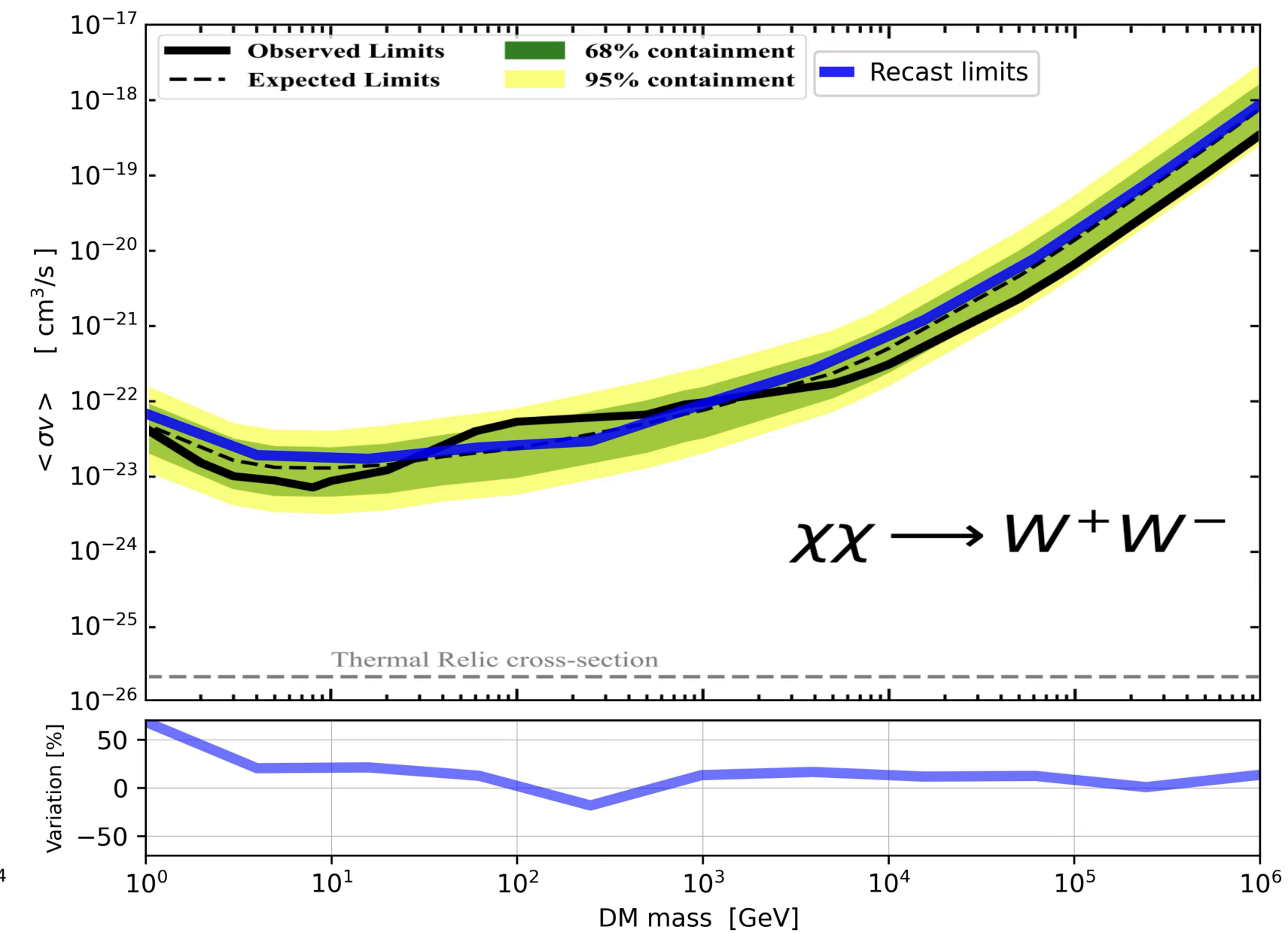
Acharyya, A., et al. (CTA), 2021. Sensitivity of the Cherenkov Telescope Array to a dark matter signal from the Galactic centre. JCAP 01, 057

Fermi - LAT / dSph



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.

