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Search for pair production of a new heavy quark that decays into a W boson and a light quark in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV with the ATLAS detector

The ATLAS Collaboration

Abstract

A search is presented for pair production of a new heavy quark (Q) that decays into a W boson and a light quark (q) in the final state where one W boson decays leptonically (to an electron or muon plus a neutrino) and the other W boson decays hadronically. The analysis is performed using an integrated luminosity of 20.3 fb^{-1} of pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV collected by the ATLAS detector at the LHC. No evidence of $Q\bar{Q}$ production is observed. New chiral quarks with masses below 690 GeV are excluded at 95% confidence level, assuming $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$. Results are also interpreted in the context of vectorlike quark models, resulting in the limits on the mass of a vectorlike quark in the two-dimensional plane of $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq)$ versus $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq)$.

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1 Introduction

The recent observation of the long-predicted Higgs boson by the ATLAS [1] and CMS [2] collaborations now completes the Standard Model (SM). In spite of its success, the SM cannot account for dark matter and the matter/antimatter asymmetry in the Universe and also fails to provide insight into the fermion mass spectrum, nonzero neutrino masses, why there are three generations of fermions, or why parity is not violated in the strong interaction. Furthermore, the observed Higgs boson is unnaturally light, requiring fine tuning to cancel radiative corrections that would naturally result in a mass many orders of magnitude larger, a discrepancy known as the hierarchy problem [3].

A variety of models have been proposed to address the various shortcomings of the SM. For example, a primary motivation for supersymmetry (SUSY) is to solve the hierarchy problem [4]. In SUSY models, the quadratically divergent radiative corrections to the Higgs-boson mass due to SM particles are automatically canceled by the corrections from the supersymmetric partners. Models such as Little Higgs, Composite Higgs, and Topcolor take a different approach, proposing that electroweak symmetry breaking happens dynamically as the result of a new strong interaction [5–9]. Grand unified theories (GUTs) go further, unifying the electroweak and strong forces by proposing that the SM gauge symmetry $SU(3)_C \times SU(2)_L \times U(1)_Y$ is the low-energy limit of a single fundamental symmetry group such as $SO(10)$ or E_6 [10, 11], which could potentially explain the observed spectrum of fermions and even provide insight into the unification of the electroweak and strong forces with gravity. A feature in many of these, and other models [12–14], is the prediction of vectorlike quarks (VLQs), hypothetical spin- $\frac{1}{2}$ particles that are triplets under the color gauge group and have identical transformation properties for both chiralities under the electroweak symmetry group. Furthermore, massive VLQs would respect gauge invariance without coupling to the Higgs field. This allows VLQs to avoid constraints from Higgs-boson production [15]; if the Higgs sector is minimal, these constraints rule out additional chiral quarks. However, some two-Higgs-doublet models are able to avoid those constraints and accommodate a fourth generation of quarks [16].

In the models of interest, the VLQs have some mixing with the SM quarks, allowing them to decay to SM quarks and either a W , Z , or Higgs boson; however, the exact nature of the coupling depends on the model. For example, in composite Higgs models, the VLQs are involved in a seesaw mechanism with the SM quarks, so the lightest VLQ couples almost exclusively to the heaviest SM quarks (t - and b -quarks) [6]. However, there are also models that predict TeV-scale VLQs that could preferentially decay to light SM quarks ($q = u, d, s, \text{ or } c$) [10, 11, 17]. For example, the left-right mirror model (LRMM) [17] predicts three generations of heavy “mirror” quarks, with the lightest mirror generation coupling to the lightest SM generation. The two lightest mirror quarks could be pair-produced at the LHC via the strong interaction and would then decay to Wq , Zq , or Hq ($q = u \text{ or } d$). The LRMM would provide an explanation for tiny neutrino masses, parity violation in weak interactions, parity conservation in strong interactions, and could be the first step toward uncovering the symmetry structure of a GUT. Another model predicting VLQs that decay to light quarks is the E_6 GUT with isosinglet quarks [10, 11]. In this model, after the E_6 symmetry is broken down to the SM group structure, VLQ partners to the d -, s -, and b -quarks are predicted. If the VLQs have the same mass ordering as their SM partners, the lightest VLQ would couple predominately to first-generation SM quarks ($q = u \text{ or } d$). The values for the branching ratios to the three decay modes (Wq , Zq , Hq) depend on parameters in the model. The values in the E_6 isosinglet model range from approximately (0.6, 0.3, 0.1) to (0.5, 0.25, 0.25), while the LRMM allows branching ratios from approximately (0.6, 0.4, 0) to (0, 0, 1), depending on the VLQ mass and mixing angles.

If such new quarks exist, they are expected to be produced predominantly in pairs via the strong interaction for masses up to $O(1 \text{ TeV})$ in LHC collisions with a center-of-mass energy of 8 TeV. Single production of a new heavy quark, Q , would be dominant for very high quark masses, but the production rate is model-dependent and could be suppressed if the coupling to SM quarks is small. To date, there have been two analyses of LHC data sensitive to VLQs that decay to light quarks, both using 1.04 fb^{-1} of ATLAS data at $\sqrt{s} = 7 \text{ TeV}$: one search for pair-production [18] and one for single production [19]. The pair-production search set a lower limit on the Q mass of 350 GeV at 95% confidence level, assuming $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$. Such a signal was also ruled out by the Tevatron for masses up to 340 GeV [20].

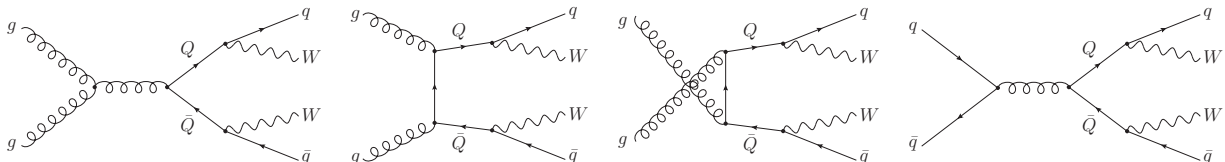


Figure 1: Leading-order Feynman diagrams for $Q\bar{Q} \rightarrow WqW\bar{q}$ production at the LHC.

This paper presents a search for new heavy quarks that couple to light SM quarks using data collected by the ATLAS detector. The analysis focuses on model-independent pair production of a new heavy quark and its antiparticle, which then decay through a charged-current interaction to a final state with a single electron or muon, missing transverse momentum and light SM quarks, making it complementary to searches for VLQs that decay to third-generation quarks [21–28]. The dominant Feynman diagrams for the signal process are shown in Fig. 1. Background rejection is achieved through event topology and kinematic requirements. In particular, a kinematic variable motivated by the splitting scale of a heavy object into daughter particles [29, 30] is used to reduce the background when selecting the pair of jets consistent with a hadronically decaying W boson. The statistical interpretation of the data uses the invariant mass distribution of the Q candidate formed from the hadronically decaying W boson and a light quark. The results are interpreted both in the context of VLQs and a chiral fourth-generation quark.

2 The ATLAS detector

The ATLAS detector [31] at the LHC covers nearly the entire solid angle around the interaction point (IP).¹ It consists of an inner tracking detector surrounded by a thin superconducting solenoid, electromagnetic and hadronic calorimeters, and a muon spectrometer incorporating three large superconducting toroid magnets.

The inner tracking detector system is immersed in a 2 T axial magnetic field and provides charged-particle tracking in the range $|\eta| < 2.5$. A high-granularity silicon pixel detector covers the interaction region and typically provides three measurements per track. It is followed by a silicon microstrip tracker, which usually provides four two-dimensional measurement points per track. These silicon detectors are complemented by a transition radiation tracker, which enables radially extended track reconstruction up to $|\eta| = 2.0$. The transition radiation tracker also provides electron identification information based on

¹ ATLAS uses a right-handed coordinate system with its origin at the nominal IP in the center of the detector and the z -axis along the beam pipe. The x -axis points from the IP to the center of the LHC ring, and the y -axis points upwards. Cylindrical coordinates (r, ϕ) are used in the transverse plane, ϕ being the azimuthal angle around the z -axis. The pseudorapidity is defined in terms of the polar angle θ as $\eta = -\ln(\theta/2)$. Angular distance is measured in units of $\Delta R \equiv \sqrt{(\Delta\eta)^2 + (\Delta\phi)^2}$.

the fraction of hits (typically 30 in total) above a higher threshold for energy deposits corresponding to transition radiation.

The calorimeter system covers the pseudorapidity range $|\eta| < 4.9$. Within the region $|\eta| < 3.2$, electromagnetic calorimetry is provided by barrel and endcap high-granularity lead/liquid-argon (LAr) calorimeters, with an additional thin LAr presampler covering $|\eta| < 1.8$, to correct for energy loss in material upstream of the calorimeters. Hadronic calorimetry is provided by the steel/scintillator-tile calorimeter, segmented into three barrel structures within $|\eta| < 1.7$, and two copper/LAr hadronic endcap calorimeters with $|\eta| < 3.2$. The solid angle coverage is completed with forward copper/LAr and tungsten/LAr calorimeter modules optimized for electromagnetic and hadronic measurements respectively.

The muon spectrometer comprises separate trigger and high-precision tracking chambers measuring the deflection of muons in a magnetic field generated by superconducting air-core toroids. The precision chamber system covers the region $|\eta| < 2.7$ with three layers of monitored drift tubes, complemented by cathode strip chambers in the forward region, where the background is highest. The muon trigger system covers the range $|\eta| < 2.4$ with resistive plate chambers in the barrel, and thin-gap chambers in the endcap regions.

A three-level trigger system [32] is used to select events for offline analysis. The Level-1 trigger is implemented in hardware and uses a subset of detector information to reduce the event rate to at most 75 kHz. This is followed by two software-based trigger levels that together reduce the event rate to about 400 Hz.

3 Signal and background samples

The pair-production cross section for a new heavy quark ranges from 12 pb for a 300 GeV quark to 21 fb for a 800 GeV quark. It was calculated at next-to-next-to-leading-order (NNLO) in QCD, including resummation of next-to-next-to-leading logarithmic (NNLL) soft gluon terms, with Top++2.0 [33–38], using the MSTW2008 NNLO [39, 40] set of parton distribution functions (PDFs) and $\alpha_S = 0.117$. The PDF and α_S uncertainties were calculated using the PDF4LHC prescription [41] with the MSTW2008 68% CL NNLO, CT10 NNLO [42], and NNPDF2.3 5f FFN [43] PDF sets. The uncertainties in the prediction stem from scale variations and the PDF+ α_S uncertainty and range from approximately 11% to 12% for masses from 300 GeV to 800 GeV.

VLQ signal samples were simulated with the tree-level event generator CompHEP v4.5.1 [44] at the parton level with the CTEQ6L1 LO PDF set [45] and with the QCD scale set to the mass of the heavy quark, m_Q . The generated events were then passed into Pythia v8.165 [46, 47] for hadronization and parton showering. The VLQ signal samples were produced for values of m_Q ranging from 300 GeV to 800 GeV in 100 GeV steps. This range is motivated by the previous limit at 350 GeV and the expected sensitivity of this analysis to masses up to approximately 700 GeV. Although the analysis is targeting the $Q \rightarrow Wq$ decay, there is also sensitivity to the neutral-current decays $Q \rightarrow Zq$ and $Q \rightarrow Hq$ (e.g., $Q\bar{Q} \rightarrow WqZ\bar{q} \rightarrow \ell\nu q\bar{q}\bar{q}$) and events were generated for all six decay combinations. In addition to the VLQ signal samples, a set of fourth-generation chiral-quark signal samples were generated with Pythia v8.1 using the MSTW 2008 LO PDF set. The kinematics of the chiral-quark signal samples, which only contain $Q\bar{Q} \rightarrow WqW\bar{q}$, are compatible with the VLQ samples when requiring $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$. Therefore, the more generic VLQ samples are used for the statistical analysis, with the sample corresponding to $m_Q = 700$ GeV and $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$ used to represent the signal in tables and figures, unless noted otherwise.

The background originates mainly from W -boson production in association with jets, W +jets, with lesser contributions from top quark pair production ($t\bar{t}$), Z +jets, single-top, diboson, and multijet events. The W +jets and Z +jets samples were produced using SHERPA v1.4.1 [48] with the CT10 PDF set, taking the c - and b -quarks as massive. Samples of $t\bar{t}$ and single-top events were generated with POWHEG-Box 3.0 [49, 50] interfaced to PYTHIA v6.426 [47] using the Perugia2011C set of tunable parameters [51] for the underlying event and the CTEQ6L1 PDF set. Diboson production was modeled using ALPGEN v2.13 [52] interfaced to HERWIG v6.520 [53] with the CTEQ6L1 PDF set, except for the lepton+jets final state ($WV \rightarrow \ell\nu qq$ with $V = W, Z$), which used the SHERPA v1.4.1 event generator with the CT10 PDF set. The contribution from multijet events originates from the misidentification of a jet or a photon as an electron, or from the semileptonic decay of a b - or c -quark, and the matrix method [54] is used to determine the kinematic distributions for the multijet background.

The W/Z +jets and multijet backgrounds are normalized to data and a data-driven correction is applied to the transverse momentum p_T of the boson as described in Sec. 5.1. The $t\bar{t}$ cross section is determined by the Top++ prediction, with the top-quark mass taken to be 172.5 GeV. The single-top samples are normalized to the approximate NNLO theoretical cross sections [55–57] calculated using the MSTW 2008 NNLO PDF set. The diboson background processes are normalized to NLO theoretical cross sections [58].

All simulated samples include multiple pp interactions per bunch crossing and simulated events are weighted such that the distribution of the average number of interactions per bunch crossing agrees with data. The generated samples are processed through a simulation [59] of the detector geometry and response using GEANT4 [60], then reconstructed using the same software as used for data. Simulated events are corrected so that the object identification efficiencies, energy scales, and energy resolutions match those determined in data control samples.

4 Event selection

The data analyzed in this search were collected with the ATLAS detector in 2012 and correspond to an integrated luminosity of 20.3 fb^{-1} . Data quality requirements are applied to remove events with incomplete, corrupted, or otherwise compromised subdetector information. Events are required to pass a single-electron or single-muon trigger. The p_T thresholds are 24 GeV and 60 GeV for the electron triggers and 24 GeV and 36 GeV for the muon triggers. The lower-threshold triggers include isolation requirements on the candidate leptons, resulting in inefficiencies at higher p_T that are recovered by the higher-threshold triggers without an isolation requirement.

4.1 Preselection

The basic object selection is called preselection and requires exactly one charged lepton (electron or muon), at least four jets, and large missing transverse momentum (E_T^{miss}), as described below. The criteria are similar to those used in recent ATLAS top-quark studies [61], except that this analysis requires that there are no jets identified as originating from a b -quark. The expected and observed numbers of events after preselection are shown in Table 1. There is negligible sensitivity to heavy quark production because the signal expectations for all masses are much smaller than the uncertainty on the background, dominated at this stage by systematic uncertainties.

Charged-lepton requirements

Electron candidates are required to have $p_T > 25$ GeV and either $|\eta| < 1.37$ or $1.52 < |\eta| < 2.47$ to exclude the transition between the barrel and endcap calorimeters. Muon candidates are required to have $p_T > 25$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.5$. Nonprompt leptons and nonleptonic particles may be reconstructed as leptons and satisfy the selection criteria, giving rise to nonprompt and fake lepton backgrounds. In the case of electrons, these include contributions from semileptonic decays of b - and c -quarks, photon conversions, and jets with a large electromagnetic energy fraction. Nonprompt or fake muons can originate from semileptonic decays of b - and c -quarks, from charged-hadron decays in the tracking volume or in hadronic showers, or from punchthrough particles emerging from high-energy hadronic showers [54]. The nonprompt and fake lepton backgrounds are reduced by requiring the lepton candidates to be isolated from other energy deposits or high- p_T tracks. The tracks used in the isolation calculation are required to originate from the primary interaction vertex and have $p_T > 1$ GeV. For electrons, an η -dependent limit is placed on the amount of energy measured in the calorimeter within a $\Delta R = 0.2$ cone around the candidate which is neither from the electron candidate itself nor from additional pp interactions. A similar requirement is placed on the scalar sum of the p_T of tracks within a $\Delta R = 0.3$ cone around the track of the electron candidate. Each requirement has an average efficiency of 90% for electrons from $Z \rightarrow ee$. Muons are required to have a p_T -dependent track isolation [62], requiring the scalar sum of the p_T from tracks with $\Delta R < 10 \text{ GeV}/p_T^\mu$ to be less than $0.05 \cdot p_T^\mu$, where p_T^μ is the p_T of the candidate muon track. This requirement has an efficiency of approximately 95% for muons from $W \rightarrow \mu\nu$.

In this analysis, τ leptons are not explicitly reconstructed. Because of the high p_T threshold, only a small fraction of τ leptons decaying leptonically are reconstructed as electrons or muons, while the majority of τ leptons decaying hadronically are reconstructed as jets.

Jet requirements

Events must contain at least four jets with $p_T > 25$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.5$ reconstructed using the anti- k_t algorithm [63] with a radius parameter $R = 0.4$. The jets are constructed from calibrated topological clusters built from energy deposits in the calorimeters, and they are calibrated to the hadronic scale [64]. Prior to jet finding, a local cluster calibration scheme [65] is applied to correct the topological cluster energies for the effects of calorimeter noncompensation, dead material and out-of-cluster leakage. The jet energy scale was determined using information from test-beam data, LHC collision data, and simulation [64, 66]. All jets are required to have at least two tracks that originate from the primary interaction vertex. In order to suppress jets that do not originate from the primary vertex, jets with $p_T < 50$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.4$ are required to have a jet vertex fraction (JVF) above 0.5, where JVF is the ratio of the summed scalar p_T of tracks originating from the primary vertex to that of all tracks associated with the jet. An overlap removal procedure [61] is applied to remove jets that were already identified as electrons.

To identify jets originating from the hadronization of a b -quark (' b -tagging'), a continuous discriminant is produced by an algorithm using multivariate techniques [67] to combine information from the impact parameter of displaced tracks and topological properties of secondary and tertiary vertices reconstructed within the jet. The efficiency for a jet containing a b -hadron to be b -tagged is 70%, while the light-jet (c -jet) efficiency is less than 1% (20%) as determined in simulated $t\bar{t}$ events, where light jets are jets initiated by a u -, d -, s -quark, or gluon. If any jets are b -tagged, the event is rejected.

Missing transverse momentum requirements

The \vec{E}_T^{miss} is constructed from the vector sum of calibrated energy deposits in the calorimeter and reconstructed muons [68]. Events that do not contain a leptonically decaying W boson are suppressed by requiring $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 30$ GeV and $(E_T^{\text{miss}} + m_T^W) > 60$ GeV, where m_T^W is the transverse mass of the W boson defined as $m_T^W = \sqrt{2p_T^\ell E_T^{\text{miss}}(1 - \cos \Delta\phi)}$, where $\Delta\phi$ is the azimuthal angle between the charged-lepton transverse momentum vector and \vec{E}_T^{miss} .

Table 1: Observed and expected event yields after preselection. The quoted uncertainties include both the statistical and systematic contributions, with the latter being dominant. The sources of systematic uncertainty are discussed in Sec. 6.

	Electron	Muon
W +jets	110000 $^{+15000}_{-21000}$	145000 $^{+20000}_{-28000}$
Z +jets	28000 $^{+14000}_{-15000}$	15200 $^{+7700}_{-7800}$
$t\bar{t}$	19200 $^{+2800}_{-2900}$	23700 $^{+3400}_{-3500}$
Diboson	3900 ± 1900	4400 ± 2200
Single top	3750 $^{+540}_{-560}$	4500 $^{+630}_{-710}$
Multijet	22000 ± 8800	13300 ± 5300
Total background	183000 $^{+27000}_{-33000}$	206000 $^{+27000}_{-34000}$
Signal ($m_Q = 700$ GeV)	79 ± 10	79 ± 10
Data	182075	208641

4.2 Final selection

With the final-state objects identified, additional kinematic requirements are applied to exploit the distinct features of the signal, assumed to be heavier than the previously excluded mass of 350 GeV. The W boson and light quark originating from $Q \rightarrow Wq$ would be very energetic and have a large angular separation due to the large mass of the Q quark. On the other hand, the decay products of the W boson would tend to have a small separation due to the W boson's boost. By selecting only events that are consistent with these properties, the W +jets background yield is reduced by orders of magnitude. To facilitate the discussion of the kinematic selection, the following objects are defined:

- W_{had} is the candidate for a W boson in the decay $Q \rightarrow Wq \rightarrow qq\bar{q}$;
- W_{lep} is the candidate for a W boson in the decay $Q \rightarrow Wq \rightarrow \ell\nu q$;
- q -jet is a candidate for the jet originating from the q in $Q \rightarrow Wq$ (i.e., from the decay of the heavy quark, not the hadronically decaying W boson). There are two q -jets per event, so q_1 (q_2) is used to denote the one with higher (lower) p_T .

The W_{had} candidate is defined as a dijet system with $p_T > 200$ GeV, angular separation $\Delta R < 1.0$, and an invariant mass in the range 65–100 GeV. All possible jet combinations are considered and, if multiple pairs satisfy the above requirements, the pair with the mass closest to that of the W boson [69] is chosen. If no W_{had} candidate is found, the event is removed. This requirement results in 94% background rejection while keeping 53% of the signal if $m_Q = 700$ GeV. The mass distribution of the W_{had} candidates prior to the mass requirement is shown in Fig. 2.

