

Large neutrino mass in cosmology and keV sterile neutrino dark matter from a dark sector

Seminar talk BNL
17 July 2025

Outline

- Introduction
 - Status of neutrino mass determination
 - Neutrino mass from cosmology — the “neutrino tension”
- How to relax the cosmological neutrino mass bound
- Seesaw model for neutrino mass, dark radiation, keV sterile neutrino DM

Based on

[M. Escudero](#), [T. Schwetz](#), [J. Terol-Calvo](#)

[arXiv:2211.01729] JHEP **02** (2023) 142

A seesaw model for large neutrino masses in concordance with cosmology



[C. Benso](#), [T. Schwetz](#), [D. Vatsyayan](#)

[arXiv:2410.23926] JCAP **04** (2025) 054

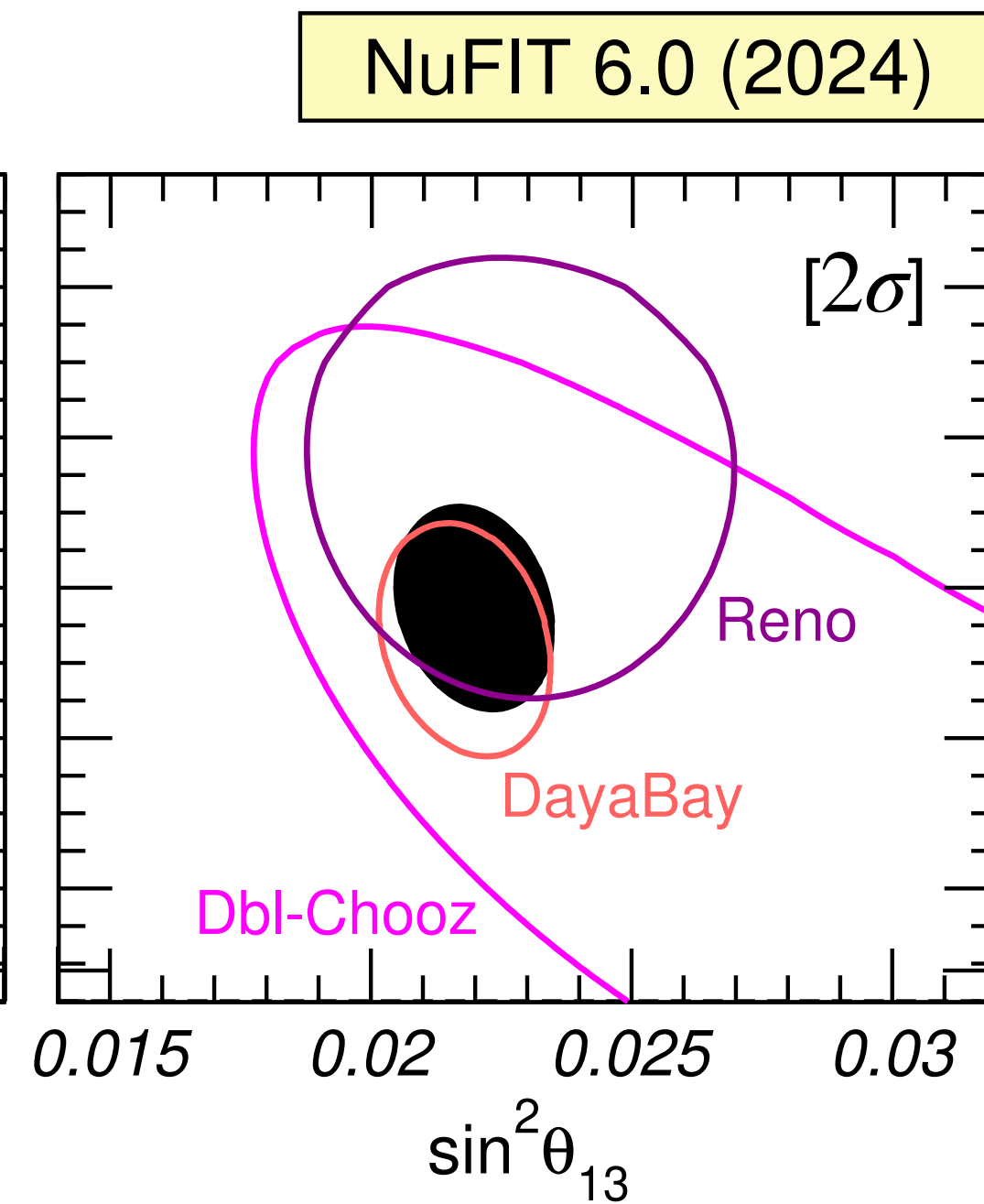
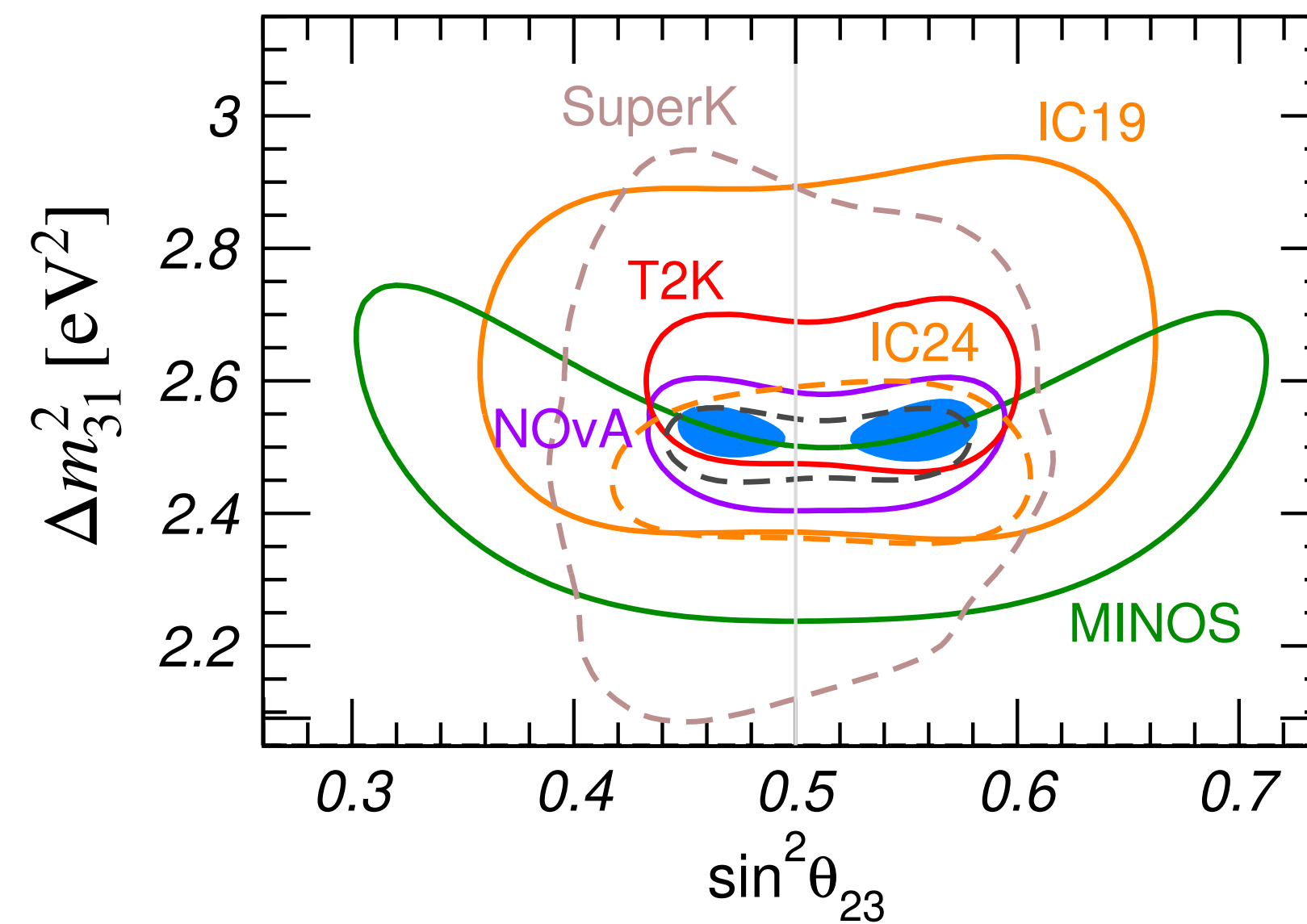
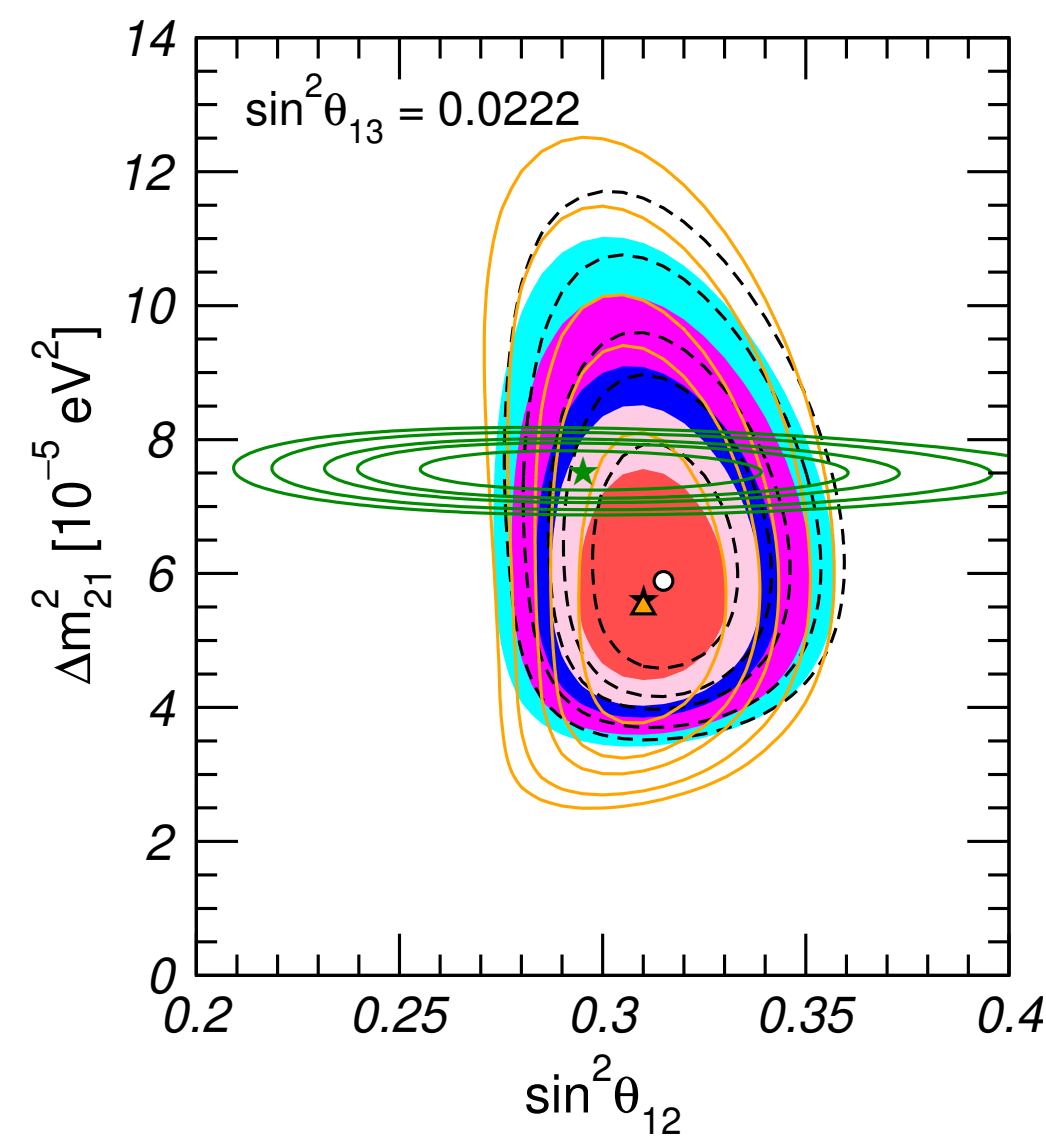
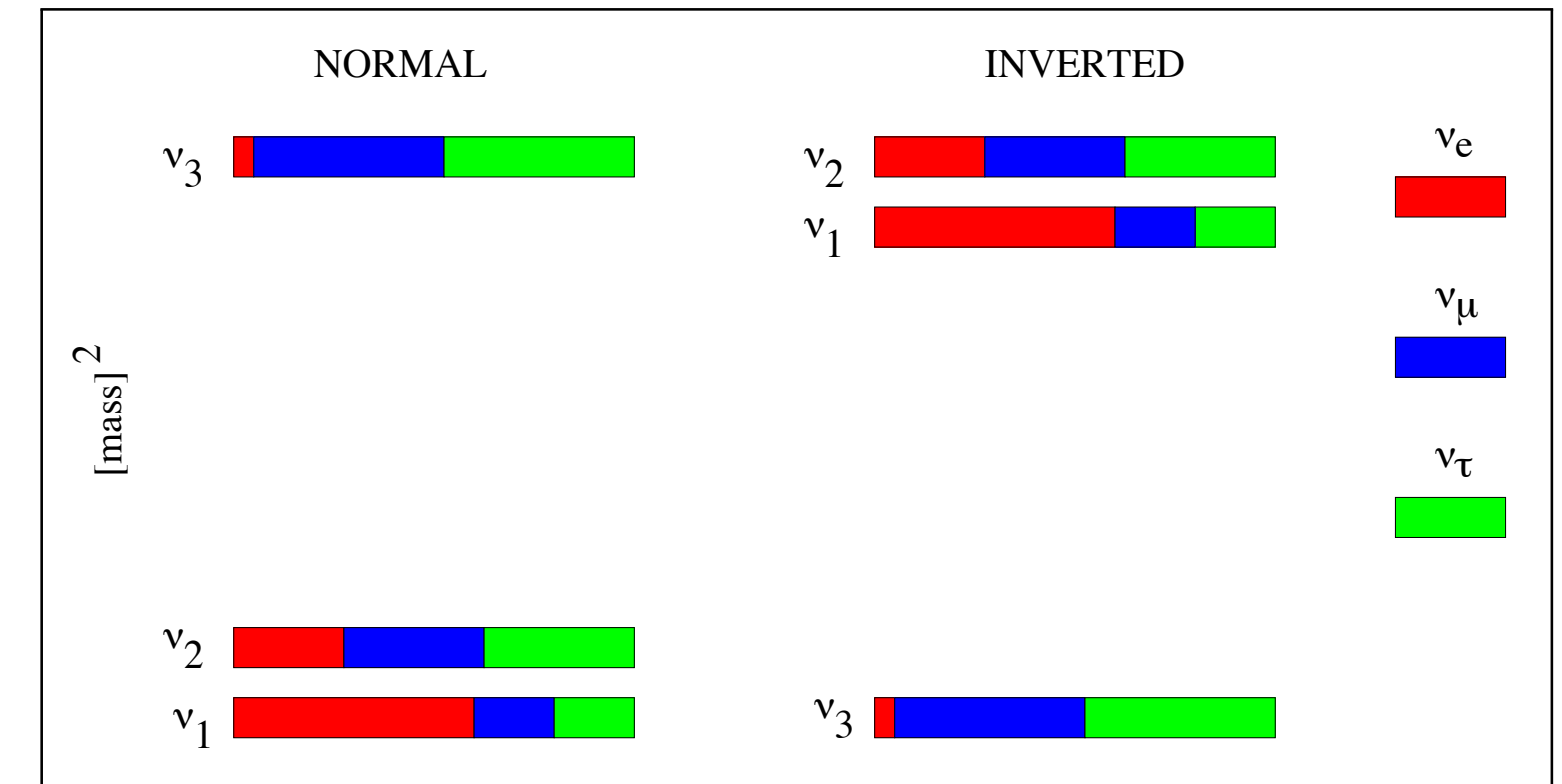
Large neutrino mass in cosmology and keV sterile neutrino dark matter from a dark sector



Neutrino masses

Neutrino oscillations:

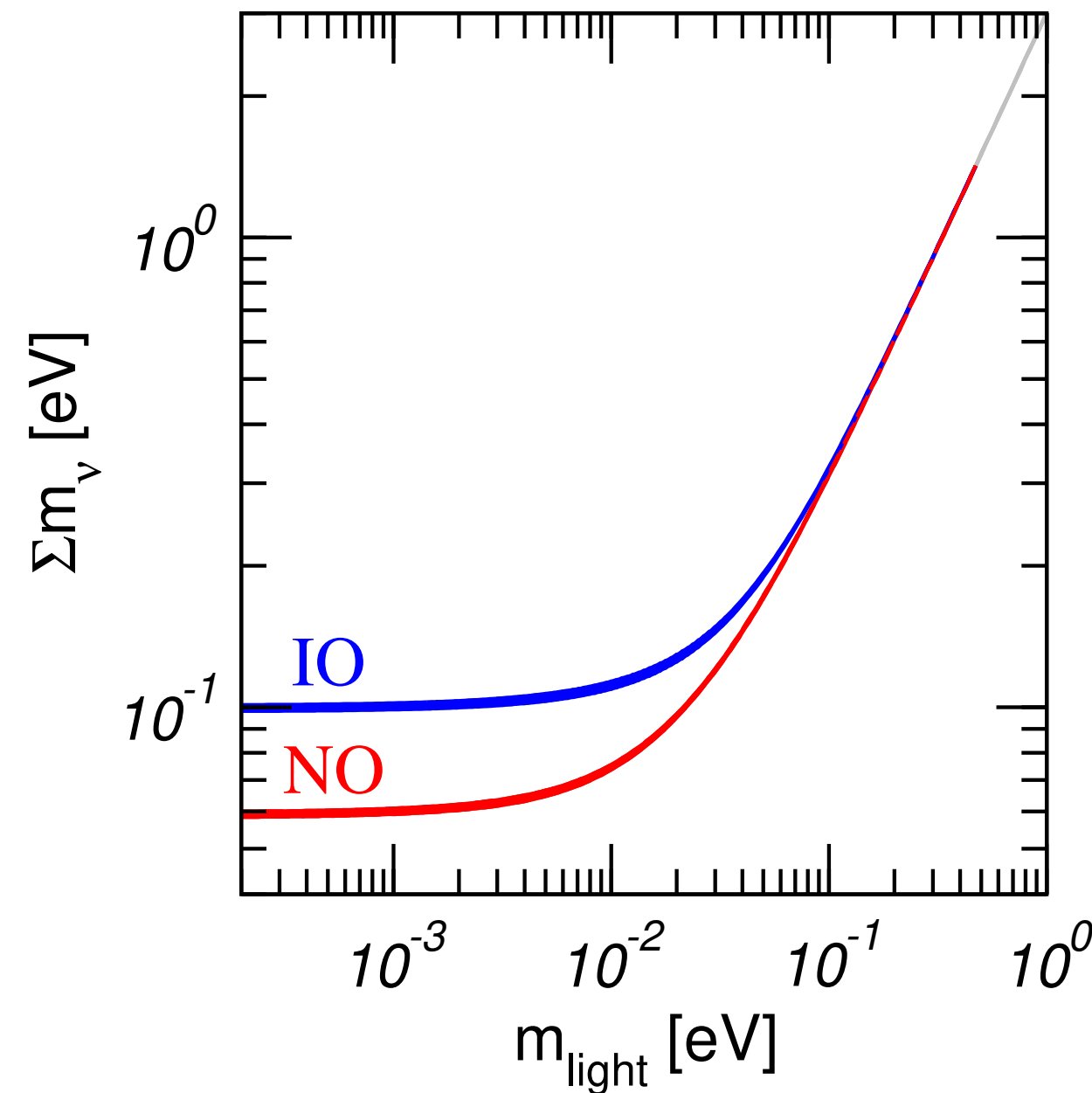
- $|m_3^2 - m_1^2| \approx (2.52 \pm 0.023) \times 10^{-3} \text{ eV}^2$
- $m_2^2 - m_1^2 = (7.49 \pm 0.19) \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$