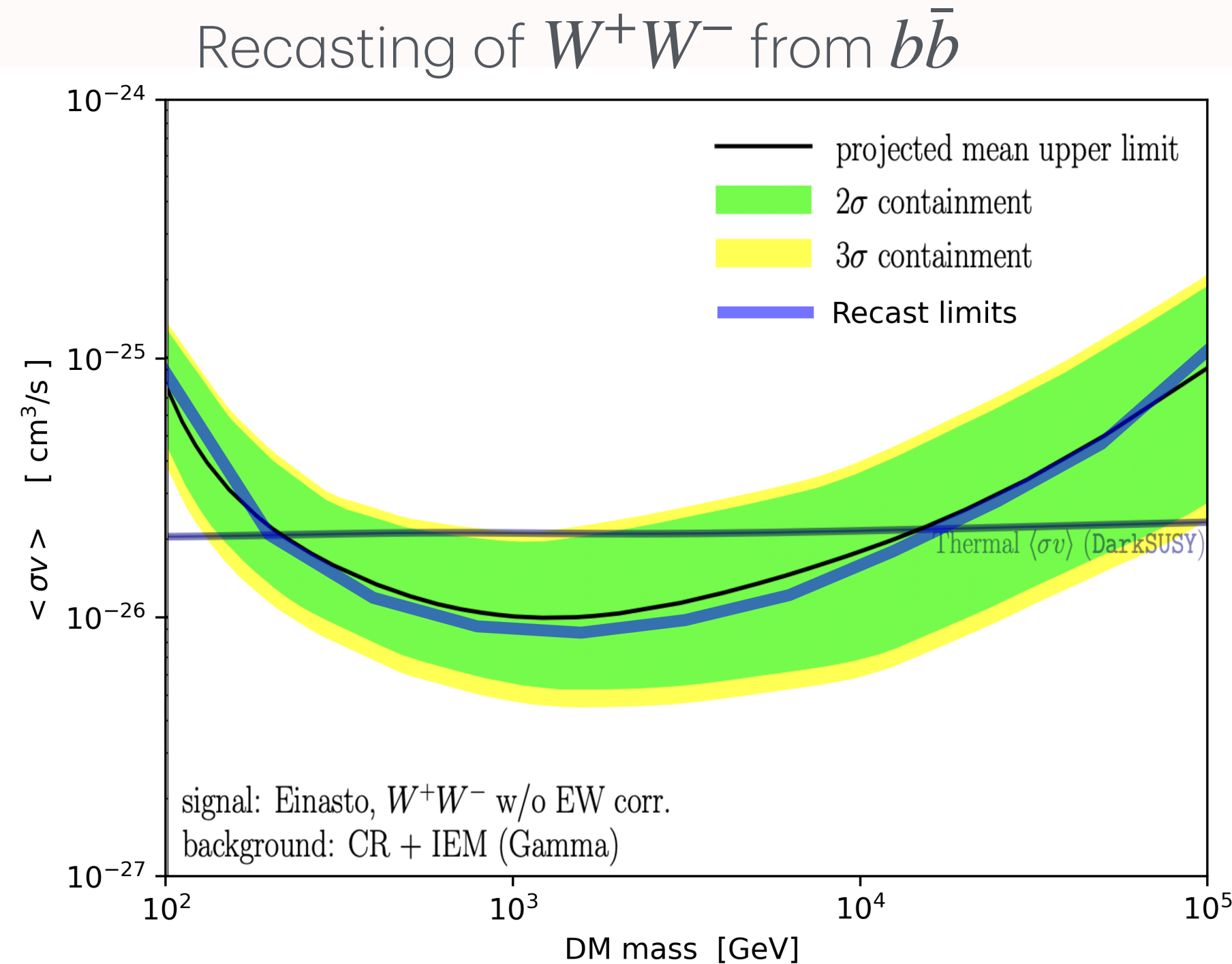
LHAASO / dSph



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

