

The 19th Vodacom Journalist of the Year regional winners

Recognising some of the best journalistic talent in South Africa, the winners of the 19th Vodacom Journalist of the Year (VJOY) regional awards have been announced.



Takalani Netshitenzhe, chief officer for corporate affairs at Vodacom South Africa, says “Marking VJOY in 2020 during a global pandemic, we were delighted to receive our highest ever number of VJOY entries this year. Despite the mounting difficulties which media have faced during the pandemic, journalists around the country have gone the extra mile to bring news and information to South Africans during the national state of disaster.

I was thrilled to see reporting that not only exposed corruption and criminal activity, but to see stories on how Covid-19 has illuminated social inequalities and gender-based violence in the country. Vodacom is proud of its continued association with the VJOYs and we look forward to paying tribute to the country’s top journalists in the weeks to come.”

Ryland Fisher, convener of the judging panel, said that the judges were impressed by the quality of the entries. “Despite the impact of a shrinking economy and the havoc wreaked by Covid-19 on our industry, journalists continued to do what they do best: breaking stories; writing beautiful, descriptive features; investigating corruption and other crimes; capturing the best news moments on film, video and audio; and keeping viewers, listeners and readers informed. We are proud that South African journalists have once again stepped up when confronted by a difficult situation.”

Appropriately, the theme this year is ‘Re-Imagine, Re-Invent, and Re-Build’ because the country and world as a whole has had to adapt to fast-changing times. The 2020 awards received a record number of entries - more than 1,300 from around

the country. There was one change to the categories this year, which saw Innovation in Journalism replace Multiplatform and Data journalism.

Regional winners

The regional winners per category are as follows:

Free State, Northern Cape, North West & Limpopo

- **Lifestyle:** Cheréne Pienaar with contributor Mlungisi Louw - *Volksblad*
- **Photography:** Mlungisi Louw - *Volksblad*
- **Sport:** André Damons - *Volksblad*
- **Features:** André Damons - *Netwerk 24*
- **Financial and Economics:** Vida Booysen - *Landbouweekblad*
- **Politics:** Charné Kemp - *Volksblad*
- **Sustainability:** Motlalepule Morake - SABC TV News
- **Opinion:** No winner
- **Live Reporting and Breaking News:** Aphumelele Mdlalane with contributor Thabo Katsande - SABC TV News
- **Innovation in Journalism Citation:** No winner
- **Investigative:** Anena Burger - *Netwerk 24*
- **Young Journalist nominee:** Mamaili Mamaila - *Engineering News Online*

Eastern Cape

- **Lifestyle:** Lerato Fekisi and Markus Brunner - SABC TV
- **Photography:** Lulamile Feni - *Daily Dispatch*
- **Sport:** Yanga Funani, Bulelani Scott and Agcobile Vena - SABC TV News
- **Features:** Nkululeko Nyembezi and Lwandile Mbulali - SABC TV News
- **Financial and Economics:** Lerato Fekisi and Gcobani Blom - SABC News
- **Politics:** Michael Kimberley and Nomazima Nkosi - *Die Herald*
- **Sustainability:** Bongani Fuzile and Sino Majangaza - *Daily Dispatch*
- **Opinion:** Sithandiwe Velaphi - *I'solezwe lesiXhosa*
- **Live Reporting and Breaking News:** Malibongwe Dayimani - *Daily Dispatch*
- **Innovation in Journalism:** Lerato Fekisi and Markus Brenner - SABC TV News
- **Investigative:** Sino Majangaza and Bongani Fuzile - *Daily Dispatch*
- **Young Journalist nominee:** Nomvuyo Ntanjana - SABC

KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga

- **Lifestyle:** Dasen Thathiah with Susanna Holmes, Nkanyiso Mdlalose and Mcebisi Sithole - eNCA
- **Photography:** Sandile Ndlovu - *Sunday Times*
- **Sport:** Lungani Zama - New Frame
- **Features:** Niren Tolsi - *Mail & Guardian*
- **Financial and Economics:** Nokuthula Ntuli - *The Witness*
- **Politics:** Zimasa Matiwane - *Sunday Times*
- **Sustainability:** Jayed-Leigh Paulse with Zamani Dlodla and Ndabezinhle Khumalo - SABC TV
- **Opinion:** Bheki Mncube - *The Witness*

- **Live Reporting and Breaking News:** Dasen Thathiah, assisted by Nkanyiso Mdlalose, Neil Raath and Mcebisi Sithole - eNCA
- **Innovation in Journalism:** Gareth Jenkinson - East Coast Radio
- **Investigative:** Tania Broughton - *Sunday Times*
- **Young Journalist nominee:** Lwandile Bhengu - *Sunday Times*

Western Cape

- **Lifestyle:** Willemien Brümmer - *Netwerk 24*
- **Photography:** Esa Alexander – *Sunday Times*
- **Sport:** Mark Gleeson – *Kickoff*
- **Features:** Anso Thom, Nomatter Ndebele, Thom Pierce, Biënne Huisman – *Maverick Citizen*
- **Financial and Economics:** Claire Bisseker - *Financial Mail*
- **Politics:** Pauli van Wyk - *Daily Maverick*
- **Sustainability:** Jay Caboz - *Business Insider*
- **Opinion:** Samantha Lee-Jacobs - articles in *People's Post*; *TygerBurger*
- **Live Reporting and Breaking News:** Nobesuthu Hejana, Lungile Tom, Balungile Dlamini – eNCA
- **Innovation in Journalism:** Bernard Kotze, Pauli van Wyk, Tevya Shapiro – *Daily Maverick*
- **Investigative:** Pauli van Wyk - *Daily Maverick*
- **Young Journalist nominee:** Okhule Hlati - *Cape Times*

Gauteng

- **Lifestyle:** Niren Tolsi - *Mail & Guardian*
- **Photography:** Alon Skuy - *Sunday Times*
- **Sport:** Kayleen Morgan - Eyewitness News
- **Features:** Relebogile Stephens - SABC Cutting Edge
- **Financial and Economics:** Susan Comrie, Sam Sole - AmaBhungane
- **Politics:** Thomas Holder assisted by Ahmed Kajee - Eyewitness News
- **Sustainability:** Sipho Kings - *Mail & Guardian*
- **Opinion:** Mia Malan - Bhekisisa Centre
- **Live Reporting and Breaking News:** Riaan Grobler with Sharlene Rood - News 24
- **Innovation in Journalism:** Emile Bosch with Reinart Toerien, Alaister Russell & Scott Smith - TimesLive
- **Investigative:** Jan Vermeulen - My Broadband
- **Young Journalist nominee:** Ahmed Kajee - Eyewitness News

National finals

The regional winners will compete in the national finals on 20 November 2020.

Regional category winners receive R5,000 each, national category winners take home R10,000 each, with the coveted national accolade of Vodacom Journalist of the Year Award winner receiving R100,000. In the event of joint winners, the prize money will be shared. The winner of the young journalist award will win an all-expenses-paid overseas trip that includes a visit to the Thomson Foundation, as well as the opportunity to work in a newsroom.

The 2020 Vodacom Journalist of the Year awards panel of judges include Ryland Fisher, Jermaine Craig, Arthur Goldstuck, Franz Kruger, Patricia McCracken, Mapi Mhlangu, Collin Nxumalo, Mary Papayya, Jovial Rantao, Elna Rossouw and Obed Zilwa.

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