absolute neutrino mass

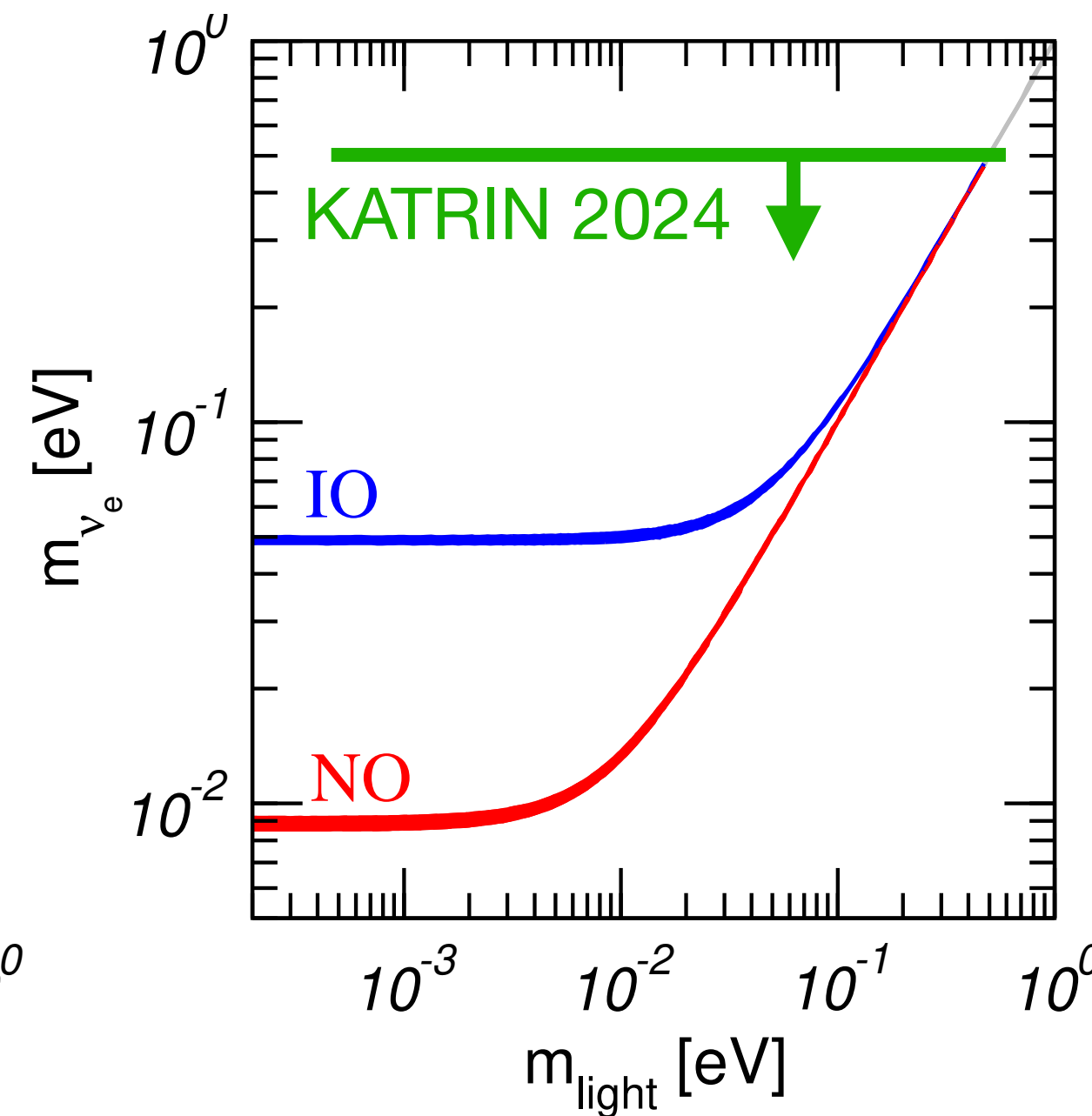
cosmology

$$\sum_i m_i \lesssim 0.1 \text{ eV}$$



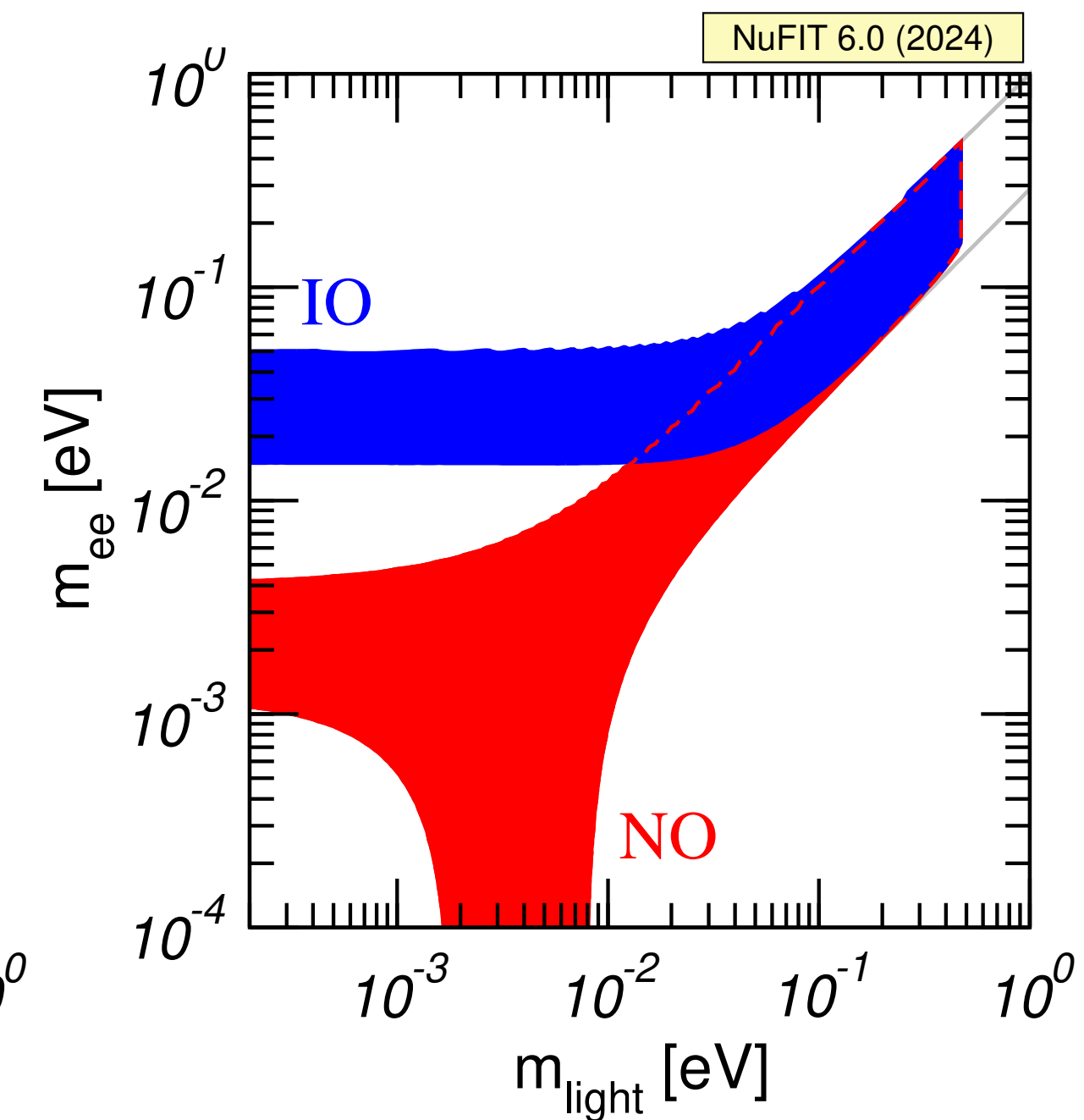
beta-decay spectrum
(KATRIN)

$$m_\beta = \sqrt{\sum_i |U_{ei}|^2 m_i^2} < 0.45 \text{ eV}$$



neutrinoless double-beta decay
(assuming Majorana neutrinos)

$$m_{\beta\beta} = \left| \sum_i U_{ei}^2 m_i \right| \lesssim 0.07 \text{ eV}$$



Neutrino mass from cosmology

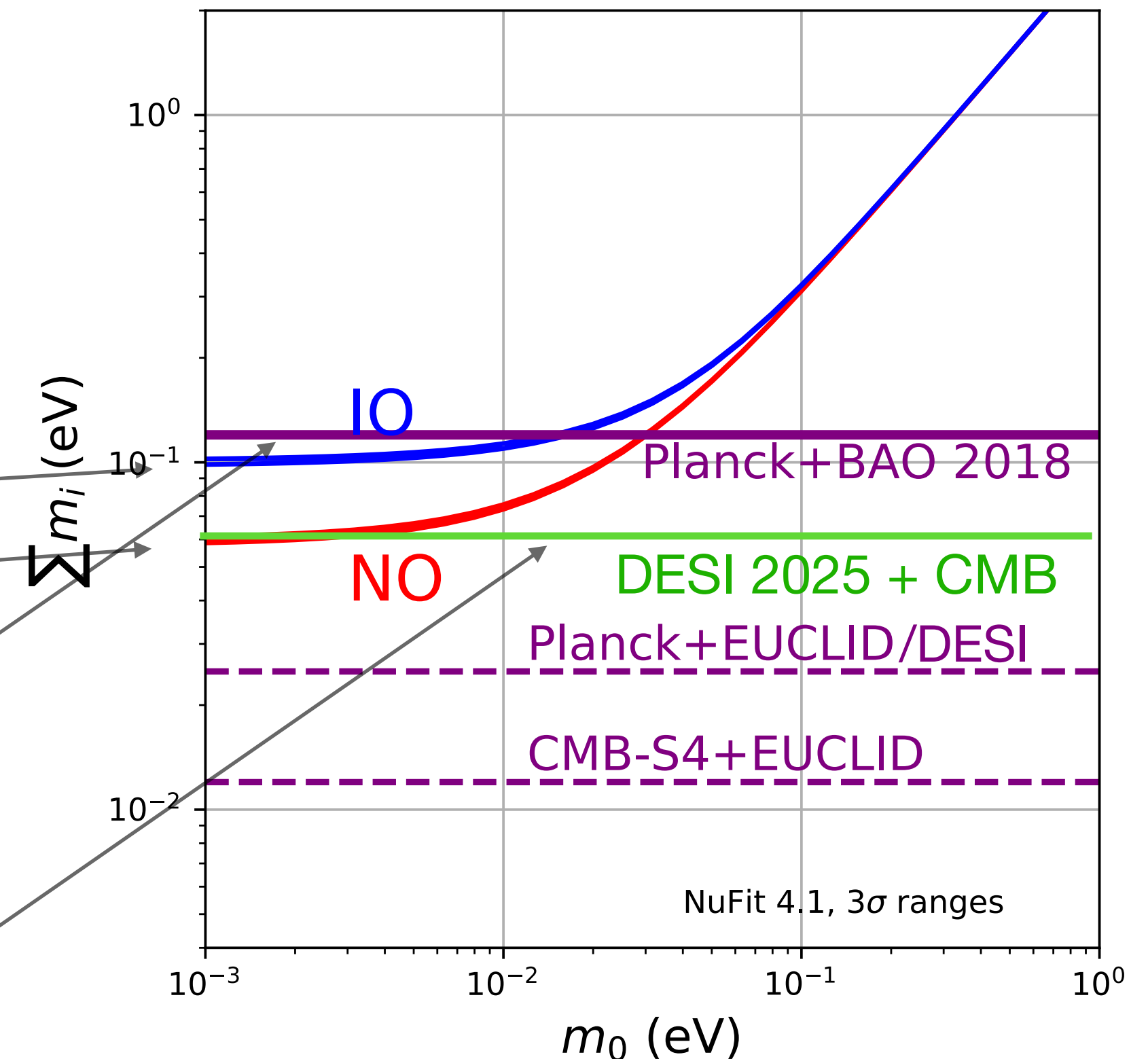
$$\Sigma \equiv \sum_{i=1}^3 m_i = \begin{cases} m_0 + \sqrt{\Delta m_{21}^2 + m_0^2} + \sqrt{\Delta m_{31}^2 + m_0^2} & \text{(NO)} \\ m_0 + \sqrt{|\Delta m_{32}^2| + m_0^2} + \sqrt{|\Delta m_{32}^2| - \Delta m_{21}^2 + m_0^2} & \text{(IO)} \end{cases}$$

- minimal values predicted from oscillation data for $m_0 = 0$:

$$\Sigma_{\min} = \begin{cases} 98.6 \pm 0.85 \text{ meV} & \text{(IO)} \\ 58.5 \pm 0.48 \text{ meV} & \text{(NO)} \end{cases}$$

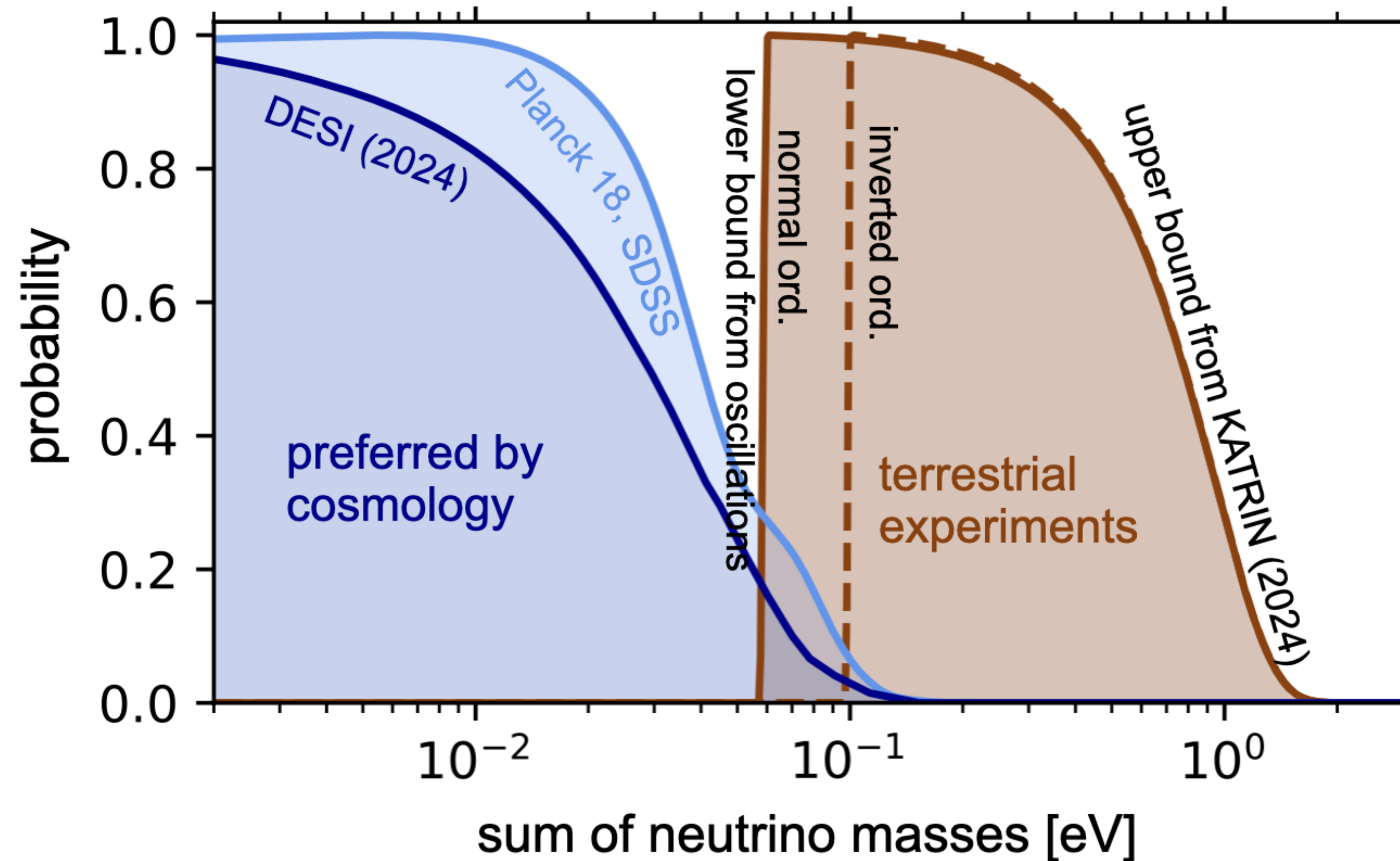
- **Upper bounds from current data:**

- $\Sigma m_\nu < 0.12 \text{ eV}$ (95 % CL) **Planck CMB+BAO 2018**
- $\Sigma m_\nu < 0.064 \text{ eV}$ (95 % CL) **DESI 2025 + CMB**



