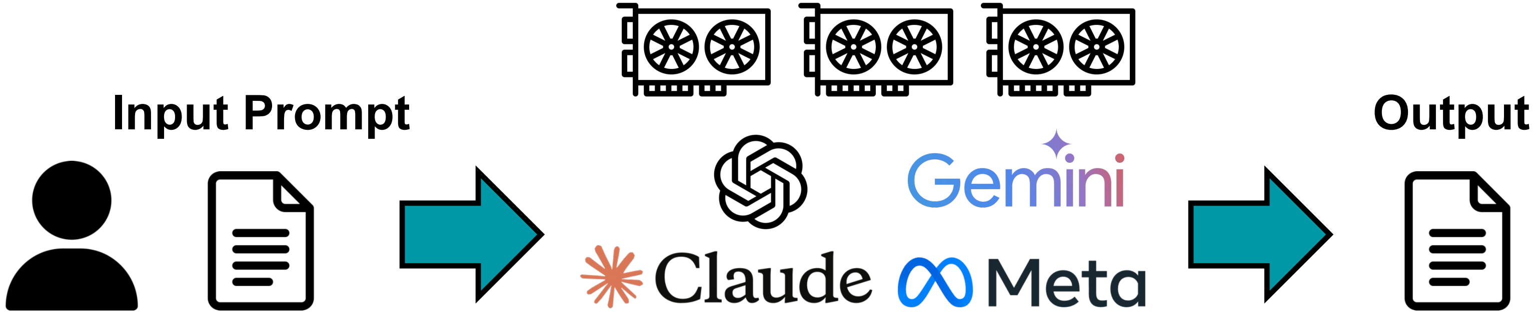
Understanding Performance Implications of LLM Inference on CPUs

Seonjin Na[1], Geonhwa Jeong[1], Byung Hoon Ahn[2], Jeffery Young[1], Tushar Krishna[1], Hyesoon Kim[1]

[1]Georgia Institute of Technology, [2]University of California San Diego

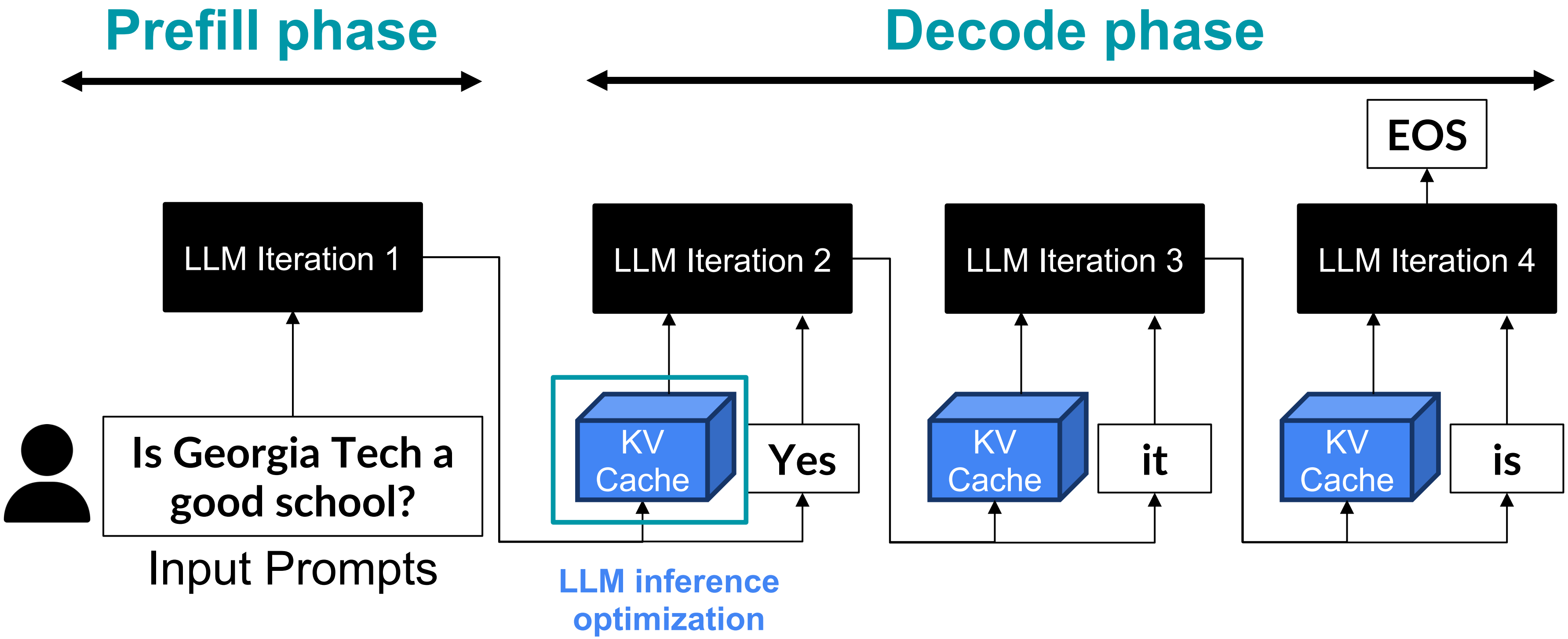
Large Language Models (LLM) are widely adopted

