



# The Association Between Parental Alcoholism and Depression in Offspring



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## Introduction

- With more than 6% of the U.S. suffering from it, alcoholism is the most common drug addiction in the country (Caron Treatment Centers, 2023).
- Because of this, many children grow up with mothers or fathers fighting the debilitating illness.
- Children of alcoholics are significantly more likely to suffer from excessive alcohol use themselves, but the link between parental alcoholism and various mental illnesses, like depression, is still unclear (Caron Treatment Centers, 2023).

## Research Questions

- Is there a relationship between parental alcoholism and depression in offspring?
- Does this relationship differ based on the gender of the alcoholic parent and the offspring?

## Methods

### Sample

- Respondents (n=43,093) were drawn from the first wave of the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC), encompassing the non-institutionalized civilian adult population in the United States. This survey examines substance use in the United States adult population.

### Measures

- To detect the presence of an alcoholic parent, the survey asked directly whether a participant had an alcoholic blood mother or father. A new variable was generated that equaled 1 if either parent was an alcoholic, and 0 otherwise.
- A lifetime incidence of major depression was assessed using NIAAA, Alcohol Use Disorder and Associated Disabilities Interview Schedule, which uses a number of questions regarding depressive symptoms experienced.

## Results

## Discussion

### Bivariate

- A chi-squared test showed that ~27% of participants with an alcoholic parent experienced depression in their lifetime, compared to ~14% for those without one ( $p < .05$ ).
- A bivariate logistic regression revealed that those who had at least 1 alcoholic parent have an expected odds of major lifetime depression that is 2.336 times higher than those who do not have an alcoholic parent.

### Multivariate

- Logistic regression analyses showed that those with an alcoholic mother (O.R. 2.15,  $P=0$ ) are slightly more likely to experience major lifetime depression than those with an alcoholic father (O.R. 2.01,  $P=0$ ).
- Those with both an alcoholic mother and father were most likely to experience depression, as their expected odds were 2.94 higher than those with no alcoholic parent.
- Sex was not found to be a significant moderator.

