

# 3 Collide and Conquer: Constraints on Simplified Dark 4 Matter Models using Mono- $X$ Collider Searches

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10 ABSTRACT: The use of simplified models as a tool for interpreting dark matter collider  
11 searches has become increasingly prevalent, and while early Run II results are beginning to  
12 appear, we look to see what further information can be extracted from the Run I dataset.  
13 We consider three ‘standard’ simplified models that couple quarks to fermionic singlet dark  
14 matter: an  $s$ -channel vector mediator with vector or axial-vector couplings, and a  $t$ -channel  
15 scalar mediator. Upper limits on the couplings are calculated and compared across three  
16 alternate channels, namely mono-jet, mono- $Z$  (leptonic) and mono- $W/Z$  (hadronic). The  
17 strongest limits are observed in the mono-jet channel, however the computational simplicity  
18 and absence of significant  $t$ -channel model width effects in the mono-boson channels make  
19 these a straightforward and competitive alternative. We also include a comparison with  
20 relic density and direct detection constraints.

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21	<b>Contents</b>	
22	<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
23	<b>2 Simplified model phenomenology</b>	<b>3</b>
24	2.1 Model descriptions	3
25	2.2 The mono- $X + E_{\text{T}}^{\text{miss}}$ signatures	4
26	2.3 Mass and coupling points	5
27	2.4 Treatment of the width	5
28	<b>3 Recasting mono-<math>X</math> constraints</b>	<b>7</b>
29	3.1 Signal simulation	9
30	3.1.1 Parton matching scheme	9
31	3.2 Mono-jet constraints	9
32	3.3 Mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ constraints	10
33	3.4 Mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$ constraints	11
34	<b>4 Results and discussion</b>	<b>12</b>
35	4.1 Limits on the couplings $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$	12
36	4.1.1 Mono-jet channel	13
37	4.1.2 Mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ channel	14
38	4.1.3 Mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$ channel	14
39	4.2 Comparison with relic density constraints	15
40	4.3 Comparison with direct detection constraints	15
41	<b>5 Conclusion</b>	<b>21</b>
42	<b>6 Acknowledgements</b>	<b>22</b>
43	<b>A Limit setting strategy</b>	<b>22</b>
44	A.1 Nominal values	22
45	A.2 Uncertainty estimation	22
46	<b>B Validation of signal simulation and event selection procedures</b>	<b>24</b>
47	B.1 Mono-jet channel	24
48	B.2 Mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ channel	24
49	B.3 Mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$ channel	25

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# 1 Introduction

Simplified models have emerged as a powerful tool for the interpretation of collider, direct and indirect detection signals of dark matter (DM). Previously, ATLAS and CMS searches for DM were conducted within the context of both Effective Field Theories (EFTs) [1, 5, 32, 33] and full UV-complete theories such as Supersymmetry [10–12, 40]. The latter approach, though well-motivated, is typified by a broad parameter space and generally yields results which are insensitive to the wider class of DM models. EFT constraints, in comparison, are applicable to a broad range of models and rely on the specification of only a small set of parameters, namely the suppression scale,  $M_\star$ , and the DM mass,  $m_{\text{DM}}$  [25]. In the EFT framework, interactions between the dark and Standard Model (SM) sector are parametrised by a set of higher-dimensional effective operators, that arise when the mass of the mediating particle is assumed to be significantly larger than the momentum transferred in a given interaction. Where this condition is not fulfilled, the EFT prescription can produce constraints which detour dramatically from those of the associated UV-complete model [24–28]. This is less important in direct detection experiments where the momentum transferred in the scattering of DM particles with heavy nuclei is generally of the order of tens of MeV [13, 14], or in indirect searches where the annihilations of non-relativistic DM particles in the galactic halo occur with momentum transfers of order  $m_{\text{DM}}$ . However, for hadron collider searches, where the accessible center of mass energy of two colliding baryons may be sufficient to produce the mediator on-shell, the range of validity of the EFT prescription is significantly diminished. Indeed, recent works have quantitatively shown that the EFT approach can break down as a valid interpretation of data collected during the  $\sqrt{s} = 8$  TeV Run I of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) [15–17, 95]. In light of this, simplified models have become the preferred tool for the interpretation of collider DM searches [18, 31, 53, 55, 56].

In a nutshell, a simplified model (SiM) arises when the heavy mediator which was integrated out in the EFT framework is reintroduced. Like EFTs, SiMs admit the comparison of results obtained in the different avenues of dark matter study [72, 73] and are defined by a relatively small set of parameters - namely  $m_{\text{DM}}$ , the mass of the mediator  $M_{\text{med}}$ , and the SM-mediator and DM-mediator coupling strengths,  $g_q$  and  $g_\chi$  (or  $g_{q\chi}$  in the case of a single, SM-DM-mediator coupling). Unlike EFTs, constraints calculated within the context of a SiM are valid across a broad energy range.

In this paper, we examine a phenomenologically distinct set of SiMs. In particular, we place constraints on the SiMs corresponding to the simplest UV-completions of the D5 (vector) and D8 (axial-vector) effective operators in the  $s$ -channel<sup>1</sup>. We also include a case in which a scalar mediator is exchanged in the  $t$ -channel, motivated by its analog of squark exchange in Supersymmetry. In the heavy mediator limit, the operator describing this model can be rearranged via a Fierz transformation into a combination of operators D5 to

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<sup>1</sup>The D5 and D8 operators form a nice starting point in the analysis of SiMs as they have been studied exhaustively in the past (see refs. [1, 4, 5, 7, 15–17, 32, 33] among others). This attention is motivated by the fact that collider limits for the D5 (D8) operator can be readily transformed into limits on spin-independent (spin-dependent) DM-nucleon scattering and vice versa.

D8.

The models are constrained using public results from mono- $X$  + missing transverse energy ( $E_T^{\text{miss}}$ ) searches conducted by the ATLAS Collaboration. Specifically, we focus on searches where  $X$  is either a parton (manifesting in the detector as a narrow-radius jet), a leptonically-decaying  $Z$  boson (manifesting as two opposite-sign same-flavor leptons), or a hadronically-decaying  $W$  or  $Z$  boson (manifesting as a large-radius jet). The purpose of this work is to strengthen existing SiM limits using the full  $20.3 \text{ fb}^{-1}$  of Run I ATLAS data, and to explore an enhanced phase space with respect to the mediator and DM masses and the relative strength of the couplings to the visible and dark sectors. We choose to treat the mediator width as the minimal value naturally arising, which is more realistic than a fixed width. We extend the study by providing a cross-check and comparison of the performance of the three targeted collider detection channels, and compare against relic density and direct detection constraints.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. Section 2 contains a compendium of the SiMs chosen for analysis and the associated collider phenomenology. Section 3 outlines the techniques used to recast mono- $X$  +  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  limits on the visible cross-section for any new physics process into constraints on SiMs, and specifically on the couplings  $g_q$  and  $g_\chi$ . Lastly, our results are presented in section 4 along with a discussion of the implications of this work. Appendices A and B include details of the limit setting and analysis validation procedures.

## 2 Simplified model phenomenology

### 2.1 Model descriptions

We begin with a short set of assumptions: that the DM particle,  $\chi$ , is a weakly interacting Dirac fermion, that it is a singlet under the SM, and that it is the lightest stable new particle. Additionally, the new sector is assumed to couple only to the SM quarks. While possible couplings to SM leptons (e.g. [26]) or gluons (e.g. [59]) have been studied elsewhere, they are beyond the scope of this paper. The nature of the mediating particle then results from these assumptions: in the  $s$ -channel it is chosen to be a vector particle which must also be a SM singlet, denoted  $\xi$ , while in the  $t$ -channel it is a scalar particle which is necessarily charged and coloured, and labelled  $\phi$ .

The  $s$ -channel models chosen for analysis are  $Z'$ -type models characterised by vector ( $sV$ ) or axial-vector ( $sA$ ) couplings to both the dark and SM sectors. They are described by the following interaction Lagrangians:

$$\mathcal{L}_{sV} \supset -\xi_\mu \left[ \sum_q g_q \bar{q} \gamma^\mu q - g_\chi \bar{\chi} \gamma^\mu \chi \right], \quad (2.1)$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{sA} \supset \xi_\mu \left[ \sum_q g_q \bar{q} \gamma^\mu \gamma_5 q - g_\chi \bar{\chi} \gamma^\mu \gamma_5 \chi \right], \quad (2.2)$$

where the sum is over all quarks. This is a simple extension of the standard model and has been studied extensively [18, 31, 57, 70, 71, 74–88]. For the couplings  $g_q$  and  $g_\chi$  to remain

124 within the perturbative regime, they are required to satisfy  $g_q, g_\chi \leq 4\pi$ , though stronger  
 125 perturbativity requirements do exist [15].

126 The  $t$ -channel model (abbreviated  $tS$ ) is primarily motivated by analogy with a com-  
 127 mon aspect of Supersymmetric models: neutralino DM interacting with the SM sector via  
 128  $t$ -channel exchange of a squark [20], and has been studied in the context of the LHC by a  
 129 number of groups [23, 71, 72, 89–94]. Note that in this Supersymmetric scenario the DM  
 130 particle is a Majorana fermion. The collider phenomenology of a  $t$ -channel SiM in which  
 131  $\chi$  is of Majorana type is kinematically identical to the corresponding Dirac case (requiring  
 132 multiplication of the cross-section by a simple factor in order to compute limits) and so  
 133 Majorana DM is not covered here<sup>2</sup>.

134 In the  $tS$  model, the mediator is allowed to couple to either the left or right-handed  
 135 quarks as an SU(2) doublet or singlet respectively. Since the LHC is insensitive to the  
 136 chirality of the quarks, we assume for simplicity that  $\phi$  couples to the left-handed quarks  
 137 only, and is itself an SU(2) doublet, allowing radiation of a  $W$  boson. To avoid different  
 138 couplings to quarks of different generations, and to remain in step with the DM forum  
 139 recommendations [53], we include three generations of mediator doublets  $\phi_i$ , with equal  
 140 masses and couplings. The interaction Lagrangian for this model is then:

$$\mathcal{L}_{tS} \supset \sum_i g_{q\chi} \bar{Q}_i P_R \phi_i \chi + \text{h.c.}, \quad (2.3)$$

141 where the sum is over the three quark doublets,  $g_{q\chi}$  is the DM-quark coupling (equal for  
 142 each generation), and  $P_R$  is the usual chiral projection operator.