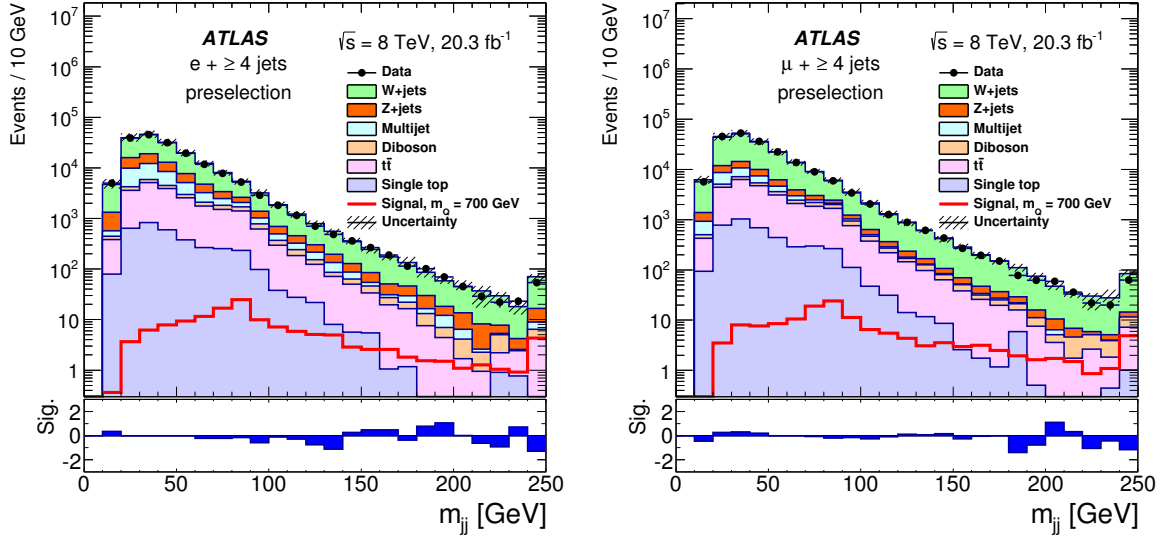


Figure 2: Invariant mass distributions for dijet systems with $p_T > 200$ GeV, angular separation $\Delta R < 1.0$, and an invariant mass closest to the W boson mass, for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels after the preselection requirements. W_{had} candidates correspond to the mass range 65–100 GeV. The highest bin includes all events with $m_{jj} > 240$ GeV. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations as explained in Ref. [70].

The W_{lep} candidate is reconstructed using the lepton and \vec{E}_T^{miss} , which is taken to be the neutrino \vec{p}_T . The longitudinal momentum of the neutrino is determined up to a two-fold ambiguity by requiring the invariant mass of the lepton–neutrino system to equal the mass of the W boson. When no real solution exists, the neutrino pseudorapidity is set equal to that of the lepton because the decay products of the W boson tend to be nearly collinear for the kinematic regime of interest. In simulated samples, the rate of events with no real solution is approximately 35%. Signal events are expected to have energetic W bosons, so the W_{lep} candidate is required to have $p_T > 125$ GeV.

The W candidates (W_{had} and W_{lep}) are then each paired with a different one of the remaining jets to create the two heavy quark candidates, $Q1$ and $Q2$. This step involves testing all possible pairings of q -jet candidates with the W_{had} and W_{lep} candidates. In addition, the W_{lep} candidate may have two real solutions for the longitudinal momentum of the neutrino. Among the possible combinations of neutrino momentum solutions and Wq pairings, the one yielding the smallest absolute difference between the two reconstructed heavy quark masses is chosen. In simulated samples, the rate of correct Wq pairing is approximately 40% (48%) for a signal of mass 400 GeV (800 GeV). Once the heavy quark candidates are determined, the q -jets are required to have $p_T(q_1) > 160$ GeV and $p_T(q_2) > 120$ GeV and the difference between the reconstructed heavy quark masses must be less than 120 GeV.

With candidate objects identified for two heavy quarks and their decay products, the following additional kinematic criteria are applied. Each event must have $H_T > 1100$ GeV, where H_T is the scalar sum of the transverse momenta of the lepton, neutrino, W_{had} , and the two q -jets. The angular separation between the lepton and neutrino candidates must satisfy $\Delta R(\ell, \nu) < 1.4$. The heavy quarks would tend to be central and back-to-back, so the angular separation between the two reconstructed heavy quarks is required to satisfy $2.0 < \Delta R(Q1, Q2) < 4.2$.

To further capitalize on the presence of a hadronically decaying W boson with high p_T in the signal, the analysis makes use of a splitting variable [30] defined as:

$$y_{12} = \frac{\min(p_{Tj_1}, p_{Tj_2})^2 \times \Delta R(j_1, j_2)^2}{m_{j_1 j_2}^2};$$

where j_1 and j_2 are the two jets from the W_{had} candidate and $m_{j_1 j_2}$ is the mass of the W_{had} candidate. The two jets from a hadronically decaying W boson tend to have roughly equal energies, while dijets from QCD processes are likely to be asymmetric in energy. Furthermore, jets from $W \rightarrow qq$ tend to have a larger opening angle due to the mass of the W boson. Dividing by the dijet mass provides discrimination for cases in which a QCD dijet system happens to have large values for $\min(p_{Tj_1}, p_{Tj_2})^2$ and $\Delta R(j_1, j_2)^2$, as such systems are likely to have a very large mass. The background is reduced by a factor of 3.2 by requiring $y_{12} > 0.25$. This requirement has a signal efficiency of approximately 50%, although the precise value depends on the mass of the heavy quark. The modeling of the splitting variable with a large number of events can be seen in the top histograms of Fig. 3, which depict the y_{12} distribution after preselection and requiring a W_{had} candidate. The bottom of Fig. 3 contains the distributions of y_{12} immediately before the $y_{12} > 0.25$ requirement is applied.

The final selection criteria are motivated by the fact that the decay products from the Q quark are well separated. The final requirements are $\Delta R(W_{\text{had}}, q_1) > 1.0$, $\Delta R(W_{\text{had}}, q_2) > 1.0$, $\Delta R(W_{\text{lep}}, q_1) > 1.0$, and $\Delta R(W_{\text{lep}}, q_2) > 1.0$. Table 2 presents a summary of the expected and observed numbers of events after the final selection, for which the signal (background) efficiency compared to preselection is approximately 8% (0.004%). The small contributions from $t\bar{t}$, Z +jets, dibosons, single-top, and multijet events are combined into a single background source referred to as ‘non- W +jets’. Uncertainties on the yields include the uncertainty due to the size of the signal and background samples and the cumulative effect of the systematic uncertainty described in Sec. 6.

The final discriminant variable used in this search is m_{reco} , the reconstructed heavy quark mass built from the W_{had} candidate and the paired q -jet candidate.

5 Background modeling

5.1 Correction to W +jets modeling

It is observed after applying the preselection criteria that the simulated W +jets sample does not accurately model the p_T spectrum of the leptonically decaying W boson candidate. This mismodeling leads to an overestimation of the W +jets yields in the high-momentum tails of the E_T^{miss} , lepton p_T , jet p_T , and H_T distributions. The dominant background for this analysis is W +jets events in which the transverse momentum of the W boson, $p_T(W)$, is high. Therefore, it is important to have accurate predictions for both the overall normalization and the $p_T(W)$ distribution. This section describes the procedure used to

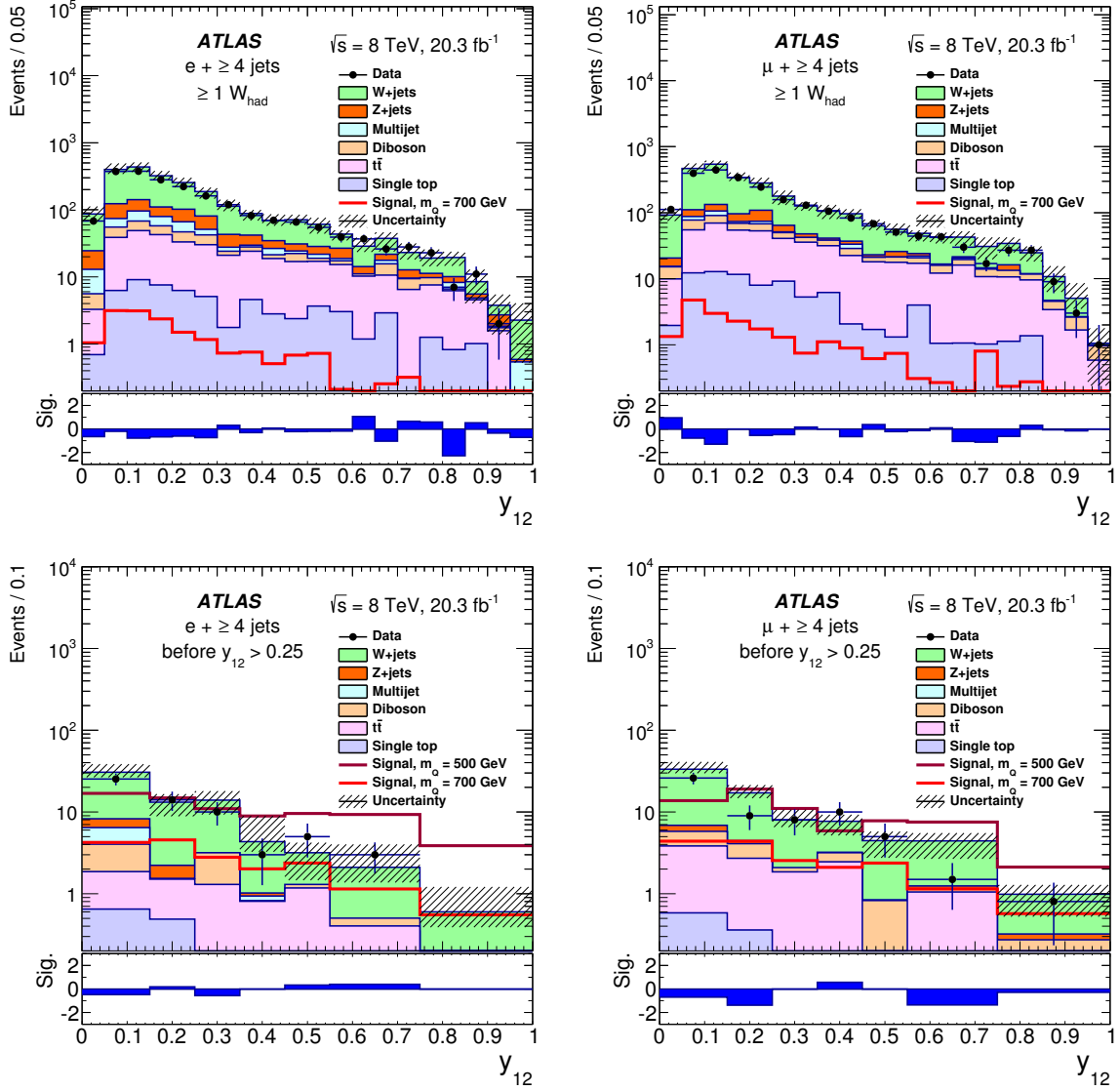


Figure 3: The splitting variable y_{12} between the decay products of the hadronic W boson (top) after preselection and requiring a hadronic W boson candidate and (bottom) immediately before applying the requirement $y_{12} > 0.25$, for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations.

Table 2: Expected yields for the backgrounds and the VLQ signal with $m_Q = 700$ GeV, along with the observed number of data events, after applying all selection criteria. The uncertainties on the predicted yields correspond to the statistical uncertainty due to finite sample size and the systematic uncertainty, respectively.

	Electron	Muon
W+jets	$5.6 \pm 1.5^{+1.5}_{-1.2}$	$6.0 \pm 1.0^{+2.2}_{-1.6}$
Non-W+jets	$1.2 \pm 0.5^{+1.0}_{-0.4}$	$1.2 \pm 0.4^{+0.8}_{-1.0}$
Total background	$6.8 \pm 1.6^{+2.4}_{-1.5}$	$7.2 \pm 1.1^{+2.5}_{-2.3}$
Signal ($m_Q = 700$ GeV)	$7.0 \pm 0.6^{+1.1}_{-1.3}$	$6.9 \pm 0.6^{+1.0}_{-1.0}$
Data	9	11

derive the W +jets and multijet normalizations and a reweighting function to correct the vector-boson p_T in the W +jets and Z +jets² simulated samples. All steps in the procedure rely on fits to the data using the p_T distribution of the W_{lep} candidate, $p_T^{\text{reco}}(W_{\text{lep}})$, after applying the preselection requirements.

First, the normalizations for the W +jets templates and the multijet templates are fit to the data, with all other background processes fixed at their expectations. The difference between the observed and predicted number of W +jets events is assumed to be due to the cross section differing from its predicted value, so the electron and muon channels are fit simultaneously to determine a single W +jets scale factor of 0.82. A correction for $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ is then derived that minimizes the χ^2 between data and simulation for the $p_T^{\text{reco}}(W_{\text{lep}})$ distribution, where $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ is the p_T of the generated vector boson in the W +jets or Z +jets sample just before its leptonic decay. The reweighting is approximately unity for low $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$, decreasing to 0.86 for $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V) = 200$ GeV and 0.65 for $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V) = 500$ GeV. Finally, the normalizations for the multijet samples and the *corrected* W +jets samples are fit to the data, with all other background processes fixed. The fit is done simultaneously in the electron and muon channels. Figure 4 shows the $p_T^{\text{reco}}(W_{\text{lep}})$ distribution in the electron and muon channels after applying the $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ correction and scale factors. The corresponding distributions for H_T and E_T^{miss} are shown in Figs. 5 and 6. The uncertainties on the normalizations and $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ reweighting are described in Sec. 6.

5.2 Validation regions

The following validation regions are used to verify the modeling of the background processes:

- VR1: preselection, plus one W_{had} and $m_{\text{reco}} < 350$ GeV;
- VR2: preselection, plus one W_{had} and $H_T < 800$ GeV ;
- VR3: final selection, but with the requirements on $p_T(q_1)$, $p_T(q_2)$, and H_T changed to $p_T(q_1) < 160$ GeV, $p_T(q_2) < 80$ GeV, and $H_T < 800$ GeV and with no requirements on $\Delta R(W_{\text{had}}, q_1)$, $\Delta R(W_{\text{had}}, q_2)$, $\Delta R(W_{\text{lep}}, q_1)$, and $\Delta R(W_{\text{lep}}, q_2)$.

The validation regions are orthogonal to the signal region, but are nevertheless useful for checking with a larger number of events that the background normalization and kinematics are well-modeled. The expected signal contribution in each validation region is approximately the size of the background uncertainty

² The correction is primarily motivated by the dominant W +jets background, but is also applied to the Z +jets background.

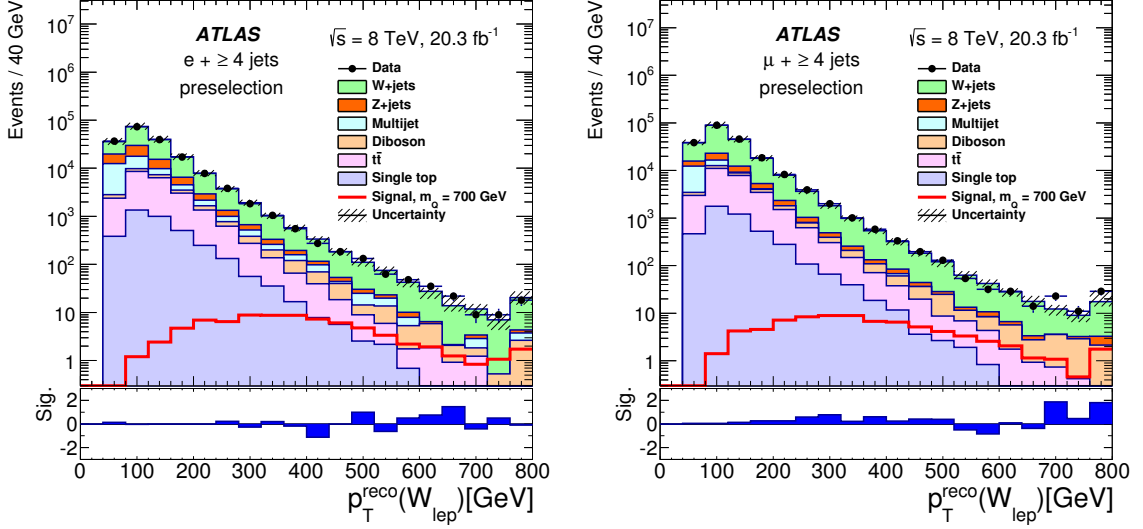


Figure 4: The transverse momentum distributions for the leptonic W boson candidate after the $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ correction and final normalization for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels. All overflows are included in the right-most bin. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations.

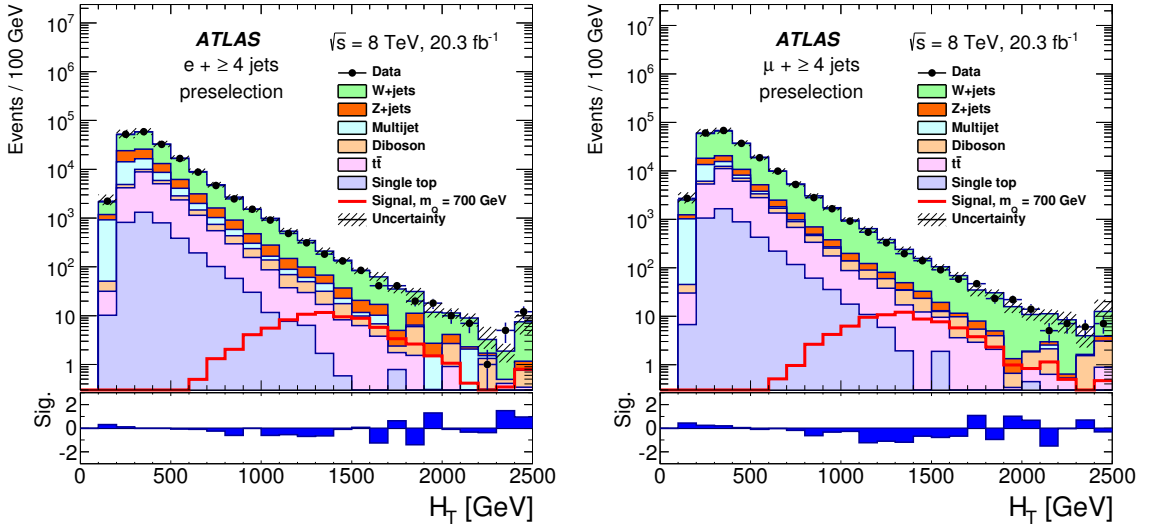


Figure 5: Distributions of the scalar sum of the transverse momenta of the lepton, neutrino, W_{had} , and the two q -jets (H_T) after the $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ correction and final normalization for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels. All overflows are included in the rightmost bin. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations.

for signal masses around the previous limit (350 GeV) and decreases very rapidly for higher masses. VR2 and VR3 are used to validate the modeling of the final discriminant, m_{reco} , as shown in Figs. 7 and 8.

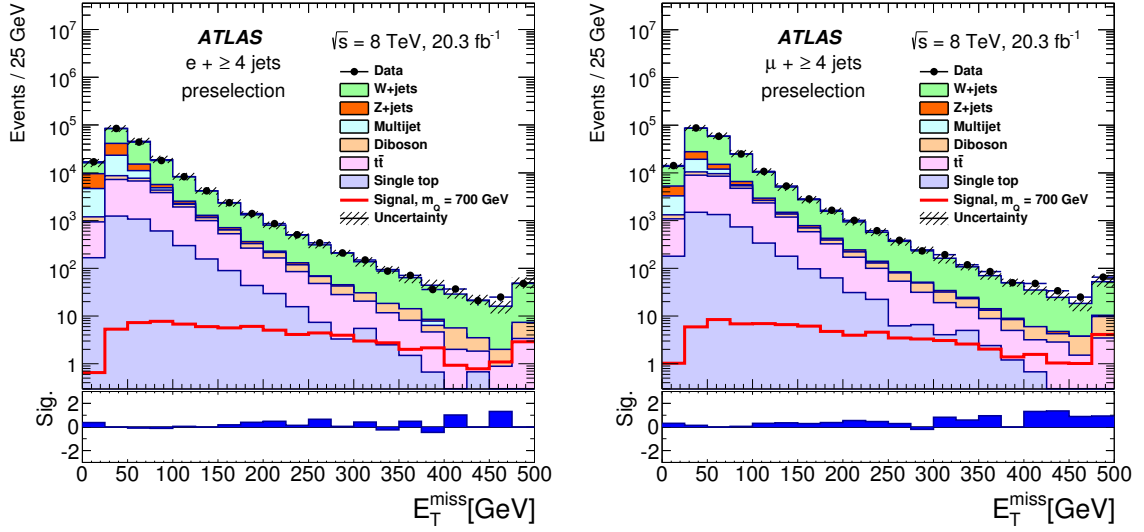


Figure 6: Distributions of the missing transverse momentum after the $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ correction and final normalization for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels. All overflows are included in the rightmost bin. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations.

VR1 is used to verify the modeling of variables other than m_{reco} , such as the H_T distribution and the p_T spectra for the individual objects.

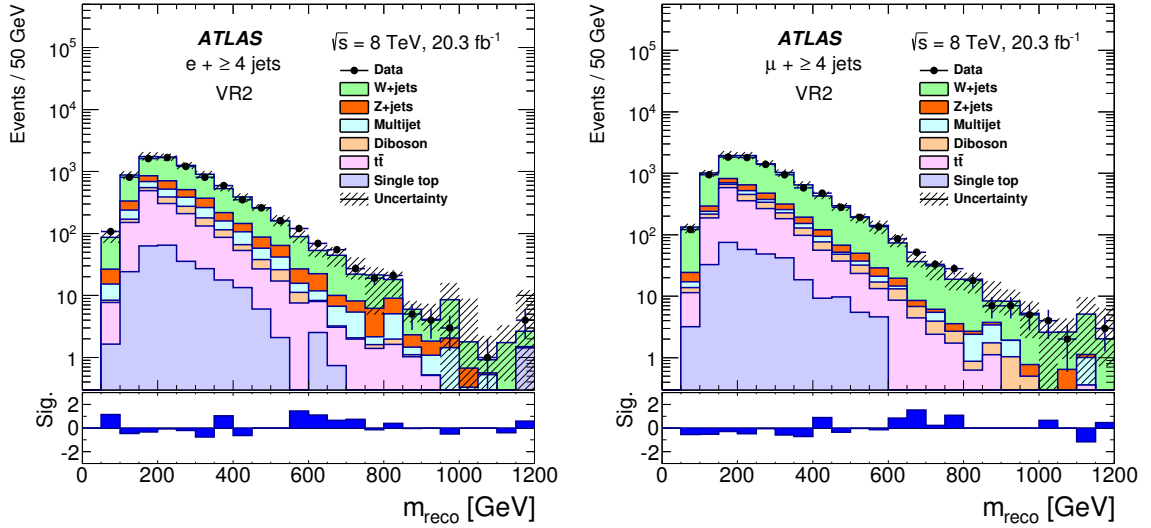


Figure 7: Comparison between data and simulation for the distribution of m_{reco} , the reconstructed heavy quark mass built from the W_{had} candidate and the paired q -jet candidate, in validation region VR2 for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels. All overflows are included in the rightmost bin. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations.

