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# Study of the mass and spin-parity of the Higgs boson candidate via its decays to Z boson pairs

The CMS Collaboration*

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## Abstract

A study is presented of the mass and spin-parity of the new boson recently observed at the LHC at a mass near 125 GeV. An integrated luminosity of 17.3 $fb^{-1}$, collected by the CMS experiment in proton-proton collisions at center-of-mass energies of 7 and 8 TeV, is used. The measured mass in the ZZ channel, where both Z bosons decay to e or $\mu$ pairs, is $126.2 \pm 0.6\,(\text{stat.}) \pm 0.2\,(\text{syst.})$ GeV. The angular distributions of the lepton pairs in this channel are sensitive to the spin-parity of the boson. Under the assumption of spin 0, the present data are consistent with the pure scalar hypothesis, while disfavoring the pure pseudoscalar hypothesis.

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*See Appendix A for the list of collaboration members

Recently the ATLAS and CMS Collaborations announced the observation of a narrow resonance with mass near 125 GeV [1, 2] and properties consistent with those of the Higgs boson predicted in the standard model (SM) [3–5] of particle physics. This observation may help to elucidate the nature of spontaneous electroweak symmetry breaking [6–11]. The main decay modes by which this resonance is observed include photon pairs ($\gamma\gamma$) and massive vector boson pairs (WW and ZZ), where at least one of the vector bosons is off mass shell. As more proton-proton collision data are recorded at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), attention is turning to the determination of various properties of this state, including its mass, spin, parity, and couplings to SM particles.

The observation of the new boson in the $\gamma\gamma$ channel implies that the resonance must be a boson with spin 0 or 2; spin 1 is excluded by the Landau–Yang theorem [12, 13]. The decays of the new boson to ZZ in which both Z bosons decay to charged-lepton pairs ($\ell^+\ell^-$, where $\ell = \mathrm{e}$ or $\mu$) offer the possibility to probe the spin-parity and mass of the resonance. We describe these measurements in this Letter, using a data set recorded by the CMS experiment in proton-proton collisions at the LHC, corresponding to an integrated luminosity of 17.3 $\mathrm{fb}^{-1}$, with 5.1 $\mathrm{fb}^{-1}$ collected at a center-of-mass energy of 7 TeV and 12.2 $\mathrm{fb}^{-1}$ at 8 TeV.

The Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) detector, described in detail elsewhere [14], is a large general-purpose device based on a silicon pixel/strip tracking system, a lead tungstate crystal electromagnetic calorimeter (ECAL), and a brass/scintillator hadron calorimeter, all inside the field volume of a 3.8 T solenoidal magnet. Outside the magnet is a multilayered muon detection system embedded in steel absorber plates, which form the return path for the magnetic flux, as well as forward calorimetry. The detector is particularly well suited for measuring electron and muon transverse momenta ($p_{\mathrm{T}}$) over a wide range.

The signal candidates are selected using well-identified and isolated prompt leptons. The event selection and lepton reconstruction are described elsewhere [2]. Events are selected online by triggers requiring the presence of either an ee, e$\mu$, or $\mu\mu$ pair with asymmetric $p_{\mathrm{T}}$ thresholds, or three electrons with reduced thresholds. The reconstructed electrons are required to have $p_{\mathrm{T}}^{\mathrm{e}} > 7$ GeV and to be within the tracker geometrical acceptance, at pseudorapidities $|\eta^{\mathrm{e}}| < 2.5$, where $\eta \equiv -\ln[\tan(\theta/2)]$ in terms of the polar angle $\theta$. The corresponding requirements for reconstructed muons are $p_{\mathrm{T}}^{\mu} > 5$ GeV and $|\eta^{\mu}| < 2.4$. The selection requires the presence of two pairs of leptons. The leptons in a pair must be of opposite charge and same flavor. Photons with $p_{\mathrm{T}}^{\gamma} > 2$ GeV are reconstructed within $|\eta^{\gamma}| < 2.4$ and considered as possible final-state radiation (FSR) candidates. An FSR photon is retained and associated with the closest lepton in a lepton pair only if the dilepton plus photon mass is closer to the nominal Z boson mass. One lepton pair is required to be loosely consistent with originating from a Z decay by demanding that the invariant mass of the pair be in the range 40–120 GeV. The first pair, denoted $\mathrm{Z}_1$, is the one nearest the Z in mass. The second pair, denoted $\mathrm{Z}_2$, is required to satisfy $12 < m_{\mathrm{Z}_2} < 120$ GeV. Among the four selected leptons forming the two Z boson candidates, at least one should have $p_{\mathrm{T}} > 20$ GeV and another should have $p_{\mathrm{T}} > 10$ GeV.

