Measurement of the transverse momentum distribution of $Z/\gamma^*$ bosons in proton-proton collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV with the ATLAS detector


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ATLAS Collaboration*

ABSTRACT

A measurement of the $Z/\gamma^*$ transverse momentum ($p_T^Z$) distribution in proton–proton collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV is presented using $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-$ and $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-$ decays collected with the ATLAS detector in data sets with integrated luminosities of $35 \, \text{pb}^{-1}$ and $40 \, \text{pb}^{-1}$, respectively. The normalized differential cross sections are measured separately for electron and muon decay channels as well as for their combination up to $p_T^Z$ of $350 \, \text{GeV}$ for invariant dilepton masses $66 \, \text{GeV} < m_{\ell\ell} < 116 \, \text{GeV}$. The measurement is compared to predictions of perturbative QCD and various event generators. The prediction of resummed QCD combined with fixed order perturbative QCD is found to be in good agreement with the data.

1. Introduction

In hadron collisions, the weak vector bosons $W$ and $Z$ are produced with a momentum component transverse to the beam axis, which is balanced by a recoiling hadronic system mainly arising from initial state QCD radiation of quarks and gluons. The measurement of the boson transverse momentum offers a very sensitive way of studying dynamical effects of the strong interaction, complementary to measurements of the associated production of the bosons with jets [1]. The simple signatures of $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-$ and $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-$ production, which can be identified with little background, enable a precise measurement of the boson transverse momentum ($p_T^Z$) and thus provide an ideal testing ground for predictions of QCD and phenomenological models. Moreover, the knowledge of the $p_T^Z$ distribution is crucial to improve the modelling of $W$ boson production needed for a precise measurement of the $W$ mass [2,3], in particular in the low $p_T^Z$ region which dominates the cross section.

This Letter presents a measurement of the $Z/\gamma^*$ normalized transverse momentum distribution in proton–proton collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV using $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-$ and $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-$ decays collected in 2010 with the ATLAS detector in data sets with integrated luminosities of $35 \, \text{pb}^{-1}$ and $40 \, \text{pb}^{-1}$, respectively. In the normalized transverse momentum distribution, many systematic uncertainties cancel. In particular, the precision of the measurement is not impaired by the uncertainty on the integrated luminosity. The normalized transverse momentum distribution is defined in the following way: $1/\sigma_{\text{fid}} \times d\sigma_{\text{fid}}/dp_T^Z$, where $\sigma_{\text{fid}}$ is the measured inclusive cross section of $pp \rightarrow Z/\gamma^* + X$ multiplied by the branching ratio of $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^-$ within the fiducial acceptance, and $X$ denotes the underlying event and the recoil system. For both the $e\mu$ and $\mu\mu$ channels, the fiducial acceptance is defined by the lepton transverse momentum and pseudorapidity, and by the invariant mass of the lepton pair $m_{\ell\ell} > 20 \, \text{GeV}$, $|\eta^\ell_1| < 2.4$ and $66 \, \text{GeV} < m_{\ell\ell} < 116 \, \text{GeV}$. The measurements in both decay channels are corrected for detector effects and QED final state radiation (FSR). The combined result is compared to predictions of perturbative QCD calculations and QCD-inspired models implemented in various event generators.

Predictions and previous measurements are discussed in Section 2. The ATLAS detector and trigger are described in Section 3. In Sections 4 and 5 the event simulation and selections are described. Section 6 reports the $p_T^Z$ measurements for different treatments of QED final state radiation. Systematic uncertainties are discussed in Section 7. Section 8 presents the combined result which is compared with various models.

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* © CERN for the benefit of the ATLAS Collaboration.
† E-mail address: atlas.publications@cern.ch.
2. QCD predictions and previous measurements

Perturbative QCD (pQCD) calculations have been performed up to \(O(\alpha_s^2)\) in the strong coupling constant \(\alpha_s\) [4,5] and are expected to be reliable at large \(p_T^Z\). In this kinematic regime, the cross section is dominated by the radiation of a single parton. Fully differential inclusive boson production cross sections can be obtained at \(O(\alpha_s^2)\) with FEWZ [6,7] and DYNNLO [8]. While the integrated \(O(\alpha_s^2)\) cross section predictions are fixed, the finite order pQCD prediction diverges at vanishing \(p_T^Z\). In this regime, the leading contribution of multiple soft gluon emissions to the inclusive cross section can be resummed to all orders [9–11] up to next-to-next-to-leading logarithms (NNLL) [12] in \(\alpha_s\). The RESBOS generator [13] matches the prediction of soft gluon resummation including a non-perturbative form factor [14] at low \(p_T^Z\) with the fixed order pQCD calculation at \(O(\alpha_s)\) at high \(p_T^Z\), which is corrected to \(O(\alpha_s^2)\) using \(K\)-factors.

