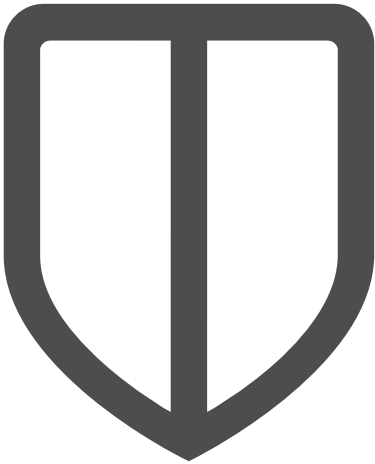


A photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a light blue polo shirt and a matching cap, sitting in the driver's seat of a vehicle. He is smiling and looking out the window. He is holding a clipboard and a pen in his right hand. The background shows a blurred view of trees and a building through the car window.

# The Road Safety Report 2023



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# Introduction

## Webfleet executive highlights key findings

A couple of surprising comparisons have emerged if one compares this year's survey to last year's. In 2022 the percentage of collisions caused by drivers in non-freight vehicles was quite high at 33%. This year that figure is substantially lower.

Although it comes as quite a surprise, it must be welcomed that there seems to be a greater understanding among other drivers about the safety requirements for sharing our roads with trucks. Last year it was disconcerting to notice the high prevalence of collisions involving trucks that are caused by other road users. However, it has to be said that other road users often fail to think of the physics of a truck.

It was also surprising to note that in last year's survey, the number of accidents caused by people driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol was fairly low at 4% and this time it is a lot higher.

It may be that there is a link between DUI and other road users causing collisions involving trucks.

As for poor road conditions, that seems to be a problem across the board. We know that it is an issue. The figures of poor vehicle maintenance this year are quite high and are definitely a factor contributing to compromised road safety for the trucking industry in South Africa.

There have been a couple of incidents so far this year and late last year, where video clips shared via social media clearly showed the poor maintenance of trucks and bad driver behaviour prevalent in the road freight industry.

It's concerning that the poor maintenance of trucks has increased considering that in 2022's survey it wasn't really an issue.

Overall the results are quite insightful. One that didn't feature previously, for example, but was flagged this year, is criminal activity. It would be interesting to see what it actually relates to. Is it riots, protest action, robbery, hijackings, especially in the transport space seeing as cargo crime has become a major concern?

The fact that it didn't pop up in last year's survey is quite surprising; we do know that criminal activity does cause accidents. And then the other issue revealed in this year's survey is human error, especially when it pertains to driver fatigue.

Ultimately, if one takes an overview of the 2023 survey, despite the sample size of 54 (52 of which own or manage fleets of about 50 trucks or more) seeming low compared to there being more than 7 000 road freight companies working in South Africa, one has to acknowledge that all operators sit with very similar issues.

If one extrapolates the numbers against all vehicles in the industry, especially the heavy goods transporters, it would be a fair reflection of the industry. It's not as if some operators would be experiencing collisions or incidents from causes that weren't covered by the survey.

In terms of inclusivity, the survey comprehensively covers the crucial concerns challenging the industry. Next year it would be interesting to build out the survey's reach to include a greater focus on the



industry's geographical dynamics, trying to find out for example if there are any incidents that are more prevalent in certain regions than others.

For example: it might be worth looking into collisions involving trucks caused by livestock, in which instance road freight figures from KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape might be very different from other provinces.

The survey also underpins, as it did last year, the value and importance of industry-specific information that could help improve the safety and security situation for road logistics in South Africa.

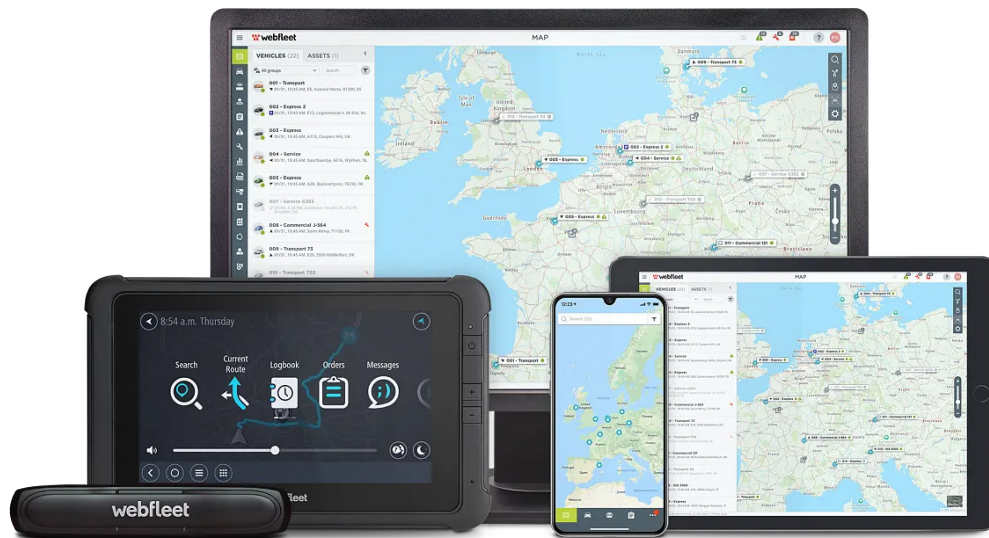
It helps to identify which aspects of road freight can be improved by the industry itself, either through better management, the use of technology and better training of drivers. It also serves as a guide for government in highlighting problem areas that require attention for a safer transport sector that ultimately benefits all road users.