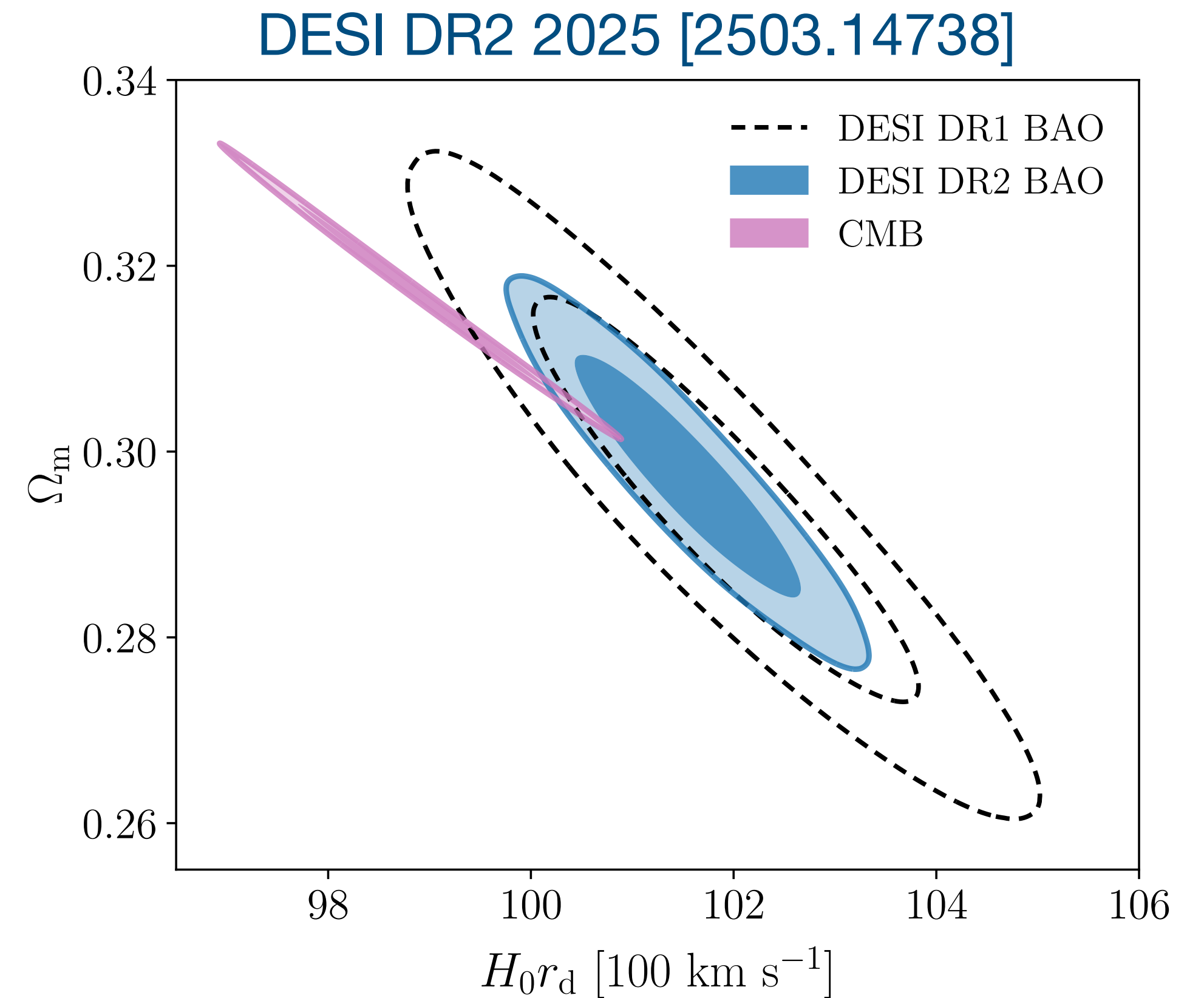
Tension between cosmology and laboratory?

updated from Gariazzo, Mena, TS, 2302.14159

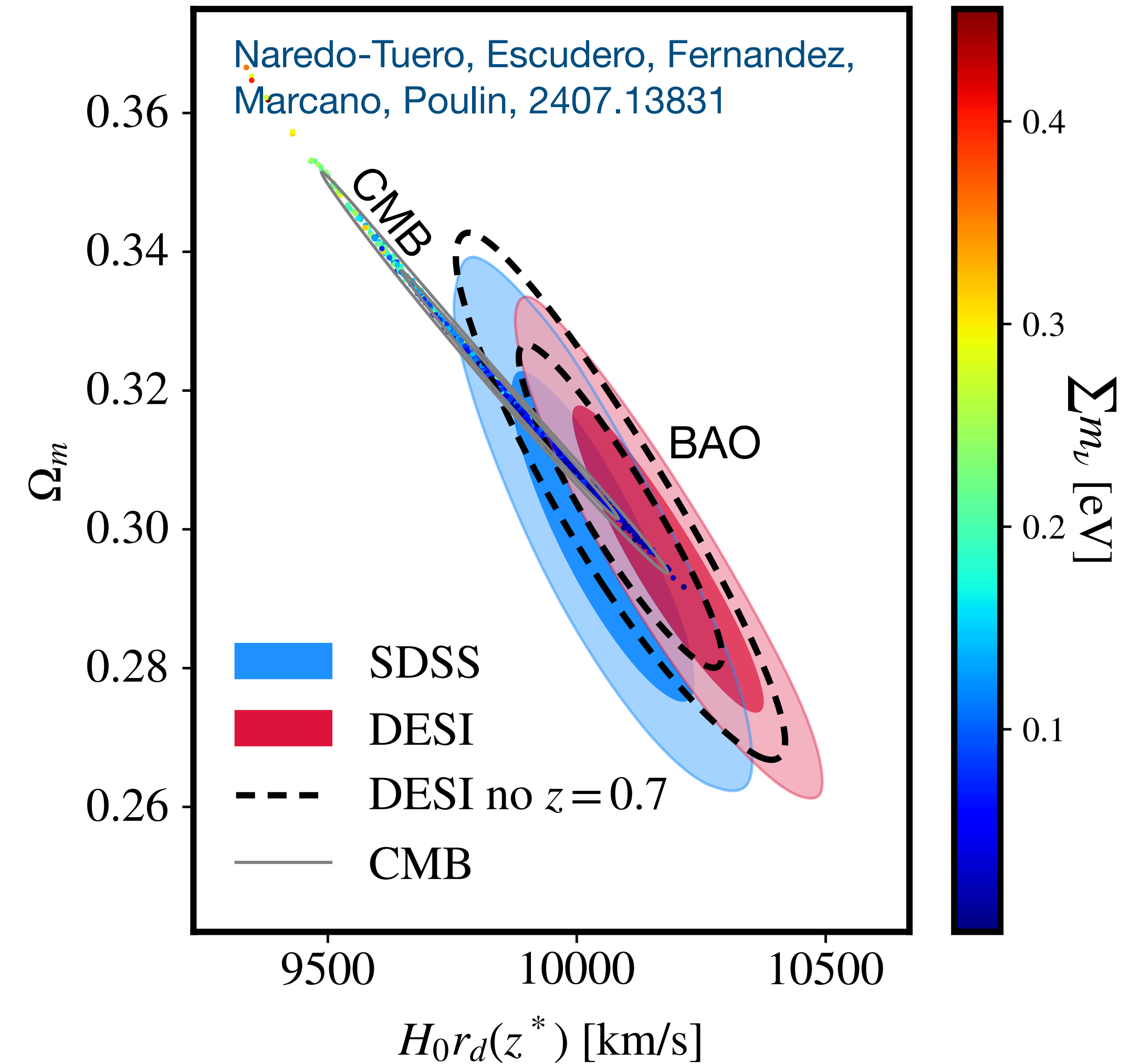
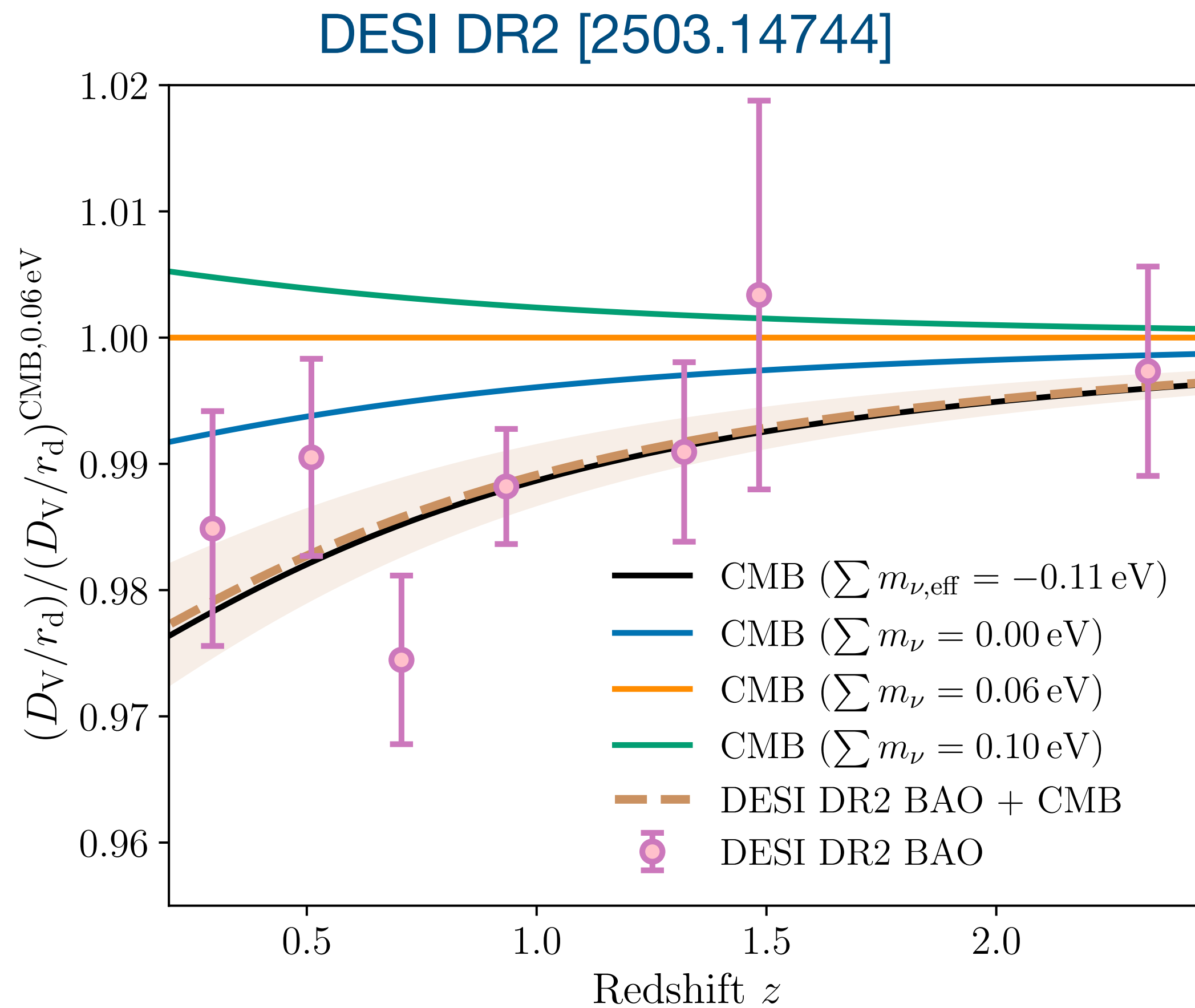


How robust are cosmological bounds?

- Hubble tension
- σ_8 tension (mostly gone)
- Planck lensing anomaly
- tension between CMB and BAO?



Powerful complementarity between BAO and CMB



- What if cosmology does not see finite neutrino mass and upper bounds become tighter than the minimal value predicted by neutrino oscillation?
- Can we relax cosmological bounds such that neutrino mass can be in reach for terrestrial experiments?

[M. Escudero, T. Schwetz, J. Terol-Calvo](#)

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A seesaw model for large neutrino masses in concordance with cosmology

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Large neutrino mass in cosmology and keV sterile neutrino dark matter from a dark sector

Cosmology bounds can be relaxed in non-standard scenarios

- dynamical dark energy

Mena et al; Green, Meyers, 2407.07878; DESI 2025, 2503.14738: $\sum m_\nu < 0.14 \text{ eV}$

- neutrino decay into dark radiation

Chacko et al. 1909.05275; 2002.08401; Escudero et al., 2007.04994;

Barenboim et al., 2011.01502; Chacko et al. 2112.13862: $\sum m_\nu < 0.42 \text{ eV}$

- time dependent neutrino mass

Lorenz et al. 1811.01991; 2102.13618; Esteban, Salvado, 2101.05804;

Sen, Smirnov, 2306.15718, 2407.02462

- modified momentum distribution

Cuoco et al., astro-ph/0502465; Barenboim et al., 1901.04352;

Alvey, Sabti, Escudero, 2111.14870

- reduced neutrino density + dark radiation

Beacom, Bell, Dodelson, 04; Farzan, Hannestad, 1510.02201; Renk, Stöcker et al., 2009.03286;

Escudero, TS, Terol-Calvo, 2211.01729; Das, Dev et al., 2506.08085

incomplete!

Counting the number of neutrino flavours

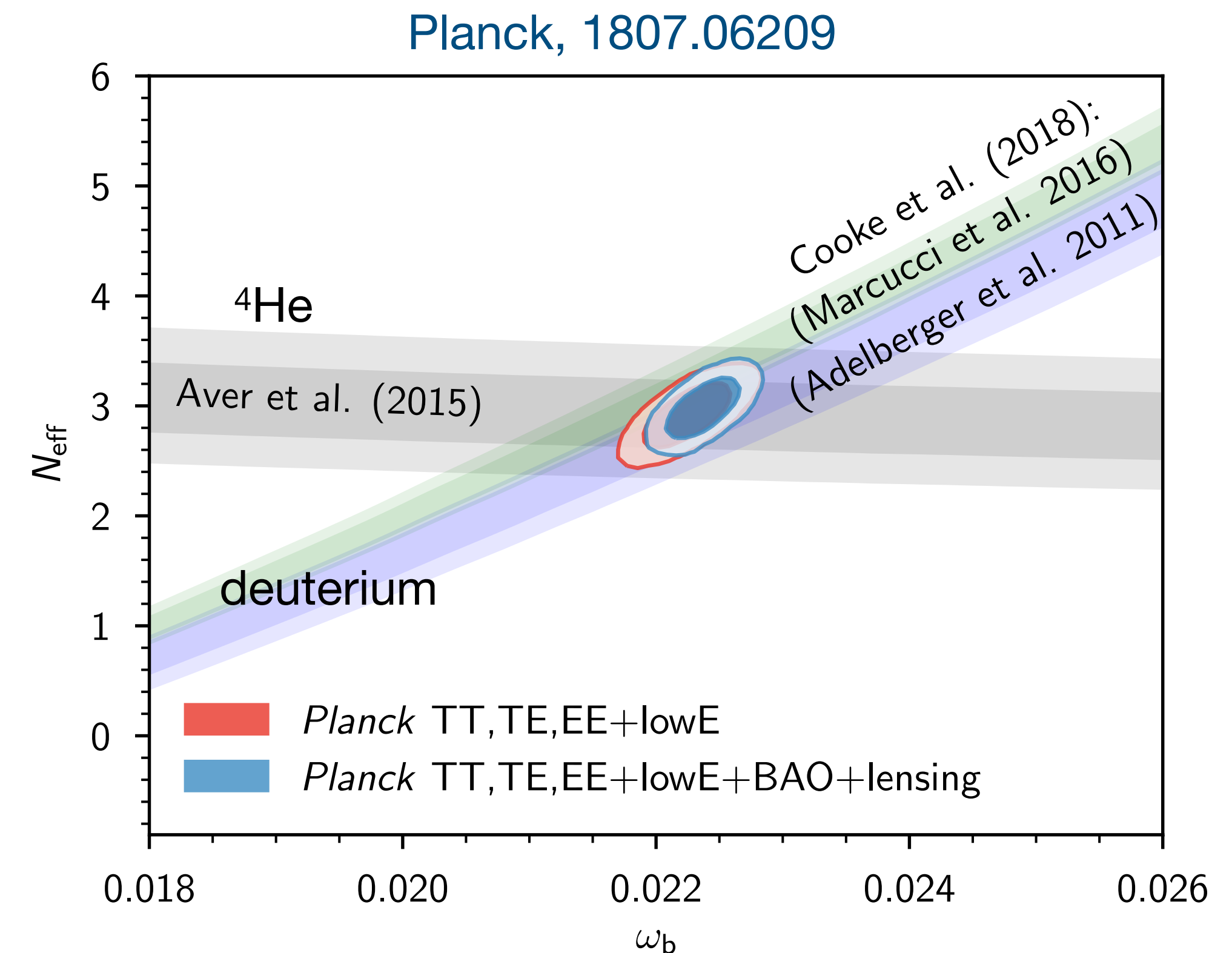
N_{eff} affects

- formation of light elements (BBN),
 $T \sim \text{MeV}$, $t \sim 1 \text{ min}$

$$N_{\text{eff}} = 2.78 \pm 0.28 \text{ (68\% CL)}$$

- CMB decoupling, $T \sim \text{eV}$, $t \sim 400\,000 \text{ yr}$

$$N_{\text{eff}} = 2.99 \pm 0.17 \text{ (68\% CL)}$$



Relaxing the neutrino mass bound from cosmology

Cosmology is sensitive to:

- energy density in non-relativistic neutrinos (late times)

$$\rho_{\nu}^{\text{non.rel.}} \approx n_{\nu} \sum m_{\nu} < 14 \text{ eV cm}^{-3}$$

- energy density in relativistic neutrinos (early times, BBN, CMB)

$$N_{\text{eff}}^{\text{relat.}} = 2.99 \pm 0.17$$

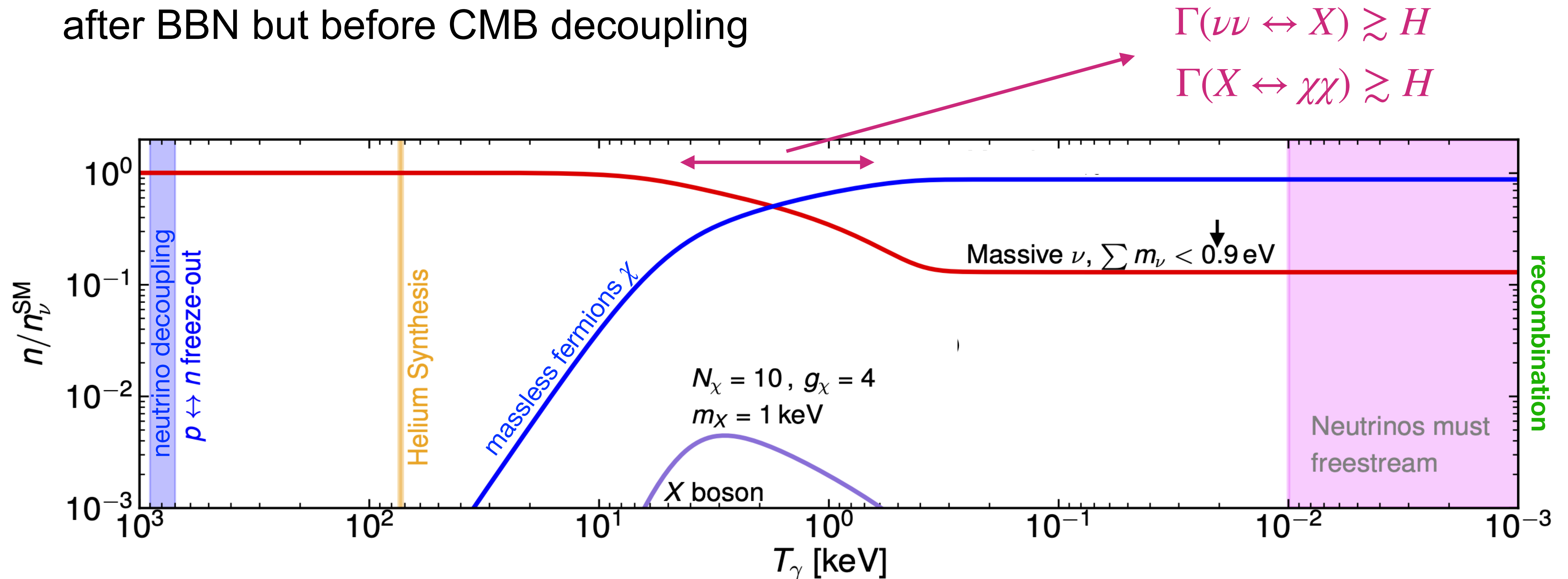
relax bound on m_{ν} by reducing neutrino number density

$$\sum m_{\nu} < 0.12 \text{ eV} \left(\frac{n_{\nu}^{\text{SM}}}{n_{\nu}} \right)$$

introduce „dark radiation“ to keep $N_{\text{eff}}^{\text{relat.}} \approx 3$

$$N_{\text{eff}}^{\text{relat.}} = N_{\text{eff}}^{\nu} + N_{\text{eff}}^{\text{DR}} \approx 3$$