The selected sample is dominated by continuum electroweak production of $\mathrm{ZZ}/\mathrm{Z}\gamma^*$, which constitutes irreducible background, estimated from Monte Carlo simulation as in the previous analysis [2]. A small background from reducible sources remains, mainly from $\mathrm{Z} + X$ events, where $X$ consists of two reconstructed leptons, at least one of which is a nonprompt lepton, including misidentified leptons, leptons from heavy-quark decays, or photon conversions. The reducible background is measured from signal-free control regions in experimental data [2].

The performance of the signal selection and background suppression has been improved compared with the previous analysis [2] by using a three-electron trigger, using better muon recon-

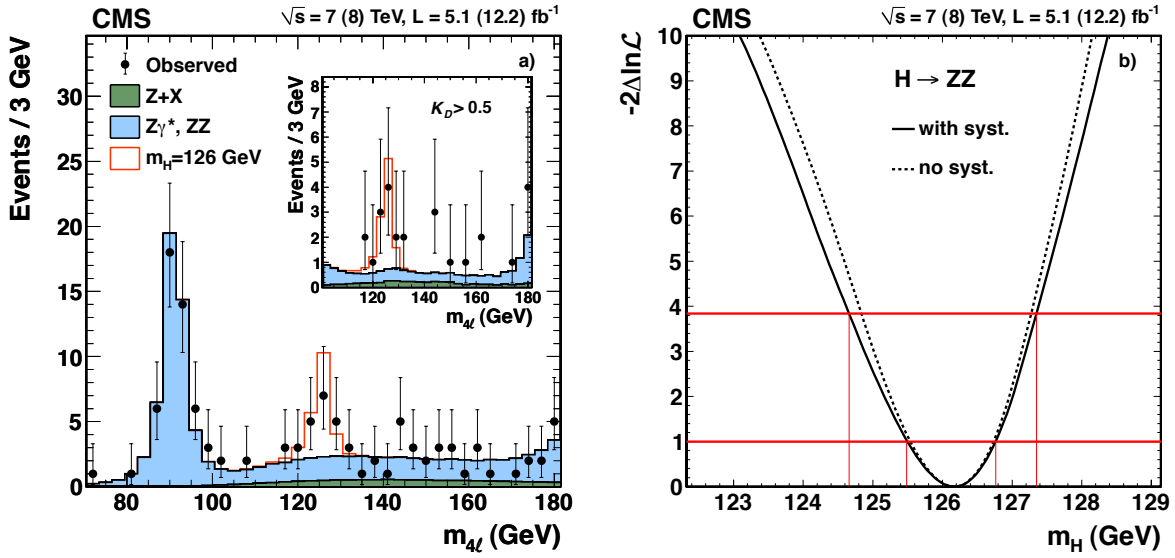


Figure 1: *a)* Distribution of four-lepton invariant mass in the range near the 126 GeV resonance. Points represent the observed data, shaded histograms represent the backgrounds, and the open histograms represent the signal expectation. The inset shows the $m_{4\ell}$ distribution for events with high values of kinematic discriminant $K_D$. *b)* Scan of $-2\Delta \ln \mathcal{L}$ versus $m_{\mathrm{H}}$ with and without the effect of systematic uncertainties included.