The potential impact of increased road safety and security on driving down elevated insurance costs, brought about by the high risk of using South Africa's roads, and the unavoidable consequence of transporters having to pass on overhead costs to consumers, should also not be overlooked.



**Justin Manson,**  
Sales Director, Webfleet.

# The benefit of technology for the trucking industry



Telematics definitely does help in that it's quite clear from the survey that 50% of respondents said it significantly changed the level of collisions, and 29% said telematics moderately improved collision avoidance in the trucking sector.

For me, the role of telematics is extremely important because while it won't stop accidents from happening, it could help change

behaviour, and that is the most important thing. It won't necessarily stop other road users from causing accidents, but certainly, in the fleet space where we do have guys behind the wheel of a truck, it does change the way drivers behave.

Knowing that you are being monitored, automatically brings about improved driver behaviour and enhanced responsibility.

# Survey respondents

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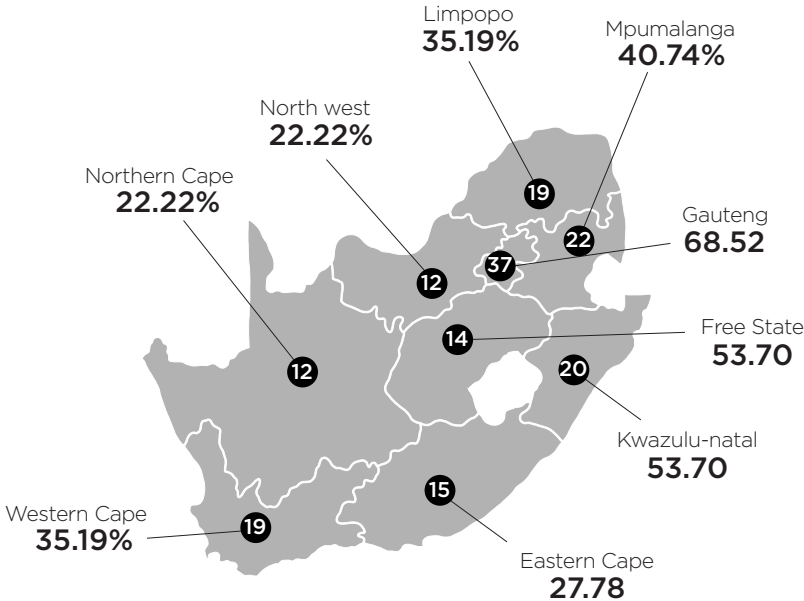
# 7.948

