# Proposal for Improving Expression Size Determination in IEEE 1800 SystemVerilog

#### **Authors**

This document contains a proposal for inclusion in the current SystemVerilog Language Reference Manual (LRM), IEEE 1800-2023, to clarify and formalize the rules for determining expression bit-widths. It is designed to replace the content highlighted in the document "Highlighted LRM Sections for Revision."

**Sections 11.6.1 to 11.6.4 (Expression bit-widths):** This material is proposed as replacement for the sub-sections in 11.6 of the current LRM. It introduces a revised formalization for bit-width determination, complete with rules governing this process, applicable to all SystemVerilog expressions. This content is a draft intended to replace existing content within the designated LRM section.

**Section 11.6.5 (Examples of bit-widths determination):** This section provides examples demonstrating the use of the bit-width determination rules defined in the preceding section. This content is proposed to extend the existing Section 11.6.3 of the LRM. The current version of the LRM offers a limited number of examples, primarily focusing on self-determined expressions. This draft proposes an update for this section, with the new bit-width determination mechanism and extensive examples for all kinds of SystemVerilog expressions.

**Section A (Algorithmic Overview):** This content is proposed as a technical Appendix to the LRM. It formally describes the algorithms used to compute SystemVerilog expression bit-widths, which are only implicitly described in the current LRM version. This section also includes implementation considerations related to the efficient execution of the algorithms.

# 11.6.1 Expression bit-widths

The number of bits of any expression is determined by the operands and the context in which it occurs. Casting can be used to set the target width of an intermediate value (see 6.24).

Controlling the number of bits that are used in expression evaluations is important if consistent results are to be achieved. The following typing system provides precise rules for determining expression bit widths in all situations.

The bit width of expressions is defined using the fundamental concepts:

**Self-determined width** We call *self-determined width* the bit-width that is intrinsic to an expression: i.e. it is solely based on the expression's internal structure and operands.

**Resizing** Expressions *may be resized* to bit-widths greater than or equal to their *self-determined width*. This operation may change the width of the internal expression.

# 11.6.2 Example of expression bit-length problem

Original sub-section of the LRM [...]

# 11.6.3 Expression categories for resizing

SystemVerilog expressions shall be categorized into two types based on their resizing behavior:

### 11.6.3.1 Atomically resizable expressions

Atomically resizable expressions *may be resized* without affecting their internal operand width. The following expressions are atomically resizable:

• Operands as defined in 11.2 (nets, variables, literals, function calls, etc.)

- Comparison expressions: ===, !==, ==?, !=?, ==, !=, >, >=, <, <=
- Logical expressions: &&, | |, ->, <->
- Reduction expressions: &, ~&, |, ~|, ^, ~^, ^~, !
- Assignment expressions: =
- Concatenation expressions: { . . . }
- Replication expressions:  $\{.\{...\}\}$
- Set membership expressions: inside

When an atomically resizable expression is resized to a target width, only the expression's result shall be extended — its operands shall remain unmodified.

**Rule (Atomic-Resize):** If e has a self-determined width of t and n is larger than t and e is atomically resizable, then e may be resized to n.

#### 11.6.3.2 Non-atomically resizable expressions

Non-atomically resizable expressions propagate resizing to their operands when a target width is specified. These expressions require their operands to be adjusted to specific widths based on the resizing rules. The following expression are not atomically resizable:

- Binary and bitwise expression: +, -, \*, /, %, &, |, ^, ~, ~^
- Unary arithmetic, bitwise, increment and decrement expressions: +, -, ~, ++, -
- Shift and power expression: », <<, \*\*, »>, <<<
- Conditional expression: ?:

Binary arithmetic and bitwise expressions propagate the target width to both operands:

**Rule (Binary-Resize):** If a may be resized to n and b may be resized to n, then  $a \oplus b$  may be resized to n.

Unary arithmetic, unary bitwise negation and unary increment and decrement expressions propagate the target width to their single operand:

**Rule (Unary-Resize):** If e may be resized to n, then  $\oplus e$  may be resized to n.

Shift and power expressions propagate the target width only to the left operand, while the right operand remains self-determined:

**Rule (Shift-Resize):** If a may be resized to n and b has a self-determined width of  $t_b$ , then  $a \oplus b$  may be resized to n.

Conditional expressions propagate the target width to both branch expressions, while the condition remains self-determined:

**Rule (Conditional-Resize):** If c has a self-determined width width of  $t_C$  and  $t_e$  may be resized to n and  $f_e$  may be resized to n, then  $c ? t_e : f_e$  may be resized to n.

