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Determination of the width of the top quark

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We extract the total width of the top quark, Γ_t , from the partial decay width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measured using the t -channel cross section for single top quark production and from the branching fraction $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measured in $t\bar{t}$ events using up to 2.3 fb^{-1} of integrated luminosity collected by the D0 Collaboration at the Tevatron $p\bar{p}$ Collider. The result is $\Gamma_t = 1.99_{-0.55}^{+0.69} \text{ GeV}$, which translates to a top-quark lifetime of $\tau_t = (3.3_{-0.9}^{+1.3}) \times 10^{-25} \text{ s}$. Assuming a high mass fourth generation b' quark and unitarity of the four-generation quark-mixing matrix, we set the first upper limit on $|V_{tb'}| < 0.63$ at 95% C.L.

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The total width, or lifetime, of the top quark is a fundamental property that has not been measured precisely so far. The top quark, like other fermions in the Standard Model (SM), decays through the electroweak interaction. But unlike b and c quarks, which form long-lived hadrons that can be observed through the reconstruction of displaced vertices in a tracking detector, the top quark has an extremely short lifetime.

In the SM, the total decay width of the top quark, Γ_t , is dominated by the partial decay width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$ which, at next-to-leading order (NLO) in Quantum Chromody-

namics (QCD), depends on the top quark mass m_t , the W boson mass M_W , the b quark mass m_b , the Fermi coupling constant G_F , the strong coupling constant α_s and the strength of the left-handed Wtb coupling, V_{tb} . Neglecting higher order electroweak corrections [1] and terms of order m_b^2/m_t^2 , α_s^2 , and $(\alpha_s/\pi)M_W^2/m_t^2$, the partial width becomes [2]

$$\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb) = \frac{G_F m_t^3}{8\pi\sqrt{2}} |V_{tb}|^2 \left(1 - \frac{M_W^2}{m_t^2}\right)^2 \left(1 + 2\frac{M_W^2}{m_t^2}\right) \times \left[1 - \frac{2\alpha_s}{3\pi} \left(\frac{2\pi^2}{3} - \frac{5}{2}\right)\right], \quad (1)$$

where the mass corrections and the NLO QCD corrections account for a reduction of the width of about 13% and 10%, respectively. The electroweak corrections are less than 2%. Setting $\alpha_s(M_Z) = 0.118$, $G_F = 1.16637 \times 10^{-5} \text{ GeV}^{-2}$, $M_W = 80.399 \text{ GeV}$, $|V_{tb}| = 1$, and $m_t = 170 \text{ GeV}$ leads to $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)_{\text{SM}} = 1.26 \text{ GeV}$.

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Equation 1 can be extended to include non-SM Wtb couplings [3].

The decay width of an unstable particle can be measured with precision from its mass spectrum when the experimental resolution is similar or smaller than the natural width of the particle. Because Γ_t is far smaller than the experimental resolution, the analysis of the invariant mass distribution yields only an upper limit on Γ_t that is limited by the uncertainty on the detector resolution. The first such direct upper bound of $\Gamma_t < 13.1$ GeV was set by CDF at 95% C.L. [4].

Following a suggestion in Ref. [5], we determine the partial width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$ of the top quark indirectly from the single top t -channel ($p\bar{p} \rightarrow tqb + X$) cross section measurement [6], assuming that the coupling in the production of top quarks is identical to the coupling in their decays. Electroweak single top quark production proceeds via s -channel production and decay of a virtual W boson, or through exchange of a virtual W boson in the t -channel [7, 8]. We measured cross sections of $3.14^{+0.94}_{-0.80}$ pb for the t -channel and 1.05 ± 0.81 pb for the s -channel. Our measured t -channel cross section is consistent with the standard model prediction [6].

As in the decay of top quarks, both processes involve the Wtb vertex and are therefore proportional to the partial width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$. Since contributions outside the SM have different effects on the s -channel and t -channel cross sections, the partial width is determined focusing on the single most sensitive channel in single top quark production, the t -channel, which is illustrated in Fig. 1.