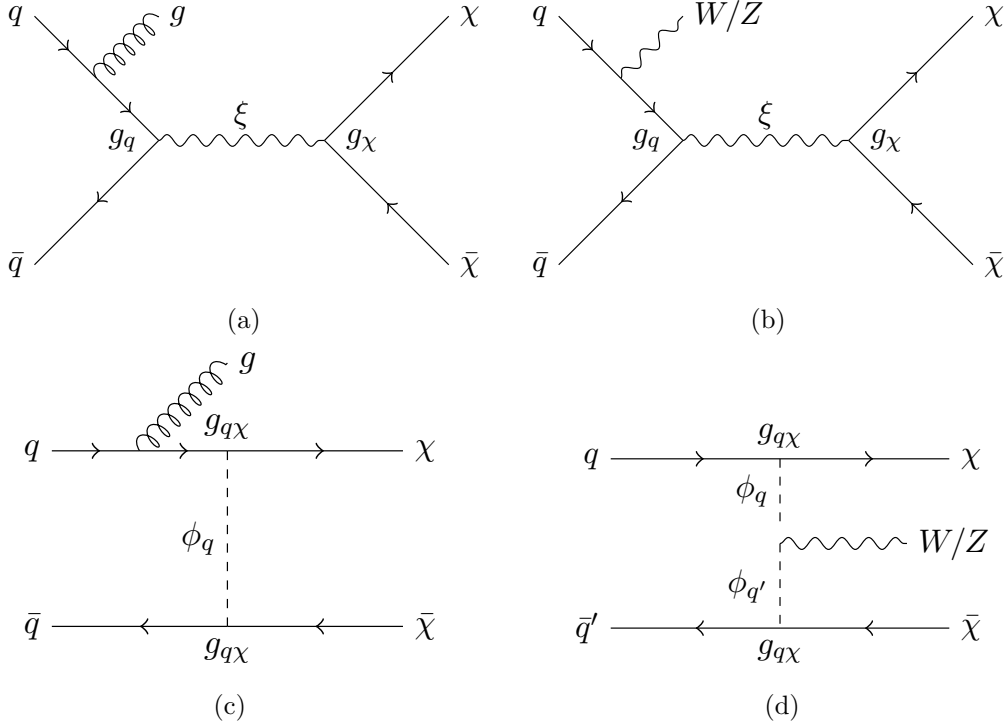
## 143 2.2 The mono- $X + E_T^{\text{miss}}$ signatures

144 The mono- $X + E_T^{\text{miss}}$  signal (abbreviated to mono- $X$ ) is a popular collider signal in the  
 145 search for new physics, particularly in the search for dark matter. Since DM particles are  
 146 not expected to interact with detector material, they appear as missing transverse energy  
 147 when balanced against a visible object,  $X$ , that is radiated from the initial or intermediate  
 148 state. For the  $s$ -channel SiMs discussed above, only initial-state radiation is permitted; see  
 149 figs. 1a and 1b for examples. For the  $tS$  model, radiation of a gluon or electroweak (EW)  
 150 boson is permitted both from initial state partons (fig. 1c) or from the mediator (fig. 1d).

151 The most likely scenario at the LHC is production of a jet alongside the invisible  $\chi$  pair,  
 152 as a result of the strong coupling and prevalence of partons in the initial state. However,  
 153 to fully exploit the potential of the ATLAS detector to record and identify a vast array of  
 154 particle types, we also consider two additional channels. Firstly, we take advantage of the  
 155 relative cleanliness and simplicity of leptons in the leptonically-decaying mono- $(Z \rightarrow \ell^+ \ell^-)$   
 156 channel. We also take advantage of the large hadronic branching fraction, and developing  
 157 jet-identification techniques for boosted EW bosons, in the hadronically-decaying mono-  
 158  $(W/Z \rightarrow jj)$  channel<sup>3</sup>. In both cases, the large multi-jet background is reduced, and  
 159 complications in jet production such as parton-matching can be ignored, making these an

<sup>2</sup>The exception being in the validation of the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel, see Sec. B.2.

<sup>3</sup>In addition, one of the first Run II dark matter search results from ATLAS was from this channel [60], released during the preparation of this paper.



**Figure 1:** Representative dark matter pair-production processes with a gluon or  $W/Z$  boson in the final state for the  $s$ -channel (a,b) and  $t$ -channel (c,d) models.

interesting alternative to the mono-jet channel where speed, efficiency and a reduction in jet-associated uncertainties may make up for a loss in sensitivity.

### 2.3 Mass and coupling points

A representative set of dark matter and mediator masses, listed in table 1, are chosen for study in each detection channel. DM masses of 3, 30 and 300 GeV are also included in the mono- $Z$ (lep) channel, where ease of production permits higher granularity. All  $(m_\chi, M_{\text{med}})$  combinations are allowed in the  $sV$  and  $sA$  models, while in the  $tS$  model  $M_{\text{med}}$  must be greater than  $m_\chi$  to ensure stability of the DM particle. The couplings  $g_q$  and  $g_{q\chi}$  are set to unity, while the DM-mediator coupling in the  $s$ -channel models,  $g_\chi$ , is varied from 0.2 to 5. The mediator masses are chosen to cover a broad range of parameter space and to coincide with predominantly three regimes: (near-)degenerate ( $M_{\text{med}} \approx m_\chi$ ), on-shell ( $M_{\text{med}} \geq 2m_\chi$ ) and off-shell ( $M_{\text{med}} < 2m_\chi$ ).

### 2.4 Treatment of the width

An important factor when considering SiMs is to ensure that the mediator width is treated appropriately, as it impacts both the cross-section calculation and, in some cases, the kinematic behaviour of the model.

Following the DM Forum recommendations [53], we use the minimal width, allowing coupling to all kinematically accessible quarks. We assume minimal flavour violation, which

$m_\chi$ [GeV]	$M_{\text{med}}$ [GeV]	$s$ -channel		$t$ -channel
		$g_q$	$g_\chi$	$g_{q\chi}$
1, (3), 10, (30), 100, (300), 1000	1, 2, 10, 20, 100, 200, 1000, 2000	1	0.2, 0.5, 1, 2, 5	1

**Table 1:** Mass and coupling points chosen for the analysis of simplified dark matter models. Values in brackets are only included in the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel. The mediator masses are primarily representative of three regimes: (near-)degenerate ( $M_{\text{med}} \approx m_\chi$ ), on-shell ( $M_{\text{med}} \geq 2m_\chi$ ) and off-shell ( $M_{\text{med}} < 2m_\chi$ ). For the  $t$ -channel model,  $M_{\text{med}} > m_\chi$  is required to ensure stability of the DM particle.

implies a universal coupling to all quark flavours. The minimum width for each model is given by:

$$\begin{aligned} \Gamma_{sV} = & \frac{g_\chi^2 M}{12\pi} \left(1 + \frac{2m_\chi^2}{M^2}\right) \left(1 - \frac{4m_\chi^2}{M^2}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \Theta(M - 2m_\chi) \\ & + \sum_q \frac{g_q^2 M}{4\pi} \left(1 + \frac{2m_q^2}{M^2}\right) \left(1 - \frac{4m_q^2}{M^2}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}} \Theta(M - 2m_q) \end{aligned} \quad (2.4)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Gamma_{sA} = & \frac{g_\chi^2 M}{12\pi} \left(1 - \frac{4m_\chi^2}{M^2}\right)^{\frac{3}{2}} \Theta(M - 2m_\chi) \\ & + \sum_q \frac{g_q^2 M}{4\pi} \left(1 - \frac{4m_q^2}{M^2}\right)^{\frac{3}{2}} \Theta(M - 2m_q) \end{aligned} \quad (2.5)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Gamma_{tS} = & \sum_q \frac{g_{q\chi}^2 M}{16\pi} \left(1 - \frac{m_q^2}{M^2} - \frac{m_\chi^2}{M^2}\right) \\ & \times \sqrt{\left(1 - \frac{m_q^2}{M^2} + \frac{m_\chi^2}{M^2}\right)^2 - 4 \frac{m_\chi^2}{M^2}} \Theta(M - m_q - m_\chi) \end{aligned} \quad (2.6)$$

It is possible that the mediator may decay to other SM or BSM particles [31], but this is not expected to have a large effect on the kinematic distribution as long as the width remains relatively small [53]. The generator treatment of the mediator as a Breit-Wigner propagator, rather than a true kinetic propagator, breaks down for large widths [57, 70].

We can take advantage of the fact that for each point in  $(m_\chi, M_{\text{med}})$  phase space, the mediator width (and therefore the couplings) do not greatly affect a model's kinematic behaviour (with the notable exception of the  $tS$  model in the mono-jet channel). This is demonstrated in fig. 2, where we plot a simplified  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  distribution (as a proxy for the full selection in each analysis) for the  $sV$  (representing both the  $sV$  and  $sA$  models) and  $tS$  models for two mass points and a demonstrative set of couplings such that  $\Gamma < M_{\text{med}}/2$ . The  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  distribution is predominantly independent of the mediator width for the  $s$ -

channel models in the mono-jet channel, and all models in the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ <sup>4</sup> channel. However, there is a clear variation in the kinematic behaviour of the  $tS$  model in the mono-jet channel, which can be attributed to additional diagrams (accessible only in this channel) featuring a gluon in the initial state and subsequently allowing the mediator to go on-shell. In this scenario, when the resulting quark and DM particle are both small compared to the mediator mass, they share equally its energy leading to a peak in the  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  distribution at approximately half the mediator mass.

In the cases where the kinematic distribution is independent of the width, we assume that the impact of the selection cuts in each channel is unchanged by the couplings. In this case, the following relations approximately hold:

$$\sigma \propto \begin{cases} g_q^2 g_\chi^2 / \Gamma & \text{if } M_{\text{med}} \geq 2m_{\text{DM}} \\ g_q^2 g_\chi^2 & \text{if } M_{\text{med}} < 2m_{\text{DM}} \end{cases} \quad (2.7)$$

in the  $sV$  and  $sA$  models [57], and

$$\sigma \propto g_{q\chi}^4 \quad (2.8)$$

in the  $tS$  model. When valid, these approximations allow us to greatly simplify our limit calculations, and for this reason, we restrict our primary results to regions of parameter space where  $\Gamma/M_{\text{med}} < 0.5$  (see app. A for further details of the limit-setting calculation).