# 11.6.4 Self-determined expression sizing rules

The *self-determined width* of an expression, solely based on its internal structure and operands, shall be computed according to the following rules:

#### 11.6.4.1 **Operands**

For operands as defined in 11.2, the *self-determined width* is always well-defined and determined by their declaration, literal specification, or result type:

**Rule** (Operand-Size): If e is an operand and s its width, then e shall have a self-determined width of s.

Examples:

- Sized integer literals: 8'hFF has a self-determined width of 8, 32'd123 has a self-determined width of 32,
- Unsized integer literals: 123, 'hABC have a self-determined width of at least 32 bits,

- Parameters, nets, variables and structure fields have their width defined by their declaration: logic [15:0] data has a *self-determined width* of 16,
- Bit-select: data[5] has a self-determined width of 1,
- Part-select: data[7:0] has a self-determined width of 8, data[base +: 4] has a self-determined width of 4,
- Function calls: Have their width defined by their return type a function returning logic [31:0] has a *self-determined width* of 32.
- Variadic sized function calls: For functions whose return type depends on their arguments, the arguments' widths shall be determined as if they were in an assignment context. Once all argument widths are determined, the function's result type becomes known and defines the *self-determined width*.

#### 11.6.4.2 Binary arithmetic and bitwise expressions

For binary arithmetic and bitwise expressions, the *self-determined width* is the maximum of the operand widths. The smaller operand is *resized* to match the larger operand's widths.

**Rule (Binary-Left-Width):** If a has a self-determined width of t and b may be resized to t, then  $a \oplus b$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

**Rule (Binary-Right-Width):** If b has a self-determined width of t and a may be resized to t, then  $a \oplus b$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

# 11.6.4.3 Unary expressions

For unary expressions (Unary arithmetic, unary bitwise negation and unary increment and decrement), the *self-determined width* is identical to the operand width.

**Rule** (Unary-Width): If e has a self-determined width of t, then  $\oplus e$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

### 11.6.4.4 Relational and equality expressions

For relational and equality expressions, the *self-determined width* is always 1 bit. The smaller operand shall be resized to match the larger operand's width for comparison purposes.

**Rule (Relational-Left-Width):** If a has a self-determined width of t and b may be resized to t, then  $a \oplus b$  shall have a self-determined width of 1.

**Rule (Relational-Right-Width):** If b has a self-determined width of t and a may be resized to t, then  $a \oplus b$  shall have a self-determined width of 1.

#### 11.6.4.5 Logical expressions

For binary logical expressions, the self-determined width is always 1 bit. All operands are self-determined.

**Rule (Logical-Width):** If a has a self-determined width of  $t_a$  and b has a self-determined width of  $t_b$ , then  $a \oplus b$  shall have a self-determined width of 1.

#### 11.6.4.6 Reduction expressions

For reduction expressions, including !, the self-determined width is always 1 bit. The operand is self-determined.

**Rule** (Reduction-Width): If e has a self-determined width of t, then  $\bigoplus e$  shall have a self-determined width of 1.

#### 11.6.4.7 Shift and power expressions

For shift and power expressions, the *self-determined width* is determined by the left operand. The right operand shall be *self-determined*.

**Rule (Shift-Width):** If a has a self-determined width of t and b has a self-determined width of  $t_b$ , then  $a \oplus b$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

### 11.6.4.8 Assignment expressions

For assignment expressions, the *self-determined width* is determined by the left-hand side. When the left-hand side has a larger width than the right-hand side, the right-hand side shall *be resized*. Otherwise, the right-hand side shall be *self-determined*.

**Rule (Assignment-Left-Width):** If the left-hand side l has a width of t and e may be resized to t, then  $l \oplus e$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

**Rule (Assignment-Right-Width):** If the left-hand side l has a width of t, e has a self-determined width of  $t_e$  and t is smaller than  $t_e$ , then  $l \oplus e$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

#### 11.6.4.9 Conditional expressions

For conditional expressions using the ?: operator, the *self-determined width* is the maximum width of the two branch expressions. The smaller branch shall be resized to match the larger branch. The condition shall be *self-determined*.

**Rule (Conditional-Left-Width):** If c has a self-determined width of  $t_c$ , a has a self-determined width of t, and b may be resized to t, then c?a:b shall have a self-determined width of t.

**Rule (Conditional-Right-Width):** If c has a self-determined width of  $t_c$ , b has a self-determined width of t, and a may be resized to t, then c?a:b shall have a self-determined width of t.

