European Physical Society Plasma Physics Conference 2026

Plasma shape effects on L-H power threshold and H-mode in JET-ILW

Emilia R. Solano

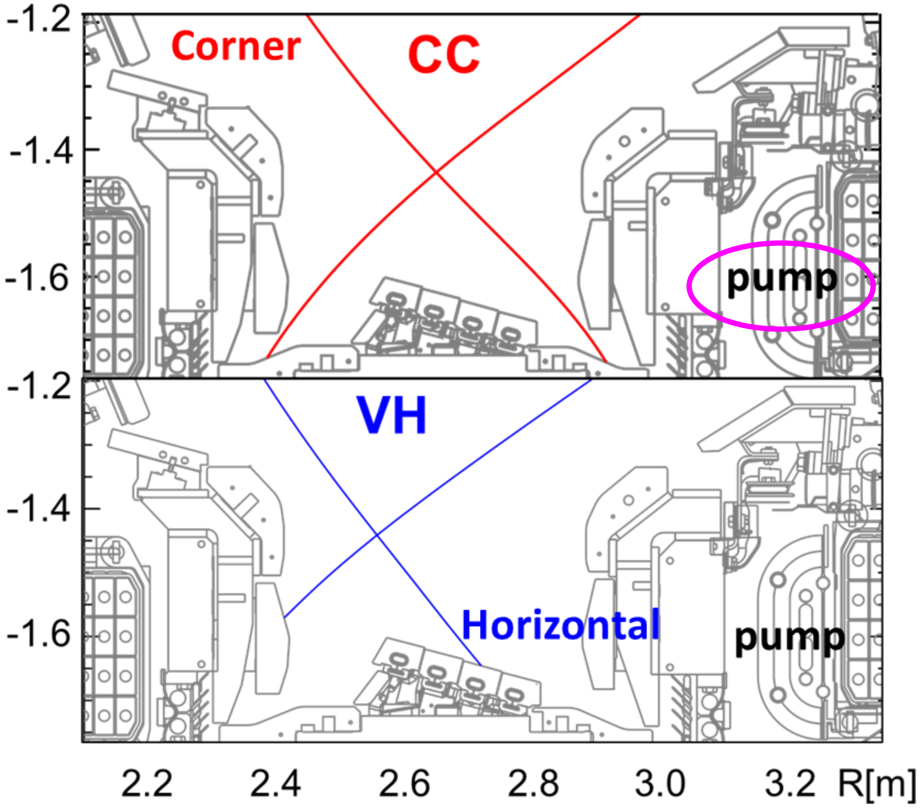
Laboratorio Nacional de Fusión, CIEMAT Spain

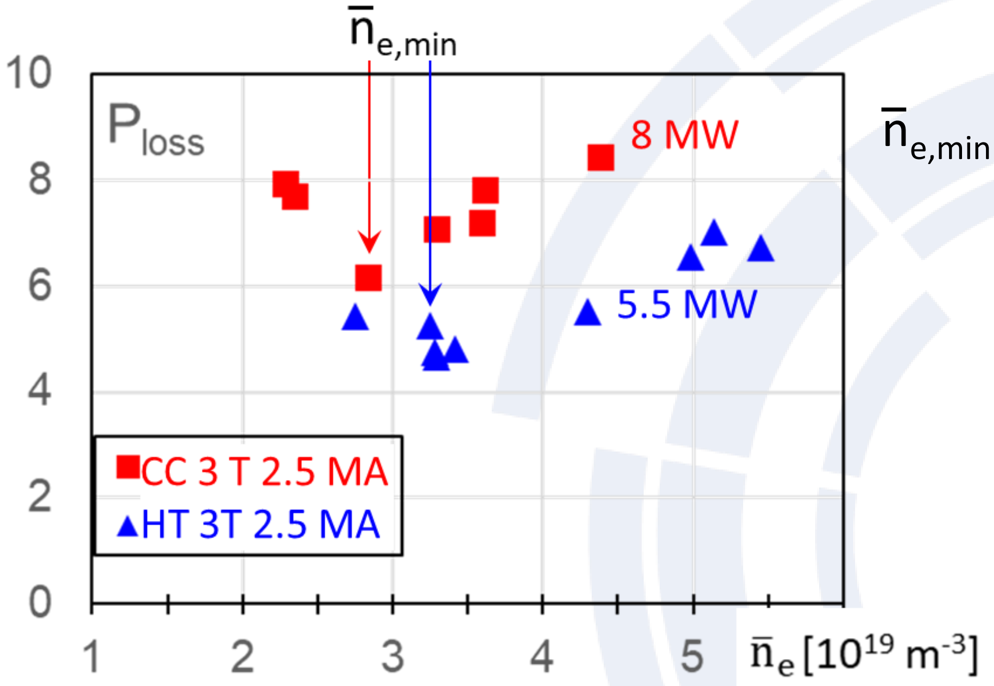
E. Delabie, F. Rimini, R. B. Morales, M. Maslov, A. Kirjasuo, G. Verdoolaege, A. Huber, L. Frassinetti, S. Saarelma, M. Chernyshova, C. Silva, E. Pawelec, W. Gromelski, Z. Huang, A. Baciero, E. de la Luna

Eurofusion Tokamak Exploitation Team (see the author list of N. Vianello *et al* 2026 *Nucl. Fusion* **66** 116010 https://doi.org/10.1088/1741-4326/ae71ec)

This work has been carried out within the framework of the EUROfusion Consortium, funded by the European Union via the Euratom Research and Training Programme (Grant Agreement No 101052200 — EUROfusion). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

In JET-ILW L-H studies the divertor configuration affects $n_{e,min}$ and $P_{LH,min}$





$\bar{n}_{e,min} \propto f_{GW} \propto I_p$

Abundant reports of JET-ILW configuration effect on P_{LH}

E. Delabie et al (2014) IAEA 25th FEC, St. Petersburg, Russia
C. F. Maggi et al (2014) Nucl. Fusion 54 023007
E.R. Solano et al (2021) Nucl. Fusion 61 124001
C. Silva et al (2022) Nucl. Fusion 62 126057

JET's configuration effect on P_{LH} is not explained by critical pre-transition E_r (Silva 2021, **EPS 2026**), nor pumping differences, as far as we can tell.
Dithers and partial detachment may play a role (Delabie IAEA 2014, Silva 2021).

