# Masked delivery riders expose gaps in UK food delivery safety and immigration enforcement



The rising visibility of masked delivery riders in the UK, many of whom remain unidentified and largely foreign-speaking, has brought to light significant concerns over the safety and regulation of the food delivery industry. Amidst the growing trend of ordering takeaways, particularly in urban locales, customers are increasingly interacting with delivery drivers whose backgrounds remain murky. One resident’s personal revelation underscores the uncertainty: these riders often arrive wearing helmets that conceal their faces, speak limited English, and sometimes enter homes with little scrutiny, despite customers providing their names and addresses. This obscurity has stoked fears, especially given reports that many of these individuals are newly arrived migrants, some potentially working illegally.

A recent newspaper investigation highlighted that hundreds of migrants who had crossed the Channel in small boats were swiftly finding work as delivery drivers, living in government-funded asylum hotels while earning incomes on the side. The presence of branded bikes and bags outside these accommodations has been noted as a ‘pull factor’ attracting more migrants. The Shadow Home Secretary Chris Philp has accused major delivery companies of inadvertently ‘fuelling’ the border crisis by not enforcing strict employment and identity checks. The precarious situation has even led to calls for a boycott of takeaway giants until stricter controls are implemented, emphasising risks to British citizens from what some describe as unvetted individuals entering people’s homes.

In a candid account, a widow recounts experiences with these delivery riders who have diverse national origins — including India, Bolivia, Afghanistan, and Iran — reflecting a wide migrant demographic. Some riders admitted to being in the UK solely to earn money, while troubling encounters revealed the potential for abuse and intimidation, such as one individual who sent a threatening image after delivering food. She noted that many riders also navigate the city at high speeds on electric scooters, often ignoring traffic rules and displaying a disregard for safety that goes unchecked by law enforcement.

Official statistics support these personal observations. Government figures from April 2023 reveal that 42% of delivery riders stopped during Home Office probes were working illegally. The crackdown operations during that period led to 60 arrests across London and the south, uncovering offences such as possession of false documents and illegal working. The majority of those arrested were from Brazil, with notable numbers also from India and Algeria. Weapons and cash suspected to be related to criminal activities were also seized. These enforcement actions have increased considerably compared to previous years, signaling a more robust governmental effort to combat illegal labour in the sector.

Further, the government has introduced stringent new legislation to clamp down on illegal working within the gig economy, imposing hefty fines and potential prison sentences on companies failing to verify workers’ rights to work in the UK. The new regulations target sectors like food delivery, where rogue operators have exploited weak oversight. In response, major food delivery firms Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats have agreed to enhance security checks on their platforms, particularly for substitute riders, to prevent abuse by illegal workers. Deliveroo, for example, has already implemented a substitute registration system that includes right-to-work verification as part of broader government-endorsed measures.

Despite these efforts, enforcement challenges remain. Many delivery riders operate electric scooters unlicensed or only provisionally licensed with minimal checks, some capable of speeds up to 50mph, contributing to traffic hazards and accidents. The riders congregate in hotspots around affluent neighbourhoods, making numerous deliveries daily, frequently ignoring traffic laws. Although some riders freely admit to having entered the country illegally, enforcement presence on the streets appears minimal, allowing these activities to continue largely unchecked. Meanwhile, some asylum seekers residing in government hotels combine state support with earnings from delivery work, effectively living rent-free and earning substantial income at public expense—a situation critics describe as a serious strain on public resources.