### 11.6.4.10 Concatenation expressions

For concatenation expressions, the self-determined width is the sum of the self-determined widths of all operands.

**Rule (Concatenation-Width):** If  $e_1$  has a self-determined width of  $t_1, \ldots, e_k$  has a self-determined width of  $t_k$ , and t is the sum of  $t_1, \ldots, t_k$ , then  $\{e_1, \ldots, e_k\}$  shall have a self-determined width of t.

### 11.6.4.11 Replication expressions

The *self-determined width* of a replication is the *self-determined width* of the inner concatenation multiplied by the replication amount.

**Rule (Replication-Width):** If i is the amount of the replication and  $e_{in}$  has a *self-determined width* of  $t_{in}$ , and t is  $i \times t_{in}$ , then  $\{i \in \{e_{in}\}\}$  shall have a *self-determined width* of t.

# 11.6.5 Examples of bit-widths determination

This section illustrates the application of sizing and type-derivation rules as defined in this specification. The examples are derived from the following declarations:

```
logic [7:0] var8; // 8-bit variable
logic [31:0] var32; // 32-bit variable
logic [15:0] var16; // 16-bit variable
logic cond; // condition signal
logic [63:0] result; // 64-bit result variable
```

#### 11.6.5.1 Basic Expression Sizing

This subsection demonstrates basic operand and binary expression sizing behavior.

Given the above declarations, the expression var8 has self-determined width 8. By application of rule **Operand-Width**:

• var8 is an operand with width 8, as declared in logic [7:0] var8.

The expression var16[15:8] + 4'b1001 has self-determined width 8. By application of rule **Binary-Left-Width**:

- var16[15:8] has self-determined width 8 (by Operand-Width, part-select of 8 bits).
- 4'b1001 may be resized to 8 by rule **Resize**:
  - 4'b1001 has self-determined width 4 (by **Operand-Width**, sized literal).

- 8 is greater than 4.
- 4'b1001 is atomically resizable.

Application of rule **Binary-Right-Width** to this expression would not succeed, as it would require resizing var16[15:8] to 4 bits.

The expression var16[5] + 8'hFF has self-determined width 8. By rule Binary-Right-Width:

- 8'hFF has self-determined width 8 (by Operand-Width, sized literal).
- var16[5] *may be resized* to 8 by rule **Resize**:
  - var16[5] has self-determined width 1 (by Operand-Width, bit-select).
  - 8 is greater than 1.
  - var16[5] is atomically resizable.

### 11.6.5.2 Relational Expression Example

This subsection illustrates the determination of sizing for relational expressions.

For the expression var16 > 16 'd100, the resulting *self-determined width* is 1. By rule **Relational-Left-Width**:

- var16 has self-determined width 16 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration logic [15:0] var16).
- 16 'd100 may be resized to 16 (already 16 bits):
  - 16'd100 has self-determined width 16 (by **Operand-Width**, sized literal).

# 11.6.5.3 Reduction Expression Example

This subsection demonstrates sizing for reduction operations.

For the expression &var16[7:0], the resulting self-determined width is 1. By rule **Reduction-Width**:

• var16[7:0] has self-determined width 8 (by **Operand-Width**, part-select of 8 bits).

#### 11.6.5.4 Replication Expression Example

This subsection illustrates the effect of replication on expression width.

For the expression {4{var8}}, the resulting self-determined width is 32. By rule **Replication-Width**:

- The replication count i is 4.
- var8 has self-determined width 8 (by Operand-Width, declaration logic [7:0] var8).
- The resulting width is  $4 \times 8 = 32$ .

# 11.6.5.5 Complex Replication with Concatenation

This subsection shows replication applied to a concatenated operand.

For the expression {2{var16[7:0], 4'hF}}, the resulting *self-determined width* is 24. By rule **Replication-Width**:

- The replication count i is 2.
- The inner concatenation  $\{var16[7:0], 4'hF\}$  has self-determined width 12 by rule Concatenation-Width:
  - var16[7:0] has self-determined width 8 (by **Operand-Width**, part-select).
  - 4 hF has self-determined width 4 (by Operand-Width, sized literal).
  - Sum is 8 + 4 = 12.
- The resulting width is  $2 \times 12 = 24$ .

#### 11.6.5.6 Assignment with Target Width Extension

This subsection illustrates extension of a right-hand operand to match the assignment target.

