Measurement of the Rate of $\nu_e + d \to p + p + e^-$ Interactions Produced by $^8$B Solar Neutrinos at the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory


1Atomic Energy of Canada Limited, Chalk River Laboratories, Chalk River, Ontario K0J 1J0 Canada
2Chemistry Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York 11973-5000
3Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario K1S 5B6 Canada
4Department of Physics and Astronomy, Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario P3E 2C6 Canada
5Institute for Nuclear and Particle Astrophysics and Nuclear Science Division, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Berkeley, California 94720
6Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87545
7National Research Council of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0R6 Canada
8Department of Physics, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey 08544
9Department of Physics, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario K7L 3N6 Canada
10Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1 Canada
11Department of Physics, University of California, Irvine, California 92717
12Physics Department, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario N1G 2W1 Canada
13Nuclear and Astrophysics Laboratory, University of Oxford, Keble Road, Oxford, OX1 3RH, United Kingdom
14Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6396
15Center for Experimental Nuclear Physics and Astrophysics, and Department of Physics, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington 98195

(Rceived 18 June 2001; published 25 July 2001)

Solar neutrinos from $^8$B decay have been detected at the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory via the charged current (CC) reaction on deuterium and the elastic scattering (ES) of electrons. The flux of $\nu_e$ is measured by the CC reaction rate to be $\phi^{CC}(\nu_e) = 1.75 \pm 0.07(stat) \pm 0.12(syst) \pm 0.05(theor) \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$. Comparison of $\phi^{CC}(\nu_e)$ to the Super-Kamiokande Collaboration’s precision value of the flux inferred from the ES reaction yields a $3.3\sigma$ difference, assuming the systematic uncertainties are normally distributed, providing evidence of an active non-$\nu_e$ component in the solar flux. The total flux of active $^8$B neutrinos is determined to be $5.44 \pm 0.99 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$.

DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevLett.87.071301 PACS numbers: 26.65.+t, 14.60.Pq, 95.85.Ry

071301-1  0031-9007/01/87(7)/071301(6)$15.00  © 2001 The American Physical Society 071301-1
Solar neutrino experiments over the past 30 years [1–6] have measured fewer neutrinos than are predicted by models of the Sun [7,8]. One explanation for the deficit is the transformation of the Sun’s electron-type neutrinos into other active flavors. The Sudbury Neutrino Observatory (SNO) measures the $^8$B solar neutrinos through the reactions

\[
\begin{align*}
\nu_e + d &\rightarrow p + p + e^- \quad (\text{CC}), \\
\nu_x + d &\rightarrow p + n + \nu_x \quad (\text{NC}), \\
\nu_x + e^- &\rightarrow \nu_x + e^- \quad (\text{ES}).
\end{align*}
\]

The charged current (CC) reaction is selective exclusively to electron-type neutrinos, while the neutral current (NC) is sensitive to all active neutrino flavors ($x = e, \mu, \tau$). The elastic scattering (ES) reaction is sensitive to all flavors as well, but with reduced sensitivity to $\nu_\mu$ and $\nu_\tau$. By itself, the ES reaction cannot provide a measure of the total $^8$B flux or its flavor content. Comparison of the $^8$B flux deduced from the ES reaction, assuming no neutrino oscillations [$\phi^{\text{ES}}(\nu_x)$], to that measured by the CC reaction [$\phi^{\text{CC}}(\nu_x)$] can provide clear evidence of flavor transformation without reference to solar model flux calculations. If neutrinos from the Sun change into other active flavors, then $\phi^{\text{CC}}(\nu_x) < \phi^{\text{ES}}(\nu_x)$.

This Letter presents the first results from SNO on the ES and CC reactions. SNO’s measurement of $\phi^{\text{ES}}(\nu_x)$ is consistent with previous measurements described in Ref. [5]. The measurement of $\phi^{\text{CC}}(\nu_x)$, however, is significantly smaller and is therefore inconsistent with the null hypothesis that all observed solar neutrinos are $\nu_e$. A measurement using the NC reaction, which has equal sensitivity to all neutrino flavors, will be reported in a future publication.

SNO [9] is an imaging water Čerenkov detector located at a depth of 6010 m of water equivalent in the INCO, Ltd. Creighton mine near Sudbury, Ontario. It features 1000 metric tons of ultrapure $D_2O$ contained in a 12-m diameter spherical acrylic vessel. This sphere is surrounded by a shield of ultrapure $H_2O$ contained in a 34-m-high barrel-shaped cavity of maximum diameter 22 m. A stainless steel structure 17.8 m in diameter supports 9456 20-cm photomultiplier tubes (PMTs) with light concentrators. Approximately 55% of the light produced within 7 m of the center of the detector will strike a PMT if it is not absorbed by intervening media.

