

New Results on Solar Neutrino Fluxes from 192 Days of Borexino Data

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Abstract. We report the direct measurement of the ${}^7\text{Be}$ solar neutrino signal rate performed with the Borexino detector at the Laboratori Nazionali del Gran Sasso. The interaction rate of the 0.862 MeV ${}^7\text{Be}$ neutrinos is $49 \pm 3_{\text{stat}} \pm 4_{\text{syst}}$ counts/(day·100 ton). The hypothesis of no oscillation for ${}^7\text{Be}$ solar neutrinos is inconsistent with our measurement at the 4σ C.L. Our result is the first direct measurement of the survival probability for solar ν_e in the transition region between matter-enhanced and vacuum-driven oscillations. The measurement improves the experimental determination of the flux of ${}^7\text{Be}$, pp , and CNO solar ν_e , and the limit on the effective neutrino magnetic moment using solar neutrinos.

We report the direct measurement of the low energy (0.862 MeV) ${}^7\text{Be}$ solar neutrinos with the Borexino detector from an analysis of 192 live days in the period from May 16, 2007 to April 12, 2008, totaling a 41.3 ton·yr fiducial exposure to solar neutrinos. Results are to be published in a letter submitted at the time of the presentation at the Neutrino '08 Conference [1]. Borexino is the first experiment to report a real-time observation of low energy solar neutrinos below 4.5 MeV [2], which were not accessible so far with the state-of-the art detector technologies because of natural radioactivity.

Solar neutrinos are detected in Borexino through their elastic scattering on electrons in the scintillator. Electron neutrinos (ν_e) interact through charged and neutral currents and in the energy range of interest have a cross section ~ 5 times larger than ν_μ and ν_τ , which interact only via the neutral current. The electrons scattered by neutrinos are detected by means of the scintillation light retaining the information on the energy, while information on the direction of the scattered electrons is lost. The basic signature for the mono-energetic 0.862 MeV ${}^7\text{Be}$ neutrinos is the Compton-like edge of the recoil electrons at 665 keV.

The key features of the Borexino detector are described in Refs. [2, 3, 4]. The key requirement in the technology of Borexino is achieving extremely low radioactive contamination, at or below the interaction rate of 0.5 counts/(day·ton) expected for ${}^7\text{Be}$ neutrinos. The design of Borexino is based on the principle of graded shielding, with the inner core scintillator at the center of a set of concentric shells of increasing radiopurity. All components were screened and selected for low radioactivity [5], and the scintillator and the buffers were purified on site at the time of filling [6, 7]. Position reconstruction of the events, as obtained from the PMTs timing data via a time-of-flight algorithm, allows to fiducialize the active target: approximately 2/3 of the scintillator serves as an active shield.

Events are selected by means of the following cuts:

- i Events must have a unique time cluster of PMTs hits, to reject pile-up of multiple events in the same acquisition window.
- ii Muons and all events within a time window of 2 ms after a muon are rejected.
- iii Decays due to radon daughters occurring before the ${}^{214}\text{Bi}$ - ${}^{214}\text{Po}$ delayed coincidences are vetoed. The fraction surviving the veto is accounted for in the analysis.

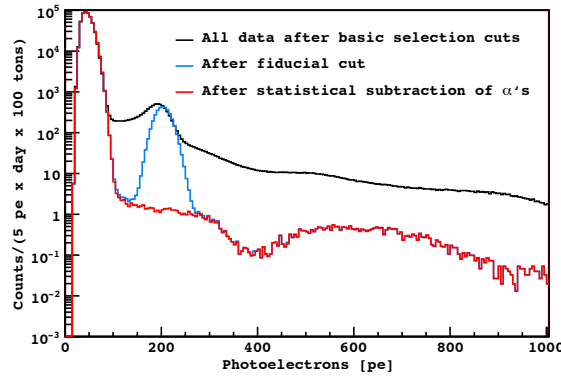


Figure 1. The raw photoelectron charge spectrum after the basic cuts i–iii (black), after the fiducial cut iv (blue), and after the statistical subtraction of the α -emitting contaminants (red). All curves scaled to the exposure of 100 day-ton. Cuts described in the text.

