

Data Analysis Intercomparison

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Exercise

- Perform energy and efficiency calibration, identify radionuclides, and determine their activities
- Tasks:
 - energy calibration,
 - efficiency curve,
 - radionuclide identification,
 - activity calculation
- All data were provided

Sample

A soil sample was collected from an unspecified location. The sample was sieved through a 2 mm mesh, dried, and homogenized.

For measurement, **(475.36 ± 0.01) g of the dried soil** was packed into a polypropylene container.

The container was filled completely and then vacuum-sealed.

More than three weeks elapsed between sealing the container and performing the measurement

The container has a diameter of 92 mm, a bottom thickness of 1.3 mm, and a sidewall thickness of 1.8 mm.

The final height of the soil in the container is approximately 50 mm



Detector

High Purity Germanium detector

Planar

The detector's entrance window is made of 0.5 mm carbon epoxy



Measurement

The sample was placed directly on top of the detector

The sample was measured for 1102549 seconds,
with a **live time of 1102212 seconds**

Background:

No sample for 855667 seconds,
with a **live time of 855522 seconds**



Energy calibration: Sample

1st iteration

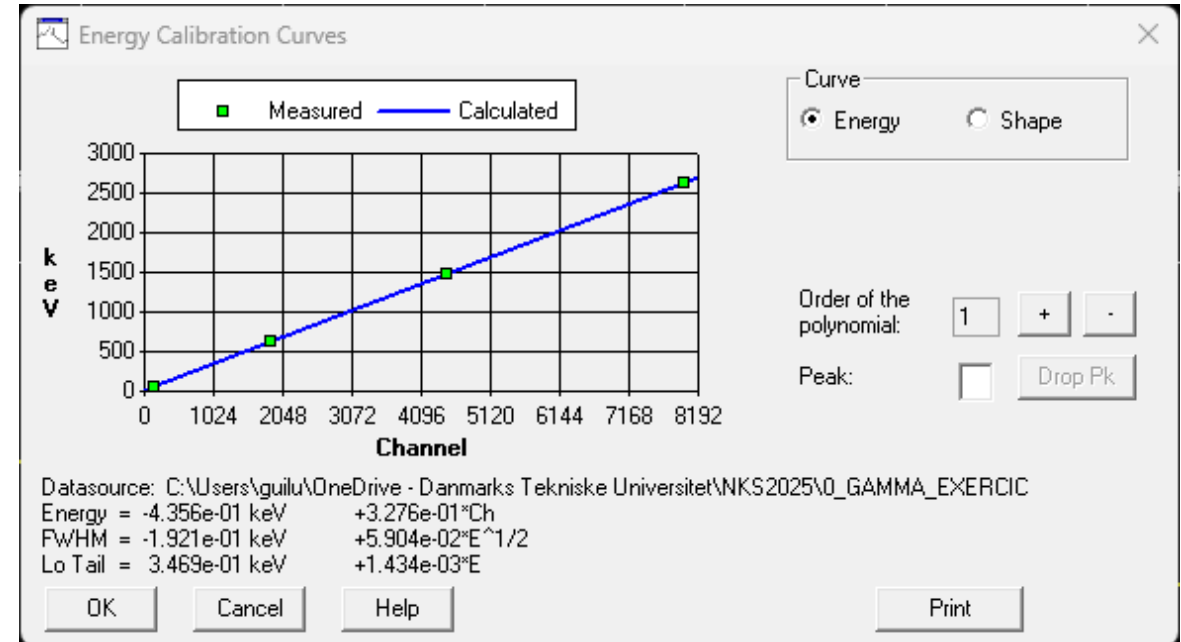
K-40: 1460.822 keV

Tl-208: 2614.511 keV

2nd iteration

Pb-210: 46.539 keV

Bi-214: 609.312 keV



Energy calibration: Background

1st iteration

Anni: 511 keV

K-40: 1460.822 keV

Tl-208: 2614.511 keV

2nd iteration

Ge-75m: 139.68 keV

Cd-114 [Cd-113(n, γ): 558.46 keV

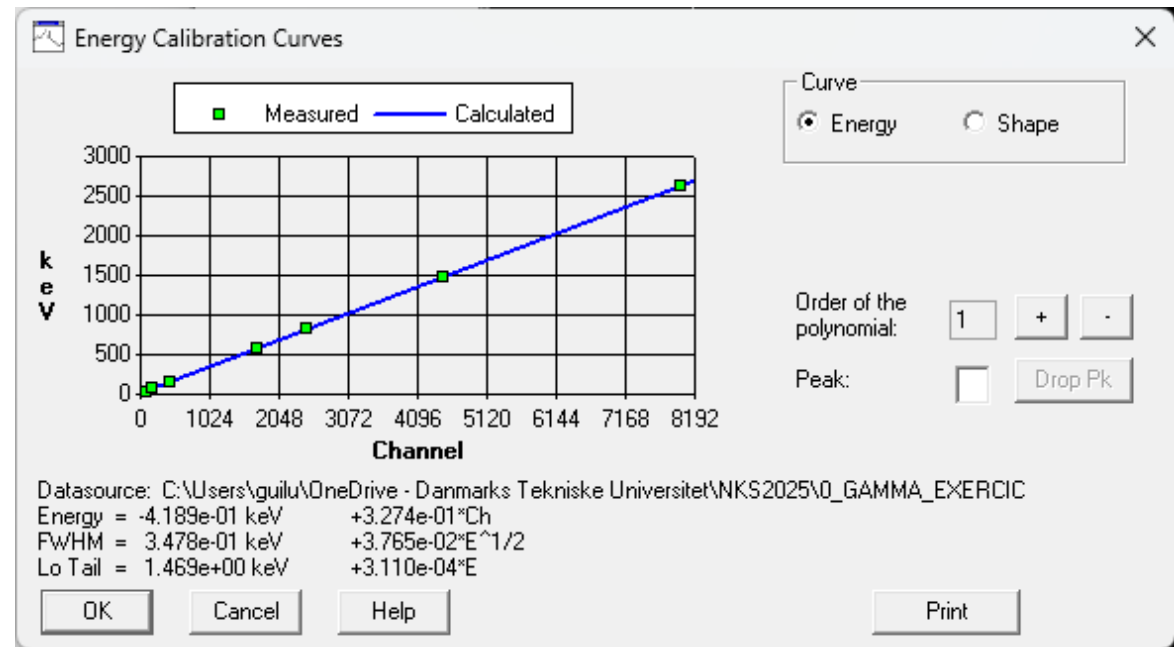
3rd iteration

Ge-73m: 53.44 keV

4th iteration

CdK α 1: 23.17 keV

Pb-206 [Pb-206(n, γ): 803.06 keV



Full Energy peak efficiency

Nuclide	Energy [keV]	FEP Efficiency	Unc. [%]
Pb-210	46.54	0.033327	4.06
Am-241	59.54	0.046425	3.08
Cd-109	88.03	0.061718	3.08
Co-57	122.06	0.059791	3.18
Te-123m	158.97	0.052882	3.08
Sn-113	391.7	0.024004	3.08
Sr-85	514.01	0.019074	3.08
Cs-137	661.66	0.014901	3.08
Y-88	898.04	0.011741	3.08
Co-60	1173.2	0.009232	3.08
Co-60	1332.5	0.008295	3.08
Y-88	1836.1	0.006363	3.08

Several options:

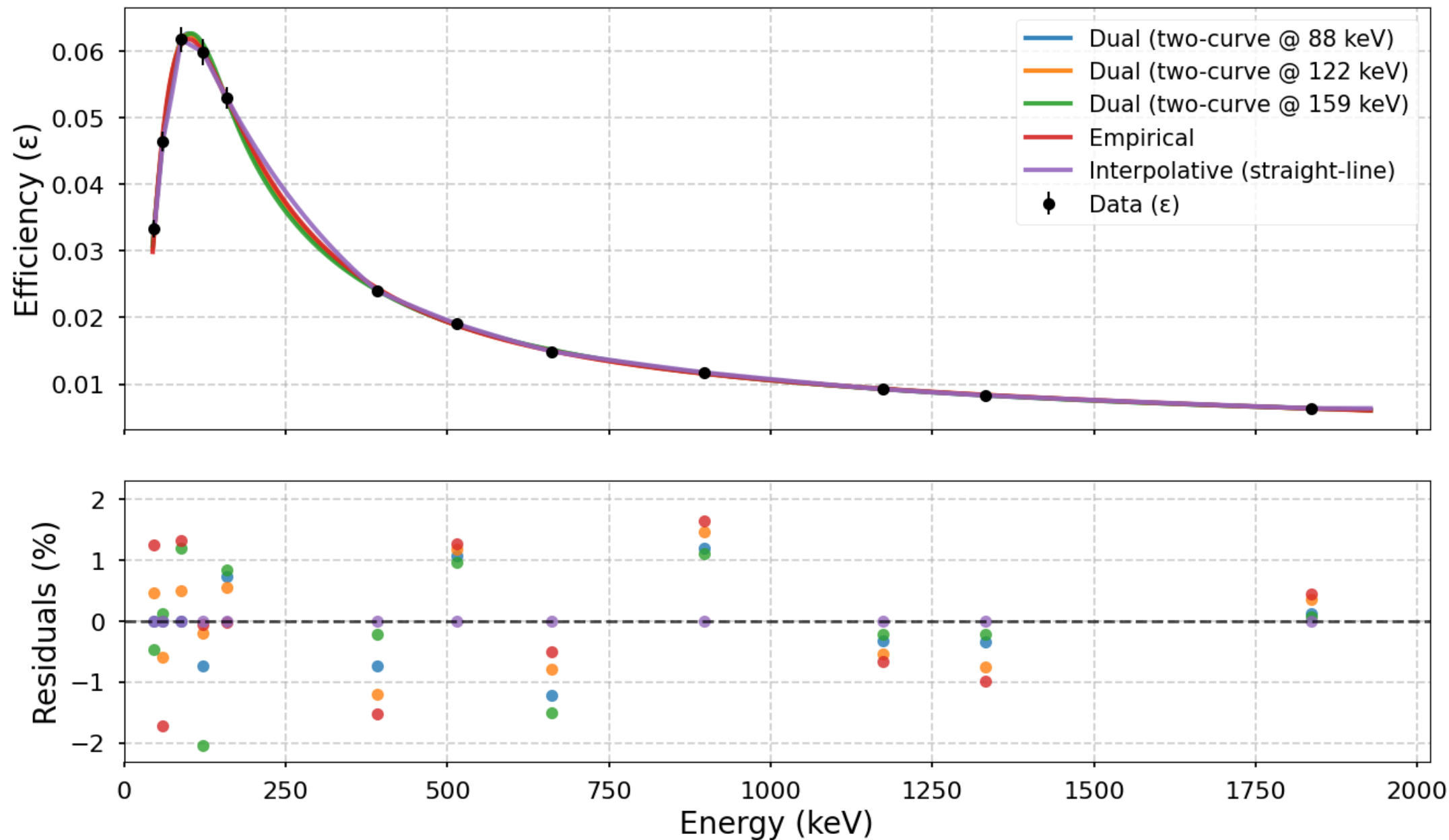
“Empirical”

“Dual”

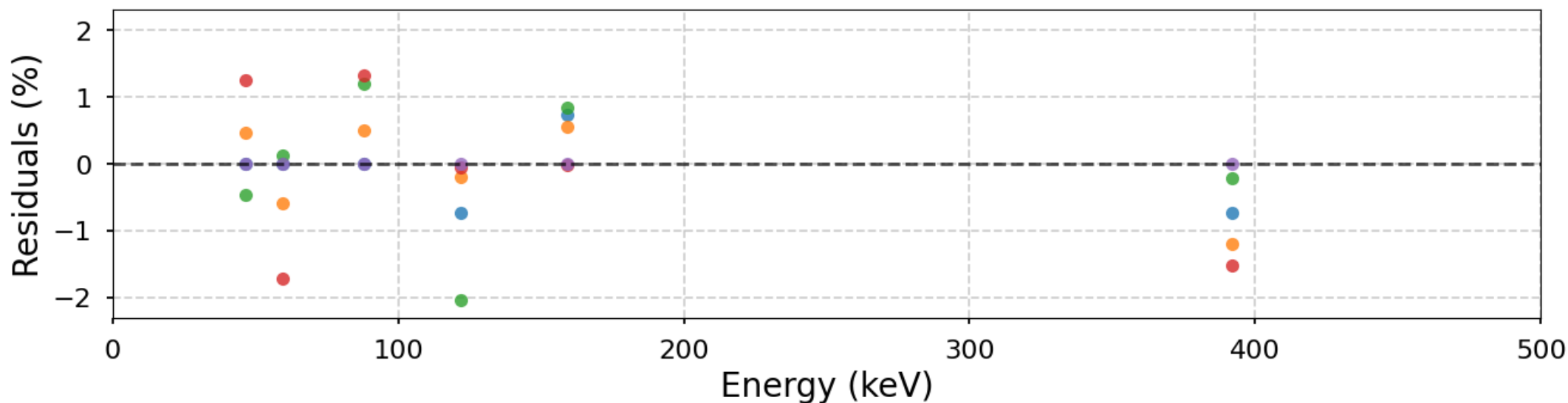
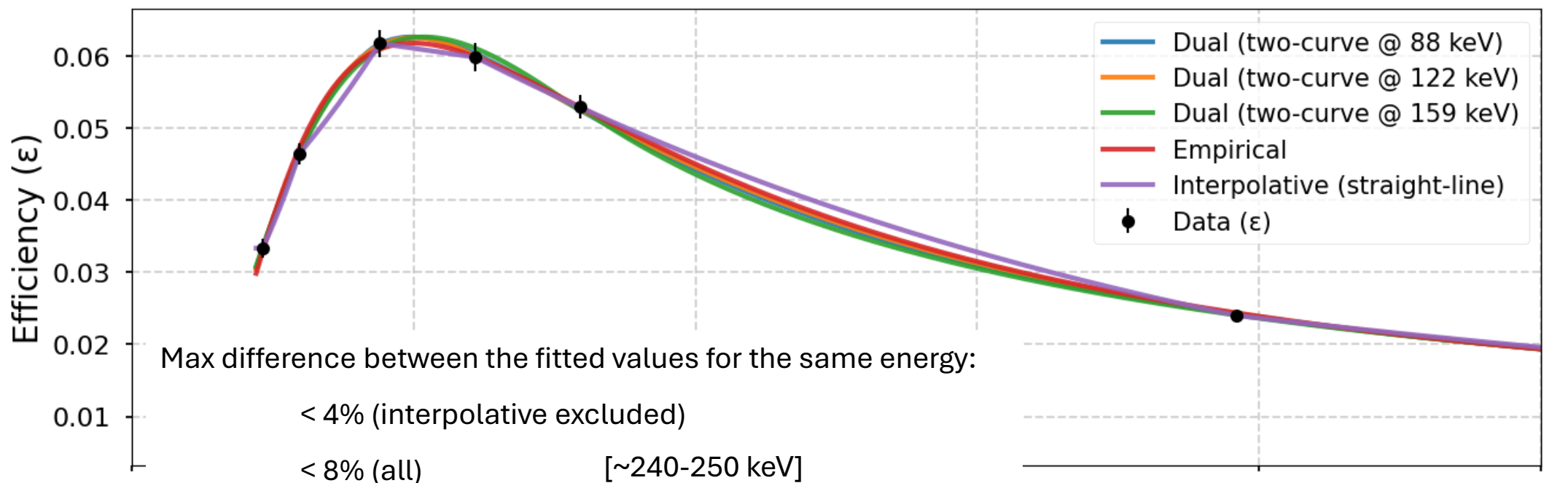
Polynomial

Interpolation

Efficiency Calibration Model Comparison



Efficiency Calibration Model Comparison



FEP efficiency curve: coincidence summing effect

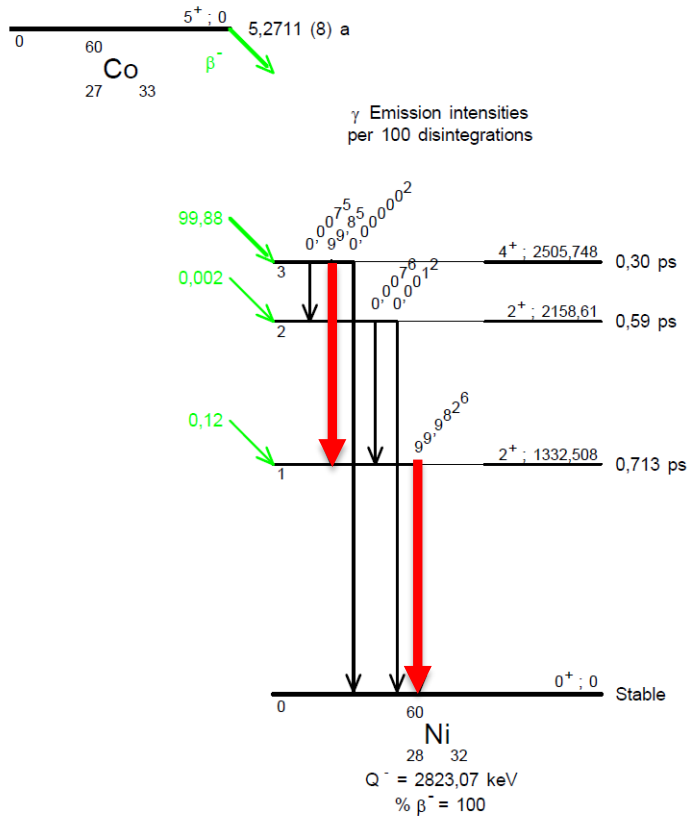
Calculated using EFFTRAN

Vidmar, T. 2005. *EFFTRAN - a Monte Carlo efficiency transfer code for gamma-ray spectrometry*.

Nuclear Instruments and Methods A 550, 603-608.