struction and momentum measurement algorithms, fine-tuning the electron isolation requirement, and by using a regression technique, as previously used for the $\mathrm{H} \to \gamma\gamma$ analysis [2], for the contribution of the ECAL to the electron momentum measurement. For similar reducible background rates, the absolute signal detection efficiency is improved by up to 4% in the 4e channel and up to 2% in the 2e2$\mu$ channel. The resolution of the reconstructed mass of the $4\ell$ system is improved, relatively, by about 10% in the 4e and 2e2$\mu$ channels. Signal candidate masses are measured with a per-event mass precision varying between 1% and 3%. The detection efficiency for a SM Higgs boson of $m_{\mathrm{H}} = 126\,\mathrm{GeV}$, with leptons within the geometrical acceptance, is 31% in the 4e channel, 42% in the 2e2$\mu$ channel, and 59% in the 4$\mu$ channel.

Systematic uncertainties are evaluated from the observed data for the trigger efficiency (1.5%) and the combined lepton reconstruction, identification, and isolation efficiencies. These range from 1.2% in the 4$\mu$ channel to about 11% in the 4e channel. Systematic uncertainties on energy-momentum calibration and energy resolution are incorporated through their effects on the reconstructed mass distributions. Uncertainties of 0.2%, 0.2%, and 0.1%, are assigned on the mass scale for the 4e, 2e2$\mu$, and 4$\mu$ channels, respectively. The effect of the energy resolution uncertainties is taken into account by incorporating a 20% uncertainty on the simulated width of the signal mass peak. To validate the level of accuracy with which the absolute mass scale and resolution are known [2, 15], we use $\mathrm{Z} \to \ell\ell$, $\Upsilon \to \ell\ell$, and $\mathrm{J}/\psi \to \ell\ell$ events. The limited statistical precision of the control samples is included as a systematic uncertainty on the final results. Since the reducible background is derived from control regions, its prediction is independent of the uncertainties on the integrated luminosity. The integrated luminosity uncertainty (2.2% at 7 TeV [16] and 4.4% at 8 TeV [17]) enters the evaluation of the expected ZZ background and signal rates. Systematic uncertainties on the Higgs boson cross section (about 18%) and branching fraction (2%) are taken from Refs. [18, 19].

Figure 1a shows the invariant mass distribution of the selected four-lepton events in the mass

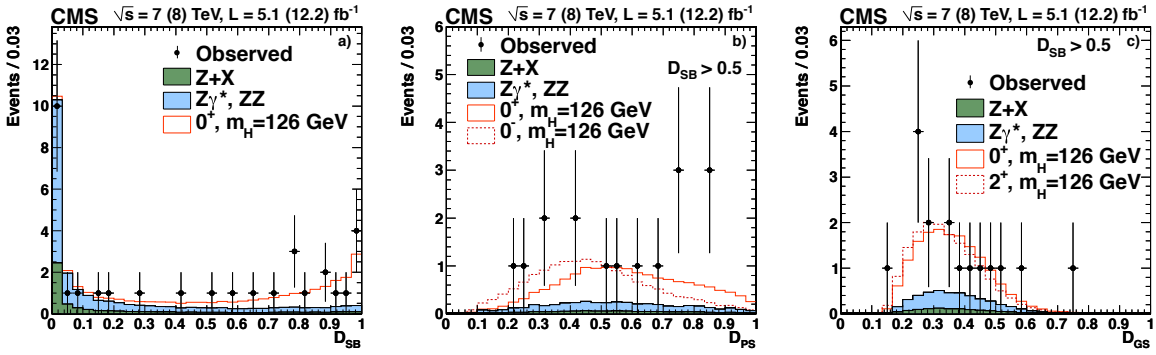


Figure 2: *a)* Observed distribution of the $D_{SB}$ (SM Higgs boson versus background) discriminant compared with the background and signal expectations. *b)* Observed distribution of $D_{PS}$ ($J^P = 0^-$ versus $J^P = 0^+$) compared with expectation, for $D_{SB} > 0.5$. *c)* Observed distribution of $D_{GS}$ ($J^P = 2^+$ versus $J^P = 0^+$) compared with expectation, for $D_{SB} > 0.5$. Points represent the observed data, shaded histograms represent the background, and the open histogram represent the expectation for a 126 GeV boson with the indicated spin-parity, produced at the SM Higgs boson rate.

