

## Complete Solution of Electronic Excitation and Ionization in Electron-Hydrogen Molecule Scattering

Mark C. Zammit,<sup>1,2,\*</sup> Jeremy S. Savage,<sup>2</sup> Dmitry V. Fursa,<sup>2</sup> and Igor Bray<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Theoretical Division, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87545, USA

<sup>2</sup>Curtin Institute for Computation and Department of Physics, Astronomy and Medical Radiation Sciences, Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia 6102, Australia

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The convergent close-coupling method has been used to solve the electron-hydrogen molecule scattering problem in the fixed-nuclei approximation. Excellent agreement with experiment is found for the grand total, elastic, electronic-excitation, and total ionization cross sections from the very low to the very high energies. This shows that for the electronic degrees of freedom the method provides a complete treatment of electron scattering on molecules as it does for atoms.

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Molecular hydrogen  $H_2$  is the simplest two-electron molecule. It is the most abundant molecule in the Universe, particularly in interstellar space and in the atmospheres of gas giants and the outermost planets in our Solar System. It is present at the edge region of fusion devices and widely used in plasma processing. A range of applications require accurate and comprehensive electron-collision data of molecular hydrogen in order to interpret spectroscopic data and model astrophysical and technological plasmas. Yet, this most fundamental few-body problem ( $e$ - $H_2$  scattering) has remained unsolved by theoretical methods, and a reliable data set of collision cross sections is significantly lacking in accuracy and range of scattering processes.

Experimentally, cross sections have been measured for elastic scattering, vibrational and electronic excitations, ionization, and dissociative processes of the ground state. A number of articles have given an extensive overview of the available experimental data and provided a recommended set of cross sections [1–4]. The most recent recommended data set [1] comes predominantly from experimental measurements, which is problematic as theoretical and experimental results vary significantly for electronic-excitation cross sections. In addition, experimental uncertainties in the measurement of electronic-excitation cross sections are relatively large, generally 20%–25%.

For theorists the  $H_2$  molecule offers a unique testing ground for the development of computational techniques. With wave functions known to high accuracy for this simple molecule the challenge is to treat the collision dynamics accurately. A large number of theoretical methods have been applied to calculate electron collisions with the  $H_2$  molecule. Among the most advanced and general are calculations based on the Schwinger variational principle [5], Kohn variational method [6],  $R$ -matrix (RM) method [7–11], and time-dependent close-coupling method (TDCC) [12]. Agreement between theory and experiment for this most fundamental of all molecules is mixed at best. To date, no theoretical method has been able to describe the

$e$ - $H_2$  collision processes consistently across all transitions and incident electron energies.

There is of course a good reason for this; experience gained over the last few decades in electron-atom scattering suggests the importance of interchannel coupling between all reaction channels including ionization. Another important point is the complete account of polarization effects in the scattering calculations. Within the close-coupling approach these can be achieved by using a near-complete expansion of both the discrete and continuum spectrum of the target. This is the approach adopted in the *ab initio* convergent close-coupling (CCC) method [13] and  $R$ -matrix with pseudostates method (RMPS) [14]. A sufficiently large expansion has to be used to accurately model the coupling between all reaction channels and avoid the pseudoresonance problem.

This strategy is difficult to implement for molecules due to the lack of spherical symmetry and reaction channels related to molecular vibrations and rotations. Even within the Born-Oppenheimer approximation and performing fixed-nuclei calculations the close-coupling expansion for the electronic part of the total wave function was often limited to just a few low-lying states of the  $H_2$  molecule. For example, RM calculations [7,8] had seven states, the Kohn variational method [6] had four states, and the Schwinger multichannel (SMC) calculations [5] had nine states. Such calculations are limited to low energies and their accuracy (convergence) is difficult to estimate. The notable exception is the molecular formulation of the RMPS method [11] that used a set of pseudostates to model the coupling to the ionization channels. The total number of states was 41 in the biggest calculation; however, only two states, the ground and first excited states, were represented accurately. For other molecules the situation is similar to  $H_2$ . Typically, electron-molecule calculations include just a few states in the close-coupling expansion and convergence studies are not performed.