More problematically, it was noted by refs. [57, 70] that the Breit-Wigner propagator breaks down in the  $m_{\text{DM}} \gg M_{\text{med}}$  region even if  $\Gamma/M_{\text{med}}$  is small. To correct for this we follow ref. [57], and rescale the cross section in the  $m_{\text{DM}} > M_{\text{med}}$  region by a factor which takes into account the error introduced by using the Breit-Wigner propagator in the generator. The factor is found by convolving the PDF with both the kinetic and Breit-Wigner propagators in turn and taking the ratio at each mass point. We approximate the kinetic propagator by making the substitution  $M_{\text{med}}\Gamma(M_{\text{med}}) \rightarrow s\Gamma(\sqrt{s})/M_{\text{med}}$  in the Breit-Wigner propagator.

A full study of the  $tS$  model within the mono-jet channel, where altering the coupling can lead to changed kinematic behaviour, has been performed elsewhere [23], and requires the production of individual samples for each coupling point. This, combined with the challenges associated with including differing orders of  $\alpha_s$ , make the generation process computationally expensive compared to the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  and mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  channels. We therefore exclude an analysis of the  $tS$  model in the mono-jet channel in this work.

### 3 Recasting mono- $X$ constraints

The procedure for recasting existing mono- $X$  analyses to obtain SiM constraints follows a simple cut-and-count methodology. Firstly, signal events are simulated (described below in section 3.1) with object  $p_T$  smearing applied to approximate the detection efficiency of the ATLAS detector,  $\epsilon$ . The event selection criteria of the mono- $X$  analysis of interest

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<sup>4</sup>In this discussion, the mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  channel can be assumed to follow the same logic as for the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel.





**Figure 2:** The  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  distribution of the  $sV$  and  $tS$  models in the mono-jet and mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channels, for some exemplary masses. The parameter  $\mu$  is defined as  $\Gamma/M_{\text{med}}$ , and is used to demonstrate the impact of a changing width; the  $tS$  model in the mono-jet channel shows a clear width-dependence. The widths are obtained with couplings of 0.1, 1 and 5 where  $\mu < 0.5$  remains true.

is then applied to the simulated signal samples. Events surviving the selection criteria are counted to determine the likelihood of a dark matter event being observed (referred to as the acceptance,  $\mathcal{A}$ ), which is then used in combination with channel-specific model-independent limits on new physics events to limit the parameter space of a given model. For a comprehensive description of the recasting procedure, see appendix A.

In this paper, mono-jet constraints are derived from a search for new phenomena conducted by the ATLAS Collaboration using  $pp$  collisions at  $\sqrt{s} = 8$  TeV as described in ref. [41]. Similarly, the leptonic mono- $Z$  and hadronic mono- $W/Z$  constraints are derived from ATLAS dark matter searches that were optimised for the D1, D5 and D9 effective operators [47, 48]. These analyses are described in further detail in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 respectively.

### 3.1 Signal simulation

Monte Carlo simulated event samples are used to model the expected signal for each channel and for each SiM. Leading order matrix elements for the process  $pp \rightarrow X + \chi\bar{\chi}$  (where  $X$  is specifically one or two jets<sup>5</sup>, a  $Z(\rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-)$  boson or a  $W/Z(\rightarrow jj)$  boson) are first simulated using MADGRAPH5\_aMC@NLO v2.2.2 [49] with the MSTW2008lo68cl PDF [50]. During this stage, the renormalisation and factorisation scales are set to the default sum of  $\sqrt{m^2 + p_T^2}$  for all particles in the final state. Showering and hadronisation are then performed by PYTHIA 8.201 [58] with the appropriate PDF and using the ATLAS UE Tune AU2-MSTW2008LO [51]. Reconstruction of small-radius jets (hereon referred to just as ‘jets’) for the mono-jet channel is performed by FASTJET [63] using the anti- $k_T$  algorithm with radius parameter  $R = 0.4$ . Similarly, reconstruction of large-radius jets for the mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  channel is performed using the Cambridge-Aachen algorithm with  $R = 1.2$ . The latter channel also includes a mass-drop filtering procedure with  $\mu = 0.67$  and  $\sqrt{y}$ <sup>6</sup> = 0.4 (see ref. [62] for further details), which favours large- $R$  jets with two balanced subjets, consistent with the decay of an EW boson to a (potentially boosted) dijet pair. Lastly, the detector response is approximated by applying a Gaussian smearing factor to the  $p_T$  of all leptons and jets.

#### 3.1.1 Parton matching scheme

In the ATLAS mono-jet analysis, matching of partons generated in MADGRAPH5 to jets generated in PYTHIA 8 is performed using the MLM scheme [61], with two matching scales, or values of ‘QCUT’, per mass/coupling point. In combination, the QCUT values span a broad kinematic range with a cut placed on the leading jet  $p_T$  per event to avoid double-counting. This treatment aims to mitigate the impact of the matching scale on the shape of the  $p_T$  and  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  distributions; that is, to reduce the uncertainty in those areas of phase space where the transferred momentum is significantly larger or smaller than the QCUT value. For the analysis of SiMs, we use instead a single matching scale of 80 GeV. Though not ideal, this approach suitably reproduces the results of the ATLAS mono-jet analysis for the masses of interest (see Sec. B.1). Importantly, it also reduces the complexity and computational expense involved in estimating limits for the mono-jet channel.

We now move to a discussion of each of the mono- $X$  channels separately.

### 3.2 Mono-jet constraints

The ATLAS mono-jet +  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  analysis [41] was originally designed to set limits on three new physics scenarios, the most relevant of which is the production of WIMP DM within the context of a set of effective operators. The analysis also includes a brief study of a  $Z'$  DM model which is analogous to our  $sV$  model. **mention third signal scenario? or not mention it before?**

Signal selection is carried out based on at least one hard jet recoiling against missing energy. To ensure that the correct back-to-back jet +  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  topology is selected events are

<sup>5</sup>Jets are seeded by any parton excluding the (anti-)top quark.

<sup>6</sup> $\sqrt{y} = \min(p_{T_{j_1}}, p_{T_{j_2}})\Delta R/m_{jet}$  is the momentum balance of the two leading subjets.

required to have a leading jet,  $j_1$ , with  $p_T > 120$  GeV and  $|\eta| < 2.0$  satisfying  $p_T^{j_1}/E_T^{\text{miss}} > 0.5$ . Surviving events must then fulfill  $|\Delta\phi(j, \vec{E}_T^{\text{miss}})| > 1.0$ , where  $j$  is any jet with  $p_T > 30$  GeV and  $|\eta| < 4.5$ . This criterion reduces the multijet background contribution where the large  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  originates mainly from jet energy mismeasurements. Note that there is no upper limit placed on the number of jets per event. The contribution from the dominant background processes,  $W/Z$ +jets, is managed with a veto on events containing muons or electrons with  $p_T > 7$  GeV. Lastly, nine separate signal regions are defined with increasing lower thresholds on  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$ , which range from 150 GeV to 700 GeV as shown in table 2.

The ATLAS mono-jet analysis revealed no significant deviation of observed events from the expected SM backgrounds in the 8 TeV dataset of Run I. Subsequently, model-independent limits on new physics signatures were provided in terms of the visible cross-section,  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$ ; these are listed in table 2.

Signal Region	$E_T^{\text{miss}}$ threshold [GeV]	$\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$ [fb]
SR1	150	726 (935)
SR2	200	194 (271)
SR3	250	90 (106)
SR4	300	45 (51)
SR5	350	21 (29)
SR6	400	12 (17)
SR7	500	7.2 (7.2)
SR8	600	3.8 (3.2)
SR9	700	3.4 (1.8)

**Table 2:** The ATLAS mono-jet  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  signal regions and corresponding observed (expected) model-independent upper limits on  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  at 95% confidence level. Adapted from ref. [41].

The signal simulation procedure outlined in sec. 3.1 and implementation of the selection criteria discussed above were validated for the mono-jet channel via reproduction of ATLAS limits on the suppression scale,  $M_\star \equiv M_{\text{med}}/\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$ , for the  $Z'$  model. The details of this process are contained in appendix B.1. Importantly, we observe agreement within  $\sim 12\%$  for all samples.

### 3.3 Mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ constraints

The ATLAS mono- $Z(\text{lep}) + E_T^{\text{miss}}$  analysis [47] was principally designed to constrain a set of EFT models of DM. As a secondary focus, it also includes a short study of a  $t$ -channel SiM similar to our  $tS$  model.

The selection criteria for this analysis are summarised as follows (see the paper for a full description). Electrons (muons) are required to have a  $p_T$  greater than 20 GeV, and  $|\eta|$  less than 2.47 (2.5). Two opposite-sign, same-flavour leptons are selected, and required to have invariant mass and pseudorapidity such that  $m_{\ell\ell} \in [76, 106]$  GeV and  $|\eta^{\ell\ell}| < 2.5$ . The reconstructed  $Z$  boson should be approximately back-to-back and balanced against

the  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$ , ensured with the selections  $\Delta\phi(\vec{E}_T^{\text{miss}}, p_T^{\ell\ell}) > 2.5$  and  $|p_T^{\ell\ell} - E_T^{\text{miss}}|/p_T^{\ell\ell} < 0.5$ . Events containing a jet with  $p_T > 25$  GeV and  $|\eta| < 2.5$  are vetoed. Events are also vetoed if they contain a third lepton with  $p_T > 7$  GeV. The signal regions are defined by increasing lower  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  thresholds:  $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 150, 250, 350, 450$  GeV.

A cut-and-count strategy is used to estimate the total observed yields and expected SM backgrounds in each signal region. The limits on  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  are not publicly available, so we take the numbers of expected and observed events, along with the associated uncertainties, and convert these into model-dependent upper limits with a single implementation of the HistFitter framework [54] using a frequentist calculator and a one-sided profile likelihood test statistic (the LHC default). The results of this process are displayed in table 3. Note that we use signal regions 1 and 2 only, as our simplified HistFitter approach is inadequate to handle the very low statistics of signal regions 3 and 4. These upper limits are also used for the validation of the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  signal generation and selection procedures (see app. B.2).

