Charged-particle multiplicities in $pp$ interactions at $\sqrt{s} = 900$ GeV measured with the ATLAS detector at the LHC

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1. Introduction

Inclusive charged-particle distributions have been measured in $pp$ and $p\bar{p}$ collisions at a range of different centre-of-mass energies [1–13]. Many of these measurements have been used to constrain phenomenological models of soft-hadronic interactions and to predict properties at higher centre-of-mass energies. Most of the previous charged-particle multiplicity measurements were obtained by selecting data with a double-arm coincidence trigger, thus removing large fractions of diffractive events. The data were then further corrected to remove the remaining single-diffractive component. This selection is referred to as non-single-diffractive (NSD). In some cases, designated as inelastic non-diffractive, the residual double-diffractive component was also subtracted. The selection of NSD or inelastic non-diffractive charged-particle spectra involves model-dependent corrections for the diffractive components and for effects of the trigger selection on events with no charged particles within the acceptance of the detector. The measurement presented in this Letter implements a different strategy, which uses a single-arm trigger overlapping with the acceptance of the tracking volume. Results are presented as inclusive-inelastic distributions, with minimal model-dependence, by requiring one charged particle within the acceptance of the measurement.

This Letter reports on a measurement of primary charged particles with a momentum component transverse to the beam direction $p_T > 500$ MeV and in the pseudorapidity range $|\eta| < 2.5$. Primary charged particles are defined as charged particles with a mean lifetime $\tau > 0.3 \times 10^{-10}$ s directly produced in $pp$ interactions or from subsequent decays of particles with a shorter lifetime. The distributions of tracks reconstructed in the ATLAS inner detector were corrected to obtain the particle-level distributions:

$$\frac{1}{N_{ev}} \frac{dN_{ch}}{d\eta}, \frac{1}{N_{ev}} \frac{d^2N_{ch}}{d\eta dp_T}, \frac{1}{N_{ev}} \frac{dN_{ev}}{dn_{ch}}$$

and $\langle p_T \rangle$ vs. $n_{ch}$,

where $N_{ev}$ is the number of events with at least one charged particle inside the selected kinematic range, $N_{ch}$ is the total number of charged particles, $n_{ch}$ is the number of charged particles in an event and $\langle p_T \rangle$ is the average $p_T$ for a given number of charged particles.

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1 The ATLAS reference system is a Cartesian right-handed co-ordinate system, with the nominal collision point at the origin. The anti-clockwise beam direction defines the positive $z$-axis, while the positive $x$-axis is defined as pointing from the collision point to the centre of the LHC ring and the positive $y$-axis points upwards. The azimuthal angle $\phi$ is measured around the beam axis, and the polar angle $\theta$ is measured with respect to the $z$-axis. The pseudorapidity is defined as $\eta = -\ln \tan(\theta/2)$.

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Comparisons are made to previous measurements of charged-particle multiplicities in \( pp \) and \( p \bar{p} \) collisions at \( \sqrt{s} = 900 \text{ GeV} \) centre-of-mass energies [1,5] and to Monte Carlo (MC) models.

2. The ATLAS detector

The ATLAS detector [14] at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) [15] covers almost the whole solid angle around the collision point with layers of tracking detectors, calorimeters and muon chambers. It has been designed to study a wide range of physics topics at LHC energies. For the measurements presented in this Letter, the tracking devices and the trigger system were of particular importance.

The ATLAS inner detector has full coverage in \( \phi \) and covers the pseudorapidity range \( \eta < 2.5 \). It consists of a silicon pixel detector (Pixel), a silicon microstrip detector (SCT) and a transition radiation tracker (TRT). These detectors cover a sensitive radial distance from the interaction point of 50.5–150 mm, 299–560 mm and 563–1066 mm, respectively, and are immersed in a 2 T axial magnetic field. The inner-detector barrel (end-cap) parts consist of 3 \((2 \times 3)\) Pixel layers, 4 \((2 \times 9)\) double-layers of single-sided silicon microstrips with a 40 mrad stereo angle, and 73 \((2 \times 160)\) layers of TRT straws. These detectors have position resolutions of typically 10, 17 and 130 \( \mu \text{m} \) for the \( R-\phi \) co-ordinate and, in case of the Pixel and SCT, 115 and 580 \( \mu \text{m} \) for the second measured co-ordinate. A track from a particle traversing the barrel detector would typically have 11 silicon hits (3 pixel clusters and 8 strip clusters), and more than 30 straw hits.