This multifaceted problem reflects deeper issues around immigration control, labour exploitation, and public safety—challenges that authorities and delivery companies alike are struggling to tackle effectively. While some migrants aspire to rebuild their lives legitimately, the lax enforcement and exploitation of the delivery industry’s flexible labour system risk creating a backdoor for illegal workers, undermining both immigration policy and community safety. The current landscape demands urgent, coordinated action to ensure that food delivery services do not become conduits for unchecked illegal employment while protecting customers from potential risks posed by unscreened individuals entering their homes.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14854463/Truth-takeaway-drivers-You-thoughtlessly-open-door-masked-strangers-drop-food-SUE-REID-asked-simple-question-deeply-disquieting.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14854463/Truth-takeaway-drivers-You-thoughtlessly-open-door-masked-strangers-drop-food-SUE-REID-asked-simple-question-deeply-disquieting.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/08/16/takeaway-delivery-rider-illegal-channel-migrant/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14854463/Truth-takeaway-drivers-You-thoughtlessly-open-door-masked-strangers-drop-food-SUE-REID-asked-simple-question-deeply-disquieting.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14854463/Truth-takeaway-drivers-You-thoughtlessly-open-door-masked-strangers-drop-food-SUE-REID-asked-simple-question-deeply-disquieting.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/moped-delivery-drivers-from-major-firms-targeted-in-illegal-working-crackdown), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/deliveroo-uber-eats-just-eats-driver-arrest-home-office-immigration-b1076211.html)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/crackdown-on-illegal-working-and-rogue-employers-in-gig-economy), [[4]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deliveroo-just-eat-and-uber-eats-to-enhance-security-checks-to-prevent-illegal-working)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14854463/Truth-takeaway-drivers-You-thoughtlessly-open-door-masked-strangers-drop-food-SUE-REID-asked-simple-question-deeply-disquieting.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/deliveroo-uber-eats-just-eat-illegal-workers-home-office-immigration-raid-delivery-rider-b1099423.html), [[6]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/08/16/takeaway-delivery-rider-illegal-channel-migrant/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-14854463/Truth-takeaway-drivers-You-thoughtlessly-open-door-masked-strangers-drop-food-SUE-REID-asked-simple-question-deeply-disquieting.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/moped-delivery-drivers-from-major-firms-targeted-in-illegal-working-crackdown> - In April 2023, the UK Home Office conducted a week-long crackdown on illegal working by delivery drivers from major firms, resulting in 60 arrests across London and the south. Offences included illegal working and possession of false documentation. The operation also led to the seizure of weapons and cash suspected of being linked to criminal activity. The majority of offenders were of Brazilian nationality, with Indian and Algerian nationals also found to be working without the right to do so in the UK. Employers in the UK have a responsibility to prevent illegal working, with penalties including imprisonment and unlimited fines for those found guilty of employing someone without the right to work in the UK. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/moped-delivery-drivers-from-major-firms-targeted-in-illegal-working-crackdown?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/crackdown-on-illegal-working-and-rogue-employers-in-gig-economy> - In March 2025, the UK government introduced tough new laws to clamp down on illegal working in the gig economy. Companies hiring people in sectors like food delivery, beauty salons, and courier services are now legally required to carry out checks confirming that anyone working in their name is eligible to work in the UK. Failure to carry out these checks can result in hefty penalties, including fines of up to £60,000 per worker, business closures, director disqualifications, and potential prison sentences of up to 5 years. This move aims to level the playing field for honest companies and undermine people smugglers exploiting the country's borders. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/crackdown-on-illegal-working-and-rogue-employers-in-gig-economy?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deliveroo-just-eat-and-uber-eats-to-enhance-security-checks-to-prevent-illegal-working> - In April 2024, leading food delivery companies Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats agreed to implement enhanced security checks on their apps to prevent the market from being abused by illegal workers. This decision followed discussions with the UK government and aims to confirm that substitute riders have the right to work legally in the UK. Deliveroo was the first to roll out a new substitute registration feature, including right to work checks. The initiative is part of broader efforts to strengthen the UK's immigration system and combat illegal working. ([gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/deliveroo-just-eat-and-uber-eats-to-enhance-security-checks-to-prevent-illegal-working?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/deliveroo-uber-eats-just-eat-illegal-workers-home-office-immigration-raid-delivery-rider-b1099423.html> - In August 2023, a Home Office crackdown on illegal workers and employers in London led to the arrest of 66 delivery riders. The operation targeted moped driver hotspots across the capital, with offences including overstaying visas, illegal entry, and working in breach of visa conditions. Campaigners and unions expressed concerns that riders are at risk of modern slavery and racial profiling. The Home Office stated that enforcement visits had increased, with more arrests in 2023 than in the whole of 2022. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/deliveroo-uber-eats-just-eat-illegal-workers-home-office-immigration-raid-delivery-rider-b1099423.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/08/16/takeaway-delivery-rider-illegal-channel-migrant/> - In August 2024, reports emerged that food delivery riders in the UK, including those from Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats, have become a magnet for illegal migrants. Home Office statistics revealed that two in five delivery riders stopped during random checks in April 2023 were found to be working illegally. Some asylum seekers who crossed the English Channel were found to have been earning up to £1,500 per month from food deliveries while staying in government-funded hotels. Critics argue that the industry's loose legal ties and lax right-to-work checks have created a backdoor for illegal migrants to work. ([telegraph.co.uk](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/08/16/takeaway-delivery-rider-illegal-channel-migrant/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/deliveroo-uber-eats-just-eats-driver-arrest-home-office-immigration-b1076211.html> - In April 2023, a week-long Home Office crackdown on alleged immigration offences led to the arrest of 60 fast food delivery riders across London. Moped riders from Deliveroo, Just Eat, and Uber Eats were arrested for offences including the possession of false documentation and working illegally in the UK. Cash and weapons suspected of being linked to criminal activity were also seized. The Home Office stated that enforcement visits had increased, with more arrests in 2023 than in the whole of 2022. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/deliveroo-uber-eats-just-eats-driver-arrest-home-office-immigration-b1076211.html?utm_source=openai))