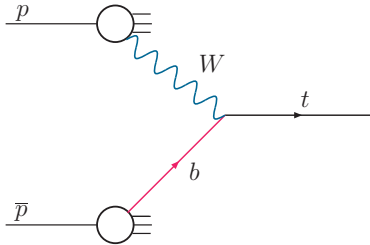


FIG. 1: Representative diagram for t -channel single top quark production.

From the partial decay width and the branching fraction $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ [9], we form the total decay width:

$$\Gamma_t = \frac{\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)}{\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)}. \quad (2)$$

In addition to the experimental measurements, this method relies on the validity of the NLO QCD calculations of the single top quark cross section and of the top quark partial decay width. In these calculations only the contributions from SM processes are considered. Any deviation of the measured total width from the theoretical prediction would therefore indicate physics beyond the

SM. Examples are the presence of anomalous Wtb couplings [10], hadronically decaying charged Higgs bosons as predicted in some supersymmetric extensions of the SM [11] or a fourth generation b' quark. We discuss the latter scenario in detail below.

To extract the partial width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$, we use the measurement of the inclusive t -channel cross section obtained from data corresponding to 2.3 fb^{-1} of integrated luminosity [6]. Without assuming $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb) = 1$ as in that publication, the cross section measurement can be expressed as

$$\sigma(t\text{-channel}) \mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb) = 3.14^{+0.94}_{-0.80} \text{ pb}. \quad (3)$$

Given the linear dependence of the cross section on the partial width, we derive the partial width as

$$\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb) = \sigma(t\text{-channel}) \frac{\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)_{\text{SM}}}{\sigma(t\text{-channel})_{\text{SM}}}. \quad (4)$$

For the predicted SM t -channel cross section, we use a calculation in NLO QCD that yields $\sigma(t\text{-channel})_{\text{SM}} = 2.14 \pm 0.18$ pb [12] for $m_t = 170$ GeV summing up the single top and single anti-top quark production cross sections. For the partial width in the SM, we use the NLO result of $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)_{\text{SM}} = 1.26$ GeV from Eq. 1. Using Eqs. 2 and 4, the total width becomes:

$$\Gamma_t = \frac{\sigma(t\text{-channel}) \Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)_{\text{SM}}}{\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb) \sigma(t\text{-channel})_{\text{SM}}}. \quad (5)$$

The branching fraction $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ is determined repeating our previous analysis [9] assuming $m_t = 170$ GeV to be consistent with our t -channel cross section measurement. This correctly takes into account the mass dependence of the signal efficiency, yielding:

$$\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb) = 0.962^{+0.068}_{-0.066}(\text{stat})^{+0.064}_{-0.052}(\text{syst}). \quad (6)$$

The $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measurement (Eq. 6) is used twice: to obtain the partial width in Eqs. 3 and 4, and to derive the total width in Eq. 5.

The analysis starts with the same Bayesian Neural Network (BNN) discriminants trained to measure the t -channel cross section [6] in 24 independent analysis channels, separated according to data-taking period, lepton flavor (e or μ), jet multiplicity (2, 3 or 4), and number of b -tagged jets (1 or 2). We then form a Bayesian probability density [13] for the partial width based on Eq. 4. This is combined with the measurement of $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ which is performed selecting 3 and 4 jets, and 0, 1 or 2 b -tags for the e and μ channels. In combining the probability densities we assume that all the values of $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$ are equiprobable, which corresponds to assuming a uniform probability density for the t -channel cross section and for Γ_t .

