



Kazakhstan App-Based Delivery Work in 2026

Measuring the impact of Courier Partner reclassification on local commerce, job opportunities and consumer prices.

About this Report

Pragmatic Policy Group (PPG) was commissioned by Wolt to independently estimate the impact on app-based workers in Kazakhstan if they are reclassified as traditional employees, as well as the economic consequences for Kazakhstan's merchants and consumers.

Pragmatic Policy Group

PPG is an independent economic research agency which models the impact on the economy of various legislative and regulatory scenarios.

PPG is particularly focused on the unintended consequences of government policies for the most vulnerable members of the community.

We use advanced analytical techniques and industry experience to forecast the impact of regulations, share evidence-based insights and help inform strategic decisions.



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1 Introduction

The app-based delivery sector in Kazakhstan has emerged as a significant source of flexible income, small business revenue, and essential consumer services. Individuals engage in platform-based delivery to earn income on their own terms, while merchants, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), leverage these platforms to reach customers and increase sales.

The online food and grocery delivery markets in Kazakhstan are expected to continue expanding steadily, supported by digital adoption and shifting consumer preferences. From 2025 to 2030, revenues for the online food delivery industry are expected to grow by **14.6%** annually.¹

As international policy debates on platform work evolve, countries including Kazakhstan are reassessing how app-based work should be regulated. A central question in these discussions is whether delivery partners should continue to operate as independent contractors or be reclassified as traditional employees, with significant implications for flexibility, costs, and worker protections.

This report uses quantitative modelling techniques to assess the potential economic impact of the regulation. **Our results show that reclassifying Courier Partners² as traditional employees will negatively impact consumers, local commerce, and workers in Kazakhstan.**

¹ [Online Food Delivery - Kazakhstan | Market Forecast](#)

² Individuals who provide delivery services via app-based platforms as independent contractors.



We estimate four main negative effects – specifically:

1

The prices consumers pay for app-based delivery services could increase by **37%–50%**, disproportionately affecting low- and middle-income households.

2

Higher prices could reduce customer demand for local commerce by **₸48–140 billion** (in annual revenue losses), especially for SMEs which are the backbone of Kazakhstan’s economy and which many families depend on for their livelihood.

3

38,000–46,000 earning opportunities¹ will likely be eliminated (**71–85%** of those currently available) at any given point in time, and thereby reducing annual workers’ earnings by **₸13–37 billion**. In particular:

- There will be fewer flexible working opportunities for people who can’t commit to the inflexible nature of traditional employment, such as the elderly, people with reduced mobility, and students, and
- Platforms will likely be forced to consolidate available working hours among a smaller number of workers.

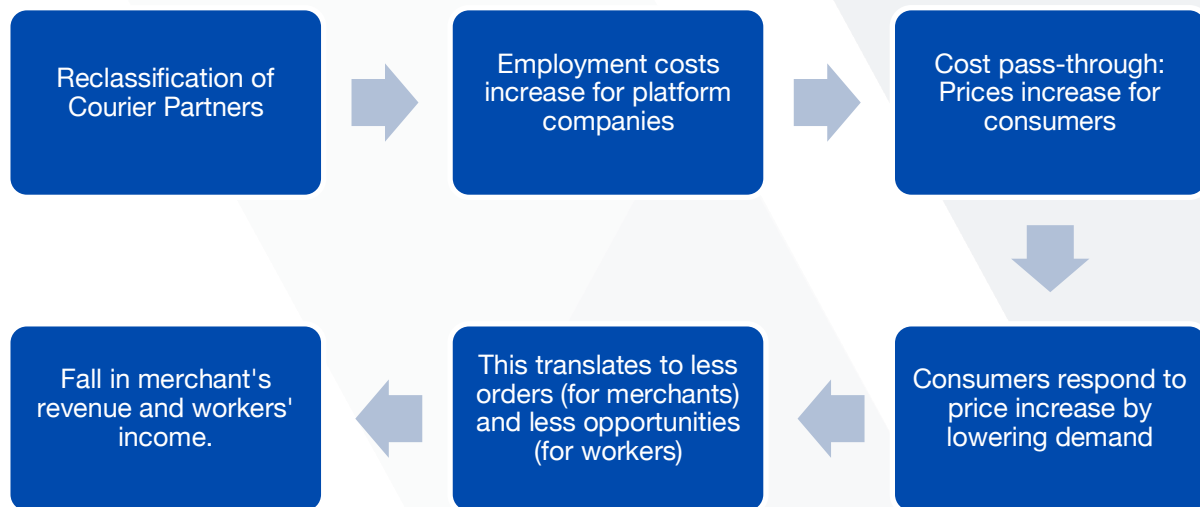
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Government tax revenue will likely drop by **₸700 million–2.1 billion** from business earnings (CIT), reducing public funds available for programs and infrastructure.

³ The number of income-earning slots supported by the total delivery hours available in the industry, based on current average participation levels.

The conceptual logic of the model we have applied is visualized in Figure 1. For more technical details on our methodology, refer to the Appendix section.