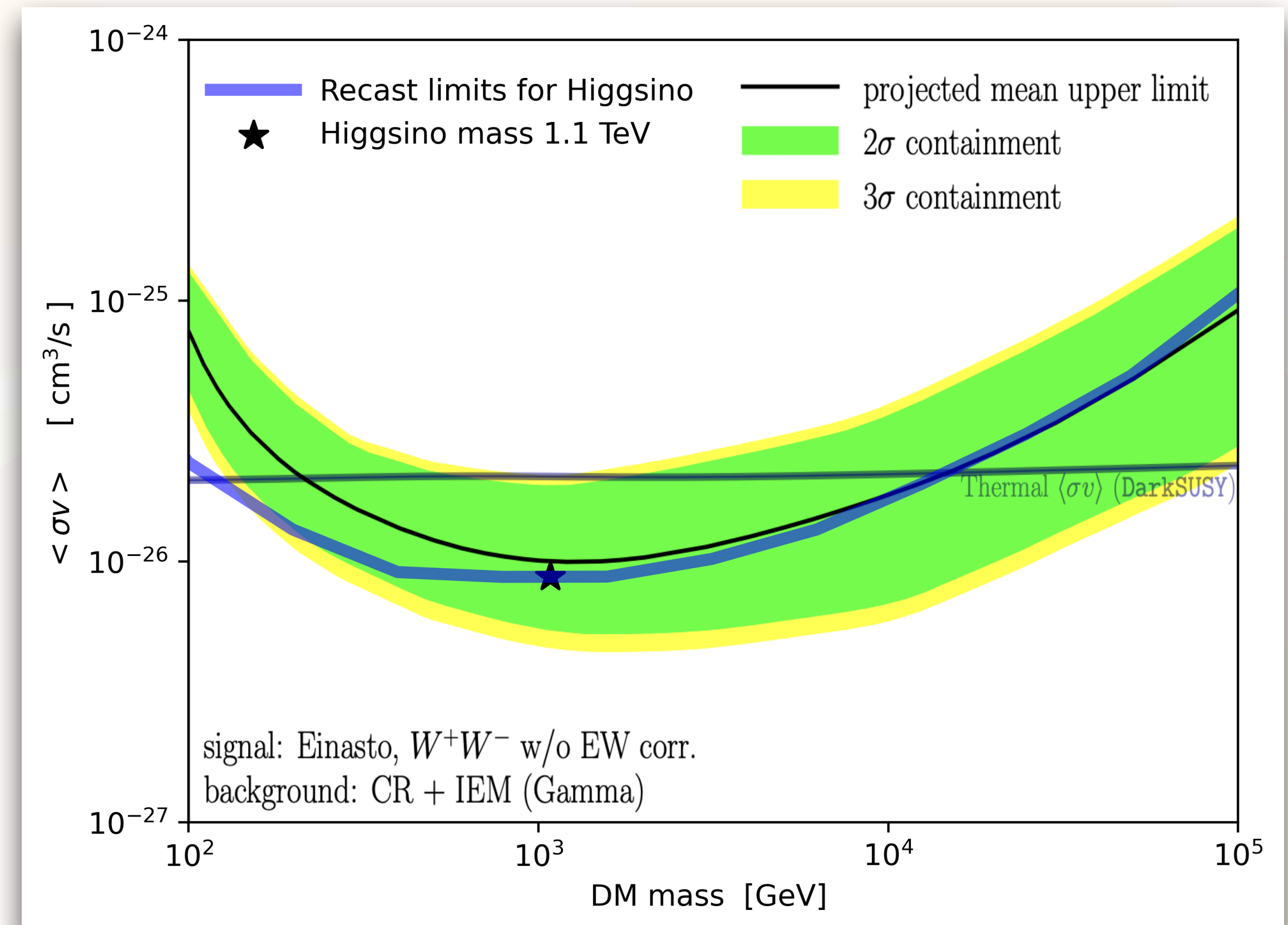
Recasting into new models

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



Same recasting but...