This is very different than the electron-atom scattering field, which has undergone considerable progress over the last two decades. Large-scale close-coupling calculations

are common, convergence studies are routinely conducted, and results of calculations are increasingly being presented with uncertainty estimates.

To enable large close-coupling calculations for molecular targets the computational implementation is important. The RMPS method as well as other techniques (Kohn and Schwinger methods) use Slater and Gaussian orbitals. This is helpful in dealing with the multicenter nature of the molecular wave functions but at the same time they are notorious for linear dependence problems for large expansions. This limits the size of the calculations and the range of their applicability. The CCC method makes use of the Sturmian (Laguerre) basis that has no linear dependence problems and allows us to conduct large-scale calculations. Another important difference is the adoption of a single-center description of the target molecule in the CCC calculations. The advantage of the single-center approach is the ability to evaluate all matrix elements in a straightforward manner and obtain  $H_2$  wave functions with better or comparable accuracy than in previous calculations [5,7,11].

The present approach has already been applied to positron scattering from the  $H_2$  molecule [15–17] and electron scattering from  $H_2^+$  and its isotopologues [18,19]. In the latter case we conducted adiabatic-nuclei calculations, which allowed us to obtain collision data for scattering from the hot (vibrationally excited) target. In both cases we have explicitly demonstrated the convergence of the calculations with respect to the number of the target states in the close-coupling expansion and the size of the projectile partial wave expansion.

Here, we apply the CCC method to the  $e$ - $H_2$  scattering problem. To demonstrate the accuracy of the method we present the grand total, ionization, and elastic scattering integrated cross sections. We also present differential cross sections (DCS) for elastic scattering and excitations of a number of low-lying states at 17.5 eV. This energy is just above the  $H_2$  ionization threshold, where the electronic excitations and ionization processes are dominant and their correct account is crucial.

The CCC method is formulated in a spherical coordinate system where the origin is set at the midpoint between the two nuclei and the  $z$  axis is chosen to align along the internuclei axis  $\mathbf{R}$  (body frame). The body-frame total scattering wave function is expanded in a set of target states. This leads to coupled Lippmann-Schwinger equations for the body-frame  $T$  matrix. These equations are solved in momentum space via a  $K$ -matrix formulation, which enforces unitarity. In the case of homonuclear diatomic molecules like  $H_2$  the partial wave expansion of the projectile wave functions allows one to solve the Lippmann-Schwinger equations per partial wave of total orbital angular momentum projection  $M$ , spin  $S$ , and parity  $\Pi$ . Body-frame  $T$ -matrix elements are then transformed into the lab frame using standard techniques and cross sections are calculated [20]. For details of the molecular CCC method see Ref. [18].

The CCC method requires a set of target (pseudo)states that should form a near-complete basis. The  $H_2$  target

electronic Hamiltonian  $H_T^{\text{elec}}$  in the Born-Oppenheimer approximation describes two electrons in the Coulomb potential of two protons that are fixed at a distance  $R$  and is defined as (atomic units are used throughout the Letter)

$$H_T^{\text{elec}} = H_1^{\text{elec}} + H_2^{\text{elec}} + V_{12} + 1/R, \quad (1)$$

where  $H_i^{\text{elec}}$  is the one-electron electronic Hamiltonian of  $H_2^+$ ,

$$H_i^{\text{elec}} = -\frac{1}{2}\nabla_i^2 - \frac{1}{|\mathbf{r}_i + \frac{\mathbf{R}}{2}|} - \frac{1}{|\mathbf{r}_i - \frac{\mathbf{R}}{2}|}, \quad (2)$$

$V_{12}$  is the electron-electron potential and  $1/R$  is the internuclear Coulomb repulsion term. The  $H_2$  electronic target states are characterized by their orbital angular momentum projection  $m$ , parity  $\pi$ , and spin  $s$ . The target Hamiltonian (1) is diagonalized for each  $(m, \pi, s)$  term in a set of antisymmetrized two-electron configurations, where one-electron orbitals are represented by Laguerre basis functions. We designate  $N_l$  as the number of Laguerre basis functions per orbital angular momentum  $l$  up to  $l_{\text{max}}$ .