Signal Region	$E_T^{\text{miss}}$ threshold [GeV]	$\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$ [fb]
SR1	150	1.59 (1.71)
SR2	250	0.291 (0.335)

**Table 3:** The ATLAS mono- $Z(\text{lep}) + E_T^{\text{miss}}$  signal regions and corresponding observed (expected) model-independent upper limits on  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  at 95% confidence level. Adapted using HistFitter from ref. [47].

### 3.4 Mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$ constraints

The ATLAS mono- $W/Z(\text{had}) + E_T^{\text{miss}}$  search [48] was aimed at constraining the spin-independent effective operators C1, D1, and D5, and the spin-dependent operator D9. The search was originally designed to exploit the constructive interference of  $W$  boson emission from opposite-sign up-type and down-type quarks, leading to DM production wherein the mono- $W$  channel is dominant. Recent studies [64] have revealed this scenario to violate gauge invariance and so we ignore it in this analysis.

The mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  event selection is carried out as follows. Large-radius jets are selected using a mass-drop filtering procedure (see sec. 3.1) to suppress non- $W/Z$  processes. Events are required to contain at least one large- $R$  jet with  $p_T > 250$  GeV,  $|\eta| < 1.2$  and a mass,  $m_{\text{jet}}$ , within a 30-40 GeV window of the  $W/Z$  mass (i.e.  $m_{\text{jet}} \in [50, 120]$  GeV). In order to reduce the  $t\bar{t}$  and multijet backgrounds, a veto removes events containing a small- $R$  jet with  $\Delta\phi(\text{jet}, E_T^{\text{miss}}) < 0.4$ , or containing more than one small- $R$  jet with  $p_T > 40$  GeV,  $|\eta| < 4.5$ , and  $\Delta R(\text{small-}R \text{ jet}, \text{large-}R \text{ jet}) > 0.9$ . Electrons, muons and photons are vetoed if their  $p_T$  is larger than 10 GeV and they lie within  $|\eta| < 2.47$  (electrons), 2.5 (muons), 2.37 (photons). Two signal regions were defined with  $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 350$  GeV and  $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 500$  GeV.

330 The ATLAS analysis used a shape-fit of the mass distribution of the large- $R$  jet to  
 331 estimate the background yields in the two signal regions, along with the associated statis-  
 332 tical and systematic uncertainties. As in the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  case, we do not take the shapes  
 333 into account but convert the published number of expected and observed events into upper  
 334 limits on the expected and observed number of new physics events using the HistFitter  
 335 framework. For the  $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 500$  GeV signal region, we obtain the limits shown in table 4.  
 336 We do not consider the first signal region with  $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 350$  GeV in the recasting proce-  
 337 dure, since the cut-and-count limits extracted could not be convincingly validated. The  
 338 high  $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  signal region was found to be optimal for most operators studied by the ATLAS  
 339 analysis.

Signal Region	$E_T^{\text{miss}}$ threshold [GeV]	$\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$ [fb]
SR2	500	1.35 (1.34)

**Table 4:** The ATLAS mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$   $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  signal region considered in this work and corresponding observed (expected) model-independent upper limits on  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  at 95% confidence level. Adapted using HistFitter from ref. [48].

## 340 4 Results and discussion

### 341 4.1 Limits on the couplings $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$

342 The 95% confidence level upper limits on the  $sV$  and  $sA$  model coupling combination  
 343  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$ , and the  $tS$  model coupling  $g_{q\chi}$ , obtained from each of the mono- $X$  channels, are  
 344 presented in figs. 3-8. These quantities were evaluated as described in appendix A (in-  
 345 cluding statistical and systematic uncertainties), and correspond to the best limits of each  
 346 signal region tested.

347 In each plot, limits are shown ranging from  $<0.01$  to the upper perturbative limit<sup>7</sup> for  
 348 each coupling,  $4\pi$ ; where a limit was calculated to be larger than this, the limit is considered  
 349 meaningless and the region is coloured grey. The white (hatched) regions coincide with  
 350 those mass points which yield an initial (final) value of  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$  or  $g_{q\chi}$  which fails to satisfy  
 351  $\Gamma < M_{\text{med}}/2$ . (We observe that values for which the width is just within our upper validity  
 352 bound of  $M_{\text{med}}/2$  may be pushed over into the invalid range with the addition of new  
 353 particles, not considered here, which would serve to increase the mediator width.) When  
 354  $g_\chi/g_q = 0.2$ , only the mono-jet channel produces limits which survive this requirement,  
 355 and so these are shown separately in fig 7.

356 Detailed comments specific to each channel are provided below, however some trends  
 357 are channel-independent. For the  $sV$  model, strong limits exist when  $M_{\text{med}} > 2m_\chi$  as the  
 358 mediator can go on-shell, thereby enhancing the cross-section. The  $sA$  model limits are  
 359 generally similar to the  $sV$  model limits except in the region corresponding to  $m_{\text{DM}} \gtrsim$

<sup>7</sup>We note that perturbativity is questionable for couplings greater than  $\sim 2 - 3$ , however  $4\pi$  is an oft-quoted hard upper limit.

360  $\sqrt{4\pi}M_{\text{med}}/g_{\chi}^{\text{gen}}$  where  $g_{\chi}^{\text{gen}}$  is the DM coupling used at the generator level. We remove  
 361 this region in the  $sA$  model to avoid violating perturbative unitarity, which can lead to  
 362 an unphysical enhancement of the cross-section when the DM mass is much larger than  
 363 the mediator mass [71, 75]. The upper limit on  $\sqrt{g_q g_{\chi}}$  is relatively constant across values  
 364 of  $g_{\chi}/g_q$ , as is expected when the coupling (and hence the width) has been demonstrated  
 365 to have little effect on kinematic behaviour (see sec 2.4), and using the assumptions of  
 366 eq. 2.7. As the ratio increases, points in the region  $M_{\text{med}} > m_{\chi}$  disappear as the initial  
 367 value,  $g_q = 1$ , leads to a failure of the width condition. However, one could easily choose  
 368 a smaller initial value of  $g_q$  to recover these points, and we suggest that the limits in this  
 369 region would be quite similar to those seen in the  $g_{\chi}/g_q = 0.2$  and 0.5 cases.

370 The constraints on the coupling strength are weaker when  $m_{\chi}$  or  $M_{\text{med}}$  is large ( $>100$   
 371 GeV) owing to suppression of the cross-section. In this region, the constraints are expected  
 372 to improve at higher centre-of-mass energies. For small DM masses with an off-shell me-  
 373 diator, the  $E_{\text{T}}^{\text{miss}}$  distribution is softer, therefore results in this region of phase space are  
 374 limited by statistical uncertainties associated with the tail-end of the distribution. This  
 375 region of phase space would benefit from further optimisation of event selection in analyses  
 376 aimed at the study of simplified models, as we expect to see in the upcoming Run II results.

377 These mono- $X$  searches are complementary to direct searches for the mediator via dijet  
 378 resonances [29, 67–69]. These have been used to study SiMs in, for example, [23, 70, 75].  
 379 Dijet studies search for the signature of a direct mediator decay into standard model  
 380 particles, generally assuming a narrow resonance. These constraints can be stronger than  
 381 mono- $X$  constraints, particularly when the width is small and when the coupling to quarks  
 382 is large relative to the coupling to DM. Mono- $X$  searches however have the advantage for  
 383 larger values of  $g_{\chi}/g_q$  and smaller mediator masses.

384 We now examine channel-specific trends.

#### 385 4.1.1 Mono-jet channel

386 The mono-jet channel upper limits on the coupling combination  $\sqrt{g_q g_{\chi}}$  for the  $sV$  and  
 387  $sA$  models are displayed in the left-hand column of figs. 3-6, for  $g_{\chi}/g_q = 0.5, 1, 2$  and  
 388 5 respectively (where the ratio of 5 is only shown for the  $sV$  model, due to a lack of  
 389 meaningful results in the  $sA$  model). The  $g_{\chi}/g_q = 0.2$  case is shown separately in fig. 7, as  
 390 these limits are only meaningful within this channel.

391 As expected, the mono-jet channel produces the strongest coupling limits for both  
 392  $s$ -channel models, which are better than those from the next-best mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel  
 393 by a factor of a few. For these models, the weakest limits result for large  $m_{\chi}$  or large  
 394  $M_{\text{med}}$ , and in fact are so weak that they are pushed into the region of invalidity where  
 395  $\Gamma > M_{\text{med}}/2$ . Although the acceptance is considerably higher when both  $m_{\text{DM}}$  and  $M_{\text{med}}$   
 396 are large compared to low masses, the cross-section is sufficiently small so as to nullify any  
 397 gain. Within the valid region ( $m_{\chi} \in [1, 100]$  GeV and  $M_{\text{med}} \in [1, 200]$  GeV), the limit  
 398 on  $\sqrt{g_q g_{\chi}}$  generally ranges from 0.1 to 0.7, with a handful of on-shell masses reaching a  
 399 limit of  $\sim 0.05$  in the large  $g_{\chi}/g_q$  case. In the large  $g_{\chi}/g_q$  scenario, limits for  $m_{\chi} = 1000$   
 400 GeV start to become valid; where  $\sqrt{g_q g_{\chi}}$  remains constant but  $g_{\chi}/g_q$  increases, the value

of  $g_q$  is pushed downward and so the width, which is dominated by decays to SM particles, decreases with respect to  $m_{\text{DM}}$ .

The uncertainties on the limits for both  $s$ -channel models are dominated by contributions from the matching scale at acceptance-level, and generally range from  $\sim 5\%$  to  $46\%$ .

#### 4.1.2 Mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ channel

The simplicity of the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel relative to the mono-jet channel, and the ease of signal simulation at MADGRAPH5 level allowed us to study a finer granularity of points in the mass phase space. The resulting limits on the  $sV$  and  $sA$  models are shown in the central column of figs. 3-6. While the behaviour of the limits as  $g_\chi/g_q$  is varied is similar to that within the mono-jet channel, the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  limits are overall weaker by a factor of a few.

The total relative uncertainties on  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$  for the  $s$ -channel models are generally within  $10\%$ , but can range up to  $80\%$  in a few cases where  $m_\chi$  is small; they are in general split equally between statistical and systematic contributions.