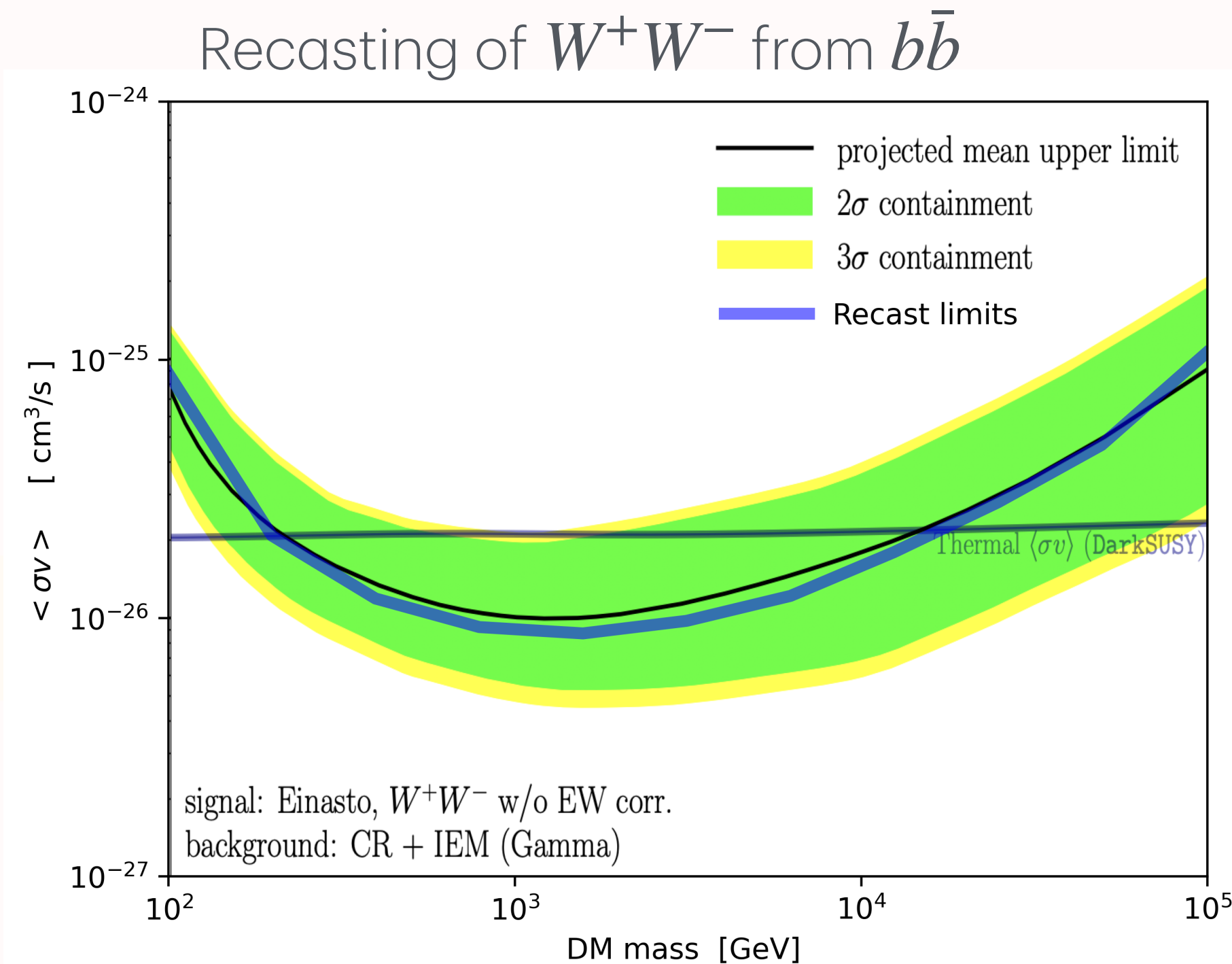
of the *Higgsino-like* spectrum with annihilation into W^+W^- , ZZ , $\gamma\gamma/\gamma Z$ with branching ratios $BR_i = 0.611, 0.382, 0.008$ respectively