- introduce a set of N_χ massless fermions
- a mediator X coupled to neutrinos (vector med. preferred)
- convert active neutrinos into massless fermions after BBN but before CMB decoupling



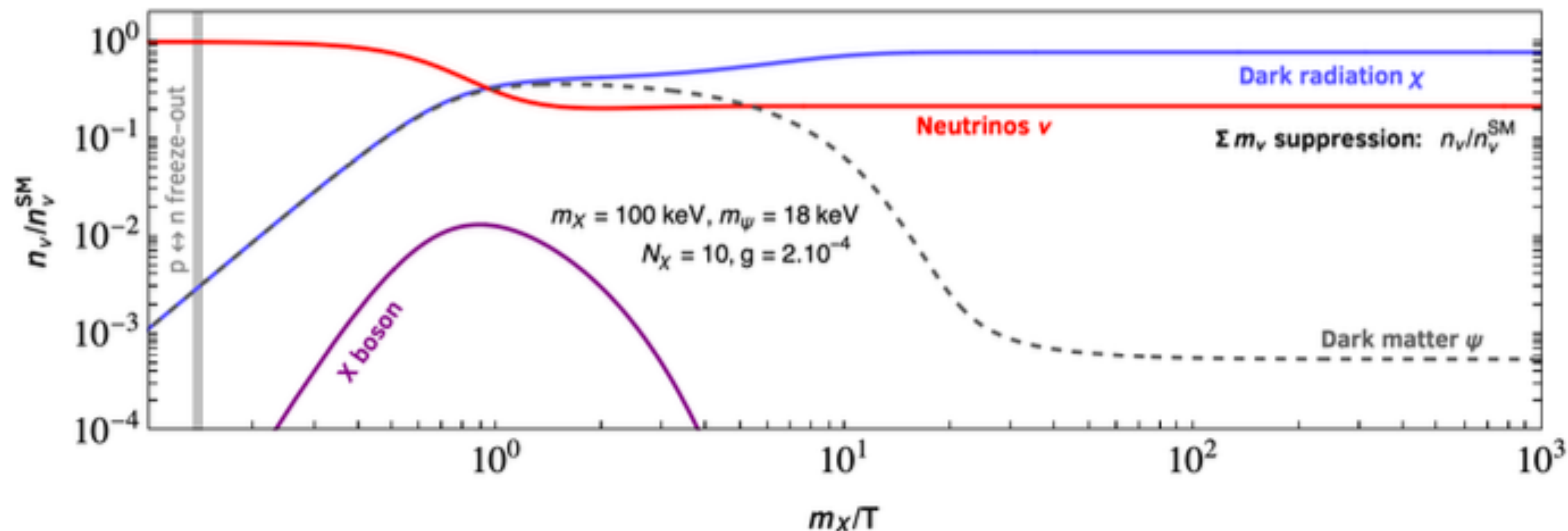
Adding keV sterile neutrino dark matter

Benso, Schwetz,
Vatsyayan, 2410.23926

- freeze-out in the dark sector

$$\psi\psi \leftrightarrow \chi\chi, Z'Z'$$

similar to A. Berlin, N. Blinov,
1706.07046, 1807.04282



Equilibration of dark sector, neutrino mass suppression and N_{eff}

- DS gets equilibrated at T_{ν}^{eq} by

$$Z' \leftrightarrow ff, \quad Z' \leftrightarrow ff', \quad Z'Z' \leftrightarrow ff \quad f, f' = \nu, \chi, \psi.$$

- both, $1 \leftrightarrow 2$ and $2 \leftrightarrow 2$ processes are in equilibrium \Rightarrow
chem. potentials vanish, DS abundances fully characterized by temperature

$$\rho_{\nu}(T_{\nu}^{\text{eq}}) = \sum_{f=\nu, \chi, \psi} \rho_f(T_{\text{eq}}) + \rho_{Z'}(T_{\text{eq}})$$

- adiabatic evolution till $T_{\text{fin}} \ll m_{\psi}, m_{Z'}$

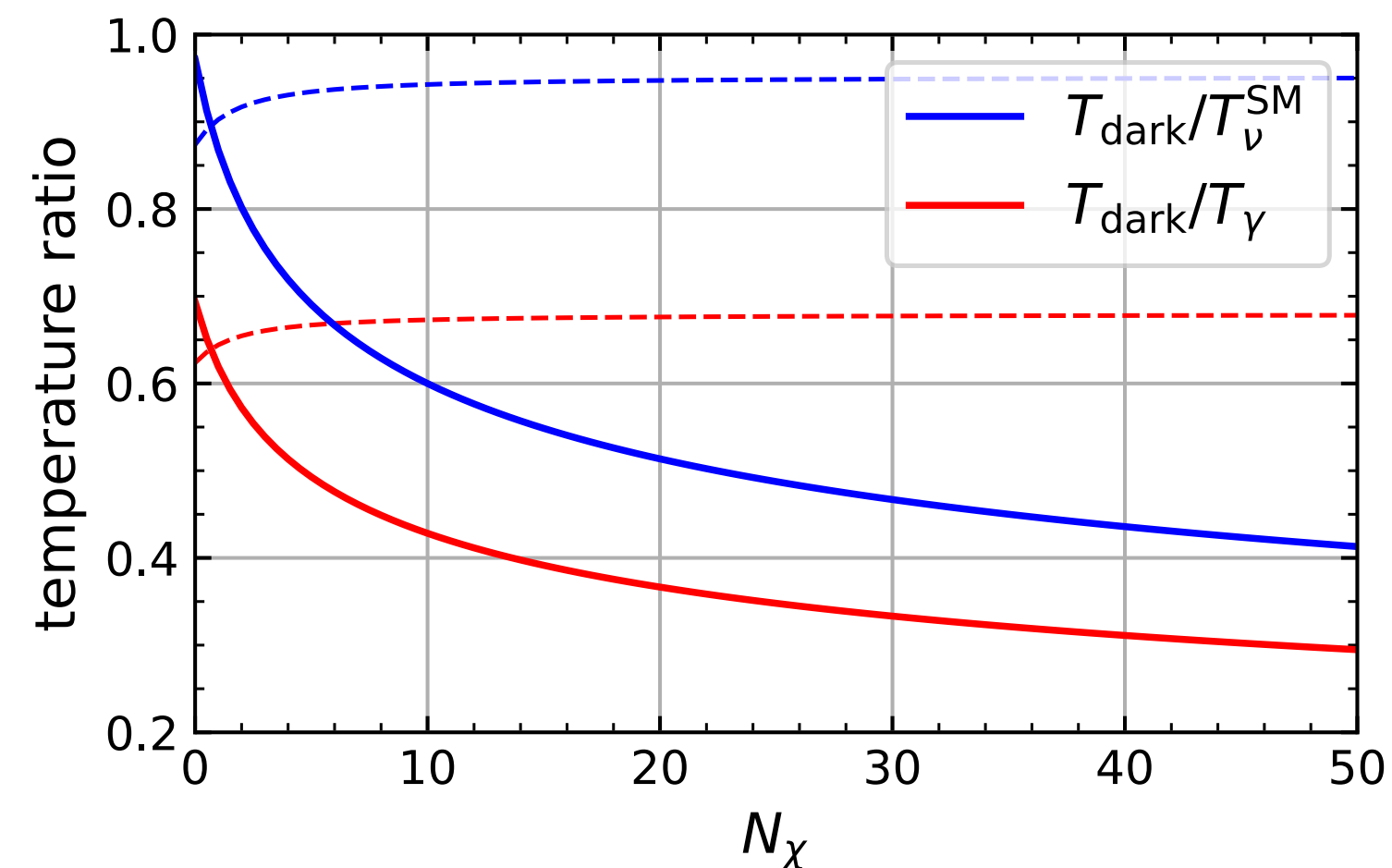
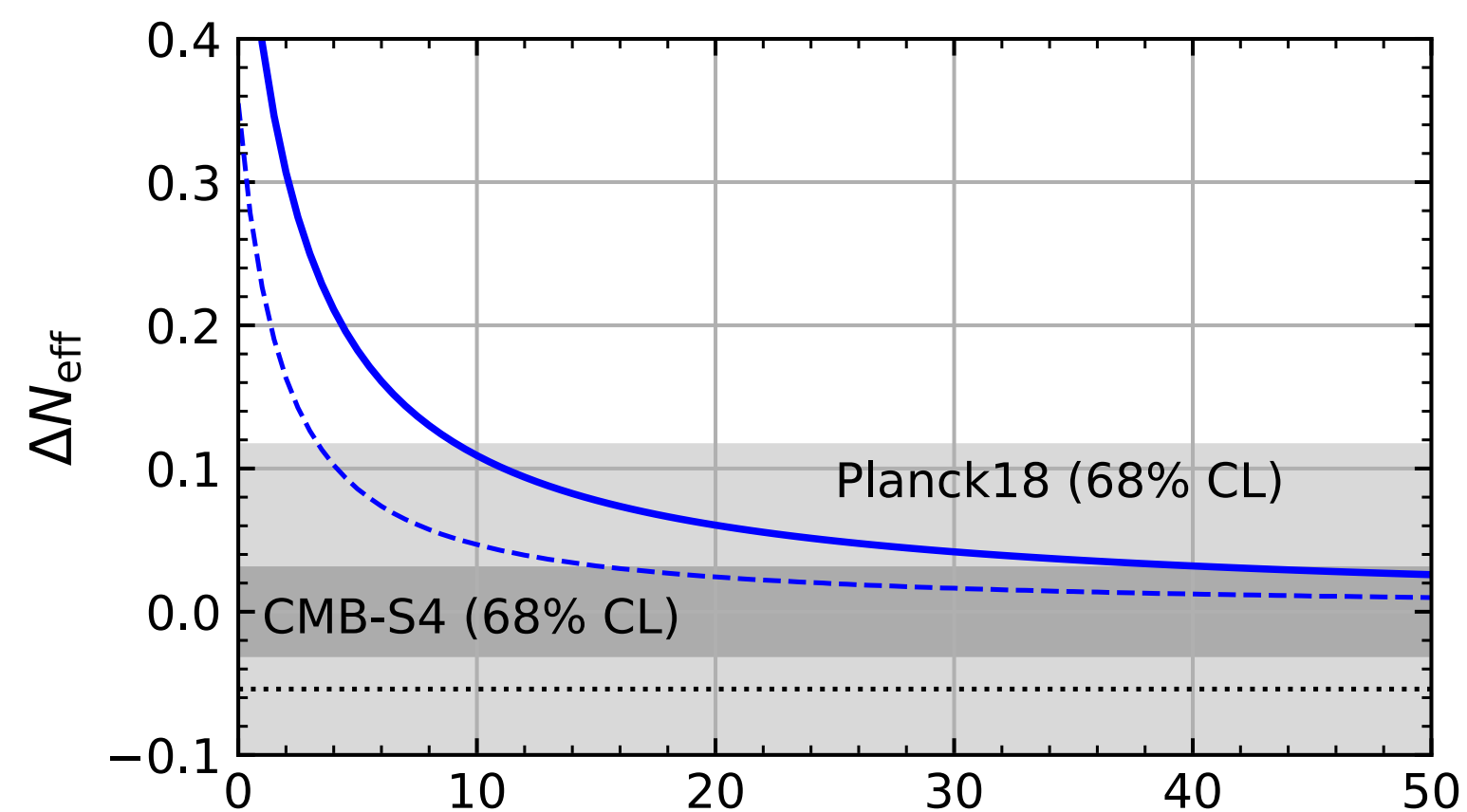
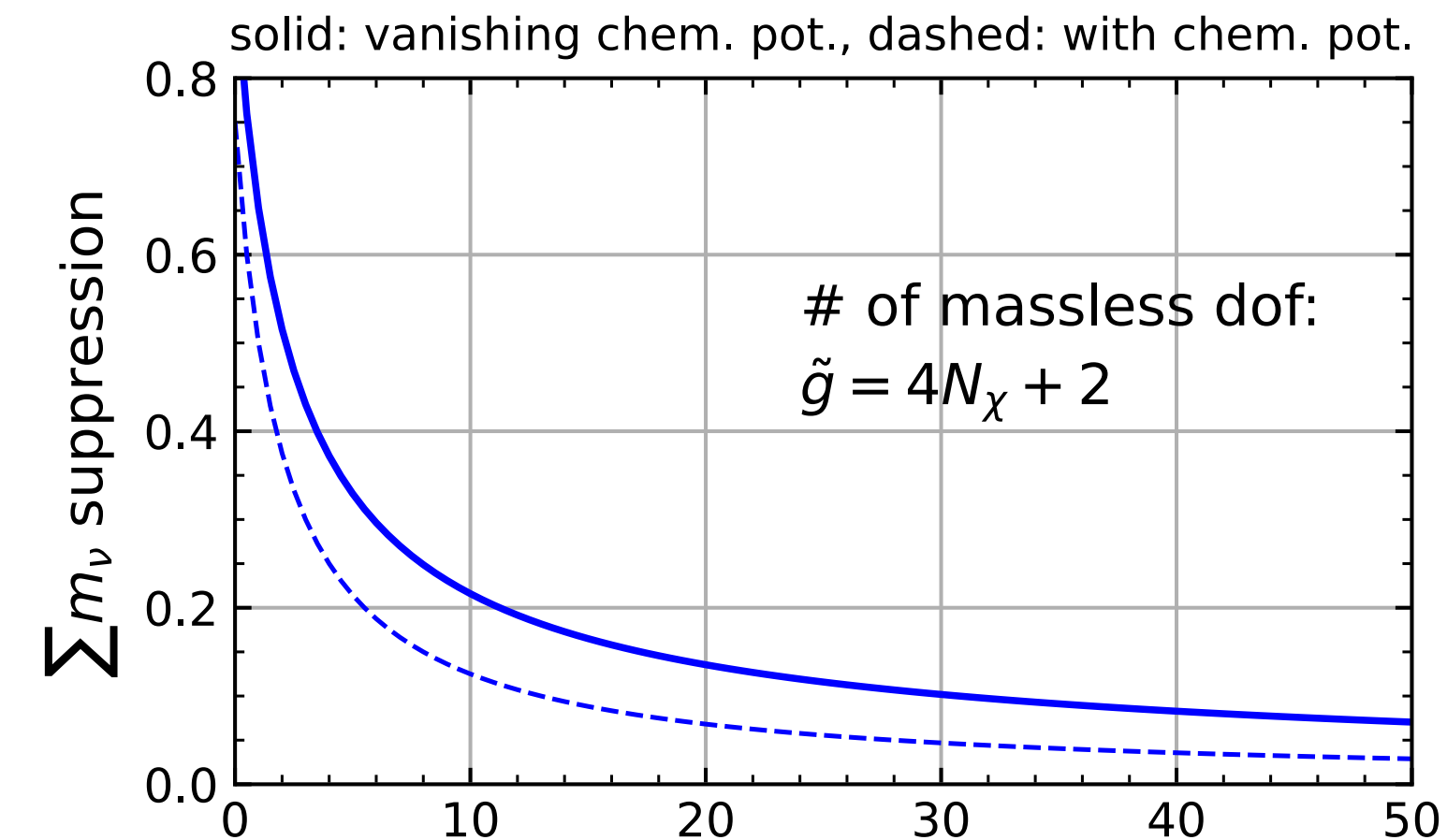
$$a_{\text{eq}}^3 s_{\text{eq}}(T_{\text{eq}}) = a_{\text{fin}}^3 s_{\text{fin}}(T_{\text{fin}})$$

$$\frac{n_\nu}{n_\nu^{\text{SM}}} = \left(\frac{T_{\text{dark}}}{T_\nu^{\text{SM}}} \right)^3 = \frac{g_\nu + \tilde{g} + g_\psi + \frac{8}{7}g_{Z'}}{g_\nu + \tilde{g}} \left(\frac{g_\nu}{g_\nu + \tilde{g} + g_\psi + \frac{8}{7}g_{Z'}} \right)^{3/4}$$

$$N_{\text{eff}} \equiv \frac{8}{7} \left(\frac{11}{4} \right)^{4/3} \frac{\rho_{\text{dark}}}{\rho_\gamma} = \frac{g_\nu + \tilde{g}}{2} \left(\frac{T_{\text{dark}}}{T_\nu^{\text{SM}}} \right)^4$$

from energy and entropy conservation:

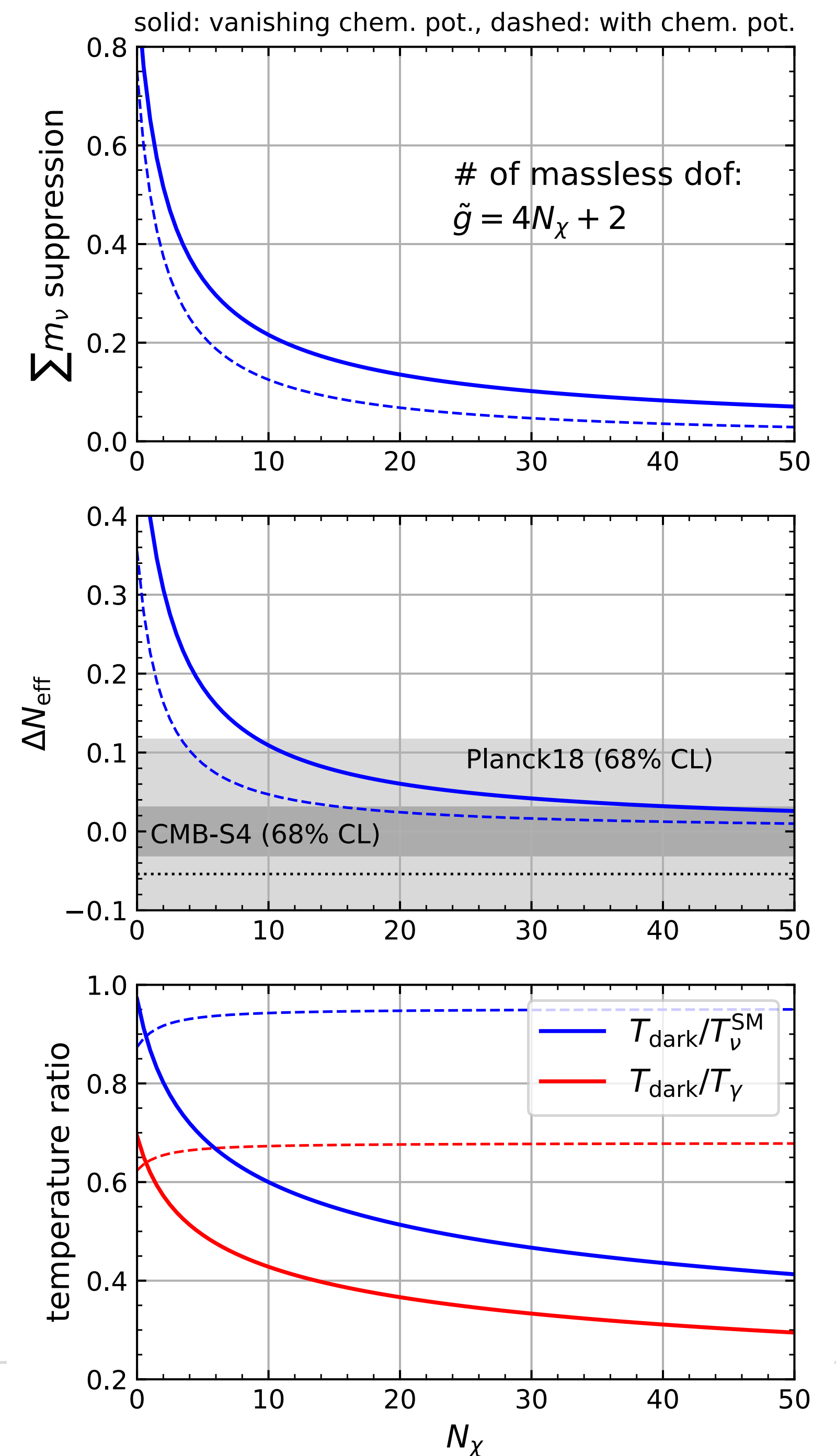
$$\frac{T_{\text{dark}}}{T_\nu^{\text{SM}}} = \left(\frac{g_\nu + \tilde{g} + g_\psi + \frac{8}{7}g_{Z'}}{g_\nu + \tilde{g}} \right)^{1/3} \left(\frac{g_\nu}{g_\nu + \tilde{g} + g_\psi + \frac{8}{7}g_{Z'}} \right)^{1/4}$$



$$\frac{n_\nu}{n_\nu^{\text{SM}}} = \left(\frac{T_{\text{dark}}}{T_\nu^{\text{SM}}} \right)^3 = \frac{g_\nu + \tilde{g} + g_\psi + \frac{8}{7}g_{Z'}}{g_\nu + \tilde{g}} \left(\frac{g_\nu}{g_\nu + \tilde{g} + g_\psi + \frac{8}{7}g_{Z'}} \right)^{3/4}$$

- if only $1 \leftrightarrow 2$ processes $Z' \leftrightarrow ff$, $Z' \leftrightarrow ff'$,
but not $2 \leftrightarrow 2$ processes $Z'Z' \leftrightarrow ff$
are in equilibrium, chem. potentials develop,
need T_{dark} and μ

$$\Rightarrow \frac{n_\nu}{n_\nu^{\text{SM}}} = \frac{g_\nu}{g_\nu + \tilde{g}}$$



A seesaw model for large neutrino mass and dark radiation

Escudero, TS, Terol-Calvo, 2211.01729



A seesaw model for large neutrino mass and dark radiation

- 3 heavy right-handed neutrinos (seesaw)
- new abelian symmetry $U(1)_X$ local or global
- a scalar Φ charged under $U(1)_X$
- a set of N_χ massless fermions charged under $U(1)_X$

Yukawa sector

$$-\mathcal{L} = \overline{N}_R Y_\nu \ell_L \tilde{H}^\dagger + \frac{1}{2} \overline{N}_R M_R N_R^c + \overline{N}_R Y_\Phi \chi_L \Phi + \text{h.c.}$$

Scalar potential

$$V = \mu_H^2 H^\dagger H + \lambda_H (H^\dagger H)^2 + \mu_\Phi^2 |\Phi|^2 + \lambda_\Phi |\Phi|^4 + \lambda_{H\Phi} |\Phi|^2 H^\dagger H$$

Gauge interaction

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{int}} = g_X Z'_\mu \bar{\chi} \gamma^\mu \chi$$

A seesaw model for large neutrino mass and dark radiation

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$$\mathcal{M}_n = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & m_D & 0 \\ m_D^T & M_R & \Lambda \\ 0 & \Lambda^T & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$m_D = \frac{v_{\text{EW}}}{\sqrt{2}} Y_\nu, \quad \Lambda = \frac{v_\Phi}{\sqrt{2}} Y_\Phi$$

$$\Lambda \ll m_D \ll M_R$$

$$m_{\text{heavy}} \approx M_R$$

$$m_{\text{active}} \approx m_D^2 / M_R$$

$$m_\chi = 0, \quad \theta_{\nu\chi} \approx \Lambda / m_D$$

A seesaw model for large neutrino mass and dark radiation

- 3 heavy right-handed neutrinos (seesaw)
- new abelian symmetry $U(1)_X \rightarrow$ **gauged**
- a scalar Φ charged under $U(1)_X$
- a set of N_χ massless fermions charged under $U(1)_X$

$$-\mathcal{L} = \overline{N_R} Y_\nu \ell_L \tilde{H}^\dagger + \frac{1}{2} \overline{N_R} M_R N_R^c + \overline{N_R} Y_\Phi \chi_L \Phi + \text{h.c.}$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{int}} = g_X Z'_\mu \bar{\chi} \gamma^\mu \chi \quad g_X = \frac{m_{Z'}}{v_\Phi}$$

couplings to neutrinos induced by mixing: $Z' \leftrightarrow \nu\nu/\nu\chi/\chi\chi$

$$\lambda_{Z'}^{\chi\chi} = g_X$$

$$\lambda_{Z'}^{\chi\nu} = g_X \theta_{\nu\chi}$$

$$\lambda_{Z'}^{\nu\nu} = g_X \theta_{\nu\chi}^2$$

A seesaw model for large neutrino mass and dark radiation

- 3 heavy right-handed neutrinos (seesaw)
- new abelian symmetry $U(1)_X \rightarrow$ **gauged**
- a scalar Φ charged under $U(1)_X$
- a set of N_χ massless fermions charged under $U(1)_X$

$$-\mathcal{L} = \overline{N_R} Y_\nu \ell_L \tilde{H}^\dagger + \frac{1}{2} \overline{N_R} M_R N_R^c + \overline{N_R} Y_\Phi \chi_L \Phi + \text{h.c.}$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{int}} = g_X Z'_\mu \bar{\chi} \gamma^\mu \chi \qquad g_X = \frac{m_{Z'}}{v_\Phi}$$

indep. params for pheno:

$$m_\nu, M_R, \theta_{\nu\chi}$$
$$v_\Phi, m_{Z'}$$

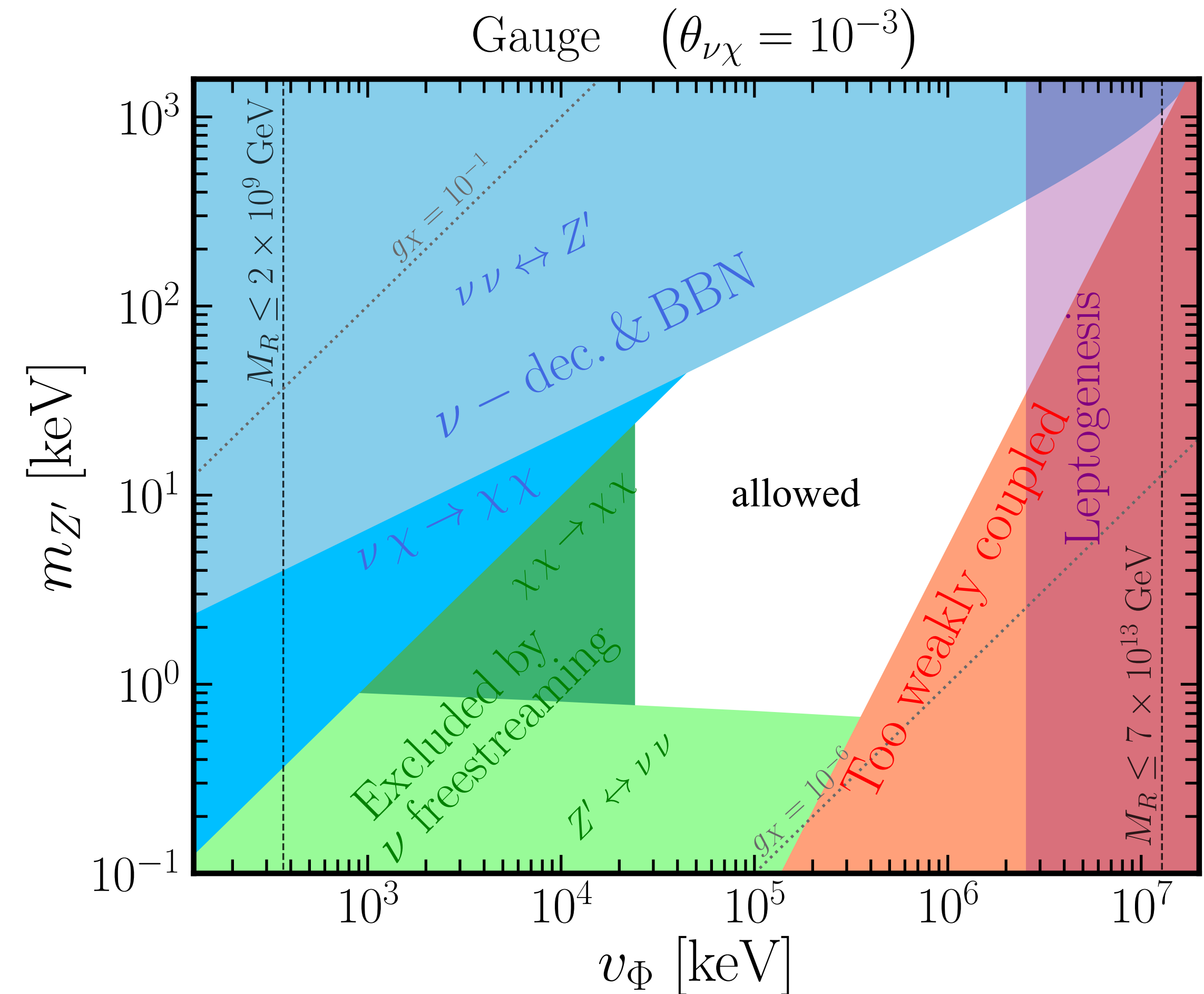
Available parameter space

$$\theta_{\nu\chi} \simeq 10^{-3}$$

$$m_{Z'} \sim 10 \text{ keV}$$

$$v_\Phi \sim 100 \text{ MeV}$$

$$g_X = \frac{m_{Z'}}{v_\Phi} \sim 10^{-4}$$



Available parameter space

- thermalization of the dark sector:

$$\Rightarrow \langle \Gamma(\nu\nu \rightarrow Z') \rangle \gtrsim H(T = m_{Z'}/3)$$

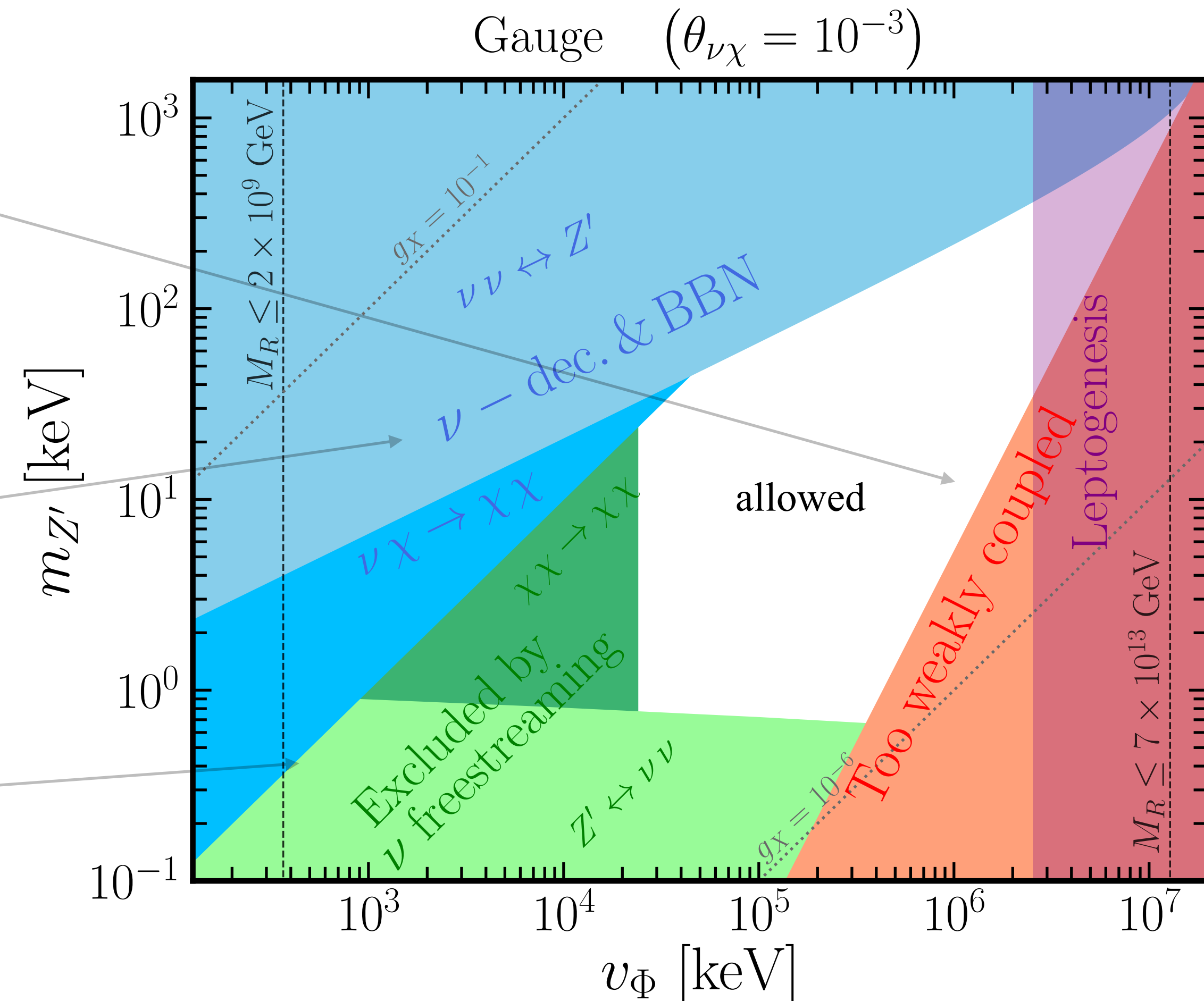
- avoid thermalization of the dark sector before BBN:

$$\langle \Gamma(\nu\nu \rightarrow Z') \rangle < H(T = 0.7 \text{ MeV})$$

- free-streaming of neutrinos & dark radiation before/around recombination

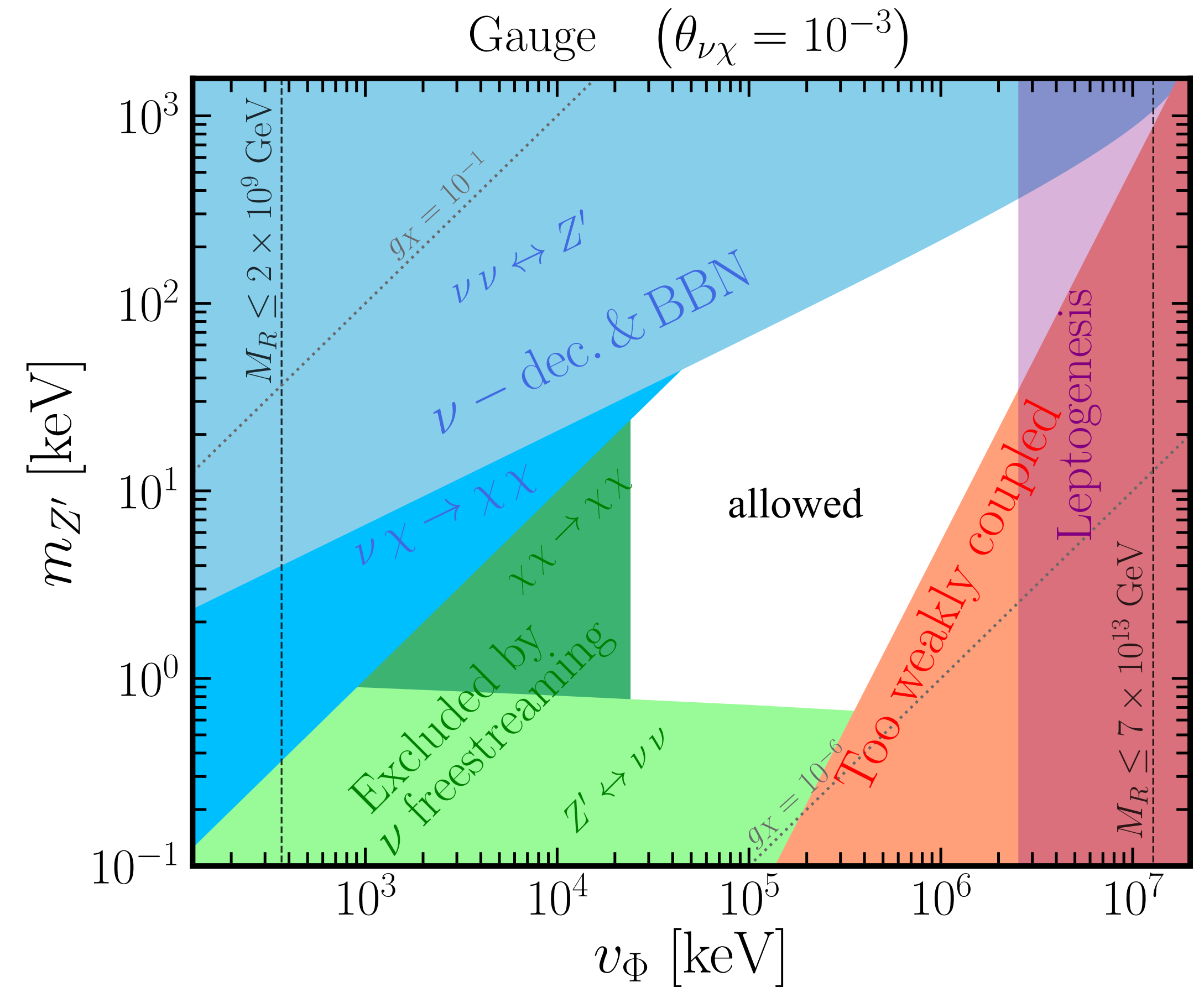
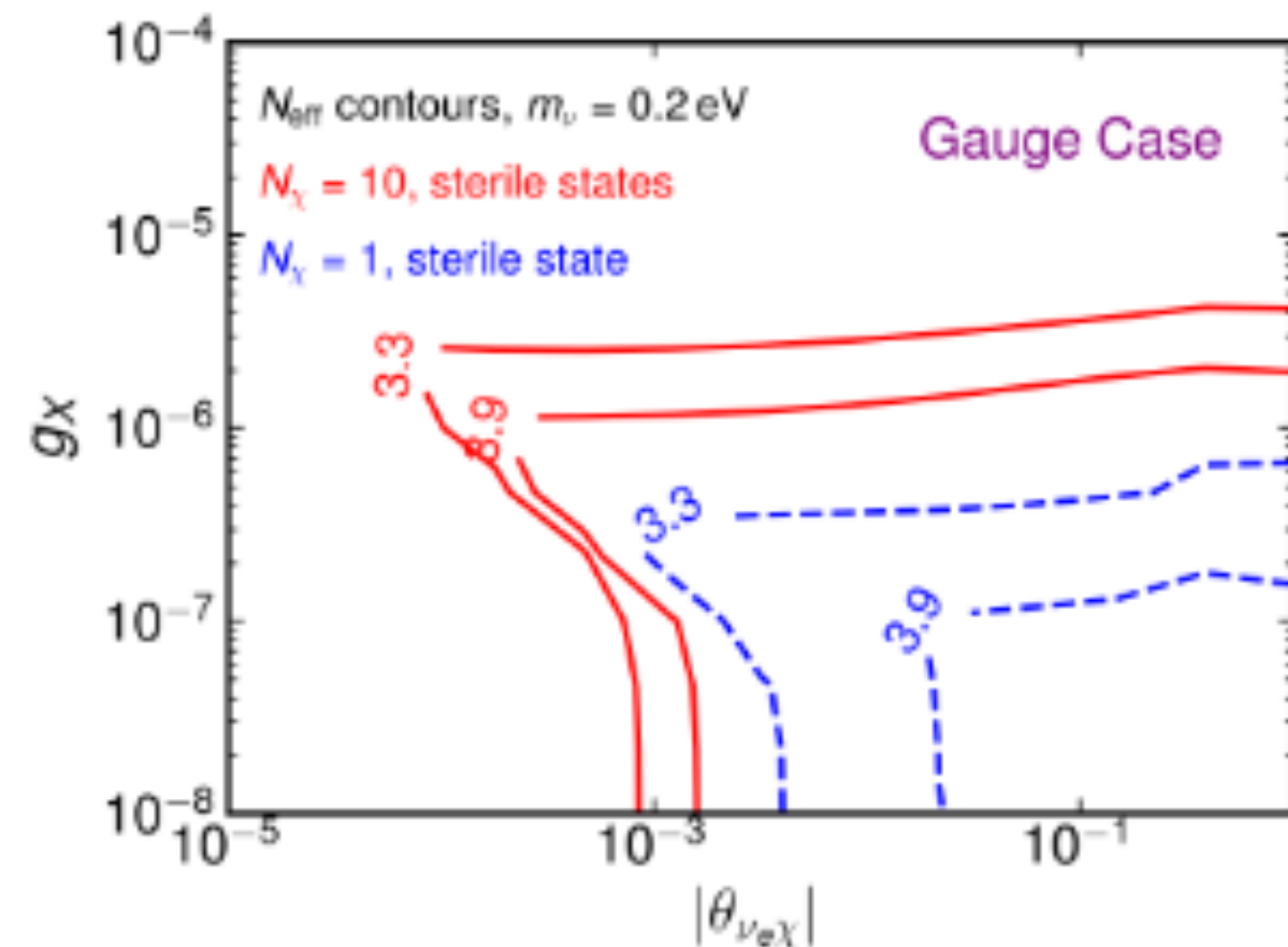
$$\langle \Gamma \rangle < H \text{ for } z < 10^5$$