The ATLAS detector has a three-level trigger system: Level 1 (L1), Level 2 (L2) and Event Filter (EF). For this measurement, the trigger relies on the L1 signals from the Beam Pickup Timing devices (BPTX) and the Minimum Bias Trigger Scintillators (MBTS). The BPTX are composed of beam pick-ups attached to the beam pipe \( \pm 175 \text{ m} \) from the centre of the ATLAS detector. The MBTS are mounted at each end of the detector in front of the liquid-argon end-cap calorimeter cryostats at \( z = \pm 3.56 \text{ m} \) and are segmented into eight sectors in azimuth and two rings in pseudorapidity \( (2.09 < |\eta| < 2.82 \text{ and } 2.82 < |\eta| < 3.84) \).

Data were collected for this analysis using the MBTS trigger, formed from BPTX and MBTS trigger signals. The MBTS trigger was configured to require one hit above threshold from either side of the detector. The efficiency of this trigger was studied with a separate prescaled L1 BPTX trigger, filtered to obtain inelastic interactions by inner detector requirements at L2 and EF.

3. Monte Carlo simulation

Low-\( p_T \) scattering processes may be described by lowest-order perturbative Quantum Chromodynamics (QCD) two-to-two parton scatterers, where the divergence of the cross section at \( p_T = 0 \) is regulated by phenomenological models. These models include multiple-parton scattering, partonic-matter distributions, scattering between the unresolved protons and colour reconnection [16]. The PYTHIA [17] MC event generator implements several of these models. The parameters of these models have been tuned to describe charged-hadron production and the underlying event in \( pp \) and \( p \bar{p} \) data at centre-of-mass energies between 200 GeV and 1.96 TeV.

Samples of ten million MC events were produced for single-diffractive, double-diffractive and non-diffractive processes using the PYTHIA 6.4.21 generator. A specific set of optimised parameters, the ATLAS MC09 PYTHIA tune [18], which employs the MRST LO* parton density functions [19] and the \( p_T \)-ordered parton shower, is the reference tune throughout this Letter. These parameters were derived by tuning to underlying event and minimum-bias data from Tevatron at 630 GeV and 1.8 TeV. The MC samples generated with this tune were used to determine detector acceptances and efficiencies and to correct the data.

The non-diffractive, single-diffractive and double-diffractive contributions in the generated samples were mixed according to the generator cross sections to fully describe the inelastic scattering. All the events were processed through the ATLAS detector simulation program [25], which is based on Geant4 [26]. They were then reconstructed and analysed by the same program chain used for the

4. Event selection

All data recorded during the stable LHC running periods between December 6 and 15, 2009, in which the inner detector was fully operational and the solenoid magnet was on, were used for this analysis. During this period the beams were colliding head-on in ATLAS. A total of 455,593 events were collected from colliding proton bunches in which the MBTS trigger recorded one or more counters above threshold on either side. In order to perform an inclusive-inelastic measurement, no further requirements beyond the MBTS trigger and inner detector information were applied in this event selection. The integrated luminosity for the final event sample, which is given here for reference only, was estimated using a sample of events with energy deposits in both sides of the forward and end-cap calorimeters. The MC-based efficiency and the PYTHIA default cross section of 52.5 \( \text{mb} \) were then used to determine the luminosity of the data sample to be approximately \( 9 \text{ \mu b}^{-1} \), while the maximum instantaneous luminosity was approximately \( 5 \times 10^{36} \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1} \). The probability of additional interactions in the same bunch crossing was estimated to be less than 0.1\%.

2 PHOJET 1.12 with PYTHIA 6.4.21.
During this data-taking period, more than 96% of the Pixel detector, 99% of the SCT and 98% of the TRT were operational. Tracks were reconstructed offline within the full acceptance range $|\eta| < 2.5$ of the inner detector [27,28]. Track candidates were reconstructed by requiring seven or more silicon hits in total in the Pixel and SCT, and then extrapolated to include measurements in the TRT. Typically, 88% of tracks inside the TRT acceptance ($|\eta| < 2$) include a TRT extension, which significantly improves the momentum resolution.