Data centers equip with
GPUs, NPUs to accelerate LLM inference



LLM Services

Overview of LLM Inference Procedure



Prefill Phase vs Decode Phase

Prefill phase

Is Georgia Tech a good school? → Yes

Input Prompts

Process all input prompts in parallel

Compute bound

Decode phase

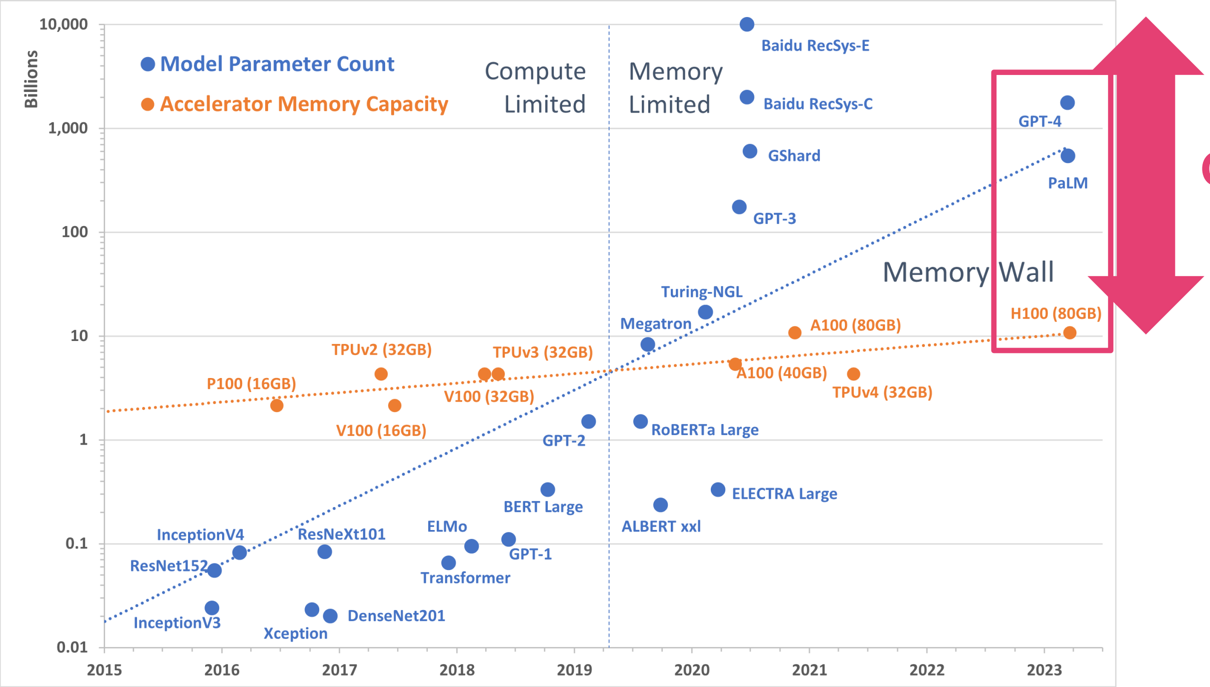
Yes | it | is

Output tokens

Process one token at a time

Memory bound

Challenges in LLM Inference: **Large Model Size**



The ***memory wall*** of LLMs [1]