## Trucks from 52 fleets in South Africa

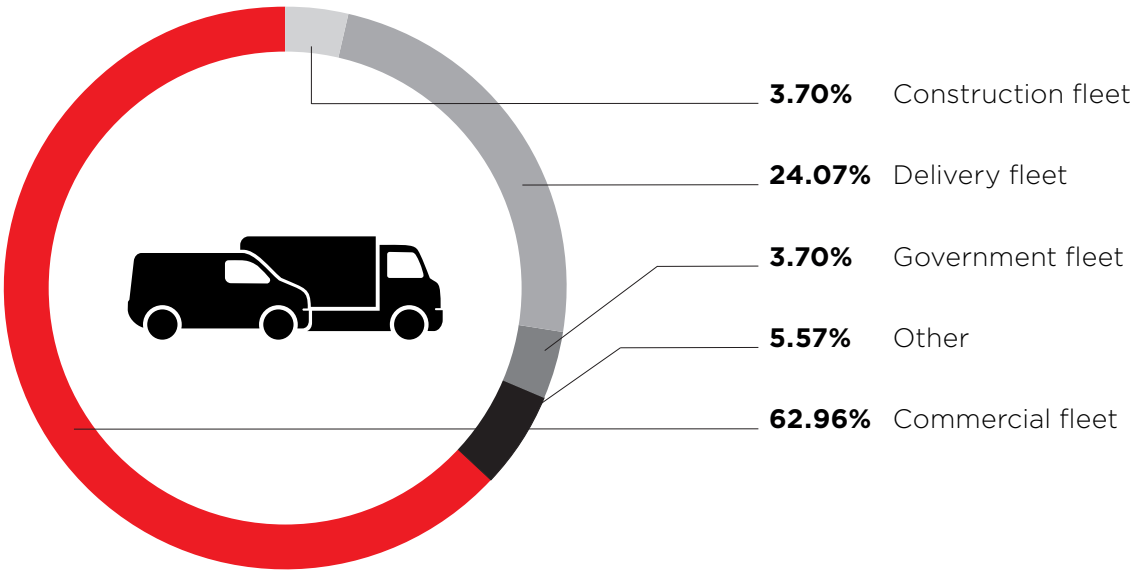
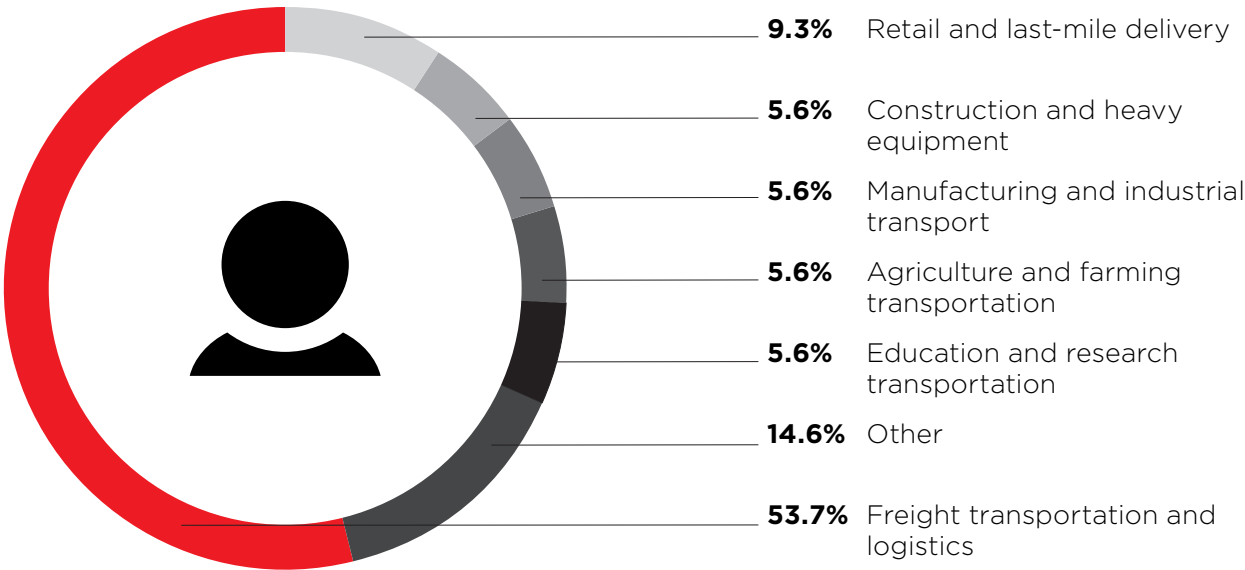
# Respondents

Out of the 52 fleet managers who participated in the survey, the majority, comprising 37 respondents, reported that their fleets operate in Gauteng. In contrast, the Northern Cape and North West provinces had the fewest respondents, with a total of 12, whose fleets are active in those regions. Respondents had the option to select multiple provinces where their fleets operate.

