

All the Vodacom Journalist of the Year competition regional finalists

This year saw more than 1,300 entries nationally in the Vodacom Journalist of the Year competition across regions and in 12 categories.



Source: Vodacom [Vodacom](#) All the Vodacom Journalist of the Year competition regional finalists have been announced

In support of developing journalism in South Africa, Vodacom funds the winner of the Young Journalist award on an all-expenses paid course to assist in upskilling young talent.

Regional category winners receive R5,000, national category winners, R10,000, and the overall Vodacom Journalist of the Year winner an impressive R100,000.



Gauteng region

Gauteng had 500 submissions, the highest number of entries, with prevalent topics being Johannesburg's Bree Street

explosion, the impact of load shedding, and issues regarding national security.

“We received impressive work on the fight against corruption, including exclusive investigations that covered a wide range of individuals involved in combating corruption. We would like to express our special gratitude to media owners, philanthropic founders, and those who continue to support quality journalism by paying for it. The exceptional journalism produced in this region exemplifies why we should continue to celebrate and honour the country's journalistic endeavours,” the judges say.

The Gauteng regional winners:

- Live reporting/breaking news – Joint winners, Ziyanda Ngcobo, with contributors Linda Mnisi, Karinda Jagmohan, Natalie Malgas, Mveli Masilela, *Newzroom Afrika* for “King Misuzulu Coronation Live Coverage”, and Kgomotso Modise, *Eyewitness News* for “The recapture of Thabo Bester and Nandipha Magudumana”
- Investigative – Jeff Wicks, *News24* for ‘Silenced - Why Babita Deokaran was murdered’.
- Opinion – Zongile Nhlapo, *Eyewitness News* for “Motherhood isn't defined by my 'non-verbal son calling me mom’”.
- Lifestyle – Zukiswa Cetywayo, *Newzroom Afrika* for “Tembisa Drug Rehabilitation Movement steps up efforts”.
- Features – Mbaso Khwaza and contributors Tshepo Dhlamini, Sindisiwe Mpahlwa and Tshidiso Lechuba, *NCA Checkpoint* for “Ulwaluko”.
- Photography – Elizabeth Sejake, *Rapport* for “The Calling to Restore: Embracing the ancestral calling”.
- Sport – Njabulo Ngidi, *AmaBhungane* for “2010 World Cup \$10m ‘bribe: South Africa left out even as \$201m returned to Fifa”.
- Financial and Economics – William Horne, *Netwerk24* for dual entry: “200 dae van beurtkrag: Donker prentjie word al donkerde” and Eskom: “Dis hoekom De Ruyter se projek vir instandhouding misluk”.
- Politics – Harri Vithi and team, *Carte Blanche* for “Of Parties and Puppets”
- Sustainability – Laura Grant and team Paul Botes, Tanya Pampalone, Leonie Joubert, Gemma Gatticchi, Gemma Ritchie, Ciaran Otter, Alastair Otter and Steve Kretzmann, *Media Hack* for “A Perfect Storm.
- Innovation in journalism – Joint winners Kgomotso Modise, *Eyewitness News* for his deft combination of Twitter Spaces, podcasts and broadcast to cover the Meyiwa Trial and Johannes Steyn, *MyBroadband* for a vast and in-depth investigation into “South Africa’s biggest-ever mobile network quality testing”.
- Young Journalist of the Year Award – Kamogelo Motecwane, *Soccer Laduma*.



Western Cape region

The Western Cape region accounted for the second-highest number of submissions.

“These journalists played a pivotal role in unveiling concealed trusts, amplifying successful initiatives, and pinpointing areas that require improvement.

“The competition within this province was intense, serving as a testament to the formidable journalism strength in the area which exemplifies why we should continue to celebrate and honour the country's journalistic endeavours,” say the judges.