Huge Gap between
GPU memory vs model size

LLMs continue to
grow increasingly larger,
driven by scaling law [2]

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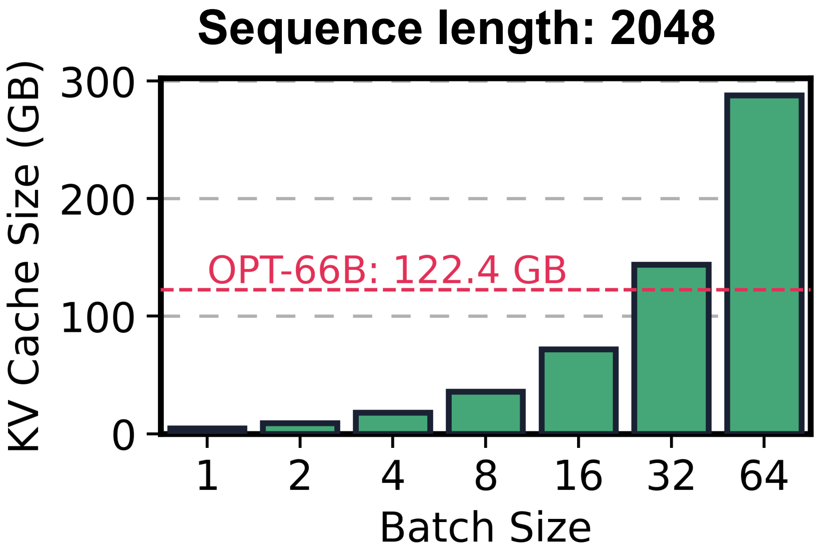
[1]: Reducing the Barriers to Entry for Foundation Model Training, Arxiv' 24
[2]: Scaling Laws for Neural Language Models

Challenges in LLM Inference: **KV Cache Size**

- KV Cache size **linearly** scales with **the sequence length and batch size**
  - The size of KV Cache = 2 (Key/ Value) * 2 (BF16) * d_layer * d_model * **seq_len** * **batch_size**