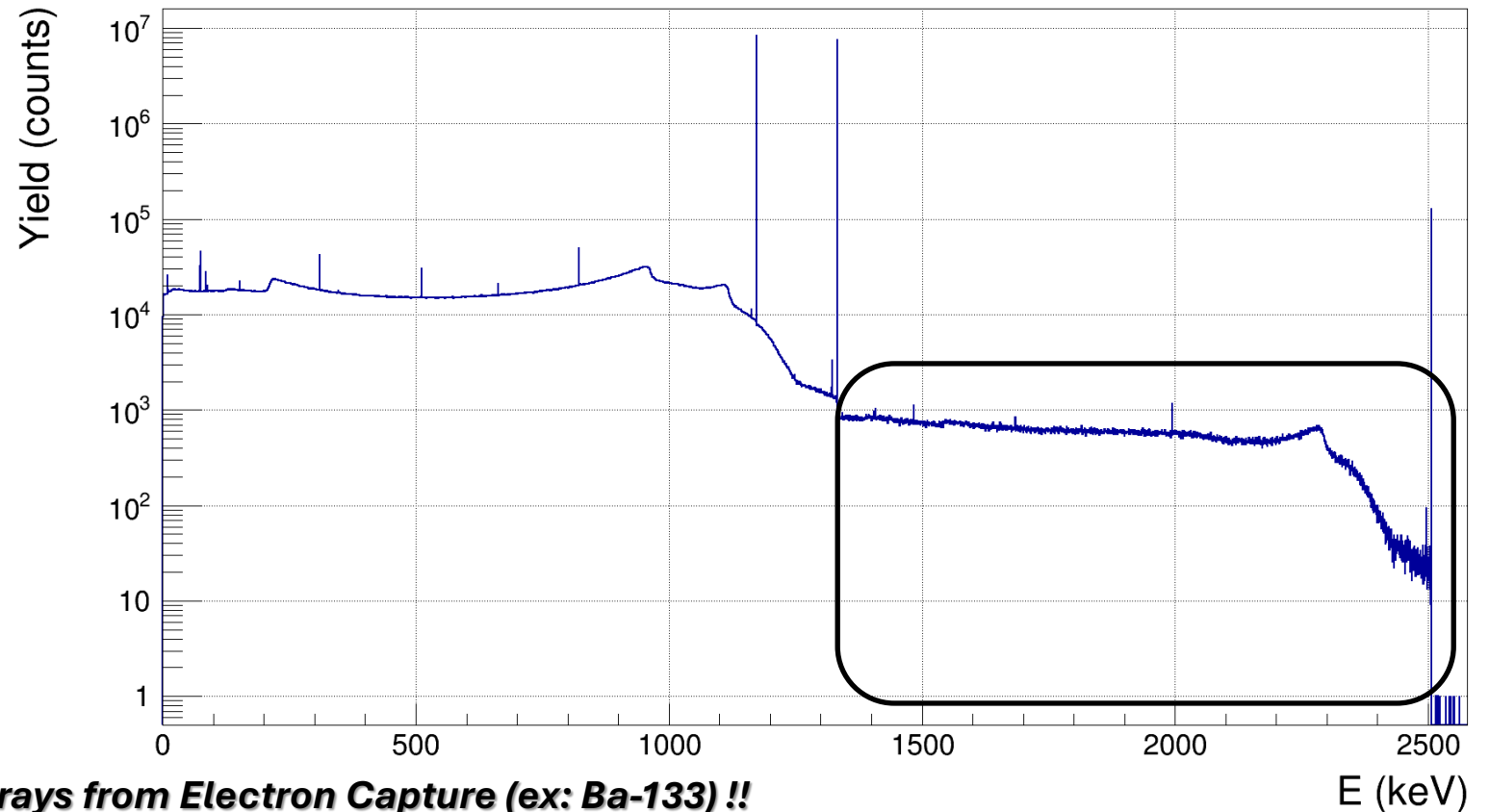
Coincidence summing corrections for the measured sample (EFFTRAN software)		
Nuclide	Energy [keV]	Correction
BE-7	477.6	1.0000
NA-22	1274.5	1.3051
K-40	1460.8	1.0002
CR-51	320.1	1.0016
MN-54	834.8	1.0019
CO-57	122.1	1.0100
CO-57	136.5	0.9866
CO-58	810.8	1.0451
CO-60	1173.2	1.1053
CO-60	1332.5	1.1101
ZN-65	1115.5	1.0053
SR-85	514.0	1.0171
Y-88	898.0	1.1149
Y-88	1836.1	1.1347
NB-94	702.6	1.1266
NB-94	871.1	1.1355
NB-95	765.8	1.0000
ZR-95	724.2	1.0000
ZR-95	756.7	1.0000
RU-103	53.3	1.2197
....		

FEP efficiency curve: coincidence summing effect



Decay data Co-60, Decay Data Evaluation Project,
http://www.inhb.fr/nuclides/Co-60_tables.pdf

Multiple gamma-ray emitters



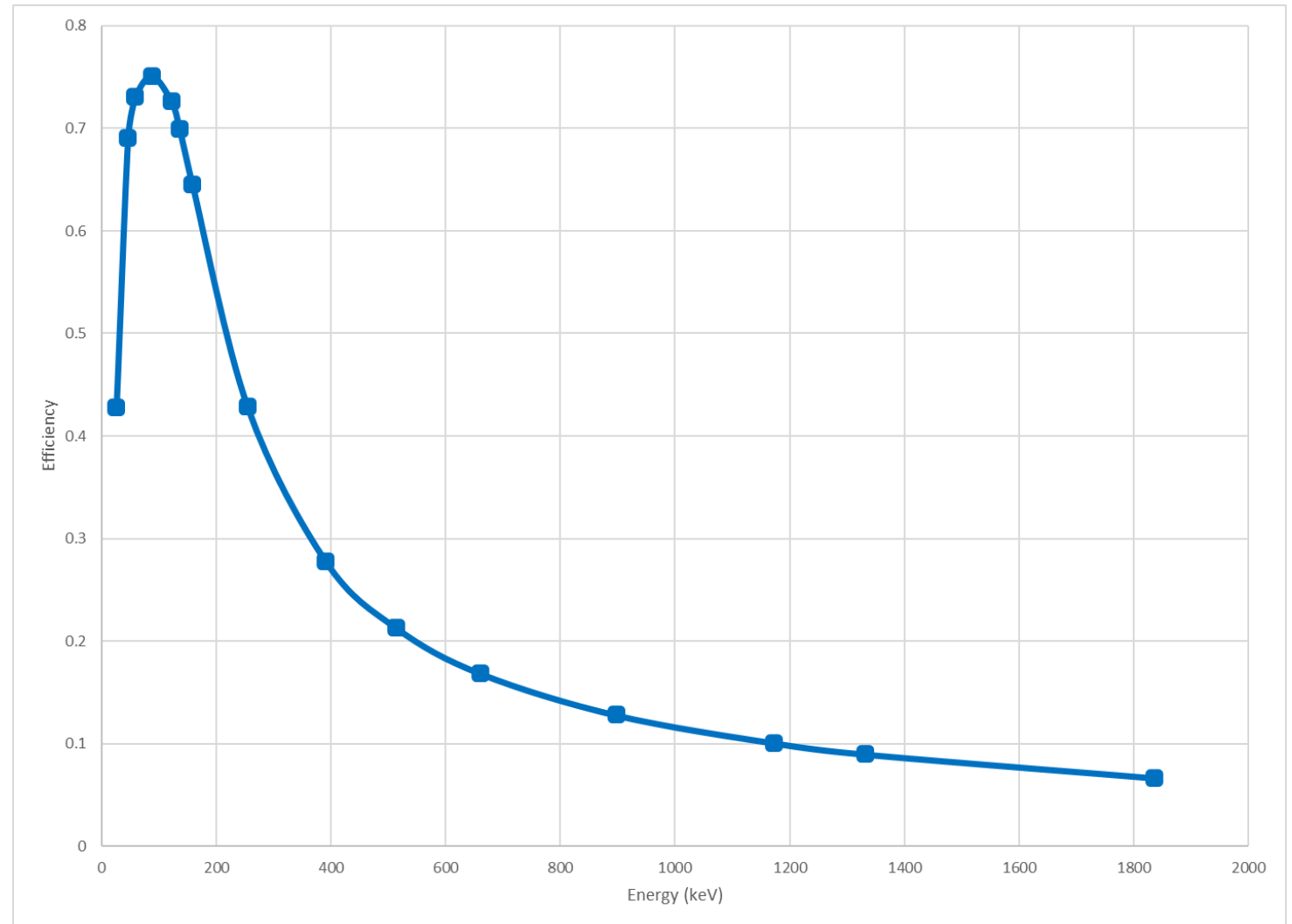
!! Also X-rays from Electron Capture (ex: Ba-133) !!

FEP efficiency curve: coincidence summing effect

Ex: Well type HPGe detector

FEP efficiencies curve
if **NO** coincidence summing

Am-241, Pb-210, Sr-85, Cd-109, Cs-137,
Co-57, Te-123m, Sn-113, Co-60, Y-88

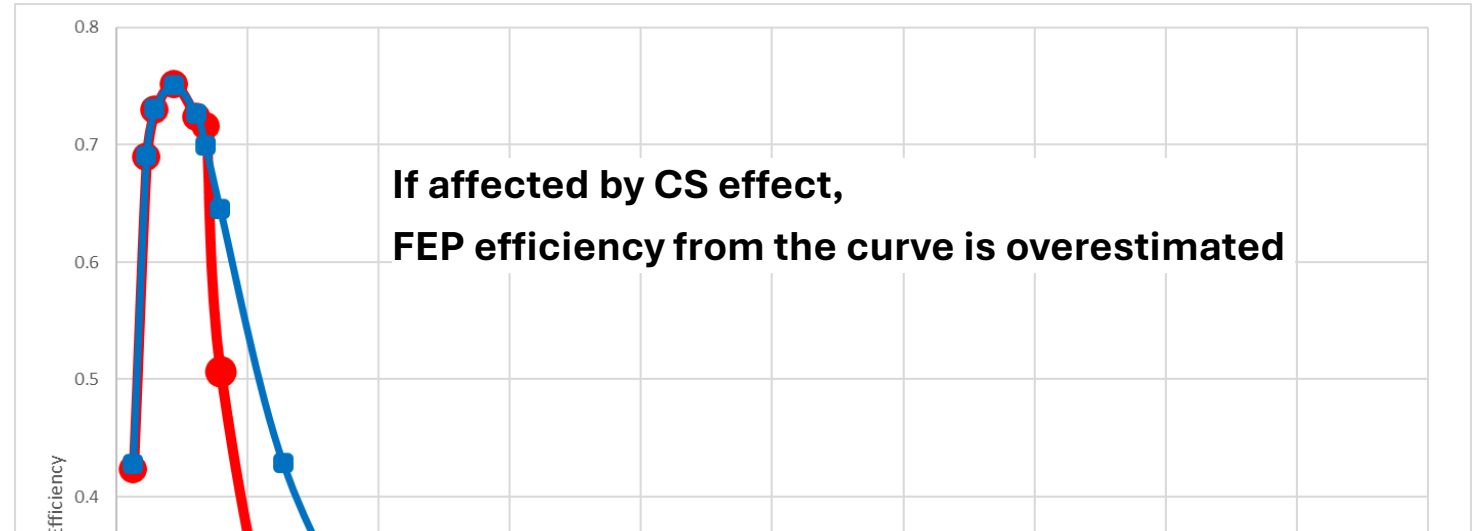


FEP efficiency curve: coincidence summing effect

Ex: Well type HPGe detector

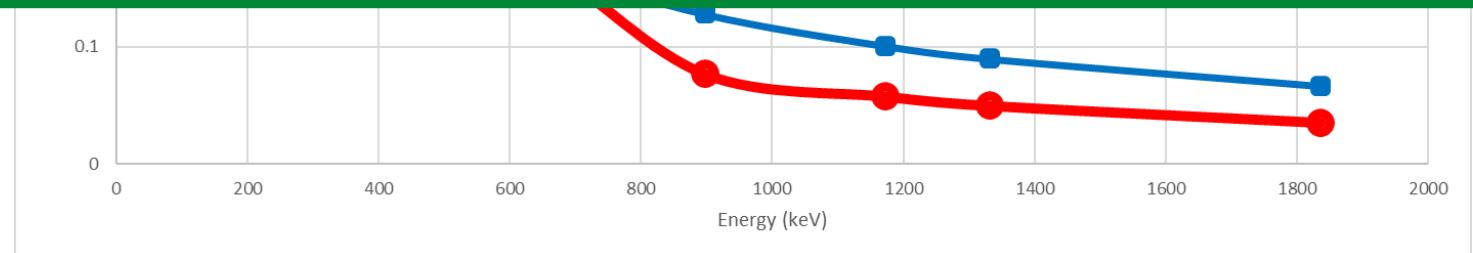
FEP efficiencies curve
if **NO** coincidence summing

With coincidence summing



For a given setup, nuclide & gamma-ray:

$$FEP_sample(Nuclide, Energy) = \frac{FEP_fit(Energy)}{CS \text{ correction from EFFTRAN } (Nuclide, Energy)}$$

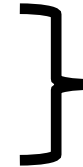


Am-241, Pb-210, Sr-85, Cd-109, Cs-137,
Co-57, Te-123m, Sn-113, Co-60, Y-88

Secular equilibrium

U-238: (*U*-238), Th-234, Pa-234m
 Ra-226, Pb-214 & Bi-214
 Pb-210

U-235: U-235, Th-227, Ra-223 & Rn-219



Many interferences
 Low activity

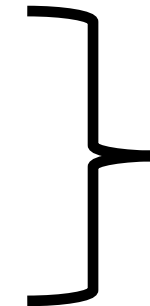
Pa-231 (32000 y)
 Ac-227 (21 y)

Effect of equil.: within the uncertainties

Th-232: Ac-228, Ra-224, Pb-212, Bi-212, Tl-208

Th-232: (*Ra*-228), Ac-228

(*Th*-228), Ra-224, Pb-212, Bi-212, Tl-208



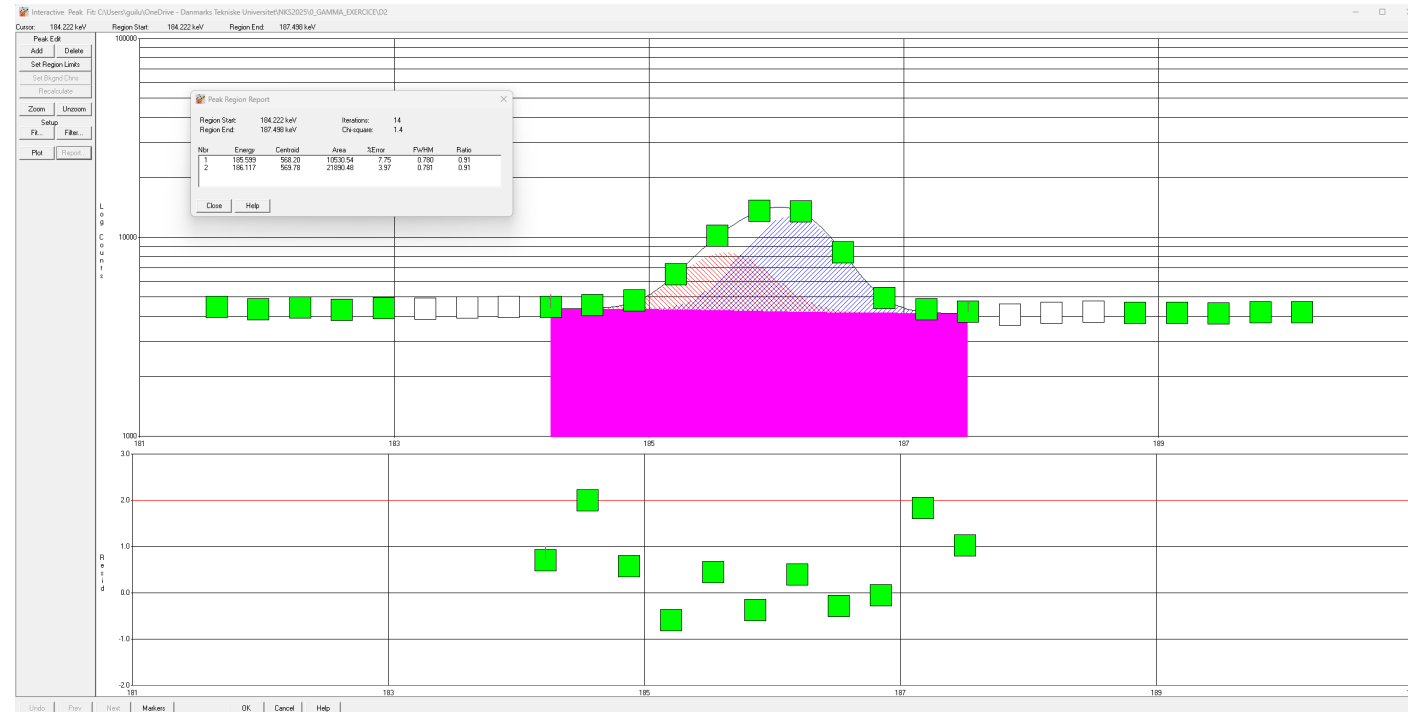
later

Ra-226/U-235: interference 185-186 keV

How to get the activity of Ra-226 ?

