

# Snowmass2021 - Letter of Interest

## *CMB-S4: Probes of the Dark Universe*

### **Thematic Areas:**

- (CF1) Dark Matter: Particle Like
- (CF2) Dark Matter: Wavelike
- (CF3) Dark Matter: Cosmic Probes
- (CF4) Dark Energy and Cosmic Acceleration: The Modern Universe
- (CF5) Dark Energy and Cosmic Acceleration: Cosmic Dawn and Before
- (CF6) Dark Energy and Cosmic Acceleration: Complementarity of Probes and New Facilities
- (CF7) Cosmic Probes of Fundamental Physics
- (Other) [*Please specify frontier/topical group*]

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This Letter is adapted from the CMB-S4 Science Case, Reference Design, and Project Plan<sup>1</sup>

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### **Abstract:**

The ingredients of the Universe that have not yet been directly observed, such as dark matter and dark energy, are central to some of the biggest open questions in modern physics. Observations of the cosmic microwave background (CMB) have allowed for extremely valuable insights into the nature of these mysterious dark components of the Universe. CMB-S4, a future ground-based CMB experiment, will provide extremely precise measurements of the CMB temperature and polarization anisotropies. These measurements, both on their own and in conjunction with other observations, will allow for new means by which to reveal the properties of the dark universe. The impact of these forthcoming CMB observations can be enhanced with future large scale structure surveys that can be used for cross correlation and complementary studies of cosmological perturbations and evolution. Furthermore, joint analyses of cosmological and terrestrial probes of dark matter and neutrino physics can provide a more complete picture than either in isolation.

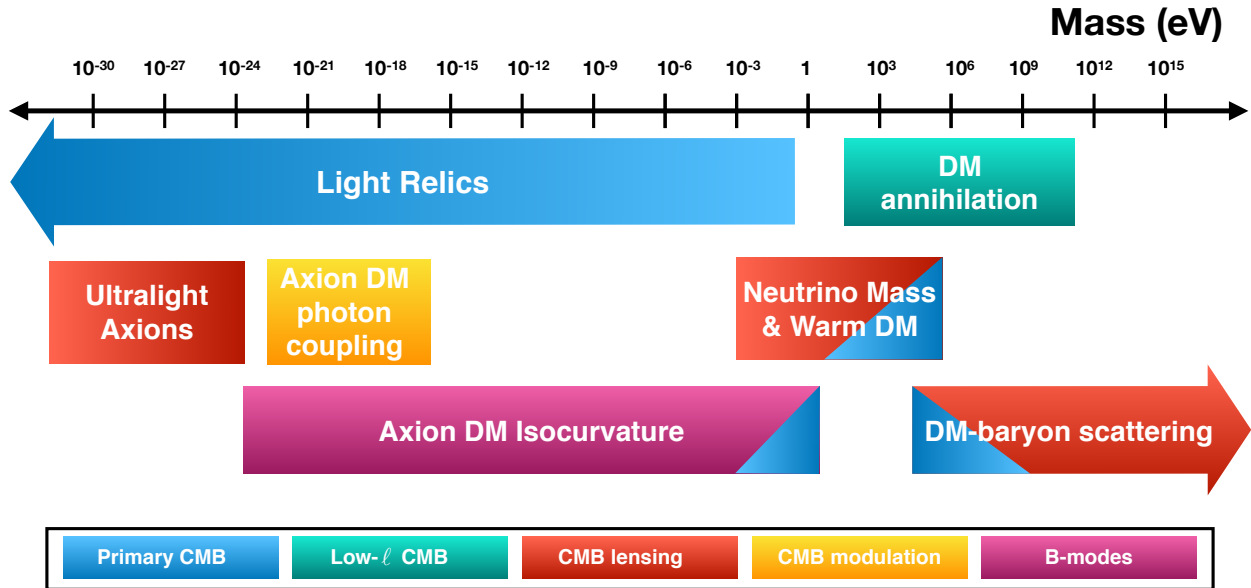


Figure 1: Schematic representation of the various ways in which measurements from CMB-S4 will be used to constrain dark sector physics across a vast range of mass scales.

**CMB-S4:** CMB-S4 was conceived by the community during the 2013 Snowmass physics planning activity as the path forward to realizing the enormous potential of cosmic microwave background (CMB) measurements for understanding the origin and evolution of the Universe, from the highest energies at the dawn of time through the growth of structure to the present day. CMB-S4 will probe fundamental physics and astrophysics with a millimeter-wavelength survey of unprecedented depth over a large sky area<sup>1-3</sup>. These measurements will represent a leap forward in the study of the CMB, which in the half century since its first discovery, has again and again transformed our understanding of the early Universe.

**Light Relics:** CMB-S4 will probe the fundamental physics of ingredients of our Universe that are difficult or impossible for us to observe directly. The gravitational influence of the radiation density in the present day Universe is negligible, but it played a significant role in evolution of the early Universe. Any species apart from photons that were present and relativistic prior to recombination contribute to the light relic density. The small-scale temperature and polarization power spectra of the CMB are particularly sensitive to the density of light relics.