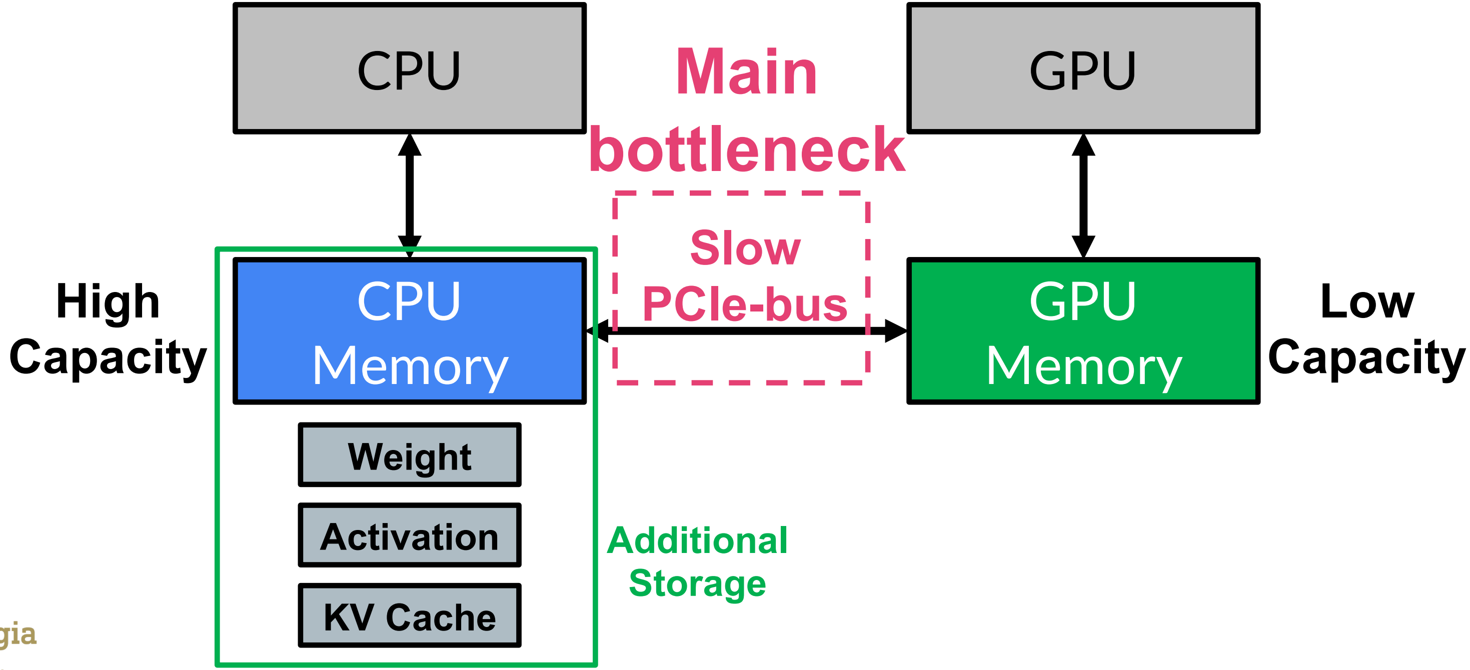


KV cache size is **288GB** **(FP16)** with 2048 sequence length, 64 batch size for OPT-66B

Requires at least 4 H100-80GB GPU

Offloading-based LLM Inference on GPUs

- **LLM weights, activation, KV cache** are offloaded to **CPU memory**



Possible Hardware Options for LLM Inference

Options	Cost	Accuracy	Latency
CPU	Low	High	Low-High
Single-GPU with CPU offloading	Medium	High	Low- High
Single-GPU with quantization (without CPU-offloading)	Medium	High- Medium	Low
Multi-GPUs	Very High	High	Very Low

Main Focus

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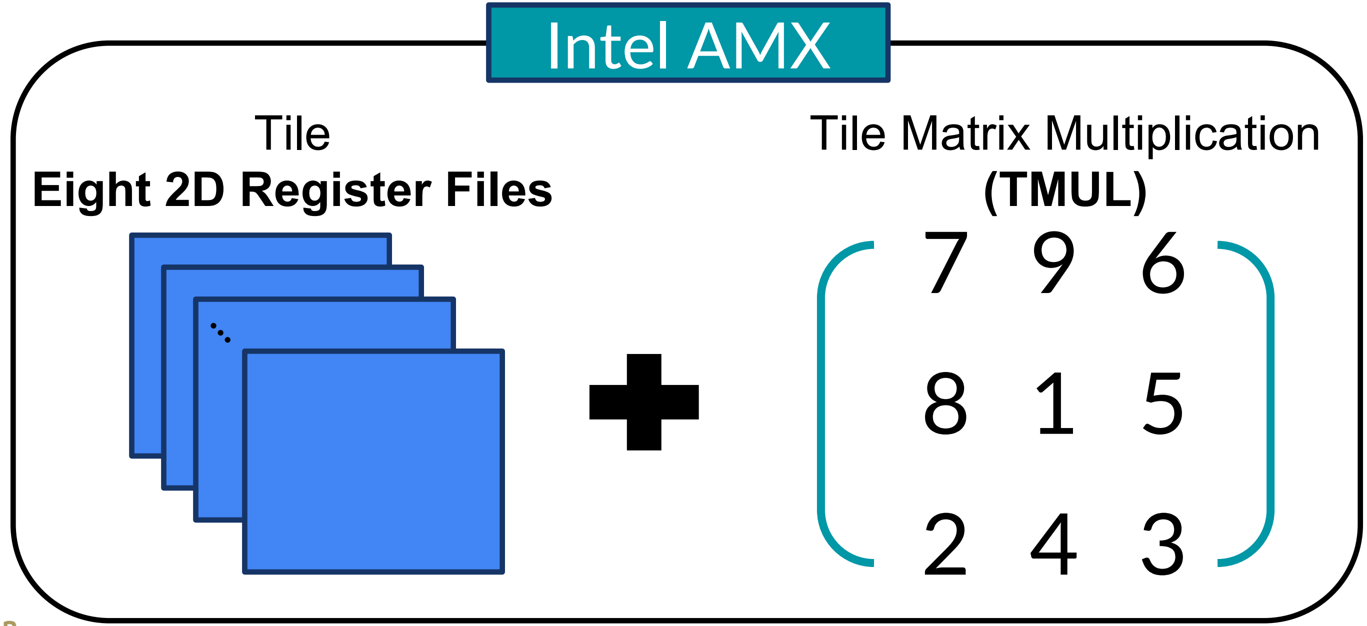
Opportunities in Latest CPUs: (1) Dedicated Accelerators