The  $H_2$  structure model needs to allow for an expansion over the two electrons ( $nlm, n'l'm'$ ). The structure model chosen here represents the “outer” electron ( $n'l'm'$ ) by one-electron orbitals. These one-electron orbitals were constructed from a Laguerre basis that had  $N_l = 17 - l$  functions up to  $l_{\text{max}} = 3$ . Exponential falloffs were chosen such that positive-energy pseudostates were open just above ionization threshold and were  $\alpha_{l=0} = 0.76$ ,  $\alpha_{l=1} = 0.765$ ,  $\alpha_{l=2} = 0.79$ , and  $\alpha_{l=3} = 0.85$ . The “inner” electron is expanded by all  $n \leq 2$  one-electron orbitals. These orbitals ( $n \leq 2$ ) are constructed from short-ranged Laguerre functions that have exponential falloffs of  $\alpha_l = 1.85$ . However, the  $1s\sigma_g$  orbital ( $n = 1$ ) is represented by a converged molecular orbital of  $H_2^+$  that was constructed from a Laguerre basis that had  $N_l = 60 - l$ ,  $\alpha_l = 0.9$  functions up to  $l_{\text{max}} = 8$ . This molecular orbital allows us to obtain an accurate ionization threshold within a single-center expansion.

Diagonalizing the target Hamiltonian with the model described above,  $N = 491$  target states were constructed and used in the scattering calculations. Of these 491 states, 92 states were in the discrete spectrum and 399 states were in the continuum. In Table I the two-electron energies and vertical excitation energies at the equilibrium distance of  $R_0 = 1.4a_0$  are presented for a number of low-lying states and compared with highly accurate structure calculations [21–26]. The length gauge oscillator strengths for the  $X^1\Sigma_g^+ \rightarrow B^1\Sigma_u^+$  and  $X^1\Sigma_g^+ \rightarrow C^1\Pi_u$  transitions are 0.277 and 0.337, which compares well with the accurate theoretical values 0.301 [25] and 0.351 [27], respectively. The static dipole polarizability is  $\alpha_{\parallel} = 6.427a_0^3$  and  $\alpha_{\perp} = 4.637a_0^3$  for the ground state, which are both in good agreement with the accurate calculations of Kolos and Wolniewicz [28] ( $\alpha_{\parallel} = 6.380a_0^3$  and  $\alpha_{\perp} = 4.578a_0^3$ ).

To model scattering from the ground vibrational state in the fixed-nuclei approximation more accurately, the equilibrium distance is replaced by the mean internuclear distance of the vibrational ground state [29]. For scattering calculations we

TABLE I. Two-electron energy  $E$  of electronic target states of  $H_2$  and the vertical electronic-excitation energy from the ground state  $\Delta E$  at the internuclear distance of  $R_0 = 1.4a_0$ . Comparisons are made with accurate structure calculations [21–26].

State	$E$ (a.u.)		$\Delta E$ (eV)	
	Present	Reference	Present	Reference
$X \ ^1\Sigma_g^+$	-1.162	-1.174 [21]		
$b \ ^3\Sigma_u^+$	-0.770	-0.784 [22]	10.67	10.62 [22]
$a \ ^3\Sigma_g^+$	-0.710	-0.714 [23]	12.32	12.54 [23]
$c \ ^3\Pi_u$	-0.701	-0.707 [24]	12.56	12.73 [24]
$B \ ^1\Sigma_u^+$	-0.697	-0.706 [25]	12.66	12.75 [25]
$EF \ ^1\Sigma_g^+$	-0.687	-0.692 [25]	12.92	13.13 [25]
$C \ ^1\Pi_u$	-0.683	-0.689 [26]	13.03	13.22 [26]

use the mean internuclear distance of  $H_2$ ,  $R_m = 1.448a_0$ . It is also important to note that in the fixed-nuclei approximation the closure method is effectively used to analytically sum over all vibrational and rotational excitations.