Multimachine L-H power threshold scaling: JET configuration effect, B_{pol}

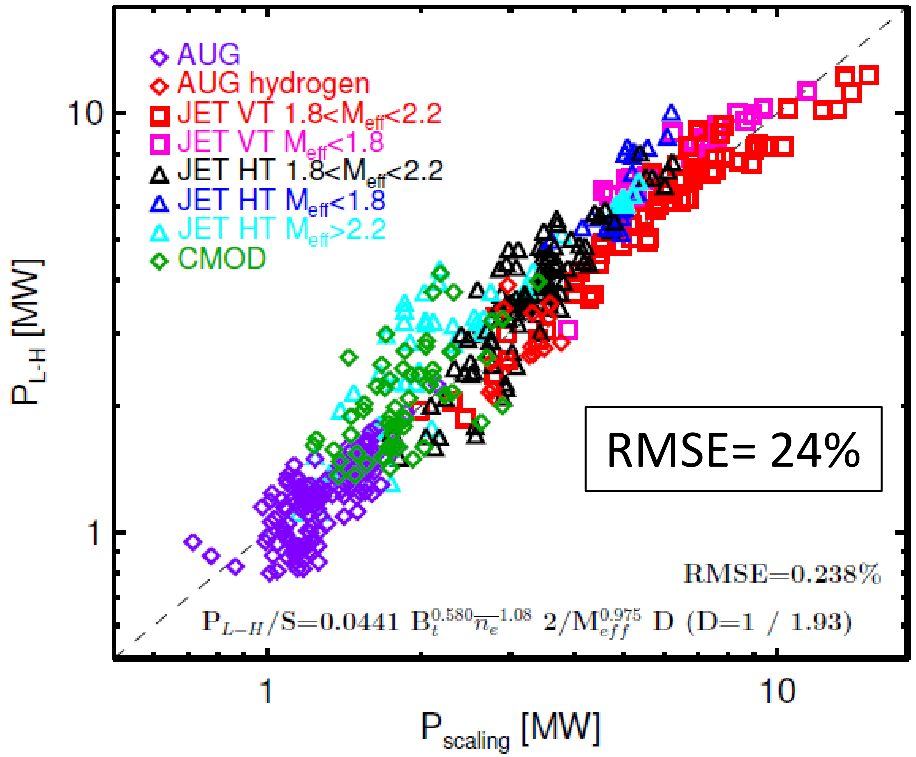
$P_{L\text{-}H} = 0.044\,\boxed{D}\,B_{tor}^{0.58} \langle n_e \rangle^{1.08} S^1\, 2/M_{eff}^{0.97}$

D = 1 for JET HT, others, **D** = 1.93 for JET VT/CC

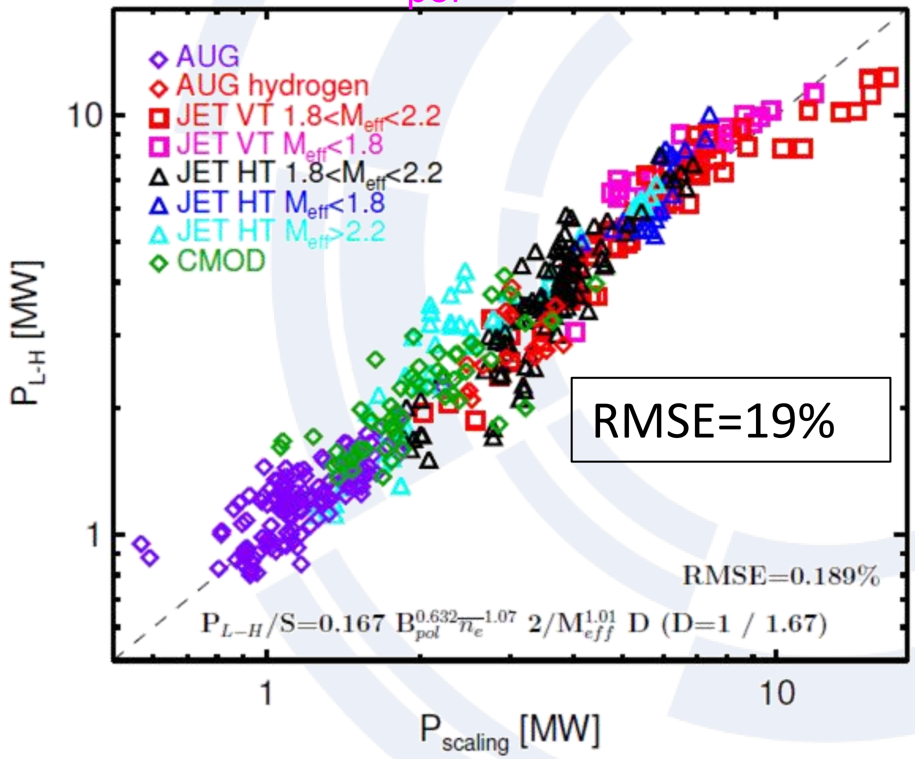
$P_{L\text{-}H} = 0.167\,\boxed{D}\,B_{pol}^{0.631} \langle n_e \rangle^{1.08} S^1\, 2/M_{eff}^{1.00}$

D = 1 for JET HT, others, **D** = 1.66 for JET VT/CC

B_{tor} scaling



B_{pol} scaling



For comparison: $P_{L\text{-}H\ ITPA\ 2008} = 0.0488\ B_{tor}^{0.803}\ \langle n_e \rangle^{0.717}\ S^{0.94}$, RMSE= 30%

$$B_{pol} = \frac{\mu_0 I_p}{S/(2\pi R)}$$

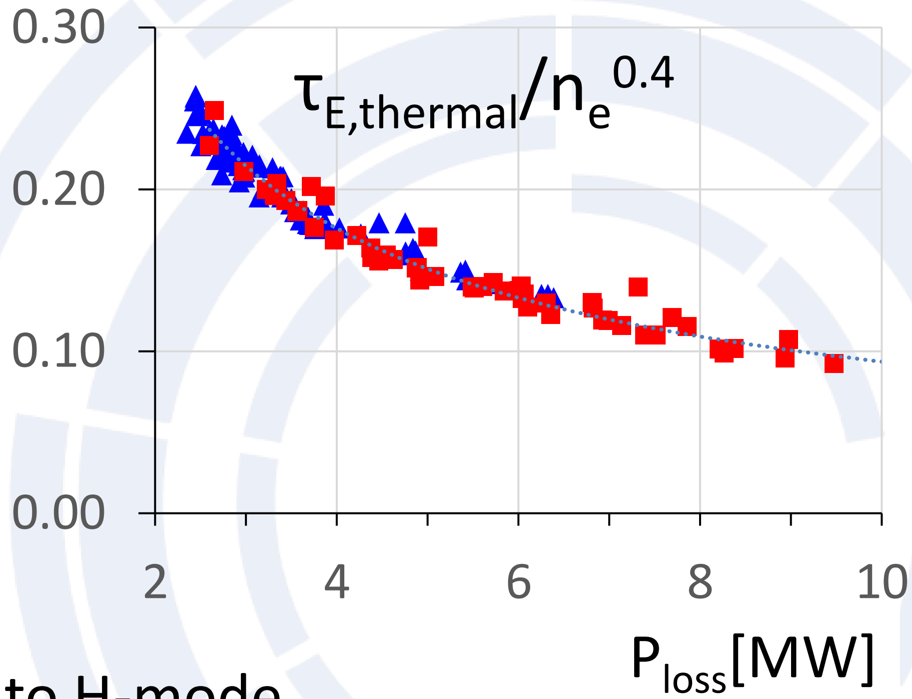
E. Delabie et al Nucl. Fusion 66 036016 (2026)

Why is P_{LH} higher for Corner? Is its confinement worse in L-mode?