Similar to resummed calculations, parton showers provide an all-order approximation of parton radiation in the soft and collinear region. In order to describe the large \(p_T^Z\) region, the parton shower based leading-order event generators PYTHIA [15] and HERWIG [16] add weights to the first or hardest branching, respectively, to effectively merge the \(O(\alpha_s^2)\) and \(O(\alpha_s)\) pQCD predictions. The next-to-leading order (NLO) Monte Carlo generators MC@NLO [17] and POWHEG [18] incorporate NLO QCD matrix elements consistently into the parton shower frameworks of HERWIG or PYTHIA.

The ALPGEN [19] and SHERPA [20] event generators implement tree-level matrix elements for the generation of multiple hard partons in association with the weak boson. The matrix-element calculations for various parton multiplicities are matched with parton showers (which in the case of ALPGEN are provided by either PYTHIA or HERWIG) such that double counting is explicitly avoided by means of weighting procedures [21] or veto algorithms [19].

As the predictions of these generators differ significantly and show a considerable dependence on adjustable internal parameters [22], a precise measurement of the boson transverse momentum distribution is an important input to validate and tune these models.

The \(Z/\gamma^*\) boson \(p_T\) distribution has been measured in proton-antiproton collisions at the Tevatron collider at centre of mass energies of \(\sqrt{s} = 1.8\) TeV and 1.96 TeV [23–27]. For \(p_T^Z \lesssim 30\) GeV, these measurements found a good agreement with RESBOS and disfavoured models [28] suggesting a broadening of the \(p_T^Z\) distribution for small \(x\) values [25,27], where \(x\) is the fraction of the momentum of one of the two partons with respect to the proton momentum. At large \(p_T^Z\), the \(O(\alpha_s^2)\) pQCD prediction was reported to underestimate the measured cross section by up to about 25% [25,26].

3. The ATLAS detector

The ATLAS detector system [29] comprises an inner tracking detector immersed in a 2 T axial magnetic field, a calorimeter, and a large muon spectrometer with a superconducting toroid magnet system. Charged particle tracks and vertices are reconstructed with silicon pixel and strip detectors covering \(|\eta| < 2.5\) and transition radiation detectors covering \(|\eta| < 2.0\). These tracking detectors are surrounded by a finely segmented calorimeter system which provides three-dimensional reconstruction of particle showers up to \(|\eta| < 4.9\). The electromagnetic compartment uses liquid argon as the active material and is divided into barrel (\(|\eta| < 1.5\), end-cap (1.4 < |\eta| < 3.2) and forward (3.1 < |\eta| < 4.9) components. The hadron calorimeter is based on scintillating tiles in the central region (\(|\eta| < 1.7\). It is extended up to 4.9 in pseudorapidity by end-caps and forward calorimeters which use liquid argon. The muon spectrometer is based on three large superconducting toroids arranged with an eight-fold azimuthal coil symmetry around the calorimeters, covering a range of \(|\eta| < 2.7\) and providing an integral magnetic field varying from about 1 to 8 Tm. Three stations of drift tubes and cathode strip chambers enable precise muon track measurements, and resistive-plate and thin-gap chambers provide muon triggering capability and additional measurements of the \(\phi\) coordinate.

The ATLAS detector has a three-level trigger system which reduces the event rate to approximately 200 Hz before data transfer to mass storage. The triggers employed require the presence of a single electron or muon candidate with \(p_T > 15\) GeV or \(p_T > 13\) GeV, respectively. Lower thresholds were used for the early data. The trigger efficiencies are defined for \(Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-\) and \(Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-\) events as the fraction of triggered electrons or muons with respect to the reconstructed lepton and are studied as a function of their \(p_T\) and \(\eta\). For muons, the efficiencies are also obtained separately in \(\eta\) regions which match the geometry of the trigger chambers. The efficiency for single leptons is derived from data using \(Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-\) candidate events or using independent triggers by matching reconstructed lepton candidates to trigger signals in the calorimeter (muon spectrometer) in case of the \(e(e\mu)\) decay channel. For \(p_T^\pm > 20\) GeV, the efficiency is 99% for electrons and 77% (93%) for muons in the barrel (end-cap). For signatures with two high-\(E_T\) electrons, the trigger is fully efficient. The trigger efficiency for \(Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-\) events is determined to be on average 97.7% and to be constant as a function of \(p_T^Z\) within an uncertainty of 0.1–0.7% depending on \(p_T^Z\).