range $70 < m_{4\ell} < 180$ GeV. The contribution expected from a SM Higgs boson of mass $m_{\rm H} = 126$ GeV is displayed. The peak from $Z \to 4\ell$ decay, studied in detail elsewhere [20], is observed at the nominal Z boson mass. The signal from the new boson is a distinct peak above the expected background, consistent with the signal lineshape depicted in the figure. The background is locally flat and dominated by the $ZZ/Z\gamma^*$ contribution. In the mass range, $121.5 < m_{4\ell} < 130.5$ GeV, corresponding to the three central bins around the new boson peak in Fig. 1a, we observe 17 events: there are 6, 8 and 3 events in the $4\mu$, $2e2\mu$, and 4e final states respectively. This compares to an expectation of $6.8 \pm 0.8\,(\text{stat.}) \pm 0.3\,(\text{syst.})$ from SM background.

Further separation between the signal and background is provided by a discriminant $K_D$ that incorporates the production and decay kinematics. In this analysis, we make use of observables defined for each event in the $4\ell$ center-of-mass frame; the rapidity and transverse momentum of the $4\ell$ system depend on the production mechanism and are ignored. We use a matrix element likelihood approach [2, 21–23], which combines, for each value of $m_{4\ell}$, the two dilepton masses $m_{Z_1}$ and $m_{Z_2}$ and five angular variables denoted $\vec{\Omega}$. We introduce a kinematic discriminant $K_D$ using the probability density in the dilepton masses and angular variables, $\mathcal{P}(m_{Z_1}, m_{Z_2}, \vec{\Omega}|m_{4\ell})$. The discriminant is defined as

$$K_D \equiv \frac{\mathcal{P}_{\rm sig}}{\mathcal{P}_{\rm sig} + \mathcal{P}_{\rm bkg}} = \left[1 + \frac{\mathcal{P}_{\rm bkg}(m_{Z_1}, m_{Z_2}, \vec{\Omega}|m_{4\ell})}{\mathcal{P}_{\rm sig}(m_{Z_1}, m_{Z_2}, \vec{\Omega}|m_{4\ell})}\right]^{-1} . \quad (1)$$

A scalar SM Higgs boson is assumed for the signal. The separation between the signal and background is relatively insensitive to the particular choice of a signal spin-parity hypothesis [22]. The minimum $p$-value [24], which characterizes the probability for a background fluctuation to be at least as large as the observed maximum excess around $m_{\rm H} \simeq 126$ GeV, is obtained from the measurements of $m_{4\ell}$ and $K_D$. It corresponds to a significance of 4.5 standard deviations, which is to be compared to an expected significance of 5.0 standard deviations for the SM Higgs boson.

We measure the mass of the boson using a maximum-likelihood fit to three-dimensional distributions combining for each event the $m_{4\ell}$, the associated per-event uncertainties $\delta m_{4\ell}$ [15]

calculated from the individual lepton momentum errors, and $K_D$. The signal strength $\mu$ (defined below) is a free parameter in this mass fit. A scalar SM Higgs boson is assumed for the signal lineshape. Figure 1b shows the value of $-2\Delta \ln \mathcal{L}$, where $\mathcal{L}$ is the likelihood, as a function of $m_{\mathrm{H}}$, with and without the effects of systematic uncertainties included. An estimate for the mass of $126.2 \pm 0.6\,(\mathrm{stat.}) \pm 0.2\,(\mathrm{syst.})\,\mathrm{GeV}$ is obtained. Combined with the result from the $\gamma\gamma$ channel [2], we obtain a mass of $125.8 \pm 0.4\,(\mathrm{stat.}) \pm 0.4\,(\mathrm{syst.})\,\mathrm{GeV}$. This value improves upon and supersedes the previous result.