The advantage of the mono-boson channels is in the study of the  $tS$  model; since this was not included in the mono-jet channel the strongest limits are obtained with the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  analysis, and are shown in the left-hand side of fig. 8. Note that, in comparison to the  $s$ -channel models, the limits have weakened by a factor of 10. This is the result of an orders-of-magnitude weaker cross-section and the inability of the mediator to go on-shell in this channel. We find stronger limits for smaller  $m_\chi$  and  $M_{\text{med}}$  masses, where larger cross-sections compensate for lower acceptances at these points. Overall, the uncertainties contribute less than  $10\%$ .

#### 4.1.3 Mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$ channel

The limits on the couplings of the  $sV$ ,  $sA$  and  $tS$  models, obtained within the mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  channel, are shown in the right-hand column of figs. 3-8. This channel was included for comparison with the leptonic mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel in particular, but a coarser selection of masses was chosen as the limits were initially found to be somewhat weaker. Additionally, further estimates were made: a) as the kinematic behaviour is reasonably independent of the couplings, a single acceptance was found for each  $(m_\chi, M_{\text{med}})$  combination and applied to each value of  $g_\chi/g_q$ , and b) complete systematic uncertainties were generated for a subset of masses and compared to those from the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel; from this comparison the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  systematic uncertainties were multiplied by 2 and then applied to the mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  limits. As a result, the limits obtained in this channel are not intended to be rigorously quantitative; rather, they are used to indicate qualitatively how the channel compares.

The ATLAS mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  analysis (and in particular the higher  $E_{\text{T}}^{\text{miss}}$  signal region) was not optimised for a SiM interpretation, and much of the phase space produced insignificant numbers of events passing the event selection, with up to 200 thousand events generated. Generally, the limits are a factor of a few weaker than those from the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel, which is both consistent with the limits on the EFT models studied in the



ATLAS analyses, and expected following our use of a cut-and-count interpretation, rather than a shape analysis, of the mono- $W/Z$ (had) public results.

In some cases the limits become comparable with the mono- $Z$ (lep) channel, suggesting that more statistics and an improved treatment of systematic uncertainties would bring these closer in line with that channel.

Overall, the uncertainties from this channel lie within 5 to 50%, most of the time being between 10 and 30%. Generally, both statistical and systematic uncertainties contribute in a similar manner. A few points are clearly limited by the generated statistics, resulting in a statistical error of up to 90%. Points with high  $m_\chi$  and low  $M_{\text{med}}$  tend to have larger systematic uncertainties.

## 4.2 Comparison with relic density constraints

In figs. 3-8 we show lines where the constraint on the coupling corresponds to the coupling strength that would reproduce the correct DM relic density if DM is a thermal relic of the early universe. For points diagonally above and to the left of the solid purple line, the LHC constraints naively rule out the couplings leading to the correct relic density. Below and to the right of this line the relic density coupling is still allowed. In some cases the intercept does not pass through a significant number of data points surviving the quality criteria outlined in previous sections. In these cases the line is not shown.

In this scenario, the measured abundance is approximately related to the unknown self-annihilation cross-section via:

$$\Omega_{\text{DM}} h^2 \simeq \frac{2 \times 2.4 \times 10^{-10} \text{ GeV}^{-2}}{\langle \sigma v \rangle_{\text{ann}}}. \quad (4.1)$$

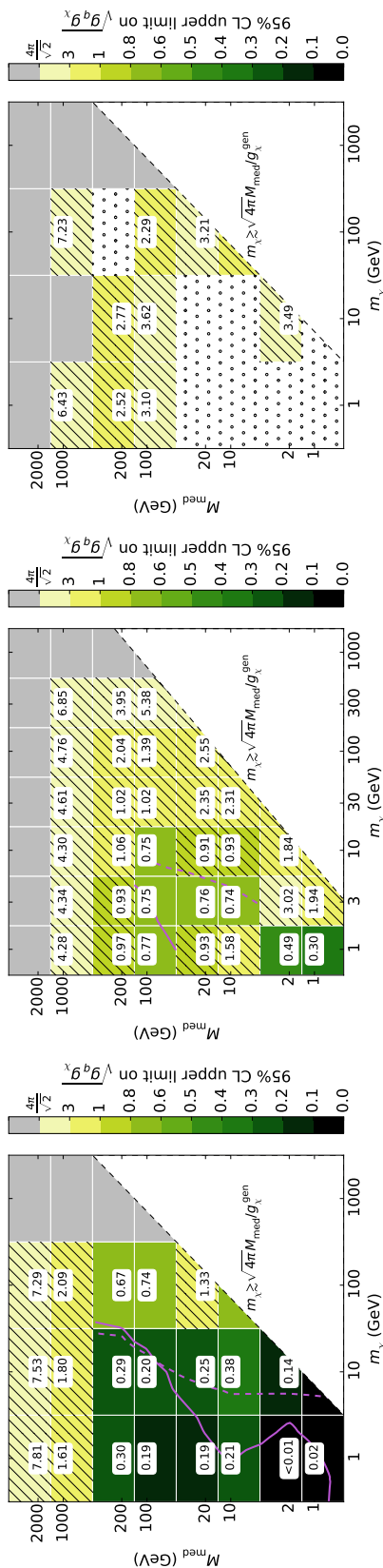
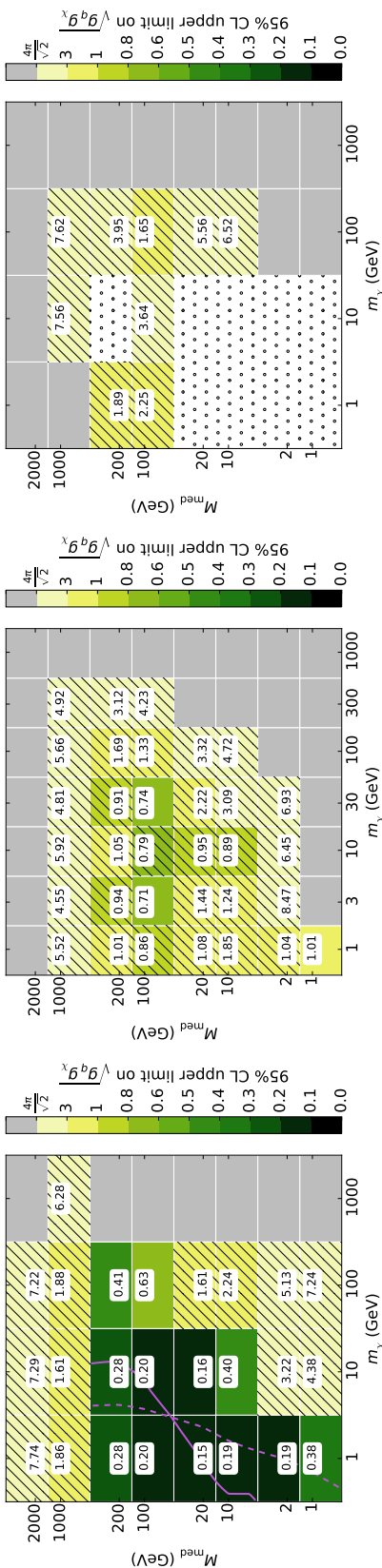
This is used with measurements of the DM abundance by Planck,  $\Omega_{\text{DM}}^{\text{obs}} h^2 = 0.1199 \pm 0.0027$  [36], to find  $\langle \sigma v \rangle_{\text{ann}} \simeq 4.0 \times 10^{-9} \text{ GeV}^{-2}$  for thermal relic DM. This relation is only approximately accurate, and so we use the micrOMEGAs code [52] to determine the coupling strength leading to the correct relic density for each model. This technique was verified against the semi-analytic technique outlined in e.g. ref. [37].

If the DM mass lies at the electroweak scale, the thermal relic scenario provides a natural explanation for the observed DM density. The coupling strengths leading to the correct relic density are therefore a natural benchmark with which to compare constraints from collider (and indeed direct detection) searches. However the relic density couplings should by no means be regarded as serious constraints. If DM is not produced thermally or there is an unknown effect which modifies the evolution of the density with temperature, then eq. 4.1 breaks down. Additionally, in the scenario where we assume DM to be a thermal relic, we ignore the possibility of there being other annihilation channels and other beyond-SM particles contributing to the DM abundance, which, if taken into account, would also invalidate eq. 4.1.

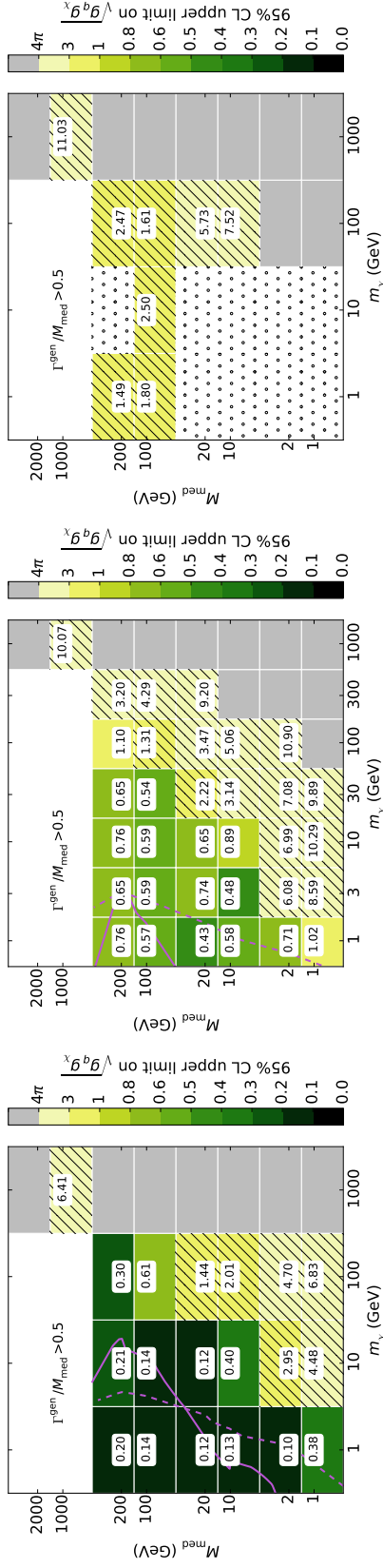
## 4.3 Comparison with direct detection constraints

In figs 3-8 we also show the intercept line where constraints from direct detection experiments are equivalent to our mono- $X$  constraints. Below and to the right of the dashed