- Get activity from Ra-226 daughters: Bi/Pb-214
- Calculate U-235 activity using other peaks then estimate the 185 keV contribution from U-235 in the 186 keV peak
- 185 and 186 keV can be deconvoluted

185.6 keV: $10530 \pm 8\%$ counts
186.1 keV: $21890 \pm 4\%$ counts



Ra-226/U-235: interference 185-186 keV

Ra-226 activity:

- Activity from Bi/Pb-214

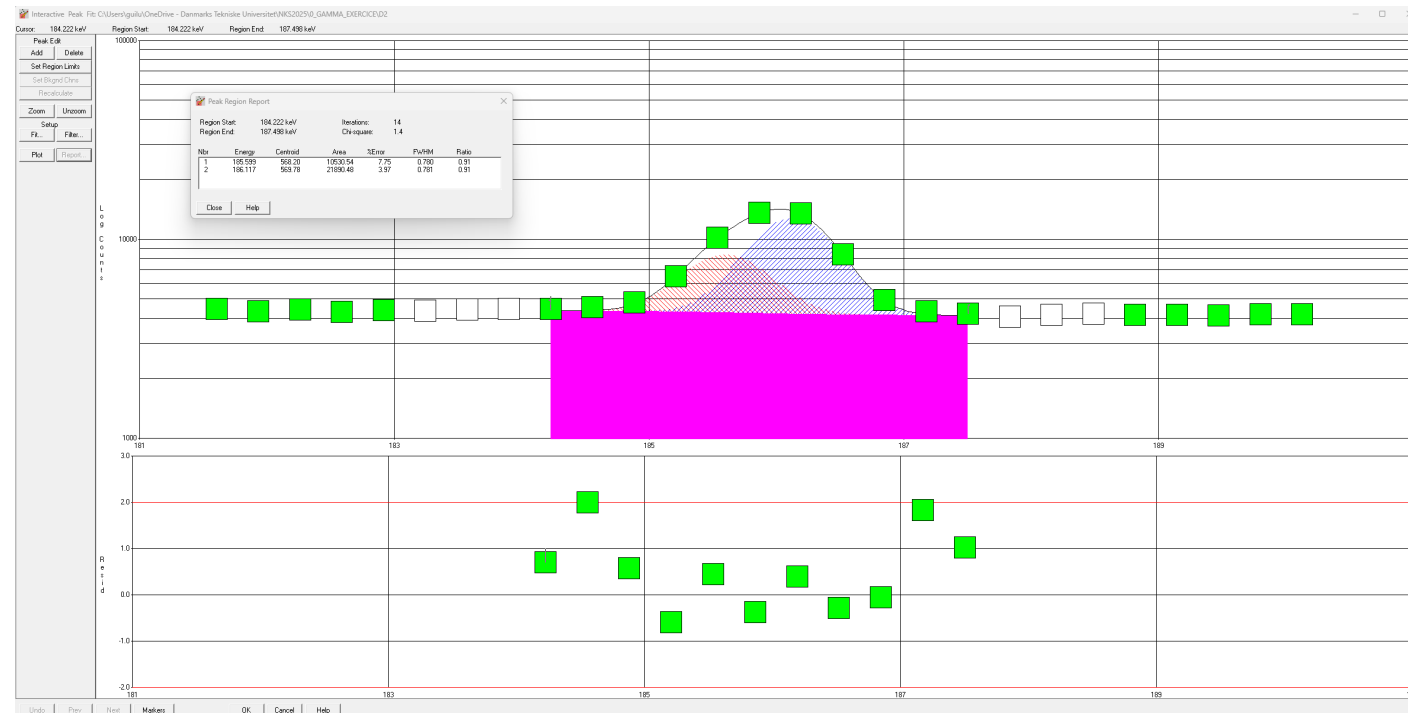
(23.1 ± 0.6) Bq/kg dry mass

- Activity from 186.1 keV peak

(25.7 ± 1.5) Bq/kg dry mass

185.6 keV: $10530 \pm 8\%$ counts

186.1 keV: $21890 \pm 4\%$ counts



Decay data

- 10 out of 12 laboratories are using DDEP decay data:

<http://www.lnhb.fr/home/nuclear-data/nuclear-data-table/>

<http://www.lnhb.fr/Laraweb/>

- 1 ORTEC library
- 1 Unisampo/Shaman libraries

Peak search & Nuclide identification

Peak search

- 6/12: Genie
- 3/12: GammaVision
- 1/12: Unisampo
- 2/12: FitzPeaks, *InterSpec*, HyperLab

Nuclide identification

- 6/12: Genie
- 2/12: GammaVision
- 1/12: Shaman
- 1/12: FitzPeaks, HyperLab
- 2/12: Manual

Activity calculation

$$A = \frac{C_{sample} - C_{background}}{\varepsilon_{fit} \cdot P_{\gamma} \cdot t_l} \cdot \boxed{e^{\lambda t_d}} \cdot \boxed{\frac{\lambda \cdot t_r}{1 - e^{-\lambda t_r}}} \cdot K$$

Decay during the measurement

Decay btw the reference date & start of the measurement

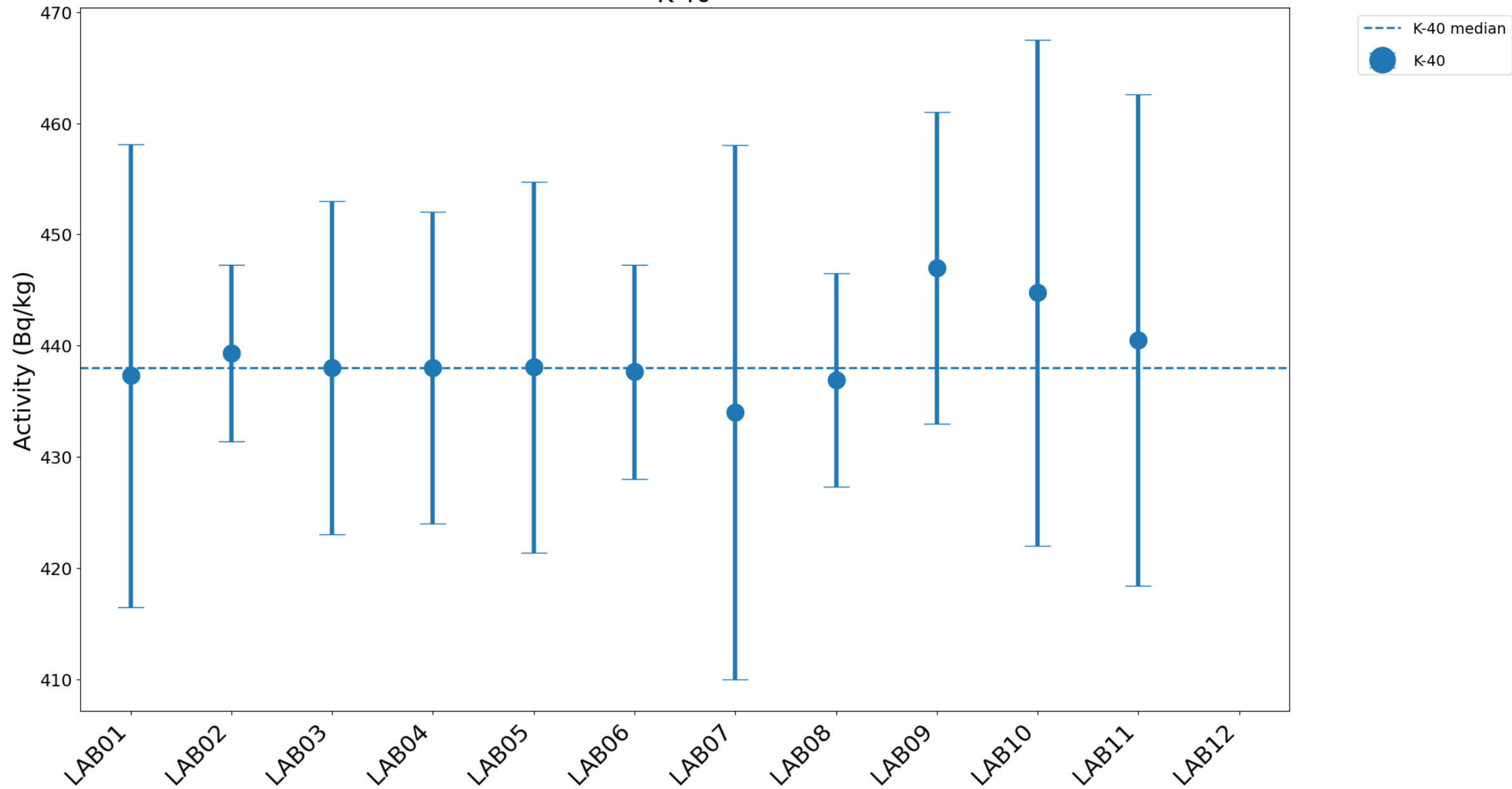
A	activity in Bq
C _{sample}	peak area
C _{background}	peak area in background measurement (if any peak)
t _l	live measurement time in seconds (after an interaction the detector is blind for few μs)
t _r	‘real’ measurement time in seconds
t _d	time difference between the measurement and the reference date in seconds
ε	efficiency for the given gamma-ray energy
P _γ	emission probability
λ	decay constant
K	additional correction(s) = CS correction given in the exercise

Results

- Only indicative, not an official proficiency test !
- Different ways to report results: some provide all nuclides, some only the main assuming equilibrium

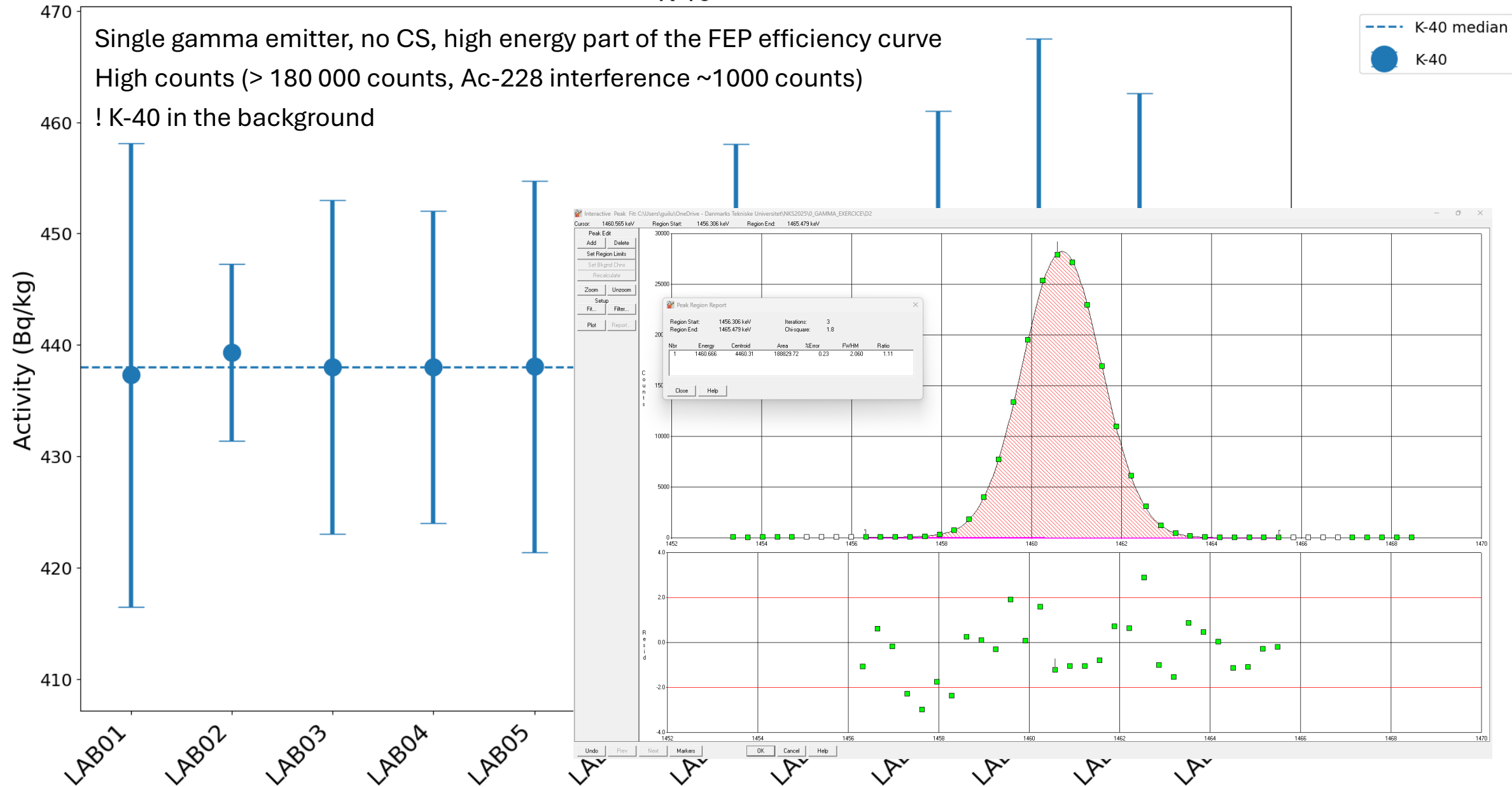
Nuclide	LAB01			LAB02			LAB03			LAB04			LAB05			LAB06			LAB07			LAB08			LAB09			LAB10			LAB11			LAB12		
	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.	Bq/kg	Unc.	Rel. Unc.			
K-40	437.29	20.83	4.8%	439.30	7.95	1.8%	438.00	15.00	3.4%	438.00	14.00	3.2%	438.05	16.67	3.8%	437.66	9.63	2.2%	434.00	24.00	5.5%	436.89	9.62	2.2%	447.00	14.00	3.1%	444.76	22.74	5.1%	440.50	22.10	5.0%			
Cs-137	1.02	0.05	5.2%	0.90	0.03	2.8%	1.00	0.04	4.0%	1.01	0.04	4.0%	0.99	0.04	4.0%	0.98	0.02	2.5%	1.00	0.10	10.0%	1.01	0.02	2.4%	1.02	0.04	3.5%	1.02	0.06	5.6%	0.97	0.05	5.2%	1.39	0.10	7.1%
Ba-133	0.26	0.04	13.7%	0.33	0.05	13.5%	0.27	0.01	4.4%									0.30	0.10	33.3%	0.29	0.17	59.2%				0.29	0.03	11.9%							
U-238																16.75	1.47	8.8%				17.19	0.68	3.9%												
Th-234							17.80	0.90	5.1%	19.60	0.40	2.0%	11.63	0.63	5.4%	16.75	1.47	8.8%							16.12	0.72	4.5%	18.53	2.87	15.5%	17.50	0.90	5.1%			
Pa-234m										16.50	1.50	9.1%	17.85	2.83	15.9%	16.75	1.47	8.8%	24.10	9.50	39.4%				14.30	1.80	12.6%	14.94	3.17	21.2%	18.70	1.60	8.6%	17.79	10.60	59.6%
U-234																16.75	1.47	8.8%																		
Th-230																24.17	2.13	8.8%																		
Ra-226				22.47	0.78	3.5%	21.00	0.80	3.8%	21.70	0.80	3.7%	21.05	0.89	4.2%	18.86	0.12	0.7%	23.50	6.20	26.4%	22.49	0.32	1.4%	15.70	2.60	16.6%	25.70	1.34	5.2%	28.60	1.50	5.2%	23.85	0.94	3.9%
Pb-214	23.22	1.11	4.8%				22.70	0.80	3.5%	22.20	0.70	3.2%	23.13	0.85	3.7%	18.86	0.12	0.7%	22.40	6.20	27.7%				22.53	0.68	3.0%	23.26	0.68	2.9%	23.30	0.60	2.6%	10.61	0.40	3.8%
Bi-214	22.24	1.03	4.7%				22.30	0.80	3.6%	21.90	0.90	4.1%	22.32	0.83	3.7%	18.86	0.12	0.7%	20.20	2.10	10.4%				22.69	0.69	3.0%	22.66	1.14	5.0%	22.70	0.30	1.3%	19.31	0.38	2.0%
Pb-210	32.75	2.03	6.2%	33.23	0.91	2.7%	32.50	1.50	4.6%	30.00	1.30	4.3%	21.98	1.13	5.1%	32.12	1.31	4.1%	36.00	8.30	23.1%	32.70	1.61	4.9%	33.00	1.10	3.3%	33.81	5.12	15.2%	29.40	1.50	5.1%	33.21	1.29	3.9%
Po-210																32.12	1.31	4.1%																		
Ac/Ra-228										19.70	0.40	2.0%																								
Ra-228																24.27	0.18	0.7%							30.35	0.41	1.3%									
Ac-228	20.91	1.22	5.8%	33.51	0.63	1.9%	20.80	1.00	4.8%				20.47	0.98	4.8%	24.27	0.18	0.7%	17.90	2.30	12.8%				21.20	1.20	5.7%	21.10	1.24	5.9%	22.00	0.30	1.4%	21.16	0.80	3.8%
Th-228										20.80	1.00	4.8%				36.37	0.26	0.7%							66.34	0.89	1.3%									
Ra-224										20.80	0.70	3.4%																21.15	1.13	5.3%	18.80	1.00	5.3%			
Pb-212	21.56	1.12	5.2%				20.90	0.80	3.8%	16.60	0.50	3.0%	21.18	0.79	3.7%	25.98	0.41	1.6%	21.20	2.40	11.3%				21.06	0.68	3.2%	22.45	0.93	4.1%	22.30	0.70	3.1%	26.76	0.74	2.8%
Bi-212	23.20	1.24	5.3%							20.00	0.50	2.5%	22.54	1.04	4.6%	25.98	0.41	1.6%	19.30	2.20	11.4%							23.17	1.27	5.5%	25.70	0.80	3.1%	54.19	5.65	10.4%
Tl-208	7.76	0.36	4.7%				7.68	0.26	3.4%	7.80	0.20	2.6%	7.69	0.29	3.8%	9.34	0.15	1.6%	7.00	0.10	1.4%				7.95	0.24	3.0%	7.76	0.33	4.2%	7.50	0.20	2.7%			
U-235				0.91	0.09	10.0%	1.01	0.02	2.4%	0.54	0.10	18.5%	1.05	0.10	9.5%	0.91	0.05	5.8%	1.10	0.30	27.3%				0.56	0.08	14.6%	1.33	0.04	4.8%	0.60	0.03	5.0%			
Th-231																0.91	0.05	5.8%																		
Pa-231																0.91	0.05	5.8%																		
Ac-227																0.91	0.05	5.8%							1.14	0.09	8.1%									
Th-227										1.07	0.16	15.0%				0.76	0.03	3.7%																		
Ra-223										1.32	0.25	18.9%				0.76	0.03	3.7%																		
Rn-219										0.91	0.14	15.4%																								