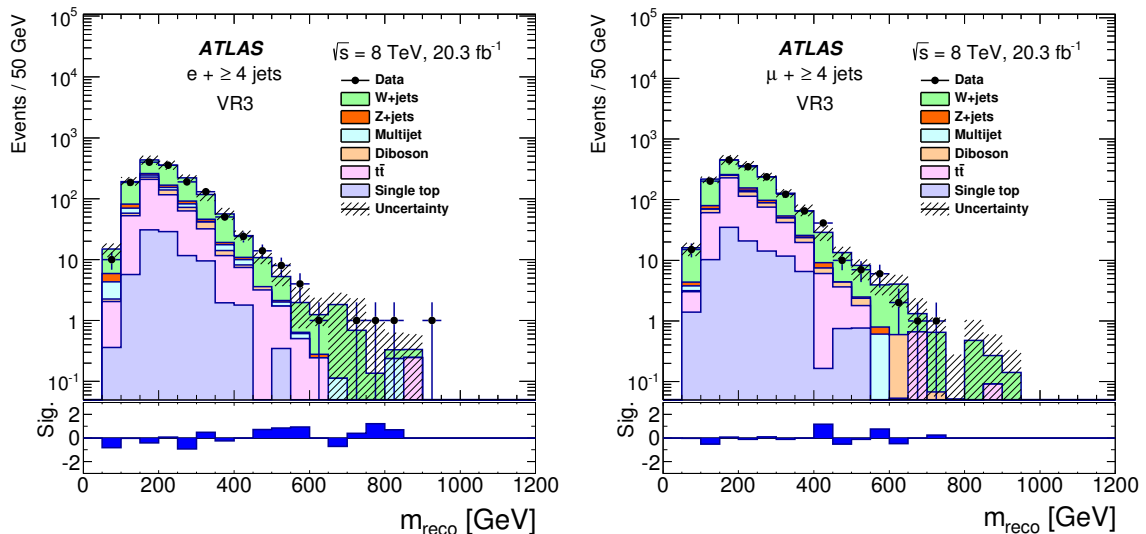


Figure 8: Comparison between data and simulation for the m_{reco} distribution in validation region VR3 for the (left) electron and (right) muon channels. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction. The lower panel shows the significance of the difference between data and expectation in units of normal standard deviations.

6 Systematic uncertainties

The uncertainties considered in this analysis can affect the normalization of signal and background and the shape of the final discriminant, m_{reco} . Each source of systematic uncertainty is assumed to be 100% correlated across all samples, but the different sources are treated as uncorrelated with one another. Table 3 shows the impact of the dominant uncertainties on the normalization of the background processes and a signal sample with a mass of 700 GeV.

Table 3: Table summarizing the overall normalization changes (expressed in %) in signal and background yields for the dominant systematic uncertainties considered. The selection presented here is the combination of the e +jets and μ +jets channels after the final selection.

	Signal ($m_Q = 700$ GeV)	Non- W +jets	W +jets
Luminosity	+2.8/−2.8	+2.8/−2.8	+2.8/−2.8
Normalization		±15	+2.7/−4.4
Lepton identification	+1.6/−1.6	+1.5/−1.5	+1.4/−1.4
Jet energy resolution	+0.6/−0.6	+12/−12	+8.7/−8.7
Jet energy scale	+6.1/−4.3	+33/−34	+14/−18
b -tagging	+0.2/−0.2	+5.1/−5.3	+0.3/−0.3
c -tagging	+1.5/−1.5	+1.5/−1.5	+1.2/−1.2
Light-jet tagging	+1.0/−1.0	+0.9/−0.9	+1.0/−1.0
$p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ re-weighting			+5.7/−4.2

6.1 Normalization uncertainties

Uncertainties affecting only the normalization include those on the integrated luminosity ($\pm 2.8\%$) and the cross sections for various background processes. The uncertainty on the integrated luminosity is derived following the same methodology as that detailed in Ref. [71]. This uncertainty is applied to all simulated signal and background processes.

After the final selection, the non- W +jets background has a total normalization uncertainty of 15%. The predicted contribution from the multijet background is negligible compared to the uncertainty on the non- W +jets background, so it is neglected.

As described in Sec. 5.1, the normalization of the W +jets background is determined from a fit to data using both lepton channels. The uncertainty on the W +jets normalization is determined by comparing that result to the normalization one would obtain if only the electron or only the muon channel were used. This is motivated by the fact that it is not known whether the normalization from the electron channel or the muon channel (or something in between) is correct and this procedure leads to an uncertainty of $+2.7/-4.4\%$. The statistical uncertainty from the fit is negligible (0.03%) in comparison.

The rest of the systematic uncertainties can modify both the normalization and shape of the m_{reco} distribution.

6.2 Shape uncertainties

Uncertainties on the trigger, reconstruction, and isolation efficiencies for the selected lepton are estimated using $Z \rightarrow ee$ and $Z \rightarrow \mu\mu$ events [72, 73]. In addition, high jet-multiplicity $Z \rightarrow \ell\ell$ events are studied, from which extra uncertainties on the isolation efficiency are assigned to account for the difference between Z boson and $t\bar{t}$ events. Uncertainties on the E_T^{miss} reconstruction and the energy scale and resolution of the leptons were also considered; however, these have a very small impact on the results.

The jet energy resolution is measured by studying dijet events in data and simulation. The simulation is found to agree with data to better than 10% [74]. The differences in resolutions between data and simulations are used to determine the relative systematic uncertainty. The uncertainty on the jet energy scale is evaluated by repeating the analysis with the jet energy scale shifted by $\pm 1\sigma$ [64, 66]. The jet reconstruction efficiency is estimated using track-based jets and is well described in simulation. To account for differences in the efficiency for reconstructing jets in simulated events compared to collider data, the efficiencies are measured in both samples and the difference is taken as the uncertainty. The uncertainty due to the JVF requirement is evaluated by comparing the signal and background distributions with the JVF cut shifted up and down by 10%, a variation that spans the difference observed between data and simulation in this quantity. The b -tagging efficiency for b -jets, as well as c -jets and light jets, is derived in data and a simulated $t\bar{t}$ sample, parameterized as a function of p_T and η [67, 75]. The corresponding (in)efficiencies in the simulated samples are corrected to match those in data and the uncertainties from the calibration are propagated through the analysis.

The W +jets sample is assigned a $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ -dependent shape uncertainty due to the correction described in Sec. 5.1. Four sources of uncertainty on the $p_T^{\text{truth}}(V)$ correction are considered: (1) the statistical uncertainty on the parameters of the reweighting function; (2) the difference between the nominal reweighting function and alternative corrections obtained by only considering the electron or muon channel; (3) the dependence of the fit on the choice of bin width when deriving the reweighting function; (4) the difference

between alternative parameterizations of the reweighting function. A closure test is performed to verify that any residual differences between data and prediction are well within the assigned uncertainty.

7 Results

The final m_{reco} distribution for the combined electron and muon channels is shown in Fig. 9 for three signal scenarios: $m_Q = 600$ GeV, $m_Q = 700$ GeV, and $m_Q = 800$ GeV. The observed distribution shows a slight excess over the SM expectation, but the excess is broader than expected for signal and is consistent with the background-only prediction at the level of two standard deviations. Therefore, the analysis proceeds to setting limits on the signal hypothesis.

The m_{reco} distribution for the combined electron and muon channels after the final selection (Fig. 9) is used to derive 95% confidence level (CL) limits on the $Q\bar{Q}$ production cross section using the CL_s method [76, 77].

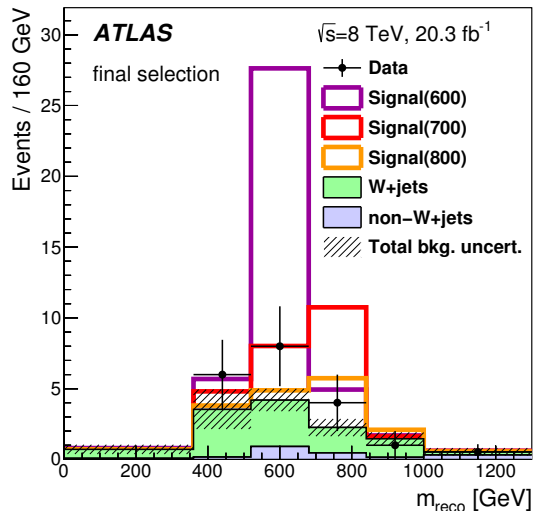


Figure 9: Distribution of the final discriminant, the mass of the hadronically decaying heavy quark candidate, with the bin widths chosen as for the statistical analysis. The expected contribution from signal with $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq)=1$ is shown stacked on top of the total background prediction for three mass scenarios, $m_Q = 600, 700,$ and 800 GeV. The backgrounds are stacked with the largest on top. The shaded band shows the total uncertainty on the background prediction.

Limits on the pair production of new chiral quarks are evaluated by setting $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$. Figure 10 shows the observed and expected limits on a heavy chiral quark as a function of m_Q , compared to the theoretical prediction [33–38]. The total uncertainty on the theoretical cross section includes the contributions from the scale variations and PDF uncertainties. Using the central value of the theoretical cross section, the observed (expected) 95% CL limit on the mass of a new chiral quark is $m_Q > 690$ GeV (780 GeV). This represents the most stringent limit to date on the mass of a new quark decaying exclusively into a W boson and a light quark (u, d, s). This limit is also applicable to the production of pairs of

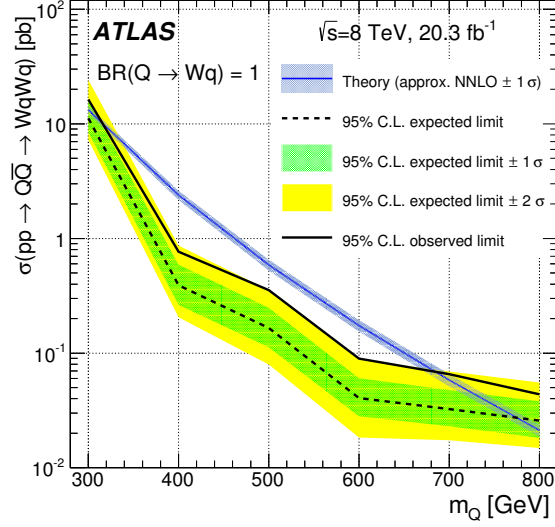


Figure 10: The expected (black dashed line) and observed (black solid line) 95% CL upper limits on the cross section as a function of m_Q when setting $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$, which would be the case for a new chiral quark. The green and yellow shaded bands indicate the $\pm 1\sigma$ and $\pm 2\sigma$ intervals on the distribution of expected results for the chiral model if no signal exists. The blue line is the theoretical prediction for the total cross section [i.e., assuming $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 1$] with its uncertainties.

down-type vectorlike quarks with electric charge of $-4/3$ which each decay into a W boson and a light quark (d, s).

Next, the VLQ signal samples are used to set limits on the mass of a heavy quark that decays to a light quark (u, d, s) and either a W, Z , or H boson. The results are given as a function of the branching ratios $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq)$ versus $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq)$, with the branching ratio to Zq fixed by the requirement $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Zq) = 1 - \text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) - \text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq)$. The analysis loses sensitivity at low masses due to the tight selection requirements optimized for the decay $Q \rightarrow Wq$, so the results are presented as the upper and lower bounds on the mass range that is excluded at 95% CL. The expected limits on m_Q as a function of the branching ratios are shown in Fig. 11 and the observed limits are shown in Fig. 12. For example, for the branching ratios $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 0.6$, $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Zq) = 0.4$, and $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq) = 0$, the results exclude VLQs with a mass from 370 GeV to 610 GeV. If no signal is present, the median expected exclusion range for that set of branching ratios is 340 GeV to 690 GeV. For $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 0.6$, $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Zq) = 0.3$, and $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq) = 0.1$, the results exclude VLQs with a mass from 370 GeV to 470 GeV, while the median expected exclusion range is 340 GeV to 680 GeV. For $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) = 0.5$, $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Zq) = 0.25$, and $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq) = 0.25$, the results exclude VLQs with a mass from 390 GeV to 410 GeV, while the median expected exclusion range is 360 GeV to 650 GeV.

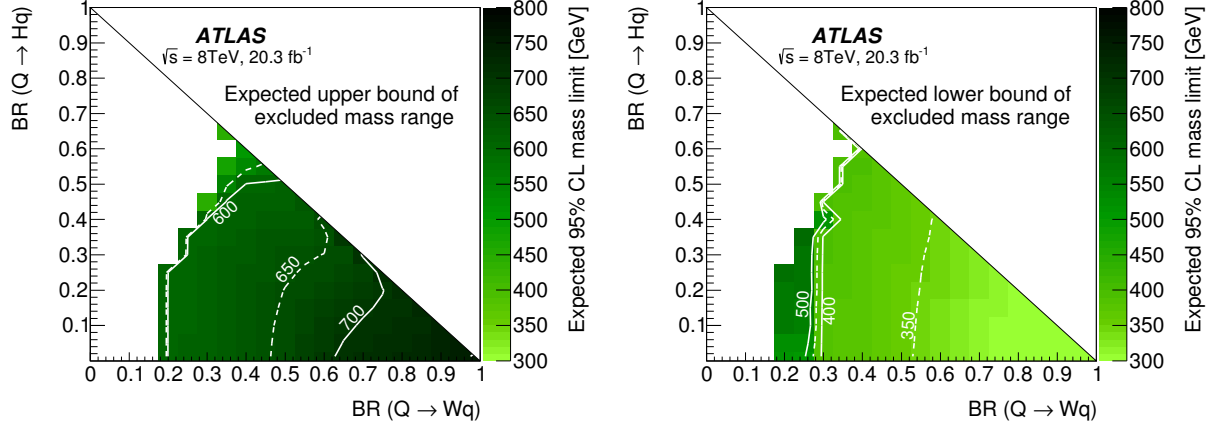


Figure 11: The (left) upper and (right) lower bounds on the range of heavy quark masses expected to be excluded at 95% CL, as a function of the branching ratio of the heavy quark to Wq versus Hq , with the branching ratio to Zq fixed by the requirement $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Zq) = 1 - \text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) - \text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq)$. The region above the diagonal is forbidden by unitarity.

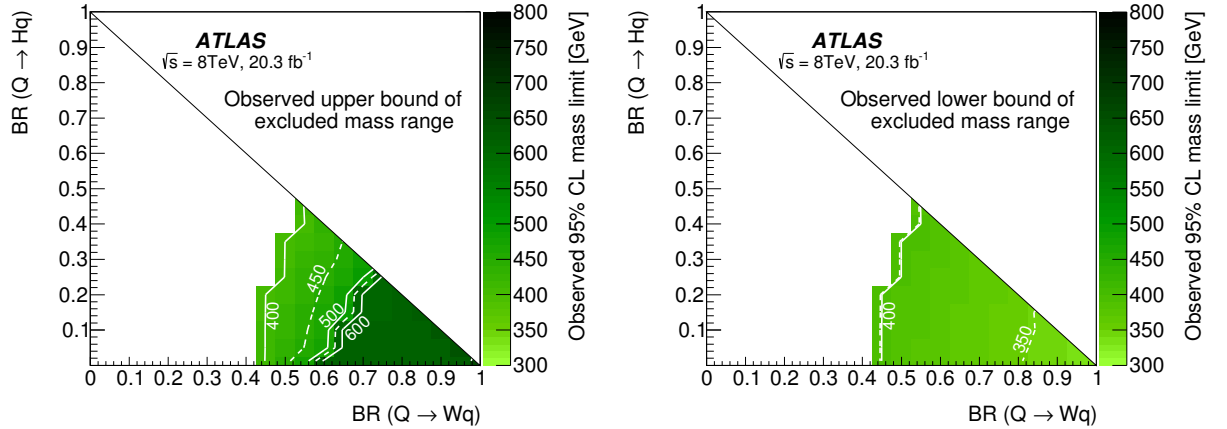


Figure 12: The (left) upper and (right) lower bounds on the range of heavy quark masses observed to be excluded at 95% CL, as a function of the branching ratio of the heavy quark to Wq versus Hq , with the branching ratio to Zq fixed by the requirement $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Zq) = 1 - \text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq) - \text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq)$. The region above the diagonal is forbidden by unitarity.

8 Conclusion

A search for new heavy quarks that decay to a W boson and a light quark (u, d, s) is performed with a dataset corresponding to 20.3 fb^{-1} that was collected by the ATLAS detector at the LHC in pp collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 8 \text{ TeV}$. No significant evidence of a heavy quark signal is observed when selecting events with one charged lepton, large E_T^{miss} , and four non- b -tagged jets. The results exclude new heavy chiral quarks with masses up to 690 GeV at 95% CL. This search is also interpreted in the context of vectorlike quark models, for which the new heavy quark can decay to a light quark and either a W , Z , or H boson. New

exclusions limits are presented in the two-dimensional plane of $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Wq)$ versus $\text{BR}(Q \rightarrow Hq)$.

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The ATLAS Collaboration

G. Aad⁸⁵, B. Abbott¹¹³, J. Abdallah¹⁵¹, O. Abdinov¹¹, R. Aben¹⁰⁷, M. Abolins⁹⁰, O.S. AbouZeid¹⁵⁸, H. Abramowicz¹⁵³, H. Abreu¹⁵², R. Abreu¹¹⁶, Y. Abulaiti^{146a,146b}, B.S. Acharya^{164a,164b,a}, L. Adamczyk^{38a}, D.L. Adams²⁵, J. Adelman¹⁰⁸, S. Adomeit¹⁰⁰, T. Adye¹³¹, A.A. Affolder⁷⁴, T. Agatonovic-Jovin¹³, J. Agricola⁵⁴, J.A. Aguilar-Saavedra^{126a,126f}, S.P. Ahlen²², F. Ahmadov^{65,b}, G. Aielli^{133a,133b}, H. Akerstedt^{146a,146b}, T.P.A. Åkesson⁸¹, A.V. Akimov⁹⁶, G.L. Alberghi^{20a,20b}, J. Albert¹⁶⁹, S. Albrand⁵⁵, M.J. Alconada Verzini⁷¹, M. Aleksa³⁰, I.N. Aleksandrov⁶⁵, C. Alexa^{26b}, G. Alexander¹⁵³, T. Alexopoulos¹⁰, M. Alhroob¹¹³, G. Alimonti^{91a}, L. Alio⁸⁵, J. Alison³¹, S.P. Alkire³⁵, B.M.M. Allbrooke¹⁴⁹, P.P. Allport¹⁸, A. Aloisio^{104a,104b}, A. Alonso³⁶, F. Alonso⁷¹, C. Alpigiani¹³⁸, A. Altheimer³⁵, B. Alvarez Gonzalez³⁰, D. Álvarez Piqueras¹⁶⁷, M.G. Alviggi^{104a,104b}, B.T. Amadio¹⁵, K. Amako⁶⁶, Y. Amaral Coutinho^{24a}, C. Amelung²³, D. Amidei⁸⁹, S.P. Amor Dos Santos^{126a,126c}, A. Amorim^{126a,126b}, S. Amoroso⁴⁸, N. Amram¹⁵³, G. Amundsen²³, C. Anastopoulos¹³⁹, L.S. Ancu⁴⁹, N. Andari¹⁰⁸, T. Andeen³⁵, C.F. Anders^{58b}, G. Anders³⁰, J.K. Anders⁷⁴, K.J. Anderson³¹, A. Andreazza^{91a,91b}, V. Andrei^{58a}, S. Angelidakis⁹, I. Angelozzi¹⁰⁷, P. Anger⁴⁴, A. Angerami³⁵, F. Anghinolfi³⁰, A.V. Anisenkov^{109,c}, N. Anjos¹², A. Annovi^{124a,124b}, M. Antonelli⁴⁷, A. Antonov⁹⁸, J. Antos^{144b}, F. Anulli^{132a}, M. Aoki⁶⁶, L. Aperio Bella¹⁸, G. Arabidze⁹⁰, Y. Arai⁶⁶, J.P. Araque^{126a}, A.T.H. Arce⁴⁵, F.A. Arduh⁷¹, J-F. Arguin⁹⁵, S. Argyropoulos⁶³, M. Arik^{19a}, A.J. Armbruster³⁰, O. Arnaez³⁰, H. Arnold⁴⁸, M. Arratia²⁸, O. Arslan²¹, A. Artamonov⁹⁷, G. Artoni²³, S. Asai¹⁵⁵, N. Asbah⁴², A. Ashkenazi¹⁵³, B. Åsman^{146a,146b}, L. Asquith¹⁴⁹, K. Assamagan²⁵, R. Astalos^{144a}, M. Atkinson¹⁶⁵, N.B. Atlay¹⁴¹, K. Augsten¹²⁸, M. Aurousseau^{145b}, G. Avolio³⁰, B. Axen¹⁵, M.K. Ayoub¹¹⁷, G. Azuelos^{95,d}, M.A. Baak³⁰, A.E. Baas^{58a}, M.J. Baca¹⁸, C. Bacci^{134a,134b}, H. Bachacou¹³⁶, K. Bachas¹⁵⁴, M. Backes³⁰, M. Backhaus³⁰, P. Bagiachi^{132a,132b}, P. Bagnaia^{132a,132b}, Y. Bai^{33a}, T. Bain³⁵, J.T. Baines¹³¹, O.K. Baker¹⁷⁶, E.M. Baldin^{109,c}, P. Balek¹²⁹, T. Balestri¹⁴⁸, F. Balli⁸⁴, W.K. Balunas¹²², E. Banas³⁹, Sw. Banerjee¹⁷³, A.A.E. Bannoura¹⁷⁵, L. Barak³⁰, E.L. Barberio⁸⁸, D. Barberis^{50a,50b}, M. Barbero⁸⁵, T. Barillari¹⁰¹, M. Barisonzi^{164a,164b}, T. Barklow¹⁴³, N. Barlow²⁸, S.L. Barnes⁸⁴, B.M. Barnett¹³¹, R.M. Barnett¹⁵, Z. Barnovska⁵, A. Baroncelli^{134a}, G. Barone²³, A.J. Barr¹²⁰, F. Barreiro⁸², J. Barreiro Guimarães da Costa⁵⁷, R. Bartoldus¹⁴³, A.E. Barton⁷², P. Bartos^{144a}, A. Basalae¹²³, A. Bassalat¹¹⁷, A. Basye¹⁶⁵, R.L. Bates⁵³, S.J. Batista¹⁵⁸, J.R. Batley²⁸, M. Battaglia¹³⁷, M. Bauce^{132a,132b}, F. Bauer¹³⁶, H.S. Bawa^{143,e}, J.B. Beacham¹¹¹, M.D. Beattie⁷², T. Beau⁸⁰, P.H. Beauchemin¹⁶¹, R. Beccherle^{124a,124b}, P. Bechtel²¹, H.P. Beck^{17,f}, K. Becker¹²⁰, M. Becker⁸³, M. Beckingham¹⁷⁰, C. Becot¹¹⁷, A.J. Beddall^{19b}, A. Beddall^{19b}, V.A. Bednyakov⁶⁵, C.P. Bee¹⁴⁸, L.J. Beemster¹⁰⁷, T.A. Beermann³⁰, M. Begel²⁵, J.K. Behr¹²⁰, C. Belanger-Champagne⁸⁷, W.H. Bell⁴⁹, G. Bella¹⁵³, L. Bellagamba^{20a}, A. Bellerive²⁹, M. Bellomo⁸⁶, K. Belotskiy⁹⁸, O. Beltramello³⁰, O. Benary¹⁵³, D. Benchekroun^{135a}, M. Bender¹⁰⁰, K. Bendtz^{146a,146b}, N. Benekos¹⁰, Y. Benhammou¹⁵³, E. Benhar Nocchioli⁴⁹, J.A. Benitez Garcia^{159b}, D.P. Benjamin⁴⁵, J.R. Bensinger²³, S. Bentvelsen¹⁰⁷, L. Beresford¹²⁰, M. Beretta⁴⁷, D. Berge¹⁰⁷, E. Bergeas Kuutmann¹⁶⁶, N. Berger⁵, F. Berghaus¹⁶⁹, J. Beringer¹⁵, C. Bernard²², N.R. Bernard⁸⁶, C. Bernius¹¹⁰, F.U. Bernlochner²¹, T. Berry⁷⁷, P. Berta¹²⁹, C. Bertella⁸³, G. Bertoli^{146a,146b}, F. Bertolucci^{124a,124b}, C. Bertsche¹¹³, D. Bertsche¹¹³, M.I. Besana^{91a}, G.J. Besjes³⁶, O. Bessidskaia Bylund^{146a,146b}, M. Bessner⁴², N. Besson¹³⁶, C. Betancourt⁴⁸, S. Bethke¹⁰¹, A.J. Bevan⁷⁶, W. Bhimji¹⁵, R.M. Bianchi¹²⁵, L. Bianchini²³, M. Bianco³⁰, O. Biebel¹⁰⁰, D. Biedermann¹⁶, S.P. Bieniek⁷⁸, N.V. Biesuz^{124a,124b}, M. Biglietti^{134a}, J. Bilbao De Mendizabal⁴⁹, H. Bilokon⁴⁷, M. Bindi⁵⁴, S. Binet¹¹⁷, A. Bingul^{19b}, C. Bini^{132a,132b}, S. Biondi^{20a,20b}, D.M. Bjergaard⁴⁵, C.W. Black¹⁵⁰, J.E. Black¹⁴³, K.M. Black²², D. Blackburn¹³⁸, R.E. Blair⁶, J.-B. Blanchard¹³⁶, J.E. Blanco⁷⁷, T. Blazek^{144a}, I. Bloch⁴², C. Blocker²³, W. Blum^{83,*}, U. Blumenschein⁵⁴, S. Blunier^{32a},