Systematic uncertainties are treated in the same way as for the combination [14] of the CDF [15] and D0 [16]

single top quark cross section measurements. Each independent source is modeled as a Gaussian probability density function with zero mean and width corresponding to one standard deviation of the parameter representing the systematic uncertainty. The terms included in the uncertainty calculation are:

- Uncertainty on the integrated luminosity of 6.1%.
- Uncertainties on modeling the single top quark signal, which applies only to the t -channel cross section and includes uncertainties from initial- and final-state radiation, scale uncertainties and parton distribution functions (PDFs).
- Uncertainties in the modeling of the $t\bar{t}$ pair production signal for the $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measurement, which include uncertainties from PDFs, different event generators and hadronization models. They are correlated with the $t\bar{t}$ background yield uncertainty in the t -channel measurement.
- Uncertainties on the background MC simulation, including the $t\bar{t}$ normalization uncertainty in the t -channel measurement obtained from theoretical calculations taking into account the uncertainty on m_t , and for $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ the uncertainty on the W +jets and heavy-flavor samples normalization.
- Detector simulation uncertainty arising from the modeling of particle identification in MC.
- Uncertainties arising from the modeling of the different background sources that are obtained using data-driven methods.
- Uncertainty on b -jet identification involving b , c and light-flavor jet tagging rates and the calorimeter response to b -jets.
- Jet energy scale (JES) uncertainty from the calorimeter response to light jets, uncertainties from JES corrections dependent on pseudorapidity and transverse momentum and other smaller contributions.

All systematic uncertainties of the t -channel cross section and the $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measurement are assumed to be either fully correlated or uncorrelated. Table I shows the relative systematic uncertainties used in the t -channel and $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measurements, and displays how the correlations are treated.

The expected and observed Bayesian probability densities for the partial width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$ are shown in Fig. 2. The most probable value for the partial width is defined by the peak of the probability density function and corresponds to

$$\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb) = 1.92^{+0.58}_{-0.51} \text{ GeV}. \quad (7)$$

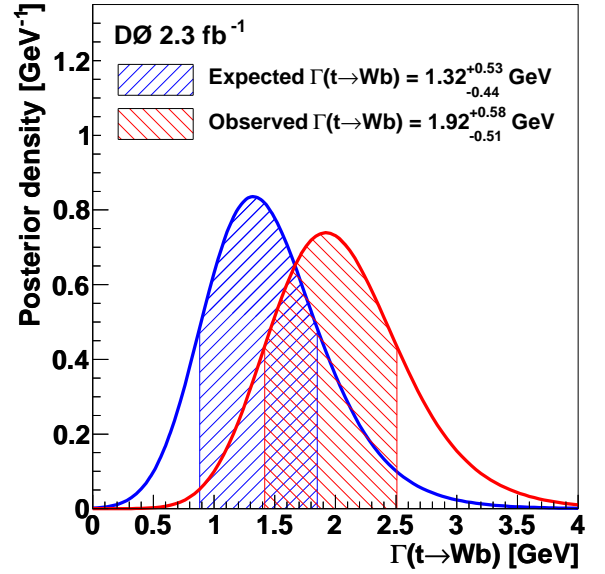


FIG. 2: Probability density for the expected and measured partial width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb)$. The hatched areas represent one standard deviation around the most probable value.

The measurement of the partial width alone can be used to set a lower limit on the total width. From the observed partial width probability density in Fig. 2, we obtain that $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb) > 1.21$ GeV at 95% C.L. This is the lowest value of the partial width that bounds 95% of the area of the probability density. Since the total width must be larger than the partial width, it also must satisfy

$$\Gamma_t > 1.21 \text{ GeV at 95\% C.L.} \quad (8)$$

Calculating the lifetime τ_t as the inverse of the total width, we determine an upper limit of $\tau_t < 5.4 \times 10^{-25}$ s. Models including an additional chiral-tensorial Wtb coupling leading to non-SM helicity amplitudes of the top quark can be excluded by this result because they predict a partial width $\Gamma(t \rightarrow Wb) = 0.66$ GeV [17].