4. Event simulation

The properties, including signal efficiencies and acceptances, of \(Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e^+e^-\) and \(Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-\) and background processes are modelled with PYTHIA [15] using the MRST2Q07LO* [30] parton distribution functions (PDF), MC@NLO [17] and POWHEG using CTEQ6.6 [31] PDFs. MC@NLO uses HERWIG for the parton shower and JIMMY [32] for the underlying event. POWHEG is interfaced to PYTHIA for the underlying event and the parton shower. The event generators are interfaced to PHOTOS [33] to simulate QED FSR. Version 6.4 of PYTHIA is used with the \(p_T\)-ordered parton shower and with parameters describing the properties of the underlying event which were tuned to Tevatron measurements [34]. For systematic studies and comparisons, a MC@NLO based signal sample is used with underlying event parameters (JIMMY) tuned to Tevatron and 7 TeV ATLAS pp collision data [35]. The response of the ATLAS detector to the generated particles is modelled using GEANT4 [36], and the fully simulated events [37] are passed through the same reconstruction chain as the data. The Monte Carlo simulation (MC) is corrected for differences with respect to the data in the lepton reconstruction and identification efficiencies as well as in energy (momentum) scale and resolution. The efficiencies are determined from a tag-and-probe method based on reconstructed \(Z\) and \(W\) events [38,39], while the resolution and scale corrections are obtained from a fit to the observed \(Z\) boson line shape. The lepton identification efficiencies can depend on the hadronic activity, which is correlated with the \(Z/\gamma^*\) transverse momentum. Therefore, using the tag-and-probe method, it is verified that the \(p_T^Z\) dependence of the single lepton efficiency is correctly modelled after efficiency corrections. Differences between data and simulation are mostly consistent with statistical fluctuations and are considered as systematic uncertainties due to the modelling of the efficiencies as described in Section 7.
Multiple \( pp \) interactions per bunch crossing (pileup) are accounted for by overlaying simulated minimum bias events. To match the observed instantaneous luminosity profile, the MC events are reweighted to yield the same distribution of the number of primary vertices as measured in the data.

In the following, if not stated otherwise, the generated samples are fully simulated, pileup and resolution corrected, and interfaced to PHOTOS, with PYTHIA as the default MC signal sample. The background samples are produced with PYTHIA for \( W \rightarrow \ell\nu \), with MC@NLO and POWHEG for \( t\bar{t} \), and with PYTHIA and MC@NLO for \( Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^- \).

5. Event selection

The analysis uses data taken during stable beam conditions with properly operating inner detector, magnets, and calorimeter or muon spectrometer, in case of the \( ee \) or \( \mu\mu \) channel, respectively. Events are required to have at least one primary vertex reconstructed from at least three tracks. \( Z/\gamma^* \) events are selected by requiring two oppositely charged electrons or muons, defined below, with an invariant mass \( 66 \text{ GeV} < m_{\ell\ell} < 116 \text{ GeV} \).

Electrons are reconstructed from the energy deposits in the calorimeter matched to inner detector tracks. They are required to have a transverse energy \( E_T > 20 \text{ GeV} \) and pseudorapidity \( |\eta| < 2.4 \), excluding the transition regions between the barrel and end-cap calorimeter components at \( 1.37 < |\eta| < 1.52 \). They should pass medium identification criteria based on shower shape and track quality variables [38] to provide rejection against hadrons. The single electron selection efficiency varies in the range 90–96% depending on pseudorapidity and azimuthal angle.

Muons are reconstructed from matching tracks in the inner detector and muon spectrometer with \( p_T > 20 \text{ GeV} \) and \( |\eta| < 2.4 \) measured using the information from these two detector subcomponents. To ensure the compatibility of the muon track with the primary vertex, the corresponding impact parameters in the transverse and longitudinal direction with respect to the beam axis have to be smaller than 1 mm and 5 mm, respectively. The muon candidates are required to be isolated to suppress background from heavy flavour production using the transverse momentum sum of tracks with \( p_T > 1 \text{ GeV} \) within a cone of size \( \Delta R = \sqrt{(\Delta\eta)^2 + (\Delta\varphi)^2} = 0.2 \) around the muon track. This sum has to be smaller than \( 0.2 \times p_T \). The single muon selection efficiency is of the order of 87–95% depending on pseudorapidity and azimuthal angle.

After this selection, 8923 \( Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^- \) and 15060 \( Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \mu^+\mu^- \) candidate events are found in the data. The main reasons for the difference in the number of candidate events in the \( ee \) and \( \mu\mu \) decay channels are: the integrated luminosity for which all relevant detector components were operating properly; regions in the electromagnetic calorimeter with readout problems; a reduced acceptance for electrons in the transition region between the barrel and end-cap calorimeter. Fig. 1 demonstrates the agreement of the data and the simulation in the dilepton mass spectrum for the selected events including the background, after applying the corrections described in Section 4.

The background contribution from \( Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow \ell^+\ell^- \), \( W \) boson, and \( t\bar{t} \) production is estimated as a function of \( p_T^Z \) using simulation, where the cross sections are normalized to next-to-next-to-leading order (NNLO) predictions for \( Z/\gamma^* \) and \( W \) and NLL–NLO predictions for \( t\bar{t} \) production. The procedure outlined in Ref. [38] is followed here.

For both \( ee \) and \( \mu\mu \) channels, the main background at high \( p_T^Z \) arises from \( t\bar{t} \) production. At low \( p_T^Z \) the background is dominated by QCD multijet production, where a jet is falsely identified as a primary \( e \) or \( \mu \). Its contribution is determined from the data as follows.

