SUM OF NEUTRINO MASSES

Revised January 2016 by K.A. Olive (University of Minnesota).

The limits on low mass ($m_\nu \lesssim 1$ MeV) neutrinos apply to $m_{\rm tot}$ given by

$$m_{\rm tot} = \sum_\nu (g_\nu/2) m_\nu \ ,$$

where g_ν is the number of spin degrees of freedom for ν plus $\overline{\nu}$: $g_\nu = 4$ for neutrinos with Dirac masses; $g_\nu = 2$ for Majorana neutrinos. Stable neutrinos in this mass range make a contribution to the total energy density of the Universe which is given by

$$\rho_\nu = m_{\rm tot} n_\nu = m_{\rm tot} (3/11) n_\gamma \ ,$$

where the factor 3/11 is the ratio of (light) neutrinos to photons. Writing $\Omega_\nu = \rho_\nu/\rho_c$, where ρ_c is the critical energy density of the Universe, and using $n_\gamma = 412 \ \mathrm{cm}^{-3}$, we have

$$\Omega_\nu h^2 = m_{\rm tot}/(94 \ \ \mathrm{eV}) \ .$$

While an upper limit to the matter density of $\Omega_m h^2 < 0.12$ would constrain $m_{\rm tot} < 11$ eV, much stronger constraints are obtained from a combination of observations of the CMB, the amplitude of density fluctuations on smaller scales from the clustering of galaxies and the Lyman-α forest, baryon acoustic oscillations, and new Hubble parameter data. These combine to give an upper limit of around 0.2 eV, and may, in the near future, be able to provide a lower bound on the sum of the neutrino masses.