

"Third's the Word" - Which was a better deal?



In 1972 McDonalds introduced the Quarter-pounder burger. It was a huge success.

In the early 1980's, A&W tried to compete with McDonalds by offering a better tasting burger. They advertised the new burger with this slogan, "third's the word". Instead of being a quarter-pound burger it was a third-pound burger. To be competitive, the two burgers cost the same.

1. Their prices were the same so who's burger is the better deal giving you more meat for the buck?
2. Convince me of your answer to question #1 with a diagram, pictures or explanations.
3. Why might consumers get confused over which burger was greater in size, the $\frac{1}{3}$ - pound A&W burger or the $\frac{1}{4}$ - pound McDonalds burger?

Well, it turned out that customers preferred the taste of our fresh beef over traditional fast-food hockey pucks. Hands down, we had a better product. But there was a serious problem. More than half of the participants in focus groups questioned the price of our burger. "Why," they asked, "should we pay the same amount for a third of a pound of meat as we do for a quarter-pound of meat at McDonald's? You're overcharging us." Honestly. People thought a third of a pound was less than a quarter of a pound. After all, three is less than four! - From [Threshold Resistance](#) by Alfred Taubman, who owned A&W in the 80s.

4. Think about the fact that over half the people in the study thought $\frac{1}{4}$ was greater? What if any of the kids in your class, school or family thought that $\frac{1}{4}$ was greater than $\frac{1}{3}$, how many people is that in each case?

5. If there were 250,000,000 people in the U.S. at that time then, using the same ratio, about how many U.S. citizens might have thought $\frac{1}{4}$ was greater than $\frac{1}{3}$?
6. How many of the $\frac{1}{3}$ - pound A&W burgers or the $\frac{1}{4}$ - pound McDonalds' burgers do you need of each to have an equivalent amount of burger?

Sources: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/magazine/why-do-americans-stink-at-math.html>
<https://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2014/07/great-third-pound-burger-ripoff/>