## Fleet representation by province:



# Industries represented by respondents

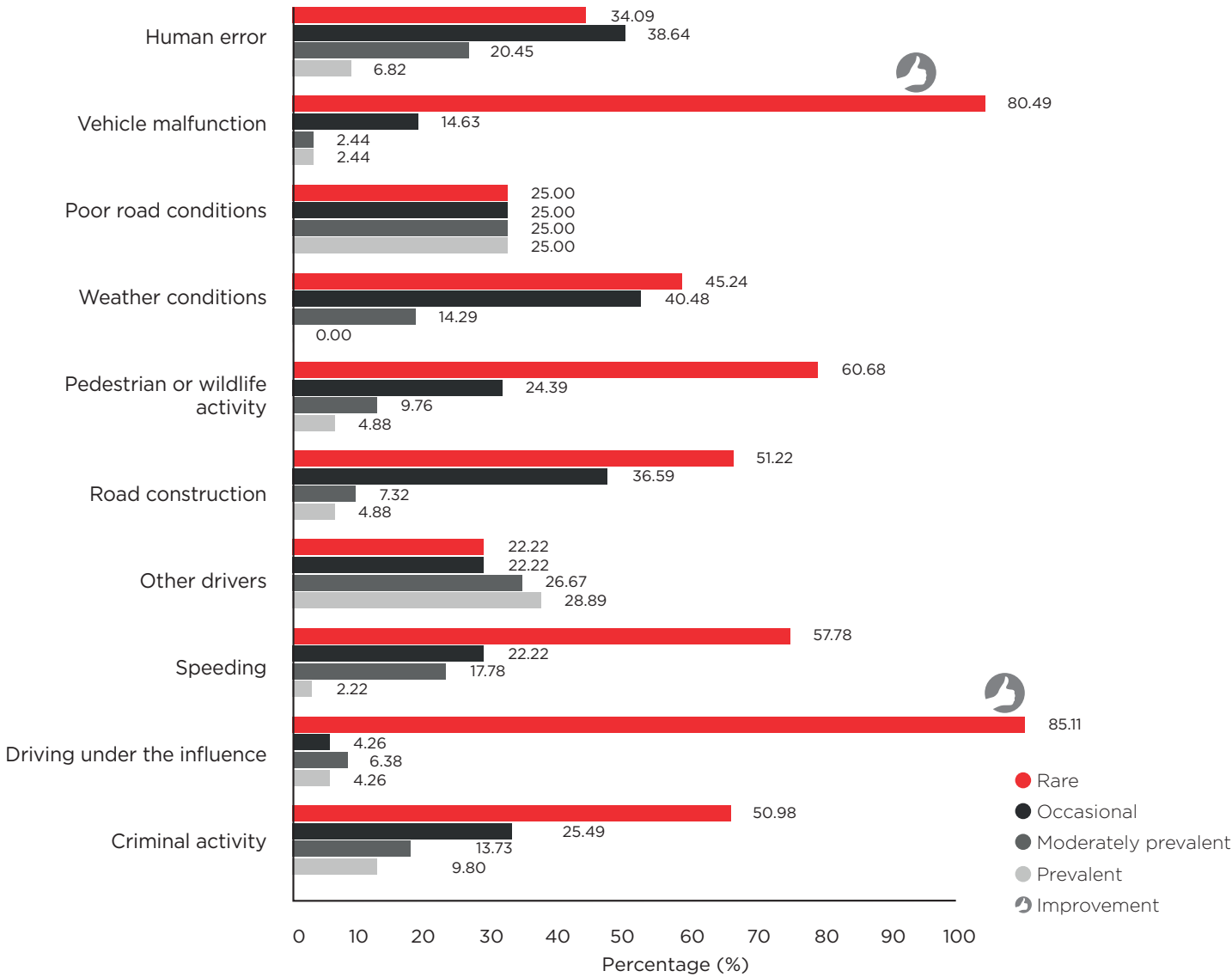


# Incidents

There was a total of 1 313 collisions reported by respondents. This is 16.5% of the total number of fleet vehicles of 7 948. It represents an increase from last year's Webfleet Road Safety Report, where "out of the total of 14 073 trucks represented, 1 253 (8.9%) collisions occurred".

Of the 52 respondents, 12 indicated they had no accidents during the course of the year. This is up from four respondents in 2022.

Of the ten worst-affected respondents, which represent 87% of incidents, five indicated that most incidents occurred at night, between 10pm and 6am. Three respondents said incidents occur randomly, at no particular time. One said there's an incident prevalence between 10am and 2pm. Another indicated that the afternoons into the early evenings (2pm-6pm), have a high propensity for incidents.

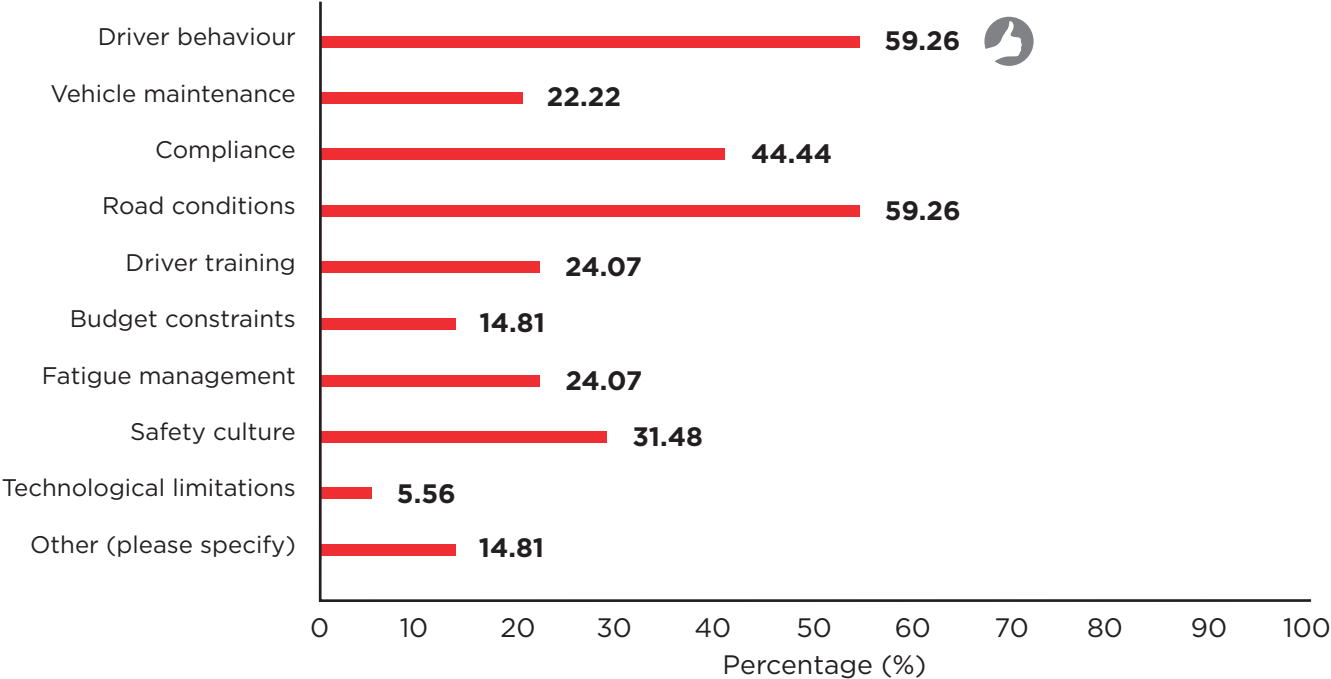


When asked to rate the prevalence of incidents, respondents cited "Other drivers", "Poor road conditions" and "Criminal activity" as the most prevalent causes of

incidents. "Driving under the influence" and "Vehicle malfunctioning" were the least prevalent.