[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

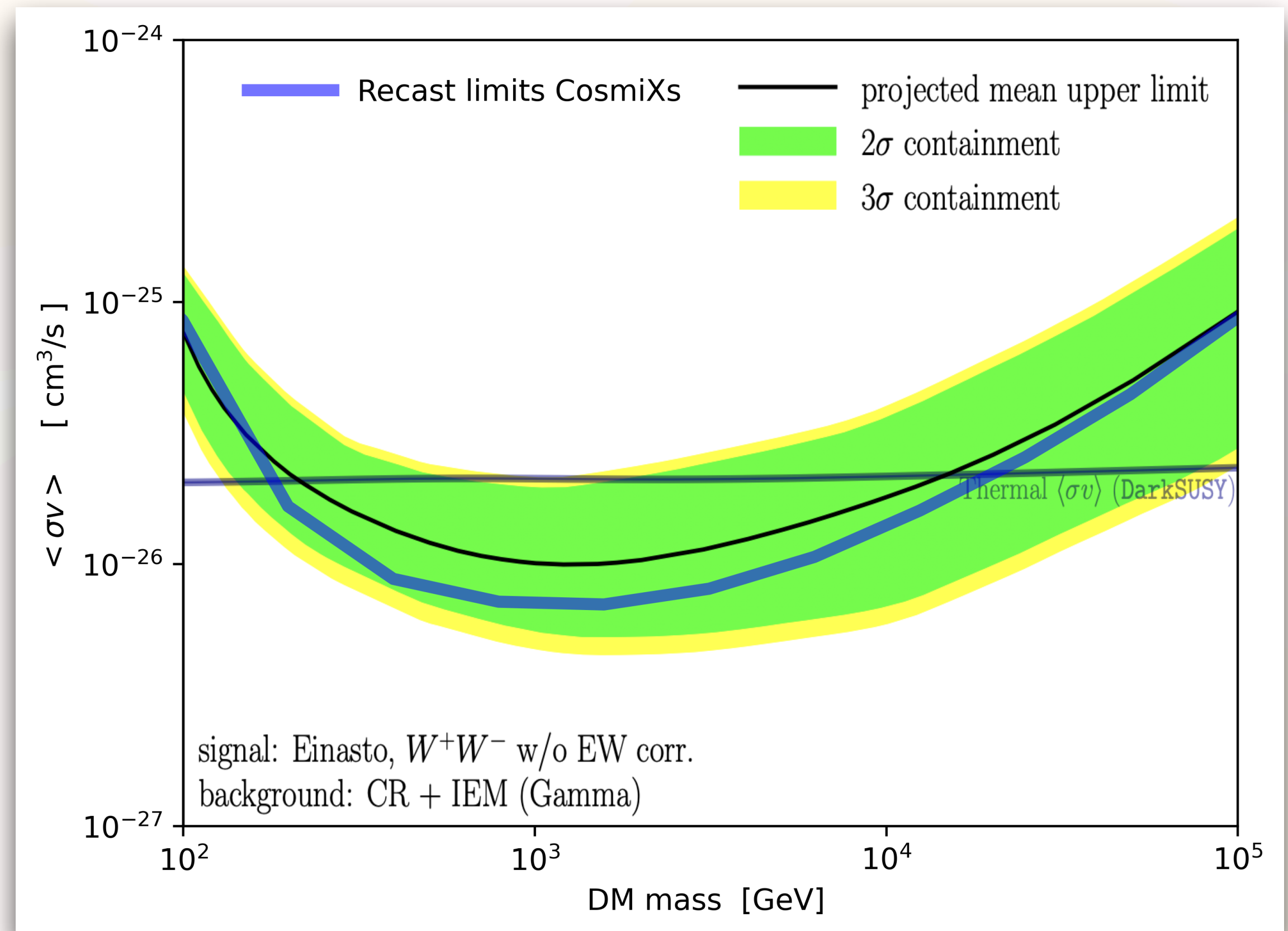
Recasting into new models

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



Same recasting but...

of the W^+W^- channel with *cosmiXs*-based spectra [2] instead of the *PPPC* ones