Inspired by ITER L-96 L-mode confinement time scaling

$$\tau_E \approx 0.023\, I_p^{0.96} B_T^{0.03} R^{1.83} \kappa^{0.64} n_e^{0.40} M^{0.20} P^{-0.73} a^{-0.06}$$

L-mode data with 2.5 MA, NBI only. Plot $\tau_E/n_e^{0.4}$ vs P_{loss}



L-mode global energy confinement doesn't explain why P_{L-H} is higher for Corner

- There are no L-modes in VH at high P_{loss}, they transition to H-mode
- There are L-modes in Corner at high P_{loss}, P_{L-H} configuration effect

L-mode database courtesy of A. Kirjasuo

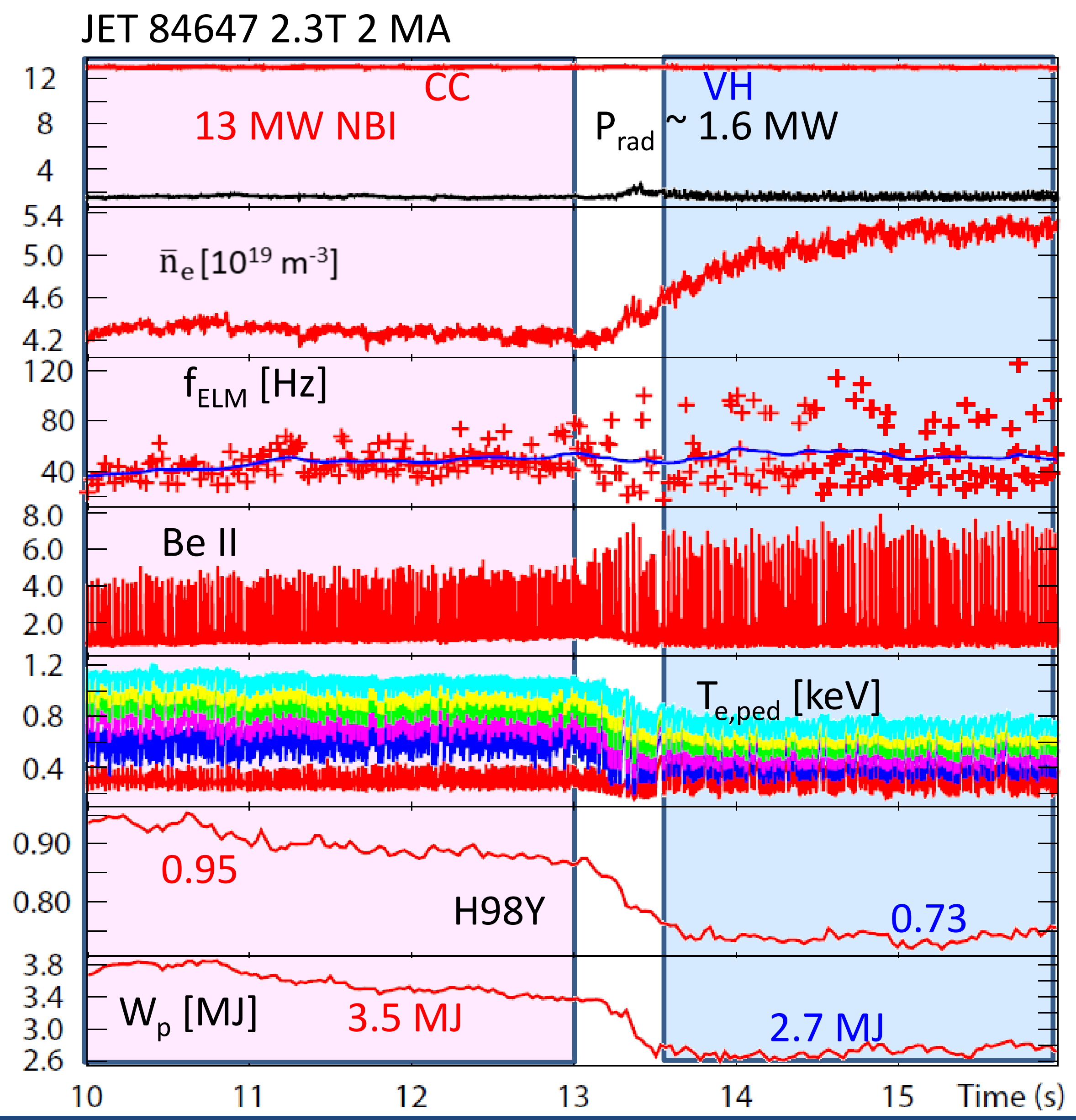
Operational history

Up until 2013, JET-ILW research programme was **VH**-dominated to match ITER triangularity

At 2 MA it was actually possible to obtain H=1 in VH

At 2.5 MA there were only very few H=1 steady phases in VH

In H-mode, change shape, NBI and fueling constant: confinement changes



At constant power and with top fuelling, change from **CC** to **VH**:

CC H_{98} ~0.9

- good confinement in H-mode, despite higher P_{LH}
- $P_{NBI}+P_{Ohm}$=13.4 MW, P_{LH}=8.2, ratio= 1.6

GOOD H-MODE

VH H_{98} ~0.70

- poor confinement in H-mode, despite lower P_{LH}
- $P_{NBI}+P_{Ohm}$=13.5 MW, P_{LH}=7.0, ratio= 1.9

POOR H-MODE

Higher ratio of heating power to P_{LH} doesn't correlate with good confinement *because divertor configuration changes density*

Operational history, impact on databases

Up until 2013, JET-ILW research programme was **VH**-dominated to match ITER triangularity