- Recent CPUs offer **GEMM accelerators with extended ISA support**
  - Intel Advanced Matrix eXtension (AMX), ARM Scalable Matrix Extension (SME), etc.



Supported DataType
BF16, INT8

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Opportunities in Latest CPUs: (2) Large Memory Capacity

- CPU servers provide **larger memory capacity** than that of GPUs

CPU

Could be expanded

There are two key opportunities for CPU LLM inference

1. Dedicated accelerator with ISA extension

2. Larger memory capacity with HBM

High Capacity
Low bandwidth

Low Capacity
High bandwidth

NVIDIA H100 GPU
HBM 80GB

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Evaluation Methodology

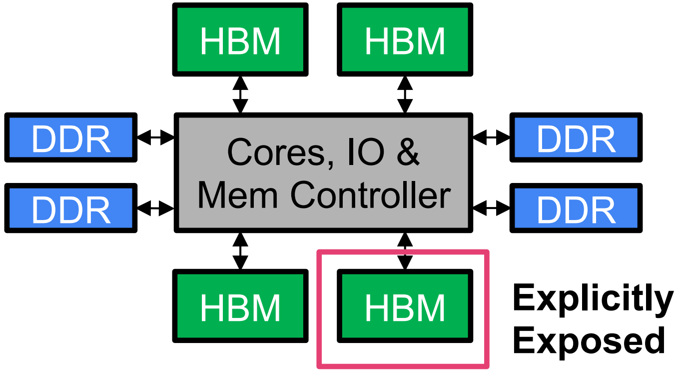
- Use **Intel Extension for Pytorch (IPEX)** for CPU LLM inference
- Evaluated LLMs: OPT (1.3B, 6.7B, 13B, 30B, 66B) , LLaMA2 (7B, 13B, 70B)
- Metrics: End-to-End Latency & Throughput (Generated output tokens/s)

	Sapphire Rapids CPU (SPR)
CPU Model	Xeon 4th Max 9468
# of Cores (Per socket) / # of Socket	48 / 2
Compute Throughput	25.6 (AVX-512) / 206.4 (AMX) TFLOPS
L1/L2 (per core)	48KB/ 2MB
LLC	105MB
Memory Capacity	DDR5 512GB, HBM 128GB
Memory Bandwidth	DDR5: 233.8 GB/s, HBM: 588 GB/s

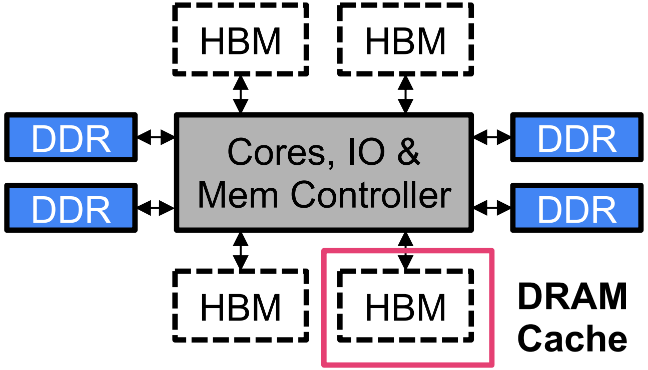
Memory bandwidth is measured on single-socket using STREAM benchmark