G.J. Bobbink¹⁰⁷, V.S. Bobrovnikov^{109,c}, S.S. Bocchetta⁸¹, A. Bocci⁴⁵, C. Bock¹⁰⁰, M. Boehler⁴⁸, J.A. Bogaerts³⁰, D. Bogavac¹³, A.G. Bogdanchikov¹⁰⁹, C. Bohm^{146a}, V. Boisvert⁷⁷, T. Bold^{38a}, V. Boldea^{26b}, A.S. Boldyrev⁹⁹, M. Bomben⁸⁰, M. Bona⁷⁶, M. Boonekamp¹³⁶, A. Borisov¹³⁰, G. Borissov⁷², S. Borroni⁴², J. Bortfeldt¹⁰⁰, V. Bortolotto^{60a,60b,60c}, K. Bos¹⁰⁷, D. Boscherini^{20a}, M. Bosman¹², J. Boudreau¹²⁵, J. Bouffard², E.V. Bouhova-Thacker⁷², D. Boumediene³⁴, C. Bourdarios¹¹⁷, N. Bousson¹¹⁴, S.K. Boutle⁵³, A. Boveia³⁰, J. Boyd³⁰, I.R. Boyko⁶⁵, I. Bozic¹³, J. Bracinik¹⁸, A. Brandt⁸, G. Brandt⁵⁴, O. Brandt^{58a}, U. Bratzler¹⁵⁶, B. Brau⁸⁶, J.E. Brau¹¹⁶, H.M. Braun^{175,*}, W.D. Breaden Madden⁵³, K. Brendlinger¹²², A.J. Brennan⁸⁸, L. Brenner¹⁰⁷, R. Brenner¹⁶⁶, S. Bressler¹⁷², K. Bristow^{145c}, T.M. Bristow⁴⁶, D. Britton⁵³, D. Britzger⁴², F.M. Brochu²⁸, I. Brock²¹, R. Brock⁹⁰, J. Bronner¹⁰¹, G. Brooijmans³⁵, T. Brooks⁷⁷, W.K. Brooks^{32b}, J. Brosamer¹⁵, E. Brost¹¹⁶, P.A. Bruckman de Renstrom³⁹, D. Bruncko^{144b}, R. Bruneliere⁴⁸, A. Bruni^{20a}, G. Bruni^{20a}, M. Bruschi^{20a}, N. Brusino²¹, L. Bryngemark⁸¹, T. Buanes¹⁴, Q. Buat¹⁴², P. Buchholz¹⁴¹, A.G. Buckley⁵³, S.I. Buda^{26b}, I.A. Budagov⁶⁵, F. Buehrer⁴⁸, L. Bugge¹¹⁹, M.K. Bugge¹¹⁹, O. Bulekov⁹⁸, D. Bullock⁸, H. Burckhart³⁰, S. Burdin⁷⁴, C.D. Burgard⁴⁸, B. Burghgrave¹⁰⁸, S. Burke¹³¹, I. Burmeister⁴³, E. Busato³⁴, D. Büscher⁴⁸, V. Büscher⁸³, P. Bussey⁵³, J.M. Butler²², A.I. Butt³, C.M. Buttar⁵³, J.M. Butterworth⁷⁸, P. Butti¹⁰⁷, W. Buttinger²⁵, A. Buzatu⁵³, A.R. Buzykaev^{109,c}, S. Cabrera Urbán¹⁶⁷, D. Caforio¹²⁸, V.M. Cairo^{37a,37b}, O. Cakir^{4a}, N. Calace⁴⁹, P. Calafiura¹⁵, A. Calandri¹³⁶, G. Calderini⁸⁰, P. Calfayan¹⁰⁰, L.P. Caloba^{24a}, D. Calvet³⁴, S. Calvet³⁴, R. Camacho Toro³¹, S. Camarda⁴², P. Camarri^{133a,133b}, D. Cameron¹¹⁹, R. Caminal Armadans¹⁶⁵, S. Campana³⁰, M. Campanelli⁷⁸, A. Campoverde¹⁴⁸, V. Canale^{104a,104b}, A. Canepa^{159a}, M. Cano Bret^{33e}, J. Cantero⁸², R. Cantrill^{126a}, T. Cao⁴⁰, M.D.M. Capeans Garrido³⁰, I. Caprini^{26b}, M. Caprini^{26b}, M. Capua^{37a,37b}, R. Caputo⁸³, R.M. Carbone³⁵, R. Cardarelli^{133a}, F. Cardillo⁴⁸, T. Carli³⁰, G. Carlino^{104a}, L. Carminati^{91a,91b}, S. Caron¹⁰⁶, E. Carquin^{32a}, G.D. Carrillo-Montoya³⁰, J.R. Carter²⁸, J. Carvalho^{126a,126c}, D. Casadei⁷⁸, M.P. Casado¹², M. Casolino¹², E. Castaneda-Miranda^{145a}, A. Castelli¹⁰⁷, V. Castillo Gimenez¹⁶⁷, N.F. Castro^{126a,g}, P. Catastini⁵⁷, A. Catinaccio³⁰, J.R. Catmore¹¹⁹, A. Cattai³⁰, J. Caudron⁸³, V. Cavaliere¹⁶⁵, D. Cavalli^{91a}, M. Cavalli-Sforza¹², V. Cavasinni^{124a,124b}, F. Ceradini^{134a,134b}, B.C. Cerio⁴⁵, K. Cerny¹²⁹, A.S. Cerqueira^{24b}, A. Cerri¹⁴⁹, L. Cerrito⁷⁶, F. Cerutti¹⁵, M. Cerv³⁰, A. Cervelli¹⁷, S.A. Cetin^{19c}, A. Chafaq^{135a}, D. Chakraborty¹⁰⁸, I. Chalupkova¹²⁹, P. Chang¹⁶⁵, J.D. Chapman²⁸, D.G. Charlton¹⁸, C.C. Chau¹⁵⁸, C.A. Chavez Barajas¹⁴⁹, S. Cheatham¹⁵², A. Chegwidden⁹⁰, S. Chekanov⁶, S.V. Chekulaev^{159a}, G.A. Chelkov^{65,h}, M.A. Chelstowska⁸⁹, C. Chen⁶⁴, H. Chen²⁵, K. Chen¹⁴⁸, L. Chen^{33d,i}, S. Chen^{33c}, S. Chen¹⁵⁵, X. Chen^{33f}, Y. Chen⁶⁷, H.C. Cheng⁸⁹, Y. Cheng³¹, A. Cheplakov⁶⁵, E. Cheremushkina¹³⁰, R. Cherkaoui El Moursli^{135e}, V. Chernyatin^{25,*}, E. Cheu⁷, L. Chevalier¹³⁶, V. Chiarella⁴⁷, G. Chiarelli^{124a,124b}, G. Chiodini^{73a}, A.S. Chisholm¹⁸, R.T. Chislett⁷⁸, A. Chitan^{26b}, M.V. Chizhov⁶⁵, K. Choi⁶¹, S. Chouridou⁹, B.K.B. Chow¹⁰⁰, V. Christodoulou⁷⁸, D. Chromek-Burckhart³⁰, J. Chudoba¹²⁷, A.J. Chuinard⁸⁷, J.J. Chwastowski³⁹, L. Chytka¹¹⁵, G. Ciapetti^{132a,132b}, A.K. Ciftci^{4a}, D. Cinca⁵³, V. Cindro⁷⁵, I.A. Cioara²¹, A. Ciocio¹⁵, F. Ciotto^{104a,104b}, Z.H. Citron¹⁷², M. Ciubancan^{26b}, A. Clark⁴⁹, B.L. Clark⁵⁷, P.J. Clark⁴⁶, R.N. Clarke¹⁵, C. Clement^{146a,146b}, Y. Coadou⁸⁵, M. Cokal^{164a,164c}, A. Coccaro⁴⁹, J. Cochran⁶⁴, L. Coffey²³, J.G. Cogan¹⁴³, L. Colasurdo¹⁰⁶, B. Cole³⁵, S. Cole¹⁰⁸, A.P. Colijn¹⁰⁷, J. Collot⁵⁵, T. Colombo^{58c}, G. Compostella¹⁰¹, P. Conde Muno^{126a,126b}, E. Coniavitis⁴⁸, S.H. Connell^{145b}, I.A. Connelly⁷⁷, V. Consorti⁴⁸, S. Constantinescu^{26b}, C. Conta^{121a,121b}, G. Conti³⁰, F. Conventi^{104a,j}, M. Cooke¹⁵, B.D. Cooper⁷⁸, A.M. Cooper-Sarkar¹²⁰, T. Cornelissen¹⁷⁵, M. Corradi^{20a}, F. Corriveau^{87,k}, A. Corso-Radu¹⁶³, A. Cortes-Gonzalez¹², G. Cortiana¹⁰¹, G. Costa^{91a}, M.J. Costa¹⁶⁷, D. Costanzo¹³⁹, D. Cte⁸, G. Cottin²⁸, G. Cowan⁷⁷, B.E. Cox⁸⁴, K. Cranmer¹¹⁰, G. Cree²⁹, S. Crp-Renaudin⁵⁵, F. Crescioli⁸⁰, W.A. Cribbs^{146a,146b}, M. Crispin Ortuzar¹²⁰, M. Cristinziani²¹, V. Croft¹⁰⁶, G. Crosetti^{37a,37b}, T. Cuhadar Donszelmann¹³⁹, J. Cummings¹⁷⁶, M. Curatolo⁴⁷, J. Cth⁸³, C. Cuthbert¹⁵⁰, H. Czirr¹⁴¹, P. Czodrowski³, S. D'Auria⁵³, M. D'Onofrio⁷⁴,

M.J. Da Cunha Sargedas De Sousa^{126a,126b}, C. Da Via⁸⁴, W. Dabrowski^{38a}, A. Dafinca¹²⁰, T. Dai⁸⁹,
O. Dale¹⁴, F. Dallaire⁹⁵, C. Dallapiccola⁸⁶, M. Dam³⁶, J.R. Dandoy³¹, N.P. Dang⁴⁸, A.C. Daniells¹⁸,
M. Danninger¹⁶⁸, M. Dano Hoffmann¹³⁶, V. Dao⁴⁸, G. Darbo^{50a}, S. Darmora⁸, J. Dassoulas³,
A. Dattagupta⁶¹, W. Davey²¹, C. David¹⁶⁹, T. Davidek¹²⁹, E. Davies^{120,l}, M. Davies¹⁵³, P. Davison⁷⁸,
Y. Davygora^{58a}, E. Dawe⁸⁸, I. Dawson¹³⁹, R.K. Daya-Ishmukhametova⁸⁶, K. De⁸, R. de Asmundis^{104a},
A. De Benedetti¹¹³, S. De Castro^{20a,20b}, S. De Cecco⁸⁰, N. De Groot¹⁰⁶, P. de Jong¹⁰⁷, H. De la Torre⁸²,
F. De Lorenzi⁶⁴, D. De Pedis^{132a}, A. De Salvo^{132a}, U. De Sanctis¹⁴⁹, A. De Santo¹⁴⁹,
J.B. De Vivie De Regie¹¹⁷, W.J. Dearnaley⁷², R. Debbe²⁵, C. Debenedetti¹³⁷, D.V. Dedovich⁶⁵,
I. Deigaard¹⁰⁷, J. Del Peso⁸², T. Del Prete^{124a,124b}, D. Delgove¹¹⁷, F. Deliot¹³⁶, C.M. Delitzsch⁴⁹,
M. Deliyergiyev⁷⁵, A. Dell'Acqua³⁰, L. Dell'Asta²², M. Dell'Orso^{124a,124b}, M. Della Pietra^{104a,j},
D. della Volpe⁴⁹, M. Delmastro⁵, P.A. Delsart⁵⁵, C. Deluca¹⁰⁷, D.A. DeMarco¹⁵⁸, S. Demers¹⁷⁶,
M. Demichev⁶⁵, A. Demilly⁸⁰, S.P. Denisov¹³⁰, D. Derendarz³⁹, J.E. Derkaoui^{135d}, F. Derue⁸⁰,
P. Dervan⁷⁴, K. Desch²¹, C. Deterre⁴², K. Dette⁴³, P.O. Deviveiros³⁰, A. Dewhurst¹³¹, S. Dhaliwal²³,
A. Di Ciaccio^{133a,133b}, L. Di Ciaccio⁵, A. Di Domenico^{132a,132b}, C. Di Donato^{104a,104b}, A. Di Girolamo³⁰,
B. Di Girolamo³⁰, A. Di Mattia¹⁵², B. Di Micco^{134a,134b}, R. Di Nardo⁴⁷, A. Di Simone⁴⁸, R. Di Sipio¹⁵⁸,
D. Di Valentino²⁹, C. Diaconu⁸⁵, M. Diamond¹⁵⁸, F.A. Dias⁴⁶, M.A. Diaz^{32a}, E.B. Diehl⁸⁹, J. Dietrich¹⁶,
S. Diglio⁸⁵, A. Dimitrievska¹³, J. Dingfelder²¹, P. Dita^{26b}, S. Dita^{26b}, F. Dittus³⁰, F. Djama⁸⁵,
T. Djobava^{51b}, J.I. Djuvsland^{58a}, M.A.B. do Vale^{24c}, D. Dobos³⁰, M. Dobre^{26b}, C. Doglioni⁸¹,
T. Dohmae¹⁵⁵, J. Dolejsi¹²⁹, Z. Dolezal¹²⁹, B.A. Dolgoshein^{98,*}, M. Donadelli^{24d}, S. Donati^{124a,124b},
P. Dondero^{121a,121b}, J. Donini³⁴, J. Dopke¹³¹, A. Doria^{104a}, M.T. Dova⁷¹, A.T. Doyle⁵³, E. Drechsler⁵⁴,
M. Dris¹⁰, E. Dubreuil³⁴, E. Duchovni¹⁷², G. Duckeck¹⁰⁰, O.A. Ducu^{26b,85}, D. Duda¹⁰⁷, A. Dudarev³⁰,
L. Dufflot¹¹⁷, L. Duguid⁷⁷, M. Dührssen³⁰, M. Dunford^{58a}, H. Duran Yildiz^{4a}, M. Düren⁵²,
A. Durglishvili^{51b}, D. Duschinger⁴⁴, B. Dutta⁴², M. Dyndal^{38a}, C. Eckardt⁴², K.M. Ecker¹⁰¹,
R.C. Edgar⁸⁹, W. Edson², N.C. Edwards⁴⁶, W. Ehrenfeld²¹, T. Eifert³⁰, G. Eigen¹⁴, K. Einsweiler¹⁵,
T. Ekelof¹⁶⁶, M. El Kacimi^{135c}, M. Ellert¹⁶⁶, S. Elles⁵, F. Ellinghaus¹⁷⁵, A.A. Elliot¹⁶⁹, N. Ellis³⁰,
J. Elmsheuser¹⁰⁰, M. Elsing³⁰, D. Emeliyanov¹³¹, Y. Enari¹⁵⁵, O.C. Endner⁸³, M. Endo¹¹⁸, J. Erdmann⁴³,
A. Ereditato¹⁷, G. Ernis¹⁷⁵, J. Ernst², M. Ernst²⁵, S. Errede¹⁶⁵, E. Ertel⁸³, M. Escalier¹¹⁷, H. Esch⁴³,
C. Escobar¹²⁵, B. Esposito⁴⁷, A.I. Etienvre¹³⁶, E. Etzion¹⁵³, H. Evans⁶¹, A. Ezhilov¹²³, L. Fabbri^{20a,20b},
G. Facini³¹, R.M. Fakhruddinov¹³⁰, S. Falciano^{132a}, R.J. Falla⁷⁸, J. Faltova¹²⁹, Y. Fang^{33a},
M. Fanti^{91a,91b}, A. Farbin⁸, A. Farilla^{134a}, T. Farooque¹², S. Farrell¹⁵, S.M. Farrington¹⁷⁰, P. Farthouat³⁰,
F. Fassi^{135e}, P. Fassnacht³⁰, D. Fassouliotis⁹, M. Fauci Giannelli⁷⁷, A. Favareto^{50a,50b}, L. Fayard¹¹⁷,
O.L. Fedin^{123,m}, W. Fedorko¹⁶⁸, S. Feigl³⁰, L. Feligioni⁸⁵, C. Feng^{33d}, E.J. Feng³⁰, H. Feng⁸⁹,
A.B. Fenyuk¹³⁰, L. Feremenga⁸, P. Fernandez Martinez¹⁶⁷, S. Fernandez Perez³⁰, J. Ferrando⁵³,
A. Ferrari¹⁶⁶, P. Ferrari¹⁰⁷, R. Ferrari^{121a}, D.E. Ferreira de Lima⁵³, A. Ferrer¹⁶⁷, D. Ferrere⁴⁹,
C. Ferretti⁸⁹, A. Ferretto Parodi^{50a,50b}, M. Fiascaris³¹, F. Fiedler⁸³, A. Filipčič⁷⁵, M. Filipuzzi⁴²,
F. Filthaut¹⁰⁶, M. Fincke-Keeler¹⁶⁹, K.D. Finelli¹⁵⁰, M.C.N. Fiolhais^{126a,126c}, L. Fiorini¹⁶⁷, A. Firan⁴⁰,
A. Fischer², C. Fischer¹², J. Fischer¹⁷⁵, W.C. Fisher⁹⁰, N. Flaschel⁴², I. Fleck¹⁴¹, P. Fleischmann⁸⁹,
G.T. Fletcher¹³⁹, G. Fletcher⁷⁶, R.R.M. Fletcher¹²², T. Flick¹⁷⁵, A. Floderus⁸¹, L.R. Flores Castillo^{60a},
M.J. Flowerdew¹⁰¹, A. Formica¹³⁶, A. Forti⁸⁴, D. Fournier¹¹⁷, H. Fox⁷², S. Fracchia¹², P. Francavilla⁸⁰,
M. Franchini^{20a,20b}, D. Francis³⁰, L. Franconi¹¹⁹, M. Franklin⁵⁷, M. Frate¹⁶³, M. Fraternali^{121a,121b},
D. Freeborn⁷⁸, S.T. French²⁸, F. Friedrich⁴⁴, D. Froidevaux³⁰, J.A. Frost¹²⁰, C. Fukunaga¹⁵⁶,
E. Fullana Torregrosa⁸³, B.G. Fulson¹⁴³, T. Fusayasu¹⁰², J. Fuster¹⁶⁷, C. Gabaldon⁵⁵, O. Gabizon¹⁷⁵,
A. Gabrielli^{20a,20b}, A. Gabrielli¹⁵, G.P. Gach¹⁸, S. Gadatsch³⁰, S. Gadomski⁴⁹, G. Gagliardi^{50a,50b},
P. Gagnon⁶¹, C. Galea¹⁰⁶, B. Galhardo^{126a,126c}, E.J. Gallas¹²⁰, B.J. Gallop¹³¹, P. Gallus¹²⁸, G. Galster³⁶,
K.K. Gan¹¹¹, J. Gao^{33b,85}, Y. Gao⁴⁶, Y.S. Gao^{143,e}, F.M. Garay Walls⁴⁶, F. Garbers¹⁷⁶, C. García¹⁶⁷,
J.E. García Navarro¹⁶⁷, M. Garcia-Sciveres¹⁵, R.W. Gardner³¹, N. Garelli¹⁴³, V. Garonne¹¹⁹, C. Gatti⁴⁷,
A. Gaudiello^{50a,50b}, G. Gaudio^{121a}, B. Gaur¹⁴¹, L. Gauthier⁹⁵, P. Gauzzi^{132a,132b}, I.L. Gavrilenko⁹⁶,