K-40

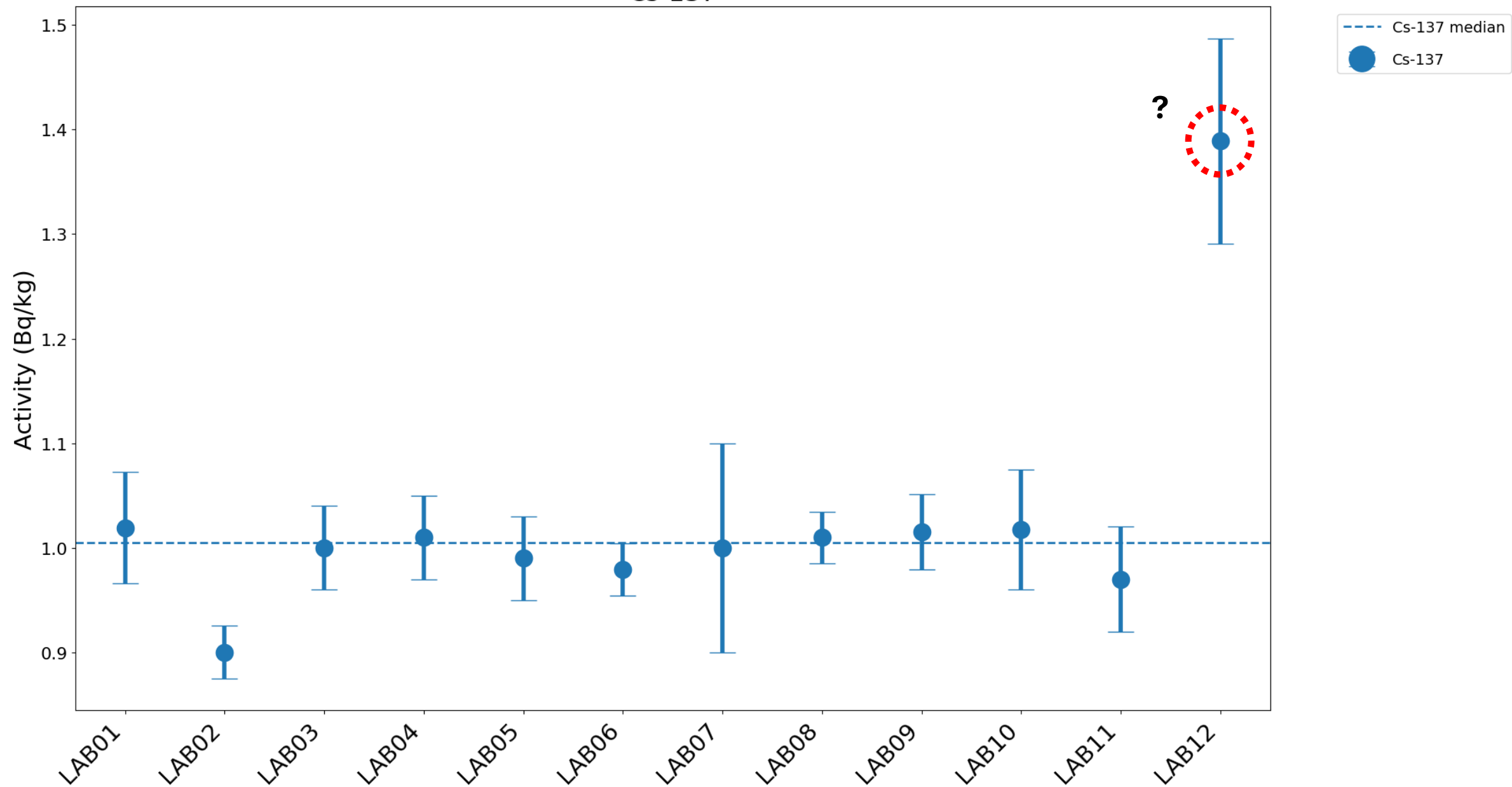


K-40

Single gamma emitter, no CS, high energy part of the FEP efficiency curve
 High counts (> 180 000 counts, Ac-228 interference ~1000 counts)
 ! K-40 in the background



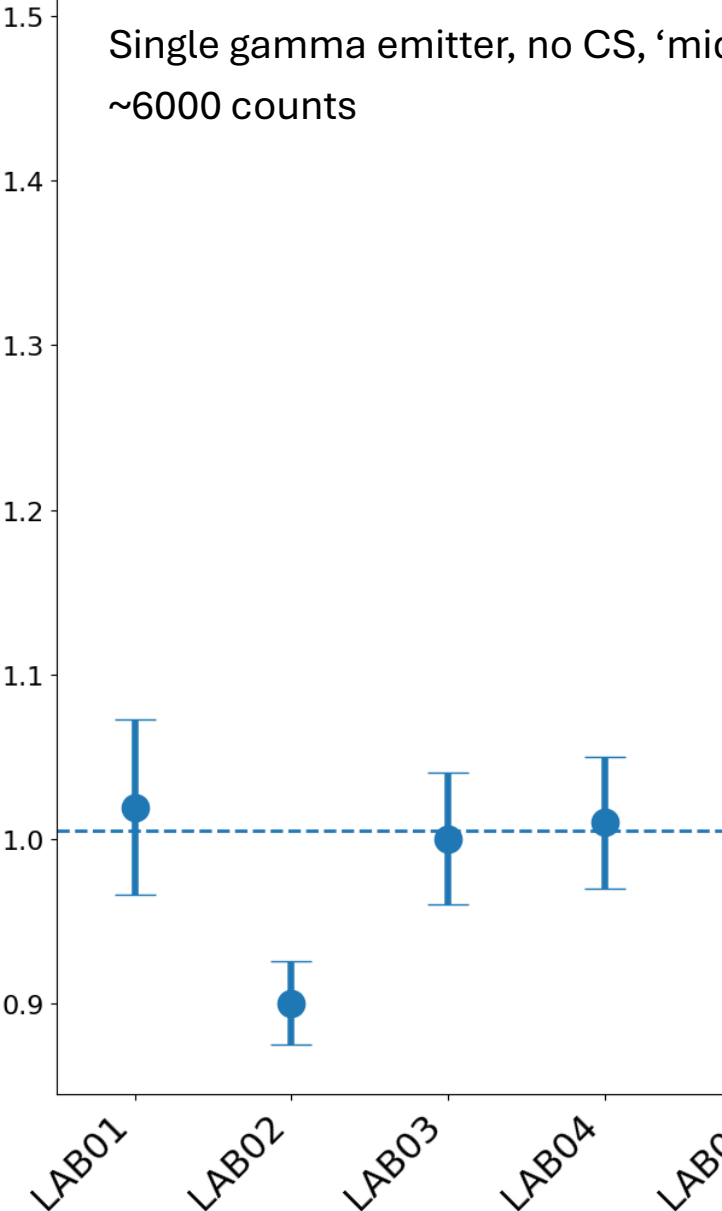
Cs-137



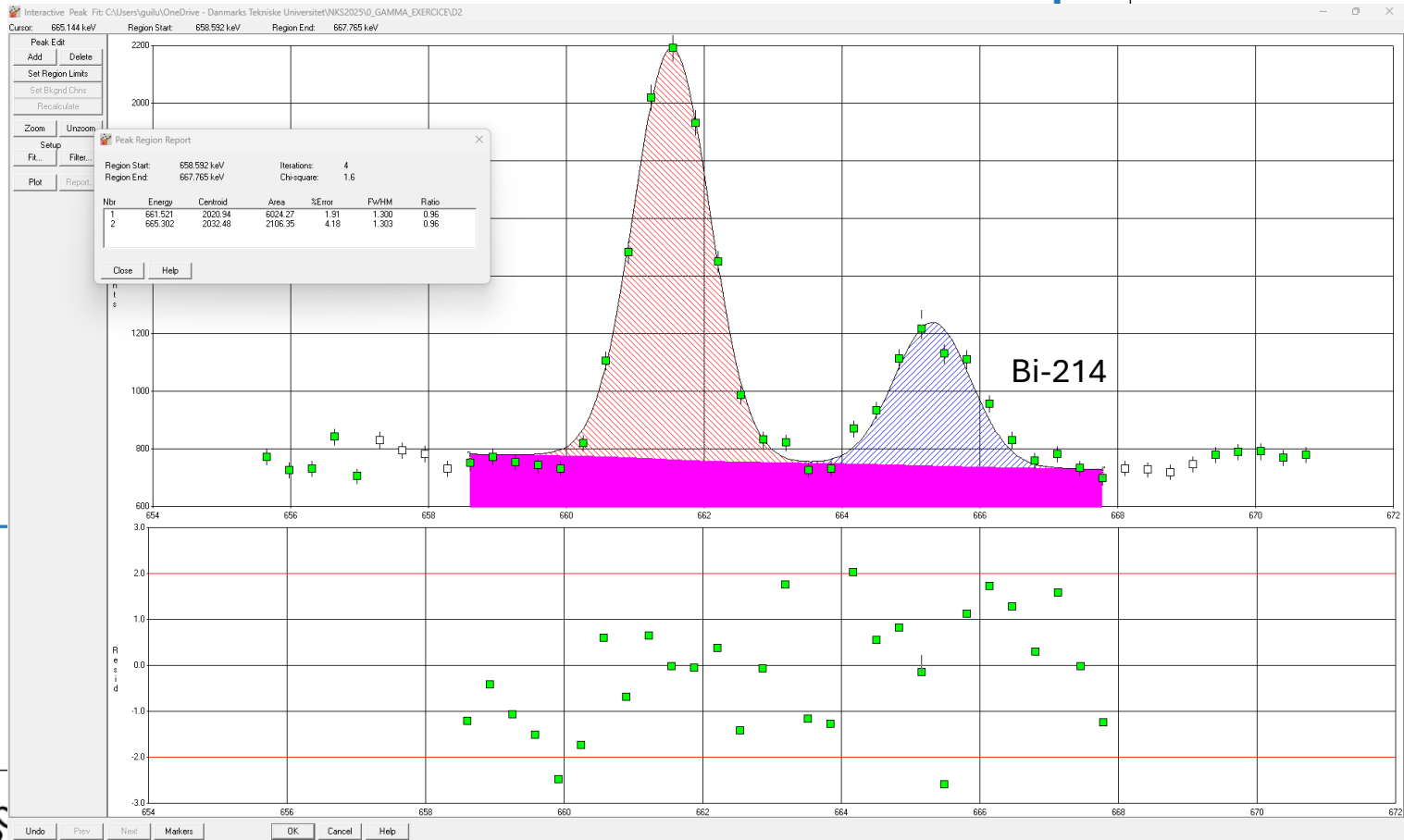
Cs-137

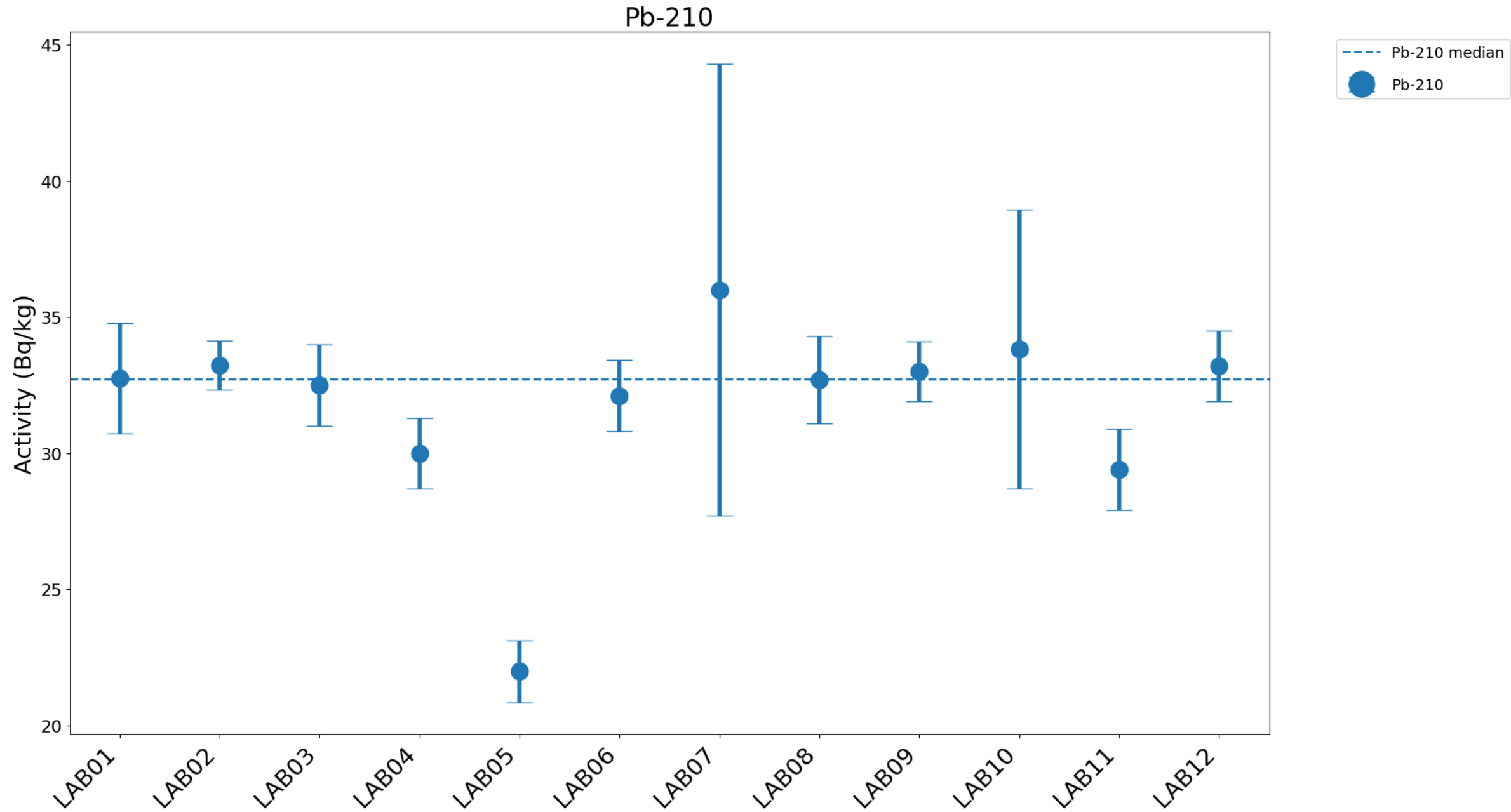
Single gamma emitter, no CS, 'middle' energy part of the FEP efficiency curve,
~6000 counts

Activity (Bq/kg)

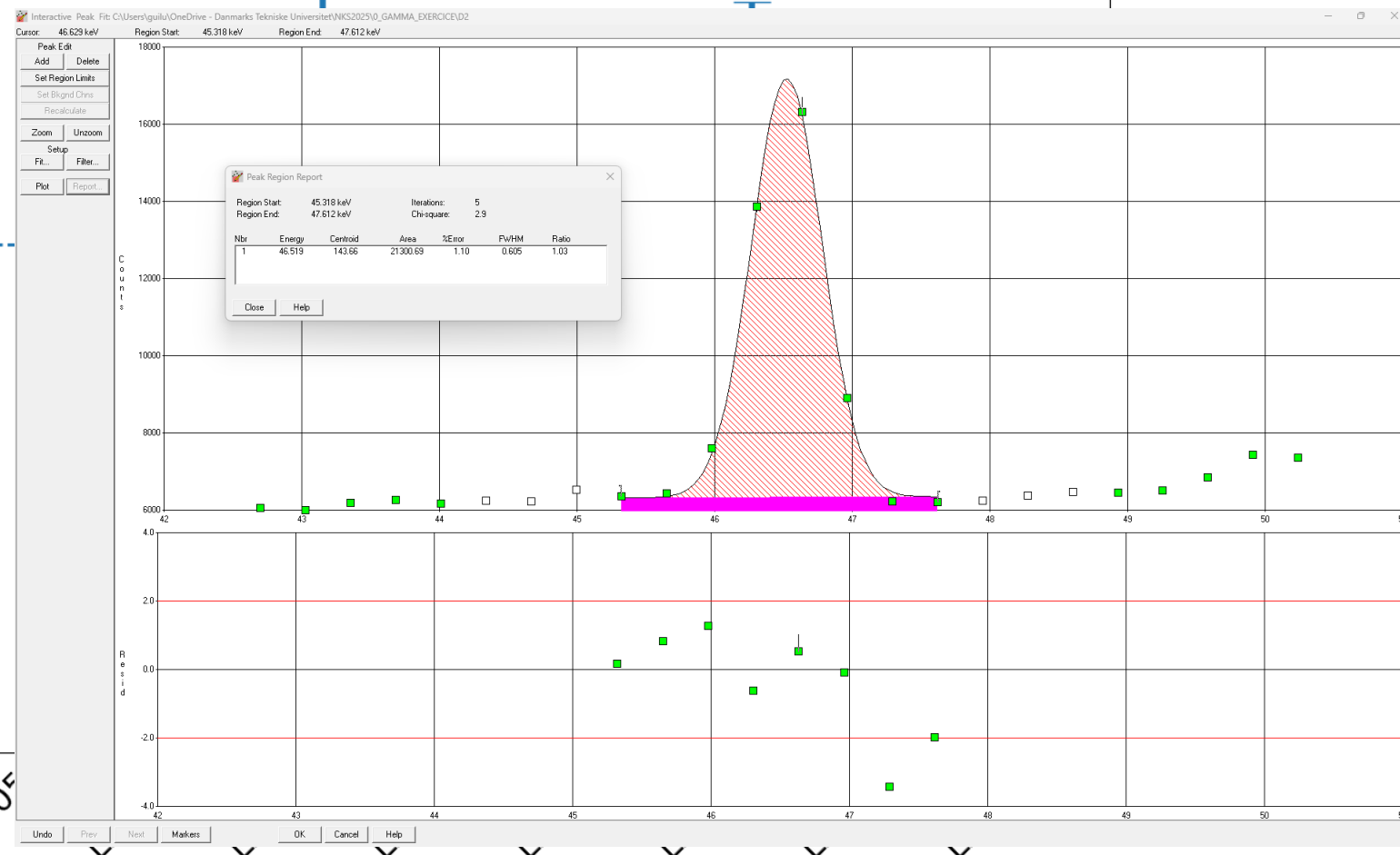
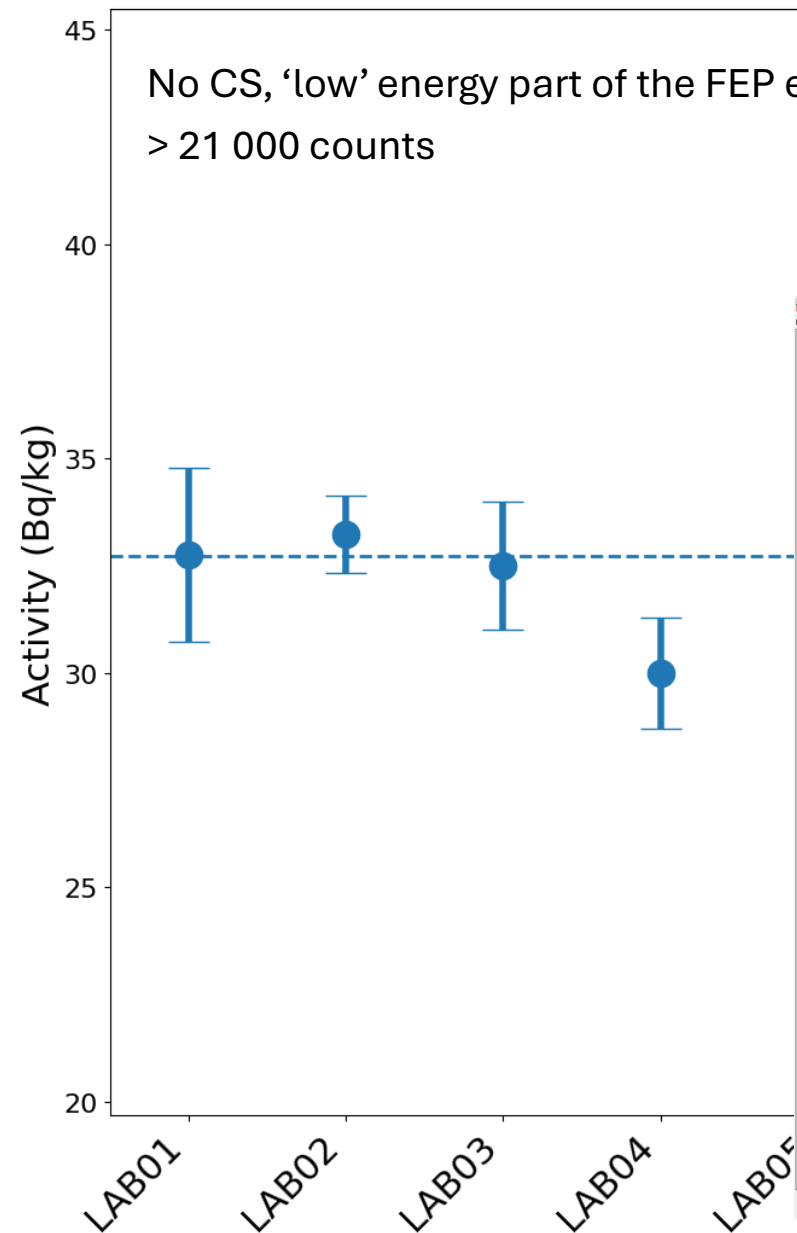