[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

Conclusion

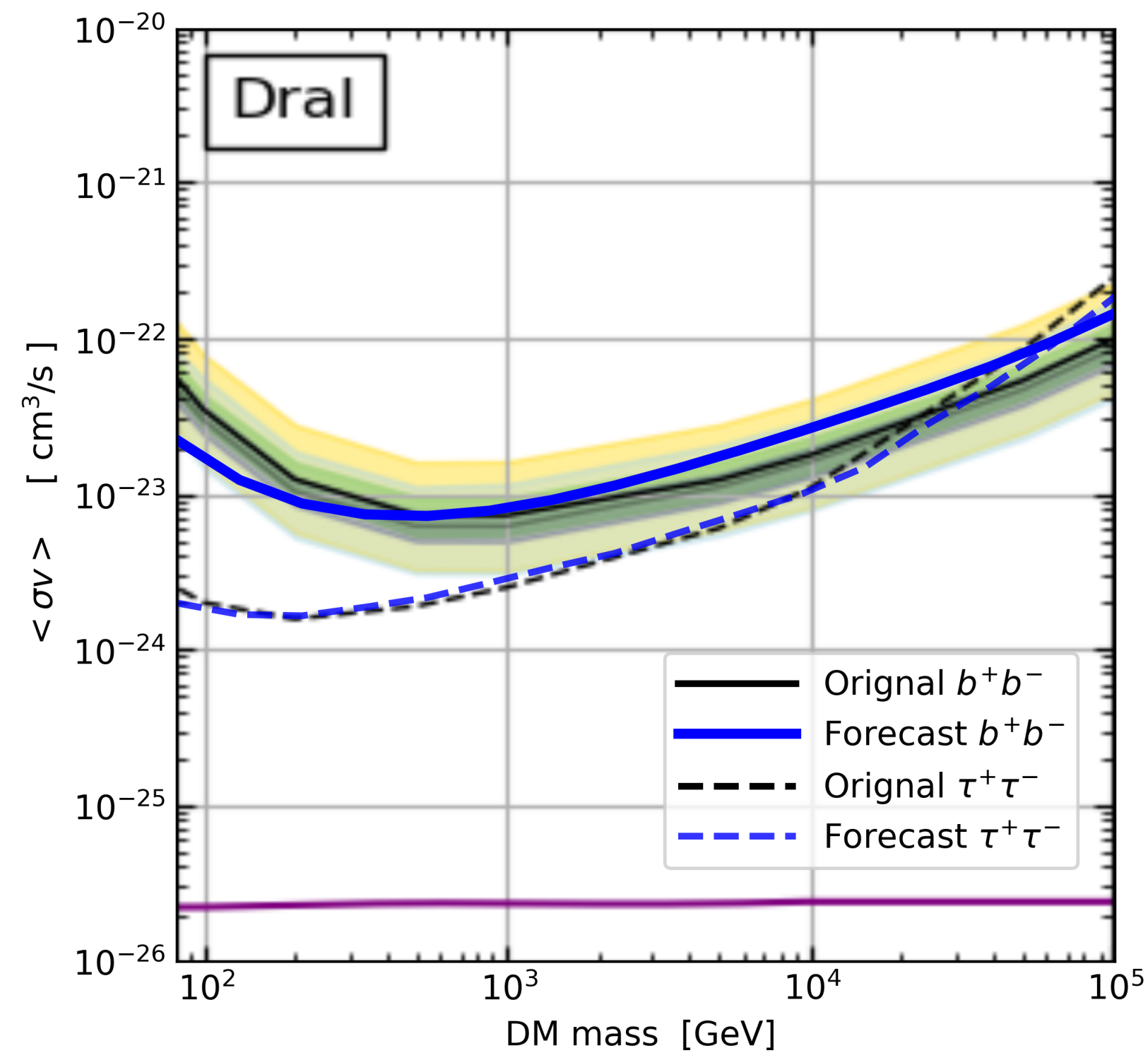
- **This novel method enables recasting of dark-matter limits without raw data**, using only published ULs
- **Validated across multiple gamma-ray telescopes**, reproducing official collaboration results within uncertainties.
- **Forecasting of ULs:** provides sensitivity projections for next-generation 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