Taule, Escudero, Garny, 2207.04062

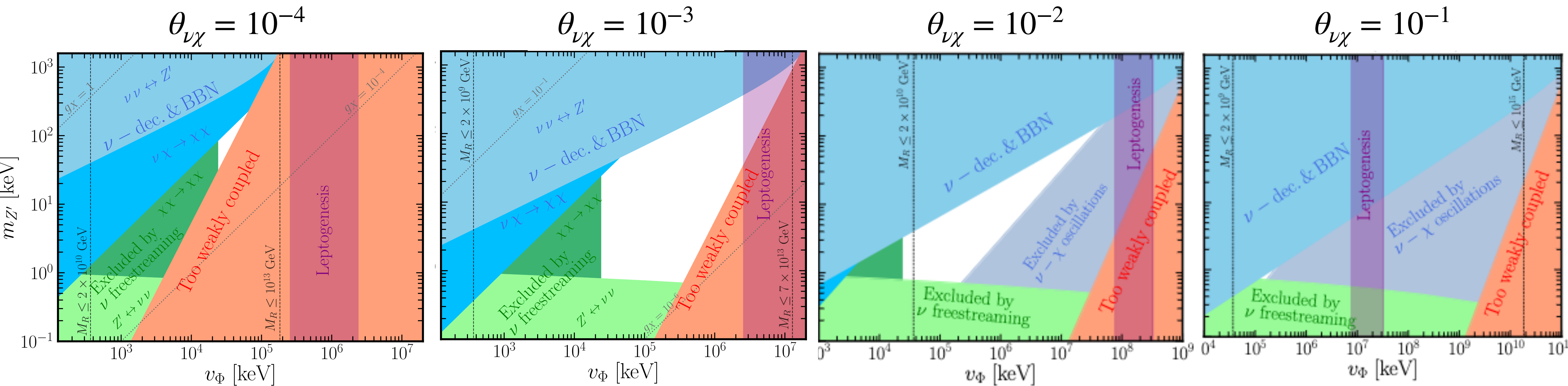


Neutrino mixing with massless states $\theta_{\nu\chi}$

- avoid thermalization of χ prior neutrino decoupling due to oscillations
- take into account effective potential due to self-interactions



Neutrino mixing with massless states $\theta_{\nu\chi}$



$$10^{-4} \lesssim \theta_{\nu\chi} \lesssim 10^{-1}$$

upper range potentially testable in oscillation experiments
T. Ota, 2411.16356

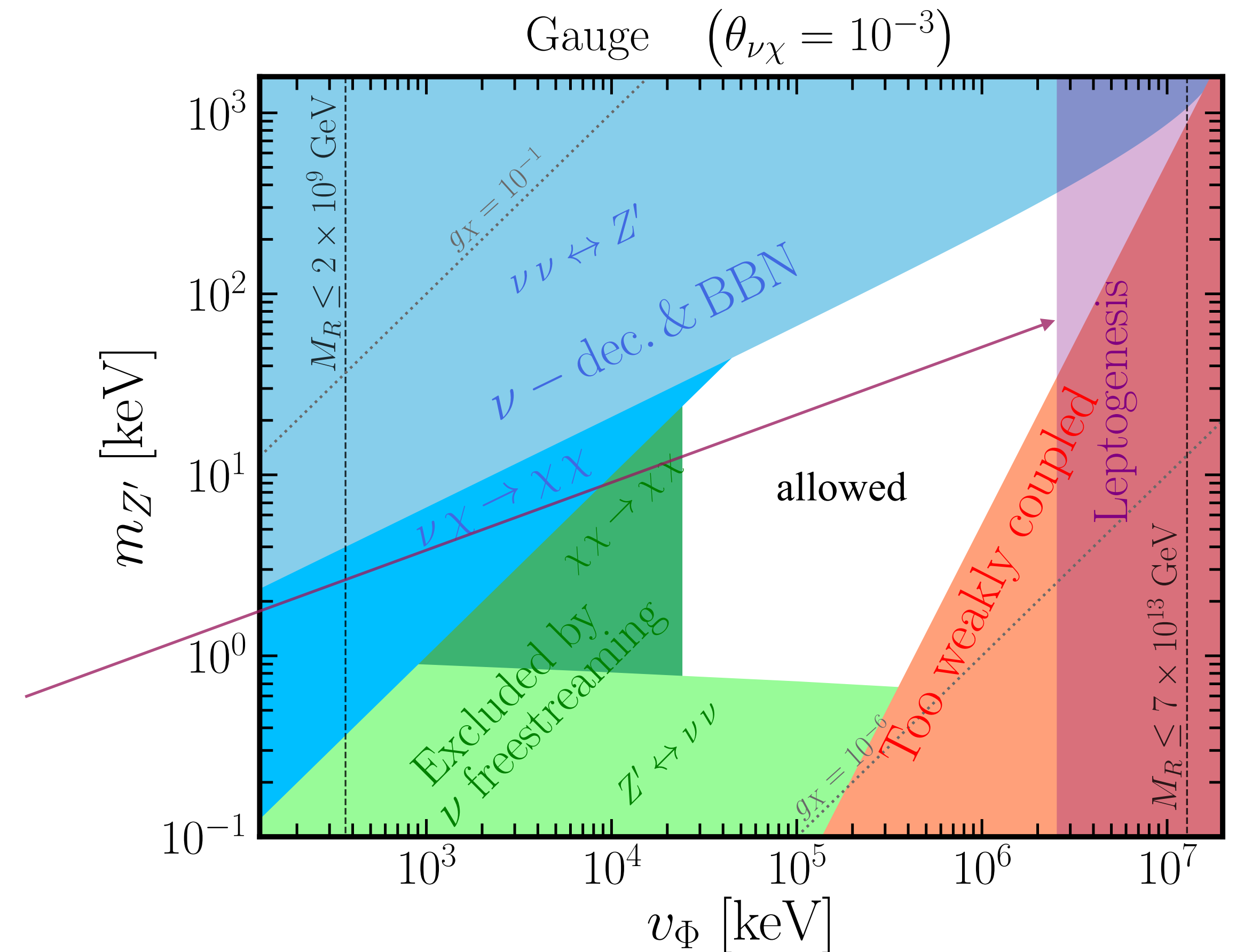
Constraints on heavy RH neutrinos

$$M_R \lesssim 10^{10} - 10^{14} \text{ GeV}$$

- perturbativity of Yukawa $Y_\Phi \bar{N}_R \chi_L \Phi$
- loop-induced Higgs portal $\lambda_{\Phi H} |\Phi|^2 H^\dagger H$ remains small to avoid thermalization of Φ prior BBN

Comment on leptogenesis:

- standard thermal LG works if $N \rightarrow HL$ dominates over $N \rightarrow \phi\chi$
- otherwise χ would thermalize and conflict with N_{eff}
 \Rightarrow require $T_{RH} < M_R$ (allows still for $T_{RH} \gg T_{EW}$)



Signatures in a super nova

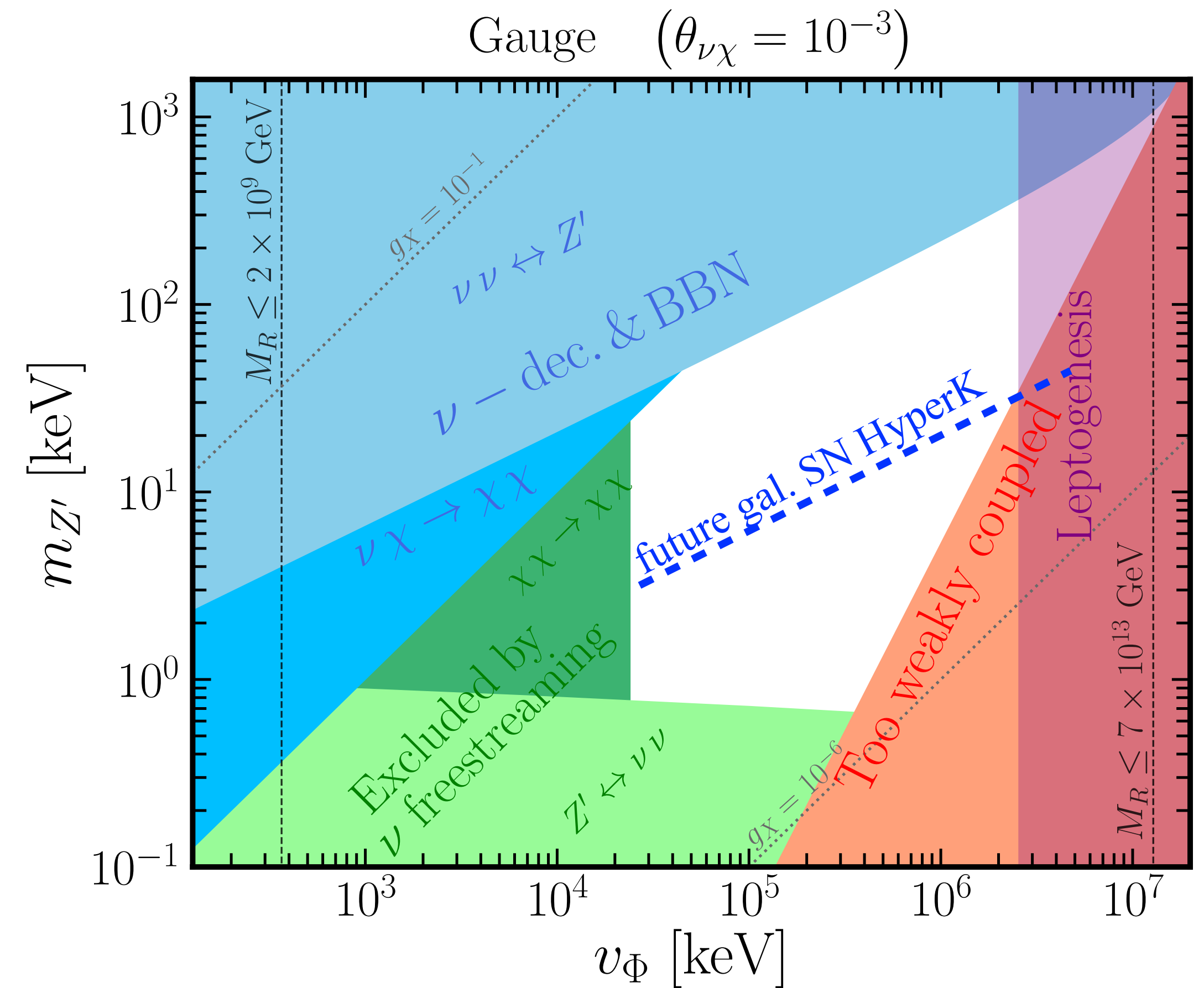
- SN cooling arguments for SN1987A exclude

$$3 \times 10^{-7} \frac{\text{keV}}{m_{Z'}} \lesssim \lambda_{Z'}^{\nu\nu} \lesssim 10^{-4} \frac{\text{keV}}{m_{Z'}} \quad \text{Fiorillo, Raffelt, Vitagliano, 2209.11773}$$

weaker than BBN constraint $\lambda_{Z'}^{\nu\nu} \lesssim 10^{-7} (\text{keV}/m_{Z'})$

- Future galactic SN at 10 kpc: neutrino signal in HyperK from $Z' \rightarrow \nu\nu$: sensitivity down to

$$\lambda_{Z'}^{\nu\nu} \sim 10^{-9} (\text{keV}/m_{Z'}) \quad \text{Akita, Im, Masud, 2206.06852}$$

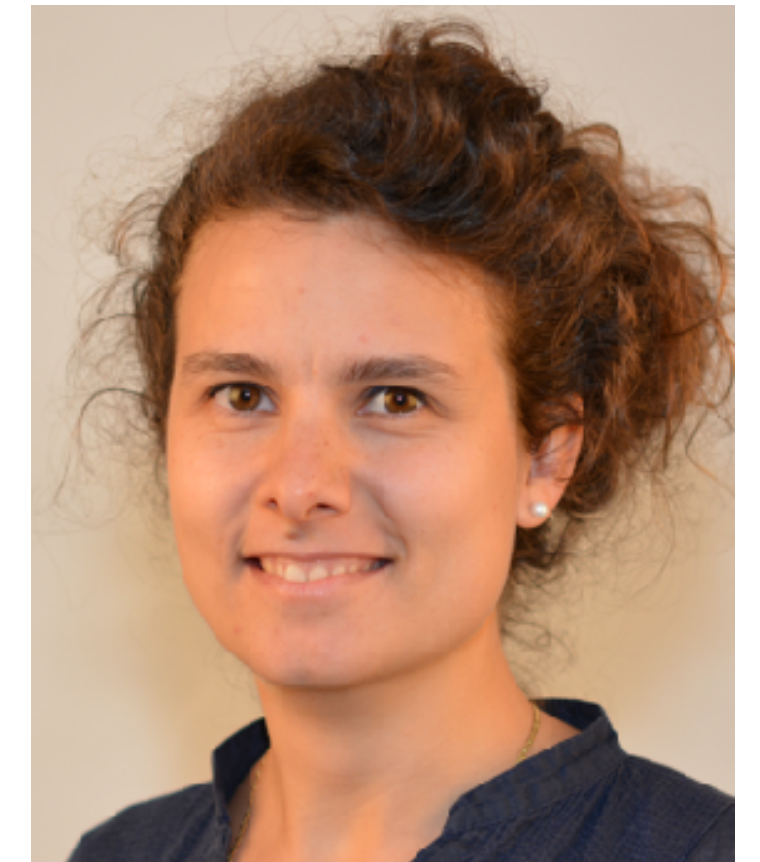
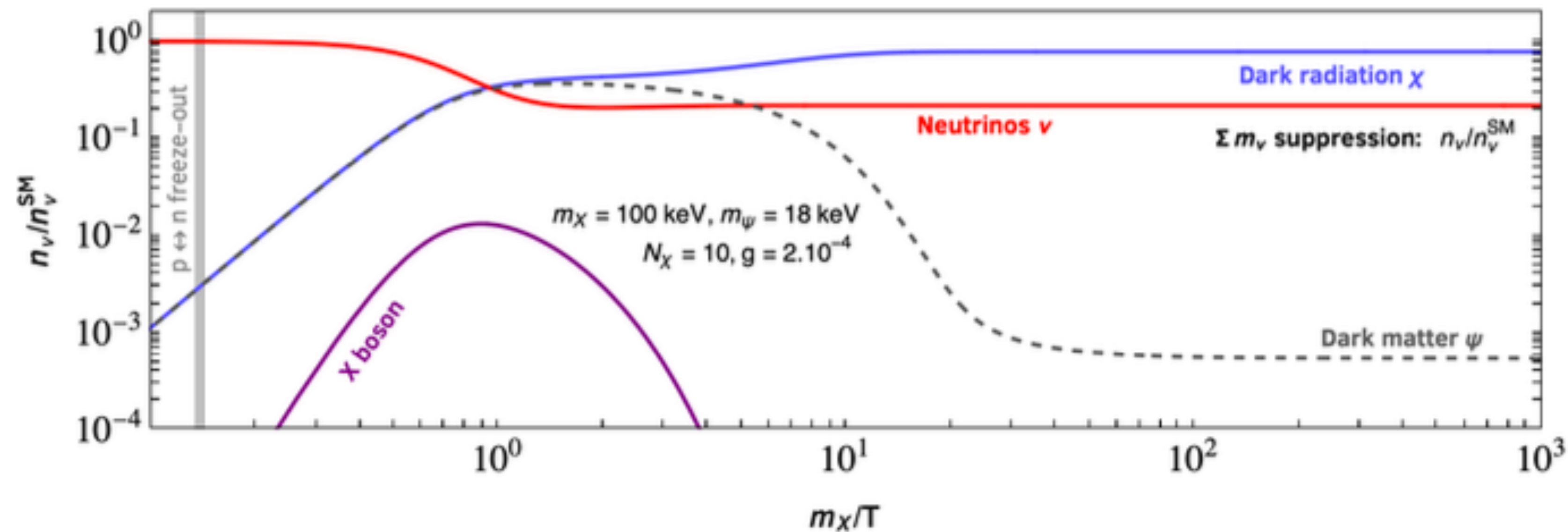