In the \( ee \) channel, the normalization of the multijet contribution is derived from a fit of signal and background templates to the observed dilepton invariant mass distribution with loosened identification requirements for one of the two reconstructed electron candidates. An extended mass range of \( 50 \text{ GeV} < m_{\ell\ell} < 130 \text{ GeV} \) is used which provides a better background constraint in the off-resonance region. The normalization derived from this loosened selection has to be scaled to the \( Z/\gamma^* \) event selection, which requires two reconstructed electron candidates of medium quality. The scaling factor is determined from a QCD multijet enhanced control sample with single electron candidates which fulfill the loosened electron identification requirements. The contamination with other events, in particular the contribution from \( W \) production, is suppressed by rejecting events with large missing transverse energy. The remaining contamination is determined using simulated events. The systematic uncertainty of the normalization is determined by varying the background templates and the criteria for the loosened selection. The scale of the multijet background as a function of \( p_T^Z \) is determined from a dielectron sample with an invariant mass \( 66 \text{ GeV} < m_{\ell\ell} < 116 \text{ GeV} \) for which exactly one electron passes and one fails the medium identification criteria. The difference between same and opposite sign events is taken as the shape uncertainty.
For the $\mu\mu$ selection, the multijet contribution is estimated from four two-dimensional regions which are obtained by changing the mass window to 40 GeV < $m_{\mu\mu}$ < 60 GeV or by inverting the isolation criterion. The normalization is determined from the number of candidate events in these four regions which is corrected by the expected number of non-QCD multijet background events and number of signal events. The number of signal events is determined from the measurement in the signal region which is corrected for the background including the multijet background, and extrapolated to the other regions using relative efficiencies extracted from the simulation. The resulting equation can be solved for the number of QCD multijet background events. The shape is determined from the control region where both muon candidates are non-isolated and their invariant mass is within 66 GeV < $m_{\mu\mu}$ < 116 GeV. Systematic uncertainties are determined by comparing the results to those of alternative methods which use template fits or same sign and opposite sign events.

The total background contribution, which amounts to (1.5 ± 0.6)% and (0.4 ± 0.2)% in the ee and $\mu\mu$ channels, respectively, is found to increase from 0.5% (0.2%) to 3.5% (1.5%) as a function of $p_T^Z$ in the ee ($\mu\mu$) analysis.

6. The measured $p_T^Z$ distribution

The $Z/\gamma^*$ transverse momentum is reconstructed from the measured lepton momenta. The $p_T^Z$ range is divided into 19 bins from 0 GeV to 350 GeV with widths of 3 GeV for $p_T^Z$ < 30 GeV and increasing widths at larger transverse momenta as given in Table 1. For this binning, the fraction of simulated events reconstructed in a particular $p_T^Z$ bin which have generator-level $p_T^Z$ in the same bin is always better than 60% and reaches values above 90% in the highest $p_T^Z$ bins for both decay channels. The bin-by-bin efficiency, defined as the ratio between the number of signal events which pass the final selection and the total number of generated events within the fiducial region, are on average about 56% in the ee and 83% in the $\mu\mu$ channel, respectively. These $Z/\gamma^*$ candidate events with $p_T^Z > 350$ GeV are found, which are not considered further due to the limited statistical significance.

The observed $p_T^Z$ spectrum is found to be well described by the simulation, using the default MC signal samples and background estimations as described in Sections 4 and 5. A bin-by-bin efficiency correction is used to correct (unfold) the observed data for detector effects and QED FSR, where the correction factors are determined from the default MC signal sample. Alternative matrix unfolding methods [41,42], which explicitly take the bin-to-bin migration into account, yield compatible results. However, these techniques require higher data statistics to fully exploit their advantages. Therefore they are currently used only to estimate the systematic uncertainties due to the unfolding method as discussed in Section 7.

In Table 1, the cross section measurements in the ee and $\mu\mu$ decay channels are reported in the fiducial volume, which is defined by the lepton acceptance $p_T^Z > 20$ GeV and $|\eta| < 2.4$, and the invariant mass of the lepton pair 66 GeV < $m_{ll}$ < 116 GeV. This implies for the ee decay channel a small acceptance correction due to the discarded events, in which one or more electrons are within the calorimeter transition region, 1.37 < $|\eta|_{\mu}$ < 1.52. The resulting correction of the normalized differential cross section is smaller than 0.6%. The measurement is reported with respect to three distinct reference points at particle level regarding QED FSR corrections. The true dilepton mass $m_{ll}$ and transverse momentum $p_T^Z$ are either defined by the final state leptons after QED FSR ("bare" leptons), or by recombining them with radiated photons within a cone of $\Delta R = 0.1$ ("dressed" leptons), or by the $Z/\gamma^*$ propagator. The propagator definition corresponds to a full correction for QED FSR effects, allows for a combination of the electron and muon channels, and facilitates a direct comparison of the measurement with QCD calculations. The QED FSR corrections are at most 8% (5%) for the normalized differential cross section in the ee ($\mu\mu$) decay channel.