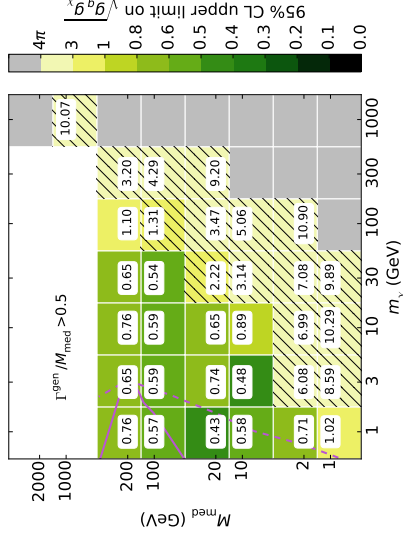




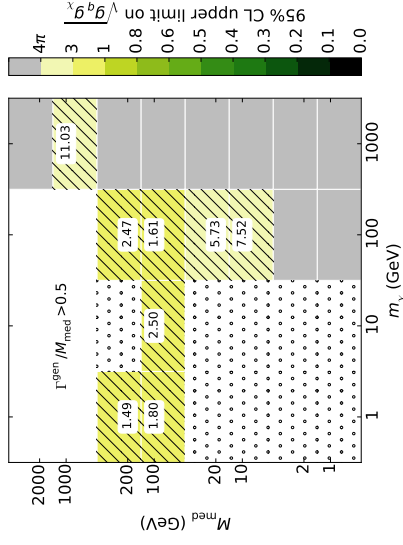
**Figure 3:** Upper limits on the coupling for the  $s$ -channel models in the mono-jet (left), mono- $Z$ (lep) (centre) and mono- $W/Z$ (had) (right) channels, for  $g_\chi/g_q = 0.5$ . The grey region represents the phase space where no meaningful limit was obtained. The hatched region represents a limit which leads to a width greater than  $M_{\text{med}}/2$ , so the validity of the calculation begins to fail. The dotted region represents phase space where insufficient statistics were available. The purple dotted line shows the threshold where direct detection constraints become stronger than the mono- $X$  constraint. Similarly the solid purple line shows where relic density constraints become stronger than mono- $X$  constraints. See the text for further details.



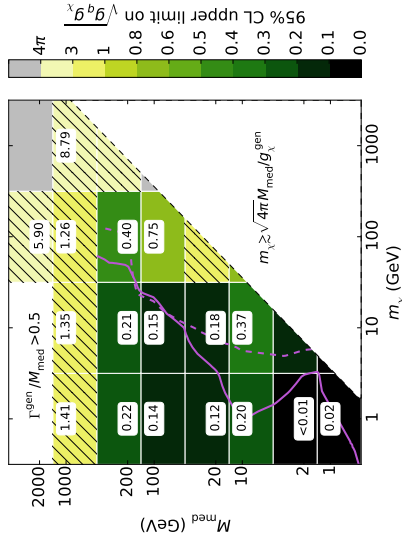
(a)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ , mono-jet channel.



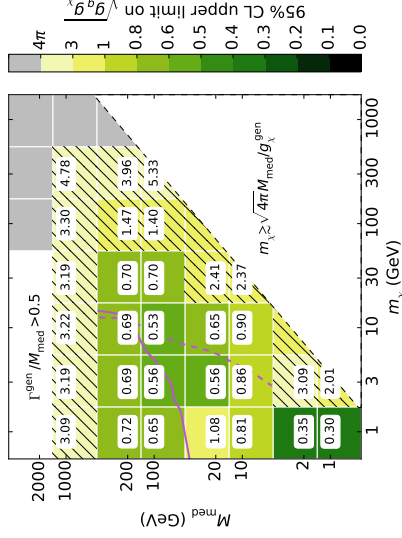
(b)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ , mono-Z channel.



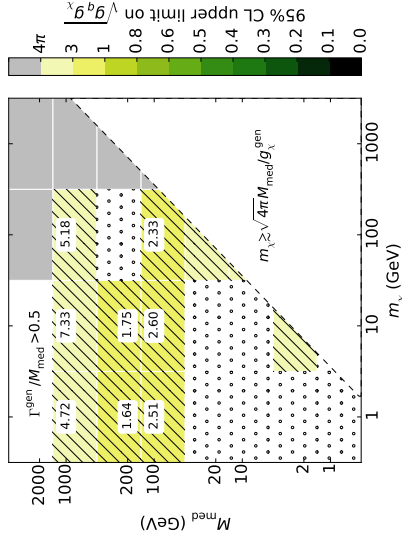
(c)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ , mono- $W/Z$  channel.



(d)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ , mono-jet channel.

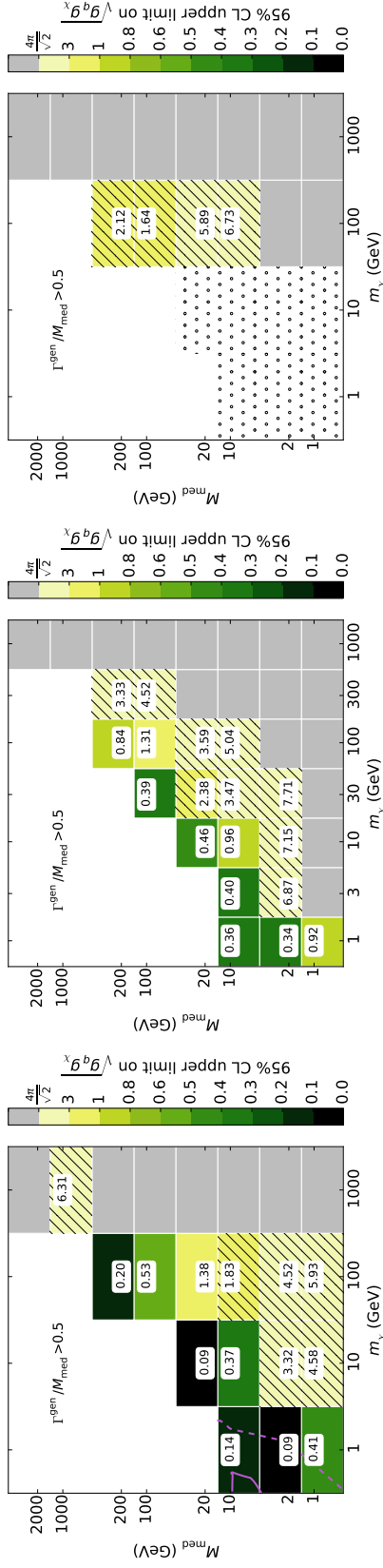


(e)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ , mono-Z channel.

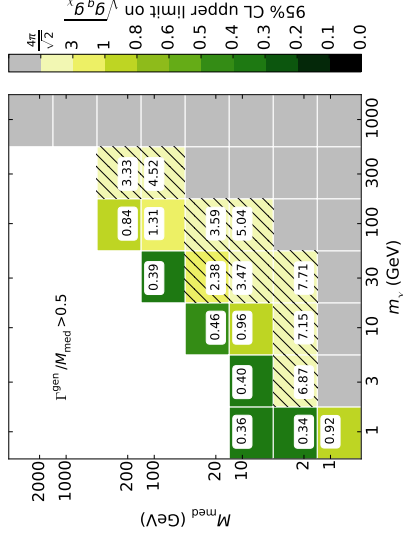


(f)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ , mono- $W/Z$  channel.

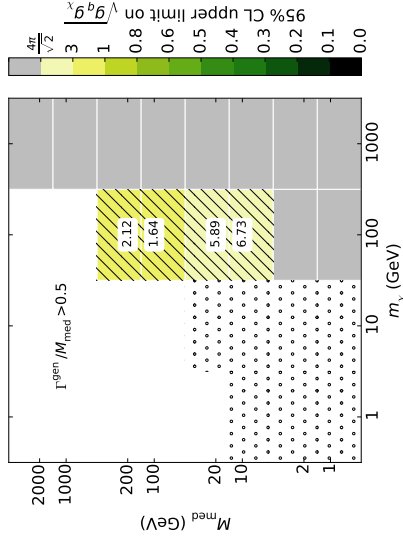
**Figure 4:** Upper limits on the couplings for the  $s$ -channel models in the mono-jet (left), mono- $Z$ (lep) (centre) and mono- $W/Z$ (had) (right) channels, for  $g_\chi/g_q = 1$ . Refer to fig. 3 for details.



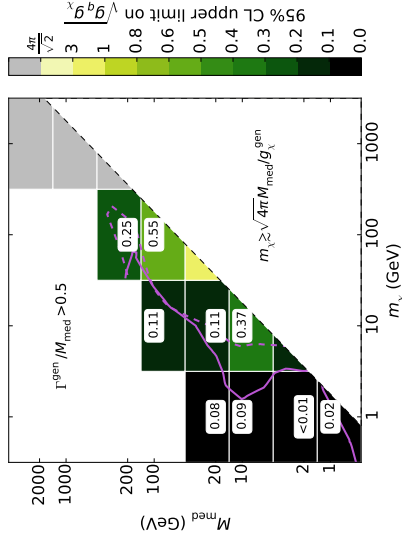
(a)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ , mono-jet channel.



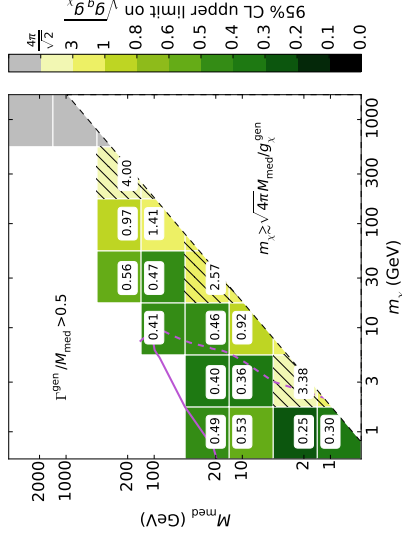
(b)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ , mono- $Z$  channel.



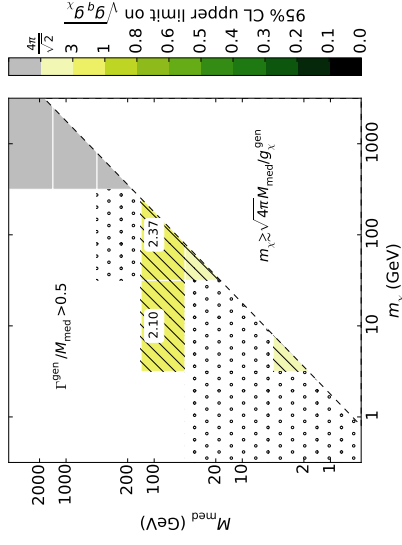
(c)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ , mono- $W/Z$  channel.