C. Gay¹⁶⁸, G. Gaycken²¹, E.N. Gazis¹⁰, P. Ge^{33d}, Z. Gecse¹⁶⁸, C.N.P. Gee¹³¹, Ch. Geich-Gimbel²¹,
 M.P. Geisler^{58a}, C. Gemme^{50a}, M.H. Genest⁵⁵, S. Gentile^{132a,132b}, M. George⁵⁴, S. George⁷⁷,
 D. Gerbaudo¹⁶³, A. Gershon¹⁵³, S. Ghasemi¹⁴¹, H. Ghazlane^{135b}, B. Giacobbe^{20a}, S. Giagu^{132a,132b},
 V. Giangiobbe¹², P. Giannetti^{124a,124b}, B. Gibbard²⁵, S.M. Gibson⁷⁷, M. Gignac¹⁶⁸, M. Gilchriese¹⁵,
 T.P.S. Gillam²⁸, D. Gillberg³⁰, G. Gilles³⁴, D.M. Gingrich^{3,d}, N. Giokaris⁹, M.P. Giordani^{164a,164c},
 F.M. Giorgi^{20a}, F.M. Giorgi¹⁶, P.F. Giraud¹³⁶, P. Giromini⁴⁷, D. Giugni^{91a}, C. Giuliani¹⁰¹, M. Giulini^{58b},
 B.K. Gjelsten¹¹⁹, S. Gkaitatzis¹⁵⁴, I. Gkialas¹⁵⁴, E.L. Gkoukousis¹¹⁷, L.K. Gladilin⁹⁹, C. Glasman⁸²,
 J. Glatzer³⁰, P.C.F. Glaysher⁴⁶, A. Glazov⁴², M. Goblirsch-Kolb¹⁰¹, J.R. Goddard⁷⁶, J. Godlewski³⁹,
 S. Goldfarb⁸⁹, T. Golling⁴⁹, D. Golubkov¹³⁰, A. Gomes^{126a,126b,126d}, R. Gonalo^{126a},
 J. Goncalves Pinto Firmino Da Costa¹³⁶, L. Gonella²¹, S. Gonzalez de la Hoz¹⁶⁷, G. Gonzalez Parra¹²,
 S. Gonzalez-Sevilla⁴⁹, L. Goossens³⁰, P.A. Gorbounov⁹⁷, H.A. Gordon²⁵, I. Gorelov¹⁰⁵, B. Gorini³⁰,
 E. Gorini^{73a,73b}, A. Gorišek⁷⁵, E. Gornicki³⁹, A.T. Goshaw⁴⁵, C. Gossling⁴³, M.I. Gostkin⁶⁵,
 D. Goujdami^{135c}, A.G. Goussiou¹³⁸, N. Govender^{145b}, E. Gozani¹⁵², H.M.X. Grabas¹³⁷, L. Graber⁵⁴,
 I. Grabowska-Bold^{38a}, P.O.J. Gradin¹⁶⁶, P. Grafstrom^{20a,20b}, K-J. Grahn⁴², J. Gramling⁴⁹,
 E. Gramstad¹¹⁹, S. Grancagnolo¹⁶, V. Gratchev¹²³, H.M. Gray³⁰, E. Graziani^{134a}, Z.D. Greenwood^{79,n},
 C. Grefe²¹, K. Gregersen⁷⁸, I.M. Gregor⁴², P. Grenier¹⁴³, J. Griffiths⁸, A.A. Grillo¹³⁷, K. Grimm⁷²,
 S. Grinstein^{12,o}, Ph. Gris³⁴, J.-F. Grivaz¹¹⁷, J.P. Grohs⁴⁴, A. Grohsjean⁴², E. Gross¹⁷²,
 J. Grosse-Knetter⁵⁴, G.C. Grossi⁷⁹, Z.J. Groul¹⁴⁹, L. Guan⁸⁹, J. Guenther¹²⁸, F. Guescini⁴⁹, D. Guest¹⁶³,
 O. Gueta¹⁵³, E. Guido^{50a,50b}, T. Guillemain¹¹⁷, S. Guindon², U. Gul⁵³, C. Gumpert⁴⁴, J. Guo^{33e},
 Y. Guo^{33b,p}, S. Gupta¹²⁰, G. Gustavino^{132a,132b}, P. Gutierrez¹¹³, N.G. Gutierrez Ortiz⁷⁸, C. Gutschow⁴⁴,
 C. Guyot¹³⁶, C. Gwenlan¹²⁰, C.B. Gwilliam⁷⁴, A. Haas¹¹⁰, C. Haber¹⁵, H.K. Hadavand⁸, N. Haddad^{135e},
 P. Haefner²¹, S. Hagebock²¹, Z. Hajduk³⁹, H. Hakobyan¹⁷⁷, M. Haleem⁴², J. Haley¹¹⁴, D. Hall¹²⁰,
 G. Halladjian⁹⁰, G.D. Hallewell⁸⁵, K. Hamacher¹⁷⁵, P. Hamal¹¹⁵, K. Hamano¹⁶⁹, A. Hamilton^{145a},
 G.N. Hamity¹³⁹, P.G. Hamnett⁴², L. Han^{33b}, K. Hanagaki^{66,q}, K. Hanawa¹⁵⁵, M. Hance¹³⁷, B. Haney¹²²,
 P. Hanke^{58a}, R. Hanna¹³⁶, J.B. Hansen³⁶, J.D. Hansen³⁶, M.C. Hansen²¹, P.H. Hansen³⁶, K. Hara¹⁶⁰,
 A.S. Hard¹⁷³, T. Harenberg¹⁷⁵, F. Hariri¹¹⁷, S. Harkusha⁹², R.D. Harrington⁴⁶, P.F. Harrison¹⁷⁰,
 F. Hartjes¹⁰⁷, M. Hasegawa⁶⁷, Y. Hasegawa¹⁴⁰, A. Hasib¹¹³, S. Hassani¹³⁶, S. Haug¹⁷, R. Hauser⁹⁰,
 L. Hauswald⁴⁴, M. Havranek¹²⁷, C.M. Hawkes¹⁸, R.J. Hawkins³⁰, A.D. Hawkins⁸¹, T. Hayashi¹⁶⁰,
 D. Hayden⁹⁰, C.P. Hays¹²⁰, J.M. Hays⁷⁶, H.S. Hayward⁷⁴, S.J. Haywood¹³¹, S.J. Head¹⁸, T. Heck⁸³,
 V. Hedberg⁸¹, L. Heelan⁸, S. Heim¹²², T. Heim¹⁷⁵, B. Heinemann¹⁵, L. Heinrich¹¹⁰, J. Hejbal¹²⁷,
 L. Helary²², S. Hellman^{146a,146b}, D. Hellmich²¹, C. Hensens¹², J. Henderson¹²⁰, R.C.W. Henderson⁷²,
 Y. Heng¹⁷³, C. Hengler⁴², S. Henkelmann¹⁶⁸, A. Henrichs¹⁷⁶, A.M. Henriques Correia³⁰,
 S. Henrot-Versille¹¹⁷, G.H. Herbert¹⁶, Y. Hernandez Jimenez¹⁶⁷, G. Herten⁴⁸, R. Hertenberger¹⁰⁰,
 L. Hervas³⁰, G.G. Hesketh⁷⁸, N.P. Hessey¹⁰⁷, J.W. Hetherly⁴⁰, R. Hickling⁷⁶, E. Higon-Rodriguez¹⁶⁷,
 E. Hill¹⁶⁹, J.C. Hill²⁸, K.H. Hiller⁴², S.J. Hillier¹⁸, I. Hinchliffe¹⁵, E. Hines¹²², R.R. Hinman¹⁵,
 M. Hirose¹⁵⁷, D. Hirschbuehl¹⁷⁵, J. Hobbs¹⁴⁸, N. Hod¹⁰⁷, M.C. Hodgkinson¹³⁹, P. Hodgson¹³⁹,
 A. Hoecker³⁰, M.R. Hoferkamp¹⁰⁵, F. Hoenic¹⁰⁰, M. Hohlfield⁸³, D. Hohn²¹, T.R. Holmes¹⁵,
 M. Homann⁴³, T.M. Hong¹²⁵, W.H. Hopkins¹¹⁶, Y. Horii¹⁰³, A.J. Horton¹⁴², J.-Y. Hostachy⁵⁵, S. Hou¹⁵¹,
 A. Hoummada^{135a}, J. Howard¹²⁰, J. Howarth⁴², M. Hrabovsky¹¹⁵, I. Hristova¹⁶, J. Hrivnac¹¹⁷,
 T. Hryn'ova⁵, A. Hrynevich⁹³, C. Hsu^{145c}, P.J. Hsu^{151,r}, S.-C. Hsu¹³⁸, D. Hu³⁵, Q. Hu^{33b}, X. Hu⁸⁹,
 Y. Huang⁴², Z. Hubacek¹²⁸, F. Hubaut⁸⁵, F. Huegging²¹, T.B. Huffman¹²⁰, E.W. Hughes³⁵, G. Hughes⁷²,
 M. Huhtinen³⁰, T.A. Hulsing⁸³, N. Huseynov^{65,b}, J. Huston⁹⁰, J. Huth⁵⁷, G. Iacobucci⁴⁹, G. Iakovidis²⁵,
 I. Ibragimov¹⁴¹, L. Iconomidou-Fayard¹¹⁷, E. Ideal¹⁷⁶, Z. Idrissi^{135e}, P. Iengo³⁰, O. Igonkina¹⁰⁷,
 T. Iizawa¹⁷¹, Y. Ikegami⁶⁶, K. Ikematsu¹⁴¹, M. Ikeno⁶⁶, Y. Ilchenko^{31,s}, D. Iliadis¹⁵⁴, N. Ilic¹⁴³,
 T. Ince¹⁰¹, G. Introzzi^{121a,121b}, P. Ioannou⁹, M. Iodice^{134a}, K. Iordanidou³⁵, V. Ippolito⁵⁷,
 A. Irles Quiles¹⁶⁷, C. Isaksson¹⁶⁶, M. Ishino⁶⁸, M. Ishitsuka¹⁵⁷, R. Ishmukhametov¹¹¹, C. Issever¹²⁰,
 S. Istin^{19a}, J.M. Iturbe Ponce⁸⁴, R. Iuppa^{133a,133b}, J. Ivarsson⁸¹, W. Iwanski³⁹, H. Iwasaki⁶⁶, J.M. Izen⁴¹,

V. Izzo^{104a}, S. Jabbar³, B. Jackson¹²², M. Jackson⁷⁴, P. Jackson¹, M.R. Jaekel³⁰, V. Jain², K. Jakobs⁴⁸, S. Jakobsen³⁰, T. Jakoubek¹²⁷, J. Jakubek¹²⁸, D.O. Jamin¹¹⁴, D.K. Jana⁷⁹, E. Jansen⁷⁸, R. Jansky⁶², J. Janssen²¹, M. Janus⁵⁴, G. Jarlskog⁸¹, N. Javadov^{65,b}, T. Javůrek⁴⁸, L. Jeanty¹⁵, J. Jejelava^{51a,t}, G.-Y. Jeng¹⁵⁰, D. Jennens⁸⁸, P. Jenni^{48,u}, J. Jentzsch⁴³, C. Jeske¹⁷⁰, S. Jézéquel⁵, H. Ji¹⁷³, J. Jia¹⁴⁸, Y. Jiang^{33b}, S. Jiggins⁷⁸, J. Jimenez Pena¹⁶⁷, S. Jin^{33a}, A. Jinaru^{26b}, O. Jinnouchi¹⁵⁷, M.D. Joergensen³⁶, P. Johansson¹³⁹, K.A. Johns⁷, W.J. Johnson¹³⁸, K. Jon-And^{146a,146b}, G. Jones¹⁷⁰, R.W.L. Jones⁷², T.J. Jones⁷⁴, J. Jongmanns^{58a}, P.M. Jorge^{126a,126b}, K.D. Joshi⁸⁴, J. Jovicevic^{159a}, X. Ju¹⁷³, P. Jussel⁶², A. Juste Rozas^{12,o}, M. Kaci¹⁶⁷, A. Kaczmarek³⁹, M. Kado¹¹⁷, H. Kagan¹¹¹, M. Kagan¹⁴³, S.J. Kahn⁸⁵, E. Kajomovitz⁴⁵, C.W. Kalderon¹²⁰, S. Kama⁴⁰, A. Kamenshchikov¹³⁰, N. Kanaya¹⁵⁵, S. Kaneti²⁸, V.A. Kantserov⁹⁸, J. Kanzaki⁶⁶, B. Kaplan¹¹⁰, L.S. Kaplan¹⁷³, A. Kapliy³¹, D. Kar^{145c}, K. Karakostas¹⁰, A. Karamaoun³, N. Karastathis^{10,107}, M.J. Kareem⁵⁴, E. Karentzos¹⁰, M. Karnevskiy⁸³, S.N. Karpov⁶⁵, Z.M. Karpova⁶⁵, K. Karthik¹¹⁰, V. Kartvelishvili⁷², A.N. Karyukhin¹³⁰, K. Kasahara¹⁶⁰, L. Kashif¹⁷³, R.D. Kass¹¹¹, A. Kastanas¹⁴, Y. Kataoka¹⁵⁵, C. Kato¹⁵⁵, A. Katre⁴⁹, J. Katzy⁴², K. Kawade¹⁰³, K. Kawagoe⁷⁰, T. Kawamoto¹⁵⁵, G. Kawamura⁵⁴, S. Kazama¹⁵⁵, V.F. Kazanin^{109,c}, R. Keeler¹⁶⁹, R. Kehoe⁴⁰, J.S. Keller⁴², J.J. Kempster⁷⁷, H. Keoshkerian⁸⁴, O. Kepka¹²⁷, B.P. Kerševan⁷⁵, S. Kersten¹⁷⁵, R.A. Keyes⁸⁷, F. Khalil-zada¹¹, H. Khandanyan^{146a,146b}, A. Khanov¹¹⁴, A.G. Kharlamov^{109,c}, T.J. Khoo²⁸, V. Khovanskij⁹⁷, E. Khramov⁶⁵, J. Khubua^{51b,v}, S. Kido⁶⁷, H.Y. Kim⁸, S.H. Kim¹⁶⁰, Y.K. Kim³¹, N. Kimura¹⁵⁴, O.M. Kind¹⁶, B.T. King⁷⁴, M. King¹⁶⁷, S.B. King¹⁶⁸, J. Kirk¹³¹, A.E. Kiryunin¹⁰¹, T. Kishimoto⁶⁷, D. Kisielewska^{38a}, F. Kiss⁴⁸, K. Kiuchi¹⁶⁰, O. Kivernyk¹³⁶, E. Kladiva^{144b}, M.H. Klein³⁵, M. Klein⁷⁴, U. Klein⁷⁴, K. Kleinknecht⁸³, P. Klimek^{146a,146b}, A. Klimentov²⁵, R. Klingenberg⁴³, J.A. Klinger¹³⁹, T. Klioutchnikova³⁰, E.-E. Kluge^{58a}, P. Kluit¹⁰⁷, S. Kluth¹⁰¹, J. Knapik³⁹, E. Kneringer⁶², E.B.F.G. Knoop⁸⁵, A. Knue⁵³, A. Kobayashi¹⁵⁵, D. Kobayashi¹⁵⁷, T. Kobayashi¹⁵⁵, M. Kobel⁴⁴, M. Kocian¹⁴³, P. Kodys¹²⁹, T. Koffas²⁹, E. Koffeman¹⁰⁷, L.A. Kogan¹²⁰, S. Kohlmann¹⁷⁵, Z. Kohout¹²⁸, T. Kohriki⁶⁶, T. Koi¹⁴³, H. Kolanoski¹⁶, M. Kolb^{58b}, I. Koletsou⁵, A.A. Komar^{96,*}, Y. Komori¹⁵⁵, T. Kondo⁶⁶, N. Kondrashova⁴², K. Köneke⁴⁸, A.C. König¹⁰⁶, T. Kono⁶⁶, R. Konoplich^{110,w}, N. Konstantinidis⁷⁸, R. Kopeliansky¹⁵², S. Koperny^{38a}, L. Köpke⁸³, A.K. Kopp⁴⁸, K. Korcyl³⁹, K. Kordas¹⁵⁴, A. Korn⁷⁸, A.A. Korol^{109,c}, I. Korolkov¹², E.V. Korolkova¹³⁹, O. Kortner¹⁰¹, S. Kortner¹⁰¹, T. Kosek¹²⁹, V.V. Kostyukhin²¹, V.M. Kotov⁶⁵, A. Kotwal⁴⁵, A. Kourkoumeli-Charalampidi¹⁵⁴, C. Kourkoumelis⁹, V. Kouskoura²⁵, A. Koutsman^{159a}, R. Kowalewski¹⁶⁹, T.Z. Kowalski^{38a}, W. Kozanecki¹³⁶, A.S. Kozhin¹³⁰, V.A. Kramarenko⁹⁹, G. Kramberger⁷⁵, D. Krasnopevtsev⁹⁸, M.W. Krasny⁸⁰, A. Krasznahorkay³⁰, J.K. Kraus²¹, A. Kravchenko²⁵, S. Kreiss¹¹⁰, M. Kretz^{58c}, J. Kretzschmar⁷⁴, K. Kreutzfeldt⁵², P. Krieger¹⁵⁸, K. Krizka³¹, K. Kroeninger⁴³, H. Kroha¹⁰¹, J. Kroll¹²², J. Kroseberg²¹, J. Krstic¹³, U. Kruchonak⁶⁵, H. Krüger²¹, N. Krumnack⁶⁴, A. Kruse¹⁷³, M.C. Kruse⁴⁵, M. Kruskal²², T. Kubota⁸⁸, H. Kucuk⁷⁸, S. Kudah^{4b}, S. Kuehn⁴⁸, A. Kugel^{58c}, F. Kuger¹⁷⁴, A. Kuhl¹³⁷, T. Kuhl⁴², V. Kukhtin⁶⁵, R. Kukla¹³⁶, Y. Kulchitsky⁹², S. Kuleshov^{32b}, M. Kuna^{132a,132b}, T. Kunigo⁶⁸, A. Kupco¹²⁷, H. Kurashige⁶⁷, Y.A. Kurochkin⁹², V. Kus¹²⁷, E.S. Kuwertz¹⁶⁹, M. Kuze¹⁵⁷, J. Kvita¹¹⁵, T. Kwan¹⁶⁹, D. Kyriazopoulos¹³⁹, A. La Rosa¹³⁷, J.L. La Rosa Navarro^{24d}, L. La Rotonda^{37a,37b}, C. Lacasta¹⁶⁷, F. Lacava^{132a,132b}, J. Lacey²⁹, H. Lacker¹⁶, D. Lacour⁸⁰, V.R. Lacuesta¹⁶⁷, E. Ladygin⁶⁵, R. Lafaye⁵, B. Laforge⁸⁰, T. Lagouri¹⁷⁶, S. Lai⁵⁴, L. Lambourne⁷⁸, S. Lammers⁶¹, C.L. Lampen⁷, W. Lampl⁷, E. Lançon¹³⁶, U. Landgraf⁴⁸, M.P.J. Landon⁷⁶, V.S. Lang^{58a}, J.C. Lange¹², A.J. Lankford¹⁶³, F. Lanni²⁵, K. Lantzscht²¹, A. Lanza^{121a}, S. Laplace⁸⁰, C. Lapoire³⁰, J.F. Laporte¹³⁶, T. Lari^{91a}, F. Lasagni Manghi^{20a,20b}, M. Lassnig³⁰, P. Laurelli⁴⁷, W. Lavrijsen¹⁵, A.T. Law¹³⁷, P. Laycock⁷⁴, T. Lazovich⁵⁷, O. Le Dortz⁸⁰, E. Le Guirriec⁸⁵, E. Le Menedeu¹², M. LeBlanc¹⁶⁹, T. LeCompte⁶, F. Ledroit-Guillon⁵⁵, C.A. Lee^{145a}, S.C. Lee¹⁵¹, L. Lee¹, G. Lefebvre⁸⁰, M. Lefebvre¹⁶⁹, F. Legger¹⁰⁰, C. Leggett¹⁵, A. Lehan⁷⁴, G. Lehmann Miotto³⁰, X. Lei⁷, W.A. Leight²⁹, A. Leisos^{154,x}, A.G. Leister¹⁷⁶, M.A.L. Leite^{24d}, R. Leitner¹²⁹, D. Lellouch¹⁷², B. Lemmer⁵⁴, K.J.C. Leney⁷⁸, T. Lenz²¹, B. Lenzi³⁰,