Key Intel CPU Configurations: Memory, Clustering Modes

Memory Mode

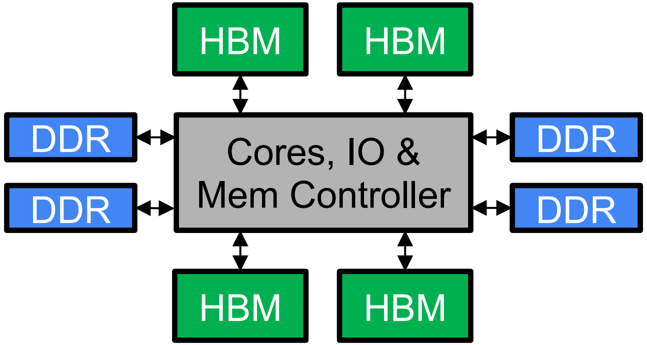


Flat mode

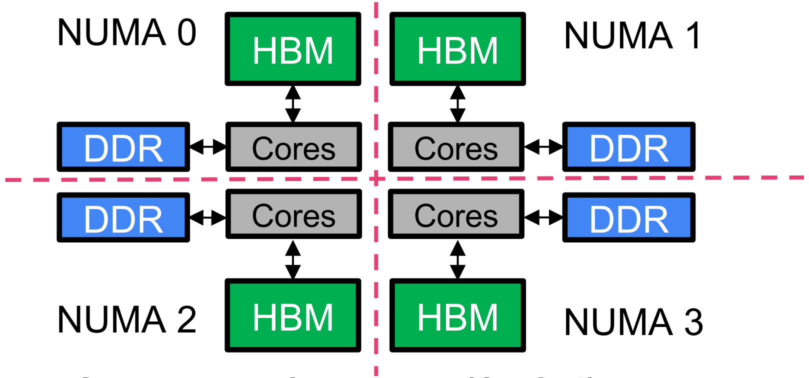


Cache mode

Clustering Mode



Quadrant mode



Sub-NUMA Clustering(SNC-4) mode

Questions We Aim to Answer for Optimal Performance

- What is **the optimal clustering and memory configuration** for LLM inference?
- What is **the optimal number of CPU cores** for LLM inference?

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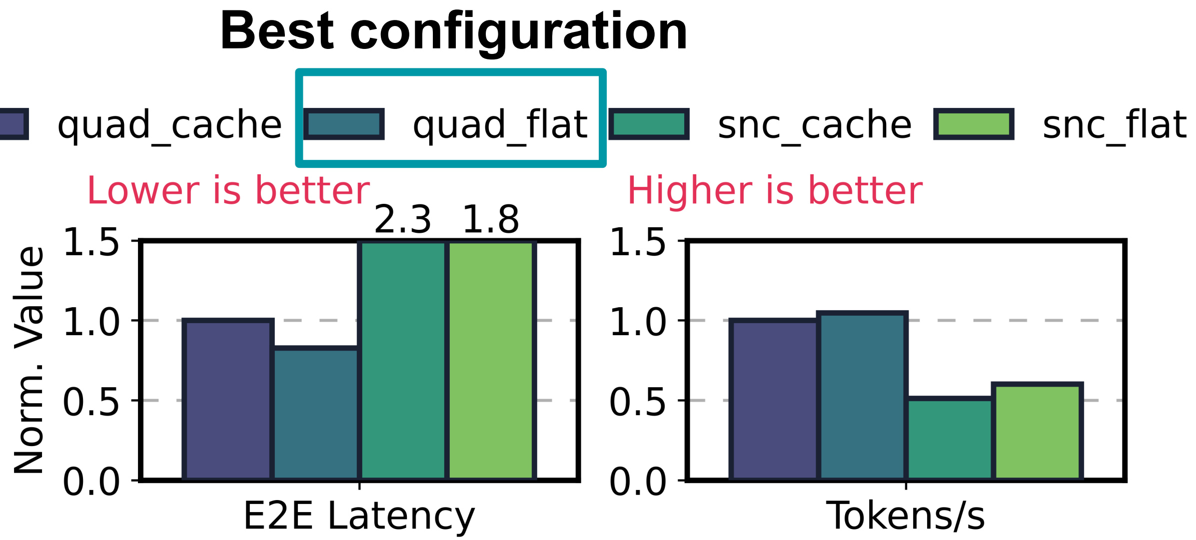
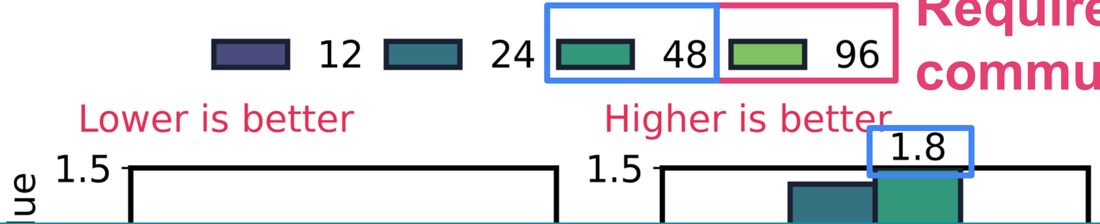
Performance Impact of Clustering and Memory Modes