Figure 1. Economic Modelling Conceptual Logic



Our report is also informed by a high-quality survey conducted by an independent third party, Copenhagen Economics, capturing the views of Kazakhstan's app-based delivery workers. It underscores the critical role of flexible work.

Over half of surveyed couriers (55%) cite the ability to start or stop work at any moment as the key benefit of delivering on app-based platforms (50%) and flexibility in choosing weekly hours (49%). A substantial share values flexibility to care for family members (46%) and the ability to be their own boss (39%). Taken together, the results show that flexibility is the primary value proposition of app-based delivery work for workers in Kazakhstan.⁴

Additionally, local businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, consider platform services as a crucial channel for expanding market access and

growing revenue. According to a survey of merchants conducted in 23 countries in Europe, at least **one in three** merchants state that they would not operate an online business without access to delivery platform services.⁵

The availability of flexible platform work is especially valuable for groups often underserved by the labour market, such as people with limited access to traditional employment and individuals balancing work with caregiving and other family responsibilities. For many, platform work serves as a critical income supplement. Removing flexibility by mandating employee status would significantly reduce the participation and earnings potential of app-based delivery work for the people who need it most.

Kazakhstan's unemployment rate has remained stable in the past few years, from **4.9%** in January 2020 to **4.6%** throughout 2025.⁶ Against this backdrop,

⁴ Copenhagen Economics. 2024. Survey of Courier Partners — Kazakhstan

⁵ Norstat, 2023, Survey of Merchant Partners

⁶ Kazakhstan Unemployment Rate (1991-2024)

it is important to ensure that new rules around platform work support continued labour market inclusion, especially for groups that value or rely on flexible earning opportunities.

Equally important, local enterprises in Kazakhstan heavily depend on digital platforms to sustain and grow their operations. Constraints on platform operations would limit these important economic opportunities for local businesses.

The continued ability of workers to operate independently, and of businesses to leverage platform technology, is an important driver of Kazakhstan's digital economy. As regulatory frameworks evolve, it will be important to balance worker protections with the flexibility and innovation that platform-based models enable.

The following sections of this report explain how we estimate the economic impacts of forced reclassification on Kazakhstan's consumers, local businesses and workers.

2 Impact of Reclassification on Consumer Prices and Demand

Our modeling indicates that if Kazakhstan were to mandate the reclassification of app-based Courier Partners as employees, the prices paid by consumers for delivery services would rise significantly, between **37%** and **50%**.⁷



37-50%

Rise in consumer prices

Prices are likely to rise by **37-50%** for customers of app-based delivery.

When the prices of app-based delivery services increase, consumers will likely use those services less often and instead prefer to buy cheaper alternative goods and services that are not impacted by those price increases.

The extent to which higher prices reduce consumer purchases is captured by the price elasticity of demand. Drawing on established academic research, including studies by Beacon Economics⁸ and Berkeley Research Group⁹, we apply a range of demand elasticity estimates:

- A conservative assumption of **-0.55** elasticity based on research in Massachusetts. This would mean that for every 1% increase in prices, consumers will order 0.55% less. Consumers don't adjust their spending as much in this less aggressive scenario, so the impact on demand and work opportunities will be smaller.
- A higher elasticity estimate of **-1.2** (i.e., for every 1% increase in prices, customers will order 1.2% fewer services). This assumption was also used by economists who supported employment-like protections for rideshare workers in New York City.¹⁰

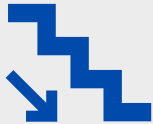
⁷ We describe our methodology for estimating price increase in the appendix, but our fundamental premise is that we have assumed that reclassified workers will require the same net earnings as before.

⁸ T Osman, Beacon Economics, how many app-based jobs would be lost by converting rideshare and food delivery drivers from independent contractors into employees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: February 2022

⁹ D Lewin, W Hamm, M Kim, Berkeley Research Group, Analysis of driver jobs if gig economy companies must reclassify drivers as employees rather than independent contractors: May 2020.

¹⁰ Parrott JA, Reich M. An earnings standard for New York city's app-based drivers. New York: The New School: Center for New York City Affairs. 2018 Jul.

We multiply the projected consumer price increase of **37–50%** by the price elasticity of demand of between **-0.55** and **-1.2** to estimate a **21–60%** decline in customer demand for app-based delivery service (Figure 2).