R. Leone⁷, S. Leone^{124a,124b}, C. Leonidopoulos⁴⁶, S. Leontsinis¹⁰, C. Leroy⁹⁵, C.G. Lester²⁸, M. Levchenko¹²³, J. Levêque⁵, D. Levin⁸⁹, L.J. Levinson¹⁷², M. Levy¹⁸, A. Lewis¹²⁰, A.M. Leyko²¹, M. Leyton⁴¹, B. Li^{33b,y}, H. Li¹⁴⁸, H.L. Li³¹, L. Li⁴⁵, L. Li^{33e}, S. Li⁴⁵, X. Li⁸⁴, Y. Li^{33c,z}, Z. Liang¹³⁷, H. Liao³⁴, B. Liberti^{133a}, A. Liblong¹⁵⁸, P. Lichard³⁰, K. Lie¹⁶⁵, J. Liebal²¹, W. Liebig¹⁴, C. Limbach²¹, A. Limosani¹⁵⁰, S.C. Lin^{151,aa}, T.H. Lin⁸³, F. Linde¹⁰⁷, B.E. Lindquist¹⁴⁸, J.T. Linnemann⁹⁰, E. Lipeles¹²², A. Lipniacka¹⁴, M. Lisovyi^{58b}, T.M. Liss¹⁶⁵, D. Lissauer²⁵, A. Lister¹⁶⁸, A.M. Litke¹³⁷, B. Liu^{151,ab}, D. Liu¹⁵¹, H. Liu⁸⁹, J. Liu⁸⁵, J.B. Liu^{33b}, K. Liu⁸⁵, L. Liu¹⁶⁵, M. Liu⁴⁵, M. Liu^{33b}, Y. Liu^{33b}, M. Livan^{121a,121b}, A. Lleres⁵⁵, J. Llorente Merino⁸², S.L. Lloyd⁷⁶, F. Lo Sterzo¹⁵¹, E. Lobodzinska⁴², P. Loch⁷, W.S. Lockman¹³⁷, F.K. Loebinger⁸⁴, A.E. Loevschall-Jensen³⁶, K.M. Loew²³, A. Loginov¹⁷⁶, T. Lohse¹⁶, K. Lohwasser⁴², M. Lokajicek¹²⁷, B.A. Long²², J.D. Long¹⁶⁵, R.E. Long⁷², K.A. Looper¹¹¹, L. Lopes^{126a}, D. Lopez Mateos⁵⁷, B. Lopez Paredes¹³⁹, I. Lopez Paz¹², J. Lorenz¹⁰⁰, N. Lorenzo Martinez⁶¹, M. Losada¹⁶², P.J. Lösel¹⁰⁰, X. Lou^{33a}, A. Lounis¹¹⁷, J. Love⁶, P.A. Love⁷², N. Lu⁸⁹, H.J. Lubatti¹³⁸, C. Luci^{132a,132b}, A. Lucotte⁵⁵, C. Luedtke⁴⁸, F. Luehring⁶¹, W. Lukas⁶², L. Luminari^{132a}, O. Lundberg^{146a,146b}, B. Lund-Jensen¹⁴⁷, D. Lynn²⁵, R. Lysak¹²⁷, E. Lytken⁸¹, H. Ma²⁵, L.L. Ma^{33d}, G. Maccarrone⁴⁷, A. Macchiolo¹⁰¹, C.M. Macdonald¹³⁹, B. Maček⁷⁵, J. Machado Miguens^{122,126b}, D. Macina³⁰, D. Madaffari⁸⁵, R. Madar³⁴, H.J. Maddocks⁷², W.F. Mader⁴⁴, A. Madsen¹⁶⁶, J. Maeda⁶⁷, S. Maeland¹⁴, T. Maeno²⁵, A. Maevskiy⁹⁹, E. Magradze⁵⁴, K. Mahboubi⁴⁸, J. Mahlstedt¹⁰⁷, C. Maiani¹³⁶, C. Maidantchik^{24a}, A.A. Maier¹⁰¹, T. Maier¹⁰⁰, A. Maio^{126a,126b,126d}, S. Majewski¹¹⁶, Y. Makida⁶⁶, N. Makovec¹¹⁷, B. Malaescu⁸⁰, Pa. Malecki³⁹, V.P. Maleev¹²³, F. Malek⁵⁵, U. Mallik⁶³, D. Malon⁶, C. Malone¹⁴³, S. Maltezos¹⁰, V.M. Malyshev¹⁰⁹, S. Malyukov³⁰, J. Mamuzic⁴², G. Mancini⁴⁷, B. Mandelli³⁰, L. Mandelli^{91a}, I. Mandić⁷⁵, R. Mandrysch⁶³, J. Maneira^{126a,126b}, A. Manfredini¹⁰¹, L. Manhaes de Andrade Filho^{24b}, J. Manjarres Ramos^{159b}, A. Mann¹⁰⁰, A. Manousakis-Katsikakis⁹, B. Mansoulie¹³⁶, R. Mantifel⁸⁷, M. Mantoani⁵⁴, L. Mapelli³⁰, L. March^{145c}, G. Marchiori⁸⁰, M. Marcisovsky¹²⁷, C.P. Marino¹⁶⁹, M. Marjanovic¹³, D.E. Marley⁸⁹, F. Marroquim^{24a}, S.P. Marsden⁸⁴, Z. Marshall¹⁵, L.F. Marti¹⁷, S. Marti-Garcia¹⁶⁷, B. Martin⁹⁰, T.A. Martin¹⁷⁰, V.J. Martin⁴⁶, B. Martin dit Latour¹⁴, M. Martinez^{12,o}, S. Martin-Haugh¹³¹, V.S. Martoiu^{26b}, A.C. Martyniuk⁷⁸, M. Marx¹³⁸, F. Marzano^{132a}, A. Marzin³⁰, L. Masetti⁸³, T. Mashimo¹⁵⁵, R. Mashinistov⁹⁶, J. Masik⁸⁴, A.L. Maslennikov^{109,c}, I. Massa^{20a,20b}, L. Massa^{20a,20b}, P. Mastrandrea⁵, A. Mastroberardino^{37a,37b}, T. Masubuchi¹⁵⁵, P. Mättig¹⁷⁵, J. Mattmann⁸³, J. Maurer^{26b}, S.J. Maxfield⁷⁴, D.A. Maximov^{109,c}, R. Mazini¹⁵¹, S.M. Mazza^{91a,91b}, G. Mc Goldrick¹⁵⁸, S.P. Mc Kee⁸⁹, A. McCarn⁸⁹, R.L. McCarthy¹⁴⁸, T.G. McCarthy²⁹, N.A. McCubbin¹³¹, K.W. McFarlane^{56,*}, J.A. McFayden⁷⁸, G. Mchedlidze⁵⁴, S.J. McMahon¹³¹, R.A. McPherson^{169,k}, M. Medinnis⁴², S. Meehan^{145a}, S. Mehlhase¹⁰⁰, A. Mehta⁷⁴, K. Meier^{58a}, C. Meineck¹⁰⁰, B. Meirose⁴¹, B.R. Mellado Garcia^{145c}, F. Meloni¹⁷, A. Mengarelli^{20a,20b}, S. Menke¹⁰¹, E. Meoni¹⁶¹, K.M. Mercurio⁵⁷, S. Mergelmeyer²¹, P. Mermod⁴⁹, L. Merola^{104a,104b}, C. Meroni^{91a}, F.S. Merritt³¹, A. Messina^{132a,132b}, J. Metcalfe²⁵, A.S. Mete¹⁶³, C. Meyer⁸³, C. Meyer¹²², J-P. Meyer¹³⁶, J. Meyer¹⁰⁷, H. Meyer Zu Theenhausen^{58a}, R.P. Middleton¹³¹, S. Miglioranzì^{164a,164c}, L. Mijović²¹, G. Mikenberg¹⁷², M. Mikestikova¹²⁷, M. Mikuž⁷⁵, M. Milesi⁸⁸, A. Milic³⁰, D.W. Miller³¹, C. Mills⁴⁶, A. Milov¹⁷², D.A. Milstead^{146a,146b}, A.A. Minaenko¹³⁰, Y. Minami¹⁵⁵, I.A. Minashvili⁶⁵, A.I. Mincer¹¹⁰, B. Mindur^{38a}, M. Mineev⁶⁵, Y. Ming¹⁷³, L.M. Mir¹², K.P. Mistry¹²², T. Mitani¹⁷¹, J. Mitrevski¹⁰⁰, V.A. Mitsou¹⁶⁷, A. Miucci⁴⁹, P.S. Miyagawa¹³⁹, J.U. Mjörnmark⁸¹, T. Moa^{146a,146b}, K. Mochizuki⁸⁵, S. Mohapatra³⁵, W. Mohr⁴⁸, S. Molander^{146a,146b}, R. Moles-Valls²¹, R. Monden⁶⁸, K. Mönig⁴², C. Monini⁵⁵, J. Monk³⁶, E. Monnier⁸⁵, A. Montalbano¹⁴⁸, J. Montejo Berlingen¹², F. Monticelli⁷¹, S. Monzani^{132a,132b}, R.W. Moore³, N. Morange¹¹⁷, D. Moreno¹⁶², M. Moreno Llácer⁵⁴, P. Morettini^{50a}, D. Mori¹⁴², T. Mori¹⁵⁵, M. Morii⁵⁷, M. Morinaga¹⁵⁵, V. Morisbak¹¹⁹, S. Moritz⁸³, A.K. Morley¹⁵⁰, G. Mornacchi³⁰, J.D. Morris⁷⁶, S.S. Mortensen³⁶, A. Morton⁵³, L. Morvaj¹⁰³, M. Mosidze^{51b}, J. Moss¹⁴³, K. Motohashi¹⁵⁷, R. Mount¹⁴³, E. Mountricha²⁵, S.V. Mouraviev^{96,*}, E.J.W. Moyse⁸⁶, S. Muanza⁸⁵,

R.D. Mudd¹⁸, F. Mueller¹⁰¹, J. Mueller¹²⁵, R.S.P. Mueller¹⁰⁰, T. Mueller²⁸, D. Muenstermann⁴⁹, P. Mullen⁵³, G.A. Mullier¹⁷, J.A. Murillo Quijada¹⁸, W.J. Murray^{170,131}, H. Musheghyan⁵⁴, E. Musto¹⁵², A.G. Myagkov^{130,ac}, M. Myska¹²⁸, B.P. Nachman¹⁴³, O. Nackenhorst⁵⁴, J. Nadal⁵⁴, K. Nagai¹²⁰, R. Nagai¹⁵⁷, Y. Nagai⁸⁵, K. Nagano⁶⁶, A. Nagarkar¹¹¹, Y. Nagasaka⁵⁹, K. Nagata¹⁶⁰, M. Nagel¹⁰¹, E. Nagy⁸⁵, A.M. Nairz³⁰, Y. Nakahama³⁰, K. Nakamura⁶⁶, T. Nakamura¹⁵⁵, I. Nakano¹¹², H. Namasivayam⁴¹, R.F. Naranjo Garcia⁴², R. Narayan³¹, D.I. Narrias Villar^{58a}, T. Naumann⁴², G. Navarro¹⁶², R. Nayyar⁷, H.A. Neal⁸⁹, P.Yu. Nechaeva⁹⁶, T.J. Neep⁸⁴, P.D. Nef¹⁴³, A. Negri^{121a,121b}, M. Negrini^{20a}, S. Nektarijevic¹⁰⁶, C. Nellist¹¹⁷, A. Nelson¹⁶³, S. Nemecek¹²⁷, P. Nemethy¹¹⁰, A.A. Nepomuceno^{24a}, M. Nessi^{30,ad}, M.S. Neubauer¹⁶⁵, M. Neumann¹⁷⁵, R.M. Neves¹¹⁰, P. Nevski²⁵, P.R. Newman¹⁸, D.H. Nguyen⁶, R.B. Nickerson¹²⁰, R. Nicolaidou¹³⁶, B. Nicquevert³⁰, J. Nielsen¹³⁷, N. Nikiforou³⁵, A. Nikiforov¹⁶, V. Nikolaenko^{130,ac}, I. Nikolic-Audit⁸⁰, K. Nikolopoulos¹⁸, J.K. Nilsen¹¹⁹, P. Nilsson²⁵, Y. Ninomiya¹⁵⁵, A. Nisati^{132a}, R. Nisius¹⁰¹, T. Nobe¹⁵⁵, M. Nomachi¹¹⁸, I. Nomidis²⁹, T. Nooney⁷⁶, S. Norberg¹¹³, M. Nordberg³⁰, O. Novgorodova⁴⁴, S. Nowak¹⁰¹, M. Nozaki⁶⁶, L. Nozka¹¹⁵, K. Ntekas¹⁰, G. Nunes Hanninger⁸⁸, T. Nunnemann¹⁰⁰, E. Nurse⁷⁸, F. Nuti⁸⁸, B.J. O'Brien⁴⁶, F. O'grady⁷, D.C. O'Neil¹⁴², V. O'Shea⁵³, F.G. Oakham^{29,d}, H. Oberlack¹⁰¹, T. Obermann²¹, J. Ocariz⁸⁰, A. Ochi⁶⁷, I. Ochoa³⁵, J.P. Ochoa-Ricoux^{32a}, S. Oda⁷⁰, S. Odaka⁶⁶, H. Ogren⁶¹, A. Oh⁸⁴, S.H. Oh⁴⁵, C.C. Ohm¹⁵, H. Ohman¹⁶⁶, H. Oide³⁰, W. Okamura¹¹⁸, H. Okawa¹⁶⁰, Y. Okumura³¹, T. Okuyama⁶⁶, A. Olariu^{26b}, S.A. Olivares Pino⁴⁶, D. Oliveira Damazio²⁵, A. Olszewski³⁹, J. Olszowska³⁹, A. Onofre^{126a,126e}, K. Onogi¹⁰³, P.U.E. Onyisi^{31,s}, C.J. Oram^{159a}, M.J. Oreglia³¹, Y. Oren¹⁵³, D. Orestano^{134a,134b}, N. Orlando¹⁵⁴, C. Oropeza Barrera⁵³, R.S. Orr¹⁵⁸, B. Osculati^{50a,50b}, R. Ospanov⁸⁴, G. Otero y Garzon²⁷, H. Otono⁷⁰, M. Ouchrif^{135d}, F. Ould-Saada¹¹⁹, A. Ouraou¹³⁶, K.P. Oussoren¹⁰⁷, Q. Ouyang^{33a}, A. Ovcharova¹⁵, M. Owen⁵³, R.E. Owen¹⁸, V.E. Ozcan^{19a}, N. Ozturk⁸, K. Pachal¹⁴², A. Pacheco Pages¹², C. Padilla Aranda¹², M. Pagáčová⁴⁸, S. Pagan Griso¹⁵, E. Paganis¹³⁹, F. Paige²⁵, P. Pais⁸⁶, K. Pajchel¹¹⁹, G. Palacino^{159b}, S. Palestini³⁰, M. Palka^{38b}, D. Pallin³⁴, A. Palma^{126a,126b}, Y.B. Pan¹⁷³, E.St. Panagiotopoulou¹⁰, C.E. Pandini⁸⁰, J.G. Panduro Vazquez⁷⁷, P. Pani^{146a,146b}, S. Panitkin²⁵, D. Pantea^{26b}, L. Paolozzi⁴⁹, Th.D. Papadopoulou¹⁰, K. Papageorgiou¹⁵⁴, A. Paramonov⁶, D. Paredes Hernandez¹⁵⁴, M.A. Parker²⁸, K.A. Parker¹³⁹, F. Parodi^{50a,50b}, J.A. Parsons³⁵, U. Parzefall⁴⁸, E. Pasqualucci^{132a}, S. Passaggio^{50a}, F. Pastore^{134a,134b,*}, Fr. Pastore⁷⁷, G. Pásztor²⁹, S. Patariaia¹⁷⁵, N.D. Patel¹⁵⁰, J.R. Pater⁸⁴, T. Pauly³⁰, J. Pearce¹⁶⁹, B. Pearson¹¹³, L.E. Pedersen³⁶, M. Pedersen¹¹⁹, S. Pedraza Lopez¹⁶⁷, R. Pedro^{126a,126b}, S.V. Peleganchuk^{109,c}, D. Pelikan¹⁶⁶, O. Penc¹²⁷, C. Peng^{33a}, H. Peng^{33b}, B. Penning³¹, J. Penwell⁶¹, D.V. Perepelitsa²⁵, E. Perez Codina^{159a}, M.T. Pérez García-Estañ¹⁶⁷, L. Perini^{91a,91b}, H. Pernegger³⁰, S. Perrella^{104a,104b}, R. Peschke⁴², V.D. Peshekhonov⁶⁵, K. Peters³⁰, R.F.Y. Peters⁸⁴, B.A. Petersen³⁰, T.C. Petersen³⁶, E. Petit⁴², A. Petridis¹, C. Petridou¹⁵⁴, P. Petroff¹¹⁷, E. Petrolu^{132a}, F. Petrucci^{134a,134b}, N.E. Pettersson¹⁵⁷, R. Pezoa^{32b}, P.W. Phillips¹³¹, G. Piacquadio¹⁴³, E. Pianori¹⁷⁰, A. Picazio⁴⁹, E. Piccaro⁷⁶, M. Piccinini^{20a,20b}, M.A. Pickering¹²⁰, R. Piegaia²⁷, D.T. Pignotti¹¹¹, J.E. Pilcher³¹, A.D. Pilkington⁸⁴, A.W.J. Pin⁸⁴, J. Pina^{126a,126b,126d}, M. Pinamonti^{164a,164c,ae}, J.L. Pinfeld³, A. Pingel³⁶, S. Pires⁸⁰, H. Pirumov⁴², M. Pitt¹⁷², C. Pizio^{91a,91b}, L. Plazak^{144a}, M.-A. Pleier²⁵, V. Pleskot¹²⁹, E. Plotnikova⁶⁵, P. Plucinski^{146a,146b}, D. Pluth⁶⁴, R. Poettgen^{146a,146b}, L. Poggioli¹¹⁷, D. Pohl²¹, G. Polesello^{121a}, A. Poley⁴², A. Policicchio^{37a,37b}, R. Polifka¹⁵⁸, A. Polini^{20a}, C.S. Pollard⁵³, V. Polychronakos²⁵, K. Pommès³⁰, L. Pontecorvo^{132a}, B.G. Pope⁹⁰, G.A. Popeneciu^{26c}, D.S. Popovic¹³, A. Poppleton³⁰, S. Pospisil¹²⁸, K. Potamianos¹⁵, I.N. Potrap⁶⁵, C.J. Potter¹⁴⁹, C.T. Potter¹¹⁶, G. Poulard³⁰, J. Poveda³⁰, V. Pozdnyakov⁶⁵, P. Pralavorio⁸⁵, A. Pranko¹⁵, S. Prasad³⁰, S. Prell⁶⁴, D. Price⁸⁴, L.E. Price⁶, M. Primavera^{73a}, S. Prince⁸⁷, M. Proissl⁴⁶, K. Prokofiev^{60c}, F. Prokoshin^{32b}, E. Protopapadaki¹³⁶, S. Protopopescu²⁵, J. Proudfoot⁶, M. Przybycien^{38a}, E. Ptacek¹¹⁶, D. Puddu^{134a,134b}, E. Pueschel⁸⁶, D. Puldon¹⁴⁸, M. Purohit^{25,af}, P. Puzo¹¹⁷, J. Qian⁸⁹, G. Qin⁵³, Y. Qin⁸⁴, A. Quadt⁵⁴, D.R. Quarrie¹⁵, W.B. Quayle^{164a,164b}, M. Queitsch-Maitland⁸⁴, D. Quilty⁵³, S. Raddum¹¹⁹,