The Western Cape regional winners:

- Live reporting/ breaking news – Victoria O'Regan, *Daily Maverick* for “Docking in the dark — Sanctioned Russian ship drops anchor at Simon's Town Naval Base”.
- Investigative – Daniel Steyn and Marecia Damons, *GroundUp* for “Investigation into Thabo Bester's escape from prison”.
- Opinion – Kelly Anderson, *News24* for ‘I will speak up for Anele Tembe as AKA's bronze statue takes shape’.
- Lifestyle – Willemien Brümmer, *Netwerk24* for a series of articles on dementia.
- Features – Claire Keeton, *The Sunday Times* for body of work on bipolar disorder: “Riding the Waves” and the long-term effect of Covid, “Haunted by Long Covid”.
- Photography – Jaco Marais, *Media24*, Western Cape for his portfolio of work.
- Sport – Thobeka Phanyeka, *Glamour Magazine* for “Disruptor”.
- Financial and Economics – Steve Kretzmann, *GroundUp* for “Post Office has failed to pay into employees' retirement fund for three years”.
- Politics – Joint winners Jan Gerber and Karyn Maughan, *News24* for “The Impeachment of Busisiwe Mkhwebane” and Jason Felix, *News24* for “Dysfunctionalities: SA's municipalities are already problematic and those in charge aren't qualified”.
- Sustainability – Steve Kretzmann, *GroundUp* for “Almost two-thirds of South African municipalities responsible for supplying drinking water to residents are either failing to provide water that meets the minimum drinking standards or simply failing to test the water they supply”.
- Innovation in journalism – Aron Hyman, *TimesLive* for podcast series *Cape of Cocaine*.
- Young Journalist of the Year Award – Tamsin Metelerkamp from *Daily Maverick*



KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga region

“This region continues to benefit from whistle-blowers, who play a crucial role in exposing corruption within various sectors of both the government and private entities,” say the judges.

“Apart from the persistent threat to national security, entries originating from this province also shed light on organised crime and unresolved cases. Entries raised awareness about the pressing issues of climate change and environmental challenges. The exceptional journalism produced in this region exemplifies why we should continue to celebrate and honour the country's journalistic endeavours.”

The province has consistently shed light on the influence exerted by the construction mafia and this year was no exception.

The KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga regional winners:

- Live reporting/breaking news - Dasen Thathiah with contributors Linge Ndabambi and Nkanyiso Mdlalose, *eNCA* for body of work on the “Gift of the Givers’ Turkiye Mission”.
- Investigative – Joint regional winners Greg Ardé and Sam Sole, *Daily Maverick* for The Durban Whistleblower, the assassination and the dodgy R30m “dept”
- Opinion – Nivashni Nair, *The Sunday Times* for “We lost more than power and water during outages”.
- Lifestyle – Mart-Marie du Toit, *Muse Magazine* for “Dishing up stars”.
- Features – Saziso Dlamini, *Radio Khwezi* for South Africa’s Unemployment rate.
- Photography – Sandile Ndlovu, *Sunday Times* for “King Misuzulu asserts himself at reed dance”.
- Sport – no winner.
- Financial and Economics – Greg Ardé, *Daily Maverick* for “Murderous construction mafias have brought many companies to their knees”.
- Politics – Soyiso Maliti, *News24* for “Dysfunctionalities: nearly 300 KZN Councillors can’t read or write”.
- Sustainability – Sakhiseni Nxumalo, *Sunday Times* for ‘You’re sitting on top of our money’.
- Innovation in journalism – No winner.
- Young Journalist of the Year Award – Dominic Naidoo, *IOL*.



Free State, Limpopo, Northern Cape and North West region

This year, an increase to 17% of competition entries originated from this region.

The judges were impressed by the calibre of the submissions, which often exposed wrongdoing at different levels of society.

“The Free State, Northern Cape, Northwest and Limpopo region gained national attention due to the daring escape of Facebook rapists Thabo Bester and the individuals who were entangled in the web of deceit surrounding his escape,” say the judges.

“This region serves as a reminder of the influence and vital role of the national broadcaster, as well as the value of community media.”