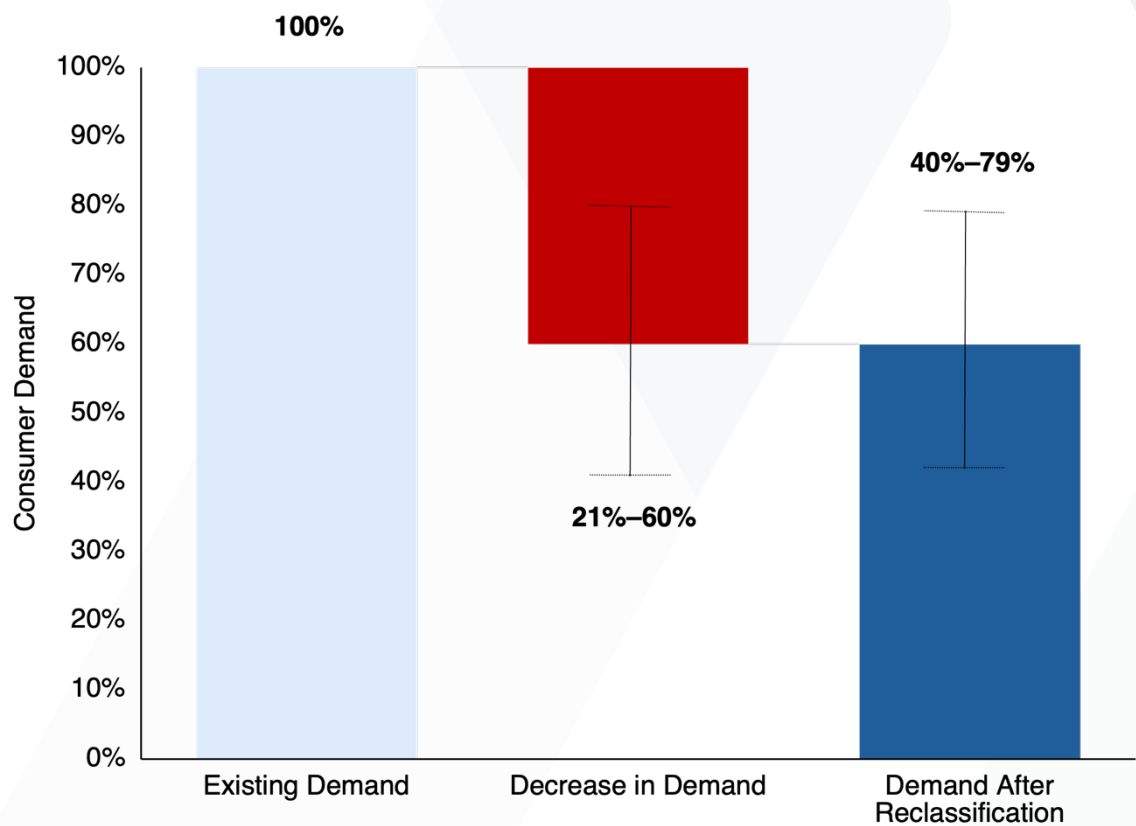


21-60%

Lower consumer demand for app-based delivery services:

We project a fall of **21–60%** in consumer demand for app-based delivery services due to large price increases for consumers.

Figure 2. Consumer demand declines by 21% to 60%



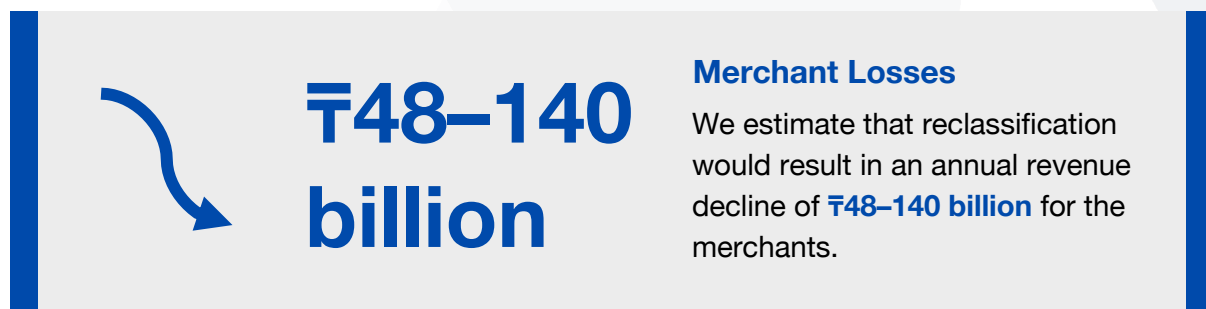
3 Merchants Lose Business

In Kazakhstan, SMEs constitute around **99.9%** of all enterprises, contribute up to **45.5%** of total employment, and account for approximately **40%** of the country's economic value added.¹¹ These merchants rely heavily on app-based delivery to reach new customers, increase their and compete with large ecommerce platforms.

Using industry data, we estimate that about **646,000** orders are expected to be placed via app-based delivery platforms every week in Kazakhstan in 2026.

Assuming an average annual growth rate of **14.6%**¹² over the next five years for the app-based delivery industry in Kazakhstan, annual revenues for merchants are likely to exceed **₸406 billion** by 2030.¹³

However, if Courier Partners are reclassified as employees, the decline in demand of 37–50% would represent an annual revenue decline of **₸48–140 billion** for merchants (Figure 3). By 2030, merchants' annual revenues could decline by **₸83–242 billion** as a result of reclassifying Courier Partners from independent contractors to employees.¹⁴



This decrease in demand could significantly impact the revenue of local businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which account for the majority of total employment.