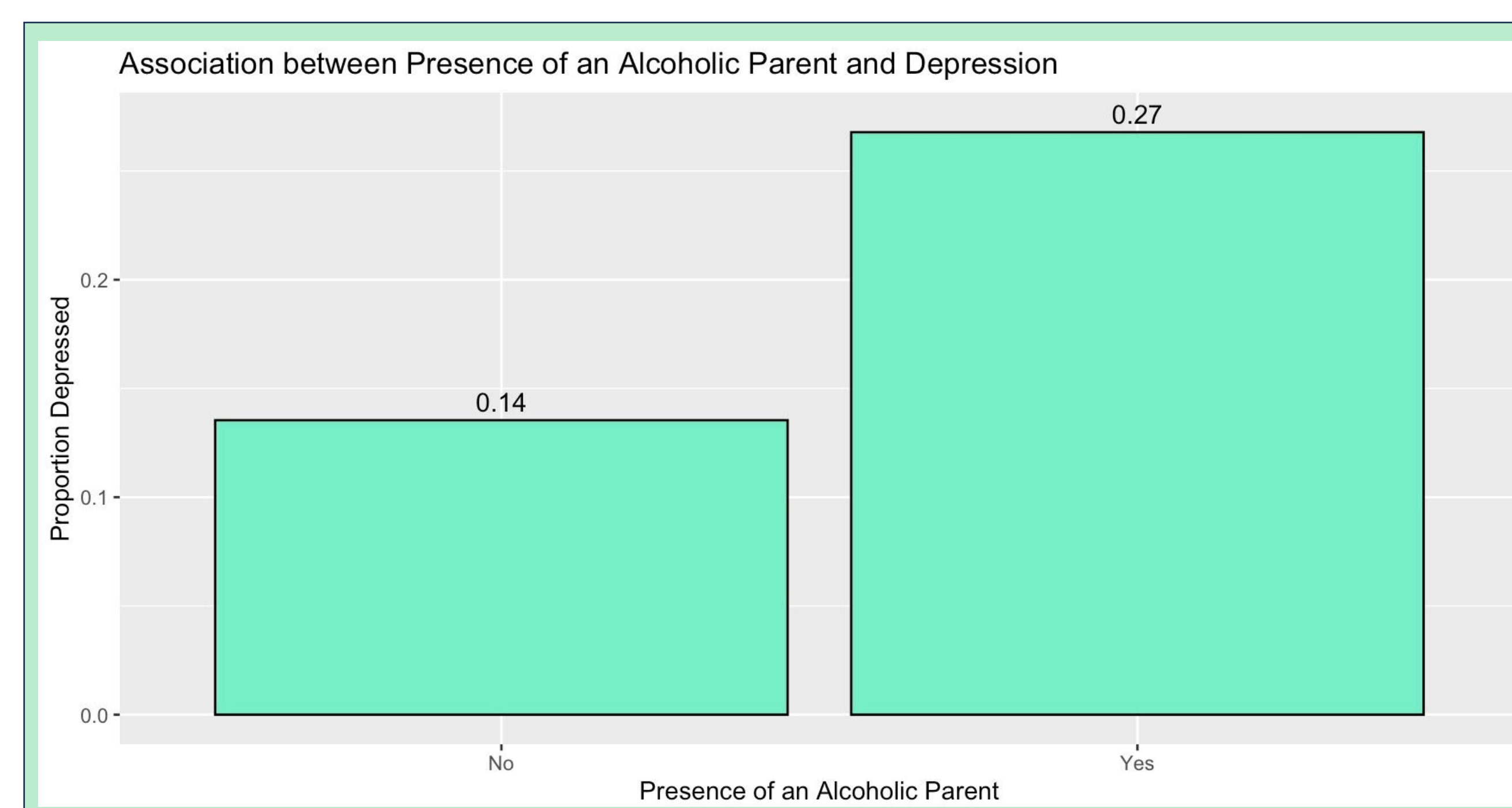


Figure 1: The Proportion of Participants Depressed and Presence of an Alcoholic Parent

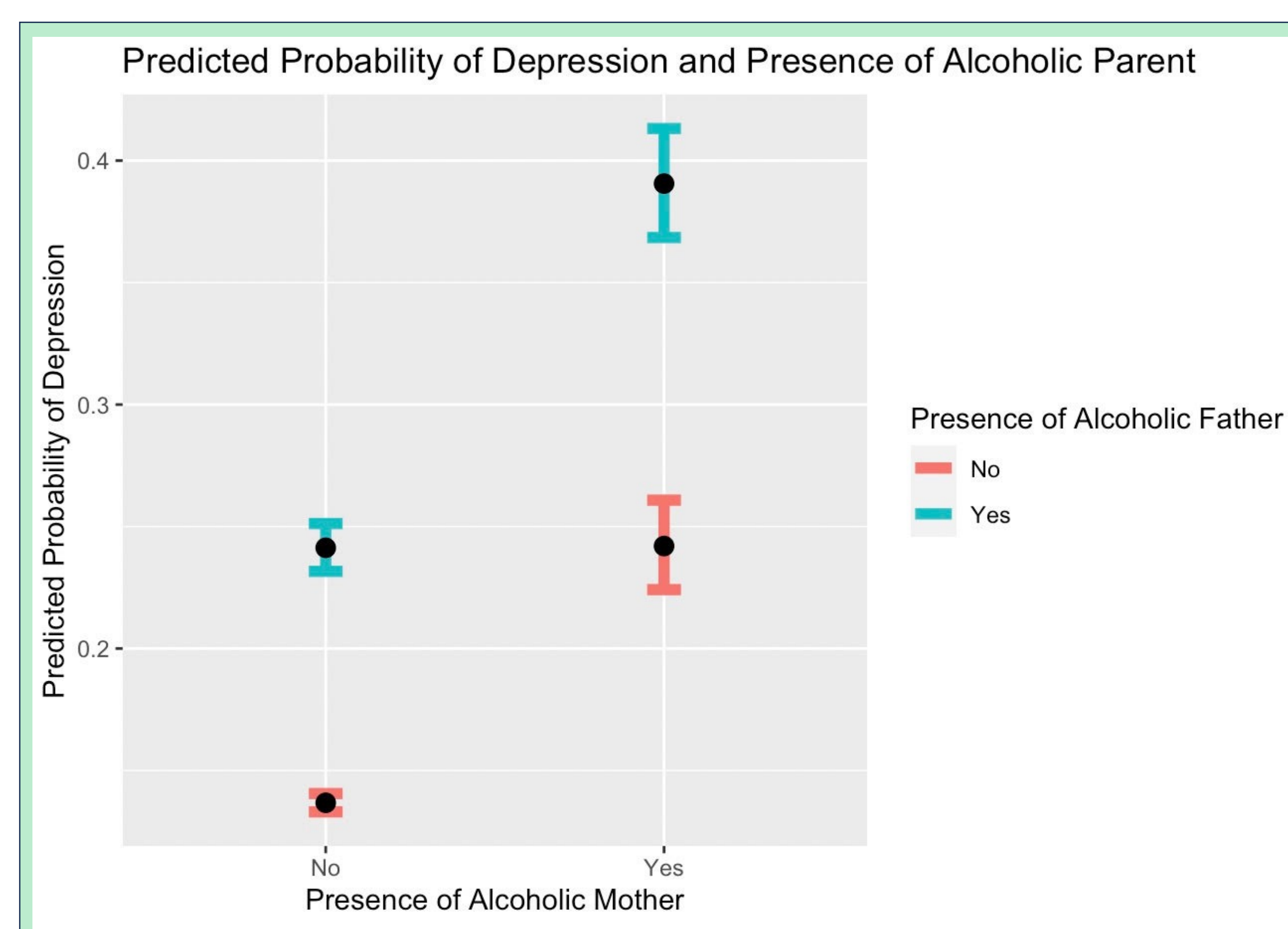


Figure 2: Predicted Probability of Depression and Presence of an Alcoholic Mother, Father, or Both

- Children of alcoholics seem to be significantly more likely to experience depression in their lifetime.
- Predicted risk of depression goes up marginally if the alcoholic parent is the mother and slightly more if both parents are alcoholic.
- There does not appear to be a relationship between the gender of the child, the alcoholic parent, and depression.
- Further steps might involve examining potential relationships between parental alcoholism and other mental illnesses in offspring, like ADHD and anxiety.

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