--- Cs-137 median
● Cs-137

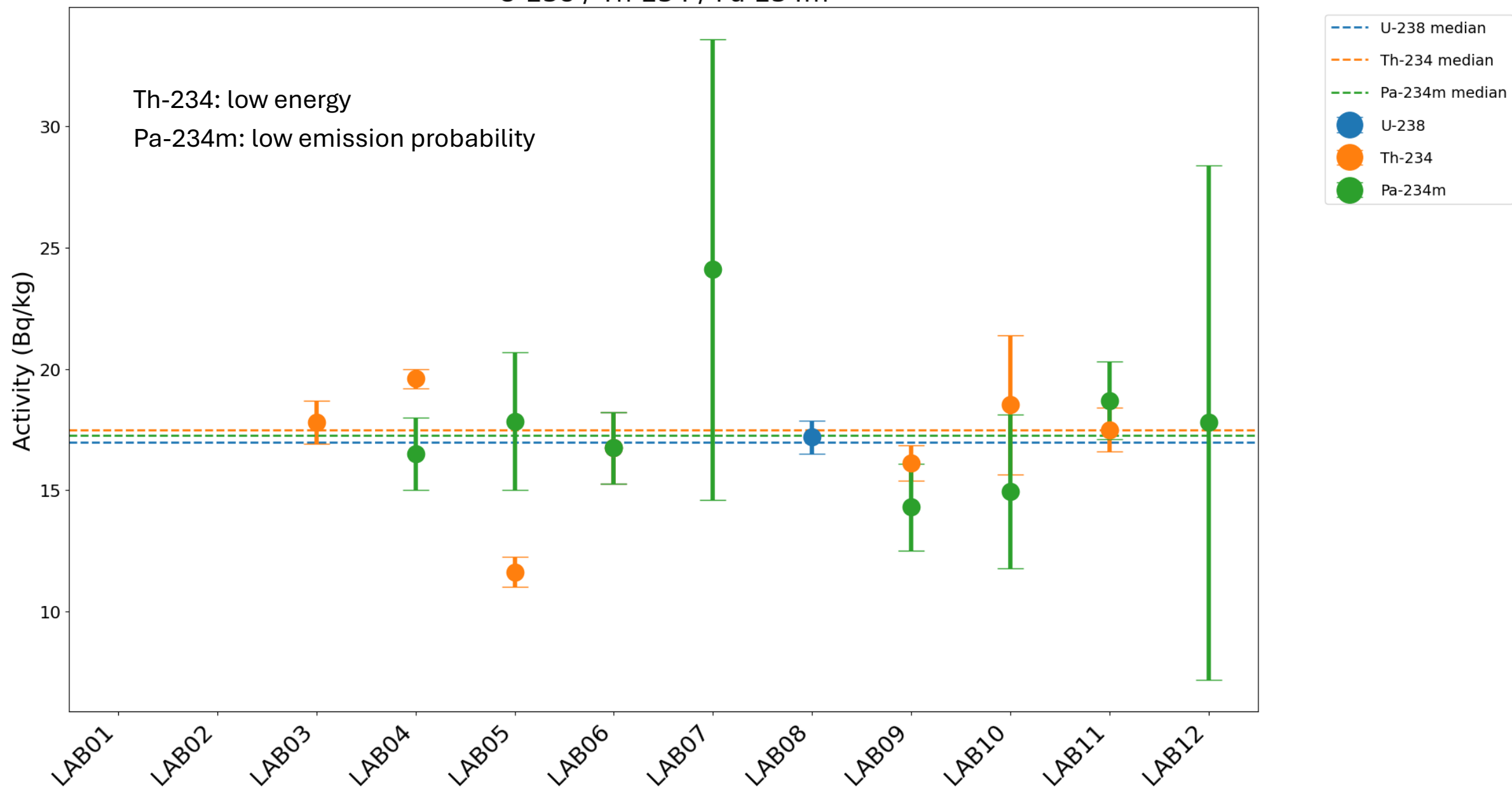




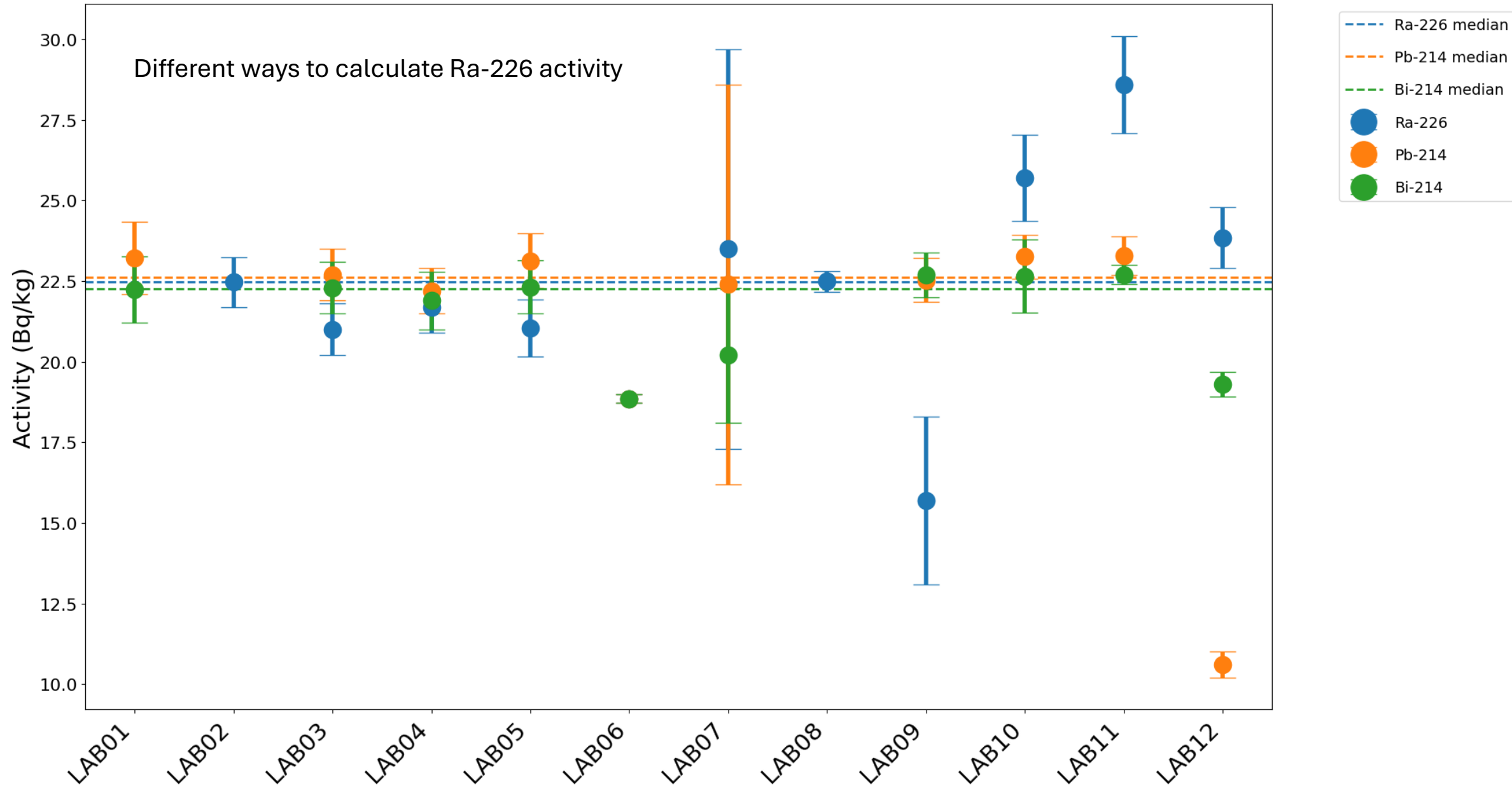
Pb-210



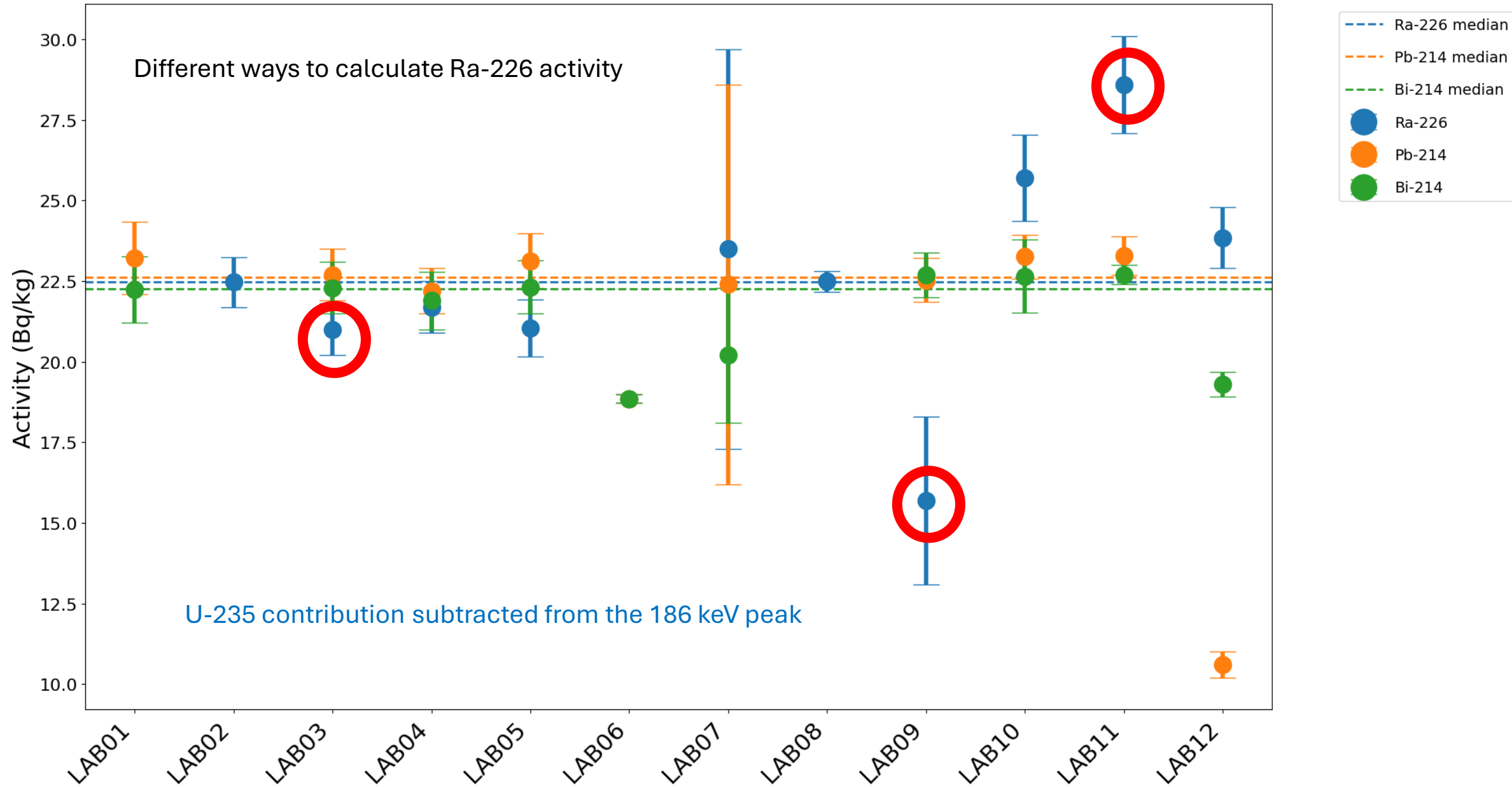
U-238 / Th-234 / Pa-234m



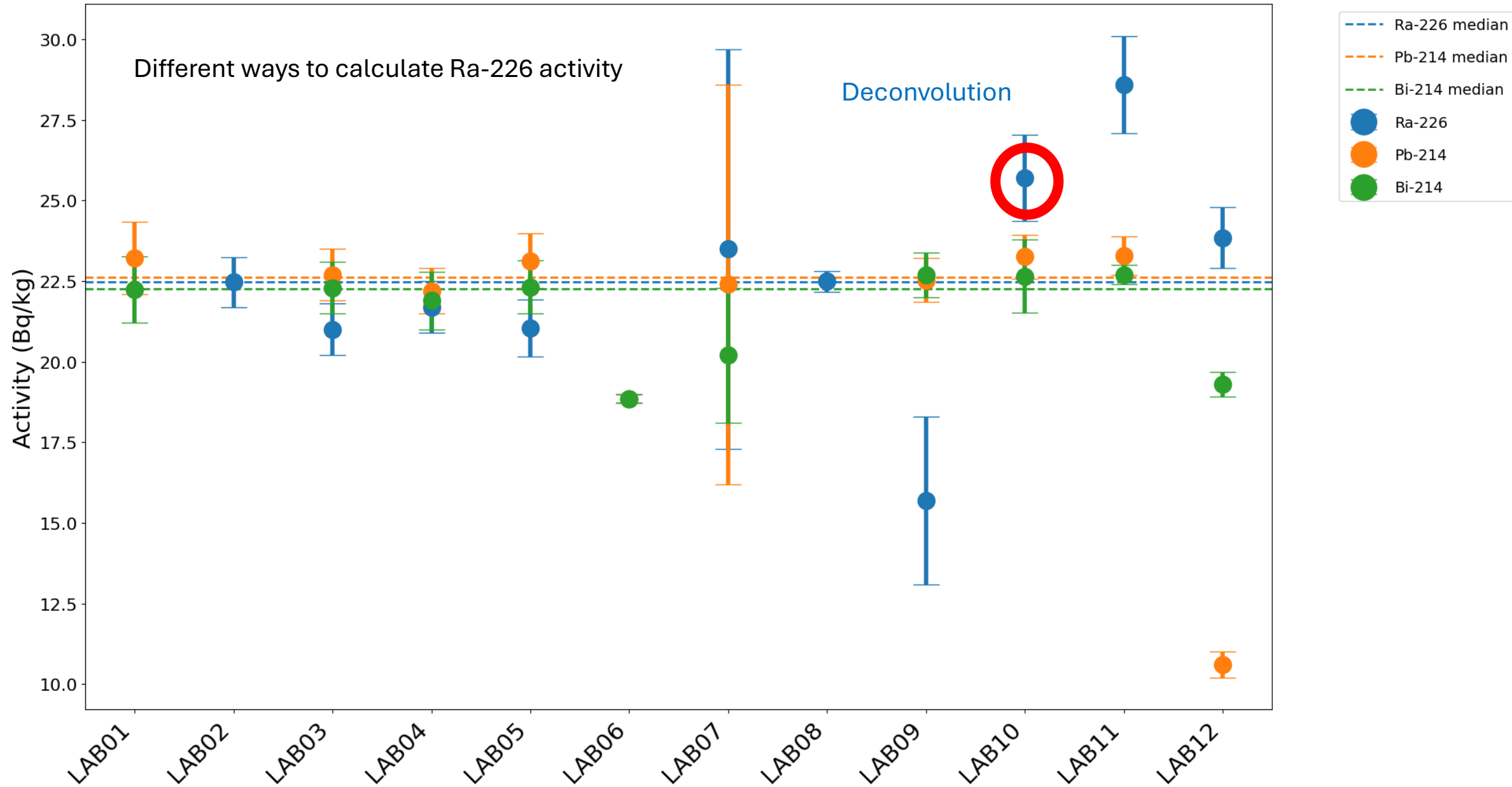
Ra-226 with Pb-214 & Bi-214



Ra-226 with Pb-214 & Bi-214

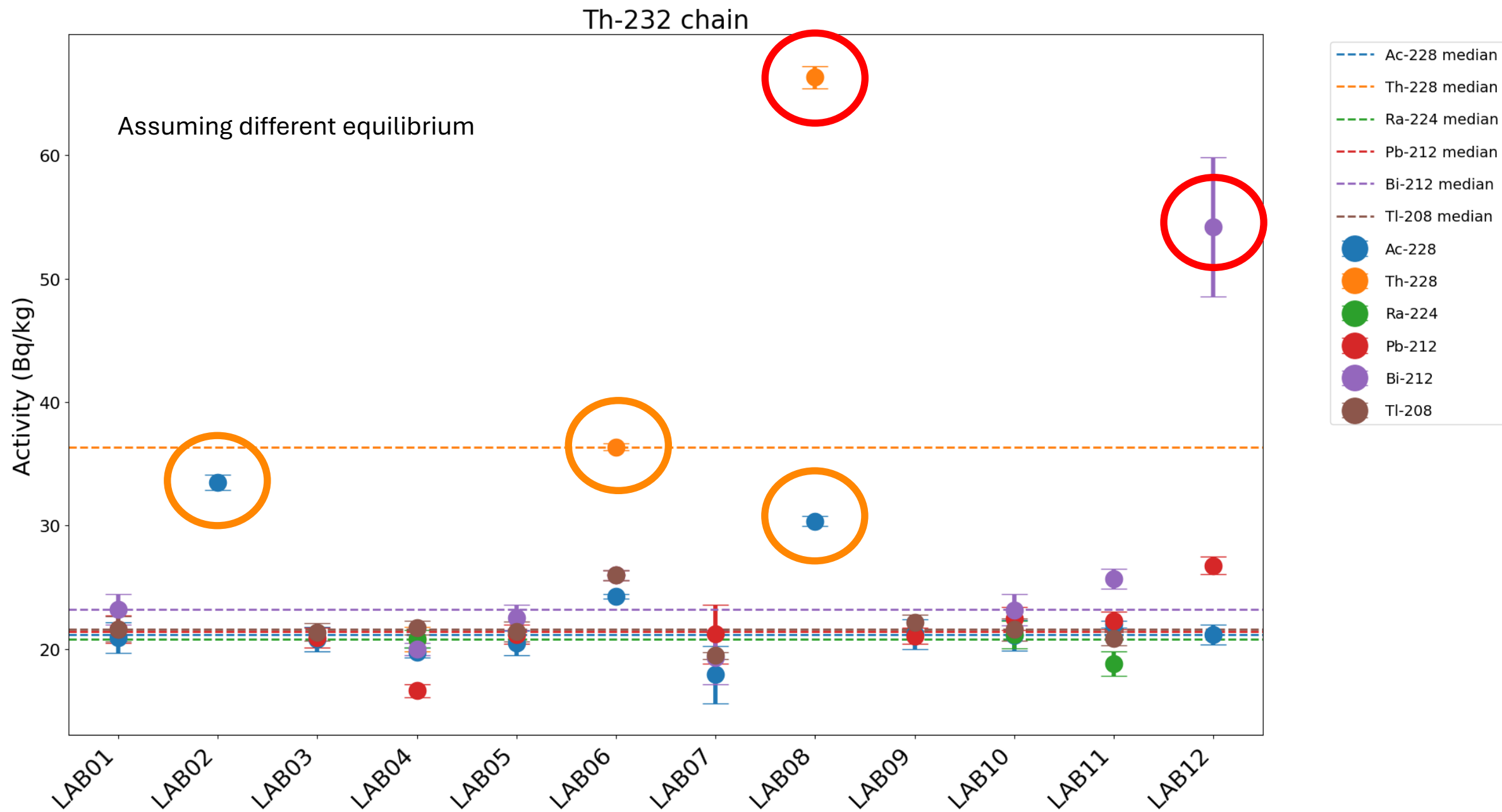


Ra-226 with Pb-214 & Bi-214

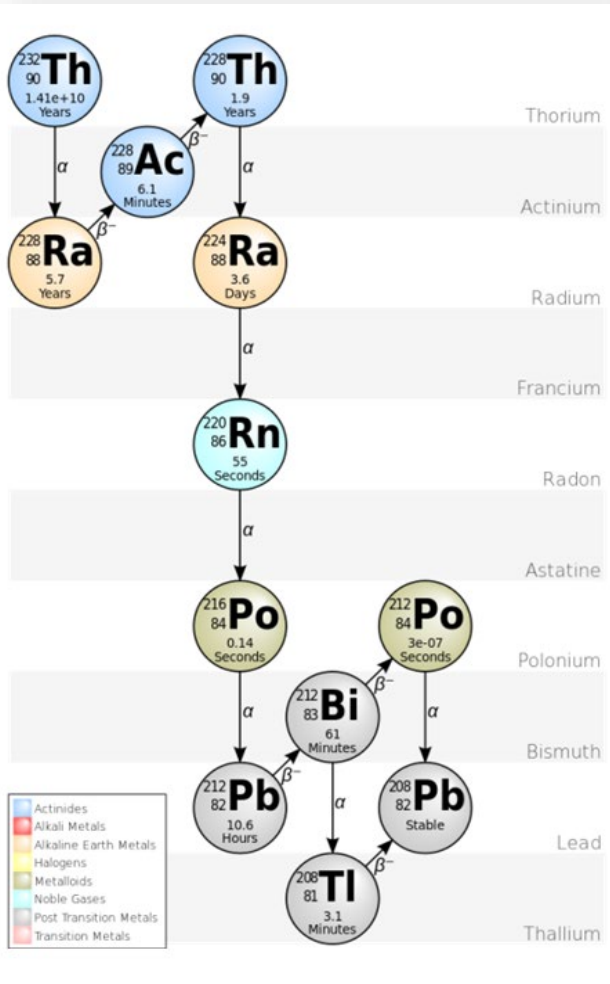




CS correction multiplied instead divided



Th-232 decay chain



Assuming equilibrium:

Ra-228 & Ac-228

Th-228 → Tl-208

Reference date = measurement date