The collective influence of the three already-known light relics (the three families of Standard Model neutrinos) has already been detected at high significance in CMB data. New light species are ubiquitous in extensions to the Standard Model of particle physics, and there is good motivation from both particle physics and cosmology to consider additional sources of radiation<sup>4-6</sup>. New light particles may arise in the form of axions and sterile neutrinos, or can appear as a byproduct of new symmetries that would explain the small mass of the Higgs boson<sup>4-25</sup>. Furthermore, light particles can thermalize in the early Universe for wide ranges of unexplored parameter space, leading to an observable level of additional radiation. Light particles may form the dark matter (e.g., axions) or part of a dark sector, they can mediate forces in the dark and visible sectors, or they can result from the decay of new heavier particles. These possibilities may also play a role in explaining the discrepancies observed in the Hubble constant  $H_0$  measurements<sup>26-30</sup>, the amplitude of fluctuations  $\sigma_8$ <sup>31-34</sup>, and clustering on small scales<sup>35,36</sup>. The observational constraints on the light relic density expected from CMB-S4 are therefore expected to have broad implications for

fundamental physics<sup>37</sup>. Joint analysis of data from CMB-S4 and a 21 cm experiment like PUMA<sup>38,39</sup> is expected to provide much tighter constraints on the density of light relics than either experiment alone.

In addition to searching for new light relics, CMB-S4 will provide useful insights into neutrino physics. Neutrinos were relativistic before recombination, but at least two mass eigenstates are non-relativistic today. As a result, neutrinos leave distinct imprints on the CMB and on large scale structure<sup>40–43</sup> that will allow for measurements of the absolute mass scale of neutrinos in the coming years<sup>1,2,44–47</sup>. CMB-S4 in conjunction with galaxy surveys will have the power to detect properties of neutrinos that complement those probed by terrestrial experiments that measure neutrino oscillations, study the influence of neutrino mass on beta decay, and search for neutrinoless double-beta decay.

**Dark Matter:** CMB measurements have great power in testing dark matter models and constraining parts of the parameter space that are inaccessible to laboratory experiments. The CMB is sensitive to the physics of dark matter throughout cosmic history independent of the local distribution. Small-scale CMB anisotropy measurements enabled by CMB-S4 will probe dark matter-baryon interactions in the early Universe<sup>48–50</sup>. These measurements will be sensitive to particle masses outside the detection limits of most existing direct-detection experiments. Furthermore, CMB-S4 will provide important consistency checks for small-scale-structure probes of dark matter microphysics that will be studied with upcoming galaxy surveys. A combination of CMB, large scale structure, astrophysical, and laboratory observations therefore provide a robust path forward for dark matter searches.

The exquisite sensitivity of the CMB to the depth and size of the dark matter gravitational potentials near the surface of last scattering makes it a particularly good probe of any new physics affecting the clustering of dark matter on large scales at early times. This sensitivity to dark matter density fluctuations is extended to lower redshifts via the weak gravitational lensing that CMB photons experience as they propagate to us. Similar to how tight coupling with photons inhibits the growth of baryon fluctuations until the epoch of hydrogen recombination, dark matter interacting with dark radiation at early times experiences a suppressed growth of structure due to the dark-radiation pressure opposing gravitational infall. Models where such interactions arise are diverse in their particle content<sup>51–53</sup>, have been invoked to explain the apparent low amplitude of matter fluctuations measured by certain weak-lensing surveys<sup>32,54,55</sup>, and naturally arise in the context of self-interacting dark matter which may address anomalies on subgalactic scales<sup>56</sup>.

Axions and axion-like particles are well-motivated dark matter candidates<sup>5</sup>. The CMB, through measurements of CMB lensing, temperature, and polarization<sup>57–59</sup>, offers the best gravitational probe of the axion dark matter density across a range of scales in the ultra-light regime. CMB-S4 will extend this range of masses and provide a complement to terrestrial axion searches, typically focused on higher masses.

**Dark Energy:** CMB-S4 constraints will be among the most powerful tests of the cosmological constant—more crucially, the simultaneous sensitivity to the expansion and the growth of structure will allow us to distinguish the dark-energy paradigm from modifications to general relativity. There are many models for acceleration in the latter class, and CMB-S4 will be generically useful in constraining them. CMB-S4 will measure the growth of structure through observation of CMB lensing and the abundance and clustering of galaxy clusters. CMB-S4 will allow unprecedented measurements of velocity fields through the kinetic Sunyaev-Zel’dovich effect. These measurements can be used to distinguish dark energy from interesting models of modified gravity<sup>60–63</sup> and will provide complementary constraints to redshift-space distortions and weak lensing measurements, probing larger physical scales. In addition to probing the global dynamics of dark energy, CMB-S4 will also be sensitive to the imprint of new parity-violating physics within the dark-energy sector which results in cosmic birefringence<sup>64–67</sup>. Detection of these parity-violating correlations would have paradigm-changing implications for cosmological scale physics, and may present a unique handle to probing microphysics of dark energy. Joint analysis of CMB data along with other astronomical observations that are sensitive to expansion and growth will allow for comprehensive probes of dark energy.

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