We then compare the observations with the expectation for the SM Higgs boson at the mass value fixed to 125.8 GeV, and obtain a measurement of the signal strength $\mu = \sigma/\sigma_{\mathrm{SM}}$, the production cross section times the branching fraction relative to the SM expectation. This is evaluated from a scan of a profile likelihood ratio. We perform an unbinned maximum-likelihood fit of the two-dimensional distributions $\mathcal{P}(m_{4\ell}|m_{\mathrm{H}}) \times \mathcal{P}(K_D|m_{4\ell})$ for the signal, and $\mathcal{P}(m_{4\ell}) \times \mathcal{P}(K_D|m_{4\ell})$ for the background. The fit is performed simultaneously in the 4e, 2e2$\mu$, and 4$\mu$ channels. We obtain a signal strength of $\mu = 0.80^{+0.35}_{-0.28}$, consistent with the expectation for a SM Higgs boson.

The kinematics of the production and decay of the new boson in the $\mathrm{ZZ} \to 4\ell$ channel are sensitive to its spin and parity [21–23, 25–35]. To distinguish any two spin-parity hypotheses, we use discriminants of the form $\mathcal{D}_{12} = \mathcal{P}_1/(\mathcal{P}_1 + \mathcal{P}_2)$, where $\mathcal{P}_1$ and $\mathcal{P}_2$ are the probability densities in $m_{\mathrm{Z}_1}$ , $m_{\mathrm{Z}_2}$, and $\vec{\Omega}$ corresponding to the two spin parity hypotheses we wish to discriminate and include parametrizations of the $m_{4\ell}$ distribution for a resonance at the mass of the new boson. We define two spin-parity discriminants: $D_{PS}$ for the discrimination between a SM Higgs boson and a pure pseudoscalar state $J^P = 0^-$; $D_{GS}$ for discrimination between a SM Higgs boson and a spin-two tensor state $J^P = 2^+$ with the minimal graviton-like coupling to gluons in production and to Z bosons in decay. We also define a discriminant $D_{SB} = \mathcal{P}_{\mathrm{sig}}/(\mathcal{P}_{\mathrm{sig}} + \mathcal{P}_{\mathrm{bkg}})$, similar to $K_D$ but where the probability densities also include $m_{4\ell}$, for the discrimination between a SM Higgs boson, with $J^P = 0^+$, and the background.

We then fit the observed data in a two-dimensional plane of $D_{PS}$ or $D_{GS}$ versus $D_{SB}$ in the mass range $106 < m_{4\ell} < 141$ GeV and obtain the likelihood values $\mathcal{L}_1$ and $\mathcal{L}_2$ for two hypotheses of each signal type plus background. Figure 2a shows the observed projections of $D_{SB}$ for events in this mass range, and for a SM Higgs boson signal with $m_{\mathrm{H}} = 126\,\mathrm{GeV}$. Figures 2b and 2c show the projections of the $D_{PS}$ and $D_{GS}$ discriminants, for events with $D_{SB} > 0.5$. In these latter two cases, the distributions for the spin-parity states being distinguished are also illustrated in the plot. More data are needed for significant discrimination of the $0^+$ from the $2^+$ hypothesis.

Figure 3 shows the distributions of the log-likelihood ratio $-2\ln \mathcal{L}_{0^-}/\mathcal{L}_{0^+}$ from pseudoexperiments under the assumptions of either a pure scalar or a pure pseudoscalar model. The arrow indicates the observed value. Under the assumption of spin 0, the test statistic formed from a profile likelihood ratio $\lambda = \mathcal{L}_{0^-}/\mathcal{L}_{0^+}$ of the $0^-$ and $0^+$ hypotheses yields a $p$-value of 0.072% for $0^-$ and a $p$-value of 0.7 for $0^+$, with $-2\ln\lambda = 5.5$ favoring $0^+$. This corresponds to a $\mathrm{CL_s}$ [36] value of 2.4%, a more conservative value for judging whether the observed data are compatible with $0^-$. The results presented here have been confirmed with independent methods [37] based on leading-order matrix elements [38].

