

## Quantifying Happiness

Here's a visual guide to how levels of happiness in life are determined, so you'll know how to work on improving your own.

### Are you happy? What does it mean to be happy?

Happiness is the intersection between relative fulfilment of your material needs and a sense of contentment about what you have. It is not about not wanting more but being aware of the value of what you already have.

#### What makes you happy?



Providing for family



Providing for parents



Taking time for self-care



No worries about finances

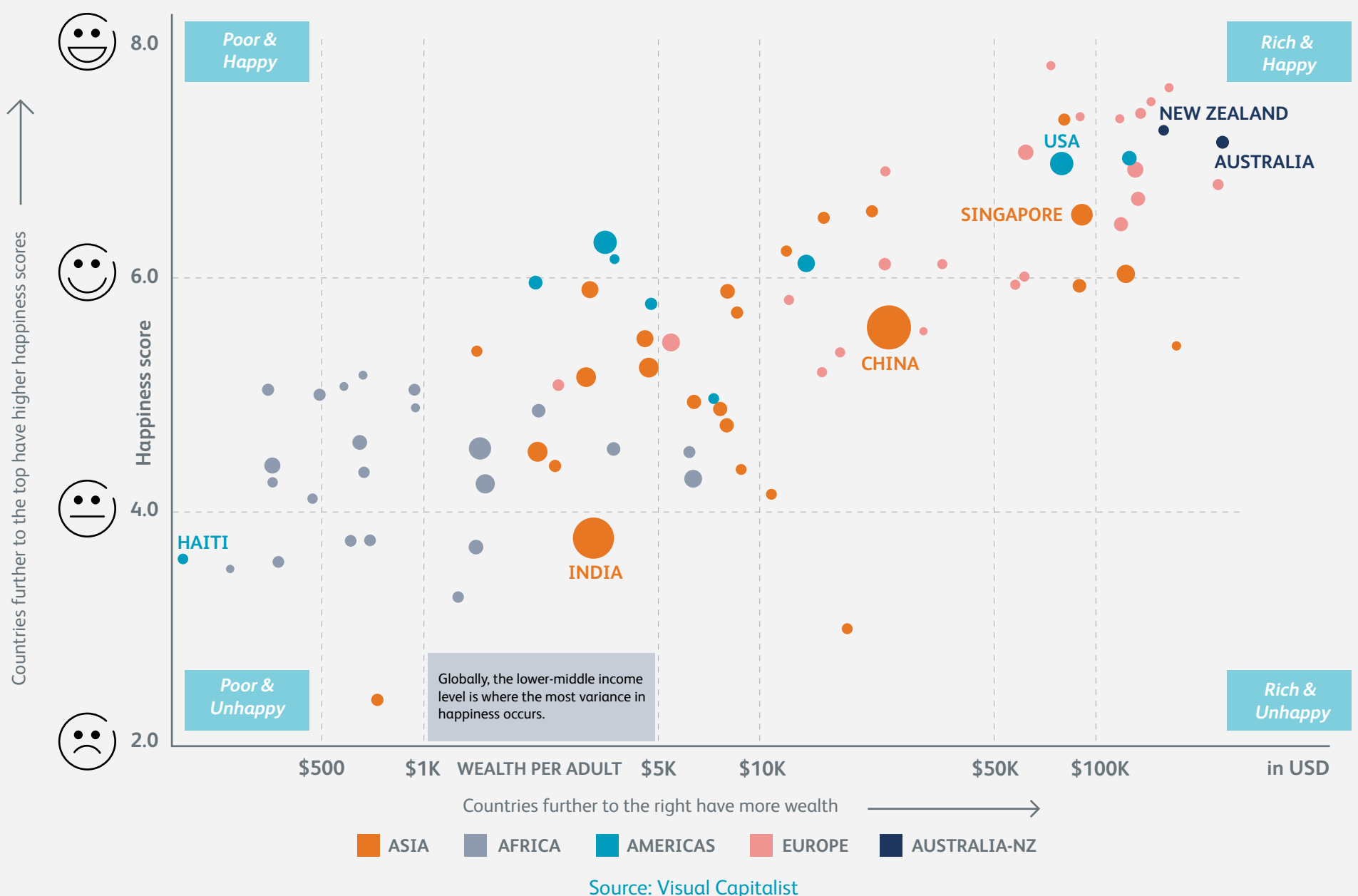


Sense of security

Broadly speaking, there are a few examples of metrics that can be used to measure this. Your age, where you live, or even your marital status. Here are some visual representations of happiness levels against time, space, and wealth.