The data reported here were recorded between November 2, 1999 and January 15, 2001 and correspond to a live time of 240,95 days. Events are defined by a multiplicity trigger of 18 or more PMTs exceeding a threshold of $-0.25$ photoelectrons within a time window of 93 ns. The trigger reaches 100% efficiency at 23 PMTs. The total instantaneous trigger rate is 15–18 Hz, of which 6–8 Hz is the data trigger. For every event trigger, the time and charge responses of each participating PMT are recorded. The data were partitioned into two sets, with approximately 70% used to establish the data analysis procedures and 30% reserved for a blind test of statistical bias in the analysis. The analysis procedures were frozen before the blind data set was analyzed, and no statistically significant differences in the data sets were found. We present here the analysis of the combined data sets.

Calibration of the PMT time and charge pedestals, slopes, offsets, charge vs time dependencies, and second order rate dependencies are performed using electronic pulser and pulsed light sources. Optical calibration is obtained by using a diffuse source of pulsed laser light at 337, 365, 386, 420, 500, and 620 nm. The absolute energy scale and uncertainties are established with a triggered $^{16}$O source (predominantly 6.13-MeV $\gamma$’s) deployed over two planar grids within the $D_2O$ and a linear grid in the $H_2O$. The resulting Monte Carlo predictions of detector response are tested using a $^{252}$Cf neutron source, which provides an extended distribution of 6.25-MeV $\gamma$ rays from neutron capture, and a $^3$H($p, \gamma)^4$He [10] source providing 19.8-MeV $\gamma$ rays. The volume-weighted mean response is approximately nine PMT hits per MeV of electron energy.

Table I details the steps in data reduction. The first of these is the elimination of instrumental backgrounds. Electrical pickup may produce false PMT hits, while electrical discharges in the PMTs or insulating detector materials produce light. These backgrounds have characteristics very different from Čerenkov light, and are eliminated by using cuts based only on the PMT positions, the PMT time and charge data, event-to-event time correlations, and veto PMTs. This step in the data reduction is verified by comparing results from two independent background rejection analyses.

For events passing the first stage, the calibrated times and positions of the hit PMTs are used to reconstruct the vertex position and the direction of the particle. The reconstruction accuracy and resolution are measured using Compton electrons from the $^{16}$O source, and the energy and source variation of reconstruction are checked with a $^8$Li $\beta$ source. Angular resolution is measured using Compton electrons produced more than 150 cm from the $^{16}$O source. At these energies, the vertex resolution is 16 cm and the angular resolution is 26.7°.

An effective kinetic energy, $T_{\text{eff}}$, is assigned to each event passing the reconstruction stage. $T_{\text{eff}}$ is calculated by

\[
T_{\text{eff}} = \min\left(\min_{x \in \{\text{CC}, \text{NC}, \text{ES}\}} \frac{E_x}{E_{\min}}, \frac{E_{\text{hit}}}{E_{\min}}\right)
\]

where $E_x$ is the energy of the event passing the reconstruction stage, and $E_{\min}$ is the minimum energy for which the analysis procedure provides a useful measurement of the event.

Table I. Data reduction steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis step</th>
<th>Number of events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total event triggers</td>
<td>355 320 964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrino data triggers</td>
<td>143 756 178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$N_{\text{hit}} \geq 30$</td>
<td>6 372 899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental background cuts</td>
<td>1 842 491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muon followers</td>
<td>1 809 979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level cuts</td>
<td>923 717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiducial volume cut</td>
<td>17 884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold cut</td>
<td>1169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total events</td>
<td>1169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*$^a*$Reconstruction figures of merit, prompt light, and $\langle \theta_{ij} \rangle$. 

---

071301-2
using prompt (unscattered) Čerenkov photons and the position and direction of the event. The derived energy response of the detector can be characterized by a Gaussian:

\[ R(E_{\text{eff}}, E_e) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi} \sigma_E(E_e)} \exp\left[-\frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{E_{\text{eff}} - E_e}{\sigma_E(E_e)} \right)^2 \right], \]

where \( E_e \) is the total electron energy, \( E_{\text{eff}} = T_{\text{eff}} + m_e \), and \( \sigma_E(E_e) = (-0.4620 + 0.5470\sqrt{E_e} + 0.008722E_e) \) MeV is the energy resolution. The uncertainty on the energy scale is found to be \( \pm 1.4\% \), which results in a flux uncertainty nearly 4 times larger. For validation, a second energy estimator counts all PMTs hit in each event, \( N_{\text{hit}} \), without position and direction corrections.