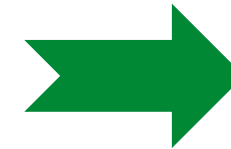
Th-232 chain

Ra-228	Bq/kg	Unc.
Ac-228	21.4	0.6
Th-228		
Ra-224	20.9	1.1
Pb-212	22.6	0.9
Bi-212	23.3	1.3
Tl-208*	21.5	0.9

Reference date = 01/01/2022 00:00:00

Th-232 chain

Ra-228	Bq/kg	Unc.
Ac-228	31.5	0.9
Th-228		
Ra-224	66.6	3.6
Pb-212	71.8	3.0
Bi-212	74.2	4.1
Tl-208*	68.3	2.9

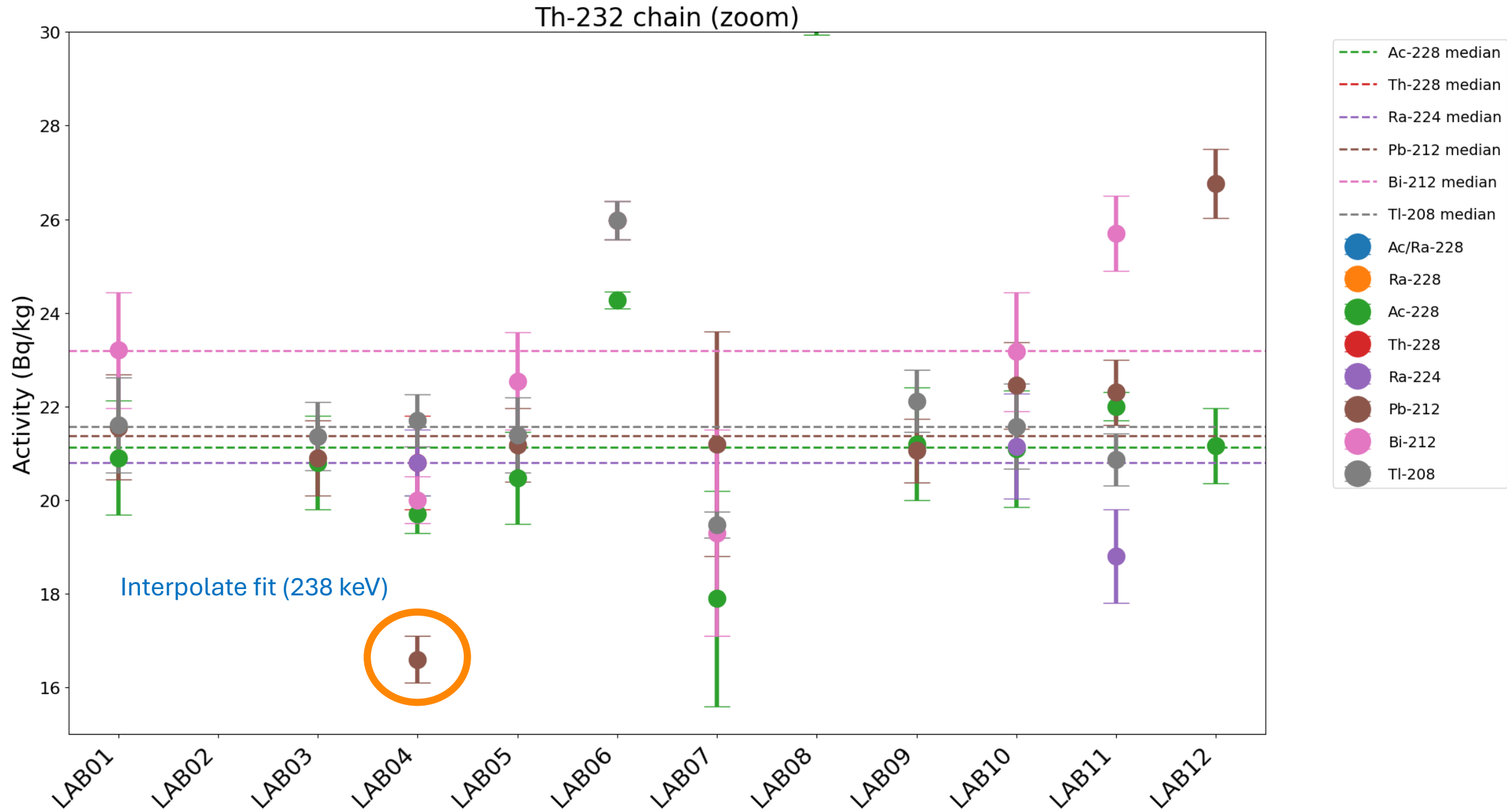


Ra-228 → Th-228 are in equilibrium

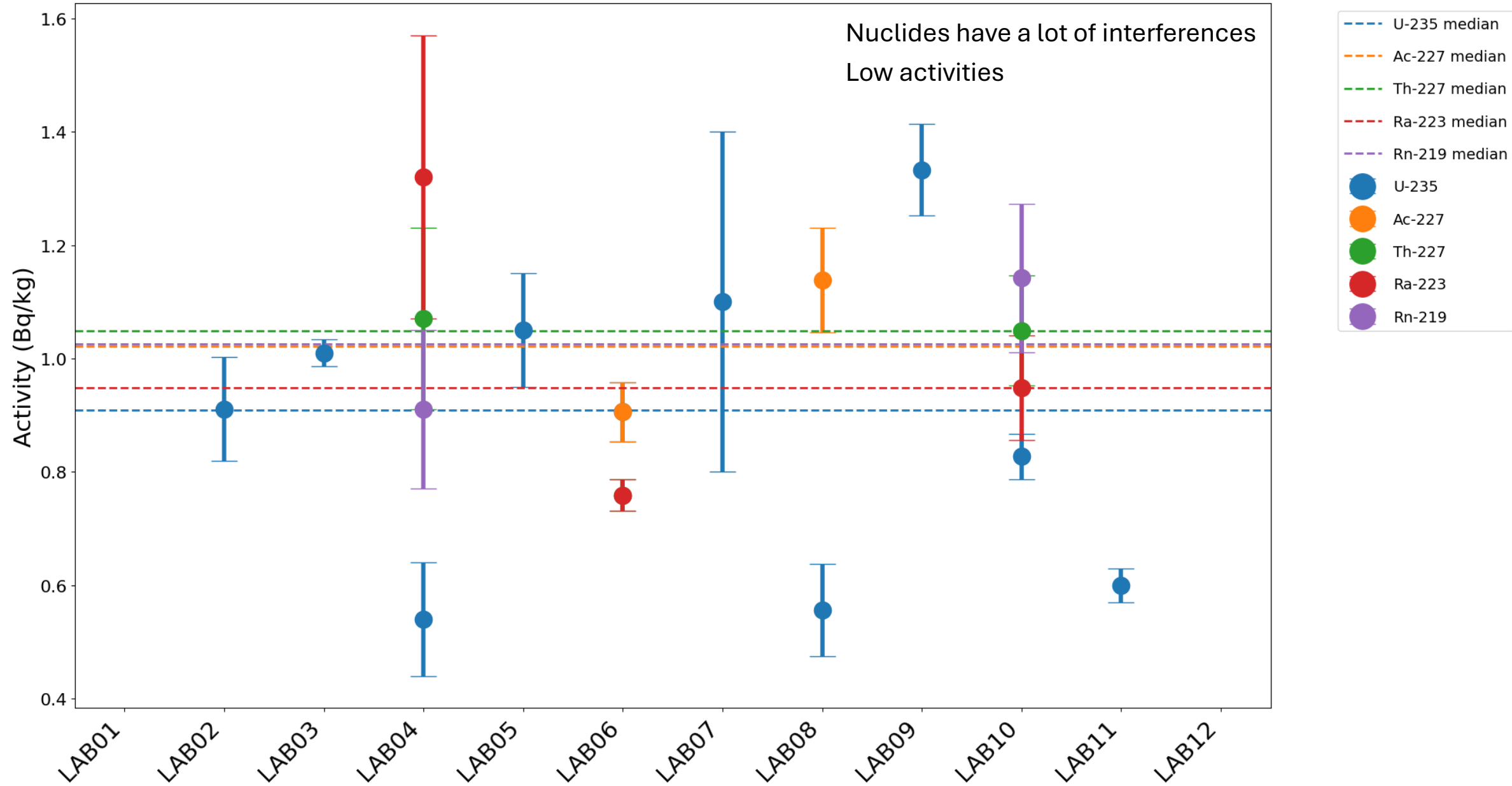
Th-232 & Ra-228 are in equilibrium ?

→ Most likely Ra is in if both 'parts'

*BR corrected



U-235 chain



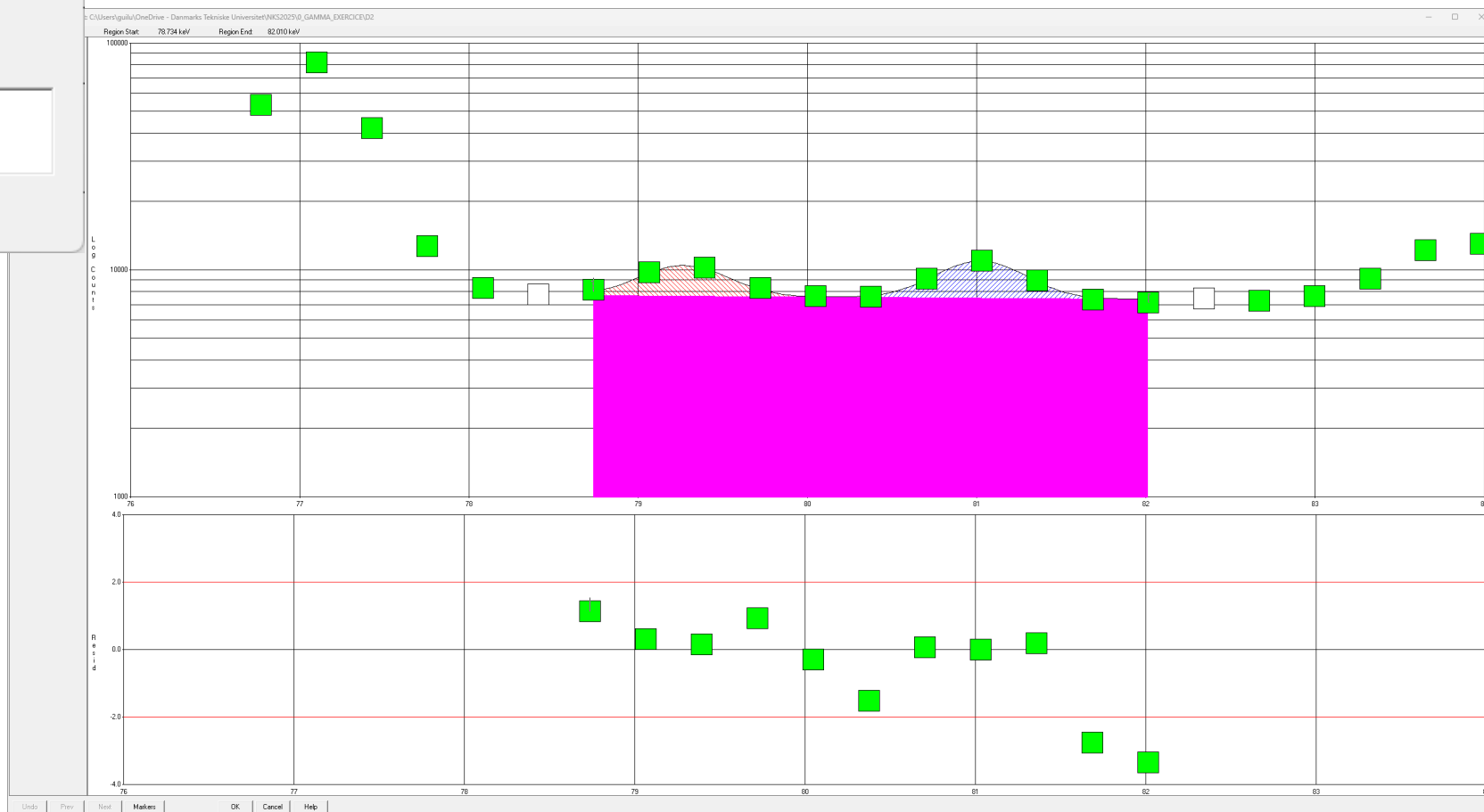
Ba-133 ?

