

“The little things aren’t as important as I once thought they were. When I get upset over things, I stop and tell myself, ‘Hey, I’m alive.’”

What is PTG?

Being diagnosed with cancer is a traumatic event that no one ever wishes to experience. Facing the possibility of death and undergoing exhausting treatments with a range of side effects may cause depression, anxiety and extreme stress in one’s life, affecting them significantly.

However, growing number of studies have shown that many survivors of trauma gain positive changes from their experience. This can include increased appreciation of life, strengthened relationships and greater religious beliefs. This is termed as **post-traumatic growth (PTG)**, which describes;

Positive changes that occur after one deeply reflects and ponders on a traumatic situation. This may take months to years of reflection which eventually produce positive transformations in one’s emotions, thoughts and possibly behaviours. ⁽¹⁾

Our aim

With increasing cancer incidence and advancements in medicine, more cancer patients now survive. This results in expanding studies on the survivors’ experiences and needs, spanning across different cancer types & population groups.

Our focus is to conduct a **scoping review**, which is a study examining the size and scope ⁽²⁾ of all the available published research on PTG in cancer survivors. Some questions that we seek to answer are:

- What **qualitative studies** have been published on this topic?
- How** were they carried out?
- What kind of **cancers** have been explored?
- Which **countries** have studies been done in?
- Are there any **common findings** from all these studies?

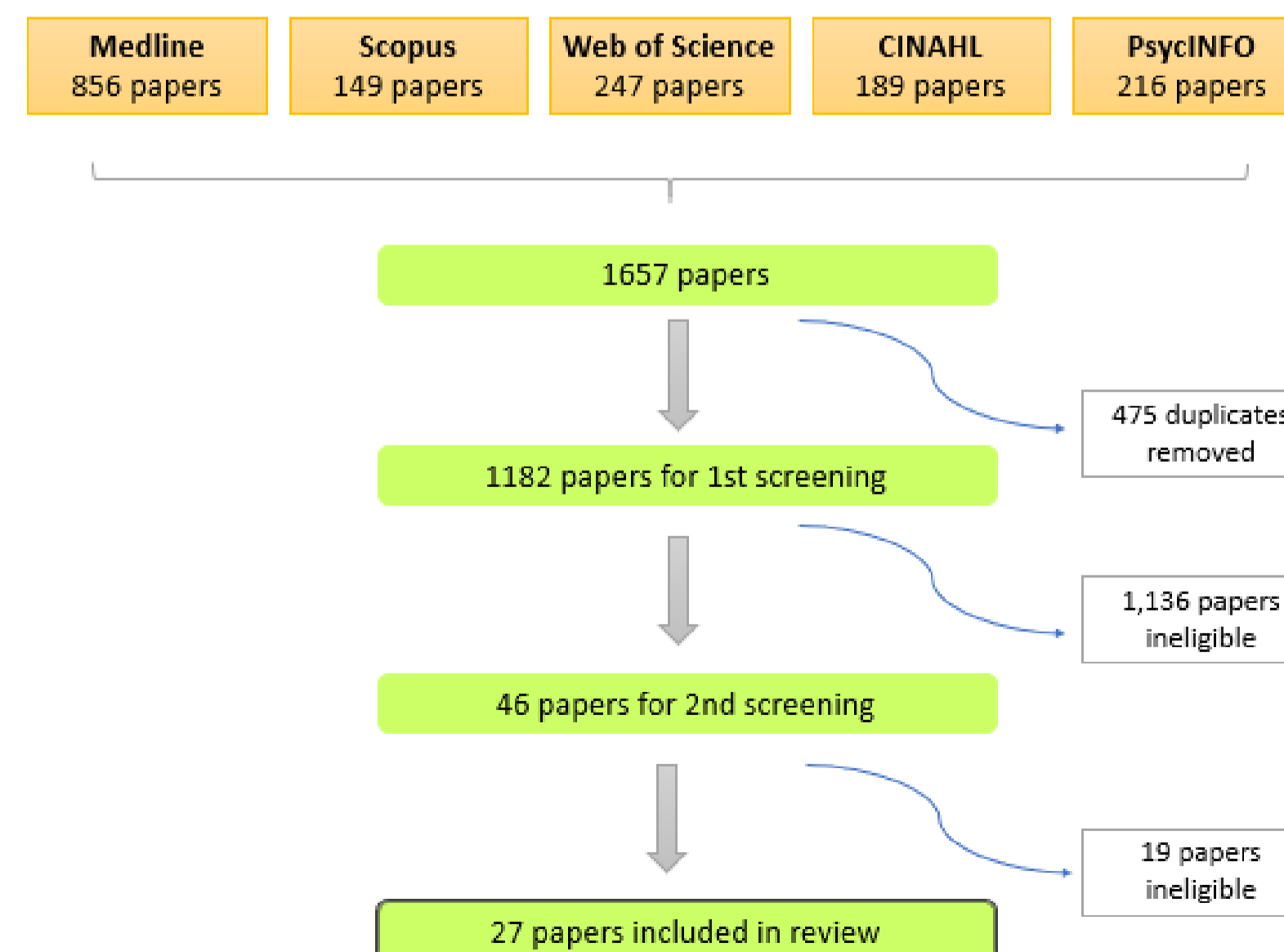
This review will give an idea to researchers on the **availability of evidence on PTG**, thus highlighting areas which lack data.