# Challenges



Driver behaviour and road conditions came out as the most serious challenges faced by respondents. All challenges listed in the survey were selected by some respondents, showing a propensity for these issues across the board.

The danger created by third-party drivers was mentioned a number of times in the comments as an additional challenge faced by the road freight industry.

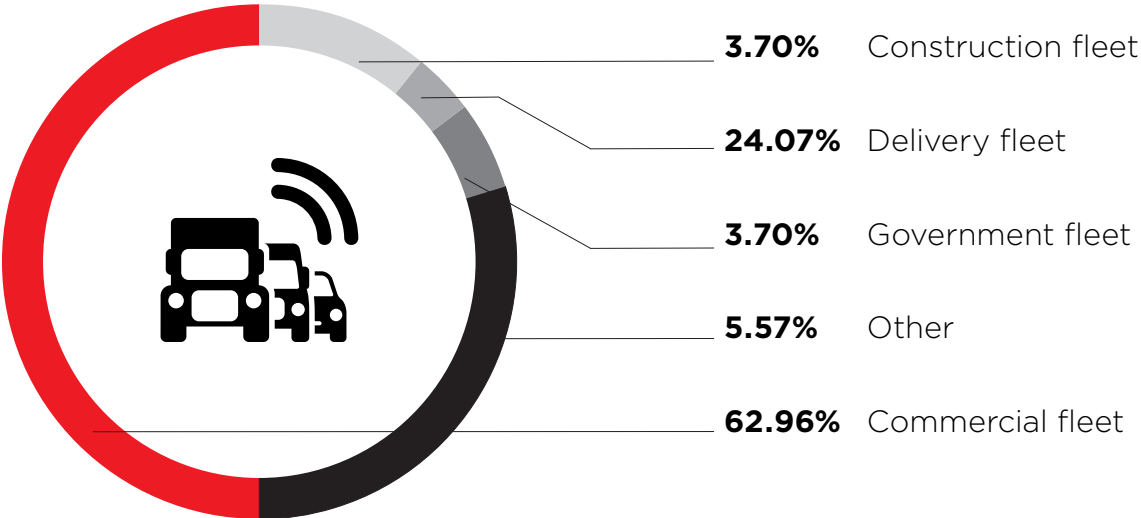
# Criminality

Crime was mentioned three times by respondents in the “Other” category as an element of concern.