Merchant losses will translate into a loss of tax revenue for Kazakhstan's government. Based on modeled revenue losses between **₸48–140 billion** annually, and assuming Kazakhstan's standard CIT rate of **20%**¹⁵, we estimate **₸0.7–2.1 billion** in annual tax revenue losses.¹⁶

¹¹ [Kazakhstan's SME Sector Reaches New Economic Milestones - The Astana Times](#)

¹² [Online Food Delivery - Kazakhstan | Market Forecast](#)

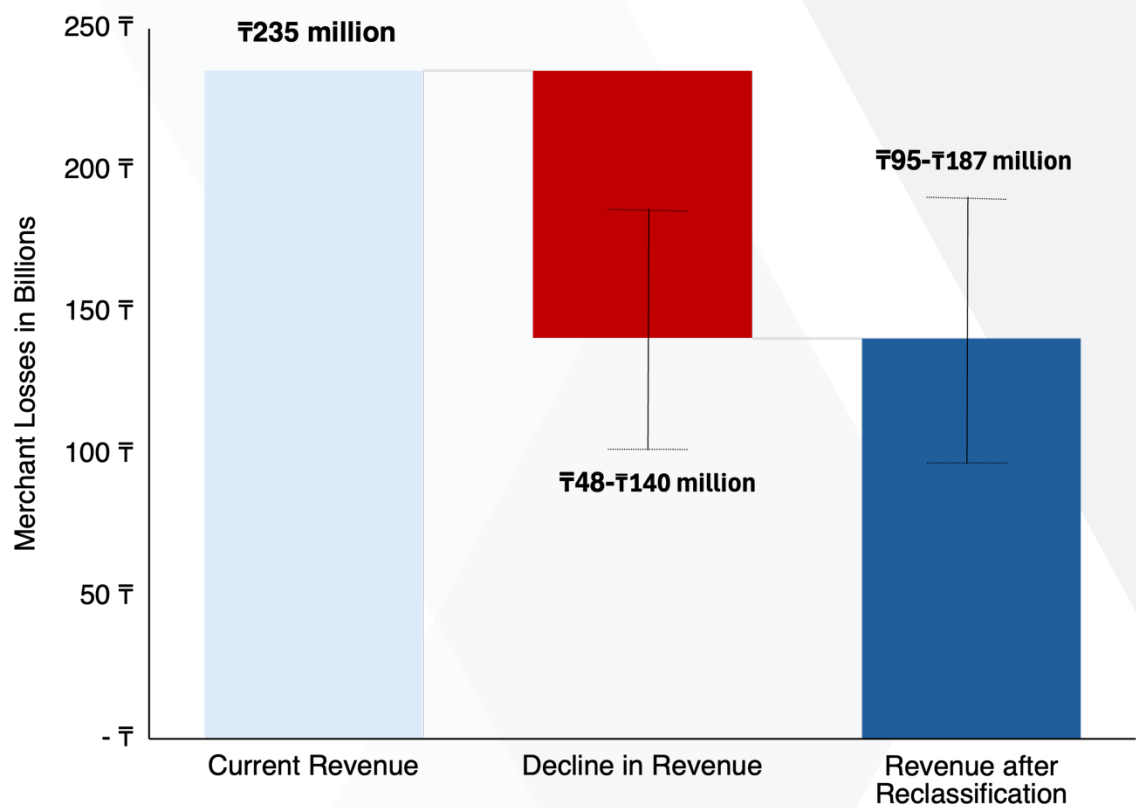
¹³ Projected Revenue = 235 billion * (1 + CAGR) ^ 4

¹⁴ Projected Drop = Projected Revenue – [(Base Decline * (1 + CAGR) ^ 4)], where Base Decline is 48–140 billion.

¹⁵ Kazakhstan - Corporate - Taxes on corporate income

¹⁶ Explanation of the calculation of CIT losses is mentioned in the Appendix.

Figure 3. Merchants could lose revenue by ₸48–140 billion





4 Decline in Worker Hours and Earnings

Courier Partners are drawn to app-based delivery work primarily because of the high degree of flexibility it offers. They value the autonomy to choose when, where, and for how long they work – without needing to commit to fixed shifts or seek approval for time off. This independence allows them to accept or decline orders freely, work across multiple platforms, and structure their schedules around other personal or professional commitments such as education, caregiving, or secondary jobs.

Our analysis and model focus on the concept of ‘engaged time’, that is, the period during which Courier Partners are actively completing a delivery or are en route to collect one from a merchant. We consider engaged or delivery time a more accurate reflection of the time Courier Partner devotes to delivery work than simply looking at total time logged into the app. There are two main reasons for this distinction.

First, Courier Partners work on multiple platforms simultaneously which means they could be spending time online on more than one platform or even using one platform while completing deliveries for another one. Adding together the amount of time spent on all platforms would overstate their true engagement levels.

Secondly, many Courier Partners remain online even when they are not engaged in tasks, often using that time for other

activities. For example, around **18%** report using the time to answer emails and phone calls; about **6%** of Courier Partners run personal errands like grocery shopping and driving family members; **9%** use non-active periods for personal activities like listening to music, podcasts and watching TV, and some even using the time to study.