For the expression var32 = var16[7:0] + 1, the resulting *self-determined width* is 32. By rule **Assignment-Left-Width**:

- Left-hand side var32 has width 32 (by declaration logic [31:0] var32).
- Right-hand side var16[7:0] + 1 may be resized to 32 by rule **Binary-Resize**:
  - var16[7:0] may be resized to 32 by rule **Resize**:
    - \* var16[7:0] has self-determined width 8 (by Operand-Width, part-select).
    - \* 32 is greater than 8.
    - \* var16[7:0] is atomically resizable.
  - 1 may be resized to 32 (unsized literals have at least 32 bits).

#### 11.6.5.7 Assignment with Result Truncation

This subsection shows truncation of the right-hand result to match the left-hand target width.

For the expression var8 = var32 + var16, the resulting *self-determined width* is 8. By rule **Assignment-Right-Width**:

- Left-hand side var8 has width 8 (by declaration logic [7:0] var8).
- Right-hand side var32 + var16 has self-determined width 32 (by Binary-Left-Width):
  - var32 has self-determined width 32 (by Operand-Width, declaration logic [31:0] var32).
  - var16 may be resized to 32 by rule **Resize**:
    - \* var16 has self-determined width 16 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration logic [15:0] var16).
    - \* 32 is greater than 16.
    - \* var16 is atomically resizable.
- 8 is smaller than 32.

# 11.6.5.8 Conditional Expression with True Branch Determining Size

This subsection demonstrates conditional sizing where the true branch determines the resulting width.

For the expression cond ? var32 : var8, the resulting self-determined width is 32. By rule Conditional-Left-Width:

- Condition cond has self-determined width 1 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration **logic** cond).
- True branch var32 has self-determined width 32 (by Operand-Width, declaration logic [31:0] var32).
- False branch var8 may be resized to 32 by rule **Resize**:
  - var8 has self-determined width 8 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration logic [7:0] var8).
  - 32 is greater than 8.
  - var8 is atomically resizable.

#### 11.6.5.9 Conditional Expression with False Branch Determining Size

This subsection demonstrates conditional sizing where the false branch determines the resulting width.

For the expression cond ? var8 : var32, the resulting self-determined width is 32. By rule Conditional-Right-Width:

- Condition cond has self-determined width 1 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration **logic** cond).
- False branch var32 has self-determined width 32 (by Operand-Width, declaration logic [31:0] var32).
- True branch var8 may be resized to 32 by rule **Resize**:
  - var8 has self-determined width 8 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration logic [7:0] var8).
  - 32 is greater than 8.

- var8 is atomically resizable.

### 11.6.5.10 Conditional Expression with Context-Driven Sizing

This subsection demonstrates conditional sizing determined by the context of an assignment target.

For the expression result = cond ? var32[7:0] : var32[15:8], the resulting self-determined width is 64. By rule **Assignment-Left-Width**:

- Left-hand side result has width 64 (by declaration logic [63:0] result).
- Right-hand side cond ? var32[7:0] : var32[15:8] may be resized to 64 by rule Conditional-Resize:
  - Condition cond has self-determined width 1 (by **Operand-Width**, declaration logic cond).
  - True branch var32[7:0] *may be resized* to 64 by **Resize**:
    - \* var32[7:0] has self-determined width 8 (by Operand-Width, part-select).
    - \* 64 is greater than 8.
    - \* var32[7:0] is atomically resizable.
  - False branch var32[15:8] may be resized to 64 by **Resize**:
    - \* var32[15:8] has self-determined width 8 (by Operand-Width, part-select).
    - \* 64 is greater than 8.
    - \* var32[15:8] is atomically resizable.

# A Technical Appendix: Algorithm Overview

This appendix presents an algorithm to compute the width of all sub-expressions of a SystemVerilog expression. The algorithm operates in two phases:

First, the *self-determined width* of the expression is computed using the algorithm 1. This algorithm traverses the expression tree bottom-up to determine the natural width of each expression based solely on its internal structure and operands.

Second, the expression and all its sub-expressions are resized to the target width using the algorithm 2. During this propagation phase, all self-determined sub-expressions are resized to their *self-determined width*, while the other sub-expressions inherit their width from the surrounding context.