- iv Events must be reconstructed within a spherical fiducial volume corresponding approximately to 1/3 of the scintillator volume in order to reject external γ background. Additionally, we require the z -coordinate of the reconstructed vertex, measured from the center of the detector in the vertical direction, to satisfy $|z| < 1.7$ m in order to remove background near the poles of the inner nylon vessel.

The combined loss of fiducial exposure due to the cuts i–iii is 0.7%. The fiducial cut iv results in a fiducial mass of 78.5 tons.

The black curve in Fig. 1 is the spectrum of all events surviving the basic cuts i–iii: below 100 photoelectrons (pe) the spectrum is dominated by ^{14}C decays (β^- , $Q=156$ keV) intrinsic to the scintillator [8] and the peak at 200 pe is due to ^{210}Po decays (α , $Q=5.41$ MeV, light yield quenched by ~ 13), a daughter of ^{222}Rn out of equilibrium with the other isotopes in the sequence. The blue curve is the spectrum after the fiducial cut iv. The red curve is obtained by statistical subtraction of the α -emitting contaminants, by use of the pulse shape discrimination made possible by the PC-based scintillator [9]. Prominent features include the Compton-like edge due to ^7Be solar neutrinos (300–350 pe) and the spectrum of ^{11}C (β^+ , $Q=1.98$ MeV, created in situ by cosmic ray-induced showers, 400–800 pe).

The study of fast coincidence decays of ^{214}Bi - ^{214}Po (from ^{238}U) and ^{212}Bi - ^{212}Po (from ^{232}Th) yields, under the assumption of secular equilibrium, contamination for ^{238}U of $(1.6 \pm 0.1) \times 10^{-17}$ g/g and for ^{232}Th of $(6.8 \pm 1.5) \times 10^{-18}$ g/g. The ^{85}Kr content in the scintillator was probed through the rare decay sequence $^{85}\text{Kr} \rightarrow ^{85\text{m}}\text{Rb} + e^+ + \nu_e$, $^{85\text{m}}\text{Rb} \rightarrow ^{85}\text{Rb} + \gamma$ ($\tau=1.5$ μs , BR 0.43%) that offers a delayed coincidence tag. Our best estimate for the activity of ^{85}Kr is 29 ± 14 counts/(day·100 ton).

We determined the light yield and the interaction rate of ^7Be solar neutrinos by fitting the α -subtracted spectrum in the region 100–800 pe, accounting for the presence of several possible contaminants. We obtain a light yield of about 500 pe/MeV for β 's at the minimum of ionization, and the energy resolution is approximately scaling as $5\%/\sqrt{E}$ [MeV]. The weights for ^{14}C , ^{11}C , and ^{85}Kr are left as free parameters in the fit. The ^{214}Pb surviving cut iii is

Table 1. Fit Results [counts/(day·100 ton)].

^7Be	$49 \pm 3_{\text{stat}} \pm 4_{\text{syst}}$
^{85}Kr	$25 \pm 3_{\text{stat}} \pm 2_{\text{syst}}$
$^{210}\text{Bi}+\text{CNO}$	$23 \pm 2_{\text{stat}} \pm 2_{\text{syst}}$
^{11}C	$25 \pm 1_{\text{stat}} \pm 2_{\text{syst}}$

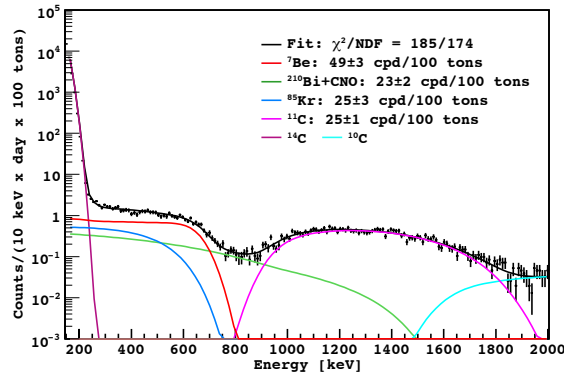


Figure 2. Spectral fit in the energy region 160–2000 keV. Contributions from ^{214}Pb , pp , and pep neutrinos, not shown, are almost negligible with respect to those in the figure.

independently determined and its weight in the fit is fixed. Weights for pp and pep neutrinos are fixed to the values expected from the Standard Solar Model (SSM) [10] and from a recent determination of $\sin^2 2\theta_{12}=0.87$ and $\Delta m_{12}^2=7.6\times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$ [11], which correspond to the Large Mixing Angle (LMA) scenario of solar neutrino oscillation via the MSW effect [12]. The spectra for CNO neutrinos and ^{210}Bi are almost degenerate and cannot be distinguished prior to removal of the ^{14}C background [13, 14]: we use a single component whose weight is a free parameter. Two independent analysis codes report consistent spectra and results, shown in Fig. 2 and summarized in Table 1. A further check was performed by fitting the spectrum obtained prior to statistical α 's subtraction, obtaining consistent results, as shown in Fig. 3.