The Free State, Limpopo, Northern Cape and North West regional winners:

- Live reporting/ breaking news – Kamogelo Seekoei, *SABC News* for “Conversation with family of the deceased found in Bester’s cell”.
- Investigative – Zinhle Kanyane and contributors Tshepo Dhlamini and Zukwisa Magosa, *eNCA Checkpoint* for “Jagersfontein”.
- Opinion – no winner.
- Lifestyle – Marti Will, *Vista Newspaper* for “Khoisan-stammevat hande vir bevordering van hul kultuur”.
- Features – Helena Barnard *NoordKaap Bulletin* for “Soek jou wortels (en vind Martha se melktert) by Magersfontein”.
- Photography – No winner.
- Sport – Joint winners, *SABC*, Ditshwanelo Masiea with contributor Reginald Witbooi on “Karate” and Lereko Motseko with contributor Margeret Mothibi on “Boxing”.
- Financial and Economics – Olebogeng Motse, *OFM* for “The construction mafia: is it transformation or criminality?”.
- Politics – Charne Kemp, *Netwerk24* for “Stryd om Kimb’ly se wyk”.
- Sustainability – Alet van der Walt, *Netwerk24* for “Jagersfontein: Visse “spring” uit water toe slik spruit tref”.
- Innovation in journalism – No winner.
- Young Journalist of the Year Award – Karabo Siyoko, *SABC*



Eastern Cape region

The Eastern Cape brought attention to the daily struggles experienced by rural and urban communities, ranging from unscrupulous lawyers taking advantage of the less fortunate to the fight against social issues such as alcohol abuse and drug dealing.

The judges were particularly impressed by the determination of journalists to continue pursuing stories and their ability to shed light on crime, social unrest, and politics.

The Eastern Cape regional winners:

- Live reporting/ breaking news – Ronald Masinda with contributor Nceba Ntlanganiso, *eNCA* for “Dutwya Hostage Drama”.
- Investigative – Tarryn Crossman, *Carte Blanche* for “Finding Zuko Nonxuba”.
- Opinion – Tembile Sgqolana, *Daily Maverick* for “Komani is reeling from power outages that last for weeks”.
- Lifestyle – Lulamile Feni, *Daily Dispatch* for “Young man presumed dead after fleeing initiation school walks 250km to safety”.
- Features – Sipamandla Kema and contributor Ruan Visser, *Carte Blanche* for “Decades of War”.
- Photography – Lulama Zenzile, *Netwerk24* for “Die Oos Kaap Leerling gaan deur diep water vir onderring”.
- Sport – Anathi Wulushe and contributor Bomikazi Midiya, *Daily Dispatch* for body of work.
- Financial and Economics – Joint winners Aphiwe de Klerk and Sithandiwe Velaphi, *Daily Dispatch* for “Load-shedding to blame for closure of R38,5 million abattoir” and “Bhisho forfeits R100m while schools suffer” respectively.
- Politics – Lulamile Feni, *Daily Dispatch* for “I remember the Bhisho massacre like it happened last year”.
- Sustainability – Joint winners Lerato Fekisi, *SABC* for “Sections of the manganese ore transport and storage sector in Nelson Mandela Bay remain under fire” and Tembile Sgqolana, *Daily Maverick* for “Causes of fish die-off and stench at Jeffreys Bay’s Seekoei Estuary still a mystery”.
- Innovation in journalism – No winner.
- Young Journalist of the Year Award – Rosa-Karoo Loewe, *Daily Dispatch*.

The 2023 VJOY judging panel was convened by Mapi Mhlangu, with Neo Ntsoma joining the panel to assist with the photography category.

Judges included Jermaine Craig, Ryland Fisher, Arthur Goldstuck, Patricia McCracken, Professor Gilbert Motsaathebe, Collin Nxumalo, Jovial Rantao, Elna Rossouw, Advocate Robin Sewlal and Obed Zilwa.

The national awards ceremony takes place in Johannesburg on Thursday, 30 November.

Authentic Information and Hybrid Content theme

The 2023 theme for the awards is Authentic Information and Hybrid Content, at a time when journalists are challenged to rise above generative artificial intelligence (AI), and to push factual information.

“As journalists are employed to inform the public, the information they are sharing must be truthful and authentic,” says Takalani Netshitenzhe, Vodacom South Africa’s director of external affairs.

“The misuse of news reporting can lead to mistrust by the public. Vodacom is proud to play a role in encouraging journalists to bring important issues to light, in a manner that is factual and original. Congratulations to all of our regional finalists for their efforts.”

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