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## **An Illustrative Review of Protective Factors That Foster Resilience Among Refugee Populations**

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# An Illustrative Review of Protective Factors that Foster Resilience among Refugee Populations

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## Background

- Currently 70.8 million people worldwide have been forcibly displaced from their homes due to war, conflict, and persecution (UNHCR, 2019)
- If given the opportunity to resettle in a safer country, many refugees still tend to experience psychological distress, often as a result of acculturative stressors in their new community.
- An abundant amount of research has focused on these negative factors (e.g., trauma, stressors, and distress) that follows a refugees' path, but less work has concentrated on the protective factors that promote resilience.

## Aims/Goals

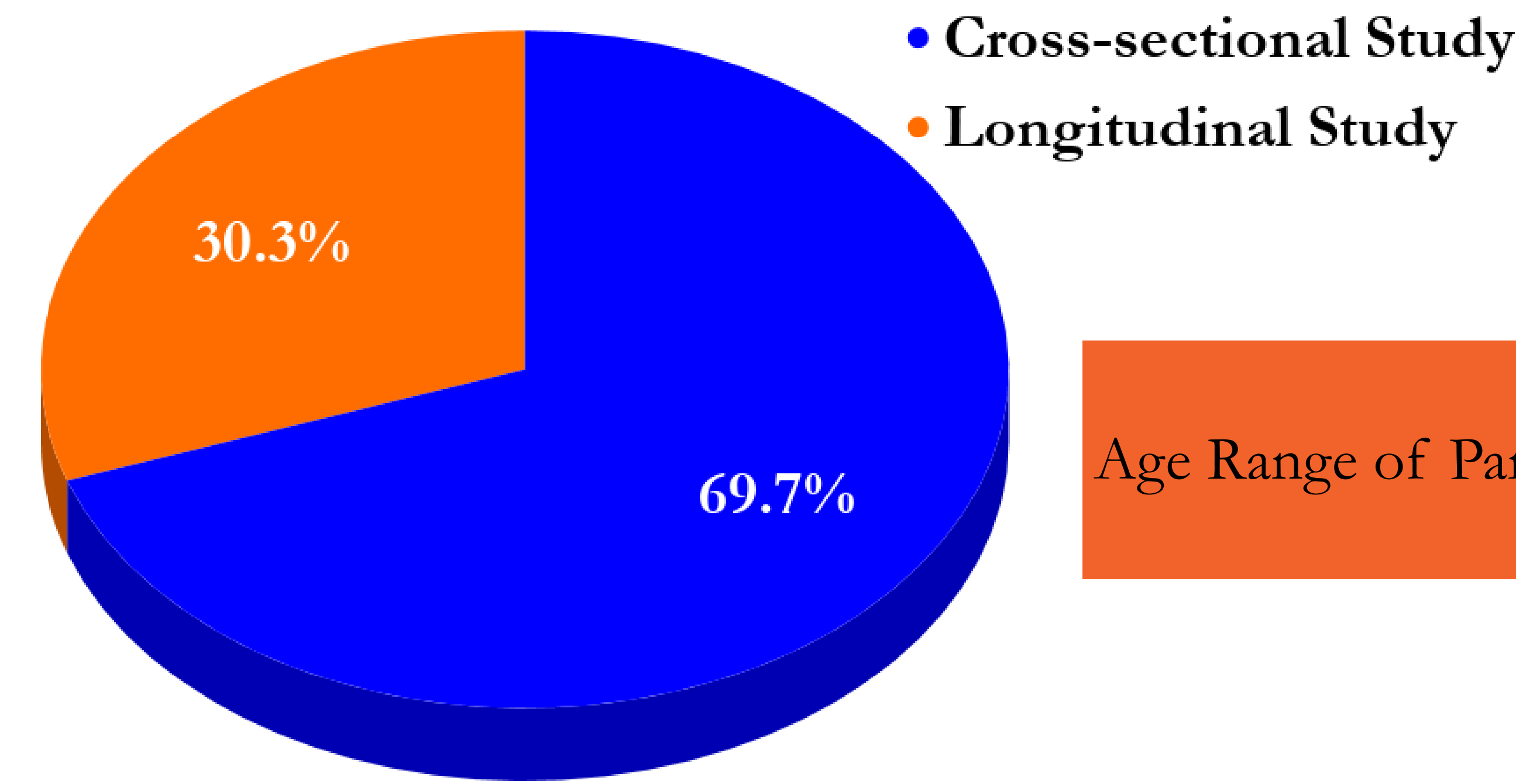
- Review existing empirical research on protective factors that promote resilience (or the ability to adapt to challenge: see Masten, 2018) during resettlement among refugees.
- We relied on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and a strengths-based approach to understand how protective factors in various ecologies promote resilience during resettlement despite past traumas and current resettlement stressors.

