

# Vodacom Journalist of the Year announces winners

Winners of the 19th Vodacom Journalist of the Year (VJOY) awards have been announced, with AmaBhungane's Susan Comrie and eNCA's Dasen Thathiah sharing top honours and the R100,000 prize money. Despite the devastation wrought by Covid-19 on newsrooms across the country, with loss of lives, jobs and publications, the competition received a record number of over more than 1300 entries.



These factors made it harder to choose a single winner, said Takalani Netshitenzhe, Vodacom South Africa Chief Officer for Corporate Affairs: "Our judging panel of some of South Africa's most esteemed leaders in the media field therefore chose to reward Susan Comrie and Dasen Thathiah as our two winners, both outstanding journalists who each showed superb mastery of their very different fields of financial/economic journalism and reporting breaking news."



## The 19th Vodacom Journalist of the Year regional winners

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Netshitenzhe said that the Vodacom Journalist of the Year Awards sought to pay tribute to outstanding journalism. "We are proud that the VJOYs have become one of South Africa's most prestigious journalism awards. We believe that they will only continue to grow in importance as a means to recognise excellence in journalism, while at the same time affirming our commitment to freedom of expression and freedom of the media, which are some of the pillars of our democracy."

The judges were impressed by the quality of submissions across all categories and from all provinces. Ryland Fisher, convener of the judging panel, said that despite an incredibly difficult year for South Africa's journalists, "they have shown that, on the whole, our industry is in very good hands. It was incredibly difficult to judge this year, not only because we did everything virtually, but because, in most categories, there could be any number of winners. Even though the media industry is going through tough times, as judges we feel confident about the future of South African journalism".

The VJOY Lifetime Achiever Award went to Sy Lerman, one of the country's sporting journalism greats who started his career in the 1960s at the *Rand Daily Mail* and has since written across the country's leading titles.

**And the winners are...**

The national winners per category are as follows:

- Lifestyle: Dasen Thathiah with Susanna Holmes, Nkanyiso Mdlalose and Mcebisi Sithole – eNCA
- Photography: Esa Alexander - *Sunday Times*
- Sport: Kayleen Morgan - Eyewitness News
- Features: Relebogile Stephens - SABC Cutting Edge
- Financial and Economics: Susan Comrie and Sam Sole - AmaBhungane
- Politics: Michael Kimberley and Nomazima Nkosi - *The Herald*
- Sustainability: Bongani Fuzile with Sino Majangaza – *Daily Dispatch*
- Opinion: Samantha Lee-Jacobs - *People's Post*, *TygerBurger*
- Live Reporting and Breaking News: Dasen Thathiah, assisted by Nkanyiso Mdlalose, Neil Raath and Mcebisi Sithole - eNCA
- Innovation in Journalism: Emile Bosch with Reinart Toerien, Alaister Russell and Scott Smith - TimesLive
- Investigative: Pauli van Wyk - *Daily Maverick*
- Young Journalist of the Year: Mamaili Mamaila
- Lifetime Achievement Award: Sy Lerman
- Overall Vodacom Journalist of the Year: Susan Comrie - AmaBhungane and Dasen Thathiah – eNCA

Category winners receive R10,000. In the event of joint winners, the prize money will be shared. The Vodacom Young journalist award winner receives an all-expenses-paid trip to Thomson Reuters in the United Kingdom as well as the opportunity to work in an international newsroom, thanks to the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

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