Several sources, as summarized in Table 2, contribute to the systematic error. The total mass of scintillator (315 m^3 , 278 ton) is known within $\pm 0.2\%$. Not so yet for the fiducial mass, which is defined by a software cut. We estimate the systematic error to be $\pm 6\%$ on the basis of the distribution of reconstructed vertexes of uniform background sources (^{14}C , 2.2 MeV γ -rays from capture of cosmogenic neutrons, daughters of Rn introduced during the filling with scintillator) and on the basis of the inner vessel radius determined from the reconstructed position of sources located at the periphery of the active volume (^{212}Bi - ^{212}Po coincidences emanating from ^{228}Th contaminations in the nylon of the inner vessel and γ -rays from the buffer volumes). The uncertainty in the detector response function results in a large systematic error, as small variations in the energy response affect the balance of counts attributed by the fit to ^7Be and ^{85}Kr . We aim at reducing substantially the global systematic uncertainty with the forthcoming deployment of calibration sources in the detector: this will allow a 3D mapping of the performance of position reconstruction algorithms and an in-depth study of the detector response function as a function of β - and γ -ray energies.

Taking into account systematic errors, our best value for the interaction rate of the 0.862 MeV ^7Be solar neutrinos is $49\pm 3_{\text{stat}}\pm 4_{\text{syst}}$ counts/(day·100 ton). The expected signal for non-oscillated solar ν_e in the high metallicity SSM [10] is 74 ± 4 counts/(day·100 ton) corresponding

Table 2. Estimated Systematic Uncertainties [%].

Total Scintillator Mass	0.2
Fiducial Mass Ratio	6.0
Live Time	0.1
Detector Response Function	6.0
Efficiency of Cuts	0.3
Total Systematic Error	8.5

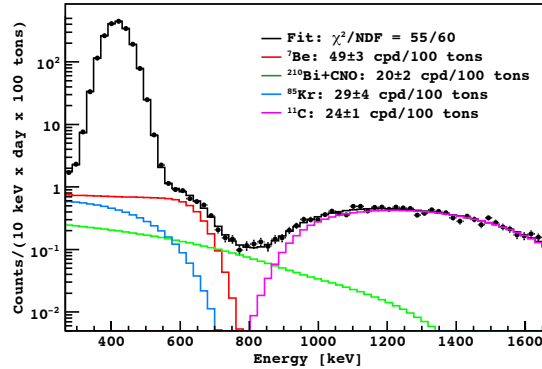


Figure 3. Spectral fit in the energy region 260–1670 keV prior to statistical α 's subtraction.

to a flux $\Phi(^7\text{Be}) = (5.08 \pm 0.25) \times 10^9 \text{ cm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$. In the MSW-LMA scenario of solar neutrino oscillation, it is 48 ± 4 counts/(day·100 ton), in very good agreement with our measurement.

Our best estimate for the ^{85}Kr contamination as determined by the fit is $25 \pm 3_{\text{stat}} \pm 2_{\text{syst}}$ counts/(day·100 ton). This is consistent with the independent estimate of ^{85}Kr activity from coincidence ^{85}Kr - $^{85\text{m}}\text{Rb}$.

In case of a non-null neutrino magnetic moment, the electroweak cross section is modified by the addition of an electromagnetic term ($d\sigma/dT_{EM} = \mu_\nu^2 \pi \alpha_{em}^2 / m_e^2 [1/T - 1/E_\nu]$) where E_ν is the neutrino energy and T is the electron kinetic energy. The shape of the solar neutrino spectrum is sensitive to the possible presence of a non-null magnetic moment, and the sensitivity is enhanced at low energy since $(d\sigma/dT)_{EM} \propto 1/T$. We had previously reported an upper limit of 5.5×10^{-10} using data from the CTF [15]. We now derive bounds on the neutrino magnetic moment by analyzing the α -subtracted energy spectrum, obtaining an upper limit of $5.4 \times 10^{-11} \mu_B$ (90% C.L.) [16], which is currently the best experimental limit.