Scattering calculations were performed from 0.1 to 300 eV. With the  $R_m = 1.448a_0$  fixed-nuclei structure model the ionization threshold is at 15.97 eV. For energies above the ionization threshold the 491-state model was used. This is the intermediate energy region where *ab initio* calculations are most difficult to perform. Below the ionization threshold a smaller model is sufficient. In this energy region we use the same model described above except the outer electron ( $n'l'm'$ ) orbitals were constructed from a Laguerre basis that had  $N_l = 10 - l$  functions up to  $l_{\max} = 2$ . We have conducted convergence studies at selected energies to verify the accuracy of the results as a function of the size of the Laguerre basis and projectile partial wave expansions. Detailed convergence studies will be presented elsewhere.

The present results have been calculated using a projectile partial-wave expansion with maximum orbital angular momentum  $L_{\max} = 8$ . The total spin  $S = 1/2$ , odd and even parity  $\Pi$ , and total orbital angular projection  $|M| \leq 8$  channels were included. Below the ionization threshold fewer projectile partial waves are required. For inelastic scattering, the orientationally averaged analytic Born subtraction method was used to top up the projectile partial wave expansion for integrated cross sections [18].

The grand total cross section (GTCS) for electron scattering from the ground state of the  $H_2$  molecule is presented in Fig. 1. The CCC results are compared with the measurements of Ferch *et al.* [30], van Wingerden *et al.* [31], Hoffman *et al.* [32], Deuring *et al.* [33], Jones [34], Subramanian and Kumar [35], Nickel *et al.* [36], and Zhou *et al.* [37]. As far as we are aware these are the only *ab initio* results of the GTCS across the intermediate-energy region that are in excellent agreement with all experiments. The small experimental uncertainties suggest that the CCC formalism is correct across the entire energy range, with elastic, excitation, and ionization cross sections being taken into account accurately.

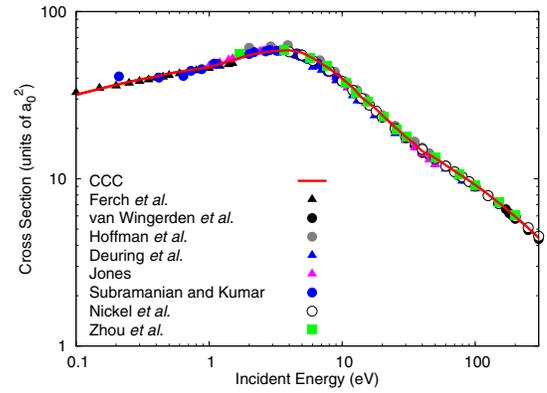


FIG. 1. Grand total cross section of electron scattering from  $H_2$ . CCC results are compared with the measurements of Ferch *et al.* [30], van Wingerden *et al.* [31], Hoffman *et al.* [32], Deuring *et al.* [33], Jones [34], Subramanian and Kumar [35], Nickel *et al.* [36], and Zhou *et al.* [37].

Our best estimate for the scattering length is  $1.30a_0$  with uncertainty of about 10%. This value is in agreement with other calculations ( $1.24a_0$  [38],  $1.27a_0$  [39],  $1.29a_0$  [40], and  $1.30a_0$  [41]). Detailed analysis of low-energy  $e$ - $H_2$  collisions will be conducted elsewhere.

In Fig. 2 total single ionization cross sections of  $H_2$  are presented. CCC  $H_2^+$  production results are compared with the  $H_2^+$  production measurements of Krishnakumar and Srivastava [42] and Straub *et al.* [43] and the total ionization cross section (TICS) measurements of Rapp and Englander-Golden [44], Lindsay and Mangan [2], and calculations using the RMPS [11] and TDCC [12] methods. CCC results have been multiplied by the appropriate Franck-Condon [45] factor to calculate the production of  $H_2^+$  ( $\approx 98.5\%$  of the fixed-nuclei cross section) and not dissociative ionization. Comparing with experiment, the CCC results are in excellent agreement with all experiments from the ionization threshold to the cross section maximum. For