V. Radeka²⁵, V. Radescu⁴², S.K. Radhakrishnan¹⁴⁸, P. Radloff¹¹⁶, P. Rados⁸⁸, F. Ragusa^{91a,91b}, G. Rahal¹⁷⁸, S. Rajagopalan²⁵, M. Rammensee³⁰, C. Rangel-Smith¹⁶⁶, F. Rauscher¹⁰⁰, S. Rave⁸³, T. Ravenscroft⁵³, M. Raymond³⁰, A.L. Read¹¹⁹, N.P. Readioff⁷⁴, D.M. Rebuzzi^{121a,121b}, A. Redelbach¹⁷⁴, G. Redlinger²⁵, R. Reece¹³⁷, K. Reeves⁴¹, L. Rehnisch¹⁶, J. Reichert¹²², H. Reisin²⁷, C. Rembser³⁰, H. Ren^{33a}, A. Renaud¹¹⁷, M. Rescigno^{132a}, S. Resconi^{91a}, O.L. Rezanova^{109,c}, P. Reznicek¹²⁹, R. Rezvani⁹⁵, R. Richter¹⁰¹, S. Richter⁷⁸, E. Richter-Was^{38b}, O. Ricken²¹, M. Ridel⁸⁰, P. Rieck¹⁶, C.J. Riegel¹⁷⁵, J. Rieger⁵⁴, O. Rifki¹¹³, M. Rijssenbeek¹⁴⁸, A. Rimoldi^{121a,121b}, L. Rinaldi^{20a}, B. Ristić⁴⁹, E. Ritsch³⁰, I. Riu¹², F. Rizatdinova¹¹⁴, E. Rizvi⁷⁶, S.H. Robertson^{87,k}, A. Robichaud-Veronneau⁸⁷, D. Robinson²⁸, J.E.M. Robinson⁴², A. Robson⁵³, C. Roda^{124a,124b}, S. Roe³⁰, O. Røhne¹¹⁹, S. Rollj¹⁶¹, A. Romaniouk⁹⁸, M. Romano^{20a,20b}, S.M. Romano Saez³⁴, E. Romero Adam¹⁶⁷, N. Rompotis¹³⁸, M. Ronzani⁴⁸, L. Roos⁸⁰, E. Ros¹⁶⁷, S. Rosati^{132a}, K. Rosbach⁴⁸, P. Rose¹³⁷, P.L. Rosendahl¹⁴, O. Rosenthal¹⁴¹, V. Rossetti^{146a,146b}, E. Rossi^{104a,104b}, L.P. Rossi^{50a}, J.H.N. Rosten²⁸, R. Rosten¹³⁸, M. Rotaru^{26b}, I. Roth¹⁷², J. Rothberg¹³⁸, D. Rousseau¹¹⁷, C.R. Royon¹³⁶, A. Rozanov⁸⁵, Y. Rozen¹⁵², X. Ruan^{145c}, F. Rubbo¹⁴³, I. Rubinskiy⁴², V.I. Rud⁹⁹, C. Rudolph⁴⁴, M.S. Rudolph¹⁵⁸, F. Rühr⁴⁸, A. Ruiz-Martinez³⁰, Z. Rurikova⁴⁸, N.A. Rusakovich⁶⁵, A. Ruschke¹⁰⁰, H.L. Russell¹³⁸, J.P. Rutherford⁷, N. Ruthmann³⁰, Y.F. Ryabov¹²³, M. Rybar¹⁶⁵, G. Rybkin¹¹⁷, N.C. Ryder¹²⁰, A.F. Saavedra¹⁵⁰, G. Sabato¹⁰⁷, S. Sacerdoti²⁷, A. Saddique³, H.F.-W. Sadrozinski¹³⁷, R. Sadykov⁶⁵, F. Safai Tehrani^{132a}, P. Saha¹⁰⁸, M. Sahinsoy^{58a}, M. Saimpert¹³⁶, T. Saito¹⁵⁵, H. Sakamoto¹⁵⁵, Y. Sakurai¹⁷¹, G. Salamanna^{134a,134b}, A. Salamon^{133a}, J.E. Salazar Loyola^{32b}, M. Saleem¹¹³, D. Salek¹⁰⁷, P.H. Sales De Bruin¹³⁸, D. Salihagic¹⁰¹, A. Salnikov¹⁴³, J. Salt¹⁶⁷, D. Salvatore^{37a,37b}, F. Salvatore¹⁴⁹, A. Salvucci^{60a}, A. Salzburger³⁰, D. Sammel⁴⁸, D. Sampsonidis¹⁵⁴, A. Sanchez^{104a,104b}, J. Sánchez¹⁶⁷, V. Sanchez Martinez¹⁶⁷, H. Sandaker¹¹⁹, R.L. Sandbach⁷⁶, H.G. Sander⁸³, M.P. Sanders¹⁰⁰, M. Sandhoff¹⁷⁵, C. Sandoval¹⁶², R. Sandstroem¹⁰¹, D.P.C. Sankey¹³¹, M. Sannino^{50a,50b}, A. Sansoni⁴⁷, C. Santoni³⁴, R. Santonico^{133a,133b}, H. Santos^{126a}, I. Santoyo Castillo¹⁴⁹, K. Sapp¹²⁵, A. Saponov⁶⁵, J.G. Saraiva^{126a,126d}, B. Sarrazin²¹, O. Sasaki⁶⁶, Y. Sasaki¹⁵⁵, K. Sato¹⁶⁰, G. Sauvage^{5,*}, E. Sauvan⁵, G. Savage⁷⁷, P. Savard^{158,d}, C. Sawyer¹³¹, L. Sawyer^{79,n}, J. Saxon³¹, C. Sbarra^{20a}, A. Sbrizzi^{20a,20b}, T. Scanlon⁷⁸, D.A. Scannicchio¹⁶³, M. Scarcella¹⁵⁰, V. Scarfone^{37a,37b}, J. Schaarschmidt¹⁷², P. Schacht¹⁰¹, D. Schaefer³⁰, R. Schaefer⁴², J. Schaeffer⁸³, S. Schaepe²¹, S. Schaezel^{58b}, U. Schäfer⁸³, A.C. Schaffer¹¹⁷, D. Schaile¹⁰⁰, R.D. Schamberger¹⁴⁸, V. Scharf^{58a}, V.A. Schegelsky¹²³, D. Scheirich¹²⁹, M. Schernau¹⁶³, C. Schiavi^{50a,50b}, C. Schillo⁴⁸, M. Schioppa^{37a,37b}, S. Schlenker³⁰, K. Schmieden³⁰, C. Schmitt⁸³, S. Schmitt^{58b}, S. Schmitt⁴², B. Schneider^{159a}, Y.J. Schnellbach⁷⁴, U. Schnoor⁴⁴, L. Schoeffel¹³⁶, A. Schoening^{58b}, B.D. Schoenrock⁹⁰, E. Schopf²¹, A.L.S. Schorlemmer⁵⁴, M. Schott⁸³, D. Schouten^{159a}, J. Schovancova⁸, S. Schramm⁴⁹, M. Schreyer¹⁷⁴, N. Schuh⁸³, M.J. Schultens²¹, H.-C. Schultz-Coulon^{58a}, H. Schulz¹⁶, M. Schumacher⁴⁸, B.A. Schumm¹³⁷, Ph. Schune¹³⁶, C. Schwanenberger⁸⁴, A. Schwartzman¹⁴³, T.A. Schwarz⁸⁹, Ph. Schwegler¹⁰¹, H. Schweiger⁸⁴, Ph. Schwemling¹³⁶, R. Schwienhorst⁹⁰, J. Schwindling¹³⁶, T. Schwindt²¹, F.G. Sciacca¹⁷, E. Scifo¹¹⁷, G. Sciolla²³, F. Scuri^{124a,124b}, F. Scutti²¹, J. Searcy⁸⁹, G. Sedov⁴², E. Sedykh¹²³, P. Seema²¹, S.C. Seidel¹⁰⁵, A. Seiden¹³⁷, F. Seifert¹²⁸, J.M. Seixas^{24a}, G. Sekhniaidze^{104a}, K. Sekhon⁸⁹, S.J. Sekula⁴⁰, D.M. Seliverstov^{123,*}, N. Semprini-Cesari^{20a,20b}, C. Serfon³⁰, L. Serin¹¹⁷, L. Serkin^{164a,164b}, T. Serre⁸⁵, M. Sessa^{134a,134b}, R. Seuster^{159a}, H. Severini¹¹³, T. Sfiligoj⁷⁵, F. Sforza³⁰, A. Sfyrla³⁰, E. Shabalina⁵⁴, M. Shamim¹¹⁶, L.Y. Shan^{33a}, R. Shang¹⁶⁵, J.T. Shank²², M. Shapiro¹⁵, P.B. Shatalov⁹⁷, K. Shaw^{164a,164b}, S.M. Shaw⁸⁴, A. Shcherbakova^{146a,146b}, C.Y. Shehu¹⁴⁹, P. Sherwood⁷⁸, L. Shi^{151,ag}, S. Shimizu⁶⁷, C.O. Shimmin¹⁶³, M. Shimojima¹⁰², M. Shiyakova⁶⁵, A. Shmeleva⁹⁶, D. Shoaleh Saadi⁹⁵, M.J. Shochet³¹, S. Shojaii^{91a,91b}, S. Shrestha¹¹¹, E. Shulga⁹⁸, M.A. Shupe⁷, S. Shushkevich⁴², P. Sicho¹²⁷, P.E. Sidebo¹⁴⁷, O. Sidiropoulou¹⁷⁴, D. Sidorov¹¹⁴, A. Sidoti^{20a,20b}, F. Siegert⁴⁴, Dj. Sijacki¹³, J. Silva^{126a,126d}, Y. Silver¹⁵³, S.B. Silverstein^{146a}, V. Simak¹²⁸, O. Simard⁵,

Lj. Simic¹³, S. Simion¹¹⁷, E. Simioni⁸³, B. Simmons⁷⁸, D. Simon³⁴, P. Sinervo¹⁵⁸, N.B. Sinev¹¹⁶,
 M. Sioli^{20a,20b}, G. Siragusa¹⁷⁴, A.N. Sisakyan^{65,*}, S.Yu. Sivoklov⁹⁹, J. Sjölin^{146a,146b}, T.B. Sjursen¹⁴,
 M.B. Skinner⁷², H.P. Skottowe⁵⁷, P. Skubic¹¹³, M. Slater¹⁸, T. Slavicek¹²⁸, M. Slawinska¹⁰⁷,
 K. Sliwa¹⁶¹, V. Smakhtin¹⁷², B.H. Smart⁴⁶, L. Smestad¹⁴, S.Yu. Smirnov⁹⁸, Y. Smirnov⁹⁸,
 L.N. Smirnova^{99,ah}, O. Smirnova⁸¹, M.N.K. Smith³⁵, R.W. Smith³⁵, M. Smizanska⁷², K. Smolek¹²⁸,
 A.A. Snesarev⁹⁶, G. Snidero⁷⁶, S. Snyder²⁵, R. Sobie^{169,k}, F. Socher⁴⁴, A. Soffer¹⁵³, D.A. Soh^{151,ag},
 G. Sokhranyi⁷⁵, C.A. Solans³⁰, M. Solar¹²⁸, J. Solc¹²⁸, E.Yu. Soldatov⁹⁸, U. Soldevila¹⁶⁷,
 A.A. Solodkov¹³⁰, A. Soloshenko⁶⁵, O.V. Solovyanov¹³⁰, V. Solovyev¹²³, P. Sommer⁴⁸, H.Y. Song^{33b,y},
 N. Soni¹, A. Sood¹⁵, A. Sopczak¹²⁸, B. Sopko¹²⁸, V. Sopko¹²⁸, V. Sorin¹², D. Sosa^{58b}, M. Sosebee⁸,
 C.L. Sotiropoulou^{124a,124b}, R. Soualah^{164a,164c}, A.M. Soukharev^{109,c}, D. South⁴², B.C. Sowden⁷⁷,
 S. Spagnolo^{73a,73b}, M. Spalla^{124a,124b}, M. Spangenberg¹⁷⁰, F. Spanò⁷⁷, W.R. Spearman⁵⁷, D. Sperlich¹⁶,
 F. Spettel¹⁰¹, R. Spighi^{20a}, G. Spigo³⁰, L.A. Spiller⁸⁸, M. Spousta¹²⁹, R.D. St. Denis^{53,*}, A. Stabile^{91a},
 S. Staerz⁴⁴, J. Stahman¹²², R. Stamen^{58a}, S. Stamm¹⁶, E. Stanecka³⁹, C. Stanescu^{134a},
 M. Stanescu-Bellu⁴², M.M. Stanitzki⁴², S. Stapnes¹¹⁹, E.A. Starchenko¹³⁰, J. Stark⁵⁵, P. Staroba¹²⁷,
 P. Starovoitov^{58a}, R. Staszewski³⁹, P. Steinberg²⁵, B. Stelzer¹⁴², H.J. Stelzer³⁰, O. Stelzer-Chilton^{159a},
 H. Stenzel⁵², G.A. Stewart⁵³, J.A. Stillings²¹, M.C. Stockton⁸⁷, M. Stoebe⁸⁷, G. Stoica^{26b}, P. Stolte⁵⁴,
 S. Stonjek¹⁰¹, A.R. Stradling⁸, A. Straessner⁴⁴, M.E. Stramaglia¹⁷, J. Strandberg¹⁴⁷,
 S. Strandberg^{146a,146b}, A. Strandlie¹¹⁹, E. Strauss¹⁴³, M. Strauss¹¹³, P. Strizenec^{144b}, R. Ströhmer¹⁷⁴,
 D.M. Strom¹¹⁶, R. Stroynowski⁴⁰, A. Strubig¹⁰⁶, S.A. Stucci¹⁷, B. Stugu¹⁴, N.A. Styles⁴², D. Su¹⁴³,
 J. Su¹²⁵, R. Subramaniam⁷⁹, A. Succurro¹², Y. Sugaya¹¹⁸, M. Suk¹²⁸, V.V. Sulin⁹⁶, S. Sultansoy^{4c},
 T. Sumida⁶⁸, S. Sun⁵⁷, X. Sun^{33a}, J.E. Sundermann⁴⁸, K. Suruliz¹⁴⁹, G. Susinno^{37a,37b}, M.R. Sutton¹⁴⁹,
 S. Suzuki⁶⁶, M. Svatos¹²⁷, M. Swiatlowski¹⁴³, I. Sykora^{144a}, T. Sykora¹²⁹, D. Ta⁴⁸, C. Taccini^{134a,134b},
 K. Tackmann⁴², J. Taenzer¹⁵⁸, A. Taffard¹⁶³, R. Tafirout^{159a}, N. Taiblum¹⁵³, H. Takai²⁵, R. Takashima⁶⁹,
 H. Takeda⁶⁷, T. Takeshita¹⁴⁰, Y. Takubo⁶⁶, M. Talby⁸⁵, A.A. Talyshev^{109,c}, J.Y.C. Tam¹⁷⁴, K.G. Tan⁸⁸,
 J. Tanaka¹⁵⁵, R. Tanaka¹¹⁷, S. Tanaka⁶⁶, B.B. Tannenwald¹¹¹, N. Tannoury²¹, S. Tapia Araya^{32b},
 S. Tapprogge⁸³, S. Tarem¹⁵², F. Tarrade²⁹, G.F. Tartarelli^{91a}, P. Tas¹²⁹, M. Tasevsky¹²⁷, T. Tashiro⁶⁸,
 E. Tassi^{37a,37b}, A. Tavares Delgado^{126a,126b}, Y. Tayalati^{135d}, F.E. Taylor⁹⁴, G.N. Taylor⁸⁸, P.T.E. Taylor⁸⁸,
 W. Taylor^{159b}, F.A. Teischinger³⁰, M. Teixeira Dias Castanheira⁷⁶, P. Teixeira-Dias⁷⁷, K.K. Temming⁴⁸,
 D. Temple¹⁴², H. Ten Kate³⁰, P.K. Teng¹⁵¹, J.J. Teoh¹¹⁸, F. Tepel¹⁷⁵, S. Terada⁶⁶, K. Terashi¹⁵⁵,
 J. Terron⁸², S. Terzo¹⁰¹, M. Testa⁴⁷, R.J. Teuscher^{158,k}, T. Theveneaux-Pelzer³⁴, J.P. Thomas¹⁸,
 J. Thomas-Wilsker⁷⁷, E.N. Thompson³⁵, P.D. Thompson¹⁸, R.J. Thompson⁸⁴, A.S. Thompson⁵³,
 L.A. Thomsen¹⁷⁶, E. Thomson¹²², M. Thomson²⁸, R.P. Thun^{89,*}, M.J. Tibbetts¹⁵, R.E. Ticse Torres⁸⁵,
 V.O. Tikhomirov^{96,ai}, Yu.A. Tikhonov^{109,c}, S. Timoshenko⁹⁸, E. Tiouchichine⁸⁵, P. Tipton¹⁷⁶,
 S. Tisserant⁸⁵, K. Todome¹⁵⁷, T. Todorov^{5,*}, S. Todorova-Nova¹²⁹, J. Tojo⁷⁰, S. Tokár^{144a},
 K. Tokushuku⁶⁶, K. Tollefson⁹⁰, E. Tolley⁵⁷, L. Tomlinson⁸⁴, M. Tomoto¹⁰³, L. Tompkins^{143,aj},
 K. Toms¹⁰⁵, E. Torrence¹¹⁶, H. Torres¹⁴², E. Torró Pastor¹³⁸, J. Toth^{85,ak}, F. Touchard⁸⁵, D.R. Tovey¹³⁹,
 T. Trefzger¹⁷⁴, L. Tremblet³⁰, A. Tricoli³⁰, I.M. Trigger^{159a}, S. Trincaz-Duvoid⁸⁰, M.F. Tripiana¹²,
 W. Trischuk¹⁵⁸, B. Trocme⁵⁵, C. Troncon^{91a}, M. Trotter-McDonald¹⁵, M. Trovatelli¹⁶⁹,
 L. Truong^{164a,164c}, M. Trzebinski³⁹, A. Trzupek³⁹, C. Tsarouchas³⁰, J.C-L. Tseng¹²⁰, P.V. Tsiareshka⁹²,
 D. Tsiou¹⁵⁴, G. Tsipolitis¹⁰, N. Tsirintanis⁹, S. Tsiskaridze¹², V. Tsiskaridze⁴⁸, E.G. Tskhadadze^{51a},
 I.I. Tsukerman⁹⁷, V. Tsulaia¹⁵, S. Tsuno⁶⁶, D. Tsybychev¹⁴⁸, A. Tudorache^{26b}, V. Tudorache^{26b},
 A.N. Tuna⁵⁷, S.A. Tupputi^{20a,20b}, S. Turchikhin^{99,ah}, D. Turecek¹²⁸, R. Turra^{91a,91b}, A.J. Turvey⁴⁰,
 P.M. Tuts³⁵, A. Tykhonov⁴⁹, M. Tylmad^{146a,146b}, M. Tyndel¹³¹, I. Ueda¹⁵⁵, R. Ueno²⁹,
 M. Ughetto^{146a,146b}, M. Uglan¹⁴, F. Ukegawa¹⁶⁰, G. Unal³⁰, A. Undrus²⁵, G. Unel¹⁶³, F.C. Ungaro⁴⁸,
 Y. Unno⁶⁶, C. Unverdorben¹⁰⁰, J. Urban^{144b}, P. Urquijo⁸⁸, P. Urrejola⁸³, G. Usai⁸, A. Usanova⁶²,
 L. Vacavant⁸⁵, V. Vacek¹²⁸, B. Vachon⁸⁷, C. Valderanis⁸³, N. Valencic¹⁰⁷, S. Valentini^{20a,20b},
 A. Valero¹⁶⁷, L. Valery¹², S. Valkar¹²⁹, S. Vallecorsa⁴⁹, J.A. Valls Ferrer¹⁶⁷, W. Van Den Wollenberg¹⁰⁷,

P.C. Van Der Deijl¹⁰⁷, R. van der Geer¹⁰⁷, H. van der Graaf¹⁰⁷, N. van Eldik¹⁵², P. van Gemmeren⁶, J. Van Nieuwkoop¹⁴², I. van Vulpen¹⁰⁷, M.C. van Woerden³⁰, M. Vanadia^{132a,132b}, W. Vandelli³⁰, R. Vanguri¹²², A. Vaniachine⁶, F. Vannucci⁸⁰, G. Vardanyan¹⁷⁷, R. Vari^{132a}, E.W. Varnes⁷, T. Varol⁴⁰, D. Varouchas⁸⁰, A. Vartapetian⁸, K.E. Varvell¹⁵⁰, F. Vazeille³⁴, T. Vazquez Schroeder⁸⁷, J. Veatch⁷, L.M. Veloce¹⁵⁸, F. Veloso^{126a,126c}, T. Velz²¹, S. Veneziano^{132a}, A. Ventura^{73a,73b}, D. Ventura⁸⁶, M. Venturi¹⁶⁹, N. Venturi¹⁵⁸, A. Venturini²³, V. Vercesi^{121a}, M. Verducci^{132a,132b}, W. Verkerke¹⁰⁷, J.C. Vermeulen¹⁰⁷, A. Vest⁴⁴, M.C. Vetterli^{142,d}, O. Viazlo⁸¹, I. Vichou¹⁶⁵, T. Vickey¹³⁹, O.E. Vickey Boeriu¹³⁹, G.H.A. Viehhauser¹²⁰, S. Viel¹⁵, R. Vigne⁶², M. Villa^{20a,20b}, M. Villaplana Perez^{91a,91b}, E. Vilucchi⁴⁷, M.G. Vincter²⁹, V.B. Vinogradov⁶⁵, I. Vivarelli¹⁴⁹, F. Vives Vaque³, S. Vlachos¹⁰, D. Vladoiu¹⁰⁰, M. Vlasak¹²⁸, M. Vogel^{32a}, P. Vokac¹²⁸, G. Volpi^{124a,124b}, M. Volpi⁸⁸, H. von der Schmitt¹⁰¹, H. von Radziewski⁴⁸, E. von Toerne²¹, V. Vorobel¹²⁹, K. Vorobev⁹⁸, M. Vos¹⁶⁷, R. Voss³⁰, J.H. Vossebeld⁷⁴, N. Vranjes¹³, M. Vranjes Milosavljevic¹³, V. Vrba¹²⁷, M. Vreeswijk¹⁰⁷, R. Vuillermet³⁰, I. Vukotic³¹, Z. Vykydal¹²⁸, P. Wagner²¹, W. Wagner¹⁷⁵, H. Wahlberg⁷¹, S. WAhrmund⁴⁴, J. Wakabayashi¹⁰³, J. Walder⁷², R. Walker¹⁰⁰, W. Walkowiak¹⁴¹, C. Wang¹⁵¹, F. Wang¹⁷³, H. Wang¹⁵, H. Wang⁴⁰, J. Wang⁴², J. Wang¹⁵⁰, K. Wang⁸⁷, R. Wang⁶, S.M. Wang¹⁵¹, T. Wang²¹, T. Wang³⁵, X. Wang¹⁷⁶, C. Wanotayaroj¹¹⁶, A. Warburton⁸⁷, C.P. Ward²⁸, D.R. Wardrope⁷⁸, A. Washbrook⁴⁶, C. Wasicki⁴², P.M. Watkins¹⁸, A.T. Watson¹⁸, I.J. Watson¹⁵⁰, M.F. Watson¹⁸, G. Watts¹³⁸, S. Watts⁸⁴, B.M. Waugh⁷⁸, S. Webb⁸⁴, M.S. Weber¹⁷, S.W. Weber¹⁷⁴, J.S. Webster³¹, A.R. Weidberg¹²⁰, B. Weinert⁶¹, J. Weingarten⁵⁴, C. Weiser⁴⁸, H. Weits¹⁰⁷, P.S. Wells³⁰, T. Wenaus²⁵, T. Wengler³⁰, S. Wenig³⁰, N. Wermes²¹, M. Werner⁴⁸, P. Werner³⁰, M. Wessels^{58a}, J. Wetter¹⁶¹, K. Whalen¹¹⁶, A.M. Wharton⁷², A. White⁸, M.J. White¹, R. White^{32b}, S. White^{124a,124b}, D. Whiteson¹⁶³, F.J. Wickens¹³¹, W. Wiedenmann¹⁷³, M. Wielers¹³¹, P. Wienemann²¹, C. Wiglesworth³⁶, L.A.M. Wiik-Fuchs²¹, A. Wildauer¹⁰¹, H.G. Wilkens³⁰, H.H. Williams¹²², S. Williams¹⁰⁷, C. Willis⁹⁰, S. Willocq⁸⁶, A. Wilson⁸⁹, J.A. Wilson¹⁸, I. Wingerter-Seez⁵, F. Winklmeier¹¹⁶, B.T. Winter²¹, M. Wittgen¹⁴³, J. Wittkowski¹⁰⁰, S.J. Wollstadt⁸³, M.W. Wolter³⁹, H. Wolters^{126a,126c}, B.K. Wosiek³⁹, J. Wotschack³⁰, M.J. Woudstra⁸⁴, K.W. Wozniak³⁹, M. Wu⁵⁵, M. Wu³¹, S.L. Wu¹⁷³, X. Wu⁴⁹, Y. Wu⁸⁹, T.R. Wyatt⁸⁴, B.M. Wynne⁴⁶, S. Xella³⁶, D. Xu^{33a}, L. Xu²⁵, B. Yabsley¹⁵⁰, S. Yacoob^{145a}, R. Yakabe⁶⁷, M. Yamada⁶⁶, D. Yamaguchi¹⁵⁷, Y. Yamaguchi¹¹⁸, A. Yamamoto⁶⁶, S. Yamamoto¹⁵⁵, T. Yamanaka¹⁵⁵, K. Yamauchi¹⁰³, Y. Yamazaki⁶⁷, Z. Yan²², H. Yang^{33e}, H. Yang¹⁷³, Y. Yang¹⁵¹, W-M. Yao¹⁵, Y.C. Yap⁸⁰, Y. Yasu⁶⁶, E. Yatsenko⁵, K.H. Yau Wong²¹, J. Ye⁴⁰, S. Ye²⁵, I. Yeletskikh⁶⁵, A.L. Yen⁵⁷, E. Yildirim⁴², K. Yorita¹⁷¹, R. Yoshida⁶, K. Yoshihara¹²², C. Young¹⁴³, C.J.S. Young³⁰, S. Youssef²², D.R. Yu¹⁵, J. Yu⁸, J.M. Yu⁸⁹, J. Yu¹¹⁴, L. Yuan⁶⁷, S.P.Y. Yuen²¹, A. Yurkewicz¹⁰⁸, I. Yusuff^{28,al}, B. Zabinski³⁹, R. Zaidan⁶³, A.M. Zaitsev^{130,ac}, J. Zalieckas¹⁴, A. Zaman¹⁴⁸, S. Zambito⁵⁷, L. Zanello^{132a,132b}, D. Zanzi⁸⁸, C. Zeitnitz¹⁷⁵, M. Zeman¹²⁸, A. Zemla^{38a}, Q. Zeng¹⁴³, K. Zengel²³, O. Zenin¹³⁰, T. Ženiš^{144a}, D. Zerwas¹¹⁷, D. Zhang⁸⁹, F. Zhang¹⁷³, G. Zhang^{33b}, H. Zhang^{33c}, J. Zhang⁶, L. Zhang⁴⁸, R. Zhang^{33b,i}, X. Zhang^{33d}, Z. Zhang¹¹⁷, X. Zhao⁴⁰, Y. Zhao^{33d,117}, Z. Zhao^{33b}, A. Zhemchugov⁶⁵, J. Zhong¹²⁰, B. Zhou⁸⁹, C. Zhou⁴⁵, L. Zhou³⁵, L. Zhou⁴⁰, M. Zhou¹⁴⁸, N. Zhou^{33f}, C.G. Zhu^{33d}, H. Zhu^{33a}, J. Zhu⁸⁹, Y. Zhu^{33b}, X. Zhuang^{33a}, K. Zhukov⁹⁶, A. Zibell¹⁷⁴, D. Zieminska⁶¹, N.I. Zimine⁶⁵, C. Zimmermann⁸³, S. Zimmermann⁴⁸, Z. Zinonos⁵⁴, M. Zinser⁸³, M. Ziolkowski¹⁴¹, L. Živković¹³, G. Zoernig¹⁷³, A. Zoccoli^{20a,20b}, M. zur Nedden¹⁶, G. Zurzolo^{104a,104b}, L. Zwalinski³⁰.