Peak Region Report

Region Start:	78.734 keV	Iterations:	5
Region End:	82.010 keV	Chi-square:	2

Nbr	Energy	Centroid	Area	%Error	FWHM	Ratio
1	79.268	243.63	5449.02	3.81	0.594	0.89
2	81.018	248.97	6688.18	3.41	0.598	0.89

Close Help



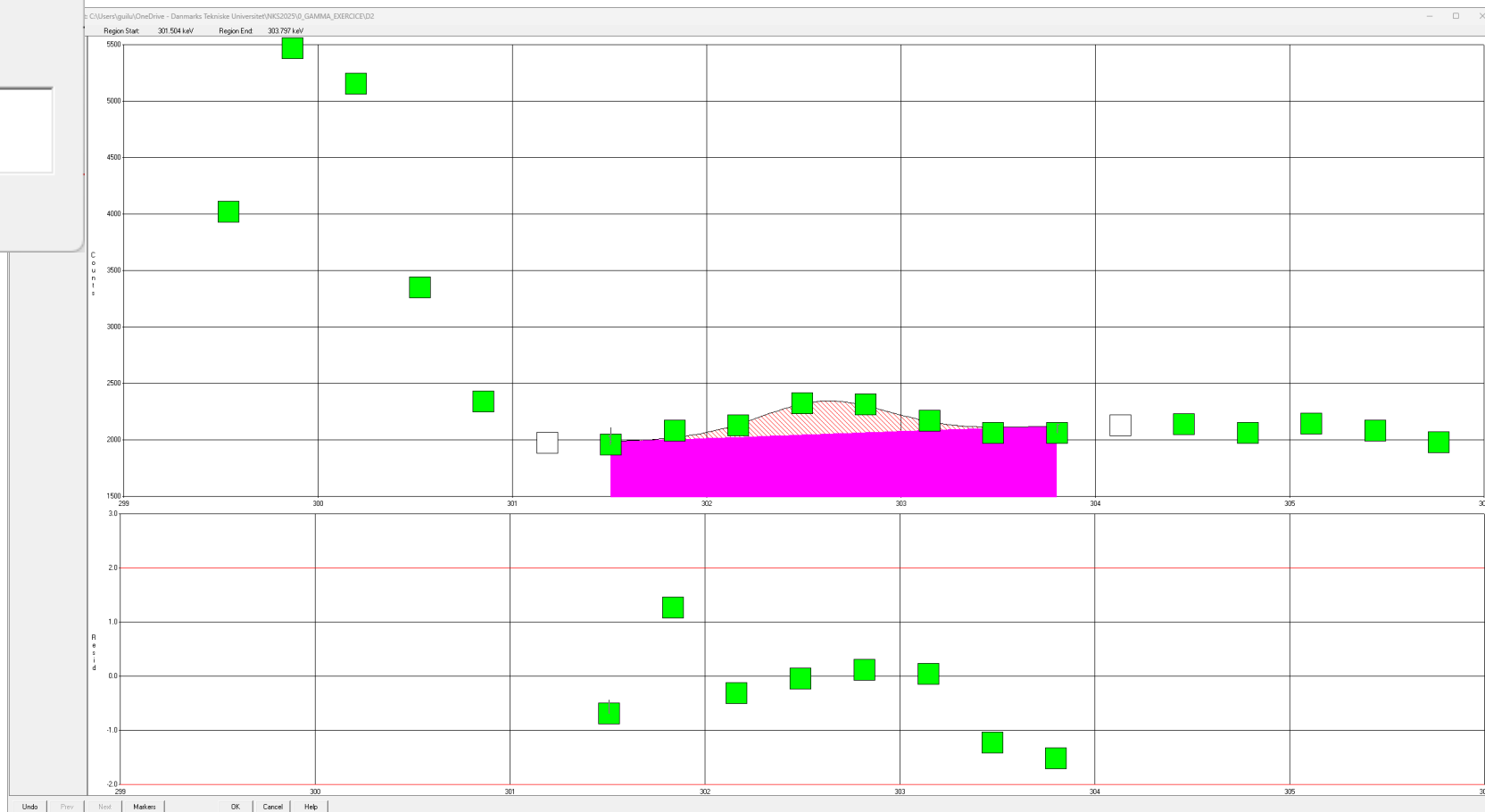
Ba-133 ?

Peak Region Report

Region Start:	301.504 keV	Iterations:	5
Region End:	303.797 keV	Chi-square:	0.65

Nbr	Energy	Centroid	Area	%Error	FWHM	Ratio
1	302.605	925.36	732.08	18.24	0.770	0.76

Close Help



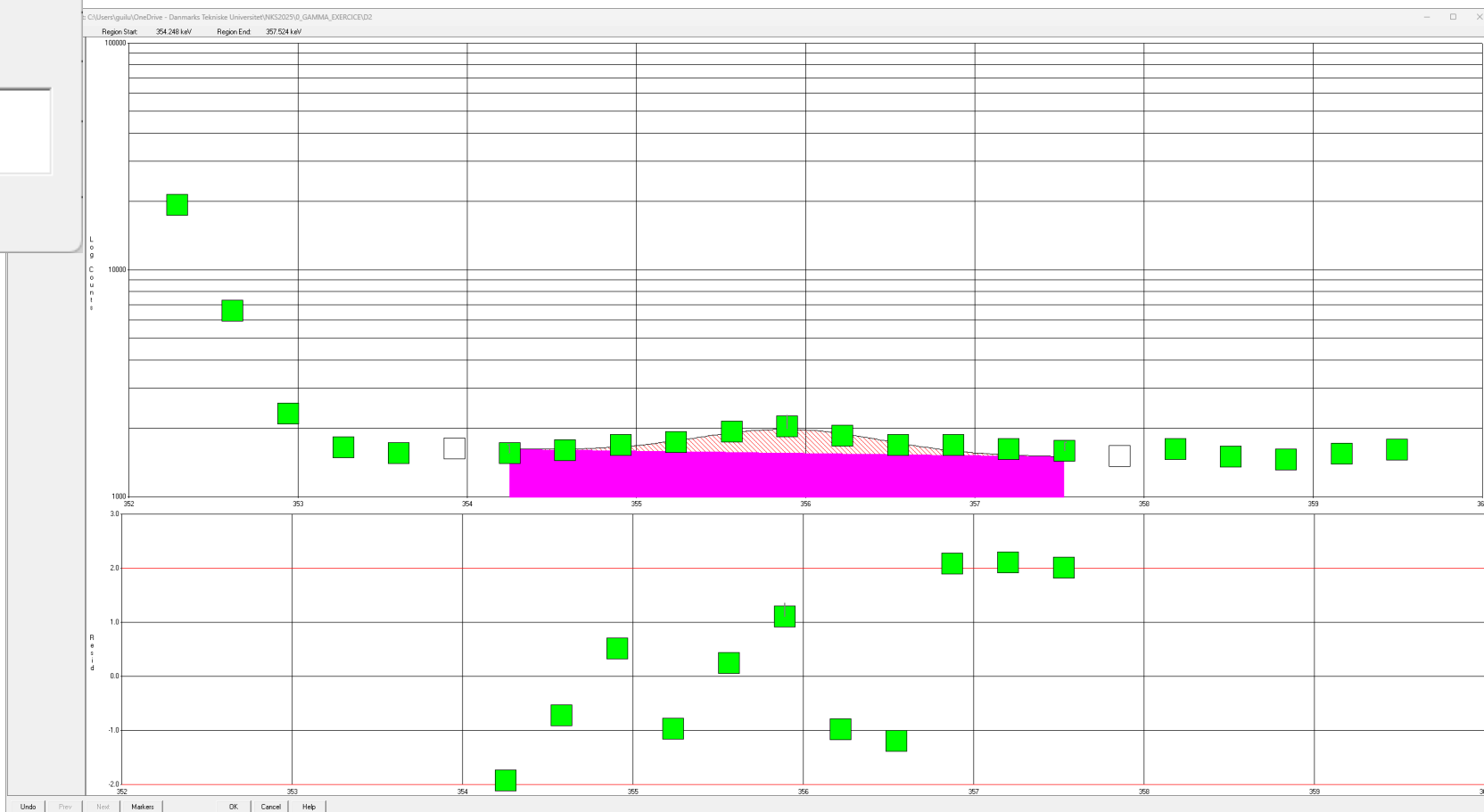
Ba-133 ?

Peak Region Report

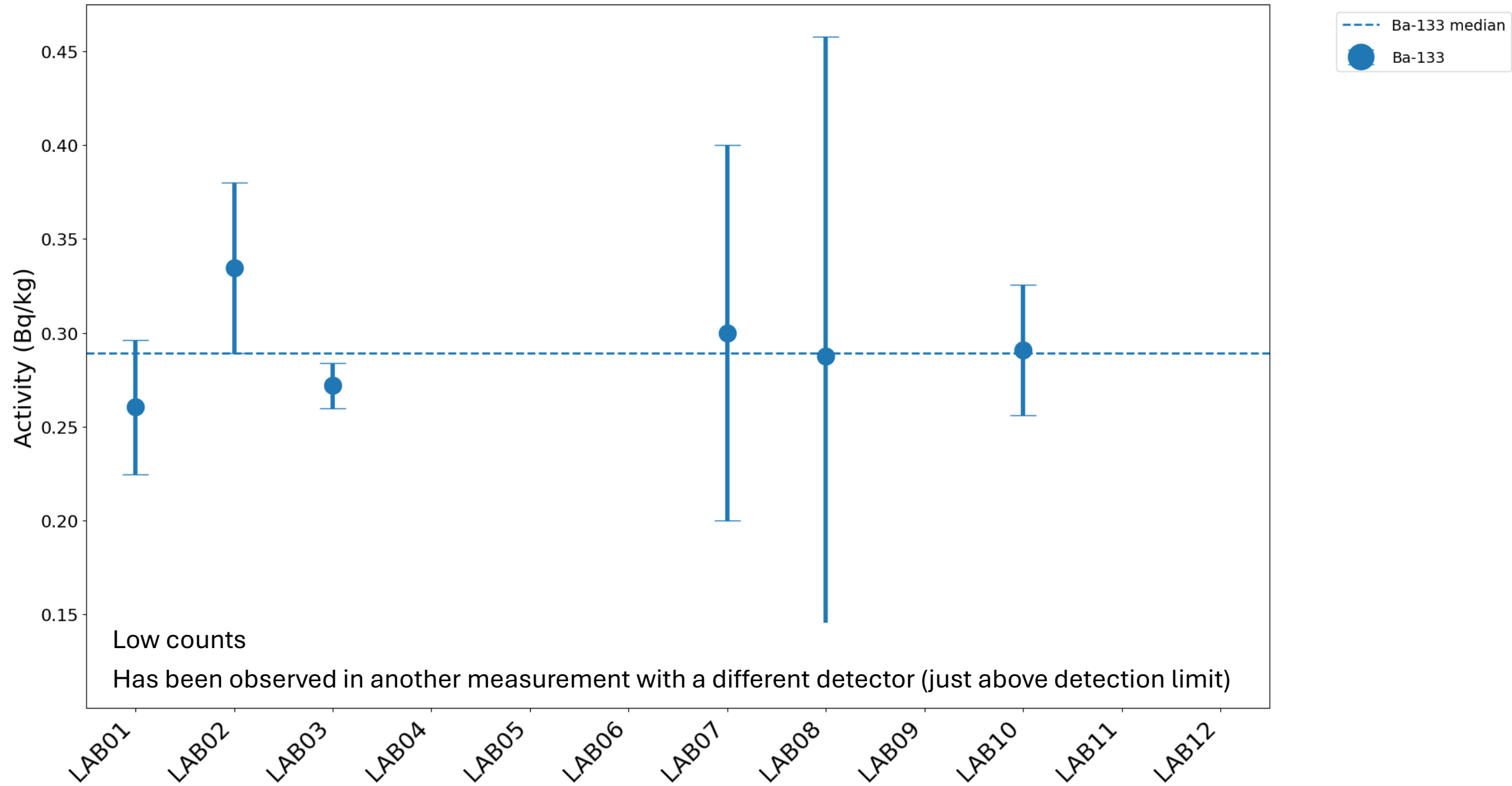
Region Start:	354.248 keV	Iterations:	9
Region End:	357.524 keV	Chi-square:	1.6

Nbr	Energy	Centroid	Area	%Error	FWHM	Ratio
1	355.897	1088.03	1691.98	8.45	1.213	1.13