At 2 MA it was actually possible to obtain H=1 in VH

At 2.5 MA there were only very few H=1 steady phases in VH

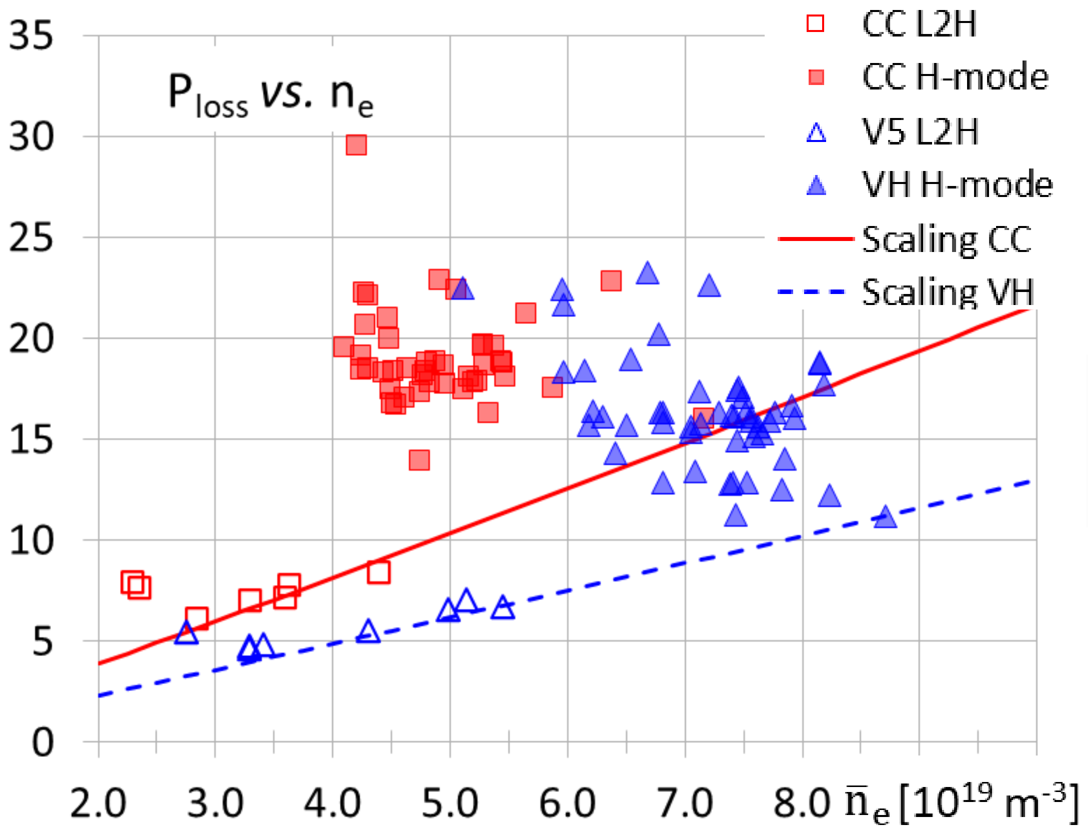
After 2013, research program discards **VH**, selecting **CC** for better confinement

3MA and above: CC (and VT), with top gas fuelling instead of divertor fuelling

Comparison only useful/possible at 2.5 MA

Note:
VT configuration not discussed here

Steady H-modes with good confinement, 2.5 MA, Deuterium only



- L-H and steady H-mode data with 2.5 MA
- $P_{L\text{-}H}(B_{pol})$ scalings
- Low density H-mode rarely accessible in VH
- Confinement scaling:

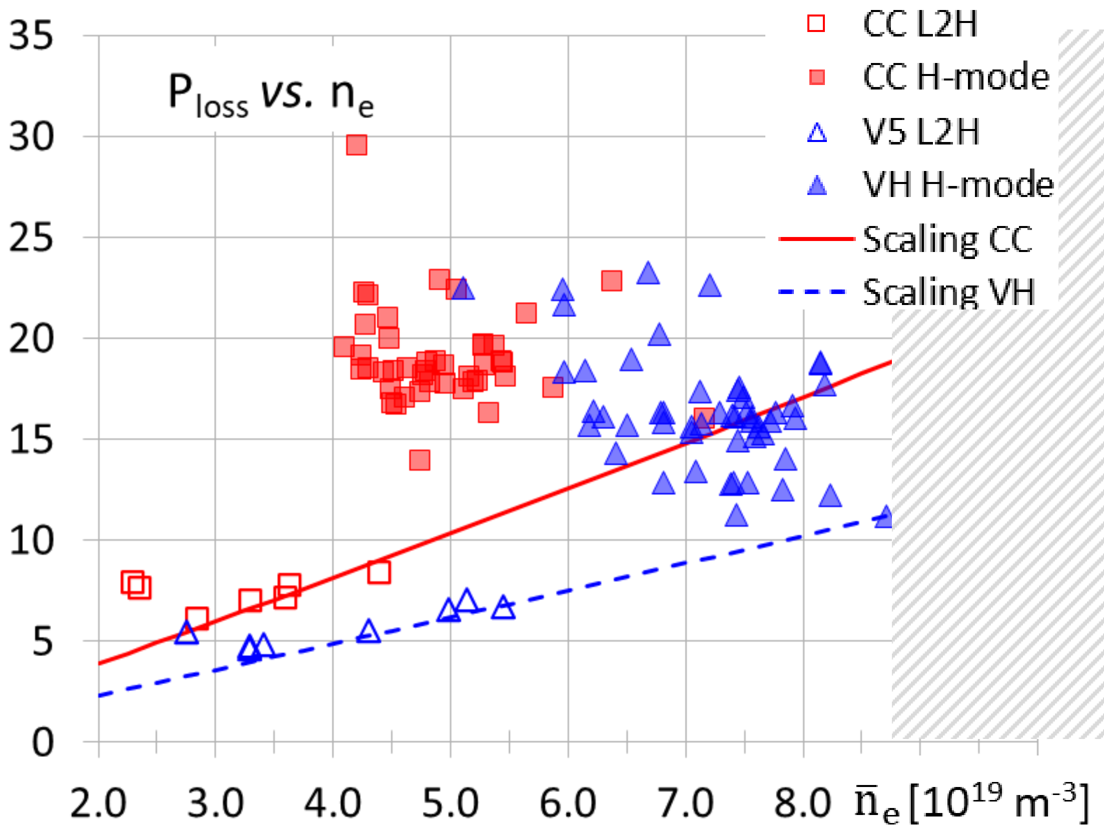
$$\tau_E^{98(y,2)} = 0.064\, I_p^{0.93} B_T^{0.15} n_e^{0.41} P^{-0.69} R^{1.97} \kappa^{0.78} \left(\frac{a}{R}\right)^{0.58}$$

H98 energy confinement scaling itself justifies selecting H-mode datapoints by current