(d)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ , mono-jet channel.

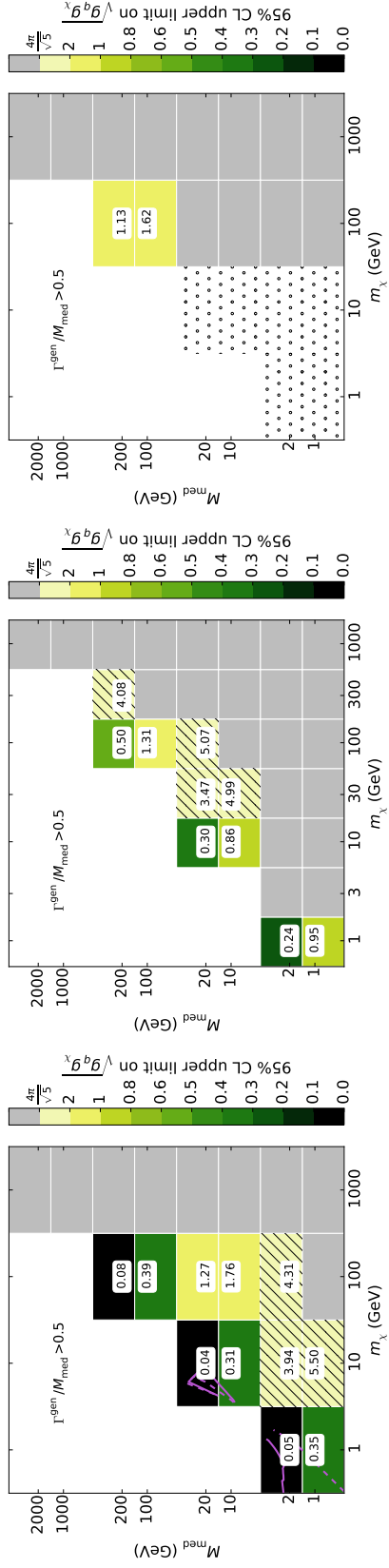


(e)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ , mono- $Z$  channel.



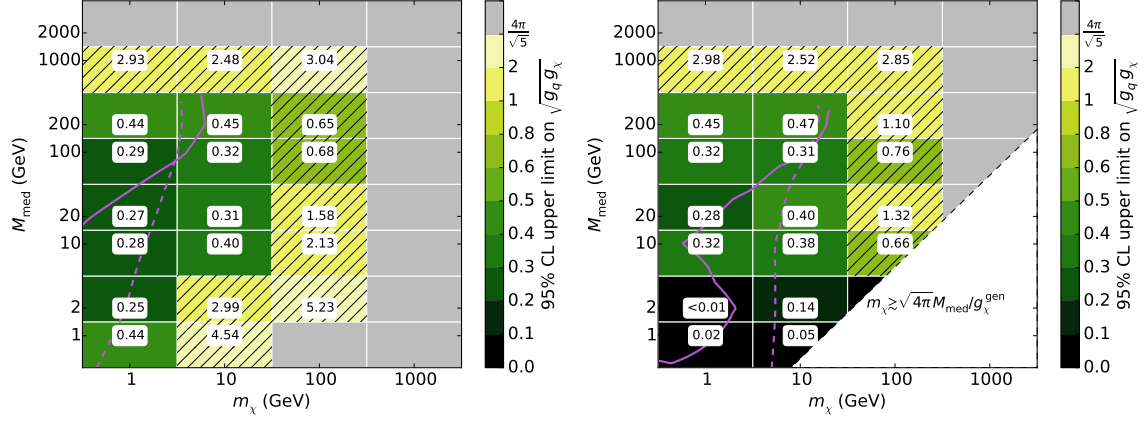
(f)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ , mono- $W/Z$  channel.

**Figure 5:** Upper limits on the coupling for the  $s$ -channel models in the mono-jet (left), mono- $Z$ (lep) (centre) and mono- $W/Z$ (had) (right) channels, for  $g_\chi/g_q = 2$ . Refer to fig. 3 for details.



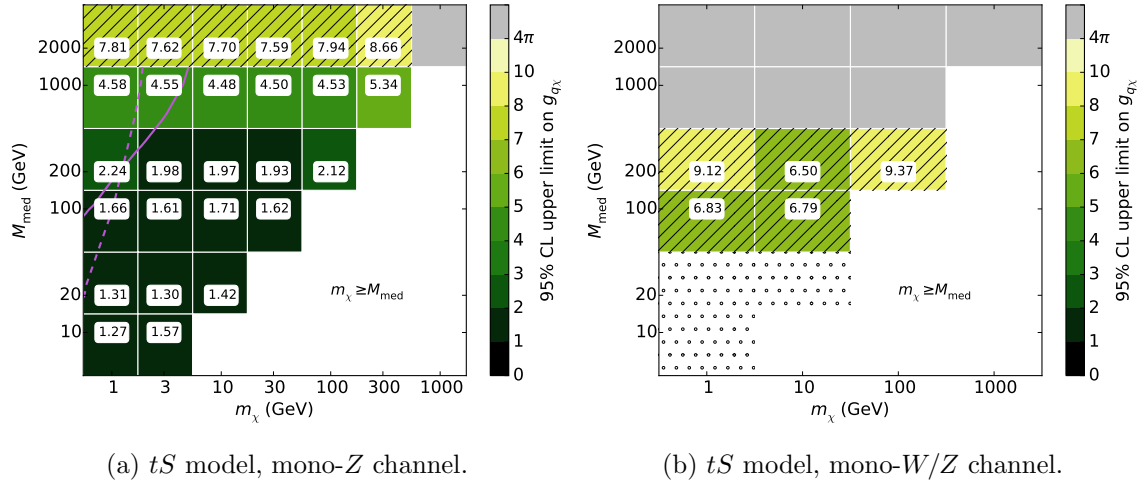
(a)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 5$ , mono-jet channel. (b)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 5$ , mono- $Z$  channel. (c)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 5$ , mono- $W/Z$  channel.

**Figure 6:** Upper limits on the coupling for the  $sV$  model in the mono-jet (left), mono- $Z$ (lep) (centre) and mono- $W/Z$ (had) (right) channels, for  $g_\chi/g_q = 5$ . Refer to fig. 3 for details.



(a)  $sV$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 0.2$ , mono-jet channel. (b)  $sA$  model,  $g_\chi/g_q = 0.2$ , mono-jet channel.

**Figure 7:** Upper limits on the coupling for the  $s$ -channel models in the mono-jet channel, for  $g_\chi/g_q = 0.2$ . Refer to fig. 3 for details.



(a)  $tS$  model, mono- $Z$  channel.

(b)  $tS$  model, mono- $W/Z$  channel.

**Figure 8:** Upper limits on the coupling  $g_{q\chi}$  for the  $t$ -channel model in the mono- $Z$ (lep) (left) and mono- $W/Z$ (had) (right) channels. Refer to fig. 3 for details.

purple line, direct detection constraints are stronger while above and to the left of this line, the LHC gives the stronger limit. As with the relic density contours, we do not show the intercept where it does not pass through sufficient valid data points. We use the toolset from ref. [65] to convert the strongest available direct detection constraints, which are from the LUX 2013 dataset [66], onto constraints on our models.

Compared to direct detection, the mono- $X$  collider limits perform relatively better for the  $sA$  model than for the  $sV$  model. This is because the axial-vector coupling leads to a suppressed scattering rate in direct detection experiments while collider searches are relatively insensitive to the difference between the vector and axial-vector couplings. In the non-relativistic limit, the  $tS$  model leads to a mix of both suppressed and unsuppressed operators.

The direct detection constraints assume that the DM candidate under consideration contributes 100% of the local DM density, while the mono- $X$  constraints make no assumptions about either the local DM density or overall abundance. In this sense the mono- $X$  limits remain useful even in those regions of phase space where they are not as strong as those from direct detection.

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper we have examined a set of three simplified dark matter models, extracting constraints from ATLAS Run I mono- $X$  plus missing energy searches featuring the associated production of a mono-jet,  $Z(\rightarrow \text{leptons})$ , or  $W/Z(\rightarrow \text{hadrons})$ . We explored a phase space where both the DM and mediator masses span  $\mathcal{O}(\text{GeV})$  to  $\mathcal{O}(\text{TeV})$ , and considered ratios of  $g_\chi/g_q$  of 0.2, 0.5, 1, 2 and 5 in the  $s$ -channel models. Rather than setting limits in the  $M_{\text{med}} - m_{\text{DM}}$  plane for a fixed value of the coupling strength, we instead constrained the coupling strength as a function of both  $M_{\text{med}}$  and  $m_{\text{DM}}$  in a 3D plane. Whilst this approach necessitates the introduction of some approximations, it also allows for a thorough examination of the interplay between the DM production cross-section and the free parameters of the models.

As expected, the mono-jet channel is found to yield the strongest limits on vector and axial-vector SM and DM couplings to a vector mediator exchanged in the  $s$ -channel. This channel is also found to perform well for small values of  $g_\chi$ . The limits obtained in the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  channel, in comparison, are generally weaker by a factor of a few, while the mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  results are weaker again. This is partly due to our conservative estimations of the systematic uncertainties and partly due to limited statistics resulting from a harder  $E_{\text{T}}^{\text{miss}}$  selection cut. The width effects associated with the  $t$ -channel exchange of an  $\text{SU}(2)$  doublet scalar mediator are observed to vanish in both the mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  and mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  channels, greatly simplifying the analysis and confirming these as straightforward and competitive channels for future collider DM detection.

Where the axial-vector model is not excluded by perturbative unitarity requirements, we find the coupling limits to be on par with those of the vector model within each analysis channel. Weaker limits are found for the  $t$ -channel model, a result of cross-section suppression not present in the  $s$ -channel models.

Finally, we compared our limits to constraints from relic density and direct detection; although each search has a different set of assumptions, this demonstrates the complementarity and impressive reach of simplified models as a tool for the interpretation of collider DM searches. We eagerly await the improved constraints expected from Run II of the LHC.