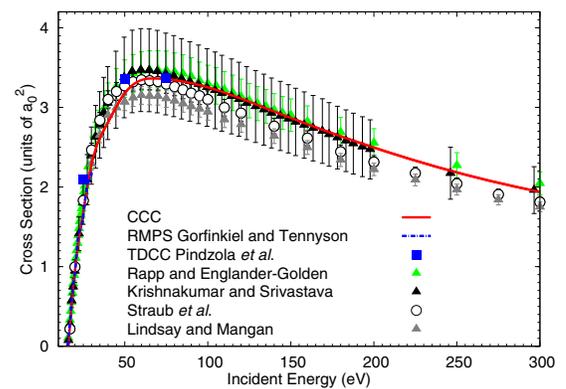


FIG. 2. Ionization cross sections of electron scattering from  $H_2$ . CCC results are compared with the  $H_2^+$  production measurements of Krishnakumar and Srivastava [42], Straub *et al.* [43], and the total ionization cross section measurements of Rapp and Englander-Golden [44] and Lindsay and Mangan [2]. RMPS [11] results end at 30 eV and are indistinguishable from CCC results. TDCC [12] results are available only at 25, 50, and 75 eV.

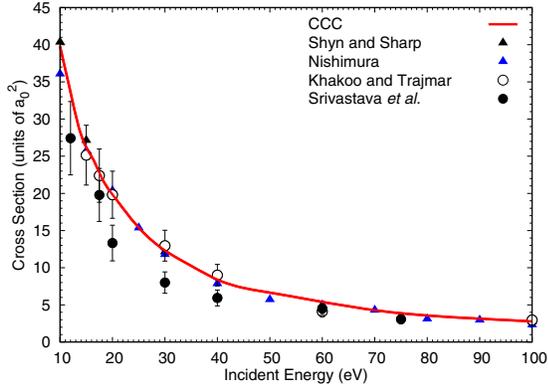


FIG. 3. Elastic cross section of electron scattering from  $H_2$ . CCC results are compared with the measurements of Shyn and Sharp [46], Nishimura *et al.* [47], Khakoo and Trajmar [48], and Srivastava *et al.* [49].

high energies CCC results favor the measurements of Krishnakumar and Srivastava [42]. The excellent agreement between the CCC results and measurements of the GTCS and TICS indicates that the electron flux has been correctly distributed to the continuum and discrete spectrum. Hence elastic and electronic-excitation cross sections should be accurate if the scattering calculation uses accurate target states, as is the case with the present model.

Comparing with other calculations, CCC results are in excellent agreement with the *ab initio* RMPS [11] and TDCC [12] results. The RMPS results are available from the ionization threshold to 30 eV and TDCC results are only available at 25, 50, and 75 eV. In the RMPS calculations there was a problem with pseudoresonances and an averaging procedure was used to smooth over the results. The one-electron TDCC method utilizes the local-exchange approximation and uses smaller partial wave expansion together with a polynomial extrapolation technique. Despite these differences the agreement with CCC is remarkable.

The elastic integrated cross section is presented in Fig. 3 from 10 to 100 eV (for lower energies see Fig. 1). The fixed-nuclei CCC results are in excellent agreement with the measurements of Shyn and Sharp [46], Nishimura *et al.* [47], and Khakoo and Trajmar [48] across the entire energy range considered. The measurements of Srivastava *et al.* [49] are consistently lower than the CCC results and the other measurements.

To complete our presentation we consider an example of DCS. In Fig. 4 the 17.5 eV incident electron energy DCS are presented for elastic scattering and low-lying electronic excitations. Starting with the top-left panel the CCC elastic DCS are compared with the measurements of Khakoo and Trajmar [48] and the seven-state RM calculations of Branchett *et al.* [8]. The CCC results are in good agreement with experiment and the RM results, with some variation between the two theories at the forward angles. Measurements of the electronic excitations of  $H_2$  are exceptionally difficult due to the overlapping electronic-vibrational