This Letter reports results for charged particles with $p_T > 500$ MeV, which are less prone than lower-$p_T$ particles to large inefficiencies and their associated systematic uncertainties resulting from interactions with material inside the tracking volume. To reduce the contribution from background events and non-primary tracks, as well as to minimise the systematic uncertainties, the following criteria were required:

- the presence of a primary vertex [29] reconstructed using at least three tracks, each with:
  - $p_T > 150$ MeV,
  - a transverse distance of closest approach with respect to the beam-spot position $|d_{0BS}^{BS}| < 4$ mm;
- at least one track with:
  - $p_T > 500$ MeV,
  - a minimum of one Pixel and six SCT hits,
  - transverse and longitudinal impact parameters calculated with respect to the event primary vertex $|d_0| < 1.5$ mm and $|z_0| \cdot \sin \theta < 1.5$ mm, respectively.

These latter tracks were used to produce the corrected distributions and will be referred to as selected tracks. The multiplicity of selected tracks within an event is denoted by $n_{Sel}$. In total 326,201 events were kept after this offline selection, which contained 1,863,622 selected tracks. The inner detector performance is illustrated in Fig. 1 using selected tracks and their MC simulation. The shapes from overlapping Pixel and SCT modules in the forward region and the inefficiency from a small number of disabled Pixel modules in the central region are well modelled by the simulation. The simulated impact-parameter distributions describe the data to better than 10%, including their tails as shown in the inserts of Fig. 1(c) and (d). The difference between data and MC observed in the central region of the $d_0$ distribution is due to small residual misalignments not simulated in the MC, which are found to be unimportant for this analysis.

Trigger and vertex-reconstruction efficiencies were parameterized as a function of the number of tracks passing all of the track selection requirements except for the constraints with respect to the primary vertex. Instead, the transverse impact parameter with respect to the beam spot was required to be less than 4 mm, which is the same requirement as that used in the primary vertex reconstruction preselection. The multiplicity of these tracks in an event is denoted by $n_{BS}^{BS}$.
5. Background contribution

There are two possible sources of background events that can contaminate the selected sample: cosmic rays and beam-induced background. A limit on the fraction of cosmic-ray events recorded by the L1 MBTS trigger during data taking was determined from cosmic-ray studies, the maximum number of proton bunches, and the central trigger processor clock width of 25 ns, and was found to be smaller than $10^{-6}$. Beam-induced background events can be produced by proton collisions with upstream collimators or with residual particles inside the beam pipe. The L1 MBTS trigger was used to select beam-induced background events from un-paired proton bunch-crossings. By applying the analysis selection criteria to these events, an upper limit of $10^{-4}$ was determined for the fraction of beam-induced background events within the selected sample. The requirement of a reconstructed primary vertex is particularly useful to suppress the beam-induced background.

Primary charged-particle multiplicities are measured from selected-track distributions after correcting for the fraction of secondary particles in the sample. The potential background from fake tracks is found to be less than 0.1% from simulation studies. Non-primary tracks are mostly due to hadronic interactions, photon conversions and decays of long-lived particles. Their contribution was estimated using the MC prediction of the shape of the tails of the $d_0$ distribution, after normalising to data for tracks within $2 \text{mm} < |d_0| < 10 \text{mm}$, i.e. outside the range used for selecting tracks. The simulation was found to reproduce the tails of the $d_0$ distribution of the data, as shown in Fig. 1(c), and the normalisation factor between data and MC was measured to be $1.00 \pm 0.02\text{(stat.)} \pm 0.05\text{(syst.)}$. The MC was then used to estimate the fraction of secondaries in the selected-track sample to be $(2.20 \pm 0.05\text{(stat.)} \pm 0.11\text{(syst.)})\%$. This fraction is independent of $n_{\text{Sel}}$, but shows a dependence on $p_T$ and a small dependence on $\eta$. While the correction for secondaries was applied in bins of $p_T$, the dependence on $\eta$ was incorporated into the systematic uncertainty.