In the MSW-LMA scenario, neutrino oscillations are dominated by matter effects above 3 MeV and by vacuum effects below 0.5 MeV [17]. The ^7Be neutrinos lie in the lower edge of this transition region. The measured interaction rate of ^7Be neutrinos depends on the solar ν_e flux and on the survival probability P_{ee} at the energy of 0.862 MeV. At present, the only direct measurement of P_{ee} is in the matter-dominated region by observation of ^8B neutrinos above 5 MeV [18]. The measurement of P_{ee} in and below the transition region is an important test of a fundamental feature of the MSW-LMA scenario.

Under the assumption of the constraint coming from the high metallicity SSM (6% uncertainty on ^7Be neutrinos flux), we combine in quadrature systematic and statistical error and we obtain $P_{ee} = 0.56 \pm 0.10$ (1σ) at 0.862 MeV. This is consistent with $P_{ee} = 0.541 \pm 0.017$, as determined from the global fit to all solar [18, 19, 20] (except Borexino) and reactor data [11]. The no oscillation hypothesis, $P_{ee} = 1$, is rejected at 4σ C.L..

Prior to the Borexino measurement the best estimate for f_{Be} , the ratio between the measured value and the value predicted by the high metallicity SSM [10] for the ^7Be neutrinos flux, was $1.03^{+0.24}_{-1.03}$ [21], as determined through a global fit on all solar (except Borexino) and reactor data, with the assumption of the constraint on solar luminosity. From our measurement, under the assumption of the constraint from the high metallicity SSM and of the MSW-LMA scenario, we obtain $f_{\text{Be}} = 1.02 \pm 0.10$. Correspondingly, our best estimate for the flux of ^7Be neutrinos is $\Phi(^7\text{Be}) = (5.18 \pm 0.51) \times 10^9 \text{ cm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$.

We then explore the constraint on the flux normalization constants f_{pp} and f_{CNO} – also defined as the ratio between the measured and predicted values of the respective fluxes – due to the measurement of the ^7Be interaction rate reported in this Letter: the result of Borexino can be combined with the other solar neutrino measurements to constrain the flux normalization

constants of the other fluxes [22]. The expected rate R_l in the Chlorine and Gallium experiments can be written as:

$$R_l = \sum_i R_{l,i} f_i P_{ee}^{l,i} \quad (1)$$

with $l=\{\text{Ga,Cl}\}$, $i=\{pp, pep, \text{CNO}, {}^7\text{Be}, {}^8\text{B}\}$, $R_{l,i}$ the rate expected in experiment l for source i at the nominal SSM flux, and $P_{ee}^{l,i}$ the survival probability for the source i above the threshold for experiment l . We use $R_{\text{Cl}}=2.56\pm0.23$ SNU [19], $R_{\text{Ga}}=68.1\pm3.75$ SNU [20], $f_{\text{B}}=0.83\pm0.07$ [18], and $f_{\text{Be}}=1.02\pm0.10$, as determined above.

We determine $f_{pp}=1.04^{+0.13}_{-0.19}$ (1σ) and $f_{\text{CNO}}<6.27$ (90% C.L.) by using the 1-D χ^2 -profile method [23]. The result on f_{pp} represents the best experimental value at present obtained without the luminosity constraint. The result on f_{CNO} translates into a CNO contribution to the solar luminosity $<5.4\%$ (90% C.L.) which is also at present the best limit. We remark that the SSM we use predicts a CNO contribution on the order of 0.9%.

By adding the luminosity constraint, we obtain $f_{pp}=1.005^{+0.008}_{-0.020}$ (1σ) and $f_{\text{CNO}}<3.80$ (90% C.L.) by using the 1-D χ^2 -profile method. This result on f_{pp} represents the best determination of the pp solar neutrinos flux obtained with the assumption of the luminosity constraint. The result on f_{CNO} translates into a CNO contribution to the solar neutrino luminosity $<3.3\%$ (90% C.L.).

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