Combining the partial width (Eq. 7) with $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ as in Eq. 2, we obtain the expected and observed probability densities for the total width Γ_t shown in Fig. 3. The total top quark width is found to be

$$\Gamma_t = 1.99^{+0.69}_{-0.55} \text{ GeV}, \quad (9)$$

which can be expressed as a top quark lifetime of

$$\tau_t = (3.3^{+1.3}_{-0.9}) \times 10^{-25} \text{ s}. \quad (10)$$

The determination of the top quark width is used to set constraints on the coupling of a fourth generation b' quark to the top quark. Assuming $m_{b'} > m_t - m_W$, a small probability density for the b' quark in protons and antiprotons, and unitarity of the quark-mixing matrix, including the fourth quark generation ($|V_{tb}|^2 + |V_{tb'}|^2 = 1$, and $|V_{td}|, |V_{ts}| \ll 1$), the measurement of the total top quark width can be used to extract a limit on the mixing

Sources	$\sigma(t\text{-channel}), \%$	$\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb), \%$	Correlations
Components for normalization			
Luminosity	6.1	0.0	
Single top quark signal modeling	3.5–13.6	0.0	
Top pair production signal modeling	—	1.0	X
Other background from MC	15.1	0.6	X
Detector modeling	7.1	0.1	X
Components for normalization and shape			
Background from data	13.7–54	1.7	X
b -jet identification	2–30	6.3	X
Jet energy scale	0.1–13.1	0.0	

TABLE I: Sources of systematic uncertainties affecting the determination of Γ_t , including sources that affect both the normalization and the shape of the final discriminant. For some uncertainties we quote the range across the different channels. In the t -channel cross section measurement the top pair production modeling uncertainty is included in the “Other background from MC” modeling category. It is taken as fully correlated to the “Top pair production signal modeling” uncertainty in the $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$ measurement. The sources are 100% correlated between the two measurements for rows with an “X” in the correlations column, and uncorrelated otherwise.

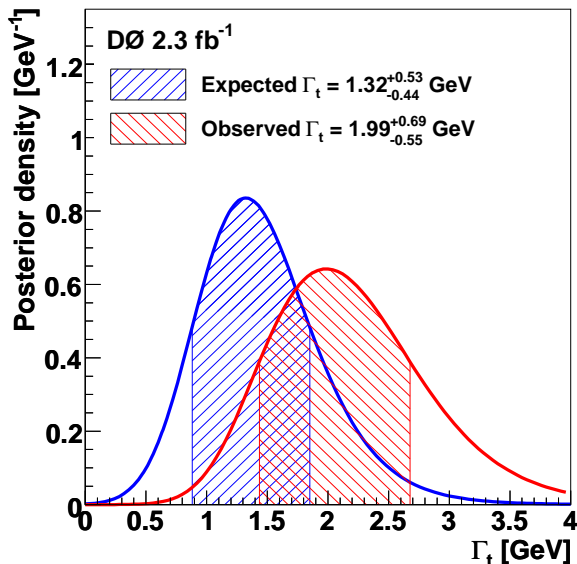


FIG. 3: Probability density for the expected and measured total width Γ_t . The hatched areas represent one standard deviation around the most probable value.

matrix element $|V_{tb'}|$. Using a flat prior for $0 \leq |V_{tb}| \leq 1$ yields $|V_{tb'}| < 0.63$ at 95% C.L. This is the first limit on the W boson coupling to the top quark and a fourth-generation b' quark.

In summary, we have presented the most precise determination of the width of the top quark. It is based on the measurement of two quantities, the partial decay width of the top quark into Wb and the branching fraction $\mathcal{B}(t \rightarrow Wb)$. It is assumed that the coupling leading to t -channel single top quark production is identical to the coupling leading to top quark decay. The total top quark width is determined to be $\Gamma_t = 1.99^{+0.69}_{-0.55}$ GeV for $m_t = 170$ GeV, which corresponds to a top quark lifetime

of $\tau_t = (3.3^{+1.3}_{-0.9}) \times 10^{-25}$ s. In addition, we set the first limit on a fourth-generation b' quark coupling to the top quark of $|V_{tb'}| < 0.63$ at 95% C.L.

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