



12B | Big Mac[®] Index

SPEAKING

- 1 Work in small groups. Discuss the questions.
 - What is the most popular fast food outlet in your country? Is it a local firm or a foreign firm? If it is local, do you know if it has outlets in other countries?
 - Is fast food relatively cheap in your country? Are there cheaper options if you want to buy a simple takeaway snack or meal?

READING

- 1 Read the article and answer the questions.
 - 1 What is the Big Mac[®] Index?
 - 2 What can it tell us?
 - 3 What are McWages?
 - 4 What do they show us?
- 2 Read the article again and answer the questions.
 - 1 In what way do Big Macs[®] vary around the world?
 - 2 On which continent are they a) more expensive b) less expensive?
 - 3 Where are the workers paid the best wages?
- 3 Find these expressions in the article and explain what they mean.

1 globalization	3 cost of living
2 currency rates	4 purchasing power
- 4 Do you think the Big Mac[®] Index gives a real indication of cost of living and purchasing power? Why or why not? What do you think it might show about your country?

The BIG MAC[®] Index



The Big Mac[®] is a powerful symbol of globalization.

You can buy it all over the world. From New York to Beijing. From Rio to Rome. There are local variations which depend on the local culture. In India, for example, the top-selling burger is made with chicken. In Australia it has less fat and fewer calories than burgers of the same name which are sold in the US. In some countries it is one of the cheapest fast food options. In other countries it's an expensive meal that is eaten mainly by tourists. And in the world of global economics, it is used to compare various economic factors around the world.

The original Big Mac[®] Index was created by *The Economist* in 1986. It compares the difference in price between Big Mac[®] burgers in different countries. The index is used to compare currency rates and the cost of living in different parts of the world. It is a very simple comparison which is effective and interesting. In 2011 the most expensive burgers were sold in Switzerland and the cheapest (in dollars) in South Africa.

A second index compares the wages of workers who work for the franchise in different countries (McWages). The differences in this index are much bigger and allow economists to calculate a 'Big Mac[®] per hour' wage index. This index shows how long a worker needs to work for in order to buy a Big Mac[®] and compares people's purchasing power in different countries. In Tokyo the rate is ten minutes. In Nairobi it takes almost three hours.





GRAMMAR: relative clauses

We can join two sentences with a relative pronoun (*who, that, which*).

It's an expensive meal. It's mainly eaten by tourists.

*It's an expensive meal **that** is eaten mainly by tourists.*

We use *who* for people, *which* for things and *that* for both people and things.

The relative pronoun takes the place of *he, she, it* or *they*.

*A second index compares the wages of workers **who** they work for the franchise.*

▶ SEE LANGUAGE REFERENCE PAGE 124

1 Replace *that* in the following sentences with *who* or *which*.

- 1 An arrancino is a ball of fried rice **that** has melted cheese in the middle.
- 2 People **that** are looking for a tasty Sunday morning breakfast often buy churros (fried sticks of dough) to eat with a strong cup of coffee.
- 3 A traditional way to start the day is to eat a bowl of hot soup **that** is served with rice or noodles.
- 4 People **that** work in offices often eat a sandwich lunch at their desk.
- 5 Food stands **that** sell hot food on the street often serve their food on banana leaves.
- 6 The cheapest snacks are fresh breadsticks **that** are made in the shape of the number eight.

2 Match the examples of local fast food in exercise 1 to the countries in the box.

India Italy Spain Thailand Turkey UK

3 Write answers to the questions using *who, which* or *that*.

- 1 What are the cheapest freshly-cooked foods you can buy in the street in your country?
- 2 Who usually buys and eats these foods?

4 Three of these sentences have a word which should not be there. Cross out the unnecessary words.

- 1 International fast food is a luxury in those countries that they have low wages.
- 2 Local food options which are sold on the street are usually very cheap.
- 3 People who they sell food on the street usually work very long hours.
- 4 The staff that work in fast food stores usually earn a very low wage.
- 5 The price of a simple snack which it can be bought on the street is a good indicator of the cost of living.

5 Are the sentences in exercise 4 true for your country? Why or why not?

6 Join the sentences to make one sentence with a relative clause.

- 1 KFC™ is an American fast food franchise. It sells fried chicken.
- 2 Starbucks™ is a world famous chain. It owns coffee shops all over the world.
- 3 Fast food is typically eaten by young customers. They don't want to spend a lot of money on food.

SPEAKING

1 You are going to talk about an international fast food chain that operates in your country. Before you speak, choose a franchise and prepare your answers to these questions.

- 1 Where can the outlets usually be found?
- 2 Who usually eats there?
- 3 How do the prices compare with local food restaurants?
- 4 What is the general attitude to the franchise in your country?

2 Describe the franchise to the other students in the class and listen to their descriptions.

3 Are international food franchises generally popular in your country? Why or why not?