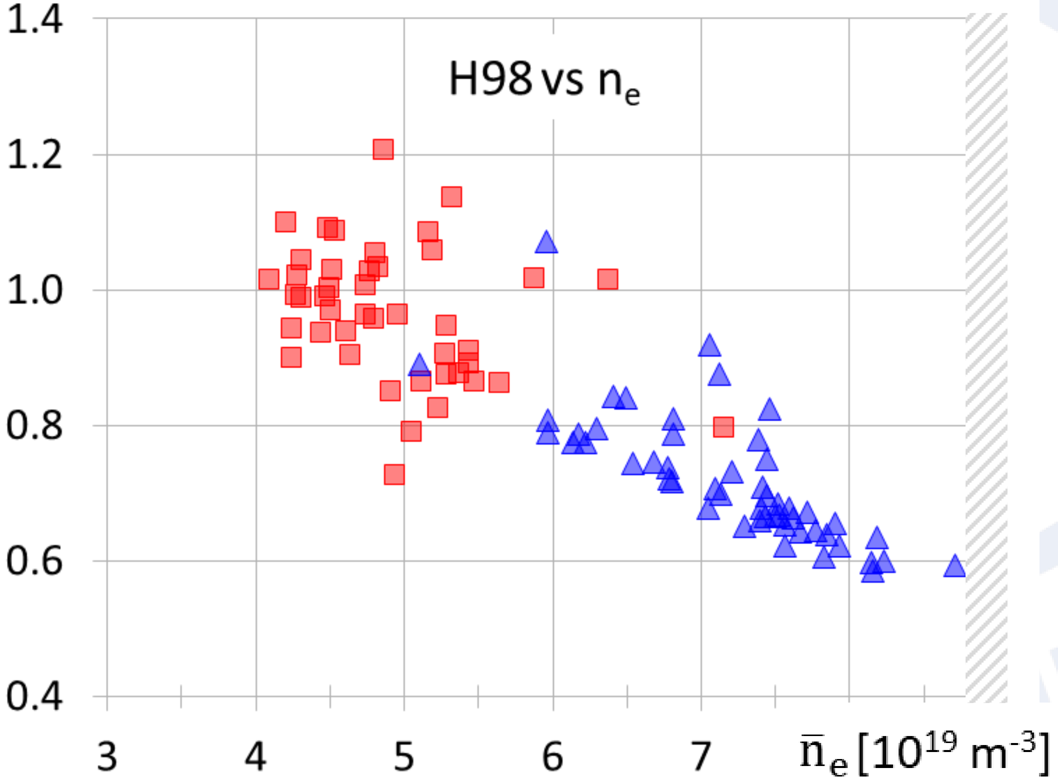
Operationally, low density rarely accessible in VH

M. Maslov et al 2020 Nucl. Fusion 60 036007
G. Verdoolaege *et al* 2021 *Nucl. Fusion* **61** 076006

Steady H-modes with good confinement, 2.5 MA



In terms of H98, CC displays better H-mode confinement fundamentally because stationary H-modes become accessible at low densities

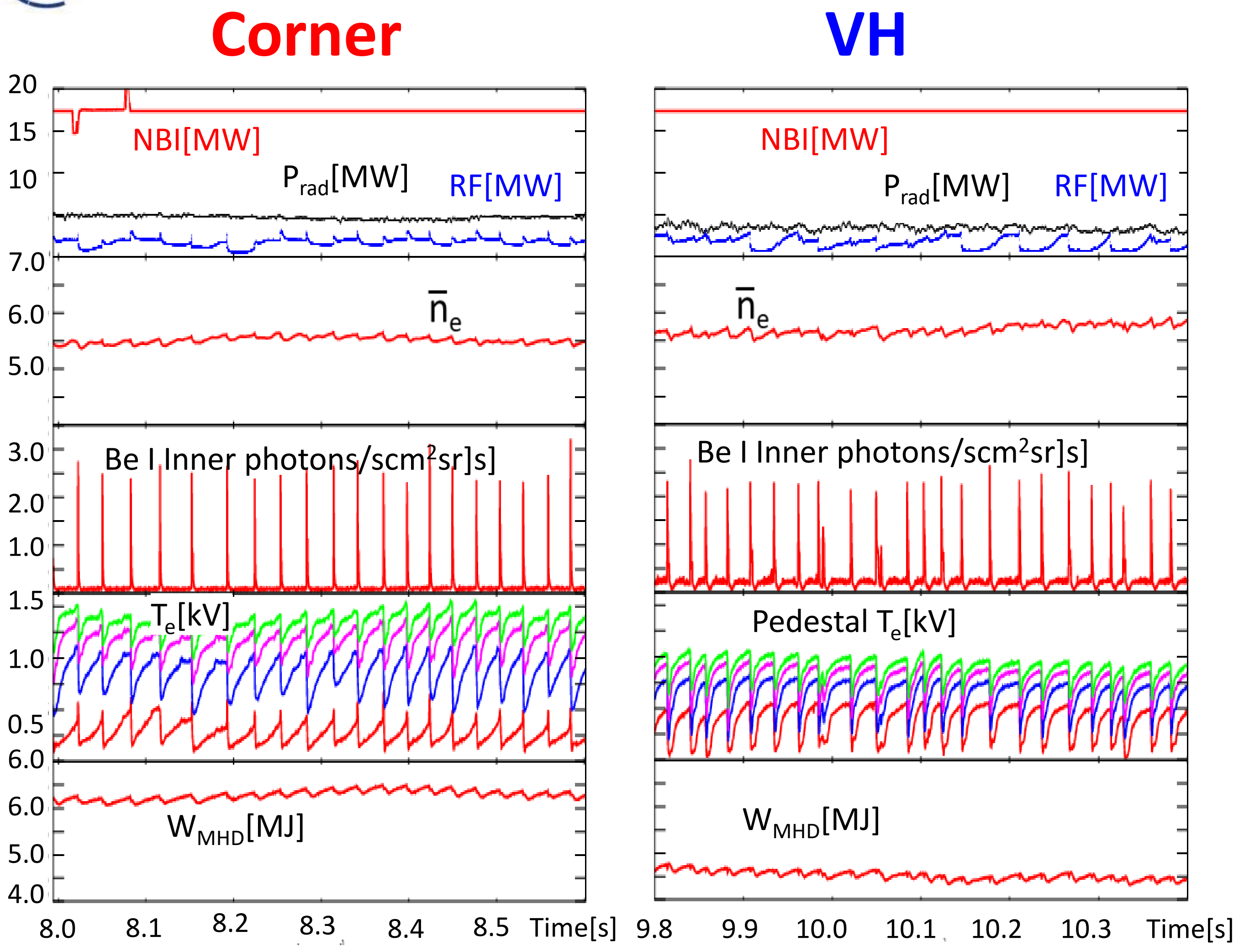


Operationally, low density rarely accessible in VH

M. Maslov et al 2020 Nucl. Fusion 60 036007
867 samples JET-ILW, 2011-2016

High H98 in low density operation space

Change shape and adjust gas, aim for constant line averaged density



Corner: better confinement

τ_E = 0.32 s, H98=1.2, W= 6.3 MJ

P_{loss}=19.2 MW, P_{LH}=8.5 MW, $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$=1.3

