Neutrino Properties

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The Neutrino Properties Listings concern measurements of various properties of neutrinos. Nearly all of the measurements, so far only limits, actually concern superpositions of the mass eigenstates ν_i, which are in turn related to the weak eigenstates ν_ℓ, via the neutrino mixing matrix

$$|\nu_\ell\rangle = \sum_i U_{\ell i}\,|\nu_i\rangle \ .$$

In the analogous case of quark mixing via the CKM matrix, the smallness of the off-diagonal terms (small mixing angles) permits a "dominant eigenstate" approximation. However, the results of neutrino oscillation searches show that the mixing matrix contains two large mixing angles and a third angle that is not exceedingly small. We cannot therefore associate any particular state $|\nu_i\rangle$ with any particular lepton label e, μ or τ. Nevertheless, note that in the standard labeling the $|\nu_1\rangle$ has the largest $|\nu_e\rangle$ component ($\sim 2/3$), $|\nu_2\rangle$ contains $\sim 1/3$ of the $|\nu_e\rangle$ component and $|\nu_3\rangle$ contains only a small $\sim 2.5\%$ $|\nu_e\rangle$ component.

Neutrinos are produced in weak decays with a definite lepton flavor, and are typically detected by the charged current weak interaction again associated with a specific lepton flavor. Hence, the listings for the neutrino mass that follow are separated into the three associated charged lepton categories. Other properties (mean lifetime, magnetic moment, charge and charge radius) are no longer separated this way. If needed, the associated lepton flavor is reported in the footnotes.

Measured quantities (mass-squared, magnetic moments, mean lifetimes, *etc.*) all depend upon the mixing parameters $|U_{\ell i}|^2$, but to some extent also on experimental conditions (e.g., on energy resolution). Many of these observables, in particular mass-squared, cannot distinguish between Dirac and Majorana neutrinos and are unaffected by CP phases.

Direct neutrino mass measurements are usually based on the analysis of the kinematics of charged particles (leptons, pions) emitted together with neutrinos (flavor states) in various weak decays. The most sensitive neutrino mass measurement to date, involving electron type antineutrinos, is based on fitting the shape of the beta spectrum. The quantity $m^{2(eff)}_{\nu_e} = \sum_i |U_{ei}|^2 m^2_{\nu_i}$ is determined or constrained, where the sum is over all mass eigenvalues m_{ν_i} that are too close together to be resolved experimentally. (The quantity $m^{eff}_{\nu_e} \equiv \sqrt{m^{2(eff)}_{\nu_e}}$ is often denoted $\langle m_\beta\rangle$ in the literature.) If the energy resolution is better than $\Delta m^2_{ij} \equiv m^2_{\nu_i} - m^2_{\nu_j}$, the corresponding heavier m_{ν_i} and mixing parameter could be determined by fitting the resulting spectral anomaly (step or kink).

The dependence of m_{ν_e} on the mass of the lightest neutrino is shown in Fig. 14.11 of the *Neutrino Masses, Mixing, and Oscillations* review. In the case of inverted ordering there is a minimum possible value of $m^{eff}_{\nu_e}$, approximately $\sqrt{(}\Delta m^2_{32}) \sim 50$ meV. If $m^{eff}_{\nu_e}$ is found to be larger than this value, it is impossible, based on this information only, to decide which ordering is realized in nature. On the other hand, if the $m^{eff}_{\nu_e}$ is less than $\sim$50 meV, only the normal mass ordering is possible.

A limit on $m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)}$ implies an upper limit on the minimum value m^2_{min} of $m^2_{\nu_i}$, independent of the mixing parameters U_{ei}: $m^2_{min} \leq m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)}$. However, if and when the value of $m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)}$ is determined then its combination with the results derived from neutrino oscillations that give us the values of the neutrino mass-squared differences $\Delta m^2_{ij} \equiv m^2_i - m^2_j$, including eventually also their signs, and the mixing parameters $|U_{ei}|^2$, the individual neutrino mass squares $m^2_{\nu_j} = m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)} - \sum_i |U_{ei}|^2 \Delta m^2_{ij}$ can be determined.

So far solar, reactor, atmospheric and accelerator neutrino oscillation experiments can be consistently described using three active neutrino flavors, i.e. two mass splittings and three mixing angles. However, several experiments with radioactive sources, reactors, and accelerators imply the possible existence of one or more non-interacting, i.e. sterile, neutrino species that might be observable since they couple, albeit weakly, to the flavor neutrinos $|\nu_l\rangle$. In that case, the neutrino mixing matrix would be $n \times n$ unitary matrix with $n > 3$.

Combined three neutrino analyses determine the squared mass differences and all three mixing angles to within reasonable accuracy. For given $|\Delta m^2_{ij}|$ a limit on $m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)}$ from beta decay defines an upper limit on the maximum value m_{max} of m_{ν_i}: $m^2_{max} \leq m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)} + \sum_{i<j} |\Delta m^2_{ij}|$. The analysis of the low energy beta decay of tritium, combined with the oscillation results, thus limits *all* active neutrino masses. Traditionally, experimental neutrino mass limits obtained from pion decay $\pi^+ \rightarrow \mu^+ + \nu_\mu$ or the shape of the spectrum of decay products of the τ lepton did not distinguish between flavor and mass eigenstates. These results are reported as limits of the μ and τ based neutrino mass. After the determination of the $|\Delta m^2_{ij}|$'s and the mixing angles θ_{ij}, the corresponding neutrino mass limits are no longer competitive with those derived from low energy beta decays.

The spread of arrival times of the neutrinos from SN1987A, coupled with the measured neutrino energies, provided a time-of-flight limit on a quantity similar to $\langle m_\beta \rangle \equiv \sqrt{m_{\nu_e}^{2(eff)}}$. This statement, clothed in various degrees of sophistication, has been the basis for a very large number of papers. The resulting limits, however, are no longer comparable with the limits from tritium beta decay.

Constraint, or eventually a value, of the sum of the neutrino masses m_{tot} can be determined from the analysis of the cosmic microwave background anisotropy, combined with the galaxy redshift surveys and other data. These limits are reported in a separate table (Sum of Neutrino Masses, m_{tot}). Obviously, m_{tot} represents an upper limit for all m_i values. Note that many reported m_{tot} limits are considerably more stringent than the listed $m_{\nu_e}^{eff}$ limits. Discussion concerning the model dependence of the m_{tot} limit is continuing.