Further instrumental background rejection is obtained by using reconstruction figures of merit, PMT time residuals, and the average angle between hit PMTs \( \langle \theta_{ij} \rangle \), measured from the reconstructed vertex. These cuts test the hypothesis that each event has the characteristics of single electron Čerenkov light. The effects of these and the rest of the instrumental background removal cuts on neutrino signals are quantified using the \(^8\text{Li}\) and \(^{16}\text{N}\) sources deployed throughout the detector. The volume-weighted neutrino signal loss is measured to be \( 1.4^{+0.7}_{-0.6}\% \) and the residual instrumental contamination for the data set within the \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \) is \( \approx 0.2\% \). Lastly, cosmic ray induced neutrons and spallation products are removed using a 20 s coincidence window with the parent muon.

Figure 1 shows the radial distribution of all remaining events above a threshold of \( T_{\text{eff}} \leq 6.75 \) MeV. The distribution is expressed as a function of the volume-weighted radial variable \( (R/R_{AV})^3 \), where \( R_{AV} = 6.00 \) m is the radius of the acrylic vessel. Above this energy threshold, there are contributions from CC events in the \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \), ES events in the \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \) and \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \), a residual tail of neutron capture events, and high energy \( \gamma \) rays from radioactivity in the outer detector. The data show a clear signal within the \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \) volume. For \( (R/R_{AV})^3 > 1.0 \) the distribution rises into the \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) region until it is cut off by the acceptance of the PMT light collectors at \( R \approx 7.0 \) m. A fiducial volume cut is applied at \( R = 5.50 \) m to reduce backgrounds from regions exterior to the \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \), and to minimize systematic uncertainties associated with optics and reconstruction near the acrylic vessel.

Possible backgrounds from radioactivity in the \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \) and \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) are measured by regular low level radio assays of U and Th decay chain products in these regions. The Čerenkov light character of \( \text{D}_2\text{O} \) and \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) radioactivity backgrounds is used in situ to monitor backgrounds between radio assays. Low energy radioactivity backgrounds are removed by the high threshold imposed, as are most neutron capture events. Monte Carlo calculations predict that the \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) shield effectively reduces contributions of low energy (<4 MeV) \( \gamma \) rays from the PMT array, and these predictions are verified by deploying an encapsulated Th source in the vicinity of the PMT support sphere. High energy \( \gamma \) rays from the cavity are also attenuated by the \( \text{H}_2\text{O} \) shield. A limit on their leakage into the fiducial volume is estimated by deploying the \(^{16}\text{N}\) source near the edge of the detector’s active volume. The total contribution from all radioactivity in the detector is found to be <0.2% for low energy backgrounds and <0.8% for high energy backgrounds.

The final data set contains 1169 events after the fiducial volume and kinetic energy threshold cuts. Figure 2(a) displays the distribution of \( \cos \theta_{\theta_{0}} \), the angle between the reconstructed direction of the event and the instantaneous direction from the Sun to the Earth. The forward peak in this distribution arises from the kinematics of the ES reaction, while CC electrons are expected to have a distribution which is \( (1 - 0.340 \cos \theta_{\theta_{0}}) \) [11], before accounting for detector response.

The data are resolved into contributions from CC, ES, and neutron events above threshold using probability density functions (pdf’s) in \( T_{\text{eff}}, \cos \theta_{\theta_{0}}, \) and \( (R/R_{AV})^3 \), generated from Monte Carlo simulations assuming no flavor transformation and the shape of the standard \(^{8}\text{B}\) spectrum [12] (hep neutrinos are not included in the fit). The extended maximum likelihood method used in the signal extraction yields 975.4 ± 39.7 CC events, 106.1 ± 15.2 ES events, and 87.5 ± 24.7 neutron events for the fiducial volume and the threshold chosen, where the uncertainties given are statistical only. The dominant sources of systematic uncertainty in this signal extraction are the energy scale uncertainty and reconstruction accuracy, as shown in Table II. The CC and ES signal decomposition gives consistent results when used with the \( N_{\text{hit}} \) energy estimator, as well as with different choices of the analysis threshold.
and the fiducial volume up to 6.20 m with backgrounds characterized by pdf’s.

The CC spectrum can be extracted from the data by removing the constraint on the shape of the CC pdf and repeating the signal extraction.

Figure 2(b) shows the kinetic energy spectrum with statistical error bars, with the $^8B$ spectrum of Ortiz et al. [12] scaled to the data. The ratio of the data to the predicted kinetic energy distribution with correlated systematic errors is shown in (c). The uncertainties in the $^8B$ spectrum [12] have not been included.