VH: worse confinement

τ_E= 0.24 s, H98=0.87, W= 4.5 MJ

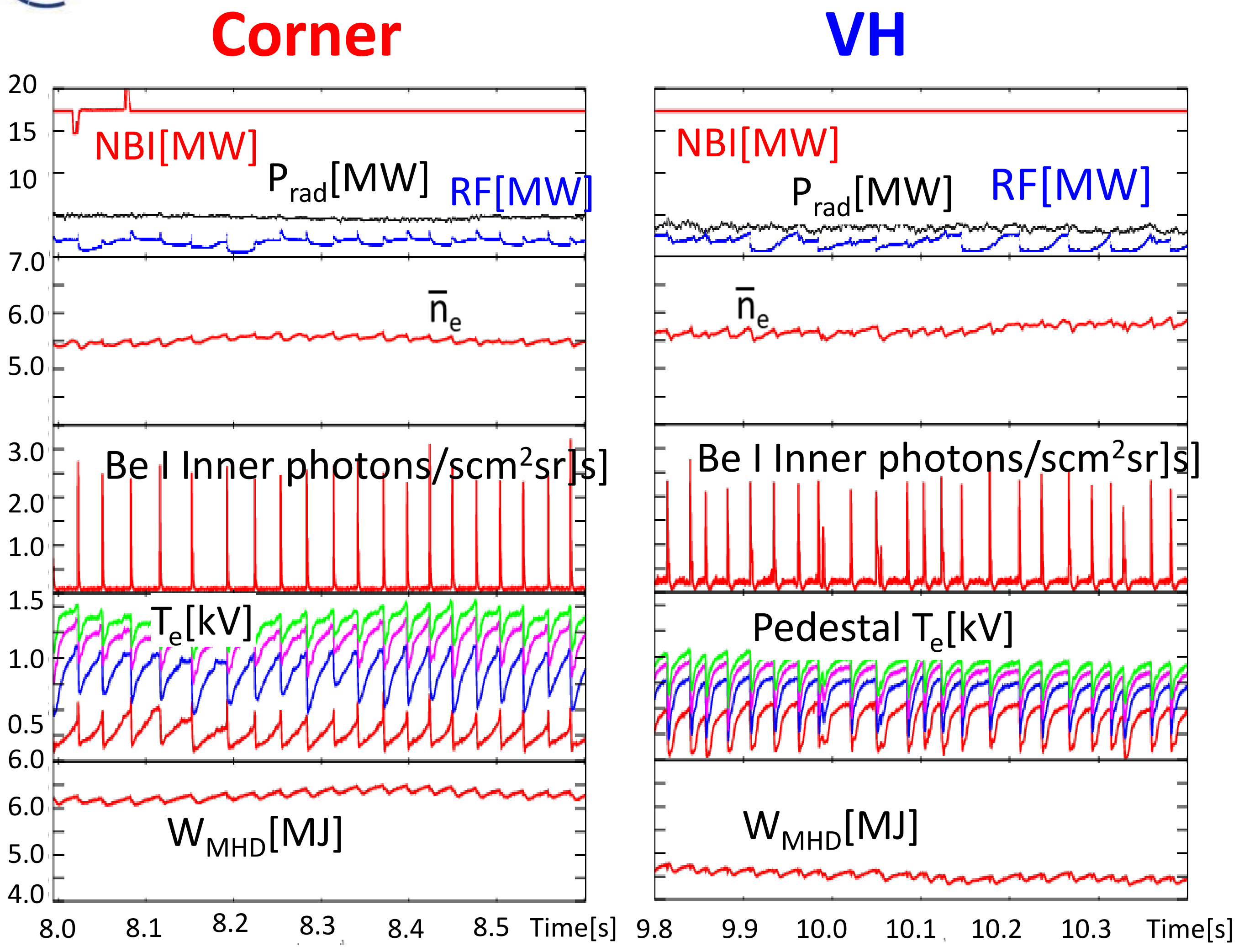
P_{loss}=18.6 MW, P_{LH}=4.5 MW, $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$=2.5

Maybe Corner has better confinement because it has less W?

Same pulse, constant power, adjust gas to match f_{ELM}, $\bar{n}_e$

Shift strike position.

Change shape and adjust gas, aim for constant line averaged density



Same pulse, constant power, adjust gas to match f_{ELM}, $\bar{n}_e$
Shift strike position.

Corner: better confinement
τ_E = 0.32 s, H98=1.2, W= 6.3 MJ
P_{loss}=19.2 MW, P_{LH}=8.5 MW, $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$=1.3

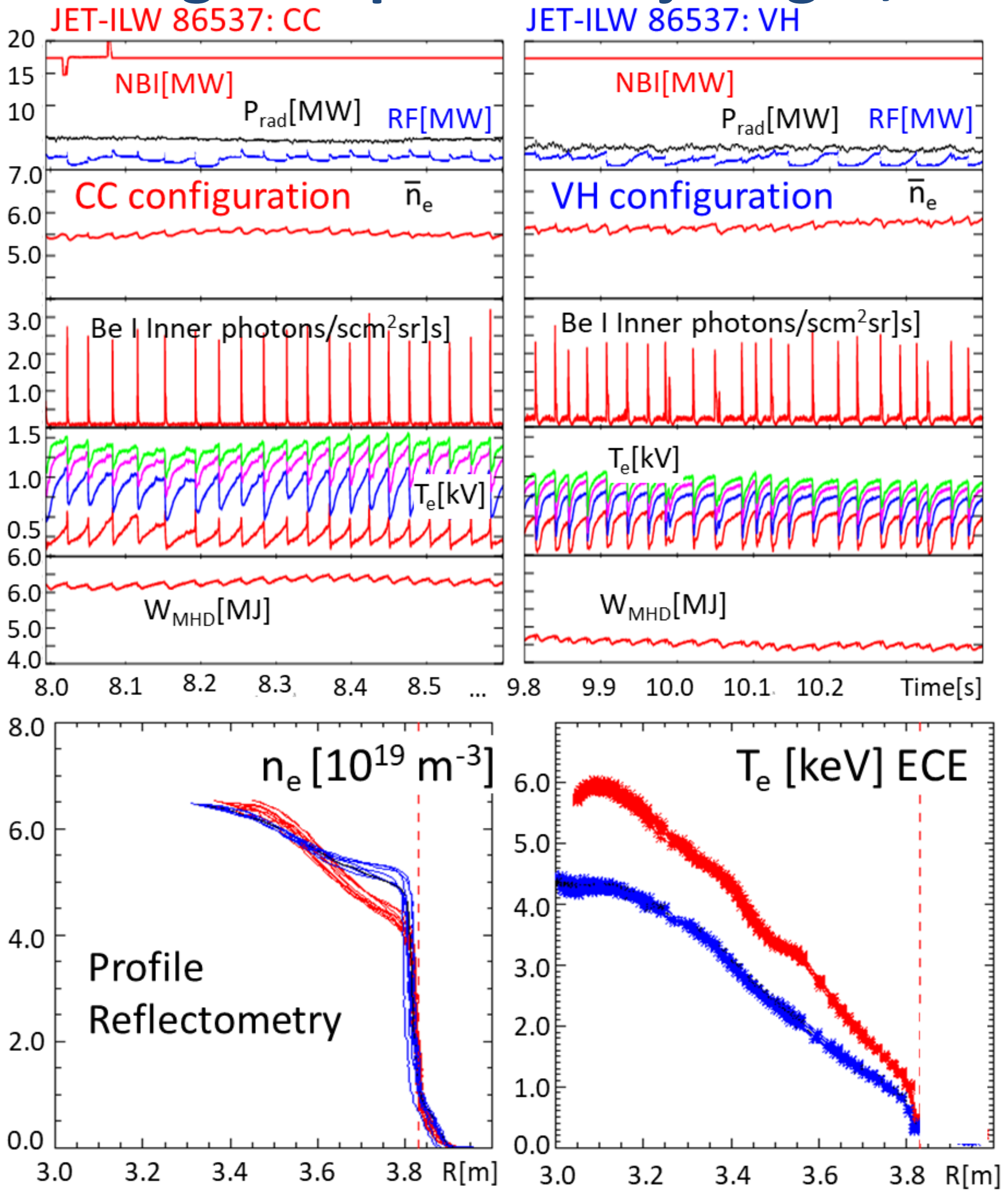
VH: worse confinement
τ_E= 0.24 s, H98=0.87, W= 4.5 MJ
P_{loss}=18.6 MW, P_{LH}=4.5 MW, $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$=2.5