7. Systematic uncertainties

Systematic uncertainties arise mainly from lepton efficiencies, momentum scale and resolution, and from the unfolding procedure. They are evaluated by varying separately each parameter in question and recalculating the bin-by-bin correction factors used to
to unfold the $p_T$ spectrum. The observed deviation in the unfolded distributions is limited by the statistics of the simulated events. The statistical component of these deviations is estimated using a bootstrap method [44] based on multiple resampling of the simulated events. Each sample has the same size and may contain the same events multiple times. Symmetric systematic uncertainties are derived in such a way [45] that the area spanned by these uncertainties covers 68% of the integral over a Gaussian with mean and width equal to the mean and standard deviation of the bootstrap distributions. The resulting uncertainties are equal to the standard deviation if the bootstrap distribution is centred at zero, and approach the mean plus half the standard deviation if the mean deviates from zero.

The following sources of systematic uncertainties on the measured normalized differential cross section are evaluated, where the quoted uncertainties are relative percentages.

**Lepton reconstruction and identification:** The efficiencies are determined as a function of $p_T$ using a tag-and-probe method. Due to the limited statistics at high $p_T$, the uncertainties are parametrized by a function which increases with $p_T$. For the $ee$ analysis, the uncertainty due to the electron reconstruction and identification varies between 1.0% and 3.2%. An additional uncertainty of 0.1% arises from the modelling of local calorimeter readout problems. In the case of the $\mu\mu$ selection, the uncertainties due to the efficiencies on the trigger, on the muon reconstruction and identification, and on the isolation requirement are evaluated separately and are found to be within 0.4%, 2.3%, and 1.0%, respectively, except for the three highest $p_T$ bins, where they reach 0.8%, 4.9%, and 2.7%.

**Lepton energy (momentum) scale and resolution:** The scale and resolution corrections of the simulation are varied within their uncertainties estimated from the fit to the observed $Z/\gamma^*\rightarrow e^+e^-$ line shape. Correlations across $p_T$ bins are taken into account. Due to the normalization to the inclusive cross section, a systematic shift at low $p_T$ is balanced by a shift in the opposite direction at high $p_T$. In the $ee$ ($\mu\mu$) analysis, the uncertainty due to scale variations is found to be 2.7% (0.2%) for the lowest bin, decreasing down to 0.2% (< 0.1%) at $p_T \sim 10$ GeV, and then increasing up to 4.4% (0.4%) at the highest $p_T$ values. Uncertainties due to resolution are estimated to be 0.5% for the $ee$ channel and between 0.1% and 0.7% for the $\mu\mu$ channel.

**Unfolding procedure:** The bin-by-bin correction factors depend on the shape of the assumed underlying $p_T$ distribution, which leads to a systematic uncertainty evaluated in the following way. The default MC signal sample (Pythia) is reweighted to different true $p_T$ shapes using ResBos and MC@NLO. The variance of these generator predictions does not entirely cover the observed difference between simulation and data. Therefore the Pythia signal sample is reweighted, in addition, to distributions based on unfolded data. The spectra obtained by unfolding the data either with the bin-by-bin method or alternative matrix unfolding techniques [41,42] are considered. These new corrected spectra feature different uncertainties. The bin-by-bin method suffers a larger systematic uncertainty due to the assumed true $p_T$ shape, whereas matrix-based unfolding is nearly independent of this assumption, but suffers from a larger statistical uncertainty. Each of the reweighted spectra is treated in the same way as the data, and is unfolded with the default bin-by-bin correction factors. The maximum deviation from the respective true $p_T$ spectrum is considered as a systematic uncertainty. A possible influence from the parton shower and hadronization model is estimated by comparing the bin-by-bin correction factors determined from either the default Pythia sample or the MC@NLO sample. MC@NLO uses Herwig for the parton shower and JIMMY for the underlying event. To separate these model uncertainties from the uncertainty due to the underlying $p_T$ distribution, which is already accounted for, the MC@NLO sample is reweighted to the $p_T$ shape of the default MC signal sample. The uncertainties due to the shape of the $p_T$ distribution and due to the modelling of the parton shower and the hadronization are combined to yield the total unfolding uncertainty, which is found to be within 2.0% (1.3%) in the $ee$ ($\mu\mu$) channel for $p_T >$ 6 GeV and 100 GeV. For $p_T <$ 6 GeV the uncertainty is as large as 3.6% (4.7%) and for $p_T >$ 100 GeV it is as large as 4.2% (2.9%) in the $ee$ ($\mu\mu$) channel. The unfolding uncertainty is dominated by the deviations observed when reweighting the default MC signal sample to the $p_T$ distributions obtained from the data with the matrix unfolding techniques.

**Background contamination:** Uncertainties in the estimation of the background from QCD multijet, weak boson, and $t\bar{t}$ production yield values of up to 1.4% (0.6%) for the $ee$ ($\mu\mu$) analysis when propagated to the normalized differential cross section.

**Modelling of pileup corrections:** Pileup has a small influence on this measurement. An uncertainty of 0.3% on the normalized differential cross section is derived.

**MC sample statistics:** The uncertainties are within 0.4%–1.5% (0.3%–0.8%) in the $ee$ ($\mu\mu$) channel, except for highest $p_T$ values for which the uncertainties reach 3.6% (1.6%).