Given this flexible use of platform availability, total logged-in time would overstate actual working hours. Therefore, using delivery time provides a more accurate and policy-relevant measure of platform-based work effort.

We find that Courier Partners, on average, make around **₸3,045** after expenses¹⁷ for every hour they deliver. The minimum gross hourly wage in Kazakhstan currently stands at approximately **₸531.25**¹⁸, meaning that Courier Partners earn six times as much as the statutory minimum on a per-hour basis.

When app-based delivery platforms receive fewer orders, workers will have fewer hours to work and will collectively earn less.

Based on our analysis of industry data, we estimate that app-based delivery workers are expected to contribute some **392,000** hours of work per week across platforms in Kazakhstan in 2026. If customer demand for delivery services declines in response to higher prices

¹⁷ Cornell University authors found that app-based workers’ expenses average 10% of their gross earnings. L Hyman, et. al (2020). [Platform driving in Seattle](#).

¹⁸ “[The statutory minimum wage in Kazakhstan is KZT 85,000 per month, typically 531.25 KZT per hour.](#)” | [Playroll](#)

resulting from the reclassification of workers as employees, the total number of working hours available in the industry would shrink significantly. Specifically, under the price elasticity scenarios of -0.55 to -1.2 and price increases of 37% to 50%, the sector could see a reduction of **80,000–234,000** working hours per week (Figure 4).

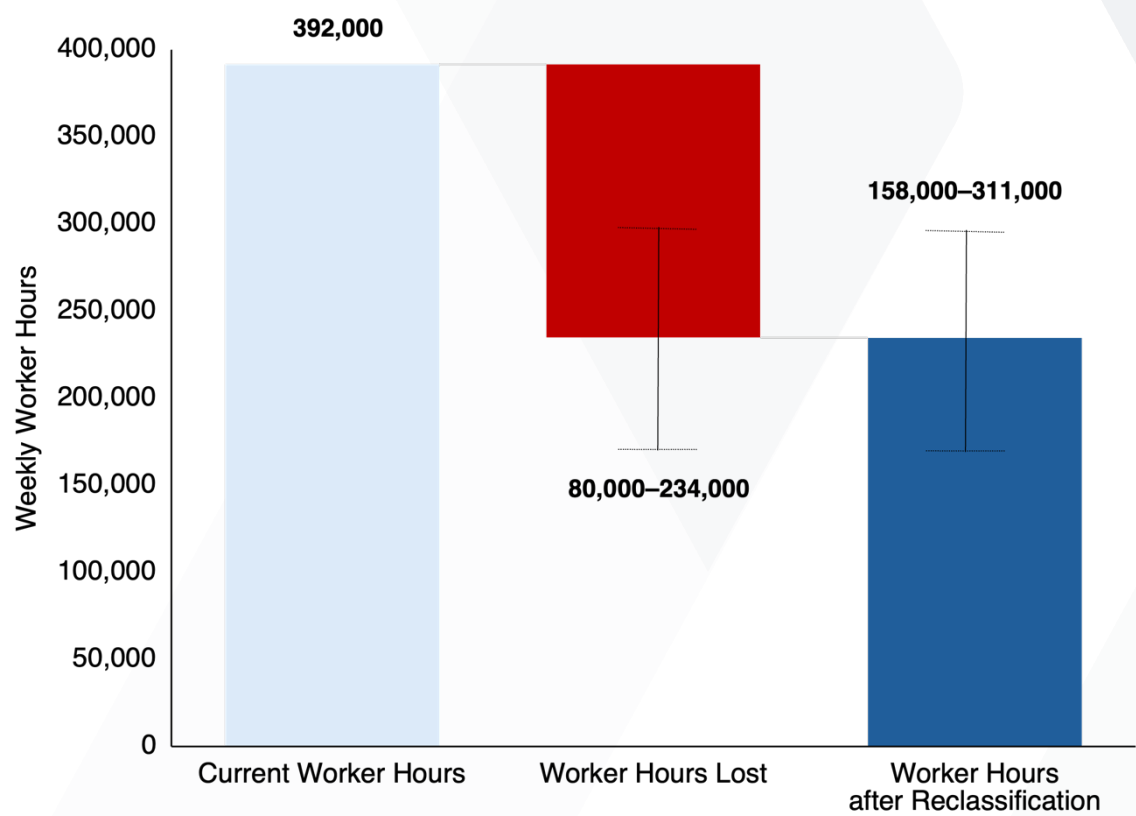


80,000 –
234,000

Fewer weekly
hours available

Total available work hours
could fall by **80,000–234,000**
hours per week.