# Telematics

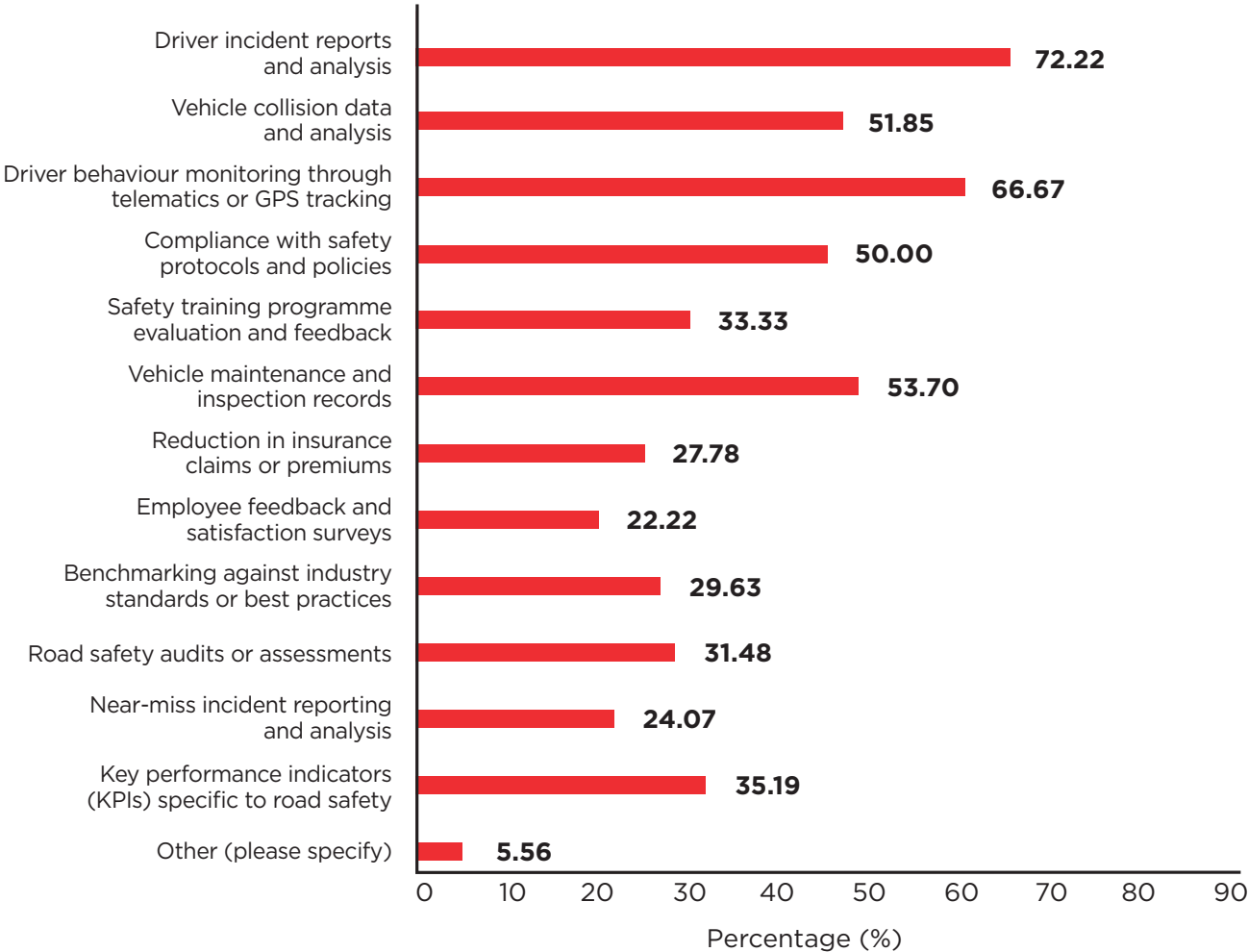
Question: If you use a telematics system, has it been effective in reducing collisions?  
80% of the respondents said telematics was effective in reducing collisions. 50% said the impact telematics made in preventing incidents is significant.



# Measurement, Policy and Assessment

Respondents were asked: “How do you measure the effectiveness of your road safety policies and procedures, and what metrics do you use to assess performance?”

Respondents could select from the following:



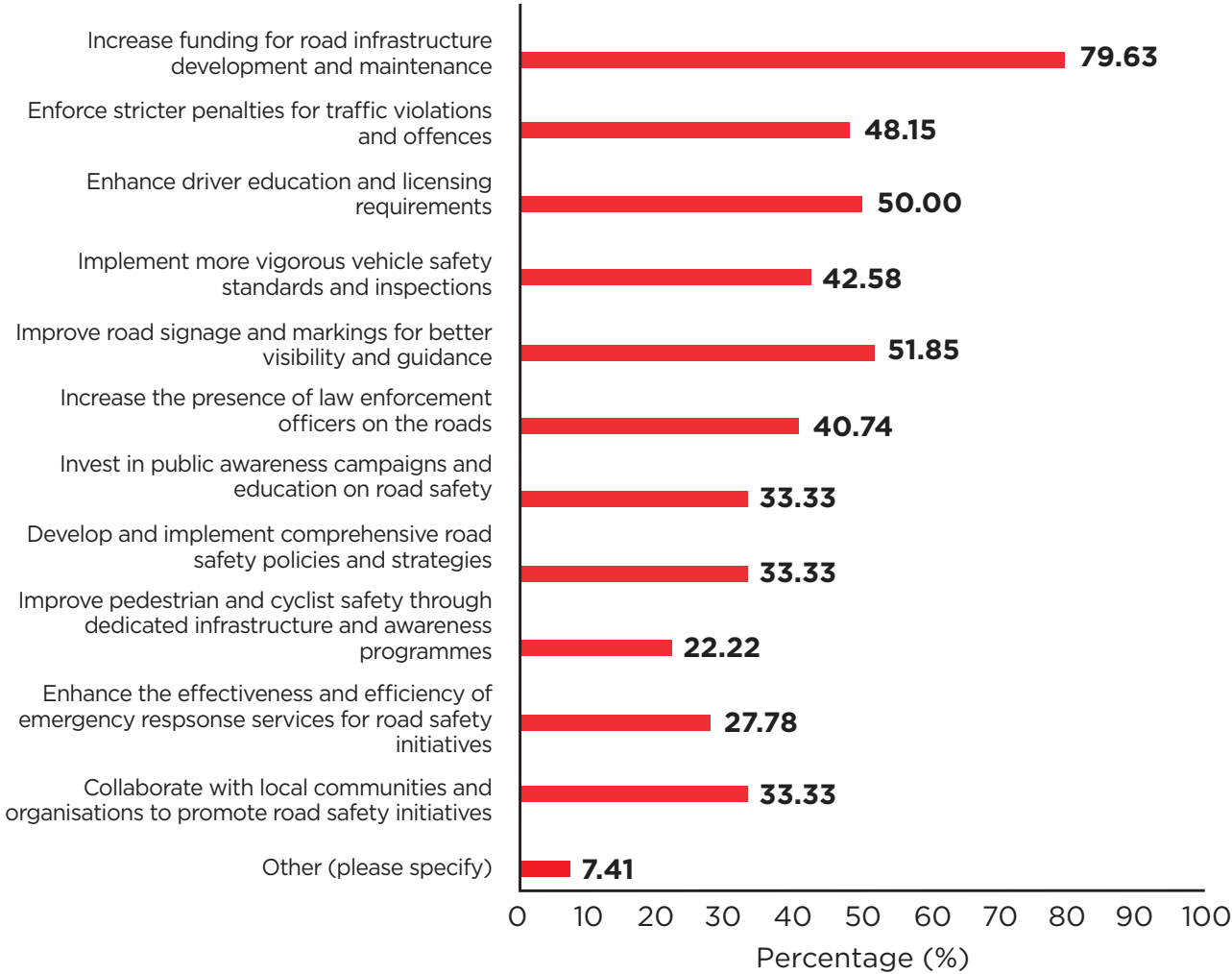
It was found that the three most popular measurement methods are: “Driver incident reports and analysis”, “Driver behaviour monitoring through telematics or GPS tracking”, and “Vehicle maintenance and inspection records”.

