Electron Neutrino and Antineutrino Appearance in the Full MINOS Data Sample


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We report on $\nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_e$ appearance in $\nu_\mu$ and $\bar{\nu}_\mu$ beams using the full MINOS data sample. The comparison of these $\nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_e$ appearance data at a 735 km baseline with $\theta_{13}$ measurements by reactor experiments probes $\delta$, the $\theta_{13}$ octant degeneracy, and the mass hierarchy. This analysis is the first use of this technique and includes the first accelerator long-baseline search for $\bar{\nu}_\mu \rightarrow \bar{\nu}_e$. Our data disfavor 31%
The neutrino oscillation phenomenon is successfully modeled by a theory of massive neutrino eigenstates that are different from the neutrino flavor eigenstates. These sets of eigenstates are related by the Pontecorvo-Maki-Nakagawa-Sakata matrix [1], which is commonly parameterized by three angles $\theta_{ij}$ and a $CP$-violating phase $\delta$.

The values of $\theta_{12}$ and $\theta_{23}$ have been measured [2–4] with indications that $\theta_{23}$ is not maximal [5–7]. The final angle $\theta_{13}$ is now known to have a nonzero value from measurements by reactor experiments [8–10], the measurement by the T2K [11] accelerator experiment, and from earlier MINOS results [12,13].

Despite these accomplishments, the value of $\delta$ is still unknown, as is the ordering of the neutrino masses, which is referred to as the neutrino mass hierarchy. Much of the attention in the neutrino community is now focused on resolving these unknowns. The mass hierarchy is not only a fundamental property of neutrinos but also has a direct impact on the ability of neutrinoless double beta decay searches to state definitively whether the neutrino is its own antiparticle [14]. Reactor experiments make a pure measurement of $\theta_{13}$, whereas the $\nu_{\mu} \to \nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_\mu \to \bar{\nu}_e$ appearance probabilities measured by accelerator experiments such as MINOS depend on the values of $\delta$ and $\sin^2(\theta_{23})$. In addition, the long baseline of MINOS means that interactions between neutrinos and the matter of Earth make the appearance probabilities dependent on the neutrino mass hierarchy [15,16].

We report the result from the search for $\nu_e$ ($\bar{\nu}_e$) appearance in a $\nu_\mu$ ($\bar{\nu}_\mu$) beam using the full MINOS data sample. This result uses an exposure of $10.6 \times 10^{20}$ protons on target (POT) taken with a $\nu$ beam and an exposure of $3.3 \times 10^{20}$ POT taken with a $\bar{\nu}$ beam. The neutrino sample is 30% larger than the sample used for the previous MINOS results on this topic [13]. This analysis represents the first long-baseline search for the $\bar{\nu}_\mu \to \bar{\nu}_e$ appearance and places new constraints on $\theta_{13}$ and on a combination of $\delta$, $\theta_{23}$, and the neutrino mass hierarchy.

In the MINOS experiment [17], neutrino oscillation is studied with the NuMI beam line [18] by measuring neutrino interactions in two detectors. The near detector (ND), which has a fiducial mass of 29 tons, is at a distance of 1.04 km from the production target and is used to determine the composition of the beam before the neutrinos have oscillated. The far detector (FD), which has a fiducial mass of 3.8 kt, is at a distance of 735 km from the production target and is used to measure the change in the neutrino flavor composition of the beam. In both the $\nu$ and $\bar{\nu}$ beam modes, the NuMI beam has an energy spectrum that is peaked at 3 GeV. At the ND, the neutrino flavor composition of the neutrino interactions, as determined by a combination of simulation and measurement, is 30% larger than the sample used for the previous appearance probabilities measured by accelerator experiments such as MINOS depend on the values of $\delta$ and $\sin^2(\theta_{23})$. In addition, the long baseline of MINOS means that interactions between neutrinos and the matter of Earth make the appearance probabilities dependent on the neutrino mass hierarchy [15,16].

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background events. Separate libraries are used for the events in the $\nu$ beam mode and the $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode. The 50 best-matching events in the library are collected and used to produce three variables. These variables are the fraction of best-matching library events that are $\nu_e$-CC or $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC, the average inelasticity of the best-matching $\nu_e$-CC or $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC library events, and the average fraction of the energy depositions that overlap between the test event and the best-matching $\nu_e$-CC or $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC library events. These three variables and the reconstructed neutrino energy of the test event are then used as an input into an artificial neural network. The output value from the neural network is shown in Fig. 1. Signal events have a value near one, while background events cluster near zero. The maximum sensitivity to $\nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_e$ appearance is obtained by analyzing events with $\alpha_{\text{LEM}} > 0.6$.