**QED final state radiation:** A conservative systematic uncertainty of 0.6% due to the $p_T$-dependent modelling of QED FSR is assigned. This uncertainty addresses both potential differences between the approximation used in Photos compared to exact second order QED FSR matrix element calculations [46,47] and uncertainties in the simulation of the interaction of the radiated photons with the detector material [38].

The systematic uncertainties listed above are added quadratically to obtain the total systematic uncertainties listed in Table 1.

### 8. Results and conclusions

The normalized differential cross section measurements for $Z/\gamma^*\rightarrow e^+e^-$ and $Z/\gamma^*\rightarrow \mu^+\mu^-$ production are in good agreement with each other at the $Z/\gamma^*$ propagator level; see Fig. 2 for the ratio of the measured cross sections. The two decay channels are combined at $Z/\gamma^*$ propagator level using a $\chi^2$ minimization method which takes into account the correlated systematic uncertainties for the $ee$ and $\mu\mu$ channels [48]. The uncertain-
ties due to the unfolding procedure and QED FSR are considered to be common for the two channels. The minimization yields a $\chi^2$/d.o.f. = 17.0/19 indicating the excellent compatibility of the electron and muon data.

The combined measurement of the normalized differential cross section at $Z'/p^*$ propagator level as a function of $p_T^Z$ is compared with predictions of pQCD calculations and of various event generators introduced above. The $O(\alpha_S)$ and $O(\alpha_S^2)$ pQCD predictions of the $p_T^Z$ dependent cross section are obtained with Fewz v2.0 [7] and the MSTW2008 PDF sets [50]. The inclusive cross section, which is used to normalize the prediction, is calculated in the same way. The uncertainties on the normalized predictions are evaluated by variation of the renormalization and factorization scales by factors of two around the nominal scale $\mu_R = \mu_F = M_Z$ with the constraint $0.5 \leq \mu_R/\mu_F \leq 2$, by variation of $\alpha_S$ within a range corresponding to 90% confidence level limits [51], and by using the PDF error eigenvector sets at 90% confidence level. They amount to ~10% and ~8% for the $O(\alpha_S)$ and $O(\alpha_S^2)$ prediction, respectively, with a dominant contribution of 9% and 6.5% from the scale variations. In contrast to the $Z'/p^*$ inclusive cross section, the prediction of the $p_T^Z$ distribution suffers from substantial scale uncertainties indicating non-negligible missing higher order corrections. For $p_T^Z > 18$ GeV, the pQCD prediction receives an $O(\alpha_S^2)$ correction of 26–36%. Despite this correction, the $O(\alpha_S^2)$ prediction undershoots the data by about 10%, which is comparable to the size of the scale uncertainty. This deficit is smaller compared to the 15–25% difference observed at the Tevatron [25,26]. At low boson transverse momenta, where fixed order pQCD calculations are not expected to give an adequate description of the cross section, the disagreement increases rapidly towards vanishing $p_T^Z$.

In addition, the measurement is compared to the predictions of Resbos and various event generators. The consistency with the data is verified with a $\chi^2$ test which uses the $\chi^2$ definition also used for the combination of the $ee$ and $\mu\mu$ decay channels.

The $\text{Resbos}$ [13] prediction, which combines resummed and fixed order pQCD calculations, is based on the CTEQ6.6 [31] PDF set and a resummation scale of $M_Z$. It is verified that the different PDF sets used for the Fewz and $\text{Resbos}$ predictions lead to differences below 3%. $\text{Resbos}$ shows good agreement with the measurement over the entire $p_T^Z$ range ($\chi^2$/d.o.f. = 21.7/19), indicating the importance of resummation even at relatively large $p_T^Z$. However, its predictions are slightly higher than the data for $p_T^Z$ values in the range of 10 GeV to 40 GeV and slightly lower above 40 GeV. The Alpgen [19] and Sherpa [20] generators consider processes with up to five additional hard partons associated with the propagation of the CTEQ6.6 PDF eigenvector sets; and by taking into account the difference to the predictions obtained with MC@NLO, $\text{Resbos}$, and Fewz.

In Fig. 4, the measurement within the fiducial acceptance is compared with predictions of pQCD calculations and of various event generators introduced above. The $O(\alpha_S)$ and $O(\alpha_S^2)$ pQCD predictions of the $p_T^Z$ dependent cross section are obtained with Fewz v2.0 [7] and the MSTW2008 PDF sets [50]. The inclusive cross section, which is used to normalize the prediction, is calculated in the same way. The uncertainties on the normalized predictions are evaluated by variation of the renormalization and factorization scales by factors of two around the nominal scale $\mu_R = \mu_F = M_Z$ with the constraint $0.5 \leq \mu_R/\mu_F \leq 2$, by variation of $\alpha_S$ within a range corresponding to 90% confidence level limits [51], and by using the PDF error eigenvector sets at 90% confidence level. They amount to ~10% and ~8% for the $O(\alpha_S)$ and $O(\alpha_S^2)$ prediction, respectively, with a dominant contribution of 9% and 6.5% from the scale variations. In contrast to the $Z'/p^*$ inclusive cross section, the prediction of the $p_T^Z$ distribution suffers from substantial scale uncertainties indicating non-negligible missing higher order corrections. For $p_T^Z > 18$ GeV, the pQCD prediction receives an $O(\alpha_S^2)$ correction of 26–36%. Despite this correction, the $O(\alpha_S^2)$ prediction undershoots the data by about 10%, which is comparable to the size of the scale uncertainty. This deficit is smaller compared to the 15–25% difference observed at the Tevatron [25,26]. At low boson transverse momenta, where fixed order pQCD calculations are not expected to give an adequate description of the cross section, the disagreement increases rapidly towards vanishing $p_T^Z$.