Maybe Corner has better confinement because it has less W?

W erosion due to ELMs higher for CC (higher $T_{e,ped}$)

W atoms/s	CC	VH
Inboard	6.5e19	4.0e19
Outboard	9.0e19	7.2e19

Change shape and adjust gas, aim for constant line averaged density



Corner: peaked density, better NBI penetration

τ_E = 0.32 s, H98=1.2, W= 6.3 MJ

P_{loss}=19.2 MW, P_{LH}=8.5 MW, $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$=1.3

VH: higher pedestal density, worse confinement

τ_E= 0.24 s, H98=0.87, W= 4.5 MJ

P_{loss}=18.6 MW, P_{LH}=4.5 MW, $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$=2.5

Select pre-ELM profiles in each phase:

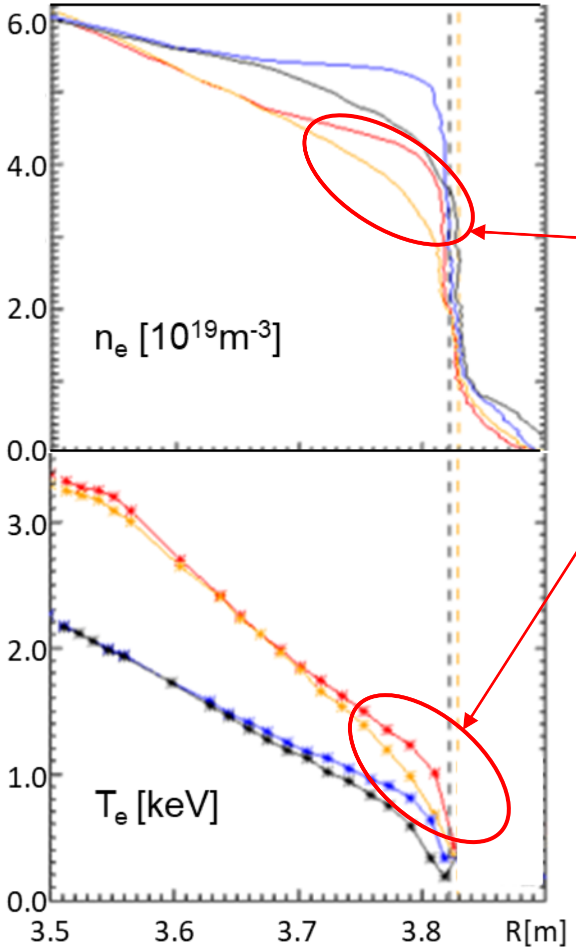
Corner: peaked n_e, lower $n_{e,ped}$, hotter T_e

VH: pedestal $n_{e,ped}$, colder core

R. B. Morales, Rev. Sci. Instrum. 95, 043501 (2024)

Zoom in, fast profiles at single time slices before and after ELMs

CC: good confinement associated to lower edge density, higher core temperatures



Select profiles

Pre-ELM CC   Pre-ELM VH

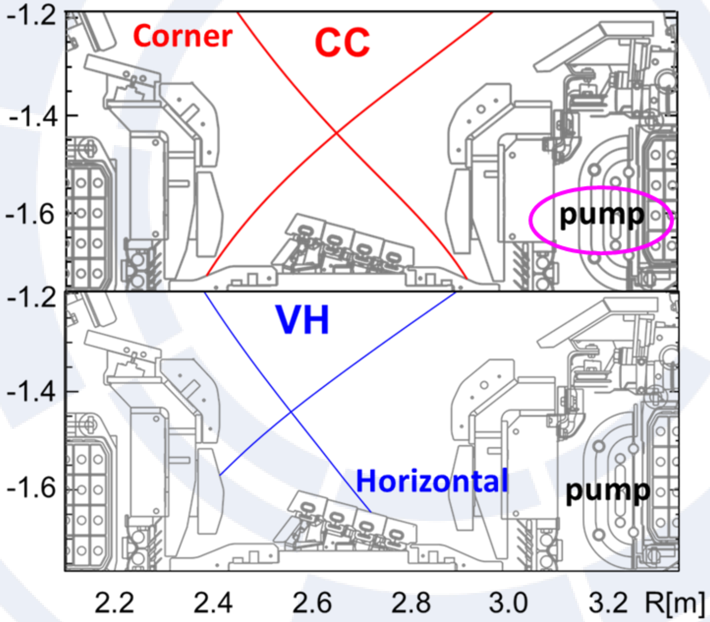
Post-ELM CC   Post-ELM VH

In CC:

- Lower $n_{e,ped}$, higher $T_{e,ped}$
- similar ELM particle loss
- better pumping
- Return to low $n_{e,ped}$ before next ELM