Following the selection of $\nu_e$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC candidate events, the ND data are used to study the rate of background from NC, $\nu_\mu$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_\mu$-CC, and intrinsic beam $\nu_e$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC interactions. The NuMI beam can be tuned to produce different energy spectra. Among these different beam configurations, the relative contributions of the various backgrounds change in a well-understood way. By measuring the total of the three backgrounds in three different beam configurations, the relative amounts of the individual backgrounds can be deduced [21].

We use the measurement of the ND backgrounds to derive the FD background predictions for the data samples in the $\nu$ beam mode and in the $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode. For each sample, we divide simulated FD events into bins of energy and $\alpha_{\text{LEM}}$ and correct each FD background component, bin by bin, by multiplying it by the measured ND ratio of data to simulated events for that background. Since the ND data sample does not contain $\nu_e$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC events from oscillation, we estimate the FD contribution from this small background component through simulation and a correction based on the observed ND $\nu_\mu$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_\mu$-CC spectra.

The sources of systematic uncertainty that affect the background prediction are given in Table I. The effect of each source of uncertainty is evaluated by producing simulated ND and FD event samples that are modified according to the estimated size of each systematic effect. These modified samples are used to produce an altered FD background prediction for the systematic effect in question. We take the resulting difference between the nominal and modified predictions as the systematic uncertainty on the background prediction. The systematic effect that results in the largest reduction in sensitivity is a 2.0% uncertainty on the relative energy scale between the ND and the FD.

With the absence of a $\nu_e$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC signal in the ND, the signal selection efficiency cannot be extrapolated from the ND events in the same way as the background estimate. Therefore, to evaluate the signal efficiency, we select a sample of well-identified $\nu_\mu$-CC events [22,23], remove the energy depositions that are associated with the muon track [24], and insert the simulated energy depositions of an electron with an identical three-momentum [25]. This method effectively turns a well-identified sample of $\nu_e$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_e$-CC data events into a sample of $\nu_\mu$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_\mu$-CC data events. For the $\nu$ beam mode ($\bar{\nu}$ beam mode) data sample, we find the expected number of FD signal events with $\alpha_{\text{LEM}} > 0.6$ and the associated systematic uncertainty to be $33.7 \pm 1.9$ ($3.9 \pm 0.2$), assuming $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.1$, $\delta = 0$, $\theta_{23} = \pi/4$, and a normal mass hierarchy. This corresponds to an identification efficiency of $(57.4 \pm 2.8\%)$ for the $\nu$ beam mode and of $(63.3 \pm 3.1\%)$ for the $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode. The systematic uncertainties are evaluated in a way that is similar to the evaluation of the

![FIG. 1 (color online). Distributions of $\alpha_{\text{LEM}}$. The plots in the left column correspond to the $\nu$ beam mode. The plots in the right column correspond to the $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode. The top row shows the distributions for ND selected events with a band about the simulation representing the systematic uncertainty. The bottom row shows the distributions for the predicted FD background and signal multiplied by 10 with $2\sin^2(2\theta_{13})\sin^2(\theta_{23}) = 0.1$, $\delta = 0$, and a normal mass hierarchy.](image_url)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systematic effect</th>
<th>Uncertainty $\nu$ mode</th>
<th>Uncertainty $\bar{\nu}$ mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Energy scale</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalization</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\nu_e$ cross section</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All others</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total systematic</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total statistical</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE II. Expected FD event yields for events with a value of $\alpha_{\text{LEM}} > 0.6$, assuming $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.1$, $\delta = 0$, $\theta_{23} = \pi/4$, and a normal mass hierarchy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event type</th>
<th>$\nu$ beam mode</th>
<th>$\bar{\nu}$ beam mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\nu_{\mu}$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_{\mu}$-CC</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic $\nu_{\tau}$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_{\tau}$-CC</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\nu_{\tau}$-CC and $\bar{\nu}_{\tau}$-CC</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\nu_{\mu} \to \nu_{\tau}$-CC</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\bar{\nu}<em>{\mu} \to \bar{\nu}</em>{\tau}$-CC</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>161.4</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Events with $\alpha_{\text{LEM}} < 0.5$ are insensitive to the $\nu_{\tau}$ and $\bar{\nu}_{\tau}$ appearance. These events are therefore used in a separate study to validate the analysis procedure. ND events with $\alpha_{\text{LEM}} < 0.5$ are used to predict FD event yields, which are found to agree with the FD data to within 0.3 (0.6) standard deviations of the statistical uncertainty for the data sample in the $\nu$ ($\bar{\nu}$) beam mode.