In addition, the measurement is compared to the predictions of Resbos and various event generators. The consistency with the data is verified with a $\chi^2$ test which uses the $\chi^2$ definition also used for the combination of the $ee$ and $\mu\mu$ decay channels.

The $\text{Resbos}$ [13] prediction, which combines resummed and fixed order pQCD calculations, is based on the CTEQ6.6 [31] PDF set and a resummation scale of $M_Z$. It is verified that the different PDF sets used for the Fewz and $\text{Resbos}$ predictions lead to differences below 3%. $\text{Resbos}$ shows good agreement with the measurement over the entire $p_T^Z$ range ($\chi^2$/d.o.f. = 21.7/19), indicating the importance of resummation even at relatively large $p_T^Z$. However, its predictions are slightly higher than the data for $p_T^Z$ values in the range of 10 GeV to 40 GeV and slightly lower above 40 GeV. The Alpgen [19] and Sherpa [20] generators consider processes with up to five additional hard partons associated with the propagation of the CTEQ6.6 PDF eigenvector sets; and by taking into account the difference to the predictions obtained with MC@NLO, $\text{Resbos}$, and Fewz.
duced boson and give a good description of the entire measured spectrum, up to large $p_T^Z$, with $\chi^2$/d.o.f. of 31.9/19 and 16.8/19, respectively. Here, the enhancement of the cross section compared to the $O(\alpha_S^2)$ prediction can be attributed to processes with large parton multiplicities [52], which correspond to tree-level diagrams of higher order in the strong coupling. Sherpa v1.2.3 and Alpgen v2.13 are used, with the latter being interfaced to Herwig v6.510 [16] for parton shower and fragmentation into particles, and to JIMMY v4.31 [32] to model underlying event contributions. For Alpgen, the CTEQ6L1 [53] PDF set is employed and the factorization scale is set to $\mu_F^2 = m_T^2 + \sum p_T^2$, where the sum extends over all associated partons. The Sherpa prediction uses the CTEQ6.6 PDF set and $\mu_F^2 = m_T^2 + (p_T^Z)^2$.

The predictions of the parton shower event generators Pythia and Mc@Nlo are based on the simulated samples as described above. Fig. 4b also shows the predictions of Powheg v1.0 [18] interfaced to a Pythia version with an underlying event tune to Tevatron and 7 TeV $pp$ collision data [54]. Whereas Mc@Nlo ($\chi^2$/d.o.f. = 111.6/19) and Powheg ($\chi^2$/d.o.f. = 100.4/19) deviate from the data at low and high $p_T^Z$, Pythia describes the measurement well over the entire range of boson transverse momentum ($\chi^2$/d.o.f. = 17.9/19).

In summary, the $Z/\gamma^* \rightarrow e\mu$ transverse momentum differential distribution has been measured up to $p_T^Z = 350$ GeV for electron and muon pairs with invariant masses $66$ GeV $< m_{e\mu} < 116$ GeV produced in $pp$ collisions at $\sqrt{s} = 7$ TeV based on integrated luminosities of $35$ pb$^{-1}$ and $40$ pb$^{-1}$, respectively, recorded with the ATLAS detector. Resbos describes the spectrum well for the entire $p_T^Z$ range. At $p_T^Z > 18$ GeV, the central FEWZ $O(\alpha_S^2)$ prediction underestimates the data by about 10%, which is comparable to the size of the combined experimental and theoretical uncertainty. The measurement is compared to predictions of various event generators and a good agreement with Sherpa, Alpgen, and Pythia is found. Except for the lowest $p_T^Z$ values, the measurement is limited by statistics rather than systematic uncertainties. The systematic uncertainties are also mostly limited by the size of the data sample and are expected to improve with increasing integrated luminosity.