Backup - Recast from annihilation to decay

Annihilation

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

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

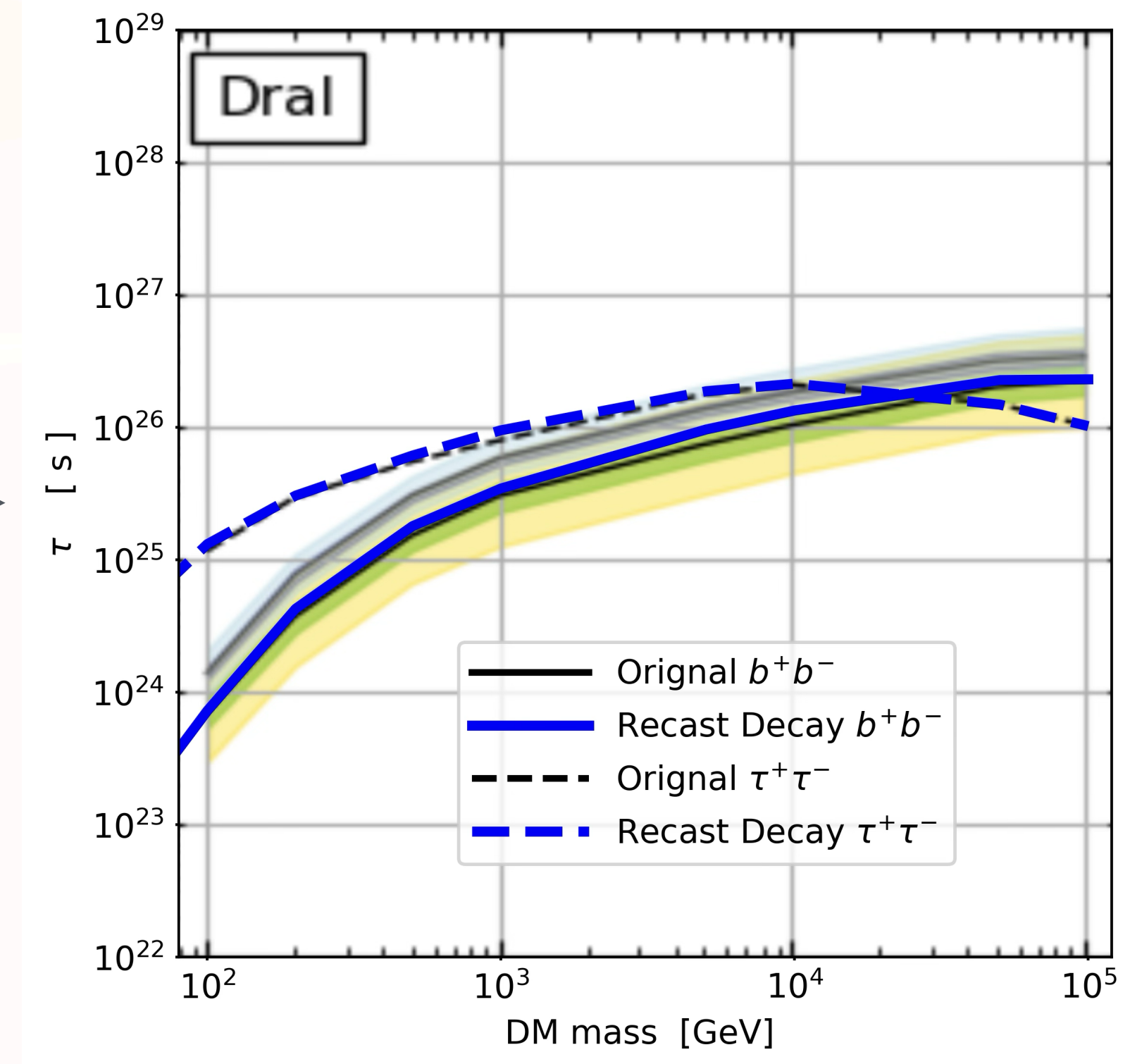


$$\tau^{\text{UL}} = \frac{J_{\text{dec}}}{J_{\text{ann}}} \cdot \frac{m_\chi}{\sigma^{\text{UL}}}$$

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

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

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

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

$$f'(s) = -\frac{n}{s + b} \left(1 + \frac{db}{ds}\right) - \frac{m}{b} \frac{db}{ds} + 1 + (1 + \alpha) \frac{db}{ds} \sim 0 \quad f''(s) = n \frac{\left(1 + \frac{db}{ds}\right)^2 - (s + b) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2}}{(s + b)^2} + m \frac{\left(\frac{db}{ds}\right)^2 - \frac{d^2b}{ds^2} b}{b^2} + (1 + \alpha) \frac{d^2b}{ds^2} \sim \frac{1}{b(1 + \alpha^{-1})}$$

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

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

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● Impact of Background Knowledge

$$1 + \alpha^{-1} > 0 \longrightarrow \sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i} > \sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i(1 + \alpha^{-1})} \longrightarrow \text{Cash ULs are more **stringent** than Wstat ULs}$$

$$\text{If OFF exposure infinitely larger than ON one} \longrightarrow \alpha^{-1} \rightarrow 0 \longrightarrow \text{Cash and Wstat ULs converge}$$

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

$$\left(\sum_i X_i Y_i \right)^2 \leq \left(\sum_i X_i^2 \right) \left(\sum_i Y_i^2 \right) \quad \longrightarrow \quad \sqrt{\sum_i \frac{K_i^2}{b_i}} \geq \frac{\sum_i K_i}{\sqrt{\sum_i b_i}} \quad \longrightarrow \quad \text{Multi-bins analysis gives **stringent** ULs than single bin analysis}$$

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

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 σ^{UL} for each DM mass m_χ 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