FIG. 2 (color online). The reconstructed energy distributions for three $\alpha_{\text{LEM}}$ ranges. The events with energy greater than 5 GeV are combined into a single bin for the fits. The vertical bars through the data points denote statistical uncertainties. The signal predictions assume $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.051$, $\Delta m_{23}^2 > 0$, $\delta = 0$, and $\theta_{23} = \pi/4$. The plots in the left column correspond to data collected in the $\nu$ beam mode. The plots in the right column correspond to data collected in the $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode.

Events with $\alpha_{\text{LEM}} > 0.6$ are selected for further analysis in the $\nu$ beam mode and in the $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode. The expected and observed event counts in these samples are shown in Table II. The observed FD reconstructed energy spectra, in bins of $\alpha_{\text{LEM}}$, are shown for the candidate events in Fig. 2.

Assuming a three-flavor neutrino oscillation probability that includes matter effects [16], we simultaneously fit the data from the $\nu$ beam mode and $\bar{\nu}$ beam mode samples for the value of $2\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) \sin^2(\theta_{23})$ while the values of the mass hierarchy and $\delta$ are held fixed. The fit is performed using the 15 bins formed by three bins of $\alpha_{\text{LEM}}$ and five bins of energy. This procedure is performed for all values of $\delta$ and both mass hierarchies, and the resulting confidence intervals, calculated using the Feldman-Cousins technique [26], are shown in Fig. 3. The values of the oscillation parameters used in the fit are taken from previous measurements [24] and are set to $\sin^2(\theta_{23}) = 0.597 \pm 0.036$, $|\Delta m_{23}^2| = (2.39 \pm 0.10) \times 10^{-3}$ eV$^2$, $\theta_{12} = 0.60 \pm 0.02$, and $\Delta m_{12}^2 = (7.59^{+0.19}_{-0.21}) \times 10^{-5}$ eV$^2$. The full set of statistical and systematic uncertainties on the prediction is taken into account when constructing the contours.

Assuming a normal mass hierarchy, $\delta = 0$, and $\theta_{23} < \pi/4$, we find that the data allow for values of $0.01 < 2\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) \sin^2(\theta_{23}) < 0.12$ at 90% C.L. with the best-fit value of $2\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) \sin^2(\theta_{23}) = 0.051^{+0.038}_{-0.030}$. Assuming an

FIG. 3 (color online). The 68% and 90% confidence intervals of allowed values for $2\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) \sin^2(\theta_{23})$ as a function of $\delta$ for the two mass hierarchies.
inverted mass hierarchy, $\delta = 0$, and $\theta_{23} < \pi/4$, we find that the data allow for values of $0.03 < 2\sin^2(2\theta_{13})\sin^2(\theta_{23}) < 0.18$ at 90% C.L. with the best-fit value of $2\sin^2(2\theta_{13})\sin^2(\theta_{23}) = 0.093^{+0.054}_{-0.049}$. The best-fit values show very weak dependence on the choice of octant for $\theta_{23}$.

We are further able to place constraints on the value of $\delta$, the octant of $\theta_{23}$, and the neutrino mass hierarchy by incorporating the current knowledge of $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.098 \pm 0.013$ that we calculate from recent reactor data [8–10]. Figure 4 shows the likelihood for our data as a function of $\delta$ for the four possible combinations of mass hierarchy and the octant of $\theta_{23}$. The full set of statistical and systematic uncertainties on the prediction is taken into account when calculating the likelihood, as are the uncertainties on the oscillation parameters. This analysis represents the first result by a long-baseline experiment to use a combination of $\nu_\mu \to \nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_\mu \to \bar{\nu}_e$ appearance data, with external reactor constraints on $\theta_{13}$, to probe $\delta$, the $\theta_{23}$ octant degeneracy, and the mass hierarchy. Assuming $\theta_{23} > \pi/4$ ($\theta_{23} < \pi/4$), the data prefer an inverted hierarchy at 0.63 (0.04) units of $-2\Delta \ln L$. Furthermore, as is indicated by the horizontal lines in Fig. 4, our data disfavor 31% (5%) of the three-parameter space defined by $\delta$, the octant of the $\theta_{23}$, and the mass hierarchy at the 68% (90%) C.L. This analysis demonstrates the potential discriminating power that can be achieved with the combination of reactor and $\nu_\mu \to \nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_\mu \to \bar{\nu}_e$ appearance data.

In conclusion, we have presented the results of the $\nu_e$ and $\bar{\nu}_e$ appearance in $\nu_\mu$ and $\bar{\nu}_\mu$ beams from the full MINOS data sample. We have used these data to place new constraints on the mixing angle $\theta_{13}$ and have demonstrated how such data will be used in the future to break the degeneracy in the appearance probability created by the ambiguity in the octant of $\theta_{23}$, the neutrino mass hierarchy, and the value of the CP-violating phase $\delta$.

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