¹ Department of Physics, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

² Physics Department, SUNY Albany, Albany NY, United States of America

³ Department of Physics, University of Alberta, Edmonton AB, Canada

⁴ (a) Department of Physics, Ankara University, Ankara; (b) Istanbul Aydin University, Istanbul; (c)

Division of Physics, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, Ankara, Turkey

- ⁵ LAPP, CNRS/IN2P3 and Université Savoie Mont Blanc, Annecy-le-Vieux, France
- ⁶ High Energy Physics Division, Argonne National Laboratory, Argonne IL, United States of America
- ⁷ Department of Physics, University of Arizona, Tucson AZ, United States of America
- ⁸ Department of Physics, The University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington TX, United States of America
- ⁹ Physics Department, University of Athens, Athens, Greece
- ¹⁰ Physics Department, National Technical University of Athens, Zografou, Greece
- ¹¹ Institute of Physics, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan
- ¹² Institut de Física d'Altes Energies and Departament de Física de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
- ¹³ Institute of Physics, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
- ¹⁴ Department for Physics and Technology, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway
- ¹⁵ Physics Division, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory and University of California, Berkeley CA, United States of America
- ¹⁶ Department of Physics, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany
- ¹⁷ Albert Einstein Center for Fundamental Physics and Laboratory for High Energy Physics, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland
- ¹⁸ School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, United Kingdom
- ¹⁹ ^(a) Department of Physics, Bogazici University, Istanbul; ^(b) Department of Physics Engineering, Gaziantep University, Gaziantep; ^(c) Department of Physics, Dogus University, Istanbul, Turkey
- ²⁰ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Bologna; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia, Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italy
- ²¹ Physikalisches Institut, University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany
- ²² Department of Physics, Boston University, Boston MA, United States of America
- ²³ Department of Physics, Brandeis University, Waltham MA, United States of America
- ²⁴ ^(a) Universidade Federal do Rio De Janeiro COPPE/EE/IF, Rio de Janeiro; ^(b) Electrical Circuits Department, Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF), Juiz de Fora; ^(c) Federal University of Sao Joao del Rei (UFSJ), Sao Joao del Rei; ^(d) Instituto de Física, Universidade de Sao Paulo, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- ²⁵ Physics Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton NY, United States of America
- ²⁶ ^(a) Transilvania University of Brasov, Brasov, Romania; ^(b) National Institute of Physics and Nuclear Engineering, Bucharest; ^(c) National Institute for Research and Development of Isotopic and Molecular Technologies, Physics Department, Cluj Napoca; ^(d) University Politehnica Bucharest, Bucharest; ^(e) West University in Timisoara, Timisoara, Romania
- ²⁷ Departamento de Física, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- ²⁸ Cavendish Laboratory, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom
- ²⁹ Department of Physics, Carleton University, Ottawa ON, Canada
- ³⁰ CERN, Geneva, Switzerland
- ³¹ Enrico Fermi Institute, University of Chicago, Chicago IL, United States of America
- ³² ^(a) Departamento de Física, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago; ^(b) Departamento de Física, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, Valparaíso, Chile
- ³³ ^(a) Institute of High Energy Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing; ^(b) Department of Modern Physics, University of Science and Technology of China, Anhui; ^(c) Department of Physics, Nanjing University, Jiangsu; ^(d) School of Physics, Shandong University, Shandong; ^(e) Department of Physics and Astronomy, Shanghai Key Laboratory for Particle Physics and Cosmology, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai; ^(f) Physics Department, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, China
- ³⁴ Laboratoire de Physique Corpusculaire, Clermont Université and Université Blaise Pascal and CNRS/IN2P3, Clermont-Ferrand, France
- ³⁵ Nevis Laboratory, Columbia University, Irvington NY, United States of America

- 36 Niels Bohr Institute, University of Copenhagen, Kobenhavn, Denmark
- 37 (a) INFN Gruppo Collegato di Cosenza, Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università della Calabria, Rende, Italy
- 38 (a) AGH University of Science and Technology, Faculty of Physics and Applied Computer Science, Krakow; (b) Marian Smoluchowski Institute of Physics, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland
- 39 Institute of Nuclear Physics Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow, Poland
- 40 Physics Department, Southern Methodist University, Dallas TX, United States of America
- 41 Physics Department, University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson TX, United States of America
- 42 DESY, Hamburg and Zeuthen, Germany
- 43 Institut für Experimentelle Physik IV, Technische Universität Dortmund, Dortmund, Germany
- 44 Institut für Kern- und Teilchenphysik, Technische Universität Dresden, Dresden, Germany
- 45 Department of Physics, Duke University, Durham NC, United States of America
- 46 SUPA - School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom
- 47 INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Frascati, Frascati, Italy
- 48 Fakultät für Mathematik und Physik, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg, Germany
- 49 Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland
- 50 (a) INFN Sezione di Genova; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Genova, Genova, Italy
- 51 (a) E. Andronikashvili Institute of Physics, Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi; (b) High Energy Physics Institute, Tbilisi State University, Tbilisi, Georgia
- 52 II Physikalisches Institut, Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, Giessen, Germany
- 53 SUPA - School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom
- 54 II Physikalisches Institut, Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, Germany
- 55 Laboratoire de Physique Subatomique et de Cosmologie, Université Grenoble-Alpes, CNRS/IN2P3, Grenoble, France
- 56 Department of Physics, Hampton University, Hampton VA, United States of America
- 57 Laboratory for Particle Physics and Cosmology, Harvard University, Cambridge MA, United States of America
- 58 (a) Kirchhoff-Institut für Physik, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg; (b) Physikalisches Institut, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg; (c) ZITI Institut für technische Informatik, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Mannheim, Germany
- 59 Faculty of Applied Information Science, Hiroshima Institute of Technology, Hiroshima, Japan
- 60 (a) Department of Physics, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong; (b) Department of Physics, The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong; (c) Department of Physics, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong, China
- 61 Department of Physics, Indiana University, Bloomington IN, United States of America
- 62 Institut für Astro- und Teilchenphysik, Leopold-Franzens-Universität, Innsbruck, Austria
- 63 University of Iowa, Iowa City IA, United States of America
- 64 Department of Physics and Astronomy, Iowa State University, Ames IA, United States of America
- 65 Joint Institute for Nuclear Research, JINR Dubna, Dubna, Russia
- 66 KEK, High Energy Accelerator Research Organization, Tsukuba, Japan
- 67 Graduate School of Science, Kobe University, Kobe, Japan
- 68 Faculty of Science, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan
- 69 Kyoto University of Education, Kyoto, Japan
- 70 Department of Physics, Kyushu University, Fukuoka, Japan
- 71 Instituto de Física La Plata, Universidad Nacional de La Plata and CONICET, La Plata, Argentina
- 72 Physics Department, Lancaster University, Lancaster, United Kingdom
- 73 (a) INFN Sezione di Lecce; (b) Dipartimento di Matematica e Fisica, Università del Salento, Lecce,

Italy

- ⁷⁴ Oliver Lodge Laboratory, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, United Kingdom
- ⁷⁵ Department of Physics, Jožef Stefan Institute and University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia
- ⁷⁶ School of Physics and Astronomy, Queen Mary University of London, London, United Kingdom
- ⁷⁷ Department of Physics, Royal Holloway University of London, Surrey, United Kingdom
- ⁷⁸ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University College London, London, United Kingdom
- ⁷⁹ Louisiana Tech University, Ruston LA, United States of America
- ⁸⁰ Laboratoire de Physique Nucléaire et de Hautes Energies, UPMC and Université Paris-Diderot and CNRS/IN2P3, Paris, France
- ⁸¹ Fysiska institutionen, Lunds universitet, Lund, Sweden
- ⁸² Departamento de Fisica Teorica C-15, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Madrid, Spain
- ⁸³ Institut für Physik, Universität Mainz, Mainz, Germany
- ⁸⁴ School of Physics and Astronomy, University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom
- ⁸⁵ CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France
- ⁸⁶ Department of Physics, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA, United States of America
- ⁸⁷ Department of Physics, McGill University, Montreal QC, Canada
- ⁸⁸ School of Physics, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
- ⁸⁹ Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, United States of America
- ⁹⁰ Department of Physics and Astronomy, Michigan State University, East Lansing MI, United States of America
- ⁹¹ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Milano; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Milano, Milano, Italy
- ⁹² B.I. Stepanov Institute of Physics, National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Minsk, Republic of Belarus
- ⁹³ National Scientific and Educational Centre for Particle and High Energy Physics, Minsk, Republic of Belarus
- ⁹⁴ Department of Physics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA, United States of America
- ⁹⁵ Group of Particle Physics, University of Montreal, Montreal QC, Canada
- ⁹⁶ P.N. Lebedev Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
- ⁹⁷ Institute for Theoretical and Experimental Physics (ITEP), Moscow, Russia
- ⁹⁸ National Research Nuclear University MEPhI, Moscow, Russia
- ⁹⁹ D.V. Skobeltsyn Institute of Nuclear Physics, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
- ¹⁰⁰ Fakultät für Physik, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, München, Germany
- ¹⁰¹ Max-Planck-Institut für Physik (Werner-Heisenberg-Institut), München, Germany
- ¹⁰² Nagasaki Institute of Applied Science, Nagasaki, Japan
- ¹⁰³ Graduate School of Science and Kobayashi-Maskawa Institute, Nagoya University, Nagoya, Japan
- ¹⁰⁴ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Napoli; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Napoli, Napoli, Italy
- ¹⁰⁵ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque NM, United States of America
- ¹⁰⁶ Institute for Mathematics, Astrophysics and Particle Physics, Radboud University Nijmegen/Nikhef, Nijmegen, Netherlands
- ¹⁰⁷ Nikhef National Institute for Subatomic Physics and University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- ¹⁰⁸ Department of Physics, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb IL, United States of America
- ¹⁰⁹ Budker Institute of Nuclear Physics, SB RAS, Novosibirsk, Russia
- ¹¹⁰ Department of Physics, New York University, New York NY, United States of America

- ¹¹¹ Ohio State University, Columbus OH, United States of America
- ¹¹² Faculty of Science, Okayama University, Okayama, Japan
- ¹¹³ Homer L. Dodge Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Oklahoma, Norman OK, United States of America
- ¹¹⁴ Department of Physics, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater OK, United States of America
- ¹¹⁵ Palacký University, RCPTM, Olomouc, Czech Republic
- ¹¹⁶ Center for High Energy Physics, University of Oregon, Eugene OR, United States of America
- ¹¹⁷ LAL, Université Paris-Sud and CNRS/IN2P3, Orsay, France
- ¹¹⁸ Graduate School of Science, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan
- ¹¹⁹ Department of Physics, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway
- ¹²⁰ Department of Physics, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom
- ¹²¹ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Pavia; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Pavia, Pavia, Italy
- ¹²² Department of Physics, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia PA, United States of America
- ¹²³ National Research Centre "Kurchatov Institute" B.P.Konstantinov Petersburg Nuclear Physics Institute, St. Petersburg, Russia
- ¹²⁴ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Pisa; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica E. Fermi, Università di Pisa, Pisa, Italy
- ¹²⁵ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh PA, United States of America
- ¹²⁶ ^(a) Laboratório de Instrumentação e Física Experimental de Partículas - LIP, Lisboa; ^(b) Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa; ^(c) Department of Physics, University of Coimbra, Coimbra; ^(d) Centro de Física Nuclear da Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa; ^(e) Departamento de Física, Universidade do Minho, Braga; ^(f) Departamento de Física Teórica y del Cosmos and CAFPE, Universidad de Granada, Granada (Spain); ^(g) Dep Física and CEFITEC of Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Caparica, Portugal
- ¹²⁷ Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Praha, Czech Republic
- ¹²⁸ Czech Technical University in Prague, Praha, Czech Republic
- ¹²⁹ Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University in Prague, Praha, Czech Republic
- ¹³⁰ State Research Center Institute for High Energy Physics, Protvino, Russia
- ¹³¹ Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom
- ¹³² ^(a) INFN Sezione di Roma; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Sapienza Università di Roma, Roma, Italy
- ¹³³ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Roma Tor Vergata; ^(b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Roma Tor Vergata, Roma, Italy
- ¹³⁴ ^(a) INFN Sezione di Roma Tre; ^(b) Dipartimento di Matematica e Fisica, Università Roma Tre, Roma, Italy
- ¹³⁵ ^(a) Faculté des Sciences Ain Chock, Réseau Universitaire de Physique des Hautes Energies - Université Hassan II, Casablanca; ^(b) Centre National de l'Énergie des Sciences Techniques Nucleaires, Rabat; ^(c) Faculté des Sciences Semlalia, Université Cadi Ayyad, LPHEA-Marrakech; ^(d) Faculté des Sciences, Université Mohamed Premier and LPTPM, Oujda; ^(e) Faculté des sciences, Université Mohammed V, Rabat, Morocco
- ¹³⁶ DSM/IRFU (Institut de Recherches sur les Lois Fondamentales de l'Univers), CEA Saclay (Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique et aux Énergies Alternatives), Gif-sur-Yvette, France
- ¹³⁷ Santa Cruz Institute for Particle Physics, University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz CA, United States of America
- ¹³⁸ Department of Physics, University of Washington, Seattle WA, United States of America
- ¹³⁹ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom
- ¹⁴⁰ Department of Physics, Shinshu University, Nagano, Japan
- ¹⁴¹ Fachbereich Physik, Universität Siegen, Siegen, Germany

- ¹⁴² Department of Physics, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby BC, Canada
- ¹⁴³ SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory, Stanford CA, United States of America
- ¹⁴⁴ ^(a) Faculty of Mathematics, Physics & Informatics, Comenius University, Bratislava; ^(b) Department of Subnuclear Physics, Institute of Experimental Physics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Kosice, Slovak Republic
- ¹⁴⁵ ^(a) Department of Physics, University of Cape Town, Cape Town; ^(b) Department of Physics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg; ^(c) School of Physics, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
- ¹⁴⁶ ^(a) Department of Physics, Stockholm University; ^(b) The Oskar Klein Centre, Stockholm, Sweden
- ¹⁴⁷ Physics Department, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
- ¹⁴⁸ Departments of Physics & Astronomy and Chemistry, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook NY, United States of America
- ¹⁴⁹ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom
- ¹⁵⁰ School of Physics, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
- ¹⁵¹ Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
- ¹⁵² Department of Physics, Technion: Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel
- ¹⁵³ Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel
- ¹⁵⁴ Department of Physics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece
- ¹⁵⁵ International Center for Elementary Particle Physics and Department of Physics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
- ¹⁵⁶ Graduate School of Science and Technology, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan
- ¹⁵⁷ Department of Physics, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan
- ¹⁵⁸ Department of Physics, University of Toronto, Toronto ON, Canada
- ¹⁵⁹ ^(a) TRIUMF, Vancouver BC; ^(b) Department of Physics and Astronomy, York University, Toronto ON, Canada
- ¹⁶⁰ Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, and Center for Integrated Research in Fundamental Science and Engineering, University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan
- ¹⁶¹ Department of Physics and Astronomy, Tufts University, Medford MA, United States of America
- ¹⁶² Centro de Investigaciones, Universidad Antonio Narino, Bogota, Colombia
- ¹⁶³ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of California Irvine, Irvine CA, United States of America
- ¹⁶⁴ ^(a) INFN Gruppo Collegato di Udine, Sezione di Trieste, Udine; ^(b) ICTP, Trieste; ^(c) Dipartimento di Chimica, Fisica e Ambiente, Università di Udine, Udine, Italy
- ¹⁶⁵ Department of Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana IL, United States of America
- ¹⁶⁶ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden
- ¹⁶⁷ Instituto de Física Corpuscular (IFIC) and Departamento de Física Atómica, Molecular y Nuclear and Departamento de Ingeniería Electrónica and Instituto de Microelectrónica de Barcelona (IMB-CNM), University of Valencia and CSIC, Valencia, Spain
- ¹⁶⁸ Department of Physics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC, Canada
- ¹⁶⁹ Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Victoria, Victoria BC, Canada
- ¹⁷⁰ Department of Physics, University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom
- ¹⁷¹ Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan
- ¹⁷² Department of Particle Physics, The Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel
- ¹⁷³ Department of Physics, University of Wisconsin, Madison WI, United States of America
- ¹⁷⁴ Fakultät für Physik und Astronomie, Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg, Germany
- ¹⁷⁵ Fachbereich C Physik, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany

- ¹⁷⁶ Department of Physics, Yale University, New Haven CT, United States of America
- ¹⁷⁷ Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia
- ¹⁷⁸ Centre de Calcul de l'Institut National de Physique Nucléaire et de Physique des Particules (IN2P3), Villeurbanne, France
- ^a Also at Department of Physics, King's College London, London, United Kingdom
- ^b Also at Institute of Physics, Azerbaijan Academy of Sciences, Baku, Azerbaijan
- ^c Also at Novosibirsk State University, Novosibirsk, Russia
- ^d Also at TRIUMF, Vancouver BC, Canada
- ^e Also at Department of Physics, California State University, Fresno CA, United States of America
- ^f Also at Department of Physics, University of Fribourg, Fribourg, Switzerland
- ^g Also at Departamento de Física e Astronomia, Faculdade de Ciências, Universidade do Porto, Portugal
- ^h Also at Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia
- ⁱ Also at CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France
- ^j Also at Università di Napoli Parthenope, Napoli, Italy
- ^k Also at Institute of Particle Physics (IPP), Canada
- ^l Also at Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom
- ^m Also at Department of Physics, St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University, St. Petersburg, Russia
- ⁿ Also at Louisiana Tech University, Ruston LA, United States of America
- ^o Also at Institutio Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avancats, ICREA, Barcelona, Spain
- ^p Also at Department of Physics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, United States of America
- ^q Also at Graduate School of Science, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan
- ^r Also at Department of Physics, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan
- ^s Also at Department of Physics, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin TX, United States of America
- ^t Also at Institute of Theoretical Physics, Iliia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia
- ^u Also at CERN, Geneva, Switzerland
- ^v Also at Georgian Technical University (GTU), Tbilisi, Georgia
- ^w Also at Manhattan College, New York NY, United States of America
- ^x Also at Hellenic Open University, Patras, Greece
- ^y Also at Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
- ^z Also at LAL, Université Paris-Sud and CNRS/IN2P3, Orsay, France
- ^{aa} Also at Academia Sinica Grid Computing, Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
- ^{ab} Also at School of Physics, Shandong University, Shandong, China
- ^{ac} Also at Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology State University, Dolgoprudny, Russia
- ^{ad} Also at Section de Physique, Université de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland
- ^{ae} Also at International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA), Trieste, Italy
- ^{af} Also at Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC, United States of America
- ^{ag} Also at School of Physics and Engineering, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China
- ^{ah} Also at Faculty of Physics, M.V.Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia
- ^{ai} Also at National Research Nuclear University MEPhI, Moscow, Russia
- ^{aj} Also at Department of Physics, Stanford University, Stanford CA, United States of America
- ^{ak} Also at Institute for Particle and Nuclear Physics, Wigner Research Centre for Physics, Budapest, Hungary
- ^{al} Also at University of Malaya, Department of Physics, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- * Deceased