Adding keV sterile neutrino dark matter

Benso, Schwetz,
Vatsyayan, 2410.23926

- freeze-out in the dark sector

$$\psi\psi \leftrightarrow \chi\chi, Z'Z'$$



Fermion sector

basis $(\chi_L^c, \nu_L^c, \psi_L^c, N', N)$:

$$\mathcal{M}_n = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & \Lambda' & \Lambda \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & m_D' & m_D \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \kappa' & \kappa \\ \Lambda'^T & m_D^{T'} & \kappa'^T & M' & 0 \\ \Lambda^T & m_D^T & \kappa^T & 0 & M \end{pmatrix}$$

dark freeze-out due
to gauge interactions:

$$\lambda_{Z'}^{\psi\psi} = \lambda_{Z'}^{\chi\chi} = \frac{m_{Z'}}{v_\phi}$$

assumed hierarchy:

$$M \gg M' \gg m_D \gg \kappa', \Lambda \gg m_D', \Lambda', \kappa$$

$$M' m_D^2 \ll M \kappa'^2$$

seesaw masses

$$m_\nu \approx m_D M^{-1} m_D^T,$$

$$m_\psi \approx \kappa' M'^{-1} \kappa'^T.$$

mixing with active neutrinos

$$\theta_{\nu\psi} = \frac{m_D'}{\kappa'} \rightarrow 0$$

Fermion sector

basis $(\chi_L^c, \nu_L^c, \psi_L^c, N', N)$:

$$\mathcal{M}_n = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & \Lambda' & \Lambda \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & m_D' & m_D \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & \kappa' & \kappa \\ \Lambda'^T & m_D^{T'} & \kappa'^T & M' & 0 \\ \Lambda^T & m_D^T & \kappa^T & 0 & M \end{pmatrix}$$

assumed hierarchy:

$$M \gg M' \gg m_D \gg \kappa', \Lambda \gg m_D', \Lambda', \kappa$$

$$M' m_D^2 \ll M \kappa'^2$$

seesaw masses

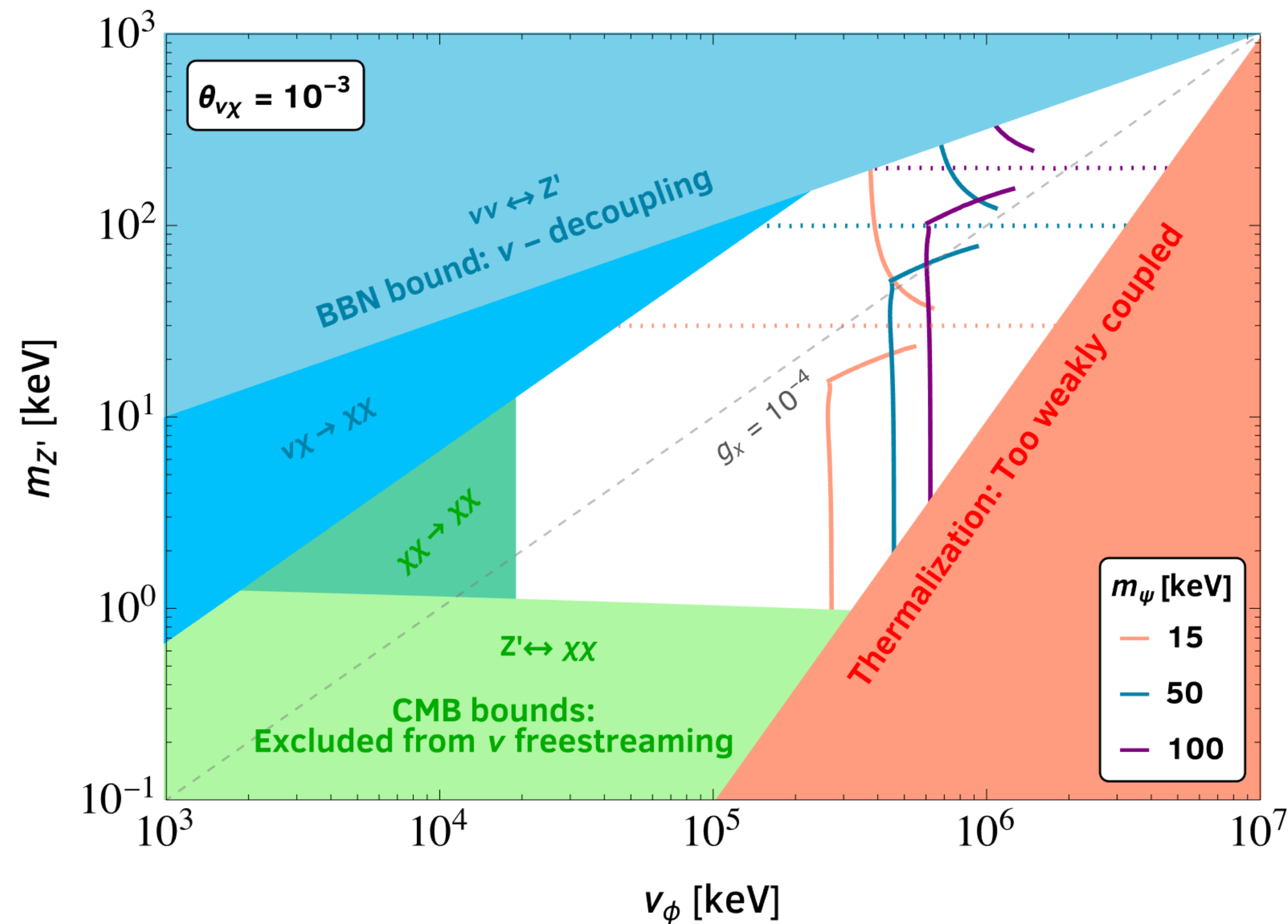
$$m_\nu \approx m_D M^{-1} m_D^T,$$

$$m_\psi \approx \kappa' M'^{-1} \kappa'^T.$$

M [GeV]	M' [GeV]	m_D [GeV]	κ' [GeV]	Λ [GeV]	v_ϕ [GeV]	m_ψ [keV]	$m_{Z'}$ [keV]	$g = m_{Z'}/v_\phi$	$\theta_{\nu\chi}$	N_χ	n_ν/n_ν^{SM}	ΔN_{eff}
10^{11}	10^2	4.47	0.043	0.004	0.5	18.5	100	2×10^{-4}	10^{-3}	10	0.216	0.109
10^{12}	10^3	14.14	0.23	0.141	0.8	53	77	9.6×10^{-5}	10^{-2}	10	0.216	0.109
10^{13}	10^2	44.7	0.1	0.044	0.6	100	32	5.3×10^{-5}	10^{-3}	20	0.135	0.060

DM abundance: freeze-out in the dark sector

$$\langle\sigma v\rangle = \frac{m_\psi^2}{8\pi v_\phi^4 x_d} \times \begin{cases} \tilde{N} & (m_{Z'} \gg m_\psi) \\ 3 & (m_{Z'} \ll m_\psi) \end{cases} \quad \begin{array}{l} \psi\psi \leftrightarrow \chi\chi \\ \psi\psi \leftrightarrow Z'Z' \end{array}$$



DM-neutrino mixing strongly constrained by DM lifetime

require $\tau_\psi > 20\tau_{\text{Univ.}}$

e.g., Poulin, Serpico, Lesgourgues, 1606.02073

- $m_\psi < m_{Z'}$: dominating decay $\psi \rightarrow \nu\chi\chi$ ($\psi \rightarrow 3\chi$ highly suppressed)

$$\theta_{\nu\psi}^2 < 2 \times 10^{-16} \left(\frac{15 \text{ keV}}{m_\psi} \right)^5 \left(\frac{21}{\tilde{N}} \right) \left(\frac{v_\phi}{2 \text{ GeV}} \right)^4$$

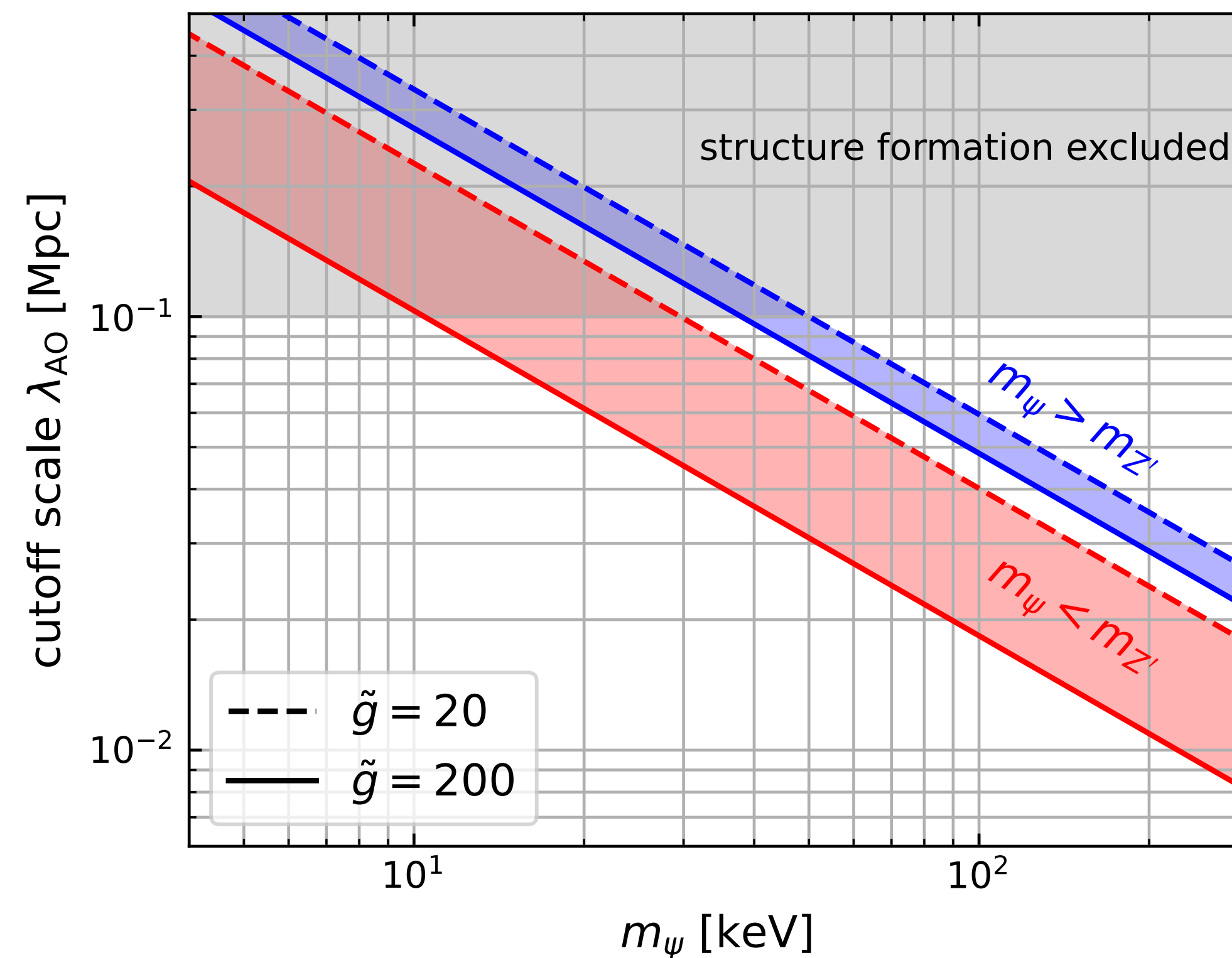
- $m_\psi > m_{Z'}$: dominating decay $\psi \rightarrow \nu Z'$

$$\theta_{\nu\psi}^2 < 1.2 \times 10^{-30} \left(\frac{m_{Z'}}{10 \text{ keV}} \right)^2 \left(\frac{10^{-4}}{g} \right)^2 \left(\frac{40 \text{ keV}}{m_\psi} \right)^3$$

Cosmic structure formation

- DM free-streaming and dark acoustic oscillations suppress growth of structure at scales $\lambda_{\text{cutoff}} = \max(\lambda_{\text{FS}}, \lambda_{\text{AO}})$

A. Berlin, N. Blinov, 1807.04282



Summary

- Relaxing cosmo bound on $\sum m_\nu$ requires exciting new physics
- Presented simple seesaw model:
 - large number of massless sterile neutrinos ($N_\chi \gtrsim 10 - 30$)
 - dark U(1) symmetry with breaking scale between 10 MeV and 10 GeV
 - weakly coupled Z' with mass 1 — 100 keV with $\lambda_{Z'}^{\nu\nu} \sim 10^{-9}$
 - including keV sterile neutrino DM
- possible signatures:
 - deviation of N_{eff} at CMB
 - galactic SN observations
 - sterile neutrino searches at oscillation experiments
 - cut-off scale in cosmic structure

**Thank you for
your attention!**

Backup

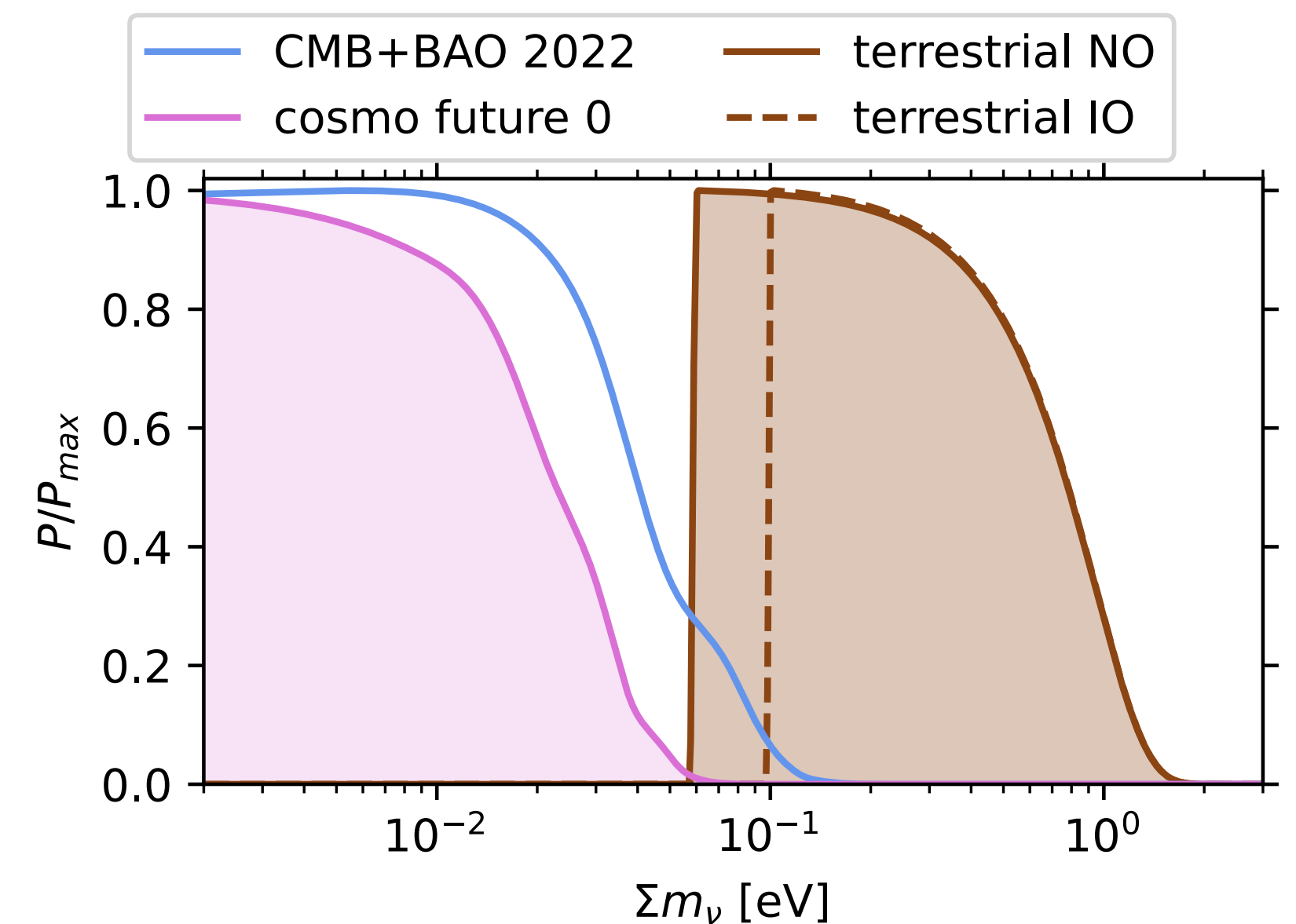
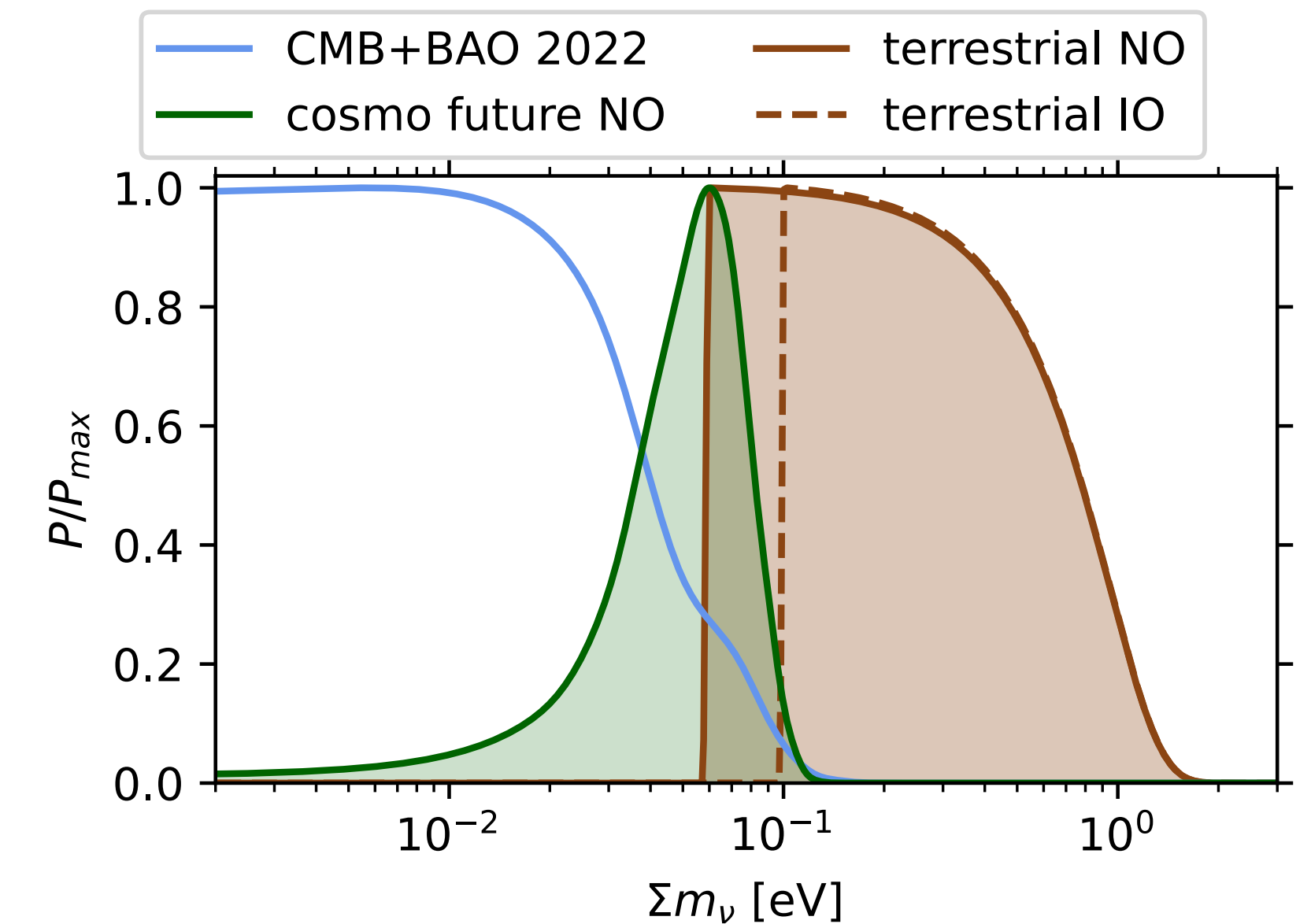
Possible near-term scenarios

$$\sigma(m_\nu) = 0.02 \text{ eV}$$

e.g. from Planck + EUCLID or DESI 5 yr obs.