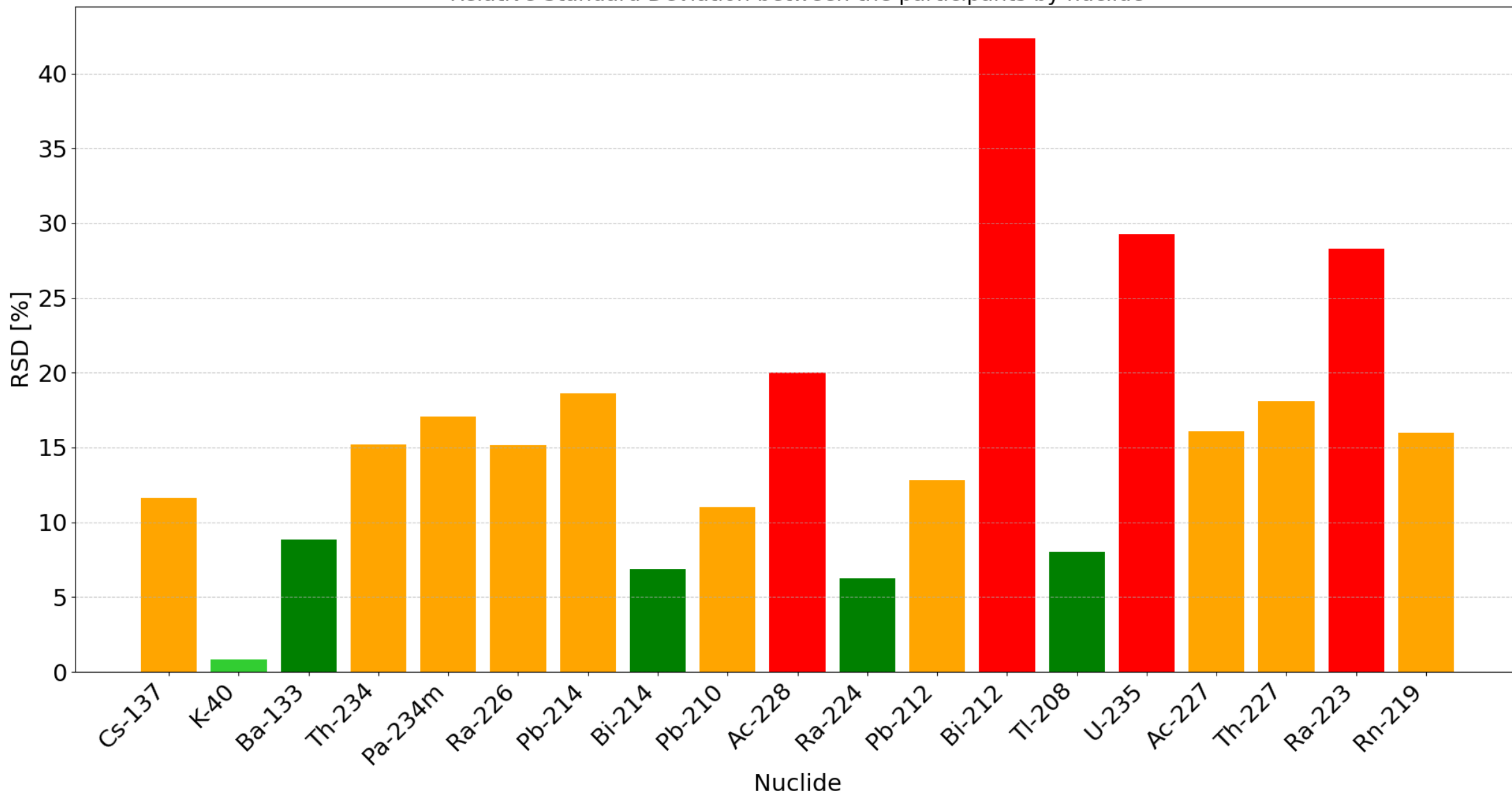
Close Help



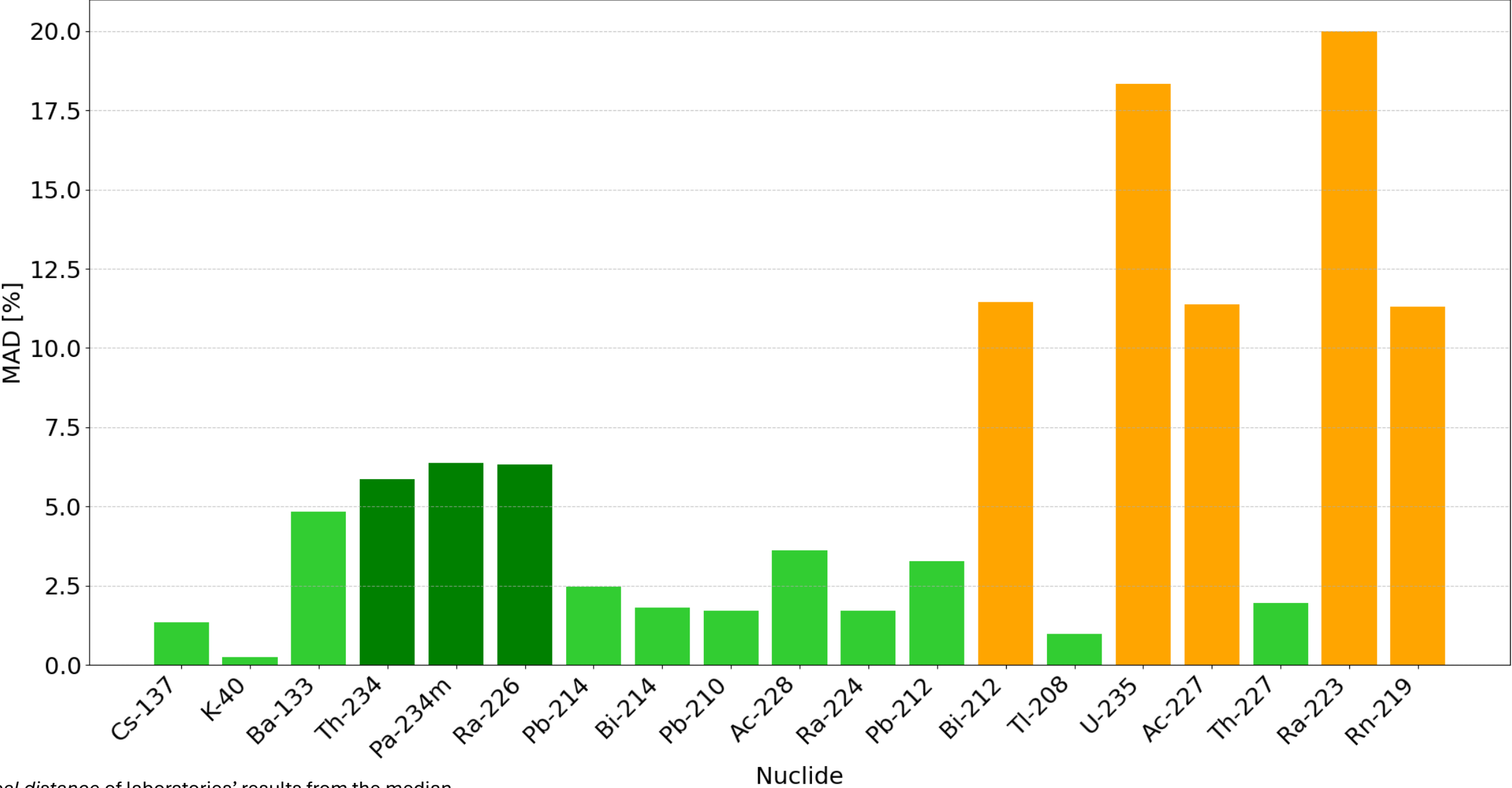
Ba-133



Relative Standard Deviation between the participants by nuclide



Median Absolute Deviation between the participants by nuclide



MAD: *typical distance* of laboratories' results from the median

Conclusion

**NO LAB NAME MENTIONED,
ONLY INSTRUCTIONS,
CALIBRATION DATA, CS summing corrections
& RESULTS without LAB NAMES**

“The exercise shows very good interlaboratory consistency for strong gamma emitters (K-40, Cs-137). Differences become larger for weaker emitters or when decay chain equilibrium assumptions are involved. The largest variability is associated with low-intensity lines and radionuclides affected by coincidence summing or unsupported daughters.”

ChatGPT 5

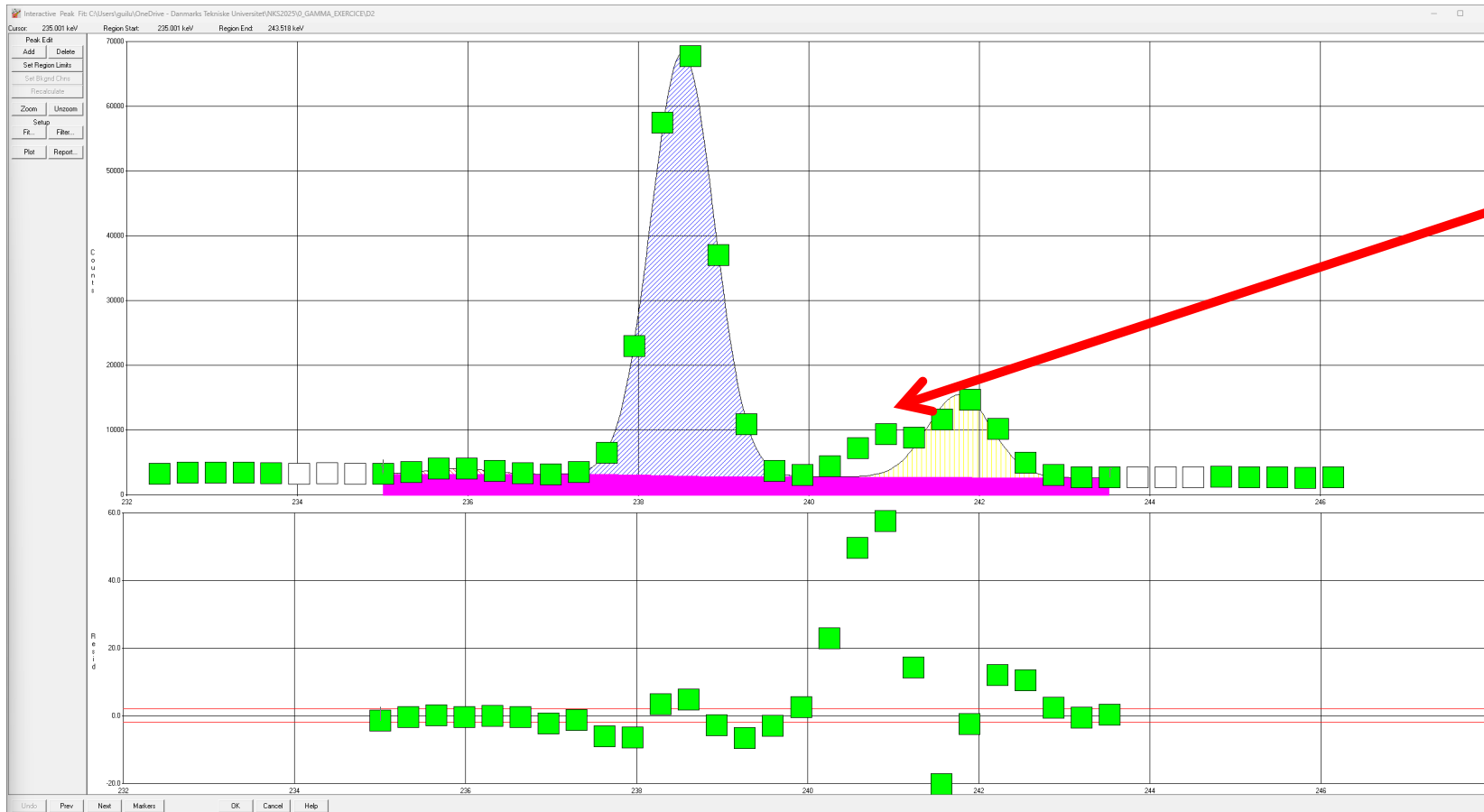
*“This intercomparison exercise was exceptionally well-designed because it successfully isolated the variability introduced by the **analysis software and the analyst's procedure** from the variability of the measurement itself.*

The key takeaway is that even when calibration and measurement are perfectly standardized, the choice of software and the specific analysis methodology remain critical sources of uncertainty and disagreement in gamma-ray spectrometry. This highlights a crucial need for harmonized analysis procedures and a thorough understanding of the software's underlying algorithms in any network of monitoring laboratories.”

Gemini 2.5 Pro

Thanks to the participants !

Ra-224, 241 keV



Pb-212: 238.6 keV

Ra-224: 240.986 keV

Pb-214: 241.997 keV

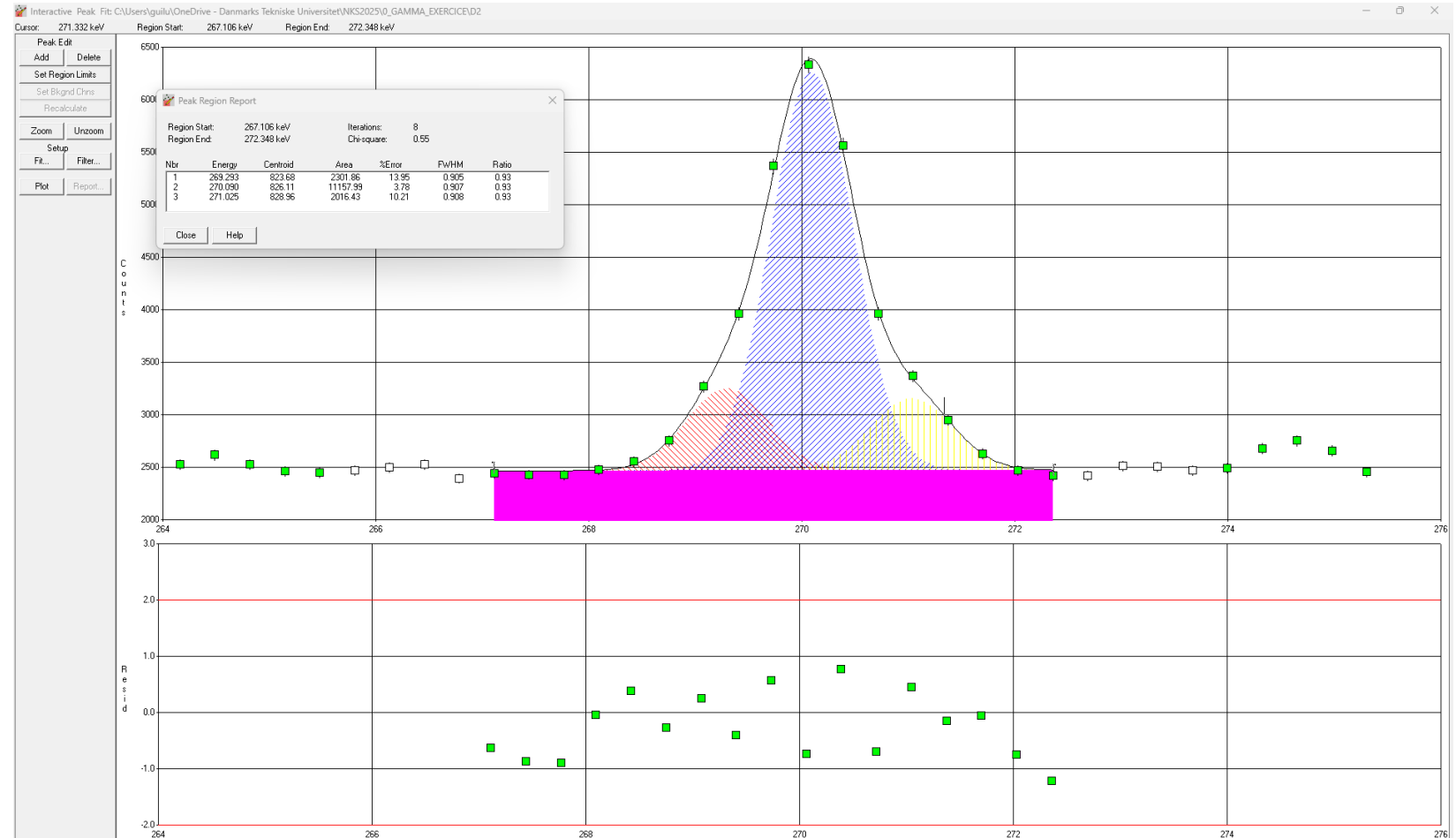
Often missed (Genie)

270 keV region

Ra-223: 269.463 keV, $P_{\gamma} \sim 14\%$

Ac-228: 270.245 keV, $P_{\gamma} \sim 3.5\%$

Rn-219: 271.228, $P_{\gamma} \sim 11\%$



Coincidence summing corrections with EFFTRAN

CS correction: EFFTRAN

Efficiency transfer and true coincidence summing corrections for environmental gamma-ray spectrometry

Free software, developed by Tim Vidmar: <https://efftran.github.io/>

*“**EFFTRAN** is coded in Fortran 77 and runs on the Windows platform through an MS Excel interface written in Visual Basic for Applications.”*

Vidmar, T. 2005. EFFTRAN - a Monte Carlo efficiency transfer code for gamma-ray spectrometry. Nuclear Instruments and Methods A 550, 603-608.

Detector

Crystal diameter	<input type="text" value="70.00"/>	mm	End cap (housing) diameter	<input type="text" value="88.00"/>	mm
Crystal length	<input type="text" value="31.00"/>	mm	End cap (housing) thickness	<input type="text" value="1.00"/>	mm
Bulletization (crystal rounding) rad	<input type="text" value="1.00"/>	mm	End cap (housing) material	<input type="text" value="aluminium"/>	
Top dead layer	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	mm	Window thickness	<input type="text" value="0.50"/>	mm
Side dead layer	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	mm	Window-to-crystal gap	<input type="text" value="5.00"/>	mm
Crystal hole (cavity) length	<input type="text" value="10.00"/>	mm	Window material	<input type="text" value="carbon epoxy"/>	
Crystal hole (cavity) diameter	<input type="text" value="10.00"/>	mm	Mount cup (holder) thickness	<input type="text" value="1.00"/>	mm
Crystal material	<input type="text" value="Ge"/>		Mount cup (holder) material	<input type="text" value="aluminium"/>	
			Absorber diameter	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	mm
			Absorber thickness	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	mm
			Absorber material	<input type="text" value="air"/>	

Detector

Load

Store

All numerical values must be equal to or larger than zero.

No check of the (internal) consistency of the data is performed!

The window-to-crystal gap is the distance between the top dead layer of the crystal and the detector window.

The crystal diameter includes its side dead layer. Similarly, the crystal length includes its top dead layer.

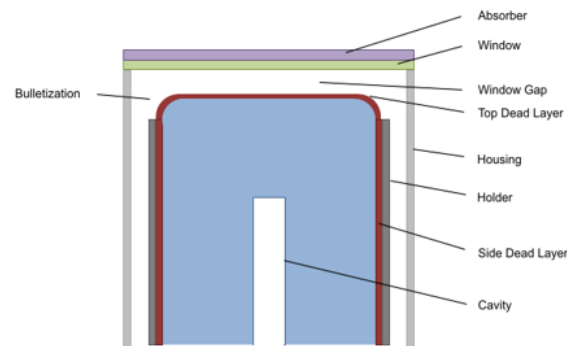
The upper edge of the crystal may be rounded. The amount of rounding is given in terms of the bulletization (cystal rounding) radius.

The crystal hole (cavity) is the central void drilled in the crystal, which contains the cooling pin (cold finger). The latter is not part of our model. The cavity diameter should include the surrounding germanium dead layer, which is also not modelled explicitly.

The absorber is assumed to be placed directly onto the detector window.

The crystal mount cup (holder) keeps the detector crystal in place.

The term end cap (housing) refers to the the detector cryostat, sometimes also called the detector can.



Source

Source filling height	<input type="text" value="50.00"/>	mm
Source material	<input type="text" value="Sediment"/>	
Container diameter	<input type="text" value="92.00"/>	mm
Container bottom thickness	<input type="text" value="1.30"/>	mm
Container side wall thickness	<input type="text" value="1.80"/>	mm
Container material	<input type="text" value="polypropylene"/>	
Container-to-absorber gap*	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>	mm

Load

Store

All numerical values must be equal to or larger than zero.

To simulate a **point source**, set all the numerical parameters to zero (except the container-to-absorber-gap) and all the materials to "vacuum" !

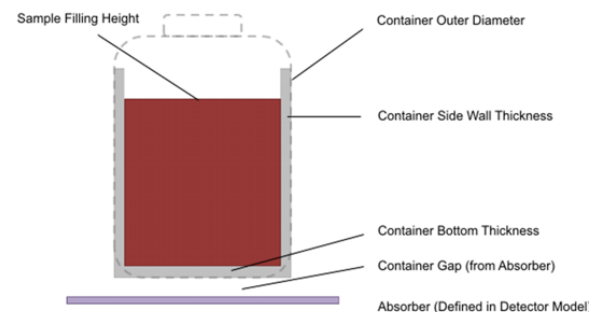
No check of the (internal) consistency of the data is performed!

The container-to-absorber gap is the distance between the top of the detector absorber and the bottom of the sample container.

The sample filling height refers to the sample material only, excluding the container bottom thickness.

The container diameter includes (both) its side walls.

The source material is assumed to tightly fill the space in the container in its radial dimension.



CS correction: EFFTRAN

Load Genie/GammaVision library



Modify Emission probability in library

CS Corrections: EFFTRAN

Nuclide Library Editor: NUTECH.NLB

File Search Options Help

Nuclide
 Name: BI-214 Half-Life: 1600.01 ☒ Y ☐ D
 Full Name: ☐ H ☐ M
 Type: natural ☐ S

Energy Lines
 Energy: keV Abundance: % ☐ Key Line
 Uncertainty: ± keV Uncertainty: ± Abs ☐ No Wt Mean

Name	Type	Half Life	Energy - keV	Abundance - %
BI-214	natural	1600.011Y		
			* 609.31	45.4900
			@ 665.45	1.5300
			768.35	4.8920
			@ 806.17	1.2300
			@ 934.06	3.2100
			1120.28	
			@ 1155.19	

609.31 keV → Pg = 45.49 %

Nuclide Library Editor: DET006_WH400_Sediment.NLB

File Search Options Help

Nuclide
 Name: BI-214 Half-Life: 1600.01 ☒ Y ☐ D
 Full Name: ☐ H ☐ M
 Type: natural ☐ S

Energy Lines
 Energy: keV Abundance: % ☐ Key Line
 Uncertainty: ± keV Uncertainty: ± Abs ☐ No Wt Mean

Name	Type	Half Life	Energy - keV	Abundance - %
BI-214	natural	1600.011Y		
			* 609.31	40.4571
			@ 665.45	1.2013
			768.35	4.2060
			@ 806.17	1.0241
			@ 934.06	2.7913
			1120.28	13.0207
			@ 1155.19	1.4892

609.31 keV → Pg = 40.46 %

CS correction = 45.49 / 40.46 = 1.124

For a given gamma-ray:

$$\text{FEP}(\text{Sample}) = \text{FEP}(\text{fit}) / \text{CS correction from EFFTRAN}$$