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References

ATLAS Collaboration


112 Department of Physics, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK, United States
113 Palacky University, RCHIT, Olomouc, Czech Republic
114 Center for High Energy Physics, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR, United States
115 LAL, Univ. Paris-Sud and CNRS/IN2P3, Orsay, France
116 Graduate School of Science, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan
117 Department of Physics, University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway
118 Department of Physics, Oxford University, Oxford, United Kingdom
119 (a) INFN Sezione di Pavia; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica Nucleare e Teorica, Università di Pavia, Pavia, Italy
120 Department of Physics, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, United States
121 Petersburg Nuclear Physics Institute, Gatchina, Russia
122 (a) INFN Sezione di Pisa; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica E. Fermi, Università di Pisa, Pisa, Italy
123 Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA, United States
124 (a) Laboratorio de Instrumentación Física Experimental de Partículas – LIP, Lisboa, Portugal; (b) Departamento de Física Teórica y del Cosmos and CAFPE, Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain
125 Institute of Physics, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Praha, Czech Republic
126 Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University in Prague, Praha, Czech Republic
127 Czech Technical University in Prague, Praha, Czech Republic
128 State Research Center Institute for High Energy Physics, Protvino, Russia
129 Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom
130 Physics Department, University of Regina, Regina, SK, Canada
131 Ritsumeikan University, Kusatsu, Shiga, Japan
132 (a) INFN Sezione di Roma I; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università La Sapienza, Roma, Italy
133 (a) INFN Sezione di Roma Tor Vergata; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Roma Tor Vergata, Roma, Italy
134 (a) INFN Sezione di Roma Tre; (b) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università Roma Tre, Roma, Italy
135 (a) Facultad des Sciences Am Chock, Réseau Universitaire de Physique des Hautes Énergies — Université Hassan II, Casablanca; (b) Centre National de l’Energie des Sciences Techniques Nucléaires, Rabat; (c) Université Cadi Ayyad, Faculté des sciences Semlalia Département de Physique, B.P. 2390, Marrakech 40000; (d) Faculté des Sciences, Université Mohamed Premier and LPTPM, Oujda; (e) Faculté des Sciences, Université Mohammed V, Rabat, Morocco
136 DSM/IRFU (Institut de Recherches sur les Lois Fondamentales de l’Univers), CEA Saclay (Commissariat a l’Energie Atomique), GIF-sur-Yvette, France
137 Santa Cruz Institute for Particle Physics, University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA, United States
138 Department of Physics, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, United States
139 Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom
140 Department of Physics, Shinshu University, Nagano, Japan
141 Fachbereich Physik, Universität Siegen, Siegen, Germany
142 Department of Physics, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada
143 CERN Accelerator School, Orsay, France
144 (a) Faculty of Mathematics, Physics & Informatics, Comenius University, Bratislava; (b) Department of Subnuclear Physics, Institute of Experimental Physics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Kosice, Slovak Republic
145 (a) Department of Physics, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg; (b) School of Physics, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa
146 (a) Department of Physics, Stockholm University; (b) The Oskar Klein Centre, Stockholm, Sweden
147 Physics Department, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden
148 Department of Physics and Astronomy, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, United States
149 Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom
150 School of Physics, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia
151 Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan
152 Department of Physics, Technion, Israel Inst. of Technology, Haifa, Israel
153 Raymond and Beverly Sackler School of Physics and Astronomy, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel
154 Department of Physics, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece
155 International Center for Elementary Particle Physics and Department of Physics, The University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan
156 Graduate School of Science and Technology, Tokyo Metropolitan University, Tokyo, Japan
157 Department of Physics, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan
158 Department of Physics, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
159 (a) TRIUMF, Vancouver, BC; (b) Department of Physics and Astronomy, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada
160 Institute of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Ibaraki, Japan
161 Science and Technology Center, Tsufts University, Medford, MA, United States
162 Centro de Investigaciones, Universidad Antonio Narino, Bogota, Colombia
163 Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA, United States
164 (a) INFN Gruppo Collegato di Udine; (b) ICTP, Trieste; (c) Dipartimento di Fisica, Università di Udine, Udine, Italy
165 Department of Physics, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL, United States
166 Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Uppsala, Uppsala, Sweden
167 Instituto de Física Corpuscular (IFIC) and Departamento de Física Atómica, Molecular y Nuclear and Departamento de Ingeniería Electrónica and Instituto de Microelectrónica de Barcelona (IMB-CNM), University of Valencia and CSIC, Valencia, Spain
168 Department of Physics, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, Canada
169 Department of Physics and Astronomy, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada
170 Waseda University, Tokyo, Japan
171 Department of Particle Physics, The Weizmann Institute of Science, Rehovot, Israel
172 Department of Physics, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI, United States
173 Fakultät für Physik und Astronomie, Julius-Maximilians-Universität, Würzburg, Germany
174 Fachbereich C Physik, Bergische Universität Wuppertal, Wuppertal, Germany
175 Department of Physics, Yale University, New Haven, CT, United States
176 Yerevan Physics Institute, Yerevan, Armenia
177 Domaine scientifique de la Daua, Centre de Calcul CNRS/IN2P3, Villeurbanne Cedex, France

a Also at Laboratorio de Instrumentación Física Experimental de Partículas – LIP, Lisboa, Portugal.
b Also at Faculdade de Ciências and CFPUL, Universidade de Lisboa, Lisboa, Portugal.
c Also at Particle Physics Department, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, Didcot, United Kingdom.
d Also at CPPM, Aix-Marseille Université and CNRS/IN2P3, Marseille, France.
e Also at TRIUMF, Vancouver, BC, Canada.
f Also at Department of Physics, California State University, Fresno, CA, United States.