## Method & Analysis

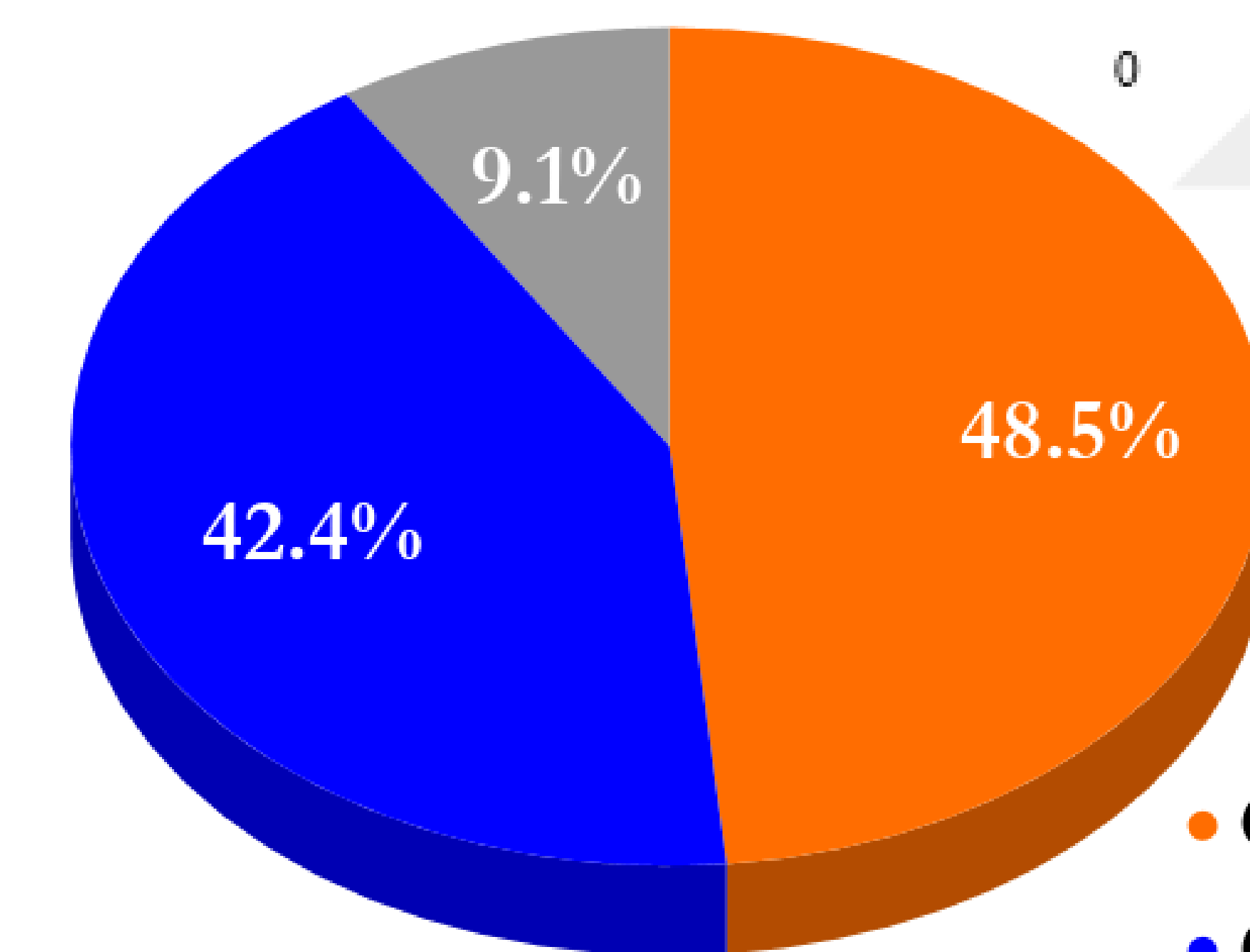
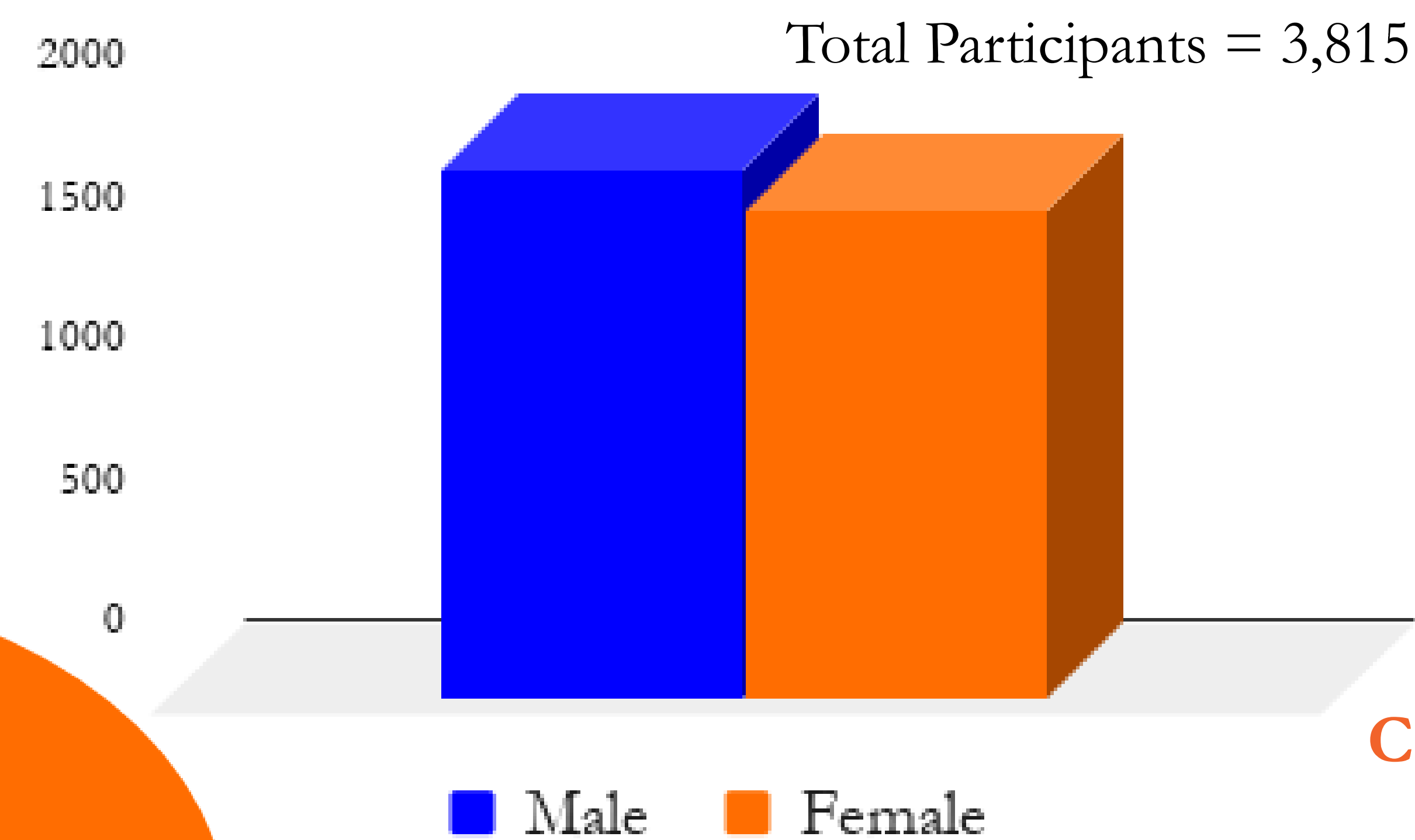
- We searched scholarly databases (e.g., PsycINFO) using relevant key words (e.g., refugee, protective factors, resilience, etc.) where refugees were assessed (e.g., interviewed; surveyed) during resettlement.
- We limited our search to peer-reviewed journals that were published from the year 2000 to present
- Thirty three (33) peer-reviewed articles were selected and reviewed.
- We created a table with participant characteristics, place of resettlement, variables (stress pathway of interest and protective factors), methodology used, and key findings for each study (available upon request).
- Protective factor variables included individual factors, family factors, and community.