Assuming that call to the Determine function are cached, the algorithm runs in linear time with respect to the number of operations in the SystemVerilog expression. The reasoning implemented in this algorithm follows the typing rules explained in the previous section 11.6.1.

```
Algorithm 1: Determine
   Input: A SystemVerilog expression expr
   Output: The self-determined width of expr
   switch expr do
       when expr is an operand do
 2
         return \Gamma (expr)
 3
                                                                      // \oplus can be +, -, *, /, %, &, |, ^, ^~, ~^
       when expr is lhs \oplus rhs do
 4
           lhs_w \leftarrow determine(lhs)
 5
           rhs_w \leftarrow determine(rhs)
 6
 7
           return \max (lhs_w, rhs_w)
       when expr is ⊕arg do
                                                                                             // \oplus can be +, -, ~, ++, -
 8
           arg_w \leftarrow determine(arg)
 9
           return argw
10
                                                        // \oplus can be ===, !==, ==?, !=?, ==, !=, >, >=, <, <=
       when expr is lhs \oplus rhs do
11
           return 1
12
       when expr is lhs ⊕ rhs do
                                                                                           // \oplus can be &&, ||, ->, <->
13
           return 1
14
                                                                            // \oplus \text{ can be &, ~&, |, ~|, ^, ~, ^~, !}
       when expr is ⊕arg do
15
16
          return 1
                                                                                       // \oplus can be », <<, **, »>, <<<
       when expr is lhs ⊕ rhs do
17
           lhs_w \leftarrow determine(lhs)
18
19
           return lhs<sub>w</sub>
       when expr is lval = rhs do
20
21
           |val_w \leftarrow \phi(|val)|
           return Ival<sub>w</sub>
22
       when expr is cond ? lhs : rhs do
23
           lhs_w \leftarrow determine(lhs)
24
           rhs_w \leftarrow determine(rhs)
25
           return \max (lhs_w, rhs_w)
26
       when expr is \{expr_1, \ldots, expr_N\} do
27
           for i \in \{1, ..., N\} do
28
            | width<sub>i</sub> \leftarrow determine(expr<sub>i</sub>)
29
           return \sum_{i=0}^{N} width<sub>i</sub>
30
       when expr is \{n \text{ arg}\}\ do
31
           arg_w \leftarrow \text{determine}(arg)
32
33
           return n \times arg_w
```

```
Algorithm 2: Propagate
  Input: A SystemVerilog expression expr, A targetWidth to resize expr to.
  Result: All sub-expressions of expr are annotated with their final width
  switch expr do
      when expr is an operand do
2
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
3
                                                               // \oplus \text{can be +, -, *, /, %, &, |, ^, ^~, ~^}
      when expr is lhs \oplus rhs do
4
          PROPAGATE(lhs, targetWidth)
5
          PROPAGATE(rhs, targetWidth)
 6
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
7
      when expr is ⊕arg do
                                                                                    // \oplus can be +, -, ~, ++, -
8
          PROPAGATE(arg, targetWidth)
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
10
                                                  // \oplus can be ===, !==, ==?, !=?, ==, !=, >, >=, <, <=
       when expr is lhs \oplus rhs do
11
          arg_w \leftarrow max(determine(lhs), determine(rhs))
12
          PROPAGATE(lhs, arg<sub>w</sub>)
13
          PROPAGATE(rhs, arg<sub>w</sub>)
14
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
15
                                                                                  // \oplus can be &&, ||, ->, <->
      when expr is lhs \oplus rhs do
16
          PROPAGATE(lhs, DETERMINE(lhs))
17
          PROPAGATE(rhs, DETERMINE(rhs))
18
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
19
                                                                    // \oplus \text{ can be &, ~&, |, ~|, ^, ~, ^, }
      when expr is ⊕arg do
20
          PROPAGATE(arg, DETERMINE(arg))
21
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
22
                                                                               // \oplus can be », <<, **, »>, <<<
      when expr is lhs \oplus rhs do
23
          PROPAGATE(lhs, targetWidth)
24
          PROPAGATE(rhs, DETERMINE(rhs))
25
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
26
      when expr is lval = rhs do
27
          PROPAGATE(rhs, \max(\phi(lval), determine(rhs)))
28
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
29
      when expr is cond ? lhs : rhs do
30
          PROPAGATE(cond, DETERMINE(cond))
31
          PROPAGATE(lhs, targetWidth)
32
          PROPAGATE(rhs, targetWidth)
33
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
34
      when expr is \{expr_1, \ldots, expr_N\} do
35
          for i \in \{1, ..., N\} do
36
           PROPAGATE(expr<sub>i</sub>, DETERMINE(expr<sub>i</sub>))
37
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
38
      when expr is \{n \text{ arg}\}\ do
39
          PROPAGATE(arg, DETERMINE(arg))
40
          Annotate expr with targetWidth
41
```