- Compare the averaged performance across all LLMs and batch sizes (1 to 32)
  - Each result is normalized to **Quadrant_Cache (quad_cache)** configuration
  - **HBM memory** is prioritized for **flat mode using Linux *numactl***



Performance Impact of the Number of CPU Cores

- Compare the averaged performance across all LLMs and batch sizes (1 to 32)
    - Each result is normalized to **12 cores** configuration
    - All configurations use **quad_flat** mode



Require inter-socket communication

Using Quad with Flat and 48 cores delivers the best results

GPU Server Configurations

- We use **FlexGen** for offloading-based LLM inference on GPUs

	A100-40GB GPU	H100-80GB GPU
# of SMs	108	132
Compute Throughput	312 TFLOP	989 TFLOP
L1/L2	192KB / 40MB	256KB / 50MB
Memory Capacity	HBM 40GB	HBM 80GB
Memory Bandwidth	1299.9 GB/s	1754.4 GB/s
Interconnect	PCIe 4.0, 64GB/s	PCIe 5.0, 128GB/s

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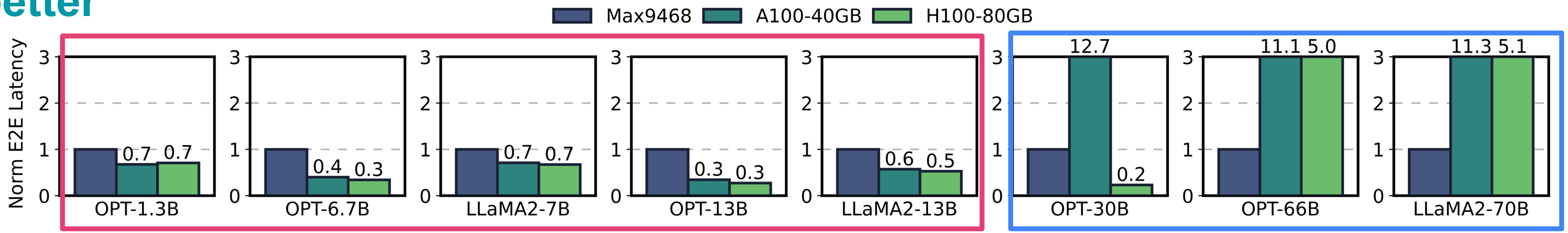
Performance Comparison: SPR Max CPU vs GPUs