Normalized to the integrated rates above the kinetic energy threshold of $T_{\text{eff}} = 6.75$ MeV, the measured $^8B$ neutrino fluxes assuming the standard spectrum shape [12] are

$$
\phi_{\text{SNO}}^{\text{CC}}(\nu_e) = 1.75 \pm 0.07(\text{stat})^{+0.12}_{-0.11}(\text{syst}) \pm 0.05(\text{theor}) \\
\times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}
$$

$$
\phi_{\text{SNO}}^{\text{ES}}(\nu_e) = 2.39 \pm 0.34(\text{stat})^{+0.16}_{-0.14}(\text{syst}) \\
\times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1},
$$

where the theoretical uncertainty is the CC cross section uncertainty [13]. Radiative corrections have not been applied to the CC cross section, but they are expected to decrease the measured $\phi_{\text{CC}}^{\text{ES}}(\nu_e)$ flux [14] by up to a few percent. The difference between the $^8B$ flux deduced from the ES rate and that deduced from the CC rate in SNO is $0.64 \pm 0.40 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$, or $1.6\sigma$. The SNO’s ES rate measurement is consistent with the precision measurement by Super-Kamiokande Collaboration of the $^8B$ flux using the same ES reaction [5]:

$$
\phi_{\text{ES}}^{\text{ES}}(\nu_e) = 2.32 \pm 0.03(\text{stat})^{+0.08}_{-0.07}(\text{syst}) \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}.
$$

The difference between the flux $\phi_{\text{ES}}^{\text{ES}}(\nu_e)$ measured by Super-Kamiokande via the ES reaction and the $\phi_{\text{CC}}^{\text{ES}}(\nu_e)$ flux measured by SNO via the CC reaction is $0.57 \pm 0.17 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$, or $3.3\sigma$ [15], assuming that the systematic errors are normally distributed. The probability that a downward fluctuation of the Super-Kamiokande result would produce a SNO result $\geq 3.3\sigma$ is 0.04%. For reference, the ratio of the SNO CC $^8B$ flux to that of the BPB01 solar model [7] is $0.347 \pm 0.029$, where all uncertainties are added in quadrature.

If oscillation solely to a sterile neutrino is occurring, the SNO CC-derived $^8B$ flux above a threshold of 6.75 MeV will be consistent with the integrated Super-Kamiokande ES-derived $^8B$ flux above a threshold of 8.5 MeV [16]. By adjusting the ES threshold [5], this derived flux difference is $0.53 \pm 0.17 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$, or $3.1\sigma$. The probability of a downward fluctuation $\geq 3.1\sigma$ is 0.13%. These data are therefore evidence of a nonelectron active flavor component in the solar neutrino flux. These data are also inconsistent with the “Just-So²” parameters for neutrino oscillation [17].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table II. Systematic error on fluxes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Error source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy scale nonlinearity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertex accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertex resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angular resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High energy $\gamma$’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low energy background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigger efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth orbit eccentricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$^{17}$O, $^{18}$O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The total flux of active $^8$B neutrinos is determined to be
\[ \phi(\nu_s) = 5.44 \pm 0.99 \times 10^6 \text{ cm}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}. \]

This result is displayed as a diagonal band in Fig. 3, and is in excellent agreement with predictions of standard solar models [7,8].

Assuming that the oscillation of massive neutrinos explains both the evidence for the electron neutrino flavor change presented here and the atmospheric neutrino data of the Super-Kamiokande collaboration [18], two separate splittings of the squares of the neutrino mass eigenvalues are indicated: $< 10^{-3}$ eV$^2$ for the solar sector [19,17] and $\approx 3.5 \times 10^{-3}$ eV$^2$ for atmospheric neutrinos. These results, together with the beta spectrum of tritium [20], limit the sum of mass eigenvalues of active neutrinos to be between 0.05 and 8.4 eV, corresponding to a constraint of 0.001 $< \Omega_\nu < 0.18$ for the contribution to the critical density of the Universe [21,22].

In summary, the results presented here are the first direct indication of a nonelectron flavor component in the solar neutrino flux, and enable the first determination of the total flux of $^8$B neutrinos generated by the Sun.

This research was supported by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Industry Canada, National Research Council of Canada, Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation, the Province of Ontario, the United States Department of Energy, and in the United Kingdom by the Science and Engineering Research Council and the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council. Further support was provided by INCO, Ltd., Atomic Energy of Canada Limited (AECL), Agramonenco, Canatom, Canadian Microelectronics Corporation, AT&T Microelectronics, Northern Telecom, and British Nuclear Fuels, Ltd. The heavy water was loaned by AECL with the cooperation of Ontario Power Generation.

*Permanent address: Birkbeck College, University of London, Malet Road, London WC1E 7HX, UK.

†Deceased.

‡Permanent address: TRIUMF, 4004 Wesbrook Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 2A3, Canada.

§Permanent address: Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Chilton, Didcot, Oxon, OX11 0QX, and University of Sussex, Physics and Astronomy Department, Brighton BN1 9QH, United Kingdom.

[19] Given the limit set for the hep flux by Ref. [5], the effects of the hep contribution may increase this difference by a few percent.