# Government

Respondents were asked: “What are the key areas on which the government should focus its efforts to improve road safety?”

Respondents could select three of the areas provided. All items were selected as important. However, “Increase funding for road infrastructure development and maintenance” was selected by most respondents, followed by “Improve road signage and markings for better visibility and guidance”.

The desired focus areas were:



## What the experts say

# Road safety needs an holistic approach

The Road Freight Association (RFA) is concerned about the number of accidents that are happening on our road network. It would seem that over the last couple of years, the number of incidents have been increasing.

This might be true for two reasons: the first is that there are far more vehicles on the road than there were in the past, including more trucks. Everyone is aware of the collapses we've seen in some modes of logistics, such as rail, resulting in a fair amount of cargo getting picked up on the roadside of logistics.

Additionally, in many cases the general road behaviour is deteriorating in the freight sector and there are various programmes to try and address that. We're also quite aware that the general behaviour of other classes of vehicles also isn't what it should be and that common offences are committed, leading to collisions.

Of course, roadworthiness is always an issue as is driver attentiveness. Then there are factors such as road conditions and weather playing a role. That's where technology can play a role in terms of looking at where there are roadworthy deficits and where there are things that need to be looked at such as early warning systems for timely speed reduction or braking, and stretches of road meriting extra caution.

Technology is not going to fix all the issues. There has to be continuous maintenance, proper checks, pre-trip inspections and the like. Drivers also have to be in the right frame of mind so they have to be well-rested. They should not be expected to work outside the maximum amount of regulated driving hours.

So it is important that operators keep tight control over probably the three major areas that could be contributors to incidents and these are: vehicle roadworthiness; driver fitness, especially in looking after their wellness in terms of minimums and

maximums; last is scheduling, ensuring that when vehicles are used and where they are used there is less risk of queueing and road works.

That becomes a challenge though and necessitates the importance of finding a mix between the three focus areas to avoid collisions.

Technology can help to meet these road safety requirements but those responsible for scheduling and ensuring fleets are roadworthy are highly important.



**Gavin Kelly,**  
CEO of the RFA.



## What the experts say

# Industry must step up and take responsibility

Road safety remains a major problem – and challenge – in South Africa.

A lack of proper law enforcement combined with poor prosecution of road traffic offences has led to a situation where road users regularly flout the law with impunity. The results are clear in the staggering number of crashes, serious injuries and fatalities on the country's roads annually.

Sadly, the results of the Webfleet Road Safety Report 2023 point to certain worrying trends: the high prevalence of driving under the influence (DUI), speeding and criminal activity.

Of particular concern is the high prevalence of vehicle malfunctioning as a cause of crashes. Clearly, this, and the high prevalence of DUIs, is something that must be better managed and controlled. In terms of national statistics, most fatalities (85%) are a result of human error, a factor which is somewhat prevalent in this report.

Given the critical nature of fleets, it is incumbent on fleet owners and managers to ensure their vehicles are well maintained, that their drivers are properly trained and screened and that the human factor is largely taken out of the equation in relation to collisions.

Fleet owners and managers should be aware of the negative consequences of poor road safety and should go to great lengths to ensure drivers and vehicles are properly prepared for the road.



**Layton Beard,**  
Spokesperson, Automobile Association.



## What the experts say

# Sample size credibility

Even though the survey was limited in the number of participants that participated, I believe that the assumptions made with the survey are a true reflection of the situation with regards to road safety in the country.

There is a need for the government to clamp down hard on criminal elements and corruption within the industry, law enforcement agencies such as SAPS, RTMC, and provincial as well as municipal traffic departments.

The amount of abuse of the traffic laws within the National Road Traffic Act by law enforcement agencies remain extremely high.