(2)

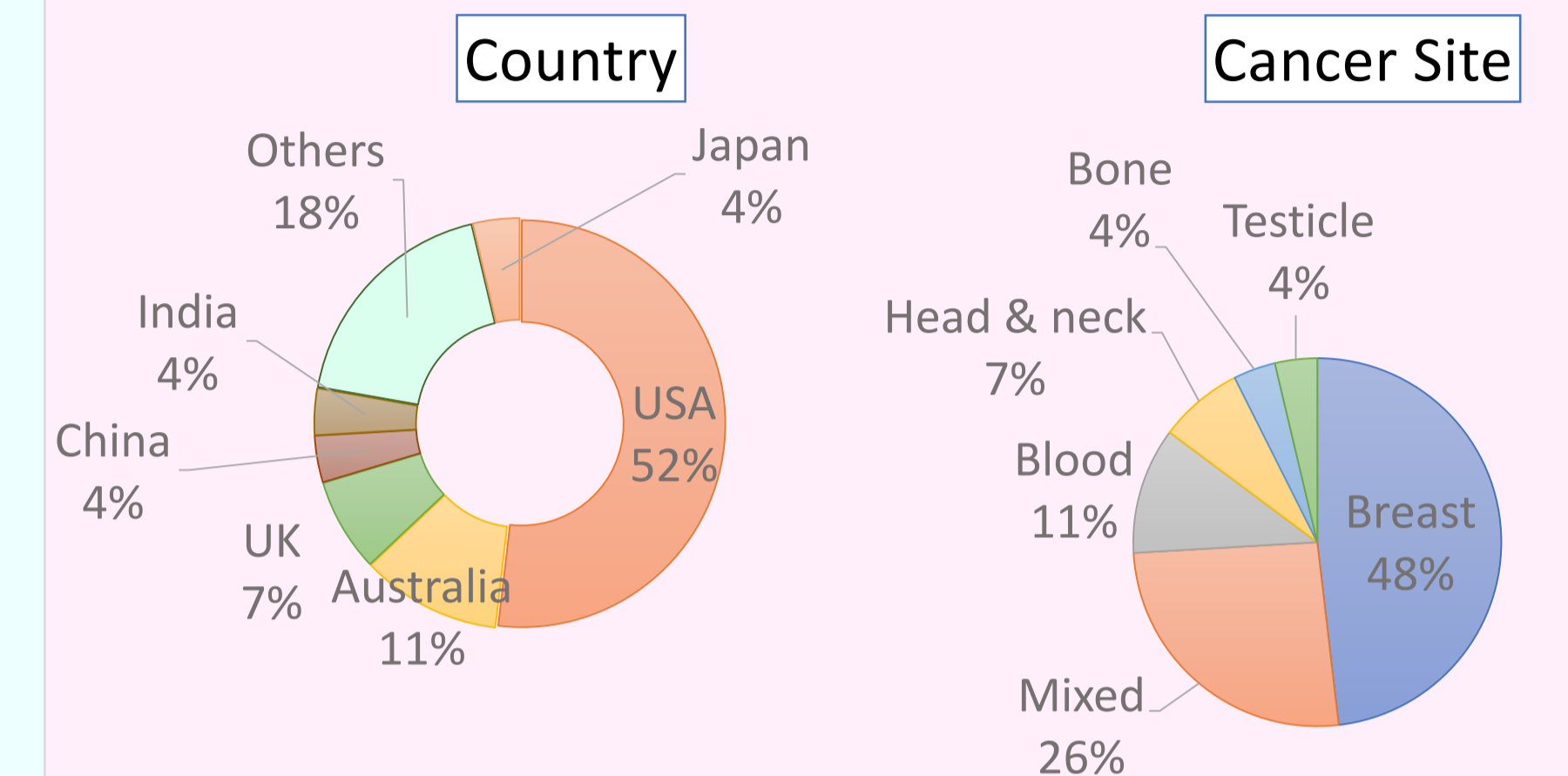
Methods

A systematic search strategy was developed. Five databases were accessed to find research papers that include keywords such as ‘post-traumatic growth’, ‘cancer’ and ‘survivorship’. Two reviewers (myself and Dr Menger) independently screened titles and abstracts to exclude papers that do not fit our set criteria. Figure below shows the steps taken. Advice were sought from a 3rd reviewer, Prof Sharp throughout the whole process.