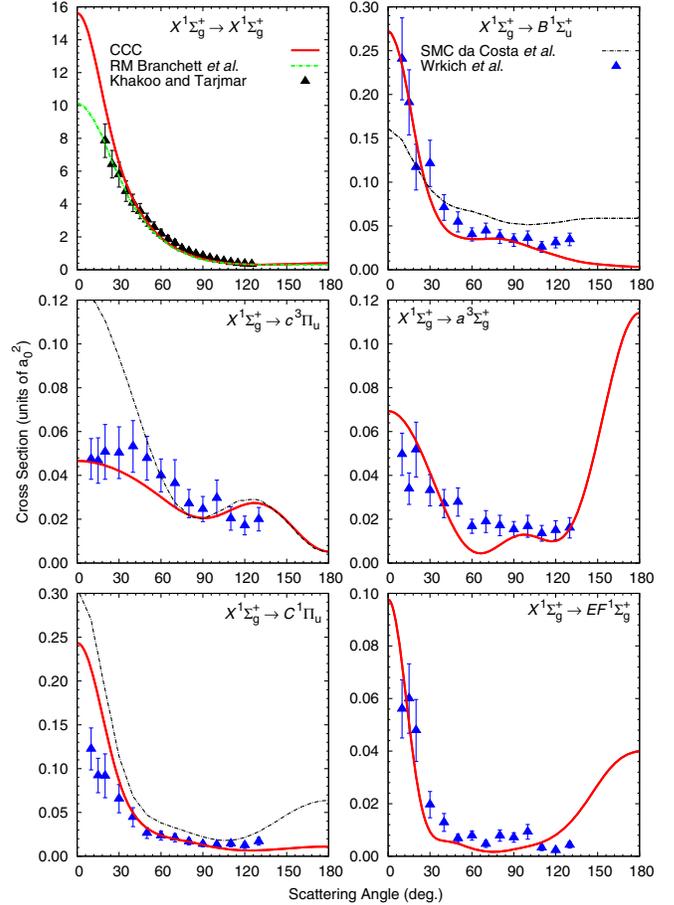


FIG. 4. Elastic and electronic excitation  $e$ - $H_2$  DCS at 17.5 eV. CCC results are compared with the elastic DCS measurements of Khakoo and Trajmar [48], with the measurements of Wrkich *et al.* [50] for electronic excitations of the  $B^1\Sigma_u^+$ ,  $c^3\Pi_u$ ,  $a^3\Sigma_g^+$ ,  $C^1\Sigma_u$ , and  $EF^1\Sigma_g^+$  states. CCC results are also compared with the RM calculations of Branchett *et al.* [8] and SMC calculations of da Costa *et al.* [5].

manifolds in the energy loss spectrum. Considering this difficulty the CCC results are in excellent agreement with experiment [50] for all transitions considered. CCC results are also compared with the SMC calculations of da Costa *et al.* [5] for excitation to the  $B^1\Sigma_u^+$ ,  $c^3\Pi_u$ , and  $C^1\Sigma_u$  states.

In conclusion we have performed CCC calculations of electron- $H_2$  scattering over a very broad energy range yielding excellent agreement with experiment. The CCC formalism provides a complete solution of the electron-molecular hydrogen scattering problem in the fixed-nuclei approximation, irrespective of the projectile energy or the electronic transition of interest. The fixed-nuclei approximation is the foundation on which techniques are built to describe vibrational and rotational excitations, resonance, and dissociative processes in molecules [9,10,20,51]. This allows us to model such processes and address some long-standing problems, such as the controversy over the vibrational excitation cross sections for molecular hydrogen [3]. While we appreciate that molecular hydrogen is the

simplest molecule of practical interest, the CCC formalism is general and can readily be extended to other molecules where the interaction is dominated by one or two-electron excitations. We are now in a position for molecular targets where we were for atomic targets two decades ago.

In addition to extending the CCC method to more complicated molecules we are also extending the method to make use of the spheroidal coordinate system. This allows us to study diffuse molecules like  $\text{Li}_2$  and scattering from hot (vibrationally excited) molecules. All this extensive data will be made available via the LXCat database and should be useful in astrophysical, plasma, and transport modeling.

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\*mzammit@lanl.gov

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