6. Selection efficiency

The data were corrected to obtain inclusive spectra for charged primary particles satisfying the event-level requirement of at least one primary charged particle within $p_T > 500 \text{ MeV}$ and $|\eta| < 2.5$. These corrections include inefficiencies due to trigger selection, vertex and track reconstruction. They also account for effects due to the momentum scale and resolution, and for the residual background from secondary tracks.

**Trigger efficiency** The trigger efficiency was measured from an independent data sample selected using the control trigger introduced in Section 2. This control trigger required more than 6 Pixel clusters and 6 SCT hits at L2, and one or more reconstructed tracks with $p_T > 200 \text{ MeV}$ at the EF. The vertex requirement for selected tracks was removed for this study, to avoid correlations between the trigger and vertex-reconstruction efficiencies for L1 MBTS triggered events. The trigger efficiency was determined by taking the ratio of events from the control trigger in which the L1 MBTS also accepted the event, over the total number of events in the control sample. The result is shown in Fig. 2(a) as a function of $n_{\text{Sel}}$. The trigger efficiency is nearly 100% everywhere and the requirement of this trigger does not affect the $p_T$ and $\eta$ track distributions of the selected events.

**Vertex-reconstruction efficiency** The vertex-reconstruction efficiency was determined from the data, by taking the ratio of triggered events with a reconstructed vertex to the total number of triggered events. It is shown in Fig. 2(b) as a function of $n_{\text{Sel}}$. The efficiency amounts to approximately 67% for the lowest bin and rapidly rises to 100% with higher multiplicities. The dependence of the vertex-reconstruction efficiency on $\eta$ and $p_T$ of the selected tracks was studied. The $\eta$ dependence was found to be approximately flat for $n_{\text{Sel}} > 1$ and to decrease at larger $\eta$ for events with $n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}} = 1$. This dependence was corrected for. No dependence on $p_T$ was observed.

**Track-reconstruction efficiency** The track-reconstruction efficiency in each bin of the $p_T$–$\eta$ acceptance was determined from MC. The comparison of the MC and data distributions shown in Fig. 1 highlights their agreement. The track-reconstruction efficiency was defined as:

$$\epsilon_{\text{bin}}(p_T, \eta) = \frac{N_{\text{rec}}^{\text{matched}}(p_T, \eta)}{N_{\text{gen}}(p_T, \eta)},$$

where $p_T$ and $\eta$ are generated quantities, and $N_{\text{rec}}^{\text{matched}}(p_T, \eta)$ and $N_{\text{gen}}(p_T, \eta)$ are the number of reconstructed tracks in a given bin matched to a generated charged particle and the number of generated charged particles in that bin, respectively. The matching between a generated particle and a reconstructed track was done using a cone-matching algorithm in the $\eta$–$\phi$ plane, associating the particle to the track with the smallest $\Delta R = \sqrt{(\Delta \phi)^2 + (\Delta \eta)^2}$ within a cone of radius 0.05. The resulting reconstruction efficiency as a function of $p_T$ integrated over $\eta$ is shown in Fig. 2(c). The drop to $\approx 70\%$ for $p_T < 600 \text{ MeV}$ is an artefact of the $p_T$ cut at the pattern-recognition level and is discussed in Section 8. The reduced track-reconstruction efficiency in the region $|\eta| > 1$ (Fig. 2(d)) is mainly due to the presence of more material in this region. These inefficiencies include a 5% loss due to the track selection used in this analysis, approximately half of which is due to the silicon-hit requirements and half to the impact-parameter requirements.

7. Correction procedure

The effect of events lost due to the trigger and vertex requirements can be corrected for using an event-by-event weight:

$$w_{\text{ev}}(n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}}) = \frac{1}{\epsilon_{\text{trig}}(n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}}) \cdot \epsilon_{\text{vtx}}(n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}})},$$

where $\epsilon_{\text{trig}}(n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}})$ and $\epsilon_{\text{vtx}}(n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}})$ are the trigger and vertex reconstruction efficiencies discussed in Section 6. The vertex-reconstruction efficiency for events with $n_{\text{Sel}}^{\text{BS}} = 1$ includes an $\eta$-dependent correction which was derived from the data.
8. Systematic uncertainties

Numerous detailed studies have been performed to understand possible sources of systematic uncertainties. The main contributions are discussed below.
VerteX reconstruction The run-to-run variation of the vertex-reconstruction efficiency was found to be within the statistical uncertainty. The contribution of beam-related backgrounds to the sample selected without a vertex requirement was estimated by using non-colliding events.