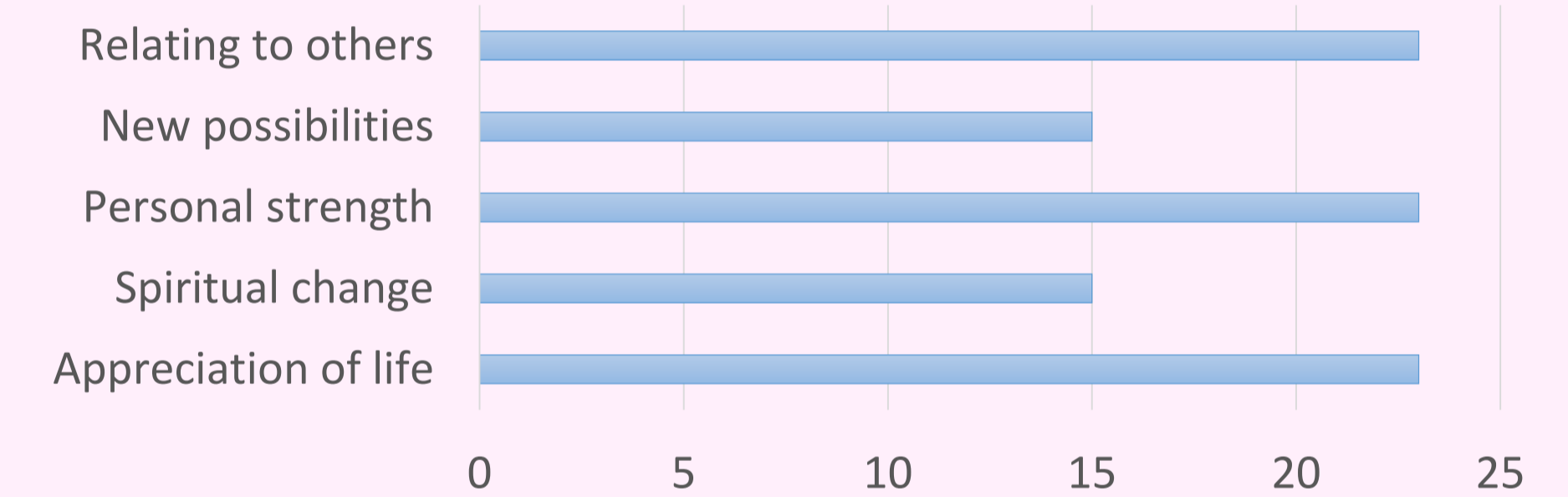


Full texts of all the 27 eligible publications were obtained. Details were gathered by reading through each of them. They were then analysed and presented in the ‘Results’ section.

Results & Conclusion



Growth Areas Identified



Charts above show the proportions of publications based on the cancer type, country of study, and aspects of growth survivors experienced. Studies on **breast cancer in women** make up almost half of the papers. Those studying mixed cancer types primarily include breast, prostate, bowel and blood cancers. Most researchers **interviewed** their participants as detailed information can be obtained directly from the survivor through interviews. Survivors reported growth in several life aspects, especially concerning **relationships, personal strength** and **life appreciation**.

From these data, we can conclude that more research needs to be done on this topic in various settings as PTG might differ across cultures and cancer types. The concept is also described using different terms across literature i.e benefit-finding. However, although most survivors gain positive life changes, they should not be made to feel this is expected, as the **distressing nature of cancer must still be acknowledged**.

References

1. Calhoun, L., Tedeschi, R.G. (2006) Handbook of posttraumatic growth: research and practice. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah.
2. Munn, Z., Peters, M.D.J., Stern, C., Tufanaru, C., McArthur, A., Aromataris, E. (2018) ‘Systematic review or scoping review? Guidance for authors when choosing between a systematic or scoping review approach’, *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, 18(143).
3. <https://www.exclusievsportcentra.nl/blog/fitness/wanneer-is-het-nu-voldoende/attachment/group-of-people-doing-yoga/#>