#### A GLOBAL LOOK AT WEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Are richer countries also the happiest?

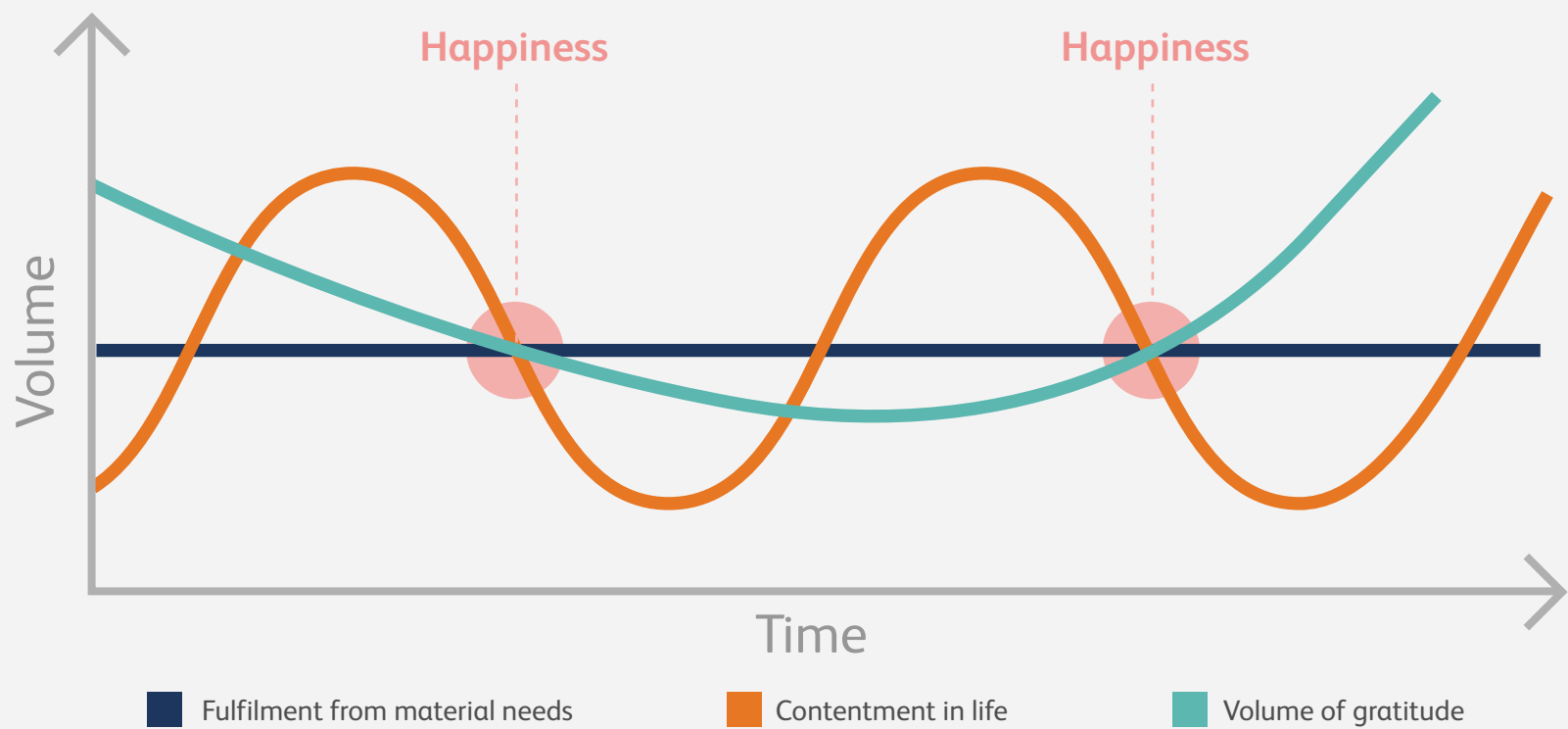


An inevitable fact about measuring happiness is that wealth largely determines the satisfaction any given individual feels about life, and you'll probably feel a lot happier if you're sure of your future. Maslow highlighted feeling safe<sup>1</sup> as the second tier of fulfilment in life. Things like investments, sufficient forward planning, etc. will help you in the financial aspect of things.

### How to pinpoint happiness on a graph?

To determine what your individual happiness rating is, you need to first know that happiness is relative to your own past experiences. It might not be helpful to compare with those around you. Happiness is the intersection of three variables: fulfilment from material needs, your level of contentment in life and the volume of gratitude you express<sup>2</sup>.

This is an example of how someone might create their own visual representation of their level of satisfaction in life.



A graph of fulfilment against volume with three fluctuating functions; material needs, gratitude<sup>3</sup> and contentment. The point at which the three functions intersect represents your level of happiness.

Source: How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain

### How can you influence your levels of happiness?

The two variables within your immediate influence are your levels of contentment and gratitude, so you might consider impacting those first. These are things that come from within, and you might consider practising being mindful of thoughts of discontent and feeling unfulfilled.

Gratitude is a muscle, and you have to work it often by expressing it internally as well as to those around you. Tell people how much you appreciate their presence in your life, for example. Or be thankful you get to eat your favourite meal when you do.

Deliberate expression of gratitude might feel awkward in the beginning, but it definitely helps you to be more positive about life in the long run!

<sup>1</sup>Abraham Maslow and the Hierarchy of Happiness - An Overview

<sup>2</sup>How Gratitude Changes You and Your Brain

<sup>3</sup>Giving thanks can make you happier - Harvard Health