Track reconstruction and selection Since the track-reconstruction efficiency is determined from MC, the main systematic uncertainty results from the level of disagreement between data and MC.

Momentum scale and resolution To obtain corrected distributions of charged particles, the scale and resolution uncertainties in the reconstructed \( p_T \) and \( \eta \) of the selected tracks have to be taken into account. Whereas the uncertainties for the \( \eta \) measurement were found to be negligible, those for the \( p_T \) measurement are in general more important. The inner detector momentum resolution was taken from MC as a function of \( p_T \) and \( \eta \). It was found to vary between 1.5% and 5% in the range relevant to this analysis. The uncertainty was estimated by comparing with MC samples with a uniform scaling of 10% additional material at low \( p_T \) and with large misalignments at higher \( p_T \).

Fraction of secondaries The fraction of secondaries was determined as discussed in Section 5. The associated systematic uncertainty was estimated by varying the range of the impact parameter distribution that was used to normalise the MC, and by fitting separate distributions for weak decays and material interactions. The systematic uncertainty includes a small contribution due to the \( \eta \) dependence of this correction. The total uncertainty is 0.1%.

Correction procedure Several independent tests were made to assess the model dependence of the correction matrix \( M_{\text{ch,Sel}} \) and the resulting systematic uncertainty. In order to determine the sensitivity to the \( p_T \) and \( \eta \) distributions, the matrix was re-populated using the other MC parameterizations described in Section 3 and by varying the track-reconstruction efficiency by \( \pm 5\% \). The correction factor for events lost due to the track-reconstruction inefficiency was varied by the same amount and treated as fully correlated. For the overall normalisation, this leads to an uncertainty of 0.4% due to the model dependence and of 1.1% due to the track-reconstruction efficiency. The size of the systematic uncertainties on \( n_{\text{ch}} \) increases with the multiplicity.
The correction for the average charged-particle density was also studied using the different PYTHIA tunes and PHOJET. The change was found to be less than 2% over the whole sample.

As the track-reconstruction efficiency depends on the particle type, the uncertainty in the composition of the charged particles in the minimum-bias MC sample was studied. The relative yields of pions, kaons, and protons in the simulation were separately varied by ±10%. These variations, combined with changing the fraction of electrons and muons by a factor of three, resulted in a systematic uncertainty of 0.2%.

The systematic uncertainty on the normalisation and on the number of charged particles were treated separately. In each of these two groups the systematic uncertainties were added in quadrature. These were then combined taking into account their anti-correlation and were propagated to the final distributions. Table 1 summarises the various contributions to the systematic uncertainties on the charged-particle density at η = 0.

9. Results

The corrected distributions for primary charged particles for events with n_{ch} \geq 1 in the kinematic range p_T > 500 MeV and |η| < 2.5 are shown in Fig. 3, where they are compared to predictions of models tuned to a wide range of measurements. The data are presented as inclusive-inelastic distributions with minimal model-dependent corrections to facilitate the comparison with models. The charged-particle pseudorapidity density is shown in Fig. 3(a). It is measured to be approximately flat in the range |η| < 1.5, with an average value of 1.333 ± 0.003(stat.) ± 0.040(syst.) charged particles per event and unit of pseudorapidity in the range |η| < 0.2. The particle density is found to drop at higher values of |η|. All MC tunes discussed in this Letter are lower than the data by 5–15%, corresponding to approximately 1–4 standard deviations. The shapes of the models are approximately consistent with the data with the exception of PYTHIA DW.

The N_{ch} distribution in bins of p_T is shown in Fig. 3(b) and is constructed by weighting each entry by 1/p_T. The MC models do not reproduce the data for p_T > 0.7 GeV. The most significant difference is seen for the PHOJET generator.