Figure 4. Decline of up to 234,000 hours available for workers to work each week



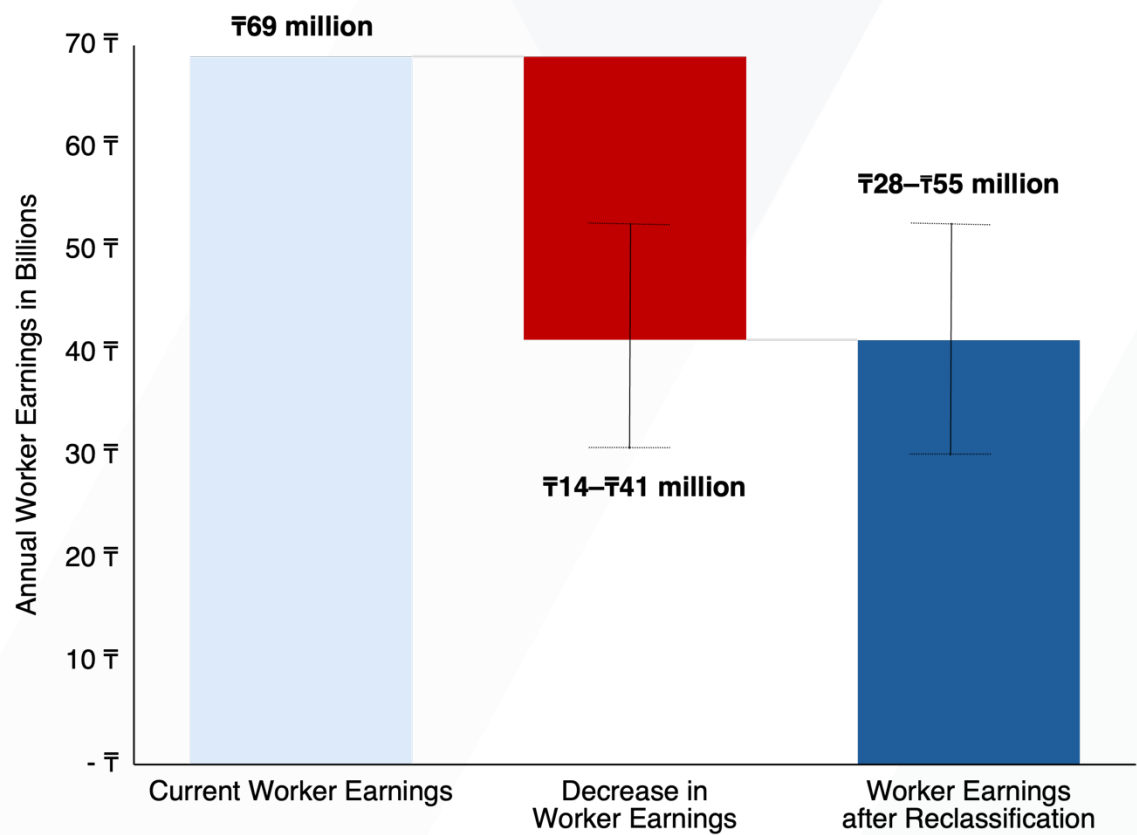
When work hours are lost, worker earnings decline

With a decline of 80,000–234,000 weekly hours over 52 weeks, this reduction would significantly decrease couriers’ earnings. With an average hourly earnings rate of ₸3,045 (net of expenses), the annual loss in total earnings for app-based workers (net of expenses) would amount to between ₸14 and 41 billion (Figure 5).

These losses are particularly concerning given that many couriers rely on this flexible work to support their households, supplement incomes, or balance multiple responsibilities. For example, when asked about their financial goals for engaging in delivery work, 59% of Courier Partners said they do so to support their families, 27% to generate savings, 44% to pay off debt, and 8% to finance their studies.¹⁹



Figure 5. Up to ₸41 billion in earnings lost annually (net of expenses)



¹⁹ Copenhagen Economics. 2024. Survey of Courier Partners — Kazakhstan. These figures reflect non-mutually exclusive responses, with many couriers selecting multiple financial goals.

5 Fewer Earnings Opportunities

Based on our estimated demand levels, we find that there are over **54,000** earnings opportunities available with app-based delivery platforms in Kazakhstan.²⁰ This is based on our estimate of the total number of delivery hours worked each week across industry, divided by the average number of delivery hours that workers currently choose to work (roughly 7.3 hours per week).

As shown earlier, the reclassification of app-based delivery workers is expected to increase consumer prices and thereby reduce demand. This will likely have significant consequences for the earnings opportunities available to Kazakhstan's citizens who rely on access to app-based delivery platforms to work flexibly and earn income.

Any loss of earning opportunities in the platform delivery sector due to reclassification could disproportionately affect a large number of workers who depend on platform income to meet their financial needs.

We model the impact of reclassification on earnings opportunities via **two channels**:

Initial loss due to lower demand

When prices rise, customers respond by lowering their demand for app-based delivery services, leading to fewer hours of work available for workers.

Our model suggests that weekly hours available for app-based workers will fall by 80,000–234,000 hours if workers are reclassified as employees. If app-based workers who are retained could continue to work around 7.3 hours of engaged time per week, there would be a loss of **11,000 to 32,000** earnings opportunities, which means a loss of **21–60%** of current earnings opportunities due to lower customer demand alone.