## Contact & References

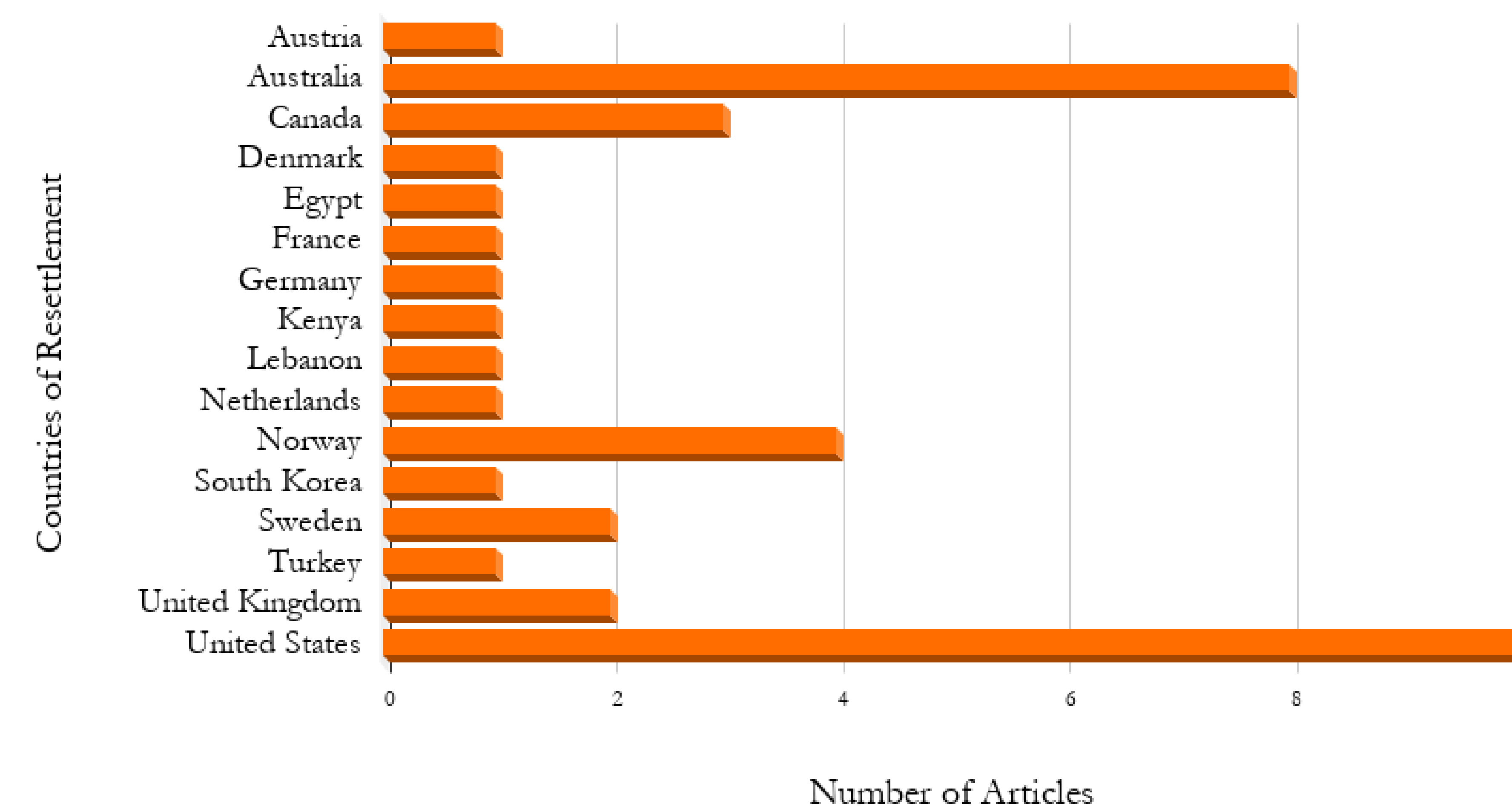
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Age Range of Participants = 1 month – 80 years



### Countries of Resettlement



## Key Findings

### Individual Protective Factor Themes

- Religion
  - Prayer was reported as a helpful method to overcome past trauma <sup>3,4,31</sup>
  - Participants reported that religiosity allowed them to gain a sense of control <sup>11,21</sup>
  - Participants reported religiosity as a valuable protective factor in a broad sense <sup>5,8,11</sup>
  - Resilience was related to reduced psychological distress <sup>1,18</sup>
- Commonly Measured Coping Strategies
  - Problem-focused coping <sup>3,10</sup>
  - Social support seeking <sup>3,7,10</sup>
  - Engagement (active) and disengagement (avoidant) <sup>9,15,23</sup>
  - Reflection and relaxation <sup>3</sup>
  - Cognitive reframing (positive thinking) <sup>11</sup>

### Community Protective Factor Themes

- School connectedness led to resilience and increased wellbeing <sup>12,13,28</sup>
- Involvement in athletic clubs led to a greater sense of belonging <sup>16,24</sup>
- Friendships led to a greater sense of belonging and led to other connections <sup>5,16</sup>
- Religiosity was reported to be a healthy community function <sup>4,26,30</sup>

### Family Protective Factor Themes

- Participants reported that the presence of family members was a source of emotional support <sup>8,21,30</sup>
- Family cohesion was significantly related to decreased depressive symptoms <sup>18</sup>
- Participants reported extended family members to be a helpful support system <sup>19,25</sup>

## Future Directions & Implications

- Longitudinal research designs focused on protective factors, strengths, and resilience of refugees.
- Empirical research of protective factors among resettled refugee populations are important so improvements can be made to policies and programs.