The high number of truck hijacking incidents involving accosters impersonating police in fake branded vehicles is equally worrying.

These and other ills impeding the road freight industry require urgent attention by the government.



**Mike Fitzmaurice,**  
CEO, Fesarta.



## What the experts say

# High collision rate late at night is a concern

One of the most notable issues highlighted by the survey is the high prevalence of accidents during the hours 10pm-6am, when one would assume that there are less vehicles on the road during this time.

This equates to a study completed by Darmstadt University in Germany that led to the introduction of reflective contour marking for HGV (heavy goods vehicles), which was introduced as legislation (Reg 191A) in SA in 1999.

As a matter of interest, South Africa actually was the first country to adopt the EU Standard.

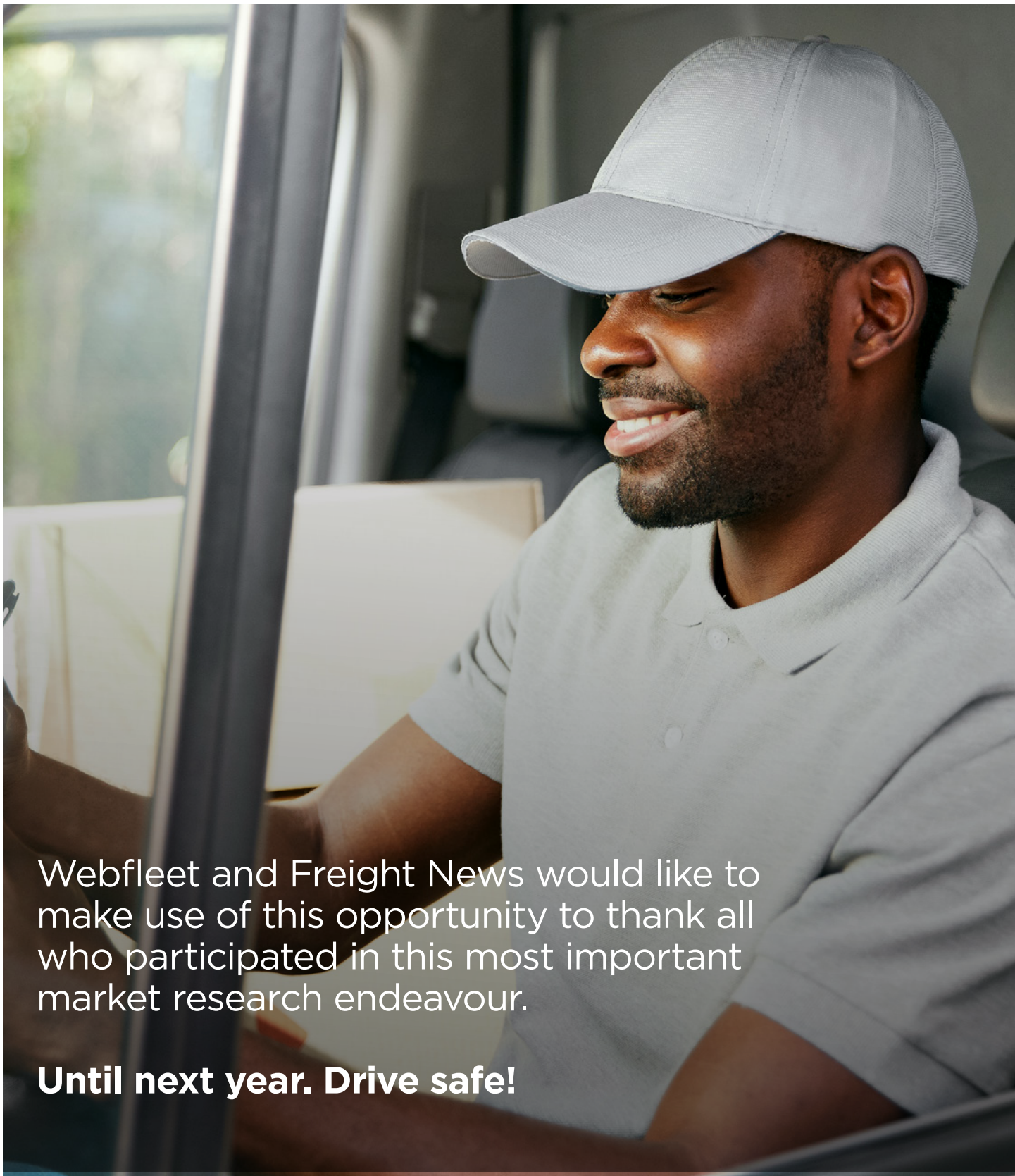
Recently, there has also been a discussion between the National Regulator for Compulsory Specifications, the SA Bureau of Standards and industry regarding the reported occurrence of poor-performing, non-compliant reflective tape products being supplied to the market, leading to the possible introduction of a compulsory standard for this product.



**Garry Savill,**  
Chairman, SARTSMA.







Webfleet and Freight News would like to make use of this opportunity to thank all who participated in this most important market research endeavour.

**Until next year. Drive safe!**