Secondary loss due to fixed schedules

Reclassifying app-based delivery workers as employees would take away the flexibility that enables them to earn money on their own terms. **49%** of Courier Partners say the flexibility to decide how many or how few hours to work in any given week is a benefit they could not get from other earnings opportunities. **50%** agree that app-based delivery work gives them the freedom to schedule their work around other activities (e.g. hobbies, travel, exercise or studies, etc.).²¹

If Courier Partners are reclassified as employees in Kazakhstan, we expect that companies would likely enforce minimum shift requirements and fixed schedules to manage costs and

²⁰ We define earnings opportunities as the number of income-earning slots supported by the total engaged delivery hours available in the industry, based on current average participation levels.

²¹ Copenhagen Economics. 2024. Survey of Courier Partners — Kazakhstan

efficiency. In such a scenario, it would no longer be feasible for Courier Partners to work a few hours a week or switch between multiple apps freely.

Currently, there is no minimum number of hours workers are required to work, and most delivery workers choose to work fewer than **7.3 hours** of delivery time per week.²²

We expect companies will consolidate the reduced number of available hours into formal part-time (**20 hours/week**) and full-time (**40 hours/week**) roles²³. This assumption is less aggressive than our research peers in California (cited above) who assume that rideshare and delivery companies would require all employees to work **40 hours**²⁴ per week.

When the lower number of hours available to work are consolidated into half part-time jobs and half full-time jobs, the number of weekly earning opportunities would drop further down, causing a secondary loss of **38,000–46,000** opportunities. The lower customer demand and the shift to fixed schedules corresponds to a **71–85%** decline in the number of workers who can earn on app-based delivery platforms (Figure 6).



71-85%

Loss of earning opportunities

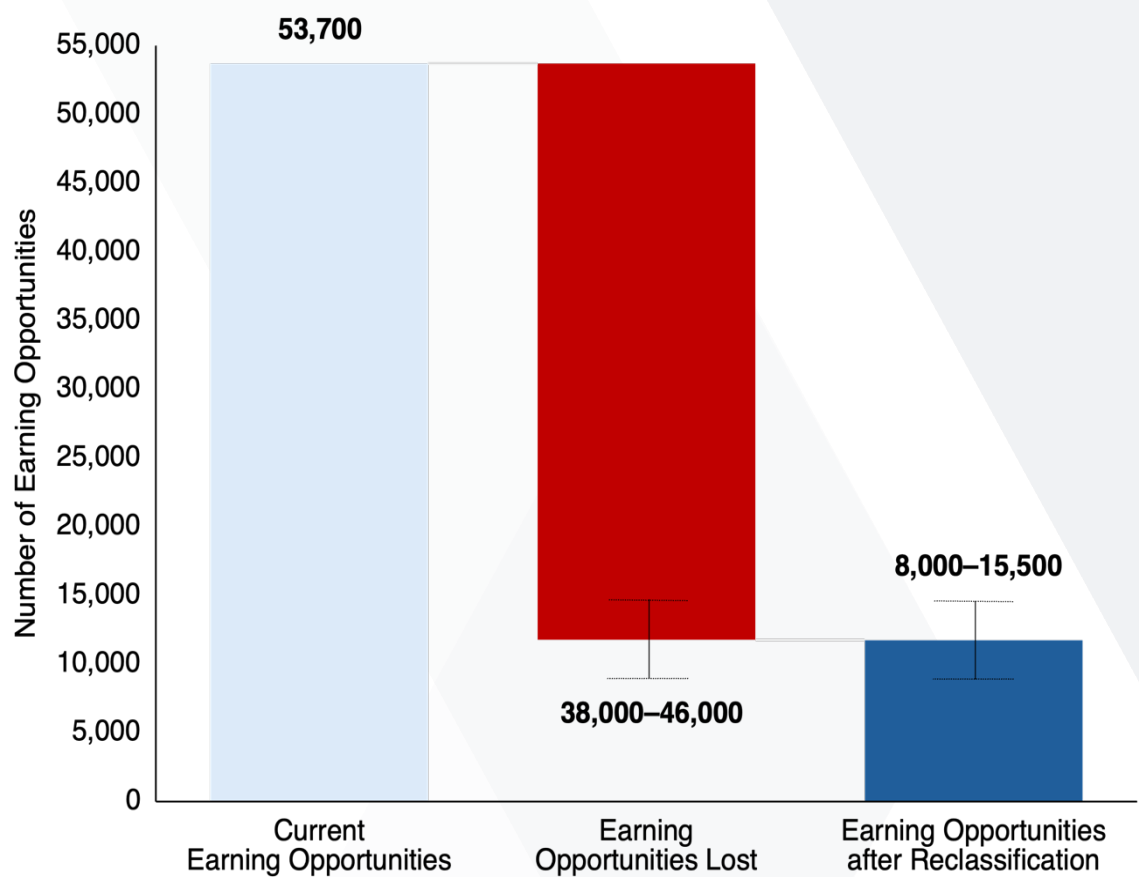
Under reclassification, taking into account lower customer demand and the shift to fixed schedules, we estimate **38,000–46,000** app-based delivery earnings opportunities will be lost, representing a loss of **71–85%** of current earnings opportunities.