The multiplicity distribution as a function of n_{ch} is shown in Fig. 3(c). The PYTHIA models show an excess of events with n_{ch} = 1 with respect to the data, while the fraction of events with n_{ch} \geq 10 is consistently lower than the data. The net effect is that the integral of charged particles predicted by the models is below that of the data (Fig. 3(a) and (b)). The PHOJET generator successfully models the number of events with n_{ch} = 1, while it deviates from the data distributions at higher values of n_{ch}.

The average p_T as a function of n_{ch} is illustrated in Fig. 3(d). It is found to increase with increasing n_{ch} and a change of slope is observed around n_{ch} = 10. This behaviour was already observed by the CDF experiment in p\bar{p} collisions at 1.96 TeV [3]. The Perugia0 parameterization, which was tuned using CDF minimum-bias data at 1.96 TeV, describes the data well. The other models fail to describe the data below n_{ch} \approx 25, with the exception of the PYTHIA-MC09c tune.

The N_{ch} distribution as a function of p_T in the kinematic range p_T > 500 MeV and |η| < 2.5 is shown in Fig. 4. The CMS [1] results at the same centre-of-mass energy are superimposed. The number of charged particles in the CMS data is consistently lower than the data presented in this Letter. This offset is expected from the CMS measurement definition of NSD events, where events with n_{ch} = 0 enter the normalisation and the number of lower transverse momentum particles are reduced by the subtraction of the PYTHIA single diffractive component. The UA1 [5] results, normalised by their associated cross section measurement, are also overlaid. They are approximately 20% higher than the present data. A shift in this direction is expected from the double-arm scintillator trigger requirement used to collect the UA1 data, which rejected events with lowcharged-particle multiplicities.

To compare more directly the present data with results from CMS, the mean charged-particle density was calculated in the range |η| < 2.4 and a model dependent correction was applied to form an NSD particle density. For the calculation of the NSD value the PYTHIA DW tune was selected due to its similarity with the tune used in the CMS analysis. This generator set-up was used to produce a correction for the removal of the fraction of single diffractive events, the removal of electrons from π^0 Dalitz decays and the addition of non-single diffractive events with no charged particles within the kinematic range p_T > 500 MeV and |η| < 2.5. The net effect of the correction is to reduce the charged-particle multiplicity. The resulting value 1.240 ± 0.040(syst.) is consistent with the CMS measurement of 1.202 ± 0.043(syst.) in the kinematic range of p_T > 500 MeV and |η| < 2.4.
5. The panels show the charged-particle multiplicity as a function of pseudorapidity (a) and of the transverse momentum (b), the charged-particle multiplicity (c), and the average transverse momentum as a function of the number of charged particles in the event (d). The dots represent the data and the curves the predictions from different MC models. The vertical bars represent the statistical uncertainties, while the shaded areas show statistical and systematic uncertainties added in quadrature. The values of the ratio histograms refer to the bin centroids.

10. Conclusions

Charged-particle multiplicity measurements with the ATLAS detector using the first collisions delivered by the LHC during 2009 are presented. Based on over three hundred thousand proton–proton inelastic interactions, the properties of events with at least one primary charged particle produced within the kinematic range $|\eta| < 2.5$ and $p_T > 500$ MeV were studied. The data were corrected with minimal model dependence to obtain inclusive distributions. The charged-particle multiplicity per event and unit of pseudorapidity at $\eta = 0$ is...
Fig. 4. The measured $p_T$ spectrum of charged-particle multiplicities. The ATLAS $pp$ data (black dots) are compared to the UA1 $p\bar{p}$ data (blue open squares) and CMS NSD $pp$ data (red triangles) at the same centre-of-mass energy.

measured to be $1.333 \pm 0.003\text{ (stat.)} \pm 0.040\text{ (syst.)}$, which is 5–15% higher than the Monte Carlo model predictions. The selected kinematic range and the precision of this analysis highlight clear differences between Monte Carlo models and the measured distributions.

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The ATLAS detector design and construction has taken about fifteen years, and our thoughts are with all our colleagues who sadly could not see its final realisation.

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