e.g., Archidiacono et al., 1808.05955

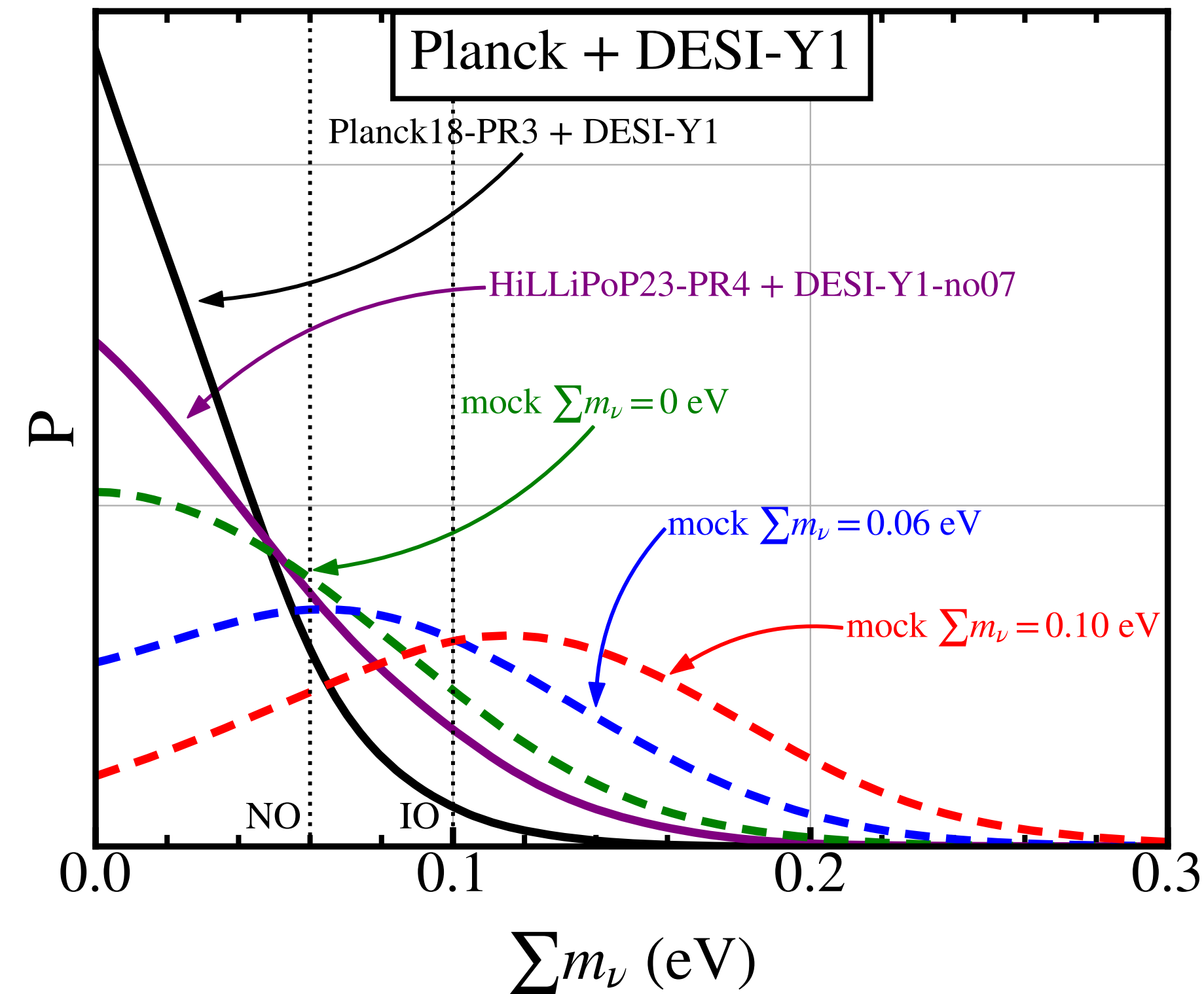
- $\sim 3\sigma$ determination of finite neutrino mass consistent with 60 meV (NO), 100 meV (IO) still consistent at $\sim 2\sigma$
- $\sim 3\sigma$ tension between cosmo and lab could indicate either non-standard cosmology or neutrino properties or both



updated from Gariazzo, Mena, TS, 2302.14159

„too strong“ bound due to Planck lensing anomaly, statistical fluctuation in DESI BAO data?

Naredo-Tuero, Escudero, Fernandez, Marcano, Poulin, 2407.13831



Example 1: hint for dynamical dark energy?

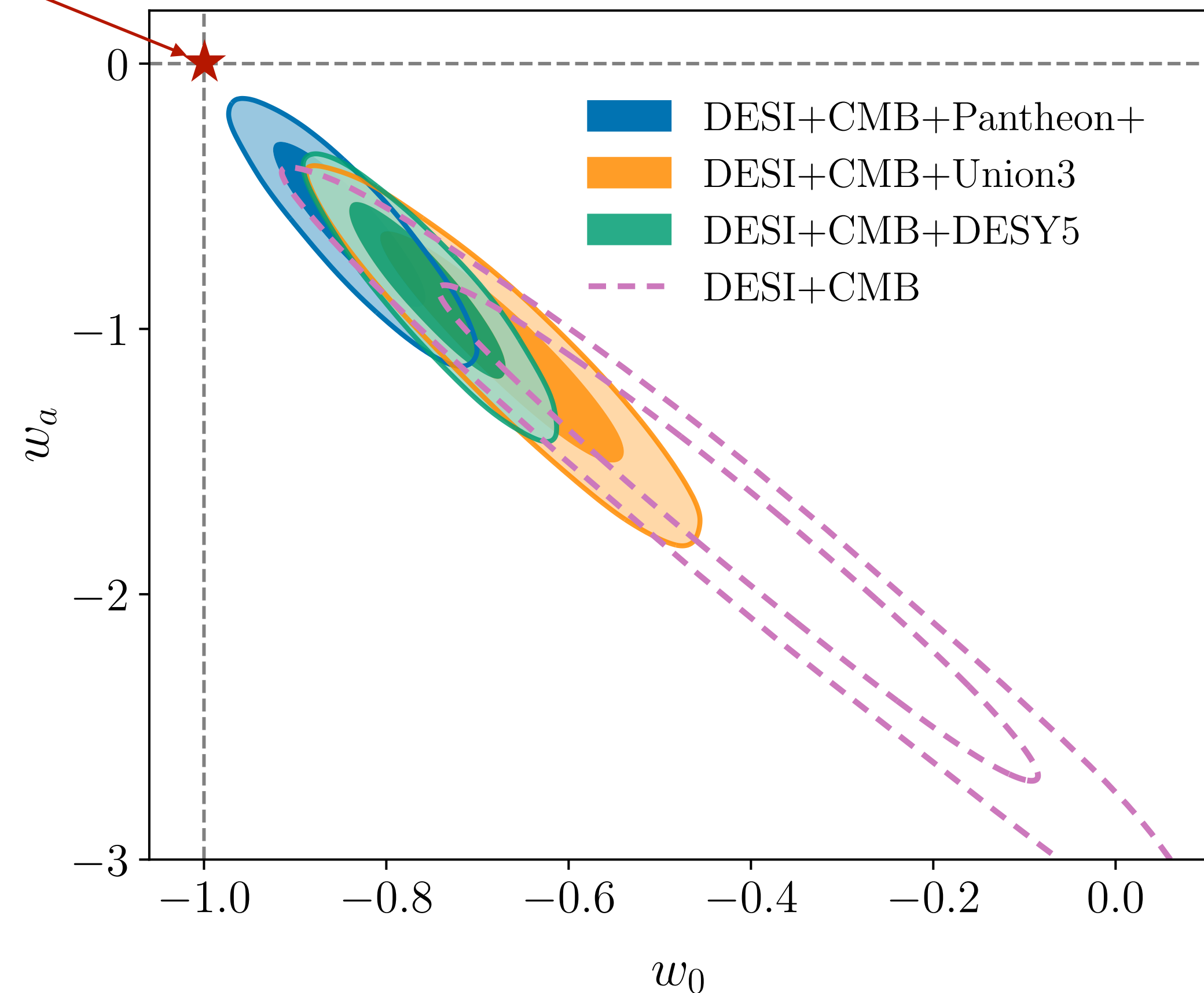
cosm. const. : $w_0 = -1, w_a = 0$

DESI DR2 2025 [2503.14738]

DE equation of state: $p = w\rho$

$$w(z) = w_0 + w_a \frac{z}{1+z}$$

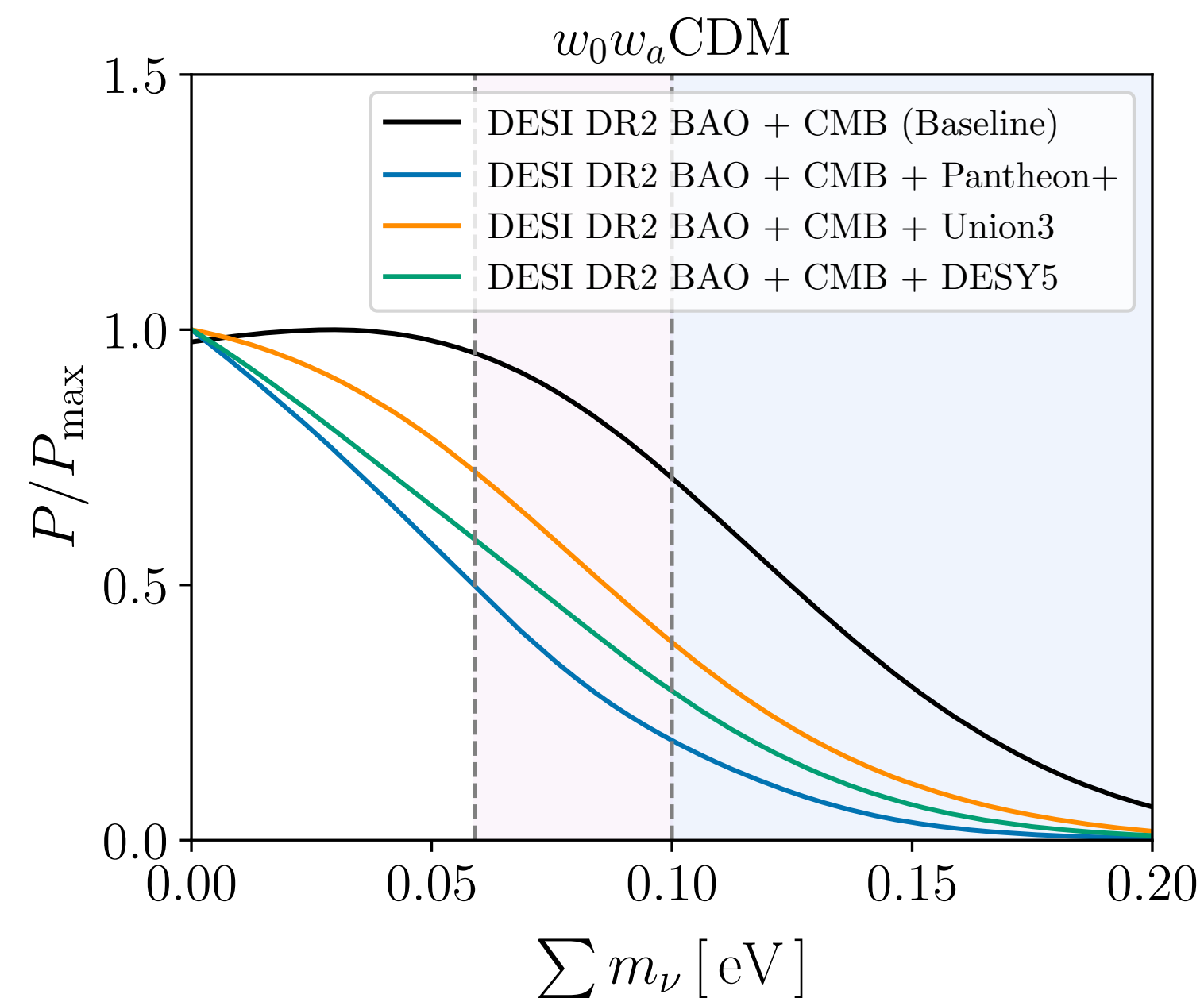
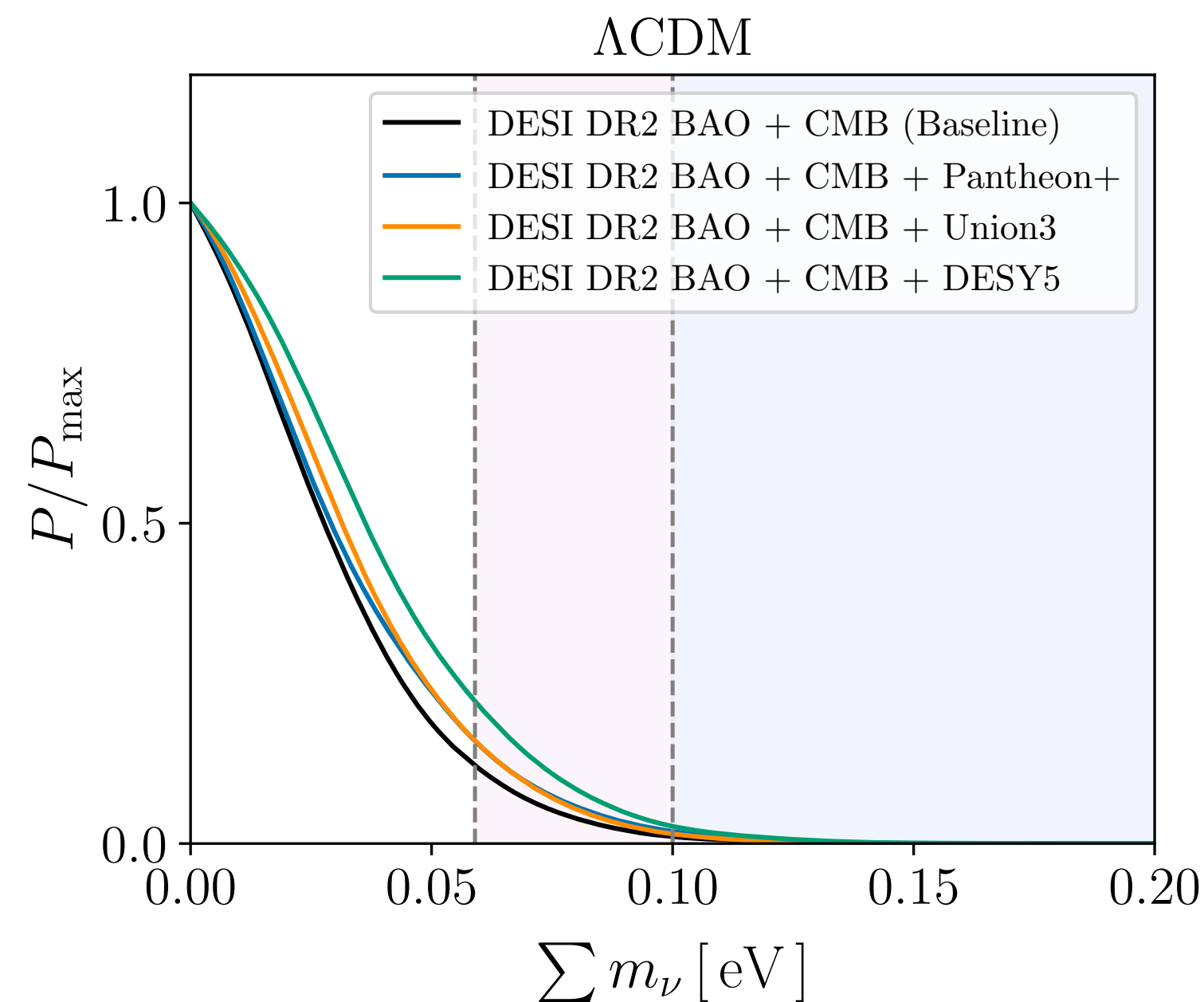
$2.8\sigma - 4.2\sigma$ indication for
deviation from cosmolog. const.



Example 1: hint for dynamical dark energy?

	$\sum m_\nu$ [eV]
Λ CDM + $\sum m_\nu$	
DESI BAO+CMB [Camspec]	< 0.0642
DESI BAO+CMB [L-H]	< 0.0774
DESI BAO+CMB [Plik]	< 0.0691

	$\sum m_\nu$ [eV]
$w_0 w_a$ CDM + $\sum m_\nu$	
DESI BAO+CMB	< 0.163
DESI BAO+CMB+Pantheon+	< 0.117
DESI BAO+CMB+Union3	< 0.139
DESI BAO+CMB+DESY5	< 0.129



DESI DR2
[2503.14743]

Preference for negative neutrino mass?

$$\Delta\chi^2(m_\nu = 0) \lesssim 3, \quad \Delta\chi^2(\text{NO}) \lesssim 6$$

DESI DR2 [arXiv:2503.14743]

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