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## A Limit setting strategy

In this appendix we present a summary of the procedure employed to calculate the 95% confidence level (CL) limits on the coupling parameter  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$ , where this parameter can be replaced with  $g_{q\chi}$  for the  $tS$  model, and  $M_\star$  in the validation of the mono-jet analysis.

### A.1 Nominal values

For each SiM, the nominal limit is calculated by taking the model-independent upper limit on  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  from each analysis, dividing by the value of  $\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  (which is taken as a single parameter for each point) to obtain the limiting cross section  $\sigma_{\text{lim}}$ , and rearranging eq. 2.7 to convert to a limit on the couplings. In the  $s$ -channel on-shell case, the width can be expressed as a function of  $g_q$  and the ratio  $g_\chi/g_q$ , which simplifies the calculation. We arrive at

$$\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}_{\text{lim}} = \begin{cases} \sqrt{g_q g_\chi}_{\text{gen}} \times (\sigma_{\text{lim}}/\sigma_{\text{gen}})^{\frac{1}{2}} & \text{if } M_{\text{med}} \geq 2m_{\text{DM}} \text{ (} s\text{-channel)} \\ \sqrt{g_q g_\chi}_{\text{gen}} \times (\sigma_{\text{lim}}/\sigma_{\text{gen}})^{\frac{1}{4}} & \text{if } M_{\text{med}} < 2m_{\text{DM}} \end{cases} \quad (\text{A.1})$$

where  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}_{\text{gen}}$  and  $\sigma_{\text{gen}}$  are the input couplings and cross-section (taken from PYTHIA 8), respectively.

The signal region in each case is chosen based on where the best ‘expected’ limit lies, where that limit is calculated assuming that exactly the expected SM background is observed.

### A.2 Uncertainty estimation

Our nominal limits rely on both  $\sigma_{\text{gen}}$  and  $\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  and so are subject to systematic uncertainties which derive from our choice of signal generation procedure. For our signal samples, there are three key sources of systematic uncertainty: the factorisation and renormalisation scales, the strong coupling constant ( $\alpha_s$ ) and the choice of parton distribution function (PDF).

We assess the impact of the factorisation and renormalisation default scales in a straightforward manner; by varying them simultaneously by factors of 2 (‘up’) and 0.5

main systematic sources	PDF/tune	factorisation and renormalisation scales	matching scale (mono-jet only)
variation ‘up’	NNPDF2.1LO + Monash tune	2	160 GeV
nominal	MSTW2008lo68cl + ATLAS UE AU2-MSTW2008LO	1	80 GeV
variation ‘down’	CTEQ6L1 + ATLAS UE AU2-CTEQ6L1	0.5	40 GeV

**Table 5:** Reading left to right, the sources of systematic uncertainty considered in this analysis. Each point in phase space is varied up or down by one of these sources, and the systematic uncertainty is then taken from the resultant changes to the acceptance and cross-section in comparison to their nominal values.

(‘down’). The systematic effects of the strong coupling constant and PDF are difficult to separate and so are treated in tandem. We assume that the systematic uncertainty introduced by  $\alpha_s$  at matrix-element level is negligible when compared to the PDF uncertainties, as demonstrated to be valid in ref. [42]. The variation of  $\alpha_s$  in conjunction with a change of PDF is done with the use of specific tunes in PYTHIA 8, which we change simultaneously with the PDF choice to estimate the uncertainty on  $\Delta\sigma_{gen}$ . The nominal choices of PDF and tune are varied ‘up’ to NNPDF2.1LO PDF + Monash tune, and ‘down’ to CTEQ6L1 PDF and ATLAS UE AU2-CTEQ6L1 tune. For the mono-jet channel, the impact of the matching scale (QCUT) is assessed in a manner similar to that of the factorisation and renormalisation scales. That is, we vary the QCUT by factors of 2 (‘up’ to 160 GeV) and 0.5 (‘down’ to 40 GeV). These systematic uncertainty sources are summarised in table 5.

The average variation in the nominal value of  $\sigma_{lim}$  (measured as a fraction of  $\sigma_{lim}$ ) resulting from each systematic source is added in quadrature and propagated to  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$  to obtain the total systematic uncertainty. This process is adjusted slightly to account for the inclusion of statistical uncertainties, which are estimated conservatively by taking the 95% CL *lower* limit on  $\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  as calculated with the Wald approximation, i.e.  $\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon \rightarrow (\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon) - \Delta(\mathcal{A} \times \epsilon)$ . Note that the uncertainty on the luminosity is less than 3%, so is considered to be negligible in comparison to other systematic sources.



## B Validation of signal simulation and event selection procedures

### B.1 Mono-jet channel

The signal generation and selection procedures for the mono-jet channel are validated via reproduction of the ATLAS limits on  $M_\star \equiv M_{\text{med}}/\sqrt{g_q g_\chi}$ , for the  $s$ -channel vector SiM. A comparison of SR7<sup>8</sup> limits for a representative sample of mediator masses with  $m_\chi = 50$  GeV,  $\Gamma = M/8\pi$  and  $\sqrt{g_q g_\chi} = 1$  is presented in Table 6. In general, good agreement is observed between the ATLAS and reproduced limits, with a maximum difference of 12%. We note that a discrepancy of a few percent is expected given the differences in signal simulation. For example, the simplified matching procedure discussed in detail in Sec 3.1.1 introduces an additional uncertainty of approximately 25% for events with  $E_T^{\text{miss}} > 350$  GeV when compared to the approach utilised by the ATLAS mono-jet group. Further uncertainties are introduced by the jet smearing approximation used in place of a full detector simulation and by the 95% CL estimation procedure (outlined in Appendix A) used instead of a thorough HistFitter treatment. As our results are consistently more conservative than those of the ATLAS analysis, we consider our approach to be acceptable.

$M_\star^{\text{gen}}$ [TeV]	$M_\star^{95\% \text{CL}}$ [GeV] (ATLAS)	$M_\star^{95\% \text{CL}}$ [GeV] (this work)	Difference [%]
0.05	91	89	2.16
0.3	1151	1041	7.3
0.6	1868	1535	11.8
1	2225	1732	12.0
3	1349	1072	6.8
6	945	769	8.5
10	928	724	10.6
30	914	722	9.6

**Table 6:** Comparison of the 95% CL upper limits on  $M_\star$  from this work and from the ATLAS mono-jet analysis [41]. The limits are for an  $s$ -channel vector mediator model with  $m_\chi = 50$  GeV and  $\Gamma = M_{\text{med}}/8\pi$ , and for the process  $pp \rightarrow \chi\bar{\chi} + 1, 2j$  with QCUT = 80 GeV. Note that  $M_\star^{\text{gen}}$  is the input suppression scale.

### B.2 Mono- $Z(\text{lep})$ channel

The ATLAS mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  results include an upper limit on the coupling  $g_{q\chi}$  for a  $t$ -channel SiM analogous to our  $tS$  model, and so it is this model which we use to validate our signal generation and selection procedures. Note that the following differences exist: the ATLAS model includes just two mediators ( $up$ - and  $down$ -type) where we consider six, the DM particle is taken to be Majorana where we assume Dirac, and the couplings  $g_{t,b\chi}$  are set to zero where we have universal coupling to all three quark generations.

<sup>8</sup>We use this signal region as it is the only one for which ATLAS limits are provided.

$m_\chi$ [GeV]	$M_{\text{med}}$ [GeV]	$g_{q\chi}^{95\% \text{CL}}$ (ATLAS)	$g_{q\chi}^{95\% \text{CL}}$ (this work)	Difference [%]
10	200	1.9	2.0	5.3
	500	2.8	3.2	14.3
	700	3.5	4.4	25.7
	1000	4.5	5.2	15.6
200	500	3.4	4.0	17.6
	700	4.2	4.5	7.1
	1000	5.2	5.3	1.9
400	500	5.5	5.7	3.6
	700	6.1	6.5	6.6
	1000	7.2	7.4	2.8
1000	1200	23.3	24.1	3.4

**Table 7:** Comparison of the 95% CL upper limit on  $g_{q\chi}$  from this work and from the ATLAS mono- $Z(\text{lep})$  analysis [47]. The limits are for a variant of the  $t$ -channel scalar mediator model with Majorana Dark matter for the process  $pp \rightarrow \chi\bar{\chi} + Z(\rightarrow e^+e^-/\mu^+\mu^-)$ .

Table 7 shows the 95% CL upper limits on  $g_{q\chi}$  that we calculate using our own generation procedure (and the values in table 3), compared with the limits taken from the ATLAS analysis. Also shown is the difference as a percentage of the ATLAS limit. We see reasonable agreement; most of the 11 points in parameter space are within 10% of the ATLAS limits, and all are within 26%. Additionally, our results are consistently more conservative, which again is to be expected given the less sophisticated nature of our generation procedure. As in the case of the mono-jet validation, the differences stem from the use of  $p_T$  smearing applied to the leptons (rather than a full reconstruction simulation) and from the simplified treatment of systematics; we also obtained  $\sigma \times \mathcal{A} \times \epsilon$  independently.

### B.3 Mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$ channel

The event generation and selection procedures for the mono- $W/Z(\text{had})$  channel are validated via reproduction of the ATLAS limits on  $M_\star$  for the D5 and D9 effective operators with  $m_\chi = 1$  GeV. We see agreement within 12.5% and 7.4% respectively, where the ATLAS limits are consistently stronger, as shown in table B.3. The relative sizes of the discrepancies are expected given that only low- $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  limits are available for the D5 operator while we use the high- $E_T^{\text{miss}}$  signal region in our recast. Note that a general discrepancy of a few percent is expected for both operators for the reasons discussed in sections B.1 and B.2, and also because we use a cut-and-count approach while the ATLAS limits are extracted using a shape-fit. Furthermore, the ATLAS limits are quoted at 90% CL while ours are calculated at 95% CL.

EFT operator	$m_\chi$ [GeV]	$M_\star^{90\%CL}$ [GeV] (ATLAS)	$M_\star^{95\%CL}$ [GeV] (this work)	Difference [%]
D9	1	2400	2221	7.4
D5	1	570	499	12.5

**Table 8:** Comparison of the 95% CL upper limits on  $M_\star$  from this work and from the ATLAS mono- $W/Z$ (had) analysis [48]. The limits are for the process  $pp \rightarrow \chi\bar{\chi} + W/Z (\rightarrow jj)$ .

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