In summary, we have measured the mass of the new boson to be $126.2 \pm 0.6\,(\mathrm{stat.}) \pm 0.2\,(\mathrm{syst.})\,\mathrm{GeV}$ in the ZZ channel, where both Z bosons decay to lepton pairs. Combining results from the $\gamma\gamma$ and ZZ channels, we obtain a mass of $125.8 \pm 0.4\,(\mathrm{stat.}) \pm 0.4\,(\mathrm{syst.})\,\mathrm{GeV}$, which improves upon previously published results. At this mass the signal strength $\mu = \sigma/\sigma_{\mathrm{SM}}$ is measured to be $\mu = 0.80^{+0.35}_{-0.28}$. Under the assumption of spin zero, the observed data are consistent with the

pure scalar hypothesis, while disfavoring the pure pseudoscalar hypothesis. This is the first study of the spin-parity of the newly discovered boson.

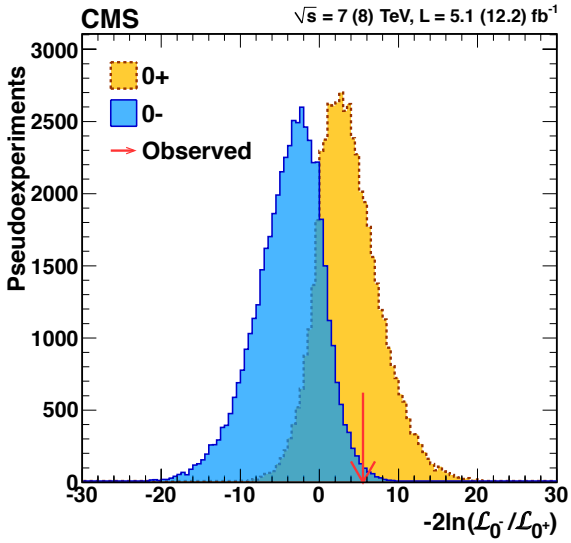


Figure 3: Expected distribution of $-2\ln \mathcal{L}_{0^-}/\mathcal{L}_{0^+}$ under the pure pseudoscalar and pure scalar hypotheses (histograms). The arrow indicates the value determined from the observed data.

We congratulate our colleagues in the CERN accelerator departments for the excellent performance of the LHC and thank the technical and administrative staffs at CERN and at other CMS institutes for their contributions to the success of the CMS effort. In addition, we gratefully acknowledge the computing centers and personnel of the Worldwide LHC Computing Grid for delivering so effectively the computing infrastructure essential to our analyses. Finally, we acknowledge the enduring support for the construction and operation of the LHC and the CMS detector provided by the following funding agencies: BMWF and FWF (Austria); FNRS and FWO (Belgium); CNPq, CAPES, FAPERJ, and FAPESP (Brazil); MEYS (Bulgaria); CERN; CAS, MoST, and NSFC (China); COLCIENCIAS (Colombia); MSES (Croatia); RPF (Cyprus); MoER, SF0690030s09 and ERDF (Estonia); Academy of Finland, MEC, and HIP (Finland); CEA and CNRS/IN2P3 (France); BMBF, DFG, and HGF (Germany); GSRT (Greece); OTKA and NKTH (Hungary); DAE and DST (India); IPM (Iran); SFI (Ireland); INFN (Italy); NRF and WCU (Korea); LAS (Lithuania); CINVESTAV, CONACYT, SEP, and UASLP-FAI (Mexico); MSI (New Zealand); PAEC (Pakistan); MSHE and NSC (Poland); FCT (Portugal); JINR (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan); MON, RosAtom, RAS and RFBR (Russia); MSTD (Serbia); SEIDI and CPAN (Spain); Swiss Funding Agencies (Switzerland); NSC (Taipei); ThEP, IPST and NECTEC (Thailand); TUBITAK and TAEK (Turkey); NASU (Ukraine); STFC (United Kingdom); DOE and NSF (USA).

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