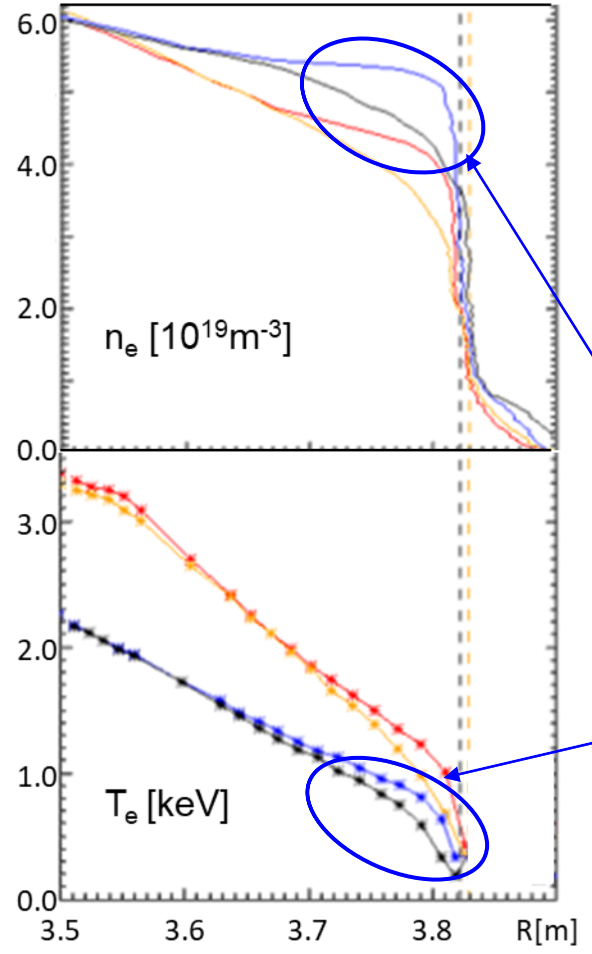
In VH:

- higher $n_{e,ped}$, lower $T_{e,ped}$
- similar ELM particle loss
- less gas fuelling
- Worse pumping, higher recycling
- Return to high $n_{e,ped}$ before next ELM



Zoom in, fast profiles at single time slices before and after ELMs

CC: good confinement associated to lower edge density, higher core temperatures



Select profiles

Pre-ELM CC

Post-ELM CC

Pre-ELM VH

Post-ELM VH

In CC:

- Lower $n_{e,ped}$, higher $T_{e,ped}$
- similar ELM particle loss
- better pumping
- Return to medium $n_{e,ped}$ before next ELM

In VH:

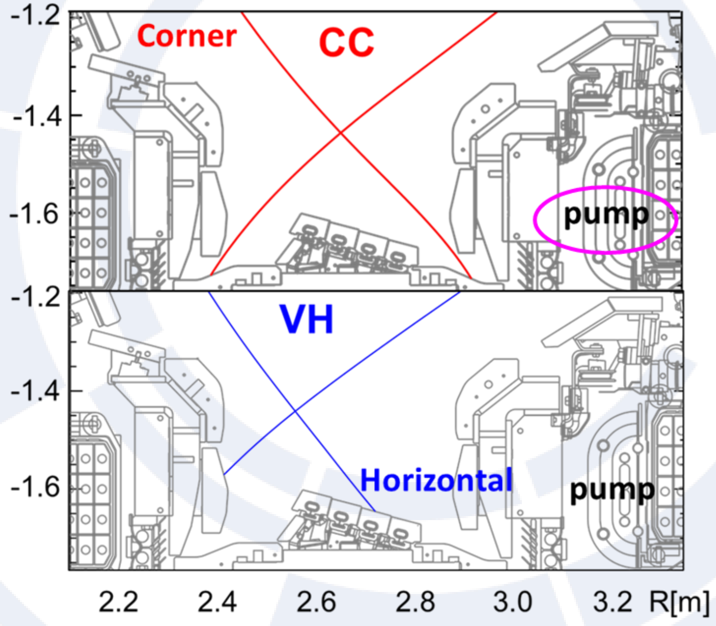
- Higher $n_{e,ped}$, lower $T_{e,ped}$
- similar ELM particle loss
- Less gas fuelling
- Worse pumping, higher recycling
- Return to high $n_{e,ped}$ before next ELM

In H-mode pumping can make a difference:

Particles expelled by ELMs are

pumped away in CC

recycled back in VH, feeding high $n_{e,ped}$



Modelling is required!

Conclusions

- In JET plasma shape at active X-point (and divertor hardware) affects $\bar{n}_{e,min}$ and $P_{LH,min}$

  reasons for configuration effect on P_{LH} at JET remains unknown

- Which P_{LH} scaling (**VH**, **CC**, B_{tor}, B_{pol}) to be applied to future devices?

  Configuration effect brings largest uncertainty

- Despite **lower P_{LH}** in **VH** configuration, **better H-mode confinement** is observed in **CC** configuration because a lower density operational window opens up. Possibly because ELM-expelled particles are pumped away more efficiently? ***Modelling required!***

  Effect observed at 2.5 MA, not below

- $P_{loss}/P_{LH,scal}$ is not a good predictor of ELMy regime or good confinement

For any planned fusion operating regime

consider access and stationarity conditions for good overall confinement, different from conditions for low L-H power threshold.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported in part by research grant PID2021-127727OB-I00, funded by Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades, Agencia Estatal de Investigación /10.13039/501100011033 and by ERDF/EU

MINISTERIO DE CIENCIA, INNOVACIÓN Y UNIVERSIDADES

Cofinanciado por la Unión Europea

AGENCIA ESTATAL DE INVESTIGACIÓN

EUROfusion Tokamak Exploitation Team: See the author list of N. Vianello *et al* 2026 *Nucl. Fusion* **66** 116010 https://doi.org/10.1088/1741-4326/ae71ec

E. R. Solano[1], E Delabie[2], F. Rimini[3], R. B. Morales[3], M. Maslov[3], A. Kirjasuo[4], G. Verdoolaege[5], A. Huber[6], L. Frassinetti[7], S. Saarelma[3], M. Chernyshova[8], C. Silva[9], E. Pawelec[10], W. Gromelski[11], S. Menmuir[3],Z. Huang[3], A. Baciero[1], E. de la Luna[1], J.M. Fontdecaba[1], JET Contributors and EUROfusion Tokamak Exploitation Team

[1]Laboratorio Nacional de Fusión, CIEMAT, Madrid, Spain; [2]Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, TN 37831, TN, USA; [3]UKAEA, Culham Campus, Abingdon, OX14 3DB, United Kingdom; [4]University of Helsinki, Finland; [5]Department of Applied Physics, Ghent University, 9000 Ghent, Belgium; [6]Forschungszentrum Jülich GmbH, Institute of Fusion Energy and Nuclear Waste Management-Plasma Physics, 52425 Jülich, Germany; [7]KTH Royal Institute of Technology, SE-10044 Stockholm, Sweden; [8]National Centre for Nuclear Research, Andrzeja Sołtana 7, 05-400 Otwock, Poland [9]Instituto de Plasmas e Fusão Nuclear, Instituto Superior Técnico, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal; [10]Institute of Physics, University of Opole, Oleska 48, 45-052 Opole, Poland; [11]Institute of Plasma Physics and Laser Microfusion, Hery 23, 01-497 Warsaw, Poland