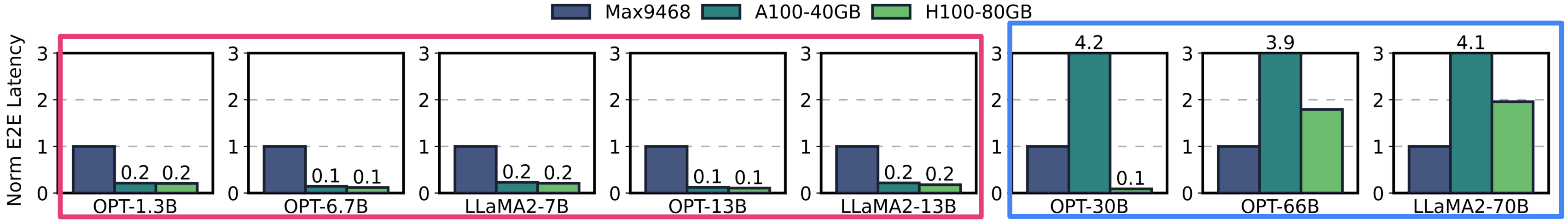
Lower is better

Input length: 128
Output length: 32

Batch size 1



Batch size 16



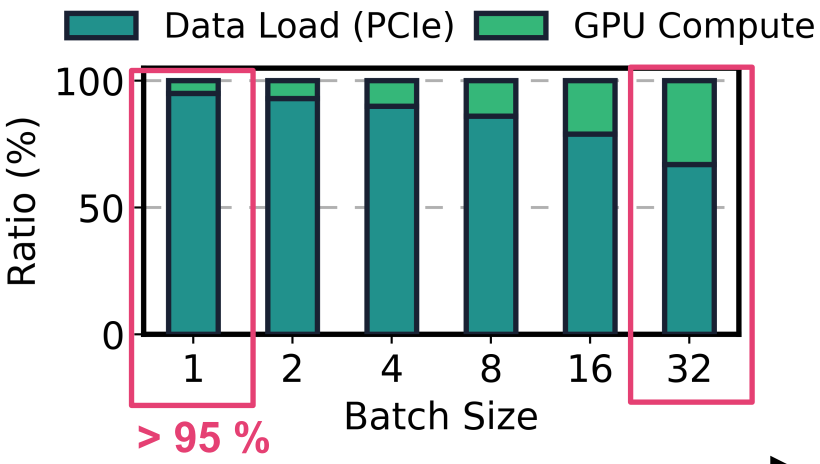
GPUs outweigh CPU for smaller models

CPU performs better than GPUs for larger models

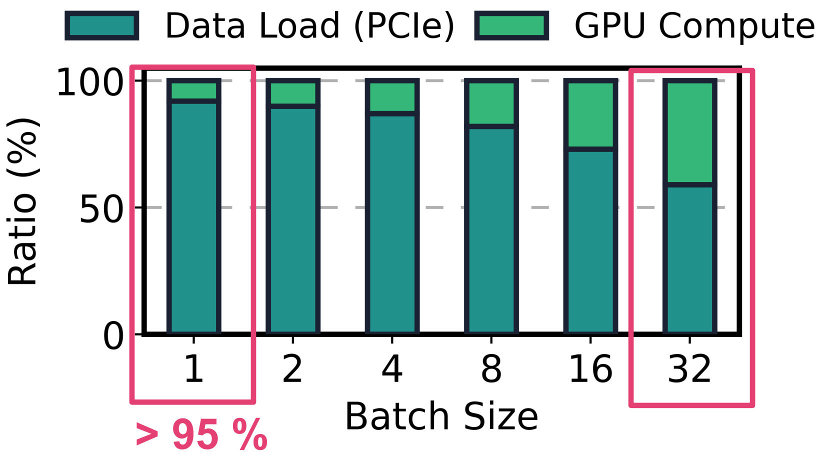
GPU Execution Time Breakdown

- Offloading-based LLM inference suffers from **significant PCIe transfer times**

OPT-30B model on **A100-40GB**



OPT-66B model on **H100-80GB**



Compute intensive

More Results In Our Paper

- Performance comparison between different CPU gens (ICL CPU vs SPR CPU)
- Detailed performance analysis for other key metrics using perf counters
- Potential optimizations for efficient CPU LLM inference
- Sensitivity study to the input sequence length

Conclusion

- LLM inference demands substantial memory, often exceeding GPU memory
  - Offloading-based LLM inference suffer from performance degradation due to PCIe transfer
- Key opportunities for CPU LLM inference
  - Dedicated GEMM Accelerators with ISA support
  - Larger memory capacity with HBM that could be further expanded CXL
- Evaluation results show CPUs can outperform GPUs for larger models

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