²² PPG analysis on industry data

²³ We assume, based on previous research studies, that 'engaged or delivery time' represents around 75% of total time that app-based workers are signed in to an app.

²⁴ Converted from 'engaged time' to total time signed-in to the app.

Figure 6. Potential loss of 38,000–46,000 of earnings opportunities



6 Appendix: Methodology

Based Our modelling approach builds on the methodologies set out by Beacon Economics (2022)²⁵ – which studied the impact of reclassifying app-based rideshare and delivery workers in Massachusetts, in the United States – and Berkeley Research Group (BRG) in its 2020 report²⁶ on California app-based driver and delivery worker job losses.

We have sourced proprietary, aggregated industry data that helps us estimate the number of Courier Partners across all app-based delivery platforms in Kazakhstan over a three-month period, as well as their delivery hours and earnings. We also analyze merchants' orders and revenue data over the same period.

Industry data from a three-month period in 2025 was annualised to represent full 2025 numbers and then grown forward to 2026 values using a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.65%. We find the growth rates (CAGR) of both restaurant and retail industries in Kazakhstan.

- Restaurant CAGR: 2.96%
- Retail CAGR: 15.16%

Using shares of restaurant and retail orders in app-based industry, we find the weighted CAGR of 4.65%.

Next, we estimate the increase in prices for consumers. Prices will rise in line with the increased regulatory costs faced by employers, which we have calculated in three steps:

1. We estimate the post-reclassification 'higher' gross wage needed to maintain workers' pre-reclassification net pay after accounting for higher income tax using:

$$\text{Gross Salary} = \frac{\text{Net Salary Before}}{1 - t}$$

where t is the sum of Personal Income Tax (PIT) and Social Security Contributions (SSC) rates.²⁷

2. We add social contributions paid by employers after reclassification on gross salary:

$$\text{Total Cost} = \text{Gross Salary} * (1 + c)$$

where c is the rate of increase in cost due to employer contribution rate. We estimate this by starting with 26.1%²⁸ increase in employment-related costs under Kazakhstan's labor law (social security contributions).

²⁵ T Osman, Beacon Economics, How many app-based jobs would be lost by converting rideshare and food delivery drivers from independent contractors into employees in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?: February 2022

²⁶ D Lewin, W Hamm, M Kim, Berkeley Research Group, Analysis of driver jobs if gig economy companies must reclassify drivers as employees rather than independent contractors: May 2020.

²⁷ PPG analysis on SSC payments around [self-employed](#) and employed in Kazakhstan, and using proprietary industry data.

²⁸ [Kazakhstan - Individual - Other taxes](#)

3. Lastly, calculating the employer cost increase as follows:

$$\text{Cost Increase} = \frac{\text{Total Cost} - G_o}{G_o}$$

where G_o is the gross salary paid under the old (self-employed) model.

We then assume that companies will either partially or fully pass through the modeled cost increase to consumers. Customers respond to higher prices by reducing their demand for app-based delivery services.

We model two scenarios: a base case and a downside case:

Base Case

This scenario is the minimum impact we expect employment reclassification to have. We conservatively assume that cost increases will partially (75%) contribute to increase in consumer prices, and that customers have a ‘price elasticity’ of -0.55, meaning that for every 1% increase in prices, customer demand will fall by 0.55%.

Downside Case

This scenario reflects the potential for a more significant negative impact. We assume that cost increases will fully (100%) contribute to increase in consumer prices, and that customers have a ‘price elasticity’ of -1.2, meaning that for every 1% increase in prices, customer demand will fall by 1.2%.

Lower customer demand means that merchants will not receive as much business as they did previously. This will induce revenue losses for local businesses who will sell fewer goods through app-based delivery platforms.

Connected to this, we estimated corporate tax revenue losses by first translating lost platform-related revenues in restaurants and retail into taxable income using assumed average industry profit margins (**8.5%** for restaurants²⁹; **3.5%** for retail³⁰).

These taxable income estimates are then combined across sectors and multiplied by Kazakhstan’s **20%** corporate income tax (CIT) rate to derive the implied loss of corporate tax revenue under each scenario.

Furthermore, less orders through platforms reduces the number of hours available for app-based delivery workers to work, their total earnings, and the number of earnings opportunities available.

App-based workers would also be converted to fixed schedules (we conservatively assume that half of the workers retained as employees are required to work part-time and half are required to work full-time), thereby reducing earnings opportunities for a vast pool of

²⁹ Is an Asian Restaurant Profitable? [BusinessDojo](#).

³⁰ Retail Store: Profitability Guide. [BusinessDojo](#).

workers, since companies will be forced to employ only a fraction of the original number of workers and require each to work extended, fixed shifts.

The lower number of hours available (due to lower customer demand) would therefore be distributed among a much smaller number of workers.

Simply put, a smaller pie will be shared between fewer workers.

Additional details about our methodology are available on request.

The logo for Pragmatic Policy Group (PPG) is located in the top left corner. It consists of the letters 'PPG' in a large, white, serif font. Below the letters, the words 'PRAGMATIC', 'POLICY', and 'GROUP' are stacked vertically in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

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